

Blind Faith

I started to turn, but the speaker stopped me.

"Nope. Face forward. Drop the bow and step away from the tree."

I hesitated, thinking furiously, but to no immediate result. The person behind me was not patient.

"You are a two count from dying, and I get your girlfriend or sister, whatever, either way. Move. Or don't."

I complied, though it seemed like an endgame situation however it played out. I'd lost. Just not smart enough, I guess. I didn't have another move to make, as all the other weapons we had were under the tarp with Brin.

With Brin.

"Pretty clever," I said. "Running two layers. Whoever the dork in the hat doesn't catch, you do?"

He snorted. Sounded like a he, anyway, no confirmation yet.

"Does that really matter? Let's go get your stuff."

We crossed the distance back as slowly as I felt I could get away with, but then we were there, standing in front of the pile of debris hiding everything left I had in the world that mattered. I tried one last delay.

"Is your buddy coming back to help with this?"

"Buddy. That's cute. No, time for the big reveal. Let's see what we got. Move all that shit off there."

I tossed aside the branches, and then flipped the tarp back.

The wheel-barrow was there, but Brin was gone.

I was the color-wheel of emotions, but my captor was just one.

"Where is she?"

I could feel something sharp press into my back, through my shirt, and through the skin. Blood began to flow, yet again.

"Hopefully long gone, asshole."

The blade withdrew.

"Turn around."

I did, and saw him for the first time. He pressed me back along the side of the wheel-barrow, until I was hard up against the fallen tree trunk.

I could tell you what he looked like, and smelled like, and the expression contorting his face as he held the long knife in front of me, showing me where he was going to bury it. I know it's kind of my duty to do that. But I'm sure, reader, you also know the cul-de-sac we'd enter together there. Perhaps, let's skip to the bit where I didn't die, and those pages beyond this one aren't blank.

I heard a metallic "shik" sound above me, and then a short whir, like a bee transferring to an adjacent flower.

Then current antagonist lost sight in his left eye as a ball-tipped metal rod broke through the bone defining the outside of said eye-socket, and pulped the eyeball in a dramatic spray of viscera. I don't care how tough you are, that's the end of your antagonism right there. I didn't hesitate, as Dave's machete was sitting unsheathed on top of the contents of the wheel-barrow. I suppose I could be

graphic here, and describe how deep the blade bit into his skull, and the wet cracking sound, and how his body spasmed as it fell with the blade still lodged in the bone. Torn from my hand, and all that.

Oh, wait, I just did.

Brin spoke from atop the tree trunk.

“Did I get him?”

I turned around, and looked up at her lovely face, shrouded in desiccated bits of once greenery, arm extended downward with the baton held in her dirty hand.

“Yes. How?”

“Echo-location. Well, not exactly, but close enough.”

I didn’t have a response, except I did, not that I knew it before I said it.

“I love you.”

There was a beat, but not as much of one as I would have expected. And speaking of expectation, it was also beyond that.

“I know. I love you too. Help me down, please.”