

As the night sky illuminated the dark forest surrounding me, all I saw was the mud my face was laying in. The figure that had been stalking me was rapidly approaching. I tried to get up and run away from whoever my pursuer was. No luck. They pinned me to the ground with their knee on my back.

"You got three seconds to tell me what you're doing here before I snap your legs." I could tell it was a female. Her warm, nasty smelling breath wafted in the air. I couldn't turn my head to see her.

"I-I'm just hiking! Honest!" I cried, trying to raise my hands to show they were empty. "My map got damaged in the rain! Take a look for yourself!" I hear the rustling of my backpack being opened. The unfurling of the soggy map confirmed my story. My attacker groaned.

"So either you're a fucking idiot who got yourself lost in the woods, or it's a lie so you could come looking for me."

"Listen ma'am. I don't know who you are. I didn't even know there was someone else here!" My explanation fell on deaf ears as silence fell between us. The only thing breaking up the tension was the chirping of crickets and the rainstorm. Whoever I was with flipped me around, now keeping one of her boots planted firmly on my chest.

It was a cat lady. Her gray fur was matted and dirty. Like the only way it was washed was this rain. And there was a lot of fur. Down past her knees. Her crimson red jacket was stained, along with her white gloves. I swear I could see blades on them.

The stare she gave me from her eye sent a chill down my spine colder than the rain. Yes, eye. Her left one was obscured by an eyepatch. Her sharp teeth glistened in a scowl. Her mouth pursed like she was about to say something, but she decided against it.

"I don't know who you are, but I won't hurt you." I hoped my pleading would work. No change in expression from her. The tension could be cut with a sword, it was so thick. Eventually she grabbed me by my shirt and held me close. Her glove blades were pressed against my neck. She finally said something.

"Leave right now." I couldn't do much in the situation I was put in, and the last thing I wanted to do was piss whoever this was off even more. She reluctantly let go. "Now scram." She began to go away.

"Hey..." I called out to whoever this stranger was. She looked back like I had just awoken a beast. She rushed back to me and held me by my jacket. "Do you know the way out of the forest? Or at least any shelter I can stay at for the night?" As thunder began to strike, her eye looked me over again.

"Come with me. Do any funny business, and I'll make sure no one ever finds your body." I meekly nodded and she started walking away, making sure to not let go of my jacket. We trudged through the mud to wherever our destination was. I debated over speaking up again, but I knew it could end well.

Eventually, we ended up at a rustic shelter. Well, "rustic" and "shelter" weren't even the best words. It was a few overturned logs covered by leaves and tarps. It wasn't until the woman crawled into the shelter and beckoned me inside that I knew this is what my plans were for that night. The only two things inside were a worn out sleeping bag and a dagger. It was as sharp as the ones she shot out her eye at me.

"Thanks." I said as I sat on the dirt floor. She sat down on the sleeping bag facing me. I could immediately tell that she was on edge. She held the dagger in her hands. Any single muscle movement I made resulted in her getting into a defensive stance. No, she wasn't scared, she was... threatening.

"Say it." She finally broke the silence.

"What?" I responded. She rolled her eye.

"Don't pretend like there isn't anything you want to say. I can tell."

"...Why did you attack me back there? Were you scared of me?" Was the first thing that came to my mind. For a split second, she looked away, before returning her attention to me.

"How would I know if you were someone to be trusted or not?" I couldn't think of a good rebuttal there. So I just shrugged.

"Well, do you trust me now?"

"Why should I?"

"Because I haven't hurt you yet."

"That's it? That's your best reasoning? How do I know you're not just playing some long con?"

"If you're so dead set on me hurting you, why did you spare me?"

"What exactly do you think I gain from not hurting you right now?"

"Someone to talk to." After I said that, her defensive demeanor stopped showing through. "It's either that, or you do trust me."

"...It's not..." She took a deep sigh. "It's not that simple... I-I didn't hurt you because-" She paused looking for her next words. But nothing came. She sheepishly looked away, but not enough to let her

guard down. Her eye gazed longingly out the small cracks of the log walls. I debated whether or not to speak up. The awkward tension was only growing by the second.

"Basil. I'm Basil... You are?" Was all I could muster at the moment. Considering we were spending the night together after she tried to murder me, it's the least she could do. Another pause from her.

"...Woe." She whispered. Almost like it pained her to say that. She rubbed her arm and shuffled uncomfortably.

"Is everything alright?" I asked. Woe's eye twitched for a second. Apart from that, she sat still as a board. I could tell something was bothering her, wondering if I had crossed a boundary.

"...Alright enough. Especially after everything..." Her whisper was even quieter. I swear a tear rolled down her cheek.

"I assume you don't want to talk about it?" She shook her head, her eye still staring out into the night sky. Although it was now obvious she was lost in her thoughts. Silence once again. I take a breath. "Look. I don't know what your deal is. You don't know what my deal is. But I can tell something is wrong. All I'm gonna say is that I'm not gonna pull any funny business. I won't hurt you unless you hurt me."

"...Make that a promise." Her head turned to face me. I smile and hold out my hand. She took a hold of it. I could feel her glove was tattered and dirty. Her face remained stoic despite the agreement between us. The air around us grew to feel less suspenseful, but still awkward.

"Is there anything you wanna say about yourself?" I ask to break the ice once more.

"No!" She shouted, barely giving me enough time to finish my sentence.

"Alright." I apprehensively replied. I could tell she didn't want to talk about that. "Anything you do want to talk about? Doesn't have to be about yourself."

"...Do you think everything happens for a reason? Destiny, turn of events, karmic retribution?" She asked. I didn't expect something like that. I never even thought about this.

"Well. I'm under the belief it's all chance, but sometimes things can be dictated by previous experiences and events. People may not like that and decide to blame it on other things. Their view may not be wrong, but they could use it as an excuse if they don't accept the truth." She looked at me and dejectedly sighed.

"Not what I wanted to hear. Thanks though..."

"Not much of a talker, huh?" I asked before she nodded. "I can tell. Just don't want it to be awkward." I ignored going for a conversation. With that new information, it became apparent that there was basically nothing to do. My only option was to go to bed. Well, "bed" was a generous term. I had a pile of leaves. Woe had the sleeping bag, and I knew for sure I didn't want to piss her off again.

I laid on the dirt ground and tried to sleep. It was obviously difficult, especially with Woe just staring at me. I could tell she was tired, but she looked, her one eye unblinking. If the silence wasn't awkward enough, now I had this. She peered at me through the dark, her thin silhouette highlighted by the moonlight beaming through the cracks. I had to turn on my other side just to get rid of the sight of a stalker. I don't remember when I did fall asleep, but it didn't last long.