

Part 35. Jeremiah

The loud whooping threw Jeremiah and Naltag. They heard the familiar cry of the scadog, and it urged them to climb from the tomb of the compound. It had been nothing but bones and ashes anyway.

As they ran, the whooping increased, becoming louder and more insistent, preparing them for the possibility of a pack. Instead, they were met with a sweaty, wild-eyed Graylyn trudging from a nearby building, a burden trailing behind her.

"Kilah?" Though as soon as he asked, Jeremiah knew his sister was the small dark figure in the plastic scrap.

Jeremiah's heart hollowed out at the limp frame he called Kilah.

"Scadogs came. Hurt Kilah." Graylyn bent to gingerly handle what was left of Kilah's arm. "They tried takin' her."

Jeremiah barely heard Graylyn. His anger overrode sense. Naltag placed a warning hand on his shoulder, and like a splash of cold water, the gesture woke him.

For the first time, he acknowledged Graylyn's injuries. She had defended Kilah. But had she saved her?

Naltag waved a silver rod over his sister, a red light streaming forth, covering her like a blanket, or a net. The light seemed to help Naltag assess Kilah, even conferring aloud. Strange words like, "Blood pressure" and "Internal bleeding."

Then, the blanket disappeared. Jeremiah asked what that meant, and Naltag revealed Kilah was alive.

Another blanket of light covered the mangled arm, with Naltag then assessing that the arm couldn't be saved. Aboard the transport, Naltag promised a solution:

"It's not perfect, but it's something."

Kilah was wheeled into a machine designed to heal injuries. While the machine hummed in the background, Graylyn relayed the details of the scadog attack. Having witnessed the girl in action, her talent still galled him. Grateful, yes. Jealous, even more.

At least with Eva, she looked like a girl, and he knew how to treat her, knew her place. With Graylyn, she looked like him, a boy, and acted more boldly than any boy or man he had known. Even her mouth was foul, spewing forth clipped questions, tainted with expletives.

Jeremiah forgave her all of this. She had saved his sister.

He couldn't help but hold back from a full friendship with the girl.

Ten years later, he still didn't revise his view of Graylyn, though his respect grew for her as each year passed.

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