

An 11:20am Glass of Whisky

I do not know if the fact that it is only 11:20 am is a mercy of the day or a cruel tormenting.

It is only 11:20!

*It is **only** 11:20*

I have more time of the day...to wallow in my self loathing and despise my general aimlessness. Sighing once more hoping this time it will bring some level of clarity, it does not, I reach for my coffee. Sitting in my favourite chair by the window that shows my favourite view in the whole world. My backyard. I send a blessed prayer of thanks once more to my deceased great aunt who gave me the property. The view consists of a tamed wilderness, giant oak trees peppering the forest among the more lowly trees, birds nesting in them filling the air with calming melodies, and the best part, a stream cutting through the land. A liquid knife that is no match for the solid earth. Woodland creatures drawn to calm clearing often do not notice the presence of man and I can sit and watch quietly at nature's beauty. Ah, the serenity, enjoyed usually by undisturbed content.

KNOCK, KNOCK

Content officially disturbed.

Opening the door, I am greeted by my dear friend, also my very loud friend, Ritchard.

"Cedrick! Thank the gods, now let me in before my balls freeze off."

"Ritch, what can I do for you as you have blessed me with such a great gift with your presence this morning."

"Is it still morning?" Ritch said turning to give the clock it some severe scrutiny, "Bastards I was hoping it was late enough in the afternoon to say, Oh well it's five o'clock somewhere,"

Ritch proceeded to turn back to give me a brief smile before hurriedly walking into the kitchen opening a cupboard and pouring himself some of my strongest whisky.

"Fatherhood treating you ruffly?" I ask, arching an eyebrow and leaning on the door frame.

Ritch barked a laugh, "Rough? Old boy I've been grabbed by my ear and hurled into the depths of hell by a crying infant. Don't tell my wife, but the thought of loving suffocation has crossed my mind." He took another swig, "No, no, I could never. I would do anything for that child." He stared straight ahead, his eyes glazing over as his mind focused on something. A terrible stoicness and firm determination was set on the face of my usually jovial friend. Something became slightly unsettling,

"Ritch is there anything you need help with, other than emptying out my collection of spirits?"

Ritch shook himself out of his stupor, "Haha, sorry about that Ced'

He filled his tumbler up again, higher than the last amount. Another swig.

"Do you have the item I gave you?"

Surprised, I straightened my back, "Kept away under lock and key as requested."

Ritch nodded, "Good, good" another swig. "I need to check it."

"Ritch, no one comes up here, except you and Ivanna. When I leave my house on rare occasions it's not for long and almost no one knows my location. There is no chance it could have been removed from this premise without my notice." I swept an arm over the room.

"You know how fastidious I am about the objects in my belonging, a trait that has annoyed you over the years, is now being quite valuable."

"I do not doubt you my dear friend, quite the opposite, I have full favour of your ability for keeping it safe. I just...I have been having horrible dreams."

"Dreams?"

"Nightmares really. When I can get to sleep, difficult with the baby of course, the thought of it disappearing plagues my mind." Another swig, "I would just like to see it again in hopes of assuring my mind and curing these awful dreams."

It was not like Ritchard to let something discomfort him for so long. Nor was it like Ritchard to ask for help with a problem, especially a discomforting problem. It must've been happening for a while for him to come here and ask.

I put my coffee down, "Of course Ritch, if you think it would help."

Ritch nodded, downing the rest of his whisky and we headed to the library. Muscle memory took hold as I followed the movements my subconscious demanded. Ritch began to talk again after the small silence. Ritch was never good with silence, especially when nervous.

"I had a strange visitor the other day, it must have been a week or so now."

I did not need to say anything for Ritch to continue speaking.

"He came asking if I knew of your great aunt."

I stumbled to halt, "What?"

"Yes, strange wasn't it. Anyway I told him yes I knew, being the childhood friend of her pain in the arse great nephew."

Rolling my eyes I pulled a book on the shelf, and a secret corridor opened as the bookcase swung forward with all the manners of a regular door. Me and Ritchard stepped inside, continuing down it. "I also informed him that she had unfortunately passed not long ago and you had taken up her old residence."

We walked down stone steps that lead in the now secret library of my dear great aunt. She had so much soul, adventures that had been collected with souvenirs had been placed with great care in this room. She had so much purpose, and she had desperately tried to help me find mine. Unfortunately any progress she had gained, was retreating viciously after her passing. I started to tune Ritchard in again, as I headed for one of the many paintings on the wall. ".....yes I felt like I knew the name but I did not recognize the face so I sent him on his way. I remember you saying any man I told the whereabouts of your location without your permission would have a quick death and I would have to eat my own balls with satay sauce, as you so delicately put it."

I produced a key from behind the painting, a smile did not grace my lips at his remark as it was not a comment made in humour. I walked to the other side of the room, removing another book. A quiet pop from the table in the middle of the room echoed. I walked over to the large oak table. Family legend said it was made for King Arthur but the poor carpenter wasn't informed that the King wanted a round table until the week after finishing this project. The table was exquisite. Innate carvings of all sorts of mythical creatures and the latin

names were grooved in the dark inky wood. It still had a well kept layer of smooth varnish over its surface. I opened the secret hatch on the side of it and brought out the little box my friend had been having nightmares of. I slid the key in and turned, another satisfying click echoed around the room. The lid was lifted and I moved to the side for Ritch to examine the object all he wanted. I went to return the book on the shelf to reset the table's locking system. Ritch was turning the object over on all sides, muttering about the beauty of the thing. Wondering what it must have been like to use it back then. I wasn't really listening to these sayings from Ritchard, for they could go on for quite some time. He fell silent for a moment and then I heard him whisper to himself, but in the small room and the fact that he was now standing directly behind me, it was crisp to my ears.

"I would do anything for that child."

"What would yo-"

As I turned around a knife slammed into my stomach, my nervous system was struck with unbearable pain. The shock was evident on my face. I did not understand. What had led him to this. He never said anything. Or had I not been listening

"Sorry old friend."

Was all he said before I fell to the floor, my own blood pooling around me. Ritchard, my childhood friend, closed his eyes, let out a breath, turned, and left with the object, the door closing after him. My aimless life was getting an aim. It was aiming for death. And as I breathed out my last breath, all I could think was how I, a secluded hermit could die from a stabbing.

The End

Written by Laura Benton

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