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Untitled Novel on Indoctrination and Mentorship

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In a place irretrievable were wooden pillars, they did not stand, they did not sit, they were not beneath their own green canopy, nor were they towering over their dirt. They merely were, and so were the hills, the ravines, the creeks, and the animals between them. It is as simple as that they were. And so was he, naked, lain at the base of a tree, his head propped upon the roots of the structures which were everything around him and for him. He listens to the wild stasis of the forest and the sounds it always makes, the insects which had, were, and would always be clicking, the birds which had, were, and would always be flying, and the swaying of the palatial green canopy far overhead which had, was, and would always sway. Somewhere far off he can hear his family.

The Kid

“I hope that she falls on a sharp rock.” I think, smiling, “That’d teach her a good lesson.” I often, as many secretly do about people in their life, day dream of all the ways I could win victory against Shaur in a good argument, Or think of all the embarrassing ways she would come to discover her own stupidity. Despite this, I never have felt a single twinge of real hatred for her, or even disliked her, and perhaps I had been a bit too dramatic this morning.

I cut the the thought short as I hear approaching footsteps, and open my eyes to see Shaur’s sister, Vera, pushing her way up through the undergrowth of the forest up to the top of my hill. I lean back and close my eyes again, and cannot help but smile. She

did not have to try hard to find me, my plumage being a distinct red, white and gold from the surrounding greens and browns.

“Havrem.” She says, her voice put on a grave facade, but it couldn’t disguise it entirely, soft like moth wings, “Havrem you are finished, my pride calls for it.” She says, her voice oddly tremulous, I open an eye to see her grave expression nearly exploding from the laughter it holds back. “What honor is there for me to insult?”

“My sister’s honor, you grape.” She squints at me, “I’m going to squish you.”

I stretch my arms and yawn languidly.

“Ah, your sister’s honor. It’s good you came to get it back, if *she* did, she would have scared off all the animals...”

I hold her gaze.

“Because she’s fat.”

In a swift motion, she grabs my leg and yanks me out of my repose, a great mistake, for no adolescent of my band wrestles so well as I. Reaching forward, I grab her foreleg, pull Vera off of her feet in turn. Vera lands half on top of me and scrambles I reach for her neck but predicting this she has thrown her arms in the way, so I grab them instead, and pin them to the ground, so that her left hand is by her right, and the same of her right hand by her left. Hooking one leg behind mine and pushing with her other, Vera flips us both over, so that she is on top, she grabs my arms and our situation becomes reversed.

“Eat shit, Vera.”

I pull up both legs to my chest, my digitigrade legs folded in three, like a spring, I use the slope of the hill to my advantage, push against her lower stomach, lifted her off her feet, over her head, and send him crashing onto her back, so that we lay head to head in a line. I quickly get up and pile onto Vera, she is no match in her stunned condition, and before too long, submits.

“You,” she says through choked breaths “win, Pest.”

Smiling, I remove my knee from her chest. Tongue lolling, Vera pantomimes being dead before smiling and getting up.

“You’re an idiot, Havrem.”

“Yeah.”

“Shaur’s so mad at you, Pest, she’s gonna piss in your soup.”

“Yeah.” I respond, smiling, I turn away from camp, Vera following me as we walk between the high trees.

“Did you hear Savoh’s story last night?” She looks at me, gauging what I am likely to say. “By the campfire?”

“No.”

“He’s been going on about something he saw in the woods the other day. Says he saw some monster or something.”

I take a glance at him over my shoulder. “Serious?”

“I don’t know, the old man says he’s seeing things, and Ove thinks he ate some interesting mushrooms.” She pauses, biting her lip and looking around the forest.

“What do you think?”

“I think Savoh is afraid of bears.” I turned back to her, eyes wide “Or, maybe he saw another family’s scout.”

Vera’s eyes match mine, the excitement palpable.

“I hope he didn’t shoot him.”

“Yeah.” I say, “Or if he did, I hope he died.”

“What?”

“If he died he can’t go back and say to his family ‘Family, they shot me!’ and then we can go and put him in the feast meal so no one ever knows.”

Vera laughs, surveying the woods as we descend into a small valley, dense with ferns and shrubs, damp from the brook which bisects it, undoubtedly making its way to the lake. We pause for a moment at its dark grey clay edge, the cool water’s surface wavy as it flows over a bed of countless river stones, their faces smoothed over by time but no less bumpy. Looking upstream reveals the odd small tree, laying in rest over the brook as some slimy bridge. With our tails for balance and long toes we dance across the river as dryly as we can.

“Should we be getting so far away?” questions Vera, with a concerned look that comes so naturally, his reflection a dancing purple against the water running below, “From camp I mean.”

“Cowards like you should be forced to eat from the floor.”

“Pest.”

We keep walking, up one hill and down the next, around thick brambles and through small bushes, until we happen across some great stony outcropping. six or seven of

them, large ancient things, like toys abandoned in a pile by some giant, they overlap and stack on top and against each other. Moss and smaller plants covering their surface. Walking up to them, Vera and I grab hold of a natural ladder, the tangled roots of some larger plant, quickly scaling the grey surface, slick with moisture and smoothed by infinite rains. We climb from one mossy bed to the next until we scale to the highest boulder. Fingers clenching tightly the roots and rocks, frightening birds away from a small pool which sits in the center of this highest errant. Vera and I lay down upon the green bed, soft and warm from a few penetrating beams of sun, we gaze at the canopy overhead, and watch as the undersides of the leaves shift in the wind. Side by side, we fall into sleep.