

The Bombardiers

There are often times in our lives when the world just throws us a bit of a curveball in an effort to get us to slow down, take things easy, and just let things happen. Sort of karma's way of saying "Stop this shit right now, you moron."

It was morning, early morning, and the first thing I heard was the sweet chirruping of morning birds in the trees. The cabin itself was silent, letting the world outside speak first. Jason and I were lying in my bed, dead tired and full of aches and bruises. Last night had to be the longest fucking night in our entire lives, second only to the one where a giant rock came out of the sky.

We were doing some kind of espionage work, that much I can remember. Something went wrong somewhere, a thread in the fabric unraveled. In other words, we fucked up big time. It all ended with some prick getting me good with the corkscrew on his pocketknife, leaving a bloody gash on my chest as long as the Mississippi river. Jason bandaged me up when we got back to our home in the woods, but the thing about getting cut with a corkscrew is this: the wound is ragged, not a smooth cut. The skin and, subsequently the nerve endings within the skin, can reconnect more fluidly from a knife cut, but not from one made by a freaking corkscrew!

The pain was bearable, but it was the effects on my mind that were aggravating me. Jason and I had an argument when we got back home last night, which erupted into a full-blown fight. I can't remember exactly what it was about, but I do know that I was the one that started it.

I stared up at a large black and white poster for the movie Easy Rider I had up on the wall close to my bed. I had only gotten about an hour of sleep--not a full hour of rest, mind you...about an hour--but I couldn't grab onto that bit of darkness that would make me slip under. I didn't want to stay awake; I just wanted to be away from the real world for a while so I can be with myself for a little bit. I don't want to talk to Jason, I don't want to take any pain pills, and I don't want to have any real cognizance about anything. Just let me dream for, I don't know, a month or two...

For a moment I thought I was in the process of going to sleep--when I heard an explosion outside. Jason jerked awake, jostling me a little. I cleared my throat and looked at him. His eyes were weighted down with large bags, adding nicely to the black and blue marks he got from some fox the other night. He looked battle-scarred and weary, and he gave me a pained look before he got out of bed.

"What the hell was that?" he said tiredly. He rubbed at his eyes, winced, and rubbed at his shoulders instead. His hair, muddy blonde today with no conflicting colors, was stuck up on one side, giving him a severe case of what people used to call "bed head." He stretched his back, letting all his joints creak and pop. His navy blue boxers looked tightly snug, hugging the curves of his rear and groin. I tried to ignore this, but his gray tail swished back and forth, unconsciously drawing my eyes down to the shapely curve of his derriere.

Why am I such a damn idiot? I'm always making up some excuse to initiate a pointless argument with someone, and it's usually just for fun, but last night just went too far. I never learn, do I? I never learn to keep my damn mouth shut when nothing's needed to be said. All I had to do was ignore the impulse to say the first thing that came into my head, but no, I had to insult Jason and drag him through the mud. I shook my head; stupid fucking idiot...

Jason saw me looking at him when I shook my head. He narrowed his eyes and said "What?" He said it gruffly, putting a lot of antagonized emphasis on the letter "t." I looked away from him and said "Nothing."

He stared at me for a few more moments before he grabbed up a pile of his clothes and walked out of the room. I felt tears begin to well up; I never imagined in my darkest, most melancholic dreams Jason would ever look at me like that, with frustration and enmity. I never wanted to see him look at me like that again. I would've been only too happy to just shrivel up and die then and there.

But it was hard to shrivel up and die when a series of explosions rocked the foundation of the cabin. I heard the wolf swear somewhere, dropping something heavy. I slowly pushed myself out of bed, curious as to what was going on outside. My chest hurt and I gasped when part of the loose bandages scraped against the wound, but I got up and tossed the covers aside. I was wearing the same grey jeans and white socks I had on from yesterday, having never bothered to take them off. I looked out the window, seeing nothing but trees, leaves, and snow highlighted by sunlight.

I decided to go outside and see what was out there. I was curious, and judging by the swearing sounds coming from the kitchen, I guessed Jason was making breakfast. The wind was cold today, but the sun was nice and warm. I took a deep breath, listening to the silence of the woods. Suddenly something dark flew past me, so close I could feel my breath taken away. I saw it travel upward, and something small fall from the sky...

BLAAAM!!

A snowdrift exploded not too far away, sending up a shower of white powder and broken bits of wood.

Oh, damn it. It's them.

I saw them swooping through the air, dodging gracefully between thick boughs and branches of the birch and pine trees. They somersaulted and barrel-rolled, turning flips and aerial tricks worth any international competition. Then they landed, delicately lighting on a tree that had been felled by a storm we just had.

They were bats, three of them. They called themselves The Bombardiers, mercenaries for hire whose target audience mostly included well-to-do rich folks who survived the comet. They were quite famous in the soldier-of-fortune underground, and as a result of their fame, their heads grew so large you couldn't fit them through a door. Honestly, they were the most stuck up

bastards you will ever meet. Try to explain that to them, though, and you'll wind up with a grenade wrapped up in a snowball dropped down the back of your shirt.

They wore outfits that looked like they came from one of the first Sears & Roebuck catalogues. Aviator goggles and flying ace jackets were popular with them, as were large regent mustachios and white aviation scarves. They had heavy, soprano voices, and spoke with accents that were obviously borrowed from old Basil Rathbone films, with a touch of Depression-era Manhattan thrown in as a tangy but bitter spice.

They posed on the log for a few minutes and then took off again, doing loops and expertly coordinated movements. I watched them, feeling my aggravation meter begin to rise.

Jason met me on the porch, his bright yellow kitchen apron tied around his waist. "Bombardiers? What're they up to today?"

"Looks like a test flight," I said.

"Hmph," Jason harrumphed, crossing his arms over his chest. "Well, I can't make anything without it spilling out onto the fucking floor with those stupid explosions."

We stood there for a few more minutes. Jason walked back into the cabin, huffing with every step. From the kitchen he asked if I wanted anything to eat.

"No thanks," I called back to him. "But, would you mind getting my little laser light?"

He came back out with a thin little metal object about the size of a pen, a confused look on his grey furry face. He asked me what I had planned; I told him he'd see in a minute. I clicked the light on, faintly seeing the beam of lime green light spot out a thin birch tree quite a ways away.

I watched one of The Bombardiers flying low, slowing down to do some silly little mid-air backflip. I shined the light in the prick's eyes, blinding him. He lost his sense of balance (strange thing to happen while flying, but I hear it happens), slipped over a tree branch, and landed on his thick skull. Judging by the audible crack, I don't think he survived.

The other two stopped doing tricks long enough to stare at their down comrade. One of them reached into a pocket at his hip and took out a nice grapefruit-sized bomb, stretching his arm back to throw it at me. I shined the little green light in his eyes.

He gave a low, baritone cry of surprise, throwing up both arms to cover his eyes. His bomb-filled hand collided with his friend's head, who gave a shriek of pain as he did a clumsy falter in the air. He crashed into his blinded friend and together they fell in a graceless tumble to the snowy ground. One of them was intelligent enough to realize the bomb was still in his hand. He cried out and tried to throw, but he was too late. It exploded with massive, luminescent bang, throwing up a red shower of bone, blood, and tattered clothing all over the vicinity.

Beside me, Jason started clapping. He smiled, saying "And the Northern judge awards two points!"

I smiled, too; I couldn't help it. Jason's big white smile was just so infectious. I pocketed my laser pointer and stretched. "Yeah," I said. "That last landing really left something to be desired."

Jason put a hand around my waist, careful to keep away from the gash. He brushed his muzzle against my cheek and gave me a soft kiss. "Hey, do you want something to eat?"

I looked at him, looking deep into his kind eyes, knowing that the raucous we had last night was absolved. It felt like my mind gave a huge sigh of relief, like a weight being relieved. Looking at his eyes without all the hate and resentment in them made me feel so much better, so much happier. I gave him a quick hug (fiery, needle-like pain flared up from my chest, but I ignored it), kissed him back, and told him that I was starving. We walked back into our cabin, letting the quiet of the woods settle back down like a fresh layer of snow, the birds carrying on their morning ballads.