

Contest #9: Writing Challenge

Theme: Continue the Story

The Beginnings:

Beginning 1:

The cry of a single raven broke the silence of the night. The light of the moon threw nightmarish shadows, one of them being close to a human shape. For a few seconds the shadow laid on the wet grass of a park, then he began to move towards an old Victorian estate. As the raven cried a second time, the head of the shadow turned around and finally light fell onto the face of the man the shadow was belonging to. It was the face of an old man who had already seen too much in his life, but his eyes still radiated power and a strong will.

After some more seconds he came to the great wooden door and took out a pack of picklocks. He tried the first one, but it didn't fit. A silent curse escaped from his mouth. Hectically he took out the next one and almost dropped it.

'Stay calm' he told himself. 'There is no need to rush.'

Finally he managed to open the lock. He slowly moved the door. With a long and painful scream it swung open. He was there. Just one last step to go...

Beginning 2:

The sun went down beyond the horizon and painted the landscape in blood red. Blood! As if he hadn't seen enough of that the last months.

His glance wandered around on the battlefield. Finally it was over. After three month, silence came back into the vale for the first time. But it wasn't a peaceful silence. It was frightening.

He shuddered and was about to go back the way he came from, but he had to walk to the other side of the valley. The smell of death normally would have been hardly endurable, but he got used to it over time. This, however, didn't apply for the sight presented to him. Dead soldiers of both sides were lying next to each other, looking at him with empty, vacant eyes, still clutching their weapons in death. He began to shiver even more.

Involuntarily his hand rose towards a pocket of his vest and opened it. His fingers fumbled around until he found...

1st - Reaper

The cry of a single raven broke the silence of the night. The light of the moon threw nightmarish shadows, one of them being close to a human shape. For a few seconds the shadow laid on the wet grass of a park, then he began to move towards an old Victorian estate. As the raven cried a second time, the head of the shadow turned around and finally light fell onto the face of the man the shadow was belonging to. It was the face of an old man who had already seen too much in his life, but his eyes still radiated power and a strong will.

After some more seconds he came to the great wooden door and took out a pack of picklocks. He tried the first one, but it didn't fit. A silent curse escaped from his mouth. Hectically he took out the next one and almost dropped it.

'Stay calm' he told himself. 'There is no need to rush.'

Finally he managed to open the lock. He slowly moved the door. With a long and painful scream it swung open. He was there. Just one last step to go...

He stopped for a moment to take a deep breath. It had taken him twenty years to get to this point. A few more seconds wouldn't matter. He left the door open and looked around. Gloomy light came from somewhere above, but his eyes already got used to the darkness. In a corner he noticed a broad stairway with a blood-red carpet on it. The source of light was up there and his target probably was as well.

As he climbed up the stairs, he envisioned a stream of blood running down the carpet and melting with it's tone. It would vanish like it's owner. But no, he told himself. This was not about assuaging his bloodthirst. It was just about revenge. Cold, determined revenge.

Lost in his thoughts he hardly noticed that the stairway had ended, revealing a long corridor. At it's end, light fell out of a half-opened door. Soft-footed, he approached it while taking a silver dagger out of his coat. Somehow he managed to get through the door without moving it.

Now there he stood, a dark figure, surreptitious like an assassin, in the corner of a dark room with his victim lying on a bed in front of him. Next to it there was a small table with a candle on it. After twenty years... Twenty years of plotting his revenge... And now he was so close. So close to the man who had taken everything from him. The man who had killed his wife and burned down his house. Who had destroyed his life. But tonight, this would end.

He came closer and raised the fist with the dagger. As he was about to jab out, he noticed a small book with a violet binding on the bedside table. The word "diary" was on it, written in calligraphic letters. He wanted to end this as fast as possible, but something made him open the book. Maybe he wanted to understand why all this had happened, maybe he

wanted to understand why that man had done all this to him and maybe he hoped to find solace by understanding it. He didn't know, but he opened it anyway.

"Dear Diary," it said on the first page.

"I'm starting to write to you because something happened. Something terrifying.

Something I can't keep for myself. I killed somebody. A woman. I can still see her face when I close my eyes. I didn't want to kill her! Just because I was hungry I broke into her house. The only thing I wanted to have is something to eat!

But somehow she must have heard me rummaging the kitchen. And then suddenly she was in front of me, with a knife in her hand. In my panic I grabbed for one as well, but as she noticed my movement she stabbed forward. Probably she just feared for her life like I did. The same mortal fear depriving me of my senses. As a reflex I raised my knife and she ran into it. Just a reflex...

I didn't want to kill her."

Some scrawly and crossed lines he couldn't read followed.

"When I sat there next to her dead body, I couldn't even realize what had happened. My biggest anxiety was that I might have been put to jail. Jail! What are 10 years in jail compared to this?

But in my fear I couldn't grab a single clear thought. Trance-like I took books and wood and.., everything I could find, stacked and burned them so that no one would find out. But as I came out of the house, her husband, maybe having seen the flames and the smoke, descried me. I ran away, hiding from justice."

He skipped a few pages.

"It have been ten years since then and still I can't stop myself from thinking about it. Neither at daytime nor in my dreams. It is probably going to hunt me forever.

I wonder how her husband is feeling now. Does he hate me? Of course he does. How does he live on? Does he think of it every day like I do? Or doesn't he even live anymore? I wish I could talk to him and explain what I did, but I fear his reaction. Maybe he would kill me. But well, maybe that's a fair punishment for my misdeeds..."

At that point he closed the book and turned his head to look down at his former enemy. All this years, he had thought he was hunting a monster.

And now he realized that this man suffered as much as he did. Somehow he felt an affinity to him. A single event had bound them together for a lifetime. He could still kill that man, but it didn't mean anything to him. Furthermore, wouldn't he be the cold, deadhearted monster if he did so?

He took the pen lying next to the book and wrote "I forgive you" on the last page, then he left through the open door.

2nd - Magnamancy

The sun went down beyond the horizon and painted the landscape in blood red. Blood! As if he hadn't seen enough of that the last months.

His glance wandered around on the battlefield. Finally it was over. After three month, silence came back into the vale for the first time. But it wasn't a peaceful silence. It was frightening.

He shuddered and was about to go back the way he came from, but he had to walk to the other side of the valley. The smell of death normally would have been hardly endurable, but he got used to it over time. This, however, didn't apply for the sight presented to him. Dead soldiers of both sides were lying next to each other, looking at him with empty, vacant eyes, still clutching their weapons in death. He began to shiver even more.

Involuntarily his hand rose towards a pocket of his vest and opened it. His fingers fumbled around until he found...

... a small, smooth stone, tied carefully to a bit of string. He looked down at his hand, the stone shining a brilliant blue even in the growing dark.

His shivering slowed as a warmth different from the growing cold began to flow through him, and he lowered the stone to again survey the battlefield.

He could see friends, lying bent and broken, amongst the carnage, and his stomach fell. He'd lived with these people, argued with them, joked with them. They had all set out this morning confident of victory. Victory! How could we all have been so naive?!

We'd thought they had been walking out to meet an opposing army of savages of lesser numbers. An easy win, surely. In reality, we had marched out into the valley, and nothing was there to meet us. It was already too late.

The supposed savages had allied themselves with another army that was supposed to be on our side, and out of nowhere the members of that army amongst our ranks had begun attacking us. As we'd struggled to regroup and fight back, the savages had come from all sides with weapons and monsters unlike anything we'd ever seen. We'd all fought with our best, but it wasn't a war.

It was a massacre.

He looked over his shoulder at a gigantic beast's carcass. That massive, deformed creature had attacked from the left, ploughing through everyone and everything, it's eyes ablaze with a primal rage.

He'd seen it tear apart friend and foe, and in an instant of his own rage for his fallen friends, he'd charged it as it lunged at him. His katana pierced through the beast's upper jaw as the beast's teeth sunk into his shoulder. The momentum of the beast carried it over him before he could get away, and then it all went black.

When he came to, he found his armor, despite being cracked and nearly broken, supporting the bulk of the dead monster's weight. After realizing he could still move, he struggled, barely managing to get out from under the thing, and retrieved his sword as he looked around. It was all over, there was no one else.

He looked away from his friend's corpses, and began to slowly make his way forward. The dark of the night grew, The little light there was, was coming from the nearly full moon peeking through the clouds. The sickly light convulsed the scene before him as he walked into something he'd not even seen in nightmares. The dead bodies, their eyes, they seemed to scream in pain, in rage, they wanted to hurt, to kill as they had been...

He wrenched his eyes away, looking to his side. More monstrous carcasses... we're they really dead? Did it just move? The shadows were playing tricks, they had to be, everything was dead...

A shrill cry erupted from behind him. He jumped forwards, turning quickly but a little unbalanced as he landed. He couldn't see anything beyond the silhouettes of the dead warriors and beasts in the abysmal light. He blinked. A bead of sweat ran down the side of his face. His hand fell and tightly gripped the hilt of his sword that hung by his side. Nothing moved, the eerie silence felt heavy on his ears. Did he imagine it? For a moment, nothing happened.

Again shrill cry, and then another, both high pitched and wailing like the first, broke out either side of him. His eyes widened in terror as from between the dead bodies glowing yellow eyes came into view, shining in the small light from the moon. He drew his sword as a cloud moved, letting the moon illuminate the valley.

The creatures we're hunched over, almost crawling along the ground. He could hear the snarls now, the bright white fangs bared... He turned quickly, his shaking almost breaking his footing, as he swung at the monster that grew close. He missed... it jumped back, it's face contorted in rage...

There was more of them. As the one already visible grew closer, others came out from behind the dead the dead and darkness, too many... He screamed at them as he spun himself in a tight circle, his sword arcing through the air, driving them back, but not enough...

His balance wavered too much, breaking under the strain. He hit the ground, the wind was knocked out of him. His sword bounced out of his hand, he reached for it, but it went too far. He was going to die, like he should have, along with his friends...

Amidst the cries of the monsters, the thudding of their feet drawing close, his own strained breathing, he heard something else hit the ground.

His eyes looked down. A small, brilliantly blue stone sat on the dirt and crushed grass.

"... check this rock out." He'd remarked, holding the stone up for her to see. "Wow... it's beautiful." She'd replied back, smiling. He'd let his eyes catch hers, and then had gazed back at the stone, smiling himself. "Yeah, it is. It reminds me of you." She'd laughed, catching him in an embrace...

The warmth, more powerful than his fear, more powerful than anything surged through him. His shaking slowed, it stopped... He couldn't hear anything, no, yes he could, he could hear his breathing. He struggled upright and looked around. Where had the monsters gone? The dead soldiers... the monstrous carcasses...

He got to his feet, listening intently. There was nothing. Nothing moved. Not the slightest whisper of noise came from anything besides himself. There wasn't any sign of them, or any sign of anything having been here since the army's battle.

The sword still sat where it had fallen and surveyed the he blade, and then looked at the valley. The dead, his dead friends...

He drove the sword into the ground, so it firmly stuck upright. His hand reached into his pocket and pulled out the bit of string, which must have come loose after all this time... Closing his eyes tightly as tears ran down his cheeks, he began to mutter...

... he stood back up and turned away from his sword, everything he wanted to say to his friends had been said and left with his sword, along with a small blue stone, tied tightly to a bit of string...

He didn't have to die, someone back home needed him more than his friends did...

3rd - Phil

The sun went down beyond the horizon and painted the landscape in blood red. Blood! As if he hadn't seen enough of that the last months.

His glance wandered around on the battlefield. Finally it was over. After three month, silence came back into the vale for the first time. But it wasn't a peaceful silence. It was frightening.

He shuddered and was about to go back the way he came from, but he had to walk to the other side of the valley. The smell of death normally would have been hardly endurable, but he got used to it over time. This, however, didn't apply for the sight presented to him. Dead soldiers of both sides were lying next to each other, looking at him with empty, vacant eyes, still clutching their weapons in death. He began to shiver even more.

Involuntarily his hand rose towards a pocket of his vest and opened it. His fingers fumbled around until he found...

... the pack of cigarettes his friend gave him. He took out one of the cigarettes and lit it. He usually does not smoke, in fact he hates smoking more than anything else in this world. After he exhaled a big amount of smoke, which then hid the dead bodies next to him, he started to think back.

His friend has always been faster than him, no matter how hard he trained his body and mind, he still could not beat him. But then irony of life and death had struck again. In the end his slowness had saved him, if he just would have been one or two steps faster he would have died with his friend. He would not have to bear this pain of being all alone, losing everyone he cared about.

His hand was grabbing his dagger which was right at his belt. He would end it now, no more pain. The dagger tip pointed now to his throat. He closed his eyes and was ready to do his last action, when something came up in his mind. The last words of his friend were repeating themselves in his head. "Live on, you don't need to seek revenge or death, I lived my life as I wanted it to, I have no regrets and so you shouldn't have either." He opened his eyes and put the dagger back at his place. The need to fulfil the last wish of his friend was stronger than the need to run away from the pain. He straightened up his shoulders and was ready to face everything which was in his way. Behind him there was a tree cracking down.

Something was coming. He turned around just to look into the faces of a hungry wolf pack. He knew what they were up to. Hungry as they are this battlefield has to be like a dream for them. "This people have suffered enough", he thought to himself, drew his dagger and was running right into their direction.