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MOURNING DOVE

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Draft
#10

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INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

A little girl, HOUND (8), lays in bed, the sun is rising outside the window. She slowly blinks her eyes and smiles. She gets out of bed and heads out of the room. There are framed pictures scattered on the walls of the bedroom. They're photos of Hound and a woman hugging, playing, and laughing and more photos of Hound, Papa, and this woman together smiling at the camera.

INT. PAPA BEDROOM - MORNING

Gently, Hound shakes PAPA (gruff, 40s) awake.

HOUND
Papa. It's mornin'.

Papa breathes heavy and grunts. She grabs a tall walking stick from the corner of the room and sets it next to his bed. He starts to get up.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Hound stands on a step-stool and brushes her teeth. In the mirror, she sees Papa walk through the kitchen. He has a pronounced limp and uses the walking stick to get around and open cabinets.

He stops at the counter, sets down two thermos mugs. One is small and covered in a pink camouflage pattern, he pours in steaming milk and a hot chocolate packet. He stands still for a moment before filling the large silver thermos with coffee. From a high cabinet he grabs something and pours it into the coffee thermos. He slips a small object into his pocket.

Hound finishes brushing her teeth.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Papa limps through the woods using his stick with a backpack on and a hunting bow over one shoulder. His eyes are focused on the horizon.

Hound walks beside him, skipping a bit. Her eyes wander. She's dressed in a camouflage shirt that's too big on her, baggy pants, and brown boots. They both carry their assigned thermoses.

She glances at Papa, looking from his walking stick, to his thermos, to his face. His blinking is uneven.

She looks ahead and blinks similarly.

HOUND

Look!

She drops down and picks up a white and gray bird feather off the ground. She twirls it in her fingers and holds it up to show Papa. He stops and crouches to meet her. He grunts and takes the feather between his fingers.

PAPA

Well, look at that. You better hold on tight to it.

He places it in her hair behind her ear.

PAPA (cont'd)

It's good luck.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Papa kneels on the ground dumping feed onto the ground from his backpack. His stick sits on the ground near him.

Hound twirls the feather in her fingers and holds it up towards the trees. A bird flies off in the tree about cooing. Her eyes get lost.

Papa grunts loudly snapping her out of it. He is reaching for his stick. Hound runs over to him grabbing the stick and hands it to him.

HOUND

Here.

PAPA

I got it, Hound.

HOUND

Are you sure-

PAPA

(sternly)

I'm fine.

She steps back and watches him gather his bag and thermos. They walk on.

INT. GROUND STAND - DAY

Papa and Hound sit inside a ground stand. It's quiet outside. Papa is alert and watching.

Hound's legs are curled up in her foldout chair. She runs her fingers along the feather. She glances up out the window of the tent and sighs.

HOUND
Nothings takin' it.

PAPA
It just takes time. They'll come.

He takes a swig from his thermos. Hound watches the drink. She returns to her feather. Papa looks between her and the feather.

PAPA (cont'd)
You gonna miss me?

HOUND
What?

PAPA
When I'm gone?

She stares at him before she slowly nods. Papa nods too and takes a drink from his thermos. Hound watches his throat move as he swallows the drink.

She holds out her hand for it.

PAPA (cont'd)
Hm?

She nods towards the drink.

HOUND
Lemme try.

PAPA
You want some?

She nods. He looks between her and the drink, hesitating. He chuckles.

PAPA (cont'd)
Alright.

He hands her the thermos and she slowly takes a sip. Hound starts to choke, spit, and cough. Papa laughs and hushes her. Hound grimaces but laughs too.

PAPA (cont'd)
Shh!

She goes to hand it back but drops it. The drink spills a bit.

PAPA (cont'd)
(whisper)
Shit!

Her laughter dies. He grabs the thermos and wipes off dirt. He pulls a silver flask from his pocket and pours some liquid into the thermos and takes a sip. Hound watches and licks her lips. Her eyebrows furrow.

They sit in silence and look out the stand window.

INT. GROUND STAND

Papa and Hound sit silent in the stand. Hound uses small binoculars to look around. She scans the woods and spots a deer. She nudges Papa.

He sees the deer and slowly grabs the bow. Hound sets down the binoculars and slowly grabs an imaginary bow. She doesn't take her eyes off the deer as Papa loads his arrow. She loads her imaginary one.

Quietly, they both draw back, hold, and release. Hound doesn't flinch.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Hound leads as her and Papa follow the trail of blood. She runs her hands along the nearby branches. Papa periodically takes swigs from his thermos.

She finds the deer on the ground in small clearing.

HOUND
Papa!

PAPA
That's my girl.

He pats her on the back. Hound smiles.

PAPA (cont'd)
Alright. Get the tools.

She slides off her backpack and begins rifling through it. She pulls out a knife and a plastic bag.

Papa carefully lowers himself to the ground and maneuvers the deer into the correct position. He holds out his hand.

She hands him the knife, blade first. He grabs for the knife without looking and slices his fingers on the blade.

He winces. She gasps and drops the knife.

PAPA (cont'd)
(yelling)
How are you supposed to hand a blade over?

HOUND
(quietly)
Handle first.

PAPA
Don't mumble.

HOUND
Handle first.

PAPA
That's right. Grab my bag.

She brings him his bag. He grabs some bandage and wraps it around his two fingers. She picks up the blade. His hands are shaking. Hound watches him.

PAPA (cont'd)
(quietly)
It's alright, Hound

He holds out his hand for the knife. She hands him the blade, careful to make the handle meet his palm. He begins to cut.

She moves around to the other side of the deer and sits down opposite Papa.

They're quiet for a bit. He glances at her.

PAPA (cont'd)
Now, what is it that you need to be careful not to hit when making the first cut?

HOUND
Bowels.

PAPA
Good. Why?

HOUND
It'll release the shit and spoil' the meat

PAPA

Damn straight. Get me the smaller blade.

Hound fishes out a smaller more precise knife and hold it out, handle towards him.

He takes it. Papa's hands are bloody as he dumps the organs onto the ground. He grunts as he reaches back in and makes a harsh cut.

PAPA (cont'd)

(grunting)

And here's the gold.

He carefully pulls out a dark and bloody heart. Hound stares.

PAPA (cont'd)

Come on now, get the bag.

Hound fumbles with the bag and holds it open. He drops the heart into it.

PAPA (cont'd)

The heart's the most tender part.
Sweetest bit to eat.

Hound's hands are slightly bloody as she slides the bag closed. She stares at the organ.

INT. GARAGE/BUTCHERING ROOM

Hound and Papa stand in the butchering room, the skinned deer hangs upside down from the ceiling. The walls are white, the floor is cement, and big white coolers line the room.

Papa drops an apron around Hounds neck, it hangs almost to her feet. He ties the strings intricately to keep it in place.

He walks over to the carving counter and begins unloading his bag. Hound automatically heads to the nearby corner of the room and drags out a stool. She brings it to Papa. He hobbles onto it, sits, and leans his stick against the counter. He closes his eyes and sighs. Hound watches him.

He takes a drink from the thermos and looks down at his hands, they are shaking. He grabs a knife from off the wall and holds it out to her.

PAPA
You got it?

She glances at the thermos.

HOUND
I got it.

INT. GARAGE/BUTCHERING ROOM - TIME JUMP

Hound works on the deer. Papa is wrapping up meat. He periodically adjusts his legs. They work in silence. He pulls out the bag with the heart from earlier and wipes his hands. Hound watches him.

PAPA
Hound, can you go grab me another
rag.

HOUND
Uh-huh.

He takes a sip from his thermos.

Hound heads to the kitchen, still holding the knife.

INT. KITCHEN

She sets her knife on the counter and rummages through drawers and cabinets. She opens a lower cabinet and stops. There is a half empty whiskey bottle tucked behind some tupperware. She hesitates a moment before pulling it out and inspecting the label. She runs her fingers slowly over the glass. Hound checks over her shoulder at the door that leads to the butchering room.

She looks back at the bottle and starts to unscrew the cap.

INT. BUTCHERING ROOM

Papa wraps a slice of meat in parchment paper, his hands are still shaking. There is a loud bang. Hound sputters and gags. She begins to sob loudly.

Papa drops his meat onto the counter and runs for the door. His walking stick clatters to the floor.

PAPA
(loudly)
Hound?

INT. KITCHEN

Papa rushes into the kitchen to see Hound standing with throw-up down the front of her and tears running down her cheeks. The open bottle of whiskey is in her hand.

PAPA
God damn it...

He hurriedly limps to her, grabs the bottle from her hand, and sets it on the counter next to them. Hound sobs loudly. He grabs the apron she is wearing and attempts to pull it off of her.

PAPA (cont'd)
Put your arms up!

Hound cries and tries to puts her arms above her head. She knocks over the whiskey bottle in the process, it crashes to the ground. It breaks and starts to spill.

PAPA (cont'd)
Shit!

Papa tries to shove the broken pieces away from them with his foot. He goes back to pulling off the apron. Hound fights him and tries to push his hands away. Papa continues to grab the apron and try to pull. There is a complicated knot from the strings that go around her neck.

PAPA (cont'd)
God damn it!

Hound sobs louder and louder. Papa grabs the knife left on the counter and tries to cut the knotted strings. She fights him. She tries to shove his hands away.

HOUND
(sobbing)
Daddy, no!

PAPA
Hound! I'm trying to help you!

Hound tries to grab his hand. He cuts the strings and immediately cuts Hounds hand. She shouts and grabs her hand.

The apron loosens. Hounds sobs hesitate. She hiccups as she looks at her freshly bleeding hand. Papa stops and stares at her hand. They meet each others eyes.

PAPA (cont'd)
Hound-

He moves towards her.

HOUND
(screams)
No!

Hound cries and runs out of the room.

INT. BATHROOM

She crashes into the bathroom, shuts and locks the door behind her. The sun is setting out the window. She messily rips her apron off. She sniffles and hiccups.

She breathes heavy and winces as she runs water over her hand. Footsteps come from the hallway and stop outside the bathroom door.

PAPA (O.S.)
Hound?

Hound stands still, looking at the door. Water drips from her hand to the floor.

PAPA (O.S.) (cont'd)
Don't waste water now.

She turns off the water. She sniffles. Silence.

PAPA
What were you doin', Hound?

Hound looks down. Slowly she sits on the floor, her back against the door. Papa watches the light under the door. He sits and does the same.

PAPA (cont'd)
I can stop.

HOUND
Stop what?

Pause.

PAPA
Anything.

Silence. Hound examines her hand, it still bleeds a bit.

HOUND
(quietly.)
Are you sad?

Pause.

PAPA

What?

HOUND

Are you sad?

Pause. He looks at his slightly shaking hands. He clasps his fingers together.

PAPA

You know late at night, when the sun's gone down and everything gets all dark and quiet? Not even the cicadas singin'.

Pause.

PAPA (cont'd)

Sometimes... that's how it feels in my tummy. I wish I could shine a light in there to give all my organs a little something to see. So they're not just sitting in the dark. In the quiet.

Hound looks out the window to the setting sun. She looks at her hand.

HOUND

(sniffling)

Is it me?

PAPA

What? No, God no. You're my girl.

Pause.

HOUND

You hurt me.

Papa stares at his hand.

PAPA

I didn't mean to, Hound. I never mean to.

Pause.

PAPA (cont'd)

Do you believe me?

He waits a moment. Nothing. Papa grunts, stands, and walks away. Hound gets on all fours and looks under the door. His feet approach the door again.

PAPA (O.S.)
(quietly.)
Can I look at your hand, please?

Slowly, Hound stands and opens the door. Her eyes are red. Papa steps into the bathroom, kneels, and gently takes her hand. He wipes it and glances at her.

PAPA
This is just payback for earlier.

She looks at him and sniffles.

Silent, he wraps her hand in gauze. He has a thoughtful look on his face.

PAPA (cont'd)
Oh god. Hound, I think you got a cut
right here too.

He reaches up to her ear and begins gently tickling her neck. She tries to suppress her laugh.

PAPA (cont'd)
Oh no! Here too. I think you're gonna
need stitches.

He tickles her ribs, her arms, her face. She laughs and laughs. He laughs too.

The laughter dies. He smiles at her.

PAPA (cont'd)
You know I'd do anything for you,
right?

Hound nods. He kisses her wrapped hand. She holds his two wrapped fingers and looks at them.

PAPA (cont'd)
Well. This deer ain't gonna finish
itself. You ready?

She nods again.

INT. GARAGE/BUTCHERING ROOM

Papa struggles and lifts Hound onto a white cooler. She sits cross legged.

PAPA

How about I do the heavy lifting for
a bit?

She smiles and looks down at her hand. Papa ties his apron
on and starts cutting the meat.

Hound rubs her hand. She watches Papa as he works but shifts
her focus to the deer heart which stills sits on the counter
behind him.

PAPA (cont'd)

We did good work today.

Hound stares at the heart. A mourning dove coos softly in
the distance.

END.