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-And Now It's Over

MARKED

A SHORT STORY
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Thank you for reading...

At birth, everyone has a date tattooed on their arm of when they will die. I was supposed to die yesterday.

I was running scared. Nowhere to hide. No one that I could trust. I kept moving in the shadows constantly looking over my shoulder. How could I still be alive? I looked down at my arm. At the ink that has followed me since I took my first breath and just stared in bewilderment.

I have to keep moving. I hear the squeal of brakes stop 10 yards from me. I stay crouched in between the garbage cans hoping that the rain drops will be enough to cover my muffled cries.

Hope the darkness of the night will be enough to cover my quivering body.

A light flashes from the car as it slowly starts to accelerate and stops a little closer to my location.

“I don’t see anything on this end.” Says one of the harvesters.

“Keep looking. He’s not far from here. I can smell his fear lingering in the air.” Says the driver in a menacing tone.

Harvesters were nasty government agents that had one sole purpose. To kill. They hunted, day and night, and once they found their target it was to obliterate.

No questions asked. I always wondered what they did with the bodies.

Why we had these forsaken tattoos on us since birth. Why we had to be hunted like animals. But now was not the time to vanish into thought. I had to stay alive.

The harvesters' car started to get farther away in the distance but I knew that they wouldn't stray too far. My time was up and they wouldn't stop until I was a breathless corpse stuffed away in their containment unit. The harvesters had a way of catching a scent of a poor soul that had expired and making sure that the date marked on them since birth was the last day they were alive.

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At first glance, I looked like every other human out there. You wouldn't be able to pick me out of a crowd.

No determining features. Your average Joe so to speak. Everything from my weight to my height to the tattoo on my arm was average. Ever since I was old enough to read, old enough to understand, I have hated October 12th, 2098.

That was the date that was marked on my arm. The date that I was supposed to be harvested.

I wait for the car to be far enough that they won't be able to tell in what direction I headed. The rain was helping me evade their tracking skills but I don't know for how much longer I would be able to outrun them. I ran as far as I could using every back road and shadow I could find to my advantage.

I ended up at an abandoned farm house and made my way into the tattered barn. Old decaying remnants of what was once a thriving plot of land were left behind.

I closed the door behind me and fought through layers of cobwebs and silence in order to make it to the upper loft. From here I had the perfect vantage point to see out of the small 2 by 3 foot window that overlooked the property and about a half mile down the road.

I lay here, among mounds of dried out hay, thinking about how I could prolong the inevitable. How I could overcome the odds and actually stay alive.

No one had lived past their expiration date and I couldn't explain how I was still here, still alive, 2 days after my time was up. I had seen harvesters take down people before and they always seemed so focused, so determined, so precise.

People usually shied away from them in public because that meant one of two things, they were hunting or you were next.

The harvesters had a human appearance but they are large, vicious looking individuals that tower over normal people.

They tended to have pointed teeth and unusually long, sharp nails to further accompany the fearful, dead black eyes. Some people would say they weren't even human but some type of beast the government created to kill and destroy the population.

The harvesters had a unique sense of smell that would let them track expired humans from miles away. What surprised me was that they were so close to me yet they were so uncertain of my exact location.

Whatever the reason I knew I had to keep using that to my advantage. I know the rain alone wasn't going to hide me forever. I was able to get in some much needed rest as the sun slowly rose and streaks of light penetrated the old dilapidated barn.

I could hear birds chirping and singing in a tree that was close by. I felt a slight breeze brush my face as I stared at the roof wondering what my next move would be. Should I keep moving farther away from the city zones where the main hubs for the harvesters were located?

Should I just try my luck out in the un-gridded zones where only the wild life and people that thought they could outrun the harvesters went to exist?

I suddenly felt uneasy. I felt electricity in the air and that is when I noticed the surrounding air had become silent.

No more birds singing.

I could hear the breeze quiet down. I closed my eyes and listened intently. Off in the distance I heard faint screaming.

A young male perhaps. The screaming was drawing closer. I raised my head and peeked through the cracked glass.

There he was, a young and bloodied man probably in his early twenties running out of the patch of woods that were next to the road.

He was headed towards the house on the main property. I was about to get up to motion him over right when I saw the rustling in the trees behind him. Oh no I thought as I froze in place.

Two harvesters burst through the tree line with a blood curling snarl that sounded like thunder.

I watched, through blurred vision, as they gained on the poor man. I wanted to reach out and help him but there was nothing I could do at this point. One harvester pounced towards the man and was able to swipe at his legs just enough to make him stumble.

The second harvester was not far behind and in one swift motion slashed him across his back. With one final scream the man was down.

They laughed and picked him up to take him back to the containment unit in their vehicle.

But as they were walking away, they both stopped in their tracks and dropped the limp corpse. As if in unison they lifted their noses to the air and both looked in the direction of the barn....

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