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## **The Love Story**

This was Jake's favorite part of the day. The rising sun was warming the Spring air. The waking forest creatures were making his task more fun which was relieving the sentry from their most forward watch position. Fun because he enjoyed sneaking though the woods without causing the birds and squirrels to stop their chatter in alarm. Plus he was relieving Mister Jaimerson an hour early and Jake was sure Jaimerson would be sleeping on duty again. Sleeping on duty could be a death sentence.

Don Jaimerson and his daughter Carolyn had collapsed at the Clan's fence gate over a year ago from starvation. Clan policy dictated that non-members would be turned away. Most of the women folk couldn't live with them selves if the refused the girl. And when the men heard Jaimerson claim to be a military veteran they voted them both into the Clan. The Clan became short on military knowledge when their two military families never arrived to the Bug Out Location.

Jake inadvertently cause trouble for his dad last month when he reported Jaimerson sleeping during a first shift sentry duty. Jaimerson denied it and call Jake a liar and power hungry kid. Just because Jack's dad was their leader, Jake thought he could get away with it, was Jaimerson's accusation. Execution of a member require an unanimous vote and an expulsion two thirds of the votes. During the three years since the Clan arrived at BOL there had been only one execution.

Everyone at least eighteen years of age had a full vote. Jack was underage but because he had qualified for guard duty he had a half vote. It was Jake's half vote that kept Jaimerson from getting voted out. Jake was afraid Carolyn would leave with her dad and ... well Jake was old enough to realize girls didn't really have cooties but still young enough to not quite understand why he didn't want Carolyn to leave. He just didn't want her to.

Jake had made it close to the lookout post without the notice of the squirrels or Jaimerson. Jake watched as Jaimerson's head slowly started nodding. Jaimerson was always late to relieve others and impatient to end his shift. Jake thought Jaimerson would be glad to see him early. Jake briefly keyed the mike on his handheld radio. Jaimerson's head jerked up startled and to look around. "Behind you. Coming in." Whispered Jack.

"Well you're early!" replied Jaimerson back. The birds had stop singing and the squirrels stopped chattering at the sound of Jaimerson's loud voice. Jack's "Sit Rep" question was ignore as Jaimerson continued. "I'll stay longer. Come back in an hour or two." When Jake shook his "No" Jaimerson stood up, "Think you're a big shot don't you!" Jake could hear Jaimerson crashing back through the woods as he headed back to the BOL.

Jaimerson had trampled the brush around the lookout post. Left food wrappers scattered about and from the smell, urinated too. For a guy who claimed to be military Jaimerson sure didn't match with what Jake had read in the books. Jake decided to move his watch location closer to the ditch and by the fallen tree. From there he watch just as good without the smell and obvious "Somebody has been here" look. Jake moved slowly and quietly to his new location. It took awhile for the wildlife to start their talking again. Jake watched without moving his head, scanning the forest from the left to the right and back again by moving his eyes only. His thoughts quickly went from Jaimerson to Carolyn.

The Clan women folk had told their men that Carolyn was nothing but bones. The Clan men replied that it didn't look like her dad had miss too many meals. The first months Carolyn didn't talk much and when she did she looked at her dad first as if asking for his permission. Some type of agreement much have been reached between the two of them because Mister Jaimerson allowed her to stray further and further from his protective side. As she did she started joining conversations on her own. She even started to look people in the eye instead of keeping her eyes downcast. Jack overheard some of the Clan wondering if Mister Jaimerson was really her dad? Just used her to get the Clan's sympathy to get in? Jake didn't know. Jake did know Carolyn wasn't no longer a bag of bones.

Jakes' eyes thought they saw movement to the right. He watched. Perhaps a small animal or a squirrel had dropped a nut shell. He gave that area of the forest a bit more attention before he continued his visual scanning.

Puberty is the description Jack read in one of the Clan's medical books. That explains why she wasn't no longer flat chested and why his voice squeaked. He had thought it just because he was nervous and giddy when he was around her. He guessed they were close to the same age. Hadn't overheard anyone asking her age and he didn't have the courage to ask her either. The Grandparents were hosting something they called a "Square dance" this Saturday evening. Jake had arrange his duties so he could attend and got a strange look from the Scheduler when Jake suggested that Carolyn might want her scheduled change too so she could go.

Movement was more center right this time. When Carolyn and her dad came, that was the last time they had seen any outsiders. Chipmunk digging a den?

Jake rehearsed his speech to Carolyn in his head. "I don't know what square dancing is but they say it's fun. And that I'd have to have a partner to learn. Since we are the only two close to the same age I thought maybe, if you are interested too and think it will be fun, we could learn together?" He sure hoped she would say,"Yes". It was the best speech he had come up with yet. Was it dorky? Would she laugh at him? Would she say he needed to get her Dad's permission first, that would be horrible!

Forest animals went quiet. Center right. The tops of the cattails started waving like they were being gently blown by the wind. Which would be normal except it was a windless day. Jake twisted the knob on his handheld radio from the low powered scouting channel to today's long range emergency channel. Whatever was causing the cattails to wave was heading straight to the area Jaimerson had left almost an hour ago. Jake slowly brought his rifle around carefully and remembered not to have tunnel vision by ignoring the rest of the forest in front of him. Could purposely be a distraction? Jake could now see a helmet poking out of the edge of the cattails, about fifty feet from Jaimerson's former post.

Jake slowly adjust his rifle sights to about six inches below the helmet, right where the face should be.

“Don?” Jake heard whispered from under the helmet. “I don’t know. He said he’d be here.”

“That makes at least two.” thought Jake. The helmet raised from a prone position until the man under it was in clear view. It wasn’t anyone from Jake’s clan.

“Don. Stop screwing around. You got the stuff on them?”

Jake watched the helmet guy come closer. Old military type camouflage uniform armed with revolver pointed where Jaimerson had been keeping watch. The second man that appeared from the cattails was a stranger too. Wearing the same type of uniform as the first but a green baseball cap and a bolt action rifle instead.

“Don...”. Jake’s first bullet landed right between Helmet guy’s eyes. His second bullet was a little lower when it hit the guy wearing the baseball cap. The blood spray made it obvious Jake’s 5.56 bullets both did their job.

“Outpost Six to Base”

“Base”

“Two intruders down. Unknown if more.”

“Backup on the way. You 10-4?”

“10-4. 10-6.” Anyone else out there would quickly know where he had shot from, time to move to another position! As Jake started to move he heard a shot and felt a sharp pain in his back. Jack fell as his brain realized that that shot had come behind!

Don Jaimerson was furiously working the bolt on his gun, “That kid was always screwing up my plans.” he thought. “Well no more. His shot hit the kid dead center. If the Clan had given him a good rifle like they did that kid he wouldn’t have to figure out how this one worked. There he

finally got another bullet loaded. Another to the kid's head should do it!" As he raise the rifle up he saw the kid raising his rifle too. Jaimerson smiled as he realizes his shot would beat the kids!

Jake had rolled. Though tears of pain he saw Jaimerson working the rifle bolt. Jaimerson had shot him! That's who the two strangers were calling for! Don Jaimerson! Jaimerson was a spy! Jake's AR sling had kept the AR close by his right side. His right arm was numb and tingling. Jake reached across his body with his left hand and grabbed his AR. As he swung the rifle into action he look up at Jaimerson's face. "I'm not going to be in time" Jake thought when he heard the shot.

Jaimerson was still smiling when he realized someone had shot him in the back. "No problem" he thought. "I'm wearing a bullet proof vest." He looked down at his chest to see blood. "Strange" he thought. "The bullet went through the back of his vest and the front! That can't be." Then he remembered that the vest made him uncountable so he hadn't wore it. His smile faded almost as fast as his blood flowed out of his body. He had started to fall forward when Jake's bullets hit him too.

"Circle Left...Allemande Left...Right and Left Grand...Promenade...Swing...Roll Away to a half Sashay...Ladies in, Men Sashay..."

"Don't they make a nice looking couple?"

"They sure do. How could she shoot her father like that?"

"Didn't you hear? That Jaimerson fellow wasn't her dad. He threaten to kill her and later the boy Jake if she told."

"Good thing Jake had his vest on!"

"True. Very true. Doc said the twenty-two just gave Jake a nerve sensation like when you hit your crazy bone hard. From watching them dance together you'd never know."

"Beautiful couple. They look at each other like they are in love."

**The End**