Stainglass #4

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Keenan, one on Logan’s neck.

Keenan’s voice shook. “Okay, it’s not money that you want. What is it?” The coin in his pocket suddenly felt heavy.

“I could kill you. But I think I tell you what this man took from me. My culture’s history. Our dignity. Our humanity. Our ancestry.” The man relaxed his knives and looked up. “My legacy. Passed from father to son for generations. This is a time we fight for something of a different value.” He shook his head. “The ones who bit the coin for our cause.”

Keenan lowered one of his hands slowly to my scrub pants pocket. “A coin.”

“How do you —” The man saw that Keenan had lowered his hand. He raised his knife, but Keenan had already made his move. He held his fist out, holding a small plastic bag. In the other hand, Nora’s pistol.

“Is this what you’re looking for?” Illuminated by fluorescent lights, he opened his hand to reveal the coin for only a second. The man sliced Logan’s neck and charged toward Keenan, but he put the coin in front of the muzzle. His hands were steady.

“Bit the coin? Why all of this for one coin?”

The men were in a stand-off, facing each other.

“During the war. An oath. We will not be taken alive.”

Keenan lowered the coin, watching it glitter through the plastic. “If I give you this, we both walk away.”

The man raised his knife.

Keenan spoke quickly. “My bullet will get there quicker than your knife. But I don’t want that. I want you to have it. It belongs to you.”

They inched toward each other, weapons steady.

Keenan’s pulse consumed his head as his hand, still clenched, and the man’s open palm aligned. He opened his hand and what tumbled out was not the sparkle of gold, but the power of sacrifice, returned.

The door slammed open. “Keenan!”

“Fergus, stop!” Keenan tried to yell, telling him it was over, but his voice was drowned out by the sound of a helicopter.

In that split second, a ladder fell from the helicopter and the man jumped to grab it. As he caught the lowest rung, he turned and mouthed “Thank you.”