

Breaking Free

Sheryl Nantus

Smashwords Edition

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By Sheryl Nantus

He climbed to the top of the hill, stumbling along ancient paths he hadn't traversed since childhood. Finally coming to the gate he pushed the rusted metal hard, watching the warped bars swing open with a reluctant moan.

Surrounded by dead grass the cement crypt sat in the center of the clearing with his family name etched into the cold stone. The second metal gate flew open with a sharp push, smashing into the walls as he strode by.

The young man ran a hand over his face, flicking the sweat into the darkness of the room. Wiping trembling fingers on the dirty tshirt he reached down into the plastic bag he had carried with him from the old family home where he had returned only a few months ago.

"Bastards." The low hoarse words echoed through the mausoleum. "Bastards." He repeated.

The knife blade caught the dim light projected on the wall by his flashlight, reflecting the beam onto the ceiling. He turned it back and forth, letting the thin ray roll back and forth along the narrow metal.

"I told you that I didn't want this. I told you that I couldn't handle this; it wasn't going to be my life." A lock of his dark hair broke free of the ponytail, swinging into his face as he spun around to face each of the walls in turn.

The knife shifted from hand to hand as he glared at each of the small plaques imbedded in the walls; the bronze squares a silent audience. "I didn't want to believe you. I told you that I would be able to fight it and win."

His long legs carried him back and forth across the floor, the jeans blending in with the shadows as he rubbed his face again. "I told you... and I was wrong."

Slamming his left hand down on the top of the stone coffin in the center of the room he waited, knife in his right.

"The curse may be inevitable, but I can deny it a full and happy life." The blade rotated in his slippery fingers, the reflected light bouncing around again. "I killed once. I won't let myself kill again." He looked down at the bloody stains on his dark green shirt. "I won't let it happen again."

The blade moved to rest on the last finger of his left hand, just above the knuckle. Stretching the finger away from the other fingers as much as possible he took a deep breath.

"Never again." He exhaled hard, feeling the air rush out of his lungs. "I may not be able to outrun the curse, but I don't have to outrun everything."

"He was a big one, that's for sure." The elderly man sipped the coffee, grimacing as he put the ceramic mug down on the counter. "Don't know if he's the one been stealing my cattle, but I don't care. Best to get a beast like that out of the way anyhow."

"Think he's the one got that girl last month? Cops say it looks like she was torn apart by something with nasty teeth and all." The waitress refilled the mug, ignoring his plaintive stare. "Best to drop that carcass off at the cop shop and let them check it out. Forensics and all that."

"Might just do that, if I had found the body." Adjusting the worn John Deere baseball cap on his head the farmer nodded again, adding three teaspoons of sugar to the mug. "I know I got him good; blood trail led to the edge of the old stone quarry and stopped there. Couldn't see anything down there. If he lives, he'll be crippled for sure from that fall."

He sipped the sweet drink. "Funny thing is, I don't know what happened to this pup. Lost a toe to something nasty, limping all over the place. The man held up his left hand, wiggling his fingers. "Caught him in the moonlight just as he was heading through one of my fields. Easy as pie to pop him with my rifle."

"Ah, well. Just as good to get one of those out of the way." The waitress smiled. "Can't afford to have him set up shop and start a family, right?"

"Right." Under her watchful gaze, he took a deep sip of the black coffee. "Best for everyone."

The End.

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