



290: She Came to Find Him

In the cherry blossom grove, the wind rustled the leaves, creating a gentle, almost haunting sound. James couldn't find Caitlin's figure anywhere, his heart racing, but he forced himself to remain calm.

He stopped in his tracks, his sharp ears listening intently to the sounds around him, his right hand already gripping the handle of his weapon.

"Come out!" he called out coldly.

Soon, a figure appeared from behind a cherry tree trunk. It was Uesugi.

The two men drew their guns almost simultaneously, standing facing each other, aiming directly at each other's foreheads.

"You sure are lucky, falling from such a high place last night and still surviving?" Uesugi sneered, his eyes dark and full of malice.

"Despicable coward!" James growled back.

Uesugi laughed coldly. "You're the despicable one! Betraying our master, a treacherous man! And you dare challenge me!"

"I'm not the one who betrayed anyone," James retorted. "It was your master who is despicable and shameless. His adoption of me was probably only because of my identity. It was all just a conspiracy!"

Uesugi's expression hardened. "Today, I'm here to clean up the house for our master! As a member of The Silent Order, you must be eliminated!"

James had already decided he would never return to The Silent Order after learning the truth about his origins. He would never help his master harm his sister.



"Today, I will represent our master, and our sect, to remove you!" Uesugi continued coldly.

James understood that Uesugi would never let him go. If they shot at each other, they would both end up injured—he might not even get the chance to see his sister one last time. The only option was to delay.

"We can both fire our guns, but who dies is still uncertain! But if we must die, let's have a real duel! No guns! A real contest. Do you dare?"

"I dare!" Uesugi said without hesitation, his voice dripping with malice. "I'll make sure you die in the most brutal way."

Both men put their guns away and drew the knives they had brought. The blades hissed as they were unsheathed, cold and deadly.

In the next moment, Uesugi shouted and charged at James.

The sound of blades clashing filled the air. Every strike from Uesugi aimed to kill James. Wounded and with one arm in pain, James fought back fiercely.

In the cherry blossom grove, it was a violent exchange—every strike from each man striking with deadly force.

Blades hit tree trunks, chopping them halfway through. Branches were sliced, and leaves flew everywhere.

Uesugi leaped into the air, swinging his blade down, but James narrowly dodged and blocked the strike with his own knife.

They fought fiercely for dozens of rounds. James, weakened by his arm injury, was eventually kicked away by Uesugi, landing hard on the ground.



His arm wound was torn open again, blood seeping out, but Uesugi didn't relent. Seeing that James was injured, he pursued him relentlessly, launching another strike, barely missing as James dodged again.

After several more exchanges, it was clear that Uesugi was winning. In the final clash, James' knife was slashed in half by Uesugi's blade.

With his body covered in blood and his wounds severe, James no longer had the strength to keep fighting with only half a knife.

But he couldn't give up.

"I'll never give in!" he muttered to himself, determination in his eyes.

"James, it's over! Prepare to die!" Uesugi roared as he advanced for the final blow.

With the speed of a gust of wind, Uesugi lunged forward, his blade aimed directly at James' heart.

"Whoosh—"

The sound of the blade sinking into flesh echoed, but just before it struck his heart, James, with his almost imperceptible speed, avoided the fatal blow.

The knife pierced his shoulder, but in the same moment, James used his remaining blade to stab Uesugi in the heart.

"Ugh..." Uesugi gasped, blood spilling from his mouth. He looked down in disbelief at the knife that was buried in his chest.

"How could this happen?" he whispered, shocked.

"Even without the blade tip, I can still kill you," James muttered through



clenched teeth.

Uesugi fell to the ground, his blood pouring out from the wound in his chest. The knife was pulled out from James' shoulder, blood pouring from the wound as well.

James struggled to hold his bleeding shoulder, collapsing onto the ground, exhausted and barely able to stay conscious.

With his strength fading, he turned to look at the distant cherry blossom tree on the hill, the wind blowing the wish plaques hanging from its branches. He longed to see if there was anything his sister had left for him on them.

With great effort, James slowly got up, staggering toward the hill.

After what felt like an eternity, he finally reached the top of the small hill. Standing beneath the cherry blossom tree, he looked up at the wish plaques.

The plaques he had once tied there had changed shape. They used to be rectangular, but now they were oval. The writing on them had also changed.

[Sorry, forgive me]

[I'm waiting for you to come back]

[I miss you so much]

Just like the ones in the animated short he had seen on TV, they were all from Caitlin.

Tears welled up in his eyes as he reached out and held one of the plaques.



"Caitlin..." he whispered, his voice breaking.

His body was weakening, and he could feel his life slipping away.

As he stood there, on the brink of collapse, he heard a whistle from afar.

"Whoosh—"

The sound of the whistle grew louder, closer with each passing second.

He turned toward the sound. Was it her?

His vision blurred. He couldn't tell if it was just an illusion or if it was real.

Caitlin and Sebastian had arrived at Cherry Blossom Ridge. As soon as they entered, Caitlin discarded her heels and ran barefoot into the grove.

Sebastian followed close behind her. When they arrived, they noticed something was different about Cherry Blossom Ridge.

There were signs of a violent struggle—many tree trunks had deep gashes, and branches were scattered on the ground.

"There was a fight here," Sebastian analyzed, his face serious.

"Please, I hope Harrison is okay..." Caitlin murmured, her heart heavy with worry.

They ran ahead, and soon, they found a body lying in the clearing, a knife lodged in its chest.

"Harrison..." Caitlin whispered, her heart sinking as she rushed forward.

But as she got closer, she realized the body wasn't her brother.

"It's not James!" Sebastian confirmed after inspecting the body.



Caitlin noticed the blood trail leading away from the scene. With great effort, she continued running forward, the pain in her heart becoming unbearable.

As she reached the top of the hill, she finally spotted a figure under the largest cherry blossom tree.

It was James.

It was her brother, Harrison.

"Harrison..." Caitlin called out, her chest aching with emotion. Her eyes blurred with tears, and her throat tightened as she struggled to call his name.

She pulled out a whistle and blew it, hoping her brother could hear her.

"Whoosh—"

She ran while blowing the whistle, calling to him.

"Whoosh— whoosh—"

Finally, as Caitlin reached him and could clearly see, she realized it was indeed James. He was badly wounded, covered in blood.

He had fought fiercely, and he was barely hanging on.

The sound of the whistle grew louder, and James realized it wasn't just an illusion. She was really here!

But he was too weak. His body gave way, and he collapsed to the ground with a heavy thud.