

Burn

Kavlin National Police Force Case #987

Name: Paisley (Lee) __error: missing__ Solace

Gender: Female

Origin: South Coast

Sentence: Guilty without trial

Crime: Illicitly running a coal mine as a woman, therefore putting the country in danger of the demons¹.

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The light across the lake is drawing me in. Because along with it comes warmth and food but also a death sentence. It's only a short swim through the icy lakes and maybe my death would be more forgiving. I'd likely be hung in front of my family, it would cause them pain but did I even care? I'd be out in a blink, only a few seconds before I'd fall unconscious. But out here, my death would be slow and painful. Just as intended. I'm supposed to be grateful. Grateful for the option of immediate death or the island. But it's hard to find any gratitude when either option meant imminent death. What was I thinking? Left to fend for myself with nothing but a less than satisfactory piece of stale bread.

How much longer am I going to sit here for? Just staring at my country. It would have been easy, it would have been comfortable to just do what I was supposed to do. I have spent 2 days staying strong. I couldn't let anyone see me cry. No one could know if I felt any regret or guilt. I was going to be sent to the island with dignity, not shame.

I have been recorded and photographed more in the last 2 days than in my life. I am still being recorded now, I'm sure of it, so I keep a smirk on my face no matter what mess of emotions lies beneath. On the outside I am made of stone. That's how my best friend, my only friend, described me. Sadie was a housewife like she was supposed to be. She was a good girl. Never did anything wrong. Never wanted anything more. But those are lies, there's something more to her. Her name just doesn't fit her. Her face and her mannerisms just didn't suit her. Just like every other woman I'd met.

I can't keep this up much longer. I have so many thoughts but I'd rather think them in private. I stand up shakily. It has been 10 minutes on the island but if I spent more time the news would start to think I feel bad for my actions. I almost laugh at the thought. I'm not the main character. I'm not the special chosen one who was brave enough to rebel. Everyone rebels but I was just stupid enough to get caught. I always wanted more so I kept pushing. I was too greedy and now I live on an island awaiting my death. It's my fault isn't it. That's what I want to believe. Because I want to go home. But in my head I know it's not right. I know I should fight.

I try not to think about my family, the press, and the government laughing at me as I open my mouth, "Your country is burning and only half of us can see it!" followed by a string of profanities and laughter. If everyone was laughing at me I might as well laugh with them. The day I was caught and taken away I kind of thought that people would care. That someone would try to help. They were just too scared to do anything. So I cursed them, called them cowards, called the world a coward.

I run into the woods, laughing. The best kind of insane. Holding back the moisture in my eyes. I tell myself I'm doing the right thing. I know I am but my heart just doesn't want to believe me. I'd done a job that was not mine. That's why I'm here. I did extra work that I did not have to do and I wasn't

¹ Legends say that the demons bring bad fortune to the country when there are women doing labor. Of course this is just a myth. But the Kavlin government has used these demons in propaganda.

supposed to do. It would have been so easy to stay at home. I was guilty. I was wrong. Go out and run a coal mine? Foolish.

My laughter wants to turn to tears but I don't know what kind of cameras could be out here. I can't cry until I'm dead and that might be a few agonizing days. This sort of thought would be a thing to haunt me 2 days ago but I'd been through enough to numb myself. I couldn't feel the soreness in my legs and my feet were lifeless as I walked into the forest. As the rocky coastline faded into the trees my mind went blank. It was useless to think. But I had so much to think about. I walked until my eyes got droopy and the trees were just blurs of green. It was obvious I wasn't the first to be exiled because I stayed on a path that had been pressed down by footsteps over the years. I don't know how long I'll be walking but my footsteps are slowing down and my feet are getting lower and lower to the floor.

Fingers wrap around my wrist and pull me down with ease. I scream and flail my legs trying to escape their grasp. But I'm too weak and instead my foot only snags on a sharp rock and I can already feel the wet, stinging sensation across the top of my arch. I flail my arms but my captor was too strong. I'm being dragged across the forest floor. The top of my foot burns with the mud piling on top of it. I keep kicking foolishly. This is exactly what the news wants to see.

I feel metal on my foot. The sensation relieves the burning of the cut. I can barely see anything through my muddled eyes but the dragging stops. My head rebounds off the floor and the hand drops my wrist. I rub off the mud packed on my eyelids. My blurry vision slowly adjusts. A dirty blonde girl is sitting on her knees in front of me, apologizing profusely. I prop myself up on my shaky arms and bring my feet into my chest. My blood is brown from the mud. I lock my eyes on the girl. My attention turns to what she's wearing. It looks like sweatpants and a hoodie, but rolled in pounds of mud and leaves, "My name is Kala, it means princess but you look more like a princess than I do."

It's as if my lungs forgot to breathe and the sensation is finally coming back to me. I can hardly comprehend the words, let alone speak. My mind was catapulted from numbness to high alert and my throat is uncomfortably dry. Where was I? Kala answered my question before I asked, "This is a crashed spaceship. I managed to get it working again but I don't have much fuel left so I have to use it wisely. In fact the things in this spaceship are the reason I was looking for you. You're a celebrity Paisley Solace."

"And your method of fetching me was dragging me here like some sort of deranged animal? Thank you so much for that!" I say sarcastically. I pick at the mud caked on my foot, winching each time I flick a piece of debris off.

"I'm sorry but the government must think you are dead for our plan to work. They will erase you from their records and it'll be easier to sneak you into the country-"

"Excuse me?"

"Yes, sneak into the country. It's a lot to explain but the demons need to be released," Kala whispers this as if she is acting out a scene in a horror film where the killer is right behind her.

"Insane," I mutter under my breath. Whether she heard it or not she doesn't acknowledge it.

"I can't stand you doing that," Kala slaps my hand away from my muddled foot. She takes a plastic bottle half full of water and pours some on a cloth which she uses to clean the wound. I wince and pull back, but the water feels nice, "I hope this can help us become friends. Trust is going to be important for this mission whether you like me or not."

"Hold on," Kala pauses and looks up from her work, "I never said I agreed to whatever this is."

She continues her cleaning, "What do you want Paisley? I think I know what you want and I think you want similar things as I do. That is to end misogyny. I think you realize it but just so we're on the same page, you do know that most women and a majority of men don't like this right? Yet no one takes

action. I would have done it myself but I needed someone who had a fiery hatred towards this issue. Someone bold enough to get caught. Someone who despises the country with an intense fiery hatred. Someone like you. I need you to help me destroy Kavlin. Is that what you want?"

Of course that's what I want, but do I want to devote myself to this stranger? Then it hits me. What would happen if I said no? I starve to death in the forest? I'm in too deep. I might as well make my final days interesting, "Yes, I'll do it."

Kala finishes cleaning my wound and she leads me to the cockpit. She slouches in the pilot seat and I take the passenger seat. She pulls out a map. I haven't seen one of these in ages. Women were never educated very well. I'm not sure how old it is; she must have gotten it from somewhere in the spaceship when it crashed. She points to a place in Southern Kavlin, where I'm from, "This is a propaganda powerhouse. Well technically it's an office building, but it houses the people who create the most powerful propaganda. There's one in every district. These buildings help create and distribute the insane amount of propaganda around the country. These are our targets."

Kala points to multiple points on the map. The center of Northern Kavlin, the far east of Central Kavlin, the west end of East Kavlin, and another 5 districts of Kavlin, "Our goal is to burn them down. And lucky for us we already have materials. This spaceship was for war many years ago and the soldiers who left their journals hinted at its bombing capabilities."

"That seems ambitious," I push a lock of hair behind my ear while restlessness and anxiety fight inside my chest.

"We leave in 20 minutes. We don't need to waste anymore time, do we? They didn't realize their country was restless, so we have to burn it down for them."