

# the @ scraps

nick marino

5:00 am is an odd time  
for a tea party, for sure.

but that's what william  
wanted, so that's what  
we did.

i asked him... why *this*  
morning, why *this* time?

smiling, he continued to  
pour as steam gently  
swirled up from the cup,  
the hot beverage filling  
the porcelain below.

with the steam came  
subtly intoxicating wafts,  
so delicate at first that  
they seemed to be more  
like the anticipation of a  
scent rather than an  
actual aroma.

it began to compound,  
each whisp bringing me  
more information than  
the last.

by the time william  
finally broke his silence  
and spoke to me, i could  
unquestionably tell he  
was pouring velca, a  
truly delectable drink  
made of roasted stems  
and dried peels.

scrumptious scent and thick steam climbed upwards, mingling into an irresistible blend of savory and soothing that floated into my nostrils and sent pleasant signals to my brain.

"i've invited you here today to kill you," he said, his intense gaze aimed directly into my line of sight.



i considered breaking my  
own gaze in return,  
hoping that a reluctance  
to accept this bizarre  
statement would force  
my good friend to reveal  
it was all in jest.

"i'm serious," william  
said, insisting that his  
sentiment firmly reach  
me with haste.

william was often direct  
with me... but never quite  
*this* blunt.

my resolve building upon  
hearing william's words,  
i no longer wished for us  
to break our gaze, instead  
locking into a stare that  
communicated my words  
without words.

what followed may have taken fifteen seconds or fifteen minutes. i can't recall exactly, although i do remember how calm william seemed, a peace in his eyes throughout our bizarre dance.

"did i somehow enrage him?" i pondered deeply as i hoisted my cup and flung its molten contents in william's direction, splattering tan liquid onto his white shirt.

i could've sworn in that  
moment the slightest  
smirk emerged on his  
face, an expression of his  
satisfaction with my  
violent reaction.

reflecting back on it now  
i realize that he enjoyed  
the dim reflection of his  
own bloodlust within me.  
but at the time i found it  
confounding, nearly  
frozen by the mixed  
message it sent me.



william was prepared,  
but by no means was he  
taut in his reply. surely  
feeling a twinge of pain  
from the heat of the  
aromatic tea, he reached  
for the entire pot and  
flung it at me.

as i leaned away to avoid  
the pot itself, i snatched  
my saucer from the table,  
clutching the nearest dull  
object and anemically  
hurling it in his direction.

my newfound opponent  
appeared disappointed to  
see the pot and its fine  
contents largely sailing  
over my head, expecting  
an impact rather than an  
instant dodge.

i, however, refused to let  
william have the coveted  
fulfillment of a direct hit,  
promising myself that i  
would dodge and swerve  
no matter what gravity  
wanted from me.

unexpectedly, i found myself rather fatigued from the exertion. my responses were noticably slowed as i watched william move towards me with great speed.

"maybe this is simply  
how it feels when one  
fights for their very life,"  
i speculated as i parried  
his punches.

i moved into a crouch  
as his left fist barreled  
towards me, searching  
the floor (*if you can  
believe it*) for a place to  
lie down and rest. i was  
ready to give up.

impractical it may sound,  
my deepest desire in that  
moment was capitulation.  
but my hopelessness soon  
gave way to ingenuity for  
on that very floor i eyed  
the scraps of william's  
shattered teapot.



i flung the smaller bits  
at my lifelong comrade,  
genuinely dismayed to  
see them strike under his  
chin and give him  
painful pause.

but this was no time for regret. i scooped up the largest and sharpest shard of teapot, wedging it between my pointer and middle fingers, driving it upwards with power.

i caught william's neck  
and twisted hard, warm  
red liquid pouring out of  
him just as the savory  
concoction flowed from  
the teapot's delicate spout  
moments earlier...

...moments before i  
fought my friend to the  
death instead of sipping  
on a luxurious cup of  
soothing hot tea.

i never should've accepted  
his invitation.

5:00 am is a terrible time  
for a tea party.



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