

Empty Nest

by

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FADE IN:

INT. THIRD FLOOR STUDIO APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

SUPER: LOS ANGELES, 2048. TWO YEARS AFTER THE OUTBREAK.

Old dilapidated apartment. Corrugated metal sheets and wood planks BARRICADE the door and window. GUNS and ammunition all over; empty cans of food in one corner.

PALOMA (9), reads a novel beyond her years on a lone mattress. She's seen hell, but she's managing.

BAM! BAM! BAM!

Frantic knocks from the other-side of the door. Paloma jumps up excitedly. She grabs a HAMMER and rips off nails from the door's barricade.

A stern voice booms from the other side.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hurry up!

PALOMA

(yelling and working)

You said two days, Dad, but that was five days.

VOICE (O.S.)

Faster Paloma, let's go!

PALOMA

It's fine, we still have a few more hours until nighttime.

She rips off the final nail. She swings the door open and jumps on Dad (45). He's a no-nonsense, short-sentence type.

He pushes away the hug and places his AK-47 on the floor.

PALOMA

Dad, Dad, I only cried once while you were gone. The first day, that was it. After that, it was smoooth sailing.

Dad is sweating. He starts feverishly pacing. He looks into the cupboards, pantries, etc.

DAD  
(distracted)  
Good, baby bird.

He takes off his backpack and pulls out a map, a marker, and a pistol.

DAD  
You remember how to read a map,  
Paloma?

PALOMA  
We're not going outside now, right?  
The infected are gonna come out  
soon.

DAD  
We're not. I need you to focus.

Dad rifles through his backpack again.

DAD  
These are for you, baby bird. You  
can open one later.

He pulls out cans of pears, corned beef, and four bags of ramen.

PALOMA  
Are pears like peaches?

DAD  
They're sweet like peaches, but-

PALOMA  
Ew! Corned beef thing. Why do you  
even like that so much?

DAD  
(serious)  
Paloma!

Dad wipes away sweat from his forehead.

DAD  
(calmer)  
I need you to listen now.

PALOMA  
Sorry...

DAD  
I found other survivors. They have  
a community in Marina Del Rey.

It's by the water. They sail out at night instead of hiding.

Paloma gasps with excitement.

PALOMA

Are there gonna be other kids too?

DAD

Yes, baby bird, but it's hard to get there. Pockets of infected here- here- and here.

Dad makes three small circles on the map.

DAD

Also Wastelanders all over this area. They'll take everything from you, guns, food...not nice like other survivors.

What do we say about Wastelanders?

DAD

Shoot first, ask questions never.

PALOMA

(delayed, but knows it)  
Shoot first, ask questions never!

PALOMA

Okay Daddy, but we can take them. My aim is getting better, you saw what I did in Tucson!

DAD

NO! You can't. Hiding is always the best plan.

PALOMA

Right, but-

Dad grabs his AK-47.

DAD

You know how to use my AK, right? It's old. You have to slam the ammo in there. Hold it tight when you fire.

PALOMA

Oka-

Dad grabs a glass bottle from the kitchenette.

DAD

And the molotovs. Good for  
Wastelanders, but not the infected.  
Only headshots for the infected.

PALOMA

I know all this-

DAD

Infected hide during the day, but  
come out at night. Wastelanders can  
attack at any time. You have to-

PALOMA

When did it happen?

Dad freezes. Paloma points at a crude bandage on Dad's arm.

PALOMA

When were you bitten?

Dad takes a second to compose himself.

DAD

I got careless. Thirty minutes ago.  
I found an RV. Was an infected in  
there.  
I probably have another thirty  
until...the change. I'm not gonna  
wait for it.

Dad removes the clip from his pistol, leaving one in the  
chamber. Paloma wells up. She walks over to Dad, squeezing  
him.

PALOMA

No. Please. No.

DAD

Paloma, I love you.

Dad kneels. He takes off the DOVE NECKLACE he's wearing and  
puts it around Paloma.

DAD

Momma bird wanted you to have this.

PALOMA

(inconsolable)

No. No. No. Don't go! I'm sorry  
about the corned beef thing, it's  
really not even that bad.

Dad finally smiles. He hugs Paloma tight.

DAD

I know.

Pistol-in-hand, he stands.

DAD

You're gonna fly so high.

He leaves in a rush. Paloma cries for a moment. She centers herself by squeezing the dove on the necklace.

Determination in her eyes, she nails in the barricade.

FADE OUT.