

TO GAIN

written by

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BLACK...

TRIBUS (V.O.)

I give you the tool. And prove to me... that you deserve power. Endure, and don't let whatever happens bother you. Why desire if it does?

1

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

1

The bridge connects to a grand, vacant patch of grass. On the bridge are TWO YOUNG MEN:

CECIL, 18, a towering figure, wears a GREEN JACKET, lets the fresh air hit him, and takes slow DEEP BREATHS.

GRIFFIN, 18, a titan, wears a BLACK BUTTON UP -- eyes wander around the scenery.

GRIFFIN

There is this watch that gives you the opportunity to travel through time--

CECIL

Hand it over.

GRIFFIN

Something like that has a catch whether we like it or not. So each time you use it, you age five years.

CECIL

At least it's not ten years. Five years is a reasonable handicap.

GRIFFIN

For most, five is a turnoff. It sounds like cowardice.

They march to the patch of grass.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

I tell them that and they give you a look... and you ask yourself about it again.

They walk onto--

But now Griffin is about an inch behind Cecil.

Griffin looks down at his pocket, slightly lifts his shirt -- there's a HANDLE protruding from it. He looks at Cecil...

GRIFFIN

Friends and family are gonna be left behind, or aging is unholy to them. But would you still accept, even with the setbacks?

CECIL

I... think of it as junk food, a guaranteed reward at the beginning and a consequence afterward. You just have to get past the afterward part.

GRIFFIN

Weight is in your control, but once a birthday comes, that's it.

CECIL

(ponders)

If dying before everybody is all I can think about, then... but it's a watch that lets you time travel, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

GRIFFIN

To be greater?

Griffin grips the knife tightly, but he lets go as--

Cecil shoots him a look that says Griffin hit it right on the head.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

(nods)

After questioning, you retell your reasons. Getting the watch was meant to happen. Out of everyone it falls in my hands.

Cecil adjusts his jacket, still looks straight ahead, and he too, has a HANDLE in his front pocket. He takes a quiet *DEEP BREATH*.

GRIFFIN (CONT'D)

 But even with retelling, the looks
 just fester there. What do you do
 then?

They stop walking.

Cecil feels his handle and thinks about the question.

Griffin almost pulls it out, but he lets go.

 CECIL

 How would you feel if I did it?

 GRIFFIN

 I wouldn't blame you.

Griffin walks a foot away, back turned to Cecil.

 CECIL

 Then make the most out of the
 watch.

Cecil touches his handle, looks into the sky, breathes in the fresh air, and lets it balance him, still a statue.

Griffin's eyes wander about until they're fixed in one direction...

Cecil looks at Griffin, a thought coming to mind...

Griffin furrows a brow...

Cecil's mouth is agape.

Both have come to a realization...

Hands pull KNIVES out at the same time.

They RUN at each other--

And stab each other -- they use the other arm to stop the attack. Hints of struggle in their *BREATHS*. Their free arms vibrate, as the other's knife arm wants to plunge.

Eyes look at each other's knives -- they are the same. Eyes make eye contact. Then, a glint of anger in both of their eyes and yet also... betrayal.

Griffin shoves Cecil aside -- he darts at Cecil and winds up a stab.

Cecil dodges, watches Griffin's every move, and occasionally parries an attack.

Knees buckle, moving like they are hunters.

Eyes still angry, hungry, yet confident.

They now only see a stranger in front of them.

Each swipe and stab aims for every part of the body.

Cecil KICKS Griffin in the stomach as Griffin SOCKS Cecil in the jaw.

A quick recovery later, the opponents wind up with more stabs--

Griffin FLINCHES.

INTERCUT: GRIFFIN RUNS, HOLDING SOMETHING, A CHAIN COMING OUT OF HIS FIST.

Cecil jumps as he listens to--

THE VOICE (V.O.)
(disbelieved)
What are you doing?

Cecil looks around. There's only his opponent.

Griffin blinks twice. He's back in reality.

The opponents shake it off... back to--

Knife swings.

Dodges.

Misses.

Each movement, desperate, sluggish.

Griffin flinches --

INTERCUT: GRIFFIN KEEPS SPRINTING, AND OPENS HIS ENCLOSED FIST TO REVEAL A SILVER POCKET WATCH.

A few seconds later, his eyes flinch again. They won't stop. Even so, this doesn't stop Griffin.

Cecil tilts his head.

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This was no guarantee. What gave
you the impression that it was?

Cecil juggles listening to the voice and parrying Griffin.

The movements have gotten more sluggish.

INTERCUT: GRIFFIN LOOKS BACK AS HE RUNS.

A flinch.

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING ON HIM!

Cecil feels his ear as he winces in pain.

INTERCUT: A GREAT WHITE FLASH (LIKE ONE FROM A CAMERA).

Griffin puts his hands on his head and takes a quick *BREATH*.

This halts the combat a bit but they're back to it--

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
STOP!

INTERCUT: GRIFFIN IS TERRIFIED.

Griffin attacks wildly, flinching, a fire in his eyes.

Cecil dodges, tilts his head, and shares that same fire.

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What made you think this was a good
idea?

INTERCUT: CECIL TACKLES GRIFFIN.

Both *PANT* like there's no tomorrow.

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
How come you can't answer--

INTERCUT: GRIFFIN KEEPS THE WATCH TIGHT IN HIS HANDS, AS
CECIL TRIES TO PRY IT OUT--

A kick to Cecil's stomach--

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is only gonna end--

INTERCUT: CECIL COCKS A FIS-

A punch to Griffin's face.

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Cecil--!

INTERCUT: CECIL PUNCHES GRIFFIN--

They tackle each other--

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
All of this and for what--

INTERCUT: GRIFFIN TRIES TO--

They stab like slasher villains--

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's not--

INTERCUT: CECIL--

They both *WINCE* -- THEY STOP. They just lie on the grass.

For Griffin, images upon images just show up:

- CECIL BEATING HIM TO A PULP.
- THE WATCH FLAUNTING ITS SHINE.
- GRIFFIN DYING.
- THE GLARE OF THE SUN BURNING INTO RETINAS.
- THE GREAT WHITE FLASH.

Griffin's eyes water.

For Cecil, there is a *BUZZING* SOUND, that grows louder and louder by the second, the Voice speaks as well, but it's being drowned out by this buzz.

Cecil covers his ears, holds his head, it vibrates like it's about to explode.

INTERCUT: GRIFFIN LIES THERE, DEAD, AS CECIL WALKS AWAY WITH THE WATCH.

THE VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Quit while you can.

Moments later, they both manage to take a look at each other. Both still with their knives in hand...

Even with all this pain, the anger has never left their eyes.

They both rise.

The hunger in their eyes never left. They look deranged.

With whatever strength they have left, they lunge at each other.

Tackling each other.

Beating each other.

Swiping at each other, making sure each swipe is the killing blow. Movements have gotten slower.

Cecil waits for an opening, knowing it'll come soon. The *BUZZ* and the extremely muffled Voice come into Cecil's ears, pounding, his head pulsing, like countless rubber bands wrapped around a melon. His eyes look like they're about to pop out of their sockets. So when --

Griffin swipes -- THE WHITE FLASH comes -- he flinches, tears stream down his cheeks. And--

SHINK!

Cecil plunges his knife into Griffin's heart.

Griffin's knife CRASHES onto the grass.

Cecil looks Griffin in the eyes. All the derangement, and anger, slowly fade away.

Griffin looks, disappointed, even hateful, but sighs, glad that the pain is gone.

Cecil pulls the knife out of Griffin's heart, now blood on the blade.

Griffin's corpse falls onto the grass.

Cecil tilts his head. The voice is gone.

Cecil collapses. He's fine though. Just catches his *BREATH*. Lets the sun bathe him, shining a new light on him.

TRIBUS (V.O.)
Cross the bridge.

Cecil jolts up.

TRIBUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Your heart will tell you to go from there.

Cecil stands, gives one final look at Griffin, knowing what he's just done, but there's no regret, just a blank stare. He's done it. An opponent out of the way.

3

EXT. FOREST - DAY

3

Cecil, knife in hand, *BREATHES* in the air, lets the smell march him forward, like an animal smelling food. He stops, knowing that he needs to be in this chamber that is the forest. The trees are dead, but maybe it's about time for the green to return.

Cecil focuses on... TRIBUS, who is never shown.

CECIL

You didn't tell me you had my cousin. Or even about the handicaps.

TRIBUS (O.S.)

The test is meant to be difficult. But you did it. Congratulations.

CECIL

Thanks. Now please, give me what's mine.

Cecil holds up the knife, offers it to Tribus.

TRIBUS (O.S.)

Keep it.

Tribus offers his hand to Cecil...

Cecil stares at it... mesmerized, all that just happened with Griffin is gone now... Just as he takes it--

THE END.