

Delayed Fallout, pt. 3

Dianne stopped talking. She just looked at the ground, holding herself tightly. Jeff was at a loss; he didn't know what to say. Finally, he asked simply, "When did you sing to me?"

She swallowed and replied, "On th' way t' Mount Sinai. Theyah wasn't anythin' Ah could say without breakin' down. So, Ah just stroked yoah hayah an' sang softly." She looked up at the white clouds that floated serenely across the blue spring sky. "Ah was surprahzed that you remembered it."

"I did. I don't know why, but I did. I kept looking for you throughout that house in the dream."

He stepped over to her and took her in his arms, holding her close. She was stiff, and would not relax into his embrace. He held her head to his shoulder, and rubbed her back comfortingly.

"You would have gotten through it, Dianne. You would have. Don't ever sell yourself short. You were so strong for everyone, especially me. There were days when I just felt like giving up and you were the one who kept me going. You would have carried on without me, Dianne... but I'm so damned glad it wasn't necessary. And that's due to your skill and dedication as a doctor." He kissed her head, then laid his cheek on her hair. "You went above and beyond, my love; did things that would have broken most people, man or woman. I am amazed that you could even stand to be here and recount this to me, and I am so glad you shared your heart... and your pain and your fear."

He pulled back a little, and put a knuckle under her chin, raising her face to his. "You've carried all this around far too long. Let it go. Please, let it go. And let me be strong for you this time."

Dianne breathed in deeply, almost convulsively, then began to shake and sob. She clung to Jeff's neck, burying her face in his flannel shirt, making it damp with her tears as he continued to rub her back.

It seemed like time stopped in that clearing and there was nothing there save the two of them. But eventually Dianne calmed, and Jeff became aware of birdsong, and of the insects buzzing, and of the clouds moving along again. Dianne was spent and leaned heavily against him, her arms still around his neck.

"Ah did this once with yoah mothah, y'know. In New Yoahk. She was... a rock for me." She glanced up at him. "Yoah rahte, y'know. Ah would have survahved. But only because o' th' suppoah't o' owah family." She closed her eyes and nestled her head closer. "But Ah am damned glad it wasn't necessary."

"Hmm." Jeff hummed, looking up at the sky, a hint of humor in his voice. "Where have I heard that before?"

Dianne snorted a small laugh, just big enough for Jeff to know that she had reacted. He looked back down and kissed her on the forehead. "I think we're done here, don't you?"

She nodded wearily, and together they left the grassy clearing, and everything it represented, without a backwards glance.

From: Tikatu Sent: 9/19/2005

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