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*Nice Boy*

The pistol in Nice Boy's hand shook as he held it to his grandfather's head. Nice Boy kept his eyes closed, because in his mind he could still see the man that raised him: the uncut hair, grey with age and knotted from work; the wrinkles of a man who never seemed to stop smiling; the strong arms built from years of work in the fields. The man in front of Nice Boy was different. The Bloody Hunger was ruthless. He was thin, and his skin was pale and papery.

"Nice Boy, I need you to do this. I need you to do this for me."

The blood ran down the old man's chin, it ran from his ears and his eyes.

"You know what will happen if I go like this."

Nice Boy grabbed the gun with both hands, his knuckles white. His body was shaking with his sobs, but through them he choked,

"I can't! I can't do this! It's not fair!"

The old man talked quietly,

"No, it's not. But this land is not fair. This land is broken, and that's why we named it that, in the old tongue. Do you remember what the name was, Nice Boy?"

The man gently placed his hand on the end of the pistol and leaned it in, pressing the barrel against his forehead. The boy was wracked with another sob.

"Rusva...but grandpa, why does that matter? This place is broken just like all of us!"

The old man smiled. "No. That's where your wrong, my child. The land is broken, the trees and the mountains are weary. Thus, we call it Rusva. But the people—the people are strong. You are strong, Nice Boy. You have to do this so that you can look after your brother and the farm. Look after your mother. I'm gone now, child. There's no coming back for me. The Bloody Hunger will leave nothing left of me once it's done, only a monster. You must be better than this place. Remain unbroken, child, and work to fix this shattered land. Breathe now. Breathe."

The boy steadied himself, his eyes still closed. The field was quiet. The chickens clucked in the coop, the pigs nuzzled their slop. The wind rustled the wheat. The gunshot echoed in the evening light.