

Rashomon recycled verb story: She sat, waiting, and was, clinging to the edge of her seat, which was situated, could have been, was, in the hull of a boat. She was conscious, and had been struck by the idea to join life, leading to actions by which she tells us, would smash through all that had gone before, pile all past convictions, clinging, and sell. Bothered, she and I came to live. We were joined, and did abandon things we made.

She avoided the eyes of birds, which flocked overhead, and would unsettle, cawing, circling. I turned. She stood. The bird, a crow, came to peck. We were silent, not wanting to be seen. Nearby in the hull was a dead seal carcass which sprouted monstrous crops of fungal plume. We had settled, worrying. A mist had formed, not fixed, but noted, as if it was waiting, as we had. What was I going to do? If something else had happened, would I have returned? I had been dismissed. She, I noted, was stoic, She had served the same dream as I, she was alone, she was waiting. It would have been like this whatever. I had to go, to do as others; contributed. Back then snow had been falling. Nothing showed. I went on, poured myself along. I was determined to find out a truth, to keep the faith, to do what was expected to be done. I carried the burdens which came to envelop me, and brought me to this. I was supporting her, and everyone, to do what had to be done, what would have to be done, but I hesitated. All that would be carried was discarded. It was as if I wandered in a fog. I passed through states of being which remained cold. I was told I was prepared to do it, could find my strength.

They gave me a truncheon, and dragged me to the beach, where I was, to make a catch. A baby seal, isolated. I yearned for something, a long-dead nostalgia even as the truncheon fell. I blew its brains out, and it was gone. I hunched down, drew short breaths, scanned the beach. Were we alone? Could my action have viewers. Would they stay? I thought. I caught sight of her leading a dog. She is taking care not to slip along rocks set into the sand to avoid erosion. She crouched, holding her dog. I took stock, cast around, my innards inflamed. I hadn't considered this scenario. It could be, I realized, not moving, as I saw her dog's tail flickering, as the sea mist hung, it could be, as a burning sensation crept from head to toes, hunching me as she was stretching, and peered, that she saw, and had said to herself, that to tell, was wrong. She had thought this would be it, and now she could see, what was, who we were, where we were. She seemed to be tangled, in her hair, in the fur of the dog, in the rush of sea spray. It was, in order for me to believe in what had been, that I did look. Who was lying? She flung her arm out. I caught sight of her casting her notions. She reached me and I flew to her. She seemed to forget, memory obliterated, until she caught sight of me, crouched in front of her. Dressed still in the yellow gown, I was in front of her, and still held the truncheon. She stared. Judging by that look, small eyes in beaten face, she was moved, forgot to breathe. As if to borrow my breath, I felt her eyes were growing. Hands placed on my chest, my heart, my lungs. She had been examining me, searching, began plucking at my skin, and then seemed to slip. Her beastliness gave way, disappeared, to be replaced, by what could be misleading. A noise felt, that grew.

What were we there to present? What had the idea been? To starve to death, to turn to butchery? Would I have been chosen, if I had blazed up, had stood against them? I had. She was pulling. I could not call. She, plucking, was suddenly something I recalled. This is what we had been planning. I leaped up, still grasping the truncheon, strode towards her, crouched, leaped, launched the truncheon into the air, shouted, blocking her path. She stumbled, to flee, struggled, to break. She pushed.


I grappled. She was cold. I grasped her hand, twisted her arm, demanded things, shoving, as the sea swept by. I thrust the dog ahead of us. ‘Now,’ I said, trembling, heaving, straining. She kept still, she struggled, seeing something else I realized.

Governed by hate, hope cooled. It had been burning. I felt it, looked it, spoke it. She happened to be passing. I won’t lie. She, tying up the dog now, not taking it away. I want to tell her what I’ve been doing. The dog stretched. She stared. It had something in its mouth, chewing. I began to move. It seemed as if she could not see me moving. Until she issued a protest. I reached the seal. Above, a crow was cawing, and pulling, pulling at the innards of the now butchered seal. The dog, startled. She, disappointed, I turned out to be like that. She came across to fill her lungs with the rancid air. She seemed to sense what I was feeling, still holding the truncheon I had stolen. I mumbled, croaked, offered to be wrong. To pull the seal out of the birds’ reach. I deserve what I get. She takes the truncheon from me. I was already pulling the seal. “That woman used to cut, dry, and sell seal meat. If she hadn’t died she’d be still selling it. People loved it, they bought it every day. I don’t think I was wrong to do what I did, to keep from starving, to death. I couldn’t help it. Don’t think what I’m doing is any different to what everyone is doing; it’s logical, we can’t help it. If I don’t do it what do I have to do?” I think she understands. She is doing something, slowly. Her hand has returned to her side, truncheon down. She is resting. She has listened. We have played. I have listened. An idea began to germinate. What I had lacked was knowledge that something was moving. I had felt impelled at that moment to seize a beast, an animal that was there. I felt torn, I was starving to death. But in becoming like everyone else I was now banished from society, from myself. I became that which I would have pressed anyone not to become. Stepping forward now I shot out my arm, grasped her by the throat. She bit me. I won’t blame her for that, for taking that opportunity. We all have to do whatever to keep from starving to death. I stripped her of the dark coat. She tried to clutch it. I gave her a push which sent her sprawling, and brought her coat to my shoulders, tucking it around me.

She plunged.

I did this last thing, which was to take the seal which had been lying beneath me, raised it up muttering, groaning, crawled to the boat’s edge, hung the seal overboard, peered into the sea and saw nothing. What happened next, who knows?

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