

The Hound - Part 4

by Thomas Shaggy

These weren't men. Humanity ends at the act of burning another human being. My life has been filled with countless kills and acts I'm not proud of, but to watch the bodies of the Mohegan's burn in the morning light reminded me of what I was fighting.

The old man approached me. "The name's Jack Williams." Yea that name rang a bell. He had followed me up from The Springs.

"By the look on yer face, I'd say you remember that name." Jack asserted.

There is a time and a place for words. I just shook my head and scanned the perimeter of the area. Any possible exit was covered by these soldiers of fortune.

Trapped.

"John will be happy to see you again, Hound." He knew that I knew this went far beyond my wife, but it took me too long to figure it out. My senses were down. When I returned to The Springs they knew that all too well.

John Marcy. He rode his horse around the bend at the far end of the field. The man had twenty years on me and would probably out last us all. He looked at me and I at him. My gaze could have gutted any man. Any man, but John Marcy. History would write that John Marcy was a traitor to his country. Public enemy number one in the state of New York. When that probably couldn't be farther from the truth. The natives of the mountains butchered John Marcy's family while John was off on government business. It's never really been disclosed what Marcy did for the government. When he returned he found his home burned to the ground and his wife and children scalped and hung, one from each other's neck. It was discovered later that they were scalped while they were still alive and his wife being the most load baring wore he children around her neck like the queen's crown jewels.

John stopped his horse about twenty paces from me and handed the reins to one of the soldiers. The man stuck out in a crowd. Not just the fact his face was on every wall in every town ship from Maine to the Midwest. His age and gimp leg gave him away immediately. How he lasted this long I'd never know. He limped over to me.

The government denied him the ability to take soldiers to hunt the natives for what they had done to his family. It was communicated that their needed to be a reasonable peace between "us and them." No man should have to understand that. So John did what any rational man would do, took a dozen soldiers who were loyal to him, murdered the governor and a few cabinet members in their sleep along with nearly two hundred natives within a week. He was an enemy of the state. Luckily, the man was a war hero and had a lot of backing. What is left to today is his loyal following.

"Well, well, well." John looked me up and down. Two guys grabbed my arms from behind.

"If it isn't the once great Hound dog only to be beaten at his own game." He snickered at me.

"Yup, you got me, John." He was just boring me at this point. Save me the suspense, I told myself.

"I'm impressed. You've built yourself quite the little army up here in the mountains, your own little Ticonderoga up here. I see you still have you lap dog Jack Williams too," I nudged my head at the old man. "But like I told you back in the Springs. I don't think you understand who yer fuckin' with."

Jack was the old timer who that he had it all. He was a follower and a bottom feeder like the rest of them. History would place him right next to John Marcy as the ultimate scum of the earth. His story, I'm not sure I really care to know.

"Wrong," John interrupted. "You're an old dog Hound. Yer senses have failed you for the last time."

"What do you want with me?"

If there was one thing that the Marcy gang was not it was spontaneous. They had a reason, and a good one at that, for

everything that they did, killing or otherwise. My wife loving another woman and having an affair may have been blasphemous, but it didn't warrant a bludgeoning rape by the hand of the most infamous gang in New York. Something else was at work. I was trapped up here for a reason.

"Sorry to hear about your wife." John hung his head. It was as if in one breath I inhaled the smoldering souls of the dead around me and turned my skin to fire. I broke away from the two men behind me and tackled John onto the ground and put my knife to his throat.

So this was blind rage. All my life I'd been taught to harness and control.

John laughed in my face and told his men to stay back. They all stood ready with their rifles flush against their shoulder pointed at my face. I didn't take my eyes off of John. He chuckled to himself.

"Give me one good reason I shouldn't saw your head off right now."

"And disgrace your wife like that? You wouldn't. You are too much a man of the people Hound. Always have been." He talks about me like he knows me.

"My wife was the only thing I had left in this world, trust me John, I'm ready to join 'er on the other side. Death by firing squad seems as good a way to go out as any. Whatta ya say?" He looked into my eyes.

"You really don't know do you?" I yelled to the others what they thought. They just looked at each other blankly. This was way beyond me.

"Know what?"

"How'd you get that scar?" He pointed to my swollen eye.

"They," I pointed to the smoldering human carcasses, "hit me with a rifle butt last night while I was riding from your henchmen." He laughed again.

"No, no. The scar. Along your head.

The scar. Ten years ago. It was from the war. When I woke in the infirmary the orderlies told me I was found on the banks of the river. Laura was my nurse. I had hypothermia and a pulse that was

barely recognizable. I know who I was and what I was capable of, but I didn't remember the accident. The doctors told me I was probably taken by surprise and cracked over the head. The cold water of river actually saved my life.

"Why don't you get off me for now so we can discuss this like men," John offered. I didn't take my eyes off him as I lived one leg back over his chest and stood up.

"Ya see Hound, it's like this..."

History is written by storytellers. Those with the power of the written word control the flow of information from the local papers, to laws, to constitutions and even religion. My history was already written for me. A decade after the fact.

"Bring me the book." John called to one of his men.

"But John..." Jack tried stopping him.

"I said, bring it to me."

He pulled a large black moleskin book from a saddlebag.

Storytellers were liars. The liars that created rules and guidelines to live by that they themselves wouldn't even believe or follow. But the wealthier it made them the more ridiculous history they could write. The people who had everything to lose created a world that could never exist. It was men like John Marcy that wrote the history that was real. The man who had lost everything to the man who had everything. That was truth.

He handed me the book.

"I trust that you will use this well," John turned and saddled up. "Let's go boy's." With a whistle and a kick of his horse he road off into the morning mist. Jack looked back at me slowly as he mounted his horse and road off after the rest of the men.

I imagined the conversation between Jack and John wasn't too cordial after they had ridden away from the field. Strider was tied up along the edge of the forest.

First things first, food and water.

That night I sat under the stars, the book on my lap, thinking of Laura's face the first time I met her laying in that bed in the

infirmary. I closed my eyes and I could feel her hands on my forehead. The night was clear and cold.

I glanced down at the cover of the book. It read:

HISTORY: AS WRITTEN BY THE TRAITOR JOHN MARCY.

