

Meny Menczel

Autocorrect

“How long ‘till we can jump?” I asked Ben.

“Oh, about six minutes and twenty seconds.” He replied, in a matter of fact, almost tranquil inflection, frustratingly ignoring the urgency of the situation. Probably because he knows this is all his fault.

“Wait, Sally, let’s take a right into this alley here.” The inquisitor and his mob of villagers were about half a klick behind us, but that doesn’t mean we get to be complacent. It’s not like we knew the streets of 17th century Granada by heart or anything.

“Ben, hold on for just a gosh darn second!” I yelled at him. My evening gown wasn’t making this flight any easier, neither was running barefoot, my heels tightly clutched in my right fist.

It wasn’t supposed to go down this way. We were supposed to be dancing it up in a big city speak-easy, circa 1924, right about now. We might have even made a stop on the ride home, stop the crash, who knows? But instead of Prohibition, the device sent us back to the *Inquisition*. Not the era you wanna stroll around dressing like a vaudeville actress, let me tell you. Damn autocorrect. Damn Ben.

It takes around six hours for the device to recharge and allow another jump. Perfect for a night on the town, unfortunate for waiting it out in a place where torture in the national pastime. Laying low could only get us so far, the coordinates for our jump site meant we had to cross through the town square, Ben in his suit and bowler hat, me in my gown and feather headband that just screams heretic chic.

“This is your idea of a date night?” I slammed at Ben, not too loud as to attract any unwanted attention. “When are we going to next, the Black Plague?”.

“What, you think I *meant* to jump us here? This isn’t my fault, it’s the damn device, it’s never done this before!”

“You always do this. You never take responsibility.”

“Responsibility? Do you really think I meant to do this?”

“That’s not what I said. I-“

Before I could finish my sentence, I noticed we had reached the square. What lay before me took my breath away. Four strappado were stationed side by side in the middle of the square, three of them occupied with poor souls hanging from their wrists. The people here are pretty backwards, but their creativity blossomed when it came to methods of torture. I know we should have kept moving, but for a few seconds I couldn’t bear to look away. I had never seen such suffering. But a few seconds was all it took. The inquisitor overseeing the cruel and unusual punishment noticed us, his facial expression quickly transitioning from shock to determination as he started in our direction.

Ben was still distracted by the medieval square. I nudged him in the arm “We’ve worn out our welcome.” Escape was the only option. I doubt if these religious zealots would accept my driver’s license as proof of identification. But escape wasn’t just an issue of where, but of when.

My heart was beating faster than these people churned out witch trials. We finally reached the right alley. A row of colorful carpets and fabrics hanging out of the windows greeted us. It was almost ethereal in its beauty, I managed to think to myself, not the worst place to die. No time to hang on to that thought, freedom was now just three minutes and half a mile away.

As we darted through the alley. I noticed an old lady beating a carpet in one of the windows. "La hereje!" she shouted at me, pointing her crooked finger. "That's not very polite." I thought to myself. The angry mob was now turning the corner behind us. Just a couple of minutes to go, we're in the home stretch, literally.

We were just a hundred or so feet from the jump point, my heart was pumping blood so fast I could feel its heat in my cheeks, but in an instant it all drained away. A stone wall stood before us, about eight feet tall, blocking our way to freedom. This was it. Behind us, the mob approached, and ahead nothing but a dead end.

"Here, I'll give you a boost." Ben turned to me; both of his hands interlaced at my knee level.

"What about you?" I asked as I placed my foot in his makeshift flesh rung. "You're twice my weight."

"I'll be right behind you" He grunted, as he hoisted me above the stony hurdle.

As I topped the wall, I quickly turned around and prepared to offer Ben my hand.

But he had also turned around, now facing in the direction of the mob.

"Ben! What-"

"You're right, this was my fault. And now it's my responsibility"

"Don't you fucking dare Ben."

"If you ever do get to that speak-easy, pour one out for me will ya?"

There was no time to reply, the device had started shaking and beeping rapidly, and I had to get to the jump point within 15 seconds. Ben vanished from sight as I climbed down the wall. I took a few

steps until the device's beeps evened out into a single continuous tone. My eyes watered up as the world was bathed in purple light.