

Brianna Sorne

Sutton

Draft 2

It is 1951. The oncoming months were going to be brutal and he noticed these things when there was a certain coloration that the sky spread on the mountains. This was only recognized as signs the winter ahead would be especially bitter and unforgiving. There is a never ending conversation between the mountains and the sky. The sky says to the mountains and the mountains nod and nod, tall and superior. He nodded too, as he looked over and around. Stepping onto the porch that had grown grayer still with wear and age, particles and dirt sifting towards the earth, he pulled on his boots and stretched. As he walked the extent of the land, he eyed his destination closest to the mountains. He walked the lines, eyeing still the growth he wanted to pick from. At the far end of the line he grasped up arugula leaves, blunt and blundering and walked back towards the small cabin. Something like the sun struggled up, heatless and hollow through the thickened sky and he came upon the porch through the frozen miasma that laced through the town and beyond. The coffee was on the stove and his pot with meat and broth was steaming already. He rinsed and broke up the leaves and threw them in as well. When it surged some more, he threw in the corn. He walked over towards the stove and put his hand to its belly. Stone cold. The basket next to the stove had little coal left. He looked down the iron gullet and poured what was left down the chute and crumpled a newspaper and lit it and threw it down as well. Initial spark but quickly ceased. He tried again. Fleeting heat and tortured ash. Then nothing. The frigid air was becoming unbearable. Squat down with his hands on his knees he looked up to see movement outside beyond the window. The city rat was walking up the path with his awkward skittish strut. He could already hear the boy's ramblings.

Sutton, you alive in there?

He walked to the door and opened it, leaning against the doorway, arms crossed.

Hello Francis

Aw, hell could it get any colder? I've been looking for yeh all day

Well, here I am. Who told you?

Some crazy old bastard up on Market Street

He walked past and into the cabin.

Shitfire, it's cold as hell in here. You try startin a fire?

The thought didn't occur. Have at it.

He squatted down and went to work.

When yeh coming into town again?

When I need something I guess

Well, the boys are askin about yeh. Should come teh Jimbo's fer drinks.

His efforts of lighting a fire failed. Hunched over and concentrating he dropped match after match in which sizzled and smoked.

I'll do that. Where are you staying?

Oh I have a nice slick setup down yonder on the other side of town. Yeh should come by. It's this nice shack under the south bridge. What's wrong with your coal? Shit.

You be careful with that. It's easy to get caught up in all the fools by that bridge.

Aw I'll be fine

Here, have some coffee

Sutton sat down on his bed and the city rat sat across the room, gulping fast what was his. Soon it grew quiet and all that was heard was the whistling of the wind through the cracks of the cabin.

He held his cup between his legs and traced the rim with his thumb and looked out the window; a small portal to the decay of the land. Grayer still and weighed with the grief and solitude of the little town beyond. Francis put his cup down.

Hey Sut, yeh think I could take up some of yer greens?

Yes, that'd be alright. Get one of those crates over there

Sutton rose up, turned off the stove and walked out to his crops, Francis trailing behind him.

What can I take?

What do you want?

I don't know what half these are

Alright then. Give me your crate

Francis handed the crate to Sutton and he walked down the lines grasping a few beets, onions, a cabbage and carrots, Francis watching the rhythm to his practice; purging each lush vegetable from its vessel with such ease, his hands leathered from the earth and the work.

Much obliged Sut, I'll see yeh around

Sutton nodded.

Yeh should come see my setup soon. He walked on, awkwardly holding his crate, dirt trickling threw its holes with each step forward and before he disappeared from sight, he turned and raised a hand into the air. Sutton raised his in reply and returned to his cabin.

At night he dreamed of those come and gone. Images of the derelict bastard son of a father whose father was a ghost and whose father's father was a ghost. And the mountains, tall and strong with wisdom to last for centuries whose existence can only be matched by God himself. And the cold that pushed against his very foundation, whistling through his core and drifting him through a gray, bleak world.

He woke to a steady tapping coming from outside and he already knew what it was before he opened his eyes. Once it ceased and he heard the culprit get into the car and drive away, he eased himself out of his bed and walked to his door and onto the porch. Next to the frame of the door a notice was tacked stating his failure to pay for his land. He ripped the piece down and went back inside.