

A Story's Story

by Blair Todd

In this world where heroes and superpowers are no longer fantasy, heroes have become nothing more than mercenaries living off of people's misfortune. Whenever something goes wrong they are the first to be there, but not because it is the right thing to do but because those who get the spotlight get paid the most. The more their stories are told the more famous they become, and the more famous they are, the more riches they obtain. That is what a hero truly is in this world. But what if that wasn't the case? What if a hero saved those in need because no one else was brave enough to step forward into the fray because deep down they felt that push? What if instead of fame and riches heroes acted because it is truly what they felt was right, and why can't stories be told to spread hope to those who need it?

These questions flowed through my mind as I grinded my teeth through the pain. The only thing standing between the collapsing ceiling and the people below was my own body. I never wanted to be in this position; I just wanted to be gone to be away from this mess. So why did I have jump in the middle of this? "You can't just leave these people to suffer right? I mean c'mon didn't you say you wanted to rewrite the rules?" I don't know where these thoughts came from, but they are the only reasoning that I have at this moment. These people have done nothing but look down on me my entire life. They treated me like an outsider so, why am I putting my neck on the line to save them? No, I can't think like that not while this pain in my chest is screaming at me to not leave them. "Run! Get out of here! There's an exit behind those desks to the left of you! It will lead you outside!" The words clawed there out of my throat as I searched

for air. The only reason I knew of that hole was because that was my only escape when they came after me. “I know you don’t trust me, but this is the only chance you will have to get out!” I looked at the shop manager’s eyes trying to prove to him that my words were true. He stared back at me looking for some fault in my gaze, some reason to doubt me. I didn’t waver despite the rebar now piercing my forearms. He realized I couldn’t be lying especially when I was the only thing keeping their lives from being extinguished. They quickly moved the desks and squeezed through the hole that lead to their safe haven. As the last person finally vanished from sight, I began to feel warm tears roll down my face. As my vision began to blur, I could only feel content and relief knowing they were safe despite knowing that I would not walk away from this. I began to feel the last of my strength disappear. Understanding this, I began to kneel letting the weight rest upon my shoulders waiting to find out what could happen after my death knowing that I would not be saved since the loss of this building would not contract enough attention to draw the heroes out. I would be alone in death.

As I laid there fighting through the pain and trying to enjoy my final breaths, my contentment began to be replaced with regret and fear. I don’t want to die. I don’t want it to end like. “Please save me. Please.” Just as these words left my mouth, the load on my shoulders began to lighten. As the weight became lighter and lighter, I slowly looked up to find a man covered in scars pulling the rubble off with ease. As the weight became lighter, I rose ever so slightly until I was able to shake off the remains. The man looked at me with astonishment. I shouldn’t be surprised my clothes were in tatters and whatever remained was colored crimson. My arms were full of holes and blood caked the skin as if I had dipped my arm in red paint and

let it dry and crack. As the man stared at me, I did the same. I had never seen someone like him. He was covered in scars, slashes as if from what looked like claws, and his face was worn with time and hardships. He looked no younger than seventy and most definitely was not a hero.

“Who are you?” I rasped, “Why did you save me? You don’t look like a hero.” The man looked me in the eyes and chuckled, “You certainly do not look like a hero either kid, and I have my own reasons for saving you. But if you really want an answer you could say I had a feeling about you kid. As for who I am, that is of no importance my name lost its value long ago but as for the bigger question: why did YOU save those people?” That question again, for whatever reason, that one question fails to spark any form of answer in my head. “I don’t know old man I just felt something in my heart telling me to do something.” The man stood there as if the words I had just said were some kind of riddle. “Heh I suspected as much. You know no one will just put their lives on the line just to save someone else without some form of compensation. But for some reason I get the feeling that you aren’t lying. You said that you saved them because your heart told you to, right?” I nodded my head. “Good, then follow me.” Having no other choice I followed him to a hollowed bunker. We walked in to the desolate structure filled with nothing but webs and machinery. We reached the end of the wall, and before I could ask the old man he pulled his arm back with a hand enveloped in flames and swung striking the wall with an echoing thud. The wall began to shake and shift revealing a rusted and worn door that resembled something from a panic room. He placed his hand and pushed leaving a red hot molten print on the door. A metallic clink resonated and the door opened. “Come on. I got something to show ya kid.” He walked through the door disappearing into the darkness. I followed and once I had

completely entered the room, the door closed shut leaving me in total darkness. Soon lights came on revealing rows of costumes all in worn shape torn and faded. From behind the row the old man appeared. “You see kid I knew you had something deep down in ya, something people have completely forgotten about. Selflessness. The ability to rise above the clouds of hatred and greed and soar with wings made of kindness and courage. Despite owing nothing to those people you stepped forward and saved them even though they have treated you like nothing more than filth. You have the makings to rewrite the rules of this world to change the way things work. To become a true hero.”