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## Just The Quiet, And The Wind

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photo by: mary ryder-swanson

#### JUST THE QUIET, AND THE WIND

It took me awhile to figure it out. There was a flash of light and there I was looking for food. The last thing I remembered was hearing a voice that told me to look away. I still felt the flash of light; I felt it through my skin, and then I was floating on the wind. But I don't remember lending.

But I had to find food.

It didn't look like it was going to be easy. But it was amazing how much of that town hadn't burned down. If I could find where the grocery store used to be, maybe I could trace the rubble and find some food. It might have been contaminated, but if it was, then so was I, so what difference did it make? I started walking down the street.

The blast we'd done a good job in that town. Most of the buildings looked more like piles of rubble, though once in a while I came across one that was still partially standing. The wind whistled around them like a ghost, the quiet was unsettling. Once that piece was crowded with people, the complications of everyday life, cars honking, people talking. Then a flash of light and the world changed. The people disappeared. But the pest didn't matter anymore. Only survival mattered.

Dusk was coming on, and it would be cold, even though I didn't feel any colder. I went in search of a blanket.

I spotted something that looked like cloth near some rocks that looked like cement — it was hard to tell. Part of the cloth was flapping in the wind. It was multicolored. I started to run toward it when I saw her.

She was climbing a pile of debris, for what reason I couldn't hazard to guess. There was another person alive! Someone to talk to — to help with the world I ran after her; I yelled, "Hay! Hay you! Here I am!" But when she saw me a look of horror filled her eyes that stopped me in my tracks. She screamed "No! I'm not ready!" I ran after her, crying, "Wait! I can help you! We can help each other!" But I tripped on a brick and fell on my face. My nose started to bleed. When my vision cleared, she was gone. "Damn it, damn it, anyway," I mumbled as I walked back to the cloth. She would probably moan and cry and use up my food supply. My food supply! I ran to where I found the cloth. It looked like a Persian rug, or something. I lugged it back as fast as I could to the shelter. If she had taken my food supply, I would have killed her! But I found my food supply safe at home. They were eating a little sluggish — maybe they were dying.

By then blood was running down into my mouth and down my chin. I wiped it off with the back of my hand, and after staring at my bloody hand for a few seconds, I licked it clean. No use wasting perfectly good protein.

The next morning, I hid my food and my blanket behind a pile of bricks in case that crazy broad was to find them, and went out to explore. If there was me, and there was her, maybe there might be others that I could talk some sense into. And I'd probably need a better shelter, and a water supply, and these grasshoppers weren't going to last much longer. I suddenly recognized my surroundings.

It was quite bizarre, because there wasn't much surroundings to recognize. But I knew where I was. On my own street. And that looked like — yes! Where those two elm trees once stood next to each other! That meant my own house was right down that street. Part of it was still standing!

It all struck me as quite funny. So I walked home.

Home.

And in my own home I realized what had happened. Not just to me, but to the world, hopes and dreams and the love for freedom. I found it in the charred remains of a human body. Mine.

"Something told me that maybe you didn't know," a voice from behind me said. I turned around to face her. She said, "I'm sorry." I said to her, "I'm not ready, either."

What will happen to her?

"Don't worry," the man smiled. "She'll be taken care of."

by Tammy Hardesty

#### TEMPUS FUGIT

I wish I could  
forget the clock  
love each minute  
free from worry;  
but there's no time.  
And now I'm late for class.  
by Sally D. Freels