

The End Of Time

By Glenn C. Gabriel

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It all started when the wagon pulled into town. People started staring and pointing at me, saying how beautiful I was as they ran beside the wagon.

We stopped right in front of the new town hall. All eyes on me. A crowd gathered, until all the town was there.

Many in the crowd cheered as the Mayor stepped up into the wagon beside me. Others, looked at me in awe, I could feel their eyes on me. They whispered about never having seen anything as beautiful as I.

The Mayor quieted the crowd to give his speech. But as he spoke, their eyes stayed on me.

Many said things like, "Look at her face! Have you ever seen anything as beautiful and flawless in your life?" Many said how much they loved my hands, and as I moved them, they smiled, the children pointing.

That was ages ago. I'm no longer beautiful, my face now dirty, scarred and weathered. My hands don't move like they used to, they've slowed greatly. I'm old, and I just don't work well now.

I guess I started dying the day they hung me, high on the tower of the town hall, for everyone to see.

Now the people who once cheered for me, who talked about how beautiful I was, will sometimes stop and stare up into my dirty face, as I now hang, dangling from the rope.

Why? Why are you doing this to me? I've worked hard, all these years for you, and this is the thanks I get?

Hung from an old dirty rope, eyes watching, waiting for me to stop moving.

The eyes of the town still look at her, but only glances now, for it is too much to bear, seeing her swinging there.

Two days later, a woman and her little girl join the crowd gathering in front of the old town hall.

"What are they doing mommy?" the little girl asks, looking high above her, to where a man is standing on the tower.

"They're taking her down honey. She's finally died. She's been hanging there for, well, a very long time. We all thought she would have died days ago, but, whenever we'd look up at her, if you watched long enough, she'd move her hands, and we'd know she still had some life left in her after all.

They watch as the old gal is lowered to the wagon, waiting to take her to her final resting place.

"It's really sad," the girl's mother says shaking her head. "Grandpa used to say, 'You should have seen her when she first came to town. Everyone loved her. Her face... flawless, and her hands! Oh, her hands! They moved with such precision and grace. You just couldn't help looking at her when you passed.' But now look at her. Face filthy and scarred. What a shame. But she outlived grandpa."

They watch as she is laid to rest in the wagon, a tarp thrown over her.

As the horses slowly begin pulling the wagon, everyone turns as one to watch her leave.

The Mayor steps up onto the steps of the town hall and calls for silence.

“Well, we all knew this day would come. It was only a matter of time after all.” Everyone laughed. “But what’s done is done. Move along now, nothing more to see.”

Turning to leave, the little girl asks, “Will we hang another one mommy?”

“Of course honey, that’s what a clock tower is for. New clock should be here next week.”

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