



## Writing Contest Entry Flash Fiction

By Lauren Baker

“Morrison!”

Called a male voice, out into the snowy, dense woods. The person whom the voice originated from was a tall, slender man with black, frizzy hair.. His face portrayed a story of disarray and heartbreak. After a period of no reply as he pushed on further, he called out again.

“Morrison!!”

He had been out for what seemed like hours, and the mild aching in his legs could prove it accurate. However, even if he knew he should head back he just couldn't. He was on a mission. Mick's hope was dwindling, along with his stamina he wouldn't dare turn ba—

*Rustling.*

The dark haired male stopped in his tracks.

“Morrison?”

*More rustling.*

Mick's eyes widened. He glanced around hurriedly to locate where it was coming from. An animal, surely, but maybe it could be his lost friend. He stayed put, keeping generally quiet. But.. nobody had come out to greet him, even after he spoke, so it had to be no one. Which meant it was time to continue. He kicked the earth beneath him in frustration, cursing at himself and the anger he felt.

“Where the hell are you!!”

He called out to the tree-covered world. There was a soft crunching of leaves, and then... an inhuman growl. Mick turned around, a wave of fear washing over him. His eyes were soon set

upon a large, muscular, deer-like creature with twisting horns and a set of sharp teeth. It was roughly 50 yards behind him. So, far-ish— but not *comfortably* far. There was no time to think about what that *thing* was, there was only time to run.

He turned back, falling into a sprint speed as he attempted to escape the creature. There was not a thought in his mind, but trying to outrun it as the adrenaline coursed through him. The only things he could hear was his heart pounding in his ears, and the steady footsteps of the creature behind him.

Then, he was grabbed. Not by the creature, but by something else. His arm was abruptly pulled as he was forced into the hedges, his mouth opened to shriek, but was met with a hand atop it.

*A hand?*

Mick's eyes flashed up. Blonde hair, blue eyes...

*Morrison.*

His eyes widened.

“Shhh... Stay quiet please— don't—.”

Said a deep voice, in a low tone as he brought the two closer to the ground, nestled within heavy brush and bushes. He held Mick's head to his chest to muffle his heavy breathing. Mick grasped onto Morrison, his eyes squeezed shut, still shook up because of... well, everything. Especially that Morrison was alive. *And here.* Mick stayed closely in place out of fear, Morrison on high alert as his eyes peered out through the dense plant growth around them.

It felt like they stayed like this for hours, but in reality it was probably only five minutes. The fear had at first made everything come fast, but the after effects definitely made time tick slowly. Mick found relief that he wasn't in this alone, at least. He had closure that his friend wasn't dead.

The beast eventually passed, and Morrison okayed the notion that they could now speak, not letting hold go of Mick until he could embrace him first, and then allowing him to turn loose.

“You have no idea how happy I am to see you...”

Morrison sighed after he spoke. Mick nodded in agreement, a soft smile present on his cheeks, reddened by the cold air.

“Likewise.”

A pause.

“What was that thing, man?”

“Your guess s’bout as good as mine.”

Morrison slowly got himself up, offering Mick a hand as he led them out into the open. His eyes scanned to assure that the creature was out of sight.

“How did you get here?”

“Walked... I was looking for you..”

Morrison turned to him, letting out a dry chuckle.

“You’re an idiot.”

“Infamously.”

Mick grinned stupidly.

“How have you survived... two and a half, three weeks out here What did you eat?”

“You don’t wanna know, Mick.”

“Well.. let’s head back, okay? Hopefully I can find the way back...”

Mick turned around to look at where he’d come from.

“That’s funny... I remember that path looking different.”

“That’s the kicker about this place. You can’t leave— the world will just... somehow shift behind you. You can walk five steps, look back, and then take another five, look back and... it’ll be an entirely different patch of woods.”

“Nuh-uh. I think starvation and this cold is getting to you.”

“Test it out, Micki boy.”

So he did, taking a few steps, looking back, taking a few more, while Morrison stood, watching him. He tried this several times while his taller friend watched, almost amused by it. Mick’s face was bewildered— amazed, even.

“How is that even possible? I—.. I don’t understand.”

“There’s something.. weird about this place, Mick. It ain’t any normal forest.”

Morrison noted.

“You’re telling me... How do we get out?”

Morrison shot Mick a serious, saddened look.

“...So we’re stuck?”

He gave him the same look. Mick mumbled some curses to himself.

“Okay... what do we do now?”

“I’ve just been wandering around for the past few weeks... avoiding the carnivorous deer n’ all.”

Mick nodded silently, his brain whirring with all of these new facts.

“C’mon— no use staying here.”

He nodded again, not really knowing what else to do besides listen to him. So, the two trekked on. Mick had been doing the same thing before he saw Morrison, but at least he wasn’t alone any longer. The silence unsettled him. All that could be heard was the light wind and the rustling of barren trees. Mick wanted to fill the silence, and it would be good to talk to Morrison anyways.

“So.. are there multiple.. uhh.. deer things?”

“It’s hard to tell with... y’know.. the new landscape every time I turn away. I’ve seen it many times, but I never got close enough to notice if they were different.”

“...Right, I guess that makes sense.”

Morrison then stopped in his tracks, causing Mick to elicit the same reaction.

“What? What’s wrong?”

“The— there’s a...”

He pointed, Mick’s eyes widened as they both saw the decaying carcass of what looked like a human.

“Oh god— Morrison we gotta leave.”

“Look. They've got a rifle. And.. what looks like a knife stickin' out of... the remains of their leg. Might've.. I dunno... been a hunter or something.”

“Should we... take that?”

“Yeah. Yeah maybe.”

Morrison approached the body, picking up the rifle and expecting it.

“It's empty. No ammunition.”

“Great. Pull the knife out of his leg.”

Morrison did so, ripping the knife from the decayed skin.

“Jesus— at least we aren't completely unarmed now.”

“One knife for the two of us? I suppose it's better than nothing.”

“Oh, no. I have one too.”

“You do?”

Morrison nodded, handing Mick the one they'd found and pulling another out from his waistband. It was stained a dark crimson.

“Was stickin' out of a tree with a target drawn on when I found it.”

“So... there's been other people here.”

Morrison shrugged.

“I guess s—...”

Mick looked over to Morrison who had stopped his statement.

“It's close.”

The blonde spoke in a hushed tone, which warranted Mick to begin glancing around frantically.

He held his weapon firmly in hand, all while staying completely still.

“Run.”

“Run?”

“Go.”

Morrison broke out in a sprint, Mick followed shortly after him. It caught on to the sound of their footsteps, and soon it was following in pursuit. And they ran, and it followed. Just like a predator seeking for its prey.

Mick made the mistake of turning to look back while running, which resulted in a cry of dismay as he tripped over a branch. His hands instinctively reached out to catch himself and the knife flung from his hands to land five feet in front of him, all the while Morrison had heroically swerved around and was already there to help him.

“Come on! Get up.”

He explained hurriedly, grabbing Mick by the forearm to pull him up.

His eyes cast to look up at Morrison.

But in a flash, Morrison was gone, Mick’s outstretched hand now empty.

Shrill, pained cries could be heard as the monster tore into him.

“Mick! Mick... Mick!”

He pleaded to him.

Mick’s vision darkened and a warm, fuzziness came over him.

“Are ya still with me, Micki?”

“...H-Huh?”

“He lives!”

Mick’s eyes fluttered open as he became aware of his body uncomfortably sprawled out on a sofa.

“You were twitchin’ in your sleep and I figured I should wake ya.”

“I was?”

“Yeah. Were ya dreamin’?”

“Mmh.. yeah, I was. You definitely wanna hear about this dream, man.”

“Alright, sure. Keep it short, I wanna go to bed. Gotta get up early so we can head to your mother’s house for Christmas. Promised we’d be there by nine.”

“Yeah, yeah.. It’ll only be a few minutes.”