

Abraxas

By Bryane Fleming

What's the next move? Abraxas was always thinking, what's the next move. He hated the cold but being a veteran, moved like a seasoned war dog, with speed stealth and focus. Pacing his strides, with his head askew favoring his one good eye, that was the way to persevere. Bleached white by nature, Abraxas had no color in his Doberman DNA. He was- the first page of an old book- white. Saratoga, two steps back and to the left- was out of breath trying to keep up. Abraxas didn't mind patrolling with Saratoga, the red brown brindle Dobie was solid. An old track racer that ran with a limp from beatings he endured, but he was smart. Shove his nose in shit once and he got the message.

The Gozen.com warehouse floor was so big it felt like outdoors. Too big to fail to quote the economist of the day. It was slightly larger than 15 football fields and the two sentries had covered the grounds three times this night on watch. This included swimming across the flooded basement twice. They were both- tired, wet and hungry. Saratoga's stomach growled and he growled back at it. Abraxas managed a rare smile then went stone-faced as a text scrolled over his ocular display. It still made his bad eye twitch when the hot implant buzzed. The symbols that equated to a canine language floated through his mind.

"So what are you going to do then? She's out of control bro." Saratoga raised his eyebrows. Punctuating the question.

"About what, November? Nothing" Abraxas beamed back.

"I've never known you to do nothing bro, I know you, you got something planned."

They slowed their steps, stopped and listened. A faint whirling sound let them know it was nothing. A small drone came flying around the corner with its belly cage full and buzzing. It was probably a vibrator, Gozen.com online retail at its finest. The vibrations threw the gyroscope off balance and caused drones to crash.

"No plan, she's a sad stupid puppy, you can't plan for it or fix it, so why stress?"

Saratoga loved Abraxas's stupid puppy analogy, his favorite top three, were;

"Stupid puppies fall down in old wells, get stuck and die."

"Stupid puppies, get under foot and get stepped on, fallen on, and broken."

"Stupid puppies run out into the street chasing the wind, get hit by cars and die. And that's all day."

They took the elevator to the second level and stalked down a long corridor toward an open door. The scent of curry beef, scallions, cheap shampoo and dried blood assaulted them.

Candice half screamed at the sight of them. "Oh shit" she laughed, choked on a mouthful of chow fun and spit it out in a napkin. Saratoga's stomach cursed at her. She was in her blue uniform maxing out the cargo in cargo pants. Her hair was a half dry wasp nest of ashen gray pin-cushioned with two pencils.

She smiled, and half ass saluted. “Good job fellas, carry on”

They left, double timed it down the stairs, and shouldered through the heavy doors out into the courtyard.

The night stood firm, but the day dug its nails into the sky breaking blue skin. The old snowfall had been deflowered, until stained grey slush now. The two guards trundled through the 100yard field toward the guard quarters. Locomotive stream trailed from their mouths. Saratoga lost sight of Abraxas in an instant with the bright of the snow. His coat was an unnatural camouflage, perfect for a winter hunt.

The housing was a cinderblock igloo. The dome stood thirty ft in diameter and just as tall at its zenith. A plexiglass disc sunroof the was the only source of light, Inside little more than ten beds and a water cooler. Saratoga aligned his eye for the retinal scan lock. His signature was verified and a corrugated roll gate clanged as it ascended. Abraxas could smell something was wrong immediately. The taste of fear hung on the air, greed, too much iron, and too much blood.

November was a royal bitch, descended from purebred Doberman stock. Her family actually guarded a royal palace in Dubai before the military put her into service. She was the tallest of the Dobermans, outer space black with the muscle definition of a race stallion. She stood in the center of the dome snout high, looking down the barrel of her snout at Abraxas in the doorway. At her feet were six slaughtered porcelettes. Porcelettes were the baby pigs the guard dogs were fed for dinner. She had eaten the entrails saving the flesh for last, the carcasses still twitched. November bit into a pudgy hind leg, lifted the piglet and thumped it to the ground. She licked the blood from her mouth with a loud smack.

“What are you playing at?”

The rest of the team, seven adult Dobermans were huddled in a corner ducking and cowering. On the other side of the dome Tarzan was circling back and forth in front of the balled up still shape. It was Eric the assistant handler, Candice’s new recruit. Eric was young with a soft command-less voice but he was tall and consistent. The bottom of one pant leg was dark with blood. Long gusts of breath let abraxas know he was still alive. Tarzan was the alpha in charge while abraxas was away. He was supposed to, hold shit down, dole out dinner, and above all look out for the boy trainer. His head hung low and his eyes darter around guiltily. It was the same look of shame he had when one of the pickers threw up from heat exhaustion and abraxas found Tarzan lapping it up latter on patrol.

“Now you wanna do this, like now, after all night?” Saratoga advanced past but Abraxas barked out a stand down order. He stopped, stood his ground and barked loudly at the female upstart.

“Clever” It was Abraxas’s belief that some spoiled little olive prince started her off on the wrong foot by insisting on the name November. Who names a dog with the first syllable “No”?

November lowered her head, bared teeth, and locked her face into a rumbling scowl.

“We don’t have to do this the hard way” she beamed “You should just submit and let things happen naturally, age gives way to youth.”

“Today is not that day lady” Abraxas said.

Abraxas had to make this quick, he was tired, and needed to restore order quickly to retain his status.

He nodded toward Eric “This is going to fuck the whole program up”

November was already coming in from the right side, his weak eye. “The program is already compromised with weak leadership.”

The buzzer sounded in all their heads for the AM shift to begin, the last patrol before the workers arrived. Abraxas feigned exhaustion with slumped head, a few slow long breaths. November advanced and circled till she had him boxed in a corner between bedding.

She charged at him biting and snapping, rearing up and swiping with her paws. Abraxas back pedaled then side stepped out of the pocket. She came in again and he swatted her head and moved to the outside. November barked loudly feeling trapped in, froth and saliva stringers slung about.

Abraxas charged in and rammed his head into her chest she rose up on her hinds pawing down with glancing blows. November turned her head and bit down on the back of his neck. Abraxas felt the tear in the tough rolls of neck skin knowing that’s exactly what she would do. She locked her jaw down, growling, snorting, and smiled with the remainder of her teeth. Abraxas backed up, dragging her and shook his body violently. A centrifugal movement meant to splay water out of one’s coat. The motion jerked November’s head with a force warbled her brain against the skull. She let go and stumbled, dizzily. Abraxas came in fast pinning her to the floor and biting down into the side of her neck. He latched on, salivating, and grumbling in meditative victory.

November was too proud to cry out or whimper, she lay there kicking up dust with heavy breathing, swiping her paws at the air. Her eyes betrayed her silence, they were wide, darting wild in terror. Abraxas growled and clenched down harder. He could feel, the muscle striations, the spine giving way, and her pulse racing as it registered through his canines. Steady like a train, pulling out of the station. He would end it with a quick merciful tear and settle it once and for all.

“Stupid ass puppy.”

A loud shot rang out and echoed under the dome. Abraxas let go and November scurried into the huddle of other dogs. Abraxas turned to see Eric on his knees with a gun cupped in his hands. Abraxas’s head, angle perplexed. Why was he pointing it at me? Why not shoot November? was the last thing he thought before a wet blanket of black smacked down over him.

Abraxas was a pup again in the blackness, fuzzy albino coat, floppy ears and big limp paws. There was the sound of a furnace roaring, no a truck engine. His siblings were in here too belting out a choir of barking, high pitched yelps followed by frantic staccato whining. In the dark where? Sunlight strained in though the burlap grain sack. Abraxas ducked and covered up from the kicking and clawing of paws and teeth. At the bottom of the bag were plastic Jack la lane weights shaped like donuts and filled with sand. Crackling, Country Music voices, steel guitar, and the drumroll of tires on grates.

“Got damned demon dogs. Unnatural is what it is, nasty white lab rats, little pink noses, just nasty, nuh uh, not in my house.”

“Oh, give it a rest Charlene”

A short screech, silence and hollow footfalls. The truck gate banged open. He sensed moisture in the air, cigar smoke, diesel burning, and chicken shit. There was a tug and Abraxas felt weightless for a few seconds till the hard crash. Cold water and a deeper darkness raced in on the pups. It was all around them now, tasting of mud, rot and mold.

Abraxas bit at the old sack chewing and tearing wildly. He worked a small hole, scratching and biting at it. A nail caught in the loose weave and the old bag split along the seam. He was out, they were free. The water was both nothing and everything, cool now in his throat. Up above fingers of light waved hello and twinkled. Hold your breath Abraxas, there's day light up there. Keep your mouth shut boy, be good and keep on digging.