the beginning of the end

by evenafterallthistime

Summary

“You’re going to be very useful to me, Richard. To this island.” The smile is wide on Jacob’s face.

Notes

Addresses scenes only up to 5x16-17 "The Incident".

The blood leaks through his fingers, warm and flowing, as he shakily covers the wound at his side.

He lies on the ground, exhausted, the man unmoving next to him. He stares up at the green all around him under a clear, blue sky.

He relaxes his grip on the knife in his other hand and takes a deep breath.

He closes his eyes.

Death comes easy.

Just like falling asleep.
The hand that grips his shoulder is firm and warm; the fingers squeeze gently, then retract.

His eyes snap open.

The sunlight shines down through the trees, blinding him, the only thing he sees at first.

The man hovering over him suddenly pulls back, his blue eyes piercing.

The man smiles.

“Hello, Richard.”

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His shirt hangs off of him heavily, drenched with blood.

He tentatively touches the wound at his side; the cut is deep and painful, but dry.

“That’ll have to be stitched up.”

He looks up as the man hands him cooked fish, his white shirt shining under the sun.

He takes it, holding it limply in his hands. “Who are you?”

The man sits down next to him in the sand with ease, staring out at the sea. “My name is Jacob.”

“You saved my life,” He says, still in awe of how that could even be possible, because he was gone, he was sure he had felt death claim him.

The man looks over at him, smiling warmly. “You were a life worth saving, Richard.”

The words, instead of reassuring him, just make him feel unsettled.

He doesn’t really know why.

“I crashed here on a ship,” He declares, suddenly feeling the need to explain. “My people and I were here for two weeks before things started happening.”

“What kinds of things?”

By Jacob’s voice, it’s clear that he’s genuinely interested to know, but the memories are beginning to come back to him with startling clarity and he wishes he never even brought this subject up.

“There was this black smoke,” He continues, pushing the words out of his mouth. “It… dragged some of my people through the jungle, took them away, never to be seen again.”

He expects Jacob to scoff, or look at him in disbelief, but all he does is sit still, listening silently.

“Then we found this ruin of sorts. Some went in and never came back out. Those that did come out…”

He trails off, remembering clearly the changes in their behavior, their blank faces, and the violence they initiated.
“What was wrong with them?” Jacob asks softly, seeming to understand his hesitance.

“They weren’t the same,” He answers, pushing a hand through his untidy, shoulder-length hair. “They seemed to be sick in the mind. They became violent, turned against us. One of them attacked me and stabbed me. By then, I was the only one left.”

“His doing,” Jacob mutters, his face suddenly tight, his eyes slightly narrowed.

“I’m sorry?” He prompts, confused.

Jacob looks over at him quickly, breaking out of his thoughts and relaxing his face.

“You’re going to be very useful to me, Richard. To this island.”

The smile is wide on Jacob’s face.

He wonders what exactly he means.

“You should eat,” Jacob adds, motioning to the fish clutched in Richard’s hands. “You need the energy.”

As Jacob looks back out at the sea, he catches a glimpse of black out of the corner of his eye and turns his head to the left.

Standing outside of the jungle a considerable distance from him is a man, his black shirt a stark contrast against the green behind him.

He blinks, and the man is gone.

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The ash is sprinkled thickly in a large circle, its prisoner bound in the cabin inside it.

“Things will be better now,” Jacob declares, his voice loud and clear against the utter silence of the dark jungle.

“Thank you for helping me, Richard.”

Jacob smiles, the torch flames flickering across his face.

He nods.

Jacob departs, disappearing behind the cover of the trees.

From the only window of the cabin, eyes glare at him, furious.

He can feel them, how they burn.

It takes hours to get rid of the ash under his fingernails.

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He waits at the entrance of the tunnels, his eyes coming to rest on the still form of the woman
lying on the floor beside him.

After a moment she stirs, a soft groan emitting from her lips.

She sits up, disoriented, a hand reaching up to her head.

There's confusion in her eyes when she fixes them on him, but the comprehension comes quickly.

He braces himself for her anger as her eyes darken.

And, sure enough, it comes.

“Richard,” Eloise declares, bristling with hostility.

“Eloise,” He replies, cutting her off from letting out the tirade he knows is already forming behind her lips. “You know why I did it. You helped them enough. You have to think of yourself now.”

She doesn’t retaliate, but the silence between them is stiff as she moves to get up.

He offers his hand to help her but she shakes her head. He suspects the anger that radiates off her now is due to the fact that she can’t deny the truth of his words.

They swim back out of the tunnels.

As they make their way back to camp, buzzing and clanging noises are so loud that it’s almost as if the entire jungle is shaking from it.

Eloise changes direction, following the source of it. He thinks briefly of dissuading her but is curious also at this disturbance, so he bites his tongue.

When they happen upon the site the Dharma Initiative has been working at (on their territory, no less, but he doesn’t dwell on that now), he sees them: James, Jack, and the brunette he believes is called Kate, huddled together amidst the chaos.

Then they disappear, right before his eyes.

However, this occurrence is not an unfamiliar one; he remembers vividly a situation like this, over twenty years ago.

He and Eloise, they both simply stand there, staring at the destruction of the site (which is all that’s left) and where the three people were seconds ago.

He looks at Eloise, sighting her unreadable face.

He grasps lightly at her arm, guiding her away, and for the first time, she doesn’t protest.

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“It’s a boy,” Charles proclaims to him when he emerges from the tent, unable to restrain the grin on his face. “We’ve named him Daniel.”

The smile he manages to put on his face no doubt must look more like a grimace.

“Congratulations, Charles.”
All he can think is *it’s been a long time coming* when he discovers Eloise in tears in the jungle a week later.

She’s alone, sitting on a log, gripping her son’s future notebook in her hands.

Immediately she knows he’s there, her whole body stiffening.

He expects this of her. She’s been this way since he had first met her.

He remembers her as a determined, calculating seventeen year old.

Even though she’s certainly become more knowledgeable and mature over the years, that side of her has not changed.

But, now, her resolve finally cracks as her shoulders slump, making her look hunched.

“Richard,” She acknowledges him calmly, brushing her tears swiftly away with the pads of her fingers. “Nothing changed.”

He knows this, knows how the people who had wanted the bomb had failed in their plan.

Nothing was erased. At least, not what Eloise had desperately wanted to be.

He moves closer, and he empathizes.

No one should be put in her place.

“You didn’t know who he was, Eloise. It was a mistake.”

Her back is still turned to him but due to his proximity he gets a full view of the notebook, it splayed open on her lap to the nearly blank page, with the exception of the mere three lines of cursive handwriting at the top.

Instantly, he recognizes it as hers, written by her future self many years from now.

The particular page’s center is creased, as if it has been opened there numerous times.

“But what was supposed to fix it didn’t work,” Eloise replies, her voice suddenly thin. “Daniel’s life will always end here, that way.”

He’s never really been one to comfort people; he’s an advisor, that’s the role he’s played for years he’s given up counting now, but comfort is exactly what this woman, their chosen leader, needs.

So he gives it to her, placing his hand on her shoulder.

At his touch she closes the notebook and looks up at him, her face so serene despite the inner turmoil she must feel, every day now and for the rest of her life.

“Charles cannot know. Not yet.”

Her blue eyes glint in the sunlight, soft, hopeful, asking something of him.

He agrees.
Daniel is a quiet, thoughtful child.

He’s three years old now, and has a habit of wandering around, curiously digging into things that aren’t his.

Richard finds him in his tent one day, holding his compass in his hands and studying it.

This doesn’t annoy him; in fact, he finds it rather amusing.

“You know what that is, Daniel?” He asks softly and Daniel jumps, startled, looking up at him guiltily.

He smiles at the boy. “It’s a compass.”

Daniel looks back down at the compass, then up at him again, questioning.

He points at the compass, making it clear. “Compass.”

He can tell Daniel understands as the boy looks once again at the compass, mimicking Richard’s gesture.

A flash of this boy as a grown man bleeding out on the ground right outside this tent springs up in his mind; with it, the gun pointed at him (where’s the bomb, Richard?; I’m going to give you three seconds), and it makes his voice die in his throat.

He knows the truth. He had known by the fearful look on the man’s face and how his hands shook as he wielded the gun that he would never have shot him, that he was just as timid on the inside as the boy who stands before him now.

He imagines this must be what Eloise thinks of every time she looks into her son’s face.

Daniel looks up at him, smiling, holding out the compass to him.

He takes it, ruffles the boy’s dark hair, and manages a smile back.

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A few months later, Eloise makes the decision to leave the island with Daniel.

She and Charles argue about it for hours, but once Eloise finally comes out of their tent, her face grim, he knows that she won.

“You do understand why I’m doing this, don’t you, Richard?” Eloise asks him later, and he nods.

“Yes, I understand, Eloise.”

In fact, he had anticipated this ever since Daniel was born; he had known that in order for Daniel to come back here in the future, he’d have to have grown into an adult away from here, with Eloise.

It’s the only way everything will come full circle.
Eloise’s face is tired, her eyes harboring pain (as they always do now). “Charles is going to stay.”

He nods again. “He’ll take your place.”

Eloise looks down at the ground, he looks off into the jungle, and that’s the end of the conversation.

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Ben holds the child carefully to his chest as they sit by the fire, minutes after Ben and Charles’ confrontation in front of everyone.

He had to admit that Ben’s actions had taken him aback. Charles is a man of action, he always has been, but more often than ever his decisions have become even more ruthless, all done in the name of the island and Jacob (even though Richard knows full well that Jacob wouldn’t have approved of half the things Charles has done).

Ben appears to be more compassionate, more prone to thinking things out.

Perhaps that kind of leader is what this island needs.

Ben recounts everything that happened between him and the French woman; he listens as Ben explains how she had killed her entire team, how she had been alone with only her child.

It’s only when Ben mentions that the French woman had accused him of being “infected” that he fully understands her situation (he had been in one similar, after all).

“She’s clearly insane, isn’t she, Richard?” Ben inquires.

It’s with a heavy heart that he replies the affirmative.

“Are you sure about this, Ben?” He asks, nodding at the baby. “Taking care of her will be a big responsibility.”

Ben is briefly surprised by his sudden change of subject, but contemplates his words, looking down at the child in his arms.

“Yes,” Ben finally answers, his voice low against the crackling fire. “Yes, I’m sure.”

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“You don’t trust Ben, do you?” Alex asks, but in her voice he can tell she already knows the answer.

“It’s not a matter of trust, Alex,” He responds, a little bothered by her casual question. “He and I just tend to disagree on a lot of things.”

“I don’t trust him either,” She says, and he looks at her. “I haven’t trusted him in a long time.”

The smile on her face as she stares unflinching into his eyes is satisfied, proud of detecting his lie.
It’s what ties them together, their views of Ben, but it is not a comfort either.

She is sixteen, but she has a wisdom beyond her years, that it’s easy to forget. He is determined not to forget.

“Do you ever get tired of it?”

She’s looking at him curiously, her brown waves of hair blowing back in the breeze as they sit on the hillside.

He finds that, over the years, she has latched on to him. She has drifted further and further away from Ben and closer to him, for reasons he can’t really fathom.

She seems to find him interesting.

However, everyone found him interesting once they had noticed how he didn’t age along with them.

“Do I ever get tired of what?” He asks, but he knows what she means.

By the look in her eyes he can tell she knows it too.

“Living forever,” She clarifies anyway. “Never growing old like everyone else does.”

He remembers Eloise and Charles’ inquiries about this, once they had aged ten years and he didn’t look as if he aged a day.

They only asked once, and he only gave one answer: that Jacob was responsible for it.

They never asked him any more questions about it, because they knew that whatever Jacob did was final and for a reason.

No one questioned why Jacob did the things he did.

“Over time, I’ve gotten used to it,” He answers, and he is honest. “But yes, it can be tiring, Alex.”

“Did Jacob make you the way you are?” She asks, almost as if she had read his mind.

“Yes, he did.”

“Do you ever wish he didn’t?”

This question perturbs him a bit more than it should.

“Why are you asking me these questions?” He asks her quietly.

“I would.” She says simply, and he shakes his head, confused.
“What?”
“I would wish he didn’t.”
He gets the feeling that she understands far more than she should.

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When she kisses him they are in the jungle, immersed in its greenish gloom.
He doesn’t pull back or push her away or question her.
He doesn’t reject her.
Instead, he threads his hand through her curls, pulls her closer.
She smiles against his lips and if there’s one emotion he doesn’t feel, it’s guilt.

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You’re the only one I can trust.
That’s what she had said to him, not so long ago.
It’s the first thing he thinks of when he discovers that she’s been killed.

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He’s the one that buries her.
He sets her body down gently in the hole, slides his fingers across her cheek.
He doesn’t look at her when he shovels the dirt in.
When it’s finally over, he leans against the shovel he’s clutching, and closes his eyes.
“I’m sorry, Richard.”
He wonders how he knows. But then he realizes.
Jacob knows everything.
For once, Richard doesn’t acknowledge his presence.

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“There will be a war soon,” Jacob tells him, more serious than Richard’s ever seen him.
The tapestry hangs behind him, now complete.
“Everything will change.”

The room is dark, the only light provided from the fire in between them.

“Will you help me, Richard?”

Jacob had saved his life.

(Brought him back to life).

Because of that, he will always be indebted to him.

Because he is grateful.

He is.

“Yes,” He says.

Jacob smiles.

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