

How Do Pawns Feel About The Subject Of Sacrifice?

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Montaign had not planned to be abducted, obviously, or he wouldn't have made the tennis date in the first place.

Dressed in white shorts, white polo shirt, tennis shoes, and a royal blue windbreaker, and carrying his gear bag, Montaign had just stepped outside his brownstone building when two men dressed in jeans and sweatshirts blocked his exit and forced him back through the doors into the entrance hall.

"What the hell!" Montaign swore. The next moment, a cloth was pressed against his mouth while strong hands held his arms to his side and bodies pressed him against the wall. Montaign held his breath, trying to gain time for a struggle, but since he hadn't inhaled after his initial exclamation, the struggle was short lived. Blackness descended over him like a velvet theater curtain.

The darkness cleared from his mind abruptly, leaving him only in physical darkness. As close as he could guess, his eyes were taped or covered in some way, and his hands were secured behind his back and bound to his trussed ankles. He was lying on his stomach, bouncing in a motion-filled space. The strong smell of gasoline hinted that he was in a car trunk, with the car in motion on a poorly paved road.

The combination of the petrol fumes, lingering chemical headache, and the roller coaster movement made his stomach heave. He successfully fought the urge to vomit, knowing that if he didn't win the battle his one avenue for breathing would quickly be clogged. He concentrated first on drawing in each breath slowly and then on releasing it completely, shutting down the roil in his gut.

Helpless to do otherwise, he endured the bone-jarring drive. By his best guess, the ride lasted another hour, give or take a millennium. When the car finally rolled to a stop, Montaign lost his battle with motion sickness. As he'd feared, breathing quickly became a near-impossible task. He gagged and choked, trying to clear his nose.

"Fucking shit!" Whoever had opened the trunk lid was not the least happy to see his predicament. "Shit! Oh, man. Dennis, get over here. He's puked all over the place! Come on, idiot, help me get him out."

Montaign felt hands grab at his arms and back and hoist him over the lip of the trunk. He continued retching and snorting as they dropped him to the ground.

"What now?" he heard another voice ask.

"You muck it out. I'll take care of him." The gag across his mouth was ripped off, miraculously giving him another air passage. He hacked, spit, and coughed, clearing his mouth and nose, and then lay inert on the ground, gasping in lungfulls of fresh, sweet air.

"Me muck it out? Why me?"

"Cause I thought of it first. Now do it."

Montaign lay face down on the ground, grateful simply to be breathing. The retching gradually subsided as the dizziness faded.

"Shit, just leave the trunk open. Let it air out. Come on, help me get him inside."

Once again, excruciating fingers clutched his arms and the bindings as the men half-carried, half-bounced him along the ground, up three stone steps, and, after a moment's wait, over a threshold. "Over there," grunted the first voice. "Open the second door on the left." They dragged him down what he assumed to be a hallway and basically tossed him into the room. He lay still, stunned by the sudden impact against the floor, and heard them close and lock the door.

His skinned knees and thighs ached from the dragging and his shoulders quivered. He shifted as best he could, trying in vain to find a more comfortable position. Finally, he lay on his side, his back against a wall. The floor seemed to be hardwood, with neither carpet nor rug to cushion it. Dust was probably thick enough to write in, judging by the way it flew up his nose. He sneezed, nearly wrenching his arms from their sockets.

"Damn!" he swore against the pain. Raising his voice, he called to his captors, "Hey, no circulation in here."

Not really expecting an answer, he wasn't disappointed. Montaign lifted his head off the floor and turned an ear towards the door. Silence, no movement in the house. He eased his head back to the floor, closing his eyes against the searing pain in his neck muscles.