

Towards a Better Purpose

Keith J. Bowers

This is a work of fiction. None of the characters are real people and any similarity is strictly coincidental.

It is the author's intent that this work should be downloaded, copyable, and shareable, in its originally published format as an Adobe Acrobat file.

It may not be reproduced, shared or transmitted for a fee by any party to whom the Author has not contractually granted permission.

The author retains all rights not explicitly granted within.

Published by Keith J. Bowers
Kjbowers1@hotmail.com

Copyright 2002 by Keith J. Bowers

5 Rosewood Lane
Marietta, PA 17547
717-426-5083

Towards a Better Purpose

The sweat from her palms dampened the leather wrapping the hilt of the sword. Moisture beaded on her forehead beneath the bandana. The cloth did its best to collect it, but Asill's rigid stance caused much more perspiration to be produced. Her outward calm was marred by that simple fact. She was sweating profusely, and her opponent knew it.

His own sword was held high, above his head and tilted back. The stance invited a strike to his chest or side, but in doing so, she would offer her head to his steel. It was a stand off with deadly implications. Both would wait until the other wavered in their concentration and then the strike would come.

Her own stance and sword were both low and out in front of her. It minimized the amount of time it would take to strike, being halfway to her intended target. It would carry less force because of the fight against gravity, but should she be successful, she would strike and wound before his blade fell.

Asill's attention was focused on his face, but her vision was flattened out, accepting every nuance of his body and the surroundings. She didn't want to be in this position, but there was little she could do about it now. On her back was the child and if she failed, not only would she die, so would her boy.

The man she stood against was the child's father. Bitter, callous, he had changed until she no longer recognized him. The time had come to leave. That is what she told herself. She held back the memories from surfacing. If the thoughts of what he did to her would rise up, her anger and hatred would weaken her. He was not the bastard who

hit her and beat her, breaking her skin with the lashes on her back.... He was simply her opponent. Her focus remained solid and unbreakable.

Her opponent blinked.

Asill's blade moved. The time had come.

As her steel rose up towards his stomach, she stepped to her right, releasing her left hand's grip on the hilt. She pushed the blade upward, avoiding the easy softness of his belly. Her body turned away from his blade as it flashed down from its place in the heavens. Her blade stabbed upward, puncturing his throat, the metal pushing through the skin, severing the jugular and pushing up under his chin. She followed it as it met the resistance of bone, her eyes disregarding anything but his imminent death.

The moment stopped - he impaled upon the tip of her sword, her body extended to evade his failed strike at her skull. His eyes held no death for himself, only confidence that he had succeeded in killing her with his strike.

He was pitifully wrong.

Asill's blade was torn from her grasp when his body joined his sword on the rock-strewn ground. She allowed it to go, it's going being the last pain, and the last wound he had tried to inflict upon her. She stood there a long time, watching the years of abuse and neglect flashed past her eyes.

The baby wriggled in its satchel on her back. He sighed once and was again quiet. Asill bent down and retrieved the man's sword from his dead fingers. She didn't look at his face, knowing that to do so might encourage tears that she didn't want to spill for this man. She took his sword as a reminder for her and her child. The blade would become his in time.

Perhaps the child would put it to a better purpose someday.