

A Tough Decision  
#29 Genre: Thriller, 1001 Words  
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As his eyes readjusted following the bright flash, Forest found himself sitting in a chair back at Old Man's place, alone. Forest stood when Old Man came around the corner of his house and smiled at him.

"I see you have returned from your trip."

"Where is everyone?" asked Forest as he sat back down.

"They have gone to prepare for what they are hoping is the final confrontation with Apophis." Old Man looked over at Forest, still smiling. "You, however, seem to have your mind in another place."

"No, I know what I'm here to do. I need to catch up to my friends and help." His jaw clenched as he rose to his feet.

"Acceptance."

"What?" Forest stopped in his tracks.

"It's the final step of the grieving process." Old Man sat at the base of his favorite mesquite tree. "We accept what has happened and realize it is all for a reason. We might not understand it, no matter how hard we try, but we *accept* and move on. For our sake, and for the sake of our children."

"Why are you telling me this?" Forest did his best to hide the tremble in his voice.

"Because you have lost someone very close to you and Ronnie and you want to bring them back. You think it's the right thing to do, that it's the only way to move forward."

"You don't think I should do it either? You're just like my parents. All you want to do is see me watch Ronnie live in pain and agony."

"No parent wants their child to live with pain or sorrow, Forest. As parents it is our job to protect you from all things which will cause you hurt or sadness, but no matter how hard we try there are some things we can't protect you from. The pain death brings with it is one of those things. All we can do is be there for you and hope you find your way through it."

Forest wiped a tear away and walked over to Old Man. He stood in front of him and watched as Old Man dug into the ground near the base of the mesquite tree.

"If that is true, then why are they trying to stop me from bringing Grace back if I have the chance to do so?" Forest asked, his anger showing through his words.

"Bringing her back has its own set of consequences that not even you can understand, Forest. You are being blinded by your pain from seeing the bigger picture."

"And what *is* the bigger picture, Old Man?"

"You can save one life, or you can save millions of them. Are you willing to sacrifice countless lives to save one life?"

"What do you mean?"

"Remember." Old Man stopped digging and reached into the hole he had made. He pulled out a small box and handed it to Forest. "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction."

Remember the Butterfly Effect?”

Forest looked at the box in his hands, then back at Old Man. His puzzled expression said everything.

Old Man explained. “A butterfly can flutter its wings on one side of the world and in turn cause a tsunami on the other side. Every action, no matter how small, can cause a catastrophic event to others.”

“So, you’re saying that me bringing back my mother-in-law to help my Ronnie could change the world in ways I never thought of? I don’t understand how that’s possible.” Forest wondered as he stared at the box.

Old Man stood up and opened the box in Forest’s hands to reveal a seed from the Golden Sassafras. “This seed can give you the knowledge you seek. The knowledge to bring back your mother-in-law. This seed can also give the knowledge of how to fight this dreadful disease to one of the 195 Dr. Faucis in the world. Which one? We don’t know.” Old Man looked at Forest as his words sank in. “Now, are you willing to gamble with which country this particular seed, or any of them for that matter, could be saving? In your hands you hold what you have been searching for, but you also hold what the world needs. You have a decision to make, one I do not envy you. The fate of the world is in your hands. Do you choose to save your beloved mother-in-law for Ronnie, or do you choose the world?”

“But she *is* his world. I don’t know how he will go on without her.” Another tear rolled down his face. “What should I do?”

“That question can only be answered by one person. You are alone on this part of your journey. All I can say is, I won’t judge you no matter which world you choose.” Old Man patted Forest on the back and then disappeared, leaving Forest to make his choice.

Forest sat down by the mesquite and stared at the seed inside the box. The memories of the good times he had with Ronnie danced in his head and he smiled and laughed. He pictured how things were when Grace was alive, sharing his joy. He saw the birth of their children once more and how his Ronnie brimmed with happiness as Grace held them. Her smile always made their worries melt away and lit up the room. Forest closed the box and wiped his tears as he made his decision. He looked around, making sure he was alone before he vanished to rejoin his friends.

Old Man reappeared minutes later and sat down next to the hole at the tree’s base. He grabbed the box left behind by Forest and opened it. The corners of his mouth turned up at the sight of the seed and he closed the box before returning it to the hole. Once the box was back in its place, Old Man covered up the hole and made it look as if the ground had never been disturbed.

J.T. Lozano is a writer of Psychological Horror and Thriller stories. He has been writing since 2010 and has amassed a total of seven published books along with some works in anthologies. J.T. writes poetry occasionally as a way of dealing with whatever is going on in the world. Besides writing stories and poetry, he enjoys staying home and watching television with his fiancé, mainly shows about the paranormal. J.T. joined the “Let’s Write A Story” team to

showcase a small sample of his writing style in hopes of gaining new friends, fans, and readers for his works.