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Kelly Ware

THE GLASS CAGE

It is cold. The rain falls and falls as if it will never stop. It is so bitterly cold, yet no snow – just unending torrents of rain. About two o'clock I begin to notice a thin covering of ice on the trees and shrubs surrounding my cabin.

My cabin set in the woods is a perfect location for observation. It had belonged to my uncle and before him my grandfather. My father took to the seas to fight a distant war, and never returned. On receiving this news, my mother took to her bed, kept to herself, and shortly passed away. From then on until now, I have lived with my bachelor uncle, who four years ago, on the eighteenth of December, was taken to fight, yet another distant war, leaving me to make my own way.

Although I am alone, I find it quite comfortable, and I prosper with each coming season. I await my uncle's return with each coming day and my hopes are high. In his last letter he said he'd come in December, I hope, for Christmas.

I have a menagerie of animals, many have come by hunger or hurt, others by chance.

The terrible rain is beginning to subside, for the time being. All I can see is a thin covering of ice on the limbs of surrounding trees. But I like the animals, know this is not the end.

I reenter the house to see how the animals are taking the cold. Cypress, the old dog, has become very arthritic from the cold, so I must move him to the chair and again venture out for wood to stoke the fire.

I return and begin to light the fire, when all at once, as if the rafters had split, there is a terrible boom and again the pounding, never ending rain. For hours and hours it continues and as night begins to fall it stops. Silence everywhere. The temperature seems to be a non-existent thing. Most of the night the animals stay huddled together on the floor, with Cypress in the chair, peaceful.

All of the late hours I sleep in warmth, but about five o'clock the fire burns low. As I shake myself from sleep, I hear, in the distance a sound. Ripping and screaming mingled in one. Cypress hears it too as he moans and growls. I am now beginning to realize what is happening. I grab my

night robe and silently slip around the cabin. Looking. As I start to put more wood on the fire, Cypress, too, awakens. To him I say, "Good morning, old thing. Cold in the chair, is it?" He whimpers and I sit beside him. He in the chair, while I crouch on the rug.

There it is again, that merciless dying sound, now it is everywhere, echoing in my ears, numbing my brain, leaving me senseless.

The light comes, and I can see it through the glazed window. As I listen I can hear no birds, no sounds of the forest in the morning. Cypress and I decide to give it a try and go outside.

As we pass through the now crushed arbor I realize that there are no longer any trees standing. The surrounding homes are smashed by fallen trees. How are we saved, I wonder to myself. The great glaze that now covers everything is as much as a foot thick.

There in front of me lies something in the ice. A great mound of dark, half under a tree, looks like a large buck, maybe.

The ice disguises the time of year and as I think, I know I have lost all track of time. Why yes, I think it must be at least December, I need to know the time and date, so I head for the mailbox, and there is a letter dated the fifteenth of December. As I open it, I realize it is from my uncle. He writes he will be coming the eighteenth, for Christmas.

As I walk back toward the cabin I think, "It really will be nice to have humans for Christmas." I pass Cypress and he still does not follow, I notice he is licking the thing in the ice and whining. As I near, the half uncovered mound, I realize it is a dead man.

Today is the eighteenth.