

HAMARTIA: A Short Story

By

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EXT. FOREST, EVENING

A fatigued and determined woman Runs down a trail, out of the forest in full tactical gear away from the search lights and the clamor behind her. She is running as hard as she can, and as controlled as she can, to escape, not fall, escape.

SARENA (VO)

Oh My... I don't want to be here  
again. Come On, Sarena, come on.  
Get back to reality. I was just...  
I was...

Sarena runs from forces and peoples unseen, a dark fog creeping far behind her, search lights desperately probing out from the mass to find her...

SARENA (VO)

I was the perfect... well, you  
know. I had no qualms about this  
life until I knew...

Sarena runs out of the forest and up to a fence encapsulating and separating a playground from her. She is dressed in civilian clothes now, is now even more desperate to get through to the other side of this very weak fence. We see no fog or pursuers now, nor their search lights. She could just bend it down and hop over it, but she doesn't seem to be aware of that fact. She shakes it as fast as she can, yelling to children on the other side, but she cannot seem to reach them or influence them at all. One small boy, ELI, stops and looks at her quizzically.

SARENA

Please No! Don't go! Look at me!  
You know who I am... don't you? Hi  
sweet boy...

The little boy, ELI, starts to mouth "Maaaa," then after a moment of intense consideration, closes his mouth, looks away and resumes playing.

Sarena stops shaking the fence, tilts her head, almost out of the moment, and is still, pondering the transaction.

SARENA

I have to get on the other side.

A hand reaches in and makes contact with Sarena's shoulder rather playfully before she is able to make her move. She snaps out of it.

(CONTINUED)

SARENA

Oh Hey, Ha ha!

EMILY

Hi Sarena! You OK? I don't think they know that game, ha ha.

SARENA

Ha Ha, Yeah! (Back on her game, some bravado) I'm done with the animal chores. So how have my boys been treating you this fine morning?

EMILY

Well, they've been pretty good. SAMMY decided to climb that tree (Sarena gives her a look) - and I know that's off limits, so I coaxed him back down. After that, he behaved very well. ELI has just been a little dreamboat as always - there was some poopiness, but that dinghy sailed. Josh tried to build another robotical, but thankfully... (EMILY notices that SARENA's attention is drifting) Thankfully he didn't have the 4-way servos needed for fully functional 7-point movement, and hadn't finished the the autonomous programming needed to make it operate on it's own. ELI managed to create a volcano that looks exactly like the one from Encounters of the 3rd Kind, and he used his own diapers for the spewing lava...(PAUSE)

SARENA

(after a beat) So, the usual, huh? Ha. Thanks Emily! You're the best. I don't know what I'd do without you! My life's been a little topsy-turvy lately, Ha Ha.

EMILY

Come on... I've got a Latte "for yer nerves, har!"

They exit the outside playground area.

INT. DAY COMFY, FIRESIDE, COFFEE IN HAND

EMILY

...not a problem. You I know I love your boys. ...Ever since you first asked, I couldn't resist the offer. I just wish that I could have some of my own just like yours. (EMILY is sullen for a moment, pauses)

SARENA

(interrupting) And what about David... right? Err, anyone new in your life?

EMILY

Well... Uh, new? I met and kinda made up with my my brother, my Big Brother recently. You know? He and I, well, we've never really seen eye to eye in the past, but well, we worked something out... that's "new!"

SARENA

No, I mean \*NEW\*...

EMILY

Not really. I've been too busy working and helping out... my big brother, and you too! That's enough for me, really (EMILY starts to feel a little uneasy)

SARENA picks up an old High School Year Book among the other papers on the coffee table or end table - motioning to it.

SARENA

You know, we've know each other a long time. I can tell when something's bothering you. Are you OK?

EMILY

I'm glad you asked (with feigned interest)... Yeah. It's been kinda difficult at work... with my current assignment, but I feel that I am making a positive difference, you know. Just a lot of stress, ha ha!

(CONTINUED)

SARENA

OK, well good. Glad to hear that.  
(genuinely) I can definitely  
understand.

EMILY

You? Anyone out there?

Before SARENA has a chance to respond, Josh bursts into the room from outside, and heads over to EMILY, but she directs him over to SARENA almost unwittingly. He exclaims to SARENA:

JOSHUA

Mommy, LOOK! I found the Dinosaur  
doubloons - the secret treasure- my  
brothers said that I wouldn't be  
able to find it, but I did! I  
counted, and I looked and looked  
and I was almost ready to give up  
but I found them; I found them  
right underneath the slide!

While Speaking, JOSHUA opens his hands to reveal many plastic gold coins, sun glinting off of them - the kind that are usually found in party stores or gag gift shoppes. As he continues, SARENA's mind shifts back to a memory of another little boy with his hands open, holding real Gold Coins, sunlight glinting off of them. He looks up at SARENA (camera) in a small 2nd or 3rd Story flat with brick walls. A Man is nervously watching out a nearby window, and a couch and lampstand are behind the boy and the window.

INT. DAY - SMALL FLAT, LIT BY SUNLIGHT ONLY

LITTLE BOY

Do you think this is enough to  
protect me and my daddy?

The LITTLE BOY is visibly afraid, but shows a naive hope to the camera / SARENA then looks up and over to the nervous but likable nicely dressed man (sleeves rolled up) by the window, as he scans the outside... The camera follows the LITTLE BOY's view / movement. The nervous man turns from the window and stares straight into the camera

SARENA (VO):

I don't want to go back here  
either. Why can't I just leave this  
behind?

INT. DAY COMFY, FIRESIDE, COFFEE IN HAND

JOSH is gone, presumably outside, and SARENA makes an attempt to recover the conversation.

SARENA

OHMYGOSH, yeah! ... I'm good. Glad to be back. I need to be here with my family , my boys - Glad to be done with all that stuff in the past. (PAUSE) There is this guy at the grocery store...

EMILY

Good. Good. You're adjusting back to civil life so well.

SARENA

I decided that I had given enough of myself, you know?

EMILY

You had a tough time there for a while, didn't you?

SARENA

I always wanted to make a difference, but, I knew that season had ended when the assignments and the intent became morally ambiguous.

EMILY

How'd you get out? I mean, is there a way? (EMILY watches SARENA intently at this question)

This time SARENA intentionally thinks back:

INT. DAY - LARGE OFFICE: MANY BUSY WORKER BEES BUZZING ABOUT

SARENA is walking down an aisle or side corridor of this massive office space, past cubicles, busy people all around her, but no one stopping her gait or getting in her way. The camera leads her above, with a very wide angle as she walks with purpose through a doorway into a large, bare office. It is a minimalistic space, with a desk on one end, near the windows - an executive's office. She stops in front of the desk. A man sitting behind it, motions for her to sit down as he speaks on his phone. Undeterred, and unflinching, SARENA removes her gun, badge and wedding ring. she puts the gun and badge down on the desk, and throws the wedding ring at the BOSS OF POWER.

(CONTINUED)

SARENA

I QUIT!

Sarena turns and starts out as the BOSS OF POWER struggles to get off of his call and stand up while motioning to her wildly and raising his voice.

BOSS OF POWER

(To phone) Hold on, hold, hold on,  
hey hold on a moment, Thank you!

(To SARENA) Sarena wait! (To Phone)  
No, I have to call you back. I'll  
Call you back.

The BOSS OF POWER tries to speak directly to SARENA but she has already left his office. The vision stutters out as she leaves, and SARENA is again back with EMILY, in her house.

INT. DAY COMFY, FIRESIDE, COFFEE IN HAND

SARENA

I just quit. You know?

EMILY

You are a brave woman. How are you  
holding up - I mean, really? Any  
wacky dreams?

SARENA

(Impulsively) No. I'm good. Why do  
you ask? I have everything I could  
ever ask for...

SARENA drifts off to another memory. This one is more visceral, more personal.

EXT. DAY COLD - SNOWY IN FRONT OF SARENA'S HOUSE

SARENA, clothed in only underwear and her nightgown runs from the house urgently leaping from the porch, then falls and lands on her knees in the fresh powder, all alone, absolutely fixated on cleansing herself, seeing in her mind's eye another Flashback to a time when she was incarcerated in a makeshift cell, back when she was still a field agent, and had just killed a guard with a shiv, blood all over her hands. She grabs the guard's rifle preparing to kill the next one coming to get her from outside the cell, desperation and focus in her eyes. As she re-lives this moment in her mind, we see her in the snow, furiously scrubbing it all over her bare arms, legs and face - anyplace that she remembers the guard's blood getting on her.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY (VO):

Are ya sure? You know I'm here for  
you Sarena, and for your boys.

SARENA snaps out of her remembrance at EMILY's words "Are ya  
sure?" and slowly returns to the comfort of her house.

INT. DAY COMFY, FIRESIDE, COFFEE IN HAND

SARENA stares off for a long moment out the window watching  
her kids play gleefully in the crisp air on and around the  
playground. She's glad to see them playing so well together,  
but feels a loss at the same time.

SARENA

Yah. Thanks Em. This is my own life  
now, and I am glad for it and I am  
glad that I made it back on my own.

Starting with SARENA's monologue, the scene changes:

SARENA (VO)

(Serious) Admittedly, there were  
some times when I felt like the  
whole of Eastern Europe was out to  
get me, but honestly, I am grateful  
for the breath in my lungs, and the  
beating heart in my chest. I've got  
no reason to complain.

INT. DAY - BRACKISH, EXTREMELY COLD, OLD BARN, MILITANT  
HIDEOUT, MAKESHIFT PRISON CELL

The KINGPIN saunters into the area where SARENA is being  
held and goes into her cell with GUARD 1. GUARD 1 holds a  
rifle, and GUARD 2 sits at a desk, nearby. a Coffee cup is  
on the desk, and his rifle leans on it with the stock in the  
dirt.

KINGPIN

Well, well, I guess we'll see wont  
we? It'll only be a small bit of  
time until we find your precious  
MOLE, right? Yes, we know you had  
your own designs for him, but I own  
this place. You really had no  
chance. So Then... you both can rot  
in here together! Ha ha ha ha ha  
ha! (He pauses, looks at her, then  
starts to leave)

(CONTINUED)



SARENA

(finding her confidence) You'll never find him! He's got a two day head start on you, which is more than he needs.

KINGPIN halts, and turns back to SARENA, challenged.

SARENA (CONTINUED)

He's got friends in every town and village from here to the Check Republic.

SARENA

He speaks a dozen languages, and knows every local custom.

KINGPIN

Nothing you can say now is of any interest to me. You will simply do what I say, or die with the rest.

SARENA (CONTINUED)

He'll blend in, disappear, you'll never see him again... unless, he wants to be found. (she smirks at this)

KINGPIN motions to GUARD 1. He immediately takes the stock of his rifle and butts it into SARENA's head, dropping her to the ground. The two guards chuckle, and the KINGPIN leaves with a flippant gesture.

KINGPIN

OK, you may have it your way. I will leave you to your little delights. Good evening.

The Closest Guard to SARENA, GUARD 1, starts to lock the "cell" but stops when KINGPIN is gone, and goes back in saying:

GUARD 1

Now, lets have some real fun, ha ha

The other guard is now seated at the desk, with his legs up, and chuckles while starting to bring his coffee mug up to his lips. GUARD 1 creeps into the cell with the intention of raping SARENA, but suddenly and swiftly falls with a yelp, then a last breath, when his legs are swept and he is stabbed (not seen in frame). The Vision ends abruptly, and SARENA returns to the present once again.

INT. DAY COMFY, FIRESIDE, COFFEE IN HAND

EMILY chuckles and sips her coffee briefly.

EMILY

So, what about this grocery store guy? David, right?

SARENA

What about him? Ha ha!

EMILY

What's he like?

SARENA

Oh, I dunno. Cute smile, fast with the produce?

EMILY

(Big Pause) Well, It seems like you are really doing well. I was really worried about you when we hadn't heard from you for a year. I didn't know if I could find another BFF, you know? (cries)

SARENA

It's OK, Em. I'm here now, and I am so glad that it was you here looking after them. You told them how I loved and missed them right? The thought of them was the only thing keeping me going.

EMILY

So, you havent had any trouble with Civi life since you've been back? No visions of past events?

SARENA

No, really. (pregnant pause) I am so relieved and happy to be home. I was just thinking earlier about a craft that I wanted to do with the boys - make slingshots!

EMILY

You're sure?

SARENA

Yes. What's going on, Emily? What's with the 20 questions?

(CONTINUED)

EMILY

(suddenly cold) Then, under the terms of your contract to the Agency, I am recalling you to active duty.

SARENA

Ok, what? What are you saying?

EMILY

Under section 323, sub-section 17, paragraph 11, you have satisfactorily passed preliminary psych evaluations, and have been commanded to report to fort hood for further instructions and assignment. (EMILY's face changes for a moment, touched) I'm sorry, Sarena.

SARENA

losing color in her face) WHAT?  
WHAT? NO! WHAT?!

SARENA backs up and gets up to standing by the window, then sharply looks out to her boys, who are unaware of the impending doom inside the house. She moves away from the window.

SARENA

I quit! You can't make me leave my family again. I've already given the best years of my life - and in exchange for what!?

EMILY

(much more grave) Sub section 17 is quite clear, Sarena. I am sorry. They need you to finish your last mission properly. Contact the mole - your the only one who can... Please come with me, or I will have you forcibly escorted.

SARENA

No. No. I can't believe that you... why you? Why couldn't I tell... After all this time, all the phone calls from the field, your prayers and letters... When did they turn you? (pause, searching)

(CONTINUED)

Both EMILY and SARENA slowly head towards the front door of the house - EMILY trying to move quickly, and SARENA hesitating.

EMILY

You're surprised... I always wanted your life, Sarena, even this part...

SARENA

Please at least let me say goodbye to my boys, PLEASE!

EMILY

Of course. We are fair. There's no need to be rough when roughness isn't required.

Both Women emerge from the house, and SARENA motions and calls for her boys to come over to her.

EXT. DAY - SUNNY, IN FRONT OF HOUSE

As SARENA and EMILY step down from the porch, the two youngest boys, ELI and JOSHUA run to SARENA gleefully to meet her on the grass. A white car with black tinted windows is parked in front of the house in the driveway, the two rear passenger doors open slightly. Both Boys grab onto her and hug her one at a time.

SARENA

I have always loved you. I never will stop loving you, even after I am dead and gone.

The Boys respond in their own fashion. Then SARENA looks to the eldest, who is pouting up in the playground tower. She motions to him, but he crosses his arms, and looks away, sad and angry, like he knows what is happening.

JOSHUA

Mommy will you come and play the super-hero game with us?

EMILY

You know, I envy you. You... at least had a chance at happiness. I'm sorry Sarena. I didn't mean to betray you. This was not what I signed up for.

(CONTINUED)

SARENA

Yeah, me either. (glaring) There's no one to trust, no one to believe in anymore, but the Almighty. Lets just get on with it. I'm not dead or gone yet.

SARENA grabs EMILY's arm when EMILY tries to push her to the white car. Two men get out of the back, but EMILY motions to them to stop. SARENA looks back once more to her boys and squeezes EMILY's arm

SARENA

Tell them to get back into the car, Em. (A beat) (to JOSHUA) You're gonna have to play without me this time, sweet boy, OK?

EMILY

(mutters and motions to the general direction of the car and men)

JOSHUA

Ok, Mommy (he tries to smile at her)

SARENA continues to hold EMILY's arm, and EMILY pulls at it, wincing as They both walk slowly to the car.

SARENA

Tell me my boys will be taken care of.

EMILY

They will! They will!

SARENA removes her grip and gets into one of the back seats, with resolve in her face while fighting back the tears. One of the men relocates to the front passenger seat, and the other sits in the back with SARENA. EMILY gets in, starts the car, and drives down the driveway, and out of view.

SARENA (VO):

That day I couldn't use my training, or stop the memories that were haunting me. Maybe it was a blessing in disguise, a catharsis. I just hope I make it through this. I hope I get the closure I need - and another opportunity to know and love my boys.

EXT. DAY EUROPEAN SIDEWALK CAFE

SARENA sits in a small cafe, sipping an espresso, serenity seemingly all around her. Swiftly, her gaze shifts, and a man sits down in front of her with his back to the camera. He looks familiar and begins to talk to her vehemently. SARENA remains calm and listens. She then motions for them both to get up and leave. He starts up, and in one swift move, she cuffs him to herself, spins him around, pulls him close. We now see both of their faces close-up, hers behind his. He struggles and is clearly confused and sad and angry all at once, but resigns himself to the situation, after realizing that she has him pinned.

SARENA

I'm sorry, Victor. It was either  
your family or mine.

She starts to push forward, and they walk away.

-FIN-

HAMARTIA

- a fatal flaw. In this case, the fatal flaw is SARENA's inability to lead a double life without cracking, to confront the current reality, and forget the past, or to NOT lie under pressure - as she was so trained - by the agency.