

The large man pulled a red fire ax from hooks over the rear door. Dark smoky tendrils oozed from his eyes. “Big Mike gots Red.”

“What am I supposed to do?” she cried, following him out the front door.

He kicked at the ballast and swung the axe as if it were a marching baton. “You gonna let ‘em take Big Mike away, Red?”

The question dragged itself over the red coals of hurtful memories. The seething black fog enveloping Big Mike’s body reached deep within her. Rage lifted Red into the sky in front of him. An unrelenting anger brought bright flashes to her eyes and transformed her hair in a crackling blue nimbus.

“They’re not taking you from me,” she thundered. Nobody’s going to do that to me again. Ever.

“No!” Glory came to her side in a rush of wind, the girl’s eyes frantic behind her square glasses. “Red, what are you doing?”

Big Mike hefted his axe with a laugh. “We take ‘em together, Red.”

Glory tugged at Red’s shoulders. “Don’t listen to him! He’s trying to make you mad. Make you into something worse.”

Max skidded to a stop on the caboose’s porch and gaped up at her. “Think she’s already worse.” He ducked back inside, slamming the door shut.

Glory struggled to stay in place as winds rattled the ballast beneath them. Her tears sparkled in the lightning of Red’s growing fury. “We’re supposed to go to Topeka.” She sobbed. “You’re going to hear that bell and be happy. Red, please stop! Storms blow away and die. You don’t want to die, do you?”

Red glared beyond her friend to where the marshal and his deputies stood on the tracks; their advance halted at the sight of her. “I’m not the one who’ll die.” She hissed, her mind afire with the heady realization that those yegg and their master feared her. Roaring with all the pent up anger she possessed, Red swept Glory aside and launched herself at those awful men. The maelstrom of her emotions kept pace, rising in a whirling column of stone torn from the roadbed.

Now her enemies ran for their lives. The sight of men scrambling like ants only served to goad her temper with a giddy sense of power. She reveled in her newfound might, just like Big Mike said she

should. Fine. Let those bad men shelter themselves in those flimsy little cars. She was strong now. Strong enough to tear those coaches into kindling. Nothing would save them.

Except something did. Their savior wasn't Glory. She couldn't even hear her friend's entreaties over the roar in her ears. But Red heard the tinkling glass when Law Keeper's lamp shattered, and saw the engine's light extinguish as the locomotive rocked helplessly in her winds. Hurt an engine? Her?

This isn't supposed to be me! Red wailed, cringing from the monster she'd become. Frigid blasts of fear washed over her to chase away the lightning in a moment of terrible realization. She'd become yegg.

Red screamed. Frantic, she ripped away the anger fueling her whirlwind as one might cast off burning clothes. Naked, she staggered back to the caboose where even Big Mike took shelter. Glory, however, remained outside, grimly hanging on to the porch railing. Her friend stretched out an arm with a wrenching cry.

Red reached for Glory's grasping fingers, but couldn't focus. Couldn't even find her own hands. More than just the winds flew off into the night. She was being torn apart as well. "Help me!"