

2022-10-12 Why do you shoot?

Breathe. Hold. Aim. Wait.

Crack

The target drops, and I move to look for the next practice dummy through this blasted Ural fog.

Grayson's just ahead, cleanly pivoting from point to point, each shot from her old rifle a bullseye. God I want to be that smooth one day.

Stop. Focus.

Breath. Hold. Aim. Wait.

Crack

The wooden dummy's still standing, and Grayson's moving further ahead. Of course the morning chill doesn't bother her. I don't have time for this!

Breathe. *Crack*

Target's down.

Breathe. *Crack*

Another one.

I can't remember the next three shots, but somehow I'm standing in the weak November dawn, finished with our training course while Grayson's last target is still standing.

Crack

And now it's not, and she's walking over with a small smile twisting her craggy face, trusty rifle slung over her shoulder.

Note to future Caitlyn: when carrying your rifle casually, cant it slightly outward to look just cocky enough without being obvious.

But I know why she's so smug.

"Why'd you let me win? Did my parents pay you?"

"Your parents paid me to look after you, young Kiramman."

"You held your shot!"

"I was watching you, and I don't need to set any records in my own back yard."

"We were racing, and you let me win."

"I know why I shoot, to protect our village. It needs me."

A pause, while the wind picks up around our patched-up greatcoats.

"That was good shooting, Caitlyn. You have rhythm."

"I was trying to win." I try to stay angry, but don't want to sound petulant. I don't want her going easy on me again.

"You want more than that, the way you're pushing yourself. Why do you shoot?"