

# Such stuff as dreams are made on

by Tanaqui

Something woke Jake just as it was growing light. Heather lay spooned against him, warm and heavy, as he sought for whatever had brought him out of sleep. A moment later, he heard it again: an unhappy whimper from the woman cradled in his arms. A shudder ran through her.

"Heather." He put his hand on her shoulder and squeezed it gently.

She started awake, turning toward him as he propped himself on one elbow so he could look down at her. Her gaze as it met his held confusion. Then she shook her head as if to clear it. "Jake?" She sounded a little uncertain, though it was a week and more since they'd started spending their nights together.

"Uh-huh." He brushed a strand of hair back from her forehead. "You okay?"

"Yeah." She sucked in a breath and turned her head away. "Bad dream."

Jake dropped his hand back to her shoulder and gave it another squeeze. The answer didn't surprise him. He was more surprised, now it had happened, that this was the first time since they'd been together. "New Bern?" he asked softly.

She didn't answer for a moment, although he could feel she'd tensed again. Then, still with her gaze averted, she gave a slight shake of the head. "The mine."

He knew what she meant by the whispered words: the old gypsum mine where Constantino had temporarily held her prisoner, while making the final plans to transport her to New Bern to be executed. From where Jake, with Beck's help, had rescued her—or maybe she'd rescued him. Where she'd cut Constantino's throat as the bastard was about to put a bullet in Jake's head.

Before he had a chance to reply, Heather had rolled back on to her side, pulling away from him. The cold air flowing between them raised goosebumps on his skin. "Stupid, huh?" she muttered, so low he could scarcely hear. "Keep dreaming about being back in that stupid hut, and it gets hotter and hotter and smaller and smaller." He saw her half raise her hand, palm flat, as if she was trying to push back imaginary walls closing in on her, probably not aware she was doing so. "And then that man comes in—." A shudder ran through her.

He knew what she meant by that as well: one of Constantino's thugs, who'd snuck into the hut to do God knows what to Heather. Which had been what had finally precipitated Jake into action, ignoring Beck's whispered protests.

"—and then it's not him, it's... Constantino." Heather's voice cracked a little as she said the name.

Listening to her speak, Jake wanted nothing more than to pull her into his arms and hold her tight and never let her go, but he resisted the urge to reach out for her. If there was one thing he'd finally understood about her over the past few weeks, it was that she didn't like to trouble other people with her troubles and that she was good—very good—at pretending she was all right when she wasn't. He was afraid that if he showed her how much seeing her like this made him ache, or how easily she could comfort *him* by allowing him to comfort her, she'd lock it back inside. And then

she'd go on thinking she was stupid for having these nightmares—after all that had happened to her; enough to give anyone a lifetime of bad dreams—when she was the bravest woman he knew. Instead, he said, just as quietly, hearing the croak in his own voice, “Guess that makes me stupid, too.”

She barely moved, but he could tell by the way she tilted her head back just a fraction that she was listening. Swallowing hard, he confessed something he'd never admitted to anyone before—something he didn't think he'd ever be able to tell anyone but her. “Sometimes I dream I'm back there, too. Constantino's got me on my knees and—.”

He stopped, and she turned to look at him, her eyes wide in the dim light. “And then I wake up,” he added lamely.

She reached up a hand and cupped his face, caressing his cheek comfortingly with her thumb, and he knew she knew what he hadn't said: *and then Constantino pulls the trigger*. He'd had plenty of guns pointed at him before and after that, but that was the only time he'd truly thought he was going to die, that there'd been no possibility of a way out. And instead, Heather had saved him. In more ways than one.

He did take her into his arms, then, burying his face in her hair. “We're here,” he whispered. “We're here and Constantino's dead. Can't make the dreams go away....”

She held him as tightly as he was holding her. “I know,” she murmured against his shoulder, her breath tickling his skin. “I know. But now....”

*Now you'll be there when I wake up.*

**Disclaimer:** These stories are based on the Junction Entertainment/Fixed Mark Productions/CBS Paramount Television series *Jericho*. They were written for entertainment only; the author does not profit from them nor was any infringement of copyright intended.