

Festivus Progressive Story – Steve's Page

The 'knock-knock' crack on the door came as a jolt to Emily. She sprang up as if alerted to danger. Being all alone in a cabin in the woods makes one forget there is an outside world. Arriving at the door she asked, "Who's there?"

"High school summer love," was the cryptic reply.

She paused bewildered, but then reflexively inquired, "High school summer love who?"

With disappointment the voice answered, "*You said you'd never forget.*"

In a quick twist the lock was removed and the door flung open. "John! Is it really you?"

"Indeed it is." He had made his way back to find her.

Her surprise changed to fear. She scolded him, "You shouldn't have come. It isn't safe for you." But he would have none of it.

"Get one thing straight," his voice sternly insisted. "No damn curse rules my life."

Ever since the Festivus curse had befallen him, strange things surrounded his life. All of these were magnified many, many, many, many, many times more when he travelled up to old-man Johnson's cabin in Festefus County.

"Okay then, what's our next move?" Emily rightly queried.

"We take the fight to our enemy and defeat this dreadful curse." She could see in his eyes there was no turning back now.

And so they sacked up and made their way out into the snowy abyss with just the packs on their back, a buttload of attitude, Emily's trusty dog Oscar, and John's fully equipped, real-life Snow Cat (just like the one from G.I. Joe).

Out in that harsh world awaited them trials they could not imagine. But they had each other, the Snow Cat, and a deep desire to set right what was once wronged. Oh, and they might have magic capabilities. That remains to be seen. As does so much else. So. Much. Else. . . .

Festivus Progressive Story – Eva's Page

Despite many protests from Emily, they decided to set out for their journey as the sunset and painted the snow fallen ground an array of oranges and reds. After a few hours of travel, a low rumble emerged from the Snow Cat. Emily and John turned to each other with faces of disbelief.

"You're joking," Emily said. "We forgot to fill up with gas, and we're stuck in the middle of nowhere, and of course we chose to leave at night."

"It wasn't my idea to leave so soon, I would have been fine waiting until morning," answered John.

"Shut up John, you were most definitely the one who, and I quote "Just couldn't wait to start the adventure," Emily snapped back.

I will skip ahead because truth be told, they sat and argued for 10 more minutes. They eventually decided it would be best to start walking to find gas. John knew of a place that was relatively close by and the walk would only take an hour if they walked like a Winkler.

As they walked, Oscar following in stride, they talked about all that had happened since they last saw each other. This mostly consisted of discussing movies and disagreeing about many things, especially the new Star Wars movies. After a long, harrowing 15 minutes. Oscar sat down in the snow. When John picked him up to carry him, Oscar wriggled out and plopped into the soft snow, and refused to keep walking.

"Ugh," sighed Emily. "Looks like we're gonna have to stay here for the night."

"But we've only been going for 15 minutes!" John exclaimed.

"I know," said Emily. "But when Oscar is tired, there is no going on. We can get to the gas station in the morning."

So they set up camp for the night. They built a fire and roasted marshmallows (really how do you remember marshmallows but not gas?!). Oscar fell asleep almost immediately and Emily decided if they rested now, they could get an early start in the morning. So they slept, using Oscar as their warmth in the cold.

John rose with the sun the next morning. Shocked by the cold he scrambled to start the fire again. Much to his surprise when he turned to get the firewood he saw a red plastic gas can. Attached was a note that read- *"Here is some gas. Thank you for the dog."*

"EMILY WAKE UP!" John yelled. "OSCAR IS GONE."

Emily awoke with a jolt and saw John sprinting off back toward the Snow Cat, red gas can in hand.

Festivus Progressive Story – April & Elise's Page

As the early morning sun reflects on the snow, Emily yells at John, "First you take us for an adventure into the woods after dark, forget gas for the Snow Cat, make us sleep outside in the cold snow, and now you've lost Oscar?!"

John shouts back, "Let me remind you that it was your idea to set up camp and sleep outside. Why can't that dog walk for more than 15 minutes? This isn't all my fault."

Emily picks up the gas can. The snow crunches under her boots as she runs back to the vehicle. She quickly adds the gas and starts the engine. "Come on, let's go find that dog!"

"Who do you think left us a note? And why would they trade gas for Oscar?" John asks.

"Look, there at the note. There is a clue. It's signed -G. Bad guys from NYC." Emily shouts over the Snow Cat engine.

"I bet it's the Gangsters of NYC. I just listened to a podcast about these guys in NYC kidnapping dogs and using them as distraction dogs in crime spree. The gangsters take stuff from stores and then make it look like the dog knocked the display over. They especially like cute dogs. People can't be mad at a cute dog for anything," John explained.

"Well then, it sounds like we are going to NYC. Hop on," says Emily.

Festivus Progressive Story – Kevin's Page

The Snow Cat motored its way slowly toward New York City. It moved at its top speed of 20mph, but as Emily drove it through the snow with John's hands on her waist as he rode on the back, she wished it was going slower. It's no wonder that Emily had a sense of dread about returning to NYC. She'd rather spend 100 more nights outside in the cold snow than return to that city. She knew she couldn't avoid the demons of her past forever, but she had hoped it wouldn't be this soon. And not with John... Things hadn't been good between Emily and John for a long time. This little camping adventure had started out as a last-ditch attempt to rekindle what their relationship had once been. If he found out about her past, it might be enough to drive him away permanently. But the note the dognappers left was clear. The signature "-G. Bad guys from NYC" could only mean one thing.

Emily was alone and vulnerable when she arrived in NYC those many years ago. She needed protection. Granado was a cold bastard, but he was good to his people, and once you drew blood for his cartel you were set. Cocaine, alcohol, money; she'd had more than any person deserves in a lifetime during the 3 years she spent working for Granado. She'd killed for Granado and bled for him; and when she left the cartel, she ensured she had done so without owing anyone anything. Apparently Granado took Emily's departure as badly as she feared he might, though. She was almost impressed that he had been able to find her at all. Granado always said that the only way anyone leaves the NYC bad guys cartel was in a casket. Apparently, he meant it.

Emily knew she would have to reach out to some of her old contacts once she got to the city. She would have to become that person who she had been when she was a trigger puller for Granado. In those days she solved problems with C4, a silenced Glock, or a straight razor. Would she be able to track down Oscar without having to cross those uncrossable lines?

One of the only things holding Emily and John's tenuous relationship together was their dog, Oscar. Emily deserved a normal life, and if she needed to turn New York City into an abattoir to get Oscar back, that's what she would do.

Was it fair to call Oscar a “dog”? He was so much more than man’s best friend. He was a semi-sentient killing machine, and Emily had stolen him out from under Granado’s nose. John didn’t sign up for this, but it was too late for all of that now, if he wanted to live. Even Granado wasn’t aware of Oscar’s full potential if weaponized. Emily knew the activation keywords and Granado’s men were trying to crack the code to open the Pandora's box that was the Oscar Protocol . They had no idea what they were running headlong into and from the ransom note, Emily knew they were on the verge of unwittingly unleashing Oscar.

With the Snow Cat flying into the unknown, Emily activated her radio headset, ready to tell John everything - to give him the choice she never had, to walk away from this life - when the Snow Cat leapt upward, twisting into a massive snow bank. She heard the ravenous howl of a beast once thought to be myth - a yeti. The genetically engineered beast roared as it sent both occupants flying. The same engineering that had produced Oscar had also produced these behemoths - unintelligent, but incredibly strong and territorial.

Emily’s years as an Enforcer coupled with her reinforced spine protected her, but the same could not be said for John. The yeti pounced on him first, crushing and killing him instantly. As it turned it’s sickly yellow eyes to her, she focused her shamanistic senses and reached out to the elemental spirits, calling for aid. They felt her rage and horror at this abomination and leant their powers - fire poured from her hands and the yeti fell, screaming in its death throes.

There was no time for mourning - the yeti were more brazen than ever - if the Oscar Protocol was enabled, there would be no end to the bio-engineered horrors that would be unleashed on mankind.

Emily, ever the devout shaman, gave thanks to the elements but knew this would not be the last time she would need their powers - they were as horrified as she was at the biological abominations being unleashed on the world through the ignorance and thirst for power of men like Granado.

Emily righted the Snow Cat and gathered her totems, scattered by the crash. She would have use of them soon and prayed the elements would open a path through the blizzard so that she could reach New York City - and Oscar - before it was too late.

Festivus Progressive Story – Angie’s Page

Brody sat high atop the hill overlooking the basin below as an engine roared in the distance. The wind howled and the snow was coming down hard helping to conceal his position. For once, the intel was right and with any luck his plan will work – it had to this time, for the sake of his people.

The Snow Cat came into view over the ridge like the intercepted transmission revealed it would. His hands ached from mounding the snow in the only obvious path, but it was clear his efforts paid off when the vehicle came to an abrupt stop at the embankment. Just as Brody began to second guess putting his trust in an erratic beast, he watched it snarl to life and throw the Snow Cat’s riders into the air like rag dolls. These creatures were unpredictable except when it came to the promise of a good kill which sickened Brody, but was a means to an end.

The yeti made an easy victim out of the first rider, however, what came next could not be explained. A human was holding its own against one of these abominations - by hurling fire from its hands! The beast went down before his eyes and left Brody stunned. He was led to believe the genetic engineering stopped at the creatures, but this – this can’t be.

Among Brody’s people, the Oscar Protocol was believed to be the savior that could redeem their once flourishing city. If they could get their hands on it, all would be restored. Had Granado lied to them - was Brody being used while his family and friends are left to perish? The only thing that could possibly make sense is that the same engineering that produced the yetis also produced this “human” before him. But what does this have to do with Oscar?

Brody was slowly coming to his senses as the rider removed their helmet and wiped their brow. From the silhouette, he could tell it was a woman. She appeared to be gathering items from the ground and what looked to be something with the words New Year City and O.S.C.A.R. written on the side. As he lowered the binoculars, he wondered if that’s what Granado sent him here to collect that was worth committing murder. He had been so close to getting it, but now he questioned what IT even is and how it could possibly help his people.

Brody looked on as the woman finished regrouping. She righted the Snow Cat and turned his direction as she replaced her helmet. To his surprise, this wasn’t just any woman. Was that the Enforcer - Emily, what did they do to you?

The female figure closed the shield on her helmet to hide a scarred face. Emily didn't want Brody to see her disfigured after Conner Inc. had gotten ahold of her. Brody had heard of them taking in orphans and running experiments, but he had no idea his childhood friend was among them. He knew she had dreamed of being an Enforcer for New Year City, but that job had only been given to males as far as he knew. Maybe things had gotten so bad for his people that no males were left to take on the task. Or maybe someone had developed a weapon that was so painful to adapt, that only a person capable of dealing with the pain of childbirth could handle.

Emily held up her arms and told Brody to stay away because sometimes she's unable to control the new abilities that fire from her hands. Brody asked what the object was that she had picked up off the ground. Emily knew she wouldn't be able to b.s. her way with a lie because Brody would be able to sniff it out by the sound of her voice. "It's a Fluorescent Motionatronic Capacitor." Brody's eyes lit up not believing that the FMC really existed. If that's what Granado sent him there to steal, what had he planned on using it for? He'd only heard stories of its power and nobody believed it was real.

Emily questioned Brody to find out why he was even in the mountains to begin with. The blizzard was fairly impossible for someone to travel in without a Snow Cat and here he was. Apparently Brody had a secret of his own. He was born on the ice planet Hoth before moving to Earth and meeting Emily in grade school. His parents told him he could never tell even his closest friends because they would treat him as an outcast. Spending the first five years of his life on Hoth had given him the ability to handle subzero temperatures and maneuver through the snow with ease. Brody just shrugged his shoulders and said "I was out for a hike to try and stay in shape". Emily knew he was lying and continued to press. "Why would you have a pair of binoculars and be perched on the top of that hill?"

Brody wasn't a very good liar so he told her the truth. "Granado sent me to retrieve an object but wouldn't tell me what it was" he said. He'd been told the future of his people depended on whatever it was that he was supposed to get. The intel had given him the location and he had spent 3 days setting up the path that would lead right to him. He'd taken a yeti with him to handle any resistance, but wasn't expecting an Enforcer, much less one that could shoot flames from its hands. The whole thing made no sense to him.

Did anyone even know what the Oscar Protocol was or is it just something imaginary to give his people hope when nothing could actually save them? Brody wanted to know why Emily was sent and just what exactly O.S.C.A.R. stood for on the side of the cylindrical FMC. As he began to ask, a flare went up no further than a mile away and gunshots rang through the air. Suddenly the question at hand seemed less important, and survival had taken precedence.

Emily’s internal alarm went off just as Brody lunged towards her, both hands grasping the FMC. Emily met eyes with Brody through her face shield and all she could see was determination – a man on a mission.

“What are you doing?!” She shouted as she ripped the FMC from Brody’s grip.

“This is my directive! It has to be,” he responded, as he lunged again, but this time was met with a searing burn from Emily’s palm. “Why else would I have run into you on this mountain after so many years? This is what Granado sent me for, and I don’t intend on leaving without it. If you think our friendship is worth more than the life of my people, you’ve made a grave mistake, Em,” said Brody as he pulled his blaster from his holster, striking the side of Emily’s helmet with the butt of the gun.

As Emily reeled back, trying to catch her balance, the shield from her helmet released, fully exposing her face. Brody stopped in his tracks and lowered his weapon. “What – what happened to you? Who did that? I’ve known a lot of Enforcers in my time, but I always thought they were the ones dealing out that type of damage, not receiving it,” Brody said as Emily struggled to get her shield back down.

“What do you care? You left, Brody,” snapped Emily as she held her palm towards Brody to keep him at bay. “You weren’t there when Conner Inc. came in and took over our sector. You weren’t there to see our rooms turned into personal torture chambers disguised as research labs. You marched on with Granado and left me to fend for myself in that hell.” Emily was backing away as the explosions grew more frequent and much closer to the pair.

“You think I had a choice? You think I wanted to leave you behind?” asked Brody. “Granado chose me! You don’t think I thought about you everyday after hearing Conner Inc. had control over the sector we grew up in? Knowing you were there, and I was with Granado tore me to pieces. But I didn’t have a choice then, just like I don’t have a choice now.” Brody raised the blaster and put Emily in his sights. Just as he was about to pull the trigger and as Emily’s palm glowed with a burst of fire, an ID9 seeker droid rose above the crest of the mountain, firing a blast at Emily. Brody struggled to see through the smoke, but as it cleared, the reality of what had just happened set in. Brody reached Emily as the droid clasped the FMC with one of its five metallic limbs and began to make its way down the mountain.

“Em! Em! Wake up! Please Em, wake up!” Brody pled. He removed Emily’s helmet and saw the true extent of Conner Inc.’s torture. It was true. It was all true. All the rumors that Granado shrugged off and ignored, they were all spot on.

Just as Brody began to lift Emily out of the snow, a refurbished E-XD recon droid appeared as if out of thin air. “Agent Brody. Liege Lord Granado demands a report. Please report to base on priority.”

“Okay. Let me see if she is viable.” Brody responded.

“That will not be possible,” the droid said, raising his blaster arm toward Brody. Brody knew the droid would eliminate him if he made any movement toward his own weapon that lay a few feet away in the snow. He reluctantly rose from the snow and began his descent down the mountain with the

weaponized machine – glancing back at Emily’s still body until he could no longer make her out in the snow.

“Who is Granado?” Brody wondered to himself. “Who am I, for that matter? I always wondered about the stories I was told but seeing Em today, seeing what they did to her. And I still considered killing her.” Brody was spinning inside of his own head. Would Emily make it off that mountain? What is Granado going to use this FMP for? What is O.S.C.A.R? Brody’s mind raced as he entered the camouflaged base at the bottom of the mountain.

Festivus Progressive Story – Lauren's Page

As Brody entered the base, he was immediately told to go down to the third layer to meet Liege Lord Granado. When Brody entered the layer, he felt like a fish swimming upstream through a current of trainees going on their first missions. As Brody walked past them, he had to wonder if they knew what they were getting themselves into once they walked through that steel door behind him. As the trainees left, Brody noticed something different, there were black devices on the back of their necks. He thought it was interesting but other than that he didn't think much of the devices.

Once the trainees were gone, Brody got to the door of Granado and performed the secret knock and his retinal scan. Granado welcomed Brody and immediately asked "Why did you not follow protocol and terminate the competition?" Brody retorted "I was shocked to see an old friend that I was going to have to kill. I had my gun at the ready until I saw her face was distorted by the torture she had been through during her stint at Conner's Inc. I will take my punishment now."

Granado started to chuckle and said, "There is no punishment today since the droid did not kill Emily, she was stunned by the rubber bullet that was shot. You still have a chance to redeem yourself. "

"Why do you believe I can complete this mission when I could not the first time," asked Brody.

"I know you will complete the task at hand; you are my top agent, and you know the consequences of failure," said Granado.

Before Brody left, he asked Granado, "What were those black gadgets on the back of the trainees' necks?"

"They are part of O.S.C.A.R.'s new ways of helping get missions across to the trainees so they will not be at the base as often."

Brody thought that was not the actual reason but after being let off without a punishment he walked away to the barracks to recuperate from his day out on the mountain and seeing Emily again after such a long time.

Once he was back in his bed, he had to think of a way that he was going to save Emily. He couldn't kill her now; she was his friend, and he did betray her when they were young. He had to figure out a way to save her life and his as well. As he started to plan his own mission, he knew he needed the help of one of the trainees. He just didn't know who he could trust. As he walked out, he saw his little sister, Norah, and asked her to come with him.

Once they were alone, Brody started to tell her the plan for all of them to escape the control from Granado. Once the plan was laid out the sibling team got to work. What was going to come from this duo no one knew, but they hoped they would get out of the assassin system all together.

"Guards, escort Brody to the fifth layer."

"Wait, Lord Granado, nobody ever returns from the fifth layer alive."

"Neither will you, Brody. Neither will you."

Norah looks at her watch and knows it's time to leave without her brother. Brody's wild plan was always going to fail, but she couldn't resist the chance to escape from the clutches of the global assassination program. She knows the odds of completing the arduous journey up the mountain by herself are 50/50 at best, but she'll be dead within the hour if she stays in the barracks.

"Norah! Hurry! We have to remove O.S.C.A.R.'s device before the drone makes its next pass below the tree line."

"Emily? How are you still alive? Lord Granado's militia is working their way down from the summit and his guards are only a few hundred yards behind me."

"Your brother showed me the secret tunnel complex he had built through the mountain. He said to wait here until he came back and we'd leave together, like old times."

"He's dead. He was supposed to kill Lord Granado then meet me at the rendezvous point. After three hours of waiting, I had to leave before The Lord realized I was working with Brody."

Exhausted and tired, the women watch from the tunnels as the guards search for Norah's remains. The drone had located her O.S.C.A.R. box and fired three missiles that obliterated the entire area and created a clearing in the dense forest.

The guards were in such a hurry to confirm the kill that they failed to check the trail behind them. Suddenly, Emily saw one guard fall forward, then two, then three. The final two guards joined their comrades face down within seconds. A moment later, Brody emerges from the forest with a noticeable limp as he unscrews the silencer on Lord Granado's personal pistol.

"Ladies, even Lord Granado can't kill the world's top assassin. Pick up your jaws and let's get out of here before the others realize we're still alive."

Three weeks later and still not believing Bruno's tale, the miniature submarine finally surfaces off the coast of Brazil. Free at last, the three swim ashore to start a new life.