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The Secret

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BULL MARKET

“Yeah. A jungle. That’s what I wanted to be — a jungle explorer. Gimme a pith helmet, a machete, and an undiscovered country.”

She looked up. “Well, there are days when the machete would be useful,” she said.

“What jungle do you explore?”

“I’m between expeditions right now,” I said, puffing up with unwarranted confidence. “But you’re right. It’s all one big wicked jungle. Eat or be eaten.” I took a long sip of my coffee, watching her over the brim of my cup. The cup was empty, but she didn’t know that. Attitude is everything. I gave her my best French roast look — savoring the rich, fictitious liquid. Wary eyes watched.

She glanced at her watch, smiled politely and folded up the paper. I noticed blue ball-point scribbling in the margins.

“Nice doodles,” I said.

“Thanks,” she said. Flat and dry, but a tinge of amusement. She stashed the paper in a blue valise and pulled out a copy of Barron’s.

“Bear tracks?” I asked.

“More like the running of the bulls,” she muttered. The blue eyes looked up and smiled over the top of the magazine.

I swirled my imaginary brew, hoisted it to my lips and smiled into the empty cup.

—*Ron Edison*

THE SECRET

Autumn’s Trees
With burnished leaves
Saluting to the Sun.

Fermented Breeze
With fragrant ease
Whispers what’s to come.

— *Cindy DeFranco*