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Soul Seeker

I always wondered if I actually knew her. If this touching of her soul to mine was an effort on my part to understand her. It hardly seemed like it was, because it was too easy. No verbal communication. Not even miscommunication. But then again, it was something no other couple could share on the planet. My hands, with the large golden symbols of humanity's interlinked souls, would know everything of her by clasping her hands. A few seconds, our eyes steady on each other, and everything we were, everything we'd done, regretted, lusted for, all our sins and all our griefs, joys and sorrowful moments, were absorbed into each other.

But I am jumping ahead of myself. I'll return to the beginning, if such a cross-section of eternity exists, to relate the sequence of events leading up to the condition I am in, and shall be in, for as long as the earth orbits the sun.

Not a day trickles by that I don't think about the way those must have felt whom I slaughtered. I cared nothing for them or their souls. A pagan, I dared mock the notion of a soul. People were animals. I thought I was doing a favor to the elite who despised the existence of poor, criminal filth, and I couldn't see that the poorest and the filthiest of them all was me.

Years long past, my soul wrestled for adventure and my body followed. I didn't know up till that time in my life, that the body is a mere container for the soul, and that the soul is the essence of everything a person is. The soul is us, yet it is more than us as it knows about the Divine Space and it tries to tell us how to live fearfully in acknowledgment of this Space.

One who despises their soul, even not knowing it, burdens and then perverts their soul so that the soul wishes for its own destruction. The way to this destruction is to kill the body to release it. My soul was desperate more so than most of the other millions on the planet, and despised me more than I despised it. In so saying that, my soul being me, I despised myself.

I left my wife of barely two years, an adjunct instructor at a community college in the city named Adonis, where I had been born, grown up in, and lived up till this point. Where I would go and what I would do, I had no care for, no concern, no worry. Away from the mist-ridden morning streets, broken and burned I rushed, to

escape from the taxation of caring about anyone, anything. I hated them all. I hated the grind of waking, showering, work, worry and woe.

To be free for myself, I joined a group of rebels not unlike myself who partnered together in an alliance of trouble. We looked out for each other, namely for the safety of ourselves. Thousands of miles from the city I refused to call home, my soul prodded me to join a savage war in the barbaric country with no name. Gladly did I load my guns and sheathe my sword, to put to use the training engrained into me from Adonis so far away.

Nearly frothing with satisfaction did I join the elite's war against the poor downtrodden, slashing them down, shooting their bodies out of existence. Their souls mourned rather than condemned by savage hopelessness. But I could not see how the figures who jumped and fell before me released their souls. Those souls cried out and found peace, but I could not.

The countless I killed, the pleasures of generous rewards the physically beautiful, lavished rich adorned myself and the other soldiers with only gave rise to more discontent. Every night, I wondered what suicide would feel like. Nearly, I would cut myself. Just nearly. The sight of blood was the only thing that seduced my soul to silence for a few hours, and with those hours, I rested.

I hated everything, not just man, and

didn't know why. I sought always as one starved for food for something to satisfy and never found it. I was in bondage to my soul who sought to destroy me, to give me peace. Weeks of butchering turned into months, into years. My wife would not have recognized me if I'd turned up at her doorstep in this condition.

What was termed the crown of my looks, my thick, rich red hair, my bold green eyes and my physical build, slender but built, and the straight posture engraved into my upbringing, was riddled with dirt, tangles of a beard, cuts, blackened teeth. Not a spark of sanity remained in me. All the men I'd flown with to this forsaken place had died months ago. Those who partnered temporarily with me I knew not, wished never to know. I made no attachments to anyone and wandered the plains as a vagrant for hire.

The ageless war of riches against poverty never ended. Serfs downtrodden, starving, stole from their masters; their unrelentless masters killed them for it, stole their daughters of age for prostitution and killed the children. Those who were free, but poor and could not be brought into slaughter in an orderly manner, were tracked down by me and killed wherever I found them. I was filth, disease on the face of the earth. I didn't care.

The things I enjoyed besides setting innocent souls free was stealing, pleasures of false love, and watching the pain of others. I

loved to laugh, to ridicule, to feel like a beast afraid of nothing because of the destruction my soul sought.

After nearly two years of this lifestyle, or lack of living, I came upon a city quite modern for this country, and learned of a rich politician who sought a shameless butcher to destroy his enemies. I thought, maybe, it would prove a challenge, for I was bored. Therefore, I met with this oversized man, a cynical, unforgiving evil as myself, and was given half the reward upfront. Those he wished to kill were of the church, speaking out and winning people against his despotism.

I didn't care who they were. A few priests, whoever was in the church at the time—I killed them all with quick slashes. Barely did I hear their agonized cries. Their blood, my eyes had stopped seeing such months ago. I stepped through their crimson life to seek as a shadow, the others I hunted. A few more I killed, interrupting the prayers, which, at the time I didn't know, were for the rescuing of my soul. If I had known, I would have tortured them before death. There was nothing I despised more than false supplication on my behalf, when I couldn't see how plagued I was by the necessity to kill myself.

After two days of crossing names off the list of life, this small favor was accomplished and I returned to gain the other half of my reward. Only, he refused to see or acknowledge

me. Wishing for their destruction, I slaughtered every person in that black and golden mansion I crossed on my way to his demise.

The slug was trying to flee from me though I found him easily enough, exiting his garage in a limousine. Jumping atop the vehicle, slamming my sword straight through the roof where he sat, was too easy to satisfy me. I watched as the limousine swerved off the road, drove off a cliff.

Was this all? In life, there are five landmarks: birth, education, occupation, marriage, and death. Throughout the existence of this planet and the human, this cycle has repeated, doomed to repeat, cursed. I couldn't stand to linger on this thought for more than five seconds. Something in my chest thrust against my fleshy cage with the sorrow of it.

Only a few people have created a mark for themselves that others remember for thousands of years. Einstein, Napoleon, Christ, Hitler, Armstrong, Washington, Michelangelo, Gutenberg, Shakespeare. A few others, a few different reasons.

I was convinced these men and their achievements and marks on the intellectual geography of society would eventually fade too. They devised their greatness out of lust for remembrance, not for any noble or passionate idea. This is what I thought at the time. And they too, strove for remembrance in vain for they would someday be forgotten in burned

books.

What is the value of achievement, of history, when such things are warped from culture to culture? Each culture prefers to think of themselves in a specific, glorious manner, and therefore would change the history to represent them better. Victory in one nation results in it's defeat in another. The insanity and despotism of one to a society would be salvation to the other. And so forth.

All is vanity. Ecclesiastes chapter one, verse one, and so on throughout. I wasn't by any means a religious man. I despised all religion as I despised myself, but that one passage I knew, for it applied to all people of all walks of life whether they so chose to acknowledge it or not.

And to myself as well, trudging over the marches and prairies once more, thinking of my wife and the city I left behind. I walked on for days; I slept where I wished, under rain or trees. Sometimes thousands of stars watched me. Sometimes vultures. As time completely washed away from me, I felt slightly peaceful. Hunger and sickness clung to me, but I perversely enjoyed, rather than disdained, them.

All was vanity. All was selfish. Humans longed for recognition to inflate their pride, not to honestly enhance the lives of others. Those I killed, I had actually saved. I had prevented them from mourning through the chasm of

obscurity, of a pointless life. To die early was a blessing. And so at peace with such justification, I shut my eyes to the beauty of darkness. Nothing. So I avoided the vain cycles of birth to death.

Only to open my eyes in a white void, pinned down by restraints I couldn't see. I looked about me for these restraints, confused. I lay on my back, covered from ankle to neck in a tight, white bodysuit, or so that's how it appeared at the time. In a void of white, wearing more white is a bit taxing on the eyes. All I knew, all I felt was puzzlement. If I was dead, which I'm sure I was, and having expected to open my eyes in the fires of hell, where was I? No wind, but a soft coolness. My arms were stretched out to the left and right of me, palms facing up, open.

There came an alto female voice, but no figure to it, proclaiming my sins to an announced audience I could not see. She clearly explained all those I had killed, all those I had affected by killing their loved ones. I laid there not caring during this whole explanation, which took quite a long time to speak through.

At last, or perhaps quickly—time didn't apply in this void—the face of the speaker appeared above me, a woman crouched in loose-fitting, white robes covering her completely save slashes for her slender arms to extend from. Very pale and fair, hair black, long, nearly falling on my face, she watched me and I

watched her.

“Speak,” she insisted.

I spoke not.

“Defend yourself,” she ordered smoothly to my silence.

I was not entranced by her beauty or the melody of her voice, I just didn't care anything of this whole procession. I longed for the punishment deserved to those as myself. My soul ached for it, and yet, even at the mercy of this woman whom since this time I have become well acquainted with, I didn't know this.

She was not confused by my lack of care, just calmly explained, “Edward Langus, only child of Maria and Johannes Langus, politicians in Adonis, honest people who bred a son of sin. What have you done to yourself?”

Here I grinned and chuckled.

Yet she was not offended, “You have sought to destroy all that is you by shedding blood of innocents. Those innocents are here with me but you will not be given the pity to see them. Instead, they will witness your eternal punishment. It cannot satisfy their loss, but it is just.”

“What is this eternal punishment?” I questioned with a hint of ridicule and doubt. I just wanted—needed—to be cast into the burning furnace of hell and this being wanted to recount my whole life. What a bore.

“I have watched you from birth till now,” she placed each of her hands into mine, “and

have judged you to be the perfect candidate to redeem the souls of the world. You do not believe in souls, Edward Langus, but after this moment, what you believe in will not matter. You will be driven by your soul to save others. Since you are so fond of paths without destination, you will wonder the cities of the country whence you come. Your only source of relief will be to the woman who so desperately longs for you even now.”

“How long will that last?” I found this whole conversation humorous. How ignorant and foolish I was at this time, to mock the very face of this woman, one of The Judges! Her two companion judges joined her at this moment to study the pathetic features of my existence.

They nodded yet only she spoke, “Forever. And your lust to kill yourself, by killing others, has cursed your wife with you. But her curse is much lighter. She will live forever as you, but be able to enjoy the mortal pleasures of rest, hobby, and achievement. You are stripped of these things and the only exception for your relief is when you are with her.”

I guessed I'd be spending a good deal of time with her, but this woman could read my thoughts and she countered softly, “No you cannot be with her longer than a week at a time, and then you will be forced by the restless pain of your soul to venture forth for others. Only every six months can you be with her.”

I knew then that I was dreaming because

the afterlife, souls, heaven and hell were just figments, parts of humanity's vanity, to give themselves hope when their existence was worthless. This was just another way my body was telling me that I was sick, and when I awoke, would experience such firsthand.

The woman leaned very close to my ear and whispered, "It is no dream, Edward Langus," and then I felt a searing pain in my palms.

I was surprised at how I cried out for her to take pity and stop. It was unlike even the worst wound by sword or gun. Flesh wounds are treatable, diminish, are eventually forgotten. Food, drink, and sleep help release the pain and there is a form of peace.

This pain wasn't exactly physical, though my body squirmed against my wishes and became rigid. The pain I felt ignited from my palms, but not even in them. It was pointed at something deeper that could not be scanned or detected by any of humanity's modern conventions.

I felt like I was melting in the center of a hungry heat eating at me deeper than in my bones. Such raw pain all within me, growing and exploding, was unbearable, but I couldn't escape. She had me clamped down with a passive face of stone to my cries. Tears actually streamed down my face. I hadn't known tears since I was a very small child. I would have been stunned at how vulnerable I was before

the eyes of thousands if I'd been able to generate one single competent thought. But this pain, I needed it to stop.

And so it did. And she stood up, stepped back and became part of the white void. With no other sound than my breathing, I slowly came to my senses and found that my hands were no longer shackled. This was the time I could escape, though rolling over onto my side alone proved extremely difficult. My body, or rather my soul, was trying to recover from whatever it was she'd done to me.

Just as I started to stand, her voice boomed from the void, "You will go forth now, but not see your wife till you have learned what is it to be what you are!"

It's hard to notice when you're fading away in a place completely white, till you wake up in a completely different place, as I did. One second, I was examining a set of round golden symbols almost the size of my palm, and then I was waking up somewhere where the sun was shining, where the wind was soft and the afternoon chatter of dozens of people, lazy and peaceful. Above me, a broad maple tree sashayed from a passing wind.

I felt such an extraordinary dizziness as I laid there, head against the grass, trying to think about what had happened and where I was.