



# *Ink Head*

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*For my father: R.I.P*

*For my family: thank you for doing everything you could for me and the whole family to live a life, much better.*

*“I began keeping a journal the night I made my first kill. He was an abuser and I had had enough of it. I slaughtered him with the pleasure a child discovers the magic of flavours a candy can bring with its sweetness, much satisfaction taken by the child who couldn't take it anymore. No child should take it. No girl, no boy, no woman or good man, no good human; ... hard a lesson I had to learn to be complete, to ask for myself to be complete and strong enough, live with dignity and not in shame, a life.*

*This journal I've been keeping under my bed tells me stories every night: about the ones I killed, about my goals to keep a world clean of problems you wouldn't have, you couldn't cope with! It's the blown-up journal of my wounded heart trying to find balance whilst keeping track of my obsession with justice and kindness and hope; and by this journal, a little book stands proud to tell of the lies and truths the world has got for us to help us play in interesting ways. I was not concerned with the proud books's fame and glory when I chose to give my notebook a chance to find guidance, but wanted to know more about all the lives that were possible - possibilities and ideals to have.”*

*Telling on... - by Syn Cigne*

## DREAMING ABOUT YOU

I run the streets of this town I just accomplished a mission for, catching this and that in my way to a clean escape. A postman's finished delivering mail and a dog is walked by a sexy lady as the man looks for some numbers on the buildings. A couple of strangers exchange opinions on their day, a woman asks for the money of her bread to a thief who trips and falls. Two men catch him and dispose him of the bread.

- It's not fair, the young man cries! You have so many of them and I am starving.

- You could have asked for the bread, the woman harshly retorts.

- Would you have given it to me?

- No, but you could have asked.

- Great, then I guess I just hoped for the best, the thief spits back while being collected by two citizens. He yanks himself from their grip and runs away, bumping into other two citizens walking side by side. I shuffle through the streets, watching for a goddam way out of this filth! It stinks.... the murder still stinks on me. Fresh blood's aroma is flowing in the air. At the top of the hill, to the end of the gently caressed by sunrays street I cross to avoid anyone follow me, there is a house. It seems quiet a place, maybe abandoned, I don't know as I am not close enough to tell. I'll go there and hide for a while! I say to myself.

As I arrive at a good distance to check if it is inhabited, I observe the window. A small light is flickering inside. I approach and stand looking through it. There's a boy inside. A little boy of..., well, actually he is not that little, maybe he's nine, or twelve. Mentally, though, he is a complete adult, if he understands anything of what he reads in that book. Schopenhauer - not easy to read, especially in such youth! Or is it and I was a complete idiot for ages!? I was twelve when I thought I discovered this book's mysteries? Then lightning struck and I lost interest, realising the fool I was thinking myself smart enough to get to the secrets behind everything I was willing to take in as knowledge of my own.

I stand and watch him for a while, a wish growing inside: I believe I want to know more of him, to be like a guardian and learn everything about him. He is interesting. A hit on the back and I drop on the grass. I look down at my body, check then the surroundings. Apparently I made a quick recovery. I look down the hill and see a shadow running away, taking distance at an inhuman speed. In no time two humans get out of the house hurriedly. My body is taken inside. I follow. There's nothing else to do outside but walk around, if you care for some air... I start feeling the evening's cold... So I do for precautions then I enter the building. One mustn't have their body out here, in this cold. My body starts to shiver. I recompose. As I move to walk away, the entry door opens and I am invited to sit at the table set ten paces away by a tall woman wearing a dress with an apron. It looks so out of this world, taken from a distant past! Maybe the '20s weren't so bad... Were they having a costume party here? I look around: the walls were decorated with finely printed tapistry. Six lamps are distributed evenly on the wall on my right. To the left, the large windows of the living room are allowing the cold blue moonlight to compete with the warm shy spread of light from a lamp set on a coffee table right next to an armchair. I raise from the soft couch and walk a few steps to the left to see who is there, sitting in that deep green armchair.

The woman hands me a little handkerchief curling her lip up for a second, then returns to her stern countenance. *Revenge will be mine!* I promise. *I suffered in vain for too*

*long!* It is the kind of promise I always make to myself to be certain that I don't forget to keep myself composed and fight until the end. He is somewhere, there and I have to look for him. I have to find him. The woman in front of me is looking into my eyes expectantly. I reach for the handkerchief. Wiping my forehead and cheek, I ask after clearing my voice:

- Excuse me! Can you help me with some information?

The boy continues to read without raising his head. I clear my voice one more time: Excuse me, I...

- My parents will be here any minute. He raises his head.

- How did I get inside?

- Our maid found you..., the boy answers returning to his reading. I make a few steps and look around. On the large table in the eating area, a great basket of fruit is guarded by two tall candles on each side. I approach to study the candle stickholders. Just when I am ready to touch the finely engraved pieces, the door slides open and a woman enters the vast saloon. She is wearing a dark blue dress a palm above her knees, simple cuts on each side of her thighs, like a tunic over the white skirt underneath, holding a large plateau with two bowls and a plate of home-made biscuits, two cups of tea and a teapot steaming. She smiles at me and places the plate on the table. I smile back. I don't know why but, for some reason none of us feels like introducing ourselves. Her eyes seem to speak to me about how she really feels: she hates my presence here, for some reason. She suffered some long time ago and became a very strong person. One can see it in the way she walks. She learned to be tough, strong... she is and always was striking beautiful. Her spark is extraordinary.

In a minute she is out, her steps tapping confidently down the hall. I am listening to her resounding depart, the echoing sound of her heels speaking in tongues as I am gawking at the treats on the table. Suddenly I feel hungry. Curious on what the two pots are holding, I approach to take off the little plates covering them. In less than a minute the boy is standing right next to me.

- Do you like soup? he asks.

- Yes, I think so.

- Alright, then. Let's have some.

We ate in silence. After half an hour, the beautiful lady comes back to the saloon. Her neck is stretched as if ready to clear her voice before saying anything but she does it not. A brilliant smile on her face, she starts measuring me intently:

- Maybe you'd like to take a shower or a bath, realx a little?

- That would be nice.

- I have some clothes for you to choose from. We have to clean these. They're all stained with blood. Her gaze is almost rising an inquiring eyebrow. Follow me. We have a room prepared for you. I follow her through the corridor. The house is a pretty large one, filled with decorations that look very expensive. I feel like walking on the corridors of a museum. There is art exhibited all over the walls. A vase on a small tall table and a statue along the hall. We walk in silence. After a two-corridors exploration we get into the room that was picked for me. The place is vast, luxurious, designed to impress.

- The bathroom is over there, she says pointing to a space that's open and where I can see a room filled with many paintings on the walls and the statue of a woman wearing with pride a dress that is flaunting her graceful shape in a corner of the room. There is diffuse light climbing down to the floor and fade in-to the walls. A large bathtub in the

middle, I feel like going there to take a closer look. You have some new clothes in the closet, there! the woman points to the large doors on the other side.

- Thank you, I smile. I believe we haven't introduced ourselves properly.

- There's no need for that! the woman says as she turns around leaving the room. I sigh not being sure of her reasons to act the way she does. Maybe she wants me to remain ignorant of her identity for a good reason. Fine by me. I don't want to know her either. Besides, it is probably best for myself not to reveal too much of my own identity as well. Although, I can always choose a new counterfeit to protect myself; just in case...

I get closer to the bathtub and turn on the water tap, fill the tub with warm water. It is ornated with bird of paradise leaves. I touch the leaves and watch how the pink shadow of my finger walks along with my eyes amazed with the extraordinary craft. Moving to the closet, I observe myself into the mirror. I am looking terrible. My clothes are all stained, my jeans cut on a side, the blouse all torn and half soaked in blood. I still can't believe it. I fought a monster of a man and won. He will no longer hurt another soul. I was feeling exhausted but happy, almost proud of myself. Now the world has one problem less to face. I head to the closet and open it. Another room reveals to me with only a few items to choose from. Using the speed of a cheetah, I pick a couple of pants and two blouses to try on. I take off my clothes and get into the bathtub. In an hour I am ready for lunch. It appears that the little snack I was offered earlier wasn't enough. The fight must have drained me of energy. I open the door and go back to the saloon hoping that I'll find somebody. There is nobody there. *Where is the kitchen?* I ask myself. *I have to find something to eat!* I check every room until I find the kitchen. There is fresh fruit on the table here as well and the fridge is loaded with food. I pick cheese and butter and a lovely fresh tomato and eat in silence. There is moonlight and there are crickets outside, parading their songs. I sit and listen to them for a while with joy in my heart then I get up and clean the table, replaying in my head everything that happened that day. In a minute I am done with the glorious achievement and remember my husband. We were the greatest team! Together we fought against the very wrong. We protected the innocent, we made this world a better place, just like I did today myself, alone. I'd prevented some people from being hurt or even killed by a monster. It was my first solo kill of such a thing, in a long while, and I couldn't believe the hatred that was residing in me, the powerful thirst with which I destroyed that creature. The pleasure I took in spilling that blood!

A little girl was rescued there and I couldn't forget the gratitude in her tearing eyes for being saved. It's an honour to serve for a cause like mine! I'm extremely happy to have chosen this path that I know it's the right one. Of course, I have to be very careful and not punish someone who didn't do anything wrong - and this is probably the hardest part in my activity since I have to make sure, and sometimes very fast, that the ones I punish really deserve it; so I go for information and look for the truth - only those who deserve it will get it, the punishment.

*Where are you?* I ask myself with reference to him, trying to remember the last place we lived our life together. From there I could try to track him and see if he's alright. It's been a while, he must have moved on by now but I still have to see him, to know how things are going. *Yes, I am lying to myself right now!* I admit. *Deep inside this bottom heart full of regrets and rage I hope he still cares and looks for me too, just like I do, but let's be fair: it's been a long, long time since I was... well, killed... and separated from him and the life we lived together.*

He was the only one to care for me. When we first met I was completely exhausted, devoid of the joy of life. I was looking into the distant horizons hoping for a recovery of the soul I had and lost - was it because of my insignificant kills? A few stupid boys who were frightening a girl: they thought it was amusing to scare and torture her, I thought differently so, well... I had beaten the hell out of them and killed their leader, promising the other ones who escaped to get to the same treatment if they dared touch another girl like that... or a woman... or a child. They behaved after that but nobody ever forgave them for what they tried to do. The newspapers went crazy, the news as well and I had to hide for a long while, change the place, the face and the style... The unforgivable is still unforgivable, no matter what you say or do after an action that hurt or promises to hurt too much. And let's not forget about what promises to hurt a lot - that counts as well. Just like being a sweet treat can mean a lot more than the world would like to hear about.

In a minute I snap out of my slightly recurrent introspection and walk out the kitchen to find my way to the room offered to me for the night. I have to get some good refreshing sleep (I want and need that fresh breeze that can help me find the man I loved with all of my heart and continue with my cause of cleaning the world of the nastiest monsters out there - creatures that would do anything, name it, for their own pleasures. And boy, pleasures come in many coatings and shapes!).

...

During the night I cry with tears that are amazingly loud, keeping it all inside, not wanting to wake up the entire house from their sleep. But, God, I am angry and upset and I feel lonely... and You were as silent as I struggle to be. You know. After my exhausting cry I fall into a perfect slumber.

When I wake up early into the morning, I can't remember what my inner fight was about but I feel so refreshed and content that I am absolutely sure I had managed to do the right thing. I feel relieved and grateful again. Thanks God! It was hard but I did it. I just had taken a shower when the woman I met yesterday comes in to bring new towels and a glass of water.

- Good morning, she meets me with a grin, measuring me from top to bottom and up again to stare straight into my eyes drilling for the core, a set of new towels and a glass of water on a plate in her hands. I can see that she is uncomfortable with my presence here. I don't know the reason and frankly, I couldn't care less. I just want to give them thanks for helping me and get out: I have better, more important things to think of and fight for, and no one has the right to judge me for that.

- Good morning, I answer with a flimsy smile.

- You need to hydrate, she says placing the glass of water on the coffee table. She then places the new towels in the bathroom cabinet and helps herself out after saying: Breakfast is in half an hour. We'll serve it in the saloon. I trust you'll join us in time. She sketches a smile before walking out.

In half an hour I am walking towards the saloon dressed in my own clothes that I managed to clean. When I arrive, there is nobody in the saloon. The table, though, had been set for four. I decide to wait for a while so, I move towards the opposite corner of the place where there is a small library and two elegant armchairs guarding a round tall table. I start reading the titles of the books aligned in perfect order. I reach for an encyclopaedia and begin reading. In two and three quarters of pages read, the saloon becomes animated with the presence of its owners. The maid comes in, bringing hot

tea and coffee. The scent of fresh coffee and bread just taken out of the oven makes my stomach rumble. I got so absorbed into the pages that I forgot how hungry I really am. The boy I saw yesterday reading by the window rushes into the room and takes a seat at the eating table. Then, the mysterious woman enters the vast room followed by a man. I assume he is her husband, I do not care to ask - it just feels inappropriate and rude to meddle. She also seems to feel upset with my presence there, masking it only too well for the rest of ghosts with a brilliant smile. She is radiant today. Her green dress matches her eyes that yesterday looked blue, now they look green. The man I assumed as her husband is just as attractive as her. They look good together but, for some reason, there is tension between them. I just want to get the hell out of here and mind my own business.

- Well, hello! the man greeted. Be welcome to our humble abode. My core manages to restrain a blurt in a puff - the place is anything but humble - instead I manage to smile and put the book back on the shelf.

- Hello and thank you for being so kind to receive me into your home.

- Please, join us for breakfast! the woman grinned. I thank and sit near the boy.

- How are you feeling? the man asks.

- I'm alright, I answer.

- Please, excuse me, I forgot to recommend myself. My name is Julian and this is my lovely wife, Cynthia. And here is our son, Jerome.

- Pleased to meet you. I am Lem, I lie, knowing that this identity is perfect for a great cover.

- Lem, what an ... interesting name, Cynthia grins.

- Would you care to tell us where it comes from? the man asks.

- An acronym. My parents were a little eccentric.

- I see... Julian smiles widely. Please, do enjoy our food.

- I am not going to lie, I feel a little hungry right now, I say.

- I'm hungry as well, the boy says grinning.

- Well then, let's have breakfast. Please, with an elegant move of her hand Cynthia invites me to choose from the tempting foods elegantly set on the table. She'd do it with all the contempt in the world if she weren't obliged by some mysterious force to behave like a real lady. She obviously doesn't like me. Well, what can I say? It is her right to feel this way. And mine to be polite and make her agony shorter so - the old clock on the wall helps me with a gong. I excuse myself in the most peculiar way:

- Oh my God! I play the pale face. Look at the time! God, I am so sorry, I feel so embarrassed, I blush genuinely, left palm on my cheek. I really have to catch a plane, please forgive me for not honouring your invite. Suddenly the light in Cynthia changes - she glowers.

- Perhaps you would like something on the road?

- That would be very nice of you, thank you! I say. Please forgive me, and thank you for your hospitality and kindness. Good-day! The man nods. There is deep understanding in his eyes. I turn around and walk down the corridor. I do not have things to pack, my yesterday's own clothes on I check the pockets as I head for the bedroom to get my backpack. Storming in and out I grab an apple on my way through the corridors, getting out of the house without being guided.

I'm out! The fresh morning air calms my over heated self. There are birds into the sky and there is perfume of roses and there are lilies, and as I am moving forward I



find the jasmine scent that calms my mind asking for trouble: *Why do I ask myself what happened back in there? I shouldn't bother with things like that! They were kind enough to offer me a place to stay over the night!* I run for a few miles until the inner heat fades out. When I'm too tired I don't stop but walk towards the train station without minding about the long distance. I'm used to taking long walks like this! It is somehow soothing. Although there is much to see, my mind is not taking in all the beauty, nor the interesting details of this place. I'm somewhere else. *Where are you?* I ask, completely overwhelmed by the air I'm breathing: it's lilies again and something else, the perfume of a flower I think I never knew... I simply can't remember the name. It takes away my pain so I take another sip, then another one. The pain disappears for a little while but then it's back. I can't take it anymore. *I need to know about you. I didn't fight and survive for so long for nothing!* I take off my back-pack and reach for some chewing gum. I forgot to take any real food in my way out of that house so, this might just help me trick my stomach for a while. My brain craves for something sweet now, something to help me think the next step to take. I rummage through the back-pack again, hoping for a God forgotten candy. When I'm done with all the little pockets I give up. *I'll have to find a store!* Then I start looking around more carefully. A perfoliate woodbine branch is hanging above my head, coming out and falling down from the fence of a garden. I take the few flowers with me and eat them. Vitamins and nectar for free, some fibers and minerals, all welcome. They help me recover my strength. I walk a few miles on an empty stomach then I find a little store. I get in and buy myself something to eat and a bar of chocolate. Heading towards the train station, I take in the picturesque surroundings. In half an hour I'm there, at the station buying a ticket. I take a seat on a bench along the platform and decide to take out of my back-pack the sandwich I bought then I eat it. There are still fifteen minutes left until my train arrives.

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Villains fear me! They fear us! They don't respect the law, they aren't afraid of prison, but they do crap in their pants when one of our names is spoken. We've tortured and marked forever so many that I lost track. And what's wrong with that? They tortured their victims as well, they marked them for life, why wouldn't I teach them a lesson hard to take?

I am a revengeful ghost, all criminals fear me but, the ones who fear me most, and those I terribly enjoy hurting and torturing, are rapists and pedos. There is a history with them I do not want to speak of, right now, but I can tell you they are the ones who disgust me the most. So, I scare and scar them in fashions that help them to the inability to produce suffering ever after our delightful encounter. My ways are sometimes incredible. I work mostly in the protective cast of shadows, occasionally coming out to the light with a mask faking a natural character in plain day too; they are mysterious, my ways, always.

So, I scar and mutilate them so they could never be able to make use of their powers. A whole bunch of them were sentenced to chastity and I'm not sorry for that at all. To be completely honest, I'm proud of myself for such a cure: "an angel of justice somebody" called me and I can't lie and say that I didn't like that but I never thought of me in terms of that extraordinary as they described my persona. That was until I actually did it - my first real job - then I knew that it was time to admit a flash of light of the sort and depict myself as that "angel of justice" I aimed to become without naming myself

this feat.

It doesn't make me feel superior in any way, what I do. On the contrary - it puts me on hold for the many times I kill and imposes humility and active retrospection, introspection and self-awareness. As watched from above, I am nothing but on little bug striving for an ideal world she is rarely able to see and seldom happy to enjoy.

I can't say that it makes me happy either, this thing that I do. But it does make me enjoy those moments when people can be surprised living a safer life in a safer environment. And I being part of the cause of it makes me know that my existence was not in vain.

I once felt alone in all this, alone and tired of trying to lift my spirit up and fight, all by myself, using means and tools left behind for a reason, for the same ideals and purposes, for the defenseless to defend themselves, but not anymore. Now I know that I am not alone in this. Neither of us is. There are those who'd do anything for what they want and believe in, and there are those who do have some boundaries, who did learn a lesson or simply knew how to deal with different aspects of life and dangers without harming some-body else to the point of no return. Yeah, you probably don't want to learn of this but you do need to hear it: some things are just wondrously damaging.

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Moonie is in front of me telling to her companion everything that had happened that year in school. She is clearly bragging about how brilliantly she did, how skillfully she mastered a few cute problems in her life. *God, can I wake from this nightmare, please? This ugly dream in which there's no one to save me from the hurtful truth and myself? ... help me move on..., help me forgive myself for causing you more suffering in vain. It shouldn't be in vain! There must be a reason.* This was my parallel universe, brought to face once more the world of the blissful. I loved the contrast in this odd placement. It is better than being among the miserable. It means that there's still hope left somewhere for one. Still, it can produce amounts of excruciating pain!

The girl was still speaking loudly with joy and passion about her entire first year as a student on media, her central interest being a few class-mates she was friends with and some of her competition. I smiled again as I watched out the window. It reminded me of my former class-mates. They were more or less the same: happy to compete and have fun. I sometimes admired them, other times I felt like walking away. I also felt inspired by them, a couple of times, maybe more. Their judgement and the terror coming with it are nothing compared to what came after, though; from the other side, the truly dangerous side of darkness, I got bombed with the news: "the world is a dangerous place, filled with evil and trouble and pain!"

- I was so surprised, oh my God, so surprised at the wonderful gift he picked for me. You know... her voice is dissipating into the vast horizons. Oh, no! I left planet Earth again. It is time for me to stand corrected: It is I the one who is getting lost in the horizons. I am watching outside the window, imagining, longing for his embrace. I miss him so much! He offered me an entire new world, a world of hope and peace, a world where our desires could mean nothing but happiness... a world where there was nothing but beauty. I love him and I know that he still loves me too... I need to believe this is true.

*He approached me, wrapping his arms around me from the back, rocking me gently. His lips touched my shoulder softly, I leaned my head on his chest, for the first time in ages*

*feeling complete, happy, relieved from all that hatred against all wrong doing. After all this time!*

*- I love you, he whispered in my ear.*

*- I love you too. I think that I was in love with you before we even met, I confessed... You were only a shadow back then, a man I made up... some would say a product of my imagination... of my need to help me ease the pain of my torments. Yet you are so much more than that! You helped me realise how wrong I always was; you convinced me to become a better person, a human being who can offer something good at her turn! You made me realise that discovering something good in myself and the world I live in isn't stupid, that life is worth living and love worth fighting for! You helped me discover myself...*

*- God, you are perfect! he kissed me and there was no time to smother us, there was no creature to disturb our plunge, no alien to amaze our eye-sight and impress our ear, only us in the vast space offered by the Universe, floating. We were such a disabled One creature, now that I give it a fair thought - a monstrosity built in five points to reflect their perfection on the other side for the sake of a delightful, much enjoyed symmetry.*

The train stops and my memories, left behind in a box buried deep inside a ground in my mind, cease comforting my restless heart. I am about to descend when a couple of young students rush ahead climbing down the steps with the ease of a feline. I follow. The sun is shining somewhere above my head, caressing my left arm with gentle touches - its warmth brought up the perfume of my sunscreen. It is about time to sketch a plan for tomorrow, get a move on, help myself as this helpless world I was thrown to was ignorant of all the rustling of my old tormented past-leaves.

No, we do not have to accept what is wrong! Accepting it means contributing to the development of insanity and crime. It means helping them grow stronger. Forgiveness is not always the answer, but then again, I might be so very wrong about it! as it depends on what one understands by 'forgiveness'.

I pick a nice bakery shop where they also serve coffee or tea and biscuits, and a great variety of pastry. There I can make my plan for tomorrow and revise my plan for today. The first stop: the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. It is there where we used to spend a lot of time together - we even left a few marks there. Nothing harmful, only a little note under a painting we both loved, a paper flower on the desk of a guide or a card saying "*thank you for being so wonderful*". This time our gift is for something else than pleasure or cultural missions. I need to get into the mind of a twisted murderer who happens to pick his victims from passionate with art or art-students. I need to kill that bastard and I need to do that fast but who was he? So many clues, so many pieces of evidence lost because he knows how to clean up after his mess! I hate him but I hate those he serves even more. I have to bring tears to his family so, I start doing my homework. I look for every suspicious move - every man watching intently a woman or girl (it's what he goes for, as they are easier prey, I assume) is a suspect. I catch a few long stares but they prove to be normal quests for a date. I change the room - on the list of suspects the man I should be looking for is tall, slender, brown haired and sage. He is good at hiding and blending in the crowds but I am clever, much more clever than he thinks. He has this flaw: he underestimates his opponents - that's how he made a few mistakes that will cost him his life. And boy, what a celebration his death would be for the entire world! "*Finally!*" a few would breathe out with relief. Tears of happiness, emotions unleashed - the world lost another criminal and nobody has to

pay. "Let's declare *to-day* a World Day for Crime Abolition and throw a party!". Yes, the whole world would feel safer and happier. But what about those who lost their entire world with those victims? What about those inconsolable souls who would gladly turn into this monster's greatest fears?

*What are your weaknesses? What is your greatest fear?* I ask as I spot a strange male fitting the description, discreetly approaching a young student. He plays the fool for a little while, making the girl feel intrigued by his presence. A few jokes, nothing harmful or betraying any intention of causing any damage. No pushing too much, no asking her out... *Maybe it's just in my mind! I must be tired with all this double quest mission!* But there was something strange about him. I know it! I can sense these things! I can smell them from miles away - in my head the decision was made before he said goodbye: I have to follow this man, see what is that he's hiding! So I do. He acts normal: 'Has a quiet lunch all by himself in a small elegant restaurant - he seems to be known by the waiters. *Okay, cool. Nothing wrong so far! But why do I keep having this feeling?* He fits the description too well. But so did many others... Why him? Because there is something about him, something in his manners that tells me everything was calculated before, that he is playing a role now, a character he chose to interpret around here. In this city, the suspect can make himself invisible. Not this guy. This guy is defying the logic of any killer. He likes danger. He likes being seen but he also knows how to act in the most discreet way. It's his way of defying any law, his way of telling everybody "Hey! Here I am! You see me! You think you know me but then, you don't! Now I am no longer here! How do you like it!? Catch me if you can!"

I am on my way to finish my dish when he decides to pay and leave. I desperately look for the waiter. He is busy. I wave to another one who doesn't mind passing. I get nervous but try to hide it. If he sees me I'm out of the game. As I sit, I bend over to the left pretending to pick up something from the floor. I sense he passed by. I release my breath. For a second time I wave at the waiter but no response. I place the money under the plate and walk out.

I take the same direction the man took but feel that I lost him. Making a few steps forward I look around, eyes squinting through the sea of people. There he is! I start running to catch up his step, alerting the rhythm so that I didn't lose him again but in less than fifteen steps he takes a cab and I find no car available to help me with my further chase. *Damn it! I was so close!* I take a bus home thinking that, if he is indeed the serial killer I'm looking for, he might get back to the museum tomorrow or the day after tomorrow as well. Normal people who fancy other people tend to revisit the places of their first encounters. He has to act normally.

Being a little confused, thinking that I might have judged wrong, I go back into my rental apartment where I prepare for the meeting I have with Judy and Jordan. They are the ones who can help me find the clues I need for my personal life to come to the meeting of peace and equilibrium.

I enter the apartment and check my mail: nothing important, a couple of bills, a postcard from an old friend who needed her escape more than anyone in the world and a few flyers giving notice of new businesses with services for busy people looking for more comfort.

- Hmm, new restaurant in town! Maybe we'll go there next time! I remember my promise made to Judy: to make my special cheesecake for her - it's the only cake I can really bake and make it well to satisfy other people's tastes. Today I'll go for an orange

coating - I hope they'll like this one as much as they liked the others. *Brownies!* pops in my head. If only I had the guts to disappoint them! *Why not make both? I have time!*

Time passes slowly as I am carefully following the recipe, being with my heart and soul somewhere else. Suddenly the world is too vast, the sea of people too dense... I used to enjoy seeing all this. Now it saddens me; I need to find those clues so I didn't feel trapped in this circle of desperation. *If it's not one thing, it's another. This world really enjoys making it interesting for us and I sometimes want to know why... then I remember: I already know. Because it can. Because it is the only way for a world like this to feel powerful and weak at the same time. Because nothing else makes it feel ...good.*

*Cruelty! Many atrocities happened because "it was their time" to have a taste of superiority. Awful. then go down to the bottom of the barrel and get lost. The tragedy! - baby cries, baby cries, rumbles and women laughing, women crying, men drinking and spitting and telling through grins and grunts of painful remarks naught as the voice of one mother yells and brings down heavens, runs and hits the ground to awake the dead and their demons for the cry of the lost baby...*

*The ones who thought they had a reason fed the poor with more and more hateful thoughts, growing ideas and feelings to serve their cause. Based on their own suffering, their acts turned things around. But that didn't make them truly superior, that didn't change them into what they had hoped to become. They wouldn't have liked being turned into something else either... who would? (Only for the best and not for the worst, to happen.) Their hateful acts only caused more damage to their prides. It sometimes bleeds, my heart, at memories of such ways... It's still much too hurtful, much too painful. How can I forgive that!? Just how? I'd take a vacation if I could... Go on holiday. If only I could find you and then... maybe then take that free time we so much need!*

This 'victim-seeking-for-revenge' state of mind begins to darken my view. I choose to ward-off wisely every bad thought. Tonight will be all about friendship and hope. Hope to find you and... and then what? What if ... I shake my head not wanting to yell the hurtful truth to myself. I've seen it in a dream. *You probably found your peace, your normal life. With me you'll have only a life with a restless heart. No. You enjoyed the life we had. And I will accept and respect your choice. I just want to know the truth. I just have to know how you feel.*

The oven timer rings. The brownies are done. Time for me to place the cheesecake into the oven and go take a shower. It smells like cinnamon and flowers, in my bathroom. Fresh flowers grown in the most perfect garden. I switch on the lights and the waterfall starts singing its soothing melody. *'It doesn't hurt anymore. It doesn't... It's alright!' - 'Why are you lying to me!?' - 'Because I have to. Something must help you move on.' - 'God, how much pain can I endure?' - 'Not much..., only enough to help you find your way...' I let a teardrop fall down on the floor, heavily. - 'There's still hope!' I take my shower then I bathe in silence. No more restless thoughts! Only good plans that can save me, save us, if there's such a thing as us ... good plans... I can see how hope is fading in. Who am I kidding? I'm just a little plan in a sea of plans, a part of a great master-plan! I'm telling myself that I'm doing this all by myself but I know I am not. There is something that unites me with all those who feel or think the same... There is something that keeps making me believe just like it helps them believe that ... we are not alone... in this vast sea of ...people. We are our people; perhaps, even more. Suddenly I feel the need to cry myself out through gasps of desperation that don't cease to stop until my heart falls asleep. -'I'm done here'*

*When I wake-up the water is cold and the time says I'm a little late. "Chute!"* Quickly, I grab the towel and dry my body then jump into the clothes I had prepared. In fast as sound moves, I grab a bag and depose the brownies in there. The cake goes into a box I had prepared for centuries: I had picked one for his birthday, five years ago, just before that fastidious mission - dreadful a time unpredictable ruined it all. I still don't know what had happened, how was that they learned our exact position but they did and I became target number one. They put me down and only God knows how is that I survived and got on this isolated place, a garden hidden in the heart of an island only half populated with creatures that looked human in appearance but who had developed such amazing abilities that it was hard not to consider them supernatural.

*I learned from them a lot!* I sigh and came back to the present. Our place remained just as we had left it. I close my eyes for a second, before rushing out the apartment. A flashlight reveals to my mind's eyes the image of us leaving this place, then his smile when we sailed on a boat. A second flashlight reminds me of a kiss; the last before I shake my head to be able to watch my steps: - his chagrined face when I got shot. *It can't be!* The face of the most beautiful brunette smiles mildly. I don't see her with my own eyes. A gorgeous blonde rests a hand on his shoulder. A pang of jealousy strikes. *Hmm! I was never jealous, in my entire life!* A man shakes his hand. They exchange a few words... Some of these weren't memories. *Maybe he is happy with somebody else. Should I stop looking for him? No. As long as I don't end up harming him it's alright to get the answers to my questions. It's my right to know and find some peace.*

The taxi I called was waiting for me outside. I jump in, being careful with the box and the bag of brownies. In twelve minutes I get to Judy and Jordan's. They seem to have started the party without me.

- Well, well! look who didn't show up in time! Judy scorns with a grin, a mild tone filled with irony possessing her voice.

- Hey! Jordan greets me raising from the couch. We were wondering about you!

- I'm sorry! I just fell asleep and when I woke up I was already late, I apologise.

- Not too late, don't worry. The stake is not even ready, Judy excuses my late arrival.

- I brought the cake! I present the box, a lopsided smile on my face. And brownies!

- Oh, my! We're gonna get fat tonight! Judy amuses.

- Not if you agree to take a run in the park with me, tomorrow! Jordan invites. I blush at the memory of *us* doing this every morning. One of our many pleasant memories together.

- Oh, don't be sad! Judy comforts. You can come with us if you want! My lopsided smile falls into a pathetic bitter curl: It wasn't all just about the run... I guess I never knew how much more it really meant.

- Thank's Judy! I try to curl my lips but I only manage to taper them while closing my eyes slowly. I'm alright.

- No, you're not! she observes. Stop lying to yourself ... and us! My face drops into an expression of exhaustion. I shrug and drop my arms trying to find a good sentence to get my presence here explained.

- You haven't been *alright* ever since you disappeared then suddenly came back out of nowhere! I don't know how your life was in the past five years but... you don't seem to be okay now! she sprints.

- I ... I was recovering... pretty slowly. I suffered a shock, if you must know. After I got shot I must have hit something hard like a rock or God knows what but I couldn't re-



member who I was for a very long time! It used to haunt me.... I had all these pieces of a puzzle I didn't know how to compose. Which memory was coming from where and....

- Here, have some water, Judy offered.

- ... after I fully recovered my memory, I was helped to get back to my former life which is this one, left here, only I found nothing else but... stuff charged with memories gathered in boxes and sacks. Our place is - more or less - just as we left it but there is no trace of him! In my bewilderment I forget to acknowledge that I was talking to my best two friends. I feel strange, as if speaking through a screen... What was going on with me? Why was I affected to such an extent by this moment in my past? Other thime when I got injured had happened and some really awful, bloody as hell a few but none getting me into such great a trouble! I should be in the present! To live in this present of mine! If I was ever to find my **Stephan**.

- You need to relax a little! Judy decides.

- 'Want some wine? Jordan offers.

- I don't know. I ... I just want to find him. Did he ever say where he was going when you last met him?

- It was only by coincidence that we met last summer in Sicily, Judy reports.

- According to his say, he was there with some business, Jordan supplies.

- Was he alone? I ask. The two partners exchange looks.

- No, Judy decides to play honest. I breathe out a long silent heavy sigh.

- Is she pretty?

- Mina, look... we can't say if there was something going on between that woman and him, Judy attempts to ease the heavy burden trying me. Chin prompted into my chest I am looking for a pattern into the carpet to help me keep calm and focus. Yes, I know, my voice lost in the agony of hopes torn asunder, I immediately look around for a glass of water. Judy hands me a glass of wine instead. I down the whole glass in one great gulp then I start coughing.

- I'm sorry, I manage to form an apology through coughs and gasps. I need water. She brings me some.

- You should take better care of yourself, Mina! Judy advises compassionately. You lost a lot of weight since we last spoke, and that was only a month ago. You weren't too heavy back then either! You have to eat and sleep better. I don't think that he'd like to meet the ghost of his wife instead of the real thing.

- If he found somebody else and he's happy with her then I want him never to learn about my survival.

- Mina, don't say this! Judy reprimands.

- I'm sorry but, you know, this is just the right thing to do! What am I to offer to him? What was I ever to offer to him? A life filled with dangers and fights against the ghosts of my past reincarnated into freaks that are just too desperate to mean something to this world, be it good or bad, be it harmful suspiciously kind. A past that I somehow can't seem to be able to extract myself out of and find a way to its long perdition?

- Mina... Jordan starts but doesn't seem to know what to add...

- No, I don't want him to suffer anymore!

- I don't think he suffered when he was with you, Mina! Jordan objects. In fact, I believe that he was genuinely happy! Happier than I ever thought the man could be.

- That's the good friend in you speaking, Jordan. Thank you.

- That's actually the man who used to be a good friend to your husband... until the ac-

cident. When he lost you he ... well,... he became a total stranger; he started looking for you - or, well, your body but, since nobody came with any news he took matters into his own hands; ... for a while. At least that's what he told me he'd do before never hearing of him again. Meeting him last summer in Sicily was a shock to me.

- Was he... happy? I ask.

- He was okay, Jordan says mildly. I close my eyes and picture him well. *Be happy!* Tears well up in my throat. I yell them down. My heart is showered with them, a few scars catching fire as the salty liquid purifies the wounds.

- I do believe that you should find him and let him know that you are still alive! Judy opines.

- And start twisting things up, turning his new life upside down?! God! What kind of a monster do you think I am!? I blurt. I mean, I know that I am not a saint but....

- You are the strongest, most hard to take, stubborn saint I've ever met, Jordan amuses. I start laughing.

- Thanks, but no! I will let him live a life that's normal in peace.

- Maybe you'll reconsider, Jordan invites. I would be very upset if not angry to know that my wife hides away because she thinks she's not good enough for me. I chose her, he says taking Judy closer to him, and it was the best choice I ever made.

- I'm not hiding... and it's not the same thing!

- Yes it is, Mina! He did just what I did. He chose. You can't deny that there was no love like yours on this planet! We chuckle.

- You can say that again! Judy says as she heads to the table to fill the glasses with more wine.

- That's actually true! I admit. Who would believe that I, an outside the law, a killer in the name of justice, found a man who was willing to fight along for the same ideal world - a safer place for women and children, for those who can't do much: the innocent.

- Just about every romantic soul in this world! Judy winks back jocularly.

- I dare say that many others who have no romance in their veins would see it as a possibility! Jordan clarifies. One just has to look at the patterns, see what fits where and who goes with whom and there you have it!

- Jordan, how very technical of you! Judy banter. We can't restrain from chuckling.

- Alright, enough chitty-chatting! Let's have dinner and start planning the reunion of the greatest couple on earth! Judy proposes, her cup of wine lifted. To love!

- To love! they raise glasses happily. I lift mine saying nothing. My lips tapered, I try to force a smile; a gasp stops in my throat wishing for the pain swallowed to either make my heart cease pounding or simply vanish. But the pain does not make itself unknown just as my heart never ceased to fight against it and put down the sorrow coming with doubt. *What if I'm making the mistake of my life? What if I end up hurting him even more! I could not live nor die with this thought! It'd be too much for me to bear! It would bring so much chaos and despair... so much self hatred! I'd be even more sorrowed than I was when I first met him. He took my broken heart and healed it with the most beautiful love that can be. Now I'm almost dead inside, again, but still, there is hope left... some hope... there is a reason for me to go on... like this... would it be wrong for us to meet again?* Jordan says it would be the right thing to do: let him know the truth. But can I ruin his new life? his real comfort, if he got to that point in life? And there's, of course, this other woman... if she exists and she loves him! then... I'd just shake their world for the sake of a history that should remain in the past. Yes, I am that... I am his past: restless, revengeful,

*dark. I dragged him into a world of darkness. What if he found the light!? Who am I to take that away from him? Torments. Freaking torments of my heart, cease pounding life pumped into my veins hard!*

Judy is saying something about a dog she found at the shelter, how she'd like to bring him home but Jordan disagrees.

- We already have a dog! What do you want to do with this place? Turn it into a dog shelter?

- Oh, but it's just one wonderful creature who needs a loving home!

- If we brought home every 'wonderful creature' in need for a loving home we'd be a charity institution not a family, dear!

- True. But still! Those eyes! I just can't take them out of my head.

- Should I feel jealous!?

- Oh, darling! You and jealousy were never more far away from one another!

- True! They chuckle. I try to catch up with everything but I'm not really here. It feels like watching everything from a box with great windows on all sides that I check to discover my 'must dos' and 'mustn't be done's for tomorrow. *First the Museum: check that place and see if that strange man appears again. Uh! Stupid me! I could have followed the girl! If she's a target then knowing everything about her would be the smartest move! Okay, she's a student, that means she'd be probably back to the museum tomorrow as well.*

- Mina, I propose we did something fun together, tomorrow! Judy decides to lure me into conversation.

- Actually, tomorrow...

- I say, let's go to the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, she goes on ignoring my attempt of an answer. It's been a while since I paid a visit there, Jordan admits. I sigh feeling that this might collide with my plans of studying the possible victim and its murderer. I accept the idea anyway, knowing that once an idea sprang in their heads, they'd do it anyway.

- Okay, let's go to the museum, I agree. I'll find a way to detach from them and follow the girl, if she happens to be there.

I leave the party earlier than planned. We need to have some good rest before a whole day planned at the museum. I climb the stairs and reach into my pocket for the keys. A step towards the door, my hand ready to meet the door knob. I realise my apartment was paid a criminal visit. The door slides open, I carefully step inside, my senses alert, paying attention to every sound or movement that might be seized. It seems that nobody's here. I start checking all the rooms: nope. Whoever was here has left. I look around, rummage through back-packs and search all the drawers and secret-storage spaces. Nothing is missing. The entity paying me the visit was looking for something very specific. But what were they looking for?

The door knob is broken and at this late hour into the night there is absolutely no chance for me to find someone to fix it. I tape the door and place the heavy mahogany chest in front of the door. It takes me a while as it is pretty hard to move the heavy piece of exquisite furniture. Once done, I'm pretty sure that nobody could break into the apartment tonight. Feeling exhausted, I go change into the bedroom and drop myself into the bed. The sheets smell like the promise of a better life, a new beginning somewhere else where there is no more pain and no more stress and the world is just like I imagined: my perfect heaven. For the night I am a child once more, taken into the

caring arms of silk and cotton fabrics I remind that I am the boss anyway - I just have to take some goodnight rest, that's all. One would say that I must have grown used to being this ghost hunting monsters, killing murderers and twisted crazy creatures that can't teach a good lesson unless they twist the meaning of good. Some might even think that I grew an addiction and yes, you know what, I did! Every time I get a break like this one to-night, I feel guilty for not being out there, killing a monster or two, ridding the world off their cruelty! *Where is that perfect slumber promised?! I self reprimand for not relaxing as I know that I need to fall asleep and forget for a moment, give myself that refreshing break helping me do a better job tomorrow! Why do I hate myself so much? Why can't I be at peace with my humble human condition? Why do I keep searching for that revenge as if it would offer me everything that I lost! It can't offer to me anything good. It can only spare some others the nightmares and the tormented thoughts I had to live with. I won't be happier... but I'll be less upset with the weak child I was...*

I finally fall asleep. I don't know when or how but, in the middle of my struggle to find a safe place to rest in my mind, I receive a comforting hug from an angel my mind could accept or create. Either of the two is as possible as me discovering who this serial killer is and sentence him to eternal fires... hm... would that be enough? I wonder. Yes, I am that upset. To think that I'm not much better, that I actually do the same thing! - only I do it in the name of justice and for an ideal world. Would that offer me the right to redemption? Will that save my soul when the end comes and we'll be judged for everything we've ever done or dreamed doing... hah... dreams... redemption... fulfillment... why won't they come in waves filled with that love we all need to cure us of hatred and spite causing us wounds that never cease bleeding...? So, I finally hit the soft grounds of a miracle - I stop feeling pain, I stop feeling anger and spite... It's all over. Now I can sleep.

I don't know for how long I've been asleep. Perhaps a couple of hours spent in the depths of self restoration; the night seems still young when I open my eyes. I look at my iphone - 3 A.M. Good Lord! It felt like much more! I feel so refreshed - incredible a couple of hours helping me restore my entire being. *Now what?* I ask myself. I have to do something so, I grab a notebook in which I sometimes lay down a few thoughts attached to the dates I meet them for either the first or the second time; some thoughts have met their recurrences in a third position others have met destinies to chance at and fates to avoid ... perhaps for the countless times. It's my second notebook of the kind. My first one is attached to the great dossier of files containing my jobs. Yes, all my kills and the work did to prove that I wasn't doing a mistake, there. Even a few notes of my own thoughts plus some personal observations attached.

*Yes, they're expecting me to kill myself. If only I listened to their voices, but I know that if I did so I'd be giving them the satisfaction of winning - they are murderers and accessories to murder. They should be my tools to use against their own stupid evil egos! The nightmares of my past childhood were over but not the ones of this present. They keep haunting but it is the only thing they can really do. I choose to ignore them. Maybe they'll get tired and find their peace where they really should be - or maybe they just don't deserve to rest in peace. Maybe they deserve to keep struggling for nothing! Just like I did for so many years and they couldn't bother for me or someone like me! They had their stupid faith that things should go on the way they go no matter how much evil around! - Lovely ghosts! Oh, lovely ghosts! How could I care less now for your struggles to make nothing of me! I will be everything! I will be the strongest and most dangerous everything you've*

*ever seen!*

It's half past five. *Sleep tight, my angels! Go rest your minds, you worked enough for me to-night! I thank you!* There's still some night left onto the skies that smoothly start to lighten their shades of blue. There's smell of blood that comes to my nostrils like a memory of a war I don't feel I won but which led me to believe there was still hope for my beautiful ideal world to happen. *"-'What would be the world without a good old villain to spice things up a little!' a bored mind would say in its tasteless pesky loneliness. A mind that couldn't make itself truly useful and would gladly help others ruin themselves and others. 'The more the merrier!' they say. I say the less we have of those the better! The tedium I've become! I give thanks God every day for not being like them! For helping me look for better ways... I pause. Who am I fooling around? I am giving thanks to myself for being this strong. God? Yes... I was offered a choice and I made it, be it hard the path taken. I'm not a normal human. The laws that apply to humans do not apply to me. I am different than they are and what fits me is not quite what the many want to make of me. But I don't care. I am myself, now, and will always know who I truly am and what I am really capable of doing. I stop and ask for strength. If God was incarnated in front of me I'd probably faint."* It's six A.M. I close the notebook and depose it inside the drawer of my night table. It's time for stretching and a little gymnastics. I have to keep fit!

A lonely breakfast gives me the opportunity to remember all my loving acts of protection towards innocent souls. They were not so many. I'm usually cold, doing my job in the cleanest way possible, with as little witnesses as possible. Through my coffee-time I relapse and get back into the bedroom to grab my notebook for a desperate note; I have the feeling that this something rumbling inside must be added to my confessions. *"God! How should I pray for them? How should I pray for myself!? Do I have the soul to bother or am I that tired of a world that wasn't mine but somehow managed to get back at me for not being the way they wanted me to be!? Yes, I killed and I will continue killing. It is what I do because I am tired of asking to be rescued pointlessly. Here I spent couples of precious minutes perfectly aligned in a circling row thinking of their need. But is there any real need or am I simply caught in that web of my self-delusion asking me to do something that is impossible for the human I claim being? Does all this reflect my own need to be saved?"*

*There's nobody to come to my rescue! I had to wake up and see that leaving things the way they were was a mistake leading me to complete failure. I had to do something! I had to fight against all that wrong doing. Many would not understand - perhaps they lived in heavens all this time, maybe their hell was not that bad but I know what really hard times mean! I know about torments and desperate cries for help. I know about fear and I know about stepping up one day because you simply couldn't take it anymore, saying "it's over! Right now I'm stepping up and putting an end to this!" To the inner cry and crave of my wounded self: - Kill me and you will suffer the consequences of your act! - Yes! My reasons to kill are good! Yours... - Who are you kidding?! You're killing for pleasure! - I'm right and you're wrong! Go suffer for all eternity, you monster, you freak. You demon!"*

- Son of the clouds! What am I doing? I jump. It's half past seven. I place my notebook back in the drawer and get lightspeed dressed. Keys, iphone, tablet, paper and pen, a pack of gum and something sweet in case my brain starts to crave for more energy and there I go: out ...of... the... door? Chute! I forgot about the door. I immediately look for a company that can send a man over. They tell me that in an hour somebody will be here to repair or change the lock. I ask them if there is necessity of me being present while

they do the work. The answer comes as a kind recommendation: yes, I should better keep an eye on them. Great! A sudden thought crosses my mind: What if I bought a whole new door? I call a firm that trades doors. They do not answer. Maybe it's too early in the morning for them! I call another one: the same thing. I try a third one, hoping for more luck and there it is! The third one is on business. I explain to the lady who picked up the phone that I urgently need an entrance door. She starts asking me for measurements, I carefully measure and give her the details asked. She tells me that there are a couple of doors on sale. Right now I do not give a damn on what is on sale or fancy or fit for this place! I just want to keep this apartment safe from another attempt on robbery. I pick a door that has the same colour the other one had. Then I am told that they only deliver the next day!

- For Christ's sake! I started with URGENT! I need the door as in right now.

- I'm sorry, mam'! We have no delivery car available for today.

- Great! I hang up the phone. In a flash of a camera I remember that there is an old door I kept for some reason I cannot remember just now. It's been kept down in the basement with a few pickle-jars and a bottle of old wiskey we got as a wedding present.

- Hmm... I wonder if Mr. Daughny is still good at fixing doors and plumbing? I go to apartment number 46, ring the bell. The wife opens.

- Oh, hello, darling! We haven't seen you in a while!

- Oh, I've been such a terrible neighbour! I apologise.

- Oh, nonsense! You kids are young! It's only normal to spend more time together or with those your age than with a couple of old raisins like us!

- That's truly sweet of you! I... We've been away for a while.

- So we've been told! ... now sit. I'll make tea.

- Actually, I can't stay long. You see, there is a problem with our door! Somebody broke in last night. I... we found the door open.

- Oh, dear! Let me call Lester! He knows what to do in such cases. You know, he fixes everything in this house!

- Thank you! You're very kind! I hope it doesn't bother him or you!

- Oh, nonsense! she approaches to whisper to me loudly. You know, just last week Frieda, the fifty five years old hot shot downstairs, needed some help with the sink. He spent all day there. I almost caught the jealousy virus! she chuckles. I can't restrain myself from smiling. She flutters her hands like a pair of bird-wings and follows. I'll go get him in a minute!

- Gilda, dear! Who is it!

- Oh, Lester, it's the nice couple two floors beneath, the... the... Goodfields?

I clear my throat while the man corrects her.

- You mean the Godfied's!

- Yes, them! She says someone broke into their apartment last night!

- Good Lord! In what kind of a world we live!? Well, Gilda, my love, I'm afraid you'll be missing me today.

- Oh, go do what you have to do, Lester. I'll mind my crocheting.

In less than ten minutes Mr. Daughny is checking my old lock.

- I could try to fix it but it wouldn't last for long!

- It doesn't have to! Somebody will come tomorrow to replace it.

- Well, then... I'll do my best fixing it for tonight!

- If it's easier to replace it for the night, there is this old door down in the basement.

Here are all the keys you need.

- Ohoho! Yes! I'll have some good old fun today! the man chuckles.

I'm out into the rain, looking for a car to take me to the Museum. No taxis available - I am beginning to feel anxious. There is anger kept inside, locked under a cover of perfect sanity. Yes, I want to be there now, in the museum, watching carefully every step of the enemy, studying him, planning against him so that he couldn't harm another one. He'd strangle me, I know, I can feel his rage - he believes he is doing the right thing, he thinks he's on a divine mission. The world needs sad stories too, he believes; sad, bitter, dark, troubling. The world needs to feel fear, terror... The world needs to stop denying the existence of evil and the one of the anger of God. He is provoking us, the ones like me who don't need much to start acting. *Oh, you will be so sorry when I'm done with you! For this you'll pay, and high a price that will be, you awful demon! Those who attack me agree with demons like this one! They agree with the ugliness and evil they are doing! But there's no one there to attack me anymore! There is nobody to become a menace to me! They're all gone, forgotten, dead; frightened of the monster I've become! Of the great revengeful goddess I am now. If you believe that I'll forgive you for this injustice, well, keep dreaming! Keep hoping until all your hopes crushed just like you crushed mine! I had a heart you gladly ruined! Now my turn has come to hurt you where it aches and charms the thirsty beast! This time I will not be sorry! I will restrain myself for being the idiot who still has mercy since you had none for me and my soul; for the love of God, or for anything that mattered to me as well!* Yes, anger kept fighting.

The car keeps rushing through the streets in the most elegant way. Feeling comfortable with my decisions for today, I started thinking about tomorrow. I was actually counting the days until my departure for Sicily. I had to follow this lead. Jordan said that he had business to do. Maybe I'll be lucky and meet him there. The phone rings. It's Judy. I immediately answer.

- I'm on my way! I was a little delayed but I'll get in time to the pastry-shop.

- Alright! We'll be waiting for you, we're already here. Do you want us to order for you?

- Maybe a cup of tea and... I don't know what I want. Something sweet to go with the taste of jasmine! Maybe chocolate chips cookies?

- Alright. See ya!

- Ciao!

Through windshield I watch: Tears of Gods trickling down, blessing a world that carries a curse inside. I am not a good person; good persons never take revenge. I am too proud to be good, too weak not to desire repayment in sweet flavours of retribution. But good people always get in trouble, always get irremediably damaged and then, if revenge taken, oh, wow! the nerve! *"Somebody promised you no good and they are keeping their promise. It's not out of greed or ugliness of their own soul, don't you worry!"* It's a hurtful sentence that pops in front of my retina and I don't even know where it comes from. It feels like something hanging onto a blue sky projected in a distant past. But whose past and why did they pick me? *"Because they had to pick somebody, you fool!"* *"So, you weren't taking her example, you were only too kind! Yes, life is too busy to save you from this kind of a man who wouldn't care about how much you already suffered because others went through some real hell, worse than acceptable things... so what if you can understand and be nice to them!"* - Nightmares! I want them out of my head,

out of my life! Out of my perfect world! I'd leave them all behind and go find that peace and happiness I always longed for! But the child inside is not happy with the decision of running. The child wants me to fight and help her out of her hell - *What did I do so wrong to deserve this?* she asks. *Why was I asleep? Why didn't I react promptly? Why didn't I save myself from what was too painful to endure?*

The car parks in a designated spot. I pay and get out, shaking my head to come back to my senses and be present. The streets are filled with people passing by - I feel watched; my senses alert, I start squinting, scanning every human being. I spot a face, eyes fixed on me, watching intently. I dismiss him. He is offended; filled with all the hatred in the world, he decides to leave me behind. I am everything but sorry. I have monsters to plan on killing. The girl inside was given a fun-to-deal-with project, damn-it! And what's better than insisting with your obsession on the love you were helped lose?

I meet with Judy and Jordan in the pastry shop. They serve tea and coffee there, so, we sit and chat a little before getting in the museum. There is a line of students formed at the booking office. Eyes squinting, I spot the girl I suspect is about to become another victim of that deranged bastard I'm after. I know what he's looking for! It's his way of becoming important to a society constantly ignoring his self-proclaimed genius. He must become important. His voice must be heard, his thoughts must find completion in their poetic revenge on a sick world not accepting as reality but the urges of the flesh and the avidity for power! He is an educator - he has to teach these pesky spoiled brats a lesson. The children of tomorrow must know of his work. It's a battle between the like-minded that he has to win but does he know that there is somebody out there who can enter his mind and ruin his genius in a split of a second? I'll be one of them, his bringers of absolute time-out. I can understand his reasons but I can't and won't agree with him. Ever! Yes, I want to destroy him for all the suffering he provoked. I want to isolate him and all the monsters like him, each in a separate cell so they could never ever harm anyone again! We're alike, me and him, at a certain extent... I may not like it, still, the connection's been made, the link is there and we can share the same set of knowledge, access the same behavioral clues and act according to our own educational purposes.

*It hurt to see how much the world wouldn't appreciate you for how beautiful and good you were... it hurt to see them trying to kill you! It hurt to be told that no matter what you'll do, things cannot get better for you even if you would deserve a better life, a better future... the ugly world convinced her, that child you hated so much. Well, I am not like her! I can't be convinced that there is no way out of this horrible prison that is also unfair! You did everything to have me pay for his mistakes, but I will get out, I will be free! And each soul will pay for their own ugly, unfair, unkind deed.*

A beautiful mind in a beautiful soul, with the beautiful body it deserved... Soul shining through. *"Watch my face now! Who am I?" Fight, my dear! Fight until the end! Fight until you get what you deserve! Fight until you complete that puzzle and become truly beautiful again! Fight until you find that peace and happiness you so much long for! Fight!*

This girl was truly beautiful, in full-sense of the word. She doesn't deserve to be destroyed by such an ugly creature like this man who - yes, the same man approached her yesterday - is watching her intently. I realise that I am too close to her - as I was listening to a conversation she had with a class mate - and that he might catch a glimpse at me. I remember myself that I shouldn't be seen - at least not just yet - so, I can build my

plan properly and finish this bastard before he attacked. He is watching her with eyes that are spitting flickers of evil. I knew there was something wrong about him! I knew it from the moment I spotted him!

*Did you ever ask yourself why is that he feels this way? - He doesn't feel... he thinks. He doesn't care, he calculates. He doesn't assume nor he falls into any trap - he knows. He looks for his prey. He desires what he cannot conquer, what he cannot have... what he cannot be! He is ugliness and evil and hatred! He wants her dead and her spirit subjected to the power of his own will! But I will defeat him! I will destroy him! He has no right to hurt her! Nobody should be given such a right!*



I was looking up into the skies, having my longing crushed forever. I used to believe in myself, think that there was hope for me and my soul but now I know better: it's useless to pray, it's useless to believe, it's useless everything we do... *There was - and still is - no justice louder and greater than mine, my anger, my right to be this way, to be that fashion I can live with, that self I can bare with and one with the spirit allowing myself and I, both to be happy!* They did not know but they were about to be murdered for what they did to me; they were soon to be put through the same great suffering for the good they took away and their try to replace it with evil! *They'll die in pain and I will enjoy every second of their agony! Weren't they on a divine mission to change a good soul? To teach the girl a lesson? To show her what she could become? Oh, well! Look who shows whom what! Yes, I was on my way of becoming a monster!*

My eyes fixed into the depths of distant horizons, I was waiting for the presence behind me to find a place somewhere besides me. I could feel those eyes fixing me and was almost certain they were the eyes of a man. *What does he want from me? What could he possibly want?* I rolled two eyes in my mind feeling already upset with myself for not letting my mind catch a break. He rested his bones right next to me carving his way into my eyes with a contemptuous smile. I turned around to face him - *"God, I am so tired!" I wish I could wipe that smile off his face but I don't know him, I don't know what's behind that smile and frankly, my monsters are enough a burden to carry on and deal with, I don't need another one. He must have been broken, at his turn, but carried on, survived and overcame the situation. "Good for you", my smile threw back at him. He instantly lost the smile. I do not care to study his face anymore, albeit beautiful, attractive... to dream about. I couldn't care less though! I couldn't care about anyone but my own darkness in which I was struggling to find the path to take, swim through and get to the safe spot on the shores.*

- I'm sorry for whatever you had to go through! he said to me in a deep voice. I looked at him, shaken by his sudden change in attitude. *Okay, you are a great player!* And I am very sorry for what you are going through, now! His guise tells me that he read every word my mind produced. Again, I was exhausted. All those sleepless nights spent creating the perfect plan to destroy those monsters that found a way to enter into my head - well, I rejected them all, they got upset; now, for their actions they will have to pay. Dead! Dead they will be but not just like that - suddenly, cleanly, simply abrupt! No! They deserved to crawl and beg for mercy and go through the pains they had caused.

I'd watch them suffer and ask them: *How do you like it? How do you feel? From where I stand things are not only too fair but quite pleasant! Hey! What do you know!? You taught me a lesson: on how to enjoy when somebody else suffers great pains - you deserve it! I didn't so, I'm still not like you!*

The boat was speeding to meet the shores - it started raining. The fine cold drops of ski-water falling on my face and the smell of rain were soothing. I should have felt cold; the wind had started blowing, heavy drops beginning to cool my skin. The man who approached me earlier came close to me and enveloped me with his coat. Surprised, I came back to the surface, looking bedazzled. I didn't seem to remember the good old manners; saying "Thank you" suddenly felt strange and stiffly prohibited but he didn't seem to mind. He dismissed my tries to remember how to be polite with a smile, a pensive look taking his countenance into the depths of a sky reflection, lips aligned with a bitter trace of sadness. He put an arm around my shoulders, and held me close. His eyes showed the hide of marks of deep wounds. For the first time in my life, I felt that I found a friend. A real friend in this stranger who somehow knew that I needed no words, no fancy gestures and games - just a simple sign that I wasn't completely alone in this nightmare.

*Where are my healer tears to comfort a soul feeling empty and tired and cold? My pain was like the desert, dry and burning with the sands by day, freezing cold with the night. I didn't need to ask anything, I didn't need to feel anything else but the healing touch of holy waters that came out of a feeling I never knew: Love. What is love? Why do we need it so desperately? Why are we so confused about it? No! **Why are they confused about it!?*** The boat reached the bridge on the shores.

- Are you hungry? he asked.

- To be honest, I'd just have a cup of hot tea, I answered.

- Well, they have good tea over there, he pointed to a restaurant on the water. I'd like to have dinner, if you don't mind! I also believe that you should eat something. One can't take a plan to its completion on an empty stomach!

- What makes you think that I have a plan?

- Everybody does! he showed a reassuring, slightly lopsided smile.

- True.

- Come. I promise I won't make you tell your darkest secrets! I tried to force smile but there was nothing there helping me succeed in doing so. We headed towards the restaurant in rapid steps - the rain was starting to hit heavily. There was a pleasant feel of being freed from the heavy chains of self-hatred, self-loathing and wish to destroy the cause of it. My peace will bring a revenge much crueller! With each step taken forward the sand, the rain, the wind, they all took away my heavy burden and I was free to feel like a child, to smile for the first time in a long, long time - it's been probably centuries and I couldn't even realise how much time spent into that darkness! One minute felt like hours - *God! It doesn't hurt anymore! I'm free!*

- Let's order something sweet with our teas! the stranger proposed. Suddenly he was in a good mood.

- Alright... I needed to find my good humours as well, so, I allowed myself take distance from all the nightmares that plagued me for years and all my revengeful wishes and thoughts.

- Tell me a beautiful story you remember! He asked, a dangerously charming grin on his face. I suddenly became sullen.



- I must say, I didn't expect you to be the kind who likes to be told stories. He laughed heartily.

- Everybody likes a good story!

- Alright... You said beautiful, and there's lot of beauty in the mystery of creation so, here you are: There was once, in the beginning of times, a couple formed of Light. They were one, together or apart their bond kept being strong - they were united in spirit. Their love was great and so they gave birth to a couple of children promising to carry on with the legacy and never turn off their inner light on the lands they were given to reign over. Raised together the two brothers were inseparable until time came for each to learn their own path that was to help them create their perfect kingdom. They studied thus separately, having different lives to learn from. In the beginning their kingdom knew nothing but Light and their subjects were resting forever, building an empire like no other. But one of them knew only the power of love whilst the other one learned about sorrow and darkness and hate. He didn't want to feel hatred and sorrow, but above all, he didn't want his subjects to know the pain coming with such knowledge, so, he took dark matters into his own hands, fighting to keep his loyal subjects away from any danger. But the one who knew nothing but love wouldn't understand his brother's ways and torments, feeling jealous at times for the power he had and the knowledge his brother wouldn't share with him. So, he tried to make him reveal those hidden truths his brother had learned about during their time away from one another. Nothing worked, though: no questioning, no research, no begging to tell him his secrets, not even trickery worked with his brother! He seemed to know everything, to be at least a step ahead him all the time. This annoyed the lucky brother more than anything in the world. He wanted to know, 'had to! He craved for the same knowledge and powers.

One day the two brothers were hunting in one of their favourite forests when they heard a maiden's scream. One couldn't hear it clearly enough to say if it was a woman's cry for help or an animal's last warning for its pack but the two launched into the heart of the woods together. A woman was desperately fighting and crying for help indeed, as a group of barbarians was trying to have their ways with her. The all-knowing brother got furious - as if possessed by all the rage and fires of a hell never known to anybody in his kingdom, he adventured into a fight on his own. Yanking the woman to throw her in the arms of his brother, he attacked with great celerity, turning each barbarian body into minced meat for the grounds, killing then the little army sent to conquer his grounds and with that all the hopes for invaders to take over his lands and hurt his people. Nobody would have known anything about this great brother if the woman wouldn't have been taken to the palace by the brother who knew only love and given a new life, offered the chance to become a true lady. He promised her riches and protection, a good education, hoping that the woman would feel as grateful to him as she felt to his brother. The woman understood that there was tension between the two brothers. Her rescuer once asked his brother why was that he wanted to be as miserable as he was. She overheard. The other one explained that he only wanted to help ease the pain, be an equal and share the same knowledge. She never said a word to anybody about that miraculous day she was saved but, she wrote her story in more than one language and made sure the legend spread - one day everybody was to hear about the truth, even if they'll never completely understand it.

Time came for the two brothers to decide upon their kingdom: who was to become

a king and who would be a warrior. As nobody likes a true know-it-all the choice of the people was simple: the brother who knew nothing but love was their choice; why would they bother with the brother who was always too busy for any ball, for any party, for any of their celebrative holidays? The man who always sacrificed his happiness for his kingdom's, didn't mind. He knew that this was the better option for his people as well as for his brother.

But the lucky brother wouldn't be satisfied with his powers. He got his kingdom, he got all the love of his subjects, still, he could not prevent himself from feeling inferior. His powerful, all-knowing, less loved brother was starting to build his own empire somewhere else, he knew it as the maiden they rescued kept reporting to him that his brother was never home.

- So, he planned to learn all about his brother's secrets?

- Things weren't that easy with him, as he was always away and aware, knowing the dangers to which his reckless brother was exposing himself, learning just in time about what he was planning. This infuriated the lucky brother greatly. Not knowing how to get what he wanted, he began planting spies everywhere in the castle and his kingdom. Soon he discovered that his brother really cared for his people and respected their wishes and their decisions. He also discovered that the maiden he had sent to spy on him and lure him into telling her his secrets wasn't doing what asked. This got her in great trouble. As the spies also learned about her writing the true story of her rescuer and other stories to explain the acts of bravery and protection of the true hero of the kingdom, she got herself soon banished, a decision that hurt the uninvested king, greatly. He kept looking for her, knowing that she needed to be protected - she was his people, part of his soul! His brother couldn't just banish her for writing stories nobody ever read with enough attention as to make the connection and actually endanger his brother's throne!

Obsessed with his duty of saving a woman whose company he started to cherish as she highly respected him and his choices, caring for what was good for the people as much as he did but also helping him learn how things went in the palace and around, telling him the truth regarding nobility and people, he started abandoning the idea of helping his king-brother rule his kingdom and look for this woman, this only soul that really cared about him, with a true heart. She needed him, he could feel it. The rest of the kingdom didn't; they never cherished his presence, never cared... So, he left.

I took a short pause intriguingly studying my desert.

- I'm curious! Does he *get the girl*? the stranger smiled widely.

- He already got her. The story is simple, I grinned then returned to the sweet treat showing off on the simple elegant plate. Do you think they'll be outraged if we ordered our meals after desert?

- I hope they will! he amused. We both chuckled.

- You know, I never had such a good time! Thank you!

- Well, what happened next? Did he find the maiden? Did he marry her?

- Yes and no.

- Why?

- Well... when he found her he did ask her to marry him and she did say yes but, a jealous spy killed her. In his arms she gave her last breath as the spear went through her chest, severely injuring him as well. In his grief he cursed the coward and his leader then put an end to his suffering.

- You mean he committed suicide? I nodded affirmatively.  
- His brother wanted to share his torments, to know what he knew thinking that this would bring him a greater power to help him become more important, not to ruin him. Tired of fighting his brothers' foolish desires, he gave away his cursed existence and sent himself to a better place. He wanted nothing but liberation from the curse and know that true love she proved to him that he could have.

- What happened to the lucky king-brother?

- He couldn't handle what came after his brother's death. In his rage against himself and the curse he wanted to share with his brother, he ended up killing innocent people which led to a rebellion against the king followed by his sentence to death.

The kingdom never knew night, before the death of their kings. But there was night that was peaceful and calm and there was night of tempests and rage, thunders and furious winds. The night that was peaceful and calm was given to the brother who carried his curse with dignity and courage, protecting his kingdom from the danger of knowing real pain and suffering. His day was given to the woman he loved, to bring to the light all the truth and make it known among their people. The afterlife gave the two a chance to live their love in a marriage too holy to be broken by any rage. Two children were born out of this blessed marriage: one was Dawn and the other one was Sunset. Sunset and Dawn never met to ruin the perfect equilibrium of the world created but they offered all the joy of true love to anybody who stopped for a while and welcomed into their hearts the beauty created by their parents. ... The End.

- This was quite a story, and you are a magnificent story teller.

- Thank you.

- I wonder why the moral of this story doesn't affect you like the other normal beings. A blush crept up my neck, I tried to swallow a bulge, instead I paled then turned sullen. I'm sorry, I promised I won't try to make you tell me your dark secrets!

- I told you a story involving darkness but with the great participation of light to cast the proper shadows over things and bring up shades of different values. I guess it applies to everyone, in a way... , I shrugged. He called the waiter and we ordered our meals. I opted for a salad, he ordered one as well.

- Just out of curiosity, he followed, where did you read this story? Do you happen to know who wrote it?

- I was actually retelling an old story told when I was little.

- Who told it to you?

- A grandmother... I said, avoiding the straight look into his eyes.

- Why are you lying to me?

- I beg your pardon!

- Please, he tilted his head, I know when I'm being fooled. There was no grandmother, right?

- Yes, there was... maybe not mine, but there was one who told a story to a little girl and that little girl could have been me if I got luckier...

- Right... So, does this wonderful story-teller has a name or should I guess? A light brightened inside me.

- Let's guess... I proposed, feeling well humoured again.

- Alright... First guess goes to the lady.

- Hmm... Julian.

- Hah! Care to explain why?

- I don't know! You came and sat right next to me with the grin of an emperor! I just assumed the name of such a great character would fit you.

- Nice... Why not Augustus!?

- That was my other guess, but since the odds for you to be named Augustus are too little these days...

- Hah!

- Your turn.

- Sarah... Lynn...

- Oh, Sarah and Lynn... That's two names you've got wrong.

- Excuse me! I wanted to say Sarah-Lynn...

- Okay! Wrong answer, I informed grinning. Just like mine, I suppose.

- You're close though!

- Hah! Then you must be Alexander!

- Oh ho ho! That's too far!

- Okay. Your turn.

- Theea?

- Right, and that comes from...?

- I don't know... I just got inspired by some idea in my head...

- Wrong, again...

- What about Juliana?

- Well, I have to admit I'd like that to be my name!

- Hmm...

- What would you like to be named...

- Julius Augustus Alexander ... the Great if possible. We both laughed. The rain has stopped. Would you care for a walk before calling the end of this perfect evening?

- Only if you let me take one more guess!

- Go ahead!

- Stephan. I looked straight into his eyes and saw shock.

- Alright... he was trying to recompose and did that faster than any other before. Why Stephan?

- Because... I was close the first time.

- And I thought I knew it all! He smiled, a pensive guise telling me I got the name right.

- Does it bother you that I guessed your name?

- No... I just didn't expect you to guess it so well and this fast.

- Sorry I ruined our perfect little game...

- It's alright, there's still plenty to guess...

- And explain, I added.

- Laura, Tina, Mona... Syn...

- Syn? ... that's short from Synthia, right?

- Syn Cigne! How would you like it as your name, your new identity?

It was a surprise to learn how much I loved it! I was even considering using it for my next mission. In the name of that woman and the scared girl inside who could have had a good life instead of nightmares to plague her and tormenting thoughts on a revenge denied to a victim discovered in time. Hmm. This world seems more of a friend of the villain than a place for any real justice to happen. We pray for things to happen here just like in heavens... now I wonder if things don't work well because we just don't deserve them or heaven is not quite what we imagined.

- Well... Stephan was expecting an answer...

- I love it.

- Chute! I was hoping you said I finally got it right, he amused. I joined a good hearty laughter. God, it's been ages since I had a good laugh! I was trying to remember when did that happened but failed. pathetically.

- Stephan..., I started and he fastened his eyes on me, do you ever wonder about heavens? If there is such a thing and what makes one worthy of living something truly beautiful?

- That is a pretty childish question.

- Yes... but I find that sometimes being a child can bring some comfort...

- Being a child or the stories told to them, the good old lies to protect and nurture their vain hopes; tranquilizers given to help their imagination grow a plethora of good opportunities to choose from when time to find some comfort comes?

- What if there's a war out there just like there're wars down here? I sometimes can hear, other times I can feel or see that there's still anger into the skies just like there's anger everywhere here on earth. It's the nature of things to start storming then calming then shining, right?

- We're creatures similar to the world we live in. Everything that happens in the world happens in us, as well. Our societies are built and ruined then rebuilt or changed according to the same basic needs. Look around and you'll see prey and predators, creators and haters, invaders and defenders of their own territories, of their people, of kindness and beauty... of rights that were violated... of rights always protected... of children and life.

- **"You'll see love and you'll see hatred and you'll decide what's best for you until you can decide no more and have to fight for your right to believe in yourself and who you are."** I wonder sometimes if that hater inside me knows what she's doing, if she stands for the right thing just now.

- You needed a break from her. She is destroying you and you know it.

- I wish you weren't so right, Stephan.

Yes, I honestly wished I could have trusted myself, against all odds. But what if I hurt somebody who didn't deserve it? What if, by hurting myself too bad I ended up hurting someone else,... someone who didn't deserve that? He walked with me the few steps to the hotel entry.

- Do I get to know the name of the most wonderful story-teller I've ever met?

- I should be flattered right now but if you knew... *God, if he knew!*

- If I knew what?

- You know, if I ever decide to publish a story or two I will think about this name, Cigne! Syn Cigne... sounds like the perfect name for a writer! Or a victim of a passionate romance, I joked. He laughed and I joined..

- Please, let me know how to call you in my dreams... I felt my cheeks burning. Good, God having fun in heavens! I was feeling like one of those stupid teen-agers who got noticed for the first time by a charming boy and they couldn't help but losing their minds. Huh! I always thought myself so strong and in control of the situation. Right now I was floating and I wasn't even afraid of how I felt which made my logic pound desperately at the door of my blown up brains. He leaned over me and for the first time in my life I felt towered, small and fragile. I panicked. "Took off the coat he offered to me in a blink of an eye and handed it sternly. He stepped back accepting the coat.

- Good-night, Stephan. I took the three steps to the door quickly. Turning around I see him standing like a statue that won't turn to see me anymore. I must have hurt him. Well, at least I didn't ruin his life completely. He's a strong man! He'll get over it soon.

*Is it such a sin to be happy..., Syn?* I am not sure what I'm hearing. This voice is new to me. I've never heard it before. A voice that knew how to hurt me. Great! Just what I needed now, before my second great job! The first one was a blast.

That night was a long stringed beads of tears that each meant a word in phrases that wouldn't stop telling me more about myself than I wanted to be remembered. Yes, my first job was successful. I somehow managed to pull myself together and rid this world of a real pest (if only all his infections of employees would have shared the same fate!). Criminals who knew how to commit crimes of the vastest variety in plain day, without anyone doing anything about it. I blew his accouts, I terminated his businesses and had him watch how his empire, built on the misery and suffering of other people - poor, innocent, desperate, honest and/or very unlucky - crumbled and turned into sand. Then I let him die slowly, alone in the dark prison cell... almost like he did with men who could have endangered his illegal activities; just because he used young girls as sexual treats for his filthy partners. Just because little children asked their parents for at least a meal a day and had to go either work or steal for their hunger to be apeased, instead of learning in schools and playing in their backyards, preparing for a life in a world that can offer them what they always yearned for. I wished all his marks could be wiped out the face of the planet. I wish I could do something for those souls who would have known how to appreciate and value a decent life - a warm meal, a cosy bed and the kind voice of a loved one, finally at peace, relaxed, not hurting, not worrying anymore. A good job and the chance to be respected, the chance of offering their children a life they wouldn't even dare dream of...

There was a little boy and a girl I couldn't do much for but at least I tried. I hoped the money I gave to their parents was well used. They seemed to be looking for their children's best interest. I hoped they used the money right and tried to find the comfort in the actions I took. But none of them gave me the rest I was seeking. None of my actions, be them of kindness and mercy or pure hatred against what I knew that went wrong. My 'noble' work could seldom let me sleep in peace, as if there was almost nothing but hell destined for those like me. I closed my eyes and let the two tears trickle down my cheeks, reaching my ear-lobes cold sharp like the memory carrying me away to realms of a happiness unknown to me until just this evening. Suddenly everything faded, my past with all my pains, my present with all of its tearing memories and there was nothing left than what made me feel that I wasn't completely lost, that there was still hope left for a creature like me. *Stephan! You opened the door of a room I forgot my true self locked in, liberated my soul. How is that you did that, I don't know but for the first time in my life I felt truly happy. And I let you go!* I fell asleep remembering all that evening, dreaming afterwards a field of wheat and poppies we were chasing each other through, like two kids. The skies were blue and puffy clouds were floating quietly, honouring the gods with their graceful changes. He kept calling me Syn and I liked it, I wanted to be Syn. I was Syn! His Syn.

Then rain came and drkness covered the sky-grounds. I turnde around and Stephan was gone. I was alone in the middle of a field that lost its wheat and poppies and cracks of the thirst soil were letting in the crawling creatures of a desert land.

*"I should rather die than waste my life this way! I should rather die for what I want than*

*let myself killed. I should be more dangerous than you are! I'm listening to good music, the music that helps me go there where my rights aren't attacked, where I can built a good life and defend myself against all the unfainess. There, where those walls of protection are dangerous for the enemy! There where I can welcome you in my house without being murdered for what I earned, for who I am... for who we both are! We're human! We're angels and we have our demons, both of us feel and want to know better... Both of us deserved a life and dream fulfilling."*

\*

Morning came unexpectedly early. I couldn't sleep so, I watched the skies turn lighter and brighter with sunrise. Eyelids half open, I let the playful light offer me solutions for my tempestuous rage. Not feeling like being watched, I ordered breakfast in the room, in my mind still choosing between Mina and Syn - who did I want to be? and why was this sweet taste of happiness so tempting? *What am I thinking? How can I even consider this new character as an opportunity to escape the duty I have!? Didn't I panic last night? Didn't I take my choice?* I remembered Stephan's stern guise when I ran away from him like a scarred little girl. The kind side of Mina dared to look at Syn and saw two eye pooling with tears of sorrow. I broke that poor girl's heart but I had to. I finished breakfast swallowing each morsel hard. In the next minutes I packed all my things and left the room. Checking out I felt two eyes glaring at me. I turned around but couldn't see him. Walking out the hotel I stopped to look for a taxi-cab. Two arms around my waist, I'm pulled against a pounding chest and I gasp. The panic disappears when I hear his voice.

- Don't be afraid! It's me! I just had to see you again, he whispers in my ear. I feel like giving up all the fights for nothing. I turn around to face him, he cups my face in his hands and looks into my eyes for a couple of seconds. The muscles on his face contorted, his mouth close to mine, I felt that what I was living wasn't real.

- Please, don't run away from me! He whispered.

- I won't, I said. He tightened one arm around me, cupping my left cheek, kissing me. The world faded away! There was no other reality than this. I was dead, probably, and this was how the afterlife tasted. His lips desperately asked for more, his tongue tickled mine, I shyly responded feeling overwhelmed by the rush of powerful feelings finding a new kind of revenge - suddenly being happy was the ultimate revenge one could take. *God, I want her!* - *What is this? Am I hearing his thoughts?* I opened my eyes and saw an expression of great pain. He released me from the kiss, gently.

- Marry me! he whispered helplessly. Let's take a chance and leave this pain and suffering!

- I... I... I stammered not knowing what to say. I didn't expect any of it... wasn't I too much of a child, too much of a mystery, too much of a burden? I... You don't know anything about me! How can you ask me that!?

- I know everything I need to know! I'm tired looking for you everywhere like a fool. Please, stop running away! It's over! This pain can end right here, right now!

- I have a duty... You don't know what I am, what I'm doing... You don't even know my name. I turn around to leave when he pushed the words out of his chest:

- It's Mina! I stopped. Turning around to face him again, I studied his face intently. He didn't want to look in my eyes. So, you knew... all this time? No answer back to meet my questioning. Who are you!? A... *Oh, God! What if he's a stalker! What if he was sent to*

*kill me? A double agent or a paid killer. I'm asking you to marry me not to kill yourself!*

- You don't... know me! We... I was obviously panicking.

- I know everything I need to know about you.

- How...! Who are you? my aired puzzle-box turns into dust.

- I am your perfect mate. How do I know this? I just read everything into the stars last night... I asked to know of you and the answers came in waves... I know enough to ask you to leave with me or fight your awful nightmares alone, forever. I raised an eyebrow:

- So, you know everything about me? my heart started pounding heavily. My temples throbbing, I was trying to find my inner balance.

- I know that you killed and that you are willing to go on killing. It's your job, you're a good spy and a redeemer. But you're acting alone and I believe that things will get heavier and heavier, with time!

- You think? I sarcastically mused. And how marrying you will solve all my problems!?

- Weren't you happy yesterday, when we played and forgot about all our personal troubles?

- Who are you, really? I mean... who just takes information like the kind you know with such serenity? Especially on their supposed soul-mate! Are you a spy, too?

- I just started to work for the same organisation you do. But I'm doing different work. I got assigned a mission to the other side of the world and I just can't let things go this way before saying that... I know you... From a different life, perhaps, I don't know... I'm still a little confused but the stars don't lie to me, to us! They never did! Couldn't you feel last night all that joy? That perfect joy under the sky of blue in that field of wheat and poppies? Couldn't you hear all that pain crash and fade away?

I wanted to say *Yes, I will marry you!* What was happening to me? I was becoming this someone else I could but feel for, watching characters like this with contempt and a certain concern. Yet, Stephan was the one I always described in my fantasies and dreams as the perfect man I was so sure I could never have, I could never be with... I was damaged. *So, trying to be perfect is wrong... trying to find yourself... must mean losing yourself? Trying to recover your soul from the hands of pure evil and take destiny into your own hands, ...bad? Change. Was it good or bad and in which amount each? Trying to improve ... all wrong!?* - After this immersion into my school-girl gutter-swim, my self reprimand felt like taking that new identity he offered and use it as a cover to leave all my fights to a Mina I would gladly leave behind. That Mina who was sent out there to produce the perfect damage to a world damaging those unfortunate souls I was so willing to start rescuing, protecting! Fighting for.

- You don't have to be in all this alone! You are much more than you allow yourself to show, to be and you are truly beautiful! I lifted my shoulders in exasperation. He goes on: You're only pleasing them, those monsters, when you run away from what brings you happiness! We can be truly powerful together! Please! Wake up from the ugly nightmare you're living in and remember, embrace this new reality. I'm here. It's not only a dream... it's a door to the powerful love we both need!

I was looking for the brains he so beautifully blew out, wishing to understand what was the rush.

- I... need to take things at a slower pace! I'm too afraid of this!

- Just say that you will come with me, now!

- I'm on my way to receive the next mission...

- Then ...good...

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