

“Let it be said”

I once danced with the winds and the rain, painting a clouded sky with the stars once reflected in my eyes. I loved with everything I had. And I knew what it meant then, naive as I was, that my purity left some things in their perfection and that it was a protected and cherished thing. My soul overflowed, for I was truly alive, and the narrow glimpse of humanity that I carried within held an eternity of complexity and wild beauty. Endless were the adventures, the beauty of a single flower in its field. There was confusion in it of course, with its own lonely and lovely brokenness. But it was a beautiful thing, like the wonder of thunder over the seas, and the gentle peace of a man walking the barren road. It was a part of me, tainted and colored by life. Perhaps painful, but ever reflective of my inner sanctum, of every brushing hand and stumbled step on the path to eternity...

I saw a man then, clothed in virtue and strength, weathered by a thousand enemies and carrying heaven in a locket, rested gently on his chest. There was a blue melancholy buried in his eyes, but it was overcome by a golden light of purpose and love, of hope in the heaven he carried day by day. His hands were calloused from his war—by regret—but they were strong hands, worthy of the sword he carried. And that sword had a name, a whispered name that he alone could know. His chosen weapon, carved from his own skin and bone. It seemed to grow heavier with every battle, but his strength would not fail him, not yet. The smile on his lips held no joy, but peace was not far from him, and so he could muster its strength with the rising of every sun, with its every cold setting. His heaven was set on his heart, he could feel its warmth in the dark of night, and swaying side by side he forced his way through the thicket and up the mountainside. A man he was. Complete in the way he was. One soul. Yet knowing what he could be and striving for it. Ever changing. And that man... he never made it home.

I watched him die, day by day, the warmth of his heaven fading long before the daylight. His journey seemed too long, his sword too heavy, his heaven too far away. The blue in his eyes was washed black, the callouses to scars, his long hoped locket to an iron weight of regret... He wasn't going to make it. But he never gave up, I will tell you that. He died with his sword in hand, but against a foe he could not hope to defeat. Oftentimes I imagine him continuing his journey, walking through clear nights, climbing pale rocks against the treacherous winds. I swear that the golden light is still there, that his heaven didn't abandon him, that its loving embrace would pick him up... give him hope.

But I cannot see him. Not anymore.

How much can the human soul take? How long can the open hand remain empty before its strength fails and it falls to his side? Is heaven even real? Or does each man conjure his own as a reason to live, to keep fighting against a world that just can't seem to love him? Out there... of course... out there someone waits, something waits, something that is better, that makes this journey—this battle—worth every drop of blood. Surely, it can't be for nothing. Surely, the fleeting nature of beauty is good. Why should we be made for more than a blink across the void back of a heartless eternity? Surely... surely that's enough to keep living.

No. No, it is not.

When his heaven faded, so did the man holding it. When its warmth left him, conjured by his own mind or not, he could fight no longer against the oppressive cold. He was never a match for those he faced along that treacherous road, but he fought, sometimes he even won,

because he believed it was for something, something extraordinary, something great, something lovely, something that would be his if he could only make it... But he fell short. He fell when the locket on his heart broke from its cradle around his neck and cracked on the stone ground. Picked up, dusted off, polished, it would never recover. Heaven would leak out of the cracks little by little, until there was nothing left. And I tell you now that some men spend their lives trying to keep the little bit of heaven they have left from leaving, only to realize that they are too weak, too stupid, too late to do so. One day their heaven will be gone. Others try to continue their journey and do battle against the gods, believing if they just make it in time, their heaven can be saved. But one day their sword splinters, their legs crack beneath them, and they collapse into the darkness, their last flicker of light drawn out into the soulless oblivion.

It's hopeless without heaven. But every man's heaven will break one way or another.

Perish.

...

But what if heaven could be recovered? Where did it come from if not within? Can man not create a new heaven to fight for? A new light to guide him, to take over the dark in his gaze and remind him of the sun?

Perhaps...

As one whose heaven has long been gone, who has layn dead, I can only hope... and there it is. Even in that subtle thought. A new heaven—though a candle set beside a ravenous and chilling storm—is born from the ashes of the first. It must be held close. First hidden, then protected. Fed from a flicker into a blaze, and one day returned to purest light that cannot be hidden, carried through both the day and the night. Perhaps I am as naive as I ever was. But I want to dance again, I want the dry well of my soul to overflow, I want to truly be alive. Let it not be said that the beautiful things die. That they fade in the dark. Let it be said that they are reborn. That the darkness can never win, because it cannot be without the light.

Live.