

Searching for Self

As many stories began, this story begins: millennia before my fingers, or the buttons they tap, type up the tale so...

There once was a woman who angered (with her careless commentary on Alexander whom she thought "The not-so-great; well, maybe in bed, but not with whom he's wed...") the Muse of History, Clio and her mother Mnemosyne, of memory.

Despite the protestations of the humorous sister, Thalia and her pleas that, "The human spoke in jest, and I am proof that comedy is an art! Think hard and long before you punish an artist for their art, I say no good will come of it."

"I say some may," chimed in the Muse of Tragedy, Melpomene, but unable to spot the contradiction of her optimism she did not realise until too late that her words would not dissuade her enraged kin. Quite the opposite.

"Words have power in context, and untruths may spawn with treacherous abandon. I say we will make sure this human woman never speaks again. My parents, Gaia of the Earth and Uranus of the Sky, will keep her trapped between them and she will never again slander a good name."

And so, there she was; a woman, 'come tree, who was not even half satisfied with her given lot. It wasn't that she was cramped, for though she was taller than before her ceiling was the sky and her arms were free to reach for it. It wasn't that she had nothing with which to entertain herself, for she was on a large hill and the land around was so flat that her view stretched for miles and miles in all directions. It was that she had no way of conveying her thoughts, for that had always been her main priority and most preferred exertion- through a myriad of mediums. The only mode of expression now available to her was to weep but the result of this was invariably unsatisfactory; the most intense outpouring of emotion would only yield a few beads from the highest leaves.

After a time, a young man would name her trunk his preferred backrest; would come and read about her each morning. She enjoyed these times more than any other in her tree-life and would strain to read over his shoulder and become annoyed when he turned the page before she was in-line with him. He sometimes found that his pages became spotted with water and would look up to say "It must be the morning dew" or "Maybe there was some rain collected from last night". He did once note that it was strange this happened usually at the climax of some characters' triumph or melancholia.

If one was to stand at a precise angle from the trunk, at a time when the sun was casting a particular shadow, one could make out a knob on the trunk that had a striking resemblance to a face, screwed up in frustrated confusion; much like that of the man who strolled at another time in history through the labyrinthine library of Alexandria looking for the perfect text to read aloud and make his idiosyncrasies more understandable to the masses.

It feels to me, he thought, that I have been in this library neigh off 100 centuries and I am still no closer to finding the book which will perfectly illustrate my feelings. He walked seemingly aimlessly, through stacks and stacks of scrolls, sweeping his fingertips across the edges of the tomes and when he felt as if one were calling out to him with particular strength or passion, or perhaps just when his legs became tired, he would pull it out and begin to read.

There are certain rules which govern our relationship with the world around us which can be proven empirically when... No! I hate this type of writing, I find no beauty or interest in the empirical! Is there nothing in this vast library which would accurately depict how life cannot be predicted and the blurring there is between reality and fiction? Has no-one written a thesis on how, if one takes into account the experience of every human that ever has and ever will live, every fiction is the amalgamation of various truths? And so is fiction not non-fiction and is reality not a poorer relation of imagination? Where is the celebration of the grey and blurry in all these books? I cannot be the first to have had this thought, and I will not be the last! I must keep on...

And thus he did continue, until eventually he was lost deep within the caverns of the library, where all light was blotted out by books piled to the ceiling and he lit his candle to read the text he encountered.

This is it! I have found it! But as his heart rejoiced, he leaned closer to the page, his flame took to a corner of the parchment. He started back with shock; that flame leaped too.

In the ensuing fire many sacred things were lost, among them an immense volume written by an exacting intellectual who had insisted upon walking out to choose the very tree which would be felled to forge his material. He walked for miles until he saw, upon a lonely hill, a tall tree reaching for the sky and he cried out to his servants that snaked behind him, "I have found it, bear your axes at that tree and load up the logs, for the real work can now begin!"

The next morning, an old bachelor walked out to the spot this majestic tree had stood and was shocked to see only a stump in place of trunk, branches and leaves. He threw himself onto the stub and sobbed and squalled for days without respite until eventually he collapsed. But just as his eyelids finally flickered shut he saw, or thought he saw, a supple sapling sprouting skywards.

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