

Catharsis. 2, Jack

by mazaher as Jack (font: Courier New)

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A nightmare. Again.

He falls so deep inside them that waking him up is difficult.

Sometimes --like now-- I must force myself not to shake him out of it. But I hold back.

Not only because we are on a public means of transportation (although our good luck allowed for an empty compartment), but because I know how ghosts and demons grow more furious if you are trying to cheat them.

He needs to face his. I only wish I could be at his side facing whatever horror is looping again and again inside his head.

So I call his name, and tap my fingers on his knee, the casual gesture of a traveling companion.

"We have arrived," I say, when at last he opens his eyes.

I am not sure he hears me. He comes from so far away, shivering and sweating at the same time.

I give him my handkerchief and I know at once, before he even speaks, that it is a mistake. I have overstepped my bounds. All the same, his annoyance at my gesture is a good sign. He is himself enough to lash out at me.

I leave him alone.

This crisis has passed, how long to the next one?

He looks preoccupied.

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He's chosen to rent a cabin. He doesn't want to be known sharing hotel accommodations with me. This far, nothing new. But he has not come back from his dream yet, not completely. His demons are at his heels, and he rejects with scorn my suggestion to take a walk down the road to the village.

I can see he fears the encounter with his intended destination, just as much as he needs to face whatever acknowledgement or revelation is waiting for him there.

We take the sunken road leading away from the village and to the falls.

It's early afternoon, and the sky is getting clouded. A grey light robs the world of its shadows.

Who are we without our shadows? I walk behind him on the narrow path, and his erect figure, his precise steps on the irregular flagstones, the sway of the hem of his light overcoat, seem to flatten and fade like the overexposed photograph of someone stepping to the gallows.

Would I look the same to him, a pale ghost in the creeping twilight?

But he doesn't turn to look.

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We get to the end of the path, to the overhang in front of the din and riot and crash of an angry mass of water tumbling madly down after earth has broken her promise of eternal sustenance.

We peer down. He leans further, listening. I only catch the wordless roar of water, but he watches, intent, as though he can discern words only he will ever understand.

Nearer still to the abyss.

I say his name, my voice forcedly calm, but he doesn't even hear me. I ask him to step back.

He doesn't.

I don't want to touch and startle him, he's so near the edge.

Too near.

He slips.

My arm snakes out, I catch him. Back to safety.

He wrenches himself away, again he lashes out at me, but he's safe, and if my heart beats in my throat so fast it isn't for the words he shouts at me.

I look at him, and see.

He could have died, and yet he isn't even into his body now. He's far away, in the hazy land where I can't follow, but which follows him by day and by night. Holding him prisoner.

We should not have come here. Yet he had to.

I try to turn him away from the falls, back to the village. He refuses, doesn't want to be seen, as though what is a mystery for me could be read as plain as day by any stolid peasant passing by. I ask, I pray, he won't. I ask again, stepping so near I am almost whispering in his ear.

He turns and runs.

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When I join him later, in his room in the cabin, he is half-drunk. As though it helps.

I lie to him. I tell him I have searched for him for hours, but all the while I knew exactly where to find him. And when to find him. I had to give him time to settle down, or he would run again, and then I'd lose him.

I took a walk, alone, following the path downstream from the falls. The water smoothing out to calm fluid glass, widening into a pool of clear green ice-cold depth. I found a track leading from there to the main road. I got back to the village after sunset, an invisible sunset, a thickening of the greyness. Anxiety my companion all the way.

It was his father, taking possession of my Patrick's beloved soul, in this place where he left such a hideous imprint of his evil mind.

His father, who pushed Sherlock down the falls, falling with him.

Who would have thought nothing to push Patrick also, if it has suited his plans.

He did even worse, releasing him into this living death-- no, living hell.

But hell at his side is better than any empty heaven without him.

If hell is Patrick's share, it will be mine also.

I need the most delicate touch to try and hold him here, on this side of the world where real, breathing people live and eat and talk. One mistake, one word, one touch too many, and the ties break, or he breaks them himself, and he is lost. The reverse side of life is calling him, the empty echoing world of darkness where there is no ground to stand on. How can I make him hear me above that siren call?

My touch is rough, my words are grating.

He doesn't even listen. I open my mouth to speak, and he breaks in with thoughts that are not mine, in words his own mind says to him in my voice.

He speaks of my disgust for him. Then he says he's disgusted of me. He doesn't recognize himself in the mirrors of hate he's crucified between.

I do not hate him. I hate this neverending pitched battle between us, when all I ever wanted is comfort his soul and worship his body, even as his mind keeps rending me to pieces.

I think he's spoiled, he says.

He is. Like in the eighteenth hexagram in I-Ching, "Cleaning up what has been spoiled by the father", his heart is a cup filled with rotten, worm-infested food. The food his father fed him.

How can I protest against his desperation?

He cannot find a way to clear away the spoilage, not yet. But he will.

I want to be there when he will.

And I need to keep him here until he does.

I must not let him slip away, down in the dark alone. I must not let him cut his ties with me. I need to be with him, or he will be consumed. I must be patient, but also I must be clever, ready to catch my chance.

I try to soothe him, and he strikes me hard.

It is my chance.

I slap him back.

We fight.

His body hot with anger, lively as singing steel, bent against mine, but still he isn't there. He's far away, and suddenly I feel the urge to hold him, block

him, lock him within my arms and between my legs and against my chest, panting and heaving, and safe.

Something I never, ever dared to do.

I tell him I will not hurt him. Because I'm someone else, not one of those who tore his soul to tatters, nor any of the ghouls within his mind.

But all to no avail. He has stopped breathing, immobile under me. I failed again.

I release him.

What now? What else can I ever do to call him back?

I want to release his heart from the possession, free it from his father's voice whispering to him to kill himself lest he dishonor his father's memory by being who he is, a good man, my beloved. Horatio to his Hamlet, I want to see him out of Elsinore at last, alive and free, and not the king of Denmark, and not his father's son.

I want to give him access to himself, and now I know what it takes and what I'll do.

If he needs to fuck me up to my own heart, so be it. I'm his, I've always been.

The room feels chilled, by I strip myself of clothes.

He listens, his back turned. I imagine his eyes, black shiny beads, not the eyes of the living.

I climb on the bed, offer myself.

He turns.

At the threshold of Hades, they say, Odysseus offered a black ram to the souls of the dead, and on they came, a crowd, all thirsty for a drop of the warm blood. Like this he takes me, searching in a frenzy with hands and mouth and teeth and tongue and cock, touching and licking and sniffing and fucking, and I'm here, all here, but he can't find me.

It's only afterwards, when his climax has spent him, that I feel his mind clearing like sky after the rain, and at last, at long last, he can hear me.

I call, I chant, I weave a net of words for him to cling to, climb on, and out, and back to me.

I look him in the eyes, and he is *here*.

Out of his death, immune, I don't know for how long, but tonight he is here, he's free, and he is mine for me to keep him safe.

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His return to the living is clumsy. As soon as he's recovered, he crashes into the bathroom and wants to take control, cleaning and dressing one by one the bleeding marks and bruises on my body which brought him back to me.

His hands, his fingers, are heaven, and he knows. Every bite and nailcut and abrasion will hurt like hell tomorrow, but now they are too fresh, and I'm high with endorphins. I know he's safe now, for a while, so I relax and allow this pure bliss to flood through me. I do not need my eyes to know what his face looks in this moment, so I close them and let the rhythm of my breathing lull us both.

Until...

Until the unwanted guest, guilt, catches up with him.

"I don't deserve you," he sighs, and as though he's slipped into the sea from a raft we've been sailing, he stops breathing.

The ghosts are back, trying to snatch him from me. But I will not allow it. This night is mine, Patrick is mine, and he must know himself, because when I order him to breathe, silently praying that he will, he does.

I've won this battle, and in the drunken joy of victory, I ask the question I never should ask him.

"What are you thinking?"

"I love you," is his answer.

No time for disbelief. I kiss him while I cry, and I don't care.

We're clean, and made new again, and the ghosts and every devil in hell are left far behind.

Let's get out of here. Let's leave forever the ramparts of Elsinore. At once, before the ghost can find us.

"Where do we go now?"

"...never look back," he says.
We pack, we're out, away.

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*Thus, arm-in-arm with thee, I dare defy
The universal world into the lists.*

KARL FRIEDRICH SCHILLER, *Don Carlos*, act I, scene IX, end