

Night had dawned upon the king's empire, a feeling he had grown to accept by now. The king sat alone in his throne room, drinking from a chalice of wine with no one to accompany him aside from the glimmering moon through a nearby window. As his gaze traced over the lunar body, he was brought aback and took a peaceful recollection of his now extensive life. As he enjoyed a long sip of his sweet nectar, his advisor entered the room through a nearby flight of stairs and moved towards his monarch.

He uttered, "Sir, if I may inquire, why is your highness up to such a drawn-out hour of the night? Maybe it would be best for you to retire back to your quarters for the remainder of the evening."

The king responded, "Not yet squire. The night is a quiet and peaceful one; one that every man with a spot of age can appreciate. I shall stay, and if you wish, you may accompany me on this eve."

The advisor disgruntledly appeased his overseer by situating himself in a nearby chair and proceeded to pour a small cupful of the king's red wine. He took a small sip and licked the remnants off his lips. Next he proceeded to stare down his king in a stern manner. He eyeballed the old man's whispery gray beard, which had been beaten severely over time. The remainder of his facial hair mirrored the same consistency and luster of his beard, all except for that of his balding scalp. His face resembled the texture of rolling waves in which gravity had taken its toll upon. The king's advisor took a few more sips at his leisure and awaited his master to speak.

"Your highness," the adviser addressed. "Is something on your mind?"

"I was just reminiscing of my childhood; it seems as though it were only earlier today."

The adviser continued, "Ah, yes. I faintly remember such a time as well."

The king added, "Youth is the time in which the son learns about the world, when all the light is shed upon his surroundings, when he discovers what he believes the world to contain. Then after the initial learning stage, the education of humanity's *true* nature is brought upon the child."

"What makes you say that my liege?"

“Through firsthand experience; must I justify myself?”

“I would not demand anything of you, your lordship.”

“Please boy, speak to me as an equal if you may. For this one instance let go of the chivalrous titles in which you assert me by and treat me as if I was something as an uncle.”

“Yes, certainly,” the advisor said as his back became more lax in his chair and he listened more keenly to his lord.

The king caressed his beard in a thoughtful manner and uttered, “As I said before, childhood is filled with glee and sunlight, mine being no different for the most part. At the time I happened to be smitten with a young lass and what a sight she was; her refined golden locks flowed in such a way that put sunflowers to shame. Her face was calm and glistening when the sun’s beam graced her ocean-blue eyes. And her minute smile brought all spectators to an appreciation to how subtly beautiful the world can be. She was the spotlight of sunshine in my life, then one tragic day a shadow was cast upon our spotlight.

“My lover came to me one morning and told me that her mother and older sister had been murdered. They had been found inside their home, with blood strewn about the living quarters. I joined her in her remorse and cradled her gently in my arms as she wept for a short eternity. I soon told my parents and they went over to her house immediately to reminisce with her father and sister’s young son. They spoke with him and discussed how miserable and baffling the whole ordeal was. As they were conversing about it, I was with my betrothed behind the house, still holding her affectionately.

“Then I heard a thud of loud footsteps come from within the home. I peeked through the back window and I could see it all. There laid my father bloody dead on the ground while my mother was scampering in fear. My betrothed’s father slowly walked towards my mother with a bloody hatchet in his hands, as his grandson watched in a paralyzed stance from the corner. My dad’s blood on the axe met my mother’s just as I looked away. A shrill scream was then heard louder than that of a hungry infant.

“My heart sank lower than the depths of the ocean and I-(the king took a moment of silence with his eyes closed and sniffled) I abandoned my beloved.”

The king shed a small but distinct tear that drew the advisor's eye.

The ruler waited a moment before he resumed his tale, "I ran at full speed clear of that house with no direction, not giving a thought to the danger that my love could be in. I continued my stride until I found a suitable alley in which to situate myself in. As the sun mercilessly beat on me from inside my hideaway, I condensed myself into a minuscule form in hopes of shielding myself from the murderer. Whilst I hid, my love's glassy and fragile complexion persisted in my mind, one that had now been fractured by my incompetence."

The advisor looked curiously at the king as he set his wine cup down. He saw the pain stretch across the king's face with every word of the tale that was told.

The advisor inquired, "If I may ask sir; why would you speak of such things involving a lack of bravery and commitment? Surely if certain people were aware of such information, they could use it as ignition to spark a revolution against you."

The king gave a stern look and said, "Do you think I fear a revolutionary, a man who simply wishes to usurp the order of things in hopes of doing better himself; when in the end he shall tread the same path as the monarch that came before him. A revolutionary is man filled with half a mind of knowledge; he sees only malice in his ruler and is ignorant of all but his king's flaws. It is the man to yell change when he does not have the courage in which to bring it himself. It is the man who thinks his words grander than those surrounding him, even though he claims to be their comrade. It is the man who speaks of corruption in others when he does nothing to promote purity himself."

The advisor waited for a break in his lord's words and interjected, "I see my lord. In fact it makes me wonder how you came to power. I cannot picture how a young boy on the streets would grow to become a king without resembling what you have just spoken of."

The king sighed, "I shall continue my story then."

He took another suckle of the wine and continued.

"I found myself alone on the streets for a time, until one day in which I spotted a plethora of flyers circumnavigating the city's premises. They detailed a recent death of one of the king's

esteemed knights, and offered an opening for the position. The terms of employment were simply to win a combat tournament hosted by the king himself.

“I perceived the opportunity as a godsend regarding it as an improvement on my current situation, and made my way to the location immediately. When I arrived, a man simply gave me a smug smile, handed me a honed sword, and pushed me into the arena in which the quarrels were to take place. I shielded the glimmering sun with my forearm and proceeded to take an observation of my surroundings.

“The audience screamed and shouted manically in the surrounding stands, exclaiming noises hardly recognizable as words. In the corner of my periphery sat the king in all of his elderly glory, discharging a gaze fixated upon my figure. Parallel from me in the arena stood a fellow participant with an aggressive look about him. He gritted his unkempt, cavity ridden teeth that shared a similar color to urine. He also bore a beard that had almost certainly never had any interaction with water or clippers. As his right eye made contact with mine, I took notice that his left had an absent pupil and a scar surrounding it.

“The king gave us each one further look from atop his perch in the stands and shouted, ‘Proceed!’ My grizzled comrade charged at me with his blade jostling up and down in his loosely gripped hand. As he charged at me I braced myself with my sword. As soon as he entered range of me I forwent the opportunity in which to parry him and leapt to my side. His slash came crashing into the ground at such force that his weapon became ensnared in the earth. As he tugged and hauled to unearth his blade, I took the opportunity to catch him off guard. I motioned quickly at him and kicked him back with such a force that his back met the floor. Before he could recover I pointed my weapon in a menacing manner at his face whilst he lay on his rear.

“The king stood and deemed the match as concluded, then motioned me to back away from my opponent. I withdrew and allowed for the man to get his bearings. Just before he took his walk of shame in retreat, he let out a slew of saliva in my direction. Luckily his aim with spittle was as poor as his aim with a sword.

“The match’s conclusion gave me time to retire in the arena’s outskirts for a time and await the other contender’s battles. The fights lasted all morning and many lifeless corpses emerged from the coliseum. I made my way through a few more fights, in which I spared my

victims after emerging as the victor from each confrontation. After a multitude of daylight had been spent, I was called back into the arena once more for the concluding fight of the tournament.”

The adviser interrupted, “May I ask you one question sire? Why did you show such mercy towards your compatriots even though surely they would most likely avoid repaying the same hospitality?”

“Simple,” the king said. “Mercy is a quality a man must exhibit to his neighbors and even though he may not receive the same treatment back, he should still put his foremost efforts into displaying this quality to his fellow people. It’s what keeps us the spirited and innocent individuals that we wish to stay for our eternal existence. Once the trait is dismissed it makes us become the dark creatures that these revolutionaries depict with such illustrious wickedness.

“Now as I was saying before, the final round of the tournament was about to begin. Both my opponent and I stepped into the foreground with weapons in hand. Accompanying our blades were suits of armor to prolong the fight and ensure the crowd’s entertainment. I looked my foe over and noticed how composed and bloodthirsty he appeared, even with his facial expression masked.

“Our king stood and said ‘Here stands two individuals who have proven they can conquer a multitude of threats without falter, who can stand strong in the face of adversity, and who are capable of becoming one of the few revered knights of-.’ Then an atrocious cough was let out that made a sound mimicking suffocation. He continued, ‘You two will fight and the victor will stand beside me after its conclusion. Now begin.’

“Instead of showing the aggressiveness of my former opponents, this man took a slow pace towards me, showing caution. I imitated this gait and moved to meet him in the arena’s center. As soon as we entered one another’s striking distance, the slices came and went like seasons. In no time our armors had become ripped to tatters and neither of us was open to the idea slowing down. With a lucky swing I made contact with his leg’s flesh and brought him down onto his knee. I disarmed his sword and flung it to the fringes of the arena. I raised my weapon and looked to my king for approval. He took a stand and said with the utmost gloominess in his voice, ‘Only one man will leave this arena alive. Kill him.’

“I looked to him confused but did not say a word in opposition; his stare was enough to confirm what he said. My palms shook and my heart sank to that of the lowliest trenches. I lifted my opponent’s helmet from his head and stared into his deadbeat face, battered with bruises and scars from the day’s events. I raised my sword with both hands above this man’s solemn head and in a quick motion I brought it through his neck.”

“So you killed the man?” asked the advisor.

The king spoke softly, “I did, and the kill was no sweeter knowing that that man was my parents’ murderer.”

He took another drink of the wine and continued, “After my opponent had exited this world, I looked to my ruler and noticed that night had just dawned. The king looked to me and pronounced, ‘You have won the tournament and now shall be known as one of the king’s illustrious knights.’ He then emitted yet another shrill cough. He said, ‘My time is short on this Earth and I wish to leave those on it with a powerful and earning ruler to govern them. I have no heir or spouse in which to fulfill this position, and nobody close to me is fit to rule. With that being said, I appoint this new knight that stands before you all, king of this land!’ just before dropping dead.”

The advisor stared admirably at the man before him saying, “So that’s the story of our fair king is it? Only through murder could the crown be achieved.”

The king retorted, “If that is the way you wish to look at it.”

“It is humorous how a king can elect his successor simply on the merit of being a scandalous brute.”

“If that is the person you believe me to be.”

“Oh, it is the person I know you to be. You and every other forsaken ruler we’ve ever had in this nation since I can remember.”

“If those are the people you think we are.”

“I am not the only person who thinks such. Look outside.”

The king took a gaze out the window nearby and witnessed flames abound accompanied by storming citizens.

The king chuckled a bit and said, “Why is that a revolution I see, by your hand I presume?”

“You are correct. It is my grandfather’s wish carried triumphantly if I do say myself. He would adore seeing his little lad sit atop the throne in place of an animal such as you.”

“And who would your grandfather be?”

“He would be the man you murdered, as well as the killer of my mother and grandmother. He freed me from the simple and oppressed vision of my maternal overseers when I was only a youth, and I rejoice in it now. His vision of bringing in a new and just order to this kingdom may have been stalled when you slew him, but I will carry out his wish. It is time to fulfill my obligation to my followers and my grandfather in the afterlife; I must bring your death.”

The advisor attempted to rise from his chair but to no avail. He struggled and struggled but only became weaker throughout the fight.

The king laughed a little maddeningly and said, “You have suffered effects of the red drink we all cherish. We love to nourish in it and take it from others without their permission. Sometimes however, and can stop the body cold when it craves it most.”

“I hope Lucifer curses you! You poisoned the wine and have doomed us both!”

“Ah, the sweet grace of death lies before us. Speaking of sweetness, before we pass could you tell me the fate of my beloved? What happened of her?”

“You want to know what happened to my aunt; after you left her to the fate of my grandfather, he took her in as part of his revolutionary group that he was beginning to raise me in. It seemed as though his teachings were not influencing her mindset however, and she did not seem to show interest in abiding by our code. Some time after my grandfather had passed, she grew ill, and on her death bed she told me to tell you a few words if I ever met with you again.

“She said precisely, ‘Out of the entire sky our stars were lucky enough to reside near one another, and out of all the feelings we could have shared, we shared the most fabled one. Our stars shined alone, but when merged we eclipsed all other sources of light throughout the vast stretches of the sky. As we aged, our lights dimmed and we repelled from one another, but that conjoining force was still there and I know one day it will reawaken. If it takes all of time before we are destined to meet once more, I will wait with anxious feet and love in my heart for the time that day arises, whether it be in this life or the next.’”

The king brought up a soft smile for his love.

“God, please give me the strength to fight on and bring this kingdom the just leader it deserves!” the advisor cried.

The king’s ears were absent at this point. He began speaking, “Isn’t it funny how the sun is glistening all day and people fall in love with it? It is bright, full of life, and can do no wrong, yet it lacks the age and wisdom in which some expect of it. Then the sun turns to night and all its former admirers turn to crusaders against it. The night is the culmination of the wise and thoughtful and instead of embracing what it offers, people choose to sleep and ignore what it brings. After the night is dismissed by its people, it sees no reason to continue on further. The moon then completes its revolution and a new sun emerges to take its place.”

The advisor then collapsed from his chair and resided lifelessly on the floor. The king gazed at the moon and its surrounding stars. He imagined the stars fusing to light up the sky as his love depicted. His strength then faltered and caused him to follow his advisor’s stance on the ground. As the king rested upon his chest he let his last few breaths slowly seep out, upholding a faint and assured smile on his face.

The night was then brought to an end by the moon’s descent, and a gleaming sun rose to light up the skies and the heavens above.