Character Stories

The Villain x

Suffering - The Deserter

Rage - The Beast x

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Curiosity - The Survivor

Hatred - The Protector x

Despair - The Hunter x

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### The Protector

I used to have a family- a husband, and a daughter. We lived in a safe place, in one of few remaining sanctuaries still hidden from the wider world. We had crops, fields of fertile earth, clean water, and miles of woodland. I doubt it remains there now, and all I have seen since is sand and brittle weeds. Together we worked the land, it was enough to survive, and we tried to get along as best we could. But we were not neighbours, we were survivors, refugees forced together to prevail. There were some who had been born in the sanctuary, innocent of the horrors of the world, and there were others, like myself, who had stumbled upon the sanctuary on our purposeless voyage through life.

With every wanderer that passed through, every vagrant that found a home among us, the tension in the sanctuary grew. We were worried that our little peaceful corner would be discovered and torn apart. And so we were divided, there were those of us who wanted to provide sanctuary to all seeking shelter, and there were those who wanted to keep out intruders- by whatever means necessary. As time passed the divide grew, exacerbated by stories from the outer world- tales of barbarism, murder, defilement, inhumanity. The strings of our relationships were pulled tighter and tighter, until one day, they snapped.

One day, like many days before it, a bleached wastelander came to our village. He was not like others that had come, there was something unhinged in him, of course we all had a burden to bear, but his was different. We found him a bed, gave him food and drink, and left him to rest. He did not speak, but he laid his leering eyes upon every woman he encountered. Ill at ease we went to our homes to rest for the night. In the morning we found the body. A young woman, her body cut and bloody, lay across the threshold of the wastelander’s tent. There was no discussion, no words spoken, we simply drew him from his tent, and broke his body in the middle of the village.

When the bodies were buried we argued about what should be done. Words turned to insults, insults to accusations, and soon we were split, two sides warring over peace. The first stone was thrown, and others followed. Then there was pandemonium, fist fights escalated into murder, and there was only chaos. I gathered my family, shouting for them to gather as much as we could, and we ran into the forest. There were other families, couples, elders, and children, all running from the village as fast as we could. And then the pursuits started, the people we had lived with every day for years now hunted us with teeth and nails, blades, farming tools, and guns. I did not look back, I only simply ran from the screams. By the time the noises had died away, I was lost, the trees were thinning, and the grass at my feet given away to the dry dirt of the wasteland beyond. I did not know where my family was. I still do not know, I hope that one day our paths will cross, for I am sure they did not perish, but I cannot go looking for them, I do not know where to look, instead I have only one thing left- survival.

### The Ghost

Things weren’t always this way. I recall I time before the winds were dry and laden with ash, a time when we would welcome the sight of another, rather then recoil at the fear of danger. Sometimes its hard to say if it was all a dream, a misrememberance of my childhood. I prefer to think we are in a dream now, because even then we would one day wake up, even if now we have to live in this nightmare. I dont know if I had a family, I must have done, though they are long dead by now I assume. Wandering is all I know, going from place to place, there is so much that has been left undone in this world. I find newspapers, books, diaries, strange devices that sputter with light and sound but go dark before long, never to wake. Happily I find myself without sadness in these dying days. I have no remorse or incomplete doings, none to to weep for, and nothing to rejoice. My only lament is my lack of feeling, though Im sure you envy my stagnant mind. What little memories I have are no more real to me than scribblings in a book. There are those who call my a ghost, because that is who I am, a ghost in this purgatory, drifting lifelessly through an equally lifeless plane. I will follow you though, though like a leaf on a breeze I do not know why. I assure you I do not fear death, for I cannot truly call my existence life.

### The Beast

My rage is eternal, enduring through the red dust and dark fire of our broken world. I have no enemies, for those that look upon my countenance see only death, but still I cut down those who stand before me- those whose eyes betray the rotting soul within. There is a dark shadow within us all, a hidden thing kept at bay by our civil self. It is in our most passionate moments that it is set free, free to do what our primal instinct knows should be done. They say that the world fell because our minds were changed, that we were turned evil by devils or monsters. They are wrong. The devil is a part of us, it is a reflection of our surface selves, the inversion of our conscious mind. It is the essence in the air that drew it out, empowering it, and allowing it to maraud openly. But I have controlled it, I let it escape, feed, exert it’s will through my hand. It is this freedom that prevents it from taking a hold of me. I acknowledge it, and so we coexist.

There is no greater power in the world than the unchained beast. However an unchained animal will wreak havoc if untrained. We must use exert our will to remain in control, to speak to the beast and let it know that we are the alpha, we allow the beast to exist, and without us, it would die. When the covenant is made between you and the beast it is like a weight lifted from your mind. Our darkest thoughts are free to expose, explore, and exploit. I revel in my freedom, I have shirked the shackles of civilisation to sate my primal thirst. Do not care for those who would do you harm, for they are nothing but fodder for the beast. Instead liberate them from their earthly duties, spill their blood on the sand, for in the absence of darkness, there is light.

What there is beyond death I do not know, perhaps the pearlescent gates are real, or perhaps we will go to the halls of our ancestors, to revel forever amongst our lineage. Or perhaps there is only darkness, nothing stretching from here to infinity. One day we all shall discover what lies beyond, but whilst we exist on this side of the veil we must live. That is why the beast is important, it gives us life, it is our source of true emotion, raw feelings. If anyone reads this, go forth, allow the wolf within to burst forth, say those words that are unsaid, seek vengeance when justice is undone, conquer the oppressors and lift up the meek. And if you should fall in your pursuit for balance, you will know that it was for a glorious purpose that your fire was snuffed. The worst that can befall is that we instead allow our flame to dim and die in the darkening of the night, our mind full of regrets and things left undone.

### The Villain

Atop the highest pinnacle of an ancient rig a man sat upon his throne. He made sure he was above all others, able to see for miles and miles around. Many worked for him, some dug at the ground beneath their feet, others were there for his pleasure. Every month, in an attempt to show his humanity, he would gather his people, and select one to bestow a great gift upon. He would take them out of the settlement in his great vehicle, far beyond the horizon, to a place no-one saw or knew about. The people of the settlement lived for this great gift, they would praise his name in the hopes that one day they too would be able to go to the paradise.

One day a mother and her child came before the warlord. With croaking voices they begged him to leave. And so he laid his great hand upon them, and spoke the words they most desired to hear. The others watched on longingly, some wept, whilst others cursed in frustration. The mother and her child descended with him. Deep through the the great machine they went, down to the salty floor below. He beckoned for them to enter the vehicle, and begin their journey to salvation. It was far, to go beyond the bounds that confined them. The self-proclaimed king spoke not a word, and gave them not a glance. He allowed them supplies to sate their moaning bellies and quench their dry throats.

Days passed, the warlord driving without sleep, before they finally stopped. Before them was a great plain. Their breath was stolen from them as they gazed upon miles and miles of grassland. So flat it was that it would drive the mind to madness if one were to gaze at it long enough. The mother started to weep, for she knew that despite the rivers that ran through the land, despite the green fields that beckoned to her, she knew it was as hostile to life as any desert. She knew that this would be the end. She turned to the driver, imploring him to return them home. But he refused, in his mind this was a paradise, how could anyone refuse this great green place.

You cannot go back he said. For if they were to return the magic would be shattered for his people. They would be crushed by the reality of the world. Suddenly the woman spun round, digging her fingers deep into his forearms, running them down his flesh in long red streaks. He screamed out in pain and pushed her to the ground. Blood spilling onto the blinding white floor, immediately absorbed by the grateful earth. He ran back to his car, started the engine, and drove away as he tried to tend to his wounds. Glancing up, he saw her in the mirror, still on the floor, a mask of anger worn upon her face. As they grew smaller he knew his reign had ended. He could not give hope to his people, not now that the veil had been lifted from his eyes. And so exiled himself into the desert. His compassion towards his people blinded him to the reality of his actions. To this day he carries those scars, a reminder that we are all equal in the dust.

### The Watcher

I once met a band of wandering holy men. “Hail”, I said, for the road was lonely, and any company was welcome. “Bless you, daughter”, they said, though I was not their son, “Are you making the pilgrimage too?” they asked. “No, brothers, I am not. For this is a godless world, and faith has no place in it” I replied. At this they made an unusual smile. “My daughter, do you not believe in the gods?” asked one. “It is well known that the gods abandoned our world, so why would I worship those that would leave us to this fate?” I replied. “But my child it was not they who caused the world to come to ruin. Their plan is perfect, it is an opportunity for us to prove ourselves worthy. That is our pursuit” another said. “Then that is a worthy goal, and I commend you for it, but by testing our worthiness the gods have demonstrated that they do not have faith in us. So why should I have faith in those who do not have faith in me?”.

Some time later we made camp. The sun had begun to set, and the holy men were not comfortable walking in the dark. One of the group sat on the ground next to me and we watched the sun go down. “It is a beautiful gift, don’t you think?” she said. Confused, I asked “What do you mean, a gift?”. “The sun- it is a gift from them, as are our eyes so that we might see it.” she said. “You believe they gave us the sun?” I asked. “Why of course, they gave us everything they created” she said. At this I was silent for some time. “I shall tell you where my doubts lie, sister. You say the world is a gift, for which the gods ask nothing in return, but you do not see it how I do. If it is a trivial task for them to create all that exists, so then it is nothing for them to give it away, for it is worth nothing. On the other hand if it was no trivial task, and required everything from them, then what they receive is servitude- belief and worship. This then shows that they are selfish, they gave us gifts expecting our praise in return. I see no reason to worship a being who would give us something worthless to them, or one who would give us something, only to make a demand we cannot refuse as payment.

### The Hunter

Deep in the salt sea there is a church, abandoned now I’m sure. It sits above the great saline cracks, under the unbearable heat of the sun. People say it once sat on an island amidst a boundless sea, if that is true, then surely it must have been a long time ago. My father took me to this church on my tenth birthday. The air in the church was as stifling as it was hot, the ancient boards of the wooden walls creaking in the breeze. He stood by the altar at the head of the church, and he commanded me 'Son, tell me what you see here’. I did not understand, other than the ancient building itself, there was nothing of interest, and I told him just that. ‘And that is exactly why I brought you here.’ he said. ‘This church is the last worship place of the gods, and yet there is no one here, there are no worshippers, no candles, not even a seat for a pilgrim to sit’ he went on. ‘This is because the gods are ignorant, boy. They have abandoned us. There will be no response to our prayers, we drive our own path in this world.’.

Years later, with the great salt sea and the dessicated church far behind me, I thought back on my father’s message. It had seemed so far to go to make that point. And yet it has always stuck with me, there are many who still pray for better times, for their children, and their crops, and their sick. But I never have, not since that day. It was not long after that my father took ill. It was the waste that took him, bound him to his bed, dishonoured his pride. Not once did he pray on his death bed. He did not ask for medicine, for he knew there was none, he had consigned himself to his fate. Though he was not without strength, he continued to teach me the way of the hunt, even until his final breath.

Now I scour the barren wastes of our world, ever tracking my prey, hunting the unjust. I do so without the gods behind me. The only measure of justice to be found lies in my hands, in the keenness of my eye, and the surety of my arm. Only the fool waits for justice from the divine. And whilst the fool waits, the thief takes what he wishes. Some may preach, they may say that our acts come about, that the farmer reaps what he sows, but I believe in vengeance. I believe in the immediacy of physical judgements that show the thieves and the scoundrels that there are those who exact their own divine will. As a hunter, that is my path, the path of retribution and the doom of the malign.