

Wolf Shrouded in Sheep's Clothing

Golden hues of light cascaded down the desolate streets, while blinding hints of auburn and copper lingered in the air. The quietude of the morning was deafening, shouldn't the churchgoers be here by now, murmuring their praises and practicing what they preach? Yet only God remained. The harsh wind carried whispers of judgement and promises of grace stained by blood. Heels clicked on the cobblestone...a lone figure! He resembled a ghost, skin as pale as snow, eyes as dark as ashes, locks as silky as a raven's feathers, and smile as twisted as Lucifer's very grin. Yet he carried himself with such pride, striding towards the church his orbs flickering with surprise.

Aha! He was the first to arrive for his weekly sermon, and of course this made him better than all the others. "God, don't you see I have come to see you?" he beckoned out loud, but he was met with nothing but deafening silence. Frowning, he entered the beautifully crafted building. Inside, walls were covered with murals of devotion to the mighty creator, thick ropes of violet lapped the posts from above for celebration of Christ's return. The man grinned, "Father Gilbert outdid himself this year it seems." He bows gently before kneeling on the teal carpet, his knees aching ever so slightly. He clasped his hands together and lowered his gaze in reverence, before squeezing his eyes shut. "My Lord, it is I...it is me, Cain. Perhaps I arrived a bit early today, surely, I get credit for that?" He chuckled softly, yet his palms began to sweat.

A chill breath of air caressed his ear, beckoning him to continue. With a deep sigh he obliges, "I killed Abel, and...and I should not be called a sinner for his own karma. Justice was served...some sins just cleanse more than they do stain." The windows banged as they shook from a sudden gasp of wind, Cain peeled his lids open. It howled throughout the small building, the delicate tracery that decorated the windows was no longer kissed by the sun as everything had dimmed, and the ribbons of violet now swayed dangerously above. You could barely hear the soft pants escaping Cain's very lips as he came to realisation of who he was facing. Without question, the one they call the Lord was there...haunting his crimes and sins, circling him with intent of judgement. Cain blinked rapidly, small clear drops staining his cheeks as his fingers fiddled with the cotton cuffs on his suit.

No life or force dared to halt this stand-off between good and evil, between right and wrong, between yin and yang. He did not need to utter a word, for the creator has already seen

everything. He is the eyes and ears, and the very words that fall from your lips, and the thick crimson that pumps your heart- Yet he allowed a moment to listen, to reflect...to judge. He was no longer in the church. Not really. The walls turned into stars as he hurdled back into the past. Time warped around him, swirling and morphing into constellations- as if the very concept of time was engulfing him. Perhaps he was enough. Maybe even redeemed...but that hope faded once his gaze met a curious set of earth brown eyes. "Cain, what has gotten into you? Father just wanted us to check the crops...If...If you'd like I can do it, and you can seek some rest?"

Him. The boy with the gorgeously smooth coffee locks, and rugged teal blouse.

It was him—the bane of his existence, the one he had once promised to protect. An evanescent memory, yet it plagued his mind.

"You always assume I can't do it myself!" The words cut through the air, catching Cain off guard. He stepped aside, watching as his seventeen-year-old self-marched toward his younger brother, Abel. Cain's eyes widened and he let out a hoarse cry of anger, not towards himself but towards his God...the one who he confided in, the one he trusted with such a secret. A sharp gasp tore from his throat as his younger self hastily grasped a pointy stone on the dewy ground, approaching Abel from behind as he mindlessly analysed the large field of crop.

Without hesitation, the boy swung his arm with fiery might and the rock came in harsh contact with the brunette's head. It was only a matter of time before crimson poured onto the sage grass. The once bright and light filled eyes were now dim, staring at the clouds where heaven collided with earth. Cain could only watch as the boy he once was crouched over the already firm body, a dangerous glint in his eyes that could only be described as wrath...or pride. "I have seen it, are you happy? But Abel is dead and I am not his keeper!"

Cain held his breath, waiting for redemption. His gaze lingered on Abel, his sweet brother who he had butchered and beaten without blinking. Sweet Abel, who was now nothing more than a distant memory and a rotting corpse with a crimson halo. "Depart from me, for I do not know you," an eerie voice murmured through the breeze. "No...no don't leave me! I did not do anything wrong- I was merely eliminating an obstacle. My brother was always more important than I, and now he is nothing."

The tips of his fingers grasped the ends of his tussled locks, he tugged harshly. "How dare you! I have dedicated myself to you- I...I have gone to church, I have prayed!"

Nothing.

The brutal scene of his crime replayed over and over, until it was ingrained in his mind, etched into his skin- yet even then it continued. A hoarse scream left his mouth as he watched the familiar actions, his calloused palms gripping the smooth stone, and carving chunks of betrayal into the brunette's silky skin. Again. Again, and again. "You idiot! Stop...Stop!"

There he remained, a soul not condemned to hell, but to memory. Until Regret became a prayer unanswered.