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The Acceptance of Amber

↙Words↘

“This is taking too long, and I don’t think the effort can really be worth it.”

“Trust me, it’s a lovely sight, it’ll be worth the trip. Just you wait, I’ve never regretted the time I’ve spent simply finding the grove.”

“But, Pyruit, I... You know... I just don’t know if I’ll view it in the same manner. Nature’s just not my thing...”

“True, not now, but then. You just need to glimpse it again, the end isn’t always clear before the arrival.”

“But it’s doubtful that I will, so why bother with it?”

↙Familiarity↘

They had acted out this conversation in the midst of a tar square formed by a perimeter of crosswalks. The silent traffic signal hung overhead, swinging in the non-existent wind. The roads lay perpendicular, stretching out towards the overbearing horizons, surrounded by concrete walls and the occasional stop sign. Stop. But why? This is where she had practiced. This is where, despite its lonely atmosphere, she had lived for most of her life. She knew the man-made structures by heart, and the symbolism of the ongoing traffic signal ignoring the empty roads reminded her of her own world. Busy, yet alone.

↙Stop↘

Pyruit was speaking again, but she was too busy staring at the red sign that seemingly glowed in the blanket of darkness. Stop who? Stop what? The octagonal sign implied for a car to

halt for a moment before proceeding. But, did it apply to her? Wasn't that what she was doing now? Stopping, thinking, before she reacted? Her life was forever swirling before her eyes, the product of a corrupted and polluted city-life that stripped her of the childhood innocence, leaving it vulnerable to contamination. The wealth she acquired did nothing to suppress the deceit and sins she had witnessed, and often committed, on her journey to her present status in society. So, how could she stop? If she ceased moving she would lose sanity. And if she didn't stop, she would crash. Where were the laws behind that situation?

✓More Words\

“You're not going to be content at this rate, you're not going to be okay.”

He stood facing her with his hands intertwined and resting behind his back. She wanted to believe he was taunting her in that posture, but she knew he was not. Maybe that's why she hated him. She ceased staring at the distant sign and managed a fake smile, but no words. He did not believe her, nor could she believe herself. The street light above turned green. Even if there were cars present, it was unlikely that the two would break from their concentration.

✓Go\

“You're lost in between your pride and despair.”

He continued to speak, despite her desire for him to withdraw from her troubles. Withdraw. Not simply leave, for that would be worse. If he escaped without first being defeated, surely she would lose herself in the midst of colors. Red and Green. She needed to assert authority, not over him, but of him. She needed to convince herself, not him, where was she going? She had to stop, for now.

✓Stop\

Here she had fallen, not in this specific location, but in this blemished world. Externally she was perfect, a survivor of the economic and social food chain, someone who had overcome the hurdles and pitfalls to reach a higher status. Status? Wealth, and that was all. It seemed of little reward after the sacrifices she had made. Family, disconnected. Health, degrading. Friendships, lost. Addictions, rampant. But it was okay, everyone else admired her. But it was okay, wasn't it?

✓Click\

She wished it could all be forgotten, just like that. Click. Who did she falsely accuse for thousands of worthless clips of paper? Click. How many innocents were consumed in her quest? Click. How much did she steal, how much did she cheat out of others, how much had she manipulated her companions to get to where she was today? Click... The pedestrian signals at the edges of the crosswalks continued to switch between red and green, stop and go, halt and walk. Each click made her wish memories could be so easily forgotten, that she could trudge onwards without guilt of the past. But, all the clicking brought back was those sorrows in the form of flashes, each click triggering the next flash. And the next flash, and the next flash...

✓Walk\

Floating gracefully over the void of hell, they are bars, to give a chance for sinners to willingly slip through the holes and meet their anticipated fate. A bridge connecting uncertainty with despair, there's no reason to stay on either side, only to cross. For if you stand upon it, you may be lucky enough to have the satisfaction of falling through. It is a crosswalk, ruled by the clicking machines that go, that stop. Man, hand. What did they have in common? That she could be so easily ruled by such an emotionless instrument embarrassed her. When God held up his hand, she did not stop. When God showed her where to walk, she did not follow. Lost sheep?

No, arrogant goat, the devil's creation. Yet, this machine, how could she follow it, was it her God? In a way, it was familiar, something she envied. A machine, ignorant of the past, absent from consequences, it simply completed its objectives. Why couldn't she just live without inner turmoil? Walk, halt. Perhaps if she stood in the middle she would fall through, or perhaps some speeding vehicle would deliver a similar fate.

∟More Words∟

“Detaint, would you like to speak about it?”

“About what?”

A lull, she shouldn't have answered in that manner. She only made herself feel worse. Maybe, maybe she ought to relate with her past, lost so long ago. She bit her bottom lip, sighed in synchronization with the clicking of the signals, and glanced at Pyruit without any preparation for speech. For how could one so easily convey the burdens of a mind to another?

“Just speak of anything, you'll get there.”

But of what? Her thoughts, emotions, fears, and memories were nothing. They were just a shade of dusk, a cloud hovering over her mind. They were not something to think about, to speak openly with another. If they were not something, they logically could not be anything, right?

“Reason is vague, and therefore logic is irrelevant, for now.”

His words might have read her mind, but rather, they were a simple predication of the circumstances, a 'logical' piece of advice that would have made sense regardless of the situation,

because in it, his words were nothing.

∟Rest∟

Under normal procedures, she would have ignored the blue sign, but perhaps the simple image of tranquility provided her with a pause from her world. To rest, but where? Here, in this

tainted world? Impossible. Memories became nightmares, nightmares became agonizing, and the agonizing was often a part of her reality. Rest, but where? She ripped her gaze from the blue sign momentarily; he was still standing in the same position. His eyes conveyed worry and concern, but what frightened her was his determination. He was not going to stand down until a resolution had been made. And although she may have wanted him to disappear, she knew that it would not help her troubles. In other words, he was not going to stand down until she truly wanted him to. Blood, her lip had been pierced by the first realization. She was not going to back down; she was going to solve everything tonight. He was merely reflecting her true intentions, reinforcing her choice. She needed to stop, and think, but first, to rest.

✓Trail\

Was that where he wanted to go? His grove at the end of the park's trail, her grove, not his. So why him, why direct her there, how did he know? The green sign, with its heavenly white letters, hung from a telephone pole, pointing up the road. Several miles, perhaps, but was it worth it? Yes, it always was. Click. She is twelve again. Click. Ahead of her parents and into the woods. Click. The trail of fallen leaves and dew-covered grass. Click. The grove with its weightless vines, glistening rocks, and luminous pond. How she sat for hours, counting snails, swimming in the spring, climbing the trees which seemed to protect her from the tainted world. They tried, and failed, but that is the role of the tragic hero, to fail. But unlike the tragic hero, they were flawless. Purity, now they had one last chance. She remembered the grove. Remembered it before everything fell apart. Before her parents, the grove, and her own life were scattered to different parts of the universe. And she remembered... Click.

✓More Words\

“I’m inferior, and you hate me because of it.”

His words would have pierced her thoughts if she had not already begun to contemplate it. To allow the ideas to clasp together upon one single reason. Sure, it was a reason, but why? Cause? He still stood in his posture, relaxed and at attention, smiling at her from a distance away. She wanted to believe he was mocking her, laughing at her beneath his innocent gaze. But she knew he was not, and once again, that's why she hated him. But inferior, was that really why? He was not rich, he was not popular, he was not loved or respected, and he was just another person among many. But he was pure, and he resided in nature, the trees of the grove. He was ready to aid others, for he was at ease with himself. Perhaps that's why she hated him. What once was, lost. The last time for the grove to extend its salvation, fading fast. Stop.

✓Caution\

High voltage, a threat? Not from the trees, from her own reluctance. Turn back, a command, from what source? He shook his head in denial, it was not him. She cracked her knuckles and returned her sight to the sign. Caution, but not a warning from the grove. Why should she fear reflection? To trudge forward, she'd lose everything she had worked for. Caution, the regret. It would never leave, always there. Always haunting. Why even attempt to seek redemption? Caution. This was it, this was why. It now occurred to her that he stood on the diagonal edge of the tar square. There were no crosswalks directly leading to him. There was no easy way to resolve her situation. Caution.

✓More Words\

“I should be nothing to you, you should feel embarrassed to know me. But, you hate and fear me, because you're lost, tainted, broken...”

“Shut up!”

She now stood, her left leg extended forward as if she was about to lunge at him. Her hand, clenched into a reddening fist, swung forward, only to fail at the end of the punch and return shamefully to her side as her head bowed downward in regret. Jealousy, hate, sorrow. It didn't matter that she was a distance from Pyruit, she had still made the brash move of committing to aggression. She finally looked up upon Pyruit, expecting to catch some form of sin in his eyes. But he was now kneeling on the tar, staring at the ground in solitude. He was frowning, the reality that she was losing herself. Click. The lies and corruption. Click. The termination of everything that could save her. Click. The practice, the loading, the hole in the red and white sign.

✓Yield\

This was him now, yield, but she had already pierced it. So why bother pursuing it? Yield, to his voice, her desires, her salvation. To admit to, to change. It wasn't about forgetting. It was about yielding, opening herself up to the flaws of her soul. Admitting them, but more importantly, living with them. Burdened by the past, she would have to take a different path. Not to the grove, but from it, elsewhere she was destined. To never arrive would be to stop, to halt, to lose sanity. To go with her plan, to crash. Where was the middle ground that would lead to yielding? Despite the time of night, the crosswalks seemed to glow beneath the traffic light. Red, green. Click, click. Hand, man. Halt, go. To yield was better than to heed caution, but how were they so different? Were they different? Some part of her wished they were not, but what she really wanted was... Familiarity.

✓Railroad\

The train hustled by in some distant part of their concrete and tar world. It did not want to be involved. However, she had already trapped it within her thoughts. A train, tracks, how were

they different from the crosswalks? The train had a set destination, it would not, and could not, fall. Fall in to the depths of hell. Yet it was different. It had no endpoints. There was no uncertainty and despair, only infinity. Because, the train carried its weight on its back. The steam that transcended its metal shell represented the troubles boiling within, but it was fine. Because, its troubles were released into the air and it walked, moved, crossed. Go. It did not care that it would always be burdened, it had no alternative, it would happily progress with its heat always releasing towards the sky. She had a new God.

∟More Words∟

“We know what you want, but we know what will happen.”

She gritted her teeth. Sucked the blood from her lips, screamed.

“Shut up! You have to leave!”

“Why?”

“Because, if you don’t exist. Then there’s nothing to compare... it to. I, can’t forget it, but if you don’t exist. I’m normal, at peace.”

“That’s impossible, you have to look for the other way. The resolution, the grove.”

“Fuck you!”

Click, the flash of movement. Click, the gun, whirled up, aimed at him. He did not care, he still knelt on the tar. A martyr, he had said his piece. They would not stop, crash.

∟Emergency∟

The firebox was latched upon a distant building, ‘pull in case of emergency’. It didn’t make sense. Such a single action could not solve a crisis, it could not solve her problems. She knew this and hated him for it, hated herself. She had started a fire, and when it consumed what she loved, the effort to free herself was too much. The grove was simple, so why couldn’t this

be? Because it was just as difficult to escape a situation as it was to immerse yourself in it. She just never realized it. She had goals, wealth, popularity, and superiority. They distracted her from the complications she created, and now that the temptations were gone, escaping was almost impossible. She could not pull the handle, for it would do nothing to save the situation. It was better to burn in the fire than waste time in a trivial attempt to prolong life with simplicity.

↙Last Words↘

“I’d fail, I knew it, but the impression from trying was far greater than we’ll ever understand. I’m sorry, you’re sorry, that it evolved into, nothing.”

Blood and tears, Red and...? She could not stop, could not go, so what color were tears? Green? No. Red? No. Perhaps they did not exist, that her rage was the only emotion present as her trembling hand clasped the gun that would bring about the resolution. The stop, after the go, all before the... She wanted to believe it was all in the past, that severing the ties with it, with him, would solve everything. But, that would be pulling the handle, falling through. The crosswalk, to go. Click. She is within her own mind. Click. She looks at her younger self, a perfect and pure being. The young girl smiles at her and says,

“You can return. Though tainted, you can always return.”

In some other frame of mind, she is still pointing the weapon at him. She scowls at him, hating him for the innocence and truth. If he had just sinned, just once, if her past had flaws, if it was wrong in any way, she could be content. It never would be, and she could never return, not with the burdens on her shoulders. For, it was not selfishness or pride. Now she realized why, why she could never change, never yield. She was tainted, it was not, how could she bare to contaminate purity with her taint? Click, she smiles, fires the gun, and expects to see his smile in

reply. He does not. Still frowning, caked with blood, he fades from her mind with innocence, determination, and sadness.

∟Danger∟

Above the yield sign, another message, another reminder of what was lost. Click. She is out of her mind. Click. She is no longer in the crossroads, no longer under the blanket of darkness, no longer in the tar square facing the location where Pyruit once knelt. But, she is still surrounded by signs. It is a room, an empty restaurant with walls decorated with license plates, traffic signals, and street signs. She is alone, staring up at the Danger sign posted above the exit door, clutching the bloody hole in her chest that had pierced her green shirt and allowed the red to drip slowly to the floor in synchronization with the pedestrian signal in the corner. Red, green, stop, go. It would not stop, and she no longer had the life energy to go. What else was there? Danger. She had not failed, but there was still a threat. She had gone to the length to stop herself from mixing her own sins with the past, the pure. Only then could she be at peace, that somewhere the grove was safe. It had tried to protect her from the outside world, and now she thought she had finally returned her gratification by protecting it. It would not be infected by her troubles, her tools, her sins. She collapsed to the ground, the bullet pierced through the whole of her being, just like the red and white sign. Still smiling, still convinced, still surrounded by signs in this room where she conducted her final journey across the crosswalk. She let her head rest, yielding to the clicking of the pedestrian signal, the model train traveling around the bar, and the changing colors of the traffic light hanging above. Red, green, yellow?

∟Dead End∟

The traffic light ended on yellow for her, that is, as the last moments of her life played out within the restaurant she was greeted with yellow, the middle, the doubt. It only lasted a few

seconds, but she was gone before it switched. Red and green, endpoints, she could grasp them. But not yellow. She had stopped her taint, she had gone and done the deed, but what did yellow mean? A last message from the grove, a final realization, that her action may have been misinformed. The yellow had caused a sign upon the window to glow. Dead end. There was nothing beyond her deed. She did not save the memory if she ceased to be. She was not destined to protect the grove. It was meant to be tainted so that she could save herself. To mix her past with her present, to draw upon the strength of purity, only then could she have yielded to the grove and resolved her turmoil. Now she was left frowning in a small puddle of blood, arriving at a dead end, so convinced that she had chosen the right road leading out of the tar square. There were no more signs, no more crosswalks, and no more clicking. However, even after she had passed on, the single traffic light hovering over her body felt inclined to provide its obscure, and rather delayed, input.

↙Stop↘