

There are some men who like to think they have the world at their finger tips, that life and the sun and all the other planets in the galaxy rotate around them. That women bow down at the sight of them and God himself can't topple the empires they have spent their entire lives building.

It's sick.

You can see it, the sickness. It's in the way they walk, the way they talk. From the way they push words out of their mouths and expel them into the air, to the way they breathe and the very way their feet land on the pavement. It's obvious. Modern day witches, working their magic not in the occult but in selfishness and arrogance instead. I don't know which one is more poisonous, but I gave up thinking about the details of my judgements long ago.

Me? I'm the one above all this. I too have built my fair share of empires and watched them crumble down around me. I've risen like a god and been torn down like a devil. Filled up and left empty to rot. A walking contradiction, so obviously put together and yet completely broken. I am what all will become: a tragedy.

I tear men down. I am the inevitable force that crashes in on their little games and leaves them shattered, the purifying white fire. After all the years I had spent alive, seeking out justice upon the world and its people, it seems only fitting that I would be cursed to remain in the same position of judgement that I had come to loath so much. I am not a good man, and I lost track of my sins long ago. Employed not by the church, but by whatever God there was, I am a witch hunter, and will remain that way forever.

There's something magical about breathing. It's enchanting really, how simple the process is. How easy it is to live, to be alive, yet how impossible it seems to remain that way. It's eerily strange to think that such a small and overlooked activity draws the line between life and death. It is an extremely vulnerable condition to have, and this vulnerability is both an unneeded and unwanted weakness I have to put up with. I await the day my lungs no longer crave air. The man lying at my feet, however, is done waiting.

I crouch down to put myself at eye level of the trembling mass of flesh in front of me. I lean my face in, close enough to taste the putrid smell of alcohol lacing the man's breath. While it sickened me, the whole thing has become nothing more than added incentive.

I did not die that day. I did, but I didn't. I had felt the heat of the flames, felt my lungs starving for air, and the smoke that had sent me into fits of hacking coughs. I breathed until I could breathe no longer, and my world had slipped into the void that walks hand in hand with darkness and death.

I had died. I know that. To say I hadn't wouldn't make even an inkling of sense, but neither did anything else in my life, so I cannot say with certainty either way. I don't

think it matters. Life is a mystery that I do not believe can ever be solved, and I gave up trying years ago.

My yellow eyes bare into the man's greying ones with a look of absolute distaste. He is a witch and I am a witch hunter and I exist for no other reason than to take that life of his for my own. The man begins panting harder, curling up into himself as his face contorts into a grotesque image of raw fear. Even in death he has no dignity, this man is a disgrace. I had chosen him carefully, stalked his footsteps like a monster and deemed him worthy of my execution. Whether he was deserving of life or not, I don't even pretend to know. I gave that up centuries ago. Morality comes second place to duty, and had I known that, my fate and this curse could have been avoided.

It hadn't been long until my consciousness became clear again. I was dead but I was somehow thinking and moving and living, and I wasn't alone. She was there and I was there and at first I cared not where I was or how I was alive but only for the fact that we were together. Regardless of all else, I had kept my final promise, and I held her in my arms so long I felt lifetimes passing me by.

Before I had died, I had spent hours contemplating my sins, debating whether it was Heaven or Hell I was destined for, or whether I possessed a soul at all. But seeing her there, finding us both alive and together, feeling her warmth against me and her kiss once again on my lips, Heaven didn't seem so far out of reach anymore. Maybe some form of mercy did exist in the world, and I had somehow been chosen to receive it.

Refusing to waste another moment on this sorry excuse for a human being, I plunge my curved knife into the man's heart. A final breath manages to escape his lips before he falls into the land of the dead. The land that I come from, and the one I can never return to. In that way, I'm perhaps jealous of the witches, and that fact disgusts me.

I catch the air in my own mouth, swallowing it as if downing a drink. Fingers like pins shiver their way up my spine. I gasp as if I had been holding my breath for a century, and the fingers become like maggots. They are spiders crawling down my throat, into my very veins, and spreading throughout my entire body. They are needles jabbing into my skin, they are my flesh being ripped apart in pieces, and the pain it brings is almost unbearable.

But the breath is mine, and through it, life, and it has never been said that living is not painful. We do not choose to be alive, and suffering comes without consent.

I sit up and wipe the sweat on my face off with my sleeve. This is why breathing is so troublesome, I think. It's a continuous process of killing and drinking in air, a hassle I want nothing more than to avoid. If not for the fact I can't live more than a few days

without this ritual, I would have quit this time consuming activity decades ago. Such things are not my choice, as I, at any cost whatsoever, have to continue on living.

It's not that I particularly want my heart to beat for another day, as I have already had more than my fair share of lifetimes. Since waking from death, I have seen worlds rise to the clouds and crumble to the depths of the sea, but I am bound to a magic far stronger than what my simple circus tricks can save me from, what anything could save me from. I'm not a believer in miracles in any form, not anymore, but I doubt even God could help me now. It is not Heaven I had woken up to, and after all, isn't he the one who put me in this hell?

I stand, staring down unemotionally at the corpse lying at my feet. The man's face is twisted into something vulgar, an expression of terror and unimaginable fear most would deem too exaggerated to be real. Although his muscles are slack from death, his mouth still hangs open as if waiting for a breath that will never come, and his eyes bulge. His body is also in some sort of withered state, the blood from the wound continuing to pool into the grassy land below.

I find no pleasure in creating gory deaths. I hear of too many people being cut open or mutilated, and the thought of it is rather repulsive to me, like the bitter aftertaste left in your mouth after eating something rotten. Death has been the fuel for my life even before I needed it to survive, and violence is not worthy of a single thought to me. However, not everyone feels the same way.

Despite my more gracious methods of killing, I still feel nothing for the man, or any other one of my victims throughout the years. I am not a good man, and I had come to that conclusion years ago. Morality and faith have become so twisted that trying has been proven to be nothing if not pointless. Nevertheless, I have a code. Most of the others don't even have that. Remnant of what was left of my days spent on my first life, perhaps.

If breathing is what means I'm still alive, my code is what keeps me human. Or at least that's how I rationalize it.

Absently dragging the softly curved blade out from the man's chest, I pull out a cloth and wipe the blood from the knife without a sound. Forever I will continue on like this. Never dreaming, never loving, never living, never anything. Her life has become connected to mine, and mine to hers. I steal their breath now so she doesn't have to, just like I used to kill but keep her alive with me. If I stop breathing, so does she, and no matter what hell I was dragged into on that day, I cannot let that happen.

I will continue on as a witch hunter until the earth itself ceases to exist, and myself along with it.

There are men who think they have the world at their finger tips, that life and the sun and all the other planets in the galaxy rotate around them. They are me, they are who I used to

be, and they are not good men. I am who they will become, and I tear them down before I have the chance to see them like reflections of myself all around me.

I too, am I witch, and no matter how much you may want them to break, some promises are impossible to not to keep.