

interstice of circumstance

I.

"So, get this into yer head.

Seasoned Big Apple car salesman wit' a nose for horseshit, walkin' tha usual route - hafta get the cigs between customers after all. Used up all'o'mah smokes wit' tha last customer - real schmuck, had ta lower the damn jalopy's price by a whole hunnid American dollers! Cost me even more nerves than tobacco sticks, the bastard.

Anyways - ain't no help by complainin', right? - I walk and I find tha goddamn lantern next to tha shittin' cig vendor. Jus' layin' there like-a washed up bum.

Ain't no runnathemill lantern either, that's fo' sure. Sum fine china, put out like tha damn trash. All up for grabs, surefire way ta make big cash - but I hafta make sure it works first, right?

So, there's tha gear to put it on. Likely electric, no lightin' it. Fancy stuff. I turn tha gear - yer still with me? - and get this: sum huge blue malarkey escapes tha damn thang! Big, cloudy thang - I get scared half ta shit - an' a second later, tha cloud forms to that colossal fellow, missin' legs 'n' all.

... Ya don't believe me, right?

Dunno what to say - afta' all, might be tha spirit of tha Holy Lord or somethin' - till' the fellow starts ta speak up. An' wit' his gaseous lips, he tells me - an' I phrase:

er-ehm, 'Ya may make any wish ya want. In exchange, I'll take a year'o'yer life from ya.'

-sorry for mah accent - so, imagine me, right? Scared till' tha damn reaper comes for mah poor heart - what would'ya say? I didn' know howta react, fo' sure. Ah'right, so he goes on:

'Three-hunnid-sixty-fahve point two-fahve days exactly, on-the-spot transfer, no refunds, no wishes that concern yer health or tha time offered.'

—an' I'm like: thas' a damn genie! Holy Lord, he talks ta me like one'o'mah damn clients.

Next, I think to mahself: how'd you get tha damn luck?

Could finally pay tha damn doc! Mah bad rear, mah busted lungs, gonezo! Hell - an' thas' between you an' me - could get tha thrombosis leg checked up as well! Issa year o'mah life, right? I'm already a crumbly man anyways, don't make no diff'rence if I oughta be 52 or 53.

An' as a respected salesman, ya make sure ta not miss a deal, right? Issa hard business, yer gotta be sharp. Quick-witted. Gotta make a wish now or tha blue man will skedaddle again.

What pops to mah head first? Is tha phrase:

'Ah'right big fellow, bring me to tha top of tha game!'

An' - would ya believe it? - a second later, thas' when I land here!"

A man in a suit, holding an ornate glass, had opposed the pale salesman.

He'd queried only one question, listening eagerly in return. However, nothing he heard seemed to lift his disinterest.

A droplet filled his glass.

—

II.

(You waltz.
Your mind can't possibly rest.
In a matter of seconds, it was torn to shreds.
'Time' had forced itself on you. The remaining 'time'.
It ticks on.
Objectively.
Mercilessly.

You continue waltzing.
In your waltz, you desperately try to cope.
You try focusing on your kindred.
You try to detract from your kindred.
It's the same. You cannot escape.

Your mind is useless. Your worthless body remains.

It draws you outside.
There is no tangible reason.
You have not moved yet. But you will.
It's merely inevitable. Circumstance dictates it so.
So, as natural as a fish traversing water, you move.

The sun is silent. The moon emanates its brisk flair through the patio.

A serene picture, on any other occasion.
Tonight, it only displays perverse disinterest.

The cosmos remains indifferent.

Wordlessly, thoughtlessly, your body has dictated you here.
At your feet, the lantern.

—

Limbo.
Gazing at the lamp made your disconnection apparent.
Reality doesn't truly feel real to you, does it?
Time only continues when you do.
However, 'time' ticks on regardless. It always will.
Circumstance, once again, dictates it so.

The moon looms above. From now on, it will always loom above her.

From now on, will it always loom above you?
A hereditary ailment. Still, an absurd thought.
A negligible chance. Unlikely. Improbable.
Uncertain. Unconfirmed.
Ambiguous? Real?
Imminent?

Have you, too, been cursed with 'time'?

The moon looms above. From now on, it may always loom above you.
Circumstance continues.
But the lantern is exempt.
It radiates resistance. An attempt at fighting back.
You turn the gear.
The sun starts to shine.
No-
it's merely a substitute.
But you recognize its warmth.

A voice emerges.
You fail to heed attention. You remain disconnected.
A fickle reaction of your gut orders you to imagine.
To dream.

A dream without pain or dread. A dream full of life.
Full of chance.
Of hope.
Time.

Are you allowed to dream?
A dream in which she is allowed to exist?
Free of 'time'?
In exchange for one year?

The question lingers.
It becomes the essence of your mind's remnants.
But you feel too weak.
You revert the gear.
You revert your moves.
You revert back to waltzing.

—

Twenty-four hours have passed.
Maybe a year has passed. It's hard for you to tell.
You are still in disbelief.
The moon wanes, a little more than yesterday.

Once more, you have been dictated outside.

The emerging voice is now clear.
It asks for an exchange.
'Time' for time.
The owner is the only difference.

You ignore the fact that you feel weaker than before.
Resolve had awoken your senses.
You came here to circumvent 'time'
You asked yourself:
Why not give back what my creator has given me?
Why does she have to take the brunt?
Why not me?

Thus, of course, you agree.

You fade.
And the dream realizes.)

A man in a suit, holding an ornate glass, opposed the dreadful young man.

He queried only one question, listening eagerly in return.
However, nothing he heard would lift his disinterest.

Another droplet filled his glass.

—

III.

"Three-hundred, sixty-five point two-five days."
Dryly, he repeated the spirit's offer.

"My condolences, friend. That is about three-hundred, sixty-five point two-five days more than I am prone to spend."

With resolute eyes, bathing in the sun's warmth, he continued.

"You see, every minute that I spend with my remains is an acclivous battle. There isn't much more left to give.

However, would you not cherish and praise the little you have left?"

His maxims sparked intrigue.

"Oho!" spoke the azure specter.

"Cherish what you already possess? Have you not had the pleasure of doing so before?

Do you not desire to shift the status quo?"

Not a tick of doubt was allowed to breathe.

"For what, I ask you?

What earthly pleasures may exceed the gravity of my very lifetime?"

No tinge of resignation. Merely brightness.

The sun, clinging on the rims of dusk.

"You still do not budge?

What extraordinary values you abide to!
Do you not understand your own mortality?
Are you not entertained by the idea of sovereignty?
The nobility of saving a soul most intimate?"

Undeterred, he stood.

"And who am I to determine that?"

Me, a frail, crystalline man, bracing against circumstance
itself?"

As his words flowed from his lips, scarlet fluids followed suit.

His reaction was not one of pain however - instead, his reddened
mouth even cracked a smile.

"Your proposal is as short-sighted as it is unrealistic... Silly,
even.

I humbly ask you to leave me be now, spirit.

And please, close the door from which your container entered.
The moon brings cold air this time of the year."

His pleased expression was reciprocated.

"Hoho!

Your soul persists adamantly!

Then, so it shall be, fated one."

The spirit returned.

-

0.

A man in a suit. Slick, stately, not a trace of human
imperfection.

The spirit transcended into his field of view. It seemed
ordinary to both.

"None of the subjects you'd fetched were particularly memorable.

Both of them swayed by the appeal of power, both of them
righteous in their eyes.

'Oh, my mother is fickle and sick. Oh, I'm not making enough
money.'

... Drops in the bucket. Insignificant.

All too happy to jump ship for granting their wish. Not even
considering how final a year can be.

Repulsive peons...

... It's become rather mundane, has it not?"

Seated in a common, wooden chair, the man lifted his glass to
spectate its liquid.

He was surrounded by serene, dim lanterns.

"What's more curious, though...

You return, merely delivering two inklings of libation?"

The liquid had no particular color. Upon closer inspection, the

glass seemed nearly empty, too.

"An unusual occurrence, sire.

A hundredth of the usual search.

Neither did he falter for one second, nor did he seem interested in a single idea I proclaimed.

It was like a regular Tuesday for him. I was dazzled - starstruck, quite frankly."

Leaving not a moment to disrupt his elegance, the man slowly began twirling his glass.

"*Starstruck?* Hoho, grand words. You do seem stirred up.

A doomed soul, willing to patiently suffer? Not even considering to bargain?

Rare, rare indeed."

He swirled the droplets of liquid in his glass by moving his hand like a vortex.

One could reasonably assume that he created a vortex in this movement, too.

"Hmhmhmmm.

One worth spending on, you say."

And as his glass twirled a final time, the vortex enveloped circumstance.

—

Remission.

A heavy word.

From one moment to the next, the perpetual trepidation of death is lifted.

Still, one lacks the means of entirely dispelling your fear.

Remission is merely a chance after all, not a guarantee.

The joyful words muttered by his medical aides could not stagger him.

He'd continue playing with the cards he'd been dealt.

He'd continue grasping the virtues he'd already grasped.

He'd continue living, as usual. Like nothing had changed.

His one and only way of living.

The most honest way.

It was 7:36AM.

Dawn.