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ATLANTIS SHORT STORY CONTEST

WINNING STORY

The Murderer's Song

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The Murderer's Song

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
We had crossed each other's way...

Yet each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard...

Oscar Wilde, *The Ballad Of Reading Gaol*

It's been sixty long years and, in the eyes of the world, I'm still the murderer.

I have spent all that long hidden, buried, torn from the maelstrom of morbid curiosity, obsession and - why not? - perhaps revenge. Oh, it is not that someone has taken pity on me; far from it. They made me disappear, in time, in order to capitalize on my black legend. To wait, simply, for the right moment to put me back under the beam of the spotlight, as a circus freak, and advertise, with premeditated drama: Here it is, the murderer in person, neither absconded nor destroyed, just hidden like a coward, and now again before the eyes of the world, still covered with the blood of his victim.

No. *No.*

Plans were twisted, or perhaps forgotten, or replaced by more ruthless ones. Meanwhile, I aged alone, invisible to the few eyes that could have still looked at me - if they have wanted to - , despised, insulted and vilified by all those who never saw me again, but reserved, however, a corner of their memory to recall me as the blackest monster, the vilest plaything of fate, that satanic temptation which ripped from their arms the most loved and most wept of all men.

Time has come, now, for my final destruction. I do not even deserve the dark hole I have occupied all these years anymore. Somebody has been called to take up the job. Somebody who cast a glance over me –

something half-way between boredom and contempt – and said: “I’ll be glad to do it. I’m a fan myself, you know...”

Of course.

So I have decided to make my disclaimer. To whom? What for? Who knows. To everybody and nobody. To this “fan” – in charge of my annihilation – who embodies all fans. To a world which no longer remembers me, except in those moments when their eyes come across one of the old photographs. And they mumble: “Such bad luck...if he hadn’t come across this wretched thing...”

I’m not a murderer. I was not created to be. I couldn’t have been. I am not referring now to the issue of will, our own or others’. Not even to the responsibility of destiny, in whose hands we are all toys, none of you more or less than myself.

I could not have been ... because I loved him.

I loved him from the first moment we saw each other. Something very hot swirled inside me when his blue eyes fixed on me, that remote day under the sun, in that remote town where we met, who knows if by chance or by fate.

Except that fate and chance are the same thing, and you should know, you should have learned as I learned, by dint of suffering, and pure loss.

At this point in the story, everyone knows that I do not lie, not even exaggerate, when I say that the crush was overwhelming as mutual. That hot thing vibrating inside me was a reflection of the light that came to his eyes when he looked at me, at length, and decided he wanted me to be his, that we belonged to each other.

And there is the misfortune, you will say. Curse the moment. That sealed his fate. I was the avenging angel, the messenger of doom. But why, why? How should I know? What foolishness. As if anyone could prove that if I had not appeared, his life would have followed a different path. It would have continued. It

would have traveled, under its form of charming spell and brilliant adventure, along that magical time that I tore out of him, that I stole with my violence and my bloodlust.

As if I had not been willing to give everything, everything, in exchange for staying at his side for a time longer than those very short days, in which we lived, embedded into each other, dreaming of a shared glory, both of us so young, so intense, so arrogant and sure of our indestructibility.

Ah, the sin of pride. The deadly sins. Let me tell you that he - so loved by all of you "*fans*", not less loved by me - never made himself averse to the entire collection. Well, with the exception of gluttony; it was not subject of his interest. I cannot call him lazy either ... nobody with that burning ambition seething in his veins may be granted the luxury of laziness, beyond some whimsical weakness, some flirtation with reluctance, that almost always attacks us all. Of the remaining sins, all. Sorry to disappoint those who even today speak of him as an angel. An angel, what stupidity. If his fascination lies precisely in being the manliest of all men, endowed in turn with that ungraspable quality, unattainable figure, *more-than-human* creature born for desire and mystery, light and genius, darkness and legend.

Among those sins, then, we enthusiastically shared pride. It was hard to imagine that we could be defeated while we remain together. Those who had the opportunity to see us agreed that we gave a magnificent spectacle. I do not need to explain anything, or fall into bombastic descriptions lacking objectivity; there are pictures: witnesses which cannot be discussed. I challenge you to contradict me. No! , not the monstrous pictures that became so famous; the ones *before*, of the days when we dreamed of victory, those in which we are together under the sunlight, toward glory, always with the *feeling* of glory; of *immortality*, which looked like a toy specially designed for him, for that combination of devil and prince, minstrel and mirage. Who would have owned it better, who might have deserved it more?

Oh, now he has it, yes yes, I know, of course he does. And, always at his side, I occupy a space in that immortality ... me, the one who pushed him into it. "The murderer". Together forever and ever, then, in the collective imagination that sees us inseparable, bound by the blood tie; he, the myth; I, the destroyer.

I am also aware that many of you put their hatred on the other ... the third side of the triangle. The other man whose participation was necessary - nay necessary; essential - for the seed of the tragedy to give its flower and fruit. Of course, if I pretend to be one of you, and try to analyze the story as objectively as possible, I agree that yes, that character is more to blame, it was *his intervention*, and not mine, that precipitated the outcome. It is an indisputable truth. If they are to find a villain, he is the one. He who came from nowhere at the wrong time and place to tear to pieces our (yes, our, mine too) dream of the prince charming. But despite the millions of fingers pointing at him as the true Abaddon, let me tell you that his conviction - and punishment, if there must have been one - is not even remotely compared with mine. As life went on, he had the privilege of living it - well or badly, with or without remorse, is not a field which I care to enter, nor do I know enough about it - and move on, while I ...

Stigmatized, marked by the world, displayed to be ridiculed, and finally disappeared, kidnapped, imprisoned for all eternity, in this darkness from which I make my defense for nobody and for nothing before being pulverized, condemned by contemporaries and posterity to be the devil of this sad story, so old and still so open.

And to make matters worse, carrying this love that never goes out: yes, like many of you who do not tire of proclaiming so. But here's a small difference ... I *had* him. I was his and he was mine, and if this hurts hearts and hurts sensibilities, I'm sorry, but it is the truth, and the truth does not or should not hurt, and even if it does, you cannot deny it. A fleeting time, yes, of course, everyone knows it. But we were meant for each other from the moment when his eyes first, and his hands later, fell on me, and from that moment until the other, the fatal one, nothing mattered to him more than me, he gave nobody more passion, no creature in this

world filled him with better dreams and illusions. And it was deeply reciprocated: I would never have let anyone else touch me, and would have given all of me to help him achieve the success he dreamed of.

Something got in our way ... the wrong time and place and that other man who should not have been there ... the concatenation of random events, chance, fate, bad star, all, nothing ... it does not matter. It no longer matters. More than half a century of dust and ghosts has decided that I was his curse. That nothing would have happened had he not found me. As if anyone could assert such a thing about him or any other human being. Nothing would have happened the day it happened, but any other trap could have opened at his feet a day or a year or ten years later, otherwise and by other means, to swallow him with the same cruelty, or with a different one, who cares, we would have lost him anyway.

I cannot prove what I say. Neither can you prove that I was his disgrace.

But being so, things would have been different for me. First, we would have had a longer life, always united. I do not know how long, but there would have been something beyond those fleeting days of sun and wind, excitement and challenge. We would have sailed together a sea of victories. Plans and dreams would have turned into realities for us to remember together.

That he would have got bored of me, would have changed me sooner rather than later for something newer, bolder, more powerful? Maybe. I do not rule that out. Again, no one can prove it. I'll never know. The only thing I know is that I had him, and loved him, and lost him, and that is what hurts, damn it, see if you finally understand, what bites and bites the eternally open wound is that I have lost him. I had him torn from my arms, taken away from me in that brutal way. *That* hurts, and not the labels that you put on me, not your idiotic certainty when the time comes to judge and condemn without appeal, not the title of murderer. And if it be true that I killed him, know this: nothing can be more painful than the knowledge of having destroyed what was most loved in life.

And here I am, hidden, butchered, unknown to many and hated by others, with just a few hours ahead. What little is left of me is slowly forgetting the fatal day, the horrible moment when it all ended, the subsequent humiliation, the widespread hatred, and only invests what little breath remains in treasuring his memory. The blue of his eyes, the timbre of his voice, that sharp burst of his young laughter, the strength of his hands on me, the abrupt and passionate way to have me: *they can't take that away from me*, as the song goes.

I'm exhausted and here ends my song. The song of one who has spent more than half a century in ruins, destroyed a little more with each passing hour, always in love, hidden from the eyes of humanity. A humanity which, anyway, in the case of finding me, would only look at me with an alloy of rejection and curiosity - perhaps a hint of boredom, like this man in charge of smashing me to pieces - , or lynch me, eliminate what little remains, set myself up again as a symbol for a tragedy of which I was as much a victim as he, and as all those who loved him in life, and those who learned to love and idolize him later, when he was already dead.

I am the Porsche 550 Spyder, the one the world accuses of murdering James Dean, on the evening of Friday September 30, 1955.