

Joan D'Arc

Everyone around me wasn't human. I would know if someone was. Someone could be human, but not have a wisp of humanity in them.

But today was different. People didn't look at me in any way. They were too emotionless, too cold. The sky was the only person there. It was grey, sobbing, and its tears dripped on my face, cooling as a last-minute goodbye. The world wasn't mourning me, the sky was.

“Gather around for the death of the witch, Joan D'Arc. Let it be known that any association with the devil results in a burning.”

The thousands of black beads that had fixated on the priest now held their gaze on me, as if they could eat me with their eyes. The priest looked me down with a deadly sort of glare, both dead in the eyes and just in a way, dead. The soldiers tightened their ropes around my wrists, binding my hands and my mouth from ever daring to feel alive, to have action in this world.

Another scratchy rope bound around my neck. Oh, wait, there was nothing there. Nothing was around my throat; that was just fear burrowing inside me, closing my throat with unspoken words.

My eyes clouded with tears that wouldn't come out, like ghost tears, haunting my terrified eyes. My head throbbed, and my lips burned, pressed together as those unspoken words overflowed into my mouth. I was on the verge of letting those screams pour out, emptying my throat until it turned into a river of blood, cascading down the raw muscle that was once my throat. I tried to let it out. I truly did. You didn't know how much I desired to scream, yet nothing happened. I was frozen. The only movements I could make were tilting my head up, looking at the very sky that was pitying me, washing away my ghost tears.

The earth was under a filter of grey, perfumed with a mist of both old rain and an air of suspense, like something was hanging right in front of me, out of reach. The moon was the only planet present, the sun, as well as any trace of warmth that had kissed the earth. I had imagined that the sun had gotten too close to the Earth and fallen into the sea.

Of course, a girl like me, living in the south of France in the 14th century, could only imagine such things when one had no sense of astrological knowledge.

The lone tree atop the small uprising of a hill was looking east and west, tilting its leaves in search of one of its own. I inhaled the life of it, the purity of this landscape, and the clouds unforgivingly held a dramatic air to them. The only other indicator that I hadn't gone mad, and this was just a fantasy, was the lone crow cawing its way, slicing the sky. The silhouette could've been mistaken for an angel, but it was such a dark shade of black that I had resolved

to the conclusion that the crow was the devil on earth, who had taken the sun, and the warm hue of spring that came along with it. The bird I had called, the Thief of Light.

As the bird flew away, leaving me with unspoken words in my mouth (so, frankly, a familiar sense, as you already know), my dress spun, following my vision. My white dress was like a lily of the valley, and it held an air so regal, it matched that of a noble lady. It held the same grace as the wind, like a gentleman, swept my dress off its feet, and my dress danced with the wind in a ballroom of its own.

With this newfound fantasy, I started to follow the sweet melody of the grass whistling and the leaves brushing together. As I took step after step, waltzing to the song in my head, my dress tripled in size, the wind making it float up. I spun around the plains. The petals of my dress spread out, and I became a victim of the wind.

It's a strange sensation. Entering a new chapter in your life, or my case, ending the book for good.

You aren't alive at all. You feel detached from your own body, and are merely watching life walk past you like you aren't there. I watched through foggy lenses as emotionless silhouettes of what are supposed to be people who are the only guests present at your demise. I didn't know if they were forced into this like I was. Or maybe they enjoyed seeing a girl like me killed because I just dared to be alive, dared to be what they wanted to be; human.

Now I was contemplating in my prison cell of a mind, if fighting for France was all worth it, all from the word of angels and Saint Michael, promising me that I was the one to bring justice to my country. Was it all worth it?

Was it worth being belittled by men who saw me as a peasant girl who was to be married to a vile man that I was to slave away to?

Was it all worth it to prove them wrong?

Was it all worth the pain brought by the war that had tattooed its mark on my morality, forever scaring my soul?

But was it all really worth it to die, feel fire leave its mark on my skin, claiming yet another woman to false accusations?

A million questions, accompanied by a million hidden answers.

Reality clutched at my shoulders and shoved me back into my agitated, goose-bump-ridden body. The truth was simple, visible in fact. A smart girl, who turns into a stupid girl, and gets caught by the enemy, and is about to burn alive, and die alone with not a friend in the world that would ever weep for her, other than the sky. Stupid girl indeed.

The dirt track I walked along was riddled with the footsteps of others before me. The only people in the world had died here, and the population of humanity was soon to be extinct, as I was the last of them. The dirt I walked on soon turned into a dark black, and fresh, splintered wood covered the charcoaled remains like a carpet would if there was an unwanted stain on the floor. A hidden truth. I was propped up on a hill of chopped-up oak and presented with a view of just how much of a crowd was present. People clouded the area, as if a painting palette had dropped, and the paint had stained the floor. Fear was now next to me, laughing at my situation, feeding me deliciously toxic lies of how there was nothing to be terrified of.

Rope was now encasing me in a coffin. This time, the rope was real, but this time, I hoped it wasn't.

First nothing. No flame. No grinning arsonist, dying to set me alight. But there was. All at once. I expected the fire to come at me slowly, a warmth trickling its way into every pore dotted on my body.

No, my body was stabbed all over. It was thrown, stepped on, beaten on, and tossed away. I was screaming, that promised waterfall was now my throat. I didn't have a throat anymore, just a hollow space in my neck. I did know that I was crying, my eyes ripping open, gaping as wide as my mouth was right now. But I wasn't crying at all, because the flames had swiped away at my tears, making them evaporate and drift away up into the clouds. Maybe the sky would keep those tears, clutching onto them for dear life as it waved goodbye to me.

Then something else happened. I was drowning.

Fear must've kicked me off the edge of sanity into icy waters of what seemed to be my sea of emotions. I was kicking and waving my arms out like a lunatic, wait, like the lunatic that I now was.

Despite my subconscious self knowing that I was suffocating in fire, it felt like, instead of the smoke that was supposed to fill my lungs was seawater, weighing my lungs down as I wall into the abyss of my very own sea. The world that was so cruel to me wants me to stay.

“Just let me go...”

I closed my eyes, too hurt to see this hell on earth. Then, suddenly. Nothing. I was in darkness, not the kind where every instinct inside of you starts to tremble along with you. Just peaceful. Then a surge of light swelled up inside of me, ridding me of the darkness.

The angels had come to save me.

And as my soul escaped the ashes that were my body, the thief of light held my hand as I took my first steps into heaven.