

THE PROLOGUE TO THE DRIFTER'S TALE begins with the drifter's words:

"Abortion, a paltry crime at the worst, is nothing compared to the gruesome transgressions I have witnessed or rather participated in myself throughout my lengthy existence on Earth. I will give one statistic that demonstrates the corruption of the society of my birth far better than any other and let me reassure all of you that my personal experiences have validated this fact several times over. There is not a single person among us or in the other world that has not committed a sin. Those of you who think I am wrong have also just sinned. You would all be lying to yourself if you disagreed."

The Preacher, certainly disgruntled by the usually quiet man's assertion, confidently contested, "Where is the proof to your claim? Do you mean to tell me that none of the followers of God pursue a life of absolute purity? I do not believe it!"

"In one of my Biblical studies, I learned that pride was a sin. Do the scriptures not pertain to you? I think not," cynically responded the Drifter.

The Atheist, in a lackadaisical tone, muttered, "What is sin to a man who does not believe in such a thing? Not to be intruding, but let us get on with the next tale rather than rhetoric."

"I believe the word sin is defined in the modern dictionary. Correct me if I am wrong, but in that case, this word has much bearing on the next tale and most likely those to come. After all, without sin, there is no conflict and hence no tale or interesting lesson," concluded the Drifter.

Following much fiery religious debate between the Preacher and the Atheist, the Infant whispered, "Excuse me. I have a question. Have I ever sinned? Since my brief

existence on Earth, I can not recall doing anything that is like what you guys are calling a sin.”

The Drifter pensively proclaimed, “ Since you are just a child and I really do not want to puzzle you or the audience of the tale to come, I will say it depends on your beliefs whether or not you sinned. Some people may even question your existence as a human and hence capability to sin. However, putting that matter aside, I personally believe you are the embodiment of sin. What I mean is that your life itself is the result of a sin. Now, if you are indeed able to behave like a developed human, then perhaps you may have sinned sometime in your truncated life or time in the other world.

“Let us not concern ourselves with these ever so controversial matters. Although I have been rather silent since I met all of you, I really do have a great deal to say, as you can tell by our discussion. I usually just choose not to make any foolish assertions like some people (looking at the Preacher and Atheist).

“The tale that follows should explain the ambiguities of my past life, which I hear everyone has been dying to learn about on the basis of the constant gossip that surrounds me. My story is one of another dimension that indelibly impacted the later years of my rather lengthy life. I believe my account of the realm I speak of will elaborate on the issues concerning sin that I have discussed and show all of you how to better avoid this ever so undesirable trait. It may seem too late for an old man to teach a lesson now that you all are dead, but perhaps the information that follows may play a crucial role in your seemingly undecided fates. Remember that one’s thoughts and morals, even while dead, are taken into consideration in the reckoning of one’s accounts. Keep an open mind and

pay close attention to the upcoming tales, specifically mine, so that each one of you may have the chance to determine the destiny of your desire!”

HERE BEGINS THE TALE OF THE DRIFTER: There once was a mystical land known as Literaturia in a realm physically separated from the dimension I traversed through in the final decades of my life, but on many occasions I did indeed visit this place. To protect its sacred existence, I will not reveal the details of its location. Although, I will say that its culture is quite similar to that of the United States and I am not the only fortunate American to have indulged in its rich history. From the world of Literaturia, one forged by the great minds of people far superior to the typical human, we can learn many important lessons that may very well have the potential to save our own world. In particular, I will disclose to all of you a brief tale from the chronicles of this land that is certainly complex yet most enlightening.

In the time of this tale, Literaturia consisted of a continent accommodating two peaceful yet very different nations as well as four surrounding islands that were partitioned by a colossal mass of water. The eastern region of the central continent was inhabited by the Republic of Creativity and the western province housed the Kingdom of Realism. Between the two nations were the Mountains of Balance and dividing the five continents was the Great Sea of Consciousness. The four island nations were equidistantly located in each of the compass directions around the center continent. From the northern island in a clockwise direction they were respectively called Morality, Diversity, Knowledge, and Ambition. However, this story will primarily focus on the Republic of Creativity and the Kingdom of Realism.

The imaginative advancement of the artistically glorified Republic of Creativity was guided by President Chaucer XIX. He ruled from an enormous glass citadel that almost magically floated above Creativity and was an attentive father to his only child, Juliet, as well as patron of the arts. Although, Chaucer ruled in a time of peace and disliked war, he, like most rulers for some strange reason, insisted upon a small army supplied with deadly weapons, like ray-guns and light sabers, crafted by the ingenious Chief Scientist Potter. General Beowulf commanded the troops and regularly forced them to endure rigorous training, but what never made sense to me was that their so-called weapons required no physical strength to wield. Beowulf's most favored as well as adept soldier was Colonel Milia, an orphan from Realism. Still, for certain obvious reasons, his men knew there was no romance between the two. Overall, the people loved their republic and especially their president, filling the walls with nationalistic paintings and the air with joyful music.

Similarly, the people of the Kingdom of Realism were content with their very different way of life. The kingdom was ruled by the steadfast King Hamlet XIV, who, unlike Chaucer, focused his efforts on industrialization rather than the arts. Nevertheless, the people accepted their culture and took pride in their grand factories and extensive military led by Sir Arthur of the Knights of the Square Table, boasting with the pleasant slogan, "We cut no corners only the heads of our enemies!" Of the many corporate giants that at some point existed in the kingdom's history, Monster's Machines founded by Boss Grendel, was by far the most monstrous, scaring all competition out of business. Somehow it became one of the only two businesses in Realism. Whenever there were

rumors of young entrepreneurs starting a business, some unfortunate accident always seemed to silence them as well as the businesspeople for good. Funded by the king's daughter, Antigone, Soiler's Wonderful World of Weapons, produced the only product Monster's Machines did not, meriting the motto, "We make weapons to put your enemies in the ground." Dr. Kroitz, head of this company and immigrant from Creativity, was the greatest fan of the weapons he produced and made sure the peaceful Kingdom of Realism had the best arms for no apparent purpose yet.

Now that the stage has been set, I will proceed by unveiling the events that plunged this seemingly uneventful world into chaos and eventually a revolution. In the Republic of Creativity, President Chaucer's emissary returned from his trip to Diversity as well as Morality in response to the lack of contact Creativity recently received from their closest allies. Gasping for air, the envoy whispered, " My rowboat was attacked by a huge battleship bearing what looked like the flag of Realism as well as several rocket launchers. On the only remaining plank of my vessel, I tried to fire my slingshot cannon at the enemy ship, but it did no damage at all! The belligerent ship surprisingly turned around and fled after enduring the shot fired from my slingshot. So, I hastily swam back here to tell you of this tale."

The fearful President Chaucer replied, " I can't believe that our neighbor would actually attack my kingdom. I am also disgusted by the loss of our mighty royal ship to one of another country in addition to your cowardice. I know you are from the lowest of our society's three estates, but failing to fulfill the simple task I outlined for you is unforgivable. Leave at once! I will find a more obedient attendant to contact Realism. "

The messenger left, saying to himself, “ The stereotyping perfectionist can’t even give a humble servant an ounce of credit. People who do not deal with the President on a daily basis may love him, but I won’t take his social commentary for another day.”

At the same time, a herald from the Kingdom of Realism returned to King Hamlet from a trip to Knowledge for analogous reasons. He shouted, “ I was attacked by a Creativity war-canoë. It fired a laser right through my submarine and turned back. I barely escaped with my life.”

King Hamlet shouted, “ People may say I am crazy, but I do not believe this story. I will send a more competent servant to Creativity to prove your claims false. Revenge on your lies will be mine through your painting of my mother’s castle again. She so loves a new coat of paint.”

The emotional courier cried to himself, “ I always said he was really a maniac.”

Generals Beowulf and Arthur thus met in the Mountains of Balance to hold a conference on the unusual recent chain of events. Beowulf greeted his old friend and perhaps new rival with the words, “ Looking mighty fine today Art. However, I am here today strictly for the purpose of business. Have you by any chance declared war on my country?”

Arthur of the Square Table replied, “ I came here to ask you the very same question. The answer to your query is no, but ever since the day I pulled that blasted rocket launcher out of a stone and that warmonger Kroitz started making weapons, I feared my country would have to go to war.”

Beowulf happily cried, “ Thank goodness for peace! My country does not seek war

either.” He hugged his dear friend and departed to Creativity.

Although it seemed like Literaturia was on the verge of crisis, revelations of an apparent misunderstanding maintained the euphoric peace that had existed in the central continent for centuries. In spite of this, two tragic events soon created turmoil in the already agitated nations.

A year after the Balance Mountains Peace Conference, the Kingdom of Realism held its annual fencing tournament. In the final match, between Dr. Kroitz and King Hamlet, Kroitz struck a blow into Hamlet’s upper left arm. It seemed that all was still well, as the wound was minor, but suddenly King Hamlet grew weak and dropped to the floor. In his final breath, the king roared, “A plague on both of your seaside mansions! Vengeance will be served.” Before the crowd knew it, the doctor disappeared along with the dead king’s body. Later, Kroitz’s rapier was found to have poison on its tip and shouts for war filled the tournament coliseum.

In a state of disarray, Princess Antigone was too distraught over the death of her father and the fact he did not receive a proper burial, which Soiler’s Wonderful World of Weapons promised to every person that its weapons killed, to lead her country and hence people crowded around Boss Grendel for leadership. General Arthur insisted on staying out of politics to focus on battling Creativity and living up to the catchphrase of the Square Table. On the other hand, Grendel, already well known throughout the country for his corporation, disfigurement, and especially back alley organizations, offered reassurance that he would do to the enemy republic what he does to his competitors, which was certainly not compromise. In one of his longest speeches, he blew down

Chaucer Castle in one breath and yelled, “ You seen how I blew dat wall down Big Bad Wolf style. Dats what is going to happen to da Republic of Creativity.”

The crowd applauded and the Hamlet’s former envoy cheered, “Now I will never have to paint the castle of that Oedipus king’s mother. Hooray for Cain’s clan justice!”

At the same time, President Chaucer held his yearly national address from his flying glass citadel, in which he was typically quite critical of the corrupt aspects of his society. However, shortly after the Balance Mountains Peace Conference, war hawk rebels were rallying under Chaucer’s fired messenger to create a new order that would better protect the interests of the general Creativity populace. In the final segment of the president’s speech, he claimed, “ I am of course very pleased with the work of artists of all sorts, but I am also disappointed with the failure of the peasants as well as nobles in glorifying this beautiful nation and overcoming their widespread corruption, which I have described in detail within my latest novel. Therefore, all income taxes on non-artists and non-civil servants will be raised by three hundred percent to fund my new city restoration plan.”

Following the speech, the president dined with his government officials in his citadel. However, a bomb exploded and part of the citadel shattered, killing President Chaucer. Only nobles from the government had access to the fortress and the only one to escape the explosion was mysteriously Colonel Milia, who was rumored to be a rebel and insisted upon eating with the president. People blamed the calamity on the Kingdom of Realism and Juliet took rule of her late father’s country. In her initial speech, she declared, “The Republic of Creativity will wage a war to end all wars on the Kingdom of Realism. I

will unite this continent into one nation. After all, what is in a name?"

The peaceful coexistence of the two nations finally ended with deaths of their leaders and war engulfed the entire continent. After several years, there was a deadlock between the two sides and their populations were reduced by roughly one half, but it was widely believed that the upcoming Battle of Mind's Moat, a few miles east of the Balance Mountains, would decide the fate of the continent and indeed it did. Each side sent their most honorable soldiers as well as leaders into the battlefield and planned to utilize their most advanced technology to defeat their opponent.

Leading the Kingdom of Realism were Boss Grendel and General Arthur. Commanding the Republic of Creativity were President Juliet as well as General Beowulf. The two sides charged at one another and old friends crossed swords, or rather whatever weapon they wielded. First, Juliet's eyes met the rival king, but she immediately lost the will to fight. At first the reason for this was ambiguous, but perhaps it was because she was a tenth of his size. Still, when Beowulf ran past Juliet to save her, ripping Grendel's arm off with his bare hands while his soldiers were futilely firing lasers, the reason for Juliet's bashfulness became clear. She cried, "Stop this needless war at once. Besides what's in a name when my true love is fighting against me and may die in front of me?"

Nobody paid attention to President Juliet's emotional speech and she ran to save her armless love from certain death, but he simply devoured her whole and shouted, "Dese battles always make me hungry. What do you think dis is, a tale of star-crossed lovers?"

Enraged, General Beowulf planned to free his leader from his enemy's stomach,

but he found Juliet magically standing right next to him again. Inspired by the surprising turn of events, each giant locked hands, but soon collapsed from sheer exhaustion.

Thinking Grendel and Beowulf were dead, Antigone rushed over to bury their corpses and Arthur as well as Juliet seemingly ran to the aid of their comrades. Antigone fought the two off, insisting on burying the unconscious bodies. However, she mysteriously fell asleep and the two tired men woke up.

Each of the spectators ran to their supposed enemies, rather than comrades, but their reunion was cut short by the appearance of a robed character flying on a machine that resembled a broom. He declared, “ Did you all forget about Creativity’s top notch inventor,” and put the combatants under the command of Boss Grendel to sleep with his advanced technology. “I have now ended the war,” concluded Professor Potter.

Instead of praising him, Juliet and Beowulf reprimanded the inventor and forced him to awaken their sleeping beauties. The professor took out a rod of some sort and awakened the Kingdom of Realism. Instead of continuing the battle, the exhausted soldiers declared a temporary ceasefire by suggestion of Antigone, who urgently declared, “ I need more time to bury these corpses! Now be good fighters and get along so I can please the gods. Fortune works most for woe if soldiers aren’t buried from head to toe.”

The people on the battlefield obediently sat upon the war torn ground and magically picnic baskets appeared throughout the former war zone. Professor Potter happily stated, “I brought them just in case this sort of thing happened.”

Happily, President Juliet said to Boss Grendel, “How about we stop fighting and

get married. I know my nation did nothing to start this war and I bet your kingdom is also innocent.”

Boss Grendel replied, “ I agree. Dis war is bad for business, dat is except for my new weapons business.” Bursting into tears, Grendel cried, “ I am just so happy dat some isn’t scared of me plus also dat commerce and dat means profits will double if our nations unite!”

As a promising peace was declared within the central continent, an armada of about two thousand mythrill battleships could be seen at the horizon on the Sea of Consciousness. The professor flew over to the sea to see what was amiss. He shortly returned with the news,

“It seems the ships are bearing the flags of Ambition Isle. However, as soon as I flew in too close, the vessels dared to fire rockets at my elaborate flying machine. I escaped with my life, but my scar burns with pain. There must be a terrible evil among those ships, unless, that is, I simply have another migraine.”

The people of the continent fearfully awaited the arrival of the passengers of the crafts and within about an hour, a man and a woman clothed completely in black led an army of about two thousand soldiers through Mind’s Moat. As the soldiers came closer, it became apparent that the people leading the army were none other than Colonel Milia and Dr. Kroitz. They asserted, “We are messengers from the Spagoni Empire of Ambition Isle. We plan on completing our conquest of Literaturia with the colonization of this continent. Surrender and no one will be harmed.”

On behalf of the continent, President Juliet answered, “My people must have time

to consider your proposition before we give an official response.”

Kroitz confidently stated, “Considering your position, that is the Spagoni Empire has fifty warships to your one canoe, the continent is really in no position to make demands. However, I am sure the generous Lord Toney P. Spagoni will allow you to enjoy your last minutes of freedom.”

The continental representatives packed up their picnic baskets and discussed the matter at hand. Boss Grendel was first to speak, roaring “ I say we fight dese bullies. With my warships and Juliet’s canoes we can defeat dem! Lord Hamlet swore revenge on Kroitz and I am famished.”

Antigone argued, “ We can’t go to war. I still have more corpses to bury! Besides, have you noticed there are fifty times as many of the Spagonis as us?”

Arthur replied, “Have you forgotten the slogan of the Knights of the Square Table. My men will certainly not stand by and lose to a bunch of islanders!” However, as the general finished his speech, he noticed not a single one of his men remained. They were all smart enough to flee.

General Beowulf spouted, “ I agree with hardy Arty. It was the Spagonis that caused this war in the first place and they must be stopped before Ambition absorbs all of Literaturia like it has in the other world. We must fight for peace!” Although it may have been a paradox, Beowulf’s statement restored courage in the seemingly hopeless ragtag bunch of soldiers and they were ready to march to their probable deaths.

In a last ditch effort to win the new war, Professor Potter made a startling confession, saying, “ I know it is hard to believe, but I am not really an inventor. I am

actually a wizard and I have a plan to secure an everlasting peace.”

The crowd was filled with gasps and whispers with someone yelling, “ How are you going to do that. Are you going to let the Ambition Empire take over Literaturia?”

Potter confidently replied, “ My plan is to harness the positive attributes of this world and use them to power a spell strong enough to counteract the corruption in the Spagoni Empire, forging a world free from the negativity that caused the other realm’s degeneration.”

Shortly after this unforeseen yet pleasant turn of events, Juliet boasted to the Spagonis, “ We have come to a conclusion. The mighty army of the central continent will stop your miniscule forces from expanding any farther!”

Colonel Milia declared, “ I knew you people were idealists, but I never until now viewed all of you as stupid. The emperor has commanded me to crush all signs of rebellion and that is exactly what I will do. Besides, I do not see any army capable of defending your assertion.”

As the hopeful wizard raised his wand to absorb the potential fountain of pure energy that had always laid dormant in the land of Literaturia, the now confident president concluded,

“ The force necessary to defeat your empire is all around you, but you are too blinded by your vice to see it.”

Potter chanted the words for his spell and a rainbow of untainted power spread across Literaturia and appeared to vanquish its source of evil. Soldiers once bearing weapons with the intent to kill instantaneously became placid and it seemed like a long-

lasting peace was finally restored after two dramatic years of havoc. However, it soon became apparent that the spell was not quite strong enough to purify all of Literaturia. There appeared to be so much treachery in one person that he remained tainted with evil. This person was the elusive Emperor Spagoni. Seeing he was outnumbered, Spagoni finally appeared outside of his flagship, the Triple S (Super Spagoni Ship). He was about sixty years old with long silver hair and completely dressed in white, most likely to distinguish himself from his followers. He had a certain aura about him that was different from all other people in Literaturia. Spagoni tried to coerce his soldiers into continuing their battle, but his attempts to corrupt them were futile. The ambition for dominance that once bound them had been replaced by a desire to make the world a better place.

Nevertheless, the emperor did not give up his imperialistic efforts and fled to his flagship to launch an attack on the continentals who had exhausted most of their resources plus found little means to resist. The wizard usurped all of his magic in his final spell and the soldiers were too tired to fight. All had seemed lost and Emperor Spagoni proclaimed from his flagship to the hopeless soldiers, “ This day marks a new era in Literaturia and also the Earth. My conquest of this world is complete and now I plan to return to my own to ultimately use the resources from this land to conquer Earth as well. You may wonder why I desire to do all this and the answer is simply because I must have my revenge on the humans who labeled me a gangster just because I have a shady name!”

I had sat by as a spectator long enough, knowing it was time for me to take responsibility for my actions. After all, it was me in the first place who told Spagoni about

Literaturia, but that is a story for another day. I had been visiting Literaturia quite frequently around the time of this story and I eventually became aware of my acquaintance's ambitions. So, a few weeks before Spagoni traveled to the continent, I sailed from Creativity, where I owned a quaint apartment, to Ambition Island. Later, I snuck aboard the emperor's flagship and waited for a chance to save the world I had grown to admire.

Just as Spagoni made his speech, I revealed myself to him, shouting, " Tony Phony (a middle name he never liked to be referred to by) Spagoni, it certainly has been a while. If I had only realized the sinful road I had taken in life sooner, it would have never come to this. I may have stood by and allowed my first love as well as son get killed, but I will not let this world suffer anymore as a result of my foolishness!"

I ran at Spagoni with my irreplaceable blade, Exeter's Exiter, with the intent to kill one more time, making sure the sword pierced his chest. However, just as I stabbed my old friend, he too took out his weapon of choice, the Spa-gone-ator, and shot me. It was a fitting end for two men whose ambitions drove them to commit terrible crimes against humanity. Thankfully, before my death, I realized the flaws of my ways and had a chance to repent. I am sorry that my friend could not do the same, as he never got the opportunity to go where I went after my death.

Anyway, this isn't supposed to be a story about me. So, I will quickly sum up the fate of Literaturia after my departure. Based on the news in Heaven's Chronicle, the star-crossed lovers, that is the unlikely couple consisting of the beautiful President Juliet and very unique Boss Grendel, quickly married and united the continent under the title of the

United Provinces of Idealism. Dr. Kroitz, the man who Spagoni forced along with Milia to betray the continent, took over Grendel's corporation after Grendel sadly found ruling a country was not quite as easy as business. Generals Beowulf and Arthur happily traveled, or at least Beowulf was fond of the arrangements, around the island nations to restore their sovereignty. The representatives of Literaturia decided to stop the production of weapons and planned to live the rest of their days peacefully after such a costly as well as needless war. Due to the fact there were no more weapons or deadly magic in the U.P.I, there was no need for an army and former Colonel Milia put the retired soldiers to work by restoring the land destroyed in the war plus by helping Antigone bury the dead corpses (or making sure no one was buried alive). Also, Antigone was very pleased to find that her father's body was discovered in the past Isle of Ambition and gave him a grand funeral. Finally, Sage Potter used his magic to develop medicine rather than weapons and finally found a cure for his awful headaches.

All was well for Literaturia and its people had the pleasure of living in an ideal world, one where Diversity, Creativity, Realism, Morality, Knowledge, and Positive Ambition peacefully coexisted. If only the people of our world had heard this tale before we died. Perhaps I would not have become such a reclusive geezer, my son would not have bitterly died before me, and people would stop making the same stupid mistakes if everyone had only heard this tale earlier. Now that you all know who I am and perhaps even learned a lesson or two, I hope I stop being the topic of your daily gossip. Besides, I think it is almost time for me to break through these boring gates and look for my son. After I finish listening to the stories about your world or fantasies of morality, I might just

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be a good enough person to get into Heaven.