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Asakusa Redemption

This was a story of me cursing my own father. Yes, I cast a death spell on him, and it all started in an elevator.

In the elevator, his heart was broken.

It was me when I was about four years old. I had a voice inside my head, and it had taken over and conquered my brain since I could remember. The voice, it urged me to do weird things. I would kick other kids in their heads when they all were taking naps, I would beat myself and lie about another kid doing that to me (just because I didn't like that kid). My parents knew this. They said that I was just a kid and I was driven by my instincts and curiosity and that I would get over it after some time. No, they were wrong, I didn't do all those, it did, my lunatic in my head. The only times that the voice wouldn't bother me was when I was watching films. There was a DVD player at home and every time I was annoyed by the voice I would rewatch any movies that I had seen over and over again. The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe was the most effective one to mute the voice and soothe my hectic mind. Slowly I became obsessed with movies, and I would start describing things or people around me using my 'movie vocabulary'. For example, I once insulted my classmate in kindergarten by saying she looked like Gollum from Lord of the Rings. My father forbade me from watching movies for a short while after the parents of the girl filed a complaint to the kindergarten. But things turned even worse without movies as the voice took over my mind. I would shatter the spare lightbulbs that were kept in a cabinet in my father's room, and I, for no reason, would start biting my fingernails on and off until blood came out from my fingers and the pain stopped me from doing so. Scolding me wouldn't do any good, it might stop the voice for a moment, but after that, I became peculiar again.

My father was an engineer, fixed all sorts of things, but repairing air-conditioners was his true field. It was not a high-paying job but it definitely was a toil. Even as a little kid I could always see that he was exhausted. In fact, my father was always exhausted when I was a child. He had to take care of my brother, my mother, and me. Exhaustion turned a man impatient, and I guessed that was why my father was always in a volatile mood. My brother was getting scolded by my father very often because my father thought he could do better in his studies. My father would pick me up from the kindergarten at six every day, after his work. Other kids left at four. He had a huge backpack with him, one that was packed with all his working tools, screwdrivers, and spanas. We would head off to the market and buy food for dinner.

My father cooked as well. I was not an elite kid and I could not do my homework well, especially the mathematics exercise. I was terrible with numbers. He was not satisfied but he didn't scold me. Maybe he was too tired to shout at me. Instead, he talked to me, in a loud voice, emphasizing the importance of studying again and again in a solemn way. I was afraid and unhappy. I walked with my head down, and I wanted to cry. As my father went for paying the ingredients, he asked me to stay right at where I was and wait. A man with a backpack that was strikingly similar to my father's walked in front of me, I thought it was my father. I didn't look up and check, and I tried to get to his hand before he turned around and reminded me that I had got the wrong man. Then I ran back to my father, feeling extremely embarrassed, I looked up and checked. He looked like he had had enough with me. He was furious, as I could see the rage on his face. On the way back home, he was walking fast and he was almost dragging me.

Entering the elevator, he was still standing in front of me. The silence in that tiny space was terrifying, I was expecting him to scold me in there but not a word came out from his mouth.

"Tell him you wish him dead."

The lunatic whispered to me. The silence in the elevator made the voice clear. It was a deep voice, sounding as if the Predator was speaking human language. Then it got louder and louder and louder, it was almost like it was yelling and screaming at me, and the only way to get rid of that voice was to voice its message. I covered my ears with my hands but it surely wouldn't work as the voice was shouting from within. It came to a point where I could not stand it anymore. The lunatic gave me a 3-second countdown.

"You are annoying, father! I wish you would die soon."

I was not saying, I was shouting it out loud, as how the lunatic did the same to me, or maybe even louder than the lunatic. I opened my eyes, hands still covering my ears. The elevator returned to the awkward silence once again. The lunatic was gone. I regained consciousness. I looked up and checked my father, he stood still, still facing frontwards. He must be shocked. Looking after of everything in the family, that was what he got in return. A curse. Then all of a sudden, he turned around, kneeled down, and held my hands tightly, with tears in his eyes, he said

"My son, please don't say that, please don't say that, please, please."

Every man had his breaking point, and it seemed this was it for my father. He was begging me in tears, not that he was crying in despair but the tears, they carried the same amount of sorrow. I had never seen my father being such emotional and desperate. He must have thought he had done something wrong or treated me badly. In fact, he had not done anything wrong, not a single thing. I must have cursed him.

For a long time, I thought I was fighting a demon within me. However, I could have said exactly what the lunatic told me to, but I went further, I told him to ‘die soon’, as if I wanted him to die right at that very moment, inside the elevator, as if I didn’t want to wait no more. It was not the voice inside me, it was me who shouted at my father, the lunatic just gave me the courage I needed. I never noticed it turned out I was fighting against myself. But why did I do it? What drove me to end this irreversible, vicious action? Was it merely because of his easily-triggered emotions? It was one of those questions that one, despite how hard one tried, even if one’s brain was dissected, would still fail to arrive at an answer.

In the elevator, his heart was broken. I broke his heart.

But he didn’t stop loving me despite the loathing words he heard from me. Instead, he was loving me unconditionally, and he would do anything to bring a smile to my face. Later on, he worked for another company, which offered a far more promising salary. The better outlook for our family apparently helped alleviate the stress of my father and put an end to his bad temper.

“Every boy ought to pick a sport that he can play for the rest of his life,” my father told me.

I knew I needed something more, apart from movies, to keep me distracted from the voice. And I picked football. Since then football had been a vital character in my life. It, alongside movies eventually overwhelmed the voice and turned me into a normal kid, and it was football that drew me and my father closer.

I used to play football on a pitch near my home. Every Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon I would be there. My father was my coach, and he was the only coach that I had ever had. He was a great footballer in his youth and he was the top scorer of his company’s football team, at least he claimed he was. He was obsessed with football, and the only things that mattered back then were football and beers, though he eventually gave up football, as he was brutally tackled once and his kneecap was seriously fractured. Since then he didn’t play anymore, not until an eight-year-old me begged him to teach me.

My father would always be the goalkeeper and I was always the striker. Whenever we were about to leave, he would make a bet with me. That was, if I scored once out of five attempts from the penalty spot, he would buy me an ice cream afterward. I was never able to score with the first four attempts. But on the fifth attempt, my father always took a dive, he would let me score and make me the happiest boy ever for a moment. I would do a goal celebration by leaping and hopping around him and he would lay his hand on my head and say,

“Not even Manuel Neuer could have possibly saved that.”

But there were not only joyful moments on the pitch. I could still clearly recall the scene when his kneecap dislocated and fell off from the normal position. My father would lose his balance for a slight moment and the pain would overwhelm him for a while. It looked as if a bullet was put in his kneecap. Then he would gently hold that kneecap and push it up hard to the normal position. And all these times, I would stand aside and witness the whole process. This whole thing felt like an awkward magic trick to me. For one second, he was seriously in pain, and then as soon as I started to feel panic, he would look at me with a gentle smile and say,

“It’s all good now.”

I couldn’t imagine the pain that he had been through, not even once. I guess it must be unbearable. After all, I was there but I could not spare his pain.

Since then, I seldom went to that same pitch again as my mother thought it was way too dangerous. Then my father brought me to other pitches. I kept on playing football since I couldn’t think of anything better to do. My father would be with me every time I played, and he stopped doing it when I was in secondary school. Later, with no surprise, I became a member of my school’s football team.

It was the first time I got to practice on a football pitch with my school football team. The pitch was in Tai Kok Tsui, roughly a 15-minute walk from my secondary school. I followed my teammates to go there. By that time, I had never played on a grass pitch, but that didn’t bother me. “Always play smart” My father taught me. I was assigned to play midfield. I had no clue what a midfielder had to do so I played it in my own style. I received a pass, I looked around, searched for my teammates, and came up with the best pass possible. Scoring was not necessary, at least to me, a midfielder, it wasn’t. I was a very small boy, the pitch was vast in my eyes. Standing in the middle of the pitch was as if standing in the middle of nowhere. For a couple of moments, I couldn’t even see where the ball was. I looked around, and I figured I was just existing there, there in the void.

I couldn’t even recall if I won or not. I only recalled that it was late and I had to leave alone. The buildings, malls, and restaurants, I didn’t recognize any of them. I had my phone on, but the map was not working. People were walking fast, as fast as they always did. I followed where a sea of people were going, only to find out very soon after that we weren’t going to the same place. Then I started wandering. Carrying a backpack that was almost the same size as my upper body made me look like Frodo from Lord

of the Rings making his journey to Mount Doom. Frodo took six months to get to Mount Doom. I spent an hour, and I was still trapped in Tai Kok Tsui. I decided to take a gamble, I chose one direction and kept on walking. Just like what Travis did in Wim Wenders's Paris, Texas, wandering in the desert till he couldn't no more. As I was aimlessly walking, the surroundings were getting dimmer and fewer faces could be seen. I knew I was lost, but my feet didn't stop moving. I thought if I kept walking, I would eventually find the right way home. Travis made his journey last four years. I gave up within an hour. I stood under a streetlight, there wasn't a single soul in sight. Standing there under the streetlight was as if standing in the middle of the football pitch. I looked around.

“Where am I?”

It was at that moment I realized that the world was a strange place, and it was not friendly. I was so afraid that I felt like crying. Frodo sought guidance from Gandalf. I phoned my Gandalf, my father. I told him that I got lost and he could sense that I was about to cry by my trembling voice. My father laughed for a moment when he found out where I was. Then he said to me,

“My son, now turn around, walk down the very same road again, and keep walking.”

Turned out I was walking in the opposite direction. If I got it right in the first place, I would have been home a long time ago. But that road must not be the right path, it was not right even though it was shown right on the map. It was right because my father said it was so.

I followed the path, was walking slowly as I was fatigued after a strenuous wander. The backpack on my shoulder was dragging me, making each step more challenging than the previous. I stopped and rested when I was two-thirds of the way from home. I took my backpack off, set it down on the ground, and I was about to drink the very last bit of water left in my bottle. A man came right to me, snatched my backpack, and slung it over to his shoulder. I thought a thief was trying to steal my backpack, until I looked at the man clearly and recognized that he was no thief, he was my father. He reached his hand out to me. I never felt embarrassed holding my father's hand even as a secondary student. In fact, I enjoyed it, especially the moment when I was holding his hand walking to school every morning. What was there to be embarrassed about? Why would I be

“Shall we go home now, kiddo?”

I took my father's hand and he brought me home. On the way home, he said,

“Someday you'll need to walk down the path on your own, when I am not around.”

I nodded, but I didn't understand. How, my father? I was not prepared.

I always get lost and that is my flaw. Lost in unfamiliar places, lost in unbearable grief, and eventually lost myself. I knew I was lost, but I didn't stop. I thought if I kept walking, I would walk out of everything and find my way home.

But there's no more guidance from Gandalf anymore, no home anymore.

My secondary school life was remarkable, especially my junior years (the first three years). My father wanted me to study in this school as he saw the school was taking good care of my brother. I wanted to as well. I met Arthur in the first year, who has himself the most girlish name in Chinese a boy could ever have. Hoi Ching. I thought the teacher was mispronouncing his name when I heard it for the very first time, I was surprised. We were in the same class, and we sat together. He loved laughing, sometimes he laughed too much and too hard that I thought maybe he didn't actually like laughing that much, he just couldn't help it. He would laugh at any jokes nonstop for minutes. Looking back to this unique friendship between me and him, maybe that was how it started. I told stupid jokes, and he laughed. There was always a short guy on the basketball team, and there he was—a left-handed shooter, though his shooting accuracy left much to be desired. He wasn't a starter, he was nowhere near being one, but he showed up in every practice regardless. I asked him what the interesting part was of playing basketball when one couldn't earn a spot in a game, and he gave me the exact same sentence my father did,

“Every boy ought to pick a sport, and it doesn't matter if he plays well, as long as he doesn't quit.”

We would go to my favorite restaurant every day during lunchtime. He never complained about going to the same restaurant over and over again. He would usually have the same lunch set with me as well. It was better for him this way because he could not, for once, decide what to have for lunch. I would zealously start yapping about my dream girl to him. A gentle girl with a sweet smile, who didn't talk much, but loved watching movies. Then I couldn't help but keep fantasizing, that she and I would go to movies together, quietly immersing ourselves in the big magical screen. People said going to the movies was not a wise choice for a date. I'd say these people were, no doubt, not movie lovers. I could tell a lot about a person from their movie preferences and the way they watched them. In cinema, people reveal their deepest emotions, laughter, fear, or tears that one trying to hold back but eventually still run down. People are their most authentic selves when they go to movies.

“She needs to be a fan of Tarantino to be eligible, right?” Arthur once asked.

“And also...” I intended to add.

“David Fincher,” Arthur said.

I introduced Arthur to Tarantino's and Fincher's films (and so many other films) and he introduced me to Pink Floyd in return. We would share the same book. We were more basketball players than readers, but we both liked Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* although we comprehended neither the concepts of absurdism nor existentialism. He was the smarter one, and I would disturb him in any way just to distract him from the in-class tests. Prodding him in his waist always worked, he would jolt for a split moment and give me an annoyed face, which didn't deter me from poking him again. He said he didn't like being touched, any physical contact would evoke a sense of intimacy to him. He even added he disliked the contact even if it was his future girlfriend, should he have one. In fact, I seldom see him having physical contact with others, apart from when he was in a basketball game. Same class, same electives, same music playlist, same film taste, same book, same restaurant. At some point, he had become a part of my life. He knew me as much as I knew myself, or maybe more.

"What if she says Fincher is overrated?" Arthur asked.

"What if she says Pink Floyd's songs are way too long?" I asked.

"Break up." We both said it at the same time.

The restaurant went out of business after Arthur and I graduated. I never thought of it shutting down. In the early days after it closed down, I would still go to the restaurant, subconsciously, and realized that it was no longer there until I saw the 'thanks for the support over the years' notice on the metal roll-up gate. Then I stood right there, despite the gate, I could vividly visualize the details inside. The long table right in the middle of the shop that could fit 10 people on both sides, the booth seats that were right by the wall, the busy beverage bar situated in the inner area of the restaurant, the on-and-off cussing from the kitchen, the two waiters that were always running back and forth, and most importantly, my terrible jokes and Arthur's laughter. Could I have one last meal? Could Arthur and I just spend one last hour? It was in that instant I had a realization.

Nothing stays forever, everything fades away, sooner or later.

A whole life could be blown away in the blink of an eye. I wondered, if any man throughout entire history was able to evade death, if death ever granted pardons?

It was a Sunday morning. My father woke me up and asked me to have breakfast with him. I was too tired and I refused his invitation. He insisted, and he started tickling me until I was fully awake. I couldn't stand the tickling and I got up. We went to a Chinese restaurant nearby. We ordered the same food as before, there really weren't many choices though. My father, as normal, was flipping through the racing paper. Sunday

is the horse racing day. My father was very fond of horse racing, he made small bets though. He treated it as a leisure event, to keep him focused and busy. We didn't talk much during the breakfast. We didn't like to yak. We sat there for a long time though, it was a usual practice, we didn't leave once we had finished, we loved to sit and enjoy our time. We usually left the place 15 minutes before the first horse race started, my father preferred watching it at home.

We went back home in the afternoon, around one o'clock. Mother and brother weren't there. They both went to work. I went back to my bedroom and my father went back to his. I was watching Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, a classic film that depicted how a medieval knight challenged and confronted Death. Meanwhile, my father was watching the horse race with his utmost attention. It was an ordinary, mundane holiday. Maybe it was too tedious that life itself decided to give me a prank, a heartless, contemptible prank.

I was sitting on my bed, leaning my back against the wardrobe. From this angle, I couldn't see into my father's room, and I wouldn't because I was too busy watching the film. Shortly after I heard a weird noise from my father's room. (1:40 p.m.) It sounded like a snore, only it was the loudest snore I had ever heard. My father had sleep apnea, which meant he snored a lot, but it could not be that loud and horrifying. I paused my film and asked, 'Father?' He didn't answer me. Instead, he continued making such terrifying snores, and I knew something was wrong. I got off my bed, I jumped off it indeed, and rushed to his room. I was two steps away from his room, I looked into his room. My father was sitting on his chair, with his head bending backward, facing the ceiling. Still, he kept on making the snoring noises. It was a peculiar posture. In a split second, he lost his balance, and fell off the right side of his chair. As he was falling off, his body collided with the door and accidentally shut it. I couldn't make it to his room, I wasn't fast enough. I tried opening the door but it didn't work. Inside the room, there was a shelf, and I was sure that my father's head was at the side of the shelf. That was to say, if I forced to open the door, the door would push my father's head against the shelf. That seemed to me was not a clever move. Moreover, my father's body was so heavy that I could not possibly push against it. I kept banging on the door, yelling at him, trying to wake him up. He then stopped snoring but turned it into vigorous choking sounds. I made my first emergency call in my life. Then I called my brother, telling him to come back home. (1:43 p.m.) The choking didn't last long, my father ceased to make any sound. A first-aider called me, he said they were on their way and would be arriving soon, and then he asked me some questions. I don't remember the whole conversation but this is basically it.

“Could you go through what happened to me once again?”

“My father fell off his chair, and slammed the door.”

“So you can't open the door?”

“No.”

“Is he conscious?”

“No.”

“What is his medical history? Any major or chronic illnesses?”

I couldn't answer this right away, I had to think, and I thought hard.

“Sleep apnea. And, and...”

I stuttered, trying the very best I could to recall anything important.

“And high blood pressure.”

“How long has your father had these diseases?”

It was like a quiz for me, a quiz for which I should have easily straightened out all the answers, but I failed, and I could only give vague answers that were of no value.

“A long time. Maybe, maybe eh 20 years.”

I was not sure if it was 20, or 25, or 30. I just didn't know.

“Ok, how old is he?”

I froze. It felt like encountering a question in a quiz in which I had completely no clue. But it should not be such a conundrum. How could a son not know the age of his father? How could I not know the age of a man who had been living with me for 17 years?

“Around 50s, middle age.”

It could be 50, 53, 57. I failed to come up with an exact number because I had never paid attention to his age.

“All right, I need you to stay calm until we arrive.”

The police and the firemen came seven minutes later. (1:47 p.m.)The firemen tried to open the door, the same one that I had tried. They soon decided to break down the door as they realized it was better this way. (1:51 p.m.) They tore the whole door down, and I finally got to see my father's face, covered in blood. He must have hit the ground hard. There seemed to be something, or someone else in the room. I could not say. Then my father was lifted onto the stretcher. My brother came and he soon left with the ambulance. I stayed

at home to answer some of the other questions. I can't recall the questions exactly, I only remember I was gazing at both of my hands. They were shaking. A fireman, I assumed it was the captain, told me calmly

"Hey boy, it would be alright, it is just a faint," the fireman told me before he left. (1:55 p.m.)

"If anything happens, they will call us," the policeman said.

I knew if they were to call us, my father would not come back. I was hoping against hope, please, let nobody call us. I sat on my couch, a policeman was there too, looking after me, though he could not have done anything to stop my hands from trembling. The entire house was silent, but I was certain that something else was there, it just stayed in my house, with no intention of hiding or leaving. It just stayed there, mocking and insulting me in a disrespectful way no one could ever imagine.

Then with no surprise, came the call. (2:24 p.m.) The policeman drove me to Kwong Wah Hospital. That unspeakable entity followed as well, I could feel the filth of it. My brother and my mother were there, crying already, implying it wasn't just a faint, my father was dying. All my aunts and uncles came. We sat and waited, waited for a long time until we heard that monotonous cliché

"We did the best we could. I am sorry." (3:20 p.m)

I had gone completely silent. I ought to come up with a more despairing reaction. I gazed at the wall for minutes. For minutes I felt my body getting lighter and lighter as if it was shrinking down to nothing, and my soul eventually left my body. My heart also stopped beating from that day onwards.

The unspeakable took him away, on a random Sunday, when I was watching *The Seventh Seal* and he was watching a horse race.

Yet now I think, the blame was on me. After all, I was there but I couldn't spare his pain.

In the movie, Death told the knight,

"Nothing escapes me. No one escapes me."

Cause of death: Heart disease. It was written on the death certificate.

I never really knew what caused the death of my father, not even until now. The day that he died, a doctor, or a nurse (I don't recall) came up to my family, told us that the doctors could not tell the cause of my

father's death, and the only way to find out was through an autopsy. My mother collapsed and she couldn't even stand without my brother. My brother was holding Mother with his tears running down. Both of their bodies were shaking. My mother was yelling "No" as loud and hysterical as she could. My brother, still couldn't manage to stop his tears.

I hated this scene. I hated it so much that I could not possibly forget it. The man, I don't care who he was or any intentions he was after, I hated him. My father was declared dead merely 15 minutes ago and now this man came, asking for our permission to cut my father apart. Couldn't he just give us a break? Or maybe he thought 15 minutes were more than enough. My mother's yelling did work. The scene was getting out of control and the man offered us another option to soothe Mother's hysteria and to stop the drama. Then he asked about the past medical records of my father. I told him the same as I told the first-aider. Now this man was bringing me back to the room (where my father fell) and made me suffer once again. I answered some questions and he discussed with his colleagues for a minute or so. Then he turned to us and said,

"So we say he died from heart disease, is it all right?"

What kind of a question was that, I said to myself. All of you professionals failed to save my father and now turned to me and asked me for a cause? Outrageous. It sounded like we had a choice to decide in what way my father died. We agreed, but how could someone die without a cause? How? I was not against my mother but now that we decided to make up a cause, it implies we would never know what took father away. The cause became an enigma, a mystery that nobody could ever solve or explain. Maybe having an intact corpse was more important than knowing the truth. I understood that we had got the only truth that matters, truth that my father was gone. Knowing other truths would not change a thing. But as the only witness in the whole incident, I believed I was entitled to know what killed my father. Was it a heart attack, a stroke, or was it the unspeakable entity? No, I knew from the beginning, it was the spell, the one that I cast long ago in that elevator. I killed my own father.

The tragedy happened on Sunday, and I still went back to school on Monday since I figured staying at home wouldn't make anything better. My feet were dragging when I was walking to school, the unspeakable was pulling me from behind. I was gazing into space all day long and I wondered if I blinked or not. I felt like I was stationary, completely still in the classroom. I didn't feel like I was at home or school when I was. I just happened to be there, and doing the best I could to stay there. Standing at the corner of the classroom was the unspeakable, it must have followed me to the school. My friends asked about me, and I didn't tell them about the incident at first, but said I was tired. Arthur was the very first

one to sense that I was being awkwardly quiet, he told me I looked more than just being tired. It was true as well. The unspeakable consumed me so well, it stayed up all night, yelling to me,

“Murderer, murderer, murderer, murderer.”

So well that I could barely open my eyes every morning, talk to anybody, eat anything, or do anything. I couldn't do anything apart from crying, I cried till I ran out of my tears.

“You don't deserve to cry, murderer. You are guilty.”

A couple of months of my life just went blank, like they had never existed. I was living without emotions and memories, and I lost the ability to smile once again. Then I told myself to start faking it, the smile. I started carrying two identities, one for being joyful, always smiling, and the other for being silent, drowning deeply in grief. Living in a double life made me even more frustrated. I didn't know that the weight of carrying a smile was such heavy. I started getting migraines more and more often. At a certain moment, my body was telling me that it couldn't stand it anymore, and yes, indeed I felt aches from all over my body, from my stomach, my head, my neck, my chest, and from all the other organs or little parts of my body. The unspeakable was stabbing every part of my body, each piece of my flesh was a token of pride and triumph for it.

The unspeakable entity haunted me ceaselessly, yelling to my face every slight moment in my days was its grating, disgusting voice, with a sense of mockery. It won, I didn't intend to fight against it anymore. I woke up each morning with a defective body. Looking into the mirror was the most anguishing deed I ever encountered. I noticed day by day, that something was fading away from my eyes. My father was so proud of my “enchanted eyes” (he always described them in this way), that he thought I got them from him. I reckon it was always comforting for parents to see something of them in their children. But the charisma in my eyes was receding, it was as though witnessing a flickering light bulb slowly burning itself out, and the light eventually vanished. The unspeakable gorged out my eyes. When one lost his eyes, he lost his soul and turned into a corpse. It left me with nothing. I was vacant, weightless.

A corpse does not talk, feel, or interact, and nobody would like to be a friend with a corpse. The corpse knew this as well, so he hid himself, isolated himself from everything. He tried not to affect others by making himself disappear. But something was dragging him out of the abyss, an innocent creature. He never expected to see this, and he wished this creature would stop as the corpse thought he would only bring misery to its kind soul. Yet, this innocent creature insisted, it was determined. The corpse had never imagined himself setting eyes on the sun once again. What did he do to earn this salvation? He was

almost refusing emancipation given to him as he thought he wasn't entitled to it. He didn't see this coming. This creature was saving him.

"Shall we go to Tokyo?" he asked.

"I am not sure, maybe you should go without me," I answered.

"Don't ever think of getting away from me," The unspeakable said.

He invited me to Tokyo with him. I refused. He would have a better trip without me, I believed. I didn't think I would change my mind, but I did. He didn't surrender. For months and months, he tried to talk me into it. He could have gone by himself or with other friends, who were undoubtedly better companions than me. But he didn't, he stayed, waiting. I guessed what made him so headstrong about it was that he must have thought that some parts inside of me were not completely dead. He must think if he could awake these parts then I would come back to life again.

"You are alive, but you are also dying," he said.

"Put all things aside. Come with me," he said.

I sensed a difference in his speech, "Come with me" he said to me, filled with conviction and courage. It sounded like a bible verse to me, like Jesus was guiding his disciples. He meant it, he spoke the words as if he was fully aware of the consequences. He looked at me, waiting for me to say yes. I could tell from his eyes that it was most certainly the last time he would ever ask. He was ready to fight the unspeakable for me, and he showed no fear.

It was an offer I couldn't refuse. I fled to Tokyo with him, wishing to get rid of the numbness and despair. It was a 4-hour flight, I couldn't sleep. I spent most of the time looking at him, with apprehension. He was asleep during the entire flight, listening to Pink Floyd. I was worried that I would ruin his holiday and that he would be frighteningly shocked when he finally met the unspeakable and realized how miserable and wicked I had been. It was there on the same plane too, it didn't leave an inch away from me.

"Did your lovely friend know you killed your own father?"

It was around 8 or 9 o'clock when we finally arrived in Tokyo. We took the metro to Asakusa, where the hotel we booked was located. Looking through the window, I saw myself becoming Bill Murray or Scarlett Johansson in Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*. It was a new hotel, and I was amazed by its grandeur. Nearly all the shops or restaurants were closed by the time we had settled down our luggage in the hotel. We could have just called it a day and hit the sack. Instead,

“Go for a little walk, shall we?” he asked.

Despite the light rain, we set off on the tranquil, gloomy, damp road in Asakusa, aimlessly. We weren't searching for anything electrifying to do, we merely wanted to stroll. We both loved to meander, that was for sure, and disguising ourselves as the lead characters of any one of Woody Allen's films. Of course, that disgusting entity would follow us, two to three steps behind me. But I couldn't help but notice that something weird happened to it. The hideous, filthy, and vile presence that it had been exuding was destabilized by some other force. We passed by some local game centres, which were apparently old-fashioned. We entered one of those and found out a horse racing game which turned out to be created in 1997 was shockingly enjoyable. We had to ride on the horse simulator, and it was way more physically demanding than we expected. We didn't stay for long, and we continued to wander once again in the rain. We came across some locals, with umbrellas on their shoulders, casually riding on their bikes.

Recognizing we were tourists, they nodded to us with friendly smiles. I pondered what gave them the strength to overcome anything tragic in their lives and eventually put on a smile. Smiling seemed to be unimaginable to me. We were walking on a bridge when he abruptly halted and gazed at the river under, which could barely be seen in such faint visibility. He didn't mean to sightsee, he just wanted me to stop as well. He set both of his arms on the railings, body leaning forward. A breeze was blowing, tousled a strand of his hair, and at the same time rippled the water below. He looked amazing. I stood right next to him, and the hideous entity didn't draw near, but it was shouting, shouting as loud as it could, to disturb me. Arthur was waiting for a peaceful, silent moment. Then he said

“Stop hurting yourself.”

“Murderer of your father.”

The unspeakable was hollering, trying its best to cover Arthur's voice.

“You are nowhere near miserable. Open your heart once again. Feel, feel the happiness around you.”

“You know it wasn't a heart attack. You killed him.”

“Don't let pain blind you. Just let it go,”

“Confess your sins. You deserve no freedom.”

The unspeakable was yelling the loudest I had ever heard it done. Simultaneously, it was surging towards me, aggressively. It accelerated, poised to give me a fatal blow. I closed my eyes, I didn't think of doing anything to escape from it. I had given up a long time ago. I felt a bump, coming right at my chest, and it

stayed there. But I wasn't hurt. Opening my eyes I realized that it wasn't the unspeakable that encircled me, it was Arthur who nestled his arms on the small of my back, gently.

"You are safe now. Nothing is hurting you anymore."

All this time, I had believed I was the most tragic person in this world, and that the world was unfair to me. I blamed myself, everyone, and everything else, with hatred, with agony. I turned my whole life into a never-ending nightmare. The unspeakable was never real. It was the guilt from myself that created that monster. I used to think it was the unspeakable who kept haunting and tearing me apart. But now I knew I was the culprit that grasped the guilt and pain in my chest and didn't let go. I was suffocating myself when I wept. Arthur was right, I was the one who was making myself suffer, I didn't curse my father, I cursed myself. It turned out I was fighting against myself.

For the very first time in two years, I couldn't feel the presence of the unspeakable. It was gone, and I was sure it would never return. It faded away as my guilt ebbed away, here, in Asakusa. I had my eyes back, I looked around and wondered, how long had I detached myself from this vibrant world? I could feel time and space anew. The elevator, the pitch, the room, and Asakusa, they were blended together. I was walking through all these places in a tunnel, a tunnel named memory. Only this time, I wasn't feeling any guilt, shame, or pain.

Maybe after all I couldn't do anything even if I was the only one there.

He must have felt awkward embracing me for such long. He turned away and gazed at the river, pretending the very best not to unveil any of his emotions and his kindest intention of bringing me back. I looked at him, with my teary eyes, tears were not of sorrow or woe, but of solace and relief. Always showing his care with pride, how egotistic, how gentle, how lovely.

"Get busy living, right, Arthur?" I said with my trembling voice.

"Did you just steal the line from *Shawshank Redemption*?" he turned to me and asked.

We stayed there, for a long time, gazing upon the river, and allowing the breeze, to softly carry my tears away. I saw my soul clearly, as how I saw Asakusa—a realm of redemption, a realm of reincarnation.

-The End

Dedicated to my father, and thank you, Arthur.