

CURTAIN CALL FOR THE FORGOTTEN

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The curtains open and the composer taps his baton on the board. He waves his hands and the symphony thus begins.

As the violins emerge and the strings are struck with gentle fingers, you open your eyes, with a white mask placed on your face, and see yourself surrounded by history in a grand hall of marble and gold. You see the paintings depicting the battles, the loves and the deaths, the first and last kisses of eternal hellos and goodbyes, together forming the history of humankind. You see the armor, the instruments, the weapons, the dresses, the confederation of the historical unity of who you are and who they are. It is glory manifest, with the rise and falls of *senex*, of *dictateurs*, of *inquisidores*, and of rebellious empires, with the salvation and murder of the holy saints of the Messiah and the fallen tempted. It is all so grandiose and so high that it can almost touch the heavens and be the sun instead of its receiver. Among it all, dancers with white powdered cheeks are coupled up, moving with the flow of the families of string and wind, around the grand hall with joint hands and white smiles. Here you are and you realize, like a bright flash of light from the very pools of enlightenment, the fact that the figures before you are not simply a fantasy, but a reality. From birth to death, from the womb to the grave, these men saw their world and said, and determined, that *no, I will not stand like a fool in the sidelines of history. I shall rise, I shall fight, I shall change!*

And it is glorious, so marvelous to the eyes of the wonderer. Within that beauty, you say to yourself, with a smile on your face and with flames in your eyes, that you shall do the same. *I am history.*

You submerge yourself into the music and dance, spinning with joy as the colors of the palace pass before you, laughing with you as your eyes bright up like stars. You see the dome of the hall rising up with the memory of warriors and saviors, of architects and philosophers, of scientists and poets, all together in an

unforgettable performance. You see it all, above and beyond from the shadows of the giants that sway to the rhythm of their symphonic poem.

Within that glory, you excitedly ask everyone about the paintings and the people in them.

- "Who is that?" You point towards the image closest to you.

- "An emperor who brought about true holy salvation." The dancers show bright smiles and approving nods.

- "Who is that?"

- "A king among kings, a priest among priests." There is a collective bow and amen to the great warrior.

- "Who is that?"

- The dance stops, the people cease and desist and the composer hesitates. A violin string breaks. "Who?" They ask in unison, their voices like a deathly whisper to your ear.

- "The one next to the General, smiling towards the horizons."

- "Who?" The ground rumbles as the earthquake of the drums shakes the columns.

- "The one in the corner, far off into the darkness of the shadows. The one who looks like me."

The dancers grumble, shuffle their feet, turn the blind eye as invisible men take the portrait, dismantle the framework, cut the edges, double its size, place a new frame and put it back on the wall again. The main man is there again, with his army garb and the beautiful settings. Nothing more, nothing less. *Who?*

The music resumes, the dancers frolic away and the bad, the ugly, the unwanted is put away, kicked into a corner for the eventual burning and cleansing.

And you look around for that person again and point towards another painting, another statue, another embroilment, but invisible men take them away; cut, break, repair, cleanse. You keep on looking and you see the men, you see the clothing, you see the skin and the structure, you see the hair and eyes, and you know they are human, you know that they are real. *But where am I? Where is my history? Where is the music to my ears?*

You know that there is more than what is visibly present, but the giant dancers obscure your vision. You try to find your way between them, falling on your knees and crawling on the floor, but the spaces between the legs and dresses become smaller and smaller until you cannot fit through them anymore. *What to*

do, what to do?..., you think as you keep trying to find your orchestra. But the giants, with their shinning armor and their frolicking dresses, do not permit you to move on. You feel their kicks, you feel their grumblings of annoyance, you feel their glares, but you cannot stop, not now. *Where is it, where is it?*

Finally, you find a secret garden between the works of art, where a wise old man, with white hair and a long beard, is sitting on a Greek bench and looking pensive, as if he was talking with the meaning of life itself, and writing down his thoughts in a book of history. Closing in cautiously, you say to the wise old man:

- "Master, I have looked long and hard for my history, but I cannot find it."

He looks up from his book and raises an eyebrow at you. "Are you blind, child? Are you deaf and dumb? Do you not see the fabrications of history before your very eyes? Do you not hear the music of great creations and destructions? It is there child, it is there."

- "I see and hear what you say, Master. I see a history, but not *the* history."

And you hear and see the wise old man chuckle. "Dear child, this is the only history there is."

- "But where am I? Where are my people?"

- "Foolish child, do you not understand that you have done nothing to deserve history?"

And a chorus chants *Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!* as the music changes. It is ugly, it is dissonant, it is a nail upon the empty blackboard of your existence. The strings are broken, the trumpets are covered up, the drums are screams, are sobs, are riots of the unjustified, of the undignified. You try to cover your ears at the searing pain, but the noise is too much. It trespasses your fingers and goes beyond your mind; it is stationed within your heart and soul, rumbling and breaking and clawing away at the flesh and barriers, one layer at a time.

And you try to keep your stand, to insist upon everything that you should be here in this palace and that you belong, for you are human and are therefore part of history. But the wise old man laughs and the dancers gather around you to cackle at your foolishness. You point towards the paintings on the walls, yelling above the horrendous sounds, "Look! I am in that and that and that! There is the nose, the lips, the eyes, the ears, and the skin!" But as you do so, they begin to vanish, unseen painters covering them up with furniture, with animals, with red curtains that frames the protagonists of history, the victorious of humankind.

You break away from the dancers and run from the hall, for if you are not there, then your existence must be outside, on the outskirts of the world. As you leave the horror behind, the roof begins to crumble away and the marble floor gets buried underneath the dirt. When there was light before, there is now the darkness of the night and storm. The palace is now long past gone, hidden in the rain and awaiting your return.

Among the rain and thunder, a glorious army appears before you, an infinite ocean of red flags and golden armor. And in front of them all, a great king stood, holding a golden scepter, his back adorned with the divine wings of the anointed ones. And he, with a powerful voice that forces all ears to listen, says: “You dare make war with us? Have we not given you a ground to stand on? Have we not given you a sky to worship? Have we not given you, gifted you, with a life?”

And you look at the ground, at the sky, at your life, and you see darkness. You see invisibility, you see ungratefulness, you see pain, you see blood, you see a white blank mask covering your face, its entrails grabbing your head and forcing you to blind yourself. Your breath is hitched, it is slowly taken away, as the mask does its own bidding for you.

- “I wish to see-“
- “You wish nothing!” Among is rain, thunder, and lighting, the music shakes your body to the bones, threatening to brake them as weak stones.
- “I wish to hear-“
- “You wish no such thing!” The mud seizes your feet and chains you as worms begin to crawl up your legs.
- “I wish to stand-“
- “Then you shall fall!” You are forced upon your knees, your head is lowered to the ground and you are positioned for worship, for absolute submission to the creators and destroyers.

And within the torturous thunder, you hear the laughter with broken strings, the smiles with screaming trumpets. And you know that the wise old man shakes his head again, scratching the words about you and ripping the page away. He strokes his beard, nods to himself, and keeps on writing, looking at the victorious Winged Empire that has won the wars that end and begin wars.

And you, against the pain and darkness, raise your tiny little fists and rise from the ground with your tiny little legs. You are grand, you are magnificent, you are amazing, young child! Fight, fight, *fight!*

And you fight against the ground, the rotting soil that hides away the truth of humanity. You dig and dig with your own two hands as they cut and bleed, your clothes smudged with mud and ripped at the seams. You dig and you brush away the dirt and you hear, above the hole, the people laughing and mocking and insulting and joking about the inevitable pointlessness of your journey. But you keep going, you keep digging and then finally, *finally*, you feel the hidden door under your fingertips. With fear, but also with hope, you open the door and the painful music finally stops. There is silence.

Someone stretches their hand out to you and, with caution and hesitation, you take it and let yourself be guided through the door, through the curtains, and towards the symphonic stage. The theatre is full to the brim and the whole world, be them from the most majestic of castles to the most forgotten of shacks, is there to witness your birth.

You can hear the air enter and leave your lungs, feel the stares upon your being and see the flakes of dust dancing in the air. Someone hands you a baton and places you in front of your orchestra. The musicians of the world wait for your direction, their fingers, hands, and lips ready to play.

And upon that stage, with a grand audience that waited with baited breath for your performance, with the Winged Empire and the wise old man looking skeptical, you hold your baton tightly to your chest. However, it is then that you see yourself, older and happier, in the closest seat of them all, attentive and patient, calm and at peace, waiting for your thunder.

You see the paintings, the writings, from love letters to royal decrees, from a child's drawing to an architectural masterpiece, hanging on the walls of the theatre. But, above all, you see the faces of yourself, of your people and of everybody's in the history of before, now and after. It is there and it has always been there and now it is your turn. *What will you do?*

The mask has fallen and there you are with your orchestra. You turn around again, towards the instruments and the musicians and, with your baton, you raise up your arms and...

...You begin.