

The Definition of Reality

by Patrick Somervell

On and on, time assaults us with its ageing disease and eroding realities. The world is not what it used to be...

I wish I could imagine what freedom is. Can it be found, bought or sold? My cell shuts me out from reality, the cracks in the wall resemble the cracks in my memories. I drift in and out of consciousness; I can see her face, her copper red hair, those dark green eyes, her face smiling at me as I offer her a glass of water. One final offering to the God of my affections. She lies there, blameless to her misfortune.

When I was young I asked my father why bad things happened to good people. The first time I asked, he looked at me with tears in his eyes; he opened his mouth to answer but not a sound came from his lips, failing to respond he just shook his head. I had never seen him like that, speechless. He was always so full of joy when we were all together, he always told us that we were the reason he believe in God.

I waited a long time before asking him again and when I did, I achieved a better response to quench my curiosity. He faintly said that "her time had come" and that there was "a reason for everything", I had my doubts. All I remember from that moment was the image of my father lamenting her passing as he laid a single rose on mother's gravestone.

Time was made to keep order and attempt to tame people that didn't conform. Who needs time when you're in a prison of your own making? People's whole lives revolve around their watches, but I don't have one, so I guess time does not affect me. It's a simple way of thinking but I see it all the time, people today have only one thought in their puny little minds: "if it doesn't affect me, then I don't care".

What's already happened can't be unmade. A moment can last a lifetime, a heartbeat lasts a second, ending a life only takes a couple of pills dissolved in a glass of water. Isn't it funny? How no one controls their own destiny. It is always controlled by someone else: the drug addict stumbling in a dark alleyway clutching a knife, willing to kill for his next fix; the doctor holding a scalpel over an unconscious woman, his power superseding the realms of life and death, and the soldier in battle aiming his rifle at a 12 year-old boy holding a radio, ready to give his position away, neither of them knowing who the other is or what they stand for but if their positions were reversed death would always prevail.

So here I am chained to a wall. Brick and mortar retaining a poor soul. Starving and mocked. Spat on and cursed. You might think I deserve all of this, but does anyone? What gives you the right to judge me? What gives a person the right to judge another when he is just as bad? Hypocrisy they name is mankind.

I still lie here, shackled by my wicked deeds. The cold metal burns my skin and the damp floor makes

me shiver and convulse. Rats scurry around my cell and devour the worm ridden bread that lies at my feet. These rats remind me of my late friends who when I needed them the most, fed off my depression like a leech to the skin, sucking the very life out of me.

Not a ray of light penetrates my cell, it is impossible to tell what part of the day it is. What is the point of having eyes, if I cannot see? (Gouge them out!) Once the greatest gifts I had, now two bleeding empty holes that bore into my mind. I am thankful no one can look through them. Maybe they would understand why I did it. Maybe they will just be sickened.

At least I won't be able to see what the world is coming to. More war, more suffering. In the end we will all end up equal. Dead. Rotting in the earth we so willingly built on and shaped for our pleasure. In the end we will all end up murdered by our brothers and sisters who simply had different points of view. We chose to be ignorant. We chose not to learn about them, and through ignorance we lived our daily lives with a warped view of their beliefs, thinking we were so above them. Thinking they were such savages. We chose our fate. We made our bed and now we must sleep in it. It's just human nature to disagree, to lust, to be consumed by greed, to kill. Today if someone takes another's life we attempt to avenge the death, to give the families closure and society piece of mind, yet he will walk among us in a couple of years. Unharmed and no second thought. Not a single drop of retribution is left in the glass of our so-called "Justice System", only hundreds of holiday resorts constructed for the ones who deserve the least. How funny. Yet I don't laugh. I lie here stagnant, wallowing in self-loathing and adulation for what I have done.

It's intoxicating. This power I have achieved. I know the rush I felt was only adrenaline being pumped into my bloodstream, but it felt like real emotion being forced back into my broken body. I smile even today as I remember the feeling. The power to make a heart stop beating, it's just so exhilarating. More enthralling than any drug known to man. Even happiness. War, genocide, disease, even the so called "acts of God" at the end of the day someone is getting off on it. Profiting from the pain of others.

I wake screaming, the sweat is pouring down my back. I remember her name now. Jane. I lie awake for hours on the cold damp floor, curled up, wishing I was still in my mother's womb. Was it all just a dream? What makes a dream a nightmare? I'll tell you what a real nightmare is: you are fast asleep but your consciousness is on fire, you are burning up and you are powerless to stop it. You can't respire, only perspire. Suddenly your eyes are torn open. You are wide awake. But you realize that you were never asleep and the truth is that she is dead because of you. That's a nightmare. Something you can't wake up from because all this time you haven't been asleep. Reality.

I can no longer defend myself from the countless hunger pangs that riddle my whole body, alas the

food has lost its charm. (What charm?!) As the rats scurry away with the last of my bread, one falls to my capture and the hunger subsides, for now.

It's no longer possible for me to keep living like this, if you call it living. I wake from my slumber at the sound of a voice. This voice, barely a whisper at first soon becomes louder. (It will soon be over friend, no longer will you stir from your nightmares screaming her name) Now the voice is always there whenever I wake, it's in my cell and it is in my head. I still wonder who or what the voice is, that familiar sound, do I know it?

(Wake up! Wake up!!) I wrench my eyes open. I am in so much pain. Pain? What is pain? Is it an emotional tear? Or a physical trauma? Because I have suffered both. My afflictions come and go, but the pain is always there.

People define something using words and concepts they already know. How do you define a person? How do you define me? In this day and age its: colour, gender, what you wear, what you listen to, what you believe, what you do, what you have done. (Murderer!) How can you lower the value of a human life to something as simple as a colour or a belief? You shouldn't. But people still do.

This is what led my existence to change: before my prison was built, before the torture became unbearable, I used to be someone people would care about, someone they would love. (She loved you!) I considered the idea for a long time, but it wasn't me who designed the ploy, it was Him. He thought of the whole thing, then sprung the idea upon me like a bucket of boiling water thrown at my bare flesh. At first it was unthinkable, then it became impossible to resist. Tears streamed endlessly down my face but I still couldn't stop the smile creeping on to me like a tiger looming over its prey. I nodded profusely in agreement as I heard his words. (The only way for her to stop suffering is for you to set her free!)

I lost her a long time ago. She was so young; she had so much to live for. Then one day, someone took her away from me. That day father walked in to my room, his face a picture of a man who had lost the two most important things in his life. Lost the woman he loved, lost his only son to D.I.D. (Dissociative Identity Disorder).

It all started six days after my 14th birthday; that was the day she died. (Our lives changed after that my friend. Didn't they?) Mother was preparing lunch in the kitchen and I was in the front room playing with my new jigsaw puzzle. She was the only one, the only one that would try and stop him. She heard me crying and immediately came looking for me because she knew the cause of my despair. His name was Daniel and he would tower over me clutching his belt. She would scream and cry but no one would ever hear her, he would just ignore her. His face was a mask, unrecognizable to anyone who knew him. That's

what anger turns you into.

As she tried to stop him, she was thrown to the floor. A heavy crash resounded around the house as her head hit the glass table. He was strong and she was so weak, in the 8th month of her pregnancy, carrying Jane. I never got the chance to see Jane and she never got the chance to enjoy life. I never forgave my step-father after the incident, he had gone too far, mother lost Jane and never recovered from the trauma. I loved her so much but she was never the same after that. She had been the only person I could talk to, after that she didn't talk at all; she just lay in her room safely enshrined in her own little world with the door bolted shut.

Six days after my 14th birthday something changed in me, no longer were my emotions securely kept under lock and key inside of me. They got out, they betrayed me and with time they enslaved me. I started shaking whenever I thought of Daniel or mother. I started having massive anxiety attacks causing me to hyperventilate and blackout. I started being afraid, afraid of going outside, afraid of staying inside, afraid of the dark, afraid of being alone, afraid that every time I closed my eyes, her screams would come back to haunt me. The nightmares were getting more and more vivid, I sank deep into the dark waters of depression. The waves dragged me down; I tried to breathe but began to suffocate, choking. The memories drowning me. Days passed, months went by. Then the day finally came in which I could not fight anymore as the monster consumed me and everything I once was.

The blackouts are back. I sometimes wake having no idea where I am or how I got there. There are deep gashes in my arms and legs, bruising forming around my eyes and on my shaved head. There's writing on the walls, the words are written in blood. (Murderer!) The writing is not my own. I mean, how could it be? I find scraps of paper on the floor, there's writing on them. Prescriptions for pills, suicide notes, letters to mother. But the handwriting is not my own. Who else could it have been? I am alone here.

At last the day finally arrives, all that planning comes to an end. The voice had been clear. (Take five of her white pills, dissolve them into a glass of water and give it to mother) While Dan was busy in the garage fixing his car, I went to mother's bedside and offered her the water. She smiles weakly at me and for one ephemeral moment I forget everything that has happened. Weeks and weeks spent in hospital, months and months of psychotherapy coupled with electrotherapy and the two years of anguish that were about to end. She takes the glass and without further thought drinks it. Finishes it. I am content, blissful you might say. I then drift into unconsciousness. (No! Not now!)

I wake, enveloped by black smoke and the smell of burning wood. Finally it's all over. The house a burning shell, filled with the suffering and the agony of my past, her beautiful face will haunt me for ever.

Fire engine sirens sounding in the distance. (You are free at last!) And he is right, I am free. Suddenly I find myself falling to the ground, I feel drowsy. Not the usual high from taking my anti-psychotics. No, this is different. I feel a weight pulling me down. I take the bottle of pills out of my pocket. My pills are yellow but these, these are white.

Isn't it funny how someone else will always control your destiny? (Someone must have switched them, but who could it have been?) Darkness surrounds me and it is now a part of me...

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