

Walk With Me, Judah Starling

A short story

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

The tail twists and curls, an unwound snake in the Desert of Calamity. The sand-spittle cakes every orifice as the wind of orange grain blinds all who can already see. You know not this rite, though not many do. We have begotten the begot, and now it is time to rue.

I know not where this path leads, except to the Way to the Edge of Insanity: a twisting, curling, purple road, thwarted by a bubbling poison swamp. Who walks along this accursed path, except for those who are inherently blind? Our feet sink with each mounting step.

Deeper and deeper, into the muck.

But who am I to walk alongside you? This is your own bastardized journey to the land of the all-seeing Eye, is it not? Look at each of my hands as you sink deeper and deeper, now up to your calves in the muck. Upon each digit is a person you love. Hollow little finger puppets, wriggling back and forth as I squeeze and clench your hateful aura.

Of course I know the Way to the Edge of Insanity, but my own fun is in the sum of how many pockets of poison will form and then burst against your knees and eventually hips as you struggle onward with each harrowed slosh.

I said look at them, Judah. I said look at these puppets upon my gnarled digits. They dance and clap for your success, but what have you given to them in return? In Life, what of your sanity have you broken off and shared with your Apostles?

I have heard the throaty whisper of the Weaving-master. He spins and spins each thread round, and round, and round his knot-covered wooden frame. He spins and spins until there is nothing but a thick, white, emptiness that not even bayonets can slash, nor can Ithacas blast.

He calls for you, Judah – the Weaving-master weaves his web for you, spindling with his long and sharp fingers, which tick and twitch like those of a bulbous cellar spider, overfed by the tides of hot summer's hungry harvest.

You ask who I am, but what of you, Judah? What is your name? What in fuck's sake is your name, Judah, do tell me! Slip and slosh in your manic compliance to the World, as those you let down twist with fret and regret upon my wretched fingertips.

The mouths of those before you agape and cease, like brainless trout. In the muck around you, their cracked, black lips pop and smack together, wordlessly warning you of what is yet to come. Do you hear them, Judah? Do you hear your brethren?

The rose-blood devil sings and salutes to you from afar, upon the black shadow tips of the moonlit cliffs. He prances upon a path made of rose petals, the scuttle of his hooves dashing up clouds of Greed and Malice among and around the flowerbeds of Rationality. He sings your name, Judah; he sings and sings, happy that he will soon finally meet you flesh to flesh.

The tail twists and curls, Judah, remember that. The tail twists and curls, or rather is it merely a tongue? A meaty, slippery, muscle of invocation – for without it, would we consider its clarity? Without it, would we realize how thick the black smoke of the World's fallen grace billows into the glazed horizon? Is our brashness in our tongue, Judah, or is our tongue just an instrument of our brashness? A trumpet in the night? A sword in mortal combat?

I know not what I say to you, except for the fact that I know the Way to the Edge of Insanity. You put the words into my gullet, Judah, and I reverberate what I've been ushered to vomit.

I would like to feast upon the portly grotesque. Will you dine with me, Judah, at the end of your trek?

Finality is a Fate worse than Life, and yet here we are together, bound in a glass crystal ball of nothingness, of kindred Finality that only those before you have come to fear. How does it taste now, the harsh and bitter gin?

Your wilting strength inspires me, Judah – all right, I'll play nice for once. I am a corpse of a cockroach; the long-since mummified cadaver of a cellar spider, hidden and long-forgotten in the shadowy nook of Victorian rafters with my far-reaching and now crumbly legs curled up, like two grasping hands meeting at the wrists, forever ensnared in the cluster of my own dusty cobwebs.

I am like you, Judah, but no more are we aligned. It was you who brought us here, but it was Finality who decided it. That's right. There is no will-bound circle that They teach you so much about. There is only here, and now, and forever, and the end – and we are at the end already – here and now, forever here, at the end, Amen.

Push forward through the muck, for there is no other choice except to stand, and sink, and drown. But there is always the chance that this poison swamp will swallow you up in any case, like it swallowed up all those around you. Your brethren.

I have said this to you before, but it bears re-mentioning as you struggle, up to your shoulders now, as we continue on our path to the Way to the Edge of Insanity. Are you listening, Judah?

When the Gun of Fate is drawn, Cowards run and fall; but it is Heroes who stand and face their Bullets of Tragedy. Remember these words, Judah, as the Darkness that seeks to consume you looms over the edge of a purple haze.

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The End

Euphoria Blackwood has backgrounds in journalism, psychology, and pop-culture analysis. In addition, she is an honours graduate of journalism from Humber College in Toronto. Miss Blackwood encourages readers to connect with her via Twitter @EEBlackwood and her writing blog, www.steriledirt.com