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This document contains two texts. First one is the Round 1 Finished Work Entry on the theme of “Opposites”. Second one was done on the day of the in-person final 8th June 2024, as a Freewrite/First Draft activity, associated with an Emotion.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices

First Text: Round 1 Entry

The Modern Maleficent

In this world, the inhabitants are split in two.

The Mortals and the Angels.

The Mortals have their wealth, the Angels have their wings. One, a creature characterized by destruction. The other, by creation.

I, myself, am an Angel. I was born into a prestigious family of Angels. The cherubim, to be exact. The few that have two sets of wings instead of one. But that isn't important.

The one I loved is Mortal. I looked at him, and I believed that he was different from the others, that he had a soul. I'd spent years pining for him, desperately trying to speak to him with courage, but I couldn't steel myself enough to even turn his way. It made me feel ashamed.

I remember the day that I confessed to him like it was yesterday.

I was in a stationary store, admiring the magnificent quills made of dove white feathers, when I felt a presence behind me, looming near me. I turned around and saw him, looking at the plastic ball pens curiously. I remember that I had felt a surge of confidence at that moment. I stood behind him, getting his attention with a polite cough, and greeted him. He greeted me back, and we chatted for a while, talking about our interests, our love for music and writing, even if they were in slightly different genres. It was wonderful, that moment. It felt like I was surrounded by pure, warm sunlight, holding me gently in an embrace.

I eventually built up the courage to tell him that I had feelings for him, to which he responded that he, too, had fallen in love with me some time ago. That only made my heart soar higher.

Since that day, we had been officially dating. I'll admit, there was the occasional look from other Angels that did make me feel nervous, but he reassured me every time I got too stressed. "Pay them no mind," he told me. "They're only jealous."

I loved him for that, for how nonchalantly he tossed the other imbeciles aside as if they were nothing but trash to him. It only made me idolize him more.

It went on like this for a few months, our relationship continued to grow and strengthen, I felt like I was right about him. He did have a soul.

I recall our first official date. He told me to meet him at a lamppost by the docks when the sun began to set. I, giddy and cheerful as ever to receive such an invite, got all nice and dressed, picked up my nicest clothes, and made for the docks. At first, I had only seen the lamp-post. Looking further, however, I saw a gorgeous boat, illuminated by little lights all over. I supposed that I was meant to fly over there, so I did, without giving it too much thought. There, he was waiting for me, at a table lit with candles. "You look fabulous." He told me, standing up to properly seat me in front of him. I noticed a crack in his voice, subtle and almost hidden, but I remained quiet and sat down anyway.

"As do you." Came my response, my cheeks red with slight blush, my voice confident and gentle.

We sat there for a while. The dishes came and went every fifteen minutes or so. It started with a simple appetizer, cocktail shrimp and various spicy sauces. I recall that I quite enjoyed the sauces. Next came the main dish, a large honey roast duck, paired with mashed potatoes and ham. It was utterly delicious, he agreed with me. The side dish was a slab of buttered salmon

filled with cheese, a unique idea for a dish, but it was cooked and prepared wonderfully. By the time dessert rolled around, I felt an ache in my stomach. Not a cramp or a sign of nausea, just an irritating burn. Even so, I finished the dessert with glee, considering it was my favourite. Tiramisu with raspberry and chocolate sauce. I had never enjoyed a dessert so much before.

After dinner, we chatted some more, and I noticed a tinge of sorrow in his voice as time passed, and the ache in my stomach increased. Soon, I was dizzy and unable to walk properly.

I tried to stand up for fresh air but the fog I felt in my head disoriented me so badly that I had to sit down.

I was breathing heavily. After a while, he came to sit beside me, eyes filled with tears, to console or help me, I assumed. But instead, he said this as he held me close to him.

“I know you will never forgive me for this, and for that, I will never forgive myself. I hope you know that I truly love you, but my father would never stop torturing me if I didn’t do this. I’ll miss you dearly, Isaac.”

And that was the last thing I heard before everything went black, and when I awoke, I knew what had happened.

Lysander was a traitor. A man who had used me to save himself from his father’s temper and torment. I despise saying his name, I can hardly think of it without wanting to strangle the nearest object.

Who was I kidding? Since childhood, I’d been living a lie, a lie told to children to shield them from the horrors of this world. Mortals were never beneath Angels, unlike what my parents always told me. It was never that way. That’s why they always warned me to never talk or communicate with them.

Mortals, with their greed and their constant want for more and more, tortured Angels. Made them slaves, ripped off their wings for clothing or ornaments, stripped them of their voices to enhance their own. This is why I had received odd glances from other Angels, they were worried for me. I hated myself for ever believing a Mortal bloke like Lysander would have an actual soul that wasn't fuelled by money.

And as I lay here, hospitalized, with four stitched scars on my back, I wish that I had listened to my parents when they told me to never trust Mortals, to never want anything to do with them or their lives of selfishness and sin.

Especially now that my once pristine wings have been made into quills.

Second Text: Free Write / First Draft 8th June 2024

“WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS”

(Fear)

“I look at you all, see the love there that’s sleeping.”

“While my guitar gently weeps.”

George Harrison, While My Guitar Gently Weeps, 1968.

November 2nd, 1927. San Ángel, México.

Antonio Márquez walks out onto the gazebo in the middle of the town plaza, guitar strapped to his chest. The weather is depressing, pouring rain. Possibly the saddest Día de los Muertos in history. Nevertheless, Antonio pulls through the cold weather, playing his guitar while dressed in his mariachi outfit, decorated with orange Dahlias all around.

Him and his band play their enchanting music for some time, the melody swimming through the freezing breeze of the rainfall, the singer's voice reverberating throughout the plaza. They go on like this, playing a few more songs, until the audience claps and cheers, and the mariachi band steps off the stage.

Antonio is applauded by his fellow band mates, patted on the back and invited to free drinks during the weekend. He’s quite calm and proud, when he overhears two drunkards near the gazebo chatter about something.

“Do you hear that?” One of the men says, looking at the nearby woods that coated the nearby river. “It’s her. The Weeping Phantom. I can hear her cries again.”

“Don’t be stupid, Gabriel! Those are just stories they tell to scare little kids.” The other inebriated man barks back with a laugh.

“It’s true! I can hear her, Rodrigo. I hear her crying for her children, sorrowfully and full of anguish. Don’t you hear it? I’m not mad, I swear it on my mother!”

“Ay Dios mío, Gabriel. You’re way too drunk. Let’s get you home.”

The Weeping Phantom, eh? Antonio thought to himself. He adored ghost stories, especially folklore ghost stories. Without a second thought, Antonio set off into the woods, eager to see the Weeping Phantom with his own, bare eyes.

As Antonio walked through the dark woods, the sound of a flowing river became louder. The wind sounded like it was blowing harder, higher-pitched and clearer, almost like a whisper. As he got closer to the riverbed, however, Antonio realised that it wasn’t the wind, it was a woman’s sobbing.

Antonio felt the hair on his neck stand straight, like a fearful cat. His breathing was ragged, loud and hard against his ribs, as fast as a mouse’s heart. The sobs and wails of the forest continued as Antonio walked closer to the source, a fearful tremor in each step that hit the moist dirt.

As he breached the woods to peer at the riverbank, his breath caught in his throat with an abrupt gasp. There she sat, a woman, unnaturally tall, her eyes deep and black, her teeth dirty and her cheeks stained with dried tears.

Antonio hesitantly stepped closer, when he accidentally snapped a twig in half, and the woman stopped crying, as though she had never even been crying in the first place. She turned around, craning her neck to face Antonio with wide, dead eyes, and said in a hideous voice.

“Are you my son?”

She spoke quietly, her Spanish was quite ancient compared to his own, her voice a disgusting rasp that sent chills straight up his spine.

Antonio couldn’t muster any sound, his lips parted with small breaths of fear.

“No.” He managed to mutter, his voice breaking with tears.

She continued to stare into his eyes, her own lifeless and horrifying.

“Could you be my son?”

She asked, her tone never once sounding gentle.

“No.” He responded, heart hammering against his chest, threatening to burst.

“Please,” she implored.

Panting quickly, Antonio fled, running as fast and as far as his feet could carry him. He could hear ear-piercing sobs trail behind him as he ran, his heart and breathing were deafening compared to the river current and the rain pattering.

Antonio ran across a bridge, into a nearby tool shed, shutting the door tightly behind him as he tried to hide amongst the shovels and rakes, his guitar banging into each tool. Against his will, he began to cry, cry with fear and desperation to get home safely, to get home alive. His skin crawled with nerves, his eyes blinded with tears as he sat in the corner of the tool shed, panting and whimpering softly.

After what felt like an hour of waiting in there, Antonio left the shed in a hurry, inspecting his surroundings before continuing his walk back. He couldn't go back the way he came, so he decided to get back through the town's entrance. *It should be just down this path,* Antonio thought to himself, calming down slightly.
Fearfully, he began trodding down the wet dirt path, passing near the river and through the trees occasionally, his heartbeat never quite slowing down.

Scared. That's how poor Antonio felt. Scared for his life. His entire outfit, ruined by the rain, felt tighter with each step he took. His face was wet with rain, tears and sweat. Eyes bloodshot from crying.
Still, he walked. The path was long, and he was losing his patience. And then he heard it again.

Through the rain, the wind, the river and the trees, he heard it. That sob, that loud, incessant sobbing that was akin to nails on a chalkboard. *It's fine,* Antonio thought, *she's far away.*

He reassured himself mentally, over and over again, before he heard the distinct sound of footfall. Rapid footfall, just a few steps behind him.

Antonio started running instinctively, rushing to find any hiding place he could spot and cower in until she was gone.
He was running so fast, gaining quite a lot of distance from her, when one of his guitar strings snapped, and an off-key A note rang through the wind.

The wails from the woman grew louder as she finally knew exactly where Antonio was. Crying once more in fear, Antonio ran, and ran and ran, to what felt like no avail. His heartbeat was so fast, it felt as though it would burst right there, against his ribs. Antonio stepped widely and quickly, unfocused on dodging obstacles, and then he suddenly ran into a bush that tore his guitar off his back, bustling in the bush loudly, before it got stuck. Antonio couldn't leave his instrument behind, it was the only thing he treasured.

So he pulled at it, desperately trying to free it from the bushes, his heart beating faster with each inch that the Phantom got closer to him, pulling and tugging again and again with all his might, until he finally pulled it free, stumbling and falling back with all the force.

And his back fell onto a shard of a broken log, the tip of wood piercing through his chest, his poor heart, that slowed down within seconds, stabbed onto the tip.

November 4th, 1927. San Ángel outskirts, México.

Beside his beloved guitar, renowned mariachi guitarist Antonio Márquez was found dead. Hung from a tree, lungs filled with water, chest stained with blood and gore and his lifeless heart stuck on a spike of wood.