

Driving through the countryside, we come upon a town.
It stands still. The lights are dim. A sense of relief.

She speaks.

“Yeah, this is one of the better, more habitable parts of
this place. Almost had me fooled. Thought I crossed the
barrier back to the real world for a second.”

So, that’s how it is, huh. Honestly, I didn’t mind the
rather eerie atmosphere. Because it felt less like I was
drowning. Hell, a self-admitted bit of horror is
refreshing when everything before was trying so hard to
be welcoming.

It seems I was regaining my personality, if slowly.

We pass by the ruins of an old wooden house.

A black ooze pours out of it. It slowly begins to form
something resembling a human. The slimy figure waves
at us, then jumps in front of the car. What the hell’s up
with that?

It obfuscates our view. The window on my left breaks.

A gunshot.

“God, why now?”

She speaks. I cower, trying to get out of the shooter’s
field of view.

No one laughs.

This world serves its purpose. It only exists to harm, to
torture outsiders.

That’s what me wished for.

One step from Hell, I hold my breath.

I open the car door and run out. I’m not sure what I’m
doing. Or why.

Why?

It does not matter.

I run as far as possible.

Something chases after me. It screams. It grabs me.

I continue running.

5th birthday. That's when I lost her the first time.

11th birthday. That's when I lost myself the first time.

15th birthday. That's when I lost her the second time.

It reminds me of the grueling events of my past.

Because that's all it exists for. To purify my understanding of my memory. To drive it into my head that everything that has happened is horrible. I feel detached from the world that I had lived in. The events that had occurred in the time I was alive.

19th birthday. My house burns down. The string of misfortune continues.

Today. I am alive.

I reject the past that I lived, I reject the me that had existed. I start anew. I kick the being chasing after me. If I were to describe its texture... maybe heavy stone mixed with goo. Something that cannot hold its shape, despite trying incredibly hard to do so.

Time unknown. I reject myself.

Because it does not matter who I am, it does not matter why I am.

That's why... I choose to reject my own identity.

I fall into a void.

The stars shine.

A door made of glass rises out of the darkness. I choose not to open it. It moves closer to me.

I choose not to open it.

Another unfamiliar voice. I do not understand its words.
I make out one simple request.

Help me.

A wish made to possibly alter the miserable state of this world. A gust of wind. A clear blue sky.

Yet I know that this world is false. I know exactly what memory this is.

“Hey, ➔. Let’s go!”

I do not understand why I am represented by an arrow. I do not understand why this memory chose a direction as a sign of something.

I know what happens next. Someone kills her parents. Then she makes that wish.

She stands in terror. She wishes to create a perfect world.

I throw myself at the killer, making a wish under my breath. To make sure everyone that isn’t me or her lives in fear and in misery for the rest of their lives.

These two extremes combine. The perfect timing of these wishes and how they are creates a half-finished pocket dimension. It envelops everything around it.

I acquire my first body.

It is a body that holds all of my previous emotions.

It is a body that holds that wish dearly. It is a body that knows with burning passion that its wish cannot be granted in the grandiose fashion that it was conceptualized.

I feel a clear disconnect from that body.

It does not apply to me. It is only one of the many me’s.

Yet it decided the fate of this world.

I feel something sharp at my face. I see myself standing there.

I know it is me, but the form of that self is much more complete. I've noticed that my current form only wears plain clothes. This world hasn't bothered to continue with the passion its master initially had.

I hold a silver knife, pointed at my own face.

Mannequins stand, dressed in dresses of various colors. One of them immediately catches my eye. A black dress. That's what she was wearing on that day. A red bowtie. A blue ribbon. This me refuses to compromise.

An onslaught of violent rage. I get stabbed and die thousands times over. Why does me wish to end this?

"How dare you reject your own wish?"

The me that kills me asks.

I answer.

"Because you have failed, you monster."

I speak with his bloodlust. I perfectly replicate his emotions. That's what he wants, yes?

"No matter how good a replica you are, you can't ever be anything more than a puppet!"

He rejects this me. I reject him.

My body begins to crumble.

He continues screaming. His screams do not reach me.

I am completely apathetic to his passion.

My body refuses to crumble, no matter how much pain these bare remains are in.

I reject that pain.

I've realized one thing.

It is simple.

“No matter how hard you cling onto your wish, you have not perfected the conditions of it. Neither a perfect world or a world of terror can exist without its owner’s explicit details of how it will function. You are believing in simple failure. How pitiful.”

Another me says it. One covered in scars and wearing an eyepatch. I do not know what number that body is. I’m not particularly interested either.

“So, the investigator is onto us, huh? You must know a few things, Right [->]. *She* has assigned that symbol to you. While yes, you may be one of the many game masters with minor influence, the one with dominance over this flawed scheme is none other than our dear friend. What was her name, again? Eh, I guess we’ll simply call her the Queen [♣]. Now, the fun part.”

He speaks.

“While the main setup for this is an eternal loop that recreates itself thousands of times over with slightly different conditions each time, a lot of it largely depends on how new the co-game master is. You know how the current world is half-finished at best? Mine was much more colorful. Well, I’m the previous body, so remnants of *my* world still exist.”

He continues.

“You have the wrong understanding of it, really. While the Queen [♣] is the creator, we’re the heart and soul of it. No matter how many things the Queen [♣] throws at us, our survival is vital to this game. Otherwise there is no point in keeping this whole thing up for long. If the

person actually holding the memories gives up on this game, the Queen herself may fully vanish.”

He continues.

“We don’t want that, right? So you rejecting this world was not exactly the best move. Though I don’t exactly blame you for blindly living in apathy. You’re an interesting case. Why did she call you Right [→]? Maybe because the concept of being right and the direction are homonyms. Can’t really come up with a symbol for righteousness. What has been used to represent justice in the past, though? Well, scales, perhaps. Yeah, in fact, I’ll call you Scales [⚖️]. It fits you much better. Now that the investigator has entered, she should be assigned a symbol as well. Queen [👑] has not recognized the investigator yet. But if I were to give her a symbol, it’d be a skull. Skull [💀] is quite an ominous title, though. Skulls represent death, right? It’s quite appropriate.”

He continues.

“So, let’s line out the teams then.”

Team A - Scales [⚖️], Crossed Swords [⚔️]

Team B - Skull [💀], Fox [🦊]

Team C - Abandoned House [🏚️]

Scales. The apathetic puppet.

Crossed Swords. The previous body. The hunter.

Fox. The body that escaped and reached out to Skull.

Skull. The investigator.

Abandoned House. The first body. The first soul.

Queen. The sleeping beauty.

(Part 3 - End)

Those were the currently active entities within this world.

“Now, Scales. I believe mechanics time is over. But there is one thing I need to mention.”

...

“You do realize that Fox is against us, right? I heard your conversation with Skull and so far she doesn’t consider you a threat. But the more aware you grow, the heavier your influence. With your apathy and incomplete self, this may become a much heavier problem later on.”

...

“They call me Crossed Swords because I have given up on trying to escape. I’m a hunter. I eliminate those things. And I eliminate everyone trying to enter this world. We’re alike, aren’t we? I’m completely apathetic to the absurdity of the situation.”

...

“This is my domain. Abandoned House dragged you into here somehow. Do you realize that this environment is a clean slate? It’s just a void with stars shining. It could be used for anything. It could have any context.”

...

“While it just seems incomplete, I’ve completely given up on trying to make colorful environments. I knew what my successor would be like. There’s a pattern there, in fact. You have the bloodthirsty first, then the 2nd was just a completely normal confused kid. The 3rd just sat in silence half the time until he killed himself. It

sorta repeats from there. But sometimes these archetypes combine.”

...

“So you get twisted characters like me. You seem to be an odd combination as well. I did see you show genuine fear and emotion, but when you’re here, you just stand silently and take damage. What’s up with you?”

...

“Jeez, you’re no fun.”

Then the first charges at him, trying to stab him.

“Why the hell are you trying to give that thing some sort of value? Do you realize how utterly disgusting it is?”

...

“Now, now, Abandoned House. You’re as ridiculous as your name suggests. No, you’re the most fucking hilarious thing in this goddamn world.”

The man called Crossed Swords slashes through his skin with a ripped out teeth he got the second before.

“Those things are sharp, you know? Oh man, this will surely get Queen to wake up. Her dear friend is in danger, ain’t he?”

The first body stands paralyzed. Not a single sign of motion. A dead freeze.

Not a single sign of motion.

A complete standstill.

Swords snaps his neck with a single motion. Yet the first’s head still holds on, attached.

“She didn’t bother screaming for your help that day.

Your flames burn for no reason other than to keep this world fueled. Don’t you understand that?”

He punches the first in the face.

The first coughs up blood.

“No matter how much damage you take, you’ll hold on, right? No matter how many people you kill, you’ll hold on, right? No matter how many people suffer because of your existence, you’ll hold on, right?”

The first speaks in fragile, futile retaliation.

“I suppose that’s right. But does it matter that a hunter does the thing he’s chosen to do? Does a murderer kill out of some sort of sentimentality? Are there killers that feel remorse for their actions?”

“There are!”

“Nah, that sentimentality amounts to just wanting to fuck corpses. There are killers who kill in desperate ways, killers that kill with a twisted passion. Yet there’s murderers that have given up on humanity. Those who kill out of a sheer lack of anything else to do. That’s me, really. And that’s you, isn’t it?”

“I refuse to be anything like you!”

Swords pushes the first down and kicks him in the face.

“You’ve already made a move on your own self. That’s means you despise humans. That means you’re detached from the pitiful being that your role in this world has to amount to. We’ve drawn a hopeless lot.”

“Why...”

The first asks a simple question. The previous stands in silence, smiling.

(Part 4 - End)

Hey, thanks for reading. It's appreciated.
Claudia Sheffner