

The Art of Living and Dying.

A Journey in Four Stages

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Death is not our friend, nor our enemy, but our foreshadower

or

Her Death Wish



i) Prologue – the girl

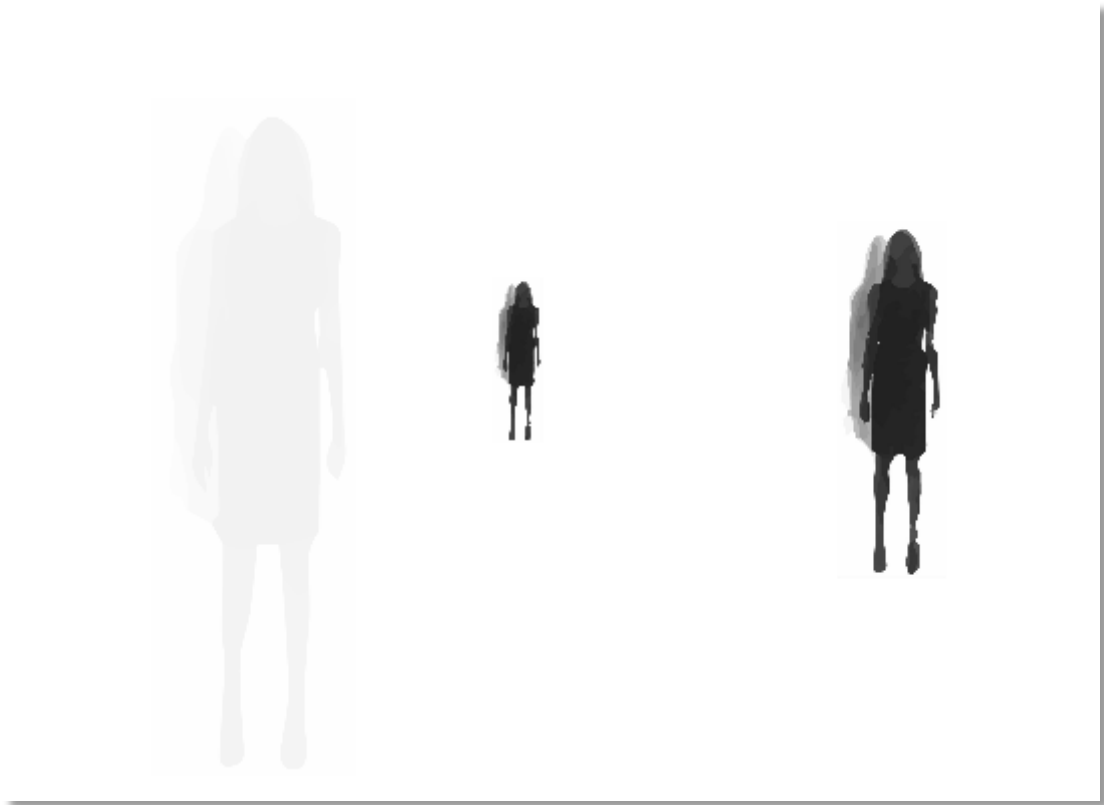
She stands at a juncture. The most critical she has ever faced. And yet it doesn't feel that dramatic. The decision to end her own life was slow in coming. She had battled a myriad of illnesses throughout her childhood, yet all stemming from the one issue. She had never experienced/possessed/felt, what others had.

Despite the complications over the years, the moment is simple. It is pure. She has never felt so clear. This, coming after further discord – the years of teenage chaos. It was overwhelming - the emotions of an attractive young girl's world, with its convoluted web of relationships, dramas and tears.

Yet, in sincere reflection, she knew she couldn't have been more wrong. It was frivolous. Juvenile. And now that she has arrived at this point, all her suffering seemed just as pointless. It did not need to continue. There is another way. It makes the most sense to her.

“I don't mind so much. It's my choice. It's impossible to be happy all the time. And I'm going to a better place.”

All that remained, was a question of how.



ii) Us

The Beginning of Dissatisfaction

Birth

Shattered from Comfort

Ripped from the only authentic Heaven

With all needs catered for.

From a warm, luminescent Red

To abrasive White

Biting open atmosphere (Exposed, Cold?)

An aching hunger

The first sensations of Fear.

Strange, encompassing Sensations

Shapes undefined and unsparing Smells.

Sustenance

And an understanding of blurred Faces

Touch, comfort of skin, relief in the Familiar, frustrating restrictions of the Body,

Confusion of Perspectives, the urge to shit and the satisfaction of it.

Kick, roll, simple joys of play, sounds, the sweetness of melody

Delight in known faces, luxury in routine.

To crawl and want more.

To Grow, Sleep, Dream.

A stumble, a victory.

A fall, a fail, a Nightmare. Terror and tears.

A desire, a need, a perpetual feed.

A want and a step.

To Walk, (finally), upon grass.
To copy, imitate and shape.
To verbalise those inner feelings.

To kid around with Kids.
Who become your Friends
And Enemies
While the Wind tickles your skin
The Sun makes you squint
The Schoolyard where all things are possible
And the restrictions never more keenly felt
The classroom to comprehend and confuse
Why? Not fair. Me. Mine. No.



Practice, Lament. A wish for more
Change, the ever constant.
Flesh altering, uncertainty, insecurity.
A divergence in bodies
Inevitable comparisons
A metamorphosis, pimples, pubes, pus and previews
Blood and semen and seismic shifts
The world awaiting and repelling
A blunder through it
Where to be, who to be

So much to choose from
But is it you?

An invention of self
To Fit In
Or brave it alone

A place of your own
If it exists.

To love
To long (so much longing)
To be on the outside
Not wanting to be in
But hurting because you're not.

A merging with another
Because the inner calling is louder
Than the appeal
Of the recipient.
Placing all your hopes in one basket
A surrender to impulse
A heart is hurting
If not yours,
Soon will be.



The Exultation of Bodies and the senses sublime
The study, the experimentation
The acquisition of knowledge
The frustration of finances
Merged into the workforce
To yield and to harvest
An ideal foreign
Contrary to yours
Already moulded by upbringing.

The conditioning of Country
A culture ingrained

A wedding, a death
A family departed
The finality of it
A blind eye is easier.

And then there are Dreams
The devastation of Rejection
There's somebody else with more
And you want more
And what you Need
And what you desire
Are two different states.

The Conflict within your soul
Never lets you forget what you are
Even if you are still learning
Exactly who...

The years fall away
And love may find you
And it may not
And the world is deviating
Though you know it's really the same
And your perspective shifts again
Only if you knew then
What you know now
And the responsibility of that
And all the rest.

The solace in forgiving
The enchantment in wisdom



The more you acquire
The less time there is to utilise it.
And before you are ready to accept it
To pass on what you know,
Your turn has come
Even if no one is listening.

There is a will
A catastrophic urge
To leave a part of yourself behind
To have it
Not been for nothing
Because you know that you're dying a little every day
And soon there will be no more time
And you'll wish for more
Or maybe you won't
But yet, still, you must accept
With no small level of apprehension
That your story cannot be changed
That it has all come to this...



iii) end

What did it stand for? What did it mean?

Is it supposed to have meaning? Is it about survival? If this is true, why do we dream? Hopes, desires, you can visualise it, almost touch it... And if we know that many of our dreams, like our fears, are never realised, then how many of us are walking around unfulfilled? Getting to the end of our lives, whenever that may be, and realising that we are deflated. Short of our potential. Merely a reach - a mad scramble for our goals, partial success, only to be ultimately left short... empty of hand.

Sure some achieve little victories, perhaps even all but are we satisfied to leave it at that? For as long as the heart beats, it continues to yearn.

Perhaps this is why people settle for second best. It's easier to capitulate and have some control, then to smile under the crushing weight of disappointment. At the end, most will justify their position, no matter where they sit on the imbalanced scale of society's wealth... and be content with it.

Deep within, under the layers of frustration (and justification) lies the heart of the question. Niggling, annoying, never to wholly let go...

What if?

What if you were meant to do more? What if you had made different decisions? Who could you have been? Where could you have gone? Who could you have been with? The age arrives, when there is more behind than forwards.



Precious time shooting by, not savoured, (When you've barely worked out who you are)

... and before long, there is too much time. A slower pace, relaxed, but strangely not as satisfying.

And now that the silence that you could only once fantasise about..

Is all around you

You'll do almost anything to break it.

Snippets of memories

Like shredded, jumbled paper

Some inconsequential

But as real as today

Others blurred, many forgotten

Here comes the fear

Of being unwanted

Of being irrelevant

And all the while, the body wears down

Betraying you

You feel for those left behind

As though stranded in the airport

But other times you're only worried your mortality

And it's possible brevity

It's the most frightening thing you can think of.

The celestials dogfight

Theologians debate

The Gods tussle over ownership of your soul

But there's only one truth

And that is yours

Just don't tell me how it is.

The sun is setting

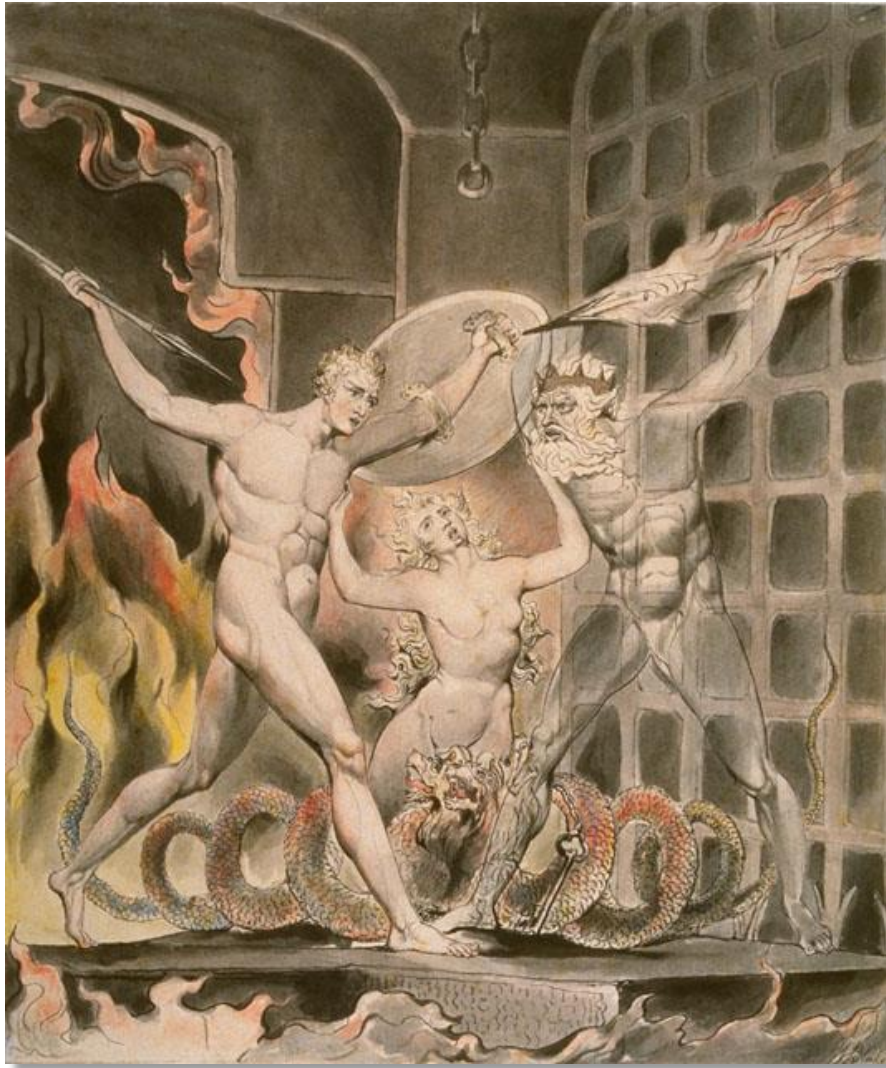
And all your musings count for naught

It's down to the inevitable

The realisation is crushing beyond compare

All that's left

Are the times before...



iv) Epilogue – the girl

There was no one else, only her.
A lone carriage shooting across the plains.
As she came to the juncture...
It felt the only way.

“I’ve got to be going now. And that’s ok.”

She sat down
In the afternoon shadow of her grandmother’s house
And tried

And tried

To relinquish her pain

Through a finality.

...and yet she did not succeed. Something held her back, just enough. There was something else. A hint. A tease... nothing substantial...

...but just enough.

Not an epiphany. A gust of wind. A truck in the distance. Something.

For a moment, the world looked different. And it gave her pause. It gave her... hope.

There was time. Perhaps it was all she had, but as long as she had time...

She had survived.

Ready to begin again.



Part of the epic artwork Rebirth by Manabu Ikeda

E n d

About

This Death Project, as it was originally known, was written ten years ago (2009). This is the first time that anyone has read it. No use sitting in a folder. As to what inspired it, I've forgotten. To be honest, I find it a little simplistic now but it's worth presenting. Its themes are far from superficial however.

Most of the images were also sourced at that time, except for this last one.

Words – Anthony J. Langford 2009