

The Crossroads | Brandon J. Banks | 2,507 Words

January 17th, 1818. 10:15 P.M. London. Had an invitation to visit with Buné. Of course, I was dissatisfied with the acute summons, as the surface was not one of the places I particularly wished to see again. He has once more made his form that of a female to find himself a suitable mate. This time, he has herded a flock of his own, one of which goes by Mister Wayne, with whom he seeks a marriage. They had met during one of Mister Wayne's lectures on divinity, although I do not believe Buné has revealed his true origins to this man. It is unusual, for that is the lure Buné most commonly uses. The house he occupies is strange, being such a size belonging to one man. It strikes one accustomed to the communal living below. The tamed humans attending to his home are bothersome. They do not accept commands with ease, nor do they serve with their own initiative. I find myself in constant annoyance by the veneer of pleasantries that humans so carefully present themselves. I see no virtue in Buné keeping at his ruse any longer. 10:30 P.M.

January 25th, 1818. 9:45 P.M. London. What a multitude of various endeavors I have experienced this past week. I have had so little time to truly compose my thoughts by pen. One day we are flooding the local public house with drinks and gossip, and the next we are dining with spoiled swine after a night at the opera. Sin pours out of their skin faster than sweat. Turning that question around on itself, I must make an amendment to my previous reflections on Mister Wayne. Dinner was at 2:30, and he held the utmost respect for Buné. She was a person I did not recognize from her time below. I saw no malice or ill intent during conversation. Although I do not understand Buné's cursory behavior at such a time when her Lord is gone. To what purpose does it imply spending time with Mister Wayne? She has already slithered into his heart. For what value can he bring besides his soul? Perhaps it is a boon that I have been given

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this time with my cousin. My understanding of her is complex but expands with each passing day. 10:15 P.M.

February 21st, 1818. 8:30 P.M. Windsor. It was a fine wedding at St. Matthew's Anglican Church. Buné has now taken Mister Wayne's hand. I bid them farewell on their wedding tour and will see them once more in two weeks. Mister Wayne has asked me to step in for his divinity and Latin lectures while he is away. I had the most ill of fates to be seated next to Miss Lucia for most of the evening. She has been very successful and, in my understanding, one of the best poets in the country. She was a small, ludicrous woman. She talks with a tongue that rivals even that of the Crossroads and always took the opportunity to use that barb in my direction. She is exceedingly rude, constantly rebutting arguments that are not hers to make and even going so far as to cast her eyes to the heavens at everything I have to say. I have seldom met a more infuriating woman. She is everything a human represents. Disrespectful. Lacking decorum. A caricature of a human race not fully developed. How I despise her. 8:45 P.M.

February 24th, 1818. 10:15 P.M. London. A cold winter day with showers of rain tempered my burning anger. The dew on my skin is such a reprieve from the scalding temperatures I have grown accustomed. For days could be spent under the drizzle of a dark cloud, and my vigor could never grow tiresome. I gave my first lecture at Gresham College this morning about the "History of Sacred Criticism." There was a bothersome face in the crowd today. Miss Lucia had heard of my attendance and decided to stop in to listen. She was a relentless reviewer and took every opportunity to ask further into my studies. I am lucky to know this history, as I have lived it, for anything less and she would have struck like a predator. Her knowledge runs deeper than I

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had anticipated. It is like she has tried her best to burrow underneath my skin. Her talent for debate is great. She is a conscious listener and had taken in what was discoursed. I did not expect much more from her than cheap jabs, so it was a grateful surprise. Upon closer observation, I must admit that she is striking in appearance. She has a toothy smile, one that wrinkles the corners of her eyes, brown hair worn long and kept underneath a hat, and a chin that is indented ever so slightly. I must have more patience, as I have agreed to educate her at a forthcoming dinner tomorrow evening. 10:45 P.M.

March 10th, 1818. 9:45 P.M. London. I bid those in lecture farewell today upon the return of the newlyweds. My time at Gresham College was agreeable. At the request of Mister Wayne, I shall return once more to finish my series of lectures. We have grown quite close in our time together. To think I can call a human my friend. The words feel strange on paper. My cousin has returned in a most vibrant mood. Perhaps the wedding tour was good for her. Had an invitation to dine at Rules with Miss Lucia, a human previously mentioned. Of course I was pleased with the invitation, as she had questions pertaining to my first lecture I was more than willing to accommodate. Dinner was for 1:30, but we did not get there until after 2, having taken our time through Covent Garden. Stalls were filled, and Miss Lucia had taken a liking to a red ribbon at one of the vendors. After purchasing it, I had given it to her as a gift for our courtship. It complemented her chestnut hair most wonderfully. I had not expected my heart to beat to such a rhythm upon seeing her don my gift. Had a fine time this night. 10:00 P.M.

May 9th, 1818. 11:00 P.M. Hell. This isn't the 1st of any calendar year, yet Uncle has brought me back home in talks of a new beginning. With Lord Asmodeus having been gone for almost a

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period of ten years, his ascension is near, and he must surround himself with those he trusts. He has offered me a new position in his cadre. Why would he think of me? Have I truly shown such fealty to deserve such an honor? A post at the Crossroads is everything I have ever dreamed. Possibly it will give me the freedom Buné so flagrantly parades if I but go along and accept this position. Still I wonder if I can ever be exactly happy in this kind of work and the pressure it creates. I hope I can. Uncle has given me until the year's end to make my decision. Perhaps Asmodeus shall return, and my contemplation will be in vain. We will only see as the summer turns to fall and the leaves eventually wither. 11:30 P.M.

June 21st, 1818. 8:45 P.M. London. I have been pondering whether to tell Miss Lucia the truth of my nature for a fortnight now. Perhaps the joy of the solstice will lighten the magnitude of my words. It is indeed trying in more ways than one. She fills me with such joy, but will that joy be tampered by the dawning of my past? It is hard to wager her reaction when even Mister Wayne doesn't know the truth of his bride. Uncle has made it clear his understanding of humans. He despises them and thinks them horrid. Like a pack of beetles swarming on the carcass that is the surface. But I do know Miss Lucia's heart. And she knows mine. She has led me to believe that the kindness of some humans outweighs the unkindness of the masses. I must make my decision to accept Uncle's offer of employment before the year's end, but now I must make one more decision. Do I tell Miss Lucia the truth? Or do I keep her eyes in the dark? 9:15 P.M.

August 2nd, 1818. 10:30 P.M. London. Miss Lucia suggested that we invite Buné and Mister Wayne to dinner. It was a polite time, yet I was distracted by the attention Mister Wayne was giving his wife and Miss Lucia. There was a distinctive smell of fear emanating from Mister

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Wayne that I have grown all too accustomed to during my lifetime. Perhaps Miss Lucia knows of the recent galavanting Buné has been doing around town. I shall not say a word. Fear of a loved one running astray is all too common for the above world. Their insecurities wash over them like rain upon my burning skin. Although these insecurities do not sizzle away the same. I had hoped to surprise Miss Lucia with a silver ring under her napkin, for today was her day of birth and she is now twenty-eight years old, but the jeweler had not finished setting her crimson engagement stone. I shall not let this delay disparage our future. In two days' time I shall surprise her with the ring, and we will be together. Two bodies from different worlds united as one. Just as my cousin has done. 10:45 P.M.

August 6th, 1818. 8:15 P.M. Hell. I had written on this for August 3rd so had to erase it. My hands shake against this fragile paper, and I have had to start over more times than my fingers can count. Uncle was right. These humans do not deserve the mercy which we yield, and my hands are now soaked in their blood. I arrived at Buné's estate with hopes of seeking advice from Mister Wayne, as he has experience with proposals. I was in a savage rage by the time I surveyed the scene. I found him standing above Miss Lucia with her throat a dark purple and life drained from her eyes. He was in a deep hysteria, rambling on about how his monster of a wife and that Miss Lucia had known the truth. How long had she known about our kind walking among them? Was it Buné that let slip our nature? Or had she known my true self this entire time? He spat venom over her corpse because he could not believe she let him go on touching such a monster. Every night he lay there, his hands wrapped around an unholy abomination. He thought I would be understanding. Be sympathetic to his pleas, and not think him mad. I do not think him mad, yet my fury rests in his actions, not his words. Did he really think I would not react in anger at

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the killing of my beloved? His words aimed at that of my cousin's doing, yet he didn't know they were a weapon stabbed into my chest. My one true human friend, having killed my one true love. It has become apparent that even the best of humans is but of the lowest of value. 11:45 P.M.

February 25th, 1819. 8:45 P.M. London. Dark lies my mind, this winter day, under Death's shadowy wing. My thoughts cannot but wander this solemn hour. Engulfed by suffering so severe, I paid a visit to Mister Wayne below, but found no comfort in his screams. Buné has not yet returned below, and I fear they never shall. This heart of mine cannot help but wish Miss Lucia also made residency there, if only to converse once more, yet those are selfish thoughts my mind all but erases. I shall find complacency as I did today, in visiting her grave. One that marks her forever in the state of her last days. Forever young. Forever loved. Forever unwed. She was one of the scant few to make her way to the Heavens, and I shall not tarnish her reputation by wishing otherwise. How small the flock that makes their way there. But my time at the Crossroads this last year has enlightened me. Even those on the path upward are led astray by even the lightest of persuasion. No mortal heart can deny itself from pleasure, even at the cost of one's soul. How silly these fleeting desires. 9:00 P.M.

September 28th, 1848. 9:30 P.M. Catalonia. How pathetic am I to this widower's plea of lost loves. "It hurts to live." He drinks deeply of the bitter cup of sorrow, and bends over two graves that have swallowed up a father's hopes. The surface has no balm for such a stricken heart. Only I do, in my unlimited power. To them I am not the nightmare made manifest in their darkest hour. To them I am a God. A God in whom reaches His hand out to guide those drowning in sorrow. Would I be so different if my blood didn't burn hot? Would I not grab the hand that sets me free?

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These questions harken back to a loss of my own. A loss that will be held only to me, as to even utter its longing will bring me ostracism, as is the case of my dear cousin. I will not find myself on the outskirts of a civilization cursed to last an eternity at the loss of such a fleeting soul. For even a full life lived with a mortal would be but a drop in the bucket that is my life. The only ears to hear my cries shall be those of my shadow. 10:00 P.M.

September 28th, 1858. 7:45 P.M. Catalonia. I don't think I have ever loathed my duties more than I have this day. Fifteen thousand souls have these hands reaped. Fifteen thousand times, I have heard the same plea spill from mortal lips. But not today. The man I came to collect did not weep, bargain, or curse the heavens as most men do when their hour arrives. Instead, we shared a glass of wine, and he regaled me with stories. Giving me thanks for ten more years of life. He introduced me to his newlywed daughter as a friend. How could he give me such an honor when I have brought him an eternity of torment? He knew of what was to come, yet he went with grace. It pains me to know that Hell will feast on his purity until he is but a husk of his former self. I am mentally exhausted. I must train my spirit in resilience, for many more souls are to come. 9:45 P.M.