

Confusion

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For lack of a better title, its called "Confusion" Its a short story I had to write in English based off one of the emotions presented in Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum". I chose confusion. I hope this conveyed the feeling well.

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/hipeople/56388/Confusion>

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His parents had been fighting. Again. Mom desired to move away from all of Dad's "tyrannical, sexist, provincial visions." Dad demanded "a complete reverence for superior beings."

Zin just wanted to study. He needed to and very much at that. That one fact, the one thing Zin detested to do, just happened to be the one thing he also cherished. It was something that his parents actually agreed on. As far as Zin knew, it was the only thing they agreed on.

However, how was he supposed to study with the earsplitting racket caused by their incessant fighting? Somehow, it struck him as an ironic contradiction. Or maybe the correct word would be hypocrisy? Oh well, the correct vocabulary word made no difference. He was studying English. Not vocabulary... or words... or...whatever. He could not study anyway. Frustrated, he threw his head into his hands and let out a long groan of exasperation. He muttered his currently favorite phrase:

"Two years to college. Two years to college. Two years..." Amidst his mutterings, he uncovered half his face and leaned on his supporting hand. His eyes glanced over the open pages in front of him. It was a copy of Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum." At that precise moment, strings of curses boomed throughout the house in a deep man's voice.

"What's worse?" Zin mumbled to the lifeless pages of the story, "Your tortures or mine?"

As if they were listening, the mania of the usual clanks and bangs of inanimate objects being thrown around the room began. He knew the next stage very well: he would be dragged into the argument to give his "valid, unbiased, loving, intelligent opinion" which could lead to one of two undesirable outcomes. Either he would be locked in his room for a day or two or six without coming out for anything (which calls for a hallelujah for his own bathroom and a secretly hidden and well stocked mini fridge), or he would be beaten and bruised until he wish he could choose the first option. Truly, his parents needed a class on how to discipline a child.

It was not that they hated him, no truly, they loved Zin. Well, it was a very unorthodox, roundabout love, but it was love nevertheless. Zin's parents just "were not expecting him and they had no time to properly prepare for a child." Actually, in Zin's opinion, it has more to do with how his mother's father was a drunkard and his father as a child was abandoned by his mother. Not to say that these were the only causes, they were just minor underlining ones. Zin's parents told him they loved him, though. Well, not in those exact words. They said he might amount to something and that confidence was what love was, right?

Deciding that none of these musings would do anything for him except beget a world of pain, he began to consider which option would be easier to deal with.

He decided on his favorite and snuck out the window that his parents thought stayed locked.

The late afternoon air was warm, but there was a slight breeze that felt soothing on his sleeveless arms. The sun was going down, but he didn't worry. He was used to wandering around in the dark like this. His parents wouldn't know he was gone for a day or so (again with the "unorthodox" love). The only problem was whether he could find a place to stay overnight. He lived out in the middle of nowhere, so that ruled out a motel even if he had money. He had friends to go to, but Zin doubted whether either of his two female friends would appreciate finding him on her floor in the morning. That did not boil over too well the first time. His only guy friend was out of town for the month. Zin had often slept over at Kahlal's house, but without Kahlal there, Zin realized he was in trouble. He eventually concluded that his best option would be to sleep in the park. People slept there all the time, well, people like hobos or even

teenagers who ran away from home.

He set out. The park was not terribly close by foot, but he could take a shortcut across the woods and make it before dark. He had taken this path many, many times. It was somewhat long and took many sharp turns, but was shorter than going all the way around. The path was a remnant of a trail to a once existent home, but it was long gone and abandoned of its inhabitants. No one would know he had come this way, and he planned to keep it that way. If someone found out a teenage boy was traveling through some woods by himself, no matter how small those woods may be, there would be a major commotion and no shortcut.

Thoughts such as these engaged his mind as he worked his way along the path. In a split second though, something so miraculous, so astonishing, so stunning caught his eye. A large, breathtaking object loomed ahead of him. He had taken this path many, many times, but he had never noticed that house. It was old, but it glistened in a spectacular charm. Showered in light, it seemed that the very foundation wavered in and out of the woods, out of existence even. But who cared, it truly was a gorgeous house. Zin began to take steps toward it, drawn by its luminous glow. Just for a quick look-over, you know? It appeared to be vacated, so no one would be bothered. He might just stay here tonight. It was really pretty. He kind of reminded himself of a bug, being drawn unconsciously toward his demise. Zin subconsciously felt that continuing onward would result in death and a death of more customary bitterness.

Why would he think such an awful thought? It was just a house. He crossed the wide, paint chipped porch and reached for the door handle, but then his daze was broken. He had not even thought about it being locked, but as he rested his hand on the intricate handle, he realized that it did not matter. He had to go in at any cost even if he did not know why. He was momentarily confused about this condition, but it no longer mattered. He had reached his goal. He had gotten into the house.

The second his foot landed on the old, wooden floor, warnings shot off in his head. They screamed at him, yelled at him, bellowed forth a warning that screeched painfully in his head to whip around and tear as far away as he could from that place. He was only one step in, so he thought about it, but the house responded to his desire. It seemed to shift and warm as to invite him in. It became more like a home. The warnings just did not understand. This house was magnificent. But still, the warnings told him to go home.

Home?

What home?

Zin had no home. His parents hated him, he knew that. They abused him. They did not love him, so why go "home"? This house could be his home. He continued on, on, and on into the house. He took a step, and then another, and then another, and then he took one more.

The door was behind him. It had been closed, and he was in the house. Suddenly, he wished he had listened to those warnings. Why had he not? They made sense. This house was old, decrepit, and musky. He had no desire to be here. He knew that he should just turn around and leave.

But had he not just wanted to come in and explore a few minutes ago. He became confused more than fearful, he could not be frightened easily, but this was truly a curious case. He did not remember closing the door, but he assumed he had. He turned to try to reopen it, only to find it would not budge. He jiggled it, but to no avail. A curious aspect, he had just opened it with ease moments ago. Grimly, he decided to explore the house.

Exploring this house will be the dread sentence of death, he contemplated, but then wondering why all these grim thoughts came to mind. Utterly befuddling ideas they were. He turned to ascend the grand set of stairs that flourished into the middle of the room.

But there were no stairs. It was a one story house.

“That’s strange,” Zin muttered to himself. He instead turned into a room on the left. Inside was... nothing.

There was absolutely, positively nothing. Wait, when he had peeked through the doorway, but there had to be, there was...

No, he thought, there wasn’t anything. Was there?

He was beginning to become beyond confused. He had thought he had seen a room full of paintings. He was just seeing things, that was all. He turned to go back into the main room that was full of brilliantly fashioned paintings. Of course, his mind was just worked up and he was getting confused. He just thought he saw all the paintings in that room on the left. He glanced around and realized he was on the right side of the room. He was seriously worked up and tired. He wanted to go try the door again, but he realized he was in the back of the house. He must have gone through the room without realizing it or something. He proceeded to go to the front, but another room caught his interest. Despite the dire feelings that flowed from the room, he went in.

This room was exactly like he had seen when he glanced in. It was full of mirrors that reflected every movement he made. Zin noticed that he looked frazzled and tired, his hair all over his head in a frizzy tangle and his skin a shade paler than what was normal for him. The room’s mirrors were all different. They were long and short, wide and thin, cracked and shiny smooth. Each mirror seemed to possess its own personality and magic. They shared nothing in common with the exception of the reflection. One mirror caught his interest. It was missing a several shards, but most of the glass was still intact. It was thin and tall, but had no intricate patterns. There was nothing really eye-catching about it.

Except that it showed Zin wearing a long white gown. It almost looked like a hospital gown, except it draped to the floor and had no hole in the back. It might have been a night gown. This particular image was even paler and full of shock. The Zin in this image looked crazed, confused, and frightened. A girl walked up behind the reflected Zin and hugged him from behind, whispering something that looked to be reassuring.

The image faded out and showed nothing the second Zin’s eyes widened and he took a shocked step backwards. Even after he regained his composure, the mirror still showed nothing. He glanced around the room to check the other reflections, and they all showed the same frightened young man who had stumbled into this house of terror.

No, it’s not frightening. Zin thought, this house is...calming. I have been here before. There’s something wrong. I’m only confused about what is wrong.

As Zin backed out of the room, the hospital image returned and somehow seemed calmer. The girl was gone.

Zin continued examining the house on his way out. He had little object in these researches; but a vague curiosity prompted him to continue them. Also, he had a desire to put an end to his confusion. This desire had not just begun the second he entered the house. Now that he began to think about it, the need to figure out and disperse his confusion had always been around. At the same time, however, warnings told him to leave. While the house was calming, it held alarming emotions. Frightening and anxious omen seemed to radiate from the walls. But these contradictory elements only aided the growing bewilderment he held.

There were many rooms, but he could not decide which to examine next. None of the rooms popped out at him like the first two did. He wondered what was so special about them, but no ideas popped into his mind. He suddenly snapped from his thoughtful trance to realize that he had been going down hallway after hallway. This did not seem to be an important fact at first, but he began to notice something amiss with this hallway. He continued down, not noticing anything wrong until he got almost to the end.

The bloody handprint was kind of hard to miss.

It was dried and chipping, but it was completely recognizable. Zin could not move. Again, he was not afraid even when faced with something that could mean death. He was calmed, and he had no idea why. Reluctantly, he placed his own hand over the print expecting nothing.

He certainly was not expecting that they would match up perfectly.

Zin's mind reeled with questions. All of this was getting too confusing. He had to leave this hallway, yet he still had no desire to leave the house. He bolted around the corner of the hallway. His heart pounded with excitement and fear and familiarity. He knew this scene. He felt it had happened before. He knew exactly where to go next. As he rounded the next corridor, he practically bounded into a small room. He slammed the door behind him, and without even examining the room, he slung himself onto the bed positioned in the corner and wept until his face and the pillows were soaked through. He lost all track of time and did not even realize when he slipped into the sweet release of sleep.

His dreams were not pleasant. He could not interpret anything that occurred. They were all a mass of muddled lights and sounds that somehow meant something and nothing at the same time. Of all the images, a few stood out among the rest. There was one of him reentering the home. Except, it did not seem he was entirely sure of himself. It seemed that he was worried and unsure, and he gazed over the house like it was a plague. It almost seemed like the dream Zin had never been in the house before. That was an impossible circumstance though, right?

Unless...

Before he could make sense of this vision, another replaced it. It was of a man that held striking resemblances to Zin, yet he seemed older. He was old enough to be Zin's own father, yet the man looked nothing like his father. An uncle or great grandfather, maybe. Zin could have seen an old photograph somewhere. The man held a gun and wore what appeared to be a military uniform. It was old, grey, and tattered with war. Blood stained the chest of the uniform, and the man seemed weary and weak.

He had not noticed at first, but along side the man, there was a woman in a long, Southern belle type dress. She was standing with her hands to her sides looking friendly and warm like a mother. She also bore a resemblance to Zin, but Zin did not recognize her. She, like the man, was soaked with blood, yet she smiled. Both the man and woman seemed to welcome Zin. They seemed to want him to come to them.

For some reason, Zin felt an urge to go to them, hug them, and never let go. Was it normal to want to hug every familiar stranger you met? No, because the next vision disturbed him.

Zin would never be prepared for what he saw and heard next. Though it was a dream, a shriek erupted through the passages of his mind. It was not any normal scream, if it could be called such. It was a sound full of fright, hate, and deception. It was full of anger, sadness, and confusion. But above all, this heart stopping sound was doused in blood and betrayal. It was a wrenching sound that pierced the soul and made it susceptible to an overwhelming sense of depression and guilt. The sound was hostile and threatened to tear Zin apart until he was nothing but grief and mystification filling the air around him. The sound made him feel wrong. It did not scare him. It made him feel serene.

It also made him feel serene that the girl was suffering. She writhed in pain even though there was only one area where the blood poured through her beautiful, delicate skin. Zin recognized the girl. Not only because she was the same girl that was in the mirror with his reflection, but she was someone he knew. It was his own girlfriend, the one he had loved for years now, and she was screaming with the pain that could only be caused by betrayal.

Yes, the sound was full of anguish, and this upset him greatly, but though he was distressed, he was tranquil.

He had no clue as to why. Why was he here, why did he know this place, why did he want to stay and

run at the same time?

Even worse, he was disturbed that he liked his girlfriend's pain.

His thoughts buzzed as he shot up from his sleep. His bewilderment became wild and furious. He had to clear his head of his clouded thoughts and make sense of them. He began to bolt from the bed when an object on the wall caught his concentration.

It was an old, torn picture.

It was of himself.

Zin stood still as his world whirled by him and shattered. He was absolutely sure it was him, there was no denying it. However, as he approached it in a daze, he began to be able to clear his whirring mind enough to read the inscription at the bottom:

"Zin Redmond. Age: 17. Date: March 15, 1874."

Zin swore his heart skipped a beat. He backed away in awe, wonderstruck, and confusion. He turned and was out of the room as fast as his legs could take him. He went so fast that he almost forgot the stairs and was an inch away from tumbling head first down them. It was not until he reached the bottom that he remembered that when he first came in the house...

there were no stairs.

Also, the paintings were gone. He could see through the open doorway, and the pictures were all back in place.

He paused briefly as this new information soaked in. There was no denying his utter and complete confusion. Not because of the painting room, not because of the stairs, not because of the mirrors, the hallways, the handprint, or even the picture.

No, he was confused BECAUSE he was confused. He was confused because he understood all of what was happening, yet he did not understand because his puzzlement clouded his mind. His mind struggled to grasp what was happening, why all of this felt right and wrong. He knew this house. He KNEW it.

That was not enough to keep him there a second longer. He was outside in the woods before he knew it, and he was running in the direction of where he knew he had to go. Against his better judgment, he looked back at the house.

It was smoldering and burned down. It was the ugliest atrocity he had ever seen.

He was finally terrified.

At home, Zin slipped back through his window and walked over to his desktop computer. As it sputtered to life, he looked back over to his desk where he had been studying earlier. The books pages were still open exactly where he had left it. He ambled over to the book and was surprised by the first line that jumped out at him: "The blackness of eternal night encompassed me." Somehow, that described him at this moment. He knew there was something out there, something there for him to reach, but he could not see. With that thought, his computer gasped to life. He quickly pulled up the internet, and his search could not go fast enough. But finally, he found what he was looking for. He did not know why he knew exactly what to search for, but he did. He finally had some sort of answer, but it threw him into more bouts of confusion than he could have ever imagined. The article he viewed read:

"...though it held more than 30 patients in its time, the Richmond Institution ultimately failed when one patient burned the building down in 1875. He had suffered from delirium..."

That was all Zin needed to read about this mental institution because what he saw under the article was what confirmed his fears.

There was a picture of the most beautiful house he had ever seen.

Then silence, stillness, and night were the universe. Zin fainted and fell with a hard smash onto the floor, or he should have.

Rather, the world just vanished.

“...he’s having another fit...quickly...sedation...”

Zin woke up and gazed around the room. He recognized his own room in the institution. He had been here ever since his parents had left to go fight in the war. He hoped they were still doing well.

He made eye contact with the doctor who was attending him and decided to ask. The doctor looked uneasy. “Sir, my parents, how have they been off?” Zin questioned. The doctor very nearly darted from the room right then like he knew he should have, but a voice answered from the doorway.

“Your parents are dead. Zin, it’s 1875. The war has been over for ten years. They died in 1863. You know that.”

Zin looked into the doorway to find the girl he loved standing there. She was stern, but gentle when she needed to be. Now was not one of these gentle moments. Zin had to snap back into reality.

“No, they have to come back. They told me they would,” Zin muttered. His body began to shake violently, and he began to sob. He reminded Keiko of a young child when he was like this. She desperately wanted him to get well, so she tried all she could to help him, but she had noticed lately that he had been changing. He had been imagining that other life more, and every time he did, he believed it more and more. He told her that in his other life, they were still in love. She told him this was his only life. She told him that he suffered from delirium, and he had to accept it to be cured. He only got worse. She loved him so much, though.

“Zin, do you want to go finish that art you were working on?” Keiko asked. Zin had always been an artist even when they were just young kids in the middle of a war. As long as they had loved each other, even.

“No...I just...” Zin mumbled as he brushed past the doctor and Keiko. The doctor began to raise a protest, but Keiko stopped him.

“I’ll keep an eye on him,” she assured as she followed Zin out of the room and down the hallway. They walked in silence until Zin reached his destination. It was a room full of mirrors that were stored until patients checked in. As of now, there was only one mirror missing from the room as Zin was the only patient. He stopped in front of one mirror, a tall, slight, plain looking one. Keiko walked up behind him. She hugged him. “Zin...” she mumbled, “Are you okay?”

“No...No, they can’t be...dead,” Zin stuttered. Keiko gazed at him with concern. He had never acknowledged their death before. Could this be a breakthrough...?

That was when he smashed his fists against the mirror so hard, several shards flew from the foundation. Zin was cut by several passing shards, but he was okay. An earsplitting shriek exploded from behind him, and Keiko’s grip on him loosened until there was no contact. He caught her before she hit the ground.

“You...you...stabbed me...” she wheezed. She had received a cut right on the left side of her chest that was bleeding profoundly. He breathed hard, trying to collect his thoughts.

“Oh...oh God...what have I done...? Keiko...please, I’m sorry. It was an accident...” he muttered. At that moment, the doctor rushed in. Before Zin could explain, he examined the situation and calmly gave orders.

“Give her here. I’ll need to take her to a hospital not far from here for her to receive better care than what I can give here.” The doctor gave Zin a severe, merciless glare. He had taken Keiko and was out the door before Zin could voice a squeak. Silence encompassed the house as the doctor rushed through the downstairs exit. Zin was left with his own thoughts. Thoughts of anger, hatred, fear, confusion, and distress swirled about his mind. He oddly also had a strange sense of glee. The person who shattered

his world had been hurt and was dying. He was disgusted with himself for this feeling and decided that he had belonged at this devil's home. He hated this place. He despised it. He made his decision. Zin raced down the hallways, his mind rushing with his own hatred of himself. As he rounded a corner, he nearly lost his balance, but he caught himself by smashing his palm against the wall, leaving a bloody hand print. He vaulted around the next corner into his small room. The window was left open, and he peered through to see his doctor and Keiko mount a horse. At first, he thought Keiko to be dead, but very weakly, she lifted her head just enough to meet Zin's gaze. Even from the distance, Zin could tell she was crying. She did not believe it was an accident. If he ever saw her again, he would never be able to apologize enough.

Zin took one of his coats from the closet and then grabbed the lit candle that sat next to his bedside. He descended the stairs for the final time, and he took one last look into the house. He then threw his lit candle upon the floor and waited to watch it ignite and begin to burn.

Several minutes after Zin left, the entire institution was engulfed in flames. Too many memories of pain were there, and it needed to be destroyed. As Zin trudged onward, a strange quote penetrated his head: "Arousing from the most profound of slumbers, we break the gossamer web of some dream. Yet in a second afterward, (so frail may that web have been) we remember not that we have dreamed." Remembering his just passed dream, Zin spoke aloud, "I'm sorry, but I do believe my torture is worse."