

M O O N

It lay affixed to the sky. A celestial orb of comfort to combat the dark canvas of night.

His pulsing heart beat in time with his paced steps, dragging his hunched frame through the damp granules of sand. The waves caressed his ankles, curling around his calves, coaxing him back to shore. He shivered. Both at the water's frigid touch and at the lunar jewel, casting its distorted white trail on the distant waves.

His mouth was dry. He could feel the dried rivulets on his lips snap and twist, fresh crimson streams flowing forth. He was entranced, stoic as the blood dripped into the black waters below, lost to sight. He did not flinch. He had grown used to the taste.

He bent down, his bones rubbing against one another in a strained and discordant protest. He grimaced, but upon feeling the cool dampness lick his fingers, despite it all, he smiled. He could sense nothing while gazing into the moving dark. Nothing but the steady sloshing. The calming rhythms.

They said the shore was impossible to reach. The sea even more so. You would die before you could feel the breeze off the waters. Many nights he spent imagining being where he was now. The very idea of standing there, seeing more than just scattered fragments and partial glimpses. Even from what managed to permeate through the thin gaps of the wooded walls, it's fullness eluded him. It eluded them all. Yet none sought it as hard as he.

How it managed to look so still he could not discern, but it was what he had looked forward to when the fire in the sky grew docile and slunk behind the mountains. Even the nights when the glow was lost, he would engrave it into the blackness, carve it out from memory. Mix it with the sounds, muffled on all four sides. Each row of waves, crashing into the sand bed with a gentle gusto, the foliage sliding together with a rustle, the ululating of nocturnal dwellers. All together with those white lines of a fractured path, crossing this way and that in tandem with the natural chaos of the unstoppable waters.

One step.

He righted himself, foot raised over the grains, hovering over the smooth, churning black.

One.

It sank slowly, a chill riding along his bones. He could feel the sharp, cleansing sting of its kiss along the sole, seeping into the wounds, pulling the pain out. Cleansing.

Two. Step.

The other followed quickly, joining its brother on the damp sand beneath the flow. His path was assured.

In a fit of brief hesitation, he looked back at the diminutive wooden structures on the dry sand, oppressive despite their smaller stature. He looked back at the tall fence ringed with metal wire, where he had left his mark. He looked back at what once was. He looked back at what still was, for so many others. He would not do so again.

The chills came again as it reached the sensitive flesh of his underbelly. Steps he would never remember taking. Stiffening, his eyes grew and his hands, held up to maintain his poor sense of balance, cut through the waves to wrap themselves around his body, chin tucking inward, digging into his breast.

Fingers ran along the criss-cross trail that indented his back. A mark that will wash away with the tide.

He bared the screaming agony creeping into the cuts as he sank lower, liquid surrounding his neck. He lifted his head high, craning his vision to capture that white circle that had transfixed him for endless nights.

His pace did not slow, gaze gone unbroken, as the edges of his sight began to blur. The sting reached his eyes, but he did not allow them to obstruct the pearl, that shining beacon on whose casted light he now walked.

The sigh he released was one of finality, of contention, as he drifted below the waters, a mess of skin and bone, to now rise to dance unhindered in the evening sky.