



Things between them could so rarely be termed “new.” In fact, their relationship—if it could be called such a thing—thus far and into antiquity was primarily characterized by complete and utter sameness, in every respect and by every conceivable metric.

Save perhaps, his ties. He made it a priority to supply himself with new ones before their next encounter. Always a new one. She hadn’t greeted any part of him with fresh eyes, save for his ties.

She was struck with a sudden, full body certainty that even now he would be wearing a new one. The habit was so old he must not remember why he started it in the first place. But—as with all the habits he’d long forgotten growing—they persisted eternally without his notice. Even for this, he would not be so careless as to wear a tie she’d already seen.

She would never see it, if he had. It was closed casket.

A funeral. That too, was new.



His “name”, so to speak, could at one time be translated as something close to: “The Fickle but Unending Record of All Things Living, Dead, and Never Alive” and his duty was to live out endless lives in eternal pursuit of the thorough documentation of everything he witnessed and experienced.

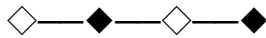
At some point, a dear friend suggested he shorten it to simply, “History”. While he was not generally inclined towards abbreviation where specificity sufficed, he was somewhat endeared to the concept of receiving a nickname from an intimate friend, and so happily agreed.

He had lost many specifics in the recesses of his labyrinthine consciousness. The face and name of that intimate friend had been one of them. The nickname had not. And so he remained: History.

Entropy, at one point, had even tried to claim that she had been the one to bestow it to him. To his great humiliation, he believed her for a good lifetime or two. Until he suddenly recalled introducing himself to her, and realized that he'd had it far before she ever even darkened his metaphysical doorstep.

At his subsequent outrage, she laughed, and called him boring. And then forgetful.

He was half certain he hated her. And entirely certain she hated him.



The young prince poked at his food, looking bored to death at everything. His parents were giving him a thorough dressing down for something or other; the raucous festivities he initiated in the town square just the other night, or another of his numerous misbehaviors.

The prince did not hear a word of it, as he began to busy himself making faces at the royal advisor standing by his father's side, who in turn made a great effort to pretend that the king and queen had never had a second son.

This delicate dance of wills collapsed at once as the queen became suddenly and irreversibly incensed with the situation, and seemed to partition this outrage to both her son and the advisor equally. The whole affair immediately descended to furious shouting and clattering tableware.

The prince boldly elected this moment to stick his tongue out at the royal advisor. Finally, the waifish man of declining age returned a glare, and sighing like *he* were the pestered child in the room, snapped his spindly fingers.

The world before them abstracted, splintering into fine motes of light, until the prince and advisor were left in the abyssal glow in the interim of realities, the in-between. And at last, the two were alone, prince and advisor no more.

Entropy had not let him take the chair she had been sitting on, and she looked for all the world like she were still a prince, and it was a throne in which she sat, all smug and sprawled. She could not yet muster any words beneath her earnest thrill at having finally pestered him History action, for fear that her overzealous excitement would spill out of her if she tried to make the slightest sound.

History seemed to hear it anyway, in the buzz of her gleaming smile. He was struggling to muster words for other reasons, trying fruitlessly to untangle the fraying threads of his composure as they knotted into woven rage. Her smile sent him over the edge.

“Would you *focus*.” He spat out each syllable like they were scraping past his teeth, and once he’d choked them all out he swept his hair back like they’d brought him physical pain to say. He did so despise losing his temper.

She crossed her legs, and affected a musing look. “I’m afraid I don’t quite know what you mean.”

“Your *mischief* has cost me another lifetime, Entropy,”

He clearly meant to say more, but then she sneered, “*Au contraire*, my dear friend, since it is so rare that *you* are the one to divorce us from reality, calling it *my* mischief seems a tad inappropriate. You ought to honor your own contributions.”

By the time she’d finished the retort her sneer had taken the curl of a wince. She’d revealed too much of her hand. Beneath her notice, the fumes of her lingering upset seeped out alongside her words.

History did not reply, only looking her over, faintly puzzled. She dreaded the moment he would arrive at the realization.

“Ah.”

And there it was. She groaned under her breath.

“I... unsettled you.”

Unsettled wasn't the half of it. She carefully peeled every fleck of those tangled feelings from her tone, and aimed to recuperate the situation, “I would endeavor to start making sense sometime soon, lest you want to spend the rest of time *in-between*, History.”

It was as if he hadn't even heard her.

“The funeral. When you arrived to find me dead.” He watched her tense figure with slowly widening eyes, “You didn't expect it. It caught you entirely off guard.”

She searched for some way to lead this wolf off the blood trail, but found nothing, and had hesitated for too long. He strode right in front of her, bending over her chair.

Then suddenly, unbelievably, he beamed.

“I *surprised* you. I well and truly *surprised* you, did I?”

And she could not form a word in reply.

He didn't need one. His face glowed with earnest, unabashed thrill, and the pleasant flush of complete excitement, as if all his life's frustrations were, in that moment, forgotten.

She hated that expression.

Mustering a faint retort, she muttered, “It was certainly no pleasant surprise. An utterly dull machination.”

He looked all the more pleased for it, and, almost sinisterly, whispered, “Then, until our next *dull* encounter, Entropy.”

And then he was gone. Scattering into his next life. She caught a last glimpse of his tie, a paisley patterned collection of subtle gold and deep blue, and the slightest hint of something like magenta. New, indeed.

Alone, she could only bask, limp in the lingering light of his joy. She hated that expression. It defied all of her attempts to coax it out of him, to summon it of her own volition. It appeared only when she did not expect it, like a sudden bolt of lightning. Always fit to completely stagger her.

She sat motionless in the in-between, helplessly taking it in.

It was a few lifetimes until he saw her again.

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He knows this place to be dangerous, though only in abstract. It is a difficult fact to keep in mind, standing in the fields of subtle darkness, patterned with flecks of scattering light. They are mirrors into a thousand universes, each a spark of recollection, a single moment. They are beautiful.

But he knows this place too well to truly forget. It is the hallowed haunting grounds of his entire living memory. A sprawling record of everything he has ever seen, thought, and experienced. The size of it never fails to bowl him over.

It is an immense undertaking, to come to terms with all he has forgotten, and all that he will never remember. It is an endless temptation, to lean over into one of those glowing pools and seek with cupped palms every sip of knowledge and feeling that has slipped from his mind.

He takes care not to look too closely at any of them. He is not normally so careless as to allow himself near this place, but today he comes seeking respite. There is no one he remembers who can find this place, and at last he is alone.

Entropy has been especially wrathful lately. She fashioned herself into a singularly destructive element, with her sights set on his peace of mind. Whatever smugness he'd felt at having surprised her had drained after a few lifetimes, chased only by frustration and the force of her fervent retaliation.

He felt something like a wounded deer, hounded to its hiding place, able to do nothing but wait her out. He could not be certain how long an endeavor it might be. But then, he could be certain of almost nothing when it came to Entropy. She was something entirely distinct from him, and he could no more understand her as he could cease to exist. She was something not quite fathomable, fickle as she was persistent, and utterly unpredictable.

He cannot remember the details of their first meeting, not anymore, and in this place he is overcome with the sudden urge to search for it. To find in these endless fields what exactly first inspired her endless pursuit of him, her constant effort to unravel his composure. To drive him mad.

It dawns on him. It must be something akin to destiny, that they should exist in eternal equilibrium, destruction and preservation. He is comforted by this thought, for a moment. That perhaps he doesn't understand her because she is not to be understood.

He has seen her in countless human forms, in every shape and build he might imagine, and yet still he cannot wrap his mind around the she that lies within them. She is eternally beyond his reach.

The shallow comfort hollows out of him, and the odd sorrow of it staggers him. He does not notice he has stepped into a pool of light until it shoots up his spine, explosive and-

Suddenly he is remembering something he cannot recall ever seeing. Eyes. The color of fractured lights in a thousand colors, endlessly refracted into each other. Ever changing. He

would greet them every time with fresh eyes, delighted by a combination he had never seen before. In the next moment, they'd have shifted, and he is enraptured by the thought that the sight of that combination can remain only in his memories. Eternally new, never repeating.

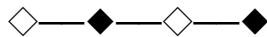
He longs to match that wonder, somehow.

And in the next moment he is stumbling backwards, head spinning. He is beset between two minds: one that remembers, and the other who knows he must not. He is running before he knows to stop himself, and one after another he stumbles and splashes into those pools of light.

His sight splinters, torn between one thought and the next, spun by his own memories, pulled forward, shaken and thrown in all directions.

Between everything, there are those eyes. Those brilliant, beautiful things. It is to the sight of them that he finally slows. That at last he cannot bring himself to swim out. He falls limp.

And he sinks.



His tie is the same as it was when she last saw him. She notices when she finally manages to pull him from the pool. She supposes she can forgive it, this once.

He slowly returns to himself in her arms, and she gazes across the glittering fields of his memory. For a brief, indulgent moment, she wonders how many of them are of her.

His eyes blink open, blurred and muzzy. She pulls him to his feet, and hoists his arm over her shoulders.

He tilts his head to her, but seems to barely register her presence. Still, he whispers a name under his breath.

“Yes.” She replies. It did not sound like Entropy, but then, he has known her by many names.

He manages a smile, faint and fading, before he sinks against her shoulder.

Together, they walk. She is taking him to the end of his universe. He is full to bursting with his own mind, unable to organize himself. Yet she cannot help but want to talk to him, when he remembers. As they find the horizon, she finds words.

“You know, I often think that you embody my name more than I.” She hoists him closer over her shoulder, “You and your ceaseless venture to capture the endless variety of existence, to inscribe even with fading ink every unpredictability.”

He seems to take in her words, shifting on his feet. She suspects he has gotten lost in his thoughts, and says, “A record of entropy. Does it not fit you better?”

“No.” He is soft, buried in recollection, but speaks firmly. “No one could match your sheer variety. I remember every instance of it. I don’t understand how you arrived at this conclusion.”

There is something about his voice, laden with all he’s ever known. His form is weak, wilting and weighed down by the impossible burden of his expansive memory. But his voice is clear. Certain.

But, incorrect. She smiles.

“Because I know in my heart I cannot keep you here, in the lanes and files of your deep memory. Even if it is here you remember me.”

His knees start to fold, and she struggles to hold him up. He pulls her in by her shoulder, and stares her in her eyes. She allows him a moment to watch them shift with light.

He asks, “Would you like to?”



But she has no answer, never has. All she can return is a mess of feelings going in all directions. Instead, she calls him, “Entropy. Because I know you cannot be satisfied, living in mere reprisal of all you have lived and seen.”

He seems to want to say something, but she sets him forward into the horizon, until his form begins to scatter to its next lifetime, and his memories are left behind.

“Meanwhile, I can be satisfied with only the sight of you.”

As always—thus far and into antiquity—she follows.