

THE MONOLOGUE

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Natasha looked over the precipice that guarded the little place of reconnoitering for their little moments of leisure and freedom and she saw all of a sudden the moment of chance leap upon her from besides the thickets. Through the thickets, running along the grass curtain that bedecked this part of the clearing she could feel the dazzle of something that to her untrained mind she considered eternal. It was a sparkle that made her wonder in the broad daylight that seemed, to the people gathered in the nearby belfry of the church, to be dwindling in its glare and energy by the minute.

After the usual round of meeting the parents and children had in this convivial gathering Natasha had stood aloof in the centre of the field measuring the size of her boots worn over woolen mittens of the colour of red. In her aloofness was a mix of purpose, as always, and for which she was considered to be ascendant towards a precocity of intellect more various when compared to the children of her age. Her parents had often confided to others about her random attempts in the mastery of multiplication tables. There was one incident that made them especially proud: her correct rendering of difficult words----words made harder by the Slavonic hard consonants and in particular “Prosze pani” (which means excuse me in Polish) or remembering the spelling of some hard country name like “Czechoslovakia”.

Her inner voice was then one with the unconscionable amount of time she had left herself in the dark, away from the bothersome affairs of her father and the fatuous intrepidity of her mother’s black conscience to which any attempt at an effrontery was a sore mistake. Her mind saw in the dazzle and sparkle a blessed omen. And though she kept quiet she preserved within herself the dogged value of resistance.

The way she moved herself after a few moments, however, gave the passing onlooker the impression that she had a resolve fixed inside of her---the fixity of purpose that is the usual possession of an army general or the grandest of thugs. The whiteness of her demeanor spoke volumes not to the beauty of the child, but to the well-maligned concourse of her own mental state.

The whiteness of her demeanor may have sunk into her soul albeit with a whiff of irritation over something. And while she moved ahead with a mixture of caution and deliberation she was positively unnoticeable. All the elders and guardians had resumed another round of partying----an event that they had been practicing with an airiness that was not affected. The children had all of a sudden disappeared amongst the open spaces.

She progressed with caution. The sparkle that shocked her at first appeared to be playing hide and seek as with the radiance and dimness interplaying with each other to create a mass of confusion. With gradual progress she could make it out to be someone else’s apparel. It was in fact a ring.

Now she felt the attraction even more as she stooped to pick it up the ring though after the precautionary measure of looking around to see if anyone was snooping around the corner. There was none to behold the scene for the benefit of public gossip. It was a golden ring and at just the perfect size to fit in her little ring finger. And then unthinkingly she put it on her left ring finger. The first feeling that she had was that she had suddenly grown older. She had seen girls bigger than her (and not just in age) put on rings of multifarious colours ---- gold, red, violet, silver. But the ones she knew of her age group did not wear any of those. She felt bigger all at once and felt that she now held an important position in the world.

But that thought had scarcely settled in her mind when she felt that she was pulled away several yards through the grassy meadows and hedges. Then she felt afraid and the first thought that came to her mind was the ring. “It must be that,” thought she. She tried to pull it away but all of a sudden she felt drawn into a closely spaced quarter of the open fields. There was a very closely spaced thicket that was closed from the remaining part of the meadows and it was towards this she found herself pulled inexorably till she was closed from the other parts of the field by a group of tall thickets.

She had closed her eyes during this event that in the aftermath of her ensconcement seemed hardly to create any ripples in the surroundings. Now she opened them with a silent dread that did not give way immediately to tears.

There was an elf standing before her in all their customary long-flowing garments and long, golden hair brushed back. His ears were long and pointed and he had a crossbow saddled across his back.

“Do not be afraid,” said the elf.

She surveyed the surroundings and then looked at him. The elf looked friendly and was smiling.

“It was me who put that ring out in the fields to lure you into our world.”

She did not reply at once. She was overawed by his presence. She felt as if a character from a book she had been reading had leapt straight out of the written page and then stood before her in flesh and blood.

“Why do you not talk? It was expressly for that purpose that I brought you here. I had been observing you for over a month and took a fascination to humans since I heard my father speak about them being involved in part of our history. I was very curious but my intent was subdued for a long time for some reason I do not know why. Now I am bigger and have more freedom than before and I often escape away from my father’s monologues and harangues nowadays and can reconnoiter on my own. I frequented this place and took an interest in you because you seemed aloof and lonely. Why do we not become friends? I, too, am friendless and lonely.”

Natasha had recovered from her initial shock and now stood still intently listening to his speech that seemed to come from a distant horizon. His speech was rich and even and slightly bereft of any emotion.

All of a sudden she assumed a very self-important look and said in an officially imperious tone:

“Why do you not tell me something about yourselves? I would like to hear something from you and listen to your even-flowed speech for a longer time. It will be a monologue that I will be listening to. Do you know that I have to listen to a monologue regularly when I stay at home? My father lectures me and my mother everyday. Today was nothing different as I listened to a one-hour speech from my father. Now I am going to listen to your history---the monologue. And then I am going to expect another one today very soon.”

“Another one? And who shall be that one?”

“From the hobbits. You and they are quite inseparable to me. Where are the hobbits? You should have been standing here talking about the hobbits rather than me. Hobbits are greater company to the elves than humans.”

The elfin boy smiled, although pensively, and gave expression to a wry grimace.

“So you want another speech from us---I mean, the hobbits. But for that you have to stay on for a longer time and explore our beautiful world.”

After that the elfin boy began his speech on the great history of the elves as legendary archers, their grand country and the river that separated them from hobbit country.

Natasha was happy. She had to listen to her father's monologue that day for her aloofness and introverted nature. And now she was listening to another one from a friend from another world newly found.

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