

The Ethic, Diablerie

“Give me your hand.”

Lucy exhales smoke through her nose—filling the air with the thick, black, cloying stuff—before holding the cigarette aloft between the two girls, its tip flaring like a brilliant wildfire. She pauses there a moment before plunging the tip down into the girl’s open palm.

Recoiling, the girl yelps in pain, pulling her hand free from Lucy’s manicured grasp.

“Why did you do that, what led you to recoil to pain?” Lucy speaks softly, returning the cigarette to her lip, the now frayed tip illuminating red once more.

Tears linger in her eyes, and she glances everywhere, before her eyes settle back on Lucy. She rubs her hand, soot falling from the fresh burn. “Because it hurts!”

“So,” Lucy speaks in a gentle voice, “because something is unpleasant, or otherwise harmful, you have the right to end it, correct?”

“Yes!” She interjected.

Lucy continued to smile. “So then, what if I enjoyed causing you pain? Does your discomfort give you the right to take action?”

“I...”, the other girl pauses, uncertain, “Where is this going?”

Lucy takes the advantage, the opportunity: “Of course it does! You, my beautiful girl, are the sovereign of your own body, mind, and soul; but yours alone. What happens unto you is your immutable domain, while what happens unto others is theirs. It is your right to live your life to the fullest, to indulge your desires, so long as those impulses encroach only on yourself, and your sovereignty. Extracting your pleasure from another demeans them and strips them of their own domain.”

Fresh tears brim at her eyes, desperation just below the skin. “But... That means I can’t...”

Lucy leaned close, her hand taking the girl’s. “Hardly. Even if others see your own form as wrong, it is still your form, and none have the right to judge it. Whatever pain you cause them due to your truth will be manifest in them. Your own form, you cannot help it: it is what it is, and passing it off otherwise would be a lie. You are your own goddess manifest, and this makes it your prerogative—your responsibility even—to craft yourself a temple of love. Trust me, whatever lies you choose to live—even for the safety of those around you—will cause more pain for them in the end. While it might take time to come out, to manifest from its cocoon, the truth must always spread its wings lest it rot inside its own husk.”

The girl wipes the tears from her eyes, and stares wildly back at Lucy. “What about when the lie is painful though, what about...”

“Shhh,” Lucy quiets, “the truth is always better, but what matters is the moment. When speaking the truth would bring you great harm—when others would beat and abuse you or another for it—hold it in until you may speak it freely. However, when such a lie will cause a wound to fester in the dark, cause mold to grow across it and foul icor drip from its pus filled cavities, the truth—however painful—is always superior. Even if you believe that such a truth will cause suffering, then you should, it is not only worse for you to lie, but worse for those around you, and the pain will get compounded as time passes.”

The girl’s tears had ceased, but her voice, it still trembled. “What of divine judgement though... What about...”

“Oh darling girl,” Lucy squeezed her hand tightly, “When you shine like a radiant beacon so brilliantly, when you unfurl your wings and take flight: how could any god, however wicked, damn

you? If a god does exist, then how could they judge you for your form so long as you act with compassion? If they have given you dominion over your own body, how could they judge you, so long as you are kind. You have been given land, now build a temple. Whether you stand before pearly gates or evaporate into oblivion, how could representing the truth inside you, shining brightest you can, ever be judged and weighed lacking? You are beautiful, so embrace the song within you, sing it. Dance your odes to Dionysus, Loki, Enki, or myself—your humble blackened Seraph—and drink your wine. So long as you hold the truth of who you are within yourself; as long as you honour your own divine majesty: you are beautiful.

And then she was gone, leaving only the smell of moth eaten pages and good scotch; the aether took her, but her words still resonated, filling the air with a static charge.

Slowly—almost entranced—she made her way down the stairs. Her parents were there. Her father flicked through his phone, reading out headlines to her mother—a steaming cup caught between her hands—her father looked up as she came down the stairs, before yelling out: “He’s awake!”

“Mom,dad,” she paused a long moment, before speaking, “I... ehm...” She faltered, unable to speak, the words not coming.” Tears came, staining her cheeks wet, before finally the words burst out. “I’m trans.”