

“When you stop speaking, you stop living. Are we clear you wretched fool?”

Perhaps those vile words will never stop spinning in my head, ringing endlessly to remind me of my entrapment and pure torture. Although I mustn't break the character to which I have been assigned, I've become ridiculously talented at speaking of one subject and thinking of an entirely other. Although this may seem easy, and something as familiar as tying your shoes, it has become the biggest ultimatum of life. I am only permitted a short four-hour rest period whilst Master is asleep. Master falls asleep to my voice when he's ready for bed and wakes up to the same chime each morning at dawn. My presence is required both before his awakening and shortly after his start of slumber. You see, my story wasn't always this pitiful, I was once a beautiful and thriving journalist. Not knowing the true length of time I have been here, I choose to believe it was years ago, a previous life even. Nonetheless, one naive wrong decision led to a consequently certain unfathomable fate.

In this previous life once lived, I had been in my early twenties, a fresh college graduate, and nailed a slot working as an intern at Smith's Publications. Being a world-renowned, top-tier journalism company, I was more than privileged to be a part of the organization. They covered everything from the Mexican drug cartel to a volcanic eruption in Hawaii, to alien sightings in Egypt, to the struggles of minorities on an international scale. Doug Smith, founder, and CEO of Smith's Publications built an empire, that he started while living in an orphanage in a poverty-stricken area of Detroit, MI. I was astonished when I received the call that I had been hand-selected from over 250 applicants to fill Mr. Smith's assistant internship position. I knew I would be covering hundreds of once-in-a-lifetime stories, connecting with dozens of cultures around the world, and assisting in making the world I wanted to raise children in, a better place.

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My internship year was stellar, Mr. Smith himself said I showed such proficient knowledge that he wanted to hire me onto his staff as a first-hand researcher. From there, I was the author of 372 successful articles published by Smith's Publications, with my most popular article selling 8.2 million copies, both physical and electronic collectively, worldwide. Additionally, I had achieved such levels of success in the short time of roughly 20 months, that was before I took on the case of a nearly invisible group of individuals. At the time the story seemed more of a conspiracy theory than a non-fictional article, a group of people who worship a god unknown to any other religion. Furthermore, these people use the knowledge, skills, and lives of regular civilians to make themselves merely immortal. These people quite literally were able to live never-ending lives by forcing others to tell them every single thing in their brains. Every memory, every piece of knowledge ever learned, every word ever spoken, everything the human brain could comprehend, they forced their victims to tell them. There was absolutely no scientific explanation that could support a thesis of a group of people that could accomplish immortality simply by learning all the knowledge in the world possible. Was there? Everything in my heart and soul believed this was a fictional conspiracy theory, made up by theorists to explain some other unexplained mystery, until I met them that is: the Odahists.

Upon my initial research into the Odahists, something rather nerve-wracking caught my attention extraordinarily quickly. "Odahists have been accused of being responsible for the disappearance of roughly 300 missing person cases within the past decade." I felt an eerie chill creep from the back of my neck down to just above my tailbone. This entirely changed my perspective of the nature of this story, this was a cult that was sacrificing people for rituals of some kind. This was one of the few conspiracy theories that could almost always be proved right. Nausea slowly crept into my perception as I continued reading of a missing woman, found

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brutally slaughtered, and a ritual setting found nearby. “Upon the medical examiners’ final examinations, the subject was female, late forties, unhealthily thin. The body had several long-standing injuries that were never properly healed and happened months, some years, before death. All ten toes, as well as all ten fingers, were broken at least 8 months before the time of death. The right radius had been broken approximately 16 months before the time of death, so severe that the bone penetrated through the skin. Horrifically, there was evidence the bone was forced back into place, with a makeshift brace, and a do-it-yourself stitching job to cover the 6-inch wound on the victim’s forearm. The skull had a slight compression just below the cerebellum lobe, the result of a blow from a blunt object, estimated to be approximately 3 days before the time of death. This blow is believed to have caused severe neurological deficits, in which the victim was no longer a viable subject and merely a waste to the demonic cult. Subsequently, there was a death ceremony planned and performed for the subject. The injuries obtained during and within the hour leading up to death include 7 symmetric slashes on each thigh, 8 symmetrical slashes on the face, 10 horizontal slashes along the back, and total mastectomy. The final cause of death has been concluded as 9, six-inch blades stabbed into the skull, all of which were still within the skull when the body was found. The body was entirely nude, with no fingernails or toenails, no hair, and the mysterious black number ‘257’ tattooed just above the collarbone. The ritual site was found only 5 miles from where the body had been dumped, forensics were able to conclude that 2.3 liters of blood found at the scene was that of the victims, however, no other DNA traces were found. The setting consisted of 6 extremely large stones, comparatively to Stonehenge on the Salisbury Plain, enclosed in a small circular fashion. Each stone had a painting of an Amaranth, the flower of immortality, as well as a depiction of the only known resemblance to Odah.”

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I was obviously terrified, and I definitely knew I was way over my head, but against all odds, I took on the case. What was the worst thing that could happen, right?

Once I had decided to research the Odahists, I had to decide my plan of attack which I would use as a guide to writing an article on this group. I needed to change the perception of these people from a conspiracy theory to a real and known fear of many. The Odahists are far more treacherous than any boogieman figure in the bedtime stories your parents told you at bedtime to get you to behave. Nonetheless, all my research had been concluding the same results; a terrifying people with the capability and inhumanity to perform monstrous evil, but no viable facts supporting the thesis. I needed first-hand data that I could collect myself. I needed a confrontation with an Odahist themselves. “Was it even possible to talk to an Odahist?” “Would they be open for an interview?” “Am I even going to find anything?” The self-doubting questions had flooded my mind like a broken dam.

I could almost feel myself, transported to another time, remembering a past life as if I were living it here now. I can feel the unforgettable mix of fear and determination yet again, having my mind clinched to find answers, even if I wasn’t supposed to go lingering around in search of them. I was so motivated in fact, that I made a life-altering decision which leads me to explain why I mustn’t ever stop telling Master everything I have seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and felt, all knowledge I have ever acquired, all of my memories, and so on.

Just a few days after my initial research I made my decision, one which I will regret for eternity. The only logical solution to finding accurate information on the Odahists would be to visit the exact area in which the female body had been found, as well as the ritual site. From that

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point, using a map of the land, I was to pinpoint landmarks and suspicious objects in the area, in hopes of finding the congregating place of the Odahists. I probably studied and analyzed every article ever published concerning the Odahists on my trip to the site which I once thought would bring success and happiness. The destination was a secluded wooded area in the Black Hills of South Dakota. It had been a 3 ½ hour hike from the nearest road when I finally reached it. The headstone of a very particular Jane Doe rested under a vast oak tree. I remember seeing the stone, yes I do. Almost as if I could picture it now, in front of my very eyes. Remembering again the very first I knew of Odahists, the horrific fate this poor Jane Doe had faced.

After recuperating from the traumatic thoughts arising from the headstone I continued, my journey hadn't been complete in the slightest there. I still had another 2 hours until I had hiked the 5 miles from the location of the headstone to the location of the ritual placing. Ironically enough, it was one of the easiest hikes I had ever been on in that past life. Although, nothing I had ever experienced in that life would have prepared me for what was awaiting me at that ritual site.

I hadn't noticed anything peculiar until I was standing right in the center, admiring its horrific awe. A figure covered in an all-black robe and standing shallowly off to the far right of the limestone plateau in which the site lies. How hadn't I seen anything? Immediately, three enormous torches, mounted to the three massive vertical stone slabs erupted in flames. A handful more spine-chilling figures covered in black robes emerged from the gloomy darkness surrounding the site.

I don't remember much of that life after this point. I remember someone calling me precious, a sharp pinch in my spine, and complete darkness. I do believe I awoke a few times during whatever it was they did to me. Once I awoke inside an ice box with wire fastened

through the skin of my chest, then within a moment, blackness again. Another time I awoke in a small conference-like room with a projector on the board. I was strapped into a metal chair with an extremely tight unknown object on my cranium. I looked up and saw pictures of my parents, siblings, friends, coworkers, and people from my life. Nonetheless, within a fleeting moment, there was blackness yet again.

When I awoke in my new life, I was placed in a fluffy queen-sized bed in the dead center of a large concrete prison cell. I was dressed in a long modest beige dress, with black loafers, and a black trenchcoat to accompany to ensemble lying neatly folded on the corner of the bed. Without the ability to understand or comprehend, he opened the door to my cell and gracefully made his way to the bed.

“My dearest child, you are simply so precious. Here your name is Precious, anyone who is dressed like you is named Precious, my Precious. I’m going to keep this short and sweet because I’m not the one who should be talking, you are. To keep me alive, I need to know every single little thing that goes on in that precious little brain of yours my Precious. Therefore, you are my informative slave until I dispose of you.” I’ll never know if my blank reaction, emotion, or thought were merely due to pure shock, or something that had been done to me during the experimentation duration of my stay. Nonetheless, Master knew how to get the point across enough that I would do exactly what he asked, and never ask why. With a brief snicker and a devilish grin, he pronounced, “When you stop speaking, you stop living. Are we clear you wretched fool?”

At that moment it was gut-wrenchingly clear, I had encountered the Odahists. Furthermore, I was now one of their puppets, one of their victims, one of their Precious.

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# Chronicles of AP

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