

MORTALITY DEVOID OF MORALITY
THE WILLPOWER TO
BREAK AWAY

*“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving, he who teaches, in his teachings, he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”
(Romans 12: 6-8)*

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Steve couldn't recall when the man he affectionately referred to as the Storyteller wasn't a cornerstone of his existence. Each night, as the heavy doors of his quarters creaked shut, sealing off the outside world, an intense stillness enveloped him. From the depths of that silence, the Storyteller emerged—an enigmatic figure, embodying the mysteries of creation and the undeniable call to faith. They would sink into their nightly ritual, the air swirling with ancient tales drawn from Scripture and rich traditions— stories that breathed life into his very being, crafting a vivid portrait of a Creator who held His children close with unwavering love.

“Listen closely, Steve,” the Storyteller cautioned, his voice deep and resonant like thunder brewing in the distance. “What I reveal to you comes with risks. Remain vigilant; not everyone is prepared to embrace these sacred truths.” The weight of his warning settled over Steve like a heavy cloak, embedding itself deep within his heart. A chilling memory flickered to life—a child as young as he was at the

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time, silenced forever by a cold, unfeeling machine, merely for talking to himself after a trivial mishap. That memory gnawed at him: innocence shattered in an instant, a stark reminder of a world indifferent to the sanctity of life. At just eight years old, Steve faced a daunting revelation: what had once seemed a simple act—speaking to himself—had transformed into a potential death sentence in a society gripped by fear, wary of anything that resembled prayer.

Every tale spun by the Storyteller pierced through the lies, illuminating painful truths about the world. But tomorrow loomed large, marking his transition into adulthood—a plunge into a world where faith was illegal and hope flickered like a candle in a hurricane. That night, as their moments together slipped away into the stark reality of change, the Storyteller's voice broke the silence one final time, a solemn melody striking a chord deep within Steve's soul.

"Are you ready for the trials that await you, Steve?"

"No," he admitted, his voice trembling like a leaf caught in a gust. "But I'll feign excitement. If I don't, they'll sense my fear and realize just how much I understand."

The Storyteller's eyes darkened, infused with sadness and urgency, deepening the lines of concern on his wise face. "Soon, you will seek refuge in the wilderness, but for now, you must navigate this unforgiving city. Seek out a companion amidst the harshness. Even when the night feels everlasting, remember—you are never alone. Hold fast to your faith; the Lord walks beside you, His light capable of piercing through all things."

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A storm of emotions washed over Steve, tears glistening in his eyes as the weight of reality settled into his chest like lead: this was it—their final meeting. “Are you really not coming back?” he asked, the words heavy with a bitter taste of fear, each syllable tinged with desperation.

“Not until the time is right,” the Storyteller replied, his voice soothing but filled with mystery as his form melted slowly into the encroaching evil. “Let my teachings be your guiding light, a beacon within your heart. Stay strong; allow your faith to ground you in the course of the storm.”

With those parting words resonating in his mind, the Storyteller vanished into the night, leaving Steve swirling in a tempest of uncertainty and dread. Sleep eluded him, obscurities draping over him like a shroud, with anticipations whispering fears in the stillness.

When dawn finally emerged, shattering the night like glass crashing to the floor, Steve found himself thrust into the city’s brutal embrace—a place starkly unfamiliar and unsettling.

He moved through streets rife with misery, where bodies sprawled like discarded dreams—some clinging tenuously to life, eyes glazed with agony, others lifeless, victims of a merciless society. The people around him shambled like specters, robbed of humanity as they overlooked the suffering around them, turning a blind eye to the broken souls that lined their path. Each face seemed like a ghost, merely surviving against a grim backdrop of anguish. In opposition within him flickered a fragile spark of

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hope— an ember ignited by the faith the Storyteller had graciously instilled in him. He believed that love and redemption could still bloom even in the darkest corners of existence.

As Meech pressed forward, the fear attempting to engulf him like an ill-omened hallucination, unable to believe what he observed was indisputable. But against the dreary gray cloud resting gloomily on his morality, he glimpsed a vibrant neighborhood pulsating with defiance— a vivid symbol of a superior existence that stood in stark contrast to the dejection engulfing those around him. He could see just past the entrance; the streets were alive with breathtaking murals and resilient symbols, each splash of color resonating like a heartbeat, a powerful reminder that hope could flicker and thrive even during the darkest times. Fueled by a renewed sense of determination, he moved onward, only to be met by an imposing figure: a colossal gatekeeper whose profile cloaked him, a menacing presence in the brisk air.

“State your business!” the gatekeeper roared, his voice booming like thunder, echoing off the brick walls of the narrow alleyways. He blocked Meech's path with a massive arm, demanding an exorbitant fee that was far beyond anything Meech could hope to pay. Panic surged through him as he was unceremoniously shoved to the ground, his heart pounding wildly in his chest, each frantic beat amplifying his fear. On the ground before the gargantuan figure, Meech felt dwarfed, as if he were just a fragile ant beneath a boot. The gatekeeper's scowl carved deep lines into his otherwise smooth, glistening visage, a harsh reminder of the daunting world that lay beyond the gate. Once lost among the

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other boys, Meech now felt painfully smaller, his presence reduced to a mere skeleton under the weight of the giant's looming presence.

With a grand flourish, the gatekeeper drew his sword, the blade glinting ominously in the dim light, a silent threat that hung in the air like a guillotine waiting to fall. Just as the tension thickened, saturated with the promise of violence, a flicker of light pierced through the emptiness. A young woman emerged from the vibrant alley, exuding fierce compassion that seemed almost otherworldly, like an angel sent to intervene. Her tall, graceful form moved with the poise of a ballerina, positioning herself effortlessly between Meech and the looming danger, embodying calm confidence.

“Wait! Please don’t hurt him!” she shouted, her voice unwavering and determined. Her violet hair waved in the wind, slicing through the heavy tension like a beacon in a storm. “He’s new to the city and here to see me. I’ll cover his fee,” she implored, her words cutting through the suffocating atmosphere like a flickering candle in a forgotten church. In that crucial moment, her presence reminded Meech that mercy and compassion could still bloom in a world rife with cruelty.

In that electric moment, Steve felt a surge of faith ignite within him. Perhaps, even in this city consumed by futility, divine connections awaited, ready to lead him toward a destiny long whispered within his heart. With hope swelling in his chest and a spirit prepared to rise above the looming storm, Steve stood tall, resolved to face the unknown. He believed that even