

In the Red

written by

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EXT. COBBLESTONE PATH BENCH - MORNING

Zach and Yan sit on a bench in front of a booth. Yelling and pleading echoes in the background, drowned out.

YAN

But I don't understand Zach. Just a couple weeks ago I-I remember telling you about taking the throne after I retire. Wh-what happened since then? You seemed... fine just then.

Yan's eyes shimmer purely and his eyebrows are tilted upwards in the middle in confusion.

Zach pulls his phone out of his pocket.

ZACH

Um... I wanted to show you this before we start talking more. It's... um... just watch please?

The video plays. Zach stands in the middle of an old, dark room. The room is foggy and red mist disperses from the walls edges. Picture on the screen: Zach presses a button on his phone at the back of the room and runs back to the center. A strong beat plays.

His body reflects the sharps and smooths of the music. He is launched into a series of motion. Spinning, jumping, isolations. The clear, defined beats of every motion. The movement halts to a stop as the music does.

Zach looks up to his dad next to him. He scrolls to another video.

Playing is a classical ballet variation from Swan Lake. It is filled with high jumps and fast turning. The music is rhythmic and hard to keep up with. He pulls it off. The classical music ends.

Zach looks to his dad once again.

YAN

Woah. You're quite the passionate dancer.

Zach nods quickly.

YAN (CONT'D)

But uhh... what does this have to do with your sudden...

(MORE)

YAN (CONT'D)
feelings against the throne and
position? I don't understand.

ZACH
Well, I love dancing. That's all it
is.

YAN
Can't you dance in my old office
just fine? I didn't see any problem
with the flooring or anything.

Zach purses his lips together and looks down at his feet.

YAN (CONT'D)
Talk to me, I'm sorry I just don't
understand what your'e trying to
tell me. It-it doesn't make sense.

ZACH
I-I-I can't dance here. Well, I
mean I can't dance all the way down
here as much as I want to.

Yan pauses as Zach finishes.

YAN
(still visibly confused)
Okay um... how about we try for
just a day? Like a little shadow
day? You haven't seen what the day
is like, maybe you'll like it.

Zach tries to smile in agreement with his dad. He just nods
instead after noticing he can't smile.

YAN (CONT'D)
Sounds good? Well at least
mediocre?

ZACH
Of course I'll.. give it a try I
guess.

Zach and Yan get up from the cold steel bench. They walk down
the cobblestone path towards their a house.

INT. HOME - AFTERNOON

Zach walks through the door waving to his dad who continues
down the cobblestone path to the louder yelling and
screaming. He walks through the living room, kitchen, and
hallway before entering his room.

INT. ZACH'S BEDROOM

Plop. He lies down on the bed and exhales. Leaned onto the side of the bed is a backpack. He grabs it and starting taking things out. A pair of ballet shoes shoved into the side pocket goes back into its appropriate drawer. He unpacks the reusable HydroFlask water bottle and sets it on his table. He dumps the pile of granola bars out from the bottom of the backpack. Last, he takes a Royal Ballet pamphlet out of the other side pocket.

He sits up and takes the laptop out of the bag. He turns on some calmer, mellow tones and looks out the window of his bedroom, still lying on the bed. Reddish golden light bleeds through the cool gray curtains drawn in front of the huge window. He falls asleep as the red light turns dark.

INT. ZACH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Yan bursts into the room with a smile on his face. He shakes the dark gray comforter Zach rests under.

YAN

Rise and shine bud! Today's the day
for the new things! New futures!
Aren't you excited?

Zach rubs his eyes and slowly nods to his dad's excitement.

ZACH

(wrinkles his eyebrows)
Shhhh! You're kinda loud dad. One
notch down please in volume.

Yan pauses.

YAN

I'll meet you in the kitchen in
ten. See ya then Zach!

Continuous rubbing. Still only half conscious. He eventually rolls out of bed and grabs a shirt and pants from his closet of almost 95% black. He closes the closet door quietly and slowly. Almost everything he does is in slow motion. He tucks his white button down shirt into his khaki pants.

INT. ZACH'S BATHROOM

He sludges into the bathroom. Grabbing a tube of gel, he slicks his hair back and straightens his back up.

INT. KITCHEN

Zach enters the kitchen on his toes. Contrary to Yan who wears leather boots, Zach wears only fuzzy socks and gently tiptoes. Yan is flipping skull pancakes enthusiastically with his red and white striped apron. They sit down together at the table with a collection of almost empty, but not quite sugary crusted maple syrup bottles. Plates and plates of skull pancakes fill the table for the two.

Zach tucks a napkin into his shirt. He uses a fork in his left and hand a butter knife in his right. Yan utilizes the caveman technique of his bare hands and nothing else.

Zach finishes and dabs at his mouth. Yan finishes. They head out the front door.

EXT. HELL SCAPE IN THE UNDERWORLD - LATE MORNING

Screaming. A blood red haze covers everything. Another 360 view of the hell scape in which his house stands in the middle of. Demons are whipping. Ghouls are either complaining or pleading for mercy.

A makeshift wall of cubbies used to organize and store weapons separates each torture room from each other. In the midst of all this chaos, a light red cobblestone path that interferes with every torture room connects Zach's house to the unknown. Nobody knows where it leads to.

Yan guides Zach to a platform overlooking the booths.

YAN

Well, I guess we'll start with delegation. Like this: Booth #1-32 is on the people that use light mode on their phones today! A little less beating with these guys remember they're fragile!

A group of booths start to move and follow orders.

Yan looks down to his side at Zach.

YAN (CONT'D)

So you divide out the ghouls by category, they're on this clipboard right here, and then how harsh the demons need to be.

Zach grabs the clipboard from his dad's hands. He looks towards the stairs they climbed to reach the platform they stand on. To Yan's surprise, he descends.

ZACH
So where's Booth #33?

Yan, confused, points. They walk down the stairs and towards Booth #33.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Okay here we are. You are ...
what's your name?

The demon looks around the room and at Yan. Yan nods.

DEMON #32
My name's Clay. I think.

ZACH
Hi Clay. You are assigned to the
minor criminals today. The robbers
and thieves in specific. A lil slap
or two should do the trick. Just
send em' down to the next floor
when you're done. Thanks Clay!

Zach zips around the other hundred booths individually and delegates. He hurries back to dad from Booth #133.

ZACH (CONT'D)
Okay dad! What now?

Yan blinks.

YAN
Future note: maybe pick up the pace
next time?

ZACH
Sure thing dad.

YAN
We are going to take a look around
the other half of the booths now. I
believe it's #134 to the end. Just
make sure everything is in order.

Zach and Yan walk across the cobblestone path. They stop in front of the booth and observe. Yan looks to his son observing. He raises an eyebrow in disapproval.

YAN (CONT'D)
Hey son. I'd suggest working on
your aura. That nice, happy kind
face ain't gonna cut it down here.

Zach looks around. He furrows his eyebrows.

ZACH
I'll be right back.

He waves and walks away towards another booth.

DEMON
Oh hey Zach. Why the sad face? Hold
on gimme a moment I'm almost done
with this one. We can go eat a
sandwich at Joe's or somethin'.
Also, if this about your whole
identity crises or career goals
I'll tell ya this right now: Do
something you love. Don't be like
me. Stuck doing something I hate.
Go on Zach. I'll talk more in a
sec.

The demon slayer whips the ghoul a couple more times.
Shrieking. Pleading. Begging. Hysterical yelling.

ZACH
Gimme the whip. Ya gotta go harder.
Whiplash. These ghouls are no joke.
A couple smacks ain't gonna cut it
down here.

The demon looks confused. He hesitantly grabs the whip and
applies the corrections.

YAN
Hey. You're doing great. You see
now why I keep telling you to
pursue this? It's great right?

Zach, seeing how proud his dad is, goes even harder. BUT THEN
--

We see Zach's POV: the whip in SLOW MOTION. The whip itself
is separated into graceful sections. The force travels
through the tough leather, articulating every section
smoothly. Zach hears the constant echo of the Swan Lake
music.

The music overpowers the treacherous screaming until only
classical music is heard. It seems to be radiating from all
the corners and edges of the Underworld. The music gets
louder and louder until the screaming is eventually drowned
out. Whip after whip, he hears it less and less. Violins.
Piano. Tchaikovsky.

Zach looks around everywhere. His head darts from ghoul, to
demon slayer, to his dad. Nobody is reacting. It's just Zach.

His eyelids flutter and he starts running from the booth down the cobblestone path.

YAN (CONT'D)

Zach where are you going?!

The music increases. It is the ear splitting type of loud.

Zach keeps running and running until he suddenly sits down on the bench with his hands on his knees looking at the stones. He closes his eyes.

A couple moments pass. He inhales.

ZACH

I can't do this. I can't just pretend like I enjoy this. I-I-I can't dad. I tried. I really did try. I can't do this.

Yan's eyes shimmer and almost seem to turn red. Flames start to pop left and right from his hands. He clenches his teeth and fists. The flames die down.

YAN

I thought-I thought you were enjoying it though! You were delegating and watching and doing a great job! I though you were changing for the better!

Zach still looks down through his knees at the stone. A pause from Yan.

YAN (CONT'D)

You can't leave. You-you-you just can't leave Zach. That's not what's supposed to happen. You can't leave.

Yan isn't yelling anymore. He looks to Zach. His eyes flutter in desperation.

The music has lowered in volume for Zach. He sits there with Yan for a few more moments.

ZACH

I just... I just don't know anymore.

He gets up and walks down the cobblestone path home. Yan doesn't follow him.

INT. ZACH'S BEDROOM

Zach lies on his bed in the house. The quiet piano and violins play softly in the background. He looks out the windows. A few moments pass. Emptiness.

He grabs his laptop and a pair of socks and runs towards the dance room.

INT. DANCE ROOM

Setting the laptop down, he chooses a song and plays it. The music echoes through the room. It is slow and silky. He starts dancing to it. A mixture of contemporary and ballet. Swept in the movements and time. He dances and dances. The song finally ends. He huffs and starts running down the hallway despite being out of breath.

INT. ZACH'S BEDROOM

Zach grabs the pile of granola bars and shoves them into his backpack. The laptop goes into its protective sleeve. He grabs the HydroFlask bottle and slides it into the side pocket. Ballet shoes go into the other pocket. He stands up from the floor and walks toward the desk. The Royal Ballet pamphlet calmly lays on the wood desk. He grabs it and puts it into the bag.