

The Travance Chronicle

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ONE HAND CLAPPING: THE TERRIBLE PRICE

BY IMRAHIL

There have been a number of events over the past few months that have crystallized during my meditations into a finer understanding of a parable I was told as a youth. I could not be sure that it would affect others in the same way, but if you would spare the time, I believe the parallels will become apparent. I offer a condensed telling of a tale as written by the lauded Lu Xun.

Mrs. Xianglin is a destitute, but hardworking, peasant woman making her meager ends meet, held to the standards of the ethics that govern her time and place. After her husband's young death and hearing that her merciless mother-in-law plans to sell her into slavery, she flees her home. Eventually she is hired as a servant in the house of Mr. Lu the fourth, in Luzhen town. It is there she is subjected to mistreatment, disdain, and discrimination. Her temporary salvation is rung when she is kidnapped and before long, sold into marriage with He Laoliu, an honest laborer. Here Mrs. Xianglin begins to accept her fate and even begins to love He, and mother a son, A' mao, with He. Not long thereafter she begins to suffer. Her community shuns her for her taboo second marriage, He is hounded to death by a slumlord, and A' mao is devoured by a wolf. In the face of these horrors, Mrs. Xianglin is driven mad.

At her neighbors exhortation, Mrs. Xianglin attempts to atone for her sin of being twice-married and gives the majority of her hard earned tael at the local temple's threshold, but yet remains tethered to her community's discrimination. When she becomes too frail to earn taels, she continues her atonement in the form of chopping and stacking firewood for the temple, but her persecution continues. Mrs. Xianglin soon becomes a simple beggar, subsisting on the meager taels apportioned by visitors to Luzhen town, as citizens that

know her cast her off as a mad beggar. Finally, she is killed in an explosion of fireworks celebrating the New Year commissioned by the governor.

It is this one's humble opinion that this tale stands testament to the brutal oppression of unquestioned yet questionable ethics, and baseless taboo. In light of the events of previous months I have drawn but one conclusion: those that fail to stand against prevailing dishonor, pass their portion of sacrifice to those least able to afford it.

THE LINE

BY DARK CANDLE

The line of ourselves and the line of each other,
The line of divide that always made us better.
The uncrossed line that separated us from evil,
But now the feared upheaval of our morals is very real.
The uncrossed line is gone: what we used to be is shattered.

Only time will tell if we were wrong, only time will tell if it all mattered.

But as we strive for a better tomorrow,
Let our past be looked on with sorrow.

NEW BEGINNINGS

BY HG.

It is hard to write about new beginnings while the memory of such bitter loss prevails. For those who are unaware of what I write about and the events of last month, I write of the sacrifice of a baby, of men and women of humble stock and common birth, all of whom had their still-beating hearts carved from their heaving chests and plucked from the bird's nest of their shattered ribs so that a weapon could be forged.

Though it is hard to acknowledge, a new beginning has come, ushered in amongst the cries of agony, the

sacrifice, and the tide of blood the Nobility chose to unleash. We, the commoner, were the midwife of this new beginning, its father and mother alike, and together we labored under tremendous strain to give birth to a single, powerful truth: that the nobles, whom we blindly entrusted for so long to govern us, are fallible.

It is a truth that beggars the mind for it means that our faith in the system of nobility was misguided. It means that we were wrong to believe that they had the best intentions of the common man and woman at heart. It means that we can no longer sit idly by in our shops and on our farms, trusting unto others to decide our fate. Rather we must rise up and together, each man, woman and child an equal amongst peers, each with an equal say, and take our place amongst the ruling bodies of government. We must do away with the old and establish a new that represents the will and the spirit of the common man and woman.

The truth is we were innocent. The truth is, we were babes. The truth is both were murdered to forge a weapon that the Count has christened Bloodtide: I can think of no more apt a reminder of the price that we, the people, paid in its forging, and the price we will pay again if we do not join together and rise up to take our place as a governing body of equals. We can no longer afford to be the babe sacrificed in the creation of a weapon for the nobility. We can no longer trust innocently that the nobility will rule with our best intentions at heart.

There is work to do and We, the People, the Common Man and Woman, are the only ones capable of doing it.

It is a time of a great and powerful new beginning and that new beginning's name is Revolution.

TO CHERISH

BY A LONE LIGHT IN THE DARK

You want stories of sacrifice?

I came to this town two years ago. In that time I have lost my life's work. In that time I have lost a pure and true love to her own madness. In that time I have lost my wife. In that time I have lost my son. In the fires of the incursion I have lost a child who was never

given the opportunity to live.

In that time I have lost everything that I was, and everything I thought I would be.

This land, this town, seemingly offers up its hands in feigned charity, but there are those who know that beneath it is a cruel ruse. It offers up everything you do not have, but claims everything you are.

Have I grown stronger? Yes.

Have I learned from my mistakes? Yes.

Have my sacrifices benefited me? No would be as much a lie as Yes. They have robbed me of a family, a life beyond pain and the endless vigil. In exchange they have granted me a purpose.

Because of my actions, somewhere in Arawyn, a father puts his son to sleep knowing his family is safe. A babe is born into a world where it stands a chance, some small beautiful chance, that it will not have to bear witness to the horror I have drenched my hands in.

It is why I'll never leave. This monstrous, gluttonous town is all I have left. As much as it has grown to hate and spit upon me with every breath, this town gives me purpose. If I do not uphold my vigil, I fear no other soul will.

If somehow this mad ramble is published, I urge any who read it, if you have family, if you have something you care about: hold onto it. Please. Cherish it while it is within your reach.

WHAT SHOULDN'T BE SACRIFICED

BY BAT COOPER

I'm sure that you will hear about things that we have or should be willing to give up. Gold, comfort, even our lives. In the right circumstances all of these things are things we should sacrifice. However, there are some things that we must never give up.

We must never give up our basic goodness. We must never give up our mercy and our honor. We must never give up our love of creation over our love of destruction.

In short, we must never give up what makes us good, what makes us different from the horrors we face. Otherwise the only difference between us and them is our names are slightly easier to spell.

THE ONE YOU FEED

BY NALICK UNDERHILL

Hearts of men swollen with pride
Hearts of men stolen with the same
Morals withering up inside
Make actions difficult to tame
Consider the two wolves in the tale
Goodness and love against death and greed
Only one will win and the other will fail
And it will be the one that you feed

BURDENS HALVED

BY LORELAI

We all have our stories of sacrifice. We all have our burdens to bear. Not a single one of us has gone unscathed in our time – whether in Travance, or outside of it, and no one of us should say that they have it worse than their neighbor.

Part of sacrifice is responsibility. The more that you witness, and embroil yourself within, the more likely you are to be affected by the consequences. This is not meant to frighten or delay action – if you can act, in good faith, and do what you think best, you should. It is simply a statement of truths. Every sacrifice began with involvement, intentional or not. Take charge of what happens to you, so that when losses occur in your life, whether your own or of those around you, you can honestly say you did what you could to avoid them.

There is a saying once told to me by Kwildar. I do not know where it began or whether this was more wisdom of a dear friend, but it resonates with me each day. "A joy shared is doubled, a sorrow shared is halved." Why else do we go to our friends but to feel less of the burden upon us of our choices, our actions, or our lives? Why else but to celebrate the victories and little happy circumstances?

So, too, should sacrifice be shared, and recalled. If you witness a person giving something of themselves, that which will never be renewed or returned, it is best to honor that. It does not need to be large, or involved, or loud. It need not even be public. When you return from that humbling sight, you will be better off sharing the experience, and passing on the legacy of that sacrifice.

We have all been through so much – together, separately, this is inconsequential. The fact is that we share these common bonds, these threads of understanding. We must remain tied, not by our words or

deeds, but by our shared experience. The strength in us, as a people, as a town, as an ideal, is in our ability to live beyond the moment, and learn and grow.

No sacrifice should be forgotten, nor should it be an inevitability. Every situation has an answer, but not every answer is to give in or give up. Don't throw yourself away needlessly, nor let your friends or loved ones do so. Learn from these events, so that you can see other opportunities when they exist. Avoid giving more conversations about sacrifices amongst us, while respecting those that have happened.

This isn't an order, nor do I claim to know better than others. I simply fear that we must remind ourselves of these things before it is too late. Please remember – all things shared are eased.

LORE OF THE NORTHMEN: SACRIFICE

BY GRIMKJELL EIRSON

In the North, there are many kinds of sacrifice. The sacrifice of blood to the gods, be it in battle or in ritual. The sacrifice of self-denial, of saving the last mouthfuls of food for your starving kin in a heavy winter. The sacrifice of a man standing off raiders so his family can flee. It is as much a part of the Northman's wyrd as to be born. To live in the cold wastes is to know sacrifice, or to be sacrificed. The exemplars of sacrifice known to Travance are the men who have given up their birthrights for the good of all. Those who have been here for the past few moons will know who I am writing of, but I will not tell their stories at length here, for you can always ask them yourselves. I will say this, they are Southrons, and I have great respect for them.

Sacrifice is by necessity a painful thing. A man may be asked to give up the love of his family in the line of duty, a man may have to choose to ignore vengeance in the service of the law, and the price is always high. In Travance, lives are given regularly to accomplish things that could not be accomplished elsewhere. Not all of the hearts used to reforge Bloodtide, maleficarum though it be, were taken in violence. At least two people gave their hearts willingly, including my dear friend Keavy. Others died to learn the truth about the nature of the sacrifices, and others have died in the past to convince Arawyn of the sincerity of their beliefs in defense of nature.

Sacrifice and duty are the two sides of the coin of honor. Sacrifice is the price to be paid, and duty what tells us what the sacrifice shall be. Our reward is honor, and while that may be little reward to some, and a bit-

ter comfort, it is enough for many of the North, as it is for the Hillmen, and even some Southron.

The question that one should keep in mind is this: At what point does what you are sacrificing become a betrayal? What morals and ideals will you sacrifice for pragmatism, to get what you want? Not everything is easily regained after it is spent, particularly when doing things which stain your soul. A man who becomes unrecognizable to himself in the name of survival and victory may well have gone too far.

There is a truth about Sacrifice that should not be forgotten. It is a price paid most often by an individual for the good of all. It may seem painful, but it is a choice with a positive outcome, in the end. Only a person who still has hope for the world can make a sacrifice. Despair leads only to selfish acts, or to throw away what little you have in an act of self-immolation without purpose.

Ask yourself this, Travance: What price are you willing to pay, as the nights grow cold, and the Ice Lord beneath our feet stirs?

A moment of silence for those who were lost in the forging of Bloodtide, either in body or spirit.