

Run For Your Fate

The sun would soon set but the chase had just begun. Mud and loose bones kicked up behind him as he ran toward the river—faster than he had ever run in his life. The hound was after him, he knew, could feel the vibration of its paws thundering on the earth. But still, he ran because perhaps this time, he would make it out alive.

The river stretched long before him, deep and darkest black in the burgeoning twilight. He jumped into the boat before he had even seen it, knowing instinctively that the old canoe would be waiting at the banks. The man screamed at the master to move, to paddle, but the hooded figure only stared blankly at ~~yuy~~him. A growl shattered his concentration, and the man turned to see the hound behind him. He couldn't, wouldn't let himself be taken back to that hell.

Please.

He begged, sank to his knees before the boat master, but the figure was not swayed. Another bark and the man realized that he had no choice but to jump. His body fell into the river as though it was weighed down by stone. The man began to drift down, slowly pulled into the depths of the water by whatever horrible creatures lurked beneath its surface. He kicked and sputtered and forced his way into the current in a futile attempt to cover more distance. Something curled around his leg, both soft and hard at once, and he fought the tears that threatened to stream down his face.

From behind him, the boat master watched with unblinking eyes. A bell of laughter chimed in his ears and the man could feel Him closing in. But still, he swam, ignoring the water's terrible chill and the waves that danced on the surface and burned his line of sight. It was too much, too far, too impossible. The water kept pulling him, and the man wondered if he should just let go. Maybe it would be a kinder end in the water, a quiet finale if nothing else. It might be peaceful, even. Yet his dream was broken when he felt the jaws of the great hound clamp around his ankle. The beast had finally reached him, tearing through the water with unnatural speed and strength to pin his prey.

The man howled as he was dragged back through the waves, towards the bank and the soulless pursuer who awaited him. He caught a glimpse of the boat master observing his struggle through the water gurgling around him. The figure's empty stare was almost worse than the pain that the man was sure to be soon acquainted with. For the boat master knew him, understood him, and yet still chose to feed him to his fate.

The hound had arrived at the banks of the river and coughed up the man who spit and bled and finally let himself dissolve into tears. Footsteps approached him and he raised a hand to shield himself from the coming blow, the torture, the—

I see you have not made much progress since we last spoke.

The man was cowed by His voice. It made the very skin on his bones peel off. *No, my king.*

Perhaps the next time you will escape.

The man threw himself at the foot of the Lord of the Dead and cried.

Although I doubt you'll be so lucky, Sisyphus.

The sun slipped below the horizon, and the world was once again covered by night.