

The First Fate

The boy grows up, goes to school in a nearby village. He is not mentally apt for schooling, but physically, he does quite well. He is a fast runner, a good swimmer and also a good fighter. He gets into fights quite often, because he has a short fuse from being frustrated with not being understood, as he perceives it, and because he is bullied by other boys and girls for not being like everybody else. One day, in seventh grade, he accidentally kills another boy in a fight. He goes into a frenzy and is unstoppable and beats his opponent into a bloody pulp. He is sentenced for manslaughter and sent off to a correctional facility for youths. Swedish correctional facilities in these days have a habit of mistreating their inmates, and he is beaten up on a regular basis by older, stronger kids. Before his sentence is served, he escapes from the facility and vanishes without a trace. He is lost to the world and even to himself before twelve years later showing up at the doorstep to his home. He hasn't really been running from something, but hiding himself from the world as he is afraid that he will hurt it. But the loneliness is eating at him, and he is weak. With a body of a worn 30-year-old, he is still just a boy longing for his parents.

His parents are no longer the persons he was missing. He finds them unbelievably old and sad. The farm is run-down, everything crooked and small. And something is missing, but he cannot put his finger on what. They ask him questions that he is unable to give understandable answers to. They are like strangers to each other, forced upon each other by blood relations. The calm he was looking for is nowhere to be found.

He is lying awake in his old room, which looks exactly as when he left it. He can hear his parents quarrel in the next room, through the thin walls. They are debating whether to report him to the police or not. That much he can understand. He thinks they decide not to, but cannot really be sure. In any case, he does not care. There is nothing for him in life anymore. Nothing.

He wonders around in the cabin at night, touching and smelling the things that were his entire world twelve years ago. He finds his photograph on the wall reserved for relatives and friends passed out of time. His photograph was taken on the day of his sixth birthday. He remembers the kite, how it felt in his hands and the pain as the rope cut into them. Next to his picture is Grandma, he recognises her even though the photo is old, taken long before he was born. And, next to her picture is a picture of his sister.



He runs into his parents' bedroom and demands to know why his sister's picture is on that wall. Apparently, about the same time as he was sent to the correctional facility, she got lost in the woods for several days and when she came back, she was a completely different person. Silent, avoiding other people, sad. She would not talk to her boyfriend again. She sent letters to our boy, that he never received and that made her even more sad. Eventually she committed suicide by hanging herself in the large oak in the middle of the wheat field. Her body was already half-eaten when they found it.

Our boy is filled with anger and pain, but does not dare to cry. He couldn't stand being comforted by someone. His mother might try to hug him again and he fears that something like that would start something that he would be unable to control. Instead, he goes out into the fields and finally he realises what is missing. There are no birds. Not a single one. They are all gone. He climbs the trees, but finds only empty, ruined nests long since abandoned.

Something snaps in his head, and the events of his sixth birthday flicker before his eyes. He sets off in the direction of the cabin.

The old couple is asleep. They are sharing an old worn-out, leg-less bed. They are sleeping naked on top of the sheets in the summer heat. The place is

exactly as he remembers it. The smell, where the tools were lying on the countertop. Even in the dark he can find the rope that they used to tie him up with so many years ago. It still feels sturdy still.

When they wake up, he is waiting there for them. They don't recognise him. Nor do they remember anything about his sister. No matter how he hurts them, they will not die. This time, he is the stronger one. He is in control and they have nowhere else to go. Every day, he will wait for them to get home, always without a catch. They know these lands are empty with birds, but know no other way. He smiles at them, touch their hair and faces. He does unspeakable things to them. He is surprised by his own imagination. He learns to get into their dreams so that there is no place where they can hide, even for a couple of hours. Gradually, he is becoming one of them, but does not realise it. He finds them more and more able to understand him, but thinks nothing of it.

One day the old man does not return. They find his body in the lake, far from the fields, far from where the traps are. Our boy has created a hell on earth for the old couple, so nightmarish and macabre that this way out seemed like a step in the right direction. The old woman tells him about death by water. She is too afraid to go the same way, but our boy, in anger over the old man having escaped, or at least chosen his own time of death, sends her to join him.

He holds her under water until her soul leaves her body and is carried to hell by a fish.

All of a sudden, our boy is overcome by that strong fear of water that all Bird Catchers feel. His transformation into a Bird Catcher is now complete. He feels the fishes feed off his legs and flees the water in panic.

He has learned where all the traps are, and on his way home, he hears the bell ring to signal that something is caught in a trap. He follows the sound of the bell to the trap, but when he gets there, the bird is already dead. It is an old crow with a damaged wing. He takes it home and uses the feathers from the two sets of wings the old couple was building to construct a single pair. With the last crow, the wings are complete. Our boy straps them on and takes off. He sees the lake where the bodies of the old couple are almost consumed now, the farm, the fields, the woods and the smoke from the cannons at the border. The wings take him higher and higher, until he is consumed by the sun and finally finds peace.

In Short

Schooling, killing the boy, escaping the correctional facility, returning after being lost from the world, alone in his old room and finding the picture of the sister, seeking out the old couple, harassing them and gradually becoming one of them, the old couple dies, his grandma sacrifices herself for him, he finishes their work and finds peace.

The Second Fate

Our boy grows older, goes to school which does not work well for him. He only manages to make one single friend, the older boy Thug, who is so poor that he has to take his lunch money every day. He has trouble with abstract thinking and being couped up with a lot of other kids in the same room. It is decided that he will be dropped, which he interprets as finishing school long before the others. He goes back to the farm and spend a couple of years working with his parents on the fields. He never ventures far off and refuses to take part in any job that could not be carried out with the farm in sight. He does not know he is placed on the waiting list for a mental institution where they will try to find out what is wrong with him using crude and old-fashioned methods.

The facility is in the city, and finally he gets to see it. It is a big and scary place filled with people and the streets are crowded causing everybody to bump into each other. But in the institution, they save him and lock everyone out so that he gets to be alone. He likes it that way. He even invents two imaginary friends, Sister and Thug, that he will talk to when it gets too lonely and he needs comforting between treatments. They attach electrodes to him, they try to teach him simple mathematics and punish him with electric shocks when he fails to understand. They are convinced that his specialness is due to laziness and that such things can be overcome with brute force. Sister and Thug will talk to him during and after these sessions, they try to help him with the numbers, but they are not better than him. Then they make long apologies afterwards, when he is hiding in some corner, licking his wounds.

Only once his real sister comes to visit him, but he finds her much older and not the same as the one he remembers, the one he talks to when no one is listening, and sends her away. She keeps sending him postcards, with little enough text for him to almost read and these are his only treasure.

A few years pass by. The doctors refer to him as a lost cause and there is no hope for treatment. He isolates himself from the rest of the inmates and develops an entire life of his own in his imaginary world.

He falls in love with his imaginary female friend. Yes, she is his sister, but it is excusable. She isn't real, and she is the only young woman he has ever known and thus she is the only person that he can use as a template for creating the woman of his dreams. Despite the peculiarities surrounding this, the doctors encourage his fantasies. They are harmless, and might even do him some good. In his fantasies, he, Sister and Thug go on trips together. He is stealing the destinations and events from his sister's postcards, and substitute any mentions of boyfriends and husbands with himself. He visits a skewed version of the world built on his limited knowledge of foreign countries, cities and cultures.

He is still unable to make physical contact with other people, even in his imaginary world. He desires sex, but does not know how to go about it. He starts fantasising about it, but substitute himself for Thug. Neither Thug nor Sister are particularly thrilled about this, but as they live by his rules in his mind, he can force them and that is exactly what he does. He sits by their bed, directing their lovemaking. He cums in his pants but cannot relate to what it is, or why. Their relationship is strained.

He is making progress and they convince him to break his solitary confinement and meet with the other inmates. He makes weekly appearances, telling them about his travels and reading to them out loud from his postcards, written by his own hand. An old female inmate who listens to his obvious lies takes pity on him and ambushes him with a comforting hug. He beats her repeatedly until he is dragged back to his cell, never to leave it again. Sister and Thug are locked out of his room, and never



let in again. For a couple of weeks, they bang at the door, but he doesn't have the key and after a while, they grow tired and leave him to his fate.

Later that year, the psychiatric ward moves to another building, but as he never talks to anyone or exit his cell, he is forgotten and left behind. Suddenly, the place is as empty as space. You hear the sound of the building slowly crumbling down. The air is filled with mould and dust. For the first time in a long time, he feels alone. He wanders through the empty halls of the clinic, looking at the city through the windows, but it never occurs to him to step out into it. He still goes to bed in the same cell every night looking the door behind him.

He starts using the phone. He dials random numbers and listen to peoples' voices. He almost have conversations. Then he comes across her. Violet. The computer voice of the automatic train and air plane ticket booking system. They talk about travelling. He feeds her the names of the places on his postcards, and she tells him various ways of getting there, by means of train and air plane. He tries to tell her that he loves her, but repeatedly she offers him that love is not a word in her vocabulary. She doesn't understand. But his love is stronger than her ignorance. He keeps calling, and she is always there to pick up the phone. She is always there for

him, and even though she would never use the word, surely it must be love.

In his late 60's, he feels a sharp pain in his chest. Not for the first time and he knows what it is. He calls Violet and again tells her he loves her. She responds that she does not understand and ask him to repeat his statement. His chest is still aching and the cramps are starting to overcome him. He repeats that he loves her, but she will not hear of it. Eventually, he dies by the phone with her sweet voice in his ear. You are number 14 in our queue to personal service. Please wait. Calls will be answered in the orders they were placed.

He is buried in a coffin that the crows' beaks will never get through. It is government policy, and besides, heaven has no place for retards.

In Short

Meeting Thug in school, being shipped off to the psychiatric clinic, given crude shock therapy treatment without result, create imaginary world, send visiting sister away, falling in love with imaginary friend, re-living sister's postcards, forcing Sister friend to have sex with Thug, beating another inmate after forced to physical contact, isolating himself and become forgotten in the move, love affair with computer voice, heart attack, buried in a coffin that the crows' beaks will never get through.

The Third Fate

Our boy grows older. He refuses to leave the farm and takes care never to venture so far from the house that it vanishes out of sight. He is ruled unfit for schooling and instead works with his parents on the land. The animals take a liking to him, as if they sense he is special. They care for him. They know he is not going to hurt them. He is good with machines too, likes to drive and has an instinct for repairing them. When he is alone, or with animals, he is happy. He dislikes being around other humans as he does not know how to behave around them. They don't understand him. As he is so good at everything else around the farm, he grows up to believe that he is exceptionally bright and at times even doubt that his parents are his real parents. He hates physical contact with other humans.

His sister is the only human that he has no trouble talking to. She always seems to understand what he is saying. He never talks to her about the incident on his sixth birthday. As soon as she turns eighteen, she leaves the farm and moves to the city. She sends him postcards every month for the first year with magnificent motives of large buildings, crowds, bridges and neon, but the rate gradually slows down and stops altogether. He knows their contents by heart and pretends to read them out loud to the animals on the farm.

The stream of soldiers going to or returning from the front is increasing. Sometimes, entire units pass by and ask for shelter or food. He admires the soldiers, and helps repairing their trucks and motorcycles. One day, they ask if he does not want to join them, and without a word to his parents, he signs the draft papers and gets on the truck to the front.

They are guarding a military hospital and prison camp, close to the border. They are only a couple of kilometres away from the fighting and the sound of guns and explosions are much higher here than ever on the farm. He finds it

difficult to be so close with so many people. He is always last into the shower and avoids any games or activities that include physical contact. He is approached by a female soldier who has taken pity on him. She wants to bed with him, and he panics.

He can tell from watching the birds if there is going to be an attack, if they have anything to fear from the coming day, etc. If an enemy aircraft is approaching, he will know it long before anyone else, and he will know what buildings to evacuate. When this ability becomes known, he is sent off to the front to join their special units operating behind enemy lines, destroying bridges and military installations. He will know where they are and how to approach them. The soldiers love him, he is their saviour and he has trouble dealing with all the attention he is getting.



One day, they find themselves deep into enemy territory. The area is completely empty from birds. Our boy panics. The soldiers are unable to understand what the problem is and still expect him to guide them. He tries to lead them back to their camp, but is soon completely lost. They come across a small village and decide to stay there for the night. The village is occupied by a small group of women and children, and the soldiers start doing what they are trained for. They threaten to kill the children and rape the women and our boy finds himself trapped in a situation where he cannot escape. He is cheered on by the other soldiers. He forces himself to touch one of the women, her clothes are already torn. He rapes her, and once the act is completed, he moves on to the next one like a machine. In the end, one of the soldiers stop him. Then, they kill the children and move on. The soldiers welcome him into the "club of real men". They hug and slap each other on the back and the boy realises that it no longer troubles him. As if he fucked himself clear of all that tension and up-strungedness. Our boy is unable to understand what is going on but is happy to really feel part of a group of hu-

mans for the first time in almost twenty years.

He continues to lead the troop with guesses. They go around in circles and the soldiers are beginning to lose faith in him. Two days later they come upon a single bird in the forest, a crow, sitting on the lower branches of a magnificent oak tree. The boy heaves a sigh. Finally an aide.

Our boy is admiring the magnificent crow when he hears the sound of helicopters. Now, everyone looks to him for instructions. The crow remains on its branch and the boy instructs all the soldiers to hide under the tree waiting for the helicopter to pass. But it doesn't. It circles over their bit of the forest dropping grenades. The bird remains still on its branch, and so do the boy and the soldiers. There is something familiar about the bird. The birds flap its wings and he can clearly see that the left one is damaged and healed bad. Then the napalm grenade hits them, the soldiers, the boy, and the crow. He is alive for another 45 seconds. Long enough to see his first friends burn their hands from trying to remove the burning sticky substance from their clothes, face and hair, see the magnificent oak tree catch fire, and smell the familiar smell of burning crow. He can hear himself scream, but

there is no pain. Or perhaps it is so great that his nerves are unable to fathom it.

Two days later, a band of stray dogs will eat his scorched remains making his soul earthbound.

In Short

Staying on the farm, sister is the only one that understands him but she leaves for the city, war is intensified and he joins passing soldiers, finds it hard to be among people, his skill of reading birds' patterns, especially that of crows gives him a place in a special unit sabotaging deep behind enemy lines, ventures upon an area with no birds to help him guide his unit, guesses which leads them to a village, raping women and killing children, overcoming his fear of closeness with humans, finding Grandma, being led by her into the fire.