

THE HALLOWED WIDE

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STORY GUIDE

As we wander through our lives searching for meaning and connection, we find ourselves twisted up in delicate threads of inchoate trust, and earnest bids for intimacy. We stumble over craggy edges of misunderstanding and judgement, vanity and selfishness. Reckless and blind, we cast our soft-hard hearts into every bliss and danger—and in our desperate thrashing, we too easily miss too much. We discover ourselves time and again in the desert. Wounded and wounding. Small. Alone.

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FIRST DESCEND

THE HALLOWED WIDE

This time, the cold and wasted wilderness feels different somehow. Impatient. An unexpected defiance builds, starting in your fingertips then extending to your heart, your throat, and down through the bones in your legs. You're struck with a thought that feels strangely new and innate. There must be another way...

Suddenly, you feel smooth stone underneath your feet and the eerie glow of a twilight moon on your brow. You're standing at a precipice veiled in thick fog. You peer over the edge. Filled with a frightful curiosity, gripped by palpable urgency—breathless, you close your eyes and begin to climb.

BITTER ROOTS

Clinging to tangled roots and jagged shale, you descend. Each new strangling snarl calls to mind the dark truths you've been heretofore determined to overlook. Prejudice, blame, conspiracy, corruption. Seeing it all up-close this way, you heartily resolve to follow each hateful spore to its contemptible end, to pull up every writhing curl from its dark and squalid safety, setting it to wither in sterile air.

QUICKSAND

As you step onto the damp canyon floor, you feel a sort of thrill at what you've conquered. You imagine you must be through the worst of this portentous enterprise. You take in the scene, washed in wide-eyed ease. The glow of the misty marsh feels like a new and heedless love. Beguiled, you move forward without a second thought...

THEN DIVIDE

CLOSER TO YOU

Disoriented and disheveled, you stumble into a bare, colorless grotto. The warm embrace of moments-ago feels like a frosty and distant memory, much too quickly chilled. You're exhausted, discarded, and betrayed. You know you can't return the way you came, but continuing seems unthinkable. This grief is too cumbersome.

Feeling a sting at your chest, you glance down at your heart, somehow revealed in your hollowed-out ribs. You take the heart tenderly in your hand, turning it over, and over again. It feels so very heavy, and for a moment you consider leaving the entire soft bundle behind. But as you look closer, you're astonished by a delicate gold-leaf lace brushed across the fleshy surface. Looking closer still, you see a maze of fine barbs puncturing the dazzling embroidery. You pull on a single thorn and feel the weight lighten magnificently. With utmost care, you remove each sliver, one-by-one, before gently returning the heart to your breast.

BREAKING ROOM

Having extracted each violent quill, you feel lighter for certain, but this weary work has left you with a new sense of despair. The landscape feels darker. The thrill is well and fully gone. Your heart, while whole, is unbearably exposed. Trembling, you realize you have more armor left to shed—more shards to tease out and surrender.

Making your way through a thick forest, you happen upon a clearing. Moonlight dances through the treetops, teasing you with its nimble vitality. Determined to earn an equal freedom for yourself, you prepare to wrestle with the last remaining monsters of your own narrow frailty...

SPLIT

You emerge from the forest onto a riverbank, spent. The last of your poison protections relinquished, you're left feeling hollow. Looking up at the moon in starless sky, you feel yourself lifting away from the ground, floating toward the river. You turn to see your own familiar frame lying motionless on the grass below. The longer you look, the less you recognize this peculiar shell at all. Floating still, and swathed in an odd peace, you fall into a deep sleep.

MAKE IT HALLOWED

SWEET DREAM

You awaken in a dewy haze to a scene too beautiful to believe. Held far above the channel below, you can almost make out the full breadth of the ravine. Looking to the west, you see the gloomy sundown sky you left behind, and to the east a swirl of brilliant midday beams. A new sense of wonder fills you to bursting. Dizzy and dazed, you drift back to sleep with this glittering vision still flickering behind your eyes.

BLEED IN COLOR

Stirring awake again, this time upon a lush and bloom-dappled meadow, you rise to your feet, spilling over with vibrance. An unencumbered heart beats steadily in your chest, and in this fulsome moment it seems the simplest, purest thing to hold the canvas of your soul aloft for any fellow traveler to behold and cherish. And you imagine it equally uncomplicated to see another's life-soaked portrait with careful faith and grace.

FIT YOU IN MY MIND

Dawn breaks into morning as you leave the valley at your heels. Stepping into the wildwood once more, you pause in reverent acceptance of the only certain truths: Beauty cannot hold back pain. Trust was never safety. Love was never fixed. The steadfast struggle is its own sacred end..

MAKE IT WIDE

BOUNDLESS

This sober contemplation calls forth an elemental enchantment, and you feel yourself transformed again. A glorious pair of azure-plumed wings stretch from your shoulders and lift you above the braided tree line, past walls of marble cliff face, through vapor and veil, and onto a clouded platform.

ARE WE TOUCHING YET?

Looking out across this final void, you see the swirling prism from your dream. Your feet fall softly, building a bridge of smoke and crystal beneath them as they move. You arrive at the threshold...but where a gate should be, you find a deep hedge of woven vines and briars. You begin to reach, clawing at the willowed web until you're caught in the middle, unable to move forward or back. You stretch your hand and send your heart out reaching, as well. Twinkling tears run onto your cheeks as you feel soft hands grasping your fingers, pressing firmly at your back, and sweeping gently across your face, guiding you through this final passage.

THE HALLOWED WIDE II

Bathed in incandescence, you fall to your knees. All around you the air buzzes with the most transcendent otherworldly chorus. The ground is warm under your hands, between your fingers. And you feel at once weightless and anchored. Filled with bliss and buoyance, you blink your eyes open to see before you yet another vast arroyo. Without hesitation, you rise again. You hear the whisper repeating in your ears: First descend, then divide, make it hallowed, make it wide. Shoulders back and eyes fixed on a new horizon, you walk up to the burnished edge, and boldly step inside.