

Mind Metaphor

The soft crinkling of the paper grasped between my fingers whispers through the darkness. The tunnel seems to stretch farther as I stop to ponder, so I quicken my pace. The dim glow at the end guides me, but I am familiar with the tricks of my mind and carefully carve the direction into the soft stone walls. Branching tunnels allure me, set fire to my curiosity, but I let the flames burn into my soul and move on. The light, only a few paces away, seems so close. A sudden cry reverberates throughout the array of tunnels surrounding my designated path. The cry is that of a child, and I recognize it as the sound of broken innocence. Although, I could never repair such a crumbling peace, I turn because I can't bear to let it crumble alone. I run down passage upon passage, a winding labyrinth, dead ends, twisting tunnels. There slumps the child. She is shattered... She was innocence, and now trembles, a hideous remnant in rags torn beneath a bruised stomach, a scene too familiar. She did not taste life. It was forced down her throat, slimy worm of knowledge, slimy tongue, so enticing. I take her in my arms as she weeps an endless flow of salt to her wounds... and my own. I carry her, heavy burden, but she teaches me. Because of her weight, I learn to listen. The world becomes clearer as my back screams for freedom from her figure, an unattainable freedom. But, it is not the knowledge forced upon her unsuspecting mind that damages her most. She knows what happened was quite simply wrong, but yet, some part of her desires it, a bizarre lust for that meaningless pleasure. She knows that she is capable of breaking the innocence of another, and that for some strange small instant, she wondered. It eats away at her mind like a mutated worm, and I carry her with me, comforting her. The line of suffering must end somewhere, and I will protect, as best as I can, this abomination from spreading. This labyrinth of thoughts and ideas has so much to offer and seems endless until it should turn to emotionless dust in all-encompassing time. With so much to think about, I keep the child occupied, keep her painful wishes at bay. The tunnels branch out endlessly as infinite questions pour from her tainted lips. Where is the meaning in this balance of good and evil? Knowledge and ignorance – sweet bliss, barefoot in the trees, smell of pine, sticky sap, vanished behind me... the walls crashed down, never to be opened again. Tunnel upon tunnel of obscured carvings open themselves before me. I try to trace the inscriptions with my fingers. I feel what they are, but the darkness keeps the known facts shrouded in a sort of mystery. A dead end looms ahead, and I start to turn, but the child stops me.

“You cannot go back when you've chosen the wrong path.” She looks back, sighs heavily and smiles. “You have to make a new path. You can't dig through the rubble to regain what was lost, but you can carve a way in front of you. The walls will listen.”

“I had to do something” I halt suddenly, unsure what my mind is grasping at.

“The destination is not where meaning lies,” the girl’s smile makes me uneasy as if in pain and loss of innocence, the answers are found, as if the price of asking is the burden of knowledge, and with that burden comes immeasurable responsibility.

It seems that the images carved in the tunnels illustrate a crying world, and I feel the damp tears brush against my fingertips. Scenes of war, poverty, sadness, disease, and endless fathoms of hypocrisy pass my seeking fingers. I try to understand it, but it seems that when I make progress in my understanding, the explanation is as painful as the ignorance. The more tunnels I pass, the more jumbled the ideas become. In one image a young girl tenderly kisses a handsome youth, and in the next, she lays a bloody heap on the floor, and he stands with a bottle in his hand wondering what he’s doing because even he doesn’t know the meaning. Then in another, a widow mourns the death of her husband, together 50 years, oblivious to the bloody heap so near to her. People chase vague objects for years only to find what they were looking for is back where they started. So, what am I looking for?

“You have to find the answer to that yourself,” the little girl hides some insight in a smile. “But you have to be willing to listen... and you have to remember what you learn. So, what are you looking for?”

“The paper!” I slap myself on the forehead. Where could I have dropped it. Tunnels dissolve around my confused mind as I shuffle through the endless array of work. “No! I had it just a little while ago! I know I wrote it down somewhere, so I would remember.” I knew I had etched it into my memory, but what use was that now. I didn’t have it. I shut my eyes tightly. “What was I thinking? How could I forget an assignment like that? I had to have written it a million different places!” I slouch into my chair as if it could swallow me to hide me from my own absentminded form of stupidity. It seems that I always get lost, and grasp for bits of memories, strings, but they fall apart in my hands, escape in the darkness behind me, and I don’t find them again until I come across them by another path, and by then it is too late. But still, I try, and I stumble forward bit by bit because that’s all I can do really. The world is a fascinating place with infinite opportunities to learn and connect what was learned in an elaborate web of tunnels. Perhaps, it takes a taste of ugliness to truly understand the beauty of the world, but consciousness is worth it.