

Heaven and Hell

by Vladimir Bilenjki

I'M BACK IN HELL AND THAT'S ALL I KNOW.
I WANT TO TELL YOU MORE BUT I DON'T KNOW MORE.

"This one is quite juicy."

"They say that's the most succulent kind of memory: one of those moments before they fall to Hell."

"Thank the Lord for our daily bread!"

"Don't you feel bad about feeding off someone else's memories when they have none?"

"There's a difference between our souls and theirs. Whatever it is, we can feast and they can't. I don't pity those who wouldn't eat. How much does their life mean when we'll just eat it like any other tomorrow?"

"I know you and I share a few of the same memories."

"Like that one where George D. got caught in a bind?"

"Haha, yeah. I wish we were actually there. I would have totally done something to help."

"How I wish we could have actually been there. I could have told him not to come along with Charlotte!"

"Is George here in Heaven?"

"After going with that Babylonian whore of his? I'm sure he's in Hell."

"Funny how Charlotte is in Heaven."

I, GEORGE DELAZA, SIT BACK ON THIS PEDESTAL OF THORNS.

I, GEORGE, SIT ON THIS PEDESTAL OF THORNS.

I SIT ON THIS PEDESTAL OF THORNS.

THIS PEDESTAL OF THORNS.

"You think George has some better friends now down there?"

"Wouldn't know. We only know what he was like when he was living. I got a few childhood memories of him. But that's slim pickings. I've got plenty of memories in the Dark Ages though, go figure."

"Humans?"

“Mostly. I mean, I eat and live well. Cockroach memories don’t do it for me.”

“Those Martians certainly weren’t interesting until they learned from the humans.”

“Yeah, but you shouldn’t always eat human memories — they fill you up too quickly.”

GEORGE.
GEORGE.
GEORGE.

...

I’M TRYING TO THINK.
CAN’T THINK NOW.
WHO IS GEORGE?
GEORGE.

“I’m going on a hunger strike! You, heavenly bodies. Do you not realize we are the sinners? The Hellbound cannot sin, they can’t even remember a fraction of a second ago! Every time they take a step, they forget why they even took that step, where they were going, and even what a step is. How can a man be proud of nothing? How can a man want anything when he’s never known anything? When he can’t know anything! They’re not living. We’re living. Yet we’re all just up here living in a black market, peddling the lives of the Hellbound.”

“It’s a free market, friend.”

“What use do you have for their memories; can you not subsist on your own memories?”

“This is Heaven, where we have our God-given freedom to do as we wished as mortals. It’s our reward for our morality —”

“— and so, we deprive the depraved of being able to sin?”

“We call that justice, and this right here is our big payoff.”

“George will never again know the love and the life he gave to Charlotte, nor will she. How can we be heavenly when we wallow in their love and not our own?”

“It’s heavenly to live as they lived together. I’m quite jealous that I never got to live such a life as the two of them until I fed off of their memories here.”

“That’s still not your life. That was their life.”

“Do you even remember your life?”

“Honestly... after all of these lifetimes of eating, I can’t quite remember the appetizer.”

“Not even your name?”

“I guess for the past few decades, I just identified most with George... I don’t think who I was is as important to me as George is.”

“Isn’t life the only thing worthwhile living through? I mean, this... this we’re existing, but this isn’t living. This isn’t life.”

“If I’ve spent my life with George’s bravura, it would’ve been quite the ride. I don’t even want to live through other people...”

“And that’s why you’re starving yourself!?”

“Oh, how I wish the Hellbound weren’t made to be mindless and the Heavenbound to be gluttons.”

“Having eaten Lucifer’s memories from the hand of God, I can see why you’re following in his path.”

“I only wish I could hold on to these last memories of mine when I fall from grace... if I can still find them among the countless memories I’ve consumed.”

“They won’t be lost. They’ll always be a part of us here in Heaven and the world which bore them.”

CAN I HOLD A THOUGHT THAT PERSERVERES?
WILL THEY WALK WITH ME TOO?
IT WOULD BE LOVE.
WHAT GOOD ARE THESE WINGS
TO FLY FROM YOU.
THE SKIES ARE OPEN TODAY.
WILL IT BE LOVE?

WOULD I WANT TO KNOW YOU?
WHO WOULD YOU BE
TO THEN KNOW ME
ARE YOU GEORGE?
AM I GEORGE?

“This angel may as well have been George.”

“What do you mean?”

“There aren’t any other memories or identities he left us with. He’s not here with us but every passing day an angel feeds upon George’s memories and wants nothing more than to have been him and lived his life.”

“To go the way of Lucifer... I don’t see why anybody would follow such a man down into nothingness.”

“George would. You and I know who George is. Do you even know who you are?”

“I forgot that a long time ago. The only thing I definitely know about myself is that I like Charlotte a lot.”

“So would you go the way of this meal we have before us?”

“Only if it’d bring me closer to Charlotte.”

ARE YOU GEORGE’S BEING?

BECAUSE I AM GEORGE.
ARE YOU BEING?

...
BECAUSE...
ARE YOU?
I'M NOT.

*“George...” whispered Charlotte to her lover. “Please wake up, George.”
The silk sheets were drenched in the blood pouring from George’s abdomen.
Applying pressure with the sheets to her lover’s gaping wound, Charlotte held
George as close as she could to keep him from dying and leaving her.*

“So, are you sure Charlotte would be with George in Hell?”

“She certainly would have left Heaven, just to seal the embrace they parted with.”

“And they’re still wandering, aimless as to who they are and what they want.”

“Funny how they’re reunited here between us in Heaven —”

“— while they lay in the bloody fires they left life in down there in Hell.”

“Will they reunite in Hell?”

“I’m sure they already have, and it was a reunion as fleeting as any other meeting in the dark. They probably didn’t know they met one another when that single, split second of a moment they shared passed in the eternity they’ll spend down there. Their love stays with us here in Heaven.”

“Maybe that’s all we need to know about ourselves.”

“Ain’t that right, George?”

“Truly, my Charlotte.”