Burgundy and Incense

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Burgundy and Incense

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The fractured images lay as colored splinters on the ground, each a shard refracting distinct shades of burgundy that lit up the night in a halo of red. A heavy object hurled through a stain-glassed window has wrought this scene upon the street. From deep within the sanctuary it was tossed out. The incense was soon to follow and escape the frosty air, where it hung heavily over the people below who had come in observance of this odd ceremony."

Cover Page Footnote
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They inhaled and absorbed it into their beings and became intoxicated with its overwhelming aroma. They could only watch in silence the broken glass on the street, apparently caused by the expulsion of a leather bound volume, a heavy text set in gold. From inside, the low murmur of deep voiced chanting was making its way out on the tail end of the incense. The candles cast strange shadows against the shattered pane, which threw an eerie glow over the red haze.

A sudden gust of wind shot through and flung open the book. Little Simon wrested his hand free from his mother's grip and broke through the crowd. He knelt over and examined this novelty that lay on the ground. His eyes darted in nervous delight as he peered at the print.

"Don't TOUCH it!" a voice in the crowd screamed, prompting Simon to do just that. He was immediately enveloped in a ghastly white light that seemed to disintegrate the whole of his tiny frame.

A unanimous murmur of approval at the arrival of such an acolyte was heard within the structure. His mother's silent tears went unnoticed as the crowd simply looked down in quiet desperation. She wanted to be with him—but at what cost to herself? This she disregarded as secondary and moved out of the ranks toward the book. She leaned over as the child had before her; she saw his name and small hand print burned into the ledger. Finally, she surrendered herself and placed her palm on the page. She was immediately overtaken with light until her consciousness, as well as her physical being, was relocated to the center of the temple. There was a nod from the robed men who formed a circle around her. Simon's hand now clung to that of a burly bearded man who pointed to a hole in the window above them.

He nudged the boy forward towards his mother, who took him in her arms and kissed his forehead.

"Oh Simon, you sweet child," she whispered in his ear. "What have you done to us?"

"He has guaranteed your salvation," answered the bearded man.

"He is indeed special."

The two were undressed and fitted with robes akin those around them.

Outside, the book was shut by a second gust of wind, and the people began to disperse, relieved in knowing that at this moment, they were as far away in time as possible from the next such ceremony. They walked away sullen, though, in the knowledge that the next such time would similarly attract the curious and the foolish into the sanctuary-sucked in by the undeniable and morbid need to experience the unknown.

As the candles burned lower and the burgundy shards of glass dimmed the smell of incense still hung in the air, and its aftertaste followed the spectators home, serving as their only reminder of this night, and those departed.