

The Faith and Void in Duddingston Loch

By Tighe Wylie-Freegard

The cold air of the loch split the Reverend's skin as he felt the hard ice slice beneath his blades - feeling the tightening straps of his skates hold him perfectly upright like the strength of the trinity that lay on to him that he lay unto others. He felt like a light glow in his little snow globe, sat in the hands of God. The eyes of the stars observing his movements as he effortlessly moved his weight from one foot to the other bringing him closer to the centre of the frozen waters, being the place where he'd learn to forgive himself for what freedom he sought. There was guilt in his pleasure, even an earned break from his duties felt like a small betrayal of the lord. Faith cannot rest, nor skate, nor wait for the sunrise and every act of liberating stride towards the middle of Duddingston loch, where he would observe the horizon, bring him painfully further from the grasp of God's mighty fist. There were the dead to tend to, children to bless and sick to see to. Death does not rest, nor skate, nor wait for the sunrise so why should he? Guilt grew larger as he entered the center of the puddle, as the sky came consumed with a painted grey which came into a perfectly round swirl above him. The eye of the sky gazed upon him with all its judgment casting a mighty shadow down upon the Reverend.

He stood Motionless. Nor resting, nor skating, nor waiting on the sunrise.

The Reverend had read the Lord's Prayer at the grave of a boy who drowned in the icy water here just last year, he knew this is where his grave truly was. Just above the eye of God, he thought. He wondered if God worked in mysterious ways, or didn't. He wondered if God could see all, and if he could, would he want to see the tears swell in that father's eye? To doubt his faith was sacrilegious, whispers of the Devil, is what his father had taught him that these thoughts were - from his father from The Father to him, yet the Reverend listened to these thoughts for once. Lucifer's fallen star played a part in the story of God after all.

What if faith is to be without the pain of knowing? The voice of prayer stopped him.

'From knowing what?' The voice asked.

From knowing that this is the end of faith, that faith in the divine is merely a whim of the desperate few that makes those too sorry to cry over for their sons find solace in, what is only, fables.

'Fables?'

Allegories.

The satanic voice spoke of the cruelty of perception – how the unknown can be shrouded in fantasy to make hope that is only accepted along with promises that could be kept by infinity. The passing masses in fear of living in worse than what they lived now and falling short of the holy gates of St Pete. The missing link between God and man was faith, and our Reverend became slowly detached. He is but just a man standing in middle of a loch. Godless, yet unchanged. What lord would abandon him to leave the

great hole in the sky and to leave the child beneath his skies to drown? To let live the cruel dawn of pain that left the members of his chapel to inhale and choke on bloody breaths. 'None' he thought, beginning to stomp on the cracking ice he stood on, making way for his grave that lay by one of God's frozen children. He was no child of the lord but a child of man, yet man truly wept when his son was unduly taken.

More and more force was transferred from our Reverends feet to the world beneath, smashing his way to oblivion. Before the Reverend dropped into the water he spoke a prayer – a little song to the son of the trinity.

Softly and Tenderly Jesus is calling

Calling for you and for me;

The hymn became sharper as the thick ice pushed in below him, sending him into tears as he cried the next verse,

See, on the portals he's waiting and watching,

Watching for you and for me.

The water consumed him as the sheet broke – turning the reverends song into gargled pleas. As he descended into the inky black, he shut his eyes and was made numb by the cold. No longer singing, nor crying, nor waiting for the lord. He accepted his tomb awaiting him.

Just as he stuck to the floor of the loch, he felt something stronger than the water, a ray of light cut through the blackness and unto him – that, the warmth of the sunrise dawning over the hills and through the ice rejuvenating the soul of the Reverend, that was now crying more gargled moans. As he began to kick off his skates and flap his arm, he felt something other than the tenderness from the light, it was a limb that he felt, a hand cold and yet tender like his own attached to a body which sat heavily at the bottom of the loch, he placed his boot against the chest of the figure and propelled himself to the surface where he rose through the thawing ice and swam for his life to shore.

He lay on the bank next to Duddingston, breathing in warmer winter air. Looking to the sky he saw sunlight, rising he saw the love of the hills and warmth radiating off the church. The reverend was so cold that he felt the heat of his own blood all over his body. He headed towards the church, shivering but smiling as he was just touch by something greater than the lord at the bottom of the loch – he walked nor resting, nor skating and no longer waiting on the sunrise.

In next week's mass he would speak not of God's wrath, but of his love – how he loved all and those who were dead became one with his kingdom, with bodies in the ground but souls in the sky.

He would also speak of how he was saved from the drowning of the Loch by his lord and savior Jesus Christ. How he descended from the heavens as the Reverend prayed for his safety, and guided his cold wet body from the darkness by offering his lifeless body as aid. He would discuss the significance of this

Miracle to him as a man of God and church. That God does answer your prayers if you have enough faith.

He would sit at the edge of that Loch every day and ponder. Ponder at the glorious love he found at the bottom of the Loch, and how it was surely impossible to ever find the body of that young boy that had drowned in Duddingston, he did not ponder on that too much.