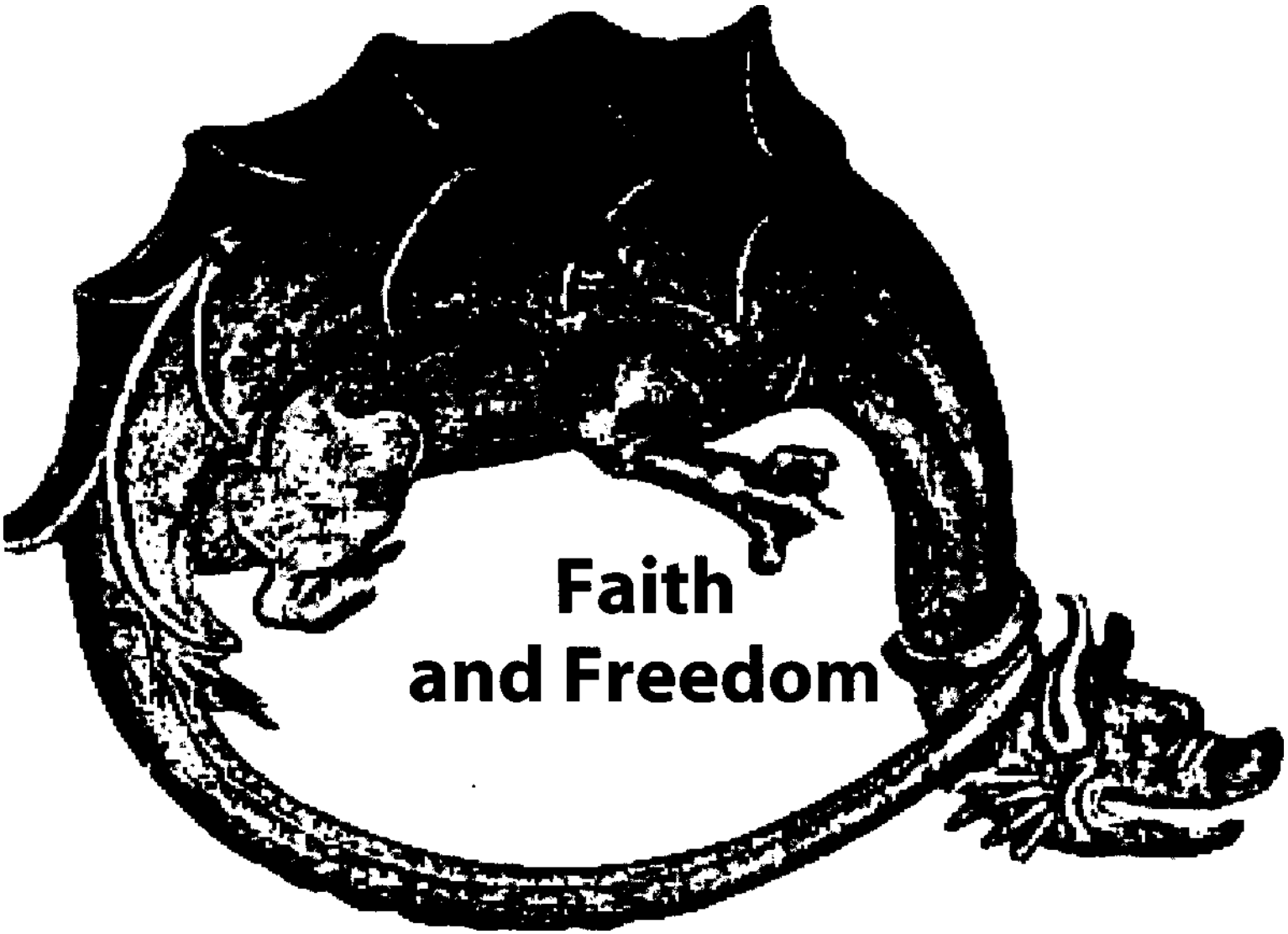

Jennifer Jones
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"(O, you were excruciated, in honour bound to the cross of your own cruelfiction!)"

"He is cured by faith who is sick of fate."
James Joyce, Finnegans Wake

"I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me god."

The bible was hot on my hand when I swore it. I did not look at him. Instead I looked at the judge. His stately black robes were no more dignified than a costume to me, but then, I always had the gut feeling that the justice he served was merely masquerading as such.

How can a child conquer themselves, self-disgust, and the horrific tsunami of guilt? I question every memory, digging at them like a miner hacking at quartz with an ice pick. Some humans hold certainty for granted, a trophy of innocence, but I own nothing but doubt. I am not innocent. No one is born a bastard of shame without having their innocence ripped from them, carbuncle torn from a drake-brain.

I stood in the red room of justice's temple and I was examined by the inquisitors of imperfect law. I looked into the eyes of age and learning and told my myth, a story so imperfect it could not help but be reality. If justice was a coin toss, I would have won my case, because chance is kinder than the shadows and doubts of old white men. However, the only fairy tales that shimmer real are the ones we live, and my story doesn't glorify the justice of humans.

Truth is an ugly word. It falsifies the world.

This is my fiction. I lived every minute of it.

Standing in a shower stall. The walls, the floor, were cobalt blue, speckled with white flecks. Metal, like that mined by the Kobold's of the color's namesake. Cold. The showerhead was plastic. It neither blasted nor dribbled, but the flow was never adequate. The curtain was plastic, ripped, white, with golden lilies. The water in my showers was neither hot nor cold enough to wash away his unwanted gaze. Prone, I stood in the cubicle, unable to cover myself completely, I hugged my chest, covering my breasts. His eyes, always everywhere, consumed my awkward adolescent body.

To this day, I still prefer to bathe.

Occasionally, I dream of the dark basement bathroom with the door that would not lock. Even in my sleep the air is dank and heavy with the smell of stale condensation. Dead bugs crowd the corners, black debris on curling cream colored linoleum. However, in my dreams, the round mirror with the plastic golden trim, the medicine cabinet, is often a door. Behind that door is a ghost in the shape of a woman's face. She caresses me with invisible hands. My dreamself shudders with joy and apprehension at her touch. The door leads to somewhere I have never been. Each time I enter, I meet the woman, and then wake.

I never fear him in my dreams, but in my dreams I'm fearless. I have been willingly killed a thousand times in one sleep. My dreamself is aware of eternity, but my flesh is afraid. He taught me that fear with electric cord lashings, with his angry brute face yelling obscenities and threats. I will never forget the way he loomed over me when he possessed my chest with his rough logger's hands. His was a gravity I could not escape.

When he ran his hands over my breasts, I did nothing. Without moving, I flew far away, to a place on Terrace Mountain. My body couldn't escape his grasp, but my brain could and did. Alone, I was monarch of a secret grove, my throne a tree-stump, my palace a lean-to built of cedar branches. In that place, where no hands could grasp me, the birds spoke to me in their secret tongues. There, I was safe from humiliation and pain.

I remember my first girlfriend. Nadia. We were both virgins. It was cute and silly and awkward, but after a few tries, my partner found herself engaged in pure sexual sensation. However, she would never awaken me. When our relationship ended I didn't have sex again for two and a half years.

Those years of celibacy christened me a mystic poet, lone and feral. I hid in my cave of creation, the womb of my self immolation. I perpetually sacrificed myself to myself, a powerless Odin, stretching my hands towards the alphabetic runes of my ruin. Drowning in Mimir's well, I wanted nothing more than to escape me. I would have given both my eyes to drink the waters of Lethe, but it was not to be.

Some wounds never fully heal; they scar and cease to bleed, but if they are jarred by memory they return to ache and rage. However, I've captured wracking sadness and transubstantiated it into strength. A wounded animal, enraged by pain, I'll always be impossible to tame, but all power stems from the wild soul.

My body is not fully my own. It's undomesticated, unruly, disobedient. Its desires are not mine. When I give myself away, a whore, my skin tingles with excitement, and I don't hesitate even though I can't forget my shame. I cringe myself to climax, my body reveling in humiliation. My body longs for rough treatment, for hard fucking. It wants to be used by the one it adores. I'm drawn to the spiral, to the Ourobouros story that consumes itself in an eternal circle.

It was summer, Terrace BC, 3612 Sparks Street. My siblings were outside, waiting to go to the videostore. I was alone with him in the foyer, tying my shoes.

"Can we rent a videogame?" I asked as I stood up.

"Stay still." He said it with heavy breath. I knew what would happen next, whether or not I want to admit it. I obeyed nonetheless. He lifted my shirt, and took a moment to just look at my bare breasts, bobbing with nervous inhalation, before he laid his hands upon me. He held each breast in turn, running his fingers over my nipples until they grew hard.

At that moment, I felt nothing. My body was ice. My brain was far away. I can't tell you how long his hands possessed me. It could have been an eternity, but it wasn't, because when we went outside, and the shimmering sun shone on me, my siblings were still laughing and wrestling, unperturbed by any delay. We loaded into his grey and red Econoline van, and drove the ten blocks to VideoStop.

I see. Stop.

Now I know everything differently. Maybe I was never innocent, but I was naive. My youthful stupidity shouldn't have been exploited, but what we live is not what should, but what is. We also should have walked to VideoStop. In the future, the fact that we wasted fossil fuels and polluted the air to drive ten blocks will be more scandalous than his putrid touch.

I felt guilty, standing in the aisle of the store, when he told me to pick out a game. Choosing what I desired made me feel complicit in his actions, but I was also pragmatic, what happened was over, denying myself wouldn't negate his touch. I don't remember what game I chose, but I did pick one. As I strapped myself into the passenger's side of the van, he turned to me, as he turned the ignition key. The engine exploded awake as he leaned over me, smiling, showing his chipped teeth.

"Would you let any man do that to you for a videogame?"

The cartridge felt heavy in my hands. My face went red; my blood rushed and rushed, trying to escape my veins. I struggled for something to say.

"You're my dad." Was the only justification I could stammer. It seemed to satisfy him, because he ceased to speak.

I felt as though I'd been stabbed by fact. His touch had always left me discomfited, but this time, I felt like a harlot, responsible, as though I had crafted the bargain myself. Every part of me felt dirty, soiled, spoiled. I felt like I could never be clean again.

That night I showered in the basement bathroom. I turned on the tap, full force hot, and I let the water scald me as I washed and I washed and I washed. I scrubbed my skin with my fingernails, futile, trying to scratch off my guilt. My tears mixed salt into the water; I whimpered because I couldn't scream. All at once, the memory of his every touch was magnified. My lack of struggle suddenly struck me as consent.

Lauren gazed at me, high on E, her eyes dagger bright with honesty.

"JJ, you live mythic narratives, fairy tales. You try to fit everyone in prefabricated roles, and that's fine. If you want to do that, it's your business, but you have to know that people aren't going to act them out for you. You tried to do it to me, and I refused to play along. Obviously April didn't want to be a character in your fable either."

"I'm just meant to be alone, that's all."

"Bullshit."

I never let his hands on me without a struggle again. His half-accusation against my purity woke me, and turned the key to my salvation. It was the final time I stood helpless before him, and it marked the beginning of my determination to be free of domination forever.