

## THE TWILIGHT DAWN

Oppression filled the foggy twilight dawn, the recherché feminism of the morning light danced an undulating number with the mood of the solitary cyclist as he wound his way up the serpentine path to the crest of the craggy peak, bathed in the soft glow of the fiercely burning star billions of miles away, still under the horizon. The tires of the mountain bike crunched the partly dewed leaves, much as innocence caught under sin's cruel tires, all its spirit squeezed out. The cyclist himself was an old hand at judging the curves – both of the road and of the weather – and immediately realized that the hiding sun was an aftermath to something oppressive that was in the offing. That's when he felt the oppression. The Shah of Persia had once prophesized that an oppressive feeling was an indication of impending misfortune, but the cyclist had neither heard of nor had cared for the kingdom of Persia. So when he hit the pick-up truck that was barreling down the slope head-on, he attributed the accident to plain bad luck.

The cyclist's name was Michener, and he was a hopeful for that year's French circuit, when his career and his life had been cut short by an obese, drunk, hardly conscious idiot thought he could do a seventy on the slope, on the way down. The first thing Michener was aware of was an intense pain in his head – in fact, the pain seemed to originate from his head and spread its claws all over his numb body. Numb, that when he recognized the perpetual numbness. He couldn't move an inch, let alone open his eyelids. There was a consistent hum in his ears that blocked out all other noise, but even the loudness of the hum didn't feel in the least painful. It was, on the contrary, a soothing cacophony that seemed to say, *"Hush, now. It'll all be over soon."* Through the pain, Michener amassed enough strength to force his eyelids open. He was staring at a black expanse of nothingness. The blackness confused his numb brain – he couldn't tell for sure if his eyes were open or closed. All he was sure of was that, he could "see" the darkness clearly enough to deduce that he was, perhaps, blind. Though this thought didn't particularly affect him, it shook him up a bit. To live a life without having to see it, to see the beautiful face of his two-year-old daughter, the twilight dawn, and a lot of other million things worth seeing, forced some tears to his eyes. Funnily enough, he couldn't feel the warm tears flowing down his face, but could taste the bittersweet on his tongue.

This brought new hope to Michener, and at the same time, a new sinking feeling. Hope, that he was still alive, and had the use of his mouth, which probably he could use to call out, and despair by the thought that since he was alive, he had most definitely lost the use of his eyes and ears. Then, all of a sudden, the humming in his ears stopped and was replaced by memories – memories of the time when he had first heard John Denver sing *"I'm leaving on a jet plane"*, the time when he had first heard his mother put him to sleep with the story of the Three Little Pigs – her voice was particularly vivid – and the time when he had his daughter call him *"Da-Da"* for the first time – and he found himself trying to smile, only he couldn't tell if he was already smiling or not. The numbness was perpetual. The hum returned with a vengeance and filled his soul with a detached horror – *a horror he couldn't feel; a horror he would have given anything to feel.*

Michener had heard the expression "Light at the end of the Tunnel" for years, and was not surprised to learn that it was a load of hogwash. There wasn't any such tunnel, let alone light. His mind freed, his soul released, his life over, Michener found enough

strength to close his eyelids – again, he couldn't tell if they were closed or not, for the blackness lingered. Salacious thoughts entered his mind and he quickly snubbed them away. He forced himself to think of something else – he remembered the time his salopette had torn on the ski slope and he had been the laughing stock of the entire lodge back in the valley, and he tried to smile.

His soul felt a lot lighter when he could sense it! *He felt the smile spread slowly across the face!* He could feel the gentle stretching of the skin across his cheek. And then, he saw her.

And when he did, he knew he was really dead. There she was, the only woman he had ever loved – his wife, who had been cruelly wrenched away from him and his daughter a year ago, also, ironically, by an accident. He had always blamed himself for her death; he should have never let her cross the street alone. But when he saw her standing there in all her beauty and radiance, he could see that delicate nose, those deep brown eyes he had missed all these days, and the lithe figure he had fallen in love with. His soul felt a thousand times lighter and he felt himself standing up – it took hardly any effort – and he walked up to her.

“What about Amy?” were the first words out of her mouth.

“Oh, she'll be fine,” said Michener. “I've finally seen it.”

“Seen what?” she asked.

He held her tight and kissed her on the lips long and hard, then hugged her. He could still smell the intoxicating perfume that lingered in her golden hair. He would never let her go again. Amy would be taken care of by his mother, who would be heart-broken at first, but she had always been a woman of astounding mental strength. It never is bliss to attend a funeral, but for a parent to arrange the funeral of her son was punishment enough for her unnamed sins of her past years. Her chastity and her unquestionable purity of this life was a mockery to that effect.

“I've seen the light at the end of the tunnel, darling. It's you,” he said and they both held each other.