

Vox Populi

She choose the name herself. She chooses it because nothing has ever felt more right. It was what the people started calling her after a while. She chooses it because all the people who knew her real name eventually had perished: killed by time, unsung heroes or war. Throughout all of her life these were the three things that had taken everything from her. She chooses it because she knows that eventually she will be forgotten but the name will remain. And what better to leave behind than a name that is everything she stands for.

No one remains that know her upbringing and she has long stopped telling people the truth. She changes her story as often as the weather does and she never tell the same story twice. Many that has been graced with her presence for a prolonged time claims its part of her charm. Many others claim that she is just plain crazy. It is probably a bit of both.

When asked she always tell people that she herself is not the important part. It does not matter where she is from or how she became who she was. It does not matter what her name is. She is only but a vessel to carry out the mission. No one ever asked her what the mission really was, everyone that came close enough to ask her these things already knew what she wanted. The part she had chosen for herself in life was that of the rebellion. She only wanted what the people wanted, and fittingly, she only turned up to listen and execute their will when what the people wanted was a revolt. She found them all throughout history. She listened, she spoke and she made sure the people got what they wanted. No one knows if she truly believes that she makes it better for the people or if she actually does it as revenge: using the people to overthrow the corrupt or the unfair. Maybe she does not even know herself.

She looks different every time she emerges. She changes depending on the setting. In the Eleven Years' War she was a proud Irish, red hair flowing over her shoulders and the accent thick. She worked at an inn, the rebels slowly starting to go on a pilgrimage to her. In the French revolution she was a pub owner, standing proud and serving free beer to all who came to listen as she softly egged the people on for difference. In the seventies she was a hippie with long, blonde hair and flowers everywhere. In 2014 she was a young, black girl with curly hair screaming at the police in Ferguson, Missouri. Times change so she does to.

She does not fight, the people do that well enough themselves. She just makes sure that they try their best. If they succeed she stays for a while, making sure that things settle down to her standard. If they lose she disappears. The curse of the Malkavians takes a toll on her then. Sometimes she's gone for just a year or two, sometimes its decades. The rumors has it that she goes into torpor, not bearing the burden of the failed the revolt, and sleeps until a new one arises that is interesting enough to get her out of it. The rumors tells of other children carrying her burden while she is away, starting new revolutions just to wake her up. Sometimes they are many, often they are few. One is a fixed point in her life. He is the one carrying her whenever she sleeps.

They first meet when the streets of Paris was covered in smoke. The fighting had passed this street an hour ago or so but the street stood empty. No civilian had yet to go near the street and both soldiers and nurses where needed elsewhere. He finds her there, slowly humming the tune of her mind and waltzing along the street. The kings men lying on the ground has started to turn cold by her feet.

“You know you're not supposed to dance at battlefields, right?” his French is horrible, the pronunciation a dead giveaway that he is not from around. As she turns and look at him she finds that even more likely. He is tall and burly. The large, black beard and the, although slick, long, black

hair tells her even more. Although he is well-dressed and the clothing fits him well, he has the general air of someone which wears a fashion not meant for him, even though it suits him extremely well.

“Scottish?” She asks, switching to his mother tongue. Her accent is perfect. He chuckles in delight. The sound he makes is dark and husky, a laugh deep down from his chest. She smiles at him and they slowly start to approach one another. His face is pale under all the hair, his teeth sharp. They don’t need to look at each other’s auras to know that they are the same.

“What’s your name then?” she asks, her words shifting, growing a more British tone. It is almost as if her voice needs an adjustment time before it finds the way it wants to sound in the different languages. They are close enough now for him to take her hand and slowly touch his lips against it. He bows as he does it, forever the gentleman.

“Dougal, my lady. And who might you be?” He mixes perfect aristocratic politeness with the undertones of a commoner which does not care for pleasantries. She loves it from then on. They stand for a while, just taking each other in.

“The people here call me Voix, but I don’t think those soft French vowels will suit a man as yourself. Try with Vox instead” the soft whoa sound is changed to a hard cks sound just for him. He feels flattered.

“Oh, really? A voice, huh? And whom might you be the voice of?” He takes her arm and they start walking down the street. The smoke has started to simmer down, back onto the streets, and the devastation is horrible. It does not matter to them however. To them, the only thing that matters is each other.

“*le peuple*” the French is back, but only shortly. She pats his arm. “But really, I’ve used the name for so long. Vox Populi seems more fitting” He doesn’t know a single word in Latin until that moment, and so he will remain. The proud Scottish he is, he would never take any other words of that god awful language in his mouth again. But those two words will remain with him forever.

“Vox Populi you say? That is a horrible language but a beautiful meaning. I can respect that” her laugh is soft and mellow as she laughs at his antics. He smiles down at her and for a moment time seems to stand still.

“What about you then, stranger? What does your name mean?” They continue towards the Seine, the war around them all but forgotten.

“Dougal? Dark stranger I believe” he rubs his neck while he thinks. “It was not the name I was born with however” She raises an eyebrow curiously. He chuckles that deep laugh once more.

“It’s quite funny really. I was born Fingal but once I turned that never seemed fitting. So I changed it” He grins down at her, the lines of his face clouded by beard but the facial expression remained crystal clear. It’s mirth. She hums at him and as they steer towards the flood bank, she looks up at him in delight.

“The fair stranger turned dark? I appreciate the symbolism” They sit down by the river, the moon shining both down on them and up on them from the reflection in the water.

“So tell me then, dark stranger, what are you doing in Paris at such turbulent times?” the question is spoken in her soft voice, hushed words not echoing along the riverbank, whispered between them as if they were lovers.

He remains quiet for a while, looking out over the city by the river.

“What can I tell you? I just want to help the people to win this war” he doesn’t tell a lie that night but that time is the last time he says the words and mean them. After that, he mainly did everything for her.

They travel together from then on. She is a lover, he is a fighter. She starts riots because of how the people love her and her words. He makes sure that her rioters stand a chance against the establishment. Where she has a large presence, enticing the crowds, he is a beast on the battlefield, frightening the enemy to run for their lives.

He believes that he surely can’t be her first companion, but he do plan on being her last. They travel the world, seeing the most beautiful places on the planet. They see the most horrible too. But so they live their undead life, for centuries. Sometime she is awake, and they roam the world together, sometime she is asleep, trusting him completely with herself. It is at those times that he eventually starts to feel a seed of loneliness grow inside of him.

He announces the problem with her as soon as she awakes. She looks him up and down and for the first time since they met he can see that she wants to do something for her own sake instead of for the people. She tells him that he doesn’t need to stay around her: that he is free to go if it pains him to stay and he is so floored by this that he almost considers it. The thing is: it’s not what he wants at all. He wants to be with her forever, he just doesn’t want to be alone while she sleeps. They debate it during the next couple of decades but eventually the solutions falls into their hands by itself.

He is the most beautiful boy both of them has ever seen. He is just turned and left to fend for himself in a hard world. They rage at the unfairness of the treatment his sire has given him and take him in into their family without hesitation. It is the beginning of the 20th century and the First World War has just started. No one yet knows the devastation it will bring. They take him as far away from the horrors of the war as they possible can, not yet knowing that the whole world would be involved.

They teach him all they know of this cruel world. When she goes under, Dougal is no longer alone, and when she is up and running, they have one more man to help in their mission. Everything should be perfect. And yet, it isn’t.

It is New Year’s 1973 and the Vietnam War is still fully raging. They are at a peace rally and a New Year’s celebration combined. She is on the middle of the dancefloor. She moves like a fairy, dancing across the floor, almost looking like she’s levitating while moving between the others dancing. They stand to the side, invisible from the dancefloor, arguing.

“We need to keep fighting, Aldo. We can’t just give up” Dougal’s voice is calm, the hand on Aldo’s arm light, but his eyes tells a different story. They blaze. Aldo shrugs out of Doug’s hold with ease. The hold was not made for retaining anyway. It was comfort.

“No. Don’t you see?” Aldo on the other hand sounded angry. The ponytail swinging as he motioned around the room.

“Doug, this is a losing battle. Soon she’ll realize that what we’re doing here doesn’t matter” It’s his turn to put a hand on Dougal’s arm, but not entirely unkind. He almost shakes the larger man as they stare at each other.

“Soon, she’ll go back asleep. And then she’ll leave us all alone again” He bites the words out, making them a whisper in the loud bar. Doug’s eyebrows furrows, a confused look on his face, as if he can’t understand why that matters.

“And then it’ll be just you and I. Together” Doug’s words seem to hurt Aldo. He looks away, downwards, a slump in his otherwise proud shoulders.

“Yeah. But we both know that that is not enough for you” there is well-hidden hurt in his voice but the words betray him. The silence is loud between them for a long time before Dougal opens his mouth to answer. He never has the time to even get a sound out before they are both interrupted. Neither of them had noticed her until she puts her hand on theirs and smiles at them with a kind smile.

“There you are. My boys. I was looking for you two” She opens her arms and they both step into the embrace. She hugs them, they hug her, and eventually, they hug each other’s well. When all of them break apart, they find her studying them. There is a small furrow between her eyebrows, a sad look in her eyes and both of them reach for her face at the same time, smoothing out the worry lines on her face. She smiles then, her face shining like the sun coming out from behind some clouds. It is as if a whole conversation has been had but no words were uttered. Just touch was needed.

She takes each of their hands in her own and drags them out onto the floor. The countdown has already begun for 1974 to come swinging. They celebrate the New Year’s birth together, and as the clock strikes twelve, a photographer appears.

“A photo for the occasion?” He smiles and lifts the camera up so they see it clearly. Doug falls back a bit, looking at the camera weirdly but the other two grabs his hands, a clear sign that it isn’t dangerous. They position themselves, her in the middle and both of them on the sides but all three still keeping close, as if they don’t want to be separated. They all smile towards the camera but it’s only her smile that reaches the eyes. The photographer takes two Polaroid’s and hands her one of them. He holds the other up and points towards the wall behind the bar.

“For the patron’s wall, alright?” they all nod in unison and turns toward their own photo as the man with the camera walks away. The photo is still dark, not yet developed. The two men’s patience is soon gone and they turn towards the dancefloor once more, this time fully intending to enjoy the night. The fight is over for now but they both have a lingering feeling that it might not be forever. However, this night was made for partying, not fighting. They can save the arguing for another day.

She stays to the side, waiting for the photo. She looks at them from afar, almost looking alienated while doing so. She looks around the bar, looking at all the people in there, demanding peace in a faraway country, and booze. She looks down at the photo, now developed in her hands. The smile spreading on her lips is sad as she takes in their expressions. She thinks that maybe something will change soon, that maybe their peace amongst the world’s wars can’t last forever. That maybe, it was all a beautiful lie. That nothing last forever.

She thinks that for a moment longer before looking up, the sad on her face exchanged to happiness as she finds them across the room. Her boys and their happiness. The people and their fight for peace. She smiles. Sad thoughts were for the bad days, and this, this was not a bad day at all. Not even close.