



AUTHOR PROFILE

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A Kid with no past

No one would ever forget that night. The large glass separating the warm interior of the wooden village house from the icy cold was fogging up from the steam, but it still kept the family inside warm. The family made their living from blacksmithing, a legacy from Arthur's father. But that wasn't the only problem; the problem was the constant migration to the king's city and the dwindling population in the villages. For a blacksmith family already struggling to make ends meet, the worst thing that could happen was moving to a new place and trying to establish a stable life there. And having to compete with the master blacksmiths in places like the king's city, where thousands of people lived... That was a job for real blacksmiths, but Joel (Arthur's father) only knew the basics. His father and his father were the same. Because who would spend decades blacksmithing to learn how to forge a sword just to make a scythe? Right? What's the point? That's why Joel's family was struggling to make ends meet. But the birth of their only child, Arthur, had given the family hope. Because after 16 hours of agonizing labor, he was a baby who had emerged breathless. Only when he finally began breathing did everyone witness the first miracle. But this wasn't Arthur's first brush with death. When he stopped crying and adjusted to the painful oxygen in his face and lungs, he turned his still-open eyes to his mother and smiled with his toothless mouth, a smile that never faded.

Arthur watched from the window during this storm. The water droplets falling on the glass comforted him. He looked at the other houses and saw Michael, one of his closest friends, in the house across the street. He immediately waved happily and shouted greetings throughout the house, as if he believed he would hear. Joel

and Maelle (Arthur's mother, Joel's wife) looked at Arthur. Arthur, with his heartwarming smile, narrowed his beady black eyes and apologized.

"I'm sorry, I must have yelled a little."

Then he pressed himself back against the window, watching his friend, just like any other 10-year-old would. Meanwhile, his mother was checking the last of the food in the house, filling her with a void. They had only a few days' worth of food to last the winter, and they couldn't manage anything. Winter brought death with it; animals couldn't graze, fields were rendered useless, and even when everyone else was in their warm homes, the cold outside froze and refused to share. Because while everyone was preparing for winter, the lucky ones survived on full stomachs, while the rest... well...

Joel soon realized the situation and came to Maelle, examining the food they had left. Even though a great emptiness was building within him, he knew he had to remain strong as a father figure. He put his arm around his wife's waist, pulled her close, and rested his head on her chest. He hugged her tightly, looked at Arthur, and whispered,

"At least she has to go. The food at home isn't enough for three people. I could hunt a few animals, but by then we'll starve, and he's only a child; he can't handle it."

Maelle couldn't hold back her tears, but she couldn't speak either. Arthur's involvement would only make things worse. She just watched the tears flow and pushed herself back. He looked into Joel's eyes, reddened but equally angry.

"He's ours—my son! You can't ask me to leave him to die."

Arthur thought he was looking out the window, but in reality, all he was looking at was the empty window of his friend's house, which had been abandoned before his parents began arguing. But his ears and mind were listening to his family. His parents constantly told him he was a ten-year-old boy in these arguments, and they didn't give him a choice. Arthur, too, thought he had no choice at ten. That's why he didn't participate in any conversations because his parents always saw him as: "A child with no choice... He can't understand us, he can't listen to us, he can't know pain, he can't go hungry."

Arthur turned his head and looked at his parents. Their faces shifted, darkness enveloped them. His parents' warm faces stretched and grew, and the entire house was plunged into darkness. Arthur's breathing quickened, he screamed, and his eyes widened. He sat up in panic and drew the sword he always kept at his waist as he surveyed his surroundings. He was under a tree in the forest. He'd had the same nightmare again. In fact, that was all he saw. Every time he tried to sleep, it was the same nightmare...

When he first came to, he was already 17 years old and had no memory of his past. He was fighting in a tournament with a sword of unknown origin in his hand, and he was whimpering in pain on the ground from the blow. That was all he saw from his old memory, or thought it was a

memory. After regaining consciousness, he tried for a long time to find his family, but no matter who he asked, no matter where he went, there was no information. It was as if Arthur had never existed before the tournament, and that was eating away at him. So he decided to investigate. His old family, his old life, his old memories... This had become his goal. He'd fallen asleep after a weary search. Slowly, using the tree for support, he rose to his feet, adjusted his sword at his belt, and looked at himself. He shook himself. Then he

looked around. If he remembered correctly, there was a river in the direction he'd come from. It was the perfect opportunity to drink water and recover. Then he could continue his search. Who knows, maybe he'd even find his old village.

Arthur searched for the tracks of his footsteps as he walked through the forest, but finding a clear trail was difficult. It had rained before he fell asleep, turning the entire forest into mud. Animals or landslides could have covered the tracks. But he had a plan B for that, too. He'd left scratches on the bark of the trees as he came. This wasn't done on purpose, it was done by accident. It was like an impulse, just one of the uncontrollable things that happened after he lost his memory. Arthur didn't think much of it. He'd arrived at the river. The clear water flowed swiftly, the sunlight filtering through the leaves glistening on its surface, practically beckoning him to jump in and be swept away by the current. But for now, he had no such intention. Arthur's only curiosity was his past.

He was careful to step on solid rocks as he searched for a more accessible spot to the river. He was careful not to slip again—I say again because, while at another river, he had stepped on an unstable rock, causing a large rock to roll down, crushing and cracking his foot. He fell into the river, hitting his head and passing out. He woke up in a town, rescued by a doctor. According to the doctor, Arthur had been found by the town's fishermen and thought dead because of his head wound and the strange appearance of his leg. But when he was examined, he was found alive, rushed to a doctor, and miraculously brought back to life. Although the people in the town were kind and didn't take any money, there was no information about his family or village. So he had to leave that place too.

Finally, Arthur found a comfortable position, crouched in the river, and put his hands in the water. The water was icy. He splashed it on his face, bringing him back to his senses. Then, he took out his water bottle, poured out the old water, and replaced it with fresh, cold water. He placed his water bottle back in the compartment inside his suit and stood up. He looked up. He didn't know where he was supposed to go, but he knew exactly what he wanted to reach.

He began searching for a path out of the forest, one hand caressing the hilt of his sword at his belt as he walked. He countered his uneasiness with a vigilant attitude, and continued on his way. When he found the path, he began to walk in the direction that felt most appealing, staying close to the trees as he grew bored, leaving his mark on them. As Arthur continued to advance, he emerged from the forest, and the rest of the path led to a town, but this town was protected by massive walls. Perhaps there was someone here who could help Arthur remember his past, perhaps his family was here. The only way to know was to go inside, and Arthur, without delay, quickened his pace.

As he approached the entrance, two guards at the gate stopped him before he could approach.

“Wait, traveler! Who are you? Who are you from? Where do you come from, and why?” they asked all the questions simultaneously. Arthur, not wanting to close the distance and irritate the men, paused and answered their questions one by one:

“My name is Arthur, Arthur Edward. I am heir to the Edward family, the blacksmith family of Ashenford. I come from a port town. I will only stay a short time before moving on.”

The guards looked at each other in confusion and whispered:

“Edward? Ashenford? Where is that?”

As the guards debated among themselves, Arthur took a slow step forward, and both men turned back to

Arthur. Clearly, they were unsatisfied with the answers.

“I’ve answered your questions. Shouldn’t I pass?” Arthur said.

The dominant guard spoke again:

“Do you take us for fools? There never was a village called Ashenford, and the Edward family is a noble royal family on the other side of the world.”

The guards girded their swords.

“Either leave this place or draw your sword one last time!”

Arthur was shocked. Before this, when he'd told others, no one knew anything—not about his last name, not about his village. But these men, while claiming the village didn't exist, also claimed Arthur's last name wasn't his. Arthur was shaken by this shock and had no desire to fight. So he slowly backed away, turning around to head back into the forest. But with every step, he was racking his brain.

What do you mean, there's no such village before? What do you mean, Arthur's last name is wrong? Was the only clue Arthur had to find his family also wrong? No, this couldn't be true.

Arthur was so lost in his own internal conflict that he realized he'd reached deep into the forest when his foot sank into the mud. He slowly pulled his foot back and looked around. It was silent... but Arthur was hungry. He hadn't eaten all day. As he began to consider what to eat, he pulled out his canteen and quenched his hunger with some water.

He bent down and looked at the mud. He searched for any footprints other than his own. He looked for a rabbit's footprint at the worst, but there were none, so he was out of luck. He rose from his crouch and began to wander through the forest in a random direction. His head was constantly down, his gaze fixed on the animal's footprints, but the shock from his earlier experience was still lingering in his mind. He couldn't fully focus on the hunt.

But then, a miracle happened again. A deer had entered his line of sight, a massive arrow wound etched into its leg. Unable to run any further, he collapsed to the ground near Arthur. Arthur quickly put aside all else and began to silently advance toward the deer, unsheathing his sword and continuing his approach. Seeing the deer lying in agony, he glanced around, for whoever had shot it might have followed the blood trail. Therefore, he needed to finish the deer quickly, grab what little he could, and escape. He raised his sword high above his head. The deer looked at Arthur helplessly, knowing his end was near, but Arthur didn't hesitate, swiftly bringing his sword down and severing the deer's head from its body.

Then he began to cut off both of the deer's legs. He was in a hurry because he felt uneasy. The deer's gaze didn't bother Arthur—if he had to, he would have watched a human being burn without blinking—but killing this deer felt somehow disturbing. So he sped up, taking only his own pieces and leaving the deer there for a hunter or hungry animal to eat. He started to walk away.

When he was sure he was far enough away, he took some branches and struck a flint he'd taken from his pocket together to create a spark, setting a leaf on fire. Then, he placed the leaf under the branches and

carefully made sure the branches were ablaze. When he saw the fire burning, he held his hands over the fire to warm them. While waiting for the fire to subside to cook the meat, he drank slowly from his flask, wondering what to do next. If there were no traces of his past, how could he find it? He seemed to have given up.

When the fire died down, he took some dirty meat from his pack and stuck it on a stone he'd placed in the middle of the fire, letting it cool to an edible consistency. He waited. Then, despite not liking the taste, he ate the meat and tried to sleep to regain his energy and rest until morning. He soon fell asleep and had the same dream again. Arthur was staring at the empty window of Michael's house, listening as his mother and father talked. But the dream didn't end when Arthur returned to his parents; instead, Joel called out to Arthur, beckoning him outside.

"Hey Arthur, do you want to help your dad with the chores outside?"

Arthur jumped up from his seat and smiled, his hands raised in the air to show his joy, and he shouted, "Hooray! I'm helping my dad!"

As Arthur ran to his father, he saw the village sign as he and his father left the house. It read "Dumanova." Before his father could close the door, Arthur turned to look at his mother and heard her screams of curses as her house burned to ashes. Before he could comprehend what had happened, Arthur woke from the nightmare, sitting up in a sweat, looking around in panic. As his breathing slowly eased, he realized there was no one around him and relaxed.

But what comforted him even more was the fact that he had found a potentially true clue about his past:

"Dumanova."

This was his village. He quickly rose from his bed and involuntarily fell into the ashes of the fire. Just like leaving traces, the ashes were involuntary movements from Arthur's old memories, and they distracted him. But he soon regained consciousness and gathered his belongings to head for the walled town. He poured water on himself to make sure the fire was out, then set off.

Even though he had only a name, he felt the joy of finding his family and his past. He imagined the moments he would encounter his family: he would run to his mother and hug her, and since he was almost the same height as his father, he would look her in the eye and shake her hand. He wanted to say, "I survived, I did it, Dad." But he hadn't found them yet—but he was sure he would.

When he got to the town, he encountered the guards again. The men looked at Arthur, trying to remember him, and the dominant guard soon remembered. He placed his hand on his sword hilt.

"Why have you come back, traveler?!"

Arthur drew his sword.

"I will go in; either with my sword stained with blood or with death. But either way, I will go in."

The remaining guard drew his sword, but the dominant guard looked at him and whispered something in his ear. The other guard sheathed his sword, and the dominant guard spoke:

"You are free to come in, but do not cause trouble. I have learned that my wife is pregnant, so I will not stain my sword with blood on this holy day."

Arthur smiled and congratulated the guard and his wife as he passed the men. Then he finally entered. The inside was enormous. It was unlike any town or village he had ever been in. Everyone was dressed in fine cloth, and no one had any bad breath. Arthur's face was perplexed. He began to walk around, stopping at a bar to talk to the bartender and ask for a glass of the cheapest liquor. After paying, he asked the bartender:

"Do you know any towns or villages well?"

The bartender replied:

"My memory has been a bit fuzzy lately, but there's no path money can't open." Arthur caught on and reached into his pocket. He had a few last silver coins. He gently tapped a piece of silver on the table, placed it on his hand, and then, as he slowly handed it over, asked:

"Where is Dumanova village? Or are there people from that village?"

He removed his hand from the money and let the bartender take it. The bartender spoke:

"Ohh, this one won't even cost you any money. I don't know that village."

Arthur was about to curse and draw his sword when the man laughed and confessed.

"I'm joking, man. Calm down. See that white-bearded man behind you? He's sitting there drinking all by himself. That man answers your question."

Arthur got up and walked over to the man, making sure to turn around and buy the cheapest drink. He walked over to him and sat across from him.

"Dumanova village. I don't have time. We'd better hurry."

The man looked at Arthur.

"You won't find what you're looking for in that village. It burned down... It's been about seven years."

Arthur couldn't hide his surprise.

"What? What do you mean, burned? Did anyone get out of there alive?"

Without answering, the man drank from the giant drinking glass next to Arthur's. Then, he stroked his white beard, pondering, and quickly replied:

"There's only one person here who came from that village. But he's been mad for the last seven years, constantly thinking someone's going to kill him and won't leave his house. I don't know if you can learn anything from him."

Something clicked into place in Arthur's mind. Someone in the village had done all this. But what happened to his family? He had to talk to that madman. Perhaps he knew how everything happened.

"Where's the madman?" he asked solemnly.

The whitebearded man took a piece of paper from his pocket, wrote down the madman's location, and handed it to Arthur, but didn't take his hand off the paper. When Arthur realized the reason, he handed him a silver

coin. He took the location, downed the cheap liquor in one gulp, and then immediately sprayed it in the man's face. The drink tasted like horse urine. The old man scowled in anger as Arthur left the house and headed toward the madman's house.

Upon arriving home, he paused at the door and took a deep breath. He tried to calm himself. This was the key to discovering his past. He gently grabbed the doorknob, pulled it towards him, and entered.

The room was filled with an overwhelming odor, as if it hadn't been aired in years. It was pitch black. Arthur drew his sword and called out:

"Is anyone there?"

There was no answer. Instead, someone panting heavily like a dog came from a corner of the house. Arthur sheathed his sword and lunged for it. He grabbed the first thing he touched, lifted it, and slammed it against the wall. When his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he saw an emaciated old man with a beard longer than the white-bearded man's. He gently set the man down. The man made animal-like noises, but his appearance was human.

"Is it true you're from Dumanova village?"

Hearing this, the man screamed and ran quickly to the door.

"No! No! He's here!"

Arthur chased after him, but the man, using both his legs and his hands, was running away like an animal, twisting his spine in an incredible way. Realizing he couldn't catch up, Arthur realized he had to use a path. He entered the first alley and blocked the man's path. When the man turned, he couldn't slow down and was right in front of Arthur.

Arthur quickly grabbed him by the throat. Unclothed, he was easy to hold. He lifted the man into the air:

"Speak! What do you know?!"

The man attempted to take down Arthur as he trembled in fear. Arthur went even wilder, slamming him to the ground. He pressed his foot against his chest and drew his sword.

"Tell me, or I'll kill you! Tell me, what do you know?!"

Just as the man was about to speak, Arthur lost his patience and plunged the sword into his thin, emaciated body. As the man choked on his own blood, Arthur calmly withdrew his foot, wiped the sword clean, and

sheathed it. He checked for witnesses, but there were none. He was in the alley, after all.

He decided to return to the bar. He didn't know what to do anymore. Perhaps he should end his life. The last hopes for his past had been dashed, leaving him exhausted. He went to the bar, determined to spend what little money he had left. He sat down and ordered a third drink.

Just then, a new man entered the bar and sat down next to Arthur. He looked at Arthur.

"Do I know you, sir?"

Arthur seemed to recognize the man from somewhere, but he couldn't place him.

"I don't know."

When the bartender brought the drink, Arthur put it in his pocket but realized he had no money left. The moment he caught the bartender's eye, the kindly newcomer smiled, took out his pocket, and paid for Arthur's drink.

"Thanks, but was it right to spend your money on someone who might not live to see tomorrow?" Arthur

asked.

The man replied with a familiar smile:

"Absolutely. Because when my village burned down, when I thought I was going to die, a man gave me more support than I deserved and kept me alive. Maybe who knows... this drink I bought you will keep you alive."

When Arthur heard about the burning village, he asked in despair:

"What happened to your village?"

The man replied:

"On the coldest night of winter, there was a massacre in the village, and to top it all off, the village was burned to the ground. Rumor has it that the person who burned the village and killed the people was coming after the survivors of that apocalypse."

Before Arthur could hide his surprise, the bartender spoke up:

"The person who spread that rumor was crazy Joel."

Arthur had taken the second blow, but before he could finish, the man spoke again.

"I got lost in conversation, sir, sorry, I forgot to ask your name. I'm Michael, are you?"

Arthur looked at Michael in surprise and said his name:

"My name is Arthur. You survived Dumanova village too? I can't believe it, Michael... It's me. I lost my memory, but I never gave up. I knew I would find you."

Michael was startled to realize it was Arthur's childhood friend, Arthur, stood up, and ran outside. Arthur quickly followed. After a long chase, they fled the town. When Michael tripped over a rock and fell, Arthur caught up with him.

Arthur looked at Michael:

"Why are you running from me?"

Michael rose to his feet, shouting in disgust:

"Because you killed my family and everyone I love!"

Arthur replied in surprise:

"No! You're talking nonsense. I didn't do anything like that... I mean, even if I did, I don't remember it. I've lost my memory."

Michael retorted:

"NONSENSE! For seven years, ever since your father saved me that day, we've known you were after us, intent on killing us! Now you come calling me with amnesia?"

Arthur's surprise slowly faded, and a smile replaced it. That smile turned into laughter.

"Ahh, okay, I got caught. I didn't lose my memory or anything. At least not biologically. When I got hit in the head in that tournament, I was just fooling myself. But you mention it, and thank you, Michael. I'd forgive you if I could, but you know... I killed my father a few hours ago. So I can't leave you alive. He deserved to live more than you."

Michael, furious, drew his sword and shouted angrily:

"You killed your father?! The man was already driven mad by you, and even I couldn't fix him! Tell me, what did killing him gain you, you crazy psychopath!"

Arthur calmly replied:

"Everyone spread my story... 'The maniac who wants to kill everyone in his past.' Frankly, I wouldn't call myself a maniac, but it's a plausible story."

Michael's eyes welled up. He raised his sword in front of him and took a fighting stance.

"I wanted to believe you'd changed. But after what I saw you do that day, even my father didn't believe you'd ever get better. But I... I wanted to believe. I wanted to think you were okay again—"

Arthur listened no more. He lunged at Michael and plunged his sword into his chest. He drew the sword and kicked him to the ground. He leaned over him with a cold gaze:

"You should have burned in that house with your mother and father. You would have suffered less."

Arthur struggled briefly with starting a fire. When it caught fire, he poured the liquor from the bar onto Michael.

"You're right... this beer will keep me alive. But you won't see it."

The flames reached the beer. Michael burst into flames. Arthur watched him burn to ashes all night. When only bones and a few belongings remained, he began to walk. He didn't know where to go. He had no purpose anymore.

He had killed everyone from his past. No one knew him. But that was the problem: while he pretended to forget his past, he didn't really seem to remember it. Now, his entire past was starkly clear in his mind. His life had no meaning anymore. He was the only one who knew his past... and that made him not free, but condemned.

He drew his sword and fell to his knees. He gripped the sword backwards and aimed it at his heart. He took his last breath and plunged the sword into his heart. He closed his eyes, never to open them again. He drifted off into a dream.

It was that winter night again. He was looking out the window at Michael's house.

This time, he didn't go to his father. He went with him to the barn where the animals were. Joel told Arthur to get the goat from the back of the barn. Arthur went back, but there was no goat, nothing.

He barely lifted the rake and returned to the main area, fearing his father would be upset if he returned empty-handed. His father, his eyes filled with tears, attacked Arthur with the knife. Arthur, panicking, pushed the rake away, stabbing his father in the foot. The man fell to the ground in pain. Arthur fled from the barn in fear, but as he did, he dropped the torch, and the wooden barn caught fire.

His father was screaming. Arthur didn't know what to do. He remembered the words his father had taught him:

"If you cut off everything that tries to harm you, you protect yourself. It's not a crime."

He ran to the blacksmith's shop, grabbed a sword, and returned home. His mother was crying on the sofa, her hands over her face. Arthur swung the sword without thinking, severely wounding his mother's legs. As the woman cursed, Arthur took a half-burnt stick from the fireplace and threw it at her.

He waited for the demon to leave him. But he heard only its screams. When the fire spread throughout the house, he fled. He turned and took one last look at the house.

Then he attacked everyone in his path, setting fire to the houses. In one night, the entire village had been reduced to ashes by a 10-year-old boy.

In the morning, Arthur returned to the barn. He wanted to see his father's ashes. But he wasn't there. He had burned down Michael's house, but he had never seen him. So he started following their tracks to make sure they were dead too...