Fringe Element

by S.H. Gall

In order to be a catalyst for catharsis — which is just a fancy way of saying *agent of change* — you have to be willing to condition yourself into something partially inhuman. Only something on the very outskirts of humanity can induce a true change of identity in another.

One who is fully human is capable of identifying the *potential* for someone's catharsis, but lacks the ability to reach within and turn him inside out so that he can see who, and what, he really is. You have to become a kind of alien entity, and this can take many years to accomplish.

It's more than just the matter of a time-span. It's the necessity of agony, the descent into the bottomless abyss that is the self. “Hell” is the most prosaic description available for this experience, but it's deeper than hell. It is truth, the inability to comprehend purpose, the crucial dysfunction which, when followed to its logical conclusion, ends in compassion and grace.

Obviously, I am having a hard time putting this into words for you. I'm sure it doesn't make any sense, but senselessness is its fundamental nature. It has to be this way. You'll simply have to take my word that it is beautiful beyond your ability to envision.

Frankly, I can't recommend this path I've taken. It requires hurting people you love, hurting yourself, hating your very nature, numerous flirtations with Death, and a massive credit card debt. Who wants to take that bait? What are the odds that you'll even survive? Not good.

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But I made it. You should be cautious in my presence; I am perfectly capable of shattering the shell you call your world.

Seth Gall has had work published in China, Canada, and the U.S. His work has appeared in Word Riot, SmokeLong Quarterly, and Nanoism. He is S.H. Gall in decomP Magazine, Nanoism, issues one and 27 of SmokeLong Quarterly, Five Star Literary Stories, and Fictionaut.