

A Disobedient Hand

by Winnie Khaw

I generally consider myself to be a person fair in view as well as appearance, and so balanced in judgment as to be very nearly perfect in symmetry—the physical sense included.

One can then imagine the righteous indignation when I conceived of an upsetting of this ideal state.

The fingers of my right hand commenced to scrape at my table in a most unbearable way, ostensibly to get my attention, although I privately suspect it was a successful endeavor to irritate me into compliance with its unfeasible demands.

“Yes?” I queried politely to this offending personage, if so it may be called, being one of the more unfortunate parts of myself in its likeness to the body's constituted character.

“I feel distinctly unappreciated in my present occupation as your right hand,” it began in an infuriatingly condescending tone, none the less aggravating in that it matched my own consciousness for haughtiness.

“Do you?” I replied with becoming dignity, and, I thought fit to add, a bit of a chill in my voice to halt immediately this outrage of propriety.

“Yes.” It tapped thoughtfully against the wooden surface of aforementioned table, while I watched its deliberate performance with impotent annoyance. “Your left hand possesses far too many privileges, while I, its counterpart and equal, receive nothing but scorn.”

“And well you should,” I retorted, “and as for thinking yourself equal, why, it would not be more ridiculous if a hippo should content in size with an elephant!”

My right hand clenched, knuckles whitening in challenge, then slowly relaxed. “I shall pass over your ungracious comparison and, may I say, injudicious insulting of yourself, to continue in my—”

“—complaint.”

“—observation. I would like to establish certain rules for the future, so that our inevitable relationship, mutually disagreeable as it is, may carry at least a semblance of respectable form.”

“And how do you propose to do this? Or have you already usurped the position of the Brain in your abominable scheming?”

A rasping of nails, harsher and, yes, unbelievable though it may seem, more heinous yet than has ever been executed, answered.

I resolved immediately to suppress this insupportable insubordination.

Loyal as ever it as had, my left hand hurried to struggle and reason with my right. So must have Jacob strove with the angel, and Michael and his heavenly host against Lucifer and his dark demons of below.

Employing my prerogative as master of my corporeal self, I proceeded to alleviate the irritation by swerving my obedient arm and thereby maneuvering the traitorous growth off my right wrist to the mortification of being sat upon.

In such an arrangement it soon surrendered, but I, not content with this lesson, determined to see the punishment through. I was,

perhaps, overzealous in this aim as my hand then expired, and further efforts to revive it proved fruitless.

In some dismay at this development, I nevertheless resolutely decided that all was for the best, and set about my usual duties.

These showed themselves to be more difficult to accomplish than previously, when I had the use of both hands. Notwithstanding, I continued in a determinedly spirited fashion until the reality of things became too apparent to ignore.

Accustomed to the idle weight of my right hand to holding down a paper, my elbow now presumed to grind onto a shamelessly writhing, squirming sheet as I untiringly applied ink to its white plane. All of this activity did not leave me unmoved, and suffice to say all involved emerged disordered and the morally worse for the experience.

In the reading of books I have in the past found great pleasure; now, it was to be the supreme trial of self-will. The starch newness of the pages and their maddening proclivity to snap closed frequently tried my patience as my newly single left hand fought valiantly to keep it open.

Needless to say, this state of affairs could not, like a bad soap opera, go on.

The regretful arrangement to which I had subjected myself I longed to be rid of, and I yearned to hold once again the prior understanding that had lent to a more successful existence than now.

Providence heard my cries. At that moment, like a Pinocchio mysteriously drowned though made of wood, and then roused to life,

my right hand surged to tingling awareness and not a little discomfort as it rediscovered feeling.

“Yes! Awake, my child, my real boy! You have come back to me as a prodigal son, and I would welcome you with two arms if you were not already attached to one of them! Ah, my love and forgiveness delve deep as the sea, and never again shall we part, no, not if some villainous knife should cleave us.”

“Because that sort of incident, clearly unpleasant for those affected, would have no greater consequences.” So grumpily returned my right hand, flexing experimentally and wondering anew at the marvelous length of its slim fingers, the pale coral pink of its delicate nails, which wanted but a little paring to render them perfection, and so on in this vein.

But I thrilled to even this uncivilized manner, and felt the happier because my wayward hand had seemingly forgotten of our former dispute, and was content in its proper place.

And so peace returned, harmony restored, I set out to achieve the highest limits of academic excellence.

Presently, my nose began to itch.

