

I am in the midst of writing a sci-fi dystopian book. What makes my book different is that many of the main characters are actually powerful philosophers. Philosophers like Plato, Nietzsche, Camus, Aristotle. One of my characters, Johnny, is a stoic philosopher.

The aim of my book is to help make philosophy cool, thereby encouraging people to learn more about philosophy.

The following is an excerpt from my soon to be published book, "The Phoenix Cycle: Part 1."

In this excerpt, Johnny goes over some of the basics of Stoicism. The General (actually The Marquis de Sade) challenges his beliefs. See if you can catch it!

Please be advised that this content is PG-13 due to some cursing and graphic content.

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The General walked over to Johnny and held out a glass for Johnny to take. "Oh, of course!" The General set the wine glasses on the arms of his

wooden chair and came back to untie Johnny's arm. Johnny continued to gaze into the fire, hypnotized as the young girl slowly blew away into the setting sky.

"So let me guess." said The General as he began loosening the rope that had curled itself into a tense knot around Johnny's right wrist. "She was the girl next door. You grew up seeing her on the other side of your window..."

Occasionally, you could muster the strength to 'run into' her when you were taking out the trash." The General raised an eyebrow and begrudgingly changed his tone as he continued his hypothesis.

"When you saw she had brought other boys home, you found that time had halted while you laid in your bed...the only sensation you got from your evening dinner was from its steam, which fumigated your face." The General droned on. "But when the boy had gone you were first in line to offer a shoulder. You became her friend." The General glanced up and cringed. "You were, 'nice.'"

The General returned his attention to the knot. "But somehow, someway, you bridged that friendship gap, didn't you.

How nice.

And she was amazing wasn't she. Ohh, she wasn't perfect but her imperfections made her all the more real. Which is exactly what you wanted. She had become more than an image on the other side of the window. She became yours. "

The knot around Johnny's wrist melted and slid off.

Johnny's arm dropped down and hung motionless, unaroused by its regained freedom. The General looped around Johnny's chair and drew a long rod from his bag. Johnny's eyes began to leak as sorrow flooded his cognizance. The General paced over to the fire, the grass quietly crunching beneath his feet. The flames mirrored themselves upon his night black aviators.

"Someone cared; you were actually worth something. Your actions had meaning. She made you feel like a real man." The General took a long breath and began to stoke the fire with the long metal rod with Johnny sitting just over his back left shoulder.

"She gave you virtue." The metal rod glided over the burning young girl's hand. It slid beneath her fingertips and slowly began to elevate her hand upward.

"Stop!" shouted Johnny.

The general turned towards the trembling young man strapped to the chair. Johnny's heart fell silent. The fire didn't dare crack. The General stared into Johnny's green eyes, his countenance devoid of expression. The poker went still, and held the young girl's hand.

The two stared at one another. Johnny shook uncontrollably as his eyes sunk into the mordant tar pits of The General's glasses. Blackness spilled out from the aviator's reflective lenses, threatening to blot out Johnny's peripherals and choke him in a world of darkness. Sadly, even with a free hand Johnny couldn't get a grip.

The General's face suddenly cringed. He threw the poker upward and stabbed it into the charcoals of the fire. The young girl's hand fell back into the flame. The General went at Johnny and whipped out a pistol from his jacket. The General shoved the gun into Johnny's face. "So, you *can* talk!" The general grabbed Johnny's shoulders and shook him so violently Johnny's neck felt a quick snap. "You want me to stop!" Shouted the General, his voice trebled like a 40-year smoker. The General pressed his face close to Johnny snapping his jowls like a Rottweiler ready to rip his face off, "You want this to be over!"

The General reared back and grabbed Johnny's forearm. He slapped the pistol into Johnny's hand. "Then end it!" The General jammed the gun into his own chest.

Johnny swooned in his chair, unable to fully grasp The General's suicidal behavior. He felt like he was broiling beside the flames. His lips moved mechanically, as if it were a built in defense mechanism. "I have virtue."

The General cringed, "You! Virtuous?! Dump that half-assed belief that by restraining yourself from doing what you lust for, you are somehow virtuous!"

Johnny's looked up into the black clouded sky. "I follow nature's river."

"Follow nature's river?" The General looked up at the same dead sky and began to patronize. "I don't remember the last time water came from those clouds."

"The world began as fire. It will end as fire. It's okay. I will go with nature. I will lose my way to passion."

‘Alright, that’s enough.’ The General backhanded Johnny repeatedly. Johnny fell out of his meditative state. The General shouted, “The only fire you need to worry about is the spark from my shell casing!”

Johnny’s eyes fell upon The General’s reflection-less aviators.

"Not a slave to passion?" The General shouted. "Nature is passion! Nature doesn’t think! It does not reflect, it does not question what it does. It only does what it feels."

Now do it! Listen to what you want right now and do it! Follow that river, let it run with blood!" The General’s thumb crept up to the gun’s barrel and cocked back the firing hammer. “No,” mumbled Johnny.

“You think being passive will stop me?" The General looked behind himself and pointed at the fire, "They thought that too!"

Johnny glanced at the stack of burning flesh. He began hyperventilating, his beliefs strained. The gun shook wildly in his hand; fighting with itself on what to do.

The General saw Johnny's finger slowly nearing the hair-pin trigger. The General breathed venom, "I killed the love of your life, I killed everyone you ever knew! I have taken everything, everything away from you!" The General lowered himself to Johnny's quivering eye level and spoke with Romeo-like passion, "...and I loved it."

Johnny tried to push through the burning pain, but couldn't help acknowledging the capabilities of the gun in his hand. The gun's sights drunkenly swayed. The General shook Johnny and barked, "You feel that? That urge secreting from your loins!" The General drove his fist into Johnny's groin. Johnny lurched forward. The General's arm grabbed his hair and pushed him back up. "You feel it don't you! That burning desire...to kill me? You feel it infecting you more with every pump of your heart." The General brought his head back, he let the fire crackle. His head tilted. "It's arousing isn't it?"

Johnny's lips quivered as they parted, "I just want to be happy..." The General crept in, his hand placed itself reassuringly on Steve's shoulder, the other kept the gun's barrel pointed square at his chest. "Good. Then you know what you have to do, because you and I both know...I'll never stop."

"But I can't...I can't be happy if I am some...some monster. A monster like you!" Johnny pushed himself away from The General's cold embrace. He screamed. His DLS cracked. Johnny swung the gun under his head and pulled the trigger.

Bang.

A quick flash shot out from the barrel. A casing flung out from the chamber and pinged against The General's aviators. Smoke puffed out from the barrel between the slits of the gun and Johnny's chin. Sulfur invaded their lungs.

Johnny looked at The General, wide eyed, in total shock.

The General glared at Johnny. He huffed and slowly rolled his head around. Johnny's hand began to quiver again, but continued to jam the gun into the floor of Johnny's chin.

"God, you are stupid," The General said. The General stood up, growling as he did so; his older age keeping him down. He swiped the quivering gun from Johnny's hand. The General stood over Johnny and spat, "You really think you

could do that?"

The General pointed the gun at Johnny's chest and fired in three rapid successions. Johnny winced with every shot as his will to live slowly rose to stable levels. The General shook his head as he watched Johnny squirm in his seat.

"Idiot."

The General turned on his heel and walked back to the fire. He grabbed the metal poker and drew it out of the fire. He looked up into the distance and waited for the last ray of light to trickle away.

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You can read and learn more about my series by visiting my kickstarter.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1568438622/the-phoenix-cycle>