

## HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL 1000 WORDS

Hope sat on the floor in the corner, her chin resting on her knees, her lovely legs exposed under her short dress. But she was sad. Once again her brothers were arguing noisily taking away any chance of sleep and even worse stopping the thought of planning an escape from this incarceration. Anger was furious, as always. Disease looked sick, but better than Death whose pale face contrasted with his black cloak. Despair was whinging endlessly whilst Famine was crawling around the floor looking for crumbs. Hatred and Jealousy were exchanging blows. It was nothing new.

All her life she'd put up with them, and given she was immortal that was one hell of a long time. Now Zeus had rounded them up, shoved them in a box, and sent them down to Earth to be protected by Pandora, the first woman. Hope wanted out of there, back to Olympus where the arguments were tolerable during the hedonistic orgies Gods staged.

Then she heard Infidelity whispering to the mortal through the tiny crack that ran around this, their small world. "Oh beautiful, I'm here for you" he sighed. "Let me transport you to heaven as you let me wrap you in my loving arms. Where have you been all my life you gorgeous woman?" She had heard it all before as he had spent his time bedding all the Nymphs he could find. Most of the Shepherds too as he really didn't care who he shafted! But, as always, it worked. His twin Temptation assisted and the box lid opened.

Pandemonium followed. Every one of these spiteful sprites flew up, forced the lid wide then, hissing and spitting, flailed at the hapless human looking confusedly down as she realised what she'd done. Hope had no time to move before Pandora slammed the lid shut so found herself alone. Bad as the bedlam of the box had been, an eternal solitary confinement was unthinkable. She had to escape and of course she had the gift to give the world that was her function. Where her family brought pain, she gave Hope.

So she pleaded. "Let me free too. I can restore goodness to your lives." "No way" came the harsh response, but Hope could beg with the best of them. "My dear Pandora" she wheedled "I am your only hope. If you do you'll be remembered for ever, your name synonymous with providing my gift for your fellow humans. And above all", and this was her trump card "how could it be made worse? You have just blown humanity's idyllic existence so it's got to be better with me out there."

Pandora had sealed the surround of the box with transparent single-use plastic, created by Hope's brother Environmental-destruction, and was now peering in. Hope switched on her magnificent lighting display, donned her stunning smile and shimmered. Pandora was seduced. Hope was released into the world promising to undo the harm the rest of her kin were waging. She kissed Pandora and disappeared leaving a trail of moonlight in her wake. Pandora felt relieved; released from guilt.

It is now millennia later. Countless people have been buried following the actions of Hope's relatives. Floods, earthquakes, endless wars, incurable plagues, self inflicted STDs, famines and pointless massacres have ensued and Poverty, perhaps the most successful of the clan, caused billions of cruel deaths. Hope never rested.

Midnight, May 15th 2019. She's outside the bars of Cell H 5 22 in Pentonville watching Chas being plagued by Self-Doubt, Anger and Dread as he awaits yet another parole hearing. Chas is on IPP, (Imprisonment for Public Protection), a cruel punishment with no end-date, scrapped for new cases in 2012 but continuing for some already in prison. He'll see the Board the next day as he has many times before. He's anguished, his life at home collapsing because his loved ones are afraid he will never get out. Hope resolves to take control.

She slips through the broken window glass and orders her brothers out. Hope is a powerful spirit. She approaches Chas, flings her arms around him caressing him, whispering encouragement in his ear. She stays talking the whole night and when officers come to collect him at 9 a.m. he is scrubbed up; in his best clothes; marching out with confidence and resolution. Hope smiles, then vanishes.

Fast forward to 11 pm. Hope is sitting on the floor in the corner, her chin resting on her knees, her lovely legs exposed under her short dress. But she is sad. Once again her brothers are arguing noisily taking away any chance of sleep and even worse stopping the thought of planning an escape from this incarceration. Anger is furious, as always. Disease looks sick, but better than Death whose pale face contrasts with his black cloak. Despair whinges endlessly whilst Famine crawls around the floor looking for crumbs. Hatred and Jealousy exchange blows. It is nothing new. What is new is the setting. All hell is breaking out on H Wing. Officers are forcing the door which Chas had barricaded. He lays on the floor, dead, his TV lead tied around his neck. He realised he would be rejected from the moment the hearing started. His partner had told him she had decided to leave him. He couldn't cope any more.

Hope's brothers all claim this was their doing. They had, they assert, driven him to this thus fulfilling their eternal task. But Hope stands up. Her dress, usually shining white is now stained with blood and when she smiles it is a sneer. Her clear white teeth are visible, neat but pointed and sharp. Her voice, so sweet and soft, now rasps harshly. "So you're satisfied my fine family? You have no cause for satisfaction in this. It was not your doing. It is never your doing. You seek to avoid the obvious truth. In all death and destruction wreaked on Earth, for this human and every other, it is always Hope that kills."