**The First Disciple**

During the writing of the album I was practicing a lot of oud (Arabic lute). I have a great teacher in Antwerp, his name’s Tarek Alsayed, a brilliant Syrian musician who found refuge in Belgium. Largely thanks to him I was able to learn to play quite well over the last two years. ‘The First Disciple’ started as a melody on the oud which I kept coming back to every time I picked up the instrument. I looped the little melody and started playing chords over it with an old nylon string guitar. The sound of these two instruments together sounded so beautiful to me. After writing this track these two instruments combined became the core elements for a lot of the songs on the album. In a way writing this song, both lyrically and melodically, was a sort of transition into new territory. Concerning the lyrics: On the surface it’s a song directed towards a prophet-like figure, sung by his first disciple. When you look at the lyrics from a metaphysical point of view though, you could also interpret them as somebody singing to himself. The first disciple then being the pure, sincere, uncorrupted energy which makes you discover your passions and chase after them quite innocently. The prophet being your body with all its earthly flaws and desires, which gets distracted and corrupted as you grow into adulthood.

Long after I had written the song I read an article called ‘Kahlil Gibran and the Fall of the Prophet’ by John Dodge. I began to see a lot of connections between this article and my tune, which was funny because I hadn’t been dwelling in Gibran’s world for some time. I’ve always been a huge fan of his work, especially of his most famous ‘The Prophet’, which was an important source of inspiration for my first album ‘Amir’. The first few times I read this book as a teenager I loved and believed every word in it.  It seemed almost too wise and transcendent for one man to have written it. It made the writer seem like a prophet himself. As I grew older and read more about Gibran’s life I came to know that he wasn’t saint-like at all. In fact he often did the exact opposite of what he was preaching in his work. I still think it is one of the most beautiful works ever made though. Perhaps even more so, knowing that the writer himself was far from perfect. It therefore reminds me of a lot of pop culture, where we’ve made our own new prophets, worshiping at the altar of their art. Somehow believing them to be better than us. Perhaps it has as much to do with these prophets mystifying themselves as with their audiences wanting to see it in them? Kahlil Gibran could as much as myself be the prophet in my song ‘The First Disciple’. Both of us ‘sacrificed’ parts of ourselves for our work. For the very unholy motivation to be desired. Of course this is not the main reason behind my work. Nor will it have been the main one behind Gibran’s work. There is passion, beauty and sincerity to be found at the source. Art wouldn’t survive without it. Only, I would be fooling myself if I wouldn’t be honest about darker longings too.

Anyway, I think it’s important for every listener to have their own interpretation and/or personal meaning they can connect to a song. This one in particular brings up different questions, images, and thoughts every time I sing -or listen to- it, and I hope it has the same effect on others.

Side note: I love the recording and its process and feel like the band has lifted it to a whole other level. As with most songs on this record I hear every band member’s personality shining through in the music. When Colin Greenwood's rousing bass line and Ruben Vanhoutte’s typical dark percussive drumming hit in one by one the track is moved into new sonical territory, (at parts even danceable? :-) ), while staying true to the song’s sober and narrative core. I feel like ‘The First Disciple’ sits at the heart of the album and is definitely one of my favorite tracks on there.