

## DENEME DREAMS

Having not slept well the previous night, M., half dressed and already cold from the small, square ceramic tiles of his bathroom floor, resignedly turned his shower handle as far as he could to the right. He took the rest of his clothes off, folding them first then stacking them one on another according to size and shape. He unfolded the chair sitting behind the radiator that had been unable to find an appropriate location after moving in to his new apartment and laid his clothes on top of it.

"It will save on my water bill and I'm in a hurry anyway" said the young man.

Despite the conclusion, tired indecision prevented him from immediately stepping in and he instead proceeded to pace the room. Making an oval route between his shower and the wall across from it, he thought of his coming day, his first day in this country, more importantly, his first day at his new position.

"I have to maintain a better record of things than before" he murmured to himself. "- regardless of how small or seemingly insignificant, remaining conscious of what happens and consistent in my thinking is paramount."

His thoughts drifting, attempting to remember the lies that were necessary to receive his new position, he realized with a quiet dread that yesterday had been his Grandmother's birthday and that he hadn't so much as sent a postcard to her. He could picture it quite clearly, she, alone

in the unkempt house left behind from his late grandfather, waiting patiently for any type of comfort other than the difficult memories, only to be left once more alone, not from red clawed nature, but his own carelessness.

With taking his new position, he had gone against the wishes of his family and moved to a distant country, unable to visit except on the rarest of occasions and holidays, isolating himself and alienating the precious few who were close to him.

The spiraling thoughts were interrupted however, as protruding porcelain floated out of his clumsy disregard for the corner containing the sink; and stopping there, the rim of his attacker now a support, he caught his own reflection, as any young person would, in the mirror in front of him. One could see a certain senselessness in the plain expression of his face, with his eyes, a good mixture of green and brown, trying to fall into their mirrored twins in an attempt to reclaim the infinity that was presumed to be behind them.

Involuntary memories erupting from this reflecting temporal tie, flashed in his mind, mocking him with their equal permanence and incompleteness. Only when steam shrouded his face did he remember absently that the hot and cold in his new home were inverted and promptly reversed the handle's direction.

He looked unintelligibly at the drain of the shower, water continuously going in, unable to decide between the water it received now and what it had before except that one would hopefully help him wake up.

"There are millions of people who take cold showers everyday, and there is no reasonable objection against it, efficient and hygienically satisfactory." But something worried him.

"There is no reason against it" he kept repeating

"No reason against it."

Spinning there, eyes closed with his head straining involuntarily away from the freezing water into the light, he imagined himself to be standing on top of a revolving stool in an old fashioned diner. Its crowded customers, the people of his life, arranged in a circle below him, looked at him with all the imperceptible knowing a lifetime acquaintance has. Their vividly dancing colour, verdant fluorescents, bubbling from body to body, mixed and blurred the outlines separating them. Circulating faces attached to shells of bodies that seemed empty, as if not made out of flesh and bone, smiled artificially at him.

With every rotation of the young man's body, the formerly familiar faces, so cherished and fondly remembered, took on a slowly sinister tone, the colors gradually darkened. They stared at him, but for what reason was unknown, all that could be felt was the unity in their intent. As the ever darkening tones turned to shadows, the people changed too, growing to an enormous height, curving their backs against the ceiling of the small room to look down on him with crooked grins. Closing in, approaching him playfully slowly, the young man realized that he wasn't a member of this group at all, but rather a skewered column of meat on a rotisserie.

#

Many years had passed since that day and that particular nightmare. Another country, another job, another life. Numbness slowly branched down though M's body from his head where cold water had been running too long. Blinking, he shook his head repeatedly to break his reverie.

He quickly dressed and made his way to his cheap, ready-to-assemble writing desk to find the old letter he needed in such circumstances. The short, poorly written love letter had innumerable creases from constant folding and unfolding. Its envelope was even torn in several places and covered in coffee stains.

Actions of a wounded and clouded heart and the memory of their last kiss, a mixture of regret and desire, blended together with an inchoate fantasy of an impossible future.

The young man cast an obligatory glance at the scar on his left hand that this treasured letter had given him a year before. In an act of closure, he had thrown it from his balcony, only to grasp for it immediately in the dancing wind, cutting himself on a jagged part of the railing.

His fist closed tightly as he imagined his first day at his new position, viscerally dreading the absurd collage of teeth, hands, and empty conversation.

Sitting in his desk now, head down towards the letter, shoulders dejectedly sunken, he hoped to mine just a little bit more of its already exhausted tenderness – a warmth that had been the way point so many times before for the beaten down optimist inside him.

He finally looked at the digital display on his phone and willed himself away from the letter and beyond the bedroom to take his usual coffee at the apartment's dominating window that overlooked the street below. He observed the spring morning. There was a warm breeze streaming through his apartment, carrying with it the heavy aroma of freshly cut grass. He looked out as the warming sun cascaded down on the world that had become so foreign to him. Adrift in memories, he could feel the sunshine on his cheeks, its perennial promise of a new day warming his skin.

Trying to remember the shortcomings of yesterday, he closed his eyes and held his breath.

Almost immediately however, he opened them again to the sound of a baby bird just below the outside windowsill. It was in a terrible state, crookedly trying to stand, blood and feathers everywhere.

Indecision racked his conscience as the antagonistic rush of hormones and pragmatic memories coursed through him. His reason finally relented under the combined pressure of immediacy and tethered empathy, and he resolved not to abandon the bird to darkness and death.

This one act of kindness, M thought, regardless of how small or futile, should mark the end of the shadow of detached acceptance that had come to fill his life.

“There has to be more than this, I don't care if I'm late”

Quickly, but clumsily, M. retrieved the only container suitable for the bird's dimensions – a shoebox he'd all but forgotten for shoes that he'd worn exactly once before for his position's interview many months ago. The over priced Italian shoes made for a comical contrast to their cheap cardboard covering. He carefully lined the shoebox with any soft item within arms reach, dirty clothes and a towel, then rushed back to the window, his hands shaking, eager to finally do something his conscience could condone.

“There is always hope” He whispered unconsciously.

He pushed a chair under the window and, almost jumping, stepped up and out on the landing connecting his building to the adjacent apartment complex. Finally aware of M's

presence, the small bird looked at the now sweating young man, instinctively afraid, and cried with its continually diminishing strength for something its blind, bird genes would recognize.

M. tried to console the broken baby bird. He softly echoed the comforting phrases in the languages he knew that he associated with such moments.

His voice failed to reflect his initial resolve and the words fell flat as he realized the uselessness of the gesture, the absurdity of the bird understanding any of the very human customs he was familiar with.

M. scooped the baby bird into the shoebox as gently as his coarse senses would allow. He set the box inside, and then, from an imagined lack of time, almost leapt back inside, in the process crushing part of the flower pot he had bought last week, the only other living companion in the apartment.

His mind raced, trying to concentrate on the next step to take, then suddenly his stomach dropped. His eyes took on a thousand yard stare, he knew the end of this particular story. What animal clinic would even take this bird and with what imaginary money would he pay the veterinarian?

He looked down at the shoebox he had so carefully prepared, trying to transmit some type of equanimity or understanding to the dying bird, but only succeeded in adding to its morbid fear. The crying became louder and its breathing became irregular.

The precious few moments remaining to the bird were swallowed by the doldrums of pain, dilating their intensity and extending their duration. M. tried to imagine the nothingness the bird had been before its birth, tried to remind himself of the immortality of the atoms it was

composed of now, but failed in stilling his human heart and all its involuntary prejudices towards death.

The bird, unconscious and leaking little droplets of blood, was barely inhaling and M knew it would be dead soon. It looked a hundred years old, completely shriveled, its legs unnaturally bent, crumpled over in its own blood. Looking at it like this, he could see that it was a small sparrow, a terribly common, perfectly precious, little thing.

“Words always fall short— even shorter with animals maybe, but my words were all I could give to you”

The morning sun gleamed off the glossy, dead eyes of the baby bird while the warm breeze rustled its feathers.