

And So They Kept Living

~~*Divyanshu Singh*

So this girl, in the crowd of thousands, no, millions, remained asleep that day. Her bed was warm, though not as warm as her heart had been just a couple of days ago. Outside, rain poured down, but the earth, earth wasn't as wet as the pillow she made damp. The clock chimed 10 o'clock in the morning, and nothing happened. "Why did it have to chime?" She thought, yes, she was alive, unfortunately, she was alive in her room where 10 O'clock meant nothing to her. Does that really count as alive? "Maybe, just maybe, there might exist a universe where the 10 o'clock on my clock means nothing to me. Does living in that universe also count as 'being alive?'" Her bloodshot eyes questioned this to some god knows entity residing in her head. Yet once again the answer, as always, lost its way in the screaming, that came with the silence wide. Her entire body, numb, had become as dead as the rock in the farthest corner of the world untouched, unknown, and unimaginable. Yet her mind was awake, pardon, it was way more than just awake, it was fighting, fighting with the tempest of all kinds of emotions but joy. She was furious, and at the same time, she was not. She was calm, and again, she was not. She was sleeping, but her mind was raging around like a hungry mad dog running for a small cat to feed upon. But not that dog, and please, not that cat again. The bullets of emotions her mind was firing at the image of that dog were fatal enough to blow up an entire building, but she knew, the buildings were not guilty of that act she was now suffering from.

Her eyes shut, a gleam of disgust shivered on her face, disgust for the body she tied to for an entire life, a body that was incapable of even reacting to a stimulus that took away her everything. Before this day, she never, not even once in her lifetime had known her body could deserve so much loathing but love that once she did, and now that is gone. She cursed her body, and after a minute of that continuous flow of cursing, she reminded herself of something that efficiently deserves that energy well. It was not she who slaughtered her sunshine herself, it was not she who wished to live a life where 10 AMs of her life were as hollow as a pin-pricked egg, she never in a million years would have imagined doing that, yet it happened. The ache that her heart was living through rightfully belonged to the one who not only dared but also brought it up to her. That thing will suffer. She will make it suffer. Her dedication was at its peak, and her peak lay way beyond that of our normal understanding. Sensation surged through her veins, and miraculously she found herself out of the bed, on her legs. As her fingers wrapped around the handle of the baseball bat, she felt an electric surge of power flow through her. In that moment, she knew that she was powerful. With a clear goal in sight, she lifted the bat, ready to finish it all once and for all. And thus she went off.

On a typical cloudy day, she strolled down the road, gazing at the cracks on the pavement and the shells housing snails. It was not so late when her eyes concluded the search by setting still on a figure of a dog. There was the dog she had been searching for, frolicking with her two puppies while a young boy fed them biscuits. She hesitated before approaching the dog, but eventually, she gathered the courage to go and sit. The boy appeared content, and she couldn't help but wonder if she should put on a happy face too. "Should I look happy too?" she questioned herself. "Nah, it's all good," came the response.

"Do you like her?" she asked, her voice barely a whisper. The boy without changing much of his expressions replied, "I like his eyes," a pause, "And his teeth too.", his words spoke, beaming with delight.

"And what's with the biscuits?"

"I had a cat," he mumbled. "She passed away a couple of weeks ago. Now I have no clue what to do with the biscuits.", the boy's eyes sparkled as he explained. She studied him for a moment, then asked, "Do you think your cat would like you sharing his biscuits with someone else?" The young boy turned to her, calmly, looked straight into her eyes and in a hushed tone, he replied, "Didn't I tell you already? She's dead. Gone now. She wouldn't be watching me anymore." She paused. Her eyes drifted to a nearby dog as he eating the biscuits the boy had tossed earlier.

Suddenly, the boy began speaking again. "I once had to spend a night in the hospital. The next morning, when I came back, as soon as she heard my voice, she came running. Meowing and purring,

her fur matted with tears. She had been up all night, waiting for me. I saw the look in her eyes. It was as if she had found the most precious treasure in the world, and that treasure was me. In that moment, I realized that my cat would give up anything just to be with me. But when she died, I realized that even everything combined wouldn't be enough for us to have our treasures back."

The girl sat in silence, silence broken only by the whimpers of the dog and the rustling of leaves in the wind.

The boy gazed at her with a curious expression etched across his face. In an instant, he posed the question that caught her off guard, "What happened to your cat?". The question, sharp and unexpected, cut through her armor. She was taken aback, as she had never mentioned her feline companion to him before. However, before she could utter a single word, the young boy spoke again. "I can see those scratches on your wrists, only cat people get those. She loved you, I can tell. And your eyes, all puffy and red, like seems like you had good cry after all.

He took a deep breath before continuing, his voice slightly shaky. "I'm trying everything I could to give those puppies the best life possible. Mumma told me our cat was going to have babies in the next few weeks, I eagerly waited for the them to arrive. I had everything planned out - their names, their food, their bed, and even their clothes. But she passed, everything fell apart. I cried for days. My time, my life, my joy, and everything else around me felt nothing but frozen. To be honest I kind of personally liked that. It was a moment where I wasn't happy or sad, but I was still capable of feeling something. I learned that if it wasn't peace, then what was it? I felt lost, but soon I also realized that I had the power to reshape my world, all on my own. Nothing had stopped, no time, no love, no life, nothing. It was just my love that wanted it to be that way and I'm proud of it. I'm proud of my tears which streamed down my cheeks in the memories of my love. It was real."

"It 'is' real, it always will be.", the girl continued him with a drop of tear kissing her cheeks. She patted her head and again silence ruled. The girl's eyes glistened with a drop of tear that slowly kissed her cheeks as she spoke, "It 'is' real, it always will be." The words came out of her mouth, heavy with emotion, and then silence ruled once again. Suddenly, the boy broke the silence, his tone changing as he asked, "Do you play baseball? If you do, would you be interested in joining us to play at 5?" The girl's face lit up with a smile as she replied, "Sure." And just like that, the world seemed a little brighter.

~~Divyanshu Singh is a writer of short stories whose narratives evoke the emotion of pity—a keen drive for survival.