

Waiting

and Other Poems

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Hidden in the Kitchen

I am a big fat hypotenuse yet again,
leaning against the kitchen wall,
sipping water from a coffee mug
after waking from sleep at 2:37am.

Anything that sets foot in my mind
whenever I'm awake at this time of night
sinks like an anvil in unrelenting quicksand,
save for the thought that hidden
somewhere in my kitchen
was the treasure of a secret poem.

Sadly, no matter how hard I tried,
I never found this hidden stash of literary chocolate
anywhere in this corner of my vapid apartment.

I began to think that maybe
it was once in the kettle on the stove,
and flew away in one of those whistling glissandos
while I prepared a cup of tea.

Or perhaps, God forbid, it found its way
in a forgotten box of lo mein in the fridge,
turned bad over time and got thrown away
with the rest of my household rubbish.

Secretly, I was still hoping that it was somewhere
inside my faucet, and would literally fall into my hands
one of these days while I'm doing the dishes
or washing some vegetables I retrieved from the market.

Or better yet, hiding like a prize in a box of cereal,
now waiting in the cupboard to surprise me
first thing in the morning.

Wherever it was, it would be foolish to go about
looking for it now — turning over pots and pans,
bottles and boxes in the middle of the night,
in search of one tiny piece of tasteful literature.

So I finish my water, go back to bed,
and let loose one deep and musical breath,
wishing I could return to the coffee shop in my dream
where I left you and your cup of cappuccino

right before this awkward intermission.

Besides, for all I know,
that pesky little bugger had already run away,
basking in the light of some beautiful poet's eyes,
in a scented page of some leather-bound notebook.

Nothing and a Candle Flame

Years ago, for six weeks, I lived in a humble cottage

in a small farming village atop a quiet mountain.

Every night in this town,

I joined the stars in motionless waiting

for the unfurling of a fitting end

to the warm symphony of day.

And every night,

with the white dust in the sky as my witness,

nothing happened.

However, this nothing took place

with such grandeur and nobility,

that I'm compelled to say

he was the most dignified nothing

I've ever seen —

arguably comparable to the first great Nothing

who relinquished much power

to the Everything that ensued.

Yet he also conquered with such valiant force,

setting out every sundown towards never and nowhere,

imposing the sovereignty of his rapturous absence.

And with the greatest passion
ever witnessed among his kind,
he sought to accomplish as much nothing
as nothingly possible.

Here was an Odysseus, or a Hercules
among their gods and heroes;
a fearless knight; a soldier-king.

Up until the moment of his death,
five weeks into my stay,
when in the middle of the night
a candle was lit in a tiny hut
I could see from across my window,
and there the stillness of space
was broken with a feverish flicker —

sensuous flame undulating like hips
that mounted the mightiest of warriors.

Her graceful entrance
onto the stage of existence

ending the brief but glorious life
of an enchanted emptiness.

I imagine what might've followed was
the traditional period of mourning for royalty,
as well as the enigmatic eulogies
wherein his subjects practically say
a whole lot of nothing.

The thought of it all threw me into
a long and arduous river of amazement
where I swam for days,
meditating on the majesty of nonexistence,
and the long line of kings and men
who've fallen at the feet
of a woman dancing like fire.

Imaginary Father

I sent you a parcel yesterday.

Two books:

one for your seventh birthday,

the other for Christmas.

I would've sent you the days under the sun

when we'd kick a soccer ball around

in a certain sunken garden,

but they just wouldn't fit

in any of the boxes at the post office.

Then I thought of getting you that moment

when you would speed off in your bike,

after I'd taken off the training wheels

and all you had left was my hand under the seat.

Sadly, the salesman turned me down,

and said I couldn't afford the cost of

such a priceless piece of time.

I remember you telling me on Skype

how much you wanted

a handful of snow to play with,
but for obvious reasons,
I couldn't find a way
to give you that either.

And as for the puppy you requested,
well, I suppose you have to talk
to *Nanay* about that.

I hope you believe me when I say
that I've considered all options
before deciding what to put in a package
and send flying over clouds and rooftops,
including that dream of yours
to take a bite off the Chocolate Hills in Bohol.

Unfortunately, for the moment at least,
this is the best I could do,
and all I could give.

Hence, I bought a couple of books
about a scholarly mouse and his clever brethren,
who go on adventures and solve mysteries

one exciting escapade at a time.

I figured,

the least I could give you

is a vivid imagination —

a place in your mind where I could stay forever,

eternally strong and beautiful,

and more importantly,

right beside you wherever you go.

Little Boy Insomniac

I cannot sleep

though I can dream

all things beyond

reality's stream.

But if time should come

that I dream no longer,

then let me sleep forever.

Greater than 9.8 m/s^2

I confess.

I've spent more than your average number of nights
sitting by the window,
throwing my sight as far as I can,
with foolish hopes of my vision,
somehow, circling the globe along that singular arc
that connects you and me in the shortest possible distance
across this spinning sphere in space,
conjuring up the means to see you
from thousands of miles away.

After all, I figured,
gravity bends light.

And as far as I know,
this force that pulls the yearning tides
rushing through my veins,

this thirst to drink the oceans in your embrace
bears upon my shoulders like a hundred giant moons,
and pulls me heavily to the center of the earth.

Is this not gravity?

When inside, my blood rushes up in waves

towards your body in the sky?

Inside,

I fall endlessly.

And yet this is what keeps me

from flying off into oblivion at any given moment —

this unshakable,

personal kind of gravity,

which, on kind and fateful nights

when I'm able to dream,

is strong enough to bend light

across the surface of the earth,

just enough,

such that whenever you glance in my direction,

somehow, you find me looking at you:

a tiny speck across a huge distance,

waving.

Night Vision

Your eyes — two mirrors facing the heavens at night,
placid lakes reflecting our half of the universe.

Laid down on my back I watched the stars
watch me drift into incoherence.

You never gazed at me this long before,
though seven days were never enough back then,

each rise of the moon always coming too soon, too soon.

Now the clocks have gone asleep,

and all the suns are stuck in the skies.

My fingers curl and melt with a foreign breeze

where your knuckles used to be whenever you'd hold me.

Against this cold, my love, I have no skin.

Therefore I asked my senses

who among them was tasked to perceive

this prayerful gloom that has mounted a vigil at my feet,
but I was met with the silence of a massacre,

until my legs pushed me forward
towards doors and desks, pens and parking passes.

The day ends when it learns that I'm missing,
looking for you amidst clouds and gray,

your face underneath the constellations,
where I could've sworn you were looking at me.

Covered Walk

I found myself along a covered walk,
one cold and wintry midnight after work,
when I decided to take a different route
as I walked my way home.

A covered walk, in case you didn't know,
is cousin to the corridor and sister to the hallway.

This one in particular, I thought, must have been related
to the hallway in an old funeral parlor I know,
strikingly resembling each other's melancholic radiance.

Then again, I was convinced that there was
something too familiar at that moment
for me to simply leave with this assumption.

So I stepped into its cavernous body
and noticed how the void within was the same
catatonic stillness that hung over its roof,
like thick drapes flowing down its sides all the way to the floor.

Inside was a lavish emptiness,
the way a blank canvas beams with a billion frescos
right before the first stroke of the brush,

while the clean and paved path gave way underneath
as I trod on the grief of forgotten footsteps:
a thousand forsaken by a thousand feet,
all damp and porous like a lover left in bed,
for another.

In the middle of this pass,
I couldn't help but recognize
the peaceful loneliness that sang like a song
and never left this place from the moment it was made —
an ever-present fragrance slow dancing with itself,
always from one end to the other and back.

Then, as if matching a face with a name,
I finally knew who this walkway was —
this infinite mural;
this lover lost;
this stage now, and dance floor here;

It was me.
Just as a square is a rectangle,
but not always the other way around.

And so indeed, I found myself,
along a covered walk,
one cold and wintry midnight after work.

The Farthest I'll Ever Be

I've begun to do my best *not* to think about your kisses.

I realized there was no good reason to live inside a glass,

looking out and aching for the milk now tracing

a poor rendition of the world map on the table top.

So with much effort, I've started peeling my mind

away from the mysteries at the tip of your mouth,

futile as it is to run away from the thought of a kiss.

The first step in the opposite direction easily leads me

into a labyrinth of all the lips I've ever longed to lock

in an endless loop of time — some thick, others thin,

most of them pale,

while a handful as plush as the blood

that makes them loud and angry for attention.

Quite a few have made my fingers heavy

with words that fell upon page after page,

forming puddles of the stuff that schoolboy crushes are made of.

While some of those I've met in person have left me scarred,

just because I was too young to know

that some people were made of fire, or knives,

or flowers that had thorns in their sides,

just as others were made of moonbeams,
or songs, or summer breezes, or all of the above
in a beautiful frenzy of elements & explosions.
And then there are those that have changed my life,
and a most special pair that has given life to the ever-changing
sunsets I've never really noticed,
until the day I've felt them setting on my lips,
filling my mouth and casting an orange glow onto the world
from the windows of my eyes. Once I'm there,
I'm back where I started.

I'm beginning to think
all I need is a breath of fresh air.

Outside, I can find the truth that
within the circle holding you and me in place,
where I stand is *already* the farthest I'll ever be from your kiss,
and that an inch in any direction would simply lead me back
to the thought of that paradisaal prison
sitting on top of your face,
for as soon as I shut the door behind me,
there you are in the midnight fog:

a cloud descending from the sky,
rousing the earth to lift its lips
with a mist eager to taste
the vaporous ground upon which angels walk.

Waiting

There is no cure for the common cold,
just as there are no antibiotics for the flu.

There is only time,
and along with proper hydration,
some waiting.

In the same manner, there is no pill
for the days when it feels like
the stars have been stolen from your dreams,
and in place of thoughts
you have a river filled with ashes
running through your head.

Little can be done when inside your room
there is an invisible flood that presses on your skin.

There is only time, and just a little more waiting.

We may choose to end a conversation,
or terminate a contract; close an account,
or even put a period at the end of a phrase.

Like this.

But there are just some things that belong particularly
to the hands of time (one, always oddly shorter than the other);
things that only end when its fingers clasp,
or when they form two fists (one, always oddly smaller than the other);

things that include all wounds, or so they say,
and the turning of the days,
and that special kind of loneliness —
the kind where the stars are missing and floods have risen.

The kind, I'm guessing, in Mr. Cummings' falling leaf¹,
which must touch the ground eventually, I presume,
and when it does it will realize that all of his brothers
have come to join him in the bosom of the earth,
by the time of winter's coming.

¹ Cummings, Edward Estlin. "l(a)." *95 Poems*. Ed. G.J. Firmage. New York: Liveright, 2002. 1. Print.

Falling In Love: A Poor Review

The word “falling” should serve
as a dead giveaway.

Who in their proper state of mind
would ever want to fall,
when a drop from
the mere height of our own faces
can render us hurt or unconscious?

Are we not more fragile
than candlelight and roses?

Even that frivolous rush
from rollercoaster dives or jumping off a plane
is but a smoldering product of the
thrill-burnt minds of adrenalin junkies —

admittedly a creative bunch,
but junkies nonetheless.

The word “in” conspicuously follows —
an explicit note that the act of falling is not enough,

but that the victim should also fall into something,
as in the case of a trap, or a well,

a cage of wavelets and echoes,
dark and wet like a womb within a tomb.

Falling *on*, perhaps, something pleasant like a bed of roses
might have been more appropriate
if the purpose of this phrase was to entice an audience,
though that wouldn't have entirely solved anything.

Certainly, one would rather *lay* than *fall*
on whatever might send people flying off to dreams.

But alas, the truest trickery lies in the end,
as with all great deceptive tragedies in life,
for this immortal line ends with "love":

the sacred mist that inflates the heart
into a moon above the clouds,
whose tasteful song bathes the skin with silken light
and fills the bones with the fire of stars.

We could infer that “falling in” such a pool of bliss
would be the want of all souls.

Maybe.

Until we consider the fact
that the words we’ve ordained
to name that final breath
between wounded lovers —

how two people *fall out* of love
when their moons have set
in each other’s horizons —

are the same words by which we describe
the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust:

when all that has been turned into dust
falls silently from the sky,
like radioactive snow
upon the heads of the brokenhearted.