

The Prairie Light Review

Volume 43
Number 2 *Spring 2021*

Article 51

Spring 5-1-2021

Emotions

Melisande E. Bocker
College of DuPage

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr>

Recommended Citation

Bocker, Melisande E. (2021) "Emotions," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 43 : No. 2 , Article 51.
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol43/iss2/51>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact orenick@cod.edu.



CW: suicidal thoughts

Emotions

Melisande E. Bocker

I was on the bridge again. I always came here when sleep did not come for me. It's a quiet bridge, not too far from my home, surrounded by woods, a single shining lamppost illuminated my bridge, and the boy holding the railing, mustering the courage to let go.

"What's it like?" I asked. He knew I was there, heard my bare feet on the asphalt, saw me pause upon leaving the trees. The night was quiet enough, the river far enough, that I was the sole sound in an otherwise silent world.

"Hopeless." The boy replied. I walked beside him and leaned on the cold metal railing.

"What does hopelessness feel like?"

"Like nothing you do matters, that nothing will ever improve, that you are completely stuck."

He was far kinder than the other kids our age, everyone else just got annoyed with my questions they deemed moronic. “Can you describe it as a place? A time of day? Can you connect it with sadness, regret or fear?”

“It’s like being in a cage, with nothing to brighten it, it’s cold. It’s like the middle of the day, when there’s no chance of rest. It’s constant fear, like your heart is going to burst and you’ll just die like that. I don’t think I can connect it with sadness. I guess when I’m not scared I’m sad. It’s just a void, nothing surrounding you, no bars with which to imagine weren’t there, no hope, means only fear and sadness.”

“I like the word sorrow better. Sadness shouldn’t really be used, sorrow is much prettier. Sorry I used that word earlier.”

“It’s alright.”

“Do you think you have courage? Mom says courage is being afraid and doing it anyway. I don’t have that emotion, so I guess I’m just a coward.”

The boy looked at me. His face was bruised, but his eyes were beautiful. They were a dark brown, shattered, held by a strand, the same strand that kept his hands on the railing. “You have pretty eyes.” I said.

The boy blinked thrice. “Thank you.” There didn’t seem to be any emotion behind it, just obligation. “It feels like emptiness,” he continued. “Like nothing. No darkness, no light, no sound, no silence.”

“I know what that feels like. I was born like that.”

“I don’t think anyone is born like that. I think you become it.”

“Well I was born like that. I was born without any emotions. Not one. Dad was scared of that. I understand that now. Someone donated fear to me.”

“Donated?”

“Yeah. Mom set up this box of donations for me in town, right outside our antique shop. So far, I have fear, regret, and sadness. Sadness is my favorite. No wait, curiosity, I got that one last year.”

“Why was sadness your favorite before?”

“I don’t know. Fear makes me run, makes me do things, but I don’t like what it does to my heart, it doesn’t feel good. I don’t like regret much

either. It makes me not like myself. Sadness makes me like myself though, I can feel sad for myself.”

“How does someone donate an emotion?”

“I’m not sure. I’ve never seen anyone do it. Mom says they make a wish in front of my box, a promise, and a prayer. Then the emotion’s in the box.”

“What does an emotion look like?”

“Mom and I disagree, so I guess it looks different to everyone. For me, sadness looked like this grey little cloud that sagged when I picked it up. Fear looked like a spider, all frantic, it was hard to grab that one. Regret looked like a little doll, curled up, hiding its face, it was really stiff. Then curiosity looked like a grey kitten who kept cocking its head whenever it saw something new.”

“If those are your only emotions, why don’t you jump off this bridge?”

“Because I got fear first. Mom says fear keeps you safe. Regret keeps you learning, I don’t like regret so much. Plus I think you need courage to let go, or maybe you don’t, I think before I had sadness, fear, or regret, I was more inclined to let go. Back then, I didn’t understand the point, what was the difference between life and death? I like you. You actually listen, and you answer my questions, I’ll regret it if you let go.”

“Why would you regret it? You didn’t put me here.”

“No, but I could do something to stop you, maybe say the right thing, then I’ll feel sad, because the only person who listens and answers besides my mom would be gone. Empty, like before.” I reach my hand out above the open space. “Can I ask you something before you go?”

“Sure.” The boy didn’t take his beautiful eyes off me.

“What does happiness feel like? Everyone says it’s the best emotion to have.”

The boy was silent. “I guess...”

“It’s okay if you don’t know. Some people don’t. I guess some people are born without certain emotions as well. Those people don’t mind it if I talk to them.” The boy was staring, “I don’t mind if people stare, I’m used to people staring at me. When I first got my emotions, I felt scared, then sad, but then I decided it was better to feel nothing towards them, and I stopped noticing their stares. I guess even nothing has its uses.”

“Do you think....”

“Yes? You can ask me anything, I like it when people ask me things, then they’re not ignoring me.”

“Do you think I can come with you? Back home? Do you think your mom would be okay with it?”

“Yes. She’ll be happy when you come back with me. I like it when she’s happy. I love my mom and since happiness is the best emotion, I want her to have it.”

“You can love people?”

“Yes. I don’t think love is an emotion, it’s something else entirely. I didn’t dislike, or like anything before I got emotions, but I still loved my mom. Love is weird isn’t it?”

The boy didn’t respond. The hand closest to me let go and I screamed, but he wasn’t gone, he’d only swung across the deadly space so he could climb over the railing. “Don’t worry. I want to tell you what happiness feels like for me, so I have to stay for now.”

“Worry. I can feel that. Mom says worry is fear of the future.” the boy was standing next to me now. He was slightly shorter than me. “You’re skinnier than me. Mom says I’m one of the skinniest kids she’s ever met. Won’t she be surprised.” I took his hand and led him back to my home.

A month later God sent me a gift. Mom burst into our shop where me and the boy were working on math, he was better at it than me. “It’s here! Someone donated it.” I jumped out of my chair and approached the box in her arms cautiously, ever since I got fear, I was scared of what lay in the box.

“What’s here?” the boy asked and approached us.

I looked into the box. It was beautiful. It had the color of mom’s eyes as the cover, the letters were the color of the boys. I’d always loved books, they told me whatever I wanted to know about emotions, but this book radiated with something else.

“It’s happiness.” The boy’s eyes widened; mom’s were crying. I reached in and wrapped every part of my being around it.

(right) Wonder. Angelo Mendez

