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Moments of Thought in Isolation

Emily Waters

Introduction

It was about midday, a thick blanket of light grey was spread across the sky, and from it was billowing seas of water droplets. It was the kind of rain that seizes your heart and makes you fall in love. There was a soft dimness to everything the rain touched, and the lamps that lined the park were glowing. They were small moments, but they were enough to make her whole day worthwhile. Walking along a sidewalk, Suzanna found herself contently watching the lives of others.

I

Stepping out of the shop and down the sidewalks, she unconsciously skimmed crowds for him, with no real intention or reason for it. She was not surprised to conclude her walk home without having seen him again. In fact, she anticipated it to be that way. Another ten-minute long fantasy that dies the moment the selected co-star exits the frame. And what were his high credentials? Likely nonexistent. But the fabricating abilities of her imagination usually take care of that absence. She loved the grey sky above her and the cool air around her. She lived for it. It fed her melancholy and simultaneously filled her heart. She liked her solitude. Could dwell in it too often if she let herself, which she did. She could put on a song and let it play through all day. Reliving the particular set of feelings it gave her. A fantasy but a real invention of feeling. She felt real feelings about something whether or not she could ever figure out a reason for them. Those kinds of feelings are still real, in fact, sometimes they seem to be the most real, most visceral kinds of feelings. And she likes to sit in them. She likes to get to know them well. She welcomes certain kinds of pain, the kind that she can control. But she fears the unexpected pain. The devastating and blinding pain. The kind that is hard to get away from no matter how badly you need and want to.

II

The sun outside made her tired and anxious like it was a sociable friend begging her to get herself out in public, to be productive. Like it was an unwelcome spotlight, nagging her stiff bones to perform. Yes, she was much more comfortable behind the shield of a cloudy day. She could do whatever she wanted there, and nobody would even notice. Nobody would know. The rain makes it even better. A physically consequential phenomenon to keep you in your house. To keep you under your hood and just a little bit cold. She craved that comfort. She stayed inside.

III

In the nighttime, once the sky turned over into a dark blue and soon enough into a blackness, Suzanna fell into a familiar and comfortable sadness. On the brink of the long night, looking on to the many hours in which she would sit up in her dimly lit bedroom whilst nighttime inhabits the world outside, she embraced the slowing of time, prolonging this weird state. What she felt, she could not put her finger on. What she wanted she could not say clearly, but she felt a pull. A restlessness and also a fear of making any kind of move. For now, sitting in this night would fill the void. To make her feel as though she is living. To make herself feel a dread, a sadness, an excitement, and to sit in it all as if these emotions were the very substance of life. When she wanted to cry, she didn't know why. She could brainstorm a few different things but nothing lasted long enough. What lasted was that stifled feeling that wouldn't just make itself known. Was that feeling? Was it numbness? She tried to convince herself otherwise on her particularly indulgent nights of heartache.

IV

Alone with her thoughts and daily movements, she felt glad to have settled on these particular events of the day but she also wondered when the next time might be that she would converse with someone. When she might hear some dialogue that was from a foreign voice and not the one that circled her head for eternity. The one she knew too well but longed to discover something quizzical about. As she settled on her old quilt, next to a tree, overlooking a small patch of grass and shortly into the distance a grey sky that met the line of the ocean. A line that always seemed so puzzling. She often wondered how there could be such a visible line between sky and water. Like a child's drawing of the blue colored-pencil sky that directly met the green horizontal patch indicating grass. To think that this childish internalized interpretation of the land and sky makeup was actually real, as real as it appears in her eyes, was almost unsettling. Where did the water go? Beyond that line, it seems as though it drops off, or worse runs and runs around the world until it meets the other side. This seemed to be the logical answer, which made Suzanna feel overwhelmed. She was looking at the whole world but five-hundred feet in front of her. One that could swallow her if she was not careful with her thoughts. She moved past this and instead focused on the birds that teetered the water-skyline. They seemed to blend these lines together so she could forget her troubling thoughts. They bridged the gap and brought things closer to home. Not so vast, not so void.

V

For the next several days, she wandered into the same park, dwelling in the same spot... in hopes of entertaining another childish fantasy. She watched, in a way she had rarely watched before. Glancing at

the statues of those who walked past, this time under the soft sun which cast a shimmery spotlight on everything it touched below. She may have seen a pleasant person or two, but none to whom she had attached a fanciful memory. None wore a tan corduroy jacket that became too familiar in Suzanna's mind. She knew the ending to her imaginings. She knew they would exist in the far beyond, in her conscious as just that: imaginings. That this seemingly similarly aged man would possibly walk through the park, but this time not see her, and would then continue on with the much more interesting narrative that was his life. A narrative in which she and her obsessive and embarrassingly fairytale-like thoughts did not exist. One in which he most likely had a love life of his own, with a soul much more familiar than her vanished one who slipped him the forgetful line "Oh, thanks!" and foolishly imprisoned her flittering lunch napkin that day in the same park. Most likely the minute he fixed his walk forward after this brief disturbance, he forgot anything particular about her and she blurred away into the form of a stranger, in the back of his memory and soon gone forever. She wished to be anything but a stranger sometimes. She wanted someone other than herself to wake up for her every day. For someone to live and breathe for her so that she didn't have to all of the time.