

Sympathy Pains

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By : SilentSmiles

A short story I wrote in 2008 or maybe a little earlier than that. Have to go back and revise. Starting to revise this now. (March 2014)

Published on
Booksie

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~She woke up inside of a pointless room, aware of the grime soaking through her like the suns itchy seeder. Her clothes had been sworn to secrecy, inverted as intensely as her thoughts. On one foot a skinny sock had wet itself, and picked up a few pointy stragglers along the way. The other foot had been stripped to its bare lineage, a blood-rust stammering across toes and up an ankle the color of a dying day. Beneath the peaked walls her body curled into atrophy, fractured images of death flashing, she wanted to emulate her fathers transience. Her fathom deep footsteps gravitated towards her numbed reflection, a beige-yellow eye splayed, the other inflamed with remorse. Time had done it a trillion times, to a trillion people. We were only memories to be trampled, and this was not home.

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Her life had been shaken into disaster. She felt like a contusion filled paperweight. Violence had been forming its opinion under her skin, screaming apocalypse at every angle. When she looked at herself, there were bruises on her abdomen bursting like violets inside of the small figure of night. She moved like a rusted wheelbarrow with only one working wheel, her shirt torn at the shoulders as if some gargoyle had perched there for the night. Its talons subjugating her into loneliness. Her bedroom was seething resentment and ripped apart art. It was as secluded as those road signs that assumed they were barreling through the world, not realizing it was the frantic headlights in front of them that lived. This room had always been a bit claustrophobic, but now it was no larger than a mouse hole. There were books with their organs gutted, tacked onto the icy pink walls like wrinkled memorials. The rootless scent of bad breath mingled with dehydrated blood, and a blue powder swam against the currents of daydreaming lavender. Their sleeping sugars meditating within the carpets threads only days after her fathers body had been on display.

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It was an afternoon that held a few pieces of his family like a rope with knotted ends. Once scattered across states now lamenting the man they had known long ago. His sister that hadn't seen him in twenty years stood upright with tears glistening inside of her crows feet. She was taller than him, but she had that same southern Italian appearance. There were cousins she never met, some she may have met once or twice. Most of them looking like they just stepped out of some Sicilian hillside, only Americanized. she was as far away from that rope as possible, and said nothing out loud. These shows were for the living, it had nothing to do with the wishes of the deceased. she sat in a short cherry wood pew watching others rise one at a time to kneel in front of her dad. They spoke under their breath, they cried with cartwheels in their throats. She was silent, far away staring at this body in a box, watching his chest ascend and collapse almost believing he was still alive. She was about to jump up and yell that there has been a mistake, look he's breathing, until she remembered that it was just an illusion.

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It had been seven days. She had no idea what time it was, if the sky ran with sunlight or moonlight, but she knew it had been a week since he had left her for a hole in the ground. She knew he was holding his gods like pearls to his heart, waiting on heavens that were out of print. She wanted him to have his colonnades of purified white, she wished to conjure a heaven just for him. They were all just fairy tales to keep us happy, safe, sometimes to teach us the right way to live, and sometimes to keep us a line of sheep. flashbacks struck with mighty hale, lightening entering the grounds taut wisdom. And then, backwards it flew all crinkled like an accordion. It had been a week of rupturing poems, and then taping their words into each others verses. A line of Plath sinking into the jagged edges of Rumi, a paragraph of Parker's witty flavors dangling inside of Ginsberg's howling reveries, and her own burnt auburn blood slashed across their secrets.

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She had grown up unaware of the cruelty of loves, that brokenhearted malaise. She had been a child so long, it was too late to move up into the business of adulthood. She was a strange thing, that never stepped outside of her own creations. A pure creature never takes mortal flight. School was a schedule of train stops, getting through the day as quietly as possible with a few insults along the way. She sat in her classroom wanting to learn, but occupied with the teasing behind her back. A girl pulled her mousy brown curls and oinked calling her miss piggy, but the teacher never heard. That was when she was still in elementary school. In middle school, there were only one or two incidents with other children. Once on her bus, a girl decided to start chanting beach whale until everyone else joined in, and another time a boy decided to call her a fucking fat ass, grabbing her butt as she left the line in the cafeteria. By the time she started high school she was thin, so no one could make fun of her anymore, but she had also lost any confidence and never attended dances or went on dates or any other social event. She would ride home on that ugly orange-yellow centipede, lie in bed watching cartoons, and then watch an old black and white movie before going to sleep. On the weekends when she sat down to homework, but couldn't quite get it right she would ask her dad for help. She would sit on the floor looking up at him, amazed at how intelligent he was especially in history. He could tell you the year of any historic event, the names, and what they were all about, and he didn't even finish middle school. He had common sense, something she would never possess.

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Her heartbeat quadrupled, heavy with insecurity. Her eyes galloped into the sharp broken edges of dreams, like abandoned casings of snails. Any love, any safety was now corroding and she couldn't sleep. She held her head up with both palms, an expanding planet with tinsel for string. It could split its precarious cord if spoken to in more than a shadow. Pandemonium had lifted its bulky legs and pounded into mirrors, throwing porcelain ballerinas and framed photographs into the deltoid corners of her bedroom. She had become the Frankenstein mob and Frankenstein all in one body, chasing her own tail. She was a monster beating on the metal frames of society, and swelling up like the moons last cry. However long she lives, she would always come back to him. Reading Green eggs and ham, tucking her inside of her rainbow comforter

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with a hug and a sigh so soothing it could have been a story in itself. Outside, having a catch his smiles drenched in sunlight. Later, as the evening whistled in its swarthy suit they would rummage through the refrigerator listening to riders on the storm preparing a simple dinner. At night as the eyes of god were dimming, a majestic black and white film would approach while they stuffed themselves comfortably into an old thick couch and snacked on the lives of fictitious dreamers.

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She could still see his olive complexion stepping through the houses rectangular spaces, his dark brown hair pushed back like a lake spilling over. Every time she thought she saw his short, portly body wavering through the hallway she would spring to her feet, wobbling and then sink to the floor like the corpse of a fish.Â She started adding up the features she had that came from his Sicilian ancestors, and when she couldnâ t hold up more than two fingers her back slumped against the beat up pink wall. Her hair had darkened as she grew older, so that she had in common with him, and her eyes were like his, a crystalline butterscotch. Her other attributes were from a mother she never knew. Her father didnâ t speak of her often, but when he did there would be a subtle curvature in his neck and if she was lying down she could see his eyes go back in time remembering her. Her name was Audra Bell, and he loved her. He would say, â her skin was a fresh pink just like yours, and her hair was curly, and when she laughed people gathered around her because it was angelic.â They were young and in love, and had a good time not taking anything too seriously, thinking they were invincible like most young people. After she gave birth, he knew he couldnâ t be so reckless anymore, but Audra didnâ t want to slow down, she wanted to live like a bird. She wanted to fly and fly until she hit the sun, and she did. She absolutely hit the sun, and it destroyed her. When she was a few months old, her mother Audra Bell died in a car crash after leaving a bar with friends.Â Sometimes she could feel herself being held in her mothers arms as a baby, the warmth of her breath rocking her to sleep singing her name with its sound. Bell, baby Bell go to sleep. Let the sunshine dance on your little feet. But, this was just a fantasy with a very small opening. What was it that made her mother fall so blindly into death, did something distort her childhood, or was it a blank call telling her to let go? Her father had one of those broken hearts that she would never receive, but his love for Bell was enough. He worked during the day painting walls, houses, apartments and then came home in the evening to his childhood room watching over his baby girl Bell falling asleep in the yellow and blue striped rocking chair.

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She had a prescience bobbing back and forth inside of her for a very long time. From a very young age she knew that she would be alone. But, the love she had for her father was her good luck charm. Something that calmed her loneliness when it showed its unkind face. Marriage, children, even friends were not meant to be. It felt like she had been holding her breath since birth, and everything outside drifted in slow motion. Her body blanched into the background, the sea closing in on the eyes of a ghost. She watched as the world spun by on its affluent knees, effortless with its arms whipping her into ash. She was still able to watch. She was the watcher. She watched from that first point leading into daylight, and then sat outside on the sullen grass as that last pockmark faded into night trying her best to taste the beauty of the bees and the butterflies.

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In her made up earth there were ripening trees like the taste of nectarines growing inside the walls. Her imagination had spread itself out into eternities, and she started painting poems inside their leaves. Somewhere inside of that third night she had punctured those poems, the leaves leaving welts the size of quarters. She had flattened her limbs into that tree, a disremembered silhouette. There were knives curling inside of her like an angry lovers hands. She had thrown away that lemon eye with a handful of tablets but, they came back up with a twist. Her whole body crawled like camouflage, passing out underneath that simpering tree. She awoke with that warmth of love, swaddled in her fathers arms. She grew to the size of the uppermost branch of that tree, summers easy days drawn onto the back of her neck. It was such a composed moment of life and death. She threw her hands into the sweet poems and smiled thinking, this was it.

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Time had passed through her like lullabies, and the light had stayed in its place. Car rides rushed through her with laughter and surprise. A book settled itself like passion in her arms, and a soft bear of a man was checking the corners of a little girls room, and feigning spiders across her forehead. And then, a kiss goodnight on each cheek, and a kind shadow walking away. A night light glowing on her sheets in waves of delight, as she closed her tufted eyelids dreaming a childâ s dream.

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It was eight days since she had to say goodbye, wishing it had only been goodnight. His black jeep was in reverse, the driveway stretching as he left the house to get a few things for dinner. It has been eight days since that other car threw its forgetful fists into his heart and ate his life. Only a few blocks away there were severe cries, a siren echoing through the evenings stairway. She was watching a movie when he left. She nodded in reply, and kept watching the movie. On the screen there was an actress, tall and lean with golden waves tightly surrounding her shoulders. She was yelling at a man who was shaking her from her wrists. Bell turned around and separated the blinds to look out at the sounds, but there was nothing in sight. She looked back at the television its gray tones and glamorous gowns still there, but their voices were gone. There was a bellowing of victims rolling in the street. Sitting there in a dimming room, actors silent, she became clammy and nauseous. She had forgotten how to move, how to speak. Her head hung limply noticing a wet spot on the rug. She doubled over in sickness, and wiped her upper lip. A bright red blood poured from her nostrils sinking into the lines in her hands. She cupped her nose with her left hand and ran to the front door. Sirens were floating by in the shady air, and she stepped outside.

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Two weeks, it is fourteen days. She had lost the only person who would ever love her. There were no refined answers. She had been waiting on death like a geisha, her appendages aching. Her fingernails cracking against the wind, her black hole of a mouth full of stingers, her walls laden with beat up words. Bell slips into the trees long stems, moss hanging from her shoulders, knowing she will not sleep.

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