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Learning, Knowing, Being

Workshop submission #2

The Red Ribbon

In the brisk breeze of a February evening was a young woman. She shuffled down an icy path through a park. It was late and she didn’t like being out by herself but this night wasn’t like the rest. *A few more light poles down* she thought as she approached her destination. A single park bench came into view with a little red ribbon tied to the arm of it. The ribbon flickered like the flames in the fireplace waiting for her back home. She sighed and took a seat, it would only be a few more minutes she was sure. The woman removed her winter gloves and pulled a pack of cigarettes and matches from her purse. Her hands shaking she struck a match only for the tiny flame to fall to her feet. She groaned and watched the flame die. The flicker of flame reminded her of something. She shivered at the thought and chased it away with another strike. She inhaled the burning little stick of tar, eyes closed and exhaled smoothly. *That’s better,* she thought allowing a small smile to pass across her features.

“Aren’t you a little young to be smoking, Susanna?” her eyes shot open at the voice walking toward her.

“It’s Anna now and I’m twenty five.” she said quickly, standing up to meet him.

“Ah, I see.” The man spoke again, his eyes never falling directly to Anna, always grazing over everything else.

“I’d prefer to speed this along if that’s ok with you.” Anna said wrapping her arms tighter around herself. She couldn’t tell if it was because she was cold or just uncomfortable.

“Of course,” the man said softly, “It’s just good to see you.

Anna was quiet, her gaze direct and unwavering.

“Do you remember this spot?” the man asked, his pink cheeks curving into that familiar crescent.

“Of course I do,” she said coolly, pulling her hand up to take another drag.

“I remember when you were little, you would always wear red. You said it was like fire.”

“Stop,” Anna’s hands shook but she couldn’t feel the cold anymore, “stop it, I have no desire to speak about my childhood, I am here for a reason and memory lane isn’t that reason. Do you have it or not Wren?” The man’s eyes finally set on Anna. They were blue and icy, colder than she remembered. This is how they had always been, fire and ice. Wren walked over to the ribbon tied to the bench and began to fiddle with its frayed ends. She watched him closely.

“It’s amazing that this is still here.”

“No one comes to this part of the park anymore anyways, it’s just overlooked I guess.” He continued to fiddle with the ribbon. The ribbon was hers and this was once their place. The summer when she was seven and Wren was ten they came her with their mother. They sat down on the bench once when they were walking home from downtown. Their mother had remarked about how well you could see the whole park from this little bench in the corner but she was afraid that she wouldn’t be able to find it again. Wren removed the red ribbon from his little sister’s ponytail and tied it to the arm of the bench. He said, “Now you’ll always remember, Mamma. Like the candle in the wind song you love so much.” Their Mother had laughed and from then on they spent every Saturday morning sitting on that bench with their mother. Even after their mother got sick they still took her. After their father left they’d take her to the park to feed squirrels and remind her that she could smile. When she was too weak to stand, they bought her a wheel chair and let the sunshine warm her broken body. Even after she was gone they came in silence and held each other’s hands. Then Wren left. The day after their mother’s funeral he packed up his room and left her. She was eighteen. He had told her he was going to help a friend in Kansas and stay there for a while but he never came home. He called at first, sent emails, a few postcards, but after a while she lost track of where he was. She never really forgave him for leaving her. She was alone, young and needed her brother the most at the exact moment he left.

Finally after seven years he called her. He told her he was coming into town and wanted to see her. Her mother had written them both a letter to open when they were twenty-five and he still had hers. She didn’t even get to see his when he opened it. Not a single call to tell her what it said, nothing. Thinking of this snapped Anna back to reality and to her brother standing before her.

“I want to leave, will you give me the letter,” she asked losing the composure she had arrived with.

Wren looked at her for a while before pulling the letter from his coat pocket. She extended her hand out waiting for the exchange.

“I’m sorry Suzy,” Wren whispered as he slowly handed her the letter. She nodded. She understood but that didn’t mean she was going to forgive him. She had hardened her heart to him a long time ago.

“I’ve missed you,” he whispered again. This time she met his gaze.

“I missed you too but I stopped missing you the first birthday you didn’t call. I stopped missing you when I no longer told people I have a brother. I stopped missing you when I stopped searching for you. I stopped missing you when the anger of you not being by my side every year on the day of mother’s death went away. I stopped missing you when I couldn’t find an address to send my wedding announcement to. I won’t start missing you again.” The silence was as cold as the air between them. He looked at her with so many emotions she hadn’t the words to name them all. She wanted her brother back, she wanted to let him into her life again but she didn’t know how. It was something she couldn’t find herself capable of because she didn’t know the man standing in front of her. She recognized the sandy hair that matched her own and the way he slouched but she didn’t know the things he’d seen or the places he’d been. She didn’t think she could bear to know. So Anna pulled the letter to her chest and whispered a “thanks”. She gave her brother one last look and walked away. He said nothing more and neither she. She didn’t look back as she shuffled up the path back to her car. She let a single tear fall but wiped it away without even noticing.

Poetry

“Sunburn”

I sit naked peeling away my skin.  
As I shed the sunburn of you, I relent my sins.  
My tears sizzle like acid down my blistered cheeks.  
I strip away your lies, flaking and pink.  
At first you felt warm and honest on my face, slowly stealing away what's sane.   
My faith in myself began to falter, my mind preparing to be a sacrifice on the alter,  
Of what used to be self restraint.   
You are the master of shame, spreading poison throughout the haze.   
I will wash my skin pure and accept no more of your petty lures.  
You may again spoil me with tainted love or the lack there of,   
Until I find myself once more lost in remorse,   
But I will not forget the feel of soft skin left in your place and what is true and good in this rabbits race.

“Reflections”

I pour myself into any love that comes along.

I absorb myself into them like a flower stretching up to meet the sun

Waking to good mornings soaking up the dawn of new beginnings and “could be’s”

Standing in the daylight of “so close” and “almost”

Lying in the twilight and finally opening my eyes,

Listening to the crickets’ song, sad and lonely but finding my way to where I know I belong.

Its not in bottomless reflections praying for the buzz of your attention

No, not in wars of who can pin whom but sentences of simply me and you,

I’ll breath the words of my youth, place my hand on that book and speak nothing but the truth.

I’ll remember what I loved before I felt desire because our fire has and will always die.

You nor I can convince my heart to lie.

Instead of grasping for your thoughts I’ll reach for a pen

I’ll remember who is left standing beside me and what this has always been.

“Aubade”  
I yawn through the early morning stars.  
The glimmer catches my smile as I exhale the night.   
I sigh and release the long, dark hours.   
I look up to watch the sky ignite.   
The warmth pricks the chill on my cheeks.  
It dries the dew on my drowsy lips.  
I unravel my limbs and flatten my peaks,  
As I let the Dawn kindle my flesh with golden drips.  
The grass just waking up reaches beneath me.  
The leaves whistle sweetly to the trees.  
I take a breath of sunshine,   
I feel the world around me buzzing.   
Finally, I can say  
“Good morning.”

“The Sap that is My Poetry”

My brain is on fire with everything.   
I sit down to write and end up with blank lines and empty stanzas.  
Where words of intense beauty and insight should rest are frustrated scribbles.  
My lack of aspiration is disheartening.   
I can’t unscramble my mind for one second long enough to write a decent line,   
Or anything that’s not…I lost my train of thought.   
Want to know where it went?  
You.   
Straight to you, without consent  
Like a fly to honey, I’m stuck in the sticky sweetness of you.   
See? Even my similes suck,  
Drowning in this sad case of writers block.   
My creative flow is barren.   
My muse is strangled by thoughts of your silly grin.   
I set my pen to paper and waste hours on the sap that is my poetry.   
Wondering if there is any hope left for me.