

A Chance Meeting

"I wonder who hurt you so badly in your life you came to believe what you did Alun", she said, "however I know the true you."

He was taken aback as primarily he had always been seen as quite the nasty piece of work. Although he was prone to bouts of melancholy as well as a fiery temper. He was surprised by her tone of voice. Coming from a place of empathy and perhaps pity.

They had arrived at the cafe that Winter's night when the frigid Atlantic air had numbed their fingers and faces. She was so very timid yet wise beyond her years. She just reaching the cusp of adulthood being a 19 year old woman. Never had he really been interested in younger women always pursuing those of the older variety. They both sat and warmed themselves with the coffee in their hands.

As they sat he talked at length about his views on the world. She nodded attentively sometimes half-smiling. Her dark yet light air long brown hair draping down to the shoulders of her winter's parka. She had a curious intelligence beyond her years one could see in her beautiful dark brown eyes. And as he spoke he gazed deeply into them. As if they drew him in. An older gentleman behind them grinned widely showing his teeth. Despite being rather trampish perhaps homeless Alun intuited that this man was reflecting upon his own days of young love. Alun still being in that time a young man himself of 25.

She interrupted to say she must be at home now or her mother would be so ever upset. And they both entered the freezing air of the night. The city itself was quiet then and the stars shone brightly over them. Alun looked up at them for a moment. And proceeded to light a cigarette. "Quite a dirty habit you have", she said disapprovingly, "smoking around young ladies as myself. Who do you take me for, Alun?".

"Sorry miss. Without my vices I have no virtues I suppose.", Alun said and shrugged.

He walked her to her doorstep the light on upstairs with a shadow behind the curtains, perhaps her mother wondering who this boy was who had stolen her daughter's presence for the night. If he was indeed as many other men interested in a liaison especially given the age gap.

Some time together was spent in those days. They were almost inseparable. And one night when they again spent their usual evening at the cafe they frequented. She had given him a quick kiss on the lips. He was so surprised and blushed. Smiling she left on her own and he stood there in shock stated. Realizing his own now growing love for her was requited. As it was so rarely requited by other females. Except for the night he would spend at the apartments of some women. Who would see him out after their proclivities and bid him good night sometimes with a hug, sometimes with a kiss but mostly with a "I needed that thank you see you later stay safe" type farewell. Rarely would they return his calls.

He had played his favorite piano composition for her *Erik Satie's Gymnopedie*. And they embraced each other watching a film. However, rather inattentively as they kissed and caressed each other. She took him by the hand lead him upstairs. And she pulled him towards the bed. They made ecstatic love.

She felt his scars as many other women had done. Inflicted as they were by cuts made by himself to alleviate temporarily some sort of pain by causing pain to his own object of detestation -- himself. Although some were from his genuine attempts to end his own suffering via suicide.

"Why do you do this to yourself?"

He hadn't had an answer for her quite frankly.

However, it was not meant to be. For she hadn't told him that she was in love with another. And while she checked in with him from time to time and told him nothing would ever take away from their memories together. He should have known when she told him she believed in the beauty of impermanence how fleeting those moments would be. How again like he always did he hadn't fully cherished them. He had been selfish, and selfishly committed to National-Socialism. The swastika flag hung in his bedroom that she had initially gasped at it. "Surely, Alun, you do not believe such things do you? You are so kind, so polite, so different from the other men I have met."

Just like all other moments in time this too was a fleeting moment. And for Alun despite his tragic flaws had to continue to soldier on much like his heroes of the Waffen-SS. Much like he had himself hoped to become via the military - ie to achieve martial glory or to die in the glory of war to become a hero himself. Something which his father had never cared for nor felt pride over. He sought it with his martial superiors who whilst lacking faith in him so often had driven home "we will make a soldier of you yet son."

Alun thought about all this as he smoked his cigarette in the humid Summer air outside of the barracks he was domiciled in. His drunken Sargeant telling him "I bet this is the first time someone has ever said they were proud of you isn't it?". Alun blinked back tears.

For so selfish, so uncompassionate, and so vain he had been in his life. All out of a desire for his father to finally feel proud of his son. Or for someone, some male he admired as a hero or warrior to say he was worthy.

For now there was just the flowing of causal time and his youth as it does faded as he grew old and grey. He had always kept a photo together of his lover in his wallet. Which it too had grown old and wore. And he sat at the cafe they used to frequent. Drinking his coffee. His teeth grown into disarray. And he listened to a young couple discuss such ideals as he had. Laughing too himself. Poor fools. Ah but what beauty and numinosity is young love. A single tear drop fell from his eye onto the faded picture. Of his young lady hugging him. Cigarette in hand with his devilish smirk.

For life itself is tragic and reveals itself in fleeting moments of beauty. Beauty we can never capture the essence of but only experience and hope to cherish.

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