

Old Morris

Morris sat with colors and brushes on a grassy hill beside a pond gilded with evening sun. Trees reached their branches down into the water and ever so gently stroked the water lilies. Everywhere around him, flowers of purples, reds and blues swayed in the light breeze of the evening. The scarlet sun was ready to set, tired from traveling across the sky and birds celebrated its colorful transitions. Morris felt a satisfying chill in his fingertips as he gently put down a flower in the slow waves of the pond. How many times had he been to this paradise of his? The lines on his face and his hands told of a long story and as all stories do, his would some day come to an end. Morris had made a hard decision. This was his last time coming here.

His white long hair was stroked back by tanned hands and a loving kiss was placed upon his forehead as he looked up. The woman he had dreamt of for years stood behind him. Her face did not yet have lines to tell a story half as long as his. This young woman's name was Vanessa and she was the love of his life. Her smile told him it was time to go home.

A bright laughter sang its song across the glade as a boy jumped down from his tree house. Tom, they had named him, after his grandfather. He looked just like Morris did at that age.

The last rays of the sun played through the trees as Morris rose. He picked up his colors and brushes from the ground and put them in a basket. Vanessa carried the basket as the three of them strolled across a field of green to a cottage by the road, a cottage he recognized as his childhood home. Warm lights welcomed them home. It was perfection.

Morris calmly entered his working room. All around him were life-size models of flowers, fish, birds and rabbits. Some had color, but most were grey, unfinished and lifeless. And so they would remain. Beside them, a portrait of Morris as a young boy stood on the table, smiling at his recent creations. Morris put down the basket and took his time putting his things in order, saying silent good-byes to every item, postponing the inevitable. He looked around at his creations one last time before shutting off the lights and closing the door forever.

'Why do you have to go, daddy?' Tom asked in innocence.

'Daddy has to go to work', Morris lied in answer.

'Will you come back soon?'

The truth would not ease Tom's soul and Morris could not make himself lie another time. A tearful smile and silence was all he could offer the boy.

The front door was slightly ajar and hinted with evening blue. Part of him wanted to run, while other part could not stand to touch the door. Vanessa came in and kissed his tears away.

Morris hugged his son and wife before picking up his hat and painfully left the place he had called Home for many years.

He walked down the road as the sky mirrored his mood: Blue and darkening. He had twenty more steps until he was out. The first stars in the sky mourned him. He picked up the pace. Ten more steps. Every strand of grass he had created waved him good-bye and he regretted his decision. Three more steps. He could not stop. One. His vision went blurry with tears and he gasped as he took the last step out of the World Chamber.

The sky was dark, but no stars could be seen. No stars had been seen in this city for years, just the clouds, stained brown by the city lights. The bus home was empty, not even a driver to keep him company.

The many stairs up to the apartment made him short of breath. He put the key in the lock and turned it. No lights welcomed him home and all was silent. He made little noise as he went to bed. The mattress shaped itself around him from many years in the same position. Going to bed was the worst part of his day. Tears started to roll down his cheeks as he watched the nightmare beside him and he trembled with sorrow.

Morris never got much sleep in this room, but he could not throw away the other bed.