A Bientôt

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Recommended Citation

Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol22/iss1/25
Lately

McKenna Rinta

I want to crack open my skull
And let the blue jays fly out
I want daisies to sprout from my eye sockets
And stretch their petals towards the sun
I want to take an axe to my ankles
Permanently dislodging my feet
I won't hold them back anymore
Let them walk where they want
I'll stay behind
Looking at my ankles
And counting the rings
For the years I've been asleep

A Bientôt

Kayla Suvak

“She is fading fast! She is too weak to live!”
The pity in the nurses' eyes screamed that the end was near.
Their lips moved making sound that I could not hear. I was too focused on the delicate flower in front of me. The moment I locked onto her rosy cheeks and button nose I loved her. She was perfect. Her eyes were squinted shut, but I knew they were a more brilliant blue than had ever been seen in this world before.

“My dear, her heart is faltering too severely. She will not last the next few minutes. The lack of nutrients and the earliness of her arrival, not to mention the amount of blood loss you both sustained, well, there is nothing we can do. I am sorry.” The seriousness in the doctor's voice emulated the voice of a captain telling his crew that there was no hope. Their precious ship was sinking.

“I know, but let me hold her. Please. I want to hold her just this once.”

“I am not sure that I can recommend that.”

One of the nurses fixed Dr. Roberts with a piercing eagle-like stare; the anger in her eyes was unfathomable. I had never seen a woman so enraged outside of a television show. She was a legitimate momma grizzly bear in full on attack mode.

“You have GOT to be kidding me! Daniel, let the girl hold her. She is never going to get another chance and you want to take that away from her. Jesus Christ, man! Where is your humanity?”

Sheepishly, Dr. Roberts left the room, muttering something about “not wanting to get in the way of women's hormones.” The nurses looked at me with glimmers of success in their eyes; all we had going for us now were the small victories.

As they delicately placed her in my withering arms, I looked at our reflection in the hospital window. The sheen of sweat on my forehead glittered in the light. I looked as though I had died or was about to. My eyes were no longer their sparkling blue, but a faded, silvery gray. I had failed her. I had given into a darkness that destroyed my one chance at happiness. I was nothing more than a
skeleton, a shadow. She was beyond beautiful. She was more exquisite than all the stars of Heaven. Leaning down to kiss her cheek, I breathed in the distinct baby smell. A smell of white lilies – pure, innocent, angelic sweetness.

“Arabella.”

“What?” Nurse Linda turned at the sound of my muttering.

“What did you say?”

“Arabella. Her name is Arabella.”

“That’s pretty. Where did you find that name?”

“I found it in my heart, where she will be for all my days.”

There were tears in her eyes. I hadn’t meant to make her cry. I had never meant to hurt anyone. Nurse Linda’s chocolate-brown eyes were filled with sadness, but it would never be anywhere near as deep as mine. My sadness and shame were buried in the deepest caverns of the ocean. Never to be removed.

The heart monitor began to beat faster, a race against time for my little lily. Faster and faster.

Beep. Beep. BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!!!!

She was fighting a tiny little fight. One she had no chance of winning. She arrived much too early with no strength in her muscles. Her heart seemed to be battling as though she was sprinting to the finish line. It was her first and last race to home.


There was no sound left. No sound, but the dull moan of the flat line. I cradled her close to my heart one last time.

“I am so sorry little one. This is not goodbye, my sweet Arabella. This is a bientôt, until we meet again.”

# A Morning

Anonymous

I force open my eyes and gaze out the 6:00 am window. The dense fog outside creeps in through my nostrils, into my lung tissue, my blood cells, bone marrow. I feel lifeless and numb within my dad’s old goose-down sleeping bag; my thoughts utterly separate from my exhausted body. My soul hovers above, beholding a depleted bag of bones with bloodshot bagged eyes clenched closed below a retreating hairline.

My mind continues trying to transport me into another world.

Cursing under my breath, I sit up and rub my swollen eyes. My bag slips from my shoulders and the December breeze takes its place, affectionately stroking my back and neck with its sharp, icy nails. I shiver, swearing.

My soul is awake yet physically paralyzed within my body.

I stand; my comfort and warmth drop to the floor. I inspect the dirty spider-webbed mirror on the wall, confused. Who is this shaggy, slit-eyed disgrace that looks back at me? I make a few faces trying to recognize myself again. I look old; sentimentally I wonder where the years went. Then I realize I will be thinking that for the rest of my life. I pick some brown dead skin off my face, brush my teeth and try to spit the filthy pink mixture in the sink.

Mom always told me to keep a clean mouth.

In a second, I am in the kitchen pouring some foul-smelling Maxwell into my cup. Coffee is wintertime cocaine; my only weapon to protect myself from sideways rain and frozen knuckles. Imagine it, black, burning hot within my empty turning stomach, caffeine seeps into my blood and jumpstarts a dormant heart.