



HOME IS A PLACE IN THE CORNER OF MY EYE

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I.

The thing is, my parents didn't want kids. When my mother was pregnant with me, she was too ashamed to tell my grandmother. Her sister did it for her. That's the thing about being a woman, you're always feeling ashamed. My dad also was never good with kids. When I was in the third grade he started giving me coffee for breakfast and suggested I read books such as *Lord of the Flies* and *War and Peace*. He considered my brother and I more mini-adults than children, which was liberating but also damaging. He had a bad temper. He was never one for patience. Parents generally tend to want to spare the feelings of their children, but my father subscribed to honesty. My grade school art projects were subject to harsh critique under the guise of truthfulness and self-improvement. *Your horizon line is all crooked. The composition is off. What did I tell you about color theory? This is all wrong.* When my mother would simply tell me she liked what I did, my father would interject with "Don't tell her that her bad art is good!" Which seems fair enough, but children are sensitive. I wasn't looking for a critique, just a way to connect with my parents. Is being a pathological truth-teller preferable to being a pathological liar? I don't know. Maybe. I did learn a lot from him about art.



II.

My mother bought me my first disposable camera when I was 5. It absolutely fascinated me. I took it with me everywhere, documenting the most inane events. I felt the impermanence of everything very deeply. I was terrified of forgetting, overcome with a compulsive need to document it all. Every thing. Every moment. Like I needed to confirm it's existence. I had to preserve it all. She told me to stop wasting the film.

Around the same age, I was an avid collector. I wanted to put the whole world in my pocket. I wanted to protect it. I would come home from school and my mother would empty my pockets of rocks, gum wrappers, broken pencils, and other treasures I found throughout the day. I loved things, objects, and everything tangible. They fascinated me in the same way that taking photos did. Every snapshot, everything I collected, felt like a mini time capsule. I couldn't stand the thought of not remembering that these things existed.

That same feeling of urgency has never left me. Everything is interesting. Everything is disappearing. I'm still afraid of forgetting.



III.

I remember coming here. To New York. It always felt like a cliché to me. The Big Move. But anyway there we were, my dad and I, standing at the waterfront. He wanted to see the water. He wanted to look at the boats. He likes things that float. We stood in silence for a while. Neither one of us are the type to start a conversation. It was early in the morning and I was moving into my dorm in a few hours. We had to get back soon, but for now we just stood. I never thought I would miss my parents. I guess no one does, but my relationship with them was so messy that I thought I would be able to smoothly transition into adulthood without thinking twice, that I could sneak by without Nostalgia grabbing my by the wrist.

“When my sister was going to Columbia, she had a hard time” he said. “This city is full of so much potential, but it can also eat you alive. Especially with what we do, creative work, it’s hard. It gets personal. Just keep your head above the water.” I just kind of sat there kind of stupidly and nodded. I took a picture of the waterfront. He may feel like more of a knife than a father sometimes, but he’s never once doubted my ambition.

So here I was, living the life I had always wanted, the life wanted when I was five. Living in the Big City. Making art all day. Exactly what I always wanted. I couldn't have it better. And now I had it but that night I couldn't sleep. I felt so detached from everything I used to know, like there was no ground beneath me. *What the hell was I doing here? Why am I doing this? What do I expect to get out of this?* I felt guilty for things that I know I shouldn't feel guilty about.

Always Dreaming won the Kentucky Derby this year. Do dreamers take all? Can the Always Dreamers of the world really win? (And tell me: is it an ugly win? The kind of win where you might as well have lost? How much did he lose before he finally could win just once? Is it cheaper than therapy?) I'll get back to you in ten years. Maybe twenty. Whenever I find the answer.