

SANDY

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Before I could find the way out, I opened my eyes. I was in familiar bed that had been mine ages ago last night. I followed the sunbeams to the window and recognised my orientation in the bed. I wondered if the light had ever been different in here, if the beams had ever cast themselves through the glass in a different angle. I didn't remember it ever being dark. I didn't remember what I had done the day before. But I felt a lack of something that hurt so prominently as though it were the center of my existence, a lack-ache so to say. I wanted to call my mom, but I didn't. I decided to visit her instead. Calling might have just interrupted my determination and brought me back to a world in which people had appointments and other reservations. No. I put my clothes, found my way to the station and got on the train, successfully avoiding to ask myself why.

Towards the middle of the journey it suddenly felt long and I didn't know where I was (going). I dozed off and dreamt of a barking dog. It seemed to be assertive (of my plan). I was woken by the conductor who asked for my ticket and realized a grey-haired round-faced woman and her tiny chihuahua dog had taken the seat across from mine. Its bark when it looked at the conductor was several octaves higher than in my dream (but had a similar rhythm). My drowsiness gave way to full-fledged lack-ache one more time and I wished I had brought something to read to distract myself. The woman with the dog got off one station before mine, and when the speaker finally announced my stop my heart pounded as if anyone knew I was coming and were there to pick me up. The door gave a "beep" and opened in front of me.

When I sucked in the first breath of homeplace I immediately felt hungry, so I sat down outside the fucked up little station café and ordered a sandwich and tea. I wondered if the owner Helga would recognise me if I looked her in the eye and greeted her. I discarded the possibility, my hair was a lot shorter than it used to be; hers was still the same ginger-yellowish tone ever so neatly framing her grumpy face. I stirred my tea with the unnecessary little plastic stick and mindlessly stared at the curtain concealing Helga's doings inside the café. It moved gently with a breeze I didn't even feel. It swung to the side and an eye caught mine for an instant before the curtain fell back into place. The eye seemed so familiar and left an itch on mine. I jumped up almost knocking the aluminium chair over and darted inside. But there was only smoke from two old guys' cigarettes that burned in my eyes and nose together with the smell of decades of cigarettes. Helga looked up from her newspaper right into my face. The question marks in her eyes made me want to cry. The lack-ache had turned itself on again and was rummaging in my stomach. I stared back at her for a moment before I uttered, "I think I saw someone I know in here." - "I've got two fine pals here to offer", she remarked sarcastically with a hand gesture towards the two old men. One of them gave me a cheeky smirk that revealed a few missing teeth, the other remained with his gaze transfixed to the ashtray. "If these aren't your men", Helga continued, "I guess you are mistaken." -

"I guess so.", I just said and turned on my heel. I left a few coins on the table with my unfinished tea that tasted like paper cup. "Mum", I reminded myself of the goal of this excursion, so I got going.

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It was still early when I woke up. I could very well tell by the light in this room. I remembered that blue hue that had filled me with excitement and explorer spirit when I was a child. I smelled a scent of coffee through the door I hadn't bothered to close last night. I wanted to head downstairs and confront my mother about Fify, hoping that Kurt wasn't as early a bird as she was. I wanted to slip in my clothes - third day in a row and found both my shorts and the yellow T-shirt were missing. Nether mind, I stepped down in underpants. If Kurt lived here, he would have to cope with meeting me unclothed. I stopped in the kitchen door from where I saw mom, facing the counter back towards me. No Kurt. "Mum", I said "where are my clothes?" "I put them in the washing machine, they were sweaty", she said without turning around or interrupting her preparations. I knelt down at the washing machine and looked into the whirl. "Now Fify might be lost forever." I thought but didn't dare to ask mum if she had checked my pockets. "What shall I wear?", I asked instead. "Your boxes are still in the cellar.", she answered calm as always. I fetched a box from the top of the old cupboard in the boiler-room and picked out an overlarge polo-shirt with pink and white stripes and thick narrow cut jeans. I marvelled at my old style for a minute. I probably hadn't worn these since I was sixteen, but they still fit nicely.

Barefoot I walked upstairs again. Meanwhile Kurt was awake and put the coffee can on the table. I poured myself a cup, still adjusting the feel of my new old jeans on my legs. I didn't like coffee but I wanted the mug to distract myself. "So, Kurt", I asked, "what has my mum told you about me and our cosy little life here earlier?", I started feeling defensive, but didn't know of what. I think he hesitated a minute and cast a second's glance at my mum who was still standing with her back turned to us. "She told me you were a rebel in school, one of the clever ones. And that you always hated it when she gave you household or garden chores, but mostly ended up enjoying them a lot. That you have the ability to play."

That was true, I guess. I remembered how I had put up a fight when she had asked me to repaint the fence and ended up having the best time of that summer over it. Especially because I had met someone behind that fence. I remembered a smile and grey eyes through the pickets. I didn't know if the face behind the fence was male or female, not that faces very necessarily are one or the other. I just heard a high-pitched voice, saw high cheek bones and these grey eyes. "Hey", I said, "you should help me paint this fence from the other side. My mum would be hyped. She thought it was a great idea to have me paint that fence, but only our side of it. God, my mum's world ends behind that fence." That was not true, but at the time I'd really believed it. (But) the person on the other side laughed (that's when I heard the high-pitched voice for the first time). "You know what", I continued, "you should paint it a different colour on your side, that would really piss her off. Let's challenge here a little, let's disrupt the neat seams of her universe." The voice chuckled, shoulders shrugged, and a hand reached through the gap to grab one of my stiff brushes. Now it was searching for the pot of paint. It was a beautiful hand, pretty fair despite summer and the fine grid of the skin looked delicious. I wanted to touch that hand. It dipped the brush inside the paint and retreated to the other side. It started painting the pickets on its side with my colour. Next time it came through to dip into the paint, I brushed it. "Hey", came the mock- indignant voice, swung the dripping brush in my direction. The drops of paint prickled on my skin through my clothes.

I looked at Kurt; he was still there, in here and now. I just nodded and mum served the omelettes she'd been preparing for us. "Thanks mum, that would not have been necessary", I said trying to be a good kid. With a dismissing hand-gesture she sat down with us and ate. "What are you doing today?", I asked. "Have to work", mum said. She was a gardener of the city. "Where are you working today?" - "In the old park." - "Can I come?", I asked quickly, seizing the opportunity to be alone with her. She was a bit perplex but said yes. She checked her watch - a gesture I didn't remember her performing

ever before - and said, "alright let's go then. Don't worry about the dishes, Kurt will do them, won't you Kurt?", she asked without a waiting confirmation or expecting disobedience. Mum grabbed her backpack and gave Kurt a kiss on the cheek. I didn't have anything to grab so I just tabbed towards the door awkwardly. Mum shut the door behind us, I felt like a schoolchild who's being walked to school, just that I was the one who tagged along. We walked silently on the little path with high shrubs next to the rail tracks. Through the leafless patches one could see the tracks and a few workers starting their shifts there. "Mum, I didn't know you worked that early", I said feeling guilty in the same instant for not asking her how she was more often, for not being part of her life really. "I don't.", she simply responded and I understood. My mum was a person who didn't ask much... because she understood anyway. She knew I wanted something and wanted it from her alone. If I had something on my mind or heart, I would have to shoot.

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