

It seemed like a while since Steven felt the soft breeze of spring. It seemed like a while since Steven felt anything. Over the summer and fall and winter he had been in a constant state of hibernation. All Steven could vividly remember was his computer screen, which gave off a soft light which delicately painted the edges of his furniture with a faint white that seemed to emphasize the room's emptiness. There was the desk the computer screen sat on, the pale colored carpet of the floor, which seemed to give off a permanent smell of Windex and foot odor and the bed, king sized, neatly organized with a white toupee and sheets, sitting below an elaborate and unwelcoming wooden bed rest that seemed strangely unfitting in a room so simple. It had the face of the moon or the sun, Steven wasn't sure, and it had a strange smile that didn't let him feel entirely comfortable. His wife's father, who had received it from his wife's father, had given it to him. He wanted to make it into some tradition or something. It seemed like an awfully strange one to Steven who didn't plan to give it to the husband of his future daughter if he ever had one. His first child had been a boy, born two years before that soft spring breeze.

He was the supply manager for a local Business, his job actually being the filling in of Excel charts each month. It was the sort of work that slowly drowned you, so slowly in fact that you never realized when you'd run out of breath. Steven had been doing this for 13 years now, looking at those little black boxes on the screen. They had nothing in them but had the potential to represent anything. He took an inner pride in having the power to make them as he pleased; small numbers, big numbers, divisions, subtractions, multiplications. For those measly

ten hours a day he could create a world, make decisions about its future, its present its past, it's size or its mass and be in total control. The amusement always came to an end when he realized that in the end, whatever he did, he had to subject himself to build his little world of numbers and letters in a way that the company had already designed for him. The facts and figures were already there, he always thought, I'm just the guy hired to make sense of them. After this he would fall into a soul-consuming boredom. This was a routine that he experienced every day from Monday to Friday, and by his son's birthday his routine had already significantly influenced Steven. He had grown a preposterously tidy moustache and wore more checkered shirts than he would've thought at an earlier age, as well as having fairly large bags under his eyes for a man his age. His son looked little like him; he had bleach blonde hair when he was born, only to become a little rustier into his teens, and he had blue eyes which clearly were a trait inherited from his mother. Little could be found in the child that resembled Steven distinctly, although that didn't stop people from trying to convince themselves into seeing similarities, the ears, the cheek bones, they have the same teeth they would say. As for the blonde hair, no one ever really knew where that came from.

He was an athletic toddler, learning to walk in a meager 4 months. From the very beginning he was more attached to his mother, and, maybe because of Steven's grueling work schedule, he slowly shaped a detached relationship with his father. In plain terms, Steven was not too fond of his son either; he tried hard to connect to him, to find something in him that he could identify with

but to no avail. He had become an outsider to his own life as if a thin veil was dropped in front of his eyes as soon as he disconnected himself from the computer screen. His social life began to feel like a low buzz in the back of his mind, like he was dining in a restaurant in a very engaging conversation, which was only made more intimate by the loud chatter of his surroundings.

Their small apartment stood above two other apartments and a train track. For the first year of his son's life it was a nightmare to keep him from crying as the train passed. Steven, who was a light sleeper, began to lose more and more sleep. He felt he had run out of energy, didn't feel prepared for growing old at that pace. The only thing that he found comforting, his work, began to feel heavy and bland and redundant. He would often begin to sweat in the meeting room and would always unbutton one button off his shirt midway through every conversation. He felt suffocated. His legs felt heavy as did his head, and he felt the need to do something about his situation. That need never evolved into anything more than long showers and a sour anger at his child. This was during the summer before he felt the soft spring breeze. As summer progressed and fall began settling in, Steven had replaced watching his family with watching T.V and eating Junk-food. A frustration seeped into him at knowing that his family and friends were pushing him down, but his fear didn't let him. His life began to grow fuzzier than ever. By mid October he had quit his job to see if that would release him of his carrying weight, of his angst, of his frustration but it didn't. Luckily he was a nifty saver and had enough in the bank for a year's living with modesty. By mid November a deep sensation of solitude began to bear over him. He felt

it in his chest, an empty space, a black a hole that was sucking him in from the inside. He let his neat little moustache grow into more of a patchy beard and the bones in his face became sharper and longer. His slight eye circles had grown exponentially and his hair was reseeding. He felt despair inside him as he realized that his whole existence could be accounted for in things inside his bedroom, he would've counted his car but he decided to sell it to boost the savings account. It was a brisk spring morning when he received the call, he had taken up chain smoking and was doing so leaning over the apartment window, admiring the view of cement, asphalt and trash. He was startled by the ringing and dropped his cigarette in the street three stories below. By the time he pulled his head out of the window his son was crawling up the coffee table towards the phone and trying to answer it. Steven quickly grabbed him by the torso and put him by the couch. The call had been made to tell him that his father had died and the funeral was being held on Sunday. They were burying him in a cemetery down in the country so he could have some peace and quiet, about a two hour drive. Steven hadn't seen his father since his last birthday in July. He looked healthy then as Steven recalled. They said it was a heart attack, no one could've detected it, but Steven knew that they could've foreseen it, if maybe they listened to what the doctor said, or if they looked out for the old man's well being but they didn't and he was dead. Steven was not sure how to react; he wished he would've seen him again before he died. He called his wife but she was in some country house outside of town with her sister and couldn't attend. He figured he'd take the kid with him. He couldn't sleep that night. A ghostly guilt had taken over him. He didn't

feel grief for his father's death but a burning frustration rooting from the fact that he could've done something, spent more time with him, invite him over for dinner but he didn't and now it had turned into one more reason he couldn't sleep.

The morning was grey and uncomfortable. He ate a bowl of cereal and helped the baby feed himself. After washing everything he went up stairs and into the bathroom. He stared at himself in the mirror for a while, trying to control his urge to punch what he was seeing. He took a steaming hot shower and slipped into his finest black suit. He was going to put on a real tie this time but had too much troubling tying the knot right so that the length was appropriate. He quickly gave up and reached for a clip on. The drive there was not any brighter. The sinister gray clouds seemed to chase him. In these situations he would usually turn on the radio in order to drown out the loud detachment between him and his son, but he felt it inappropriate this time as he saw it as disrespectful to his father. The drive was a solemn journey haunted by the threat of rain and disaster.

He arrived at the cemetery by noon. It seemed to be the only place in the whole area not covered by the foggy shadow of clouds. It had the misty aura of spring all around. It smelled of musk and dry wood and had a little wooden church which was where the ceremonies were being held. The plans were initially to hold them outside but the menacing clouds approaching sent them skittering off into shelter. As Steven went through the door he saw familiar faces, faces that he hadn't seen in decades, all hidden under a cover of sorrow. He hugged his brother and his mother and his aunts. The people who knew who he was gave

him a hug or hardy pat on the back and told him the same recycled phrases. "Sorry for your loss," "your father was a great man." Most of the chatter was directed towards or about him. The town where he grew up was a small tight-knit community. They all knew him and were extremely eager to know where he'd been or what he'd done in the past decade. They asked it with a characteristic timidity, as if feeling guilty for gossiping in a funeral. Steven was made quite uncomfortable by all the attention, and having to explain the admittedly standard circumstances that led to the presence of a big blonde baby in his arms and his lack of a wife to show off, with his father's carcass only feet away. After a while Steven realized that he did not very much care for those people and he knew very well that they did not care for him either, and the fact that they were here now competing to see who was the saddest in memory of his father seemed like a preposterous idea and a pointless one at that. He left the funeral with not much of a change in spirit, no sort of relief. A frustration was still digging inside him, like something in his chest that was itching its way out, and it hurt Steven and sometimes he couldn't sleep, and sometimes he couldn't help himself from crying. He just couldn't. As he was driving towards the city a light drizzle had begun to fall. And the highway seemed fuzzy and warm, and Steven felt the urge to steer away, but then he looked at his son, and steered himself back on course. As they approached the bridge to go into the city, he started to slow down, parking the car in a grass patch just ahead of where the bridge began. He started to walk towards the very middle of the bridge. When he reached what he estimated to be the right place he simply stopped and climbed onto the edge. He heard the shriek and the smell of

burnt tires behind him. Someone screaming, someone calling the cops, another trying to communicate with him. It was all a fog to him, transparent, impermanent. He looked down at the choppy ocean and thought of all the hate, and all the fear, and all the anger that had built up inside him. His wife, his job, his child. They were all worthless, transparent. He had nothing to stand for, nothing to be proud of. He looked down at that choppy ocean and he saw peace and relief. Oh! The relief. He thought of his life, full of empty promises, false starts and disappointments. He thought of the pain he would feel upon impact, what he would feel like on the way down. Finally he thought of himself; he thought of his own actions, his own desires, his own goals. It was hard for him to find anything at all. He didn't exist, he wasn't anything. He saw others and thought they are something, people react to their presence. And then he asked himself why. Why were these other guys being people? Why couldn't he be a person? Have a voice? He wanted to have a voice! He knew then that his life, his circumstances, his world, it was not up to him and it broke his already shattered heart. But who he was in that world; that was something he could control. He understood now. He didn't need to change what was around him to feel real, he had to change himself. Life was unfair in a fundamental way but it was up to each and every person in this world to make it fair, to mold it. And a slight glimmer of hope ignited in his chest because he knew he could change. He looked down at the choppy ocean and felt fear, and knew that he couldn't do it. Not now, not now. He still had a chance, a fighting chance.

He looked over his shoulder and saw that a police officer had been talking to him the whole time. He smiled

at that. He yelled out an OK. And relief fell over the crowd and he knew then that he had made the right choice. These people, these strangers actually cared about him. He began to turn around, slowly. As he turned, the men and women who were watching joyously at a saved life looked on in horror as he fell, accidentally, to his death. As he smashed into the ground, the last thing he lost, even after he had lost his life, was that glimmer of hope that had been ignited in him. Nobody knew exactly why he fell. Some said he slipped, others said he simply lost his balance, but there was one very small group that theorized that it was a soft spring breeze that tipped him over.

THE END