

The swaying of snowflakes

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Marie woke up unusually early that day. *I'm going to die today*, was the first thought that crossed her mind. The seemingly menacing sentence had become serene over time. She had eventually developed a routine of a flash of an unsettling feeling of anxiety at the brink of awakening followed by the arcadian thought of dying. As her hope for a better life had started wearing thin, she had become more and more content with the idea of death. Little did she know the comforting wish was to come true that day.

Marie was not satisfied with how she lived or who she was. When she was nineteen years old, an older man she was seeing at the time asked her: "Don't you feel like you're wasting your youth?", to which she responded: "I love you." Marie never knew her way with words because she felt her thoughts were too complex for other people to comprehend. She never loved the man. Had she known how to express whatever ideas were running through her head, she would have said this:

"Youth? I don't believe in youth. Like you, I've been taught that I'm only young once and that I should rejoice in my happiest years because I've only got one chance. We've all been taught that. What time period of a man's life is the easiest to find joy in? If you ask anybody in this world, you'll get the same answer: your childhood, your teenage years, your youth.

"But the problem is, everybody who says that is looking at it from a distance. Sure, in retrospect, I can now observe my childhood memories - the early ones, I mean - and tell you exactly what I would have done knowing what I know now. But as I was living those memories, they haven't been just a concept that I'd think about in the future. At the time, they were everything I knew, no, they were *everything I was*.

"As you live, there is no such thing as the past or the future, there is only the present - everything you perceive at each and every moment of your life, there is no youth, there is no childhood, there is no adulthood, there is just one moment that passes by and gets replaced by another in an instant. In a flash, your life changes, as people come and go, as responsibilities pile up. Poof and you're someone else. The life you have is transient and that is why you can't act like you're writing a script and that everything has to lead to a good future, no, there is no *in ten years* you have to worry about. All that *in ten years* means is that there will be a moment when you have survived another ten years.

"So to answer your question, no I'm not. I can't waste something that I don't have."

And of course, had she said those words, the man would have said something along the lines of: "You say the nicest things," and she'd shrug and they'd laugh it off and she'd start taking her clothes off. Which may or may not have been what happened after what she had actually said.

Marie, of course, had grown up since then, acquiring more and more views and opinions on life. Not much of this attitude she had at nineteen had stuck with her. Or, more precisely, all that remained was a reminder of what she could have turned out like, had she

organised her opinions and stuck to them. And this permanent feeling of regret would lead to her early demise at the age of twenty nine.

The day of her death was a freezingly cold, dry December day. She took a deep breath as she raised her head and shook it to get rid of any lingering thoughts too obnoxious or irrelevant for her to deal with. She then got up and went to the kitchen to make herself a cup of coffee.

I'll tell you that it was a Thursday, but it could have been any other working day, because at twenty nine, the notion that she wasn't fully taking advantage of everything life has to offer had consumed her completely and every day had felt the same. She was broken. She would never say anything, she'd go to work, day after day, never happy with herself or anybody else. After work, she'd come home, lie in her bed, and wonder what she could have done differently and where her life went wrong. She wouldn't do anything about it, except to let the existential dread set in more and more.

Some people would call this a midlife crisis, but that would imply she'd live for another thirty years.

She decided to walk to work that day. Perhaps to enjoy the fresh air; she hadn't done that in a long time. Or perhaps she knew what would happen. It might have been her way of saying goodbye to the world she once knew so well.

As she left the house, she walked past her car, hesitating for a split second. She worked some two streets away from her house so the ride was never necessary yet the thought of walking that mile never crossed her mind until that day.

After walking for about five minutes she realised she didn't recognise her surroundings. *Has it been that long since I walked this road?* She looked around. *This used to be a cul-de-sac, I know it.*

She was right, the concrete road used to end by a yellow house with a red roof and gradually turn into a gravel path where no cars could go. Except the house had been torn down and the road extended so it would now connect to a road junction. Marie sighed.

After she had moved in her current apartment, she would spend all her free time in this street, thinking it was the most beautiful part of the city. She was twenty two back then and the street was new to her; menacing at first, flickering lamp posts nobody ever seemed to fix or care about, cars that would never move which made her wonder if they were even owned by anybody. As she got used to these details that made her feel uneasy, she'd grow fond of the place.

But as it is with things, places and even people that are close to your heart, as time goes on, all the fondness and the burning passion you have towards them, turns into commonness and you start taking them for granted. That has happened to Marie as well. With the street and also with life.

It started snowing. Marie stopped to look around again. She tried focusing on something tiny. Like the snowflakes' swaying. She tried her hardest to concentrate on the light

bits of white slowly descending, hitting the concrete and melting away. She had to, because she remembered that it used to come naturally to her, focusing on details, stopping to perceive the moment. But now she had to think about doing it. She grieved for her old self, Marie in her early twenties never thought about doing anything.

What has happened to me? She thought. *I never had to struggle to do this. I used to be so carefree about the world. I never thought about my career, about my future, I only concentrated on my life as it was.*

What have I done so wrong to have my life fall apart at twenty nine? Since when do I pay attention to anything else than myself and the swaying of snowflakes?

There was a distant sound, a screech of breaks, but Marie was too lost in her thoughts to pay attention to that. Instead she dwelled on the word swaying, unsure if she only did it to prove she still could.

“Swaying daisies sing a lazy song beneath the sun,” she sang to herself soundlessly. Marie used to love the Beatles. Not only because of their music, but because of their rise and fall, the way their lives started slipping through their fingers because somebody else, be it record companies or their groupies, took control over them. And they fought it and they realised they had to get themselves in gear again. And they did.

Mother Nature’s Son used to be her favourite song, it used to calm her down and make her life seem tranquil, which was a beautiful illusion she had to keep alive. This illusion of having control over her own life was sort of a coping mechanism she’d gotten used to. It was a way of turning her disparate emotion-ridden life into a series of beautiful memories she’d never regret. Oh, did she miss her ability to do that.

“Sit beside a mountain street, see the waters rise,” she sang softly. As her voice got louder so did the screeching sound.

Needless to say she never got to sing another verse of the song she once loved so deeply. I’ll tell you she barely felt any pain.