
LOST STAR

PIMSIRI ROJANAPORN

The long wooden bench was beautifully crafted, carefully stained, sawed, and shined. I have sat on that bench countless times. I played on it, cried on it, and even hit my head on the front right corner of it, but this was the first time I honestly looked at it. It was long, long enough for me now to lay on it completely but not comfortably. The natural line of the wood, patches of beige and black, painted with hues of red like water painted sunset or dried blood stain. But now for the first time since 1998, there was a palm-sized white stain. It was different than the other marks; it was dull, dented, circular, white, and unnatural. A scar on the once pristine masterpiece.

A wrinkled hand ghosted over the patch. Spindly fingers vigorously rub and rub and rub, over and over and over again. The fingertip became sweaty, warm, hot, and eventually burning. She would pause for 10 seconds, eyes staring at mine glazed but shining. Ten seconds later she returns to the bench. She continues to rub, determined to remove the white patch she didn't realize she was causing. Her fingertips were raw, skin red.

My dad snatches her hand away from the bench. Held it tightly and yelled, "Stop!" My eyes widens and latch on to the scene in front of me. My dad almost never yelled--happy, angry, calm, or sad, he has always spoken with loud voices of passion, but he never yelled. My eyes are lost black dots that needed to find their guide. I look straight into her eyes. They widened just like mine, but I didn't think it was out of fear like mine. Her eyes look into my dad's, dark soft brown, circular, but not dull. It was full of little stars twinkling but not orbiting anywhere, no gravity, no direction. My dad slowly let his hand fall, held his grip gently, rub and rub and rub again but this time with a gentle caress on that now fragile wrist. No matter how comforting and apologizing that touch might be, he couldn't look into her eyes. My eyes relax but I didn't look away, I couldn't. That eye full of stars never used to be lost, it used to be hard, strong, beautifully crafted, stained by time, sawed by hardship, and shined with wisdom. She used to tell me when I laid on that bench with my head on her lap that your eyes should never sparkle without purpose, like a ditz (she did always say whatever she wanted), it should be warm but hard, kind but determined, never lost. She used to hate that I wore glasses, she said it hid my most important feature, she didn't comment on it at all today. I don't know if she liked my new glasses or if she just didn't like glasses.

To me, she was always a beautifully crafted masterpiece. My grandmother was the strongest person I know. Her body, short but steady, her grip was rough and strong. That five foot tall lady that raised five boys almost entirely by herself never once looked lost. She was everyone's guiding star, even in the most literal sense, blinding and held together by its own gravity. Slowly she lost her light, snippets of memory floated away. It was first random facts, then name, then direction, then who we were, and slowly but surely, who she was. She can no longer speak. Sounds made, but no words formed. The lady who once yelled from her front door for all her kids, then eventually her grandkids to run home, no longer did. The stars in her eyes didn't hold direction. They were floating stars. Glimpses of herself remain, the stars are still there, strong but lost. Lost as she may be, she was shining all the same. She was smiling, happy. At first, I was devastated when she forgot my name but now as my eyes reach hers she is still my star. My eyes began to warm and shine again, this time not for guidance but for love. My dad and uncles sometime can't bear to look at her, to see the remnants of their old mother. But I don't just see the remain of her former self. Alzheimer's is only a small dull stain that is denting this masterpiece. Nevertheless, that masterpiece still remains, strong, sturdy, and beautiful. She returned back to her bench. Rub and rub and rub again.

STUDY OF A WOMAN DANCING

SARAH MIA
DURAN

