

Blind Faith

He only met her in the dark. He remained ignorant about her looks, her age, her name. She was suggested by a whisper, a breeze, the slight brush of her hair against his shoulder. Touch and voice remained the only slight indications of her presence.

“Close your eyes,” she always whispered once they left the diner. He obeyed but only because he had an odd premonition that if he opened his eyes she would disappear.

“Why?” He would question, although her answer was always the same.

“Because people are too reliant on their vision. They think light will lead the way.”

He would nod like he understood and laugh all the same. Her grip intertwined with his like a tether connecting their lives together. Then her hand squeezed tight, once, a pulse, as if she was afraid to let him go. Then it would slip away, leaving behind a coldness and an emptiness as if the tether had never existed at all.

He met her in the diner at midnight. He had no phone number, no contact save for a promise and silent agreement. The waiters knew him by voice--always odd to recognize someone by a voice but not know their face.

He stumbled along, pulled by the waiter's rough, calloused hand. As he staggered through the diner, his free arm brushed the tablecloths; each was distinguished by their textures: velvet, straw, silk, or canvas. His guide stopped, releasing him abruptly enough that he lost his footing. His hands roamed, searching for the tell-tale grain of wood to catch his fall. Instead, it encountered a stringy, tangled substance. A woman laughed--a breathy, willowy sound--and her dull, long nails scraped against his palm as her hand found his.

“Clumsy,” she teased and directed him to his seat. She moved gracefully, with slow sweeping motions despite the dark.

He had remarked about this, on their second meeting, and she revealed she had been a dancer. He imagined a woman with an elegant frame, rigid posture, her coarse hair pulled into a bun, and her chin poised in attention. It suited her, he thought. She sounded like a dancer.

Once the clock sung a somber note of morning, they left the diner. Once more, she commanded him with her gossamer voice: “Close your eyes.”

He did, but was struck with the recognition that he would never see her dance. She wanted a blinded man, and he could never understand why.

“Why can’t I see you? Just once,” he begged.

Her hand fell limp, no longer holding his anymore. “Because you will not understand,” she said, her voice shaking with some unknown fear, “And people are over-reliant on vision, and there’s no need for it here.”

He sighed, his face turned, and resolved just once to disobey her: he wanted to see the face of the woman he loved. He opened his eyes slightly, glancing at her from the side of his vision. She was beautiful with pale everything--from her skin to her eyes to her hair. Her gaze was directed elsewhere, but she turned as if something had alerted her about his infraction. Her eyes widened, and she began to cry.

“You shouldn’t have done that,” she sobbed, and gripped his hand, desperate for that tether. He flushed, ashamed, but refused to look away.

She started to fade, her body gradually shifting more translucent than it already was. He was confused. He didn’t understand.

“Where are you going?” He asked.

“I’m not supposed to be here,” she answered, “and you saw me, so my illusion dissipated, and now I must go.”

He watched her leave, confused and alone. His hand that had once tethered his love to the living world now vacant of its purpose.

He sat, bewildered, in the diner the next night. As he floundered past the tables, he found no one was waiting for him anymore.