

Dementia and Endless Dawn

Tomorrow, he will turn on his side and ask for his chai again. My grandfather's illness never lets the sun set and the morning is an expanse of 'Bring me my chai' on repeat, the stoves of our hearts always warm with his request. He holds his cup with so much tremble, carefully measuring how long the biscuit should stay dipped in the concoction. He holds my hand with equal amounts of tremble, carefully measuring how long we have to hold hands, his brow a flicker of worry: is the morning not morning anymore?

Tomorrow, he will turn on his side and ask for his chai again. I will slip into his sweater of hand-stitched stories and ask him to weave new ones in an attempt to delay his request. He will break into a song somewhere midway, and I will collect the melody in cup after cup after cup, hoping that this soil will never lose its moisture. There is so much that I want to plant, dadu. Maybe the ladybirds will come visiting too, their red a glowing whisper of well-preserved memories. Like strawberry jam, a potential delight for the next day, as we ready breakfast. A more beautiful way of naming my grandfather's illness could be: The Season of Endless Breakfasts, where the sun is a dollop of homemade butter.

Tomorrow, he will turn on his side and ask for his chai again. I will ask him if he managed to sleep, and he will wink in response, amused at my question. I will reach for his forehead and say, "I love you". He will reach for my nose and say, "I know." For a long time, I hoped in my heart that he will say "I love you too", but perhaps it is the knowing of love that brings more comfort than saying of it. My grandfather knows

that I love him. He knows it like I know that the ladybirds will come to visit. Maybe they will stay too. Maybe

they will know too, 'Here is home'.

Tomorrow, he will turn on his side and ask for his chai

again. I am learning to be patient but I am afraid that there will be a flash of anger, and I will scream

'But you had your tea only five minutes ago!'

I am afraid of him forgetting he is loved in that moment. I am afraid that

the void will become into a vacuum and there will no space for stories. His is the voice of loneliness convinced against itself: he has

spent so many years holding himself up that even when he breaks, he does

not call it hurt. Now, though, he breaks easily and he knows it. I wonder

how much accumulated hurt

sits beneath his tongue: a specter

that can now form itself into a voice.

Tomorrow, he will turn on his side and ask for his chai

again. I will make him a cup, slowly brewed and tinged with cinnamon. I read once that cinnamon is a spice made from the inner bark of a certain tree. Maybe it will help him see that sometimes what looks like a cavity

is a storehouse of spice. Maybe he will know the world still has something to offer

and that his granddaughter, when she cannot make him his tea,

will always be on the other side of the telephone line, asking

if he could taste the cinnamon and he remembers the song.

Dementia and endless dawn;

our love is all cinnamon and song.

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