

Providence

By Nadine Ducca Deharbe

A white light glared over him, and he realized he was awake. With a great fear clutching his heart, he turned his eyes either way to inspect his surroundings. He had awoken on a barren wasteland, a featureless, dry basin void of life. Except him. For he was alive, wasn't he?

An image of his silken home between the leaves sprung like a wildfire in his mind. And much like a wildfire, the specter of his vanished home scorched his senses so that he found himself running, running without direction until he met a polished white wall.

Thrusting his legs forward, he grappled the wall, scrambled up a short way, but lost his hold and slid back. Gasping for breath, half blind with panic, he stood trembling in front of the cruel barrier. He lifted his gaze to the sky. It was no longer the loving blue he remembered. It had become a pasty envelope, a white curtain that brought a chill to his many limbs.

As he watched, a black silhouette emerged from over the cliff, its shadow darkening the basin where he cowered. He regained his senses and fled. He tore forward, scrambled as far up a wall as he could, then, when his knees buckled, he dropped once more to the wasteland and ran in the opposite direction. He lost all sense of himself as he scurried, to and fro, up and back down, until a white curtain fell over him.

He yelped, he cried out for help but nobody answered his pleas. The white fabric fallen from the sky wrapped around him, locked him in but did not hurt him. He sputtered and coughed, his voice lost to the reverberations in the air around him. He managed to crawl through the curtain, until he could poke his head out from its folds. Then the world lurched upward and the ground was miles below him. Panic drove his eyes in all directions and he scrambled to free himself. But the white curtain carried him, adapted to him, cupped him like a cloud, until he could only huddle and await his fate.

Then the journey came to a halt. The edge of the fabric touched warm, green leaves. A garden. An Eden. His head spun as he drew closer to the green forest on the edge of the cloud. The refreshing scent of dewdrops and moist soil fluttered up to him. Still trembling with every step, he descended from the cloud and scurried onto the sunlit leaves. The shadow over him retreated. The white fabric had rescued him from purgatory and taken him to paradise. Now it pulled back and rose into the sky. A bright blue sky. As he watched his savior disappear, he marveled at the incomprehensible wonder that is life.

"What are you doing?" Mom asked through a chuckle as she came out to the balcony. "I thought you were having a shower and then I see you run by with a wad of toilet paper in your hand."

"Yeah," I answered as I watched the little guy hide between the leaves of the potted plant, "but I saw this spider lost in the tub and I couldn't bring myself to kill it. It's better out here, don't you think?"

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