

West Coast November

By Gina Goldblatt

The silence of November, the sheets turned under her, again and again, trying to fold her into them, the way blueberries are folded into muffin batter, gently, so as not to squish the dark blue globes. Thin like tissue skin over inky insides, the berries will heat in the oven, bleed a bit onto the muffin they inhabit.

It was not her November, but the November of those stifled in their bed sheets, unable, or unwilling, to climb outside of them, beyond the shield they provided against failure and endeavor and sliding. Her November was yellow-brown, glowing like feline eyes in the night, fleeting evidence of the night, the battles and the scroungings and the sheer adventure of the hours after the sun melts into the horizon like a pat of butter, fizzles outwards into the dark purples of they syrupy night.

She was description heavy without an ear to pour her musings in. It was a lonely cubicle of life, the bedroom, the whole format of the house, the shading trees that made every hour feel a bit like bedtime. Her things sat around her, glaring accusations of her material worth, her fear of losing, her grand aspirations, cloud-like in consistency, completely dependent on the unpredictable rains.

There was a thunderstorm the other day, a rare sighting in the Bay, something she took for granted back at home on the East Coast, as a sort of assurance that she was headed for something, that the air was heavy with it. When rain is only a drizzle, only a mist, only a distant never delivering threat, it is hard to tell where one stands.

In a sudden flash of cognizance, she asked for the things she needed: throaty declarations, drunken fits, lashes for penance, witnesses to grand dreams. The wet pavement outside shirked its responsibility, defiantly formed fissures and potholes in doublespeed, tied the wheels of the semis and hybrids to the road with spider webs of wedding. Greedy paved world, she mumbled. Greedy me, it warbled back. They were at least in agreement.

This was enough for her to set her foot down, on the wooden floor of her room, to scrape her feet long ways against the individual panels, listen to their stories. None of them were California-born. None of them were the same. Each was cold. Shivering with the sense that the humidity of their homes was absent. Each called to her to put the warmth of her back on them, to let them feel what a mother form was like, for the centuries of lack they had endured.

She was inclined to procrastinate further, so she indulged them. Stripped bare and lay on the wooden floor, to the murmurings of approval, arousal, jealousy from those in the outer corners of the

room, far from the warmth and curve of her backside, the relegated hipbones of her fleshy form.

The leaves fell in clumps outside, like a molting old man, leaving handfuls of his hair in a path, hoping to lead someone to him, someone who would stare into his face the way they did when he was young, when he was stunning even, when he was desirable and not pitiable. California was an all or nothing season shifter. Dropping it's Autumnal cloak for the shrewd awakening of naked winter in a night's time. Passing this manic denuding off as a passive necessity. The increments, the gradations, the easing of an uneasy city, was missing in this passive aggressive act.

She longed for the east, a place of not-so-silent hypocrisies. A place where the blending of seasons eases the harshness of the life, where thundershowers split century old oaks in anger, flood homes who had the audacity to dig up the earth for a cellar or a leather-couch seating area, rushing dirty, leaf-filled water clean through glass door to glass window, gutting the frame of the home like a fish, impersonal and driven in their fury. It gives a person the sense that they've already failed, were born insignificant, but in the spirit of the weather, in the way the seasons coax the brashness out of the East Coast fervency in small strokes of patience and manipulation, in this way, the human stubbornly rakes against this mentality, rises to the occasion as a challenge, one without concern for the inevitability of their smallness against its largess; for the spirit of obstinacy is as inborn as the air necessary to breath in gulps of lilac scent, or grandmother soup, or the salt-dough smell of a mother, when she finds time to hold us momentarily, so as to keep those small, fleeting indulgences in mind, to strive to reach the next one, whenever it arises out of pity for our hefty needs.

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