

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Written by

Denise Macomber Lenz

June 2016

EXT. PARK, JOHN'S TABLE - AFTERNOON

The sun beats down on BRYANT PARK, in the heart of New York City.

Its rays meet a BLANKET OF SNOW on the sleeping grass; a WET SIDEWALK, where ICE transforms into its gaseous alter ego in small, oozing increments; a small, BLACK IRON BISTRO TABLE and a BLACK IRON CHAIR, resting half on the concrete and half in the snowy grass; a SHINY BLACK LOAFER, tapping to its own beat, also half on the concrete and half in the snowy grass.

The loafer gives way to BROWN TROUSERS; the trousers give way to a STRIPED WOOLEN COAT; the coat gives way to the bearded, wrinkled face JOHN TYSON, age 85, his twinkling blue eyes staring into the sky, in the direction of the sun's rays.

His head bops to the same beat as his loafers.

John HUMS a jaunty tune. The sun's rays illuminate his joyful visage.

A PIGEON lands on John's iron table, pecking with futility at the black swirls.

John's eyes dart down from the serene sky, taking in the twitchy, pecky motion that has erupted upon his table.

His brow contracts.

A snarl. Some spittle.

The twinkle has left his eyes.

JOHN TYSON  
SCAT, VERMIN!

John flails, claws at the pigeon, a man possessed.

The pigeon flees for its life.

The table resumes its empty splendor.

John leans back in his chair. His song has evaporated. His loafer lays still in the melting snow. His heart is thumping.

John exhales.

He glances at the park around him, deflated.

EXT. PARK, YOUNG COUPLE'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

A YOUNG MAN and a YOUNG WOMAN sit at a distant BLACK IRON BISTRO TABLE, holding hands. They are full of all of the taut and shiny vigor that comes with the privilege of youth. They look deeply into each other's eyes as they talk.

EXT. PARK, JOHN'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

John glares at the young couple from afar.

EXT. PARK, YOUNG COUPLE'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

The Young Man's mouth moves with great speed, his face alight with the excitement of a story well told. He reaches his inevitable punchline - inaudible, but unmistakable.

The Young Woman laughs heartily.

The Young Man grins, leans in. He gives her a small kiss.

The Young Woman pulls back, surprised, her mouth agape.

The Young Man pulls back, befuddled, embarrassed.

EXT. PARK, JOHN'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

John gives a derisive snort. He is pleased.

EXT. PARK, YOUNG COUPLE'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

The Young Woman's shock gives way to a slow smile.

She leans forward and kisses the Young Man.

They embrace, leaning across the table that separates them.

EXT. PARK, JOHN'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

John resumes his glare, with a mumble and a cringe. He reaches into his coat and pulls out a folded paper NEWSLETTER.

He opens it. He scowls at the words.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
What you so angry at?

Startled, John almost drops his newsletter. His head jerks up, in search of the owner of the all-too-cheerful voice presently invading his solitude.

The owner of the voice pulls up a BLACK IRON CHAIR, dragged over from a neighboring BLACK IRON BISTRO TABLE.

JUDITH HARMON, age 70-something-nobody's-business, plunks down her chair with a decisive THUD, right in the middle of a snowbank. Her dark skin is littered with a thousand lines, marking the passage of infinite laughs and tears and thoughtful furrows; her hair, left to grow with its natural curl and texture, flies unapologetically wild and free, a bit of pepper but mostly salt; her dark brown, piercing eyes fix solidly on John, firing joy and curiosity straight into his soul.

She sits down on her chair and waits for John's answer.

John, struck silent, sits frozen in the grip of Judith's overpowering invasion.

JUDITH HARMON

What did that pigeon ever do to you?

John blinks.

JOHN TYSON

Wha-- What?

Judith smiles, shakes her head. Her eyes rest upon the newsletter in John's hands.

JUDITH HARMON

"Ridgehaven Community News?" That sounds compelling.

John looks down at the paper, bemused. He blinks a few times, clearing the cobwebs.

JOHN TYSON

They, uh... Newspapers.

JUDITH HARMON

Newspapers?

JOHN TYSON

They don't, uh... They don't really print them so much anymore. So, uh, I'm left with this crap for reading material.

Judith nods, chuckles.

JOHN TYSON (CONT'D)  
That's funny to you?

JUDITH HARMON  
It is. You are.

John's scowl returns, as does his snarl.

JOHN TYSON  
That a fact?

JUDITH HARMON  
They're just happy. That's not a crime.

JOHN TYSON  
The pigeons?

Judith gives him a long glare.

JUDITH HARMON  
Yes, the pigeons. And the young people. And Ridgehaven Community News. They're all happy. And that's okay.

John, perplexed, sets the newsletter down on the table and just looks at Judith.

JOHN TYSON  
Do I know you?

JUDITH HARMON  
No. I don't think so.

JOHN TYSON  
Then what in the hell makes you think you know *me*?

JUDITH HARMON  
Who knows anything? I'm just callin' it like I see it. You see joy, and it makes you angry. I see you, and it makes me intrigued.

John scoffs.

JUDITH HARMON (CONT'D)  
What is Ridgehaven?

John is about to burst from the annoyance of it all.

JOHN TYSON

It's a place where you go to live  
so you can die. It's the last  
ditch. It's the dark end of the  
goddamn tunnel.

JUDITH HARMON

What the hell kind of "haven" is  
that? And where does the "ridge"  
come into it?

John opens his mouth, then closes it.

JOHN TYSON

I...

Quite in spite of himself, he lets out a laugh.

JOHN TYSON (CONT'D)

Come to think of it, there's no  
freakin' ridge anywhere near that  
damn place. It's just on the other  
side of the river.

Judith nods.

JOHN TYSON (CONT'D)

That's pretty much the stupidest  
name ever.

He smiles at her.

She smiles back.

He catches himself, shifts uncomfortably.

Judith contemplates him for a moment.

JUDITH HARMON

You dyin'?

John is startled by the question.

JOHN TYSON

No.

JUDITH HARMON

Hmmm.

JOHN TYSON

It's a retirement community.

JUDITH HARMON

What are you retired from?

JOHN TYSON

Life.

Judith narrows her dark eyes.

JOHN TYSON (CONT'D)

Is this your job? Do you wander the park and interrogate innocent strangers?

JUDITH HARMON

Pretty much.

John shakes his head.

JOHN TYSON

No. **Real** answer. Who are you?

Judith leans across the bistro table, reaching out her hand.

JUDITH HARMON

Judith Harmon. Retired public school teacher. Park dweller. Stranger interrogator.

John reaches across the table in return. They shake hands.

JOHN TYSON

John Tyson. I hate pigeons.

Judith smiles.

John pulls back, embarrassed.

JUDITH HARMON

I heard your song.

JOHN TYSON

My song?

JUDITH HARMON

That song you were singin' to the sun. I know that song. I used to sing it in clubs when I was young.

JOHN TYSON

You were young? I was never young.

JUDITH HARMON

I believe that you believe that.

JOHN TYSON

I thought you were a retired public school teacher?

JUDITH HARMON

I was many things. **Am** many things.

John looks up, contemplating the sun.

Judith contemplates the Ridgehaven Community newsletter on the bistro table.

John starts HUMMING his tune again. The rays of the sun wash over his face.

Judith sits back, closes her eyes. She quietly SINGS along with him. Her voice is liquid gold, transforming into its invisible, gaseous alter ego in small, harmonic increments.

The Young Man and Young Woman walk past them, holding hands and lost in each other's eyes. Neither John nor Judith notice.

Nearing the song's end, John glances over at Judith. Her eyes still closed, he hums along as he watches the shapes her mouth makes as she sings.

The song is finished. Judith opens her eyes, swiftly locking with John's eyes.

He doesn't flinch. There is no embarrassment.

Judith points to the newsletter on the bistro table.

JUDITH HARMON (CONT'D)

The dark end of the goddamn tunnel  
appears to be hosting a dinner  
social tonight.

JOHN TYSON

Are you inviting yourself to  
dinner?

JUDITH HARMON

I am pointing out a fact.

JOHN TYSON

Hmph.

As he stands, John picks up the newsletter, folds it, and returns it to the inside of his coat. He fastens the coat buttons and stretches a bit, stiff from sitting.

Judith glances off around the park.

John holds out his hand.

Judith's gaze lands on the outstretched hand. Her brow furrows. She throws John an inquisitive look.

JOHN TYSON (CONT'D)

The dark end of the goddamn tunnel is hosting a dinner social tonight. The food is terrible, the wine is watered down, and I don't really know you. But you intrigue me.

JUDITH HARMON

Is that an invitation?

JOHN TYSON

It would seem.

Judith takes his hand. He helps her up, out of the snowbank.

EXT. PARK, YOUNG COUPLE'S TABLE - CONTINUOUS

John and Judith walk down the snowy sidewalk. They pass by the empty BLACK IRON BISTRO TABLE and two BLACK IRONS CHAIRS, previously vacated by the Young Man and Young Woman.

Watching one another with great amusement as they walk, neither John nor Judith notice the table or the chairs.

END SCENE.