

The Dream

He had been relaxing on the veranda for some time now, reading and rereading yesterday's newspaper. Troubled by a last piece of a puzzle, he stretched, gradually absorbing the increasing warmth of the rising autumnal sun. A slight movement across the aqueduct caught his eye, as the curtains covering her balcony door parted.

Long, graceful fingers, unadorned by the veneer of polish, paused on the handle, as if unsure of opening the portal to Pandora's Box. Barefoot, in a long-flowing, cream-colored nightdress, she hesitantly ventured forth. The early morning sea breeze tossed her hair wildly about her face. She made no attempt to gain control of it.

She was tall, somewhat slender, with a majestic and quiet ease that her undetected observer judged as ethereal. But he discerned a strangeness inflicting her demeanor that, at first, he could not codify. Often in our attempts to recall something half-forgotten, we find ourselves poised on the very precipice of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. Later, when forced to summon the reason for his disquiet, he would reflect that it was something about her eyes. She was staring into the distance, not seeming to allow any image emerging from the night's shadows to capture her attention. The thing was not in the nature, brilliance, or color of her features, but something hidden behind her expression, a thought of such terrible portent that focusing upon it would demand an action. With a feeling of deep, yet most quizzical, affection he regarded his neighbor anew, her singular yet placid cast of beauty, and the enthralling eloquence of her sensual language.

Before he could fully comprehend these mixed passions churning within, she gracefully pirouetted and returned to the bedroom. While he contemplated the significance of her effect on him, she quickly returned holding an object wrapped in what seemed to be a small, powder blue blanket or shawl. Just as he recognized that it was a child, it slipped from her grasp, fell from the height of the lofty complex into the deep and dim Grand Canal. The quiet water closed placidly over its victim.

Then, seemingly no more disturbed than one who has just disposed of the trash, she turned back into the room, closed the doors, and dropped the curtains.

He had been relaxing on the veranda for some time now, reading and rereading the incomprehensible scratchings of the story he had just completed. A slight movement across the aqueduct caught his eye, as she ventured hesitantly forth onto her balcony.

She stared off into the distance, as if attempting to be the first to discern the shape of someone returning from a perilous journey. He had seen her like this many mornings before. She was tall, somewhat slender, and with a lithe beauty he judged as exquisite. Yet he had never spoken to her, even though his own solitary existence longed for that contact. But there had always been something sad and unapproachable behind her eyes, something he understood. This made its way into his very essence by steps so slow and stealthily that she had embraced his soul unnoticed and unknown to him.

Before he could fully comprehend these mixed passions churning within, she gracefully pirouetted toward the door. As if pulled suddenly upright by a puppet master, he rose, his dramatic movement across the waterway finally drawing her attention. For just the first time, their eyes met. He offered a hesitant smile. She stared, no change in her expression. Slowly he

raised his hand and held it uncomfortably aloft. Cautiously, she returned his wave. Time's arrow seemed to pause in its flight.

Across the divide he called out, "It's going to be a wonderful day, full of promise, adventures, new opportunities, and best of all, second chances."

For a moment he believed she would just ignore him, go back inside and shut out the world again, or worse. Then, as if a veil had been pulled back carefully by a lover, her expression brightened. Slowly, she nodded her head once in acceptance. "Yes, it is," she offered. After that she vanished again, as quietly as she had appeared.

Next, seemingly no more disturbed than one disposing of the trash, he crumpled the pages of his story into a ball and dropped it into the deep and dim Grand Canal. As he closed his eyes, the water closed silently over the dream.