

## Rowboat

The light morning breeze enters the room and swirls slowly towards Emily, who lies motionless on the bed, her body struggling to shake off the last remnants of sleep. A faint smell of eucalyptus and petrichor comes riding in sound waves of rustling leaves. Only those waves and the fresh redolence they bear disturb the otherwise still house. Between them, they bring Emily out of the mild slumber.

It is like this every morning. Emily finds herself waking up with a tangle of bedsheets to her right, but no one to hold responsible for it. She has the entire house to herself, and she rises from the bed still undecided if today she will be delighted or terrified by the loneliness. Looking out of the window in front of the bed, she sees the sunlight dissipated and softened by an overcast sky. A church bell rings in the distance, its echoes clashing against each other as they travel to and from Emily's second-floor window.

And she decides to be delighted.

Emily walks downstairs, still wearing the clumsiness of the forenoon. Having opted for delight, she has neglected to wear slippers. The wooden floorboards are pleasantly cold, and she closes her eyes in between steps as she hears them creaking profusely beneath her feet. It smells of a rainy afternoon. Emily can't help feeling a warmth in her chest that is foreign in the mornings. How long has it been since she's felt this peaceful? Has she ever had this sensation of uneventful bliss? This balmy, tingly current that starts in her chest and spreads slowly through her body, as if her heart was pumping warm syrup and not merely blood? She must be in delirium. Surely she has never felt this.

She could float in this feeling all day, until the sun has switched sides and sinks unnoticed at the other end of the overcast sky. Emily could bask in this unassuming elation for the rest of the morning and the afternoon. Until he comes, and decides that the world, her world, has no warmth and no smell of moist trees and heavy air. Until he brings the darkness with him. But what if he didn't come?

Emily has taken a long bath and laid out a royal blue dress on the bed. It is one of her finest. She can't recall when she last wore it. Much like Emily, the dress has the ability to be both inconspicuous and impossible to look away from. How many heads she would turn in Salthill Beach! The silken dress dancing and brushing against her skin. Dancing and brushing and hovering like the rogue strands of hair that would manage to escape from the bun she has tied them into. The mothers and children running around and laughing as they play with plastic moulds in the shapes of starfish and seahorses and palm trees. Emily would find a blue shovel and look for its companion bucket, but nowhere in Salthill Beach would there be a bucket deep enough for all the things her shovel could pick up. And there would be a rowboat tied to Blackrock Pier and she would think of taking it.

Reluctantly, Emily escapes her daydream and stands up. She walks downstairs again and passes by the study. How long has it been since she sat at the piano? The study is almost completely isolated from the light outside. She rarely comes in here, into this distant world of books and creation. Emily stands in awe, revering the study as if it was a sanctuary she prohibits herself from entering without an atmosphere like today's, where she can make the colours unsettle and blend with the smells and cold light that warms her heart.

Emily sits at the piano and lifts the creaking keyboard cover. She can hear trumpets. They are muffled, but she can make out the chords. Her eyes focus on her fingers as she starts to find the notes to lead out of the chords of the trumpets. Maybe a B, then a G. Then down to an E and back up to an F sharp. She plays the notes spaciouly, allowing the empty house to engulf each of them and make them resonate with each vibrating floorboard. Her fingers start speeding up and the notes begin to melt together into a bassline. Emily thinks of the rowboat and all the forbidden things, the things that disappear when he comes home. How the delight and the terror of loneliness fade into darkness in his company.

Why do we think of things as forbidden, wonders Emily? The words start flooding her mind. She sings them with irony on top of the incessant bass line, as if mocking her own cowardice for not walking out and rowing away in the deteriorating rowboat of her daydream. Her life is a lie, a forged painting within the comfortable limits of the forbidden. Emily laughs and sings at the top of her lungs, never missing a note of that caustic but innocent bass line. And she cries for the rowboat.

The trumpets grow louder and they soar over the piano as Emily stops playing and keeps singing along to the chords. She stands up from the chair and leaves the dark study. The trumpets bellow and more notes, some of them dissonant, join the chords. Emily runs outside and keeps running. What if he saw her in the lawn and then the streets and then the beachfront?

But Emily only feels delighted by loneliness. She keeps running. She runs to Salthill Beach and finds the run-down rowboat with its oars and she plunges into the sea. And the sea will welcome her as the steps she takes become more difficult and her breathing heavier. The rowboat will be there, waiting to take her deeper into the sea until she decides to be at one with the heavy air,

the smell of eucalyptus and the sea spray. She will be elated by her solitude. And she will feel at home in the roughened sea. She will feel safe.

Until he comes to find a blue silken dress damaged by saltwater and a pair of broken oars.  
And all the colours of her world will be loose.