

The Monarchy

He's always been the man that everyone looked up to even though he stood at a rather average height. His personality, his feats and his ambitions elevated him above everyone else. He came from a small town in the south and then went to an Ivy League, Princeton to be exact. He majored in Molecular Biology, but when speaking as the valedictorian of the class of 2010, said it was the chase that truly captured his attention, not the science of it all. Out of college, he started his own non-profit in Washington and a few high-ranking liberals begged him to run for The Senate, claiming that he would be the new face of their party. For which he replied that a party involving only rich, white men was no party he'd like to attend. His name was one of those names that could so effortlessly be coined; one could not simply say the first without it being quickly followed by the last. Benjamin King, his friends and the tabloids called him Ben, but his mother still called him Benjamin. He had a slim face with dimples deeper than an ocean trench, his cheekbones were tall and sturdy like the branch of a noble redwood, and he was tall too, but not too tall. Yes, Benjamin King had it all. Each day the front-page was filled with his acclimates and hinting around about his forthcoming ambitions. Time Magazine even named him person of the year, in back-to-back years. He was

the man of the hour. Any other sensible person would be grateful to have such a graceful fifteen minutes, but not him. Benjamin King, the man among men, was blissfully living in the past.

"You have to come to the wedding!" Sarah shouted at him while dancing around rejected wedding dresses lying like corpses on the oversized dressing room floor. She squeezed her body into a size 00 to where it fit tight and nice, like a glove that she'd seen her grandmother wear when she was a child.

"Ben! Are you even paying attention?" She slammed his black journal shut on his carefully sculpted nose. He scowled in a reply as he adjusted his thick square-framed grey glasses; the pen marks visibly bled the entire side of his left hand to a royal blue.

"Weddings, just aren't really my thing, you know that." He said under one elongated sigh.

"You're my best friend. Insufferable or not, you'll suffer through it. For me." Benjamin hadn't been to a wedding since his first, which he swore to God would be his last. But he had always been a people pleaser to the highest degree. He had immense troubles in the art of saying no; it seemed to be the only thing he wasn't so good at. He's always so busy going to this and that event. It's quite exhausting actually, all that popularity. He finds himself feeling forced to go to all of these things. He is constantly being whirled to this place and

to that party in a black Cadillac's, seeing the world behind tacky, dark-tinted windows. And truthfully he missed the bluebird-egged sky of the south. He missed his mother calling him by his full name, Benjamin. He misses his childhood. He misses North Carolina. He misses days that meandered on too long. And most of all he misses his ex-wife.

Low and behold two months later, The King, found himself humbled, loosening his bowtie that noosed tight around his neck. He patted his hair and gelled it over to one side so no one could see where the single gray patch that had started to sprout just a year prior.

"When will I learn to say no?" He mutters under his breath as he takes a seat at the ceremony. The audible breeze from The Southern California Shoreline hits him in the face like a gift from God. The other wedding guests ask for autographs and pictures, for which Benjamin flicks his wrist and then effortlessly, emotionlessly grits his teeth, each gesture giving off an equally undisputable signature that says, "Ben."

Throughout the unnerving moments before the wedding he felt cooled and calm. Upon the entrance of the vicinity there was a great ice sculpture of the couple. It was so carefully crafted and beautiful that Benjamin couldn't keep his eyes off of it. As the other guests fidgeted in their seat, he sat perplexed, watching the ice sculpture gain a bit of fluidity with each

passing second. The liquid began to collect at a large bowl, serving as the basin, at the bottom of the figure.

Sarah makes her way down the aisle with bleached blonde hair lapsing down the nape of her neck and clinging against her pearl-white dress. He claps with everyone else as the couple kisses and smiles that same fake smile that Benjamin himself has even become to think as genuine. The ceremony took less than ten minutes but Benjamin found himself perplexed by the surplus of cliché living and breathing amongst the vows that the rest of the audience oo'ed and awed at. He couldn't believe that his friend, that love, that the world could be that rudimentary, that fabricated, that dull. How could they be happy, when they could lead such better lives without each other? They could've used more vibrant adjectives! Her dress and his shirt could've been altered to fit just a smidge better. He couldn't help but feel that Sarah was settling, that everyone had been settling their entire lives. Benjamin initially found comfort in his outwardly introspective personality; it set him apart and ahead of everyone else. He looked around the audience, mid-applause as the wedding precession made their exit from the isle and he saw the genuine, joyful faces on the crowd and for once wondered if it maybe, just maybe it had set him back. He remembered his own wedding and smiled. He thought of how beautiful she was in her white dress, hair flowing against the Atlantic. He had loved her

so much and it had been the perfect place, the perfect day, the perfect moment. This memory is where Benjamin had allowed his love to stay after he made the conscious decision to leave it all behind. He rarely thought about her crying on that porch as he backed his Cadillac out of the gravel driveway one final time. However, every once in awhile by sheer chance, he'll smell the coconut oil on someone's skin or a cheap Herbal Essences' Conditioner tangling in someone's hair and think of her. As the crowd began to clear Benjamin made his way over to the sculpture, which was now sweating itself to death under the California Sun. "Katherine King." He muttered under his breath. And he smiled, and smiled, and smiled.

Benjamin found himself, seated at a table with the grooms Great-Grandmother and Aunt.

"Aren't you the boy in all the magazines?" The great grandmother asked with the thin, little veins on her head palpitating under her thin white hair.

Throughout the meal Benjamin kept forking at the rare meats he no longer ate. After he moved away from Carolina he became a vegetarian and since his most recent relocation to Southern California had given into the trends of veganism. His stomach growled and he drowned it with a fourth, maybe fifth, glass of Champaign. His vision became heavy and the room seemed to heat up at a rather alarming rate.

"Dance with me!" Sarah insisted, but he couldn't take his eyes off of the sculpture. "C'mon, just one song!" She said lifting his wrist, which had lain dormant, limp on the table. They spun around in awkward, drunken circles, laughing and letting the alcohol slosh about their bellies. The sculpture began to drip a bit more drastically as the winded wedding guests wiped sweat from their brows. A crowd gathered and closed in around Benjamin as the Champaign spun the room and he elegantly went with it. He placed his feet here and there, he had never taken a dancing class before, but naturally, he seemed to be a natural.

"Is there anything Benjamin King can't do?" He heard a small voice ask. Then he heard another say, "Your dance is trending on Twitter." "I would love for you to meet my daughter." Another voice called out.

It was here where the seemingly perfectiveness of Benjamin King's person becomes lost within himself. It is that drive, that force that he can never recognize how great he truly is. "Where's Katherine?" He asks aloud to the haze of people surrounding him. All of the liveliness in the room suddenly dulls at the asking of his question and the room becomes dark and quiet, Benjamin returns to his seat and pats his hair primitively at the epicenter of the grey. He's concerned with the past and relentlessly trying to get back to it. He worries that he's already peaked, that his best days are over. He combs

his hair with his smarmy fingers and covers up the greyed area. He stays stationary for the remainder of the night.

The other guests return home and capture on last glimpse of the legend himself, laying into his hands which are concealing his face, breathing in through the holes between his fingers. He looked out to realize that the statue had dwindled into nothing but a rippling pool chilled water. He gets up and stumbles to the bowl, now completely filled to the top, and without any hesitation or forewarning dunks his head underneath. He screams loudly under the muffled density of the water and the glacial liquid stings his pupils as he opens them in his submerged state.

"What the hell are you doing?" He heard someone ask as pictures flash like a lightening storm in his face. "He's crazy! Benjamin King is crazy."

But the thing is that, Benjamin King wasn't crazy. He did the only sensible thing. He left that little town in North Carolina for something better. He left her there, he had to, he was too content with her. Nothing ever would've gotten done. She made cake and he made a moderate, healthy amount of money. Someday they'd never get out of bed. Everyday had been a cheat day with her. Benjamin and Katharine King now sat dethroned. They loved each other too much. To Benjamin, Katherine was like salt; he liked a dash of her in a bit of everything.

Benjamin King reigned triumphant over all of the debacles that sat in front of him. But he can't shake the memory of looking back at that porch in the review mirror. Even then he knew the world would be less vibrant without her. Now he achieved everything and conquered all, only to find out that he didn't actually desire any of it. He misses that ice-statue that he found so remarkable; his stature doesn't seem to matter much anymore. All that he desires amidst these photographs, these fake smiles, the myriad of sentimental events and weddings of friends, is his very own set of ceremonials. Benjamin begins to cry, his entire being wrung into a sopping wet mess that exploded widely in front of the cameras. Tears stroll down his face and sweat pools down the sides of his arms and the back of his spine. He finds himself completely transfixed in the memory of him looking through that that review mirror opens his lips and mouths the damp words:

"I want to go back."

Benjamin King woke up the morning following the ceremony just as he would've any other morning, before everyone else. He got into his car and headed north on the 405, which sometime within the next hour would be clogged like an artery, with traffic traveling into the heart of the city. But Benjamin, well he looked a little different today; he hadn't shaved, and he kept a pair of aviators snug against his face, covering up the



better part of it. And he was ashamed, he had saw the tweets and the headlines, he knew that he had to get away, that this was something that he couldn't even fix. Benjamin King, felt peculiar again. It had all caught up to him, not for the first time of his life, but for the first time for which he had no immediate answer. He didn't know where or why, just that it was vital to his survival that he go. Yes, within all but a day Benjamin King had completely ridded himself of his ego.

As he walked into LAX he approached the kiosk of the first non-American airline that he could find. The woman helping him was short, but not too short, she still retained the authority over the conversation with her customer:

"I would to buy a one way ticket." Benjamin said with his head hanging, eyes glued to the tile.

"I need to see an I.D., Sir." Benjamin handed over the I.D. The woman glanced down at the plastic and back up at him, with a different look in her eyes, she suddenly felt a little smaller. She couldn't help but nervously smile as if she was in the presence of some kind of an angel, walking around where he shouldn't be. It was odd for mortal people to see this figure living and moving in such an average manner, in such an place, she watched as he inhaled and his structured cheekbones indented into his face.

"And where will you be going today, Mr. King?" She nervously laughed when she spat out the final syllables of his name, this of course, not being the first time she had said them, but see, it was just her first time actually doing it in front of him. And everyone had done it before, everyone had gossiped about him, gawked over him, it seemed that everyone had an opinion on Benjamin, they all internalized his existence a bit. It was their right to do so, he was more than a person; he was an actor, a figure, a businessman, he put himself out there to be ripped apart with every role he tacked on. It all became so confusing and fake so fast that now he wakes each day, unsure of which Benjamin King to play, should it be the husband to Katherine, the scholar at Princeton, the future politician? Benjamin took a sip of water and choked on it a bit, coughing from deep within his throat.

"I don't know."