

DISH ON DEMAND

Through wide-open windows, I watched them laughing loudly. They were drinking some form of wine through fine glistening glass. Some had knives in hand, chewing mildly on dinner rolls and steak—neither rare, nor well done. From the look of the venue, I would venture that the food in the menu was dispersed in exchange for more than a few singles from a purse; good things have a price.

They chattered cheerily. I would wager that they were sharing stories about savings, steals and deals they found shopping. Maybe they were telling tales about times they entered into illegal activity, and somehow managed to escape the vicinity of peril where others might have been incarcerated. Perhaps they were gossiping about love affairs of loved ones, and ones they did not care to love. From where I stood, they looked happy; and to me, this moment, their moment, seemed like a scene from a movie.

Candle wax waned. With stomachs full and inhibitions mute, they stepped right outside those restaurant walls of brick. They did not tread very far. It was only a few steps before they blended in with the rest of the rush hour traffic on the sidewalk. High beams lit the night. The air seemed to have picked up on the people's fashion, for it sported the not so subtle scent of cigarette. Suits, ties, and briefcases hurried home from work. Outside of bars, men stood together laughing, cursing and flailing arms at passing taxicabs. Young ladies j-walked toward nightclubs in high heels and skin-tight dresses, cut shorter than their fathers would like to imagine.

Walking down the sidewalk, young and old passed a man sitting on the cement floor. He wore open toed shoes in the cold of the night. His worn bases looked like he had walked with Moses, but these were not sandals, and he was not a religious man. What was once quality footwear had become holey in the process of evolution—the irony. His clothes showed he also did not believe in ironing. The upper portion of his slacks managed to disagree with the lower, and over time they grew apart from one another. Rotting cheese was the smell that erupted beneath his sleeves. Every time that he perspired one could smell that it'd been weeks since soapsuds had run down his mud brown skin. He blinked as the streetlights flickered. Callous fingers shivered, wrapped 'round a near-empty bottle of cheap liquor. Bittersweet, for it went down warm, but left a taste that lingered. Average Joe, no longer G.I, protects his grey head in the neck of his weathered green jacket, while at war with the breeze of this empty freezer that he seemed to live in. No longer did he wear the camouflage uniform, adorned by the citizens he once protected. The city had grown cold.

Favored by fashion, fortune and fun, they march by the man swallowing guilt, like the last bit of wine in their glass. They took a sip every time they glanced. Bittersweet, for he was explicitly reminding them that they were blessed, and yet he left a taste that lingered—not long enough perhaps.

I channel my focus to the sidewalk, as I quickly walk by with cold hands in thick pockets. Reality sets in. Unprotected hearts felt the breeze of this empty freezer that we seemed to live in. The city had grown cold. But he was bold with such audacity, to plead for change without a word or a sign. He returns to cardboard floors again tonight. An entire city remains living inside of a box, without a mind for thought, or the time to watch.