

The Death of Beauty

Emily Angell

My largest regret in life is that I didn't smile enough...Life is too short, too vague. But life is beautiful like a sparrow floating on the currents; however, like a sparrow, life can be caged and damned to an existence of confinement. It is not these moments that we should focus on in our dying hour, we must rather focus on those times of beauty, times of light that have shot across the sky of our life – It is growing ever harder as my breath escapes me to reflect on those times of beauty, yet that is all I can do now.

My life began in the sun lit hills of my glen, where there is only a subtle definition between what is nature's and what is man's. This beauty is where I played, where I chased the hounds around our shack of a house, and helped my mother provide for our kin. However, the days seemed to be tarnished by the sounds of crows in the trees, threatening to invade my sanctuary. It was not long before my beauty was stomped out – as the men of the next glen brought their white beasts, which were worth more than our souls. The English called them sheep, but I knew better, sheep were not more important than my people. We were burned out like a family of foxes from their burrow, scattng, trying to find safety. I never did see my friends, my kin, my hounds, or my beauty again.

I was met with a new beauty, across the mass of blue water, my father called the ocean. I did not give it the same name, for me this 'ocean' was called 'The Wall'. It separated me from where I was supposed to be. We settled in the town of Effingham. This foreign land had its own sort of beauty, its own sort of promise, and as I grew, I learned. I began to love the black soil under my feet and the minnows in the creek down the hill. I could only imagine a different life with the rolling green of my former home, and I spent years suppressing that image and the sadness that followed. This was my home now, this was my beauty.

My life was sewn together by with many seams and stiches, all working to form a work of art. Each seam threaded the pieces together, while each stich created strength and

power that depicted our history, my history. This history will be displayed, covering up the jagged and unforgiving edges of The Wall.

My mother shaped me with her words, she taught me to grow and nurture the ground. She taught me to love nature, to cherish the horses the same as the ants in the grass.

“All life is important” she would tell me.

Her tired hands never faltered, the deep lines in her face, which gather around her mouth, displayed the beauty of the years that had gone by. She was always working, keeping her hands and mind busy – She worked the farm and always made sure that her babies were cleaned up for Sunday mass.

My father crafted me with his wisdom. He had seen more than any one person should. His hands were hardened with calluses, his hair caked with sweat and mud. He had a hard life, yet he knew only love for his family. My father taught me the ways of our people, the ways of our clan, our songs, dances, stories, and histories. He told me that we were once a proud people and many men died fighting for us to keep our beautiful home; however, he told me, it was not a fight that could be won. My father was a gentle man, he loved my mother with the love of angels, and his children with the love of the alpha for his pack.

My brothers and sister were all peaceful – they were younger when we moved and don’t remember much of our home. Now, this new blemish is their home. My time, in short, was looking after them and preparing to one day be a mother myself. My siblings taught me patience, the importance of tradition, and love.

I remember the morning I was awoken to the squawk of a gigantic black crow sitting outside my window. I had raced downstairs to find my mother crying, I was heartbroken to learn that that morning my father had been in a farming accident early that morning. The next day the entire town helped to lower him into the ground. My home had been taken from me again. Our priest told us he would surely be in heaven yet I couldn’t help but see this ‘heaven’ as a wall between my father and me.

I was sixteen when I left home. I was naive and innocent, but the world would soon teach me how to toughen. I settled

in a small town outside of Springfield. I had a small plot of land I had saved money to purchase, and my mother spared as much as they could to help me. I worked odd jobs waiting tables, and baking at a local diner. It was a lot of work for little pay, and as I earned and saved money, I decided to open a small nursery. Here I could nurture the earth and be one with nature. It was lonely work at times, but I didn't mind. The idea of following my passion was easier said than done, it grew even harder to make ends meet. Beauty did spring up from these times of hardship, for it was in this time of solitude that my love for literature was able to flourish, as I often spent time reading under my canopy of trees.

Six years had gone by before I found what had always been missing. My hands were buried in a pot of daisies when the roar of a truck brought my head up. I had never seen anything as beautiful as my Fredrick, he was tall with a tussle of blond curls thrown on the top of his head. He had come to acquire some fruit trees for his farm; he left with two pear trees, an apple tree, and a date for that Saturday. We had gone dancing and I remember the smile on my face, stretched so far that my cheeks ached for a week after. *I can remember no happier times in my life than those by my Fredrick's side.*

In only four short months I would never know loneliness again. Fredrick and I were married in October and our first baby arrived only nine months later. We called him Fritz. My life was beautiful.

Fritz looked like the spitting image of his daddy. He was a big strong baby with the same tussle of blond curls placed atop his head. His eyes reminded me of the 'wall' that I always thought separated me from my home. It was in my baby boy I realized this had always been my home.

Its beauty grew as a year later we welcomed Elena and Helena into our family. The birth of our twin baby girls had been hard, almost taking all that I had. *We should have seen the signs then.*

Elena looked like me, she had fiery red hair and deep green eyes, and she had little time for patience. Her twin sister may have been an exact replica in looks, yet Helena was sweet and peaceful. The two together mimicked the two sides inside of me. I could not have loved anyone as much as my babies.

Two years later we would lose our fourth, Gabriel, before we ever got the chance to know him. After his passing, my life became devoted to teaching my children as my mother had taught me, to raise them to love and nurture the land and every living thing upon it. I tried to open their eyes to the beauty of life through all its forms: nature, literature, antiquity, and kindness.

Life was growing increasingly harder the past few winters as it became harder and harder to keep food on the table and the chill from the house. The world seemed plagued by the death of beauty. Each year the beauty of the world would die, only to be reborn again. Through the reincarnation of life, I learned that death is not unpleasant, but instead, it has a beauty of its own. The idea of death no longer scared me.

It was the third winter after the death of our baby that I fell ill.

The bitterness outside began to eat at my body taking me slowly with it. *It is in this time that I lay reflecting on the years of my life. I threaten any crow that may come in range. For they will not get my breath, they will not ruin the beauty for my children.*

So as I take my final breaths I pull a smile across face as I know I am about to breath the 'wall' that separates me from death.