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Nobody's Imperfect

Vanessa Ballingall

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"Good luck" she said, and I never saw her again. I didn't really know what she meant when she said it. I could have taken it two ways: (1) she was daring me my "good luck", (2) she really did wish me "good luck". Either way I thanked her.

She had purple-tinted hair when I saw her last, who knows what color she's wearing it now. She changed hair colors with her moods. Joe, a friend of mind from the center, insists she saw her getting into a car. She had black hair, he claims. I don't believe him; she was afraid of cars, "They are deadly toys. More creatures are lost to those wretched contraptions than wars," I remember her saying.

I saw her out of the center once. She was sitting beneath a twisted oak holding a pen and a small notebook. She smiled at me. I noticed something strange about her at the time, but I've forgotten now. I asked her what she was writing. She corrected me, "Analyzing, not writing." She looked up at me, a puzzled look on her face, "Could you inform me of the name of this creature?" she asked.

I chuckled nervously. I remember her oddity gripped me and I simply replied "An oak tree." I had heard from people at the center that she was disoriented with "our world" (as she put it).

She only laughed at my answer and said "Thank you, but I am fully aware of the name of the creature we are now beneath. "Please explain to me what this creature is." I was stunned to see her holding out her small hand, as if waiting for change, and in the center of her palm sat a rock. I told her what it was. "No," she said, "please explain to me what it is." I could not explain. Rocks are rocks. They are a given fact: 1+1=2. I began to explain this logic to her.

She wasn't listening, "There are so many of these creatures. One would assume an explanation would be simple, but you make it complicated with logic." I began to try to convince her that the logical theory is the universal theory. "Your limited boundaries shine around you," she said. I walked away.

We began to run into one another more frequently at the center. For some reason I was extremely happy to see her. She fascinated me and I began to understand her—not what she said but what she did. She would tell me of places she had been, unlike any I had heard of before. She imagined these places, I think. We became friends, maybe not. Something was there, though, a sort of trust.

On one occasion she had dropped her plastic paisley purse after pushing hurriedly and blindly into me. I was shocked to see her in such haste. "Forgive me," she asked, "look, I've dropped my favorite purse." I stooped to pick it up for her. I told her that dropping a purse was hardly anything to be upset about and asked how she felt about the current headlines (I've forgotten what they were). She seemed awed, she sighed as if annoyed and retorted, "This world dwells on questions of the past and future, never on the 'insignificant absurdities,' like 'why don't some people understand other people?'; in the present. Nothing is insignificant completely, many things are absurd. Problems should be dealt with creatively, with insight, not logic.
Do you understand me?" Of course I had. I always listened—I told her. "No, do you really understand?" I told her I did, but she didn't believe me.

I recall another incident that jolted my perspective, for a moment. I was with her. We were standing at a water fountain in the center. She was telling me of a dream she had had. I leaned to the flowing water and filled my mouth. Then I realized. I noticed she was studying me and had stopped talking. I pushed the water on and with my other hand I grabbed at the perpetual arc.

"Look," I said, "it's like holding water in my hand. You think you have it, then it's lost." A grin stretched across her face and she stared at me for a moment. Then continued telling me of last night's dream. I remember feeling embarrassed. She noticed and frowned.

She frowned on me, she pitied me. One day she even told me she pitied me. She pitied, but also envied, my naivete. She asked me if I had ever felt pity for anything. I told I felt sorry for people who are different from others.

"Have you ever felt pity for a rock? They are the simplest of creatures and are omnipresent but they cannot be explained. Have you felt pity for rocks?" I knew she was serious, but I laughed.

She flashed me a foreign look of disbelief and, as strange as it may seem, I felt her trust for me die. I stopped laughing. "I've tried to reach the unreachable. I've tried to teach the blind-ignorant. Nothing is impossible as everything is perfect. I must abandon all hope here. I'll leave it with you. Good luck," she said, and I never saw her again.

Vanessa Ballingall