

The Wind
by
Autumn M. Birt

The door sweeps open and wind rushes into the small café. I clutch my coat and the other customers groan at the sudden cold. The gust tossed in a few leaves and a disheveled girl.

She seems small and pale, standing alone as the door shuts behind her. I notice she is only wearing a light sweater and jeans. She must be trembling from the cold. With wide eyes and flowing hair, she looks like the subject of a classical painting, much too delicate to be out in this weather. Her hand that had been resting on the door, seemingly waiting to push it back open, pushed her away from the wall.

I watch her walk. She doesn't make a sound as she moves across the room. Her walk is so graceful she seems to be dancing. Or perhaps, she is aware that all eyes in the room are on her.

She stops at the counter and orders a cup of hot tea. She waits leaning against the counter and idly scuffing her shoes. With a nod to the cashier, she turns to look for a table. I can see the disappointment in her eyes from across the room. There are no empty tables.

Her eyes sweep across the room. They hesitate on me, but continue on. With her eyes still wandering, she starts to weave through the maze of tables. Again, her walk belies weight. She walks, balancing easily on her feet. With her eyes averted, she seems proud and above the rest of the world. Her thoughts must be on matters beyond this realm of the ordinary. She pivots around chairs while holding the tea cupped in her hands like she is gathering warmth from the small cup, holding it like a precious object.

I toy with the flash of imagination. Of a priestess slowly dancing out a ritual and carrying a bowl of sacred oil. You see the flash of her eyes as the wind blows the smoke in another direction. All the while a murmur of chanting sounds like leaves in a summer breeze.

"Pardon me, Sir." A voice gentle and lilting lifts me from my thoughts. I raise my eyes to hers that are so full of life. She continues her question with a soft smile. "May I sit here?"

I feel my eyes widen in surprise. "Yes, Miss," I reply quietly.

She sits across from me with her back to the rest of the room. For several minutes, she sits without saying a word. Somehow, the silence seems companionable. Her casualness makes us seem like old friends who are playing a joke on each other or performing a ritual. Her eyes remain looking out the window where people are struggling against the wind. The struggle with their coats and packages as the wind flows around them.

She suddenly focuses on me. "Why do people fight the wind? Why don't they enjoy it? In the wind, you feel life. You can be happy and forget everything for a moment." She asks this in a way that is impossible to address, giving it weight, making you think. It makes you truly wonder and question why.

"I don't know, but don't worry. Tomorrow, they will complain of the heat." Her smile is sudden, like lightning on a clear day. "Miss, why did you sit here?"

She thinks. "Perhaps, I like this table. Perhaps, it is you. You seem to have experienced much and learned from it. It hasn't beaten you. You are merely resting for now."

Her words surprise me. They echo my own thoughts and more. It is like she touched me and revealed my existence as having worth, as being special.

She looks out the window again, her eyes taking on a far away haze. She turns back and smiles. "I must leave. Thank you for your company." With an ironic lift of an eyebrow she adds, "And your table."

Quietly, she walks to the door. Perhaps her walk is more than just a dance that celebrates life in every movement. But, she is also the wind, gentle and strong, natural and free. She opens the door and the wind rushes into the café. The customers groan and clutch their coats. I tilt my head back and feel life rushing through me.