The Postman Rarely Comes Anymore –

The postman rarely comes anymore. Apart from the occasional bill or flyer from local businesses offering 10% off window cleaning that month; she hardly gets post these days. She’s certain that these business’ post the same leaflets every month offering the same deal; nonetheless she bins it. She only has one small window in her apartment anyway it would hardly be value for money.

For the first few months after the accident she was swarmed with sympathy cards from family members she hadn’t spoken to in years, old colleagues that she’d long forgotten and lost the number for, neighbours she’s never met all telling her they were “*so sorry for her loss*.” What does that even mean? To be sorry for someone’s loss? It seems to be the instinctive phrase people use but the whole thing starts to sound like a broken record of insincerity. It’s the cliché you hear in movies that she had involuntarily become a starring role in; this scene was stuck on loop; eventually she became immune to it.

Even today, almost threw it away, it wasn’t like she was waiting for something. The envelope didn’t strike her as exciting. It was uninspiring, plain and white. The kind you get in packs of a hundred at the pound store with her address scrawled on the front blank biro. Nothing particularly striking. She almost didn’t open it, but after sitting and staring for several minutes, fiddling with the envelope and running it through her fingers over and over, the anticipation became overwhelming, drowning her like she was a small child in the vastest of oceans. Her nails slid themselves beneath the fold of the envelope, careful not to damage it. The contents of the envelope was an A4 hand-written letter with what appeared to be words scribbled on both sides in childlike handwriting, filling up every space to squeeze every word that he had wanted to say to her but couldn’t. She refrained from looking at the photo attached, she needed to read it first.

She thinks about it now; the moment she saw the letter on the doormat. Perhaps there was a part of her that knew? She might not have necessarily believed it, but something in the pit of her stomach told her it was him. Perhaps that is why she

didn’t bin it straight away, like she routinely did everything else that was shoved through the door. She often considers the fact that she wasn’t all too surprised when reading the letter to discover its sender, and maybe that’s because she already knew. Some part of her had anticipated it, or at least was holding onto hope for it. Without it, she felt empty and incomplete, like something was missing but she couldn’t quite understand what it was. The jigsaw was incomplete, but she didn’t know where about to find the piece nor what it looked like. It was hiding from her under a pile of questions, confusion and heartache. A small envelope hiding beneath a pile of junk mail.

Her fingertips guided themselves over his name which he’d signed the letter off with, admiring each cursive vowel and the perfectly dotted i’s. She pressed her nose to the paper, desperate to smell his cologne through the potent ink that to her surprise still lingered. How long ago had this been sent?

He had not written the letter with any intention of saying goodbye but merely as an ‘I miss you’ during his travels in Kuala Lumper whilst working in Mongolia.

He had tried his best, he said, to convey the sheer beauty of Malaysia’s capital, though he himself admits that his efforts remained flawed as no words exist that could do justice to the environment that presented itself before him.  He told her of the sky-high buildings that seemed to go on endlessly beyond the clouds and how these buildings lit up amber and royal blue as if they were elements of fire and water mingling together.

He humoured how Malaysian men and women were even smaller than he had expected, perhaps the scale of their surroundings made them appear more like figurines in a doll’s house rather than people. He was 6ft’4 and milky skinned, towering over the locals and having to duck to get through every doorway. He was unavoidable, like an anomaly on a graph that has a clear correlation. He often was regarded as The Giant amongst colleagues, not in a way intending to mock him, but just stated matter-of-factly. He neither felt offended nor abnormal, more so he admired their naivety and how protected and closed off from the rest of the world they were, living in their own microcosm whilst reading about foreign lands in stories and seeing them in films, dreaming of adventures in strange places where the people are giant, over-weight and wear funny clothing.

From where he wrote his letter in KLCC Park he could see the splendour of the towers peaking up through the trees. Ironically, he found that for a park which celebrated such a national landscape, there was something off about it that he had felt foreign, as if it didn’t quite belong in Malaysia. He later found out when reading the information pamphlet that this might be because it was designed by a Brazilian architect, Roberto Burle Marx. The park was a tropic in the middle of Malaysia, the juxtaposition of peace and tranquillity in a city of hustle and bustle; ultimately it was a place to escape.

He wrote how he could smell the nearby food vendors that sold Malaysian Classics; the salty scent of Satay and Sang Har Noodles masking anything else in a fifty-yard radius. He could taste it on the tip of his tongue which teased his stomach, making it groan and plead with him ‘feed me!’

He often got frustrated by how, whilst trying to get lost in his train of thought, he was constantly interrupted by the cackling of kids in the background, running around carelessly with no troubles to intrude their minds. He wondered if they were too young to understand that people have come here for peace and quiet and therefore screaming and shouting should be kept to a minimum, but probably not as there was a park nearby after all, so he could only really blame himself for his poor choice to stop.

There was a picture attached to the top which he had taken as he had lay beneath The Petronas Twin Towers, dreaming of her and wishing with all his might that she might just suddenly appear lying next to him if he could shut his eyes and clench his fists tight enough. The towers reminded him of the two of them he told her; proud,

protective, perfectly complimentary of one another. She felt it endearing and a tad amusing that he thought it looked as though the corridor that conjoined the two buildings made it look as though they were holding hands, standing intimidatingly, encouraging everyone to stop and awe the impressive architecture. Whilst they’d probably topple over and were hardly captivating if standing alone, they were powerful and remarkable when unified, just like them.

A tear began to crawl down her cheek, stopping at her upper lip allowing her to taste its saltiness on the tip of her lounge as she thought of how his travels we not supposed to have stopped there, underneath those towers. He was due out back to Mongolia soon after for work after a short break.’ He had always wanted to explore Asia, become a part of its landscape, learn it’s history, live with its people. She had never fully understood why. He had moved solely for his dream job, it was an opportunity he couldn’t have resisted - nonetheless she remained convinced that this was more a masquerade for the sense to discover himself more. The tear trickled onto the paper, smearing the black ink in which he had written that he promised to be home soon, as if to erase the message that now felt like a lie.

She looked down at the ring she now wore around her neck, his ring. He had given it her when he left, oddly enough asking for her to hand it down to their eldest if anything should happen. With so many loopholes left tied up, she didn’t have the heart to part with it. After all, what if he returned? Giving her the ring, it’s like he knew something might happen. Something bad. Did a part of him know he wouldn’t return? Who knows. The idea played over so many times in her head she started to get migraines and had to shut it away in the deepest parts of her head, only for it to break free later; a lion who refused to be locked away in a cage, wanting to prey on the weakened.

She wept often about how he must have felt in those final seconds. How fast has his heart been beating? Was his vision blurred by the saltiness of his own tears? Did he

show fear or did he remain brave-faced for the mother and child who sat terrified in the seat beside him? Selfishly she had hoped that she was the last thing he had thought about in those final moments. She hoped he had tried to remember the sweet smell of her perfume and the softness of her kiss. She hoped he would miss her quick-wit and delicate touch. She hoped.

The most painful part was not the chill that came from the empty space in the bed next to her, it was not the memories that the photos around the house drowned her in. No, it was not the silence that had been swapped for the childish laughter that had echoed once within these walls. She longed to be suffocated by the smell of him; a harsh mixture of tobacco and whiskey. She yearned for the warmth of his touch, the comfort of his hum, to hear his voice utter her name. Yet, these were not the most painful parts.

When she was born, she had had trouble sleeping and so her parents bought her the softest, friendliest looking teddy bear they could find for companionship. She called him Rupert and he became her best-friend, the first person she ever truly loved. Aged 9 and Rupert started to look somewhat aged and tattered. His left leg had gone missing from when he got trapped in the car door and one of his eyes had fallen out as the stiches became loose. She took him to school every day, something that the other kids teased her for; they teased her about everything else too, so she didn’t care much.

One day, he was taken. A cruel joke which she was the target of. They cut off his limbs, gauged his eyes out, de-stitched his smile before scattering his remains, cackling around the playground, ordering for her to follow. His fluff became the breadcrumbs that Hansel and Gretel scattered, his stitches mere thread of cotton. She was traumatised. Nothing her parents did could console her and eventually she was sat in a pool of her own tears wanting them to drown her. That was the first time she had ever loved and lost, she couldn’t imagine that it could be worse.

She needed answers most of all. What had happened to the man she loved and why? How? Where did his body lie? Was his resting on the ocean bed or had become part of the earth in ash? Sadly, there were no explanations; no justifications. Only the cruel reminders from the media and the emptiness he had left behind was all that reminded her it was real. She folded the letter that she had read one thousand times over and over, slipped it back into the envelope and taped it up as if she had never even read it. She kissed the seal delicately and desperately, as if she were kissing him for the final time. By the phone with her laptop on the table top and news coverage of the story on repeat would she remain, waiting for explanations. What happened to Flight MH307?