

## Songs inside the birdcage

### I. Brass cage

The song bird was not singing in the brass cage this morning, and I was wrapped up in worry as I finished my morning routine of pouring coffee and smoking a cigarette on the balcony. I watched the smoke drift away into the pale blue earliness.

I knew this old bird was on its way to dying soon, and I chuckled thinking that the bird itself probably had the exact same thought about me. I often believed that my own life was entwined by that silly old bird behind the brass bars. That when she played her last song sometime around midnight one winter night, my old bones would finally settle into the song, and let it take me away from my bed.

The coffee shifted in my stomach, and I thought I might shit myself, right in my lacey wine colored robe that was one of the few nice things I had left aside from that old, silent, bird.

I stood there, clenching. I waved at that skinny kid that got his sweetheart pregnant, he was heading off to work like he did every day, and there was love in his heart, but his life was just like anyone else's here: sketched out like a caricature of poverty and desperation, full of one time mistakes, lonely pedophiles, bitter old women with brass hearts. This wasn't a good place to raise that kid, but two poor kids with a high school education that they didn't even pay attention to weren't amounting to much around here.

I unclenched.

The feeling of immediate release had faded; it was safe to walk again.

Walking to the bathroom I had to pass by the brass cage in the hallway, to my surprise the old bird was in there, alive and sitting on the fresh events of a newspaper, and I chuckled at how fitting it was.

It is first of the month, a trial in will power and an excursion into the realm of decadence. It was when I collect the dues, or tell the family to get the hell out of dodge. Well I give them two more days, but I usually encourage them to just pack their bags now.

There were only three stair cases, and each one made me feel like Dante descending into another circle of hell. But the sin here was randomly assorted, and I wonder where the darkest pit of degradation lies.

“Goodbye birdie”, I told her, I left her on the balcony like I sometimes do because a bird should be able to see the sky a few times in its life, “why don’t you sing pretty birdie.”

Room 203 B was occupied by only one man. A quiet man, a large, stained man. A man you would imagine living alone in a rundown apartment complex, he wore small little glasses sometimes that made his eyes seem focused on you.

I knocked, and there was nothing but the muffled sound of a television, I knocked again and again, because I figured he must have been on the other side. But there was nothing. So I left to come back later. I finished my rounds, and only had to warn two families about their potential impending homelessness. It even seemed like there were less black and purple eyes around the building. Yes, autumn is a time for romance it seems.

Back to 203 B. knock knock knock.

Knock knock

Knock.

I was not one to make more than one trip around the building, so I yelled across the thin wood, "open up, or I will be coming in."

No answer.

I took out the brass keys that hung from their chain like bones, and selected 203 B's spare.

At his desk sat the man from 203 B, dead, so awfully alone he looked like he belonged there all along.

The bird in the brass cage began to sing. Her notes falling down from the balcony.

II. Notes of a man who dies alone

The simple room wasn't decorated with much more than a plant and a cross on the wall.

Detectives Stevenson and Catalano placed his time of death between 4:00 a.m. and 4:45 am.

Cause of death undetermined. They talked to the landlady, calming her down; she was a jack rabbit stammering while smoking her cigarette, eyes wide as if they would be able to catch a glimpse of the death that still lingered in the room.

The only things that this man seemed to have left were these notes scattered across his desk.

Dear Jenny,  
  
I still miss you, and a  
may never send this letter, e  
I drive past your house on m  
consider placing this note on  
doorstep.  
  
Every night I wonder if I'll still  
love you, and in every dream I truly  
do. My life is a little bit emptier  
without you.  
  
Sincerely,

Milk  
Apples  
Bread  
Butter

There was a girl made of glass,  
So I held her gently.  
Just in case

Bullets,  
Cookies  
Wine  
Tarp

1. Hispanic  
2. White  
3. Indian  
4. Asian

REMEMBER TO CALL THE  
DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR  
FOOT.

January 17<sup>th</sup> 2011

1. Flowers for Algernon  
2. The Giver  
A wrinkle in Time  
Watership  
The island of the flies  
My side of the mounta  
Blood merdian

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. d3 Nc6 4. Be2 Bc5  
d6 6. O-O O-O 7. Bg5 h6 8. Bh4 Be6 9. N  
Nd4 10. Nxd4 Bxd4 11. Qd2 c6 12. Nd2  
c3 Bc5 14. exd5 oh shit cxd5 15. Ne3 d4  
Ng4 Bxg4 17.Bxg4 xc3 18. Qxc3 Bd4 19.  
Rb8 20. Bf3 Qd6 21. Bxf6 Qxf6 22. Rac1  
23. Bd5 Bxb2 224. Bxf7+ Rxf7 25. Qxb2  
26. Oxe5 Rhf8 27. Oe6 Of5 28. Oh3 Kh8

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III. The obituary, on page four in the local paper, in the upper right corner

John Simon age 35 203 B  
Willow Creek Apartment  
complex. Funeral  
arrangements will be  
handled by Johnson and sons  
funeral home. "I will always  
miss you"

#### IV. One person and a gravestone

This is where he is buried. The plot was very nondescript; he didn't have a headstone that jutted from the ground like a concrete obelisk or a rectangular marker. He simply has a flat stone on the ground, which reminds me of a welcome mat.

But there was no door to knock on and open up and see him, thirteen years ago when knocking on his door and seeing him was my favorite thing in the world. Back when he wrote my poems and smiled that small smile of his that wasn't anything but a microscopic speck of the tiniest flake of dust to the universe, but it was all I needed.

A piece of him always loved me, and I let him die here alone. No one deserves to grow up and die alone in apartments we never deserved. Everyone should have the option of dying with whoever made them okay with dying.

So many years ago I remember a tiny voice in the universe tell me that before he met me,

"I was so afraid to die. Yet, just looking in your eyes and knowing I made you smile, if only for a little while. If my end came today, or tomorrow, everything would have been enough."

So I head to my small minivan, back to my home, my apartment. And somewhere, I hear the sounds of a canary's song.

