

Homework – Week 4

Part One

As I wander along the cobbled streets of the City of Light, Paris, and smell the waft of the Boulangeries baking their daily croissants, baguettes and eclairs, my heart is filled with joy. I feel elated as the hum of the city sings to me like a piece of modern jazz, with its quirky rhythms and scintillating melodies. The water on the river Seine glistens in the morning sunshine as it meanders throughout the city, transporting tourists from the Eiffel Tower to the famous Louvre, where statues and sculptures from centuries ago, tell the story of the world. I pass by a florist full of colourful, vibrant shades that burst out and saturate my nose with their aromatic scents of lavender, frangipani and rose which fill the air. In the distance, I see the towering Notre Dame Cathedral with its territorial gargoyles guarding and protecting the evil forces and demons from the sacred walls. This historic city is beautiful, yet terrifying as beneath the streets lies the millions of skulls and bones in the Catacombs continually haunting the Parisians with their whispering screams.

The city makes me confused with its range of contrasts from the joy I felt earlier to the ghastly images of squished skulls, row upon row in the cavernous dark underneath the bustle of the city streets. In the afternoon, I enter the Louvre and am drawn to the enigmatic smile of the Mona Lisa, as she stares at me with cunning eyes following me as if she wants me to release her from the entrapment of her frame. Her beauty is plain with her black veil, seated in front of the landscape by Da Vinci. To end my day, I decide to go shopping and am overwhelmed with the choices of fashion from Dior, Louis Vuitton and Chanel, with its windowfronts filled with exorbitant jewellery dazzling like the lights on the Eiffel Tower as the sun sets and the sparkles of the city lights dance in a rapturous frenzy. This is the city of romance and yet, its darkness and history create a spell over me and make me feel small and alone as I know I am just a fleck of dust in the world compared to this place of vastness antiquity where artists have lived and created a world of beauty that will live much longer than me. Paris, one of the oldest cities in the world will live on forever, but I will not, and it will stand long after I am gone...

Part Two

The cabin stood alone in the woods surrounded by majestic trees, like a lost child in a crowded sea of congested people at a busy peak hour train station. Outside, the temperature was below zero and the wind howled like a lone wolf away from its pack. Snowflakes gently sprinkled on the waxed, buffed roof of the cabin and as they landed, they reminded me of icing sugar on a delicious cake. Despite the bitterly cold weather outside, I was snug inside the cabin feeling the gentle warmth of a wood fire slowly devouring the wood on which it preyed. It was like a dance of death, and I could not help but stare at the ribbons of flames which danced like erratic hummingbirds, zigzagging unexpectedly into the air. Their dance was mesmerising and began to hypnotise me into a trance. I remembered my childhood, sitting by a campfire with my family, toasting marshmallows watching the delicacies singe and brown knowing the crispy outside would be filled with delicious, gooey nectar. My dad would command me to “Keep back! You’re too close” but the fire would beckon me to play, and I would toss the wood with my long marshmallow stick, watching it light up like a match with sparks flying and ricocheting randomly.

The door begins to rattle as the wind outside picks up its pace, and I am startled by the sudden, unsuspected sounds from nature’s breath. I am frightened but know that it is just the wind tormenting me, playing tricks on my mind. The wood is blackening, and the embers leap upward as I place more kindling on the flames, as if they were fireworks atomising into hundreds of smaller speckles of light.

Whilst I am alone, the fire makes me feel warm and I am not lonely. The fire entertains me with its dazzling performance, and I am captivated by the shapes transforming and fluctuating in front of my eyes. The smell of the wood burning is pleasant and makes me feel drowsy, as I fight to keep the searing sensation of the bitter flames from my fluttering eyelids that yearn for me to sleep. My skin prickles as the flames roar to life, an inferno beginning to appear from behind the mesh screen protecting me from the power of the phoenix. I sip my hot chocolate and the sweet, sugared liquid warms my throat and I am content to be here, alone in the woods.

Part Three

As Miss Cecile waited backstage, she could hear the overlapping chatter of the audience, she could smell the pungent smoke of cigars and the clinking of glass was piercing to her nervous ears. She was here under a pretence, as she usually worked as a maid minding Mayor Greyson's children, but tonight she had her chance to prove herself at the Cool Cat Bar in New Orleans.

The drums began to swing, and the double bass began to strut the familiar line and the trombones raised their slides and began the riff. Miss Cecile reverently shuffled onto the stage and took her position in front of the microphone. Leonard played the chords on the piano, and she began to count the bars before her entry. The crowd barely noticed she was there and continued their conversations, rumbling and jeering like a pack of wolves, cunningly ignoring her presence. Her mind was a haze of a fog in New York City and her stomach was filled to the brim with butterflies. She had to get past the fork in the road, the first breath, the first sound and then she would be fine. The smoke in the air was intoxicating as it tried to strangle her vocal cords, but she inhaled a breath deep as the ocean and began...

As she sang the first line, a man with a checkered suit, a moustache and a fedora hat at the back of the club, caught her eye and Miss Cecile saw him raise his whisky glass with a smile that was a sudden beam of sunlight across the room. He had a heart of gold, and she began to sing louder, standing up taller and began to belt the tune. The piano sang its melodious tune, harmonising with Miss Cecile and Leonard winked at her and her dream began to come alive.

It had been a long, bumpy road for her to get here and her life was beginning to be like her song, and she was writing her own lyrics. The microphone's energy was touching the souls of the audience and they were now listening to her every word. The heat of the room began to breathe a new aura and the clinking glasses were no longer piercing her ears.

"She has the voice of an angel!" shouted someone from the shell-shocked crowd.

Miss Cecile responded "Thank you all. I have been inspired by a poem by Maya Angelou "The caged bird sings with a fearful trill of things unknown but longed for still and his tune is heard on the distant hill for the caged bird sings of freedom."