

## Falling in love

They are nothing. They are nothing compared to my painting. The painting to which I devoted my whole life. As I stroll around the art museum again and look at the same artworks as I do many times, I can't stop myself, from thinking of that one painting I had lost many years ago. I remember the moment I had seen it as clear as yesterday. Back then my mind wasn't able to comprehend its ethereal beauty nor understand its meaning. Still.

Every brushstroke had used vibrant colors and the striking composition had an extremely delicate and still harmonious flow. As I had stared at it, my heart was overflowing with feelings of admiration and pure gratitude for just being alive to see that painting while I felt like I had just wasted my whole life not looking at that masterpiece of art. I had fallen in love.

But today, I'm here, surrounded by mediocre paintings which could never hold to the magnifying image of my piece.

Then suddenly, a loud sound of a husky voice interrupted my daydream. The depiction I saw when I turned around was a taller built woman in office attire talking to her phone. She praised the exhibition's collection of Salvador Dali's masterpieces loudly but then went on criticizing the fine layer of dust on the stone-carved sculptures. Must be an art inspector. As I glanced at her, I couldn't stop but reminiscing about my days thriving as a new fresh employee working at a logo design firm. Back then, I was able to fit in very quickly in the welcoming work environment and built close relationships with my coworkers. But I had no choice but to quit my job after having seen that painting. I couldn't waste time constantly working in an office building and eventually missing out on seeing a piece of art like that particular one again...

Since the chatter of the woman nearby slowly got on my nerves, I went out of my way to the next passage and found myself in front of an oil painting. The description under the picture says "One of the Family, Frederick George Cotman" It depicted a family sitting around a table eating pastry together. They all showed faces of extreme contentment and seem as if they enjoyed just bringing each other company.

It made me think about my own family. When I had quit my job, I had to rely on my parent's budget to cover my basic living expenses. First, they thought that being unemployed and just wandering around every day would only be a temporary phase that would stop by itself one day. But after six and a half months of me still living at their home, they started to get worried and thought that kicking me out of the house would awaken my senses again and be the best for my own sake. Since then, I hadn't spoken a word to them. But it was fine. I know in the deepest depth of my heart that not even the most important and closest relationship could offer me the tiniest bit of bliss or ecstasy the way the painting had given me five years ago.

I moved on and took a look at the other pieces of art as well. I had to admit, despite my apparent difficulties, I'm not a delusionist. Internalizing the fact that the chance of seeing the actual painting was incredibly low wasn't hard for me. But it wasn't exactly what I sought out in the first place. Since that day, I have always craved for the feeling of heavenly elation I had got when I had seen the painting, not the particular picture itself. Therefore, I picked up the brush to recreate the experience, from the

moment I had lost it. I couldn't even count the many days and nights I had spent mastering the visual arts. Drawing, sculpturing, photography, and, of course, painting.

But my pieces were not any different from all the other ones in this fancy museum. They were nothing against that picture I longed for. Or even worse. The pieces of art here weren't even made to hold to my feelings of love for that one piece. They were all made driven by many other artists' intentions which they ultimately fulfilled. But mine hadn't. All of my various pieces did not satisfy the purpose they were made for. What else was I supposed to feel for them other than hatred instead? They were just utterly worthless.

I decided that spending any more time in this place would be inefficient. Therefore, I went to the shabby cafe next to the museum which I had ignored until now, but surprisingly my building hunger overcame my prejudice. After I had ordered and finished my "fresh salmon cream cheese bagel sprinkled with thyme" (which tasted unexpectedly good), I took a short toilet break and entered the restroom. Then I saw it. My heart skipped for a moment. Breathing heavily and having to lean on the door I glared with wide-open eyes at the painting above the mirror. It was that painting. The painting I hadn't seen in five years. The painting to which I had confirmed my whole life. And it wasn't.

It had the same strokes, same vibrant colors, and of course the same depiction. There weren't any remarkable differences. But then why did it look the same as the hundreds of artworks I had seen before?

Its astonishing ecstasy and my feelings of admiration completely vanished. It was a bland, average picture.

My vision became blurry, the walls were suddenly closing in, and a painful unexplainable feeling was growing inside of me as I clenched my sweaty hands. Simply breathing became a hard task in itself. I stumbled out of the restroom and tried to run as fast as my shaking legs could carry me. Is that my life purpose? Was that the painting that I defined my whole life to? And lost so much for? For that stupid canvas? For some reason, I couldn't even cry.

---

I woke up early in the morning, still exhausted from last night's shift. Since few employees were missing while the restaurant was as busy as usual, the work became twice as hard. Not to mention the detour I always had to take when walking to the diner. I had deliberately avoided the art museum and the cafe in the past since that day.

Since that day, I've realized that all efforts and longings were all for nothing and started questioning my overall purpose of existing in this world. But today was different. My close coworker had offered me to move in with him since sharing the typical high rent in this metropolitan place would benefit us both. Naturally, I would have to clean out the room which I used as an atelier where all my work was stowed away.

I hadn't entered it once during the past months. My mind was racing with fear and my throat felt dry. With shaking hands, I opened the surprisingly heavy door. It was a little bit stuck since it had been

unused for the past months but eventually, it opened. There they were. I was surrounded by all different kinds of artworks in various forms. Many oil paintings, framed photographs, and even a stone hammered sculpture. I couldn't take my eyes off of them. A few pieces were recognizable but there were others that I felt like I had seen for the first time in my life before. But seeing them arranged all together being untouched and in peace was weirdly ... beautiful.

Each piece had its striking flaws but also held its kind of worth radiated in different ways. Sure, they weren't as perfect as the image which had lived in my mind for such a long time but... they didn't have to be anymore. That piece was gone. My pieces could finally exist as their own. My heart skipped, but not like the time before. As my whole body was trembling, I couldn't help but stare with wide-open eyes at the pieces. Hot tears were streaming down my face, as I shut my eyelids laughing out of pure bliss and delight.

I couldn't believe it. These astonishing, magnificent and absolutely beautiful works of art right in front of me were mine. Made by my own hands. Even though they weren't as flawless as the image stuck in my head for several years, they were still mine. And I fell in love again.