

Pitter Patter

"Remember!" I shout at myself, banging my fist on the desk. My brain resists. It sits in my head, arms crossed, and with a stern prospect. My hippocampus, and his neighbors also working for memory, all sit in this way, defying me like crotchety old hermits who "wanna be left alone!" I understand.

"Memories hurt!" they cry.

"They make me itch all over, like my jeans are too tight."

"They make me feel like I swallowed a whole egg, shell'n'all."

"But I have to write a memoir for class," I plead. Negotiation, rather than authority, starts to work. I sit and stare at my desk, letting words, then fragments-- phrases, pictures, ideas-- float into the air on their own, and swat them down like flies onto paper, or the keyboard.

I remember the eighth grade. A writing assignment. Mr. Smoot. I can see Mr. Smoot's nervous but handsome face lighting up, and the corners of his mouth being pulled upward into a smirk, as if two fishhooks had caught both ends of his mouth and the rods were slowly reeling in. Short, low, bursts of air and sound--laughter, "heh, heh, heh," follow. Though remarkably expressive, his face is not turned towards me, but downward, at a paper in his hand. The paper is mine-- one of the only creative pieces I'd ever had to write for school, perhaps the only one. I can hear him, "pitter patter, heh, heh, heh" as he shakes his expressive face back and forth.

A few minutes earlier I'd stomped up to Mr. Smoot from the front of the classroom, his desk being situated in a back corner-- the one furthest from the door. I'd

politely commanded his attention, politely remonstrated him for making a mistake in correcting and grading my paper, and politely thrust forth my supporting evidence. In spite of my “politeness,” I was scared. I was twelve. Behind the scene (though I stood facing him, my memory approaches the scene from a side angle) stands a group of boys whispering and laughing, mocking me I thought, just waiting for my forthcoming humiliation.

The Hermits, humphing intermittently as they tell their story, pause and catch my eyes swallowing them whole. Begrudging my menacing eagerness, Hippocampus offers something, pinching it between the edges of his two longest fingers, stretching his arm to its limit. It looks like a script, from which I'm told I can read the conclusion "for myself."

Mr. Smoot, though a little taken aback, humbly admits to and apologizes for making a mistake (with another smirk), and immediately swivels towards his computer, changes your grade, and swivels back.

"Triumph!"

But Mr. Smoot isn't finished, I read.

He flips over the pages of your paper until he reaches the first page, at which he gazes intently. Then, “brilliant” he says, barely audible, and still nodding and laughing. You don't remember much beyond that; besides the one word acknowledgment that someone is impressed with you. You blush. So does he, but it's a perpetual state of being for him, which surprisingly contrasts the dark deepness of his set, sinking eyes. You admired Mr. Smoot, probably because, for a moment, he'd admired you. You've always been a little vain. He saw you, you thought, really saw you. He saw something; a good phrase, descriptive diction, talent, potential. Or, at least, that's what you like to think

now. In short, you were rewarded for challenging him, and complimented for your writing. You beam at the now sulking boys and melt them with the heat that radiates from your face, so shy the instant before, now, so proud.

As I write, the hermits adapt to my presence. Released from the silence of time and distance, their voices bubble, rush, and flow, smoothing over wrinkles and cracks. Finally, they've escaped from the insignificance in which I've donned them, to reminiscence, which is the blood that courses through them, warming vein and tissue.

I remember the twelfth grade. I was seventeen. It was spring time. I'm sitting in the main office, waiting. Suddenly, I turn my head and Dr. Minxwell, my English teacher, is there. We strike up a conversation about my fast-approaching departure for college. She asks the question I've been asked so many times this year. Even genius can't escape the mundane.

“So, what are your plans for college?”

At the time, I'd taken a fancy to Shakespeare and the stage. So, I tell her about my plans to pursue acting, and how I'd been wanting, for a while now, to further whet my appetite with the Elizabethan verses I'd fallen in love with.

“Yeah.”

she rasps energetically, nodding her head up and down. Her small, black-lash ornamented eyes widen, her forehead furrowing to make way for thin, arching eyebrows. It's as if she was channeling reserves of light power through those beady, bright greenish-blue eyes. A Cheshire smile stretches out and over her face, reaching all the way up to her skeletal cheekbones.

The summer after I graduated from high school, I decided to organize my bedroom, which included my stuffed-full, tall, white bookshelves. The bottom shelf of one unit held mammoth, bindered “School Files,” and so they’d been meticulously labeled the summer before-- before I’d been swept away by the chaos of concluding one life in exchange for another.

While pulling these mammoths off of the bottom-most shelf, I begin to flip through them. When I get to “12th Grade English—Dr. Minxwell” I start to carefully sift through the many “English Logs” I’d written. I must have been compelled by some power, akin to curiosity but, I’d like to think, more cosmic. I stop, and read the margin notes I’d flown by, noting one: “I think when you were born, a star danced.”

I’ve treasured these words and moments like children treasure skipping stones and old empty packets of pop rocks. They are my childhood prizes, though simple and few. I conserve the light power, the heat, the energy, to sustain myself

The hermits, their stiff joints, now well-oiled with life, whip their limbs into a frenzy of movement and they flee their porches, re-directing themselves, and concentrating their focus on one pulsing spot to which I have no choice but to follow. It appears to me, a garden.

The tall, purple irises first catch my eye, swaying slightly and majestically in a balmy, sensuous breeze. The daffodils are plentiful and ring like weird bells, nodding their heads back and forth, side to side, smiling unconsciously. Pansies trump through out the place sometimes daintily, sometimes with a grimace. Seed floats fat, but somehow light in the air along side equally fat bumble bees, who firmly clasp onto chalky chunks of pollen, planting and pollinating, pollinating and planting. Age is unrecognizable in a

garden where birth and death succeed each other like phoenix life, with less ash and waste. The white, “multi-faceted” rose, as Eliot called it, is my favorite, rising above and overlooking all with grace and dignity.

Dawn climbs up and over the garden, to have a look for itself, and I wonder aloud "where did it come from?"

“From YOU!” they shoot with glee, slapping their knees and bending in half with their arms wrapped tight around their waists, holding themselves up and away from the ground. Their faces puff and wheeze like the sounds they produce simultaneously, and redden with the effort.

Laying his hand on my shoulder, Hippocampus explains to me, “S’called pitter patter”.

“Every time we plant one seed a hunderd pop up and not just one kind neither-- all kinds! Only, the rose was already here when we come to plant the rest...but anyhow, just one little pinch o’ pitter patter and BOOM, you gotchera garden, heh heh heh.”

