

The Homecoming Flight

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Rows of blue seats were sparsely occupied by passengers. Two women near the cabin door tended to a golden retriever. A man in black sat in a corner. The Donald Trump in the small TV screen talked continuously, his mouth twisted into different shapes and his fingers crossing again and again. His voice was muted. My hands itched under the gloves, every molecule rejecting the synthetic surface above it. I felt very uneasy.

The plane took off. Drowsiness pervaded the cabin as it swung in the air. The turbine hummed, its blades chattering as it consumed gushes of wind: in, out, in, out...a process going on forever in an incessant, monotonous symphony. Out of the little square window black began to erode to cyan, fading into a spectrum of yellow, orange, and red. A divergence of colors blurred the skyline.

I was stuck in artificiality. The smell of alcohol and petrol diffused through the air. Under the heat I could feel my body swelling under the tight, multilayered clothing. But I knew that I would endure and survive, like Odysseus clinging hard to a tree and waiting—with hope in his eyes—for the tide to calm down.

Yesterday I left school. I knew. It was a silent Friday. The white flowers bloomed, one after another, from pink bulbs. Cuddling one another, they formed a heart-shaped sphere, delicate like fluffy marshmallows. The clouds partially covered the sun, letting out a few rays to dance upon the leaves with a soundless melody.

*Sometimes a wind came, and
The numerous magnolia leaves
Fluttered
Like the waving of many little green hands.*

The hands waved, and colors began to fall onto the ground, covering the stone surface with a soft carpet. Purple arches leaned against the purple carpets, a door leading to a purple world. Underneath the leaves of an old tree a squirrel flexed its tail, its hands clinging at the tree trunk. It stared at me with sparkling eyes. The glance posed a question that I could not understand.

Just a few weeks ago, spring was the season of love. In front of Rand Hall, roses on a table formed a pyramid. People stood behind exhibition stands. Others walked by, chatting, laughing, hugging their friends. Often, I turned away from such noisy places to engage in quiet wandering. I almost regretted my indifference on that Friday.

In the LA airport the crowd began to bustle from all directions. I checked my mask, raincoat, and visor again. In the rapid footsteps of the crowd, I understood that the challenge of endurance applies to everybody. The meaning of homecoming is the

meaning of life, to seek safety and shelter for our unsettled hearts. After taking my body temperature and boarding the plane, I sat down and fell asleep.

In my dreams, I heard crows flying by, cawing above my head. They are the masters of the sky. I looked up and saw—in their little bulging eyes—the glowing flame of selfish carelessness. The elements of Pandora's box swelled. From a small hole that was chipped away the hairy legs of a spider stuck out. They began to climb out, one after another, their sizes enlarged to those of haunting specters. I turned and ran away as fast as I could, finding myself standing up against a large glass panel.

Through the glass I looked. Lavish feasts revealed themselves under warm lights swerving along with jovial music. And the people inside danced along. They never cared to stop. They were lucky, and proud to be lucky. I was in the dark and they, at least they believed, would always be in the light underneath the beacon. In the strangeness of my dreams I could not wake them. Most of them would not care to throw even a glance at me.

Next to me a crowd began to gather. So many of us were watching. On our side of the windowpane the music was faint. We could not dance, were only pushed against each other. Inside the room, empty bottles and curses began to land in our direction, their force piercing the glass. The bubble of a dream burst, leaving one or two drops of water. They were the tears that welled up in my eyes, having become too dry during the flight.