

Storyteller of Life

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Still wrapped in the drapery of autumn melancholy, Morley felt mentally listless at the sound of alarm, reminding her that the preparation of breakfast should be started.

“French toast and pan-fried bacon, again?” Morley whispered to herself in a tilting head and carelessly juggled an egg between two palms like a depressed clown who had run out of any creativity, presenting skilled, yet the same old trick to the anticipated audience.

“Mommy, is Monday a day to celebrate Prince Alex’s good deeds?” In his daddy’s fluffy sleepcoat, Tommy mumbled in a feeble voice with eyelids slightly opened. Morley didn’t know how to give a plausible answer to cover the truth that actually she didn’t know what to prepare except for French toast, turning around and squinted at her 7-year-old son in a smiley manner, backing to her work immediately.

Without any response except for a faint arc lingering on mother’s canthus, Tommy teetered through the dining room, then set his bottom on the wooden stool heavily as if he were an innocent fish which couldn’t resist against the string of the tantalizing aroma but could only accept the fact of being waken up from the dreamy ocean waves.

Despite of the tempting disturb, Tommy was content at the sight of mother’s slim figure mingling in the mist of sweetish smell, knowing that she had gradually recovered from some unspoken grief.

There was no surprise to Tommy’s curious speculation, for Morley always weaved fascinating bedside stories, in which the male character emanating with valor and charm was exactly Prince Alex. In order to add more dimensions to Prince Alex and make

Tommy's childhood hero more tangible with humanity, Morley created a special unit, called "Trivialities of Prince Alex," into Tommy's favorite bedside series.

More than often, Tommy preferred listening to those insignificant details to continuing story's further development. It seemed that Tommy was absorbed in collecting small fragments and piecing them together into a mosaic as a tribute to his Prince Alex.

Sometimes, Tommy could be inquisitive, acting like a detective who seemed to need one more clue so that the perplexed puzzle could be resolved straight away.

One night, Tommy popped out the question. "What Prince Alex likes to eat for breakfast?" The first image flashed into Morley's mind was French toast.

For Morley, French toast was a cuisine reminiscent of her dead husband. At first, it's a treatment for her grief; gradually, it became a reminder of her sorrow. It was strange that a cuisine could reflect contradictory feelings time after time.

After Tommy finished the breakfast, he automatically put the plates in the sink, flushing them at once. Even from behind in silhouette, Morley contently smiled to herself while picturing Tommy become somebody dependable.

Since Morley needed to be fully concentrated on her work as an illustrator of children's book, there seemed to be a premature understanding embedded in Tommy's young mind about the importance of being independent. Tommy never let Morley down or made her worried.

"Mommy, I am going to school. You don't need to pick me up today." Tommy said to Morley at speed, hastily putting on his coat and rushing out the flat. Sipping black coffee in front of the window with mind gazing out for a moment, Morley hadn't got a chance to kiss on her son's forehead. She watched her son closing the door in a hurry.

Morley did feel guilty sometimes for she couldn't be attentive to every aspect of Tommy's life; the only thing she could afford is a house to live and those fictional bedside stories. So, she dedicated herself to the book illustration every day, detaching herself from secular trifles and enclosing into the ground where nobody was allowed to trespass.

However, what Morley feared the most is the seasonal symptom within her weak mind. The sickness would drench her spine, making the four limbs flabby and consuming her whole brain. Her dead husband, Alexander was the one who aroused the sickness.

What made her illness worse was the commission to a children's book Morley had been working on. The storyline of the book is about a bunny's journey to find a refuge after a forest fire took his families' lives away. When the story evolved into a point where the bunny started to build a house himself, Morley couldn't resume for those colors of a house had been erased from her mind.

For the whole afternoon, Morley hadn't got any progress on the work. Instead, she spent most time observing the smoke of cigarette drifting in the air with no direction and no purpose. She did envy the smoke because it came without responsibility and vanish without guilt.

Morley closed her eyes, imaging herself float with the smoke and dreaming of disappearing just for a while. As Morley was about to evaporate with the smoke, a patch of warm sunlight came across her face, softly whispering to her "Wake up. Wake up." With struggle inside, Morley couldn't fight the tenderness of sunlight tickling her again and again any longer. She slowly opened her eyes.

A scene that a little girl happily flied up and down on a swing immediately came into her sight through the window; a young lady blissfully stood behind the little girl, pushing her with love and care. A beautiful curve of the biggest smile was carved into the blue sky; a big surge of sensation overwhelmed Morley's gradually numb mind.

"Maybe, it's time." Morley nodded to herself, deciding to go out for some stimulation. And what excited Morley the most was that she could surprise Tommy by an unexpected visit.

By the time Morley reached at Tommy's school, the classes hadn't been dismissed. Roaming about in the central garden surrounded by classrooms at each face, Morley found that the atmosphere was serene; only intermittent bursts of laughter were heard.

Morley got a bit of curiosity. The more she listened, the more she became familiar with the voice.

"Was that Tommy's voice?" Morley was distracted, following the string of voice carefully.

After searching aimlessly, Morley stopped.

Through the foggy surface on the door's window, she saw a boy energetically wave his two arms. He seemed like portraying someone eagerly with his whole body; it could be a warrior or something alike.

"Madam, can I help you?" a soft voice broke into Morley's contemplation on the boy's performance.

"Oh, no... well, sorry. I am just waiting for my son." Morley was a little bit embarrassed for she didn't want to be thought as a weird person.

“Um...I do recognize you. You are the clever boy, Tommy’s, mother, right?” The woman dressed in orange suit, and her face beamed with enthusiasm; Morley thought she must be the teacher.

“Yes, I am...Um, excuse me for asking, what are the class having? Children seem so excited.” Morley said with a sense of relief.

“Well, those kids are just fantastic. We organize a storytelling session each week, and every kid prepared so much. Actually, Tommy is today’s storyteller. Didn’t he tell you?” the teacher asked with wide open eyes; she seemed perplexed.

“Oh, he did. It’s my fault for being occupied with some trivial things,” responded Morley with a tinge of guilt because she really didn’t remember anything about the “story” thing.

“I am sure he did. He’s a wonderful child and every kid loves him telling the story of Prince Alex. Look how gallant he is on the stage.” The teacher pointed to the boy on the stage.

“Yes, his Prince Alex.” Following the direction, Morley whispered with a light smile.

Bell ringed, it brought both Morley and the teacher into reality.

“Mommy, what are you doing here? I told you I can walk home by myself,” said Tommy with surprise as well as a sense of joy.

“Tommy, you’ve done a great job!” Morley knelt down, holding her son’s cheeks.

“You know what, besides from French toast, I recently discover there is some other food that Prince Alex likes to eat!” Morley said in a fascinating voice.

“Really? Tell me!” Tommy screamed out, hopping around.

“Always obsessed with Prince Alex, hum? Let’s buy the ingredient first,” said Morley, and then she stood up, holding Tommy’s hand tightly and walked out the classroom.

Not long after, the image of Morley and Tommy dissolved into a crowd of pupils.

“How lovely!” said the teacher; she tenderly stroke her pregnant belly in a maternal appreciation.