

Entombed

By Adair Broughton

She watched him raise his body from the deep womblike crouch called concentration. He was a statue waking from a faraway place of which distance was no reference. She knew all about that pull of darkness, the comforting forage into a silent and inner world where the external problems and issues are forgotten. It was a drug without the high or the comedown.

Entombed in thought he had forced himself back through the metaphoric doorway to the humdrum reality of the city, intuitively pulling his hood over his head knowing the rain would fall at any moment. Prediction was a necessity in the city with a predilection for rain. He stepped back to take one last look at his work.

The women moved her face a few inches forward until she felt the briefest sensation of cold glass on nose, a bereft urgency before the sky's cold tears would wash away what she believed his complicated and interesting art.

She felt a need to learn about him. A seed of intrigue had been planted almost as soon as she had first noticed him. His consistent visits to the same location meant he surely felt something enticing and engaging with what he did and where he did it. He felt comfortable there. People could not lose themselves in their environment unless they felt protected or so she thought. Or do they react with that environment for the very fact they do not feel protected and they need to show their control.

Her thoughts were like the tide, drifting one way then the next but there was no gravity to blame for this ambiguity. Her mind simmered with conflicting thoughts but only rarely was there ever a specific winner.

She saw every movement, felt every rustle of cloth and on occasion even imagined the sinewy muscles beneath cloth exaggerating the small movements he externalised. He would throw money into a cap and place it delicately on the pavement. Standing next to his grey bag, which contained the drawing implements and paints, he looked like an expectant priest with a bowl for collection at Sunday sermon. It was like he felt subdued in asking and did the process slowly or with embarrassment. She watched the falling coins and imagined she could hear the jingle that her window and distance silenced. They landed and bounced with incongruous asperity and on occasion a rare shimmer of dancing light caught her eye as they fell. A few coins in the hat would let stray pedestrians know he was looking for cash but only occasionally would she see a glint of silver emanating from someone other than him, as a lost sun ray hit the coins from a passing stranger in reflections return. Even then she felt it an automated response to rid pockets of change rather than appreciation. Even if she watched for hours, few coins would ever fall to fill the vacuum of what city life cost to live. He would need shallow pockets to even find enough coin for a cup of tea. He did this for something more than money.

Those rare coins and glints of metal reminded her of when she was a young girl, wrapped in pigtails and perfumed with innocence. Her favourite necklace had fallen off, the jingle alerting her, but when she tried to tell her mum, she was told to be quiet

as they were rushing from shop to shop with her mother notably flustered, almost dragging her down the street. She never spoke up and nobody had ever asked her about that necklace since or even at the time. She knew of no reason why that incident always resonated in her mind with feelings of sadness or her own inability to speak out. She had changed now but part of her was always that little girl losing her necklace as well as her voice. Not every memory had an importance or a moral, this one did but she did not know what.

She touched the window with the tips of her fingers; a gentle soft caress that wanted to softly penetrate a message to him that comfort could and should be shared. She moved them away and looked in mild disgust at the disappearing marks and small smudge left by her fingers. Was she always going to be an unknown stain on other people's lives?

The impermanence of his work upset her. The fact that people would walk past blind to this created beauty made her sad. She wanted to reach out and let him know that he had a talent that should not be washed away. Why didn't he want that art to exist, to be traced with memory and eyes and to last forever? If he took a whole day to think of the constantly changing patterns and images that came from his chalk why didn't he care it would all be lost within moments without any recognition from people walking by? To her it was a waste; she wanted to understand that maybe the process of creation had more value for him. But that meant there was no reason why he would create in public. He could have used a canvass and had some paintings to sell when complete. Even if he sold them cheaply he couldn't possible take home less than the disparate metal that fell into his cap and a ruinous smudge left by rain or nature's dirty tears.

Was it only her that could see this? Were these people blind to beauty and the hidden depth of each chalk world he created? Why couldn't these people see? But she knew art had always been like that. She was focussing on one person. How many books had been written, sleeping silently in an attic collecting dust rather than other people's opinions or brilliant artwork left covered and hanging in a garage, with mice chewing the edges and spiders finding places for their spiral homes? It was an ingrained and sad aspect of life that it often took much longer to create something beautiful than it was to destroy it or see it end. But it was not entropy that she was fighting against.

It was a strange analogy but she felt a bonding to this young man as if he was her son or an old boyfriend from school where no intimacy was shared. The lover she never had, the one person who could have been perfect yet time and youth meant the story could never be told. If so, then what were these 'worlds' he could create, her grandchildren? She felt some intimate connection with them. She had been alone too long in the confined space of the apartment and she felt the need of companionship or integration into life. She had not known the sacrifice would be so large. It was not affinity but loneliness. She would often study the chalk worlds once he had gone home and there was always something she felt she could associate too but she also knew it is easy to find connection with anything if you force it. They were unusual, probably metaphoric but the ambiguity was not for her comprehension.

By having this solitude and distance she had got to understand a little about the man. She could not regret that. It was special. Like life, it was valuable precisely because it

was precious and fleeting. She knew about him, he knew nothing of her. That was why things had personal or sentimental value. Maybe more importantly, why should she care about this if he was happy? She had no knowledge of what he felt. It was true he became engrossed in his work but that could also be a way of hiding unhappiness, trying to lose oneself in what the self could create to hide behind. She was only inferring by her thoughts and presuming what he felt. She had no access to his truth. She studied his drawings trying to milk emotion and meaning with the findings inconclusive. She had mused upon his life at night as a way of stealing hours from the world and from sleep. She was dead when she was asleep, what was the point of that? Incongruous to that she knew she was wasting valuable time now, thinking one way but acting another, living in Ptolemaic circles. At least if she thought of him she did not have to think of the magician. Was that the real reason she felt anything for him, a method of escape?

She had kept her distance knowing that to get involved would be a mistake for them both. He would ask questions, find things out, try and help her. She had judged his character; saw his personality through his movements and could sense a kindness, something delicate like the eyes of young fowl, innocent about the future maybe. He was slow and deliberate but maintained a lithe sustained energy, layered and hidden beneath the permanence of his dull grey jacket. She had to fight the urge to be selfish or to want that help and attention

She wanted to reach out past her own angled reflection and throw her spirit down for him to catch and feed upon and nourish some hidden melancholy she could both love and despise. She wanted to be standing in his shadow and breathing in his soul, offering help with his art and to freely give her opinions, because if she ever had one talent, helping people and nurturing them was it, even at the sacrifice of her own ambition. Now she needed some time.

Each day it grew progressively harder to resist the temptation of speaking to the young man. Could she risk being seen? She knew this young man would not know who she was but she also knew that life had a funny way of making coincidences happen from almost impossible odds. But that was just the same as the anthropological principle.

Liberate your soul to the repose of thought was the mantra for a saviour but words are only listened to when they have actions as foundations. Those that act earn the recognition and acceptance of wisdom upon reflection. In that sense history always was the author. History was also the cruel judge of arrogance.

She had done a bad thing and felt guilty that she did not have the strength to watch or see the hurt she had caused. She did not want regrets to beget guilt to counter reason. She had to move on but she needed to know she wasn't a bad person, that she was allowed this one mistake in life. That was, if it actually was a mistake. Was the paranoia even legitimate or something that happens and spirals out of control with age?

It took a lot of bravery for her to be a coward and that was a saving grace even if there was nothing graceful about it. If you had to hurt someone was it fairer to tell them earlier rather than later if it would cause the same amount of pain. Didn't it also mean

that in their life they had then to live with bad experience for a longer period? Equally, the person also possessed a chance to 'get over it' as best they could earlier. She didn't want thoughts to bog her down once they had been decided upon. She knew if she tried to think about it her own defences would weaken and eventually eat away at her insides like some sort of Ichneumon wasp.

She was leaving soon (but she had been forcing herself to say and believe that for weeks) and she knew she couldn't afford to have this last regret. She was going to speak to him; she just wanted someone to know her story, and to say everything she had done was ok. She had no family for that, no real friends. There were still parts of her that doubted the truth of it, that she had imagined things beyond what was acceptable. She wanted someone neutral to let her know she had been right; that she was justified. Her unknown affinity to this young man and the esoteric idealisation that he would corroborate from fact and feeling like she had meant it could only be him she could speak too. The others in the city seemed indifferent. This grey man was the colour in the dull-concreted overbearing city.

It was like she was divorced before she was even married. She had needed to escape. There was a difference between fantasy and then finding information that upset her and seemed far too sickening for it to even be real. She had been in a relationship with a con artist, a man who called himself a magician, someone who could achieve deft tricks and surprise people with disbelieving eyes but she knew that was all it was. Magic was always going to exist in the realm of fairytale.

For a while she had been that lost princess, the forgotten child, the sad pauper who had found a prince. She had liked it too, engaged with the magicians enthusiasm, been honoured by his interest in her and however trite it sounded she had liked the attention and had been made to feel special. What did she have that this man found so interesting that other women did not have.

He was an extravert but only recently had that bordered on arrogance. This was more pronounced in her reflections now because of the young man and his chalk drawings. She had been given a different perspective but she could still see positive things about the magician. He was able to engage with people, entice them to believe him with trusting eyes. She had also drowned in his Plato eyes; some imagined vision of truth and trust that emulated from those spheres of depth to resonate inside the soul. He had chosen hers to engage with. It was only now that she had questioned why. She had been lost in that cave, had seen the world as shadows, yet he had given her daylight and love. She had been immersed and was willingly drowning until he himself had crossed into that world of dark reflection. Had she changed more than him to be able to recognise that?

Years had passed from that first meeting and she had become a part of his act, earning and travelling together, while nurturing developing love. She saw love as that true magic which romantic idealism held close, something a lot more magical than what they did on a near daily basis.

Yet gradually and then increasingly, like the sun lowering in the afternoon sky, the shadows grew longer and she could begin to see the darker silhouette cast of his life.

He would be lost to books, talk less and had begun to wear all black as if he wanted to immerse himself in the night no matter what time of day. He did not howl at a full moon. She had asked him about the change twice. The first response he gave was "our act needs character" the second time with the disconcerting "I'll wear black until I can find anything darker to wear".

Where was this heading? She had lost that magical connection between them but she still had nothing to be too concerned about, at least not her life, or so she had thought. Was it a phase or just a new direction their act would take? He had begun to introduce more swords and more blood, his smile more menacing as he listened intently to the gasps in the audience. She had not been harmed but could not help thinking the show was degenerating into a torture voyeur fetish.

Then she would think she was being stupid. People paid to see an act and if they were pushing boundaries with the act it was not necessarily a bad thing. However, her mind had been changed completely when they had visited that bookshop. She remembered the knowledgeable look the owner gave to him, as if he had been there before, a delicate nod to hidden conversations. "Just look around" he had told her, walking away to a dark corner of the shop. Dark was a relative term. The dark was pervasive. Musty too, a cathedral vault with paper rather than bone and now with even less to have faith in.

He would not show her the books and it was in that moment she grasped the difference in him. The eyes were less responsive, had become disengaged to those around him, the swirl of a prophets crystal ball where people could see inside themselves as well as him had gone. That had been the first and distinct sign. The second was when she had secretly looked at the books.

Having secrets was not the problem. Relationships could not survive without them. It is what keeps people guessing and intrigued, so we can continually learn about others. But with the best intentions, it changes when you have to 'know' those secrets, when the trust has gone, when you believe the secrets contain a darker edge. These secrets did.

The old covers and smell added to the mystery and tension as she surveyed the index. He had gone to look at some outfits for the new trick planned. In the past that had been one of her duties but he had taken over that role, giving her less responsibility in this partnership. Was that deliberate? It was just another reason how she knew they were drifting apart. Yet he never seemed annoyed with her, even with his distance. It was like he was indifferent to that distance. Maybe he had taken it for granted that she would never leave.

She would show him what magic really was, how to disappear. It would take careful planning.

The magician walked the streets smoking a cigarette that was once an enemy. Smoke had become the friend, health the sacrifice to a changing mood and persona. Smoke had been the shroud to hide footsteps and to cloud judgement about what people thought they could see. This cigarette was helping him exhale thought with each inhale of the swirling white lung devils.

What was more important to him, a relationship or art? Magic was the one thing he had always wanted to do and live for. If she loved him then this was her sacrifice. If she did go, he could get her back, or could he? This was the gamble, the reason for his distance. What was it someone had once said to him 'If you love somebody, let them go. If they return, they were always yours. If they don't, they never were' This was the test, maybe it was out of his control or the one way he could tell if he had what it takes to do really magic. It was within his grasp, but so was she. It was to be a long walk.

He passed many people on the walk until the shadows of night matched his clothes. Some looked at him, others with their heads down. So many lives entwined yet separate. They knew nothing of him, him nothing of them. He thought of her again, pictured her as one of the strangers. That wasn't actually hard to do and he knew a decision had been made.

She waited and waited until moments became minutes and then time was an inky blackness to suit the night, unsure whether to confront him. He was planning something and whatever subtle changes had occurred between them over the last weeks had become unsustainable paranoia about what it was he wanted. He had books on devil worship, on banishing demons, even one on making people disappear. Were they real or tongue in cheek? Were they inspiration? She knew the truth of course; that there was no such thing as magic. Yet it was as if he had started to believe. She wanted to believe and trust her initial feelings, that he was pushing boundaries. It seemed more than that, like he was now pushing himself out of reality, a tsunami instead of a wave that was gently lapping at those edges of possibility.

Clocks ticked to their own agenda and tired but still awake eyes and ears heard the door. She pretended to be asleep, watched his shadow fill the doorway. She couldn't even speak to him. He stood for endless minutes, the face impossible to discern even though the soft light cast a glow bright enough to embrace any emotion that could have shown if he wanted it too. When he did not sit next to her, kiss her forehead she knew then that he did not care. He never even came back with a blanket to cover her, the one thing he had always done in the past.

Weeks had passed from the evening when she had been lost in her thoughts and even now he was cold in his approach. She had not said anything. Actions would be stronger than words. He was explaining about a new trick, how he would let her escape from the box secretly while setting fire to it, the audience previously checking that there were no escape routes from the concrete pit. Each day she had asked him how she would actually get out and he said he could explain it better on the day, that there was no need for a practice. This was significant. Her trust had gone; the one thing that both their professional and personal lives had been forged upon. He had been as thorough as he was at loving at the start of their relationship and now he was dismissive, as if her thoughts and feelings were of little consequence. This was no longer two people falling apart or just her imagination. It felt like there was a universe between them

She remembered all this clearly and yet something still clouded her judgement. This was why she needed to speak to someone. She had felt a bond; a weird longing that

the young man who seemed so lonely could help her move on, to not judge her, to tell her what she did was the right thing. She wanted to know why the magician had gone underground, why he had not performed again but she needed someone neutral to do this otherwise he would find out it was her. She felt guilty for bringing this young man into the situation before he was even in it. He could quite easily ignore her and then she would feel even worse. Something deep inside told her this would not happen. Tomorrow she would speak to him. She had made tougher decisions than this.

She moved away from the window and watched him leave, her finger still touching the glass. Tomorrow it may even touch his face.

As tomorrow became today the crying of the sky refused to cease and she knew she would not see him. The clouds matched the concrete and the sun was a figment of people's imaginations. She didn't know why she cried too, why someone so strong could be so weak. 'There are no facts, just interpretations' she remembered a phrase the magician was fond of quoting by Nietzsche. But there were facts, she had left him and that couldn't be undone. She could not move forward, not till she had spoken to someone. Guilt was a strange thing that it required other people to alter its significance. What evolutionary responses and reasons were there for being concerned about a person's actions that did not result in life or death?

It was the night of his magic. The magician could not get near the dancing flame, as the heat seemed more viscous than he remembered. There had been no screams from her trapped inside although the gasps of astonishment from the crowd would have drowned anything but the wail of a banshee. He was shaking as much from excitement as worry. Was he concerned that she had died or that the magic had failed?

He had done everything the book said including the silly rituals and drawing of pentagrams that he had always dismissed so easily in the past but he *had* felt something powerful when he had first made that decision, as if magic was something that could be created from emotion as much as from following guidelines or protocols. It had forged in him a belief, something personal he could hold onto once he had lost her from his life.

He knew he had changed but did not have the guilt to reflect on it or be concerned. He could think. Something was driving him forward, an internal incentive that appeared to dismiss reflection as an inconvenience. It was as if he knew what he was supposed to think and feel but couldn't and that the associated concern was just not important enough to be of necessity.

People stood in the corners of the stage surrounding like a diamond the concrete construction built days before, the main protection against the fire. They were a presence with fire fighting equipment just in case. He had been given special dispensation because of his reputation and how detailed his explanations were to the safety representatives. They were there for insurance purposes mainly. He also had to show them that there was a way out, a secondary escape mechanism as backup. He made sure she did not know it.

He had seen a little fear in her eyes that he had not noticed before but he knew of the trust she had in him; it was the one thing he knew he could always rely on even if he only needed it at this one instance. If he had looked at her with the eyes of an audience member he would have considered her beautiful, the tight black dress hugging her figure with the sheen of a panther, graceful and elegant, uncompromising in her confidence.

She looked deep into his eyes and for a few seconds his heart felt a dull ache, as if it beat in a moment lost in a different place. It passed as quickly as the thoughts of a person's life years ago, when he used to think of all the people who had ever lived, just dots in a landscape of life and how that was what his life would be in hundreds of years, insignificant and lost, remembered only in seconds. There was no life and death, not when there was this other unknown place. He would have a lot of time to think afterwards.

He gave her a wry smile but she never gave one back. His hand was holding hers, helping her step down into the box and when he let go she gave a gentle wave to the audience, the traditional assistant's goodbye. She could not see them because of the stage lights shining into her soul. Was this also the last time she would see him?

The darkness came quickly as the lid closed and she saw their relationship disappear with the light. She had little time to escape but conversely she would now have all the time in the world. She had not been alone for a long time nor had she ever wished to play the loner. There was comfort in security, in being with someone, even if the relationship was cold. How many people stayed in relationships purely from fear of isolation or braving the unknown? She didn't know if it would be more or less than she supposed.

The secret exit would have been impossible to locate had she not known where it was. All her thoughts and feelings and intuition that he was attempting something sinister had been right. She knew this because he had not told her about how to escape and one thing he had never been was presumptuous with detail. Had he just forgotten? It seemed unlikely.

She had tried the escape route those days before she had taken a small light. Now all she could do was curse herself for not creating the same circumstances and began to fight back the panic and frustration that made her heart beat to the tempo of survival.

Only muffled noises could be heard outside but it was best she did not focus on what he was doing. The way the box was designed, the smell of oil and because of the safety people nearby she knew that fire would be involved somewhere and maybe not just for show. He would first let people examine the box to prove there was no way out. The fire could quite easily have been an impressive shield to hide her escape but she knew it was more than that even if it could work in her favour.

It was as if there was no air in the box and if she took a breath she would be absorbed by a vacuum. Even though her heart was racing her mind was reliving past moments, like an old film flickering with images of childhood and places visited. Was this her version of drowning? She would only be in control when she could release the small latch. The click was reassuring and she slowly moved the tiny panel from the floor.

She would not have guessed by sight that she could have forced herself through but maybe not breathing in for the last minutes had helped her. She pulled the cover back over, looping the latch so it looked like it had been locked from the inside, something she was glad she had recognised from being here days before. The corridor was musty, reminding her of the bookshop from all those weeks before.

She found the clothes she had hidden and quickly dressed and in the background she could hear cheers from the audience. She put a cap over her face and just hoped nobody had seen her face when she left the boyfriend. She had finally disappeared.

The magician stared at the crowd, his eyes used to the harsh light enabling him to discern people's faces. The audience were electric but he was feeding from the lapping flames as much as from the spirit of interest and support they were showing. It was not just another trick, he wished they knew that, but they were here for fun and his extravagance had now taken on deeper meaning. When the flames died down and all that would be left was an empty shell of blackened wood then he would know the truth of all he had been studying. Was his life's work about to begin or end?

He had listened intently for screams and would have been disappointed had he heard any. He had cut himself at the moment she was to disappear following all the advice of the books he had read even chanting phrases that could help summon energy. Why had he begun to believe or was there something at the back of his mind that was sceptical? That bookshop had been deliverance. Finding it down that side street by chance had steered his life in a different direction. He had a new motivation and journey in life and everything he had not believed in but took advantage of in his line of work was becoming real and intriguing, like a priest suddenly believing in God, or faith moving out of the way for fact? Who needed belief when there was proof?

Only a few days ago he had gone back and was surprised to find it closed down; dust and empty shelves making him feel he had imagined being there, like that part of his memory had been wiped or that he couldn't rely on it having happened. Yet he had the books so he knew it had been true. He remembered the man pointing him to the shelves of the arcane before he had even stated he was a magician. The shop itself had existed, there was no point in believing that magic was a dream or illusion or even false memory. Maybe one day he could buy that bookshop but he was unsure if he should stop travelling especially considering how much it rained. Peculiarly he was less concerned with the overcast life he had been living recently. It was the longest time he had spent in one city.

Broken and burnt wood fell indiscreetly onto the concrete floor, its heat still as sharp as the blades he used in alternative tricks. The audience had been receptive and impressed with the fire but they had no idea that someone had 'really' vanished. He felt inside him that she had gone, that there was something missing. Did it feel the same to sell another person's soul rather than your own?

As the yellow flames become orange and the white ash and smoke began to fill the air he knew it was time to look inside the box. The audience wanted to see that it was empty because earlier on he had asked members to thoroughly walk round and check that there were no escape routes. The four sides could be split apart easily and as he hit the front one towards him, he watched the sparks flick up as it hit the ground with

a crackling thud. The sincere gasp from the audience answered his question before he looked himself. She was gone. He watched the other sides fall down until there was just an empty stage area more for completion than necessity. The trick was finished.

The flames died as quickly as the lights that were dimmed. It was a good end to the show that was now a beginning to his life. He was a real magician. How could he celebrate that fact? What was he to do now?

She was glad that her clothes had not been found because they had also contained in the pockets enough cash to keep her in accommodation and food for a few weeks, time she was now running out of. The city was expensive but she wanted somewhere to hide and reflect. It was easier to hide in a city than travelling alone through villages and towns where questions are always asked. She also felt he would move on as his work meant he needed to have new audiences wherever he went.

She wanted to know what he would be thinking now, how her disappearance had affected him. He had lost his way and could she have changed that. The guilt had appeared suddenly and completely and it was another reason she was happy to have this time alone. She was glad she had chosen the apartment even if it was sparse and minimal in its comforts. She could sit and watch the city without ever being seen but more importantly she had grown fond of watching the young man create his chalk worlds. She needed that softness and delicate sadness to honour her sacrifice, if that was what it was.

It was just a shame about the rain, the one day she had been confident enough to talk to him. There was always tomorrow. That was a silly phrase; it was too easy to rely on tomorrow.

Tomorrow for the magician was a day free of magic but without him making a conscious decision tomorrow had also for him become a week and then a month. He had not been back to the books and he was finding it hard to sleep. Somehow he had lost emotion by seeking magic, and wanted it back, but he had only wanted it back after he had lost her. It was as if the magic had taken away his thoughts and feelings as a human being, not being able to balance the importance of being with someone. Nothing should have mattered apart from each other and he had been blind to that yet there was no one else to blame. It had been his choice. He could have killed her even if it had not worked, even with the safety protocols that had been in place. It was hard to live with and he could not leave the city even though she wasn't here. There was no one to tell or to convince about what he had done.

He had been back and checked the stage and the escape route but she could not have been through it or even known how to operate the latch. He was living a lie even though he had found the truth about magic. No one would believe him but there would be many questions about where the woman was. How could he admit to being real when everyone would believe him a fraud? Either way it would not bring her back.

He had lost emotion by seeking magic. Was her disappearance a bargain to make him feel human, to give back his own soul? He hated how trite it sounded to think about what he had lost only when it had gone.

He walked the streets endlessly finding little to sooth him in the dull days of rain. The clouds were his conscious constantly dampening his own spirit of life. He deserved that and he could not move on. He was devouring his own mind with how stupid he had been without questioning if it could be reversed. How can you bring someone back who has been lost to you forever because of your stupid actions? He had brought demons into this world instead that were feasting on his overbearing guilt. Why would guilt rise like a Phoenix from the flames of real magic?

Another tomorrow passed and she woke to the day surprised by the blue in the sky. It was a rare day and as the sun filtered through the window she had a feeling the young man would be there today. She got dressed and even whistled a tune to a lost song from her youth.

The magician knew what he had to do. He had to move on, somehow make amends for what he had done. It was true he was in pain for his loss but this was insignificant compared to what he had done to her. She had no relatives to mourn her loss or disappearance but this fact alone did not lessen how he felt. Life should not be valued by how many people knew you, just by the fact there is life at all. He would start again, free himself from the confined spaces of the concrete walls and city life.

He withdrew what money he had and wanted to do a little good before he disappeared too. There was so much he had to do and knew that however long he lived the damage could not be undone. Doing real magic was meant to make him feel powerful but it had emptied him of feeling, thought and soul.

Despite the beauty of the day when even the sun could reach the pavement even with the tall buildings the streets seemed quiet. He stopped and watched a young man drawing something in chalk, a picture of a fire with an angel hovering above with an outstretched arm, a wing on fire but the face still smiling. It was an unknown face but somehow beguiling and contradicting the flame. It hurt him to look at it but he felt thankful for the pain it caused. He reached into his pocket and took out all the money bound by a single elastic band. He dropped it into the hat, looking at the single coin and walked on. There must be a way out of this city. He looked to where a single cloud was moving across the sky and decided that the horizon was his best option. He would not stop walking till he had escaped the confines of the city and his mind.

She always wondered why the man could not sense he was watching while he chalked his imagination onto the ground. She wanted to be outside today to enjoy the blue sky while it lasted but there was a greater need to see the man. He still wore his grey coat, his face hidden as it always was. She noticed the brightness of the chalk as if he was chalking real fire. He was creating the outline of a body now, a body with wings.

It was then that she noticed another man walk by, a dark silhouette shadowed by the wall. It should have been a proud figure, tall but the lowered head made her feel a slight affinity, as if the world had overpowered all three of them together. She watched him place something big in the mans hat and at that point she felt threatened, peculiar, as if she needed to protect the young man somehow. It was only when the figure began walking again she realised who it was.

She had to go outside now. Her whole body was trembling. She needed to speak to them both but knew there was only place in her world for one of them. She took one last look out the window and headed out of the apartment, the door creaking behind her, closing awkwardly on her life.