

The Day of Boats

a short for a sad, lonely string instrument

I always thought of myself a land-dwelling mammal; therefore I never particularly liked boats. My friend, now she liked boats. She liked a great number of water-sports and activities: she felt borne to the stuff. That was our one greatest disparity, this most opposite of preferences.

My friend and I always used to spend every possible moment with one another; in nearly every aspect (asiding boats, of course) we were like kindred spirits. We could talk for hours, about anything and everything. I felt at most comfort when I was with her... the pressures of life melted away every time I saw her smile.

Likewise, from my gathering on the situation, my friend felt the same way—she always seemed at ease with me, she would open up to me, she seemed to want for my company as much as I for hers. Until that day of boats.

One day, out of the blue, she expressed a desire to go out on a boat. She had always talked about how much she liked that sort of thing, but in the time I had known her, I had never seen that side of her world. I likened it to a far-off entity, something in the past that I wouldn't be a part of. I just didn't think it would be in the here-and-now; so much time had passed without so much as an inkling that I thought it was just a childhood thing someone laments upon. Much like myself and the desire to stay on land.

Back to that day—the one of boats—yes, she wanted to go out on one. She did like boats, after all. It was a Sunday; a nice Sunday, the weather was nice, the breeze was just that right speed, cooling, refreshing. We usually spent Sundays together (and nearly every other day as well.) That day, however, she decided to go out on a boat. I said sure, I would stay on land and maybe see her when she got back.

It's funny how some things you can remember with perfect clarity, and others you can't for the life of you. I remember the day of boats, I remember the way she made me feel, but I can't remember where we met, how we became to be: perhaps I was too naive, swept up in the whirlwind, too happy to notice.

The rest of the day of boats went without incident; a couple of hours later we met up and talked for a bit, I don't remember what about, but things seemed back to normal. Soon, I would come to realise, it would happen again.

Suddenly days of boats cropped up everywhere; like a raging fire, or when rain incrementally increases in weight and speed. Before I knew what was happening, she was spending more time on boats than we were together. This turn of events made me sad; I didn't know what to do. When not a single day used to pass without us being in company, now days turned to weeks, and weeks to months.

In desperation, I decided to turn to the boat.

I regarded the object with a sense of suspicion, like a jealous husband regards his wife's handsome co-worker. I checked myself, wondering if I was just being silly—whether there was nothing wrong, it was all just in my head. However, the niggling thoughts remained, and I had to find out more.

It was a Sunday; we no longer spent Sundays together, so I had the free time to check out a boat. She was already out there, in the unknown, on a different boat, in a different world. I gingerly touched the hull of the foreign beast; I could almost feel a low rumble, as if it were alive, as if it were responding to me. I stood there for a long while, communicating with the boat. My wariness subsided as I learnt about another world, one of boats, of seas, of water with no bottom. A world that I could not be in.

One day I asked my friend if she would let me come with her on one of these boat trips; I caught her by surprise, being that this was the first time in a month or two that we were in contact with one another. In a halting, deliberating fashion she allowed it, as if it were a crucial decision to let me back into her world. We set off on a Sunday for the boat trip.

There's a wooden plank that adjoins boats from the pier, perhaps six feet in length, with raised wooden ridges for grip. Others in front of us had already formed a queue, slowly shuffling along the pier and up the gangway onto the boat. I looked at my friend, who to me seemed a mixture of excitement (at the boat, no doubt) and worry, the latter directed at my impromptu request.

She was halfway up the gangway before she realised I hadn't followed her up. Turning slowly, she looked at me and asked if I was coming or not. The queue banked up behind me, the shuffling petered to a halt. The entire world converged at this one moment, everything stopped to watch this climactic of shows.

No, I answered, I came to say goodbye.

Almost miserably so, I watched the slow resumption to normal speed, the rest of the people boarding. The boat offered a haunting bellow as it left port. I bowed stiffly as this happened. She looked at me with that same mixture of emotion: part happiness, part sadness. She offered a simple wave of her hand. I offered a tear.

Just one.

One was enough.

Life, like the great many things within it, all tend to unravel with enough time.