To Burn

When I was young, before I could read or write, after I had just steadied my feet on the ground, and just as I started to think things through, I remember asking my mom who God’s Mommy was.

“Mom, if God came first, then where did he come from?” I looked into the mahogany bed frame as I scratched at its carvings.

“You are going to have to ask Ms. Cindy honey. She is the one that can answer all of those questions for you.” She replied without looking away from her crossword puzzle. Her response was planned and executed accordingly. She filled in some more square boxes with black ink.

Even then I knew I wasn’t going to ask Ms. Cindy. Her black frizzy hair and permanent smile never suited me. Around her was the only time that I hid behind my mother’s legs. I don’t know if it was just a coincidence of my timid adolescence, but when I heard ten years later that she ran off with the minister, leaving both of their spouses after being caught in the church basement, I was not surprised.

But at that time my mind was not older then five and my thoughts played out like a storybook.

If God had no mother and no father, he must have just appeared.

I pictured a single foot, just one lone foot in the middle of nowhere. And from the foot, I decided, sprouted the rest of God’s body. But then I thought about it more. That doesn’t make any sense. WHERE DID THE FOOT COME FROM? And there wouldn’t be nothing. Because nothing is something. What is nothing that isn’t a something look like?

When I was a little older, my mom got a phone call at six in the morning with my grandma’s voice whispering, “I think something is wrong.”

That morning the television woke me up from the den where my mom sat on the floor. We never used that room. I knew something was off. I got up before my sister and sat in my mother’s lap.

“I think something is wrong.” She whispered it into my hair.

I was tracing the lines in the wood floor when, for the second time, a plane and building shook hands. She screamed and pulled me to her chest and the voice of the newscaster sent a shiver down my spine. There was something weird about reciting the pledge of allegiance that day.

Without raising my hand I asked my teacher, “Mrs. Toth, why do things like this happen?”

She didn’t answer but instead told me to raise my hand next time.

With my childishly selfish and overachieving mind, I decided that things like this happen for me. Things like this happen so that I can do something about it, so that I can feel this way.

When I was a bit older, I read about a girl named Anne who reminded me of myself. I soon visited the tolerance museum with my school.

After I touched the nail marks dug into a wall in a mock crematorium, after I found out that those indentations could have been made by the little girl on my card, and after I saw a man who told me that he was only there that day because a Nazi soldier picked him out of the pile of frozen corpses to be burned and decided to let him feel the pain of death a little longer, I tried to find a bathroom in order to pull myself together but ended up fainting right outside a wall of about 2,000 pairs of body-less shoes.

When I finally got back into the bus, no one sat next to me. No one had a roll of tissues in their hand either. I remember feeling very alone, but I also remember feeling very comfortable in this isolation.

As I looked out the window onto the buildings of century city, I decided that there was no way I wasn’t going to do something.

I called the museum the very next day asking for a job. When I told them I was twelve, they laughed.

When I was just a couple years older than that, I discovered that a different kind of holocaust had been and currently was going on. I realized that history repeats itself and that people are ignorant. I realized that politics has little to do with justice. I realized that people had been trying to change things for a long time. I realized that very few had succeeded. I realized that it was my turn:

“What gives off light must endure burning” - Vikctor Frankl.

Fish Bowl

“Were just two lost souls living in a fish bowl year after year.”

I thought about that.

I’m already swimming. I didn’t realize I was already drowning.

I hate the water.

I hate the water.

But the water loves me. That is what is so dangerous.

It is not mutual. If it were mutual we would have no problems with each other.

Opposites attract and the same repel.

The water loves me. I don’t love it back.

It’s a kind of love that borders on the line of hate. Sometimes it gets so blurry, sometimes it gets so infinitesimally small that the two are interchangeable. Love is the same crimson fire as hate and they both love to burn.

I’ve been burning my whole life. Maybe I should go out drowning.

Oh the irony. Natalie Wood dies by her greatest fear: drowning. Film mega star never to be seen again. Did her husband do it? Was it murder? Suicide?

I do love to keep them guessing.

I have never been good at acting. I don’t think I have ever acted a day in my life. I never pretended. The hardest thing in the world is to be yourself. I think there is an expiration date on that.

People must realize when its there time to go. I can only be me for so long before there is no such thing. I like how I am now. I am too afraid to wait till I can no longer say that.

Proactive. Yes I am proactive. A pro at being active.

That was nice. I smiled. And it was good. It was natural, genuine, sincere, all of that. It curved on my face. No teeth were flashed, my eyes were closed. That’s how a smile should be. Not for anyone else.

For yourself.

I tried to do it again, and I can’t.

But it was still nice! I still enjoyed it! Not being able to do it again means nothing. I can live with one time. I can live with that. It doesn’t matter how long, it matters how good. It matters if everything was accomplished. If it mattered to me.

You know if you stand here long enough Nat you might sober up and who the fuck knows what will happen then.

Ok.

I remember the first time I hugged myself. I was looking at the moon and I thought, “I know that I can always look up into the sky from this window and see that moon. In three days, in one year, in twenty, in fifty, I can always count on it being there”

That made me wonder how many things were out there like that. How many things does a person have that they can without a doubt, indefinitely depend on?

Yourself. But I remember thinking that at that time all I wanted was a hug. You needed someone else for that.

No.

I didn’t.

I wrapped my arms around my body so easily, so tightly. My eyes closed and the warmth was secure. Never in my life have I felt so reassured then that first time when I held on to myself and squeezed my back knowing that I can always depend on this. And this is all I need.

A fish knows food and water. I know hugs and smiles. A fish knows sharks and storms. I know people and razors. A fish knows safety and fear. And so do I.

Close your eyes Natalie

and fall.

SPLASH

Evolution

Soon we are all going to be naked.

I didn’t sleep because of the cockroach and instead took Artemis out.

A woman, or a man, walked past us as I sat on the bench.

Tall and built, but hunched, with a pink coat and heels. The skirt could have been a bikini. The outfit was really just skin.

I know that this person is a prostitute. Anyone would know. But if you add two more inches to the skirt, and a bigger top, this person could walk on 23rd with no problems. And people do. Fifty years ago, a conservative person today would be labeled a prositute. But a couple thousand years ago, clothes were scraps of hide. Maybe evolution is really just one big circle.

Maybe this person, walking around at 3 ocklock in the morning, knows more than me, than all of us. Maybe we were born or created exactly how we were suppose to be from the very beginning and then tried to change it. Evolution isn’t a forward movement, it’s a backward one.

I smile because I like this person. Artemis does too. I bet you, if this person sat down next to us, they would most certainly bring something to the table. Talk about something intersesting, something big, no small talk. The only problem is I don’t know if I would. And that scares me.