



THE STORYTELLER'S PUBLICATION

A MONTHLY COLLECTION OF POETRY & SHORT STORIES

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

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A Note from the Editor

Thank you for reading our second issue of The Storyteller's Publication.

The Storyteller's Publication exists to connect and expand our minds and hearts through diverse stories and contrasting perspectives, revealing the greater tapestry of which we are a part. Each month is assigned a different theme. The theme of our second issue is "It's the Little Things".

I will probably repeat this with every issue, but that is because it is so important: consumption alone is sure death to the artist. The purpose of this publication is to break the cycle of consumption, and to invigorate the creative spirit in the storyteller.

Why did we choose the theme "It's the Little Things"? Simply put, we are very focused in this world on the great big events and ideas that we are told drive us, yet at the same time, we often neglect the little details of our lives. Indeed, it seems that it is in the daily interactions and the commonplace relationships where most of our lives are lived. Of course, this is not to say that we are not a part of a larger world. We are. But to be healthy in that largeness, I believe we must value the small building blocks of reality.

I will repeat what I said last month. I sincerely hope the diverse perspectives you encounter here will expand you and challenge you to connect across the divides in your life. You are sure to find some that bring you comfort, but you will probably find others that do the opposite. Please take this rare opportunity to see inside yourself and ask yourself why.



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The Man

By

Joshua E. Stevens

He stood high in the tree, his feet uneasily balancing on the thick branch as his hands fiddled with the rope. The Man tied the rope taught around the branch as he ran a cracked and calloused hand over the rough bark. He stood up, both of his hands holding firmly on the other end of the rope. It reminded me of his grandfather—both tall and burly allowing their hair to grow like unkempt bushes deep in the forest. Their eyes were brown like deep pits of mud and their teeth were crooked like my own branches. Like his grandfather before, he walks among us talking and singing with the birds.

Every evening as the sun would crest over the ocean of trees, The Man would stroll through the forest and come right up to me. The Man began his walk through the forest early that morning, chopping and hauling off the trees now long since dead and making room for the seeds to sprout new life.

He would tell me about his life and what he did. His sorrows and satisfactions were like the notes of an orchestra strung amongst an eager audience. With time, he went from standing in my shade, to sitting against me, and finally climbing up and lying in my branches.

The Man's gaze was fixed on the horizon as his hands played with the rope, nervously turning the fixture peering through it wishing it offered sight into an unseen realm. Like a wheel. He did not come with a song on that day; no poem written by angels fell on our ears, but we felt the depth of his sorrow as he began to climb up the branches that morning.

The Man's words were short and cut like a chill wind, "It was a cold winter. Wasn't much anyone could do to stop it from happening. Even the big cities had a rough go of it. Still, I'd like to think they got something the city folk don't." His eyes shifted from the horizon to the surrounding trees, then to the axe which laid harmlessly on the ground so far away. "I'd like to believe you're holding them now, keeping them safe and warm like I couldn't." The Man took a deep breath and carefully walked over to the trunk to begin a safe descent back to the welcoming ground.

Once there, he looked up at the rope dangling lifelessly in the tree and exhaled whispering, "There is always tomorrow." Perhaps he intended for the forest not to hear his exhausted words. It is possible they were said in a hope that tomorrow would bring a better result than the rope in the tree.

As he walked away, we all leaned towards him; the birds fluttered around him singing their songs and chirping him on towards home. A raccoon climbed up the

trunk and casually strolled over to the rope to untie it. Then a raven flew down from the sky, and together they picked the knot free, letting the rope fall harmlessly to the ground. When night came, the crickets began to sing their lullaby and rocked the forest gently to a peaceful slumber.

The animals scurried to their dens, but we stayed awake. We were restless wondering why the man left the rope tied on the branch. Never had he done this before. "Just like his father," one tree whispered in the wind. "Prone to doubt and melancholy." Another tree waved, "There is always tomorrow."

Night soon faded, and morning was met by the chirping birds and scurrying squirrels. The Man began his walk through the forest late in the day, chopping and hauling off the trees now long since dead and making room for the seeds to sprout new life.

He made his way to me after the sun had passed its high point in the sky. He dropped his axe on the ground next to him as he sat with his back to my trunk. He dragged his hand through the fallen leaves grabbing a handful and crushing them before slowly letting them tumble back down to the ground. He lay his head back.

"I miss them an awful lot. That place just isn't the same without them. Seems empty, but I can still hear them. Their laugh and their warmth. Then I try to sleep, and a chill runs straight through me. Suddenly, their laugh I can't hear, and their warmth has turned to cold."

He climbed up the branches that day with red eyes and tear stained cheeks. He went to the same branch his father would—just high enough they could see over all the forest, but not so high the branch could not support him. He carefully crawled out to his normal spot and sat with feet dangling over and swinging in the air. He tied the rope around the branch, this time with two knots to hold it in place. He then affixed the rope to himself. A rushed wind came over us as whispers from the worried trees sounded.

"He's never done that before."

"Stop him."

"What can we do?"

A bird flying by saw The Man and gracefully descended to the branch. With a hop and a chirp, the bird caught the attention of The Man. The trees watched as tears crossed his face like stars falling from the sky. The bird began to sing a sweet melody and was joined by other birds. He stayed sitting while his feet unconsciously swayed to the music. Squirrels flew through the trees racing for some unknown reason, but it looked as if they were dancing to the rhythm of the song.

The Man exhaled and unfixing the rope around him. He let it drop and slowly sway below the branch while he climbed down. Looking back up at the rope, he whispered, "There's always tomorrow."

The rope stayed still in defiance to the wind, its cold call a somber reminder. As he walked away, we leaned towards him. The birds were still singing, and the squirrels continued racing. All around him, the forest was alive prompting him onwards towards another day.

Meanwhile, the same raccoon came scurrying up the tree once again. Frantically trying to undo the knot and vowing to hide the rope. Unable to undo The Man's knot, the raccoon called for the crow, and together they worked. Even after the crickets awoke to sing their lullaby and after the rest of the forest had fallen asleep, the two creatures were still unable to undo the knots.

All throughout the night the trees stood in silence, each with their own machinations of what tomorrow will bring. No tree asked the obvious question: "What should we do?"

The crickets' lullaby was broken by a loud and lonely cry coming from his dwelling. If trees could breathe, then we would all be holding our breaths anxiously awaiting for what dawn would bring.

The Man rose early for the crying did not cease at all the previous night. He began walking through the forest before the sun rose. With no axe beside him, he walked with only the howling wind as his company. He made his way to me, not stopping to talk or sing to any other tree. The Man walked determinedly through the forest until he saw the raccoon sleeping at the trunk. With a weary head the small animal hissed to scare off The Man, but he would not be deterred.

He walked by and climbed the trunk as the raccoon stood helplessly off aside; nothing it did could slow The Man down. The raven quietly sat up in the tree while its black eyes surveyed the situation.

The Man boldly walked out along the branch, affixing the rope to himself. The trees leaned in, and the birds sprang to their song as the squirrels danced in the trees. The Man's eyes were not looking at any of them. Only I could see he was staring at the spot where his loves was laid to rest. A soft whisper cut through the noise and howling wind.

"Why not join them?"

The End

Restless emotions

By Eleonora Cenzone

It rained
on a night
of troubled sleep.

Wet pines
smell like memories
of a different
lighter
lifetime.

A slow snail
carries its home,
a small world
made of slow days.

Some drops
fall off feathers
of a flying bird
leaving the river.

And the waves of emotions
hide
in the waves of the ocean,
in the waves of the universe.

The waves come back
behind eyelids' shield.
The waves flatten
after hours of grief.

We are our own
in a sea of threads,
in a skein, floating,
tangled lives
with meaning coating,

lots of eyes
but limited noting.

But sometimes eyes can see
how much we can't see,
how much we're entangled
in our tangled lives,
seeing the universe
we've left behind.

Hypnotized
by little things
I hide
in a wandering world,
in an eternal life
with nothing to hold.

The clear sky
the warm rays
the wet pine
still make me happy.

Even when happiness
is just a word
for quivering
restless
emotions.

A Note from the Poet, Eleonora Cenzone

I wrote this poem after a night of troubled sleep, back from my first morning out riding my bike after two months of isolation. It had just rained.

A lot of things happened during the lockdown, especially inside my mind. As well as many other people, I've been troubled by thoughts, memories, and worries (more than the usual amount).

I've been surprised by the flow of emotions in a way that I have never noticed before; waves of feelings can invade the days in many different shades and intensity. I feel like I'm realizing how much of a stranger my feelings and desires can be. I've rediscovered how impossible it is to control emotions.

I've felt the world enlarge under my feet, in the vast unknown, full of uncertainty.

As I found myself wandering like a lost pilgrim inside my own thoughts, during that bike ride, I noticed little things that brought back memories. I noticed little things that felt so distant from my own world, frames of other lives that looked like they existed in a different dimension. All while enjoying how emotions were changing inside of me, a mixture of happy memories, a dreamy state, and the aftermath of a big storm. I feel like an infant that has to learn how to walk again after trying to understand myself better. But I'm discovering the joy of uncertainty and contradiction that life inevitably brings with itself.

He Speaks

By
Cecelia Replogle

There is nothing in this world that I love more than You, God
Except this and that and my sarcastic thoughts
But other than that, Lord, I am Yours!
Though sometimes in church I am totally bored
Besides that, God, I love You and only You
Yet the more words I say
The less they seem true

I guess it was easier when I was little
When the answers were simple
Every question could be answered with 'Jesus'
Story after story of how He can clean us

But I guess that's just it, God
I don't see how it's possible
That You could love someone so irresponsible

The preacher keeps saying how much You love me
But he doesn't know what I've done
Doesn't know who I am
He's only seen the lies, the scams
The smile I put on every Sunday isn't my own
It's all part of an elaborate show

To be honest, I don't know why I'm here in this empty church
Why I'm waiting for a sign to know I've been heard
I need to know You've heard me
That you're here and You're listening

But this silence is deafening
Hardening my reasoning
And increasing my questioning
Speak up, Lord, and answer my cry
Let me know there's more to life than living this lie

A moment of silence
Someone is here
Someone is listening
My old Sunday school teacher

He speaks

Have you forgotten who we serve?
Have you forgotten who you are?
Have you forgotten the King who carved out the stars?

The One who sees your brokenness
Your sarcasm and staleness
Your depression and cutting
He has declared that you are worth loving

As hard as you try, you can't hide from His love
He is bigger than your lies
Bigger than your troubles
Vaster than the sky
As much as you try
You simply can't escape it

His Word proclaims it
Neither life nor death
Nor Height nor depth
Nor anything in all creation
No sin or temptation
Can separate us from the love of God

Child, you may have forgotten God
But He has never forgotten you

He knit you together in your mother's womb
He knows your every thought
He put breath in your lungs
He turns days into months
Builds songs from silence

All He requires is your repentance

He already did the time for your sentence
Rendered Himself guilty
So you don't face judgement
Yet you stand there reluctant

Make the choice to become one
One with the Creator
One with our Maker
One with our Savior
One with the body
Because Christ came to unite His bride
But we're often stuck defending our pride
Unable to see the wonder around us

Can't you see the beauty?
The beauty of the Earth?
The beauty of the world?
The beauty our creator created
Even though we beat him with hatred
Nailed Him to a cross
Nailed Him to a tree
Those two wooden pillars
Turned the world upside-down
Yet created perfect unity

The King will return
With glory and honor
With lightning and thunder
He died for us
In whom do you trust?

As he finished, I had only one response
To open my mouth and pray honestly, for once

Have mercy on me, Lord
I've forgotten who I am
I've forgotten why I was made

Help me remember what You've done
How You sacrificed Your Son
How He bled on the cross
How He died for all of us

So have mercy on my soul
Release me from this tension
Strengthen my intentions
Let my will be Yours
Come back, ascension

Help Your people get ready
Ready to fight, ready to thrive
Ready to stand, ready to die
Equip me

Arm me with a shield of faith
The breastplate of righteousness
With the helmet of salvation
With shoes, the gospel of peace
With a sword to defend the least
The losers, the sinners, the forgetful, the distraught
Help me guide them and teach them what You taught
Give me wisdom and patience
To teach the young and old
To save the lost and ready the bold

I stopped praying
Surprised by everything that spilled from my lips
By everything I remembered
By everything subconsciously locked away in my head
And that's when I realized

I sat in a church pew every Sunday and rejected Him
But even when I didn't notice it
He was working in me

He never gave up

Little by little
Story by story
Person by person
He made His way into my life

A Note from the Poet, Cecelia Replogle

I wrote this from the perspective of a person who has lost sight about what it means to follow God. This person may be at church every week but their heart is elsewhere. Hurt by the church but reluctant to leave. I wanted to tell their story. Why are they still there? What keeps them coming back if they don't believe? Some people come on their own to church for years before they believe what is being preached.

The Sunday School Teacher answers the cry. He was listening in and spoke up. Sometimes we wait for God to speak to us or show us a sign, and He ends up speaking to us through other people. The 'He' in the title refers to God. But He chose to speak through someone else. Are you listening when He speaks?