

Light Snow Like Constellations

(A parody of A Constellation of Vital Phenomena
by Anthony Marra)

Light snow, soft, fell magically, bespeckling the shoulders of the children's woolen pajamas. The fuel from which the fire before them burned was no more than half an hour ago the threshold to their happy home. It was warm.

Hol'la looked upon what was her room, now mostly passed into holocaust. She remembered Nash'ile that day in early autumn, her hair falling from her hijab as she twirled twirled twirled in it's center, and how Mon'an'a, Nash'ile's brother, had gracefully nudged the door open enough to watch.

"Mother's whore! You blasphemy His name to allow your hair to float free! Are you a tramp, eh, like the American infidel? Eh?", he said playfully and hit her across the cheek. "Praise be to Allah that you do not wed a goat," as he spun like flowers and left.

Nash'ile held in vigor Hol'la's ballerina figurine, brought for her by her great aunt Totissii.

Now melted that figurine. To Hol'la, it was like a lollypop she once saw in the September, 2002 issue of People magazine. She thought, "What would it be like to finish something like that?"

Anmed felt tears approach, but with much effort, forced them asunder. "I cannot cry. Not now. Hol'la will see. She will see and cry, and crying is like the plague. A plague that spreads and surfs and shackles. Soon the tears will flow like the Volga, down our cheeks and that..." A shutter overcame him. "That will be our death."

Anmed was overcome with the need to weep. Like nails twisting into rotten planks, he repressed the feeling and overcame. "Hol'la will see. I cannot cry. If I weep, she will weep, and..." Mindlessly, Anmed had begun scratching his balls.

"This clears my mind! I will remember! Those things that come upon me, those moments where life and death lie like the moment of conception, in those times I will do that which comforts me. And remember to verify that no one can see."

"No one," he said out loud.

Sunup stared blankly at the roof above her. The missing fixture left the blazing-forth of a light bulb laid bare. A moth approach, missed once, circled around, and slammed, with all her earth mass, into its luminance. Sunup thought, "How interesting."

She was so riddled with cancerous lumps that her face had become unrecognizable to her Alzheimer's laden husband, who had to be put down. Now she was free to fight this thing. "I shall win this fight!" she thought.

Anmed entered. He had worked for the hospital for years now. It was his great aunt, Totissii who had gotten him the position, a real boon for Anmed, since he was sure his home was going to be incinerated. Perhaps it already had been. At home, Yo'ddle...Father, had been disgraced for drinking hair-brush cleanser from the boutique. Not only had Father fallen to the vice of alcohol, but he had been found inside a boutique.

But the disgrace was not going to weigh on Anmed. He had read Tolstoy and was going to become a great writer.

"Sister Sunup. Your cancer treatment is done."

"Good, trivial goon."

"Sister Sunup, you need not disparage me so."

"Fine. You are right Brother Anmed. The roundness of your belly, it's sheer girth, made my mind wander. You are fat."

"Why...?"

"And your teeth are yellow. You're a complete buffoon. There is no purpose to the space you take up. Plus, you're dumb."

"You know, someday..."

"Unclean! Vile, bile-infested, haggis-feast. Oh, you know I'm just kidding."

Anmed turned his back and put his hand down his pants.

Not-sobbing, Anmed replied, "I know."

"Flatulence!"

Tolstoy walked. He was almost to his blessed threshold, his home, the place where he could write such classics as War and Peace and Anna Karenina. But Tolstoy was not happy. He had been sent to the store with only three items to obtain, and still he had forgotten the butter.

"Butter," he thought.

"Butter," said Anmed.

"Wouldn't do us much good," replied Hol'la. "Hey look. A dead dog."

This dog was dead. Deader than a dog. What does it mean to be deader than a dog? Nothing, because the phrase is "Deader than a doornail." What does it mean to be deader than a doornail? Nothing, because they don't use that phrase in Chechnya.

There was no doubt, however, that the dog was dead. Anmed said, "That's nothing like us. Nothing," and he tried not to cry. The two moved along in high spirits. The dog thought, "You'll see soon enough," which was strange because it really was dead.

Tolstoy cringed as he opened the front door. Misses Tolstoy was not going to be happy.

"Just a little scratch and it's all ok," Anmed thought as he put in the needle. "I'm going to beat this thing, just watch."

"You're such a peanut-head," she said out-loud.

"Months left, if not days."

"A lollypop like that would take that long to finish." But that wasn't her. It was him, knowing, within his very soul, that the dog was nothing like them. Not now, unless he couldn't hold back the...

"Tears. Real tears, Sophia."

"It's hard to eat butter without at least bread," as she turned over flavors in her head.

"It's like a cancer, sister, like the ones I treated or am going to treat." He couldn't get the fear out of his head.

"He has lost it," she thought. "It'll be ok," she said by way to comfort.

"I'm still ok. We'll get through this. Just...don't cry."

"I won't," Hol'la said, imagining their smell.

In the hospital, Sunup felt cold. Anmed was a complete loser, and she couldn't separate from truth. So she would light a fire. The fire would burn and her fear would be ameliorated. But in the cold, where Anmed and his sister found themselves, a fire was not escape, it was survival. No firewood meant Hol'la would be sad. The thought infuriated him. "We will unite!" he thought, as he reached for potentially not-soaked underbrush. His hand was placed on the savior, a foot-long piece of bark that had escaped the deadly snow. "I've got it!" he exclaimed towards Hol'la's ear, but then he looked down at the wood and wept. There, like a mystical embellishment, the stick took form. It was a leg. It was her leg.

Chapter two will be set in 1978