

- A Tale of Two Magicians -

He is an older man with wisps of wire grey hair, hunched shoulders and a crooked smile. He stands slumped near an occupied bench waiting in line. A long winding line filled with the miserable. He is not.

He hums a tune reminding him of someone he no longer knew.

A picture in his mind.

*Waves crash against crumbling rock.
She stands barefoot, in saturated frost, her soaked feet drifting,
dancing on the edge of a cliff oblivious to the thousand foot drop
into crashing seas and jagged rocks below.
She would not fall. She could not fall. She did not swim, but she
loved the ocean, the waves, the wind and the salt in the air.
She tastes the top of her lip as she smiles...*

I do remember when life was simpler.

Ben rubs his chin.

Let me tell you a story.

I have heard this one.

He is relaxed, stretching out among the crowd. His black boots will often trip people. His arms draped on either side make claim of the entire- bench.

Can I sit here?

She was an old woman with an arched back.

Nope.

She turns away in disappointment feeling a little insulted.

She will get over it.

Why don't you sit down, Ben.

No, really I'm fine. Don't want to lose my place in line.

What are we here for?

I need to.....

Ben scratches his head.

I seem to have forgotten where we are. His laughter is subtle.

I wont tell you.

No, I imagine so.

Shall we go?

I don't want to lose my place.

They leave anyway.

Ben and Jimmy stroll alongside one another on a busy city street. It is a muddled commute on an early evening. Ben struggles to keep up. His companion struts, shoulders back head held high. He swats at a pigeon posted up on a parking meter, striking the bird with an open hand, feathers fly and it quickly takes flight.

Oops, I didn't think I would hit it.

That wasn't very nice. You are mean spirited.

Really I'm not. The bird was slow and dim witted.

Let's imagine then- you were able to fly... loft into the air and soar above the clouds and these ugly buildings that blot out the sun.

Ben- You can fly. You have only forgotten how.
Watch me.

He does so with ease.

In a moment Jimmy elevates above the sidewalk floating alongside the crooked old man. He holds his arms out to one side feeling the cool breeze brush against his palms.

Don't remember do you?

People are watching.

Let them.

He pirouettes around him.

Please don't draw so much attention to us.

No Ben, they are done doing that. They haven't done that for years.

I want to be home. You really do bring out the worst in me.

I'm the best of you. Now why not join me.

He places his palms toward the ground raises his eyes to the sun.

Ben watches as he is now elevated above him once again dancing on an imaginary floor.

We're here. Come down from there.

He floats down slowly. Lightly taps his toes to the the ground. The sand grinds beneath his leather soles.

You have taken all the joy out of living.

No, no I'm very happy.

Ben fumbles with the screen door of a small house nestled between two skyscrapers. It's extremely out of place. An old cottage with a stone shingled flat roof and a balcony overlooking the sidewalk.

He opens the door and they step inside.

The lights flicker to a warm glow and a ceiling fan begins to spin from a stand still.

Not on command but instinctively as though the fan knew its purpose. The burners on the stove ignite in the same way. Ben places a kettle on the burner.

Coffee or Tea? A hot toddy, maybe.

No Ben.

You seem to think because I don't constantly flaunt our gifts, I won't use them. I choose not to. I enjoy walking and the people you rudely disregard. We are not any better than any one of them.

They are only indifferent.

We are better. We are gifted.

I am. You are a shell of what you're supposed to be.

I am a shell for good reason, our gifts. The world is no longer ready for us. It's too dangerous these days. So much fear and hatred is so easily inspired.

Hmmm in what way?

Do they believe in magic?

I do.

Most of them do not. When I choose to hide my gifts, it's not for me. I don't do it for me, but for them. If I were to show them you see. They would cease to believe.

In magic?

In everything. They would simply believe once more they were being tricked. They don't take to it. In fact some become angry. We must not flaunt our gifts.

The kettle floats across the room and fills a cup with boiling water.

Only in private.

What a dirty trick you play.

At night it is quiet on the balcony where they sit. Jimmy tosses flame in the air with no concern of an audience. The warm light presents a glow to their faces. He folds the flame in his fingers and lets it drip on his shoes.

I'm not the least bit concerned by opinions and the thoughts of the less fortunate.

What would they do?

Marvel at it.

Fear it, they would. They will.

Once again you see the world as an adversary.

We should do it then.

Do what?

Show them Ben. Show them what they should see. Show a child a magical horse with wings, they could ride.

A unicorn.

Or a horn, sure.

In the morning we will, we will set out and find one.

And do what?

Let them see. Let them know what the world hides from them. Remove the blinds and intimidation children are so often fooled by. It's such a shame.

If we do this, you have to promise-

I do. Yes. You'll consider it then.

I'm out of practice.

Oh come on Ben. You never lose it. Not once you know. It's second nature.

Promise you won't take it too far. If word got out. If we were exposed to the wrong sort of people, like authorities or the one percent who control everything it would be madness.

The one percent... we don't show them. We could never. The lies, the lies, the lies. It would expose them for sure.

Of course it would. So why show one child?

Because children tell stories anyway. No one believes a child. Our secret would be safe and we could share it.

Magic should be shared Ben. That's why you are so , what you are, miserable and depressed. The murk is all over you.

I'm not-

A deal then.

Yes. I'll think on it. I'll consider it. Strongly, take it into consideration.

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A warming glow from the fire fills the room. The soft breeze of an open window brushes the hair back on his head, revealing his many wrinkled face and spotted flaking skin. Ben does look tired, even when he sleeps. His eyes sunken his cheeks shallow. He snores loudly.

Jimmy is seated practicing elevation. A silver coin flutters around the room like a moth toward a burning lantern looking for a place to land. Jimmy orchestrates the dance flicking his hands ever so gently to make the coin dance and twirl. He is intent and inspired, smiling to himself each time the coin takes a turn or drop but does not hit the floor. He brings it closer and holds it before him just above his brow and watches the continuous spin. He catches it with a quick grasp and frozen fist. He squeezes tightly until a liquid metal drips from his fingers. He watches the liquified silver roll across the floor spreading in tendrils over through the floor boards.

His focus changes and pulls the silver back together, back to a coin, floating in the air.

Jimmy?

- A Choice is made -

Ben is awake. He rolls to his feet, still hunched. He peers from a tilted brow.

Is it morning?

No.

Is it late?

It is not yet sunrise.

You've thought this through? I was hoping it would blow over.

You're afraid Ben.

No, not afraid. It's time I'd say. I think you're right about it all, about magic about what they see and fear and who we are, and about children.

That they would accept us?

Yes. But, we have to be careful-

We are always careful Ben. It's time to share with the world what gifts we have to reveal. It's way past time to be fearful if at all. Tell me, you know I speak the truth. Besides, if it is only children we share with- well then, it's all stories and imagination. No matter then.

Only children.

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A city park at sunrise. Ben climbs the hill slowly. His steps labored, his breathing harboring effort.

Ben does not appear as the kind gentle old man he should be.

He lacks concern for what he wears and what he says or how he presents himself to the world, not always welcome. His long dark wool coat is pulled tightly together. His rough and calloused hands clutch the lapel.

Jimmy, is beside him with a spring in his step, he frowns.

What?

You know this is a playground. We are here to earn trust.

You're terrible. You look as though you crawled out from behind an alley dumpster.

What would you have me do?

Just a little fix here or there. May I?

Jimmy creates a soft glow of an aura around him.

Don't you dare. I won't use magic to change who I am.

Who you are , is feeling sorry for yourself and you want everyone to know.

Stop!

Ben grabs Jimmy's shoulder.

There she is!

It's as if inspiration has struck, an answer to a long forgotten dream reemerges in his eyes. Ben is wrought with anticipation.

A girl, light on her feet , charm and wonder in her eyes.

On the playground she should see , see magic.

She reminds him of her. All the small traits a child carries. The lift in her walk. The charm in her smile. Her curiosity, abrupt. Her hair is a warm glow of red and gold flowing freely around her face. Soft as the touch of a feather grazing her cheek.

Yes, amazing she should see magic. She deserves to see.

But we keep our secret as we have said. Only children can see.
Only the spell, not what it takes to create such a spell. we should
make it so only they can see with a spell

You mean teach them.

Yes of course.

She hops onto the swing set. The rusted gently swinging chains over
a sand pit are old and brown. They stain her hands.

She kicks off her sandals into the air and they land at Ben's feet.

Ben smiles as he picks them up.

The girl drags her feet and stops swinging.