

Where The Sparrows Fly

-A Fictional Narrative by Adiba Pionty-

The sun was preparing itself to sink below the horizon. The sky, dull blue from the earlier rain and clouds, was turning into soft colors of pink, orange and yellow. Seagulls were now flying above the lake water, searching for some late-night fish. The setting sun made the birds' feathers glow. The scent of salt from the lake filled the air. Everything was quiet.

Everything, except for the storm in my mind.

One moment, I was celebrating my ninth birthday, the next, I was on my way to the first day of high school. Time always flies by. And now, instead of having barbeque night with my dad in our weekend cabin, I'm here.

The night when I got that phone call on my way home from school will stay etched in my head. That very night, my heart shattered as my hope crumbled from hearing those words fall from the doctor's mouth.

"I'm sorry. We have tried our best, but...the crash was too strong for his body to handle..."

Everything else becomes a blur, muffled ringing in my ears. I was told by Uncle Reggie that I went numb and my body went into shock.

Papa is gone. No laughs. No humorless dad jokes. No special homemade recipes.

The cabin feels so...empty. Hollow. It gives me chills whenever I enter it.

I walked down that old dock, and sat down at the edge. Letting my mind drift as I stared across the lake. The massive willow tree stood on the far bank.

That tree had always been a witness of my childhood. Climbing its branches, jumping into the lake for swims, and even camping out under its shade. And I'm sure most of my pictures had that very same tree in it.

I got up and turned around. It took about five minutes to get to the other side of the lake. And once I arrived, I went up to that willow tree and stood in front of it.

The gentle breeze flew by, making the long leaves of the willow tree sway in place. A few birds were nearby, landing on the tree's high branches and chirping away. They hopped from one branch to another, perhaps looking for food, or some twigs to make their homes.

Home. What's home without the scent of Sunday barbecues, watching late soccer matches on the TV with his homemade snacks, or karaoke nights...?

I laid back against the tree and sank to my knees, letting myself fall. The willow tree behind me, its strong, rough trunk holding me up, and the view of the lake in the front. The hush of the water and its salty scent calmed me.

The chirping of a sparrow pulled me from my thoughts. Its little beady black eyes searching the ground. It picked up a small shiny rock with its little feet and flapped its wings, trying to carry it. But it was too heavy for the tiny bird. After a few more attempts, the bird let go of the rock and flew away to its tree branch.

Letting go—releasing the things I cling to the most.

It's so hard to do.

That little sparrow chirped from its spot, summoning a few more of its kind. Their feathered wings flapping about, making a dance to beckon the little bird to fly with them. It had taken the invitation, hopping off the branch and flying with them up in the pink sky.

From under the willow branches, I watched as their little figures flew into the horizon. A chill went down my spine as I got a sense of déjà vu. I can almost feel his presence near me.

He had me on his shoulders, his hands holding my small ones to keep me steady. He was wearing his favorite red flannel sweater. I could always tell that whenever he wore that sweater, he was going to take me to see birds, how he always lit up at the topic. He would take me to the bird aviary and point out different facts about each feathered creature. He would show me feathers and mimic their bird calls, which I would either look up at him in awe or in a fit of giggles at how ridiculous it sounds.

He pointed up at the pink sky, *“Look, little flower, there’s some sparrows.”*

Younger me would look up in awe at the little brown birds as they did their dance in the wind. *“Wow! Can I fly like them too, Papa?”* I asked excitedly.

He let out a deep laugh, then he lifted me from his shoulders and gently tossed my little body into the air. I squealed and laughed, asking him to toss me again and again. The warm lighting from the settling sun reflecting onto the gentle ripples of the lake’s water makes the scene feel all so magical.

After a while, we sat down at a willow tree, leaning back at its trunk. Papa then looked down and plucked a bright purple petaled flower. *“Do you know what these flowers are called, little flower?”*

I shook my head, *“No, what are they called?”*

He gently tucked the flower in the hair as he smiled, his eye dimples visible as he crinkled his eyes, which always revealed his emotions, “They’re called violets. They have the same name as you, Violet.”

I looked down at the flowers surrounding the willow tree. Violets, their brightly colored petals swaying in the gentle breeze. I gently plucked one up and tucked into my hair, then another. I looked up at the sun, which had now completely set, the pink sky now turned into dark ink, displaying stars.

I gave a small smile at the scene. It was bittersweet, but there is a sense of comfort in this place. With the willow tree, the setting sun and the gentle hush of the lake, the little sparrows that live and fly without worry. Some of my papa’s last words stuck with me.

“I hope you’ll learn how to fly like the sparrows, little flower.”

Maybe one day I will soar like them, Papa.

Maybe one day.