

A Story for Alex, Or For Me

Alisha Ragon

It was the whoring hour.

Ready the sheets and the lingerie.

Ready the moans and the delicious delights to be discovered.

Ready the bodies wanting and hungry.

Ready the minds, sore for distraction, aching for bliss.

Slowly the sliding of cloth, flesh venturing out into the open air

Hands gliding over the landscape of his torso; breath breaking from composure to ecstasy

A landscape not her own. Breath not meant to be broken.

Rein it in.

She snapped back up to the professor who now had drawn the attention of the whole class in her direction.

“Can you repeat the question?” She ventured to ask, her eyes were still starry from her thought voyage.

Someone behind her giggled, little whispers spread through the students. In the eyes of the teacher who stood so stoically she saw both annoyance, and some strange twinge of compassion.

“In the essay, the author’s word choice is irregular. I asked what he meant by his description of the fruit tree.” The professor skimmed over her pupils, and silence spread through the room. “I am interested in where your mind wondered, seeing as we have heard so many superficial accounts of his hunger.” A small chuckle masked itself as a twitch in the corner of the professor’s mouth.

Eyes staying calm, the student replied. “He talks about the fruit tree in relation to his desire. He is obviously admitting something much deeper than hunger. He sees the other man tending to the tree, taking the fruits from the branches. He acknowledges the tree is likely the property of the man or gardener, what have you. But there is lust. He doesn’t talk about the smell of the fruit, or the sweet taste he anticipates. He talks about his appetite, the plump skin of the fruit. The color in the fruit isn’t so much appealing to his desire for food, but it epitomizes the tree blushing in response to him.” Snickers from the back of the class.

“You’re suggesting the author has an erotic fascination with a fruit tree?” A beefy student from behind added, raising his thick voice into an overzealous cackle.

“I’m suggesting the author is the other woman,” the roomful of laughter slowed to a stop.

“Fascinated by the promise of fulfillment in something belonging to someone else. So infatuated with the object of his desire he is able to see the evidence of mutual desire within

them. He sees the gardener plucking the fruit heedlessly, taking for granted the bucket of ripe fruit before him." Her eyes shifted to the floorboards of the classroom. "The tree would so rejoice in his soft and caring touch that the fruit would slip effortlessly into his hands. Instead of force, or obligation, the lover would allow the fruit to fall. It would mean so much to him, too much. But no matter how much the tree does or doesn't reciprocate it is landlocked to the gardener."

The teacher stares down at the girl, waiting for the resolution. "Even the guilt can't keep them from sharing each other's fruit..." A tear rolled slowly down the girl's cheek. The compassion lingered only a half second longer on the teacher's face before she moved on. "Thank you, it was a refreshing view."

The rest of the lesson was inconsequential. The girl wasn't there. She was in the orchard; she was in the man's head.

After class she wasn't concerned about speed heading out of the class. She waited for the others to race each other out of the room before leaving her chair.

The story was pretty, but inaccurate.

She walked through the darkening evening to her dorm.

It wasn't the man who was the other woman, but the tree.

The man had in his hand a lunchbox. It was her desire which had drawn him in so. She had laid out her fruits in the best hues of light to catch his eye. She had hired the gardener to stir up the jealousy in him. When finally he outstretched his hand to inquire of the fruit, she dropped all her fruits like the second skin, the cloth in piles by the foot side of his bed. Piles of fruit for the taking, he could take his pick. The hunger in her was deeper. Her roots couldn't reach deep enough. Her fruits were too sweet, she had wasted her water. While he might say he preferred her sweet taste to that of the pre-ordained lunch, he would go back to it later. There was too much of it available, and it wouldn't turn bitter. When her leaves changed color, the wind blew her away.

Step by step through the dark, the girl forged the images into some recess in her mind. Almost home. Almost gone. All the water was used up, her fruit spoiled.

Stupid little stories spinning into sensuality in her slutty state. The heat of walking between her legs made the hair on her neck stand on end. She enjoyed sun dried raisins. He said he still craved her. But what cornerstone was ever made of words? She said she didn't mind. Static electricity built up inside her when she entered the dorm: full to the brim with her tight collared roommate.

The metaphors were getting old. The tree was long gone.

The gardener retired, and had children of his own.

No gravestone for the homeless, uprooted tree.

No sweet Sunday treat for the man.

She could pretend.

She could savor the thought of digging in for water and sending fruit along the distance.
But the landscape was not hers.
Her breath would break all its own.
She would lay awake and wonder.
Ready the noose, ready the knife, ready seduction, the pain, and strife.
Ready the whoring, and this hour of bliss
Ready your snaky soul, you can do only this.
Ready the words you so desperately mean,
Ready the fire to make yourself steam.
Ready the bodies, the minds, the lovers.
Get ready as each mind fucks the other.
They would think of times future and past.
The times they had together, things they knew wouldn't last.
But it was just a story in a class.
No more beginnings.
Rein it in.
Apologies for poisoning, and for enjoying the heat between the sheets
It is the more she will never know, she thinks before turning to sleep.

Alisha Ragon is a junior at Dominican University studying dance with a minor in English. She has interests from dance to writing, and knitting to science. She has been exploring these interests through reading and writing since she was a little girl, and will continue to do so for as long as she is able.