Rhythms 2008

In An Airplane. Over A Sea.

by Joseph Iaia

I really couldn't tell you.
And no one understands it either.
Moments where you chew on your heart, spit out blood, and the Bible is just a book. Where all things are held constant and the sounds that animals make while fighting are just noises and not feelings. No one could tell you. I don't understand it either. Why they happen.

Could you tell me?

I keep having dreams you know. Dreams about when moments like that happened a lot, like right before we had sex for the first time. Those are my dreams. Those days where I knew I was going to get it from you, I knew that I was going to be a space in between your legs, and that, that feeling of invincibility, that was better than being inside of you.

But that was all it took with you. Which makes you nothing special. Nothing special, with your new hair cut, nothing special, with the new apartment that makes you feel like we are different now even though we always have been, nothing special, with your unending enlightenment over shit that doesn’t matter like 'really, what kind of music does They Might Be Giants play?'.

Nothing, special.

Last night I didn’t have one of those dreams. Last night, for the first time since I’ve started dreaming, I slept.

Maybe it was the traveling, the lack of eating, the constant need to wonder if I’m going to make that connecting flight out of my life and into the next one that by rights is mine for the taking. Yeah, it might have been that, and almost none of me wants it to be that way, and almost all of me knows that that isn’t why I can close my eyes and wake up knowing I’ve rested my living-weary bones.

88 - Short Stories
So I tell myself the truth.
The reason my problems (you) are solved are because of two things, two (recent) changes.

The first way I have figured out how to save my own self is, I cry at least two times a day for superficial reasons. The door to the refrigerator was hard to open, cry, the D-string on my guitar is out of tune, cry. Every one wants to be more emotional than they have to, and we are angry at ourselves for not being like those shining, beautiful stars on that wonderful silver screen. Why can’t our lives be episodic and tearful, meaningful and riddled with metaphors? So we wait and wait for something bad to happen, and when it does we let out all of that anger and all of those moments we have kept cryogenically frozen inside of our TV sets and all of those tears we never let go and before you know it, leaving the bathroom door open while you piss has metamorphosized into a divorce case and wishing you got that pre-nuptial. So, the way I see it is, the more I cry, the happier I am. If we don’t cry, we laugh, and when we don’t laugh, we cry, and they are both done at the wrong time, so I have taken to reversing everything I do. When I should fall into love, I fall into dislike, and when I should laugh at your stupid anecdotes I am easily offended. It makes sense. I promise you.

But that wouldn’t have worked by itself. The other way I solved my problems is yesterday.

Detroit was unusually suburban. I was just expecting something bigger. But instead I saw, through that window that doesn’t even feel like glass, on that plane that looks like a giant Lexapro, this skeleton. A skeleton of red-shingled houses with pools and dogs and boys and girls and soccer balls and drum sets and mothers and fathers and problems and school grades and ‘why can’t my friend come overs’ and just all of this suburban sprawl.

Watching the lives being lived next to me was a stranger, and it could have been you I guess but thank chance for it not
being you.

Since it is rude to travel next to a stranger (it’s a universal law, you know), I introduced myself.

Hi I am. Hi I am.

And it was lovely. And life went on. And this stranger, this female of beautiful proportions, this hater of Detroit, this enjoyer of plane rides, she keeps talking. About trips with her mother, about her small dog, about things that I really didn’t care about.

“You know I really don’t care about any of this shit you’re telling me.”

“Who would?”

“I really don’t know.”

“Well that’s what I’m trying to find out.”

“You know, you really just don’t know when to take a hint, do you?”

“Oh no, I’ve gathered that you don’t want to speak to me at all, and that’s fine, unfortunately, I am not in the interest of making you happy, and what I want right now is to talk with someone. And here you come, or actually, not really, you’re just sitting there, but either way, here you are, and you look ripe for the talking to.”

“So, in this metaphor I am a fruit.”

“The metaphor isn’t what’s important.”

“Whatever.”

And this girl, her name was Meghan, like Megan, but with an H(I never understood the H), she kept on talking to me. Not one bit of what she had to say was compelling. To me, she sounded like an advertisement for a product called “You don’t give a shit about this product”.

The lights in the plane went out in between her 485th and her 486th sentence, and at that time, the lights below us, those wonderful Arizona lights went on and we saw under us a city in those lights. A city that did not exist, because normally, it would just be a few houses and roads, like Detroit, like every
other place America has come to love and hate.
“"I think I can stop talking now.”
"That would be a delightful idea.”
“"I think so too.”
“Hey.”
“Yeah?”
“I’m going to lay my head on you, and even though we are so close and cannot touch because we are so far, I’m going to put as much of myself on as much of you as possible. I just love touching something real when I sleep.”
“"That’s stupid.”
“You’re stupid. Feeling someone else’s skin is such reassurance. Especially when you fall asleep. You know that there is warmth in something real, and that comfort doesn’t rely on the grace of the wind. It takes more than just the weather or chance to make us feel safe. Skin is security.”
“Sure.”
“You’re stupid.”
“Irritable.”
“Stupid.”
“Stupid.”
And so it went that Meghan put her head against my shoulder. And so it went that my arm went around her tiny neck, and so it went that everything made sense to me. That my heart rose up from its decrepit sarcophagus and pulsated in my lungs so that I was breathing blood and mixed feelings.
When we woke up there were still lights outside but not inside the plane. And under us was a sea of black and forest green. When we woke up we were tangled together in sweat and confusion and limbs. And because of Meghan and her falling asleep all over me, I have felt my heart in my mouth again. Thanks to her in all of her strange glory, I know what a left ventricle tastes like.
Thanks to her and myself, my problems(you were my problems)are solved(you are now resolution).
And I realized something.

We spend most of our lives trying to figure out what keeps us alive and by the time we die we have just begun to learn

that life is just tiny moments (grains of sand moments) AND

any of those moments, any of them… you will know them feel them taste them want more of them

those are the moments where you lose your breath long enough to feel the thrill of it

those are the moments where you remember, just in time, how to continue breathing

those are the moments where all you can hear is nothing and the nothing is more than everything

those are the moments where everyone is so far away and remote and barren and yet they are inside of you, so close, violating you and you love it all.

This is why we have all chosen to continue living.

92 - Short Stories
So, it just happened Claire, that I managed to find a fleeting spot of perfection and it also just happened that that moment in time saved me for a while. For now, I am just alright, and just alright, it sounds alright to me. It just so happens that when I come back from where I am (and no, you’ll never find out) I will not call. I will not tell you what happened. With anything. Even if nothing happens here. It also just so happens that this might make you miserable, but it might just save you as well.

And this whole ‘moving on’, it might just be the safety net we’ve all been looking for. This whole ‘letting go’, it might just save our lives. We are stubborn people, Claire, we are stubborn people, and we say our lives don’t need saving, and maybe they don’t.

But then again, who really knows when they are going to die?