

I was never there.

He wanted to go back to the beach one more time. He thought that would help him feel closer to her again. It wouldn't. So he didn't go because he couldn't walk that far. He thought about going back to work. Maybe tailoring one more suit for a rich man would give him some sort of self-fulfillment. It wouldn't. It would only make him more tired.

So instead of trying to do the things he couldn't, he sat in a rocking chair by the glass panes of his front window, watching people go by. He would sit there for hours. I can never tell if he was actually looking at the movement and energy of the outside world or if he was lost in thought, inside an empty void of imagination. He used to yell at the milkman and the paperboy. He said they disturbed his peace. I knew that was a lie. He hadn't felt peace since 1939.

Right after her death, he'd sit by the cliffs and sulk. He thought about jumping right off the rim, just as she did. I watched him ponder his worth. He never went through with it though. I don't know why he didn't. He was miserable, yet his feet never left the safety of the cliff's edge.

Back then, he was young. Handsome, I guess. Happy, for sure. But after everything, his beauty fell apart. Sixty years later, he still can't breathe the same peace he did back in 1939.

I think he knew I was there. All this time.

I don't know if he knew it was me.

But I was watching him.

Even though he thought I was gone.

I never left.

He wouldn't look at me but he'd talk to me.

"To be loved is perhaps the closest anyone can get to being immortal in this life.

You're just a cat. A small black cat. But still, have you reached fulfillment?"

Then he'd laugh.

Then cough.

And he wouldn't talk to me.

Not for years.

But one day, I sat closer than usual. Instead of sitting in a bush, I sat on the dirt path next to him. Instead of sitting on the porch, I sat in the window he always looked out from. He noticed this.

Because one day, there was a curtain over the window and there were rocks on the path so I could not step on them.

I noticed.

So I decided to sit in the next window. And on the other side of the dirt path.

Soon after, there was a shade in front of that window too, and there was water on the path so I could not sit.

But I waited for the water to dry and I climbed to a higher window.

He noticed.

So he tied a dog to the tree next to the path and he put curtains on the higher window.

I did not give up.

I befriended the dog and climbed to a higher window, the highest in the house.

I fell from that window. I broke my leg. I was lying on the ground in front of his porch. I couldn't move. I didn't move. And not until the sun began to set did someone notice me. There was a creak of a door, then footsteps across the porch.

And there was the old man staring down at me, with bright blue eyes.

"Look what you've done now, cat. Was it worth it?"

I didn't reply to him but if I could, I'd tell him it was.

He picked me up and brought me inside. He bandaged my leg, shaky old fingers wrapping my black paw in white gauze. Then he put me back outside on his porch.

I waited.

And waited.

Until the moon rose and the owls sang, I waited.

He opened his front door, and he let me in.

I lay on the stool next to his bed while the old man slept.

And in the early morning, when the sun shone through the white curtains, and the birds chirped their hellos, I waited for him to wake.

He did not. He wouldn't.

He was finally breathing peacefully.