Pursuit of Color

1,292 Words

Imogene woke up. Her room looked dreary and beige; the only light was coming from her nightlight that would flicker on and off throughout the night. She went downstairs and poured herself a bowl of cereal. She stared down at little, tan, bland-flavored loops swimming in milk. She took a bite and looked up at the cereal box. First, she noticed the nutrition label. It was black and white, and didn’t hold any information that Imogene cared about. Then, her eyes tracked along to the game printed on the back of the box. The instructions for the game read “Find the colors.” Maybe anyone else would’ve completely overlooked this set of words and found their way back to the nutrition label, but this piqued Imogene’s interest. Something about the completely meaningless yet so powerful nature of the sentence interested her. “Find the colors,” she repeated to herself.

*Above Imogene hung a chandelier. She looked up at it; it flickered with a fluorescent glow a few times.*

Imogene spent most of her time inside her imagination. Her imagination held comfort, familiarity, and life. She could escape there whenever she pleased. Reality on the other hand, was dull. All the color had been sucked out of reality by the time she turned nine. She had gotten used to this lack of color, but she never forgot what the color had felt like when it was still there.

“Find the colors,” she repeated once more. In her imagination, she was welcomed by a swarm of butterflies that helped to take some of the heaviness off of her heart. A memory greeted her with warm, big, open arms– she was around five years old. Her hands and tongue were stained blue, and the smell of fresh berries wafted through the air. She was in an orchard with her family, her belly was full of blueberries, and she was surrounded by vines with color practically dancing up them. This memory sat in her head for a moment, and then it drifted away, as all memories must do. “Wow,” she thought to herself, “there was so much color.” But she knew this color could only exist inside her imagination. No one can live inside a memory, after all.

*She took another bite of her cereal; it was a bit soggy now.*

She decided to make her way to another section of her imagination. This section was a blank canvas dedicated completely to dreaming up what the future might look like. It had great big whiteboards where she could draw out scenarios; some were probable, most were obscure, improbable, and entirely irrational. “Maybe that’s where all the color went,” she wondered.

She was met by enormous whiteboards stretching in every direction. She picked up a black marker and began drawing a scenario. She was standing on the edge of a cliff, and below her there were glowing blue waters, crashing into sunbathing rocks. She felt the cool ocean breeze whisping across her face. She held onto this feeling for a moment, then reached for a nearby cloth and erased the vision. “It was colorful,” she whispered to herself, “but it’s impossible to take color from the future.” After all, no one can live in the future.

*She got up from the table and went to sit in a well-loved, comfy chair that was sprinkled with a faded pattern of roses. Imogene sank into this chair. It was soft to the touch and its arms wrapped around her like a hug.*

Buried deep in Imogene’s imagination was a section of her mind that she didn’t like. This section held only darkness. When she went there, it felt like someone was pumping her heart full of black smog and was squeezing it as hard as they could to try to stop it from beating. In this part of her mind, trapped inside an old, rusted cage, lived a monster– his name was Mori. He was a dark figure made up of sadness, anger, and disappointment in the world. He didn’t have a face, but sometimes, she could see the black vortexes that made up his eyes. Imogene hated going to see Mori, but she had nowhere else to look. “How could there ever be color in such a dark place?” She grumbled. “This is ridiculous.” But nonetheless, she trekked down the dark, ill-lit road leading to Mori’s cage. “Hello Mori,” Imogene said in a shaky voice. Mori stood with a curved back and long, blackened fingers that wrapped around the cold, metal bars of his cage. Smog floated through the air, making it hard for Imogene to breathe.

*This rose-covered chair faced a window. Imogene reached for the handle and jerked open the glass. She took in the air and looked out. There was a robin perfectly perched on a tree branch.*

“Mori,” she began, “where did all the color go?” Tears began to fall down her rosy cheeks. She missed the color so dearly. She was coming to the conclusion that she would never get to feel or even see the color again. Her tears felt warm as they dripped off of her chin.

*The robin flew from its branch.*

“My child,” Mori spoke in a tone that softened his deep, gruff voice, “the color has never left, you have just been too afraid to look at it. Sometimes, colors swirl and mush together so much that they create darkness. This darkness terrifies you, so you got rid of everything in your life that could ever bring you to it. When you hid from the darkness, you hid from the color along with it.” Imogene quivered at those words. She had been searching for this color everywhere, but it had been there all along. She just decided to stop seeing it.

*Imogene watched the robin. Its back had been turned to her as it flew. But the breeze gently carried its wings enough to reveal to her its burnt-orange underbelly. It flew to a new tree. This tree was lush with autumn-colored leaves that rustled with each gust of wind.*

Imogene stared intently into Mori’s eyes. They had a slight sparkle about them that she had never seen before. She looked down at her feet. The ground below her began to rumble with a drum-like rhythm. Leaves left their branches and danced through the air. Dark clouds parted and made way for a sky, filled with ballerina pink clouds that drifted above. Memories rushed through her mind and blended together on the blank whiteboards of the future. Mori loosened his grip around the metal bars of his cage, and his expression got soft. And he faded, peacefully, into dust, to get carried away by the wind.

*Imogene opened her eyes, and traced her finger along one of the roses she was sitting on. It was a muted red outlined in black. She walked outside and stood on her dust-covered front porch. A ladybug flew up to Imogene and landed on her shoulder. It wore a shiny coat of red that was spotted with shiny black pearls. She looked out in front of her. The robin she had seen was sitting inside a birdfeeder. Its color was striking. It had an orange breast, perfectly complemented by its black, sleek, feathered body.*

She found the color. It was there all along. She was just afraid to look at it because it was surrounded by darkness. Her imagination bloomed like a lily turning outwards toward the sun. The color in her mind became oil pastels on a canvas and blended with the world around her.

*She looked around, and took in a reality full of color.*