

The Prequel

Tuesday, July 30th, 2010. 10:44 PM. A small, gunmetal Toyota painted with black scratch marks creaks into an off-white driveway. The Toyota halts in front of the garage door, the front lights reflecting off the metal, revealing the man inside. The man appeared to be in his mid-sixties, with strong gray hair and wrinkles seeping with wisdom. He wore a humongous tie and suit that contrasted delightfully with his average frame. He exited the Toyota with his keys in his left pocket and in his right hand a suitcase that looked darker than the empty sky. What was particularly interesting about the suitcase was that it looked exactly like the ones portrayed in the movies. He looked like an infant wearing adult clothing for a photoshoot.

When he opened the front door he was greeted by a resounding echo of obnoxiously loud laughter coming from the living room. Without removing his shoes he took moderate steps following the mouth-watering scent of broccoli, lemon, and steak. The food was on a table just a few steps away from the sink where a woman was standing. On her hands were a pair of blotched gloves that formed a gradient of brightness, darker and wrinklier the further away it was from the sink. As she moved with graceful stutters, she cycled the dishes in and out of the giant pool of bubbles, each coming out with impeccable polish.

The counter on which the sink resided was fantastically spotless white marble. On this counter was a variety of antiques: a sleek Chinese vase depicting an ocean blue dragon swimming in the clouds purchased from a garage sale, a gramophone with an aged bronze-gold finish, and a tiny framed photo of the man and the woman. At just a glance one could only imagine that this photo was taken many decades ago. In that photo, the man and woman looked to be the perfect encapsulation of prom king and queen in the 70~80s—the flamboyant hair, pearly skin, and the slightly blurry undertone of vintage cameras. Furthermore, with careful inspection, on the backside of the photo's frame, is a date written in microscopic font, 'August 2nd, 1999', making the claim irrefutable.

The man brushed past the woman and sat on the ebony wood table where his silver cutlery awaited him. As his right hand was occupied, he clutched the knife with his left. Maintaining his composure, he coiled the fork with his tongue and clamped it with his teeth. Lifting it, forward, and

down to strike the steak in one swift action, his motion guided by the experience found in his wrinkles. The man slammed his knife into the steak but all it managed was a slight incision hardly piercing the crust. He lifted the knife and gathered all the herculean strength he could muster, striking again and again and again.

After a plentiful amount of elbow grease, the woman detached herself from the sink. The rinsed dishes sat patiently on the drying rack and next to them was a single glove colored in gradient. The clock struck 11:11 pm. She glanced behind and found that the man was gone. His departure from the kitchen must've been overshadowed by the noise coming from the living room. Taking gingerly steps, she moved past the couch, careful not to disturb the settled dust that had begun to gather in the corners of the room. The remnants of the day—crumpled napkins, an empty glass, a few stray crumbs—lay scattered on the sofa and coffee table.

The woman's eyelids fluttered rapidly and her body swayed drunkenly. She only regained balance once she stopped at an oak door. Her hand rested on the cool, metal doorknob. With a slow turn of her wrist, she turned the handle and gently pushed the door open. The room was bathed in the soft, amber glow of the bedside lamp, casting long, gentle shadows across the floor. The bed, neatly made with the covers pulled tight, invited her. Before she could even consider stepping inside the room, her vision drifted away into a sheet of black. The woman's eyes clapped shut like the sudden drop of a curtain at the end of a circus performance.

The End

Well, how rude of the author to end the story with a cliffhanger! Now you're left to suffer as you wonder what happened to the man and the woman. But before that, I must ask one simple question. Who was the protagonist? I assume most of you answered the man, some may have even said the woman. But you're wrong. The protagonist has yet to be properly introduced into the story. Look back at the story and tell me if you noticed them. Don't say you've already forgotten about it—they were mentioned in the second and fifth paragraphs for goodness sake!

Right now it would be perfectly normal for you to question how there can be a story without a protagonist. But why are we getting ahead of ourselves? Look back to the title. It said it was the prequel, not the main story. In fact, this was never meant to be a fully fleshed-out story in the first place. After all, how can the story of any family be complete without the child?

Word Count: 883