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Falling Into Love

Adam Groff

UNF Writing Center Award for Fiction

As my body leaves the rooftop, my mind wanders. The first notion I have is the speed at which I am falling. I can only describe it as something slower than normal. I'm estimating the fall from a forty story building would normally take anywhere from five to fifteen seconds. This of course depends on the type and amount of clothing one is wearing and the accessories (i.e. watch, jewelry) accompanying an outfit. Not to mention wind conditions. Regardless, knowing death is approaching quickly, the fall to death has slowed immensely. To put it in exact terms, a fall that would usually take five to fifteen seconds takes a lifetime (a lifetime being the necessary amount of time to reflect on one's life leading up to the point of impact). For one reason or the other I am stuck in this so-called "lifetime". Basically, what looks like a short drop to the casual passerby actually seems like minutes to the person falling.

Now that I have your attention, the first thing you must be wondering is how you are receiving this information. All logic tells you it is impossible to receive information from the dead. Let alone receive the information from a person who is in the process of committing suicide. Before I go on let me just say I will dive (no pun intended) into the term "suicide" a little later, but for now just know I am extremely uncomfortable with the term. Anyways, for lack of a better explanation, let's just say a cosmic messenger who can transcend space and time has relayed this

message to you. The details, which I could go into about the messenger, are of minor importance considering the situation I am in.

Destiny is something that I have always considered a rudimentary concept, an unimaginative word with a dry definition and nothing more. So, the information I reveal as to why I have made this deathly decision does not pertain to destiny. Destiny is a moot point and that is that. It was three days ago that I had my first vision. I will recall to you, to the best of my ability, this horrid dream of mine. My father, still and lifeless on the floor, the breath taken from his chest and his usually healthy complexion replaced with a pale tone and a splash of blood red, and me, his trusting son, standing over his body as the obvious murderer, weapon of choice in hand. This dream occurred constantly and without mercy. It took minor convincing to tell me that this vision would soon become a reality; so for the past few days I have been avoiding my father. This has been difficult considering we live together in a cramped studio apartment in the old forty-story building that I am currently falling past. My father and I have never been close, but he is my father and I do love him. You probably think I'm insane, but instead of talking to a shrink I took matters into my own hands. I took a jump.

It must be three minutes into the fall and I'm only at the thirty-seventh floor windows. This of course is in "lifetime" and not real time. If this were in real time they would already be cleaning my splatter radius from the sidewalk. This is Old Lady Sanders' window. She always talks to me in the hallway. She seems so lonely now that her husband's gone. Whenever we talk

she looks happy enough. This explains everything. Old Lady Sander's is smoking a joint. And from what I can see she smokes constantly. I can't believe a woman of her age smokes. Old Lady Sanders and I have more in common than I previously thought. I can only imagine the conversations we could have had if I would have known this. I don't know why but I am going to miss her. What a shame.

There is now a little boy staring at me. I think he sees me in "lifetime". There are many people on the streets but he seems to be the only one who notices me. His eyes are perfectly affixed to my figure and the rate at which I am falling. I hope he turns before I hit. Maybe his mother will notice me and turn him away.

I'm going to call the little boy on the street Peter. Peter is my last friend on earth. I wonder what journeys Peter's life has in store for him. I want to talk to Peter and tell him this isn't the way life should be. I want to tell Peter secrets that will give him the ability to change the world. I want Peter to live life to the fullest.

Peters' eyes are formulating a plan. He is going to run down the street in "lifetime" and come back with an army of pillows for me to land comfortably on. Peter will save my life and we will become great friends. When Peter is a little older we will visit Old Lady Sanders on the thirty-seventh floor and smoke ridiculous amounts of reefer with her. She will tell us all about her husband and how he was the first man in space. Peter and I will laugh, knowing Old Lady Sanders is out of her mind. But this cannot be so. Peter, the little boy who is watching me fall, will turn around just before I hit, tug on his mothers skirt, and say, "I want to be the

president of the world when I grow up, but I want some ice cream first." Good for Peter!

I am currently around the thirtieth floor of my building. Because my time with you is drawing to a close, this is a good time to tell you my thoughts on the term "suicide." Not because I don't think you know what it means, but because I told you I would. Webster's Dictionary defines suicide as the act or an instance of taking one's life voluntarily and intentionally, especially by a person of discretion and of sound mind. Now you see why I'm uncomfortable with the term. I don't consider myself intentionally volunteering to take my life. As for that last part of the definition, a person of discretion and of sound mind kind of reminds me of a Bob Dylan song that is, if Mr. Dylan were smoking as much weed as Old Lady Sanders seems to be. For this reason and many others I have made up my own term and definition for suicide. I like to call it "overbortion." My term spawns from the words overdue and abortion; basically an overdue abortion. This makes it easier to think of my upcoming death as having a purpose, the purpose being taking my life before I take someone else's.

Looks like I'm passing the Russian's window. That makes this the twenty-third floor and counting. Little Peter and his mother are gone now and I'm once again all alone. I never understood the Russians. They are these married couple, from Moscow, in their mid thirties who work across the street at Giuseppe's Deli. All day long, roughly thirteen hours, they mop gritty floors, clean dirty dishes, and bus food-covered tables. But for some reason they are always in a good mood. They always seem to be happy and happy with each

other. I don't know their names because I can never understand their heavy accents. Just like Old Lady Sanders' window, my fall and this pass is again explaining everything.

The two Russians make no money and work all day long just to be with one another. Right now they are in their tiny apartment making love. This is not sex, but love. What they are doing is not anything dirty or wrong; it's beautiful. It looks like every chance they get, they make love. That's what gets them through each day, that's what makes them smile, that's what makes them happy: each other.

I'm beginning to feel like I'm in love too. In love with Old Lady Sanders and her grey, weathered skin, her oversized red-framed glasses and sunbonnet, her fifteen or so plump cats all named Buttercup, her tired smile and limp leather hands, her copious amounts of marijuana and her tiny white cardigan she wears even when it's warm. In love with little Peter who dreams of the future but is concentrating on being a kid. His blue cap and mustard-stained super hero shirt, his brave mother whose hand he holds and the fact that he saw me, if only for an instant. In love with the Russians and their love for one another, their steady work ethic and complicated language barrier, their glances at one another across Giuseppe's as if to say, "You and me kid, you and me." Most of all, I'm in love with the world.

Now I have eighteen or so stories to go and no more friendly windows. No one has noticed me yet besides Peter, and he is gone. At this point I wish Mother Earth would swallow me whole. While we're on the subject of wishes I equally wish I could just fly away. Never see this place again. Forget about my father and all my problems. Speaking of

my father he should be getting home from work right around this time. He might even be the first to see my body flat on the pavement. Being the anal retentive man he is, the first thing he'll probably do is run upstairs, get a spatula and some bleach, scoop me up and clean the sidewalk before the cops arrive. When the cops finally do come, two hours after the incident, he'll tell the cops it was just an accident and send me to my room without dinner. After an hour or two he'll knock on my door offering me a lucrative business opportunity that we, as partners, could execute that includes an appearance on a day time talk show and a place in one of those believe it or not magazines where I will be generally known as The Flattest Man in the World. Peter will be my number one fan, the Russians will bathe in Giuseppe's dishwater, and Old Lady Sanders will use me as a throw rug. Perfect!

The initial excitement of height has worn off now that I am in the lower teens of this old grey stucco building. Although I am more relaxed, I am still in "lifetime." As my imagination goes from running wild to a steady pace I can't help but think about the landing. Will I feel anything? A barrage of images runs through my mind as I begin to imagine, in vivid detail, my landing. There are various types of stage plays, yes, stage plays, I am now acting out in my head that I have decided to tentatively entitle This Land is My Land. There are three plays total. They are all of course one-act shows where I, the great hero, plunge to my death in an effort to save an innocent life. The plays will be considered new-wave because dialogue will be non-existent, replaced instead with technically complicated, highly coordinated action sequences.

Eventually, long after my death, my play will hit Broadway and I will become famous. Not famous for being a brilliant playwright, but famous for being a brilliant dead playwright. My vision will sweep the nation and my play will be seen in theatres coast to coast.

The first act that comes to mind is a tremendous clash between pure hope and utter despair. As my barreling body finally makes contact with the sidewalk I will discover a completely different sensation than previously expected. Instead of becoming a vertically challenged human paperweight, I will splash into a cool, blue liquid. This will instantly revitalize any weakness prior to my “dive”. After sinking towards what I think is the bottom of this beautiful abyss, realizing I’m not dead, I will swim my way towards the water’s surface. When I emerge I will find that I am not myself anymore. I will peer at my reflection in the water and notice wings protruding from my back. Taking a few seconds to find which set of muscles moves my newly acquired extensions (happens to be the tip of the shoulder blade), I will proceed to fly from the refreshing blue. For the moment, my previous wish of flying away from my worries will seem as though it has come true. That is until I find I have no control over my feathered friends. I will ascend to the height of the tallest structure in town only to be flown directly back into the blue abyss at a speed I cannot fathom. This time instead of splashing into the blue liquid, the waters will have turned red and boiling. The impact will be followed with screams of pain and agony, but surprisingly not mine. Onlookers, hundreds of onlookers, will be yelling from their rusted metal boats, hands covering faces, searching for mercy as

they navigate the changed waters. I on the other hand will not be screaming, but drowning, my screams muffled by the red.

The second act that comes to mind, from what I can tell, is much different and more pleasant. It has to do with reproduction. Not the type of reproduction that is sexual, but an instant type of reproduction. Again, my body will be barreling towards the ground at an uncanny speed. This time there is no water. My body will make contact with the rough cement. Instead of instant death there will be instant rebirth. Not the type of rebirth accompanied by a musty old book with a cross and suspicious priest who tells me his religion is the only way. No, I’ve tried that before and look where it got me. I’m talking about the type of rebirth that multiplies. As my body drives into the cement I will break into a thousand pieces. I know what you’re thinking, why not a million pieces? Well, simply put, I’m not that ambitious or greedy. In this case a thousand pieces is perfect, flawless even. These so called “pieces” will not be parts of what once was considered a whole. They will transform into tiny versions of me. Call them shattered examples of a former whole. They (they being much smaller versions of me) will go off in their own separate directions. They will be just as intelligent, just as capable as the original. They will begin tiny families with those who have taken the same journey as I, and whose shattered pieces have done the same as mine. The offspring of the tiny families will then have offspring of their own and so on and so forth. Eventually I, along with many others, will become part of a larger existence that of which is not known, or for that matter, talked about in regular

circles. My little selves will become part of a race known, by few, as the Tiny Ones. The Tiny Ones will only come out at night. If you don't believe me, ask your cat.

Now you're probably under the impression that I'm two spades short of a full deck. Well, before you come to any conclusions, let me tell you about the last act that comes to mind, which in my opinion is a damn good final act. This one involves abandonment. It is somewhat of a cop-out, but the simple audience won't be able to stop talking about it. As my body hits the ground, I wake in my bed from a cold sweat. I turn on the lights and check my pulse. I realize the jump was just a dream and that my life was never bad enough for me to jump in the first place. I find, to my delight, that my mother is still alive and my father is sober. The false news of the car wreck that killed my mother and sent my father to prison was just that, false. I realize that I never stayed with my uncle Curtis for two years while my father served time for killing three people in that horrific traffic accident, two strangers and my beautiful mother. Upon realizing this, I will check on my parents and find they are peacefully sleeping, my mother never dying and my father never going to jail for being a drunk. The bright, yellow stage lights will flicker on, the audience will file out of the theatre exclaiming that This Land is My Land was the best play they had ever seen, and everyone will be extremely content. Considering that would never happen and all of those horrible things did take place, do you still consider me insane or had those two missing spades been hiding in the pack the whole time?

Well, my great leap is coming to a close. I am passing the second to last

story, still in "lifetime", and approaching my final thoughts. Old Lady Sanders is in the past, my new friend Peter is just a memory, and the Russians are a faint glimpse. But, for some strange reason I have a sense of elation coursing through my body. This is something I would have never imagined feeling as a result from my grim decision. At this very moment, one of my last, all I can think about is my infatuation with the world. I adore the world. I feel as though I have a connection with this place. I don't want to leave, but at the same time I could never stay. I know if I do I will never experience anything equal to what I am experiencing now. I am king, if only for this moment, and I can see for miles. Gravity is my poison, and my kingdom I must leave behind.

Rain? It has begun to rain! Only seconds from the end and the rains have come. Now I feel new, clean in a way, ready to accept my fate. I will miss the rain. What is this? Oh my god! There is someone directly below and I know they don't see me. "Hey, mo..."

County Police Report: January 13th, 1997, 6:31 P.M.

Two males, ages forty -six and nineteen found on the corner of Thirteenth Avenue and Love Street. Both bodies have severe neck and spinal injuries, faces almost unidentifiable. Possible double homicide/ suicide. A witness, Elmira Sanders, who lives in the apartment building in front of the crime scene, said she saw the nineteen-year-old victim fall past her window seconds before accident. The bodies have been identified as Henry Phillip Scott, age 46 and William Jonathan Scott, age 19. Father and son.

The End