



# EVELINE

A Series of Short Stories by:  
Tobias Brask

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**This is a work of fiction. All of the character, organizations and events portrayed in these short stories are a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.**

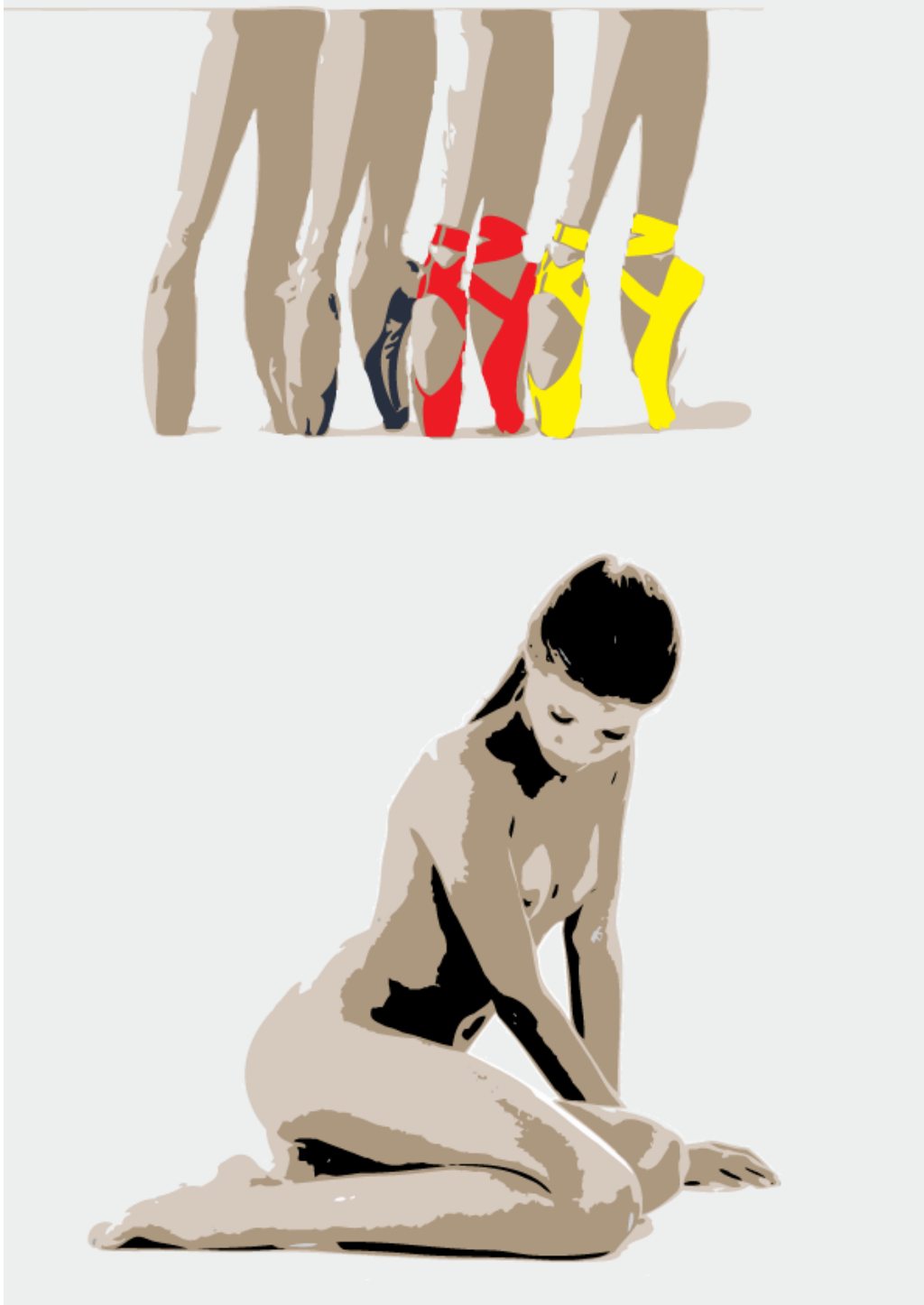
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# *Eveline*



By: Tobias Brask

The sun reflected off the train that passed just below her window, shining onto the shattered mirror of her nightstand and casting small rays of sunshine throughout the room. She woke up for a second to the drumming noise made by the train. A heat wave had swept in over the East Coast, all the way up to Rhode Island and did not make it easier to sleep. Kicking the duvet of her young body and exposing her rose dressed shoulder, she looked at the window and wished the blinds would close themselves, but she knew that it was not going to happen. She sighed heavily knowing she did not yet have the strength to get up, so she took a deep breath and hid her face in the pillow.

An hour later she was awake again, this time from someone walking up the stairs, just outside her apartment. She sat up in bed, feeling the rush of blood swirling in her head for what felt like several minutes. Suddenly, she heard a knock on the door, but she had not noticed any footsteps this time. She looked suspiciously at the door and stood up naked. Eveline decided not to answer the door and instead walked across the room to her bathroom while stepping over the business card from last night's entertainment, the two \$10 bills left after the cab money he gave her and the \$600 she made for the night.

Last night had started with a drink in the hotel bar at the Empire on the corner of Broadway, followed by a dinner and her legs high up in between the sheets before she quietly walked out of the hotel room around three am. She knew she was not worth anything to the men she met. She was simply their pleasure as they all had wives at home. Despite all this, they were still the ones who made her feel alive, the ones who paid for her living. She had looked like an angel in her short, dark blue brocade dress and four inch heels. Now the dress was thrown on top of a pile of ballet shoe boxes.

Every second week Eveline went into Manhattan to walk around The Upper East Side and later in the day to pick up two new pairs of Grishko Pointe ballet shoes. Eveline started ballet training at the age of six after an evening in Central Park with her parents. She was mesmerized by this young woman, all in white, figure skating by the ice rink. It was the only time she could remember seeing true love in her parent's eyes and felt a big beat in her heart. By the age of 11, she had started dancing with pointed shoes, the wooden floor in her apartment showed the marks of her passion for the arts. She practiced two hours a day, four days a week to get that perfect alignment.

Even as she stood in the steaming shower, she felt a strange shiver over the fact that someone had knocked on her door. Nobody really knew where she lived, not even her parents. She had also remembered to pay the rent last week as she always did. For Eveline, although it was small and worn, her home was her haven.

As she stood in the middle of the room drying her hair after the shower, she gazed at the door. Outside she hears new footsteps coming from the hallway, but this time she recognizes them, it is Chase from upstairs. He always drags his feet and wears a heavy chain attaching his wallet and keys to his pants. She now felt calm again and thought it might have been Chase's friend that knocked on the wrong door, since she could hear two voices. She turned around and started to examine her body in the mirror for bruises and scars. Sometimes it could get rough with a client, but last night was gentle, it almost felt like what she imagined a normal date would be like. He did not command her or even talk dirty. He was gentle and more pleasing. Eveline was not even into the dirty part, but the money made up for the fact she had to pretend. As she had checked her body for scars and bruises, she sat down on her bed and got her inch thick diary out. It had a nice rich green leather cover, and she kept it as a journal of all her adventures, although with a bit of fiction for a small hope that someday it would turn into a publication. Eveline grabbed a Mont Blanc pen from her nightstand drawer. The pen was a Greta Garbo edition and rested perfectly in her hand as it swept over the pages, filling them with her stories. She looked at it and sighed, it was left as a money clip from her first customer and hence spawned the idea for her to write her story. With the pen in hand, she thought back to last night before she started to write:

*Quarter past one.*

*August 12th*

*As I stood up from the table his eyes followed the length of my leg, up from the heel all the way to where the slits ended. His mind fell into a dream as I stood there next to him in the restaurant. I leaned over to pick up my phone from the purse on the table, it was then I saw him in the reflection of the screen, paralyzed by the shape and colour of my leg. I had caught him in the act as I looked over my shoulder giving him a smile. It was funny how some men if not almost all turned into kids in a candy store as soon as something sweet was in front of them. I looked back at my dinner company and walked with them to the cloak room. While putting on my salmon pink trench coat I felt a strong yet gentle hand on the shoulder, I did not look back yet to face him, I felt like it was a game he played with me*

*as the prey. I walked out on the sidewalk and as I passed the glass windows on the front of the restaurant, I gazed in and could see him walking back to his table. Who was he? Later that night I felt a little bit drunk as my blue dress fell to the floor. The men had said I looked pretty but looking in the mirror I was a little mess. It was quarter past one and in the back of my head I could still hear the piano playing. Just as the stars disappeared in the early hours, I fell asleep. Lost and lonely I was a soul survivor.*

Eveline put the pen back and kissed the cover of her book. She stood up and opened the drawer where she kept her panties, picking up some white cotton ones. She always wore white ones when she was not working because it gave her an innocent feeling, a pure feeling. She put them on with some slim fitted blue denim jeans and took a drink of the orange juice she had poured for herself right after her shower.

As she was just about to close the last button on her jeans, someone shouted on the street and it vaguely sounded like her own name. "Eveline..." She thought she might as well take a look. As she glimpsed out the window, she saw it was one of the young boys in the neighborhood calling after a puppy that just ran into the street. She remained by the window to see the boy catch the puppy. While he walked back over to the sidewalk with the puppy in his arms, he looked up and saw Eveline as she adjusted her duvet. He smiled at her and waved the paw of the little puppy. It brought a smile to her lips, and she waved back from behind her bed. Still in just her jeans, Eveline thought to herself that maybe there is still some hope out there.

She decided to hurry up in her apartment, putting on her matching white bra, baseball jersey and baseball cap and ran out. Finally out on the street, her eyes searched for the boy, but he was nowhere to be found. Just as she thought that was unlucky, Chase came back with a brown paper bag in his hand, sipping on a Coke. It made Eveline's belly growl a little, she could tell there was a burger inside from the grease stain on the bag. She felt happy and wished she could surprise the young boy with taking him to the game, so she asked Chase as he opened the door to the building, he turned around and looked at her for a second then said, "You mean Jack, short little blonde boy?" Eveline nodded back, and he shook his shoulder but added, "He was here before, and I saw him walk West," pointing with his greasy bag in the direction.

There were a few things in life that Eveline had in common with her parents, and most notably, with her father. One such similarity was their love for baseball, particularly the Mets. She remembered all the games she had seen with her father in front of the living room TV, those were the happy times, although he was never much of a father. Eveline never talked about her history with anyone because she knew she would easily fall into an evil circle of dark memories that she never spoke about or even wanted to think about it. For her, her childhood was and would for always be the Mets.

As she leaned over to tie her shoes, she peered over her shoulder to see if the boy would reappear. Eveline decided to wait for another ten minutes, but he was nowhere to be seen, so she decided to grab a proper meal with the cab money left from last night, instead of the black Americano she normally had after sleeping in. Eveline liked to dream big during the nights and live small during the days. In her own words it was Dream Venti – Live Tall a phrase she once made up at Starbucks waiting for a customer.

She left the house turning east on the street and walked towards the old, brick office buildings and the Dugout diner, one of the best she knew. Dugout was located in between two high rise office buildings and was designed in the traditional diner style with brushed aluminium, red chairs and couches. The walls were covered in photographs from the 1969 and 1986 World Series titles, among others. Along the counter there were three builders sitting, the first one looked at her as she walked through the door and gave her the thumbs up for the jersey, “Game night!” he said to her, and Eveline smiled back in confirmation. He then turned back and joined his friends in their conversation over burger’s and the Brooklyn lager to go with it. Over by the window sat two salesmen discussing the weekend’s Knicks game. They did not pay any attention to Eveline, not that she cared, since they did not look as good in a suit as her city boys and basketball was not really her sport. Lisa, a middle-aged waitress at Dugout’s, walked over to the round table that Eveline sat at, tapped her on the cap and said, “Hi.” Eveline knew what she meant and took off the cap and placed it on the stool next to her. Eveline saw Lisa as a young grandma that did not judge her decisions in life because she did not know. But one day she planned on telling her, just not today. Lisa thought a girl should never hide her face, especially such a beautiful girl like Eveline who was more than your girl next door. In Lisa’s eyes, she was a new Audrey Hepburn, but there was something more about her and at the same time, something missing. She felt Eveline had a

story to tell. Eveline looked up at Lisa without looking at the menu, ordered a junior cheeseburger with two pancakes, vanilla ice cream on top and an apple juice. Normally she had this meal with a strawberry milkshake, but she planned to save the milkshake until after the game tonight. Lisa knew the order by heart since Eveline was one of the regulars, although she stood out from the rest of the builders and salesmen who dined their daily. Most people would find the size of her order strange for such a petite girl, but Eveline knew it was more than good, it was a delicious meal that would make her smile all week.

After the diner she walked around the parking lot of Citi Field to soak up some pregame atmosphere, and to sell her extra ticket for an easy \$40 before heading to her seat. Eveline never touched alcohol if she was not out with a client, so she settled for water and treated herself to some mini M&M's. The stadium was another world from the animal that was Manhattan where she never had a problem getting a free drink. She loved the atmosphere in some of its finest hotel bars.

The oddest part about Eveline's life was that she was a Met's season ticket holder. The lower infield tickets she owned were her largest asset, and it was nothing that neither she nor her dad would have ever imagined. She knew she could never afford them on her own, yet still saw them as hers. They were a gift for her favours. After the game had ended with a 12-5 victory for the Mets against the Washington Nationals, she felt even happier. She wished everyday could be like this, and she could give up her entertainment job. Then again, this line of work gave her the freedom to have control over her own life, away from her parents.

Before going to get her victory milkshake at the diner, she decided to take a walk along the Unisphere and down along to Meadow Lake. It was a clear night as she sat on the lawn along the water. She could see some stars, which in the city was a rare occurrence. The light from the city, the ballpark and the motorways surrounding the lake usually created a yellow haze overhead, but not this evening. In the distance she heard a piano playing, although she couldn't make out the song, she started to hum along. In her own dreams, Eveline would have been a ballerina by now, perhaps even one day performing at Carnegie Hall in Manhattan, but her father had raised her to be a tomboy. She thought it was a hard dream to live up to.



As Eveline could no longer hear the piano play, she stopped humming and felt how cold it actually had become. The summer heat did not want to stay around at night. She stood up and walked towards the parking lot lights. Someone must have thought of her because there stood a free cab waiting. Eveline felt it was too cold and dark to walk back, she was not really too keen to walk alone in the emptier areas of Corona Park. The cab driver, a man in his mid-forties, opened the door for her and asked "Where to?". She gave the street address to Dugout as she sat down in the backseat. On the radio, a young singer was crying her heart out over a lost love. Eveline looked out through the back window and saw how the lake disappeared among the trees along with the urban concrete jungle, she thought of as the city, and all it had brought to this world.

Maybe it was time for her to make a clean break, try to find herself and see what the future had in store for her. She wished she had said "no" before, but had always played along and let everyone use her because of her low self-esteem. All she really wanted was to drift away in a daydream, but she knew there was no such thing as a perfect world. Maybe it was time to take the \$80,000 she had saved up and hidden behind the bathtub in a sailing bag, for a journey in life, or start fresh with that cosy attic conversion in Brooklyn Heights with her own little window overlooking Manhattan.

Suddenly she felt she was falling and someone cried out her name, flashing lights and with her hands she grabbed hard on to the seat. She woke up and realized she had dozed off for a second. Her cab was now only blocks away from the awaiting milkshake. Once she arrived, she paid the driver and walked straight to the same table she had sat at earlier in the day. Lisa observed that Eveline arrived with a cab and started to wonder, something was not quite right with Eveline.

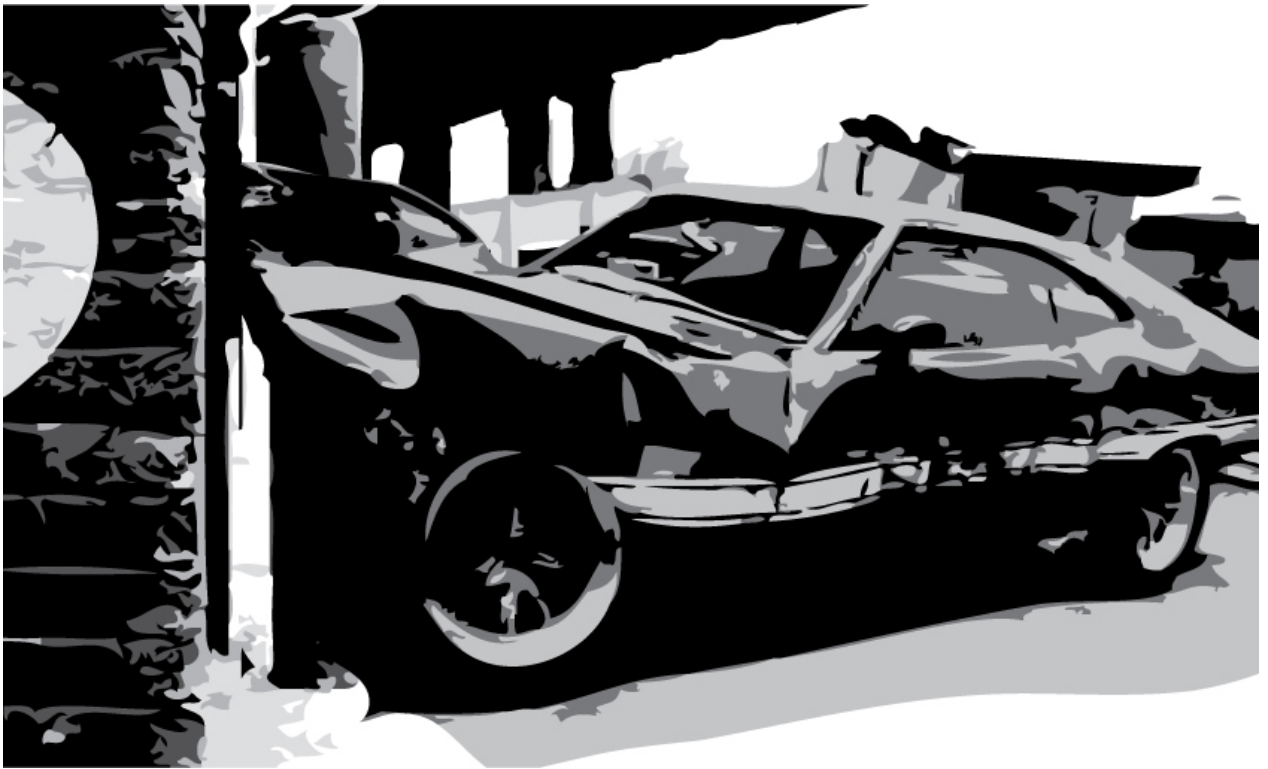
Lisa prepared the strawberry milkshake from real ice cream and strawberries while looking at Eveline's table. It was Dugout's trademark along with their junior burgers. Eveline herself looked at the street outside as one car after another passed by while she felt empty inside since that strange dream back in the cab. She was scared and felt like something had walked away from her, even if it did not make any sense. She checked her pocket for her lucky two dollar bill, it was there.

Lisa came up from behind with the milkshake and saw on Eveline's face that something was wrong. She did not tap her on the cap and instead let her hide under it. Eveline grabbed the milkshake and took a sip. It filled her mouth with a heavenly smooth and fresh taste of creamy strawberries. She blinked her eyes, looked back at the cash register and gave Lisa a small, but affirming smile, then back to looking out through the window. Normally, she would have paid attention to the local broadcast of the evening's baseball games on SNY, but tonight her mind was somewhere else. After awhile, Eveline had found a new inner peace and had the last of her milkshake. She walked over to Lisa to pay for it, but got the response it was on the house. Eveline showed some affection by smiling again and tapping with her five dollar bill on the counter before leaving it in the cup for charity.

While walking back to her apartment it happened. Careening out from behind a bus, a dark green Torino was swerving in a lost motion. The car hit Eveline and threw her through the air and along the pavement. Everything came to an end, everything became quiet. Lisa heard the sound and looked up from her counter and started moving along, weaving through the tables to get to the door. There she saw the green Torino up against a brick wall and a Mets cap on the ground beside it. She started to run and thinking to herself, God please, no God. Then she saw the legs of Eveline and her face on the pavement, all still, all quiet. She fell to the ground in tears.

This was the night Eveline died

# Jack Fueller



By: Tobias Brask

## Tuesday

Jack was sitting on his dark leather couch, resting his arms over his knees and was breathing heavily. He had just put down the phone for the fourth time tonight. The rain was pounding on the window, and through it, a faint shine from the street light could be seen flickering on and off. Jack got another whiskey glass from his cupboard, put it on the table and poured a steady drink, the third one for the night. As he put the bottle down next to his whiskey glasses, he grabbed his thick, brown hair and out of frustration made a growling sound. He did not drink the whiskey. He just poured them as he was feeling miserable. It was not his day or even month, and the whiskey was a ritual he felt he needed to do to acknowledge his remorse. His eyes were dark and heavy after hardly sleeping the last couple of days. He gazed out through the window and thought about how cold and wet one would be out there in the downpour. A cold feeling spread down his spine while thinking, no one in the world would be out walking in this weather, voluntarily. He flinched, and his eyes rapidly closed for a second. He needed to sleep more than anything else.

Hours later the rain was still pouring down. Jack took another deep breath, stood up and thought it was time to make a decision or at least take some action. He walked over to the window putting his palms up against the single glazing. He was somewhat scared it would break and cut his hand, but at the same time it gave him a warming feeling, a connection with mother nature that somehow brought his soul to rest. The street light kept on flickering in the rain. He looked back at the table and over to the office desk noticing the clock had just passed two am. The rain picked up, so his attention was drawn back to the window. He slid his fingers through the condensation that had built up on the inside of the glass. All of a sudden the street light glowed feverously, almost bright as a day. Crippled by the light, he saw a shadow. Seconds later a person in a black raincoat and long, bleach blonde hair emerged walking across the street. He looked back at the clock radio on the desk, and it was now well after three am. He shook his head and looked at it for a second time before looking out the window again. The figure in the black raincoat was now nowhere to be seen, although he had clear view of the figure just a moment ago. Accepting it was late and time to try to catch some much needed sleep, he walked away from the window and went back to the couch. Seconds later, he was sound asleep.

## Thursday

It was just passed noon and Jack was sitting on the couch after a call with the Philadelphia office. He had already poured two glasses of whiskey and picked up the phone more times than he could remember. He just wanted to make that call and hopefully make everything alright again, but the loneliness and haunting thoughts that possessed him was the price he had to pay for his actions. He knew better. Spread over the table were the letters she had sent him when they first started dating. He picked them up one by one and put them back in their envelopes. Looking out the window, the street light started flashing again like it did the other night, although it was still light outside. He quickly looked at the clock on his desk and back again. It was then it hit him. Had he the other night been standing by the window for an hour, paralyzed by the light, or what was it. He closed his eyes and thought to himself, "Heck, what's the point of feeling so low and miserable if it won't change anything and no one even seems to care". It was not entirely his fault the relationship had not worked out, he knew well enough he had problems expressing himself while she did not make it any easier for him, always pushing his case about their relationship and his career. Still here he was alone with the few things he had acquired in life stored up in boxes he kept in a friend's basement. His eyes got caught by the drinks, how would it feel just to let one down, it had been over three years since he last had a drink. Again the loneliness swept over him. Where should he go from here? Get his own place or see if she would take him back? After all they had a four-year-old daughter, so they had to think of her too and find common ground. He regretted he had missed out on the first two years of her life. Maintaining a middle management position at a steel firm was not the easiest in this economy with China picking up more and more orders, and why the office was in Corona, New York, he could just not understand. Miles and miles away from the steel plant where he could make a difference, plus any business partner was miles away. Forced to travel everyday to and from New Jersey, across Manhattan, made him hesitate and stay in the office instead of going home to his wife and baby daughter. Sleeping on the very same couch he now had spent the past week on made his wife suspicious and gave her fuel for any argument, big or small.

He took a pen and paper from his desk and walked over to the couch, rolled up his shirt sleeves and thought for a minute. Jack was different, and she seemed to understand him and his ways. Jack's childhood was full of drama. His mother had always been very strict, a true WASP in both spirit and mind after a year in Cornwall at a English boarding school, she was still from New Jersey, and his dad was a hard drinker and a hard working white collared man. Somehow, by the end of the month, they were always broke. Jack could only imagine which pockets his dad's salary had gone into, gambling or even hookers since he usually showed up at home with a breath of alcohol and his shirt not tucked in. All the times he had

spent listening from upstairs to how his mother and father argued in the kitchen created a miserable childhood. His mother often reminded him he was never good enough in her eyes, it had tarnished Jack for life. She was neither a forgiving nor loving mother. Was he the reason behind their misfortune and even the reason she had stayed with his dad? Jack put his pen to the paper and thought about what to write. His head was a mess filled with childhood traumas, and it was last weekend when his wife, Wendy, came back to him. It was a Saturday, and she had woken up an hour before him. As the clock just passed 10 am, she came back up to the bedroom and asked if he would join her for coffee and breakfast. He snapped at her within seconds, jumping out of the bed shouting how he needed to think and to be left alone. He must have been taken for a maniac reacting like that to such a simple and loving question. Within minutes he had downed the coffee on the kitchen table, and as he was almost out the front door she had stopped him, asking "I love you, why do you act like this?". He replied in a sharp and shrewd voice, "You should take a moment and think about what love really is". She just stood there bedazzled by his reply as he shut the door behind him and walked away. Jack did not return home all day or even let her know where and what he was up to. In the early morning hours, he sent her a text, saying "I feel I'm not enough for you".

Jack returned home around noon that Sunday, Wendy was in the kitchen preparing lunch for her and their daughter. She immediately stopped everything and ran over to Jack, gave him a massive hug as they looked each other in the eyes. He kissed her on the lips and said, "I am so sorry. Want any help?". As they shared the food, the conversation fell quiet after a while as Jack had no intention to tell where he had spent the night and Wendy did not want to pressure him. As Wendy stood up to clear the table, her eyes went blank, and she fainted. She woke up in the bed as she regained consciousness. Jack was standing by the window with his back to her. He turned around, said he was sorry and then just walked out. Jack's thoughts eased their hold on him. He was holding the pen in a tight grip, it felt like he almost had a hand spasm. He regretted his actions more than anything, leaving them both without saying anything. He did not even feed her a lie, but instead just walked away.

## Friday

Jack spent the morning mesmerizing over how he first met Wendy, a late summer day down in Atlantic City. They were seated next to each other at a \$5 Black Jack table, laughing over

how pathetic they were with their bets. Lucky as they were, they cashed in \$140 that day and spent it on a steak dinner for two. Forgotten were their mutual friends that they came with. It was one of Jack's fondest memories. A few months later their lives took a change of course in a doctor's office as it was confirmed Wendy was pregnant. Within two weeks they had moved in together, in a modest three bedroom house just down the street from Wendy's parents.

By the afternoon, Jack sat by his desk melting away as the last two days had now culminated into a heat wave. The AC in his office had seen better days. It kept on fighting and making all kind of noises just to keep the room at a modest 78°F. Having a cup of coffee was not even worth considering in this heat. As the afternoon embarked on him, he reached for the radio to change the station to the *NY Baseball Digest with Mike*. He wanted to listen to the pregame show for the Mets game although he was brought up to be a Cleveland fan. As the first inning came to an end, Jack was asleep on the couch.

Hours later Jack woke up from a loud bang, the street light once again glowed brightly for a moment, followed by a loud scream and then the light started to blink once more in a rapid succession before it started to slow down and then completely stop. Jack looked at the time, realized it was Friday and way past office hours., so he shut down his laptop and threw it in his brown, leather briefcase. While he walked down the corridor putting on his jacket, in a distance he could hear how the sound of sirens started to build up. To the left of him, as he walked out of the main entrance. a new sight opened for him. Up against the brick wall, a green Torino crashed. As he looked beyond the car. he froze. The sirens in the background came closer and closer. There in the darkness he saw a blonde woman lying over a young body. He looked on with shock as his senses took it all in, the smell from the overheated car wreck, the blonde woman's cry and how a life just evaporated in front of him. He just stood there on the sidewalk as the firemen and ambulance staff approached the scene and as bright lights from the fire trucks threw their lights over the street. He took a few steps back and reached for his phone in the briefcase. Jack put the phone over his lips and stood there quiet to say a small prayer before he sent a short message, "I'm sorry..".

The end

# Ashes of Cape



By: Tobias Brask



She was sitting in the sand with her eyes closed, listening to the sounds of the waves breaking, knowing how every seventh wave was the biggest. She opened her eyes now and then looking at the waves as they approached the beach. She had spent the early hours of the last four days out on the beach. Next to her she kept a cardboard box that had been by her side since she picked it up in New York, and now she was searching for an answer of what to do with it. She spent all her time going back over the last two weeks, how everything in life could change and how quickly something could come to an end. She took a deep breath and held it for five seconds before she opened her eyes and looked down at her Bulova watch resting on her wrist, it was just past seven in the morning. The last two hours had been spent under the night sky, and then the transformation began as the sun had slowly risen over the horizon. The sunrise had a special place in her heart as it was among one of the best things she knew, an inspiration to life as a new day grew opening to a new world. She picked up the box and brushed the sand from the bottom. Then she looked longingly out to sea and was jolted with a vision further down the beach. In the distance, she saw a character of a man walking towards her with a shadow next to him of what she thought must be a dog. She looked a final time out over the ocean before she turned around and walked back up to the beach house, which was a mere hundred feet from the water. As she stepped up on the patio that stretched along the seaside of the house, she put the box on the table and fell into the hammock, swaying back and forth for a moment before she fell asleep.

Slowly she felt how her hand became warm and wet, and as she opened her eyes she saw a dog next to the hammock. Confused, she moved her legs to stand up. While she was doing so, the dog moved away from the hammock, down the patio onto the sand and then ran back from the point she had seen it earlier in the day. As she observed the dog it hit her, it was dark outside. She thought back over what she had done that day as all she could see was a couple of hundred feet out in the moon light, the sun had already set. Had she really slept all day long. She did not have any memory of doing anything else and everything on the patio looked just as she had left it that morning. She went into the house to make some supper before taking her book out to read under the patio light.

## Day 6

In the distance, she heard a big bang as the thunder rolled in. The air was heavy this morning and outside the sky was falling as she lingered around the window watching the seagulls all packed on the rocks between the widespread white beach, the grass and the bushes. She still

felt hurt on the inside, crying over the feeling that had erupted upon her since that late night in New York. She got a big plastic bag out of a kitchen drawer and wrapped the box in it. In the closet next to the back door that went out to the patio she found a pair of wellingtons and a heavy raincoat. It was not hers but fitted well enough to keep her dry from the rain. From the patio she got a wooden stool and walked down to the shoreline, leaving a track behind her as the stool dragged in the wet sand. She spent the next hour sitting on the stool with the box resting on her knees. The rain kept falling on her raincoat cap, so she could not even hear how the waves kept on breaking and every now and then they almost reached up to where she was sitting. That afternoon she spent indoors making a vegetable soup followed by a warm bath. In the end, she had gotten cold and a bit wet from sitting in the rain. She felt a bit ashamed over the bath since one could lie in it and look out over the beach and the ocean for miles after miles. At the same time, the ocean was so close that she almost could touch it with the palm of her hand, but she figured during the fall and spring when the ocean was cold it would be a true joy and luxury. That evening she spent all wrapped up in a blanket reading Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*. As her fingers swept over the sun dyed pages, memories from her childhood started to come back to her. How she, as a mere fourteen year old girl, spent a summer in Europe, running along the beach in Skageen, Denmark, and how her feet had made an odd whistling sound in the sand. It was a phenomenon she had never been able to explain. Running around the Louvre, eating way too many macaroni's, and how her first glass of champagne had made her ever so giggly. She had spent the last days of the summer onboard the beautifully built 120 ft long Schooner, Renee. With the yachts white sails up, they had cruised among the Greek islands. She remembered it as an amazing time, picturing herself as a young Grace Kelly with everything in the world at her fingertips. The best moments onboard were when the yacht was at anchor in one of the thousands of small bays, and she could sit with her legs over the railing, swinging her feet above the water and enjoying the sunshine I one of her dresses she had been given in Paris. Back then she could spend hours just watching how the fishermen in the village worked, and how the young boys played among the cliffs diving after all sorts of treasures. The journey among the Greek islands had been in the true spirit of the Onassis. All these flashbacks had brought warmth to her heart and a smile back on her lips. She took her cup and walked outside, as she passed the mirror by the door she saw how her dimples were back. The following hour she spent walking along the shore whistling and imagining how she was back in Skageen. Her final thought before she fell asleep that eve was, as long as there are children, there is hope.

She had slept in this morning, the watch on her nightstand already showed close to eleven. Quickly she put on a one piece swimsuit and brought a blue summer dress with her that she put on the patio table and on top of the dress the box so that a morning breeze could not take hold of her dress. Then she ran down to the water for a swim, the salt felt refreshing against her skin. The water must have been about 70°F and not a single wave. Funny enough, the stretch of beach seemed to be empty this morning from sunbathers or dog walkers so she let the top of her swimsuit down to more quickly sundry her skin and hair as she stepped out of the water. After she had put the blue dress on, she stood and looked at the box, noticing how the sun, sand and salt water had started to eat it up already after only seven days out here. She wanted to keep it as long as possible to protect the treasure within. As it was almost noon, she had now built up a hunger, and the delivery of groceries she had called in the other day had not been delivered. Quickly she decided her only option to get some food now was to head into town. She took the box inside and put it on a stool under the table, clear from eye sight. As she looked outside the kitchen window she saw a man on a bike approaching the house. She could not tell through the stained glass who he was so she thought no more about it and went to get her purse. A minute later she heard a man's voice calling, "Lisa", she looked out the open patio door and walked over to the window to take a peek again at the road. Now she saw the bicycle parked outside. The man's voice called again so she walked outside and down in the sand stood the mailman, he said; "Good morning, Elizabeth Swanson". She looked at him with a confused look upon her face, how on earth did he know her name? She had not requested any forwarding of mail from the city, yet here he stood with a pack of letters and was Elizabeth just a lucky guess? She took the pack of letters from him and looked at them. They all seemed to be really old, like they had been waiting for her wrapped in a thick cotton rope. The mailman looked at her and said goodbye as he left her with the letters. Lisa followed his steps as he made his way through the sand and back up to the road. She just stood there confused with the letters in her hands as the waves and seagulls played on in the background as if nothing had just happened. After a few minutes standing there holding the bundle of letters, the thought of food came back to her. She went inside and put the letters on the kitchen counter before she made sure she locked all doors. Next she jumped on the bike she kept next to the main entrance of the house to ride the one and a half miles to the store. She thought she might as well go to the main street with all the shops to pick up her order and get a proper brunch. She knew she was not supposed to have brunch alone, but who did she know here to dine with her? She felt like a tourist among all the locals over the last couple of days, but the visit from the mailman this morning made her think. She had in fact spent her childhood here in Cape Cod learning how to cook over at the gilded house of Kleeman, a Danish merchant family, with several vessels but also two beautifully built Sloops out of mahogany and teak plus the very impressive Schooner she

spend that summer in Greece on. They always kept it docked along the Mediterranean sea, those summers had blessed her with an eternal love for the ocean. That was some twenty five years ago when she was in her teens. She still recognized the Cape from her younger days, some houses seemed not to even have been painted in all that time. She still dreamt of having her own cedar house tucked away among the sand dunes, just like the beach house she now had rented. After brunch, she put her bag of groceries in the basket and cycle back to the beach house.

### Day 8

After her morning swim, she went inside to change and to get a knife to cut the strings around the package of letters she received the previous day. As she went out on the patio again, she was met by a man. They startled each other and as Lisa held a knife in her hand he quickly jumped down the two steps onto the sand and directly excused himself. "Sorry Miss Swanson, my name is John Styckher, the guardian of the Kleeman family trust". Again she got a curious look upon her face, what was going on here? She walked over to the table and cut open the rope. As she put down the knife and held up the first letter Mr Styckher took a step up on the patio and repeated himself. Lisa had heard him the first time, but just wanted to quickly sort her thoughts. After he had introduced himself again she asked him to sit down. She went inside to get drinks for the two of them and as she served the well suited man a glass of the ice tea she had prepared the evening before. He started to tell her the reason behind his visit and how he had found her. It all started while he was going over the ledger for the beach house to reconcile the account. It was then he had seen the name Lisa Swanson, and he remembered as a young man the family had a kitchen helper in the name of Elizabeth and wondered if this could be the very same. He then decided to ask the local mailman to deliver a package of letters in her name. See John ran his office from Boston and although it was close so he could have driven down directly, he preferred the approach with the mailman since it gave him a day to prepare if it was really her. As they sat there enjoying the view and the conversation, John told her how he tried to find her for several years. Lisa listened with true enthusiasm and then started telling her own story how she, on a late August day had met this boy from New York on the beach, 21 years of age and handsome as cut out as a catalogue. He worked on Wallstreet, a phenomena new to her at that age. Swept away as she was by his boyish charm and good looks she also jumped on the opportunity of the city as he had asked her to come along that eve, a housemaid was not what her dreams consisted off. She went on telling Mr Styckher how they got married shortly after, and how she became Lisa Cadwell while lying about her age. See Lisa had just turned 16 that spring

and would have needed consent from her parents. She went on telling him their first apartment had been in Bronx but within a year from their marriage they had moved to Manhattan. She went on telling him how they never had any children, although she was attractive and just in her 40's when her husband had passed away in a car accident almost 10 years ago. Since then, she had not really been seeing anyone and also been very private about her personal life since the accident. She liked to live in the shadows of other people's lives and hence took a job at a diner not far from the Mets arena. As she had told Mr Styckher her story, she looked in through the door at the stool next to the table, it was there she was resting.

### Day 9

Lisa was sitting by the table on the patio enjoying the scrambled eggs she had made for breakfast as she heard a knock on the front door. Lisa only looked over her shoulder at the side of the house and thought whoever it was they could walk around. Seconds later, Mr Styckher appeared with a Snow White Goldendoodle puppy at his side. Lisa shined up as the dog stepped up on the patio and came over to her to say hello, its fur was just like a teddy bear. Mr Styckher excused himself and walked half way to the water. Lisa did not even hear him as she was spellbound by her new acquaintance. She patted the dogs for a couple of minutes before she looked up and saw how Mr Styckher was walking along the beach. She stood up and closed the patio door behind her as she went down to the beach. The Goldendoodle ran after Mr Styckher and Lisa followed in its steps. It was a beautiful late summer day, the sun was high above and the ocean was still warm. She had been lucky with the weather since October was actually approaching and soon that bathtub in the beach house would be a more sensible thing. As they walked along the beach, Lisa got an invite to join Mr Styckher over at the Kleeman residence for supper, she happily replied yes since she had not seen the house since she ran off to New York with her newfound love. She wondered if it was still as majestic as she remembered it. The afternoon she spent in the hammock swinging back and forth while reading Hemmingway. Now and then she looked over at the box on the table thinking of what to do with its content. From the north she could see a white hull and red sail appear, she decided to take a closer look so went inside to fetch the binocular along with the tripod stand. As she stood there studying how the boat gracefully harnessed the wind and broke the sea in front of it a warmth built up inside her again, how the journey the boat took symbolized a new opportunity, a new start. She took a sip of her ice tea, since she had arrived at the beach house she had been hooked on her homemade peach ice tea. The sailboat slowly made its way past her point, and as the stern became clear for her

she looked through the binoculars again and read the boat's name, Petra af Malen. She reacted to the name and once again memories flourished in her head, af Malen. She recalled how the Kleemans had called several of their vessels something af Kleemans. Although the boat had a Maine state flag it must have had a Danish story behind it. Before she went over to the Kleemans she made a rose bath and brushed her hair for the first time that week. She did not want to appear looking like a bum at the dinner since she did not know exactly who would attend. By seven pm, she was ready and started walking north along the beach towards the house, further ahead she could see the lighthouse casting its light along the shore and ocean. She walked for at least 10 minutes before she started to look for either the gravel road that went up and around the house or even the wooden foot path that should lead all the way to the front lawn and then onto the main house. After walking another 200 yards she saw a stars and stripes flag and next to it a yellow flag with a griffin on it, the family crest. She was once told by Hans G. Kleeman, the grandfather of the family she worked for, that the yellow represented the fields of Rapeseed that their ancestors had farmed and build their fortune from. The blue griffin symbolized the sky and ocean, although it was rich blue, one was not to forget the strength that rested within. The most clear blue sky could, within minutes, turn black and destroy a year's crop she had been told. Lisa made her way up the wooden path and seconds after she had rung the doorbell, a young brunette opened the door and greeted her. She was a splitting image of Lisa as a young girl, just that Lisa was blonde. She showed Lisa out to the terrace where Mr Styckher was waiting with a bourbon in his hand and a small bowl of peanuts balancing on the railing. The young girl asked Lisa if she wanted anything to drink, she asked for an ice tea. Within minutes, she appeared with a glass for Lisa. Lisa took it to her lips and tasted it, looked back at the maid and said it was very refreshing, in reply she got, "It is mango miss," and so she returned back inside. As they stood there Mr Styckher told her how the family had found the young maid in Paris and taken her on the very same schooner around the Mediterranean sea last summer. They went on talking for another 15 minutes before the young maid appeared again, both Lisa and Mr Styckher took their seat at the table as the young girl opened a bottle of Gragnano from Sorrento, and as Lisa tasted the wine she was amazed how refreshing it was, a red, fizzy wine. She asked the girl about it, and she replied it was a find from her trip around Campania last summer with the Kleemans. As a starter, she served a bruschetta and rocket salad. During the starter, Lisa asked about the two sloops and Mr Styckher told her that one of them had gone under in a storm 10 years ago and they almost lost a younger family member. For the main course, they were served scallops linguine and a lemon veal dish, all cooked to perfection. After they had finished off all the food, Mr Styckher called for the maid and asked her to go to the study and bring a wrapped package. When she returned with it, Mr Stycker passed it onto Lisa. She looked at him with a question on her face. It was an eight by eight

inch package wrapped in a brown paper. He just said, "Open it please". Lisa took her dinner knife and made a small cut in the wrapping and then tore the paper off. At first she was stunned, and then she remembered she had made it on her cruise among the Greek islands. It was a painting of a small hillside village and a yellow hull sailing boat at anchor as a storm started to grow up in the horizon. Lisa asked Mr Styckher about the painting, and it had been put in a box shortly after she had left the family with some of her writings and other belongings. She was truly amazed they had kept it all for this long, it was all she had from a childhood that seemed so long ago and so forgotten. They finished the evening in the sundeck chairs parked on the lawn with a glass of prosecco that even the young maid, Claire, as Lisa had gotten to know her by during the evening. joined in on. While they were all sitting there, Lisa asked again about the sloop and this time Mr Styckher understood her, querying if she would fancy meeting him in the harbor tomorrow morning. Without thinking she replied, "What a splendid idea," with a fake English accent that made Claire giggle.

#### Day 10

Lisa woke up before the break of dawn, looking at her watch on the night stand, it had just passed five am. She pushed her duvet aside and took a deep breath before she got herself out of bed. The ocean was calm as ever and the seagulls were still resting their eyes as she walked down the beach. Far north she could see the light house cast its light of hope along the horizon. As she slowly made her way through the shallow water, a rest built up inside of her. She felt this was the right decision coming here and also that her plan was the right call. As she reached the shallow waters again after her swim, she looked up at the house she had stayed in the last week and thought what an emotional journey this had been, from heaven to hell and back. The rest of the morning she spent resting in the hammock and just after seven am she got her things together for a day out to sea. She got the box out and a wool sweater since she thought it would most likely get chilly in the wind. By seven thirty she left the house walking north up against the lighthouse that marked sandy shores of Cape Cod to guide any sailors into the bay. As she stepped onto the dock she gazed out over the harbor, the fishermen were already out to sea, and the sailboats rested peacefully in the water, waiting for their owners to embark on new adventures. A feeling of joy and love washed over her, why had she not returned sooner? The city had not attracted her for a long time, it had more been like a slope downwards. She walked out on bridge E, and there she was, Louise and next to her just like Mr Styckher had told her a vacant spot marking her sister's destiny as she had gone under. Lisa sat down next to Louise and dipped her toes in the water, small rings started to spread on the water. The reflection of Louise started to dance in the place of

her sister spot. The air felt like summer but she knew the fall was approaching, everything she had known felt like it was blown away like the clouds but yet it all came back to her here. She started to feel at peace inside. As Lisa closed her eyes she felt a push in her side, she opened her eyes and it was the Goldendoodle that greeted her. Lisa stroked her hand through its deep fur. Onto the dock she could now see Mr Styckher, the French maid Claire and to her a new face, a young man who she assumed would be the skipper. He introduced himself as Rick before he helped Lisa onboard with her bag. Lisa made herself comfortable as Claire went to the bow to untie the rope as the boat would glide out of its berth. Rick was fast, almost seconds after they passed the two end beams of the berth the main sail was up to push the boat forward through the water and out of the harbor. Lisa looked on with amusement, Rick was skilful to set sail so early while they were still in the harbor. The dog rested next to Lisa, and she looked at Rick and Claire maneuvering the boat out to open water. Mr Styckher was below deck making sure everything was secured for rougher seas. Rick told Mr Styckher and Lisa that they were about to run out to deeper water before going true south with the wind racing the spinnaker. Both Lisa and the dog loved how the wind kept playing with their hair. That evening they laid anchor in Monsod Bay just north of Martha's Vineyard.

## Day 11

Lisa woke up from the sound of the waves as the water danced along the hull of the boat. Up on deck was the Goldendoodle already sitting on guard, looking out over the bay. Mr Styckher had arranged for a chaser that morning to let the dog come to shore for a walk. Lisa and Claire joined in on the little boat ride and spent the next half hour playing on the beach with the dog. An hour later the wind had started to pick up just as Rick had predicted. He said if they had left earlier they could have made it through the Cape Cod canal since the tide was working their way but now it was preferred to go along the coast. As Rick raised the sail to leave the bay, Lisa went down under deck to get her box. She ripped it open and took out a brass container, walked up on deck again and passed John on the stern. She sat down with her legs over the railing, unscrewed the lid and poured the ashes into the water as she whispered, "Goodbye Eveline, this is where one journey begins and one ends. Stay safe my rose". And as she said those last words a tear fell down her cheek. Mr Styckher had looked on as Lisa had poured the ashes in the water, he patted the dog for a second before he walked over to Lisa, sat down and rested an arm around her shoulders to comfort her as they saw the ashes slowly fade away in the gentle current from the boat.



The End

# Thank you

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