

The Fox

On sunny days I remember her.

Long silk dresses. Flowery patterns and dainty hands, meticulously planting seeds in our tiny garden. A freckled face radiating sunshine, just like she herself always did. And when she turned to flash those sharp teeth of hers at me, her mane of copper hair would glint faintly, until she turned away again.

Every day with her is a blessing as I get up, woken by the faint smell of the outdoors, hearing her hum in the kitchen, stirring and mixing, knowing that she is preparing something special just for me. Even though I am away for the rest of the day, doing what needs to be done, I smile, holding her presence in my heart. And when I return, there she is, standing guardedly, waiting for me, just as she always does. Supper follows and she tells me about her day, tells me about the same thing always. Her garden.

The soil is hard, she says. No matter what she does, or what she uses, it is unyielding. Many plants have failed to penetrate the upmost layer, and no effort has changed that. However, one flower, and one flower alone has prevailed. One singular red rose. It needs regular care, she tells me, her face shining with excitement. Special soil, the right amount of water and protection from the fierce glare of the sun. But, she adds, there is no flower on this earth that could come close to it.

After she finishes her tale, she cleans up, and I take a stretch and look at the garden, gaze upon the fruit of her effort. However, all I see is brown earth and green moss, no red glint, no red rose. I never ask her where it is, because I cannot imagine seeing any disappointment on her face.

So this continues. Every day I return from work, I must listen to her rambling about the rose and each and every time I stand at the window, I see nothing. Remain untouched by her story, by the picture she describes of the beautiful red rose right in our backyard, which my eyes refuse to see. Day after day, I look deeper through the glass, the window and the wine, trying to find that flower in my garden. But I cannot. She sees something I can't. At some point it becomes worse. Slowly, I cannot bear seeing her exultancy about that wonderful plant, the one thing in this world I seem not to possess, but she does. Something else builds up inside me, something red.

Rage.

After that one day, she fell silent. Now I only see her in the garden when I look out, a faint glint of red hair, working on the soil.

Her tale still haunts me, however, and each time I hear her scratch in the soil, I walk outside, hoping to catch a glimpse of what has eluded me for so long.

And so the days fall into another pattern. The evenings become quiet, instead of talking to me, she talks to the earth. I only see her bushy hair outside, close to the ground, and some other times, she disappears altogether. I start missing her.

"Come inside!" I want to shout. "Tell me about the rose!".

But she hears nothing, just as I can see nothing. Guilt wracks me every night, and every morning I stare out into the little patch of seeds that have been shifted by her gentle touch. I feel her presence, and suddenly I know what I must do.

I skip work that day, hunting down the biggest bouquet of red roses I can find. I stop at nothing, knowing that I must find the flower she keeps talking about. Until I do. One singular red rose lying in the corner of the last flower shop in town I have visited. Immediately, I hurry home, into the garden, towards her. She is waiting for me, I know it.

As I cross the garden I see a faint outline in the soil, the same one which could never be moved. It is fresh and dug up. At the head of the patch, a fox prowls around, with its red bushy tail sniffing the irregularity in the ground, moving the plant seeds with its snout as it does so. Its fur glints in the sun just as her hair used to do.

Maybe that is why it visits this spot so often.

The red rose falls from my hand onto the ground, and with it a tear. As I fall to my knees, I see the tiniest saplings growing from the soil, and know that her body has offered one last gift to this world. The flowers finally start growing.