

“Last Night, South Town” by Ella Freda

The remaining drops of alcohol flow down the street, weaving through the shards of glass, diluting the blood that coated the inside of his nose. It becomes with the stream of the rain, slowly passing down to the grimy grate entrance to the tunnels below. The street is quiet now, as the groups have long left and taken the evil with them. Nothing can be heard now except the light taps of liquid down below and the sprinkle of rain on the store awnings. Not that any noise would be loud enough to pierce through the ringing in his ears. Folded on the curb, he gives himself up to the concrete and filth. The red neon signs that illuminate the shop windows reflect off his face, embellishing the reds of the marks strangers' hands left on his skin and dancing along the blues of the bruises already taking form. Tears on his compressed cheek follow the same route of the blood, sweat, and rain. Though a victim on this occasion, he does not search for remorse from the vacant street. It is not his place.

It has been dark enough now to question if the sun will ever rise again. But it does. And gloriously so. The early beams coat the dry road in search of his pitiful condition but return unsuccessful. The warmth would have done him good, but it is for the best. The street had but two friends: Night and Day. And no one could have predicted the chaos that would ensue if he had remained.

The birds are awake now, and the crisp air sends their notes dancing along every rooftop in the cobblestone kingdom. The town is reborn, as every morning, with the bustle of shop owners, greetings and good. Fresh warm breads are set out and cold fish hung. Any newcomer within a mile radius could have caught a whiff of the flavors that enveloped the street and found their way without having to ask a kind stranger for direction.

The rain had washed away any trace of wrongdoing and sent the liquor out to sea. In its place falls a handful of yellow daisy petals in the gutter, forgotten in a cart's unsteady route along the street. A young boy wearing an apron two sizes too large sweeps up the frail yellow stragglers, along with the glass shards from the night before. The vibrant colors and perfumes of the flower cart wash over him with some delay as it makes its way past his aunt's bakery. He keeps his head down and doesn't speak a word, watching as the bristles sanitize and swallow the evidence whole. He had grown accustomed to the routine of his job and understands, at least to some extent, its necessity despite his age. Patrons begin to weave through the stores and the now golden light. Most smile at him, some don't.

Though his task isn't complete, he slumps down on the curb. The broom hits his legs as it descends alongside its owner, but he doesn't notice. In his familiar solitary, he sits.

And watches as the street recovers.