

I Just Want You to Be Happy

By: Evan Bair

Floral curtains hung over the double French door openings to the balcony. Corresponding patterns lined the sitting room chairs, and the golden-plated mirror echoed the reflection of flames fluttering up the chimney from a wood-burning fireplace. In one of the chairs sat Maurice, comfortably settling into his seat indentation, formed over years of development. The mirror covered most of the wall, and when Maurice turned, he could see his bald head and horn-rimmed glasses settled above his full, white beard. He grabbed each arm of his chair, and through considerable effort, hoisted himself into a standing position. He wore a grey cardigan with a seasonally festive plaid shirt that smelled like sandalwood. His flannel pajama pants swished between his legs as he made his way towards the kitchen.

Maurice waved to his maid as he entered the kitchen. What time did she get here? He did not think he had let her in, but she sat at his granite island with a dozen pill bottles in front of her, caps laying everywhere. They look like landmines, he thought. The last thing he wanted to do was to disturb her, but she looked oddly familiar to him. Then he thought, of course she looks familiar, she is my maid. She sat at the island, whispering under her breath, placing pills in what must be the perfect corresponding holder. Her orange sweater and khakis reminded him he was hungry. The fridge was just past the island, and before reaching in to grab an orange he saw a note on the door. It said that the lease on his apartment was ending soon, he wondered where he would go. He had been in this Woodhaven apartment for as long as he could remember. On his way back to the sitting room he reached in his pocket and felt a course, sandy marble. He had found it in his garden just the day before. It made him wonder what it would be like to have a son. He had always wanted one.

II

Maurice peeked his head in the bottom right pane of his kitchen window. From here he could see the street, and he knew his driver would be picking him up soon. It was morning and buildings from across the street casted a shadow that covered half of the road. While he waited for his driver, he could not help but notice the wall he was facing was mustard yellow, while the other three were red. There ought to be some extra paint in the cupboard in the rec room, he could take care of that later. His gaze shifted from the wall coloring to the numerous enchanting paintings that were scattered on the walls. They were of landscapes, architecture, and people, happy people. He did not recall there being so many. He removed himself from the window and walked down the hallway to his bedroom. More paintings hung on the walls. They were beautiful. A tear came to Maurice's eye before remembering he needed to look for his driver waiting for him on the New York streets.

His driver was a full of positive spirit. Jovial and engaging, Maurice thought he was a good ol' boy. With his newsboy hat on, Maurice looked out of the passenger seat window with a grin on his face, brownstones passing by like columns in a slot machine. The buildings were stately and welcoming, and he leaned towards the window with his index finger extended, like a zoo-goer deciding whether to tap on the glass. Well into their trek, Maurice stuck his hand into his pocket. He felt the sandy marble and rolled it around in his palm, his fist pulsating to feel the rigidity of his prized item. He decided to pull it from his pocket and show the driver. It was in his garden, he said, and he asked if the driver had a son. Maurice had always wanted one. The driver quickly diverted his glance from the road and looked at the marble. After that, he grew quiet. He sniffed a few times and wiped his face with the sleeve of his corduroy jacket. Maurice decided maybe it was not the best idea to ask the driver about his personal life.

After the visit, Maurice's mouth felt extremely clean. His tongue wiped over his smooth teeth and the bubblegum flavoring reminded him of opening packs of baseball cards when he was a boy. He smiled as the brownstones cycled by in front of his eyes. They pulled up in front of his apartment, and the driver asked if he was ready for his lease to be up. Maurice had not thought about his lease until last night, and decided it was best for him to read it thoroughly before he decided to leave. He was not sure where he was going to go once it ended. Pushing up on the center console, Maurice assured the driver he was fine to get into his apartment. He had a lot of work to do, his sitting room needed a fresh coat of paint. The driver smiled and told Maurice to take care. Maurice ate an orange on his couch until the sun went down, and Diane came over to give him his pills.

III

Maurice spent the whole morning looking for his lease. He could not find it anywhere and figured he must have misplaced it when moving into the apartment. It had just been a year ago, he recalled. He thought the lease must be running out soon. The paint was not in the cupboard and his sitting room did not match, and while a fire roared in the fireplace, he ate an orange while staring into the palette of mustard yellow. He stood up to look at the painting of a barn on his wall. The red was so rich, contrasting with the yellow, that it startled him. He crept over to his French door facing the street and looked for his driver. He knew he was coming today, the fridge had said so, but he was not sure why. Any chance to be with the driver was enough for him, he was a good ol' boy and was always a guaranteed laugh from their conversation.

Maurice noticed his driver was more quiet today. No brownstones, they were exiting the city, somewhere new for him. Upon entering the building, Maurice noticed the smell first. It was institutional, a vague staleness in the air that made him uneasy. He imagined the roar of his fire from his favorite chair. He was happy to be back in the car, the countryside turned into busy

streets and soon the brownstones were cycling through his eyes on an aggressive rotation. He reached into his pocket and there was nothing there. He was confused, patting both sides of his pants, and decided he must have not transferred his belongs from his trousers from the previous day. The driver parked in front of Maurice's building, and Maurice paused. For some reason, he reached towards the driver's arm and grabbed it tightly. He did not know why, but he started to cry. Gentle sobs came from Maurice while hot tears stream down his face onto his wool sweater. They stayed like this and decided it would be best to stay like that, just for a little while.

IV

Once Maurice is inside, the driver calls Diane to see how their father had been the day before. Diane made sure he was taking his medicine but was not sure how it was working. The driver held himself together while stating the lease will be up soon. He had to get home soon to his children.

Maurice stared at the painting right inside of his bedroom door. In the corner said the words Maurice Lemeaux. He thinks of how it's remarkable the way the stalky yellow of the plains flirts and flickers with the ominous blue and grey shadows of the overcast sky above. In the field is a family sitting Indian style in a circle, a man, a woman, a boy, and a girl. He wonders what it would be like to have a son, he always wanted one. He drops the marble he was rolling between his thumb and middle finger, and it rolls steadily on the hardwood under his bed. He looks back up at the painting and wonders what it would be like to have anyone at all.