

Wonder Woman

by Charlie Brule

Insomnia was nothing new, but tonight as I watched shadows dance across the ceiling, I not only felt awake, I felt restless. The tile floor of the kitchen was chilled under my feet as I navigated from my bedroom to the open kitchen area, from which I gazed out at the city skyline. The windows of the wall opposite where I stood cascaded in a waterfall of glass from the ceiling to floor, exposing the view of the grid of Seattle that fell 14 floors below. The balcony collected rain which habitually fell, drops leaving their streaky paths across the windows. I adjusted myself on the edge of the bar stool that lay in line with the four along the outstretched arm of marble counter top. I questioned why I had four, I never had company and I always chose to sit in the same one. It was actually rare that I sat in the kitchen anyways, surrounding myself with the bare cupboards and the reflective surfaces of the stainless steel appliances. But yet hear I sat listening to the rain.

The tumblers of the lock a floor below me jolted and I heard the hinges creak. For as much as I paid for this apartment I should not have been able to hear any of my neighbor's activities, but I had Addison's schedule memorized after living above her for the last year. I glanced at the red glow from the microwave, 2:30 am. This was early for her to be coming in on a Friday. Most weeknights she returned from her office at this time, but weekends she always put in extra hours, but as I heard her briefcase fall with a thud, I knew that she had still been at work. To describe her as a workaholic would have been insulting to her efforts. The attractive red head, her green eyes piecing the lenses of her dark rimmed glasses, was convinced the world was hers to save, one graphic design ad at a time.

Your candle burns at both ends/ And mostly in the middle/ But you won't learn/ That you can't even do better when you sit still/ And don't you know it's really sad/ That you might just forget how to laugh

I had run into her various times; at the mail boxes, the elevators, even picking up take-out from the Chinese restaurant down the street. But, I had yet to utter more than a polite hello. Instead, I shyly observed. We left for work at the same time; often standing in the elevator, both avoiding the awkward silence by losing ourselves in our imaginary text conversations. Or maybe she was busy enough to begin conversations at the start of her day. She was a Wonder woman, working day and night to keep her advertising business running. Every day was a battle, and she was set to win it.

Cause even Wonder Woman needs her sleep / And Wonder Woman even gets her nails done/ And Wonder Woman takes a break for her own sake / Not every time a battle's won

I listened as she crossed to the balcony and pushed open the door. With the rain falling she remained inside, but I could smell a bit of the smoke of her cigarette wafting through the slightly cracked window. There was a gentle beeping from her microwave and I heard her move back into the kitchen. I moved from my seat on the bar stool towards the balcony. I watched her shadow return to the window, her door cracked to allow smoke to escape. Clinking of the dish and clacking at her laptop allowed my ears to form a picture of her. Long hair plunging down her back in a crimson spool of silk, she would focus on work still even at this hour. I could go out on the balcony; even in the rain I'd do it for her. I just wanted to speak words other than hello.

But she wouldn't have time for me. I imagined her voice, "You're a great guy, but I have a meeting that night." She had to save the world, keep the sun shining, keep the stars from falling. She did not have time for me. I turned and went to bed.

And don't you know that it's OK / To take a rest some days

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Behind every Wonder Woman/ Is a pretty lonesome heart/ You should do your best to involve it/ Before you even start

Addison sat in her comfy chair; having kicked off her work heels she inhaled her Chef-Boyardee. She sat in her recliner facing her balcony watching the rain fall. Rain, it was stable and comfortable. Addison was used to the phenomenon of how much it rained in Seattle. She couldn't tear her eyes away as the drops fell and in minutes her dinner was done. It was her first meal since a corporate lunch earlier that day. Total exhaustion was filling her muscles with fatigue. She leaned forward and slid open the glass sliding door that separated her from the rain that plummeted down on her balcony and the city beyond. She propped open her computer to check her email one final time. She needed to see if anyone had contacted her about the meeting tomorrow, instead she found an inbox already swarming with emails screaming for response. The screen was an impending sign of doom. Hours of work lay ahead. It never stopped, never waited for her to catch up, just kept piling. She lit another cigarette and heard a rumbling above her.

Wayne was off to bed. His dark hair, broad smile, twinkling eyes, the image flashed across her eyes. Maybe she should take a day off from work and call him. So many times they had passed in the building or in restaurants around their apartment building. His coy smile and shyness was thrillingly cute, but she'd leave him. Balancing dating and a career seemed impossible for her. Single was a lifestyle choice she decided upon long ago. Another cigarette was lit and she moved closer to the glass doors. The rain was continuing to fall and she could feel spray the wind blew through the cracked door. The puffed slowly. Letting the deep drag fill her and the exhale take away her troubles. Since building her company she hadn't had any time to enjoy herself. She couldn't trust anyone else to run the company, who knows what could happen in a day when someone else took the lead. Yes she had managers, but it was different when it was your company, she always argued. Addison had passion, love, and was ultimately determined to be successful. Others did not have the same connection to the company. It was their job, not their life.

And here she sat, alone, listening to her neighbor stumble to a vacant bed. She missed the warmth of coming to bed with another body there. Having warm, strong arms wrap around her delicate shoulders. That safety and comfort now came from stability in her work. That was what she had, work.

She stubbed out the cigarette, closed her computer and left her dirty dish on the table. It wasn't bugging anyone else. Standing her knees cracked, and she yawned stretching her arms upward. The rain pounded as her feet pushed her forward toward the empty room with the empty bed. She was going to bed, alone again.

"Behind every Wonder Woman is a pretty lonesome heart"

