Reproductive Disneyland

by Elaine Chiew

Justin comes out of the bathroom, finally erect, his hands glistening with K-Y jelly as he chucks the girlie mag into a corner. “I'm ready.”

Through the afternoon's soft-filtered light, Kelly watches him climb on top of her and thinks of the meanings of “coitus". Fornication, love-making, sexual congress, intimacy. Only one of which is procreation. She stares at his jutting collar-bone, as the bed begins to shake with his exertions. The sun has changed his skin pigmentation in a couple of places, and a mulberry-colored stain woos her.

Two nights ago, Kelly had dreamt of a baby with curly brown hair and doll-blue eyes blowing raspberries at her. His pudgy fingers clenched, unclenched. When Kelly woke up, for a moment she could still see an imprint of that baby on her retina. As if she'd stared at the sun too long and it had left its dark shadow.

Justin looks at the wall behind her head. The poster is a cheap reprint of Ansel Adam's Oak Tree, Sunset City. Choices pared down to a black and white starkness. Kelly can stare at that reprint for hours. Right now though, she wishes Justin to be less retrospective, less accepting of the firmament of air trapped between their bodies.

Justin expels with a sigh. Kelly hears his stomach rumbling as he climbs off to shower, the way he always does. “I'll get the car ready.”

Three nights ago, at a friend's dinner party, they'd met a Spanish couple, Miguel and Catarina. Somehow, in the course of three bottles of wine, Justin let slip that they've been trying for a baby for

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three years, that they've tried all manner of acronyms: IUI, IVF, GIFT, ICSI. Even chewing ginseng root. Good one! Miguel clapped Justin on the shoulder, laughing. Miguel himself had tried deer penis and the Aphrodisiac of Sultans (41 spices and herbs mixed into a paste —*Dios mio*, I was high as a kite!). Acupuncture, Catarina wrung her hands, they stuck me with quills, like a porcupine. They even went on a reproductive tour around California's fifty or more premier clinics, organized by an agency. Disneyland for the childless. Miguel and Catarina laughed. Justin laughed along, but Kelly heard how hollow it was.

“In the end, you know what worked?” Miguel paused with significance. Justin leaned forward.

“The Demon, Great America! All that tumbling, like a washer-dryer, you know?”

“No kidding!” But he had exchanged looks with Kelly, as if to say, *You see?*

She wanted to tell them how tired she was. That quiet desperation had changed the man she married, that she no longer knew what she wanted.

Here they are now, at the closest roller-coaster ride they can find. It's not Great America, or Disneyland, but it'll have to do.

Twenty minutes drive, with Justin twisting the wheel, foot pumping the gas, before those soldiers start swimming in wayward directions.

Justin chooses the Twisted Tornado. Kelly hears the slow grind of gears, the metal click of wheels on rails. She looks over at Justin. His hands lie sequestered in his lap. She thinks of her ova, lined up like bingo balls, until their numbers are called.

Her fingers grip her seatbelt as they hurtle off. The wind whips her hair wildly around her face. Vertigo slams her as the train car plunges. One minute she can still see, the next, her world is spinning. Someone is screaming. Is that her voice? It seems to be coming from the valleys, the hills, the corkscrews and loops. The wind snaps tears out of her squeezed-shut eyes.

In the redness behind closed lids, she visualizes the inside of a drum, steel sides tumbling, rolling, as white flickering amoeba gnashes against an oversized egg, again and again. She visualizes the way Justin tells her to. Faster is the tumbling, deeper is the spinning, until her throat runs dry and her lips begin to move silently, forming a precursor to sound. How chance has trounced them both, she now thought. And yet, there is a sense of the sublime. Kelly realizes what survives her is more than progeny. From her lips now emanate a whoosh and a long ‘aaaaaa', a primordial language that breathes of bones and fossil jaws.