

Clicking

by T.M. Washington

Symphony didn't know what was more prejudicial: the legions of gaping onlookers staring at her in inaudible terror or the misshapen craters populating the concrete under her crimson and white mountain bike (the same bike her older brother Evan warned her repeatedly never to touch) as she rocketed down Melrose Avenue, re Purgatory's Lane; re Dead Man's Hill.

Reining her small hands around the molded handle grips, her bottom bouncing athwart and wildly off the seat, Symphony wrenches her center of gravity inward, commandeering as much control the road would allow. With her breaks behaving as stubbornly as a codger ordering dinner at breakfast she knew, with all the conditions lining up, that a crash was inevitable.

Despite this, and the whimsical computations one might conjure up on paper as to her possibilities of surviving her quarter-mile descent unscathed, Symphony wouldn't have wanted it any other way. She was out to disprove her nay-sayers and check their sexist egos at the door.

With gawkers on either side, an old woman heard faintly trumpeting admonition amid the collage of blurred faces, Symphony moves with uncontrolled urgency of a carriage out of Sleepy Hollow. While some would embrace fear and concern, Symphony remains inconsolable from either emotion. She made up her mind gradually on what had to be done, more so in pace when she rounded St. Anne Avenue and pedaled the oversized bike toward the chutes n ladders gorge like so many others---including stupid Gregory Adams!

Not since the 1970s, when the city and planning intelligentsia added Melrose Avenue to their chopping block of “wasteful and unnecessary city expenditures” had anyone ever dared to tempt the

gods of gravity and incongruity and try the perilous concrete dead end street. Not since Nat Diaz Jr., who came within 30 yards of inscribing his name to the annals of inner city bravery before his repaired bike chain unfurled beneath him, hurling his spry body like tossed leaves into the air, had anyone attempted to fill his shoes. Not since his recovery; and the 10 tiny rods of steel needed to correct his maligned legs and wounded spirit, has anyone ever contemplated the feat. Notwithstanding the administrative lore attached to the road, and its prize seekers, perhaps there was some unregistered semblance of vainglory coursing through her bloodstream, thusly motivating her to jaunt over parental care and wisdom and wear the crown of imprudence fashionably? And then again, maybe there wasn't.

Symphony didn't consider them enough deterrents to sway her from her grail of immortality.

Her peripheral vision begins to blur, as the dazzling force pulling her down the hill increases. Soon, the people, the buildings, and store-fronts begin to fade, slanting into dizzy gray and black borders. Symphony wraps her sensibilities around the bicycle; placing utmost care in negotiating the riddled landscape than the lively environment around it. A blessing from above suddenly touches her blanched lips, saturating them, and then her entire body in a drizzle of moisture.

The spot shower took little notice of her minor predicament. It not to feed the trees and cool the dry earth around it, it served to turn the cement beneath her bike into a slippery hell. Like a rocket the bicycle flew, bouncing over cracks and streams effortlessly. Symphony's body, much like her adolescent faith, begins to suffer from the trepidation and exhaustive trembling. Soon, if not sometime before the rainfall, she questions her single-minded

worthiness. Asking if the challenge proposed in her direction earlier the day justified her embarking on this misadventure in the first place.

The word heady couldn't come close to describing Raymond Marrero, a prodigal wunderkind perched on the top of the world at Christopher Columbus High School. Among the universe of peers and personalities at the school, his was the most ebullient; with a fragile disclaimer: a mounted cause to either follow the rules or vilify them.

However to Symphony, these facts notwithstanding, Raymond possessed one trait that was both a social compliment and a blight, and to her an item of embarrassing noteworthiness: she secretly loved him. What made Raymond an aberration among his peers (the jocks, the preps, the wannabes, and pariahs) who possessed similar attractive traits was the fact that his wasn't a supernova. He wasn't one of those boys who possessed an overbearing amount of attractiveness, the beam of all women and men at one moment, only to corrode into ugliness and guttural failure later in life.

NoNoNo.

Raymond was as attractive as the word describes, and those who glimpsed him for a moment or resided in his presence knew that in high school, in college; in adulthood, and in retirement his adopting beauty and charisma would never leave him. Without advertising arrogance, Raymond knew this. Which only added to his rising stock, if not religious following, among the girls (and boys, because a man rises only so far off the coifs of girls in high school without the support and ballast of his brethren) in his classroom; in his

school; in his neighborhood.

Symphony despised this about him.

She despised his grace, his carefree luxury about things, as if expecting or aware of his place on top of the food chain. She watched how Raymond's voice could spin a room against its own better judgment, causing bullies to pacify their bastard rage or Administrators to massage the rules, all before he meandered out at 3pm like a satisfied pied piper. He was the prodigal's prodigal, and for this she found his gall a slap in the face. Still, with all she knew about him, she knew Raymond possessed a shimmer of egalitarianism about the world, and when not under his self imposed spotlight, did incredible things for others. She saw this part of him during those times when the attentive eyes of the many turned elsewhere. For all his verbal hustle and physical charm Raymond possessed a self-efface that could do so much good, but this aspect of him he chose to ignore. This never more apparent earlier in the day, when he spoke and imposed his will to the classroom, and to her.

On a daily basis, Room 210 ran pretty standard, unsurprising, like role call or check in at any Fire House--as all homerooms did. Nothing ever happened within the walls of the classroom the teacher and students didn't see coming. So who would have known that morning when Ms. Baron plainly inquired what the students' plans were for the three day weekend, she would be shaking Pandora's Box ever so. Breaking the seal and unleashing a tsunami of trouble.

It didn't happen all at once, but gradually built upon her open question, the replies filtering across the classroom with a grumble and a buzz. From the left came fragmented noise about going to the movies to see some actor do his best vampire slaying routine; from the right came a disgruntle reply reminding everyone of the

homecoming tonight and party on Saturday. Ms. Baron, reposed at her desk beneath the white dry eraser board, listened to each child flare in excitement, swapping their weekend endeavors or tabloid gossip. She enjoyed this moment as it allowed her to glimpse the tenor of childishness in front of her; the footprints of the generation Y squared. She heard the glamour of discontent rise a decibel when someone, one of the boys in the front row, utter something about snowboarding this weekend with his family in New Hampshire. This was an innocent declaration, no need for an utterance of disapproval from his classmates, Ms. Baron thought. But the umbrage wasn't about the locality of the boy's foray this weekend or his activity but his opinionated comment regarding blonde snowboarders (the women in particular). Ms. Baron found fault with his adolescent, if not sexist comment, and rises from her seat to regulate the room. However, she is supplanted by a boisterous and tomboyish brunette in the background, who makes it her mission to inundate the boy and his now snickering cadre with as many castigating remarks she can usher out her mouth.

The class was well aware and verse of Symphony Johansson's temperament, but some derided her character trait as sign of sexual ambiguity. Yet, many respected the sophomore for her contributions inside and outside the class room, as her flighty, often comical mien, were a hallmark of her real character.

Regardless of her niceties, Symphony could turn into a Tasmanian Devil if she heard someone ever speak ill of a friend or assail the defenseless--diving into the accuser with guns a blazing (Ms. Baron loved Symphony's spoken gall, her ability to be both exacting and obstreperous, but saw this imprudence as one of her major failings).

As Symphony spoke, her words tugging at the ears of all the tweens around her, Ms. Baron couldn't but help notice Raymond Marrero sitting in the front row, turn his head halfway around, in a contorted eavesdropper's poise. She couldn't see his lips, but swore to her

eyes that he was grinning, a passive grin, both feigning and contemplating. He must have known Symphony's malaise wasn't directed toward him, especially not from someone other's charge as being "a sexually ambiguous tomboy sophomore with second hand clothing"? But still the shrill in her voice (if there was one, mind you), her tone of calculated berating, must have irked Raymond's conscious mind—his ego—, and as he turned completely around in his seat, Ms. Baron knew Raymond felt compelled to curb this brown-haired puppy before she grew teeth.

Before Ms. Baron could attempt to seize her class, the front row warring with the back on a new topic charging men with being better [insert avocation or vocation] than women, Raymond opened his mouth slowly to add commentary. It would be his words, feeding off the grist of ammunition left in the air by the room's heir apparent to Joan of Arc that would divide the alignment of the classroom, and place one student on notice to react and another on par to admire.

Raymond, with a shrug and an entreaties grin, proceeds to balk at Symphony's pros (because in his world of modest chicanery, everything was debatable) and shelter his opinions in matters of factuality and seemingly misogynistic grace.

Ms. Baron expected an uproar to ensue, from both divided factions of reason that made up her living classroom (which in fact does occur, but much later and not under her watch), but she wasn't prepared for Raymond's gilded and unnerved manner. His resilient strategy deflecting, feigning, and eroding every query put to him by Symphony, was insurmountable in this, his arena. Terse at times, Raymond never left his seat throughout, capable of disagreeing without donning the cap of belligerence or vulgarity, his contraption of presentation in his posture.

"He could be so much more," Ms. Baron thought, her mind's eye

regarding Raymond's feat with airy optimism. "He could serve such a greater good if he were on our side instead of playing his vantage or up to those popular assumptions of him."

Symphony, swimming in a sea of agitated voices (other than her own) took Raymond's feminine castigations, his smug "I have answers for questions you haven't even thought of yet" smile and felt the searing vomit rise in her throat. The raucous brought on by his unfeeling commentary swooning over each student's head, waving from lip to ears, from ears to lips.

Secretly, away from the verbal jaunt overtaking the class; away from the classroom and school itself, Symphony felt a familiar stir build inside her (nothing like the emetic rise from before), a sensation which brought with it a crushing weight, followed by an awkward chill and queasiness. And like every time, she agrees with the condition taking over her, speaking to her, and replied to it in a whisper.

"I know, I know. I do love him...I love him so much, but I won't be seen as weak."

Unlike Ms. Baron, who harbored feelings toward Raymond Marrero's personality incarnate; and unlike half the female population who adored him for being hot (in every way imaginable), Symphony Johansson loved him for his appearance, his gall, his indefensible mien, but above all these externalities she admired his secret identity: which was one of utter selflessness and unheralded affability.

Outside school, where his fan base and attractors ceased to exist, Raymond was a simon-pure of adorable civil egalitarianism. He took to the plight of others, seeing to assist or serve them as best he could, without guile, egotism or the reward of status elevation. His alter ego was one of true friendliness, this evident in his

organizational skills to bring people together for parties, sports or community activism (something many on campus, the immaterial cluster of faces, would find inconceivable). Despite all these telling nuances about him; which were either observed by Symphony from afar or by accident while with family or friends, she knew Raymond would never reveal his truer identity. More over, she knew she could never reveal the kind of person he really was to anyone in school (maybe some of them already knew, but chose to keep it a secret?). In any event she knew she could not say anything, not unless she wanted to incur the wrath of the powers that be; and increase the sneers and jeers she received every other day from her detractors and “popular class” ten fold (not to say that would be such a bad thing, considering the insults would be just the same once news of the argument between she and Raymond caught wind).

Raymond, being a junior, commandeered much of the resources those of his ilk normally did not or could not socially afford. Symphony on the other hand was a sophomore, and not a wildly likable one at that (as hinted at in the last paragraph, and sprinkled about this part of the story). Being middle of the road, sans the worn hand-me-downs, the lack of makeup, unkempt hair, and social awkwardness, she dare not rub against his gravitational belt unless invited to do so. In short, arguing with Raymond already painted a bull's-eye on top of the already fainted imprint placed there last year. As the clamor in her chest begged her not to sit idle, insisting for her to wail like a siren and crush this conversation, to subdue his voice, she couldn't even do this for herself, though she loved him. Given her “heresy” at this moment, the topic of discussion now questioning her bravery, she dared not trespass into his line of fire and defend herself outright. Symphony resisted trespassing as an option, co-opting instead to swapping out her fiery mien for that of a docile sheep’s wont.

It was always Symphony's habit to withdraw when someone of Raymond's magnitude and merit approached. It was always her

habit to saddle aside, giving berth to people like him, so as not to become a target of their aspersions.

For some reason this morning, Symphony decides otherwise.

Raymond becomes increasingly vocal with his tactics, his argument now sensitively sexist, as every closing inveigh stultified each student who dare protest. Save for one.

The fervor of exchange between Symphony and Raymond was instant, happening without governance of punctuality or etiquette. Each, driven as it was, to espouse his or her ideology within the given time allowed, and yet, poking holes into the fabled popularity of the other. As Raymond denounced women's roles in sports, social hierarchy and sexual sensationalism, his opines reaching into the top breast pocket of male dominion, Symphony vigorously countered each of his conjecture ridden remarks with passion and steel reverence. Ms. Baron watched helplessly, for the second time in her academic career, as two bodies of thought collided.

Ms. Baron along with her gawking students listened as Symphony and Raymond exchanged, no, argued point of views on the subject of who contributed more: men or women, and as she did so, her parental mind focused on the temperance and passion of the two students. A thought appears to Ms. Baron, trickling down from her once tween mind, and resting along the brim of a now parting smile. What she noticed, but the entire class missed, was the fact that they weren't watching a noisome debate between two hidebound opponents, but rather a lover's quarrel.

The Language Arts teacher of 21 years watched as the Kentuckian took to the self-aggrandizing celebrity, replying to each of his mild talking point with rolled blue eyes, furled eyebrows, and vocal carriages of disappointment. Ms. Baron loved it, as one would love to see a chauvinistic dolt be put on his head in front of the world by someone seemingly insignificant by his standards. But what brought

endless pleasure to her though, what possessed the power to quiet the classroom for the duration of 5 minutes, was the fact that Raymond Marrero had suddenly turned from a calculated gentleman and into a stammering and stuttering bleached bust of his former self. All his superior charm and wit withered away like dry leaves, revealing an atony weary boy who could not devise a way to defend himself accordingly or rouse his now silent supporters to his dry voiced cause.

What changed the direction of that morning's palaver, what stirred in the depths of ridicule and humiliation, similarly, along with the life force of change between Raymond and Symphony, was a one sentence indiscrete potshot delivered by the former to the latter. It was this remark, and the seconds following its utterance, that spark an audible gasp followed by a series of insincere chortles from the classroom. Many were caught off guard at first, perhaps blaming their ears for failing to discern if Raymond blurted out his comment in haste. But when it did reach their ears, when it did navigate around the classroom; the nerve behind his insult inquiring as to whether Symphony liked boys at all (her sexual ambiguity), some took to it like a feeding frenzy.

The conversation almost immediately, beginning harmlessly some ten minutes earlier, developed and cultivated into a full blown slander-fest; each student deriding the other in school popularity, activities, social strata, grades, and (as it was expected) attire. The bystanders of this car-wreck, erupted into calamitous teasing, laughter and derision, as Symphony sat rightly so in the middle (after having one's sexuality questioned it seems the rules governing this once lighthearted and already won debate were tossed out).

Some students however, quiet and always unchecked, saw Raymond's accusation as one fed off desperation. Symphony, not to be outdone, replied with even more vigor; deciding to sample from the same appetizer list of insults as Raymond did.

It was hard.

As they continue with their now personal debate, said out of frustration, somewhere nestled in each sentence and syllable, existed a faint atmosphere of regret between them. Ms. Baron immediately wrestles control of her class before any more caustic words can be passed between the two students; obliterating the bi-partisan conversation with a throaty “Ok, that's enough.”

Unfortunately it did not end in homeroom, as Ms. Baron would find out much later in the ubiquitous teacher's lounge. She would hear various retellings, from both her colleagues and wayward students that the tumult between Symphony Johansson and Raymond Marrero took on this sovereign of importance during the school day. Mr. Wise, a rail thin History teacher, told her that during his class the typically loquacious Symphony sat reserved and quiet, daydreaming outside the window, her thoughts elsewhere and not in his classroom. He saw her come to life once, after the bell rang, when he saw a group of girls pass secretly, inaudible words in her direction. Before he could say something, Mr. Wise continued, Symphony utters something in a low, bristled voice, which disperses the clutch like a stone tossed into a glass house.

(The wounds were fresh now, trickling, and the wolves teamed around to take a stab at her; to ridicule and mock her inevitable demise.)

Ms. Baron, undaunted by her heavy afternoon schedule or the crowds of gossip populating her senses, listens next to Mr. Wiley, the third year Foreign Language Teacher, recant how even the students in his 11:15 class (renown for being detached from the everyday happenings in the school), those who weren't even privy to its genesis, spoke of the topic in rushed voices and concealed mouths. Whatever had occurred had spiraled liked a pandemic first among

the freshman and sophomores, and into the lofty hubris environs of the juniors and senior classes. Mr. Wiley even shared a tidbit of information, passed to him from another, that the study hall, typically silent and dogmatic to the rules about talking, internet usage and cellphones became inundated with rule-breakers; a whirling dervish taking on the form of text messaging (a violation), emails and instant messaging (another violation), and boisterous chatter (and yes, another violation).

It was dreadfully sad to see how much apocalyptic damage a sophomore could stir up in the span of a thirty minutes, but when an unbridled heroine dug her nails inside the Chimera's side, the act alone is destined to make the front-page, if not the better headline, of everyone's individual newspaper.

Ms. Baron heard from every teacher, from anyone who had an inference to relate or share about the affair regarding Raymond and Symphony. She listened how both students continued their discussion in fifth period lunch; outside under the foyer, the topic of male-female importance swapped for an impetus regarding which of the two was the bravest. There, in a brief moment, a dare was brokered, set and agreed upon, one which would settle which of them could do the bravest, most daring act before the week was out.

...and so Deadman's Hill was to be Symphony's punctuated rebuke to Raymond's statement--his uttered out of unerring haste, ego and guilt.

Symphony finds herself caroling wildly down Deadman's Hill, motivated by the incessant social criticism and the bitter opine by her secret crush. With everything reexamined, her indictment for a day spent wallowing in a sea of naïve arrogance reinserted and brought up to date, Symphony finds narrow enterprise in the fact

that she will survive this unscathed. This was all said and unsaid, spoken through the chamber of swooshing passing into her face and through her clothing.

This was all constant. But she was not alone.

It would typically take the average person 3 to 5 minutes to walk down the hill; with all things considered like weather and companion alike. Symphony rationalizes the duration of time before and during her glide down the hill felt as if ten minutes had lapsed. The only pervasive occurrence riding with her, along with her now fearfully saturated ego, is the colloquial whisper emanating from her bicycle in the guise of a noisy bike chain. The cricket-esque rattle, soft and preen, felt as if the bike was speaking to her personally; for far off in those lands of talking rabbits, jousting playing cards and animated broomsticks, the everyday did speak the tongue of man's populous when one inquires to listen.

"clickclickclickclickclick," the bike responds to the puddles and cracked concrete.

"clickclickclickclickclick," the cricket utters, as it's song reverberates through wood, steel and bone.

"clickclickclickclickclick," as its chatter builds into the rider's very namesake, a waltz of confidence and assurance issuing between each note.

Her hazel gray eyes spy it first; way before her squinting heart has the chance to, an object jutting out of the blurry background like a peeping tom on a mission. Gathered amid the candescent gray, some 100 yards south of her, a bulky mound of shaven branches and dirt sat at the bottom of the hill. The composition of the pile is entirely guesswork, but it looked as if it could absorb a lot of force--say a 109 lb girl on a rocket. Symphony didn't know who to sing praise to first: the heavens or the mismanaged crew of laborers who neglected to clean up after a week's worth of work before heading

home (perhaps to Staten Island) for the weekend.

Absolution, their absolution, is found in the confetti-like wood and corrugated boxes off to her right. All she knew is that she had to get herself pointing in that direction, everything else afterwards will play itself out. Throughout her plan of attack Symphony constantly reminded herself that if she mis-measured by an arms length, her ascent (after this descent) would be instantaneous.

“clickclickclickclickclick...” Schwinn reminds her, its frame vibrating in teeming excitement (or foolish inebriation) of this.

“I know, but there's no other way,” she replies into her chest.

The instructions were obvious now, voiced shrewdly through her scarlet and white comrade; and Symphony took to them as canon. She knew that if she followed the laid plan, without too much deference...

“clickclickclickclickclick...”

...things would pull together auspiciously and her pride, along with her body, might remain intact. Because to wrestle control away from the assigned course of action (well actually the second course of action seeing how the first one brought her to this point) could cartwheel and expunge her down the concrete Kilimanjaro with nothing more than her broken and bristled bones to muffle her screams.

No, she will comply...

“clickclickclickclickclick...”

...and everything will be as aptly fine as that popular dinnertime spirit...

“clickclickclickclickclick...JAHKJUNG!!!”

The token of confidence found, borrowed from her bike's soothing voice, is immediately choked silent by the enormous grapefruit size crater her front wheel bumps over. Symphony feels her body rise along with the bike's as they are launched off the concrete tracks and into the brief air, as her handlebars tug forward out of her grasp

like an unruly crowd. The teenager's reaction is instant: she shuts her eyes close, blocking out the biting rain and her heart pulsing inside her ears. Forsaking everything, she reaches out for the prattle and hope.

In the pitch of darkness, where the spittle of rainfall dominates, where the ignominious craters leer and wait, lives a vestibule made of polish white gold and pearl. Etched at the base of this three meter tall bust, the body concealed by an overweening glow of orange and blue; a pleasant smile pouring through, is the words "Ray.M" in fine scripture. Before she can parade her heart's attention onto the incandescent construct another woe begotten image takes the former's place. This new visage, crippled and superannuated, is unpopular to her eyes as she recoils away from the stage. To this she flees, pushing aside desire for reality, and exits from the sight of both narcissism and disability.

A calamity of sound assaults her ears, threatening reign over her eyes and hands. It is this event, this antebellum of inferiority that Symphony opens her eyes. Perhaps felt upon by the happenstance to live or maybe to avoid the bodily durance of Nat, she reaches out—in mind and body. Her small hands molest the rubbery molded handgrips, as both her eyes and heart come out from cover...

...pulling the handles with every ounce of static might, she jerks the front wheels of the bike upward. She bunny hops up and over another furtively placed crater; her butt rising along with the Schwinn into the air. A chill seizes her, wavering from the peak of her shoulders on down the slender of her back. Before she can applaud, finding much gratuity in surviving her second peril, a familiar voice returns and adds some commentary of its own. "clickclickclickclickclick..."
"Cut me some slack already." She fires back.

Searching the horizon just beneath her nose level Symphony eyes

her prize. Hunching deeper in her seat, arms taut and legs firm...
“clickclickclickclickclick...”
...she allows Schwinn, her companion; her appurtenance; her
idolatrous grace, to take her home.

The man made bushel of shorn branches draws closer, the hemp of
matter turning from a shy pile to a mountain of impropriety.
Squinting, she foresees pain, accepts lacerations, and offers no
apologies for the bruises and cuts she is about to receive. However,
it is these expectations, built on a host of latter, former and in
between possibilities that do not occur.

An eerie silence replaces the audibility of the boisterous, copious
gray world of sound, emotion, and end over end movement. This
silence filling her with an abysmal numb that traces the distance
between the self and the frottage that is the mattress of wood.

Symphony succumbs to the webbing of warped equilibrium and
impregnable darkness. A sound faintly emerges from the
dissonance; the oblivion, and crawls to life. This shill, entrenched in
the far corners of her mind, behind her assumed broken spirits and
faded bones, reins her interest—her concern to eavesdrop
enormously piqued now. The cord, however, the words spoken by
this shilling sound, are indiscernible as if garbled, and yet all too
soothing to ignore. They, the words, feel her, tempt her senses to
peer onto them, and as she does so, the darkness slowly opens onto
a rubix of mosaic gray, dark crimson and white color. The multitude
of voices, which now the shill closely resembles, turns into one great
tenor in an instant, the once auditorium of chatter reducing itself to
just one lone note.
“click...click...clickclickclick...click...”

Symphony raises her up slightly; only after realizing that she was
both still alive and unharmed—not even a splinter. Groggy, she

searches amid the debris of thicket and sodden stuff for her bicycle's voice.

"clickclickclickclickclick..." it groans from its embedded prison within the heap.

Climbing over the mattress of slippery wood, she expunges her bike from its turmoil, and then with care placed on her footfalls—and that of her bike's—plots a course out. She finds it difficult walking through the knee high depot at times, her normal ambulatory steps reduced to awkward, comical goose-stepping. After a brief time she reaches the concrete surrounding the outer orbit of the mass; more soaked and sore than before when she started.

Symphony shares an admirable and cheek reddening glance behind her before departing for good. Her eyes behold the summit, on where this all began, with a somber appeal—this entire ordeal could have turned out worse than she ever imagined. Saint's preserve her. Turning her gaze, she samples the metallic and crimson mountain bike rolling beside her in silence, and marvels over how much damage it withstood. Yet still, it rolled, clicked, moved as if nothing ever happened.

She absorbs both images, both parallels, inhaling them, making each a part of her. Even with the rain growing fiercer and her soles a bit squishier, her hair a matte of sweat and other, Symphony walks with the prose of a caliber edition. She passes Rosario's corner bodega, the outer cropping of the new row of condominiums, and the post office in silence. She is preoccupied by many things, one of which was her new brooch of humility found—which fit neatly over her braggadocio. She was gracious for all for this, the aching, the weather, the foolhardiness, and memories for they served as a reminders that no matter how cantankerous life can be, some matters of argument aren't worth the build up or reaction. Some things are just best ignored, allowing the sheer silence of retort to express an even greater magnitude. Schwinn winks at her from time

to time, catching just a teasing bit from some place far away.

Crossing the street under the elevated 2 train, uncaring to the flashing “don't walk” ensign immediately in front of her, Symphony slows her drive, mesmerized in part by the simplicity of her reaction to Raymond quibble and those of the school for that matter. She allows herself time to reassess the situation, as an artist does after the last paint stroke, and smiles softly. It wasn't worth it, it wasn't worth the price or prize to prove a point. It took the voice of her convictions to parley her dreamy lovesick appeals and focus on what was being put up for barter.

“clickclickclickclickclickclick...” Schwinn rushes to add, even as they splash through a gutter puddle and up toward home.

“Yeah, you are right. I know,” She says with an ambiguous shrug.

“He's not worth it if I have to resort to this--they're not worth it. I have two more years to win them over yet, and if that doesn't work, well then I'll do something stupid.”

“clickclickclickclickclick...”

...Indeed.

The End.

