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Colora

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Colors

There wasn't much to that room. It was nothing like the rest of the house. The house was hers, but that room was his and his alone. No one was allowed there, he locked it twenty-four hours a day, whether he was inside or out. That key he never let out of his sight, it hung both day and night, around his neck by a smooth leather cord.

It was a small room with four white walls and a ceiling equally as white. Two windows faced the south and allowed generous amounts of light to flood the hideaway. The walls were bare of any adornment, and the only furniture was a medium sized cherry-wood chest in the corner nearest to the door and an easel with a stool. There was only one thing that was especially odd, the floor was covered with sand, a whole foot of sand. He was a beach man, and each time he went to the shore he would take a jar of sand home with him. He had white sand, yellow sand, and black sand, fine grained and coarse. Everyday he would sit down for an hour and draw images in the sand with his forefinger before he went to the chest and pulled it over to the easel. Then he would begin to paint.

He would sit on his stool and stare at the blank east wall as if it were a movie screen, while squeezing sand through his bare toes. He would then open his chest and start mixing colors. He never got them wrong. His paintings were always of the sea and or the beach. With people, without people, with the sun, with the moon, didn't matter. But it was always the sea and or the beach that was the subject. He turned out a painting each day and when he left the room he always removed the picture and put it next to the front door. Once a week the gallery would send a truck and pick up the seven paintings and dropped off a check of a reasonable amount. But the painting was not the only thing that left the room. As he ran the sand through his long fingers he would pick out one granule of sand and place it on the easel, when he finished the painting the granule of sand went into a jar just outside the room. When the jar was full to the top he would return the sand to the sea and never touch a paint brush again.

His wife lived a domestic life. In the morning she saw her children off to school, at noon she watched her soaps, in the afternoon the children came back, and in the evening she made dinner. She couldn't complain about her life. The paintings her husband created were in large demand and the money was always rolling in. Her husband loved her and their children more than life itself, and she got to see more of him than if he held a nine to five job. But that room bothered her. When they moved in the house he had insisted that room to be his. She had no qualms, when they had looked at the house she had seen nothing special in that room and it was the only thing that he had ever wanted. She had no idea that there was sand on the floor for he was always very careful not to let any stray grain fallout of that room. She had no idea of what went on in that room other than her husband went in it and returned with a finished product that fed their children. And she knew that was all that should have mattered, but it wasn't. She was not an insecure woman but she hated the feeling of being locked out of her husband's life. She had asked him several times why he locked himself in that room and the answer was always that he worked better without distractions. Then she would ask him why he locked the door when he wasn't in there and as the pattern went he would reply that if his things were just remotely out of place or just sensing another person's lingering presence was enough of a distraction.

She wasn't satisfied, but she never gave up and once a month she would ask her two questions, and once a month he would give her his two answers. He never got irritated with her questions because, in his own way, he knew how she felt. But he also knew that he would never fill the jar outside that room's door.

As time went by she grew to accept that room and almost forgot it. But one day she past it doing laundry and an insane panic swept over her. Her mind began to buzz. What if he tripped in there and hit his head and became unconscious? What if he had a heart attack or a stroke? What if ?'s raged her brain and no matter what she knew that she would not be able to be the father of her children. She suddenly had a passion to rap on the door to see if he was indeed still breathing, but she knew better than that. That night, while he slept, she took an imprint of that key that laid heavily on his chest. The next afternoon she went to a friend and had a duplicate made. The next day she would open that door.

She stood by that door with that key in that lock and as she was about to turn it she felt guilty. She wondered if ~~her curiosity would kill their marriage. But she halted to being left on her husband's front doorstep. She wanted to be~~ in his whole life, not just part of it. But she would settle for just knowing it.

She turned that key, that lock make no sound as the tumblers fell into place. Silently, she opened that door and peered in. His back was to her and though he make no motion he was aware of her presence. His eyes stared trance-like at the east wall, but they moved rapidly as if in the R.E.M. stage of sleep. She shut and locked that door behind her and all was silent. She sat down Indian style in white sand. This would be the first and last time she would see her husband work.

No time had passed and he was opening his chest. He began to mix the oils. So smooth was his actions. His hand delicately held the brush as he pulled the colors into one another. She watched him and could hear his rhythms as his hand glided back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. She began to rock in time to the strokes, she could feel the tide lapping at her body and soul. Each color he blended, blended perfectly with the first try. His hand swept over the canvas and with each sweep more of a reality come to life. She became lost in his work and before she knew he had turned around and was staring right at her.

His eyes had the blue softness of the sea. His face was washed with a calm beyond calm. He looked right at her, and she knew that he had known of her presence the entire time. He rose to his feet and walked to her. He grabbed her wrists softly in his hands. He willed her to a stand and she did. The sand that she had unconsciously been squeezing sifted through her fingers. Their eyes never left the other's. She leaned forward and kissed him hard and then softly. He wrapped his arms around her and they fell to the ground. Over and over they made love. They made love like they had never made love before. They made love to the rhythms to the crashing waves. They made love under a swaying palm tree and the sleeping midnight sky. They made love beside a softly trickling waterfall. They made love to the natives. They made love to each other. They made love on the sand.

The painting was placed with the others next to the door. The couple went to bed and nothing was said about that day in that room.

The next morning she awoke before the rest of the house, as usual. And she went downstairs and stared at the painting from the day before, as usual. But as she looked she found something unusual. Her face was a shadow reflected in the sea and the sand. She moved the painting so that she could see it through the kitchen door way. She made her coffee and sat sipping it, never taking her eyes away from the painting. Her husband came down, still wet from his shower. He poured himself a cup of coffee and sat down opposite his wife. They held their normal breakfast conversation, but she never removed her eyes from the haunting painting and he didn't seem to notice.

After he finished his coffee he left, and, as usual, unlocked that door and then locked it again behind him. About five minutes later the painting lost its intensity and she left to do her laundry.

She was walking down the hall with a basket of colored clothes when he burst forth from that room, his eyes gone wild. That door left open wide, her basket over turned on the ground.

"It's no use!" He cried. His hands saying everything. "All I see is that room, you and I laying in the sand, with your face in that painting looking straight at me."

By: Stephanie Rychlowski

"To change your mind and to follow him who sets you right is to be nonetheless the free agent that you were before."

-Marcus Aurelius A.D. 121-80