

Beautiful by Naomi

There once was a boy, who lived in a world where everything was simple. Every sentence lacked color and life, and no word would ever invoke emotion. Just like the language of this world, the world itself was lacking and dull. The sky was covered in flat grey clouds and the sun only shined through in moments. There was never variation or color in any circumstance. Everyone did everything the same way it was always done, their faces never moved too close to a smile or to a frown and no one ever strived to be different. Their clothes were all the same grey color, their routines never waivered far from normal, and every single thought they had was absent and dry. Yes indeed, everything was simple.

Our boy was at peace in his world. He spoke in the same single tone as everyone around him, wore the same grey color every day, and never spoke more fluently than he needed to. His routine always stayed unchanging, he ate the same thing every night, and every day he went to school just like every other kid. There was one thing about this boy though, one thing that made him different from the rest: our boy loved to write.

There was a great grey tree on top of a great grey hill on the edge of his little town. Every so often he'd climb the grey grass and sit underneath the tree with his little notebook. With his pen in hand, he'd write about everything he could. He wrote about the days as they passed, the size of the clouds in the sky, the people that he saw around him, and how all of it made him feel. But he never went outside the boundaries of the language he had been provided with. In a world where everything was so simple, he didn't need to make things complicated.

One day, in a moment so small as he sat on top of his hill with his tree, he looked up to see the sun in one of its few shining moments. It was a sight that he had only heard of, and one that most tended to disregard. But when he looked into the sky, he saw the sun's light peeking through the clouds, and in an instant, he saw how everything was supposed to be. The rays showed the colors and the flavors of the things around him. The grass beneath his legs turned green, the notebook in his hand turned green, and the bark of the tree pressed into his back turned brown. He saw creatures flying amongst him in the air, and a gentle breeze traveled through his hair. He had never seen these things before, and he blinked as he viewed his world in this mysterious light. It was nice, he noted to himself, but so nice that he couldn't just call it nice. So nice that it made him feel things he didn't know how to describe. It was more than happy, it was more than sad, it was more than angry, it was even more than bad! But then the light disappeared before he could decide how exactly it made him feel, and the world returned to how it always was.

When the boy returned home that day he felt pressed to share his experience with his family, but he found that no matter how he tried, he couldn't bring the experience to life.

"I saw the sun today. The light made everything change. I saw small creatures flying in the air around me and the objects nearby seemed different. It was so nice." His voice stayed unwavering as he spoke as it always was, and all he could do was hope that his family understood how it made him feel.

But his mother simply nodded as she braided his sister's hair, "That sounds good." she replied. His father stared blankly toward him, "That sounds nice son." And his sister said nothing at all, as was custom to do when one could not find the right words.

So the boy laid in his bed that night feeling things inside him that simple words could not mimic. The moment replayed before him again and again whenever he closed his eyes. He needed something better to describe what he had seen, and this word could not be simple. It needed to bring about the same emotion as he had felt when witnessing the light on top of his hill. "It was," he mumbled to himself again and again, "It was, it was.." His tongue tapped against the back of his teeth as he laid in difficult thought. He remembered the life that had entered the world from the light. How the grass had swayed gently once the breeze had passed, and how the creatures flying in the air had seemed to dance before his eyes. "It was, it was..." Beads of sweat formed on his head as he struggled, "It was..."

"IT WAS BEAUTIFUL!"

He sat up upon saying the word, and for a quick second his mouth curled up on the sides in a way he'd never experienced. "Beautiful", he mumbled to himself. It was a word that he'd never heard before, yet it felt familiar. A word that portrayed more than something being nice, a word that truly meant something. As he mumbled the word, again and again, he looked up out his window to see the moon piercing the gray clouds. The colors on his bed formed before his eyes, the wool poking through his comforter turned white, and the blanket underneath it became blue, but he became so surprised by these sights before him once again that he stopped speaking, and just like that the clouds resealed, the moon went away, and his room went back to how it always was.

In the days following the boy began to speak more words to himself, more words to describe what he had seen that day and that night. "The sun's light was BRILLIANT," he wrote in his journal, "and the moon almost seemed to, SPARKLE!"

The boy began to write more into his journal, filling page after page with words that he had never heard spoken before besides out of his own mouth. Every day when he went and sat under his tree and wrote, the clouds would part for moments each getting longer and longer until there were days when the sun would shine on him enough to feel it on his skin, he called this feeling warmth.

He created many complex words, words that made him feel alive, and sometimes he would use them in more ways than one. Through his creation and use of words, he noticed how lackluster the world around him truly was. Thus, in an attempt to break free from this world's limp existence, he began to seek meaning from his life. When he felt happiness or a feeling he liked to call *joy*, he would let his eyes scrunch and the sides of his lips pull out and upward, in what he liked to call a smile. When he was sad or depressed, he'd let the smile flip upside down on his face if it wanted to, forming a frown. He also started naming things that used to sit meaningless in the back of his mind, using words or phrases in ways that didn't truly make sense but also did

somehow. When he was nervous, he called it feeling *butterflies in his stomach*. When he was hurt, his *heart would feel heavy*. If someone were to ask how he was doing, he would really consider it, and answer with words that had thought behind them.

“Well, today I feel comfortable!” he’d answer often, or “Today I feel amazing!” On some circumstances when things just weren’t going his way, he’d pull the occasional, “Well today, the vast ocean of life laid before me that I swim in every day, feels pretty shallow.” Most people would give a slate-faced nod in response, but in some circumstances, he’d see surprise run across their faces. With most though, they’d stare at him like he had broken some sort of rule. Regardless of whatever their reaction was, our boy didn’t hold back. He said what he felt and he felt what he said.

On another normal cloudy day in school, amongst the gray of his classroom, his fellow students were describing a book they had been assigned to read about a man who had been hungry, decided to get a meal from a local restaurant, and had then eaten it.

“I liked the book,” one student said.
“The book was fine.” answered one.
“It was nice,” Another voice added.

Then the time to speak fell over to our boy. He puffed out his chest and rose from his seat to let his eyes fall on the dull classroom.

“I found this book to be rather *drab*,” he explained calmly. All of his classmates stared at him with blank but slightly unsettled expressions.
“Where was the discomfort of his hunger? The distress flowing and dripping from the page like water from the tap? What about the compelling description of the restaurant? The sound of the gravel rubbing against the sidewalk that his feet made as they slapped against the pavement? Or the taste and smell and texture of each morsel as it was brought to his lips? Or—”

“Stop talking.” his teacher interrupted, “Simplify your language. You are using words in ways we don’t understand. ”

It was here that the boy felt a new emotion, it burned at the sides of his lungs and made his teeth grind together, one that he would later call rage.

“But why can’t we learn!” The boy cried, his eyebrows pushing down and inward to the middle of his forehead, and his heart beating vigorously into the back of his chest. “Why can’t we fill our minds with the rivers of vocabulary that sit blocked by the jagged stones of our presumptions! To think beyond our common simple words is the only way to *truly* choose to live!” As the boy spoke, the clouds moved from each other and a bright and powerful light pierced through the square windows of the building, turning the children’s schoolbooks red and their desks brown.

As their chairs slammed against their desks and their feet pounded against the wooden floor the students gasped and raced from their chairs, in order to get a better view of the mysterious light.

The boy stopped speaking to race with them, but as soon as they were outside the building, the clouds pulled back together like a person clasping their hands together, and the rays disappeared. Too surprised to compose themselves, the children looked around with expressions close to shock and astonishment. The teacher stood amidst them, staring up into the sky with the same emotions on her face as the pupils around her.

“That was, that was..” she began as they all stood motionless, “That was nice.”

Her face faded back to complacency, and our boy watched as his fellow classmates followed her lead and forced the light from their eyes.

“Yes, it was good.” a student answered.

“It was fine.” Said another.

Soon enough the students began to reenter the school as if nothing had happened, slates of clear gray nothingness resting on their faces in place of all the emotions that had been there before.

At this moment, as he watched the students turn on their heels and begin to leave as if what they had just seen and felt had not mattered at all, our boy realized what he had to do. He climbed to the top of the hill that sat next to his school building, the very same hill where he had first seen the light. From on top of his hill, he stood with his back to the sky and his arms raised to gain the attention of those around him. He could see the entirety of his town from the height he was at, and everyone began to gather at the bottom of the hill in response to his great display of emotion.

“What we have seen today is more than nice! More than good! And more than fine!” He screamed as loud as he could from on top of the mound, “It made us feel something deep inside, in the gloomy damp midsts of our souls, it sparked a fire!”

The townspeople stared up at the boy blankly, all having seen the light from their various parts of town, but still being unsure of how to respond to his vibrant strings of words.

“Well!?” He yelled once again with his hands still raised toward the sky, “What is your fire?! How does it make you feel!?”

A silence truer than one the boy had ever experienced fell over the people. For a moment our boy felt hopeless as if the light he had seen could never be understood by anyone but him. The smile on his face began to soften, and he felt tears begin to well into his eyes. But then, as if by some sort of miracle, his teacher stepped forward.

“Wonderful!” she yelled up to him, a single tear falling from her eye, “It made me feel wonderful!”

One of his classmates stepped forward next to her, “Excited!” he screamed.

“Exuberant!” cried a townsperson,

“Fantastic!”

“Whole!”

“Amazed!”

“Extraordinary!”

“Dumbfounded!”

The boy watched triumphantly as the people’s faces filled with vibrancy and emotion. The atmosphere swelled with the sound of gorgeous words he had never heard before, even from his own mouth, and with emotions of joy and laughter and love. Their cries flew up from the valley and filled the air with a tremendous cacophony of verbiage. The air grew breezy as the sun broke through the cloud’s barriers and laid out its warmth and light, filling the cold empty souls of the people. A vibrant cobalt sky spread itself across their eyes. The grass became green, the dirt beneath the grass turned brown, and the petals of the flowers that decorated the field turned yellow. The clothes of the townspeople turned white and red and black and gold and so many other colors the boy did not have names for. Cheers of gladness and joy and awe and astonishment filled the boy’s ears as he turned towards the sky to bask in all that he had been missing his entire life.

“Now this,” Chris smiled to himself as his eyes closed and the sun’s warmth gently brushed itself against his skin, “Now this, is truly, beautiful.”