

Pieces of Time

In a time between times, a place between places, there is a town named Crowsville. It is night time in Crowsville and the only light is that of the moon and of the fires that act as streetlights, silently burning until they are put out in the early morning. The moon casts a silver glow on the town, pushing the deep blue of night away with its eerie glow. Pumpkins grow in the surrounding fields, leafless trees stand scattered here and there, and a lone scarecrow slumps like a condemned man waiting for the rope. At the edges of the fields the darkness seems to hang, waiting patiently for the clouds to pass the moon so that it may enter the safety of the town. But no time will come for the darkness, for there are never any clouds in Crowsville, and it is always night time.

You and I, we have not met before now. I see you, staring off into the distance, and I ask if you are alright. You realise that you were daydreaming, picturing a town that is always asleep, where a scarecrow bows its head in the light of a full moon. You tell me you were just daydreaming, but do not tell me of what. We laugh and exchange names. You glance at your watch. I ask what train you are getting, and it turns out that we are getting on the same one.

The train arrives, and we take our seats. As if by coincidence, our tickets are numbered adjacently; seventeen and eighteen, coach B. Again we laugh, and this minor coincidence fuels the conversation for a few moments. We stop speaking after those moments and respect the silence for the rest of our time together on the train.

The journey is long and we cannot see where we are out of the windows due to the darkness of the night. We stop at many stations, and I stand up out of my seat at my stop. As the train is slowing, I notice that we are the only people left in this carriage, and maybe the whole train. You arise after me and it is clear that this is your stop too.

The platform is dead; you and I are the only people around. It is a modest platform; there is room for a train on either side to drop off and pick up passengers, although it occurs to both of us that not many trains stop here.

As we continue onto the path that leads to the flickering lights in the distance, you are struck by the complete lack of noise that surrounds us. You glance at your watch. This place is so silent that the chugging of the train can still be heard, in spite of its ever growing distance. We carry on the silence by not talking, and strangely our footsteps seem to make no sound.

The flickering lights are closer now, and a town comes into view. It is more of a hamlet than a town with only a handful of houses. The abundance of darkness and stillness strikes you as odd, but you know you have felt it before. You peer at the sign in the distance. You already know what it is going to say before you read it.

The sign induces a thought within you. Where are the crows? You turn around to where the scarecrow was before to see that it has not moved since. Without words, you tell me to follow, a mixture of a beckoning hand signal and the movement of your head. You approach the scarecrow at a wary pace, cautious of it for some reason. It is looking at the floor so that you cannot see its face. It is hard to decide whether to touch it or not. I can tell you are scared. On its chest are the numbers one-seven-

one-eight sewn in on the breast pocket, as if this scarecrow is being accounted and kept in check. You decide to be bold and lift its head.

What you see is strange. The scarecrow has a mirror as a face. Your own reflection startles you, but you soon realise that it is not a mirror, but actually your face. You turn to me, looking for answers. I read the confusion in your face. You ask me, voice shaky, why I have brought you here. And I tell you that I have not. You came here of your own accord. You realise now that all of the events you put down to "coincidence" were not actually so. The meeting at the train station, the adjacent seats, the getting off at the same stop, the town in your dream, the scarecrow. I knew every thought, every feeling, I knew the words you were going to say before you said them. I knew that you would go to investigate the scarecrow. I knew that you would find your own face on it. You glance at your watch. Eighteen minutes past five. I ask you now, can you remember what happened before you met me? You were in a train station. You were daydreaming about a town that is always asleep, where a scarecrow bows its head in the light of a full moon. You were... alone. My final question to you then, is what does a scarecrow do?

You are alone. You are scared. And you are numbered one-seven-one-eight.