

The Anatomy of Colour

2024

Mum loved blue.

Blue was her favourite colour.

This detail came to mind as I placed a bundle of forget-me-nots down on the hall table for her, along with my keys and briefcase. After slipping off my Clarks, I continued walking through the house.

I then passed my brother's room.

I paused for a moment to observe his timeless refuge; the bed unmade, legos still on the floor, air heavy. The hallway light that irradiated his baby-blue wallpaper added an eerie glow of nostalgia to his past sanctuary - blue had been Luke's favourite colour too.

I spotted Mum on the balcony.

She stared out across the horizon, the wind gently playing with her curls. Her cornflower sundress was contrasted by her Summer tan; her gold jewellery decorating her wrists and fingers, bringing attention to her deep azure nails. She had one hand against the limestone balustrade, the other wrapped around the stem of her Pinot Grigio.

Living in Varoš had been Mum's dream since her twenties. She'd apparently always dreamed of owning a spacious cobblestone house hugging the Croatian coastline, with floor-length curtains, dense bookshelves, high ceilings, few but meaningful possessions, and flowers - lots and lots of flowers. She'd always emphasise that part.

She also had a name for this dream, this plan, this house: her "*Museum of Memory*". According to her, a house should be a home for the pieces of yourself that you can't fit inside your soul - a reservoir of memories, a library of souvenirs, a record of reminiscence, a raw yet comforting gallery of the self.

But Mum's museum had faded ever since she was involved in an accident that damaged her short-term memory. Hence the bundles of forget-me-nots placed next to most photo frames in the house - they're reminders to remember; they're the efforts to rebuild it.

I joined her on the balcony. The sky's warm haze of nectarine and honey-nut hues met the distant border of the ocean's stretch, before smoothing into cooler tones of pastel cerulean that sheeted the atmosphere the further I tilted my head back. Faint glimmers of stars dappled the upward expanse in a thin varnish of white specks.

Mum spun around from my footsteps.

"Darling, you're home!" she said, wrapping me in a warm embrace. "Do you think I should get Luke?"

I faltered.

"I'm sure he'd love to see the pretty sunset." she smiled.

I felt my heart sink. It had been months since the car crash.

"It's alright, Mum. He's at his friend's place tonight, remember?" Each word felt like vinegar on my tongue. "You can show him tomorrow."

Lying to her was difficult, but easier than telling her the truth. I learned very quickly that breaking the news to her each time she forgot the accident was pointless - it just shattered her over and over again.

She nodded, her smile slightly lessening. "Maybe he'll be seeing it now from his friend's place."
"Maybe." I repeated.

There are many things Mum doesn't realise. Or rather, there are many things Mum doesn't remember. Like the night of the accident, when she had been driving and Luke was in the backseat. It had been storming all month. They were driving high up Perun Hillside. The road had washed away. It was dark.

I don't blame anyone.

Yet it tears me up every time I lie to her, and continue the narrative that Luke's still here.

But then again, it would tear us *both* up, if I were to be honest, and tell her he's not.

After all, is it better to bask in the bliss of ignorance, or rather grieve in the truth of memory?

I'm still trying to answer that one for us.

I bring my attention back to Mum. She's leaning on the limestone balustrade, her deep azure fingernails delicately tracing absent-minded patterns through the glaze of condensation on her wine glass.

Just like the colour of her nails, Mum is blue.

Blue for the rain that swept her and Luke off the Perun Hillside. Blue for the tears she cried every time I used to tell her that. Blue for the forget-me-nots that accompany most photo frames in the house. Blue for the baby brother who isn't with us anymore. Blue for his wallpaper, his toys, his favourite colour. Blue for Mum's untarnished memory of him. Blue for everything she remembers and everything she can't. Blue for everything she knows and everything she's lost. Blue for everything she is and everything she was.

Blue is for Mum.

So I don't dare fade her to a grey.

So I keep her Museum of Memory intact; a preservation of perfects; a sanctuary for her dream.

Even if it means living a beautiful, blissful, blue lie.

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