

One is the Loneliest Number

There is very little comfort one can take in rush hour traffic. Horns blare and people shout. But, tonight I am living in my city. I stare at the cab in front of us and take solace in the flashing of his blinker. Time is still and my whole body sways to the rhythm of the blinking light, until the front cab finally makes its right turn. I am left sitting in the bucket of yellow cab #24. I sigh and place my hands ever so delicately into my lap to continue looking out the back window.

Hours later, locked away in my office reading the quarter summary, my cell phone buzzes. Connor reminds me of our date, sounding slightly off, but I can't put my finger on why. I apologize and twenty minutes later I'm standing in front of Babbo's on Waverly. I take a deep breath and go inside. Connor is seated at a table by the window. He looks dashing handsome in his pressed white oxford and black pants. His Rolex shines in the light as he instantly stands up to greet me. I give him two pecks on the cheek before I sit down in the chair he has pulled out for me.

I am tall, so our eyes are level. He has the most sincere look on his face. He takes my moist hand in his cool one and asks the most famous words ever uttered. He does. He says them:

"Charlotte, it's been the best seven months of my life and you are perfect in every way. I want to share my life with you. Will you marry me?"

I gasp and my eyes fill with emotional tears. I am speechless. His face leans over mine and plants a wet kiss on my mouth. He slips cold metal onto my left hand as our waiter and the other people in the restaurant clap and cheer. Several old ladies come over to congratulate Connor. I remain speechless through the rest of the dinner.

Later, I find myself trotting east towards Battery Park in the slush. I slowly pass the storefronts with their Christmas lights and decorations. I pass couples gliding down the sidewalk holding hands, faces pressed together whispering secrets. I pass apartments with lights on and see mothers reading to their children in bed.

Mechanically I continue until I reach the waterfront. I lean over the railing where the concrete ends and water laps at the shore. I feel the first flakes start to kiss my cheek. I turn my face up towards the dark sky and breath deeply in, exhaling a silver puff. The snowdrift starts to fall slightly harder and I can see it swirling around me. I reach my hand out to catch a snowflake but I can't seem to. Frustrated, I spread my fingers wide and reach my hand further out. Again and again I try, to no avail.

Suddenly I have an overwhelming urge to get the ring off of my left finger. It is smoldering and burning my hand. I can't pull it off. I pull harder in desperation but it is stuck. I panic. Like an animal, I take my teeth and rip the ring off my finger and the force lodges the ring in my throat.

Choking, I immediately start to cough up the ring but it says stuck. As my face turns purple I dejectedly swallow the ring. My airway immediately opens. Cringing, I feel the ring making its way down my throat until I'm sure it has hit the bottom of my stomach. Gasping for air and exhausted, I collapse against the railing of the pier. The snowflakes fall harder now. The flakes hitting my cheeks turn to water and drip off my chin, mixing with my tears. I am left looking out onto the water, staring at the glare that the lights of the city reflect.

This is not the life I thought I wanted.