

Sundown with Giraffes.

Her house smelled like a mix of burnt chocolate and elephant shit.

Her mother was no cook, but in her free time, she attempted to bring delicious chocolate mousse or strawberry shortcake to life, without any success.

I still remember her small little face biting into the dark burnt brownies her mom would make, and an expression of disgust would appear in her face as she spitted some crumbs.

Your mommy is a better cook than mine. She'd tell me. The cakes she makes are actually good.

I really agreed to such statements, but I didn't want to be rude with her. So I'd only reply: *Well, your mom owns a safari.*

One day, we broke into the giraffe's habitat, even though her mom would always tell us not to go anywhere near the animals without an adult. But we were children, and our minds thought that the warnings we were given were nothing but an evil act of preventing us from having fun.

We jumped over the handrail and ran through the man-made savanna to get closer to the tall and magnificent giraffes. The golden weeds hit my body as I moved, and if I looked up I could see that we were getting nearer to the long spotted necks. Once we finally reached them, we started stroking their legs, and I swear I can almost remember the giraffes looking down at us with smiles in their faces.

Do you want to ride them. She told me.

I said yes, but we never got the chance to do it. Her mother got to us fast, like a cheetah hunting down its prey. She grabbed our hands and with an angry voice told us that even though giraffes were not aggressive like the lions or tigers, they could kill us just as easily just by kicking us like soccer balls.

I could see the fury in her mother's face, her wrinkles vibrating with rage and her eyes palpitated like a heart. However, she wouldn't lecture or quarrel her daughter. Not in front of me, anyway. So we just went back to the house, tears in her eyes, and pretended everything was fine.

Now I wonder if those acts of normalcy are what brought her to her finale.

I used to not understand her mother's paranoia with the animals. She wouldn't even let us get near the monkeys, and I thought that it was rather hypocrite, because she said all the time that she adored the animals, but at the same time she was frightened of them.

But then one day she told me the story of how her grandfather opened this safari in the middle of Mexico, and how in a short amount of time it became one of the biggest zoos in the entire world. She told me how her grandfather was an epic man, how he escaped the civil war in Spain and moved empty-handed to Puebla, Mexico looking for something to eat. Then she told me that somehow he got a job that took him to Hollywood, where he worked for film companies and made lots and lots of money, and that when he had enough bills to make his impossible dream possible: he rescued many animals from Africa and India, brought them to Mexico, and opened a safari. Then he got married, and had 7 children. Her mother being the oldest of them. She told me that they were a happy family, that they had everything anyone could ever want. She told me that some people called her grandfather "The indestructible" because nothing could stop him from succeeding.

I thought she was like her grandfather, that she was a dreamer and that one day she would climb so high that even the tallest giraffes would look up at her.

But sadly, her grandfather was killed by one of the tigers and shortly after her grandmother died of sadness. All of these happened when her mother was sixteen, so not only did she have to take care of 6 children, she also had to make sure the animal world her father had created.

So when the indestructible died, a warrior was born. And that warrior's only mission was to protect her indestructible daughter from the same fate her indestructible father found.

She once told me that she didn't believe in heaven. We were fifteen, in her presentation party. She was wearing a pink dress and her presence was more radiant than any of the lights of the party. We have had champagne, maybe a little too much, so we went outside and laid on the grass so she could purposely ruin her dress.

It just sounds dumb you know? How can there be anything better or worse than this world? If anything, this is heaven and hell altogether, and we decide who are our demons and who are our angels.

I asked her if I was an angel or demon to her.

Honestly, you are one of the only angels I know. All those people inside, they may look prettier than anyone else in their world with their fancy purses and their suits... but you are the only one of them that is good.

Then, wearing one of those suits she hated, laying on the grass under invisible stars, music from the party fading in the background, I pressed my lips against hers, and she didn't back away.

It was my first kiss, but I knew it wasn't hers. I didn't kiss her because I loved her, not in a romantic way, I kissed her because she was the only angel I knew too, and the alcohol in my blood whispered in my ear that angels should kiss each other.

When our lips separated I just asked her what she thought happens after we die.

She only said: *We stop.*

Three years later, she decided to stop.

I wasn't with her when this happened, I wasn't near at all. In fact, the last time I'd talked to her was three weeks before she did it. I didn't say goodbye, she didn't say goodbye to anyone. She wrote a letter though, but I can't bring myself to read it.

I don't even want to know what the letter says, I know that even though she could dream too big, sometimes she spoke about nightmares and not daydreams, and I am scared to see the darkest part of her mind, that I know lives in her letter.

My parents read it, and they told me it said that she felt alone and trapped, that she couldn't breathe in this world so she wanted to go to the next. And that she loved me very much.

And I know they bullshitted me, but I didn't say a word about it. She never said "I love you" to anyone, not lately anyway. The sound of her childish voice saying those words to her mother still resonates in my ears. But there are no memories of her grown up self spitting words of love. Not to her mother. Not to her boyfriend. Not to me.

I don't know what led her to kill herself, I don't know the reasons why she decided to leave a suicidal note next to the handrail we jumped when we were children, and then jump over it again, bottle of vodka in hand, swallowing the pills that would kill her.

I will never know why she emptied the Russian liquor in a matter of seconds when the pills were being dissolved in her stomach, nor why it took her mother so long to find her, as she laid dying at sundown next to the giraffes.

Her name was Triana, and her house smelled like a mix of burnt chocolate and elephant shit because her mother is not a good cook and she has elephants, giraffes, tigers, and other beautiful but dangerous beasts living in her backyard. She was my best friend and we would jump and run through a fake savanna, we would go to parties and dance until our feet couldn't move anymore, we would watch bad movies every Saturday just so we could critique them, and we would tell each other our secrets and gossip about our love lives. But then she decided to stop existing. But she failed. She is still here, if she wasn't the image of us holding hands as the sun set behind the regal giraffes wouldn't be as vivid as it is in my head now.