

Rathbones

Folio Prize

MENTORSHIPS

in association with FIRST STORY

Two Extracts

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In This Moment

Happiness

I'm standing tall on the sidewalk of Wroclaw. Tall buildings easily overwhelming all of my senses, all I can hear is people shouting in the town square, every voice raised louder than the other. The foreign language rolling off their tongues with ease and perfection. My nose is filled with Polish delicacies, which have drifted from the restaurants around me. I see dumplings on one side while sweet jam rolls are on the other. The sight of a long fountain makes me smile. It stands right in the centre, and drags on to form a rectangle. I can't help but raise my camera and take a picture. I have never seen such a beautiful city in my life. Unbelievable how different from this is from England. Sometimes I forget about the various cultures in this world, being too busy with my own life. The experience of something new and fresh is exhilarating. Pure happiness spreads through my body as I recall leaving my job, relief in finally being able to leave that awful office. I wasted so many years doing nothing in my life. The moment I stepped off the airplane, I realised this was really happening. The air felt more distinct, like I have taken my first real breath in years. The cold night breeze hit me as a wave of freshness, even after living in the country of rain and chilled air, this moment couldn't be any better. And yet, I feel scared of the unknown. This is not a familiar place and home is so far away, how can I be so anxious of something I always wanted. I snap another picture, this time of the church tower just as the bell rings to inform its citizens that 12 o'clock has struck. Just like me, a few months back. I was struck with a job of a lifetime, a job that fulfils my life dreams. I get to travel the world and write the most mind-blowing articles about everything I see, a journalist that never stays still. I can't help the grin that forces its way to my lips, with one more picture of the town square, I walk along. Ready to see more.

Guilt

"I swear I was gentle! It was already broken!" My voice is strained and my eyes start to tear up. I finally remember about our museum tour guide who has been quiet for too long. He seems just as scared as us, he opens his mouth, ready to tell us something when the door opens to the private room that we are currently in.

I can feel my heart sink to the pit of my stomach in fear, my hands begin to get sweaty as I try to wipe them on my jeans. As my heartbeat quickens, I can hear the pulse in my ears as my cheeks are flooded with red from embarrassment. My lips are open to help me get enough air into my panicking lungs; my throat is too dry for me to swallow. I test my luck and turn to look at my friend; her eyes are wide with shock. The situation obviously still not sinking in. With a brave inhale I straighten my back and take a step forward, ignoring any eye contact

that was directed at me. I can't help but look back at the podium with hope that nothing has happened. I was met with emptiness as the small stone artefact now laid on the floor in two pieces, a clear crack matching on both sides where the stone hit the wood. The feeling of panic morphs into despair when two men enter the room. I feel Jessica move to my side, her shaking hands grabbing onto my arm before pushing me forward. The darkness inside the corridor feels more ominous than ever before, a walk of doom that could cost me anything.

I was expecting to meet the worse scenario, like the mafia, a modern Al Capone scenario. However I was not expecting to be led straight to the museums entrance with a fine ticket slapped into my hand and the doors slammed in my face. The biggest amount of relief flushed over me, my shoulder sagged in released tension and I slid down the door to sit at the steps. Jessica gently joins me, the energy seemingly drained from her body. I can't help the guilt that was silently creeping in, I had just kicked her out of the museum too.