

Miss
by Parker Reed

Miss was seated in her spruce rocker. Despite being only half her age, the chair had caught up to how withered she had become. Her weary, drained hands rested on the varnished arms of the chair. Sun-bleached cushions—certainly not the ones the chair had come with—fitted her shape perfectly after years of holding it. As though a ghost had taken her place, the comforting didn't reform as she stood up. The light from the window quickly rolled over her frame as she rose; over her silver hair that glistened as though it was woven from quartz. Then, over her tired face, watering the crop of wrinkles planted on her pale skin. Finally, as she stood fully erect, it only reached her upper lip. Her foggy eyes pierced through the shadow, as though they were two lighthouses guiding ships. Ned felt puny in her presence, like a field rodent in the shadow of a hawk's wingspan.

She reached for a cane none dissimilar to the chair she had risen from. With it, she steadied her shaky frame and slowly made her way to the window. The rhythmic and heavy tap of the cane made up for her soft, cushioned steps. Her cane struck the ground much harder than necessary, and much harder than Ned had thought possible for someone of Miss's age. It was a familiar noise that everyone in Lady recognized as, 'Stand up straight, Miss is here.' Ned could only wonder how many of those taps Miss had left in her.

She tilted her cane toward the window, "Look."

And so, Ned did. A plump pill covered in cream-yellow fuzz sat atop a flower with eight—no, nine—petals. Petals the color of watermelon, the tips of which were glassy, like they were dipped in molten sugar.

He whispered, as though he was scared of spooking it through the glass, "A bumblebee."

In the dim light, Ned had thought her lips were wrinkles, but when they opened to say, "They: scientists, say that bees shouldn't be able to fly," it became clear.

The insect crawled into the center of the flower then beat its wings steadily.

"Yet, it's right there," Ned whispered, "gathering pollen."

"It's wonderful." she took in a slow, strained breath. "It's wonderful that it came to be." She looked down at Ned, "The things that make the day easier to enjoy. . . It's wonderful."