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Carrying Time - By Florence Knight

After years of painstaking building I am almost completed. As soon as the next few pieces are inserted in, I will be ready to fulfil my purpose in life: to carry a royal to Westminster Abbey on their coronation day. Imagine that. Me, on the front cover of magazines, on newspapers and on TV. Until that day I have no choice but to be trapped inside my jail of a room. A prisoner of my own home. I lose myself so deeply in my thoughts that I don't notice a cluster of people entering the room carrying tools. Something catches my eye. My stomach flies and swoops as I realise what it is. My next piece. A wooden panel held delicately in the gloved hands of one of them. My door is opened and my space for the next piece is checked but I don't notice, my eyes don't wander from that wooden panel.

I wake up. I seem to have fallen asleep. Then I remember what happened. My new piece was about to be installed then nothing. I can't seem to recall anything that happened beyond that point. Instinctively, I feel for the new piece on the interior of my left door. There it is, I can feel the slight ache from when it was inserted but I don't mind. It is another step closer to fulfilling my dreams. A vision of lush, emerald meadows and cloudless, sapphire skies dance in my head. What was that? It was so peculi...The room is spinning, my vision is blurring, all I can see is the clock pointing its hands at 5 o'clock, a high pitched sound is filling my head and then... Nothing.

Momentarily, I am blinded by a glowing, golden ball. As I come to my senses I realise that I am no longer in the stone cold, isolated room but instead jade pastures overflowing with wildlife and beauty stretch out in front of me as far as the eye can see. The high pitched sound from before is still ringing in my head. I realise it is not in my head but me currently screaming so I stop. Gradually, I let myself notice and appreciate Mother Nature's toll on this place. I can see her footsteps in the grass causing wild Primroses and Grape Hyacinth to spiral up her tender legs. Her laughter travels on the wind leaving petals and leaves in her wake. I am so caught up in the beauty of it all that it takes me a while to realise. I am no longer in my own body of a carriage but in the body of an isolated apple tree.

I could feel my heart in my throat hammering away as I frantically grappled for a plausible reason. Was I dreaming? Was I never a carriage to begin with? Have I been cursed by an evil witch? What if I can't get back to my original body? Will I never be able to experience my purpose?

A young boy, possibly in his early twenties, was wandering out of a house behind me that I hadn't noticed before then. He seemed to be muttering to himself as he wiped the beads of sweat from his forehead. As he approaches me my nerves swell inside of me, is he the reason I am here? Can he help me? The boy leans against my rough, weathered body and slides down until he is sitting on one of my many roots that stretch out in all directions like fingers grasping out ready to grab hold of anything that passes by. Soft, brown curls of candy floss cascade down his head, getting caught on my nobly cinches and bark that faintly resemble valleys and hills. "I am tired of this plague. The only thing anyone is doing is dying and isolating. Why can't it just go back to normal?" As he silently fumes, I am so intent on watching him that I lose my grip on one of my many apples. Everything seemed to slow down. My apple flashed in front of my eyes as it began its descent onto the boy's head. "Ow!" the boy exclaimed back in present time "An apple just fell down onto my head". The boy froze, his eyes lit up, he jumped to his feet in astonishment. "That apple fell down on my head. Why not sideways or up? Why down?" he shrieked with excitement. Before I could even come to understand what he said, he pelted faster than I knew possible back to the cobblestone house behind me. Just as he was reaching the doorway my sight began to spin and blur again, I didn't have time to begin to open my mouth to scream.

I am back in my room furnished only with a clock. As much as I love my life, it is a shame the exhilarating adventure is over. All of those new emotions in that short time period appeared to have drained me of energy even though it was only, according to the clock, 5 o'clock I felt the need for a rest after all of that drama. My heart was still pounding in my chest from it all. That was when it hit me. It was 5 o'clock. When I left it was the same time. It felt like an hour had passed yet not a minute had gone by. To add to that, the newly inserted wood panel was glowing. Things were getting even weirder by the second. Rapidly, a swirling storm of thoughts and explanations began to rage inside my head. Amidst the howling hurricane, hidden in the eye of the storm I knew was the answer. What was happening? Is the new part related? Through all of this chaos, my eyelids began to get heavy and sag.

I hadn't forgotten a thing about the night before but it was as if the fog in my head was clear. I could think straight again. Why is this happening now and never before? There was only one half reasonable explanation that I could think of. The event seemed so familiar it almost seemed like I was there, so maybe I was. Did it have something to do with my new piece? Perhaps time stopped when I got teleported. That thought quickly gets discarded as I realise what a foolish thought it is. As bewildered as I was, I was determined to find the answer no matter what.

I awake to the sound of drilling and bellowing voices; vibrating me violently as pain shoots through me like a poisoned arrow. A new piece. How could I have slept through this without noticing this event. The inside of my stomach churns as I recall what happened the last time a piece got installed. The first time it was pleasant but what happens if I turn up in a threatening situation where I am tiny and I can't help myself. A tsunami of alarming scenarios flood my mind, each one worse than the last.

They are gone. Last time I got teleported it was after my new piece got installed so it could happen any second now. My eyes are coated with terror and excitement as I soak in all my surroundings: the clock saying 10 o'clock, the plain white doors that I have never got the opportunity to escape from until now and me. This might be the last time I am in this room in my intricate body delicately crafted from the finest materials. I might never fulfil my potential: a carriage to carry royals. My wheels begin to spin effortlessly yet I stay still in my spot on the chilly, marble floor. A flash of blue momentarily blinds me. It's happening. I open my mouth to cry out but no sound comes out. I am paralysed with anxiety. Then the lights go out.

A block of blue is all I can see. A bomb of panic explodes inside of me releasing a flurry of questions. Am I trapped in a blue cage? Am I still in England? Am I still on this planet or even in this dimension? Squinting, I inspect my surroundings. It is not plain blue but an intergalactic swirl of sapphire, azure, cyan as well as indigo and emerald. As I realise what it is, my fragments of panic immediately thaw. This is the ocean! Stories of this wonderland I have overheard but never have I seen such beauty in one place before. Speckles of gold rapidly cut through the knots of sea leaving pearl foam in their wake. Dancing on the water are joyous rays of gleaming gold emitting from a ball of raging fire up in the blanket of sky glowing with light and colour and scattered with floccose spun sugar. Sighing with contentment, I let the scene wash over me just as the waves wash over my surface. Bracing myself for the worst, I look down at myself as I mentally slap myself on the forehead. I forgot that I changed bodies!

An immense wooden shape lurks underneath where my wheels used to be and on my top half tower tremendously tall poles swathed in rich cotton fabric. As I take in the view of myself I notice men trampling along my back. Out of the corner of my eye I catch a glimpse of something that makes my breath catch in my throat as I realise this location is not as serene as I first thought. A boat firing cannonballs at me. A glimmer of hope resonates in the back of my mind as I notice the men on board me firing back. I can most likely withstand this. That spark of hope flickers out like a fire as I notice a hulk of brown behind it. There isn't just one boat but a swarm of them attacking me and more boats behind seem to appear out of thin air. The fleet behind aren't firing at me, they aren't even travelling away but helping me attack the enemy boats.

Desperate cries and yells can barely be heard over the ear-splitting sound of granite balls screaming as they cut through the chaotic, frenzied air. The men on my wooden deck begin to bellow orders, somehow turning me away from the fight. Then it happens. Spinning around steadily a ghastly gale suddenly hammers me and my sails like a giant fist punching me with all its might causing me to wobble like a seesaw throwing the men on board me to roll from side to side. Just like the men the attention to the battle is momentarily thrown leaving me as vulnerable as a two week old harp seal stranded on an iceberg. The French enemy fleet took no time in grabbing this opportunity. Swiftly, a cannonball nimbly slices through the blanket of destruction at breakneck speed and makes contact with my hull. BOOM! Violently, a volcano of anguish and agony erupts from within me, molten magma mortifyingly melting my insides as roars of distress holler in my ear. I can scarcely make any shape or form of the words apart from the same repetitive word: Mary Rose. My name. Somehow this word represents my name in my mind yet I don't know why. The name seems familiar and somehow seems to fit me.

Coming back to this present moment I regrettably notice the silvery smoke hauntingly climbing up me carrying an unwanted message. I have a hole. Normally, back in my room a small hole would be fine; it would get fixed as soon as it was noticed but out here there was nobody to patch me up and save me this time.

Before I knew it the water was closing in on me like a coffin enclosing the body forever. The men on board are desperately scrambling around in the water to attempt to cling onto any drift wood they can find but my bulky body sinking creates a swirling vortex to appear, sucking all of them down, leaving no survivors. This wrathful vortex is like sinking sand; if you ever go in, you will never come out.

The boring, lifeless room in which I am stored in all of a sudden doesn't seem bad at all. I would do anything to be safe there now but there is no going back now. The bellowing cries still ring clearly in my head as I get encompassed into the field of death. Intensively, I grope around my thoughts in hope of discovering a structure or plan to escape from this lethal circumstance but too soon I realise that it is too late. I can't escape. This is the end.

Gingerly, I peek out of my sleep encrusted eyelids expecting to be met with the my dead body at the bottom of the ocean as I watch as a ghost from above but instead I see the wall of my bare white room. I am safe. I have come to the end of another intoxicating incident. I deeply exhale the breath I must have been holding with relief mingled with a bit of disappointment. Out of the corner of my eye I catch a glimpse of the clock saying 10 o'clock. The exact same time that it said when I left. I am too bewildered to think of a credible explanation. Did the clock stop working? No, it's still ticking and this happened last time as well. Am I dreaming about this? No, the pain from the new segment still faintly pangs. Did time stop? Possibly, last time the clock stopped then resumed or maybe time didn't stop and instead I wasn't in this time or place but time travelled. Stop it, I think to myself, I'm letting my imagination run away with me, there is no such thing as time travelling. I'm just drowsy due to the adrenaline accelerating through my blood, the experience of my heart vigorously pounding, a sensation I have never felt before now. The danger of these encounters is what makes them so thrilling but as much as I enjoy them I want to fulfil my responsibility at last and get my last piece installed. There it is again. My new piece is glowing, I definitely was not imagining it. My energy and fuel has completely drained like a battery after all of this. I just need some rest.

A new day which can only mean one thing: a new instalment. It should arrive soon. The clock states 7 o'clock so not too long to go.

8 o'clock.

9 o'clock.

10 o'clock.

11 o'clock.

12 o'clock.

1 o'clock in the afternoon and still nothing.

2 o'clock.

3 o'clock.

4 o'clock.

5 o'clock.

Here I am at 10 o'clock at night and still nothing. Have they forgotten? Every day I normally get a new piece, why is today different? I'll wait again tomorrow in case they have forgotten.

Two weeks later and still the familiar sensation of throbbing from new screws, nails and a new piece has not arrived. Gawping in astonishment I let my jaw drop to the floor with what I see; my body has lit up like a shooting star blazing across vast space. Then everything clicks into place like a jigsaw puzzle completing after weeks of torment. Every question that I have previously asked myself I have now got the answer to.

I have wondered why this has never happened before but I now understand. I have had them before but just not as vividly, like the time when I was in some sort of camp with some men referred to as Scott and Shackleton. I also recall the biting wind clawing and scratching my frostbitten body and the Antarctic lashing its bitter whips at my frozen face. As I mention this, a part of my window frame begins to transform into golden luminescent wood before fading back again.

A question I asked was about time stopping but now I realise that time doesn't stop but something else happens instead. Every time I recall or have one of these mystifying adventures an element of me glows indicating that they are related. The events seem so familiar that it seems like they are a distant memory. Perhaps these events have happened before to me or more specifically to my new piece. These adventures could be a memory or flashback from a segment of me which would explain the familiarity of them. The reason the most recent ones were so lucid is because they were my last few pieces so I was reliving the past life of my pieces in their former body hence the reason I glowed after the most recent piece was installed because it was my last piece so it was showing that I am complete. All of this means something spectacular; any day now I could get used for my sole purpose.

The prospect blooms inside of me like a blossom delicately dancing in the wind of jubilation. I wait like a puppy in the dog shelter waiting to be picked out of my sorrowful container to be brought into the bustling reality. Day after day I wait with green eyes for my chance to rule the spotlight. More anticipating, two weeks later and still nothing. As the days wear on my patience wears thinner, my blossom of hope leisurely wilts. Unwillingly, my eyelids begin to drowsily droop, struggling to stay awake. My last thought before going into a deep sleep is that no matter the time, I will be awake and ready for my big day. I'm not sure I can keep that.

Gradually, I come back to senses after years of rest, spying the gold, bejewelled room stretching out in front of me. For years I have been polished and tested and finally it's my time to play my part in such a historical event and bathe in my glory.

Baby angels, swiftly pirouetting across the night sky are captured in the extensive, ceiling. I feel like one of those angels, strong, powerful, elegant and free. Free from that small box of a room to twirl around these unbound quarters. This is how new born babies must feel: clean, flexible and an overall sensation of freshness. I could climb a mountain without batting an eyelid thanks to this new polished and shining look which credit must go to those humans that assist me. Speaking of them, here they are now. This is really it. Bundles of diamonds and rubies aloft frail bodies gleam in the light as they sit down upon me, shaking with the idea of the spirited and slightly intimidating day ahead.

I will be remembered in history for the day that I, the Diamond Jubilee State Coach, transported King Charles III and the Queen consort to Westminster Abbey. Trundling down the stone archway towards the seemingly menacing gates ahead, a display of fireworks explode inside of me each one coloured differently such as the colour of fear, agitation, nerves, excitement and most of all proudness to be here, steeped in so much of my own history. I feel invincible as I hear the roaring of the jam-packed crowd and the feeling of the hug from the intoxicating smell of fresh roses mingled with rags drenched in sweat as I allocate myself under the vast canopy of the sky. I never knew I contained so much history and time. Today I will make my pieces proud: the tree where gravity was founded; the Mary Rose, a flagship belonging to a king; the Antarctic bases of Captain Scott and Sir Ernest Shackleton; and much more are all represented by me. Today is my day to mark history. Wish me luck.