



An Infinite State of Total Wonder



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Azra's Fountain

by Margaret Eaton

estimated
reading time
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Samir died in the middle of the lunch rush at Dobar Dan. He owned the tiny café and was a fixture there, always finding a way to mention how little he cared that Dobar Dan was voted Best Bosnian six years in a row. He finished his kahva, a Turkish style coffee, stood up then collapsed hitting the floor hard.

Forks fell. Mouths half-filled with lamb burek stopped chewing. Samir's daughter Azra, who runs the café, dropped to him, her knees barely missing the old man's head. "Otac" she moaned, "Otac."

Samir's sons, Jozo and Goran, rarely came to see him. Their sporadic visits usually ended with a pitch for money for some kind of half-baked scheme. Samir usually declined mumbling "budala, budala," fool, fool. Recently they began pushing Samir to sell the café. But it was their desire to buy American houses with attached garages far from the neighborhood that displeased him most.

Samir made Azra work hardest for his love. When she earned it, which was often, it was a fountain. Samir had love for his sons too but it had become half-hearted and to Azra's delight, was rarely a fountain.

Bebe, Azra's sister-in-law and Dobar Dan's best waitress, stood motionless and spoke as if to no one in particular, "we should call Jozo and Goran." At that moment one of Azra's colossal tears landed on Samir's head, his eyes opened. He spoke one last time, "He who is late may gnaw the bones."

Margaret Eaton grew up in Cleveland. After working as a community organizer and political consultant she began helping social change activists tell their stories. Today she lives in St. Louis, still a consultant to progressive groups, she also dabbles in fiction.

COMMENTS

Carolyn Benson 12.17.2009

I love the title, the idea of the fountain. The details, like Azra's knees barely missing Samir's head. The matter-of-factness of this very short, wonderful story, really works because of the details. Bebe's offhand statement. And, of course, the great ending. Wow! So much happens in



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this space!

Karen Baicker 12.17.2009

So much quiet drama -- the collision of the momentous and the mundane, the backstory and the moment. So well done! This is really wonderful.

Sheila Daly 12.17.2009

Oh, this story is just breathtaking from the very first line all the way through to the perfect ending. I love the tone, the poetry of it, the aftertaste--did it really happen?

Connie Baugh 12.17.2009

Fascinating. How much emotion and tension right through to the incredible ending! Keep the stories coming!

Mike Erickson 12.18.2009

This is a gem. Beautifully crafted and full of life. Wonderful.

Jeanne Kirkton 12.20.2009

Margaret's short story is riveting. I keep replaying it in my mind to digest each detail and the multitudinous meanings open to the reader.

Manuel Rosaldo 12.21.2009

Beautiful. So many evocative details in such a short space. Loved the description of Jozo and Goran.

Mae Gibson 12.27.2009

Your opening sentence is an attention-grabber. Great character description by the use of clipped sentences about their behaviors--much as one would in conversation. The story moves well and keeps my interest as it does. The last sentence sums up nicely, sort of a Go to Hell. I like it.

scott wilson 12.28.2009

Umm, right. Dobar, Bosnian, "kahva, a Turkish style coffee," "mouth full of "lamb burek," "Otac," with all these cool foreign word thingies how can this fail. I love that "half-baked scheme" turn of phrase, can I use it some day? I hear that forks fell. Now Fingers stop typing.

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