

"Go Home" by Daniel Hanson Dzah

Two words. Two syllables, almost echoing out of the cave that was his mouth. "GOOO HOOOME", he bellowed, with eyes lighting up and his brow perniciously furrowed. I froze momentarily. My mind blanked out and staggered, unsure of how to process those two words I had heard. And when clarity prevailed, even then, what transpired was a reverie unfamiliar to my everyday reasoning.

He was walking away, after delivering those propane-laced syllables. Probably proud of himself for defending *his* home, for defending his one colour, or lack thereof. He was walking away, when I lunged at him from behind. I shoved him with force that had ignited in my bowels and evolved into a flame within my heart and mind. Into the booth that willingly materialized, we slumped. His head bumped against one of the interior white walls. When he shrieked in pain, I was sorry, and then afterwards not so sorry, for he was after all, alive. I turned and locked us in.

Having been crouching that moment, he made some efforts to stand upright, but I violently dropped him by his shoulders, buttocks first, in the seat behind him. There was a small patch of red where he had bumped his forehead, but the rest of his face had paled almost into a reflection of the white colour of the walls.

I stared at him and pitied him. *Who was to blame for his ignorance? How does one's mind receive training to create such brackets for fellow humans? How does one see a person and immediately write out their life's story in a matter of seconds? How does one not see the limitations of the mind to do that with precision? How can it be stopped?* I smiled, chuckled and shook my head. *Anyone, everyone, can be taught.*

I pulled out my notebook and began to show him pictures of *my* home. I began with vistas of rich and luscious evergreen woods he could enjoy only in one season. He looked bemusedly at me, and then back to the screen. He did not see the point.

I stared him down into attentiveness. Next, I showed him monuments that stood taller than the stereotypes he had been fed. And then, I showed him happy faces; of infants, of young children, of adults, and of the elderly. Faces of joy overflowing and submerging surrounding banks of pain and suffering. There was everything anyone ever needed in these images, I tried to show him. All the food and drink and light and love a human body and soul could ever want. If he had harbored a shred of pity for me, the plan was to drain it all out of his brain.

But perhaps, *his* hatred and self-defense were built on ignorance. And for that, I was ready to see his *hate* diluted with *envy*, which has eventually become respect. When images of my family and friends appeared, I let him know how much love was waiting for me, how much of that had been stored up in my heart and how his ignorance was a threat to that. He had to understand that this was my gesture of defense. I did not care so much about hurting him. What I cared to protect was the reservoir of love and joy, stored up for decades and never before so threatened than minutes ago: darts of discrimination, flying in from the towers of his ignorant heart, threatened to breach it.

When the slideshow of pictures ended and I exhaled away much of the anger that had led us both to that figment of a booth; I was staring intently at him, catching him before he could mask his expression. The furrowed brow has turned into ridges of surprise and was farther from its path of anger and hatred than when he had first laid his eyes on me and uttered those two words. And now, traces of shame of a humbling discovery, almost apologetic, shone brightly out of the new frown born of the boyhood petulance he was keenly feigning.

I leaned to my side and let the door open. He walked out, stopped at the door to look at me for one last time, to apologize, perhaps. I looked away, weary from what I saw to be a valiant defense of my identity and soul. The door shut with a victorious calmness, and I came to, just as the subway's automated voice announced, at the final stop. I smiled, chuckled

and shook my head.