



The Fly (A Chair Story)

by Amy Halloran

When Jeremy Lupine Arella came to play the blues, the fly on the wall had a free ticket to the most unsoldout performance in the history of the hall. Everybody knew Jeremy and no one wanted to know more about why he was sad. The man told his woes until he was blue in the face. He had to be reminded to breathe between the lamentations he listed daily at the counter of the coffee shop.

"She picked a fine time to leave me," Jeremy began his day, every day after Sarah, the waitress wordlessly asked if he wanted coffee, by holding the hot carafe in the air in front of his face. The action was like an invitation, the waving of a flag to let the race begin. But Jeremy had no competition. He won at enumerating the dump of life upon him. His sorrows made everyone else feel great, even if they had cancer or hadn't slept because their kid stayed up all night, puking on three sets of pj's and sheets.

"You picked a fine time to leave me," Jeremy said every day at 6:33 a.m., to no one and everyone in the shop. "With four hundred children and a crop in the field."

No one laughed because Jeremy wasn't being funny, he was being himself. He was himself, a fool who couldn't see the sun ever shone. He couldn't see that the sun shined especially on him and even if he did have four hundred kids at least they each had four limbs and two good eyes, none of which needed glasses. Sarah the waitress had the diplomacy to ignore the four hundred nannies that cared for his multiple offspring, and she regarded the rest of his troubles with the restraint of a well paid therapist, because the man tipped like a king. The man was a king, financially, plus he was the king of the worst. He had the worst luck, the worst love. His wife left and unless a few of his kids could manage to support him, he would be SOL on Social Security in his rapidly approaching golden years.

Jeremy Lupine Arella booked the hall five years in advance of his performance. He wanted to be prepared. One night a week, he paid to practice his laments in the hollow of the empty space. He didn't want anyone to hear his creations, so he paid extra for the whole building to be free from folk each time he practiced. He didn't know that he was perfect at moaning, that he did it every day and no one planned to come see him. No one cared that he was rich, richer than God was God. They wanted to teach Jeremy Lupine Arella a lesson: that people didn't have to listen to him. So what if the self-styled musician wasn't even going to charge for his show? Free couldn't buy people's attention. They had paid him enough of that already.

The night of the concert, Jeremy had a reason to sing the blues. The house was empty, full of chairs. The lights were on and stayed on throughout the performance, because Jeremy Lupine Arella hadn't hired any stage hands to help with his show. He had thought he would ask members of the audience to turn down the lights. He had thought the show would be a success, that the hall would be filled to the gills and people would be spilling out the doors and onto the street, where they would sway to the persuasions of his woes. He had anticipated the empathetic weeping of the women of his town, of Sarah, the waitress, especially. He had high hopes for the fifteen minute break for cookies and conversation with the artist, but he ate cookies all by himself.

The hall echoed with his loneliness and the sound of cookies crunching in his mouth, crumbling on the stage. The fly on the wall moved to the chair and listened to the man's moans. After intermission, the man sobbed for another forty five minutes, wondering how he had managed to offend so many people. The fly listened to the man crying, and, when he was done, the fly came over and sat on Jeremy Lupine Arella's nose.

"As if this don't beat all," Jeremy said, looking cross-eyed at the persistent fly. "Go away, fly," Jeremy said. The fly would not, and he would not let Jeremy kill him, either. The fly showed that in addition to having a million eyes, flies have ears on their hearts. They can listen.



About the author:

Amy Halloran currently resides in Troy, New York with her husband and son. Despite the distraction of buying a home, Amy continues to fight "the good fight."