

Aligned

Final Act.

Sunlight flickered through his eyelids. Eyes closed, his sight was orange. He was waking up from his needed sleep. His inert lids opened slowly to a blurry view. Above him a sea of glittering leaves, underneath him a bed of soft grass and virgin daisies. His mind slowly repossessing the warmed up body, his chest let in a deep breath of air. He laid there for a few more minutes. His legs felt heavy as he lifted himself up from the ground. As did his heart. He closed his eyes again. It was still early in the morning and people were busy getting from here to there. The trees were resting in the sun while he was walking underneath them. Slow steps. *Left - right - left - right*. Looking at his feet. *Left - right - left - right*. He couldn't recall how far they had been taking him. Endless distances that would bring him back to where he began.

Those were the last days of summer. Those days that linger with sweet nostalgia and enduring warmth. The sun tried to

peak through the little gaps between the still green leaves. Skinny sun rays landed on his soft skin reminding him that despite all the years past there was still life unchanged. This park, it had always been giving him so much comfort. He felt lucky, that it was still there.

“Old friend,” he whispered, a weak smile gracing his face as he walked back home.

Her arms were filled with books, that had been resting in dusty bookshelves for decades. The wooden oak floor creaked under her weight announcing her presence. The public library was her sanctuary, whenever her mind was clouded with sorrow or doubt, which was most of the time. The sun was shining through the tall dirty windows of the historic building and colored the hall with its dark brown shelves and desks in a golden yellow. The air was thick, scented with dry paper. Walking tardily between the tall, sturdy shelves, she glided her fingers along the backs of the books. She stopped in her steps when a particular book caught her eye. She gently drew it from between Thomas Hardy and Makepeace Thackeray. It was Wells' *The Time Machine*, an edition from the 1960s. The cover was faded and pages yellowed. It had been untouched for a very long time she sensed. She stacked it on top of the other books she had collected before and carefully moved to the desk next to section 4, *American literature and art*. It was her favorite spot. She put down the books and turned on the green bankers-lamp, which stood on the far right corner of the wooden desk. She sat

down and looked at the clock on the other side of the hall. *Still time*, she thought.

His eyes opened slowly. The room was dimmed and cold. For a brief moment he had to recollect where he was. He was home. His body felt slightly stiff as he turned on his back. The noise of him turning under the cotton sheets filled the otherwise quiet room with a rustling noise that was incredibly soothing. After his walk in the park earlier that day, he decided to stay home just letting time creep by itself. He made lunch, did some exercises and watched the news. It was a peaceful but long day.

He had fallen asleep while reading. His eyes felt dry and swollen as he woke up from his second nap that day. It was already dark outside and the once warm air had cooled down, filling his apartment. He sat up and enjoyed the feeling of his body weight shifting. He looked at his watch. *Almost time*.

On his way to the living room he grabbed the blue candle from his nightstand. It was nearly burned off. Maybe an hour left. But an hour was enough. He put it on the glass top of his coffee table and lit it. Its light graced the room with a pale halo flickering in steady rhythm. Sitting down on the sill of his big open window he reached for the pack of cigarettes next to him on the same sill. He rarely smoked but welcomed the calming meditative act that comes with it. After lighting the cigarette he had withdrawn from the pack, he took a long and

slow drag from it. With his eyes closed he exhaled the bitter smoke from his lungs as slowly as he inhaled it. As the last bit of smoke departed his body he leaned back against the window frame and opened his eyes. The ember at the end of this cigarette pulsed in the darkness of his living room. He watched the thin thread of smoke leaving the ember, whose curves and movement were weirdly sensual. Just like that he rested his mind and heart.

Gradually, the pale halo that radiated from the candle disappeared. The room was dark. It was time. His heart was full with joy when he looked up and saw the stars aligned. He has been waiting for this day for eighty-nine years. Waiting patiently as everyone and everything else turned to dust and left with him with an open heart und closed eyes. He lived many many lives that he patched into one. Sadly, it wasn't the first nor the second time that he had been waiting this long. The wait, the pain, the longing and the uncertainty was worth it for the time that they would have together. Even though it sometimes seemed like a blink of an eye. She was worth it.

Water was dribbling down her naked body and covering her face. She knew that she would get hurt again. The last time broke her. She was tired of leaving and being left over and over again. Nevertheless, she grew stronger from the pain. Through all the sorrow and despair, she never doubted her decision.

Suddenly, he felt it. The whole atmosphere shifted. He

closed his eyes and took a deep breath. When he heard a creaking from the hallway his heart contracted, his body started shaking. Small unsteady steps coming closer. It seemed like years past again until there, in the distance a black silhouette appeared from behind his bedroom door. The small fragile figure was hesitant approaching him any further. It was surreal and if he wouldn't have had known better, he would have mistaken the creature for a ghost. He carefully stood up from the windowsill. His legs were shaky as was his breathing. Automatically his legs decided to take steps forward until there was only a meter left between him and the little figure. They stood like that for a while. The room felt empty except for the presence of just the two of them. Every noise was intensified by the silence that reigned the whole apartment. Not standing the stillness anymore he broke the silence.

“Hi,” he breathed out.

“Hi,” she whispered.

And then it was quiet again. But in the silence he heard a familiar sound. A suppressed quiet sobbing and rambling breathing. His heart contracted again.

“So, how have you been?” she asked smiling and crying at the same time. That's when he pulled her into his arms and pressed her tightly to his body not minding whether she would get enough air or not. He just wanted to feel her. Feel her strongly. But, the expected relief from the tightening grip around his heart never occurred. She was there and she was here. He was there and he was here. Their universes came

together once again. It had happened times before but it felt overwhelming and new time and time again. A month left. And eighty-nine years until the next time that they would have the chance to meet again. They would never age nor die until they decided to. They have long overcome life. It was a lonely life. As soon as were in each other's arms. It was in both of their hearts. This would be the last goodbye.