

“Wild Geese” By Mary Oliver

Lagoon Myers

(492 words)

The Pennines soothed the ache. The latent pangs that plagued Max amidst concrete and brick waned against moss. The night sky reverberated with the Earth beneath their supine body. Fog shrouded the stars above the overgrown quarry, glittering with strobing colour lights fit for a discotheque. The bass from the soundsystem shook the ancient limestone; Max vibrated in their skin. Hands spread in the beaded bog moss, they felt a connection to something bigger than nights in Northern Quarter. Some took their own queer identity as an implication to party. It sparked an isolation akin to their childhood home an ocean away, impenetrable politically for a dyke like Max, not woman enough for ‘family values’.

“You okay?” A stranger approached, tinnies in hand, mate in tow. One couldn’t help but grin at her hat, knitted to resemble a frog wearing a tiara, and no doubt, handmade.

“I’m communing with the Earth,” Max cringed at their own voice.

“Just wanted to make sure you’re not havin’ a bad trip or nowt! D’ya know where t’a piss?”

Max gestured to the trees, “nature, innit?”

The girls laughed, “Cheers! Ina bit!”, ambling towards the grove of young ash trees.

Max looked back towards the soundsystem, pulling their knees to their chest. The lights flashed, illuminating the dancers like ants before some musical god. Jungle breaks churned through the quarry, tunneling into Max’s core. A wave of loneliness tightened their chest, but they remained frozen against the Earth.

“Max!”

The voice softened their face, heart. “Daisie!”

Daisie clambered onto the mossy ground beside Max, all long limbs and purple braids.

“Oh this is *luuuush!* You alright?”

Max closed their eyes. Tears pricked at the inner corners. Daisie pulled Max against her chest, a tight hug with hearts reverberating in time with the bouncing bassline.

“V should be here.” Daisy acknowledged the heavy silence, the now-forever shadow over raves. The bog moss felt like cat fur between Max’s fingers. They stroked the strands.

“How could she...” Max’s voice was moss against the free party’s noise, “when we were all right here, would drop anything to help? How could she have hated the same person I love so much?”

Daisy squeezed them a bit tighter, “I don’t think it’s fair to yourself to look for explanations. Grief is mysterious.” Releasing Max, they both observed the Peaks unraveling around them.

“V would’ve loved the quarry. Ace spot.”

Daisy and Max sat shoulder to shoulder, watching the lights glimmer across the limestone. Sunrise was coming. A snail, drum & bass green, slipped through the long grass beneath an ash tree that reeked of piss. The loneliness could be left in the moss for a bit while Max got up for a dance. When they returned to it, they’d have friends like Daisy to haul it up the sunken quarry and lug it out to Hope, back North West on the train to the city that felt the most like home.