

“Hmmm. Well, she does have that weird boyfriend, you know.”

“Weird boyfriend?”

My heart rate speeds up again, and suddenly I’m sick to my stomach.

“What exactly is weird about the guy?”

“I don’t know; I’ve never actually met him. I’ve just heard he’s kind of creepy. You know, real possessive and whatnot. I think he’s some kind of religious nut too; a Jehovah’s Witness or something.”

\*

*Saparmurat Niyazov wrote a book known as Ruhnama (Book of the Soul), which is still taught as a religious text to Turkmen students alongside the Koran. Somewhere in the capital city of Ashgabat stands a giant memorial to the work, an enormous, colorful statue of a book surrounded by fountains and trees. Every evening at approximately 8:00 pm, the big book opens up to reveal a video of the late ruler reading from the text. A number of foreign corporations desperate to do business with Turkmenistan have graciously helped out by having Ruhnama translated into various languages.*

\*

“Are you okay darling? You look terrible.”

“No, I’m fine,” I lie. “You know what I’ve been thinking?”

“What.”

“Let’s go somewhere. For real. I’m completely serious this time.”

“Where to? Turkmenistan?”

There’s a brief pause, and the smile on her face gets wider as she gradually realizes I’m telling the truth.

“You really are serious!”

“I am.”

“Well... Where do we wanna go then?”

“Let’s go somewhere happy.”

“Happy? Like where?”

“I don’t know, somewhere like Denmark or Sweden maybe. In fact, yeah, let’s go to Sweden.”

GARY ARMS

## The Moth

The Moth is dull and drab, with dirty wings.  
The Air, who only cares for dainty things,  
For lace-winged Flies and Butterflies and rare  
Beige Seeds that float in clouds of mazy hair,  
Does hate the Moth.

“Oh, sweetest Moth,” says Air,  
“Do condescend to meet my friend, the Flame.”

“Who, me?” asked dazzled Moth. “I meet the Flame?”

“Poor Flame is starved. He has no friends at all.  
Sad, bluish thing, he drinks—pure alcohol,  
You know.”

“I didn’t know!” cries Moth, and flies  
To meet poor lonely Flame. Through Air’s dark skies,  
She drives her dirty wings to meet poor blue  
And drunken Flame.

From out his bowl of glass,  
Up leaps the Living Flame, so hot and bright—  
For Living Flames are tall and upper-class,  
Not poor and dull at all.

Poor Moth in fright  
Does want to fly away—but who can fly  
From bright, exquisite Flames? “Good-bye! Good-bye!”  
She sings. But never does she go. Around,  
Around the Living Flame as if she’s bound  
By golden string. With every round, she closer flies.  
She dives. She nearly nicks the lovely Flame.

“Oh, pretty Moth, do KISS the Flame!” Air cries.

And so Moth does. She dives to kiss the Flame.

“Oh, pretty Moth, I love your Blazing Wings.  
For I am Air, and only care for Dainty Things.”