

Mémoire

Putting on the thick jacket and sweater, Edward leaves for work. He jumps on a bus, and after an hour he arrives at the French Quarter. He runs through the crowd and stops at a sidewalk.

“Edward, ya late today! Hurry up, there is a parade at seven-thirty, we ain’t have time!”

Does not even let Edward catch his breath, Mr. Boudreaux hoarsely yells at him. Mr. Boudreaux is a middle-aged man whose round face is as red as a ripe tomato (and his eyebrows are stitched together); as he yells, Edward can see his round belly moving. Mr. Boudreaux turns on the huge speaker and picks up his saxophone. Quickly apologizing, Edward comes up to fix the microphone stand and then sits down.

He takes a look around the French Quarter and sits there melancholically. It is three o’clock in the evening, more than half of the light shop signs are still off, some restaurants are crowded with people, and everyone is walking past his face. He sees some ladies putting on their vibrantly colorful clothes with sparkly make-up on their faces passing by and giving him a blown kiss.

Surrounding him are the loud noises of the engine starting, people chatting, and children laughing; he vaguely hears Mr. Boudreaux’s taking a deep breath — the performance is starting,

The jazz music starts with Mr. Boudreaux's saxophone sound, accompanied by the piano in the backing track. He closes my eyes, all the noises fade out, leaving the corner for the performance.

“Stars shining bright above you

Night breezes seem to whisper ‘I love you’

Birds singing in the sycamore tree

Dream a little dream of me”

(Dream a Little Dream of Me)

The moment he starts to sing, the whole world around him with all the worries stays quiet, and the only thing that remains is his soothing voice. He hears the clanking sound of people putting their change into Mr. Boudreaux's money bucket.

Edward opens his eyes and looks around. Some people are recording him (which makes him blushes), some are just standing looking at him, and—

—a man is looking at him straight in the eyes.

The man’s look does not belong to this small corner. He is such an attractive man; he is tall, his dark brown eyes are looking deep into Edward, his brown hair naturally covers his forehead, and his grin is somehow unexplainable.

Edward notices him in just a glance. Unlike other audiences who enjoy the music, the man seems to only focus on Edward.

“The Mardi Gras memories

Of creole tunes that filled the air

I dream of oleanders in June

And soon I'm wishing that I was there”

(Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans)

He is weird, Edward glares at him, or to be frank, he is creepy — but it somehow does not bother him that much. Edward sees a young lady who is standing next to the man, and she is fully distracted by his look. Her cheeks have turned to early morning clouds, and she keeps shyly looking at the man.

Edward tries to not notice the man, but that “passionate” look of his is hard to ignore.

Little does Edward know, in those dreamy eyes, Edward is shining like the moonlight. He shines not too brightly, but he is engraved in the man’s mind. Edward’s black hair is softly dancing in the wind, his black eyes are so deep that the man cannot escape, and his coffee color jacket makes him look like a young shepherd who is singing to the sheep. People come and leave, only the man silently stays there.

“Kiss me once

Then, kiss me twice

Then, kiss me once again

It's been a long, long time.”

(It's Been a Long, Long Time)

The performance ends at six o’clock, and Mr. Boudreaux leaves just a few minutes later.

All the lights are on. Edward heads to the bus stop.

“Good evening.”

Edward’s wrist is held tightly, and the sudden warmth in the middle of the winter gives him a goosebump. He turns his head, and he sees the man is standing right there smiling.

“Good...evening...” Edward, awkwardly, tries to escape from the man’s hand, but that man just grabs even tighter.

“I’m James,” his husky voice delicately annoys Edward — he does not want to admit that this obnoxious guy has such a good voice, “James Norwood.”

“Edward Martinez,” Edward said.

“Are you free now?” James grins. His smiley eyes are like little puppy’s, which are miles away from the cool and distant image he has, “I just moved here, so I don’t know much about this place and the...what is that... *Mar-die Gra-ss?*”

“Mardi Gras,” Edward tries not to laugh out loud at the man’s pronunciation, “and yeah, sure. I am free.”

Well, Edward does not have anything to do after this. Mr. and Mrs. Martinez are at work and probably will not return before midnight. Then, why would he come home while he can hang out with James?

James, so unexpected, rides a bike to this French Quarter. The bike is not too small, but it is like a dwarf’s for two over-six-foot-two-tall men to ride. People on the street keep looking at them; two young men riding on a tiny baby bike is quite a sight to see.

Being such an enthusiastic tourist, James buys everything he sees: a Mardi Gras mask, a crown, and even a cape, then he puts them all on Edward.

“You look like the little prince, Edward,” he says.

The little prince “gently” tells his new friend, “Shut up.”

They ride slowly. The whole French Quarter or the whole Louisiana is covered in purple, green, and gold, the color of justice, faith, and power. They stop at Cafe Beignet on Bourbon Street, and while Edward falls in love with the live jazz band, James buys two cups of coffee and three boxes of beignets so they can eat while watching the parade.

“You sure you can eat ‘em all?” Edward asks with a very confused look. The next thing he sees is James finishing the first box even before the parade even starts.

They do not have a good spot on the route because this is a last-minute decision, but they are so tall that they can still easily watch it over people's heads.

New Orleans is lively, Mardi Gras is lively, and the people are lively. You may be strangers at first, but as soon as the party starts, we are all neighbors. Everyone becomes one, rolls with the music, joins in the second line, and welcomes a rain of beads.

“We're supposed to have a basket to catch 'em!” Edward yells over the crowd, “But now just try to catch!”

Edward quickly catches about five to six beads. He gently puts those on James' neck, who is on the verge of crying since he can catch nothing.

The parade keeps going on, and there are so many magnificent floats that it seems to be endless. They see a three-floor float with about twenty people on there dancing, and the float is so splendid that Edward's eyes are a bit hurt. The theme this time is glowing, so the floats are covered in sparkles and neon lights.

James and Edward do not really like to be in the crowd, so they leave earlier than anyone else. They go to Coop's Place, a lovely restaurant with such an amazing seafood gumbo dish. James eats it enthusiastically (after two and a half bags of beignets), and he does not even let Edward have a chance to take out the credit card to pay.

“I ask you to go out with me, so I should pay for my little prince,” James laughs even though Edward wants to punch him in the face.

“Stop calling me that!”

James calls a taxi for Edward since it has passed the bus time. After looking at Edward silently, James digs into his coat pocket and takes out a pen. He keeps searching for a piece of

paper, but all he can see are candy wraps. Why is it so hard? He just wants to be in touch with his little prince.

Edward bursts out laughing. James makes everyone think that he is such a distant, cold person (well, his resting face looks like somebody just stole his money -- even though he is handsome) but actually, he is just a joyful and outgoing young man. Edward puts his hand on James' palm and tilts his head, "You can...just write your number here.."

James carefully writes on Edward's hand as if he is scared that Edward might be hurt. Edward's hands are elegant, his fingers are long, and his fingernails are clean like a water drop. James locks it with his hand, then whispers into Edward's ear. The taxi comes, James waves at Edward then rides the bike home.

It is eleven at night. Edward dozes off in the taxi. He has not felt this comfortable for a while. He is working day and night to pay back his student's loan when he was still a college student, and singing gradually turns into a job, no longer a hobby anymore. He cannot find that excitement anymore but only worries. But today, his music helps him make a new friend.

The last thing he thinks of before entering his dream is James' last words, "Dream a little dream of me, little prince."