

Chapter 2

Chance Worthington’s coffee machine was set to begin brewing automatically at 6:30 a.m. so he could wake to the smell of a fresh brewed pot. This morning he was woken by a shaft of sunlight that snuck in under the blinds and landed directly on his eyes. Yawning and stretching he got up feeling remarkably rested.

His dreams last night were still vivid to him, but they were fading fast. He grabbed the yellow legal pad he kept on his nightstand and wrote the last one he could remember with as much detail as he could before it vanished back into his subconscious.

I was back in Paris again. I’ve only been there once in reality, but in my dreams I’ve been there hundreds of times. Under the Eiffel tower again with Jenny. I can see and feel the gravel beneath my feet. I remember at the time, and now in the dream, thinking that it’s odd that the Eiffel tower’s foundation seems to be made up of gravel. Such a large structure should have a more solid foundation. I can’t recall now if there was actually gravel there or not, but that’s how I remember and that’s how it appears in my dream.

As you’d expect there were crowds of tourists wandering around, gawking up and taking pictures. We were standing next to one of the legs of the tower, she was leaning against it. The casual way you’d lean on any public wall. She’s wearing khaki capris with large pockets full of all sorts of necessary things for travel.

I remember thinking that we both had spilt our money up into various piles and had distributed it among various pockets and pouches so that if we were to be pick-pocketed the criminal wouldn’t get all of our money.

She’s wearing a blue and white striped shirt that formed comfortably to her body, showing her curves without looking too restrictively tight. Her medium length auburn hair just touching her shoulders was being blown by the wind into her face making the moment less classically romantic, but more real. The pulled a strand of hair out of

her mouth, making a funny spitting noise with her tongue as she did. Had that really happened? Dream and memory are getting mixed up now.

The sun was... it was bright out, but I can't see if the sky was blue or grey. It was bright. It illuminated the edges of her hair making them glow like fire.

I can smell sweet candied roasted almonds. I can feel it in my nose, a sweet hot feeling. I can see the vender, his small cart with two large wooden wagon wheels painted thickly with blue and white paint. I remember thinking that was similar to a rickshaw but for nuts instead of people. The passing thought that this was this man's entire life passed through my mind.

I breathe in the sweet air, and look up, the view from below a dizzying geometry. I look back at her and she's looking up as well. I'm overcome with the urge to get down on my knee right there and then and ask her to marry me. It's the most romantic moment I can conceive. Paris, the Eiffel tower, picture perfect day, heck it even smelled romantic. I didn't have a ring. In fact, the idea of asking her to marry me hadn't occurred to me in our entire relationship.

But this moment. This moment is the perfect moment for it. You can buy a ring whenever, but you cannot buy a moment. You cannot plan for a moment like this to come along.

The bells of Notre Dame Cathedral are ringing nearby. We'd walked from there before. Rambling through skinny cobblestoned streets using the Eiffel tower as a city guide. The specifics of those streets are gone, but the feel of cobblestone, the feel of the tightly packed buildings that seemed to be leaning against each other to stay up, those feels are still there.

I'm not even sure Notre Dame has bells that ring anymore. My knowledge of the cathedral is entirely based on a Disney cartoon, and that can't be too reliable of a historical source.

But, in my dreams the bells are ringing. A small group of doves (probably pigeons) disturbed by the ringing, or by any number of other things, suddenly takes flight their wings loud, but not unpleasant in my dream.

In reality I let that moment pass. I did nothing. Said nothing. I think she said “Should we go up?” and we went and paid our 20 Francs, or whatever, and went up to the second landing. We didn’t go all the way to the top, because it was incredibly crowded and as the tower only got thinner as we went up we felt the wait and cramming of people wouldn’t be worth the extra view of another couple hundred feet would provide us.

Just another missed opportunity, I suppose.

In the dream I did ask her. I could feel the gravel give slightly against my knee as I knelt down and took her hand in mine. I looked her in the eye. In dream logic, I don’t think I even said the words out loud. Either she just saw the look in my eye and knew what I was going to say, or there was some dream jump cut before the words came out.

I’m sure it says something about my subconscious that even in my dreams I didn’t actually formally say the words.

In the dream she broke into a large smile and said “yes”. Pulled me up to her and we began to kiss and spin. And, then... then she was just gone. Paris, the Eiffel Tower, the bells of Notre Dame, the pigeons, everything was gone. Everything, but the gravel beneath my feet.

I was looking down at my feet. No shoes on them now. My bare toes digging into the dusty gravel. I could feel it digging into my skin. It was giving way and my feet were sinking into the ground. Gravel now covering my feet and ankles. A terrible crunching sound of rock rubbing against rock. I sank deeper and deeper into hot and dry rocks.