

## CHAPTER ONE OF LIBRA

IN WHICH

*Libra tells a story,  
Aquarius doesn't hear,  
and Gemini doesn't care*

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Gemini sits cross-legged in her stockings, her shoes flung elsewhere, de-segmenting an orange. Aquarius trails a finger in the Pond. I circle the Pond and ask myself one question: fountain or memorial?

Fountain?

Memorial?

Fountain?

Memorial?

The Statue in the middle of this Pond is either one or the other.

“It can't be a fountain if it isn't shooting water,” I say, “However, it can't be a memorial if no one remembers what it's for.”

Neither Gemini nor Aquarius responds.

In all, it's an overlarge Statue, in the middle of an overlarge Pond, in the middle of an overlarge Garden. It's an ambiguity that engages guests as we sip at our one-shot cocktails and wait to see if this wedding is still happening or not.

I weigh it out:

Fountain?

Memorial?

Fountain?

Memorial?

“I know what it is and it has nothing to do with either of its possibilities,” Aquarius says.

“Ah. Well,” I respond, “If you know what it is, Aquarius, then it's likely no one else will ever know.”

It's true.

Aquarius' wisdom is like the rain: it falls plentifully enough, but the dithery nature of its delivery makes it difficult to cup in cohesive quantities.

I prefer intelligence I can cup.

Knowledge is nothing if it can't be cupped.

So, which is it?

Fountain?

Memorial?

Fountain?

Memorial?

“You know,” I say, “This reminds me of a story.”

“I don’t care,” Gemini responds.

“Hold on now,” I say, “Stories are effective vehicles of communication. To bring clarity to this situation, I feel like I should tell a story.”

“I don’t care,” Gemini says again.

“I once knew a girl who wanted a butterfly tattoo,” I begin, “However, she didn’t know where she wanted it. So, she started drawing erasable ones on different parts of her body to see what she liked. One morning, she woke up and found the butterfly on her shoulder. Strangely, however, she hadn’t drawn it there.”

Gemini chews on her orange peel. The gears in her head turn more like windmills in fields of poppy than metal cogs.

I continue:

“The next morning, the butterfly had moved to her collarbone, then to her hip. She couldn’t explain it. Every morning this butterfly tattoo was in a different place. One day, it had moved to just under her eye, the tip of its wing substituting for her bottom row of lashes. It was beautiful, however, since face tats are frowned upon in Western society, she couldn’t go to work. Then, it was on the sole of her foot and she couldn’t walk without smashing it and staining the carpet. She decided she wanted to get rid of it. She tried swatting it but self-flagellation proved too painful. Then, in an attempt to fight fire with fire, she started drawing other tattoos to get rid of it. She drew spiders to eat it and cats to catch it. She even drew a flower with the hopes the butterfly would sink into its color and get stuck. Unfortunately, these additional drawings became just as unruly, just as autonomous, until the art of her began to overcome her use as a human being. As she turned more and more into a Thing of Beauty, people stopped needing her, and therefore noticed her less and less. Finally, in a depressive last-ditch attempt, she gave herself leprosy to degrade everything that had superseded her worth as a human being, and, in consequence, was

forced to hide under the mountainous canvas of that disease for the rest of her days. Eventually, this woman died, although not from the leprosy; she died from the controversial prison sentence.”

I step back from my story and let my words sink in as Gemini stares.

“Wow. Ok. Great story babe,” she says, throwing her orange peel at Aquarius before exiting toward the bar.

I continue my walk around the Pond:  
Fountain?

Memorial?

Fountain?

Memorial?

I wish I knew which it was.

If I knew which it was, I'd be able to cup that information more effectively and everything would be better.

“Hmmm,” I say, “Tilapia. Hmmm.”