

Beauty

By Sabina de Rochefort

© 2016

With both hands, closing his eyes, he caresses the polished head of the marble statue. Not knowing why, he thinks of Raymoon, his childhood friend. What would his friend feel if he put his hands on this sculpted marble body? He never did have the courage to ask him: *Raymoon, what do you see when you touch something without seeing?*

They talked about girls, parents, colleagues, cars, trees and flowers, all invisible to Raymoon, but this he never asked. He was maybe too timid. He also never asked him (though always wanted to) why the oddball name? *Raymoon?*

Even now, after more than thirty years, he still remembers his friend's features: the narrow, transparent blue eyes, the straight nose, and the slim, tall body — taller than all the boys in their class. He hasn't forgotten Raymoon's laughter, chirpy and boisterous like a bird in the Spring. During recess they would play *Telephone*, and, when the final words became unpronounceable, their laughter would turn into tears of pleasure.

For years, their families would go together to the beach. Raymoon learned to swim faster and much better than him. One time he asked Raymoon how he managed to not swim too far from the shore.

"I can hear you even when you don't speak."

That was frightening — Raymon must have known everything about him!

Raymoon was not only the tallest, but also the best student in the class. Even though he had known Braille since he was three, Raymoon's parents wanted him to go for the first four years to a regular school. They obtained an exemption for their son to pass all the written exams verbally. Thus, he and Raymoon were classmates for those years. When the teacher asked questions, Raymoon knew every answer. Even topics they had never learned about. He sometimes wondered if his friend knew more than the teachers.

This morning, when he went to drop off some metal scraps from the shed, he found the statue at the local dump. It couldn't have been there for more than a day. It was lying down, soiled with dirt from the night rain mixed with the trash brought by the trucks from the city. He grabbed it carefully, placed it in the trunk on some old newspapers and took it home. He put it out on the lawn and washed with the hose the dirt off until the perfect body of a man, a teenager, appeared.

Imberb. The first time he heard the word was in High School, when they learned

about Rimbaud, the beautiful Arthur Rimbaud, the adolescent poet.

He looks at the statue, perplexed — a beauty born by blessed hands from a piece of marble. He is sure Raymoon would have liked it too. With a childish smile, he would have caressed the elongated body, the perfect face, and say:

"Boy! It's a beautiful statue — a good sculptor must have made it, Alex!"

Raymoon died in a car accident when he was ten years old. A drunk driver had accelerated through an intersection without seeing Raymoon slowly crossing the street, tapping the faded stripes on the crosswalk with his bright white cane.

He dries the body with a towel until the marble is almost warm, takes it in his arms and carries it in the house. He looks around, searching for a good place, and puts it in the corner of the living room, safe from the small children who play there — children who still don't know what art is.

He takes a few steps back, looks at the statue from both sides, and approaching again, grabs the short hair and gives it a flick, a "chestnut" as Raymoon would say.

This time it hurts.

He goes into the bedroom, sits on the unmade bed, now a grown man, numb and

lonely in the quiet, empty house and — for the first time since Raymoon's death — begins to cry.

In every tear, warm like a seed ready to grow, there is a word.

It is so good to be free, to fly... You'll see, come with me Alex... take my cane and you'll fly too...

An elongated body floats in the room and flies out the window into the city humming like a beehive full of honey.

The End