

Perfectly Flawed

Autumn Meier

Short Story

O'Fallon, IL

589 Words

O'Fallon Assembly of God, IL

Every few seconds, Joseph eyed his beloved photographs, each carefully hung onto the wall with a single tack. They were taken by him, each carefully designed with days of work. He only kept six up, though, and stored the rest in folders downstairs. These six were the only ones he found worthy.

The first was a detailed photograph of tall prairie grass swaying gently in the wind, stricken perfectly by light. “It’s beautiful,” those who saw it would say, and they didn’t expect the others to match the beauty of the first.

The second, though, matched the beauty of the first. It was of the blue ocean. “Not the green or gray ocean,” Joseph pointed out. It had taken him weeks to find the perfect spot to capture the image of the sea, free of foam or bubbles. “Even better,” his guests would say, then move on to the next one.

It was a beautiful waterfall. Yet again, the light, shadows, and colors were perfect. Joseph wouldn’t tell anyone where he had taken the photo, though, claiming that it would only spoil “the fun of it all.”

To no surprise, the fourth was a perfect image of a green butterfly, caught in midair, and the fifth was of Joseph himself, giving his bride a kiss several years before.

“How do you do it?”

Joseph would always smile, cross his arms behind him, and move calmly down the hall to show the sixth and final picture.

Encased in an old brown and red frame was the picture of a cross, mangled and

scratched with age and weather. The sunlight only made it look darker and more eerie, if not mysterious. “Why isn’t it perfect like the others?” they would ask. “You could have done wonders with this image.”

Joseph would then give another smile. “That cross is the only reason that we can enjoy these other wonders of the earth. Do you think you could enjoy the waterfalls or prairie grass without His mercy? Do you believe joy would be found at the ocean if you were not saved from sin? Would animals and insects be so entertaining if it wasn’t for the love that is cast down from above? No, and I would never have been able to love my wife had I not been loved first.” He would point to the picture again. “That very cross is a beautiful thing, but not in the way these other things are. No, because this is the only thing that was so beautiful that it changed everything.”

Some of the visitors would nod understandingly and give a knowing smile. Others just gave him an odd look and thanked him for the tour before leaving. A few would still ask, “If it’s so beautiful, why not give it justice in your picture?”

“If I did that,” he would say, crossing his arms again, “it would have been just another cross. You wouldn’t have thought anything of it and only taken the time to notice the exterior beauty. There’s much more, though, don’t you think?”

The visitors would always nod, whether they understood or not, then leave with a thoughtful or confused expression. “After all,” Joseph would add before they left, “that ugly cross was the one thing that represents true sacrifice and love; who

would have thought it was expressed for *us?*” The visitors would nod again. No matter what, though, Joseph was always sure that he had, in fact, given the sixth picture more justice than all of the rest combined.