

Butterfly burial ground

by Jason_Love

I'm a morning person: that's when I get my best sleep in. I believe that most evils can be cured by 10 hours' sleep and that alarm clocks should exist only as supplemental punishment for prisoners.

You can imagine, then, how warm and fuzzy I felt when the phone began rrrrrring at 6 a.m. Some fool was alarming me from a remote location. It happened twice, thrice, frice!

I staggered to the phone with dreams in my eyes. Some people call them tears. I followed voice mail's helpful instructions: If you are calling from a telephone, please press one! The messages came from my wife Yahaira, and I deny ever using the word "fool."

"Honey, it's me. I know you're asleep, but it's an emergency!"

"Papi, I need you to pick up the phone!"

"Come on, Love, this one time!"

She didn't sound normal. Why do we even have a normal if it never sticks around for two days at a time? Dialing Yahaira, I feared the worst. Car accident? Fire? Nuclear war? She answered on the first ring, mid-sentence:

“There was a butterfly on my windshield wiper and I didn’t know what to do so I called you but you didn’t pick up so I kept driving and then I realized that it was going to die if I didn’t stop so I pulled over again and now it isn’t moving!”

I checked the calendar for her monthly cycle. Still 10 days away.

“A butterfly on your windshield wiper?! Clearly it was suicide.”

The joke made her cry. So it goes.

“I need you to come down here and help me bury it.”

I knew when I married this woman that she was different and that I would have to do “different” things. But she knew about sleep. I would surrender chocolate, TV, and the right to vote before I parted with it.

She added in her baby voice, “Pweeeeeease.”

I drew a deep breath, which denotes the death of my will, and got dressed to bury a butterfly.

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Yahaira was kneeling on the side of the highway, sculpting a mound of earth, destroying a pair of nylons. Her eyes had crusted over. At the head of the grave, two sticks were trying to be a cross but looked more like an X.

In the dirt wriggled two tiny worms, the kind you find among pill bugs underneath rocks.

Yahaira explained, â€œI tried to feed him, but it was too late.â€•

I didnâ€™t have the heart to say that butterflies donâ€™t eat worms but evolve from them.

â€œItâ€™s okay,â€• I said.

“I killed him because I was too stupid to stop.”

Yahaira took to picking butterfly fragments from her windshield and returning them to the tomb. I watched as if from a dream, mainly because I was asleep. I guess today R.I.P means “rest in pieces.” I was smart enough to keep that one inside.

While Yahaira paced for the pressure of her conscience, I wondered what kind of world it would be if everyone valued life like this. What if our government beat with such a heart? If Nature were so ardently guarded?

Yahaira started to place the windshield wiper itself on the grave, and I had to step in. I always said that she would never hurt a fly. Looks like I’d have to extend that to butterfly. I intercepted Yahaira and steered her to the street. Drivers roared by, wondering what I did to the poor girl.

For want of caffeine, I repeated myself: “It’s okay.”

I asked Yahaira to phone her boss to say that a friend had died and hence the delay, but she would tell the truth. She once notified Bank of America when they over-credited our account by \$1,000. My therapist and I have almost worked through it.

Yahaira smiled when I told her that I wouldn’t charge her with murder this time. She was coming back.

One last glance at the butterfly burial ground, and we started our cars. Even as we pulled away, those worms were devouring the corpse of the butterfly. And I suppose thatâ€™s okay too.

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