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If April is indeed the cruellest month as Eliot assured us all those years ago then the height of its cruelty might well have been its giving me to light as Spanish speakers would have it on a steely cruel day some 30 odd years back the icy winds whipping through my mother's sweat-drenched hair tangling with her screams as I was made to understand and thus keeping her there confined to the hospital bed for an additional few weeks owing to her newly caught pneumonia why the windows were left open in

the hospital room to begin with I haven't a clue nor was I given even the breath of an explanation though perhaps I was never born in such a clinical spot but out in a field or some such unlikely place but no matter I am here and that is enough to testify to April's cruel nature I think you will agree but then I am getting ahead of myself or behind myself maybe the simple fact of the matter which of course is anything but simple is that Angelika is now dead done in by her own hand again typically in April a year ago as April is the month when the number of suicides jumps suddenly to ride out the summer on its plateau of death so I guess we can say that in this one instance and perhaps in this instance alone Angelika was the leader of the pack which she no doubt would have found rather terrifying enough so in fact that if someone had pointed out the leadership quality of her suicide it might well have been enough to stay her hand on that fateful day and keep her here with us but that train I'm afraid has left the station attesting again to April's blind

delirious cruelty although of course one shouldn't imply that the fourth month or any month for that matter is some kind of conscious agent looking to do us harm but instead only happens to fall owing to no fault of its own in a season at least in the northern hemisphere that seems to compel us toward violence maybe leading one to opine that April is but a label we give to a particularly strong mode of human aggression

I first met Angelika as she was coming off the velodrome on Broadway not to insinuate that there's some other velodrome in town and maybe not another in the state even she was walking her bike which I recall as making a rather disturbing clicking noise or at least one that was disturbing to me but what do I know about bikes? and she was grinning broadly completely oblivious to the noise apparently so for all I know that clicking was in fact an indication of the machine's good health which indeed may have accounted for her smile although I chose yes I think it's fair to say that I chose to believe that she was instead smiling at me although we had

never met and had never knowingly laid eyes upon one another but her smile had such a congenial effect as to trigger within me the warm remembrance of some past love or other whom I couldn't to be honest put my finger on so it wouldn't be right to say that she reminded me of a particular former girlfriend or of any other woman I had known but simply felt supremely familiar and supremely friendly as she approached me and smiled even more broadly as it seems to me now so that I wished her a good morning which she reciprocated with such a sudden blush of joy that it made me feel she'd been waiting weeks for a chance to respond to such a greeting having apparently kept her silence until just such a moment compressing her anticipation all the while later we went to breakfast or perhaps it would be better to call it brunch maybe it was lunch already she ordered an omelet in any event and I believe I ordered some kind of sandwich and after our coffee and her juice arrived she began to talk about Donetsk and her

mixed feelings about the uproar there with the pro-Russian militants taking over various government buildings and demanding greater autonomy within Ukraine her paternal grandfather being from Donetsk she had spent a few summers there as a child and had very fond romantic memories of the place processed in faded green with the scent of ripening apples and the comforting murmur of Russian I stupidly asked what the political mood had been there at the time whether some people were even then yearning to be embraced again by Russia but of course she hadn't had the least idea about such things as a child a fact she confirmed with a sudden boisterous laugh which to my ear seemed more forceful than necessary although there was nothing cruel in it and was actually so altogether inviting that I was just as suddenly laughing with her she recalled her grandfather's house as a large unadorned rectangular structure of two stories that shimmered a ghostly white at nightfall and often featured candles in the windows that cast an intense

light onto the lane that ran closely by the front door but truly she couldn't be sure if that had been her grandfather's house or rather the painting of some country house that she had seen somewhere perhaps one by Magritte though she had fixed the house there in her mind for so long that it was now firmly and probably irrevocably set amidst the nighttime noises of frogs and crickets and the brush of a crisp cotton nightgown against her skin and after all that house might just as well have belonged to her grandfather as any other

It occurred to her recently that her grandfather might actually have been a heroin addict a notion brought on by her own therapy sessions for the affliction it's an epidemic you know she said that morning during breakfast or lunch even as deaths from prescription opiate overdose are falling the number from heroin is on the rise it's really just a matter of cost it's a whole lot cheaper you know she went quiet then for a while and slowly and rather sadly it seemed to me chewed her omelet which had arrived during our discussion of her grandfather's

house and the summers she had spent in Donetsk which must have been longer and more involved than I remember the discussion that is not the time she spent in Donetsk to account sufficiently for the time required to prepare our breakfast or her breakfast rather and my lunch I asked her how long she had used heroin which seemed a wholly natural appropriate and unintrusive question at the time but strikes me now as quite forward shockingly so in fact but she was not at all put off by the question and even seemed to welcome it as I recall looking up from her plate with her fork just inserted into the omelet to tell me that it had been about this same time of year so one might say that she was commemorating an anniversary of sorts albeit one she'd have preferred not to have been a part of but there it was she first shot up on a Good Friday six years prior and it quickly became her cross to bear she grinned which caused me to mention a silly article I had read in the paper that morning which posited Christ's crucifixion as the conclusion and quite a reasonable one in the author's view

of an established atonement tradition that sacrificed animals and crops to cover the sins of humans and that Christ's blood had represented the ultimate sacrifice "so that people no longer had to kill things to be forgiven" which suggests that killing plants and animals was in fact a valid God-endorsed manner of absolving human foibles and misdeeds before this a completely ridiculous notion of course but then aren't most notions of faith I used to think my death would be a type of sacrifice she said flatly returning to her omelet and we didn't talk again about her heroin use until several weeks later a fact I attribute now to my untimely and inconsiderate mention of the stupid newspaper article

After we had finished eating and paid the bill we went out and chatted a bit longer on the sidewalk finally I asked how far of a ride she had back to her place to which she replied with a laugh while unlocking her bike not far and why the laugh? nothing it's only that it's a track bike it has no brakes yes? so I'll get there fast no matter the

distance ah yes I see ha she shrugged maybe disappointed I hadn't laughed all that freely but I mean really and by this time it must have already been early afternoon I have the feeling that I was late for something or other but I can't for the life of me recall what it might have been or if it even was most likely it was nothing of any great importance as I'm often plagued by anxiety over remaining in one place for too long a time always I'm anxious to move on and when the need strikes me it wants to be satisfied immediately to get on to that other place and hurry and on that afternoon I think my discomfort must have been obvious to Angelika for it seems to me that seconds after my shrug she was already halfway down the block walking her bike and as she turned the corner I realized that I had failed to acquire any contact information hadn't even learned her last name in fact so I stood there dumb for quite a while kicking myself but finally wow I remember it as several minutes standing there but of course it couldn't have been that long when I finally turned from the sidewalk

that no longer held Angelika and got in my car and
drove home or to that other important unimportant place
that I so desperately needed to be