



Short Stories Series: "Prom Night"

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PROM NIGHT

by Zazie-Charlotte Pfeiffer

ENGLISH: This article is the first of a series of short stories by the young author Zazie-Charlotte Pfeiffer, who received the "Jean-Paul" Award in 2013 and the "Tom Sawyer" Award in 2012 for her work. Marco has always been a dreamer and the creator of his own little world. Tonight he is dreaming and reflecting about past and future, lets his gazes fly over a sleeping city and searches for roots that he didn't even know he lost. A glimpse of future possibilities, a moment of breath in silence and the reflections of a stranger on his own life.

GERMAN: Diese Kurzgeschichte ist der Auftakt für eine Serie von Erzählungen der jungen Autorin Zazie-Charlotte Pfeiffer, die 2013 den „Jean-Paul“ Award und 2012 den „Tom-Sawyer“ Award für ihre Kurzgeschichten erhielt. Marco ist schon immer ein Träumer und Erschaffer seiner eigenen kleinen Welt gewesen. In dieser Nacht träumt und reflektiert er über Vergangenheit und Zukunft, lässt seine Blicke über die schlafende Stadt streifen und sucht nach Wurzeln, von denen er nicht einmal wusste, dass er sie verloren hatte. Ein Augenblick der Zukunftsmöglichkeiten, ein Moment des Atems in der Stille und die Reflektion eines Fremden über sein eigenes Leben.

FRENCH: Cette nouvelle est la première d'une série d'histoires de la jeune écrivaine Zazie-Charlotte Pfeiffer, qui a reçu le „Jean-Paul“ Award en 2013 et le „Tom Sawyer“ Award en 2012. Marco était toujours un rêveur et le créateur de son propre petit univers. Dans cette nuit il rêve du passé et de l'avenir, regarde la ville qui dort et essaie de trouver des racines, desquelles il ne savait même pas qu'ils étaient perdus. Une seconde de possibilités de l'avenir, un moment de respirer dans le silence et les réflexions d'un étranger sur sa propre vie.

Marco had always been a very silent person. A stranger in the common world, but also a dreamer, who easily swapped reality with his own imaginations. He liked walking on dry fit needles, standing still while everybody else was running and thinking of how it would be to think nothing.

His mother and father said that he never really arrived in the US, that he had left something in Mexico without knowing what. "I mean, not as you could remember anything, you were just a baby, but however you have Mexican blood." They said that with a smile, thinking to approach him by acting as if they could imagine how it is to lose your roots. Mother. Father. Marco never saw those people as parents, but as they gave him food, clothes, a bed and a passport, he had decided to call them that way for a while. He never really knew, if they actually liked him, or if it was only the idea of being socially valuable citizens, which made them giving him a host. But in fact, he did not even care about that. Marco did not want to wake them from their deep all year round hibernation – that would be like trying to dig a hole in quicksand. Thoughts like that always came to his mind, when he looked into the mirror or at some old pictures. It was the same feeling of mistrust and skepticism seeing himself growing and taking a look at the past. Through all those years of High School they had wanted him to gain some surface, to build out some new roots, but in fact, they had never reached their goal.

Marco looked at himself in the mirror and stroke over his white shirt and the formal black tie with a fleeting gesture. Laura had ironed it the other day. It was some creepy thing to go to - that “prom” because he still thought himself to have nothing in common with the people there. But as he knew that this event was part of mother's self-fulfillment concerning him, he did not want to disturb her little show. So he just took his gown and went out into the corridor, where the rest of the family was already waiting, while they were constantly discussing if they should change another time before leaving. Laura stood in the middle of the room and the tight white silk dress, which she had already bought two months ago, discreetly accentuated her soft curves. Marco could hardly imagine how she intended to walk in the high heels she wore, but one thing he had learned in this family was never to ask too many questions. When he came out of his room she directly turned towards him and smiled. "You look great! He looks great, doesn't he Jeremy?" Jeremy, “father” shortly looked at Marco and nodded. Jeremy was a little more sympatric to Marco than Laura because he also never said very much. Most of the time he was nodding or shaking his head – that was enough for a life with Laura. "Jasmine, don't you think your brother looks great?" Jasmine was a fifteen years old teenager with brown curls and some very, very white teeth. With those teeth, she should

become a teeth doctor, but in fact, she was too unintelligent for that. She scanned Marco with a short annoyed look and picked her little handbag from the ground. "Yes, he looks...great." Marco didn't feel great, but as he had already done it lots of times before, he just ignored Jasmine and began to think of a plan how to get rid of them as soon as possible. They had to drive around the parking a couple of times before they finally found the entrance and placed the car on a big parking spot close to the prom hall. Marco had the feeling that Laura was even more excited than him, but not because of the prom, but because of the way her new dress would impress the other parents. "You don't have to be nervous." Laura said while there were coming into the prom hall. "I mean, we are proud of you anyway, even if your marks shouldn't be that great, you know." "Great" was one of Laura's favorite words. The certificate ceremony luckily passed very quickly, so that Marco didn't have to stay on the monstrous podium that long. Anyway, there were the typical final speeches, in which some of his mates talked about the "great years", the "great support ", the "great friends" and the absolutely "great experiences". Nobody talked of the pressure during the last years, the numerous times they had to fleet to the restrooms to weep behind closed doors, the frustrated teachers, the dirty classrooms, all those condescending gazes or of the days, where they wanted nothing more than leaving school forever and never come back again. No, those were forbidden subjects – at least for this evening. They were all quiet good complainers, but now no one said a single word on this complaints. They were all just smiling and trying to look absolutely happy. After the frenzy of flashing cameras finally ended, everyone threw his cap in the air and finally got rid of his gown to show off in the prom dress. During all this ceremony Marco sat near the door and waited for a suitable moment to go outside. When the girls finally came back from the restrooms, where they had checked their makeup, he saw his chance and silently slipped outside. Fresh air filled his lungs and made the terrible feeling of crampedness slowly fade away. Marco walked across the forecourt and sat down on a small wall directly facing the prom hall. Through one of the big windows, he could see the crowd of smiling people, all decorated like Christmas trees laughing, giggling and slurping white wine, while they were constantly trying to spread joyful air. Marco undid the knot of his tie. There was Clara Bonesfield with her frustrated face, looking like as if she had eaten an unripe plum. It had taken a little while till Marco had understood that this was her everyday face and not dependent on any kind of mood. Side to side with her Marco could identify Loreena Burns, who absolutely fulfilled the cliché of a pretty cheerleader, but absolutely free of any intelligence. The only thing she could remember more than three hours was how to do her make-up and to always carry a package of condoms in her handbag. Apart from that, she was

a very hollow nut, but still very experienced with different boyfriends. She was an easy good, lots of boys had taken a try on her in the last years, but the fact that she could not remember any of them longer than two days, annoyed them really quickly so that they passed her on to the next one. Marco had never taken a closer look at her till the day, he had found her laying on the floor of the men restroom with hardly any clothes on and absolutely shattered. He remembered her face with the ruined makeup and her red eyes looking up to him without seeming to recognize him. He had taken her to the school nurse and during the way she had been crying into his shirt so that it had become wet of tears and dirty of her make-up. That had been the only time that Marco had looked into her eyes and after that, he also never did it again. Sometimes he had thrown a short look in her direction and sometimes she responded with an even shorter look, but Marco always had the impression that she feared him. Maybe because she remembered his face or the smell of his shirt. Marco did not know. While looking at Loreena Burns in her pink wedding-like-dress, Marco had to smile. It was creepy how they were all capable of keeping their mask for such a long time. The smile on their faces seemed to be clipped and the laughs were so loud that Marco could even hear them from outside. The funny thing about the situation was that he knew exactly how the evening would go on. The girls would try to look absolutely irresistible, present their dance class knowledge, drink too much wine, go on smiling and finally try to fulfill the Disney cliché of kissing the boy of their High School Dreams on the dance floor under the monstrous chandelier. The boys would mostly hang out in some corners, trying to look cool and relaxed and take advantage of the girl's wish for an absolutely unforgettable evening. Marco turned away from the bright window and looked over the silent city with all the little lights moving around, seeming to be a big constellation of stars in the dark sky. He could hear the sound of the cars on the highways and the sirens of the ambulances yelling through the darkness. He could feel the cold wind on his skin and his sweaty shirt on his chest. And he could smell the fresh perfume of winter, the little snowflakes behind the clouds and the ice floes on the lakes. And there he just stood still with closed eyes, breathing nothing more or less than pure winter and thinking about nothing else but breathing. The prom hall with all the faked happiness seemed to be far away – he could not even hear the laughs and the music anymore. There he stood in the midst of winter, breathing, smiling and also weeping a little, because that was the moment where he realized that he was free. Free to do whatever he wanted. And this thought let him forget about the faked world outside and made him smile again.