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The Smell of Doughnuts

By Ottessa Moshfegh

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In the late fall of 2006, I went out for what I knew would be my last night of drinking. I remember stopping at Kellogg's Diner to buy some Advil and a SlimFast, which I chugged on my way to the bar where I was meeting a girlfriend and a guy she was dating. There was something ceremonious about drinking that SlimFast, like putting on war paint. I thought it would protect my stomach from all the alcohol I was about to pour into it. I had never cared to do such a thing before.

The first few rounds of drinks were unremarkable, and I was bored with my girlfriend and her guy. Then we went to another bar, which I think was on Graham Avenue. I remember that the bartender was an old Polish woman who could see that I was up to no good. I had probably had ten drinks by then.

I turned to the man next to me. "Why do you smell so strongly of doughnuts?" was my opening line.

"I don't smell like doughnuts."

To me, he did. In fact, the whole bar smelled like doughnuts. "Am I hallucinating?" I asked the man.

"I don't care," he said.

“Let me buy you a drink,” I told him. “Let me buy this whole bar a drink!” But I didn’t. The bartender deliberately ignored me.

I was broke, sloppy, depressed, angry, bloated, desperate, and addicted. Apart from the SlimFast, this night, so far, was like any other night. Whether I was drinking at a bar or alone at home, self-centered dissatisfaction plagued me. I couldn’t really get drunk anymore. I barely slept. I liked to drink sake instead of coffee in the mornings. Somehow I had held down a job, but I was always hungover, cranky, and rude, insensitive to everything but my own bad mood.

It was probably already three in the morning when I left my friends on Graham to go and “get into some trouble.”

The smell of doughnuts followed me. I figured my olfactory nerve was on the fritz, or maybe that SlimFast was working on me in mysterious ways. I wandered in and out of bars, looking for someone or something to turn the night into an adventure, but all I found were a few more drinks. I knew I had a bottle of vodka at my apartment. Maybe there was enough left to obliterate me. I kept thinking, If I can just drink enough tonight, I won’t need to drink again for the rest of my life. I told myself, Go out with a bang.

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I was impatient waiting for the subway at the Lorimer Street station. I don’t know what the G train has been like since—I haven’t taken it in a decade—but back then you could wait an hour for a train at night. I paced along the edge of the platform, peering into the tunnel for lights. The station was pretty empty. I was impatient to get home to that vodka. I kept leaning out over the tracks to look for the train coming. Darkness. It was driving me crazy to wait so long. I kind of spaced out with my feet half over the edge of the platform, playing with my balance.

“Hello.”

I turned and saw an angel. He was seven feet tall, wore brown pants and a blue puffy coat, and smiled as if the sight of me actually made him happy.

“Hi,” I said.

I stepped toward him, away from the platform edge, right as the train arrived. I felt the breeze at my back. I understood that this man had appeared just in time to save my life.

The train doors opened. He went inside and gestured for me to follow him, as though he were a maître d’. He smiled continuously and sat a few seats away from me. I don’t recall what we talked about during the ride, but I remember that he was very calm, very polite, asked me simple questions that I tried to answer without slurring. The doughnut smell was even more powerful at that point.

“I’m getting off here,” he said, as the train pulled into the Myrtle-Willoughby station.

“Me, too.” I lived a block and a half away.

It was still dark out, but I could feel the sun readying to break. The angel walked me to my door, quietly, dutifully, as if he had been sent there just to return me to safety.

Before I went inside, I asked him, “Do you smell doughnuts?”

He looked a little embarrassed, and laughed, and said, “I work the graveyard shift at Dunkin’ Donuts.”

I shook his hand and thanked him, went inside, and got into bed. In the morning, I poured out the vodka. ♦

L'olor dels dònuts

Un text d'Ottessa Moshfegh
versió de Gloria Saurí Nicasio

S'acabava la tardor del 2006 i vaig eixir per a la que sabia que seria l'última nit que bevia. Vaig passar pel súper a comprar un batut de vainilla i la B12, que em vaig estacar anant al bar on estava la meua amiga i el xic amb qui estava quedant. Tot fou molt cerimoniós. Prendre'm la B12 va ser com pintar-me dues ratlles a la cara abans de la guerra. Vaig pensar que em prepararia l'estómac per a tot l'alcohol que estava a punt de vendre. Mai en la vida havia fet res semblant.

Les primeres rondes van ser molt avorrides per a mi, per a la meua amiga i per al xaval. Després, vam anar a un altre bar, crec, per Graham Avenue. La cambrera, una dona major i polonesa, m'estava veient anar directa a l'abisme. En aquell moment ja en devia portar deu.

Vaig voler començar una conversa amb l'home assegut al meu costat mitjançant un:

–Per què fas olor de dònuts?

–No faig olor de dònuts.

Per a mi en feia. De fet, tot el bar feia olor de dònuts.

–Etic al·lucinant? –li preguntí.

–Tant me fa.

–Deixa'm convidar-te a una –li diguí–.

De fet, deixeu-me convidar-vos a una a tots!

Però no ho vaig fer. La cambrera em va ignorar notòriament.

Em sentia trencada, descuidada, depressiva, enfadada, empatxada, desesperada i enganxada. A banda del batut de vainilla, res feia aquella nit diferent de qualsevol altra. Estiguera bevent al bar o sola a casa, la sensació d'insatisfacció amb una mateixa em sobrepassava. No havia de tornar a emborratxar-me. Per poc m'adorm. De matí preferia beure sake en comptes de cafè. D'alguna manera vaig aconseguir que no m'acomiadaren mai, tot i que sempre anava a treballar amb ressaca, malhumorada i era maleducada i insensible a qualsevol cosa que no foren les meues poques ganes.

Eren vora les tres del matí quan vaig deixar els meus amics al bar per a buscar-me, voluntàriament, algun problema.

L'olor de dònuts em perseguia. Vaig pensar que o bé tenia l'olfacte rebentat, o bé el Choleck aquell estava desenvolupant-se misteriosament dins meu. Eixia i entrava dels bars, buscant alguna persona o alguna cosa que convertira aquella nit en una aventura, però tot el que vaig trobar va ser més i més alcohol. Vaig recordar la botella de vodka que tenia al pis. Seria suficient per a desinhibir-me. Vaig pensar que si podia beure prou aquella nit, no seria necessari

tornar a beure mai més. Em vaig dir:

–Ni t’ho penses.

Esperava el metro impacientment. Des d’aquell moment que no he tornat a pujar-hi –una dècada, deu anys–, però aleshores podies fàcilment estar-t’hi una hora de nit esperant. Caminava amunt i avall i de tant en tant mirava el túnel buscant la llum. L’estació estava buida. Jo estava impacient per aplegar a casa i beure’m tota la botella de vodka. Continuava abocant-me a les vies per veure si venia el metro. Obscuritat era el que veia. M’estava enervant d’esperar tant. Per poc caic de l’andana per voler posar a prova el meu equilibri.

–Hola.

Em vaig girar i vaig veure un àngel. Devia fer dos metres, portava pantalons marrons i una jaqueta de pelet blava. Em va somriure com si realment s’alegrara de veure’m.

–Hola –li vaig dir.

Vaig caminar cap a ell, allunyant-me de la vora de l’andana, just quan va aplegar el metro. Vaig notar l’alenada d’aire a l’esquena. Vaig entendre en aquell moment que havia aparegut per a salvar-me la vida.

Les portes del metro es van obrir. Va entrar i em va fer un gest perquè el seguira, com si fora un *maître*. No parava de som-

riure i va seure dos o tres seients enllà del meu. No recorde què vam parlar durant el trajecte, però el recorde tranquil, molt educat, i em va preguntar coses simples que jo tractava de respondre sense empastrar-ho. En aquell moment feia molta olor de dònut, més que mai.

–Baixe ací –va dir.

–Jo també. –Vivia a dos carrers.

Encara era de nit, però podia intuir el sol ja preparant-se per a eixir. L’àngel em va acompanyar a la porta de casa, en silenci, responsablement, com si l’hagueren enviat perquè jo hi aplegara sana.

Abans d’entrar li vaig preguntar:

–Notes olor de dònuts?

Em va mirar avergonyit i va riure:

–He fet l’últim torn al Dunkin’.

Li vaig donar la mà per donar-li les gràcies, vaig entrar i em vaig gitar. De matí vaig vomitar tot el vodka.

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