

Meant for a Garden

Slowly the sun lifted its golden head over the Eastern horizon, peering through the smog at its reflection in the numerous skyscraper windows. Below on Fifth Street, a woman stepped out of her apartment building, and walked briskly towards the corner. Raising her arm to hail a taxi, she paused with her hand in the air, glimpsing something purple out of the corner of her eye. Struggling to grow out of a crack in the broken sidewalk, a cheerful lavender flower stood bathed in the early morning light. Its color showed brightly against the drab concrete. Droplets of dew on the delicate petals caught the light and winked at the woman as if to say, “Good morning! Isn’t it good to be alive?”

As the woman boarded his taxi, the driver’s curiosity was aroused by his passenger’s strangely content smile. The majority of business people he drove wore stoic expressions in apprehension of their destinations. If he had been able to read her thoughts he would have marveled even more. Inwardly she nodded to herself, finally understanding an old Egyptian proverb she had heard long before: “A beautiful thing is never perfect.”

For the longest time, I mulled over this saying unable to make sense of it, with only a headache to show for my efforts. “Whatever is perfect must also be beautiful, yet nothing is perfect. What does perfection really mean? What makes something truly beautiful?” These questions, and several others, swirled in my mind. Finally, like the woman in the story, I saw the answer standing so plainly before me, that I wondered why I had not noticed it sooner.

Water only holds flavor for those who thirst. Light only brings hope to those smothered in darkness. Peace only knows appreciation in those terrorized by war. Beauty is likewise. It goes unnoticed until surrounded by the non beautiful.

By placing a person or object into an unfamiliar situation, the genuine qualities have a chance to shine. Faith is not tested when reading about a stranger's battle with cancer. Likewise, a candle is barely noticed in a brightly lit room. When imperfections are absent, perfections often become commonplace, and are generally disregarded.

In addition, bearing marks that show the trials one has overcome renders one an attractiveness that goes beyond appearance. The laugh of a child is beautiful in its purity and shielded innocence, but an elderly person's laughter holds a deeper meaning because he or she has gone through the trials of life, yet still finds joy.

Perfection as we know it often equals superficiality; yet it was not that way from the beginning. When God created the world, he stepped back and pronounced it good—untarnished, flawless, void of mistakes. Then sin entered. Like a crack on a glass, it spread shattering the image until the original picture became invisible, and only pieces of it remain discernible through the broken shards. From the first heartbeat to the escape of a final breath, other than Adam and Eve, people have never known perfection in its true form. Everything around us and we ourselves are riddled with flaws.

Can the blind explain the vibrancy of yellow? Do the deaf value the morning song of a mockingbird? They cannot comprehend what they have never known. People do not understand perfection, as they have never experienced it. Often, the too perfect is rejected along with the ugly in an attempt to embrace something more familiar in the middle.

In this fallen world, we understand the flower's struggle to survive in a polluted city, when it was meant for the gentleness of a garden. Yet standing on the damaged sidewalk, the little blossom shines much brighter than it ever could while nestled comfortably in a flowerbed. As a result, while in a situation far from perfect, its full beauty has a chance to shine.