

Nobody had ever described Karen's life as extraordinary, and so far, they'd been right. Her life was a picture book without colours, and she'd turned the pages with steady-handed obedience for 29 years now. Mornings slid into afternoons and evenings into nights, a mechanical cycle of silent clockwork that filled her pores and underpinned her conventional life.

Mornings started early, the buzz of the alarm next to her ear never failing to send her heart racing forward, dragging the stillness of dawn from its stronghold. Birdsong and traffic she'd been deadened to in her slumber soon invaded her ears and the tone of the alarm hovered in her head long after she'd hit the snooze.

Karen always remembered her dreams with great clarity, a secret she never disclosed to even her closest friends. Nor did she tell them what they were about. Every night, she dreamt of doors. Thick polished oak and about eight feet tall, they would swing inward toward her, exposing nothing but darkness. Then, from all around her, people began to materialise, the crowd all walking to the door. Suffocated and surrounded on all sides by the throng, she would be carried further and further toward the double doors, heading into the void. No matter how loud she yelled, the people were oblivious to her words, continuing in their robotic way.

She always slid out on the wrong side of the bed, leaving her unsure in her drowsiness as to where she'd left her slippers the night before. The flat was always cold in the morning. Even if the sun was present it wouldn't hit her bedroom for a good hour or two yet. This morning was overcast and the bleak gunmetal shade told her it wasn't moving any time soon.

Stagnancy seemed to be an underlying theme in Karen's life and the insipid happenings that she'd been satisfied with for the past 29 years had begun to taste unsavory. Her dissatisfaction at such static monochrome existence began writhing in her stomach, growing steadily louder and more influential. For the first time since a brief stint in Philosophy class in high school, Karen actually began to speculate about life.

The bus pulled up to the kerb and Karen stepped on, modest heels sharp black against the faux linoleum floor. The bus driver was a portly man who looked her up and down flagrantly before handing her back her change. It was a lot busier than usual today, and she made the decision to stand in the aisle rather than take the only free seat, next to a shifty looking man in a beige overcoat. Nobody even glanced up from their newspapers or cellphones as she stepped onboard, but this didn't surprise her. She was just another city commuter, making the daily journey into the bustle of the business district.

Several clicks of her heels and two take-away lattes later, she stepped into the air conditioned office. The receptionist at the front desk gave Karen a warm smile, and she returned it politely but did not linger to chat. Once Maggie got started, there really was no stopping her.

Rhythmic heels tapping against the floor. Polite smiles. Elevator to level three. Boss taking the coffee from her hands without acknowledgement. Letters to type. Emails to read. Phones to answer.

The morning stumbled on, until just after 10:30 she heard a scream of tyres, a loud crash and the sound of wood splitting. Her computer screen went black and the fluorescent lights above her head flickered to darkness. She heard a rising sound of confusion and questioning from down the hall as the other staff tried to work out what had happened.

Moving over to her window, she soon saw. A large truck, transporting frozen peas by the signage on the trailer, had slammed into the main power pole that sourced the building, bringing the wooden post and connected power lines to the ground. She saw the driver, miraculously unhurt, scrambling from the cab, cigarette still hanging out the corner of his mouth.

Fire and ambulance crews were quick to the scene, but their building was informed that the power wouldn't be able to be reconnected until at least Thursday. Karen's boss was

given no choice but to send her and the other employees home. All bus services were delayed and the road closed, so she had no choice but to walk home.

Winter brought a bitter chill to the outside air, and her polyester cardigan gave her little warmth. Her shoes soon began to rub at her feet, pinching the skin at the back of her heels. She slipped them off and carried them with one hand, her handbag in the other. After setting into a steady rhythm, her mind began wandering.

From childhood, through to adolescence and adulthood, Karen always played by the rules. Her conscience and morality stood in the forefront of her mind on pedestals, speaking from lecterns and orating with purpose and pre-learned forcefulness. She never questioned their authority and took their word as law. But lately, a cavity in her head once filled with security soon was filled with moral dilemmas.

Surely there must be more reasons for voyaging. Surely there was more to life than black and white paths and just flipping pages. Surely she didn't have to spend her whole life on subservient knees waiting for her life to change. Her life was incomplete, and what she saw as she turned down a typical suburban street made her realise just what was lacking.

It was on a Tuesday that Karen saw God, in a treehouse down that street. The tree itself had been stripped of leaves and stood in naked grandiosity free of modesty, as though proud of its stark and twisted branches. Everywhere that its pointed arms hit the sky, the heavy cloud that had once possessed the sky radiated in cerulean wonder. A small hut was nestled in its lower branches and from a gap in the wooden planks; eyes that matched the colour of the sky looked down at her.

A boy stepped out onto an unsteady hand-built platform. He looked to be about ten years old, with cocoa hair and a smattering of freckles across his cheekbones. His eyes though held more wisdom than any being she'd met, and the wind stopped buffeting her the moment she held his gaze. The boy's head tilted to the side and a slightly puzzled look graced his features, as though trying to recall the name of an old friend whose name had

slipped his mind. Something clicked in his head, and a determined look filled his eyes.

A minute passed, and all was still. Karen heard nothing over the roar of silence in her ears. True silence is immeasurably louder than the human mind can fathom. Suddenly the boy nodded his head once and the corners of his mouth twitched upward in the space of a blink. A gust of wind ripped through the stillness of the air they shared, and the boy dissolved to alabaster sand before Karen's eyes, carried away like ashes on the blanket of wind.

Dazed, Karen stumbled home, fumbling to put the key in the lock. She dropped her shoes and bag, making for her bedroom.

The moment she closed her eyes, she drifted into sleep. This time Karen didn't dream about the doorway to oblivion. She dreamt of birds, spiraling through the air and skimming the waves of a nameless ocean. Karen too was a bird and she ascended and descended in complete trinity, the earth, her wings and the sky.