

And Your Name Is . . .

Flash Fiction by Stella Morovic

“Bill, Bill, my name is Bill...” The chant skips in and out of his thoughts as the doors gape open, and he awakens in a space unlike any he’s ever seen. Strange metal carriages are parked, hundreds of them, and as he watches, one of them is removed by a white-haired creature who reminds him of his mother. Perhaps it is his mother.

“Mom,” he hazards. But the woman is swallowed up by a second pair of doors that open like magic. Perhaps she recited some mystical words like “open sesame,” a rhyme he suddenly recalls from the past. Before he has a chance to utter the words, he’s already forgotten them, and the doors yawn open to let him in.

What a bright, colorful place, he thinks as he makes for the first row to his right. All exposed so prettily: the green soft stuff, green harder stuff, round red and orange stuff, a purple thing, not quite round or long, and bumpy, deformed stuff. He picks one up, sniffs and puts it back. He vaguely remembers seeing these, but the picture dims and fades. He ambles on peering, inspecting, stopping, poking, sniffing, and repeating, “Bill, Bill, my name is Bill.”

A buxom young woman with swinging brown hair and rollicking hips passes him with a riot of stuff filling one of the wheeled carriages. He studies her, follows until she stands by a counter filled with pale chunks that he knows he likes. She deposits a few in her carriage and moves on. He examines the chunks, picks one that appears familiar, and crams it in his pocket.

He spies a young man who looks like his neighbor and thinks: He plays pickup baseball with me.

“Hey,” he calls, “hey, you...”

The young man turns, surprised, points to himself.

“Me? Yes, can I help you?”

“Bill, Bill, my name is Bill.”

“I’m sorry, sir, I don’t know you,” he says, pivots, and hurries off.

Bill plods on until he sees row upon row of cakes, pies, cookies, all firmly packaged and waiting. With gleaming eyes, he picks a small box, removes the cardboard casing, opens it, and begins to chomp on the pie with closed eyes, the muck spreading across his mouth and staining his teeth a deep purple. Licking his fingers, then wiping them on his pants, he continues to appraise these goodies. A small chocolate cake with pink and white icing enclosed in clear plastic captures his eye. Mouth watering, he picks it up. With mounting frustration, he struggles to pry it open. Finally, with a mighty wrench, he succeeds, only to have the cake splatter to the floor. Somewhat frightened, he abandons it and hastens further into the hall of plenty.

The row of canned goods doesn’t tempt him. But the pie has made him thirsty. He’s delighted to see little soldiers of juice cartons lined up with other drinkables, small to large in a rainbow of colors. He settles on a luminous red beverage. With little effort, he unscrews the cap, takes a gulp, and spews it out in revulsion. It leaves some unfortunate spots on his blue shirt. He ignores this as he sets the offending bottle on the floor and hunts for something more palatable.

He spots the yellowish-orange bottle, and dimly remembers it as a tasty beverage. His first tentative sip confirms it. He’s on his third gulp when a bulky chap approaches him, smiling.

“Sir, would you come with me,” he says, taking hold of Bill’s arm.

“Bill, Bill, my name is Bill.”

“Yes, we know you’re Bill. Some people have been frantic with worry looking for you. They’re waiting in my office. Why don’t you bring that drink with you.”

“Okay, but my name is Bill, Bill—Bill is my name,” he repeats as he is gently led away.