Smoke, haze and the distinct sound of a rocking chair

The summer evening was hot and sticky. It had rained the previous day but due to today's heat, all moist was forced out of the ground and into the air. It resulted in a haze that just slightly distorted the view for everyone stupid enough to actually go out in this weather and not sit inside with air-conditioning and a glass of cold lemonade with ice cubes clinking as a straw is circling the edges of the foggy glass. It was the kind of heat that stuck to you, made your clothes cling to your body and made your body feel heavy. It made everything slow down, as if no one had either the energy or the effort to actually do something this evening. The basketball court by the school stood empty, no one wanting to play and the shopping district in the suburb stood empty, everyone opting for the cool mall a few miles down the road instead. Both the concrete of the buildings and the asphalt of the roads caused mirages and the whole atmosphere felt as it where moving. You could almost see the air swirling around if you focused your eyes on nothing for a while.

The heavy scent of heat filled the air. It smelled like a combination of asphalt, ice cream and chloride from the pool the neighbors have just a few houses over. They seemed to have a pool party because when a hot breeze blew past you could smell the coal in the grill, getting the right temperature for a barbeque. However, on the patio of the little white house most otherworldly scents where lost. The patio had a ceiling extending from the house and even though it had no walls, just a railing enclosing the space, the air remained unmoving. It did not help that the air was in fact not much air at all but almost entirely smoke. Almost no other scent penetrated the stale cigarette smoke. It stuck to every surface in the space. Every pillar, every cushion, every plank in the wood flooring smelled like smoke. But that did not stop a cigarette being lit on the patio.

The sounds of the slowly inhaled smoke tranquilized the surroundings, making it seem almost like a dream. The noise which was heard out onto the street was however another. The ones on the patio had since long stopped hearing it but to people walking by, it was the only thing that was heard. The old rocking chair on the patio was rolling back and forth in a slow pace, making a distinct rocking chair noise. The old floor beneath it creaked with each movement and the same could be said for the old lady in the chair.

Her hair was white and stripy, the face had clearly once been beautiful but now only wrinkles remained. She wore an old summer dress, a white backdrop with a floral pattern on it. It was the Sunday finest, only worn to and after a church visit. The large straw-hat had been discarded, laying on the wooden floor beside the rocking chair. The red lipstick had been worn away, a slow transfer from lips to cigarettes. The only remains was now a soft red line around the edge of the lips. Her glasses sat perched upon the tip of her nose, seemingly able to fall off at a moment's notice.

The cigarette was moved from her mouth by fingers so thin they seemed to be made of only bones. She handed the now small, glowing cigarette bud over to a tiny hand beside her. The little girl with scraped knees and sun kissed skin took it with careful precision and prepared herself with a deep exhale. She slowly inhaled the smoke. She had learned from the last time not to do it too quickly, or to large of an inhale. This time it seemed to work because the inhale was not followed by a large coughing session. After another slow exhale, this time breathing smoke instead of air, the cigarette was crushed into an ashtray, the embers at the end of the bud taking their last snippets of air before dying and turning from a soft glow into a black ash.

The old lady stopped the rocking and arose from the chair. She turned and started limping into the house.

"Come on Abe, I do believe it is time for some food" The little girl followed.