

It is a thing of beauty. Elegance. Chaos.

In Turkey, there is a tradition in cafés to allow a fortune teller to read the leftover coffee grounds in your cup after you finish. The idea is that shapes and patterns created outside of human control are melded by fate itself—a direct glimpse into the workings of powers beyond us.

This, right now, is exactly that. A display of fate in motion.

The shards of glass that litter the pristine hardwood floor look just right. Not too much on one side or the other, but also in no discernible pattern. When an artist decides to splash ink onto the canvas randomly, their intentions are attached to the piece regardless. A true lack of deliberation is beyond the reach of any human.

These shards had, until recently, been a bottle. Once inseparable parts of a whole, the contents they held within now soak the wood in red. A shame, really. Wood stains really easily from wine. Then again, the shape of this cascading red puddle is just as beautiful as the glass.

Half an hour ago, this wine was to be an ingredient for a lovely evening between her and I. Its quality was assured repeatedly by its original owner, a friend of hers. He was quite the gentleman, polite and intelligent. Handsome. No doubt successful and wealthy, as the glare from his Rolex signalled from a distance. Such a man would know a thing or two about fine wine, certainly.

As usual, the cat insisted on joining us at the table. It likes to rest its overgrown body in her lap, waiting patiently for any treats that may come its way. A true ball of sloth and greed, given physical form and a coat of scruffy white fur to hide itself. A parasite clinging to its host.

The puddle grows bigger as I think. The fluid tilts and runs towards me, even though the surface is flat. I thought I made sure of that during the renovation, but maybe the renovator duped me after all. I suppose listening is a rare skill in this day and age.

The wine was, as expected, very good. A few glasses in, and neither of us were in any mood or capacity to listen properly. Talking, however, usually requires much less intelligent thought. When I went to Japan for a tour a few years ago, one of the locals told me about a saying they had: "The mouth is the gate of misfortune".

I've probably told her how much I hate that cat every single day it has existed in this home, but she doesn't care much. Today was no exception to the former, at least. But for once, she interrupted me.

"That just jogged my memory. What happened to the batteries for the cat feeder?"

It's hard to shift blame when there's only three living beings under this roof, one of which doesn't even have thumbs. I hadn't intended to cause direct harm to the animal with my actions. I just thought it could stand to lose some weight, that's all.

"No more jokes!" she warned me sternly. The cat snarled, baring its teeth at me. A feeble attempt.

Once a line is crossed, it seems more are bound to be headed the same way in succession. I think the scientific term is momentum.

How much momentum do you need to break glass? I'm not the one to go to for physics, but I would say it's a lot less than you might imagine.

"You're barking up the wrong tree. He and I are business partners, nothing more!" Talking had devolved to shouting. The cat scurried off somewhere while we were busy, of course. Zero backbone.

"Maybe if you got off your fat butt and did something with yourself, we wouldn't be having this conversation!"

Perhaps fate had a hand in making my floors uneven? I just so happened to pick that one renovator, he decided to cut corners on this specific thing, and now it's finally relevant. I mean, what are the odds?

It was too late to stop after the bottle hit the floor. It felt good to do that, at least. But my hands kept picking up more things, and so did hers. Our glasses. The vase from my sister-in-law. An unlit candle. The steak knife.

I've let many things slip from my hands, both figuratively and literally. Did fate guide them to leave? Or did it make my fingers unfurl and my hands open against my will? How much power does it really have?

I once heard of a story from ancient China. There was an art student who toiled day and night to finish his drawing of a dragon, and finally displayed it for all to see. His master, giving the piece a quick examine, produced his own brush and drew a dot on the dragon's eye. The crowd applauded the master, as the eye made the dragon look much more lifelike. The story ends there, and how the student felt about that was ignored.

The wine inching towards me joins up with a second pool of red, mixing into a more complex shade. To me, the pile of shattered glass and wine was already perfection, but hands that aren't mine decided otherwise.