

Whispers from the Wood



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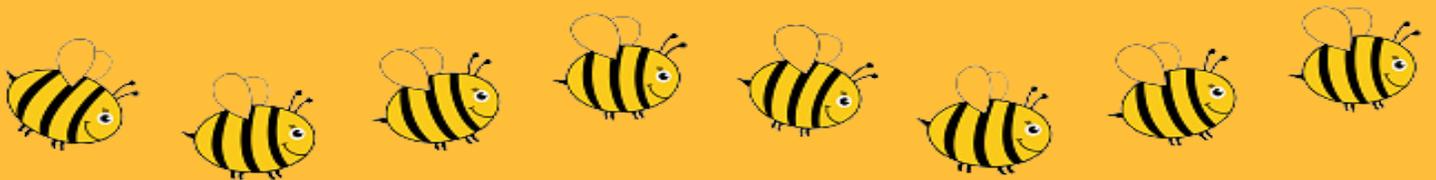
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Cherry On Top

I wake up to my speakers streaming calm songs.
To my curtains and shades open while it rains, sky white.
Pumpkin spiced candles lit across my room on my dresser.
The sound of the rain and the song blend so beautifully,
I feel the warm vibes throughout my body.

I sit and watch the rain with my eyes closed,
Slowly moving my head along to the music.
The vocals of the songs send vibrations through me,
I can think clearly now.

I daydream of everything positive and everything I love.
I use this moment to be happy before the rain stops and the sun comes
out,
Before the candles are melted all the way down and I no longer feel the
music.
Before this euphoric feeling is interrupted by life.

The sun never seems to be on my side,
It never calms me.
I don't relate to the bright rays nor the warm air.
Sunny days are meant to be happy days,
Yet I feel happiness on gray ones.
I feel how it looks in the atmosphere on those days.

I feel represented by the sky on those days.

There's no noise to make me feel safe in bright light,

No cool air to help me concentrate.

And the quietness of air forces me to deal with my burdens.

The way I connect with the short lives of the raindrops,

Is what really puts the cherry on top.

A Perfect Brightness of Hope

A shining star you will always be,
A jewel in the universe that I see,
Like the stars that glisten white.
Like the moon that shines bright.
You bring out the best in me.

You are the flame that lights my fire,
The light that shines in my eyes,
You are the only love that's taken a hold
Of my soul forever.

Immortal Artwork

They say
That God lets
Painters decorate the sky.
That each day,
Colors are blended
And art is created.
Deep new blues and vibrant purples.
Fiery reds and shimmering golds.
Swirled on the canvas
That is the sky.
Mistakes may be made,
But they create
The cotton candy clouds
That float peacefully
And perfectly.
Adding splashes of vibrance
To the already ravishing Painting.
Listen and you can hear
The music that is created,
The conducting of birdsong
And the gossip of squirrels.
See the art
And hear the soundtrack.
A new one every morning
And every night.
New colors
And new shadows.
Songs and choruses.

Each one another life
Forever immortalized
In the sky.

The Dance of the Flowers

The sun is shining brightly.
The pretty flowers,
Gently swaying,
Dancing in the sunlight,
Hiding their roots within the ground.
You stand in the field,
Looking out at the trees,
Your back to the poppies.
A foolish mistake
But worry not,

You are not the first to err in this way.
And you will not be the last.
They have been here longer than you or I.
And they will be here long after we are both gone.

A song begins.
A wind whistles through the trees,
Their branches calmly waving,

Beckoning you to join them in their Autumnal dance.

A flurry of leaves calls softly,
Crooning lovingly.

They carefully distract from the scene behind you.
The sun shines brighter
As shadows rise over your head,

A single cry,

Then, the shadows suddenly disperse,
You have escaped for now.
Not the first to flee from such a fate,
But certainly not the last.



"Singled Out" - Norah Sheldon

Gold and Honey Rims

here comes a feeling you'd thought you'd forgotten:
a love like his, tripping into the deep gaze of the unfolding dawn,
his eyes splitting at the sight of the sun's tired horizon.
they chased after that marigold sunrise as venus scatters the sun's rays
across the birthing stillness of the morning.

if you close your eyes just for a moment,
you can remember his warm hands cradling warmer brown skin
tracing over scars that you'd forgotten over the years,
singing a sweet summer hymn.
this same warmth breaks over the horizon
when the sun tears the curtains open with gentle hands,
sweeping the floor with its blond shadow.

and this is where you'll feel the sun, all gold and honey rims,
breaking out all over your skin,
realizing, that the sun loves you just as much as he does,
enough to come back to you each morning (just as he stayed)
realizing, that everything is a little golden, but not everything gold can
stay (just as he left),

and here comes a feeling you'd thought you'd forgotten.



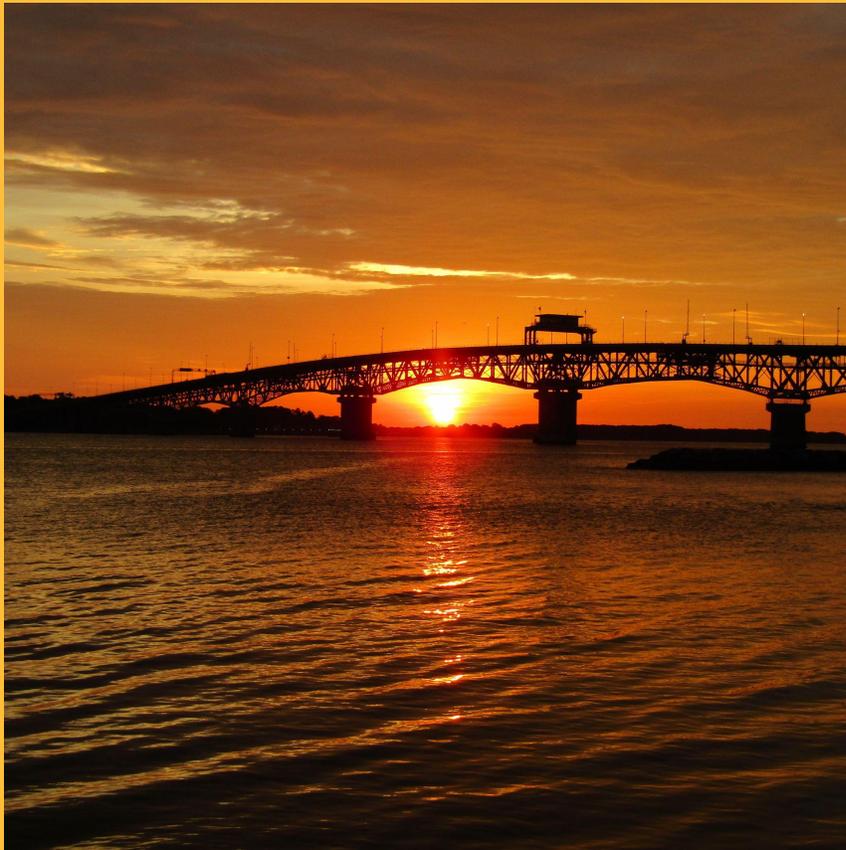
"Blonded"- Leea Copeland

Happiness

Harnessing the uncontrollable smiles,
As you set out in your consciousness of gladness.
Playing in the abundance of white sparkled grains,
Passing through the obstacles of satisfaction.
In a way of prosperity in which you're hit,
No path is blocked by uncontrollable faith.
Everything resting through the sunny nights,
Seething on the opulence dreams
So, this is the meaning of "Happiness"
?

Mornings

Darkness encased me
Its arms wrapped around me, covering my eyes
Cooing a lullaby, urging me to stay
But then you opened the blinds, letting the sunlight in
And suddenly everything was bright



"Untitled" - Robert Pritchett

The Assurance of You

“You’ll be okay”

Fell from your lips with the softness of a feather

Three words laden with sincerity

A promise you intended to keep

The syllables reached their arms around me

Embracing me as I had never been before

Holding me close to their chest, keeping me safe

Your assurance rattled around my brain

Seeping into my open wounds and gaping gashes

Mending the trauma I had so long endured

It was an efficacious ending and a beautiful beginning

As you picked up the pieces because you intended to fix me

And I intended to let you

Because you’re you

And you made me, me

Sit

Spring comes to the year;
a joyous time to prance in the warm grass fields as the wind breezes ever
so slightly; plus, the pleasure of being graced with the rain sprinkling
outside.

Won't you come sit with me in the field?

It's summer;
the scorching sun burns the landscape as we hide away inside;
we've decided it's too hot to go out; even the rain can only cool the air so
much as the heat bleeds inside through the open window.

Won't you come sit with me on the couch with the fan on?

The winter spills across the land;
there's no snow; but it doesn't matter since the cold still protrudes the dim
skies as it begins raining; oh wouldn't it be nice to snuggle and cuddle
warmly in bed as the night begins to chill further.

Won't you come sit with me in bed?

Rain

I felt the coldness on my skin release from my body.

Filling my pores with warmth and a delightful feeling.

The storm left things in ruins.

There were twigs, dead frogs, and mud all around me.

The foggy clouds drifted away alas, but again I still felt empty.

The dead frogs decomposed deep into the Earth leaving a reminisce of grass on the ground.

The twigs were raked along to the side leaving the floor with a marshy feeling beneath me.

Yet, the sun never failed to soak up the aftermath from the ground the rain had left.

This cycle helped me realize that yet it wasn't pleasant to have the marshy mud stuck on the bottom of your shoe.

The dirt needed the nourishment that we desire for our own bodies, and the sun deprived that from it.

It was oh so beautiful, but such a curse.

Yet it left us with great demure.

Fragile Passion

Tranquil enchantment that remains
Fuzzy feelings of floating
Tender weakness that matches the blush
Butterflies that fly among flowers in my mind
But hope the thorns don't puncture my heart

Sparks slowly going to my head
Sun setting into surreal smiles
Delicacy deliberately dances with the light of love
Infinite bliss that fills the past abyss
Love is honest pain, restoring ours to trust

Sweet sentiment as the other became significant
For one day, three words become two
To fairness of forgiveness that touches fullness of fondness
Without separation of thorns, only the scent of roses
You are my passion

Dreamcatcher

Dreams are but a fragile beauty
Unleashing thoughts from willful ignorance through the boundary
With hues of happiness and loveliest traces of forgotten times
Connect with the lost, lose yourself in hopes of trying to reach them

Memories embedded with rushes of impulsive adrenalin
Scented with remnants of you and petals you held close
Airy with cherished memories that fill my flowering lungs
Oxygen revives bittersweet goodbyes

To feel distinct fogginess in my sights
It seems I have forgotten you once again among hidden heartbeats
Drifted away from the resting place in my heart to the lengthy skies
Sudden awareness, reliving the rest of you

Catch a glimpse of me before you once again return
As I return back to a reality of stubborn realism
Stars remind me of wishes that went to you
Asleep under your skies to catch our dreams of addictive comfort

Always and Forever

What's the point?
Trash spewed across the floor, leading from the door to my bed
Short glimmers of light pierce through the blinds
Yet, the dusky walls impede the slamming dawn
Hollow walls and echoing cries
My damp cheeks drizzle onto my crossed knees.
The heavy vase sends a rupturing guilt to my stomach
Is this what she wanted?
Do I dare walk backwards into the endless dusk?
A light shove pushes me forward
I trip and stumble, topple and slip.
Yet I swing myself forward, shattering the grasp of the chains behind me.
The blinding light tramples my eyes
But must I see ahead of me?
Must I pause and glare?
I don't quite know
But the weight of the shackles lessen with each passing second.
Yet the weight on my shoulders keep stagnant
I am not ashamed.
I will keep moving forward, always and forever.
It's what you truly want isn't it?
I failed you, but it's the least I can do.
I decide to sprint towards the light.
After all, it's proof that I love you.



"Bubbles" - Norah Sheldon



Believed in You

Our laughter filled the air and our smiles shined so bright you'd think they were the biggest stars in the entire universe. We were so happy and we still are. So happy we've been running and jumping around for almost two hours now, maybe more. Ahni jumps onto my back wrapping her small arms around me, screaming about how she can't believe it. *I believe it, Ahni. I've always believed in you.*

"Maya, Maya! I can't believe I did it!"

"I know, Ahni! I'm so proud of you!"

Ahni got accepted into her dream college today. She's been waiting for her letter for months now, and it finally came. The nerves were getting to her and even started getting to me, but she got it! I knew she would get it. Ahni worked so hard all throughout high school. She spent all her free time studying, all her time memorizing, and focusing. She's never missed a homework assignment- never failed a test, nor a quiz. She stayed after school to go over materials with her teachers, and dealt with all the bullies calling her a '*try hard.*' She's been through tougher times...

Ahni struggled with depression in her early high school life. She was so worried and

stressed about work, work, work. College, college, college. The stress got to her too many times, and her family degraded her for not going out, or making friends. She believed everything they said and what her bullies said. Her room became her greatest ally, and the outside world was her enemy. She wouldn't let me in for days, weeks, a month. Ahni ignored me and hid herself away from the world. That time was tough for me too because

Ahni's my girl. She's my *best friend*.

I don't know what happened, she hasn't told me, but one day she was just okay again. She came over to my house one early morning, and tackled me right at the door. She told me how much she missed me, and apologized for how she was acting. I forgave her right away even if she did nothing wrong. I don't blame her at all because everyone goes through tough times. Literally everyone. It's been some weeks since that moment, and today's the day she got her letter. We decided to instantly celebrate one of her greatest accomplishments. So, here we are. In the middle of a large grass field, jumping and screaming around like we're lunatics.

"Hey! Wanna go up there?" she asks me, all of a sudden, pointing to a medium sized grass hill.

It looks easy enough to climb, so I agree and let her pull me to it by my now cold hands. We race, hurriedly and clumsily, climbing up the grass mountain. Ahni gets there first, and screams like a mad man, '*I'm the best person in the world!*' which makes me push her over

playfully. We giggle and lay side by side on the surprisingly comfortable grass. Ahni stretches her arm out, her hand reaching to the sky.

“I can’t believe it, Maya. I did it,” she whispers.

Copying her movements, I stretch out my opposite arm.

“Yeah? Well, I can because...”

...

My brain clears and I remember where I am. I’m in the Laxton Airport wishing Ahni a goodbye. Time flew by quickly, and now it’s time for her to go to college. Ahni puts down one of her suitcases and hugs me so tight I thought I’d die.

“I can’t believe it, Maya. I did it.”

“Yeah?” I say, just like last time, “Well, I can because *I’ve always believed in you.*”

“Always?”

“Always.”

When She Was Young

Even then, she knew that this planet, this gift of life, was something to hold onto.

Fresh spring air filled the girl's nose as she pranced across the dewy green lawn. She stopped to marvel at every living thing: the flowers in bloom, the birds in the sky, the grasshoppers hiding in their forest of greenery. More than once on this day she gleefully fell onto her back in the grass, staring up at the soft sunlight that managed to make its way down to earth between the complex branches of maple trees. She pointed at clouds, she gently caught butterflies in her small hands, and she studied the plants, although she would never pick them. The elements of nature were not hers or anyone's to harm or collect, and she knew this. She would appreciate the world around her, and nothing more. Not knowing how to read or write, yet, she had learned the importance and brilliance of the earth and its living creatures on her own accord and was determined to soak it in for as long as possible because it was beautiful. At four, with such a small understanding of the human world around her, she understood that this was a moment to remember. That this was the feeling of living. The feeling of being a child of nature, and nothing more.

A Bit of Luck

Alya grimaced as the arrow in her side shifted with every step. It had been a lucky shot on the bandits' part, though their luck had ended soon after. At least she hoped so, despite every loud complaint her wound offered. If fortune favored her, she would make it to a village before she lost the exhausting race against blood loss. However, the spots dancing in her vision made her doubt she was going to make it.

She would've been lying if she said she was surprised when her legs crumpled beneath her. She fell to the ground with a light thud; and her vision faded as she felt blood seep from her wound. Numbness overtook her body as seconds ticked by, and she wondered if the light was to fade from her eyes while the sun continued to shine. As a shadow passed over her face, she couldn't help but wonder if Lady Death was coming to claim her.

Alya awoke with the sun's rays on her face and a straw bed under her back. She felt bandages and some sort of ointment covering her wound. She moved to touch it, only for her hand to be gently pulled away.

"Please don't touch the bandages. The wound's still healing, and you probably don't want to bleed out again." She looked up, and the tension left her body as she saw a woman with luxuriant black hair, bronze skin, and dark, yet kind eyes.

"Am I dead?" Alya asked, despite her heart pounding in her chest.

“Thankfully, no. You lost a lot of blood, but I was able to heal you in time. You’re pretty lucky.” The woman smiled, and she shone like the sun.

“Thank you,” Alya whispered, “What is your name?”

“Saria. You?”

“Alya.”

“Well, the wound should heal in a week. If you, uh...want to keep the arrow, you can.” Alya laughed, causing another shot of pain to lace through her skin. A look of concern replaced Saria’s smile as she cautiously looked over Alya’s bandages. A weight settled in Alya's stomach; one that suspiciously felt like guilt. She was the one hurt by her laughter, but the immediate look of concern, possibly even distress, on this stranger's face hurt her more than any arrow could. She pushed it down, assuming that it was just the remaining pain of her injuries clouding her senses.

A week later, Alya’s wounds had healed. After a day of rest, Saria told Alya that she was free to go, but Alya couldn't find it in herself to leave her.

“I need to repay you,” she said, “you saved my life, so it's only fair that I do something for you.”

“Well...I do need some help around the house.” Saria said, despite the house looking impeccably clean. Regardless, Alya was eager to help.

The next day, after the cleaning was done, Saria tentatively, almost reluctantly, reminded Alya that she could leave. Alya, once again, asked if Saria needed anything else

done. Saria immediately, perhaps eagerly, responded by saying that she needed to replace the ingredients she used. The two spent that week together, collecting ingredients during the day and talking by the fire in the dark of night. Throughout everything, Saria had forgotten to ask Alya if she wanted to leave.

The question hung in the air above them until a month later, when Saria suddenly asked Alya why she had never left.

"Because," Alya said, voice nothing but fond, "I was lucky enough to have an amazing woman like you save me from death's door."

The question never surfaced again as a month became a year, and a year became half a decade. It was on the anniversary of when they met when Alya asked Saria if she would make her the happiest woman alive, and she couldn't help but say yes to the woman she saved so long ago.



"Reflection" - Norah Sheldon

Summer At Last

Everybody knows what summer is, it's the season of bright skies and for most, the feeling of time ceases to exist. No one could complain about getting a break from the excessive hours of work put in for the year.

Leah for sure couldn't, and all the days where nothing but the idea of sleep motivated her finally paid off. Finally, Leah could rest, she could sleep in, eat whenever, and practically do anything she wanted. The stressed girl could finally put her mind at ease and let the world flow without her interference. With that, her summer journey finally began.

She felt the golden grains of sand in between her toes, and a light blue towel hung over her arm as she walked closer to the shoreline. There was a crochet bag in her hand that was filled with two novels, a bottle of water, and something for her to snack on too. A gentle breeze caused her towel to lift and sway. However, the weather was no problem for the girl, her glossed lips remained curled into the biggest smile.

Above her, seagulls cawed and squealed at the top of their lungs as if they were performing for everyone on the beach. Once the smell of saltwater tickled at her nose she knew she was in the perfect spot. Not too close to the water, but just far enough from the sand to have her own personal space. Finally, she laid her towel down and laid down on her back. Her golden brown skin glowed underneath the sun and she raised her hand to shield

her eyes. A soft hum rang from her vocal chords as she basked beneath the sky. Everything felt insanely calm, and her mind felt as if it had finally been allowed to rest. Finally, Leah felt like she was spending her time right. With that, she let herself marinate in the time alone, leaving her with peace on her mind.

Courier

It was the beginning of time. Other creations had gotten mad, they were out of control. Zeus knew something must be done, but Sariel and I were always one of the calm ones. We would never use our power for worse. Though we weren't part of the problem we still suffered the consequences. We were such a beautiful creation, such a calm creation.

It was decided that Zeus would split us all. We went from two in one to just one. I was separated from Sariel and we were sent away. I was sent to Paris, but had no clue where he'd been sent. We were told that we couldn't handle the power we held together, so we'd reunite again someday. Everyone was in a frenzy. Internally, I was also in a frenzy. It happened so abruptly. Though my half heart was beating profusely, externally I kept myself together. I hoped and pleaded that one day, no matter the wait, I'd see Sariel again.

Days, months, and years passed. I went through so many emotions within the time. One day a yellow canary started to follow me. No matter which way I turned, the bird remained in my presence. It was a beautiful bird, so bright and full of life. I decided not to question it. It'd fly away at the end of the day, but it'd always be there when I woke up. I decided to name it Sariel. Over time the bird had grown just as important to me as Sariel was. Sariel followed my every move. He studied my every day schedule.

I spoke to him as a friend. I spoke to him as I would speak to my Sariel.

“Everyday I wonder about the world.” I told him. He’d always chirp in agreement or reassurance.

“Everyday I wonder, will it ever change from a *when* to an *if*?” I sighed. The bird moved his head as if to shake it.

“No? Oh, but how would you know?” I said. The bird flew around in excitement as if trying to convey an emotion, a statement, a message.

“What is it, Sariel?” I asked the bird. He flew back down beside me as if not to reveal his conveyance just yet.

I decided to move somewhere new. It was time for a change. Of course I would bring Sariel with me. I looked and searched for a new state, something different from Paris. Maybe Hawaii? The next morning, as I knew Sariel would be there when I awoke, I told him.

“I think it’s time for a change.” I told him. His feathers twitched. “Don’t you think?” He flew about the room in absurdity. I caught him before he could fondle up a mess. “What’s gotten into you Sariel?” I asked as I held him in my hand. He stopped fighting as he began to weep. I held him for a minute which turned into a long slumber. We awoke and decided to take a walk. We saw couples reunite around us. It’s been so long since we all were separated. Day after day Sariel and I saw couples reunite. It was beautiful. I always loved to see others happy. At the same time it made me sad. When was it going to be my turn? I wallowed in my own despair. I was in disbelief, and starting to lose hope. I was

starting to lose faith. As these emotions ran through my mind, so did a feeling. This feeling was faint, but there. It was a feeling I'd never experienced before. The feeling was indescribable. It wasn't painful, but it wasn't pleasurable either. I decided to move without telling Sariel. I thought he shouldn't know since he wouldn't know how to react. I packed my things at night once he left.

The next morning I woke up to Sariel pecking at my nose.

"What is it?" I asked as I sat up. He looked at my bags, flew over to them and started unzipping them. I hopped up to zip them back up.

"No, I'm leaving, I need to." I said to him. He sighed. He chirped as if to tell me to get up. I got ready for the day as I normally would. He flew away out of the door rapidly. I followed after him, leaving everything in my home. I ran down and across streets for him. It felt like a game. It wasn't fun, but I realized I couldn't leave without him.

He flew into an outside mall, near a coffee shop. I ran in to get him.

"Sariel!" I called out. I was at the foot of the entrance. There he was perched up on a familiar shoulder. The feeling I'd felt for the past couple of weeks was now stronger than ever. I called out his name once more and to my surprise the familiar shoulder turned around, to reveal the most familiar face. Together at last, my Sariel.

When the Sun Rises

In the night, it is bright. The bright moonlight covered on my skin, reflecting onto you. Your beautiful blonde hair, mysterious and yet so familiar. You're beginning to come closer to me, making my breath catch. I don't believe I have ever seen someone so beautiful.

You're in front of me now, opening your mouth and trying to form words. I accidentally speak first, interrupting you.

"Hello," the words come tumbling out from my mouth.

Your face is twisted in confusion for a moment, surprised that I have spoken first. Perhaps I have made a mistake? My thoughts begin to fill up my mind, that is until I finally hear your voice.

"Hello," you say, your mouth forming a shy smile.

I realize that I have nothing to say, so I stare at your beauty. You stare back at me, possibly thinking the same. I see you look up at the starry night, your smile somehow brighter. "Beautiful night, right?" You say through your smile.

I nod before I forget that you can't see me.

"Yes. Although, most nights seem to look the same."

You look back at me.

"Well, yes, I suppose after seeing the night for so long you begin to become used to

it.” “You’ve never seen the day?” I ask.

You shake your head. “Not once. Everytime it has happened since I’ve been born, I conveniently am asleep.”

I suck in a breath. “Aw, that sucks. I’ve only seen it about twice. It’s very beautiful.” You look down to your feet. “Yeah, I bet.”

“Hey, lift your head up. Anytime now someone will find that special someone again. You’ll see it this time.”

You look back up to me, smiling. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a smile that’s so perfect. “Thank you, that means a lot.”

“Yeah, I mean, of course! I know a lot of people who haven’t seen it and I know that it makes them upset, which is very reasonable.”

“Yeah.”

We stand there in silence, trying to decide on what to say next. I find that you feel very familiar in this moment now, and I have never been this comfortable around a stranger, not until now.

You chuckle. “I’m sorry, but have we met before? You seem very familiar to me.” I smile. “No, I would remember someone as beautiful as you. I must just have one of those faces, yeah?”

“Yeah, maybe.” You pause. “Well, it was lovely meeting you, but I’ve got to head

home. Hopefully I'll see you around?"

"I'm sure you will, I always happen to be around here."

And with that, you start to walk away. I turn around to watch, perhaps to make sure you're okay. As you walk, you turn towards the sky. I see a slight smile upon your face. As you cross the street, sure that you're fine, I too look towards the sky.

There is a little glimmer of brightness under all the darkness we have all seen. It begins to rise and rise, taking over the sky. The sun takes the place of the moon, the brightness blinding my eyes. I can't help but smile when I realize that this is your first day. Your first time seeing the sun.

I turn, walking towards my home. I smile to myself once again as I think of the lucky two who have just met. Maybe one day that brightness will be caused by me. Or perhaps I will never find the one. But for now, I shall cherish the thought of two lovers meeting.

Stage Five: Acceptance

"I've stopped thinking about you," I wrote. My pencil lifted up from the paper and stared at my words, along with my eyes.

"That's a weird thing to say to me," my husband replied. I jumped in response, forgetting he is always behind my shoulder now.

I shook my head, a smile forming on my face. I turned in my seat and looked up at my grinning husband. "Well, what did you want me to say?"

He shrugged. "I dunno, you're the one with seven New York Bestselling Books, you should know what to say."

I looked back at the letter to him. "This is different. It's *you*, not some fictional characters I made up in my head."

"Well," he started. He gently took the pencil from my hand and bent down over me. "How about that?" he asked after writing a sentence that read, '*You make it hard to move on.*' I took the pencil back and erased his words. "I don't want this to be that type of letter. I want to move on."

"But then you'll forget about me."

"No I won't," I responded. "I could never forget the voice of the police officer telling me they found your body. I wanted to believe so badly you were still here."

“I am still here.”

“You’re not.”

We both fell silent and I felt my husband’s hand rub along my back. He chuckled lightly. “I remember when you were angry with me. Angry because I wanted to see you. Angry because I drove the two hundred miles. What was that? Stage two?”

I looked up at my husband. “Stage two of what?”

“Stage two of grief. I see you’re making your way along the stages now though. You’re forgiving me. You’re *leaving* me.”

I stared back down at the letter and words from my heart quickly were envisioned on the paper. My husband talked and rejected everything I had written down, but after some time, his voice became quieter. By the time I had finished my letter, he was no longer there. The weight of him was gone. And I was okay with that.

My pencil, dull, pressed on the paper one last time. “*I’m leaving, but I’ll never forget you. With Love, Your Wife*”



"Greg" - Norah Sheldon

Thank you for reading!

A big thank you to all the students, teachers, and administrators for making this literary magazine possible. Thank you for supporting our craft!

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