

Preface

There She Lay

A young girl sits in a shadowed frame, where the light is never present yet you can see her pasted skin like a white spot on a black canvas. Shadows dance around without a sound; that is with the exception of her tapping foot and jittering fingertips across her jeans. She speaks,

“He was a muse of mine. if you want to call it that. To be honest, he gave me purpose. I had someone to write for. Now it feels like empty words on filled pages. Then we...I don’t know. I don’t know why. Well I don’t *think* I know. We just kinda fell off, that happens all the time with friends, right?”

She adjusts her hair back behind her shoulders as the figures continue to move around her.

“Growing up with him... was the best childhood. It was an answer to my parents’ prayers when they moved next to us all the way from Japan. Since they couldn’t give me a sibling, Ossy was like having a brother. I can thank my dad for moving them.” She smiles with a fondness that scares the shadows behind her, “I remember how pressed my father was to be more American, like my mother. He wanted me to grow up idealistically. A childhood that he never really got to experience.”

Her smile fades into a melancholic remembrance.

A remembrance of where she is.

“I miss it. I miss it a lot. I wish it hadn’t left in the blink of an eye. It does fly by so fast. And I wish it hadn’t—you see, I could’ve done more for us. But how was I to know what to do? I was only a child. And it’s too late. Like, I had missed every opportunity given. There’s all this tension now, I don’t know how to talk to him anymore.”

“He must think I hate him...”

Each shadow continues to brush by her. Her golden locks appear grey in the dizzying light. The shadows grow larger and stronger, laughing at her in a mocking tone.

“Maybe I never meant to back away. Maybe I thought he needed space. And while he needed space I thought I could do something for him. I thought I *was* doing

something for him. I wanted to write this... *silly* story. This story that's going absolutely nowhere."

The shadows laugh, their dance is more joyous.

"My friends insist I'm in love with him. They think it's so romantic. But they could never understand what it is to have a bond with someone, anyone, and lose it over nothing. It gets deeper under my skin than anything. I tell them to drop it. I won't hear it. Nothing bothered me more. Not everything between a boy and a girl is love. I mean, love love. How could they understand? They never had someone like him to lose."

"Oh, Ossy—"

The young Ocea sits on the soft ground beneath her, dropping her head back with her arms behind her head. The shadows dissipate all at once as Ocea finds herself laying in a blooming meadow, staring up at the vibrant sky.

She takes one more deep breath. "Don't leave me here alone."

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The room is dark and hazy. And there's only one flicker of light; that is her eyes. That's where Oslo stood, with nothing else between him and Ocea but the rail of her hospital bed, he recounts the steps which got them there,

"It was the morning after; we were a few days into the family summer vacation. It was the first time we interacted in quite some time. Lots of small talk; where we're going to college and all that. She had the idea to wake up early on our last day at the beach and cook breakfast for all the parents. Now, that's where things get a little blurry for me... I can't remember the exact sequence of events, it's all spotty. Like photographs of short moments flipping by in a choppy projection. I remember her in the fridge, she said there wasn't enough food so we had to go to the store. I remember my hand grabbing onto her parent's car door, the passenger side. I remember leaning my head against the window as we were listening to music. I remember feeling calm. I don't remember much of what we talked about. I don't think it was anything important at all—I'd hope I'd remember that much. The next thing I know, I'm standing here. Right here." Oslo looks down at the girl's two weeping parents.

He stands on the cold tile, barefoot, with a hospital gown on. Her parents don't make eye contact with him as they console each other. His parents stand on the opposite side of the room, mourning the girl in the hospital bed. Oslo turns back around to see the beauty that lies there. With little shaking in his body, tears trickle down his face like a leaky faucet. *Drip, drip, drip* the salty water falls at her bedside.

"If you asked when I was a kid, I would've told you I was gonna marry her. Six-year-old me didn't exactly know what love was— at least how it could make someone *feel*. I just knew she was my best friend; the only world that I wanted to be a part of. Funny for a child to think these things, right? Of course it is. It's cute. But nobody knows what that turns into. When you're a child and so in love with something, there comes a day everyone tells you it's time to grow up. Time to *not* love that thing. '*You're too old for that*'. That was our wedge. And it's all my fault." The young Oslo grabs the railing of the bed, leaning against it to feel as close he can hear her gentle breaths.

He stares down into her shut eyelids, "When I lost you, I promised myself to never let those parts of me go. I continued our adventures on my own. Playing pretend... It's been pathetic really. Though hard as I could work, as much as I could draw, it wasn't the same. You'd always tell me what to do. To my frustration, of course. But it worked. You always had a way of making things work. I just wanted you to see that I'm capable too. I've always wanted to change the world. I just hope... One day, you'll see. Won't you?"

He can see it all, his childhood and his future slipping between his fingers as the blondish beauty lays in peaceful distress.

Beckoning for their reunion he begs,

"Please wake up, Ocea."