

Chérie

The brick of the walls clashed with the white tile as Elliot walked down the hallway one final time. He couldn't decide if he was happy or afraid. With the responsibility of school suddenly tugged away, the world seemed so accessible, and the freedom was almost suffocating.

"Celebrate?" A voice called sweetly, as if molasses was being poured over Elliot's ears..

"Hm?" He looked at her and smiled; out of the prison of her bun, one fugitive lock sprawled over the left side of her face, obviously unnoticed.

"You look stupid." She said everso playfully.

"Not as stupid as you." He brushed the lock of hair slowly towards her ear, watching her eyes light up at the romantic situation, then let it fall back into her face, giggling at the way her eyebrows shot down furiously. She pulled out the ribbon holding up her hair, and the brown, wavy tousle fell at her shoulders.

"So, Ell, about that celebration. The ruins?"

"In Esmer? Sure." The same light returned to her eyes, and even though Elliot would never say so, the light in those pupils was his personal paradise. They walked down the halls, their footsteps so slightly out of sync. The rhythmic tapping was mesmerizing. Her footsteps were smaller than his, as she was shorter, but they had been together so long, that she had unconsciously introduced a slight delay between every other step, causing her two steps to fall inside his two steps. Each step he took was alternatingly followed by or followed one of hers, and he couldn't help but lose himself in the hypnotic heart beats their steps made together against the ground.

They walked out the front doors and the cool air of spring drew a light blush to their cheeks, as if the blood, so tired in its cardiovascular chore, wished to enjoy the beauty of the flowers and clouds as well. As Elliot got in his jeep and turned the ignition, he pulled a CD from above the sun visor and looked fondly at the etched heart on the top. He slid in the CD and felt his entire body relax as his girlfriend's favorite songs began softly trickling into his ears. He looked at her again and smiled, such an unnoticed habit of his. This time she didn't play it off with a playful insult. She smiled back and the warmth of

summer would have been made insecure by the feeling radiating away from the soft curvature of her lush lips.

As they drove down the scenic road, endless trees populating either side, Elliot felt safe. Here in his car, with his love, shrouded by the soft leaves and sturdy boughs, he could not think of a more desirable place to be. The songs played, each one emanating the same loving emotion, and when Elliot put his right arm to rest on the center console, he felt her soft skin grace his own as her hand embraced his. Her hand was cold, but he enjoyed this because it made the presence of it so much more noticeable. And when finally their hands reached thermal equilibrium, he would know that they had become one through his donation of heat, an even more comforting feeling. As they passed the gently fading green sign that read Welcome to Esmer, announcing their arrival to the city's forest, Elliot's favorite song came on, and he couldn't help but feel that this day would be the best day of his life.

As Elliot pulled the car into the same spot countless others had, and he himself had so many times before, he still held the ruins in such awe. No one knew what exactly the structure was before it was abandoned. The walls were a pristine white, even though it had evidently been ages since it had fallen. Moss touched not a single intact area, but lingered softly at the bottom of fallen pieces. The roof was fully collapsed, but the walls remained ever so standing, as if in defiance to gravity itself, remaining upright in spite of the foe that had brought about the demise of its dear friend, the shielder of sky. Elliot held her hand as they walked past the fallen stones and into the grand hall of the ruins. They sat down on two fallen pieces of stone next to each other and faced each other. Elliot loved the dress she wore, a flowing, laced, white gown that ended in a low hanging skirt. And yet he thought it so silly that amidst such colorless clothing, she wore green Dr. Martens and sunflower earrings. What amazed him most is that somehow regardless of the extreme color differences of her choices, it didn't clash; amidst her dark brown eyes and hair, and her light skin, the colors somehow perfectly contrasted the light pink of her lips and the lighter pink nail paint she wore always. Only she could so boldly pull off her outfits, and Elliot respected her for this greatly.

Then he realized. The sudden nature of it made it hard not to panic. His heart raced and he could feel his body heat in fear. This was a dream. He was a lucid dreamer and always at some point he realized, and it was now. It was hard to accept, but it was undeniable. He tried to regain his composure as he saw the worried look on her eyes.

“What’s wrong?” He couldn’t stand the worry in her voice.

“This is a dream. I’m going to wake up, and we won’t be together anymore.” He couldn’t think of a way to lighten it, and so he said it outright and succinctly. His heart sank and kept sinking. A droplet snuck down his cheek, but she didn’t seem to notice. She was laughing, a giggle really, so amused by what she thought was some trick. He knew such a claim must sound unbelievable, and could not think of how to get across its truth, until he finally decided he would simply have to provide proof. “What is your favorite color?” Her giggle died down, and she looked at him with confusion.

“Lavender.” He waved his hand and, enchantingly, the color of the ruins faded to lavender, following the direction of his sweep. Her face became serious. It was not that she had not trusted him, it was that his claim was too absurd of a notion. Now that it was supported, she could no longer deny it at all. The realization on her face was the most painful thing Elliot had ever experienced. She leaned forward and so did he, and as their foreheads met and they sat there taking it all in, salt littered their faces as rivers broke free of such weak dams. He could feel it, his body in bed, a precursor to his inevitable wakeup.

“I’m being taken from you. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. We’ll find each other. I love you.” Her voice was crestfallen, and Elliot’s heart crumbled upon hearing such evidences of her pain.

“I love you, Ellie.” Their mouths met and their tears mixed as their lips, soon to be long lost lovers, embraced each other in that intimate dance one final time.

His eyes opened and he laid there. He absorbed the dream in entirety, noting each detail with utmost care. Again, again, and again, for hours, he laid there and relived it as his eyes raged a constant lachrymal storm, committing every single detail to the safest cores of his memory, so as to never forget his lost love.