

Yuti Das

Age: 16, Grade: 11

School Name: James Clemens High School, Madison, AL

Educator: Elizabeth Vaughn

Category: Flash Fiction

paint me a blush one more time

One day, you'll be with the love of your life, and you'll paint them stories about my clarity and the blurry curse of such a blessing. You'll paint them a lost love, a young love, an immature love. You'll then kiss her cheek, grateful that she's special and worthy of your love in all the ways I couldn't be. You'll have that relationship that I could never give you, no matter how much I tried, no matter how much I loved. But, goddammit, I do love you. How could I not?

One day, your eyes won't be filled with love or pain upon hearing my name or a close resemblance of it somewhere in the wind. They'll be filled with indifference, a closed acknowledgment that we were just never meant to be. You say you won't get over me fast, but when you do get over me, it'll be final. It won't be reversible. You're smart, smarter than me. And I might get over you faster, but on those dark nights, I'll whisper the syllables that form your name to test how it sounds, to recall the memories that I spent saying it, and I'll long for a take-back - a second chance. But then it will be too late.

I'll tap the window that encloses my heart and expectantly look out and see a boarded up window and a for-sale sign, signifying you've moved on, And there I'll sit, in the hollows of my heart, my elbows tucked in underneath my head, wondering. I'll brush a knuckle over the dresses in my closet, remembering your compliments that brightened my day, regretting I wasn't able to do the same to you.

A day not long from now, I'll sit silently in the black hole of my emotions and wonder how I ever thought I could love in a way that was comfortable to you. I'll wonder how I thought I could protect you when I couldn't protect myself from me. I'll curse hope for letting me dream, because of how fast the dreams spiraled into nightmares.

But for now, I sit in the same chair that has witnessed so many of my heartbreaks, mistakes, pain. For now, my tears well up in sadness, the impossibility of loving you yet being unable to have you. An unfair juxtaposition, to love you with all my heart..yet know that love isn't enough. That I couldn't be enough for you. That somewhere down the line, the love got swallowed by the shadows that have always haunted me. The shadows that I thought I could ignore.

I touch my face: my eyes that once saw through you, my lips that once felt like they were designed for yours; they'll remain, former pen-pals, forgotten as the grains of time fill the hourglass. They'll never again meet in sweet harmony, never again meet in love and passion. Perhaps one day, they will. But if they do, it'll be in a fit of rage, of despair, of pure anger at our history and in the sadness of our forgotten futures.

Our fingers will never entwine in each other. For when we do meet, we'll be wearing masks that shield us from pain, longing, and love. We'll greet each other as strangers do, stilted hellos, artificial smiles, and vague handshakes. But even through that slight touch, our souls will recognize each other and weep in abandonment. Yet we'll still turn away, shaky step after shaky step, one after the other, until numbers fade into each other and thoughts turn into a standstill.

All our future histories vanquished by, seemingly, one moment of time. That's how we'll remember it. Even if it was doomed from the start. Even if the powers above decreed that we would never love each other the way we should. Even if we slipped and fell and knew it would end in despair.

In this singular moment in space, I'm united with you, enemies of time, but I know inevitably time's arrow will seduce you, melting perspectives that drag you to the other side: a barrier that I can't overcome. A barrier that I'll gaze at, unfocused eyes staring at your ever-fading silhouette from the other side, my slippery fingers in pain at the desires that it can't have.

Time will heal, I know, but not before it hurts. Not before it destroys.

Because if our love couldn't last, I don't know if anything can.

And if you couldn't survive it, I wonder if anyone ever will.