

Tapestries

I'd say we just have bad press. Through myths, through stories, through eternities, it's our reputation, wounding us in every lifetime that lives. We are just confused; confused by people with their muddled minds, and their ideas of who we are and what we do. We don't do much anyway. Just spectate. Watch. Mourn. Sometimes they mourn for us. Sometimes they mourn with us. They don't know we're with them, though. They don't want us to be with them. We are hated. We are shades of grey and white and everything but light. They don't see the red. The red that still beats, throbbing in our chests. The red that pours through our hearts and through our eyes. The red that's slowly fading fading fading on that string. It's twisted around my finger, wrapped around my hand, but it tightens and tightens and tightens. They don't see though, because they don't see me. They will, one day. *Someday*. Sooner for some, later for others. They all will. After all, I am eternity. I will continue to exist and watch and spectate and they will never know. Because they don't know me. To them, I am past mistakes and unwanted regrets. As I said, we're often confused. Maybe that's why we are hated. Because we are seen as *somebody's* ghosts, haunting them, until they turn into a ghost too.

Here's the thing about ghosts. We're stuck, in this space, between life and death. In this grey, where we are forgotten. They don't realise that we watch, that we feel, that we *exist*. And we *will* exist. For all life to come. We are just forgotten. But we don't forget. We *can't* forget, even when we wish we could.

I remember now. The young, dumb love, the petty arguments. We were first loves. I'd say first loves hurt the worst. To lose something so pure, so real, so raw. I remember it all. *I wish I didn't*. The world called us gullible, to believe in something made on a foundation of hope and love. We never listened. We were foolish, our hands holding onto each other, letting go of land. I never thought twice then, because she was water and I was a man dying of thirst. We were swimming to our own Atlantis. I remember bits and pieces of the things we would do. The laughter and the jokes and the fun. I remember when we first met. She believed in fate. I thought it was a coward's escape. There was no other explanation though, to the red strings binding our fingers. It weaved around us, knitting us into a tapestry that was so painstakingly beautiful. Maybe I was a coward. A tapestry is getting weaved now. This one is just as beautiful. In this one though, it's not my hand holding hers.

I watch. I see a white dress. I see an altar. I see smiles. There are cameras and cakes and rings. There's an audience too. There's an empty seat at the back. I pretend it's for me. I pretend that I'm waiting for her at the altar instead of him. He's tapping his foot. I see her now. Her dress is off white, bunching around her feet. They look happy. To the outside, they are the definition of love. The green of the courtyard surrounds them. We had dreamt of a beach. I see the string. It's tied around her finger, but it doesn't connect to me. Instead it drags on the floor, shrinking as she gets closer and closer to him. Mine creeps up around my throat, forming a noose that's about to pull at any second.

They read their vows, and with every word, that noose is pulled tighter, until my heart bleeds and aches and begs for them to stop. They don't.

In the evening, their tapestry is weaved. I think it's more beautiful than ours ever was. They used my blood for the colour.

The audience claps and smiles and laughs. Because he's not her first love. He's sensible, he's smart, he's what the world wants. He's what *she* wants. I am nothing but a first heartbreak. I am *her* ghost. I am her worst mistake. I see why they hate us now. I hate myself too.

She made me believe in fate. Because after everything, after the fights and the screaming and the arguments, we would always find a way back to each other. Sometimes I wonder if we held each other back, from falling in love with the right people. The sensible people. There had to be a reason that *every single time* we would find each other again. I think it's cruel. How the universe brought us close enough to touch, how the universe kept bringing us back together, how the planets aligned when we touched, then ripped us away the second they did. Maybe the planets only align for a split second, yet she was still entwined in every part of my soul. She keeps me binded.

I remember calling her before. Or after. However, you want to phrase it. After the crash, before the black. I told her I loved her. I never heard her say it back. At that moment, I stopped holding her back. The stars crashed down that second, and I never thought shooting stars could be that ugly. Our Atlantis had sunk.

I watched the heartbreak. It was quiet. I could feel it. A soul shattering into a million pieces, an agonisingly breathtaking moment. No one cared much, though, because a first love is always meant to be lost. So she tied her heart back together with the string, but she cut it, too, and mine shattered all over again. And as her string let go, mine wound around my neck, growing tighter each day.

I watch again. She's got a house now, and two kids. Both girls. A happy family. They're getting in a car. A holiday, I think. I wonder where. I see sun hats and some towels. A beach area. He's driving, she's radio surfing. Her favourite song comes on, and they start to sing. The children laugh, and they look strikingly like her. Blonde hair, big smiles. He tells a joke, and they laugh again. Maybe the first love is the worst one.

She works in a company. I wonder why. She said she hated nine - to - five jobs. White roses sit on her desk. I used to get her the red ones. She said she liked how vibrant they were. There's a picture of her family on the desk. There's a shell sitting there too. I had gotten her that shell. It was a symbol of us, a symbol of love. Now I am nothing more than a paperweight.

She's older now, her kids are married. Her hair is no longer blonde, but grey. I still watch, my face no different than how it was years ago. I think I might see her soon. She's with her husband. Their hands still hold on to each other, no matter how frail and old. Their red strings are still bound to each other. Mine has started to loosen. It doesn't matter though, because it still *hurts*. I wonder why I am not dead yet. I wonder what holds me back.

I don't think about her as much anymore.

They're both in the hospital. They both have oxygen masks on, trying to gasp in air for a few more mere seconds. I wonder why I seem to be losing breath, too. They look at each other in this way where they are the only two people left in the world. Like to each other they are the sun and the stars, and the planets surrounding them. I think she was happy in this life. Even if I wasn't. That makes it easier to let her go.

I don't think I'll ever forget her. I still hear her favourite songs in my ears and her voice seems to drown out my fears. She shaped me, I think. She was part of my identity, part of my heart. I don't remember the exact tone of her voice or the pitch of her laugh anymore. I think that's okay. We were just place holders, and one day, in a different reality, maybe our love will last. Maybe she won't get married and I won't just be watching. Maybe I won't be mistaken as one of her ghosts.

The string is fading now, and my vision isn't that clear anymore. I see them smiling. Laughing. I can breathe. I smile. For them. For me. And as my string disappears, I do too.

I feel it being cut. The strings in the tapestry are undone. Ready to be weaved into something new. Something for the next life, where the realities might be different, where we are together, where first loves are the best ones.

Sometimes, a tapestry has to be redone.