

# A Collection of You

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When we write people, we often write them in one consecutive love letter. When I wrote him, I wrote him as I thought him. As every moment came and passed. As every feeling was felt, buried, and then dredged back up again. For a period of time, he was my everything. No one should be anyone's everything. It's a miserable existence to put yourself inside another. To rely so heavily on them to take breaths so you can have air. I wrote him as a collection of feelings illustrated by carefully selected words. He was a nightmare and a daydream all at once to me. It was a beautiful hurricane and it's only now that he's gone that I realize what I was really writing about. He was a collection of beautiful moments in my life. So as any writer would, I put my pen to paper and wrote him how he was to me. A collection of you.

## *Her Eyes.*

Everyone always told her that her eyes were beautiful. They were a burning cosm of rich greens: emerald in the dark, sage in the light. Encircled by violets and navy. Like the ocean when it swells over lichen-covered rocks. Then there was gold; flakes of light surrounded by deep pools of color. Like magic glinting through a haze.

Those eyes could kill. You had to be careful with her. What you said, what you did: she took note. She would record it in some metal notebook in her brain. And she could make her beautiful eyes cut like ice. It would always end with her cold, you desperate. She could break you with a single glance. Make you

cover away, begging for redemption.

She was pretty when she cried. The tears would swell in her eyes, the rims gaining a red glow. And she wouldn't sob dramatically like those girls in the films, she would cry in a silent, eerie, altogether more depressing, way. Like the world was pouring out of her eyes and no one could get to her. No one could save her.

## *Meeting Eyes.*

When he met her, she was 17. Young, but not dumb. Beautiful. Breakable. Delicate. Underestimated. He met her on a hot summer's day in late August. It was just before the leaves would start to turn and snap off. Before the hues of orange and yellow would litter the ground and dance towards their ends on light breezes. She remembered the moment they met. A subtle passing of the eyes. She was strolling by. The air was warm, and she had dressed accordingly in a black cotton sundress and light coat. In one hand she clutched a book, one of the many she was devouring at the time, on her shoulder hung a simple brown bag containing her life. Her heeled boots clicked on the pavement as she passed him... the first time. It was like a scene from a movie. He looked up just as she glanced over. Their eyes locked for a second. That was all it took. One short passing of time, and their worlds had ended. Then she broke the stare, continuing down the path, and their worlds began again.

She had spent the morning flipping through pages in the library and, as it was then noon, she had

decided to treat herself to lunch. He had been bored all day, watching the passerby's and tourists go about another mundane Sunday. Then she walked by, and he let her go the first time. She had ordered lunch, eating it outside on one of those rusting benches, by a gentle river, under the welcoming shade of an old willow tree, where she read another few pages of her latest book. When she finished her food, she made her way back up the concrete steps to the gravel walk where he was, waiting behind the counter of a food stand, watching for her. She had planned on passing by, on acting like the moment they shared earlier had not existed, but he was determined to mess with her plan.

He called her first, "Miss!" "That didn't take you long," he smiled referring to the short break she had just entertained.

"No, it didn't," she responded, continuing up the gravel to the parking lot.

"It's a nice day, isn't it? You should stop by for lunch if you have the time." She had almost made it to the top of the stairs.

"Maybe I will" smiling back she turned the bend and opened the door to her car.

She had laughed at herself. Why had she expected that? She knew she was beautiful, knew how entertaining the sight of her, despondent and dazed in the hot air must have looked. So then why had she been surprised? It certainly wasn't the first time something like that had ever happened, nor would it be the last.

She was driving away, reversing out of her spot, pulling into the stream of traffic, pressing on the accelerator, then there he was. She had slammed on the breaks. The car had jolted to a halt. She had knowingly rolled down her window and he had made his way closer to her.

"Hi," he had said leaning on the frame of the side doors' window. "I don't mean to be a creep or anything, but I think you're beautiful and I was hoping I could take you out to dinner sometime."

He handed her a card with his number scrolled on the front. She took it, internally laughing. Hadn't she expected this? But still, she couldn't believe it was real. A movie scene, not playing out in her head, but instead being acted out in reality.

"Thanks, maybe you can sometime."

"I'm Wesley, by the way." He slapped the side of her car with his hands in the way that boys do and began backing away from the car so that she could drive off.

"I'm Amelia."

### *Seeing Pain.*

"I think I'm fucked up." The most real thing she had ever said. At 17 she knew it; was sure she'd die for it.

"Why?" he had questioned, concerned with that dark look in her eyes. The swell of sweet colors turned black.

"Because I revel in it. I love the power and control of ruining someone. I get off on manipulation. I do that thing with my eyes, and I get people to fall for the way I pronounce their names and the way I laugh and smile and play along, dancing around their pretty little flammable hearts with a match. I can't help myself. It's like they're all out there, ready for the taking. It's something about those pretty little hearts, they love pretty little lies. And that's the one thing I've always been good at; lying."

He had been silent. She had looked over at him, on the verge of tears. Her eyes had been so dark. Her heart had been so dark.

"Does that scare you?" She hadn't moved. There was a long pause. He had said nothing. There was only the quickening and release of breaths, the shallow beating of two incandescently broken hearts.

"No," he finally sighed. He had walked across the room to where she sat on the bed. Her fragile figure made a small indent on the cover. He had knelt

below her feet, bringing his tall figure to her level. "I think it scares you more than it scares me," he had whispered as he pulled her balled fists into his. Her eyes had asked him questions, he knew the answers. "It scares you because you know that you're fucked up and you don't know if you're all right with being flawed. It doesn't scare me because I always knew you were flawed, but that was my favorite part."

"I guess that makes you pretty fucked up too."

"I guess we're more alike than you think."

*A Novelty.*

They had been sitting in the basement laughing at some game of pool. She was losing, as usual, but she wore a grin like it was her weapon. She had never cared much for the game, but she liked the way he looked when he concentrated. Liked the way she could toy with his mind, break his focus, and make him miss. She could have run circles around him if she gave a damn, but the game was never why she played. They were talking, simple words, what he would go back and change if he could. They were real in that moment. Uncharacteristically and utterly themselves.

She had just made a shot and, pulling back, she had raised her eyes just slightly meeting his across the table. They caught again; in the same way, they had hundreds of times...unwritten, unspoken words wavering on lips. What would she say, what could she say? What did he want? There was a moment, a slight pause, a quick breath.

"God, I wish you were 18," he had whispered. He never knew if she heard it, she kept on making her way around the table, examining her options, biting her lip. But she had heard. She heard everything he said, even the things he didn't say. She knew that he wanted her, she had played her cards just right to make sure that he did but she was terrified. Not of him wanting her and taking her but of him having her and leaving her. She was a novelty...a beautiful,

delicate, fantasy he could never have. That was her intrigue. Of course, she could hold a conversation, she was daring, brilliant, witty, she had her eyes, she had her smile, and that voice and that laugh she had perfected when she was just a child, but it wasn't enough. It had never been enough. She could alter the world and it would not guarantee he would stay. He had made her a promise telling her he could have her, would have her, sealing it with a kiss. But his having her came with conditions, she had to keep her mouth shut, which broke her heart, and she couldn't fall involved with him, the words that would end her. She had been a fantasy, glinting in the distance, white, pure, innocent. Now she was something he would have, she was a reality, and the worst part was, she knew reality was boring. But still, she agreed. The game had changed. She was no longer playing to have him; she was playing to keep him. She knew she shouldn't. She was worth so much more than fighting for him, but she didn't want to lose.

He had always thought she loved the game because it kept things interesting, and enticing, and that was part of it, sure, but she loved the game because it gave her hope. This golden toy that snapped far too easily only to be sent back, repaired, and then broken again. He had once asked her what she wanted. She had played coy, ignoring the question, pretending he didn't matter enough for her to have thought of an answer. But she had an answer. She always had an answer. "I want you. I want everything. I want you to worship at my altar and for me to be helplessly in love with you. I want you to want me for me and not for what you can do with me. I want to make you feel like you're the only thing I have ever cared about, and I want to feel that too. I want everything with you... I want all of you." But she wouldn't have him. He had made sure of that. He had told her clearly. Outlined the terms and conditions. He did not want to love her, he just wanted to fuck her. And that was somehow worse

than not having him at all.

*You Smiled.*

He had asked what she was doing, she had told him she was playing the piano. He told her she made him smile. She walked upstairs then, tears swelling in her eyes. She had laid on her un-slept bed, balling herself up until it didn't hurt anymore and then she had let the tears fall as All Too Well hummed in the background. She hated it. Hated the fact that she could see how this would end. In three weeks or six months, it didn't matter how long, she would end up on her bed, bawling her eyes out to her favorite song and thinking about him. She had made him smile but he made her happy. She didn't feel it now, but she knew she would. She knew, from the illumination of four little words on her phone, that she could fall in love with him. And she hated that because she knew how it would end. How it had always ended. And she didn't want to feel that heartbreak, however far in the future, again. She didn't want to love him just to lose him, but she knew she would anyway, because what else are you supposed to do when a boy tells you you're the reason they smiled?

*Lips and Skin.*

There's a mark on her chest from where he had kissed her. In two weeks that mark will be gone... faded with the turning skin. But, in two weeks her memory will still be of him, his lips pressed against the curve of her skin. His lips parted to come together so close to her shaking skeleton. In two weeks, she'll still have the memory of waking up in his arms. Of rolling over against the strain of the sheets to peer at his face from under the covers. To watch the way his eyes fluttered a little when he dreamed. To see the way his chest rose and fell as his lips parted slightly, sucking in air. To see him open

his eyes to her and smile. Because just like she did... he knew she was in his arms...so unbearably close to being home. But somehow, she knew she'd never reach it. Never make him feel the way she wrote him. In two weeks, she will still remember all of this...but in two weeks it won't matter...in two weeks he'll be gone.

*Everything.*

It is said that everything can begin and end in a single moment. The fluttering of eyes as they pass by another's the magnetic pull of a curve of a lip into a smile. Everything can begin and end in a single moment because that's what it feels like. You're caught in a whirlwind spiral from the beginning chime of a single laugh to the roll of a single tear in the end. It all happens so fast. You never ever have enough time. It's impossible...the thought that something so strong can begin and in a single moment, to the sound of two single heartbeats. If there was one thing, she'd change about that saying it would be the end. Because she and him...they neither began nor ended in a single moment. They began and ended as simply as that, all with eyes. After all, everything begins and ends with eyes... doesn't it?

*Scent.*

She had woken to the smell of him. He wasn't there but she could still smell him on the sheets... lingering there from the night before. And all of a sudden it had hit her how much she'd miss him. How much she was going to.

*Drowning.*

They were lying in his room. The light from behind the curtains had danced across the walls. It made it seem as if they were underwater. Slowly

sinking, trapped under the weight of everything they weren't saying to each other. She had broken the silence. She had lifted her head from where it had been resting in that perfect spot, hooked under his neck. She smiled at him; eyes bright like a little child looking up. She made him put his hands on his ears and close his eyes, laughing so he wouldn't be suspicious. Just when she was sure he wouldn't know, she had whispered "I love you" into the silence. She had thought he wasn't listening; thought he hadn't heard. It was barely more than a whisper, but he had lied. He had heard. He told her the next day he had heard it. It came out when he was trying to stop her from saying it to his face. He had stood there and said, "don't complicate this, I heard what you said last night and I'm begging you please don't tell me." He had tried to convince her that she didn't feel that way. That it was just some childish crush that had made her lustful...not in love. That should have been a red flag to her, should have made her pack up her things and head for the hills, but all she could say back was "you didn't tell me to roll over and plug my ears and shut my eyes. You didn't let me hold mine just a crack away so that I could hear you say I love you too." So, she could hear him feel the same thing. And it was true, he didn't say it. He had never even asked. And when she told him that she loved him, he told her not to. She told him all of that, all the things he should have said when one tells you they love you, and then he left the room. And there she was, sitting in the dark and the cold, drowning under the lights, and wondering why she loved him in the first place.

*In the End.*

He turned 21 and was supposed to leave her life. He had told her, warned her time and time again that he would turn a day older, and she would no longer belong to him. She had been distraught, fighting for him to stay. Thinking if only she loved

him harder, did more for him, was more for him, he would stay. He has toyed with her mind, stringing her along, as if he loved to watch her breakdown for him, loved to see her in pain and know he was the one that caused it. He had been broken before by people in the past and she supposed he carried it with him, baggage, tied up in a pretty little bow for others to unpack and deal with. And so, they didn't say goodbye like they were supposed to. They didn't say goodbye at all. He'd promised her this whole time that he was leaving, and she prepared to be heartbroken, lonely, and crying on the floor, but he showed up on his 21st, he kissed her lips, and stayed the night. And she knew that no matter how much he said it, no matter how much he fought it, he wasn't going to leave. It felt too real for him to leave. So, the next morning she drove him home and it didn't hurt, and she didn't want to cry, and the tears didn't fall. Because driving him home wasn't driving him away from her, driving him home was just driving him home. And for the first time, it felt okay. It felt like it would be uncomplicated, back to the way it was when they first met, back to the way it was before she cared. It was windy and she walked him up to his front door, sun streaming through, hitting her eyes. It was like that perfect moment in the movies, he had reached for her, pulled her in, and held her there, peering at her face as if she was going to stay forever. Then he had kissed her and all of a sudden, the wind had picked up, fallen leaves dancing around in the distance, fluttering like butterflies on the first night. They were back to where they began in the beginning when she didn't know him and he didn't know her...and although they were back to uncomplicated, they were also back to before...when she didn't love him.

It took her forever to understand what everyone had been telling her from the beginning. That it was always about him and never about her. That everything they did, they did for him, to make him feel better, to accommodate him. And, in the end,

she was so afraid of being alone, so desperate not to lose him, that she lost herself. She turned into him. Made up for everything that he wasn't. Always doubting that she was enough for him when she should have been questioning if he was enough for her. It had all spent time in her brain, pushed there in the back, bubbling up until he didn't leave her. Until the worst thing that could have happened didn't and she no longer had anything to fight for. He had always told her that she loved games, but he had been pulling strings all along.

So, in the end, he was not the one that left, she

did. She came back from Montana, and he said they needed to talk, that yet again, he needed to put himself first. And that was the end. You could see the light go out in her eyes, the love go out in her touch. She was no longer his and the room could feel it when she walked in. And that was how it ended. With eyes. She thought it would be two brown eyes leaving her, but in the end, it was two green eyes and a smile walking away. The only part that ended up coming true: everything begins and ends with eyes.