

She felt her gaze narrow as she looked at her counterpart, his warm honey eyes filled with secrets. He looks back at her with a feeling that she couldn't distinguish, *you remind me of cinnamon*. He stared back with glossed eyes, a coolness ran through his veins that gave him pleasant shivers, he felt as though she was made of glass - like a delicate porcelain. *You remind me of cider; then*. She smiled. *That's cheating, you're stealing my flow*. He perked up at the comment, feeling a sense of wonder at how seamlessly she could use the slang he taught her so recently, *Cider doesn't have to have cinnamon in it*. He pauses for a minute, thinking pensively, *also it's warm, and it reminds me of home*. This caught her attention, she felt a sensation run through her body- something familiar, like she knew he would say that. His hair was tussling in the morning wind, it looked like small dancing creatures she would think about hours later late at night in bed. *Sometimes you smell really familiar to me and it reminds me of home*. She always felt something different, that her and him would be two humans connecting through some story like quality. He sees a small smile on his face. *It's because I teleport to your house to pet your dog (consistency)*. She knew that he was saying this in a bitter-sweet way, her family at home had no idea who this boy was, and her dog in a similar fashion would be equally unfamiliar with his presence. Yet sometimes she thought of a different life, where he would be closer than across the coast over the summers, where he would live in the small town that she grew up in and knew the ins and outs of her little life. But in the same way, she keeps thinking that it was meant to be that they met out of pure and strange coincidence in a small college-town. That it was by a universal conviction that the ways they grew up were all leading up to how they met, and how they met was made up by the small elements of their secret lives they lead in their hometowns. She felt herself thinking over and over in circles but could only muster up some small nonchalant answer. *Interesting, interesting*. They both feel a silence blanket over them. They stay there a while, looking around the park, thinking.

In the dorm room that they both have become warm and familiar with, they lie on her bed facing up, staring at the little plastic stars she put on her ceiling. The dull yellow-green glow reminds her of her bedroom at home. They lie for a while, feeling each other's heartbeats and the slight grumbles of the others' stomachs in the silence. Turning to face him, she looks at the curvature of his cheeks, and thinks it's a bit unfair how nicely his cheekbones are raised. She fixates, staring at him for a moment while his eyelids lul to a close. His eyebags are slight, but

she finds them endearing- they're his body revealing the countless late nights they have spent together and the stress of having to continuously work at the deli. He sometimes visits her on one of his (countless) shifts, smelling of rosemary and bread. She whispers, *Sometimes I think you're not real.* Groggily, his eyes begin to flutter open, *Why.* She observes his sharp eyes, something she's found to adore- the almond shape that turns to a sharp pointed corner near his nose bridge- it gives the most dangerous and comforting feeling. *You're too perfect; it's like you came out of a book.* He holds her closer, breathing in the light smell of her hair. He hides in the crook of her neck, as though only she could protect him from the imaginary plights that could come about any second. He mumbles, *You should talk.* He begins to trace small shapes on her shoulders and traces down to her arms. Small squiggles of nothings that only he could understand, and only she could feel. He yawns a bit, and continues to speak in a low staccato voice, *But I know you're just what I need - if you weren't real I would explode.* She holds his head closer, feeling the warm breathing on her neck. She feels herself having almost no cohesive words- nothing that flows to her for her to express the alien feeling in her stomach that his words brought to her. She lies there for a while, counting the inhaled and exhaled of his breath, and the slight warmth of his cheeks. She reaches for the back of his head, twirling his dark curls around her index finger. *I think that you make my brain want to say things and I have no idea how to explain them so I sorta end up with a bunch of colors I can't describe.* Breathing slightly quicker, she feels him melt slightly down into her comforter, and in turn, into her.

*I love you?*

*I love you too.*

They lie there a while, with the small breeze from the open window hugging them like a familiar friend. Their breathing syncs, and so do their heartbeats- the slight thumping being felt on both their chests as if they were pounding to reach each other. He shuffles his feet, and she adjusts her hair to go over his arms. His eyes trace the curves of her cheeks, dusted with constellations of freckles. How the light pink flush that always goes over her nose when the weather cools, and her warm soft hands holding the back of neck and tracing circles on his left hand. A moment passes, in soft silence, and it breaks with the faint sound of his voice. *How do you say I love you in colors?* She closes her eyes, as if to tell him that she's in a deep thought. She opens her eyes and points to the dull glow of the plastic stars above. The yellow-green hue leaves a small glowing ring around the white dorm room ceiling. *Kinda like that I imagine.* Doing the same

eye-closing-thought motion, he kisses her forehead and rests his chin atop her head. *It Looks like cinnamon in cider.*

The lakeside was illuminated by the warm golden hues of the evening light, rays dancing on the surface of the water's edge. The crickets were buzzing in the background, the birds were fluttering around the trees, and the rabbits and deer were stumbling along in the hidden canopies of the forest. He felt serene, an unusual peacefulness he only felt with her and the beaches of his west-coast home. Playing with the ends of her tasseled jacket, he looks to her small notebook that she takes with her whenever they go somewhere quiet. She draws and writes and sticks all sorts of things she finds in that book, and he finds the whole thing innocent in a sweet way. In the leatherbound pages, he sees her draw a small calf with 2 heads and four large eyes. *Why are you thinking about a baby cow with 4 eyes?* Without looking up from her page she explains to him, *I think it's because if our love was a thing it would be a small calf with four times the amount of enthrallment in the world to give.* He hears the light scribbles of the pen go slightly slower, knowing she's nearly done with her sketch. He thinks everything she makes is something worth keeping, and in turn, she doesn't mind ripping out the pages for him to keep. He looks to her, smiling softly at how she sticks her tongue out when she concentrates a little too hard, *That's a whole 4 heads.* She looks up to him, tearing her eyes away from her (in her opinion) half-assed drawing. He leans down closer to look at her drawing, tracing the thick blue marks on the lined pages, *So we win basically.* She shrugs in a fake coolness, imitating the ironic tone they tend to take, *Basically.* Still tracing the rough edges of her paper, she takes her hand atop of his. He looks to her again, with the warm sensation of butterflies crawling up his throat. His head feels light, like there was too much helium pumped in his head. His head feels funny in a light familiar sense. Whispering slightly he puts their hands in a lock, *I'm definitely enthralled.* She squeezes her hand in his, *I definitely am too.*

Sounds of steam and dripping coffee surround the young couple in the local coffeehouse. The familiar rich scent swirls around, the Sunday crowd's atmosphere holding a tight and tender air. The barista yells the boy's name, repeating the order of a dirty chais (with oat milk for the girl's weak stomach) and a drip coffee. Carefully taking both mugs, he heads back to the small corner booth that they both became acquainted with. With a thankful smile, she closes her laptop

and sets aside her pen and notebook. It was one of the typical evenings for the both of them, attempting to get some work done in an area other than a dorm room or library that gives her cabin fever and him claustrophobia. Yes, the local caffeine sanctuary is one of few places that's quiet enough from the bustling life of a college town, allowing for the most quintessential of study spots. She sips her drink, feeling a warm burst of relief from the cinnamon and sweet oat milk. She allows herself the break from her studies to feel the tension built up from her work slowly dissipate with each sip. He scoots closer to her on the booth, feeling her soft skin press against his. He sips his black coffee, trying to drink slowly to match the pace she usually takes. He tends to slow down for her, and in doing so, feels the effects of food and drink in a more relaxed way than before. Compared to his haste to fulfill his hunger and thirst, he's learned to feel the flavors of each ingredient on his tongue, and although he won't say it, he thanks her for this. He looks over to her, flipping her ring between her thin fingers, *Does cinnamon remind you of home.* She looks down at her drink for a moment, and thinks back on her days at home making cinnamon challah with her mom and teasing her father for not liking the flavor. *I think it reminds me of the comfort I get from foods with cinnamon- I used to make cinnamon buns at home...* She sips her chai once more, letting it sit in her mouth a little while until the flavor dissipates. She swallows, *and it always makes me feel kinda little and you give me the same feeling in my stomach.* He kisses her cheek lightly, ruffling part of her hair against his cheek. *I love that.* They sit for a while, staring out the window while the soft nothings of the local shop embrace them in the warm setting sun.

The boy was making her a small dinner before they would sleep soundly at his place. The warmth of jazz piano emanates from his phone as he chops slices away at the groups of peppers and onions before him. Sizzling chicken gives the air a fuzzy look, while the condensation on the microwave forms into small dew drops. She's laying on the carpet floor, lazily looking at the muted tv before her. Gazing at her partner, she finds his enjoyment in the kitchen endearing. He always keeps a small towel on his left shoulder, a presumably force of habit from clumsily burning himself or making spills, that gives him a cartoonish quality. She turns to her side to look at him more, and wonders about his life apart from the small town that she fell for him within. The confines of his life were still somewhat mysterious, almost a secret that she wanted to share with him but enjoyed having hidden from her at the same time. *Would*

*you say California will always be your home?* He finishes putting his chopped veggies in the sizzling pan, and looks at her for a moment. He turns back to his dish, making sure nothing burns or bubbles over, *Definitely not, sometimes I hope it will be though.* She understands the feeling, Florida was not much different in that regard. The smell of rain in the early mornings, the somewhat film-like quality that surrounds her in the essence of her small hometown, the feeling of absolute understanding of where she is- all of it feels like something that he would feel as well. Even if it isn't the way she lived, she knows it can be the way he feels, *Do you picture yourself someplace else in the future.* He smiles from behind the wall that lies between them, feeling a bubbling nervousness when he speaks his answer slowly. Lifting the pan from the electric stove he's learned to tolerate and not completely loathe (though he always claims the burner stoves give a smokier feeling to his meat) he calmly speaks, *I picture myself staying with someone just like you,* he places the freshly cooked chicken and veggies on two plates alongside some rice he prepared before, *that's home - it's a scent and a feeling in your stomach and bewilderment and a taste.* She feels a rumbling in her stomach, and she's not sure if it's the scent of the cooking or the excitement of his words. Slowly lifting to get up to him, she finds that he's already right in front of her, with a plate in either hand. She feels herself get excited at the sight of her two favorite things- him and a fresh dish of food. She sits upright, and takes the plate from him with the shyness of a hungry child. Before she bites, she tugs him down to sit next to her. *I feel at home when we kiss,* she takes a bite and explains while chewing, *and I feel a kind of bubbling whenever I see you doing something like cooking or reading that makes me want to spend a long time with you.* He doesn't know it, but the same rumbling she felt would occur in him as well. He pushes the peppers and onions into his rice while he tenderly tells her how he feels. *I noticed that feeling too watching you read it makes my heart warm.* They both lift their eyes from their plates to look towards each other, feeling the signature warm and fuzzy feelings that always arise when they admire each other's eyes. She leans her head on his shoulder, enjoying the meal that he tenderly prepared. She never thought that love could be tasted in a meal before she met him, but that's just because she never had his food. She looks to him with this sentiment in mind, *I know that I like the simple domestic things in life, and you embody it in a way that brings me a lot of comfort.* She pushes herself deeper into the warmth of his shoulder turning her head to muffle her speech, she speaks into his shirt, *You're everything.*

There is something that, fundamentally, they both could feel in that moment. A deep seeded universal truth that aligned them. He puts an arm around her, feeling her small body beneath him. *I know that I haven't had to think around you to know how I feel deep in my brain.* He feels safe around her, that he can be the most himself he can be, even compared to being alone. *It feels like you were always going to be everything and more.* He feels her everything-ness alongside his own. It's a strange and wonderful thing. *Is that crazy?* She knows that it absolutely is not crazy, because all the words he says are spoken truths that echo in her head from the moment she wakes to the second he lies her head to bed. *I think we're both equally as into that very idea that it cancels out and that we both are meant to be.* She scoops rice on her fork and takes a bite, remembering the first time that she tried to make dinner with him. Even though they are the same age, she feels younger than him for a multitude of things. His knowledge of the kitchen is no exception, but every time she attempts to help he does nothing but make her feel like she was perfect at what she did. Including her soggy rice that couldn't compare to the grain on her fork right at that moment, ... *as a fact and not a thought or opinion - I want to be with you and not leave your side and I would say lots of poetic things,* she breathes for a moment, feeling herself pour feelings quickly and rapidly- he doesn't mind the urgency- she slows for a moment. Breathing in all the air she can and exhaling, she slowly explains, *but all of it really simply is a way of me needing you.* He feels a flutter in his chest, and knows that this is the exact thing he needed to hear, and he hardly even realized it, *I know, I'm the same...this feels like more than words.* He looks down at her to see her tugging a bit at the carpet, and he slowly reaches to pet her head softly. He knows that it calms her, eases her in a way that gives all the admiration for her through a simple touch. *I think it's why you draw colors before anything else and why you talk about souls and shapes.* She loves to think of the shape of his soul and hers, mixing and combining in hypnotic ways. He expressed the colors of their souls, the seamless orange and yellow hues that come to mind when they are together. She leans closer to him, placing her finished plate in front of her. She puts her hand along his thigh, letting the warmth of his leg emanate through her hand. She softly says, *They embody what my words or my actions can't describe- our love seems like a natural form and it can't be placed in the confine of a word.* He places his plate in front of him as well, and positions himself so he can now give her a great bear hug from behind. He whispers softly from behind her head into her ear, a practice he does only

when the words he wants to say are the truest they can possibly be, *Then I feel like I don't even have to say anything else, I know exactly how sweet you feel right now.*