

Captain & the Scientist

I pretended to not notice the ledges cage themselves around my ankles. A summoning sea bluff and a lighthouse turned into a home of white with black shutters under a silver fog. I heard him once. A coffee mug shattering on the wooden floor as his clairaudience hummed my name in the center soul of his chest. I heard him once. A single, panicked time, his distinct cheekbones and a headstrong manner howling my name as I slept. I could hear the distant echo of his boots pounding through the dense mud and down the crooked, ruddy stone steps that carried me away to the coastline.

His hair was a remnant of dusty morning sun, August embers. Daily, his woodland ghost hung itself from the maple trees until the gossamery branches would shake the corpses off. He crushed their stories page by page, speaking in poetry with his footsteps. Reality was no match for the scent of pine and bourbon that lurked on his tongue; sharing with me his appetite and the lascivious prose he wrote with his crooked, British teeth. His songs never stopped playing in my head, and I could feel the vibrations of his soulful lullabies reverberating through my temporal lobe, moving down into my lungs, and sneaking out of my mouth in search of air to give them life.

Why don't you love me? He whispered as he found me alone, his voice cracking under the weight of his own ego.

My body was washed up again on shore, sprawled across the sand and pebbles; my hair briny and tangled. I felt the pressure of freedom clamoring against my lungs as he leaned in, so clever, skimming his hands with reason and greed against my stomach. He clawed at me in his hunger and swallowed my tongue with his thirst. The passion in his kiss was often mistaken for desperation, but for him the two were synonymous; like flowers need to be blossomed by the sun. I was always the flower to him and he hated when I over watered myself.

He insisted he was the sun.

6 a.m. under the coral dawn. *I can't escape*, my thoughts silently spilled. Six. Six times...and still, Death will not have me. For a moment I felt disappointment but then a gush of bitter wind sailed up my body from my toenails to my hair follicles, and I saw outside myself and felt accomplishment in my failures. Six times?...and still, Death will not have me? All at once I realized this isn't because I'm too weak...it's because the universe is too strong.

He continued to hover over me, staring at me with longing and a nervous reverence. My bony hands like broken porcelain reached up to burn themselves in his golden wildfire. I am here. This is existence and my time is not an artifact. My insatiable autumn, my peach

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trees, my comfortable sleep with an old man of feral history - and both his skinned knees. His flesh is nostalgia.

You will always wash up onto this shore because you belong to me and not the sea. Not the rivers or lakes. You are mine. Endlessly, ferociously, tiringly—until I've stolen your final breath with my lips to keep safe in my lungs until your infinite but bounded soul is born new, and then...then I will find you again. To the sea, you are a shadow, an echo of my voice howling as sick as a dog in heat...and in love. Because you belong to me and not the sea. You are mine, and more than that, I am yours.

I allowed his body to sink into mine, collapsing his freckled arms and chipmunk nose closer against my dampened skin. His fluttering eyelashes felt like sea spray against my ear; every breath crept into my soul like a congregational chorus—and he is true north.

The last of the saltwater drained itself from my chest and trickled down my neck. One of his palms mauled a lone thigh as his ragged jaw opened itself up with its drunken wolf teeth and took a bite out of my chin. *Please stay* I heard him whimper, *I fought the universe to find you.*

I rolled myself onto my stomach and pushed my frozen body onto unsteady feet. My legs felt like crashing waves as I struggled to walk towards the path to the lighthouse. I turned myself towards him as he sat in puddles of foamy grey water, his crystal eyes reflecting off the surf. I was incapable of finding the memory that would allow me to breathe and walk simultaneously, so my knees gave out every time my lips parted to inhale. *Carry me back.*

My body disobeyed gravity as he swept me into his arms, removing seaweed from my hair with his nimble fingers. *Close your eyes* he urged softly as I burrowed my drowsy judgments into his neck. He let loose his legs in homeless vacillation, nursing widows and statictics, speaking in poetry with his footsteps.