

Frozen Smoke

Harrison Potts

You always said there was something magical about the first snowfall. You'd press your nose against the frosty window, eyes wide, watching the world transform into a pristine canvas of white. I remember the warmth of your breath fogging the glass.

I still see you in the snowflakes, each one a subtle recollection drifting through the cold air. The night you left, it snowed. It was like the sky was weeping, tears crystallizing into tiny fragments of sorrow. I stood there beneath the streetlamp's glow, the flakes catching the light, creating a halo around me.

We used to walk down the cobblestone streets during those times, our footprints a temporary testament to our journey together. We would become long shadows under the glow, and we'd pretend we were the only souls alive in a world asleep. Your hair, dark as the moonless sky, would cascade down your back, a waterfall of midnight against the white of winter. I would wrap my scarf around you, our breath mingling in the freezing air, creating brief ethereal clouds.

I see the scarf now, draped over the chair where you used to sit. Each time I touch it, I try to grasp something intangible, something just out of reach. It still carries your scent, faint but lingering, like the memory of a distant melody that holds after the music has stopped.

We used to talk about dreams and places we'd

go and things we'd see. You had this way of making the world seem full of possibilities. We'd sit on the park bench, the one by the frozen pond, and you'd lean your head on my shoulder, eyes closed, lost in your reverie. The ice would reflect any tiny star that could pierce the clouds, a mirror of the sky. In those moments, I believed everything you said about the future.

Now, the pond is just a frozen body of water, cold and unyielding. The bench is empty when I walk by, save for the dusting that settles on it. I don't dare to sit.

I replay that one night over and over in my mind, each detail etched into me like a carving in marble. The way your eyes sparkled, the warmth of your hand in mine, the sound of your voice in the soft crunch of snow underfoot as you said those three words "I love you."

But time is an honorless criminal, and the more I try to hold onto these moments, the more they slip away.

The day you left, it was snowing, the sky a tumultuous swirl. I stood there at the pond for hours, the cold giving me a million paper cuts, waiting for you. Eventually I went home with my lips turning blue.

They found your car the next morning, a misshapen ball hidden beneath the fresh blanket of white: the metal charred, the smoke long gone. The cause was never really decided. The ice? The

darkness? I visit the spot sometimes, a small clearing by the road where the trees stand as silent witnesses. There are no answers there.

I leave flowers, white lilies, your favorite. They look otherworldly against the aridity of the ground. I kneel there, the persistent March chill biting my skin, and whisper things that I hope you can hear. The grating wind responds, a mournful wail that carries my words into the void.

I see your face in the snowflakes whenever they

fall. And whenever they stick. The first snowfall will come again, in time. And again. An eternal recurrence of grief.

You always said there was something magical about it. But there was never magic in the snow. There was magic in the way you saw it. Now the flakes will never be observed by your eyes again, the magic is *gone* with you, and my footprints will be made alone.