

Memories

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Mornings weren't kind to me anymore.

I woke up late in the afternoon for the fourteenth consecutive day today. The air reeked of your old clothes and perfume and I regretted smashing the perfume bottle on the mattress for the umpteenth time. As awfully easy as it was to fall asleep to your scent, a little part of me died every time I woke up and found you were not there next to me. And besides, I was used to waking up to a kiss on my forehead and a coffee mug on the nightstand and it'd been a while since that happened.

Your coffee mug rested on the windowsill right where you left it a fortnight ago. I hadn't had the strength to move it an inch. I didn't even plan to. I lay in bed and stared at it every day, wondering what must have gone through your mind while you leaned against the wall, looked outside at the sleepy, foggy neighbourhood and sipped your coffee that morning. I wondered if you had taken a moment to look at me sleeping peacefully, oblivious of what you were about to do to me.

I woke up at around 12 o'clock that day to emptiness on the right side of the bed and your porcelain mug on the windowsill. I found myself at a short of breath as the eerie silence weighed down on me. Something about the way the sunlight seeped into the room through the translucent, yellow curtains, the way the second hand of the clock ticked, the way the door to the closet was partly open and the nightstand was empty didn't seem right.

The mattress felt soft underneath my feet. I hurried out of bed and out of the room into the empty corridor. As I made my way towards the kitchen. Every other article in this house, bore in it the memories of every single day we had spent in this house for the last fifteen years. You had picked the mattress out yourself, like you had picked out the curtains, the china and the paintings. We worked on this house for a good two months, ensuring it was exactly the way we had imagined it to be. A little bit of peace, a little silence and a lot of love—that was all we ever wanted inside these walls. And yet, I loathed the silence that afternoon.

When I finally made it to the kitchen, I looked around and found a note taped to the refrigerator door. I had expected it to be like all those little notes you left every once in a while to surprise me. Sometimes there would be a poem, sometimes a love song or a memory we both cherished but boy, was I wrong this time.

I didn't know how long I sat on the floor with the note in my hand. When I finally snapped out of my trance, it was dark outside and my legs ached as if they had been hit repeatedly. I tried getting up but my knees gave in and I slumped back on the floor. I stayed like that for a while, rubbing my ankles before attempting to get back on my feet again and when I finally did, I left the kitchen and went

to the living room.

I placed the note on the centre table and took a seat on the sofa. I realised I hadn't eaten the entire day or taken a shower but your words had drained every single bit of energy and strength I had in me. I turned on the stereo and the song we had danced to the first time in college started playing. It was a song about heartbreak, and it never made sense to us before. 'Songs about heartbreak never makes sense when one is in love, you see,' you had said while we swayed to the beat and they never had till now.

Now, as the speakers regurgitated the lyrics, every single word made sense. I picked the note up once again. I had lost count of the number of times I had gone through your words and the number of times I pictured you with another woman since the first time I read it. I had stopped trying to track the number of days for which you had been betraying me because my whole marriage would turn out be a lie if I did.

"I met her in the hotel lobby during our honeymoon."

I could hear your voice in the back of my mind. I could hear you say it without an ounce of remorse and I felt myself shatter into a million pieces again and again as I realised that the last fifteen years of us being together meant absolutely...nothing.

I turned the stereo off and walked back to our room. I opened the closet door, expecting it to be empty but your clothes were still there. I guess when you said you wanted to start life anew, you really meant it. I didn't know when it was that I started crying but I found myself pulling your neatly folded shirts out and flinging them on the floor. I ran around the room, smashing photo frames and perfume bottles and screaming at the top of my lungs. I felt so infuriated I thought I would burn the whole house down. I would set ablaze every single memory you had left behind, every single thing you were a part of and then I realised I would have to set my own self on fire if I did that.

These hands, these feet, this face, this skin—every inch of my whole being bore in it memories of you.

My surroundings went blurry and I retreated to bed once again.

And just like that, I spent the last two weeks in

our bed, getting up only when hunger got the best of me or when I needed to go to the bathroom. I lay here, wishing you had given me at least a hint about your parallel universe. When my Cousin Lily thought her husband was cheating on her, she hired a detective for photographic evidence and they spent the last two months of their marriage quarrelling like dogs. I had always pitied Cousin Lily. Now I wished I was her.

I made an attempt to get up this morning and go face the world but when I got out of the sheets, I stepped on the maroon shirt I had gifted you on our last anniversary. I picked it up, held it close to my chest and closed my eyes. For a moment, I felt like this was all just a nightmare and if I just opened my eyes, I would find you right next to me.

I opened my eyes to find emptiness and your coffee mug on the windowsill. I put on the shirt and slipped in between the sheets again.

I wasn't getting up anytime soon.

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