

COLORS OF IMAGINATION

MASHIYAT NAYEEM

I stared at the white stretch of canvas, so empty and bare
Ready to be splattered with bright colors layer by layer
I pictured his face, so innocent yet full of life,
painted on the cotton base with my rusty palette knife
The first thing I painted was his radiant skin;
The color of cinnamon stirred in warm milk
I struggled to fake that jaw so lean and glowy like lustrous silk
I mixed and mixed on hours at end, Copper, rust and brown,
to set the tousled waves and bends if the most beautiful hair in town
I swirled my brush in my palette's tiniest chamber,
in greens so vivid and lush and enchanting amber
To capture the gaze that first set my heart ablaze
But alas, why's his smile so sad?
Why is it that his gaze held nothing but a lie?
I tell myself the lighting's just had
But he's forever only in my mind's eye



FROM JOEY'S ROOFTOP

RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

You know, sometimes when I close my eyes really hard, I can still see the excitement in Toby's eyes as he told us about the girl he had just met at the mall. He would flap his hands like a little kid and tell us over and over about how this girl got all the jokes we never did, how she listened to that same obscure band he was crazy about. I don't remember what came of Toby and the girl but I did hear a few years ago that Toby died of some kind of heart disease over in an old home in Montana. I bet he missed Joey's rooftop towards the end. He must have.

When I sit on my lonely front porch during sunsets I remember Clarisse joining us after we had all already arrived. She would always look stumped in her worn out formals. She was the first among us to get a proper job but she only had one good suit so she wore the same one every day. She had had to quit her writing dreams to pay off her dad's hospital bills. She would laugh over her ice tea and tell us how someday she would write about her tribulations. Trust me, I've stopped my car at a thousand book stores and asked about a new author named Clarisse McClellan throughout my life. Never had any luck.

When my nurse, this really pleasant woman in her mid thirties, feeds me my dinner, you know who I really miss? Joey.



He was such a nice host. You'd think someone would get mad at having people over at his roof almost every other day. But I don't ever remember him complaining. He'd always have a barbecue and a mini fridge up there, ready to roll us some

food. I wonder how he managed to afford it all the time, that fridge was never empty. Do you remember how he would always get upset as the hours rolled by and it was time for us to leave? He must have been real lonely in that big old

house of his. He got that from his father, no? I always dreamed of owning a place like that, never managed to. I guess it was better that I didn't.

You know what I miss the most though? I debated telling you because if you didn't miss it too then I would appear needy again, as you always said I was. But I figured there wasn't much of a point being so indecisive now. So I'll tell you. I miss how you would gently place your fingers on mine while we sat at that bench. It was an unspoken thing we did but I think we did it every day. The conversations would carry on as they normally would between everyone there. But the two of us, we shared our own little secret with our hands. Thinking back now, I realise merely fiddling each other's hands isn't anything at all. But it felt infinitely intimate, more than any kiss we had, trust me. I think you know what I mean. You always did.

I wonder if you ever shared secrets like that with anyone else after that. You must have, there will have been thousands out there more than willing to share secrets with you. I wonder if all of them held on to your little secrets like I have.

The places and the faces have been nice, haven't they? Yes. They've been very nice. Am I just a face in your book? In mine you feel like a face and a place, I don't know what I'm saying. My words get all jumbled these days.