



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

STILL GREEN

SHAIRA MIRZA

A late summer in June,
Sticky afternoon as cars whizz past.
The sun burns a familiar orange as I close my eyes and reminisce.

At a quarter past three,
The rays of the sun still dance on the bedroom floor.
I huff and puff against the mother's chest
As she sleeps easy.
Yet sleep fails to find me for all the thousand pats on my back
And afternoons remain my most hated time of day.

I try to recall
When it all went wrong,
When I concluded I was brave.

I'd stacked myself up in bricks
And at long last,
Looked after the injured bird within.
Fidgety but feisty
Jittery with repressed rage.

I'm on the precipice of doing immense wrong.
I am full and empty, fed and hungered.
I will smash into smithereens my conscience,
An ever-present beckoning.

But the bricks have started to erode.
My anger dissipating as fast it comes
Like water hitting hot steel;
A screech, then vapour.

I now cry in the arms of all that gives me comfort.
Can you forgive all the poison I spewed?
What is a better illusion than when the lover feels more like home?

Your absence feels
Like a buzzing, aching presence.
I'm drowning.
Holding onto the raft you sail upon
But you're content to paddle away.

I guess I'll just have to swim my way.

Hot dusty winds swipe my tears
And I shake from my head all I once held dear.
Nerves hammer gently against my skin
As I cross the road now clear.

A resignation from being your muse

RAYA MEHNAZ

My dearest Merek,

I am writing to you from our barren bed, watching as your shadow moves just outside the room, beyond my reach. I tried not to write it. In fact, my heart is falling apart as I write. Yet I'm afraid if I don't write it now, I will cease to exist.

Do you know that I have come to abhor the silence?

I – a person who is just as proficient in the craft of writing as you – have come to abhor this stifling quietness between us. I used to be able to experience the spectacular quietude just as easily as you. For it was the only company between my scribbled words and I. Now, I abhor it the same way my mother, in her deep slumber, would abhor the shrieking of a door being cracked open.

Mostly, I abhor the silence between us. I abhor the stillness in our conversations when I finish speaking and I have to wait for you to say something. I abhor it when I wait for you to come closer when your sedated steps are the only sound between us. I abhor the tiny hush that falls when you interrupt me to counter an argument. I, helpless to do anything else, succumb to this engulfing veil of soundlessness because it's your turn to speak. I abhor the silence that renders me speechless in your presence.

You often joke in your writings that you found me in the trenches of destiny. You brought a washed-up writer and found enough within her to make her your muse, your only one so far. You tell the story to all your bourgeois friends – who happen to be artists, just like ourselves. Yet, it has been months since any of your friends have said a word to me. They only look through me, their words are empty and dissolve in the air before they can even reach me. For I'm the muse, only there to inspire your masterpieces.

There's only silence from your end when you're supposed to interject that you were supposed to be my muse too. I used to think that I was made to find you one day.

The other half of my artistic soul would never let the silence reside between us. We were meant to fill the world with beautiful words. It wasn't supposed to come to this.

My love, when I fell for you, my world was a dreary hush. A place where no sound could get inside. You came with so much noise that I almost shielded my fragile heart, for it was used to silence for too long. You brought a vibrancy that I never could understand. I could only try to hold on to it, as long as you would let

me. Yet, I think it is destroying me, breaking me from the inside. For months now, I have laid myself bare for all your whimsical melodies, and I am dying because of it.

I die a little inside every time I have to tear away my gaze from you and break the tiniest contact between us because I know that you would eventually be the one to do it. Your indecisiveness and cowardice won't let you hold on to me with respect, or for too long. I have decided to let you go because of it.

I think we could have been happy together if our cacophony of destruction left us be. I think it's better this way. Because I cannot leave my heart open to your dissonance anymore. It is tired of the silence that keeps growing longer and longer every day.

The faint timbre of your voice doesn't soothe me anymore. It reverberates so loud that I cannot hear myself think. I'd rather embrace the silence than let you ruin my quiet heart with your raucousness. I'm afraid if I let you, it will splinter when it inevitably has to go back to the quietude.

So, no matter how much my heart weeps, I can't be your muse anymore. I tried desperately to find a way to reconcile with your negligence. However, it is just as true as my love that can never truly exist if I adapt to your silence. I never doubted your love, anxious as it is. I had hoped that you wouldn't doubt mine.

With love and grief,
Your muse.

