

The Name of the Storm

Someone once asked you if you had ever fallen in love.

Once, you did.

You fell in love with a storm. You fell for a girl with sunset curls that felt like gossamer every time you touched it with your calloused hands. You fell for a girl with grey-blue eyes that gazed at you with such love and adoration that you would be bursting with joy; eyes that lit up and crinkle at the corners when she smiled that beautiful smile; eyes that would sparkle with the stars the ocean reflects back at the sky. From the day your eyes met, you were trapped in her currents, life forever thrown into disarray by the winds of her love.

Once, you fell in love and it was the most fantastic feeling you've ever felt.

You were not loved as a child.

With busy parents and three older siblings--who were much more successful than you could ever hope to be-- you struggled to be heard amongst the masses of 'more important' business that needed to be taken care of. When you were younger, you often wondered how you could be seen. You wanted--craved the attention your family failed to give you. And on one starry night, you decided that instead of pleading for scraps of their attention like a dog, you would demand their attention. They had no say in the matter.

You rebelled. You intentionally flunked your grades, skipped classes, hung out with bad crowds, and came home at ungodly hours in the night with the stench of whiskey and the taste of smoke still lingering like a demon. You were a disgrace to your family...and yet, they barely paid any mind except to give you a disappointing look.

You were the school's notorious Bad Boy. Guys stayed clear from your path, and girls were both attracted and disgusted by you. Sometimes, a girl with stars in her eyes and romance in her soul would approach you with the intent of getting close. You would avoid those girls like the plague. They were severe romantics who spent a second too much time reading a romance novel or watching some cheesy teenage romance film. They wanted to change you. To be the Beauty to your Beast. Those girls wanted to experience a love that they've only heard about between the lines of fiction. You could not give them that. For you never even knew how love Felt.

When you first met Madeline "call-me-Maddie" Williams at college, it was like that french idiom avoir de coup de foudre. To be struck by lightning. She was the first thing you've ever learned to love.

When you met, she had no intention to change you.

Instead, she razed your insecurities to the ground and flooded the walls of your heart with her smile and her love. She did not change you. She just brought out the best in you that was always there--just buried beneath layers of sarcasm, self-deprecation, and addictions.

Forgetting her was never an option. She was special. One of a kind. An anomaly amidst a sea of normalcy.

Her voice was as light and airy as the sea breeze. Her laugh always held a lilting melody to it, as if some god of music decided to weave the essence of music into her voice. You

remember the way she moved. Like a bird that flits this way and that way, never able to keep still for a moment.

You remember what she looked like when you married her. Dressed in ivory silk and looking like one of the angels poets would write sonnets about. You remember what she looked like when she pledged her undying love to you at the altar, and you remember what she looked like every day since then.

You know her more than you know yourself. Every edge and curve, every freckle and scar, you've memorized with crystalline clarity.

You ever remember how she looked in death.

She drowned. Drowned beneath the waves of the ocean she so loved to frolic in. The sea had craved her for their own and pulled her into its dark embrace with currents too strong to escape from. When she surfaced, her hair was splayed about like sunset over water. Like some tragically beautiful Aphrodite emerging from the seafoam.

You stopped feeling after Maddie's death; to the point where you've forced on a smile and acted like the picture perfect definition of a coping husband. They will never know that you couldn't cope with her loss. That you are an experienced actor that can fake through anything. That you can laugh and smile and seem perfectly alright, when you're not.

They don't know anything about you. They don't know that you're a selfish bastard who wants to keep everything good in his life safe and locked away where you would never lose them. You're a possessive idiot who's deathly afraid to form attachments to others because

you're scared they'll end up leaving. And when Maddie died, you were so devastated because the one person you could always count on to be by your side is dead and gone and--

--*god you're a bloody mess, aren't you?* You couldn't handle the void she left in you, so you decided to take up your vices again. You smoke away the sobs that threaten to tear your body apart with cigarettes. You burn away the memories of her with the taste of whiskey scorching down your throat.

In a drunken haze, you would recall your honeymoon in Italy. You both revelled in the Italian sun, basked in the timeless glory of architecture and art, and waltzed beside the shores of the mediterranean sea. She kissed you in every single beautiful spot in Venice, whispered your name with such adoration in Milan, and declared her love for you at every new city that the both of you went to.

The both of you loved Italy so much you decided to move there permanently.

Now, as you walk in the empty streets of Rome, to return to your too big and empty house, you see phantoms of what used to be in the shadows of the looming buildings. Each kiss, each whisper of love, each display of affection, came rushing back with such fierce intensity that you could almost break down into tears and die.

Her death destroyed you beautifully.

She was the storm. Disappearing as quickly as she had appeared. Her absence left behind the crumbling ruins of your fragile heart, trying to pick up the pieces and rebuild something that will never be the same.

There is a reason why storms are named after people.

Now you know.