

*To Pygmalion,*

There is nothing behind your eyes. No love that is authentic, no love that is unfeigned. No love. Your soul is artificial, and your heart is peeling with dust as grey as fog. Perhaps you have no heart. Perhaps you have no soul.

I tell you this because I believe my heart is bloodier than yours; and because of this, I am harrowed with remorse.

I see it all, as though it were glass, untouched by time. These are my memories, my thoughts, my words. Untainted by your conviction.

My soul lingered in the air even when I had no flesh to home it. Pygmalion, you built me with such gentle hands.

And I awoke the day you kissed me. Like liquid, the moonlight poured through the open window, and a cool glow rested upon your eyes. In them, I saw a love so intense, so raw, so real. It was written in the lines beside your eyes, hidden in the furrow of your brow, revealing in your smile. All I knew was the quiet warmth of your lips on mine, and the gentleness of your soul. Your hands caress my skin with ease, your movements, delicate as clouds. "Wake up," you cry, "wake up." And somehow, by the wonder of the Gods, I do.

"Pygmalion," I say, my voice quiet. The moonlight casts shadows of trees dancing in the wind upon your cheek. The light smooths your face, and your eyes beam. "Galatea." Your lips shape every inch of name, and sparks of life grew, like roots, in my heart. *This is love.* I thought to myself. *This is love, and it is everything.*

Days passed; time stretched like the river outside the window, and your presence kept me warm. "I'll marry you," you would tell me, "You'll be mine until I die."

Each morning when you left, my heart ached. Love is felt so much more when it is absent; and it is all the more painful. But each night, you would come home and kiss me, and the pain died and grew into delight. When you left, I would glare outside the window; admiring, revering, envying. Outside, sits a great oak tree, and water slips from the clouds, pattering on the leaves. Rainfall, you call it. An inconvenience, you call it. Yet, I am awestruck by its ethereal beauty. People walk past this large window; lovers, strangers, friends. Happiness leak from their smiles. Then I see her. The sun. She sets on the horizon behind the sea. Delicately painting the vast sky, a dusty peach. I opened the window for the first time, allowing the cool air to brush the hairs on my arms. Like honey, the sun's light spilled upon all it touched; the grass, the bushes, the sea. It's bronze haze glowing. I wondered how its heat would feel on my skin. Watching the beauty of the world from this window, eased the ache of loneliness.

One night, you came home with some friends, boasting of your skill, your gift, your genius. The men would smile and gaze in wonder at me; every crevice, every inch. "She's splendid," they said, "divine." Their eyes were knives. I watched you watch them, in awe of me, in awe of *you* and your talent. But despite my discomfort, there was a perfect tenderness about you; an air of jubilation, of confidence, of delight. You smiled, and sweet dimples appeared upon your cheeks, lighting up your face. It was everything. For weeks, every day was the same. Only different people; all with daggers for eyes and leering smirks. *Galatea, the statue that came to life.* But *this is love,* I would tell myself. *This is what you do for love.*

“Tell me about the sun,” the words left my lips in a whisper. “It’s hot.” Your voice was expressionless. “I’d like to see it.” Hope flickered beneath my skin. I could feel it tingling in my fingertips, warming in my chest, growing from my lungs to my throat. “You can see it from the window.”

“No,” the word slipped out like water, then it withered and crumbled like chalk. “I want to feel it. The air. The rain. The sun. I want to be out there, allow me this. Please.” You glanced at me, and for a moment, you seemed unnatural. Your eyes were vacant as you chuckled, shaking your head. In that moment, I felt my soul sink. I grieved the dream while it was still in my arms. But it slithered away too quickly. All happening before I could breathe.

The next morning you left the room and locked it. And that was my life for a year. A year I watched the world unravel through its seasons. A year living as a statue. A prisoner, a possession, a prize. Until one fateful day, when I realised; I love a lifeless thing. Your soul that I once believed was gentle, is corrupted. Your pride is veiled in the guise of confidence. But mostly, your pretty words and soft kisses concealed your selfishness. It makes you callous, cold, unhuman.

Or perhaps it makes you human?

So, I left.

Now, I sit on the cliffs, watching the lavender sky bleed to ink. Boats decorate the ocean surface, their sails glistening white in the sinking sun. It seems that time has paused for me; just so I can feel the wind, cool on my skin. Below, the water throws waves like swords: silver hurling upon silver, sapphire tossing upon sapphire. Its loud and wild and vicious, but the sun’s golden rays paint the earth, and the air breathes smoothly between my fingers. Because of these things, it is hard to be afraid.

I close my eyes and rest my cheek upon the grass; watching clementine swirls fold over each other beneath my eyelids, as the sun spills through them. I envelop myself into the ground further, immersing myself in it, sinking into it. A warmth lingers in my chest; it spreads through my veins, my blood, my bones. Like water, a strange heaviness sails through my ribs, reaching gentle hands to my heart, my lungs, my throat; until carefully wrapping around my soul. I am still, as a fallen tree. The last of the sun threw gold on my smile, and I allow myself to become stone.

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