

Fiction Excerpts

Frostbite

She's taking longer showers now, but she doesn't sing anymore. I think the longest shower she's taken has been three hours. She's never left the bathroom mirror foggy. I asked, and she told me she likes to take cold showers. I've heard they're refreshing, that they clear your head. I don't know how someone could stand cold water pelting their skin. I would rather take a warm bath—so warm that I feel lightheaded by the time I get out... I take these baths most during winter, when it feels like the water is defrosting my bones.

I'm excited for fall, but not so much for the winter.

October 18th, 2:12 AM

I was lying in bed with her yesterday, fantasizing about white dresses and string quartets, and she asked me why I loved her.

She sounded too serious. It scared me; I didn't know how to reply. I sat up slowly, felt my stomach turn.

"There are a lot of reasons, hun," was the best I could come up with. I tried to give her a gentle smile, but I'm not sure how it came off. She told me she was just asking for one of them, but her voice felt distant. Cold.

"Well, I love you because you're you." She went quiet, like my answer hadn't satisfied her curiosity. Like there was a right answer and I hadn't been even close to the mark. Despite how much those words meant to me.

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Plumas

If he was careful, and looked past his own reflection, Nico could see the twinkling lights of the city like stars climbing up the mountains, fading just below the horizon. The stars in the sky weren't visible, just a solid, hazy grey.

The first time that Nico saw Micah again, he didn't recognize him. He wasn't watching Micah because he thought he knew him. To Nico, he was simply a stranger he was standing directly in front of on his commute. That was all.

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When his staring had turned more towards passive watching, he realized the man was crying. Not loudly, not anything that would draw any attention -- Nico only noticed because he could see tears slowly drip onto the pages of the book. He looked around to see if anyone else had seen, surprise caught in his throat. Nico had never seen a grown man cry before.

The metro came to its slow stop. The doors slid open. The man he was watching looked up. He was leaving. The guy was leaving, and for reasons he could never explain, but somehow understood, Nico followed.

It felt important. Urgent. Like he'd found something he'd lost, and he desperately didn't want to lose it again. He would later tell his friend it was curiosity that pushed him forward, out of the metro, through the station, up the escalators, and into the crowd. Nico tried to keep up with him, but he was caught in the sea of people and the stranger was quick. The further away he got, the more Nico felt like he was losing his breath. The stranger turned a corner, and by the time Nico reached it, he was nowhere to be seen.

Then, like a spell being broken, "what am I doing?" he asked himself.

He got back onto the metro, scuffing his feet the entire way back.

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