

Cotton Candy Stars

Her vision was the undulating, unending inkiness dotted with speckles of sparkling dust. Like freckles, except in reverse; bursts of white across dark skin. The longer she stared, the deeper the galaxy seemed, more and more constellations revealing themselves in response to her increasing concentration. She felt so close to the night canvas, as if she could reach out her hand and her fingers would come off stained with stardust. Nothing separated her from the galaxies.

Beneath her, she felt the soft carpet of grass. Its pointy blades tickling her palms, the cool earth resting beneath them.

This was their spot. At the edge of town, where the stars shone brighter without the city lights, cushioned by the field of grass, blanketed by the starry sky they met each evening. For the last few days, it had just been her staring into the starry abyss and the abyss staring back. She waited, just looking. The inkiness had turned charcoal and the stars brightened. She realised then, the scene would shift from sparkles to the pallor of the night descending and she'd still be here, alone. Who she was looking for wasn't to be found in the dust of galaxies.

She sprang up and turned away from the show of the stars. She had waited long enough for her. With a decided purpose she began to walk away, leaving their shared sky behind.

Each step she took was a struggle against some invisible cord tugging her back, but she fought it like she fought the stream trying to escape from her eyes. The wind slapped loose dark strands onto her face, another force trying to stop her. She submitted to it a few times as her head turned back towards the night abyss, seeking the break of a familiar silhouette in the stretch of spangled canvas.

Her marching feet didn't stop. They carried her away till she felt the softness her soles sank into shift to the strike of a hard surface. She found herself on the street leading into town. She looked behind her; the backdrop of galaxies had disappeared. Mere remnants of it stretched above her but she refused to look at it and continued forward.

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A fluff of pink cloud bounced in her vision. It matched the nail paint at the tips of her fingers drumming against her knee. It blurred. Her vision was scrambled by translucent, overlapping spots. The cloud and her nails disappeared in a sparkling mesh of pink blots.

A siren rang through the air beating against her eardrums. She reached to wipe away the tears gathered in her eyes, her vision cleared. She glanced at the phone vibrating by her ankle. It was her.

She breathed in and it burst out involuntary as her eyes shut, drops trickling down her lashes. The sound of the piercing ringtone mixed with her sobs. Only she could hear herself as her ribs

rattled with each gasping gulp her throat demanded of her. Her arms went round her thin frame as her body bent forward.

A sweet smell invaded her damp nostrils. Through hanging gold tresses she saw pink fluff being thrust towards her. She looked up into the chubby face of her little sister. It bore a look as sweetly innocent as the cloud of cotton candy poking from her round fingers. 'You can have it,' the sticky strings of candy bumped her chin as the tiny hand pushed it closer.

Her painted nails accepted the cotton candy, the shades of pink merging. The sweetness remained in her mouth after the strings of spun sugar dissolved at the touch of her tongue. Her tears slowed to a trickle. Memories flooded in. The sweetness of cotton candy remained in her mouth as her surroundings shifted to be replaced by the picture of a face. A face, framed by dark waves, laughing in unceasing giggles from behind a blue fluff of cloud. The pink cloud fell away from her own mouth as she burst into an uproar matching the face in front of her.

She sprang up. One hand pushed the gold tresses back, the other still wrapped round the stick of candy, she ran.

Her hair flew behind her, gold tendrils becoming part of the wind that attacked her as she tore through it. The wetness on her cheeks got lost to the same wind. Its chill cut through her but her legs continued to hurtle against it, hitting the concrete; the force of collision coursing up her entire body.

She saw her. A lone dark smudge picked in the glare of the street lamp casting onto the empty street. Her feet picked pace; striking the ground harder. One of her steps didn't make it to the ground, it landed in air and her body fell forward. Rough points of concrete bit her chin and scratched her knees. The stick of cotton candy lay trapped in the space beneath her splayed palm and the ground. It trembled with the march of hurried footsteps coming closer. Her fingers tightened on the stick as she struggled to force herself up.

Hands gripped her arms and helped her to a sitting position. Her bent knees protested against the sharp concrete, her chin stung but none of it came to her notice. Her entire attention was captured by the face in front of her. The head of dark waves had bent down to her level. It was stained with tears like hers.

Both of them moved at the same time; arms and hair tangling together as they collided against each other in an embrace; light head by a dark head with a fluff of pink stuck to it.

The stars in the sky stood witness to the collision on the ground.