

Sanctuary

By Asia Jones

Dear mystery man I met at the Mecklenburg Correctional Center During Visiting Hours,

I never expected to have this conversation with you here but I guess this must do
I notice you've grown lonesome in the eyes I never knew
I notice your lips crinkle in like mine when you're nervous
I notice you swallow regret down your throat and I can tell it burns the surface of your taste buds as it passes through

Dear mystery man,

I waited so many years for this moment
Waited so long to be able to speak my mind
And come to find I am choked
Choked by the question mark of who I am intertwined in the quivers of your lips
Choked by the memories with you I do not have
Choked by the fact that I look back over my life and all I can see is the ghost which you shed before you left me, in hopes that maybe that would be enough to last a lifetime

Well, mystery man, the shed has broken into dust
It flew away into the wind that summer mama told me you might come by to visit
And I waited outside with the words "I need to be loved by you" stuck in between my teeth as I grinned from cheek to cheek waiting for your arrival
Now I am here and all of my thoughts have burned to ashes, too
Maybe that's what I get from you

"Didn't you miss me papa?"
"Didn't you wonder who I was papa?"
"Do you even know who you are papa?"
"Why won't you look me in the eyes?"
Disguise the lies you're waiting to tell me
Just tell me you love me
Tell me you're sorry
Tell me something worth grasping, worth swallowing

I've found hello in your tears
I've found goodbye in the way you said my name, a stutter, a pause as if you've said goodbye to me too many time before
Maybe you've been talking to my shadow, too?
I'll misplace the invisible trace of you
We are here now

Dear papa,

You plead guilty of abandonment years ago.
It's okay; I've turned my heart into a jail cell
It is the only place you'll ever call home