



EPHEMERAL

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THERE'S SOMETHING TRAGIC ABOUT YOU

“It’s cold,” I say
“Sure,” she replies.
Things don’t feel as easy as they did
last year.

I kick a clump of snow, watch the flurries spread in wild clumps. The pile is now destroyed, but I can’t work up the energy to feel sad about it.

“No school for the rest of the week,” Cam says, plops down on my bed, hair fanning out around her, a crazed mess of curls. “I

love the snow.”

I am watching the rise and fall of her chest, the way the air passes through her lips, marveling at the miracle of her life.

“Yeah,” I say, “It’s nice.”

“It’s more than nice,” she sighs. She’s not looking at me, but I find myself wishing she was. “It’s magic.”

You’re magic, I think, but don’t say. It feels like a secret.

“Did they just not have snow in Georgia?”



I ask her, laughing at the wonder on her face as she stares at the snowflakes collecting on her hand. She looks at them like they are something more than just crystallized bits of water, like they are special.

"Not like this," she says, turning to catch my eye.

My nose is turning red and I'm dreaming of languid summer days, but her smile is warm and when she links her arm with mine, pressing it into the fabric of my coat, I smile too.

Privately, I think she's the prettiest girl I have ever seen.

"Come on, Jo," she says, pouting, hands on her hips, standing in the middle of the snow drenched street. She looks younger than she usually does, makeup off, wearing a too large jacket and mismatched gloves.

"I don't have the right shoes," I say, glancing down at my scuffed converse, the worn holes in the side where snow is already gathering, ice melting in my socks.

"Excuses, excuses," she says. This is Cam at her best, all bright sparkling eyes and easy familiarity. It's times like this where I can forgive all the bad, the ignored texts and glassy eyes and casual dismissals.

It's time like this where I almost don't feel like a fool. Almost.

"Okay. Fine," I say, sighing, but a smile rests underneath it. I've never been very good at resisting her.

I sit on the front edge of the porch, feel the cold of the wood leaching warmth from my backside, but it's better than being inside. My breath comes out in puffs of smoke ("Like dragons," Cam likes to say. It seems my mind is full of useless Camilla trivia). I wish I'd brought a heavier jacket. I wish I hadn't come.

I recognize Cam's laughter from inside and then she explodes out onto the porch. Her steps are sway- ing and her smiles are hazy.

"Jo?" she asks, brow furrowed, as if she doesn't even remember that we'd come here together. I huff out a breath, feel the misty air on my face.

"Yeah. I'm here," I say.

She flops down beside me, resting her head against my shoulder. I try not to get intoxicated by her closeness. She smells like pomegranate shampoo and smoke and Camilla.

"You're drunk," I say.

She laughs against my neck. It's nice. I wish it wasn't.

"Only a little bit," she says.

"A lot bit," I say. I sound pouty and childish and the instant the words pass my lips I want to take them back.

She hums, but doesn't respond.

I think back to the beginning of the year, all of the nights we'd spent huddled on the couch watching Gilmore Girls surrounded by oreos and icing and goldfish, feet in each other's laps, hands splayed on shoulders and thighs and stomachs. Cam would mouth Lorelai's lines and I would respond with Rory's and we'd laugh when we got them wrong, throwing goldfish at each other and not caring about all the things that got mushed between us. It had felt like the forever kind of friendship. It had felt like love.

"I think I'm going to go home, Cam," I say, standing and brushing off my jeans.

She lifts her head and stares at me. Mascara is smeared underneath her eyes and her hair is straightened, hanging down too low. She doesn't look like my Cam and when I look into her eyes, I almost don't recognize the person staring back.

"Okay," she says and it hurts because I'd wanted her to ask me to stay. But instead she lets me go.

And when I get to my car and look back, the porch is empty.

"What happened to us?" she asks me.

Her hair is shorter now, barely brushing her shoulders. She doesn't look like the girl I loved. It's strangely comforting.

I take a moment to wonder how she's been, what classes she's taken, who she's met, if she has a boyfriend. I wonder what she'd think of my life, so different now than it had been when we were friends. I try to think of her responses to my lab partner in chemistry and my gender studies teacher, to the people who are important to me, Aaron and Carter and Samira, to Talia, but I find I can't. I don't know whether that relieves or saddens me.

"We grew up," I reply.

"You seem like a winter person," she tells me when she is still the new girl with the wild hair and sunshine in her veins.

I don't know how to respond, so I remain silent. She is staring at me and I squirm under her gaze.

"So, are you?" she asks, tilting her head.

"No," I say, finally. When lacking anything else, I go with the truth.

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