

Sarah Grishpul

3rd Place, Secondary Division

2020 CFUW Writing Contest

### **Till Death Do Us Part**

When did it all go wrong? I don't understand... our life seemed so perfect, everything routine and orderly. He said our love was meant to be everlasting, how nothing could break the bond we shared, and swore he would stay by my side until death do us part. But that was seven years ago, people can change. He changed.

I could tell something was off when we sat down for dinner at our favourite restaurant. It was the night of our wedding anniversary, and every year we would return to the bistro where he had proposed.

"A bottle of your finest wine, please," he said to the maître d', his disregard to flip through the menu pages or even glance up at me becoming prominent in an instance.

"Of course, sir, and for the lady?"

"Oh, she'll be having water, thank you."

How strange, we always shared a bottle of Chardonnay, it was tradition. That's when I began to notice the signs; the elusive glances, rattling hands, the constant pull at his necktie, it was all so unlike him. I laid my menu firmly upon the table and reached out to place my hand over his.

“Gerald?” I spoke softly, remaining perfectly still while his hand flinched under my touch and darted away underneath the table. “Are you feeling alright?”

He sighed, I watched as he ran his hand through his hair, digging his nails into his scalp. My concern for him grew as he tilted his head to look at me, his usual warm eyes were clouded as his true emotions remained concealed under what could only be a mask.

“I can’t do this anymore,” he said at last, his hand travelling down from his hair to the brink of his nose and at last resting underneath his pointed chin. A foreboding feeling of dread and terror clenched at my gut as I could feel his next words dripping down the sides of my flesh.

“I want a divorce.”

He might as well have lunged over the table and grasped my throat with his bare hands. I couldn’t breathe nor could I produce a single sound or thought. It was as though my heart had been shoved deep inside my stomach, the sick feeling of bile and acid floating up to my mouth as I remained motionless. An ongoing mantra of his words circled my head, piercing my soft penetrable skin and shredding through the dress I had assumed made me beautiful. He wouldn’t stop looking at me, nor could I bear to remove myself from his presence. I had to say something, anything, to make him stay. He didn’t want a divorce, he only wanted me, he told me on our wedding day that he only wanted me.

“It’s for the best, I think,” he said, folding up his napkin and placing it beside his untouched glass, as he leaned forward to vacate his seat. “I’ll send you the paperwork, and I’ll be back for my stuff once all the legal work has been dealt with.”

I had to do something. I had to stop him. He was leaving. He *is* leaving. *He is leaving me.* As he crossed past, out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of his steak knife lying askew on top of the tablecloth. I couldn't feel anything as my arm reached out to grasp the utensil, caressing the smooth handle with my thumb as I stood up and pivoted towards my husband. Eyes dry of all emotion, I snatched his jacket sleeve, pulling him closer towards me and barreling my head into his for one last lingering kiss. A noise of surprise and pain echoed from the back of his throat as I tightly held on to him. When we parted, I curved my head downwards to stare at the heavy stream of blood gushing through the knife wound. I smiled blissfully as his expression transformed into that of terror and fear. Clawing up to rest my hands on his shoulders, I hoisted myself up to the balls of my feet and tilted my head to whisper into his ear,

“Till death do us part, my love.”