

Your Star is Forever

“It was time for a change.”

That’s what my mom had told me while she tucked me into bed this particular night. But what she did not realize was that change is not something you have to be told, it is something you can see. I know this because I was forced to silently watch boxes multiply as my favourite pieces of home withered from the walls, pictures of us now tucked neatly away. The hallway I had once skated down in my mismatched socks now held luggage full of clothing that belonged in closets and memories that were meant for us, not confinement.

She did not know, but I had already begun to feel the change. Most of all, I felt the change in the way that my mom did not tuck me into bed as tightly as she always had done. She wasted no breath on sending me to sleep with the words of my favourite bedtime story. Instead, she said this and only this. And so I knew this was going to be no change for the better, which left my heavy head resting against my pillow while I could not.

From behind her, stars spilled past my window and casted freckle-like shadows upon my walls. They even lit the telescope that sat at the end of my bed. I loved the night sky, I loved the stars; they followed you everywhere you went, and they surely wouldn’t pack up and leave quite the same way a father does.

“Why is Dad leaving us?”

“Well...sometimes people stop loving each other...”

My nose scrunched as my eyes narrowed. How could someone just *stop*? Especially someone like my mom? When traffic lights turned yellow, she sped up. When midnight rolled around, she refused to go to sleep. When I showed up in her tummy too early, she still finished school. So why, all of a sudden, after never being stopped, choose *now*?

“I don’t understand how that could have happened. That one time I asked you where I came from, you started with, ‘When two people love each other very much’. So how could I be here if that wasn’t true?”

She sighed. She glanced back at my telescope, then to me. “You know what they say about the stars? When you look at them you’re looking at stars that existed millions of years ago; stars that are no longer there anymore. That’s why you’re confused. You’re looking at stars that are already gone; you’re living in the past. Maybe it’s time you point your telescope somewhere a little more present.”

I had taught her that. Everything she knew about the stars was from me. And anytime I’d tell her something new she’d smile and tell me how I was her universe. Now, I wasn’t so sure. “So sometimes you just wake up and stop loving people?” I asked. She nodded. I paused before asking, “Well...what about me?”

Her cold thumbs cupped my cheeks before adjusting the strange plastic straws that made my nose itch. As she moved them around, I felt the air finally reach my lungs. Unlike me, they got this bedtime story every night; if they didn’t, I wouldn’t wake up. She smiled. “I’ll love you forever.”

When she said forever, I really wanted to know if she meant her forever or mine? Because *my* forever was ending very soon. But there were more important questions to be asked. “Where will you go?”

“A new home. One for just me and you.”

I wondered if my mom’s home would smell only like her, not like the one we lived in now that smelled only of smoke. Dad smokes cigarettes even though he knows they’ll kill him. He’s leaving mom even though he knows I’m dying. Some people aren’t stopped by death. I was not some people.

“And where will I go?”

“When the time comes, you’ll become one of those stars.” She pointed toward the window. I followed her finger but couldn’t help but think if people became stars, then the night is just a graveyard. “The very brightest one, my love, I promise.” When I looked back, she was holding my hand.

My mom didn’t know this, but the brightest star was the sun. I hoped I’d be the sun. I could wake up every morning next to her and I’d even keep her warm. But most of all, I’d never ever have to change.