

# Paint Splattered Box

## Jules Tobias

I had heard stories about them. The colors. I had experienced them myself, too, the swirls of light that entered the world and settled themselves amongst the scenery. I had gotten used to them, and no matter how bleak things became, they were still there. Sometimes fading or flashing, but nevertheless present. I'd panic when the palette faded even slightly, fearing I'd lose them for good once they had disappeared completely. I clung onto the pastels my imagination provided, which gave me solace until my irrational fear passed over.

I knew my disappearance fear was irrational, because the colors showed up at the same times and occurrences everyday. Smiles and laughter were flashes of vibrant yellow, warm hugs were a fuzzy orange aura, supportive words a hopeful pink. Hearing others talk about it, I knew it wasn't the same for everyone, different colors associated with different emotions, and sometimes they wouldn't appear at all if the occurrence and emotional value didn't match up. I always kept my experience to myself, simply because it was mine, it was unique. No matter how alarming or distant my hue became, it was mine, and I didn't want to tarnish it by making it anyone else's business.

When I met you, it seemed like you could see all sorts of colors. Maybe bright warm patterns, I imagined at first. And then one day, you saw that my world had faded, a murky blue-gray was surrounding me, like a mixture of suffocating fog and heavy rain. You asked, which people hardly did, about the state of my palette. I tried to brush it off, swipe it away as if working with an actual canvas. It didn't work.

I know from experience, that it takes a certain palette to know another one. I've always had a sixth sense for picking up on other's negative pigments--because darker shades often invade my world as well. I knew the signs. The distant looks I saw as a misty white, the frowns that were a soggy green. Were you like me? How could you, someone so bright--how could you recognize the crisis I was going through? Purple curiosity crept in. I wanted to know. I had to know.

So I took down my tinted filter, and I told you. About the blue-gray, the misty white, the soggy green and sometimes even sharp black that I often saw, I even admitted that the world washed to complete grayscale occasionally. You responded by making me see the colors I associated with happiness using words alone. I tried my best to return the favor, realizing it was very possible you saw the same tones as me. I wanted to see you smile--it was contagious.

That's when I realized--contagious. Your happiness was contagious, the bright warm tones I presumed you experienced were the ones that had been creeping

around the edges of my scenery ever since I stumbled into your path. But soon, the spectrum increased. Midnight blue sky as a backdrop for golden fuzzy fireflies, turning sky blue with clarity. The image of emerald grass and fluffy joyful clouds surrounded by soft polka dots of laughter. Whenever these pictures appeared around me, I dared not touch them, knowing I was the only one witnessing it.

With you, there was hardly ever the same color twice, but none of them carried a negative connotation in this case. Our words covered every single color of the rainbow within seconds, each moment encased by a dreamy pink, and long after the sound of our voices left the air, those colors continued to fill my vision. It was almost scary. Red is the color of fear, but this hue was much softer than the alarming rose colors I associated with the feeling. This was because, deep down, no matter how unbelievable it was to me--I knew you saw this palette too.

Actually, you said it before I did. Of all things, that was one I never had the courage to say first. It's one thing to reveal your appreciation for a person, and another to admit how they've changed the tones in your world.

Recently, you stopped. Blank. Gray. Watery quietness, no longer engaging with the color, with conversation. Why? I don't know. Mint green self doubt is telling me I've done something wrong, but clueless viridian hasn't any idea what it could be. Missing your friend is an icy blue, and regret is every bleak tone all at once. Words are occasional, but it's hard to see their pigments when the moment is fleeting. Sometimes, I pass by and can almost feel a silvery sadness when you glance my way. If our colors are of the same spectrum, are you lonely too? Has monotone absence taken its toll on your perspective as well? Honesty is the most precious golden I've ever seen, and it would be nice to view the colors of truth, no matter how hard they may be to visualize.

I hope you're okay. I hope any negative tones keeping you silent will soon fade, and I hope the memory of my understanding takes over. Until then, I'll continue to hang on to these pastel moments, this turquoise patience, and wait. Maybe you'll find this somewhere, in the paint splattered box I've left in the corner of your mind, where, deep down, you know it is. Maybe the colors will swirl around and guide you to it, busting open the lock and revealing the folded up note--black ink still fresh. And maybe you'll uncurl the rainbow-tinted edges and reveal the shades you're seeing now. If only you had the courage to do so.