

The Sky Bleeds Pink | Kayla Luis

“I think it loves me,” the little girl said with a missing front tooth as she slobbered on the cherry flavored lollipop that she plopped back in her mouth.

“Who loves you sweetie?” the mom questioned, at her daughter like the stars were in her eyes and galaxies strung into her slightly knotted hair.

The girl moved her hand, flinging the sweet treat forward like a sparkling wand, waving towards the expanse before her. Crashing waves erupted in the distance as the pair sat on a hill, finding comfort upon the soft blades of grass beneath them and the company of a shared heart. The girl's remained raised, pointing at the setting sun as it winked goodbye before the stars could sing.

“Mommy! Look!” the girl screamed, excited at the shades of color painting the sky. The world was a canvas of creativity and hope, casting a gradient of pink hues and specks of orange, like cotton candy and tangerines swirling in the sky.

“It's pretty, isn't it!” the mom reassured, watching her daughter's amusement more than the universal beacon before her.

“It's—it's my favorite color! I love pink!” The little girl yelled to the heavens while she was dressed in all pink. Her shoes dusted with dirt, hiding the rosy tint of her ballerina slippers. Hot pink frills at the end of her dress contrasted against the vastly different blush shade of her jacket, which was zipped up all the way to keep her cozy amidst the chilly breeze.

“I know!” the mother squealed, reciprocating her excitement with excessive vigor.

“The world loves me mommy!” She smiled a wide grin, revealing a little dimple carved on her chubby cheek.

A dimple just like her mother's. Two crescents of a single moon. "It chose *my* favorite color. Not yours. Not Daddy's. It's mine."

The mother's expression dropped at the mention of him, but she didn't let her daughter see her faltering smile. If strength were a mask, she wore it well. She always did.

"See, sweetie," the mom said, holding her daughter closer as they watched the pink sky. "Always remember that the world loves you just as much as I do." She peppered kisses on her cheek and forehead. The little girl laughed with delight, squealing a melodic cacophony of giggles.

"I love you too, Mommy"

Like all things change, so did she. If she could buy glasses with the rosy tint of her childhood, she would, but not all things could be bought. Not everything could freeze like the memories encapsulated in her mind. Forever frozen in what used to be.

As she grew up, she never once thought about the wonders of the universe or the hope that lingered in the atoms she breathed. The natural beauty that highlights the light bordering the dreary shadows of disaster and in no way, to be seen by her again. Like a tornado, she was caught in the darkness, wondering about other things that composed the world.

When was that assignment due? Does this outfit make me look bad? Maybe it's too much? Too little? Was I supposed to go practice today? Is dad coming home? Will he ever come home? What did I do wrong? Did I do something wrong? Of course I did. Why am I like this? Why am I here? Why does everybody leave me? Why?

If her thoughts were a maze, she would be trapped for a lifetime, yearning to escape the endless tunnels of pressure carved by society and the feeling of abandonment that was scarred amongst her arms. People passed by, snickering comments in her direction or allowing their bubbles of laughter to haunt her. The girl

who was trapped in her own head was a funny story—for everyone but the one living it.

Now, the girl sat on the dead grass, watching the waves crash before her from the shore below. It's been years since she came back here—the memories too painful to relive. But all she sees is the record of her life being played on repeat. She watches a younger version of herself dancing in the grass barefoot with her mom and they hum a gentle song as the dizziness sets the darkness of the world on a carousel of color. Singing of the past is presented in the subtle sound of the ice cream truck veering up the road. Watches with tears blurring her vision, trying to grasp onto the illusion of what was. The illusion of who used to be there. Of what used to live there.

"I miss you," she whispered into the wind, hoping it could find a path to the past where the world was brighter. A world with two bright souls and not just a fading half.

Tears were a warning to the storm brewing in her heart, she stood up on shaky legs, fallinwg on her knees in a failed attempt to showcase her strength. Once again, she rose, finally finding stability from the cold earth beneath her. As she stood up and wiped the dead weeds off her baggy gray sweats, and turning her back to the past—walking away.

She never looked back to watch the universe blossom behind her. The dull shade of pale blue transformed into a stunning pink, reminding her of who she was...who she still is. The sun screamed for her attention, but she didn't realize how much the world missed her. Yet, every day without fail, the sky still bleeds pink.