

FRIGID HEART

Completed for ENG510 at Southern New Hampshire University

I stepped outside into the cold brisk air of early winter, and he slammed the door shut behind me. Standing on that frozen concrete porch felt like eternity. Everything was behind me; nothing was in front of me. My feet—like bags of sand—crushed through the ice of the walk as I stepped into the void of my self-inflicted despair. Each step carried me away from warmth. Away from love. And I was the one who turned the knob. I wanted to look back but my neck was frozen. I wanted him to come chasing after me. I knew he wouldn't. My heart couldn't take the sight of that closed door. I sighed as my shoulders slumped. The warm breath dissipated into the cold night like the ghost of every severed connection. "Won't you stay a little longer?" I said under my breath as I took another step. And then another.

It could have been hours—the walk to the sidewalk—just thirty-feet with the weight of my actions crushing down upon my heart. I couldn't understand how it wasn't broken. Maybe it was. Maybe it always had been. I could taste the frost on my tongue as I took each breath. Frigid, but almost sweet. A hint of salt, it reminded me of tears. Had I been crying? My cheeks were so cold I couldn't tell. The tiniest curl of a smile cracked my lips as I turned onto the sidewalk. That was when I saw it. When I saw him. Nothing but a shadow in a curtained window. And then the light was gone, and so was he. All I could do was keep walking. I tasted salt again. Was I still crying?

Every step I took was sheathed in darkness. The yellowed glow from the streetlights only grew the shadows of the empty unlit homes. The night stretched on in front of me. Nothing. Nothingness. Nothing but the ghosts in my breath to keep me company. Him. Her. Them.

Nothing remained except for my frozen heart. My chest was tight. “It must be the cold.” I said to myself; to my ghosts. I hungered for the loss. As I stood under the flickering light—and flakes of snow began to fall—I understood; I felt the shiver of something perverse echo through my veins. I built a mausoleum out of my own misery. Of their misery. I could only love him—all of them—until they loved me. The knife in my bleeding heart was my own and I would twist it deeper with every scorned lover.

I couldn’t walk another step. My feet were frozen as sweat soaked my socks through. I sat down in the soft snow as fresh as his broken heart, and just stared at the heavy orange clouds suffocated by the streetlights. Robbed of their purity and cast in the pollution of the world. This is who I am. This is all I can ever be. I will love. I will destroy. And I will love the destruction.

“You forgot this.”

“I left it on purpose.” I could feel the snow soaking through my jeans as I sat on the curb.

“Take it.”

“I don’t want it.”

She threw the jacket down beside me and crossed her arms—bracing against the frigid wind.

“Why did you leave?” she asked.

“I couldn’t stay there anymore.”

“Why?”

“It was too warm inside.” I pushed the air out of my lungs and stared into the night sky as my breath drifted away. “I was hot.”

“And now I’m cold.”

“Then go inside.”

“Are you really going to be like this?”

“I guess so.” I reclined and let the snow wrap around me.

“James—”

“Just stop Aria.” I shut my eyes and let the snow bleed into my skin.

“We can turn the heat down.”

“You know that’s not what I mean—”

“Well, what do you mean then!”

I could feel my arms starting to burn as they were crusted with ice. She was standing over me, and I thought she was about to cry.

“This is just how I am.”

“It’s too cold for me out here.”

“Then go inside.”

“You’re impossible,” she turned to go, but stopped. “I can’t leave you here. How do I know you’ll be okay?”

“I’m always okay.”

“Liar.”

I heard her footsteps crunch—quieter and quieter—as she left. I opened my eyes and let my tears warm my cheeks. “Goodbye.” I closed my eyes again. The snow felt like home.