

"This has to end," I thought aloud.

The smell of her perfume and the long grass danced together in the cool early October breeze. We lay there by the fence around the plantations' water tower, her back to my chest, watching the sun set lazily. Its heat vanished in the dry air. She was so small that I barely felt her weight pressing against me. Yet she consumed my entire world, especially so far away from the crowded campus. She rolled over and rested her chin on her hands, fingers splayed across my chest. I ran mine through her straightened hair as our eyes held quiet conversation.

It hadn't been hard to say it. It hadn't been hard for her to hear it. How many times had we already said it or thought it or known it? The words simply had no meaning despite their gravity in our impossible situation. In another time, another life, those words had been razor sharp knives and cruel pounding bludgeons. I had taken them beyond the literal, the now ending in blackness, the future blanked. Emptiness had reigned. Yet there we still were.

She pulled herself up to kiss me, her body sliding deliciously against mine. I tasted her lips and tongue as my fingers twisted in her hair. The summer heat of it crackled in defiance of autumn. I slid my free hand down her back and pressed her against the bulge in my jeans.

I could feel the shape of her smile on my lips as she pushed herself up. In the near-twilight, the sun glowed weakly, framing her face within a red-blond corona. She perched there, turning her arms in against her breasts to accentuate her cleavage, still smiling her wicked smile. It was a smile that said she knew what I wanted, and she wanted it, too. It was a smile slightly saddened that neither of us would be getting it.

"I better get back soon, my roommates are going to start to wonder." Roommates. I had quickly developed a healthy distaste for that word. It was a bitterness steeped in tragic irony. The roommates had been the ones that finally brought us together, yet it was the roommates that were now busily forecasting the end. The Roommates, with a capital R. My favorite of our clever metaphors cast them as a pack of hungry she-wolves, all claws and bite. Please don't feed the animals.

Our walk back into the face of reality was lit dully by distant floodlights on the barns and the yellow-orange of streetlights by Lynah Rink, yet was strangely devoid of other life for a Friday. I rested my arm around her shoulders, which only emphasized how mismatched were the lengths our strides. I towered more than a foot over her head, and most of that was in my legs.

"I was in marching band," she remarked on keeping the pace, while I hungrily considered the careful planning of the human body. I congratulated the evolutionary genius that allowed her lips to reach mine even while we were locked at the hips. We were facing a self-prescribed weekend of celibacy, which only made the hunger pangs sharper.

It was decided, sometime while we lay there in the grass, that this weekend was to be a trial run for the end. No late-night phone calls. No sneaking up the fire escape in a jacket and pajamas to spend the night wearing nothing at all. It was only two days - surely we could handle it. Two days and two nights. Well, the nights might be a bit of a problem. Had we ever gone two nights apart, since our nights together started?

"Shit." I suddenly realized, as I was squinting down the road, that I left my glasses behind somewhere in the grass. "Shit, shit, shit."

"What?" She turned to face me in the bright lights in front of the hockey rink. Her look of genuine concern was beautiful to see, carved on her face from that solid block of hardened jade.

"My glasses," I said, as she took my hands. "I should go get them now in case they mow tomorrow, and before I forget where they are."

Almost instantly, her compassion vanished from her features, replaced by something approaching contempt. That too vanished, and nearly as quickly.

I bent to kiss her. She put her arms around my neck and pulled me to her lips. I slipped both hands into her hair and let it glide through my fingers, gently pulling at the roots, running my nails along her temples and down the sides of her head. It just might have been enough to last two days.

"We couldn't walk down College Ave. together, anyway," she conceded. Objectivity was back. Though I agreed with it for once, I never liked to see it win. When objectivity won, I usually lost. After a long gaze, one hand slipped from mine and she turned to go. The other hand held until our arms were fully stretched, then she was off with that purposeful stride, hair bouncing playfully against her shoulders.

I finally turned myself, and as I was walking I could just begin to feel the creeping cold fingers of the real thing, not just our little weekend trial. I almost chased after her, if only to steal just one more kiss.

One last chance to feel her body pressed against mine, to hear her breath and voice, to smell her perfume. I turned to look, walking backwards, and just barely recognized her shape slipping off into the night.

Really, it wasn't even the end at all. There was no way to fake it. It was either the end or it wasn't. As hard as it was to miss her for two days, it was nothing compared to facing a long dark future of missing her for a lifetime. The weekend would just fly by with my mental photo album to keep me company. Even after the pages in the album got dog-eared and worn, I could reread our email, short and sweet as it was. Sometimes those little messages eased apart the pages in the album that had clung together, breathed new life into them, and made me smile and yearn for her anew.

I jogged most of the way back, eager to lie there in the grass again and leaf through the newest pages. My jog slowed to a walk as I came up to our spot on the hill, now eerily lit by the plantation greenhouses. I looked up at the water tower as I collapsed on the grass and leaned back, following the lines of the struts and crossbeams while the latest memories drifted by.

Like developing Polaroids, the images were ghosts taking familiar shapes and patterns. We picked our spot on a little hill. I took off my jacket to use as makeshift blanket. She nestled in at my side on the soft ground. I took off my glasses before leaning over for our first real kiss of the night. Lying there now in the dark, I felt the warmth of her body spread through me, and traced the same hard angles I was now seeing lit only by the distant lights painting the corners of the barns and flooding the greenhouses.

I reached out and felt in the grass for the cold metal frames of my glasses. There they were, just as I had left them. If only I had come back and found her again, too.