

Please, Before You Go

written by neni demetriou | March 20, 2017



Let's just say I found someone. Let's just say they're not you—let's say they're someone new.

I've had this low hum live inside my chest for the past month that's slowly been inching up towards my throat. Sometimes it feels like a tremble, other times it's a rumble—and, on rare occasions, it's like a rabid beast trying to throttle its cage.

I paint wings on its back, which I imagine is what I feel tickling my insides, quivering against my throat, as it tries to leave my body. And, for the past week—ever since I spent a cold, snowy, London night in a bar with someone new—it's been lashing out against its chains, wanting to come out.

I think it must be the last ghost I have of you trying to escape and end my haunting; it's the memory of you trying to pour out of me. I've long feared if I let it go it might fly too close to the sun, but while I tried to protect you from the world, I realize now you never asked me to.

Heart—forgive me.

Writing about someone new feels like a prayer of salvation—one that comes after a long period of purgatory. My pen slides smoothly over paper, as I write their name in wide strokes, embers starting to burn my past while the beast roars, drowning out the sound of your name in my head until it stops sounding like, "Forgive me."

The night was cold, and it was snowing, and it was late, and the drinks kept on flowing until we—that someone new and I—were both very drunk. With the comic relief only intoxicated people can truly understand, they began a monologue while I began exorcising my old demons from their face.

"You do understand that it's not just about the fingers, right?" They started saying, as I focused on their eyes. Azure melted with grey, which I could've sworn held undertones of kindness; dark blonde hair, which I tried very hard not to let my hand run through it; a smile, which alternated between smirks and giggles—"You've got the thumb, too, and the base of your palm. And then you've got your mouth." Dimples, which I failed to keep my fingers from touching—"You've got your lips and tongue, and—and this is something nearly everyone forgets—you've got your breath."

Once those words came out I coughed, as my breathing snowballed like something was trying to force it way out of my mouth, my body purring in ways it hadn't in a while.

"It's time to go home," I declared, but after a disaster of an attempt of them trying to call a cab ("Where are we?" "The location on your phone is wrong." "Don't do that." "Cancel it, you've sent them at the wrong place.") I confiscated their phone and proceeded to walk out of the bar, en route to the train station that was a good 20-minute walk in subzero temperatures.

"You coming or what?"

"Alright, alright, alright."

I caught them as soon as their foot missed the end of the sidewalk.

"We have to stop doing this to ourselves," I maybe flirted.

"It's snowing," was their reply.

The snow was coming down hard, reminding me of the last time I experienced the cold and quiet of a city with snowflakes falling all around me—back when I was living in New York City. I remember riding the subway up to my apartment with you by my side, talking about ordering Italian for dinner and watching 'How I Met Your Mother' reruns. I remember coming out of the station and seeing the city starting to change colour—the most beautiful I've ever seen her—and the two-block walk to the front door was one of the coldest walks I ever made in my life.

Until you stopped me mid-step, turned me around and kissed me—and my knees gave out from right beneath me, and everything in my body went quiet.

Heart—forgive me.

The snow doesn't stick in London, in case you were wondering, but it cleanses just as well as a deluge. We walked across Blackfriars Bridge at 12:45AM, the hum in my heart vibrating, and the city of London never looked as good as it did in that moment. The lights all along the river glowed like the lights I used to leave on for you—just in case you wanted to come back home.

The Light is what I called you whenever I used to write about you—because you were the only truth and warmth my heart and soul ever needed. But now I think I can see the sun.

To this day, I still write about all the ways we broke each other; about all the ways I learned to bruise a person. But I have to stop writing about you; I have to let you go. It's been 26 weeks since the last time we spoke, since you told me you needed space. That's over six months, that's more than half a year.

God, that's more than half a year.

Half a year where I've lost people I've loved, where my anxiety got worse,

where I quit my job and I found myself all over again in cities we never marked together.

Where I kept going back to the city I know holds pieces of your soul, very nearly jumping into the Seine in the hope that I'd be baptized in someone else's name.

More than half a year without my best friend.

Heart, forgive me, but after five years of writing about you, my pen no longer sits peacefully in my hand, my calloused fingers no longer able to write hymns and psalms about you. Five years of loving you, of penning words of joy and forgiveness, words that were meant to heal but ended up hurting you. Five years of loving and losing you, of writing about the best person who taught me even sinners deserve sainthood. Five years of praying to keep you safe.

With the light in my heart dimming and the humming pulsating all through my body, I walked across the bridge with someone new—and it was in that moment when I finally understood that broken bones heal, and so I will too.

We arrived at the station ten minutes before the train was supposed to leave, giving me plenty of time to make sure they got on the correct one.

But they stopped walking and turned around—and that was when the rumble in my throat got worse.

And I knew it was only a matter of seconds before I had to let you go for good.

I thought back to all the times we made each better, about all the times we made each other laugh. About all the times I mumbled your name in the dark, about all the times you brought heaven just a little bit closer to me. The rumbling became more erratic as they kissed me—and Lord forgive me for they weren't mine to kiss—moving the tremble beneath my tongue, dissolving the shadow of your ghost that twirled around in my saliva for so long.

Before you go, I remember thinking with their arms around me, I wanted to let you know wherever I am—the beast was banging behind my clenched teeth (I don't want you to go)—I'll always think of you and the time we spent together as the happiest of my days.

The Light escaped through my lips, and Waterloo station lit up like the fourth of July—and I breathed out your name.