

“Nothing left unsaid”

Remember the Bittersweet Tomorrow

Waves crash against the levee, it groans a cry against the mounting pressure. Surely, the point at which it bursts is soon, no? Black ice snakes, and cracks form over the spitting, seething foam of the sea. Standing from the rocks, with the spittle flying, there is only the morose realisation that anything that attempts to navigate with the lighthouses flickering, sporadic morse, will surely sink.

There is only dark all the way down, past the jagged, razor rocks in those carnivorous trenches.

*But at least down there,
in the yawning abyss,
she can finally **breathe**.*

...

To Lilliths knowledge, the story goes as follows: The second her solo mother could take her safely from the hospital after her birth, she was given up to a church a few regulars cite they had seen her come to weekly for many years. Upon speaking to the Pastor, she had left handsomely rewarded for following the wishes of God's doctrine and refusing to take part in the death of an innocent newborn through the evil that was abortion.

What she had bought first with that money was something Lillith had always wondered about in the dead of night, staring at an unfamiliar ceiling in an unfamiliar city... It's all she's ever really found familiarity in.

drip drip drip

It leaked the second she moved in.

Her head has taken a swim, the room sinks with her, she's beached on her own mattress, the world around her spins in tandem with the throbbing of her pulse. Too loud. Loud enough to make her eyes sting with additional tears.

Why she'd been given away was a story she could never decide on.

Was her mother desperate for cash and saw an opportunity when she was pregnant?

Was she a follower of the church and saw it as the right thing to do after an unplanned pregnancy?

Had she wanted her in the beginning, but upon her entering the world she'd been so disgusted?

Postpartum depression?

Had she despised the very idea that a child had been born of her?

Was she raised by a terrible mother who had left her feeling like she would fail when raising her own?

drip drip drip

She can feel its rhythm even as she sleeps. In her quietest hours outside she swears she can still hear it. Rising and falling with her breaths, leaking to the cadence of her anxiety.

Did she believe she was a monster for what she'd birthed?

Was she ashamed of herself and couldn't bear the burden?

Did she have any love at all for the life she'd been forced to bring into the world?

Did she regret giving her away?

Does she think about her sometimes?

Does she miss her?

Does she even remember her outside of the scar she left on her womb?

The bottle escapes her weak grasp, rolling lazily away from her. Her breath is hot, the afterburn still kisses her throat, she burbles with each hiccup. She pretends her runny nose, red face and wet eyes aren't from her sobs.

Above her head as she lays there weak and helpless, a red number glows dull, stoic and imposing. She can see it above others if she focuses just a little bit more. For her, it's a date that's always changing even as it still ticks like the hands of an eternal clock. In the same reverberation as that irritating leak. Harmonizing into a tone that doggedly follows her every thought. Those digits have been there for as long as she can remember.

drip drip drip

It pounds in her ears, it feels like it rattles tightly in her skull and throughout her bones. It hurts, it hurts. She's always cried under the mounting pressure of a migraine.

With tired, sunken eyes wet with tears. It reminds her, above all else, that despite what she feels and thinks, her genesis is a responsibility she is to bear and not something to ignore or abandon.

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ACT 1 - 05 : 67 Neon Crosses, Glass Pyres

It's another cold cold winter morning, but there's a fire lit in her belly as she takes a swig of some month old whiskey stored under her bed.

She leaves her motorbike shuddering and whining as it tries to heat up, burying her face in her scarf as she waits in the howling wind. Snow flurrying and threatening to whip her hair around. Her piercings feel like ice in her ears, but she doesn't mind. She's more thankful she can wear them despite her workplace's disapproval. She drags her scooter out of the snow, forgoing a helmet as she hops on and takes the slow route to work.

It's a Sunday and no one sane is out, the roads are clear. 4:52, alone together with her bike's shuddering engine. Her mind is blank as she rides, letting herself ignore the familiar speck of red reflected in her wing mirrors.

"A city of great glass, built tall and fragile, pretending to be transparent despite the stains, hiding everything behind great masks, because personal action does not matter if there is another to shun, blame and scorn. Seek not to keep in check those who are 'holy', but persecute those who are 'unholy' to the Almighty."

She doesn't lose her way, even if she hasn't been in the city long enough to say she's more than a temporary visitor. Her sense of direction has always been good, no matter the occasion.

The winter has been hindering her however. She's never cared much about her body temperature, it's the snow that piles up on the road, blankets that tuck in the frost underneath. She doesn't mind it too much, even if her boss doesn't agree with her. Giving her grief over how slow she is. She tries not to let it bother her, instead taking in the way the sunrise reflects off the sleet.

"Neon crosses polluting the air, the devoted on their knees in great masses, praying that they are virtuous in the eyes of the Almighty no matter their transgressions"

She likes her job, she honestly does. It fills her with a little bit of satisfaction being able to provide a service. And as much as she otherwise hates the shipping company she works with, she does appreciate that they were willing to waive away the blatantly obvious fake information she fed them about her background. Laws here were a lot more lenient than her homeland it seemed.

"Monuments rise in the image of victors, crushing the torn history of their land, forgiving the heinous in the name of nationalistic pride. The dark being rewritten by people masquerading as gods. They are platinum prophets and protectors. Outsiders, invaders and heretics be damned."

She toils away anyway with little reward. Packing and stacking, hidden away in rattling and groaning shipping containers not too dissimilar to the one she hid away in not too long ago.

The roar of the sea drowns it all out.

Lilith hums as she makes her usual rounds, stopping by post offices, complexes and apartment lots, peddling who-knows-what in brown packages big and small. Delivery was easily her favourite part of this job, it was relaxing just riding around and letting her mind wander, instead of being stuck inside the dingy warehouse, fan blaring and hearing the roar and groan of the port and its docked ships, alone save for the whirl of forklifts, scissor lifts and other picker machinery far deeper into the warehouse. She wasn't qualified yet to drive them, so here she was stuck with the repetition of packing boxes with products, taping and printing off delivery slips, organising the transport for big orders and strapping smaller local ones to her bike. It was truly mind-numbing and she hated it. But money was money, for as low paying as it was, the hours made up for it. There was always work to be done in a warehouse, it never ended, a ceaseless cog grinding day in and day out. Lilith truly wished that she could find another job, she was done doing food delivery though, that yielded her even less than here. So here in the cold, huddling into her coat as she shivered. She puts her idle hands to work as the sea heaves in tandem.

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ACT 2 - 84 : 09 First Breath

Lilith, when she was small, dreamed of seeing the ocean. She knew what it was... Generally. All, gentle sandy dunes, rocks and shells brushed up to the shore, crustaceans, and gulls eking out a living from the crumbs scattered in the coral forests.

What Lillith didn't realize was, it was only in the stories she'd learned about the beach...

With a hungry roar, the water scraped with ferocity, scrambling for purchase, only to come away with weathered rock too weak to withstand the onslaught a moment longer. Withered with age, everything returns to the sea eventually. Maybe that's why, now that Lillith is nearly an adult, trying not to let her monsters resurface, she sits before the broken pier by the ancient lighthouse with a sailor stare and a pulse that burns for one last voyage into deeper, uncharted waters.

"People would do well to heed the tales of sirens and the destruction they leave in their wake."

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Lots of Lillith's childhood was spent sneaking out at dusk to teach herself to swim. Something she had been curious about since the first time she'd seen the shore on a little youth-group outing. Soft sand, sea spray, black rocks... Lillith was smitten with it all. She spent more time in the water than on land back then, she'd pretend she was a mermaid from the second she hit the water, up until she was dragged back to the shore, sopping wet as a mangy dog. Impatiently waiting for storms and big waves to die so she could dive right back in. At some point, a Prior would recognise her absence, and a Sister would come to collect her. And she'd wave goodbye to the only friend she'd have.

When Lillith was 10, she fucked up a dive for the first time. Freezing in shock, her whole body locked up, sinking in the cold, early morning water with no oxygen in her lungs. Dark seconds filled with despair and acceptance as she was pulled yet deeper...

Until, with a shuddering jolt, the spell was lifted, and she had control of her limbs again so she finally reoriented herself and came up for a gasp of air.

Lilith had never felt such a rush like a failed, ruined attempt.

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After dark each night, Lillith went out to the shore, shivering in the cold. But feeling more alert and alive than she did back at the dorms. She'd slowly take, step after step into the freezing water, letting the sea greedily swallow her, it creeps up to her neck, and she closes her eyes and lets her body float, shoulder length blue hair fanned out. She feels so at home, she imagines herself as a beautiful mermaid, just for a little while longer...

Lillith finishes her shift at the warehouse and hops back on her bike. She has her next job at the local gym lined up in a few hours, and then it's a closing night shift at the bar. Her bills don't get paid by themselves. She gets to watch the sun rise and set though, so it's not all bad.

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She's freezing. Sopping wet from the rain, has gotten yelled at a few times tonight for her shit tableside manner, but she still trudges home because there's no one else to do it for her

Starting a new life had been surprisingly easy. She's a stowaway that ran away from home, with very little to her name aside from the clothes on her back and her first name.

She's finally away, but at what cost? Everything looks much prettier from the shore.

Now she's got three jobs and little time for anything else. She wants to get places, and get there fast because she's got bills to pay and a life to pave.

But is this really what you wanted? Weariness in your bones, not an ounce of passion for anything. You want to lay down and die but that means those back home proven right about you. You just want to make it.

So she'll toil away until she feels, until she physically can't anymore. She detests the idea of giving up, even though deep down she knows she already has, and she's just keeping herself busy as she withers away to nothing. She's never been passionate about anything in her

sheltered life. Her doctrine always made her uneasy, talk of evil and suffering seemed to single her out as the other.

Her hobbies are next to none unless you count swimming until everything burns and she can barely move.

She's got nothing better to do anyway...

"Im really far down..." the way the sunlight turns to rays under the surface has a grip on her heart.

ACT 3 - 11 : 99 Timers

Lillith finds it impossible not to notice the dull red looming over everyone, the small clocks ticking down in tandem above people's heads. It started with dreams, prophetic things that seemed to spell the doom of the handful of people she cared for. But they never happened, they'd just bring her to tears and fill her with genuine fear for the few people she loved. Possible realities that weren't guaranteed. She went to her best friend Olivia, sobbing and wailing, begging for her belief that she would never leave her side, apologising again and again for all the times she wasn't there for her one and only friend. She swore profusely- that she wouldn't let it happen again, she'd always be around and here and she'd never be left alone ever again. Her one and only friend smiled sadly at that.

When she starts seeing vivid images of Olivia dying on repeat in reflective surfaces, she races to her side and proclaims to protect her from everything that has and will ever threaten to hurt her. She does so with righteous anger and determination so much so that Olivia in turn, expresses how much love she has for Lillith.

Lilith sees her best friend less and less over the years, naturally drifting apart. The dreams stop, the visions don't, but the urgency is gone. She stops jumping at shadows, and whenever she does, the girl in the reflections has long since changed from her best friend to herself. It's been a year since she last heard from her closest friend, since their heartfelt goodbye as Lillith snuck onto a boat headed for bigger and better, and the world has been cold and lonely since.

"Have you heard from her lately?"

She gets a phone call one day out of the blue.

"Not recently no, she must not think that we're that close anymore if she isn't willing to even text me anymore" She laughs humorlessly.

There's a deathly still pause, and Lillith starts to think she's in one of her nightmares again.

"Lillith... She... I don't know how to tell you this, but I'm sorry, she-"

Lilith sits for a long time with the dial tone.

...

Lilith prays for the first time in years and decides she doesn't feel any better at all. The mirror laughs as it shows Lillith in freefall, hitting the pavement with a sickening splat. She never prays again.

Lilith thinks about how she never told Olivia how much she truly loved her. How much she went back on all her promises and platitudes about always being there for her. She thinks about her smiles and her touch, her warm hugs and her lovely smell and the closed eye stare she gives and how cold her hand feels at the funeral and how her best friend died because of her and she knew it was going to happen and she did nothing to stop it.

She covers up all the mirrors in her room and makes sure all windows have curtains over them at all times.

She ignores the giant red fucking numbers floating above people's heads counting down to their doom and cries and cries and cries, begging forgiveness from a corpse she last spoke to a year ago.

She's not surprised to see her own counter, but it's the only one that constantly changes. Different numbers, a different time each instance she dares to take a look. The date of her death is never certain.

She has something left to do here before she dies. Before she lays herself to rest too late because her best friend took the spot meant for her in the afterlife.

ACT 4 - 67 : 23 Ice Cold Blues

One day, Lilith finds her way into money, by sheer coincidence, an error made by her bank means she's rolling in money. Lillith makes sure to spend it just as fast as she gets it. She wonders if her mother would hate to see who she's become. But that just makes the urge to get rid of her money much more turbulent. Bury the shame in the material, the sin and the absence left behind. No more reasons to stick around when there's nothing left to lose. She buys a motorbike then, jet black and sleek and everything she's always wanted, a way to pack up and leave with her few possessions whenever she wanted. Not that she had anywhere to go, not that she was able to leave when she's tied down with three jobs while simultaneously failing her degree.

Hairline fractures riddle her body, each new agony digging deeper and deeper, letting that yawning abyss emerge in place of her heart and mind. Maybe, just maybe, she should have died years ago. If she was meant to live, why would the world be showing her all the signs, if

she was to live, why was it to be in isolation. Lillith wasn't a stranger to working with a bad hand, but with walls closing in around her, the end was drawing near. The timer ticks ever so slowly, solemn and haunting.

She heads to her third job, showering in the back, switching hi-vis for a skimpy waitress uniform, some sleazy bar job that she'd applied to, originally trying for a bartending position, instead it ended up being sniped. Lillith had been worried, but she guesses they felt pity for her because they took her on as a night roster waitress even if it wasn't listed initially. So here she is, basically flashing her underwear as she mops floors and helps tidy up for closing. She grits her teeth, super fucking embarrassing being stared at like this, but a job's a job. She needs the money badly. Her stomach grumbles as she works, she's only had liquor from this morning, it sloshes around in her, reminding her of how painfully inadequate of a meal whiskey is.

She winces as a stomach cramp threatens to have her keeling over herself. But she steels herself against it, slowly making her way to closing time.

The snow has fallen thick and freezing, Lillith braces herself against the cold, bundling into her signature beanie and black scarf that she may or may not have stolen. It's still not enough, and like always she staggers with frozen limbs to her scooter. She trips and falls, eyes slick with tears borne from exhaustion and for just a little while, she lays there in the cold.

Drip, drip, drip

The snow comes down feeling as heavy as a deluge, as it turns to water against her weak body.

When Lillith was 10, she fucked up a dive for the first time. Freezing in shock, her whole body locked up, sinking in the cold, early morning water with no oxygen in her lungs. Dark seconds filled with despair and acceptance as she was pulled yet deeper... With a shuddering jolt, the spell was lifted, and she had control of her limbs again so, lucid against the panicking of her body, she pulls her body out of the water. She coughs and pants as she breaks the surface and makes her way slowly, reluctantly, to the shore. She sits there for a long while in the sand, taking in the blazing sun and the shivers across her shocked body.

Lillith had never felt such a rush like a failed, ruined attempt.

ACT 5 - 00 : 39 Blinding suns

Lillith was beyond exhausted going into university, her attendance was plummeting, but tuition costs this month couldn't possibly be covered by that miracle error now that it had been all but

drained. It had covered her first two semesters, but now she was well and truly alone, working away most of her days just to keep up with her costs, she could barely attend lectures and the dorms weren't cheap as an 'international' student. Always falling behind.

Fuck she was so tired, her three jobs weren't enough to keep up and she doesn't physically have enough time in her days to fit in a fourth. Her legs feel like lead as she slowly ascends the stairs up to the rooftop. She pauses as she makes it to the top. She'd expected the door to be unlocked, but it sits wide open. Someone was already here. Her heart leaps in her chest, settling slowly and uncomfortably. She pauses by the door. Maybe they'd leave? She didn't exactly plan on being seen.

Well, she might as well check it out. She takes a deep breath and walks out onto the rooftop. It's littered with trash, rusting old furniture left unloved. But it's otherwise clean and barren. That's nothing new, she'd scouted out this specific rooftop before. What is new is there's someone standing near the railings at the edge of the roof. Her shoes are off and her brilliant orange hair trails messily down her back, she stands with her hands daintily held behind her back.

Lillith blinks, and takes in the scene, the empty rooftop, her shoes off, standing right at the edge, gripping the railing like she was at war with herself, the girl seems to make up her mind then and there, slowly making to move... And that's when Lillith, her heart catching in her throat, realises her timer is counting down from seven, to six, to five-

"Hey!" Lilith takes a step forward, and the girl turns around and...

Fuck she's beautiful. She has soft features and a fierce aura to her, she looks surprised but after a flash of too many emotions to count she gives her a wary but not unkind smile.

"Oh, hello! I wasn't expecting anyone else here today."

Lillith swallows, trying to stop her eyes from trailing her body hungrily "uh, yeah, ditto."

Her timer stutters, freezing at 00:00:05-

"..."

"...?"

"Did you come to get me?" She asks, looking serious.

Lillith blinks, that wording was kind of weird "No?"

"Good." The girl seems to breathe easier "I should go, she's all yours." She bends down to pick up her shoes, pushing some hair behind her ear as she does.

The fiery haired girl turns and walks away, passing Lillith with a smile brighter than she's ever been used to. And Lillith immediately misses her warmth.

When Lillith was 10 she fucked up a dive for the first time, hitting the water too fast and too heavy that it sent a shock through her system, locking up all her limbs and shutting her brain off for precious seconds as she sunk, the sunlight overhead growing weaker as she fell. Sickening thoughts of disappearing for good under the waves as her limbs failed to move. But then, the spell was lifted and she could move again, her body desperately clawing at the water, rising quickly to the surface as her mind roiled, she gasped, greedily sucking in air as she made her way weakly to the shore, her arms and legs weak.

Lillith has never felt anything more terrifying than a failed, ruined attempt.

"Hey." Lillith grabs the other girl's arm without thinking and the startled girl turns to face her with rapt attention.

"I dunno what you were thinking, but shit, there are far better ways to deal with those feelings than that, there just has to be."

The other girl purses her lips and slowly searches her face and body, looking for something, Lillith doesn't know what, and feels stupid and slackjawed under her gaze. Her hand that grabbed her feels sweaty and Lillith starts to regret saying anything. It wasn't her business, it really wasn't. She doesn't know this girl and she probably doesn't care what some dumbfuck stranger has to say about her coping mechanisms-

The girl finds... Who knows what, but she seems to acknowledge Lillith's words. "Thanks". She says simply. "I'll be okay". She seems to promise. "I'll see you around"

"Yeah, Okay..."

Lillith watches her head disappear down the stairs, her timer has changed, ticking down slowly in that same rhythm. But now it's some far off number that has Lillith breathing a sigh in relief.

Drip, drip, drip

Lillith makes sure she's gone for sure, *or I don't know, wishing she would come back for her.* Before she turns to the spot the girl had once stood. Lillith takes a deep breath and climbs over the railing. Her blood starts to run cold, the wind threatens to rip her from her spot, and her heart starts to pound. *Fuck*

Lillith takes a deep breath like she's about to take a dive and she takes one step, hovering over the empty air. *Shit.*

She goes to take a second step but pauses. That girl, she was here for the exact same reason, trying the same thing as her, steeling her nerves to take a 15 storey jump, because of who knows why, there could be so many reasons, yeah, who knows what her deal was.

Fuck she was probably going to hate her, reaching out to stop her, when all she was gonna do was jump off a fucking building because she felt so fucking trapped and scared and miserable and she didn't know what she was doing and she's all on her own now, shit she had no idea what she was gonna do, go home, crawl into bed and cry because she doesn't have the strength anymore to cook anything to fill her stomach and shes so fucking tired and hungry and she wants to live just one day without everything overwhelming her, everything pointing to her death, all the roads, inactions and actions leading to her own demise. She's helpless to stop it, the snow continues to fall and bury her alive...

Come on, it's so easy, just let go.

She thinks about the girl, she was pretty, so fucking pretty she's jealous. Fuck her for coming before her, shes stuck in her own head because of some bitch trying to off herself, selfishly pushing her death into the hands of her friends like they wouldn't give a shit, fuck, didnt she understand how hurt they would feel, how fucking awful it feels to know that you werent enough to make their life more bearable to live fucking dammit fuck fuck fuck FUCK.

With a jolt, she springs back and grips the railing like it was a lifeline, emotions flood her past the pounding of her pulse. Guilt, regret, anger, sadness and despair. *Dammit*

Like the coward she is, she steps away from the ledge.

ACT 6 - 28 : 39 Rocky Starts

When Lilith arrived in Freemans Bay, she'd only come with the clothes on her back and a backpack stuffed with whatever random junk she thought she'd find useful. She had no plan except to get the fuck away from her homeland. So here she was, effectively homeless, wandering around taking in the sights of the big city. She felt a familiar pull, one she'd felt her whole life, towards who knows where but she followed it. She'd learned to trust her instincts, honed by years of hiding away from sight, hosting magic shows for stuffed animals, empty bottles and whatever constituted a friend at the time. She was self taught, but her connection to the arcane was undeniable, she could divine signs from bones, tell the future with tarot cards, random shit like that. A constant in her life she'd never given much thought, the world gave her signs, and she was paying attention. She'd only ever shared her connection with the Arcane with Olivia. Who she'd shared a heartfelt goodbye with before sneaking down to the docks. She was gutted Olivia wasn't coming with her, but the girl was devoted to her marriage, arranged as it was. They'd fought quite a lot during the months leading up to Lilith's 18th birthday about it. But she ended up going to her wedding anyway. And god she didn't regret it. She fucking hated the groom, in his 30's getting married to a 19 year old. Didn't matter what good Olivia managed to see in a creep like him, Lilith wasn't okay with it. But god, she would never ruin Olivia's big

day. So she stood tall and proud, towering over the other bridesmaids and standing out even more by rebelling against wearing a dress. She looked perfectly fine in a suit, thank-you-very-much.

Her first year had been rough, and she'd been lucky. She would work so long as there was accommodation. She'd lived in soup kitchens and massage parlors, anyplace that would give her a chance despite her non-existent background. Not that her background would really do her much good, as a shunned church girl who'd only ever worked odds and ends over the summer period. Who also happened to ruin a good few of her employment opportunities with summer flings.

For as long as she was able to recognise what attraction felt like, it had always been girls on her mind. And while younger she had certainly learned her lesson expressing this unnatural inclination to her commune peers she found pretty, the girls that came and summered by the shore certainly didn't have any problems with her, at least, for the most part. She'd learned, over the years, that being intersex wasn't normal.

The praying-specifically-for-her part of sermons and being treated like she held the devil's own curse certainly baked that into her. But she'd had to learn it an additional time, being with girls over the summer, no taking off her pants, only kissing, and nothing further than that. Though, some parents who found out certainly didn't act like it was "just kissing" she still has a scar on her stomach from a hysterical mother that stabbed her and she still remembers how deathly still she'd gone when she was staring down the barrel of a shotgun held by a very pissed off father screaming at her to stay away from his daughter.

All in all, that miracle bank error had saved her ass big time. It allowed her to pursue higher schooling, something that she'd never thought she'd achieve on her own as well as finally secure herself a place to stay at Seven Sisters dorms.

Now though, rolling into winter a year after she came ashore, she's not sure if that was the right move. Hell, maybe all of it was the wrong move. Maybe it shouldn't be a surprise that she found herself climbing the stairs to the rooftop that sunny evening.

ACT 7 - 16 : 53 Limit Break

Lillith starts to wonder, what if she had gotten there too late, why did she stop for some girl that just so happened to be there first, who beat her to her planned spot. What if it had been her instead, with no one there to stop her. Her final moments, spent in a city she'd not gotten familiar with, far from home. Shit. She hated this, lying in her own misery. Alcohol calms her just a little bit. Having wasted what little money she can spare on a bottle of vodka. She screams, throwing the bottle and hearing it smash against the wall in a wet splash. In those shards, she sees that girl again in free fall. She turns away and hides under the covers with her eyes shut before she sees the body hit the floor.

She's tired, she's so so tired. She ignores the mounting pile of letters on her nightstand, threatening her eviction. She's behind again. Fuck, she was so stupid, thinking she could make this work. She's thousands of miles from home drowning in her own self-pity, with no one to bail her out. She'd burned all her bridges and she refuses to go crawling back. What a mistake it was, going to university, but it's the only way out for her. She's sick of dead end jobs and building herself back up from nothing with every failure, every setback, every moment of weakness. She's struggling. Plain and simple, and she hates herself for it.

She stares up at an unfamiliar ceiling. She'd made it out, but at what cost? She was going to be scraping by for the rest of her life and god, is this really all she's going to amount to? It's been a whole year since she arrived in the city. And so far she's managed to pick up more jobs than she has time for and dumped all of her meagre savings into a business degree. Great. Yeah sure, having a degree that's desirable and opens up opportunities? Perfect. Excellent even. But it wouldn't mean jack squat if she ended up flunking out or being unable to pay for the rest of her tuition.

...

She hops on her motorbike, revving it up, driving fast and reckless. Her head pounds as she accelerates, straining the motor and swerving around a corner like a drag racer. Only to slam on the breaks and come to a skidding stop inches from a terrified girl crossing the road.

"What the Fuck are you *doing*?" She screeches "Watch it."

Firey hair... it's the same girl from yesterday, face twisted in anger, soon morphing into a hint of recognition.

"It's you... Small world".

They're sitting in a coffee shop now, escaping the cold. And Lillith isn't sure what to do with herself, she's not actually sure why she agreed to go along with this girl she doesn't know, but here she is. Watching the other girl happily order a ridiculously specific coffee order while Lillith settles for a straight black. Lillith watches the other girl intently, maybe too intently, tracing her soft features with her eyes, making her lips dry. God she was so fucking beautiful, and it seemed like she knew it with the way she dressed and wore complimentary makeup and lashes. Lillith realised she should probably say something... Like apologise for nearly running her over, shit!

"I uh, I'm sorry for nearly running you over, shoulda been watching out more." Lillith cringes internally "I was distracted"

"Uh huh." She says dismissively. All forgiven, she supposed? Lillith clears her throat "So uh, I've not seen you around much on campus." Or like, at all actually now that she thinks about it. And it's not like she's hard to miss.

She still doesn't look up at her "Been on leave, medical stuff. But now I'm back"

For the better part of the year? Must have been serious. But not really something to bring up over coffee (coffee date? Outing? Who knew.)

"Welcome back" She says lamely

"Thanks." Is the equally bland response.

She was striking out, hard. Though in all fairness this girl wasn't really giving her much to go off of. So why were they even doing this? She supposes buying coffee as an apology is polite, but sitting here awkwardly trading back one word question and answers probably wasn't either of their ideas of a good time. There had to be more to this that she was missing, maybe about yesterday..?

"Hey, just so you know. I'm not gonna, like, tell anyone about what happened yesterday. Whatever your business up there-" (not like either of them didn't know what she was contemplating) "-that's your own, and if i was in the same position i wouldn't want anyone going and spreading that around so I'm not about to do that to you."

She finally looks up at her, slightly shocked, but the expression is gone in an instant.

"Thank you" She smiles gratefully, it's a good look on her. "I actually really appreciate that. I was worried I'd have a bunch of people on my ass about it later, so thanks for covering for me." She nods to herself "Plus I don't really need a bunch of self assured people thinking they can save or fix me" She adds meaningfully.

Shit, well, Lillith could take a hint.

They finish their coffee, Lillith pays for the two of them and they both head out to weather the sleet and snow.

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"-and then we just kind of, got up and fucking left. It was insanely awkward Marie you have no idea" Lillith groans. "I'm getting second-hand embarrassment just talking about it, and it's something I did."

Lillith and Marie are baked on Lilliths couch. Usually Lillith hates hanging out at her own place, but weed isn't allowed at Marie's parents house so it's their only option.

Like usual, Lillith is manic as she tends to be with weed for some reason. Marie is busy pretending she's a slime-girl melting into the couch.

"I'm more surprised you stayed to chat honestly." Marie takes another hit, offers the blunt to Lillith who shakes her head and wrings her hands. "You still haven't told me how you two met"

Lillith chuckles "I'm not that antisocial am I?" Marie raises a pierced eyebrow "Actually, don't answer that. And I told you, we met on campus, complimented her hair. Yanno-" she motions to herself "like fire boy and water girl. She thought it was funny."

Marie knows that's horseshit because one, literally no one would know what Lillith was talking about and two, Lillith was such a dogshit liar. She didn't even have any tells, she was just so obvious.

Marie could probably get it out of her if she pulled the "no bullshit" card. But it's been a hot minute since she's managed to see the blue haired girl, something that has been genuinely worrying her. The two of them are fiercely independent and often times when they want to be alone won't be heard from for days. But it has been an entire month since Lillith and Marie last spoke. Marie only had Lillith's promise, which honestly made things worse.

The promise that if she was to do anything stupid, that she would organise her last will and testament to be sent to her alongside a letter containing her last words and goodbyes. Marie had spent many nights staring at her phone screen, ready to dial emergency services and dreading the arrival of a personalised letter full of apologies and goodbyes.

So, she lets Lillith have her secrets.

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Lillith does some asking around. Well, a *lot* of asking around. She sometimes sees who she now knows is 'Ava Dawn' in the halls, but never can track her down. She doesn't have any obligations like clubs or anything like that, she mostly is in and out of classes except to be an incredibly popular social butterfly flitting from clique to clique, welcome in all groups like they all scramble over themselves to make way for her. Lillith can see that she has an effect on people. The same effect that has her desperately asking around for a girl that for all intents and purposes could be avoiding her for all she knows.

She's sitting with Marie at their usual bench in the smokers spot. Marie's laughing at a shitty joke she made but sobers up and looks past Lillith. The blue haired girl follows her gaze and it's Ava, who's making her way right over to the two.

"Hotness inbound *hello*" Marie snickers

"Aren't you straight?" Lillith hisses back, not for the first- and probably not last, time. She rolls her eyes "Yeah but I have eyes, duh."

"Whats this about eyes?" Ava asks.

Lillith colours while Marie flashes her best friend a wide grin.

"Uh, nothing, it was stupid." Lillith says quickly. "So what brings you here?"

“You, obviously” she points at Lillith.

“Me? Did I do something?”

She fixes Lillith a *look* “yes, you've been asking around for me apparently and now ive got several people a day asking me if im gay because the local lesbian is apparently singling me out-”

“Well, are you?” Marie asks

“-and it's starting to get on my nerves” she finishes, not bothering to look at Marie. “You've got my attention, now what do you want from me?”

Lillith suppresses a cringe, she did not plan this out nearly as well as she thought.

“Would it be lame to say I didn't really know?”

Judging by the expression on Ava's face that was *not* the right thing to say.

She steps right into Lillith's personal space. Bright orange and red hair brushes Lillith's shoulders and she stands up straighter at that. Lillith is no slouch in the height department so Ava has to tilt her head to look up slightly at her and it'd be a cute moment if she didn't look so royally pissed off at her.

“Stop asking about me, don't talk to me, leave me the fuck *alone*.”

She stalks off after that and Marie whistles.

“Wow. Yeah I'm super sure she laughed at your ‘fireboy and watergirl’ comparison huh?” She snarks. At Lillith's shoulder droop she shows pity on her. “The fuck was her problem though, you okay Lilli?”

Lillith was lost. Fuck, she really shouldn't have been asking after her. But she was just desperate to know if she was okay and... She didn't know, maybe they'd become friends or some shit? It just felt too weird, too final. Like that talk in the coffee shop (if whatever that was could even constitute a ‘talk’) meant that they'd go their separate ways and never speak about what happened on the rooftop ever again. Call it looking out for her fellow girl, but she wanted to make sure that Ava didn't feel like she was alone, that the weight she carried that lead her to the rooftop didn't need to be so overbearing, so all-encompassing. Maybe she was just being selfish.

—

Lilith finds herself at the lighthouse, watching the light rove across the ocean as the sun began to set. The lighthouse at point view was only really maintained once a year, so until then Lillith was all alone. She parks her bike somewhere out of sight and strips down to her unassuming undergarments, padding over with bare feet to her favourite spot to dive from. It was a lot riskier than back home, where she'd just plodded through the water from the shore until it was deep enough to stretch her weary limbs out. She remembers so many people, so many girls she'd shared her love of the ocean with, and now she's alone. Because she was just another fling, just an experiment, someone to have some fun with then leave when summer was over. Those types had come around each year, and for awhile, she finally found home in each and every one of them. But summer doesn't last forever, and the reverie finally wore off. Hushed apologies, cold shoulders, breakup-texts, admittances that they weren't gay, disgust when it came down to do the nasty. Lilith was so utterly familiar with being the one chasing after people like a kicked puppy, hoping that maybe one of them would take her away, far away from home and they could build a life together. Entwine their lives so irrevocably that she'd never be left lonely again. She bared her soul for each pretty face that came around and each and every time they gave her a new reason to let her heart freeze over.

Drip, drip, drip

She can't see her own timer, she's refused to look at it since the day she was told she bore a striking resemblance to her mother. "You have her face" The church pastor had said pityingly. Lillith fucking hates how she looks. She fucking hates her mother for leaving her behind. Whatever, she'll become the biggest, ugliest dyke Freemans Bay has ever seen.

Drip, drip, drip

She takes a deep breath, staring down at the black rocks, she just needs to clear them and she'll be good. She's done this countless times before. *Breathe in.*

She hits the water and suddenly she feels alive. She's weightless, limitless and she feels some semblance of kinship with the water she drowns in. She opens her eyes and lets herself sink lower. It's beautiful, she thinks, the way her hair flows around her face, tangling in the water. Her head is clear for the first time in days. God she's missed this.

Oh right, need air

She goes up and breaks through to the surface with a gasp and a breathy laugh.

Lilith will stay out here for hours, as the sun goes to die.

—

Lilith sweats, fanning herself as she lounges atop an old folding chair. Her second job, during midday, is at a dingy run down gym that is sparsely populated. Shes surprised the place is still

open with the AC burning hot all the damn time. The one good thing about this job was that she got to sit down and only become sapient when someone approached the front desk. But, fuck, shes beat. Deliveries this morning were rough and she was running behind, got yelled at by her boss. She's just been tired lately, worn to the bone trying to keep up. She's left Marie on read today. She'll just have to make it up to her later.

She wipes her sweaty hands on a dirty towel. Stepping outside and sitting on the curb to escape the sweltering heat. She's done for the day, at least until she starts her next shift at the bar in the evening. She'd had to skip classes today, when she'd been called about a shift here. So she was even further behind in her assignments. Great.

She'd just have to find some time to catch up during her downtime, probably should go do that now. But she was running a bit low on alcohol, and she needed more of her vice. She hops on her bike, flips a middle finger at the gym and shoots off towards her favourite liquor store.

She parks her bike in her usual spot outside and heads in. A chime announcing her arrival. She nods to the bored teen manning the counter and moves towards the back where they keep whiskey. She's reaching for her favourite brand when she hears shuffling and muffled voices in the freezer area. She hears a muffled shout and hissed whispers. A boy and a girl it sounds like, having some kind of disagreement. She goes to turn away but remembers her promise to a blonde haired girl years ago. To always protect her, be there for her, and decides she cannot turn a blind eye.

She opens the door quietly and slinks in. There's a tall guy, blondie, blue eyes and muscular looming over a smaller girl who- fuck, its Ava. Of course it is, shes been running into her literally everywhere why the hell not? The irony dies in her head as she notices her pleading expression and the way she's held too tight by the meathead. She slams the door to the fridge shut and both Ava and the guy turn at the sound. Ava wriggles out of his grip and runs over to Lillith, clinging to her.

"What do you want, fag?" The guy grunts out, narrowing his eyes at the way Ava clings to Lillith. "We're not done here babe" he calls over to Ava.

"I think you are" Lillith says coolly, not liking the tone he was taking.

"You're not involved in this dyke, no ones talking to you." Jock says

"Don't talk to her like that" Ava snaps.

Lillith clenches her fists. Ready and waiting for him to make his move.

"Really? You'd choose her over me? Guess the rumours were right about you being loose." He laughs "Whatever, bitch. I'm out of here"

He shoves past Lillith and almost throws the door in her face, and when the door swings back to slam shut, he's long gone.

"Fuck was his problem?" Lillith hisses. Turning to Ava who's still gripping her arm tight.

"Just a boy who couldn't get what he wanted, you know how it is"

Lillith didn't know how it was. But she did understand her meaning.

"Are you alright? Did he hurt you?"

Ava laughs "him? No he didn't, just tried being intimidating, but he didn't hurt me. He's all talk"

"So long as youre okay" Lillith shrugs

They leave the freezer, Ava loops her arm through Lilliths as they walk. Lillith picks out two bottles of the whiskey she was intending to buy and the teen at the counter rings her up. They mumble something as the two of them leave and Ava flashes them a big smile that flusters them.

They walk out the doors arm in arm-

A punch to the face sends Lillith staggering back, Ava steadies her with a cry. Lillith drops the bag of whiskey bottles and they clank loudly as she looks up. It's the jock looking much too smug. Lillith rises, squares her shoulders and raises her fists. *This cunt.*

"*That* was for stealing my girl, bitch. Why did you even get involved, shes not gay you idio-"

Lillith invokes her rules of combat, she lashes out with a stomp to his knee, causing him to buckle forwards. She steps in close and slams her callused fist into his face before he can recover. She grabs his hair as he cries out and steadies it so she can introduce her forehead to his nose. He blindly swings and connects with her left eye with a crunch. She snarls in pain and kicks him in the groin, leaving him to fall back on his ass and stepping back towards Ava. Ready for his next move. He lies there in the snow, panting and groaning in pain.

"You fucking animal" He screeches, wiping his bloody nose. He scrambles to his feet and spits in Lilliths direction, before limping off into the snow.

Lillith lets out a sigh of relief, before returning to a stunned Ava, one eye squinted as she gives her a grin.

"Holy fuck, are you alright Lillith?" She says, reaching gingerly for her injured eye.

Lillith ducks her head, grabbing Ava's hand and holding it for a few beats "Yeah, im good, he just managed to clip me. Doesn't hurt too bad." Was probably gonna bruise but would look a lot worse than it actually felt.

They stand there in the cold, warm breaths puffing out little clouds.

"Say, wanna head back to mine?" Lillith suggests.

—

They stumble through Lilliths front door. Lillith hoisting Ava up by the thighs so they could kiss while she carried her.. She kicks the door closed behind them and on uneven footing moves across the room and collapses on the couch with an exhale, knocking over some empty bottles in the process . Hot breaths intermingling as they kiss, deepening as they lay on the couch, hands roving across bodies. They part with a gasp, saliva suspended between them.

Drip, drip, drip

"Lillith" Ava all but groans. "I want you" Her hips buck with need, with want and desire for the blue haired girl and she's all but happy to oblige.

—

They lay in bed together, Lillith cleaning up for the both of them. She flops back down next to Ava, who curls into her side.

"Wont you take me away?" She whispers, and Lillith succumbs to the sirens sweet song. "If nothing keeps you here, why don't you leave with me?"

She can't... But what if she could. She's packed up and left before with nothing but the clothes on her back, and is anything she's built here truly made to last? Four jobs and a heart yet colder, a degree she's flunking and new friends she's left in the dark.

"Okay" Lillith breathes. "I've got you now, don't let go"

I'll be yours