

What my Hands Forgot

The last time I folded a paper crane, I must have been around 10 years old. My grandma's fingers helped me tighten the creases in the paper. And now I'm alone. At the same table where it happened, and I cannot remember how to do it. The paper sits in front of me, all crumbled and messy, and for the first time in years, I wish someone were here to smooth the paper for me.

But the only thing that greets me in return is stubborn silence. Not even the sound of electricity.

I try once again. My hands seem too clumsy, the paper far too thin. It tears a little in one of the corners, and something flashes in me. It's a mix of sadness and anger, something desperate to remember and yet unable to.

I throw the paper on the ground, as if it burned me.

Then I stand up and head to my grandma's cassette collection. She loved music. And here is the evidence of her love. Neat little stacks of so much music, Elvis, Michael Jackson, and Whitney Houston, to name a few. She used to listen to music with her brothers when the night was too long, or something was wrong. It was their little ritual.

I put it in the cassette player. Unchained melody, a song my grandma adored, comes on, and I retreat through the house, looking at pictures. Smiling faces, fishing trips, weddings, photos from vacations... Not a phone in sight.

The truth is that I'm running. Always. I don't know why I do it, I guess it makes me feel smothered. Like, I can't breathe properly because people expect me to be there all the time, to watch so many movies, listen to this, and comment on that. It's exhausting. And I just want to be left alone. I don't know how to be there for people because I'm not even there for myself.

I wish I could go back to my childhood. When the summers meant swimming in the lake, laughing while my brother fell over a rock while playing football with my cousins. When technology was something you knew existed, but it didn't control every aspect of your life. When we were all together.

Now it's just me.

I sometimes imagine myself sitting on the front porch, dust collecting in my hair, body frozen from mistreatment, waiting for someone to come back like a dog waiting for its owner.

They're not coming back.

But that doesn't stop me from waiting.

I didn't cry at the funeral. There was nothing inside of me. Just like any other day, I sat there and stared at what's supposed to be someone I deeply love, and I did nothing.

People were sobbing, and I remember thinking how annoying it was. That they didn't even know her, and that I'm supposed to be the one doing it.

The first time I came to this cabin and played one of her old cassettes, I crumbled to the floor like someone pulled the rug from underneath me. Because it was years later, and this song is still here, still playing like when she was alive.

All the good memories that happened because we were present in the moment. Not on a phone, not online. Present. Her fingers touched it, and it wasn't Spotify; it wasn't something you could play whenever you wanted to. It was there like a testament that objects survive people.

And that hurt more than if someone slapped me.

I miss her. Her food and the way she laughed, how she always danced between the tables in the kitchen. I miss her smile and the colour of her eyes. I miss her all the time, and that's not the right way to live. One leg in the past, fingers clinging to it like they might keep it still.

But I cannot go back to how things were. They change all the time; another model is made, something that will replace the previous version. That's just life.

I can hide and miss someone, but the world will move on without me.

So, I try again.

And again.

And again.

Until I get it.

This time, my paper crane looks messy. It's slightly crooked to one side and awkwardly placed on the end of the table. But it's there.

I stare at it for a while.

No, not perfect.

But I'm trying.