

# Tales About You

by Christian Bell

You said you stopped writing because someone killed your muse. Assassinated, shot out of the sky with a high-powered rifle. When your muse hit the ground, there was a loud groaning thud, a rumbling shockwave that went through buildings and beyond into the network of roads that stretch into baked desert. You, though, were trapped in a room, no windows, no doors, voice stripped from your soul.

\* \* \*

You whisper to me through a dream. Let me drown. Your torso below the gray water line and hands extended up. Your pose suggests being swallowed, a fate you won't resist. I'm splashing trying to get to you, and there are cold hands and arms below the surface trying to touch me. Your angel locks, your sculpted beauty—it's dissolving below the water. Let me drown. I won't, but I can't stop it. Tomorrow night, I will return.

\* \* \*

You, over and over and over again. Yet I'm still afraid to die.

\* \* \*

You are me after I'm me. More succinctly, you are my future self. We don't actually meet, and the communication is one-sided, but I assume you exist. There was that one time at the carnival—I thought I saw you walk past the ferris wheel and into the woods. I followed you, my path your faint footsteps, until I stumbled upon a pack of flannel kids smoking weed. They gave me the yeah, so, look. I lost you then. I hope you made it back to when you were. I hope there are superheroes in your time. I hope you've learned all the lessons. Me, I never do, but it has to happen someday, doesn't it?

\* \* \*

You told me, I have a new muse. Good for you, I said, but I thought, why the fuck do you need a muse? If I stop writing, it's because I've got nothing to say or have plainly just lost how to say it. Grow up, I'm thinking, and stop believing there's some imaginary

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winged barely clothed stick figure of a woman who's giving you writing mojo. But then you looked at me, eyes ground deep into your skull like never before, and said, my new muse is the ghost of my former muse, and damn, I knew what you meant.

