Language

by Jill Chan

I know a friend who speaks five languages.

She expresses herself best in English. But occasionally, she would burst into Chinese, recovering some word lost since childhood, picking it up like it was a seashell she almost stepped on.

The thing with language is it is so malleable. People living in different cities sometimes couldn't understand each other even when they speak the same language. Accent is another thing. But languages absorb other languages, changing so much that they are virtually unrecognisable.

I'd like to think that love is like that. We live to love. Each person we speak with speaks a different language. Think of Babel. Think of that sky we're trying to reach since we were born. We look up and never know when we'll reach it. Perhaps even knowing it's an impossibility, this reaching, this striving to love like it's there becoming something we need.

Like language. Indispensable. Necessary. Essential.

For expression, for livelihood, for living.

How do you talk to someone who doesn't speak your language? You love them. You look at them. You think that the city you're in is a language you learned to speak. Go there.

The night is falling in this city. It is quiet, as quiet as language itself, without words.

I'm saying that love is not just a language, it is there to be here, to reach us like the night sky.

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