

In Which Lovers Separate, As Always

by XXXX

We used to find ourselves watching a World War II documentary, but from the periphery of our vision; because our tongues would be swishing against each other, and we'd be breathing each other's wind; and we wouldn't be as in to it as we used to but we would go along so as to not offend the other's pride.

We didn't like each other like we used to, but we didn't want to hurt each other. So we'd look at Hitler making a speech from the corner of our eye, while the other, like Sartre's, stays lazily behind to pretend we were so into it that we were ignoring our mutual fascination with history.

By the end of it all his spit just tastes like baby food that was processed too long, and it was too sticky and I could discern it from my own saliva, so I would pretend to pee afterward but all I would really do is spit. I'd flush the toilet so he wouldn't be suspicious.

When we held hands, it was strange. I could feel his hand. I would count the seconds until it was socially acceptable to let go, providing no surplus to the socially-necessary hand-holding time. Sometimes I would find reasons for my hand to escape, like a misplaced pen or a sudden itch that required immediate attention.

I also became aware of this layer of sweat the covered him at all times. I spoke to a friend who is now a doctor, and said that this layer of sweat exists for everyone. We had been so familiar that I began to see him as wrapped in this layer of liquid as if he were wrapped in cellophane. I rarely touched him anymore.

One day he said he was going to Palawan with his friends, to search for flowers and herbs. He was a herbalist from the national university. I said ok. I asked him to bring me back an undiscovered flower, and name it after me; and I told him this has been my wish for maybe as long as I remember. He said ok.

Then he never came back. I could ask where he is, but I never did. I sometimes see his activity on Facebook, and know that he is probably not in Palawan anymore; but that's ok. Then one day I got something in the mail. I thought it was junk, because who sends stuff over the mail anymore? It was from him. It was austere and mysterious. He liked doing things like that. This is why I fell in love with him in the first place, I recalled. This is why he was so special.

I opened it and it was a flower, squished and dried, but still beautiful. I have read about flowers many times. It was not something I had seen before. It came with a piece of paper that said: "This flower was found on the 7th of June, in the island of Palawan, and I named it after you."

I messaged him on Facebook and said thanks.

