

Monsters Cannot Hold Butterflies

I took your pictures down today.
Put them in a shoebox and taped it up tightly, as though I expected something to get out
Or maybe to try and get in.
Then I sat in that big chair we used to watch movies in, the one with the cocoa stain on
the arm,
And I wondered at how dark the room had become.
When I looked at the space above the TV I still saw you, dressed in that loose white
sweater and faded jeans, smiling that thousand-watt smile back at me.
But of course, you weren't there anymore.
That is past. As past as the old car you were sitting in when the shutter clicked.
I've also taken down the picture of us together at that resort where we saw the bear cubs.
I thought about tearing it in two and putting your half in the box but leaving my half up,
but I can't. I know what staring at that torn picture every day would do to me. And
although the idea of suicide has its attractions I'm not ready to do that yet.
Today.
This hour.
This minute.
This second.

After I sealed the box I had to open it again and rearrange some things.
The picture of us sitting under that big tree in the park, reading "Dracula" to each other,
had started near the top of the pile
So I had to put it deeper in the stack.
You see, although I never told you, that was the day I first wondered how long I could
hold onto you.
I first felt the fear of losing you that day under the tree, as Lucy was driven back into her
coffin and the brutal stake came down...
Maybe I had to bury that picture deeper in the box so that it, unlike poor Lucy, would not
rise again.
You were a glorious butterfly – beautiful, free, floating effortlessly from sunbeam to
sunbeam;
And I? I was a shambling monster, struggling to walk from here to there, hideous and
deformed to so many eyes – only to know your kind of freedom in my heart, in my
writing, and in your arms.
A monster whose grotesque paws were too clumsy to safely enfold such a fragile
treasure.
Everyone knows that
Monsters cannot hold butterflies.

There's a picture of you outside the store down the street from your house, a cold Coke in
your hand and sweat making your coffee-gold skin glisten.
That was taken before we met, but years later it was in the parking lot of that store where
you broke down and wept for your friend who'd been killed in the holdup.
I held you as you sobbed and I promised that I'd always be there for you.

And I always was.
When we first professed our love and you'd been afraid of being thrown away again and
you begged me to promise that I'd never leave you, I did so gladly.
And I never left. Not for a moment.
How strange that the one who needed the promise is the one who broke it.
Maybe promises mean different things to butterflies than they do to monsters.

Who will hold the butterfly now, I wonder?
Who will hear you whisper their name in your sleep, as you did mine?
Who will look into your eyes and see love lighting them like stars on a summer's night?
Maybe nobody today
But someday it will happen.
Butterflies are meant to be captured and cherished
Just as monsters are meant to be reviled and driven away.
The world has its scripts and we all have our roles to play.
Who will he be, the one who can finally keep your heart?
Really, I hope I never find out.
But part of me thinks that I may already know.
Just don't send him for your pictures. He can't have them.
He doesn't deserve them.
You wouldn't want them anyway.
Somehow they got covered with tear stains.
No, don't ask me how that happened.
Everyone knows that
Monsters never cry.

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