

'Diseased'

By Iman Hafizal

YOU

Honey milk warmth gliding across the tender hills of my face, gently caressing the sores of my wrinkles with the all the grace and beauty of a mother. This holy place was so magical you could almost taste the sweet crystals of happiness glinting, suspended in the air. The smell of the Earth changes when I am with you. It was like we fed off each other - a mutual relationship between us more fantastical that any eye who saw would instantly be blinded by grief, for the shock of need!

I need you, and you need me, like the two crows in that tall tale - lovers, united by destiny, shackled together by the bonds of time. It is a match as true as the circle of life, I will conquer the torments of this twisted Earth hand in hand with you. What is that? The Earth? No! The sky holds more dreams than you could ever reach for. I see it all as clear as the constellations, a map of my future with you. Riding the tides against the cold hard Earth, the North Star lighted like a beacon of hope. We will fly, far away into the night thousands of miles above ground, I will lock my eyes onto yours and you to mine and I shall wonder, as I already do, how difficult it was to obtain perfection. Your elegant, angular visage - a piece in itself, skin softer than the most expensive silks and furs, flushed pink features painted by the hand of God Himself. I hear it now, the angels singing for me, melodic ringing voices like bells in my head. You are all I need and all I shall ever pursue on this tiny, meaningless island. All I want to do is hold you.

HER

Does she even know? The feeling of her with me is like ... hands. Hundreds of hands smothering my face, jabbing, twisting, pulling, pinching, and yet her hands never once touch my face. Mine are tied in several loops in a guilty white knot with an iron guard welded to my third finger. The air between us gets heavy and even heavier with the air of disconnection the further she goes. And I do not know what to do. I breathe at her beck and call. I can only describe it like this. Imagine if you were thrown into a tornado. Only it didn't stop. You don't get thrown out or dragged down, but you become dizzier and more distant from the ground than you have ever been and no matter how hard you try, your pathetic attempts will never be enough. The storm doesn't care if she rips you open. Or rather she doesn't see you.

Right now, the storm sleeps. The past seems like a faint distant ghost, who knows where it went. There is nothing left for me to do. I can't move from her. I am scared to move at all, I don't know what she will do. I can't breathe underwater. From when she wakes, her eyes are glassed over, and her sick smile is pasted on her face like a Russian doll,

She is not just my wife.

When I first met her, she was as ethereal as an angel. She spoke and her words were like a riptide to my heart. I couldn't breathe then when she was around. Catching youth's sickness of love like it were just a dragonfly. She made my heart do flips and given me the courage to do things I never thought I could do. And I had never met another like her, so full of wonder and love. She was a magician. And I was under the wraps of her spells. All I ever wanted to do was be around her, just to see that magical world she could take me to. But now, all that is left is the magic. That dangerous mystification that stole her from reality, from me. From dragonfly to dragon. And as though the scaly beast became enraged and decreed that our cosy day to day life was not worth existing, it ruined our life. That ferocious wrath. Her mind snapped and the cold shiny pieces got lost in the cracks between the pavement. Life became a slow agonising walk on eggshells.

She didn't see that I want to be here, where the solid ground supports me.

For years we were fine, living by the law of life, getting by in a normal fashion. I don't understand what went wrong. Nothing was wrong. Nothing. Nothing at all.

She hated... something. Thinking back, her mouth would twitch, and her hands would fidget, staring out the window like a lonely dog during after-lunch telly. The window was her solitary place. Before she left, she was always there at the window, silent and thinking.

We had followed the hand of fate. I was a fisherman and I had finally caught the siren. We had woven pieces of ourselves together in the ultimate bond of life, creation. How could you break that?

I guess she couldn't answer.

And that's why I cannot move. The truth felt worse than any sickness I never had. I didn't feel her pain, even though we vowed to live and face struggles together. I had no idea how trapped she felt. Like a fool, only now, I understand - she was supposed to be free. I caught her wonder and light in a jar, and she couldn't push past the love she had woven with me. It broke her. *I* broke her, in the end.

How could I leave her when she did so much to stay?

