

# Only Ever as a Shadow

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my heart comes in through the window, sticking her hand carefully through the cut glass. when she holds me, it's like the embrace of a mother, my head in her lap and limbs in her arms. even the words she says are the same- or what should be the same at least, in a better life and world - 'you're going to be miserable for the rest of your life. you're going to let them do this to you, oh sweetheart no', in the most resigned and distraught of voices. trying to come closer to her for comfort, but her fingers dissipate into mist when they card through my hair.

i was looking at the brightest star in the sky and thinking about how the sun would not shine on me if it knew me by the sound of my voice. i was watching a boy by the drink station turn his head, like a string snapped, to look at me like i was a shadow. in that moment, i would've reached out and snapped his neck, if it meant that i could wear the movement of his body. little violent things, better suited for criminals than good students and followers of good faith.

but peter pan has his shadow and i have nothing. and a boy with a light laugh looks more like me than my heart does, when it comes in through a shattered frame, mothering and full of nothing but empty nurture.

if i went missing now, i know i'd never be found. i'd join the search party for myself, hand out flyers and posters, because none of these pictures and mirrors seem to reflect the truth.

so i'm not looking for wendy, and i'm not looking for hook. i don't want a mother and i don't need revenge. all i want is a love that i can be defined by, one that lights me up, so bright that i can see the shadow of my body laid out on the floor. like if i stand close enough to him i will be whole. that we can forget where one person ends and the other begins.

all the stars in the night sky, their shadows lost to the millions, distance stretching out endlessly between each body of light. i would scrape the light out of him if i could. it would be a hit and run, no trace of a witness. but i know i'd never do it, the same way i know that the sun would turn away it's very face if it had to hear my voice.

dear heart, i don't hate myself but there's a well inside of me. the frog in it can't see the sun, yet it feels it's light and knows it's touch. i'm in plato's cave. he



wouldn't understand. he was born out of it, somewhere in a beautiful inbetween that i'll never get the chance to see. i can't leave something tangible and known for a world full of sun crazed beasts and other unknown objects, no matter how much i dream. and i dream of it so often that it feels more real than anything else i see.

in my dreams the boy in the drink station never turns back. when i wake up, i always want more. to be the person that i know i am so badly that it hurts, stardust emphasis on the dust. my own constellation of pain, needle pricks in a blanket. most nights i can't even see it through the streetlight glare and their artificial rays. all the way back to the well, away from eden, and the sharpest corner of a cave. i want to burn alive sometimes, to be icarus- boy spreading out his wax wings in flight. still, the sun i know is impossibly embedded up above in an eternal overarching sky. and i've heard too many tales of falling to even dare.

so i don't think i'm a snake. and i don't think i've committed any terrible historical wrong, at least not anything bad enough to cause the downfall of humanity. there's no sin in my blood, but i believe in a god that condemns me, and sometimes it feels like they're the same thing.

all children grow up. i'm not boy icarus, with his body burnt into the retinas of the watchers down below. i'm not peter pan either, eternally young without a chance of change. i'm wendy. and i already know what kind of story this is, and how it's going to end from the very first lines.

when my heart comes in through the window, because it's never learnt how to take the door, she reaches out as if to hold me, and i let her, one last hurrah before i have to leave. softly, she promises a better ending, over and over again until i can barely distinguish one word from the next. and i let myself believe her, if only so that i can fall asleep at night with hope of waking up tomorrow.