

UNDER THOSE HOLEY CEILINGS

Asher Foster

Part One:

The ceiling was a peculiar one for a bedroom. It was similar to those you see in primary school classrooms; divided into squares with random holes that as a child you wondered if you could throw your pencil in. All your classmates tried. You thought they were delusional for damaging the lead in their pencils so you kept your pink fluffy pen safely secured in your pencil case. It was simple back then under those holey ceilings.

Your gaze drifted to the single wooden door covered in a multitude of posters ranging from all different artists and bands. Lady Gaga; Queen; Taylor swift; Cave Town. Anyone would assume this room belonged to a girl. You knew it didn't. Ignoring the old posters you focus your attention on your new bed left by the old owners. It was stripped of its bedsheets and you couldn't help but wonder what their bedspread patterns have been. *Pink, perhaps. Or maybe something fancier like magenta and purple?* You thought. *I wish my parents allowed me to have colourful sheets.* Your gaze snapped away from the bed immediately at the sound of the creaky door opening.

“Wow this is a... pretty room,” your mum said as she gazed upon the posters covering the door, all the way to the old pink lampshade still resting on the bedside table. “The realtors told me the previous owners had a son. I guess they were wrong.”

They weren't, you thought, but never spoke aloud.

“Well, help me with the rest of the boxes,” she said, spinning in the direction of the hallway. “Oh, and we'll need to take these stupid posters down too.” With one yank, she rips the Lady Gaga poster in half in an attempt to remove it swiftly. “Oh bother, we'll start on that later. Come on.”



As your mother exits the room, your gaze is trapped on half of Lady Gaga's face. Underneath, the section where your mum tore through, the plain brown wooden door peaks through, taunting the life you're set to live. You knew that this time things wouldn't be so simple under those holey ceilings.

Part Two:

Instead of paying attention to the teacher like you were supposed to be doing, your gaze caught on the same holey ceilings in your new English class. They must be ceilings that all schools use, not just primary, you thought. However unlike primary school, no one was flinging their pencils at the ceilings.

Your gaze fell on your pen you'd been fiddling with all throughout the lesson. Black. It was just a simple black pen with no colour popping out. Nothing like the pink fluffy pen your friend Kate gifted you for your eighth birthday. Your mum threw it out a week later. You missed that pen.

The posters in this class room were nothing like that on the door in your bedroom. They consisted of COVID awareness, anti-bullying, and no phone rules. You examined the anti-bullying poster closer and discovered how vague it was. It talked nothing about how you "shouldn't bully" just that if you are being bullied to talk to someone you trust. You couldn't think of a person.

"Psst, could I please borrow a pen?" a voice whispered from beside you. Up until that moment you had been completely lost in the decor of this room, completely forgetting about the presents of your classmates.

"Yeah, sure," you mundanely responded, turning to face your classmate only. The moment your gaze latched onto his, your mind was pulled into the depth of his ocean eyes like you lost all recognition on how to swim. And you didn't know if you wanted to. *Beautiful.*



The sudden clatter that echoed through your English classroom snapped you from your trance. Glancing down you realised it was the sound of your pen slipping from your hand that hit the floor.

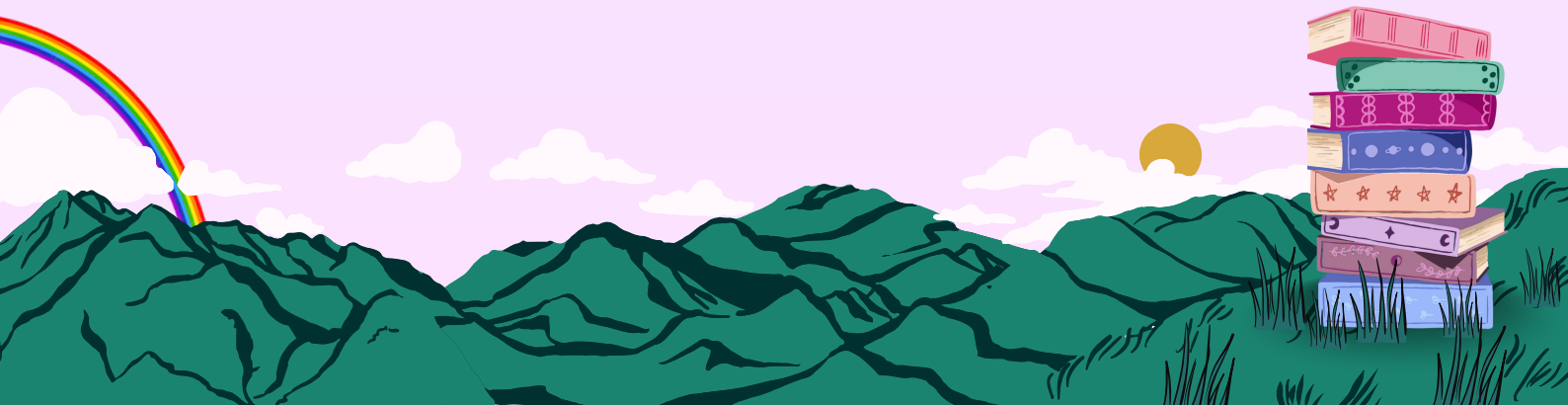
The stranger chuckled slightly while bending to pick up the fallen pen. “Thanks,” he smiled unabashedly.

The heat warming on your cheeks caused you to snap your attention back to the front of class. However, throughout the rest of the lesson you sneaked careful glances back at the stranger, in hopes to consume the marvellous view for a little bit longer. You were careful not to draw your attention for too long, in hopes he didn’t notice. It seemed as if he was a lamp in a dark room and you were nothing but a helpless moth, entranced by his shine.

His hair was a soft brown, almost blonde. You thought of your old friend Kate from primary and remembered her hair being a similar colour. You always liked Kate's hair. He even had similar facial features to Kate, such as his sharp jawline and deep ocean eyes. *Oh, those deep ocean eyes.* Perhaps it was the fact that he reminded you so much of your childhood best friend, but nonetheless you were completely lost in the allure of his beauty.

The bell rang to end the class, interrupting your flow of fascination. A disappointed thumb beat in your heart at the thought of leaving. Never did you think you’d be so disheartened to leave an English class.

“Thanks for the pen,” the stranger said, dangerously close to your ear. You watched as he exited the classroom, his dark blonde hair bouncing as he walked. Before he reached the door he gave you one last smile that tugged at your heartstrings before vanishing from sight.



Finally after collecting yourself, you brought your attention down to the pen he left at your desk and your speeding heart pulled to a sudden stop. A note lies underneath with a range of numbers spelling out a phone number with the name 'Adam' written next to it.

Part Three:

Beneath the holey ceilings of your newfound room, lacking the ray of colours that once coated your wooden door, you sat on your plain bedspread blissfully typing away at your phone. You and Adam had been texting all week. In class you would sneak glances in each other's direction with a subtle "hello" every now and then, saving all the talk for later. While giggling to your phone, your mother burst through the door without any respect to knock.

"Dinner's ready—Oh...what's got you smiling like that?" She said playfully, crossing her arms over her chest leaning noisily over your bed.

Instinctively you switched your phone off, pulling it close to your chest, praying she didn't read the name displaying above the chat.

"Who's Adam?" She asked; her playful tone went out the window.

Crap.

"A, um, friend from school," you stuttered, holding your phone firmly over your speeding heart. *She can't know, she can't know, she can't know...can she?*

A dangerous pause hangs heavy in the room as your mother stands tall over your bed. For a moment you think it's over, no more further question about Adam, that she'll drop it and bring you down for dinner. But that was only wishful thinking and you knew it.



“Give me your phone,” she said.

Your heart dropped. “No.”

“Give it to me *now*, or forget dinner tonight.”

“What—”

“I don’t want you getting distracted from your school work because of some *phase* you think is real. You will give me your phone, come down for dinner, and afterwards you will complete any homework you have been assigned. Is that clear?”

You felt as if your heart had been ripped straight from your chest. As if your own mother, the person who’s purpose in your life is to protect you, sliced right through your very being and twisted the knife to inflict more damage. You couldn’t understand why she was so against your happiness, why she didn’t understand. You only nodded at her demands, secretly powering down your phone before handing it to her.

“Good. Now come eat your food before it gets cold,” she said before leaving you stranded in the emptiness of your own room.

How ironic, you thought, that you felt more at home under the holey ceilings of your English class than you do in the falsely promised safety of your own room.

