

New-Fallen Snow

- Grace Bieber

Trudging through the smooth uncreased snow, my heart was damp and sultry. Engulfed in the crunching and the sound of my short unsteady breaths I climbed on, knowing no other purpose or reason. The sky submerged in clouds made it impossible to tell whether it was day or night.

Left and right, metres away, groups of trees nestled closely, sharing their warmth. I turned slightly towards them, pushing one foot in their direction. The wind suddenly picked up, letting out a sharp wispy hiss in my direction. I shifted back toward the endless white, and continued forward.

As I drew closer into the bleached abyss, my view became gradually dim, and shaky. The scene before me trembled, ricocheting within the walls of my vision.

Oh, the sweet sharp sunlight was beginning to show its self...perhaps too sweet, but it felt good at the same time it was painful.

I woke up to find myself in a dark and dank room. The night seemed perfectly silent, yet so thick that any sound uttered would be buried. I lay motionless, waiting for the sun to come up.

What seemed like moments later, I felt someone gently shaking me. A voice delicate and pretty beckoned me to awake. *I must have drifted off...*

“Are you okay?” As reality established itself in front of me two gazing bright brown eyes appeared. As if pleading with me to survive, their focus did not shift from me.

“I’m fine.” The sound of my voice, seemed to be a force of its own, because the moment I spoke, a crack slid through her controlled expression. “You’re...okay...” she gasped, “I can’t believe it...I thought I’d lost you.” Her face fell onto my chest, breaking completely. I could feel her cold tears slip out and sink into my skin.

I lay there watching her cry for a while, running my hand through her silky black hair, in attempt to comfort her. Once her weeping had softened, I finally spoke up.

“Excuse me ma’am, but why are you crying over me?” She slowly raised her head, displaying a confused, frightened countenance. To halt her trembling lip, I quickly spoke, “I think you’ve mistaken me for someone else.”

With this, her expression became a little less disorientated. “Then, who are you?”

I opened my mouth to speak, and yet nothing came out. Her eyes stayed there, waiting for me, so I tried again. Still, my mouth was completely empty, as if someone has stolen the words right out of it. At last, I uttered, "I...I suppose I don't know."

Again, her expression transformed, becoming more and more passionate. She rested her head back against me, grasping tightly. "Oh...Akihiko...I was told this might happen...but I'm so happy that you're back. Don't worry, I'm sure that you'll get your memory back soon." She stood up, "In the meantime, I'll make some tea. I'm sure you're thirsty."

I was about to tell her that I really wasn't, that I didn't need anything from her, when she disappeared into another room. I sunk into the pillow letting out a great sigh. What was I going to do with her?

I couldn't disappoint her by leaving, and at the same time, how long could I stay here, pretending to be someone that I wasn't? And what if others came...people who recognized me?

It felt almost like I would be taking advantage of her, if I stayed, and yet, wasn't she believing that I was Akihiko out of her own will? Was it my fault if she was crazy, or my duty to correct her?

Well, if she believes that I have amnesia, then I can get by knowing nothing for awhile. Eventually, she'll have to figure it out. Sooner or later the real guy will show up, and she'll realize that I was telling the truth. Just a few days...I can't wait it out until then.

She brought out two cups of tea and set them down on a short table sitting by the bed. She pulled up a chair and sat on the other side of it. "Thank you." I said.

"I hope you like it. It's your favorite kind."

"It's very good." I replied. She smiled pleasantly, sipping her tea, gazing at me with her gentle eyes that always stared. Nervously, I swallowed mine, half choking, but hiding it behind a smile and a laugh. She laughed too.

"What's so funny?"

"Oh...um...a joke I remembered."

"A joke?"

"It's not exactly female-appropriate." Apparently that was the wrong thing to say.

She scowled, but then thankfully, quickly changed the subject. I supposed she too, did not wish to fight with me. "I'll take you to a doctor later, when you're feeling well enough to get up."

"Shouldn't we wait till mourning?"

"Huh? Oh. It is mourning. In Konaysha, almost every day is shadowy. Remember?"

I shook my head no. "Well, anyway, tell me when you feel better."

"I'm ready now."

She seemed both surprised and concerned. I slowly began to lift myself up. She stretched out her hand, "Here, let me help."

I pushed it aside, "No I'm fine," and with a grunt, lifted myself up.

The streets of Konaysha were busy and alive. They were a sight to see. My mind was so absorbed in it all, that a few feet of distance began to form between the girl and I. I think that she may have looked back once or twice, but I was too preoccupied to notice.

Every corner, every crack, except for the stone pathway, seemed to be occupied. Only five centimeters, at the most, remained unused between each building or stand, as if there was no space to be spared.

We twisted and turned beneath the shapeless gray sky, until we at last stopped in front of an old brown building. "This is it, Akihiko. Come on, take off your shoes."

I untied my boots, and then followed her in. It was a cold and damp place, worn down and decaying, however, the chipped and chafed linoleum floor shined to its zenith, and the dented walls were white as they were capable of being.

In the first room stood a tall desk, and behind it stood a young woman, and who appeared to be, her boyfriend. They stood against each other. The boy was whispering softly as his fingers slid across her face. The girl was giggling.

"Excuse me." Said the girl who had brought me, slightly frazzled, and slightly annoyed. When the two behind the desk continued what they were doing, she raised her voice, "Excuse me!"

That got their attention. The girl automatically flipped towards us, combing her hands through her hair, and repairing her appearance. Behind her, the embarrassed boy melted from sight.

"I'm sorry." She said, "What can I do for you?"

"I'm here to see the doctor."

"Oh, yes, right away. And what is the patient's name please, miss?"

"Akihiko."

"And the one who will be paying?"

"Aika."

She wrote all of this down into a thick, tattered book, and then glanced at the clock. It will be about a five-minute wait. Can I offer you some tea in the meantime?"

The waiting room was musty, and covered in shadows. Despite the dismal atmosphere, the walls were decorated in colorful pictures, and the floor was adorned with beautiful rugs and patterned furniture. However, despite their admirable attempts, the contrast of the joyful colors, against the exhausted building only made the room seem gloomier. It only increased the desperation, and hopelessness. If a starving man was not fed, then eventually, he would forget what it was like to be hungry, however, after a single bite of food, every sense would awaken, and his body would be desperately burning for more.

I sat down beside her on the couch. She calmly gulped her tea, studying the various pictures.

I sipped my tea slowly, releasing it back into my cup just as quickly. Now that my taste buds were coming back, I could no longer bear the mold-infected tea. I looked over at her, to see her reaction, and realized that she had not even noticed. Her tea was on the coffee table now, and her full attention forward.

"So, your name is Aika?"

She nodded, "Mmhm."

Concluding that she was busy, I looked down tracing the couches raised pattern with my fingers.

"That one's my favorite." She remarked suddenly.

I looked up at her, and her eyes at last met mine.

“That one, over there.” She pointed to a picture, far off by it’s self in the corner. I hadn’t seen that one. Different from the rest, this one was done in pale watercolor, containing two or three, swift brown lines.

“What do you see, Akihiko?”

I tilted my head to the side, then straight up. I squinted tightly. Still, no concrete image appeared before me.

“I think it looks like two hands, fit perfectly together like a puzzle, you see?”

It still looked like nothing, but I nodded. “Oh, yes. I see now.”

She smiled.

The girl who registered us then appeared in the entry. “He’s ready for you.”