

Bittersweet Valentine

By Alan Bennett Flagan

It crept up on me so stealthily, so slowly and silently, that when I finally surrendered, it was as if I had been that way always ~ in a state of surrender from the beginning. Perhaps that is what love is ~ a lovely surrender ~ and I have truly experienced it and felt it, and the proof is in the pain. Not a searing, shocking slap of pain across the face, but rather an ache, a gentle ache in my stomach and in my heart. There was no big showdown, no dramatic end to our duet... simply a subtle disintegration that insidiously came to inhabit the two of us. Without a clean-cut cleaving, the thing just dangled, perpetually torn and forever hurtful, if a dull hurtful.

I think that is the hardest part ~ the fact that we couldn't hack it off completely, that we let it hang there, swaying in the brutal wind of the coldest winter. Neither of us could bring ourselves to deliver the final merciful blow, neither one of us willing to risk such loneliness. It was too terrifying. After living together for almost a year and a half we had become a separate entity. There was me, there was him, there was us. Maybe our failure to merge the three was our downfall. Or it might have been what kept us together for so long. I don't know.

Yesterday was his birthday. I baked a chocolate marble cake and put it on the glass cake stand which he had brought with all his other kitchen stuff last summer. It's amazing to think how intertwined our possessions have become. At first I was certain I'd remember what belonged to whom, every item of clothing and each CD, and for a while I did. There would be fits and consternation over every missing t-shirt or pair of socks, and then I'd step back and secretly smile when I would come upon him in a piece of my clothing. Knowing that when someone asked him where he got it, he would say it was mine gave me an inexpressible thrill ~ the thrill of a partnership, of knowing someone so well that other people ask you questions about that person. I loved that I was the one who knew him the best, all his personality quirks, what he would or would not like, what he would or would not do. And I loved that he knew me and could answer the same questions. Knowing someone so well seemed a testament of true love; that such time and attention had been given by two people unites them in an often-disparate world.

I went grocery shopping early in the day. The first harsh spell of winter had descended. Wrapped in a thick scarf, hooded coat, and big clumsy gloves, I tread through bumpy paths of dirty, gray snow. Too cold for slush, the snow crunched and crackled beneath my feet. The wind was the worst ~ cruel, unrelenting, and violently whipping off the lake and down the cross streets. Huddled into myself, I walked hunched over, lowering my head and bunching up my shoulders to keep the scarf around my ears. The ears were always the coldest and most troublesome. They would take the cold, absorb it instantly, and hold onto it until inside, at which point they would heat up viciously ~ hot and throbbing and red as if stung and poisoned.

I never used to get cold. It seems to be a part of growing old. When young, I don't ever recall being too hot or cold ~ no matter how frigid it became, I would be fine in a snowsuit and hat and boots ~ able to play in the snowy forest behind our house for hours. In the most scorching of summers I could ride my bike all over the city, play hide and seek, and not shed a single drop of sweat. As I get older I am less resilient, more sensitive to the weather and the world, and less content with just about everything.

Walking through the grocery store I picked out the ingredients for his birthday dinner. I had cooked quite a bit since we had moved in together ~ being a freelance writer with a bit of savings in the bank afforded me such luxury. Most people don't think of cooking as a luxury, (and if I had to do it for years I probably wouldn't either), but my generation doesn't have to cook. Instead of a necessary burden, cooking was an event, a fun thing to do if one had the time.

I remember cooking an eight-hour tomato sauce, a recipe given to me by an Italian family, after having my heart broken by a one-night-stand. If I can just cook, I'll be fine. It was so simple, so methodical, so warm and inviting to create something in the kitchen. Working late into the night, with only the light above the stove staving off an all-encompassing darkness, and the heat of the burner driving away the cold of winter, I cooked the special sauce. Not for the boy who didn't care that I thought I loved

him, not for any gathering of friends the next day, and not for an assembly of family members; simply for me and my sanity. Since then cooking has been a comfort , a refuge and a barricade against the hurt, any hurt. Impending hurt.

Trudging back to the apartment, groceries hanging heavily at my sides, I made a mental plan of what to do first. I needed to mail out some packages from the post office. Had to get a USA Today from the gas station on the way. Call my parents. Send out a few job applications. Bake the cake, marinate the meat, and make the bed. My days were turning into a domestic haze, and I embraced them.

Paul was working steadily to make his ends meet while pursuing an acting career. I was more or less the housewife, without financial support of any kind, but I didn't mind. In all honesty I loved it. Cooking dinner for him when he came home, picking up his clothes in the hallway, lifting the toilet seat, closing the shower curtain ~ these little things are what I may one day miss, I thought, and they didn't seem so unforgivable. The labors of love were no longer as laborious.

I'd hear the clatter of keys at the door, his out-of-breath call, and I knew that the quiet of the day was over and the quiet of night was about to begin. He'd enter the kitchen and sit down to chicken curry with rice, or fettuccine alfredo with garlic bread, or rosemary chicken with a side of asparagus in a hollandaise sauce, and I'd serve him like the King of My Heart. He always did the dishes; that was the rule ~ I'd cook, he'd clean the dishes, and vice versa. It was almost like we were married, a thought that left me alternately thrilled and dismayed.

The idea of being comfortable was a repelling one. At some point in our lives we had been conditioned to fear and loathe such comfort. We were taught that comfort was stagnation and death, and surely not a good thing. We drew back from the monotony and recoiled at the thought of permanence, no matter how well things went. We held onto the bad stuff, the fights and disagreements and differences as though they would keep us from being trapped in a bad marriage. We didn't take much time to look around at how much better off we were than so much of the world. We didn't compare and contrast our relationship with the abundance of abusive, unhealthy, and loveless unions that passed by us each day. We didn't own up to what a good thing we had, and perhaps that was our problem.

There was no definitive moment at which things changed, no exact time when the course of our relationship altered and faltered. When we first moved into the apartment, after driving a fifteen-foot Ryder truck half-way across the country, we slept on Paul's twin bed in the middle of our living room. We pulled close to one another, trying not to fall off and onto the hardwood floor. We'd sit on the same floor during the day (we didn't even have a couch), trying to organize what belongings we had and hook up the phone and computer and figure out where to get food. It was awful and it was the best. We had done it, and we were together. I missed my friends and family, but I was with the man I loved, and he made it all right.

We leaned on and supported each other, learning our way around a new city and getting a feel for our new home. Walking through our neighborhood, I felt happiness at the thought that people saw us as a couple. Our names were on top of one another on the mailbox and seeing them there was at first disconcerting, and then filled me with awe. Look what we've done, what we've accomplished, I'd think to myself, ever amazed at our union.

It wasn't that I was in love with being in love. That had been done to death before. I really loved Paul. I loved him for himself, not for the fact that he made us a couple. I wouldn't have left my friends, my family, my job, my life, if I were merely in love with being in love. I did it because I was in love with him, and he had become my life in many ways, the best ways. I cannot write any more right now.

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The day is blindingly bright ~ white sun shoots from above, reflects off white snow from below. I am walking to the post office again, to mail my Mom a book and a letter briefly telling her that Paul and I are no longer romantically involved. I'm also sending some candy to a long-time friend. On my way back I'll pick up a newspaper.

Opting to get up each day instead of lying around in mourning, I must keep going. Keep walking, keep writing, keep cooking, keep reading... It is not the time to stay still. If I stop now, I fear I'll stop forever. Stillness will have to wait.

The gas station is out of newspapers. I arrive home in the middle of the day with nothing to show for my battle with the cold. Paul is in his room. The door is shut and the apartment is silent. Sun streams in through the windows, the hardwood floors glow like gold, the mottled leaves of an umbrella plant the only spot of life in our living room.

He was crying in the morning. At first I wasn't sure ~ his stereo was playing and the heat was clicking and sputtering in the living room ~ but I crept to my doorway to listen and heard the muffled sobs and cries behind his door. My initial response was disgust. I couldn't help it. What right had he to cry and sob like that? It had been his decision, his lack of feeling "in love" that brought about our "separation," as he called it.

The official letter had been placed on my bedside table late last night. He came out of the bedroom and said he had left it there. I waited a few minutes before reading it. I knew it would hurt, and I was afraid to go in there and be confronted with a letter that left no room for a response or another chance. So afraid.

His crying always pained me. The idea of him being sad or hurt in any way made my heart ache. It was a feeling I hadn't known, at least not for anyone other than my family. I could feel sympathy and empathy toward my friends and their sadness, but there was always some detachment, some distance. As Paul was in pain, so was I. No distance, no detachment. He cried for the both of us; he cried when I wouldn't.

Part of me still didn't believe. Even with the letter lying on my bed, even having read it twice, even with the words "separation" and "moving on" and "over" staring me in the face, indisputable and clear, I still didn't believe. It wouldn't register. Like reading the same sentence over and over while not paying attention, nothing got through or made sense.

To survive, to continue, I put up a block ~ an emotional clot that allowed me to carry on without breaking down. When I felt myself start to rupture I immediately picked up a book or popped in a video or turned on some music and danced. Eventually I knew it would come true ~ the day would arrive when I really didn't feel. But that didn't worry me ~ for some reason I understood that when the time came when I could deal with it, I would. There will always be a way to return and deal with these feelings that would destroy me if I let them happen today.

Yes, it's forced, yes it's unnatural, and yes it goes against everything I've ever believed. I once felt that it was impossible to turn feelings on and off. Just as I couldn't help but be in love with Paul, he couldn't help falling out of love with me. There's no blame here, no way to make feeling happen or force emotion that doesn't exist. But it is entirely possible to ignore it, to suppress it unconsciously, much like the way I had suppressed all doubts that we wouldn't last.

The power of such unconscious suppression runs deep. Up until Paul, I knew the seed of doubt, I paid attention to the far-away rumblings of a wrong decision or a forced feeling, and I followed those guttural instincts. But Paul and I had needed our love so badly ~ we needed to care for each other and be loved and give love to someone who wouldn't turn and throw it away. We had to be with each other to make the world okay, to reaffirm our faith in humanity, to give others and ourselves the hope of happiness, of togetherness. To end the ache of loneliness that we had known too well, if only for a moment, and in that moment we lived.

It was all new for me, for anyone who had planned and plotted and predicted in an effort to get a grasp on the precarious perches we balanced upon. Again there was a surrender ~ of order, of control, of manipulation ~ and it was good. Those first few weeks of dating ~ the heady rush of nervous excitement ~ the feeling of wanting and not wanting to walk into the restaurant where he waited ~ the not-knowing whether or not to leave him alone in my apartment when I left for work... I was always preoccupied with love then, a delicious disorder where all that was once important suddenly took on a new tint. Small matters dissolved and evaporated in the wake of our blossoming love.

Dare I say it? Should I admit to my falling? Is it all right to venture "I think I am" or "I might be" or "I could?" I can't quite remember how we did it. In many ways we had always been in love, always felt that this was the person for whom God or destiny or whatever intended us to find. We seemed to fall so easily, and we ignored our inherent differences in philosophy and thinking patterns, and rightfully so. No

two people are perfectly compatible, not unless one or both is lying or giving in to everything. We were aware of the work involved, and we threw ourselves into it as if we were restoring a grand old house we just purchased.

It was not a way of life to which I was accustomed. Like the house in my mind, I wanted it all done at some point. The idea of an ongoing task, the perpetual day-to-day care and work involved without a neatly completed outcome went against my need for order and clarity. There were moments when I couldn't stand the messiness, the incompleteness ~ I failed to appreciate the quivering beauty of such fluctuation. I wanted the deed done. I wanted to know for sure that we could fight and scream and still be beautifully bound to one another. I wanted that safety and assurance. We both did, and we put in our best efforts to restore the long-dormant house of love.

I need to do something else for a while.

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The temperature outside is hovering just above zero, and the wind-chill is dangerously lower. I have completed dinner, such as it is. Chicken breasts with oregano, tomatoes and onions in a salty soy sauce, and jasmine rice. Paul is at work and I've had to fill the hours with the television and a book. Mindless filler to fill my mind with meaningless but substantial circles so I won't have to think about anything. It's not working. There is a piercing pain in my stomach that is threatening to release itself in these lonely hours.

Cooking did nothing to relieve me of the impending, inevitable breakdown. And yet I will not allow myself to cry. It might be good at some point, but not just yet. I know that if I start crying I may never stop, that I will cry until I am carted off to a hospital and drugged into a state of numb bliss. So I can't start crying.

My hands are shaking. They always shake a little, but they are especially bad tonight. It is difficult to type this out, to gain simple control of my motions. I was distracted all through the afternoon. In the kitchen I forgot to take the chicken out of the oven and almost burnt it. I never do that. The exact time to turn off the heat, the exact moment to turn down the burner - they are usually etched into my mind and I just don't forget them. I don't know what happened. I can't stop shaking.

Maybe it's the cold. Today I could not manage to get warm. From the moment I woke up in the big bed alone I felt cold, and nothing I did ~ the scorching hot shower, the oven and stove turned to high in the kitchen, the clothes and robes on top of them ~ could make me warm. It was a cold from within, a cold I thought could kill someone. I was reminded of when old couples drive up to the top of some mountain to freeze to death together.

It's happening. The sudden stun and shock of the last two days is subsiding and the reality of our break-up is invading like this cold front. Undeniable and brutal. It seemed unreal and temporary ~ a slight mishap on the path of our intertwined lives, a little bump in the smooth sailing of our vessel, a small squall in the weathering of our lives ~ and it would soon pass and be done, and we, ever wiser and closer, would look back one day and be thankful.

I entertain myself with such thoughts, and don't know if it's good or bad. Will this help or hinder the situation? It would be good to know what to do, what would be best, to make the outcome a happy one. Will it be easier down the road if I feel the pain now? Even if that's so, I can't do it. I can't face that, not tonight, not tomorrow. And I can't write once again.

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"Did you want to sleep over?" I asked him late last night, giving in to the cold and hoping a friendship could be salvaged where we might occasionally share sleeping space on particularly icy evenings. We got into bed and held each other and I was at last warm.

I awoke as he was about to leave for work. Unsure if he was still in the apartment, I went to the bathroom for a drink of water. The pit in my stomach was gone, the worry and sense of loss had dissipated. Today would be a good day. Everything would be all right, everything would be okay. Stumbling into the living room, I laid down on the couch and turned on the television, pulling a blanket up to my neck and drawing my knees to my stomach to create a cocoon of heat.

He came and sat down by me for a moment, his head in a knit hat and his eyes stained with tears, looking like a little schoolboy who doesn't want to leave his mother. Maybe he remembered how good we were together, maybe the warmth of the bed, our bed, had rekindled his passion, his love, for me. Maybe he was cold and lonely and afraid. I had been doling out weak smiles and silence, and every so often saying that I was okay and not disappointed and didn't resent him. I wasn't yet ready to talk or explain or share in full.

In his quavering voice he said words of hope, words of possibility and regret, words that indicated we would get back together. He asked me what I wanted. I didn't know. I returned the question and he said that maybe he hadn't given me a fair chance. I said nothing. My sudden freedom, at first so unwanted and frightening, had been realized into a blessing, a test ~ one that I didn't know I needed until I took it and passed. That freedom was being threatened by his words, and as much as I wanted to believe and return to his arms, I knew that I couldn't.

He said good-bye and went out into the cold. I felt relief at being alone. I'd become accustomed to the solitude of my days and found comfort in the company of myself. I knew that many of my friends, Paul included, had assumed and believed that I was co-dependent, that I couldn't do anything without him, that I relied on him for happiness and well-being, and I knew that they were all wrong.

No one saw the hours I spent without him. The days and nights when he'd be at work and I lived out life alone. No one saw me eke out a social existence ~ meeting people in the coffeehouse down the street, chatting with the man who sold me my newspaper every day, going out to brunch with an old friend from home, harmlessly flirting with the sales guy at the clothing store ~ they saw only that I had moved in with Paul and nothing else. I think Paul felt it too.

I'd be asleep when he left in the morning, and be sitting on the couch when he came home at night. He didn't seem to realize that I had gotten up as soon as I heard the door close, spent much of the day in the city ~ wandering, reading, learning, talking, exploring, sharing, laughing, living ~ wrote and read on the train ride home, got groceries and cooked dinner, worked on job applications and writing samples and query letters, and then sat down for a moment of repose just before he walked in the door. To him I must have seemed a steady, sorry sight staying on the couch all day, and I have no doubt he resented my assumed laziness and life of leisure.

I never bothered with a defense, never pointed out all the work and labor and time that went into cooking all those dinners, or the hours spent writing, editing, reworking, and thinking that made up my mid-day. I didn't bring up the minutes it took to clean up the bathroom or the dirty dishes he left in the kitchen sink or pick up the socks by the bed and the inside-out underwear in the doorway ~ those minutes add up, and I was not being paid hourly. Not once did I defend myself, to him or anyone else, and in my silence I suppose there was acquiescence to all assumptions of weakness and co-dependence. But I knew, and that was enough.

From a big mug I sip at warm herbal tea, sweetened by two pink packets of Sweet and Low. It is a gray winter morning and I am, for the most part, content that I have found a writing voice these past few days, for it is this voice which is saving me and rescuing me from certain ruin and depression.

I don't think we'll ever stop loving each other. From the very beginning Paul had said we belonged together, and it is so true. In an early letter, he had written that he couldn't help loving me, that it was just the way he was made. It made sense in its simple way. We were made that way, made to love each other. That's what we do. It seems so clear, so easy, and yet it's the first thing to become obscured. Like a set of keys or the remote control ~ the things which we unwittingly rely upon the most ~ our loving each other is taken for granted, misplaced, and in a panic we search for it, needing it and cursing ourselves for not being more careful. Once found, we don't guard ourselves against it happening again ~ it is lost a few weeks later and once again appreciated in its brief glory upon rediscovery.

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On a Sunday morning in January I walk to the store again. Passing the tall, looming church of St. Gertrude, I crunch through snow and ice as sunlight splinters inescapable from all directions. The mid-morning mass is getting out, and the jubilant faces of the families show relief that it is over for another

week. I am reminded of the fact that I don't attend mass here, and for a moment I wonder if God will punish me, if that's what He or She is doing.

As I round each corner and cross every street, a remote part of me wishes that a high-speed truck will fly out of nowhere and knock me out of my body, relieving me of all blame. I envision it with appalling clarity and peace ~ a sick, giddy gladness ~ as the plastic bags of groceries are ripped from my hands, the vegetables and other ingredients for the stew strewn across gray-black slush, a yellow pepper comically rolling into a snow bank.

It will be a grand beef stew ~ in all five to six hours of simmering required, with ingredients added at each hour. Last night I called my Mom for the recipe, wanting to create something warm and thick in the midst of this desolate winter. Or maybe not even that. I wanted to return to our kitchen at home, where my brother and I would run to our seats as Mom scooped out the stew and Dad walked away from the television and we all sat there, happy and full, my brother and I oblivious to the work it took to get us there, and blissfully content in that oblivion.

In between adding ingredients and stirring, I will crochet. My grandmother had taught me, and since that week... oh, almost fifteen years ago, I have been working on a blanket. It has grown with me as I have grown up ~ a mainstay, whether being actively crocheted or lying forgotten in the back of a closet, only to be remembered in times of need and doubt. Crocheting was a comfort ~ it made me feel like I wasn't just wasting time, I was doing something and there was a beautiful, thick blanket to prove so. When I work on my blanket, I feel a little less lonely and sad. I am reminded of the rushing stream of love from my Grammy, an all-encompassing love that can only be given by grandparents to their grandchildren. It seems to me a pure love, not bound by any sort of obligation and unblighted by stifling proximity ~ the kind of thing that makes it difficult for teenagers to be friendly with their parents.

My Grandmother adores Paul, and he returns her adoration. They exchange gifts at Christmas, share secret smiles and jokes, and both have a compassionate love for animals, especially dogs, that I often wish I had retained. Their love is too good, too clear, to continue unbattered. My Grandma doesn't spend enough time in the world to have it matter much ~ her love can no longer be warped or wounded. She goes to the market and the mall and spends Sunday night eating dinner with my family.

Paul doesn't have that luxury. He is out there every day ~ vulnerable and open to the encroaching madness. It's not that he isn't strong, but even the most stalwart and fortified among us can be beaten down and dulled like the once-jagged rocks beneath a pounding surf.

When I was home last, I felt the pain and helplessness of love, of being loved. As my Grandmother and another distant family member spoke in the kitchen, I hovered out of sight at the top of the cellar stairs and listened like I did when I was ten. Gram was talking about me and Paul, and how we lived together in Chicago. She spoke of us with such pride, I could hear the beaming in her voice, and such love that my heart ached in its smallness. I was not worthy of such love, not from my Grandmother, nor from my Mom, not from my Paul, and for the first time I felt the horrible unrealized love ~ the feeling of not having the capacity for it, the ability to access it, or the knowledge of what to do with it.

What do we do with such love? How do we acknowledge and appreciate it to the fullest? And where does all the love go? I can imagine that some is absorbed ~ with such force and velocity and magnitude some must be absorbed. But what about the rest? Or is there not a saturation point? Do we have a bottomless reservoir for love?

I always maintained that we could never love enough, or be loved enough, that it wasn't possible to get too much or give too much, that the only worry was whether we'd run out. Now I don't know. Maybe there's a point when all the excess love is just wasted, where it simply runs off of us and evaporates. Or maybe love knows when it has reached a limit and then ceases to exist until it is needed again.

Paul and I still love each other. So much so that it makes us grieve and pain for the knowledge of what to do with our love. A part of me knows we are good together, that we are so much better than most couples out there, that our problems are minute and meaningless in comparison. I fear we have mistaken comfort for complacency, placed too high a price on passion and excitement and are giving up too easily, too soon. And a part of me feels we have done all we can do, and it is time to stop.

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It is very late at night or very early in the morning. The apartment is still and quiet, except when a heater clicks on or a blast of winter rushes against the window. A lamp glows on my desk so I can write this. Paul sleeps ~ I think he sleeps ~ alone in his own room. I cannot bring myself to crawl into my own empty bed.

It reminds me of the beginning months at my very first apartment in Boston. How I dreaded going back to that lonely emptiness at the end of the day, the gloomy moonlit expanses of hardwood floors, the drone of the refrigerator and the shocking silence when it would go off. Sometimes, just as I was about to walk up my front steps, I would pause, turn around, and go to the drugstore or newsstand, if only to forestall being alone. It didn't matter that I didn't know anyone ~ I simply couldn't walk into a dark empty apartment at certain moments.

Months later I basked in such solitude, happy living with myself, and no longer fearful of long nights alone. Something told me I could do it ~ I could live alone and like it and be all right. If that's the way it had to be, I would be okay. I hadn't always known that, and the revelation was both an empowering and a humbling one.

Tonight, after almost a year and a half of never having to be alone in these hours, I revisit the terror of solitary sleep. Even when we were miles apart visiting family or friends, I could sleep at night just knowing. Now there is nothing to know, and no one in whom to wrap myself when sleep slips away and restless unease keeps it at bay.

I want to shatter this silence with shrill screeching, scattering the false peace with sudden shouts. I want to pound on the floor and ceiling, bang on every door in the hallway, bring on the groggy anger of my neighbors, and prove that there is life going on, that it is only asleep, that it can still be roused and awakened and upset.

Most of all I want to walk into Paul's room and beg him to end our suffering, our mutual unhappiness. I want to tell him that we do belong together, that we always have and always will. There will never be anyone better, never anyone who cares as much, who loves as much as we do. I want to tell him that I'm sorry ~ for not communicating, for not letting him know that I never stopped loving him, for taking it all for granted, for putting off things and assuming we'd have another day to deal with them.

I want him to grow up, to get a grip on his own life and stop thinking that our relationship is hindering him when it is really giving him unseen strength and motivation. We empower one another, don't you see that? Together we can overcome anything ~ we've proven that countless times. We're a team, a pretty good one too, and even though we argue and disagree, we're still better off than we were before we fell in love.

But I won't say any of this to him. If he can't see it ~ if he won't see it ~ then maybe I am wrong. So many people still claim that the hardest part of any relationship or marriage is the first six months ~ after that it's supposed to be easier. For me, the beginning is the easy part ~ anyone can get along for a few months without killing each other. The tough part is the sustenance ~ the endurance and strength of a love to sustain itself through the years. Time is the greatest enemy ~ time, not death, is the great equalizer ~ and it threatens always to take away happiness: in its dulling effect on passion, its way of turning little annoyances into major arguments, and its petty march onward in the face of all emotional upheavals. Time never gives in. All of those moments when we think we're fighting each other are simply our misdirected battles with time.

We've proven ourselves steady through the changing seasons, and I sit silently awaiting Paul's arrival at agreement. It's not something I can force or rush or influence, and if our ships pass quietly in the cold darkness of this winter, then I will not go back. I will not retread the murky waters of the past, trying to come upon his wayward path as it gets washed away by waves of coming days. I will tend to my own ship, fill my own holes, chart my own course. And sometimes, late at night, I will think he is near me, sleeping in his own room as I cry alone in mine.

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