

Winter Water

A girl sat by the riverbank, watching white foam gather around rocks that peeked out from the slim street of water. The river lapped at the shore, overflowing like tears that departed from her blurry eyes every now and then. Her chest felt cold, devoid of the flame that once occupied it.

She closed her eyes, and memories started playing as if they were scenes from a vintage movie. The frames started out fuzzy and slowly focused until she could see every detail.

***Cut.** A park bench stood by a trail, surrounded by a blanket of russet-colored leaves. On it, two people sat shoulder to shoulder in the fading light. A faint breeze ruffled the bare skeletons of trees around them. The girl laid her head on the boy's shoulder, her heart warmed by a soft flame.*

***Cut.** The girl looked out a window misted with condensation. Heavy clouds loomed over hills covered in white. Not far away, children played in the snow, wrapped in layers of warm clothing. Their shrieks and shouts were in stark contrast to the stifling silence in the room. She closed the curtains and turned away from the window. Taking a bowl of warm soup, she sat by the side of the bed and fed the liquid to the boy. His pale face glistened with sweat.*

***Cut.** Ice was melting, running down from the mountains. Wispy white clouds floated in the ocean-blue sky. However, the warm embrace of spring did not reach this place. The cheap leather of the chair stuck to the girl's sweaty skin. The sterilized room smelled like*

alcohol mixed with something awful. Fluorescent lights flooded the space, making the bright room torture for her fatigued eyes. Her attention was locked on the sleeping figure on the bed, his chest barely moving. She closed her eyes.

Cut. *The shovels parted the dirt damp with the summer rain, the sopping mess echoing the thoughts in her mind. The humidity in the air made it hard to breathe. Or maybe it was just her tears, impatient to burst. She looked over the edge of the wooden box. The boy's face was peaceful, with no signs of illness. His cheeks, full of makeup, reclaimed its rosiness. The sounds of digging stopped, and she stepped back quietly as the lid of the coffin was placed shut. Tears made two long rivers down her face.*

Cut-

Shaking her head, the girl jolted back to the present. A thousand other memories waited in her mind, begging to be played. She imagined gathering them up and dumping them into the river, watching them float away in the soft waves. In her chest, an ember awakened, its light muted and delicate in a pile of ashen coals.

She stood. The squelch of her footsteps in the cold mud slowly faded. The next season will not find her waiting for it by the riverside again. Winter came early this year. Perhaps spring will, too.