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Haunted

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Author Bio

Kira Goodwin is a sophomore Math major with a double minor in Writing and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Apart from involvement in The Mercury, she is Co-President of Students Against Sexual Assault (SASA) and plays the clarinet in the conservatory. Kira loves cats, the color yellow (because it's like sunshine), and being quirky. She loves writing and is very excited to be included in this year's volume of The Mercury.

Haunted

Children, Broadripple is burning and the girls are getting sick off huffing glue up in the bathroom while your boyfriends pick up chicks.

And darling I'm lost.

I like to imagine it's him singing to me. That he's sorry and he misses me. That he didn't mean it. That he needs me. Because I need him. I need his warm breath tickling the inside of my ear when I wake up and find his arms around me. I need the 'I love you' he tells me every morning as I leave for work. I need the horrible British accent he attempts now and again to make me laugh when I'm mad at him.

I heard you whispering that night in fountain square. The trash filled streets made me wish we were heading home.

I miss him so much it hurts. Even more than the six stitches holding together the stab wound I took to the gut. I just wish she'd let me see him again. Let me touch his cool skin, look into his lime eyes and be allowed to be in love. I don't know who I am without him, and I lie here growing homesick. I think I feel him next to me, but then I realize it's my mind. And I try to get out of it but I can't; it just keeps running on and on and on...

There was love inside the basement where that woman used to lie in a sleeping bag we shared upon the floor almost every night. And darling I'm drunk, and everything that I have loved has turned to stone. So pack your bags and come back home.

We were in the basement. I was putting my bike away after my ten-mile ride when he came home drunk. He did that a lot. He'd get scared, and get drunk, and lash out. It wasn't his fault; it was the alcohol. That's why I never told anybody. But that day he'd lost his job. I didn't know. And when he saw me happy he couldn't take it. He took the scissors off of the table and drove them into my stomach. I dropped to the cold, concrete floor in that dark cave and felt as if I'd be stuck there, in that moment, for the rest of my life. I was clutching my gut and looking at my hands as they turned red. When I saw the scissors clatter to the ground in front of me I looked up to meet a gaping black hole and doe eyes. He couldn't believe what he had done. "I'm sorry...I'm sorry...I'm sorry..." he muttered as he paced back and forth, clutching his hair between his fists. "It hurts," I said, trying to bring him back to me. "Will you help me?" He rushed over and scooped me into his arms.

He laid me in the back seat of his pick-up and we drove to the hospital. I stared at the grey roof, growing confused as it gradually became pixilated. It was difficult to keep my eyes open. But once we were inside and he stood there with me in his arms, the image of distress, and the nurses came running, I knew I didn't have to anymore. He did it, he loves me, I could sleep.

And I'm wasted. You can taste it. Don't look at me that way, 'cause I'll be hanging from a rope. I will haunt you like a ghost.

We lied to the doctors, but I told my sister. And she made me leave him. Really though, she went into my house, packed my bags, and set me up at her place—I wasn't given a choice. But I just want to go home. I want to see him again, to be with him. I miss the way he used to say my name—I didn't need to

hear symphonies, or birds chirping, or sleigh bells ever again as long as I could hear him whisper ‘Maria’ to me every morning. He was everything. He still is everything.

If my woman was a fire, she’d burn out before I wake, and be replaced by pints of whiskey, cigarettes, and outer space.

They tell me I need help. I need to get out of bed. I need to talk to someone. I need to get over him. I need to eat. I need to stop playing *Broadripple is Burning* on an endless loop. Don’t they know that even if they turned it off it would keep cycling through my head? I need it. I need it to help me forget—to help me feel. All I am is numb. Thinking hurts. Speaking hurts. Living hurts. So I let *Broadripple* play through my mind again and again and again.

Then somebody moves and everything you thought you had has gone to shit. We’ve got a lot. Don’t ever forget that.

We were happy. We would go for bike rides together, laughing as the wind blew back our hair, smiling as we pedaled past the gardens filled with roses and lilies and daisies and flowers of all colors. Then we’d stop and rest our bikes against the sea wall, take off our shoes and tuck our socks inside of them, and he’d grab my hand pulling me up onto the wall, and together we’d jump down and run through the sand, leaving footprints as the grains stuck to our skin. When we got to the shore we would stand there, the tide rising and falling over our feet which were gradually going numb, and we’d just stare out at the wide, expansive, mass of blue, never more aware of the other’s presence or the hand that was tucked inside our own.

When I was sad, he’d sit and hold me, my head against his chest, his hand running through my hair, my hands playing with his shirt as his voice was making me melt. He’d be reading me *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, a book that never failed to make me feel better, for hundreds of reasons, but primarily because how can a book that ends with the line, “And even if somebody else has it much worse, that doesn’t really change the fact that you have what you have,” not make you feel better? Or at least allow you to accept your sadness for what it is.

He was amazing. It was only when he drank that he got bad. But should I have left all of that love because of the one time I overcooked the chicken so he pushed me down and I got a concussion? Or for that time I forgot to mention that I bought a new pair of shoes so he slammed me into the wall and I broke two ribs? Or for all of the times that he was so angry with himself that he’d get so close to me his spit was hitting my face and his hands were gripping my arms so hard they left bruises? I don’t think so. Because every time after he’d break down crying, and I’d cradle him in my arms as he mumbled, “I’m sorry...I’m sorry...I’m sorry...” over and over and over again.

And I wrote this on an airplane where the people looked like eggs. And when a woman that you loved was gone, she was bombing east Japan.

I never should have told my sister. But I can’t lie to her, she can read me too well and would’ve forced it out of me. So I lie here in bed and don’t leave. Their lives were better before I got here, now I’m all they think about. They whisper about me—I can hear it through the walls—they’re worried and they’re tired. They don’t know if I’ll be able to make it on my own. Every few hours someone comes in with a plate of food and a monologue, thinking that eventually I’ll

get up and move on. I think deep down though they know they can't let me off on my own, I'll just run back to him. I just want to go home to him, I never should've let them make me leave.

And don't fucking move, 'cause everything you thought you had will go to shit. We've got a lot. Don't you dare forget that.

I remember our wedding day. We were so happy. His parents were still alive back then. Four and a half years ago they died in a plane crash on their way to visit us, but that day they were very much alive and swinging. And the smile on his face was bigger than that of the Cheshire Cat's when only his grin remained. And mine made a matched set. I never felt warmer than when his hands held mine and we each said "I do," or happier than when he spun me around on that wooden dance floor.

And I'm wasted. You can taste it. Don't look at me that way, 'cause I'll be hanging from a rope. I will haunt you like a ghost.

He's all I think about. He's all I want. He's the only thing in life worth living for. I don't even notice my stitches because of how much larger the hole from missing him is. I just want to go home.

And I'm wasted. You can taste it. Don't look at me that way, 'cause I'll be hanging from a rope. I will haunt you like a ghost.

The song ends. But it's still here. Just like he's still here. These things, they stay with us, never really leaving, never really providing a definitive end. Can our hearts really completely let go of something that was once all we needed to survive?