

Honey Cough Drops

We lie in her bed together, our shoulders nestled side to side. Her hair has been the color of honey for a year now. My roommate tells me about her most recent ‘boy troubles’ as she holds her mother’s old, frayed teddy bear between her cold fingers.

“Think about all the good Karma you’ve been racking up,” I say. “If the Universe has frontloaded you with all these bad experiences, I’m sure it intends to send you some great things soon.”

A tired sigh escapes her lips. We’ve had this conversation before in its multiple different variations.

“I don’t believe in Karma anymore,” she says. “I’ve known a lot of good people who go through awful things. There is no Karma in death and loss.”

“Well, isn’t it a law of physics that everything has to be in balance?” I ask. I readjust my legs so they don’t dangle as much off the edge of the bed. Our feet touch and she doesn’t flinch.

“So?”

“Well, doesn’t there have to be something that keeps the good and the bad in balance? A Great Equalizer of some sort?”

She shakes her head and looks out the open window with a glassy stare. A storm pours loudly outside. The rain rhythmically hits and splatters on the bricks of our neighboring building as if it were a visual representation of the hard year we both had—a year plagued with the deaths of our grandfathers and the end of multiple romantic relationships.

I shift from my back to my side and nestle my face in her shoulder. She pulls the blinds down. In our new darkness, I can’t help but conjure the outline of my grandfather’s face. It happens to me when I least expect it.

I peek up to see her face right before we both fall asleep. She has her eyes closed and a single tear has already begun its long journey down her cheek. I don't have the words to say it, but I want to ask her why she can't realize what we have here in this room is enough.