

**Long Overdue**

by Vel Santillan

When you

–my coffee buddy down at Dunkin Donuts ‘til the break of dawn, who checked on me whenever I went home late, who treated me out for cinnamon rolls just because I was craving for them and had only ten pesos in my pocket; my bodyguard when I walked in Divisoria at night, who played the guitar just to hear me sing, who wrote me the first handwritten letter I’ve ever gotten from a non-relative human male –  
told me my beauty is gentle yet fierce

My hair –

*mimics the waves of the sea*

My name –

*rhymes with “hi”*

And said –

*“My world stops when you laugh.”*

I laughed. How could I have missed that?

*I laughed. Coz when I offered you forever, you gladly kicked your shoes and ran with me on the beach barefoot.*

– **We kicked the sand ‘til they kissed the waves–**

I laughed.

– **We laughed. We were two parts of the soul. Two sides of the same coin. –**

I was the warm to your cool

*the yin to your yang*

the wild to your calm

*the peace to your chaos*

**the light to your dark**

I laughed. You said you’d name our children Luke and Leia.

*But you begged me no. So we made a deal.*

–**No juniors. No mixing our names together. No geekdom references.**

*But fortune never smiles on people who say No.*

Let’s just hold off on our nerdazzle, shall we?

–**Okay, deal. –**

(pause)

There’s always something sad in piers and airports.

–**Someone is always leaving and someone gets left behind.**

–*But, we made it work.*

I wake up, grab my phone and tell you good morning.

*Come high noon, I tell you I’m in a meeting.*

– **Good morning! How are you? Fine, you? Good! Are you in a meeting? Yes, gotta go. Okay, take care. Love you. Love you, too. –** (repeat thrice)

Where are you?

Overtime.

Where are you?

Work.

Where are you?

*With friends from work.*

Where are you?

*Night out. Where are you?*

I'm right here. I'm always right behind you. Ready to give you a hand, an arm, a shoulder, an eye, an ear, my pieces, my soul. Me.

*But you aren't. Where are you?*

I'm right here.

*I was in the concrete jungle.*

I'm right here.

*I was making ends meet.*

I'm right here.

*I was lonely.*

I'm right here.

**-Where are you?**

**- I'm right here.**

**- Not with you.**

*I jumped from one dream to another.*

I scrambled along the way to catch up to you. I only had one plan.

*I had a grand plan: not*

**-To be with you.**

*But I offered you forever.*

I offered you me.

**-I'm sorry. Even if we burned bridges, we could always find a way to zip line through the ridges.**

I could still retrieve it through the recesses of my mind.

[# here is a constant mobile number being said again and again by someone]

I could still recite it (#) like an empty prayer.

My lips (#) stored it in its muscle memory.

Amazing (#), isn't it? (#)

(#)

**The number you have dialed is either invalid or not in use.**

I laughed when I found out her beauty –

*is gentle yet fierce*

her hair –

*mimics the waves of the sea*

her name –

*rhymes with “hi”*

Sometimes I hold my breath, close my eyes and see

*The time I held your hand,*

*the time we kicked the sand,*

*the time we tanned*

*and the time we planned...*

I kept them in memory and willed myself to go back.

**But we couldn't.**

Our memories like a movie reel before me.

**Cut. Edited.**

(pause)

**Our lives ahead of us. Time to let go.**

**Look back once in a while.**

**But never stop moving forward.**