

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.