

Out of Sight

December 13, 1998.

As the stars began to set and the sun began to rise, Walter took his final breath. He fell like a pine in the forest- no sound was made. His limp body folded over his red wagon, her note fell under his fingertips. The observatory filled with golden honey and washed away his tired soul. Ah- to see again.

In all my time at Sunrise Senior Living I never hated a patient as much as I did Walter Moon. Every morning I sat outside his room with his breakfast- lukewarm oatmeal with cinnamon and a black coffee. I could assess how our day would go by the way he took his first bite: spit it back into the bowl- average, spit it at me- a day of mild insults, ate it- absolute hell. The last day I saw Walter alive he ate his oatmeal and smiled at me.

I found his body at the Moon Observatory the day after he was released to his daughter for at-home hospice care. I was the only one who knew where to look. In-between the spitting, running over my foot with his wagon, and wiping his shit on the bathroom walls, Walter told me the mysteries of the universe and his life. He was an astronomer who lost his sight, and his wife, in a car accident. He kept his wife's belongings in a red wagon and never let it out of touch.

That's why I found myself running to the observatory after his daughter told me he *and* his wagon were missing. I can't describe what I felt when I saw him- for a fleeting moment I felt relieved, and then I felt alone? I saw the note resting at the end of his fingers. I read it. What a bastard.

December 12, 1971

Walter,

This is my final letter to you. After fifteen years of marriage, I've finally swallowed my pride and filed for a divorce. I fell in love with you because you were a dreamer, you always had your head in the sky. I'm leaving you for the same reason.

A few years ago I walked into the observatory and stood behind you as you searched for the double helix nebula. I stood there for an hour, waiting, hoping that you'd notice me. You didn't and I went home alone, again. It was our anniversary.

You've always had your eyes on something else and I've stayed out of sight for far too long. I'm writing this letter to you from our Best Western hotel room as you sit outside chasing the stars. I wonder if you remember that I'm here at all (Happy Anniversary). I've been envisioning what it will be like for us to drive home and to go our separate ways. I already feel so much peace.

-Liz