

Aftermath

by

Sarah Darling

Today, I realized how much you had become a part of who I am. I thought about you, and I couldn't stop. I traced 'uruz' on my wrist for the first time in over a month because it suddenly started hurting again, just like I suddenly thought of you again.

I never wrote about what happened. I never put it into words. I just stopped writing about you at all, just like I stopped texting you, stopped being your friend on Facebook, and stopped seeing you. What would I have written? You screwed up. I screwed up. And maybe I'm screwing up all over again.

I think I was a little bit in love with you. Or maybe the fact that it hurts even now just fools me into thinking so. But we were years in the making, only to shatter within seconds. Unfulfilled. And it wasn't just the mythical "Us" that broke. I think it broke me a little bit, too, just like I think I was a little bit in love with you. After all, there's now this little fragment of me that was completely composed by you.

I can't seem to bring myself to hate that.

No, I never wrote about what happened. This is the closest I've come.

You're the second male to ever hurt me that way. The first listened to me later that night, seven weeks ago, as I spoke with quiet fear, and he sobbed out that he was wrong, that you were wrong, that it was never my fault. He was sorry, even if you aren't.

Between the two of you, I will never be the same in so many ways.

It's kind of terrible, really. That a woman as beautiful, confident, strong, seductive, responsible, intelligent, and no-nonsense as I am has only ever fallen in love with the two men who hurt her the worst. God. I am a melodramatic, prattling fool.

I ignored it, both times, both men. I addressed the issue accordingly, and then went off with my life as though nothing had ever happened. I pretended that I still enjoyed being kissed with passion rather than sweetness and that I didn't want to jerk away anytime a male touched my wrist. I deluded myself that I'd always loved films and that I'd find a salsa partner who doesn't make me think of the way you whirled me about your living room. I imagined that the reason that tall, dark males now warrant second conversations is because tall, dark males are my "type," even though my "type" actually has blond curls.

But something did happen, both times, both men. I feel nervous whenever guys kiss me more than softly and I am immediately turned off and even frightened when they chance to wrap their hands around my wrist. I held movies in contempt before you and I started discussing them like literature and I've only been salsa dancing once since that night. The only reason tall, dark males catch my attention these days is because, from the corner of one eye, I almost mistake them for you.

I don't really need to write about what happened. No, not really.

The aftermath - the way my fingers trembled a tattoo on the steering wheel on the drive home, the way I winced through my essays the next day, the way that I am only now beginning to come to terms with it seven weeks later - is enough to write about. The aftermath says everything about what happened, without going into sordid details of betrayal and blame. What happened was never about the event.

Lost:

- My contempt for movies
- My ability to see a film without wondering what you thought of it
- A good salsa partner
- A pain-free right wrist
- A flair for rough play
- Countless good times with you
- Several good times with someone else
- At least a lifetime's worth of passionate kisses
- One friend on Facebook
- One Netflix customer
- One ounce of self-respect
- Two pounds of confidence
- Three tons of faith in the goodness of humanity

Gained:

- An appreciation of films
- A new writing style
- An analytical mindset
- A new "type" of male
- The discovery that I am good at cha-cha
- Time that used to be spent trying to figure you out
- A penchant for cuddling
- A fresh start
- Countless good times with other people
- Countless opportunities to make new friends
- At least a lifetime's worth of sweet kisses
- One Netflix customer
- One ton of self-respect
- Two pounds of confidence in the short-term
- Another two tons of confidence in the long-term
- Two pounds of faith in myself
- Three ounces of cynicism
- Recognition that what happened changed me
- The knowledge that what happened changed me for the better