Izzy Srivastava

Submission 3

It is very easy to forget

Sitting here, almost midnight, with a calculus final that feels like a guillotine hanging over my head

That I am made of stardust

That I am molecules that have been compressed and superheated and scattered across the ground,

Molecules that have made up much bigger and much smaller things than myself

And that when I am ashes,

I will be ashes that drift to the bottom of the river Ganges, sequester themselves beneath stones in the creek-bed at the Glen, wash up on the beaches of Sydney, sink into the soil of Ontario,

And lend whatever nutrients they have to a small, tenacious plant that will claw free of the dirt

It is very easy to forget

That we are all scientific miracles of exactly the right place and exactly the right time

And the person we bump into because we turned the corner too fast is existing in their own intricately woven web of a life, in which we appear as an extra, a background character, when we are the quirky protagonist of our own story

It is very easy to forget

That I am a soul hammered into shape by lifetimes

That the quicksand of trivialities does not have to suck the blood from my veins; the blows from Bane’s fists do not have to break my spine

And that I am not alone

Oh, I will see you when the stars slide out from behind the clouds

When they wink at me, shining purple and white and blue and green in a midnight sky that swallows them in the next instant

I will see you when rain sparks on the pavement

And soaks through my clothes

And runs down my face in a thousand tiny cold, clean touches

I will hear you when the algorithm throws me a curveball

Chords reverberating through my head as I stand, transfixed

I speak to you at night, in storms, in my head, in my fantasies,

And there are times when I could *swear* you are standing right next to me

There are times when I take two steps to the left to make room for you

And every now and then a memory of you will swallow me whole, a wave that knocks me under and pins me beneath it, though I am unwilling to struggle

And I will be right there again

Whether it’s running down that quiet hallway

Or grinning at you

Or stealing glances from my cozy corner of a pointless discussion

But it is excruciatingly easy to forget

You were this star

This quiet, quirky, mortal star that blinked into my sight

But by the time your light reached me, you were almost gone

And you burst

Your light and laughter and writing and memories and funny faces and goofy glances and gentle wisdom and warm heart strewn all across my life

You scattered yourself across an entire universe

My universe

And even though I just have to trust that it was your time—

Even though I find that impossible to hear, impossible to handle—

You left me with the remnants of a supernova

Searing through my life

I am a patchwork

Of cold winter nights and hot summer afternoons

Of anger and regret

Of confusion and certainty

It is very easy to forget

That I am made of stardust

And the fabric of you