

## WHEN THE STEAM FALLS

---

There was a blue moon the day I died. Snow hugged the city's cobbled buildings and its crystals glistened under the sparkling sky. The moon painted the land in azure light.

Cars zipped down the streets of my usual path. They brushed over the pillowed layer of white and hummed a low mechanical hymn as they passed. And through the blackened windows, curious faces peered up at the sky. I arrived late to the cafe that day but no customers or workers waited outside. I kept the lights off and sat in the window-lit room for a while. I sipped my tea, tapped the wooden counter, and watched the silhouettes of pedestrians dance across the blue light. With hesitance, I fished out my phone from the bottom of my bag and turned on its dirty screen. The unanswered messages piled in. I scrolled for a few minutes.

*When are you coming home?* A message dated four years ago. The last message from my sister. My migraine returned while I stared at the neglected text. I turned off my phone again.

I did not realise that I had fallen asleep until something soft brushed against my shin. It was familiar, and I was scared to open my eyes. But there was nothing there when I did. The cafe was stagnant. My tea went cold.

Dull taps of soft padded feet ran behind me and a shiver crept through my skin as I turned and saw a cat sat at the glass door. Its orange fur was vibrant against the blue backdrop, and it stared back at me inquisitively.

In seconds I bursted through the door and scooped the cat up into my arms. I squeezed it and sobbed at the sound of its familiar purr. My baby. My little pumpkin. He was alive. I clung to

him as we sunk into the snow, and he rubbed his head against my chin. We stayed like that until my phone dinged, and I held him with wobbling legs as I stumbled back into the cafe. A single message glowed.

*Where are you?*

A message from my sister.

My cat leapt from my arms and hurried to the door. He scratched the corner and looked back at me, meowing demandingly. I grabbed my phone, picked him up, and pushed out the door again. He mumbled and stared eagerly down the street. I had no idea what was happening, but I ran.

I followed the swivels of my cat's head and navigated the streets. Strings of pale blue light danced in the sky as the moon sat above, larger and brighter. Sobs of delight and hysteria filled the city as people clung to each other, rolled on the ground with animals, and collapsed in shock. Snowflakes hovered in the air like fallen stars. The snow piles glowed.

My cat led me to an alleyway. He nuzzled against me and purred quietly. We entered the narrow route, and shadows danced with the light moving in the sky. I felt dizzy, straight did not feel straight. But everything stilled when I saw my sister at the end of the path. She turned, and while inverted in appearance, it was her. She smiled as tears fell from her cheeks to the ground.

On that day, the city below the blue moon fell into an eternal slumber. There were no footsteps left in the snow, and no signs of distress were ever found. The blue moon layered the land of the living with the dead. Not a single resident survived. Scratch marks left on the cafe's door were the only remnants of that day, and I died by the time my tea went cold.