

# f People Were Seasons

Yvonne Bamba

He and I are sitting in the middle of my staircase, squished together on the same step, our limbs overflowing and dangling off the edges. We have our respective beverages in hand—his beer and my glass of red wine—facing each other with our legs bent, contently intertwined. We already touched base on our weapons of choice for the zombie apocalypse, the sports and instruments and dreams we gave up on in high school, and whether our day was more like The Weeknd’s Can’t Feel My Face or Fetty Wap’s Trap Queen. Now, we’re brainstorming names for the future Alaskan husky he wants for his fiftieth birthday and I have a strong feeling he’s about to screw up the sleeping schedule I worked so hard to fix. We’re laughing in two-part harmonies and I’m clutching onto my stomach so hard, I almost spill wine on his khakis. Then, I catch myself before I float too far and lower myself back down to ground. For a moment, I look at the world through my kitchen window and use it as my anchor.

Outside, the blanket of brightness fades into a sky of muted blue. I know everything is different now and I’m sitting on my stairs with someone new, yet I can’t help but wonder what skies you’re under and if you’re with someone too.

It hits without warning—the wave of dullness, sweeping my feet from under me and threatening to drag me back out to sea. Thinking of you is the one habit I can’t kick. Now, the room is quiet.

“Who is it? The guy you love or the guy who broke your heart?” he asks me. “It’s always one or the other.”

He’s referring to the look—the look I get when the bitterness overpowers the saccharine and my pain starts to look more like skin. It’s the look I get when my mind accidentally wanders and stops at you. It’s the look I have now.

“Both. They’re one in the same,” I tell him honestly, with a half-shrug and a half-smile because, let’s face it, I haven’t been whole in a while.

“How does that work?” he asks.

“Oh, it doesn’t. I mean, it didn’t. Sorry, I keep trying to use the past tense to make it easier but... Anyway, it didn’t work out because...” I think about what I’m going to say. I hold the truth in the palm of my hand and I’m wondering if he’s ready to catch it if I toss it, wondering whether he’ll understand my reasons for feeling in seasons. So I say, “Because I’m summer.

Because my life is a series of seasons, out of order, and muted blue isn’t just a color.”

This catches him off guard and he gives me a weird look. I expected this.

“Summer?”

I nod slowly, slowly giving up and slowly giving in. I’ve been twisting my own arm for too long, forcing myself to look at you and love you through a kaleidoscope. But tonight, I’m calling ‘mercy’. Tonight, I want to dwell in hope.

So I tell him,

“I’m summer... His summer girl, you see. Or at least that’s what I used to be. We called it ‘symbiotic without the complicated, the cuddles without the strings’. But three seasons later, he made that hotline bling because he wanted something more than a one-time thing. Now, we’re three cycles in and so,

I’m summer... His summer girl, you see. Or at least that’s what I used to be. I lived on the other side of the fence, where the California drought was fixed and the grass was lush, Crayola green. I was the girl he looks forward to, the incentive during the school year, and the getaway fantasy. I was his sunshine state of mind and he kept me there so reality couldn’t touch me. There, I existed without shadows, scars, or skeletons. Although it was a lie, I guess it made him happy.

So here I am.

The best umbrella-holder for spring showers, the best Easter-egg hunter, Halloween pumpkin-carver, mistletoe and Happy New Year’s kisser, but he’ll never know that, will he? Because to him, I’m just summer and that’s all I’ll ever be. I seek answers at the bottom of wine glasses and I look better temporary.

So here I am... his summer girl.

He enjoys the heat between our bodies and the way I kiss his skin.

But there are certain spaces, certain seasons only love can fill in.

So if people were seasons, I’d be summer, you see.

But God, I wish he could have loved all the rest of me.”

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It’s almost morning. It’s funny how vaguely it resembles ‘almost night’. The only difference is the sun is on its way, I know it.

It’s almost morning, in the middle of October. And instead of waking up next to you, he’s standing in my kitchen, making two cups of coffee—one for him and one for me. “Half and half and a teaspoon of sugar, right?”

“Yup!” I quickly reply, amazed by our comfortableness despite knowing each other for such a short period of time.

It’s ironic, isn’t it? How he’s here, and you’re not. How he stayed, and you didn’t. He wonders.

He cares. He listens. He remembers. He wants to know all about me, even the parts of me that are about you. It's a shame I can't love him the way whole girls do.

I'm trying though. I'm learning how to be less half and more whole, so I'm still recovering leftover pieces of my soul, but I know some pieces are still stuck on you. So I'll wait for you to drop them as you walk further away with each month, and I'll tiptoe behind you to pick them up like little bread crumbs so you never find your way back to hurting me.

I slide my backdoor open to let the sunlight in. Outside, the air is crisp and keen, but the sun is also forgiving. The leaves are falling and fluttering onto the ground, piecing together a field of golden orange and yellow.

It feels like the start a whole year without you.

And it feels a lot like letting you go.