

Crossroads

Senior, Runner Up

At the place where three roads meet
—not in the forest,
but in the quiet of your chest—
there is a flicker.

You have stood there before.

Once, as a child of becoming,
hands full of questions,
pockets heavy with stones you swore were treasure.
The world was enormous then,
every door a dare.
You were not afraid of the dark—
only of being unseen within it.

There was a version of you
who believed in beginnings
like they were promises carved in silver.
She still lives somewhere,
barefoot and bright,
asking you to remember
how it felt
to want without apology.

Then there is the one
who learned to carry fire.

She moves through kitchens at midnight,
through hospital corridors,
through long commutes and longer conversations.
She knows how to swallow storms
so others can sleep.
She has memorized the weight of responsibility,
the geometry of sacrifice.

Her love is not loud—
it is the steady turning of a key,
the keeping of small, sacred things.
She is tired sometimes.
But she does not let go.

And somewhere deeper—
quieter than regret—
waits the one who has lost.

She has buried old selves
without ceremony.
She has watched dreams close
like doors that would not open again.
She has learned that grief
is not a wound
but a lantern.

In her hands, endings glow.
She knows how to sit beside you
when the night feels endless.
She does not rush your sorrow.
She has survived her own.

We are told we must choose
which self to be—
the hopeful one,
the giving one,
the wise one who has endured.

But the truth is
they share the same bones.

Inside you
the dreamer still hums.
The protector still burns.
The mourner still keeps watch.

And when you reach a crossroads—
when love asks more than you think you have,
when change cracks the ground beneath your plans,
when you must leave something behind
to remain yourself—

all three step forward.

One says,
“Begin.”

One says,
“Hold steady.”

One says,
“Let it end.”

And in their braided whisper
you find your way.

You are not broken
for having been many things.
You are not weak
for grieving who you used to be.
You are not foolish
for wanting more.

You are simply human—
a living crossroads,
lit by the quiet torches
of who you were,
who you are,
and who you are brave enough
to become.

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