

# Hiraeth

Nathania Putri Kinanti



Shades of grayscale filled the room early in the morning, only a hint of sunlight flashing through the blinds, reflecting its hue on the memories hanging on the wall. The memories printed and clipped to the grid wire hanging on the wall... only that all of it was perhaps a lie. Hanging postcards and polaroid prints, the sound of the old fan creaking, while the rest remains loud with silence. She was already up, waiting for something she's not yet sure of. On the bed, she's sitting on with her flannel and jeans rather than a nightgown, she threw the crumbled and dried tissue papers to the floor. Her eyes were bloodshot and her face was still puffy from lack of sleep. She looked at herself in the mirror, checking on her dark circles while tying her hair up.

In front of her was a study table. Standing tall, a bit crooked, left unused with a pile of mess decorating the hard surface. She took a brief glance at it. Used cotton pads, leftover snacks, empty mugs, remnants of opened packages, and a bunch of other miscellaneous things carelessly put in there. The backpack next to it was unzipped, loaded with clothes. With the corner reflected by the faint sunlight being rather stuffed and full of things, nothing really changes the fact that the room still felt empty to her.

After a few moments of contemplating, she made up her heart to walk out of the bed. Approaching the doorknob, pieces of broken glass and ceramic were peeking underneath the door, she wiped it away with her slippers, picking it up carefully and putting it in a piece of paper, packing it up neatly and safely before throwing it outside in the trash bin. She went back to her room in tiptoe steps, making sure no one could hear her movements. She reached her sneakers next to the door of her room, loosely stepping on it like wearing a pair of loafers as she grabs and puts more stuff on her backpack before finally zipping it.

Approaching the front door, she closed it gently without making any sound. In the faint sunshine, she walked down the alley with her backpack hanging loose on her back. She had gone through the alley nearly every day, but never before the sun was completely up. It felt quiet and empty... or her heart made her think so. She paused her steps and sat down at the bus stop. The streets were not as busy as usual since it's a holiday. Her eyes stopped at her shoes, but her mind was somewhere else. She recalled everything vividly. She did not see anything, but she heard everything.

How her father yelled, the sound of the thrown glasses and ceramics breaking, something fell down which she believed was their dinner chair; she could not hear her mother sobbing, but she was sure that her mother was crying. Frankly, that night was just like any other night, she felt like she has not felt true happiness ever since her father came back home from this place—she can't recall the name—for work. More or so, that's the main reason why she almost never had dinner at home. She tried everything for the past few years, but it never worked out. Her parents had completely lost their spark and it's about time they split, she guessed.

The sound of a familiar engine snapped her out. She shook her head and looked around, there was no one but her in the stop. Climbing up to the stairs, she tapped her card as she entered and looked for a seat. *Back seat*, she aimed. She sat down on the seat next to the window on the left side. Hugging her backpack, she pulled up her khaki-colored hoodie and leaned her head on the window, staring blankly at the view until she slowly fell asleep as the bus went.

The sound of the bus bell woke her from her short nap. Everyone who remained on the bus exited the door. It was the last stop. She yanked her backpack as she stepped lightly down to the bus stop. She rubbed her eyes and yawned, then she looked up to the sky. The sun was already up, and the day felt warmer than when she just got on the bus. The streets were busier, and people were passing by the streets. It was warm enough for her to take off her hoodie and let her black t-shirt with a caricature of an anime character hang loose. After sitting at the bus stop for a while until everyone left, she decided to walk towards the subway station nearby, though she didn't know where to go yet.

She wandered around to look at the routes, still nothing in mind. She stared at it for a little longer, hoping she would have a destination. Then she felt someone was pulling the tip of her t-shirt's sleeve. A little girl. Well, not really. Just a girl who's a bit shorter and looked so much younger than her. Probably an elementary student.

"Are you going here, too? I'm going there as well!" the little girl grinned.

She looked around to see if someone was here with the little girl, but it seems like there was no one. She stayed silent and tilted her head instead, giving the little girl a confused look.

"Do you want to come with me?" the little girl asked again.

*Contemplating.* She might. She didn't have a destination, right? She might as well go with this little girl she just met. But where would they be going next?

She looked at the girl and asked, "Where are you going? Home?"

The little girl's smile suddenly faded away. She went quiet for a second before she flashed a faint smile, "Uh, I live alone in a small room on the second floor of a coffee shop, if you'd call it a home," the girl explained.

Her eyes widened for a brief moment, then she brought back her sight to the routes.

"Does it feel like home?" she mused, without turning her face.

Another short silence.

"I don't know. Maybe?" The girl flashed a playful grin at her, but she could pinpoint that the girl was just trying to hide her true emotions in

front of a complete stranger.

"I believe you do have a home, right?" the girl asked again, this time with a more cheerful tone.

?

She paused.

"Home... I'm sure I don't have that either."