

"Chocolate Nights"

Ellie Nikakis

Her face was pinched with the taste of too-much chocolate, the overbearing sweetness so rich it was bitter. But, despite that, she kept eating the small confections. One by one, she would reach for them, tearing off the gold foil wrappers and crunching into the nutty shells, savoring in her mouth the soft chocolate surprise in the middle. She ate and ate and ate them, because that was all she knew. Across the width of her wide, white desk, there was nothing except the clean blankness of the tabletop. Only the chocolates on her left, a telephone on her right.

She was waiting. Waiting for a call she knew wouldn't come. Earlier she was tapping her fingers impatiently, expecting the vibrating rings to come at any second. A little while later the chocolates came out.

It was later now, much later. She only continued sitting there because she couldn't bring herself to *do* anything. She couldn't remember what hope was. She couldn't remember the meaning of faith. She couldn't forget his name in her mouth, the way her lips stretched and pursed to form the sounds that made it up. It was almost as delicious as the chocolates she devoured.

She pondered, forcing herself to think back. Did any of it ever happen? Did she even meet him? Or did she just make it up? No. It was real. She glanced down at the ratty bracelet on her wrist, made of once-colourful, now-dull cotton threads, knotted and twined together with memories that seemed to jump at her. How could she ever forget? Oh, she could try. But she could never truly erase those moments, trapped in time, always just beneath the surface.

The phone lit up. It buzzed, emitting loud, chirpy beeps. An unknown caller. She picked it up without a thought.

"Hello" she said monotonously, grievously disappointed.

"Why, hello there. Won't you look out your window?"

She stopped. The phone clattered to the floor. Where did her heart go?

"Hey," the now-exasperated voice came out muffled from the phone, which was lying face down on the carpet. "I know I'm late but it's cold out. Would you please look out your window now?" It was that voice. That smooth, silky one, the one that was always carefully nonchalant. The one that made girls sigh and cities smile. It could only have belonged to one person. "Are you okay? Hey, is everything alright?"

She bit her lip - stopping a smile? - at the concern in his voice, getting up from her chair. She slowly turned towards her window. No way, no way in the world could he possibly be -

And there he was. His silhouette stood just a few feet in front of her out in the garden, holding a phone to his ear, smiling the crooked smile that always made her melt. Unbelievable.

She lifted the latch on her window, her breath catching at the cool nighttime air as she pushed it open. He strode over to her, carefully stepping around the roses her mother planted last month. She leaned out of the window, casually eyeing him with curiosity. He welcomed her gaze with a smirk, his almond-shaped eyes smoldering at her from the soft moonlight.

"Well," she said calmly, even though her blood was pounding, "I can't say I expected this." He grinned at her now, absolutely heart-stopping, and stepped closer to her so they were nose to nose.

"Don't tell me you're disappointed?" he said smoothly, though it came out as a question.

She sighed.

"What are you doing?" she murmured quietly, shaking her head with amusement, a hint of a smile. He regarded her with those penetrating eyes, soft emotions playing across his stunning features. Leaning into her, he paused, his hot breath on her neck.

"Being in love with you." He whispered in her ear, then gently took her in his hands and kissed her as if the world was theirs.