

# “tattoo”

by

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**Tattoos are mementos for those who are afraid to forget life. For only on and through the skin will life be permanent to ephemeral human.**

Lying on her bed, I trace her skeleton with my fingers. Her ribs, outlined with the deepest and blackest ink runs through her, her heart enclosed safely within their protective embrace. Her spine, straight, unbearably straight, the crooks and crannies mimicked to their imperfections, yet strong and descending to the hips. The backbone of the body and of the frame that holds all that we own. Our own bodies and nothing more. For with all of our sucking and breathing, of wanting and needing and licking and eating, we cannot consume others fully. We can only satisfy ourselves with our own hands, lips, collarbones, and soft flowing hair. For all that we cherish must die in the end, but our bodies are the last to go, last to go. Why not cherish them the most? For when all that we licked, ate, needed, breathed and lived for goes, we do not. Not yet. We always believe we do, that flourished tree cut down to its roots. Yet those roots birth a seed that grows and thrives to become another flourished tree. We are phoenixes, as much as we despise our rebirths. We'd rather wither and die than go through the painful process of living.

*Like bones*, I murmur. Like the bones of a child that grow and harden, sometimes break, but always mend. Until our bodies betray us and then we truly do go. But the tree does not get cut down, it melts. First, the leaves. Melting off of the branches, they curl to the earthen floor. Then, the bark. In layers, it falls, soundlessly over the bed of green. Then the sticky, sweet sap of marrow blood and life, consumed by, would you guess it, life. Those ants and bacteria, eating, burrowing, licking, needing, breathing the tree, carry it further.

They carry you further, but you must reach the melting stage, the end  
and only you can reach the end.

*What about the spaces in between?*, you whisper. The spaces in between? They are the magic, they are the others. Because though you must reach the end by yourself, you cannot do it without help. And so the spaces in between are just as important as the ribs and the spine.

*What do they look like?*

They look like your dreams and the people you have loved. They look like the years of laughter and tears, separate sometimes together. They look like the books that you read and the gods that you saw. They look like the music you created and the animals you held. they look like the gravestones you touched and the children you wept for.

*And the girl who you kissed?*

*And the girl who I kiss.*

Moist air rises as my soul makes love to her back.