

Kintsugi

Claire Jenkins

He shuffled down the stairs, sleep heavy on his eyelids and in his limbs. Shaking the thick curtains open, he reluctantly let in the dawn, glaring at the sun's cheery welcome. He stretched his aching bones, feeling them crack satisfyingly. Thank goodness for coffee. As the kettle hissed and whistled, he scrubbed at his eyes with hard, calloused hands. It was going to be a long day.

The sun had set when he finally put down his tools, a pile of small wooden boxes beside him. Cramp seized his fingers but he felt justified, acknowledging a job well done. A bell rang out and he glanced up to see a figure hovering in the doorway. In the candlelight, he could make out a female, her red-rimmed eyes half-hidden under a low hood. She looked young, too young to be visiting him. He adopted a quiet, unassuming air as the girl battled internally with her decision before finally striding towards the desk.

"I... I hear you can fix things?"

Something inside of him ached for the hesitant young girl, despair and sorrow streaming off her like smoke. He reached under the desk and handed her an empty box, gesturing towards the small cloakroom. As he waited, he pulled out the admissions book, fondly smoothing out crinkled pages and filling the ancient pen with ink. His customers had often told him such things were obsolete, but he preferred the old ways.

The girl returned, clutching the box to her chest. He adopted his most reassuring smile as he reached for the box. 'I'll take good care of it. Write down your details and I'll inform you when it's ready.'

She nodded sadly, not mentioning the archaic materials before her, her mind too full and distracted to care. He watched her leave, feeling nostalgic for a time when his eyes didn't ache and his bones didn't sing. She tugged down on her hood before exiting, disappearing back into the world. He turned his attentions to the box, unable to prevent the intake of breath as he opened the lid. It was in bad shape. Pushing his emotions aside, he pulled out the tiny fragments and laid them before him. It would take time, but he would make it whole once more. He worked long into the night, humming softly to himself as he slowly but determinedly breathed life back into the broken heart.