

After

by Lauryn Campbell

The sun rose.
Birds sang.
People smiled and laughed and felt and loved.
Didn't anyone tell them the world had ended?
Did no one tell the Sun that she needn't shine?
I think I'm the only one who has noticed.
I whisper to the golden rays,
Don't rise,
Don't get out of bed.
Stay hidden behind the heavy clouds,
Beneath the cold, barren horizon.
We don't need your warmth.
There's no need anymore.
I'm sorry I didn't tell you earlier;
I thought you would see.
We're all ghosts now.
Or at least I am.
When I was seen,
Caressed,
Kissed,
Loved,
I lived.
But now,
I am nothing more than vapor.
Wilting mist that lingers on the shriveled grass of winter.
If you shine on me,
I'll disappear completely.
Now I live in the after,
The after of him.
I can't find the parts that were taken away.
He guided them out
With sweet words and feather-light fingertips
And I gave him every piece he wanted.
There was none of me that wasn't all his.
So, if you need me,
You'll find me with him.
In his passenger seat,
Tucked between picture frames,
Just beneath his collar,
Or maybe clutched in his fist.
My heart,
Always on my sleeve,
Beats within his grasp,

And there it shall remain until he loosens his grip.
So, for now,
Please, dear Sun,
Please spare me your warmth.
I cannot feel it,
For I once found it within his embrace.
And since that is no longer a place for me,
I shall sit in the chill until I learn to tolerate it.
And tell the birds, won't you,
That they should not sing.
He took the music of the world and stuffed it in his pockets.
He traced his fingers along the grooves of his records
And declared them his property.
He laid claim to the lyrics of songs he loved,
Songs I learned to call "ours".
But there was only "his",
As he once called me.
So if you must shine,
Do it upon his face.
Brighten his sky with your gleaming rays.
Keep him warm and happy,
For I can no longer.
Maybe one day,
I can bear the feel of your glow upon my skin.
But in the interim,
I'll linger in the shadows,
Beneath trees and under mountains,
Until I find the pieces of me that I gave away.