

Silver Waters

by

Venessa Young

Silver Waters

FADE IN:

EXT. ON THE BEACH - MORNING - PRESENT

Black rock stands against crystal blue skies. Seagulls caw in the distance, cutting through the gentle sound of the tides washing in.

WOOJIN stands silhouetted on the rocks, his figure only a dark speck against the blue sky.

Wind blows open his long coat, the fabric flapping in the breeze.

He strokes a thumb over his engagement ring as he stares out at the open ocean.

A wave splashes against the base of the rocks, tossing white foam into the air.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. THE GLASS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING - ONE YEAR AGO

It is an open kitchen, the island made of white marble. A toaster sits on the countertop, against a red and silver Breville coffee machine. There is toast in the toaster, the timer ticking away.

In the adjoining living room, the windows are made of glass, the curtains stained a delicate cream by the morning sun's rays. The couch is a dark turquoise, velvet. It sits in front of the floor to ceiling windows, facing the sun.

The glass casts funny shadows on the wood floor and onto Woojin's face. He looks as if he is underwater as he turns the pages of the newspaper.

MING YUE is standing by the big glass windows, holding a mug in his hands.

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MING YUE

The sea is calm today.

Woojin flips another page, raising his head. He smiles when he sees Ming Yue.

WOOJIN

Yes, it is.

He sets aside his newspaper, getting to his feet.

WOOJIN (CONT'D)

What're you thinking about?

Woojin loops his arms around Ming Yue's waist, resting his chin on his shoulder.

Ming Yue does not speak for a long moment. He stares at the waves sweeping in upon the shore.

MING YUE

I want to go out there.

Woojin sighs heavily.

WOOJIN

There are rip currents, Xiao Yue.
And sharks.

Ming Yue laughs, fingers tightening on his mug.

MING YUE

Whatever you say, Woojin. Whatever
you say.

He kisses Woojin on the cheek. The toaster dings and he brushes past him.

Woojin follows after him, wrapping his arms around his waist when Ming Yue pulls the toast out.

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WOOJIN

I just wish you wouldn't go so far.

MING YUE

It's quieter out there. I can hear myself think.

WOOJIN

But I can't hear you.

Ming Yue falls silent. Woojin holds him a little tighter as Ming Yue puts a coffee pod into the coffee machine.

The machine whirs to life.

MING YUE

It's supposed to be sunny later.

Woojin grabs the coffee cup when the machine stops running.

WOOJIN

I'll come with you.

They eat their breakfast standing by the windows, staring out at the calm sea.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Waves rock gently against the shore. The sky is crystal clear, dark shadows flitting against it. The air is filled with the sound of seagulls cawing.

Woojin watches Ming Yue stride into the water, in a white shirt that turns translucent upon his entry. He lounges on the sand, making little circles with the base of his beer can.

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MING YUE
Come into the water!

WOOJIN
I'm coming!

Woojin chugs his drink then follows Ming Yue into the water.

He shivers and stays in the shallow end to watch Ming Yue swim further and further out, towards a rock outcropping.

WOOJIN
Don't go too far!

Ming Yue waves a hand and dives.

He does not resurface.

WOOJIN
Ming Yue?

A seagull caws and divebombs him. Woojin ducks and stands up straight in the water, scanning the surface.

WOOJIN
Ming Yue, it's not funny!

He paddles out, as far as he dares.

WOOJIN
Xiao Yue!

The sea remains empty, flat as a mirror.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

The sky glitters with a thousand stars. The waves wash gently against the sand, white foam breaking. A lone seagull calls.

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Two life boats sit on the water, rocking gently with the waves. There are people in life vests in the water, torchlights reflecting off the surface.

MING YAN, Ming Yue's brother is amongst them, shouting his brother's name over and over again. His boyfriend, HAE SEONG makes his way up the shore, legs covered in sand.

Woojin is wrapped up in a towel, shivering against the rocks. Hae Seong kneels at his side.

HAE SEONG
They'll find him.

Woojin says nothing.

HAE SEONG
Let's get you home, okay? You've been out here for ages.

WOOJIN
I told him not to go too far.

Hae Seong grabs his arm and hauls him to his feet.

HAE SEONG
Ming Yan will call if there's any news. Let's go.

Woojin looks back as he is dragged away. Sirens ring long into the night.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. THE BEACH - MORNING - PRESENT

A wave splashes particularly hard. Droplets rain onto Woojin's face.

HAE SEONG
Woojin.

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He picks his way across the rocks, nearly turning his ankle. When he reached Woojin, he touches his elbow.

HAE SEONG (CONT'D)
Ming Yan made breakfast.

Woojin turns back to the open sea. A tear slides down his cheek.

HAE SEONG
Let's go eat.

He steers Woojin away, off the rocks. Ming Yue's face appears in a rockpool as Woojin passes before a wave breaks against the rocks and the reflection vanishes.

INT. THE GLASSHOUSE - SUNROOM - MORNING

A single stem of rose sits in the blown vase at the center of the table. The glass top of the table is set for four.

Woojin freezes.

Ming Yan is still setting out forks and knives, oblivious.

Hae Seong makes a little noise, hurrying over to take Ming Yan's elbow.

HAE SEONG
(whispers)
You've set it for four again.

The rest of the utensils clatter onto the table loudly and Ming Yan vanishes into the house.

The chair scrapes against the floor as Woojin sits down heavily.

WOOJIN
No, leave it please.

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The plate rattles when Hae Seong sets it back down.

Ming Yan reappears, bearing plates of pancakes on his arm. He sets them down, four in total.

Hae Seong starts up a conversation but Woojin tunes him out, eating methodically. He picks up his water glass and freezes again.

Ming Yue's face is reflected on the surface of the water, lips opening and closing as if he is trying to say something. His hair is curly and he is wearing the same shirt he wore when he disappeared in the sea.

The water ripples and Ming Yue's face vanishes.

HAE SEONG

Woojin?

Woojin looks up.

WOOJIN

I'm okay.

MING YAN

Maybe you shouldn't go into work today. I can cover you. It is Ge's--

WOOJIN

No. I just need to wash up.

He leaves the sunroom in a hurry, his breakfast only half eaten on the table.

The couple share a look.

MING YAN

I didn't mean to.

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Hae Seong moves to reassure him, abandoning his breakfast.

HAE SEONG
Give him time. He's still
grieving.

MING YAN
Ge would want him to move on.

HAE SEONG
I know. He will when he's ready.

MING YAN
It's been a year.

They fall silent when a door slams shut loudly.

EXT. THE TOWN - MORNING

There are people on the streets watching him as he passes by. Woojin hurries on, the streetlights blinking off one by one as he passes.

The bell on the green door jingles when he steps inside the coffeeshop.

INT. COFFEESHOP - MORNING

Heads turn. Whispers start up as he crosses the room to order his coffee.

A man rustles his newspaper and Woojin nearly stops in his tracks.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

"MAN MISSING OFF ORADALE COAST, BODY STILL
UNRECOVERED ONE YEAR LATER."

BACK TO SCENE

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The coins scatter across the wooden counter when Woojin thrusts them at the barista. His coffee is pushed across to him, accompanied by a look of pity.

The bell on the door jangles extra loudly when Woojin leaves.

INT. THE FLOWER SHOP - MORNING

The shop is small, the shelves overflowing with terracotta pots. Plants spill out of their pots, leaves dangling over the edges. The florist, JIA AN, behind the counter raises her head when the bell rings.

Woojin crosses the room, sets down two paper notes.

WOOJIN

The usual.

Jia An lays a bouquet of gentians down, the paper rustling. She curls the ribbons with a pair of scissors.

JIA AN

Is Ming Yan coming in today? I set aside those roses he wanted.

WOOJIN

Didn't ask. He does what he wants.

Jia An sighs.

JIA AN

I wish you wouldn't be mad at him for moving on.

WOOJIN

I'm not. And he hasn't. He just likes to pretend he has.

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Jia An shakes her head at him. She hands him the bouquet.

JIA AN
Anything else?

Woojin shakes his head and leaves with the flowers.

EXT. THE BEACH - MORNING

Waves swish gently against the sand, wiping off footprints as Woojin walks.

His toes squish into the sand, wind ruffling his hair, tugging at the ribbons around his flowers.

Woojin makes his way to the black rocks bordering the beach, clutching the bouquet to his chest.

A tear tracks its way down his face as he tosses the flowers in his hands into the water.

It splashes, floating up. The ribbon trails in the water and a wave dashes it twice against the rocks, white foaming against the black.

Woojin leaves without looking back.

The flowers float out into the open sea, purple blooms sinking and vanishing beneath the waves.

INT. THE GLASS HOUSE - STUDY - AFTERNOON

The room is lit with golden sunlight. A red couch sits across the desk, a patch of sunlight pooling on the velvet fabric.

The sunlight casts strange shadows on the floor through the glass of the desk, elongating the shadow of the hydrangea in its cream-coloured vase.

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Hae Seong is sprawled across the couch, flicking through his phone. Ming Yan sits at the desk, laptop open. The laptop dings. Hae Seong looks up just in time to see Ming Yan frown.

HAE SEONG

Do you want to go into town today?
I can go get the flowers if you
don't want to.

There is no response. Hae Seong sits up.

HAE SEONG

Xiao Yan?

MING YAN

Woojin went again, didn't he? Jia
An just texted me that he was in
her shop for the usual.

HAE SEONG

Ming Yan. Cut him some slack today
please. It's your brother's--

MING YAN

Ge would want him to move on.

He types aggressively on his laptop.

HAE SEONG

Have you?

MING YAN

It's been a damn year, alright?
Ge's not coming back.

He slams down the top of his laptop.

MING YAN (CONT'D)

He's dead! I know he's dead and buying flowers and throwing-- throwing them into the sea every month isn't gonna bring him back.

HAE SEONG

Everyone deals with grief differently.

MING YAN

He thinks he's coming back.

HAE SEONG

You set four places for every meal.

Ming Yan breaks. Hae Seong drops his phone and runs to hug him.

INT. CAVE OF MEMORIES - THE WHITE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Light filters down from the clear ceiling, rippling and distorted. Ming Yue floats, suspended in the middle of the room.

The walls are white, covered in gilded frames with nothing in them.

Ming Yue opens his eyes and his body sinks slowly, until he is sitting on the floor.

The hands on his wristwatch are frozen at the twelve and two position. He panics when he realises there is no way to tell what time it is.

A lilac sheen falls over his eyes and he looks up, light shining through the purple wrapping that encased the bouquet of gentians floating down towards him.

MING YUE
(raspy)

Woojin.

He grabs for the bouquet, hugging it in his arms. The gentians are waterlogged, the purple paper disintegrating under his fingertips. But the ribbons remain, drifting as if caught in a draft.

Something creaks and Ming Yue spins, a wall sinking back into itself to reveal a passageway.

The walls are a dull grey, a stark contrast against the bright white room. He walks forward anyway.

His footsteps echo, bare feet slapping on concrete floor as he passes through, only freezing when the wall behind him creaks again.

He turns around to see the square of light vanish, the wall resealing itself, leaving him in total darkness. There is only the sound of his breathing before he picks up his pace.

The hallway opens into another room, the walls still grey.

INT. CAVE OF MEMORIES - THE GREY ROOM - AFTERNOON

He hears the sound of water before he sees it.

A stone fountain sits in the center of the room, the ball at its crown emitting soft white light. Sculpted stone dolphins spout water from their beaks.

Ming Yue fumbles with his gentians when the walls flicker.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

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EXT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - AFTERNOON - SEVEN YEARS AGO

Ming Yue sits on the edge of the fountain. He is dressed in his school uniform, blue blazer and tie perfectly in place. A stack of books perch precariously beside him.

The stream of water from the dolphins' beaks causes droplets to fly into the air, splashing him as he leans.

Ming Yue peers into the water and shrieks.

Woojin's face stares back at him, pale and thin.

MING YUE

Woojin?

END FLASHBACK.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - AFTERNOON - PRESENT

Woojin flicks the lights on. The ancient water fountain in the middle of the store bubbles to life. It is green stone, carved with ugly chimeras and has a red for sale sticker stuck to it.

Woojin picks up a cloth and goes to wipe down the stone basin.

The water throws droplets into the air, turning into a miniature waterfall as Woojin increases the water pressure.

He sees himself reflected in the basin of water as it fills up. It ripples and the reflection changes to Ming Yue's face.

INT. CAVE OF MEMORIES - THE GREY ROOM - AFTERNOON

Ming Yue stares at the face in the water. Woojin looks like a ghost, his gaze vacant and empty.

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Ripples spread across the surface when Ming Yue touches it, Woojin's face flickering.

MING YUE
Woojin? Woojin, it's me.

Woojin's face vanishes.

The walls swirl with colour, too bright in the dark room. Ming Yue squints, squeezing his eyes shut.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. BEACH - MORNING - SEVEN YEARS AGO

The sea is grey. Waves crash hard against the sand, white foam creeping up towards the high tide line.

Ming Yue stands on his board in the middle of a curling wave, eyes fixed on the shore. He is euphoric.

Woojin stands behind the high tide line, dressed in running shorts and a track jacket. His shoes are covered in wet sand.

WOOJIN
Are you crazy?

The wave sweeps in and Ming Yue stumbles, nearly falling when he steps off his board.

MING YUE
Maybe.

He turns back around, climbing on top of his board.

WOOJIN
Hey.

Ming Yue ignores him.

WOOJIN

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Hey!

Ming Yue turns, barely sparing him a glance. Woojin points towards the sky.

It is dark grey, storm clouds rolling in. A wave of thunder rumbles.

WOOJIN

There's a storm coming.

MING YUE

So?

He starts to paddle out. Woojin grabs him.

WOOJIN

There's lightning, you idiot.

Ming Yue shakes him off.

MING YUE

One last wave. Not that it's any of your business.

He paddles out. Woojin is left standing on the shore, watching in awe and fear.

INT. CAR AT BEACH - MORNING

The rain pours down, pattering against the car roof. An air freshener in the shape of a surfboard swings from the rearview mirror. The windshield wipers sweep furiously across the window.

The car is silent. Ming Yue is in the driver's seat.

WOOJIN

Who goes out surfing when they know a storm's coming?

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Ming Yue levels him with a look.

MING YUE

Who takes a bus to the beach
knowing a storm's coming?

WOOJIN

Point taken. You're Ming Yan's
older brother right?

Ming Yue nods, turning his attention to the road. The car falls silent. Rain drums against the car roof, growing louder in volume.

WOOJIN

Are you always this quiet?

MING YUE

People are loud.

WOOJIN.

Huh. Is that why you like the
water so much?

Ming Yue shrugs. The car speeds out of the town, turning into a blur in the pouring rain.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CAVE OF MEMORIES - THE GREY ROOM - AFTERNOON -
PRESENT

Woojin's face is back, reflected in the grey water. The water has slowed to a trickle, the sound echoing as they drip slowly onto the water's surface.

MING YUE

Woojin.

The Woojin in the water widens his eyes, gaze sharpening.

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MING YUE
Woojin, I'm here!

Woojin stares back from the grey water.

WOOJIN
Am I hallucinating?

MING YUE
Woojin, it's me.

WOOJIN
How-- where are you? You're
supposed to be dead. That's what
the police said.

Ming Yue grips the ledge of the fountain tight enough
for the stone to bite.

MING YUE
I don't think I'm dead. I think
I'm--

He looks around him at the grey walls.

MING YUE (CONT'D)
I think I'm stuck.

WOOJIN
Is this all in my head? Am I
crazy? Ming Yan said I should see
a therapist. Or a psychiatrist.
Maybe he's right--

MING YUE
Love, you're not crazy. I'm here.
I don't know how. But I'm here.

He touches the water and something must happen on the
other side because Woojin stops rambling.

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WOOJIN

We searched for you. For so long
that the coast guards gave up.

MING YUE

How long have I been gone?

WOOJIN

A year.

Ming Yue freezes in shock.

MING YUE

I've only just woken up.

WOOJIN

Where are you? I'll come get you.
If this is real.

He laughs and pinches himself.

MING YUE

I don't know. I just woke up in
this white room--

Woojin's image flickers.

WOOJIN

Xiao Yue? What's happen--

The floor opens up beneath him and Ming Yue screams
as he freefalls into nothing.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - AFTERNOON

The water bubbles, and Ming Yue's face flickers once,
twice before it vanishes. Woojin grips the stone
basin tightly, before he rears back and punches the
fountain.

MING YAN

Woojin!

WOOJIN

Why are you here?

MING YAN

(concerned)

Seo Jun called. She said you didn't look so good. I'm covering your shift. You should go home and rest.

The fountain bubbles merrily away. Woojin's knuckles are purple with bruises. He slams his hand into the ridge of the basin again.

WOOJIN

(angry)

I'm going to get him back.

EXT. BOARDWALK - AFTERNOON

The sun is excessively bright, rays dancing off the rippling water. The boardwalk is worn along the sides where it touches the ocean. A lone red car sits at the other side of the boardwalk where it meets the beach.

Woojin sits behind the wheel, watching the waves wash in.

WOOJIN

(whispers)

Where are you?

FADE OUT:

