

Version 1

“Again”

He meets her at the subway station.
It's always the same spot,
by exit 2, near the weathered bench,
beneath the broken arrivals board.

She leans against the chipped steel railing,
boot heels crossed,
clutching the same book – The Stranger
its cover worn, edges curled from use.
Her coat, too thin for the weather,
her hair messy, half pinned in haste.

When she looks up, their eyes meet,
and they fall in love.
Falling into rhythm,
a routine repeated so many times,
the jokes land the same,
each word, each quick glance,
it all happens on cue.

But every time,
no matter what he does,
spring arrives.
Trees bud soft green,
Persephone returns,
and the blossoms fall too fast.
As if spring was never meant to last,
she dies.

The first time,
it happens all too quickly.
He crumples to the ground, shocked.
As he cradles her cold, lifeless body,
the echo of his sobs
linger like the smoke.

The second time,
he tries to warn her.
His voice shaking with fear,
a frantic urgency in his chest.
Yet, she only smiles, unaware,
and simply pulls him closer.

The fifth time,
he steps in front of destiny,
offering himself like a shield.
Yet fate, cruel and disinterested,
passes through him
and takes her anyway.

The twelfth time,
he doesn't cry.
Just sits beside her,
fingers trembling,
a feeling of fearful emptiness,
not wanting to let go.

Dying over and over,
time rewinds like a broken reel.
Each loop pulls him back,
the tragic act is replayed
again.

He knows he could just leave.
Could board the train,
turn away without a glance,
let their paths untangle,
forgetting the curve of her smile,
the warmth in her eyes.

But when he sees her,
unable to resist,
taking just a small peek –
her eyes catches his like a match,
held too close to paper.
She asks, "Have we met?"
And in that heartbeat,
before reason takes hold,
he ignites.

Revised Version 2

“Again”

He meets her at the subway station – again.
It’s always the same spot,
by exit 2, near the weathered bench,
beneath the broken arrivals board.

She leans against the chipped steel railing,
boot heels crossed,
reading the same book, *The Stranger*,
its cover faded, edges curled from use.
Her coat, too thin for the weather,
her hair messy, half pinned in haste.
He could trace her from memory,
so clearly, as if it were just yesterday.

When she looks up, their eyes meet.
Something so familiar stirs,
and they fall in love.
Setting into rhythm,
a routine repeated so many times,
each joke lands the same,
each word, each quick glance,
he’s lived this scene a hundred times.

But every time,
no matter what he does,
spring arrives.
Trees bud soft green,
Persephone returns,
and the blossoms fall too fast.
As if spring was never meant to last,
she dies.

The first time,
it happens all too quickly.
He crumples to the ground, shocked.
As he cradles her cold, lifeless body,
the echo of his sobs
linger like the smoke.

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he tries to warn her.
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