

Sophia Warner - 12C1

I am a window, wide and rectangular, with peeling white paint flaking like ash in the wind. I've stood here longer than most people who walk past me. My glass, once pristine, is now etched with age—scratches from careless hands, streaks from rainstorms that never dry clean. I am the eye of this building, staring out at the world, unblinking.

When the sun rises, it floods me with light, revealing every imperfection in my pane. Dust motes cling stubbornly to the corners, glowing in the morning rays. I reflect the street: grey cobblestones slick with dew, lampposts wearing their halos of the night, and the occasional bicycle chained to a rusting rack. The air is damp and heavy, muffling sound and settling deep into the bones.

But today, it is one of those interminable grey afternoons where the world seems paused in shadow. The clouds hang low, swollen with rain yet to be released, and the filtered light is dim and cold. My glass does not glow; it glowers.

Through me, the shop behind is revealed—a hollow, forgotten thing. Once, this space was alive, filled with the hum of conversation and shuffle of busy feet. Shelves lined with wares cast long shadows in the light of old brass sconces. I reflected bustling crowds, hands pressing against me to peer inside, faces alight with curiosity or longing. But now, there is only emptiness. Dust blankets every surface, a quiet, patient conqueror.

I catch glimpses of myself in the mirrored surface of puddles outside. My own reflection—cloudy and streaked—stares back, a frame for nothing. My glass, once so quick to capture the smiles of passersby, now holds only the monotony of grey days.

People pass by, but they don't look. They hurry along, collars turned up against the chill, eyes on the ground. A woman with a child tugging at her hand drifts past, her voice a distant murmur. A man on a bicycle pedals by, wheels hissing against the wet pavement. Their movements blur, leaving faint streaks of color in my reflection, like watercolor bleeding on paper.

But then, a figure slows. A man, tall and stooped, stops in front of me. He's wearing a coat too thin for the weather, the hem frayed. His face is hidden beneath the brim of a hat, rainwater dripping steadily from its edge. For a moment, he looks at me—not through me, as others do, but at me, as if trying to understand what I am.

His hand rises, pale against the grey world, and presses against my surface. The warmth surprises me. I haven't felt warmth in so long. His palm leaves a faint fog on my glass, a smudge

of humanity against the lifeless cold. I want to tell him: Look closer. See what I once held. See what I could hold again.

He leans forward, peering inside. His breath fogs me further, a small cloud of life that clings for a moment before vanishing. His eyes trace the room beyond, lingering on the cobwebs in the corners, the dust hanging in the air like suspended time. He does not smile, but something in his expression softens. I think, perhaps, he sees more than decay.

Days pass, and he returns. This time, he brings tools—scrapers, rags, a bucket filled with soapy water. For the first time in years, someone cares enough to touch me, to clean me. His hands are strong but gentle as they work. The water trickles down my surface, carrying years of grime, pooling at the base of my frame before dripping onto the cracked pavement below. I feel lighter, clearer.

As he wipes away the final streaks, I see my reflection sharpen. The glass is still old, still scratched, but I shine now, catching the light in a way I haven't in years. Through me, the shop is no longer just an empty shell. It is becoming something new.

Shelves are dusted off and restocked, their wooden surfaces polished to a soft sheen. Lamps are hung, their warm light spilling out onto the street at dusk. The man—Thomas, I hear someone call him—places small, colorful objects just behind me. Tiny figurines, woven baskets, jars of something golden. A display. I frame it proudly, catching the eye of every passerby.

People begin to stop again. Their faces press against me, their hands leaving faint prints that fade quickly in the evening air. Children point and smile, their laughter ringing out like chimes.

The grey days still come. They always will. Rain still streaks my surface, wind still rattles my frame. But now, I am more than just a window in an abandoned building. I am a mirror for joy, a portal to warmth, a beacon in the monotony of grey.

I am alive again.