Crayons

Inspired by the poem of the same name by Stephen A. Martin

The rain finally stops falling, and in its wake, a rainbow begins to shimmer with life. I gently touch my fingertips against the window, as if it will bring me closer to the faded lines of light. The intertwined colors glow faintly against the warm sky, and each delicate streak cannot help but remind me of you.

“Can I borrow your crayons?” I asked shyly, gaze timidly cast towards my desk. I had been so excited to use my seven new crayons, only to discover I’d forgotten the box at home.

“Of course you can!” you beamed. “Which color?”

I looked down at my paper. “Red, please.”

“Red? Which red? Red like a fire truck, or red like a brick? Ruby red or scarlet red?”

“I… um… I don’t know. I only have one red crayon,” I mumbled.

Your bright smile erased my doubts. “That’s okay, you can always use mine!”

I couldn’t help but compare my box of seven crayons to yours of 120.

Red. What was one color to me was a world of life to you -- the blush of a shy rose, the laughter of a teasing flame, the shine of a perfect apple.

Even in that first conversation, even as my meekness began to fade, I think I realized that I didn’t see the world the same as you.

Orange. Orange to you was the grin of a jack o’lantern, the hopefulness of early autumn, the flutter of a monarch butterfly.

You were only five years old, and yet you looked deeper into the world than I can even see today.

Yellow. You saw yellow as the dance of a wild daffodil, the twinkle of a playful star, the song of a whistling canary.

And it didn’t matter to you that as far as I was concerned, the entire universe could be drawn with my seven colors.

Green. Green to you was the rustle of waking leaves, the croak of a wizened frog, the good luck of a four-leaf clover.

You would always be there to show me the shades between hues, despite the fact that I never saw them as well as you.

Blue. Blue was the crash of ocean waves, the yawn of a lazy sky, the crush of a sweet blueberry.

Even now, through my tears, this rainbow is nothing more than a mere arch of color, a hollow note where you would’ve heard a concerto, an empty brushstroke where you would’ve seen a painting.

Purple. You saw purple as the grace of a regal orchid, the incandescence of a glittering gem, the touch of gentle velvet.
Though there was one crayon that you never used, one crayon that was always left as it was, its tip as sharp as on the day you’d first opened your box.

Black. Black to you was… black.

You never seemed to like black as much as the other colors, perhaps because to you, black was also just black. There was no room for the life you brought to everything, for the imagination you radiated. It was absolute. Unyielding. Irrevocable.

So I don’t think I will go to your funeral today, to the black funeral, where the black car will bring your body in the black casket to be lain beneath the stifling, black soil. No, instead I think I will sit here by the window, trying to see the hues in the colors and the life in the hues. I may never see the world the way you did, but with one hand holding your old box of crayons and the other brushing this rainbow, I can only try.

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