Illuminating Love-(On Going)

By : AemmaBella

Maya Dovel is a disturbed young teen girl who has no friends, an abusive mother, and a harlot for a younger sister.She later meets a young man named Zaiden Roy and contemplates whether or not she will fall in love with him or continue her life in recluse. Zaiden Roy, a summer employee at a local bookstore, has had a hard life living and dealing with his short tempered father and his very old, yet very wise, grandmother. He falls for Maya at first glance. He decides immediately that he wants her to love him too and that he'll do anything to have her heart.

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Table of Contents

Illuminating Love-Chapter One

Illuminating Love-(On Going) Chapter 2

Illuminating Love-(On Going) Chapter 3

Illuminating Love-(On Going) Chapter 4

Chapter 1: Illuminating Love-Chapter One

Maya It seemed like it rained everyday. Lightning flashing occasionally, but darkness still washed over me. Everything in me was dark, and cold, and a little scary sometimes. No one came too close to me, like they knew I would scream and bite them.
I can't say they were wrong.
It was a dark rainy day, or maybe it was sunny, they all looked the same to me, I was on my way to a bookstore,called Lucky's , I know it's a very off name for a bookstore. I always go there to get away, it was summer and I didn't want to stay home all the time. I'd go there and just sit in one of their big brown overstuffed chairs, and read whatever caught my eye. I didn't look up to see if anyone stared, or answer anyone's questions, they would mistake me for an employee sometimes. I never understood why they would make this mistake, I was not a happy person nor was I approachable. I had blacked spiked hair that looked off on me, I was too young for it being only 15 and all, and I wore black eyeshadow and liner with a stud in my nose. I never wore bright colors, just black. The black would always make my already white skin look ghostly pale, even though it was summer I didn't visit the beach to get a tan. I'd say I'm not the bookstore employee type. But there was one, just one, who didn't label me or bother me, he'd recommend a new book for me every now and then, he would watch me sometimes so he knew which stories caught my attention. Sometimes I would look up and see him staring at me, and he would look away hastily. Did I embarrass him? Was he afraid of me? I doubted it, he always had a black eye, or a swollen lip or cheek. He was a fighter, a natural. He was taller than me and he seemed to be fit, I could see his muscles when he would wear fitted shirts. He had green eyes and long dark hair that he always kept in a pony tail, and he was tan-ish, maybe Indian? I didn't know anything about him and I thought I would never want to know, but something about him kept calling me. When I went home that night he was on my mind, he watched me read the whole day and his eyes followed me as I left. I tried not to stared back, I succeeded sometimes, but I always looked and he always look away. I opened the door to my house expecting my mother yelling at my sister or my sister saying not-so-sweet-little-sister type of things to her little summer fling, but the house was dark and quiet. There must have been a fight, no one goes to bed this early (it was 9 pm) unless tears were shed. I was glad I wasn't here during the storm. I walked up stairs to my room for bed, I wasn't really tired I just didn't like wandering around the house when no one was up. I got on my laptop instead and searched the web, deleted some emails from people I now hated, and bitched in a chat room about how bad my life is. I fell asleep about 2 hours later and my laptop fell to the floor, closing itself and shutting down. I woke to the sound of glass breaking and my mother screaming something a bit confounding and full of curse words to my sister and my sister screaming right back. I ignored it, like they usually ignore me, and threw on my darkest jeans and a black tank, patted on my black eyeshadow and liner and headed out. My mother was leaning over the counter smoking a cigarette and wiping her eyes, she was sniffling. I sneaked past her and made it out the door, I never got involved with my mother and sister's arguments, I would just get hurt and hate them more. I hated my mother, she always smoke and drank until she blacked out, and then hit me when she wanted more but couldn't afford it. I hated my sister because she never got the same treatment, physically, she got the verbal abuse, and she was a whore. Shes had more boyfriends than me, and 2 pregnancy scares, mother never hit her once, just yelled.
I took my time going to the bookstore,watching people laugh and gossip, the birds flying in a huge groups across the sky. The sky still seemed dark even though the sun was out. I saw little kids in the park across the street playing on the jungle gym and sliding down in all the different ways they could fit and not hurt themselves. I chuckled a little at the memory of me and my sister sliding down the slide together, she would be in the from I would be in the back holding her hands up. I started to tear and abolished the thought and sped up my pace.
I walked into the bookstore, chilled a little from the air conditioner that suddenly hit me. He was there, staring at me. I walked to the back of the store like a usually do and picked up one of the paranormal romances, I hoped someone would die or get shot in the end. I heard someone clear their throat and I looked up, he was standing there, smiling at me.
"Yes?" I asked dully.

"Nobody dies in that book." he says, still smiling.
"Excuse me?"
"I said nobody dies in that book. I've notice the kinds of books you read, and they all end tragically."
He laughed a little and shook is head.
"What is your name?"
"I'm Zaiden." He chuckled and smiled at me some more. "What is your name?"
"Maya."
"Very nice name."
"Thanks."
I got up to leave but he blocked my way.
"Maya, I've been watching you."
This creeped me out a bit considering the fact that he said like he knew what I did last summer.
"I've noticed."
"I'm sorry if I seem a little weird."
Did he just say a little?
"It's fine but I really have to go."
I shoved him a little with my shoulder to get by and headed toward the door.
"You didn't pay for that book." he called to me. I tossed it to the side and kept walking.
"Sorry." I muttered.
I glanced back and saw him pick up the book I had just tossed and he dusted it off with his hand. I saw him smiling, chuckling and shaking his head.'Was he laughing at me?' I thought. I brushed off the thought and strutted down the street towards the park. As I sat on the hard wooden bench I noticed how everyone always seemed happy at Grant Park. I see the parents gossiping about the new men in town, kids sharing cookies and germs and toys. I think I look out of place, people kept staring and walking far outside my perimeter like I had a shield to keep them away. I sat there until sunset, I liked people watching, it was calming when the warm wind blew through my hair. I felt calm, I never feel this way at home. At home I'm always so tense and scared that my mothers acrylic nails are going to scratch at my face when she can't find her whiskey.
A cop started toward me, his face so stern and cold. I got up to leave before he could reach me, but I wasn't going home. No... never home. I walked through the streets of StillWood until I spotted another bench to plop myself on. It was next to a club called "Smex",'that's catchy,' I thought. Smex is an 18 and over club full of drunk 16 and 17 year old's looking for a good time with someone twice there age. The smell of old fries and some gel I wouldn't want to know about until I'm 30 drifted out of the club, along with a few happy, and very stoned, couples, some occasionally stopping right in front of me to make out.
'What am I doing here?' I thought,' I need to go home.'
I hated that I felt the need to go home but all the sexual tension did not suit well with me at all. I got up to walk away and saw him walking towards me, with, of course, a smile on his face. This guy has a thing for smiles.
"Hello, Maya." he greeted.
"Hi."
"What are you doing here? This club has a reputation you know."
"I didn't go in I was just sitting here. And I don't think it is any of your business to know what I'm doing here even if I did go inside."
"I wasn't trying to get into your business, Maya, I'm just curious."
What the...
"Fine whatever, I'm going home anyway, if that makes you feel better." I tried to shove past him but he grabbed my arm.
"Please, let me walk you home," he pleaded," it's dark and I... I want to make sure you get home safely."
I don't know why, but I feel like I need to be mean to him, I know he doesn't deserve it, he's so nice and apparently caring, despite the fresh bruise on his cheek.
"Ok, fine." I said coldly.'What is wrong with me, can I not be grateful for his kindness?' I thought.
He looped his arm around mine like a classic gentleman and I pointed us in the direction towards my home.

We walked in silence, slowly, but as one, it felt nice to walk with him and a little strange at the same time. I decided to break the silence.
"how old are you, Zaiden?"
"I am the big 1 8, Miss Maya."
Miss? Really?
"Don't call me Miss."
He smiled shyly and said,"I'm sorry, it was a bit of a joke."
"A joke? "
"Yeah, you seem a little tight sometimes, like my old English teacher Miss Turner."
Did he just compare me to an old high school teacher?
"So I remind you of a bitter old teacher?"
"No! I mean.... uh never mind, it was a stupid joke."
We walked on in embarrassing silence again. He made me look so small standing next to him, he had to be at least 6'0 to my 5'4. The wind was starting to pick up and it was getting colder,' why did I not bring a jacket?' I thought.
"Are you cold?"
"A little."
He started to take his large leather jacket off and offer it to me," no that's ok, I'm fine," I assured him," we're almost at my house, actually you can stop right here, I'll be fine."
I tried to give him a promising smile and apparently failed.
"I insist, I'll go all the way."
He must have noticed how wrong that sounded and said quickly,"I mean I'd be happy to take you the umm whole way."
I giggled a little. 'a giggle?' I thought, I hadn't giggled in months, not since my sister and I camped out in front of our Christmas tree on the Christmas Eve, making smores with our little fire lamp, and telling stories all the way to midnight. I pushed the memory away and stopped giggling, I went cold again. We walked up the street and my house slowly creeps up around the corner as we advance upon it. The windows are dark and ominous. Eerie.
"This is me, you can go now." I said.
"It was nice walking with you." He said smiling slightly, shoving his hands in his pockets.
Yeah, bye." I said, and started walking off and remembered, "Zaiden?" He hadn't started to walk off, he was still standing in the same place, staring at me thoughtfully.
"Yes?"
"Thanks. For walking me home I mean."
He smiled.
"You're welcome, Maya."
I started toward the front door again and went inside. I peeked out the little side window by the door, he was still standing there, and it looked like he was staring right at me. I hastily ducked away from the window, and ran up the stairs, in the dark, towards my room. I closed my door and kept the light s off. I carefully peeked out my window. He was gone. I felt a little disappointed.'Why?' I thought. I've never had a boy like me before nor have I ever opened myself up to any boy that I had a crush on in school. I never understood dating, it seemed like a waste of time to me, all you do is make out, fill each other up, say "ILY" in text and break up a week later. Superfluous, time wasted on a useless relationship that we both knew wasn't going to last anyway. I took a hot shower to compensate for the cold air I had just absorbed. I picked laptop up off the floor and turned it on, and checked my email. Nothing. I turned off my laptop and my lamp, and drifted off into a deep sleep.

Chapter 2

Zaiden "Thanks. For walking me home, I mean." she says to me.
I smiled and said,"you're welcome, Maya."
She walked off down the walk way, hunched over so the cold night air blowing through her wouldn't freeze her. I knew she was cold, and I offered my jacket, but she wouldn't take it. I wondered if it was because she didn't quite know me yet, or she was just looking out for me to make sure I stayed warm. Either way I was happy to get to walk her home, I didn't trust the people at that God awful club back there. I didn't want anyone to take advantage of her, she's so small and fragile looking it made me wonder what she was thinking staying out so late, and sitting alone by a club full of drunk men, prey on girls like her. Maybe not quite like her though, she's definitely not like other girls.
I saw her peek at me through the window by the door, I chuckled a little when I saw her, and she knew I saw her, she snapped back before I could wave a final goodbye to her. Was she afraid of me? Did I embarrass her?I hoped not.
I started to walk home, though I wouldn't call it a home, home is where a family that loves you live. I might as well walk into the fiery pits of hell.
The night was cool from the wind and bright from the moon and stars, I didn't want to go home, not yet. I checked my watch and it read 10 o'clock, I hoped my dad wouldn't wait up for me. Why should he? As I walked on back in the direction of the club, I saw couples walking hand in hand, drunk with lust and alcohol. It made me miss the feel of Maya on my arm when we walked together, I could still feel a little of her weight on my arm, her warmth, she was cold I knew, but her body held onto it's heat. I know she probably look odd on my arm, she is so pale she looks ghostly, and her black hair made her even paler. I didn't care though, she was beautiful to me. I wonder if she was happy to see me... I walked past the club, getting a whiff of old fries and some kind of gel. Someone bumped into my shoulder,"watch it!" he shouted, and scowled at me as he said so. I really did not feel like fighting tonight, so I muttered an apology and kept walking. He didn't see it as an apology, and he was very drunk.
"What?! You too good to apologize?" He said, shoving me into a brick wall. I hated fighting with a drunk man. I tried to walk away but he grabbed the back of my jacket and pulled me back, he wasn't that much bigger than me, maybe 6'2, and he wasn't that strong either, I heard him grunt a little a little when he pulled me back. "Don't walk away from when I'm talking to you." he growled. I guess he thought I was scared, he started to snicker.
"Awe you scared?" I sighed and shoved him away from me, hard. He was surprised by my sudden act of retaliation and came at me with a jab to my jaw, which was already tender. I stumbled back and into the brick wall with a little force and I hit him back with a punch to his gut and another to his nose, I felt his nose break under my fist and he stumbled to the ground. He got back up, angrier now, and punched the left side of my face, the side with the bruise. I fell to the ground and he kicked me in my stomach 'kick' and again 'kick' kick' 'kick' and he stopped to brag about his oh so impressive handy work.
"Pssh, some fight. Maybe you should have stayed home, little boy." he snickered, and turned his back on me to walk off. I picked myself up, slowly, and curled my hand into a fist, 'this is bad' I thought, 'I shouldn't do this' but anger overtook me and I grabbed his shoulder and turned him around, I punched him six times in the face, he started to bleed and bruise so I let him fall to the ground.
His friends tried to help him up but he was losing consciousness and fell to the ground again.
"What the hell, dude! "one of them shouted.
"He was drunk! What did you do that for?!" guy number two said. Thankfully they didn't gang up on me, they were obviously sober. And I was fine with that.
"He was getting on me. What did you expect me to do?" I asked, holding my jaw in my hand, and it was already starting to swell, and rubbing me stomach.
"Whatever, man, just get the hell outta here." I wanted to hit him too, but that would've just led to cops, and an over night stay in the town prison. No thank you.
I walked the rest of the way home, ignoring everything an everyone. I just wanted to get home, take a shower,

and go to bed. I was so tired I practically dragged myself home, I checked my watch, 11 o'clock, I sighed and sped up my pace despite my jaw that throbbed with pain with every step. I finally reached my building and buzzed myself in. The building was run down and raggedy, pipes dripped from the ceiling leaving a puddle in the middle of the floor that I always stepped in. I dragged myself up the stairs to the third floor and entered our apartment. It was a three bedroom apartment but all the bedrooms were roughly the size of a walk in closet, maybe a little bigger. The walls were a little moldy and the rug was stained with questionable liquids and fluids, the whole place reeked of cigarettes and beer, as usual. When I walked in the kitchen lights were on, he waited. My dad was sitting at the table wit ha cigarette and a beer in his hand looking at me with obvious disappointment and contempt. I never understood why he was disappointed in me when he was the one who could only afford a run down piece of crap apartment like this.
"Where have you been, son?" he asked, his voice reminded me of Clint Eastwood when he says "Do you feel lucky, punk?" He only called me son when there was going to be a problem.
"I had to walk a friend home." I answered.
"What happened to you?" he didn't sound worried about it, just annoyed.
I got into a fight on my way back."
"You know fightin' isn't gonna get you nowhere."
'Neither will you.' I thought.
"I know... I didn't start it, though."
"Do I look like a care who started it?" He was glaring a little and clutching his bottle with a white knuckled hand. No he didn't care who started it.
"He wouldn't let me walk away, and I wasn't going to run, I beat him so there's no problem now. I'm fine."
He got up from the table and slowly started toward me.
"So you think you're a man now 'cause you can kick a little ass?" God, here we go.
"No..."
"So you're a pussy now?"
What is up with the questions?
"No."
"You wanna hit me?"
I stared at him straight in the eye and shook my head.
"Good....we both know you wouldn't last." My hands were shaking, I just wanted to go to my room, I wanted to get away from him.
"Zaiden, are you alright?" my grandmother walked in, I relaxed a little bit.
"I'm fine, Grama, I just had a little accident." She looked worried and scared. I guess I looked worse than I thought. She walked over to me and gently took my face in her soft little hands.
"Oh, baby, who did this to you?"
"Some drunk guy by the club. I'm fine, Grama." I gently took her hands away from my faced and walked around her to go to the bathroom. I closed the door and turned on the water. I looked in the mirror; my face was swollen and blood glided down my nostrils, the bruise from earlier was getting darker too. I took off my shirt and I had bruises on my chest and stomach. I sighed, undressed and hoped in the shower. I let the water rain down on my tender body, into my eyes and mouth. It felt soothing after awhile. I replayed the days events through my head while I rinsed my battered shell. I've lived in StillWood for three years and the whole time I've been here I've done nothing but study, fight(literally), and work, I couldn't live like this forever, and I didn't want to. I got a job at the Lucky's bookstore since the beginning of the summer, and it was the calmest place I've ever been, I loved the smell, the sound of people turning the pages in their books, it was cool in there, never overheated or humid, it was perfect.
Then I saw her. Maya. She just appeared one day, just walked in with her head down, her arms wrapped around herself like she was always cold or something. I wanted to warm her, but she never looked at me. I'd try and suggest books to her, she would take them and utter a little thank you and head to the back to her territory, the overstuffed chair. I could see her perfectly when she sat there, engulfed in a the world the story created for her, she always looked so concentrated, not struggling, you could just tell she was in another world. She looked so secure and natural when she read, I thought it was amazing how she could just switch

worlds like that. I hardly ever read, I just worked there for the money.
One day, I'll never forget, she looked up from her book and stared at me, I looked away for some reason, as if she might see something I didn't want her to see. From then on she would look up occasionally, and stare at me, I'd look away. Why did I look away?
The water started to get cold so I hopped out and toweled myself off, wrapped it around my waist and took the 3 steps it takes to get from the bathroom to my bedroom. I threw on my pajamas and fell into be, still thinking about her. I hoped she wouldn't go to Lucky's tomorrow, I didn't want her to see me like this, the bruise was bad enough and she seemed to look past it, but I didn't want to push my luck. She came in everyday now, though, so she would probably see my bruised face, I hoped the swelling would be gone by the time I go to work. I didn't want to take any chances so I got out of bed and went to the kitchen to get something cold to put on my face. My dad had gone to bed but my grandmother was sitting at the table with an ice pack in front of her. She knew me well. She silently handed me the ice pack when I reached her.
"Thank you."
"How are you feeling?"
"I'm fine, just a little sore."
"You should have bathed in some Epsom salt."
I smiled, she suggested Epsom salt for everything.
"I'm fine, honest to God." I chuckled.
"Oh don't you laugh at me, Epsom salt is good for the body."
"I know, Grama, I'll take one tomorrow if I'm still hurting."
"Why did that boy attack you, Zaiden?"
"I told you, he was drunk, he jostled with his shoulder and wanted me to apologize, I did but I guess he was too hammered to hear it, so he shoved me into a brick wall, I shoved him back and a fight broke out." She sighed and got up from the table.
"You could have walked away."
"He wouldn't let me walk away, he grabbed me, Grama, I couldn't get away." I started to shake and tears started to fill my eyes, Grama was totally anti-violence and I hate it when she gets disappointed in me for fighting, even if it wasn't my fault.
She saw the tears coming and came around the table to hold me.
"I'm not mad, Zaiden, don't cry, I don't want you to cry."
"I'm sorry, Grama."
"It's okay, baby."
She rubbed my hair and rocked me. I loved my grandmother more than anything, disappointing her was like cutting deeper into a paper cut. Painful.
"Why don't you go to bed now, I know you have to work tomorrow." She stopped holding me and took my face in her hands, she wiped the tears that had escaped my eyes and kissed my forehead. I kissed her cheek and got up to go to my room.
She stopped me and hugged me one more time." I love you, Zaiden, and know you can be strong without violence."
"I know, Grama, I love you too." She let me go and I walked to my room, closed my door and got into bed. I stared at the ceiling thinking about how I could have gotten away from him. Maybe I should have run? No I couldn't do that, he would've chased me and probably beat me harder. I had no choice.
I forced myself to stop thinking about it and finally fell asleep. I dreamed about her the whole night.

Chapter 3

Maya I lay in my bed for awhile, the bright morning sun beaming into my room made me cover my face with my comforter, even though it was obviously over 80 degrees in my room. I was contemplating what I was going to do today and that list ran all the way down to....nothing. I thought about going to the park again, sit on one of the swings and reread one of my old books, but I hate rereading books so that was out. Then I thought about pigging out and eating all the food in the house, but that involved staying IN the house, with my mother, and that was definitely something I wasn't going to do. I tried my best to keep my mind away from Lucky's , even though I had already made it a habit to go there everyday until school starts up again.
I sighed and lifted the thick blanket off my head so I could start my depressing morning ritual. I got on my laptop, procrastinating was all I could think to do until I was absolutely sure I had no choice but to go to Lucky's. I checked my e-mail, Facebook, Myspace , Vside, and Youtube in the time span of 10 minutes...and then I got bored.
The house was reassuringly quiet. I assumed no one was up yet and tip toed downstairs into the kitchen for a small breakfast.
'Ahha! FruityTops!' I thought cheerfully. And took my favorite cereal out of the cupboard.
I dug in the fridge for milk, just as I thought, we only had a little left. Mom was gonna beat the crap out of me if the fridge turned out to be lacking a carton of milk. She loved to eat ChocoChunks every morning, with a beer.
I pushed the thought aside and grabbed the milk, I'd just go out and by some when I finished eating.
As I sat down to eat I heard a door open. I panicked and got ready to bolt when I saw that it was just my sister, Emily. She looked so tired and, to my surprise, way to old for a 14-year-old. She was dragging herself into the kitchen, not noticing me at all, and opened the cupboard for some cereal. Her blonde hair was very tangle and messy, and I doubted it was from sleep. She looked fragile and tiny, she was shorter than me by an inch, maybe. She had a bruise on her the back of her neck, I had mistaken it for a hickey when she walked in but it was too gross and dark to be a hickey.
She opened the fridge in search of milk and slammed the door, exhaling angrily.
She turned around and saw me sitting at the table and glared at me.
"She's gonna kill you." she said, crossing her arms and leaning her weight on her right leg.
"I'm gonna go to the store when I finish, OK." it wasn't s question, I just wanted her to shut up and leave.
She scoffed.
"Whatever." she said, then left. Stomping upstairs like she was trying to wake up mom and get me killed.
I sighed heavily and scarfed down my breakfast. I ran lightly upstairs and threw on a pair of shorts and a black Tee-shirt, I skipped the make-up ritual, I was in a hurry. I slipped on my sneakers and lightly rushed back downstairs and out the door.
It was hotter than it was in my room and very very humid. My hair was not going to have a nice day.
I ran the short distance to "Quick Mart" and rushed in to the dairy section. It was a small store with only essential grocery items: eggs, bread, fruits, beans, breakfast foods, ect.
I found the milk my mother usually got and rushed to the checkout. As I jogged I saw a familiar figure to my left and stopped. I looked and the figure was gone. I could have sworn it was there. I know I saw him, his hair was unmistakably dark and long there was no way I could imagine it. Or maybe I did imagine it. I walked over to where I saw the figure and there was nothing there, I checked the nearest isles. Nothing.
'The heat is getting to my head.' I thought, and started towards the checkout. On my way home my hair started to frizz and I swear I looked like I was from the 70s. Short hair and frizz don't cooperate well together. It wasn't a pixie but it wasn't shoulder length either.
'One day I'm gonna let my hair grow out, and never get within 2 feet of scissors.' I thought as I opened the door to my house.
It was still quiet, other than my sister taking a shower. I took a long quiet strides to the kitchen and gently placed the milk in the fridge. I sighed and felt pleased with my work. Then I heard the door open. The shower was still on and the steps were too heavy to be Emily's. I rushed out the door and down the street in the

direction of Lucky's.

Chapter 4

Zaiden I didn't waste any time getting to work, I just washed my face, ate a bagel, and silently left the the apartment. I nearly ran to Lucky's hoping desperately that Maya wouldn't be there. I had glanced in the mirror while I washed my face; the swelling had gone but my eye and jaw and cheek were obviously still bruised and darker than before. She would definitely notice. The very thought of her seeing me made me slow my pace and take my time getting there. She usually showed up at different times every day so there was no telling if she was going to be there or not. I sighed and tried to push her out of my head. It was unbelievably hot this morning, beads of sweat had already formed on my forehead even though I hadn't ran a long distance. The streets were practically empty, all the parents (except mine) were at work and the kids were out on summer break, and by "out" I mean in the house playing "Call of Duty". A tall blonde girl in her 20s was out walking several dogs at once. There was a man in a cheap suit (probably works at the bank or city hall) walking and talking on his cell phone. Usually I didn't "people watch" but I was spending as much time away form Lucky's as I could. I looked at my watch, 10:57am. I exhaled annoyed that I had no choice but to run to work now, I had to be there at 11 o'clock.
When I went in I did a quick scan of the small store and, to my satisfaction and slight disappointment, she was nowhere in sight. I breathed out as if I had been holding my breath, and who knows, maybe I was.
I said "hi" to Calvin, the store manager, and went to my post in front of the register.
I picked up a book that had been left at the register, "50 ways to please your woman" it said, I was bored and there was no one in the store so I cracked it open and skimmed a few pages. It wasn't a bad read, actually.
Someone cleared their throat and I looked up quickly shutting the book. It was Maya.
Her amber eyes went wide for a split second of surprise when she saw my face, she looked away shyly for a second, then she looked me in the eye.
"I heard that was a very good book." she said smiling. And from the puffiness of her cheeks; holding back a laugh as well.
"What?" I said confused by what she said, I was expecting a "hi" or "good to see you".
She pointed to the book I was reading.
I looked at the book as if for the first time and hastily tossed it aside with a light 'crash'.
"I uh uh, umm. How are you?" I managed to add quickly.
"I'm alright." she said shaking her head and turning to walk to the back of the store.
Her territory.
"Uh wait. Maya."
"What?" she said not stopping to hear what I had to say.
"I uh. I just wanted to- "
"Look, Zaiden, I just came here to read, OK?"
She stopped this time and looked at my face, not my eyes. She shook her head and walked around me.
I felt a pang of sadness when she shook her head.
'Was she disappointed?' I thought.
"It's not what it looks like!" I blurted out.
She stopped and looked at me again, she looked irritated.
"What are talking about?"
I pointed at my face.
She sighed.

"What is it then? Did I upset you?" I don't know why I'm so hurt by her rejection, it felt like a kick in the shin.
She looked taken aback a bit by my persisting in her personal life, if it was even personal and not just me.
"It's just... I'm not really looking for a friend right now, I have enough to worry about already without the whole "dating" thing."
"Who said anything about dating?"
Now she blushed, deep and dark too.

I smiled.
And she blushed even deeper.
"I-I Uh, that's not what I meant, I j-just, wait n-no." she was babbling now.
"Maya?"
She stopped babbling and looked up at me. She looked scared, and so small. I didn't mean to scare her, that was the last thing I wanted to do to her. Her hands were shaking and her eyes were bright with on coming tears. What have I done?
"I' m sorry, I didn't mean to make you cry." I took her shaking hand in my steady hand.
She didn't pull away, she just looked sadder.
"No! No, it's not your fault." she said wiping a tear that started to fall with her free hand."I-I have to go."
She gently tried to pull away, but I held on.
"Please." I begged." I'm not going to hurt you. Do you need to talk?"
She smiled and gently put her hand to my bruised cheek, like my grandmother did last night.
"We can talk later."
I let go of her hand and she started toward the back again. Her arms were wrapped around herself again even though it had to be 89 degrees in here, and that's with the air conditioner on.
She spotted a book and picked it up not looking at the flap to see what it was about. She sat in the overstuffed chair and tucked her pale skinny legs under herself.
I couldn't help but stare at her, she was so beautiful. But something about her seemed disturbed, like she had a deep dark disquieting secret. She wiggled and squirmed in the chair and then looked up from her book; she was looking at me tentatively, searching for something from the short distance that separated us.
I started to pretend I was busy, you know, checking making sure all the books had bar codes and what not. I peeked at her for a second and she was still staring.
"Is this pay back from yesterday?"
"What?"
"You're staring at me like I'm going to rob this bookstore."
She smiled and giggled a little. "Yes, I guess you could say that. Paying you back I mean, you were staring at me like a creeper yesterday."
I smiled back at her.
"Well it's working, you're creeping me out."
She laughed and shook her head.
Then customers started walking in and the moment faded.
She set her face in a stone cold "Don't bother me or I'll bite" expression and didn't look at me again until she left a few hours later. She glanced at me, with sad eyes, as she walked out of the store.
I missed her already. 5 o'clock. My shift is finally over and I can leave this store. It was starting to smell like sweat and some kind of cream. I said "bye" to Calvin. Calvin wasn't a friend of mine, just a coworker. He was taller than me, skinny, pale , and his face infested with freckles. His hair was a carrot read and his eyes were a bright blue. He reminded me of Chucky and he creeped me out.
I left the store wondering what I was going to do with the rest of my day. I decided on going to the park, it was soothing and it felt like the wind was going to pick up soon so it wouldn't be too hot to slum around there until night fall.
I walked with a brisk pace to Grant Park, deep down hoping that I might see Maya there. I planned on getting her to talk about what happened at the book store, if I saw her.
I wanted to know why she started to cry as if I was scolding her. The sad puppy look she gave me as she looked up at me when I was holding her soft cool hand was still plastered in my head like a frightening picture to a young child.
I wanted to wipe her tears, but I knew she wouldn't have let me, she probably would have ran away, or slapped me, either way they both would've hurt.
I walked through the gates of Grant Park and headed over to a bench under a big Willow tree. It was close by the play ground and the pond, the perfect view.
I plopped myself down on the bench and stared directly at the setting sun. People say you shouldn't do that but

it never bothers my, eyes except for the few seconds after I look away and that annoying purple glare is in my way so I can't see anything. But I stared at the sun anyway, ignoring the consequence of temporary blindness I knew I was gonna get after I looked away. I loved looking at a setting sun, if you look at for a long time the sun disappears and all that's left is a clear circle in the sky, a glowing halo where the sun should be. Sometimes I wondered if I myself am like the sun, a transparent shell, except I don't glow so that's a pretty lame metaphor to compare myself with.

I looked away from the sun, temporarily blinding by the dark splotch in my vision, I looked over at the play ground, still unable to see clearly, but I know what I saw was there and not a trick of the light. Sitting there on the swing looking so innocent and sweet, was Maya. I rubbed my eyes to make them clear, and I was right. She was sitting there looking at the same sunset I just looked away from.

She looked so dreamy and peaceful I didn't want to disturb her. I didn't want to make her cry again or upset her in anyway, so I got up and started to leave.

"Zaiden?" said a faint voice.

I stopped walking and turned around, she was looking right at me, questioningly.

"Hi."

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