

5:42am Tuesday

I am the moon, forever alone in the night sky. Offbeat with the stars, and destined to endure an existence made for one. Utterly abandoned in the black abyss that envelops the Earth each sundown, and helplessly reaching for each shooting star that passes by. Well, at least it feels like I am. As the soft panes of my face bathe in the pale glow of the moonlight, I allow myself to be comforted by the moon and the dark sky that threatens to swallow it whole. Exactly how the ocean will swallow *me* whole in a matter of days. Will swallow the old rooftop I am now perched atop of too. I take a shuddering breath, willing the air to come easier. It's not too late to run, not at all. I could get on the next emergency plane and be gone by sunrise. Being the fifteen year old girl that I am, my boarding group has already been given permission to board the planes. Despite the fact that there is not enough time or resources for every citizen of California to escape the record breaking tsunami that's poised and ready to strike, I could walk on to just about any plane and be handed a seat. I could, but I won't. I won't claim the seat that's waiting for me, but rather leave it for someone who wishes to escape. Someone who wishes to live through this.

The rusty metal door to the roof slowly opens behind me and my head snaps towards it. Who else is here at this hour? Compared to what the city's population used to be, it's as good as a ghost town. And those that are still here are frantically trying to secure a plane ticket, not lounging on the tops of apartment buildings in the dead of night. As the door fully opens, the lights from the city illuminates the answer to my question. A boy- it's a boy who stands in the doorway, moonlight washing over his kind features. Alarm sparks in his hazel eyes, clearly surprised to find someone on the roof at this hour. I

uncomfortably shift on the rough surface of the cement, the same uneasiness surely shining in my eyes.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t think anyone would be up here.” He nervously admits, a few wisps of his chestnut colored hair falling over his eyes with the movement.

“It’s all good.” I assure him. “Care to join me?” I could use the company on one of my final nights. The offer fills the air and he gently nods his head, agreeing to the hesitant offer. He crosses the space in a few tentative steps, softly sitting down a couple of feet beside me. He lets out a breath and stares up into the night sky.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” He asks, admiration shining in his gaze. I follow his line of sight, contemplating his words.

“The stars?” I ask, leaning my head back to get a better view of them all.

“No, no,” he exhales. “The moon.” I almost laugh at the irony, but instead turn my head, my green eyes meeting his brown ones. I didn’t notice before, but his eyes are like pools of honey. A few heartbeats pass, our eyes boring into each other’s. I’m the first to look away, noting the knobby grey sweater he’s wearing, cozy against the chill breeze of the summer night. “What are you doing up here?” He asks, curiosity sparkling in those eyes. I turn my head back up to the sky.

“I could ask you the same thing.” I hear the smile in his voice as he concedes,

“Touché.” The distance between us is again filled with comfortable silence, both of us content to bask in the beauty of the vast night sky and city lights. “Shouldn’t you be on a plane though?” He questions again, his voice shattering the stagnant quiet. I consider his question,

“I’m staying.” That gets his attention. His head whirls to mine, surprise written on his face. I meet his stare, readying myself for the scrutiny that he’ll no doubt spit at me.

“I thought it was just me.” And that gets my attention. My heart jumps, and I will my face into one as close to neutrality as I can get. I force myself to voice my words steadily as I confirm,

“You’re staying?” He just barely nods his head, his amber eyes crinkling slightly and his right cheek (and only his right cheek) dimpling. He’s smiling. Something new stirs inside me as I watch the timid boy in the old worn sweater smile his crooked, one dimpled smile. . . odd.

“I can’t believe it. I was sure that I was the only one.” He mutters more to himself than to me as his eyes drift toward the city below. His voice returns to its normal level as he confesses, “It’s strangely comforting . . . knowing that it’s not just me.” A twinge of painful understanding sparks in my heart. I did know, I knew all too well how lonely it was spending your last days alone. Perhaps it’s that very feeling that gives me the courage to ask,

“What’s your name?” His copper hair slides into his face yet again as he turns his head to face me, a small smile back to dancing on his lips. At the sight, that same unfamiliar warmth blooms in my chest. I brush a strand of my long dark hair out of my face as he answers,

“Noah.” Simple, sweet, and perfectly fitting. “Yours?” His gaze catches mine expectantly. Those eyes, like the amber in the trunk of my leafy green ones. His focus doesn’t stray from my plain face as I breathe out the word,

“Autumn.” His goofy smile broadens, the dimple deepening. He strays closer to me to extend a handshake, his scent of pine and lavender lazily floating over me.

“Pleased to meet you, *Autumn*.” At that, even I can’t hold back my bashful grin. I take the offer, the warmth of his large hand almost fully enveloping mine.

“The pleasure is mine, *Noah*.” I croon, my mocking tone coaxing a soft chuckle from him. His hand releases mine, the cool dark air biting at my fingertips. A few rays of sunlight begin to peek through the city, the golden shine effortlessly flowing around the buildings. I inhale, drinking down the rich morning glow. His soft voice sounds from where he’s seated almost directly beside me,

“What’s your plan now?” It’s a good question. Great actually. What *is* my plan now?

“I don’t have one.” I answer honestly. This time he fully shifts his body to face mine, tattered sweater in full view. I do the same, our bodies now across from one another. He lowers his voice and states,

“Autumn, we are going to die by five am Thursday.” Five am Thursday, the predicted time of the tsunami that will ensnare our last breaths and the earthquake that will rattle the earth so much that the ground will splinter and the sky will tremble. That’s not including the countless other earthquakes leading up to the dreadful hour. With it being Tuesday morning now, our breaths are limited. “I promised myself when I made the decision to stay that I wouldn’t waste my final days waiting for death. I promised that I would do more things in my last days than most did in their entire existence.” A shaky breath, “I promised myself life when the world promised me death. And it starts now.” A beat of silence thrums between us and I find myself fully enthralled in his words, his caramel eyes. “Are you in?” The last words, soft as they are, echo across the rooftop.

His gaze is fierce and all-consuming as all his attention lay upon my decision. The city seems to still, the breeze dispersing for this one moment. Even the morning birds seem to quiet.

“I’m in.” The words reverberate through me as relief floods his features, an easy smile stretching across his tan face. At his relaxed manner, I release a breath I didn’t know I was holding.

“It starts with watching the sunrise on an old roof.” He declares, returning his attention to the rising sun. I do the same, eager for the distraction from our impending death. As we witness one of our last sunrises, his breaths a steady rhythm beside me, I am at last eager for what comes next. And so begins the story of the brown eyed boy and the green eyed girl who try to fit a lifetime into a matter of days. *Hopefully it works*, is all I dare think.