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My Soulmate

Many people can call their “person” their “soulmate.” Usually found within the depths of the volcanic highschool hallways. For example, an Oscar nominated boyfriend with the perfect family, flawless body and hair. Or it’s the beach blonde, Barbie best friend, who meets the blonde and brunette duo perfectly. It could also be, the perfectly matched zodiac sign duo, that are only friends because they are compatible. Then there’s me, a typical seventeen year old girl that can’t grasp the concept of reality.

I walk home from school in my skin tight, purple LuluLemon leggings with my black cropped shirt. Everyday, I pass the same overly excessive sign that says “Welcome to Cashiers.” I also pass the same trashy gas station sign that reads “Discount Food and Drink.” I walk along the brown sidewalk and can feel my sweat drip down the side of my back. *God, I hate the summer.* I could also hear my delicate, silver layered necklaces whisper *lank clink clank*. Which somehow reminds me of my parents’ imaginary chains that are tightened around my neck and wrists.

I step over a placemat that says home-sweet-home. Gosh, I wish you knew what I said to myself at that exact moment. Susan and Eric greet me as soon as I step through the door.

“How was your day, honey?” “Did you have fun?”

I think to myself, *what kind of teenage girl has fun at school?* Instead of saying what I really want to say. I take a deep breath, plaster a grin on my face, and respond with “yea.”

“Yeah” is a very intriguing word to me because there are so many forms and attitudes that go along with one word. For example, “ya” can come across presumptuous or unpleasant. “Yes” can come across as too formal or straightforward. So my preference always lies with “yea” because it’s the middle man. No one ever dislikes the middle man.

Although my parents can be suffocating, I find my fresh air with my little brother, Max. I follow the museum of family pictures on the path to my room. I come to a stop and look across the hallway to do my daily check-in on Max. He’s sitting next to the window, in his own personal spaceship, at least that is what Max calls it.

“What’s up little man.”

“Hey Maya!” Max exclaimed.

I’m completely aware that Max gets extreme bullying for being in a wheelchair his whole life. Max has never had friends over, and he looks tired for most of the time. But, this tiredness is different. It’s not caused by his condition.

Therefore, I look at Max as one of the strongest people I know. If I was still seven years old, I would beat the crap out of those small, little trinkets. This is why Max is one of the few tiny heroes in my life.

Everyday I have the same after school routine. I like routines. They make me feel comfortable because change makes me feel uncomfortable. Routines are inevitable, they make me feel safe.

Ok I think you get it, I'm a very “type A” person.

I sit down at my desk and do my homework for about an hour and a half. Which most teenagers don’t do, but I just get it done. I digitally turn the chemistry review in and go back downstairs. I make Max his favorite snack, green apple slices with evenly spread peanut butter on each individual slice.

After I give the slices to Max I get ready to leave for the library. *I promise I'm not a nerd.* I like to read on occasion, my mind typically wanders to other places while reading, but it calms my ADHD down at least.

The library is exactly 6 minutes from home. The library is usually filled with people of all different age gaps. There’s the usuals, who come every day around the same time as I do. Specifically, an older college guy with a perfect head of brown hair and a smile I can see from all the way back to the non-fiction section. Then, there’s the typical rich yoga mom with a 6 year old son looking for Dr. Seuss books. Lastly, there’s the sweet 60 year old men and women that I can talk to for hours on end.

I'm an old soul, if you couldn't tell.

On the way home from the library in my mom's car. I hit traffic. I'm very startled by it, because there is never traffic like this in Highland park. I turn my head to see what the problem is. There's an old man starting to get out of his car that has a flat tire. The old man looks like he is in his mid-60s. The old man is wearing a Hawaiian shirt and khaki pants. Which exactly resembles my grandfather who passed away a year and a half ago.

I pulled the car over to see what the issue was and to see what I can do for him, because I knew no one else would do the same. I walk up to him and at first he starts to ignore me, then he opens his mouth to say something. I didn't even comprehend what he was saying because I could only focus on the sound of his voice. It felt warm, and familiar just how my grandfather spoke.

"Yeah, so that's what happened." The man says.

I just nod my head and pretend like I just listened to his entire story.

"Okay do you need a ride somewhere, back to your house or something, I can help you out." I said this a bit aggressively.

Although I really didn't mean it.

"Yes, please, that would be extremely helpful."

Keep in mind that I only agreed to this because he looked and sounded exactly like my grandfather... which don't get me wrong, it was very nice.

In the first 10 minutes of the car ride it was silent. The more silence that passed by, the more awkward it became. I finally just took a chance and said something.

"So... Do you have a wife."

"No, she passed away a couple months ago."

"Oh, I'm sorry for your loss, that sucks."

About 20 minutes passed and our small conversation was one of the best I've had in a while. Our conversation was just so easy, I can't even tell you how many times I laughed. Once we got to 67th street he told me to turn left which was an "Independent Living Residency."

This has to be the wrong turn but ... it wasn't

I didn't mention anything about his living conditions when we got there. I just carried on the conversation, like nothing had happened.

Hours passed after he welcomed me into his home. We talked for hours, it felt exactly like when I would talk to my grandfather.

I swear that Murry was reincarnated as grandpa.

A couple conversations later, Murry pulled out a long list of things that resembled Santa's famous "Naughty and Nice List." Except this list was a bucket list of things Murry wanted to do before he passed.

How does someone already have a handwritten bucket list of crazy things if they aren't dying?

I just ignore the questions that pop up in my head, about the whole sick and dying thing.

Try to live in the moment, Maya. Don't let your mind wonder.

He begins to read off his intriguing bucket list in numerical order.

1. Ice skating in NYC.
2. Go to the Bahamas by boat

The list went on and on.

What felt like Twenty hours later we got to the last bullet point.

101) GO TO THE GRAND CANYON!!!

I told Murry that The Grand Canyon has been my dream location to visit since I was exactly 4 years old. The odds of us having the same thing in common was way too small. This made me somehow want to cry my eyes out in relief.

Did I finally find the person that I have been waiting for?

Did I find the person for that friendship that makes others jealous?

Over the course of the next 2 weeks, I visited him every other day. We would go downstairs and get the incredible pumpkin pie that they serve in the dining room. Then we sit there for hours talking about anything and everything. I began to just forget about school and friends when I'm with Murry. The friendship that we have is my main focus. This friendship is what keeps me going and what makes me the happiest version of myself.

Neither my parents nor Max have an idea of the friendship that Murry and I have. As far as they know I'm doing service hours at the "Independent Living Residency."

The following week on a Tuesday afternoon after school. We go down stairs to the dining room to get some lunch, as we are approaching the depressing gray-walled dining room, I blurt something out of my mouth.

"We should go to the Grand Canyon," I said abruptly.

"I mean that's a lot of time in advance planning Maya."

"But it doesn't have to be, we should *live in the moment*, what do we have to lose?"

"I can start packing today and buy the plane tickets tomorrow," Murry said with a very excited tone.

"Okay! Let's plan to leave Friday."

That day, I went home to tell my parents a lie. I typically don't lie, I think it's one of the worst things you can do to a person and to yourself. It just makes you question your own integrity, but this time it was different. The purpose of this lie would benefit me and make me so happy.

I approach mom, dad, and Max in the living room. I tell them that I have a school trip coming up this weekend to Arizona and it's mandatory that I go. It took some convincing and fake signature papers to get approval, but I did it!

Lying to Max is something I thought I'd never do, but sometimes your soulmate makes you do crazy things for yourself and to others.

When Friday rolls around I jump out of bed and just can't seem to make my grin fall from my face. I packed my clothes in a small luggage early this morning. Then happily said goodbye to my parents and gave Max the biggest and warmest hug yet.

This is the day.

I make my way to the residence as fast as I can. I could probably drive with my eyes in a blind fold if I wanted and still know how to make it there.

Seeing Murry's big smile melted my heart I gave him the biggest smile and an even bigger hug.

"Today's the day!" I exclaimed.

The entire residence could probably hear my voice. That's how loud I was.

By the time we board the plane to the time we step foot at the tip of the canyon. It felt like a flash of a photograph. We were in awe of the canyons, the pink and purple skies fit in just perfectly with the shape of the canyon. Everything was completely different and better than it looked like in pictures. Everything fit so perfectly, I felt like I had it all in just that small snapshot of a moment.

This is the best day of my life.

The trip went by in a matter of seconds. By the time we know it, we are right back where we started. In Cashiers, North Carolina. After we say our goodbyes, we part and go back to our homes.

After getting questioned by mom and dad for about an hour, I get a call from an unknown number. I pick up the call and it's Murry's residency.

"Are you Maya Sinclair?"

"Yes," I said calmly.

"I was told to call you since you are Murry's emergency contact. Murry has had a heart attack and is in the hospital. Do you want to come see him?"

"No, I mean yes, yes I do want to see him." I said very nervously.

My hands were shaking and I could no longer talk on the phone. I can start to hear my breathing increase at an extremely rapid speed. I grab the keys and run to the car. I speed down the highway and make my way to the hospital. Holding back every tear and fear I've got I speed walk through the halls to find Murry's room.

Once I get to his room he is surrounded by 6 doctors, who were doing something scary to his chest with a machine. I couldn't even see his face or his body. They wouldn't let me in, I started to let the tears run down my face. I don't cry, because it makes me feel uncomfortable. But in a weird way crying is comforting to me in this split second.

After 5 minutes of a panic attack in the hallway, the doctors let me inside the room.

They sit me down and say,

"I'm sorry..."

After the doctor said "I'm sorry" I suddenly could only hear the screeching beep of Murry's machine, and the crying of the other patient's family. I can hear Murry's calming voice as if he is right beside me. I refuse to hear or accept anything else.

He is not dead

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He is not dead.

Journal Entry #1

He died. Just like that. Apparently he never told me he only had one more month to live his life. (That's what the doc told me at least.) He had one more month of his entire lifetime and chose to spend that time with me. An ugly, dumb teenage girl with nothing to offer him. I should've known he was dying, he had a bucket list for fuck's sake. Murry is my soulmate, he was my best friend. Tell me how I'm supposed to grieve when I don't have friends or

close family to help me through it. Just like that I'm back to my old self, alone, left with no one. Not a friend, best friend, or soulmate. Just myself, I will always just have myself.