Finley Reinan/Someday/1489 words/Senior/

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Someday (1489 words)

 I brushed past another person in the hallway, rushing to get to class. The guy spun around to look at me, arching his eyebrows like he had never seen me before in his life, which he probably hadn’t. I often melted into the crowd, just another plain brunette girl, nothing much to look at. Especially since I’m so quiet it’s as if my tongue’s been cut out.

 I stared at the ground as I pushed through clots of kids, most of them remaining firmly planted where they stood. My hair covered my face, and my hands gripped my backpack straps for dear life.

 I always kept a backpack with me. At school anyway. It was one of the only ways I could avoid going down more hallways to reach my locker. *My locker.* It’s been months since I’ve seen that thing. I forgot the number, I think.

 Suddenly I bumped into someone. I looked up at them, ready to scurry away, when I realized who it was. I stared up at her in shock, my eyes wide. She looked down at me in a sort of frustration, as if the sight of me was bringing up old unwanted memories like dry heaves in her lungs.

 “I- “I began to say, looking deep into her light green eyes, but she shrugged me off and walked briskly away, her books held tightly to her chest. *Sasha,* I thought to myself, taking a moment to reminisce. Her shoes hit the ground with a subdued sort of confidence, always knowing where to go and when, her dark brown hair a trail in her wake. Her eyes were sharp and striking, and she held herself high, showing that she would not settle for less than she was worth. She was the last person to leave my side, and *leave* was hardly the right word; I gave her no choice. How can someone be best friends with a girl who’s afraid to speak?

 I stared at where she had stood long after she was gone, my eyes boring a hole into the seafoam green locker. Number 222 was hers*. Someday I’ll fix this. Someday.*

I gripped my backpack strap and walked as quickly as I could down the emptying hallway, all the students that once filled it slowly receding like the ebbing tide. I walked with a tightness in my throat that bubbled up from my chest, a sort of aching that remained there no matter how much I tried to think of something else.

 My classroom loomed ahead of me, a daunting room. I walked slowly to the door, and took a sharp breath in. The cheap metal door squeaked open without me having to knock, and the teacher stared at me in surprise, knowing that it was unlike me to be this late for class. My heartbeat was fast in my chest like a bird in a cage, and I feared it would fly away. I realized my knuckles had turned white from gripping my backpack strap so tight, and I let go with a slight embarrassment.

 “Eva?” The teacher said in shock, pushing her glasses up the bridge of her nose. “Why on earth are you so late for class?”

 I shrugged, avoiding the gaze of students that I could already sense through the crack in the door. The teacher sighed. “Normally I would need you to have a pass. But I’ll let it slide this once. Don’t be late again, ok Eva?”

 I nodded slowly, my grip beginning to tighten again as the teacher pushed the squeaking door open. The squeak turned into a screech as I walked slowly into the classroom, my feet heavy, as if weights were tied to my ankles. My heartbeat went faster as I realized the classroom was full of students, all looking at me with eyes trained to watch the unusual.

 I felt the heat rising in my face as I looked down at the ground, trying to ignore the eyes that I could feel on me. Even though I couldn’t see them, I knew they were there. The eyes were always there, watching, waiting, almost with a sort of boredom, as if there was nothing better to do than watch.

I rushed to my seat, the heat still in my face, sweat lacing my palms. I pulled my chair out and collapsed into it, not bothering to sidle it close to the table. I sat completely still, my eyes fixed on the front wall, my arms folded across my chest. There was a gap between me and the desk, a gap that I didn’t dare fix with all the eyes looking at me.

Slowly the eyes began to look back at the teacher, who now stood at the front of the classroom. She didn’t mind the eyes looking at her; after all, that was what eyes were supposed to do, right? She was trained to be watchable and accustomed to being watched. It was one of the reasons she got a check every month.

The teacher looked up from her computer and smiled at me. I slid lower into my chair. She clicked on her computer until a movie popped up onto the screen. *The Lion King* in Russian. It was Russian class, after all.

Through the first ten minutes of the movie, I stayed as still as possible, and although most of the eyes were watching the tv, a few turned to look at me for a glimpse, as if judging and analyzing me. I didn’t know what there was to analyze, though. I was nothing special, nothing pretty. I was just there.

After fifteen minutes of the movie, the teacher paused it and asked for students to take out pen and paper to write down every Russian word they recognized and what it meant in English. I reluctantly pulled out a fresh sheet of notebook paper that was folded in my backpack and smoothed it onto the desk. I searched with my hand in the pockets for a pen, finally sliding out a number 2 pencil.

I didn’t write many words. I couldn’t focus on the screen, not really. I had just realized that Sasha had been moved to the seat next to me, and the tension was much heavier in the air than I had anticipated. I prayed that this movie would end quickly, but I knew that an hour-and-a-half-long movie would certainly not.

Sasha sensed the tension too. She never turned her gaze onto me like the other eyes; she watched the screen with a sort of unfocused intensity. I decided to sneak a look over at her desk and saw that her paper was blank, and her body was still, like a statue.

“Ok, everyone,” the teacher said, pausing the movie. I flinched, surprised by her loud voice. “I need everyone to write down at least five words in this next scene coming up. I see that many of you still have blank papers,” She flashed a look at Sasha.

The teacher tapped her computer and the movie continued. I heard a word I knew by heart and reached over to my pencil to jot it down. But then my finger slipped on the smooth surface.

I heard a small, hollow clink as my pencil rolled off the desk. *Shoot,* I thought, freezing my hand in place. My heartbeat was fast again, and I knew I had to reach below my desk to grab it. But the eyes watching every move I made was enough to freeze me entirely.

As I stared at the wall, torn on what to do, there was a soft click on the far-left side of my desk. I turned slowly and saw a singular, bony hand placing the pencil carefully on my desk. I looked up and saw haunting green cat-like eyes staring back at me. She retracted, turning back to the movie without glancing back at me again. *Sasha.*

I dragged my pencil carefully over to me, gripping the sides with the tips of my fingers. Staring at the tv for only a moment, I looked back down at the desk, placing a single finger on the notebook paper. Ripping a tiny piece off the square of paper as quietly and slowly as I could, I began to write on it.

Thank you.

I folded the small paper quickly and tossed it blindly to my left, not wanting to see her. It took a few painstaking minutes for the paper to be slid back across my desk.

Thank you.

No problem.

And it took a few minutes for me to toss the paper back over again.

I’m sorry for what happened. You seriously didn’t deserve that.

I was finally able to look back at Sasha, and I met her deep green eyes again. But this time, she met mine back with a slight smile. And suddenly, someday didn’t seem so far.