

She Was My Light

My cheeks are flushed, but not just because of the late summer heat. It is because... well, because of my girlfriend, Celcia. She is always protecting me, ever since she rescued me from those bullies that day in early September... We have come a long way from just walking through the halls together, holding hands, or smiling at each other in the halls between classes. My love for her, this entire year, has only grown stronger. Much, much stronger. And yet...

“We should break up...” I whisper to her, pulling away from her kiss. My heart doesn’t agree with what I am saying, but it is what I have to do.

Her eyes widen for just a second. “Why?” she asks, even though she knows the answer.

I stare at the rusted feet of the bright green park bench we are sitting on and sigh, my sadness chilling even in this warm August evening.

“You know why...” I say, “Mother and Father won’t allow it.” I am not even lying when I say that. My parents are, well, homophobes. And as far as they know, I am still their precious little Violet, straight A’s (true), innocent and young-looking (also true), straight and perfect (False).

“But will *you* allow it?”

I let out a wry, bitter laugh. “It doesn’t matter what I want, Cel. You know that.”

At this, I am only met with silence, probably because I am right; I am not in control of my life. My parents are, and always will be, even once they are resting in their graves...

Finally, Celcia breaks the silence. “Just come out to them. It’s not hard. I came out when I was twelve.”

I sigh. Celcia may be poor, but she is luckier than I am in some ways. “Ugh, I’ll just go home now, it’s already half an hour after curfew.”

I stand up and start walking towards my house, and Celcia comes with me. We do not talk at all while we are walking, but the silence is comfortable, not at all awkward. Celcia is good like that, things are always fun when she is around...

We reach my modern, largish home within the span of five minutes, and I begin to fumble around in my purse for my house keys. I pull out a lipgloss and two bunny hairclips, but no keys.

“Just ring the doorbell...” Celcia tells me.

“I can’t. She’ll see you.”

Celcia sighs exasperatedly. “You worry too much. She won’t care that we’re together.” Before I can stop her, her finger finds the doorbell. *Ding-dong.*

Mom is at the door almost at once, smiling--until she sees Celcia. Maybe she knew something was off, maybe she found my pride pins or realized I would not be out half an hour past curfew with any normal friends, but either way, she is not happy. At all.

“Welcome home, sweetie,” she says sweetly. *Too sweetly.*

“Hi, Mom!” I tell her, trying not to let on what had just happened in the park a few minutes ago. *Definitely did not just kiss a girl, Mom. What makes you think that?*

She pulls me inside and slams the door behind me, and before I know it- *bam.* I can feel the sting of her slap on my face, and she glares at me. “Violet Kim,” she almost yells at me, “Tell me honestly. Are. You. Going. Out. With. That. Girl?”

This is terrifying.

“U-um...” my brain is working overtime, trying to make what will probably be the most important decision of my life. *Do I say no, continue to date Celcia in secret, and live with the guilt of both lying to my parents and hiding my feelings? Or do I tell her yeah, I am lesbian, so what?* Neither sounds exactly ideal. If I lie, I will still have food and a roof over my head. But I will not have my identity, it will be shoved into a closet until I am out of college and have a life of my own. If I tell her the truth, while I might get kicked out, I will have Celcia. Yes, Celcia. That is the deal-breaker for me at the moment. “Yes, Mother,” I tell her, my eyebrows furrowed in defiance. “I’m dating Celcia, I’ll have you know I like her a lot better than that boy you introduced me to last week- Ms. Liang’s son? What was his name, El Dick or something?”

“Elric,” she corrected me, not even noticing my “brilliant” joke. “And he was a very nice boy, better than that little delinquent girlfriend you’ve got yourself here.”

She glares at me, the contempt in her eyes as plain as day. “I can’t believe it...” she hisses, “My precious daughter... a faggot.”

The words sting. So, so much. I had heard the words whispered to me before, sure, in the halls of school. But never, ever from someone I loved, never from my family. I storm upstairs to my room and grab a backpack, filling it with things I think I will need (My phone, car keys, and a book) and as I run out the door, I can hear her yelling behind me, but I do not listen. I just leave.

It is not until I make it a few blocks away from my house that I realize I now have nowhere to go, nowhere to live. Sure, I have my scholarship for UC Berkeley, but no dorm. I take out my phone and google “UC Berkeley Student Housing”. It looks like the cheapest on-campus student housing is about \$1,405 per season for a room shared with four people.

Tap. Tap. I register for a dorm with my almost-empty credit card, hoping I will have a job by winter. But where will I stay until college starts? I go through different hotels and inns I know of in my head, but I doubt they would just let me sign up without an adult... Then I remember. A while back, my friend Mirei had been chatting with me about housing for homeless families, and she had told me about a church where homeless families were allowed to park in their lot and sleep in their cars for the night. I had thought that was kind of weird, asked where a homeless person would get a car, and I had brushed it off. How ironic.

I wait until my phone clock reads 12 am before I sneak back to my house and open the garage, getting into my ancient Toyota. I ease the car out of our large garage and close the garage door behind me before driving off into the night.

When I finally pull up into the parking lot of the church, I am struggling to keep my eyes open. I text Celcia to make sure she is not worried, although I probably should have texted her before I left. She can be very protective sometimes. Hey Cel, I write, I'm staying at a church parking lot in my car overnight..

Almost immediately, I get a *bing!* on my phone telling me Celcia has responded. I read it with a smile. Oh, okay. Love ya. 

I laugh. Typical Celcia. I love her. She is intimidating looking, sure, but she has a really kind heart. She is kind, and really, just like a burnt marshmallow. All dark and scary on the outside, but on the inside, she is softer and squishier than normal marshmallows. Or humans, I guess. By then my eyes feel like they are being pulled down by giant 10-pound weights, and I fall asleep and dream that she comes over to my car, raps on the windows. She comes in, and just sits in the front seat, providing much-needed company.

And when I wake up, she is still there, next to me. So I guess it wasn't a dream.