“Excuse me miss, I think you dropped this.” A smooth male voice said from just behind and to the left of me. I’d been paying such close attention to my phone I didn’t realize I dropped the twenty-dollar bill I was holding to pay for my coffee.

“Thanks,” I said as I took the money from him without even a second glance. I couldn’t be disturbed now.

Glancing up I saw I still had some time. There were five people in front of me and I just had to know what happened. I was in one of those parts of the story where the love scene is finally coming to fruition. The characters are getting hot and heavy, not too hot mind you, I don’t really read those kinds of books, but it still had me looking over my shoulder to make sure no one else was able to see what I was reading.

I had this vague sense of eyes on me, but I brushed it off. The guy behind me was still so close.

“I know how you feel.” The same voice sounded in my ear again.

The shop was crowded, almost to the point of people standing shoulder to shoulder, but not quite and yet this man, he was standing much too close for my liking. I ground my teeth in frustration before turning slightly, just enough to see a blurry form from my peripheral vision.

“What do you mean?” I didn’t hide the obvious annoyance from my tone, or the long sigh. He was quiet for a moment, not responding, but I could’ve sworn I caught a smirk from the side of my vision. The temptation to look at him, too hard to resist.

He spoke just as I was about to turn back. “I mean I think I stayed up all night reading the very same book a week ago and I was cheering for Alden and Ava to get together from the start.”

Okay. This got my attention, so much so in fact I turned full swing, my arm dropping the phone from my vision. No one, not one of my friends had read this book—a sappy love story they said and laughed at me for reading it. So, I supposed he deserved my attention.

Wow.

I opened my mouth to speak, but my voice caught as I took in the sight of him. Who knew, I had thought it was just an average man who stood behind me, but it was like I was looking at the spitting image of an ancient Greek god. Gorgeous.

As if sensing my inability to form words or coherent thoughts he spoke again. “Hi, I’m Will.” He reached out a perfectly masculine hand.

“Um, h-hi, I’m Layla.” I smiled, but I wanted to slap myself for how unimpressive my voice sounded. I wanted to come of posh and poised, but it felt way short of the goal. I held onto his hand for longer than socially acceptable and then dropped it awkwardly. There was something so familiar about him that struck a chord deep inside. It was like I knew him from somewhere, or maybe he reminded me of someone, but for the life of me I just couldn’t remember.

“I wouldn’t have pictured you for a romance novel reader.” Thankfully, it came out more polished than my first words.

He blushed a little, it was noticeably cute, and his eyes never left mine. Usually I would turn away at this point, break eye contact but the soft amber of his eyes, so light it was almost like honey, wouldn’t let go of mine.

The woman at the register alerted me I needed to order. The moment was broken. I gathered my pumpkin spice coffee, savoring the foam sprinkled with cinnamon which buffered the heat from the coffee. I smiled at the stranger who captured my attention and walked out of the coffee shop. I glanced at my watch and noticed I was already running a few minutes late. I’d have to hurry if I didn’t want to get a reprimand from my boss. Before leaving, I hesitated and looked back thinking maybe I should wait, but he was turned towards the register, his attention away. I just shook my head and left, the feeling of familiarity stuck with me.

The days of autumn flew by. It was well into the end of October and I could not shake the handsome stranger from my thoughts. It was an odd occurrence, his face would pop into my head out of nowhere, in the middle of the work day, during grocery shopping and even in my dreams. Sometimes those moments felt like they could’ve been memories, but there was no way. I know—I know I’d never met him before, but I couldn’t get him out of my head and I didn’t think I really wanted to.

As the leaves turned from green to orange to red, I found myself wishing he was walking the beautiful streets with me. The smells of cinnamon and spice heralded the season of thanksgiving, leaving me with a longing of wanting something more—someone to be with.

Every time I went to the coffee shop, my heart would skip when the bell chimed alerting of a new customer. My stomach clenched, hoping it would be Will walking through the door, but for weeks I never saw him.

I felt it like a lead weight holding me down, the feeling I should stick around the coffee shop that day. I ordered my coffee as usual hoping, because of the feeling, he would be there, like the first time we’d met, but he didn’t show. It hurt—more than I wanted and I didn’t care about my tardiness to work.

The weather was so nice this morning, crisp and chill with the smell of changing leaves all around. I sat on the bench and pouted. I would spend another season without someone by my side when all those around me were getting married or making a family.

I sat on the bench, shoulders slumped, head down and barely even sipping at my peppermint mocha when a figure sat down next to me.

“Layla?”

My head shot up at the familiar warm voice and I was immediately caught in his honey gaze. “Will?” My voice came out as a barely audible whisper. I never thought I’d see him again. I didn’t know how I knew he’d be here. It had to be fate. I had the uncontrollable urge to embrace him. Every muscle in my body tensed, and judging by the smile on his face he could tell I was having a hard time.

“I’m so glad I found you Layla.” He smiled, but there was a twinge of sadness in his voice.

Was he married? But that wouldn’t explain why he was glad he found me. “You’ve been looking?”

He nodded, extended a hand and placed it on my upper thigh. Immediately the warmth from his touch flooded my veins. As I placed my hand on top of his, a jolt of electricity zinged my hand, and my mind flooded with a sudden rush of memories.

I didn’t understand how, but these pictures of me and Will rushed through. The more that flashed, the more I felt like I’d missed Will so deeply. I couldn’t understand why we’d ever been apart.

When the pictures slowed enough, and I didn’t feel as if I might vomit when I opened my eyes, I looked up. His face still bore the same sad smile.

“I’m sorry it took me so long to find you this time,” he said. His grip on my hand was tighter than before.

My eyebrows scrunched together as I sifted through memories—memories of him finding me in the past. “What’s going on?” I was still so confused. It would take time to come to grips with this person who’d lived so many lives already.

“We don’t have much time, but I wanted to be here—together this time.” He moved closer and wrapped me in his arms. I didn’t protest because I finally felt like I was home—he was *my home*.

“I don’t understand Will? What do you mean we don’t have time? I’ll call into work if that’s what you’re worried about.”

He shook his head. “It’s not. I knew the time was coming when I saw you in the coffee shop. I promise you Layla, I will find you sooner in the next life.”

This should be a happy reunion, but I was so confused. What he said didn’t make sense. But as the sound of squealing tires caught my attention, I knew, our time had ended too soon.

My heart pounded as the car raced towards us. There was no time to move, to think. I looked at Will. “I love you.” It came out in a whisper.

“I love you too,” he said, only a second before the car plowed into us.