

# We Met in Autumn

Angela Harris

Sunlight streams through the windows lining the hallway, painting the walls with bright light - matching my mood. Hamilton School for Boys held its annual music exams, and a few minutes ago my results for my guitar assessment came through - I passed with flying colours. As my friends and I cheer, the crowded hallway parts, and other students smile as I pass by - accepting the high fives I offer. Further away in the crowd, a boy catches my eye; he's anxiously tugging at his school tie as though he's being strangled, avoiding eye contact by staring at the floor, a pile of textbooks weighing him down. When our gazes stray and lock together, his green eyes pierce me. Distracted, he loses his balance and falls, the textbooks scattering across the floor. Immediately, I weave through the crowd and kneel down to help him. "Kyle Baxter," I smile, reading the name on the cover of a history textbook aloud. "Uh, hi," Kyle nervously replies, dropping his gaze. He stands to leave, and disappears into the flow of the cramped hallway. Kyle's striking eyes haunt my thoughts for the remainder of the day, and I can't help smiling at the ground as I walk away.

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Dappled light filters through the trees above, great oak trees that line the avenue, slowly beginning to fade to the red hues of autumn. For a moment I pause, sinking in the rich smell of the dying fir over the hill. The neighbourhood we're currently strolling through is where Tino lives, a street graced by large villas - belonging to the richer side of the city's population - a neighbourhood familiar to me from the childhood I spent here before the divorce. On the opposing side of the city is the small apartment I moved into with mum after the divorce. Number One on the list of topics we don't discuss at home - the divorce, an event that occurred on an ordinary November afternoon, in an orderly courtroom - the setting opposite to the feeling of my life being torn apart before my eyes. I was only eight. Nowadays, we get by fine - my mum is my favourite person in the universe after she openly accepted me when I came out as gay last August. Now, I can feel myself slipping into a crush that will echo in my mind for days, sending me blushing at random moments.

"Rikki. Anyone home?"

"Huh?"

"Earth to Rikki," Tino laughs, "You've been a space cadet all afternoon. Is something wrong?"

"Everything's fine!" *Dammit. Spoke a little too quickly, I thought. He's going to be suspicious now.*



“Omigod,” Tino appears excited, “You’re blushing! C’mon, I know that look. Who’s the lucky boy?”

“Lucky? I never said anything about that!”

“Tell me!”

“Ugh, fine - but you can’t tell anyone. Plus, he’s probably straight.”

“Pinky promise, I’ll never tell anyone!” Tino cried, victorious.

“Kyle. Blond, shy... Eyes like glittering emeralds...”

“Omigod, Rikki, you’re obsessed already!”

“*Tino!*” I yell, but he’s already disappearing through his front door.

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“Where are you going?”

“I’ll be right back,” I vaguely call back. Pacing the hallway where we met doesn’t make it likely that I will see Kyle again - but today I’ll take the chance. Rain splatters against the windows and the hallways are more crammed with students avoiding the weather beating the old school buildings. As though he visited in a dream, Kyle has left no trace of where he is.

I go to the only place I ever go when I need to think - the music room. Drawing nearer, striking violin music rings in my ears, sending chills cascading down my spine. When I push the door open, cringing at the screaming hinges, my jaw gapes open, eyes drinking in the scene - Kyle is standing in the sea of desks, pouring his soul into the violin resting upon his shoulder. Notes fall into place amongst the melody, enveloping me and washing away my thoughts. Crescendo rising, the climax of the song reaches its peak and fades to the end. Kyle must sense that somebody is watching, and opens his eyes, his mouth parted slightly and breathing quickly from the exhilaration, his blond hair falling into place like dominoes.

“I never caught your name,” Kyle blurted.

“Rikki,” An unwilling smile tugs at the corners of my lips, “I was hoping I’d find you,”

Under the soft light emitting from the windows, a rosy flush creeps onto his face, emphasising his gorgeous eyes as they rise to meet mine.

“I heard you were celebrating your guitar exams yesterday, congratulations.”

“Thanks, you wanna hear it?”

“Of course!” Kyle blushes at his eagerness, “I mean, it sounds cool. Sure.”

Exchanging numbers, we arranged to meet at my place after school, and scurry away to class after the ringing bell.

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Ticking steadily, the clock reads 4:12 as a knock pounds against the door.

Leaping from the chair, I wedge the door open and usher Kyle inside. Adorned in a tattered trench coat, protecting him from the autumn chill outside, we shyly swap looks and enter my room. For a second, I wonder what his perspective is like as he surveys my room - battered furniture, tacky band posters - the opposite to the charismatic, popular student I portray at school. The only items of real value in here is my electric guitar - sleek, shining and stunningly red, my most prized possession. Kyle leans against the wall by the door, waiting with a half smile. Firing up the volume on the amp, I strum a chord - the guitar roars like a beast unleashed.

Striking my soul with each chord, a roaring fire builds inside me till I'm not only lost in the music, the music is a living part of me that is vulnerable and aching. Time flickers, till a few minutes feel like seconds. Kyle wordlessly watches, awestruck. Once my halting performance had ended, I recklessly walked over to him. I place my fist over his head and lean in close, whispering in his ear. "Did you like it?" His only answer is his lips pressed against mine as we lose ourselves in each other.