

Yuti Das

Age: 16, Grade: 11

School Name: James Clemens High School, Madison, AL

Educator: Elizabeth Vaughn

Category: Short Story

A Brush

“If you love me, kiss me.” She whispered, her eyes a beacon of soft, startling hope.

“No.” He moved away, looking away guiltily. She pouted.

“I can’t.” He emphasized, trying to persuade himself he couldn’t. It was so tempting, but it just wouldn’t be right. He had morals, after all, morals that wouldn’t let him do such a thing. He didn’t want to hide when he was with her; she was too beautiful and too loved for that.

“Why not? People who love each other kiss each other all the time. My Dad kisses my Mom a lot. Do you not love me?”

“It’s complicated. Of course, I love you.” He didn’t want her to doubt him, didn’t want anything to obstruct the pure, unadulterated love they shared between each other.

“But why then?”

“Ours is a forbidden romance; your parents wouldn’t approve. Think of us like Romeo and Juliet.”

“Who are they? It’s not fair! Why would my parents not approve?” Her eyes grew languid, sad, staring straight up at him and melting his defenses. He hated making her sad. He loved her after all.

“They just wouldn’t understand. I don’t think they would like the type of person I am, you know? I’m unconventional and Society dictates terms on love, something that should have no boundaries. If you had taken an advanced literature class, you would have known who Romeo and Juliet were.”

“But if I had taken an advanced class, I wouldn’t have known who you were or ever talked to you or ever fallen in love with you. It was destiny that we met in that class. It was fate. But you do know that we can just hide it from them.” She grinned, sticking her bottom lip out, the full, pinkness that spoke of her innocence; he found himself transfixed by the sight, lusting, losing himself in it.

He silently groaned, fighting himself from giving in.

“No, of course not. I don’t want to parade you around like a dirty little secret - I love you too much to ever reduce you like that. The kisses will be sweeter the longer we wait. I promise that one day we’ll be happy together. You just need to wait until you’re in college and out of your parents’ control so that we can be happy together.” Her eyes that were growing teary turned bright again and she nodded happily, pleased at last by his answer.

“I’m going to practice kissing my pillow in the meantime; I’ve never kissed anyone before, and I want my first kiss with you to be perfect.”

“You’re enough. I promise.” He spoke willfully, trying to convey his love for her in one sentence. He needed her to understand that she was the only one for him, that the love he felt for her was second to nothing.

She sighed dreamily, unbelieving in the romance novels that were slowly blurring into reality.

Even though he wouldn't hear of it, continually promising her she was enough, she found herself trying to change herself from him. She knew what girls hung around him, all smart and pretty and well-learned. Oh, she never doubted him. How could she doubt her love? He was so faithful, so trustworthy, so perfect. She just disliked the attention they showed him, the temptation he had to continually turn down, the lack of social etiquette the girls all showed.

She longed for the day where she could tell everyone that he was hers, to watch the intoned sighs of jealousy fall from the lips that they tried so desperately to seduce him with. Sometimes the jealousy became too much for her, though, the envy threatening to overpower her and seduce all of her senses.

She was waiting behind class to talk to him a little, catch a few of his unhurried smiles, the ones that split across his face, the ones that reminded her of all the love he had for her, and she for him. She knew he was busy with finals and the end of the semester coming up, so he was talking to her less than usual and she missed him.

At his desk, as he was packing up to get lunch, a girl ambled towards him, her cleavage shown in a low-cut top, her jeans skin-tight and stuck to all of her curves. She leaned over him and whispered something to which he gave her his famous lazy smile, the one which all females went wild for. Her blood boiled, her rage spilled, and all she saw was red.

She pulled out her drink, intentionally loosened the lid, and walked towards the pair now bent over a book and "accidentally" spilled the entirety of her drink on the girl, mumbling a sorry a half-second afterward.

Mistake. His eyes flashed towards her, knowing it was not an accident. But worst of all, the girl's top was transparent now. Ever the gentleman, he shrugged out of his jacket and draped it over the girl. She became more jealous now, remembering the spicy scent of his that the jacket smelled of, memories in which he had wrapped her in his jacket.

He dismissed the girl, telling her that she should probably go to the nurse for a change of clothes. The girl hurried out, glaring at her while she exited.

"What was that?" He asked her, his voice calm yet still rippling with disguised fury.

She turned away, refusing to meet his eyes.

"I don't know. I just wanted her to know you were taken." She whispered, trembling in fear. What did she do?

"That was a ridiculous case of immaturity." He spoke, radiating fury and disbelief. "I loved you for your maturity. You were different from all the other girls I've ever talked to. I thought you had a clear understanding of society and the world it operates within, and you stoop to *this* level? I guess I was wrong about you after all. God, was anything about you true?"

"I'm sorry. Please don't leave me. I wasn't thinking" She blushed, fighting back tears. What was she thinking? Now he would know she wasn't good enough as all the other girls that hung around him. What if he left her? What would she do?

"Be mature. Jealousy isn't a good look on you. If you keep doing things like this, I'll realize that you're just like every other girl, like every other girl that I've dated." She flinched at the reminder of his love-filled past.

He continued uncaringly, "Respect my boundaries and stop pushing me to kiss you and take you out on dates. I get to have that. I get to stick to my morals."

She nodded, her cheeks blotchy with tears. He looked her up and down and strode out of the room, leaving her alone in the middle of the room. She broke down, chest heaving, lips parting as tears and gasps stole out of her, leaving her breathless, leaving her scared, leaving her sobbing. She didn't want to lose him. He was perfect and he was right. How could he not be right? He was so divine, so mature, so wildly smart. He had seen things and experienced things that she couldn't even dream of.

She had to make things right. She ran after him.

“Lucas!” She called out desperately, trying to catch his attention so that all could be right in the world.

He shifted uneasily, glancing over to see who else had heard, visibly relaxing when he saw that no one was within earshot.

“Now, remember,” he spoke, calmly and furtively, “at school, my name is Mr. Jonathan.”