

*[Writing Sample]

"Sometimes, if you think too hard, your head might explode."

It already has.

Looking up, I found a handsome face.

Leo's handsome face.

He looked flushed, and out of breath. His jet black hair was wet, and stuck to his forehead like glue to paper. I looked behind me at the glass window, and observed the weather –it was dry outside.

"Have you been running?" I asked.

"I, uh, just had class." Leo looked down at the floor, making small clear droplets of water fall onto the table.

"I know they're meant to make us work hard, but I don't think I've ever sweat that much in a class before." I let out a dry laugh to try and lighten the mood; however, Leo just looked at me, raising one of his thick granite eyebrows, as his thin chapped lips curved into a tight smile.

He took a seat in the opposite chair, and sat forward, resting his head over crossed arms. "I'm knackered."

"May I ask why?"

"No reason, I'm just tired, Helena." He said, without looking up.

I rolled my eyes, and sighed. "Nobody is just tired, there has to be a reason."

Leo looked up again, this time with both eyebrows furrowed in annoyance and said, "Well there isn't one, okay?", before breaking eye contact, and resting his head back down. I stared at Leo for a moment. His back was broad and tense. It moved rhythmically when he breathed, as did his hair, which was starting to look like a dry mop on top of his head. His large, rough, hands lay flat under his arms; which covered the valley of veins that vacated them. He looked unsettled, as he tried to get comfortable on the small wooden chairs.

I decided to break the tension and ask, "What are you?"

It was quiet for a moment, before he answered. "Uhm, male? Human?"

"I meant, race wise."

Leo's face resembled a blank canvas as he looked at me. Within that moment, it felt like it was only us left in the small coffee shop, as the busy atmosphere around Leo and I, became a blacked out blur.

"I'm half, everything and quarter so many other things. But on a whole, I'm biracial. It's not really a 'race' per say, but it'll do." Leo mumbled, into his knitted jumper. "My mum is white, and

my dad Egyptian. However, he's half Indian too, and my mum is French; so it gets a little messy at Christmas."

It all explained a lot.

The sharp and hard facial features were the Egyptian in him. The half that thrived authority, and power. The half that made you want to worship his beauty, and presence. However the Indian within explained the softness of him; of his dark hair, words, and smile. The French, well, I didn't really know Leo until that day in the park, (a small conversation, however, can't really portray his romantic side); that was just one part of him that I'd have to wait for.

Leo finally made a move to sit up, as his beautiful chestnut eyes moved rapidly on my face.

"What are you?"

Lost.

"Black. Still learning to live with the proud bit, though." I broke the eye contact with Leo and stared down at the small wooden circular table.

"Why aren't you proud? There's nothing wrong with being black, is there?" He sounded quite frustrated, and I understood why.

"I haven't had any reason to. It's just –well, it's been more of a childhood thing really. I see women, you know, like really pretty black women, and I want to be that. But deep down, I know I never will." I looked up at Leo, to find him still staring at me. Not once did he bother to look away, it was like he wasn't ashamed of looking at me so hard.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with you. You're just going through a motion right now." Leo said.

'A motion?'

I wanted to laugh, to prevent myself from explaining why my eyes were watering. I was speechless, and couldn't fathom on why he would say something like that. It sounded so heartless. It sounded like something my mum would say.

"Oh, stop being stupid, Helena. You're just going through a phase in your life. Everybody at some point of their life thinks they're ugly. And putting on excessive amounts of makeup won't cover it."

However, she'd never really confirm that I wasn't.

Although I wanted to blame my mum for myself loathing, it was my own personal issue that I'd have to suck up, and get over.

It was just a motion.

A phase in my life.