

## **Two pairs of sunglasses**

### **Nina Kisniaridou**

Dark sunglasses on. Head down. There is no reason for it to look up the gloomy overcrowded sidewalk. Why would he look up? To see the neverending cold and unfamiliar faces? Or the sky-high buildings towering over him; trying to suffocate him? No. He just walks on the sidewalk, among the faceless rushing crowd, day in and day out. To get to work and back home.. A work that barely pays for food and rent. A home consisting of four walls that seem to close to his, threatening to crush him. Day in and day out.

The sidewalk is covered with a thick layer of trash and filth. No matter where he steps, these seems to be no way to avoid it. The air is cold and thick coming into his lungs. Makes it feel like a violent, unnatural intrusion. A poison. The sun is out. Shining, in all its glory. Yet it doesn't feel glorious to him. Neither glorious, nor warm. No. Its rays do not caress his skin in a warm and pleasant way. He doesn't like the sun. Never did. Probably never will. What's the point of having the sun when the buildings constantly block it? When there are no trees or grass. When the only thing you can see around is a hundred shades of grey.

There is an everlasting buzz in the air. A cacophony of sounds coming from cars, horns and forlorn people. And in this buzz comes the overwhelming feeling of loneliness and despair. He manages to feel alone among thousands of people. Day in and day out.

Every day the same dull routine. But not today. There is something different about today. He notices a vintage, welcoming little coffee shop. In an attempt to break his abiding cycle of habits, he opens the door and goes in.

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There is authority in the way she walks the street. She owns the sidewalk with that mesmerizing sound of high heels. Dark sunglasses on and the gorgeous, contagious kind of smile engraved on her alluring face. The sun makes her features even more exquisite, and she seems to be well aware of that. The walk to work fills her with bliss. The grandiose and magnificent buildings that seem to almost reach the sky. The massive malls and sophisticated boutiques decorating the streets. And there she is among this picturesque scenery, daydreaming of being a part of that life. No. Not daydreaming. Planning.

Her job doesn't earn her much. It's enough for food and rent, and maybe an occasional guilty splurge here and there. Her apartment consists of four well-decorated walls. She has managed to make it a warm and welcoming home, with quite some effort of course. But she likes putting effort in everything she does. Works hard, studies hard, parties hard. If you only live once you may as well live it. It's a quite simple motto and she lives by it.

The streets are filled with the sound of people urging to reach their goals and that motivates her. She curiously notices the faces around her giving each one an interesting backstory. This one is a successful business woman shopping for her fiancé's birthday present; healthy relationship, exquisite style, financial security.

“Must feel good to be her” she thinks. “I will be.” She assures herself and continues walking. She crosses the bust street and enters the little coffee shop she works at. Chin up. Smile on.

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He feels so out of place in this environment. It’s cozy, warm and for once the buzz at the street is almost inaudible. And yet he doesn’t fit in there. He sticks out like a sore thumb in that fancy coffee shop. Nevertheless, he sits down. He removes his coat, eyes never break contact with the polished parquet floor. He waits for someone to get his order. While waiting he gets lost in thought. Deep thought. The kind that makes his eyes look distant and emotionless. “Good evening! What would you like?” the voice disrupts him. Confused and almost lost he lifts his gaze to look at the waitress. He means to talk but to his own surprise remains speechless. “Would you like something to drink, sir?” explained the voice again, “Why...yes. Coffee. Plain. Black. Thank you.” he managed to say after all, while thinking “I have never laid eyes on such a delicate and dazzling creature before.” “Right away, sir” answers the waitress. He is trying very hard to keep his eyes off her. “Out of my league” he thinks to himself.

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Eleven o’clock. He pays for his coffee, not lifting his eyes off the table, puts on his coat and walks out. The sounds and smells of the city once again overwhelm him. He stops at the corner and lights a cigarette, secretly, maybe even unconsciously wishing to catch one more glimpse of her. She walks out. Radiant and cheerful to emerge once again into the city’s embrace. She opens the passenger’s door of a sumptuous car and it drives her away into the night. “Yeah. Out of my league.” He thinks to himself and drops the cigarette. He returns home to his melancholic and suffocating bare walls. The clock strikes midnight with the sound of a gunshot.

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The coffee shop is empty. It always is early in the morning. She finds a chance to rest her feet and sits down. She picks up her phone and starts scrolling down. A post pops up among many others that makes her stop for a second. A picture of a handsome guy and beneath it a headline: “Young man in his twenties kills himself.” “Damn” she thinks to herself. “He looks familiar.” That thought dims her smile for a moment. She continues to scroll down the page and eventually she gets her smile back with a cheerful sound of a text. “Good morning gorgeous!”