



Hikari

RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

It was a misty November morning in 2011 when she told me what her name meant. She had just gotten rid of her braces so the sight of her without them was still new to me. I didn't know that someone who was late to getting her braces could end up with such a beautiful set of teeth. I asked her what name meant. *"It means 'light,'"* she smiled. It turned out she had dimples. And I knew I was done.

I think what made her amazing was that there wasn't anything romantic about her. There was nothing there. And she knew it. And I knew it. I fear she might have hated me for it. She pursed her lips whenever she wanted to get a point across. And it wasn't like the point she was making was very logical; Most of the time it was oddly childish. But I would always feel the ground beneath me shake when she looked at me with that pout. *"It means 'light,'"* she smiled. It turned out her hair just had to fly like flames whenever the wind picked up. And I knew I was done.

I fear now that I never got to know her. She mumbled strange words like 'solace' whenever I found her eyes drooping. I tried to make sense of it. I really did. But she would just smile and say she was alright. There was also the time I found she had a black eye. I asked her what was wrong. She just shook her head, as if to say nothing was. *"It means 'light,'"* she smiled. It turned out I wished I could paint whenever she smiled. I knew I was done. Years,

many years later, I got the painting done. But my painting skills took a long time coming.

I don't exactly remember when her visits started to get more and more uncommon. I think I was to blame as well. I hadn't picked up on the signs. There was something wrong. There had to be. The times when she did visit, she would just sit there listening to me go on about my day. She always had the strangest enthusiasm for every random detail in my life. She would give me the thumbs up and tell me I did well. Then I would ask her how she was. And she would faintly respond, *"Perfect."* I know that was true. But it also wasn't. *"It means 'light,'"* she smiled. I wish I started painting faster.

I don't remember when I first heard that there was a blackout. It came all of a sudden. But the people around me said they had been expecting it for a while. It's kind of funny how I never saw it coming. Was I careless or just plain stupid? Surely there was more I could have done. Was I just too young or just too cocky? If I got a chance to ask her, she'd say it wasn't my fault. I hate that about her.

I remember when she told me what her name meant. *"It means 'light,'"* she had smiled. I think I now know the meaning of expression she had. She knew all lights went out. The ones that burned the brightest went out the quickest. And then they became the heroines of elaborate dreams and mismatched song lyrics. I wish lights didn't act that way.



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Star Seeking Light

RAYAAN IBTESHAM CHOWDHURY

Was it you that let the candles fade out?
Or was it me, I can't remember.
Does it even matter now that we're here?
And we don't know if the candle ever burnt
Won't you let it burn again,
If it's out, it's out and is that all there is?
Was it you or was it me?

Remember the time we almost got the candle going?
It was doing its best but we put it out again,
That's just how we are, that's just how it is,
If it's out, it's out and is that all there is?

You're the light I can never put out,
The one with the purple-tinged flare,
You're the light with the crazy something,
The one that lights up the pitch black sky.
Was it you or was it me?
If it's out, it's out and is that all there is?
Was it you or was it me?

