

# inked



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"So you notice absolutely nothing different about me?" Mumu asked the question for the third time and the first time with disappointment in her voice.

"I mean, you have your ponytail on. There's that." I shrugged.

It wasn't. She had a tattoo on her shoulder blade poking out of the back of her blouse. It was a butterfly but I think the term "eyesore" would describe it better.

"Fine then, have it your way," she sped up until we were walking far apart.

What was I supposed to say? If I acknowledge that I've seen it, she would expect me to compliment it and I'm a terrible liar. Ever since that one time in school when I unsuccessfully tried to convince my teacher that doing homework would trigger a dormant and rare disease, I knew lying wasn't my forte. The tattoo was hard for me to look at let alone admire. The butterfly wasn't symmetrical. It's right wing clearly bigger than the left. The arthropod made of ink was leaning from her shoulder blade in an awkward angle. The shading on the tattoo was off by some

margin as well.

There really is nothing to love about butterflies. For starters it's juvenile. A little bug that uses its bright wings as a warning for predators is nothing to romanticize about. Why is that something that you would want the world to know? I didn't know why she would do this without telling me. Was it supposed to be a cute little surprise? A permanent tattoo sitting somewhere I hold ever so tightly at the deep of night? How would it feel now to think there's a crudely inked butterfly, of all things, sitting still under my sweaty palm? I hate butterflies.

But it wasn't just the butterfly, was it? I'm not saying it's any less of an eyesore, because it is, but the more I thought about it the more my own thought pattern became muddled. What if it wasn't just the tattoo? What if it was the fact that after a very long time, I was not in control. It was her decision and her alone. Am I selfish enough to begrudge that little moment of liberty she had, that little decision made of freewill?

Or was it just my fear that she, just like that butterfly, was undergoing a metamor-

phosis as well every moment of her life. We are not the same people we were six years ago. Maybe I'm just scared that she'll fly away.

Maybe it's just a bad tattoo.

I didn't know how long we had walked for. Only that we hadn't said a word. But I knew the moments of self doubt weren't really helping anything. We had been together long enough to figure each other out from the little details alone. I knew that she wasn't mad at me anymore. She had this weird habit of clicking her shoes whenever she was angry. But that wasn't the case now. With her head hung low and her steps unsure and frantic, she was as blue as the sky above ready to burst into rain. And just like I was reading her I knew she was reading me. She could feel my inner thoughts through my footsteps alone. She knew that I was staring at the butterfly hiding behind her ponytail without even turning back.

There's a beauty to conflict. When you oppose someone you can justify every one of your antagonistic actions. But when there's no conflict and you find empathy instead, you lose the advantage of all those

sharp witted logic you built for yourself. "Maybe she really likes butterflies?" a part of me brought up after some hesitance. "Well she could have told me," argued a part still bitter over the whole thing. "Like how you tell her about your night outs with your friends?" brought up another defiant voice. I sighed. This was going nowhere. I looked up to see her tattoo one more time as some odd raindrops bounced off her shoulder blade. "I mean if you look at it from a certain angle it's not all that bad."

The rain started getting faster as I sped up my steps. I reach out my hand to catch that butterfly hiding behind her ponytail. My hand meets her wet shoulder blade. "Why didn't you tell me before, it looks beautiful," I lie one more time, thankfully more convincingly than that one time in school.

*Nuren Iftkhar is your local stray cat in disguise; he interacts with people for food and hates bright light. He got Hufflepuff 3 times straight in Pottermore so no walking around that one. Send him obscure memes at [n.iftkhar18@gmail.com](mailto:n.iftkhar18@gmail.com)*