

1. My name is Ilona

"Who are you?" She asked with a smirk on her face while she remained playing with her long brown hair. Gracefully it would glide through her fingers and the many rings she was wearing would sparkle in the golden sunlight. She had many necklaces and along with her earrings, that resembled a few bats and a witch on a broom, she was looking at me with a cold yet curious expression on her face. With hesitation and being shy I replied back: *"I am... Joey."* Raising my hand in order to shake hers, she just waved it off and lifted her shoulders. Clearly, she was not impressed by my name or how I greeted her. Rolling my eyes a little and wondering what I did wrong this time when confronted with a girl I just thought to ignore her and wait for the bus. It would take at least another twenty minutes for it to show and it was midsummer. Even though Holland is often referred to as a Country-of-Frogs because of the many rainy days, the sun today was doing her best to cook us.

I was wearing All Stars shoes and dark blue pants, a white t-shirt and my hair was made out of a fashionable out of bed look. At some point she started to giggle a little while looking at my hair.

"What..." I asked while getting slightly annoyed with her. She was strange, cold and almost unfriendly and yet on the same time it seemed something was buried beneath her heavy makeup and black gothic like clothing.

When she only giggled and said *"Oh... Nothing..."* I gave her a sour look and turned around. I didn't know what to make of her and thought the best thing to do was to ignore her. I remember that I even thought she was stupid but caught myself looking at her a few minutes later.

Time sure was taking its "time" with us. The bus didn't show so we had to wait another thirty minutes before the next one. By now I really wanted to take a shower already and I could only imagine how hot it would be for the girl standing a few feet away from me. Her arms and legs were covered in black and white stockings and were covered in bracelets or armbands.

"That's it, I am going home." She said suddenly.

I turned around and looked at her. The moment I did the wind picked up and gracefully started playing with her hair. I hesitated for a couple of seconds before I could say anything

and just stared at her. She looked beautiful and yet her expression remained unchanged; cold and unfriendly.

“Going home? The other bus will come. Can’t you wait for it?” I said after a while.

She lifted her shoulders and rolled with her eyes.

“Hmpf... to take me to school? That I came down here to wait for the bus is something they should be happy about.”

I lifted an eyebrow and looked at her funny. From out of nowhere it seemed her cold expression changed into a wilder one and with a fire erupting in her eyes she asked:

“What...?”

“Oh... Nothing.” I replied with a little grin on my face not realizing that making fun of a girl, especially a strange one, isn’t the best thing to do.

“No, tell me!” She said and suddenly started walking towards me. I could tell by just looking into her eyes she meant business and somehow I didn’t want to know what that business was. I stepped backwards but I forgot the bus stop was two feet higher than the actual ground and what happened next took only a few seconds. While my feet remained on the heightened bus stop I was laying on my back in the rich grassy patch around it. Feeling incredibly stupid and embarrassed I looked up and saw that she was looking at me with open eyes. Her rings and necklaces were sparkling in the sunlight while she covered her mouth with both hands. Her body was beginning to shake a little and within seconds she started to laugh. Even though I remember that I had no clue what to think of her, there was something completely different about her now. The sunlight that shined through the many leaves of the trees around us illuminated her body and I was stunned by her beauty. Her brown hair seemed to be made of gold and was slowly dancing on the wind while her dark brown eyes got fueled by the light around her. With a kind and warm expression she looked at me and it were those same eyes I would fall in love with.

She kept on laughing and all I could was look at her and be amazed. That hard and skeptical face she had before was gone all of a sudden and beneath the masks of gothic style clothing and heavy makeup around the eyes was a girl that was astonishingly beautiful. I can’t remember if my mouth was open or not but I was blown away by her sudden change of character. Her body was still shaking a little under her laughing but somehow she managed to get a smile upon my own face.

This was the first time I would hear her laugh and the first time to feel the almost magical power that was behind it. It could make even the saddest of persons, the most angrily or most embarrassed like me, come to a stop with whatever it was they were doing and before they knew it, they would smile.

When she stopped her laughing I was a little sad because her cold self returned but her expression didn't change back to the almost emotionless state it was in before.

"Are you all right?" She asked while gracefully stepping down and giving me her hand to get up. Hesitant I reached for it and looked at her. Her dark brown eyes were sparkling in the warm sunlight and I knew there was a lot more to this girl than would meet the eye. She pulled me up and while I started brushing myself with my hands to remove some of the grass and sand I said: *"Yeah... Yeah I think so."*

"How did you fall?"

With a little blush I said: *"I... don't know?"*

She smiled a little sarcastic but suddenly her eyes widened and she stumbled a few feet back. Looking at her I asked: *"What's wrong?"*

She didn't speak but slowly raised her hand pointing at me. I looked where she was pointing at and saw an adult Garden Spider crawling over my shoulder. It was a big one, surely a few months old or something.

"Kill it..." She whispered and it even seemed she was scared.

I looked at her and softly said: *"Now why would I do that...?"*

Placing my hand in front of the big spider I waited until it was on top of it and slowly raised my hand. Her eight little legs tickled the little hairs that were on the back of my hand but slowly I raised it from my shoulder and kept it in front of me. Even though my eyes were focused on the little monster that was crawling over my hand I could see the girl stepping back in fear. When I looked at her I could see a whole other side of the strange yet fascinating girl.

"I am just going to put her in the grass okay?" I said softly while I slowly moved my hand towards the ground and waited until the spider got off.

"You're afraid of spiders?" I asked her even though there was no real need for it.

She nodded fast and multiple times and by doing so her earrings danced in the golden sunlight as if it were a reminder of the beauty hidden away.

"It's okay. She's gone now..." And I raised my hand again, showing her it was gone. I saw her eyes and they were filled with fear. Yet... there was something else, something that I couldn't explain. Slowly I walked towards her and raised my hand again.

"I never got your name..." I said softly. She hesitated for a few seconds as if she was thinking what to do or to say, but then slowly raised her hand as well.

"Monique. My name is Monique." she said while placing her soft hand in mine.

That was the first time I laid eyes upon her. The first time I heard her voice, that catching laugh and saw those amazing eyes. I didn't know at that time but shortly after I would fall in love with her. Thinking back I have to say it is strange because when I was walking towards that bus stop I saw her but did not pay that much attention, although she was not hard to miss. Long brown hair and even though it was incredibly hot outside, dressed in black.

It was her laugh that made me curious about her, since it revealed a whole different person. She was no longer hiding behind those masks she had build around her to protect herself for whatever there was that would come at her; she was being her real self. But it was her eyes that acted as a doorway to something far more then beautiful.

That day we didn't go to school but it was not intentionally. When she helped me get up I could see that mysterious fire burning in her eyes. Starting to get more and more curious about her I asked her where she came from. I had never seen her before and I was rather well known in the small town I used to live in. Slowly we started to talk and even though most of her answers were short and deprived of any form of emotion, I could tell she was somehow changing.

We started to walk away from the bus stop and just walked forward, not paying attention to where ever we were going. She told me she just moved here with her mother and was going to another school then I was. Upon hearing this I was saddened a little, what cheered me up however was the fact she only lived a few blocks further from my own house.

She didn't have any brothers and sisters and never knew her dad. Unlike me, she seemed to have a very bad relation with her mother and not knowing her dad, I had a hard time thinking how her life must've looked like. No friends, no parents to look up to and yet even though she was clearly hiding a lot of herself, she really seemed strong. I quickly became aware she didn't really want to talk about her private life which was somehow understandable.

“So, what are you going to do when you get home?” I asked her in order to change the subject. I remember that she looked up at the sky and watch the few pearl white clouds gently drifting on the streams of the wind. It seemed as if she wanted to let go of her thoughts that were causing trouble in her mind.

“Writing.” She said after a while. I looked at her and asked: *“What do you write then?”* She lifted her shoulders and finally with an emotion, yet not the one I had hoped for, she sighed: *“Useless junk.”*

“What kind of junk?” I asked again.

“Why do you care?” She asked, while looking away from the clouds and towards me.

I remained looking at her and I remember that I tried to figure her out. Something I never tried to do again, not because I couldn't, but because I loved her for who she was.

After a while I said: *“Well, I write too...”*

Eventually she looked away from me and again stared at the never ending bright blue sky high above us. When we passed a small grass field on the right side of the road she suddenly stopped. I turned around and saw how she jumped over the small fence around it and sat down upon the soft green grass. With a smile I looked at her and noticed how she continued to look at the sky.

“Do you daydream a lot?” I asked her. Without given the question any thought I could see her nodding. Slowly I sat down next to her and asked her again: *“What do you write about?”* She sighed a little and said: *“What do you write about?”*

I looked at her and I remember that I felt somehow sorry for her. She clearly wanted to be free, to let her mind drift on the streams of the wind and sounds of the oceans. Fly over mountains like a bird to escape whatever it was that was haunting her. In fact, I believed she didn't even wanted to talk with me, but I was so fascinated being in her very presence that I stayed with her. It was as if she was made of glue and I got stuck being in that very presence. I wanted to learn more about her, I wanted to see the beauty that was hidden away behind the cold and almost emotionless answers she could give me. Whenever a question was warmer or on a softer tone it made me more curious because it instantly showed how beautiful and kind she was. When she showed a smile it was her eyes that came alive and could melt me away. And even though those moments were short and seemed to disappear like snow in the sunlight, I could tell she was already more open then when I met her on the bus stop.

Eventually I smiled and told her that I wrote about all kind of things; drama, fantasy, love and even poems. I remember she looked away from the sky and towards me.

"You write poems?" She asked with a small grin on her face. Pouting I said: *"Why is it always so strange for a boy to write poems... I mean, girls can do it and there is no problem, but when a guy does it..."*

She continued to look at me and for a brief moment there I thought I could see a small genuine smile.

"It's not weird." She said softly.

"Did I saw a smile there?" I asked her teasing. She looked away instantly and said: *"...No! Don't be stupid..."*

"Yes it was..." I softly said again. I smiled while looking at her reaction; I clearly could see a small red blush appearing on her cheeks.

"No it wasn't!"

"A pretty, little smile then?"

"Cut it out..." She said while she softly hit my arm. She was turning away from me but the way she talked was not violent or cold anymore, it was a little passionate, almost warm even. Even though she still was hesitant to show it I could tell it was there.

I remember that I smiled while I saw her turning away. This was the very reason I stayed with her, even though sometimes before it seemed she was annoyed by my presence.

Ilona was a girl that had a hard childhood and was used to being alone, just as me. But unlike me, who had two wonderful parents, she never had that. She never knew her father so she had difficulty behaving around men, even if they were as young as me. Her mother never really cared for her; in fact, she stopped celebrating her birthday when Ilona was nine years old. Her friends were never really friends for her and betrayed her again and again. But, as with everyone from our young age, we want to be accepted and feel that we are at least recognized by someone. Even now I cannot imagine why someone wouldn't love a girl as Ilona. She was beautiful, smart, polite, strong in every possible way and friendly. Yet she always encountered the wrong people in her life. It was only normal I think that she was hiding behind masks and walls to stop her from getting hurt again.

"Can I ask you something?" She asked after a while.

I looked at her and nodded. She was silent for a few seconds and while I lifted myself from the ground leaning on my left arm, I could see she was playing with the grass between her fingers. She was silent for a few minutes but I waited patiently for what she wanted to say. Suddenly she stood up and her hair was flying around her like a cape on her back. I looked at her surprised and was wondering what she was going to do when she suddenly reached out her hand and with a small smile she said: *"Come with me..."*

I remember I was amazed for the first few seconds. It looked like something had completely changed inside her. Her eyes held that amazing fire again and it seemed to be only stronger now that she was standing before me, illuminated by the golden sunlight. Gently I grabbed her hand and she pulled me up. Just when I thought she would let go, she pulled me with her and we started to run.

I remember her hair, dancing in the wind. With every step it would fly up on the streams of the wind that came blowing past us and with every other step it would glide down again. Her earrings and necklaces were bouncing up and down and were sparkling in the beams of the sun. When she looked over her shoulder a couple of times I can only say I was beyond feeling overwhelmed. She actually smiled and even though her strong dark makeup was covering her eyes and lips, it was her eyes that were shining with a light I had never seen before.

I remember that she held my hand tightly in hers and how much I liked it. Her hand was soft as a blanket and her grip was as sweet and innocent as that of a child. Words cannot describe the feelings that were coursing through me, the feeling she gave me by just being together with her. Even though I had known her for such an incredible short time, deep down I knew she was special.

We kept running and suddenly I noticed we were heading towards the park. Crossing the last street before we would run upon the soft grass she suddenly stopped and I almost bumped into her. I looked around and gazed over the beautiful park that was almost empty since everyone was at work at this time of the day. The only ones that were there were older folks or younger ones with children, playing soccer or just reading a paper on the bench. It was a peaceful sight and I still remember, even though we had stopped running and were just looking over the scenery, she was still holding my hand.

"This was the first thing I saw when we came here." She said softly. I looked at her and softly asked: *"When was that?"*

She was silent for a little while but then softly said: *"Few weeks ago I think. I actually... came here with my mother..."* She stopped talking and slowly pulled her hand back from mine. I felt sad for her and slowly asked: *"What happened?"*

She looked away and glared at an elderly couple who were feeding some ducklings at one of the ponds. They were laughing and enjoying each other's company.

I sighed and said, while feeling incredibly foolish: *"I'm sorry... I didn't mean to..."*

"It's stupid... Don't bother."

The wind was reduced to a soft gently breeze and was gliding past us. Birds were singing and not far away from us there was a dog barking at his owner who held a ball. Children were running around playing tag and parents had worried looks in their eyes when one of them came to close to a pond, shouting their names and saying they had to be careful. But I didn't look at any of that. All I was focused on was the girl that was standing next to me. Every time the subject slowly changed towards her own life, she seemed to return to her cold self. It was a way of protecting the feelings she had, or better yet, she almost couldn't control. And even though I felt it that way, I asked: *"What is stupid..."*

She seemed so nice and friendly, even honest since she said things to me I wouldn't dare say, but thought most of the times towards others. Her answer was an honest one as well.

"Hmpf... Why do you care...?" And she wanted to walk away. I didn't stop her by grabbing her arm or hand even though I really wanted to but I simply said: *"Wait... don't go."*

She walked a few feet away from me but stopped.

"Why?" She asked. I looked at her back and smiled a little.

"Why did we come here?"

She was silent for a long time, while the wind tried to play with her hair. When she finally answered she said: *"I... Don't know."*

"I do." I said. She turned around and looked at me. I could almost feel her eyes trying to poke a hole through my soul, trying to see what I meant. But all I did was waving my hand around the park view and said: *"Look at it. It's beautiful."*

She looked in to my eyes for a very long time, while I stared back. She was much better at this and it felt as if her eyes were burning inside me, pulling out secrets of who I was. But

something else told me not to let her go. I don't know what it was, but those eyes seemed to hold a beauty deep inside them I just wanted to learn more about.

It seemed to drag on like minutes but eventually she looked away towards the park and softly said: *"It is..."*

I could see her eyes gazing over the people that were inside of it and how much they seemed to enjoy each other's company. Small children were laughing with their parents who in turn returned those laughs and were smiling, clearly loving every moment of it.

A daughter with her mother was slowly walking by and when Ilona saw them she gazed at them until they were gone. I looked at her and could only imagine how it must've felt like, to see how it could've been. She didn't go into any detail that day about the relationship she had with her mother, but I noticed the tone of her voice and some of the things she said about her that she was telling the truth.

"Are you alright?" I softly asked her. She looked away from the park and towards me and was showing a little smile.

"Yeah..."

"There is that smile again..." I laughed a little. Ilona smiled a little more and said: *"Your weird."*

"Ha... I am weird!?" I said with a smile on my face.

"Yup."

"That's..."

The moment I said that word she walked back until she was standing in front of me and looked straight into my eyes.

"That's what...?" She said softly while there was a tone of mystery in her voice. I honestly didn't know what to answer but after some seconds I said softly: *"That's... okay? I... Guess?"* She smiled and said: *"Scaredy cat..."*

I smiled a little but was surprised when she poked me in my stomach, at one of the most annoying points where it tickles so much.

"Scaredy cat..." She said again while she started to poke me some more.

From that moment on I still don't know why she changed so much, or why she suddenly changed into this touching kind of girl but I liked it. It showed the soft side of her; the real Ilona, as I would later come to realize. A side I would love and care for as long as she was

with me, day and night. A side that was from that moment on almost always the side she showed me. A loving, sweet, friendly and beautiful girl that slowly lay down her armor and masks before me.

I didn't do anything back, since she was right. I was scared, not because of her, not at all even, I just met her and I really liked her already. But for the fact I just didn't want to hurt her. I can be such a clown if it comes to these things, that I rather play the victim and try to stop the other then to actually do something back. I don't even know where to tickle anyway.

When we started to push around a little I could see her laughing again. The sound of her laugh is most likely the thing I will remember most because it showed she was happy. And there was nothing more that could make me happy, then to see her like that. Her brown hair was gently flying around and she just seemed to be alive. A complete other girl then the one she was at the bus stop. Her eyes still maintained that same fire, but stronger, brighter and even more beautiful. The way she moved around over the grass was as if she was a dancer but clumsy in her own magnificent way. I remember she laughed and let herself fall down upon the grass while looking up towards the sky, spreading her arms like an angel. She closed her eyes for a moment and let the warm golden sunlight fall down upon her. With her long brown hair as a blanket beneath her it almost seemed to be glowing by the golden beams of the sun.

From that moment I just fell in love with her. From the first day, in those couple of hours, knowing almost nothing about her, I fell in love with her. I remember that I looked at her and felt a feeling I never felt before. It was as if she had sparked a fire inside me. A fire that would become bigger and bigger the more we were together, the more we loved each other and the more we shared. She was so incredibly beautiful and sweet; I just had to get to know her better.

I laughed a little and sat next to her.

"What's wrong?" She asked.

"I was just wondering..." I mumbled. She opened her eyes and looked at me.

"What do you write about..." I asked after a while. And for the first time she didn't wave the question of but smiled a little upon hearing it.

"Everything what feels to be written down."

"Most of the time I can only write when I feel something myself." I replied.

"Me too..." She said while looking at the bright sky.

"So, do you have something on your mind to write about tonight?" She asked softly and with such kind words it almost seemed as if she was hinting at something. I looked at the amazing girl lying comfy in the grass next to me and all I could think of was her beautiful voice, her beautiful style and grace, her own way of being alive.

"I think I have something..."

"What is it?" She asked softly.

"Oh... Just... things." I replied. I think she saw that I blushed a little because the moment she looked at me she smiled so incredibly sweet and passionate it almost seemed she knew I was going to write about her. I didn't know if she felt the same way about me at the time but in the next few days I would find out that my feelings towards her only grew more and more. We remained sitting there for quite some time listening to our surroundings. In the distance cars were driving by and around us in the park people were chattering. Kids were laughing and shouting while parents were talking with each other. The breeze of the wind came softly flowing over and with it came the sweet scent of roses that came from the flowerbeds created in a circle pattern around the park. Slowly the wind moved itself through the leaves of the old trees that were above us.

"Their talking..." She said. I looked away from a small pond where a swan was clapping its wings and asked: *"Who is?"*

She looked at me and said: *"I'll show you."*

She stood up and picked up her bag she had thrown playfully on the ground and started to walk towards a bridge that stretched over the biggest pond in the park.

"Come..." She said while she looked over her shoulder. Her smile was enough to make me follow her to where ever she would go and quickly I got up.

The pond was surrounded by hundreds of year old trees. Old oaks, like those of stories were standing strong and tall around us when we stopped at the middle of the bridge. Birds were singing their songs and the soft breeze waved itself through the leaves. Now that we were standing in the center of all the sounds we heard before, it seemed magical. The pond itself was covered in hundreds of water lilies. Yellow and pink, all were mixed together.

I can remember how the sunlight shined through the many leaves down upon her almost giving her an angel like appearance. I never forget what she said that day and these are her

actual words: *“When the golden sunlight moves over the earth and shines down upon every living creature, the mighty oaks around a sparkling pond will sing a song. A song, so majestic and beautiful, only those worthy can hear it.”* She looked at me for a long time and then asked: *“Can you hear it?”*

I honestly didn't know what to hear, except her beautiful voice and the annoying children in the background. But all I could do was look at her, how the wind played with her hair and how the sun made her look like an angel hidden away beneath makeup.

When I didn't answer she hesitated a little but slowly walked towards me and said: *“Close your eyes.”*

I looked at her not knowing what to do. Wanting to say something she placed her pointing finger on my lips and whispered: *“Trust me.”*

When I looked into those eyes, the way she said those words, the soft and almost loving expression on her face... There was not another thought on my mind. Slowly I closed my eyes and the last thing I saw was her looking at me with a small and sweet smile on her face. Leaving everything behind I felt the wind gliding past us. I listened and heard the birds singing their songs while the children and parents were talking in the background. Dogs were barking and ducks were quacking. The wind was gliding through the leaves and suddenly everything faded away when I could hear the most beautiful thing of all. The sound of the children rapidly faded away and the birds were no longer present. All I could hear was her amazing voice when she started to sing.

I don't know how long I spend time with her that day since time seemed to had stopped for us. The only thing that could remind us was the stars that were slowly filling the night sky. Their light shined down upon the earth and illuminated everything in a silver shine. In the distance a lonely dog was barking and its cries for attention slowly faded in the night sky. The wind was cold but not unpleasant when it sometimes came blowing in through the open window.

I looked at the photo frames on her desk and noticed how some of the pictures were torn apart. Briefly I looked at her and saw that she was sitting on her bed searching in a red book for a drawing she wanted to show me. When I saw a young baby girl with a gigantic German shepherd on a photo I said: *“Now that, looks like an awesome dog.”*

She looked up and saw that I was looking at her pictures. Putting the red book next to her on the bed she stood up and walked towards me. She picked up the frame and said: *"The best... He died two years ago."*

Feeling incredibly stupid I mumbled that I was sorry but she didn't respond. She kept looking at the photo and I saw how her eyes were shifting over the little girl and the big dog over and over again.

"It's okay..." She said eventually while slowly putting the frame back on her desk. I didn't know what to say so I just kept looking at her and saw how she turned the frame towards the wall. After that she walked back towards the bed and I could hear her mumbling: *"He was... my friend."*

I looked at her and thought that the dog must've been the only friend that never lied to her, simply because a dog doesn't know how to. Man's best friend is the expression and it's true since a dog never goes out of their ways to get something done only for them. Unlike most people that hurt, betray or just care about themselves.

When she picked up the red book in order to search for the drawing I turned the frame back around and looked at the curly handwritten names under it.

"Max" was written under the German shepherd.

"Ilona" was written under the little girl that seemed to be very happy back then. Upon reading that name I looked at her sitting on the bed. Her beautiful hair was like a cloak on her back and the way she was searching through countless drawings, just in order to show me one, was adorable in its own way. I could only wonder why she called herself Monique. After that I looked around her room and thought how chaotic it was. Stuff was everywhere, but it wasn't dirty. Not at all even, but it seemed she was always busy with things. On the ground there were puzzle's, drawings, paintings and tons of paper filled with words. Her walls were covered in posters of all sorts of bands and drawings by herself. A huge bed filled with red and white pillows was standing at the window side and on the other side of the room was a big wooden closet for her clothing. It was a real teenage room, just like mine used to be back then. It wouldn't take long before I loved being there. Her mother was almost never home and we almost felt being free there.

"And this..." She flipped the page of the big red book around and showed it to me: *"... is what I made a few days ago."*

"I am really out of words how amazing some of your works are." I said while walking towards her.

"It's nothing special really..."

I smiled and noticed that she was modest on all her work. Even the poems and some of the little stories she made, which touched me deep inside, was considered nothing special. She wanted nothing more than to have one of her stories published so she could give people an idea of how she looked at the world. A vision I shared with her, even though her world was a bit more fantasy like then mine.

When she was done cleaning up her work and placed everything back in their original places she looked at me and said: *"You have to show me your work to."*

"Oh, but of course. But I highly doubt it can match yours though..."

"Don't be silly." She mumbled. I laughed and looked outside towards the stars in the night sky. Ilona followed my gaze and asked: *"Do you dream on them?"*

"Sometimes." I said.

"I find them magical."

I looked at her briefly and smiled. It was strange, but from that day the stars would almost always accompany us. We would lay hours on our backs just looking at them, letting our minds and dreams float away on their peaceful presence.

I remember she hesitated for a little while she was standing at the bookshelf where she had placed the big red book but eventually she slowly came walking towards me. She sat next to me and I looked at her. Even though there was a little light in the corner of the room, the magical light from the stars illuminated her in a silver shine.

Together we watched the stars for minutes and we felt comfortable in each other's presence. When she looked away from them she looked into my eyes and all I could see was the almost magical fire burning inside of them. She was strong, beautiful and sweet. She was a light in the black and when she said: *"It's getting late... you should go home. I don't want you to stroll around in the mid of night..."* I knew I would never let her go again. It was the tone of her voice that showed me she cared for my well being but I would never had thought she would come to love me as much as I would love her.

"I... guess we are a bit late for that now..." I smiled shyly while looking at the stars outside.

She smiled back at me but wasn't able to look in my eyes for long. I remember that I saw her blushing and it made me warm inside. It made me feel she had lowered some of her masks

for me.

Walking down the stairs and towards the front door I slowly opened it and stepped outside in the cold but refreshing night. I turned around and she was standing in the door opening. Neither of us knew what to say and a strange but a friendly and peaceful silence followed. We just looked into each other's eyes and I wished that I knew what was going on in her mind. I knew what was going on in mine and I was feeling warmer than I ever did. This amazingly girl was not only beautiful from the outside, but from the inside as well.

When a car came driving slowly through the street it broke the peaceful silence and I said my goodbye to her. When I wanted to turn around she grabbed my hand and pulled me back. Even now, I can still feel that warm hand closing around my fingers. I remember her gorgeous face in front of me, so pure and innocent. So full of truth when she said: *"I... lied about my name."*

I waited patiently for her to say something but when she did I knew she was telling the truth: *"In time, I will explain this to you. But my name is Ilona."*

2. Night of Dreams.

"... Looking up at the sky, I wonder where I will go when I am no longer here. Here, in this body that is called woman. Will I ascend to heaven or will I be a spirit chained to earth. Will I glide over the golden beams of the sun, all the way up in the endless sky? Where our air stops coming and the sky slowly goes over in the vast galaxy of wonders. A galaxy so vast it goes beyond our thoughts that holds so much beauty and mystery. What will become of me? What will be my destiny?"

She looked away from her story that she had been reading out loud and waited for what I had to say. Lying on her bed looking out of the window towards the black sky that was filled with a thousand stars, I smiled. It was something I loved the moment she started reading her stories or poems. It was the way she spoke, the way she brought pieces of text to life in my mind that made me want to listen with devotion. I knew Ilona was very happy that I liked her writings but I liked her visions, her ideas and beautiful voice even more.

"Like I said, it is a wonderful story."

"No, it's not. It's not even finished yet... It holds so many mistakes but I just get can't myself to finish it." She said while pouting. I turned around and looked at her.

"Shall I finish it for you then?"

She smiled a little and said: *"If you are truly bored with life, go ahead..."*

"I am not." I replied. *"I like all your stories."*

She looked at me while raising an eyebrow and made a funny looking face.

"Even the one about the scarecrow?"

I laughed and said: *"Well, maybe not... That one..."*

I turned around and looked at the endless sky that resembled a black sea. A sea that was filled with so many sparkles it could be magic. Wind was blowing softly through the leaves of the gardens outside and the lonely dog was barking far away. Sometimes a car came driving by and it would disturb the peaceful and gentle night only to be faded away into nothingness.

It had been a few weeks after we first met but we had seen each other most of the time and my feelings for her had only grown in those weeks. Every time we were together she seemed to become more open and friendly towards me even though she remained as cold and almost untouchable for strangers she didn't know.

She continued to look at me, and asked: *“What are you thinking off?”*

I remained silent while looking outside. She stood up from the chair from where she had been reading her little story and laid herself next to me.

“What is it?” She asked softly. Ilona had changed in those weeks more than I could ever imagine. It was as if not only her walls were slowly crumbling down but also her masks were being removed. Now that we started to trust each other a little more she became more open about her feelings and memories. No longer would she fall back upon her cold and emotionless state but would actually talk about it, even though certain memories still remained hidden. The way she spoke of her mother truly seemed to shine through how bad their relationship was. She would tell me stories that were unthinkable for me but then again, I came from a loving and steady household. Her so called friends seemed to gossip over her because she was different than the rest and would only rely on her if it was for their own good. She told me many tales about how they set her up for pranks some so worse she even had to cry about them. Upon hearing those I felt so sorry for her because all I could see was the sweet, friendly, gentle and caring girl that I was lucky enough to get to know. I admired her for her will to be different than the huge majority of people. But she didn't wear the clothing or makeup because she wanted to be different, to be a unique snowflake, but because she truly found that type of clothing beautiful. The way she could talk about her jewelry or dresses, makeup and why she would wear things was astonishing and inspirational in its own way.

And all I wanted was that she could be herself around me, to be real. At first at that bus stop she didn't seem like it but she was indeed different than the rest. Buried beneath those masks she seemed alive, honest about her ways, about the world. She would speak her mind and ought that people should take her for who she was, not for what she could be. Even though her masks and walls made her cold towards other people, it was simple because she didn't want to get hurt again. As for me, I would find out I was different in her eyes as well.

When I looked at her I could see her portrait illuminated against the silver light against the stars. Her amazing brown eyes were almost, but thankfully not completely blended in the shadow that came from her long brown hair that had fallen to the sides of her face. Even though she was sitting against the light I could still see her beautiful eyes. This night, she was not wearing any makeup, rings or necklaces. All she was wearing was a big shirt that covered

her almost completely and two duck-like slippers were coming from underneath it. When she opened the door like that and saw the reaction I gave her she pouted while saying: *"This is comfy!"*

"I'm sure it is..." I remember laughing. She gave me a even more pouting look but that changed quickly when she started to tickle me. I could see her smiling and heard her laughing; it was so amazing to see her like this. I laughed with her even though I was the poor tickled victim. I tried to get away by running upstairs but she didn't seem to mind that at all and just tickled anywhere she could. She even continued when I tried to say I was sorry, but she just went on laughing while I was trying to grab her hands. I remember I finally got her hands tightly but gently gripped in mine and out of reaction I pulled her closer to me. It was sudden and I don't know why I did it but suddenly I could feel her warm breath gliding past my cheeks and her warm body closer to mine than ever before. The whole moment just seemed to instantly freeze in time. The wind was falling away, the lonely dog was fading in the background and all we could hear was our breathing that seemed to flow with the rhythms of our suddenly increasing heart beats. Seconds seemed minutes and all we did was look at each other. I could feel her shaking a little and she turned as red as a cherry. For minutes we stood there but it was far from uncomfortable. I remember I dreamed about this, thought about it. But before we did we something that we might regret I softly said: *"I... shall place my bag... at... at the floor..."*

At this point I didn't know she felt the same for me and we had such a fun and strong friendship building up, I didn't want to ruin it by doing something I could regret. Slowly I released her hands from mine and saw how she held them up in the air, almost as if she was still somewhere else in her mind. I turned away with an incredible blush on my cheeks but before I lost her out of my eye sight, I could see Ilona softly biting on her lower lip and heard her mumble something.

That night, she was so incredibly beautiful. She didn't think so, but I most certainly did. She always had makeup on and even though it added a lot to her appearance, it was amazing to see her true face for the first time. It almost seemed as if the way she dressed herself and applied her makeup, that it was an reflection of the inner walls she had build around her feelings. She was opening up more and more towards me and what seemed to be changing on the inside, seemed to be changing on the outside as well. Ilona was as beautiful as the

night sky filled with a thousand stars or the sunrise above a crystal blue sea. I didn't mind how she dressed or how she would apply her makeup, for I had already seen the angel that lived inside her. The kind and sweet girl I was so happy to get to know.

I remember I was looking through some of her drawings she handed to me when I heard a deep sigh and annoyed sound coming from the bathroom across the hallway. Putting the drawings away I walked towards the open door and looked inside.

"What's wrong?" I asked while looking at her.

"Oh..." She sighed while trying to brush her hair with a comb. *"I hate this hair... this face."*

"That's not true." I said immediately.

"Oh is it?" She said while standing up from the edge of the bath tub and looked in the mirror. Annoyed she was brushing her hair and I could hear how rough she was going through it. I walked towards her and with a slight hesitation I softly placed my hands upon her shoulders. She instantly stopped and I could feel a shiver going through her body.

"Why didn't you apply it then..." I asked her softly. She looked down and in the mirror's reflection I could see she was blushing. When she didn't answer I softly said: *"Look in the mirror."*

She shook her head sideways and squirmed a bit. I smiled and softly said: *"Look at you. What is there not to like?"*

Eventually she looked up and our eyes would meet in the mirror. I smiled at her and I could see she was starting to blush more.

"I don't see anything that is not beautiful..." I started to blush a little and my voice slowly started to break down in to hesitations. Ilona looked back at and softly said: *"My forehead is..."*

"... sweet and perfect the way it is." I replied.

"No, it's not... Those lips..."

"Are a gorgeous mask... towards a place where the most wonderful of words and songs come from." I said blushing. On the same time I thought how beautiful she could sing. How heavenly-like her words could sound when she was talking about her feelings. How deep and true, how warm and passionate.

"My eyes are..."

"The most amazing thing I have ever seen." I replied again. She was silent for a few seconds and asked: *"What do you like about them then?"*