

The Very Lonely Firefly

By

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based on a short story by Sara Cardoza

2015 Matthew Charof

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EXT. TOWN/VICK'S HARDWARE

The sun is getting ready to set on a small quaint town somewhere upstate, about an hour north of New York City. Vick's Hardware and Appliance Store is closing for the night. FATHER (early 40's), thin, tall and built, steps outside and closes the door behind him. He sets his rusted red toolbox down before he locks the door. REMY (8), thin, average height comes skipping down the block toward the store holding a sunflower. FATHER does not notice, as he is distracted by the baseball game happening across the street. It reminds him of when he used to play short stop for the High School Cougars. REMY runs up to him showing him the sunflower. FATHER looks down with a stern look, like he is not surprised, then motions toward the tool box as he walks down the stairs toward his truck. REMY struggles as he tries to pick up the tool box while still trying to hold the sunflower.

EXT./INT. PICK UP TRUCK/CAB DRIVING - DUSK

REMY is sitting next to his FATHER in the cab of his blue pickup truck. They are driving home from town. A baseball ribbon from High School hangs from the rear view mirror.

REMY

What was Mom wearing when you first saw her? Did she have on a dress and high heels?

FATHER

(quiet for a few minutes
staring over the steering
wheel)

That's a damn sissy thing to ask!

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

MOTHER (late 30's) thin, tall, beautiful, sits at a vanity in a gymnastics leotard twisting her hair on top of her head. REMY, trying to imitate his mother's posture, tumbles around on the floor, as if he is trying to remember how to do it like she has showed him before.

REMY

(doing tumbling routines
beside the bed)

I want to join gymnastics!

(CONTINUED)

MOTHER
(fixing her lipstick, briefly
smiles)
We'll see.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

FATHER and MOTHER are standing by the sink after finishing dinner. MOTHER has just finished doing the dishes.

FATHER
(shaking his head)
Gymnastics is no sport for boys.
And I'll tell you, I've never seen
a boy trail behind his mother so
far outta diapers. Rate he's going
he's gonna turn into one of those
fags.

MOTHER
He is just a little sensitive.

FATHER
That's what I am saying.

MOTHER touches FATHER'S face and looks into his eyes as if she is telling him she loves him but will be leaving him soon.

EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

FATHER is getting ready upstairs by the bedroom window, putting on his shirt for work in the mirror. Below, MOTHER creeps out of the front door with a folder in her hand, walks over to FATHER'S blue pickup truck, and quietly puts the folder underneath the front seat in the cab. Then hurries back in the house. FATHER hears something as he is finishing his routine with his Clubman aftershave, looks out the window, but sees nothing. His face seems hurt.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

FATHER walks down all ready for work carrying his rusted red toolbox. MOTHER, in the kitchen, hands him coffee, which he ignores. REMY sits at the table eating cereal, observing. Father goes to the cabinet and gets a small bottle of whiskey which he hides in his toolbox. MOTHER watches him like she has seen it a hundred times before. She gives a fake smile and avoids his kiss as he leaves for work.

EXT. PICK UP TRUCK CAB - MORNING

FATHER gets a text on his way to work from MOTHER: Hey, have a good day. Look under your seat when you can.

EXT. FAMILY HOUSE - MID DAY

The FAMILY is moving. FATHER stands outside at the edge of the lawn with a LAWYER (35) average height, wearing a black suite, who is holding the same folder MOTHER had hidden under the seat. The lawyer is pointing to places the father has to sign.

MOTHER is on the porch directing THE MOVERS as they move a couch down the stairs. ADAM (30's), good looking slender, clean cut, modern dress, locks eyes with MOTHER as the couch passes between them. They move closer into an embrace as they look forward into the future of their new life together.

REMY is watching all this happen from his bedroom window on the second floor of the house. He is holding back tears.

15 years later...

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

JULIET (24), average height, thin, beautiful, lights up a cigarette in the parking lot of a small town bar. The majority of her breasts riding far above the pink leopard print bra at the neckline of her ripped tank top. Her two GIRLFRIENDS are still in the car passing around what's left of a vodka bottle. JULIET finishes her cigarette, pulls out a flask and swigs it. She looks toward the bar, then back at the car. She bangs the trunk of the car with the flask to let the girls know its time to go.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

ERMY, now older (23) is tending bar. His attention is taken away from his customers when JULIET and her friends walk in and sit down at the end of the bar. REMY notices JULIET'S dark eyes and how her cigarette habit creates a halo around her thick black hair. A small diamond stud in her bottom lip shimmers in the candle light as she pushes a stripe of dyed red hair behind her ear.

ANTHONY (30), slightly overweight with an aging face, the bar manager, sees JULIET smoking.

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ANTHONY

(as he points to a no smoking sign)

Excuse me, we have a no smoking policy. Can you please put that out?

JULIET gives him an evil look as she lights a second cigarette with the butt of her first one. Her friends snicker. ANTHONY mutters something under his breath as he walks away.

REMY looks over at JULIET as if he has just fallen in love. She notices him and puts out her cigarette out in a glass next to her.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The crowd has thinned out by now and it is getting late. JULIET'S two friends are flirting with two guys in the corner while she sits alone at the bar, motioning for REMY to get her a third drink.

REMY

(as he pours Jack Daniels over rocks)

You remind me of my father, always drowning himself in a bottle of Jack...probably because he missed my narcissistic mom.

JULIET barely looked at him while she sips her drink and looks deep into the bottom of the glass.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

REMY locks up the bar and turns around to see JULIET leaning against his car. She finishes her cigarette, throws the butt and walks over to get right in REMY'S face.

JULIET

Where do you live?

INT. KITCHENETTE - NIGHT

FATHER, older now (60's) sits at a small table in a yellow-papered kitchenette. An ashtray filled with twenty or more broken-necked stumps and a glass, a quarter filled with Jack and melted ice, sit on the table in front of him. He stares off into space as REMY and JULIET come in.

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REMY

Dad, this is Juliet...

FATHER and JULIET exchange glances for a moment before she looks down at his Jack and cigarettes and he at her exposed tan midriff. FATHER looks at REMY and grunts as if his homosexual suspicions of his son had been foiled, then downs the rest of his Jack Daniels.

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

It is gloomy weather. MOTHER, older now, (late 40's) with a crepe-like face; her orange skin creased sharply around her mouth and eyes, is standing by FATHER'S grave crying next to ADAM, also older now and more tan. A picture of FATHER is displayed near the grave. A MINISTER is finishing his words, while REMY walks away from the site to find JULIET hiding behind a large gravestone smoking. REMY sits next to her and takes the cigarette from her, he looks awkward as he smokes it, and she gives him a quick look of apathy.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

REMY and JULIET are laying in bed after just having sex. JULIET'S left ass cheek is sticking out of the sheets revealing a tattoo that says "HIT IT". She is just finishing a cigarette.

REMY

What was your childhood like?

JULIET doesn't answer, but instead puts out her cigarette.

REMY

I thought that maybe because your parents were immigrants, you might of struggled to be understood...caught between the old world and American culture. Did you ever feel like you had to search deeply for a sense of identity?

JULIET

Where did you get that bullshit?
Some cultural awareness class at
community college?

BEAT

(CONTINUED)

REMY

Where did you grow up?

JULIET puts the ashtray on the nightstand.

JULIET

(softening up a little)

My mom used to take me to the public library, in Brooklyn. When I was a kid. We would check out a bunch of picture books and read them together in our small apartment in the Starrett City district. Which always smelled like her cooking-cloves, sumac, coriander. She didn't speak English so well at the time, and I was just learning to read, so the illustrations in the books helped us, and we stumbled over the words together.

She laughs to herself.

JULIET

She had this old Armenian-English dictionary that belonged to her mom, it's cloth cover was all worn, and the pages were falling out. And we'd sit and read these books, right, when we didn't know a word she'd fight with this shitty, old dictionary trying to find the definition. It would take us two hours sometimes to get through a ten page children's book.

They both share a big laugh. Then settle again.

REMY

Which one was your favorite?

JULIET pauses before answering, remembering.

JULIET

The Very Lonely Firefly - Eric Carle.

EXT. REMY'S APARTMENT

REMY is holding a jar chasing fireflies around his cramped patio behind his apartment. His neighbor, whom he shares the patio with, has an arrangement of glazed, ceramic pots, which creates a makeshift garden, and attracts fireflies in the evening. He catches two of them in the jar and adds some green stuff and some flowers.

EXT. REMY'S APARTMENT

JULIET walks up to REMY'S front door and before she can knock, REMY opens the door. JULIET doesn't seem fazed and is used to REMY'S over-eager personality.

REMY
 (handing her the jar)
 See, a firefly that was alone in
 the world, no longer lonely.

JULIET
 (pushing the jar back to him)
 You're lame.

REMY grabs a strand of loose hair and kisses her temple.

REMY
 (asking her if she wants some)
 I made curry...

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

It is the fourth of July. There is a holiday spirit in the air and people are hanging outside in the parking lot by their cars being loud. REMY and JULIET walk up to the bar and enter. A tall blond girl with large hoop earrings is waving sparklers around, passing them out to people. As the two pass, the blond hands one to REMY and they share a moment that JULIET sees but does not react to. A feeling of uneasiness suddenly comes into the air, as the two enter the bar.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

REMY and JULIET are sitting at the bar. ANTHONY, who is wearing a red shirt with an American flag pin that lights up red, white and blue, is drunk and offering them free shots of tequila. JULIET cocks her head back and lets the liquor rush down the back of her throat. REMY watches as some of the liquid escapes JULIET'S mouth, and slides down her

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collarbone in the plunging neckline of her shirt. He wants to lick the trail it makes and moves into kiss her, but she pushes him away.

The alcohol makes him fuzzy, and as he turns to look at her, he feels like his head had reached his destination before his vision catches up.

JULIET gets up and walks away, REMY looks after her thinking she is mad at him, like she often was for being too affectionate.

JULIET pushes through a group of people and stops in front of the blond girl who was passing out the sparklers.

It was hard for REMY to see because of the dim lighting and crowd, plus the loud music to hear them. JULIET was gesturing at the woman angrily, throwing her arms around. It looked like she was screaming but no one was paying attention other than a few people standing beside the blond.

Suddenly the Tequila hits REMY full force with a ripple in his stomach up through his throat and back down again. He runs to the bathroom and pukes, missing the toilet, onto floor.

REMY'S vision starts to clear up as he looks in the mirror. He spits in the sink, and wipes his mouth with his hand and arm. As he exits the bathroom, he notices people crowding around, looking outside. He walks slowly through the groups of people, craning his neck to see what was going on. REMY notices a TALL MAN standing next to him.

REMY

Is there a fight or something?

TALL MAN

Yeah, some little chick just beat the shit outta this tall bitch.

It took a minute for REMY to realize what had just happened.

REMY

Shit!

He fights his way through the crowd and makes his way out the door to see an officer pulling JULIET off of a woman on the ground whose face was unrecognizable beneath the blood. One of the blond woman's earrings has been torn out of her ear, and there was a dark sticky pool of blood forming on the cement around her head.

JULIET is staring at REMY. Her face and arms stained in blood. Two officers secure her hands in handcuffs and guide her writhing body into the back of the police cruiser.

REMY watches the cruiser drive off, and waits in the gradual dissipation of the crowd until the lights of the ambulance reflect on the bar windows.

He doubles over and vomits against the sidewalk.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

People are filing into the courthouse.

INT. COURTHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

A nondescript DETECTIVE (40s') average height, wearing a gray suit, asks REMY about JULIET. REMY has a blank stare on his face as he thinks of JULIET and her favorite children's book, *The very Lonely Firefly*, how she thought he was corny, didn't like public affection, and drank Jack like his FATHER.

DETECTIVE

Can you tell me about Juliet's personality?

REMY zones out.

LAWYER

(in a disjointed faint way)
Head injuries are dangerous, they can lead to permanent disability, mental impairment, and even death. She will be charged with malicious wounding, intent to fatally injure, eight years - no chance of parole.

REMY

(waking up from his trance)
She's really creative and concerned about the environment.

INT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

REMY'S POV - REMY is waiting behind a fat security guard to go through a heavy steel door. He watches the sweaty fat behind his neck, until someone signals, and the locks are released. He walks in, and sees JULIET waiting for him at the last visitation window.

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REMY
(whispers)
Hey! (clearing his throat) Ho-how
are you?

JULIET motions toward her brown jump suit.

REMY
(glancing over at the large
hispanic woman next to her
with gold plated teeth)
Are the other...people...okay?

JULIET looks too.

REMY
Do you feel safe? Aren't you
nervous about being transferred to
a prison?

JULIET
(laughs)
I'm ain't worried. Anyways, I don't
mind being around woman for eight
years, in my experience, bitches
gives better head than men anyways.

REMY
(slamming the phone onto the
receiver)
Damn it, Juliet! That's not funny!

JULIET'S eyes widen as REMY turns to leave. As he reaches
the third window, he hears a sharp knock behind him. He
turns to look and JULIET motions him back with the phone.
Tears come fast as REMY picks up the receiver.

JULIET
I love you Remy. But don't ever
visit me again.

JULIET gets up and leaves REMY sitting there speechless.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

REMY and MOTHER are sitting at a table outside a nice cafe
in Manhattan.

MOTHER
It's better this way. The longer
you stayed together...you never
know when she could have snapped.
It could have been you!

(CONTINUED)

The waitress comes over for their drink orders.

REMY

I'll have a Jack Daniels on the
rocks.

His mother looks at him surprised.

EXT. REMY'S APARTMENT

REMY walks out onto his back patio. He kicks his shoes off and starts to walk slowly through the grass. He crouches down into stealth mode as the fireflies start to come into view.