THE GIRL IN THE RED HOODIE  
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The rain pressed heavily, dropping hard on my head and nose, occasionally making my eyes blurry, but I didn’t blink much. The cold wind rummaged through my jacket as I made my way to the Metro Station. It was evening though one couldn’t really tell since the sun rarely managed to sneak in from behind those majestic hills. The never ending dark clouds seemed to hover over the earth, as far as my eyes could go. It suited my style, my personality. The spotlight wasn’t screaming its lungs out at me anymore.

I walked at a normal pace as the others dashed past me, I looked at my watch. The train had almost arrived, and I ran too, leaving the others behind, the girl in the hoodie had almost arrived.

I seemed to love pain. It was something I deliberately let hang around even after the party was over. I know I couldn’t handle it too much but I couldn’t let go of the things it made me feel, of the things it made me think about. I had no severe life threatening problems, I was just caught off guard every single time they ricocheted past me. And I always wondered why. Things were fine, mostly smooth and yet I felt that thing missing, like something had stopped, something which was meant to, supposed to happen throughout my entire my life and in a sudden flash, it was all gone. I don’t know when the “flash” flashed, I don’t remember.

I checked past security, ignoring the judgmental, speculative eyes of the guard as he ran his hands all over my excessively damped clothes. I raced through the stairs, the automatic ones were too slow. The yellow lights flashed at a distance, as the train approached, my heart beating faster with every blink, the size of the train was increasing. I said I didn’t blink much, but it was always the train which made me. And it was all accidental.

I would take the train back home from my office, every evening around this time, along with people I didn’t know, hadn’t seen, hadn’t met, and yet there was this familiarity which existed throughout the 4 coaches. They all had problems, and I just had those 40 minutes to take a breath and realize that fact.

A saw her a week back, for the first time in my life, but something told me that my eyes had had this experience before. Maybe it’s another form, my heart would reply. Maybe you are just too depressed for no reason at all, my head would conclude. She was fairly tall. That’s all I could say about her the first day I saw her. She would always wear that hoodie, covering most of her face, though her hair would manage to escape, sliding through the back of her ears. She had long shiny hair, and for 2 days straight, I couldn’t manage a single proper glimpse of her face.

Travelling in the train isn’t always a task of linear transmission. You never just stand, sit, wait and leave, you see things. Peculiar little things floating about, giving you a glimpse of what short parts of their lives people reveal. All I wanted was to see her face, and so I stood, sat, waited, and painfully left, never managing a full view of her face. But something about her struck. She would always wear the same hoodie, and I was beginning to be obsessed about knowing what was underneath it.

I would stand in the centre, she would always pick the corner. She would never sit, even though people offered her seats, she didn’t rest even when they were empty. I caught her eyes ones, they were black, a shade of black I hadn’t seen. Over reacting my brain would conclude, again, and yet that excitement of a fresh revelation remained.

It would be weird, I realized, to stare at someone like that, and even though I couldn’t help it, I knew she was aware of my unfazed gaze. She chose to ignore it. She too, would have her eyes transfixed, I don’t know at what, but I reckoned she knew what I was feeling, that hollow feeling of not being inspired. She is just minding her own business, like everyone else, my brain would conclude, much to my heart’s agony.

But you should do something about it, my brain suggested. Ah, so you are intrigued too, my heart would mock. So I took my earphones out, plugged them in, and watched, yeah, that would make me seem less creepy I figured. I was never a “Metal” Person, I preferred Grunge. I rocked my head a little, enjoying this combination of music and her sight. 6 days passed like this.

I wanted to talk to her, to see her, to know her and more than anything, to figure out this strange sense of attraction I had towards someone I couldn’t even properly see. That damn hoodie. I shifted my weight, still looking for a better view. She would get off 2 stops after mine. I had to track back home 3 because of her. The train would get almost vacant by then, only a few people hanging around. Some elderly people, a few school kid and her, in that damn hoodie.

I sometimes feared that I had forgotten how to feel the things I used to, those songs didn’t make sense anymore, and those places weren’t serene. All I had were memories, and memories alone. This though, was different. It wasn’t complicated. It was as simple as it could get. One stranger, wanting to know another stranger, in a train full of strangers.

I stood, as always, as the crowd began to disappear. My heart sank as the doors opened and shut, I had to talk to her. Just 2 more stops left, my mind was racing with all those things I could say, all the things I could see. That was when she turned to her side, facing me, as I quickly averted my gaze, blood rushing to the back of my head. She unfolded her arms, and slowly walked towards me. I stood where I was, wanting to say something I know I couldn’t. It was her eyes, the first time I was seeing them. Some sense of pain lingered in those black shaded gates, there was also some twinkle. She was getting nearer, quickly now. I straightened myself, but as soon as I had, I noticed how her eyes weren’t matching mine; they were focused on something behind me. I lowered the sound of my music, but not completely, I knew I needed it. She paced right past me, evidently unaware of my presence and before I could turn or move, I heard the loudest cry I had in a long time. That was when I turned, and that was when I saw, the girl in the White hoodie, as she took a long sharp knife out of her sleeve and pierced the man’s neck, the man who was standing behind me. The man who was always there, sometimes with his friends, sometimes alone. How did she manage to get that knife in the metro was something I didn’t ponder over for a long time. Blood splattered all across, his expression slowly turned from surprise to fear to agony. I remember that, I remember that well. He went down on his knees, the blood falling faster than he was, there was a lot of it. She kept stabbing him in his chest as the elderly couple ran for it, to the far end of the coach. The two school kids watched with their mouths open, backing away slowly, their eyes opening for the first time in their lives. It all happened in a flash. That flash I forgot, that flash I missed, as I thought of a million things, watching her stab him to death. Run my brain said, stay said my heart. Watch said my eyes, redemption screamed my soul. The blood wasn’t red; it was purple, dark purple, as it raced with the train on the floor, rushing towards my feet. I knew I wasn’t breathing, the music was still on, I could hear both of them scream. With every stab, her big tears fell inside his ripped chest. With every stab, a pool of blood pounced all over her *White* hoodie. The train stopped, the door opened. She was still stabbing him; it was all slow motion, as the man waiting to enter the coach ran back to where he came from. The wind rushed in, as her stabs increased, and all this while I had not noticed her face. It was burned from the bottom of her neck to the side of her face. Her eyes were red now, not black. My music was dying now, “Alice In Chains” was now becoming “Slayer”. She is a psycho, she will kill you next, said my brain. No, this is hell, and the man’s blood has caused it said my heart. The doors remained opened, as she got up to her feet, the man dying motionless at her feet, his eyes popping out, there was blood all around, red splashed all over her hoodie. She dropped the knife as she got up slowly, still taking in short breaths, her eyes were now on me. I didn’t know what to feel. I was numb, I didn’t know what this meant, and yet from the inside, I think I knew. Tears raced down her magnificent face, sneaking from behind those drops of purple blood on her face. I didn’t know what she was thinking, though her eyes reflected desperation, this didn’t make anything better, and yet this had to be done. I was not scared, for the first time in my life, I was not scared of something as real as her, looking right into my eyes. She was death, *The Girl In The Red Hoodie*. I wanted to hug her, to hold her tight, my feelings for her had changed, she was more familiar than before, she was now my responsibility. As I watched the uniforms running their way into the coach, I slowly walked towards her, my heart, head and soul, were all bleeding red.

It’s been two months now, since they dragged her to the station. Her sister was raped and killed by the same man she stabbed to death, that’s what the newspapers said. Her face was burned with acid by the same man who lay right there as I fought those uniforms, forcing them away. I watched the sun set, the hills weren’t majestic anymore, but the sun finally came into being. It was orange, as the light slowly faded away, the orange that reminded me of meaning, of resurrection. I was at the same metro station, at the same time, waiting for the same train, but somehow I would never board it ever again, my life had a different direction now.