

Scars

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Today, I walk across streets I've once walked through not so long ago with my best friend I've had since 8th grade, passing cozy little neighborhood streets and ones filled with large, towering buildings. I grew up here in Atlanta, Georgia but have recently moved out for university. However, it's summer now, so I came here to visit my lovely parents and the place I call home. As my friend and I chat together, I look to the side where small buildings are lined up and notice an incredibly familiar beauty store. I stare at it for a quick moment, and that's when I realize why it's so familiar. It looks different, with a faded out sign and new posters hanging on the walls, but I remember it nonetheless.

"Autumn!" I say to her, "Remember what happened here?"

I look down at the brown slash on my lower arm. I remember everything that happened more vividly than ever. I remember exactly where I was when I saw her, and of course, where I fell.

I was 15, walking across the same exact streets. It was a warm summer day, and with nothing else to do, I decided to go out on an evening walk. It was wonderful outside, with the fading sun illuminating the streets beautifully. The sky looked as though it came straight out of a painting, with paint brushes of different sizes creating beautiful strokes of sunset colors. The streetlights created soft glows on the areas they shined on. It wasn't everyday that evening was this lovely.

I wandered the shops a bit, seeing if there was anything worth buying with the money I had. I wasn't allowed to stay out for that long though, so soon enough I made my way back home. I never expected what was about to happen - an encounter with my old best friend that would leave a mark on me forever.

I only walked a little way back when I saw her, just outside a beauty shop with her new group of friends. She looked so much more different then how she did on the last day of 9th grade. She had cut her black hair shorter, wore more makeup, wore fancy clothes that gave off a menacing aura, and had long, sharp purple nails. So much more different than me with my long, wavy brown hair, baggy sage t-shirt, black flared leggings and barely any makeup. No one would've ever thought we were best friends once.

But those times were different. Before she wouldn't care so much about boys, or looking picture perfect, or breaking a million rules just to be 'cool'. Then in 7th grade, she started changing, and asking me all these stupid questions about things that didn't matter. Eventually she evolved into who she was that day.

I looked at her and her friend group for a moment. They were sitting on a bench, dumping the contents of a bag. They were laughing and giggling over them, as though there was something special. I was about to walk off, when I realized that they dumped everything out yet there were no receipts. They were laughing over the contents because they *stole* them.

There was no way I could let my former best friend simply waltz off with a bag of stolen items and not face any consequences. I crossed the street and started to approach them. She may have looked menacing, but I knew she would have a sense in mind to at least not shoplift. I was sure simply talking to her would make her realize the absurdness of her actions. She was still a good person after all... right?

“Hey, Nyx!” I called, “What in the world are you doing?” I came closer. Her friends backed off slightly, but Nyx stayed put, rolling her eyes.

“What do you want, Ava,” Nyx replied, saying my name with disgust. “We’re not even friends anymore, why do you care about what we’re doing?”

“Oh, it just looked like something was a little off... or maybe even that something illegal is happening?” I said with a pressing note. To her I may have been irritating and bothersome, but that didn’t matter to me. What mattered was not letting her and her stupid friend gang get away with their little crimes.

Nyx faltered, her eyes slowly turning into a frown. “It’s none of your business,” she said sharply. “Literally just go away, no one wants you here. Right guys?” She turned her head around to look at her friends. They all nodded and murmured in agreement, yet no one actually confronted me. *Fake friends*, I scoffed to myself.

“Not until you tell me what you’re doing with that bag of items that has *no receipts*.” Since when was she so hard to argue with? I thought it would be easier than this - what was so confusing about the fact that you shouldn’t shoplift?

“Answer my question first. *Why do you care about what we’re doing???*” Nyx said spitefully, her face slowly contorting into unimaginable rage.

“Because you’re probably gonna get in trouble and shoplifting is illegal! Why else!” I stated exasperatedly.

“Who are you to care! You never cared before when we were friends and I asked you for your opinion! Nor did you care when I asked you for your help! You never cared *when I needed a friend!!!* Oh, but now you care, now that I did something wrong.” Nyx replied menacingly,

advancing toward me. She stood on a thin layer of ice, and I had a feeling it was going to break very, very soon. She was a balloon against needles, glass against force.

I was taken aback from her comment. I never thought of it from her side. I always thought of it as her constantly asking silly questions about silly things. But now as she stared at me bitterly with eyes the colour of dark chocolate, I realized it was much more than that to her.

I shook my head. I knew we just weren't right for one another. She may have been hurt, but so had I. What mattered was that she was trying to commit a crime. In a way, I was showing her that I moved on, and I forgave her for everything she did to me. In a way, I was helping her, and protecting her from the consequences.

But she didn't forgive me, and nor did she want my help.

"I'm going inside to tell an employ-" I started making my way inside but before I could finish my sentence, Nyx shoved me to the ground sideways. I could feel the burning sensation of skin peeling as my body met the cold, concrete ground.

"You are *not* going to tell anyone about this," Nyx said forcefully. She stared at me with flaming eyes. They were like an ominous abyss, hiding dark secrets and struggles at the very bottom, never to see light again.

"Yea I am!" I exclaimed outraged. I started getting back up - when she suddenly grabbed my arm, slowly piercing into my skin with her fake nail. It felt as though she was compressing every bit of hatred she had for me deep into my flesh. My skin was silk, and her nail was a needle. Yet I chose not to show her any pain.

Then, pulling me close, she said under her breath threateningly, "Don't you dare tell anyone. And don't you act innocent. You know if it wasn't for you I wouldn't go about doing the things I do." With that, she pushed me to the ground again, letting her nail drag across my skin.

I hit the ground, feeling warm blood trickle against my arm. I could see tiny droplets of fresh blood hit the dull concrete. My whole body was burning. Nyx took this too far. Anger fueled me, and I quickly bounced back up and punched her in the stomach, sending her toppling over, stunned. Her eyes now looked hurt. I left her, running off into the shop.

Who did she think she was to physically attack me ruthlessly? She knew I was stronger than her. I always have been. I could easily destroy her, ripping her apart one by one. Yet I didn't do any actual damage to her. I wasn't heartless like Nyx.

I ran off to one of the employees stocking the shelf and told her about the shoplifting. I didn't say anything about our fight. The employee went off to Nyx and her friend group. However, I didn't stay long enough to find out what happened to her.

The streets were no longer beautiful, and now darkened with the arrival of night. The beautiful colors of before were now covered with a thick layer of pure black. My mother was surely worried for me now, so I quickly made my way home.

I never saw Nyx again.

Now, being on the same exact street by the same exact shop, these memories flooded in clearer than before. However, in the beautiful morning glow, I also remember just how much I've changed since then. Not only do I have better friends, but I've also been a better friend - and a better person - myself. And I've learned other things too from the incident, like the importance of forgiveness and that sometimes, you have to upset people in order to do the right thing.

I look down at the brown slash on my arm. I know it's more than that, more than a simple scar. At first it was the striking memory of everything I've done in that relationship. But now it's something different. Now it's a part of me, something that reminds me that I changed.

So today, I walk through streets I've once walked through not so long ago with Autumn, passing cozy little neighborhood streets and ones filled with large, towering buildings. However, It's not only that. Arms linked with my best friend, I walk through the past, the present, and the future - at the same time.