

Ink Stains

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Chapter One- Jade

Jade wasn't sure if she believed in soulmates, but she knew that Aliyah came pretty close. Laying in her girlfriend's lap with Aliyah's fingers twisted in her hair was probably Jade's ideal place to be. She smiled at how focused she looked reading that poetry book for English. Aliyah always complained about her English homework but Jade knew how much she loved it- the romanticism and the flow of the rhymes. Sometimes they would lay here under this very tree, and Aliyah would dramatically read from it- speaking in an English accent because she "loved how romantic it sounded," and Jade would laugh until her face was bright red.

They'd been dating for a couple of months now- ever since Aliyah made a big sign, and asked her out at homecoming. Thinking back to that time was hard. She'd just found out that her dad had cheated on her mom with his co-worker and as hard as she tried, she couldn't forget how heartbreaking that had been. She'd been left behind, and the only ones there for her were Aliyah and Olivia. That reminded her.

Chapter Two- Aliyah

"Hey, when're we meeting Liv?" Jade asked. Startled, Aliyah looked up from her book.

"Hm?"

"What time did Liv say we were supposed to meet her?" Jade repeated.

“Oh!” Aliyah said, smiling. “Sorry. I think she said around—” she picked up her phone to check. “Shit, right now.” Jade sat up to check her phone, sighing when she saw the time. Aliyah grabbed her book and shoved it into her bag, stumbling over a tree root. Jade laughed.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry- I know it’s not funny.” Jade said, wheezing. Aliyah smacked her arm playfully.

“I hate you.”

“Okay, okay let’s go,” Jade said, grabbing Aliyah’s arm and pulling her along. “Liv’s probably waiting for us- you know how she is about being on time.”

They practically raced to the bus stop, and once they’d made it, they collapsed into seats next to each other, clutching their sides.

Aliyah sighed, “I almost thought we were going to be left behind!”

Hey, can you text Liv and tell her we’ll be there soon?” she asked.

“Yeah, one second.” Jade responded, pulling her phone out of her back pocket. She sent a quick text to Olivia and rested her head on Aliyah’s shoulder.

The bus edged slowly through the traffic and as they neared the cafe, Jade reached up and pulled the cord, signifying their stop.

Chapter Three- Olivia

“Hey Olivia? Your shift’s over,” called Olivia’s coworker.

“Oh yeah, I know!” Olivia responded. “I’ve just really been trying to get this spot out.” She held up the mug she’d been pretending to work on getting coffee stains out of.

“That’s great Liv, but Lucy really can take over! You’ve been working for so long.” She looked towards Lucy, who was prepping to start. She pulled out her phone, seeing a couple of texts from Jade come in.

Hey! We’ll be there soon!

We’re heeere!

“Sounds good,” Liv called over her shoulder, untying her apron. She grabbed an iced coffee before exclaiming, “Bye guys!” Her coworkers waved goodbye, occupied by their shifts.

If she was being honest, she was kind of annoyed at Jade and Aliyah. They were her best friends, but recently they were always together and tended to end up being late anytime they had plans for the three of them- not unlike what had just happened. Liv was well aware that they were dating and of course she was happy for them, however it had started feeling like they didn’t care about her as much anymore. It felt as though a bottle of ink had been spilled all over the story she was trying to write, so you could no longer see what was being said. Now she was just covered in stains. She knew it seemed childish, but she was so afraid she’d be left behind, struggling to live her life without them. But there was no doubt in her mind that she would never admit that.

She plastered on a smile as she pulled the cafe door open, bells jingling. There were Jade and Aliyah, sitting on the bench in front of the cafe, giggling and holding hands.

“I know, it was literally so funny like- Liv!” Aliyah jumped up, interrupting herself, and pulled her into a hug. Jade joined in a moment later.

“What were you guys talking about?” Olivia asked, sitting down on the bench where they had just been sitting.

“Oh sorry, it was about someone from my school,” Jade said quickly. “You don’t know them.”

“Oh, okay.” Olivia responded, hiding her flushed cheeks by taking a massive sip of her coffee. She’d always known Jade to be reserved, but it was weird of her to shut something down that quickly, at least with Olivia. She was only ever that short with people she didn’t like, didn’t trust, or actually just with everyone except Aliyah and Olivia.

What is going on? she thought. This is so unlike Jade.

“Hey, do you guys want to come to my house? My moms are out right now.” Liv asked. She only lived a couple of blocks away so it wouldn’t be a far walk.

Aliyah gasped in excitement. “Can we make pasta?”

“Oh my god, yes.” Liv laughed.

Chapter Four- Jade

It’s not that Jade didn’t want to tell Olivia what they were talking about, it’d just seemed a little weird between the two of them. Liv hadn’t done anything wrong, it just felt like she didn’t want to be around her as much. Jade felt so hurt because she considered Olivia to be her family as she was one of the only ones there when she needed someone the most. So naturally, Jade shut herself off, as she had been known to do.

Sitting on the floor of Liv’s absurdly clean room, Jade felt awkward. Aliyah had gone downstairs to grab something, so it was just Jade and Liv sitting in uncomfortable silence. It was at that moment when Jade made the decision to ask her about it.

“Hey…” Jade started.

“Yeah?”

“Are we okay? I feel like it’s been weird recently.”

Liv had an unreadable expression on her face.

“Yeah we’re fine,” she answered bluntly. That was when Jade knew something was definitely wrong.

“No I don’t think we are,” Jade said, not noticing that she was raising her voice, although the change in Olivia’s face showed that she definitely did. Liv didn’t make any inclination to respond.

“Liv!”

“Don’t yell at me Jade.” Olivia said in a tone that Jade hadn’t heard before, and it was at that unfortunate moment that Aliyah came back in, awkwardly sitting down on the foot of the bed.

“What’s going on?” Aliyah asked, clearly testing the water.

Jade quickly relayed to her what had just happened and Aliyah, looking confused, turned her head towards Olivia.

“Listen, I don’t know,” Olivia said quietly. “I just feel like you guys don’t care about me anymore. And no hold on- let me finish,” she said as Jade and Aliyah both opened their mouths in protest. “I just mean like, I introduced you guys to each other. And don’t get me wrong it’s been so amazing how close you guys have gotten, it’s just sometimes I feel left out. Like even today you guys were late to the cafe, and it’s been happening a lot.” Jade realized that Liv had started to cry and moved to sit next to her, Aliyah on the other side.

“Liv, you’re everything to me.” Aliyah said.

“Me too,” agreed Jade. She’d hurt Olivia and she felt like such a terrible person for hurting someone she cared about that much. After everything that had happened with her parents,

she knew how much it hurt being left behind, and she never wanted someone to feel like that, especially a person as kind and perfect as Liv. She felt her heart beat faster and her vision get blurry from tears that seemed to refuse to fall. She looked around to Aliyah and Olivia's faces, hoping for a reassuring look that just maybe- this wouldn't completely end their friendship.

"I'm so sorry we made you feel like that, Liv," Jade said, wiping away a tear that she hadn't realized had traced its way across her cheek. "You guys are really the only people I have, and I promise you I'm not going to leave you behind."

"That's really sweet," Liv said softly, wiping at her eyes. "I love you guys so much."

"We love you too," Aliyah responded, tackling them both with a hug. They all laid there for a few seconds before Jade asked about the pasta.

"Oh my god I forgot about the pasta!" Olivia shrieked, jumping off of the bed and running to the kitchen. They'd all forgotten about the pasta that had been cooking the entire time they'd been upstairs. Luckily none of them were against overcooked pasta, which they were perfectly content eating on the floor of Liv's bedroom.

Artist's Statement

The plan that I had while writing this short story changed numerous times. I struggled sticking to one idea, or sometimes even thinking of what to say next. The only thing I've had since the beginning, was the characters and their perspectives. I knew that I wanted to tell a story that included at least three characters to represent not only the struggles of being friends with people who feel closer to each other than to you, but also overall miscommunication in friendships, which is where Jade, Aliyah, and Olivia came in.

In regards to the essential questions, I wanted to tell a story that incorporated finding family through friendship while also discussing some impacts that the character's families had on them. All three characters talk about how much the other characters mean to them, and how they feel as though they're all they have. They chose each other, representing the "chosen family" trope. For example, Jade is reserved and has a hard time trusting people because of the impacts that her dad's infidelity had on her.

The snapshot that I chose is in Jade's chapter during the confrontation between Jade and Olivia. I chose this scene because I wanted to represent how Jade was feeling in a more dramatic way, rather than simply telling the reader. I described how she was feeling and what she was aware of, that she might not have been if I hadn't described it as in-depth as I did.

I utilized dramatic irony throughout the story by describing how the characters were feeling, which helped build tension towards the climax. (I.e. Jade doesn't know why Liv is angry.) Tying into dramatic irony, I used thoughtshots a lot in this story to convey what is going on in the characters' minds, that like the dramatic irony, help to build tension.

The motif in this story is the idea of being left behind. Each of the characters have an internal fear/insecurity of being alone, whether that be personal or from familial issues, and their

friendship was a savior to each of them in a way. When their friendship is tested in some way, their insecurity is reflected.

The dialogue that I created was mainly used to push the story forward and help to describe the characters' relationships to each other and their personalities. For example, most of Liv's dialogue is optimistic and happy, which contrasts to the mood of her dialogue in the climax.