

“Isadore”

As I approached my favorite park and bench, my feet crushed the dry rustic leaves that dressed it. The town was empty except for the occasional passerby who found solace in the ground. It was quiet except for a slight rustle of the leaves and the wind whistling its seasonal tune. There was a figure in the distance sitting in my spot. The closer I got the more in focus she became. It was a woman with etched wrinkles and an olive complexion. Her clothes didn't match. She wore a leopard print short sleeve shirt and a long blue skirt with flower print that brushed her ankles. Her legs were covered in white stockings and her feet rested in blue slippers. A black kerchief with a white and gold pattern covered her head to keep her cottony hair in place. She didn't say a word as I drew near. Her tired eyes stared straight and her head was tilted slightly forward. She was holding a newspaper clipping in a language that was foreign to me. I sat at the opposite end of the bench taking my glance back to her ever so often. Silence. I tried to engage.

“Good Morning,” I said.

Nothing.

I pulled a book out of my backpack and began to read. Once and a while I would look at her out of the corner of my eye. She didn't move. I became concerned.

“Ma'am, are you ok? Do you need some help?” I asked.

Still staring straight ahead she mumbled something under her breath. The only thing that I could make out was a name that sounded like Isadore.

“Isadore, did you say? Are you waiting for him?” I asked.

No reply. Slightly uncomfortable, I continued to read my book. I thought about getting up and leaving but if something happened to this woman it would have eaten me up inside. Who knew

“Isadore”

how long she had already been sitting there?

The air became colder. I had a long sleeve shirt on but I wanted something warmer. I pulled a blue zip up hooded sweatshirt out of my bag. I stood up to put it on but instead of putting it on myself, I offered it to the quiet stranger sitting next to me. When she didn't answer, I instinctively wrapped it around her to cover her exposed arms. When I finished covering her, a male voice with an accent yelled in the distance, “Grandma!” I looked up to see a dark haired man with a white button down shirt, black trousers and black dress shoes jogging toward us. “Grandma!” he yelled again.

The woman didn't move. Out of breath, the man approached us. He looked at the woman and said, “Oh Thank God!” For the first time, a slight smile came across her face. Her grandson started talking to her in another language. When she didn't answer, he put his hand on her shoulder, knelt down, and repeated himself. To my surprise, a soft voice answered him and again I heard the name Isadore. After removing my jacket from the woman, the gentleman handed it to me and with his accented dialect said, “I'm Malik. Thank you for your concern.”

“Please don't thank me,” I replied. “I wasn't sure what to do next. I tried to talk to her to no avail. The only thing she said that I understood was the name Isadore.”

“Yes,” Malik said. “She said she has been waiting for him here. But he's not coming.”

“Oh. I don't know what to say. I'm sorry.”

“Isadore is my grandfather and they used to come here all the time and sit on this bench.”

“Where is your grandfather now?”

Letting out a sigh and glancing at his grandmother he said, “He died five years ago today. She hasn't been right ever since.”

My face became expressionless.

“She always comes back to this spot on this date and sits on this bench hoping my grandfather

“Isadore”

will come for her.”

“Jesus,” I said looking at the old woman.

“Yes, she is very lonely old woman,” he said kissing her covered head.

Malik said something to her in their language and she got up. She turned around, looked at me, and patted my hand.

“Mutašakkira,” her soft voice said.

“She said thank you,” Malik translated.

“You’re welcome,” I smiled.

Malik smiled, put his arm around his grandmother and escorted her back to the parking lot.