

CATCH THE LIGHT

By Melissa L. White

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - DAY

AUTUMN WINSTON (14) breezes into the kitchen carrying her backpack and her cell phone. She has her earphones in listening to her playlist. She drops her backpack on the table, grabs a piece of toast. Still standing, she gulps her orange juice.

Her parents sit at the table eating breakfast. Autumn's mother, SARAH (40) reaches up and takes the earphones out of Autumn's ears.

SARAH

You sit down right now and eat your breakfast.

AUTUMN

But Mom, the bus will be here any minute. I don't want to be late on my first day at a new school.

SARAH

You won't be late. Sit.

Autumn plops down in the chair, angrily eats a bite of eggs.

AUTUMN

I never wanted to move here. I was happy in L.A.

Her dad, EMMET (44) puts down his newspaper.

EMMET

Your grandmother needs us here. You know that, sweetheart.

Autumn rolls her eyes, puts her earphones back in.

EXT. BRANSON SCHOOL - DAY

Autumn walks down the steps towards the schoolyard. She passes a group of snobby teenage girls. The girls turn and stare at Autumn, then they all burst out laughing.

Autumn stops in her tracks. She turns back, approaching them.

AUTUMN

Something funny?

GIRL 1

You look like some ratchet ghetto ho. Who dresses you? The Salvation Army?

Laughter erupts from the group of girls.

AUTUMN

Is that all you have to say?
Negative comments about my clothes?

GIRL 1

Learn how to dress, maybe then you
won't look like such a freak show.

AUTUMN

You need therapy. Seriously. Try
some anger management counseling.

Autumn turns and walks away. One of the girls throws a half eaten cup of yogurt at Autumn, hitting the back of her head. Yogurt spills onto her hair.

Autumn keeps walking. Angry tears in her eyes.

She goes to a bench on the far side of the schoolyard and sits by herself. She pulls a napkin from her backpack and tries to clean the yogurt from her hair.

She gives up, then lies her head back on the bench, crying.

LENNY DAVIS (14) swishes up and sits down beside her. She looks over at him.

LENNY

Hey girlfriend. You okay?

Autumn wipes her eyes.

AUTUMN

Yeah.

LENNY

Don't worry about those bitches. If
they were twice as smart as they
think they are, they'd still be
morons.

Autumn nods.

AUTUMN

What's your name?

LENNY

Lenny. What's yours?

AUTUMN

Autumn.

LENNY

This your first day here?

AUTUMN

Yeah. We just moved up from L.A.

LENNY

Cool. So how do you like Marin?

AUTUMN

I hate it, to be perfectly honest.

Lenny laughs.

LENNY

Well, the climate is a teeny bit materialistic. But it grows on you.

She laughs.

AUTUMN

Hey. What's on your list?

Lenny pulls out his cell phone and gives it to her. She scrolls through it.

AUTUMN

Green Day. Van Morrison. Pharrell Williams. Sorta eclectic, huh.

LENNY

I guess. So what music do you like?

AUTUMN

I love "Pink Bullets" by The Shins.

LENNY

Me too! I love that song! It's got so much soul.

AUTUMN

Yeah. That's the kind of music I want to write.

LENNY

You write music?

AUTUMN

Lyrics. And I sing.

LENNY

I write music. And play guitar.

AUTUMN

You should come over after school. We
could hang out. Write some songs.

Lenny smiles.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - DAY

Lenny and Autumn sit on the floor in her bedroom. Lenny
strums his guitar. He plays a chord.

Autumn hums a melody. Lenny copies the melody on guitar.

AUTUMN

(singing)

I saw you sitting there...alone in
the crowd...I know it isn't fair...
all their voices so....so What?

Lenny strums another chord.

LENNY

Loud?

AUTUMN

Perfect.

She scribbles the lyrics down on her notebook.

AUTUMN

All their voices so loud.

Lenny riffs on a new melody.

AUTUMN

Ooh. Love it, dude. Very cool.

He plays the melody again, adding a new chord progression.

AUTUMN

I've got the perfect title.

LENNY

Oh yeah? What?

AUTUMN

May Day.

LENNY

May Day. Sweet.

AUTUMN

Here's the chorus: May Day, May Day, Can you help me save myself? May Day, May Day, can you help me share myself?

Lenny puts his guitar down. He takes her hand.

LENNY

We need to record this. It's ripping hot.

AUTUMN

Do you know anyone with a studio?

LENNY

Revolution 9 in Fairfax. I know the owner. He'd help engineer a demo.

AUTUMN

Let's do it!

Lenny kisses her hand. She laughs.

AUTUMN

Do you have a girlfriend?

He howls.

LENNY

Sweetums, what's up with your gaydar? Is it busted, or what?

AUTUMN

Wait a minute. You're gay?

LENNY

All my life.

AUTUMN

Are you sure?

He frowns.

LENNY

Hold on there, Suzy Q. Don't go getting any ideas about saving me.

AUTUMN

(laughing)

Not in this lifetime. But I do think we could be best friends.

LENNY

BFF. I'm down. But you'll have to get used to being called a Fag Hag.

AUTUMN

No one will call me that.

LENNY

You got pelted with yogurt today. No telling what's in store if you keep hanging out with me. I'm like the social equivalent of Ebola.

She laughs.

Autumn's mother steps into the open doorway, wiping her hands on a dish towel.

SARAH

Dinner's almost ready.

AUTUMN

Can Lenny stay for dinner.

SARAH

Sure. I'll set another place. It'll be ready in five minutes.

AUTUMN

We'll be right there. And, Mom?

SARAH

Yes?

AUTUMN

Thank you.

Sarah looks puzzled, then smiles.

SARAH

For what?

AUTUMN

For being such a good Mom.

SARAH

(surprised)

What a sweet thing to say.

AUTUMN

I mean it.

Sarah looks skeptical.

SARAH

You're up to something. What is it?

Autumn shrugs.

AUTUMN

Nothing, Mom. We just wrote a song.

SARAH

Really? What's it called?

AUTUMN

May Day.

SARAH

Nice. What's it about?

AUTUMN

Not fitting in.

Sarah folds her arms across her chest.

SARAH

Rough day at school?

LENNY

She got yogurt thrown at her today.
I found her crying outside by
herself. We bonded.

SARAH

Honey, I'm so sorry. It'll get
easier, once you make some friends.

Lenny laughs.

LENNY

It'll get easier once we graduate
and leave.

Sarah looks disappointed. She sighs. Turns to go.

SARAH

Don't forget to wash your hands.

Lenny and Autumn glance at each other and laugh.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lenny and Autumn sit with her parents and GRANDMA (66).
Grandma offers Lenny some more spinach.

GRANDMA

Have some more. It's good for you.
Full of iron.

AUTUMN

Grandma! He's already had two
helpings.

Lenny takes the bowl of spinach and serves his plate.

LENNY

Thanks. I need looking after like this.

GRANDMA

Doesn't your momma cook for you?

LENNY

She works late. We usually
microwave a box of Lean Cuisine
when she gets home.

GRANDMA

Does your dad work late too?

LENNY

He left when I was just a kid.

GRANDMA

I'm so sorry.

LENNY

Don't be. He's a drunk. We're
better off now that he's gone.

Sarah takes the bowl of spinach from Lenny and sets it back
down on the table.

SARAH

Autumn and Lenny wrote a song today
after school.

GRANDMA

How nice. Can you sing it for us?

AUTUMN

It's not ready yet. We need to
rehearse it first.

GRANDMA

Well, when you're ready, I want to
be the first to hear it.

AUTUMN

We want to record it. Lenny knows a guy in Fairfax with a studio.

EMMET

How much will that cost me?

Lenny glances at Autumn.

AUTUMN

I have no idea, Dad. But I'll pay for it myself.

EMMET

How? You don't have a job.

AUTUMN

I'll find a way.

GRANDMA

Maybe I could help. I could be your patron.

AUTUMN

Wow. Grandma. Thanks!

GRANDMA

Find out what it'll cost, and let me know. I'd love to help.

Lenny and Autumn exchange a quick look. Grinning.

SARAH

That's awfully generous of you, Mother.

GRANDMA

I'm glad to do it.

Grandma raises her glass of iced tea.

GRANDMA

To the band. What it's called, by the way?

LENNY

We don't have a name yet.

GRANDMA

How about "La Luce?" That's Italian for "The Light."

LENNY

I love it!

GRANDMA

Let yourselves shine, little ones.

LENNY

Maybe you can come watch the recording session, if you want.

GRANDMA

I'd love to.

Autumn gets up and goes to her grandmother and hugs her.

AUTUMN

Thank you so much!

GRANDMA

You're welcome, dear.

AUTUMN

(to Grandma)

I'm going to write another song for you tonight. And dedicate it to you.

Grandma smiles.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Autumn stands in front of the microphone. Lenny sits on a stool beside her. The recording ENGINEER points at them and Lenny starts to play. It's a soulful ballad.

AUTUMN

(singing)

Smiling in the sun you kiss away my
tears...take me in your arms and
quiet all my fears...I found an
eternity of love in your gentle
upturned palms...teaching me to live
with a soothing peace that calms.

Lenny plays with passion, ripping out the chords.

AUTUMN

Look for the girl with the sun in
her eyes...catch the light all
around...across the clear blue
skies.

Grandma sits in the background, watching as they record.

AUTUMN

You gave me strength to live.
 Courage to move on. Power to be
 myself and wake to greet each dawn.
 With peace and light, yeah, peace
 and light. You taught me to be
 strong and put aside the night.

Autumn closes her eyes as she segues into the chorus again.

AUTUMN

And look for the girl with the sun
 in her eyes...catch the light all
 around...across the clear blue
 skies.

Grandma smiles, tapping her toe to the beat.

AUTUMN

You are the world, the universe.
 You are everything to me. Catch the
 light yeah, catch the light. In
 everything you see. Catch the
 light, yeah, catch the light. In
 everything you see.

Lenny looks up at Autumn and smiles. He raises his fist to
 her for a knuckle bump. She reaches out, bumps his knuckles.

Grandma shoots them a "thumbs up" signal.

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE - DAY

Autumn hurries into the kitchen where her mother is busy
 baking. Sarah takes two apple pies out of the oven.

Autumn grabs a soda from the fridge and hurries out.

SARAH

Wait just a minute. I want you to
 take one of these pies down to
 Grandma.

AUTUMN

Oh, Mom. Do I have to? Isn't she
 coming over for dinner tonight?
 Can't she get it then?

SARAH

She's not feeling well. She's
 staying home tonight.

Sarah puts the pie in a ceramic carrier.

SARAH

Here. Take it to her. It'll make her feel better.

AUTUMN

Oh, all right.

Autumn takes the pie and heads out the back door.

EXT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Autumn peeks in the front window and rings the bell. No one answers the door. She rings the bell again, then takes the key from under the doormat and opens the front door.

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Autumn walks through the house, carrying the pie. She calls out to her grandmother.

AUTUMN

Grandma? Where are you? I brought you a pie.

Autumn walks past the hall bathroom. She stops, looks inside then drops the pie.

AUTUMN

Grandma! Oh my God!

She rushes into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Grandma is lying on the floor in a pool of blood. She's unconscious. Autumn kneels beside her, touches her head. It's cut and bruised where she fell and hit her head on the edge of the counter.

Autumn panics. Starts to cry. She grabs her phone out of her pocket and calls 911.

AUTUMN

(crying on the phone)
My grandmother fell! She's unconscious! Her head is bleeding.

Autumn paces the floor, crying.

AUTUMN

Oh God! Do something! Hurry!

INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Sarah, Emmet and Autumn stand in front of a coffin. It's draped with roses.

Lenny enters and walks up front and joins them. He hugs Autumn and stands beside her with his arm around her shoulder.

Autumn turns to him and breaks down sobbing.

AUTUMN

Oh God! I just can't believe it!

Lenny hugs her. Tries to comfort her. She craters, sobbing hard, with so much pain and grief pouring out of her like molten lava.

AUTUMN

(crying)

I've got to get out of here!

LENNY

Come outside with me.

They turn and Lenny leads her out of the funeral home viewing room as they step outside.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Lenny and Autumn sit on the bench adjacent to the parking lot. They are silent for a moment then Lenny reaches over and puts his arm around Autumn's shoulder.

She lays her head on his shoulder.

AUTUMN

I can't believe she's really gone.

LENNY

Yeah. She'll be missed. But she lived a long life. She was happy.

Autumn wipes the tears from her eyes.

AUTUMN

Do you believe in life after death?

LENNY

What? Like heaven?

AUTUMN

Like we somehow continue on, after
our physical bodies die.

LENNY

Yeah, we definitely have souls. And
they gotta go somewhere. So why not
heaven? It's as good a place as any.

AUTUMN

Sometimes I feel like she's still
here with us. Watching over us.

LENNY

You know, if you are loved and
remembered by just one person, that
counts. That is worthwhile. You
don't have to be a celebrity to
live a meaningful life.

AUTUMN

She found meaning in the
ordinariness of life. And that
makes her extraordinary.

Lenny turns and looks at her. He brings her hand to his lips
and gently kisses her hand.

LENNY

You're extraordinary. You know
that, don't you?

AUTUMN

So are you, my friend. So are you.

They lean their heads back and gaze up at the stars.

Final credits roll as Autumn and Lenny sit together on the
bench, gazing at the sky. Their song, "Catch the Light"
builds as we...

FADE OUT.

THE END.