
Under the Summer Storms Additional Scene 1: The First Time He Really Saw Her

Summer Storms is told through only Kiki's point of view. Here is an idea that came to me one day when I was stuck in traffic. The first time Luke really saw Kiki, from his point of view. This takes place long before Summer Sun and Summer Storms. As usual, my additional chapters are unedited so expect to see some errors.

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The row of sleek black cars that line the street should be impressive. They're expensive and shiny, but nobody is ever impressed by these

cars. Cars that carry coffins and mourners, heavy hearts, sombre silences, and flowers presented in displays of wreaths that carry cards with messages of sympathy.

Beside me, Clementine sighs before she slips her hand in mine and gives me a little squeeze. My girlfriend knows the emotions that come on a day like this, but I wonder if it's different based on who has been lost. Would her grief for her fiancé Henry feel the same as I feel now for the loss of my father? Is this the same I felt years ago when I lost my mother? Is grief a universal leveller—that no matter who you are, and whomever has been lost, it feels like this same black hole I'm sure I have in my stomach.

"It's time to go, Luke," she murmurs softly.

I nod, though I'd give my fortune not to have to do this, not to do anything that lies ahead. I don't want to go watch as they give the service for my father. I don't want to watch as the coffin is lowered into the wet ground. I don't want to walk around the hall where the wake is being held, passing people giving me pleasantries and sympathy.

I don't want to get in the car and set this day in motion.

Clementine pulls me gently when it's clear I'm not going to make a move. It pulls me out of my frozen state. As much as I don't want to go through today, I know I must. It's my duty as his son. Milo Hewitt would expect nothing less from me, so I'll do everything I'm supposed to do.

I open the door to one of the cars for Clementine to get in, and then I turn to the other people gathered with us. There are a bunch of distant relatives who get into the last two cars in the queue. They were the people who insisted they belonged in the procession of cars, almost like they were determined to show they were close to my father. I'm sure a lot of them are only concerned about whether he left them anything in his will.

People file into the cars until there is only Amelia and Poppy who remain standing.

They both stare at me with sadness in their green eyes and give me sympathetic expressions. Poppy steps forward and pulls me into a hug. She's never been one for the social expectations, not like the people in the last cars who have given firm handshakes and fake air kisses instead. I welcome the affection. She's not my blood but she is my sister, and sometimes I'm sure she's the only person who likes to bring me down to earth, always with a sarcastic comment and a jest when needed. Today though is not the day.

"I'm going to miss him so much," she whispers into my ear.

I know she's genuine. She's not going to miss my father the most way I know people will—for his money and connections, smart business decisions and his shrewd mind. Things I know people will look to me to provide now, especially at work. Not Poppy, though. She loved Milo and he loved her. He always wanted the best for her, and he would tell me often that he was glad he had the opportunity to shape her life.

"He loved you," I whisper back.

"I'll look after Mum today. I know people will be monopolising you all day, so don't worry about her. I have this sorted. Mum and Clemmie," Poppy promises. She lets me out of the hug and takes a step back, tucking her auburn hair behind her hair. She pulls her long coat tighter around her and then gets into the car, sitting opposite Clementine.

I turn to Amelia. A small tear escapes her eye, and she quickly wipes it away. She takes a step towards me and with her other hand, she touches my cheek.

"My boy," she says. She doesn't say anything else. Whether it is because it conveys everything she wants to say or because emotion has

gripped her and tightened her windpipe in a way that makes words impossible, I'm not sure.

"Are you ready?" I ask after I kiss both of her cheeks.

"As ready as you are," she replies. She gets into the car beside Poppy, the door left open for me, the last person in the procession.

I make another silent prayer that I'll look after my family. I promise my father— wherever he is, wherever people go after this life—that I'll step in and fill his shoes. I'll make sure Amelia and Poppy are looked after, because I love them. I was an adult when Amelia married my father, but she's been an amazing mother. I know our bond won't be severed by his death, like some step relationships are when the lynchpin passes. I'll be the lynchpin. I'll keep us all together—me, Ameila, Poppy.

But, for now, I take a deep breath and get into the car next to Clementine. I shut the door and take her hand. The car purrs to life and then the procession sets off, my father's coffin at the helm, my car following him, just how it was always was in life.

The hum of the hall does nothing to help the headache that has grown from an annoying background hum to a full on drum procession in my head. People are milling around, sharing stories and hushed conversations. I overhear somebody commenting they were surprised a heart attack took down Milo Hewitt because they would have sworn that he didn't have a heart.

"Sir." A waiter stops next to me, carrying a tray containing a single glass of rum. I don't remember asking for a glass of rum, but I grab it like it's a lifesaver. I give him a nod of appreciation.

I search the grand hall, looking for Clementine, Poppy and Amelia. There are a sea of blurred faces, severe hair styles and dark clothes. It reminds me of my mother's funeral. Black suits and dresses everywhere, even though my mother had hated black clothes. She was always a woman who enjoyed splashes of colour, I always saw her in emerald green and royal blues. I get a jolt of a memory, asking my father before the funeral if people could wear colourful outfits, and being told that no, a funeral was for respect. Tradition. Black clothes of mourning.

Within the crowd, I see a splash of colour. Ginger, and blue. The woman crosses the hall, oblivious to my staring. She fits in with the rest of the mourners with her long black dress and black shoes, but her pale blue cardigan is a welcomed difference, as is her ginger hair which stands out among the browns and blonds and the salt and pepper grey of my father's friends and colleagues.

Who is this woman? I can't see her properly, not until she turns slightly, changing direction. She's carrying a bunch of pale blue hydrangeas, a perfect match to the shade of her cardigan. It's as she turns that I feel a bolt of realisation.

Kiera.

Kiera Kirkwood. Of course. But... she doesn't look like Kiera. Not the Kiera I know. She's been Poppy's best friend for as long as I've known Poppy, but it's only in the last couple of years that I've seen more of her. Since they turned eighteen, I saw Poppy more socially with her living closer to my home and work as she studied at university, Kiera sharing the house and going to the same university course.

I shake my head. She doesn't look like I remember, and I wonder when I last saw her. I don't think I've seen her since she, Poppy, Amelia and Jemma, Kiera's mother, visited when Clementine and I spent time in France. I'm sure I saw her at her twentieth birthday dinner, but was

that before or after France? It may be a while since I saw her, but it's like she's an entirely different person.

I watch as she joins Poppy and Amelia. I notice they're with Jemma, the ginger haired woman who holds Amelia's hand in comfort. They're tucked away in a corner, distanced from the other mourners.

Kiera speaks to Amelia, giving her a gentle hug before handing over the flowers and I watch, mesmerised.

Has she always looked like that? Has she always moved in that way, with the grace of a swan gliding on still waters. Have her eyes always been that shade of blue, like they're a crystal-clear lake with untold depths.

Has she always been so stunningly beautiful?

I cannot work out what is happening. Why it suddenly feels like the crowd of dark clothes and stern faces has parted, a pathway towards her lit, a pathway to colours and light. I don't know why it feels like my heart is skipping a beat, and my skin is heated, and—despite the rum—my mouth is dry.

I don't feel in control of my own feet as they head towards her. It's like a mantra in my head. *Go to her. Speak to her.*

Closing the distance between us by half, I'm oddly terrified and confused. I remind myself this is Kiera.

Poppy's best friend.

Practically Amelia's daughter.

A woman ten years my junior.

A woman who is not my girlfriend.

Despite the reminders, I can't stop myself drawing level with her. She turns to me, offering me a soft smile.

"I'm so sorry for your loss, Luke. Milo was a wonderful man," she murmurs. Her tone is soft and gentle. Has she always sounded like that; like she's singing a lullaby to a cherished loved one?

“Thank you, Kiera,” I reply.

I know everybody else calls her Kiki, but she doesn’t seem to mind that I always address her so formally. I’m grateful that the name that spilled from my lips wasn’t anything else that suddenly seems to be in my head.

My darling.

My beloved.

My fate.

That’s what she feels like. Right now, it feels like she’s been dropped in the middle of this room to shake up my whole world, to flip everything on its head and change my life, for the better. I know I’m dreaming. I should probably leave my remaining rum. I’ve clearly had too much to drink, if I’m suddenly imagining this woman in ways she would never understand nor contemplate.

I remind myself again who she really is. Kiera. Poppy’s best friend. Ten years my junior. Not Clementine.

“Shall we get a drink, Kiki?” Poppy asks.

My head screams out for me to tell her not to go. To ask her anything to keep her with me. It’s on the tip of my tongue to ask her how her job is going, just so she doesn’t leave.

“Are you okay?” Kiera asks, cocking her head slightly and staring at me. Beautiful eyes. She has beautiful eyes. Her expression softens and her cheeks flush. “Of course you’re not okay. I’m so sorry.”

I want to apologise, to tell her that her words and question wasn’t silly. She probably thinks she’s committed some faux pas, and I want to settle any anxiety or embarrassment she might have. I want to tell her that if I don’t look okay, it’s because she has me stunned. More than that, I want to tell her I would love to sit and talk with her somewhere quiet, because something about her has me making me want to spill my soul to her, bare all my secrets, open my heart and let her see exactly

who I am. Tell her how much I've worried about the expectations of everybody in this room that I'll be as in control of everything as my father was. I want to hear her tell me things will be okay, because—for reasons I don't fully understand—I know she's the only one I'll believe when she murmurs that things will be okay. More than believe her. I suddenly long for her to tell me things will be okay. To tell me in that lullaby tone, to let her words soothe my worries and my soul.

Ten years your junior, Luke. Knock it off. Get a goddamn grip. You're here to mourn your father.

"It has been a long day," I murmur.

Before she can reply, a hand slips into mine. Clementine. The woman I should be letting soothe me. The woman I'm meant to be vulnerable with.

I watch as Poppy pulls Kiera away, and I remain with Clementine, talking with Amelia and Jemma. I force my attention onto the group and try to pretend that my heart isn't yearning for a woman I'm not supposed to have.

The glow of the tablets screen in the dark room makes what I'm doing feel illicit. I could wait until morning. I should actually wait forever. There is no need for me to do this, aside from satisfying the voice in my head that has demanded I do this, telling me I won't rest until I do.

I open the folder on the tablet that contains the photographs from France. I skim past the many scenic pictures Clementine and I took, our sight-seeing around historical locations and important landmarks. I stop at the first pictures taken when my family had arrived at Clementine's French estate. I know she took these pictures, mostly

because she fancies herself as a photographer. I stop at the pictures taken on the first night they arrived, when we organised a catered dinner in the garden of the estate. The tables are perfectly laid out, everything set in a way that would be expected in the higher echelons of society.

I skim past the pictures of Amelia and Jemma. Jemma had come on the trip because my father was too busy at work. I skim until I find a picture of Poppy next to Kiera. Kiera had been invited to stay because she and Poppy did everything together. I vaguely remember telling Clementine that it would be good because it would mean Poppy wasn't bored.

Now, I zoom in on the screen, Poppy fading off the screen until it's Kiera's face I'm looking at properly. I see no differences between the picture on the screen and the woman who came to my father's funeral today. The eyes on the screen are the same beautiful blue. Even in this snap of her frozen in time on my screen, I swear it's like she's looking into my soul. Her facial features are the same, the same slight button nose, the same full lips, the same cheeks, flushed pink. I wonder if she had said something she regretted before this photograph was taken or if she always prone to a flush on her cheeks.

I can't see any differences between the photograph and the woman today. In the photograph, she's dressed in a long black dress, something elegant for a fancy dinner. The only slight difference is that in this picture, her hair is down, ginger locks hanging to her shoulders. Her hair today had been in a neat French roll, making her look glamorous and sophisticated.

No difference, but to me it feels like two entirely different people, because I have never looked at Kiera Kirkwood in the way I did today. Never felt the same things when looking at her—or anybody—before. I've never let my eyes follow somebody around a room before, and

even in the few moments when I lost track of her, I felt an automatic draw back to her, like a magnetic pull that kept me centred.

I put the picture back to the normal size and the flick through the rest of the pictures. She's not in many, mostly group shots or posing with Poppy, but there is a draw to her in every picture. She doesn't look mysterious or like she has a secret. Instead, she looks like she has the answers. That she is the answer to every thought and prayer I've ever had.

Clementine stirs in the bed next to me. In haste, I close the photographs and put the tablet away. I feel dirty and immoral for looking at photographs of Kiera as my girlfriend sleeps soundly next to me. I tell myself I should feel dirty for looking anyway, Clementine shouldn't be a factor.

I shouldn't be looking at photographs of Kiera.

I shouldn't be wondering when I'm going to see her again.

I shouldn't be thinking about how much I want to hold her hand and cherish her.

I shouldn't be thinking about how I'm sure, somehow, that we're meant to be drawn to one another. That fate finally rolled that die to show me where my heart and my true path lie.

I settle back into the covers and try to force Kiera out of my mind. No matter how I felt today, it's not right. She doesn't feel anything for me. She's young, probably has a line of men who want to take her out and show her the joys in life. It's not my place to think I could be the one who knocks on her door for a date. There are barriers, the main one that it would be impossible for a woman like Kiera—beautiful, young and kind—to be interested in somebody like me.

Despite the warning and reminder to myself, as I fall asleep, she is still on my mind. The last conscious thoughts I have is of her, of her holding her hand out for me, staring at me with her beautiful eyes,

telling me to come find her, to love her, to give her everything. As I slip into a deeper sleep, the shape of her name feels etched on my heart, and I let myself fall into the dream of something that would be impossible to turn to reality, but something I'm going to chase after regardless—with hope and reckless abandon, and my heart wide open.

