

# Did I Mention I Need You?

*by Estelle Maskame*

I'm half looking for the baggage carousels and half looking for a pair of green eyes. Around me, I can see people hesitating, looking. People in suits holding signs. Families searching the crowds flowing off the escalator. I know exactly who I'm looking for. For a moment, I think I see him. Black hair, tall. But just my heart's about to stop, he draws a woman into his arms and I realize that it isn't him at all.

My eyes return to roaming the concourse as I make my way toward baggage claim, still forcing my feet to move, however numb my legs feel. I'm stealing glances at the line of placards as I pass, taking in the last names and wondering why all those people are traveling to New York. My thoughts don't last long, though, because suddenly one placard in particular catches my eye. It draws my attention, of course, because I see my name scrawled on it in black Sharpie, each letter slightly out of alignment with the next one.

And that's when I see him.

Tyler.

He's holding this stupid placard of his just below his eyes, and the second mine meet his, they crinkle at the corners. He's grinning. Suddenly, everything calms. The tightness in my chest relaxes. My heart stops thumping against my rib cage. My pulse no longer throbs beneath my skin. And I just stand there, in the middle of the arrivals area, allowing myself to be nudged by my fellow travellers. But I don't care that I'm blocking the way. I don't care that I look like I'm lost. All I know is that Tyler's right here, and we're in front of each other again, and that everything immediately feels like it's back in place. It's like it hasn't been three hundred and fifty-nine days since he last smiled at me the way he is now.

He's slowly lowered the placard to reveal his face, and his grin and this jaw and the color of his eyes and the way one eyebrow slowly arches reminds me of some of the many things I used to adore about him. Perhaps I still do love these things, because now my feet are moving again. And fast. I make my way straight over to him, gaining speed with each step, my eyes locked on him and nothing else. My beeline forces the people around me to move out of my way, and now I'm running. The moment I reach him, I throw myself into his arms.

I think it takes him by surprise. We stumble back a step, his placard fluttering to the ground as he grasps my body, and I'm vaguely aware of some people around us gushing "Aw!" as though we're some sort of long-distance online couple meeting for the very first time. It might look like that because in a way it's true. It has been a long-distance relationship. Stepsibling relationship, that is.

Nonetheless, I don't pay attention to our small audience. I wrap my legs around him and bury my face into his shoulder.

"I think they're getting the wrong idea," Tyler murmurs by my cheek, laughing slightly as he stabilizes us. I might have heard his voice on the phone each week over the year, but it's entirely different hearing it in person. Almost like you can feel it.

"Maybe you should put me down," I whisper, and he does exactly that. With one final, firm squeeze, he gently sets me back on my feet. That's when I glance up to meet his eyes, up close this time. "Hi," I say.

"Hey," he says. He wiggles his eyebrows at me, and there's just this sort of relaxed and positive vibe radiating from him. I find it impossible to stop grinning. "Welcome to New York."