

## Maya and Clyde

It was her last burger to flip for the day. *62 burgers* Maya thought. She counted to one minute and forty seconds on each side of the patty then flipped. The spatula was rusted. Not too rusted to the point of meeting its end in the even more rusted trashcan, but just close enough. Her red apron was covered in grease, mayo, and something else she couldn't quite put her finger on - and she didn't dare to. She was the only one in the kitchen besides a woman older than her that flipped even more burgers and had even more grease than she did. "Done for the day?" the woman asked. "Yes, the eight hours couldn't have come fast enough." Maya said. As Maya took her apron off over her head, then her hairnet that caged her long black pinstraight hair, then her plastic gloves, she finally headed home. It was cold. Mid December, Christmas lights were barely hanging onto the passing buildings rooftops, flickering from exhaustion. The walk home was dreary. Maya stomped her second-hand boots into the grey, slushy snow that covered the sidewalk. The twenty-five minutes that it took for Maya to leave the burger stand and enter the footsteps of her home was the latter choice. The bus or the walk. She would often flip from the bus to walk but she knew no matter what, she would walk under the same roof.

The roof was collected with leaves, a lost frisbee, and gunk. No one had taken care of it for years. Maya sometimes took the long way home when it was nice out, the walk by the big blue houses with even bluer shutters and a frisbee being tossed around rather than tossed out. *One day I'm going to live in a house like that, carry my traditions, and fill it with anything I want, she* thought to herself. For a brief moment she would stare, stare into the big living room that housed a family with a big golden retriever dog and the ones that often bought the burgers she flipped. For a moment she would forget that in the morning, she'd be back, flipping burgers.

"Maya, is that you? Shut the door, it's cold." her mother asked from the couch, counting the bills.

"Yes it's me mama," Maya said while slamming the door and pounding her feet into the dirty rug.

"Come here, show me," her mom said. "It wasn't that busy today, it's too cold for anyone to be

out,” Maya said. Maya put her bag on the murky glass table that sat across from her mother. Maya put sixteen dollars onto the table. Her mother took it immediately, putting it into her pocket for things like rent and food. “There’s dumplings in the fridge,” her mother said. Maya walked over to the fridge, exhausted and hungry. She put her hands over the stove as she warmed the dumplings up. After Maya ate, she went down the hall to shower and lay on her bed to journal. She could hear her mom poking at the calculator all night long and sparking lighting for her Double Happiness cigarette before finally falling asleep on the couch, still lit. Each night after 2:00 a.m. Maya made sure to put the cigarette out and sit on the bill-filled glass table. She sat with her legs crossed and racing thoughts before kissing her mothers forehead before heading to bed herself.

*Dear Diary,*

*I walked by the blue house again. Or should I say MY blue house today. They had white reindeer in the front yard leftover from Christmas I guess. Today was a fine day, my customers were fine and one even gave me a five dollar bill. Tomorrow I can take the bus, many thanks to the customer who had a distressed jean-jacket and big timberland boots! And it will also be my eighth month working there officially tomorrow. Much better than the gig I had before, let us not forget the creep chef who left me feeling like a shell of a woman. Sarah called from University, she said it was going well that a professor of hers is taking her to a field trip to the mall to look at examples of visual merchandising and that the dining hall had a weird smell to it today. Gross.*

*Dear Maya, why so blue?*

*XXXXXX Maya*

The rooster alarm had cuck-ood at 7:30 on the dot to wake Maya up. No earlier, no later. Quickly, she dressed in jeans that were given her by a cousin who had moved to Nevada and was two sizes too big for her. Then red polo that was generously given to her by her manager for work, and then gloves and a jacket. Maya walked down the stairs past her mother still

sleeping on the couch with yesterday's clothes still on to cook breakfast. *Eggs* Maya thought. Empty. "Hey the carton's empty!" Maya yelled. No response. Just a glass of milk will do for now, she made sure to sniff it before pouring it into a glass that had a tiger print on it. "Good morning Maya," her co-worker said. "Morning," Maya said. She put her stained apron on and wrapped her hair in the net, and got to flipping. She watched a baby in the corner with her mother and father sitting in the booth across from her. Maya could tell that this was just a stop in their road trip to who-knows-where. "It's too early for food like this, I don't even know why we're open this early." Maya said. Her co-worker shrugged in agreement. Counting to a minute and forty seconds she watched the baby, in awe. She figured it was a better view than the burning meat that defrosted in front of her. *Now let me tell you something, once you can stand up on your own two feet, you run, run far away from this place,* she thought to the baby. She knew it was the words that she once heard but disregarded at a particularly un-dauntless point in her life. She should have listened. "Hey, take your 30 Maya and make sure to clock out." her co-worker said. Maya clocked out and just like usual took her 30 while reading a book and eating any salad she could get her hands on from the establishment. *The Turn of the Screw*, a book she's been reading for quite sometime now – adding a little edge to her rather jaded life. Throughout the eight months she has been working at the establishment, she has managed to read a handful of books that seem to excite her and let her escape. Poirot, one of her all time favorite characters, demonstrates strength and determination through solving mysteries. "Yo can I sit here?" her co-worker asks. " I mean I guess. My break just started." Her co-worker lights up, pulling the cigarettes and lighter from her bra and putting her hair to the side before sticking the coffin nail in her mouth. "How's it been going" she asks while her red lipstick gets all over the cigarette. "Fine. You know I'm trying to concentrate, our breaks don't need to include talking." Maya says. " Whatever, I'm just trying to be neighborly," her co-worker says. Maya stares at her intently while she just sits there, across the booth from her still. Even after Maya was short with her she still sat there laughing at the tv that played above the register. Loudly. The cigarette is flapping in

her mouth and she takes it out to say some remark that is quickly forgotten. Her nails are bright pink, so long that plastic gloves constantly fall victim to their sharpness. The TV is blaring some show that might not even be in English, it's just the channels the establishment can afford. Maya surrenders her book to the loud tv and the customers constantly walking in and out of the establishment. Head resting on her hand, legs crossed, hairnet loose, Maya drifts off, succumbing to the haze. The door opens and the bell above rings and closes with the wind. There, standing in the middle of the establishment is a tall, mysterious man wearing a chunky Carhartt jacket and big boots. His dark facial hair is covering the features someone might otherwise consider attractive. He's standing there, just waiting in line patiently. He makes his way up to the counter. "Listen, I don't want to hurt anyone but I might have to if you don't do what I say," he says. The woman working the counter leans in. "I just need the money in the register. Now," he said. "Here, take it, take it here," the woman says. She's frantically opening the register shaking, wiping sweat off of her visor. "Please don't hurt me please," she said. "No one's gonna get hurt, hand me the money," he said. "Hurry up! NOW!!" he said. Maya just sits there, quietly, waiting – she spots the gun he's holding in his pocket. "Here! Here! Here!" the woman said. "Please please don't, this is all we have please," she said. He runs off. Maya and her co-worker darted over to the woman at the counter to console her after what had taken place. She's crying. Scared. But something shifts in Maya, her consoling just isn't enough. She needs more, she wants more, she needs to quench her thirst. Maya runs out, chasing the man who abused the establishment, taking all its good for – the money. She catches him. He's still sitting there in the parking lot in a Honda counting the money with no urgency. She gathers herself to walk over, impulsively. "I want in," she says. "Excuse me?" he asked. "You want in?" he asked. "Yes. I need money. I have to leave. I can't work here anymore and I am more than willing - " she said. " Well, I mean you can come, I ain't babysitting you though or buying you a big diamond necklace. You want all in? You gotta jump in head first," he said. "Yeah yeah that's fine. I need the money, you gotta promise that I'll get the money," she said. "You'll get the money

if you're diligent enough," he said. "I can do that," she said. Following the solidation of their plan, they drove away in their getaway car. The Honda made it far, passing woods, houses, office buildings, they were getting comfortable. Maya was feeling the thrill, her feet were on the dashboard and her hand and face were out the window, the breeze brushing her face. They parked at a gas station to fuel themselves and the Honda. Meanwhile, Maya wrote in her diary in while sitting shotgun.

*Dear Diary,*

*Today started out typical I guess you could say. Woke up, ate, well, tried to eat. No eggs were left so just milk had to do. But as I was drinking my milk, I was just so sick of it. I'm sick of it all. I'm sick of my mother who lays on the couch so much there's an indent of her body, I'm sick of my bitch of a sister who wants nothing to do with me, I'm sick of my shit house and constantly passing the blue one, I'm sick of flipping burgers and waiting on people who don't even look up from their phones for a second, and I'm sick of the routine. And lastly, I'm sick of being sick of it. Everyone is off doing their own thing. Their own studies, their own interests. And what am I doing, nothing. Flipping burgers and growing grey hair at the ripe age of 22. And don't even start me on my non-existent love life. But I decided I need to do something. Something lasting something that thrills me. So I did. Well, I didn't exactly plan this. Not at all. He just came in and it clicked and it helps that he wasn't violent or anything necessarily. I don't know what the long term thing is here, it's not gonna be a whole Bonnie and Clyde situation, this is just for now and maybe to get a few bucks. He's Clyde. I'm not Bonnie.*

*Dear Maya, why so red?*

*XXXX Maya*

Clyde comes back with a handful of things. A blue raspberry slurpie, pretzels, a coke, and some mentos. Nothing for Maya. "Alright we ready to go?" Clyde asked. "What nothing for me?" Maya asked. " No you can go in and get shit yourself just like I did," Clyde said. "Let's hit the road!"

Clyde said. Maya waves the gas station goodbye. They're on the empty road driving circles around the neighborhood looking for their next hit. Suddenly, out of the corner of Maya's eye, there it was. Big and blue in all its glory. And just as impulsive as the first daring choice she made, this one came a lot easier and more obvious. She grew fond of her high horse view and wanted to stampede over the town. "Have you ever stolen from a house before," Maya asked. "Look there's one really big one there we could try," she said, pointing to the house. " We can try, I don't know houses can be tricky," Clyde said. "There's a lot of pieces going into the house. An alarm, people home, pets, whatever. It can be tough. We need to plan," Clyde said. " I think we can do it, I'm familiar with the house and stuff. I walk by it all the time. Maya took out her diary and began to plan on a scrap piece of paper. She notes that there's four people living in the house and one dog. The two parents leave for work around 8:15 in the morning for work, Maya only knows their whereabouts until the very end of the driveway and then it's fair game. The two boys are young and go to school at 7:30 in the morning via school bus at the end of the neighborhood. The dog stays in the house and sits by the window with its mouth open smiling at the birds on a tree. Everyone returns to the house around 4 o'clock in the afternoon following after-school activities. The plan was set. The next day Maya and Clyde planned to meet at the beginning of the driveway. But first, Maya went home to collect herself, she was still in her grease-stained apron after all. Clyde dropped her off in the front of her house and said he'd be back at 8:30 in order to execute their plan. She opened the squeaky door, and stepped into the house tapping her feet onto the distressed weather mat. "Hey I'm home!" she said. She looked over to the couch to her mother waving to her as if she were laying on a buoy. She didn't say a thing. Maya walked over to the couch and sat on the table in front of the couch in her dirty jeans and hat. "Are they ever going to get you a new hat?" her mother asked. "No...this one is fine it doesn't matter it's just a hat and I'm in the back anyway," Maya said. "It's raggedy, I don't even know why you bother working there at all," her mother said. "I work there so I can support us, so we can buy eggs and keep the house warm, that's why," Maya said. "Whatever, I don't have

time for this argument, I have a headache. Could you just get me a damp towel to put over my head?" her mother asked. "Of course," Maya replied. She stood there over the sink, ringing the warm damp towel to give to her mother, looking at the sink of dirty dishes, patting the towel on her own forehead as well. "What's taking you so long Mai, hurry with it," her mother said. "Right right, coming!" Maya said, ringing the towel in once more. For dinner Maya just warmed up some leftovers from her Uncle's restaurant. Dumplings and vegetables eaten out of a paper container to avoid adding anymore straws to the camels back. She hurried upstairs and finished up her dinner before hopping into the shower. *Warm, thank god, shampoo, wash in wash out, conditioner, body wash, wash conditioner out, wash face.* Maya stood in the warm water for a while, the warmness hitting her skin was refreshing in the ice cold winter. And when she stepped out, she would be cold once again. As she was drying off her mind was racing. *Am I really going to do this? This isn't me, but I needed a change, was the me even going after him change enough? Do I need to push the limits that bad? I'm fine here. I guess I can make do. Maybe instead of robbing my dream house I can just apply for another job or something. But the burger joint is doing fine, although I can still hear her pink nails tapping against the break table even still. I just need to exhale and reboot and.... put on lotion. It's fine, it'll work out fine.* Her mind was running rapidly and all she could do was sit on the edge of the bed and stare at her feet. Maya tried to go to sleep, but the anticipation kept her up all night instead. Pacing back and forth barefoot in her room still in her towel is how she spent most of her night. *Maybe I should go downstairs and light a cigarette to calm my nerves.* A persuasive thought, but not one strong enough. She continued to pace until her feet and mind grew tired. And in true Maya fashion, she wrote it down.

*Dear Diary,*

*Tomorrow is the big day, who knows if I'll follow through. I'm worried about the whole situation. Who even is Clyde and what does he do? How old is he? He has to be like around 30 ish. A young thirty. I'm needing a change. Why couldn't I just get a bad haircut or start*

*smoking weed. No no no instead I'm robbing my dream house! Logical. If he is one minute late tomorrow morning I am not going. Count that. And hold me accountable. It's true I am green with envy for a dog. The dog who has a life in that blue house. That's a new low, jealousy for an animal. This doesn't even seem real. This isn't me. Well the jealousy is but nothing else! I am content with things now. Kind of. My time will come. But I've been saying that for the last 3 years and all I've been doing is sitting here! Motionless. Determinedness. Maybe this is it for me. I get caught and I go to prison. Well at least they're guaranteed a meal... that's besides the point. Prison is tough. I'M NOT GOING TO PRISON!!! PERIOD!*

*Dear Maya, why so green?*

*XXXX Maya.*

The next morning, Maya managed to stay awake the entire night. Clyde was there. Just as he had promised, 8:30 on the dot. "Morning, here I got us some coffee, chug it before we go inside though," Clyde said. "Um okay, thanks," Maya said. She takes a sip. The drive was around 15 minutes. Since Maya had been up all night rethinking her entire life, she felt tired and managed to fall asleep in the car before she arrived at the house. *Nails tap tapping tap tap tap laugh laugh laugh bell rings door closes blurry tv noises, chew chew chew.* "Maya. Maya. MAYA. MAYA! Wake up, your break is done, it's been done. And now the boss is mad at the both of us even though I managed to stay conscious unlike you." her co-worker said. "What's going on? What?" Maya said. "Dude I can't believe you. The tv isn't that boring you know," her co-worker said.