The night I met my mum

“Look at that nerd,” someone yelled at me, but I was used to it. I had been bullied my whole life.

The only person who could bring a smile back to my face was my mom.

If you’re asking yourself, “Was? Why can’t she make you happy anymore?” — she is dead. She died in a car accident a couple of months ago.

Now I live alone and hope the police won’t come knocking on my door, forcing me to live with someone, because I have no one. My dad abandoned me and my mom.

As soon as I got home, I sat down on my sofa and began writing in my Notes app.

“I wish my mom were here. She would understand.”

As soon as I typed that, something happened, and I woke up in a bedroom that looked really old.

I saw Y2K clothes all over the floor, a Titanic poster next to a Justin Timberlake poster, which was covered in lipstick kisses.

“What is this?” I thought, but before I could take a closer look, someone burst into the room.

She looked like my mom — the same dimples, the same crooked teeth, the same mole.

“Hey, are you the new girl?” she asked.

“Mo—”

No, I thought to myself. She will freak out if I call her mom.

I stuttered and finally said, “Yeah, that’s me.”

She looked happy.

“Come join us downstairs. You can’t even hear the music here. Oh, and by the way, I’m Karen with an E.”

She is the only Karen with an E — it has to be her.

A party? That my mom was at?

Don’t think too much about it, Maya. She’s waiting, I said to myself, and followed her downstairs.

As we walked through the hallway, I remembered my grandparents’ house. This was definitely it.

We talked for a bit when a familiar woman walked in.

“Maya, this is Sarah. She’s like my best mate,” Karen said.

I could tell right away — it was Sarah. She used to babysit me all the time.

“And that’s Elizabeth, but she’s always on her dog.”

Dog?

I looked at the girl she was pointing at and saw her on the phone.

A dialect, I thought.

She introduced me to a lot of people, some of whom I couldn’t recognize.

As the party went on, a boy came up and kissed her. She introduced him as Ryan.

But Ryan wasn't my dad? Did she lie about having only one boyfriend — the one who later became my dad? I wonder why, I thought, but I didn’t think too much about it.

“I’m going to play Tekken, wanna join us?” he said.

We both agreed on staying alone, and he went away.

“What is Tekken?” I asked.

“OMG, you don’t know what Tekken is? It’s one of the best-selling games for PlayStation One.”

“I understand it now, thanks,” I said and changed the subject.

“This song’s a proper tune, innit?”

Thank God I got an A+ in old British dialect.

“Yeah, it is. Wanna hear about the new school word on the street?”

And so we talked about school drama and gossip.

The party soon started to settle down, and only me, my mom, Ryan, Sarah, and a few other people were left.

I am screwed. Where should I go now? Back to the streets?

“Wanna stay at my place, Maya?” my mom asked.

I was blessed.

“Sure, that would be ace.”

We went to her room after everyone left and started talking.

“I was bullied in my old school. That’s why I switched,” I said, hoping she would give me some words of wisdom that would help me in the real world.

“That’s rough, mate. People can be proper cruel sometimes. But don’t let ’em tell you who you are, yeah?”

This was the Karen I knew and loved. This was my mom.

“School can be rubbish. It doesn’t last forever, though.”

We talked for a bit more and then went to bed, but I knew that if she woke up and found me gone, she would panic.

So when she fell asleep, I wrote a sticky note:

“My parents called me on me dog. I had to leave. If I don’t come to school tomorrow, I probably transferred again. Sorry.

With lots of love,

Maya.”

I stuck the note to the wall and went to sleep.

…and suddenly, the music stopped — and so did the past.