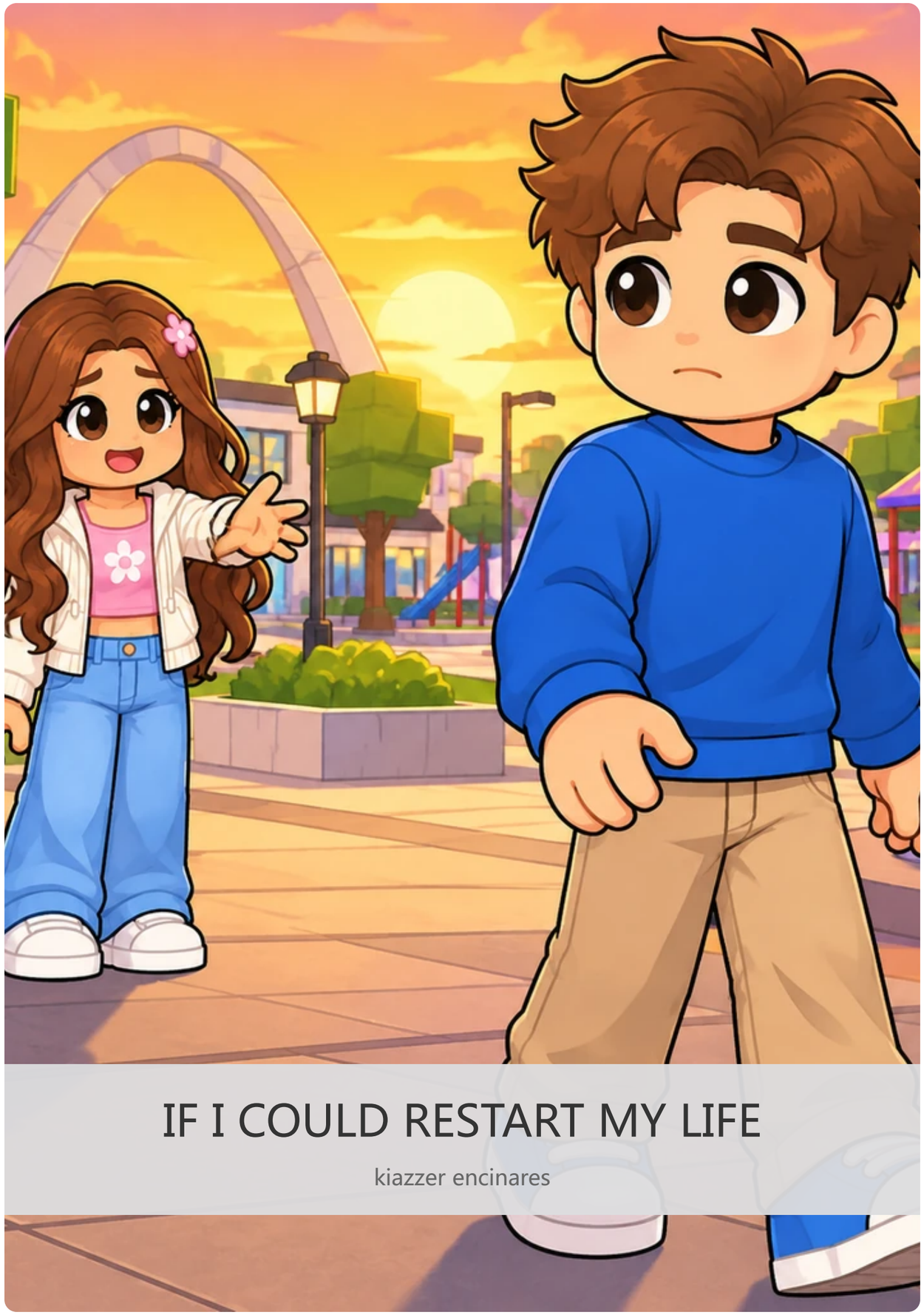


IF I COULD RESTART MY LIFE

kiazzer encinares



Under a warm golden afternoon sky in a bustling Brookhaven town, Leo sits on a wooden park bench looking down at his broken skateboard. His best friend, Maya, runs over with a bright smile and a toolkit in hand, eager to help him fix it. Sunlight filters through the green trees, casting a warm, colorful glow over the two friends as they kneel together on the pavement.



Days turn into joyful weeks as Leo and Maya race down sunny suburban streets on their skateboards, laughing without a care in the world. They stop by the colorful town ice cream parlor, clinking their cones together in celebration of another unforgettable afternoon. Every corner of the lively town feels brighter whenever the two of them are side by side.



At the town carnival under glowing string lights, Leo wins a small blue plush star and hands it to Maya, who beams with happiness. They stand near the Ferris wheel while Maya snaps a photo of the two of them making goofy faces. The warm, vibrant colors of the evening capture a bond that seems completely unbreakable.



As the months pass, a sleek new arcade and a crowd of older, flashy kids arrive in town, catching Leo's attention. When Maya waves at him from across the plaza holding two skateboards, Leo hesitates, glancing between his loyal friend and the exciting new group. Slowly, he turns away from Maya and walks toward the loud neon lights of the arcade.



The lighting in Leo's world begins to shift to cooler, shadowed tones as he spends all his evenings glued to a glowing phone screen and hanging out with his new acquaintances. Maya stands outside his house in the cool blue twilight, knocking gently on the front door with a board game tucked under her arm. Inside, Leo sees her shadow through the window, sighs, and silences his buzzing phone without answering.



One rainy afternoon, Maya approaches Leo at the town fountain, holding out an umbrella and offering a hopeful, tentative smile. Distracted by a conversation with his new friends, Leo barely glances at her before brushing past her shoulder with a dismissive wave. Maya's smile fades as she stands alone in the pouring rain, watching him walk away into the gray mist.



Later that evening, Maya sits quietly on the empty swings at the park, bathed in the dim, chilly light of a lone streetlamp. She looks down at the small blue plush star in her hands before setting it gently on the empty swing beside her. Taking one last look back toward the quiet street, she turns and walks slowly into the shadows, deciding to stop reaching out.



Weeks later, the neon excitement fades, and Leo finds himself sitting alone in his dark bedroom surrounded by silence, his new acquaintances nowhere to be found. While cleaning out his closet, he knocks over an old shoebox, spilling printed photographs across the wooden floor. A single beam of moonlight illuminates a picture of him and Maya laughing at the carnival, freezing him in his tracks.



Overwhelmed with sudden regret, Leo sprints out into the cool dusk air and runs past the ice cream parlor, the arcade, and the quiet park. He arrives at the empty swings just as the sun dips low, finding only the faded blue plush star resting beneath the amber-and-indigo sky. Dropping to his knees beside the swing, Leo clutches the plush star to his chest as tears well up in his eyes.



Leo stands completely alone on the empty, quiet suburban street as the final rays of sunset cast long shadows across the pavement. He gazes down the silent road where Maya used to walk beside him, wishing more than anything that he could turn back time and restart his life. As the horizon deepens into twilight, the quiet street stretches endlessly ahead, leaving him with a lesson he will carry forever.