



# Nine Months of Light

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Their eyes meet for the first time in the crowded school hallway, a moment of stillness amidst the chaos. Dominic stands there with a map in hand, looking lost, while Mateo feels a sudden, inexplicable pull toward the boy who just arrived from Paris.



As the American autumn paints the trees in vibrant shades of gold and crimson, Mateo and Dominic spend their afternoons walking through the park. They share stories of their very different worlds, their laughter echoing through the crisp October air as they become inseparable.



Under the neon glow of a 24-hour diner, they share a strawberry milkshake and fries long after midnight. Mateo watches the way the light reflects in Dominic's eyes, realizing that nine months is far too short for the lifetime of conversations he wants to have.



Mateo takes Dominic on a drive through the sprawling suburbs, windows down and music blaring. He wants to show him every corner of his world, from the hidden viewpoints to the bustling street markets that smell of cinnamon and rain, creating a map of their own.



On a quiet hilltop overlooking the city, they watch the sun dip below the horizon, staining the sky in hues of violet and orange. Dominic leans his head on Mateo's shoulder, a silent acknowledgment of the deep love that has blossomed between them despite the ticking clock.



Winter arrives with a dusting of snow, turning their town into a quiet, frozen wonderland. They huddle together in thick coats, sharing a thermos of hot cocoa and making a secret pact to ignore the calendar pages that are turning far too quickly.



They pack a small bag and hit the open road, driving toward the coast with no specific destination in mind. The vast American landscape stretches before them, a symbol of the endless possibilities they wish they had more time to explore together.



In the middle of a sun-drenched field of wildflowers, Mateo captures a photo of Dominic laughing. He wants to freeze this moment forever, keeping a piece of Dominic's radiant light to hold onto when the house eventually feels empty.



The bedroom is filled with open suitcases and half-packed memories, a stark reminder of the flight to France scheduled for the following morning. They sit on the floor in silence, the weight of the impending goodbye hanging heavy in the air between them.



At the airport terminal, the morning light filters through the glass as they share one final, heartbreaking embrace. As Dominic walks toward his gate, Mateo realizes that while the flight is booked, the love they built in nine months will stay with him forever.