

chapter one.

Nyra. past.

Life is insignificant. Nyra Mehta spent every day on the same bench, wondering how meaningless we are.

Today was no different, yet the pen in her hand halted at this recurring thought: she clearly had no more words left in her. The thought lingered, and she was reminded that one day she would become only a fading memory. She would become meaningless.

She felt like a doll, absently staring into the distance, whistling her way through life until nature decided it was her last day.

She placed her notebook away - *too many thoughts for one day* - and instead of willing herself to write more, she silenced her mind, arranging her face into a smile again, as if her default expression was to remain the sunshine for everyone to admire. A sunshine caught up in her own mindless thoughts, watching the world go by.

Nyra often sat here, watching life move forward without anyone paying close attention to her. Every day, she would perch on the same bench, underneath the chestnut tree that would drop conkers in the autumn and shield her from the snow in the winter. There were three identical trees in a row, all with the same wooden bench placed under their leaves. She chose the middle, as if she were still central to everything yet a distance away.

Her bench overlooked the lush fields of Bridgewater Park and was the closest to the small stream that circled its perimeter. One which had fresh, trickling water, flowing constantly each season - a sound she grew to love ever since she sat here with her mother.

The trickling water drew Nyra inward, as if the steady thrum of the glassy path was constant, monotonous. The heartbeat that kept the park alive.

The other rows of benches along the path were facing her a few yards in the distance, but they were turned away from the stream; *you can't hear the water*, Nyra thought. It was too close to the noise of onlookers, yet here, her spot remained close enough for her to observe everyone, while she could retreat to her own solace.

She reminisced, absently listening to the wind whistle as it brushed delicately through the spring leaves. Nyra loved spring, the way tulips and hyacinths littered the grass, as if winter was fully over. But little did she know, her winter had not even begun.

End of sample.