

Skyler,

I wish to breathe another season



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Chapter 1

The Smile People Once Mocked

The realm where a human breathes, creates a ripple in the core of that soul. The constant shift of the season transforms that ripple to tranquility or waves. The season was summer then. That was one of the most brutal summers I ever witnessed. Eternity seemed short to wait for a single cloud shading a corner of the sun. The consequence was a canopy of pure blue sky. But to the ever changing human hearts was that spotless blue with only radiant white sun soothing or intimidating !!

I am Nova. Currently a college student. Every five days of a week attending class without skipping any is my regular routine. Though that is the expected routine for a student. The regular scenario of the students is to make plans during off periods or after classes, which includes hanging out at popular sites or bookstalls, eating street foods and so on. The small gaps between classes will fill the classroom with clamor. In my case, not being an active participant in their chit-chat, all left to do is just hearing their stories only. Certainly, I do enjoy this. However, hanging out with them is not in my pattern. Honestly, I enjoyed such moments most around my sister. As she went to a different city for work, I hardly get chances to interrupt her schedule. As a consequence, another pass-time was added to my chart. I often wander around on my own. Back at home, the stories of my class often become a way to chat with my mother.

Our college holds classes in the morning shift. There are some lab classes or extra classes that are held at noon. The latter sometimes feels too tiring to me. One Thursday, I had a lab class. It took longer to finish the task than the scheduled time. By the time the class ended it was afternoon. I failed to answer correctly. The gloomy mood was unbearable. Suddenly, the idea of visiting my school area crossed my mind. That area is both my favorite and nostalgic. If I was a witch I would turn back time.

I hurriedly caught the bus and got down at the nearest stoppage. There is a playground behind my school building. The appearance of that playground changed a bit. It was late in the afternoon by the time I reached there. The surroundings were like a group of students playing cricket, some children were riding bicycles, some children playing seesaws and slides while their parents were watching them and gossiping with their peers. There are some benches beside the slides. I slowly walked to an empty bench thoughtlessly. Sitting down on that bench I took a deep breath. The fragrance of summer air was blended with the flavor of freshly made popcorn and fried

snacks. The air one breathed in with dear memories for most days of their childhood can be quite calming. As I kept looking at those children, I kept reminiscing about my day when I was at their place. Back then I used to hang with friends and all students in the class were cohesive. Time surely changes everything.

With a pensive mind I kept staring at the surroundings. Suddenly my gaze met with a girl sitting on the bench at my right side. That girl smiled politely at me. I snapped back to reality. I could not recognize her. Is she somebody who knows me? Or, a school friend I cannot remember? Throughout my school life I was jocked for smiling when I met someone I knew. Though not all of them did that. Maybe she was one of the latter. But I had a tiny bit of confidence left to remember those few people. Unable to find any solution, I turned my face after returning an uncomfortable smile. Not to embarrass myself further, I stood up that instance and strode out of the playground. Undoubtedly it was disrespectful to ignore anyone like that. Instead what was I supposed to say? Do we know each other? That would be a rude choice if she was a friend. Sorry I cannot recall who you are. That was an option. The moment I started to get those points I already left the area.

The setting sun was scattering the final red rays on the darker blue sky when I reached home. My clumsy character always gets me in such situations. With wide open notebooks I tried to concentrate on my study. But that event kept distracting. I regretted not talking. That was the moment I realized I did not properly remember her face. I was annoyed with myself forgetting the notebooks in front. I left my room and found my mother just returning to the drawing room after doing her task to relax. She turned on the television. Our usual chat started. That was the moment I was able to calm myself and returned to focus on my study.

Days of the summer passed by. My routine was the usual with the drifting time. One day, we had some special events arranged in our campus. The classes ended sooner than expected. I was not much interested in that event and came out. I started to walk towards the bus stand. The glare of the sun was making it hard to walk the whole way. To take a break I sat on the bench under the large trees. While leaning back, a bunch of dangling green mangoes caught my sight. Those large green mangoes made me greedy to have at least one of them. However I am still on the road, not in my garden. I don't have a garden to begin with. The real adventure was to steal the green mangoes from the school yard, which was forbidden to climb on. Due to the early leave, if I would go to school I would be able to visit the school yard. The school had to be open then. Forgetting the break I ran to get on the bus. When I reached it was still class time and the yard was open. Visiting my school yard after so long, I felt so happy. The flower plants

in the yard had grown. The sight of the students with our school uniforms was very nostalgic. That mango tree at one corner of the yard is still in the same condition. A bunch of students were there. Some were trying to reach the tree while others were guarding if any teacher was coming. I pretended not to notice them to not interfere with the fun. All of them were primary section students. The higher section classes were still ongoing. I left the school arena, humming a children's song and came to the playground, behind the school. The sun was showering the land with harsh vertical lightrays, resulting in a deserted playground. I skipped to the side of the benches. However, arriving there, I saw someone sitting there in that rough sunlight with a light shade from the nearby tree. Noticing me, she stood up wearing a familiar smile on her face and approached me. She was the girl I met that day.

I was greeted with a "Hello". With hesitation I replied to her greeting word and said, "I apologize. But I cannot recognize you? Are you a student here? Um, did we meet before?"

I first thought she might be a student here. On second thought, she seemed the same age as me. She might not be a school student then. She did not answer my question. It made me reconsider whether I should have said something else. It's hard to get a human's point of view. Their preferences are surely different. How can I know what the person on the other end is thinking? That was the reason I fled the other day ignoring the whole incident.

She broke the silence with an apology, adding to her statement, "A friend of mine used to be a student at this school. I am familiar with this place. Nice to meet you."

She skipped answering some of my questions. Since she was not a student at this school, I was sure enough that we were not acquainted. The reason was other than school, I had very few friends or acquaintances. I nodded slightly to reply pleasantly and confessed that I was a student there, so I visited that place often.

"Um. I did not introduce myself yet. I am Nova."

"It's Skyler," she said.

Skyler did not say any further about her, neither seemed interested. I also paused there. However we continued our conversation. The topics were not related to us in the slightest. Mostly like weather, that playground etc. The extent of the chats were also short like a constant shift of water ripples direction. After a few minutes of talking, I mentioned my time to return home. She nodded saying "See you next time."

With uncertainty in mind I smiled. She waved me bye with that same gesture of smile on her face. Even when I was leaving the playground she was looking my way, just the same way we

did back in school days while returning home. I was not courageous enough to ask her more questions. But today I saw her face properly and thought could it be that we met before. After searching through the mind diary pages I still could not find anything.

Childhood friends do hold a different feeling. As we grow up we tend to search for people whose thoughts match more with ours. Though it is not something soul truth. Back in school days we defined our friendship in a different way. In my circle almost everyone started to get along after a quarrel among us, not to mention the topics were way more childish than our age. That was a hilarious way though. As time passed we started to learn the world and judge the people. At that moment even though I wanted to befriend Skyler, my mind was clashing with joy, anxiety and some other feelings I cannot describe. I ended up deciding not to come in this area for some time.

A daily notebook or diary is proof of every fleeting moment. Sometimes it turns into a collection of only the special moments. The view of the cover page of that notebook eventually becomes like the doorbell of the room. When you do not visit it for a long time the bell ringing sound will make you picture some corners of the room without your consent. I had one like that. My dearest friends bought a set of notebooks with the same designed cover but different color. I had one of those. It had been two years since I opened the drawer I put it in. I often make drawings in another notebook. It is not something one will say artistic. However to me it is similar to that diary which is superfluous to others but quite indispensable for the author. That night I took my drawing notebook and sketched some random landscape. I had an urge to paint it, but the time started to run. I ended up making shades with pencils. The landscape was based on the vague memory of the place we went on a tour back at school. Writing the date at the bottom right corner, I closed the notebook, as if to close the list of allotted events for that day.

Chapter 2

Words We Leave Unsaid

Marching to the end of April the weather started to get warmer. On one holiday, I was at home. Away from the burning sun, it felt better. While relaxing after studies, handing me a list, my mother told me to buy those things. To do the chores I have to go out. So, what's the point of doing only one task when you have a lot of time in hand. It would take just 10 minutes, but I informed her that I would be back in an hour. Leaving the housing society, I crossed the road and started to stroll. Though it was hard to feel the wind inside the house, there was a light wind drifting from time to time. The light windy atmosphere went perfect with the heat of scorching summer.

There is a small rest area beside the wide footpath, primarily a place of evening gathering of all aged people of the surrounding societies. I bought a bottle of soft drink from the nearby store and found a place to sit under a tree. The summer noon streets on the holiday made the area feel deserted. The sun rays were coming through the gap of the leaves. When the wind was starting to blow it was more fascinating. Leaning against the tree, I closed my eyes to hear the playful collision of leaves. I felt a tap like a falling leaf on my shoulder. I slowly turned while hearing a known voice saying, "So, we meet again!"

"Skyler", I said in awe.

Skyler chuckled, "How have you been?"

"Ah, fine."

"What are you doing here?"

"Just lazing around."

"Mind if I sit beside you?"

"Be my guest."

She sat on the ground next to me. I started to look at the ground. I did not know what to say. We are not school friends to talk about routine or after school plans. To break the silence, Skyler mentioned the roughness of weather and some other casual topics. I kept nodding or agreeing to follow her conversation.

"The leaves are shading as if the sunlight is fragmented and so is the warmth." At the change to a