**An Invisible Friendship**

“Charlie, I can’t see you… Hello? Where are you? It’s pitch black in here!”

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The graphite of the pencil stroked the paper as he drew the mouth. Little did he know, that smile belonged to me. The name is Idea….Ivan Idea. My job is to keep a child safe and happy. In this case, that child is Charlie Thompson. Charlie’s mind was powerful. He was creative and spent his spare hours huddled up in a corner in his room hunched over his little blue notebook, scrawling away. He would engross himself in the tales of Doodleoodle - the land that he created. He would tell me tales at night, as if I was his child, and we would invent different characters together. We would design imaginative gadgets, one being a ‘hate detector’ which would scan the world to find bullies and they would be sent to prison. I thought it was harsh on the people, but his heart was in the right place.

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I woke up abruptly with Charlie’s alarm piercing my ears and rattling through my brain. The room was dark and it had a mysteriously magic feel to it. The window was open a crack and I could feel the wintry mist on my skin. Sharp shadows were cast by the streetlamps through Charlie’s substandard curtains. I looked over towards him, half of me longing that he was still fast asleep, the duvet over his head, not moving a muscle. However, this was Charlie and for him to sleep past his alarm would be almost unimaginable. Instead, his head was halfway inside of his book and his corner reading light cast a long ray of light over the darkness. I spotted the familiar cover of Huckleberry Finn. He’d read that at least 4 times before. “Huckleberry Finn?” I asked. “Haven’t you read that already?” I was expecting a speech like politicians deliver. I was preparing for a lecture on how reading the same book could open your eyes to different aspects of the world. That’s the Charlie I knew. Or thought I knew. I waited but it never came. “Are you okay?” I asked. “Are you excited for going to college today?” No reply.

Why? What had I done? The last few weeks had been strange when I came to think of it. It was as if he didn’t register my voice anymore - or chose not to. I didn’t know what I’d done. All his life I had been there, supported him and was his best friend and it seemed like all of that was gone. A tear rolled down my cheek. I felt a sudden urge to scream and cry. What did I do to deserve this? Without thinking, I threw the duvet off me and stomped downstairs.

I pulled up a chair and sat staring through the window. Black clouds sprawled across the sky. The street’s colour was drained, reflecting the emotion inside of me. The low crack of thunder rolled from the rooftop and raindrops as big as blueberries began to fall. I watched each drop hit the window and roll down. I was about to close my eyes when I was startled by a hand touching my shoulder.

“Great day to be moving boxes, isn’t it?”

Charlie. His voice was unmistakable. I turned around to greet him with a smile but all I saw was a blur. I rubbed my eyes but when I regained my vision the ‘blob’ was gone.

“Charlie?” I called out. There was no answer.

It was 9 am and the van was loaded. I looked over to Charlie. His mum was squeezing him tightly, tears streaming down her face. I was going to miss her too. Charlie’s face was blotchy from crying. He got in the van and I slipped into the seat beside him. “It’ll be okay,” I said holding him. He didn’t move. It was like he didn’t notice me.

The college gate was as high as the Empire State Building. I couldn’t wait to get inside. Charlie pulled the van up and got out, leaving me inside. I banged on the window but he didn’t hear. In that moment, my world collapsed. Everything turned black and my head swirled.

“Charlie, I can’t see you… Hello? Where are you? It’s pitch black in here!”

My mind called out to him but there was no connection. He had forgotten about me and I was alone.

By Abigail Bregman