

## The Book Club

By Asana.Y

Sarah, that's what she told me her name was, Sarah. A name that will forever stay with me.

“My name is Sarah,” She said. I remember her voice as clear as day. The way her voice enunciated the word ‘name’ specifically. The way she fidgeted with the sleeves of her hoodie. The way she tucked her hair back. The way her eyes glistened in the shining golden hour sun. December 14th, 1996, that was the day she told me her name was Sarah.

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### Chapter 1. 30 years ago

I took a deep breath and finally took a step into the start of my worst nightmare. As I entered, I was instantly hit with the sounds of humans. The hallways seemed scarier than I expected. Everyone seemed to know exactly where to go, which turn to take, and which side of the hallway to walk on; everything just seemed so natural. And I couldn't even figure out how to get to my class or how to even open a locker. My legs just seemed to have forgotten how to walk, and my brain wasn't working properly. I had gone over this so many times in my head yesterday. All I had to do was ask someone. As simple as that. But like always, my mouth just froze whenever I tried to utter a word. I stood by my locker, staring at the crumbled paper with the locker combination scribbled on it. I acted like I knew how to open it and started jamming the knob randomly so that I didn't look stupid. But in truth, I had never even touched a locker before. I slammed it, hoping it would open, but also out of frustration because I had to get something out of me. Then I saw her, the first time we met, near my locker. I guess she was also trying to open her locker, but I interrupted her with my big slam, and she was looking at me with a funny expression.

“You know that's not how you open a locker. Slamming it won't do. Want me to help?” I chuckled a bit and handed her my paper. She squinted her eyes, trying to read the smudged numbers on the paper, and started working on opening it. And just with some twists, the locker busted open. She smiled and handed me back my paper. And she looked at me as if she were waiting for something. I just stood there like an idiot! Why didn't I say anything?!

She looked confused, but she just smiled and said, “You're welcome” and left.

I thought that was the last time I would see her. But I'm glad it wasn't.

The bell rang loudly as I exhaled a sigh of relief. Finally, it was over. I packed my bag so quickly and left the building. I had remembered quickly what my mom had told me, *You better sign up for at least one after-school club! I don't want a repeat of last year, Evelyn!* I sighed as I turned back, and I dreadfully walked back to the school. The building was still packed with people rushing toward their designated club. I guess I missed the part where you actually signed up for them because it seemed like everyone had already chosen their activities. I started wandering around the school, peeking into the classrooms and gyms to see if there was something that would spark even a small interest in me. This school had practically everything: chess club, art club, dance club, cooking club, drama club, film club, languages, history club, hiking club, and of course, every sport you could think of. They even had an indoor and outdoor pool! *Gee, this school was like a castle.* But even with all this, of course, I couldn't find a single one to join. Just as I was about to leave, something was glimpsed in the corner of my eye. I turned to see a small poster hanging on the bulletin board. It said,

*Book Club at the field outside every Tuesday and Friday!*

*But this isn't just an ordinary club—join if you're ready for an adventure!*

I stared at the poster. It wasn't a really well-decorated one compared to the others. It was just a simple poster with words smeared on it. It wasn't the most appealing poster, but for some reason, I had a small desire to join. I don't know why, it wasn't like I enjoyed reading books, or like I actually believed that this club was going to be fun. Or maybe just because this was my last option, and I knew my mom wouldn't let me go back home without joining a club. So I decided this was it, I would join the book club.

I stood in the field, not knowing what to do. There was no one else out here except the cheerleaders and the track people. It had already been 10 minutes, and it just felt like I was tricked. I slowly started walking back home. I pulled out my phone and earphones and started to look for a good song to play. Then suddenly *Thump!* I felt a strong force hitting me in the face. I fell to the ground, dropping my phone and bag.

“Oh my goodness, are you okay?” A worried voice said, then a girl lent her hand to me. I grabbed her hand and slowly got up. My head was still ringing from the fall, but I quickly started to pick up the things I dropped and she helped me too.. *Oh no, it was totally my fault. I bumped into her. I shouldn't have been looking at my phone!*

“Thank you, I'm so sorry-” I looked up at her, and I realized it was the girl from yesterday. The girl who helped me open my locker.

“Hey, I remember you! You're that locker girl,” She chuckled.

“Yeah,” I said awkwardly, not knowing what to say.

“What are you doing here? Are you on the track team? I mean no offense, but you don't look like a cheerleader, so you must be in track, right?”

I tried not to take too much offense at what she said, I mean, it was true, I wasn't really the type of girl who looked like a cheerleader at first glance..

“No, actually, I was here to join a club, but I guess there isn't one.” But as I said that a huge smile lit on her face.

“No way, is it the book club?” I slowly nodded, confused. Her smile was like a child's smile, the ones that are smeared onto their face when someone shows them candy. *Was she in the book club too? So there is a book club.* I think to myself.

“EEK! I'm so excited this is the first time I had an actual member. Oh and about that I'm sorry, I was running a bit late but I was just on my way there!” She said excitedly and started jumping up and down. *What! This girl's the leader?* I started to wonder if this was a good idea. I mean what does she mean the first time she had an actual member? Is this club that unpopular?

“Uh, actually I'm not actually gonna joi-” But before I could finish my sentence she pulled my arm and started running. *Great what I was getting myself into.* I wanted to turn back and just go home but she was so excited I just couldn't tell her anymore that I *didn't* want to join. Then we arrived at this tree, it was a little farther from the track and hidden from the rest of the school.

“So, this is where the book club meets every week,” she said, plopping down under the tree. I slowly sat next to her, placing my jacket underneath so I wouldn't touch the dirt. She looked at me confused and pulled the jacket from me.

“The dirt ain't gonna hurt you!” she said while laughing loudly.

I rolled my eyes, annoyed. We sat there silently for a while. The girl took out a book and started reading it. *Shoot I forgot to bring a book. How could I forget to bring a book to a book club?! This is awkward...*

“Uhm, so what do we do in this club?” I asked. Hoping she had some sort of plan or routine to follow.

“Uhhhhhhh, well I've never done this before so I don't really know!” *What does she mean she doesn't know?! I was starting to get even more doubtful of joining this club.*

“Oh,” I say quietly. I was hoping for some direction so I could avoid sitting there in awkwardness again. I just had to ask a question. Yeah that's it, a question, get a conversation started.

“So, what's your name?” I mumbled, she quickly looked over here then placed a finger on the line she was reading in her book and answered.

“Huh? What? Did you say something?” *Great, now it was even more awkward.*

“What's your name? I just realized I never asked you.” I said louder this time so she could hear clearly. She chuckled a bit and closed her book.

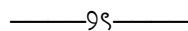
“Yeahhhh, I'm sorry I totally forgot. Hmm, my name. Well, tell me yours first!” She scoots closer to face me.

“Oh, uhm my name is Evelyn.”

“Evelyn! That's so pretty like the Latin word *bird* right?” she says eagerly. *Bird? I didn't even know that and it was my own name!* I was surprised she knew that and chuckled a bit.

“So what is your name?”

“I'll tell you tomorrow!” she said quickly then grabbed her backpack and ran away. I stared at her as she ran into the distance. *Strange.*



## Chapter 2. Present

I sat there staring at the book.. *Firefly Lane* by Kristen Hannah I mumbled to myself. *Sarah.* How could I forget that name? How? I opened the first page... I slowly started flipping through the pages. But tears slowly started staining the papers. All the memories started to come back to me. The memories I tried to hide, tried to forget. Because it was something I was ashamed of. All the feelings I had swallowed away somewhere had to start to rise again. And I felt a sway of emotion I couldn't explain. I quickly slammed the book and stuck it back in the drawer.

“Ms. Evelyn? Are you alright?” I quickly snapped back to reality.

“Yeah, uh-uhm I'm sorry, I'm okay thank you,” I say barely while sniffing. I looked up at her and she definitely didn't believe that and had a concerned look on her face.

“Well okay, I just wanted to tell you I finished cleaning the kitchen. Do you want me to do anything else?”

“No, that's all, thank you, your paycheck should be on the counter.” She smiles and leaves the room.

I slowly open the drawer again. Staring down at the book. But I quickly shut the drawer again. *I better get back to work.*

I rub my eye bridge in pain from all the long hours of staring at my computer. Emails after emails, papers after papers, deadlines after deadlines. It was like it never stopped. I looked at the certificates on my wall reminding myself of all my accomplishments. I often did that, it was like a way of reminding myself to keep on going. But it never felt enough, is this what I really wanted? This life?

*Ring Ring Ring!* I suddenly hear a call coming from my phone and I quickly answer.

*“Hello, This Evelyn speaking, ”*

*“Hi, I work at Maple Elementary School, I'm the homeroom teacher for the 2nd grade, Mrs. Johnson. Are you Emma's Mom?”*

*“Oh sorry, hi, yes I am. How are you today—is Emma doing alright at school?”*

*“Oh, uhm I was calling you to inform you that Emma is still at school and waiting for you to pick her up?”*

My stomach quickly drops and I look at the time, 6:15 p.m. *Shoot!* I hadn't realized how much time had passed.

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I finally sat down at the dinner table, exhausted. I blankly stare across the empty chair in front of me and let out a big sigh.

“Mommy, why were you late again?” Emma says and I glance over at her. She reminded me of when I was younger.

“I, I'm sorry it's just that Mommy has been really busy,” I say, but Emma just looks sad and continues eating her food. Looking at the hurt look on Emma's face broke me, it just felt like I was failing at everything. Everything that I worked hard for, sacrificed for, just felt empty, like I was missing something.

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I was right back in my chair, staring down at my drawer where the book was. For the past few days I could barely focus on anything. I was distracted at work making simple and careless mistakes and worst of all I've been so distracted I'm forgetting about Emma. And it was like this book was pulling me in, even though I had left it in the past for so long. Why now? Why did I care so much about it now? I gave in and opened up my drawer and there it still was. As soon as I opened up the book, it was like the words pulled me in and it was then, I was sure I had to go meet her.

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### Chapter 3. Past

I stood waiting again, this time under the tree. I was still doubtful of joining this “Book club” and that girl just seemed a little off. Then I saw her running towards me with stacks of books that she was carrying with both her arms with a huge smile on her face.

“Oh my goodness, hi! I'm so glad you decided to come again. I was worried that you would leave the club or something,” she said.

I nervously chuckled, acting like just a second ago I wasn't planning on leaving the club.

We sat down again in the same spot as last time. The breeze was nice in this spot, not too much sun but just enough shade to keep me cool. But the dirt still bothered me so I put a jacket underneath and sat down. This time I remembered to bring a book. It was a random book I picked up in the library that the librarian recommended to me since I had no knowledge whatsoever on books. She told me that it was a “*Classic book*” and was surprised that I've never read it before. So I pulled it out of my backpack and opened the first page.

“Augh, what is that book? Here let's read this! It's so much better than that lame book” She said while shoving the book back into my backpack and placing a different book on my lap. *Firefly Lane* by Kristen Hannah “This is my favorite book!” She said,

“Ah, thank you” I say while I pat the book. I don't even remember the last time I've read or even opened a book. The last book I remember reading was a history textbook in middle school. I was never a book person so I wasn't the most excited to be reading books almost every week from now on. I looked over at her and she had already started on the book. And I noticed the book already had sticky notes and memos jotted down all over the book already.

“Have you already read this book before?” I ask her.

“Yeah! I told you it's my favourite book, and I love to read my favourite books over and over again. Each time I find something I missed before so it's like getting the excitement and thrill of the book all over again!” She said super excitedly. I didn't understand anything, joy? Excitement from a book? That was something I've never thought about a book before. I mean what was so interesting about a long condensed book with just words in it that hurts your eyes? But I didn't say that and instead I just chuckle and nod like I could relate, afterall I couldn't be in a book club and not enjoy reading books. And she soon just went back to reading her book, and so I realized I should probably start reading too.

I opened the book and started reading the first sentence. But as I started reading more and more it felt like I was sucked into a different world. The words were pulling me in, it was like projecting a movie in my head.

And at that moment I wasn't sitting down under a tree, I wasn't at school, I wasn't at this book club, I was in this book. I kept on reading each word, sentence, and page. But just as I was about to flip to another page I was bursted back to reality by small chuckles. I look over and I see her laughing, and she notices me.

“I'm sorry, you just look really focused on the book” She said while holding in her laughs. I feel embarrassed, and slowly close my book.

“It's like this is your first time reading something!” She said jokingly, I felt even more embarrassed, knowing that she was right. This *was* my first time reading a book or atleast for fun, besides the books I had to read for school. I never knew that books were this fun.

“Well so what do you think about the book so far?” She asked,

“It's amazing! I didn't know books could be this interesting!” Then we both looked at each other and a wide grin ran across our faces and we both started laughing. And we continued just reading the book peacefully for the rest of the day.

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*Buzz Buzz!* I heard my alarm ring and I went to turn it off. But today naturally my body feels lighter than usual and my face was smeared on with a smile. For the first time in a long time I felt excited to head to school. I was just walking down my usual road to school. The sounds of the birds and the light on the trees were so peaceful it's like I've never noticed these things before. Just when I hear a familiar voice coming from behind me, It was her!

“Good morning Evelyn!” She says while pouncing onto me wrapping her arms around me.

“Good morning.., “ and then I suddenly realized I still didnt know her name! “Hey, you still haven’t told me your name!” She stops walking and looks towards me annoyed.

“Do I have to? It's just I don't really like my name” *Does she have to? What a weird thing to ask?! I mean it's just a name!* I nod with my eyebrows raised sarcastically. She then rolls her eyes dramatically.

“Fine, but I'll just tell you a name I use because I *hate* my real name.” she says while sighing loudly. She looks over at me one more time like she's making sure she has to say it.

“My name is Sarah,” She says softly. *Sarah*

“Ah Sarah, nice name! See that wasn't so hard. But someday you gotta promise me to tell me your *real* name” I say excitedly while gently patting her on the back. Then she slowly smiles and we continue to head to school.

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#### Chapter 4. Present

My eyes barely stayed open as I realized the sun had already risen, and I had stayed up all night. But still no clue on where or any information on Sarah at all. It was like she didnt exist. Afterall I only knew her last name, because Sarah was just a fake name she used. I was getting more and more hopeless as I endlessly scrolled through my computer trying to find something. I tried contacting anyone who may have known Sarah but nothing. My last option was to go to school.

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I stood in front of Silver Oak high school. It looked completely the same since the last time I came here, which was when I graduated. The same building, same yard, same entrance. And as I walked by the field I was hit with a wave of emotions that I could not explain. It was like I've travelled back in time, with all the memories slowly finding my way back to me. I entered the school heading to where the office was.

“Hi, I'm looking for someone who came to this school a while ago?” The lady looked at me suspiciously.

“And why are you looking for this person?” She asks.

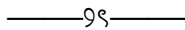
“Oh, I'm just looking for an old friend of mine, we used to go to this school together. And the funny thing is I only know her last name” I say jokingly, chuckling. But now she looked even more suspicious of me.



“Okay... What's her last name.” She asked doubtfully. I tell her and she goes onto her computer and starts typing. She continues typing for a long time until she finally stops and looks at me.

“So the only information I could find was her phone number that she used when applying for the school. I don't know if it's hers or her parents but here.” Saying that she jotted down something on a piece of paper and handed it to me. *(206) 342-8631. Great, if I do enough digging I could find the address from this phone number!*

“Thank you so much!” I say excitedly and head back home.



## Chapter 5. Past

“So I was thinking we should actually discuss the book today!” Sarah says excitedly. I quickly grab my book from my backpack. I stayed all night reading and finishing this book. My eyes were tired and my brain was barely functioning but it was worth the sacrifice. We had both decided to share our favourite quotes from the book, this was an awfully challenging thing because there were so many quotes I loved.

“Okay here's my quotes, *To make real friends you have to put yourself out there. Sometimes people will let you down, but you can't let that stop you. If you get hurt, you just pick yourself up, dust off your feelings, and try again.*” I say while reading out my quote. I didn't really understand it, but there was something about this quote that connected to me, like it understood me.

“No way, I chose the same quote!” At the moment we both start bursting out laughing.

“You know, this might sound kinda silly but Tully and Kate sort of remind us of us, we're both really different but the same, you know?”

“That's exactly what I was thinking!” Everything seemed perfect with Sarah. I've never been this happy with anyone before. And Sarah was the friend I've always dreamt of. It was like this book brought us together. I'd wish this moment of us just spending time in the book club lasted forever.

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I stared down at the clock, *ugh 2 more blocks to go. Ding Ding!* The bell rings and I quickly head over to the cafeteria. Just as I was about to sit down with Sarah again, I hear someone,

“Hey! Come sit with us!” I look back to see four girls looking towards me, the four most popular girls in the grade. *Were they really talking to me?* I pointed at myself to make sure they were talking to me and they all nod and gesture at me to come over. I feel a bit reluctant but I decide to head over there. I whisper *sorry* to Sarah and slowly start walking towards them. I felt really nervous. My hands were shaking and I could see the food on my tray clattering. They all smiled at me, and sat down at a table. And they all started talking like they usually do. I knew I had to fit into their conversation. For some reason this felt like some sort of test. A test to see if they like me, and if I pass they’ll let me join their group.

“So... Evelyn right?” One of the girls said, I knew her name was Zoey. Everyone in this school knew who Zoey was.

“Y, yeah” I stuttered. They all looked at each other and laughed. I could feel my face becoming hot from embarrassment.

“You know we're not as scary as we look, right? No need to be scared” *Yeah right of course they're as scary they look!*

“Haha, yeah of course” I say while chuckling awkwardly.

“You know that girl you're with Sarah?” Zoey cackled

“Yeah?” I say confused.

“Well, don't you think she's kinda, well” She smirks around at all her friends. *God this was taking forever.* I knew what she was gonna say next wasn't gonna be nice. “Well uhm a weirdo..? I heard that's not even her real name! She just uses a fake name because she hates her name or something...” and as she says that the whole table starts bursting out laughing. I knew it was wrong but I started laughing with them.

I look over at Sarah who’s just sitting right across a table from me. She had her head down and she's acting like she doesn't hear us but I knew she could. I felt this uneasiness in my stomach, like it knew this was wrong but I had no choice; this was the opportunity I had always wished for.

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We sat under the tree. I looked over at Sarah and she looked more down and quiet than usual, and the silence felt loud. *I knew it was about lunch, but I didn't know what to say. She had every right to be mad at me, why hadn't I defended her? Was I afraid of Zoey? Or was I afraid that I would end up like Sarah?*

“Hey Sarah, you know Zoey was just joking-” I try explaining but she suddenly cuts me off. She wasn't even facing me, and I felt even more bad.

“Evelyn, can you promise me something?” She says, and her voice sounded quiet and soft. I slowly nod at her.

“Can we forever be friends even with our differences just like Tully and Kate”

“Of course I promise,” I say, then we both smile, and hug each other. It was a warm and long hug that wasn't just some fake hug, it felt like a real hug. I was lucky to have a friend like Sarah.

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“Wow, your house is really cool,” Sarah says observing my house. This was the first time I've ever had a friend come to my house so I was over the moon. Apparently my mom was too, because as soon as she heard I was bringing a friend over she had prepared a whole tea set or something. And my mom came jumping over to our room with arms filled with food.

“Oh my goodness, hi! You must be Evelyn's friend, I'm Mrs. Harrison, Evelyn's mom” My mom introduces herself to Sarah.

“Hi Mrs Harrison, thank you for having me over! My name is Sarah,” And they just both start talking to each other.

“So, Sarah, what are your hobbies?” My mom asks Sarah.

“I love reading!” Sarah answers

“How about sports? Do you do any? Perhaps cheerleading?” My mom starts investigating her. And I become embarrassed.

“Well, uhm” Sarah says uncomfortably, “I don't like that type of stuff you know? I just like reading and spending time with Evelyn!” Sarah answers, but my mom drops the excitement in her face.

“Oh alright. Well you girls have fun!” Her tone is darker and she just leaves the room.

“I'm sorry about that, let's just read our books!” I say and Sarah smiles and we both get our books out. I sit down at my chair ready, ready to dive into another adventure. Today it was the same book again, Fireflylane. Sarah was right, there was something peculiar and interesting about reading the same book twice. It was like watching your favourite movie twice but with more details you can find. Whenever Sarah and I would hang out it was like

20% talking and 80% reading. And I enjoyed that most about us. Even though we weren't physically talking, it was like we were connecting through books. Joining the same journey together, walking through the characters together, like we were the characters going on our own adventure. It was such a surprise how deep words could connect to me, connect me to Sarah.

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“Hey!” I suddenly hear, just when I was walking down the hallway. I turn around to see a group of girls I’ve never seen before coming straight towards me. I panicked as I just stood there, where I was.

“You're in the book thing right?” One of the girls says while the others stare down at me. *What did they want from me?*

“Ha! The club finally has a member!” And all the other girls start bursting out laughing. My legs start to shake and I could feel my hand trembling. I hated this feeling, Feeling where I couldn't stand up for myself just hearing the same wicked laughs echoing through my ears.

I just ran off holding back my tears. Just then I see Sarah coming over here in the hallway and she stops me.

“Hey, you okay?” I don't even look at her.

“Yeah I’m fine”

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I glance down at my plate with peas, steak, and potatoes on them. I wish I could just have a peaceful dinner but my mom starts talking to me.

“So, how is school so far?” She asks me while dumping more peas on my plate. Even though things at school were going good I knew even if I told everything she would still find a way to criticize me or judge me.

“It's fine” I told her, because that was all she was going to get and I just wanted to enjoy my dinner. But my mom looks at me as if she wasn't satisfied or just didn't believe me.

“Did you join a club like I told you to?” She asked me and I nodded.

“Wow that's great Evelyn! What club did you join? Did you join a sport like I wanted you to?” She starts questioning me eagerly.

“A book club” I mumbled, knowing she wouldn't be happy. And I was correct, the excited expression turns into a disappointed one.

“Oh, well that's still good, at least you joined a club right?” She shakes off the disappointed look on her face and says to me but I could still see them in her eyes.

“How about friends?” She asks me, still not wanting to end the conversation.

“I mean, I have Sarah, you know the one that came over to our house the other day?” I say to her,

“Oh, right Sarah. That's great Evelyn, But have you tried making other friends too...?”

“Why?” I answered her.

“Oh, well, no offense to your friend but she's just a little different than others you know...? I just,” She pauses, “I just don't want for you to get bullied again that's all” She says and smiles at me. I don't answer her and I just continue to eat my food. And I know I should feel bad, I know I should feel hurt for my mom to make fun of Sarah. But it just felt like there was this part of me that knew it was true, that my mom was right, even though it was wrong.

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*Ding Ding!* Finally, the bell rang, I quickly got out of the hall and went to my locker to grab my book as usual. But then I hear someone shout my name.

“Hey, Evelyn! Come hang out with us!” It was Zoey and her group. A huge grin spread across my face, I was finally becoming popular and had friends. I can't believe they wanted to hang out with me! But when I looked down at the book, I thought about Sarah, but I just couldn't risk it. Just as I'm about to go to Zoey, I hear a voice. Sarah?

“Evelyn? Today's book club, remember! Let's go!” I turn to look at Sarah, as usual, she's wearing worn-out clothes and just a ton of books in her hand. I look back at Zoey and her group and I see them whispering and chuckling at Sarah.

“Come on Evelyn! Leave that freak already!” Zoey shouts and the rest of her group starts laughing loudly. Sarah looked hurt. I knew I should go with Sarah but this was my only chance to finally fit in, and besides Zoey was right Sarah was weird and she probably used this type of stuff. And so I look away from Sarah and start walking with Zoey. They all surround me and start laughing and talking to me. I finally feel good, but I slowly turn back to see Sarah standing there, and that look on her face was something I will never forget. And from that day on it felt

like something inside of me and Sarah would be forever broken. After that day it just seemed like we drifted apart. I continued to hang out with Zoey and I rarely saw Sarah. And sometimes I would see her in the halls but that was just it. And just like that we all graduated high school and we all went separate ways.

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## Chapter 6. Present

I stood in front of the porch looking down at my phone, *564 Woodhill Avenue*. This had to be it. I gently knocked on the door. It took a few seconds but then I heard a few clicks and a middle-aged woman around my age opened the door. She looked confused as she stared at me.

“Hi, does anyone named Sarah live here?” I say, but as soon as I say that, her expression immediately changes. She looks shocked and in disbelief at what I just said.

“Wh, what? How do you know Sarah?” She said, quivering and sobbing. I was starting to become confused and worried.

“Oh, uhm I'm her frien-” I paused, not knowing what to call us.

“I just used to go to school with her.” She looked at me blankly, then slowly opened the door gesturing me to come inside. It was a nice cozy home, not too big but just enough to live comfortably. I sat down at the table with only two chairs. She offered me some tea but I politely declined, I was only here for one thing. I looked around for maybe any photos of Sarah or frames but nothing. Only pictures of families and people I didn't know. I didn't even recognize this woman. I started to wonder if I had maybe gotten the wrong house. But that expression on her face wasn't something someone would make for a stranger. The lady was in the kitchen making tea even though I declined.

“Is Sarah away right now? Should I come back another time?” I say, but she quickly stops what she's doing and just stands there. *Did I say something to offend her?* She finally came over here and sat down next to me.

“I'm *Sarah's* sister, Grace, I really don't know why she used that name,” she said while chuckling softly. She was her sister?! Sarah never told me she had a sister. In fact I don't remember much of the conversations we had looking back.

“What's your name?” She said,

“Evelyn,” I say softly.

“Evelyn, I'm really sorry you weren't informed of this, I know you were a friend of Sarah's but, uhm Sarah passed away last summer to a brain tumor.”

My heart dropped, as I processed the words I just heard. *Sarah died?* I was hit with an overwhelming amount of emotions. And I just sat there, silently. I didn't know what quite to feel. What is sadness? Guilt?

“I'm really sorry Evelyn.” She came closer and comforted me. I came here expecting to finally move on. Move on from this part of my past that I've kept hidden for so long. But now, it was too late. I had been too selfish in my own life just trying to brush her out so my life could be easier but now it was too late. Sarah was gone.

“Do you want to go visit her?” Grace says softly. I thought about that for a moment, and nodd gently.

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I took a deep breath and stepped out of the car. Grace led me to her grave. It was a beautiful grave covered in flowers and I could imagine Sarah loving it. As I read the full name engraved in your stone, I couldn't hold it in anymore. Tears came rolling down my face. And I broke down. Grace came over, and we both cried together.

“What did she mean? Her name is beautiful!” I say laughing and crying at the same time. For the first time I finally learned her real name, like she had always promised to tell me. Grace nodded as we both sat next to her and cried.

“Thank you so much for everything,” I say, back in the car. Grace softly nods.

“Wait, I almost forgot something, she told me that if anyone came, I assume she knew it was going to be you, to give them this book” Saying that she handed me a book, it was *Firefly Lane*. I slowly open the book and realize there was writing on the first page.

*Dear Evelyn,*

*I don't know if you'll ever receive this book but if you do, I hope you're doing well. I'm doing very well. I don't really know why I'm writing this to be honest, but I've become a librarian like I always wanted to be and I recently found this book we always used to read, firefly lane. And I just quickly remembered you so I decided to write hoping it would reach you someday. I hope things went your way in life too, but even after knowing you for a little while I can already tell you became very successful! I know things fell apart after highschool but I could never forget you, and even if you don't think so, to me you were the best friend I've ever had. I think you already know but I wasn't very*

*liked in high school so you don't understand how happy I was when you joined the book club! So even if it was for a short time you've always stayed in my special place in my memory.*

*Love, Sarah*

*P.S. I realized you still don't know my real name so I promise next time we meet I'll tell you!*