Mayfly

I woke up that morning, but I couldn't find a reason to get out of bed. I stared at my furniture, motionless, where they always should be. A mundane life. Nothing else to expect. I checked the clock. 9:00 AM. I'm 30 minutes late to school already. Oh, well. Who cares? Though, I know better than to skip school for the third time in a row. Still groggy with my eyes opening to a slit, I crawled out of bed and slowly started to get ready for school. There's no point in being in a hurry, since I'm late already.

I threw my bag onto my shoulders and leisurely rode my bike to school. The combination of the warm, spring breeze and the pink and white flowers gliding down their trees made the scene look like a work of art. In no time while staring up at the sky, I ended up at school, still as late as ever. I quietly opened the door and walked past the stares to my desk.

"Hello, Mr. Parker. I'm sorry I'm late, something came up," I said. Mr. Parker, my teacher, smiled at me.

"No worries, Sam. Just make sure to not be late the next time. You've already been tardy 6 times this month."

I laid out my things onto my desk – my notebook, my pencil, eraser… and a bright green highlighter? I looked to my left. An unfamiliar face stared back at me. She was dressed… interestingly. She had a straw hat, braided red hair, and for some odd reason, an insect container strapped around her. She reminded me of Anne from *Anne of Green Gables*, except if she was an entomologist. "Right, I forgot to mention," Mr. Parker said. "This is May. She's a new student and will be sitting next to you for this month's table rotation."

"Nice to meet you, Sam!" May smiled and lent her hand.

I stared at her hand for a good 3 seconds. I then awkwardly shook it. The remaining 40 minutes of class were spent by May passing me notes and doodling smiley faces in my notebook as if we've always been best friends. It was starting to get a little annoying. My once colorless notebook was now full of messy doodles of smiley faces and various bugs, as well as random streaks of color made by neon highlighters. The highlighters in question were scattered all over

both my and May's tables. I felt like I had to dig through a pile of those highlighters just to open my pencil case.

Once class ended, I stacked up my things on my notebook and headed straight for the door. I wasn't sure if I was too fond of May. She seemed…quirky. Unique. Maybe a bit obtuse. I turned around to see her following me. I groaned internally. "Sam, Sam!" she chirped, waving happily. I didn't look at her. She continued talking anyway. I was zoning out, walking in circles hoping she would stop trying to interact with me. She was the definition of a chatterbox – specifically one that just won't stop no matter how much you try. She was like a walking, talking entomology book, going into full details about bug anatomy and how apparently 'trap-jaw ants can close their jaws at 145 miles per hour.' Unfortunately for me, this was going to be my life for the next few weeks. Every single break I had from academic studies was the start of May's never ending energy. Eventually I grew used to it. It became one of those things part of my mundane life. It became something not special. Not intriguing, not interesting. Just something I experience everyday.

"Hey, Sam," May tapped on my shoulder one day. "Wanna see something cool?" I sighed. I didn't. Whatever it was she wanted to show me, it's probably nothing of my interest. But I knew she wouldn't take no for an answer. It was after school, and barely anyone was still around the area, except for the students with after school activities. May grabbed my hand and dragged me to the large pond behind the school. The pond was just what I thought it would be. Hot, humid, and full of flying bugs. I swatted them away from my face as May took pictures of them with her phone like they're the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre. "Isn't it beautiful, Sam? Look at all the mayflies flying around here! It must be the time of the year when they lay their eggs," May bubbled. "They're my favorite insect. It's such a miracle to get to see this with my own two eyes!" Her favorite insect huh? Must be because they're equally annoying.

I couldn't understand why May liked insects so much. Especially mayflies. What use are mayflies other than getting stuck to cars? Of all insects too, not butterflies, not beetles, not even those ants she seems to be so fascinated with. Mayflies, of all things. "Why in the world do you like mayflies?" I asked, puzzled. May just smiled. She never stopped smiling, no matter how my

reaction was to her chatter and discussion topics. “Because they only live for 24 hours,” she said. “I get reminded of my life and think about how you only live once, and how short life is. So in conclusion…I guess I just always think about how I should cherish every moment of my life.” I paused. This was the first time I’ve ever heard her say anything serious like that. It almost sounded like I misheard her. “...You’re weird. Like, really really strange,” I said. “I know!” May laughed. “But I only live once. Better to live for myself than be someone confining themself into the mold made by society, am I right?” I sat there in silence. I didn’t really know how to respond. I just wanted to go home. May just hit me with another big smile. “You just gotta enjoy life! Make an effort to live. That’s the solution to become happy.”

I pursed my lips. “No,” I blurted. May looked at me and tilted her head. “It…it doesn’t matter,” I continued. “You’re acting like life has some sort of meaning to it. There’s no ‘solution’, May. Life is just going to be cruel to you. The fact that you try to steer away from the fact that we’re cosmically insignificant and life is completely meaningless other than to provide us with the pain of being alive is… it’s stupid!” May went silent. “I don’t get it,” she said. I didn’t realize I was still continuing to speak. “You’re telling me to care. You’re telling me to care, and put effort into this life. This stupid, *meaningless* cycle of waking up and going back to sleep. Waking up, going back to sleep, like a cycle of survival with no end goal! Think of everything as a whole, as part of the universe. None of this matters. We’re all insignificant. I don’t know why you’re trying to make an effort into something worth so little.” I sneered. May stared. Her smile was gone. “...I don’t understand,” she paced. “Is there nothing important to you? Nothing to live for? Nothing that you see as important at all? Just because we’re not significant in the universe doesn’t mean there’s nothing to achieve.” I looked her straight in the eye. “Whatever is achieved in this life will never matter in the future.” I then turned around, and didn’t think to look back.

As I walked home that evening, May’s response to my question stayed in my mind. ‘Cherish every moment of my life.’ ‘Live for myself.’ ‘Make an effort to live.’ I couldn’t quite grasp why these words were impacting me so much. So, live just for the sake of living…? I shook my head. Did I lash out on her too much? It wasn’t that big of a deal. Maybe I went too

far… No. I'm right. Joy for us means nothing in reality. Life isn't something made to be enjoyed. Her argument was illogical.

I slammed open the door to my house, and threw myself onto my bed. Just like that, a couple minutes passed. Daylight peeked through my curtains. I rubbed my eyes and checked the time. 8:17 AM. I grumbled. At least I didn't wake up as late as I did yesterday. I grabbed my bag and decided to head straight to school on my bike.

As I entered my classroom, though, something felt…off. The air was different. The class continued. The teacher, Ms. Parkinson was teaching us about prehistoric life. She mentioned that bugs were some of the first creatures to exist on this planet, and –

Wait.

I looked around. May should've been here. Exactly two rows in front of me. But her seat was empty. Not a single neon highlighter to be found. Where was she? She was here just yesterday. I shrugged. She probably got sick from spending too much time near that mayfly pond. So I waited a couple days for her to come back.

The days turned into weeks.

The weeks turned into a month.

…Where is she?

At first, I was completely fine with it. Finally, some days of peace and quiet where there's no one to nag me about entomology and the anatomy of stagbeetles. But slowly, as my notebook returned to being pale with graphite scribbles from the colorful stripes and smiles it used to have, and as my time during lunch and break went back to being alone from the vibrant and lively chatter it used to be, things started to feel empty.

I sighed, sitting on a nearby bench. Kids walked past me, their mouths curved upwards, their laughter echoing through the halls. Ah, it feels like it's been a while since I've seen a smile.

Well, at least not from May. It felt so wrong being at school without seeing a happy, smiling and enthusiastic May bugging me all day. It's like being in an alternate timeline.

"Hey, have you heard about how May got into a car crash?"

My ears perked up.

"Yeah, that was like, a month ago. Who doesn't know by now? She's been in the hospital for a month."

"I feel bad for her. Hope she's doing alright…"

"At least it's quieter here now. She used to be so loud, always talking about bugs. She's always hanging around that one emo looking kid…who was it, Sam?"

My heart dropped. *A car crash?* She's been in the hospital this whole time? The school bell broke me out of my thoughts. I hopped onto my bike and rushed to the local hospital. She must be here, right? Or in a different hospital. I pedaled on my bike faster than I ever have. I didn't know why. I just kept pedaling. I felt as if my body and mind were acting separately. My body acted desperate, moving as fast as possible, and yet my brain was still questioning my own actions. What am I doing? Why am I acting as if this matters?

…Does it matter?

The hospital doors slid open. I ran inside, just then realizing I have no clue where May could possibly be. Just then, I saw red hair tied into a braid. She had casts on her limbs, covered in neon smiley faces and doodles.

And most importantly, her beaming smile.

…Maybe I was wrong.

Life is meant to be lived as if you are a mayfly.

To the fullest.