

Flashes of light awakened Chai from her reverie. “Sorry,” the girl said with a neck-aching articulation of the head and a strategically placed empty palm framing the pink and white teacup-like blooms behind her. Vanna White would be proud, Chai mused. Why did she choose this place to meet him, in all of Cambridge, outside an all-girls dormitory she had inhabited a decade past. Because when he had collided into her at the World Robot Summit, reminded her that his name was Isaac, had sat two rows behind her in university for *four* years, and asked if they could meet again, this place, this tree was what she remembered. Textbooks, once poured over more attentively than any lover’s letter, were now forgotten in some moth-eaten cardboard box. The unyielding pressures and deadlines that had once steeped her life had become more palatable, diluted by time.

The tree, however, was indelibly rooted in Chai’s memory. Its eosin-stained petals stirred up childish fantasies of tea parties and rabbit holes. Within days they would abandon their careful place settings atop the branches, like a failed tablecloth trick, leaving tea stained shards carpeting the ground and the whiff of their floral, earthy scent.

When Miss Vanna White departed, Chai approached this well remembered tree and gently stroked its rubbery petals. Why hadn’t she done this before? When did she last dream, reminisce, appreciate? It was with these thoughts she turned to the voice behind her calling “There you are.”