

## **Nothing.**

Ximena Alvarez

They were in pre-school when they met. They lived on the same street; he three blocks up from her, she three down from him. They had always been together; building forts and saving memories. They were no longer in pre-school, even high school was almost gone. Still, even when living in a big city as they did, nothing set them apart. Her name was Mia, his name was James. They had seen years go away, people pass by, and their friendship grow tight. But in all the time they had spent together they never realized that what they were looking for was in front of their eyes, until they lost it. He was sitting on the same table at the same bookstore they met every Saturday at; carrying a backpack filled with clothes and a box filled with memories. He saw her walk in with her coat on, her hands and gloves waving hello. The city was getting cold, but his heart was already frozen. “Hey!” she said. “Hey.” he said. They had never felt this way before; the words were heavier than normal. She sat down in front of him and stared at the backpack. “What’s that?” She asked. “Nothing.” He answered. “And the box?” she asked. “Nothing.” He answered. They both stared quietly. They weren’t outspoken people, but between them, talking had never been that hard. She had no idea what was going on, and he was dealing with the guilt of what was about to happen. He stood up and put the backpack on. “Will you join me?” he asked. “Sure.” she replied. They went out of the bookstore and started walking. He felt as if he was going towards his execution, she was glad they were going on a walk. She followed him without question. He walked slowly, regretting every step he took. “What are you planning?” she asked. “Nothing.” he replied. “What’s going on?” she asked. “Nothing.” he replied.

She lowered her head, let out a sigh. He was sick of saying *nothing* but afraid of breaking into pieces if he said anything else. All she wanted was for everything to be as usual, all he wanted was for everything to change. They arrived at the train station, stopped right in front of the big entry. She looked him in the eye. “What are we doing here?” she asked. “Nothing.” he replied. They said nothing for what felt like a long time, waiting for the other to talk. Finally he broke the silence. “I-I have to go.” he said. “What?” she asked. “I have to go,” he repeated “and I am not sure if I am coming back.” They had never told each other how they felt for the other, but as far as they knew it had never been necessary. She held her tears as long as she could but when they finally rolled down her cold cheeks her heart had no repair. “What’s going on?” he asked. “Nothing.” she answered. Both knew what was going on, both knew what they felt for each other, both knew they belonged together; but neither had the courage to speak up. He knew that if she asked him to stay he would send to hell his father’s wishes and stay with her forever, but he also knew that her pride was not going to allow her to do so. She knew that if he said he really loved her she would beg for him to stay, but she also knew he was not going to say a word. They stood there for a bit longer, him holding his box of pictures, silly child drawings — memories — tight against his chest; her trying to hide the fact that she was completely broken inside. He put the box on the floor and took her between his arms; she set no resistance. She knew she belonged there. They stood there forever, until forever came to an end. He had to go, she had to stay; and both, with an “I love you” stuck in their throats let each other go. She watched him disappear in a sea of people; he felt he was committing suicide by jumping into that sea. They were in pre-school when they met. They lived on the same

street; he three blocks up from her, she three down from him. They loved each other in secret their entire lives and they never realized that what they were looking for was in front of their eyes, until they lost it.