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15 (13-18, A Stranger I Met)  
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### **A stranger I met**

It's a cold regular night for Charlotte. Charlotte had of course forgot her umbrella as usual. As she sat on the bus, cold and wet from the rain, Charlotte noticed a father and her daughter laughing together on the bus. A sense of loneliness hovered over Charlotte. She was reminded of her own father and the memories they shared when she was younger.

A strange yet familiar man boarder the bus at the next stop. He wore a worn coat and his face wrinkled by time. He sat across from Charlotte with them making brief eye contact. There was a strange aura about the man but Charlotte couldn't quite place what it was causing this.

The bus had reached it's next stop and the man rose to leave. A small photo slipped out of his coat. Charlotte picked up the photo, glancing at it before handing it to the man. It was of a little girl and her father at an ice cream parlor. Charlotte realized the girl wore familiar clothing, so did the man. The realization struck her immediately. It was her, the man was her father. "Who are you?", Charlotte questioned. The man couldn't believe his eyes. He mumbled Charlotte's name and then swiftly left the bus. Charlotte had just met her father after 15 years.

Memories of Charlotte's eighth birthday flooded her mind. There was a sense of magic in the air that day. Her father was consumed by his work. Eventually moving away from his family to continue it further overseas. He became nothing more than a distant memory to Charlotte and her mother.

As Charlotte sat on the bus continuing her trip home but Charlotte's mind was somewhere else. She felt mixed between the joy and pain of old memories. She thought of searching for him but hesitated from the apin it would cause her. She decided against it, but revisited the old ice cream parlor. It was now replaced by a corporate office. Grey and devoid of all colour and emotion.

As she returned home, Charlotte remembered the life without her father and how she had accepted him leaving her family's life. She placed the photo outside by the door, and entered the apartment. Carried by the wind, somewhere in the city, the photo landed in front of her father, the stranger's, feet. Charlotte felt a sense of closure. That the pain she had been holding for so long now had left for good. Now a ghost of the past.

As Charlotte woke up the next day, she had fully let go of the past. She decided the stranger who she once knew should remain that, a chapter of her life she had now passed. Ready to move on.