

# Nothing For Now

Charlie walks through the woods in the middle of winter. There is light snow on the ground and his breath is visible in the cold. Although he is wearing a coat, he is visibly cold as he puts his arms around himself and shivers. He appears to be lost, looking in all directions and slightly panicked.

Suddenly something catches his eye in the distance—a girl wearing red and walking away from him through the woods.

The girl stops to look at him for a moment before turning and continuing on.

Charlie is puzzled, but curious as he follows her deeper into the woods. As he moves through the woods in pursuit, he comes to an opening.

Mysteriously, the girl is even farther away from him than before. She is now located in the middle of the clearing, at least a quarter mile away from him.

Charlie stops for a moment to consider whether to follow her not. He is visibly cold and is seriously thinking about turning back.

Again, she stops to look at him for a moment before continuing on her way.

Charlie follows.

Soon they are back in some woods and somehow Charlie has closed the gap between them. As he rounds the corner in the middle of a forest, he comes upon a large tree. There, standing and painting a picture of the tree on a canvass placed on an easel is the girl. She looks at Charlie.

He moves in closer.

As he moves, the tree temporarily blocks his view of the girl. By the time he moves to the other side of the tree, the girl is gone—leaving only the painting and easel behind.

Charlie approaches the easel and looks frantically around for the girl, but she is nowhere in sight. He looks at the painting. It is a painting of the tree in the autumn, full of colorful leaves. He walks away from the tree in an effort to find the girl. Yet, she is nowhere around. He moves in another direction, then another. But still, she is nowhere to be found.

By this time Charlie is extremely cold and staggers back to the tree.

He sits down on the snowy ground, puts his back against the tree and begins to shiver uncontrollably. Clearly, he is nearly frozen to death, but he presents no effort to find shelter. Instead, he just seems to surrender as he closes his eyes.

Charlie wakes up in the kitchen/living room area of a familiar house. He is leaning up against a wall and is covered with a blanket. He is still shivering and his hair is damp from some melted snow. Seconds pass when he notices a man sitting a few feet away on a stool at the island in the middle of the kitchen.

The man is sitting patiently at the island, stirring hot chocolate in a mug on the counter with a spoon.

Charlie watches him for a moment. There is something familiar about him, but he can't quite figure out what it is.

“Do I know you?” Charlie asks.

The man continues to stir the hot chocolate and speaks in a warm, calm voice, “Yes, but not in the typical sense.”

Charlie looks confused.

“I'm you... Or rather, your higher self, that is to say,” the man explains.

Charlie remains confused as he looks around the house. “This is the house I grew up in... How did I get here? Am I dreaming?” He asks.

The man stops stirring the hot chocolate and gently places the spoon on the counter top. “Astral traveling,” he tells Charlie. “It's like dreaming, but more lucid.”

Charlie listens contently.

“This is a purely emotional plane,” the man continues as he motions his hand around. “Where all your deepest desires originate before manifesting on the physical plane.”

Charlie takes in all the information for a second. “If you're really my higher self, then why don't you look like me?” he asks.

“What I look like is up to you,” the man explains, motioning to himself. “Ultimately you chose this form because of the meaning it has.”

Charlie studies the man for a few more seconds before finally declaring, “You're the author of a book I once read... I remember your picture on the back.”

The man nods his head.

“It wasn't just *a* book I read, it was *the* book I read...the one that opened my eyes,” Charlie tells him.

“It not only opened your eyes—it changed your path,” explains the man as he looks around. “It's what brought you here.”

Charlie looks around for a moment as well before asking, “Why here?”

“Because of the safety...and the warmth it represents,” the man tells him.

Charlie shivers. “I don't feel warm.”

The man gets off his stool and approaches Charlie sitting on the floor, “Complete with marshmallows—just like mom used to make,” he states as he kneels down and hands Charlie the cup of hot chocolate.

Charlie takes the mug and sips some hot chocolate as he tightens the blanket around him in an attempt to get warm.

At that moment Charlie notices a couple sitting at a table by the living room window only fifteen feet away. The couple is enjoying each other's company as they quietly talk, hold each other's hands and look affectionately into each other's eyes.

Charlie looks at the couple for a second before asking, “Who are they?” as the man sits back down on his stool.

“You know,” declares the man.

Charlie studies them for a few more seconds before asking, “The couple from the coffee shop today?”

The man nods.

“Why are they here?” questions Charlie.

“You tell me,” states the man.

Charlie looks longingly at them for a moment. “Because they are in love,” he says matter-of-factly. “Because I remember thinking how much I want what they have... And how I'm afraid I never will.”

The man looks down at the floor with sad eyes.

Charlie moves his eyes from the couple to the man and asks, “Are they soul mates?”

The man looks over at the couple and begins to explain, “He sat behind her in freshman English and played with her hair when the teacher wasn't looking... Their first kiss was under the northern lights three days after he got first car and took her for a drive in the country... They went to the same college and got married a month after graduation... Two years later they had twins... Today is their ten-year anniversary.”

Still shivering, Charlie studies the couple as they continue to hold hands and look at each other with affection.

“Fifteen years from now she will be paralyzed from the neck down in a car accident and spend the following year in a hospital,” the man continues to explain. “He visits her every day and eventually gives up his career to be by her side... When the house is sold to pay the bills, she begs him to leave her rather than go down with the ship... But he stays.”

The couple continues to intimately carrying on their moment.

“She dies of an infection the day before Christmas, and for the first time in over twenty-five years he is without her,” the man tells Charlie. “Then, on the last hour of the last day of the year, he too passes away for no apparent medical reason.”

Charlie is silent as he hears the devastating news.

“They are indeed soul mates,” the man finishes.

Charlie smiles at the affirmation of soul mates, asking the man “Does everyone have a soul mate?”

The man sees Charlie admiring the connection that the couple has and hesitates to tell him more. He pauses before saying, “Let's take a walk.”

Instantly the two appear in the woods near the tree.

Charlie looks around and quickly recognizes the location from earlier. “I was just here,” he explains, shivering while wrapping himself tighter in the blanket. “I followed a girl to this very spot... Who was she—the girl in red?”

The man pauses for a moment and smiles slightly. “She is your soul mate,” he declares. “And this is the tree you fall in love beneath.”

Suddenly, the painting of the tree from earlier appears on its easel.

Charlie looks over at the painting of the autumn tree.

“It happens on a warm autumn day” explains the man.

Charlie smiles at the prospect, but quickly goes back to shivering.

“Right now that seems like an eternity away,” he mumbles. “How long until that day?”

The man is silent.

Charlie looks anxiously at the man, asking again, "When will we meet?"

A few more seconds pass before the man answers, "Not in this lifetime."

Charlie appears confused.

"She is waiting for you...in the next world." the man affirms.

Charlie becomes slightly agitated. "But what about this world?" he desperately asks.

"Where is my soul mate now?"

The man looks at Charlie with compassion as he motions with his hand, "Come on."

The two begin walk.

"There is a difference between knowing and being, and that which is known and experienced must have an opposite to exist," the man tells him. "You, like everyone else, consist of multiple layers of experience: from physical sensations, to emotions and thoughts that all culminate into the very essence of your soul."

Suddenly, as they continue to walk, they are no longer in the forest, but in an open field.

Charlie holds the blanket tight to his body as they walk through the field.

"The body has anti-matter to annihilate it, positive emotions are negated by negative ones, and every thought is nullified by its opposite because they were never real to begin with" the man continues to explain. "But your essence is different... It seeks completion by embracing all that is outside itself... A soul mate is nothing more than the external beauty your essence seeks to be whole again... And when they come together, instead of becoming nothing, they become everything."

Then, moments later, they are standing outside Charlie's childhood house, looking up at the couple in the window.

Charlie looks up at the couple, admiring their love for each other.

The man watches Charlie for a moment, smiling slightly as he speaks, "Which brings us back to your peculiar situation."

Charlie is puzzled as he looks at the man, asking, "What situation?"

The man pauses to look around for a moment. "Describe this moment for me," he kindly asks.

Charlie takes his eyes off the man and looks all around. "Beauty beyond belief... Like a dance between shadow and light to the melody of the wind," he declares, looking back up at the couple in the window and smiling. "And every passing moment, every new verse that unfolds... feels like *home*."

"Those words comes from a soul that has moved beyond this world in search of the solace it can no longer find here... Yet, the rest of you still remains—not fully belonging to one world or the other," the man confides, noticing Charlie's deep admiration for the couple before

finishing in a calm and matter-of-fact voice, “Charlie... Those who are not long for this world, will never find true love in it.”

Charlie is speechless. He can hardly muster the energy to stand as he looks around in disbelief. Finally, he drops to his knees in the snow and quietly sobs.

Off in the distance, the girl sits on a bench and looks at Charlie with compassion.

The man looks over and notices the girl in the distance before looking down at Charlie weeping on his knees. He pauses for a moment before speaking in a gentle voice, “The sun will be rising and our time here will soon be over... Why don't you spend what little is left with her.”

Charlie looks up at the man, wondering who he is talking about.

The man motions his head towards the girl off in the distance.

Charlie follows the man's gaze and sees the girl sitting and looking at him. He looks back at the man to see if he is indeed serious about going to her.

The man nods his head.

Charlie gets up from his knees and walks towards the girl.

When he gets to the bench the girl is on, he looks at her for a moment before sitting beside her.

The two lean up against each other and close their eyes.

When they open their eyes, they are leaning against their tree in the forest. No longer shivering from the cold, Charlie removes the blanket from around himself. Finally, despite the winter day, he is warm.