

RADHIKA ANAND

*Unseen
Constellations*

FINDING THE STARS WITHIN.

To the ones who overthink & overlove.

She fell for it once
you know,
the road less taken
is this another flaw
in her mind's matrix?
she questioned herself
or maybe
just a dream
waiting to be destroyed, yet again
Observing the lush greens in the
daylight
& the screaming darkness at night
she wondered how it would feel to be
lost in this wilderness.
To not return home, to just be.
Will this road less taken help her?
take care of her?
handle her overbearing emotions?
raise her like it's own?

so people who meet her,
talk about her uniqueness
and her flaws
about the love she has to give
and the hate she couldn't bear
about where she came from
and where she's headed.
about walking on the path
where once rested the deer
beautiful, still and unbothered.
or about the unseen constellations up
above & within.
So, she wonders again
if this road less taken will help her?
take care of her?
handle her overbearing emotions?
raise her like it's own?
so people who meet her, fall for her too
just the way they do
for the road less taken.

CHAPTER I

The Hidden Surface.

Maya stood at her window, gazing out at the bustling city below. The chaotic symphony of honking horns, distant laughter, and hurried footsteps seemed to mirror the cacophony within her mind. She pressed her hand against the cool glass, as if seeking solace from the outside world. Despite the vibrant energy that flowed through the streets of Bangalore, a heavy cloud of introspection hung over Maya's heart.

She had always been different, even as a child. While her peers reveled in carefree innocence, Maya felt emotions with an intensity that often left her breathless. Each feeling, each fleeting moment was a universe in itself, vast and uncharted. The world called her an empath, but Maya had her own term for it: the echo chamber of emotions.

With a sigh, she turned away from the window and walked through her small apartment. The walls were adorned with post-it notes, each bearing an affirmation or a motivational quote. "You are stronger than you think," one read. Another proclaimed, "You can do this." They were a testament to her determination to keep moving forward, even when the weight of her emotions threatened to pull her under.

Maya had come a long way from the timid girl she used to be. The girl who danced with abandon one moment and battled invisible demons the next. She had braved storms, both within herself and in the world around her. Yet, despite her progress, there were days when the waves of despair crashed over her, leaving her gasping for air.

As she settled onto her couch, Maya's eyes fell on a canvas leaning against the wall. She had started painting a few months ago as a form of release—a way to channel the

tempest of emotions swirling within her. The brushstrokes were bold and vibrant, each stroke a declaration of her existence. And yet, there was a hint of uncertainty in those strokes, a trace of hesitation that betrayed the lingering shadows of self-doubt.

Maya's phone buzzed on the coffee table, pulling her from her reverie. It was a message from her best friend, Diya. The screen displayed a heartwarming photograph of the two of them, arms linked and smiles radiant. Maya felt a glimmer of warmth amid the storm as she read Diya's words: "Miss you, my warrior. When are we going to have one of our crazy movie nights?"

She typed a quick reply, assuring Diya that they would plan something soon. In the midst of her own struggles, Maya had always found solace in the unwavering support of her friends. Diya had been her confidante since college, the one

who stood by her side through heartbreaks, triumphs, and the quiet moments of introspection.

Maya's gaze drifted to a shelf adorned with an eclectic mix of books, each a gateway to a different world. She had always been a reader, finding solace between the pages of fiction and poetry. Yet, lately, even the allure of storytelling had waned. The books had become symbols of unfinished stories, much like her own.

Outside, the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm glow over the city. Maya's eyes were drawn to the sky, where the first stars were beginning to twinkle. She had always been captivated by the night sky, finding comfort in the constellations that painted tales of heroes and myths across the heavens.

In that moment, a thought occurred to her—a fleeting spark

of inspiration. What if her life, much like the stars above, was composed of unseen constellations? What if the key to unraveling her own narrative lay not in the grand gestures, but in the quiet moments of introspection?

With renewed purpose, Maya reached for a fresh canvas and her paintbrushes. She dipped the brush into the palette, the colors blending and blooming beneath her touch. As the paint flowed onto the canvas, Maya felt a sense of release—a connection to the universe that transcended words. Each stroke was a declaration of existence, a testament to her journey, and a tribute to the constellations within.

The night deepened, and Maya painted until the first light of dawn kissed the sky. Exhausted but fulfilled, she stepped back to admire her creation. The canvas was a tapestry of emotions—bold and raw, intricate and delicate. It was a

mirror reflecting her inner world, a constellation of feelings waiting to be explored.

With a contented sigh, Maya finally allowed herself to rest. As she drifted into sleep, the stars above whispered a promise—a promise of unseen constellations waiting to be discovered, and the stars within her waiting to shine.

CHAPTER II

One Day At A Time.

The tendrils of early morning sunlight crept through the curtains, casting a soft glow across Maya's room. A new day had dawned, yet the weight of yesterday's struggles lingered, a testament to the unresolved battles waging within her. With a sigh, she peeled herself away from the bed, her thoughts a swirling tempest of emotions.

Maya stood before the mirror, studying her reflection with a mix of curiosity and trepidation. It was a ritual she had come to both dread and reluctantly embrace. The mirror was a merciless confidante, revealing not only her outward appearance but also the unrelenting inner monologue that plagued her.

Her eyes traced the contours of her face, lingering on each

perceived flaw with an unforgiving scrutiny. The cascade of self-critical thoughts surged: the curve of her nose, the unevenness of her smile, the imperfections she believed set her apart in a world of polished beauty. She reached out a hand to touch the mirror's cool surface, as if hoping to mend the fractures within herself.

Maya's mind wandered to a time when these insecurities first took root, when the echoes of others' opinions held more sway than her own self-perception.

Maya had been a beacon of effervescent joy. Her laughter echoed through hallways, and her smile was like a sunbeam, warming the hearts of those around her. It wasn't that she didn't experience happiness—she did, with a fervor that was both captivating and contagious—but there was always a whisper of melancholy lingering in the background, a shadow that cast its spell over her even

during the brightest moments. Maya was known for her ability to weave connections effortlessly. Friendships bloomed like wildflowers in her presence, and she danced between cliques and social circles with grace. Everyone was drawn to her magnetic spirit, and her genuine interest in others made them feel valued and cherished. Maya was the kind of friend who would listen, who would offer a shoulder to cry on, and who would light up a room simply by being there.

Yet, despite the warmth she radiated outward, Maya often found herself mired in a pervasive sense of solitude.

Beneath her laughter and camaraderie lay a belief, insidious and unspoken, that if she were to one day stumble, if she were to falter and need someone to catch her, the ground would remain painfully empty beneath her feet. It was a belief that gnawed at the edges of her consciousness, an ever-present reminder that the bonds she wove with

others might not be as unbreakable as they seemed.

There was a distinct turning point, an imperceptible shift in the tides, when the world around Maya seemed to transform. The days when her laughter had rung like a symphony suddenly gave way to moments of quiet introspection. The carefree ease with which she had once navigated her social landscape was replaced by a growing wariness, a hesitance born from the realization that the support she had readily offered to others might not be reciprocated.

It was a bittersweet awakening, one that cast a spotlight on the intricate dance of human connections. Maya had been a steadfast advocate for her friends, a tireless champion of their dreams and desires. She had stood at the sidelines, cheering them on as they reached for the stars. Yet, when the tables turned and she found herself yearning for the

same unwavering support, the silence that greeted her pleas was deafening.

The evolution of her friendships was a symphony of both joyous crescendos and somber diminuendos. People came and went, leaving behind fragments of themselves in Maya's heart. Each departure, each moment of unreciprocated vulnerability, etched itself into her memory, reinforcing the notion that while she may have been a confidante and a comforter, she was not necessarily deserving of the same.

But Maya was more than the sum of her interactions with others. She was a complex mosaic of hopes and dreams, fears and desires, stitched together with the thread of her experiences. Despite the lingering echoes of solitude that reverberated through her past, she clung to the belief that there was a place where she could unfurl her truest self, where the shadows of self-doubt could be banished.

As she turned away from the mirror, Maya's gaze settled on the world beyond her window. The sun was ascending higher in the sky, its golden rays illuminating the possibilities that lay ahead. The path to self-discovery was a journey with no clear destination, a pilgrimage to the heart of her own identity. The whispers of her past may have shaped her, but they did not define her. Maya was determined to unravel the complexities of her emotions, to navigate the labyrinth of her experiences, and to unearth the strength that resided within her.

CHAPTER III

A L o s t B e t .

Maya's mind is a battlefield, a tumultuous terrain where thoughts clash like titans in an unending war. Each day brings a new barrage of doubts, fears, and insecurities, a ceaseless assault that leaves her mentally battered and emotionally bruised. It's a struggle she's waged silently, a lone warrior locked in combat with her own thoughts.

In the depths of her being, Maya yearns for an escape. A refuge where the relentless onslaught of self-doubt can finally find respite, where the echoes of past failures can fade into oblivion. It's a craving that claws at her insides, a hunger for liberation from the mental shackles that have bound her for far too long.

The allure of this liberation is seductive, a siren's call that

beckons her to a realm beyond her own mind. In moments of quiet desperation, Maya envisions herself free – free from the grip of expectations, free from the gnawing uncertainty that plagues her every decision. She yearns for a mind that is clear, a mind that is at peace.

But breaking free is a battle that rages on, a relentless struggle that shows no mercy. Maya's mind is a labyrinth, its twists and turns leading her deeper into the clutches of her own insecurities. Each attempt to escape seems to only tighten the noose, a cruel reminder of the chains she longs to cast aside.

She sifts through memories, excavating the buried roots of her mental strife. Childhood moments resurface, mingling with societal pressures and personal disappointments to form a tangled web of self-doubt. It's a journey through the labyrinth of her own psyche, a journey she must undertake

if she's to find the key to unlock her own liberation.

Yet, the path is treacherous, fraught with the shadows of past traumas and the weight of her own expectations. Maya grapples with the remnants of her childhood, with friendships that fizzled and relationships that soured. She confronts the specters of her past, each memory a jagged piece of the puzzle she must assemble to understand herself.

And still, as Maya traverses this landscape of introspection, she finds herself ensnared in a paradox. The more she struggles to escape her thoughts, the more tightly they grip her. She discovers that true liberation doesn't come from evading her mind, but from embracing it – warts and all. It's a revelation that dawns slowly, a fragile ember of hope in the midst of her internal tempest.

But as the days go by, Maya's struggle intensifies. The

storm within her shows no signs of abating; if anything, it seems to gain strength. The once-distant whispers of self-doubt have grown into a cacophony that drowns out her every thought. Sleepless nights give way to endless days of rumination, a ceaseless cycle that threatens to consume her.

Maya stands at a crossroads, the weight of her battle-worn mind nearly unbearable. She knows that something must change, that she can't continue down this path of self-destruction. Yet, the fear of burdening her loved ones with her pain, of exposing the vulnerability beneath her carefully constructed facade, holds her back.

With a heavy heart and a faltering spirit, Maya contemplates the only option that seems left – returning to therapy. It's a decision she had hoped to avoid, a testament to the depth of her desperation.

CHAPTER IV

An Old-School Lover

Maya had always been a dreamer, a romantic at heart. She possessed a soul that resonated with the melodies of Sinatra's croons and the poetic lyrics of Kishore Kumar's songs. In a world obsessed with swipe rights and lefts, casual encounters, and ephemeral connections, Maya was a throwback to a bygone era, an old-school lover caught in the perplexing web of modern dating. She felt like a relic from another time.

She couldn't fathom the swift pace of this digital age of romance. The idea of building meaningful connections through a few texts and fleeting moments left her bewildered. It seemed like everyone was in a hurry to move on, searching for the next thrill without taking a moment to appreciate the beauty of what could have been.

Maya believed in the magic of love letters, the allure of stolen glances, and the joy of slow dances beneath a starlit sky. Her heart ached for the kind of romance that was written in the stars, the kind that stirred the soul and lasted a lifetime.

She had poured her love into the hearts of many, dealing with her own inner demons along the way. But in her pursuit of a love that echoed the classics, she had often been met with disappointment. It was as if the world had forgotten how to cherish and protect love. Her heart had been broken, her trust shattered, and her dreams dashed.

Yet, Maya remained resolute in her yearning for a love that defied the ordinary. She longed for the kind of love that made her heart race, her spirits soar, and her soul sing. She yearned for the romance that was patient, passionate, and unending.

In a world that had seemingly lost its appetite for genuine connections, Maya was a beacon of hope for those who still believed in the power of love. She continued to dance in the rain, imagining her lover's arms around her. She longed for stolen kisses in the moonlight and handwritten love notes hidden in secret places.

As the echoes of "Fly Me to the Moon" faded into the air, Maya stood there, feeling the weight of her old-school dreams and the warmth of her enduring hope. She believed that someday, somehow, in the chaotic dance of life, love would find her in a way that was different & real.

With a faint smile on her face, she whispered to herself, "One day, it will be timeless and It will stay."

She knew that when that moment finally arrived, it would be as if all the love she had given away in the past would come back to her, amplified and everlasting.

She was hopeful, even amidst the tumultuous storms of her emotions. Somebody out there, she believed, would be willing to embrace the beautiful mess she was—a mess of gorgeous chaos.

The music ceased, and the receptionist called her name. It was time for her appointment with the new therapist, a fresh start on the journey to understanding herself, healing her heart, and perhaps, one day, finding the love she had always yearned for. Maya took a deep breath, walked through the door, and closed it behind her, ready to face whatever lay ahead.

CHAPTER V

She comes with it.

Maya sat in the therapist's office, her fingers nervously tracing the patterns on the armrest of the chair. The room was filled with the soft murmur of the air conditioning, but Maya felt an overwhelming silence enveloping her. She cast her gaze downward, avoiding the inquisitive eyes of Dr. Anderson, the new therapist who was about to become a part of her life.

The question lingered in the air, hanging there like a heavy cloud. "Maya," Dr. Anderson began softly, her tone a soothing balm, "I'd like to know more about you. Could you share your story? What led you here today?"

Maya's gaze dropped to her hands, nervously intertwining her fingers. The question echoed in her mind, resonating

with a past she had tried so hard to escape—the past that had led her to therapy in the first place. The memories of her past weighed heavily on her shoulders, forming an emotional baggage that she had carried for far too long. Feeling everything, a little too much than required.

Maya's emotional sensitivity, her tendency to feel things deeply, was a product of her early experiences. She had learned to be hyper-aware of her surroundings and the emotions of those around her, often putting their needs ahead of her own. This hyper-awareness had further fueled her longing for validation, as she believed that by making others happy, she could find the happiness and validation she sought. She didn't know where to start or rather where to stop.