

It was a crisp autumn afternoon when I met Sarah. I began to see how rigid my views had been and how much I had resisted change out of fear. At the time, I was firmly convinced that people rarely changed. We are who we are, I thought, and life's circumstances only highlight what's already within us. Meeting Sarah would challenge that belief in ways I never anticipated. She was sitting on a bench, sketching something in a notebook. What caught my attention wasn't the sketch itself, but the absolute focus in her eyes. Normally, I would've walked past, but something about her presence felt magnetic. Sarah had a way of seeing the world that was entirely new to me. She spoke about her experiences traveling alone, learning from strangers, and finding beauty in the mundane. She shared stories of moments where she had been vulnerable, lost, or unsure, yet somehow found strength through connection and openness. Her belief that people could change—that they could reinvent themselves over and over—was infectious. I had been walking my usual route through the park, the golden leaves crunching under my feet, lost in my thoughts. It was as if the rest of the world didn't exist for her in that moment. "You seem like someone who's pretty set in their ways," she said at one point, not unkindly. Over the following weeks, Sarah and I continued to meet. Each time, she'd challenge my assumptions, not just about others but about myself. One day, she asked if I'd ever tried sketching. "Thanks," she said. We started talking.