

# Fern Park: Story Two

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A warm, summer day in the small suburban town of West Hartford, Connecticut is the backdrop to this short tale of a young girl's attempt at friendship.

Published on  
**Booksie**

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As Lisa rocked her small body on the park swing, she gazed longingly at the group of girls laughing as they jumped on the large playscape. She had once more come to Fern park alone. Lisa's mother preferred her to stay at home, where she wouldn't be subjected to ridicule. But Lisa enjoyed the beautiful trees and the pond that the small park afforded her. She now leaned back and viewed the small playground before her. Young mothers sat on wooden park benches, chattering away as they shared the neighborhood gossip.

Lisa noticed that one small girl was sitting by herself on the old see-saw that lay near the entrance to the play area. The girl's face seemed to betray loneliness, not unlike the strong emotions that Lisa felt herself. Gathering her courage, Lisa gingerly walked over to the see-saw, then sat down opposite the girl.

"Hi," she said in a friendly voice. "Do you mind if I sit here?"

The girl smiled her assent. She regarded Lisa with interest. "Hi," she replied. "I don't think I've seen you here before."

Lisa nodded her head. She wasn't sure how much she should share with this girl. "Yes," she offered. "I don't get to come here often," she admitted.

They began to rock the see-saw back and forth. "My name is Angie," the girl said. "I love coming to this park. I think that it's the nicest one in West Hartford."

Lisa smiled, nodding her head in agreement. She suddenly noticed her cousin Sarge passing by them with his friend Kevin. Sarge looked at her searchingly. Then, Lisa remembered. She was supposed to have brought Sarge the basketball that her brother had borrowed from him. She shrugged her shoulders at Sarge, silently indicating her failure to bring the ball. Sarge scowled, walking wordlessly by the play area and ignoring her completely.

Angie laughed as the see-saw went faster and faster. "This is better than the one at my school. Do you go to the same elementary school as I do?"

Lisa looked down. Her sense of shame was visible on her features. "I...don't go to elementary school," she admitted.

Angie stopped rocking. She gave Lisa a strange look. She seemed to notice Lisa's short arms and legs for the first time. And to notice Lisa's Mongolian face. She asked, "How old are you?"

Lisa looked up at her with grave eyes. "Sixteen," she said quietly. Angie sat up from the see-saw. She wordlessly walked over to her mother on the bench. Angie's mother whispered to her daughter, then the two of them quickly left the park.

Lisa's face bore sorrow as she walked back to her swing. The group of children that had ignored her before now seemed to regard her with scornful looks and laughter. Lisa stood up, and walked to the entrance of the play area. She viewed the park, taking in the sunny loveliness of the day.

Then Lisa strolled back home. She had not had a good day at Fern park.

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