

WRITE

On

2022

- Carroll High School 😊

* As Close As It Gets

IT was March 12, 2020. There were 15:42 seconds left on the clock. I had no idea what was about to ensue before my eyes and continue for the next year and a half of my life. It was my sophomore basketball season and I had been lucky enough to be a part of a team that made it all the way through the State Basketball Tournament to the State Semi-Finals.

It was a long season, full of wins and losses, lessons learned, good games, bad games, and a great deal of hard work. Everything that I had worked for this season and all of the seasons before led up to this moment for me. All that a little girl could dream of was playing in the State Basketball Finals. In a high school athlete's world, it is the epitome of how good it gets. There is nothing better or anything higher to accomplish. That is it. The last three years of high school I have been lucky enough to get about as close as it gets. However, arguably the most memorable year ever and most definitely in my lifetime would be the year 2020. The year will not soon be forgotten by anyone, but especially by me and my Carroll basketball teammates. The opportunity to play in the State Semifinals was taken away from us minutes before we were allowed to take the court to play and that is a moment I will never forget.

The day started off differently. Just hours before it had been announced that seating at the game would be reduced to four tickets per person. Now in 2022, this is all that we have known for the last few years, but at that time this was unprecedented. In addition, on the way there all we were hearing on the radio was "Big 10 Championship canceled, ACC Championship canceled, rumors of March Madness cancellations looming." This was hard to hear but we brushed it off. We arrived at St. John's Arena at Ohio State University. Masks weren't a thing yet at this time so nothing besides the four tickets per person was abnormal.

My team and I got ready, I braided my hair as usual, and we headed to take the floor before us. Little did we know that not only the game would be canceled but the rest of our lives would also change before us. The news was shared. The game was canceled. Now I live with the fact that there is punctuation next to everything in the year 2020. We will never receive the accolades or the labels for what my team and I lost in 2020. The experiences will never be replaced or replicated and I will live with the fact that I was never given the chance to play. Now though, for the rest of my life, the year 2020, along with the State Championship, will be referenced with only a small piece of punctuation: an asterisk.

-Sarah Ochs '22

“Cane’s Coleslaw”

I know of some info
Of which I must share
To you I hope to bestow
But receive it with care

An old man once told me
Of his important word
Bad things bring no glee
So don't be a nerd

These words are no joke
Yes this is the truth
In this tone he spoke
Don't waste your youth

I took in his quote
It filled me with fear
I don't mean to gloat
But I heard it so clear

I am to share this law
A wise man once said
Treat girls like Cane’s coleslaw
Swap them out for more bread

-Sean Dalton

“Reflection in the Mirror”

The reflection in the mirror
So blurred by the fault of my eyes or the steam
Why can I not see any clearer?

I can see the sun in the morning and
I can see the sun at night
But why does the reflection seem to run away, as if
in fright?

Well I can outsmart the reflection, and wear a
disguise
Maybe try to see it through someone else’s eyes
Their eyes, they say, are bright wide and mild,
but how are mine different and blind?

Am I blinded by the light, no its fine
Am I blinded by my eyes, no I am only blinded by
my mind
My mind filing through the doubts that remain and
those that were left behind

My mind was full of colors, almost like flashing
lights
It was also the bitter statements that pursued
No wonder I couldn’t see the future of someone I
want to be
Because I cannot even acknowledge my present
being

One day, this mirror will shatter, only to reveal
another blurry reflection
Only this time, it will be more clear than the one
before

I must no longer be afraid to open my eyes
And wipe away the fog
To see the reflection of a girl, standing there,
learning to love herself
Even though it is only a reflection in a mirror,
It is me, I am the reflection, a reflection that I
must learn to love.

-Sarah Campbell

"The Race"

I cannot do this
How do they expect me to race
When I'm so nervous
That I can't look myself in the face?

But what other option
Will you help me out with this fix?
I have to I must
Even if I'm out of tricks
So I dress in my uniform
And lace up my shoes
I tell myself, "Today is my day
Either I win or I lose"

Now I'm on the start line
With the rest of the team
I'm feeling so
nervous That
I'm about to
scream.

The gun fires
And I run so very fast
My eyes on the gator
My anxious nerves in the past
I get to the last straight-away I'm almost done
I push towards
the finish and just
won.

Neil Tivakaran

Eleanor McFarlane

*ONCE I was full of heartwarming love
Dancing and singing without a care in
the world
How the feeling delighted me
Never could I let my heart be settled
So much was to be given and received
All of these people who say they love me
I gave my love to anyone who needed
Never could I let my heart be settled
Until I met my dearest so sweet
Years went by and my heart was so full
Yet my heart kept beating so full of love
Never could I let my heart be settled
It wasn't until that dear so sweet saw
this love as free
And kept it under lock and key
Now my heart has stopped beating
Never could I let my heart be settled
-Abigail Becker*

"Teddy"

I WAS once a prized possession.
Taken everywhere.
Never Left.
Always held with a strong arm.
I was a best friend.
The Woody to my owner.
Then my owner grew up.
What was once a friendship,
Turned into a memory.
At least I have not been given away,
Still sitting on my owner's shelf.
Overlooking my friend.
Making sure he is safe.
While he may not make me a priority,
He is mine.
-Jacob Wilson

Wake Up

YOU wake up one day, and something is different.
The birds outside aren't quite singing as they
used to,
and something inside threatens to rip your heart
out of your chest before you can take another
breath.

The way that you walk feels incredibly foreign,
And as you take one step after another, You can't
figure out how something so simple became so
difficult.

Sometimes, you feel as if a viscous black ink has
been poured over your mind,
Making it difficult to think, and to sleep, and to do
anything that makes you feel even a little better.

You stare at the sun until your eyes feel like
they're on fire,
But it does nothing.
The stars look ever so familiar.
Are they closer than ever?
Or are you just forgetting how they used to look
when you were young?

You've forgotten almost everything from when
you were young.

The sky outside is even more gray than ever, even
when it's a brilliant blue.
It's the best when it's raining, though.
The sound is wonderfully chaotic,
And it makes you smile more than anything else
in the world.

You talk to a god,
But he isn't able to do anything to fix this feeling.
And eventually, you get used to it,
And even feel like you're getting better,

But it's never the same.

You might smile when you see your friends again,
And you might have better grades than the year
before,

And you don't cry yourself to sleep anymore,
But you still feel cold when you look at yourself in
the mirror.

You still aren't sure whether or not you'll genuinely
want to get out of bed in the morning,
And you don't know if that will ever change.

-Megan Gantner

Catherine Baker

I STILL remember what he was like
The world would standstill
His luscious hair that brushed through the
wind
The way his eyes would glisten when I
entered the room
That dumb smirk he had spread across his
face
Holding him close and smelling his colon
When he put his hand on the small of my
back
He always made me laugh at inappropriate
times
Now he is so distant
His luscious hair was now lifeless
The glistening eyes are now dull wherever
he goes
That dumb smirk has been covered up with a
still face
Holding him close is not an option anymore
Putting his hand on the small of my back is
forbidden
He doesn't make me laugh anymore
The world moves on
I still remember what he was like

Abigail Becker

"The Day"

The day begins,
And the sky is alive and full of glory,
The day has just begun,
And although the sun will eventually make
its way across the sky,
The day is here, in this moment,
And the world is full of endless possibilities.

The day is still new,
But the sun has begun to climb through the
sky.
There is so much to do, and so little sunlight
to waste,
And it seems inevitable that everything will
crash and burn,
Driving everyone's lives into eternal chaos
and confusion.
The day is confusing, and maybe a bit too
bright a bit too soon.

The day is all-consuming,
And it is scarcely possible to breathe
through all of the exhaustion that seems to
be inevitable.
The pressure is overwhelming,
And even though there are still possibilities
for change,
Most are furiously begging the sun to stop
its endless crawl across the sky.
The day is hot, and brilliant, and although
pleasant, is going by a bit too quickly.

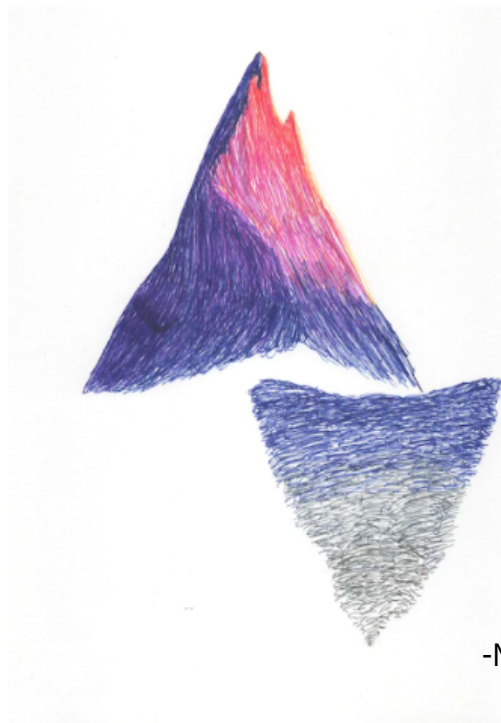
The day is coming to an end,
And the sun is turning to so many beautiful
colors.
Most are growing content with the monotony
of the day,
To be honest, it's a sort of comfort,
And the glory of the everyday is becoming
an accepted wonder.

The day is quiet once more, and as the sun
is close to finishing its race across the sky,
all is at peace.

The day grows old, as it flies through the
atmosphere,
Seeing and hearing the world below.
The day searches for a meaning behind its
existence,
It is bewildered at the emptiness of all.
The day finds itself all alone, with no one to
bask in its glory.
The day gives up, and makes its turn
towards the forgotten darkness.

The day starts hiding as it grows tired, and
slowly but surely it falls asleep.
The day darkens and turns to night,
And the world keeps turning without it,
Lost in its own story.
The day returns and life begins once again.

-Evelyn Myers and Megan Gantner



-Nathan Snizik

"The Ball of Fuzz"

There once was a ball of fuzz.
It floated around like a balloon, just
because.

The fuzz floated and floated until it
was air.

After all, it was just crumpled-up
hair.

Fuzz floats, just like it always does!

-Sky Londergan



"Love Liberates"

In her words I see a lot of truth,
I have experienced much the same in my
youth,
Love is true when truth fails,
Even then my love prevails.

Love liberates, and it frees
Like a joyful summer breeze,
Though love can bind it doesn't hold,
It shapes us with a better mold.

Throughout life, love is changing
But indeed it is always quite wide ranging,
Love for Grandma,
Love for Grandpa,
Love for Father and Mother,
Love for Sister and Brother.
Love for all those of our kin,
For all those where my love has been.
But even then there's so much more,
So much to love this world for!
For the animals and the trees,
And the little tiny bees.

But above everything comes he who loves
us all,
Whom in the darkest moment we may call.
He will guide us too true love,
Until one day we are with him above.

I have been loved much, in many ways,
And I hope to be till the end of my days.
For love is what life is worth living for,
And it will open every single door.

As said, I agree
Love doesn't confine, it frees.
-Bruce Crossman

Half Light

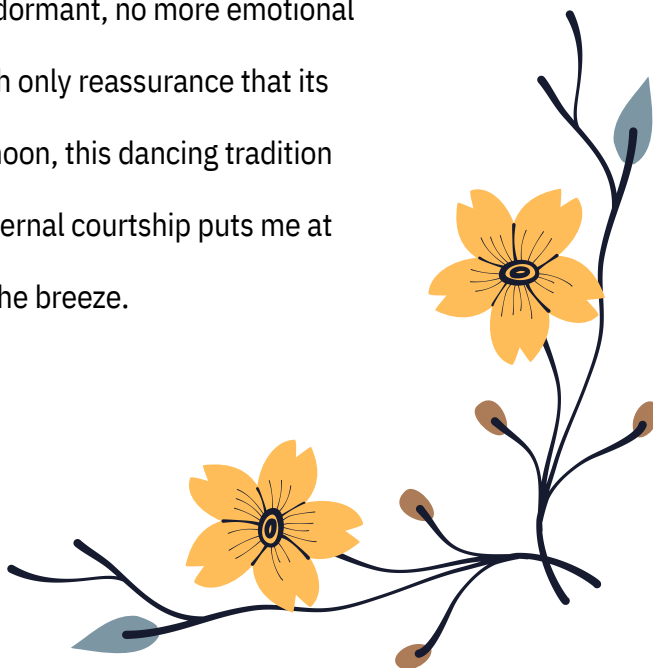
As I walk through the half-light, with not much to see, I
suddenly spot a large mulberry tree, "I've seen you before" I
proclaim with excitement, realizing I saw it setting up my
campsite "and wouldn't you know my fire's right there?" I say,
staring down its waves with a long lustful glare.

The air has a sharp, unreasonable feeling, of cold, of pain,
of nothing appealing.

And as I sit down, my mind winding down, the heat of
the fire finally making me sound. I think of how hollow, how
lonely I feel, my only companion, the sky, colored teal. And as I
drift off, the air now feels soft, all worry evades me as my brain
is flicked off.

As I finally lay, I think of my day, until I'm finally asleep,
concluding my display. And as I lay dormant, no more emotional
reinforcement, I dream of the lake with only reassurance that its
water is dancing with the rays of the moon, this dancing tradition
carried out every afternoon. as their eternal courtship puts me at
ease, my soul drifts away, along with the breeze.

-By Mark Beckwith



Solace and Silence

By: Tori Kozma

The rain spilled from the clouds without warning. What was previously a sunny day, had become damp. The air smelled crisp and the rain droned as each drop met the concrete. I looked around at the rubble that was scattered about. My face stung and my hands ached. Strands of my dark hair hung and plastered itself to my face. I sat and tried to clear my mind when I heard a sound. It was a far away sound, but human.

It was desperate and tired, asking if anyone was there. I called back, not even realizing that I had risen to my feet in search of the voice. The buildings that used to tower over me were demolished into pieces that laid on the ground. Shards of glass littered the asphalt. Broken bricks were scattered aimlessly across the streets.

“Hello?” the voice shouted, with a twinge of hope in its intonation. It was louder this time. I continued to yell back through the rain, my legs throbbing with every step. I had been alone for what felt like years, and I hadn’t seen another person since the thriving city became a pile of ash. A rejected memory. Everyone fled. Images of the night everything changed raced through my head. The voice rang louder and louder. How could I go back to living isolated now that I’ve heard that sound? I needed to find the voice’s keeper.

“Where are you?” I cried. I looked around frantically, desperately pleading for someone to step forward. Then I saw him. A boy stood in front of me, looking at me intently. He blinked a few times and stepped forward.

His skin was bruised and decorated with scrapes and scars. His eyes were a deep brown and his hair clung to his forehead. I stepped forward and touched his arm, just to make sure that

he was real. I didn't know what to say. My face was wet, but not entirely from raindrops. Relief washed over me. I smiled, and he started to laugh. We embraced each other, crying and laughing. My body hurt as we hugged, but I couldn't care. I found someone. I'm not alone.

After some time had passed, our initial shock had died down and we sat down on a crumbling curb.

"What's your name?" he asked me. His eyes pleaded for an answer. I wondered if he had been alone for all this time as well.

"I'm Vanessa, what's yours?" I replied.

"Oliver," he said. He looked away and up at the sky, "Are you from around here? I came from Region 2, but I didn't realize that the destruction had reached Region 3."

"Yeah," I said, "Everyone evacuated to Region 6 when the first bomb fell."

"Oh," he muttered under his breath. He traced the cracks in the concrete with his finger and then hesitated to continue, "Why are you here alone then?"

I stumbled to start my sentence. "My parents were in Region 1," I managed. Oliver nodded his head solemnly. I had thought about losing them incessantly, but my voice broke as the words fell out of my mouth.

He continued to outline the concrete. I didn't know what to say, so we sat together quietly, looking at the ground.

"Why are you alone?" I finally asked, breaking the silence. I noticed his face wince at the question. Immediately, I regretted asking. He stared at the ground.

"I lived in the center of Region 2. Some of my friends stayed with their families, but my mom told me to get as far away as I could from home. She was old and couldn't move quickly," he paused, "I didn't want to leave, but she insisted. When Region 2 was bombed, I was in a corn

field close to the outskirts of Region 3,” his voice broke and he started to cry. He stopped and looked into my eyes. His face was distraught. Tears dripped from his chin onto the asphalt road. He continued, his voice pained, “Why? What did we do to deserve this?”

The rain slowly drizzled to a stop. Clouds began to separate and the sun peaked through again. I looked at Oliver and watched him wring out the water from his clothes. I noticed that my clothes were soaked as well, and started to do the same.

“Vanessa,” he muttered, “where do we go now?” I turned my face to his. His gaze looked confused and sad. His voice played over in my head and I remembered how overjoyed I was to hear his voice the first time. I thought I was saved, but there he stood. A boy just as lost as I was.

“Well, we can head for Region 6,” I suggested. I had come to accept that my parents were never coming back. Everything that I loved had been stolen from me: my family, my home, and my friends. I had waited for so long, fooling myself into thinking I could get any of that back. Oliver must’ve felt the same way. We only had each other, and it was time to move forward. It was the only thing we could have done.

“What if it’s the same as here?” he asked.

“We won’t know unless we try,” I replied.

Raindrops dripped from busted street lamps and collected into puddles on the concrete.

Our fingernails were caked with dirt and dust. Our clothes were tattered and torn. Our feet were calloused and sore. We trudged on. I felt Oliver’s hand in my palm. He squeezed tightly and I could feel his nervousness radiating off of him. I was anxious as well, but his presence helped remind me that I was not alone. We walked in silence toward the border and to our unknown fate.

Love Resolute

Tick, tick, tick, tick....

As the clock continues to move its hands I
remain still
Still, cold, submerged into the ground, I lay
here permanently asleep
You say my time was cut too short, but here I
remain
Forever

Through the copious rain, the pure, clean
snow,
the blinding sunshine, and the searing heat
I am sheltered from your world, trapped in a
stuffy box that was set down and fed to the
earth

Three days after I left you
You stayed longer than anyone when I was
forced into this new home
I watched as you stood over the shaped stone
with my name inscribed
I watched as you knelt, clutching a rosary,
repeating over and over

"Hail Mary, full of grace...."

I watched you weep and I wept with you
I wept not for my end but for your new
beginning
You're new life which you must live without
me
I wept tears of sadness and of joy
I wept for the time we had and the time we
will miss
The times we laughed, the times we cried, the
times we kissed
The times you will laugh, the times you will
cry, the people you will kiss
I weep for the continuation of time apart from
you
And now I weep for you from beyond my

grave
Patiently awaiting the day when you are by
my
side once more
I am here, watching the clock as it endlessly
sounds
Tick, tick, tick, tick....
Until the day it finally stops for you.

—Patrick Sableski

Isolation

Up in the tree, I am confronted
by my thoughts;

I sit here on old wood
supported by old nails;

The sunlight peeks through the
cracks of the old wooden walls
around me; The dance of the
leaves from the playful breeze
shakes the branches; The chirps
of the birds fill the air like a
concert of bells;

Confronted by my thoughts I sit
there on old wood supported by
old nails; I can't help but feel
alone in a place that once
brought me joy;
Climbing up those planks nailed

to
the tree after a long day;
My friends trailing
behind me;
Staying up all night telling scary
stories and enjoying our youth;
This used to be a
sanctuary for joy;
Now, all it brings is the
faint thought of old
memories from years ago;
Oh, what I would do to feel
that joy again;

Oh, what I would do to take away
this pain I feel inside;
Many summers and fall
afternoons were spent
inside this treehouse; But
that's just what age does;
People come and
people go;
But at least I still have the
memories to console me;

Up, up in the tree, I sit here on
old wood supported by old nails,
wondering; Where does the time
go?

Theryn Marsh

Unraveling

Sometimes I forget the
feeling
Of every single nerve
tingling
Better than any lover's touch
Creating burns of pain and
bubbling joy
To feel myself unravel onto a
page
Typing from my heart
Burning with passion
Hoping, begging, praying
That I remind someone that
they can feel
These emotions that feel so
unfamiliar
Transport myself into the minds
of people I've never
met
Yet knowing every inch of their
soul
People that hold a piece of
me inside of them
Products of my own creation
Pieces of me that I've hidden for
so long
Finally able to breathe
Hidden in the folds of melodies
As they soared high in the
sky
Tears escaping as the weight
lifts off my shoulders
Every inch of those people's
being filled with love
Soft and warm
Burning brighter than a star
Watching them thrive
Watching them fall so far and
get back up
Watching them lift each other
up
Inspiring me to do the same

To keep walking forward no
matter how unsteady the road
gets
To keep reaching towards my
dream, no matter how far away
it is
And to bring my friends with me
Helping them to unravel the
pieces of themselves that
they hide
Showing them what I think of
when I see their name
When I hear their laugh, see
their smile
Burning like a lighthouse in the
dark
Hoping that I don't burn out too
soon
-----Grace Simpson

Bird —

Calm yet flighty
Tiny yet mighty
Neverending fear
An enemy could always be near
Gentle and encouraging
People always stop to hear her singing
Yet her song is not meant for them to
hear
Many people think she is fun
But all she wants to do is run
She's trapped in a cage
Searching for a way o this earthly stage
—Lily Mongelli

Outsider- Hannah Wilkinson
 I watch the sunset
 And the moon slowly rise
 Slowly in the distance
 The stars beginning their twinkling

Here I am alone
 With no label or role
 Here I can relax
 Without putting on an act

Everywhere I go I am judged
 Called a hood rat
 A greaser
 Judged for who I am

I don't know where I fit in
 Always feeling like I'm different
 I read instead of fighting
 I watch the sunsets instead of
 stealing

I don't know who I am
 Or who I will become
 I don't know if I belong with them
 Or if I belong somewhere else

Maybe I will always not fit in
 Maybe I don't have a place
 Maybe I'm not a greaser or a soc
 Maybe I'm an outsider.

Narcissus.... by Rois Bultemeyer

I can't keep my eyes off of him
 He is the most beautiful creature I have ever
 seen
 With gorgeous brown eyes and luscious long
 hair
 A smile with teeth so bright they reflect the sun
 His features so sharp and complex, you can't
 help but adore
 No one as handsome as he is could ever take
 my eyes away
 "Narcissus!" Someone calls and I am forced to
 look away
 From the man before me
 As I take one more glance at my reflection,
 I know that no one else can compare.

The Birds That Eat the Berries

---Tessa Zimmerman

2nd period, 9 am.

Mindlessly watching the birds, again.

Right out the window,

dozens if not more.

Oh how often they fly, jump, and soar.

They stop in the branches,

an all-you-can-eat buffet.

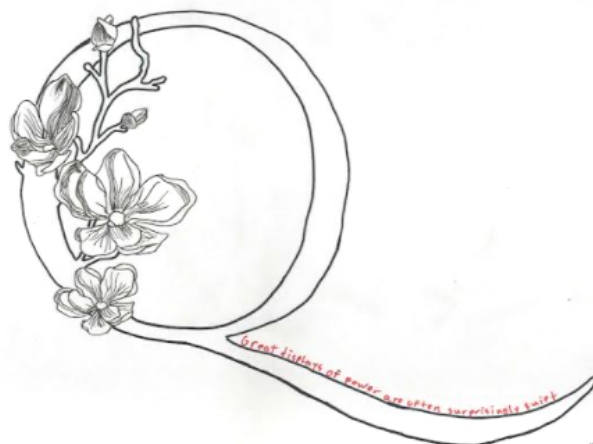
Horning down berries for the entirety of
 the day.

Maybe I could pay attention,

Maybe there would be less homework to
 mention,

But rather I stare mindlessly at the birds.

The birds that eat the berries, and sing
 out all their words.



The House by Cavan Reed

"We want to look at the scary house everyone is talking about in our neighborhood," I heard one of the neighbor kids say. "Hey man, we should go into the haunted house at the end of the street."

"Sure I'm down. You know me," the other kid replied.

Too bad I didn't get to know him because after they went into the house they never came back. That happened another time before back when parents were kids. The teens' names were Jimmy and Timmy. They were best friends who would do anything and everything together. They were inseparable; nobody could come between them. So when Timmy said that they should go to the haunted house, of course, Jimmy wanted to go there. He was already thinking the same thing. They got ready for the trip to the house. They grabbed a bat, lighter, a flashlight, and a magical orb that they got from the *As Seen on TV* section at Walmart. Now that they were ready for their journey to the house, they could leave. On the way there they were stopped by an apparition telling them not to go into the house. Even though any normal person would listen to it and not go into the house they kept on walking towards it. I guess these kids were not the sharpest tool in the shed. They went up the steps to the house and walked in. They were never seen again.

I'm 25 now and I'm going in there to find them and all of the other kids who were lost inside the house. I wonder why none of the police officers have ever looked inside there?

I started getting ready for the adventure and rescue mission. I got my backpack and put in some food, flashlights, and a bat. I started walking down the street to the house at the end. Then the apparition came to me and warned me about the house and what would happen if I went inside it. Nobody ever knew about this because only people that heard what it said would go inside the house. What did it say? I was thinking about that for years and I would finally get my answer.

The apparition told me, "If you go in there you will never come back. You will be in a dream forever and never wake up."

I can see why people go there. Having your dream come true alone would be enough to get me in there. As I start walking, the apparition asks me, "Are you sure that the dream is worth your life?"

I begin to think about if it is worth it. I could finally attain what I want but it wouldn't be real. What should I do? I decided that I would go inside even though it wouldn't be real because a dream is better than reality. As I open the door I am finally at peace. But as the time passes, I begin to ask myself, was it worth it after all?

An Old Lady, Kids, Private Investigators, and an Oven

by Nathan Jokerst

There was a family, the Millers, of four: a father, stepmother, boy, and girl. Times were difficult for the family as their father had just been laid off from his job. Running low on food, and with no job in sight, the stepmother forced the father to leave the kids in the forest.

Shortly after, the stepmother died, and Mr. Miller felt great remorse for leaving his kids. He worked grueling hours, most times with little or nothing to eat. It was difficult, but after days and nights of hard work he had enough money, and a heart-wrenching story that could get the attention of some earnest detective. The father went around, and talked to every investigator in town. Time and time again, he was turned down: there was no lead, and too much time had passed. The task was too impossible for any rational detective to take. However, two young detectives from a nearby town, eager to make names for themselves, approached Mr. Miller. They met at Mr. Miller's house one evening to discuss the possibility of them taking the case. At the entrance of the small house, they talk about the cost of their investigation.

William, one of the two brothers in business, lead a more practical approach to their investigations. He was standing near the entrance leaning against the wall, even though Mr. Miller had pulled out a chair for him. He had a bulky frame and could often convince his partner to follow his ideas, even if they disagreed.

"We're fine with working with your small fee," William told Mr. Miller, "we just need some money to keep some food on the table while we're working." Jake, the optimist of the two, was morally involved with this case, and he had opposed taking Mr. Miller's money. Despite this small disagreement, both detectives had agreed that taking this case would be beneficial to them.

"We promise that all of your money will go straight to our work on your case," Jake added, giving a kind smile. Mr. Miller looked at both of them.

"How can you promise me results?" he asked them. The younger men looked at each other.

Jake started to respond, but William answered before him.

"We can't," William responded flatly, and turned to look at his brother, "but we're the best chance you have at finding your children. As far as we hear, you weren't able to get anyone else to take this case, but both my partner and I feel as if all of us could benefit from our looking into this." He looked over at Mr. Miller as he finished his sentence, who nodded back to him. Jake followed up trying to be reassuring.

"We may not be able to guarantee that we find anything," he briefly paused, and again smiled toward his client, "but we will give it our best effort," Mr. Miller silently nodded in agreeance, and the duo celebrated silently. William pulled out a small notepad and began to read off of it.

"We've heard a few things about this case already," he glanced down at his notepad, "and you said they just wandered off one day and never made it back home?" Looking down at the ground; the older man nodded once more.

Will continued to read off his list, "And this was about a month ago, your wife got sick shortly after and that's why you couldn't look for them yourself." He paused and licked his lips, "I have a few other notes, but is there any other important information that you could give me. Any possible place they would go to? Any person?" Mr. Miller shook his head and the partners looked at each other unsurprised but disappointed.

"So that's all we have to go on," Jake questioned with nervousness beginning to reach his words.

"I thought that you two were ready to take this on," the old man said, crossing his arms and looking up from the ground, "I had already said my wife was sick, and so that's why I couldn't find them myself. And even if I tried to find them there was no way that I could. They ran away without me knowing and there's nothing I could have done about it." By this point, Mr. Miller had become visually upset.

"Ah, we were hoping for anything more, possibly something to give us a head start." William pointed to the bedroom doors by the entrance, "Mind if we take a small peek just to see if anything worthwhile is in there." The man nodded and the two go to the bedroom. They emerged shortly after emptyhanded, thanked Mr. Miller, and left.

William and Jake headed to the tavern for some reconnaissance and relaxation after a long day of work. William and Jake split up and sat down with many different people, asking all of them about general information about the town, any hotspots for kids, and things that might point to where the kids might be. Their conversations lead to varying degrees of success, but as the night went on success became smaller and smaller. Jake ended up sitting next to an older man and started some light conversation with him. Jake unsbtly asked the man about Mr. Miller's kids.

"There have been many children that have gone missing," he fell silent again.

"Like they're just gone one day," Jake beckoned towards William, but didn't get his attention.

"Hold on, my friend over here is just going to sit in and listen."

"Many children have disappeared in the woods," the old man said, pausing, "many parents have lost their children and never found them again."

"Yeah, yeah that's good, can you say that one more time," Jake completely ignored what the older man was saying, putting all of his effort into getting William's attention, eventually shouting across the room for him. The man got up and forcefully pushed Jake, knocking him to the ground.

The Next Day

William and Jake had just left their hotel, and they were walking around the streets looking for breakfast. Jake was trying to convince William what their next step should be.

"We need to go look into the woods," Jake persistently told William, "it's the only actual lead we have to go off of."

"Oh, I didn't realize that it's just a really great idea to follow anything that anyone says," William retorted.

"Sure, I suppose we'll go off of any of the multiple leads that you have," Jake said slyly. "Come on, it'll kill two birds with one stone, both the lead and where the kids had last been seen." William gave in, and after a hearty breakfast they made their way to the forest.

As they transitioned from the town to the forest the area became more and more quiet, filled only with the occasional rustle of trees and the calls of different animals. Buildings change to trees, and roads become less and less refined. Eventually they make their way to a clearing near Mr. Miller's house. By this time the sun was directly overhead, and the clearing was filled with light.

"So any plans, or are we just supposed to stumble upon them out here?" Jake walked over to William.

"Look at the ground," Jake told him, pointing down, "I think that if there's any chance of finding anything we'll find a fallen toy, or a footprint, or something that will give up direction." William shuffled along and muttered to himself how unprofessional it is to hope to randomly find anything that will lead them to the kids on the ground. He kicked a rock along as he surveyed the ground looking for anything that might pop out to him. Walking along he missed the rock with his foot, but continued on. Fortunately, he spotted a similar rock and began to kick that one. He turned around briefly and saw Jake wandering around looking similarly lost. Facing forward again he realized he lost the second rock, but there's another

one just a few feet in front of him. William picked up his pace and saw another rock, and several rocks in the distance; leading him down a path.

“Jake!” William yelled across the forest, waving his arms, “I’m heading over this way.” He pointed towards the trail of rock, and he saw a small nod from his brother. Following the trail he lost himself in thoughts about the case, what might have happened, did the rocks really have anything to do with it, was there any way they could possibly solve this case. Suddenly he realized that he’s pretty far away from where they started. He took one last look down the trail before he headed back, but saw something in the distance, a house. Running back he told Jake about the house and together they went back down the path to see the house. As they got closer, they noticed a similar looking chimney, a recognizable small house. It was Mr. Miller’s.

Looking back down, they saw that rocks lead straight to the front door. They knocked on the front door and Mr. Miller answered, confused. They confronted him, and asked him to reveal why there is a trail of pebbles leading to his house. After some intense persuasion Mr. Miller gave up the truth. He abandoned his children in the middle of the woods. Finally, Miller brought them to the place where he left his children, and then William told him to go back to his house.

The two detectives looked at each other and saw the same emotions on their faces.

“So now what?” Jake asked.

“The same thing as last time.” William responded. The two split up and search in opposite directions. They got further and further away from the original spot and they began to get discouraged. Jake looked up from the ground and stretched his neck. Again he saw Mr. Miller’s house in the distance. He decided that it’s best if he goes, and discussed privately with Mr. Miller to see if he can get any more information. Making it most of the way to the house, he looked back up and saw an unfamiliar door, then a different window, a garden, a different chimney, and a smaller house. He realized that this is not at all the same house.

Jake knocked on the door, but there was no answer. He decided to wait and examined the house a little closer. Eventually he noticed something odd about the walls of the house. The door opened and a little old lady stood in the doorway.

“Hello, my name is Jake, I’m a private investigator. I noticed you live out in the woods; recently there have been some events that I have been paid to investigate. Is there any way that I could have a few words with you?”

“Anything dearie.” the old lady croaked. “Why don’t you come in, it’s awfully cold outside.” At first Jake denied the request, but eventually he is convinced to enter. When he entered, he noticed a lack of furniture, a tidy house, a closed room to the left, and a kitchen to the far right.

“Are those cookies I smell?” Jake asked politely.

“No. But can I interest you in anything.” she grabbed his arm, “you look like you could put on a few pounds.” Jake laughed awkwardly, and turned her down, but thanked her for the offer. She motioned towards a chair in the corner, and he sat down. She went over to the kitchen. Jake pulled out his notepad and began to question her.

“Has anything out of the ordinary happened in the last few weeks?” He patted his pockets and eventually found a pen.

“No, not much,” the old lady called from the other room. She brought in a plate of food, handed it to Jake, and headed back into the kitchen. Jake continued to ask questions, but never seemed to get any answers from the lady. Putting the plate down, he stood up and put his notes and pen away.

“Thanks for everything, but I’m going to need to be headed out,” Jake said as he moved towards the door.

“Ohhhh, could you do one last favor for me sweetie,” the old lady asked and Jake turned around in the doorway.

“Could you just check on my oven, it hasn’t been working for the past week?” the old lady asked kindly. Jake sighed and walked into the kitchen. He reached the oven and leaned over it, and messed around with it before turning to the old lady.

“I’m not sure what’s wrong with this,” Jake scratched his head and stood back up, “maybe you need to let someone else check on it.”

“Could you check inside before you go, I think that there may be something loose in there.”

There's a knock on the door, and the old lady told Jake that she'll get it. He knelt down and stuck his head

in the oven to get a better look. A sharp push in his back caused Jake to fall in, and before he could react the oven door was shut.

Meanwhile, William opened the door in front of him. In the house he noticed the barren rooms and how clean it is. He peaked around the house to find it empty. He walked through the entrance and called out, but no one answered. Looking through the house William decided to check inside the room off to the side of the entrance. Opening the door he found two kids in a small room, one shackled to the floor, the other in a cage. Moving towards the kids, he checked the chain and the cage, unable to open it. He stood up and told the kids they'll be okay and moved back into the main room. He went into the other room branching off from the entrance room. Looking around he found himself in the kitchen. He searched around to find a key or something to break the kids free. Suddenly there is a cry from behind him and William twisted to see a crazy old lady lunging at them. He grabbed a pot from the open cabinet, but the old lady reached him before he could use it. He tried to struggle, but she was unusually strong for an old lady. William was pushed against the wall, and the witch went to open the oven. She opened the door and from inside Jake lashed out with his foot, connecting with her face. William took advantage of the moment and knocked her out with the pot.

Wasting no time, William pulled Jake out of the oven, and told him about the kids in the room. Jake went over to try to help, while William checked the old lady for keys. William rushed into the room with the keys and got both kids free. Quickly Will rushed out with the kids, and looked back. After a minute Jake came out, and they both walked the rest of the way to Miller's house. The group arrived on the doorstep, and knocked on the door. Mr. Miller opened the door, and William and Jake presented the two kids to him. Mr. Miller stares at the two detectives.

"Those aren't my kids."



Love Liberates

Love is a tightening of the chest
When the thought of them leaving sinks in.

Love is getting up at 3 am
When it's cold outside
To dance in the snow with them.

Love is trusting that
Someone else can be there for you.

Love is dancing in the refrigerator light
As you cook together
Flour slipping into the crevices
Of the pain
Remedying the mistakes.

Love is working on yourself so that they
Can receive the type of attention they so utterly
deserve.

Love is the essence of happiness
That never seems to leave your face,
Rosy cheeks and bright eyes.

Love is fighting and drifting apart
But always finding your way back to each other.

Love is understanding that interests, although vast,
May lead you down different paths in life.

Love is playing superheroes on a Saturday evening
Rather than going out with friends

Love is seeing them for the first time
After being separated for far too long.

Love is limitless
Boundless,
It crosses oceans
And moves across worlds.

Love is a tether that connects one person to another.
When you are separated, the tightening of this rope can
be felt

Like a rubber band, stretching

Stretching

Stretching.

It's a constant ache until the tightening subsides when
you are finally in their presence, seconds from a
breaking point.

Love is freedom.

It is the feeling of knowing, at last, that you will have
unending support.

It is the admiration you feel when they do well at their
job.

Or when they come home with elation clear on their
faces

Bouncing from the overwhelming excitement
Of something that means the world to them
And you are enthused right alongside them.

Love is not a cage
Meant to hold something beautiful until it withers.

Love is not a magnet,
the room to breathe forbidden.

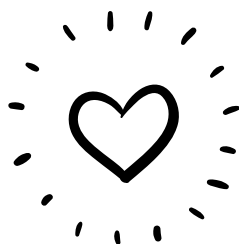
Love is the water that feeds a flower and allows it to
bloom.

Love is the bird that sings in the early dewy mornings.

Love is the platform that allows others to reach their
dreams all the more easily.

Love is liberating

- Brea Lawton



from prose to poetry by Isabella Mainard

Purple
 Walls
 Surrounding
 You ,
 You sink farther and farther away from REALITY,

Only
 To
 Realize
 You've
 Been
 Sinking more and more
 Deep into the covers,
 The HEAT from the SUN shining across your face
 As green reflected from the green
 Filling each window
 In the light purple room,

As

You
 Hear
 The
 Quiet
 Bubbles
 Popping
 POP
 POP
 POP

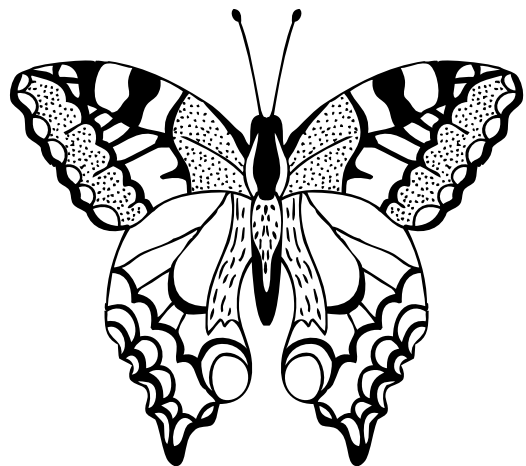
To lift up from you book to realize
 You're HOME
 Where YOU belong.



How do you define the start of a life?
Is it when you're born
Or when you decide what you want to do
with yours?
My life didn't begin until I was 5 years
old...
It was September
My mom had left the house for a few days
And I didn't know why
I was afraid she would never come back
Like my dad did
But one day, she walked through the door
And she wasn't alone
In her arms was a baby
His name was Joey and I believed he was
mine
Sitting on the couch,
In my Little Mermaid nightgown,
I held my baby brother for the first time.
We would play dinosaurs together
And he always knew their names.
R's were missing in his vocabulary
So he could never pronounce mine
But I found it endearing.
He used to believe cartoons were real-life
And that he was Scooby-Doo.
But seasons change
And we all age
And before I knew it
We weren't best friends anymore
For he now had his own.
He learned to pronounce my name
correctly
And no longer cared to play dinosaurs.
I sometimes wonder if he remembers
How close we used to be.
Does he care?
Was the start of his life
The end of our friendship?
Perhaps as time goes on
We can meet each other again,
As the people we will one day become,
And maybe
Just maybe
We can be friends again
- Brea Lawton

Wisdom by Lucia Igitego

*In life I've acquired wisdom
The power to see what other don't
Everything surrounding me piques my
interest
There's a nostalgic feeling to it
Has you feel the wonder of Déjà vu
The slight chill that goes down your spine
The feeling of a familiarity
Feels like you just unlocked a past memory
Sometimes it leaves behind a cynical feeling
Why me? you may wonder
Well you're special in a way
You bring out the darkness in life
The irony of it is.....
Are you going straight towards the darkness
or,
Have you been in darkness all along?*



WHAT IF YOU COULD BRING SOMEONE BACK FROM THE DEAD?

THERE WAS ONCE A GIRL WHO WAS THE LIFE OF THE PARTY. SHE WAS THE POPULAR GIRL THAT EVERYONE WANTED TO BE. BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING THAT NO ONE COULD SEE. IT WAS THE DARKNESS INSIDE THAT SHE WAS FIGHTING. THIS DARKNESS ONLY BEGAN TO AFFECT HER AFTER ONE FATEFUL NIGHT. THE NIGHT SHE LOST EVERYTHING THAT MATTERED.

EARLIER THAT DAY, SHE AND HER FRIEND HAD BEEN HANGING OUT AND SOME OF THEM WANTED TO GO TO A PARTY. SHE DIDN'T KNOW IT THEN, BUT SHE WOULD SOON REGRET SAYING YES. WHEN SHE GOT TO THE PARTY SHE MADE HER FIRST MISTAKE OF THE NIGHT. SHE GRABBED A DRINK. THE SECOND MISTAKE, AND THE ONE SHE WOULD SOON REGRET, HAPPENED WHEN SHE LEFT HER DRINK UNATTENDED. UPON COMING BACK, SHE DRANK IT IMMEDIATELY. THAT'S WHEN THE FLASHBACKS HAPPENED. RECOUNTING THE EVENTS THAT MADE HER REMEMBER THE DAY SHE LOST EVERYTHING THAT MATTERED. IT MADE HER REMEMBER THE NIGHT OF HER PARENT'S DEATH.

IT WAS A NORMAL EVENING FOR HER AND HER FAMILY. THEY WERE DRIVING HOME FROM VOLLEYBALL. BUT, AS THEY WERE DRIVING SHE FELT SOMETHING WAS OFF. SHE DOESN'T MENTION IT, BUT SHE SOON REALIZED THAT NIGHT COULD HAVE ENDED VERY DIFFERENTLY IF SHE HAD. MAYBE HER PARENTS WOULDN'T HAVE DIED AND THAT IS SOMETHING SHE WILL HAVE TO LIVE WITH... OR WILL SHE? ONE MINUTE THERE WAS LAUGHTER AND SINGING IN THE CAR AND NEXT, THERE WAS A SOUND SHE WOULD NEVER WANT TO REMEMBER. THE NEXT THING SHE REMEMBERS IS BEING PULLED FROM THE CAR. AS THEY WERE REMOVING HER, SHE SAW SOMETHING NO ONE SHOULD EVER HAVE TO SEE. SHE SAW THE LIFELESS BODY OF HER PARENTS. AT THAT MOMENT, SHE REALIZED SHE WOULD NEVER SAY ANOTHER WORD TO THEM. WOULD NEVER GET TO SAY I LOVE YOU, I'LL MISS YOU, AND GOODBYE AS THEY LEAVE. THESE WERE THE THOUGHTS THAT WERE PLAGUING HER MIND AS SHE WAS LOADED INTO THE AMBULANCE. AT THIS MOMENT EVERYTHING IN HER LIFE WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE.

ONCE SHE FINALLY WOKE SHE SAW SHE WAS IN THE HOSPITAL. SHE WAS HAVING A HARD TIME BECAUSE OF THIS, TO BEGIN WITH, BUT AS SHE WAS BECOMING MORE CONSCIOUS, SHE STARTED TO REMEMBER WHAT HAD REALLY HAPPENED. WHEN SHE WOKE UP, SHE HOPED THAT EVERYTHING WAS JUST A SICK NIGHTMARE.

BUT, WHEN SHE FINALLY SAT UP, SHE SAW HER GRANDPARENTS AND NOT HER PARENTS. THAT WAS THE FIRST SIGN TO HER THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG. THEN SHE WAS TOLD SOMETHING. SOMETHING THAT SHE SHOULD NEVER HEAR. THAT'S WHEN SHE REALIZED IT WAS REAL. HER PARENTS WERE DEAD. AT THAT MOMENT, SHE REMEMBERED THE FACT SHE WOULD NEVER HEAR THEM LAUGH AGAIN. SHE WOULD NEVER SEE THEIR SMILES AGAIN. AT THAT MOMENT, EVERYTHING THAT SHE HAD IN HER LIFE CHANGED....

WHEN SHE FINALLY WOKE UP FROM WHATEVER DRUG WAS IN HER CUP SHE SAW EVERYONE AROUND HER. SHE WAS LAYING ON THE GROUND AND EVERYONE WAS STANDING ABOVE HER, WATCHING. SHE GOT UP, DITCHED HER HEELS, AND STARTED TO RUN. AS SHE WAS RUNNING SHE HEARD PEOPLE YELLING AFTER HER BUT IT WAS TOO LATE---SHE WAS ALREADY GONE. SHE JUST KEPT ON RUNNING UNTIL SHE REACHED HER HOUSE. ONCE SHE ENTERED THE HOUSE, HER GRANDPARENTS WERE THERE TO GREET AND COMFORT HER. THEY GOT HER SOME WATER AND CRACKERS. SHE COULDN'T EVEN START TALKING BEFORE SHE STARTED TO CRY AND THEY TRIED TO COMFORT HER. IT WASN'T THE SAME. IT WILL NEVER BE THE SAME WAS ALL THAT WAS RUNNING THROUGH MY MIND AT THAT MOMENT.

WHEN SHE WOKE UP, SHE HEARD HER GRANDPARENTS CALL HER FOR BREAKFAST AND TELL HER TO GET READY FOR SCHOOL. IT WAS 7:30 AM AND SCHOOL STARTED AT 8 BUT SHE DIDN'T WANT TO GO. SHE GOT READY AND ATE BREAKFAST LIKE SHE WAS GOING TO SCHOOL BUT IN REALITY, SHE WASN'T. INSTEAD, AS SHE WAS GOING TO SCHOOL, SHE TURNED OFF TOWARDS THE CEMETERY. TAKING THE PATH THAT LED HER TO A PLACE THAT FELT LIKE HOME. NO, IT WASN'T THE CEMETERY ITSELF, BUT A GRAVE THAT WAS IMPORTANT TO HER. HER PARENTS' GRAVES. THE PLACE THAT FELT LIKE HOME.

WHEN SHE ARRIVED SHE WENT TO THE GRAVE AND SAT IN SILENCE FOR A FEW MINUTES, OBSERVING THE AREA AND ENJOYING THE COOL BREEZE OF EARLY FALL. THEN SHE TALKED ABOUT HER LIFE AND WHAT WAS HAPPENING WITH HER GRANDPARENTS. SHE MENTIONED THE PARTY.

THEN SHE HEARD SOMETHING BEHIND HER. WHEN SHE LOOKED, IT WAS A PERSON. SHE COULDN'T SEE THEIR FACE AND HEARD ONLY A VOICE CALLING HER CLOSER. FOLLOWING THE VOICE, SHE WAS LED TOWARDS A BENCH. THEY TOLD HER THAT SHE HAD BEEN CHOSEN. SHE WAS NEVER TOLD WHAT SHE HAD BEEN CHOSEN FOR. WHEN THE PERSON WALKED AWAY, SHE FOLLOWED AS SHE WAS CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT SHE HAD BEEN CHOSEN FOR. THEN, AS SHE GOT CLOSER TO THEM, THE PERSON VANISHED INTO THIN AIR. AFTERWARD, SHE WENT BACK AND SAT DOWN BY HER PARENTS' GRAVE ONCE AGAIN. AS SHE WAS SITTING THERE SHE FELT A POWER, A TYPE OF POWER SHE HAD NEVER FELT BEFORE. THEN EVERYTHING WENT DARK ONCE AGAIN. SHE WOKE UP A FEW MINUTES LATER TO FIND THAT NOTHING CHANGED. BUT SHE FELT IT AGAIN; THE POWER SURGING THROUGH HER. SHE REALIZED IT WAS MAGIC. AS SHE WAS STANDING THERE, SHE HEARD A VOICE IN HER HEAD. IT TOLD HER TO COME CLOSER AND SHE PICTURED WHAT SHE LOVED THE MOST. SHE DIDN'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT, BUT FINALLY, SHE DID. WHEN SHE OPENED HER EYES, SHE SAW TWO PEOPLE SHE THOUGHT SHE WOULD NEVER SEE AGAIN---HER PARENTS. THEN EVERYTHING WENT DARK AGAIN. AS SHE WOKE UP SHE HEARD VOICES THAT WERE NOT IN HER HEAD THIS TIME. AS SHE OPENED HER EYES, SHE SAW THE TWO PEOPLE SHE LOVED THE MOST, ALIVE; HER PARENTS. SHE STOOD UP AND RAN TO THEM AS IF HER LIFE DEPENDED ON IT. SHE NEEDED TO MAKE SURE IT WASN'T HER IMAGINATION PLAYING TRICKS AND IT WASN'T. HER PARENTS WERE REALLY THERE. SOMETHING FELT OFF TO HER BUT SHE IGNORED IT. SHE WAS JUST SO HAPPY THAT SHE DIDN'T CARE. THE FIRST THING SHE DID WAS APOLOGIZE TO THEM. SHE TOLD THEM IT WAS HER FAULT THAT THEY DIED. THEY TOLD HER IT WAS NEVER HER FAULT. THEY DIDN'T BLAME HER FOR THEIR DEATH. THAT WAS WHEN EVERYTHING WENT WRONG. IT WAS ALL HAPPY AND SMILES BUT IT QUICKLY TURNED TO TEARS AND SORROWS. SHE ASKED WHAT WAS WRONG AND THEY REPLIED THAT THEY WERE SAD THAT SHE WAS LIVING THIS GREAT LIFE WITHOUT THEM AND THAT THEY HAD MADE PEACE IN HEAVEN. THAT WAS SOMETHING SHE NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT: WHAT THEY WANTED OVER WHAT SHE WANTED. AT THAT MOMENT, SHE REALIZED SHE ALWAYS THOUGHT ABOUT HERSELF AND NOT OTHERS. SHE REALIZED SOMETHING SHE NEVER WANTED. SHE HAD TO SAY GOODBYE. SO THEY COULD BE HAPPY AS WELL. AT THAT MOMENT, THAT FRAGMENT OF TIME REALIZED SHE REALIZED LIFE WAS FULL OF HARD CHOICES AND SHE NEEDED TO MAKE THIS ONE. SHE KNEW THAT SHE JUST HAD TO APPRECIATE THE TIME SHE GOT AND NOT DWELL ON ANYTHING ELSE. TO HOLD ON AND KEEP BELIEVING THAT ONE DAY SHE WOULD BE WITH THEM AGAIN. SHE LEARNED THIS WAS GOOD AND SHE WOULD SEE THEM LATER. WHEN SHE WAS SAYING GOODBYE, SHE KNEW SHE WOULDN'T SEE THEM FOR A LONG WHILE. SO, SHE STARTED WITH GOODBYE. THEN, SHE COUNTED HOW MUCH SHE LOVED THEM. SHE THANKED THEM FOR TEACHING HER EVERYTHING SHE NEEDED TO KNOW.

SHE APOLOGIZED FOR THINKING OF HERSELF INSTEAD OF WHAT THEY WOULD HAVE WANTED. AS SHE SAID GOODBYE, HER PARENTS SAID IT WAS NEVER HER FAULT AND THEY WOULD NEVER BLAME HER. AS THEY WERE HUGGING GOODBYE, SHE FELT THEM DISAPPEARING IN HER ARMS. AS THEY DISAPPEARED SHE WAS TOLD THAT THEY LOVED HER AND THAT THIS WAS NOT GOODBYE BUT SEE YOU SOON. ONLY ONCE THEY FULLY DISAPPEARED DID SHE STAND THERE AND CRY. SHE DIDN'T WANT THEM TO SEE HER BEING WEAK AND FRAGILE AND NOT STRONG. AS SHE STOOD THERE, SHE SAW A PAPER FLOATING DOWN. SHE PICKED UP THE PAPER AD IT READ: "NEVER LET THE DARKNESS TAKE OVER" AT THAT MOMENT SHE KNEW WHO IT WAS AND JUST SMILED. THEN SHE STOOD THERE. REMEMBERING TO THINK OF OTHERS BEFORE HERSELF. TO ENJOY THE PEOPLE THAT SHE HAD IN HER LIFE NOW AND ENJOY THE MOMENT THEY DO GET TOGETHER. THIS WAS BECAUSE, FOR HER, SHE DOESN'T KNOW HOW LONG THEY WOULD BE IN HER LIFE. FINALLY, SHE REMEMBERED TO NEVER LET THE DARKNESS TAKE OVER.

– MEGAN SWISHER

Unwonderland

by Maria Wilson

Down

Down

Down

The RABBIT HOLE I fell

Down

Down

Down

Whatever can I do?

With bottles labeled "drink me"

And cakes labeled the same

I shrink till almost nothing

I grow till I burst

Help me

Help me

Help me.

Flowers talking

No yelling

A caterpillar

With a hookah

Shouting

"Explain yourself"

"Who are you?"

The caterpillar says

Running

Running

Running

I'M RUNNING AWAY.

A very merry unbirthday

The MAD hatter yells

A tea party for all!

Drink

Drink

Drink

Until you are full.

Drink

Drink

Drink

Drink until the poison sets in

–Till you go cold.

WHITE roses

–Dipped in blood

Drip

Drip

Drip.

The queen yelling ---

"Off with her head!"

My Dream by Lucia Igitego

I've grown to love the sound of horns

To wake up to the sound of cars zooming past

blaring

To look outside of my window and see and

Trains passing by

To hear the sounds of

Even the birds flying past your window

The wonder that is New York traffic

I yearn to hear the people bickering outside

Having spent the entirety of my life secluded

Traveling from all around the state

Kept inside of my house

Going from place to place

Never getting to explore what's around me

Never having sound

Freedom

That's what I yearn for

That's what I need

The Freak of Nature and the Prince.

Belle was a beautiful young girl loved by everybody in the community. Although was known for her beautiful singing voice and her intelligence, her looks caught the attention of all. She was beautiful beyond words. When she was born, her dad noticed her loveliness and decided to name her Belle, or beautiful in french. She was out of this world. From a young age, Belle loved picking flowers. It was a tradition of hers to pick flowers for her dad and sister. Sometimes she even picked some for her neighbors. She was a cherished girl. However, things took a turn when something horrible happened to her. On a cold winter night, Belle was walking in a forest. She approached an old beggar who asked for one of the flowers she had picked.

"Hey, young lady. Might I get one of those roses?" asked the beggar.

"Umm I could give you some but these are for my sisters and father," replied Belle.

"I said give me them now!" demanded the beggar.

“Oh my! Why so aggressive?” asked Belle.

“If you do not give them now, I’ll punish you.” said the beggar

“NO! I CAN’T GIVE THEM TO YOU” shouted Belle.

The beggar was shocked, “Oh really, fine, you are going to be *lusus naturae*.”

“What does that even mean?” asked Belle.

“A FREAK OF NATURE and the only thing that can cure you is a kiss from the one you love but with that horrid face, I can guarantee you shall never find someone, hahaha,” yelled the beggar.

“Well, I don’t believe you, beggar. I shall not turn into a freak of nature.”

At that moment, Belle turned into an ugly creature but she had yet to realize it yet. Belle thought the beggar was being overdramatic. But, when she was walking back to the village with her basket of flowers, she noticed that everybody was looking at her weirdly. She wasn't bothered by this. Belle went about her way, singing her favorite song. When she got home, her sister yelled as she saw her horrific face. Belle was perplexed. She wondered what had caused her sister to scream like that.

“Clarice, what’s wrong? Why are you shouting” Belle asked

“My beautiful sister, that can’t be you. What has happened to your face?” Clarice asked

Belle ran to the mirror to see what her sister was talking about. The horror caused her to faint.

She woke up surrounded by her aunt Marguerite, father Maurice, and sister Clarice. She hoped that everything was just a dream, but her father’s face made her realize it wasn’t.

“She is going to be the shame of the family, we have to get rid of her,” Aunt Marguerite said to Maurice. Belle was outraged at herself. Her sister was never going to marry because everybody thought she was cursed. They would think her whole family was cursed. She had no idea what to do.

“My daughter Belle, who did this to you?” asked Maurice.

Belle did not want to talk. She knew what everybody thought of her. She felt guilty. Belle planned to run away that night, so she waited until nighttime when everybody was sound asleep. Then, she went to her father and sister’s room and said goodbye to them with tears in her eyes.

“I have to leave. I can’t let my curse cause problems for you guys,” Belle said.

Belle started her journey to the unknown. She had no idea where she was going. All she knew was she had to go as far away as she could. So she went on with her journey and stopped for a break occasionally. As she was singing, she saw a handsome young man. They made eye contact and the young man with a confused face approached Belle.

“Was that you singing?” asked the young man.

“Ye- Yes that was me,” replied Belle.

“Oh wow, you have a beautiful voice for such an ugly face,” said the young man. “What has caused your face to look like that?”

“I was cursed by an old beggar when I refused to give her my rose. She said the only thing that could cure me was love,” said Belle.

“What are you doing walking out here by yourself?” asked the young man

“I didn't want to shame my family so I ran away,” explained Belle. The young man was shocked by this.

“Well since you have nowhere to go, you can with me. I can help you stay sheltered until you know what to do.” offered the young man.

“Well no I can't do that, it is too nice of you.”

“I insist, young lady. I would not want you to stay here in the cold.”

“Well, if you insist. I do thank you for your hospitality and kindness,” said Belle. The young man and Belle started walking to their destination. Finally, they reached an elegant gigantic castle.

“Welcome in,” the young man said

“This can not be your place. What are you? A prince or something?” asked Belle.

“I *am* the prince,” said the young man.

Belle was surprised. That was the last thing she expected. This increased her shame.

Belle and the prince hung out for the next couple of days, went on walks together, and picked flowers. The prince taught Belle how to play the piano. She would sing and the prince would join in. The prince and Belle soon became best friends.

The Prince noticed Belle's beauty and he started to fall in love with her. He tried to ignore the feeling because he knew many people would disapprove of as a princess, but it became hard for him to ignore his feelings.

Soon after this, he finally accepted his feelings and made a move on Belle. The kiss was so magical that Belle eventually transformed back into herself. Once he saw her new transformation, he was fixed on her beauty. They stayed together until death finally took them away. Those years were full of joy and love.

-Kc Nkundabagenzi

Meredith Grey

HE'S CODING

These words I say all the time
I dread the sentence of calling the death
The weight of the guilt weighs me down
I feel like I have lost my gown
My clothes turn into scrubs
My hair becomes ratty and greasy
"Don't worry" "I'm sorry"
I reassure the family then let them down
I dread the entrance of grief when the
flatline sounds
It means we have lost him and I break
down.

-Annie Sableski

SpiderPig

I Grew up on a farm in Springfield
I got bite by a spider with turned me into
Spider Pig
My powers were growing extremely fast
and I was able to walk on walls, I was then
captured
by a bad man named Krusty the Clown
I would then be able to escape and find
my best friend Homer Simpson but
Krusty the clown would again capture me
and I wouldn't get that lucky again
It left my friend Homer Simpson very sad
-Devin Goodpaster

This Was It

This was it, her final chance. She lifted her head to reveal her bright smile as the velvet curtain gracefully slid open. As her horizons widened, she gazed over the crowd. Such a grand place filled to the rim as if it was too small. The whispers hushed and set their sights on her in her swan-like gown as her eyes continued to scan. Her eyes seemed to lock wherever she looked as the instruments started to play elegantly, joining in one by one. She took her last breath that will decide it all. She opened her lips and the words poured out of her as if it was completely natural. The words were sad and lonely, yet the melody was calm. The audience felt it too. That this was not just another performance, but a story. A story of a girl that wanted to make her mark on the world. The girl wasn't the brightest in her class, but she has passion that no one else could grasp. She had a voice, a voice of her own that she could use to make her mark. And, she knew it too. But unfortunately it was taken from her, the passion that she thought no one else could ever take away from her. Her voice started to shatter as she realized the weight of life outside of her hopes and dreams. She was faced with the challenge of death. The melody started to darken. As she sang, her composure was broken and her still, idle, dignified figure started to shift. Though her smile

remained, her body started to pour out more passion that she had inside her. She strutted slowly forward looking up her eyes gleamed and glossed over, almost as if she would start crying. Her final song was coming to an end. She looked back down to the crowd, still smiling softly as she sang. Her eyes gazed over them as she took it all in for the last time. For this was her last performance she will ever be able to do, but no one will ever know till it would be too late. She stepped back and bowed lightly as the same velvet curtains closed her off from the rest of the world. With her eyes closed, all she could hear was the vigorous clapping of the satisfied people, and the weeping of some women. She bowed her head as tears started to drip down to the floor. She smiled weakly and covered her hands to her face. She had done it. She could finally rest in peace knowing that her mark would remain just as she had wanted for so long.

-Corina Harris

Scout (my dog)

LET me run.
 Open the door and let me be free.
 I will come back, I swear.
 I just need an hour and some pizza crust.
 My owner, let me run.
 -Eric Hilgeford

(Fades to Memory)

A single sound, lost in its
 own noise. A trivial tune echoing its final
 note. The choice to persevere, an inevitable
 decision.

The bonds of harmony are
 weathered at the base and made
 brittle as time wears on. By

a culmination of thought, the
 pressure of the masses,
 a simple solution. People

change. What was once nearest
 dims as the past fades to memory. The
 brick crumbles, the concrete

falls. Nothing remains. The structures of
 memory having
 no form. At most,
 the foundation endures. To

rebuild, a hopeless endeavor. Where do
 we go from here? Fragments in hand with
 a sea of opportunity afoot. No actual

limits in sight. Grounded only by the touch
 of the land,
 untethered and
 Free. Lost again in an oceanless sea.

-Nathan Snizik

I Like Fall Most Of All

By Sophia Burton

**When the leaves change,
 The weather gets strange.**

**When the leaves die,
 I feel like eating pumpkin pie.**

**When the leaves fall,
 I get the feeling of all.**

I love the Season of Fall.



-Karli Beard

Wouldn't it be lovely to think so?

To be able to believe that everyone
can change?

That everyone is worth fighting
for,

That no one is truly broken beyond
repair,

That every single one of us is
priceless?

It must be nice, to have the
strength to shine so bright,
Instead of doing your best to make
yourself as small as possible,
Without snuffing yourself out.

Wouldn't it be lovely to be able to
see your own worth,

Beyond how useful you can be for
others?

Wouldn't it be lovely, to let yourself
have needs,

Instead of forcing yourself to be
low maintenance,

So you feel worthy of someone's
time and energy?

Wouldn't it be lovely, to be able to
look at yourself in the mirror for
more than a few seconds without
it being painful?

Wouldn't it be lovely to be able to
go a single day without

Anxiety thrumming in your veins like
a second heartbeat,

every second of the day?

I think it would be lovely, to have
enough confidence to speak
without shaking,

To not overthink every word,
every phrase that I say.

The anxiety never leaves, it sings
me to sleep and screams for me
to wake up.

It haunts my dreams as if it were
attached to my very bones,
Hissing taunts and insecurities into
my ear, so quiet no one else can
hear

Wouldn't it be lovely,
To feel like your skin isn't too tight
and too loose in all the wrong
places

To rarely feel the constricting
tightness in your chest,
Scared that you did something
wrong?

Wouldn't it be lovely to think so?
-Grace Simpson

The Race
–Hannah Hall

At the break of dawn
Young we are we start
No knowledge of what lays
Before us, but we are eager

Flying we go, rhythm
Takes over us
One foot down, one foot up
Look ahead, not behind

A mountain and fear
Of what's to come
Pain, the mind wants an escape
Must keep going, it's not over

Then... downward
Relief, if only for
A moment, flying
Across, successful

Blades of grass, people, places
Pain, want for an end
One foot down, one foot up
Look ahead, not behind

People besides us
People ahead, altogether
A massive wave, all different
But in the same experience

The miles we cover
The miles we'll go
One foot down, one foot up
Look ahead, not behind

The end will come
It always does
Slowly, but fastly
The finish will be in sight

But what is the reason
For this race, what
Are we, what are you running
Towards in this race of life

Ode to Simplicity

Devotion to luxury
supersedes community
Lack of virtue
breeds superficial desires
Deliberately wretched,
greed consumes us

Heedless consumption,
a detriment to all
Overgrown and cluttered,
the fruits of material goods
Constant fluctuation,
endless demand
The system unwieldy
and complex

Its superfluous form
consumes us all
Reversion to simplicity
the only remedy
A life of pleasure supersedes
subliminal pursuits
The only solution
to an endless problem
- Nathan Snizik

To the Moon and Back
I love you
To the moon and
back But I know you
Will never look back

To the moon and
back I would follow
Will never look back
I will wallow

I would follow
But I know
I will wallow
I love you

Emily Gantner

Oliver Queen

When I spent five years on that island,
I was forever changed to realize the dangers
of the world.

Before that, I was a partier that cared about
myself and only myself.

That island made me care about the people
of my city.

I became a warrior sworn to protect them.

My family was in tatters because of my
mother,

But we continue to make amends.

I wanted to be able to protect everyone by
myself,

But that was impossible without my friends.

Friends helped me to be my best and to do
my job.

I needed my friends to reach my full
potential.

They made me who I was,

And they shaped my vision of who I wanted
to be.

-Albert Brust

Wouldn't It Be Lovely? By Tony Wilson

Wouldn't it be lovely to experience a world where there was no judgment, no oppression, and no discrimination. A world where we could be free to live our lives and not worry about what we can and can't do. A world where there is happiness and peace and not anger and violence. A world where there are no inequalities. A world where we could all live our lives to the fullest and without worry. A world where there is no hate, discrimination, or prejudice, but kindness and compassion.

A world where kids can get a great quality education, as they are the ones who will change the world someday. A world where there is no crime, no murder, no burglary, no theft, and no assaults. A world in which we could all live our lives out with no worries and threats of violence. A world where the impoverished are given chances to escape their financial burdens and obstacles.

A world where there is more construction than destruction. A world where we could all practice our faiths and beliefs without the threat of persecution and segregation. A world where everyone is given an equal chance of achieving success. A world with lush green forests, vast deserts, and beautiful seas, without a single piece of waste spanning as far as the eye can see. A world where sickness is overcome with good health and proper medical care. A world where stress is overcome with calmness and serenity. A world where we can love whoever we want, without the fear of prejudice and social judgment. A world where a peaceful solution is the only answer to a major problem or dilemma. A world where we can all be accepted by society, no matter who we are and what we do. A world where hazardous nuclear power plants, large towering petroleum refineries, and dangerous coal mines are a thing of the past. A world that is covered in windmills, dams, and solar panels to get our energy. A world where we conserve animal species and there is no such thing as endangered and rare animals. A world where habitat loss and extinction are halted and become a thing of the past. A world where we can coexist with all life on Earth and preserve it if need be. A world where we can also coexist with our fellow man, with no problems or issues. A world that scrambles to serve a natural disaster relief effort, with no thought, just human instinct. A world where politics and appearances are not more important than helping and protecting our neighbors. What if, there was a world that contained all of this, it would be too good to be true.

The first few hundred times, the differences weren't very noticeable. A different color wall, different type of hair, a different teacher sometimes, were all hard to notice, and hard to keep track of. I would wake up sometimes with black hair instead of blonde hair, and I'd barely notice until I glanced in the mirror while brushing my teeth that night. As long as the alterations couldn't affect me in a large and noticeable way, I didn't care much to acknowledge them. They didn't matter. They were completely arbitrary to me. I don't think I even noticed them for a few months. I was so wrapped up in everything else going on that I didn't care to notice that my English teacher had slightly different hair, or that I had different colored socks. Those sorts of things have never mattered much to me, and they certainly didn't matter now.

Eventually, the changes started getting bigger. I went to a completely different school now, and no matter how many times I went to sleep and woke up, I still went there. It was weird having to learn a new place in less than 8 hours, especially when the school would sometimes look very different the next day. One day there might be a water fountain where my favorite class was, or a restroom where the cafeteria had been. Most days, I didn't even eat lunch because I couldn't find it. That's around when things started to really go bad. That's when the big differences started appearing when I woke up.

I think the worst part about it all was that no one would believe me about it. Once, I tried to tell my friend and explain it all, but she thought I was joking, and since I didn't want her to think I was crazy, I didn't mention it to anyone again, except for that one time, of course. A few months ago, I had woken up, and my mom looked completely different in more ways than I could even notice. She didn't even speak like her anymore, and so I asked her who she was. She looked confused, and then angry, and then so angry I regretted ever speaking or even looking at her, and yelled that she was my mother, and that she had always been. I was too scared to speak, and never asked anyone anything similar again. My mom was back again the next day, and I didn't say anything. Of course, I was scared of what she would say, and if she wouldn't sound like herself.

Anyways, I don't think I can recognize anything today. Which is unusual, of course, because I can always recognize something about every day, whether it be my appearance, or how my friends look, or even the color of the sky. The sky is a dark red today, and everything seems dismal and dark. I have no friends, because even if I had some, I wouldn't be able to recognize them. My mom looks so, so different, and apparently my dad is alive. He doesn't look anything like I remember him looking like, and somehow that's even more disturbing than everything else.

When I looked in the mirror this morning, getting ready for school, I didn't look anything like how I remembered I had a few months before. Maybe it was the not eating. Maybe it was the not sleeping. Maybe it was the constant stress and pain over the world you once knew not being your own anymore. I didn't know. Now, instead of looking reasonably healthy and like myself, I had thin, black hair that barely reached my shoulders, and my eyes looked... dead, I think it was. Maybe I was myself, and maybe I looked like myself, but I definitely didn't feel anything like myself. I was a twisted face detached from my soul, which was drifting around the cosmos, finding an awful place to end up for just one singular day. And I didn't know what to do.

I don't think that there's a way to save me. I wouldn't even know how. I am perpetually trapped in an endless cycle of meaningless lives, and I can't even recognize my face in half of them. Maybe I will be happier tomorrow. Maybe I would smile at my friends while I greet their faces that I had memorized so well. Maybe I would go swimming over the weekend and revel in the beauty of the smooth, clean water, and fit my soul and body into the same place again. And maybe this would all disappear, and I would finally understand it all. But of course, this can never happen. No matter how many times I attempt to find the good in the bad, and the happiness in the confusion of switching universes every twenty-four hours, it never works. And I don't think it ever will.

Ariel was a beautiful child with long red hair and rosy cheeks from spending most days on the beach. She had many sisters and they loved the ocean too but the fun came to a stop when Ariel turned twelve. Apparently someone was found dead on the beach not far from where they often swam. No one knew the cause of death but rumors started to spread that it was Ursula. No one had even seen her before though, so no one was really sure. She could have been a myth made up to scare children or keep people away from the beach. Whether she was real or not, no one wanted to find out. The stories about her seemed too real to be made up, some of them had no explanations other than a magical sea monster doing it.

Ariel's father was a stern man that also happened to be the mayor of their town. He held a lot of power within the town because the people really liked him. They thought that he was keeping the town safe by not letting people go to the beach. They were all deathly terrified of Ursula. Ariel never understood why though. She knew that people were afraid of Ursula, she was too, but she didn't think the beach was that dangerous of a place. It was her home and happy place until she was twelve. Now she is seventeen and hasn't stepped a foot in the sand for almost five years. It was six o'clock in the morning on the first day of senior year and Ariel had an amazing idea. She thought that if she was able to get enough people to go to the beach with her, she would be safer and honestly, not get in as much trouble as if she went alone. At school she asked all her friends and they thought she was clinically insane. She even considered asking her sisters but she knew they would just tell her dad. They all thought Ariel was weird for still talking about the beach so much, they could not understand why she couldn't just get over it.

"No one has even seen Ursula so why is everyone so scared of her", Ariel said to Frank Flounder.

"But everyone has heard of her, and the things she's done. I don't really think going to the beach is the best idea" Frank said a little too loudly,

Ariel punched him softly and told him to keep his voice down, no one could know she

was even thinking about it, let alone planning to go. She also knew how bad it would look on her family. Her father is the one publicly telling people to stay away from the beaches, so if his own daughter were to get caught there he would just feel ashamed of Ariel.

“What if I tell Tina you have a crush on her if you don’t go with me” Ariel said giggling while Frank darted his eyes at her.

“I’ll go with you”, he said as they sat down at the last lunch table left.

“Really?” she said, waiting for him to scream “NO” back, but he didn’t. He just looked up at her and gave a small fake smile. He didn’t look happy about it but he did agree to go. She didn’t really know why he said yes, he was scared of freshmen as a senior. Later she would realize he loved the ocean too. As terrified of a person he was, he knew the ocean was a safe place for him and Ariel. He was always terrified of everything since the ocean shut down. Not because of what happened that day, but because the ocean was his peace and he had to say goodbye to it.

Later that night Ariel got her swimsuit out. They had collected dust in the bottom drawer of her dresser for the past five years. She doubted any of them would even fit. She tried on her favorite but it could barely go around her waist. She tried off every other pair and they were all too small. She wondered if her sisters still had any. Her older sister would’ve been around the same age and size that Ariel was now when the beach closed. That’s the one thing she liked

about having sisters, the clothes. She crept into the old attic and saw Attina’s old suits in a box that read “GIVEAWAY” on the front. Luckily no one had been in there in years so that hadn’t been given away yet. She opened the box and instantly got flashbacks of the beach. Long days with her sisters spent in the sand and going back the next day to do it all again. The top swimsuit was the most memorable. She remembered seeing Attia in it and thought she looked beautiful. The top of the bathing suit was a deep purple and the shape resembled shells.

The bottoms were an emerald green with a soft pattern on them. Purple and green never went together in Ariel’s mind, she honestly didn’t love either color that much. But since Attia was the only other red headed sister, and those colors looked amazing on her, Ariel hoped the same would happen for her.

She put the suit on and fell in love. It probably could’ve been the ugliest swimsuit and she would still be in love with it. The feeling of them reminded her of her happy childhood days. She put shorts

and a shirt over and got everything ready. She got on her bike feeling nervous about what they were about to do. She figured if they needed to run from the police for being on the beach it would be better to not have a license plate or car. With a bike she was able to go down the small alleys of the shopping centers close to the beach. They were too small for cars to go through so if the police chased them it would have to be on foot, so again, the bike was her best option. It was a nice day to go biking anyways, plus she wasn't old enough to drive last time she went to the beach so taking a bike felt like the old days. Letting the warm air dry you off was euphoric to Ariel. She met up with Frank at the local deli shop. It was exactly in the middle of both of their

houses. They stopped in for a minute because Frank wanted a sandwich.

"You know, they say you shouldn't eat right before you swim," Ariel said while grabbing her own snacks to eat. She loved using sarcasm on Frank because he rarely understood it.

"You're a hypocrite," he said, reaching for his wallet.

"And you don't understand jokes" Ariel said while grabbing the two dollars she had shoved in tight pockets of her favorite jean shorts.

"Doesn't seem like your humor is paying the bills though" he said chuckling.

They both sat on the small tables outside the front of the deli. The wind was really strong so Ariel tied her hair back. She hoped that the beach was wavy, not only because she wanted to surf but she also thought they would be more noticeable in still water. They finished their snacks and hopped on their bikes. The ride to the beach was peaceful to both of them. Both of their lives had felt anything but peaceful, this was understood by the silence that was held between them on the bike ride. They both just wanted to enjoy themselves.

Ariel had planned to wait until it was darker out to head into the water so that less people would see. But as she got closer to the beach she knew she wouldn't be able to stop herself from jumping in. Not a lot of people were around. There were barely any people in the shopping community by the beach so they felt it was safe and no one would see. She hopped off her bike at the edge of the sand. She slid her sandals off and felt the hot and spikey concrete. She took a step forward and then bolted for the water as if the touch of sand was an on button. Frank yelled for her to slow down and decided there was no stopping her, so he joined her.

She leaped into the ocean as if it were a family member she had been missing for the longest time. She went fully under and decided to open her eyes. She didn't care if it burned, it was a nice burn. She felt at that moment that there was nothing in this ocean that could ever hurt her. She pulled her head back up and saw that Frank was about to get in as well. He was running, laughing and looked just as happy as she did. They both played in the waves for about an hour before she decided she needed a break. She turned around to get out of the water when a sudden push came from behind her and Frank, shoving both of them into the sand below the water. They both got to the surface at the same time, trying to look for each other. They were now 100 feet away from one another and the sky was completely black. The ocean water was now completely still. A ripple of water started to form right in between them as if something was dropping from the sky. All at once a circle of water cleared and you could see the ocean floor. The sand opened up and Ursula started to come up. They both stood in shock and Frank started running but he wasn't going very fast. Ursula looked like an octopus and had long black and purple tentacles.

All at once she started crying. Not Ariel, Ursula. She just broke down in tears. She started telling Ariel why she had done the bad things she did. It was because she loved a man that could walk and she couldn't. He was a local fisherman and she watched him everyday. One day she tried to get him to notice her. He did and instead of being in fear, he talked to her and tried to understand her. She slowly fell in love with him over the next few months. Then one day he told her he was going to stop fishing because he was so busy. She became extremely sad and made horrible mistakes that closed the beaches. Ariel was still in shock but tried to calm Ursula down. She told Ursula that heartbreak is something that everyone goes through and how her actions closed the beaches and hurt other people. Ursula considered how it was unfair to take away the people's love for the beach just because her love was no longer there.

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obviously needed to talk to someone since she just opened up to Ariel the way she did. She had probably been waiting years to talk to someone and Ariel was just the first person to come along.

A month passed and the beaches opened back up. Everyone was hesitant but very excited to go back. Ursula met a new fisherman and fell in love within a month. The beach was beautiful every day and Ariel started spending every day there just like she was a child again. She actually met up with Ursula often to talk about feelings to avoid any future disasters, and slowly they became best friends.

AJ Wolfe-Smith

The young man woke up and started his day with breakfast.

Once he finished eating, he went to his room, got dressed, brushed his teeth, and slipped on his shoes. He stepped into the garage, and when he opened the garage door he flew out with a jetpack on his back. In fact, everyone did. This is because this is the year 2150. The jetpack was a gift from Elon Musk years and years before he flew to mars to live with his robot son. Today there aren't even cars in certain countries. Back to the man from earlier. That is Ben Dover. An average guy who works an office job. Ben does one of the few human jobs in an accounting department for the second biggest company in the world, Skyrocket. Ben flew into work, docked his pack and walked in.

But something was different. There was no noise but silence.

No co-workers. No robots.

Nothing. Every, Corridor, room... empty. He went up to his desk, logged in. Then he began to work. He went to eat and still.. No one was around. He stared at his phone while eating, no notification. He went back to work at his desk and worked for another four hours. He undocked his pack and flew home, popped off his shoes and realized, IT WAS SATURDAY. The accounting department gets shut down on the weekend.

“Bubbles”

She appears in your life
Like a slight summer
breeze

With her sky blue eyes
Carrying a bouquet of
joy

Her rosy cheeks
And yellow bright hair
Reflecting the light
Wherever she glides
Willowy and light

Then Pop!
She's gone

But leaving her mark
Like a kiss from a
dog

-Ava McIntosh

Shawn Butler

GROWING up we are always told
Everything you do has to be great
If you fail what will become of you
Focus on the future they wanted to
live
You got to do something with your life
They force you into a private school
So you'll learn all these skills you'll
never use
Colleges have to get a great look at
you
Keep your smile wide enough to see
You got to do something with your life
Choose a career that will make your
parents proud
And get stuck in a job that fills no void
Make all this money but what for
Work and work until it's all over
You got to do something with your life
Now I sit here and think to myself
An average person who walked the
streets Now I lay in my grave and can't
rest at night Did I really do anything
with my life

- Abigail Becker

The Way the Wind Blows---

by Hailey Vanderhorst

The true beauty of the morning sunset creeps
through the window

The curtains dance with the flow of the breeze

As the scent of the salty seas drift in

One could bask in it forever

Oh the Way that the Wind Blows through the
Room

But there's nothing quite as beautiful as the
laughter of a newborn

Not even the beauty of that window in the morn

The parents had never had so much love in their
hearts

And they vow to never be apart from their child

Their love only grows

Just as the salty morning breeze never ceases to
flow

As the years pass by

They began to see their beacon of light fade
away

As they watch her walk on the door on her own
way

She's leaving them to truly find herself out

Feeling the slight tingle of the wind as she
leaves them behind

As she slowly drifted in her own direction Leaving
the past behind-with the occasional trip to the
train station

She never forgot the beautiful morning in her
childhood bedroom

Even though she's an adult now, out on her own

She still has the childlike wonder in her eyes

Still feeling as if time never zooms

Still waking up to see the sunrise

The years passed by at her own pace

She finally felt like she had found herself, finally
won the race

She found someone else in the process too

The only one that made her say "I do"

They lived happily ever after

Their days always filled with love and laughter

Once time had passed and her parents were
gone Her family moved into the home she grew

up in They all made it their own, and she had a

slight grin

Even though her parents were gone she could
finally feel the breeze again

She woke up each and every morning to the
sunrise

But it felt different, not in a bad way as if it were
filled with lies

It felt as if the sun had matured and grown with
her

She woke up every morning to bask in its beauty

But she had someone next to her this time

Someone who would love her more than she

loved the sound of the windchimes

More than she loved the breeze

As time flowed on and she grew old

She could see the end of her story unfold

She lay in bed because that's all she could do

Sitting watching the way the wind blew

Just outside the window sill there lays a broad
ocean

Ads waves wash upon the shore in a soft motion

The ashes blowing out into the sea

Bringing her out to the only place where she
truly felt free

The only place where she belonged, the one
place she truly knows

Forever outside the windowsill

Oh the Way the wind Blows



Write-On Staff 2022

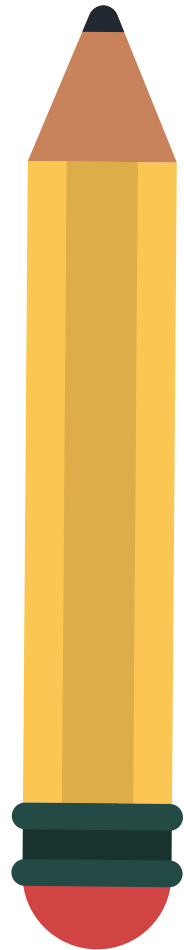


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