One Piece of You
2018
One Piece
of You
more than words

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Hillsborough High School
466 Raider Boulevard
Hillsborough, NJ 08844
www.htps.us
# Poetry and Short Stories

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MORE THAN WORDS
Paper Cranes
by: Surya Vaidy

Cut from the paper I came.
Fresh, unbent, ready for the hands of life to shape me.
   The first crease, my bruise from falling.
   The next crease, the tears that I cry.
The next crease, the joy of the wind blowing through my clothes.
   And so on every experience,
       Every pain,
       Every sadness,
       Every joy,
   Became folds in my paper.
From these folds came my body, my eyes, my face, my hair.
   And of course, my wings.
And with all the others life had folded I noticed,
   Not one paper crane was the same.
Life had folded delicately, roughly, neatly, messily, loving, brutally.
   Life chose different hues and sizes and patterns.
   Life had wrought us in different ways.
But in the end, I hope all these folded wings unfurl.
   In the end, I hope we all fly.
four months
by: Erin Chang

four months. that’s all the time i have left
time to get know you more, to understand you more, to fall deeper in love with you
knowing perfectly well that you’ll break my heart at the end of all of it

four months, that’s all the time i have left
time to make memories and laugh until i cry with my childhood best friends
knowing that soon, we’ll all be a million miles apart

four months. that’s all the time i have left
time to live in the protective arms of my parents, in a home that is my safe haven
knowing very well that i will leave them with nothing but an empty hole in their hearts

four months. that’s all the time i have left
time to still be a child, to live in the wonders of my imagination
knowing full well that i will have to leave that world soon

so this is senior year, the year that everyone can’t wait to go through
but for me, it’s an hourglass, a timer set for the end of youth
it’s a constant reminder that I can’t stay in this life, a life so comfortable and content to live in

a life that is structured and organized and designed successfully
without so many unknown and uncontrollable variables
once it’s over, it’s over forever

and to think that i didn’t even appreciate it till now
because i never realized that time is finite
and that all good things must come to an end

four months. that’s all the time I have left
Sitting at the foot of the Pacific Ocean, 3000 miles off the coast of California, I watched the waves wash over my toes, ridding them of any trace of sand. Soon, the Big Island sun became too much, and I was compelled into the crystalline waters ahead. Growing up a Jersey girl, I was accustomed to water temperatures so frigid that I felt as though the Hawaiian waters were uncomfortably warm. Coming up for air, I slicked my now wet hair back behind my ears. The warm breeze blew in a way that made me feel at home and safe on the island. Yet, all I could picture was an expanding red pool beneath me.

Chaos erupts and no one comes to my rescue. An unbearable, jolting sting runs through my calf and up my waist. I peer below the waves and see the same beady, jet black eyes as those from Discovery Channel Shark Week searing holes through my head. Time freezes. Suddenly, my instincts kick in, and I jab those deadly eyes until I feel the jagged jaw release its grip of my leg.

I can’t even begin to count the number of occasions where I’ve been scolded for my wild imagination—“Caroline, you’re being ridiculous. The chances of you actually getting attacked by a shark are slim to none.” I’m not saying I’m one of those oh-my-God-the-world-is-ending or I-have-an-underground-shelter-for-emergencies people, but more often than not, my imagination pressures me into expecting the unexpected. When I glance over the edge of a rail, my body goes cold and I can feel anxiety leaking from my pores. When I get into my car, I double-triple check that the backseat is undoubtedly vacant. When I’m home alone and hear footsteps followed by the ding of the doorbell at the front door, I jump to the conclusion that it’s a convict out to get me.

Sometimes, though, my mind can take me to a studio apartment in Los Angeles—one that is centered between various prestigious film production studios. Or I’m seated at the Dolby Theatre when I hear my name called. My body rises, and, in fear of tripping, I think right, left,
right, left while the smile I save for my best occasions forms on my face. Though my imagination is grounded in my realities—ziplining through the mountains of Catalina, sinking twenty-foot putts for par, devouring Hawaiian pineapple, or having Taylor Swift follow me on tumblr—what separates me from others is the ability to draw upon my own experiences and integrate them into written fantasies. The dreams I’ve had since I could hold a pencil—I want to materialize them into existence. The days that I’ve lived through, even the worst ones—I can channel those memories and turn them into something people can relate to.

The power of imagination will always remain a remarkably challenging mystery in my eyes. Throughout my life, I frequently find myself envisioning scenarios in which I conquer fears, chase fantasies, and live dreams. Some people consider their imaginations to be dangerous—contradicting reality and reason. But I’ve found that imagination lets you escape and think for a moment, “What if?” Convincing myself the shadow in the corner is just my guitar and not a human being is sometimes all-consuming. Yet I’ve grown fond of my impractical theories because, every so often, I’ll see myself realizing my dreams and basking in the feeling of boundless potential and possibilities, rather than wallowing in my fears.
Wild and Free
by: Shani Vasquez
Keeping Track
by: Ariella Franchino

First Grade—I believed in Santa Claus
Second Grade—I wanted braces
Third Grade—I loved One Direction
Fourth Grade—I spent recess with my teacher
Fifth Grade—I wanted glasses
Sixth Grade—I took an art class
Seventh Grade—I always wore black
Eighth Grade—I dyed my hair
Ninth Grade—I lost my best friend
Tenth Grade—I fought with my dad about politics
Eleventh Grade—I’ve met new people
      My love, Etc.
untitled
by: Karim Abdelhalim

The sun welcomed its ray onto the moist grass,
and the ball continued to roll over after several kicks
by the same feet which went hiking last week.
The clouds soon covered the sky,
I was left alone under the rain.
Soaking wet I ran home,
And started reading a book.
If there’s something you should know,
I never digest reading.
I stare at my noiseless phone,
waiting for a friend to check on me,
but they all left me behind.
I remember when I got left behind in a mall,
or at least I thought I was.
It’s funny how people tend to forget
the good old memories and
live on a lie.
one long night
by: Jason Evers

In the hours before the morning dew settles, a sort of smoky breeze drifts through the things hidden in the dark.

A sort of lofty haze slips through the spaces between branches, the places under leaves, and the holes in all the wooden fences. Everything moves in the cloak of night, dancing and changing unknown. Cutting through the sea of midnight pitch are windows of two-story houses, square and golden, having no depth but immensely deep in every individual way. I tap each of my chilled fingertips on my windowsill once more.

A warmer breeze flows into my room from the darkness. Could I bottle that, capture it in essence, take a tag and label it summer, and save it again for a colder day to cure my winter melancholies? I’m afraid that’s not how memories work. It’s too detrimental, too sad to be living in the past. It’s important to live your best life now, when you’re most able and most ready and most happy. Another warm wind flows in from the midsummer night and takes one piece of me with it, outside into that lovely dark.

This will be the first and last time I shall be in this moment. I am unafraid. The darker the night, the brighter the stars.
Cozy As Can Be and A Big Part of Me
by: Erin Townsend
My dad turned into a piece of me

The best day will always be when my dad got on one knee

He took in two girls that were quite a handful like they were his own

Oh, if he only known

How hard it would be to be a Dad

Not just a dad, but our dad, we promised him it wouldn’t be that bad

I guess our fighting, loud voices, and always having to get our way didn’t keep our deal

But it became his life and his love quickly became real

He was living with three hot-headed females

And he was the only male

Even my dog loves him the most

He is the true reason our family is so close

We wouldn’t trade him for the world

He became my Dad

A piece of me he’ll always remain
A Rip in Life
by: Maggie Gries

A piece of paper
on its own
with nowhere to go
and nowhere to call home.

The sheet blows in the wind
going with the flow decided by Mother Nature
as she throws it in all different directions.

There are wrinkles and rips
smudges and tears
but no one seems to stop to help.

This paper will no longer be perfect
and will always have its flaws
but the ones who accept it
are the ones to keep close.

Life is that sheet of paper.
People are made up of libraries, and museums, and classrooms.

They all have stories, they have art, and are filled with lessons.

Each, as unique as the street their childhood house was on, and how the books are stacked and coordinated, or how the pieces of art are placed. Some shelves are dusty, while others have words scattered all over the chalkboard and empty seats.

You must know that everyone is made up of so much, No one is merely an abandoned house, for even that has its own story.
Love You to Death
by: Abby Johnstone

You see her there,
She filled your lungs with lies.
She once was your friend,
But with a terrific disguise.

You trusted and loved her,
Addicted to filthy air.
You would kill yourself for her,
But her love was too much to bear.

Your love is up in smoke,
Every breath you take is a fight.
And as you die now,
She is wrapped in orange and white.
3:37 AM
by: Erin Washbourn
The Forest Within Me  
by: Garvit Gupta

I can feel, hear, and see the forest ever so clearly-- for the forest is just within me;
The breaths of the wolves I hear, as they pass through places in packs of twenty--
I can hear them clearly for they march with me;
The Pine tree standing tall I see, as it holds various critters, some mean and some mannered, on its back-- I see them for they too live within me;
And I can hear the waterfall slamming itself, from near it is roaring, but from afar it sounds so serenely soothing-- I hear it for its waters flow within me.
And I can feel the the buzz of the hardworking bees-- for they too buzz within me.
The forest is full of such glorious and wonderful beings, Breathing and moving with such precise rhythm, just as the atoms within me.
Untitled
by: Justin Dominique
Me
by: Ashley Quiros

Because without you knowing what you were doing to me, you were my forever, my never, and everything in between.
My words.
My sight.
My taste.
My sound.
My reason to keep going.
My reason to live.
And as soon as you left, I did too.
I felt like “this was the end and I’m never going to get better.”
Then I realized,
My words,
They are all me,
Every thought I have had, every word I have spoken or written,
They are all 100% me.
My sight, though you altered how I viewed the world, I took a looking glass and fixed for how it needed to be seen, for how wonderfully beautiful yet horrendously evil it could be.
My taste,
Though sour from how you broke me and left a sour taste in my mouth became sweet when I realized no one would ever love me as much as I needed to love myself.
My smell,
Though gone when you left me broken on the floor, rekindled when I found that flowers, chocolates, candles, and much more were far better smelling than your cologne that used to leave me weak for days.
My sound,
Though I felt I had become deaf to everyone’s words when you told me those words that hurt much more than I thought, would open into beautiful symphonies that I created myself with my love for myself and with the love of friends and family I know will never leave me.
My motivation,
It tumbled down hill when you left me at the bottom to climb alone. Though it returned when I saw that at the top of the hill there sat all of my goals, friends, family, and love, all pushing me to keep climbing and pass you on the way up.
My reason to live,
I lost it all when you dropped me, let me shatter, stomped on me and, left me for dead. I felt myself drowning in a clear box where you would stand, watching and laughing, all while I was struggling to breathe and make it out alive.
I was practically dead.
I thought, “why not just end it all? After all, if I can’t trust the person who told me they loved me, who can I trust?”
My mentality was stuck on dying.
Until one night, in a dream, I came to a conclusion.
I am living for a reason.
I am here for me.
I am not living so a person can tell me that they love me.
I am was made to love myself.
I wake up every morning for myself.
I breathe for myself.
I think for myself.
I love for myself.
If not for myself, then for who?
Because no one will ever love me as much as I have to learn to love myself.
And although I have managed to make it this far with loving myself, I still have a lot to learn until I can become stronger than before.
Do I blame you for making me feel this way?
No.
I blame myself for not realizing this all sooner.
I do want to thank you though.
You taught me this lesson and helped me to become a better person.
I hope one day, you accomplish all of your goals and realize this too.
Sonnet 1
by: Caitlyn Christiano

The chains you wrap around me hold me back,
and cause a yearning for freedom unknown.
Recently clipped wings lay strewn in the black.
Despite this harm, my soul you still disown.

O’ how I ponder the horizons far,
escaping your impenetrable grasp.
At night, I look up toward the bright North Star
that whispers words for me to break your clasp.

I am stuck in perpetual twilight.
Looking at myself I stare, disbelieved.
All my bones tell me, “Run towards the skylight,”
but I can’t flee, I will not be relieved.

For you are me as I am also you,
If only my mind would bid you adieu.
Failure is an Option
by: Justin Bagdan

Failure, a step in life that conquers all.
Its presence is just inevitable.
It may lead to your ultimate downfall,
Restricting you from the incredible.
The future holds all monotonous days,
The chance of failure overwhelms the best.
And the fear inside sets your goals ablaze,
All the achievements in your life suppressed.
A life that accommodates no failures,
Enforces a life without any spark.
The old, repetitive, dull behaviors,
This lifestyle will leave you in the dark.
Go out and put many of your fears on breaks,
Life is not life without a few mistakes.
The Winter Comes
by: Ethan Eilers

The winter comes and goes
   Taking the life with it
The next victim to be froze
Another tree, each branch a spirit

A soul released to follow where the wind blows
   Falling where it so desires
Residing where no one knows
   Its spirit still burning fire

This one tree nature chose
To have the dull gray branches lie on the ground
   Left for the snow to enclose
     To never to be found

As I look out at that tree
Branches dull and gray
I see it as a piece of me
   Slowly fading away

On the ground there is
My own soul, Still on fire
That piece of me lives
Confinement
by: Samantha Compell

Seared by society,
I just keep burning through the fire.
Walking through hell, flames bursting and igniting all around.
Trapped in a life I could not escape.
Confined to a problem I could not conquer.
Testing the boundaries,
Pushing the limits,
Between imagination and reality.
Aimlessly floating, no end in sight.
Lifted up by the fire that pushes others down.
But gasping for air, trying to catch my breath.
Endlessly into the pit of oblivion,
Drowning.
Welcome, old friend, it has been so long.
Nearly eighty years, so much has occurred during that time.
During the first fresh years when I left you,
I spent much time among the trees, scaling, scratching, swinging, soaring to the sky.
There was an abundance of time under the golden sun for those years,
Time among the tall grass that waved in the breeze, and cool, crystal ponds all opened to me and my youth.
I, of course, had playmates at this time, but the greatest, unknown and forgotten relationships were between me and the grass which tickled my toes and me and air that combed through my hair.
It was in those lanes and forests that, if I were old enough to look closely,
I could have seen you hiding in the dark corners on the ground of those same trees.

However, we moved on from those grinning, bright days.
From the dirt ground we went to tiled floors, desks waiting for me to sit and gain the knowledge adults deemed important enough to waste our time with.
From then, I watched those waving grass and the golden sky from the inside of a fish tank.
It is to my despair that by this time I forgot you, and how you had built the palace around us, and how you tore parts of it down to a fresh, bleeding, raw plane.
It also pains me to admit that I understood none, I was unable to truly bring the sweet scented air into my lungs, the golden rays into my eyes, the more delicate petals arranged into into my hands.
The days passed with the seasons, leaves falling into the snow which melted into the soft grass.
I loved and loathed, laughed and lashed out,
I leaped towards loves and lazed in the comfort of your world.
And now, while I watch my legacy play in the yard,
I see my past and future all in one.
For they too do not truly understand the wishful wind or the slurping streams.
But they will, one day,
when they sit with you, old friend.

They will see all the wisdom the trees they climb have to offer.
They will see all the glory a field has to show.
They will see all the beauty and undeniable fear in a dark forest.
They will see me, floating in the wind alongside them.
And they will finally understand the awe and nostalgia in a sunset.
They may not understand that now, but it is okay, for I do.
You are ready to take me away friend? Yes? It may be futile, but could you grant me just five more minutes?
No? Ah well, it was a fine time anyhow, I would just hope someone is able to truly enjoy all this one day, before it is too late.

Or perhaps you make it so they don’t.
Come friend, I know how punctual you like to be.
Untitled
by: Julia Kwiatek

It was always just me
Always thinking erratically
Always doubting myself
Always finding the lies
What’s the point?

It was always just me
Constantly choosing hate
Constantly losing the fights
Constantly finding the wrong way
Why can’t I stop?

It was always just me
Eventually seeing optimism
Eventually smiling through the pain
Eventually loving the living
Am I closer?

It’s always just me
Overcoming the hardships
Beating perturbation
Forgetting the loss
I choose happiness
The City Bench
by: Gabriella Dudajek

Sit on a bench in the city and watch
All the people that pass
The thousands of lives
The thousands of stories
Many so similar, yet many so different
Thousands of pains
Thousands of tears
Wounds and scars embedded in each of their hearts
Thousands of wins
 Thousands of loses
The sweat of hard work streaked across their faces
Thousands of dreams
Thousands of goals
The glimmer of hope in their eyes

See how each story and sorrow and journey and ambition makes up one piece of every person

And how each person makes up one piece of the world
Nothing really begins, and nothing really ends. As my eyes are fixed to the moving of the fan above me, attempting to offer some reprieve from the intense heat and sweat drowning out the nightmares that brought me here, the thought of nothing truly beginning or ending dominates all matter of consciousness I have left, as if I was nothing more than an animal. An animal, however, has a more nobler purpose than I, for at least they are dedicated to their own survival and perpetuation of their own species. I don’t know how long it’s been since I’ve truly lived, but whatever existence I can muster up has been perpetuating what seems to be my own self destruction. The scar hurts more than it usually does, but I feel myself stuck in a trance watching the fan go around and around, a usual occurrence that brings back a sense of familiarity which, while I wouldn’t call it home, brings me somewhere that I have been to before.

As the helicopter sharply banks for landing, the monotony of it washes over me. Once again, as if clockwork, I find myself back in the thick of the jungle. Some compatriots and I hop out one by one out of the helicopter in an unbroken loop. I try to squeeze my hands together, but the metallic steel taking the form of a Colt M16 Rifle locked and loaded for optimal ammunition efficiency and suppression assistance in the wake of insurgency from the locals stop me from doing so. You’d think that the rest of my platoon, made up of school boys dragged here kicking and screaming would revel in having such a power in their hands, but as I turn to make sense of the reason why we’re here I cannot distinguish the faces from each other. Along with the muffled sounds and static coming from the mouths of these figures, their faces are smeared, devoid of any human characteristics other than mouths that spout words that don’t reach me. Illuminating our arrival is a sea of fire enveloping the jungle ahead of us, as if it were reaching its hands out trying to grasp everything in its wake, piercing through the night sky. The smoke blocks out the low hanging moon. Liquid napalm turns jungles into candles, but the natives couldn’t have known that. Whoever was in here didn’t stand a chance. The only sounds I can hear, other than the static of my platoon speaking, is the sounds of the fire raging and the occasional thud, marking the death of another tree that had lived here for hundreds of years prior to our arrival.
My platoon starts to make it way towards the jungle entrance, past a thicket of long grass and ash that had been carried by the winds earlier. As I drudge past the grass and ash, I can feel corpses littered around in varying degrees of desecration. Some charred, some fresh, all dead. The rot and decay reek a stench that drowns out the gasoline in the napalm, bringing me back to reality while also serving as a reminder that I too will be scorned to a fate like this. I feel lethal, like a rabid dog ready to strike. Orange hellfire and remains guided our ways, to our graves we marched.

We hiked through the thickness of the jungle, our steps being suppressed by the chattering of the denizens who had set up their lives here before we came. A cricket here, a bird there, all attempting to make out some meager existence in the wake of such devastation. Smoke hung low, filling our lungs with course cinders. We wouldn’t dare to cough or wheeze, lest we incur the attention of the locals and, by extension, their wrath. I hung around towards the end of the regiment, watching our rear in case the locals were going to make a move against us. I wasn’t here to be a hero, I’ve seen enough people try and be Alexander the Great until there isn’t anything left of them to go home with other than a Purple Heart. They have more valor than I, but even that couldn’t stop the feeling that the eyes of the jungle were quietly judging us as if we were an uninvited guest. I can’t describe the feeling, a mix of terror and need to accomplish the task. But on we went.

After a certain distance the jungle decided we had overstayed our welcome. I couldn’t much in the way of blame it, to be fairly honest. One of the faceless men took a step forward, and all it took was one out of place tick for me to know that the jungle was no longer our friend. That’s the thing they don’t teach you in Basic, that when you’re stalking in the jungles for so long you start to hear the little things. See things that others can’t. Some call it intuition or an acquired talent, others call it our primal nature. Maybe we aren’t anything more than predators looking for prey, like a cheetah hunts for a gazelle. It didn’t take me long to realize that we weren’t gonna make it out of this the same way we came in.

The explosion that rocked underneath the faceless man launched debris and bits of soil in all directions while leaving behind a heated crater and smoke
where the man had stood. Instinctually I had thrown myself to the cold soil as a vain attempt at avoiding shrapnel and other collateral that would cut my life short, and as I took my hands off of my head and cleared what seemed to be a mixture of soot and blood off of my forehead, I was hesitant in leaving my place off the dirt floor. I was afraid to breathe; if the smoke saturated air even slightly irritated my lungs and make me cough, I could end up as just another report to be filled and sent away to God knows where. The rest of the battalion, either out of sheer surprise or being unaware of what had just happened to one of them, albeit now a little more crumpled in their stances, just stood in place like toy soldiers waiting to be moved. As my eyes darted across the darkness of the jungle, darkness and chatter resuming as if uninterrupted, I could feel the wayward doom that was about to seal our fates.

As I felt the feeling of dread wash over me, the jungle confirmed my suspicion that this was truly the end. In an instantaneous moment, thousands of eyes, like that of a rabid cat, opened from the darkness of the jungle, peering down on us with an unutterable contempt. These eyes, stained in mustard yellow and iris’ pulsating in rage, pierced through all of us with a stare of nothing more than disgust. It only took another moment before the eyes shifted from every position it littered in the thick darkness until it reached the focus of it’s attention – me. The eyes seemed to judge me, without flinching and without compromise. I felt an ebb and flow of absolute terror render my body to nothing more than sludge, my mind as blank as an answer to why the eyes were there to begin with. After what felt like ages of the mustard eyes judging my poor state, they started to blink. It only took one blink before the wrath of the jungle would truly be felt.

Bullets wrang through my compatriots, turning the only ties I had to humanity into a mass grave of bodies and bullets. As I shut my eyes and covered my ears, I felt a sharp pain assault my nerves in my thigh, accompanied by a stinging feeling from the heat of the wound. I reached down with my left arm to feel the now missing chunk of my thigh, making my ears vulnerable to the sound of rounds still being rapidly dispensed into boys who didn’t know any better along with the muffled winces and screams that accompanied a massacre of this proportion. When the sound of death had

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subsided, I looked up and saw the scene. The crumbled bodies sprawled across the floor of the jungle in various poses, drenched in blood and gunpowder, looking as what one would think the Terracotta Army would look like if obliterated by something more cruel than time itself. There wasn’t anything more to say about it. This graveyard uttered no sounds, bore no faces, cast no opinion or sensibility on why it was what it was. It was simply a sight of ruin for the poor souls that were brought to this place. In the backdrop, the eyes watched the bodies and I, this time with a certain level of indifference. When the reality of the situation finally hit me, I knew this was my time to run.

Summoning all the strength I had left, I cast aside my rifle and made a gallop down the route we had taken to getting in here. With each sprint, I felt more pain shoot up and down my body, seemingly rejecting the notion that there was any way I could escape the fate I was dealt: Stepping over rocks and vines, pitfalls in the ground and the imprints of steps of my now dead platoon. With each breath I took I could feel the smoke and particles of ash snuff out the oxygen in the air, gasping more and more for something greater than the fumes of death. The cackling of more gunfire gave more motivation for the will to live, though I can’t be certain that it was even directed at me at all. Even with the cackling, I could hear something more in the jungle, a sort of static noise televisions produce when disconnected from the regularly scheduled broadcasts. It started off muted, almost insignificant, until it grew louder and louder with each step I took in escaping this godforsaken jungle. Trailing the static were the yellow eyes, which followed every route I took without any hesitation – there was no way I could escape its gaze. After running and running, my legs gave out from under me, submitting to the weight of gravity and forcing me to crawl to sanctuary. The static now pervaded every recognizable sound I heard. It drowned out the gunfire. The distant screams. The sounds of burning trees and toppling dreams. The sounds of death. The sounds of life. My body felt of paper, my mind burning in flames as I tried to yell out for anyone to save me, but no words came. No tears fell. Only the sight of the eyes staring and the trees burning in the distance. In my desolation, I gave in.

The sheets of my bed feel like vines stuck together by a sweat and the
constant tugging and releasing from knuckles caught in a feedback loop. My mouth tasted of copper. Each breath of the stale air brought me more comfort. The muscles around my body tensed and relaxed in quick successive motions, unsure of whether or not I was prowling in the jungles again or residing in a barren existence. The scar that stretched from the top of my thigh all the way to the upper part of my leg tingles, serving as a constant reminder that I am, indeed, alive. The leg itself was only saved because the second batch of conscripts they sent in found me as quickly as they did. I guess it was a win-win; they get to call it a successful “rescue mission” for the PR and I got to keep a bum leg. Recovery was a blur; all that I can recollect is a series of flashing lights and sounds that I, once again, could not make sense of. I drifted from place to place, person to person, thing to thing, without purpose or care.

Sometimes when I blink I can still see the eyes staring back at me. Out of the corner of my vision, an eye judging me as though the day had not been too far ago. Haunting me from place to place, keeping me on edge and aware. As if I were nothing more than an animal in a zoo, to be picked and prodded at until I do something worthy of the eyes amnesty.

Though the cold air of the fan and warm sweat on my body remind me that I am still alive, a piece of me was left behind in that jungle. I feel detached, like as if my mind were able to roam freely in and around the abstractions of humanity. When you can’t move on from an event, time almost stops in place. To the outside world, however, nothing was new. Each day moved forward as if the one before had no meaning. The air remained cold, the war raged on, people still died. What else is there to do other than sit in the dark waiting for another thing to inevitably come.

It began to rain softly, with little droplets of water slowly streaking across my only access to the outside world. Little taps would accompany this display, while condensation started to build up around the edges of the window before all I could see was the streaks of water and a partial vision of the world. I laid there in my bed and stared. What else was there to do? Watching the water run down the window, one after another, breaking the silence and the humming of the fan with little taps here and there. For a moment, I felt content just sitting there and watching nature take its course. I knew it wouldn’t last forever, but time felt so far away. It all felt so far away.
Strung Up
by: Rachel Santorini
The Day You Left
by: Symone Marsh

I remember that day, I woke up startled
I remember that day, I woke up scared
My terrifying thoughts came true
You left me, I remember seeing you after school
My terrifying thoughts came true
I miss seeing your smile after school
I miss hugging you, after school
My terrifying thoughts came true
My days of seeing you were over
My days of happiness were gone
You were my best friend
My terrifying thoughts came true
I woke up to your death
I woke up broken
I woke up without a friend
You left me and took a piece
A piece of me I treasured
A piece of me that mattered
You left me with a missing piece
An Ode to Senior Year
by: Abhishek Iyer

In September, you remember all the seats in each new class,
By November, all the embers of excitement disappear.
Some days you feel, that life’s a wheel, that rolls through endless grass,
But other days, you’re just amazed, by how short is the year.

We like to think we’ll never shrink and always be supreme,
That the world is ours and so are the hours we wear around our wrists,
But deep down there, we’re well aware, how fervent we all dream,
Will not revise our coming demise we know that e’er exists.

It’s January, not so merry, midterms ‘round the corner,
You hold your head and look with dread, and wish you could get out,
Now June is nigh, you heave a sigh, and feel you’ll be a foreigner,
Four more years that isn’t here, your head is filled with doubt.

The point that I’m trying to make, no crying about it, no more tears,
Whenever you felt, that you would just melt, so painful seemed the stress,
Those times helped shape your great escape into a land of fears,
‘Cause you’ll grow fonder, maybe ponder, the building called HHS.
Far off in the distance,
In the ocean,
Past the beach,
You can see the white crests of the waves,
Curling and unfurling,
In all their magnificence.
The wet loam and froth of the waves
Undulating across the sea
In its elegance.
On the edge of the brine, you can see a boat,
A simple ship for simple people.
Out in the distance, a bystander on the beach sees a storm.
He starts to inform the sailors,
But the mariners are already departing their sailing craft.
Aghast at the chaos,
The previously playful people run from the cerulean entanglement of the
stormy ocean.
Their refuge being the brown-amber beach,
Fearing the tempest, the refugees of the turbulent blue
And drunk with adrenaline,
They flee from the sea.
The swirling blackness of the rough skies terrify the simple folk,
Forcing them to scurry to the safety of familiar terrain.
Blotted out by the sun, the iron-gray stormclouds grew ever-closer.
Mere moments after the modest men and women ingressed into their
shelters,
The atrocious hurricane hit
Overturning houses and sailing ship alike.
Opportunities Across the Atlantic
by: Bibi Ashar

The first thing that comes in my mind when I think of America is “land of the free and home of the brave,” as do many other immigrant families like mine. Having the opportunity to pursue my education in the United States opens up so many more doors for me to thrive than if I went to school in my parents’ homeland Pakistan. If Pakistan granted the same promises, security, and rights as America did they would have never left the comfort of their home to start from scratch again in a foreign country, having nothing but each other. They built a foundation for my sisters and I to grow up in this environment where we have all the resources we need to obtain a proper education because, above all, academics will take us further in life: for us to take risks, to explore the world, ourselves, and everything we could become. It’s special to be able to earn my college degree in this country because it will show how the years of hardship and struggle lead to something brilliant and beautiful. That diploma will indicate to my parents that they did it; taking the risk twenty one years ago was absolutely worth having this moment today. They will know they planted their roots in the right spot, lifting a little weight off their shoulders. They will think back to when they were eighteen and what they were doing, their dreams, and wishes then see me at eighteen accomplishing more than they could have imagined. My future is looking bright because my parents came to America, land of the free and home of the brave.
The Sanctuary
by: Michael Eckrote

My sanctuary is here. Even if its sight can be compared to a barn, and its smell can be described as foul. The mess within looks like the pigs’ playground. Nevertheless, this is my sanctuary. The place of tranquility and mental freedom. My own personal heaven that has its doors locked. None other can replace this place. Others see it as a barn, but I see my sanctuary that is stress free and allows me to enjoy myself.

It’s the place where my memories are implanted in. The only home that I have ever lived in. It’s full of the times I have cried, the times I was envious, and times I was full of wrath. It is also full of the times I felt happiness. Such as the times I spent with my wacky and fundamentally flawed parents. The times I have felt the warmth of the companionship of dogs. The times that I have felt the courage and bravery given from friendship.

My home was never the place for reunions; my house is too small for that. We have never celebrated anything there, not even my birthday. There are still joyous occasions that occur here though. The time where my family was over and we got over one hundred dollars worth of white castle. The times that my cousin come to sleep over. All the times that my dad was there.
The Flower Bush
by: Michael Jeney

On being asked what was the flower’s purpose.

When desolate and dimmer days were gone
When frigid weather ceased to carry on,
I came upon a stunning flower bush.
For ‘twas the flower way on top that pushed
Itself up high while reaching towards the light
As God would touch its grace with life in turn.
And there I stood in awe for nature’s might
To blossom Earth and teach us ways to learn.

O, might I have not plucked the flower’s soul,
It’d be at peace and shine in nature’s role.
Fulfilling God’s intention most of all:
To love yourself and never feel so small.
So looking back upon my flower’s task,
I saw the pride it took while high above.
It wanted not to hide behind a mask,
But be at peace with others like a dove.
Everyone knows that you don’t get to choose your family and that you’re stuck with the one you’re born with for the rest of your life. Friends can come and go, but your family is irreplaceable. Your parents, your brothers, your sisters, your grandparents, they’re all the people who you grew up with and who supported you and cheered you on throughout all your endeavors. I know not everyone is fortunate enough to be born with a caring and loving family, so I am grateful to have the family that I have. Especially my siblings.

I was born with three older siblings: two brothers, who are nine and five years older than me, and one sister, who is eight years older. I know I would not be the same person I am today if I were an only child. It’s impossible to express how much care and love I have for them because of the huge part they played in my life. They’ve taught me so much and made me a better person. We’ve shared so many great memories together from having sleepovers in our own house to enduring sweltering, long car rides with our parents to having picnics in our backyard in the summer. What’s great about having three siblings is that I can bond with each of them differently; while I love shopping with my sister, I enjoy playing video games with one brother, and I can talk about movies with my other brother. Of course, not all our memories together are positive. Like all other siblings, we’ve fought physically and verbally, even about the most childish things, like what television channel to put on or whose job it is to do the laundry, or who gets the last slice of pizza in the fridge. But after insulting each other with the most brutal names or throwing the most violent punches and kicks, we were able to forget about our arguments minutes later and go back to a regular conversation. None of us held grudges for long, and we learned to forgive each other.

Personally, I’m grateful I have older siblings as opposed to younger ones. Since mine are older, I could borrow their money, when I didn’t have any, and I could beg them to drive me around places when I couldn’t do it myself. I was lucky because they didn’t always refuse to buy me things I wanted, like food or clothes, because I knew they cared for me. And even though they got older and moved out of the house, we all still make a point in hanging out together and catching up with each other. In the future, I know I’ll still be as close to the three of them as ever, even if we are on opposite corners of the globe because they’re the family I was born with and the family I’ll be stuck with until the very end.
Words fading, most of them swirling, spinning into marbled words
nostalgia for who I was - disappearing, harder for me to reach, grasp onto who
I am— was.
State of confusion, my mind a blur, and unable to speak,
a lump in my throat, hard to swallow and the stinging tears pouring out.

Lack of emotions in me, lack of feeling, desiring to feel more pain,
here I am isolated in my misery in that dark corner of my room.
Missing the comfort of myself, the compassion, the love for me,
but the looking glass bestows a reflection of no one.

Disguised by a costume of self-loathing, but the change in me is loud and
clear.
Who I have become, is heart-achingly terrifying, unable to identify my old
bloodshot blue eyes.
Now sitting and watching everything become soft feathers and floating away
before me,
Unable to grab them with my scar-filled arms, unable to grab my memories.

Complete silence fills me every fleeting moment, hour, minute, and second.
Images flashing of me, screaming, into that same mirror, difficulty fills every
inch of my throbbing body – a hot flash down my spine.

My head is not a blank sheet; it’s dark, ebony-like sky that seems to have stars
that don’t shine.
Sitting on an old broken down chair, like me, young but my heart old and filled
with regret.
Regret, mistakes, situations I do not recall,
But remembering them as the reason of my fall.
My fall into a dark pit, no lights, the sound of rumbling train tracks, and the
wind embracing me as I fall, fall, fall

Slowly becoming whole of the endless darkness in my head.
People think
That in order to be happy,
They must let everything go,
Such as the dreary memories,
And the pleasant ones too.
But, obviously,
That is not true.
They think
They have to go back
And create
A brand new beginning.
But,
Why can’t they just start today,
And make,
A new ending?
I am History
by: Louis DiGirolamo

I am Joseph II who failed at everything he did.
I am Tsar Nicholas II where the Romanovs fell as Bolsheviks were the bane.
I am Jimmy Carter during the Iranian Hostage Crisis.
I am Rousseau, and everywhere I’m in chains.

I am a failure at pleasing everyone at large.
I am a stain to my family’s name.
I am horrible at taking charge.
I am a pessimist that feels trapped in this stupid game.

I try to be enlightened like Catherine the Great,
But, like her, the people only view me to hate.
I want to travel the world like Ferdinand Magellan,
But like him, halfway there, and I’ll reach heaven.

Failures happened throughout history.
Reasons for them are sometimes a mystery.
Yet, I study history, and it is written by the winners.
And winners of history never sulked in their misery.

I am Napoleon crossing The Alps after the Battle of Marengo.
I am Hammurabi writing the laws of Babylon.
I am Martin Luther nailing the 95 Theses at Wittenberg.
I am the American Troops liberating the city of Caen.

I am destined to move mountains and be on top of the world.
I am a writer of my own rules for people to abide by them.
I am a rebel who seeks to expose the oppressors.
I am the one who will take down the aggressors.

History is recorded and I will continue to write it.
It is my choice to decide how it goes bit by bit.
My failures don’t matter because they’re in the past,
For my future is golden as long as I don’t look back.
She always had that look about her, like she had relived the future one too many times. Like she was seeing something so far away in the distance, that the very edge of the horizon was nothing but a corner. She always had that look about her, for the best meteorologists couldn’t predict the storm that was coming. So she put up walls and dams, and told people to get off the beach. But there was only so much she could do to help the people around her, to keep them safe in the wrath of the storm. By the time the storm hit, it was far too late. Water flooded the bay while people fled for safety, but nobody knew the girl who saw it coming all along was the one who was whipped by the current so hard, that it took everything out of her, for she was the eye of the storm, and all she was was but a girl drowning in herself.
Sadie
by: Justin Zinger

ONE PIECE OF YOU
Sandie
by: Justin Zinger

Since I was little, she has always been there for me.
When I do my work, she cuddles up by my knee.
In the winter, we play in the snow.
In the summer, it’s off to the park we go.
When I walk in the room, she shows me her belly.
She loves it when I give her food from the deli.
She wags her tail when I walk through the door.
She loves it when I bring her to the shore.
We always play in the sea.
She is the biggest piece of me.
Untitled
by: Peyton Quackenbush

The sweating and shaking is a part of me. Walking into a room with a knot in my stomach, crying before tests and going to friendly events. I know its not normal to be nervous around my friends and family, always expecting the worse. But it’s a part of me. Sundays are my worst days. The week ahead frightens me, not being perfectly planned or knowing what to expect. Coping is hard when there’s no reason for my sadness. Trying to find a solution isn’t always the best thing to do. I can’t help the anxiousness that surrounds me that makes simple tasks not so simple. But it’s a part of me. It makes me stronger. My strength is a part of me.
Wheat Field Ruminations
by: Bryan Trinh

In the Wheat fields, where they grew high
There in the fields, sat I.
To consider the mundane world
And all of its viscera.
In its majesty,
I gazed.

The winds blew above with voices,
Many long dead from time immemorial.
They asked the word, Why?
And so I asked the word, Why?
But the winds chose not to answer,
For those winds had long ago died.

No wisdom imparted from old men,
No cries bled from infants eyes,
No wonder to be wondered,
No prayer unheard.
The silence of the All,
Broken by silence of the None.

The Beloved is loved by A Beloved,
The Star continues to burn,
No answers to your questions
Answers which continue to yearn,
Know that meaning means more
When One finds Absolute Truth.
But the Absolute is without Being,
And this is the only Truth.

The Star will come through once more,
But I will continue to sit.
when i met you
by: Gabriella Diaz

when i met you
i was nothing but an asteroid
constantly creating chaos as i moved
throughout the galaxy
minding my own business
but unknowingly making my business
everyone else’s.

when i met you
i was a flame that couldn’t be extinguished
burning down everything in sight, my brightness
was the light of disaster,
the light that not one
person looks forward to seeing
when they come home after
leaving the flat iron on during the work day.

when i met you
the tangles in my hair sprouted
from the roots on the right side of my brain
uncontrollable emotions fertilized
my melancholy days
where breathing seemed impossible
and loving someone
was unfathomable.

when i met you
i thought i couldn’t be helped.

after i met you,
i realized i could.
Space
by: Kajal Patel
Family
by: Dylan Boczon

My family means the world to me
They teach me that nothing comes for free
All the way from birth to now
They have always manage to turn my frown upside down
I always come home as hungry as a bear
So I sprint into the kitchen faster than a hair
My mother always has dinner waiting for the whole family
We eat together like a colony of bees
My dad works late every night
But he never forgets to be polite
My brother makes all the jokes in house
But to others, he can be as quiet as a mouse
My family means the world to me
They teach me that nothing comes for free
Perfection is what we strive for each day
It becomes an obsessive goal to reach
Constantly it is but out of your reach
It is a force that pushes you away

Getting farther away to your dismay
Mad and insane as it slips from your reach
Detaching yourself from what you once were
Once you are lost it is hard to turn back

But what if you are already perfect
Some force made you as you are
Putting pieces together to form you
A masterpiece is what you are you know

Remember as you search love is love
And it will come to yourself once its done.
Identity
by: Maggie Gries
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