Bucket list🪣

“He’s awake Ezra, Benji's awake!”
My mother screeches. I can see, through my mother’s hair, my father running past my hospital window, then backtracking. He wrestles with the door handle, trying to get it open. He runs in and hugs me tight.

My doctor then walks in. He is dressed in a white coat and has a brown clipboard with paper stacks. “Mrs and Mr. Sallow, can I see you outside?”
He gestures to the space outside my hospital room. My mother’s smile falls, but she still gets up and gives me one last tight hug as if to say everything will be alright. She heads out the creamy colored door. My father gives my shoulder a squeeze and follows.

I take the time to look around the room I know too well. All the monitors are like a symphony of beeps and clicks. There are so many wires that make my head feel like it’s all in knots. I reach up to feel my head, a smooth surface meets my hand. I pull up my too big hospital gown’s sleeve and look at the purple and green bruises up my small arm. Then I look outside. Out of the glass, I see the green trees of summer, starting to turn to Fall. I then look to the small window to watch my parents. My mother buries her face in my father’s shoulder. He wraps his arms around her small body.

I know that my mother hasn’t been eating since she found out about my leukemia. I watch her sometimes from my plate as she moves around her food but not picking up her fork. It’s been 4 months since we found out. I hadn’t realized the bruises or nosebleeds until it was too late. The first time I came to this room, I had fallen off the side of the slide where I was sitting watching. Watching the birds, watching the blades sway, watching Pippa. I was watching the way her chestnut hair swished in the breeze when my world went black.

My parents come back into my room, my mother’s tear streaked face makes her skin shine in a sad way. My father takes off his glasses, willing himself not to cry. They hold me,tell me about death, a topic I know too well. Around eight’o’clock, they get up and leave. Thinking my closed eyes and almost steady breaths mean sleep.

I am curled on my side in bed, watching the minutes tick by. Then I remember. I reach into the fake wood side table drawer, and take out a robin’s blue folded piece of construction paper. I unfold it gently and smooth it out next to me. I lift one leg and then another out from the thin sheets. I take the paper to the window and hold it under the

moonlight. My bucket list. In my six year old hand writing, I see my letters and words on this piece of robin's blue construction paper.

Benji's Bucket List

- Get a dog and name him Bear
- Have a sleepover
- Get revenge on Ryan Blakely for water ballooning my tree house
- Go camping
- Tell Pippa I like her
- Go all the way on the monkey bars without falling off
- Drive my dad's car
- Live as old as Grampa Steff

My Grandpa Steff is 96. He is my favourite grandpa. He gives the best hugs and is a bit of a joker, like me. I have always hoped to live as long as him. Grampa always said to go for it.

First step, get a dog.