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### Lifelong Lifelines

Though I choose to create thoughtful change by formally reentering the academic arena, the study of humanities through arts, writing, culture and language is who I have always been. It was never a choice. It just was.

In the beginning, there was abundant love, given freely. There was an inkling of security and joy in beautiful objects, music, videos my mother danced to in the living room, along with drawing, painting, dressing up, and reading fairy tales. At age five, I attempted to make an *I Dream of Jeanie* outfit from the pink velvet curtains hanging in the living room. For many years to come my sisters and cousins sang songs I had reimagined or rewritten. We danced and put on shows for the rest of the family. Naturally opting to create, I was uplifted in the ability to imagine alternate endings or contrasting conditions, tweaking uncomfortable certainties into satisfying altar realities. Pouring my wonder, observations and discomforts onto paper, poetry flowed freely from my being. Music, writing, art and nature were constant companions. I spent a great deal of time alone with these steadfast soul mates. These allies are my foundation. They are my gifts. Humanities had a hold on me long before I became cognizant of that fact.

In middle school, though already a rebel of sorts, the humanities preoccupied my studies. Attending an honors English course, I entered a county-wide poetry contest on the subject of Greek mythology. After penning several stanzas, I was satisfied with the flow and subject matter, as well as the completion of a story, within the poem. Medusa was my muse. Followed by all I had learned relevant to the obstacles Perseus and his brethren faced, I would describe in detail how they discovered and conquered her. Being called to the principal's office was nerve-wracking. What have I done, or what lie was told? I was nervous, as was Steve, the other boy who was called in. "Do you know why you are here?" We looked at each other; we had no idea. He then broke the news that we had taken the top two spots in the poetry competition, with me taking the top honor. The students in this course were also assigned to author short stories. One of the stories was for Halloween. This story was meant to evoke fright from our peers. We read aloud to the class, from a rocking chair placed amidst cobwebs, ghouls, and ghosts. Following that read, my teacher wanted to speak with me after class. She then told me to look her in the eyes as she bent down to reach my gaze. "You have to be a writer." She spoke ever so matter of fact. My eyes fell and glanced away, dismissing her comment. "Look at me." My eyes met hers, "You have to be a writer!"

Taking journalism and working yearbook, I continued to play clarinet my second year. Conflict escalated in our home and the family unit eroded during this time. When high school arrived, I was in marching band and continuing my path into arts and humanities. Alas, outside trauma ensued. Things fell apart expeditiously. Leaving school the first time was not my idea and was forced by father. Leaving permanently, though, my sophomore year, was my idea.

Being accepted into art school at age sixteen with the general education diploma was an opportunity to remain in humanities and had never been offered by this school to someone of my age. I did not go to art school. I ended up taking my own advice, believing that being told what to create, for the profit of another, was not how I wanted to be inspired. The door was closed on an attainable dream.

Bewildering tempests inhabited my turf. These cyclones would encompass existence, bogging down the motivation once beheld in color pencils or flowing ink pens. Caring for patients, intermittent college courses, raising a son and surviving depression, all ended up taking time away from my original passions. Fury or sorrow always drew me back to writing. Invariably, stories were forming in my mind, even as I neglected to forge their existence. When I drew with my son, he loved to watch the images appear. Over the years, time drawing became less and less. He would say as I struggled, "Mom, you should start drawing again." He sent me art supplies as an adult when I needed to find my way.

Nowadays, I choose this path with rebounding passion, venturing toward higher education in the field of humanities. Confessing distaste for social forums, I now speak, betraying my anxiety, exposing thoughts and ideas concerning literature and art with the community I find myself a part of. Now is the time to honor my truth, and the truth is that humanities that has always chosen me.