

EXAMPLE 1:  
Kicked Out and Kicked Around

One of the worst days of my entire life started when the excruciating words spit out of my father's stiff mouth as he said, "Alice can't live with us anymore." We all knew it was coming but why then when things were already difficult? My Dad was plotting for the ruthless moment where it would bruise and crush us to pieces as he'd watch us flutter in smithereens to the cold floor expecting us to be bright and bold again but he'd surely hope for us to collapse so he could belittle us once again. This time it was really happening. It wasn't a nightmare where I would wake up and everything would be fine. If that were the case I'd have to wake up back when I was eight. At this moment it swept my breath away but not in the awestruck kind of way. It was more of the way where I felt suffocated and trapped underwater. With an evil stare grazed upon me my tears were jammed in my head along with my spinning emotions.

I couldn't handle myself at that moment; I didn't know what to say or how to respond. Questions came spattering out of my mouth even though the man before me was the last person I wanted to talk to. I was aching to talk to Alice.

"Why, where is she going, is she going to be ok, when will I get to see her" all flooded out as my tears were no longer able to be held back. Too many insensitive answers came back to me that sounded just as harsh as his news.

"She has been rebelling too far from the rules so she is unwelcome in our home" he retorted along with other answers my ears rejected.

After being overwhelmed by all those words came new rules for me. My parents enforced that I couldn't see or talk to her unless it was a rare occasion where they gave me permission, I can't answer the door to her, and I'm not allowed to go in her car. Horrible thoughts

came through my throbbing head as I was thinking I wouldn't need the rules because she would abandon me and leave to California early and never come back to see me.

I sprinted out to the driveway in determination to see Alice. I stopped a few feet in front of her as we gave each other a long mute stare; her drastically changed self was still unfamiliar to me as I looked at her dark hugging clothes and black makeup. Her lip quivered and her eyes were glazed over with tears as she spoke the words that went through me like knives. "I don't know where I'm going but I have to leave home."

Petrified of the reply I asked "When will I get to see you?"

"I don't know if we will see each other again, maybe not for a long time" her soft soothing voice responded but this time her words didn't comfort me like they did in the past.

This is what hurt the most as I felt my heart sink to my stomach. She wrapped her arms around me in melancholy as we stood to cry. Clutching with all my strength I locked my sister in my arms for what could be our last embrace. When she comforted me in her arms I couldn't help but be a little enraged at her for letting this happen but I was also guilty for not trying enough to help her. The new spring air was frigid that evening on a long Thursday after school as we stood in the openness of the long steep driveway. The driveway looked as I thought my life was going to be. It was all downhill ending at a sharp stop out in the open where I was left to see the wrath of being left alone. It was the place we used to race down in wagons and sell lemonade to our few sweet neighbors having fun no matter what happened. What used to be lovely rows and gardens of blooming summer flowers around the vine dressed arbor was all deathly and destroyed, leaving only the torturous thorn trap bushes to poke me until I'd burst like a balloon. It seemed as the world stood still with only my sister and I with her new friend, Nic, to the distant side there to help cart her things into a new life away from me. The air

was tranquil to let us have our moment. We only heard the waterfalls cascading into the garden pond where we used to giggle and take our Barbies for a swim. As we stood in the middle of the blackness of the driveway, the place for our massive summer chalk work every year, it felt as the world was perfect when we were together. When we were disconnected the ugly scene murdered by winter's frost looked like our feelings of dead bareness. The cliché of my "perfect home" did not resemble life as Alice was leaving because a house can never be a home without the entire loving family.

Before Alice turned into the stranger she is today she was a cheerful church girl and was almost a double of me. She used to dress in pretty clothes that we would buy when we gave into our shopping addiction. We used to sing and dance around our yard blasting the stereo as it echoed through our neighborhood. In the summer all of our close friends would come over for pool parties and we would sleep in the tent. There used to be a time where we would have heart to heart conversations and give each other supportive advice. Then she began to drastically change into someone who left me alone along with her old friends. She changed to earsplitting dark music, dark gothic clothes, hanging with the wrong people and making terrible choices. Alice started to rebel against the rules and encouraged me to shadow her wrongdoings. When she changed people at school would rumor about her and torment me saying my sister is a creepy psychopath. They all say that I will turn out to be just like her after they make me feel miserable by talking about how we lost our beautiful past. All I had left of Alice were the memories we used to share. I had lost my other half.

After Alice and I stopped hugging my best friend, Nikki, walked over from her house next to mine as I explained to her what was happening. I know she felt my excruciating pain because she was more than a sister to Alice and I. Alice headed into the house to gather her belongings. My body trembled as we watched her take her things

from the house. We watched her continuously walk by with a memory deeply attached to each item she grabbed. My mind traveled to when Alice and I were young playing dogs outside with Nikki. I spaced out smiling as I saw us fighting over the name D.O.G. oblivious to what it spelt. We were prancing around our yards with fake collars barking to each other and eating real dog food and drinking from a bowl. From that young memory my mind fast forwarded about five years to us three with the rest of our neighbors happily playing capture the flag and jumping on the trampoline. Alice, Nikki and I would be on the same team and always snuck out of the jail laughing hysterically thinking we were so sneaky. As happy as the memories made me feel my mind snapped back to the cold new reality as I saw the last memories she took with her from her room pass by me. Emptiness. That is what was left in my life, my heart, our family, and her room.

I thought to myself if there was something I could have done to encourage her to do what was right and not let her actions be strong enough to let her be kicked out and left abandoned in the cruel world. When it was my time to be her role model I was unsure how to because I was deprived of someone I could look up to. I was terrified; I needed her as much as she needed me. As I watched her drive away in solemn I knew it might be the last time I had her in my eyes with the blur of my tears.

In hopes of being distracted from this madness Nikki went with me on a walk around the serene neighborhood. There were no cars to rush by and bother us on the quiet curvy roads, it was perfect. This time the only thing missing was Alice by our sides. The rest of my tears were mostly held in with my last bit of dwindling strength. It was hard to clear my emotions and have an ordinary walk with her after what we had just witnessed but we knew we had to move on with our lives. I am proud to have Nikki as my friend because she has been with me up until three a.m. on some nights to support me when things were hard with Alice. Nikki filled the gap Alice left and because of

her I can be happy and have another fantastic person to call my sister.

If it weren't for Nikki this moment that had just passed by could have been the death of me. On the walk we looked to the future where we saw three possibilities. Alice could leave to California without another time spent with me, she could transform back to who she used to be, or she could remain the same but I would still see her every now and then. These possibilities tormented me but I knew in the end it would be alright as long as I had Nikki by my side and kept the memories with me.

## EXAMPLE 2:

### A Tragic Tail

*Dedicated to my feline friend,  
Catnip.  
We will always love you.*

*Prologue: In Memoriam*

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I slouched in overwhelming thought on the edge of the sofa, contemplating the worn flaws of my gnawed fingernails. He had been there my entire life, and then in just one day he was gone from it. Torn, so suddenly; ripped harshly from us. At least I could say goodbye one last time...

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It was not a particularly warm day, nor a cool one. Tiny tufts of white speckled the vibrant indigo sky, and a deep shade of violet formed the boundary between the great pines and the horizon. The air was stiff as it blew sporadic gusts through the endless forests of spruces, elms, and oaks, whose rustling emanated for miles around. The leaves were becoming crisp again: their lush moisture siphoned out as though the very air were a vacuum. This is how I felt that school day: as though all the pleasures and joys of life had simply been sucked out of my presence. It would have been routine for all of the other third graders, but this had been no ordinary day to me; from this point forward my world would never be the same.

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*Part I: 'Til Death Do Us Part*

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I postured myself on the edge of a large boulder toward the end of my driveway, as I did every day, to await the morning school bus. For a while I stared blankly ahead of me, as though in a competition of concentration with the trees, but soon I began to observe the awaking life which was beginning to bustle about me. A voracious militia of ants ascended from their earthly pits and assembled in their ranks to embark on a quest for comestibles. A weary whistle-pig cautiously lifted its head from its cozy burrow, still woozy and drunken with sleep. A triad of purple finches flitted merrily through the slim branches of a newly sprouting crab apple tree, innocent and childish in their mirth. Then, all at once, the finches froze amidst the blossoming branches, the woodchuck became a marble statue amidst the grass blades, and the regimen of ravenous insects stopped dead in their tiny tracks; the pendulum of time itself seemed to cease its perpetual vacillation.

I thought back to all the fond memories we had shared; he had been my companion from the moment we had first met: constructing and utilizing a covert base of indestructible feather pillows which could withstand any injury from the collapse of a building to spontaneous floor combustion; playing an altered version of hide-and-seek in which I was always the hider, who was required call to the finder whilst hiding, and he was evermore the finder, who had to listen for the hider's calls and come running; and even something as simple as lounging in the bay window observing the abundance of nature's vibrancy, whether it be a frosty winter morn with a sheet of crisp snow and slippery ice lain upon the ground, or a sweltering summer's eve on which flora basks in the ambience of welcoming warmth... much like tonight would probably be—

My thoughts were blunted, and I was ripped harshly back to reality as the tumult of a bus engine shattered the fragile, natural quiet. I looked around and realized that the finches, whistle-pig, and ants had all disappeared from view in terror of the noise. Time had surely elapsed while I had been reminiscing: my eyes were swollen and I could feel moisture on my face; It felt as though a sock had burrowed its way down my throat and knotted itself into a ball there. I mopped away the salty tears with the collar of my shirt just as the school bus came to a gear-grinding tumult of a halt at my driveway and reluctantly boarded it, knowing well that I would never forget these memories which had aroused my mourning.

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Class had started, but I was distant. I sat in the rear of the room that day, rather than at my usual seat nearest to the teacher at the head of the class. My posture became lax and I slouched, my spine awkwardly arching into a crescent as the moon does in its wane.

"Alright class, today we are going to learn some new vocabulary words!"

*Nobody cares. I probably already know the stupid words anyway.* I relaxed deeper into the seat.

"Now, the first word is "island!"

*Seriously? You're teaching a third-grade class lady...* My temper began to rise, and my face became heated, though I realized that my teacher was not the instigator of my anger.

"An island is a piece of land that isn't connected to any other larger segments of land and..."

I clamped my jaw down on my tongue, nearly to the verge of blood and tears, and began to zone out into my own little world in order to restrain myself from lashing out in an outburst of wrongly directed fury. Gradually, the faces of my classmates dissolved into nothingness.

A poster displaying an inspirational quote faded into the eggshell brickwork of the wall. The minutely-irritating high-pitched voice of my teacher was drowned out by my thoughts: my memories. I again thought back to all the experiences we had shared: tearing presents open together on Christmas Eve and rejoicing in their contents, sitting around the house while watching him become a spastic ball of flailing limbs after inhaling a certain drug which he happened to be named after, and the night before when I had discovered that it was the last night that we would ever share together...

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"Honey, I need to talk to you..."

*Okay... Why do you sound so sad, mom?* "About what?"

"Just," she paused to think, "come in here, hon..."

*She sounds pretty serious...* "Okay," I contemplated the possibilities, "what's wrong?"

I walked obediently into the bedroom as I spoke, and found my lifelong friend lying limply on a pile of pillows. The air was immobile in the room, and instantly I felt a pressure against my chest from both the muggy heat of the room and his appearance. His head weakly rose toward me at the sound of our footsteps, and I could tell that his weary muscles strained to do so. Our eyes met for a moment, and instantly I understood that some spiteful thing had occurred.

"What's wrong with him, mom?!" My chest palpitated, and every breath I took in became shallower than the last. "Can't we take him to the vet to make him better?"

"Honey..." She couldn't bear to say anything more for fear of hurting me, but her silence spoke volumes more than she could devise: more so than two gossiping hags relaying curses upon innocent victims at their disposal.

I wanted to run. I wanted to bolt out of that room in the likeness of a lightning bolt, and never return. But I couldn't. My friend was here, lying helplessly, barely able to will his own body to move. I could never leave him alone: not like this.

"Whe-" My voice cracked and my mouth became as dry as the Sahara as I spoke, "when?"

"Tomorrow," even at this, her heart broke, "at 3:00, just as school gets out..."

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### *Part II: Day of the Dead*

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I remained inside the building during recess that day, not wanting to be distracted from the pain. I needed to feel it... No, I *wanted* to feel it.

This agony was the final connection to my childhood friend... My heart had been pierced through with a demonic athamae, which if removed by force would heal the wound, scarless, but whose emotional marring would cause such atrocious pain that one would wish they had died of the wound.

The raucous shrieks and cheers of my innocent classmates penetrated the formidable school walls from the fields below. I did not give even a passing glance out the window, nor did I dare peer at the clock resting upon the wall, which negligently diminished moment after moment of my friend's life. I sat with my forehead level against the ceramic desk, anticipating the end of the school day, and therefore his end...

Reality again left my clutching fists, though I grasped desperately onto every shred of palpability within my reach.

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My mother had left the room so as to give me a final moment of privacy with my pal. I slowly approached his bed of pillows, letting my stress and anxiety flood out of me as during a low tide along the Atlantic. He had always had a knack for sensing stress in me, and anybody for that matter, and I knew that that was the last thing he needed.

"Hey, buddy," I spoke calmly to him, and began to caress his spine softly with my hand. His fur was now coarse and grainy with age, and as I petted him I could feel every vertebrae and rib as his spine passed through my fingers., "how are you doing?"

He strugglingly looked up toward my beaming face with his iconic look of sarcasm, as though to say, "Did you really just ask that?"

I chuckled as I lay down softly astride his lanky back, and he began to purr as I rubbed his warm belly. We stayed like this until every star was visible in the deep marine-blue sky.

He once more peered up into my face with an expression of peaceful serenity, all pains long forgotten in the pure brotherly love we had shared.

"Good night, Catnip..."

Finally able to rest, his head slowly laid down on the silken pillow in exhaustion, unable to fight the fatiguing darkness of night. I took one last long look at my beloved friend.

"I love you..."

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I was abruptly wrenched from these vile retentions of the mind.

Reality seeped slowly back into my cognizance, and I became increasingly conscious of my surroundings. My saliva had coagulated, and the taste of putrid decay flooded over my tastebuds. The piercing glow of sunbeams from the west invaded every corner of the classroom, nosing queerly through our business. The teacher's voice

now formed a raspy and harsh note upon each consonant she spoke, causing me to cringe between each and every syllable. My face was drenched with tears, but they were more than that: these were my memories, and I felt as though every tear that escaped my ducts left a cavity; a vacuum; a void which would not and could not ever be filled. But, amidst all these realizations, a sudden cacophonous rhapsody of abrasive pitches began to screech. This jarring tone marked an age of freedom of all cares and worries to my innocent peers, but the same dissonant vibration I perceived was that of a reverberating death rattle echoing perpetually through the desolate halls.

### EXAMPLE 3:

“Beep! Beep! Beep!” went my startling alarm clock. The sunlight shined through my turquoise curtains, illuminating my room. A warm breeze burst through the half open window, informing me of the nice, summer day that was to come. Suddenly there was a monstrous raucous. Doors opening and closing, people shouting outside. I could not figure out what was happening.

Then my mom called out, “Time to get up Sarah, we’re heading to the lake in an hour!”.

I had totally forgotten, today we were going to the lake house! Everyone must be packing their bags and loading up the truck. I immediately removed my sheets, hopped out of bed and began preparing for a delightful weekend at the lake where many memories have been made. It is where the entire family gathers and spends as much time as possible together. It was just another place I liked to call home, and I would soon be there cherishing the amazing moments spent with my family.

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The diesel truck echoed off of the buildings, crunching the pebbles in the marina parking lot. As the truck slowed to a complete stop, doors flew open and bags were unloaded onto the ground. The boat was tied to the dock closest to where we had parked. One by one my family members gathered their belongings.

“Ryan, Sarah, Tyler” shouted my dad, “help your mom and I with the bags and load them onto the boat”.

Ryan’s large, muscular arms allowed him to carry four bags to the boat, leaving one for Tyler and I. Everyone was very anxious and ready to make it to the island. “Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick” went the boat engine as it started up. The sound became louder as we drifted away from the swaying dock. Little ripples of water traveled throughout the lake. The ticking sound of the boat engine quickly changed to a fast

rattle as we increased speed, while little ripples transformed into waves. As we made it across the lake, the island became closer and closer. Boats were traveling in all directions trying to reach their destination, just as we were. The wind blew, making my hair fly all around.

As we approached the island, I could see a short, little woman standing on the end of the dock waving her arms all around. Her excitement traveled amongst everyone. She began to jump up and down making her short, red curls bounce off of her shoulders. We parked the boat and secured it to the poles. She grabbed a bag in each of her hands, being the helpful and caring person she is. For having such short legs, she certainly made it up the flat, stone steps quickly. I, along with the other grandchildren, leaped out of the boat and raced to greet her.

“Grandma! Grandma! Grandma!” exclaimed all four of us.

Everyone was pushing and pulling each other in different directions trying to reach her first. Luckily, her petite arms embraced me with a giant, loving hug before anyone else made it to her. She absolutely loved welcoming her grandchildren with a tight, enormous bear hug that took their breath away. Her little arms wrapped around my body tightly, making sure I could not escape.

For a moment I remembered all of the previous times I had been in this same position. Summers filled with happiness, more and more memories being created. A few years ago however, I realized I had the best grandmother anyone could ask for. We were all arriving to the island; as the boat was pulling up, my grandma surprised us and jumped into the water fully clothed. My cousins and I were screaming with laughter. As soon as we jumped out of the boat, we ran to hug her, all soaking wet. That was the best hug I had ever shared with her, and still to this day, she expects an enormous hug from each of her grandchildren, even though we are happy to give her one.

The sound of my pestering cousins trying to have their turn with my grandmother brought me back to real life. After I finished hugging her, I kissed her soft, wrinkled cheek and made my way to the house with my bags. As the door to the log cabin house creaked open, the smell of fresh baked, chocolate chip cookies filled the air. The door to the fridge swung open as my hand reached in and grabbed a Poland Springs bottle of water. I dropped my bags on to the floor and ran down to the beach. My younger brother and cousins followed and we jumped into the warm water. As my parents, aunts and uncles set up their beach chairs by the water, my grandma and grandpa made their way down. The radio's music began to play loud and clear. Water splashing, sun blazing, the lake was a magical place.

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Time flew by. The sun hid behind the island across the lake, darkening the sky. Spatulas flipping cheeseburgers. The sound of knives hitting the cutting board after slicing through the cucumbers could be heard throughout the kitchen. The smell of delicious, juicy cheeseburgers traveled down to the water, informing the grandchildren dinner was ready. Grandpa took the burgers off of the grill and brought them inside. The four youngest grandchildren sat at one table, while the older grandchildren sat with the adults. Everyone grasped the people's hands sitting next to them, creating a chain. "Dear Lord, thank you for this meal and thank you for bringing my family safely together. Amen" prayed my grandmother. "Amen" was said in sync around the room. I looked around the dining room, examining each and every family member of mine, realizing how much everyone meant to me. My eyes made it around to my grandmother. The sweetest, old lady anyone could ever meet. I was extremely lucky to be able to call this woman *my* grandma. *Wow am I lucky. I love her with all of my heart, almost as much as I love her hugs.*