

75%

Jackie Cotter

You knew exactly what you were doing to me.
I told you everything.
I mapped out the route to easily breaking me down,
Making me cry,
Hurting my ego,
Breaking my heart...
I told you one of my greatest weaknesses,
And you used it to hurt me
To scar me...
How can that possibly be forgiven?

I'm screaming out loud
My throat is raw
My mouth is bleeding
My eyes are puffy
My heart is broken.
And it's almost like no one can hear me.
Can't you see?
I've experienced so much emotional pain
That it's somehow become physical.
I don't know what to do with myself.
And I don't know how to be cured.
I just know that you're the cause.

My chest is collapsing
I've forgotten how to breathe.
What I've feared most;
And I knew it was nearly inevitable;
Has happened.
I can only pray and hope that it won't happen again.
I don't know if I can survive this ...
Certainly not again.
The relationships I've depended on my whole life are crumbling.
And I'm simply lost.
How can I possibly recover?

God made all of his creatures to be equal
Except the gays...
Only God can judge
Except for you, clearly
Love the sinner, hate the sin
That's what I hear, but I know not everyone means it.
Jesus can change you
What if I don't want to change?
Homosexuality is a sin
There are certainly worse things I could do...
We don't agree with-
I don't want to hear anymore. You make me sick.

Brody Wilson

After you hear the wondrous scream muffled by a torn cloth that you've prepared to strike with an ax, or a bat, a golf club, a sword, well really anything that your heart craves, *desires*, needs. At first its a bit troublesome, but you get used to it, the feeling; the squashing, the gushing, the oozing, the smell, its not that bad of a smell, I have actually grown rather fond of it. You can really get used to it, every aspect of the very act, it was once a gut wrenching concept in my mind, now it never leaves my mind, its always there, not like its bad, but its a memory, a good memory, how people always think of memories, usually bad ones, but people often associate bad memories with bad attitudes, or good memories with good attitudes, I however associate all memories as good ones because it makes my attitude good, theres never a bad day, because there is *a/ways* a good memory in my mind, because I'm always thinking of my memories.

I would say that i have a problem but theres really nothing wrong with what i'm doing, it's really something amazing, its an advanced form of modern day dentistry. It's highly impractical and the FDA would never approve of it, come to think of it neither would the LAPD, CIA, FBI or my mother. My mother always has something to say about how what i'm doing is wrong, in every situation, i'm not good enough, so i keep this from her, i love her, but id never tell her that again. My mother and I have a strange relationship, she basically is supported by me, lives in the house that i pay for, Its bigger than mine, but whatever, she did give me life and the mind set to do what makes me happy, but our relationship is her watching, judging, and manipulating. Shes close to her end and im just patiently waiting. i would never lay a hand on her, but its gotten to the point where she compromises my happiness and shes just another bill to pay, its not that im focused on what i'm spending, money really doesn't matter to me despite how much

of it i've acquired throughout my pursuit of happiness, but the fact that she feels entitled to be taken care of at an old age because she took care of me at a young age, as if getting knocked up at the bar and coming home to raise a drunken mistake by yourself is something that you deserve credit for.

I get a bit fed up with her, but its okay, i have ways to cope with stress, the same way i had since i was a middle schooler. I light one up, maybe two or four, it doesn't really matter at this point, i dont even get high anymore, i just get normal, but it passes the time and keeps me happy sometimes. The high isn't enough, i've tried everything i could come across in a fifty mile radius, like shrooms, acid, molly, meth, heroine, crocodile, bath salts, cocaine, crack, pcp, i've tried everything any local druglord could get their grimy hands on, but high isn't what i want, i want happy, and high doesn't get that, all that gets me by is my hobby. its a fantastic way to cope, and i've learned to enjoy the smell, i really do, sometimes the taste, but that was only three times. that isn't even close to a tenth of the amount of times that i've done it. I just smoke now, all those drugs just made me hate myself a bit more, but i'm okay with myself stoned. thats about it, or when i'm smelling the smell of the smell that smells smelly.

Where was I? uhhhh, i'm not sure, i'm also not sure if you're sure, or if you're not sure, all that im sure of is that you're surely unsure of how sure I really am. I'm I'm not crazy, let's get that clear before it begins to fade away slowly into a withered corpse of what once never was. I'm serious, dead a\$\$, I am not crazy, if anything I'd say I'm so naturally sane that everyone who considers themselves to be sane, is actually beyond repair. That's how mentally stable and in control I am. But I don't know what made me think that I had to share any of that with you, you won't remember I am for much longer anyway, it's it's really it's really no it's really no big deal. I see that you're having a hard time sit here and listen to me talk, and frankly I think you're being and very rude guest, I bring you to my house, give you and tour, and allow you to sit in MY throne with your hands bound for your own safety. It may seem illogical that ensuring your hands are inaccessible is is a safety precaution, especially for you, and I understand that. Usually my guest don't don't have access to their legs, and you are obviously taking them for granted the way you're kicking them at my legs. Whatever you want to hurt me, I'll leave you alone to think about your actions.

Upon leaving my garage I saw a woman jogging, and what a woman she was, i've never seen a set so unsure if it preferred to be north or south. I didn't pay much attention to the woman beside her pink sweatshirt which covered her voluptuous set, and her bright green running shoes, they may have been reebok, maybe nike. I stopped watching and completely forgot what it's it's even left the garage for, I remember it had something to do with that bitch in my throne trying to

kick me, *that ungrateful broad*. She could've played nice. But instead her actions sent me spiraling down into a state of insightful rationalization in which it realized that I'm the f*cking boss.

After my moment outside, I stepped back into the garage, and my guest was on the floor sideways and she better not not have f*ckin scratched my throne. *That's my god damn throne that you're knocking over*. I hit her. I regret it instantly, I don't like to inflict meaningless pain, but the bitch knocked my throne over... only kings have thrones and you disrespect mine? Look, I'm sorry I hit you, but I gave you that time to yourself so you could think about how your actions affect others, and you rub it in my face by knocking my throne over? *I want to make this right, let's go for a ride*.

I hopped in my Tahoe with my guest in the back, and I decided that I'd take her to my favorite park. It's a place called Raspberry Quarry, for what reason they named it I will never understand, but it's my favorite park. There's a main parking lot with two paths which you could walk down, and in between those two paths is a bench. I actually built the bench a few years ago and brought it here because this place is magical. The two paths that go opposite directions end up in the same point, a red wood tree, at least 40 feet wide, definitely taller than 50 stories, the thing is huge. I used to come here with my girlfriend a while ago, I carved a 4 foot heart with our initials in it. But that's beside the point, there is a tree and this place is a celestial vacation from society.

While sitting on the bench, I looked down the right path and saw those bright green running shoes, well one of them, and wanted to see why the woman decided to leave her shoe behind. Approaching the shoe, the thought occurred to me, she certainly had no say in the placement of it. I began walking a bit faster, when I reached the shoe I could hear movement in the woods. Curious, I looked around, surveyed the scene, and about 15 feet into the woods I saw the other shoe, walking over to it I noticed the sound of the movement in the woods began to get louder and louder. I looked around, it was getting a bit dark so the visibility wasn't all there, but I saw movement on the ground, once I narrowed my attention in on the movement I could make out the figure of a man, looking as if he's on his hands and knees, just before this moving figure was the bright pink sweatshirt that belonged with the green shoes. I could hear a muffled scream, an agonizing scream, I've never heard anything like it before. I've heard plenty of screams, but none as gut wrenching as this one. My stomach turned in knots at the sound of these screams. I knew something was wrong, even for me, something was very wrong.

I took a deep breath and ran toward the movement and muffled screams, the man's figure shoot up and as soon as he was standing, the joggers screams echoed throughout the woods, he attempted to flee, but he was too late, I was a dive away from him.. and I dove. I tackled this sick fuck like he was tree I was determined to tear down to the ground. I tore him to the ground and began beating him. Swing after swing I hear thud thud thud thud thud, but in the background I can hear the jogger crying, and I can began crying, I knew how violated she felt, I was crying while beating this "mans" face into a fat unloved bloody pulp. I decided that I wasn't the one who should be beating beating this man, however this jogger was the one who should exact her revenge.

You're safe now.

I knew she was still scared, I was scared too.

Wait here I'll come back for you. I laid my coat on her for warmth. in a world which she had lost security and comfort I tried to make her feel okay for the time being. I grabbed the filthy man by his ankles and began dragging him back to the bench. It was a challenge, this man weighed a good two fifty maybe pushing three, but I was so furious that I refused to give up. It took about 5 minutes to drag him back to my truck, when we got there I grabbed a roll of duct tape, and connected his hands to his grimey little rapist dick, i used a the rest of the roll on it, but i wasnt concerned because i always have at least two rolls of duct tape in the back of my tahoe. Seeing this guy on the ground with both hands bound to his genitals with half a roll of duct tape had an aesthetically pleasing to me, but i wasnt done, i took his left foot and taped that to his hands. at this point he was looking like a pretzel with a free right leg, a perfectly fine right leg, that was okay for the time, then i realized he didn't need it.

This guy was just coming to, and he had fear in his eyes, he looked up at me as if i was some type of disgusting animal that roams the jungles molesting smaller animals because i was able to, he looked at me as if i was his brother, as if i should regret having stopped his progress. *how was that pussy you piece of shit?* at that moment he realized there was no way out. he began squirming and screaming, muffled by the duct tape i could understand what he was saying. *I've become quite skilled at the language of tape-mouth.* I chuckled to myself as i said that, it was quite humorous, and true. It's a rather simple language really, all you have to do is listen to the first sound and the last sound and determine how long the word is emphasized for, its like a game to me to decipher what is being said. Although i normally hear something like "why are you doing this" or "please dont do this" but this guy was gasping to say "sorry".

SORRY? *ahah you're sorry? whats your name?* "Peee-eeeR" he attempted to announce to me. It was obvious he was aiming to say his name was peter. *pete, peter, p-money, you piece of peter shit, i'll tell you what, actually i won't, you don't deserve to know anything, but i will warn you..... your leg is going to be in a lot of pain soon.* Hearing him scream for help was great, it really aroused my senses. I rolled him over to the back of my tahoe and opened door and saw that bitch that fucked up my throne in there. I had completely forgotten about her, from the serenity of Raspberry Quarry, to the rage of discovering the rape. I took p-moneys available right leg and put it in the back next to that throne wrecker and pressed the door against it so he couldn't move it, his body was on the ground while his leg was elevated into the trunk. *enjoy this one pal.* I stomped his knee to the ground, i felt bones snap and ligaments tear, i loved it. I took a perfectly fine right leg and turned it to an internally soupy knee stew with a floppy calf and foot. Hearing his agonizing screams was, well it was perfect, i sat on the ground next to him and grabbed his thigh and began flailing his useless leg around. *HAHAHAHAHAH ITS LIKE ANUNCHUCK, look at it p-money, you're a ninja now.* I played with his floppy leg for a few minutes then heaved his fat disgusting and beaten body into the trunk next to the anti-throne.

I pulled out a bone from my joint tin and sparked it for my walk back to the victimized jogger. The walk back was really sad, i felt so bad for her, she didn't deserve this, no woman does, nor will they ever. When i came back to her she was in a ball on the ground grasping to my coat for dear life. *hey, im really sorry this happened to you, sincerely.. i wish i could've prevented this, i really do, but that useless prick is in a lot of pain right now not as much pain as you i'd imagine, but we can work on that.* she looked up to me with a look of fear and gratitude, it broke my heart, i knew she was thankful, but i really wish she wasn't, i wish she wasn't here, i wish she never met me, but because of that fatass p-money, she had to meet me. Standing next her, i offered her my hand for stability, comfort, compassion, anything really, but she just stared at me with bloodshot tear-filled eyes. *You're safe with me, i promise you, my name is Oliver Bryson, I live here in Charming, I'm less than 3 miles from here, I saw you jog by earlier, let me take you home please, i have a maid at my house who used to be a paramedic, we dont need to go to a hospital if you don't want to, i understand you don't want to talk about this, but i can't leave you here. either I'm taking you to a hospital, or to my house, but i need to help you.* she sat up and put on my coat that was comforting her, and accepted my extended hand.

She didn't speak a word to me on the walk back, but she never let go of my hand. Never let up on her grip or anything, she was devoted to maintaining contact with my hand, i knew she felt safe with me, she didn't need to speak, nor would i expect her to, but i knew she was safe,

as did she. *thats m truck right here, or SUV, whatever you want to consider it.... See that bench right there? i made it and brought it here.*

Cassandra Goyette 75%

Chapter Thrice

The sunlight penetrated the crystallized frost consuming the four glass panes solidified by the wooden frame bound to the wall. Shining through, brightening the room with shattered rays of light, scattered amidst the panels of wood that lay stapled to each other beneath Raeth's feet. He had woken up several times during the night in cold sweats caused by mares. Standing by the edge of the bed, his eyes focusing on the various sequences and on goings just past the thin panes of glass. His cloak had never been removed from his back, small creases could be made out in the dark thread caused by the pressure of his body onto it. Accalia watching inquisitively as her master stood in a questionable daze, she lay quietly by the door with her head laying on her extended front paws. The wick on the candle, still idling on the windowsill. Something peculiar peaked Raeth's interest, if he could recall correctly the candle has been unlit upon his arrival and through the night, so why suddenly was there a flame present now? Silently the flame flickered about, dancing, taunting him, it's reflection lurking in his pupils. The nails of Accalia curiously tapped the floor as she trotted up to Raeth's leg's, choosing the left one she nudged persistently with her muzzle attempting to create a reaction. His gaze interrupted, Raeth looked down, petting his companion and scratching her behind the

ears. He proceeded towards the door, before opening it taking one last glance at the candle. As he opened the door Accalia burst out through the tiny opening, barreling down the hallway and the stairwell. Scoffing, Raeth followed her manner but in a relaxed walk. Passing through the dimly lit stairwell something moved out of the corner of his eye. He quickly glanced around, nothing by the creak of a lantern occasionally swinging on it's hinges. He could have sworn a shadow jolted out into the hallway vanishing into someone's room, he convinced himself it was his mind playing tricks on him. The stairs led to a wide, open, well-lit great room filled with strangers lingering and socializing.

Accalia had found her way to Havoc who was laying by the edge of the great fire surrounded by a marvelous stone wall in the center of the room. Sitting in a chair lined by the fur of a saber was Sylana, she sat quietly adjusting her bow. Raeth walked up to the bar and ordered two mugs of spice, bringing them both over to Sylana. "You look like you could use a drink." He said smiling. "Isn't it a little early to be drinking?" She responded sarcastically. "Nonsense! Think of it as heightening your senses." Raeth added after taking a quick swig of his spice. Sylana placed her drink on the end table next to the chair. "They seem to like each other." She said while watching Accalia and

Havoc socializing near the great fire. Raising a brow and taking another sip Raeth responded. "It would seem so, could be worse they could be fighting and get us kicked out." Sylana reached for her drink and took a small sip. " I suppose, although I would hardly believe Havoc ever displaying such behavior." "Well anything could happen." Raeth shrugged. The room was filled with chatter from the various individuals gathered in the area. Yet Raeth felt an untrustworthy presence somewhere within, however unable to pinpoint it. While scanning the room he nudged Sylana's shoulder and asked her.

"Hey do you have a candle sitting on the windowsill of your room?"

“Well I have a candle, but it’s placed on the end table next to the bed. Why do you ask?”

“I swear when we arrived and I opened the door to my room, the candle in my room was unlit, sitting on the windowsill. But when I woke up this morning, it had been lit. The wick had been burned and dissipated that it had to have been lit all night.”

“That’s rather odd. Could you have it during the night and forgot about it? I blew the flame out before I slept.” She said while finishing her drink.

“That’s the thing I remember almost nothing of last night. I swear I’m losing my mind.”

His mug had been emptied prior to their conversation, he placed in on the table near a wicker basket of roals.

A loud banging and crashing sound echoed throughout the hall, every presence halted, frozen in place only for moments as a response. Every head turned to the stairwell, where the sound was emitted, silence filled the air as footsteps could be heard parading around above their heads and through the hallways. In the midst of the commotion Raeth was cradling his head, both hands placed over his ears as if trying to block out a sound or a voice. He was on the ground shaking, screaming in pain, the several seconds Raeth’s hands fell to the ground next to him, he lay still almost lifeless, with the faint rise of his chest every few seconds. The footsteps ceased and silence fell once again, each person dazed with confusion.

Revised Chapter two :(Anything in Blue was acause unknown. After dded)

Chapter 2

It was nearly dawn as far as they could tell, the sky was grey dense with a screen of clouds, the faint shimmering of a golden scarlet glow could be made out through them. The

crimson glow illuminated the surrounding skyline it's beauty tainted by the shroud of storm clouds. They grew wary as they proceeded across the tundra, legs aching, faces frozen, and bodies covered in icicles. Fatigue only growing. Exposing his head to the winds Raeth looked up eyeing what looked to be a small cave on the side of a snow capped mountain. Unable to move his lips or generate any type of coherent verbal command, he simply raised his arm, making a fist pointing in the direction of the cave. Taking notice Sylaena gave a reassuring nod at Raeth.

Steadily they crossed the tundra reaching the cave, an immediate feeling of relief as the stone walls shielded them from the brash winds. Upon entrance both Sylaena and Raeth collapsed with backs against the wall sinking to the ground, sighing with relief as they breathed heavily in short bursts, Havoc and Accalia sitting contently at their sides, their fur was frozen in a streamline pattern lining their backs, covered in small crystallized water droplets. A few moments passed before Raeth retracted his hood and unbuckled his leather satchel attached at his hip, reaching inside he would retrieve three small roals. Handing the first to Sylaena, keeping the second for himself and breaking the third in half giving a portion to Havoc and Accalia. As they sat eating they could hear the whistling of the wind as it flowed through the caves entrance slowly dying as it passed leaving behind a chilling brisk aura.

"If we want to make it to the village, we shouldn't rest long." Raeth said as he took the final bite of his roal and began brushing the icicles off his cloak. Sylaena had already finished her roal and refastened her cloak to shield her back from the winds. She had been running her fingers through Havoc's fur attempting to remove the icicles flowing down his back. Throwing her brown leather hood over her head, she looked towards Raeth speaking softly, "Way ahead of you." Quickly Raeth finished refastening his black leather cloak and threw the hood over his head, now preventing his eyes from being seen. Whistling sharply Accalia trotted over proudly,

“Shall we?” Raeth said while extending a hand towards Sylaena to help her rise from her kneeling position. She nodded as they set off once more into the tundra.

As their boots treaded the tundra, a faint vibration could be felt underneath the sea of white, unable to coherently distinguish anything around them they pressed on. Stopping every time they felt the vibrated, vision always clouded by the small white particles that never seems to dissipate. Eventually the vibrations became more noticeable, distinct and stronger, getting closer and closer. When a large faint silhouette could be seen charging straight at them, both Raeth and Sylaena quickly jumped to the side dodging what seems to be a behemoth, fur covered rhino with tusks protruding from the lower mandible. They drew their weapons, entering a combat ready position with their companions next to them ready to attack, only to realize with the weather conditions they had lost sight of the beast. “Something must’ve startled the beast, Marhofs are not known for their aggressive nature.” Sylaena remarked as she sheathed her weapons. “What could’ve, they are so docile and peaceful?” Raeth responded while kneeling next to one of the large tracks left behind. Lowering her hood Sylaena scanned the areas that were visible to her eyes, nothing stood out. “I’m not sure anything can, I’ve never seen one so hostile...Let’s keep moving.” Raeth nodded and they set off for the village. “We’re almost at the village, we should be there in a matter of hours.”

Hours passed, the winds had died down enough that they could walk without their hoods up, however the snow had not stopped. After reaching the top of a small hill, they could make out the first couple of small buildings belonging to the village. Quickly they proceeded towards them, eventually reaching the front gate. The gate was massive made of stone laced with golden hinges and trim with the Faergas crest centered between the doors. The crest depicted a magnificent goddess with long flowing white hair, with a golden circlet. She was dressed in white plated armor, with a golden trim around each piece, dual wielding a pair of elven long swords

each with a golden gem at the center of the hilt, which was wrapped in white leather. As they approached the gates slowly opened, inviting them inside was short, stout guard dressed in the guardsmen uniform. His voice was deep and short of breath, "Hurry up, we've got to shut the gates for the night you two just made it. The Inn is up the road a bit on the right." Raeth and Sylaena hurried between the gates, keeping both Havoc and Accalia at their hips. As they passed the guard each of them gave a nod and continued toward the Inn, behind them the creaking of the stone gates could be heard.

Each building they passed was made of wood, that had a dark trim of spruce lining the outsides of the buildings, while the walls were made of a lighter wood most likely oaken. Most windows had candles in them or had a curtain over them. The road was lined with closed shops, open taverns or locked houses. They finally reached the Inn, it was called The Burning Tree Tavern, the building itself was larger than the rest and seemed to be filled with villagers.

They approached the counter joyfully greeting the tavern keeper. Raeth politely asked "Two rooms, how much?" The tavern keeper put his elbow on the counter and leaned closer to them raising a brow he said, "Fifteen gold pieces." Raeth handed him the pieces and nodded at him. "Up the stairs, fifth door down on the right and third door on the left." The keeper responded handing them each a key. Casually they strolled away from the counter making there way towards the stairway ignoring the roaring masses present within the great room of the tavern. The stairway was broad and dimly lit by several lanterns, cased in iron dangling from small sturdy hooks fastened to the wall. Each door was labeled with a small symbol etched into the door frame indicating the number of each room. They passed each room until reaching the third door on the left, Raeth stopped to insert the key into the lock twisting it clockwise twice to open the door. He grabbed the door handle, pushing it down in order to open the door. The room was standard for an inn, it came with a small wooden framed bed next to the window with

an unlit candle idling on the ledge, in the corner was a large empty wooden wardrobe, and a small wooden nightstand next to the bed. Removing the key from the lock Raeth turned around to Sylaena speaking softly. "Rest up, sweet dreams." Before entering his chamber for the night. "As to you." She would responded, continuing down the hallway until she had reached the fifth door on the right. Her fingers carefully traced the symbol carved into the door frame, before she took her key twisting it counterclockwise, unlocking the door. Her room was practically identical to Raeth's, except the candle was sitting on the nightstand instead of the windowsill. As she opened the door Havoc pushed through her legs nonchalantly trotting inside, jumping onto the bed, prodding the surface with his paws before lying down. Smiling at her wolf's delight she walked inside removing her quiver, cloak, bow and short swords. She hung her quiver and bow from the bedpost. Untwisting the knot used to secure her cloak, removing it and draping it over the bedpost concealing her weapons. Sylaena approached each of the two lanterns dangling from the sturdy iron hooks placed on the wall, twisting the knobs, dimming each so the room was barely illuminated. She climbed onto the bed, the frame creaking a bit before settling, she laid her head against Havoc's side which was steadily rising and falling. Whom was lying sound asleep at the head of the bed, his steady breathes provided a rhythmic cycle of relaxation that soon allowed Sylaena to drift into a slumber. The candle's wick slowly dwindling, eventually fading away as the last drop of wax trickled down the side of the incongruous cylinder.

Kasara Maloney

Dear Dad,

If you ever get to read this, I want it to be the start of our new relationship together, I love you despite everything that's happened and you don't deserve anything that's happening to you as of April/ 4/ 2015. As much as I'd like to envision our future together, the past and the present come first.

You're eyes are closed, but they flutter from left to right under your eyelids. They say you wouldn't recognize me if you came to but the way you clench my hand whether it be from contracture or because you actually recognize my voice crying out to you; it just gets to me. When the doctor spoke the words, "He has less than a 1% chance of surviving, and if he manages to pull through he may not recognize you. He would most likely be in a vegetative state and bedridden for life" the words penetrated my heart, and deteriorated a part of me. It's like a black empty abyss is forming due to your absence; though it's not like you were here before.

Just the thought that I can't start over and I can't build another life with you as I had intended too is disheartening. Just the mere thought of you never reading my last message about how I forgave your absence from my life and how I would gladly start over, it tears me apart from the inside. There's a tightening grip on my heart, I can feel the heart attack you had, and just as you struggled for breath I'm struggling for the right words to say to you; not that you can hear me. At first I thought you moving your foot, and your arm was a sign that you weren't as far away as I worried, but then I was crushed to find out that that may be just an involuntary muscle spasm. I'm stuck in a limbo between having hope and having it stolen away. Just a machine, I never thought it would end this way; you can't breathe on your own and my worries may fall on deaf ears. My apology, my forgiveness, my love, my hope, my departure; all of it may not be heard. I'm just hoping you take this with you to the next life, if you don't beat the nearly impossible odds against you, I just want you to take my voice with you and keep it in your heart.

I want you to know how much I love and care for you, and how much your leaving actually affected me. There's no closure. I'm an open book writing away each and every moment that goes on without you. Documenting the years I've lost and the years I wish I had to make up for it. I just wish you knew how much I love you, and how this final departure will affect my life further. In the end, it will all make me stronger, but also desensitized for what I've seen is the most heart-wrenching sight I've beheld in almost my whole life. The weakness I saw in a man who's usually one of the strongest, and the heartache I felt with all the strangers who became your friends was an important lesson. We leave this planet almost as quickly as we're born into it. 53 years to 53 minutes, to 53 seconds, the time decreasing with age, we never know when it's our time so you've taught me to never let any conflict go unresolved, and to never leave something unsaid that you might regret keeping to yourself later; you've taught me to love even what isn't there and to care for people who may not ever express their true feelings for you.

My whole life I grew thinking that you may have hated me, or just didn't want to raise another kid and just gave up on me; I thought I was the secret you locked away; I thought I was an embarrassment to you; I felt like I was something you used only when you wanted to but when you didn't want anything to do with me, you pushed me out of your life just as you signed away the rights to your son. I thought you didn't want me. It was only just recently, when I was called to the hospital concerning your placement in the ICU that I met the strangers you had become well acquainted with, and it was them who shared with me a lot of the stories you told of me; It was then I discovered you truly loved me, for they had no recollection of you having the other two children you have; They didn't know about anyone besides me; I was the only impact. Your ex-wife also told my mom that she was your one true love. I just wish you had told me how much you actually cared. I wish you had shown me what you told them. I wish we had more time to share these things with each other.

I saw your grandson as well. He's such a young, and bright child with a great future ahead of him; I was told he was taking your illness hard and that he will be suffering one of the greatest losses if he loses you. I'm praying to God that you will come out of this, though it's unlikely, and I'm praying that if you don't God will show you the words I've spoken, along with the words I've written, just so you know. I'm also praying that he pardons your childhood and tough life, and forgives all the sins you've committed along the way, for I understand what affect it's had on your decisions. You're catholic and you've been baptized and confirmed, so that's enough hope that I'll see you again someday and be able to speak these words to you myself assuming we have memories and are able to speak of this world after death. I just uncovered the love you had for me all these years and it's like unwrapping a present from when you were four at your thirtieth birthday party; I feel like it's something I never should've doubted. There was a song that described the relationship I thought I had with you. It's called Swan Song and it's by Set It Off. As soon as I was aware of the truth a new song took its place, Flight Risk by Framing Hanley.

I'm so sorry I wasn't ready to accept you back into my life at twelve and I wish I had that opportunity today. I'm just imagining scenarios where we could meet again; You opening your fluttering eyes, waking up to see my aged face and how I've changed, hearing my voice telling you everything I've felt over the past eleven years, and the look on your face when my mom tells you she's glad you're okay and what she doesn't tell you about how she's always loved you and that you're the last man she's been in a long-term relationship with because she could never love anyone else the same way she loved you or...; You passing away and God showing you the two of us standing over your hospital bed, me holding your hand and telling you I love you, Tracy telling you how stubborn you were for not waking up for the ones who love you, and my mom saying "Come on Dan, I've seen you pull through worse." God showing you these words and the message you never got to read, showing you the impact you've made on other people's lives or...; You being gifted a second chance here with a new life to start over again, or even you

being gifted a new life here on earth in the body of my son, so I could give you the childhood you never gave me and so we could start over anew.

So much is going through my mind right now, like clashing waves of all my emotions trying to comprehend what my next move will be. Grievance? Anger? Pity? Love. I feel love, and it's arguably the worst of all. I ponder on the 99% chance I have of losing you and the 1% chance we have to build another life together and it pains me to think of all the love we've had for one another but were unable to express. I don't want to get too prepared about a future that I'm not sure we'll have together so I'll end this with wishing you the best of luck in recovering. I'm hoping you'll get the week I was planning on giving you to see if God blesses us with your recovery, and if not I wish you the best of luck in the afterlife, may God bless you.

GABBY SEARS

Gabby Sears

Lost at Sea

Short Story #3

The wave rose in front of Marina like a wall of glass, crashing over her head with a forceful blow that washed over her small body and dragged her backward. Her breaths became short and forced as she struggled for air. She could not swim, and the weight of her own body became too much to bear. Her hand reached toward to ominous sky as if to hold onto something as she slipped underneath the tormenting waves.

-

Peter's eyes were constantly moving. Back and forth. Back and forth. The sea was spread in front of him, flat, as far as his busy eyes could see. His hands had a firm grip on the wheel. He was focused at all times when it came to being the captain.

-

The S.S. Julius was the most beautiful boat Marina and her father had ever seen. It was the largest, most luxurious yacht and had anything and everything you could imagine. Multiple bedrooms, bathrooms, movie room, game room, beautiful dining area, everything.

Lawrence and Katherine Julius had owned the boat for quite some time, and Peter had always been their captain. They met Peter through their best friends, he was their nephew. Lawrence was the CEO of a major software company. He was a wise and clever man, and knew the answer to almost any question you could ask. Katherine came from a rich, royal family, supposedly she belonged to a long line of royalty in England (nobody in Marina's family believed this). They practically bathed in money, breathed money, lived for the money.

Marina tried to figure out every possible detail about the Julius' that she could. Every summer, she kept a small journal and wrote down things she thought were important. As soon as they got on the boat to start this summer, Marina already had details about Mrs. Julius. Although she seemed too young to be that smart, her curiosity led her to a world of knowledge.

-

Marina's Notebook

Mrs. Julius:

June 17th

Today I saw Mrs. Julius with a man. He was holding a briefcase full of papers. I wondered where Mr. Julius was. Who was this man?

June 28th

I saw the man again today. How did he get on this boat? Why was he kissing and holding Mrs. Julius. She's a cheater.

–
“Marina dear,” Mrs. Julius rang in her shrill voice.

“Yes?”

“I need you to help me get something from the lower deck, would you please follow me?”

Marina followed her down a narrow tunnel in the lower part of the yacht. They passed rooms filled with new workers for the summer. *Wow, we’ve been on the boat for a week and she’s already hired this many people. For what?*, Marina thought to herself.

Mrs. Julius opened a large metal door that emitted a strange chill.

“Marina, I cannot see anything in there. It is darker than night. You must go in and get the chair for the deck. Here is a flashlight, you will see it as soon as you step in.”

Marina reluctantly stepped into the darkened room. She pointed the fading flashlight at a pile of chairs in the corner. Just as she took a step towards them she heard the door click shut behind her. She tugged at the rusty handle, it was locked from the inside.

“Mrs. Julius? Are you still there?”

She heard nothing. Marina was alone in a strange room, with a flashlight that dimmed with every passing minute.

“MRS. JULIUS!” Marina screamed at the top of her lungs. Nothing.

She sighed in exasperation and sat down on the cold, dusty floor. Tears filled her pure blue eyes and spilled onto her cheeks. *What am I going to do? Dad will never hear me. I have to find my own way out.*

Marina stood up and started to take in her surroundings. From what she could see with her nearly dead flashlight, there were aisles of miscellaneous items all around her.

Marina walked over to one of the aisles and picked up an old book. It's binding was torn and the pages were frayed. The front read: **PROPERTY OF LAWRENCE JULIUS**. Marina opened the page and saw pages upon pages of pictures of familiar people. Some were workers, others were family members of the Julius'. Each picture had background information about the person featured. Next to this information was a red check, which she found peculiar. Marina flipped to the last page and her heart dropped. It was a picture of her mother and brother. Next to it, a red check.

-

They had died a year ago. Marina's mother, the love of her father's life, and her little brother. Gone. Left during a snowstorm and never came back. No explanation. Just a girl losing her mother and brother in an instant. The thought of it tears Marina to shreds. Her insides are empty, and her thoughts constantly swirled with memories of them. *A red check?*

-

Pounding. A beat. One after one. A loud thumping in the rear corners of Marina's mind. A muffled voice echoed in her mind, her resting brain was frustrated by the fact that she could not understand these words.

Her eyes were filled with sleep as they opened to reveal the same darkened room. Her cheek was pressed against the grimy floor and hands were pressed against the floor with the weight of her body.

She heard the thumps, louder this time.

"MARINA" Her father's voice filled her body like a warm breeze. She ran to the door.

"DAD PLEASE OPEN THE DOOR!"

"Hold on! Watch out I'm going to run into it."

The door swung open and hit the wall with a heavy crash.

Her father ran to her, picked her up, and swung her around.

“Marina! Where have you been?! Mrs. Julius and I have been worried sick!”

Mrs. Julius? She’s the one that locked me in here.

“Oh, I was looking for something and the door shut behind me.”

“Well stay out of here, come upstairs.”

-

After breakfast, Marina decided to find Mrs. Julius. She went to the hallway where Mrs. Julius’ room was. Last summer, she has discovered a secret eye hole in the wall next to the room. Marina decided to go in that room first and see what was going on.

Marina looked through the wall and saw Mr. and Mrs. Julius sitting in chairs whispering.

“Lawrence, I swear. She found the book. I told you to hide it, didn’t I? You have to be more careful.”

“Katherine do not even try to blame this on me. You’re the one that locked her in there!”

“I didn’t know that the book was out! Who knows what else she saw in there.”

-

The next day, Marina worked up the courage to reenter the room. She needed to know what that book meant. She scurried down the hallway, afraid to be caught by anyone.

She swung the door open and stuck her notebook in the space so that it would not close on her. Marina hurried to the aisle with the book and quickly picked it up, stuck it in her jacket and ran upstairs.

Marina sat on her bed and took a deep breath. *Do I dare open it? Yes, I need to.* After a moment of hesitation she lifted the cover. Her eyes skimmed the book, all of these pictures were of dead people. Workers and family of the Julius’ that had passed away.

The last page. Marina's small hands were anxiously shaking. She flipped to it, and it was exactly what she expected. A picture of her father, his background information. Below that, a picture of Marina. Next to both pictures, an empty space just waiting to be filled with a red check.

-

Marina thought about telling her father, but knew she couldn't. She decided she would handle it herself. She ran to the upper deck where she knew Mrs. Julius was eating her afternoon imported squid.

Marina panted after running up the numerous stairs and ran over to the chair that Mrs. Julius was lounging in.

"Oh Marina, what are you up to?"

"I know all about your plan. I know what you're going to do to my father and I. I am not going to let it happen."

"Oh dear. I'm afraid you are too late sweetheart."

"Wha-" Marina was stopped by yelling coming from the captain's quarters. She looked up to see her father's flailing body. Two men were holding him over the side of the boat.

"MARINA" Her father's voice echoed through the boat. This was the last time Marina ever heard his voice.

"DAD NO!"

The two men proceeded to loosen their grip on Peter's hands. They released one, and now he was dangling. Then quicker than Marina could see the men released him and she heard the splash of his body hitting the swirling ocean.

"DAD" Marina ran to the side of the boat looking for any way to save her drowning father. Suddenly, she felt two hands grasp her small torso and lift her into the air. She was parallel to the ocean and looked

down the find her father's body submerged under the tormenting waves. Marina struggled against the man's firm grip and was released. She tumbled dizzily toward the ferocious waves and hit the water with an ear shattering noise. She felt her ribs snap, her leg bent in a place it should not have been.

The last thing Marina ever saw was the S.S. Julius sailing away into the depths of the ocean as she sunk into the heart of the water.

GABBY SEARS
Short Story #4

Hey Sam! Katie and I just got out of track practice and we're going back to her house. Wanna come?

Sam replied instantly.

Yes! Definitely I'll be right over.

-

Katie and Joshua hopped out of her mother's car and walked up to her front steps.

"Haha, I know. Coach was so mad at you for leaving practice the other day."

Katie proceeded to unlock the front door and gasped when she saw Samuel sitting on her couch.

"Sam! What the- How did you get in here?!"

"You gave me a spare key last summer remember?"

"Uhm, no."

"Oh, well you did! What's up guys? How was practice?"

"Fine I guess." Joshua replied. He suddenly felt uncomfortable and wished that he could take back his invitation to Sam.

"Let's go downstairs." Katie tried to make the situation less awkward.

-

Katie and Samuel sat down on her leather couch while Joshua played RockBand.

“Hey, I’m gonna go get a drink. You guys want anything?” Katie asked.

“Nah. Wait actually I have to go to the bathroom I’ll come with.” Joshua said.

“Alright, I’ll wait here!” Samuel said although he knew what was going on.

Katie and Joshua ascended the stairs and opened the basement door. Joshua pushed her into the bathroom next to the kitchen.

“Katie. I cannot do this. I don’t know why we invited him.” He put his hands over his face.

“Josh it’s fine you can come over this weekend and we can hang out alone. I promise.”

Josh looked into her blue eyes and pushed a stray piece of her beautiful brunette hair behind her ear. He leaned in and kissed her passionately.

“Josh, stop it.” Her cheeks were red and she was smiling timidly.

“Alright, fine. But just for the record, I would much rather be alone.”

The words echoed through the audio piece that Sam had attached to the necklace he gave Katie for her birthday. His insides boiled with anger and his fists clenched until his knuckles turned white.

Oh don't you worry Josh. You'll be alone soon enough.

-

Sam threw open his closet door. He stepped inside and his eager nostrils were filled with the scent of Katie’s perfume. He breathed it in until his insides were full of her scent. Sam closed the door softly behind him and his eyes sparkled as he scanned the room full of pictures of Katie.

That smile, he thought.

Every square inch of the closet was covered in pictures of Katie. Her and Sam at the beach, her by herself, pictures he had taken without her knowing.

He was madly in love with her. So mad that it drove him insane. He needed her.

“I can take better care of her. I can give her what she needs. Josh can’t.”

Sam paced back and forth in his room, speaking to himself.

He opened his window and quietly climbed out onto the grass. He was so glad his parents had decided to put his bedroom on the first floor. It was close to 11:30, on a school night, but Sam just had to see her.

-

Sam looked in Katie's window. She was fast asleep. He had done this many times, but this time he wanted to enter the room. The window was wide open, it was a cool spring night and he slowly slithered into the window. The floor squeaked with his first step and he knew he had to be more careful. The walk to her bed seemed to take forever, but when he finally made it he knew it was all worth it. Sam was careful not to touch her, but got as close as he could to admire her natural beauty. He could hear Katie's mother in the bathroom next door and knew he had to leave. The temptation to kiss her boggled his mind as he backed away from her and out the window into the chilly night.

-

Samuel wanted to kill Josh. He knew the consequences and he knew that he could probably never see Katie again. But on the other hand, the idea of him getting to hold her toes held him apart. His mind zigzagged through each thought until his head hurt.

-

"Hey Kat, what movie do you wanna watch?" Joshua sifted through the DVD bin in his basement.

"Hmmm. I don't care! You pick." She smiled at him.

A soft rumble came from the closet door beside him.

"Uhm Katie did you hear that?"

"Hear what? It was probably just your parents upstairs."

Josh put the DVD in the player and sat down next to Katie on the loveseat. He leaned in to kiss her, smiling while he did, and gently caressed her face in the darkened room.

The closet door opened. Katie and Joshua screamed and held each other.

"WHAT WAS THAT?!" Katie screamed.

Neither of them saw anything in the room, it was too dark. Joshua made his way to the light switch and flicked it on. Nothing.

"What the..."

"Josh just shut the lights off and come here. I don't want to be alone."

They sat down and proceeded to watch the movie, but Josh felt uneasy. He felt as though he was being watched and he did not enjoy it.

"Katie." Josh whispered.

No answer.

"Katie."

No answer.

He shook her.

Nothing. It was dark, very dark. The only source of light came from the TV.

He violently shook her. His hand. Wet.

"KATIE" Josh screamed.

He ran to the light and switched it on to reveal Katie's dead body, covered in her own blood. Samuel laid next to her, also covered in his own blood. Both of their eyes were wide open, staring right at Josh. Josh was alone.

Thomas LeClaire 75% checkpoint

For my 75% checkpoint, my goal was to revise the first 25 poems I wrote out of the fifty I wrote.

In the Beginning... (freestyle)

This is just the beginning

This is where...

I start

There is so much ahead of me at this moment

Though I know I can handle it

I'm venturing into the first steps of long journey

My work has just begun

This is just the beginning

The commencement of my work

I have an understanding of my objectives

My goals have been established

I know what must be completed

With these words I can speak about what's on my mind

I can express my creativity

This is just the beginning

Sure it may be a challenge at times

However that it is part of the fun

My excitement starts to grow

Now that a plan is in place

This is where it all starts

This is where I begin.

Ode to Life

Oh Life,

What is there to say?

You're the reason that I am in
existence,

The reason I am writing this poem

You're a beautiful thing,

Well most of the time.

You can be

a friend,

You can be

an enemy.

You create many possibilities

And create many difficult choices

You can be a handful at times,

You can be cause of happiness, sadness, anger

You're underappreciated

Too many people lose faith in you

You deserve more respect

The amount of stress you create can be overwhelming

The happiness you bring upon me, however, overshadows all the bad

In a period of bad times, I think of the good times you've given me

People sometimes ask...

what is life?

Well I think I know the answer

Life is what you want it to be,

Decided by your own choices.

Never forget about the gift of life

And why it is so special

So I just want to take a moment,

To say thank you,

For the great life I have!

Rain (haiku)

Rain begins to fall

We start running towards the house

Escaping the storm

Sunset (haiku)

I watch the sun set
At the end of a long day
And think about life

Practice time (Pantoum)

The last bell of the day means the start

After another long, tiring, stressful day of school

Ready to release the energy that has been building up for so long

While part of me is ready to rest

After another long, tiring, stressful day of school

I make my way down to the locker room

While part of me is ready to rest

I begin to walk outside and prepare myself for today's journey

I make my way down to the locker room

Talk to my teammates while waiting

I begin to walk outside and prepare myself for today's journey

Coach finally approaches the group

Talk to my teammates while waiting

We stretch and warm up

Coach finally approaches the group

And then today's awaited journey begins

The Race (pantoum)

Everyone's on the starting line, any minute now, the gunshot echoes, signaling the race's start, and I begin

My mind is focused solely on the race and nothing else, and I channel all my energy into this moment

Don't start too fast, pace yourself, follow coach's instructions, watch your competitors, let's go

You know your goals, you're prepared for this, give it your all, you're ready, it's time

My mind is focused solely on the race, and I channel all my energy into this moment

You're off to a good start, just keep your head in the game, stay on pace

You know your goals, you're prepared for this, give it your all, you're ready, it's time

Keep thinking positive thoughts, you know you can do this, and remember to have fun

You're off to a good start, just keep your head in the game, stay on pace

You're on the final stretch, don't slow down now, give it all you got, keep going, dig deep

Keep thinking positive thoughts, you know you can do this, and remember to have fun

You're tired but don't let that affect you, you're almost there, your adrenaline is rushing

You're in the final stretch, don't slow down now, give it all you got, keep going, dig deep

This is it, you're 200 meters away, Go! Go! Running as fast as you can, this is it!

You're tired but don't let that affect you, you're almost there, your adrenaline is rushing

You cross the finish line, take a deep breath, lay on the ground, a smile is on your face, mission accomplished!

Summer Pantoum

There are many reasons why people enjoy summer

Mainly because summer can be so much fun

You spend time doing lots of fantastic activities
Let go of all stress, kick back and relax

Mainly because summer can be so much fun
You never run out of exciting things to do
Let go of all stress, kick back and relax
Sleeping late into the day, and staying up late into the night

You never run out of exciting things to do
Go with the family on a fun filled vacation
Sleeping late into the day, and staying up late into the night
Be active and just enjoy life

Go with the family on a fun filled vacation
Even though there may be heat you cannot bear
Be active and just enjoy life

Make spectacular memories that will last a lifetime

Bad day (Monorhyme)

I woke up and then turned on the light
Right away I knew that something was just not right

My head hurt, my stomach ached, and my jaw felt tight

I could barely sit upright

Believe me, it was not a good sight

Things were not looking too bright

Did not get a lot of sleep last night

Looked in the mirror and saw that my face was white

My parents were sorry to see me in this plight

Rest is what I desperately need to fight

The illness that caused me so much fright

Is this going to be a good day, nope not quite

Chances of me enjoying this bad day are very slight

Worrying is a waste (found poetry)

Worrying is a hard thing to avoid

A new worry always seems to be entering our lives

Brought upon you for whatever reason

Whether it is real or imaginary

A new day brings a new worry

"Here's a little song I wrote"

Worries can take over your mind

If you let them control you, that is

You maybe can't help it, that's understandable

Sometimes it's just common sense

Other times it's an overreaction

"You might want to sing it note for note"

However, whether you know it or not, there is a way

To prevent yourself from being constantly and endlessly focused on these fears

You might think it may sound a bit far-fetched

But that is not the case

Believe me when I tell you this method really works

"Don't worry. be happy"

Impossible, is what you might think

Being happy in a time of concern and fear

But you may not realize

How much happiness can help you

And how much better you will feel

"In every life we have some trouble"

Think about people, places, things you love

Reminiscence on great memories of your life

Take some time to think of the good

Things that will bring a smile to your face

And your worrying will soon conclude

"When you worry you make it double"

So think about what I said

The next time a worry enters your head

It'll save you from a tough time

I know it helps me

Worrying is a waste of time

Don't let it ruin good times

Just remember

"Don't worry, be happy"

It is a great motto to live by.

Respect (cinquain)

Respect

Desperately wanted

Not easily received

Many people deserve more

Respect

The Frog (Limerick)

There once was a frog

Who sat on top of a log
It started to rain
And it gave the frog pain
So it jumped back into the bog

Like Father, Like Son (Double Voice Poem)

I don't always get my way	He almost always gets his way
I am a kid right now	He's been a kid already
Some more years of school ahead	All years of school finished
I think I'm always right	He's actually always right
Many lessons I still have to learn	He has lessons to give
I don't always think of him	He always thinks of me

I sometimes say things that I regret

I am his son

He never says anything unkind

He is my father

Inspiration

Writers block.
Days, weeks, months go by
Like the ticking of a clock.
“What time is it?”
“When is this assignment due?”
It always seems like you bite off
More than you can chew.
But then it comes,
It’s just a spark.
Your mind opens up like a storm
In the dark.
Thoughts flow,
Brilliance hits,
Sending a lightning bolt
Of ideas
Flooding through your fingertips.

Jealousy

Your eyes follow her closely as she approaches him.
Blonde, blue eyed, and much too close
Your throat burns with the heat of flames,
Smoldering like coals in the nearby fire.
She reaches, touching him
Drunken giggles bubble from her lips.
At once, you're moving
With the bitter taste of blood and alcohol on your tongue.
Batting eyelashes like steel swords
Your weapon of choice
Against a girl who threatens to take what is yours.

Hatred.

*I was laying in bed last night thinking and
this thought just popped in my head.*

Screw you.
You'd think I'd be used to this by now.
I'm so angry
I could be screaming out loud.
I've been here before
But never again
I didn't think you'd turn on me too.

*I should've seen it coming
But hey, I guess I'm just blind
'Cause you told me you'd love me forever
That was a lie.*

I think I just relapsed,
Friends are supposed to be true.
Do you remember
When he put his hands on you?
Yeah, I was there.
I saw your pain.
I swore I'd never let him hurt you again.

You didn't eat for days
You could barely drink
You got so weak
You almost went faint.
I was there all that time

Do I need to remind you?
Oh, *you're feeling blue?*
It's *too late*.

You're trying to flip this on me?
You've got to be kidding.
Cause I remember
When he was in your face
Turning blue
And spitting.

Who do you think you are?
Turning on me now?
Breaking our ties
As soon as Jer's not around.
You knew I was lonely
I just needed a friend
But I guess it doesn't go both ways,
You were too busy
Cheating on your boyfriend.

Where were you?
You left me
On your bedroom floor crying.
You didn't care
That on the inside
I felt like dying.
You're too two-faced for me.
You only wanted attention
Maybe that's why
You hooked up with
Every single goddamn
One of them.

You'll complain when you listen to this,
But I'm only telling the truth.
Oh well.
I guess it's
An eye for an eye,
A tooth for a tooth.

I feel so much better.

Katie Forrest

Leader of my Team (Double Voice Poem)

I am there to coach

I know the sport well

I make them work hard

I know they're not a fan of workouts

I teach them

I do a lot for them

I am their coach

They're there to play

They are still learning

Their hard work pays off

They see the end result

They teach me as well

They do even more for me

They're my team

Thomas (name poem)

Thomas is a quiet and curious boy who loves to have fun
Has been on the earth for sixteen years, but still there is many lessons he still has to learn
Often busy with many things taking place throughout his life
Member of Norton Track and Cross Country teams, something he is very proud of
Always working hard and gives his strongest effort on whatever he has to get done
Shows that he cares about his life right now and his future

The Beach (Nonet)

I always love going to the beach

Feeling the breeze from the ocean

Taking a look at the waves

Swimming in the water

Walking through the sand

Enjoying life

Have good times

Relax

Fun

A New Day (lantern)

The sun

Rises welcoming

A beautiful morning, no clouds in the sky

I take a look out the window and look around, I know that it will be

A good day

Stress (ABC poem)

A lot of stress, is what I have right now

Brought upon by the many things that are going on in my life

Certain priorities are more important than others at the moment

Deciding how to figure everything out can be tough

Though my life may be very busy, I know that I will get by

Spring (Tanka)

It's a special time

The air's becoming warmer

All snow disappears

Now I can hang out outside

It feels good that it is spring

Lots of Pain, No Game (Shakespearean Sonnet)

I woke up and noticed that my face was bright red

I realized I was definitely sick

Oh no, I was told to go back up to my bed

I was angry, disappointed and wanted something to kick

It was because that today was a special day

Today was the big championship game

I had been really excited to play

Those dirty, annoying, terrible germs were to blame

Being sick today was just so unfair

Just thinking about the fact I was sick made me really sad

Although I couldn't play in the big game now, I still care
I thought about all the good times I had
I remember saying the big game is near
Well hopefully I will get the chance to play next year

Fridays (Shakespearean sonnet)

I wake up and I know today is the day
Last day of frustrating work, and tomorrow a day of fun
I'm in a good mood because I know that it's Friday
A week that went on forever is finally done
Just one more day full of stress
I know it will go by fast
Number of things on my mind will be less
This weekend is going to be a blast
Though I take today seriously and try my best
There is stuff that has to be finished

Have to take a quiz and a test
Then I'll continue on with my day, on a day that is cherished
But this will not be a day of sorrow
Fridays are great and I can't wait until tomorrow

Nighttime (Petrarchan sonnet)

When I go outside at night and look at the world around me
I will find that there is usually not a person around
I listen carefully and I cannot hear a sound
During the night there is not much to see
At night being outside is not the best place to be
So dark I can barely make out my own feet walking on the ground
At this hour there is no chance that anything lost will be found
You go outside at night and you'll surely agree
But I find night time to be very peaceful
It signals the end of a long, busy day

The wind blows and you can hear the sound of wind chimes

It is something that is very beautiful

That doesn't require any pay

Some may not be a fan, but I love the nighttime

Snow (Ghazel)

I looked outside my bedroom window and all I can see was a world of white, more snow

Unfortunately all I wanted to see was anything but more snow

Moaning and groaning at the sight of this never-ending weather, I was so annoyed

There is no doubt about it, we have gotten more than enough snow

My mother delivers the news to me, that another school day is cancelled

Something that had become quite common recently, with presence of all the snow

I do have to admit, I was not in the mood for a day of learning

But the summer vacation I love so much was shortening, thanks to all of this snow

I could not remember another time in my whole life

Where I had experienced the presence of so much snow

In recent years it seemed like it was becoming quite rare

You were pretty lucky if you saw a single flake of snow

But I have to say at this point, this is just way too much

Can't look at another weather forecast, that predicts much more snow

So now that a long, tedious winter is nearing the end

I'm glad to finally say goodbye, to all this annoying snow

The big race (quatrain)

Today is the day of the big race

There are goals and dreams you have to chase

Focus now, don't doze off into space

This is a moment to embrace

Deadlines (freestyle)

Life is filled with many deadlines
Seems like there's a new one each day
Just too many deadlines to count
As some arrive,
others are announced
Hard work is a must
It will take time
Time needed for the task to be done well
Organization and focus
These are the requirements

To make sure these deadlines are met
On time
Some people meet them,
While others do not
Some people easily meet them
Some are rushing at the last minute
Even though they cause stress, deadlines need to exist
They're part of a structure that is essential life.
Because at the end of the day, the work must be done

Total combo 1

He woke with a shout, a loud squeal that seemed to resignate through the dark room. The window, open blasted cold air onto his naked buttox, he sat up grogily grabbed a pair of boxers, and his light pants along with deep blue overalls. He got up and looked out the window to see a tall brutish man looking up at the window, his grizzled face seeming to fluctuate between absolute glee and pure hatred. He stood in front of a large motionless tree that seemed to call his name. The man called again this time in a tone that he could all but forget, raspy, tough but light, and not in english. a word that seemed to be theirs, Only they knew what it meant. he ran down the stairs and embraced him, Not knowing what to say they lounged on the porch looking. "what have you been up to Serge" he asks " I am living, i living well, life is full of mystery, i know you know this." serge says in a hard russian accent, with a smirk " I do serge i really do, so why are you here?" "i have to ask something of you." in an increasingly deeper tone, "What is it serge?" the in a quieter tone. " I need some." "serge i thought we agreed we were done, you never needed more." "well i do now" serges tone immediately became violent. " We agreed." "i am breaking the agreement." "Serge" "i really need it Stan." a quiet release of energies is apparent, stan sits down and serge besides him. "You know

where to get it," Serge stares at stan for a few more seconds before stumbling to his feet. Stan looks straight down and thinks. "STAN." From the house Josh shouts out his window. Stan stands up and yells back. "Stan why is George here you know i told you he can't come back here." Josh he is in trouble i haven't seen him in years i just.. i needed to help him." " Don't let him take anything," "Josh, he is in trouble, i already told him to get it." josh disappears from the window " "Josh? Josh where are you going?" "JOSH!" Exiting the house josh emerges with a kg9 "josh what are you doing!" "i'm killing this addict." "josh calm down he says he needs... SERGE GO!"

Total combo 2

She picks up her phone in disgust as if someone had just revealed themselves in front of her, josh's number had popped up with the words "how about tonight" this question seemed horrific to her as if it were the devil himself, she put her phone down and looked at Stan sitting across from her, he hadn't looked up from the menu, she didn't even look at the menu let alone think about what she wanted to drink " hi guys my names kal, i will be your waiter tonight, what would you like to drink" without removing his eyes from the menu stan replied " water no lemon" the man looked towards me waiting for my answer, " um i guess... Hmm, i guess i will get a pepsi" the waiter didn't fluctuated his face in the time i was trying to order my pepsi and he responded with a simple " alrighty guys i will be right back" Stan continued his blank look at the menu, instead of checking the menu i decided to survey the humanoids around me, there's a young couple of maybe 26 behind stan next to them a family of 5 with three little girls and two fathers, well i assume two fathers, they could be child molesters for all i know, i bent my head to see the people behind them, old couple not attracting any attention, non waiters walk by them, they don't have drinks, it seems sad to me, i cocked my neck backwards to analyze those behind me. I wish i could say im not breaking out into a cold sweat but i am, directly behind me sits an adventurous looking pair who seem to feel each other here more than in bed, but it wasnt them who send me into this joyride if hate, it is him, next to them he sits there motionless staring, not really at me, more off in the distance, farther, but at me in my direction, empty stare it is , cold, i know this face nontheless, i know it well, out of the corner of my eye i see the young women who was being basically having intercourse in the resturante, get up and walk past the table, Stans eyes lift for about three seconds to admire her physique, then he continues to stare at

the menu. His eyes beckon me back i look again but this time he is looking, not blankly this time, but intently, meaningfully, his eyes beckoned me over, then his hands did to, and i realized he was smiling, he no longer took the shape of a stranger but of an old friend, or maybe a new one he pointed towards the bathrooms. I turn back to stan "are you guys ready to orde?" I jump a little as the waiter had returned the second i turned back, stan responds " yes im going to get the fried cod with the garden greens, italian dressing and a lemon wedge" " and for you maam" i saw the waiters expectedness his unflappable face " yea umm im gonna get the sirloin" " and what would you like on the side, and how would you like it done" i turned back around at the man and he was gone his dish and glasses where still there, i respond to his question " raw on the sirloin and for me Im gonna get the broccoli. I told stan i was going to the bathroom, he silently nodded, i got up and headed towards the bathroom, Headed towards george, i wonder know how marcel is doing i havent seen him in 15 years.. i still love him no matter what.

FOUND

*Oh just give me something
just for a little.*

Take me down within the folds

Deep to the middle

You spend your days alone

Still hoping for the truth,

Asking for no help here

other than for some proof.

But you don't want to try.

You don't feel it fill you.

So love, you sit and cry.

You swear the light will find you

But what happens if it does?

The most wonderful moments can slip away.

You're the one who's got to know when it's right.

Betrayal

We used to be so close,

two shoes tied up with one lace.
“Forever friends” and “Partners in crime”
we were together all the time in every place.
Others said we were too alike,
that we needed to have space.

We shared a goal, we made our group
we added friends into our loop.
Each day would pass with me and you
Stuck up together and joined with glue.

Tension built, but I could not see
Why you drew away from me.
I asked you why,
began to cry
When told you did not want to be-
Best friends,
Friends,
Associates,
Anything.

How strange it is to look around
And live life with you in the background.

The girl inside the mirror,
She is trapped but she can see
How wonderful and powerful her future self can be.

The girl inside the mirror,
Was alone and she was scared.
For the journey life would send her on-
How could she be prepared?

Fingers pressed to glass
Runs a chill straight down her spine.
She knows she could break through to them
If they just gave her a sign.

A signal that it's all ok across that pane of light
For that girl inside the mirror-
She was paralyzed with fright.

Caught up in the Moment

You wanted to get out and move forward,
And that's totally fine with me.

But when you did, well you left me
dragging behind.

And without thinking twice you severed that line
that held us
together.

I was caught up in the Moment-
Waiting.

.
. .
.

You had no time to wait.

95 Atlantic Ave

Running down the path to hit my feet on the to sand. Carrying everything in you arms as they drop in the sand.To wait for my cousin Molly to go in the water as i beg her. Finally running down to the ocean as i step in with my toe to feel the water.As it hits my toe like ice. But i am forced to go in because i have beg my cousin to come down with me. Walking to the rocks with everyone as we all have buckets to fill with crabs. Climbing up on the rocks to feel the slippery slime on the bottom of your feet and in between your toe. Curly hair blowing the the wind to hit your face as you try to look out upon the water . As the sand sticks to your feet like glue as you walk back to the house. Tried and yawning but you are not getting carried or picked up. Then to carry all the chairs and beach toys that were brought down had to come back. Washing off in the outside shower feeling the hot water touch your cold skin. Running back into the house hoping that no one will see you. Changing as fast as you can so you can eat dinner on the porch by the pool. The kitchen barely having enough room to fit everyone. I don't know how we do it but we are always together.

Nokomis

Unfortunately i was late for the1st session at camp Nokomis my second year going .It was my first time going for a month. The night before i was arguing with my dad on speaker phone that i was not going to camp that i couldn't do it .He told me that i should pack my bag and in the morning if i dont want to go you don't have to. I woke up the next day and i was fine i was on my way . 4 hour drive up on a sweaty hot bus. I finally got up there and i was happy and ready to meet my cabin mates that i will be living with for the next 3 weeks.It started out great i was all set about home not thinking about it i was just ready to be here and make the best of my 4 weeks there at camp. Later i were getting our luggage from the bear which is a boat used to get bags and campers to camp .The next morning everything went from good to bad . I was thinking about home again. So i went to my activities and told myself that i will pull through and everything will be fine. The night time came and i am not good with being away from home so i get the feeling that i am trapped somewhere and i couldn't leave and i can't deal with that. I always need a way out. But camp was on a island so the only way i was getting to the Y-landing which would bring me home on a gross bus filled with million sweaty girls was by boat. So i wrote a sad letter home and whenever my mom knows i am upset she will call and basically send a police force to get to out of the place that is upsetting me. She gets very uptight and will do anything in her power to get me home. At camp there is a no cell phone on the site. So there was no way of telling somebody something other than a letter home that took days and days to get an answer back from the person you sent it to. It finally got to the point where my cabin mates started to notice that i was upset.. My friend Maddie who is from from Nh where the

camp was so she told me that she would go to the office with me to see if i could call my mom just to talk to her . I asked Debbie Parker who is the Camp director who is 80 years old and ready to fall down basically. I always get really emotional when i try to talk to Debbie or even stand near her. I told her what happened and she said no you can not call your mother. i said okay fine and i left. I was brave enough to go back the next day and ask her the same question that every girl will ask every year if they are sad. Can i go home? By the way she kept saying no. It made me really want to keep trying because i am not a quitter and i am a very determined person when i really want something i usually get it . She finally let me go home at the end of the 1st session this was Wednesday and the session was over on Saturday. Saturday came the time to pack up and really say goodbye camp the best place in the world. But i say to myself still that i went in with a bad mindset to not have fun or be happy and thats just what happened, Thats all i can really tell you because there's nothing i regret more than leaving. I wish i just got through it but i couldn't stand being unhappy with what i had put myself though so i gave up and left it all behind me and never looked back.

Kathleen

how you met the one..

How do you meet the one. Should the story be good? Or does it a happen unexpectedly.. This story is about a boy named Nick who met the one in 10th grade named kat. She was a bit older than him but this is how it started..... That is a crazy ride for here. Its not your normal way of meeting the one but that is what keeps it special for kat and Nick. That no one else has to know the the whole thing

Your first thought of how you meet is romantic and fairytale like. Well sorry to tell you that is not how it goes. How Kat met Nick it a real story. Kat was not so popular in high school was gorgeous. I mean every girl wanted to be her. She had some friends. Her favorite subject was history all she would do was study all the time and loved doing was putting her input to everything she knew about it. She was going out with Declin the football star how everyone wanted. She ended up breaking up with her boyfriend Declin because he was cheating on her. Kat was heartbroken and never wanted to trust anyone again. Never thought love was possible ever again. Nick the boy she just started talking to was also dating Kaylin

at the time to and he got his heartbroken after a month of dating because he said she said he wasn't good enough. He put everything he had into the relationship. He never thought he could never get over her Kat being friends with Nicks ex Julia and always thought there was nothing wrong between them . Started getting close to Nick talking to him and he told her everything about what happened. They got very close and started talking everyday at this point. Kat was not into him at all she just wanted to help him get through everything. He finally got over her and kat was so happy for him when he said that he was over Julia. Then they started to talk more than hang out after she went to dunkin donuts and Nick liked something about her. Going home from dunkin he thought he needs to get to know her better. What better way to do that by texting her when she gets home. See Kat was not trying to date anyone. The whole story but ill keep it simple... But in my life nothing can be called simple. fights happen and everything you can think for Kat and Nick went through and make though it together. How can the story of meeting the one really be a nice and perfect moment. But what makes the story great is how you can randomly met the person you love from the first look at her. Knowing that she will be my one true love forever. How can you really tell? i cant tell you.... But maybe one day you can feel that and answer that question you always wanted answered. Love is a crazy ride.. You either want to fall or you do not. You can not predict love like the weather so be careful who you fall for. And i hope you have a crazy story to tell everyone about! To be mindful of any boy that says he loves you and that it is for real.

So let me know how it goes.....

75% Checkpoint: I took a more traditional route of satire with these essays

Christopher Alves

Class: A

Just Thinking

My very first mock senate served as an eye opening experience. Prior to the events of the mock senate, I was but a naïve, over opinionated boy with pre conceived notions of just thinking. That all changed when a bill legalizing prostitution was proposed. I was ignorant and thought that people should have the right to do what they want with their bodies and should not be restricted by the confines of the law. That was until a colleague from North Attleboro opened my eyes. He bravely strode up to the podium and asked us a question. This question highlighted a CRUCIAL and yet obvious detail in our proposal that the rest of us somehow overlooked; what will the legalization of prostitution mean for the United States on a nuclear level?

I was flabbergasted. How could I forget about the potential of nuclear prostitutes? My entire thesis was ruined. I was humiliated. It took all the emotional strength inside of me to not burst into tears.

Everyone knows that the minute you sell your body, you gain nuclear qualities. It's been proven by real doctors that all prostitutes glow green with nuclear radiation at least twice a day after being exposed to the prostitution business. The legalization of prostitution could bring about the end of the modern era. Imagine the power that prostitutes could hold over the government. They would be able to take over the government with ease just by using their inherent prostitute-themed nuclear powers. They would be able to take over all big business because everyone would want to have

these potent prostitute powers. Everyone would instantly quit their jobs to become prostitutes. All non-brothel companies would have been shut down by this new nuclear threat. They would have a firm choke hold on the economy. But it wouldn't stop with just America. The power of the prostitute would spread all throughout the world. Japan, Russia, England, Egypt, and more would be overrun by the despotic hookers. The Great Wall of China would become the Great Balls of China. The Pyramids become Panty-mids. Our entire society would collapse at the hands of a single prostitute, combusting into a nuclear explosion. The entire planet would become a nuclear wasteland, cesspit; covered with brothels. I was shaking in my boots at the mere thought of these tyrannical panty-pullers taking over our world.

My eyes have been opened. I have seen the horrors of the world. I must do all I can to protect the planet from the ever-looming threat of the nuclear prostitute.

Christopher Alves

Class: A

Satire Piece

Madame Defarge is judged far too harshly in Tale of Two Cities because of her actions, when in all reality she is a queen. She might have been symbolic for a chaos and darkness, but so was The Joker and people seem to like him. She was literally a total bad ass in every possible aspect. Some people view her murderous killing spree as evil, but really it is raw determination. Like half of her family is slaughtered so she wanted revenge. And she got it! Like how BA can you get? She's definitely a powerful feminine role model too. Like when she tells her husband

that she is a “force of nature” and “nothing can stop her”? Talk about girl power! She’s incredibly attractive. But her raw beauty is beneath the surface and that’s why people can’t see it. She may be a little plump but her actions are what make her so hot. Like cutting off the governor’s head with an axe? SUCH A TURN ON! She’s also got those cute hoop earrings so she’s like a fashion queen to boot! I also think that it’s cute that she has a hit list of everyone she’s planning to kill. Like how can someone so organized be that bad. Plus she can probably sleep with the blanket of all the people’s names she killed. Now that’s crafty woman! When people criticize Madame Defarge for being too cold I get so confused because she’s really a sweetheart. Like when she goes to talk to Lucie, she really doesn’t care about her, but at least she bothered to talk to that human-mess in the first place. Which is more than what most revolutionaries can say? Can the Vengeance say that? NO! In speaking of the Vengeance, how BA is it that the FREAKING VENGEANCE is Madame’s right hand lady. You’d think that with a name like “The Vengeance” she would be in charge of everyone. But oh NO, Madame Defarge is so BA she’s equal to the scariness of The Vengeance, but she doesn’t need an intimidating name to strike fear into the hearts of men. I just wish people could see Madame Defarge as the beautiful, determined, feminist, powerful sex icon that she really is.

Christopher Alves

Class: C

Meme Addiction

Hello my name is Christopher Mark Alves and I have a serious problem with memes. I am classified as a meme addict in three states across the New England Area. I was once sent to The Meme Rehabilitation Center after the incident when I posted seventy four separate sad frog memes on various social networking sites. I have even spread the meme contagion around the Norton Area and even my own family. I want to stop, but as I have said on more than one occasion “You can’t stop the meme”!

It all started this January. I was at one point a clean kid, never memed a day in my life. That was until I started hanging out with the wrong people. I met this group of kids from Attleboro through my theatre group. They seemed really cool so I was thrilled to bits when they said I could join their “squad”. I wasn’t sure what the squad membership entailed until I arrived at their leader’s house. I walked in, excited to have a fun, safe day, but I saw it: the memes. Initially I didn’t know what they were. “Why is that frog so sad?” I asked innocently. To which they laughed and told me that it was a meme. They showed me all the memes the world had to offer and even taught me how to speak in meme. What I didn’t know was, once you start memeing, you NEVER STOP. My mind was infected with their dank meme lifestyle.

All my friends are worried about me. Jeff Beaucage stated “He was normal at one point. But those Attleboro kids ruined him. He’s dead to me”. He was correct. I had gone off the deep end of the meme allotment.

Memes had completely taken over my language. I couldn’t go three sentences without making a meme pun or screaming about Pepe the Frog. “One or two memes a day in an ironic use is acceptable. But this is out of control” Chris Tatarczuk said sternly, trying to snap me out of

it. Unfortunately, I had completely ignored my meme allotment and lost my ironic integrity as I went down the slippery slope of the memer. At some point it took over my language completely. Melanie Morris reported “Chris substitutes meme for literally any word possible like he's a smurf”. It was true, and just like any smurf, I was about to ruin the hell out of the lives of everyone within close proximity.

I had started to spread memes around to my friends in Norton. It was infectious. My friends tried to resist but they all submitted to the meme. Before they knew it, the whole school was sending around pictures of Guy Fieri, posting fliers of sad frog around the school, and living their lives as if it was all one big meme.

I had ruined my mental (memetal) state of myself and so many others. Ultimately the defining moment where I recognized my meme problem was when I found myself explaining memes to my grandmother. Gramma Alves has never done anything wrong; not even once. She did not deserve this form of disease. Then it hit me (meme). I have a problem. All my dank memes and I have nothing to show for it but a limited edition rare pepe. How will the Pepes help me out in the real world? Answer: They won't; not even the rarest Pepe can help cure my longing. I need to find a cure for this meme addiction before I ruin the lives of all those who care about meme.

Christopher Alves

Class: A

Global Warming is a myth

The idea of global warming is a bunch of hooley and yet it's been around for years now. All these fancy shmancy scientists are trying to confuse us with all of this scientific mumbo jumbo, but I simply don't buy it. It's causing all of these peace loving, tree hugging hippies to lose their minds. Those gosh darn liberals keep starting protests to preoccupy the government and scientists when they COULD be starting more wars and making more guns. Global Warming is a fricking myth and here's why.

Every single "scientifically proven, undeniable fact" all happen to have a string of conveniences to counteract each and every fact they're spitting at us respectable corporations who enjoy polluting the air like God wanted.

People keep saying that the polar ice caps are melting. Well that's clearly got nothing to do with global warming. In all actuality it's probably just some damn polar bear flopping around and breaking up all the icebergs. Those critters may seem cute and cuddly but those bastards have no respect for the ice. I hope the beast goes extinct for all the trouble it keeps putting us through. If not polar bear activity it may very well just be Santa trying to expand his land across the world because it's his God-given right. Santa has never committed a single crime and should not be treated with such disdain for trying to expand his property. That's what the Americans did to the Natives and it worked out pretty well I'd say. So don't even try to use the polar ice caps as an excuse because I'm just not buying what you're selling.

I've also heard that apparently the earth's temperature has been rising. But honestly folks come on! Isn't it much more likely that every single one of the thermometers around the world

has been tampered with for bogus nature propaganda? It just makes sense. It's another inside job just like the Watergate Scandal. I bet they don't even fill it the thermometer with mercury anymore. They probably use Arsenic or some other swindley fluid. America has been lying to us for centuries and you expect me to believe that they're telling the truth about thermometers?

And I swear to the lord above if you dare say that we haven't been experiencing as much rain and snow I will straight spit in your face. The lack of rain and snow is a good thing. It means that the clouds have been feeling a lot sunnier than they usually do and haven't been crying as much! Places like California just have really satisfied clouds. That's something to be proud of. I bet it's because of Taylor Swift that the clouds are so happy or maybe it's because of American Sniper (the best gosh darn film America has ever seen). In all reality the lack of rain is just a sign that our country is better than everywhere else. \

The whole Global Warming concept is just a dumb way for the government to steal money right out of your pockets. You think the donations to save the lake are going to help the world, but really you just paid for another highway. That's because Global Warming isn't real and the government is just lying to you to take your hard earned money from your American-made pockets.

Now I'm sure you left wing knuckle heads must feel pretty dumb right about now. I just completely blew your entire "Global Warming" Argument out of the water. Your scientific hoo-hah just doesn't add up. Now that you realize that the whole "Global Warming" Concept is some big money grabbing joke, you can finally join me and become decent American Citizens and focus on the real issues: upholding the second amendment.

-Chuck O'Hara member of the NRA

Jennifer Berard- 75% checkpoint

POEM #3:

Remember

THE CLOCK STRIKES 8...
IT WAS JUST A NORMAL DAY
BUT TERROR HAS CLAIMED IT.
NOW I STAND IN A RAIN OF PAPERS
LOOKING ABOVE AT THE SMOKE, THE FIRE AND THE PEOPLE

BOOM! CRASH!
THE CLOCK STRIKES 9...
AND HUNDREDS HAVE DIED THIS DAY.
YET THOUSANDS MORE WILL FOLLOW
THE TWO SISTERS BEGIN BURNING TOGETHER
BOTH TRYING TO REMAIN STANDING AND STEADY

THE CLOCK STRIKES 10...
THE YOUNGEST, SOUTH, CAN NO LONGER HOLD ON
SHE BUCKLES TO THE GROUND, HER WOUNDS TOO GREAT
HER SISTER, NORTH, FOLLOWS NOT 30 MINUTES LATER
NO LONGER ABLE TO BEAR THE WEIGHT WITHOUT SOUTH BY HER SIDE

THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY YELL, SCREAM, AND WEEP
AS NORTH & SOUTH CRUMBLE...DOWN...DOWN...DOWN...

TAKING ALL 2,606 SOULS WITH THEM
WE WILL NEVER FORGET THIS DAY
FOR IT IS FOREVER ETCHED IN OUR MINDS
AND OUR HEARTS

SO, LET US NEVER FORGET THE TERROR
NEVER FORGET THE HORROR
NEVER FORGET THE SHOCK
NEVER FORGET THE PAIN & LOSS
SIMPLY LET US...
REMEMBER

To the victims of 9/11; we'll never forget you

Story #3:

(Not sure if I'm going to keep this story or just scrap it... ???)

The air was cool as the rider made his way down the path. The only sound was of the occasional rock hitting the horses' hooves as he traveled through the forest. It was so green and lush, but the rider felt the feeling of uneasy seeping through his bones, though he couldn't directly pinpoint the cause of the uneasiness. As he turned the corner he saw something black hanging from the tree, as he got closer and closer to the object he realized it was a man who had been hung by the neck from the overhanging tree branch. The man was very dirty but didn't seem to be very old maybe in his mid-40s; he was dressed in a simple peasants shirt and pants, the smock like shirt may have been white at one point but was now almost all black since the dirt and grime seemed ingrained within its seams now. There was a sign hanging around his neck, with what the rider assumed since he couldn't read the language, was a warning to all those who passed by him. The rider soberly stopped his horses progression, then looking up at the man he wished him a safe journey to the afterlife and that he was once again with the people he loved as well as happy. Just as the rider was about to begin his journey down the road once again the hanged man's eyes popped open and he responded to the riders well wished by saying, "Thanks very much sir for those kind words". The rider's head shot up and when

he say the hangman looking back down at him smiling he fell from his horse so frightened by what he was witnessing that he nearly fainted like a lady would at just the sight of blood. "WHAT ARE YOU?!?!?!?", the rider yells, having been startled by the hangman, he begins trying and failing the scuttle farther away from the man hanging by his neck from a tree. "Now thats no way to greet anyone, Sir. Where did all them nice manners go that you'd been showin' me a minute ago." the hangman responded looking disapprovingly, as if this was a normal situation and he wasn't suppose to be dead hanging by his neck from a tree. "Now be a good lad and go chop that rope they'd done used to string me up in this damned tree, me necks getting a bit tired and I'd be losing feeling in me legs" the rider did nothing to dumb stuck to do anything other than stare at the man up in the tree, "Well don't just sit there get to it," the hangman said a bit of impatience filling his tone, "I've been hanging here for a long time I'd like to be changing the situation up a bit wouldn't you if you'd had found yee self in me situation..."

LAINE PARKER 75% CHECKPOINT

Since my checkpoint would be a spoiler for the short film I'm making, I thought I would just put on here the preview I had for the 50% checkpoint, since I never presented that:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0pN3_5siCk

Nicholas Kilgore

75% Checkpoint

K

1.

Keesha's eyes struggled to open as the first rays of sunlight pierced through the straw roof of her bedroom. *It can't possibly be morning yet.* she thought. Gingerly, she stretched underneath the wool blanket and let out a long yawn. Her muscles still ached from the night before. The light slowly started to illuminate the rest of her petite bedroom, in a warm orange glow. Sitting up, she cracked her back, and took a look around her room.

Her brown leather clothes were strewn around her room from the night before; when she came in from the farm. The wooden floor was ridden with dirt and brushed off soil. The walls had an assortment of shelves on them, containing small knick knacks that Keesha had collected throughout the years. She deeply admired a large metal disk she had found as a little girl. As a child, she used to use it as a play shield, fighting fictional monsters with the the

other village children. Next to her shield was a circular object, in of which were engraved symbols she didn't understand. In the center of the dish were three sticks, that could spin in a circle when she pushed them. Across the room from the shelves, laid her mirror and dresser. She never used the dresser much, didn't see the point when there was so much floor space to put her clothes. The mirror was equally neglected.

With a final yawn Keesha got out of bed. Her bare feet hit the floor with a cold slap, and she slowly sat herself up. She felt her back satisfyingly crack as she stretched her arms over her head.

"Keesha get up!" shouted her father's voice from outside the door.

"I'm awake," she replied in a groggy voice, "be right out."

She walked herself lazily over to the clothes pile on her floor, and got dressed. Her clothes were in their normal state; covered in dirt and smelling of animal. Lacing her boots up, she let out yet another long yawn. *How long was I up last night?* she thought to herself. For the first time in a long time, she looked at herself in the mirror. She saw her short amber hair was caked with a coating of mud, making it look brown opposed to its usual red-gold. The sides of her head were shaved, and the top was parted to the left. She blew a piece of hair out of her face, just to watch it fall back down. Keesha walked away from the mirror and towards the door.

Emerging from her bedroom, she walked into the kitchen. This was the heart of their home, its where they were all together. The large wooden table conquered most of the room, and next to that was the stone oven. Connected to the kitchen was a small living room that contained her father's feather chair, and her mother's ancient rocking chair. Sitting at the table, sharpening a knife, was her father. His large hands made the long blade seem almost childish. His beard was messy, and his dark brown (almost black) hair was unruly. He was a beast of a man, towering over all in a bear-like fashion, at almost seven feet tall; he was the biggest man in the village. Tending tediously to the stove, was her mother. Her petite frame made her look weak, but she was a strong woman, who could tame her bear of a husband, even at the worst of times. She had the same amber hair as Keesha, yet she wore it in a long ponytail.

"Good morning my little dove," said her mother, looking away from the eggs sizzling on the stove-top, "How'd you sleep?"

"Fine." lied Keesha.

"Good!" she replied, "How hungry are ya?" asked her mother joyfully.

"I can eat." replied Keesha with a smile, and at the same time, her stomach growled.

With a chuckle, her mother cracked another egg on the piping hot stone surface. Her father looked up at his wife.

"How many eggs are you using?" questioned the bear.

"Just the four." she replied without turning from the stove.

"How many do we have left?"

"We have hens Mateo."

"How many damn eggs do we have left Kita?" growled the bear

Sighing she checked the shelf the shelf above her.

"Three." she said.

Her husband's face wrinkled in a peculiar way. He thought for a moment, and then looked at Keesha. She had just sat down at the table when he said, "Go check the hen house,". She was about to retort when she saw her mother's hand shoot up in protest. Keesha sighed and got up, when an idea popped into her head.

"Why can't you have Rita do it?" she asked politely.

Her father grunted and answered, "Because your sister is already out there".

"At least let her eat her eggs first." chimed in her mother from the stove.

After she scarfed down her eggs, she gathered some tools, and went outside. The sunshine made her eyes squint shut and water. Putting a hand up to shield her eyes, she took a look around. Their village was situated at the bottom of a valley surrounded by snowcovered mountains. Surrounding her house were other similar straw huts with wooden sidings, all with the same simple humbleness. She could hear childish laughter emanating from behind her house, and she knew it was her sister. Rita was several years younger than Keesha. She had remembered when Rita was born, and how her mother had looked at the little bundle that was her new sister. Keesha didn't see much in the bundle, until a little face peeped out over the linen at her, and smiled. Ever since then she had loved her little sister, and would do anything to protect her. Rita was old enough now to start tending for the animals on the family's farm. She loved the rabbits the most. Sometimes Keesha would leave the house at night to gaze at the stars; she would find Rita out of bed as well, petting the baby rabbits. She constantly reminded her little sister to not get too attached to any of the animals, and never to name them. They were the family's primary food and trading supplies. Rita never did name any of them, but she did say something to Keesha once, "Even if they are alive for such a short time, they should have love". She found it foolish at first, but then she began to understand. That would always stay with her.

Keesha walked into the back of her home to see what Rita was doing. The view from the back was stunning. The mountains made them feel like they were in a bowl. Everyone in the village awoke to this beautiful sight every morning. Their house was unique to the others in the village however. In their backyard there was a massive structure that was immovable. It was a huge triangular piece of metal, with a tube on one side of it. It stuck out the ground at a forty five degree angle, and gave a nice amount of shade to the yard. Birds had built a nest in its tube, and had filled it with twigs and dirt. There were large blue symbols on the object. Keesha did not know what they meant, though they were written in red paint, scraped away by year of age. Few people in her village could read, but the ones who could told her it said something along the lines of *British Airways*. She continued walking into the backyard. Sure enough when she turned the corner she saw her sister running around barefoot throwing chicken feed everywhere.

"Rita," said Keesha questioningly with a smirk "whatcha doing?"

Her sister stopped skipping, turned, hid the pile of chicken feed behind her back, and blushed. Her blue day dress was stained with fresh dirt and grass, and her long amber hair crawled down her back.

"I was just feeding the chickens..." she said shyly.

"Well where are the chickens?"

At that a small yellow chick fell out of her dress, and landed with a *peep* on the grass. Keesha looked at her, looked at the chick, and then burst into laughter. Her sister followed with her high pitched giggles. They continued for what seemed like an hour. After the two of them had had a proper amount of laughter, they calmed down and began to breath normally again.

"Ok," started Keesha, resisting the urge to laugh again, "we need to get these chickens fed". They picked up the chick and placed it with the others in the coop.

2.

The chores were done by mid morning, so Keesha decided to go into town for a walk. She opened the wooden gate in front of her home, and walked out onto the dirt path people there called a road. It was the only road. The people in the village did not wander out of their valley very often at all. The farthest Keesha had ever been away from home was when her father took her hunting in the mountains as a little

girl. Her father had taught her everything he knew about hunting; how to shoot a bow, how to skin an animal, how to gut a fish. Everything that all the other girls in the village had no idea how to do. When the other girls were braiding their hair, Keesha was checking the traps for rabbits. When the other girls were preparing their dance routines, Keesha was stringing her bow. She never enjoyed the activities that the other girls did, there was no use to them, she thought. Girls were taught by their mothers on how to tend to the house, clean clothes, make dinner, and take care of the family. The only thing Keesha agreed with was that the family needed to be taken care of. However, she did not care about the cleanliness of her clothes, or the neatness of her house; and as long as her food was cooked, she'd eat it. She was grateful that her mother never installed these ideas in her head. Her mother let her father plant the seeds.

Rita on the other hand, was a completely different case. She loved everything that the other girls did. She admired their hair, their clothes, their laughter. She adopted most of their customs, including participating in the Harvest Gala dances. The whole town was preparing for the annual Harvest Gala at that time of year. The girls were practicing their dances, and decorating the village. The men were breaking their backs in the fields, trying to get every last crop harvested. Some of the younger men were up in the hills, hunting for fresh game that would be served at the feasts. For awhile Keesha's father was the village's lead hunter, but years of tending the fields altered his aim, and the game just started coming less frequently. The bear was replaced with a new cub, by the name of Frederick.

Frederick had been a quiet boy when Keesha was growing up with him. Kept to himself at the galas, and never socialized much. He spent most of his time in the woods. Because of that, he was able to quickly pick up on common game signs and trails. He began setting traps when Keesha was being taught how to count. By the time her father had started teaching her how to use a bow, Frederick knew how to track and take down a buck. Nowadays Keesha saw the town girls look at him with giddy faces. They all giggled quietly and blushed whenever he walked by. Frederick did not seem to notice them. He went about his business everyday: skinned his animal, made some new arrows, hiked into the mountains. At least that's all Keesha saw him do.

She continued her walk down the well trodden dirt road until she reached the center point of the village. Keesha took a deep breath of air. She smelled the newly hammered iron from the blacksmith, Brock. She smelled the freshly baked bread of the baker, Amelia. And then her nose crinkled when she smelt the flowery perfume of Rosaline. *Oh great*, she thought. Rosaline was what Keesha considered a girly girl; and the one that was walking right at her happened to be the queen. Everytime she had ever talked to Keesha, it would be to lecture her. "You shouldn't wear your hair like that," or "What kind of clothes are those," or even "Why would you ever do that?". Keesha stopped responding after she realized that no matter what she said, it would make no difference. She would still critique every bit of her that was classified as "lady like"; which was practically all of her. The queen caught her eye, and Keesha swore under her breath.

"Keesha!" squeaked Rosaline "Will I be seeing you in the dances this year?" she asked with her chin up and eyes wide.

She didn't want to respond, no matter how short her answer was, they always ended up getting into a discussion about how she should act.

"For the fifth year in a row," she started "No!".

Rosaline was one year older Keesha, making her almost twenty. She thought she was better than everyone else, and the only person that seemed to notice was Keesha. The other girls in the village looked up to her as an idol. Keesha found this hilarious and sad at the same time. *How can they look up to*

someone who is so blind. Rita was part of the admirers. Every night she had a new story about how amazing Rosaline was. The day before she had taught her how to sew; and the day before that she taught her how to make decorations for the gala. Keesha had seen the work the girls had been doing on the village. Everywhere she looked there were pumpkins, haybales, and pine cones strung together with yarn. The town hall had pumpkins littering its wooden steps. It was the only building in the village with two floors. Pinecones draped down from the second story windows, meeting each other above the large wooden double doors. Rosaline had been leading the decorating force since the beginning of Harvest season, which had been just over a month ago. Keesha had yet to see her do any actual work. Whenever she looked over she had been giving the other girls orders, or sipping her water skin in the shade.

"C'mon Keesha," pleaded Rosaline "Have you ever even tried to dance?"

"Listen Rosaline. As I've told you before, I don't dance. I like my hands dirty, and not waving in the air."

Rosaline let out a huff. "You know that you're not supposed to do any of those things you do?"

"Here we go again," sighed Keesha. She began to walk again but Rosaline stepped in her path. She attempted to get around her, but the effort was futile.

"I'm serious Keesha. Leave that stuff to the men, we need all the help with preparing for gala, and all you're doing is mucking around in the woods and fields."

This made Keesha stop. "Mucking around? The one mucking around is you!" Rosaline let out a single laugh. "I'm out in the woods getting meat, and harvesting everything in the fields; whilst your here sitting in the shade."

"The fields have enough work being done on them, and unless I'm wrong, Frederick is our hunter, not your father, nor *you*."

Keesha's jaw tightened, and she lifted a finger, pointing harshly at this annoyance standing in front of her. "Listen here you arrogant c-" she was cut off from a voice from behind her.

"Keesha. I need your help with something." said a deep rumbling voice.

She slowly closed her mouth, keeping her eyes on Rosaline, whose face looked harmlessly innocent. Letting her arm drop to her side, she turned to face the voice. It was the village's blacksmith, Brock.

"Come here." he said flatly.

Keesha walked away from the annoyance of Rosaline, and towards Brock's hot forge.

3.

When Keesha entered through the massive stone doors of Brock's forge, she was hit with a blast of heat from every direction. Strewn around the forge was an array of different metals and ores, varying in size and shape. Looking around she saw familiar tools hung on the walls: hoes, shovels, axes. Parallel, on the other wall, was an arrangement of weapons. These were rarely used, and consisted of mostly bows used for hunting. Though occasionally a sword would show up on the wall. Swords were always a mystery to Keesha. Why would anyone use a sword when you have a bow? she often thought to herself. When Keesha was a child she had frequent play fights with the other children. They had used sticks for swords. She never thought of swords as anything more than sticks, until she saw actual steel ones for the first time. The only time Keesha remembered anyone in the town ever using a sword was many summers ago, when their village was invaded by wolves.

The howls had started about a week before the first one was spotted. Larik, Keesha's neighbor, and father to Frederick, was the one to report it to the rest of the village. Most at that time were confused, they had never had a wolf problem in the past. However that was the year that the village had a surplus of calves. This had been a blessing at first; more milk, more cheese, and more meat. Later that summer they understood that it was anything but a blessing. The wolves came in like a plague. They ripped through the village searching for the newborn meat. If they didn't find cow, they settled on human. After the first death, the people knew they had to take action. During those days, everyone looked towards Keesha's father for answers, for he was the largest man there, and the most successful hunter. He asked Brock to forge enough swords for every abled bodied man and boy in the village. Brock followed through on this, and made some of the finest steel he ever smelt. Swords were swung, and horror followed.

The day after the swords were made, everything went quiet. The attacks stopped, and people felt safe again. They were not safe. The wolves had regrouped, they knew how to use war tactics. On the second night of the third week, they swarmed. Keesha was in her house when her father came bursting through the front door. He had blood dripping off his arms and face. His sword was dark red, and glinted crimson when the light of the fire touched it. Her mother was pregnant with Rita at the time, and Keesha was just a little girl. Seeing her father like this scared Keesha, and she ran behind her mother. What she saw next was much scarier. Her father was about to open his mouth when the wall exploded. A massive black beast of a wolf came down upon him. It was just as large as him, if not bigger. Keesha didn't remember much after that. Maybe it was the fear, maybe the shock, maybe it was everything combined. She remembered what living room looked like after that. The wall could never be a wall again, and her father rarely smiled after that. She remembered his face after he thrust his sword through the beast; the way that the blood sprayed his face, the noise it made. He pushed the body off of him, and sat on both his knees for hours, crying. Keesha remembered him laboring over the repair of the house, and doing nothing else. He cut down four trees to fix a single wall. That wall now has the same sword he used to end the wolf, hanging from it's beams.

Keesha moved through the forge, until she found a sturdy wooden stool by one of the many furnaces. She watched as Brock took a pair of massive iron tongs to a molten piece of steel. Quickly, he moved it to a cooling basin filled with crystal clear water. It hissed as it pierced the surface of the water, and steam filled the air. He released the tension on the tongs and the steel submerged completely into the basin. Brock walked back over to the work bench and put the tongs down. Letting out a long satisfied sigh, he wiped the sweat from his brow, and took a seat across from Keesha. Tr his apron he asked, "So how you been lately? 'Aven't seen you much round 'ere."

"I've been busy." she replied nonchalantly.

He raised his brow. "Is your da gettin' that old on ya?" he questioned with a smirk, and a slight chuckle. The two had known each other for much longer before Keesha was born. She had grown up with Brock as an uncle.

"No," she said with a laugh, "this year has been more bountiful than usual though, and he's needed all the help he can get on the farm. Hell, last night I was up until who knows when; he told me at one point that I could go to bed, and I did. I didn't hear him come in for a few more hours after that."

"Well I just hope the old fool doesn't push himself too far." he said looking at his dirty hands. Brock was a large man, who rarely left his forge. When he did, the children often ran home due to the way he looked. Grime and soot covered most of his features, making him look like some sort of monster.

Keesha rarely saw him without the caked on layers of black ash. The only time he didn't have the permanent layer of muck on him, was during the galas.

"Keesha I need you to do something for me. For the village really." said Brock, looking at her, "The gala is almost here, and we need more metal."

"Um, why do we need metal?" she asked skeptically.

"Pots and pans my girl! I've been getting ear fulls from all the women saying," he cleared his throat and put on a high pitched lady voice, "'How are we supposed to cook all this food if all we have are wooden bowls?'"

Keesha laughed and replied with an "Ok!", "But where do you want me to get this stuff?" she asked.

Brock got up from his creaky stool, and walked over to a large wooden desk. As he made his way around it, he opened a drawer. A plume of dust came up in his face, and he coughed loudly. Keesha snorted with a laugh. He gave her a smug face, and started digging through the drawer. Eventually he pulled out a very old looking piece of parchment, and set it on the desk. Keesha got up, and scurried over to the desk with eager excitement. Laying on it, was a map. She had never seen a map of the village, and it took her awhile to decipher what she was looking at. "Here," said Brock, pointing a finger at a small square on the map. "That's my forge," he said contently "and that," moving his finger to a rectangle, "is your family's farm". She stared at the map intensely, starting to figure out how it worked. As she stared, she began to understand. She looked at the rectangle that was her house, she saw the dirt path that led into the center of the village. She saw the circles and squares that made up the rest of the buildings. Brock's hand moves the the outskirts of the map. "Around 'ere is where ya need to go." he explained, pointing at a triangle on the map. "The land there is rich with materials; the ones we need."

Keesha traced a line with her finger to where he was pointing. "I don't really know how to read maps but, this seems pretty far out." she said

"Well it is," he replied, "and thats why I want you to go wit' Frederick."

She slowly raised her head, with one eyebrow raised in a questioning manner. "The guy doesn't talk!" she half whispered.

"Don't matter if he don't talk much. He knows where he's goin' out there!" he said loudly with a grin. "Listen," he started softer, "the boy's been out there more times than anyone else in the village. I mean the lad practically lives out there! So you're going to follow him, get the ore, and follow him back. We have a deal lass?" he asked satisfyingly.

Keesha thought this over in her mind. "What's in it for me?" she asked.

"I'll make you those new traps you been wantin'! The ones for the rabbits!"

This caught her attention. "Fine, we have a deal." She spat in her hand and held it out. Brock performed the same act, and shook.

4.

Days past, and Keesha did her daily routines. She helped her father with the fields everyday, and everyday proved to be harder than the last. The farm this year was more successful than ever, people called it a miracle; Keesha called it a curse. She was out until the ungodly hours of the early morning with her father, trying to get every little crop. Sleeping was a dream, and she desperately wanted to dream. Her catnaps were short, and after they were over, it was back to the fields.

On the fourth morning, since she had spoken to Brock about the trip, she woke up with a sigh. *Another two hour night, hurray!* she thought glumly to herself. She commenced her morning routine, and walked out of her room to the kitchen. Thinking primarily about food, she walked over to the oven, and grabbed some eggs out of the shelf above her. Only two left. She grabbed them both, knowing that there was more in the coup. While cracking the first one, she thought, *I wonder where mum is?* She was always at the stove top in the morning. Keesha cracked the second egg into a dish, picked it up, and turned around. In the corner of her eye she saw something move. She let out a short high pitched scream, and the egg dish shattered on the floor.

Standing in her living room, bow slung over his back with the feathers of arrows poking over the other shoulder, was Frederick. His mouth was agape and his eyebrows were raised. His hands were out in front of him like he was about to say something.

"What in the hells are you doing here?" Keesha shouted, trying to sound powerful but coming out as shocked.

Frederick was about to respond when Keesha's mother came in through the door, grasping a basket full of eggs. She looked at them both with an amused look of confusion. Then looked at the broken dish on the floor, and looked to Keesha whom was blushing. Frederick was even more red, he looked like a scared puppy.

"Frederick came about an hour ago!" said her mother holding back a smile, "He said Brock gave you and him an errand to run?" she said questioningly.

Keesha had forgotten to tell her parents about the job. She had been so busy helping her father in the fields, that it completely slipped her mind.

"Oh yeah, um, awkward." said Keesha while pulling out a chair to sit in. "Brock needs some stuff, and Frederick knows where it is." she said while starting to blush. Her mother looked at her in a strange way.

"No one else knows where whatever it is you're looking for is?" asked her mother.

"Well Brock knows but..." she was interrupted.

"If I could just say something?" blurted Frederick quietly

"Hold on Frederick," said her mother while still looking at Keesha. "Why didn't you tell us about this?" she asked.

Keesha got a little annoyed at this question. "Well if you haven't noticed mother, I've haven't exactly been home lately!" she said in response.

"Did you tell your father?" her mother inquired.

"We don't exactly talk while we're out there." said Keesha slowly getting angrier.

The two of them continued to bicker with each other for another ten minutes or so. Frederick decided that he would just sit down and watch the madness unfold in front of him. He was sitting for awhile, twiddling his fingers, when he noticed the room was silent. He looked up and saw the two women looking at him.

"So..." the older one said, "I think you had something to say?"

Frederick looked blankly at her, and then sprung back to existence. "Oh yes! What I was going to say was, um, that we need to leave soon." he said with a nervous smile.

"How soon?" said Keesha, still a little agitated from the discussion with her mother.

"Like, now soon..." Frederick said in a weak response.

Keesha sprung up her chair. "Now?" she almost shouted. She looked at her mother, and she just nodded. Keesha took this as a victory, and rushed down the hall to her room. Her mother looked at Frederick, "Good luck with that one" she said.

Keesha practically tore apart her room. She grabbed her backpack and started stuffing it with supplies: smoked meat, a blanket, a knife, and flint. She changed out of her farm attire and put on her leather hunting garments. Keesha hadn't used them in a quite awhile, they didn't have a caked on layer of mud like the rest of her clothes. She pulled up her boots that went up to her shins, and laced them tight. Looking in the mirror for the first time in a week or so, she was a little embarrassed with her appearance. She combed her fingers through her hair, and decided that it was good enough. She walked over to her dresser and opened it. The inside was deserted of all clothes, which could be found everywhere on the floor. Instead of clothes, there was a dark ebony bow. The string was solid, even after years of use by her and her father. Next to the bow, was a black leather quiver, stuffed full of white feathered arrows. Her father had fletched them himself. She grabbed both of them from the dresser. After tying on the quiver to her waist she slung the bow across her back. The backpack was heavier than she had expected, but she took the burden on despite the weight. Feeling confident that she had everything she needed, she exited her room.

The hallway felt longer after knowing that she wouldn't be walking down it that night. Walking into the kitchen, she caught her mother's eye. She offered a smile, and it was warmly accepted.

"Come here," her mother said opening her arms. Keesha's lips curled into a smile, and she gave her mother a long hug.

"Tell Dad for me will you? I don't think I want to have that conversation with him." she whispered in her mother's ear, still in the embrace.

"Don't worry about him. If it was anyone else but Brock who asked you he'd be furious. He'll be fine." she reassured.

They separated, and Keesha walked towards the door. The knob was cold to the touch. She turned to her mother, gave one last smile, and opened the door.

5.

Frederick was waiting patiently outside when Keesha came walking through the door. She looked around, and took a deep breath of fresh air. The morning was still young, and the brisk air flowed through her lungs, filling her with a welcoming chill. Letting out a satisfying exhale, she looked at Frederick.

"Well?" she asked.

Frederick just looked at her, wearing a confused face. "Well what?" he countered.

"Where are we going?" she asked with a giddy voice. She hadn't left the family land in a week or so. It had been a very long time since she had left the village totally; to say the least she was eager. The only times Keesha ever left the village grounds was to hunt with her father. Their last hunting trip was over a year before this adventure, and it had been brief, and lacked excitement. Keesha could barely wait to leave, she was moving eagerly in place as she waited for Frederick's response.

"Well," he started, "I'm going to grab my satchel from my place," he said as he gestured behind him with his thumb. His house was less than a two minute walk from Keesha's home. They had lived as neighbors for as long as Keesha could remember, yet she had never entered his home; and until this morning, he had never entered hers. Frederick said, "I'll be right back," and ran in a light jog down the road to his house. Keesha just stood there and smiled happily. Then a thought punched her in the gut.

Rita! She put her apparel on the ground and ran to down the path in a sprint. Keesha flew past Frederick in a whirlwind of speed. “Where are you going?” he shouted after her.

“Be right back!” she shouted back to him in a cracking voice, “Don’t leave without me!” she shouted at the last minute while running down the dirt road to the village center. While running down the hill she could see the entire center of the village, but what she was looking for were the people in it. She spotted the one person that she didn’t want to see, Rosaline. She was sitting under the tree drinking her water skin as per usual, doing no actual work. Keesha let out a curse under her breath, and slowed her run down to a jog. Rosaline looked up and saw the amber haired girl coming towards her.

“Hello Keesha!” she said cheerfully, whilst standing up, “Looking for your sister?” she asked. Keesha was surprised with this response. No snarky remark about her hair, no insult to her family.

“Yes...I am.” she said cautiously in response. This was concerning and pleasant to her at the same time, to have a normal conversation with an arrogant pain in the neck.

“She’s with the other girls by the town hall helping hang up pinecones.” said Rosaline in a casual response.

“Ok, thank you?” the words felt strange coming from Keesha’s lips, and it made it sound like a question. Rosaline nodded in a “you’re welcome” fashion. Keesha’s face crinkled into a confused twist. She turned around and began running again towards the town hall. When she arrived, there was a mass of girls with flowers in their hair tampering with pinecones and strings. She scanned the crowd for Rita, and eventually spotted her in a group by a massive pile of pinecones, scented by the looks of them. She jogged over and weaved between bodies to get to her sister. Rita was in the process of dipping pinecones into a barrel filled with a strong smelling perfume, when Keesha came from behind, and tapped her on the shoulder. She jumped at this, and dropped the pine cone into the liquid, and watched it sink to the bottom.

“Keesha! Hi!” she said as her shocked face mellowed to happy.

“Hey there little sister. Listen, I’m just coming here to say goodbye, and then I have to go.” said Keesha in a voice one would only use when speaking to a child.

“Goodbye?” asked Rita in a concerned high pitched squeak, “Wh-where are you going?” she asked with tears welming up in her eyes.

“Don’t worry Rita,” Keesha said in a reassuring voice, trying to make sure her sister didn’t cry, “I’ll be back before you know it. And by that point it will be time for the gala!” she said. Rita’s bottom lip started trembling. “Oh no don’t cry! I’m going with Frederick and we’re going to bring the village back important things! Like pots and pans. maybe I’ll even bring you back something,” Rita’s face brightened a little bit, “but only if you promise me that you won’t cry! And that you’ll take care of mom and dad for me. Sound good?” Keesha asked looking into her sister’s eyes and smiling warmly.

Rita sniffled hard, and blinked away the tears building in her eyes. “Ok Keesha, I will. but you have to promise me something too.” she said with another snuffle. “Be safe.”

Keesha smiled and gave her sister a tight embrace. She whispered in ear, “Of course I will be.” They separated, and Keesha gave her a kiss on the forehead, “Of course I will be.”

6.

When Keesha started her way back up the road, she looked back on the town square. This would be the last time that her eyes will lay upon it for awhile. She took in the air, and let it out of her slowly. At that, she turned back around, and continued her way back up the road. Keesha cleared the hill that led back to her and Fredericks homes, and she saw Frederick sitting by her belongings. He had an arm

holding up his head, and looked quite bored with himself. On his back was a small backpack, which seemed almost empty compared to Keesha's. He saw her approach and rose to greet her.

"Hey sorry! I just had to do something real quick." she said without looking at him.

"That's fine," he said while tightening his shoulder straps, "We need to get moving now though." he said as he picked up Keesha's bow to hand to her. He let his fingers wander over the embroidered ebony. The bow was a masterpiece and a true beauty to any hunter. The string was laced with metal fibers, which made it a beefy rope that required strength to pull back completely. Frederick was wide eyed in admiring it, and gave Keesha a suspicious look. "Where did you get this?" he asked.

Keesha looked at him and gave a half laugh. "It was my father's. He stopped using it after he wasn't required to hunt anymore." she said looking him in the eye. He blushed and felt a mixture of embarrassment and guiltiness. Frederick knew he was a good hunter, it was about the only thing he was good at when he thought about it. He'd never been good with women, or people in general for that matter. When he started hunting he finally felt like he belonged somewhere. Out there, beyond the confines of the village, he felt free. Like he could do anything he wanted. His family needed food, so he made it his task to go and retrieve it. He discovered that he was gifted at this, and when he came back home from the first hunt, he had enough food for half the village. He never knew however, that he had replaced the great hunter Mateo Longpond. That was never his intention, he never enjoyed competitions. Frankly, he was frightened of them. He was a narrow built lad, more power in the brain than in the frame. Most of his successful hunts were only successful due to a well thought out plan. Deer were the most plentiful. They strived off the many plants and ponds contained in the region, and Frederick knew just how to get their attention. His traps never failed him, and neither did his natural skill with a bow. If Frederick had an animal in his sights, it was dinner. Eventhough he brought much death to the forest creatures, he respected them, and he felt a very close connection between himself and nature. He grew his hair out long; long enough to tie in a ponytail behind his head. His clothes were made from deer hide, and some refined metals that Brock had infused the cloth with.

Brock had always seemed to be there for Frederick when he needed him. Not in a loving, or caring way however. More in a friend's point of view. Whenever Frederick had felt down (which had been a lot in his childhood) Brock had something for him to do. I couldve been as trivial as retrieving a bag full of river stones, or a rabbit's pelt. Though some of the tasks were more challenging and bizarre than others. Frederick vividly remembered the time he had to collect an egg from an eagle's nest. The climb up the tree had not been pleasant. Or the time he had to mine minerals that could only be found under water; that one took him days to complete. At the end of all these quests, Brock would reward him with something he needed, but not always desired. Experience was often the reward. Though in the rare case that it was a physical object, it was mostly always a tool of somesort. A knife, a hammer, once even an axe. Frederick kept telling him that none of those things were much of any use to him. So Brock taught him. The axe was well used one summer, when the blacksmith had taught Frederick to cut wood. He spent entire days slicing through oak, spruce, and birch wood. At first the work was difficult, but soon frederick began to find a liking to the monotonous chore. He could go through a tree a day, if he put his mind to it. Not only did it help the village, and Brock, it also helped him. That summer Frederick built his strength up, mostly unknowingly. His feeble arms quickly became defined with thin muscles, and his gut started to recede and harden. His jaw line began rigid, and his face stronger. Frederick had become a man that summer thanks to Brock, and he never forgot about that time he spent with his axe. Nowadays he kept a hatchet in his satchel at all times, he felt naked without it.

His parents hadn't been there much for Frederick when he was growing up. He loved them both dearly, but they were old and tired people. His father kept a very little farm in their backyard, and his mother taught the young children the basics about their society. They very much appreciated his work in the woods, but never could really bond with their son. As much as Frederick hated to admit it, he spent a lot of time by himself because of his homelife. His father always tried to convince him to come work on the field with him, but Frederick knew that his calling was in the forests. His mother was always worried about him, even after the many times that he had reassured her that he was being safe. Frederick felt like the only thing that accepted him was the forest, so that's where he was.

Keesha looked at him, and realized that she had made him uncomfortable. "Sorry," she offered, "which way are we headed?"

Frederick came out of his awkward haze, and back into reality. "Right! It's this way," he said and began walking down the road towards the mountains, "we'll set up camp in a few hours."

They began their trek down the dirt path, but this time in the opposite direction that Keesha was used to. They walked by their houses and Keesha's fields. Frederick's mother popped her head out of the doorway and said goodbye to her son. She looked at Keesha with a curious eye, as if she had never seen her son with anyone but himself before. She gave Keesha a smile, and then disappeared back inside the small grotto. They walked on, past other farmlands, rivers and streams. Keesha looked back when they came upon the first group of trees, and took a moment to reflect. The journey she was going on was the first outside the village without her father. She was finally free of him. She just hoped Frederick wasn't strict with his hunting ways. Then the thought hit her, *This isn't even a hunting trip!* She was going to be in the wild for a day or two, without much of a purpose to her family. *I mean I guess it's for the greater good of the family,* she thought.

Keesha was satisfied with the task anyways, she felt like she needed some time away from everything. The nights in the fields for hours upon hours were draining her, both physically and mentally. She couldn't remember the last time that she had slept through the whole night. She let out a slight sigh, and continued her walk behind Frederick. They walked for what seemed to be hours, and the sun was beating down on their heads. It hadn't been that hot in the valley for a couple summers at that point, though in the last few years, each one was getting increasingly warmer. Keesha hadn't seen snow on the ground since she was a little girl. Legend is that there used to be so much snow in the winters, that people couldn't leave their homes, and some died freezing to death in their beds. She dismissed these as stories to scare the children, for even when she did witness snow, it wasn't equivalent to anything substantial. Keesha stopped thinking about the weather when Frederick veered off the path and into the woods. "Woah!" she exclaimed as she raced to catch up to him.

Frederick paid little attention to her. He had taken this route many times in the past, on prior hunting trips. He proceeded up the rocky hillside with ease, as Keesha fell farther behind with each step. She eventually lost sight of him and slowed down her pace to a walk. The world around her had completely changed, it was so much different than the open fields of the village. Humongous trees towered over her, and cast long shadows down through the forest. The air seemed heavier here, as if each breath were a constant struggle for enough air. The ground was soft, but littered with hidden stones that made the forest floor a minefield. Keesha remembered the first time her father had taken her hunting, she sprained her ankle due to running around like a child would do. She recalled the look on her mother's face when her father had carried her through the front door with her in his arms.

Now Keesha had been walking alone for just under an hour before she finally saw Frederick again. He was sitting on a cliffside with his back turned to her. His backpack was next to him open, and Keesha could see that he was eating a piece of salted pork.

“What in the hells was that?” she shouted in frustration at him.

Frederick was startled by the sudden explosion of sound in the tranquil forest. He recoiled back from the cliff and swallowed the bite of jerky he had in mouth with an audible *gulp*. Keesha took a few steps closer, with an angry and questioning look on her face.

“Sorry, I didn’t even notice you weren’t behind me...” Frederick retorted awkwardly, “...I expected you would catch up, and well, here we are.” he said matter of factly.

Keesha’s expression softened, but she was still annoyed with him. “I’m not even going to argue, it’s not worth the effort.” she said in a tired voice. She had walked at least two miles uphill in treacherous conditions; her feet were sore and swollen, and her back ached from the weight of her backpack. They had left in the early afternoon, and it was now almost twilight; they never stopped. Frederick seemed unphased by the journey the entire day, but now he was exhibiting symptoms of exhaustion as well.

“Well,” he paused, yawned and spread his arms in a Y, “this seems like a good a spot as any to settle down for the night. Quite a nice view if you ask me.” he gestured towards the cliff side. Keesha walked over next to him and took in the view. She could see almost everything. It was like looking down on a world that was created in a sandbox. The mountains seemed less intimidating from this height, and she could spy a group of dim lights in the far distance.

“What’s that?” she asked, pointing to the lights in the distance. Frederick took a look. He smiled and turned to Keesha.

“Its home.” he said calmly, with a content smile. Keesha took a longer look, and she began to make out details. She could almost see the two story town hall, and the black smoke from Brock’s forge. If she imagined hard enough, she could see the fields surrounding her house. She began to try to think what her family would be doing at this hour. Her father would be going out for his second churning of the fields, and her mother would be cooking something up for dinner. Her sister would be braiding her hair, and having make believe conversations with her imaginary friends. And now Keesha was there on a cliff side, gazing down upon them. Frederick went for a short walk, and when he came back he had arms full of firewood with him. He found a small area of dirt and placed the branches crisscrossed over each other. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a handful of kindlewood, and inserted it under the middle of the pile. Next he walked over to his backpack, which was where he had been sitting earlier when Keesha found him. Now Keesha herself was sitting there, looking mystifully at the darkening landscape. He reached into his bag and grabbed his flint and striking rod. Keesha sat silently still, not appearing to notice his presence.

7.

The flames erupted in the jumble of twigs, and the campsite was given newfound light. Shadows crawled with stretched out arms away from the fire, and Keesha finally turned her head to face the warmth. Frederick was near to the fire, occasionally blowing puffs of air into the flame, making it jump to life. Every time it moved, the shadows crawled further and further from them. Keesha felt safe in the wake of its warmth. The hunter eventually backed away from the fire, and went to the cliffside once again, and gathered up his backpack. He came back and sat down next to Keesha by the heat, and let out a long sigh.

“What is it?” she asked him.

The boy turned and faced her, “There’s nothing like this,” he said, “being away from it all. The wilderness offers freedom, and I try to suck it all up when I’m out here.”

Keesha thought about this. She had never truly been free. Even when her father brought her out, they were never apart. She realized that earlier that day when Frederick had gone off by himself, that she was free. Maybe that would be the only freedom she would get on this trip. She felt stupid for being frustrated with him, for he just wanted the freedom that she so craves.

Frederick reached into his bag and pulled out some smoked pork. He held it out in offer to Keesha. She looked and gladly accepted the food. She had not eaten much all day. The food that her mother had served her earlier was dust in her stomach, and her stomach had been grumbling since midday. She took a bit out of the meat strip, and was surprised on how tough it was. It took extra effort to separate a mouthful from the rest of the strand, and when she finally did, the meat created stings that grasped onto the last hope of remaining whole; before snapping and falling downwards in defeat.. The taste was salty and gamey, each bite was a struggle to chew, but she couldn't care less. She devoured the rest of the strip in minutes, and felt satisfied. Frederick handed her a wineskin, and she took a large gulp of the bitter drink. Her stomach told her to stop, and she sink down into a slumped position. This was the best she had felt the whole day, and she slowly drifted off to sleep.

The fire spat its last few breaths, and then died out. Frederick, who had been asleep for quite awhile, noticed the sudden change in temperature, even in his sleep. He slowly peeled back his eyelids, and gazed groggily at the glowing embers. He tossed the coarse wool blanket off of him (but didn't bother to get up), and scooted over to his open satchel. After finding the tinder, he sat up and crawled over to the smoke that was once a flame. Pulling out his striking rod, he hit the tinder repeatedly. Sparks flew out of his hands, and ignited the dry kindle wood, resurrecting its former flame.

By the darkness of the sky, and the chill in the air, Frederick could tell that it was well past midnight, and that the sun would be rising soon. Knowing that he wouldn't be able to fall back asleep, he began refilling his bag for the journey that would commence in a few hours. He changed his shirt, which was dirty and sweat stained, for a fresh, tan, long sleeved tunic. The trousers he had been wearing were worn and torn, but they could take a beating. He brushed the dirt off them, and then put his boots on. Strapping on his belt, he could feel the leather tightening around his waist. The flint and tinder were on the ground next to the fire. He scooped them up, along with his makeshift mattress of linen, and shoved it into his bag as well. While rolling up his rough blanket, he noticed that Keesha was shivering ever so lightly. He looked at the blanket, and looked at her, then back at the blanket. Walking over quietly, he gently draped the the woolen cloth over her body, and then backed away, trying not make a sound.

Most of his bag was packed, but the added bulk of the bunched up shirt made the bag awkward to handle. Frederick reached in and pulled out his hatchet. Brock had given him this one as a birthday present a couple years ago. It was light, and could fold into a convenient clamp when being carried. It was no longer than half his arm when folded. Frederick took the hatchet into his hand and felt the weight. Then with a quick snap of the wrist, the hatchet exploded to three times its size! The handle now required at least two hands to grasp, and the axe head was as large as deer’s antler, and the body of the weapon stood half as tall as Frederick himself.

He swung the large tool through the air with ease. He made flawless cutting motions, and twirled the axe around his body as if it weighed as light as a feather. The light from the fire bounced off the tended steel, and cast rays of light through the nearby trees. He nodded to himself, and flicked his wrists

again. The axe folded in two, and returned to its small hatchet form. He slipped it into his belt loop and continued to pack his things. Frederick had always wondered how Brock could make such a tool. It made no sense to him, he never understood how something so small could turn into something deadly. Brock once told him, *A man who has the right 'ammers, can shape anythin' into anthin'*. Frederick never really questioned him after that, the art of blacksmithing had always been over his head.

The bag was packed, and the stars were still above his head. He sat by the fire, watching it intently. He was a little worried. *The sun should be up by now*, he thought while taking a tear at a strip of smoked meat. Another hour passed, and Frederick was now concerned that he had woken up much too early. Another few hours past, and he was now sweating. *Something is very wrong here*. Keesha was still sound asleep, and no longer shivering thanks to the fire and the extra blanket. Frederick was now pacing back and forth across the campsite. He walked over to the cliff to clear his mind, and that's when he saw the light.

8.

Keesha woke up to Frederick shaking her shoulders. She opened her eyes and saw Frederick's face directly above hers. He looked terrified and hurried at the same time. He kept shaking her and now he was shouting, "Wake up! Wake up!". Keesha sat up quickly and looked around. It was pitch black other than for the light of the fire. Frederick was throwing her belongings at her. "Hurry up!" he shouted. He ran over to the fire and stomped it out.

"What's going on? What happened?" she asked sleepily.

Frederick looked at her, and then, went back to hastily organising her things. "We need to go, now!".

Keesha got up and stretched her arms above her head. "What time is it?" she asked looking around at the darkness that surrounded her.

"It's mid afternoon," he said flatly.

A confused look crossed her face. The sky above her was filled with stars, and the grass was still wet with dew; and not to mention the sun hadn't risen yet. Now Keesha knew Frederick must have been joking.

"Yeah right. You obviously had a bad dream or something. Go back to sleep," said Keesha nonchalantly. Frederick stopped packing her things, and snapped his head at her. Quickly he closed the distance between him and her, and grabbed her by the arms. He yanked her to a standing position, and pulled her over to the cliff side.

"Hey what the fu-," Keesha stopped.

In the distance the little lights that had made up her village last night, were now a luminescent storm of flame. It was the only light visible for miles, and it was massive. The smoke billowed over the trees and fire stretched across the fields and farm yards. The square was a blaze of fury, and Keesha's stomach sank.

9.

Kita's eyes screeched open at the first sound of silence. She was so used to hearing Brock's hammer hit the anvil in the wee hours of the morning, and Keesha's snoring. But today the blacksmith was not working, and her daughter was not there. The bear had recently woken up to take his second shift

in the fields, but she could not even hear his plow churning the soil. The silence was so loud that she had to close her eyes to focus. The curtains in her quaint bedroom were drawn back, yet no light of day entered into the chamber, only a cloak of eerie darkness.

Reaching over to her nightstand, she found her matchbox, and removed a single matchstick from the vessel. Light streaked across her face as the flame ignited in her hands. She placed the orb of heat onto an awaiting wick, and the rest of the room lit up. Curling her fingers around the waxy candlestick, Kita moved to the door. The house surrounded her in complete darkness, only the flame she carried pierced the shadow's veil. Each step she took was a thunderstorm in the dark night. She peered into Rita's bedroom. The lump in to bad was breathing slowly, and was sound asleep. Letting the light into the room, she could see her curls dangling out from under the covers. Confident that her daughter was safe, Kita stepped back into the hallway. She stumbled into the kitchen. It stood still in silent emptiness. Her eyes surveyed the perimeter for any movement. Nothing. Mateo's rocking chair lay dormant, and her stove untouched. She moved to fireplace.

On the mantle lay all the things that were always there. Her wreath of flowers that Keesha had made her when she was a child. Rita's doll that she had made her when she was smaller. Above them all however, was her husband's sword. It shone proudly, even in the dim lighting. That's when she heard it. Fast footsteps just outside. They got closer. Closer still.

The door exploded in a firework of splinters and debris. Behind it came an aftershock of light and noise. Kita was deaf and blinded, she was blown back onto the floor, and the candle went out immediately. In through the door came Mateo holding his hoe, and drenched in blood. He screamed something, but she couldn't hear a thing. Suddenly all the sound in the world rushed back into her ears. Overwhelmed with the noise of explosions and the clanging of metal on metal mixed with the sounds of death; she blocked her ears.

Her husband grabbed her under the shoulders and pulled her up to a standing position. He positioned his face in front of hers and looked her directly in the eye.

"Are you ok?" he shouted at the top of his lungs; barely breaking the sound of the outside noise.

She didn't even have time to respond before the roof collapsed under the weight of spider like creature. It's limbs (all six of them) were slicked black. It's body was the size of a man's, but it had a head that resembled a coyote. However it's ears were on its ripples neck, and it's mouth had two jaws that opened like pincers.

The creature was on all six of its feet when it closed the distance between Mateo and itself. The roared and struck the hideous beast with his farming instrument. The creature caught the hoe with its two front most arms, and snapped it like a twig. Then it raised itself up on its two hind legs and did something unforgettable. It's reached into it's own chest and pulled out two of its ribs, which were as sharp as razor blades. It let out a horrible scream, and began to lunge at Mateo. He dodged left and right, before it cut his shoulder. It burnt like fire, yet the bear stayed standing.

Kita was struggling to move underneath the straw that was once her roof, but she was determined to stay alive. With all her might she pushed the straw off her body, and rolled towards her husband's recliner. Mateo was leaning against the wall with the creature towering over him about to strike a killing blow.

Kita's arm shot out fast, and reached under the seat of the recliner. Her fingers gripped the cold handle of the revolver as she ripped it from the linen of the chair. Her other hand met the trigger, and she fired.

Three shots. Each bullet sent a plume of blood cascading onto the wall. The creature fell to its knees. Kita fired again, and the creature's head exploded, into a dandylicon of red. However, it's spine flexed, and spikes flew back into the room, and into Kita. She attempted to keep her eyes open as the poison seeped in. Rita's face flashes in front of her, before the world returned to black.

Maddie Larocque - 75% checkpoint

(I have a lot more 'done' but since nothing is finished in its entirety, it's not posted. even this isn't revised - I've been hardcore slacking - but read it anyway so it feels special)

I was born of nature, you know?

My gramma would take me, all swaddled up, and trace her finger around what she called
"Perfect little rosebud lips"
"and tiny shell ears"

She would carry me around her whole great-big yard and introduce me to everyone;
Mrs. Maple and Mr. Elm, Miss Robin and the Mourning Doves

I grew up with these characters,
spent my spare time cradled in branches and chatting with squirrels
lulled by birdsong, calling back to hoots and coos

But I got to a point where I'd spend more time inside than out, which was odd
It was during that time that I sort of felt myself wilt and dry out

We stopped going to the beach at some point...
We stopped going to parks, to zoos..
My grandfather ordered to have my favorite tree cut down
then my second favorite..

But I still had my roots buried deep
I was left to my own devices, to start
putting casts on broken branches,
praying for rain once the drought had forsaken my soul
Each swallowed disaster leveled me, yet somehow
I kept finding a tiny bit of faith to push up through the rubble

Today my rosebud lips and tiny shell ears aren't much bigger than they were 17 years ago,
BUT,

My lips have bloomed into my medium. Painted red.

Words and words alone are my art and I can use them almost every second

My ears have either grown weak or selective

but all of the shrill screams and fighting words have only left me

with room to hear the sweeter sounds - and drive to form my own

It's true, I was born of nature.

Built of nature

Burned of Man

And built again



