

Memory

The sun's beams peek through the canopy of trees, rays streaking the open graveyard, shining upon names either long forgotten, or long vanished from history.

The wind brings with it dead leaves as it travels across the plain soil and tombstones. One pricks your cheek, a sting of cold death until the wind fades, and the leaf falls.

Isn't it mesmerizing how life passes and death arrives?

What will be the point of anything if the only destination for you is here, in this graveyard, waiting until your name is spoken for the last time? What will you do then? Lie in this miserable, wet soil, waiting for decay?

You close your eyes, inhaling slowly, standing before your beloved. A tear leaves your eyes.

As time passes, you will be the last with a memory of them, the last to speak their name. You carry a terrible burden for keeping their soul alive, though whenever you remember them, they can't speak. As if they've lost their voice.

Maybe it is destiny then. They will be forgotten.

Maybe they will simply fade from your memory as you age. Maybe the death of their soul will come sooner than your heart's.

The birds chirp their awakening, and the sound tears through the silence, reminding you to breathe. Breathe, in this beautiful, terrible world. Breathe, for a moment.

Breathe while you can.

Haileigh Goodie
Grade 12
Clearwater Secondary School
Peter Pan and Pain

Peter Pan

If Peter Pan came to your window offering you a hand to Neverland, would you take it?

Because if Peter Pan came to my window offering me his hand to fly to Neverland, I would not.

What Peter Pan doesn't tell us is that Neverland is a dream. And every dream has an end, and in the end, we all have to wake up.

To wake up is to grow up, and to grow up is to be awake to reality.

If I am given a dream that feels like it lasts forever, only to wake up at its end and get crushed by the weight of reality, I don't want it.

Because even if Peter Pan does not go by that name, our world is full of Peter Pans.

People who offer us happily ever after forever dreams, will always disappoint with a crushing end.

It's over.

In real life, there is no happily ever after.

Every dream ends.

So wake up.

Don't get stuck in those dreams we all long for so badly.

Because when it ends and you have to wake up, it's the dreams we want the most that hurt the most when they come to their end.

SO WAKE UP!

Haileigh Goodie
Grade 12
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Pain.

It's our thin grasp on reality. It bubbles inside us till it overflows, spilling from our ears, our eyes, and our mouths. We pretend it isn't there until it's too much, too big to ignore. We fight it. It's a gift. It tells us we're alive. It tells us we feel. Without it, what is the point of love? We all feel it. It crushes us under its weight. Some of us long for its sting.

Pain.

It's being hurt by the same person over and over but still holding on. That person is most likely the one in our brains. We plaster on a smile and say we're fine. The mask is breaking. Our brain is a tornado. We chop down the trees of our imagination and let weeds cover the ground. We are destructive. It holds us, hostage, in our own make-believe prison of im fines and smiles.

Pain.

We hold on. It breaks us but we hold tight to that thin strand. This is the storm. If we let go more will rise. It will be calm for us. But the storm for others will rage on It will never fade. It haunts every shadow. Every unspoken word is laced with it. We see it, we hear it, we can practically taste it. It is vile. It cots our thoughts, and suffocates us. It consumes our very being.

Pain.

It ties us all together. It tears us apart. It is what we are. We hate it. We love it. We destroy it. We make it. It's everywhere. It's in everything. It is our unwanted but necessary cornerstone to the temple we call life. It creates a fire in us. It puts out our fires. It is dark and thick and deadly. It creates all. It destroys all.

Pain.

When You Smile

When you smile

nature stops and freezes

halts and seizes

to appreciate your beauty.

The chatter of birds

the sing-song of their choir

is a second pick choice

to the melody that is your sweet voice.

Caressing the dark sky

shades of green and blue dance on high

I look to you

and I see

I'd rather watch that dance: you and me.

The coldest of days.

The most frozen of nights.

Fended off by the feeling you give me

so warm and light.

A beautiful sunset;

painting soul warming colors all over the sky

and the ones that I adore most

are those I witness

reflected in your deep eyes.

Deklan Pelland, Westsyde Secondary, Grade 12, When You Smile and Drops of Dew

Nothing can be wrong in this cruel world

when I look at you

and you smile.

Drops of Dew

Small drops of dew kiss the surface of delicate grass.

The whisper of a breeze dances through tree spurs.

Rustling leaves grace the forests' lullaby.

The warmth of the sun caresses everything that its light is cast upon.

A hellish fireball millions of kilometers away;

bathes the blooms of flowers and the sprouts of new growth.

The pitter patter of small raindrops

corrodes the peaceful chatter of the breeze.

Each raindrop, so vastly different and unique

each meet the forest floor.

Dirt and debris gets cast away.

The forest that we now see,

a little different from yesterday.

Cold water trickles down the gnarled bark of old trees.

Small streams of this elixir of life

flow down and down

all mingling in humble pools.

Small creatures come by

their steps tentative and delicate,

not wanting to raise a ruckus upon their arrival.

Their eyes dart about

surveying the forest that envelopes them.

Deklan Pelland, Westsyde Secondary, Grade 12, When You Smile and Drops of Dew

So much is observed, but none is seen.

A crash is heard

not far enough away

disturbing the beauty

breaking the peace.

This oasis of tranquility has lost its sacredness.

Footsteps ravage the soft grass.

The whisper of the breeze is drowned out by a cacophony of industry.

Puddles turn to poison.

Small creatures rear in fear.

The forest of yesterday

Taken away today.

A letter to a loved one
Montserrat Gonzalez Corrales
Westsyde Secondary Grade 12

Dear Tata,

Hi, I know it's been a long time. I'm sorry for not checking in sooner. Congratulations, you have three more grandchildren than you did the last time I saw you. They're amazing and you would've loved them. I wish they could've met you.

Every now and then I wonder how you've been; if you like the new place. I know you don't like change; I got that from you. I wonder if you miss me the same way I miss you. I wonder if you felt pain. I'm sorry you were alone. I wish I had been by your side when it happened.

I know you're probably worried about me. I am still smart, I had all A's on my last report card, I took up Brazilian JiuJitsu, (I know you'd be fond of that), I still know how to throw a punch, and how to make quesadillas. I still know how to hold the light over the hood of a car and I still like my hair braided even though I haven't had the energy to do it. I don't go to church anymore; Mom and Nana are not happy about it but I know you understand.

My favorite sweets are still Toffifee. My favorite drink is still agua de cebada. My favorite movie is still Atlantis and my favorite colors are still pink and green. I still like reading. I speak English now and I'm learning French, but don't worry, I still know Spanish and I don't sound 'pocha' like I know you'd hate. Canela and Wendy are still alive. Max isn't.

I know you wanted me to go to university and have a career. I know you wanted bigger things for me than what you were able to provide for me. I'm trying my best. I'm scared. The feeling of

uncertainty is overwhelming. I look around and it seems as if everybody has chosen a path, and I haven't. I wish you were here. I wish you could hold my hand like you used to when we crossed the street. I've gotten used to holding my own hand.

I'm tough and I can take care of myself; I know my limits and I know how far I can push myself without breaking. I am breaking. I keep thinking maybe I'll clean my room today, but I know I won't. I tell myself "tomorrow will be better" it seems as though I'm always wrong.

I'm doing well in school. I know you don't care about the mess if my grades are good. I haven't showered in a week or so and I can't remember the last time I washed my hair. In the middle of my room is a pile of clothes that aren't dirty but aren't clean. I've been dressing myself from that pile for around two weeks. I know I'm not at my best, but I'm not at my worst. I still brush my teeth and I still show up to school. I'm still eating and sleeping, sometimes.

I miss you every day. I see pieces of you in the way I live, like the side of the bed I sleep in and the way I like my drinks. I miss you so much I can feel my spine caving in. I have an ever growing list of things I'll never get to tell you about. So I stretch my back and ice my wrists and I'll go to bed hoping to wake up in a tomorrow I get to share with you.

I grieve the time that was stolen from us.

I have this one video where you're laughing, and you tell me that I'm so smart while you mess my hair up and we're laughing and we look happy. We were happy. I watch that video like my life depends on it. In a way it does. I put my headphones on and I listen to it in the middle of the

A letter to a loved one
Montserrat Gonzalez Corrales
Westsyde Secondary Grade 12

night, when everything is quiet. It's not loud enough. I want it to be louder. I want to feel your laugh coursing through my bloodstream.

I was mad at you for so long for leaving without me. But how could you have known; it's not like you planned it. I'm sorry about the service and I wish I could change the way it was. I know you didn't want that.

I am angry at you. I'm angry for all the things you didn't teach me, the words you never said, for making me feel special, then abandoned. I am angry at you because I am angry at myself, because I wasn't there for you when I should've been. I am angry and I am sorry. I'm sorry I brought you drinks when you asked for them and I'm sorry I lit your cigarette when you couldn't. I'm sorry I made you play with the tea set on the hardwood floor and I'm sorry for hurting myself so much.

I talk to you everyday: sometimes out loud, sometimes in my head. I hope you're proud of me. I hope you love me.

I will forever be grateful that I got the chance to meet you, to experience being loved by you. I keep looking for you in all these places, knowing the only place I'll find you in is the smell of car oil and grease. I wonder if you'd like the person I grew up to be, the person I am becoming.

See you soon,

- Monse

Ella H.

Grade 12 *Westside Secondary*
Flickers of Life

There was a type of pain that everyone in their lives would experience, an inescapable agony that would burn away the sanity of those who could not survive it. It had taken away her sanity a long time ago. Grief was one of the weird types of fire that could not be put out by water. It burned hot and bright, turning any flammable emotion to ash. Over the years, as the flames of grief had slowly charred the crumbling edges of her mind, she had discovered a way to put out the flames for a brief time, before they would flare up once more. It turned out that the only way to smother the flames was to light a candle.

Each morning, before the burning monstrosity of the sun rose above the horizon, she lit a candle and summoned her pain into a bright flame that could melt stone. She watched every morning as the flame ignited to life, dancing back and forth in a non-existent breeze. Since the grief had first risen in a dangerous blaze the night her brother had been murdered, she had lit a candle in memory of him, as tradition demanded. It made her feel better. Lighting that candle was almost like saying hello to the long-lost soul of her brother. Yet, despite how good it felt to watch that little flame dance every morning, she wondered what the point of it was.

It had been so long since her brother had walked the world with her, guiding her through life's challenges as they faced them together. The candle would never bring him back. No matter how much the act of lighting the hopeful flame made the fire go out, it would never bring him back. The connection she felt when the flame sparked into existence was a false hello to someone who had been gone longer than he had lived. What was the point of her morning ritual?

What was the point in remembering the dead? All it did was keep the memory of them alive for a little longer. It was like making a dying person take their medicine so they could suffer a little longer, while their loved ones savoured each passing moment with them, fearing it would

Ella H.

Grade 12 Westside Secondary
Flickers of Life

be the last. The dead did not care about the gesture. After all, caring was something only the living could do. Her brother was not around to hear the whispers she spoke as she talked to him, pretending for a moment the dancing flame somehow provided a connection with him. One he could hear her through. But the reality was he could not hear her, he did not care about her effort at remembrance, he was not here to witness it. So what was the point?

Despite how much she questioned the point of the candle, deep down she knew what the point of it was. The candle was what soothed the burns her grief left behind. It was what tempered the flames until the next time they would ignite. The little flame was all that kept her sane and was what allowed her to survive the passing years without her brother and best friend. So she would continue to light the candle each morning, as its point was not to bring her brother back but to help her remember him until the day they would be reunited.