

Evanescence

ATLAS

My eyes flutter open. I struggled to keep them open from the fluorescent lights. The buzzing is almost as irritating as my headache.

“Doc! He’s awake!” a familiar perky voice exclaims, calling someone over. I push myself up immediately regretting it as my headache turns from bearable to head-splitting. I noticed that I am melting under about fifty blankets. As I try to pry them off I nearly throw up from an awful stench: imagine “ultra-strong” cleaning supplies. I finally manage to pull all the blankets off; they must be weighted because I think I gain muscle. A hand waves in front of me. Pink nails.

“Atlas? Hello, don’t ignore me!” an agitated voice said. The waving-of-hand doesn't stop until I look up at her. Ophelia. She has golden blonde hair with a slight wave, a contrast to my jet black hair. Her hair goes past her thighs and her bangs are just high enough for her diamond-blue eyes to poke through. They’re mesmerizing really. She’s your typical “pretty-girl”.

I look around the room full of what I can assume are worried nurses and doctors frantically running around.

“Why are we in the hospital?” I ask Ophelia.

“You don’t remember?” She questions, looking at me like I’m dumb. I shake my head. “Dr. Diablo *did* say you may suffer from amnesia of sorts,” Ophelia confessed. “-But you’ll probably go back to normal in a week!” She quickly adds as not to worry me. I think she's trying to comfort herself more than me.

“You still haven’t answered my question” I say blankly. I’m very curious what happened. *Nothing* can top last time when I made a fifteen story building fall. In my defense, I was aiming for a person, not the building.

Evanesence

Ophelia gives me “the look” before speaking. “Somewhere in that little brain of yours thought it would be *fun* and *awesome* to fight a bloody dragon-seriously Atlas, what were you thinking? A *dragon!*?” She was yelling now. “I don’t get it, you can’t win a spar against Apollo and you still think that makes you good enough for a *dragon?* That’s practically suicide!” She continued, her gaze hardening on me. She was right and I knew it. I turned away out of embarrassment from being idiotic and a little from losing to Apollo, who was quite possibly the worst magician in our year, scratch that, the whole world. I only lost to him because he snuck up on me. She also didn’t mention that we were like ten when I lost. Seven years can change a magician.

“You know I’m right,” she teased as I turned back to her.

“At least I was a kid! Losing isn’t as embarrassing when you aren’t seventeen!” I manage to choke out. Ophelia let out a loud “Hmph!” while crossing her arms and turning away. She does this when I make fun of her a lot. Her ears and face turn red, a contrast to her tanned skin.

As I’m laughing I see a flash go past the open door, soon followed by a loud crash. Ophelia’s head whips around. “What was that?” she asks me. I look at her funny.

“How in the world would *I* know that?” I say slowly and sarcastically.

“I wasn’t asking you!” she said like I was dumb.

“Why don’t you go check it out then since I’m, you know, tied down” I gesture towards the tubes attached to me. She gives me a weird look, a side-eye. “What’s that look for?” I snarl.

“Leaving *you*, in a room full of *expensive* and *dangerous* supplies isn’t exactly a good combination, and you know it” I roll my eyes.

Evanescence

“How could you possibly know that?” I glare at her. My headache suddenly turns into a volcano. My hand instinctively digs into my forehead. Ophelia rushes closer to me.

“Atlas! Oh my god! Are you alright?” She shouts. “Need me to call the nurse?” I shake my head; trying to act all tough and cool when in reality I think I’m gonna throw-up. “Atlas?” She nudges me, waiting for an answer.

“No, I’ll be alright. It’s just a headache” I assure her. “Ophelia,” I start, “I promise I won’t do anything dumb or dangerous if you go take a look at whatever happened out there” I plead.

Ophelia then gives me “the look” for what I can assume is the billionth time in the ten minutes I’ve been conscious. “Atlas, the last time I left you alone in a situation like this you found quite literally twenty different ways to kill me, you and several different doctors,” she scowls.

“But that was like seven months ago! I’m a changed man Ophelia” I reply, giving her the classic puppy-dog-eyes that only my own mother can say no to. Ophelia lets out a long sigh.

“You know, one of these days I’m not gonna fall for your manipulative tactics-or whatever forbidden spell you use” She rolls her eyes. Ophelia turns away from me, heading for the door.

Ophelia

Atlas is practically on his hands and knees begging me to check out the ruckus in the hall. I look down the endless hallway and see a hospital bed far away. I quickly rush over to it. Seriously, someone must have used magic on that thing for it to go that fast.

Ciera (Asher) Earle Grade 8
Westsyde Secondary School

Evanescence

As I approach it I get a strong scent. Definitely magic. I poke my head around the bed finding nothing but a broken wheel. I'm surprised there's no nurses around. I don't think I saw any in the rooms walking past actually. It's odd. *Probably just busy*. I say to myself. As I walk back, I see a light flicker. That's also odd. I glance in the rooms as I pass and each one is deserted.

I get to the room and spit out, "It was a bed." I notice Atlas is also missing. I check the room number: 44. This *is* his room. I call out "Atlas?" as all the lights shut off.

Cherry blossoms, tangerines – Payton S, Valleyview Secondary School, Grade 9

There is no cherry blossom picking where she lives.
How can anyone bear to steal petals from a wonder of the earth?
They bend down with their scuffed baskets and pick them up, one by one.
Flowers that float with the breeze; the wind rises!
Let it.

A youth in cloud blue and fluttery white pedals across an old stone bridge.
He turns back to gaze at the alleyway, steps up an incline, to the old house.
His lantern beckoning, flickering, the wind sweeps up.
A star flashes in the sky, a meteor blazes cuts across the vast world.

He smiles at nobody, and the sunset, in orange.
Truly an orange glow, the setting sun, in its blush-pink hue.
It is a stream of clear water under the bridge.
It rushes small pebbles, swept in the current, they rise.
Tangerines fall from the dirty plastic bag in the youth's painted basket
They land
Plop plop plop
splashing in the river, he runs to pick them up,
Bicycle discarded, gliding in pursuit of his fruit, facing the sun,
He looks down.

She bends to pick them up from the water. They are almost crimson, rugged
Sliding a hand from her pocket, slender
She shields her face from the sun, casting shadows,
She looks up.

What a season for cherry blossoms.

Highschool, 1999 – Payton S, Valleyview Secondary School, Grade 9

Creaking bicycles, sharp morning air,
 Street-fried, crispy critters in sweet milk, a
 salty handful of peanuts, wind chimes
 Signal an entrance into the corner store:
 Faded stickers of a Hong Kong movie star sits
 in front of an encased MP3, newly imported,
 Lush greenery peaks over the brick wall.

Shade, stone benches,
 We skim by the beach- too familiar to stop,
 Squeezing up slushy cream soda,
 Sweet, cold.
 A soft breeze steals a corner
 from a ripped math workbook-
 Gone with the wind! College examinations are finished,
 Carted away to college, new students take their place.

We pause, stop our bicycles, click.
 Stopped by the shutter of a camera- too expensive to use often.
 We stop by a store, a few coins,
 Exchanged for two banana popsicles, hawthorn candies-
 An iced glass of cold lemonade.

We stop to watch the sunset. We rest our legs,
 You take off your carefully laced shoes, white,
 Step in the sand with your sockless feet,
 I watch. Click.
 Encapsulated.
 The sea glimmers. Flaunts a speck in the distance.

The crickets chirping set us off.
 We pedal away, shiny shells in our baskets.
 Sticky thighs rip away from our plastic seats.
 Standing in front of creaky wood.
 We bid each other goodbye.

Mother smiles at me, her wrinkles
 Only appear on her worn fingers, years
 Of menial labour, cooking,
 The fresh scent of egg fried rice wafts,
 Permeates, another cup of silky orange juice.

Highschool, 1999 – Payton S, Valleyview Secondary School, Grade 9

I rush to the shower, using the rest of the hot water,

Just before the electricity cuts– Barely!

I scrub my teeth.

Scrapbooking, newspaper clippings,

Climb into that warm bed. It creaks, too.

Your pillows are soft.

They wait for tomorrow.

Ashlee Crawford
Grade 10
Westsyde Secondary School
My Old Dog

The story I'm about to tell took place in 1935. I lived with my mother, father, and six siblings in a quiet apartment on the edge of Toronto. I was 12 years old in 1935. We were living on relief during the Great Depression, the dole, as some would call it. The relief is where the government gives you scrapings of money each week, usually \$10 for an entire family to live off of. Pathetic. Welcome to the Depression!

My family, although we spent most days on an empty stomach and prayed every night for Dad to come home with a random cent or two, we were considered pretty lucky. First off, our landlord was a good fellow. Renting out the three rooms we had to hold our large family wasn't cheap, no no no, and that good landlord understood our financial situation, how our father was out of a job, and how the only money we got was when we handed in our weekly voucher.

You see, we had an old dog named Terry. He was a moderately-sized fellow, big floppy ears, curly brown fur that smelled like grass and creekwater, and he had a scruffy grey muzzle. Terry was so ancient that we had to carry him down the apartment's absurd flight of stairs just so he could get some fresh air. Terry was blind, so he often stumbled into walls, poor thing.

As the oldest boy in the family, during the hot, dusty June of 1935, I was responsible for dropping the relief voucher off at the store. If I gave the voucher to the clerk, he would then give me the supplies we'd need for the week. That was what it was like being on relief. It was embarrassing each time, handing in that voucher.

So, June of 1935. I was passing the voucher to the clerk, and as Momma told me to, I was to get something for the dog. Scraps of meat, mostly. Now, everything I got for the dog was not inclusive with what we were guaranteed from relief. Everything I bought for my old dog was

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Westsyde Secondary School
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straight out of my father's shallow wallet, which only held five cents, if he was lucky.

I walked out of the store that evening with \$10 in my pocket and scraps of meat for Terry.

Momma planted a hundred kisses on my face upon my arrival at the apartment, and my five younger brothers all dove into the relief bag. Margaret, my older sister, had to hold them back from ripping apart all the valuable food.

Terry, with his long nails on the wooden floor, came *click-clack-clicking* into the kitchen.

"Terry, Terry, Terry!" I exclaimed, ruffling his thick chocolate fur and smothering his wet, hairy snout in lovely kisses. He made this rumbling noise in his throat and bumped his face against mine, as though whispering, "I missed you, best friend! Now, where's my food?"

Then Dad walked in. He was the type of man who's eyes held this incurable, miserable sadness. The Depression took a savage toll on him, and that would explain his death in 1948. Took nothing but a rope and a rod to end his life.

"What's wrong, Dad?" I asked.

My father was never the one to sugarcoat things, so he came right out with it.

"We can't afford to feed the dog anymore. The landlord's fallen on hard times, just as we've all, and now he's bumped up the rent. I'm sorry, son."

I folded my arms around Terry and cried, "We can't get rid of him!"

I refused to let him go, although my parents and Margaret advised me that it would be for the best to take him to the "Barn for Old Dogs." I knew what those words really meant, even then. Still, I refused.

A week later, I dropped off the voucher at the store. The clerk raised an eyebrow, noticing

Ashlee Crawford
Grade 10
Westsyde Secondary School
My Old Dog

I carried no change to buy food for Terry.

“Are you getting something for the dog, boy?” the clerk asked.

“No, sir,” I said sadly, my head hanging. “Nothing for the dog this time.”

Terry started getting hungry and sick extremely quickly. A day without food, and he could no longer make it to his water dish; Margaret and I had to carry the silver bowl to his bed. Two days without food, and Terry could no longer lift his head.

I knew the Grim Reaper was to show up with a leash and collar soon.

On the third night of Terry’s starvation, Dad loaded my curly-haired best friend into his arms and hauled him down the stairs. I chased after him, shouting, “Wait wait wait!”

I bumped into Dad outside the apartment. The night was cool, the moon a grinning crescent, and the clear sky was freckled in trillions of stars. I watched helplessly as he slipped Teddy into the passenger seat of his truck, as one would lay an angel to rest.

“Dad, stop!” I yelled, wiping at hot tears. Snivelling, I asked, “Where are you taking Terry?”

“It’s been three days, son,” he replied, his voice hollow. “Terry can’t stay here anymore. We can’t afford to feed him.”

I understood Terry was going to the Barn for Old Dogs.

“Can I pet him?” I wept, my voice breaking.

“You can pet him.”

So I did. I inhaled the fresh scent of grass and creekwater that still, and always will, cling to his luscious brown curls. I played with his floppy ears and scratched his belly, laughing and

Ashlee Crawford
Grade 10
Westsyde Secondary School
My Old Dog

crying.

Dad pried me away from him and shut the door. Through the window of the truck, I saw Terry's round, innocent eyes staring into mine. I think he understood what was happening, too.

Dad promised he'd be back by morning and told me to go inside. He loaded his rifle, placed it next to Terry, and drove off in a cloud of dust.

That was the last time I ever saw my old dog.

"It Could've Been Me"

I remember when I went to my first funeral. I was young, not so much in age but in maturity. I stared at the black leather in front of me as we drove in silence towards the venue. I remember picking at my painted nails, the chunks of colour flaking off. My mother glanced at me in the rearview mirror with concern written on her kind face.

"Kiddo, you alright?" I glanced back up, my head foggy with misguided ideas.

"Yeah, just... thinking," I sighed. I'd grown up seeing impressions of death. Cheesy, gorey renditions of loss in horror movies and whispered about on the news. I'd never really imagined I'd be in the same vicinity as one. The silence between my family grew thick and palpable, like rotting vines had grown between our words. I peeked up again at my parents. My father, usually stoic and silent, had a slight crack of pain in his façade. A mask of false calmness perched upon my mothers face, unusual compared to her normal cheeriness. My sister sat beside me, head turned to watch the roiling river and cars hurtling by. As we pulled into the funeral home, bodies swathed in black swam by me like fish upstream. I didn't recognize them, really, but their sorrow emanated off of them in waves. I followed behind my father in my plain black clothes. I felt many eyes on me. I knew they were looking at me wondering if I was next. To be honest, I was asking myself the same thing. The boy who died wasn't much older than me. Closer to my sister's age, but not far off. We said our awkward hellos and our sorrowful apologies and wandered towards the ceremony. I remember peering at the coffin and seeing him, lying there, much too still. His skin was shades off, like someone had painted him wrong. He seemed peaceful, but there was something unnatural about the look on his face. He was

almost a rendition of a human, something that couldn't possibly have been alive. But the humanity in me shouted, screamed at me, "that could've been you". I stood there, frozen, locked in a cold stare with lifeless, closed eyes. For most of the ceremony, I couldn't pull my eyes away. I couldn't stop thinking how he and I had talked before, how many times I'd seen him, how we'd shared experiences. It could've been me. Maybe it will be. I listened to the stories, the laughter and the tears shared as people talked about this boy, this man who I'd barely even known the name of. Is this what will happen when I'm gone? Is this how my family will feel? Selfishly, I spent my time at the ceremony thinking about what I could've done, what I should've said. When we got in the car afterwards, I just sat there in shock. I was stuck in a trance. My mother kept making futile attempts to meet my gaze in the rearview mirror. I ignored every glance, fighting back stinging tears. Ever since I was little, I had this thought that crying in front of others made me weak. I held onto that thought, as though showing emotions was a shame and a humiliation.

"You know, you can talk about it. Listening to that... seeing those things, it's horrible. And it's hard to process, okay? Don't keep it to yourself, honey, please." I heard her words and they splintered my heart into bits even more. One of the last things I wanted was to hurt her, but I couldn't talk about it. The sight of his sickly face was burned into my mind, a constant haunting image. I felt pity, sympathy, and pain for his family. But I also felt fear. I wasn't prepared for any of that. I understood it, but in my mind, I was still an innocent child. My mind kept returning to the similarities he and I shared. If I had lost strength, if my resolve had wavered for even a second, could I have ended up the same? That evening, I laid in bed, my mind in an endless loop of melancholy and helplessness. I couldn't shake the pit in my stomach, drowning in the sea of overlapping thoughts. Trying to drag myself back to reality, I thought about better

experiences. Summer camps, adventures with friends and vacations flashed through my mind, but they gave only momentary relief.

I couldn't stop returning to the same hopeless thought. It could've been me.

Georgia M. - Grade 12
Kamloops School of the Arts
Two Poems:
Shore Stone
The Antique Granary of Battlesbridge

1

Shore Stone

Shore Stone

Faces Ocean's shadow -

Raked over

Submerged

Bludgeoned

by dark, unyielding towers

and countless icy forces

Yet, still stands

in spite of Sea's intent to defeat

Shore Stone

Brave, strong

Soul beautifully complex

With desire to protect

Nourish

And love.

Sea turns to a whisper

in its presence

Georgia M. - Grade 12
Kamloops School of the Arts
Two Poems:
Shore Stone
The Antique Granary of Battlesbridge

2

Many waves of envying eyes advance

Fangs and talons

crave a piece

And wish destruction

to fall upon

what they cannot have.

Sabers and knives

cut, stab, slice...

But one cannot draw blood

from a stone.

Shore Soul,

Armor welded with love,

Stands

When no one else will.



Georgia M. - Grade 12
Kamloops School of the Arts
Two Poems:
Shore Stone
The Antique Granary of Battlesbridge

3

The Antique Granary of Battlesbridge

Many a clock, mirror and paperweight

Awakens Alice's perception -

curious steps, careful glances

Silent, almost giddy excitement

Alight in flickering, fascinated eyes

Finding

All manner of things

Most, obnoxiously obviously

Cheap, crude costume jewels

Spray-painted

Slow-blushing copper and nickel

Single-digit coins

And

Little treasures

Of an era long-passed

Find a nook and cranny

In my psyche

And call me

To take them home

Georgia M. - Grade 12
Kamloops School of the Arts
Two Poems:
Shore Stone
The Antique Granary of Battlesbridge

4

Rook to Bishop

Pawn to Castle

The items line up to

Make a winning move in my mind:

Fruit knives battle

Murky-gemmed rings

And eclectic amulets

Silver pens spar with

Pocket watches,

Brooches,

Thimbles,

And tiny cutlery.

A cavalry

Of opals on strings

Gold spines

And rings

Green, blue, cream, violet

Compare not much else

To tough ambers

Fuschia rubies

And celtic folds.

Georgia M. - Grade 12
Kamloops School of the Arts
Two Poems:
Shore Stone
The Antique Granary of Battlesbridge

5

Smelling salts canisters
On twirling, old chains
Lead to far away wood
Of poly-limbed deities and giants
That step into
Another tall, old hall
Adorned with pseudo-widows' webs
Clutching crumpled victims of invertebrates in
Crustacean coats.
Where a haunting statue
Glints
At a glance,
Her curved body
And falling robe
Suggests regality
Yet,
On approach
Her ominous austerity
Destroys all likeness
To the White Queen's grace.
The statue's gown
Sweeps up to spread wings

Georgia M. - Grade 12
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Two Poems:
Shore Stone
The Antique Granary of Battlesbridge

6

Which lack feather or scale -

The shapeless disks

Match her shapeless head.

Without hair or beauty

She stands.

A string bound to paper

Reveals her name:

“Spirit of Ecstasy”

But her marred face

Evokes nothing

That such a spirit should.

I go home

Selecting none

To accompany me

Leaving them to fight another day.