orthogenique

A literary magazine produced by the students of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School

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Many thanks to the people who subscribed to this issue of Orthogenique! This magazine costs over $1000 to print per issue, and your donations are greatly appreciated. All others who wish to subscribe to this magazine can do so with the order form at the back of this issue.

SPECIAL NOTICE TO READERS

The next issue is scheduled for a June release. Anyone who wishes to contribute artwork or a writing piece to Orthogenique can do so by giving the piece to Michelle Z. or Michelle P. A special section will be made in the back of the magazine to showcase the artistic or writing talents of the contributors.
Ladders have been used throughout history. There are images of them in primitive drawings being used as tools to transport and build, as well as to fearlessly attack by scaling castle walls. They can represent resolution and determination, a hierarchy in life, a bad omen, or path to new heights. The rungs can represent levels of communication or levels of spirituality.

At the Orthogenic School, students work to overcome and rise above obstacles in their lives. Sometimes the challenges are small; remembering to take completed homework out of their binders and turn it in or asking for help when needed. At other times, however, the challenges are quite daunting; facing truths about themselves or establishing meaningful relationships. Most of our students begin their work here with shaky, dangerous ladders. As they move through the program and continue their journey, their ladders become sturdier and are more strategically placed.

I am continuously learning from the students at the Orthogenic School, and this semester in Literary Magazine has been no exception. The students have challenged themselves in new ways with amazing results. Students who didn’t think they were artists have produced amazing work. Students who didn’t think they were writers have created images with their words. More impressive than that, they have worked in collaboration and created new rungs on our ladder to better and more professional publications. They inspire Michelle and I to face new challenges and take new steps, and we are sure that they will inspire you as well.

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dreams

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The beach was as still as stone, but the sea roared violently. I was walking along a path in the dark, the summer moonlight my only guide. Houses with a strange art deco look lined the inland side of the trail, and I wondered how anyone taller than 2'9" could fit inside them. I followed the path for what seemed like hours, but the moon never moved. The path led into a neighborhood I knew well, but I couldn't seem to reach it.

I woke up to the sound of my alarm, but I didn't get out of bed for a moment as the dream ran through my head. I was on a very tight schedule and I really needed to get going if I wanted to make it to school on time, but I knew if I didn't do something soon I would completely forget the dream, so I sketched out a map of the beach I had seen in my dream. I felt a very strong sense of deja vu, like I walked that trail every day. The neighborhood I saw was part of my town, but there is no beach in my town. What was stranger was that I had even had a dream; normally I only have a nightmare every couple years.

The next night as I lay in bed, my imagination ran wild with thoughts of what I might dream tonight. Would I get to see the beach again? Would I get to walk farther down the path?

I woke up in the morning straining my brain trying to remember any dreams I had had, but was disappointed when I realized I was unable to. This was a little frustrating; the dream had seemed somehow very significant to me. Another three weeks passed like this, and I had since dismissed the dream as a singular event.

I walked through a neighborhood I was very familiar with. The houses were all new and big. Evergreen trees lined the street in a uniform pattern. It was snowing like I had never seen before; the wind was so strong, the snow didn't settle on the ground, but instead stayed in the air. It created what almost seemed like a thick fog; you could only see twenty feet in any direction. The sky seemed overcast, although it was nearly impossible to tell. I followed the sidewalk not knowing where I was heading until I reached my old middle school. The front door was open and I was freezing, so I didn't think twice about going inside. I seemed to have entered a different world when I stepped through the doorway. Everything was warm and quiet. There were halls branching off in every direction from the lobby I had just entered. I walked down the hall to my left. It was lined with blue lockers that were as tall as I probably had been back then. The school was a little different than I remembered it, but maybe I was just now noticing how odd it was for the school to be dead silent and empty. As I walked down the hallway, it seemed to go on forever.

When I realized I was awake and in my bed, I became frustrated. I wished I could have spent more time in the dream. During school that day I mapped out the neighborhood from the new dream and stapled it to my other drawing so they were parts of a single map. I seriously doubted whether my luck would last and I would have yet another dream in this twisted version of my town.

Three months went by without any dreams. I had all but forgotten about them when I ran across my old sketches. They inspired me to go out and by a bottle of Melatonin, an OTC sleep aid that is
supposed to help you recall dreams. The first night I took it, I drifted comfortably off to sleep.

I found myself in an underpass I occasionally pass through, and I seemed to recall the exact path I took from my house to get there. The first thing I noticed was the airy noise of cars overhead. The noise reverberated in the roughly fifty-yard tall and one hundred yard wide amphitheater. I walked along the concrete flooring that was different from how I remembered it. I dragged my hand along the obsidian black railings, that also ran across the ceiling. While I pondered the practicality of this, I ventured out of the underpass along a path. I discovered a bright spring day waiting for me outside the dark, damp underpass. I knew exactly where I was- Spring Rock Park. I was only two blocks from my house. I walked along the path on my way home, and noticed what must have been a newly constructed red brick wall. I ran my hand along the ridges in it and stared into the blinding sky, slipping further and further into consciousness.

Like the last time, I was horribly disappointed when I woke up to my alarm. I rolled out of bed and went to school. I took every chance I got to sketch out what I had seen. During my English class my friend Peter looked over my shoulder.

“What are you drawing?” Peter asked.
"A dream I had last night," I answered. After a brief unknowing stare I explained my dream to him.

"But who was in it?" he asked.
The question took me off guard. "Nobody," I said. "I was alone."
"That's weird," he said. "I've never had a dream that didn't have any other people in it."

I had never thought about that before. It was on my mind the rest of the day. Why was no one in my dream? Who should be in my dream? Should I be meeting people instead of exploring my always twisted surroundings? As I got ready for bed I took my Melatonin again. I lay awake for a long time thinking about my dreams before falling asleep.

A golden-yellow leaf fell to the street in front of me. I was on my own block, only a few houses down from home. It was a windy, overcast, autumn day. I decided to go home. My parents should be home by now, and I was really starting to feel lonely in this town of mine. As I walked, I listened to the crisp sound of leaves under my feet over the white noise the wind provided. My house looked exactly like it did twelve years ago, when we moved in. The grass was greener, the paint was fresher, but somehow nothing seemed quite settled. I walked inside and into the kitchen, but was surprised to find no one there. I called out to see if anyone was home, but the house was silent. In the back of my head I knew it was pointless but I felt compelled to search every room of the house. When I was finally satisfied that no one was home, I sat down on the couch. I felt a strong sense of nostalgia with the house the way it was, like looking through a photo album. But it became more painful than that quickly, and I began to feel very alone. As I recalled old memories I heard the cry of my alarm.

I went to school on autopilot thinking of my dream like usual. This was the first dream that was decidedly unpleasant. The intensity of my feelings of loneliness almost made the dream feel like a nightmare pretending to be a pleasant dream. I then realized all of my dreams had been like that in actuality. I shuddered as I thought of it. I knew if I had another dream the feeling would just get stronger.

Since then I’ve thrown away all of my drawings. I stopped taking Melatonin. I haven’t remembered any dream since then, and I think I’m happier that way.
Dreams, Dreams
those mystical muses

Ring, Ring
those devious duos

Dreams, Dreams
those pipe dreams

Ping, Ping
those mystical mages

Dreams, Dreams
these explicit envisages

Ring, Ring
these hideous hallucino-gens

Dreams, Dreams
these pipe dreams
A small village stood on the top of a hill, its ominous doors and windows obscured by a thick black fog. Out of this fog came a man, running down the street of the village, screaming. He ran to a door, banging on it desperately. No reply came. The house was empty. The man looked behind him. Out of the deadly silence came a high-pitched shriek that echoed through the man’s mind. It seemed almost to be speaking to the man, but was too high and moaning to understand. It rattled the windows and sent the man scrambling faster down the lane.

He went to another door, rattling the doorknob and kicking the door. Another moan came from the fog. Panic overcoming him, he ran and jumped through the cottage’s front window. The house was also empty, devoid of furniture and residents. From outside the window came the shriek again, breaking the silence of night. The man ran frantically ran around the house, searching for something to block the window or attack his pursuer with, but nothing was in the house at all. He ran from room to room, closet to closet, finding only moths and cockroaches swarming in the dark. Suddenly a loud bang reverberated through the bare hallways. His pursuer was at the door.

The man ran down a hallway that seemed to stretch for an eternity. From the black of the hall behind him, a faint glow came. Suddenly, the man ran into a wall. Realizing it was a dead end, he groped in the dark for a doorknob, something to allow him to continue. The glow grew stronger. His hands passed over the handle of some sort of weapon. Hope glinted in the man’s eyes as he touched the candlestick, its blunt edge perfect for his defense. Raising it over his head, he waited to kill his attacker.

The glow from the hallway grew stronger. In the distance, a human silhouette became nearly clear against the white light, the glow partially going through its body. It was female, with piercing blue eyes and long blond hair. Her eyes were almost on fire and seemed to bore into the man’s soul. She stared at him, unblinkingly, as she approached. The man crouched into a corner, knowing that the element of surprise was beyond him. She grew closer, her features slowly becoming clearer. A deep cut ran across her cheek, making her teeth visible through her face. Blood trickled from her head to the floor, staining her white dress and leaving a glistening trail behind her.

Suddenly she stopped, a few feet from the man. Her face showed unimaginable abuse, deep wounds on top of other freshly healed ones. She stared straight at the man who crouched in the corner. Unable to contain himself anymore, the man lunged forward, the candlestick flying in a controlled arc over his head. The woman quickly grabbed his arm, causing the candlestick to fall forward into her head. This seemed only to make her more enraged, and grabbing his other arm she pulled the man very close to her. She shrieked again, the high-pitched wail causing the walls around them to collapse into darkness. The man screamed, and, closing his eyes, he awaited his doom.

When he opened his eyes again, he was in a comfortable bed. The large curtains hanging from the top of the four-poster frame enveloped his mattress and shielded it from the morning sun slowly coming in through the window. The man got up slowly and looked at the room around him. It looked like his. It must have been another nightmare, he thought slowly as his mind began to reconnect with reality. Stretching, the man got up and trudged into the bathroom to wash up and prepare for the day.

As he shaved, he looked into the mirror to examine his face. Out of the corner of his eye he saw two small blue eyes staring at him from behind. Whirling around, he looked around the bathroom to try to spot any sort of person or thing that may be watching him. Nothing was there. No one was in the bathroom except for him. Shaking his head, he washed the shaving cream off of his face and took a shower.

After he had gotten dressed, the man went downstairs alone. As he poured a fresh cup of cof-
fee and slowly sipped it, his groggy mind came into focus. He suddenly wondered where his wife was. Going back upstairs to his bedroom, he looked to the bed. It was empty. He ran back downstairs to the living room. A note was taped to the front door. It said plainly:
Edward:
I’ve gone shopping for the day. I’ll be back by seven.
P.S. You were tossing and turning a lot last night. Perhaps you should see a doctor.
Edward stared blankly at the note. She had been shopping a lot lately. Why did she never take him with her? What could she be shopping for that he didn’t need to be around for? He didn’t understand it, but he was determined to find out. Getting his coat from the front closet, he walked out to the front door and into the garage. Putting the keys into the ignition, he slowly drove out of the driveway and onto the street.

The mall was not far away, and it wasn’t long until he had pulled into the parking lot and walked into the front doors of the complex. Walking slowly down the marble pathways crowded with shoppers rushing to and from various boutiques, he searched the crowd for his wife. Looking, he spotted her inside of a shop. Her long blond hair was tied in an elaborate bun; she was covered in the expensive jewelry Edward had bought her. She didn’t notice him as she casually browsed through the shop’s various wares. She seemed to be waiting for something. Edward slowly moved closer to investigate.

Just as he was about to break through the crowd and approach her, another man appeared from the back of the store. Her face breaking into a smile, she reached over the counter and passionately kissed the man. Edward was shocked. He didn’t know what to do.

The man and Edward’s wife reached across the counter and held each other’s hands, walking to the back of the shop. Edward began to cry. He walked from the mall and back to his car. His life as he wanted it was now over.

As he was driving home, he slowly thought over what he had just seen. His wife was cheating on him! What was Edward worth to her? All the things he had bought her, the affection he had showered on her with gifts and love from the day he first met her at Cambridge – did they mean nothing? He watched the road, his mind suddenly blank. He didn’t know what to think anymore. He didn’t know what to feel anymore. He turned onto the street of the subdivision. Invisible blue eyes watched him from the windows of the houses he drove past.

As he turned back onto the driveway of his house, a white figure suddenly jumped in front of the car from nowhere, smacking against the front bumper and leaving a trail of blood as it flew over the windshield. He immediately hit the brakes and jumped out of the car, running around to see what he had hit. Nothing was there. Confused, he ran back to the car to find the windshield spotlessly clean. Fear overtook him and he ran into the house screaming. Blue eyes watched him from the car windows. Running upstairs he jumped into his bed and flew under the covers. Praying that the apparition would stop bothering him, he began to rock uncontrollably. He heard a banging at the door. He began to scream, his piercing voice echoing about the suddenly smaller room. Several men ran in from the door, tying him to his bed. He began to struggle as another man wearing a white coat came in, carrying a syringe filled with a green liquid.

A woman watched from the mirrored window outside the man’s room, her piercing blue eyes watching him. She placed her hand on her face to rub the scratch on her cheek the man had given her the previous week. Another man came up in a white trench coat and said, “What is his diagnosis?”

“It appears that his murder of his wife and her lover has induced a post-traumatic stress disorder. The subject has been hallucinating and believes that I am some sort of ghost who has come to kill him for his deeds. He refuses to talk, but instead screams and runs into the opposite corner of the room. It is necessary to sedate him on a regular basis for his own safety.”

“Any chance that he may recover?”

“I don’t know,” the woman said again, her eyes watching Edward as he gradually began to stop writhing and lay on the bed somewhat unconscious. “I just don’t know.”
The man stared blankly ahead as a woman pushed his wheelchair alongside the littered highway. He was barely holding on to a bright red balloon, as if it was his only lifeline. He was slumped over, barely keeping his bloodshot, watery, green eyes open. Onlookers either shouted obscenities out their windows or frowned and kept on driving.

It is three in the morning. I fling myself out of bed and take a gasp of air. This haunting feeling floods my mind. I can't remember the last time I got a good night’s sleep. I need to get up. It’s already six.

“Sam?” I call, wondering where my sister could have gone. “Sam!” Anger starts building up in my stomach and spreads throughout my body down through my toes. “Sam?” I shout. She’s gone. I know this feeling. I’m alone for eternity.
I start looking all over the house and she’s nowhere to be found. The house is empty; I can hear my footsteps echo off the hardwood floors.

I head over to the kitchen and it is oddly clean. I see myself in the shiny marble counters. They are gleaming and the sun reflects off of them. I am a pale image; I can almost see my body fading away. This gives me a sense of haunting…. uncertainty. Who has seen their reflection here before me? This desolate emptiness fills me. I feel as if I am still in a dream.

I go into the living room and sit down on the worn leather couch. I pick up a picture of my mother. It is dusty and the glass is cracked. It seems like it gets dustier every day as the years pass since she has been gone. She was so beautiful. In a disastrous way she used to keep herself together. I can remember back a thousand years ago, like it was yesterday. She used to hold me, with her long brown curly hair blowing all around. She never wore makeup, but she never needed to. Her beauty penetrated through the expectations of society. No one dared to criticize her. Everyone says I look like her, but I don’t believe it. I think that they are just trying to flatter me.

I do this often, here recalling old memories in the crevasses of my mangled brain; it makes me feel closer to her, though it is impossible. She was so distant when she was alive and when she died it was as if I felt closer to her. When she died she wasn’t sane, but what is sane? Are we sane? Is anyone sane? People that just glance at the situation will say “It was the drugs.” They don’t know; no one knows, not even me.

The clock is melting off the wall. The numbers are dripping onto the Venetian Drapes, and then sizzling on the hardwood floor and eventually burning holes into it. I am very much alive in this terrible nightmare called life. I step outside, onto my front porch and nearly fall off onto the highway screaming with car horns. Onlookers either shout obscenities out their windows or frown and keep on driving. I see the man in the wheelchair holding the red balloon, his one lifeline. He lets go of it; I see it float slowly into the air over the highway polluted with nightmares and bad thoughts, brutal deaths and suicides. As he lets go, I fall endlessly, never reaching the asphalt of the littered highway.
Dreams are unusual. Things happen that no one, sometimes not even the dreamer, can explain. Sometimes people will say that dreams mean something, but if that’s true, then what’s going on in my life? I have the most unbelievable dreams, and if my dreams mean something, my life must have a very strange destiny.

One of the dreams that I can most clearly recall is based on an event that happened a few years ago and reoccurred in my dreams, or more appropriately, my nightmares for months and even now still occurs every so often. In this dream, I’m sitting at home, except it doesn’t feel like my home, it’s dark, cold, and I’m alone. I try to cry out for someone, something, to help me get out of the darkness. I’m in pain, not physical pain, but mental and emotional pain. I want to slip away from the world; I want the pain to go away. I cry out again, but no one can hear my cries. My mind starts to fill up with anger and hurt, seeing people around me, taunting me, but no one is there to help me. I think of all the pain I’ve gone through, and want it to all go away. I want my mother to come and comfort me, but she can’t
My Dreams are My

hear me crying for her. Then everything is gone. I’m alone again, sitting in the darkness and the cold, shivering because I’m scared. I sit there for what feels like an eternity, but is really only a few minutes. Suddenly I’m being screamed at over and over again, tears streaming down my face leaving what feels will be permanent marks on my face. I’m sitting there crying and all I can hear is laughter.

That’s where I wake up. The laughter is always still in my mind, and real tears are always running down my face when my eyes open from this terrible nightmare. Ever since the first time I’ve had this dream, I’ve always wondered what it means. Every detail, every second, I’ve always wondered if it all had some sort of meaning in my life when I’m awake.

I recently went to the website dreammoods.com, a website that tells the meanings of events that happen in your dreams, to see what my dream means. I was curious as to see what events in my dream were actually happening during my waking life during the times I had these dreams. I picked out a few major words from my dream to analyze what they mean. The words I chose were alone, scared, hurt, darkness, cold, and cry.

To have a dream where you are alone signifies that you yourself are feeling rejected and may also be feeling that no one around you understands you. It was odd to learn this, because I do feel sometimes like no one understands me, most of all my parents. I think that it is not a coincidence that this occurred in my dream. I do not believe that any of these events were a coincidence in my dream, but this specific one was the one that most interested me based on similarities to the meaning and what is going on in my life.

If in your dream you are scared, you are experiencing feelings of incompetence and self-doubt. You may also be feeling a total lack of control. When I first experienced this dream, I did feel like I was out of control.

In a dream if you are hurt, whether physically or emotionally, it means that you may have wounded emotions or feelings in your waking life. I was feeling unloved and completely uncared for. And this caused me to become even more upset. It is no surprise that this came up in my dream.

If darkness comes upon you and you become lost this denotes feelings of desperation, depression, or insecurity. During most of my life I have been severely depressed and have done things out of sheer desperation to be acknowledged. I would do some of the stupidest things just so I could either feel better or get some attention from my parents and others. I was definitely depressed.

Feeling cold in a dream often indicates that you may be feeling isolated. Throughout much of my life, I have purposely isolated myself and left myself alone. I used to blame others for my being alone, until I realized that I myself was pushing people away so that I would be alone. I never understood why I would do that, and even now I still wonder.

That last event on my list is crying. To cry out and have no one hear you or respond to you usually represents your helplessness and difficulties in trying to communicate with others. This is very true for me. Sometimes when I try to talk with my parents, or even occasionally my friends, I feel as though I’m being ignored and as if no one understands what I’m saying. I get very upset and frustrated when I’m trying to express how I’m feeling, but no one seems to hear me.

I had wondered for so long about what my dream means, and now that I know, maybe it could even help me through some of the difficulties I’m going through. Seeing what these different events in my dream signify is very important in helping me to change who I once was and to help me become a new, improved, and happy me, and hopefully now I can determine what my other dreams mean and see if I’m changing.
The Color of Dark - Written by Shelby, Artwork by Ryan
Sunset - Written by Ryan, Artwork by John
Soleil - Written by Lizzy, Artwork by Ryan
Untitled - Written by John, Artwork by Shelby
The Blue Ball - Written by Julie, Artwork by Julie
Being a privileged person, I am able to walk, talk and see everything. I notice the color of summer and the bright green leaves comfortably placed among tall trees swaying in the warm breeze. I notice the color of the city at night, the yellow dimly lit windows of skyscrapers and the faint blue of the lake that touches the horizon. Although I have to wear contact lenses, my eyesight is easily corrected. Without them, the world is very different. Light looks dark and faces look blank. Colors warp together and the floor doesn’t separate itself from the ceiling. Reds and pinks look the same from afar and I cannot tell what shape I am looking at.

When I was in the first grade, the chalkboard started to look a little blurry, so I had to get glasses. I was really embarrassed to wear them and the kids did the typical, oh so original “Ha Ha you have four eyes” insult. I wasn’t very happy about that so I didn’t wear my glasses. Life went on and in second grade I realized that you needed to wear glasses to see. I also realized that you could purchase cooler frames and spice up your look.

My eyes got worse and I got contacts in third grade. I had to take a few trips to the optometrist before I got the hang of sticking my finger in my eye just the right way so that the magic lens would
suction on to my eyeball and stay there for “all day hydrating comfort!” I still wear contacts today. If they perfect laser eye surgery, that may be an option. I am legally blind. When I got contacts, people saw me differently. They saw me like less of a nerd. My friends said I looked older, I just thought it was funny that one little thing could make more people pay attention to me.

A few days ago while heading home on a Friday afternoon, I was walking to the gate of my train and I saw a blind man. I was looking at him and I didn’t want to be rude and stare, but I remembered that of course he couldn’t see me. He was alone and he was obviously trying to get somewhere, maybe onto his train. He was tapping the ground with his cane to search for any interruptions and, being in a train station’s boarding gate, there were many people and noises. I was just thinking to myself how hard it must be to have a cane as your only tool to serve as prosthetic eyes.

What really struck me about this man is that when he bumped into anyone he would apologize or excuse himself. He was very polite and people were so caring around him. I could tell he was very kind just by seeing him for the few moments I did. He wasn’t angry that he couldn’t see, he didn’t yell if anything got in his way.

In a way blind people are omniscient. They see things that people with eyesight can’t. Blindness can allow you to see an individual for their personality and not for what their outer appearance is.

I know people with eyesight can see outer appearance. They can judge how attractive one is and become very intolerant and dissatisfied through what they see. I can see and I can say that I have seen the bad side of the human race. I know I don’t always look for the good in everybody. In a way, I feel that blindness may be the ultimate vision.
lying alone in the yellowing grass

gazing at the distant dusk in fall

yellows and oranges watercolor the sky

horizon swallowing the sun

and it is night
Her golden locks remind me of sunshine, silky, smooth, short, and wavy flows her hair.
Eyes like glimmering amber, sparkle and shine when early morning light first hits them.
Dainty, graceful feet allow her to step at quite an intense speed, always moving.
The cutest ears I have ever seen are upon her head. Soft, expressive ears are hers.
Expressive are her brows, dancing on her face, showing off to all, her every mood.
Never before have I seen such a nose, always so wet, her comprehending nose.
She is my Soliel, so soft, and so sweet, never such as she, a canine I did meet.
The luminous glow of the sun through the leaves,  
That clung to the branches of the sprawling trees,  
    Cast an animated tint on the forest floor,  
    The radiance of which was a consuming roar.

    The synaesthesia of light and sound,  
    As crisp autumn leaves touch the ground,  
    Was a prismatic kaleidoscope of sepia color,  
    Though in this season it had lost its pallor.

    I enjoy the peacefulness of the woods  
    Along a twisted trail I stood,  
    I view the trees of summer and fall,  
    Among the trees that stand so very tall
“Gimme the ball!” the little blue fox yelled.
“No way! It’s my ball now!” the red raccoon replied, hugging the ball to his chest.
“But the ball is blue, which means it’s mine!” The fox began to cry. Anything blue belonged to her, and anything red belonged to the raccoon.
“No! My ball! My ball!” the little raccoon cried as he bounded away into the forest.
“Oh no! Rylie stole my ball!” cried Christine the Fox, as she ran after Rylie the Raccoon.
Rylie the Raccoon couldn’t see where he was going. All he could see was the little blue ball he had taken from Christine the Fox, his best friend in the whole world. Christine had hurt his feelings, so because he was so mad at her, he had taken her favorite blue ball. He knew he cared about her, but he didn’t want to show it. Right now though he was alone and scared, and wanted her there with him.

Christine was so sad. She had not only lost her ball, but she had lost her best friend as well. She knew she had been mean, and she was really very sorry. She could barely see where she was going, but she had to find Rylie. It was long past the time they were supposed to be home, but she couldn’t leave without finding Rylie first, even though it was very dark, and she could hear the owls hooting off in the distance, which scared her very much. He was like her brother, and she would do anything to find him before it was too late to be out all alone.
“Where am I” Rylie cried into the blackness of the night. “Where is Christine? I’m alone and scared! I never should have taken her ball and run off!” Every little noise around him made him jump. There were the sounds the owls made when they were out hunting for their breakfast, and the frogs hopped through the leaves making crunching noises that chilled him to the bones. He was so lonely.

“I wish I hadn’t been so mean to her! She hurt my feelings, but I should have talked to her about it, instead of just being so mean! I wish she was here right now!” Suddenly out of the corner of his eye, he saw a streak of blue rush past him. He cried out with joy, “Blue!”

Christine heard him and stopped in her tracks. “Blue!” she cried out in response. It was very dark and she could barely see, but she knew Rylie was there somewhere. She looked and looked but couldn’t see him. Then she realized that she could hear him, so once again she called out, “Blue!” She waited for a response, and when she heard it, she stepped towards the sound.
Rylie could hear Christine calling to him, and pretty soon he figured out what she was trying to do.

“What a great idea!” Rylie thought to himself, and began to do the same. Pretty soon they were close enough to see each other, and for the last time they called out, “Blue!”

Then they ran for each other and hugged, because they had finally found each other.
As they were walking home, Rylie turned to Christine and said, 
“I’m really sorry I was so mean and took your favorite blue ball.”
“You shouldn’t be sorry,” Christine replied. “I should be sorry because I hurt 
your feelings, and I am.”
“Well, I should have talked to you instead of just being mean and holding a 
grudge. Friends are supposed to be able to talk to each other, right?”
“Yeah, I guess so. Friends again?”
“Best friends.”
Rylie and Christine walked the rest of the way home happy that they had 
worked things out. And as they walked out of the forest, everything seemed differ- 
ent, as though nothing in the world could scare them. Not the owls, not the dark, 
and definitely not the frogs hopping around.

The End
Eidetic Memory - Written by John, Photo by Jeanne
Memories of Love and Life - Written by Julie, Artwork by Shelby
The Ages Old Tale of Sir Memor & His Illustrious Mind - Written by Ryan,
Artwork by Shelby
Old Man Withers - Written by Shelby, Artwork by Julie
Clean Slate - Written by Jerry, Artwork by Julie
A memory: a faded, black and white still shot discarded somewhere in the bottom of the old cardboard-box that is your hippocampus. Some are lost because a part of us doesn’t care anymore, and some we have framed and think of always. Some are focused on the smallest detail, while what’s important is blurred in the background, but sometimes you are amazed at how you can fit so much more than seems possible in 8X6 inches, so much more than you can put into words.

We all form memories with our senses. There’s the frequently heard about eidetic memory which I have in a way; I have always thought of my memory as a camera. I remember people and events as a bunch of small details, and not any of the feelings or meaning people usually attach to them. I remember exact quotes from my grandmother’s funeral when I was 7 or 8, things said word for word, but I can’t remember how I felt.

I especially remember sound for some reason. I vividly remember things I heard at my first concert when I was 10. I remember specific lyrics and melodies exactly the way they were, in exactly the key they were in. I remember the people sitting in the row in front of us exactly as they were, and that they cheered especially loud when a spoken word version of “The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe was performed. But until recently I had to be reminded it was Lou Reed we saw. I also forget whether I liked or disliked it in the least bit. For all I know I could have been completely bored for the entire time.

Obviously what I remember is significantly different from those around me. Other people tend to see the “big picture” and forget the small details. To continue with the example of my first concert experience, my parents, who took me, have no recollection of what songs were played or even whether he sounded good or bad; but they do remember that they had fun at the concert, which is more than I can say.

I’ve come to realize that in actuality my memory is horrible. When you take a picture one of the most important things to do is to know what is important in your picture, and to keep that centered and more importantly in frame. If you can’t do that you’re just left with a photograph, and nothing more.
I once thought that
love and life
Would be memories
to always gaze back upon
But now as I gaze upon
my life I see
Nothing but
loathing and lust
Abandonment and sorrows
Filled my memories
But now that my mind is lucid
Maybe new memories can form
Form like the life of a caterpillar
Emerging from its cocoon
Turning into a beautiful butterfly
Maybe just like me
Memories of desire and vivacity
Of giddiness not misery
Of days and nights of laughter
Not crying in the dark
And wrath be gone from sight
I once thought that
love and life
Would be memories
to always look back upon
And now I see that could be Absolutely true
Every day since I can remember,
in any weather
Old Man Withers would chase any kid
that stepped one toe one onto his lawn.
He’d keep all bright bouncy balls
He’d keep all trinkets,
He’d keep all toys and yell at kids to
“STAY AWAY!”
Nobody bothered to say “hello,” or wish him a good day.
Old Man Withers is sad and lonely.
You see, he wasn’t always this way.
He used say “hello” and wish everybody a good day.
No one in the whole neighborhood speaks of those times,
or of that sad, tragic day.
I’ll let you in on a secret.
Promise not to tell? OK.
Old Man Withers once had a son.
That boy sure made him smile.
One day he didn’t return home
Old Man Withers cried for a long, long while.
You see, that night when Old Man Withers son disappeared,
turned him cold and rough.
He looked and looked and looked some more,
but soon grew real sore.
He grieved and cried and grieved some more,
his son still never showed.
After that day Old Man Withers grew cold and old.
He grew mad.
He grew grey.
He hated the birds.
He hated the bees.
He hated the trees.
He even hated you and me.
He missed his son and wanted him back.
He knew wishing couldn’t help.
Little Stevie was gone.
One day, Old Man Withers looked in the mirror. He was getting older and greyer by the hour. He missed the birds. He missed the bees. He missed the trees. He even missed you and me. He wanted to feel cheer. He could tell that his time was near. People weren’t so bad. He put on his hat. He buttoned his coat. He walked outside. He declared “Life is too short, and I am quite old and I want to feel cheer!” So around the neighborhood he marched, saying “hello” and wishing everyone a good day. He said “sorry” for all the times he acted so grey. He wanted to feel cheer.

That day he did. Just like any man should, who has been so old and been so cold and has been so grey. Old Man Withers came around to every house bearing a huge bag full of trinkets, full of toys and full of thingamawupps For all the girls and boys. He returned the items to each rightful owner and said, “Please feel cheer and have a good year. I wish you all a good day.” After that day, The Old Man disappeared. He still remains in our hearts and now everyone has wonderful days.
Once upon a time in a far away land there lived an old knight named Memor. He lived in an enormous castle, filled with all sorts of wondrous things. Memor was very old and did not fight in the wars like he once did, and he often forgot who he was or where he lived. The servants of the castle always helped him remember things. However, he really did not like them. They refused to let him leave under orders from the King. One day, he decided to run away from them and live on his own.

He planned the perfect scheme, both in his mind and on paper. He would sneak out of the castle by nightfall through the big front gate. Then, he would go down to the local village and borrow a horse from his old friend Helena, who lived just west of the village square. After that, he and his horse would ride as far away as they could and live in another castle owned by his cousin, the Duke of Grandshire. After writing the plan down, for Memor knew he would forget it, he put the paper with the plans on it somewhere hidden. Then, he waited for the perfect chance to run away. It was great in his own mind. Nothing could go wrong at all.

One night, the servants of the castle left the front gate open. Memor saw his chance. He rushed out of his bedroom, down the stairs, across the garden, past his surprised servants, and out across the drawbridge into the night.

As Memor ran off, he forgot that his shoes were still sitting by his bed in the castle. He suddenly stopped and turned around to get them back. As he walked towards the castle again, he heard the yells
of his servants looking for him. Hearing them, he remembered that he was supposed to be running away from the castle, not towards it. He turned around again.

Memor wandered down to the village. He looked around from house to house as he struggled to remember where it was his friend Helena lived. He finally came to a house and knocked on the door. A girl answered.

“Are you fair Helena?” Memor asked.
“No,” the girl responded. “Who are you?”
“Sir Memor, and I wish to see the lady Helena,” Memor said.
“Sorry, she doesn’t live here,” the girl responded politely and closed the door.

Memor continued wandering on until he eventually reached the village square. He searched and found Helena’s home. Knocking on the door, he was greeted by Helena and invited inside her home. “So what brings you to my home at such an hour?” Helena asked.

“I don’t remember,” said Memor, shaking his head vigorously. He thought very hard. He knew he had forgotten something. Suddenly it came to him. The paper! The paper! He had forgotten the paper! Memor groaned. He sat in Helena’s kitchen while Helena herself made a hot meal for the both of them.

“Thanks, Grondo,” Memor said gratefully between bites of porridge.
“My name’s Helena,” she smartly replied.
“I’m sorry,” Memor said. “I forgot.”

As he ate, his mind slowly recovered. He remembered why he had come to Helena’s home. “I need a horse,” he said.
“Right away, Sir Memor,” Helena said.
Helena went to the stables and fetched a horse. Getting onto the horse, Memor wished Helena farewell and rode off into the night.

As Memor rode past the sleeping village’s gates, he came across another problem – he forgot where he was going! He cursed having forgotten the paper. However, he kept going into the forest, his horse beneath him.

No one saw Memor again. Some say he still rides around in the forest, trying to remember where he was going. Others say he remember where he was going, went there, and lives there to this day. But who can say for sure?
What are memories? Memories are what make up our self, our history, and even our civilization if you think about it. Memories are what form our specific personality in this world, whether the personality is negative or positive. When a baby is conceived it is free of a personality until it begins to take in what is going on around it. For that matter it is free of memories until its brain forms enough to process what is going on around the mother and her womb. As soon as the baby is able to recall what happened a matter of seconds ago, or even able to learn for experiences it is already beginning to form its personality based upon its long term memories.

According to John Locke’s theory a baby is born with a clean slate and it has complete innocence. When weighing his theory against other theories about child birth, I find his theory the most intriguing, and I agree with it more than I do with the others. In my opinion I find Locke’s theory very agreeable. Locke’s theory is one of the few that I find I am able to relate to and understand, and for that matter that makes sense to me. It brings me back to my limited memory of childhood.
From the time I was born to the age of three or four, it seems I have no recall of life, or any limited memories for that matter. The only memories that I can seem to recall with some partial vividness are those that are near death experiences. Only a few months ago one occurred, bringing me to my knees, literally.

It was back in July, towards the end of my stay at the boot camp my parents had so brutally thrown me into. I had earned it, running with the group was all I knew of for the moment. I knew that if I was to make it out of that hell hole, I would have to do everything they asked of me, no matter how hard or impossible it was, even if it meant long group runs. If I stopped running, and gave in to the physical pain that was gnawing at me, then the whole group would get punished, and I didn’t want to be selfish.

It was at about 3,400 feet that we had to do our group run. We were in the mountains of Georgia. Now, a year or so back I had gotten diagnosed as being an asthmatic, but I had long forgotten this, for I had been a couch potato. My mind wandered as I tried to think of something to keep my mind off the pain in my lungs and tendons. The only thing I could seem to keep a hold of was the reoccurring thought of home that was faded and unfamiliar in my mind. I didn’t want to think of home. Not until I was on my way home. All that the thought of home did to me was make me want to give up and cry, that’s all. I ran for what I hoped would be the last time in my life as I supposedly had only two days of camp left before my parents came to pick me up.

It seemed as if with each thrust of my legs my lungs tightened and my throat closed. In the fight between my mind and my body, my body was winning and it was shutting down my brain. I told myself that it was over, that the fight was over, that life was over as my vision continued to blur and dissipate. One of the other guys, Tommy, who was one of the few kids that actually saw me for who I was, passed me up and shouted some words of encouragement to keep up. I was now at the end of the pack.

My mind finally gave in to the physical pain and started its shutdown process as I fell to my knees and struggled to stay on my hands as my arms attempted to sabotage me and give out. I couldn’t breathe whatsoever, and hoped Tommy would get one of the counselors for help. Tommy noticed in good time and got counselor Dave’s attention. Dave asked what the problem was, and having the relationship we did, I rasped “What the #\%^$ do you think is wrong, I can’t breathe, I am having a G-Dang Asthma attack.” Dave told me do something and said something about it helping to get my breathing back to normal relatively soon. Then he asked if I needed to go to the hospital. Almost immediately I refused. I had no intention of staying at this camp longer than I was required to. After all I would be okay.
Ambrose Eyes - Writing by Jerry, Art By Ryan
The Town Crier’s Insight - Writing by Shelby, Art by Julie
His Blue Eyes - Writing by Julie, Art by Lizzy
Neighborhood - Writing by Ryan, Art by Shelby
Joe’s Morning - Writing by John, Art by Ryan
Rex, Bonnie & RoboTobo - Written and Illustrated by Alicia
Dim lights flickered on behind the liquid screen as Sergeant Ambrose booted the lever. The screen rapidly changed from its clear state to black with green lettering.


A wave of jet black antennas bolted up as the brood stood at attention. “Today….has been a great day in history. Your lives will be forever enlightened, and oh so glorious from this day forward!”

A roar of approval swept across the inner chamber and to the outer as well. “Never before have we been gifted with the grace of Anathema! Today he has granted us a new source of life! Of energy! Of hope! Today is the day we will show our enemies what we are capable of! We shall conquer them!”

Ambrose listened to his audience, as the roar of the wings of the airborne became one massive hum.

He watched his sons and daughters as they became one, danced gracefully in the air as one, breathed as one, and sang their approval as one. Ambrose waved his antennas in annoyance at the interruption.

“Silence!” he demanded with a wave of his leg.

“Anathema our savior, God, hero, father, and ancestor has given us power far beyond that of past and present broods in history. He has blessed us with his very own fruits and leaves from his personal trees! He has given us what we have craved and desired to have for years…today! These fruits from these trees have enchanting effects on those who ingest them. Some of those lucky enough to eat from Anathema’s fruits have the strength of a whole battalion of ants! This is the day that we shall be remembered for who we really are. This is the day that those who are loyal and faithful shall prevail! This is the day we shall finally taste the blood of our enemies and feast upon their children! Brood Exile shall feel the wrath of Anathema today! To victory!”

At this, the brood swarmed the air and dirt around the stage with feverent passion for their leader’s speech and promise.

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Shadil glared down at the massive black ranks that lay below in anticipation of the uprising that awaited. This was a reminder of his past to him. As he weaved between the grasses while he flew, he recalled his days in the ground units. He had slaughtered his enemies to reach the rank he was at now, and smiled to himself for his achievement. He had come so far. He had started as a lowly GU grunt and was now a high ranked Air Unit commander. He tilted his head slightly to view his men as they snaked through the brown wilting dandelions. They were one flying black mass. There were about eighty thousand of them, and an estimated thirty four thousand in his command. That was only a portion of Brood Exile’s strength.

***
An incessant tremble in the cracked earth persisted as the army of Ambrose moved to the northeast. The whirring of wings prevailed over the GU’s rumble of footfall on the parched soil and created a sound so fierce that not even the strongest of enemies could deny the strength and size of the brood. From the distance, Ambrose’s Brood 103 looked like an intimidating black rain cloud as they flew as one. The sound of their gathering had awakened something, as the sun was temporarily blocked out. It flew crazed into the heart of the AU forces, beak opened hungrily. Forces scattered like fallen leaves as the sparrow darted amongst them snatching off the unfortunate victims’ limbs. The black mass dived as one to the ground as the sparrow came back for another sweep. The AU forces were split into three separate groups as the bird did a barrel roll and picked off a few of them. It snapped its beak on the struggling ants; they stopped struggling and then slid into its mouth with a tilt of its head. Two of the AU forces regrouped and held their ground as the bird came around again. They stood their ground until the last second, and then flew at the sparrows head. They latched on
with such viciousness that some of them even drew blood with their huge pincers as they ripped at feather and flesh. The bird tried to shake the ants off, but they just held their ground and became even more aggressive as they ripped at its eyes. It dove straight towards the ground as it could not see out of its soon to be empty sockets. At this, the ants that were still attacking the bird released their grip and fell into rank. They watched as the bird plummeted towards a sharp briar bush and cheered as it was gruesomely impaled by the razor sharp thorns. Its struggle to get out was short-lived as it soon went limp and its eyes clouded over. This was only the beginning of war.

***

Each of the two brood’s forces were massing amongst what would soon be known as “Massacre Valley.” Running along the centre of Massacre Valley was a fissure that created an impassible route for each brood’s GU’s. The valley was scarce of life and very few plants grew here that could be used as protection or a stronghold. Exile’s forces, led by Shadil, were massing near the southeast part of the valley where there were hardy rock strongholds and some patches of dead grass to use for cover. Brood 103, led by Ambrose on the other hand, was massing directly north of Exile, had no cover and only one good stronghold, but they had the masses to make up for it.

***

Shadil looked out upon his ranks.
“This is our chance to regain our council and our brood! We lost our brood and council rights when we became mutants in their eyes. The majority of us here can say that we are blessed by this, but also plagued by it. What our brood did to us was outrageously cruel and we shall make them pay for every bit of it. We shall take them from the weak point of their stronghold and tear them apart from the inside out until they surrender to us. Do not spare the weak and those who plead for mercy, they are not worthy of the brood. Follow your commanding officers orders. If you break an order...you will have earned a death sentence. Young and old alike shall be out fighting for our cause and wreaking the havoc that shall be their demise. The greatest honor is in knowing that you are dying for your family, brood, and children. Go out there and show them that you are not yet ready to die and that you are not yet ready to give up. Show them that we never give up! For Exile!”

With this Shadil raised his head threateningly in anticipation of the upcoming slaughter. His heart bounded every other beat or so as he crawled towards his rivals in a menacing fashion. He tried to reassure himself by looking back every so often to make sure his men were in his wake.

***

7 hours later
Pincers and mandibles clashed ferociously as the broods danced in their fight for life or death. It was only seven hours into the battle and already both sides had received heavy casualties. Ambrose locked jaws and pincers with a brute of an ant. As Ambrose tried to lift the brute and throw him, two smaller ants threw themselves upon him and started to tear at him. Ambrose flew into a rage as one of his antennas was torn off of his head. He threw the two ants off, locked mandibles with the brute again and crawled onto its back. Ambrose released his grip only to bite onto the brute’s neck and crush its spine. It immediately went limp and its legs twitched incessantly as it left its body. At this open chance, Ambrose took off crawling towards Shadil, who was fighting four of Ambrose’s brethren.

***

Shadil knew his enemies were overtaking him. He could feel his blood flowing freely out of a gash on his abdomen and was fatiguing. He lashed out with his pincers at the nearest ant and got a
glory hold on its throat. Shadil’s mandibles closed on the ant’s neck, then he watched as it flailed briefly and stopped. He tore into another ant as it lunged for his neck and dropped it to the ground into a pool of its own blood. Shadil turned his head to catch a glimpse of Sgt. Ambrose scuttling towards him. Shadil broke off from the skirmish and went to greet his old friend. They cautiously crept up to each other, each in their own defensive stances. They crept like a predator stalking their prey, each circling the other.

Finally, Shadil broke the suffocating silence, “So how does it feel to be killing your own brethren you bastard. If you somehow think that this is enjoyable for either of our broods you really are as corrupt as everyone says you are. You really must be corrupt, either that or you’re just too naive to consider the fact that we are your brothers and sisters and that your father is somewhere on the field fighting for what he truly believes in. He said that exactly one year ago today, something was stolen from you. That something shifted your being; he said that you changed. He was right about that too. Now, I don’t know what the &%#! happened to you but whatever happened, it killed your soul.

Exactly one year ago

The night sky reflected Ambrose and Cheirja’s fight. His mind kept on wandering back to the night’s events that he regretted. Visions of killing Cheirja repeatedly went through his mind as he wandered the colony. He had felt something snap in him during that fight, though what had snapped was yet to be figured out. Cheirja had screamed at him as he had punished her for her recent actions, and her screaming only made him want to beat her more. He knew it was wrong, he knew that he truly loved her, but something was wrong with him. He knew he was too harsh, and that he was extreme. He tried to steer his mind away from the reoccurring images of his pincers crushing her head. He came to the conclusion that he was going crazy, and essentially he was true to his conclusion.

***

19 sleepless hours later

He replayed the plan over and over in his homicidal mind as he scuttled towards her. He would kill her for he could not stand the guilt that was crashing down upon him like a tsunami. He stealthily crept closer until he was within two ant’s length away from her. This was the moment he both dreaded and welcomed into his insane mind. He pounced upon her placing a lethal blow to her head and then clamped his pincers onto her neck.

***

Current

Ambrose felt himself crack as he was consumed by the dread of the awakened guilt and sorrow. He barreled headlong into Shadil as he headed towards his destination. He knew he had committed such a sin against not only Anathema, but also himself and Cheirja. He moved faster than he thought his body would ever move. He spotted the huge fissure and knew what had to be done. Amendments, or at least apologies were being made and said inside his head to all those he had hurt, physically and emotionally. He knew he was sorry and that he couldn’t bear to carry the burden of Cheirja on his back for the rest of his days. He reached the edge and propelled himself off into what would be a new life.
“Here ye, here ye!” the town crier cried
“Come to Town Square and we’ll detach his
mind!”
Step up to the guillotine
How bright it gleams
A manmade killer
A killing machine.

Step up to the ballots!
So red, white and blue!
Punch in your votes!
Share your point of view!
They’ll pick out our leader
It takes days
… Maybe months
Then we’ll swear them in,
Left hand on the book.

They’ll lead us through war
Through the blood and the bombs
“Support our troops!” the same ol’ song
Support the killings

The bombings, the rapes
Support everything that our government hates!
Mine the oil that we all love!
For our gasoline cars and polluted air!
“Here ye, here ye!” the town crier cried
A tear dripped from this young man’s eye
“So many dead!”
“Maybe someday we’ll work as a team!”
“The guillotine is operated by human beings!”
A man made killer
A killing machine.

“I am warning you!” the town crier cried
“…. That we need peace and love; we need to
leave war behind!”
“Nothing will be left if we don’t try!”
“That is what I have to say!”
“Please don’t abuse the human race!”
“Why? Why couldn’t you just listen to me?” Malia whispered almost silently as she approached to place the white rose on the coffin laid out in front of her as it was about to be lowered into the icy ground. He had been killed in a drunk driving accident. He was the driver, and he was the drunk. He was also only sixteen.

That had been three weeks ago. Since then, Malia had done nothing but sit in her room and think about him. The last thing he ever said to her kept running through her head over and over again,

“Don’t worry, Malia. I’m not going to do anything stupid. I promise. I’ll see you tomorrow. I love you.”

She blamed herself for his death, and because of that, she changed. She was no longer the joyful, giddy girl she used to be when he was alive. Now she was depressed, and she rarely ever spoke...
to anyone anymore. She went to school, but she never did her work and she always sat alone.

Her view of the world also changed. Now all she saw in the world was death, sadness, and people she once thought she could trust, but now couldn’t. She looked at everything and everyone differently. Many of her once close friends, she now refused to so much as look at after the death of the person she loved and trusted with all her heart. She felt as though everyone would betray her, as she felt he had.

She blamed herself for his death. She thought he would change his ways for her because he had loved her; but he hadn’t changed, and now he was dead.

All Malia could think about was him. Everything, from walking past certain houses on her way to school, to the color blue, reminded her of him; therefore everything triggered a sadness inside of her that would cause her to be so upset that she would physically be in pain, as if she had just been punched in the stomach several times.

Soon she became so depressed that she started skipping school. She would lie in bed and refuse to do anything, even eat. Her parents would try to bribe her to eat or at least get out of her bed, but she was so depressed that she felt like she physically could not move, even to eat, and all she could think about was this betrayal that had fallen upon her. Wherever she was, she could see him; his beautiful blue eyes, and his amazing smile that would always make her feel ten times better, as though everything in the world was ok, and nothing could ever bring her down.

Days soon turned to weeks, and she was still refusing to do anything. She had lost a lot of weight from not eating, going from a healthy 125 pounds to 87 pounds. She looked so extremely thin that if you compared a picture of her to that of a holocaust survivor, you could find more than one similarity. Her face had sunken in, and her long blond hair now looked thin and greasy. Her hazel eyes now looked bloodshot and somewhat glazed over. You could almost literally count every bone in her body. She was extremely unhealthy because she was in such a strong state of depression. She thought about death as the only way out on several occasions, and she detached herself from everyone she knew. Her parents didn’t know what to do any more. They debated hospitalizing her, or sending her away to a treatment facility, but they never did, hoping and praying she would get better.

“Please Malia!” Her mother would beg. “Just eat something. You have to eat or you’re going to die!”

“Good,” was all Malia would ever respond.

Time went by, and now it had been four months since his death. Malia was still depressed. She had become so mentally and physically unhealthy, her once ever-present smile now a constant frown, and dark circles under her once beautiful hazel eyes, that, out of desperation to leave the house, she decided to run away. That’s exactly what she did.

It was dark outside when she left the house, but that didn’t matter because she knew exactly where she was going. She had everything planned out.

It was a long walk from her house to the graveyard, but that didn’t matter to Malia in the slightest
bit. She had a destination in mind, and she was going to get there no matter how long it took.

When she finally arrived at her destination, she broke down crying. His gravestone was covered on one side with ivy, and a rose bush was planted around it; a beautiful rose bush that was fully in bloom, the red roses showing through the leaves like bursts of red sunlight. It was still very dark, but she could see his name on the gravestone clearly. It was a beautiful spring night, but all Malia felt was cold.

At first she sat there crying, not knowing what to do, but then she started screaming and hitting the ground.

“Why did you have to leave me? Why did you have to do this to me?” She screamed at his gravestone. “I thought you loved me! I thought you cared! You promised me you’d change, but you didn’t! Why? How could you do something so stupid and wind up killing yourself?”

“Malia,” a voice behind her whispered. It was a familiar voice, soft and calming. It was his voice.

She turned around expecting nothing to be there, expecting that her mind was playing tricks on her, but there he was, tall and handsome. His blue eyes were shining in the moonlight like opals in a necklace. He was really there.

“Malia,” he whispered again, this time reaching his hand out to her. Not knowing what else to do, she reached out and put her hand in his. It was strong and soft, like she remembered from when he was still alive. He pulled her in close to him and embraced her in a loving hug, like he always had before.

It was an amazing experience, just standing there in his arms once again. She couldn’t stop crying, the tears running down her face and dripping onto his shoulder where she had habitually placed her head. She cried into his shoulder like that for what seemed like hours, but was really only just a few moments. He then stepped back and, looking into her eyes, he gently moved her long blond hair out of her face and wiped away all her tears.

“I’m sorry, Malia. I’m so sorry,” he whispered into her ear. His voice cracked with the sound of total and utter desperation for forgiveness.

“Why did you do that? Why did you drink when you promised me you wouldn’t?” Malia managed to say in between silent sobs. He put his head down in shame as he answered her,

“I don’t know. I could never explain to you why I made the decisions I made. I never dreamed this could ever happen. And I never wanted to leave you like this. I love you so much.” As he said this, he pulled her in close to him again, enveloping her in his great warmth.

Malia was crying again. He stroked her hair and hugged her closer, noticing for the first time how thin she was, her bones pressing against him as he held her, and noticing that she was shaking slightly.

“I don’t know what to do,” she cried, looking into his beautiful blue eyes.

“You need to move on.”

“But how? All I ever think of is you. I haven’t been going to school, I don’t talk to anyone anymore,
“Don’t say that,” he whispered, sounding as though he would start crying. “Don’t you ever say that, Malia.” He kissed her lightly on the forehead, and she felt as though the sun had suddenly come out just to warm her body.

“But I want to be with you! I want you here with me!”

“I am with you, always, in your mind and in your heart. Just remember everything, and I’ll be with you. Memories can last forever.”

“I want you to hold me, though. I want to be in your arms always.”

“You are right now, and that’s all I can do. I love you and I want you to be happy, but dying is not the answer. You have such a long life to live ahead of you. You have to move on, even if I’m not physically there. Life is so amazing, and I would do anything to be alive again, to be with you. I love you so much and miss you.”

“I miss you so much. You’re my world, my everything. I just want you back.”

“I want to be back too but that’s not possible right now.” With that, he did begin to cry, just a few silent tears that dripped from his eyes. Once again, he pulled her in close, kissing her on the forehead again, whispering, “I love you,” in her ear.

Burning tears streamed from Malia’s eyes as she held on to the person she had loved and cared about so deeply. He looked lovingly into her eyes, then kissed away all of her tears.

“Malia, I want you to promise me something,” he whispered in her ear almost silently.

“Anything,” she whispered back, her eyes welling up again with tears.

“Promise me that whenever you think about me, you’ll know that I’m thinking of you too, and that I’ll always be with you, no matter what.”

“I promise,” she said, the tears that had welled up now rolling silently down her cheeks.

“I don’t want to have to say this, Malia, but I have to go now.”

“What? Why? I don’t want you to leave me again!” Tears streamed down her face; tears she shouldn’t have because of all the crying she had been doing all night long.

“Just remember everything we’ve been through, the good and the bad, and always remember my love for you.” As he said this, he began to slowly fade away, tears burning down his face. Before he was completely gone, he looked in her eyes once more, and for the last time gave her his amazing smile.

Already she felt ten times better, as if she was on top of the world and nothing could bring her back down.
When I was younger, the street I lived on was a very different place than it is today. The houses were all built in different eras and styles, making the street look like a hodgepodge of buildings. Front lawns ranged from the large, open and sunny to the fenced-in, dark and secluded. The street, a pothole-riddled mixture of asphalt and dirt, was perfectly straight and divided the block down the middle. On this street is where neighborhood games were played, for there was little traffic on our quiet boulevard to hinder our frolicking.

On the corner of the block was an abandoned field. It had been the previous site of another house that was condemned and torn down. This house is barely in my memory, almost like a dreamlike apparition that slips in and out of focus. It was small and blue, and seemed oddly small compared to the lot it was sitting on. A driveway was in the back, attached to an adjacent street. Beyond that I have no memory.

Slowly as the times changed the neighborhood did too. That abandoned lot became prime real estate and a house was built there. It has tan bricks and a low roof, and looks very much like a stereotypical suburban blueprint with small differences but the same style and plan. Another home
was torn down after its residents died; two pre-fabricated structures were built in its place. They looked exactly the same as the first, and signaled a warning to the rest of the block that this street would never be the same. Ironically, a year later the street was ripped out and replaced with one with more asphalt and fewer potholes.

New people moved into these homes; the rest of the neighborhood didn’t like them simply because they were new. They also fit the stereotype of the suburban neighborhood — white, middle class, one mother, one father, two-and-a-half children, one dog, one cat, one mid-size sedan in the driveway and a minivan in the garage. The father went to the office precisely at eight-thirty while the mother stayed at home, cooked dinner, took care of the kids, cleaned, gossiped with the other neighbors, and finally waited patiently at the door wearing a white apron as the father came home at exactly five-thirty to eat dinner and enjoy the rest of the family. This happened Monday through Friday; Saturday was when nothing in particular happened, and Sunday was obviously the Lord’s time. Being a good suburban family they had to be good Christians too.

As more homes were torn down and cookie-cutter houses built in their place, the street changed. Trees that had been there for longer than eighty years, that shaded the road and its citizens with their wide green limbs, were ripped from the ground and used as woodchips for the gardens of the new homes. The sidewalk on the street, which had lazily meandered through front lawns and stopped at an abrupt crack in several places, was straightened and connected.

Soon mid-size sedans filled up the street and it became difficult to play in it. The children of my street were forced inside their homes as they watched the street changing from their windows. It seemed almost a daily process of gentrification at one point something would change every day, whether it was due to installing streetlights or ripping up the new street to put in a larger sewer system.

Eventually the entire block was unrecognizable from memory. A few homes were left, namely a cluster of houses at the end of the block that includes mine. My neighbors stubbornly refuse to leave the neighborhood because they know what would happen if they did, but the damage is already done. The street has already given up.
Joe woke up like he did every morning. He got out of his bed and looked out his window. It was a summer day; the trees were very green and the sun was low in the sky.

“Hello, Sun,” Joe said.
“Hello, Joe,” said the Sun.

Joe got ready for his day; he was going to play with his friends all day because it was summer break. Before he left he looked at his clock.

“Hello, Mr. Clock. Do you know what time it is?” Joe said.

“Of course Joe,” said Mr. Clock. “It’s eight in the morning.”

Once he was ready, Joe went outside and played with his friends all day.
Several years later Joe woke up like he did every morning. He got out of bed and looked out his window. It was a fall day; the trees were red, orange and yellow. The sun was high in the sky.

"Hello, Sun," Joe said. "You're awfully high in the sky today."

"Hello, Joe," said the Sun.

Joe got ready for his day; he was in high school now and was going to school today. Joe worried about how high in the sky the sun was, so he looked at his clock

"Hello Mr. Clock. Do you know what time it is?" Joe said.

"Of course, Joe," said Mr. Clock. "It's ten in the morning."

"Ten in the morning!" Joe said. "Oh no, I'm late for school."

Joe rushed to get ready and went to school late that day.
Several years later, Joe woke up like he did every morning. He got out of bed and looked out his window; the trees had all lost their leaves and the sun was nowhere to be seen.

“Where are you, Sun?” Joe said.

Joe had a job now and he had to get up very early in the morning. He went to check his clock to see how much time he had before work started.

“Hello, Mr. Clock Do you know what time it is?” Joe said.

“Of course, Joe,” said Mr. Clock. “It’s six in the morning.”

Joe got ready and went to work early in the morning.

As Joe grew up, a lot of things in his life changed. He woke up at different times and to do different things during the day. But some things never changed; he always said ‘Hi’ to the Sun and Mr. Clock in the morning. Change was a big part of Joe’s life, but he was always able to find things that stayed the same.
Rex and Bonnie were best friends. They always played together and told each other everything! One day, Rex went over to Bonnie’s house. She answered the door, but before Rex could even say “Hello,” Bonnie pulled him inside and began to shout in excitement.


Rex followed Bonnie into her room and asked, “What is it?”
Bonnie turned around and in her hands was the new ToboRobo300, a toy robot that could walk, talk, and play games! Both Rex and Bonnie had seen the commercials and agreed they were cool.

“Awesome!” said Rex.

“Yeah,” said Bonnie, “and I’m going to let you borrow it over the weekend while I go camping with my family!”

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!” Rex exclaimed in excitement. “But you have to promise you’ll be careful.” “I promise!”
The next day Bonnie stopped by Rex’s house to drop off the ToboRobo300 she said he could borrow. “Bye, have fun camping!” Rex yelled after Bonnie as she got back in her car.

“Bye!” she yelled back as the car pulled away.

Rex couldn’t wait to play with ToboRobo, so he ran to his room and closed the door.

“Hello friend!” ToboRobo’s eyes blinked while he talked.

“Cool!” said Rex. The Robot began to walk.

“Let’s play a game!” it said.
Rex stood and called back, “Coming, mom!” but when he walked towards the door he heard “CRUNCH!” and under his foot lay an armless ToboRobo. “Oh no! What am I going to tell Bonnie?” Quickly, Rex hid the robot under his bed and went to eat lunch.

The next day Rex couldn’t stop thinking about the broken robot. Bonnie was coming back that night, and he didn’t want her to be mad or stop being his friend. It was evening when Bonnie rang Rex’s doorbell. “Hi Rex!” she said.

“Hey Bonnie, how was the camping trip?” “It was so fun! We ate s’mores and told scary stories” she replied.

“That does sound like fun!” Rex agreed.
There was a long pause before Bonnie said, “So, do you have my ToboRobo?”

“Oh yeah… uh, about that-”

“Is something wrong?” Bonnie looked worried.

“You’ll never believe what happened! The day you dropped ToboRobo off I started to play with it, then my mom called me to eat lunch and when I came back, ToboRobo was gone!”

Bonnie gasped, “No way!”
“Yes way! So I searched and searched and that’s when I finally looked out my window and saw my dog, Ruby, running around in the back yard with the robot in her mouth!”

Bonnie let out a little chuckle, “Oh that silly dog. So… where is it now?”

“Well, you haven’t even heard the craziest part! I ran outside to get the robot, and as soon as I walked outside the door, a storm came! Lightning and thunder-” Rex continued waving his hands wildly in the air to emphasize, “and finally, using all my strength, I managed to look up into the sky, and that’s when I saw it- through the thick clouds, emerged a UFO!” swirling his hands, and now exasperated, Rex went on to explain, “it came closer, and closer, hovering above Ruby and before I could get there-SWOOSH-UP went Ruby with the robot in her mouth! The beam struggled to hoist Ruby’s weight so while stumbling to the ground, your robot fell out of her mouth! And in a flash the UFO was gone, and so was ToboRobo.”

Rex looked at Bonnie, then looked to the floor and said, “Sorry.”

Bonnie put her hands on her hips and said, “What happened to my robot, Rex?”
Bonnie interrupted, “That story would be almost convincing if it wasn’t the same storyline from last week’s episode of Alien Invasion. Now tell me the true story.”

Rex was caught, and now he felt guilty. “Well… will you promise you won’t get mad?”

“I’m already upset that you lied to me, please tell me the truth” replied Bonnie.

“I accidentally stepped on your ToboRobo when I wasn’t paying attention and broke it. I was scared to tell you because I didn’t want you to be mad at me and stop being my friend. I’m really, really sorry. Please forgive me.”
“I do forgive you, Rex. You didn’t have to lie to me; a toy robot wouldn’t stop me from being your friend. I understand that accidents happen, but I wish you had told me the truth instead of lying. Not being truthful will break up friendships.”

Rex gave Bonnie a hug. “I promise I’ll never lie to you again. I can replace your robot if you want with the money I earn from mowing the lawn.”

Bonnie hugged Rex back and replied, “Thank you, Rex. You’re a true friend.”
From then on, Rex and Bonnie continued to be best friends and always play together. They never lied to each other and after working hard mowing lawns, Rex got enough money to buy the two of them ToboRobos.
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