A Work in Progress

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English Creative Writing
Honors Thesis Title:
A Work in Progress
October 23rd, 2019

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I adored imagining a life where my mother was not sick. What a dream it would have been to see someone whom I admired my entire life be happy with herself and with her life. She was happy but never as happy as I think she deserved. Hell, before she had children, her life was extraordinary. I understand it was rough at times and she went through her own hardships, but there will always be a time in which I wish I could have died. What I mean by this, is that if I were the person to get cancer and die from it instead of her, life would be so much more different, for the both of us. I know parents are not supposed to be the ones burying their own children. For the reason people have children is to make sure their family name continues, however, if it were the other way around in my situation, I feel it would have been better for my family. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of thirty-two. She died of breast cancer at age forty-six. I was three years old when she was diagnosed and sixteen when she died. The burdens I and my remaining family must carry with us for the rest of our lives are so heavy I can’t breathe. I still cannot breathe from the weight I am carrying. Over time, the weight becomes less noticeable and you grow used to it, but occasionally, the boulder on your shoulders slips and crushes you. It does not squish you completely, but every so often it digs into your shoulders and pokes you in the ribs reminding you that it is there—stuck there attached to you forever, feeding off your soul and lifespan. I will admit the rock I am carrying is beautiful, but the prettier this boulder becomes, means that it will take even more of your mind and heart—making sure to leave you with nothing left but an empty mind and a darkened soul containing only endless voids.

As I keep ambling through life, I meet numerous people who ask me if they can help carry my boulder. With a gentle smile I thank them for the offer and politely decline. Not a single being can ever help me carry my boulder. It is mine and will always be mine. My boulder is permanently stuck on me, it is impossible to separate it from my body—it is almost as if the boulder itself is now part of me, it has forever been part of me, and its roots are deep within my heart. Ever since I obtained this rock, it has grown with me, becoming bigger in size as I myself became an adult. If this boulder were to ever be removed from me, it would probably kill me. I remember in the beginning I despised this rock. I hated it. I hated it more than anything I had ever disliked before in my entire life. Nevertheless, as the years went on, I started to hate the boulder less and less. I accepted it and now as I stroll through the road of life, I have learned that the rock has humbled me, made me wiser, made me stronger and overall a better person. When people first meet me, they do not notice my boulder. The rock only shows itself to a special few. Nowadays, it is easier for me to open and discuss with people about the weight I have on my shoulders. It makes me happy to share my story and others are impressed I can carry such a rock by myself. I hope that by telling others about my boulder, more and more people will feel comfortable and open with their own stories about their own rocks. The weight I carry on me has shaped my identity and has made me who I am today. To comprehend this idea in a simpler way, I am going to start from the beginning. The time when I first got my rock.

“IT’S TIME! Oh yes, it’s time! MOM!” I yell. I swiftly jump out of my bed and hop onto the carpet. Okay hmmm what should I wear today? I open my polished, white dresser and shuffle through my clothes. I settle on wearing a pink and white dress with a rose print design. Okay how should I style my hair? I scramble to my bathroom and pick up my brush. I don’t feel like doing anything to it except wearing a white headband. My bleached blonde hair is cut short like a bob and rests nicely atop my shoulders. “Okay ready! School time yay!” When I was in fifth grade, I loved school. Going to school was always my favorite part of everyday. I could never get enough
of it. I wanted to live at school. Learning and spending time with my teacher and friends was never a chore to me. I nearly trip down the stairs and make my way into the kitchen. It was a typical sunny and hot day in Las Vegas, Nevada the city in which I and my younger brother Mark were born. Mark is sitting at the kitchen table eating a bowl of cereal. “Hello Markie! Whatcha eating!?“ I ask and seat myself at the table.

“Hi sis! I am just eating honeynut cheerios!”

“Oh, I love cheerios! Can I have some?” I scan the area for a spoon and bowl. Before I manage to get up, my mother grabs me a bowl and spoon and pours the cereal for me. “HI MOMMY! IT’S ALMOST TIME FOR SCHOOL! AREN’T YOU EXCITED?”

“O-of course I am love…why wouldn’t I be?” She turns away and finishes packing mine and Mark’s backpacks for school. My mother already packed her bag for work. My mom was a dental hygienist. She enjoyed her work and was extremely passionate about it. The only thing she loved more than her career was her family, which included her husband and two kids. I follow her eyes as she turns away and they look…different. More different than usual. Her sapphire blue eyes don’t look as bright as usual. Usually they glisten deeply and have tints of jade within them. However, today I see no green in her blue eyes, for instead they look dull and dark. Mark is munching on his second bowl of cereal seeming to be utterly oblivious to the situation.

I lean over and whisper, “Mark is something wrong with mommy?”

Mark finished crewing his current bite and pulls his spoon out of his mouth. “Sara why would something be wrong with mommy?” He dips his spoon in his bowl and places another bite in his mouth.

“Shhhh! And I dunno…I just feel like something…something is wrong with her.”

“Sis nothing is wrong with mommy.” Mark slurps up the remaining milk in his bowl and excuses himself from the table.

I limply stick my spoon in my cereal bowl and force myself to eat. I lost my appetite. For some reason I feel like something isn’t right. Mark doesn’t think so, but I think he is wrong. Something must be going on. I wish I knew what…it is my job to find out. Mark won’t help me, so I am on my own.

I finish my breakfast and soon enough my mother is driving Mark and I to elementary school. Mark is in third grade, as he is two years younger than me. The entire car ride I feel uneasy. Mark is humming to himself and gazing out the window. I try my best to stop staring at our mom, who through the corner of my eye I can see she looks dead as she drives us to school. She seems tired and worn out. She almost looks sick. Or maybe she is sick. Sick with what? I hope its not the balding disease again.

I remember when I was in first or second grade my mom was bald. She had no hair! She wouldn’t tell me why, but I never understood why she was bald and had to wear a wig. The only thing she told me was that she was sick and that her hair would grow back, but until then she had to be bald and wear wigs.
I don’t know how my mother can have the balding disease when she has hair right now. Maybe she is just sick with a cold or flu of some sort because she still has hair. I hope she feels better.

The car comes to a halt.

“Bye mommy! I love you!” Mark sings as he jumps out of the car and dashes inside the school building.

I gulp and sling my pink backpack over one shoulder. “B-ye mom! I love y-you!”

“Bye Sara have a wonderful day at school!” My mother calls as my passenger side door slams shut. I begin wandering up the concrete path into the ominous elementary building. The way she said that to me sounded a bit more like herself, so maybe she is feeling better. Despite this fact, I still feel uneasy and scared.

When I get inside, I take a left down the nearest hallway and then another right to find my classroom. When I get inside, my eyes light up from the sight of my friends. My teacher grins and greets me kindly.

“Good morning Sara. Please have a seat”

“Good morning Mrs. Livingston.” I reply. I scurry over to my desk and sit down, placing my backpack gently beside my feet.

The school day is the same as it is every day. First, we take attendance, then we do some reading and after is history. After our daily history lesson is lunch and recess. My favorite part of the day besides our English lecture. I grab my lunch sack out of my bag and make my way toward my friends.

“Hi Lacey and Raine!” I holler.

“Hello Sara!” Lacey responds.

“Hi Sara!” Raine giggles.

“So, what did you guys bring for lunch?” I ask.

Lacey opens her My Little Pony metal lunch box. “U-uh I got a PB&J, a Capri-Sun juice box, animal crackers and a Snickers bar.”

“Ugh! It’s not fair why do you always get good food?” Raine moans. She opens her paper bag and pulls out an apple, celery sticks with peanut butter, a small water bottle and a turkey and cheddar cheese sandwich.

“Ha-ha! It’s not my fault you’re a health freak!”

“Ughhh it’s not me! It’s my mom! She’s so crazy! Lacey can I pleaseee have your Snickers bar? Or at least like your animal crackers?”

Lacey chuckles in amusement. “Yeah sure Raine. Here give me your celery sticks with peanut butter and you can have my Snickers bar. I’ll just have one when I get home from school.”
“YAY! THANK YOU, LACEY!”

I rip open my brown paper bag and take out my PB&J sandwich. I have the same sandwich as Lacey, except my sandwich has strawberry jelly, which is clearly and will always be superior. I take a bite and sink my teeth into the soft bread, creamy peanut butter and tangy strawberry jam. A match made in heaven.

“H-hey Sara are you okay? You seem kind of quiet today.” Lacey states.

“Y-yeah Sara, what’s wrong?” Raine inquires.

I shrug. “I dunno I just feel like something is wrong with my mom.”

“What do you mean?”

“That’s the thing! I can’t figure it out! Something feels off and I don’t know what! I think my mom is sick.”

“Hmmm maybe she just has the flu or a cold. Adults get those after all.” Lacey mutters.

“Yeah true…but for some reason I feel like this is more than the flu or a cold…” I mumble.

“I wonder what it could be then…” Raine takes a bit out of her sandwich.

“I just hope it’s not the balding disease again…”

Lacey’s cobalt eyes widen in confusion. “Sara the what?”

I finish the last bite of my sandwich. “T-the balding disease…”

“What’s the balding disease? Raine takes a bite out of her newly obtained Snickers bar.

“I dunno. All I know is my mom felt sick and she lost all her hair and had to wear wigs. Then eventually her hair grew back, and she didn’t need to wear wigs.”

“Aww man I hope I don’t get the balding disease!” Raine pulls on her long, brown hair and reties her pony tail.

I smile stiffly and search through my lunch bag, finding some carrot sticks with ranch to eat.

“Sara are you talking about cancer?” Lacey asks.

My jaw drops, and I nearly drop my carrot stick. “U-uh what’s cancer?”

“I don’t know, except I remember my grandma having it. She lost all her hair and then she died. My mom was super sad for like months about it.”

“S-she died!??”

Lacey munches on a celery stick. “Yeah she did sadly. I wish she didn’t. I hate my mom being sad the way she was.”

“D-does Sara’s mom have cancer!??” Raine sputters.
“No of course not! I just thought it was strange how Sara’s mom lost her hair from the balding disease. I’ve never heard of the balding disease, but I do know that cancer causes you to lose your hair. So, I guess you can lose your hair from cancer and from the balding disease then.” Lacey dips another celery stick in a tiny cup filled with peanut butter before stuffing it in her mouth.

My mind is spinning. My mother had the balding disease and lost her hair, or she had cancer? How could she have had cancer though? I don’t even know what that means. Plus, my mom has her hair, so she can’t have the balding disease or cancer now, could she? I feel even worse now. Maybe Lacey and Raine are right. My mom is just having a cold or flu. She will be better…tomorrow…I hope.

I finish my carrot sticks and eat the rest of my lunch in silence. Lacey and Raine laugh and ramble on about the perks and worry of life as a fifth grader. Raine chats about her crush and how annoying her younger sister is. Lacey blabbers on about how her older brother and sister got into huge trouble for sneaking out and drinking something called “beer”. I like hearing Lacey and Raine talk. It makes me feel better and forget all about my mom for the time being.

After lunch and recess, the three of us go back inside for the remainder of the school day. After lunch and recess we do our daily science experiment and then before class subsides, we do mathematics. My least favorite part of every school day. At least it is at the end of the day. I have hated mathematics ever since I started learning it. I was never talented or skilled in it like Mark and it always took me so much time to do my homework. It frustrated me, and I barely scrap by. All I know is, I hope in middle school I don’t have to do as much math. Reading and writing are my strongest subjects. History is my second best and I’m decent at science. The only interesting field I enjoy in science is astronomy. Raine and Lacey often make fun of me for that.

“Okay after you finish your times-table worksheet you are dismissed! I will see you all tomorrow!” Mrs. Livingston exclaims boldly.

Raine is like Mark in the sense that she adores math and is very good at it. She finished her worksheet quickly and picks up her belongings. “Bye Lacey! Bye Sara! I hope your mom feels better!” Raine beams joyfully at me and skips out of the classroom.

I sign in frustration as I try to finish my worksheet. *Ugh! Why does math have to be so difficult and boring!!??* I scribble on my worksheet and the silver lead from my pencil smudges across the entire sheet. At this point. I just want to finish. I can’t keep my mother and Mark waiting. Lacey finishes her worksheet before me and soon is walking out of the room.

“Bye Sara! Forget what I said today! I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings! I know your mom is going to be all better soon!” Lacey calls as she disappears through the door.

I nod and write down the final answer to the last problem. I’m so relieved that I’m done. I pick up my backpack and waltz over to Mrs. Livingston and hand her my paper.

“Thank you, Sara! I will see you tomorrow!”

“Bye Mrs. Livingston! See you tomorrow! Have a good day.”

I walk out of the room and down another two hallways. The halls have bleached white walls with a single lavender stripe running across the top. Mountain View Elementary school is
beautiful and spacious. The classrooms are small, but they provide comfort to all the students. All the teachers I have had are very nice and respectful. The playground for recess is gigantic and I love playing on it. It is my favorite place in the world next to home. Nothing can beat home sweet home. I have always thought of myself as a home-body, despite how I dream of travelling the world. There are so many places I haven’t discovered yet. I hope to someday visit them all. I go through the double glass doors leading to the entrance of the school. Sure enough, my mother is waiting for me in her tan Honda mini-van. Mark is already in the car staring down at his Leap Frog videogame pad. I open the back door and climb inside.

“Hello Sara.” My mother articulates. Her voice is soothing and lovely. It is high-pitched, but not to the pint that it sounds annoying and fake. Her voice reminds me of songbirds chirping in early dawn. Comforting and beautiful. It’s as if her voice could put anyone under a spell with how whimsical is sounds. I wish my voice could have that affect and beauty to it.

“Hi mommy!” I squeak. “How was your day at work?”

“Oh, it was fine!”

Even when her voice begins to strain it remains gorgeous. I dart my eyes away from her and to the window. That’s what I was afraid of. She says she’s fine, but I can tell she’s not. Mark is too young to understand. I, however, am not.

The car ride back home is brief and raucous. Mark and mom talk about each other’s days at school and work. Mark goes on and on about how he made a basket in basketball and that he got 100% on all his homework. When Mark chats with our mother, I can tell this makes her happy. I can tell that Mark is also very content. Ah, at least my brother is happy. I want him to be okay. I want our mother to be okay.

When the three of us arrive home, Mark zooms up to the garage door and opens it clumsily, dropping the gilded house key.

“Whoops sorry!” Mark laughs. He picks up the key and steps inside. I follow in behind him and turn around to notice my mother limping up behind me. *Why is she limping?*

“H-hey mom…are you okay?”

Her eyes widen in fear, as if I spooked her with my voice. “Y-yes sweetie! Why wouldn’t I be?” The strain in her eyes states otherwise, but I play dumb and don’t say anything more.

“Okay mommy.”

After my mother comes inside, she goes up stairs to her room. Mark and I raid the fridge and eat copious amounts of snacks as we finish all our homework. Eventually our father returns home from work and it is dinner time.

“Hi daddy!” Mark ceases his homework and runs up to our father, hugging him tightly.

“Hello Mark!” My father replies and squeezes him. I don’t get up from my chair and continue doing my homework… mindlessly. I can’t stop thinking about mommy. I feel dizzy but flinch from my father’s touch. “Hello Sara.” He kisses the top of my head and pats my shoulder before going upstairs.
“The pasta will be ready soon!” I holler to my dad, but he doesn’t respond. Now’s my chance. I push my chair out and hop down.

“Where are you going? Dinner’s almost done dude.” Mark inquires.

“U-uuh bathroom.” I murmur.

“Um okay…”

I place my pencil back on the table and race around the corner. The staircase in our house is exquisite. Rails crafted from maple timber compliment the sand-colored carpet delightfully. I tip-toe up each stair carefully, as to not make a sound. When I get upstairs, I notice the double white doors leading inside my parent’s master bedroom to be open. As I approach closer, I notice the light on the bathroom. When I enter the bedroom, I make sure to not make a peep. I press myself against the wall next to the open-door frame of the bathroom. I hold my breath.

“How was chemo today?” My father ponders.

“Eh…it was okay…I’m just super tired and sore.” My mother replies.

“Is fatigue a symptom of this chemotherapy?”

“Uh…maybe. But honestly I think being tired is just a side effect of cancer.”

Cancer.

I stop myself from wincing and cover my hand across my mouth. Before my parents realize my snooping, I crawl out of their room and practically fall down the stairs. I can’t breathe, and I think I might vomit. Mark observes me tripping over my dress as I make my way to the table. I guess Mark apparently moved our homework because the kitchen table has been cleared and set with bowls, cups and forks for our pasta.

“What’s wrong with you?” Mark raises an eyebrow at me.

He can’t know. He can’t.

“U-uuh nothing! Nothing is wrong! I just in the bathroom…I…slipped and hurt myself.”

“You hurt yourself in the bathroom?”

“Y-yes! I got water everywhere on accident! I was washing my hands…and I accidently sprayed water and it got the floor wet and then I slipped. But I’m okay now!”

I bite my lower lip because for a moment I feel Mark isn’t convinced. Then, after a couple seconds, he relaxes his face and shrugs.

“Okay just be careful. Where is mommy and daddy? This pasta is done.”

My eyes widen in panic. “T-they will be right down!”

“Maybe I should go up and check on them.”

“No! I mean…no Markie! It’s fine!”

“Golly sis you sure are acting strange…”
“No, I’m not! Sit at the table!”

I pull my chair out and sit down. Mark follows my lead. Soon enough, our parents are downstairs. My father looks sad and my mother looks lifeless. This can’t be happening. I don’t even know what this means. My father weakly smiles at mom and finishes draining the pasta and preparing it for us. Mother pulls out her chair and slowly sits down. I hear her cringe under her breath. Pasta is one of my favorite meals, yet I no longer feel hungry. Though, if I don’t eat then Mark and our parents will know something is wrong. I must pretend. I must act stupid and not mention or acknowledge a thing. Maybe mommy doesn’t have cancer. Maybe this is a sick joke. After all, I’m only ten, what do I know anyway? I will forget about cancer. Lacey has no clue what she is talking about. I will forget about cancer.

At the table, all four of us eat slowly. The first half of dinner feels awkward and silent. Luckily, thanks to Mark, the latter half is like it usually is. Mark asks our parents a lot of questions. Our parents ask both of us a lot of questions, but Mark is the one usually answering. Our parents laugh and have a good time. Mark giggles and is jubilant per usual. I guess you could usually say I am too most of the time. Today though is a different story.

Today was when the rock first fell upon on my shoulders. It was very small, smooth and a dark metallic grey color. I didn’t realize it at the time, but this boulder would stay with me for the rest of my life. It would develop with me as I grew up and although I denied my mother ever having cancer, deep down the rock and I both knew the truth. She did. And she was going to die from it. We did not know when, but she was inevitably.

“Sara are you feeling okay? You’ve barely touched your food.”

I snap out of my daydream and blink. My mother is staring at me puzzled.

“W-what? Oh yeah! Sorry! I’m okay!” I stop playing with my pasta and scarf down the remaining noodles in my bowl. Immediately, I serve myself another bowl and gobble that down too. Stuffing my face with homemade pasta is the best thing ever. My father, mother and Mark don’t question me for the rest of the evening thankfully. When it is bedtime, I crawl under my rosy pink bed covers and bury my face under the blankets. Before drifting off, mommy comes in to tuck me in.

“You sure you’re okay love?” Mom questions me, as she pats the only part of my head sticking out from under the covers.

“Yeah mommy, I’m fine.” My voice is muffled, but I know she hears me.

“Okay well if you ever need anything, feel free to talk to me.” Mom kisses my head and strolls out of my bedroom, flicking the lights off and shutting the door.

I lay under my blankets. Heart pounding. My face sweaty. Forget about it. I squeeze my stuffed dog toy and fall asleep. Not grasping I cried myself to sleep that night and that several more nights such as this would follow.

Four more years would go by in a blur. Sometimes I would forget about my mother’s sickening condition. However, as I got older, I became more aware of her disease and what the consequences of cancer would entail.
“Bye mom! Thank you for driving me! See you later!” I call as I jumble out the car and onto the sidewalk. Mark follows close behind. “Bye Mark see you after school.”

“Later loser.” Mark grumbles.

“Hey, you can’t call me that!”

Mark stops in his tracks. “Uh, yeah I can.”

“What no! If anything, I am the one who can call you that!”

“No way! You think because you’re at the top of the school now you can do anything!”

“Psshh me think that? You think because you’re now in middle school that you’re SOOO cool! Well, let me tell ya, sixth grade sucks!”

“Eighth grade sucks more!” Mark flashes his tongue out at me and rushes past me inside.

Ugh, I’m going to kill that kid one of these days. I march through the double glass doors into what I call hell. Or should I say middle school. I thought middle school sucked, but honestly, I’d rather stay here than go to high school. I hear high school is either the best or worst time of your life. With my luck, I know it will be the worst.

“Hey Sara!” My friend Jaiden yells.

I spin around and wave at her. Jaiden has been a truly remarkable friend to me in middle school. I love her a lot. Her and my other friend Artair.

“Hi Jaiden. What’s up?”

“Oh…nothing much.” Jaiden pauses. “Are you excited that it is almost Summer vacation? We’re going to be in high school!”

“Are you kidding me, why would I be thrilled to go to high school? You’re not even going to the same high school as me!”

Jaiden rolls her chocolate-brown eyes at me disapprovingly. “Ugh Sara, do you have to bring that up again? I know…I’m super upset too. Can’t we just enjoy the time we have left with each other? Plus, we will stay in touch! I promise!” She wraps her left arm around my neck.

I giggle and try to swing her arm off me. “O-okay okay! Sorry!”

The two of us are walking to our science lab class, when someone tackles me from behind. “Artair!” I shout.

“Hiya Sara!” Artair laughs. He wraps his arms around my waist and hugs me from behind. God it’s little things like these that make my crush for him develop even deeper. However, it makes me question the fact that he has a girlfriend even more than I already did. Would someone who already is in a romantic relationship do this sort of action to another female?

“Excuse me! But you forgot me! Hello to you too!” Jaiden hisses.
“Oh Jaiden! How could I forget you?” Artair releases his embrace on me and whacks Jaiden in the shoulder.

“W-what are you doing? Aren’t you supposed to be getting to class. It starts in five minutes.”

“Ha-ha yeah I am! I figure I gotta say hello to my two favorite ladies though.” Artair winks at me.

“I thought your favorite girl was your girlfriend.” I interrupt.

Artair frowns at me.

“Well duh Sara, why you gotta be so rude? She may be my favorite girl, but you and Jaiden are my second and third favorite girls.”

“Yeah Sara! You should be more grateful. You’re his second favorite after all.” Jaiden teases.

“Am not!” I whine. “Artair your class is on the other side of the building, get going!”

“Hmph! Okay, okay, I’m going! I’ll catch you two at lunch okay?”

“Okay!” Jaiden and I reply in unison.

Artair smiles deeply and zips off in the opposite direction.

“Sara you know you’re his second favorite girl. I can’t compete with that.”

I shake my head. “Nawh Jaiden. No matter if we are his second and third, we can never compete with his girlfriend.”

“Sara, just remember though, you’re so much prettier and better than his girlfriend. You may not be his number one, but I know someday you’ll be someone’s number one.”

_Oh Jaiden...if only. Says the girl with a boyfriend._

Jaiden and I attend our science class. It is utterly boring... devoid of all things fascinating. I have trouble concentrating. My mind drifts off. Lately, tensions have been high in my family. I can’t put my finger on it. I understand something is off though. For me, it has been a rough four years. I kept forgetting that my mother had cancer. At some point, I stopped trying to guess and I wouldn’t dare ask her. As I became older, I grasped more about what cancer was and the treatment options available.

Cancer is a disease in which your healthy cells in your body begin to over grow in an unhealthy and rapid fashion—an abnormal division of cell growth in the body. Cancer can occur at any time, any age and anywhere in the body. Cancer can be caused by genetic factors, lifestyle factors, environmental factors and in my mother’s case randomly. Sadly, getting cancer can purely be just bad luck. Symptoms of cancer can range from symptoms exactly like a cold or flu virus to extremely obscure things. It is even possible to appear having no symptoms at all and by the time you find out you have cancer you’re effectively or already dead. People actually have cancer cells in their body all the time. Our body always fights off these cancer cells. It’s only in rare cases that our body malfunctions and is unable to get rid of the defective ever-growing cells,
that cancer truly become cancer. Isn’t it amazing and horrifying that simply an overgrowth of cells can somehow kill us? Treatment for cancer includes medications, chemotherapy, radiation and surgery. Chemotherapy is a drug that kills both cancerous and healthy cells, hence why a lot of patients may experience hair loss and other side effects because it gets rid of the “bad cells” and “good cells”. Radiation therapy is when high doses of radiation are administered to shrink/kill targeted cancerous tumor/cells. Surgery for cancer treatment involves removing the tumor or cancerous tissue from the affected area. Sometimes the entire area can be cleansed of the cancer, but if it is on a difficult organ sometimes only part of the cancerous tumor can be excised.

I knew my mother experienced some of the symptoms of cancer, even though I did not want to know for sure. Even thinking about cancer would make me feel sick to my stomach. It was around this time, that I began to develop anxiety problems and panic attacks. They would never happen often, but every once in a while, I would have one and it freaked out my friends. In addition to my developing anxiety, I similarly began to develop clinical depression. My family had no history of mental illness. Tragically, I would be the first in my family to progress into having mental disorders of all kinds. The crippling depression and anxiety only ever grew worse as I aged.

As each day came after the next, I felt more and more drained. I felt as if I was only going through the motions and not living life. According to everyone, I had it all. I had beauty, family, friends, knowledge and talent, which are the things people desire the most in life. My concern is that if I supposedly have all of this, why am I unhappy? Why did I wish to…to die? To kill myself. Could I kill myself? Should I kill myself?

“Sara! It’s lunch time! Artair will be waiting!” Jaiden scowls. She waves her hand in front of my face and I can feel the air it creates whip me in the face.

I wrinkle my nose. “Sorry! Class is done already?”

“Y-yeah we are the last ones out. Again.”

Our science teacher chuckles and takes a sip of her iced coffee at her desk. Jaiden grabs me by the wrist and drags me out of the classroom.

“Honestly Sara…what’s been up with you lately?”

I bow my head down in shame. “I…I don’t know…Jaiden…I don’t know.” I actually do know. On the outside I portray the perfect girl. Gets excellent grades and is happy. In reality, I just think of ways to kill myself. My poor arms and wrists are constantly marked up with cuts and scrapes. I hate them and don’t want any more scars. I cover them up with bracelets and pray that the scars go away. I’m never self-harming again.

As Jaiden and I enter the crowded and noisy lunchroom, we make our way to one of the farthest outside corner tables. Artair sits there, a sandwich in hand, munching happily.

“Is that a BLT sandwich you got there?” Jaiden asks, as she sits down across from Artair. I grab the spot to the right of Artair.

“Hell, yeah it is! You should know by now that these are my favorite sandwiches. I bring one every day.” Artair explains.
“You know you’re going to become bored of eating the same thing every day.” I whisper.

“Oh Sara! You’re just annoyed that I eat the same sandwich every day and not grow sick of it!” Artair pats my head playfully. Jaiden laughs and flashes her pearly whites at the two of us.

I shake my head resentfully. Artair surely does have quite the quirky and exquisite mind. I open my brown paper lunch bag and pull out a turkey and swiss sandwich with honey mustard. I don’t even enjoy the taste of turkey or any meat for the matter, but I force myself to eat it anyway. During lunch, Artair and Jaiden engage in small talk. Sometimes, I speak up and join, but I mostly listen. Just listen. I love Artair and Jaiden immensely, but am upset that all of us will be attending separate high schools. I don’t know how I am going to survive without them. I don’t know how I am ever going to make new friends. I’ve never been the best at making friends. I feel over the years I have gotten more and more timid. It’s as if I feel this looming debilitating presence wash over me and it is slowly but surely draining my confidence. I have never cared much for having a ton of friends, for I prefer quality over quantity, but Artair and Jaiden both were the ones that initiated the first move on me. To this day, I cannot understand why they each decided to be my friend, but they did and have been friends with me for all of middle school. I’m shocked it went by in such a blur. Everyone tells me I am growing up too fast. Little did I know though that I would continue to grow up at speeds much faster than most children my age. I will soon be forced to become wiser, stronger and experience things that people, let alone children my age will never and should never experience in their lifetime.

Lunch is over, and it is time for the three of us to part ways for our last class of the day before heading home.

“Hey Sara, have a good day.” Artair states. He puts his hand under my chin and gives me a mischievous smile. “I’ll see you tomorrow favorite girl.” He winks and lets his hand drop before whisking away. Jaiden giggles.

“Why do you let him do that to me?” I ask.

“Sara I’m not the one who lets him do it. You are.”

My face flushes a tinted pink. “I wish he didn’t do that to me.”

“I beg to differ. I think even he wishes he could do it to you.” Jaiden ruffles my hair. “Have a good day Sara and I’ll text you later. I’ll see you tomorrow.” She turns away from me and trudges to her final class. I grin ever so slightly and go to my last class of the day before school ends.

Mark and I once more each jump into our mother’s car. Mark is happier to see mom than me, but still the ride is pleasant as Mark talks with mom. My mother nods and exchanges her answers, but I can’t help feeling worried about mom. She seems to be herself, yet she looks exhausted. There are heavy bags under her eyes and she looks paler. In addition, her hair seems thinner and her entire body frame appears fragile. I could almost just break her in half like a toothpick. My mother was always extremely skinny, tall and gorgeous, though something is off with her. Cancer. I gasp aloud, and my mother and brother turn their attention to me. What no it can’t be. I haven’t thought of that…since…since…fifth grade. Not true. I’m lying to myself. And I can never get it out of my mind. I have been consumed by the idea and have been frightened ever since.
“I’m…I’m fine!” I sputter. Mark and mom dart their eyes away and resume their previous conversation. I spend the remainder to the car ride gazing out the window.

After arriving home, Mark and I march upstairs to our bedrooms to finish our work before dinner. I’m curious as to what we are having tonight. I hope it is something I enjoy eating for once.

“Sara! Mark! Come down here! Now!” My mother commands. I put down my notebook and hurry over to my door, cracking it open and poking my head out. Mark does the same thing, except journeys out of his room entirely and begins his expedition downstairs.

“Is dinner ready?” I inquire.

“U-uh…yes, it is! But please come out Sara.”

I do as I’m told and shut my door gently behind me. When I get outside my room, I observe my mother sitting down on the couch. My father is there too. When did he get home? I make way to the edge of the stair railing overlooking the living room and couch area below where my father, mother and Mark are all seated. Dad is sitting tense, with his hand placed gently in his lap. My mother looks petrified, but the serious facial expression reads something different. Mark sits on the edge of the couch, pondering what to make of the situation. I grab a railing with both of my hands and hang onto it tightly, as I stick my head through the gap in between the railing bars to listen in on what my mother has to say.

“Kids…before we have dinner…there is something I need to tell you.” Her face morphs into inflamed crimson and looks like she may burst into tears at any second. My father frowns and isn’t delighted.

“W-what is it?”

“What is it?” Mark inquires.

“Well…kids…” My father begins.

“Well kids…I…I have cancer.” My mother blurts out.

*Cancer.*

*Cancer?*

*CANCER!!????*

*I KNEW IT.*

*I KNEW IT THIS ENTIRE TIME.*

*I FUCKING KNEW IT I KNEW IT I WAS RIGHT I KNEW IT I KNEW IT KNEW IT KNEW IT.*

I feel my eyes fervently rush towards the back of my skull. Am I going to faint? Or scream? Or cry? Or vomit? I can’t breathe. I might do all three.

This was the day I truthfully lost a part of myself. The boulder held upon my shoulders grew bigger. The part of myself that I lost, I am still desperately trying to recover to this day.
“Y—your mother has cancer.” My dad mumbles.
“I—I have breast cancer. I will die from this.”

Mark starts to ask mom ridiculous questions and at this point my entire mind is checked out. I can’t hear nor understand anything anyone is saying. I dizzily stand up and saunter to my bedroom door. I make sure to close my door as quietly as possible, so no one hears. I hope no one noticed I left. I will be down for dinner in a moment.

I lunge myself at my bed and land on top of it with a loud thud. I bury my face in my pillow and scream. I shriek in rage as I pound my fists against my bed and my legs kick rapidly with a temper never seen quite before. I keep screaming until my throat feels raw and my body bushed from the kicking and punching. My tears and snot wet my pillow. I roll over too far and fall off my bed, still sobbing and gritting my teeth together to keep from screaming. I find my phone and text Jaiden I want to kill myself. I sent the same thing to Artair and the same thing to my other friend Merlyn and to another friend Jules. Whatever. No one responds nor cares anyway. I can’t let anyone see me like this. I wipe my nose on my sleeve and rub my eyes until the tears are dried. I make sure to straighten my clothes before peeking out of my room and crawling downstairs. When I make my way to the kitchen, father, mother and Mark are all sitting down. They all look like they have barely touched their food, which consists of pork chops, mashed potatoes, carrots and green beans and buttered noodles.

“D—did I miss anything?” My voice sounds hoarse, as I can barely speak.
“No.” Dad answers.

I shyly make my way to the table and sit down. Everyone gapes at me. I pretend to not notice and pick up my fork. I begin stuffing myself with the veggies, noodles and potatoes. I viciously cut my meat and tear at it with my teeth. No words escape from me at this moment. I just want to finish this food as swiftly as I can. I feel like throwing up but won’t. As I eat my meal, the rest of my family eventually joins in. Our dinner is silent. Nothing to be heard except occasional grinding of food and gulping of liquids. Once I finish pounding out my meal, I excuse myself.

“Sara, your father and I are going out.” My mother hollers at me as I trek up the stairs.
“Okay.” I reply.

When I reach my bedroom, I shut the door and propel myself at my bed again.

I bury my face in my pillow once more and begin throwing a tantrum. I’m acting like a two-year-old, but I don’t care. I knew this entire time that my mother was sick. Why didn’t she tell me? Why did she have to wait until now tell me? I feel betrayed. She lied to me. She fucking lied. She betrayed me. her own daughter. She fucking betrayed me. I don’t know if I should be furious or disappointed. I don’t know why I feel angry, when I knew the truth the whole time.

She will die of cancer. I do not know when, but now I fully comprehend that her death is inevitable. My brother was ignorant. He was unaware this whole time and was utterly shocked that our mother had cancer and was going to die from it. My father knew. He knew and like mother, decided it would be best to keep her terminal disease hidden from her two children. She wanted to protect us. Protect us from what? If she truly wanted to protect us, she would not have lied and never told us until now before she is going to die. The boulder would grow to be even
heavier from this moment forth and for years I would always feel this deep betrayal in the back of my mind. Guilty because I learn that it is better to lie to your young children about this and to protect them from the psychological trauma that may develop, despite how I still developed horrific psychological trauma. Eventually I would forgive my mother for doing this and understand why she did this. What makes me feel the most miserable though is that I feel I should have been the one to die. If I were to die, I’m so young that it’s not like it would matter. I don’t have a husband, children, career or much of a future. This splendidly attractive person has a husband, kids, career and life, only soon to be torn away from her by force. My mother did not deserve this. No one deserves this. Her husband and children to not deserve this to happen. My father did not marry my mother only to find out she would be dying of an incurable disease leaving behind two children. Mark and I did not deserve to grow up without a mother. She and I would miss so many different things, my mother would never get to see me graduate high school, go to college, graduate college, get married, have kids, travel the world and make all my dreams and own successes come alive.

I am awoken from my silent sobbing to my phone vibrating. It’s a message from my friend Jules. Please don’t die Sara! I scan the message thoughtlessly. I’m not going to die. Jeez. I chuck my phone on the floor and go back to suffocating myself with my own tears. I’m just going to go to sleep early tonight.

I had only just begun to finally drift off to sleep when my door bursts open. Looming in the door frame are both of my parents. My father has his arms crossed in front of his chest and his facial expression reads livid. My mother stands, arms dropped at her sides steam fuming from her ears. Why are they mad at me?

“Sara what is the meaning of this?” My father growls.

I sit up on my bed. “W-what are you talking about?” I reply.

“Sara you tried to commit suicide!?” My mother howls.

W-what!? I did not try to commit suicide!”

“Yes, you did! We just got a call from your principal reporting to me that you texted some of your friends you wanted to kill yourself and then you never replied to them, so your friends took it into their own hands to report it.”

“I didn’t try to kill myself!” Wow my friends really thought I was serious? I didn’t mean I actually wanted to kill myself or was going to attempt killing myself. Wanting to kill oneself and executing the action are two different things entirely. Yes, I wanted to kill myself, but was I going to go through with it? Hell no! I am too much of a coward. If anything, I would try to kill myself, yet I would fail. I would only end being physically and mentally deformed for the remainder of my life, which would be much worse. “I-I didn’t really mean it! I-I wasn’t going to kill myself! I-it was a joke!”

“Some sick joke that is.” My father grumbles.

“Sara don’t ever do that again. We are going to call back the principal and tell him you’re okay. You better explain to your friends you’re fine. Now go to bed for school tomorrow.” My mother demands. She and my father walk out of the door frame, closing the door shut behind them.
Seriously!!! This isn’t about me!!! You tell me you have terminal cancer and are upset that I threatened to kill myself!!!?? This is such fucking bullshit! Argggggghhhh! I swoop my blankets over myself and fall asleep suffocating in my own despair, sweat and tears.

Six AM sharp I am jolted awake from my alarm clock ringing thunderously. After a few misses of the button I finally get it to shut up. I roll out of bed and quickly try to get dressed and make myself look presentable. When I stumble in the bathroom Mark and I share, I remember what happened last night. Suddenly, a piercing pain forms in my stomach and I grab the bathroom counter for support. I feel like I might vomit. *Don’t throw up. Don’t throw up.* I eye the soap bottle resting next to the sink. *Soap. That should make me feel better.* I grab the soap bottle and pump some of the white foam onto my hands. I turn the sink on cold and rub my soapy hands under the frigid water. I want to stay clean…and germ free. Free of germs. I can’t catch cancer…hah yeah of course I can’t, yet this was the beginning of an obsessive focus on hand-washing that would drive me to insanity. It eventually caused the skin on my hands and arms all the way up to my elbows to become dry, cracked and bloody from over washing.

I mosey down stairs to make myself breakfast. Two frozen chocolate chip Eggo waffles. Unarguably the breakfast of champions. As I sit down to eat, Mark is still asleep per usual and mother and father are getting ready for work themselves. Both are drinking coffee, watching the news and taking turns reading the morning paper. Everything seems normal. It’s as if my mother wasn’t sick and dying of cancer after all. I take a bit of my warm, buttery and syrup laden waffle. It does not taste as delicious as it was…yesterday. I’ve previously lost my mind, my heart and now my taste buds.

My mom drops Mark and I off at school before driving away. Mark seems as cheerful as ever and runs to greet his friends. I sigh and trudge to my locker.

“Sara you’re alive!” I hear Merlyn shout at me from behind. She grabs my shoulders and hugs. “I-I thought you were dead.” She starts to cry.

“Sara, oh thank god!” Jaiden whimpers. She comes and wraps her arms around me.

“O-okay I’m fine. Sorry about that…really.” I apologize. *Ugh I hate you people. You don’t truly give a shit about me. Stop it.* I smile at the two of them and escort myself off to class. Both of them gawk at me bewildered.

“Sara are you okay!?” Jaiden cries.

“I’m fine! See you all later!” I yell.

The remainder of the school day is a blur. I attend all my classes, don’t talk or socialize per usual, yet I still turn in all my work and succeed in my schoolwork for the day. Lunch is uneventful. I eat my lunch as Jaiden and Artair talk amongst themselves and sporadically, try to get me to laugh or smile. I appreciate their kindness, but I’m starting not to give a shit about what they do for me. After all, I must focus on myself and I can only provide my own happiness.

“Sara this is for you.” Artair hands me a thick piece of purple construction paper. His eyes have a sad presence in them, though his smile still pierces my heart.

“Thanks, Artair.”
“Of course, Sara...of course.” Artair is standing so close to me I feel his breath on my face. I could kiss him right now. I kind of wish he would kiss me. We stand face to face for a couple seconds before Artair turns away from me and saunters in the opposite direction.

“See you tomorrow Sara.” Jaiden calls. “After all, tomorrow is Friday! Be happy!” She skips down the hallways past the crowded clumps of people.

I grin yet feel a hopeless cloud hover over me. I want to feel happy, but ever since last night I think all the happiness I ever had was drained out of me, forever to be lost.

At the end of the day, mother picks Mark and I up from school. She looks sleepy, but not as sickly looking as usual. That’s a good sign. Mark asks mom how her day was, and she laughs in reply, answering all of Mark’s questions per usual. I remain silent but smile as if to look amused. Later in the evening, after our delicious supper of breaded chicken, veggies and cornbread I head upstairs to my bedroom to go to sleep. It’s too early to go to sleep but I have nothing better to do.

My mother notices me going upstairs and without my knowing, or more so without me caring, she follows me upstairs.

“What do you want?” That comes out harsher than I planned.

“I…I wanted to talk to you.”

“About what?” I keep walking and ignore her until I’m inside my room. I can’t close my door because she’s stuck in between the door frame.

“About yesterday.”

“What about yesterday?”

“Well...” My mother starts off. She comes completely in my room and shuts the door behind her. “I know you’re very upset what I told you yesterday and I am sorry.”

I say nothing. I don’t even look at her. My back is still facing away from her.

“I…I just wanted to protect you and Mark…I know I shouldn’t have hidden it from you…I just…I didn’t know what to do at this point....”

I can’t think nor speak.

“I know this is extremely tough for you. It is for me too...”

“I wish you told me!!! I wish you didn’t lie!!! I wish this didn’t happen!!!! I…” I just have an overwhelming urge to scream and pound my fist pugnaciously against the wall.

“I know...” My mother coos. She tries to reach out her hand toward me. I am hesitant...like a frightened puppy, I don’t want her to touch me, but at the same time, I crave it...I crave her touch...her...

In a moment’s time, mother pulls me to her chest and embraces me tightly. I inhale deeply and shut my eyes. The two of us just stand there. Hugging. Silent. I want this moment to last forever. I wish she didn’t have to die. I wish she didn’t have to go through years of pain and mental torture due to this disease. My mother was a very healthy person. The fact that she got
cancer, was just bad luck. Terrible, unfair luck. Why was my mother choosing this? The countless surgeries, chemotherapies, radiation. All of it…for what? For me. For us. For her husband and two children. The only three things in her life truly worth fighting for. Call me selfish, but if I were in her shoes I would not choose to fight it. I would let it take me sooner. She knows it will take her, but if she fights it, it will take longer to kill her. I am not a quitter, and neither is she, but I know one thing for sure is that she has the most strength, bravery and courage out of anyone I have ever known. I am told I am as strong and brave as she, but I do know I could never choose the path she wished to travel.

Six AM. Time to wake up for school. I spring up from my bed sheets shakily. Ever since my mother told Mark and I about her cancer I have become paranoid. I didn’t mean to become paranoid…I just for some reason can’t shake these obsessive thought patterns that have consumed my mind.

It started off small. Something that I did not think was a big deal. Everyone washes their hands. People wash their hands after using the restroom, before eating something and after handling dirt or certain work. People even may wash their hands after coming home from somewhere that was particularly dirty, or germ infested. I washed my hands like a normal person…well so I thought. Honestly, at first, I did…until my habit began to become extreme.

Please don’t wake up.

I sneak into my bathroom and use the restroom. After I wash my hands. Except, I don’t just wash my hands. I wash them twice. I wash my hands all the way up to my elbows. I refuse to touch anything unless it is with a tissue or paper towel. I don’t know why I can’t get over this fear or addiction I have developed. I waste so much tissue, paper towel and soap that my father is angry at me and my mother is frustrated with my behavior.

I don’t waste much tissue. I think to myself as I pump four globs of soap onto my hands. This foam soap is scented tropical paradise. Whatever that means. I start to scrub my hands. It feels painful because my hands are so dry and raw, yet I continue anyway. I feel my heart start to race and I run the soap up my arms and wash them profusely. My body begins to become less tense as the warm water flows across my fractured flesh and fills every crack with moisture and soap, only to suck it dry again. I reach for more soap and my mother opens the bathroom door. Shit I didn’t lock it.

“SARA WHAT ARE YOU DOING? STOP!” My mother is in her pjs and robe. She doesn’t look very awake, but her fuming expression makes her look alert. My mother swipes the soap bottle away from me. “STOP WASTING SOAP SARA. STOP IT. YOU DON’T NEED TO WASH YOUR HANDS.”

My eyes begin to fill with tears. “B-but I need to!” I wince. I try to grab the soap bottle from her, but she is too swift and tall, raising the bottle above her head. I try to jump but can’t reach it.

“YOU’RE NOT GOING TO GET CANCER FROM ME SARA.” My mother hisses. “I-I KNOW THAT!”

“NO, YOU DON’T! I’M GOING TO HAVE TO WATCH YOU NOW.”
“NO!” I dry my hands and scramble into my bedroom, slamming the door. I continue to get ready for school as normal.

_I’m not washing my hands too much. I know I’m not going to get cancer. I just need to clean myself. Clean myself…_

**Three Weeks Later~**

Six AM, alarm blaring. Time for school. I hop out of bed and go to the restroom. _I hope she doesn’t wake up._

I turn on the faucet. The water is flowing down in a steady stream. Soon to be warm and relaxing. I lean in for the soap and pump three squirts. _So far so good._ I rub the soap in my palms and up my arms up to elbow.

Without warning my mother opens the bathroom door. I flinch and quickly try to rub the soap off my arms. My mother narrows her eyes at me. I glaze at her petrified and embarrassed.

“Oh, you can continue Sara. I’m just going to watch you.” My mother says happily, but with an eerily angry edge to it.

I wince and wash off my hands and then dry them. My mother stands in the doorway to the bathroom Mark and I share. She eyes the soap bottle. I pretend to ignore her and keep up my daily routine. It’s painful. I want to wash my hands again even though I just washed them. I rub some tinted moisturized makeup on my face. _I must wash my hands again. I have foundation all over my hands._ I eye the soap bottle. My mother of course notices this.

“And what do you think you’re doing?”

“I-I need to wash my hands.”

“Why? No, you don’t.”

“Y-yes I do. I have foundation all over my hands.” I show my mother my palms covered with makeup. I grab the soap bottle.

“NO, YOU DON’T.”

“Y-YES I DO!” I play tug of war with my mother for the soap bottle.

“NO SARA.”

“Y-yes please!” I begin to cry.

“Fine.” My mother does not let me have the liquid soap bottle, for she squirts one pump of soap on my hands.

My hands are shaking, and I rub them together anxiously to wash off the sticky makeup. I wish I could wash my hands BETTER. But STUPID mom won’t let me. Once I’m done washing my hands, I finish getting ready for school, with my mother observing me of course.

I glance down at my hands. Unpainted fingernails. My hands are so dry they are bleeding and I put four band aids on a few of the cracked knuckles that have too large of cuts that can’t cease bleeding.
I stare at my hands.

*Beautiful, bleeding, dry hands.*

*Is this what being attractive is about?*

*I can’t get cancer now, right?*

A demented smile forms across my face.

I can still remember the day she died like it was yesterday. I was a junior in high school. Sixteen years old. I was in my high school’s pep band, an organization in which a group of members from jazz, concert, symphonic and marching band all come together in a smaller group to play “pep” tunes for the high school boys’ and girls’ basketball teams. I remember coming home on Tuesday (January 27th, 2015) at about 8pm. My high school men’s basketball team won barely. Final score 47 to 45 (I cannot remember exactly), but I was thrilled that Pine Creek won.

At this time, I knew my mother was dying and very ill. Did you know that when a person is dying, the last sense to go is their hearing? This means that a person dying of certain diseases, they lose their ability to speak and to function like most people. They are bed ridden and must be fed, clothed, bathed and have their basic necessities taken care of for them. The last thing a person is able to experience on their own is hearing (besides seeing, unless your disease involves the deterioration of sight). My mother was at the point where she could no longer talk to any of us, but she could understand what we were speaking to her.

I stroll in my mother’s bedroom and spot her laying cozily in her bed watching television.

“Hi mom!” I exclaim. She grins at me and nods her head, acknowledging my presence.

“Guess what?” I pause. “Pine Creek men’s basketball team won! It was such a fun time playing for them! We just barely won! Just barely! We won by like three points!”

My mother mumbles gibberish and nods her head again. My father comes out of the bathroom ready for bed, to climb in bed with her for the evening.

I beam my pearly whites at her for what I didn’t know to be the last time.

“Okay goodnight mom! Love you! See you tomorrow!” I whisk out of the master bedroom and into my room, getting ready for bed and drifting off to sleep. A content high schooler, who isn’t as focused or fazed on her dying mother.

“SARA WAKE UP” my Aunt Marijn whispers in my ear, as she shakes me awake. My family knew my mother was dying, so over the past few months numerous relatives came to visit us. Everyone wanted to say their final goodbyes and best wishes to my mother. Currently, my Aunt Marijn was here visiting my mother.

“W-what is it?” I murmur. I lean over, and my clock reads 6:22 am. “It’s...6 in the morning. I have a delayed start on Wednesdays. We don’t start school until 9:30am.”

“Your mother is in the hospital. We have to go.”

“W-what!”

“Let’s go.”
I barely have time to brush my teeth and style my hair, let alone even change into clothes. My aunt is dragging me by the wrist to the car. Mark, my grandmother Enora Shyama and grandfather Aurelius Shyama all pile into my aunt’s car to drive to the hospital my mom is staying at. The car ride is swift and none of us talk. How could we? I can barely keep my eyes open as it is.

When we arrive at our destination, the hospital is beautiful. How could something so huge and terrifying be as breathless as it is before me? As I amble inside the double automatic glass doors, I turn right and am led down a noiseless hallway. All the doors are a lush wooden tan. Some of them have flowers hanging on their door. I don’t know what the flowers signify, but later realize that flowers are only placed on the doors where people have died. We come upon my mother’s room. There are yellow flowers mounted onto its wall. Pretty. My aunt slowly turns the knob and all of us enter inside.

Once in the room, I study how plain and sterile it appears to be. Typical hospital room. My father is slumped in a chair. His eyes are red, and his face is covered in sweat. It looks like he has been weeping. In the hospital bed, my mother is sound asleep. I start to approach her bed, until my father halts me.

“Sara…” he trails off. “Kids…your mother…died…this morning.”

“When?” Mark blurts out.

“6 am.”

“Y-you didn’t…we didn’t…even…” I pipe in.

“I chose not to wake you. She told me you already know.” My father explains.

My aunt and grandparents start crying. My father whimpers and Mark tries to hold back his tears.

Something inside me died.

I always thought my heart was made of glass. It contained several green vines, plants, leaves and blooming rainbow flowers of all different sorts. Inside my heart, the flowers bloomed vividly and healthily. However, as I grew more and learned more my heart began to crack. The flowers started to wilt and die. Everything in my heart was turning black and dead. The weight on my shoulder growing even more grueling than before. I think my heart just shattered—burst into fragments that made up my soul. And to this day, I still have not recovered all the pieces.

I try to inhale air, but nothing fills inside me. I don’t speak. I don’t cry. Part of me wants to scream and sob, but I refuse. I feel dizzy and like throwing up, but it never comes. I already knew my mother was going to die. I had known for as long as I could recall that she was going to die, it was just a matter of when. I guess now that she finally did die, I am in shock, despite how I expected it. I feel like a zombie as I make my way toward my mothers’ bed. She’s dead. She looks like she’s sleeping. Though, when I place my hand on her forehead it is as cold as ice. I look down and her fingernails are purple. Her lips have a blue tint to them as well. I flinch and trip backwards.

“Say goodbye.” My father whispers.
My eyes widen in dismay. “G-goodbye mom. L-love you.” My voice is so soft its almost inaudible.

I turn away from her and awkwardly stand in the corner of the tiny hospital room. We have to go home. Mother will be cremated. At exactly six am on Wednesday January 28th, 2015 my mother died at the age of forty-six from breast cancer. She will have a service here in Colorado Springs, CO where her Coloradon friends can celebrate her life and then this Summer, she will have a service in Illinois, where my mother is originally from to be buried there. Mark and I miss the rest of the week at school. Rumors spread like wildfire that Sara and Mark have lost their mother. No one can react or say anything. Then again, I feel nothing never needs to be said anyway.

When Mark, my grandparents, aunt and I exit the hospital to go home, we pile in the car and begin our drive. However, our aunt makes a wrong turn and one of the nearest cars honks violently at her. My aunt is irritated and heartbroken from her younger sister just passing away, but my aunt decides to roll down her window and begin swearing at the driver of the car. I feel embarrassed and sad that this is happening, as does everyone else in the car, but we stay hushed.

“FUCKING SHUT YOUR MOUTH! WE JUST HAD A DEATH IN THE FAMILY! I WENT THE WRONG WAY ON ACCIDENT! YOU FUCKING SHUT UP!” Once my Aunt is done with her rant, she rolls up the window and all of us go home.

When I get home, I start to frantically clean my mother’s bedroom. Germs…my OCD part of me taunts me. My aunt, grandparents and Mark are all annoyed at my frenzy, but stop complaining and give me a rest. After I vacuum and clean my parent’s master bedroom, I am assigned to pick my mother’s “outfit”. Before someone is cremated, they are usually shown off and the family can pick an “outfit” for the deceased member to be cremated in. I knew perfectly what my mother’s outfit would be.

I scurry to my parent’s closet and throw open the dusty, brown and wooden dresser that is perfectly tucked in the corner of the cramped walk-in closet. My mother loved warm weather, so capris and a short sleeve shirt is what suits best. I pick out some white socks, purple underwear, a white lacy bra, jean capris, a white tank top and then a grey short sleeved shirt with blue and purple butterflies on it. To top it off, I find her favorite hat—a jean bucket hat. This outfit looks cute and is perfect for her. She’ll be dressed in this to be shown off at her wake service and then cremated in this outfit later.

My father comes home and is frazzled and exhausted. I tell him that I cleaned and pick out mother’s outfit. He is a bit aggravated at me but shrugs it off. He just has a lot to do to plan for my mother’s wake and then funeral service, not mention burial service too. I feel bad for him. He has to do this for his own wife.

My mother died.

My family fell apart.

We are still trying to be put back together.

I can say I am doing better, but do not know how my father and brother are doing with their own personal recovery processes.
In addition, I can say that I am rebuilding myself and recovering but I had to break even further for this to happen. I also understand that I will never and can never be the same again. In a sense I will always be broken, but I think I am finally accepting that.

At first, I hated being broken or feeling broken. I loathed that a lot of terrible things happened to me that I did not deserve. No one deserves any of this. I wouldn’t even wish this on my worst enemies. The pain from the burden I carry will always be with me for the rest of my life, but over time I’ve gotten used to the load. It does not feel as prominent as it once did. Despite it growing permanently, the pain isn’t as dramatic and cutting. It has become more of a dull numbing pain. It’s like people who live with fibromyalgia. In the beginning their pain is unbearable but eventually their pain becomes less noticeable and affects them less, like yes, they will always be experiencing pain, but in time they don’t think about or notice their pain as much. Their pain doesn’t not hurt them or affect their lives as much as it did when they first were diagnosed with their condition.

The next few days, the family was masked with anguish.

Everyone was crying.

Not me.

Well actually, I was bawling on the inside.

I never show my true feelings. The entire situation was uncomfortable. How could I have the courage to legitimately tear up in front of my father, brother and other distant relatives that have come to visit? I needed to look brave in the eyes of others—make it seem like everything is all right, even though we all know it is quite the opposite.

My shattered and deadened heart still contained slight color from the minuscule and dehydrated flowers inside it. Nevertheless, after my mother’s passing, the rotten and dead flowers within my heart became dirt. There was now no vines or plants and all the flowers inside were disintegrated. Huge chunks missing from my heart are more obvious. The few pieces of glass remaining have become stained and malformed. This event itself took the largest toll on my heart and mind.

“Sara, time to go!” My father shouts. There is pain behind his voice, as if he is about to burst into tears at any moment.

“Coming!” I yell back. I barely recognize the pitch of my own voice. It sounds raspy, as if I have been smoking a pack of cigarettes. The tingle in my throat makes breathing and holding back my own tears a challenge.

I take a quick glance at myself in the mirror. Black pants, a black long-sleeve dress shirt and a dark navy and pink flowery scarf. I despise the color pink; the color reminds me of her. It makes me want to throw up. My makeup is done in its usual quirky and colorful way. My blonde hair is in low pigtails. I frown at my reflection in disappointment. I wish it was me and not her that died. I always wanted to be prettier—to be skinnier or to be dead. Dead and not actually living. Because currently, I am part of the living dead.

I amble out of my bathroom and into the main corridor of my house. My house is beyond gorgeous. It reminds me of how attractive she was. Covering the floor is tan carpet and maple
wooden floors. The walls are painted a dark sand color with a few open windows that are neatly covered with white blinds. A beautiful black chandelier hangs from above that emanates light to everything in the area. Green house plants of all sorts are scattered between brown leather couches and gold lamps. The flat screen TV in the living room is glossy and black that stands out next to the neutral, earthy tones of the living room. The kitchen has black and stainless-steel appliances. The kitchen table is a chocolate wood with four chairs.

My mother adored organizing and home design. She made sure the house we lived in was impeccable. The first floor is something that could be taken out of a home and garden magazine, it’s that classy. Simple, clean and minimalistic that is pure classic. Nonetheless, she’s gone; therefore, I think everything in the house lost its luster. She gave the house spark, elegance and happiness. She took that all away from the house when she left. Nothing can replace it. Is this why my father wants to move, even though I adore the house? I hate moving, I have moved far too many times. This house holds history and amazing memories. Though, tragic memories wreak this home even with the wonderful memories that occurred within it as well. It is justifiable why my father would want to escape this house—run away and leave behind the torment it created for all of us.

I snap out of my daze and slip on my black converse shoes on. Everything I own is black. I finally notice my father and fourteen-year old brother, Mark, come into view. The two of them are handsome. They are both in black dress pants. Mark is wearing a polo shirt and my father wears a dress shirt with a tie and jacket. My father and Mark look very professional and fashionable. They clean up nicely.

After the three of us fasten on our shoes, we slide out the garage door and jump into my father’s pale green Subaru Forrester. Theoretically, this was my mother’s car; she always drove it like she owned it. Before leaving, my father adjusts the seat to his settings and moves the rearview mirror to his height. It never dawned on me that no one drove this car before she passed away. Even the scents of the car faintly smell like my mother; a new car smell that lingers with a touch of apple, cinnamon and Autumn scents. The whole car ride is silent, and the air feels unbreathable. It is a sunny, clear-skied winter day of January. Of course, on her day it would be good weather; it better be. I wouldn’t expect her day to have terrible weather; she is too marvelous for that. I blankly stare out the window, but in truth, millions of thoughts swirl in my head. I always wanted it to be me. It’s funny; the people who want to live don’t and the people who don’t want to live must survive.

Mark sits in the front passenger seat silently on his cell phone. He probably is texting or playing one of the games on his Android phone. My father is quiet and fixes his eyes on the road. His coffee brown eyes give the impression of sorrow. Obviously, they express grief beyond words. I can barely bring myself to look him in the eyes for more than a second.

My mother was good-looking, clever, kind and annoying as hell, but had the most immense and vibrant personality I did not even comprehend could be possible for a human being. She was also the strongest human being I ever knew to walk this existence. Which is why, I feel unfit to even be here. Why should I be living now when I am not even tough enough like her to do it? I do not see light and vision in everything; let alone myself. As much as she got on my nerves, she saw the universe as something extraordinary. She was able to use that talent of hers to get herself far in life. She was able to be stable for herself and others. She thought of herself as dazzling and she thought of others in that sense too, which is probably why everyone
thought she was frankly superb. That glimmer of hope my mother had in every obstacle was astounding. The flicker in her blue eyes was so prominent it blinded everyone; it overwhelmed me. She deserved better—she deserved more. A lot more. She actually deserved the best. She deserved everything out of this world.

“Sara, get out.” Mark grumbles.

I flinch from the sound of Mark’s grave voice. He sounds annoyed and slams the car door forcefully.

*We’re here.*

I unbuckle my seat belt and open the door on my side of the car. Nausea starts to settle in my stomach again. Genuinely, I don’t want to exist anymore. If I didn’t exist, I wouldn’t have to go through this.

My father, Mark and I stroll side by side up the hilly parking lot. A slight breeze in the air makes my spine shiver, but the three of us keep walking.

To a place we used to not know but know too well now.

There are not a ton of cars in the church parking lot which does not alarm me. The family has to arrive earlier than everyone else to prepare the coffin for the service and get in place to greet the guests upon arrival. Curiosity ignites inside my stomach, for I am not sure how many people will show up. My mother had plenty of friends here, despite how she was on the quieter side.

After marching up the hill, the church comes into view. It is smaller than typical churches, but still intimidating. The building itself is made of a tannish-brown brick material. Coming upon the front entrance, there are two main doors made of transparent glass with large windows on both sides. The landscape surrounding the front consists of rock beds, beige patchy grass and a bronze pot fountain. Next to the fountain is a silver stone that reads: St. Gabriel, The Archangel Catholic Church.

Mark catches hold of the door handle and lets my father and I step inside first. Not a sound can be heard, except for the rumble of the heater. An old man wearing gold and white glinting robes saunters toward us. This man is the priest. He solemnly grins at my father and takes his hand, shaking it rigidly. The priest does the same to Mark and whispers something inaudible to him. When the priest turns to me, my olive-colored eyes glance down at my shoes timidly. I feel a cold hand touch my flesh and the priest shakes my hand.

“I am sorry for your loss.” He murmurs in my ear.

“Thank you.” Is all I can spat out. My face feels sweaty from embarrassment and I never peer up at the priest.

My father and Mark have meandered off toward the colossal casket that stands a few feet to my left. My heart hurdles out of my chest when I notice it is halfway open. If I were to get closer, I would be able to see my mother’s dead body. My mother is going to be cremated, but before that takes place, the funeral service places the body in a customized coffin designed by the family for the loved one. I got to choose the clothes my mother would wear, and my father chose the design of her casket. Swallowing the bile in my throat, I whisk toward the coffin. Sure
enough, my mother is there. She looks like she is sleeping. The outfit I picked out for my mom makes her look authentically real—not like a Barbie doll or photoshopped model. In movies, corpses are usually dressed over the top, but not my mom. The apparel that I selected was something she wore on Spring or Summer days. A denim, floppy hat hugs her head (she is bald, and I did not want anyone gazing at her hairless head). My favorite shirt of hers was a grey butterfly T-shirt with purple, blue and orange butterflies. I was always a fan of the layered look and picked out a white tank top for her to wear underneath. For the bottoms, I selected jean Capri pants and purple socks. A casual and cute outfit, I would have stolen from her closet if I could wear her clothes.

Another ritual the funeral service does for the deceased loved one is make them look more alive by applying makeup to their face. I could distinguish pink lipstick on my mom’s lips, nude foundation, peach-colored blush on her face, brown mascara, brown eyeliner and a sand-colored eyeshadow on her eyelids. I was impressed with how detailed the makeup was done.

Part of me was desperate to touch my mother one last time, but at the same time I did not want to touch a dead person. I feel like it would be disrespectful to touch my mother even though I spent the last sixteen years of my life touching her constantly—whether that be hugging her, holding her hand or tapping her on the shoulder. Her skin was always smooth and soft like fluffy clouds in the sky.

The coffin that my mother lays in is a chestnut wooden casket with pink, purple and white flowers on top. My mother treasured flowers—probably the reason why I became obsessed with them. I get on my tip-toes and inhale the smell of the plants. These specific flowers are hibiscuses, lilies, roses and daisies. In addition to the flowers on top, a pink ribbon banner with black cursive lettering displays the following message: In memory of a loving mother.

“Sara, get over here!” Mark bellows.

I circle around, and Mark is standing by the door with our dad. I did not even realize my father and Mark were already welcoming guests, nor did I comprehend that I had been hovering over my mother’s coffin longer than I would’ve liked. Feeling rushed and flustered, I nearly trip over my shoes traveling toward the two of them. Mark’s cobalt eyes squint at me suspiciously. My father is already shaking hands with one of the guests and chatting happily with her.

“Why did you call me over?” I snap at Mark.

“We are supposed to address the guests and thank them for their respects, you idiot.” Mark hisses.

“Don’t call me that!”

“Shut up!”

My father pauses his conversation with a guest and gives Mark and I a resentful expression to quit it.

My jaw clenches tightly and I bawl my hands into fists. I want to say something nasty to Mark, but I won’t. Today is a rough day for everyone; I will not let any vulgar comments Mark says tick me off. I always had a fierier tongue compared to my younger sibling. Words and
insults were my forte when it came to the fights Mark and I would engage in. I used my words and Mark used his fists—the quintessential sister and brother showdown.

The funeral service started at 10am. More people are arriving now that it is getting closer for the event to begin. I take a couple steps away from Mark and stand up straighter. When people come to meet me, I want to look presentable and appear unfazed. I compulsively wipe the inconspicuous dust off my shirt and adjust my scarf. A dull cough escapes my mouth and I pray no one noticed. I can feel myself sweating more profusely the longer I remain here.

“Hello Sara.”

I blink a couple times and acknowledge a guest in front of me reaching out her hand for mine. With wide eyes, I grab the lady’s hand, shaking it quickly and robustly. The woman turns out to be one of my mother’s childhood and college friends named Naenia.

“O-oh hello Naenia! It is nice to see you! T-thank you for coming.”

I clear my throat and keep shaking Naenia’s hand longer than appropriate due to restlessness.

“I-it is nice to see you too Sara.”

Before I pull Naenia’s hand off her body, she yanks it away.

“Sara…I am…deeply sorry for your loss. I loved your mom…a lot you know.”

Of course, Naenia adored my mother. Why the hell would she come to her memorial if she didn’t. Every person here is going to tell me the same thing. For the past three days, all I have been hearing from people is “I am sorry for your loss”. The first few times I didn’t mind hearing it, in fact it made me feel better, but now it’s being repeated so often the phrase has become a monotonous record player stuck in my head with no off button. The words no longer affect me in the same way they did a couple days ago. The phrase causes me numbness. When people tell me, they are sorry for my loss, I don’t feel better. As a matter of fact, I feel upset because I’m sick of hearing it. Nevertheless, it is a universal custom to say such words when someone’s loved one dies. People probably understand that I have heard these six words a million times in the past seventy-two hours. They apprehend that saying it is bothersome and does not help, but to show sympathy and to be considerate to the family experiencing the loss, everyone will say “I am sorry for your loss”. Even if I was attending a funeral service I would say those precise words to the family because I want to be gracious to the family in their rough time. I would make sure to be sympathetic. People have virtuous intentions when telling others this, but that’s all this phrase simply is for me now—just a phrase. At times like this, it’s the thought that counts.

After giving Naenia an earnest flash of my white teeth, she kisses my cheek and parts ways, trying to scope out my father or Mark. I do not understand why I must stand and welcome all these people. I want to thank them, but I feel I can show my gratitude to them in a way other than this. Everything I am doing feels robotic and fake. This is the first funeral service I have gone to. It is both sad and funny that it has to be my own mother’s. Trying to think positively about the entire dilemma is unfortunate. I want this day to be over. I want all of this to be done. If I could take a magic wand and make it all go away as cliché as it is, I would in a heartbeat. I need to find a genie and he needs to grant me three wishes. One of the wishes would be to
reverse all of this. I would die for my family and friends in an instant. I would die for her immediately. The five stages of grief are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Am I in denial? Probably. This is one fucked up dream and I’ll wake up to get ready for school.

I feel a tap on my shoulder and it’s Mark.

“Sara the service is starting. Come on.”

I was daydreaming once again and was distraught by my brother. “O-oh, it is? O-okay.”

As Mark and I saunter up my father, we come to an unforeseen halt, I nearly crash into him.

“M-Mark what are we doing? Aren’t we supposed to go inside?”

“The family of the deceased follows in behind the coffin.” Mark points to mom’s casket. There are six pallbearers that carry the coffin inside. The pallbearers my father assigned are all close friends of his and mom’s. Bricius, Vladimir, Cadeyrn, Dimitrios, Cyrillus and Radcliff will lift my mother’s hefty casket to escort her inside the main area of the church where the service takes place. My father, Mark and I will closely trail behind. My father straightens his tie and signals for Mark and me to start walking. Two men dressed in black suits open the glass doors for the pallbearers and my mother is ushered away. Perfectly on cue, classical music starts to play.

I pursue Mark and enter the main corridor of the church. I am astounded by the inside. Even though, I have been to mass here before, the inside has been transformed for the service it barely looks familiar. Entering the glass doors, the worship space (nave) is open and lit up. A white ivory stove (bowl) filled with holy water sits atop a hazel-colored, wooden pillar when first coming inside. The ceiling is covered with honey wooden tiles and arched wooden pillars that are attached to simple, grey, cylinder-shaped lights. A humungous cross that is gold, maroon and copper in color hangs in the center above the alter. The cross has a statue of Jesus in the middle and a photo of Mary and Joseph are on the left and right sides of the cross. On the top of the cross reads: INRI. There are numerous aisles throughout the nave that all lead to yellowish wooden pews for people to sit on during mass. Up front to the left, are music stands with a Grand Piano where the church musicians and choir are preforming their tune. Several pots of rainbow-colored flowers are lined up along the aisles and surround the edges of the pews. There is also a portrait of my mother on top of a metal paint easel down the main aisle (chancel) that leads up to the sanctuary where the alter, pulpit (where the priest preaches) and lectern (where bible reading are read) are located. I recognize the identical hibiscuses, lilies, roses and daisies from before. Likewise, there are also tulips, carnations, orchids, hydrangeas and gladioluses.

The aroma of the flowers puts me in another fantasy that I do not remember making my way up to the front pew. The family of the deceased sits up front on the right for the service. I decide to stand on the outside edge next to Mark. My father and my two grandparents are the only others in the front pew with me. The fact that I am visible to everyone causes paranoia to sink in. I never enjoyed being up front or the center of attention. This is my mother’s funeral, yet my dad, Mark and I are the focus. Nonetheless, my mom passed away, hence her survivors are the only ones that can represent her now.
The first piece of music has ended and now a trumpet and flute commence the next song. There is a pianist, guitarist, flutist, hornist, trumpetist, violinist and four singers. The melody is not Amazing Grace and I don’t recognize it. Amazing Grace will probably be played later, for it is a composition always rendered at funerals. In sync with this hymn, the priest comes promenading through the doors up the chancel toward the altar. His gold and white sparkly robes reflect off the light fixtures making him appear similar to a disco ball or shining star. Behind the priest comes a man dressed in simpler gold and white robes—he must be the Deacon. Behind the Deacon, is a boy and girl (both about thirteen years old) in plain white robes—they are the altar servers.

Everyone is standing politely in their pews eyeing the priest as he’s making his entrance. I was not thinking about anything except the music. I’ve wanted to be a musician for the longest time…but playing in a funeral seems it would not be as passionate and fun. These musicians did not know my mother. They are playing music for us and I wonder if they feel awkward preforming for a dead person they did not know personally. Are they only musicians that play for funerals? No one grows up saying: “I want to be a funeral musician!”.

Funerals are expensive, and the family pays all individuals involved with the memorial events. My father wasted the remains of this month’s paycheck on a service that takes place honoring and celebrating my mother’s life. If funerals are celebrations of the departed person’s life, why are they depressing? From what I have observed until now, no one is “celebrating” anything. I feel guilty that all these musicians, religious staff and people have to waste their Saturday attending something like this.

As the priest surpasses the front of my pew, this time I can genuinely sense the sadness in his eyes. Even priests feel dismayed doing funerals. I’d like to think my mother is in heaven or a better place. Out of my whole family, she felt the most spiritual bond with God.

Studying everyone’s faces around me, there are too many puffy eyes with read and wet faces. The service has not quite begun, and people are already sobbing soundlessly. I can’t cry. I want to remain strong for her. As I sit down on the bench, I recoil and fall out of the pew. I accidently sat down on a tiny packet of tissues. The packet of tissues is green, etched with purple lavish letters that say: The Springs Funeral Services. Without suspect, I know everyone saw my accident. By now my cheeks must be crimson.

“Sara are you okay?” Mark asks.

“Y-yeah, I’m fine.”

I cannot help but notice Mark’s blue eyes are red and swollen. To sidetrack myself, I pick up the tissue packet and stuff it inside my pocket. The priest is standing behind the alter talking to the crowd about my mother and God. I attempt to listen, thus far it goes in one ear and out the other.

As time goes on the funeral service is sluggish and extensive. The priest and deacon both discuss philosophic topics on the afterlife with God. After, the priest reads my mother’s eulogy. Oodles of church hymn and classic ballads are preformed—Amazing Grace finally being one of them. People on all sides are weeping, even the strangers. Experiencing the actual funeral service is not hard, it is only time consuming. The slow timing of the service is what causes funerals to be gloomy for everyone involved. I am about to fall asleep in the pew, until the priest calls upon the first bible reading to be read. This gets my attention and I turn toward the back of the church,
where a woman dressed in a black and white paisley dress jolts up from her seat and treks up to the lectern. She has tears in her eyes as she appears closer. The woman reading this first verse is one of my mom’s closest friends, Skaði.

Before Skaði reaches the lectern, she swiftly drops something next to me. I glance down and at first am a bit bewildered. She placed a bracelet next to my feet. After picking up the bracelet and examining it more meticulously, my eyes water.

Sara, you promised you would not cry.

Silver and twinkling, a breathtaking bracelet sits in the palm of my hand.

Without any thought, I slip it around my wrist and hold the bracelet up to my heart.

My decaying heart needs to be held up at this point anyway. The weeks pass by and new events come and go. I am still completely numb to it all. None of it can kindle the deadened flame within my splintered soul.

“So, Reagan how are you spending your Mother’s Day?”

“I have no idea. My mom and I are probably going to go shopping and get our nails done! What about you?”

“I think my mom and are going to get food and shop till we drop of course! Mother’s Day is about showing appreciation to our mom’s for all that they do! Plus, it gives us an excuse to do something girlie and spend money on treating ourselves to beauty treatments and delicious food!” The other girl responds.

The two girls giggle and skip off to class happily. I just frown and drag myself to class. My mother died nearly five months ago, yet I am still far from being over my grieving process. In addition, my boyfriend of two years and three months dumped me. It was not a clean breakup either. I honestly just want to die. I remember a couple weeks ago I tried to kill myself.

“Zakhar can you please…just…talk to me?” I whimper.

Zakhar turns toward me in the empty hallway. “Sara leave me the fuck alone. It’s done. Give me space.”

“B-but! Wait! You can’t just do this! You can’t!”

Zakhar turns his back on me and keep trotting away. I am so livid I could scream or punch a wall, despite how the walls in the school are made of brick, coated over in white paint. I still have two more classes to go after lunch. I just can’t take it anymore. I live seven minutes away from this place by foot. Mark is at school and dad will be at work. I just need to go home. I have only missed a few days of school. Missing one more half day of classes won’t be bad. I decide to ditch school and I just walk home. On my walk home, I whimper and cry. I want to shriek, but I don’t want to make myself noticeable to the cars whisking past me and other walkers on the sidewalk. I attempt to hide my dismay.

On the right side of the sidewalk within the suburban neighborhoods I waltz through have beautiful trees of numerous kinds, I can’t distinguish every kind, for there are too many. Some of the trees have blooming pink and white flowers, then others simply have green luscious leaves.
On the left side of my walking path is the road with endless cars sweeping by in a flash. I enjoy living in the suburbs, it is the perfect medium. Not too crowded like the city, but not deserted like the countryside.

After a few minutes, I reach my house. The outside of my house has neatly cut emerald green grass with a couple purple flower bushes (Lilac) and a couple small evergreen trees. The wreath hanging from my tan front door glimmers with pretty rainbow shaded flowers and green leaves. The old and crack maple wooden bench on our front porch sits silently with two red-brown pillows atop it. The outside of my home is always maintained well, and I may not live in an extremely rich and fancy home, but this home means a lot to me despite how it is the house my mother died in.

As I open the side garage door, I must carefully mind the security cameras that circle around my house. My father may get upset that I am coming home early from school, when he re-watches the security footage later. Then again, my father is going to be far more upset about what I plan on doing once inside. My family doesn’t have a security alarm system, so what we do to protect ourselves besides keeping doors and windows locked is that we put security cameras around our house. There are a couple in the front and a couple scattered in the backyard. There is even one in the basement and top floor inside my house. Our house is only two stories—one main level and basement. I prefer smaller houses to larger houses anyway. I’m quite lucky my house is gorgeous with its sandy stucco and white edges and coppery door. The snowy garage doors are exquisitely smooth, despite how the outside of my house does not have much color to it. Nonetheless. I feel like ever since mother died, she drained all the color my house had with it and now everything I see is in monochrome hue. Mother was color. Not just in my life, but in everyone’s lives who knew her. I feel like returning the spectrum back to life will be no easy feat and sometimes I think to myself I will never be able to get it back.

To this day, the color in life I see is slowly returning, but even so, I feel like every color is not as vivid as it once was. It’s as if I lived in a permanent washed-out and faded world.

I try my best to stay out of sight as I comes inside the messy garage of my house. It’s a three-car garage and with the two cars gone, the right half of the garage looks empty and cleaner. The left half of the garage is messy with huge wooden desk with tools scattered around it. Then there are more boxes with tools, outdoor toys, gardening tools, other outdoor equipment, and one lonely, white outdoor fridge that is filled with soda, alcohol, frozen foods and then other homemade dishes we put in freezer bags to store for later.

I grab my house key and place it in the door, twisting it carefully. When I enter inside, my dog Wrigley barks and dashes toward me excitedly. She is a dusty brown labradoodle and nine years old. She isn’t as squeamish as she used to be, but Wrigley still jumps up on me and wags her tail rapidly at the sight of me. Wrigley was named after the Chicago Cubs Baseball team. The stadium the Chicago Cubs play at it is called Wrigley Field. My parents were both born and from Illinois. My mother did not want to name our dog after a baseball stadium, yet she gave into my father’s pressure so Wrigley Field Sabatello became her name after all. I wanted to name Wrigley Cocoa when my family bought her, though everyone vetoed that. I got Wrigley when I was eight years old. She was my first pet and has been my only pet my entire life. I technically had a couple tadpoles in middle school due to a science project, but unfortunately both of them died and never turned fully into frogs. I have never had a pet cat; however, I have
always wanted one. Unfortunately, my entire family, including myself is allergic to cats, hence
why we could never get one. I hope to someday, get a cat that I am less allergic to.

“Hi Wrigley! Hi girl! Oooohhh yes! You’re such a good girl! Yes”, I coo and bend down
to pet Wrigley, as she nuzzles herself into and gives me licks on the face.

If Wrigley is this ecstatic to see me, I couldn’t even imagine what she would do if she
saw my mother somehow walk through the door. I wish that would happen, but I know that is
impossible.

_Sorry Wrigley...I am going to be leaving you._

I hang up my bag on its hook inside and then wander out into the kitchen and family
room area of the house. I bite my lower lip and fall to my knees on the hardwood floor. I scream
so loud my throat hurts and Wrigley gets frightened. At first, she approaches me and wants to
comfort me, yet after my constant wailing, her ears can’t handle the high-pitched sound and she
runs downstairs into the basement. I pound my fists into the floor as I yell and throw a tantrum
like a typical two-year-old. My face is as red as a lobster and my beautiful brown eyeliner and
mascara is becoming smudged. The tan and peach eyeshadow atop my eyelids is melting from
the sweat and constant rubbing of my eyes. My nose is beyond running with snot. I feel as if my
lungs are tied in knots with rope, for I can’t breathe.

_I can’t believe I am actually doing it. I am not going to be a coward. I will go through
with this. I will die. I will kill myself. I am sorry dad and Mark. I am sorry mother. I am sorry to
everyone. I just can’t keep going. I may only be sixteen, but I was supposed to already be dead.
My time is overdue. It was supposed to be me who died not you mom. I don’t have anything
going for me. I have nothing. I’m not beautiful on the outside or inside. I just am scared, but I
don’t want to go on. Dad and Mark will feel like shit after I’m gone. They will feel guilty as fuck
for treating me terribly. They will move on though and get over it I know it. If they can move on
and get over you, of course they will with me. It will be hard, but life is hard. Life sucks. Life is
unfair and stupid. I wish I died and not you._

I scream again. “I LOVE YOU ZAKHAR YOURE A FUCKING MORON I WISH I
WAS DEAD I WANT TO DIE I WANT TO BE DEAD YOURE A FUCKING IDIOT FOR
NOT LOVING I DON’T WANT THIS I DON’T WANT TO LIVE WHY CANT YOU JUST
LISTEN TO ME FOR ONCE GOD WHY CANT YOU JUST KILL ME I DIDN’T DESERVE
THIS I AM A GOOD PERSON WHY DO I DESERVE KARMA WHAT DID I DO WHY
CANT YOU JUST ANSWER ME AND DO WHAT I SAY WHY I HATE YOU I FUCKING
HATE YOU HOW CAN YOU LIVE WITH THIS MOM I WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE NOT
YOU YOU HAD A FUTURE AND A LIFE I DIDN’T I AM NOT SUPPOSED TO BE ALIVE
I AM NOT SUPPOSED TO BE ALIVE AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH”

I stand up weakly and limp toward the kitchen counter, eyeing the kitchen knives. I pick
up the biggest slicing knife I can find and stumble toward the living room. My hands are
shaking, and palms are sweaty. I’m weeping and start screaming again. I don’t want to do this,
but I have to. I hope this kills me.

_I position the knife facing my chest, the tip of it pointing straight at me. I can feel its
sharp tip pressing slightly against my chest. It is time. I am sorry. I begin sobbing and screaming.
“I WANT TO STAB MYSELF I WANT TO DIE!” I better kill myself and not deform myself._
Ugh I am a coward. “A FUCKING COWARD WHY!?!???” I zoom over to my living room, knife in hand and fall on my knees. “I WANT TO DIE I WANT TO FUCKING DIE!” I scream and pound my left fist against the carpet. I take my knife and begin stabbing our brown leather couch over and over, making cuts and slashes into it repeatedly.

_It’s either me or this sofa._

I keep crying and ripping up the couch until I feel too tired and my throat too raw to keep going. I drop the knife and curl up in a ball, weeping. I stay there for what feels like hours. I pass out eventually because Wrigley comes up and notices me laying limp on the ground. She comes by and sniffs my hair. She then paws at me and whimpers, placing herself next to me and remains curled up in a ball by my side. I pet her soft hair. Once again, I am too weak to die. Too weak to kill myself.

“I’m sorry Wrigley.” I murmur. Wrigley stares at me with her big, beautiful, brown eyes. I think Wrigley feels bad for me. She knows ever since mom died that all of us have been different. Wrigley senses there is something wrong but as she is a dog, she can never truly comprehend what is wrong. I have told Wrigley what has happened to mom, but I know she will never entirely understand what has occurred. It’s times like these where I wish I was a dog. If I was a dog like Wrigley I would have all the love, happiness and care I could ever want. Being human, it makes love and happiness a challenge, that I feel like I am losing and will never obtain. As I begin to doze off, I hear my phone on the kitchen counter vibrate.

Frantically, I stand up and rush over to it, nearly tripping on Wrigley. It’s a text from my Mark: “Where u at?” I text him and message him that I decided to walk home today and that I am already home. Mark replies with “OK”. I sigh. I must clean up before Mark comes home. I don’t want anyone to suspect what I was doing or trying to do. I pick up the knife from the table and slide it back in its slot in the knife block atop the kitchen counter. I then whisk to my bathroom and fix my makeup and hair. I reapply my eyeliner, and mascara. Then I comb my hair and re-style it. Lastly, I rub on some more deodorant and spritz on some perfume. I look fresh like when I was when I first started school.

I hear the garage door open and close and then Mark bursts through the door.

“Dude why did you walk home?” Mark asks.

I try to play it cool. “I got out of my last class extremely early, so I decided to walk home. I thought I should do that instead of waiting for thirty minutes. Plus, we live close enough where it is not a long walk anyway. Sorry.”

“Ehhh okay, okay. It’s fine. I guess just let me know sooner next time.”

“Yeah…totally. Sorry.”

“It’s fine dude.”

Mark hangs his backpack up and then books it to the kitchen to open the fridge. After gazing inside for a couple seconds, he closes it before going to the pantry and opening that up. Once again after looking at the pantry, he shuts it and goes back to the fridge.

“I can’t decide what to eat!” Mark grumbles.
“Have whatever you want.” I say. My voice sounds like a robot. An empty void. Hollow and dead. To be honest I look dead. I feel dead on the inside, but even on the outside I look different…than I usually am. My eyes have permanent dark circles under them. I don’t smile as much. I try my best to make myself look presentable, but I feel like its not use. I guess I look pretty on the outside, but at the same time, I always look tired and sad. I constantly feel self-conscious about my wrists and arms that have various cuts on them, so I try my best to hide them with my clothing, bracelets or scar cream. The most exhausting thing though, is no matter how hard I try to be happy again, it seems impossible. My head legit hurts from how stressed, anxious and depressed I feel. I always feel like I am about to die, and I am growing tired of pretending to be happy and fine. Everyone thinks I am fine and content with my life. From the outside, it seems as if I have the perfect life. I have it all. I have the looks, the smarts, a family who loves me, lots of friends, lots of talent. I should be so so so content with my life. LIES. If only that was true. If only I Had that. I don’t. I don’t have the looks. I don’t have the smarts. I don’t have much talent. My family treats me like shit now. And I’ve never had many friends. The only aspect of me I have going is that I am SO AMAZING at faking all this bullshit. I have the best talent of playing a façade. I am so good at faking it until I make it. The only aspect I have of myself is that I make it seem like I love living and my life that no one ever questions nor suspects that I self-harm and have attempted to kill myself multiple times over the years, that sadly have become stronger and more frequent as I have developed and grown over the years ever since my first time in eighth grade.

Mark settles on having cookies, a couple bags of chip, a Dr. Pepper soda and some cheese and crackers. He plops himself on the couch and turns on the television. Oh, thank god he hasn’t even noticed. Mark munches on a bag of BBQ potato chips. After chewing once, he swallows, and I hear the crunching stop. Mark turns himself toward me. I’m currently sitting at the kitchen table doing my homework. I’m almost done.

“Sara…” Mark trails off.

I finish scribbling and put my pencil down and look up from my paper. “Y-yeah Mark?”

“W-what’s with…” He bolts up from the couch frazzled and looks around. The couch has slits in it. The brown leather torn. “WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COUCH?”

I attempt to play dumb. “U-Uh what?”

He raises his blonde eyebrows at me. “The couch. What happened to the couch?”

“Huh? What do you mean?” I stand up from my seat and stroll toward Mark and Wrigley. When I get to the couch, I study the sofa and all the rips in it. “I didn’t even notice this! I dunno! I guess Wrigley scratched the couch!” I try my best to sound as surprised as ever. However, I feel like Mark can see through my lie.

“Liar! How did you not notice this? What did you do!”

“I-I didn’t know! I didn’t even come in the living room and notice the couch! I came in and went to the bathroom, then just started my homework. I’ve been in the kitchen this whole time! I guess Wrigley did it!”

“NO, SHE DIDN’T FUCKING LIAR Bitch!”
I feel a rush of antagonism rise in my chest to my face. I think I might cry, but I try not to show it.

“I DIDN’T DO IT! I SWEAR IM NOT LYING I DON’T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED LEAVE ME ALONE!” I shriek, and tears begin to run down my cheeks. I stomp over to the kitchen table and slam my hands against it. The papers on the table fly everywhere.

“Whoa Sara! Calm down!”

“I WILL NOT CALM DOWN! I’M NOT LYING! I’N NOT A LIAR IM NOT A LIAR AHHHHHHHHH!” I scream even louder and sit down sat the table and sob. Mark has no idea how to react to this. He just turns away from me and sits down on the sofa again. He goes back to munching on his chips.

My homework paper is splattered with tear drops. Eventually, I finish my homework. Later that evening, my father comes home from work. He greets Wrigley and then says hello to both of us.

“I’m going to start dinner.” He exclaims tiredly.

“N-need any help?” I ask, with my weak sickly voice.

“N-no need Sara.”

In half an hour dinner is served. The three of us sit at the table silently. Tonight, for dinner is steak, veggies, buttered noodles and mashed potatoes. I love the vegetables and noodles but hate the steak. It’s too chewy and I just dislike the taste and texture period. But I must eat it anyway. *Maybe someday I can go vegetarian.* I pour some ketchup on my plate to dip my steak in. Dipping my meat in some sort of sauce is the only way to make meat bearable. Ketchup is my favorite sauce.

“So how was your day at school kids?” My father asks, but his brows furrow at me.

“Oh, it was good! Chill! I got my homework done and played some ball with my boys.” Mark states.

“Yeah it was good.” I manage to pipe in.

My father grins with slight frenzy to it. “Okay.”

I twitch and go back to focusing on my dinner. I finish everything on my plate. Dinner ends, and I begin to clear the table.

“Oh dad, Sara destroyed the couch.” Mark blurts out. I nearly drop a plate I’m holding.

“Oh, did she?” My father inquires. “T-that’s funny…because I actually got a call today that Sara missed her last two classes today.”

“Liar! I knew it!” Mark shouts.

“W-what no! I did not miss any class today!”

“Oh, really Sara? Yes, you did. Why did you?”
“I-I wasn’t feeling well! I…I didn’t want to say!” my voice becomes more high-pitched than usual.

“Dad Sara destroyed the couch!”

“I DID NOT!” I bite my lower lip.

Control. Control anger.

My dad ambles over to the couch and gasps at the sight. “S-Sara what did you do?”

“I…I didn’t do anything! Stop!” I plea.

“Yeah she did! She’s a fucking liar!”

“NO, I’M NOT!!! SHUT THE FUCK UP MARK!”

“YOU TWO! STOP, YELLING NOW! SARA WHY DID YOU DO THIS?” My father goes in his room and slams the door.

“What are you doing?” I yell.

Dad doesn’t answer.

“You’re a fucking liar.” Mark growls.

My face is crimson. I want...to kill him. I can just stab him right at this instant. And murder him.

“I. DID. NOT” I grit my teeth and go back to the kitchen.

Twenty minutes later, father comes out of his room. His facial expression is creepy. I’m sitting on a recliner chair in the living room with Mark watching TV. Without warning, dad grabs my wrist and pulls me. I grimace.

“D-dad?” I sputter.

He drags me by the wrist to the “mud room” (room that leads into the garage) and slams me against the wall.

“What the hell did you do to my couch? What were you trying to do kill yourself?”

I close my eyes and begin to cry.

“Bitch answer me! You tried to kill yourself didn’t you? What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“I-I didn’t try…t-to kill myself.” I’m yelling and sobbing.

“Fucking liar. You’re paying for my new couch!”

“I-I can’t! I can’t afford to pay for a new couch!

“You should’ve thought about that before you decided to pull this off!”
At this point I can’t breathe or think. I wish I was dead after all. I brace myself.

“YOU’RE COMING WITH ME!”

My father clutches my wrist again and open to the door to the garage. He flips the switch to open the garage and presses his car keys to unlock the its doors. He continues pulling me and opens the car door, as he pushes me inside the vehicle.

I erratically put my seatbelt on in between whimpers.

“W-where are we going?”

My father doesn’t answer.

The entire drive is me messing with the radio and my father keeping his eyes glued to the road.

Soon, a building comes into view. It’s brick brown with white edges around it. The roof is a grey-black cover. Approaching to the parking lot, there are several lights and streetlights that brighten up the building and its perimeter. There is a sign that reads: *Peak View Behavioral Health*.

The parking lot is completely empty. Is this place even open? I would soon find out it is open twenty-four hours. It’s a mental hospital.

My father pulls up into a parking space and turns off the car.

“Get out.”

I nod and unbuckle my seatbelt. Him and I walk up to the building, through the automatic glass double doors. In front of us is a white receptionist sitting in a foamy black chair, typing on her computer. When she hears my father and I approaching, she stops typing and looks up to meet us.

“Hello. May I help you?” The secretary asks. I blankly stare at her.

“Yes. We are here for a new patient appointment.” My father chimes.

My eyes widen. *New patient? No no no…I…I can’t be…in a mental hospital!* Please god no...  

“Okay, what is the patient’s name and date of birth?”


“Okay! Sara! She’s all checked in!” The receptionist hands my father a clipboard with paperwork and a pen. “Fill out this paperwork and someone will be with you shortly! I’ll let the doctor know you’re here!” She stands up from her seat and walks away to who-knows-where.

My father and I sit down at two empty chairs. He hands me the clipboard.

“Fill out this paperwork.” His voice is softer and less cross sounding.

“O-okay.” I take the pen in hand and begin to fill out the paperwork. *What is your SSN?* Screw this. I’m not putting down the social security number. A lot of the questions I answer in
On a scale from 1-10, 1 being the least and 10 being the worst, how suicidal do you currently feel?

*Can I just lie on this? Please? I want to lie, but at the same time I don’t want to lie.*

I sigh in between my teeth. I circle eight.

Have you ever experienced feelings of anxiety or depression?

Yes.

Have you ever felt feelings of worthlessness or uselessness?

Yes.

Have you ever thought about hurting yourself?

Yes.

Have you ever thought about hurting others?

No.

Have you ever felt restless, agitated, frantic, or tense?

Yes.

Have you experienced trouble sleeping -you could not fall or stay asleep, and/or didn't feel well-rested when you woke up?

Sometimes.

There were two pages of questions that went on like this. I filled out each question honestly, despite feel awkward, embarrassed and wanting to not tell the truth. After completing the paperwork, I walk up to the receptionist and hand her the clipboard.

“Oh, honey, keep that with you. Give it to the doctor when he calls you.”

I’m about to speak when a man dressed in scrubs opens a nearby door. “Sara!” He calls.

That’s me.

My father stands up from his seating position and signals for me to follow the doctor through. I nod and keep the clipboard close to my chest.

“Hello Sara.” The doctor exclaims. “My name is Varius, I’ll be checking you in to speak with Dr. Callixtus.”

I nod in understanding.

As the three of us meander the halls, there are several silver metal doors on both sides that stick out against the plain, white walls. Everything in here is sterile, but it still plays off a
clean and professional aesthetic. Varius stops in a couple seconds and opens a door on our left. My father and I step inside. Inside the room is a wooden desk with two wooden and cushioned chairs. The room is bigger than I thought, but still there is nothing existent in here except the desk with office supplies and two chairs. My father and I each sit in one of the chairs, while Varius sits in the chair behind the desk.

“May I please see your paperwork Sara?” He asks.

“Yes.” My soft voice cracks. I hand him the clipboard.

Varius turns each page and scrolls through it with his russet eyes. “Okay…good…so Sara…all of your paperwork looks good. I’ll give this to Dr. Callixtus and he will be with you guys shortly.”

“Thank you.” My father states.

“T-thanks.” I murmur.

Varius beams brightly at us and walks out.

My father and I each sit silently in the room.

“Sara…” My father squeaks.

“Y-yeah?” I answer.

“You know…I’m only doing this because I love you.”

I look down at my hands in my lap. Yeah…I should’ve known he was going to say it. It’s ironic…I want to kill myself and I do not want to live, yet my mother gave everything she had to fight to live. For herself, but more so, for her husband and two children.

Glass shards inside my heart slowly are being put back together. The vines are reappearing and there are microscopic stems poking out of the acidic dirt. Possibly in the future, they will become gorgeous flowers and plants once more. The spectrum of discernable rainbow rays will shine again. Even the boulder taped to my shoulders seems to not crush my soul as painfully anymore. I can carry this hindrance on my own and stand proud to hold it.

Sara you’re only allowed to be sad on my birthday, my death day, Mother’s Day and my wedding anniversary. Live your life. Live your life my love. Do whatever dreams your heart desires and never give up. Remember you can do anything and everything. Your purpose is what you want it to be. I will always love you. I will never forget you. Life will be hard. It will never be the same. But it will be worth it. It will always be worth it. Never forget who you are living for. Yourself. And when in doubt, at least...

Live.

Live for me.
What led me to write this Honors Thesis was my own drive toward wanting to explain to others why I feel the way I do. I am a very emotional person and an open book for the most part about many things, yet I still have trouble expressing myself when it comes to putting my ideas, thoughts and feelings into words. One reason for this is because I am a quieter person and more introverted than most people, despite being a highly emotional person. I think the ideas and feelings I feel are so complicated and have many qualifying complicating factors that when I try to express them in words, most people do not understand where I am coming from and why I feel the way I do about certain things. I try to elucidate my background story and history about myself, yet because my life contains extremely traumatizing and controversial events, it is often hard for people to believe and hear what I have gone through from a young age. Several people believe and tell me that I have a perfect life and am perfectly “happy”. I’ll admit I pull off that façade very well and do my best to keep it up, but still even at times when I do seem to not be myself, people are intimidated to help me and ask me what is troubling me, for it surprises them that I feel this way. I may look happy and look like I have a “perfect life” yet I don’t. No one has a perfect life. Everyone goes through trauma and hardships. Some people experience more adversities that may be more disturbing than others. By writing this story, I hoped to convey this message to other individuals so they can not only understand me more but sympathize with others in similar situations to me.

Writing this piece allowed me to psychologically express and get out every detail I want people to know about my life experiences which also allowed me to reface these memories once more in a profound contemplative state. Now granted, I cannot remember every life experience I have had, but regardless I tried my best to convey the thoughts and feelings I have had while growing up in my life until this point. Penning this piece brought back memories long forgotten and allowed me to re-discover, experience them and capture everything I felt from that experience and explain how it affected me in that moment. More so, I was able to learn how the experience made me a wiser, stronger and better person overall, despite how the experience was mortifying. I am happy that I went through what I did because I learned from my tough experiences and became better from them. I hope that by telling other people about myself and my story, people are willing to listen and understand me better. I want to have a voice. I desire for people to understand me clearer. Also, I believe that if I share my personal story, it will inspire other people to not live in fear and be afraid of sharing their own stories…no matter how joyful or dark their individual life story may be.

I want to inspire people and give them even just a tiny piece of hope. Writing this allows me to portray some of my most vivid life hardships on paper. People can now be able to get at least some sort of grasp on who I was as a person and how I continue to grow as a person. This slice of my history allows others to live from my perspective the experiences that define me today. From an academic standpoint, ever since the start of college, I wanted to one day defend an Honors Thesis in my major (which, at the time my major was undeclared) and be part of a special distinct group of students. I have always been a hard worker and resilient person. Thus, I thought I would be able to prove to all my doubters (but most of all myself) that I have the wherewithal to write and defend an academic Honors Thesis project. After all, I was accepted into the CU Boulder Honors Program and thought that doing an Honors Thesis would help me gain academic confidence and a higher self-esteem in myself that I feel is sorely needed. I have dealt with numerous horrible hardships; doing an Honors Thesis should be simple compared to what I have already endured in theory.
From a psychological standpoint, a mother and daughter relationship is vitally important to a child’s development. I feel like growing up with a sick mother, gave me some insights on things children my age do not normally think about nor learn about until they are more mature. This is a reason why I think I became wiser and more mature than children my age because I had to learn the lessons of discipline, responsibility and that life was not as sugar coated and “fair” as I thought and wished it to be earlier in life. Furthermore, growing up without my mother at such a young age has deprived me of what most children experience. I do not experience having a “nagging” mom call me once a week while in college, my mom never saw me graduate high school, she will never see me graduate college, she will never see me get married if I choose to do so, my mom has never and will continue to never experience any new milestones in life. Growing up without a mother and being the only girl in the family was rough for me because my father and brother could not understand me. I felt like the odd one out. In addition, I felt I could not tell them everything and feel comfortable talking to them about certain subjects because I felt they would not care or understand. Henceforth, why growing up I felt uncomfortable and didn’t open up or expose myself as much as should’ve. Not to mention, I was not taught how to express my emotions and thoughts as I should have, considering I was living in fear and refusing to open up, only to when I finally did become an open book, I did not know how to actually convey my feelings into words. Instead, people became turned off and uncomfortable because of how daunting, offensive and unbelievable my experiences were and how open I was about them. I don’t think people can handle the truth about my life, which is why I feel most people do not understand me and choose to not get to know me. Understanding what I have gone through is a sour pill for many to swallow. I think this is because it is shocking that someone like me would actually experience these events and feel these sorts of demented thoughts. Nevertheless, I am a person. A person who simply wants to inspire others and make myself feel less like a walking corpse ambling mindlessly through life. I only have one life to live and as difficult as it is living it, I know I will be able to persevere. After all, I have already been through more than what most people experience in an entire lifetime. Living life should be a breeze for me. What’s the fun in life without another challenge for me to conquer?