

Memories

Dear Evelyn,

32-13-30.

Do you remember that?

Do you remember how you struggled to open that sticky lock of yours?

Do you remember how I, ever the hero, approached the new girl, and asked you if you needed help?

I think I made a bad joke somewhere about the lockers of our school, but all I can recall is how wonderful your huge, crescent moon shaped smile looked.

And do you remember how, afterwards, you shook my hand like we were in an old movie and you said "My name is Evelyn"?

I still remember how small your hand was.

And then I said, "Sofia", and I'm pretty sure I smiled for the first time in about nine years because you just made me want to smile.

You made everyone want to smile.

I walked you to Mr. Harris's history class that day, and you kept talking to me about everything that happened to slip into your mind at the moment, and it was the first time I had ever heard someone so excited at an educational facility before.

I'm sure you know by now, but I was never much of a talker. I was just always, there. A background actor in my own movie, you could say.

But your voice made me want to use mine.

I don't know if you know this, but you bounced as you walked and you laughed as you talked and your smile never left your face, even as you looked at the dreary, white hallways covered in abandoned dreams and desperation.

You were a cliché love song.

You gave off a glow that I wish I could emulate; you painted things that once had been gray and black and white into a rainbow of colors that spiraled into oblivion.

32-13-30.

The end of the beginning.

It wasn't very hard to like you. I don't think I've ever met someone who had a bad thing to say about you.

You, with your curly, dark brown hair and your practically black eyes.

You, with your huge glasses that constantly fell down your nose and your smile that took up half your face.

I remember the first day I realized how unique you were.
I think it was a Tuesday, and you walked into art, your shoes soundlessly tracing a path from the door to the seat next to mine.
Your saucer eyes crinkled at me as you smiled in greeting.
I started talking to you about how my life felt so confusing; so raveled. I told you I wanted an easy life. The life of a "Barbara, or a Bob" I said jokingly.
You must have heard the deeply rooted confusion and sadness in my voice because you pulled out a piece of paper, and you grabbed your light up purple pen with the fuzzy ball end.
You drew a straight line, and you labeled it Barbara. You then drew a swirling ball of ink, running your pen around and around the paper until you finally stopped.
You labeled that one Sofia.
You handed me the piece of paper and told me you liked the more confusing swirly one better.
"It has more character", you told me. "A better personality. That swirling ball will have gone through much more than the line ever will have. I think it's much more interesting. The Grand Canyon would not be so beautiful if it was not so riddled with cracks." And you smiled at me.
I'm pretty sure I stared at you for quite a while.
All you did was laugh at my reaction, your head tilted back, the sun gliding across your skin as it whispered things in your ear.
That was the moment I wondered if maybe you weren't real.
Maybe you were a figment of my imagination. Or maybe you were my guardian angel.

I wish I could have told you that I taped that piece of paper with the line and the swirly ball on my desk. Every time I would become disheartened, angry, upset; I would look at it and think that I am like the Grand Canyon.

It took me about 30 seconds to realize I was going to love you. You were the greatest sister I never had.

Do you remember how we used to study together for Mrs. Langston's AP Government class?

I remember how your fuzzy sweater felt against my bare arms as I cried for the first time in front of you because of an F in that class. You didn't try to tell me it was ok, or that it wasn't really that bad of a grade after all. You didn't say any of the things I thought you would, any of the things that anyone else would have said.

Instead, you just placed your arms tightly around mine, and you let silence wrap itself around us, covering us entirely.

And then, when my tears had stopped flowing, you said something to me that I still remember to this day.

“You can do better next time.”

These six words were remarkable. It was like I had lived my entire life under the bed covers, breathing that recycled air, until you pulled my head to fresh air, and you dared to tell me I could do better. You dared to believe that me, of all people, had potential.

And then I think you took it upon yourself to help me reach what you saw in me. I can still hear your quick “I’ll be right back” as you hopped off my squeaky bed and walked down the hall, your pink sweater and bouncing curls retreating into the shadows.

I still remember your giggle when you returned as you set down the game Headbands, and you took out our flashcards, and you set one inside each headband.

You wiggled your eyebrows at me as you put one on and you said to me “Describe this word so I can guess what it is.”

I don’t think I’ve ever met someone so practically impractical before. I laughed at your absurdity, not even attempting your studying game, and I can still feel the sting I felt on my arm when you hit me with that small hand of yours. You made me put a headband on too, and we stayed up all night on that awkwardly pale bedspread of mine studying for the government exam, outlasting even the moonlight.

I didn’t realize until later that you didn’t even need to study.

You were always making me happy somehow. I don’t think it’s even physically possible to be sad around you.

In our junior year, I had the worst day of my life.

Do you remember that day?

The world was so hopeless. So bleak. So dark.

Your light, which was usually so bright, couldn’t even reach me.

And I think you were worried for me, so worried for me that you skipped eighth period and you grabbed me by the hand and you dragged me and my darkness to the bus stop.

I didn’t say a word, I don’t think I even said a word all day, and you just kept dragging me by the hand all the way to the back of the bus until you plopped down on one of the gray and red seats.

You pointed at the window seat next to you and you raised your eyebrows in a question that I never answered because I just sat and curled my knees to my chest and stared out the glass.

I remember to this day how cold that window was on my forehead. How warm my

tears were. I kept expecting you to say something philosophical like you always did, to say something about how even in the darkest moments of life there is still light, to say something that would just make me cry harder because you had such a positive outlook on life and I had only tears.

But you just sat next to me, your black backpack on your lap, your arms crossed over it.

And after a while, I ran out of tears, and I started to *really* look out the window, to look out and see the lives of all these other people cross by us and then fly past, like I was a line and they were a line but we were perpendicular lines and we might meet, but only at one point, and then we continue on separately.

Now that I think about it, maybe we were perpendicular lines.

I watched this little boy with a red balloon tug on his mother's sleeve excitedly. And I watched a young woman help an old man across the road.

I saw this little girl in a bright yellow dress running with a smile across the sidewalk. I watched a family have lunch on a picnic table at the park.

I heard a tired woman on the bus sneeze, and then I heard her son say "God bless you", and I heard her laugh, a joyous sound that came out of someone who I believe had not laughed in a while.

And I remember looking at you and your large, black, circular glasses that had slumped down your nose and I can still remember how salty my tears were.

But I was once again struck by you and everything about you because, without speaking, you had managed to make me believe that life wasn't so bad after all.

That time would move on.

And so would I.

And you just turned to me and you squeezed my hand like you always did and you smiled and you raised your eyebrows again in an unspoken question of "Are you ok?" and I shook my head, but my raspy voice told you "But I will be."

You, who had such a unique way of thinking of things. I wish I could enter the labyrinth that is your mind. I want to know your secret to the way you think of things the way you do.

I wonder how you manage to compare everything to something else in a way that makes the world seem different.

After I met you, I knew my world had changed, but in what way exactly I didn't know. I told you this one day, and you laughed and told me that you had shifted everything in my life two inches to the right. A subtle change, you said, but one that my brain would notice and not know it did.

You used to write me poems that broke the laws of English.
You used to text me at 1 AM just to tell me about how the moon looked like a glowing golf ball that was hidden in the darkest cornerstones of the universe.
Sometimes you'd call me in the morning just to tell me about how the sunset turned this one sliver of your purple room red, making a spiral of other colors float around your room.

I wake up now at 1 AM and sit by my phone, hoping that you'll text me to tell me about what the moon looks like tonight.

32-13-30.

The beginning of the end.

I went into your locker that day to look for your book. You called me to tell me you were running late to school, and you wanted me to grab your books for you.

You sounded rushed. Hurried. Unlike you.

I wish I would have told you to not worry. I wish I could have been like you for just one moment and told you that it wasn't the end of the world if you missed first period.

I wonder if the history teacher still thinks about the genius girl who knew everything about the Renaissance.

Does the English teacher still have your award winning short story on his desk?

Does the librarian still remember that she gave you the keys our freshman year so you could go in whenever you liked?

Because maybe if you hadn't slept in late, maybe if you haven't slept in late during the winter when ice was everywhere, maybe you could ask your teachers for yourself. They told me it wasn't a drinking problem. Or drugs. I didn't want to tell them I already knew that.

I can't blame a drunk truck driver. I can't blame road rage.

I want to blame someone.

I don't want to just settle with "It was the icy roads, and the bad tire friction."

"She was rushed, and didn't notice the patch of snow."

I want to think that I could have done something.

That maybe I could have changed your fate.

That maybe I could have kept you from being 17 forever.

I told your parents I was sorry.

I looked your mom in her eyes that were your eyes and one tear slipped down both cheeks and I said I was sorry.

I held your dog's collar as he barked at the dark brown wood that was lowered into the cold white ground.

I cried as I walked home on the day you became a part of the earth. My black dress rippled in the wind and my heels swung in my hand, my feet too tired to wear them much longer.

I boarded the bus you brought me to not so long ago and I sat by the window.

I sat there and I waited for you to sit next to me to tell me about how the tree leaves reminded you of fairies.

I stood at your locker, 32-13-30, and waited for you to run up to me with your backpack bouncing behind you, your glasses sliding across your face.

I took out Headbands and I waited for you to come through my bathroom door with your pink sweater to tell me about the meaning of "political socialization".

I waited for you after every class, expecting to see your curls bouncing as you laughed at something that wasn't even funny.

I would give anything just to see that smile again, even for a moment.

I wonder sometimes about you. About how you're doing.

I think that wherever you are, you are happy. You're always happy.

I lay awake in my bed and I stare as the clock goes from 11:10 and then 11:11 and sometimes I make a wish like you used to and I wish that maybe you could come back and maybe I could hear you laugh again.

I want to tell you that I still have all of your advice tucked in my heart like a carefully folded origami dragon.

I want to tell you that I still have your poem that you wrote in 5th period shoved in the bottom of my sock drawer.

I want to tell you that after I met you, I started smiling again, started laughing again, and I realize now that everything is not shades of black and white but everything is purple and orange and blue and red and yellow and green.

But I think that you were too good to exist with the rest of us.

I think that maybe you had too much knowledge and too much insight to live around on this planet.

I wonder if maybe you were taken away so you could be put somewhere where there were lots of people like you. Maybe you're wandering around right now talking to someone about how the expansion of the universe is a bit like the expansion of your diaphragm when you're sleeping.

Maybe someone realized their mistake, that they had accidentally put an angel on this planet with the rest of us ordinary people, so they took you back.

I just hope that wherever you are, you are still laughing.
I hope you know I loved you more than the words of every language could ever portray.

I wanted to tell you I got into UCLA. You always used to tell me I could do it, and I finally listened to you. They liked that piece that I drew, the one of you on the beach where you looked like a piece of artwork more than my artwork did.

I wanted to tell you that I will always be your Sof.
And I will never forget my Evey.
I told you once, when the moon was nonexistent and it was so black we became nonexistent too, that you were the person who helped me be found.
But I was wrong.
You didn't find me.
You taught me that it was ok to be lost.

You taught me to wander through the past, the present, and the future.
You once told me that the beginning isn't always the beginning, and the end is *never* the end.

So, here's to your beginning.
Here's to your never-ending end.

Love,
Sofia