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Prose

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Koyczan

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Grayling High School

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thank you.**

"the truth is; there aren't enough miracles to go around kid, there are simply way too many people petitioning God for the winning lotto ticket."
and I'm ticking."
-Shane Koyczan

[1. arthritis]

Thunder rattled through the stale late day air, lightening brightening up the otherwise dull evening. The clock on the wall stalled at ten-after-five, the second hand circulating with less than enough force to push the minute and the hour along. The ache in Sara's right hand appeared to be a sign of rain, as legend states. Most people would babble on and on to her that legends tying such aspects are simply comical, and not to be taken seriously, as if the pain in someone's joints is a sign of an impending heavy precipitation. Though to Sara; the way the pain in her right hand intensified as the storm drew near only further proved to her the prevailing sense that these legends were false.

Her boots scraped against hard wood floors as she shuffled her way to the nearby open window, a mental debate brewing inside of her. Should her window remain open or should it be shut now that the storm was mere moments away from hitting the city with its powerful force? The closer the storm neared, the less dull the ache became, a fiery pain intensifying as it surged its way through her joints. Little did she know, her hand was slowly beginning to fail her.

The rain made contact with the ground, making a loud smacking noise water makes when dropped from high altitudes. The sandy ground quickly turned to mud, the grass perking up in expectation of restorative refreshment. This was Sara's favorite part about heavy storms: the beautiful way the water kissed the ground, the way the water quenched the thirst of everything it touched. The thunder and lightening combined with the falling rain performed a symphony, as the wind allowed the grass to dance like nature's musical.

Sara longed for her rain storm to come, for her chance to be refreshed. On her own for so long, lonely nights, weakened days, she spent hours staring out the window in a longing way. Her silver-blue eyes would glassover, though people said the color was beautiful; however, her gaze held a captivating sadness. She was good at hiding, everything bad in

the world was hidden in her, she held it buried deep, hidden behind a smile.

Anyone who knew Sara Jane during her adolescence knew very well of the struggles she dealt with everyday. Many people found her childhood to be a work of art, something that could create a *videnda*. To Sara, her childhood was really no different from any other kids' childhood. In her eyes—despite everything she'd overcome— her life was nothing significant, ordinary at best. Looking back at her childhood as often as she did, she discovered two things:

- 1. Nothing was ever free, every action made came with a price, and*
- 2. Everything happens for a reason, you are what you make of yourself.*

The key to survival—she found—was to find something she loved and let it destroy her, even if the destruction is accidental. Her *trouville* was her writing abilities, this of course was found accidentally, and since then it had become a *latibule*, a hiding place far away from reality. She discovered her *aisling* after she discovered how much she truly loved writing in third grade.

In a jumbled mind constituting the need for ventilation, she stumbled upon the discovery of a way that could potentially help her still underdeveloped mind. Perhaps writing could serve as a sacrament for her sanity, the sanity that began to stray after the disappearance of her father, and the travesty that became her mother. After watching her mother crumble, she grew an abhorrence for alcoholic drinks and other beverages of the sort; she was told that drinking may help her numb the tearing sensation throughout her hand and upper arm, but she was thoroughly disgusted with this and rejected the theory.

All of her life people saw her as the girl who smiled and laughed. Little did they understand about her. When she was four years old, her father disappeared. His body never turned up, and her father was never the kind of guy to just get up and leave. He was just gone. Her older brother Jack enlisted in the Air Force when she was thirteen; it was five years before she saw him again. When she was younger, her mother hadn't handled the only other man in her life leaving, and often spent nights loitering around the house in her intimates imbibing libations as if she were a man who had walked the desert with only a gallon of drinkable water available. She has been alcohol-free now for nearly a year.

When she was sixteen, her right hand began to ache after too much use. When she visited the doctor she was told that her obscene amount of writing could perhaps be the reason of her failing right hand. The joints in her hands were slowly turning into stone, and eventually she wouldn't be able to use it at all. She was left with the decision of choosing her hand over her writing, and in the end her hand would become her sacrament of happiness. In life one is often left making choices that often involve putting mind over matter, and this just happened to be one of those instances.

Her head rested against the glass now, her breath fanning over the window pane. Sara's hand rested against on the wooden frame, her eyes closing slowly.

Meanwhile...

On the adjacent side of town, a man sits at a desk a candle flickering in the dimly-lit room, his pen sprawling meaningless words across a sheet of paper. The water from outside seeps through patches in the rotting shingles of his failing roof, falling into buckets scattered around the floor. The beams creaked and croaked under the building's weight, paint chipped, and floors glazed with unknown substances. Other than the sounds of water dripping into buckets, the atmosphere was near silent.

The journal cover was a speckled black and white, his name, Shane Koyczan sprawled across the dotted line on the front of the book; his journal meant more to him than his own life did. His pen never left the page, his right hand clenched tightly as he wrote furiously, the pages of his journal stained with ink. His life was meaningless, he had a menial job, and turned to poetry when he needed it most, people considered him to be inspiring, and whimsical, that his talents were in some way phenomenal.

To him, they were words. Words only have power if you give them power. To him, the word love has no specific meaning. Perhaps that is the reason love is thrown around so much, it doesn't mean a thing to him, or to anyone. He recounts his latest encounter. He met a boy days earlier, a boy he feels he may never see again. He maps out a drawing, the words forming the picture as he paints his emotions against dotted lines; he writes:

"It doesn't matter why I was there, where the air is sterile and the sheets sting. It doesn't matter that I was hooked up to this thing that buzzed and beeped every time my heart leaped like a man whose faith tells him God's hands are big enough to catch an airplane or a world. It doesn't matter that I was curled up like a fist protesting death, that each breath was either hard labor or hard time, or that I'm always either too hot or too cold. It doesn't matter because my hospital roommate wears Star Wars pajamas, and he's nine years old. His name is Louis, and I don't have to ask what he's got; the bald head and skin and bone frame speaks volumes. The game boy and the feather pillow booms, like they're trying to make him feel at home, because he's going to be here a while. I manage a smile the first time I see him, and it feels like the biggest lie I have ever told; so I hold my breath. I'm thinking any minute now he's going to call me on it. I hold my breath because I'm scared of a fifty-seven pound boy, hooked up to a machine, because he's been watching me." (Shane Koyczan, Arthritis)

He stops writing long enough to recall Louis, his pallid body, skin and bone frame, and his bald head. He shudders at his own stupidity, the same stupidity that led him to landing a place in that wretched place. He drums his fingers against the desk, a million other memories flashing him back as nostalgia takes over.

When Shane was a kid he truthfully wasn't like the rest of the kids around him; he didn't have a Mum or Dad, he had his grandparents. Of course he had parents, but they chose not be in his life, which made it that much harder to fit in. He recalled his first nickname in school and how he'd somehow earned that nickname. He recalls the time his gym teacher

gave him the nickname "half-ton", he remembered it because it was the first time he'd ever used a swear word.

His childhood was the reason he never believed in heaven; to him heaven was... whatever. He had a turbulent past, and that was what led him here, it led him to the finding of his one true love; poetry. That and he had his alcohol, to an alcoholic, anytime is a good time for a drink. That key piece of his life was the very reason his life would change, in the most amazing way possible.

[2. my darling, sara]

"the failing use of my right hand, isn't actually the failing use of my right hand. it's just another way to tell the time,

and I'm ticking."

-Shane Koyczan, *My Darling Sara*

A man sat at the counter in the corner, drinking glass after glass of who knows what, trying to drink his pain away a little more each time. He in himself was numb, the pain becoming increasingly dull the longer and harder he drank. Sara found herself watching the man, peeking up at him once and a while as she cleans her station, humming a tune she didn't know the words to. The rain outside continued to drum, as more people requested drinks.

The man raised his hand, slurring out the request for another drink, his voice was deep. She tossed the rag she'd been using into the bucket of bleach behind the shelf. The closer she got to him, the more intense the color of his eyes became. Her own silver-blue eyes meeting his deep brown-green eyes, though his eyes were more distorted, as he had been drinking.

"Hit me with another drink!" He chuckled, even though he was drunk, he had this way about him that made him seem more sober than anything else.