Creative Writing Portfolio

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Introduction

My love for writing started when I was little. I would take my colored pencils and write fairy tales, each paragraph in a different color, every margin covered in doodles on the side. I loved spreading out on my fuzzy carpet and just writing. Today I still love doing this. This Creative Writing class seemed like it would take me back to those days, offer a reprieve from the other subjects I take in school. The homework would be fun. The class certainly fulfilled my expectations.

I enjoyed the class very much. I loved the feeling I would get when I thought of a clever sentence or line of poetry to write down. It was a nice, pleasant way of escaping thoughts of anything unpleasant. Over the course of this class, I had hoped to make my work mean something. Every piece of writing has some kind of message, no matter how small, and I wanted to be able to convey that every time. I also wanted to work on incorporating more metaphors and figurative language into my writing. I do think I improved these areas over the course of the class. My favorite assignment was probably the narrative, as the subjects I could cover seemed limitless and I could structure the paragraphs however I wanted to. It was also the assignment most similar to what I used to write when I was younger. The assignment I favored least was the sonnet. I liked the structure of the poem but the subject matter is one I am not very familiar with, especially since I am still young. I had difficulty trying to write that kind of language without sounding artificial. My writing theme tended to lean towards nature, especially with shorter poems like Cinquain, Tanka, and Haiku. But I also wrote many stories about younger people and the conflicts that can arise in their lives, and this may be because I can relate to those ideas more than I can to others.

This class taught me many things, the most noteworthy being the necessity of having passion in writing. It was a consistent struggle for me to find something I felt so strongly about that I could write a tribute to it in so many words. But writing about something you know or can relate to in some way makes the piece seem more genuine. I realized that the subject does not have to be so grand. It can be small and seem unimportant and still be worthwhile to write about. I also learned that at one point you need to move on to a different piece of writing and not dwell on the one forever. I always had trouble considering something complete and, since there is always room for improvement, I wanted to keep revising and tweaking even the smallest aspects of every piece to make it that much better. Though it is acceptable to want to keep editing my work, I also learned that moving on to the next assignment and then coming back to it can be beneficial. Professional authors may have the same problem as me but at one point they have to publish their work, as I hope to do one day. First, I might have to learn to allow other people to see my writing, instead of keeping it safe in my notebook. The poetry unit of the class, though enjoyable, took up a lot of time. Still, I am glad I opted to take this class; it was a nice experience.
Contents

Caroline ........................................................................... 5
Diving Lessons ................................................................. 6
Cinderella ......................................................................... 18
Paris .................................................................................. 19
Teatime ............................................................................ 20
The Looking Glass .......................................................... 20
A Long Way to Go ............................................................. 20
The Little Girl ................................................................. 21
Atlantic ............................................................................ 21
Sleep ............................................................................... 22
Tempest ............................................................................ 22
Wintertide ........................................................................ 22
Spring Rain ....................................................................... 23
Away With the Wind .......................................................... 23
Tahiti .............................................................................. 23
Morning Mist .................................................................... 23
From the Sky .................................................................... 24
Silence ............................................................................ 24
The Bank .......................................................................... 24
Listen to October ............................................................... 24
Ripple ............................................................................. 24
To Novels ......................................................................... 25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Sea</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gift</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Now</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something On Its Own</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls' Night</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I Only Knew</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jolly Good Fellows</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Caroline

I ring the doorbell with my freshly French-manicured finger, resting my hip against the smooth marble wall of Nate's entryway.

A balmy breeze blows the wispy tendrils of hair off my face.

I can't help but let out a soft squeal- wouldn't you if you just knew you were getting engaged tonight?

The love of my life opens the door and kisses my cheek, beckoning me to come inside his cool, palatial Hawaiian pad.

“I’ve missed you so much,” I whisper, leaning on his arm just as he tells me softly that he has a surprise for me downstairs.

He takes my sweaty hand in his and leads me down the stairway, our shoes echoing on the floorboards.

Once we get to the basement he leans in for a hug, wrapping his strong arms around me a little too tightly, pressing my cheek into his rough stubble.

In my periphery something glints- the ring? No, a knife.

That's all it takes for me to duck out of his grip and sprint to the stairs, and he lunges after me, knocking down his The Scream replica hanging on the wall by the stairs.

“Nate!”

I wake up on the guest room bed in his basement, my hands bound to the bedpost, Nate with his back to me, pacing in the corner of the room holding a steak knife.

He must hear me stirring because he turns and says with a smile, “Did you enjoy your nap, my dear? Well, you may want to shut your eyes for this now”.

“Trust me, darling, I'm saving you from a lifetime of pain” he assures me, his fingers drumming the hilt of the knife.

In one swift movement Nate drops the knife on the bed and seizes my neck- his grip grows tighter by the second.

I look around frantically for something, anything to use against him, as my vision gets dark around the edges; this morning’s paper with the update on Syria, the pillows, my trench coat, but nothing could possibly help me.
“Hello? Nate?” a girl’s voice calls from upstairs, and Nate’s head whips around, his grip loosening ever so slightly, giving me just enough time to forcefully yank my hand away from the bedpost, ripping the twine, and reach for the knife.

His eyes turn back to me and sees his knife in my grip, his eyes those of a doe.

“Oh, Nate,” I whisper as I plunge the knife into his arm.

I race upstairs crying and run smack into – “Caroline?”.

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**Diving Lessons**

Finally, finally, I see it in the distance, perched at the top of the hill. The entire ride I sat sprawled across the plush leather seat with nothing to keep me company save my thoughts. I mean, obviously, Paul, my chauffeur, was there but we don’t have very many conversations. He winds down the private, oak-lined street and pauses when he reaches the foot of the driveway. This is it. The only thing separating me from a whole summer with my mother is a set of wrought iron gates... and I’m just not ready to endure it.

The gates open and we crawl up the driveway, Paul taking extra care not to hit a caterer carrying a gigantic cake, no doubt on his way to the dining room to set up for my parents’ self-thrown welcome party. The limo halts at the fountain and Paul comes around to open the door for me. I put one sparkly, Tory Burch-clad foot outside, then the other, and step out into the fresh ocean air. Looking left I see one of the gardeners trimming topiary into what looks like an elephant. Really Mother-elephants? All they do is remind me of the circus of a summer vacation I’m going to have to go through.

Mommy dearest has undoubtedly overbooked my schedule in an attempt to seal my spot in the Hamptons social scene. Paul hoists my suite of luggage up to the attendant waiting to collect it and deliver it to
my room. I pause and take in my grand estate— a huge Victorian peppered with windows and French doors
opening to patios on each of the four stories. I trudge up the stairs to the front door, twist the knob, and almost
get run over by one of the waiters on staff for tonight. Inside is a hurricane of activity. More caterers bustle in
and out of the kitchen, fulfilling orders of the head chef and setting up for the party. Florists toting crystal vases
erupting with exotic flowers hurry through the French doors on their way out to the patio. I spot Mother’s hair
stylist coming down the landing on her way out the door. Oh great. That means that Mother must be-

“Cleo, darling!” she purrs. “Where have you been? I was beside myself!” Her hand flies to her chest
dramatically.

Oh, I’m sure you have. My gaze travels up to the landing of the staircase where she is standing, decked
out in a gauzy, pale blue gown with pearls adorning every bit of exposed skin.

“Why don’t you go freshen up, dear, we have a big night ahead. Now, I’ve laid out a few outfit options on
your bed. I’ve given you lots of liberty tonight. I’m even letting you choose your own accessories. You’re welcome.

Oh, and Cleo, dear? You might want to take some time styling your hair. It’s looking a bit... unruly today”

“Where is Father?” I question, letting the insult roll off of me. I’m used to it but it still smarts a bit to
hear her say things like that.

“He had to take care of urgent business for work. Or so he says,” she mutters.

Her nose wrinkles, looking very out of place on her otherwise admittedly gorgeous face. Bright, sparkling
eyes and blush pink cheeks framed by long, golden waves seemingly spun by Rumpelstiltskin himself. Everybody
tells me I look like my grandmother: big emerald eyes and dark hair.
Thinking of Grandma reminds me of the huge portrait of her hanging in the entryway. She used to own this estate but my mother inherited it when she died. I look up at it now and marvel at the way the painter seemed to capture the daring gleam in her eyes everybody tells me she had. I don’t remember very much of her, she died when I was very young. I sigh and begin hiking up the winding staircase.

First flight.

Then second, then third, until I reach my room. I throw open the doors to my marble bathroom and take my sweet time in the bathtub, wishing I didn’t have to attend the dinner tonight. Once I finish I take a look at the three dress choices she laid out for me. The first one is a pretty ivory number with lace details. The next two are made of the same material as my mother’s dress. All three are pretty but, just to spite her, I choose a short, pink one from my closet. Anyway, she deserves this for that comment about my hair before. I pair it with silver, strappy Jimmy Choos, a bit of makeup, and a matching set of silver jewelry and, as much as I don’t want to, I head downstairs.

I follow the noise to the spacious patio where I gleefully discover that I’m fashionably late. All of my parents’ utterly boring friends and colleagues are mingling with each other. I make a beeline for the hors d’oeuvres but am stopped by my mother and one of her fellow preppy clothing designer friends. At first I don’t understand why she is here- she and my mother are always competing to sell more clothes that season. But then I realize that Mother will do anything to stay within the circle of the high society fashion designers of today, no matter how much she hates them. I know I’ll be in massive trouble if I tarnish my mother’s reputation in front of her friends, so I force a smile and walk over to them.
“Cleo, dear, you remember my friend Mrs. London, don’t you?”

“Of course. Good evening, Mrs. London,” I greet her, all smiles and sugar.

“Good evening, Cleo,” she responds. “Your mother was just telling me about your great sense of style. Taking over the family business, are we? This is one of your latest designs, Elizabeth?” she asks my mother, eyeing my short pink dress. My mother would never design anything like this.

“No, it isn’t. Cleo just likes to experiment with her style. You know how teenagers are,” she replies smoothly.

“Yes, I have quite a lot of practice myself,” she chuckles. Somebody calls to her from across the patio and she politely excuses herself.

“Cleo, why on earth are you wearing that grotesque piece of clothing? I specifically laid out three choices for you to choose from,” she says through gritted teeth. She has always hated when I wear brands of clothing other than her own, and I can only imagine what she must feel like right now, when I’m wearing it in front of all of her colleagues and friends.

“Don’t make such a big deal out of this, Mother. We wouldn’t want to make a scene, now would we?” I reply with a wicked grin.

I walk away and then retreat to a table to eat my dinner. I look out at the ocean longingly. How I wish I could be out there right now, concealed from all of this by the depth of the water and the distance between my mother and me. I’m a free diver. It’s just diving except without any oxygen or snorkel or anything to help you
breathe. I am proud to say that I can hold my breath for seven minutes straight. The ocean is my second home and any time away from it is spent wishing I were back in the deep.

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And the next morning, as soon as I wake up, I slip on my wetsuit and head to the rocks. The cove where I usually dive is relatively shallow so I don’t have to hold my breath for that long. But I can still catch sight of amazing sea creatures and schools of fish, which is one of the best parts of diving. Of course, the other great thing about it is escaping my mother. She doesn’t approve of my diving. I never know why but every time I try to head to the water when she’s in the vicinity, she always tells me I can’t go. She says I can make better use of my time doing something else. But I think the real reason is that she thinks diving isn’t a sophisticated enough hobby for me. It’s no secret that she’d rather me blend in with the rest of the Hamptonites and go horseback riding or play golf or something. This is why I’ve moved my diving sessions to the early morning before she is awake, so I don’t have to listen to her.

I fasten my flippers and goggles, take a deep breath, and plunge off the rocks. As soon as I hit the water it envelops me like my favorite silk robe. I swim downwards for a little while, my eyes focused on the inky black coloring of the water below me. It’s so peaceful under here with no distractions or priorities—just the sound of the ocean humming in my ears. I reach the floor and look around me. All I see is blue. So familiar, so welcoming. Except in the near distance, something shimmers. I try to wade over to it but the closer I get, the farther it seems. Finally I reach it with one forceful kick of my legs.

A necklace.
What is a necklace doing at the bottom of the ocean? Maybe someone threw it there? But how could they reach this far out from the rocks? My lungs start to burn a little bit, my cue to come up for air. I snatch the piece of jewelry and head to the surface to get a better look. Once my head breaks the surface, I hoist myself up, my hands slipping a bit on the slick rocks. I take my goggles off and shake out my hair, pushing it out of my face so I can inspect the necklace. But it's not just a necklace. It's a locket.

I fumble with the clasp trying to open it. My wet hands and the slippery metal make it seem like it's covered in butter. I can't get it open! I run back to the house and grab a towel to dry off. Then I walk into my room and shut the door behind me. I try to pry it open again. This time it works. My eyes widen in astonishment: there is a picture inside it!

Inside of a locket.

That I found on the bottom of the ocean.

Is a picture of my grandmother.

My jaw hits the floor. Why is my grandmother inside of a locket I found at the bottom of the sea? I don't know of anybody else who knows of that cove. It's so secluded. I know Grandma used to own the house, but...

So many questions are going through my head that I can't think straight. So it's no help when Mother prances in a while later to tell me my itinerary for the day.

"Cleo, darling, there you are! We have a busy day ahead of us. You have a hair appointment at noon. Then we'll have to go shopping for clothes for this summer, don't worry I'll help, you'll need it...."
Sometimes I think she cares more about fashion and the Hampton’s society and parties than she cares about me. But honestly, I’m so consumed with this… mystery that I barely even hear her.

“And we must get you new shoes for…”

I drown her out with my thoughts about the locket. I never thought something so enigmatic could happen to me, of all people. The only way to figure this out is to investigate. Which means I have to find some time in my overbooked schedule to go diving again. Ugh. That’s going to be hard.

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As Mother is making me try on countless dresses and blouses and shoes at the boutique, I think of something. The only way the locket could have gotten there is if Grandma herself left it there. I don’t recall ever hearing my parents say that Grandma was a swimmer, but there’s only one way to find out.

“Mother, do you know if grandma liked to swim?” I ask her as she thumbs a Chinese silk scarf.

“Swim? Why, yes. Grandma was an avid swimmer. It was one of the many interests she had. Why do you ask?”

“No reason. I was just thinking about her,” I reply casually.

“Well stop thinking about it right now, dear. I need you to try this on,” she demands, thrusting a gold party dress at me. I obey, but when I come out of the dressing room I press for more information.

“Do you know where grandma liked to swim? Around here?”
She stays silent for a while, seemingly avoiding my question.

Finally she says “So many questions Cleo. Why are you so curious all of a sudden?”

“I’m just wondering that’s all.”

“You’re not thinking about diving again, are you Cleo?” she questions, her pink lips set in a straight line.

“Cleo! Answer me!”

She has never made such a scene in public before. It frightens me a little.

“Calm down, Mother!” I snap.

“They answer my question,” she hisses. “Are you still diving?” All the color has escaped her face, leaving behind an expression that I’ve never seen before. So different from the perfectly made-up, composed mother that I’ve known all my life. I just don’t understand what’s wrong.

“Just a little bit...maybe,” I mumble.

“Cleo we’ve discussed this already!” She looks like she is about to cry but I have no idea why.

“Why can’t I dive, Mother? I don’t see why this is such an issue.” It seems like ever since I mentioned Grandma she has been on edge. Why?

“Cleo,” she barks, “you are forbidden from continuing this ridiculous hobby!”.

That makes me angry. I put up with her shoving me into the dumb Hamptons world, and deal with her smothering me, planning everything under the sun for me to do and hair-spraying and making me up to within
an inch of my life. And she has the nerve to forbid me from diving? From doing the one thing I love, the one thing that keeps me sane? How dare she!

“Well you know what Mother? You can’t stop me from going. In fact I’m going diving right now!” I cry, a bubble of indignation rising from the pit of my stomach.

I race out of the store and all the way back home. I snatch my suit, rush to the rocks, and dive.

The water feels so pleasantly cool it almost soothes my hot anger. But not quite. I swim downward trying to find clues, signs, anything that will tell me more about that locket. My breathing is not as strong as normal because I’m so furious, so before I can find anything I have to get back to the surface for air.

It’s then that I notice the sky for the first time. It’s dark and ominous, the clouds coalescing into a single gray mass at an alarming rate. The water is getting choppy and tossing me around.

But I head back under.

Just as I’m submerged again I’m yanked to the side. I struggle back to the surface, choking, only to discover that I am being pulled out to sea. My mouth is so full of seawater I can’t even scream for help. A wave taller than I’ve ever seen comes crashing over me, flipping me under the surface. I manage a scream but who can hear me? The ocean used to be my safe place but now it’s just a vicious monster, devouring me.

I’m a pretty strong swimmer but I’m still accustomed to more shallow water like in my cove, not the depths of the ocean. My body is forced under again against my will. It feels like somebody is taking a giant spoon and churning the ocean and I can’t do anything to help myself. I’m just part of the mix. The last thing I
remember is something grabbing me, maybe seaweed, but it feels like a hand. I wake up on the sand of the beach, coughing and spluttering and forcing the water out of my lungs. My mother is hovering over me, tears streaming down her face.

“Mommy,” I fling my arms around her and sob over and over again.

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I end up clean and in my bed after the medical people have all left after making sure I returned to normal. Mom lies on my bed with me, stroking my hair.

“Mommy, I thought I was going to drown. I should have listened to you. I’m so sorry. I’m so, so sorry,” I cry and lean into her. She keeps petting my hair soothingly and holding me tightly.

After a long silence except for my sniffling she says, “Cleo, the reason I didn’t want you to keep diving was because... your grandma drowned. I just didn’t want to take the chance with you, sweetheart. I don’t want to lose you too.” Now she’s crying too.

Grandma drowned? Everybody told me she just got old.

“It’s no secret that she was a daredevil. One day she went for a dive in the rain. But not just a drizzle- it was a big storm, you know, with eighty mile-per-hour winds and trees breaking and falling down. The ocean was the worst place to be. I’d just had a horrible fight with her and she went to cool off in the ocean.
"It was like her home away from home. Even in her old age, when she couldn’t stay in for that long, she swam. It was her passion. She’d been diving ever since she was a little girl. Grandma knew better but she went anyway. The last words I said to her were “I never want to see you again,” she whispers, her eyes pools of glass.

“Be careful what you wish for, Cleo…I just hope she forgives me.” Her eyes flit to the ceiling as if looking for grandma’s response.

Mom fought with her mother just like I do with Mom. I don’t want my last words to her to be something so cruel, even though I know Mom didn’t mean it. I get up and shuffle over to my jewelry box where the locket is hidden. Grandma’s drowning still doesn’t explain why I found it on the ocean floor.

“Mom, have you seen this before?” I ask her.

“Where on earth did you get this?” she breathes, taking the necklace by her fingertips.

“Believe it or not, at the bottom of the ocean. How do you think it got there?” Maybe the answer lay with my mom all along.

“My grandfather, grandma’s father, used to keep this with him all the time. When he died from an illness, when Grandma was fourteen, he gave it to her. She wore this everywhere. She must have lost it on one of her dives.”

Wow. What a story.

I can tell that Mom is thinking about a lot of things right now. After a long silence she speaks.
“Cleo, I try to involve myself in so many activities because my heart still aches for her. Each day I occupy myself with things that I know seem worthless to you, but they provide a distraction for me. I try to immerse you into this lifestyle to try to give you opportunities for other hobbies, to steer you away from diving. I guess I just hoped that it would be a passing phase you would forget about once you became absorbed in that type of life, like I am.”

“But Mom, why do you want to be distracted? Don’t you think it would be better to let yourself accept that she is gone rather than let sadness weigh down your heart all the time?” For the first time, it seems, I care about Mom’s happiness. I truly want her to accept that and move on so she can enjoy her life.

She stays silent for a while. Then she whispers, “You know, Cleo, you have so much wisdom, just like Grandma did. How did I get so lucky to have you as my daughter? You’re completely right.”

“I know I don’t remember much about her, Mom, but I bet that Grandma would want you to accept that,” I murmur.

“You know something else? I think Grandma would also tell me to stop pushing you the way I am. She always believed that people should be free to do whatever they want to. She’d want me to let you be free, let you dive if you want to.”

“I know you only meant well... now,” I confess to her, and she holds her arms out for a hug.

In an odd way, my near-death experience was one of the best things to happen to me. I learned things about Mom that I didn’t think she was capable of. Having feelings, for example. I never knew how sad she was. You couldn’t tell by looking at her—she always seemed like this confident, upbeat woman with a huge circle of
friends and an obsession with parties. But she is a real person and she does have a heart. Bonus: I also found out the real way Grandma died... and solved the puzzle about that locket.

I won't take Mom for granted anymore and I know she'll do likewise for me. She is the only mom I've got and I'll love her forever.

Cinderella

A dream is a wish your heart makes
And a wish is what I need
I wash, I dust, I scrub, I bake
And not a simple thank you for me
I m forbidden from the ball
Until in front of me
Appears Fairy Godmother, wand and all,
Oh, how could this be?
Well into the night we dance
All my troubles forgotten
’Till the clock strikes and destroys my chance,
For clearly he's besotted
I lose my slipper down the stairs
My carriage is disappearing!
I must run or I'll soon be bare,
All that's left, an earring!
Then they call in to fit the shoe
That a lady left behind
That it would fit, I knew-
Of course, for it is one of a kind
The carriage drives us away
After a marriage bright with laughter.
This is how I'll always stay:
Happily ever after.

Paris
My history dates back
To the times of balls and gowns
In 1789 my prison was attacked
The royalty went down
Often described as pretty,
A place of love and light,
I'm a destination city
That's loveliest at night
I'm home to many churches and parks
I have a right and left bank
Most people come to see the Arc
For which Napoleon's to thank
My boulevards are wide
With many modern stores
Come visit me, don't stay inside
Grab your coat, step out the door

**Teatime**

So much depends

Upon

A teakettle,

Churning and boiling,

Its high-pitched

Whistle

Stinging my

Ears.

**The Looking Glass**

The figure in

The looking glass

Stares back at me

**A Long Way to Go**

My gaze torn from the

Words on the page

To the raindrops outside.

A hot sip of cappuccino,

Long sigh,

Back to the novel.
The Little Girl

Back and forth on my swing
Sky, grass, and me
Until she takes my hand
And we run,
Dresses flapping in the
Wind, her arm looped around mine
Then gone with a whisper
My swing rocks back and forth.

Atlantic

A gentle mist kisses my face
And wakes me up to
A soft to and fro,
The rise and fall,
Eternal blue,
And a smile
Dances upon my lips.
Sleep
My lashes flutter
Quick as a hummingbird’s wings,
Close very slowly
And leave only inky black
Tender hands ease me under.

Tempest
The rain
Sticks on my face
And trickles down my hair
I abandon myself to the
Storm

Wintertide
Just through the window
Where my breath fogs the cold glass,
Lay a world where the
Days are shorter than the night
And everything is in white
Spring Rain
Teardrops
She shed just at
Daybreak now settle as
Dew on the lush meadow, and
Sit there.

Away with the Wind
Alone
On the wet grass
A daisy’s white petals
Get caught in the breeze, and they fly
Away.

Tahiti
In the palm’s shadow,
A salty breeze floating past
Stirs the leaves above.

Morning Mist
Cloaked in morning mist,
Hidden leaves dip far below
And birds sing their song
From the Sky
A single raindrop
That plummets to a puddle,
Can last forever

Silence
Though soft enough to
Sound empty, still loud enough
To have its own voice

The Bank
Fresh, dewy scent clouds
The air with the lilies’ zing,
This, here, is springtime

Listen to October
Outside wind whistles,
Eerie notes still heard above
Cries of the rainstorm

Ripple
The tree’s reflection-
Ebbing as the raindrop falls
Filling the puddle

To Novels
Entice us simply by the smooth cover
That begs to be opened, for us to discover
The secrets that are kept hidden by it.

And as each page is turned to another
We’re lost in a world where troubles hover
In a distant realm, escape bit by bit

Their thoughts become entangled with our own
And in all of our hearts firm bonds are sewn
Through the twists and turns of every chapter
The words on the page become our captors
Your enchanting spell is never broken
The cover shuts, but desire’s awoken

The Sea
Something magical about you beckons
And lures me towards your forever depths
The calming kiss of the tides, I reckon,
Or perhaps that azure sparkle, except
Blue so tranquil in a matter of seconds
Can escape the serenity it once kept

Blue are your waves with foaming crests
Dancing in the heavens, playing in the sky
Reaching a crescendo, laying to rest
The storm goes quickly, wishes a goodbye
And retreats after the final test
Imagination? It seems like a lie

Something so vast and still very unknown
So inviting, magical, appealing
And across the shore the blue surf is thrown
As silk that covers my toes; a feeling
I get when we come together: home
An embrace, soft, comforting, and healing.

The Gift
Delight in the bright with a grin
Savor in every cherry
What’s done is gone as what’s once been
So throughout go on, be merry!
Only so much sand can slip the glass
Not to be passed with dally
Hear the voice calling and pass
Your days with bliss, forget the tally
For the seeming sweet infinity of youth
In all its callow glory
Holds a certain finale, in truth,
A completion of the story.
The wheels of time are spinning
And are only forward bound
But we will all be winning
When the gift of life is found.

_Nelson Mandela_

With persistent hands, thumbs of green
Your dream was planted, those unkeen
With minds restrained to fields of cotton
Though by us, you’re unforgotten
Your little plot, poor and pallid,
Nurtured by their thoughts invalid
With rich, dark soil it was sown
Upon it gales of parity blown
Thirty years of iron locks
Is merely time passed on the clock
Love for your garden never wavered
We’re now bereft, your time savored
Gone is the man in who love lies
No, never will your match arise
Through woeful eyes we all cherish
Your days, but only frame perished
All the world bids you goodnight
As loss like yours tugs our hearts tight
We wish you were still here, our friend,
But all god things come to an end
Though held in your eternal rest
Your legacy left us all blessed
Naught is the meaning of your tomb
Your flowers are forever in bloom

Another Now

Now as I gaze upon a sea of stars
Whose glamor to yours can’t nor will equate
I wish I knew exactly where you are
The darkness grips my heart, an iron weight
But now, dear one, that you have gone away
And I have tried in vain to mend the pain
My heart’s at war, duel to keep love at bay
It's not the same; I'd rather be in chains
But though intangible forevermore
One thing I know is that I have a key
Which has the will to open up the door
And tether everything I lost to me
The dreams from which I wake up with a start
I know you will be locked inside my heart

**Something On Its Own**

*Love is like a lighthouse on the shore*
*A steadfast, guiding light to every ship*
*It holds us, transfixed, in its golden grip*
*And weathers every raindrop on its door*
*Love is like the ocean all the more*
*We'll never find the end, so deep it dips*
*Infinity, nary a person it skips*
*We feel its power in our very core*
*Love is like the sun, so warm and bright*
*And even when invisible at night*
*Illuminates every inch of the earth*
*It keeps us all alive for all we're worth*
*But though these special traits to love I loaned*
*It's something else completely on its own.*
Girls' Night

Scene I

Simone: Mom? Don’t forget we don’t want any pizza this time, okay? We’re trying to change it up a little. We’re all going on the NeanderThin diet- so that means carbs are out of the question and we’ll be expecting fruit, nuts, or vegetables, every three hours. (She pauses, her mom still standing in the doorway) Bye, Mom.

(Doorbell rings from the front door)

Simone: Ahhh! They’re here! (Flies down the hallway and opens the door) OMG! Hi guys!

(Mallory, Libby, and Stacy walk in)

Simone: Come on in. Let’s go upstairs! (They all head upstairs, the three guests carrying their own overnight bags) Did you guys all bring the right pj’s? The silk button-up ones we all bought for Christmas? We’re supposed to be matching or it’ll look weird.

Libby: I know I did.

Mallory: Yeah, me too. Stace, what about you?

Stacy: Oh, not only did I bring the pj’s. I brought the SingIt 3000, a dozen neon feather boas, and the entire Sephora store all in this baby right here. (Pats overnight bag). All I needed to do to afford it was spend a week with Mrs. Blake’s twin terrors next door.

Mallory: Way to go, Stace! Nice way to spruce up our regular old Friday night sleepover!

Libby: You didn’t do so badly either Simone. Look at this place!

(All three girls admire the endless entertainment options strewn about the room)

Simone: Glad you like it, babes. Took Dad decades to get that disco ball up there. He kept getting work calls. You’d think his own daughter would be more important than some measly little work problem. (Sighs theatrically) What can I say, girls? Parents! (Stacy rolls her eyes at Simone’s melodrama) Why are you guys still standing here? Go! Get changed! You know where the bathroom is!

(The three guests retreat to the bathroom, then emerge wearing identical polka-dotted silk pajama sets)

Simone: Let’s get this party started! I’m thinking makeovers!

(Mom enters the bedroom)
Mom: Hi, girls. Nice to see you. I brought you some snacks. (Holds out a neatly arranged vegetable platter).

Simone: Knock much, Mom? Just leave it there, okay?

Mom: I guess I’ll leave you to it, then.

Stacy: No offense or anything, Simone, but fruits and vegetables don’t exactly top the Ultimate Slumber Party food list.

Simone: Okay, like, where have you been? Maybe if you checked your messages you’d know that we’re all going on the NeanderThin diet. We may only be 13 but it’s never too early to start watching your figure.

Stacy: You sound like a doctor’s office brochure! The NeanderThin diet! (Rolls her eyes at Mallory)

Simone: Whatever. Just go get your Sephora things…. We’re waiting.

(Stacy huffs then dumps her cosmetics on the plush carpet)

Libby: OMG Stace this is a gold mine! You’re totes the best! It really only took a week of babysitting?

(Simone quickly jumps in, unhappy with Libby’s reaction to the makeup).

Simone: It’s not that much, Lib. Remember when you stayed in Denver with us for Christmas that year and Grams got us oceans of this stuff? We used a ton of eye shadow and got allergic-

Libby: (Doubling over in laughter) Allergic reactions! OMG I remember! We looked like red puffy chipmunks!

(Simone grins and laughs along with Libby, delighted with their inside joke. The girls then make each other over. Libby fixes up Stacy, Mallory does Simone)

Libby: OMG Mal you look totes adorable!

Mallory: Why, thank you, daaaaarling. You’re not so bad yourself! Any one of those 8th grade boys would be lucky to have stunners like us!

Simone: I do look exquisite too, Mallory. Okay. Karaoke time!

(The girls take their pick of boas, hats, and heels and turn on the SingIt 3000).

Simone: Me and Lib will go first. We’re doing Walking on Sunshine. Prepare to be dazzled!
(Libby and Simone start squealing to the song in their high-pitched tweenie voices. When the song finishes, Simone sings another duet with Mallory, then a solo.)

Simone: Who else is totes thirsty from all this singing? Let’s stop.

Stacy: Wait, Simone, I didn’t get a turn yet.

Simone: Don’t worry, Stace. You can do it later. Like, way later. Like when the neighbors need the rooster to wake them up!

Libby: Simone! Hahaha! Don’t worry Stace, it’s not true.

Simone: Um, yeah, it kind of is. But, hey, look on the bright side. When your job as a makeup artist fails, and judging by Libby’s face it will, you can always get a job on the farm!

(Stacy is about to defend herself when a loud rumble of thunder rattles the room. The wind howls outside, gusts flying in through the open window just as a streak of lightning makes the lights flicker.)

Mallory: OMG is that thunder?

(Simone shoves Stacy to her open window) OMG Stacy close it! My perfumes are getting knocked down!

(Stacy stumbles over to the window and just manages to shut it before she slips on the slick floor and falls on her backside).

Stacy: Ow! SIMONE! You IDIOT! What have you done?

(Electric crackling sound. The lights go off onstage)

Libby: Ohmygodohmygodohmygod!

**Scene II**

Simone: Ohmygod! You’re all so slow! Mal go get a flashlight! In my nightstand!

Stacy: Simone, you just shoved me into a thunderstorm! Do you realize that or is your brain too clouded with cheap perfume to notice?

Libby: Focus, guys. Ugh, does this thing even work?

(Libby hangs the flashlight on the nearby table. A beam of light illuminates her face)

Simone: Come on, hand it over, Lib. (Yelling at the ceiling) Are you serious? A power outage? Could my life get any worse?
Stacey: Okay Your Royal Highness; stop being such a drama queen!

Mallory: Hey, cheer up guys. This could actually be fun. Let’s tell ghost stories with the flashlight!

Simone: (Snaps) Fine! I’ll go first. Okay, so once there was a girl at camp and she had to use those disgusting bathrooms- once we were driving back from New York and we were in, like, no man’s land and I had to use one of those portable bathrooms. Worst night of my life-

Stacy: Get on with it, Simone.

(Simone glares at Stacy but continues)

Simone: So she went inside and there was a mirror but she felt like something was watching her. When she looked in the mirror something with black, soulless eyes and covered in blood was coming at her with a knife. She felt a sharp stab and a wetness running down her back. Then she died. Moral of the story- don’t go to summer camp. I speak from experience- it’s just a bug infested, hot and sticky nightmare.

Stacy: Oh, Simone. You’re sooo creative. Bloody Mary? How original!

Simone: Think you can do better? Let’s hear it!

Stacy: I’ve got a good one. Once there was a spoiled brat who thought she could get everything she wanted. One day she shoved her fr-

(Simone lunges towards Stacy and grabs the flashlight from her)

Simone: How dare you? You’re only jealous of everything I have!

Stacy: Oh, yeah I’m totes jealous of your elephant sized ego and your knack for making people feel bad!

Simone: You take that back right now Stacy Weatherly!

Stacy: Or what? You’ll kick me out? I’ll save you the trouble. (Stacy packs up her makeup and hitches her bag over her shoulder) Au revoir, Simone Wood.

Simone: Good riddance. You better watch out, Stacy. I can make your life miserable.

(Mallory, hearing such nasty words, carefully defends her friend. The wind howls outside as a streak of lightning lights up the room)

Mallory: (Softly). Simone, stop it.

Libby: Com on, guys. Don’t do this. Stace, please come back.
Stacy: I never left. I can't see the door. It's too dark.

(Simone feels around and pulls Libby to her side).

Simone: Don't ask her to come back, Libby. We don't want her here.

Stacy: Don't you get it, Simone? Libby does want me here and there's nothing you can do about it. For someone accusing me of jealousy, you seem awfully possessive of Libby.

(Simone, hearing Stacy speak the truth, starts crying. The wind howls outside, the sound of rain continues).

Mallory: I think you've cracked the case, Stace.

Scene III

Stacy: You don't need to make things complicated, Simone. Learn to share.

Simone: You don't get it! Libby is all I have-

Stacy: All you have in addition to everything you want.

Simone: All I have for a friend! It's totes clear that you don't like me, Mal is, like, scared of me. That leaves Libby.

Stacy: But Simone, the reason I don't like hanging out with you and Mal is scared of you is because you're mean and bossy and so totally un-fun to be around.

Mallory: Guys, I'm not scared of her, okay? I just don't like fighting.

Stacy: You purposely make us look bad in front of Libby. You want to keep her all to yourself. Well, newsflash, people are allowed to have more than one friend.

Libby: Can I say something? Stacy, I never ever thought you were annoying or stupid or anything Simone makes you out to be. (Gives Simone pointed look). And Simone, I'll always be your BFF. How could I not? We've been friends for, like, a century.

Simone: So why do you always exclude me?

Stacy: Like I said, you constantly insult me every time I'm around you. Why would I put myself through that? Maybe if you were nicer to people you'd have more friends. A little kindness does wonders in that department.
(Simone gets a fresh wave of tears)

Simone: Ohmygod! I’ve been so awful to you guys. That’s not me. I know it’s too late but I’m so sorry. Sorry times a billion.

Mallory: Simone, we know deep down your heart is made of gold. You weren’t always like this. It was just hidden when your friendship felt threatened. All we’re asking is to get rid of Cruel Simone and bring the old one back.

(Simone laughs through her tears)

Simone: OMG, Mal. Who are you? Like, thank you Dr. Psychologist!

Mallory: I read it in one of my mom’s self-help books on the flight to Orlando. I was totes bored to tears.

Libby: Okay, girls. I think this calls for a group hug! Cheesy yet appropriate!

(The girls all hug each other)

Stacy: Hey. Where is Mrs. Wood? The power’s been out for, like, ten minutes!

(Just then Mom enters and the lights come back on. The disco ball starts spinning again, splashing colorful lights around the room. The SingIt 3000 starts blasting Britney Spears).

Mom: Sorry, girls. I obviously don’t have a career as an electrician ahead of me. I couldn’t start the generator. Are you alright?

Stacy: OMG I’m psychic! I just asked about you, Mrs. Wood.

(Mom chuckles)

Mom: I just feel so bad about leaving you girls in the dark. You had a flashlight, right, honey?

(The girls, remembering their ghost story episode with the flashlight, start laughing nervously)

Simone: Um, yeah, we did.

Mom: Oh boy. I don’t even want to know. Can I get you girls anything? Drinks, snacks, a movie from downstairs?

Simone: ...Actually, Mom, could you order us a pizza when the rain stops?

Mom: (Mom gives Simone a knowing smile) Sure.
If I Only Knew

Brittany: (Stomping into classroom) Okay, Jamie. Take out your math homework (She desperately tries to keep her voice light as she hangs up her sweater on the radiator)

Jamie: I already did it

Brittany: You’re so funny! Seriously, sweetheart, take out your math.

Jamie: I already did it!

Brittany: If you don’t take it out I’ll have to call your parents, okay? Go on, sweetie, we’ll breeze through it.

(Jamie pales)

Jamie: Okay okay. Fine!

Brittany: Number one. What do you do first?

Jamie: I hate math. And you’re a rat for making me do it.

Brittany: (sighs) Oh, sweetie, let’s focus all right?

Jamie: I don’t take orders from rats.

Brittany: Jamie, that’s not very nice. You know that. Please apologize.

Jamie: The one who needs to apologize is you for making me come here every Friday and look at your stupid face!

Brittany: Jamie! Stop that right now!

Jamie: (Twisting her face as if she tasted something sour) Look at me I’m Brittany. I’m a mean old witch. Watch out, if you don’t do your homework I’ll take you down with the rest of the kids who didn’t do their homework.

Brittany: (Takes a deep breath) Why don’t we move onto number 2? What is 19 times 10?

Jamie: 19x10 is the number of years it’s going to take for you to catch me!

Brittany: Jamie! Get back here! OMG I so didn’t sign up for this!

(Brittany races off after Jamie, who has just run out the door and around the corner into the rain)
Jamie: Maybe you should lay off those cookies, porky. Do us all a favor! (Snickers)

Brittany: Porky? That’s IT! Get back here, you little heathen!

(Between her long legs and her anger at Jamie, she catches up to her in no time)

Brittany: Look, garbage mouth, if you don’t want to listen you’re outta here!

(Jamie opens her mouth to rebound, then suddenly dissolves into tears)

Jamie: Oh, please, don’t! Please don’t send me away!

Brittany: Hate to break it to you, angel, but behavior like that doesn’t earn you a spot here or anywhere else. You’re lucky enough to have people who care about you and want to help you. Don’t blow it.

Jamie: Who cares about me? You? I know you don’t. Neither does Mommy and definitely not Olivier. (Jamie spits the name as if tasting something bitter)

Brittany: Who’s Olivier?

Jamie: My new step-daddy. He gives me all these chores and he never lets any of my friends over and he hides Mommy from me. He locks them in their room and says they have to handle adult things. And when I asked him for a sleepover birthday he said I could only get one when I learn to use my brain for once! Please, Brittany. I hate going home. I’ll read a whole picture book and do ten math worksheets everyday. (Whispers) Please.

(Brittany does not know what to say)

Brittany: Oh, Jamie. Come here.

(Brittany gives her a warm hug)

Brittany: Don’t worry. I won’t make you leave, okay? We’ll just have to work on getting your work done and choose our words carefully, okay, sweetie?

Jamie: (Dragging her forearm across her nose to wipe away the snot) Okay.

Brittany: It’s freezing out here. Why don’t we go back inside and you can tell the counselor what you just told me, okay?

Jamie: Okay
(Brittany opens the door to the community center, sighing, feeling sour inside for ever judging the little girl)

**Jolly Good Fellows**

Albert: My family needs the money, Russ.

John: Ah, well. I’ll see what I can do. (Grins) Hey, Albert, remember when we auditioned and you were in the middle of a line and you started wheezing? Hahahaha!

(Albert remembers and cracks up)

Albert: I remember that! Then you tried to guide me offstage and-

John: And we tripped! Hahaha!

(John wipes at the tears in his eyes)

Director: How about we take 5 guys?

(John and Albert high five each other then walk offstage. John notices one of the actors whispering heatedly to the director)

John: What does he want?

Albert: I don’t know.

(The other actor marches over to them)

Other Actor: You two need to get a grip and stop messing around.

Albert: We’re on break, son. Don’t get your knickers in a twist!

(John and Albert burst out laughing again)

Other Actor: This is what I mean. You two oldies need to focus onstage. You make rehearsals ten times longer. I’ve got to get home to my family. This isn’t a nursing home! Some of us aren’t here for a post-retirement oldie activity!

Albert: Aw, simmer down. We’re only laughing.

John: We didn’t mean to upset you, son. Live a little. You’re so stiff up there!

Director: Okay, guys. I think we’ll call it a day.
(John packs up his equipment and starts to leave)

Albert: What was wrong with that guy?

John: He's a piece of work. You know, I may be ancient, but if there's one thing I've learned in all my years is to make the most of everything.

Albert: Haha! Oh, buddy. Is that what you were thinking last summer when your pants fell down onstage?

John: Oh yeah! And then I tripped. AGAIN! Hahahahaha!

(They walk offstage slapping each other on the back)