

Living with a missing piece

By: Zoë B.

“Back off!” Keith yells. The next thing I know, two large hands are rocketing towards me. The fists of apathy seemed to burst through the meaning of mercy as they travel towards my face. I beg and scream for him to halt, but no one spares an ear; all he hears is the wicked voice of the devil booming within him. The bedside table is right behind me, standing boldly with its razor-sharp corners. Tears coat my eyes, fluid and constant, racing down my red and bruised cheeks. I feel his hands pound into my stomach, and in response I desperately dig my fingers into the bed sheet. Instinctively, my eyes shut as I begin to roll. I do not need a glance to realize that I am approaching the table at tremendous speed! My heart lurches, spine stiffens, pupils dilate with the resignation that I cannot terminate the inevitable impact. When the corner finally pierces my body, I feel nothing.

It has been four months since the “*accident*”. When I move my left hand to my right side, all I feel is the light air on my palm. When I stare into the mirror, all I view is myself, a strangely mix-matched figure. When I do a cartwheel, my weight only pounds into my left arm. As melancholy as it is, my right arm is no longer in existence. My brother and I do not speak much anymore; I avoid him as much as possible and only communicate with him when absolutely necessary. Just at sight of his sinister form, fury ruses to my cheeks and fire burns in my aching heart. I can’t accept him anymore. No matter how hard I try to persuade myself and tell myself that he is family, I just can’t.

Ambling down the steps of the front porch on a bright day, I notice Keith across the yard and whip around in a flash. Upon rushing back inside, I hear my brother’s heavy footsteps trailing quickly behind me. *When will that irritating boy stop?!* I think indignantly. He has gone about this for months. I have already listened to his apologies, but those words fail to make my arm reappear. He doesn’t know what it’s like to lose something so important with the knowledge that you will never get it back. My scampering does not stop until the door to my bedroom is shut and locked.

When morning finally comes, I yearn for nothing but waffles with maple syrup. On my way down the stairs, I hear the doorbell ring. *This early?* I think as I change direction for the front door. There stands Julianna, about as perky as a butterfly. “What do you want?” I ask, my frown growing heavy on my fragile face. “Gee, Brenna. You’ve been like this too long.” Only a moment later she is tugging on my arm, yanking me through the doorway, and I realize I’m about to go treading to the park in my Mickey Mouse pajamas with an empty stomach. When we arrive, I head directly to the swing, Julianna’s loyal companionship a bother as she takes the swing beside me.

“How come you’re so down all the time?” snorts Julianna.

“Are you serious?”

“Just tell me,” she demands.

“In case you haven’t noticed, I don’t have a right arm like you. I can barely even swing.” I answer, and it’s true. We are just sitting on swings, our feet dangling over the ground, with no movement whatsoever.

“Your brother tried apologizing.” she exclaims. A scowl shoots over my face.

“I can talk about anything with you...but not him. You are my best friend but he doesn’t count. Never.” I growl. Sparkles twinkle in her blue eyes.

“I’m just saying, things were better before. I don’t know what sort of fight you got into before the incident...” she says. I’m holding back the urge of knocking her straight out of her swing! “But,” she continues, “you should really just forgive him. You never know how long you’re gonna survive in this world, so why waste your time frowning?” That last line she spoke...that hit me somewhere.

“Okay.” I answer after thinking for a few minutes.

When I get home, I hear Keith’s loud footsteps hurrying towards me again. I get ready to sprint, but remembering the words of my friend, I reluctantly turn around and ask, “What does someone like you want?”

“Forgiveness.” he answers. “Please. I’m so sorry, and believe me I regret it completely! Brenna, you got to understand....”

“Okay!” I shout and stomp away.

“Wait!” he yells. “What does that mean? Do you accept my apology?” I halt for a moment and glance to the right wall where our family’s baby pictures hang. In one of them, Keith and I are competing to catch a Monarch.

A crystal tear slivers down my face as I respond, “I’ll think about it.” I can hear his sigh of relief as I turn my head forward again. Walking away, I think, *Maybe this can work.*