

Zahra K.

## Our Oak Tree

We were two lost souls just passing by. I was falling until I had you to catch me. The simple thought of me knowing you all my life gives me a belly full of monarchs and swallowtails that alight just by the mere thought of you, because even that was a pleasure.

I remember exactly where I was when I realized I loved you. I didn't quite catch it though, because I was just a kid. I put it off thinking I was too young to feel what I felt. Little did I know, I would soon come to realize that love had no age, and frankly, no race either.

We lived on opposite sides of the hill. The hill we both commonly known. The hill that was the root of our childhood, and the obstacle that stopped us from interaction. But at the very top of that hill, was a tall, masculine, hard, Oak Tree. We would run around that Oak Tree like it was the big bad monster under our beds who would come eat us if we couldn't run fast enough. That was when we were kids. When our parents weren't too concerned about the color of our skin because we were only 5. I remember when my parents were having an argument about us.

“She shouldn't hang around him, David! He is black, he is going to teach her something that she knows is not allowed in this house!”

My mom would say, watching us out the window.

“Just let them play, Amanda. They are only kids. We will worry when they're older, and this is a small town, he'll probably move by then.”

But You never did. Until the big fight that our families had, you never did. I watched as you knelt before my parents, begging for approval of our marriage. I never knew that the same people who raised me would be so oblivious to the pain it caused me when they wouldn't let me marry you, just because you were black. It was us against the world, but they wouldn't understand. They wouldn't understand that at 16 you would call to me to come by the Oak tree, the days when our parents would go on date nights. You would lean against that tree like you had no worries in the world, your brown Acoustic Guitar strumming the melodies of the songs you wrote in your little cabin house. You would sing to me and tell me how every lyric was written ahafor me, a description of me and how beautiful you thought I was. They wouldn't understand how we would always engrave our initials into the most hidden part of the tree with a big heart around it, so every time mom would ask, “Are you hanging out with that black boy again?” We could someday show them our engraving fearlessly, telling them that we are one when we are together, and our skin doesn't define the people that we are. We could never grasp the concept of the lectures our parents would give, that whites and Blacks don't belong together, and that we were meant to live separate lives. They wouldn't understand how we would stare at each other for hours in front of that very Oak tree instead of watching the sunset because when we looked at each other we didn't see white or black, we saw strength, beauty in each other, and love. That Oak tree symbolizes us. It is the mascot to our love.

That is why, when I look at this tattoo of an Oak Tree I just got a few days ago, when I missed you a little extra, I could not help but think of you.