**Eccentric Memories**

As I walk facing the dock, I watch the planks--dodging splinters with each step. The planks’ once golden smooth surface has faded to a light grey--each splitting with age, they create a corrugated walkway. I can feel my heartbeat in the soles of my feet. The air is ripe with salt and the sky, radiant with orange and purple, beams through the wooden canopy. Lapping under my feet, the water softly calls to me. As the sun retreats into the water, fairy lights, strung overhead, lay a blanket of candescence over the dock. Sky lanterns gently float towards the stars creating a dome of unbounded brilliance. Streaks of white sail across the inky black tapestry overhead. Shoulder to shoulder, our thighs meet the cold sand as we lie against it, as our pointers drag across the dusted-white fabric.

I often imagine my old mental images of people’s houses. Walking through the front door I can see the image I have had in mind for months now. Like a flashbulb camera, my mind has burned specific images into my memory. However, there’s nothing particularly special about most of them. In this house, I can see the dock as the door sits open welcoming the summer breeze. It's a beautiful image I think about a lot, but other than that it’s pretty random. In this same house, I still have the picture of the hallway that leads to the house’s main bathroom as it was the closest one to the bedroom I stayed in while in the house. The hallway, without any lights on, tunnels my vision straight toward the bright bulb sitting above the mirror. The light doesn’t spill out into the hallway like I’d expect, though. Rather, the contents of the hallway don’t exist. Instead of simply being black, they’re just not there. Almost like how closing my eyes presents me with black, but when I’m asleep the black that I should see against my eyelids just doesn’t exist. Although this image carries an eerie feel when I describe it, in my brain it feels just as normal as any other image.

However, some images have become more profound as they’ve aged. Standing in an outdoor shower with the dock out in front of me, I’m staring up towards the stars. With the edge of the Milky Way smeared across the sky, the long streak of a shooting star is seared on my mind. An image this vivid will never fade. I remember the hot water streaming over my shoulders and the song that played on my friend’s Bluetooth speaker from outside the shower. I knew in the moment that this moment would stick with me for a long time if not forever, but as time passes the image somehow becomes even more vivid. One day, I might as well be exactly in that moment again.

I am standing in the hallway of my elementary school best friend’s house. I can still smell the dusty basement where we played Wii sports on his TV. Running around his backyard, ecstasy rushed through my mind like never before. But instead of taking an image with my hand finally reaching his back to tag him or one of our major league baseball games with our short white bats, I’m standing in his hallway. Instead of looking in from the door like in entering, I’m specifically looking at the closed door from the inside--across the hall. It’s closed and there's a soft warm light halfway between me and the door. This image is almost as old as some of my first memories. I remember using this image to imagine my other friend’s houses that I’d never been to. As they would describe their house, I would carry couches, tables, and desks into this image I held instead of trying to imagine a whole new house. Ever since I stopped imagining this house, I’m not exactly sure when, but I imagine it in layers. When I think of it, I have to remember as my past self remembering it. I’m looking at a painting inside of another painting. I recognize the painting inside the other, but it’s not the original--it holds an uncanny likeness to the original, however, the image of the original in my mind is too blurry. It’s a brawl between the fading memory of the original and this slightly off recreation. I know the recreation’s always gonna win but I still pit them against each other.

My head is my grandpa’s armrest. It was three in the morning. My family is standing outside our rental house with our backs facing the shore. My grandpa’s arm lifts off of my head as he loudly whispers “Look,” pointing towards the sky. I watch as the moon shifts from its normal white glow to black to a striking red color. We watch in silence with the light ambiance of waves crashing behind us. With the cold sand under my feet, the wind pierces through the blanket I dragged off my bed.

I’m running across the beach throwing the washed-up bodies of clear jellyfish at my friend. This is the beach’s equivalent of snowballs. As we dodge each others’ throws, we move further into the water. Now dodging and diving under waves, we get tackled into the sand while holding our breaths. With water up our nose and our mouths completely dry we retreat to the shore.

These are some of my best memories at one of my favorite beaches, but when I think of this beach I don’t immediately think of these memories. Instead, I think of me and my brother standing on the top floor of our rental house learning how to use the yo-yos we got the day before. Nothing more than that, just us messing around with yo-yos. This image clouds my vision in perfect clarity whenever I think of the beach. I can’t even see the beach from where the image was taken nor was I even thinking of the beach itself. Eccentric memories have been seared across my mind.