

**Coffee, Late Nights, and Music**

By: William Lewandowski

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*Dedication:*

*I dedicate this collection of works to*

*my wonderful mother*

*who has helped me through the hard times*

*and the good times.*

*Thanks mom for putting up with me*

*and all my shenanigans. I couldn’t have*

*asked for a better mother than you!*

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**Coffee**

*Coffee. It is the cornerstone of life. Hanging out at coffee shops, having a coffee machine dripping non-stop, and constantly holding a cozy to-go mug with a zarf, people are nearly always seen with caffeine in one form or another. Coffee is one of those key tools, along with paper and pencil that helps get homework completed and life tasks accomplished. Without coffee or caffeine, it’d be a miracle if anyone passed through life at all! It works wonders in the life of a college student and makes those endless nights go by much smoother. For others, it’s the thing that gets them out of bed and puts a smile on their face.*

Some of the Many Reasons

Having a cup of coffee, brewed smoothly out of a machine, cheerfully placed between my hands, creates a radiant sense of wonder wrapped in a zarf.

My coffee, dark and simple, is

why I get through the day,

why I smile when it’s grey,

why my mind keeps turning,

and students keep learning,

why old men gather at the diner,

why I added another minor,

why the sun shines and the moon glows,

why the leaves turn color and the grass grows,

why the moon pulls the tides,

and cowboys ride,

why campfires roar,

and I hit the dance floor,

why the sky is blue,

and my love is true,

why children play and,

why everything will be okay.

My coffee, beautiful as it is, keeps the world, *my world*, spinning. My gorgeous, sensual, cup of dark, sexy coffee.

My Cup of Coffee

Groggy eyes

a pair of fuzzy slippers

shuffle to the kitchen.

The outside, still shades

of royal blue, snowy.

I plop down and prepare

for the day ahead

with my cup of coffee.

The fresh aromatic coffee,

nestled in my cup:

hot as sin,

black as tar,

and bitter as dark chocolate.

My mug,

resonating warmth

like the luxury of a hug,

contains my coffee

my wonders and dreams.



The Hole-in-the-Wall

An atmosphere of full-on hipster. A quaint place of crafted coffees and odds and ends furniture. Art produced by local artists and photographers hang by wire on the brick wall, for display and sale. A stage, for poetry slams and local artists, painted black and back-dropped with dull fabric, hanging decals, and lanterns.

Yep, a chill café that creates continuous comfort.

Here, the inviting nature swells in this aesthetically wondrous coffee house. Ordering a simple latte or a cup of fresh tea, finding a nook to sit in, the ambiance begins to absorb. The only things missing are some weed, a record player, and some Boston or Pink Floyd. Positioning on a seat; an old, orange floral couch (which is in desperate need to be stationed atop avocado green shag carpet), a sense of sinking begins: my insides melt in with the brick wall and it’s like a completely different world; an escape from the old one. With a warm cup of coffee, studying materials or a riveting book in hand, and summoning the environment around, the humbleness of the hole-in-the-wall experience takes over.

Dear Coffee,

Mmm… Coffee…

I love you.

Without you, I’d be nothing.

I love you with sugar,

I love you with ice,

I love you with syrup,

chocolate,

or spice,

I love you with a book,

I love you with cream,

You’re just like

my greatest dream

I love you with cinnamon,

I love you with friends,

God, I hope

this feeling never ends.

I love you with breakfast,

I love you with milk,

chilled with a straw

I love you with a cigarette,

it leaves me in awe,

with oatmeal and a newspaper,

or peppermint,

or mom,

because she is the best

with you after all.

I love you with study sessions

and all the homework they shove.

Oh yes, Coffee…

you are my love!

Energy Tornado

This bed is so warm and comfy. I don’t even want to try and get up. There’s just no way.

Ugh. But I better go to class. I’m sure there will be something important if I don’t go.

The only way I will make it is if I get coffee in me first. “Large, white raspberry mocha, extra shot of espresso. Thank you.” She makes it perfectly like every day.

I down 20 ounces of espresso infused, joyous liquid, and

I’m ready for the rest of my day. The gift of caffeine soon pumps through

my veins and gets the grogginess out of my eyes. As the second

hand clicks, I can feel my attention grow and my thought

run fluidly. I am ready for discussion and debate

and any questions given. An exam?

Bring it on! I am ready for this!

Damn! I am so pumped!

Isn’t life just great?

The sun is shining.

The birds are singing.

The only thing I am

afraid of is

the crash……

At the Coffee Shoppe

Old Lady Weak Tea sat regally upon the lounge chair, elegantly sipping on her hot drink. Trying to mind her own business with her droopy nose in the air, she couldn’t help but overhear Mr. and Mrs. Latte discussing their new arrival: baby Whip. Old Lady Weak Tea was delighted for the newly forming family of the Lattes with little Whip.

The old lady, not having any children and now being the only member left of her family, wanted to get in on their conversation to take part in their joy. She wiggled out of the deep chair and pristinely sauntered over to the gleeful couple.

\* \* \*

On the patio typing frantically, self-proclaimed screenwriter, E. Spresso was short on time. He had his agent on speakerphone and did not sound happy whatsoever. With every syllable that vibrated out of the phone, Mr. Spresso more and more heated.

In one sweeping motion, E. Spresso screamed profusely and knocked all the technology off the table. Grabbing his cracked phone, the continuous screeching went directly into the phone’s receiver.

\* \* \*

DéCaff, the bubbly, red-headed barista always knew what her customers wanted by their outward personalities. A tall thin man came up with a disdainful look in his eyes and a flat thin set of lips. She already knew he wanted a flat white. DéCaff could tell his girlfriend wanted a handcrafted cold press by the way she stood irritated and plainly.

But today, DéCaff wasn’t quite herself. She couldn’t quite get the right orders and make them as effervescent as usual. Maybe it was just the weather or the pain in her chest. But for whatever reason, DéCaff didn’t quite have the kick like she usually did.

But she still smiled and gave it her best shot.

**Late Nights**

*Evenings are perfect for romantic dates, staring at the stars, or a solitary walk. Late nights can be comfortable and relaxing. But nightfall can also be stressful after a long day of work and hours of homework. Late nights can be surprising and have unexpected events. An alarming phone call, a gunshot from outside, or a car accident on the highway can change the entire outcome of a night. Night life filled with amazement and love can also be filled with fear and upset. Late nights, when people should be asleep, some of the most outstanding things happen.*

Misunderstandings

Carl left. Enough was enough. Jacob was an unfaithful, ungrateful prick and Carl was done. With a few of his belongings in the car, he was gone.

It was one in the morning, blizzard winds and icy roads made driving nearly impossible. With tears in his eyes, burning his cold skin, driving became even more difficult for Carl. “How could Jacob deceive me like that?” Carl screamed in his head, “I don’t understand it. He’s gay. He’s been with me for months now. How could—” With rage fuming, Carl couldn’t finish his thought. He slammed his fists on the steering wheel and shouted, “That fucker!” And with that, Carl went spinning over a lake of ice, swerving and flying, back and forth, like a top. The whole world slowed more and more as each 360 degrees passed by. And when he hit the ditch, it all went dead.

\* \* \*

Jacob couldn’t believe it. The love of his life had left. He couldn’t understand the huge fuss that was being made. “Carl wouldn’t listen, which was typical,” Jacob thought, “If he won’t listen, maybe it’s for the best.” But after a few minutes sitting in front of the coffee table, staring at the condensation on his beer, Jacob started to ponder, “I was just meeting Angie for some drinks at the bar. I mean, I probably had one or two too many.” The scene played in his head. “She was kissing me all over when Carl saw us. I know I didn’t provoke it, but I didn’t push away either.” Jacob stood up, ambled into his and Carl’s room, and slammed the door. He threw himself on the bed starting to feel the blame instead of the victim. “Maybe he just needs his space,” and Jacob, shortly after, fell asleep.

When Jacob woke up, Carl was still gone. He took a deep breath and looked at his phone as he sat on the edge of his bed. There were no texts, no calls, no Facebook posts; there was nothing. Jacob dialed Carl’s number. It went straight to voice mail. Anxiety overtook him. He started to tremble as tears entered his eyes. Then the phone rang. It was the hospital.

A Long Night’s Dream

Late night, in the middle of homework, listening to music, and cranking out math problems, I get a phone call from my friend, Jay. He’s drunk and wants me to come over; he’s alone and wants someone around. I hesitate. I have a pile of homework to do, but I don’t want to leave a friend in need. So I muster up an, “Okay. I’ll be over in a half an hour.” I look at the clock. It’s half past nine. I shake my head and get my keys. I try to anticipate my night with Jay, but I wasn’t going to be able to anticipate the night I was going to have.

I get to Jay’s apartment and he buzzes me in. The minute I walk in to his warm apartment, I smell the stench of alcohol and cigarette smoke. The sink is filled with dirty dishes, the kitchen table is cluttered with papers, and Jay is sitting in front of the TV in his recliner, which is surrounded by a sea of Bud Light bottles and caps. I come in and sit in the old rocker next to the twin mattress. I look at Jay and smile, he gazes over to me and gives me a thumbs up.

Jay has had me come over before in situations like this before. He just gets anxious after he’s been drinking for a while. If I stick around until he falls asleep, everything is usually okay. Not tonight.

We start talking. I never really say much, I just listen and let him tell me everything. Jay starts, “Kay is a bitch. I can’t stand it. She keeps playing games. She says she isn’t seeing anyone, but the next day she’ll say yes, she has been sending inappropriate things to guys she doesn’t even know. I don’t want my kids around this; I wish I could have them here with me. I can’t take it anymore.”

I nod and listen, but I can tell he’s starting to escalate. The tone in his voice starts to fluctuate more. He has every right to be angry, but then it goes from anger to pain. At this point he’s at around fourteen beers within a matter of a few hours. A normal person processes one beer an hour. Jay starts to get upset and depressed. He starts saying the things I hate hearing: “I am a terrible person. Why do you hang out with me? I am not a good person, can’t you see that? You have so much going for you. You are an amazing person. You are going to go so far in life. Why are you friends with someone who is going nowhere?”

I always reply, “You are never a bad person. Some of the choices you make aren’t always the best and you make mistakes, but those don’t define you. You are a great friend. We all make bad choices, but we learn from them. I’m glad I have a friend like you. You are an amazing friend.”

Jay sits there, looking down, processing everything with a frown on his face, like he’s about to burst out in tears. He looks up at me and back down and gives me another thumbs up. He goes on his phone and pulls up YouTube. I know what this means: Jay is pulling up *By and Down* by A Perfect Circle. To this day, and probably forever, I will never be able to listen to that song. It may be the most depressing song I have ever had to listen to, along with the other songs he’s played for me when he’s like this. The song starts and he gets worse, “Will. What am I going to do? I don’t want to die. If I keep doing what I’m doing I’m going to die. But I don’t want to die.” His head slumps down and the tears in his eyes dissipate. Like a new personality, he grabs a bottle cap out of the mound of caps sitting on the arm of his chair. Grasping it tightly in his hand, he takes the sharp edges and quickly scratches back and forth on his forearm. I am taken aback as I can’t believe my friend is doing this in front of me. I don’t know what to do. So I tell him stop and I get up. He stops and asks, “Are you leaving?” I tell him no and I go to the kitchen. I put my face in my hands and think to myself, “What do I do?”

I go over to the table and sit down. Jay gets up and sits next to me, the music still playing. Now I’m getting depressed and want to hurt myself. I look at him. He starts talking about me and wonders what is going on with me. I just shrug and tell him nothing. He says, “Come on, man! I know something is going on.” I repeat and tell him that nothing is going on. And immediately, he turns the around, back onto himself. He becomes even more depressed than he was when he took his bottle cap to his arm. He grabs the leg of the kitchen table and as hard as he can, and with the other hand, punches himself in the face. Again, I am in pure shock. I yell at him to stop, but he threw another swing. On the third time, I grab his arm before he could strike. I hold it awkwardly in the air as tight as I could so he can’t pull away. In my reach, I see a picture of his three kids. I put it in his hand and let go. I sit back down and tell him softly, “Jay, you need to listen. These kids, they are the reason to live and get better. They need you in their lives. Which do you want for them? To have you there or have no dad at all? You need them just as much as they need you. Suicide and drinking is not the answer. You are strong and you can get through this, but you have to remember who you’re fighting for. It’s not even your kids and it’s definitely not Kay. You are fighting for you. You need to get through this. I have had to go to one other friend’s funeral before and I don’t want to have to go to another one. You will be okay.”

After I finish giving him my pep-talk, he gets up. Not another word said. He stumbles back to his chair and stares at the photo I handed him of his kids. He gives me one more glance, a quick smile, and a thumbs up and looked back down at the picture. Not much more than a minute later, he dozes off. I am alone with my thoughts now. I watch Jay every now and then to make sure he was breathing alright and his pulse isn’t abnormal. I stay another hour or two. I make sure he is alright before going out to my truck. I am shaking. I am so scared about losing my friend and when the last time I might see him could be. I don’t know. I turn on my playlist of songs that I listen to when I’m sad. I notice it’s nearly three in the morning and I start to drive home as *Angels Among Us* by Alabama came on. I try singing but soon start to break down. I cry and sob almost the entire way home. I wish this was a dream.

Late Night Cruise

Driving around, a moonlit night

The autumn air with chilling bite

A runaway escape from school

To enjoy a night so fresh and cool

Out in the country, to see the stars

No city lights or rushing cars

Just be with you and hold you tight

A feeling of being oh, so right

On a late night cruise

We watch the stars’ faded light

Twinkles of yellow, blue, and white

I look in your eyes and promise, “You’ll

be happy,” and give you a jewel,

“No matter how much we argue and fight.”

On a late night cruise

October 14th

Sitting on a stone-cold cement bench. My ass is chilly. For it is autumn in October at one AM. I’m on campus. No students. No professors. Just me, alone on the quad, buildings enclosing the area around me. I hear only the sound of my breathing and the rustling of leaves from a soft, biting breeze. In the distance, I hear the horn of a train and possibly the light whir of traffic, but that, I’m unsure of. It’s peaceful, but I’m glad I grabbed my cozy, too-large hoodie. My chest and arms are comfy, but my denim-covered butt and my exposed face are cold, not frozen, but definitely refrigerated. My nose, I assume, is rosy and sniffle-y.

This is a perfect way to take a break from studying. Just leaving my desk to come outside to do nothing but sit and absorb the environment around me… No words I can write can convey the tingling beauty I feel in my stomach. The sparkles and sprinkles, the enjoyment of being surrounded by nothing and everything, for no rhyme or reason, captures my never-stopping mind and body and allows me to unwind and calm down from an otherwise hectic life.

The Boogeyman

The moon was stationary in the cool, purple sky. The crunchy, dead leaves still hanging onto the branches, clamored in the sweeping breeze. Inside, Vicky hugged a warm mug of tea as she listened to the radio in the dining room. Her little boy was asleep and her husband wasn’t going to be home for another couple hours. This was her time of peace and solitude. In the mood for a sappy chick flick, Vicky put in a movie to compliment her cup of tea.

Half way through her movie, a thump came from upstairs. Vicky paused the movie and listened for Ben to come down or call for her. After a minute, Ben hadn’t come down. Vicky decided she better go check on him. As she got to the top of the stairs, a shrill scream came from Ben’s room.

Vicky ran in and grabbed Ben who was clenching his blanket with wide, tear-filled eyes. She got into bed with her little boy and laid with him. She told him everything would be okay, but Ben just kept shaking, not saying a word. “What’s wrong, Ben?”

Nearly convulsing with his shivers, Ben lifted his pointer finger to his open closet door. “There’s something in your closet?” Vicky questioned. Ben, scared as hell, threw himself under his covers. Vicky reassured him, “I’ll go check it out, okay?”

Immediately, Ben popped out of his covers and yelled, “No! Mom! Don’t!” Just as she stood up, a black figure sprinted out of closet, pushed Vicky on top of Ben and leaped out of the second-story bedroom window with a duffle bag in their hand.

Vicky hopped off of Ben and took him into her arms. “Are you alright?” she asked in a worried, nurturing voice. Hugging her tight, Ben wouldn’t let her go. She picked up the scared child and carried him as she looked out the broken window the stranger jumped out of. On the damp, solid ground below lay a rough outline of the intruder’s body. Vicky ran down stairs and called the police.

The flashing red and blue lights came rushing towards the house within a couple minutes, but when Vicky and the officers went to the lawn under the window, the man was nowhere to be seen.

Your Special Place

Sitting in your car

A meeting on a whim

Talking, smiling, enjoying

each other’s company.

The light’s reflection

on the river

glowing like paper lanterns

warm with fire.

You showed me that

at this special spot

of yours.

Your friends, the geese

chatting with us

with their clown horn dialogue,

muted trumpet antics,

and silly honking jokes

accompanying our late night

chat by the river.

Stunning

God, You look amazing

in the glow of the interior

dash lights

As the sun sets and

the sky grows grey,

You refuse to dim

as the world around us does.

You’ve been hurting

before I got here.

I’m glad I’m with You.

God…

You are beautiful

in the glow of the faded light.

**Music**

*Music can evoke the deepest emotions, memories, and thoughts. A single note may bring out a tear whereas a complicated harmonized chord may inspire joy. Music brings others together and can often be applied like glue when two are torn apart. Music helps people get through the bad times and make the good times better. The influence music has on culture, society, and the world is unsurmountable. Music is a language, a sign of affection, a sticky note of hatred, a secret, a tissue, and a kick to the balls. Music completes and unifies an otherwise disconnected world.*

Grandma’s Van

Always sitting, waiting for me in front of the elementary school, was grandma’s green van. The sort of green that a dusty plant’s leaves are or the ugly green after winter, but you can’t quite call it spring yet. I always ran to the car and waited for my sister to gallop like a foal to catch up. There was one of these days in early fall that somehow always stuck in my mind.

Grandma always had a great taste in music. Growing up in the fabulous fifties and slick sixties, she had the primal experience of gathering up all this amazing music, which she shared with me as a child (and even now at twenty). Besides singing “Bingo was His Name-o” nearly ninety times a day, I got to capture the great country and rock ‘n’ roll music of her time. From Patsy Cline to The Kingston Trio to Tennessee Ernie Ford to Alan Jackson, grandma always had something to play. Music that was *really* music.

Two songs played on that day that, for some reason, cemented in my brain. It wasn’t a special day. Grandma picked me up from school. My sister was in elementary school yet, so I had to have been in first grade. She got me, stopped at the gas station and the blue post office mail box, and went home. But on this day, grandma had her fifties flashback rock ‘n’ roll CD in. It was always one of my favorites to listen to.

I remember grandma cranking up the volume until the notches on the display stopped even when the knob kept turning. Boy, did we sing. “Rockin’ Robin” blared as the bass nearly shook the ugly green paint off the van. Hardly able to whistle, we belted out the most awkward, up and down stream of air an old lady and little kid could blow.

After that, “Great Balls of Fire” came on fast and loud. Pretending to bang on the piano like Jerry Lee Lewis and singing until our voices cracked. We were quite the duo.

I always loved to ride in grandma’s van. She always had the best music. Those songs will forever be cranked until the volume can’t go any higher and will always be playing in the back of my mind.

♪

Poets are like artists of music,

putting out albums now and again.

Readers going out to hear the new songs

and some of their favorites.

But poets die.

Yet the songs play the same tune

for generations to listen to

on repeat.

It’s All in the Performance

Walking on stage, lights heating up his face, Zach’s senses were going ballistic. The cheers from the crowd filled every sweat-filled pore with ecstatic energy. He throttled the mic stand with both hands. The performance was rock ‘n’ roll heaven.

The band, for a solid three hours, played in sync, thunderous and boisterous. Zach couldn’t have had a better performance, but the euphoria was always short-lived.

The band loaded the tour bus behind the stadium. They all were hyper and raved about the night’s show. All but Zach.

A routine for Zach was to hide himself in the back of the bus with a bottle of hard liquor and marijuana, which escalated later to harder forms of drugs. For Zach, nothing was like being on stage. Off-stage, the world was nothing but loneliness, pain, and failure. To keep him out of his own mind and out of the world around him, Zach turned to drugs and alcohol. He always told his bandmates, “I’m better than I was before,” he would try to justify, but everyone knew it was all starting to take a toll.

It was one of the last performances of the tour and Zach was having a shitty day from the start. Zach typically stayed clean until after the show. Last night was a mistake. Zach snorted and drank so much he hardly slept. This caused Zach to mentally sink even more than usual. So instead of pushing through the day, Zach started drinking soon after waking up from his couple hours of sleep. Totally drunk and blitzed off his ass, show time had arrived.

Walking on stage, the lights blinded his eyes and scorched his face; Zach’s senses were going ballistic. The cheers pounded his eardrums, making him feel sick. Looking at his mic stand that appeared to be warped and crooked, Zach sloppily took hold of the mic. The performance was a comedy from hell. Halfway through the show of slurred lyrics, Zach lost concentration and eloped with the ground. The only thing audible, once dropping to the stage, was a faint roar of screams and feedback from the microphone. Then there was nothing. Nothing but the slowing thuds of his heartbeat as someone tried shaking him awake.

Vinyl

The crisp popping

of the needle hitting

dust

as you spin

in circles

the grooves enunciate

a concoction

of my favorite

combination

of rhythms lyrics and notes

while adding your own

sound

making it all

unique

Rock ‘n’ Roll Suicide Experience

Sitting alone with silent sobbing. The only audio came from the headphones: David Bowie’s “Rock ‘n’ Roll Suicide”.

Sitting. Hand with razor and razor with hand. It stings: the tears and the cuts. But “oh no, love, you’re not alone.” Heartstrings pop, break, and shatter—the mental illness attacks. Images flash: your death, the mourning of others. The pain and suffering transferred from one to many. It’s unsoothing, damaging, destructive. Breathing is a struggle as the sobs become rushing waters and broken, short huffs of breathing.

“I’ve had my share… You’re not alone.” ~David Bowie

Our Song

The notes strike my heart.

You’re with me, babe.

My eyes shine

when I view

your picturesque beauty.

The song starts to fade.

The hold we have does too.

You disappear with the lyrics.

The only thing I have

to remember

is you and this song.

The notes strike my heart.

**Thank You: Epilogue**

*I wanted to state a final thank you for reading my memories and imagination. This last piece is a fictional short story about a pair of lovers. This story holds each of the parts (coffee, late nights, and music) all in one. From me to you, I’m glad to have shared all these emotions, parts of my life, and fictional pieces with you. Enjoy.*

Tuesdays

Amy and Miles sat down in their favorite corner of their favorite coffee shop. They were comfortably in love and couldn’t be happier. Both were very modern looking and made to match. Amy wardrobe usually consisted of cute, petite dresses with tiny flowers or store-bought homemade sweaters with colored denim. She loved her winged eye-liner and raspberry lipstick that matched her dreamcatcher earrings. Miles corresponded with her style with dully designed button-ups or flannel shirts and typically wore denim. He often wore his hair in a bun with nerdy, thick glasses and usually left his piercings out except around the house.

Together, they had a picturesque life. Miles played his saxophone on Tuesday nights at this coffee shop. He worked at the local grocery store during the weekdays. Amy helped the homeless shelters and animal shelters and read to the elementary kids after school who would wait for their parents to come pick them up. Together, Miles and Amy read poetry to one another whenever they wanted.

They rented a studio apartment on the third floor above an Asian restaurant. There they had a small nook with an antique desk, a typewriter, and an old whiskey set with shot glasses and a bottle of whiskey; all illuminated by stringed lights. Next to the desk stood a shelf of books, worn from many readings. On the opposite side sat a large mushroom chair next to a record player and a stack of vinyl. In their living area sat an ugly, worn out couch Amy got from her grandparents when they died. In the larger part of the apartment, their queen size bed sat with sheets thrown about. The living situation wasn’t much, but everything they had was suitable for them.

Amy and Miles sat staring at each other, hands together in the center of the table. Their coffees growing cold in the gap between their chests and hands. Miles spewed lines of Robert Frost and William Carlos Williams to Amy as she smiled and inhaled every word that passed his lips. From the feeling between their hands, Miles could sense something different about today, but he shrugged it off as a weird day.

The sky grew into a soft grey as the clouds came between the world and the sun. As the couple finished up their coffees, a tiny pitter-patter of rain tapped on the large window at the front of the café. Miles smiled at Amy and kissed her forehead; before she could respond, Miles ran out the door and started splashing in the puddles. Amy gave a quick giggle and chased after him.

The two ran after each other in the cascading rain. She caught up to him at the end of the block and grabbed his waist from behind. They both started grabbing at each other, laughing and having a good time. Together, they waited for the signal to tell them to cross the street. Hand in hand, Miles and Amy walked home.

After arriving home and drying off, the two relaxed together. Miles typed on his typewriter with a small shot of whiskey next to him. Amy sprawled out in the mushroom chair with a Boston record spinning on the record player.

The next morning, Amy was up earlier than normal. Miles woke up to notice she was on the couch. He got up and whispered a good morning to his love. She gave a small, short-lived smile. Miles came around and sat on the edge of the coffee table directly in front of her. He tried to look into her eyes, but she would not look into his. Grabbing her hands, he said, “Whatever is troubling you, I’m here. You’ve always got me.”

She looked up into his eyes and kissed him. The kiss wasn’t just a quick peck, still it wasn’t a slobbery make-out. This kiss held the world. Their bodies felt light and in this one kiss, filled with compassion, bliss, and endless love, they seemed to be one entity. Their hearts groaned with ecstasy and their hands, holding one another, were perfectly placed. This kiss, empowering and strong, told a story without words.

She let go, looked at him, and walked over to the kitchen. Amy grabbed a bottle of wine and poured a small amount in a glass and did the same for Miles. She sat next to him on the coffee table and started to tell him what was bothering her, “I have let go of everyone,” she took a pause to sip of her wine. Miles just sat, staring at his hairy feet with open ears. “You, I have obviously kept because I love you to the moon and back. I have also kept Mara because she has helped me through thick and thin.

“I have given everyone else up because I don’t need anyone else but you and Mara. You two are the ones who make me happy, and that’s all I need. I don’t need others making life complicated.” Amy smiled and looked up from her glass of wine to see how Miles was reacting. He just smiled at his feet. Amy, wanting him to say something, spoke up, “Well?”

Miles let out a short, quiet chuckle and smile bigger not quite displaying his teeth. He turned to look at her and kissed her cheek. “I have told you before: do what makes you happy. I will never restrain you from living your life. We are free spirits. Life is what we do with it. I am always beside you and I will never leave you.”

Amy stood up with her empty glass of wine and put it in the kitchen sink. “I love you,” Amy called from the kitchen. Miles responded with a hug from behind.

A week went by and the couple lived happily, but even after letting out that she gave up nearly everyone in her life, Amy still seemed off to Miles. Miles, not knowing how to handle it, just let the uneasiness occur.

Amy started dressing differently, her makeup was more thrown together than usual, and she started behaving more quietly, which was odd compared to her normal, outgoing self. This caused more worry for Miles, but again he left it alone figuring she was just adjusting herself a little. Then the uneasiness became something more.

Miles, after playing his saxophone, wondered where Amy was. She always watched him play at the coffee shop. When he arrived home, she had a suitcase packed and plane tickets in her hand. Miles immediately felt numb. A tear came into his eye as he started to fear what was to become of his relationship with Amy. She picked up her suitcase and walked towards him by the door. Amy looked intensely into his eyes, gave him a goodbye kiss and walked out the door with her things. Miles stood, dumbstruck, staring at Amy as she walked away, never looking back.

Amy took a taxi to the airport and boarded a plane to Europe. Her destination was a small town outside Paris, France. Miles sat at home in tears and fears. He didn’t know what to do, where to go. He tried calling her phone, but she had it disconnected. Miles was purely heartbroken. Taking one of his favorite, battered-up book off the shelf, Miles grabbed a light jacket and took his book to the café. The café was empty, lights dim, and the open sign flashing. Miles came in, sat at his and Amy’s table. He wiped the wetness off his cheeks and opened his book. A small handwritten note fell into his lap. It was a note from Amy dated the day she told him she was giving everyone up except himself and Mara. It read:

*My Honey, you are my true love. I deserve no one better because you are the one for me. I will never find another because you are the only one I need. My Honey, smile because I know you found this after I have gone. I don’t expect you to understand right now. Just please. Be happy as much as you have made me. I can’t say I’ll be back because…*

Amy’s handwriting faded into unintelligible scribbles. Miles looked over the words multiple times, inspecting the handwriting in disbelief. He placed his note from Amy on the table in front of her normal spot that now sat empty. Miles started reading his falling apart book careful not to let any pages fall out, but as he read pages still fell onto the floor. After reading the entire book, Miles put Amy’s note in the center of the book and put the book down on the table. He got up and left the coffee shop, not even acknowledging Harold the barista who tried to tell Miles that he left his book behind.

Miles waited at home after work every day. He waited for a call, a message, a letter, a notification, a package, anything from Amy. He even imagined her walking through the door. Anything to show she still loved him, that she would return, but nothing came. Dreams became dreary as Amy’s face would always appear. The memories of her never disappeared. Sometimes Miles would even wake up feeling the pressure of a kiss on his lips.

The pain of Amy leaving without explanation really took a toll on Miles. Depression overtook him and after a month or two after Amy left, he started drinking more and more. His routine became dreadful and mundane. He would go to work in the mornings, pick up some liquor, an amount that increased each week, then came home to drink most of it before passing out in bed. Miles started smoking cigarettes and quit playing his saxophone every Tuesday. The one thing that never changed was his writing. Every night, accompanied by a record and the glow of the stringed lights, Miles would smoke a chain of cigarettes and drink half a bottle of hard booze as he wrote poems and prose.

After six months of a growing addiction, slurred speech and writing, and a saturation of smoke, Miles had a pile of writings. He gathered his writing with his hangover on a grey rainy morning. Putting his large stack of writing in a leather case, Miles headed to a copy store. Trying to subside his banging headache, he approached the counter with a sideways smile. He looked at the ditsy teenager behind the counter and asked if she could photocopy all of his writings twice and have each of them bound, leaving the originals the way they were. Snapping her bubblegum, she placed his writings in the copier and smacked the “two” button and the “enter” button in two quick whacking motions. Miles gritted his teeth as the smashing sounds made his head ring. “It’ll be ‘bout ha’f hour,” the snarly girl squawked. Miles nodded, turned away from her, made a sour face and rolled his eyes.

He headed down the street towards the liquor store. Half way to the alcohol shop, Miles started to pass by the coffee shop. He turned and looked through the large front window. Miles hadn’t been back since the night he brought his book and found Amy’s note. The book and the note was gone. A new couple sat in Mile and Amy’s spot, staring at each other, hands together in the center of the table. Their coffees growing cold in the gap between their chests and hands. Miles heart started to ache as much as his head did. Miles turned away from the direction he was going and headed back to the copy store.

The girl behind the counter looked at him as he entered the store. She gave him a tested look and moaned, “It’ll still be ‘twenny’ minutes.” Miles raised his hand to her as if to motion to her that he got the message and was just going to wait it out in the waiting chair. Plopping down in the chair, Miles sunk down and put his face in his hands. He thought. He thought about life, Amy, booze, what direction his life was going, what direction he needs to go. It was time for change. Miles must have drifted off because when the girl woke him up by tapping harshly on his shoulder with her bony finger. In a sassy tone she told him his stuff was bound and his originals were put back in his leather case. He paid for it all with his alcohol money and headed home.

Miles tried hard to focus on himself. After a couple months of being on-again off-again with his addiction to liquor and cigarettes, Miles had soon stopped both of them entirely. The temptation was still lingering, but he kept himself occupied to resist the urge. Amy was still in the back of his mind, but instead of her being a negative force that brought on depression, Miles made the thoughts and memories of her a positive, driving force. Everything he did, he did it for her. After a year since Amy walked away, Miles had his life back on track. Things seemed to be getting better.

One day after work and playing saxophone at the café, Miles came home to a package at his doorstep. A yellow envelope with his name and address on the front in Amy’s handwriting with the postmark of a week ago, Tuesday. All that was in the return address corner was her name: Amy. Shaking, Miles took the envelope and his saxophone into the apartment. He sat on the couch; the couch that had once belonged to Amy’s grandparents. The envelope sat on the coffee table directly in front of him. It stared at him fiercely, but he refused to look at it. He was too afraid to confront it. Miles hoped when he looked up, the envelope would be gone and just be something he imagined, but it still sat there. Waiting.

Miles grabbed the envelope and slowly popped open the metal tabs on the back. He pulled out a stack of papers that had been bound together. On the top, typed out by a typewriter was a note from Amy:

*Miles, you know what’s absolutely terrifying? I could completely alter my life at any moment. The entire world is in my hands, so what do I do with it?*

*It’s been a year since I left. I didn’t leave you, I just put distance between us. I didn’t know what I needed out of life. I had my entire world, but had no clue what to do with it, so I had to find out. The only mistake I made was doing it without you. I probably hurt you, messed up your life. I’m sorry, Miles. I stayed faithful to you. I never found another love. If you did… I understand.*

*Miles, in this envelope, if you decided to even open this, are the accounts of the past year of my life. The year of my life I had without you.*

*Miles. By the time this package gets to you, I will be gone. After I have the post office place postage on this envelope and send it to you, I am taking my own life.*

*Miles… I am so sorry I had to leave you. All over again.*

*“Do what makes you happy. I will never restrain you from living your life. We are free spirits. Life is what we do with it. I am always beside you and I will never leave you.”*

*With the utmost love and affection,*

*Amy.*

With tears in his eyes, Miles put the note down and picked up the bound pages. Opening the cover, he saw her handwritten dedication to him and the time they spent together. He flipped to the last entry that said:

*Tuesday:*

*I listened to his saxophone playing for the last time. It’s a new experience every time. I think it’s the only thing that’s kept me alive. I can tell I don’t have much time left. My health is getting worse by the day. I know my final treatment is coming but I know the cancer has gotten worse. So my final treatment is going to be premature. I am going to self-medicate my last treatment tonight.*

*Tonight.*

*Tonight. Tuesday. My heart, my soul, my free spirit will be set free.*

*Tonight. While Miles plays his saxophone across the ocean, across countries, in the small little café where I used to stare into his eyes.*

*Tonight. Tuesday. My spirit becomes completely free.*

*Tonight.*