

Jasia Mcmillan

Age: 18, Grade: 12

School Name: Cypress Bay High School, Weston, FL

Educator: Shawntee` Herring

Category: Short Story

Moriko

Sitting alone in a coffee shop at the edge of town, Hinata Juuto watches as the citizens of Tokyo walk past him. Taxi cars honk in traffic as the tall, LED billboard screens illustrate advertisements on the skyscrapers surrounding the metropolis. The city was beautiful, Juuto thought to himself, however he wondered how he could be so unhappy looking at something so pleasing. His favorite spot in the town he loved no longer made his heart beat a new rhythm, but rather kept its same, slow pace. It was evident that Juuto was depressed.

Arriving back at his flat, Juuto got onto his bed and layed, facing the ceiling. He felt the pain of crying, however his sockets were dry. Glancing over to his night stand, a photograph of his ex-wife and daughter sits in a brown wooden frame, next to a television remote. Juuto sighs audibly, grabbing the remote and turning on the television. A headline reads across the screen in bright, red letters,

< *DEATH RATES IN AOKIGAHARA INCREASE* >.

This summer, the increase in suicide rates has taken over Japan, labeling most rates in the past two years. Aokigahara, the Sea of Trees, has become the host of these suicides, containing the bodies of loved ones inside of it. Reach out if you are having thoughts of suicide.

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Suicide, Juuto thought to himself, something that has never crossed him mind.

Juuto had the sensation of wanting to die, seeing no point in continuing these long, dreadful days of loneliness, though he never thought of the idea.

How would I do it? Pills? Jumping off something tall? Or, go to this forest?

Juuto pulled out his phone from his back pocket, searching the travel time to Aokigahara.

Wow, only three hours away...I can do that.

There, he began to plan his trip. From Tokyo, he would take the Chuo Line to Takao, then switch to the Chuo Main Line. Once at Otsuki, he would change to the Fuji Kyuko Line to Kawaguchiko Station. Juuto then bought his rail ticket online.

Now, all that was left of planning was the suicide.

But, how will I do it?

Juuto woke up to his alarm for work. There was no reason to call in sick, he thought to himself. Instead, he got up in the same clothes he wore the night before, and was out the door.

Stepping out of his flat, Juuto walked the streets of Tokyo in search of a hardware shop. Not taking him much of the time to do so, he found a small shop on the corner. He had 2 hours till his rail would take off, so he had no time to speak with a worker. Helping himself, it was obvious what he was in search of; a rope. At that moment, Juuto realized the way in which he was going to kill himself. It didn't take long for him to find the rope aisle, for the store was so small. Tracing his fingers across the hanging rope, one by one, he found a thick, blue and yellow stitched rope. Juuto wanted the rope to be perfect; strong enough to hold his limp body, as well as meeting his likings. Blue and yellow were Juuto's favorite colors for as long as he could remember. It felt right to purchase this rope.

And so he did, making his way out the store with an hour and a half to spare.

Juuto made his way back to his flat, setting his new rope onto the bed and staring at the mess of a room he had.

Sheets, clothes, and trash covered his floor, making it almost impossible to see the floor. This was funny to Juuto, being he was always such a clean, organized person, and would never be messy like this. He never thought he would

kill himself, either.

With his remaining time, Juuto cleaned his room. What the point was in doing so, he wondered, however it felt right to. Should he write a note? Not like any loved one would read it, or that anyone would care about that matter.

It was finally time for the rail trip to Aokigahara. Grabbing a bag of money to get around, his phone, a knife, and the rope, Juuto was off.

The train ride was quite long, awaiting Juuto to his planned death. Thoughts rolled through his head, questioning whether what he was doing was right; however, Juuto saw no reason to listen to them. They were the natural instinct, he thought to himself.

Hours later, Juuto finally arrived at the Sea of Trees. At this point, it was dark outside. He pulled out his phone, flashing the ground with his programmed flashlight within the phone. Once the bus pulled away, down the street, the silence took over Juuto. Nothing other than the blowing wind through the trees was heard. Although this deeply frightened him, he continued onto his plan. Checking the time, his phone flashed 2400.

Slowly walking through the entrance of the forest, leaves crackled beneath his feet. Juuto would flash his light left and right, illuminating the dirt path. Through the trail, belongings of those who entered the forest laid upon the ground, still in time. Dirty shoes, dolls, jackets, and rope were tossed around bushes, telling a story of the past. Juuto imagined the life these objects once had. How did they get here? Why were they left? A realization hit him in that instance; these belongings were ones of those who died in this forest. Those who decided to take their life, just like Juuto planned to. A wave of unease washed through his body in realization of the reality of the situation he was in.

As he moved further through the forest, the sky grew darker, making it nearly impossible to see without his phone's flashlight. As he continued flashing his light left and right, he heard someone yell in the distance. But, it wasn't just any voice, but the voice of his daughter.

"Daddy!" a young girl yelled. "Daddy, where are you?"

In an instance, Juuto ran further towards the yells of his believed daughter.

"Daddy, come here! I'm scared," his daughter yelled.

Cutting his face now by the tree leaves he ran through, Juuto got further and further through the forest.

"Juuto!" a woman's voice yelled now, "Juuto, baby, where are you?"

That had to be the voice of my wife.

Juuto's legs moved faster, but not fast enough. The pain of the leaves striking him didn't face him anymore; he just wanted to get to his family. The voices continued to repeat the same phrases, sounding closer and closer as he ran further into the forest.

How were they in the forest? Why were they in the forest?

Juuto didn't care about the logistics of the situation, rather the safety of his family.

Then, the voices heard as if they were feet in front of him. Juuto stopped, swifiting his head back and forth in the darkness, attempting to make out the silhouette of his ex-wife and kids.

"Daddy?" he heard his daughter question, inches in front of him. Though, something sounded off about the voice.

Juuto couldn't quite put his finger on what was off, but something about the voice didn't seem human- rather a mimic.

Hairs stood up on the back of his neck as an uneasy feeling sat in his stomach. Something wasn't right; this isn't the voice of his daughter.

"Baby, you found us," the off voice of his ex wife whispered in his ear.

Without thinking, Juuto ran in the opposite direction, attempting to get away from the voice he once chased. He had no clue what he was exactly running from, but whatever it was, he didn't want to find out.

As he ran, he could hear loud footsteps behind him, one of something with large feet. The movement sound only got louder as he ran further through the trees.

"Daddy, why are you running from me?" a distorted version of his daughter's voice questioned behind him.

What is happening? Who is behind me? And if not who, what?

Juuto kept running, with no intention of stopping. Whatever was behind him he did not want them to catch up to him. In fear of the unknown death, Juuto realized in that instance he was fighting to stay alive; the exact opposite of his intentions when he entered the forest.

With Juuto's new found urge to survive, he found it in him to continue running, if not faster. Though, the steps behind him got louder and louder, until he heard a breath above him as he ran. Trees shifted around him, as if something was

jumping on them, above him.

Before Juuto knew it, he was grabbed and thrown up into the air. The pumping adrenaline and fear running through him stopped him from realizing he had been stabbed in the stomach. By what was unknown to him, but it's connection was to the creature who had finally caught him. Now being high in the trees, the moon illuminated the face and body of the creature. Its head, long and white as the skull of a deer. Its body, although naked, had thin and patchy, furry hair. Its eyes glowed red in reflection of the light. It was long and skinny, with the bones inside of it being visible. It's breath breathed in Juuto's face, like one of a bull. It's breath stinks of rotting flesh; death.

At this moment, Juuto knew he was going to die. Although it was his original plan to die in this forest, he did not realize he would die fighting to not. As he was filled further to the creature's face by the sharp claw in his torso, the animal spoke it's final words.

"Daddy, I found you!" the mimicked voice of his daughter spoke out by the creature.

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Category: Poetry

The Bar

A woman walks into a bar
In shoes that don't quite fit
Her every move, watched
Shoulders high neckline low
Tight, velvet red dress
Feigning femininity of someone much wiser than she really is
They see her,
She prances across the room like prey,
They've just been served
Trained to take advantage of any purity they see
Eyes devour her smooth-skinned body
A little girl playing dress-up
And they know it but
Told to say "it's not my fault"
Not their fault that their
Teeth are sharpened to cut
That their hands are too strong to escape from,
That their smile can get them out of just about anything
Using that exact smile he flashes her a hello from the corner of the bar
His musty smell of cigarettes reaches off of him,
Grabbing her, pulling her closer
He lurks further, closer than he needs to be
Asks "can i buy you a drink"
As if it's a question
Something sits in the back of her mind
A teacher, a mother
The tapping of nails tells her, walk away, leave
Something doesn't feel quite right
His smile is just a little too wide
Grip of the handshake a little too tight
The sound of a nice cold beverage slipping down her dry throat sounds great to her
Instead of listening to her loud subconscious
She agrees, cluelessly
As if jumping straight into his arms
Someone lost their daughter tonight
Not just a daughter but a friend tonight,
A classmate, a role model, an acquaintance
Someone who meant something in this world
Someone who was gonna be something in this world
Instead of a lifeless body
Cold and blue, purple bruised
A body no longer reaching for adulthood
With blood pumping through her veins

The curiosity of what it feels for a man to look at you, to want you
He wanted her a little too much that night
Ignoring how fragile she was
Didn't your mother ever teach you not to play with the fine china
Her porcelain is now cracked
No longer giving off beauty,
But instead forgotten
Didn't even have the decency to clean her up with the dustpan
She was not made to crack,
Not to be another thing the business man needs to cover up
Cover her body with wads of cash
How much is enough?
Thousands of dollars, thousands of memories, wasted
How you blame it on the fact you were wasted
Makes it okay
But it's alright
Our society will continue
Making things like this okay
Until we start hearing the silenced
And holding the accused.

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Category: Science Fiction & Fantasy

Protecting Mystic Island

The sound of giggling mer-children playing in the grand pond fills the enchanted air as tiny creatures with wings, called fairies, fly around them. Two headed goats and purple rabbits sit from the side of the water, watching them, as if observing a play. Tall, moss filled trees swoop over this hidden oasis where these mermaids live. The trees shelter tiny bug filled homes built by the working fairies. This place is like no other, not found and controlled by humans. It is its own sanctuary, surrounded by only water, in the middle of the ocean.

Although this hidden island is not controlled by humans, it's highest level of authority are the mermaids. The pod of mermaids live strictly in the grand pond, which connects to the ocean, through rivers, in all sorts of directions. Although this is their main habitat, the mermaids can also walk on land like humans. This is a trick they use, if ever needed, to lure and kill humans. These mermaids are crucial for the protection of the other creatures on the island.

Zenevieva, a female mermaid, is the leader of the pod. Her and her sister Nixie watch over the mer-children playing in the pond.

"Look at them play! Don't you wish you were that young?" Nixie playfully asks her sister.

"And be that clueless? Completely vulnerable to the world? Absolutely not," Zenevieva demands, flashing her bright blue eyes at Nixie and swimming further through their forest's river surrounding the lake.

"Always so serious," Pixie, a fairy, comments as she flies next to Nixie.

"Yep. Can't ever just have fun, or even imagine it!" Nixie replies to Pixie who is now standing on her shoulder.

"Well someone has gotta take charge of this place. Keep us safe from harm, yeah," Pixie explained, releasing her wings and flying up into the trees.

Zenevieva makes it to the shore where she stands her human-form feet into the sand. She watches over the shores that slam into each other like football players on a field. Over the horizon she notices a ship sailing towards the island. It was far, so far it wouldn't arrive till morning. Zenevieva knew what she needed to do; warn the pod about their unexpected guest.

By dawn, Zenevieva makes it to the pod. She creates a plan in her head for when the humans arrive. Zenevieva knew it was possible for her to kill humans, but she had never done it herself.

"Ladies, gather together. We have company arriving by morning," Zenevieva explains in a calm, serious tone to the pod in the pond. Even though she played it off like she wasn't scared, she was terrified.

"Company? What type of company?" a mermaid asks.

"Humans." Zenevieva answers with the same tone. "Humans will be arriving by morning."

"What do you mean, humans?" Pixie jumps off a high branch and flies on a log on the ground.

"Humans. The mortal, useless, boring creatures who have taken nearly every land for research, expansion, or resources." Zenevieva explains as more fairies meet Pixie on the log to listen in. "They are selfish. They will either capture us for what we are, or kill us."

"Kill us? Should we be scared?" a shy fairy whispers to Pixie.

"Don't be scared, Poppy. There is nothing you should be afraid of. The mermaids will protect us," Pixie answers, as if not scared at all. "I'm actually excited."

Zenevieva overheard their conversation during her announcement. "This is not something to be excited for. You should be scared, scared of your lives. These humans are vile and not to be trusted. But we will control the situation."

Pixie crosses her arms in disappointment.

“The same ones that killed mom?” Nixie asks, stunning Zenevia and silencing the crowd of fearful chatter. Zenevia stares at Nixie, in shock of what she just said. Her mother, the former pod leader, had met humans before and were killed by them. That’s the last memory she had of her; being slaughtered by those horrible creatures. Nixie was just a baby at the time. Zenevia sighs, swimming away from the group and into the forest.

By morning, the pod had discussed their plan for once the humans arrived on the shore.

“All we have to do is act like them, right?” Nixie asks Zenevia.

“Yes, act like them,” Zenevia answers, walking to the front of the pod and turning to face them. “You are to all act like humans. You must remain in this human form. Act calm, but stay alerted.” She could feel her feet in the sand again as she looked over the calm waves. The ship was near, only an hour away.

The fairies had begun their building of shelter for the bugs and fairies, in case they were to be taken for research.

“Pixie, where is Poppy? She needs to be huddling these bugs somewhere,” a male fairy shouts at Pixie who is flying around like a hummingbird.

“Dunno, mate,” Pixie responds, glancing over at the pod who are walking back from the shore and into the forest.

“Wish we were able to help. I would like to take some action.”

“Um,” the male fairy hums, pushing his long dark blue hair behind his ear as he builds a wall of twigs. “Why would you want to threaten your life like that? We are tiny and can be killed easily.”

“Albreich, you are aware we can shift to their size, right?” Pixie asks, handing Albreich a pile of sticks. “We can look and be just like the pod and the humans. Then we can fight.”

“Yes, I know. But, still,” Albreich sighs, looking through the forest. “Where could she be? Do you think they got her?”

“Albie, they haven’t even arrived!” Pixie chuckles, setting down her last pile of twigs. “I will go find her.”

Just as Pixie flies away, half of the pod arrives back at the pond.

“Albreich, how’s the shelters coming along?” Nixie asks.

“Good. I’m just finished up. Just need Poppy to get the bugs in. Hey,” Albreich pauses, looking into Nixie’s neon eyes deeply. “What you said yesterday wasn’t okay.”

Nixie’s forehead crunches up in confusion. “What are you talking about?”

“To Zenevia, about your mother?” Albreich’s face turns, confused as if she forgot or not.

“Oh, no big deal. She’s fine,” Nixie brushes off, turning to walk away from the tree.

Albreich jumps off the tree branch and turns into his human form, grabbing Nixie’s arm. “No, she’s not fine. I can sense it.” Albreich is an empathy fairy, being able to sense and feel other creatures’ emotions.

“Oh,” Nixie answers, looking down at her feet. “I’m gonna go find Poppy.” Nixie pulls away her hand and walks in another direction of the forest.

On the edge of the forest, just at the beginning of the sand, the mermaids hide in bushes. Zenevia whispers, noticing the humans had just arrived. “It’s time.”

There are five of them; four men and one woman. They anchor their ship and climb on to a much smaller ship for the shore. As the mermaids watch, they realize the female is the leader of the group. The pod hisses in the bushes.

Later through the day, the humans had finally set camp and were looking for food. One of the men, a large one, declares they should go deeper through the forest. The woman snaps at him, declaring for herself that they will go through the forest.

The mermaids realize they must stop them from moving further and finding the oasis they call home. Zenevia whispers to the rest of the pod in the bushes. “Follow me lead.” Just as the words left her mouth, she jumps out the bush and walks towards the human group.

They spot her, pulling out their crossbows. The men look at her strangely and put down their weapons.

“Why are you putting down your weapons!” the female human shouts, remaining an aim at Zenevia.

“What is this naked woman gonna do,” one of the male humans replies. Just as he does, more of the mermaids come out of the bushes. “Wow- there’s more naked women.”

“Pick your jaw off the floor, boys,” the woman sighs. “Hello ladies. Are you from here?”

The mermaids stay silent. If they did answer, they wouldn’t be able to understand their mystical language. They stare back at the humans.

“Do you mind if we stay the night here?” the woman asks another question. The mermaids once again stare back at them in silence. “I’m gonna take that as a yes,” the human responds.

The humans begin to walk further into the forest when the mermaids hiss, startling all the men. The female puts her hands up. “Okay, we won’t go down there. We will go back to our camp, okay?” The mermaids remain silent for a

few moments, just before they run off into the forest.

The pod arrives back at the oasis. It's silent, not a creature in sight. Zeneiva shouts out, "We are okay! The humans have arrived. Stay hidden." The pod gets into the water and stays hidden as well.

By night, the creatures still remained hidden. The humans haven't come over here yet, so the mermaids got on the grass surrounding the water and slept like humans. In the fairy shelter they are still looking for Poppy.

"I'm starting to get worried, Pixie," says Alberich.

"I know, I know. I dunno where she is," Pixie sighs. As she spoke, she could hear a crack outside. Her face jumps. "What? What did you hear?" Alberich asks. Pixie is a super fairy, having her senses heightened. This allows her to have super hearing.

"There's a human, or multiple, just outside! I hear them," Pixie begins to stutter, now fearful of the mermaids outside. They hear nothing, and then a loud yell.

The mermaids wake in terror, looking around them in every way. They noticed one of the humans had been killed, and laid on the floor. Another human began to swing a knife at Poppy, who was standing next to them in her human form. The mermaids all attacked the rest of the humans, killing them all in seconds.

"Poppy, are you okay? Did you kill this human?" Nixie asks, grabbing her by the shoulders.

"Yes. Yes, I'm fine. I did." Poppy answers, her heart racing. "You can come out now!" she yells to the rest of the creatures.

Alberich and Pixie run out of the shelter and fly next to Poppy. She shifts into her fairy form, hugging the both of them.

"We're so proud of you," Pixie comments, hugging her tighter. "I didn't know you had it in you to fight."

"Yeah, you should have seen Pixie! She was so scared!" Alberich laughs, getting punched in the arm by Pixie. "Ow."

The pod is in shock of what just happened. They just attacked humans for the first time, and succeeded.

Nixie runs over to hug her sister. "I'm sorry for what I said earlier. I wasn't thinking," she apologizes.

"It's alright. I'm proud of what we did today although Poppy-" Zenevia begins before being cut off by Nixie.

"Don't lecture, just be happy. We're alive, all of us!" Nixie jumps into the air in joy.

The next morning, the pod ordered the Megalodon, who lives in the great depths, to eat the ship and all of their belongings. The great sharks also ate the human bodies. There was nothing left of the humans, and that was their goal. They wanted to forget this ever happened.

And now, the island is alive again. Mer-children played again in the pond as fairies flew around giggling. Frogs jump around the trees in a game of tag. Everyone was happy, even Zenevia who was playing with Nixie in the water. Mystic island was safe at last.

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Category: Personal Essay & Memoir

The Loss of A Front Tooth

When I was seven, I managed to break my front teeth. It was the 2nd of July, 2011, just two days before the yearly celebration of America's Independence. My family, like every year, were preparing our block party; consisting of a barbeque, fireworks, and a bouncy house. This year's rented bouncy house, unimaginably huge compared to my small body, had a large dalmatian's face on the front. It's outer mesh print was black, white, and red, not resembling the upcoming holiday whatsoever. Not caring about that matter, I bounced around the entire day. Watching me from outside the mesh, my parents took pictures and laughed as I attempted to do small tricks within the house. An idea struck my father's mind when I giggled and fell down to the air filled, rubber floor. "Jay," he called out my pet name, "do a flip!"

Excited by my father's request, I got up and jumped into a fold, bending my legs. My legs for my age were extremely long; the tallest in my class and was very proud of it. That was until it came at my disadvantage. Expecting my body to land on my back, staring up in the interior of the dog house, I was instead met with extreme pain. My mouth filled with the taste of iron as my gums beat the same, now fast, rhythm in my chest. I had no other reaction than to scream-cry and hold my face. My body could not move from the immense pain that now inhabited my mouth. I squeezed my eyes shut, attempting to contain the tears that rushed from my sockets. In seconds, I was wrapped and layed in the back seat of my mother's SUV.

And so I ended up at the ER, with doctors staring at my face with bright lights. As they realigned my now backwards facing front teeth, I wondered what my face would look like afterwards. My teeth became extremely sensitive, but healed within months. Everything was back to normal, right?

Sadly, that was not the case. Once sixth grade arrived, hitting me with puberty and immense immaturity, I noticed after time my front left tooth began to change color. It wasn't the same yellow tint that I would brush every morning, but rather a dark shade of purple. It began to grow worse, changing into a darker shade within weeks. I asked my parents about the matter, and was taken to a dentist. As I sat in the cold dentist chair, I was reminded of the bouncy house from its similar rubber material. I felt the same awaiting fear I did on that fateful summer day. As expected, I received disappointing news; I was going to lose my front, adult tooth. It had been from the accident that July day. The decaying it inhabited was a waiting game until I would soon be missing a front tooth. Heartbroken, I wondered how I could go on with my life without ever having a front tooth again.

It finally came time for the tooth to fall out. Like any baby tooth, it wiggled until it was able to be loosely pulled from my mouth. I would attempt to cover my face as best as possible; not smiling and rarely talking with my mouth completely open. Fearing judgement, being laughed at, and getting flashed with the face of confusion made me super insecure of the matter.

However, I grew to accept my missing tooth; making jokes and laughing at the matter later on. Dwelling on the situation would lead me nowhere, but instead make me more unhappy about the situation. A small thing like a tooth wasn't going to stop me from enjoying myself. I was still going to smile, laugh wide, and talk normally. Losing something, no matter the size, can destroy someone entirely, but it shouldn't ruin their life and opportunities all together. So, instead of staying on the rubber floor, crying and waiting for the problem to go away, I promised myself to always get back up and keep jumping.

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Category: Poetry

You Told Me I Was Pretty

You told me I was pretty,
When I sat next to you in class
Pushing my hair over my shoulder
And leaning forward in my chair.

You told me I was pretty,
As you walked me home
Holding my backpack to your chest
And asking about my day.

You told me I was pretty,
As we ate sub sandwiches
Childishly playing with our food
And watching movies on my couch.

You told me I was pretty,
As you lead me alone
To a silent room
And shutting the door behind us.

You told me I was pretty,
As you slipped your hands up my skirt
And whispering in my ear
And kissing my neck.

You told me I was pretty,
Saying it was okay to keep going
Ignoring my pleas to stop
And pushing the hair behind my ears.

You told me I was pretty,
A pretty crier
That my tears glossed my eyes
Before falling down my face.

You told me I was pretty,
However not pretty enough
For you to just use me
And leave like nothing.

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The Performance of a Young Poet

As my sophomore year approached, I desired to do something. Not knowing what this “something” was, I understood I wanted to accomplish and achieve; to set goals for myself, and really take charge. I just had to find what particularly it was going to be...

I like to call myself a writer. The thrill I get from finishing writing a book or short story, I thoroughly enjoy. Throughout my teenage years, I attended multiple creative writing classes where I was able to express myself. However, I still wanted more from writing; the ability to express myself in further ways. During the end of my freshman year, I wrote a spoken poem to perform at our yearly school event, Coffee House. I knew nothing more of the occasion, other than its extra credit grade in my English class. With ample consideration, I thought to try it out because, why not? With the weeks building up to the event, I wrote a poem titled “Man at sea.” In this poem, loneliness in a populated place was emphasized in a metaphorical and figurative format. Although proud of the poem’s final draft, I feared the opinion of the audience.

Finally, the day arrived for the event. The entirety of the night, nerves pumped through my veins as my heart pounded in my chest. Walking upon the stage, I looked out at the crowd of people. As my hands shook the half-crumpled paper I held, I performed my poem. Speaking with a nervous voice into the metal, meshed microphone, I felt a rush. I could feel everyone in the crowd listening and feeling my words, too. Snaps, cheers, and applauds were heard from all around the room. Walking off that stand, I felt like I was unstoppable; as if my words really caught everyone and changed them. Now, all I wanted to do was chase that feeling.

Throughout sophomore year, I joined a Literary Club in an effort to write more. Within this club, students would collaborate to write a Literary Magazine, showcasing our stories, poems, and art pieces. Although relishing the thought of the club, there was something I still longed for. That’s when I heard about the poetry group, within the club, called the Live Poets Society. Here, students wrote, collaborated, and performed spoken poems to large crowds to be judged and scored against other schools. Amazed, I knew this was exactly what I searched for. Again, I would be able to put my heart and soul into poetry for an audience, who hopefully will feel me and my words, too.

And so I joined the society, writing until my fingers were sore and begging for a break. My room was filled with sheets of lined paper covered in words, making up random, runoff sentences. What I had running in my mind was too fast for my hands to write. When my palms were no longer my outlet, I spoke into voice recordings on my computer. Somehow these words wouldn’t feel like words, rather a sensation. The word’s rhyming schemes created a ring or jingle, making the poems sound like musicless songs.

Once junior year arrived, it was finally time to perform my poem. I recorded endlessly, all night to finalize my submission. Although through a screen, my efforts to grab my audience’s attention was met. I ‘spit,’ known to poets as “Spiritual Poetry Ignites Thought.” As I watched my video play on the live stream, the judges casted their scores. Out of ten, I received a score of all nines.

Feeling extremely accomplished, my team and I won first place. The trophy and title were a reward, sure, but the poems were our most proudest achievement. At last, I acquired the same thrill I got in my freshman year. And I couldn’t wait to get back on that stage, again.