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I Have Been Thinking

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A person wearing a brown beanie and a dark hoodie is sitting on a reddish-brown rock, looking out over a vast valley. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds, and the horizon is lit with a warm, orange glow from the setting or rising sun. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

I Have Been Thinking

Sara Hendrike Rose Vijfhuizen

December 10, 2020

To my parents, who said they loved my book before they even read it.

Lost

Unfamiliar signs
No trees are the same
Never ending roads
Determined as I came

To find my way
In this new sphere
But then I faced
My biggest fear

Distance becomes blurry
My legs begin to shiver
Lost in my consideration
As I walk next to the river

Scattering my words
Into the light breeze
My body lets me down
Moving with unease

Tears of sour sweat
Dripping on the ground
My hopes and my believes
Are nowhere to be found

Losing myself entirely
In the fear of the unknown
Abundance of new faces
Surrounded but still alone

Drifting without direction
On this warm day in May
Daylight goes to ground
As I try to find my way

Time flying away
With the flowing air
Fighting against my fear
Wishing I was there

Miles away from me
Awaiting of my advent
Sitting on the ground
My not yet acquainted friend

Nothing left to lose

I wish I could tell you
How you ripped me apart
Killed my fragile happiness

You took me into your world
Molded and consoled me
But everything was a lie

The night you told me
About your mistake
I felt the need to scream

Coldness took me over
Ached in sadness
A feeling of glorifying pain

You drew my breath
Silenced by your malice
And left me wondering

Why I wasn't enough
My love for you was pure
Now petrified and hurt

Tears were the words that my heart couldn't express

The pain of losing faith
Crushed spirit
And shattered trust

You never said goodbye
A million times I needed you
But you were already gone

I kept looking for you
Wanted to feel again
What we once had

That summer feeling
On a dark night

I found bravery
Letting go taught me the art
Of being powerful and free

I don't need you anymore
Thought you were the one
Now I know better

I'm sorry for getting mad
We just couldn't hold on to our love much longer
My soul sagged with exhaustion

It's beautiful, isn't it?
As much as you hurt me,
I still have love in my heart

Z as in Seahorse

Silken pink duvet,
Soothing lullaby,
Dreaming about little seahorses

Strangers as friends,
Pure laughter,
When was the last time?

Raisins for his eyes,
And a carrot nose,
Snowman the only man I knew

Catching snowflakes,
Instead of feelings,
Innocence left me free

Sitting in the backseat,
Feet dangling,
The sound of frequent pitter patter

Watching raindrops race,
Who will win?
Pretending I was always right

Eyes bigger than the earth,
When I swallowed my gum,
Thinking it would be my death

Running through the field,
Enjoying the simple pleasure,
Of creating my own wind

If only I could go back.
Infinite joy stolen
From a little girl's heart.

Flowing into the knowledge that I was seeking
Had me realize

The end of innocence's road.
Remember it for its silence¹

¹ Line taken from Dzvina Orlovsky's "Stone Cross" from her book *Bad Harvest*

I think she's falling in love with me

I was taking a sip of my double cappuccino when I saw her. She moved her right hand through the cold December air, holding it near shoulder level. It wasn't an impatient wave to the waiter, or a wave to wave traffic around an obstacle. It was a deadly wave, that at the same time brought more life into me than I'd ever felt before. She wasn't moving her whole hand. It was that special kind where she was only waving with four fingers, wiggling her fingers randomly, followed up by a cautious smile. She had piano hands. Abnormally long and thin fingers encircled with rose golden rings. So elegant. She didn't just acknowledge my presence. She was falling in love with me. That 'love at first sight' type of thing. I felt a sudden increase in heat in my body. And it wasn't my coffee. A wave so convincing, that I didn't just see her. I saw my today and my tomorrow. I tried to be a man and wave back as casual as I could. She knew I was falling in love with her too. There was this undeniable connection, piercing through every person standing between us. Silencing every noise around us. I turned around and that's when I realized. She wasn't waving at me.

The night I screamed

‘I love you, mommy!’

‘I love you too, sweetheart! Come here, give mommy another hug.’

Instead a big, sloppy kiss on the cheek followed. The mother threw on her coral pink coat, checked her make up in the mirror for one last time, and grabbed her keys as she walked out the door. ‘And listen to Marla, she is the boss now until I get home!’

‘Yes, mommy. I know.’ replied the little girl with a slightly annoyed voice, but the door was already closed. Marla joined Esther at the end of the kitchen table. ‘I don’t have to go to bed until nine,’ the little girl announced flatly while she stuffed her mouth full of skittles. It was Marla’s fifth time babysitting at the Anderson’s. She started to like Esther. In the beginning she had a hard time getting along with the at-first-sight stubborn, know-it-all, spoiled girl, but as they spent more time together, she discovered the treasure in her. Once she gets to know someone, she loves with her whole heart. Marla and Esther agreed to watch the final episode of ‘How to Train a Dragon’ and settled next to each other on the rose golden furnished couch. The five-colored Christmas lights lit up the room on this Thursday night in December. Marla looked at the time and managed after some back and forth arguing to get Esther go upstairs to get ready for bed.

Marla walked upstairs and caught a glimpse of Esther hurrying out of the bathroom in her pink and black colored Snoopy underwear, pressing her favorite plush against her chest.

‘You want me to read this book?’ Marla pointed at ‘The cat in the Hat’ that was lying on Esther’s Disney themed night desk.

‘No, only Daddy can read that.’

‘I have never met your father! Is he working a lot?’

‘Daddy moved far away. He is working there but he told me he will come back soon.’

‘Aw, do you miss him?’

‘Yes, I miss Daddy...’ ‘But I have a picture of him in my pillow! Look!’ Esther pulled a picture out of her pillow and proudly showed it to her.

Marla's mouth opened in a silent scream. Color drained from her face and her heart hammered in her chest. It felt like a knife in her gut slowly twisting. *It was him.*

It suddenly all came back to her. The stormy Thursday night in October 2019. Marla and her 12-years old brother were biking their way back home after she had picked him up from up from his basketball practice. Lightning lit up the dark sky as they were fighting against the heavy wind. Their clothes were soaked and they could barely see because of the leaves and branches flying around in front of them. They were only five minutes away from home when her little brother's backlight fell off his bike as they were crossing a round-about. He turned his bike around to pick it up, when a dark blue car crashed into him.

Marla froze. Marla was frightened down to the soles of her shoes as she was running towards her brother. She looked into the car standing a few yards away, and saw a young man, his eyes wild with terror. Suddenly the car turned around, accelerated, and drove away. Marla couldn't move, fear had struck her and muted her throat. The only one she cared about was her brother. But he was already dead. Months went by as Marla and her family tried to track the man down who killed her little brother. Hundreds of people have been contacted; pictures of the car dominated the internet. But the man was nowhere to be found. And then she saw this picture, and she knew. *It was him.*

Driving me insane

150 miles down, 45 to go. Out of the 3 hours I had enjoyed precisely four minutes and eleven seconds: “Barcelona” by Freddie Mercury playing on the radio. The sun had radiated across the clouds, turning them marigold orange with blanks of pink. Autumnal air crept through my slightly opened window. Every once in a while, a car flashed across my vision. They drove so fast that I couldn’t observe every detail of the scenery.

It was just you and me, like it has always been. But it wasn’t the same as usual. We used to laugh together in the front seats, you using the water bottles as microphone, singing along to our favorite songs. Our car rides always screamed happiness. Now silence lay on your clothes like a poison. I had been swallowing down my frustration ever since we were driving home but my edge of irritation had reached its turning point.

‘Melissa, talk to me.’ Tension lingered in the air, thick and heavy, like a weighted blanket. Melissa pressed her nose against the window. Legs crossed, tapping her nails aggressively on the book she was holding, which she probably had never read. She only cared about her own story.

‘What do you want me to say, Robert?’ Resentment clouded her words. ‘What do you want me to say?!’ Now anger hardened her words. In the corner of my eye I could see her balling her hands into fists, her long nails scarring her skin.

‘I want you to try to understand me. You know that it wasn’t a choice.’

‘Oh, so that makes everything okay?’

‘Is that what I am saying?’ I realized this argument was going nowhere. ‘Melissa, look, I don’t want you to feel like you are any less than her, okay? I love you and only you!’

‘Oh, funny you mention her! Guess she’s important to you after all, huh?’ She replied with a suddenly honeyed, sarcastic voice. I hated when she did that.

‘Yes, she is important to me, and you know that. But she has nothing to do with our relationship.’ I tried to calm down my voice to have a mature conversation about it. Melissa clearly wasn’t on the same page.

‘‘That’s ironic of you to say,’’ She continued, turning her head towards me. I couldn’t look her in the eyes for two self-explanatory reasons. ‘‘then tell me why exactly was it necessary to ask her to come live with us, huh? So, we could all hang out together, every day? Oh, that sounds amazing!’’

I started to feel rage pulsing through my veins. Anger swirled inside me. I didn’t deserve this at all, and she knew that. She knew damn well I had no choice in this. But she kept going.

‘‘You know what, I actually can’t wait. I am so excited for this. You, me, and her. It’s like what I have always dreamt of.’’

With every word she said a wave of fury crashed through me. Until I couldn’t take it anymore. ‘‘Melissa, STOP! Get out of my car, I don’t want to see you anymore!’’ I screamed to her, stoked with anger. I lost myself. And I probably lost her as well.



Sara Vijfhuizen is born and raised in the Netherlands and moved to the United States after graduating high school. She is a sophomore at Providence College with an English Creative Writing major. Her passion for language has gotten her into writing from an early age. Besides writing she loves playing soccer and spends a lot of her time behind the piano.

“Sara Vijfhuizen’s pieces pack a punch with her readers as they move through the twists and turns, discovering what will happen next. With her clear story-telling ability, Vijfhuizen grabs the reader’s attention and takes them along for the ride while also incorporating striking imagery.” - Kate Laliberte

“Sara’s words jump off of the paper. They pull at the reader’s imagination and curiosities, making them yearn for more. She does a phenomenal job of grabbing the audiences’ attention and never relinquishes throughout any of her writing’s. Her pieces speak to the heart and to the soul.” - Zach Kapstein