

Haibun by Spring 2022 Students
Spring 2022

01 - SUNDOWN

The green light at the end of the bay, the blue dolphins giggling as angry mermaids. The salty smell and my wavy hair in contact with the white sand. Drinking my piña colada and melting the salt and the salty flavor with the sugar of this tropical drinking eating the ices and melting them in my mouth. A bunch of children building castles of sand, wow this summer is being the largest and most humid one in years.

sand sand
crunchie, strong and wet
melting its salty flavor

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02 - SLEEPERS

7:00am. The sun has barely broken through the horizon, yet the warmth of the city has broken away the cold night. Streets normally packed with cars and people live silently. No one is awake yet. Pins drop in Chicago, but everything feels right. Blocks filled with towering buildings fly by. A peaceful park at rest, the only semblance of nature in the metropolitan. The morning air of possibility lures an endless walk. Every minute passes painstakingly slow. Each corner is turned with the disappointment of seeing another pedestrian; where was the emptiness we had a moment ago? Stopping on the corner to lean against a red brick building, hoping that the Pomeranian and her owner will just walk a little faster for the moment of a lifetime to arrive.

fireworks
first kiss on a street corner
hoping the strangers watch

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03 - GROUNDED

Slight drizzle in the air. The fairy's wings are wet. She sits on a mushroom to dry them. However, her attempts fail her. She then takes cover under an oak leaf. While there, she hears the laughs coming from the large hole in the tree. She goes over to inspect the hole and sees her friend the raccoon. He is having tea and snacks with Mr. Squirrel.

wet fairy wings
friendship
nutty lunch

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04 - A PACKAGE DEAL

I'm so happy that you're happy. The memories we shared up until this special day. I can't thank you enough for making me the happiest person alive. You have taught me so much in life. I have taught you many things in life as well. On days you hurt, I see and recognize that. I comfort you and do the best I can to make you happy again. We are in this together. When I am sad, you know the perfect solution to make me happy again. We understand each other and our pasts. We are a strong force together. This is why I am standing here today. To promise you the rest of our lives. To be happy with you. To live life with you. To be ourselves and share so many more memories with each other. You are mine and I am yours. There is nothing that will break us a part. I am so glad you and my mother are best friends. I always had this vision. Of my mother and husband being the best of friends. We are family. We are a package deal now. Because we are here today, we are sharing our love to the world. You always talked about this day to me. I would always get nervous to talk about a future with my permanent guy. Now that I am here and we have gone through so much together I know that you are the perfect man for me. I see your big smile at that altar. As I start walking down that aisle, all I can think about is: I'm so happy that you're happy.

two rings fingerless
one love story
about to begin

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05 - FOUR YEARS

We were in this for four years. Acting all crazy in love. Feeling like we were the ones to be high school sweethearts. We felt like everyone wished they were us. All of the laughs we shared and all the memories. Sneaking each other into our houses behind our parents' back. We were wreckless. I wanted to build a future with you. I was ready. I thought we were communicating well with each other throughout those four years. I know I was. We could've had something amazing. But you threw it all away. Once you started becoming distant, I knew something was up. You may have been three years older than me, but that didn't mean you were slick. I found out. I was always going to find out. What you did and what you weren't going to tell me. That pain of not knowing what I could've done to make things better hurt me for the longest time. When I finally grew up and reflected on what we had, I was grossed out. I was so head over heels for you because you were my first love. We talked about how amazing our lives would be for forever. We weren't going to leave each other ever. You even text me to this day. We may have had something amazing, but you cheated. You cheated on me with my best friend at the time. How was that going to be secret. And who knows how many other guys there were. It made me sick thinking about all that stuff. He knows it's fucked up too. We were in this for four years.

thankful for some memories
with the way it went
you cheated

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06 - CHRISTMAS EVE

A home away from home. Hours spent with family and friends. Friendly faces filled with joy that your presence is there. Jokes that never end. Stories that fill the room. Food to fill every belly. Grammy's carpet feels like the blanket at home. The couches not so modern but filled with charm and history. Unopened presents sitting under the tree. Cousins wondering who has the biggest gift. Wandering around the familiar home hoping to find something hidden. Not paying attention to how late it is. Not realizing if Santa will be at home first. Not wanting to go but happy it happened. Next time will be just as special as the last.

mini sodas
door chimes
everybody's coming to town

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07 - LONDON

In the chilly night, the nursery with three empty beds bid farewell to their owners and the mystery shadow who is taking them away. A shimmering, yellow ball of light guides the path out the window. The St. Bernard's bark pleads to be brought along, but the rope keeps her tied down. Traveling along the merry way, the moon beams down on a pond with two swans in love. The swans welcome these travelers as they demonstrate ways to glide unlike before. The ripples of the water disrupt one beauty for another, as the journey ventures on. The looming circular faces of Big Ben invite the group to meet. Fifteen minutes pass in a second as the bells chime out of routine. Pointing into the dark blue sky, two dazzling lights of color pierce through with promise of adventure.

holding her hand
we leap off the arm
and soar to the stars

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08 - NOTES APP

You're in the mood for love. You're in the mood to dance. The girl that is occupying your love doesn't ask, really ask, how you feel about things. She doesn't explore your mind. She doesn't think of poetry when she traces her finger on your skin. She doesn't foolishly romanticize the notion of fixing you. You think that this is different, and it is, for you. I know this. You're in the mood for me. You're in the mood for someone who wants to be skin to skin all night. Someone who makes it feel like a movie. Someone who plays into your pleasure. Someone who's too damaged to differentiate fake tears and forceful touch. I've been here before. I know this, but can I have this dance?

in the mood
and temporarily intrigued
the idea of me is contradictory

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09 - MISSING HER

potato soup, home-made hats, and old cigarettes

I've never been in love, but sitting here on my bed with her, I think I might be close. It's been years. We have known each other for years . . . Years! Something about watching her fingers work at the crochet hat and catching the occasional whiff of stale cigarette smoke stuck in her jacket has left me frozen in my seat. I can't say it, and I've never been able to say it. Those three words get stuck in my throat and make my mouth feel like cotton and, god, I can't even say it to my mom these days. She says she's depressed, that she hasn't showered in days and is living off cigarettes instead of food. So of course, I buy her dinner. We sit in the empty restaurant eating crackers and potato soup and I'm telling her about all of the books I've been reading. The one person I've ever loved and I can't shut up about my own life. She writes down every single title anyways and promises she'll read them.

On the way back, I stare out the passenger window of her car. I watch the twinkling light as we drive back out of town and she plays me her favorite songs. I'll never be able to tell her how I love her. We'll say it as we hang up the phone, or when she hugs me goodbye before I leave again, but I'll never be able to look her in the eyes and tell her that I've never loved anyone as much as her.

guilt
I look at a photo
to remember your face

You're gone. You've been gone for years. I can still remember the day that they told me you left. Sitting in my mom's office, watching my dad choke back tears as she told me you were... gone. My dad left that day too, just for the week, just to see Nana and talk about you, but it felt like he left and took the rest of you with him. I never got to say goodbye. The only thing I remember is the way I held your hand on our way into the restaurant the last night I saw you. I was so little, so excited that for the first time since we had gotten there you were going with us, and I jumped off the curb. You said ow, that the little jostle my 10-year-old body had made hurt you. I let go of your hand, too scared to hurt you more and never touched you again. I wish I hadn't been so scared to hug you goodbye, I wish you had been awake when we left, that I had told you I loved you one more time, but now you're gone. Some days I can't even remember your face. I have to look at the pictures of you hidden in photo albums hidden in the second drawer of our coffee table just to remember your face and it hurts. It hurts that they spread your ashes without me, that they never told me where they let you go. I'm scared that when I get older, I won't even be able to find pictures of you to look at and your face will fade from my memory forever turning into nothing but warm feelings and sweet reminiscence. They say that time heals all wounds, but I don't want to heal. I want to hurt and bleed and remember how much it killed me to lose you.

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10 - BOBBLE

Addicted second-smoker. They killed you, but god they smelled good. I don't want to smoke them, I just want to smell them. I want to smell them and hear the tar in your lungs dance while you rattle it around with one of your stories.

cigarette butts
talking through
the filter

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11 - FINAL SCORE

Senior year. Post season for women's soccer begins. Three-hour drive to Columbia, Missouri for a super sectional game. We get there, we warm up, we take the field. The starting whistle blows, and the game begins. Down 5-0 at half. Spirits are still high, and all the players are laughing. Second half begins the other team scores some more. Almost to the end of the game the second string is now put in. The score is now 9-0. One forward against one defender, ball is in the air. The defender trips on her own feet and the ball is taken to goal. Final whistle blows... 9-1. The crowd cheers their pity cheers, and we all smile and huddle together as it is our last game as a team. Not the turnout we wanted but still enjoyed every bit of the season.

last goal of the season
the fans cheer
number 11... out

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12 - FAIRY

Flying so fast. Where is she off to? Glitter falls to the ground. How'd that get everywhere? Gentle wings that sparkle like a star. Can I get that glow? Before my eyes she flies. Wondering if she is as friendly as she looks. The glimmer of her shape comes forward. Closer and closer. She stares at me. Do I say hello? Do I catch her? Do I ask her what it's like to be her? She smiles. The glimmer is gone.

fast flight
as she sparkles by
curious little one

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13 - PISCES

The land in front of me has to be at least 50 different shades of green. It is our friend. We cherish the space we all hold in our hands. We are here together. All of us. We need each other. We have a responsibility to each other. We have a collective obligation to each other. We owe each other sunrises and gardens and long embraces and rest. We realize just how precious every minute is. We got it right. We are free from hyper-consumption and greed and envy and exhaustion. We do not want for less. We do not yearn for less clothing and less waiting and less words and less space. The grass in between our toes is more. We dance under the moon and wail in unison. We are here and now.

you see me as
I see the world:
delusional

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14 - CATCHING UP

In a world full of chasing your dreams. You are mine. I chase after your attention and enjoy being in your presence. You ignore it and focus on your own journey. You send me a message and it alters my mood. You know there is something there. You are lying to yourself if not. I enjoy the time we spend together. The smell of incense in the air. Laying with you on the couch. Having endless conversations and catching up. I can see the look in your eye. You want me. I want you. You fear what your parents will think. They need to see it and be exposed to a new idea. Love is love.

chasing dreams
it's you
always been you

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15 - BOOTS

Music bumps as you sit in front of the small mirror. Your roommate plays her pump-up playlist and sits at her desk next to you putting on her makeup. Parties aren't either of your scenes, but for a friend's birthday, you'll make the sacrifice. You both have party clothes in your shared closet. It's college, who doesn't have a mesh shirt or fishnets tucked away in a drawer somewhere? You throw in some eye drops and blink a few times, clearing their cloudiness from your vision. Your roommate locks eyes with you, both of your faces are plastered with thick foundation and heavy eyeshadow. It doesn't matter, you giggle and brush on more glitter, the only thing people will be able to remember are the pictures, and the point isn't to look good, the point is to do the most. You're tired of just going to the neighborhood parties at home, the ones where you put on jeans and a sweater and always end up being put in charge of the little kids so the parents can drink, even if you're in your twenties now and want to talk to real people about more than the newest pop-its and Roblox updates. Tonight is different. You're guaranteed to have human interaction, although the level of coherency is debatable. Shoving your feet into rubber boots—a must, you've discovered, when going to parties where the liquor is flowing— you lean into the mirror and pucker your lips giving them one last swipe of color before slipping the lipstick into your pocket and darting out the door.

push-up bra and lipstick
putting glitter under our eyes
college party chic

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15 - LIGHTHOUSE

I traverse through the bush roses and ferns that open to a solitary lighthouse that emerges from the peak of the cliff. Grey skies and misty air crash against my face. The haunting fog shrouds the ocean in the distance, and I understand the purpose of the lighthouse. Veins of granite guide me to the cliffside to observe the power of the sea. Crashing waves wear down the boulders in the ocean, creating straight lines that look too perfect. If only I could sit here forever.

light rotates
i catch glimpses
of you

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16 - MONSTERS AREN'T REAL

The little girl was old enough to start sleeping on her own, but she didn't want to. Yes, she was five. In her mind, that meant she could do big kid stuff. Fought tooth in nail be as independent as a five-year-old could be – except for going to sleep on her own. See, she knew about monsters. She knew they come out at night and try to sneak in her house when she's falling asleep – only when falling asleep. That other sleep stuff didn't matter – the beginning of the sleep is the crucial moment for monsters to come. Everyone knows that, except for parents, apparently. Her papa would tell her monsters aren't real, but she knew better. They have been sneaking in to eat her snacks. She set a trap to show her parents. She pretended to fall asleep. The house began to wake up. Walls groaned, windows whistled, the floors creaked. She tiptoed out of her room and followed the noises. Ah ha! The kitchen. She poked her head around the entryway. The room was dark. She gasped. A bulky shadow with frizzy hair was hovering over the counter. She flipped the light switch. Her mom stood there, mid bite. Halloween candy wrappers littered the counter. The pumpkin Reese's. The monster had been caught.

door slams open
Halloween buckets dump out
the parent tax

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17 - LIGHTS UP

Lights up in New York City. The Big Apple is what they call it. Tonight, is the night you dreamed of. You have worked your ass off to get here. The late nights where you thought you reached the snapping point. The cracked notes and sore muscles. It was all part of your process. Now you're here. Mom and Dad are here too. They love you unconditionally and have always been the number one fans. You sit in dressing room and stare at yourself in the mirror. A tear or two drip down from your eye. They are happy tears. The costume is on and fits like a glove. The stage manager calls "Places!" on the speaker. One final look in the mirror. A final smile is shared with yourself. This is the first of many throughout the night. Lights up as you make your Broadway debut.

after years of training
he smiles in the mirror
of his NYC dressing room

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18 - STARS

Looking up at the stars and looking at the sky. Wondering what makes the sky and stars appear the way they are. Little girls wondering what they could become, knowing that they can be whoever or whatever they want. Knowing that they should always have the support of their fathers.

looking down from the clouds
everything seems small
even the people

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19 - GARDEN GATE

Mountainous rhododendron bushes stand guard, their flowers painted in bright, bloody reds ward off any unwelcome visitors. The sickly-sweet fragrance fills the nose while passing through their gates revealing a home. The building that stands the test of time, dilapidated and grown far too wild. The only window that remains fully intact catches the light and glimmers. The grandiose fountain now stands discolored and overgrown. Bird song fills the air and little feet scurry across the forest floor and retreat inside. The squirrels go back into their home.

in death
there remains
new life

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20 - MY TURN

In the air-conditioned summertime, I curl into the couch and watch my grandfather nod off to sleep. The news drones in the background with stories about crises and global pain, but my hurt is a dull pounding somewhere far away in my chest, personal and universal, as his glasses slip farther down his nose. I spend every Thursday morning with him, brewing cups of coffee and talking about life, all normal, until suddenly he asks a question that leaves me breathless. He asks after people who are long dead. Have you talked to Mom? How's Skip doing? He asks me the details of a life that belongs to some other relative, not me. How long are you in town for? Do you like commuting to St. Louis? The worst is when he misses. He misses always, a constant ache, grief he doesn't remember he owns. We should visit Dick and Cynthia; it's been too long. I would be cruel to tell him the truth, that we buried them two years ago. Instead, I reassure or redirect, like the websites say to do. I toss a lot of questions back to him. I gulp pale milky coffee and gently beg him to tell me about his life. There's urgency buzzing on these slow summer days, a metronome only I can feel tilting back and forth. Meanwhile my phone buzzes with a text from my mom and I promise her we're doing fine. We are. Everything is fine. He sleeps slumped in his favorite brown cardigan buttoned up over a twenty-year-old t-shirt. I try to memorize him and this room. Remember when I was small enough for him to lift me and he would, grab me in a squealing hug and tuck me onto his lap with a picture book, remember when we'd go for walks or draw pictures or when he protected me instead of the other way around. I watch the trees out the window, how the branches sway lazy in the breeze. Nothing that's killing me matters at all. All I'm cupping in my palms is this Thursday morning, holding it greedy against me, sipping from it.

crises on the front page
I read you
our horoscopes

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20 - HARMONY

We know not what others act upon. All we know is who we should act. Many people try to work in harmony but cannot seem to because they do not try to understand why others act the way they do. Many people feel that when others act it's almost an attack against them.

two people
in perfect harmony
in perfect sync

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21 - MUD

Do you think you think you're a good person? I know that I at least try. Even if it just holding open the door. Do other people see me that way? Do I even want other people to see me that way? I don't want to be walked all over but not seen negatively either. Is there balance in between? The ying and yang of being a well-rounded person, being nice but not a door mat. Was I seen as a good person as a door mat? I don't feel like I have it in me to be mean. Well not mean but standing up for myself. Would standing up for myself make me a bad person? Maybe I don't mind being a bad person if it means no more footprints.

brushing off
the footprints
on her back

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22 - ALICE

Chasing the rabbit, down the rabbit hole. I find myself in a land unknown, yet somehow familiar. I see the rabbit, running towards a tea party. The mad hatter, throwing the tea, goes over my head. A table of sweets and cakes, flying with the chaos. Why was I brought here, I was only following the rabbit? I continue to follow, to the caterpillar with colorful smoke billowing from his lips. "You lost?", he asks. I'm not sure I'm actually lost though, I chased after the rabbit after all. I just fell out of line, fell into somewhere where I don't have a lot of control. Am I dreaming, is the rabbit real? I lay down and stare at the shapes in the smoke, closing my eyes. I wake in a field of lotus flowers, holding a cup of tea.

chasing the rabbit
to the bottom
of the bottomless pit

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23 - SPACE

There are no mirrors on the alien spaceship. Maybe that's how they got so advanced. I'd take an extra probe any day just to see my own face again. I'm the only thing left of home. I don't even remember what a human looks like. If I saw myself, I'd probably look like the alien. *I barf in my space noodles thinking about my own face.* Are humans ugly or pretty? Am I ugly or pretty? I can't remember. No one here seems to care.

i can't see
myself
when no one's looking

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24 - CROCHET

A stack of newspapers is bundled on the floor, next to my head. I inhale the inky paper scent, I love these words, I consider using the stack for a pillow. You walk in the room with bare feet and a flowered crocheted blanket, and you toss it on top of me. Your grandmother made that, you say, like it's no big deal, like it's not an act of love to share that with me. I respond by gripping it tighter around my body and groaning into the stack of newspapers. The wine was cheap and tangy but we split the bottle and now I'm breaking my neck on the threadbare carpet of your bedroom floor. It's cold in your cramped attic room. I stretch my toes out too far and send paperbacks tumbling across my ankles, apologize. "I'm glad you're here," you say from your bed after the lamp is turned off and there's nothing but the creaking old house and a yellow streetlight glow peeking through the curtains. It's lonely here. Are you always alone here? "Thanks for having me," I say for the fiftieth time from my spot on the floor. A car drives by, headlights swinging around the room as they turn into a driveway down the street. "I've missed you," you confess into the silence. I try to remember the words to repeat them back to you but my head is fuzzy and sloshing and then pulled into sleep. And in the morning when there's dawn shining through the blind slats across the honey floorboards and my crocheted blanket, splitting me into pieces, I blink and stretch my hands up and graze my knuckles against the newspapers, and I wonder what today's headline should be, how the first story of the day will break: I Sneak Downstairs and Make Us Coffee or You Ask Me When I'm Planning to be Back or maybe I Drive Two Hours Away and Try to Call that Place Without You Home, Like I Used to Before I Met You, Before I Knew What Home is Supposed to Feel Like.

the scent of almond shampoo
in your hair soft to touch
and see your smile

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25 - STUBBORN MULE

Cars are the most frustrating creatures. They work when they want to, and don't work at the most inopportune moments. Almost cat-like in nature, cars act of their own accord. They are aloof, yet we still feel attached to them. On this rainy day, a dear friend's car is stuck in the mud. We push and pull; even rock it like a little baby. However, the car won't be coerced out of its resting place. Quite literally a stick in the mud, it spoils the fun for all of us. Drenched, cold, and sticky, we try to dig the mud from under its tires. We place cardboard down in hopes of creating a flat surface. The car laughs in our faces, and sneers when we, too, are covered in mud. And so, like the cat, the car waits, until it decides to move on its own time.

stupid fucking cat
I rev
the engine

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26 - SELF PROTECTION

She ties the knot around the candles, gazing at the waning moon. The air is crisp and clean, begging for renewal and new beginnings. She closes her eyes and clutches the bay leaves in her palms. The energy seeps through her skin and through her body, protecting her from any harm. She takes a deep breath, feeling all the goodness in the world and embracing it. She breathes out, releasing as much tension as she can, and casting out negative energy. She sets her intention, and lights both candles. One burns down incredibly quickly, ripping the twine with it and burning it to a crisp. The other burns steadily, a beacon through the night. Finally, it is done.

crash
and burn
but I am me

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27 - JELLO LEGS

Sweating. Hot. Nervous. Jittery. Panic. The line winds up the stair case, through a tight opening and out onto the ride floor. It's cool in there; cooler than outside, at least. Dark, too. Chatter among the ride goers. Small crew of four – tightly bonded. They just got there. It's everyone's first amusement park in years. First break in a long time for education exhausted teens and work tired adults. And so many nerves. The moment the ride inched forward, her eyes were glued shut. Organ gymnastics as the ride flipped and soared. Verbal assailants flew from her mouth. Heart racing as the ride came to a halt. Jello arms and wobbly legs. Let's do it again.

rusty metal chains
inching them up the incline;
whoooosh!

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28 - PUERTO RICO

The alleys, the lights, the people living on the streets and enjoying the nice weather, feeling the sun on their skins, on their faces as a kind of reward after a long and white winter. The colorful houses in which the people have no privacy and where the tourists could see what was inside their walls, the windows open and showing to everyone their daily activities giving a sense of welcoming and conform.

sightseeing
colorful houses
from the dark side of the street

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