

There was glass, sound, and blurred images. There was red and a feeling of indifference so profound that no collection of letters on paper could exemplify the moment of the crash... at least that is what I assume. I do not know. I was not there. I have seen it in the movies and in those dramatic television shows where people in car crashes are given the power to freeze time, to deny the logic of seconds, and to for a fraction in the existence of human life, have absolutely no feelings or thoughts. In essence, they experience the epitome of living in the moment. Newton explained the universal laws of gravity hundreds of years after the Hindus said that karma is the moral existence of cause and effect. But, that is the problem with theories; they vary in application.

The Guy on a Star

There I am in class. There he is in the desk, horizontally to the right of me. Please do not let my introduction mislead you. This is not a story about girl meets boy or about some petty crush that somehow set the foundation of my life. This is a story about someone who I owe an apology to and the only way I know how is to write it out and share it with you now. We were seniors in advanced Earth Space studying astronomy, meteorology, and geology. Did you catch that? We were studying the way that you can look into the night sky and actually look into the past. I imagine that maybe he is on a star seeing me as I was in the past. How many more years will it be before he sees me now, in this classroom, sharing his story with my students, and writing his legacy? We were studying the way that two systems of opposite pressures slide past each other and the repercussions that ensue. I guess I would be the low-pressure system, because my behavior, in retrospect, was low. I guess he would be the high-pressure system, because everything he did and everything he said was intense and driven by impulse. We were studying the way that time writes itself in the mountains and ocean beds of the Earth. We were studying the impacts of things that are often taken for granted. No, this is not a love story. It is a story for the guy who taught me something that took years to sink in. This is a story that reveals regret and, in simple ink on paper, strives to compensate for wasted time and immaturity that lies in the stones, constellations, and weather patterns of my life.

It's a Thursday, fifth period, in a science classroom at our high school. Let me tell you the full story, because you surely only saw half of it. I am *that* girl. I am that girl who studies too much and never really fit into one crowd or another, but drifted between cliques as if they were unimportant. I had friends from every group, though I knew these were seasonal friendships. I am that girl who everyone thinks is really smart, but the secret is that I will spend hours re-working that math problem, trying to understand how I can mess up an algorithm that should solve everything, stretching every neuron around the concept of quantum physics until my brain hurts, and reading the book one more time, because maybe I missed something the first time. I daydream in class and draw pictures all over my papers. I am the epitome of average, but I work twice as hard as the average. The result is this reputation that you knew me by. I never was in theatre, but I guess I could have been. I played the role. I built walls, defense mechanisms, so that no one could get close enough to find out who I

really was. It was better that way. It would be easier to leave for college if I continued to distance myself from everything and everyone.

So, there you are. You come in with your football jersey on, like you own the place. You talk to me a lot, probably because I am one of the only ones who will listen to you. I always act annoyed, like you are bothering me. I cut you down a lot with side comments that are crafted to destroy your ego just enough for me to see who you really are. I roll my eyes. I ignore you a lot. I act like I am better than you, with that pretentious behavior that I learned from others, nose-in-the-air, high class, don't-waste-my-time-with-your-stupidity act. I was an actress. Did you know that? You really were annoying, ninety-two percent of the time. Eight percent of the time, I thought you were awesome. I never told you, did I? You were awesome.

My other friends are there, each from different cliques outside of this class. It is one of those cool classes that happen once in a blue moon. There aren't any cliques, so we all just kind of get along as civil acquaintances. We finished our assignment. So, instead of being productive, we began a conversation completely off topic... vaguely inspired by astronomy. You are turned around in your seat facing my desk. I am working on the finishing touches of my hundred acre woods sketch on my homework assignment. I am not really listening to what you are saying. Erica and Shelby jump into the conversation, saving me from talking to you. I am just not in the mood today. You are saying something about how you know that I don't really hate you. Amateur bait. I am not falling into that trap. I am ignoring you. Finally, you say that you know that if you died, I would come to your funeral. "No, I won't. We are not friends. You don't really know me. I don't care what you have to say. I'm not in the mood. Leave me alone. There you go, turn around in your desk. Shut up and everyone will be happy," I say, looking you straight in the eyes without any mercy... it was the truth in the moment. I meant *every word* I said. You were silent. You turned around. I felt no remorse. I knew the next day that you would stroll into class, cocky as usual, and forget the whole thing. You did and I did. Friday was a new day. The year ended. We graduated. I never expected to see you again. I never did.

It's a Sunday, a few weeks before I move up to Bloomington for college. I am working at the local ice cream place. I am the manager, so I have to be on my A game. However, I am working with a good crew. So, I don't really care that everybody is on their phones. I am running through all of the things that I need to still get or pack up before I move into the dorm. I am worried about all of my middle class, petty, materialistic "needs" for college. Then, it happens. Erica says something. Time stops. The forgotten is remembered- that Thursday. It all comes flooding back into my consciousness. It is vague at first. You said you knew I didn't hate you. Did you really know? Tell me that you knew. You can't tell me. You aren't here. You are sitting on a star now.

It was a car crash. You were probably texting and driving. You went off the road. You hit a tree, one of the trees that was in my hundred acre woods. I hear you saying, "If I died, you would come to my funeral." I meant every word I said. I didn't go. Not because I hated you, but because I was ashamed of myself. How could I stand in front of all of those people who loved you knowing that I had been so immature, that I had cut you down every day? I could not do it. I moved on with my life. I went to college, taught at a few schools, moved to the Navajo Reservation. Then, I came home. The same dynamic between a girl and a guy was prevalent in every setting. I wanted to tell her to stop being so pretentious and conceited. I wanted to tell him to take it down a notch. The problem is that it does not work like that. Time does not always synchronize the way that we want it to. Space plays with the perception of time, but the past and present are in a constant dance. Rocks, geological records of time, reveal time frames separated by lines that we can never cross. The weather shows us the inevitable. When a low-pressure system meets a high-pressure system, they are pushed away from each other. That is the great paradox. It is never too late to say sorry. Maybe it will travel along the edge of the pressure systems, touching both lines of geological time, across the fabric of the universe to the guy who sits on a star. Maybe then you can have the full story.