

Nature Writing ENG/EVST 247 Section 01

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Final Portfolio

The Bell Jar

How do you feel now
Trapped in the center of a bell jar
The scornful sun beating your bare skin
All around you, you can see what belongs to nature
The stretching maple trees
Their lofty branches interlacing
Dropping their helicopter seeds
Floating to the ground like in your childhood
Dancing and soaring
Catching them and throwing them with your mother
But you sit still not admiring it
But consumed by a lofty darkness barring down
Cloaked with fangs
It wraps itself around your subtle frame
Taking hold as it burrows into your body
Seeping into your pores and pulling you into yourself
When you open your eyes again
They are black reflecting what is within
The soulless crunch of gnashing teeth
And sick thoughts flurry around you
You and the cloak become one
It twists and intertwines within your being
Shoving the reality from your grasp
But still a single thread hangs on
You pull at it unraveling your true self
Like a spider weaving a web
The shining silk erasing what the cloak has done
Pulling, prying, picking
You pull until the thread breaks
And all at once you are alone again
Sitting still captured within the bell jar
Looking at a beautiful scene
Yet tears spill and incredulous laughter bubbles
Will you ever truly be free?
You push against the glass
Using all of your might to make it budge
The glass cracks like a mirror folding over itself
Pieces spilling to the floor

You step out free for the first time in so long
But you still feel the hand on your shoulder
The grip that will never let go
The shadow that follows you for the rest of your days
But you embrace the shadow, you welcome it this time
This time it does not consume you
It is only a part of you
You welcome yourself in whole
Completely and utterly alive
With whispering breath and agonizing heart beats
You take a step forward
A step forward into tomorrow
A new step, one that feels foreign
Than before

The sky glittering above in a sea of pink and purple
A speckling of stars shining down below
I take the shadows hand and remember
Remember a time of helicopter seeds
And dancing round with my mother
Breathing in the fresh salt air
I feel at peace
Content with remembered childhood in my heart
Ready for the next stage in my life
Unafraid and unfaltering
Accepting of my experiences
And holding the hand of my past

Memories Dance on the Beach

I sit on the beach and draw lines in the sand
I remember the times my grandma traced the year in the sand
Footprints below showed how we grew up
Little imprints stretched and deepened
The ridges concaving the dampness and holding the shape
Feeling the soft mounds give way
The pictures hold the memories but it's different now
Waves crash and spill onto the shoreline
Sucking in little rocks and shells
I feel the water lap against my feet
As I sit and remember

I've been coming to this beach since I was six months old
LBI with its sprawling beaches and ever so perfect towns
I breathe in the salty air and listen to the laughter of kids running to the ocean
Flashes echo in my mind of my sister and I as children
Splashing in the breaking waves with my grandparents
I remember the car ride the most
The giddy joy of getting to the house before them
Hiding in the closet to jump out and scare them

It's been five years since my pop-pop passed away from Alzheimer's
When I was a kid I would hold his hand and go get ice cream
I remember the rough feeling of his working hands as they held my own
The calluses rubbing against my pillow-like skin
Small and soft within them
Savoring the numbing ice cream as it dripped and ran in the hot sun

I still remember the first time he didn't remember who I was
The shattering moment when I still had the hope he'd recall me again
But I was wrong
You never remember when it's the last time you'll say goodbye to the person you knew
I watched for eight years as the person I knew and loved faded away
When you lose someone from Alzheimer's you lose them twice
Once as they no longer remember who you are to them and again when they take their last breath
His smile was so luminous and warm
He would wrap me in an embrace and tell me I was his favorite grandchild
I never got to tell him how much he means to me

LBI used to be so different
Most of the shops and businesses were independent and family owned
They would remember your name and greet you with friendly cadence
The quaint little cottages that were nestled along the shore
Tucked into the sand with chipped paint and rusty hinges
Are slowly being replaced by modern mansions as people steamroll the past
People slowly forget how LBI used to be

The last year my pop-pop was alive
He never got to make it to LBI
Confined to the four white walls of the hospital
Cold, Sterile, Bare
The machinery slowly beeping and signing with the passage of time

You could hear the shallow breaths
Still and quiet, not aware his family was begging him to come back
Sometimes there would be the slightest squeeze of the hand
Or the blinking of the eyes
The stillness is something that will always live on in me
Doctors shuffling in and out
Never bearing good news
Their white coats swishing as they raced to the next room

But what you could hear the most was the ticking of the clock
The noise cutting through the silence slashing and disrupting
A real life indicator of how little time was left
Sitting too long with the clock would drive anyone mad
Waiting for something that never came
Waiting for him to wake up

After he passed everything lost its joy
But the island still echos with his laughter as we ran and danced on the beach
Everytime I come here I can still feel him and see his smile
I'll never lose him as long as I can return to the beach

My Entanglement

Ink spilled on the page
The lines interloping and interlacing to meet each other
Embracing in a watery slope
Not knowing that soon they would dessicate and forever be still

Vines twisting and wrapping themselves around my throat
Blood dripping from thorns stuck in my hand
Little daggers slicing what can be seen

But the real damage was in the knot below
Within tangling veins that gorged with blood flow
Meeting a thumping heart
Pounding and ringing in my ears
Speak your truth it screams
But whenever you open your mouth
The words fall unbroken
The words that were rushing and weaving in your mind
Now lay dead in the air
Hanging between two people

While the last breath of what we had escaped
Silence echoed louder than any sound I've ever heard
As I slowly untangled myself from you
I tried to keep my emotions in line but they balled themselves back up
Withering as if they had been kept from the light they craved
I felt a black stain mar my soul
A spreading creature sucking the life from my very body
Lifeless, Pale, Sucking Breath

Gasping on the ground surrounded by my own entanglement
I gaze at the wasteland around me
The night sky shining down on barren sands
Desperately longing for the rain
But the only water that would come was the pooling salt water
Leaking from my face
Sprawling onto my hand as I recalled the memories
But they slipped away as they faded to grey
Mere wisps of intertwined worlds floating by

Trust must be earned
But is often fractured
Memories mean nothing without action
Cycles continue and drift
And I start anew with a twisting connection



Art by Debra Weisberg part of the "Embrangledscape" exhibit