

In the Ords: CSUMB Literary Arts Journal

Volume 3 | Issue 1

Article 30

5-2019

In Memory

- Anonymous -

California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/ords>

Recommended Citation

Anonymous -, - (2019) "In Memory," *In the Ords: CSUMB Literary Arts Journal*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 30.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/ords/vol3/iss1/30>

This Non-Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Journals at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in In the Ords: CSUMB Literary Arts Journal by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

In Memory

Anonymous

Let's be completely frank, movies are full of shit. Whenever someone dies, the people around them are complete emotional wrecks, and the weather is raining and storming. It looks like the world feels the pain too, like this death meant something to more people than that person could've ever realized.

But this doesn't happen. We aren't special, the world doesn't bend over backwards to cry for us. Countless people have died before us, and countless more will follow. Good people, bad people, leaders, tyrants, lovers, and enemies. Not one person gets special treatment. I have become painfully aware now that the world simply does whatever it pleases.

It is getting close to three years now since she died. While it does sound like a cliché, nobody had any idea. We all came into class that day, pulled out our textbooks, and began slogging through another day. Once that class was done, we moved onto the next and the next after that. With every hour that passed we all remained blissfully unaware, and we were all just waiting for the next lunch period.

That was a weird lunch. They told us right before, our teachers I mean. We all knew something was up, as the principal and counselor had been pulling teachers in and out of classes for the last half-hour. It started off slowly at first. Around 11, I went down to speak with the school counselor but couldn't find her. When I asked some of the people at the front desk, most of them had no idea. However, a few looked like they were ready to pop. Their faces were flushed, but their eyes were drained of life. They tried not to look at me, afraid they would let loose the secret. Honestly they were almost just teasing us, building anticipation.

Most of us, myself included, had assumed there was another school shooting in the area. We had already had one at a college nearby, and I think another at an elementary school, but that could've been later in the year. So by the time we had already closed the blinds and locked the door they finally worked up the courage to tell us. Sarah Sun was dead.

If I was told the day before that she was going to die, I wouldn't have believed it. May have even laughed in your face. She was the ultimate stereotype of the perfect high schooler. She was the top of her class, was the Student Body President, was even active in sports. Yet she was still kind and caring. She was absolutely hilarious with a sarcastic humor I greatly appreciated. She was relatable, and able to help anyone out with their classwork, stress, or just to vent with. She was great at so much. She was great at too much.

Stress really is an unforgiving bitch. Looking back at the day before I can see how stressed she was, but at the time I couldn't be bothered. I think I had a paper that was due two days before, and I had to think up a way to guilt trip my professor into an extension. She asked me for help with something for a school event. I like to think that I took some time to help her, that I was able to give her a little relief, but I don't know. It's probably safer to say that I told her I'd do it later. That is a hard thought to swallow.

I don't remember much that they said when they told us. As our teacher began to speak, I began to see tears come down her face. As they continued to explain, the room just became a vacuum. It was so unbelievably loud, I couldn't hear a thing even if I wanted to. Yet, no one else was talking. We all just sat there and listened in complete and utter silence. I was afraid to even move, that just one small turn would break the silence and the world would implode or something. I would've been ok with that actually. At least then I would be able to hear again.

I didn't even notice when the teacher finished speaking. They just stood there in silence with us. They probably didn't know what to do, they probably wanted to let out all of the tears they were failing

at holding, but they had to look strong.

Eventually she broke the silence. “If you need to step out for a moment please feel free.” Once she finished speaking, the silence returned. I looked around to see if anyone else wanted to be the first to go, and met some others looking for the same in everyone else. I was desperate to get out of the silence though, so I rose from my seat, pushed in my chair, and quickly made my way outside.

I had known Sarah since the sixth grade. We both attended the same private school, yet we had very different lives. Even then she was still popular, and I was very much not. I half-assed about everything I did, was excessively rude, and just generally reclusive. I disliked most everyone because I didn’t understand them, I didn’t understand why they did things or why they acted how they did. I’m still confused by people, but I try to be more curious than resentful. However, back then, I really hated her.

I’m pretty sure I said this to her face back then too. “I don’t like you. You’re so cold-hearted and mean. How do you even have friends?”

I don’t know how I didn’t get bitch slapped, but she simply turned and looked right at me. She showed no fear, and after a moment she began to smile and even laugh at me.

“What makes you think I’m so mean? You don’t even know me enough to like me.”

I hadn’t prepared that far, and before I could even think of a comeback she turned back to her friends and moved on.

I hated her even more. I felt stupid and pathetic, and slowly began to wobble myself off to some corner to sulk. I just thought about what she said, “You don’t even know me enough to like me.” She was right. I knew nothing about her. She worked hard every day to be who she was, and I didn’t see that. I simply saw something I wanted to be, and got mad I couldn’t be it.

The moment I left the classroom I think it finally hit me.

“Sarah was dead.”

“She was dead.”

“Just dead.”

“How is she dead?”

“Why?”

“I don’t understand.”

“How?”

“Please!”

“What is this?”

“Please, no.”

I heard someone call my name to my left, and before I knew it I was hugging one of my friends. They were inconsolable. I don’t know if they said something to me, and I don’t know if I said something to them. How long did I hold them? Why did they let go? Did I push them away? I don’t know. I just knew I had to leave. I needed to hide. I needed to get these feelings out of me, and get back as soon as I could to help everyone else.

Maybe I was wordless, or maybe I explained that I had to go, but I found myself walking away from the main building of my school. I saw my classmates around me. Some were silent, others very much not. It wasn’t quite anymore, but I couldn’t hear a damn thing. This silence was infective, almost as if my whole body could no longer make a sound. With each step I took, I heard nothing. Just a silent ringing in my head.

I don’t know why I wanted to go into Student Body, but I just did. All of my friends made fun of me, but it was something I wanted to do. To at least say that I tried to do something to make things a bit less shit.

I still ran in a very undesirable position. “Club Coordinator”. I think the only reason no one wanted it is because you did nothing. I ran unopposed, and began working the week after. I didn’t know who was involved in the position before and I didn’t really care. I just wanted to be a part of something.

I went into the meeting room to see many people that I've never spoken to before. I knew no one. That's always a fun feeling in a very un-fun way, so I tried my best to soldier on and find one of the few people I did know, Hannah.

Abbey had just been elected as the secretary, so she should know what I need to do, or which direction to go to find out.

"Hey Hannah! So what exactly do I do as the Club Coordinator?"

She looked up to me with a massive smile.

"Hi Charlie! You can just talk to Sarah about what to do, she was Club Coordinator last year."

I became afraid. I don't know why, but I knew how I remembered Sarah, and maybe I was just afraid of how she would remember me. I turned to see where Hannah was pointing and saw Sarah getting some paperwork gathered.

I shuffled myself over, trying to hide how awkward I felt. Before I even got to her table, she looked over to me.

She smiled.

"Hey, Charlie! How are you?"

I hope I did not look as startled as I think I did, but as I remember it I was a deer in headlights.

"Hi, I'm doing good! I was told to talk to you about the Club Coordinator position."

I hadn't even finished the sentence before she went shuffling for my specific work folder. She opened it up and explained it all to me. How each form is written and where it goes, how she thinks best to organize everything, and even inviting me to ask her for help anytime. The whole time I felt worse and worse. I had hated her. I did hate her, yet she was being kind and thoughtful. She treated me as best as she was able to, and I knew that if the roles were switched I probably wouldn't have been as good. I really hate myself.

I kept moving forward. Past every building, past every distraught friend. I just kept walking.

I walked to the grapefruit grove right outside our school, and went right in. I began to walk slower. I had to step around all of the massive grapefruits that had fell and splattered on the ground. I stepped over the ones that fell recently, the guts still pink and juicy and the rind a golden yellow. I stepped over the ones that had fallen a long time ago. They were now fly food, rotten on the inside with a broken and crusty skin.

With each step further and further in, I tried to take my mind away and focus on the grapefruits. Feel the wind on my skin and through my hair. Listen to the leaves crinkle with each step, and the birds chirping in the trees.

I can hear.

I could no longer hold it back now. I leaned up to a tree and just began to cry. The birds kept singing, and the sky shone beautifully through the leaves of the trees. The grapefruits left a sweet smell in the air that the wind continued to just roll around me.

I hated her.

I didn't know what happened, but I knew in the back of my mind the truth of it. It didn't make it any better to swallow though, so instead I just decided to hate her.

Halfway through the year, the student body president decided to quit. Sarah was the vice-president at the time, so she then became the president. Hannah was a very good friend of Sarah's, and later got elected as vice-president to help her out.

Sarah did not care for the position, but took it on anyways. I don't think she saw it as a choice, but a responsibility that she was obliged to carry out. She put as much as she could afford into her work, and it clearly showed.

The whole time, I don't think I saw her relax. Not a single time.

Actually, that is a lie. There was one time I remember where she looked purely happy. It was at a dance we put together. Some dumb, "we're halfway through the year so why not celebrate" kind of dance. It was country themed too, so I was already dreading it. She still put everything into it.

When the day came, there were obviously a lot of little hiccups. First the speakers weren't working, then

half of the decorations hadn't gotten put up, then we ran out of tables. With each hiccup, she took it upon herself to find a solution.

"Call Stanley and ask how they are configured."

"Everyone let's get together and get this all done."

"Can a few of you go and borrow some tables from the classrooms?"

She knew what to do every time, and helped in every single part of the event. Eventually the sound started working, and the decorations got up, and we brought more tables in, and made sure everyone was getting the help they needed.

Once the dance started, the tension died down and everyone began to enjoy themselves a bit more. Sarah was still staying on top of everything. Refilling refreshments, checking people's tickets, taking out the trash. Only near the end did she finally start to relax.

I was sitting at the entrance just relaxing and enjoying some instant-mix gatorade. She and her boyfriend went onto the dance floor and began to do a slow dance. She looked truly happy. She had a massive smile as she danced, a damn contagious smile. I had a massive grin just from seeing her happy. It was really wonderful to see.

I really tried to hate her. I wanted to hate her for being cruel. For being selfish. For leaving all of her friends and family like this. Broken and in disarray.

But I couldn't.

I was so mad at everything, but I just wanted her to be back. For this to be some sick joke that we can all laugh about years from now. Or maybe that our teachers made a mistake, and that she was just a little bit sick but not gonna die anytime soon.

Maybe this was a joke? Maybe she was already back at school laughing it up with everyone. I wiped my eyes of all my tears, blew out my nose and cleared my throat as best as I could before I started to walk back.

It wasn't a joke. Everyone was scattered across the school. I started circling around cause maybe, just maybe, she was in some corner.

On the first rotation, I saw everyone still mostly silent. Even though I found my sound again, I guess most people were still having trouble. Most of the girls were sitting and crying while the guys tried their best to comfort them. But for the most part, people just sat in silence. They had nothing to say, and didn't want to say anything. Their heads were already loud enough.

The second rotation, people had begun to move around. But only pacing. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. The silence was starting to fade now, but only little whispers were spoken. The air was still delicate, and if someone raised their voice then the sky might fall.

The last rotation was the worst. The girls had finally gathered themselves and had begun to comfort each other. The guys took this chance to go into privacy and silently bawl their eyes out. That is one of the most defeating feelings. Seeing someone that was so strong not long ago reduced to tears. It makes your heart just sink.

I can't take it anymore, everyone's faces, tears, and whispers. I walk into the main office to see if I can leave for home.

That's when I hear Hannah.

I didn't see her, but I could not escape her screams and crying. She was in the counselor's office, with the door shut, but you could still hear her throughout the building. I liked Sarah, but she was Hannah's best friend. I don't know how she felt, but from those cries I'd say it was close to a knife in the heart. Over, and over, and over again.

I can still remember the screams.

The next few days are a blur. I didn't go to school, I hardly even left my room. I just laid on my bed and tried to find things to take my mind off of her.

They were all in vain though.

Each day after that I could only think about what I could've done differently the day before Sarah died.

“Maybe if I gave her a hug...”

“Maybe if I gave her a call that night...”

“Maybe if I noticed how she felt...”

“Maybe if I told her how much she meant...”

“Maybe if I just paid attention...”

“Maybe if I didn’t focus on myself...”

“I could’ve saved her.”

But eventually, I got myself back to school. Back into class, and back to trying to get through another day.

When I returned, I was greeted by silence once again. People were talking, and moving, and going on with their life, but there was still a delicacy with everything. The ice was still thin, and we all had to tread lightly. I sat down at the front, and ready to move on.

“Welcome back class,” our teacher said. “How is everyone doing now after the weekend?”

I don’t know what possessed me to say this, but without thinking I said with a smile “I cried the whole time.”

Why did I say that, who knows, but it was the truth of it. I had been living on a water bed for the past few days, and I just needed to get that off of my chest.

The teacher gave me a sad look, like I said what was on everyone’s mind, but then moved on with the lesson for the day.

“Are you okay?”

I look to my right and see a girl I have rarely ever spoken to looking towards me. She had a sad look in her eyes too, and probably like me had been crying until that morning, but she still forced a smile.

“Yeah,” I say. I look at her in the eyes, and give a smile back. “I’m ok.”

This gives her some relief, and returns another smile back to me before returning to the lecture.

Later in the day, she hands me a little note before heading to her next class.

“Everything is going to be ok, and I’m here for you.”

It’s the last day of school of my Junior year. Sarah Sun died on April 14, 2016. It hasn’t been easy to adjust, but somehow I think we all have managed.

The week after she died, I started to work on a small memorial area with the girl that gave me that note, Lucy. Lucy got a bunch of small plants and ornamental rocks that she decorated, and planted them all on a small square of dirt right by some of the school. I built a large garden ornament in metalshop in the shape of a sun, and put it right above Lucy’s small memorial rock. “Sarah Sun, 1998-2016.”

Everyone is celebrating the last day of school, and the summer break so close that we could taste it. Everyone in the student body helped put together a little carnival for our last day, with a cotton candy machine, bouncy house, and a homemade slip-n-slide kickball game.

It’s a nice and sunny day, the same as the day we found out Sarah died. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves too, able to cool off from the heat and enjoy the diabetes on a stick we were handing out.

When it was all over, and I began to head off home, I made my way towards the small memorial we made. The flowers had established very well in the ground, and Lucy has been taking amazing care of them all.

I look down to the little memorial stone.

“We miss you,” I whisper. “I really wish you were here with us, and I’m sorry I couldn’t be there for you. I keep thinking back on the day before, and wonder what I could’ve done differently. Maybe it would’ve helped, but then again maybe it wouldn’t.”

“It’s just so hard sometimes, to keep going. To find that way forward. It hurts. To move each foot forward, one in front of the other. But I want to keep trying, I want to keep going. I want to become better.”

I stood there, listened to the wind, the trees, the cheering and fun screams in the distance. It was really a beautiful day. Just like that day, with the sun shining down, the wind riding through, and every bird singing in the trees.

The world was trying to show just a small reflection of her, of Sarah. Trying to remind us of the the

wonderful person that we had lost. Show just a smidge of the beauty she had. Maybe this isn't the case at all, and it was just a sunny day, but I like to think otherwise. That maybe we do matter, maybe we mean something, and maybe the world feels with us. I like that thought.

I look back down at the stone, with Sarah's name written boldly on top, staring at the sky.

"See you next year man."