

Syncope

By: Alyssa Charlize Bueno

I still have your baby teeth hidden under my bed unnecessarily secured in a metal box. Inside, in an organized mess reminiscent of a medical waste bin are other mementos you gave me, like a white cloth made brown that "signified your first nosebleed." While the rest of the class wore fear on their faces, you were gleaming with fascination. You even tried everything to induce fainting--not eating breakfast for 8 days straight, hyperventilating, lying to the phlebotomists about how much blood you donated--and nothing. Your biology didn't work like the rest of us. And so did the rest of you.

I remember all the times we kissed because, really, there weren't that many. The one I remember the most was at Brad's party. We were snooping through his basement looking through all the photo albums of memories long gone and of toys barely recognizable from dust and lack of attention when you looked at me in a way you never did before and I leaned in and you leaned in and we kissed. Brad saw us and if we had set his house on fire and danced around it in hooded robes, he wouldn't have been more pissed and disgusted than in that moment. We left after that. And in the name of Brad and everything holy, we kissed again.

When the rest of the world found out about a 19-year-old girl from Middle-of-nowhere, North Dakota going missing, it was like knowing when and where an atomic bomb was going to strike and not being able to say anything about it.

I hated you. Not just because of what you asked of me: To forget you. To lie to your parents, to our friends. To live with the guilt. To accept that I will never see you again. To accept that the same person who opened the door was the same one who closed it. And for showing me the person whom I've long suppressed. For showing me the best kind of love. The kind where I didn't have to hide who I was. The kind where the sun shone in my mind. The kind where music felt sweeter. The kind that was magic. You took that away when you left. You took everything away when you left. Your back must hurt from all that baggage you dragged along with you.

But today you appeared at my doorstep. You smiled at me. "Hi," you said, with a cadence of neighbours encountering each other during their morning walks. "Hi." Your eyes travelled over me and landed on a picture on the wall. "So, you're married? ...and you have children?" I met your eyes. "Yeah." Your smile faltered for a moment. "And you're happy?" My eyes dropped for a moment. "...of course." You smiled again and turned and left and I was left standing there with your image an image I thought I had forgotten an image I didn't want to bring back for you to bring back and my hand shook but my body stayed rigid my mind raced and raced and raced and

raced back and forth it ran around scrounging up memories feelings experiences and propelling them back to the surface. I felt like fainting.