

Chad Petrie
T00618088
ENGL 3330
Justin Madu

Assignment #4 Manuscript

K-12

Ok so where do I go?

Where do I sit?

Where do I find the person I'm supposed to be?

Question after question some of which I could answer and some I may spend months years decades trying to find something in hopes I can find where this piece belongs.

Where I can find myself.

To find my lost pencil so I could practice my name or to find the person who could bring me back to life.

1

And so it begins.

The journey I've been procrastinating.

Hoping that when my mom tucks me in at night, I could close my eyes and make everything disappear.

But no matter how hard I tried and how much I prayed I'd find the courage to withhold the relapse I was greeted with the gift of tomorrow and stepped forward.

Forward into the lion's dens.

Where I'd fight to keep my dreams alive as the words of others created wounds which lead to scars that never healed.

2

My buzz cut and glasses presented an easy target, yet I couldn't hear any of it.

While admiring the liminal skyline, which rested above the hatred and anger I'd soon give in to, I drifted off towards the life I wanted to live and away from the opinions of those who claimed to know me better than I knew myself.

3

"You can sit with me." A helpless voice rang my ears as I discovered what it was like to be related to someone without sharing the same blood.

Not realizing the blade I gave them as a gift would eventually be used against me to cut out all the things I hated about myself.

4

Burning out to live up to my so-called potential.

Leading me towards a darkness written in addiction and self-hatred while I bathed in the sun of my parent's love.

While I determined if I was a good person or not based on a letter on a card written by someone who also didn't have anything figured out, while 5 caused me to see time as an enemy as I watched my clock tick faster than my peers with nothing I could do to stop it until the bell which controlled when I moved and what I thought shocked my heart back to my life when 6 made me question how someone could spit so much poison in one's face and laugh at their expense as I exposed all these people who I thought were more family than friends as being neither.

7

Just as I picked myself back up.

Just as I found where the piece I've been holding onto since I was greeted with my reflection for the first time to see a boy full of purity and love, it was over.

The first sorry was complete.

Written by ghosts without me ever getting a chance to pick up the pen and write it myself.

8

It began with shades of the past.

Where do I go?

Where do I sit?

What is my purpose?

Still unsure if the brief state of positivity and optimism was worth the nights where I wondered why I was different.

Wondered why I didn't belong all for me to fall into old habits leading to the same outcome.

9

Building relationships with the people who would end up stabbing me in the back, as I watched my heart give everything it had for a chance to re write my last story as 10 proved I could never get that chance as I faded into the shadows to protect this story from being overtaken so I could be the one to paint the picture.

To show the world the truth.

My truth, while those who saw my undersized frame and introverted personality as weakness trying to tear down someone who never learned how to stand up for himself putting everything I had worked for to waste as 11 repeated their voices over and over in my head as tears filled my pillow as my final thought passed through my mind.

I no longer wanted to wake up tomorrow.

12

But despite the voices in my head telling me that I had nothing to give, that my purpose was to fulfill the prophecies of those who tried to control me, that my presence was a burden.

I chose to wake up.

I chose to keep going.

I chose to live.

God's Masterpiece

1. London

We have a small sign in our kitchen. It's coated in a stained brown frame with old flowers probably from the late 90's to compliment the poetry. You remember the one I'm sure. It sits above our water cooler than I rush to after I take one to many hits from what I refer to as a pen, although you believe it's one I use to write with. It reads:

Mother's and roses are much the same...

*Both are God's masterpiece –
Each with a different name.*

This sign has remained present as I've aged. Since you watched me take my first steps to when you saw me walk across the stage at graduation, when you wore your black dress painted in flowers with your hair curled as you usually do. Those words symbolized how I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you. How you risked everything to save me. How you put your future on pause and risked your life for a chance for me to start mine.

I couldn't imagine. All you worked for was finally starting to come together. The grind of nursing school and the countless hours of studying to bring a dream you had to life. Settling down with someone who made you feel alive. To start a family and become the most loving mother a son could ask for all for it to be turned upside down as you traveled to London with your newborn son in hopes for a miracle.

I have no memory, yet the trauma lives in you. It consumed your soul for years as the scar of what took place became a part of you forever. The scar that made it hard for you to show your true beauty. To be comfortable in your own skin and wear clothes that made you feel beautiful. The scar that brought me back to life; the one that saved me.

The news that I needed a new liver would rearrange your priorities as my innocent self cried over and over again with no clue how much you were about to risk for me. When my name skyrocketed to the top of the transplant list in Canada, it still wasn't enough. My clock was ticking and although death introduced themselves as God, and took my hand, leading me to the front steps of my premature afterlife, you stepped in and put your life on the line as you came to my rescue as my seven month old self realized angels existed and that I had my own, although I referred to her as 'Mom'.

The surgery was a success. You made a deal with the devil so your baby boy could grow up to cause you to develop grey hairs and piss you off so much you'd think about the most efficient way to send him to the moon where you'd never see him again. However, despite the stress and potential regret of saving your child only to see him almost fall to the hands of his own thoughts, you still loved me. From spending my first Christmas in the hospital where you held me in your arms as feeding tubes and wires were present in every photograph, you had nothing to express but gratitude. Grateful that your son would get the opportunity to grow up. To go to school and get in trouble. To walk him down the aisle as you pass him on to his future. Your road to recovery was an afterthought as I took center stage.

You would watch me sleep hoping I'd be strong enough to make it through, but lucky for you I was your son and had your strength and courage to come through and be seen as a *miracle* when the real miracle was being blessed enough to have you as my mother.

When we made it home and life was supposed to go back to normal, death decided they weren't done with me yet, although this time there wasn't anything you could do but pray. To become best friends with God in hopes he'd spare your son just one more time. As your prayers were answered for the second time, I now realize why you and Dad would get so mad at me for swearing. God listened and brought me back to you once again. He took the pneumonia away and swore he'd leave me alone from now on.

Going back there for the first time since the surgery felt weird. None of the buildings looked familiar to me although you saw them in your nightmares. When I hinted at the idea of visiting the hospital where I became this so called *miracle* I failed to consider the PTSD in which you and Dad still had. That this hospital was not only the place I was saved, but also the place where I was supposed to take my final breath.

This medium sized city in Ontario was not just the place where you saved my life. It was the place where Dad struggled with the fact that since he wasn't a blood match, there was nothing he could do. That he had to watch his wife and newborn son fight for their lives while attempting to distract himself by sparking conversation with neighbours in the Ronald McDonald House he stayed in and stay up late watching Vancouver Canucks' games to ease the anxiety he was secretly dealing with. The place where you had to make the decision for me to receive an 80-year-old liver or take matters into your own hands. Looking back at it now, I owe you everything. I owe you for putting your life on the line in hopes to save mine. I owe you for all the hateful things I've said to you over the years that still exist in the form of regret, and for all you've sacrificed for me to still be breathing today, although I know you wouldn't even let me try.

You are the reason I'm here today. You are the reason I got an A+ in that class. You are the reason I scored that game winning goal in my hockey game. You are the reason I keep going and strive to be the best person I can possibly be, because I want to be like you.

2. Cafeteria

I saw you after a long day of work exhausted. Coming home with dark circles under your eyes symbolizing how much you do for us and the effect it has on you. Despite you barely being able to make it from your car to the couch, you would still prepare a homecooked meal for our family as I complained about how I got two words wrong on my spelling test unaware of how much you sacrificed for me to be healthy, for me to be here. In elementary school, you would

always have my metallic thermos with the teal lid prepared with whatever Chef Boyardee had on the menu for that given day. High school was more of a sandwich era as the peanut butter and jelly combination satisfied my teenage cravings when I wasn't busy dodging them when my so-called *friends* would throw them at me or mock me for the way I ate them.

London was the origin; however, it merely represented a place of rebirth. The life I now had to live because of God granting our wishes, was one of pain and suffering to pay for a second chance. Vancouver became our new London as the three-hour drive was more convenient than going across the country a couple times a year for a checkup. These checkups started out as mini family vacations. The four of us would all cram into your Chevrolet Tahoe and embark on a day trip to Vancouver, or if Luke and I were lucky, go down the day before to visit Playland, which I knew as the PNE, where I could experience what it was like to be a healthy young boy growing up in the early 2000's. Unfortunately, the next day would be full of repeated blood tests and endless needles, but at least the two-dollar stuffed animal Dad won for me at one of the many carnival games would help take some of the pain away. This eventually resulted in more unnecessary stress for Dad who was still secretly struggling with the fact that my condition could worsen at any given moment as these family trips shifted to mother and son-bonding time.

You would wake me up around 4:30 in the morning as I attempted to be as quiet as possible to avoid waking up Luke, who still had to go to school. You would prepare an outfit for me the night before and lay it on the chair that spelled out my name in the corner of my room. I'd fall asleep looking at it as I became consumed with excitement thinking I was going on a field trip with all my classmates and friends. When I woke up, first to my alarm, then second to your voice telling me we were late, I realized this *field trip* wasn't exactly what I had in mind. I'd complain about being hungry from the time I woke up until I stepped foot in that hospital cafeteria which gave off depressing vibes to everyone else, but to me was a place away from all the needles and tests where I could spend time with you like when you would take me out of school for lunch every January 23rd to celebrate the anniversary of our transplant. It wasn't exactly my master plan to persuade you to get matching tattoos with me for our 20th, but it was a close second.

The fasting was the worst part. You would always let me have the window seat so I could see the world from God's perspective as the kind flight attendant would offer me pretzels in which I'd have to save for later. You would store them in the black backpack with the brown pouch that I only ever saw when we would go on these day trips. When we arrived in Vancouver stepping off the plane felt like I was starting my new life as I admired the sun rising from the depths of the ocean on the coastline. I would sit in the cab looking out the window wondering how the sun could sink into the ocean at night and then rise from the darkness to bring warmth to the world.

I awoke from my brief nap to your voice coming from the passenger seat "Wake up, we're here. Don't forget anything." you said as I looked up at the towers surrounding me as the front door read '*BC Children's Hospital*'. The smell of hand sanitizer and the soft jingle of calm music which rang over the beat down speaker system was supposed to reduce the anxiety of the parents of these sick kids who didn't know if their children would experience another Christmas or not. To me, it served as an invite of kindness and love that made me feel cared about as I broke away from your hand to check out the toy store.

During one of the trips where Luke and Dad joined us, I remember us in the gift shop together. My mind was sold on this cheap blue boomerang that I swore I would cherish forever as Dad dealt with the stress of his job and people who claimed they appreciated him attempting to work him to death. Lucky for me, my young innocent mind convinced him to throw the boomerang outside with me as it not only helped ease his mind, but also helped me forget that I had to get my blood drawn three times throughout the day.

Whenever I needed to get blood, we would walk down this hallway which was decorated to the liking of 5-year old's. The pillars were replaced by giant crayons. Swirls and fun shapes were scattered on the floor and walls in attempt to help these kids ignore the fact that some of them were dying and would never grow to understand that crayons aren't actually that tall. These elements showcased the atmosphere as happy and warm when behind the crayons and early 2000's aesthetic, the setting was one of cold and consumed by death.

When it was time I'd press the red button as these dark blue doors would welcome me to this magical place full of toys for me to play with until they were ready to equip me with an IV to make it so I only had to get stabbed once. Although the barely visible needle, which would be inserted into my forearm was the size of a toothpick, it felt like the machete Michael Myers used in the Halloween movie Dad and I watched the night before. They took my blood as I still had to wait for my ultrasound to be completed before I could eat.

Due to my transplant surgeon having to rewire my intestines to minimize the complications of my surgery, the ultrasound, which was my last obstacle before I could enter the cafeteria, often took way longer than others. Whether it was air in places it shouldn't be or my enlarged spleen, there was always something which would cause more people to flock to me trying to solve the mystery. All I knew was that I felt fine, maybe a little hungry, but besides that I felt like the world was at my feet and that I had superpowers to save the planet of all it's problems. Why else would God save me? Why else would he spare my life twice if I didn't have something meaningful to contribute?

Even though I still had to get blood drawn two more times throughout the day it didn't matter. The fasting was complete. I sped up past you down the bland hallway as I followed the signs that felt like they were screaming at me. They simply read '*Cafeteria*' with an arrow pointing me in the direction of overpriced food, which at the time, tasted like a bargain. With my two slices of pepperoni pizza and a cool blue Gatorade in hand, I sat down next to you and watched as you stress ate your salad as I offered a bite of my pizza which you reluctantly declined.

The cafeteria wasn't just a hub for sick families to overspend on lunch, but also symbolized quality time with you and making the most out of my environment and surroundings. It didn't matter that we were in a Children's Hospital, praying everything was still working properly and I didn't require another visit to London. I was just thankful to be here, to be alive, to talk to you and share stories about school that would have never existed if it wasn't for you. That Vancouver was my future now representing hope and the narrative that maybe you would get to see me grow up. To see Luke and I having a winner take all volleyball match in the pool in a random Airbnb in Phoenix Arizona. To see me hold Rudy for the first time as his snoring rang our eyes with love as he would grow up to have two brothers instead of just one. The cafeteria was simply a place in this depressing hospital, but to me, it was also home. Where we'd spend dinners as a family discussing problems that felt more intense and important than

they actually were. A place to be grateful. A place where regardless of how badly I misbehaved or pissed you off, you could reflect and accept that trade off if it meant I got the opportunity to live a long life without it being taken away before it even started.

3. Rainbow Parachute

Do you remember when you used to watch me play with the rainbow parachute? It was usually one of the last days of school for the year, but for this year in particular, it happened to land on my birthday. You showed up unannounced a few minutes before lunch. "Chad Petrie, can you please make your way to the office." I hear the voice of a middle-aged woman over the worn-down PA system. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't think I did anything wrong, but then again, I already had a difficult time believing myself. When I saw talking to the secretary in front of her desk my eyes shifted to the McDonald's bag in your right hand which was folded perfectly to keep all the smells of fresh fries and smashed hamburgers alive.

I walked up to you as your smile greeted me first as you handed me the bag of unhealthy deliciousness saying to me "I'll stay and watch some of your activity day." I was beyond ecstatic, both for the McDonalds on my birthday, but mainly for the fact you were here. That you went out of your way to make my day better. Whether it was something as simple as bringing me fast food on my birthday in elementary school or trying to calm me down during my many anxiety attacks where the world felt hostile and I felt detached from my body. You were always there to show how much you cared. To show how much you love me.

After I finished my meal and all my classmates expressed their jealousy by trying to steal my fries when I wasn't looking, I made my way with the rest of my classmates to the soccer field for our overhyped activity day. I remember you lingering around to every station I went to as you watched me grow up. Watching me go from tetherball to the rainbow parachute; watching me go from happy and innocent to depressed and suicidal as you prayed that I would still be alive and breathing anytime you left the house for an extended period of time. That I was still full of air, full of life. You would shield me from the world, which at the time felt like you didn't want me to grow up. Truthfully, you just wanted to protect me from all the evil I couldn't see. From all the poison in this broken society where they turn on those they used to care about with no regrets. You were my rainbow parachute. Living under your vibrant colours in the dome which, when I was in there, felt like the only place in the world.

The dark blue stripes shielded out the negativity. Kept me safe from all the negativity in the world as you raised me to grow up with manners and to share kindness and respect with everyone as I attempted to follow in your footsteps. The red symbolized passion. To pursue the things I had interest in and was passionate about and how you believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. When I would write something that felt pathetic and a waste of words, you would show your appreciation and claim you could never write like that, however I believe you could. You always tell me I have a gift, but that gift came from you. Not the ability to write per se, like the time I had to show you how to copy and paste on our family Lenovo laptop, but the ability to experience life. To experience emotions and go on adventures which would trigger my inspiration. It always came back to London, came back to you, and how your love and determination and willingness to risk everything you had worked for to bring me back to life was the greatest gift anyone could ever receive. The gift of a second chance, the gift of life, the gift of being able to call you 'mom'. You became my yellow stripe. The joy in my life. The reason

I would try to be the best peewee hockey player I could be, or the reason why I chose not to harm myself that night and instead have a chocolate bar or two, per your suggestion, as I took a deep breath and woke up the next day ready to try again.

When the day was over and summer was on the horizon, you promised we could have pizza for dinner, as I ran down to our family computer with my zero responsibilities to play Club Penguin for the rest of the night. When I would wake up the next day to birds chirping and the smell of fresh cut grass, I thought about how badly I wish I could live in this moment forever. To pause time and live within the rainbow parachute for the rest of my life. Growing up seemed so overrated, and over time, I realized I was right. That these moments where you showed me how to appreciate the little things would consume most of my time as I plotted my masterplan to build a time machine so I could experience those moments clearly one last time. I already live the same day over and over again now, so why not make it one where I was actually happy. Where I was smiling and didn't know what *stress* meant. Before I'd become my biggest enemy as I looked back at a person who didn't belong.

God showed me the things that truly mattered. How I was born in one place and reborn somewhere else as my story became longer than it was ever supposed to be with each passing day. That London taught me to appreciate the origins, regardless of how sad and depressing they could be. The cafeteria showed me that the little things to look forward to are the greatest motivation. How being poked and probed with needles all day was worth the price of overcooked pizza and a small plastic boomerang which held more significance than it should've. That the rainbow parachute was a safe place where I could be myself. Where I could be alone with my thoughts and help find solutions to my problems. No matter what metaphor I used in attempt to describe my upbringing and how I got to this point in my life, it always came back to you. What you risked for me to make it to my second Christmas. The sacrifice of letting me have the last piece of chocolate cake, unaware that you saved it for yourself the night before. How spending time with you would help me forget about the mistakes I've made throughout my life and everything in between. You will always be the most important person in my life and not a day goes by where I don't think about how you are every reason why I'm here today.

*Mom,
I Love You...*