

The Old Swing Set

“Don’t swing to high now, you might fly right off!” my mother shouts after me as my feet stretch out in front of me. There is a moment of weightlessness, and I stare at the pond at the bottom of the grass hill, the two ducks there seem to be talking to each other, I giggle at my own silliness. The swing launches back and my hair rushes in front of me, blinding me for a moment. I scream in joy as I let the swing guide me with its momentum.

I feel hands wrap around my stomach, “Time to go sweetheart,” and I am pulled out of my joyride for the safety of solid ground. The sky now has a darker-orangey hue, the stars carefully peeking out from behind the clouds. I feel as though it has only been minutes and that there is so much more that I want to do.

My eyes trail back to the pond at the bottom of the hill, the ducks looks so sad now that they are not talking to each other. “Can I go say bye to the ducks,” I say, and I hear a loud laugh fill the air and a warm hand grasp my own. I am led down to the bottom of the hill, where I say my goodbyes then I skip off down the worn path as a voice calls after me to slow down.

My boots feel heavy on the muddy path, as I carefully make my way around the puddles. The sky is dim, and the clouds haven’t stopped rumbling since I got here. The path abruptly stops, and I gaze ahead to see a small, wooden bridge that looks sturdy enough to stay in place but not enough to hold my weight. I side-step and instead look at the pond that it crosses over, the water is now murky and tinted brown, splotches of random junk float across the surface.

I recall the two ducks that lived here once. I had named them Molly and Sarah; they were best friends of course. My mother had reckoned that one should be called Donald, but I never quite understood that it was a joke until later on. I can’t help the smile that reaches my face, and I turn behind me to trek up the grass hill before I become to overwhelmed by my own grief.

I am surprised to see that the playground has not been torn down, although it looks to be falling apart by itself. I listen to the slight creaks in the rusty metal poles of the monkey bars before taking a cautionary seat on the old swing set. I stare at the scene before me, the slowly fading grass, murky pond-water, and tree stumps in the distance staring back at me. The remnants of what this place used to be and what it is now is too painful to look at.

I close my eyes and picture the glowing sun falling under the treetops, the breeze forming patterns on the soft grass hill, and the ducks chattering amongst themselves. And I hear her voice calling for me as I rock back and forth on the old swing set.