

### Windows of Reflection

Perched upon my bed I mindlessly peer outside my window dressed with white curtains and a daunting shadow overcasting my body. Through my window I observe all of the things I have taken for granted these past eighteen years of my life and the stories and memories that I will always hold close to my heart. In my vision stands the hundred year old ash tree that gently supported my swing as I soared through the air swiftly and smoothly and provided the perfect backrest, shielding me from the beating sun of July as I read. To the right, upon the hill rests a wooden barn that has been a backdrop in Colborne Township's history for a century and a half. Each year small repairs are made in the hopes that it will continue to stand and bask in the shimmering moonlight as it does each night from the comfort of my bed. Upon the window ledge of the carefully crafted wall made of granite stones from the local Maitland River bloom the prosperous salmon pink geraniums that I help my mother to plant and care for each year.

The stillness of the quaint country property is disturbed by a tiger-like orange cat leaping from the window sill that displays the prize winning flowers. I suddenly come back from my reflections and it hits me hard. For the next five to six years I won't have the pleasure of rising and falling with the sun in this particular setting. The time has come to move on and leave

my childhood home behind to achieve my career aspirations within a mini city of buildings full of professors and state of the art lab equipment that will nurture my academics. Silently I walk out of my house and outside where I'm greeted by my parents. I engage in chit chat for a few minutes and then excuse myself to tour the property for a final time. I make my way to the small bush that my parents planted all those years ago when the property was purchased. It's like entering another world, so still and quiet, yet so welcoming. I soon find the trails that I laboured to create with my father and I witness the phenomenon that amazes each year; hundreds of monarch butterflies perched upon a small crop of milkweed. I observe for a few moments before suddenly they take flight, off to explore new places.

As I approach the serene but populated pond I come across a friendly painted turtle who waddles in a carefree manner to his home. I then spot a frog seated on a pink lily pad and I'm amazed that such small creatures can create such loud and beautiful music to lull me to sleep each night. I take a few minutes to examine my reflection in the clear blue expanse and attempt to recognize the person that I've become over the past eighteen years. My golden hair has become longer, more curly and I've grown and changed from child to young adult. This place and its people have played a crucial role in the development of me as a person. The values of honesty, kindness, respect and

perseverance have been instilled in me, not only by my parents and family, but by the tight-knit community. I smile at my reflection, satisfied with the person I've become and thankful for the privileged upbringing I experienced. I slowly wander back along the beaten path taking in every element for a final time; the sweet smell of the protective pine trees, the sight of black-eyed Susans, the touch of the tall prairie like grass as it brushes against my bare legs and the taste of the fresh country air.

"We have to leave soon or else we'll be late for your residence move in time," states my father. I nod my head and take a final walk through my house, grabbing a few pictures from my dresser on the way out, closing the door on my childhood.

"I think we're packed and ready, this ought to be enough things to get you started! Heck the car is filled to the brim," exclaims my mother. I smile and give a small laugh as I fasten myself in my usual seat; the back right. We accelerate towards the so called "paved paradise."

I gaze out the car window as the landscape changes from two lane highways gliding over soft rolling hills to four lane highways surrounded by cement tunnels and overpasses. The car ride is mostly silent, but not awkward. As we reach the five and a half hour mark of our drive mom starts fretting about university life; what my roommate might be like, not to stay up

too late, eat well, attend classes and, of course, study lots. After each of my mother's orders and reminders the answer is always similar, "Yes mom! I can take care of myself!" and "Of course I will!" We approach the city limits; my final destination. I assist my father in finding the university, following the map and signs just as he taught me to all those years ago when we encountered our first major road trip.

As the car makes the final curve my eyes widen and butterflies are unleashed as I take in the expanse of the campus; my new home. Upon arrival we are greeted by overly enthusiastic university students that try and make the transition for us freshmen less daunting. But I'm not in the mood for it. They mean well, but ecstatic strangers cannot replace the people and places I've abandoned. Move in goes smoothly but I just wish that these strangers would leave me alone; I want to spend these last few moments with my parents. They brought me into this world, cared for me, nurtured me and supported me in every way possible. With no siblings, they are the two people out of seven billion that I've spent the most time with and the three of us share an inseparable bond. What will this change be like for them? Their only child has been removed from their life. I know it won't be easy for mom and it will be difficult for my father even though his emotions are often hidden.

I'm moved in, final goodbyes and hugs are given. And just like that, my past routine and life has been abandoned and a new one begun. I stand in my new 120 square foot room that will become my home for the next eight months. I'm intrigued by the window and stride towards my new bed. Perched mindlessly upon it, I peer outside my window dressed with dull curtains and a daunting shadow overcasting my body. Through my new window I observe all the people, places and things that will become my daily life. In my path of vision stands cement buildings, sidewalks, strangers and little to no greenery. To the right, upon the hill lies a set of pristine buildings that shelter cutting-edge labs and will be the source of stress and possibly defining moments in my life. Upon the window sill rests a cheap planter with wilting flowers that are part of the university's beautification project to make the tall cement buildings more inviting. The stillness and solidarity of my tiny room are disturbed by the honking of a car horn with two occupants. They wave, smiling but holding back tears until they are lost in the urban hustle and bustle.