

Lavender Perfume

By Katie Gaskin

Josie

He always walked through the hallway, head high, smile stretched across his face. He was popular in the way that everyone liked him. He was nice. He talked to, and made time for everyone.

But, he was lonely. You wouldn't think it just by looking at him. All his friends surrounding him, every Friday night filled with some new adventure. That smile glued to his face. One day I saw him, he was walking down the street, after one of those adventure-filled Friday nights. We were both walking down the dark road, lit only by a singular street light that flickered on and off above us. We were both wandering. He didn't look up at me. Keeping his head turned down toward the ground.

Charlie

A cold breeze blew by me and rain dripped down from the darkened sky. The scent of spring: rose, lavender maybe, wafted up my nose, an odd scent in comparison to the dark, rainy night. I didn't want to go home yet. But I knew I would have to. I was feeling bad and I was scared of what I might do. If I stopped walking, got tired, and went home, no one would be there. My dad and step-mom were out of town this weekend. My brother was off having a blast at college. I would be there alone. More alone. No one to stop me from doing anything to myself except me. And I was in no state to do that.

I don't have a bad life. I have lots of friends and people like me. I don't have an excuse to feel sad. But I do. My family is a good one and they are happy. My dad is a heavy-set man, with a hearty laugh that never goes unused. My step-mom is a small woman with a big sense of humor. She makes my dad laugh more than anyone else can.

I never knew my mom, but my dad says that she had a warm spirit that would flood any room she stepped into. And that she could read anyone like a book, especially him. He told me,

“She was an impossible woman to lie to, Charlie.” Then he laughed that hearty laugh, but his eyes grew teary.

“She was the type of person you only meet once in your life, but wish so dearly to meet again.” He paused. “I just wish you could have met her, Charlie. I really do.”

The tears that had formed in his eyes never fell. He seemed to be lost in thought for the rest of the night.

Josie

I turned around to look at him once he had passed. He ran his hand through a shaggy head of loose curls, as he lifted his head slightly, looking back in my direction. Charlie's deep brown eyes seemed to overflow

with sorrow. My heart ached for him. No one ever deserved to feel that much sadness. He turned back, never seeing me, and continued on his walk.

Charlie used to love the rain, ever since he watched *Singin' in the Rain* when he was little. I smiled to myself, remembering the scene that he had learned every dance move to and every word of. He would dance through the streets every time it rained, his smile bright, big, and honest. I missed that smile. I began to dance along the empty street, humming the song Charlie loved so dearly. The dull streetlights caught the rain as it fell, lighting up each droplet nearby, making it appear as though the sky was covered in thousands of fireflies. I wished Charlie could still find joy in these moments. I wished Charlie could find joy.

Charlie

The house was dark. Not a single light and not a single sound. I looked over to the clock on the stove. It read 1:27am. I walked over to the fridge to get something to eat.

When I pulled it open white light flooded the kitchen. I stood there for a while, apparently, because the fridge began to beep at me. At first, the beeping just an echo in the back of my head. I finally clued in what was happening and closed the fridge, without really looking for anything to eat. I wasn't all that hungry anyway.

I looked over to the clock again, which now read 1:38 am. Maybe if I went upstairs to sleep, I wouldn't feel quite so bad when I woke up. Each step I climbed seemed like more and more work. I sat down in the middle of the staircase; I didn't think I could take another step without spontaneously combusting. I buried my head in my hands and sat like that for who-knows how long.

Finally, I lifted my head and raised my aching body and walked back down the stairs. Slowly, gripping the railing for support. My legs carried me to my front door, and outside. I sat on the porch, sinking into the cushion that sat on one of the wooden chairs. I couldn't tell if it was wet or just cold. I didn't really care.

Josie

The door of the house across the road squeaked open and he stumbled out. He stood still for a moment before moving to sit on the porch. I spoke to him. I walked up the driveway, sat next to him and spoke. I knew he could hear me, but I hoped he might know I was there.

“My poor baby boy. My lovely, lovely Charlie. I wish so badly that I could have been in your life. I wish I could have been with you and watched you grow.” I reached out my hand and clasped it over top of my son's.

“I know it hurts. I know. Trust me. I know. But love, you need to keep pushing. I miss you. I miss you with every bit of my heart. And I cannot wait to properly meet you. When your old and grey and have lived a full life. You have no idea what good things tomorrow might just hold for you. All I ask, is that you find out.”

He leaned forward and laid his shaggy head of hair on his knees. I tried to ruffle it lightly, and give him a delicate kiss on the top of his head.

Charlie

As I sat, the rain drizzled from above and the wind weaved its way through my clothes. I felt cold. Except for my hands. They seemed enveloped in warmth. I felt what must have been the wind tousle my hair, this way and that. There was something. I couldn't say what, but at that moment I felt love. Like a warmth had entered my body. Something shifted and I knew, I could keep pushing through until the morning. I just need to make it till tomorrow. And tomorrow I will tell myself the same thing.

I lifted my head, which now felt ever so slightly lighter, from my knees. I walked back into my house, turned the hall light on, and headed up the stairs. I crawled into bed, pulled my knees into my chest and fell asleep almost instantly, and I swear I felt the wind through my hair again.

I dreamed about my mom that night. She was young, and beautiful. She was full of love, just like my dad said, and had more than enough to give out. She held a baby close to her chest, and she stroked the peach fuzz covering his head.

“Oh, my beautiful boy. I love you so much already, I think my heart might just burst.”

She laughed and tears fell from her eyes. I had always wanted to hear her laugh. I had always wanted to meet her. And here she was giving a tiny me a delicate kiss on the top of my head. Her tears of overwhelming joy dripped onto me. It was only when I woke up that I realized I had been crying. I missed my mom, so much. It didn't make any sense, but at the same time it was the most sense-filled thing that my mind had ever held.

I made up my mind, as scary as it seemed to be, that I would tell my dad. I would tell him everything I've been feeling. Once I decided this, I felt an elephant step off of my chest. I didn't feel as bad this morning. Not perfect, not by any means, but, today, it was tolerable. “I will make it till tomorrow.” I whispered to myself as I walked down the stairs, each step making a light creak.

The blinds in the kitchen were closed but the sun squeezed its way through the small cracks, lining the kitchen floor with stripes. I pulled them open and the morning sun flooded through. When I cracked open the window, the sound of birds and the warm spring breeze enveloped me.

I breathed. I breathed for what seemed to be the first time ever.

The kitchen smelled of lavender. It must have been from outside, but it filled every corner of the sunny room. I smiled. My dad always told me that my mom's perfume smelled of lavender. That she always said,

“It smelt like the spring was coming to greet you after it had returned from the long, cold, winter.”