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1st Place, Elementary Division

2020 CFUW Writing Contest

### **Mending Melody**

When did it all go wrong?

That is the question written on my sister's face as she enters the dark, dreary room. She crosses the threshold and comes to rest on the edge of the bed. But although she sits so close, we're miles apart.

*The roads are slippery, slick with ice. Snow falls around us, coating the world in a thin white blanket. My breath comes out in a white fog, condensing on the window next to me. I say something, and he laughs, a deep rumble travelling from his chest to my heart.*

I shake the memories away and turn to stare at her. The drawn curtains cast shadows on her face, but I can just make out her features. Her round, pixie-like face is sorrowful, and her cheeks are wet with recent tears. A lump forms in my throat as I recognize her auburn hair; she inherited it from him.

*His smile reminds me of the sun, shining through the blizzard. Although it is an overcast day, I feel giddy at the prospect of spending time with him. I envision the hours we will spend together and my spirits lift. I watch as his hands grip the wheel confidently, and we continue on.*

Saying nothing, she slowly puts her hand over mine, and grips it tightly. *I am here*, the gesture seems to say. I don't pull away. Inside, the fragmented pieces of me stir. But still, I do not find the strength to move on.

*It's beautiful, I murmur, looking out at the storm. The snow coats the ground, the trees, the road. One by one, the falling snowflakes settle on the ground. The scene is still, serene and calm. Too calm.*

I make myself meet her eyes, and they are mirrors of my own grief. The despair claws away inside. She is just as broken as I am. I feel like a shattered glass; fragmented into a million pieces. I choke down a cry, because deep down, I am hollow. The desolation threatens to overwhelm me, to shatter me more than I already am.

*We reach an intersection, and seeing green, continue slowly, cautiously. By this time, I can tell he is worried, even though he doesn't show it. The blizzard keeps falling, and we are still far from our destination.*

My blood turns to ice as I remember what follows. I tell myself to stop, to forget, but the memories just keep coming. I close my eyes, willing myself to draw a blank, but they are engraved in my mind.

*We don't see it until it is too late. It is just me and him, and we are not expecting it. The black ice, the slip of the tires, the car speeding towards us as we cross the intersection.*

*The blackout.*

I crumple inside. I am here, and he is not. A tear carves a path down my face. I am broken.

*The people hugging me, full of sympathy, cannot fix anything. You have to move on, they tell me, but I cannot help but relive the memories, over and over again. I am broken.*

*The men lower the black box into the ground. I watch, unfeeling and numb.*

With every memory, I shatter a little bit more. The tears stream freely down my face now. My sister watches me as I shiver and sob, my head in my hands. Slowly, she reaches a hand under my bed and pulls out an aching familiar object.

*His hands covering mine as he teaches me how to pluck the string, how to play the chord. His smile when I get it right reflects the joy I feel inside. My excitement when he brings me to the store and tells me to pick one out. My contentment when we sit, side by side, playing together.*

She hands it to me, soft and sleek and comforting. I run my hands along the sides, across the strings. Everything about it says “Father”.

I play a note, then two. It feels as though the world is holding its breath, waiting to see what will happen. The soft strumming fills the room with hope, bringing light in a world I had given up on. Slowly, the fragments in me start to heal, remembering the good times. My fingers find their way, and suddenly I am making music. Every chord brings back memories, familiar and bittersweet, of time spent with him.

I guard them in my heart. I will not forget.