

I Miss You, Maple.

I stare blankly out the window. Watching as the cars drive by, the clock on the stove clicks on slowly as I follow the journey of a single maple leaf from tree to ground. I remember you always said those were your favorites, because when you looked at them they made you taste the sticky sweet sugar on your tongue and feel the sting of the sharp Ontario air.

Commented [CH1]: The point of this whole paragraph was to paint a scene for the reader using every one of the five senses, placing them in the moment that's about to take place

I'm compelled by this memory to go outside and scurry down the hill, picking up leaves as I go. Leaves colorful and beautiful, and yet technically no longer living. At least no longer capable of growing, changing, and continuing. Fallen away from their one beacon of life. When they reach the ground their deterioration begins, their transformation from green to yellow to brown changes into being no more. I imagine I am a leaf. I've spent my whole life in this one place, on this one tree, and now I'm reaching the point of letting go. I'll let the wind blow me to my final resting place. Begin the process of decomposing.

Commented [CH2]: I wanted to have a good symbol for loss that I could echo throughout this piece. I went with a maple leaf, because it's something that people could recognize in their mind's eye

I sigh.

Commented [CH3]: The purpose of this was a pause after the last paragraph, which I wanted to be face paced if not rushed. Since there are so many things coming into the mind of the protagonist all at once.

Change requires new growth, death leads to new life, and therefore things *need* to die. This is a fact. It's the natural order of things, from death comes new life. From the soil of my decomposed leaf a big oak tree could grow, with a branch sturdy enough for a little girl's father to put up a rope swing. Or a lemon tree, like the one in the backyard of your grandmother's house that she would help us pick from to make her pies. Or maybe a new maple tree.

Commented [CH4]: With this section I wanted to create a poetic imagery that could guide the reader through the chaotic thoughts of the protagonist

From you grew the empty feeling inside of my chest when I wake up every morning. The longing to create a world that could live up to what mine was when you were in it. The drive toward something more. The longing to be a child, collecting the pretty leaves and not for a

second thinking about the fact that these same leaves will never fall again. I want to collect a handful, a boutique of dead leaves to bring to you. A whole picnic basket full, enough to fill the back of my car, or the living room of the tiny apartment **we** once shared

Commented [CH5]: I tried to leave who “you” is to be quite vague, open to the interpretation of the reader

But I can't.

Commented [CH6]: This acted as another pause in these rushed and stressed thoughts. It emphasizes the overarching feeling I was trying to create of helplessness

I move slowly to stand up from the table. I can hear the tea kettle on the stove screaming, but it doesn't register as something I need to attend to. Tea doesn't feel like something I need to taste. I blink slowly. **As I open my eyes a blur of white light closes in around the edges of my vision.**

Commented [CH7]: This was meant to create a transition into the imagery of the “unreal” moment about to occur

You walk through the doorway into the kitchen.

I freeze in my tracks, leaving one hand propped on the table. Your mop of hair is a mess atop your head, as though you've just woken up. Your hazel eyes catch the sun and they look puffy, tired and empty, and yet, still beautiful. You raise your long arms high above your head and stretch them up towards the ceiling. I watch your shirt rise as you stretch, and the bone of your hip peaks out from between your sweatpants and a shirt half a size too small. You remove the kettle from the stove and fill the frail tea cup resting on the counter. I long to touch your skin. To trace those tired creases across your face, the veins down your arms and lines of your hands. As you move over to the cupboard and reach for the nearly empty box of Captain Crunch, my eyes remain fixated on your back. From under the collar of your shirt I spot a few of the freckles that span across your shoulder blades. **That summer when the light radiated across the water of the lake, I wonder how many new freckles you got then?**

Commented [CH8]: I tried to create not only a visual description of this mystery person, but to paint a feeling of their relationship's intimacy and importance

After you find the shelf empty your hands fumble mindlessly through the dishwasher for a clean bowl. The way your body bends over I can see the curvature of your spine. I trace it all the way down, and then back up again. You find the ceramic bowl covered in flowers that I got from the farmers market on our third date. You pull your body up from the dishwasher and stand straight.

Commented [CH9]: I really focused here on using my words to create a very clear image of the moment that was unfolding, in a way I felt an audience could imagine on their own

As you pour the milk I can see how your shoulders hunch over, they make you look defeated. A strange look for your broad, tall body. I wish you were turned so I could see your face. I could see if you were as hurt as I feel you are. Your skin looks so soft, and as I trace the wood grain of the table I can feel it under my fingertips. You turn your head to the side when you place the milk back into the fridge, as if you've heard something in the distance. My breath catches. I can see the crook of your neck tense up. I remember when I used to nuzzle my face into your neck. Every night. Every morning. It was always so warm. You smelled like the scent of laundry detergent from our sheets mixed with the musty scent of your cologne. Like home.

Commented [CH10]: Beyond the tense of sight, I wanted to create something more tangible as a feeling

Commented [CH11]: Emphasis on the feeling of relying on the presence of someone consistently in your life

I feel the tear slide down my cheek and splash onto the linoleum floor before it registers that I'm crying. That's when you finally realize that I'm there. My body collapses onto the closest seat. You rush to the table with worry crossing your face. You take my face between your hands. You pull my wrenching body into yours. Holding me for a while. Asking me not to cry. Telling me I'm okay. I'll be okay. When you place your soft lips on mine it's like a wave crashing over me. Starting at my lips and pulsating through my spine. The sharp focus returns to my closed eyes, everything feels clear again.

Commented [CH12]: This whole section continues the use of feeling over sight

Commented [CH13]: This was meant to come off as very rushed and hectic moment, focusing on the way that it would sound to the protagonist for the person to be so worried about them in this moment of overwhelming sadness

Commented [CH14]: This was meant to juxtapose the blurriness that created the "unreal" moment, bringing it back to reality

When I opened my eyes, you're gone. The room feels colder. A shiver rushes through my body.

I look down at the table in front of me to find a fresh bowl of Captain Crunch and a steaming cup of tea. The maple leaf in my hand has crumbled into tiny fragments because of the fist I've made.

Commented [CH15]: I struggled with the end of this piece, which is why it may feel so rushed. I wanted to bring back the symbol of the maple leaf