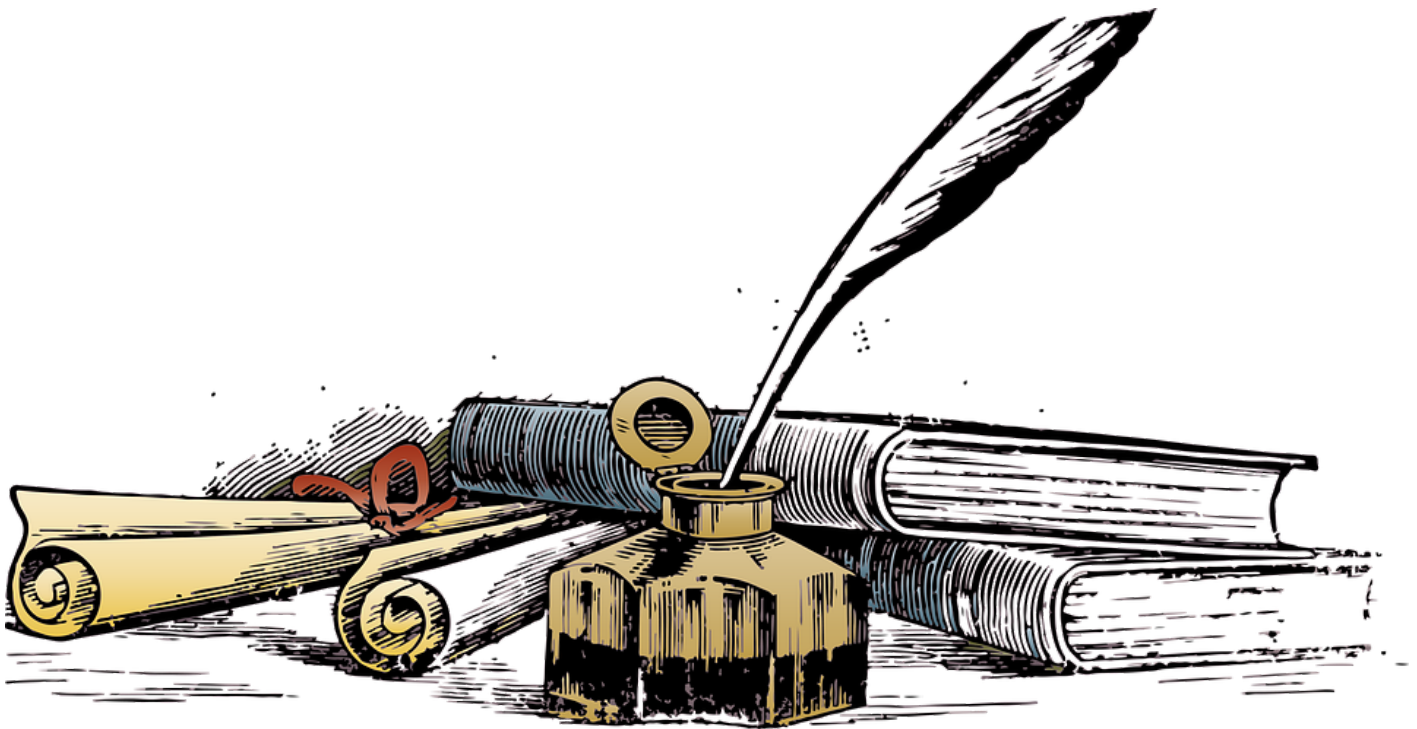


TOWER MAGAZINE

ONLINE EDITION

INCLUDING

*Tower Writing
Contest Winners*



May 4th, 2017

Hello and welcome to the 2017 Online Edition of Tower's Short Story Competition. We have received so much support from the Pinkerton community and want to congratulate the winners for their hard work and inspiring stories. A special thank you to everyone who submitted to our contest; without you, Tower wouldn't be as such successful a club as we are today.

This is our second issue of this contest, and we hope to continue this as a tradition for years to come. As amazing an opportunity it is to have an organization dedicated to the literary and visual arts at Pinkerton Academy, our writers, photographers and artists are what makes this group so incredible.

May the rest of your year be successful and inspiring!

Sincerely,

The Tower Staff

SHORT STORY WINNER-11/12

Trouble on the Battlefield

By Sara Agresti

It had been ten days since the hostages were taken, and Kitty's patience was running very thin. With her commanding officers including General James Sterling, under ICGA control, there was one way this war would end and Commander Katherine Engle wasn't having any of it.

Kitty, as most people called her, looked up. The night sky was jet black, lit only by a thousand tiny balls of light. The light given off by the moon was minimal, granting them protection from prying eyes. There was quite peace in the brush. The soft hum of nocturnal creatures added a sense of security to the tense situation.

Currently, Kitty and a group of her finest were attempting to free Sterling and his officers from their current situation. From their position in the bushes, they had a good view of the small hut where they were being held. Kitty peeked through the bush and took in her surroundings. Two heavily armed guards patrolled the front, making it impossible to get in without being seen.

"Commander, permission to fire?" Came a small whisper from behind her.

"Permission not granted."

"But Ma'am--"

"Hold. Your. Fire." Kitty said with a harsh tone in her voice. Making sure they weren't heard, Kitty turned to face the group. Her sniper, a young man filled with not only energy, but confusion looked up at her. "Look at me soldier." "Do you know why you're here?"

He looked at her with a blank look then replied with an unclear voice, "To fight for freedom of my people." She took in his features. He was an attractive young man and even in the darkness she could see the ocean blue of his eye. She looked away, and pulled her gun from over her shoulder.

"What's your name soldier?"

"Akins Seif, ma'am. "

"Where are you from Seif?"

"The region once known as Egypt, ma'am."

"I've always wanted to visit Egypt." Kitty commented. "We are getting off track". She said shaking her hand. The dark haired commander began to load her gun, "Now can you tell me what we are doing exactly on this mission?"

"We are freeing the General and many COs." Seif replied blatantly.

"Exactly. I would love to continue this conversation, but we have a mission to complete." She finished her task and looked up at the group, going over the plan in her head. There was about 10 of them, including herself, they would split into two teams of five, one going through the front, one through the back. She lowered her voice to barely above a whisper.

"Four of you with Johnson, the others with me. Johnson's team, you take the back, mine will tackle the front." She looked them all in the eye. "Get this done as fast as possible. Make sure everyone, including yourself gets out alive." She paused for a moment. "I wish you the best of luck." She rose and her team split into two. The team crouched down and moved quickly in the darkness as they approached the hut, they could hear voices from inside.

"Do you really think she will come for these traitors?" Said a deep raspy voice from inside.

"Are you really that stupid? Of course she will!" Came from a stronger, more powerful voice.

"Katherine Engle is not that stupid, you should not underestimate her." There was silence. Kitty checked her watch. 9:00. It was time. She looked to her team and gave them the signal, she then looked back towards the hut, and began to count.

"One," A bang came from inside.

"What was that?" The raspy voice said again. One of Kitty's men got to the side of the door.

"I don't know, go check!"

"Two." She whispered.

There was the noise of chairs scraping back and heavy footsteps. The wooden door suddenly swung open, to reveal a large burly man. His stone face looked around.

"No one's here boss." He took a few steps out of the light. One of them men then silenced him and knocked him out, then hid his body. Johnson should be getting the hostages out by now, they only had minutes.

"So General," The main voice turned to another person inside. "What do you think about the girl?" There was a scuffle inside the hut and someone gasped for air. "Had a hard time breathing there?" There was a sudden bang coming from the back of the hut. Johnson. "What in Stradeoria?" Kitty and her men stormed the hut and pushed the men to the ground while one soldier freed the general. Gunfire was exchanged in the brawl, one bullet hitting her in the soldier. A tinge of pain ran up her arm as blood began to stain her jacket, she couldn't stop now. Aloud ticking began to ring throughout the hut.

"EVERYBODY OUT!" She yelled. Her men, along with the hostages swarmed out of the hut, and to safety. She checked the rest of the hut to make sure everyone was out.

"Commander!" She heard someone yell. "Get out now!" She began to run from the hut, when she heard an explosion. She could feel the heat gaining on her and another sharp pain. She looked up to see her men and the hostages safely away before her eyesight shifted.

She saw her little sisters when they were little. Autumn and Chloe. She hasn't seen them in years. Autumn had long hair back then and Chloe was just a little thing. They were eight and five when she took custody of them at 18. Their father had died in the war and their mother died from an accident a few years later. She saw her five year old sister run and hand her a flower while Autumn faced away from her.

"Autumn." She said hoping to catch her attention, but the eight year-old refused to look at her. "Autumn, look at me." The little brown-haired girl turned and met her older sister's gaze.

"Kitty," She said in a little voice before the scene went up in flames. Her sisters disappeared. Then everything went black.

Kitty woke up a week later in the base's hospital. Her head felt very light and very tired as she forced her eyes open. Her chest and left arm were wrapped in gauze, restricting movement until she was consensus. She raised her right arm to her head and rubbed her eyes. God she felt lousy. She sat up and felt a tinge of pain going straight up her back. She let out a grunt and placed her free hand on her back.

"Commander, you shouldn't sit up yet." A nurse came bustling over to her with some medicine. She gently pushed her back down and gave her the medicine. "You were out for a week." Answering her question before it was asked. Suddenly the opening to the tent flew open.

"Commander!" Darrell Johnson, her right-hand man, stood in the doorway, relief filled his face. "You're awake." He sped over to her.

"No! Get out, she just woke up! She needs rest." The nurse reprimanded him.

"I've been resting for a week," Kitty said sitting up, this time in less pain. "Did everyone get out okay?" She asked Johnson.

"Yep, thanks to you." He said with a smile. "The hostages have been sent to a refugee camp until a permanent place can be found. The men are all alright, and the general is just fine." Kitty smiled at the news, when the noise of cars came from outside. Johnson looked out to the doorway. "Reinforcements." He said. Kitty sighed and got up. "What are you doing?" He asked as she put her boots.

"Going out to meet the reinforcements." She said, putting her belt on.

"You just woke up from a coma." He said looking at her. "You are not leaving this tent." He said as she put her hair up.

"Watch," She said, grabbing her tape from the pocket and began to retape her hands. She walked out into the blistering sun of the afternoon. Trucks full of supplies and reinforcements were being unloaded into the loading dock of the base. Soldiers were doing their daily exercises, while the rest of the camp was bustling with movement.

"Commander, I don't think this is a good idea." Johnson said, following her as she walked to the planning tent. Kitty opened the flap of the tent and walked in. The captains, and other commanders along with General Sterling surrounded a long table with a map pinned to it.

"Now if we move the 70th to New Orleans that should give us an advantage in the South." General Sterling said to the men. "Now where to move 45?"

"Put 45 in New Orleans and 70 in LA. Both contain soldiers from that area. They should know it well enough." Kitty said, stepping into the tent.

"Commander Engle," General Sterling said looking up. "You're awake."

"I am," She said taking her spot at the table, still wrapping her hands. "What's the plan?"

"Well, after your rescue, the Stradeorians got a bit sloppy. They think that you're dead, so they are getting a bit careless." He said. "Taking less caution on their locations and strikes."

"That's a good thing." She said, tying her tape and looking up at him. "It should give us a hand when we do our strikes. We can accurately pinpoint their location while not putting civilians at risk." She said looking around the table. The others looked at her with blank expressions. "What?" She said with a disgruntled look.

"Commander you almost died last week." General Sterling looked at her with a stern look. "And the enemy thinks you're dead."

"So?" She said with a questioning look.

"I'm afraid that I cannot send you on any more missions from now on." The general said in a serious tone.

"WHAT?" She yelled. "Just because I'm 'dead' doesn't mean I can't fight!" A rage started to grow in her chest. "Do you know what I gave up to come fight?!" She made eye contact with everyone in the room. "I gave up my sisters! The two people I still had in my life, I gave them up to give them a better world and you expect me to stop fighting for them!!?!?!" She yelled across the table.

"It's for the cause." General Sterling started to explain.

"The cause my grass!" She yelled cutting him off. "I am fighting in this war and that is it." She turned to storm out when a tall figure walked right into her.

"Sorry, oh you must be Commander Engle?" The figure said. Kitty looked up at the man. He was about 5 inches taller than her and rather skinny.

"I am." She replied looking up. "And you are?"

"Lieutenant Greg Briggs Ma'am." He said while he saluted. "I've come to fetch you for training."

"Training?" She said, looking from him to General Sterling. "What training?"

"As I was going to say, your new assignment is training the new troops for battle. We all agreed that you will go hard enough on them, but not break them fully." He explained. "Now go."

"But Sir--"

"Go." Kitty took a deep breath and turned to Lieutenant Briggs who led her to the training field.

"We are very excited to have you train our troops Ma'am." He began. "We have heard stories of your wins and battles in the past. Like the Battle of Montréal. The division loves that story. Or The War of DC? Great one too. Or--"

"I am not here to tell stories of past battles Lieutenant Briggs. I hope you understand that." Kitty cut him off. She moved in front of him and began walking at her normal pace. "I am here to train them

to take back Earth, not to be some dumb girl who tells stories. I'm a soldier, not a storyteller." They approached the field where the recruits were lined up.

"This is Commander Engle." He announced to the recruits. "She is here to train you to take back what is rightfully ours." He turned to Kitty and stepped aside. She stepped forward to address the troops.

"Alright, if I'm going to train you, I'm training you my way." She said as she paced in front of them. "I'm here to get you lot better than you are now. " She began to walk up and down the aisles. "Under my command you will-" She stopped short. *Was that? No, she's at school.* One of the soldiers looked a lot like Autumn. Same hair only shorter and same face. Commander Engle walked up to the girl. "What's your name soldier?" She asked. The girl remained quiet and refused to make eye contact. "Perhaps you didn't hear me?" She said. "What. Is. Your. Name." She repeated.

The girl cleared her throat and spoke. "Autumn Engle Ma'am." She said in a soft voice. Kitty's eyes widened.

"Autie?" She said in shock. *No, no, no, no. What is she doing here?!?! "What are you doing here? You're supposed to be in school!"* Kitty tried to keep her voice down.

"Well so are you and Chloe but we both know how that worked out." She said, sass growing in her voice.

"What do you mean by Chloe isn't in school?" Her eyes narrowed and her voice deepened.

"She left to go be a nurse." She looked at her sister. "I thought she told you." Kitty cleared her throat and turned to the rest of the unit.

"Detail dismissed until 14:00." She said. Kitty looked back at her younger sister. "And you are coming with me." She grabbed her wrist and dragged her through the base, getting stares from everyone they passed. Once they reached the tent, Kitty opened it and threw her sister inside. "You're not supposed to be here!" She said, shutting the flap behind her. "You could get yourself killed!"

"Like you would care." Autumn said, plopping down on Kitty's cot. "You left Chloe and I to come fight. Why can't I?" She looked her older sister in the eye. Kitty rubbed her eye and was silent for a moment. She cleared her throat in an attempt to hold herself together. She could feel a hiccup coming up in her throat.

"Because I want to..." She trailed off, avoiding eye contact with her sister.

"Because you wanted to what?" Autumn said, edger to get an answer from her.

"Because I wanted to-" Suddenly a loud crash came from outside, and a puff of dust floated into the tent. Kitty turned and opened the flap and froze.

"What happened?" Autumn asked, trying to see around her. Kitty's eyes widened at the sight. Tents and bodies scattered the beige ground. An Airstrike. She turned and grabbed the gun that was leaning against her bed, the loading it like she had a million times before.

"Stay here." Kitty said to her sister, before pushing her out of her way and stepping out into the battleground. "Here we go again." She muttered under her breath as she pointed her gun to the intruders. She felt the tent flap hit her and quickly turned her head to see Autumn running out to fight by her side. "What did I just tell you?!" She yelled over the gunfire.

"I'm not being pushed into the background again Kitty." She yelled her reply, while firing as well. Autumn quickly turned and fired a bullet over Commander Engle's head, killing a Stradeorian. Kitty did a double take.

"Nice shot." She said with some surprise. *Where did she learn to shoot like that?* She thought. She shook her head and brought herself back to the problem at hand, questions would have to wait. The two sisters moved back to back, firing upon anyone who got in their way until they reached the planning tent. "General Sterling-"

BLAM.

Kitty flew back, staring blankly up at the sky as she tried to register what had happened. It felt like someone had punched her in the chest with a boxing glove filled with lead, and her vision was fading. No, she had to keep going. Where was Autumn? What was going on? She coughed, hot, sticky blood splattering her lips, before letting her eyes flutter closed. Maybe sleep would make this all stop. Maybe it was just some bad dream and Autumn was still away from the fight. Her breathing slowed before ceasing entirely, but before she drifted off into eternal sleep, noises of the battle echoed in her ears.

“Commander Engle!”

“Kitty wake up!”

A lullaby of gunfire rocked Commander Kitty Engle off to sleep.

SHORT STORY WINNER-9/10

The Beginner's Guide to Starting Over

Madison Penland

It's an exceptionally rare and magnificent thing when the communal love between two entities is so tenacious that it can break the barriers of commonplace beliefs. This degree of ardency is far and few between but when achieved can be all-consuming. When we think life and death, we equate these two things with the beginning and end of existence. Now picture a place where that is erroneous. Let me expound.

Life and Death were dispiritedly in love. Their love is so pure and genuine. Life is devoted to Death and Death adored Life wholly. Like fire and ice, they can never truly be together. They stay devoted to one another and Life presents Death with the most beautiful thoughtful gifts. Death keeps them for eternity. You might wonder what bestowment could encapsulate the devotion between the two.

Death loves a good story, so much so that Life is steadily writing the most captivating tales. These anecdotes tell the story of every person who has ever lived, is living, and will ever live. Each person has their own book, even you. It explains the whole life of the subject, their hopes and dreams. Fears and habits and wishes. It also tells their simple everyday lives. Death adores reading about mortal humans and their complexities. Death strolls through the library and re-reads the best stories.

It was the most thing that was never seen, the day that Life and Death met for the first time. No one truly knows how they met, some say its fate some say luck. What is known however is that it was the beginning of everything. From the minute they laid eyes on one another they would stop at nothing to make the other happy. Life gave Death the gift of full lives, and Death cherished them always. The marriage between Life and Death was the most pure thing known to have ever occurred. Every person plant and animal that has ever lived and died has done so in the name of love. The lovers will remain together for all of eternity because love is an everlasting flame.

The library is where every story is kept. When you die you get the chance to read a single book. You must choose carefully because that is the life you will taken on upon re-birth. Reincarnation is to be taken very seriously, you must stay within the plot of the version you read in the library or else Fate must rewrite the whole book and fate does not like having to make significant changes to Life's eloquent writings. Death gets very unhappy when the books change.

The library is extremely vast and is ever growing. Upon every new birth, Life picks up the quill again. When someone dies, Death get a new book. Around 151,600 books are added each day. Each new book makes the love grow more powerful and the longing grow as well. There are rare occasions where

a book is added to the library but quickly taken back by Fate and returned to Life because the story is not meant to be finished. Very few people have been taken back but they have some of the best stories.

Death has favorites that are kept on a special shelf away from the general population. They are read so many times that the spines are worn and the ink is fading. Some such books include those that tell of the lives of Heathcliff Ledger, James Morrison, Katherine Penland, and Anton Yelchin. These tell the tales of brilliant actors and singers and role models. They are bound in gold and kept close always. When you visit the library, you'll consider looking at them but be advised not to take on the role of these magnificent lives because it will be excruciatingly hard to recreate perfection.

The moment you step foot in the library you feel a sense of serenity and tranquility. You could almost taste the sweet love that wafts through the great halls. A place so perfect that you might consider never leaving but to take on a new life is the greatest experience imaginable. A total restart, a clean slate. It's best to take on the life of someone who live in a different time than you did. It would be truly unbearable to see your family and friend mourning the loss of you. That is if you remember your past self. Not everyone does, but those who do will feel a strong connecting to a deceased soul. They might not know why exactly they feel so strongly that person, or they have an idea but don't share it aloud for fear of sounding absurd.

You won't be able to go back to your own life because Death is still reading it. Death has a very long reading list so it will take quite some time to get back to one specific life. You will re-do the life you started with at least once. That's why sometimes a certain thing will happen and you can't put your finger on why but the *deja vu* simply remembering slightly, if only for a moment, the life you have experienced already. You might never realize what the sensation is and it will send a burning need for the truth running through your veins.

You might be feeling a little down because you're recently deceased but the good news is you're starting over. You aren't dead because you are not one person at this moment. You can be anyone: Beyonce, Abraham Lincoln, François Hollande, River Phoenix, anyone! I hope you remember this discussion it's important to keep in mind as long as Death is happy, then all is well. The next story Life writes you as might become one Of Death's favorites which will land you in the hall of fame. That is a great honor. Put alongside the greatest lives to have ever graced the mind of both Life and Death. Live the best life that you can, don't be afraid to make mistakes because from our perspective they are very entertaining mistakes. It's time now for you to choose your next life. Be wise and stay considerably within the previous tellers portrayal. Life is ready to welcome you back and Death is eagerly awaiting your return.

POETRY

How

Mikelle Kearnes

My friend asked me how to write a poem
I told her I don't know
I could give her step by step instruction
Like the recipe to her favorite brownies
Add the flour and the sugar,
Mix the dry together before adding eggs,
But I would rather have her figure it out
Travel through the experience
I want her to visit the sites on the way to poetry
Visit the Colosseum as she attempts a replica
Eat poutine in Quebec like natives do
Take a wrong turn and end up on an island
Stranded from other civilization
I want her to experience trial by fire
To survive on the island alone
Relying on herself to figure out the puzzle
To be set free
Writing based on her emotions
Not what I could tell her to feel
I want her to find the hatchet I couldn't find
Buried in the sand
A mile from where I found another wrecked boat
I want her to develop her style
Meet other influencers
But not copy ideas like a survival guide
Copying gives the result
But it's the journey that makes the best poets
Learning from various experiences
Meeting penguins in the antarctic,
Or climbing Mt. Everest with a Tibetan guide,
Lends stories to the way poetry grows
I want her to become her own writer
Since I don't know how to write her poems.

Lay with me

Mikelle Kearnes

Lay with me
Cuddled together
In plush lawns
Near country roads
Eyes lifted to night skies

Millions
Trillions
Unnumbered bodies
Twinkling like children's songs
Reaching beyond imagination

Journey with me
Through eyes
Seeing the universe
Stretching to the end,
If it exists,
Arms wrapped together
Hurling through vacuums

Vast expanses
Yet together
We travel
Finding constellations
In each other's eyes
Finding thoughts
Lost to brilliant stars

Travel with me
Until we tire
Exhaustion hindering
Universal exploration
Then,
Lay with me
Until stars shine again

You Think You Know Me

By Mackenzie Finocchiaro

You think you know me.
You think you know who I am.

You think you own me.
You think you have every right to my privacy
You think you have every right to my life, to know every move I make.
You think that just because I love him you can do whatever you please with me.

You think I am always happy.
You think that my face is constantly smiling.
You think that I am proud, thrilled, and happy every time he goes up there and risks his life.
You think you can dress me in your pearls and fancy dresses for the world to see, because, after all, I am the wife of a god amongst us. Or so you say.

You think you know me.

But you are wrong.

You do not know me.
You do not.

You do not know that I am a mere human being, and that he is too.
We may seem like gods, but we are not. We are a man and woman of flesh and blood.
You do not know that I am entitled to my privacy, just like you are.
He may accomplish things that have never before been accomplished, but what right does that give you to know my every move, to know how I choose to pursue my life?

You do not know that we hardly see each other.
You do not know that he is never there to hold me through all of this.
The last time you saw him beside me, he had to come from halfway across the country just so that we could appease you all by being together. He actually left and did not come home for another week after that brief moment.
Such is the life I live everyday for all of you.
And you still think I can smile in your pretty little pearls and your fancy dresses through all of this?

You do not know the toils I have to endure every minute of every day.
You do not know that my broad smile is only a mask for the pure anguish that has been painted on my face.
You do not know that I really am not proud, thrilled, and happy. Rather, I am angry, depressed, and terrified. He is never here, always there. Why should I be proud, thrilled, and happy?
You do not know how much I dread that tomorrow could always be the day that I have to bury him. After all, some of the greatest accomplishments require the most brutal sacrifices. He could very well be one of those sacrifices.

You think you know me.

Think again.

The Path

Corey Krochmal

Paint me a picture

Forget the canvas.

The memory of you is worth more than the gallons of paint used to create the world's largest mosaic on the Great Wall of China.

Use your words instead.

Whisper the color into my ears and show my mind's eye the night sky of the best day of your life.

Let each word echo in my head until my next lifetime

And read the lifelines of my palm tracing each crease with your fingertips while telling me the history of my soul.

Light the pathway that led me to you, and let me be your enchanted place.

Cuddle away your struggles

Sleep away the frustration.

Wake up in the morning refreshed

staring off into the sunrise knowing that your existence means something.

The day you were born you left a mark on this world that you'd never be able to take back.

And you definitely have learned to use paint from every inch of the rainbow

To paint pictures on the lives of all of us that you've met.

Each and every masterpiece is worth more than language can encompass.

This is to making something of it.

This is to all the times you fell over learning to ride your bike but got back up anyway.

For all the times you thought you weren't worth it,

And for the times where you pulled through the rubble

To stand up on the other side of the mountain

Breath taken by the view of this reality.

So tell me the stories of your past underneath the stars of our future.

Each one of our legacies is a star in the sky of our existence,

And maybe one day

We'll figure this life out.

Understand that the key to this treasure chest

lies in the hands of a question that forged our souls.

But we live on.

Searching for an answer that we hope to find,

The chances were slim when we were alone

But since our paths collided, the nights aren't so scary.

We're no longer wandering alone and no longer need to carry flashlights down unknown paths.

Your hair mimicking the color of an autumn leaf in the peak of the season

My movements fluid and careful.

Our trademarks leaving their signature in our footsteps.

A similar goal, to touch the lives of others,

Coming to fruition in the infernos of our hearts.