

## *Windows of Our Worlds*

When they were young, they were always together.

In the spring, they splashed in puddles and spun in the rain. Yellow and blue rain boots, a tiny hand clasped around the dripping handle of an umbrella that did nothing to shield them from the fat drops that fell onto their smiling faces. Mud splatters coated their shoes and coats in a trail of stars. Their thin pigtails curled and tangled from the water. Perhaps they regretted it later, when they sat shivering in a car, pressed together for the others' warmth.

In the summer, they plucked flowers and danced in the sun. They ran around in cotton shorts dotted with flowers, tie-dye shirts, and worn down flip flops. The pink and purple sticky juice of popsicles ran down their arms, their teeth and lips dyed bright colors. In the dark, they caught small orbs of light in the fat palms of their hands. They ran, they tripped, they cried over eyes of gleaming red and sniffled over the angry green stains on their knees. They biked, they sped down hills, the wind's wispy fingers sweeping their hair into their faces.

In the fall, they pounced into piles of leaves and skipped under the clouds. Thick scarves tucked into their coats, the beginning of sweater weather. All things apple, cinnamon, pumpkin. Everywhere they went: red, orange, yellow, brown. They scampered through corn mazes, decided on the perfect pumpkin. They sat next to each other, small legs swung under their chairs as their parents drew white and black cat noses on their faces. Leaves fell and they jumped up and down under the foliage.

In the winter, they threw snowballs and twirled on the ice. They turned faces to the sky, mouths wide open to catch the falling snowflakes. Mittens and puffy snow pants allowed them to frolic in the cold, falling in whirlwinds of white and frost-coated knitted hats. Their faces were always tinged pink from the chill, their laughs billowing outwards as clouds. The swishing of snow around their short limbs as they drew angels, the flakes of ice from the blades of their skates sprinkling the rinks.

When they began to grow up, they could be separated.

As the flowers in sunshine grew outside, they remained sheltered and shaded and separate inside. Perhaps it limited their growth— they did not care. Why feed off the glowing rays of the sun when they had their own, blue and harsh, from phones?

As other small toddlers, with their pudgy legs and pink hands, wandered around in their sun hats, they sat. They sat in their rooms, by themselves, talking with blue and gray bubbles. There was no need to go out into the world. They had each other at the tips of their fingers on a screen, whenever they wanted, so there was no need to see their real faces and talk with real words.

As the leaves began to shrivel and fall, computers and papers of work built themselves up into a wall. No matter how much they tried, it was constructed far too tall, far too well. Nothing they did shook the towers— so they began to accept it. They were too busy working hard to bother trying to reach out to one another.

As the butterflies of winter drifted through the skies, the snowfall was left untouched. They kept to themselves, warm and comforted by the fires inside. Angels were there no longer, and instead were replaced by a blank sheet of white. Endless hours spent scrolling, scrolling, scrolling.

When they were old enough to understand much of the world, they were hardly together.

Spring,

Summer,

Fall,

Winter.

They were just markings of the passing of time. The change of nature did not matter to them anymore. The colors of leaves and the drops from the sky made no difference to their lives, safely shut inside. They barely talked anymore, not even online. There was so much more to do online than talk to each other, far more interesting things.

They were miles apart. Walls apart. Screens apart. Watching the world through windows, through the colors on their separate screens.