

**Marin Poleshek**  
Age: 17, Grade: 11

School Name: Homewood High School, Homewood, AL  
Educator: Amy Marchino

Category: Poetry

---

**"broken vessel"**

*i. guilt trip*

i wish i could explain to you  
what it feels like  
to grieve something  
you still have.

each morning,  
i wake up and  
face what is  
dead.

every day,  
an unwanted visit  
to the graveyard  
of what i am missing.

i place flowers  
on the headstones  
of so many things  
that even the flowers  
are growing  
weary.

my hands have memorized  
the motions  
of driving down this road  
over and over  
again;

*continue straight down  
unease way.*

*turn right onto  
apprehension avenue.*

*make a hard left on  
accusation street.*

*stop abruptly on  
tears lane,*

*pull over on  
the side of the road.*

*reminisce on  
your guilt trip,  
and wonder what  
you have done  
to deserve this  
toxic thing that  
life has handed to you.*

it is then,  
you see the sign  
on the side of the road:

“welcome to  
my life,”

where the population  
is however many people

i have the courage  
to share it with.

***ii. mirage***

parched throat / dry land / you are a desert / we are in a desert / have been splashing around / in an oasis / *or maybe*  
*a mirage*; / maybe all of this / has just been / in my head, / maybe you never / said you love me, / maybe we never  
/ had that day in the woods, / maybe you never / brought me flowers, / maybe you never / paid for our dinners, /  
maybe you never / called me beautiful, / maybe i / was never yours, / maybe the past / two years of my life / have  
just been / in my head, / and when everything / finally ended / it didn't hurt / as much / as i thought / that it would /  
because there was nothing / to end / at all.

***iii. what i wish i could say***

that i spend each day  
hoping you will speak to me.

*(that i spend just as much time  
praying that you don't).*

that black jeeps  
make me nervous.

that i remember every time  
you told me i was beautiful.

that you are the story  
behind all of my poems.

that i can still feel  
your hand in mine.

that the word love  
tastes sour in my mouth.

*that i am forgetting*

*what it felt like  
not to tremble  
at the mention of your name.*

***iv. the art of getting used to***

*“basketball”* he mumbles lazily.

*“what?”* i ask, squeezing his hand  
and fixing my eyes  
on his lips.

he rolls over,  
buried deep in dreams,  
smile stretched across his face,  
and as i watch him  
i think about  
how i am not sure  
if i will ever get used to  
all the random comments  
he makes while he is sleeping.

i am not sure  
if i will ever get used to  
opening my eyes and  
seeing him  
laying next to me.

i am not sure  
if i will ever get used to  
the way his eyelashes flutter  
when he dreams,  
or how he never takes  
his hand out of mine,

or how his smile  
never truly fades  
[it only softens  
to match the rest of him].

i am not sure  
if i will ever get used to  
the feeling of being loved  
the way he loves me,

but growing familiar  
with being loved  
starts with having  
more nights like this one.

figuring out  
how to do this  
begins and ends  
with him in my arms.

***v. the ghost of you***

*i used to be haunted.*

you used to haunt me,  
and i lived every day  
in fear of your ghost  
infiltrating my heart  
and reminding me  
of what i did  
to hurt you.

i went to our park  
two weeks ago,  
and i didn't see  
your ghost.

i returned on saturday  
cloaked in darkness,  
and although the moonlight  
is typically where  
ghosts like to hide,  
you did not  
pay me a visit.

i have made new memories  
in our park,  
not because  
i want to hurt you  
but because  
that park is still  
a piece of me.

and though i thought  
that i would never  
be able to return,  
*i did.*

i went back  
just yesterday  
to continue constructing  
my house of memories  
that you don't have  
the key to.

a house  
i wasn't sure  
i could ever live in,  
*but now  
feels more like home  
than you ever  
did.*

your ghost no longer  
haunts me,  
and as much as i thought  
that i would miss it,

*i don't.*

*in fact,  
i don't think that  
i miss you anymore  
at all.*