ALFONSO MAÑÓN

Colegio Internacional SEK

2nd Place in the ESU Chile Creative Writing Competition
2023
Junior Category

This document contains two texts. First one is the Round 1 Finished Work Entry on the theme of "Family". Second one was done on the day of the in-person final 10th June 2023, as a Freewrite/First Draft activity with the following prompt: "Write about the friendship that inspired your favourite song."

ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION
discovering voices

First Text: Round 1 Entry

"Together"

Mother always said, "be good and nice things will happen." As I took my first step on the cold marble staircase, her words rang through my head. Mother knows best, that's what they told me, and now I finally understand what they meant. When I started making my family, everything was perfect. I had a beautiful girlfriend that I turned into my wife a few years later, then a beautiful baby boy followed suit 9 months after our honeymoon. Yet now I am here, at least we'll be together again.

I kept going up the staircase, every step I took became harder than the last. It was five years after our marriage that I started to have these… thoughts. I loved my family, but we couldn't stay the way we were forever. Eventually my wife and I would grow old and one of us would die first, leaving the other to suffer, maybe we wouldn't even get to that point. We could get a divorce because we became tired of each other's presence, or worse, she dies in an accident before we can watch our son become a righteous man. I couldn't allow tragedy to strike our family like this, not while I could do something about it.

I can feel a weight on my shoulders getting heavier the closer I get to it. I pushed those thoughts aside for a few years. I couldn't let my fear get the better of me. We were still a happy family. But of course that happiness didn't last long. When I lost my job everything changed, I fell into a deep depression and just sat on the sofa all day. Everything I'd ever worked towards crumbled in front of my very own eyes, can you really blame me for what I did next? I started drinking, I drank until I couldn't remember where I was.

Then, in the blink of an eye, it had already been 3 years since that fateful day. I hadn't had a single moment of clarity since then. I struggled to stand up. How long had it been since I did? The room was dark, and only a small table was lit up by the old antique TV. The table had a stack of papers I'd been using as a beer stand. I shoved away the cans and bottles. For some reason I had a strange urge to read the papers. To my utter shock, they were a mix of diagnoses and divorce papers that had already been signed.

I am starting to see… footprints on the beautiful marble steps, they look extremely similar to my feet. It took me some time to find them again, after reading the stack of papers. I remembered that which I'd been trying to forget since so long ago. I was diagnosed with liver cancer, just a few months before my wife decided she'd had enough of me and left with my boy. "You did this to yourself, I can't keep living like this." She said. That was the last time I saw her. Those words were carved into my mind, just like my mother's.

These footprints are… mine, have I already been here? When did I start leaving footprints with my every step? The answers must be at the top, I'm almost there. I stalked the house for a few days, I saw her and my boy with another man. My boy was now calling him dad, and my wife was calling him honey, but I knew he was nothing but a replacement. A replacement that could never truly make them forget me, I made sure of it when I cut his car's breaks. He drove straight into traffic. My family was devastated, they barely ate anything for days after the accident. That's when I knew it was my time to strike.

I am now standing in front of the gates, just a step away from them. Yet I can't move a single muscle in my body, was this my punishment? I knocked on the door, when my wife opened it, her gaze wasn't even fixated on me. She was still grieving, but when she noticed who I was, a horror filled expression greeted me as if I was her worst nightmare. And in that moment, I was. I lifted the knife I held tightly in my right hand and plunged it deep into her chest before she could close the door like she intended to. With her last breath, she tried to warn our son, but it was already too late. Her body hit the floor with a heavy thump, one down, one to go.

As I look up at the golden gates, the weight on my shoulders got impossibly heavy. "I know this is where I belong!" I cried out. "I did what was right!" A strange force lifted me high into the air and turned me around, I was now able to look at the staircase from a bird's eye view. I dragged the fuel canister I'd hidden in the bushes near the house a few days ago and started drenching the house with it, my son was sleeping on the second floor. So he didn't even notice when the fire started, I dragged my wife's body into the house and closed the door. This is how the three of us could finally be together.

My son ran down the stairs and then towards the front door. I was waiting for him with open arms, still soaked in his mother's blood. He ran back up the stairs, I followed behind him closely. He tried to slam his bedroom door shut, but I got there just in time. He had cornered himself for me without even noticing. "Why?" He cried out to me. All I could do

was smile at him. “So we can be together again.” I said as I jumped on him and choked him until I was sure he was dead. Then I dragged his body and my wife’s to the living room sofa. So we could sit together, like a big happy family. The flames engulfed the house and everything went dark.

The invisible force made me look at the staircase, I couldn’t look away. I start hearing steps, then I see someone’s about to reach the top. There’s someone one step behind them, and another, and another, and another, and another, infinitely. There’s an infinite line of people on that damned staircase, and they’re all me. I finally understand, this is my hell, my eternal damnation. As soon as I reached that conclusion the force dropped me and I fell through the cloud the golden gates were perched on, just to do it all again. I closed my eyes and let the darkness take me.

Mother always said, “be good and nice things will happen.” As I took my first step on the cold marble staircase, her words rang through my head. Mother knows best, that’s what they told me, and now I finally understand what they meant.

Second Text: Free Write/First Draft 10th June 2023

"COLD DECEMBER"

My world crumbled in what felt like only a second. It took every single bit of my strength to plan her burial, but seeing my wife's peaceful face as they lowered her into her final resting place was what truly broke me. A drunk driver hit us as we were on our way back home, that was all it took. Even if I'd lost part of my memories in the car crash, she was still my everything.

I hear a knock at the door. I don't answer. I know it's not her, so why bother? I hear another knock, only this time, the door opens by itself. I stare at it in disbelief, I hadn't given a key to anyone. Lo and behold my best friend, who I haven't seen since highschool was now in my small, dark apartment. But I feel like I've seen him before… recently, but it's probably just my imagination.

He greeted me with a warm smile and embraced me as if our last meeting hadn't been us just swearing at each other. "Why are you here?" I asked, there was a hint of anger in my voice. Our last conversation ended in disaster, and we agreed to not speak to each other ever again. He never cleaned up after himself, never bathed nor did anything around the house, so I kicked him out of this exact same apartment.

"I'm here because I know you need me." He said, still holding me. "I…" there was silence, over the last few weeks there had been many people who reached out to me to give their condolences, but none of them cared to check if I was ok. And I wasn't, I had just lost the love of my life, I wasn't eating, cleaning up, bathing… I was just like him when I kicked him out. He could still read me like an open book, even after all the years we spent apart, and he knew just what to say to disarm the bomb that was my heart. "I forgive you."

The following months were a blur for me, my best friend moved back in and little by little, he managed to get me to go out more, and for a while, I felt happy. But then reality hit us like a ton of bricks, he had to go back to work and I had to start going to therapy. We couldn't spend time together nearly as much, to the point that there were weeks where I would barely see him at all. In those days, I could only think about the car crash… making me miserable.

Not being with him destroyed me, without even me noticing, he had become the highlight of my life. Not being able to talk to him was grueling. I stopped going to therapy and just sat in my room all day, waiting for him to come back, but that still wasn't enough. He had become my happiness, but what else could I do? When he's not around I feel so lonely, in those moments I wish he'd just die on his way home. Then I wouldn't have to feel this way nor would I have to feel so lost.

He has to go on a business trip for a few weeks. I tried to go with him but he turned me down saying I was acting weird, it looks like he hasn't caught on yet. He's a heavy drinker, so I don't know if he even remembers how he destroyed my life. But I remember, it is now etched into my bones and seared into my brain. He killed my wife.

He arrived on December 31st, his birthday. He told me not to get him anything, but of course, since last year I'd forgotten to even congratulate him on his birthday, I got a surprise waiting for him. When he crossed the door like he did all those months ago he didn't expect to see files of my wife's case scattered all over the floor, it was everything the police had found. He pulled a handgun out of his briefcase and aimed it at the deep darkness that seemed to have engulfed the apartment.

He tried to turn on the lights. It was no use, I had removed all the lightbulbs. He closed the door behind him and started walking down the hall. "I saved you." He snarled. "AND THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY ME!?!" He shouted as he shot blindly into my dark room, but I wasn't there. I creeped up behind him and slit his throat, still, he managed to lodge a bullet into one of my lungs.

As we both bled out on the cold hard wooden floor, I knew I'd finally avenged my wife, and that her killer was not going to be able to harm anyone else, and two beautiful white elms would be planted in our names, at the end of town. To be remembered every December.