**Congratulations to Abby Hutton, the Grade 9 – 12**

**First Place Winner of the 2021 Farley Mowat Writing Contest**

**From The Sky Above**

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This is it. The day I end one life and start another. I shift my eyes from the miniature

whirlpools forming at the surface of the water up towards the shimmering midnight sky. The

gentle Yukon breeze kisses my cheek and plays with my brown tangled curls as I pull the boat

away from the mainland. Tonight I start my journey towards nothing and yet everything all at

once. I have no particular destination, but I know exactly where I want to go. I want to find a

home in the wild where I feel understood; where I can find my soul. The trees will not judge me

for being rough when, they too, have hurt many. The wind will whisper me secrets in exchange

for mine. Even in my darkest hours, the stars will shine their golden light on me. The wild does

not judge or hold grudges. You are their home, as they are yours.

As I reach a beautiful island I am greeted by the promising morning sky. The colours are

so warm and vibrant, like a tamed wildfire. It’s a beautiful sight to see after such a rough, stormy

night on the river. I almost didn’t think I’d make it. I pull my boat close to the shore of the luscious

green island. It’s forest is thick with many different types of trees and colourful wildflowers.

*Amazing* . I quickly gather my tent and bags from the back of the boat, eager to see what this

island has in store for me.

I’m close enough to the shore that I just throw my bags from the boat to the island. As I

throw my bags I realize just how freeing this is going to be for me. My first time alone in the wild,

no one holding me back or controlling my every move. As I go to throw my third and final bag I

hear a loud snap come from just inside the treeline.

“Hello?” I call out, expecting no response.

“What are you doing here?” Confusion fills the voice of a young man as he steps closer

to shore, closer to me. He seems to be about 20; close to my age.

I stutter, I was not expecting to see anyone else here. “I- I’m just finding a place to camp

for the night,” I throw my final bag onto the island and jump down beside it. I lock eyes with the

boy. His eyes are as green as the trees behind him, “what are you doing here?”

“The same thing as you,” he stretches a hand out for mine, “mind my manners, I’m

Blaise!”

“Juniper,”

“Lovely to meet you, Juniper! Would you like to set up camp with me? I’d love the

company,” He almost sounds desperate.

I really would have preferred to spend my time here alone but something about him

intrigues me. Something familiar, though I’m not sure what. Plus, he seems to not only want, but

need the company. I agree and he helps me carry my bags to his campsite. He talks the whole

way there, hardly stopping for a breath.

We arrive at Blaise’s campsite, a small opening in the forest. His tent set up on my right,

a small fire straight ahead, and a few logs set up as a table and chairs on my left. It’s quite nice

actually. He takes the bag containing my tent and sets it down beside his.

“Do you want help setting this up?” Blaise asks, eager to help in any way he can.

“Sure, thank you,” I respond. Blaise pushes his blond pin-straight hair back as he puts on

a ballcap and starts grabbing the poles from the bag, handing some to me. The act of him doing

so gives me déjà vu. I blink hard, squeezing this unsettling feeling away. I never get déjà vu .

After setting up my tent we decided to go on a walk along the shore. We talked and

laughed like we had been friends our entire lives. I have never met someone so pure, his

presence was unreal. He told me stories from his childhood where he was almost always

outside, covered in dirt, and just appreciating the nature that surrounded him. He was taught to

always be grateful for what this world has to offer, much like I was. But there was something

different in how he admired the world; something different than how I have ever admired it. When

he spoke of the tiniest insects or the biggest gusts of wind he had ever encountered, something

inside his eyes lit up. Like the light on a front porch signaling that he is home. I say that the earth

is as much our home as we are theirs, but part of me doesn’t truly believe that. How could such

a big world find home in someone, something, as small as me?

Blaise and I sit on the tree stumps, now seated around the fire as we eat canned chili. It’s

surprisingly good considering it came straight from a can and into my mouth. The sun has set

now and any signs of wildlife have disappeared as they settle into the night. Aside from the

occasional chime of a cicada and flash of a firefly. I glance over at Blaise as he stares up at the

stars, shoving a spoonful of chili into his mouth. I think this is the only time he has stopped

talking since I arrived. He continues to hold his gaze on the twinkling beauties above us. You

can tell he is in absolute awe of the sky.

“Have any big thoughts running through your mind right now?” I tease, poking his leg with

a stick. He doesn’t move.

“No, not really,” he pauses and smiles a little bit. He’s still looking at the stars, “Just the

thought that something as small and ultimately meaningless as humans came from something

as extravagant as the stars above us.”

I look from him to the stars, and back to him, “How do you mean?”

He shifts, finally looking at me, “Of course everyone has a purpose on this earth, but in

the grand scheme of things, it doesn’t really matter what we do or do not do. In the end we all

return to the stars. Back to the many worlds that live above us at all times. Humans stress so

much about what they are doing, have done, or have yet to do. Rather than focusing on how

they feel; how they are far more than flesh and bone; more than tasks and accomplishments.”

I push my curls out of my face and look back up at the sky, “Wow, you have really

thought about that, haven’t you?” I have never heard a concept so intriguing as this.

“Yes, yes I have.”

As I sit with the many words Blaise just spoke, he stands up and goes to grab some

more wood from behind the tents. The wind picks up quickly and whispers in my ear, *you and I*

*are more than human.*

“Did you say something?” I whip my head around, looking for Blaise.

As quickly as the wind arrived, it disappeared. And so did Blaise. So did the tents. The

trees. In an instant, everything was gone. Was Blaise ever there to begin with? Was anything?

I float through the beautiful waves of light that flow through the sky. I had always loved to

watch the aurora borealis, but I never imagined that they were what I had come from. My soul is

entirely made up of the North’s glowing beauty. A magnificent mix of green and blue light

replaces my physical body. I am nothing but light, a delicate soul. As I continue to float through

the sky I see my boat below me, capsized in the middle of the river. I’m glad I was able to meet

Blaise and see the island before returning to the sky. Well, at least I think I was able to. Either

way, this is it. The day I end one life and start another.