

Willow

It was on a cool fall Thursday that Bailey felt like she was melting. She may have noticed that her life was being consumed by mindless activities and commitments sooner, but she didn't have the time for that. Such realizations take time for oneself to come to, for which Bailey really had no room in her agenda. So, she was left in the dreadful position of total exhaustion which, combined with the fact that she was driving, couldn't have hit her at a worse time. Recognizing the danger in continuing like this, Bailey gripped the steering wheel and widened her eyes, forcing herself to stay awake just long enough to pull over. Every single responsibility on her mind kept playing over and over again like a footage reel, all at once, each task selfishly trying to claw its way out to the surface and take priority over the last.

She stumbled out of the car in a haze, dragging her steps towards the field she could see in the distance, the one with the clovers that always seem to call to her this time of year. Her head somehow found the pillow of green below her, her legs the earthy blanket surrounding them. There was dew resting on the leaves, but rather than bother her it only made everything smell fresh and damp. She sunk deeper and deeper into her trance, into the peaceful plants and nature. She was becoming one with them, growing and breathing as they grew and breathed, waving in the wind as they did.

She slowly awoke, only to find she was immobile. This was fine. She was at peace with it, no longer caring if she would make it back home in time to eat dinner and do her work, maybe schedule in some time for the gym. She was the trees; she could feel the worries fall away with the acorns that fell from her branches. She was the dandelions, each responsibility a fluffy cloud unassumingly flying out into the world. She was the mud, squishing beneath the toes of the

playful dog and his owner. That's funny. She could've sworn she had a dog. No matter, she thought. Everything matters, so nothing can matter. Nothing matters because everything does. Everything is selfish, and everything is just too much. Too much.

Not much later, some friends sat out on Bailey's grass with some food and some paints, illustrating the world around them as they saw it, as they saw her. Hmm. *Looks like fun* she thought. More time passed. A girl biked along Bailey's dirt paths down into the creek, probably using that old shortcut Bailey used to use to get home. Those crisp afternoons she spent biking home were always her favorite, where she would take her time observing the animals, the way they moved in their own world, each with their own task to complete. What an idea, to only have one task, one goal. But, she supposed, if that's all they need to be satisfied, then good for them.

Why wasn't Bailey satisfied? Was it because she was trapped in the tangles of nature, or trapped in her busy tendencies? She no longer wanted to sit by and watch, but she didn't want to go back to her real life either. If only these two extremes could find a way to balance each other out, like the way nature gives and takes away from itself, always replenished. Bailey suddenly became aware of the metal ring on her big toe, feeling it wiggle and intertwine with the clovers. Gradually her legs did the same, until she could finally lift her head from her pillow and sit up. The sun was setting. It was probably time to get home.