

Sometimes, when I find myself alone and the world is still; where the only noises are the rustle of the leaves in the trees, water kissing the rocks in the creek, and the bees are buzzing about their honey, I go to talk with you. I close my eyes against the eastern sun and feel my mind begin to wander.

Beyond the hedges, under the crunch of playground gravel, is the garden. A world away from this. The safety net of my creation, blossoming in color, brimming in love. By my feet is my old cat, purring loudly, tail tickling against my knee. I hold him in my arms again and feel him make his biscuits against my sun kissed skin. The sharp nails pierce skin, yet I can't find a reason to complain. In the distance the dogs are running around, playing by the pink weeping willow tree. The willow where you wait.

Before I can talk to you, I have to go to the first row of white chairs against vibrant grass. Grandma is here. She left before you, but you where there. Grandma is out of season in her best outfit: a turtleneck sweatshirt with holly leaves on it, her purple sweatpants, and always the pearl necklace. With the cat in my arms, I take the seat next to her and smile as we look up at the willow. The blossoms are beautiful this time of year, whatever time of year this is.

The Garden is always at the point in the evening when the sun is descending and the sky is alight with the orange glow, reflecting an effervescent pink tint in the clouds. In the branches of the willow are twinkling lights, emanating the lightning bugs we used to catch as children. A competition to see who could catch the most. The Garden is my perfect place. The mind palace I built from the dirt to the sky.

Of course, I miss Grandma. I've missed her every day since eighth grade. Christmas is a little sadder, but time numbed the grief.

For you, it's only been a couple of years. The grief comes in waves. Sometimes it's calm before the wave rises and takes over. This year hit in more ways than one.

It marks two years.

Two long years.

You were always a big supporter. One of the first to know, and I found it ironic, yesterday, on the two year anniversary, that you left during pride month. For years, you stood with me. No matter the time we went without speaking, we always came back like the time never passed. There were so many promises, hidden in the yellowing pages of yearbooks, saying that we can't wait to see where the rest of our lives took us and how we would always be friends, no matter what. You are one of my best friends. Always and forever.

I put the cat down and make my way up the curved staircase, built into the ground, to where you wait under the weeping willow.

Before we diverged on our separate paths, I promised you – cross my heart and hope to die – that you would always be my bridesmaid in blue.

Now it's been two years since you left. I know my party of pastels; green, yellow, purple, and pink. Without you, there's no blue.

Blue is you.