



2022 Ben Strauss Youth Program

Middle School

Teen Essay Contest

Kevin Mallon

A Bowl Full of Sorrows and Love

Innocence, purity, and love -- qualities a child inherits from birth. The child lays on his grandmother's lap promptly sitting up with a warm smile melting his face. His head lay softly on his grandmother breasts as she flips the pages of a children's picture book lightly with her nimble fingers. The pages come to life for the child as the grandmother soothes him with her voice that forms a melody so sweet it sounds of that of an angel. The book, the kid's favorite book brings him joy. Light from a window ahead beams on his face lighting his plump, meatball like head to a heavenly glow. A happy thing the kid possesses as the pictures in the book dance around with such love and joy. Laughter echoes through the room, as the child feels completely at peace. Yet, as the child is overwhelmed by these joyous feelings of love, an envious savage multiple in the pounding heartbeat of the child's grandmother. Time seems to spin much faster in a blurry haze of light as the grandmother flips the pages, tik. Each one a smile brighter than the sun is shown, tik. Love bounces through the pages, tik. Time seems to thunder in flashes as things go faster tik, tik. Each page flipped time becomes faster and seamless tik, tik, tik. The sun is fading tik. Its growing tik, tik. Rapidly multiplying tik, tik, tik. Just a tik, tik ticking time bomb.

Life goes by faster, faster, faster, STOP. Tears flow down the child's face, 10 years later and this child really doesn't resemble a child, but more of young man. Evil, pain, and truth things a child learns when growing up. Drenched in the water from his own sorrows he sobs some more. Stumbling with the words he says to his family about what he remembers of his sweet old grandmother. He tells about the book and the teddy bear and the happiness. The happiness. How could of the child known. His head lay so close to this disease, this virus. He was helpless. His head so softly laid on his grandmothers' beating heart. He didn't know that 2 inches from his head an evil grew rapidly, multiplying, growing, eating, and ripping away the child's sweet grandmother's chest. Second by second, she was dying, but how could he have known? She was dying to something that was totally out of control. And the child, now a teen that is 14 tries to get out and collect what he feels, but inside he hides, through his endless spill of tears and his true thoughts and fears, quickly his frustrations have overtaken his sense of emotion. That memory he had that stuck in his side felt like it would never come out and he surely would die. He felt so bad, like the weight of the world held him down. He could not get the sound the memory brought out of his head as it rang out loud. But how could he have known he was merely 4 years old. His grimacing, grimacing laughter arose in that room full of sobs and moans in a beautiful happy death note. He didn't know as his grandmother lay dead in the casket that he had to say goodbye to her before it closed. He just laughed and played like life was fine, but he didn't know his actions at this age would leave a scar deep in his mind. Yet at the time everything seemed just okay, but now the child 10 years later sat with his hands to his face in a mess of tears and sorrows. Saying to himself if only I realized the truth at the time, I could feel placid, less stressed and accepting inside, so I didn't have to live with the thought that my

grandmother had died to breast cancer, and I didn't even say one last final goodbye. Fast-forward a year and the child sat on his grandmother's bench right by the seaside memorialized by a silver plaque on the right side. It read in bold, *"Forget me not, for I am there. In the beat of your heart, on the wing of your prayer. Ask for my help and I'll answer your call. Reach for my hand, when you stumble and fall. Always remember, my love is right there. In the beat of your heart, on the wing of your prayer."*

-In loving memory of Kathleen Maxwell