

I look at the dark stone that's embedded in the dirt. It looks so lonely sitting there. Its distorted surfaces are encrusted with sand and dirt. The edges create a soft curve around and eventually form an oval, except one half of my oval is stuck helplessly in the mud. The other half is sticking up, teasing me to pick up the most perfect stone I have ever seen in my life.

I pick it up.

I turn around only to see my tall oak tree. That tall oak tree has been there as long as my developing young brain can remember. It stands tall and proud, yet it looks so lonely sitting there. Its twisting branches and green leaves open a new doorway to my singing imagination. It makes me wonder about how many little girls, like me, have ripped their new white and yellow polka dot dress trying to climb to the apex of that tree, just to see the soft blue sky with the white wispy clouds.

My imaginative mind closes when I hear a faint voice coming from someone who is fragile, old, wrinkly, and white haired call my name.

"Olivia!" I hear my grandmother call out. I then realized that tiny, clear, perfect rain droplets were falling from the grey cloudy sky. I start running towards her only forgetting the most perfect stone sitting at the base of my oak tree.

I run up to my old rickety house where moss clings to the shutters, dripping wet with the fresh rain that had just started to pour. I could already smell that familiar scent of wet dirt and wet grass. I run inside the house where my grandmother awaits with a twisted up face that looks like she is about to scold me. She looks at my boots that are caked with mud. She looks at my knee that has been skinned ever so slightly from falling at the creek, and is now turned to a bright pink. She sees my hands that are crusted up with a mixture of dirt and sand. Then she finally sees my face that has rosy, flushed cheeks.

"You have a twig stuck in your hair," she whistles through her dentures. She stares at me through the small slits in her eyes and her lips press together tightly, causing dimples to form in her cheeks.

I rush over to the antique mirror where swirly patterns frame the edges like the patterns you see at a fancy hotel. I look in the mirror to see my reflection and

observe my black ringlet hair coiled around that twig like a snake holding its prey. It wasn't about to let it go without a fight. Just before I was about to yank it out, my grandmother comes over to get it out. She brings her soft, delicate, bony fingers to the twig. She plays with the twig and my hair for a while before she gently pulls the twig out.

My grandmother then turns to go sit at the old, worn out wooden table. She walks there slowly as if she might break a bone if she moves too fast, which might actually happen. She then sits there looking so tired, with her hunched-over back, slowly blinking her raisin eyes at me.

"Olivia, you are just too old to get yourself into such a mess. You're twelve years old now and you should be able to keep yourself clean." She says with her eyes that look so tired, as if her eyelids weigh a hundred pounds.

"Yes, I know you still want to be that five year old girl with jelly stuck to your cheeks and dirt under your fingernails and behind your ears, but you can't keep thinking you're so young," she explains. "Ha, if you were me, you would really be wishing you were still the dirty five year old that you are acting like. It's time to grow up."

As my grandma was winding down from criticizing me, I walk over to the drippy sink. The old wooden floorboards moan and creak under my footsteps. When I get to the sink, I look out the ribbon-framed window that is above the sink. I watch the rain come down in a sheet covering all of the grass, and tree leaves. I admire each and every tree that stands tall and proud in the backyard of my grandma's and my house. I first look at the base of the tree and allow my eyes to travel up the trunk, studying every indentation in the beautiful bark, and then my eyes float to the colorful bright green leaves. Sometimes if I'm lucky, the sun will shine through a leaf and then I will be able see the skinny veins that tangle inside it.

I suddenly notice the sky doesn't look happy at all. Its grey dark clouds are starting to move in a circular motion; the trees are bent over from the strong winds. The winds strip the branches and leaves from my trees. Then a flash forms a haphazard calligraphy pattern in the sky and a thunderous boom comes a second behind it.

“Grandma, what’s happening? I’m scared!” I cry out. My grandma hurries over to the window and studies the angry sky. Her eyebrows pucker and a worried expression forms on her face. She then shuffles over to the radio that’s mounted on the wall. She flips it on and surfs through the channels until she finds one that doesn’t hiss with static. She turns the volume down so I can’t hear the panic of the radio and then puts her ear to the speaker and listens intently. A couple minutes later she looks at me.

“There is a tornado coming! Go lock all the windows and hurry to the basement,” she commanded sternly. I charge up the stairs into my grandmother’s room and lock the window shut. Then I dart across the hall into my room. I slam the window shut and as I turn to leave the room, I see my rock collection lined up in a soldier formation on top of my dresser, and I gasp. I realize that I forgot the rock I found outside today!

“Grandma! Grandma!” I scream as I came galloping down the stairs. “Grandma I left this precious stone outside by the oak tree! I need to get it before the tornado sweeps it up!”

“Oh honey you can’t go out now, look outside, the tornado is here!” she exclaims. I run towards the window only to see branches and leaves blowing in the wind. They fly all around looking so helpless. I wish I could save all of them, but I can’t. My eyes start to burn, and then start getting a little damp. I really need to get my stone.

Without even thinking about it, I rush to the creaky door and fling myself out into the frightening wind.

“Olivia!” my grandma yells. She said something else, but I couldn’t hear it over the roaring and screaming of the wind, but I make sure I don’t turn around to see her angry face as I march on towards the stone.

The trees stand outside in a line pointing the direction to my oak tree. I know that my oak tree is only seven trees away from the house, so as I pass the first tree I know my oak tree is only six more trees away. With determination in my stride I make my way past the second tree. By now my clothes and hair are soaked, and dirt is splattered on my face, getting in my eyes. I. Must. Get. To. That. Tree.

I pass the sixth tree, I know I'm going to get there one way or another. Each step plummets into the soft wet mud. I must put all of my energy into my feet in order to release the suction force my foot and the mud create. As I pull my right foot up, I realize my boot is still in the mud's grasp. I turn around to yank my boot from the clutch of the mud, but the wind knocks me over onto my back into the mud. I immediately squirm to get out, but the clenching of the mud is too much. I flounder around trying to prevent myself from sinking. I suddenly felt something hard sticking out of the mud. I then realized that it is a root from the oak tree. My oak tree! I desperately clutch the root and pull myself out. I follow the root on my hands and knees to the tree, and there, sitting nestled in the twisted roots next to the tree, is my stone. I snatch the stone up and stick it in my pocket. I turn to make my way back to the house and to my grandmother.

My eyes are stinging and I can hardly see. I only have three more trees to go until I make it back to the house. I rub my eyes and see that an object is coming upon me...fast.

CLUNK! A branch hit me straight in the face. I fall on my butt with a hard thump. Debris is flying everywhere, my head is throbbing and spinning in circles, and I can hardly see anything. I start seeing black splotches appear everywhere I look, and then everything turns to black.