

## The Boy I Met 23 Years Ago

The cabin seemed bright against the rainy night,  
just as it was years ago,  
almost twenty years to be exact.  
As the youth minister I was there for my church,  
and the kids I loved so dearly.  
This camp changed my life forever.  
being back with the boy I met 23 years ago.  
My feelings came back,  
not knowing how to react.  
He sat next to me,  
It was something I didn't expect.  
He was something I didn't expect.  
We talked about the memories,  
he changed my life forever.  
I cried remembering what he last said.  
Our tears shed again on the old, green-cushioned couch.  
He told me about his wife and kid,  
he fell in love, never letting go.  
After the hard times he faced,  
letting me go was one of the them.  
He grew older and matured.  
We shared.  
We were open.  
Me and the boy I met 23 years ago,  
sat on the old, wooden, green-cushioned couch we did 20 years ago.  
His words made sense, like they always did.  
He loved his wife and kid, in the same way as I did.  
His tears shed again on the old, green-cushioned couch.  
I told him about my high school sweetheart,  
the parsonage I lived in,  
three kids and one on the way.  
Happiness is what I felt that day.  
Sadness is what I felt that day.  
The exact same way I felt,  
when we sat in the exact same place,  
When we didn't know if we would be back again.  
My tears shed again on the old, green-cushioned couch.  
The kids came in,  
so full of the happiness we once knew.  
Wonders of learning new things,  
meeting new people,  
and finding who you are.  
Those were the joys we felt when we went here,  
Me and the boy I met 23 years ago.  
Our tears shed again on the old, green-cushioned couch.  
Sunday came by,  
when the kids had to say goodbye,  
to the people they all loved so dearly.  
The kids sang the song of sadness.  
They don't know if they'll be back again,

not knowing if they would wait for each other,  
after leaving yet again on that Jet Plane.  
I couldn't stay to listen,  
he followed.  
The boy I met 23 years ago.  
Pulled me in a hug,  
in the same warm embrace of forever ago.  
he grasped my hair,  
moving his hands through it,  
up and down,  
tugging it,  
stroked it back and forth.  
He whispered in my ear,  
"I waited for you."  
I cried.  
Knowing that the old, wooden, green-cushioned couch...  
was in him.  
My old best friend,  
my tears shed on his shirt's collar.  
Knowing that we have grown and shared so much,  
But always we'll remember...  
On that cold, foggy winter night in my cabin.  
When we shared that moment  
when our tears were shed once again, on the old, wooden, green-cushioned couch.  
Me and the boy I met 23 years ago.

**By Melanie Fleischer, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Christiansburg High School  
First Place**

## Gold Over Chrome

there's a birthday card wedged in the corner of my mirror  
between the glass and the wood  
happy 17<sup>th</sup>  
happy soon release  
happy time to leave  
happy get your things  
and i'm not ready

i wasn't ready when i was 9 and crying on the carpet to my third grade teacher  
my breathing got ahead before my words could even reach her  
i was nervous for a play about what it took to be president  
she told me to imagine something different  
so i did  
i still do

i imagine the same future i did when i was nine  
where i'm immersed in an ocean of free people and everything is fine  
where i'm touching the biggest stars standing upon an old pine  
where a monster in my head follows our car on the yellow line

flash forward not back to the next 20 years  
(did you know the only thing that grows on your face is your nose and your ears?)  
when i won't be wearing boy's jackets from sears  
i won't be in the backseat of my mom's white mountaineer  
and the biggest thing in my head will no longer be fear  
but instead, hopefully,  
bubbles of memories from every single year

the last 17 have meant a great deal  
the last 17 have made me feel like i'm real  
don't replace a golden childhood with the shiny chrome world you predict  
because i'm alive and i'm here with stories from when i was six  
where i sat criss cross on the alphabet carpet  
we spelled apple and spilled its sauce  
we gathered in to snap a class picture  
piled in a bathtub  
that resided in our library  
just kids and no suds  
only kids and no contrary

everything has happened just as everything will happen  
20 years will have nothing on me  
20 years and its mindless machines  
20 years will never tarnish my memories  
of swing sets and neighbors  
of acorns and greyhounds  
of my life and my labors  
of family and familiar sounds

20 years  
can come quickly  
and I will stand with open arms  
daring it to erase  
just one of my scars  
welcome it with an  
embrace  
it seems so far  
but i know one day, that same card  
will read happy 37<sup>th</sup>

and 17 will seem so far

**By Karly Custer, 11<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Christiansburg High School  
Second Place**

## *I Hope*

*In one score I hope  
Nature will not have vanished  
And the seas will calm*

*By Audrey Jones, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Christiansburg High School  
Third Place*