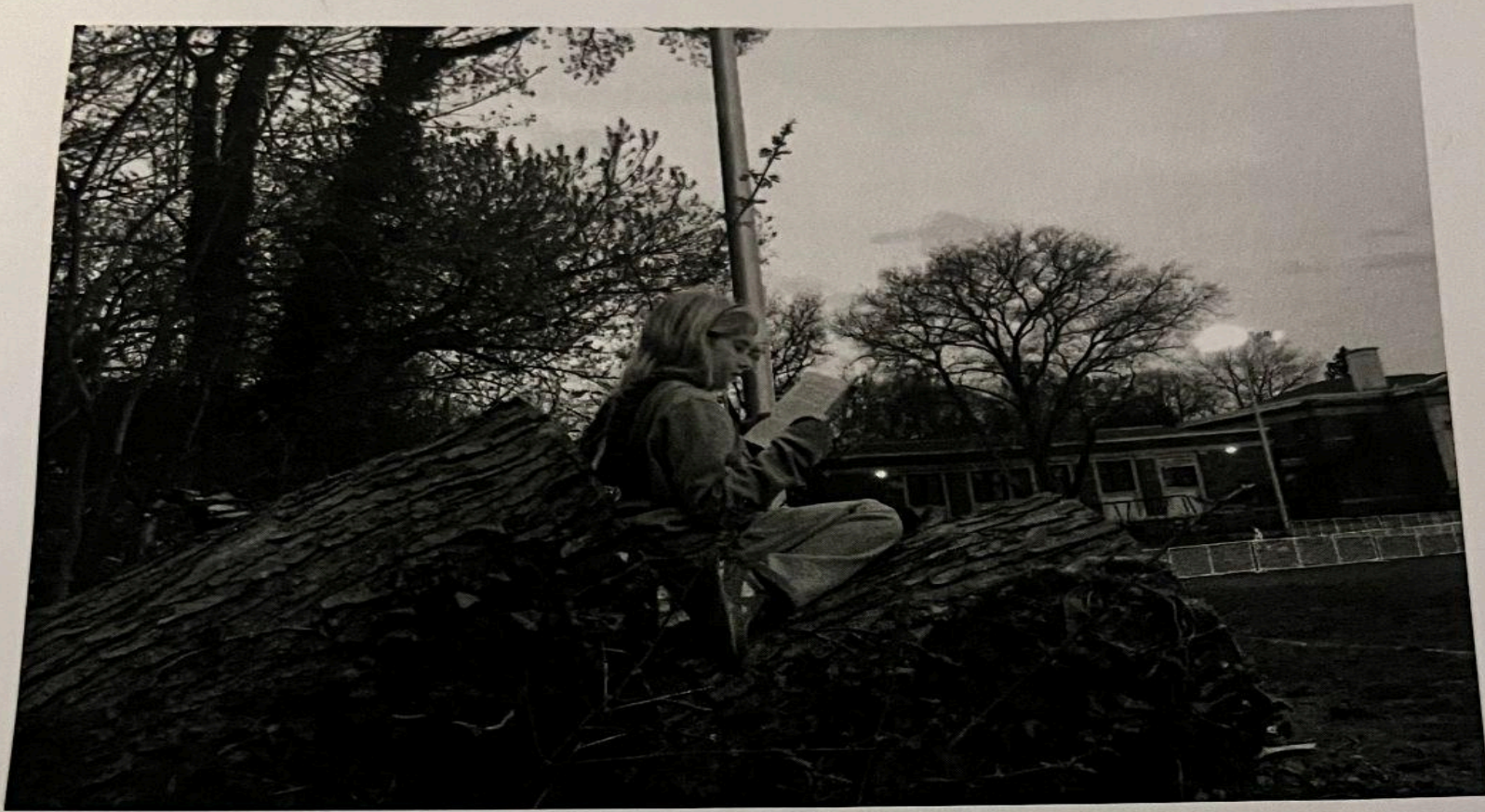


11  
Fall 2024 Edition



Growing Up Means  
Growing Down  
Sometimes

by Sophia Forchetti

## *Thea*

Sweet Thea  
Little Thea  
Pretty Thea  
With her golden hair

This was lost Thea  
Useful Thea  
Thea who only knew home  
As a place to run away from

Until I met you  
And I understood the world  
Even if only for a little while  
Brave Thea was what you called me

I said I didn't need you anymore;  
But I do.  
I didn't know anything  
Until you showed me

What it is to have value and be listened to  
To have something in common  
Every thought and feeling  
I was your equal.

I have lived my life in shadows  
Until you turned on the light  
And let me see  
I am not just someone's wife.

But what do I do  
when the person who taught me how  
to love myself is  
no longer here?

What do you do with love when  
it doesn't have a home to stay?  
Loving isn't the same as understanding  
But you did both.

I am just a girl  
Who wanted to run;  
I just wanted to run to you  
And call that home.

I will live where you are;  
In another life  
Your brave, little Thea  
Will run  
And she won't ever go back  
(from where she came)

## Sonya

Sonya, my darling  
Be still  
and rest  
a moment

You're always worrying, my child  
Always working.  
Let me take some of your labor  
and give you some of my peace

You are loved, my darling  
Even if you can't see it, it's there  
He's hurting right now but papa loves you  
I just can't be the one to say it for the both of us anymore

Take care of Vanya, my dear  
Look out for him the way he wants to look out for you  
He's sad, Sonya  
Consumed by a love that won't love him back

Don't let him consume  
what will ruin him.  
Take away the poison.  
Remove the temptation.

As for you, little one  
Don't go looking in mirrors  
expecting to see what wasn't there before.  
You drink your own poison everyday

and you've been dealing with it alone  
No one understands your pain, but I do  
I see you torturing yourself  
and claiming happiness

Beauty won't make him love you, dear  
It's time to chop down the tree  
you've been growing for 20 years,  
pick up your seeds and plant them. somewhere else.

Don't spend the rest of *your* life suffering  
simply because he won't love you in *his*.  
Don't wait for heaven to experience happiness  
Don't wait for me.

Choose to live before you don't have the choice to die.  
I see your soul from up here, darling  
and you are good hearted, Sophie  
That was always more important than beauty anyway

Remember you are your mother's daughter  
Next time you go look in the mirror  
see my face staring back at you  
see what has *always* been with you, all along

You are beautiful, Sophie  
You never needed a man to say it to you  
but no one taught you to say it to yourself,  
until now

We are beautiful.

## **Blanche**

Pure Blanche  
had to let go of reality  
and trade it for magic  
only to reveal  
she wasn't so innocent after all.

No one  
seems to understand that  
a wilted rose  
can still be crushed.

All she wanted was  
kindness;  
but the Streetcar  
led her astray.

A stray  
was all she was.  
Always somewhere to go  
but never somewhere to stay.

Her desire was only  
filling in the gap  
between lust with everyone  
and love with no one.

## Maybe in Another Timeline

life would be simpler if I didn't know you existed.  
If I wasn't looking around corners  
or waiting in school hallways  
to hear you call my name.

Maybe in another timeline

this simple school girl  
supposed to be composed, (instead)  
failing as glass weakness,  
wouldn't be so fragile  
breaking into mirror pieces  
at the sight of you  
reflecting a we  
that doesn't exist together.

Maybe in another timeline

you'll pick up the little pieces  
of myself I leave with you and  
claim them as yours. But here,  
the pieces go unnoticed and  
fall to the ground like  
snow without wind  
until I no longer have feet  
to walk toward you, arms to  
hug you, eyes to see you,  
until suddenly it's as if  
I'm under a blank sheet  
bland near invisible  
buried here waiting  
for you  
to find me and  
plow away  
this heavy  
weight  
on  
my heart  
because I can't  
bear it  
anymore.



Maybe in another timeline

I won't have to bide my time  
until I can get another glimpse of you  
I will pick up the glass pieces  
I will form the whole damn mirror myself.  
All you have to do is  
stand in front of  
me.

Maybe  
In becoming  
Another person that's the only  
Time I forget about you among the  
Line of lies I need to pile high  
to cover the height of my obsession. You,  
make me hate the thing I love  
and for this I cannot forgive you  
and for this I cannot love you  
May be in an  
other  
timeline.



*I know you from a dream*

My body shivers in the cold night air while I wait for the quiet of slowing traffic, my signal to cross the busy divide. I see him standing across the street, his brown hair blowing in the wind. Every night he visits me in my dreams, calling my name, knowing I'd always leave my bed to go to him.

I take a step off the curb, then another, and another, quickening my steps as I close the distance. The familiarity is exciting. I know that as soon as I leap into his arms, I'll find happiness in his strong embrace.

"HEY!" I hear someone yell. Disoriented, I turn around to look at the voice as they try to swerve the wheel—

*WHAM!*

A deafening silence swirls through the street as everything screeches to a halt. For a few seconds, the only sound that fills the space is the slow descent of autumn leaves scratching the pavement.

He is gone. I can't see him anymore. I can't see. I'm blinded by the pain of the impact. My body lays in the street, broken. Are my eyes open or closed? Suddenly I feel nothing. I had just been on the brink of having everything. Did I wake up or did I die?

I don't know which I wanted less.

*Beep beep beeeeeeeeeeeep!* I feel myself being pulled through the deepest layers of my dream into reality. The beeping won't stop. I must be in the hospital. Unfamiliar voices echo sounds of concern, "Did she get up yet?"

"No."

"I'm starting to get worried."

"She has to get up soon, it's been awhile."

I can hear them talking about me. I'm relieved that I can't respond. This gives me more time to dream about him. All I will do from now on is dream.

Him. His brown hair the color of dark chocolate and blue eyes as green as the waters of Key West. Sometimes my hand gets tangled in the chocolate waves and stays, slowly smoothing out the surface. Can't help myself. I get lost in his two seas that adore gazing on me.

Life with him is a figment of my imagination. I dreamed up a man I can only see when my eyes are closed. It's not fair. He's perfect. Other men don't notice me. He notices me. Other men don't linger lovingly at my fingertips. He hates letting even the smallest parts of me go. So, I'm not going to give him the chance. No, no. I'm remaining with him this time. I will not lose his hug to mundane reality.

The dream always begins with a "Susannah" sweetly shouted from the street, waking me from my slumber. I jump out of bed, overlooking my shoes and coat on the way to the door. I just need to be with him. I run out, my white dress flowing behind me. Blades of green grass tickle the bottoms of my feet, teasing the tenacity of my step. As I reach the concrete curb, my toes curl to catch my balance while I wait for the signal.

He tells me I can walk. But I don't walk. I leap. I bound. I bolt. I skip. I sprint. I rush. I dart. I dash. I fly. I shoot like a star until he catches me.

Suddenly we're in a field—his arms a portal taking us to a place mere mortals could only dream of. Flowers fill the earth where there had once been grass.

"Breathe," he tells me.

I do. I breathe in the comforting chill of this place somewhere between nowhere and everywhere. A place that knows no time. Time is not relevant here. The only things that are counted are breaths and flowers and stars and the sparkles in his eyes when he looks at me, making it impossible to distinguish between him and the vast universe I admiringly stare up at.

"Stop looking at me," he whispers teasingly in my ear.

As he leans into me, my unashamed smile fits over his shoulder. I see a sea of stars speckling the sky.

"Count as many stars as you can and I'll match that amount in flowers," he earnestly promises.

“No, match that amount in breaths, in moments,” I desperately say, thinking, *how lucky am I to refuse a whole field of flowers. I have everything I could possibly need just by sleeping with him. Don't wake up. Freeze this perfect moment in time.* I realize there is no time here. *Oh shi—*

I count, and count, and count the stars, running frantically around trampling the flowers he offered me until I lose track in the millions, realizing I don't want to ever stop counting because I never want him to stop breathing. I never want to stop dreaming.

He halts me gently with his hand pressed lightly on my back, working its way up until it rests on my face, cupping my cheek.

“As long as we are here,” he breathes, “there will always be stars.”

Tears well in my eyes. If stars can't be counted, breaths are not limited. This moment is frozen. Out of time. Forever. He loves me.

He takes my hand and we begin dancing together, past the peonies, past the posies, the daisies and hydrangeas, lilies, tulips, and daffodils. He plucks a red rose and a blue iris, extending them out to me. No sooner does he present them I select the blue iris.

“It's in the name,” I flirt. “It reminds me of a certain someone's...”

He looks down, his eyelashes covering his blushing eyes.

I grin triumphantly. Two can play at this game of flattery.

We begin twirling around each other again until one body is indistinguishable from the other. The more breaths we share, the more we rise up into the cool night air. I have always wanted love to take me to the moon.

“I thought of something you can give me,” I coo. “That big, white ball, craters and all. This way even when it fades, I'll always know it is still there, watching over me.” He doesn't need to say anything for me to know that he would gift me the sun if it wouldn't burn my hands. I would've still held it until it destroyed me.

We float down to earth, but when we get there my feet feel pricking pavement. My gaze falls to the disappointment. I look back up at him with blazing eyes.

“No!” I shout.

This is how it always ends. He leaves me when I can’t keep them closed any longer. What was once him is now sky. What was once blue is now black. No stars in sight. No moon.

I’m not letting it happen this time.

Nothing will become between me and my dream.

Cars speckle the street as stars do the sky. I can cross to my lover one way or another.

I’m starting from the beginning. But this time, I’m not waiting for him to call me out of bed.

My body shivers in the cold night air while I wait for the quiet of slowing traffic, my signal to cross the busy divide. He will come. Even if I turn blue it will be for him. All for him. It’s all for him. I will wait until I see him. I will wait.

Forever feels freezing.

I see him standing across the street, his brown hair blowing in the wind. I take a step off the curb, then another, and another, quickening my steps as I close the distance.

I race toward the strong embrace. I hear a car coming. Turning toward it—

I fall out of love.

“I can’t breathe,” I choke.

I open my eyes. No one is there.

Pitch black appears. All I see is darkness.

This time, I did not wait for the signal. The traffic never stopped. I couldn’t take it anymore. I was just standing there by the side of the street, waiting for something, someone that was never going to come. Because he never existed in the first place. My back is only held by concrete, my face only touched by blood. There is no hospital, only a death bed.

I wish I could say I sleepwalked, but I just didn’t want it to be a dream anymore.

A part of me hoped he would be here for this. For me. This is why true love is only found in dreams.

*Well, maybe the moon is watching.*

I take my last breath. *Will I still dream when I’m de—*

Beeeeeeppppppppp.

All stars burn out eventually.

## Moonscape Mate

### I

there's a ghost in my house  
where the feet meet the stairs

a ghost in my house  
that brushes black hairs

ghost in my house  
dares to share stares

in my house  
where lays lairs

my house  
for bares

house  
mares

### II

room  
gloom

my room  
doom soon

in my room  
she moon looms

ghost in my room  
scaped from her tomb??

a ghost in my room  
makes me cocooned goon

there's a ghost in my room  
and i'm wondering whom

### III

there's a ghost in my bed  
breathing sick on my head

a ghost in my bed  
who craves to be fed

ghost in my bed  
breeds me with dread

in my bed  
there is red

my bed  
i bled

bed  
fled

there's a ghost in my house



## *All the Things That Were Known But Never Said*

Hey you,

We haven't talked in awhile. I was beginning to forget what your handwriting looked like. So foreign. The squiggly way you write your s'. Self deprecating humor shared on every corner down memory lane. I know you. We grew up together. Don't forget about the time ~~you got cast in your first dance performance and came out running to the car showing everyone your name on the list~~ you were happy.

I'm just gonna say it. You're not doing well. Kinda terrible actually. Is that mean? I think we were taught to be kind to ourselves. But it might be too late for that lol. ~~Kindness only means accepting everything that's wrong.~~ Maybe I don't want to be. Maybe I don't know how. Maybe being mean is the only way to cope ~~with the mean people~~. I figured (the not doing well) is just a fact at this point and I know you hate when people lie to you so I thought I'd spare the resentment and just tell it to you straight. What are you doing? Please tell me what's happening because as much as you hate when people lie to you, why are you lying to yourself? To me? Who are you protecting? And why isn't it me/you?

You aren't showing up to school—that's not normal. You're not normal. Never been. It's not ok. Never was. Not when you were the only one who wasn't dancing at the father-daughter dance in 7th grade. Just stood there like a fucking tree. I know why, even then, I knew. It's scary to stand out. And I know standing still haunts you because that's when everything around you moves, ~~and you just have to let him~~. I've never forgotten how your face changed at the dance—too sad for anyone to look at without a warning label first. Your best friend couldn't look at you. What does that make me? Anyway, it's senior year! It's supposed to be fun! Why did your dad have to pull you out? You could at least finish high school. Fucking failure. It's like he was sick or something. I really miss you. Sorry I haven't been nicer, I think I sorta forgot how after I lost you.

*I'm beginning to go crazy writing this, asking questions, expecting to get answers right now. I guess letters don't work that way. But God, if they did, I'd remind you that I deserve to know everything. You're better than this. I mean what about when it was spirit day at school in 5th grade and it was deathly hot, you could feel your sweat drenched in skin from the sweltering heat of the sun (or from that guy Todd who thought standing next to people would be a good idea. It was not). You were always so sensitive to heat and it was such a dumb rule but we were only allowed to take one little water bottle so that everyone could get one. But that's the thing: not everyone got one. During water break, you were so red in the face as if Chris Hemsworth had made an unexpected appearance to cheer on our legendary game of tug-o-war. Yeah like he'd do that again. But no! It was because you gave your water to that girl who also looked like she was going to faint. And now that girl is our friend, Bethany. So there. There's a sunny story about how I know you're a good person. Because you share your water. Now fess up. Why are you lying?*

*Shall I remind you of another time you lied and that literally only made your life worse. Just gave him more fuel. You were asking for it, right? Went looking for it. You didn't wanna be different so you became it even more. 8th grade party...Peter...and Micah...and ME. Girl I don't even wanna write this but I fear you're forcing my hand. Soooooo you were hooking up with Micah and everyone knew that. I knew that. You knew that. Micah obviously knew that. Peter literally knew that. But you flirted with Peter. And then KISSED him. Why'd you do that like literally why. Because then everyone found out. So that was just dumb. And then you put dumb on top of dumb. You made dumb look dumb. You told everyone you had a brain tumor that made you make craaaazy choices that you couldn't control. And that's the only reason why you'd ever kiss Peter. So then Peter got upset and went home and told his parents and then his parents called your parents and then your parents called Maevé's parents and then you were forced to go home ~~and you remember what happened there...~~and then all the parents were calling all the parents and then all the parents ended the party because then there was no one left. Now that was just dumb*

because Peter was literally a better kisser than Micah. Did you think being unkind would make you fit in? Is that what he taught you? ~~Showed you?~~ Once again, he was wrong. So stop lying.

Do you remember the last day we really connected? That warm early September day, right before Junior year started. It was the last day I felt like I really knew you. And we were laying down in my backyard looking up at the chestnut trees, like always. Our moms planted us by the roots of those trees when we were babies and watched us grow up there until we could stand on our own. No matter the weather, sunshine or shade, anyone could find us there, always looking up. God knows we already spent enough time looking at each other. But yeah, that was our place we'd go to feel hope. Our hopeful place. Backs atop grass, arms out, eyes up. Grounded and reaching high at the same time. Promise me you'll go back there. Find hope for yourself again. The trees are always there for you even when people aren't.

Anyway, I knew something was different that day. My point of all this is that you didn't even have to tell me, I still knew. I knew when you came to my house at 1 AM crying saying you would never go home again. I knew at school when you couldn't raise your hand in class because you were scared people would see. I knew at your mom's funeral that you'd never feel safe again. It was really bad that day looking up at the trees because you weren't looking up, your eyes were closed, shutting off the hope. There was cold all around you, yet I was sweating. I could see our childhood slipping away right in front of me, buried by the grave where your mother escaped what you couldn't. I said, "If he ever touches you again, I'll kill him."

Apparently that was the wrong thing to say because I didn't see you after that. Not really. You were someone different. I saw what everyone else saw and that was a shell. How could I know that you were the only one allowed to hate him? He made you feel like everyone else was the enemy. So you pushed away everyone, even your best friend. Why were you lying when I already knew? We grew up together, remember? You tell me everything, remember? It's not right to lie to your best fucking friend when she already knows everything. So I'll ask you again. One last time. Why are you lying to yourself?

*I know this. I know all these things. I know. I KNOW. I just need to SAY it. Or write it at least.*

*I don't want to be different. I don't want to scream silently with the voices echoing only in my ears.*

*He burned the list. He took the cast list from me and he burned it. Tore it to pieces ~~just like me~~. Tore it to pieces just like me. Tore my insides when they became outsides. Of him. He took everything. Except for when he forced himself. On me. In me. All around me and mom.*

*I never danced again.*

*I was never normal.*

*My dad is not a good person. A mean person. My dad is mean. He could only give scars and the worst part of himself.*

*I know it was his fault. There. I said it. His fault. Nothing was ever mine.*

*Somewhere along the way I didn't know who I was writing this to or for anymore. I'd be surprised if anyone wrote to me at this point, so I just wrote to myself. Here are all the things I wish you'd say to me, Lana. Or all the things I needed to say to myself. I just wanted to feel cared about again. I wish it had been you there that last day by the trees. He took away the only place I felt safe. Maybe I'd still be in school.*

*The rumors are true, yes. I'm in a mental hospital. No, you don't need to kill him. He did that himself. Can't wait to see you again. And the trees.*

*P.S. I have a brain tumor.*

*Brought to you by my new best friend—my journal,*

*A letter to me from you, written by me*

## Unrequited Collection

I wish you would know  
how much  
I love you  
and I wouldn't have to suffer  
this agony  
of not being able to tell you how  
I indescribably good  
Looking  
You  
are  
in your shirt  
tonight.

---

Water  
drops  
on shower curtains are  
watchful eyes in  
vulnerable spaces  
they see me cry  
I see them cry  
free  
rivers run  
this grief of ours  
fills a  
basin  
that knows no  
bottom  
nor end  
marking the passage of  
clouds spent  
alone  
together  
until someone new  
turns the waterworks  
off

## **Tiny**

my heart is snowed in  
i wait here  
impatiently  
for You  
to plow away the heavy weight

but You don't  
even see  
me pulsing  
beneath  
layers and layers  
of Tiny Things  
that can be melted  
Tiny Things  
that can be blown away by You  
plowed away

Tiny Things  
start to hurt  
start to cut  
start to make skin bleed

Now You notice the Tiny Things  
because the Tiny Things are a  
pool of blood  
my blood  
You notice my blood  
my blood my blood  
it's mine  
don't be afraid to step in it  
bathe in it  
drink it

there you touched it  
You touched my blood  
You touch me  
You touched me

finally now was that so hard

so how come You saw the tiny things  
but you never saw Me

## **Maybe In Another Timeline (Reprise)**

life would be simpler if I didn't know he existed.  
If I wasn't looking around corners  
or scurrying around school hallways  
to avoid hearing him call my name.

Maybe in another timeline

I wouldn't be weak and glass  
shattering into mirror pieces  
at the sight of him  
reflecting the torment he puts me through  
everytime he looks at me.

Maybe in another timeline

he'll pick up the little glass pieces of myself  
I leave scattered behind and claim them as his  
so they will cut him when he tries to touch me.  
But the pieces go unnoticed  
and fall to the ground like  
snow without wind  
Until I no longer have feet  
to walk away  
arms to push, eyes to close  
Until suddenly I'm a blank sheet  
printed on the floor by his press  
Until suddenly I'm nothing  
waiting here for him to stop  
writhing on me  
because I can't  
do anything  
anymore.

Maybe in another timeline

He would know  
how much  
I hate him  
and I wouldn't have to suffer  
this agony  
of not being able to tell him how  
Indescribably terrible he looks



Leaning in for the kiss  
He so desperately wants to take  
not give  
You are nothing  
to me  
no  
more.

Maybe in another timeline

I won't have to bide my breath  
Until I never have to see you again.  
I will pick up the glass pieces  
I will plunge them into your heart myself.  
All you have to do is  
stand there  
and suffer  
and feel  
that same torment  
You made Me feel.

Maybe  
In becoming  
Another plastic person, that's the only  
Time I can be dropped and not break.  
Line up the plastic pins  
Your bowling ball  
will not knock  
me down  
like the  
others.

**sad existence**

the saddest part of my existence  
is thinking of the possibility  
of you no longer  
existing

i think of your death during the day  
so that it does not haunt me at night

that's the saddest part



