

Happiness By Charity Swanwick

“Lose yourself in the music, the moment, you own it, you better never let it go,” the famous words of Eminem. *“Lose yourself in the music,”* one of my many pastimes. I love the sounds of bass drops, electric guitars, and the English language being spit out like watermelon seeds on a summer day. I enjoy the sad feeling of seclusion, like I’m the only one on this 14 billion year old speck. I sink my head into the seatbelt and close my eyes; this is what happiness feels like.

I imagine myself in a cave. I am surrounded by speakers and roses. The roses are ten feet high and in full bloom. The speakers are at their loudest volume, and I can feel the vibrations. I am oblivious to the outside world and its sounds. I’m suddenly lying down on top of this bed of flowers, greeted with the overpowering smell that is almost intoxicating. It’s a good feeling, having the deep red petals embrace my 116 pound mass. Every so often I feel a sharp thorn in my side, but it is nowhere near painful. Finally my weight is too much for the petals. My body is now caressed by thorns. I’m bleeding out, like a river of ketchup. My body’s numb, and I lie there, staring at the sky of red above me. Just when my body starts to feel shots of pain, the floor gives out. I fall once again, my tarnished form now plummeting into the abyss.

I open my eyes to see the glass window of my car. I can see the rain drops trickling down, and I imagine two NASCAR racers careening for the finish line. The rain starts to come down in blinding white sheets, and I can see no further than 10 feet. My mom is saying something, but I ignore her. What could she possibly have to say that is more important than this? I close my eyes once more and let the power of sleep overtake me.

Skidding, Spinning, and Sliding; the three S’s that perfectly describe hydroplaning. After all, that’s what we are doing right? Looking out the window, I see nothing but the blurred surroundings of my car. I still can’t hear anything, but I can see my mom screaming and reaching for me. Before I can do anything, my side of the car wraps around a tree. I look at my mom, and hear her utter the words, “I love you.” Her face is the last thing I see. There is no pain, only the expiration of my life; it wasn’t more than that was it? My life was no more important than a gallon of expired milk.

Music, that’s all I hear. Then I hear the crying and recognize some of it. I can hear my mother; a silent huff and puff of sobs. I can hear many more, yet they are all a chorus in harmony, and my mom is off key. I open my eyes. I am met with a bird’s eye view of a funeral. The people are so familiar. I can see the roses on the casket, red as blood and oozing with that intoxicating smell. I see my mom, brother, and sisters hovered together in an awkward Christmas photo pose. I look down at the picture resting on the blossoms. It’s me, my school picture from freshman year. I intently watch as my niece, Carissa, makes her way to the casket. Her tears are silent, coming down her face like the steady drip of a faucet. She watches my pale face hoping it’s a dream, waiting for me to jump out and give her a piggyback ride. But I can’t, and she knows. She takes

my hand in hers and weeps. The pain is too much for her to bear and she collapses to her knees. Her silent tears become breathless sobs. My nephew, her brother, Luke, immediately runs to her aid. She leans into his shoulder and they weep together. I scream their names in some unavailing hope that they'll hear me. I long to wrap my arms around them, to comfort them, to reassure them that I loved them and that it will be okay. But I can't. I have to stand there and watch my family fall apart.

It's hard to see my family cry, and I suddenly have the urge to comfort them. I jump off of my nonexistent balcony and fall. It takes forever, and I never feel the thud of my back against the wood. Instead I feel the soft cushions of the interior of a casket. I'm trapped. I push, but I have no arms. I shove, but I have no shoulder. I kick, but I have no legs. I'm a bottomless pit, left only with a soul.

Abruptly, the casket is hoisted into the air. The wooden body is tilted with precision, until it rests in the soft soil. I hear the mounds of dirt being thrust into the crater. It sounds like marbles scattering across the living room floor. Knowing I am stranded, I decide to take a look at my corpse. I turn around and see my face. It's like looking in a mirror, but now I see what I have really become. My face is pale, the color of eggnog. My skin is sulking, like a velvet curtain. They have clothed me in the dress I was supposed to wear to winter formal. I can't say it looks as good as it did in the dressing room; after all, it is on a corpse.

An enormous hand scoops me up and places me in its palm. It's warm, comforting, and humbling. Whoever this hand belongs to, I'm not afraid of them. I want to feel anger, aggression, something, but I can't. I try and force myself to, but there's nothing, only peace. I fall into the realm of slumber.

I open my eyes for the fourth time and see my dad; the father who died of pancreatic cancer when I was 4 is within arm's length. I fall to my knees and land at his feet. I weep, only gasping for air every few seconds. My heart is overwhelmed with humility and joy. His hands lift me to my feet and wrap around my shoulders. He pulls away a few inches and gives me a butterfly kiss on the nose, just like he used to. "I've missed you Charity; I missed so many father daughter dances, birthdays, and special moments. But now you're home. I love you, and I always will."

No, this is happiness.

Written by Charity Swanwick