

Seven Minutes

by Summer Jackson

They say the human brain continues to live for seven minutes after the body is dead to replay its happiest memories. The mind remains active; meanwhile the heart is completely still. It makes me wonder what I'll think about. If I were to die today, what thoughts would occupy my seven minutes?

Would I be able to hear the flicker of the switch as it turned the lights on or the crackle of campfire as it flared shades of bright red and orange when the sparks floated up into the sky and somehow disappeared to be no more than just another star, illuminating my sleepless nights, burning what would later become my last marshmallow?

Would I think about the times you made me laugh, all my crooked teeth showing, no longer hidden behind my lips, which would later become forever closed inside my casket?

Would I think about the times we sang as loud as we could to our favourite songs when they came on the radio, which you had purchased just for me because, even though I could have easily connected my phone to the car and played my favourite song on repeat, you noticed how I liked the thrill of not knowing what would be next?

Would I think about the time you wanted to go outside and dance in the middle of the shining wet road in the pouring rain, but it took you too long to put on your navy blue raincoat, yet you went outside anyway even after the rain had stopped and danced under the old maple tree in the water droplets that were caught in the chartreuse-coloured new spring leaves?

Would I think about how you recounted all the stories from the 600-page romance and fantasy novels you read every night in the dim white glow of the small flashlight you kept beside your pillow, which I know I may have seemed bored with while listening, but I swear on my last seven minutes I really didn't know how much I would be missing hearing you talk about what happened in Chapter Four?

Would I think about how you missed the turn to the grocery store and passed an old billboard advertising a berry farm only thirty minutes from where we were, and then somehow, we ended up in the car missing more turns while eating freshly picked dark-red strawberries?

Would I think about how you complimented my eyes and told me you loved the bright blue hues that showed around the edges of the rest of their stone-cold gray and how after that I suddenly stopped wearing light-brown, natural-looking theatrical contact lenses?

Would I think about the way I used to critique myself in the mirror until I was biting my misshapen lips, trying to hold back tears because I was disgusted by the way I looked when I cried until that one day I wore my white fake wool sweater and dark-blue loose-cut jeans, and we went outside at lunch and I was twirling on the pavement singing my favourite song and you told me I looked beautiful?

Would I think about the secret elegies I wrote in my notes app, which practically begged you to stay so I might as well have been on my knees or how in the end they didn't really end up mattering because, regardless of how I sounded like a Hollywood actor reading a well-written

monologue, I never actually got the courage to say them to anyone but myself in the bathroom mirror?

Would I think about the phrase ‘I love you’ and how I threw it around so casually because, although I have had nightmares more terrifying than anything that’s ever shown on TV, I could never have expected to *ever* have to speak the horror of having to add ‘goodbye’ on the end of that sentence?

Would I think about how you were like a lighthouse that lit up my sea of self-pity and tossed a buoy to save me from drowning in the raging ocean waves of consternation or how you were the abundant glimmering ivy that grew over my old brick wall and kept it from crumbling?

Would I think about the way it felt when you hugged me, the way it felt like all my problems were suddenly nothing but dust, and I was finally safe from all the fears that haunted me in the silence of the night while I was in your warm embrace?

Would I become so consumed by panegyricizing the way you were the only one who was ever able to make me feel like I was worth anything at all and made me truly believe that I actually deserved to be loved when I was at my lowest and my heart was sinking down into the deepest pits of my empty stomach, how you were the only one who ever made me feel truly confident in myself and how you not only took that confidence with you when you left but also took the smile you gave me, and the safety I was finally able to feel, and how you took with you the only seven minutes I had that were worth replaying when you switched off the light in one final flicker before you left?

I know exactly what my seven minutes would be, and I know exactly who would be featured throughout all of them. I don’t expect to be *your* seven minutes. If I were, you would probably still be here creating an eighth minute with me. I won’t ask for a lifetime, I won’t even ask for seven minutes. I just ask that I am at least one of your ‘what I would think abouts’ as you were all of mine, and I pray you know that before I’m in my seven minutes, not a single second would be wasted on anyone else.

* * * * *

Summer Jackson
Grade 9

Adam Scott Collegiate Vocational Institute