

Poetry

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For Garrett

He shows me tie-dyed compression socks folded neatly in his duffel bag. Tells me how despite the pain, seeing the colors make him smile. I ask him why he is always so happy. He says his friends all made it back to camp this year, that no one moved to heaven. He says DMD is nothing more than a monster, and that heroes, especially the fast ones, always win. He says this proudly while heading to the door, walking on his toes, stomach pushed out, shoulders stretched back. Race me, he yells, as his legs shake slightly, a grin on his face.

I visit him the next summer. It is an hour's drive from the city, soaked in cornfields and hay. His mother pushes him out on a wheelchair, and he rolls himself down the long gravel driveway. His socks are bright orange, like a sunset, and I ask him if that is his favorite color. He tells me blue is, because it reminds him of the sky, and of where he can run and sing in a few years. I tell him to not say such horrible things. He kicks me in the shin, tells me to not take life so seriously. He tells me to push him, and to push him fast, even though his doctor said to never race. I strap him in, make sure his legs are comfortable, and off we go. Briefly, all I can hear is the wind and laughter, kept in tempo by the pebbles crunching underneath. I look down at him. His eyes are closed, his arms are out. I tell him he is a wild one and ask if I will see him at camp in a few weeks. He tells me he would not miss it for the world.

As I am checking in the campers, I receive the news. Is it like that when we lose one another? On the weekend I stop by his house. I see his blue socks, crumpled on the floor, strands of hair sticking out at angles. As I walk among the saplings outside, I can almost hear his song. I look up, see the clouds darting around, the trees briefly touching. And suddenly, I feel warm from the feeling of waking, of walking through an outlet to the heart and knowing someone is there on the other side, laughing with me. Here, he whispers thank you, and asks me to race. I smile, close my eyes, and begin running alongside him.