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### SECTION INTRO: Life's Intangibles

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# Life's Intangibles

“Be prepared to attend a lot of funerals.” Those were the only words my brother uttered to me as we sat in the backseat of my family’s Toyota Camry. We were driving to the mall to purchase suits that my father and brother could wear to the funeral of my great aunt who just passed away. I stared at him, shocked he could say something so insensitive. It was as if he were jinxing our family, condemning everyone to death. But he was right. Our relatives were approaching “that age.”

That year death knocked on my family’s door and took us for a ride. But my grandmother’s brief encounter with him was most difficult.

I was studying abroad in Strasbourg, France and wanted a small favor from my mother. But when I Skyped her, she responded that she had no time in the midst of preparing for her trip to China. My mother never took vacations. The reason she was abruptly doing so: My grandmother was in critical condition. Like my great aunt, she had caught pneumonia. This was her second diagnosis with it, and the combination of her previous and current prescriptions didn’t allow her to be given any-

thing new. Doctors said she wouldn’t make it past the end of the week.

A part of me had always believed that my grandmother was immortal. She raised me. I had never spent a day away from her before I left for college. If she were gone, I don’t know what I’d do. My brother’s “prophecy” suddenly hit me. Death and disease are inevitable.

One day, death will strike. Sometimes he wins; sometimes we do, gaining only a few more days, weeks, months, or years. I lit a candle for my grandma at the Notre Dame Cathedral that night. And by some miracle she pulled through. She survived but her body is weak. Any moment could be her last. Death and disease are inevitable. We will all experience or witness it. The pain may seem unbearable. But when we learn to accept and learn to cope with it, we grow stronger; we become survivors in our own light.

This next section deals with these intangibilities, overcoming them and finding self-liberation in the midst of them.

—Amy Li, Editor

Layout by Matt Kovac. "Family Portrait" by Flickr user bignoseduglyguy, Joe Dunning, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/59999295@N00/3574478709/>.

I wonder what Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David Thoreau would say about us now. Society in 2012. People always talking on their cellphones, playing games on their hand-held devices, watching movies on laptops. I wonder if they would appreciate our willingness to be alone and disconnected from society, or frown upon our dependence on material things.

In this section, writers wrestle with their own existential ideas. By getting a glimpse into the lives of these young authors, you as readers can feel and experience the struggles and embraces of "Life's Intangibles."

Deep things. Deeper than Facebook statuses and Twitter mentions, cellphones and MacBooks. These pieces are about the things in life that make or break the people we are, the people we were, and the people we will become. It's what shapes our values to contribute to the legacy we one day hope to leave.

We as humans share many emotions: happiness and rage, jealousy and embarrassment; to be is to feel. Writers harness those emotions and turn them into words and works of art. The authors in this section have mas-

tered that idea miraculously.

We, the writers, are the next Emersons and Thoreaus. This section may not have all the answers you're looking for, of course. They may not dry your tears or induce tears at all. But if they make you question, if they make you think, even for a moment, they're all worth it.

—Annie Licata  
Editor