

The Red Shoe

Saige Anderson

Dull stars,
coated by clouds.
Nature's nightlights
suffocated by
rolling thunder.
The moon trapped
behind a wall of mist,
unable to illuminate
the sea thrashing below,
its depths a darkness that
accompanies death.
Waves capped in white
ricochet off rocky cliffsides,
merciless as misery.

Hidden amongst the
water's push and pull,
a single red sneaker
bobs amongst the waves,
flashes of color popping
up here and there.
Laces once tied by
scarred hands, now tinted
brown, float aimlessly
around the flooded sole,
stained by miles of
torment trekked through.
Isolated, lost by the foot
that bloodied it, that
plagued it with pain.

Under the waves, the
screaming of the wind
falls to silence. The
beasts of the deep
plunge their teeth,
ripping fiercely and
pulling down towards
oblivion's awaiting jaws,
to the cold that numbs,
where it's too late
to be saved. But
over and over the shoe
resurfaces, still alone,
forced closer and closer
to the jagged rocks of the
towering cliffside until its
inevitable imprisonment.

Bitter sea salt hangs damp
in the air, one that leaves lips
chapped, lungs gasping, and
throats burning. The wind
whispers now, carrying
secrets of those lost as
waves continue to crash.
Even as the sky beckons
the shoe back towards
the dangers of the sea,
it stays, a red mass caught
between the sharp edges of
the rocks – a warning to all,
a reminder of one.

Holocaust

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The wind pulls me away from those who raised me. They brought me light but now we head towards the dark, as if the sun itself has ceased to burn.

The wind won't let me join them. They file into a line separate from mine as my bones themselves rattle beneath my skin.

"Go this way," whispers the wind. Dragging me back when my feet try to wander away. It pushes me to the ground, screaming into my ears—a gust so sharp I let loose a shout of my own.

A stinging pain shoots its way through my limbs, like bolts of lightning electrocuting me as my knees hit the ground. The wind doesn't like when you fight back, it whips harder in return.

I try to remember my faith, to stay true to it all. But the blood dripping from my ears when the wind howls and squeals that I am wrong floods my mind, washing away my prayers.

A strong burst of the wind, cold on our bare skin, shoves us into the large shower. My hands quiver in this sea of people but at least I'll be able to wash that blood away.

But now I wish for the wind to return. For even though it threatened me, it was better than this stagnant air. I can't breathe. A chorus of coughs echo across the walls as I sink to the ground.

Death sings a happy song, stretching its hand out to cup my cheek. In the warm breeze much gentler than the torrent I leave behind me, the glow of a yellow star now fades into the dark.