Warmth spread across my body, cradling me in a blanket of both comfort and fear. I closed my eyes and dreamt of what our life could be. I released a breath of air, reopened my eyes, and looked into the mirror. The white button up hugged my arms, the black suit jacket creating a rich and tasteful outfit. I've been swimming in money ever since I was born and disagreed with the quote, "money can't buy happiness". Being the captain of the football team with a beautiful girlfriend and scholarships to Ivy league schools is everything anyone might want.

When looking into the mirror, however, I don't see myself. My father's raging drunk eyes digs into my soul leaving tattoos of mental illnesses. Although I promised my mother I wouldn't be like him, I find myself every night with a bottle of beer and a blinding headache. People tell me to quit but it leaves me more bloody and bruised than I was. I never talked about my issues, never once mentioned my drinking problem to anyone besides my girlfriend. She promised me that when high school was over that she would help me. Grace has been the only person to stay by my side through thick and thin; picking me off the ground when I was lying in my own vomit, caressing my head to sleep when I had nightmares. I have never loved anyone as deeply as my desire to live the rest of my life with her. She was my home.

Prom was the milestone before graduation. It marked the straightaway before my life truly began. I had promised Grace that I would not drink today and would continue the long and treacherous journey to freedom. This was my starting point.

Jogging down the stairs, I grabbed a bottle of water and my keys.

"Jacob!" My father's voice rang through the echoey corridors. I tried to ignore him as I headed for the front door. "Don't you walk away from me, boy!" I slowly turned around, heading back to the living room.

"Yes, sir?"

"Where do you think you're going?" He questioned.

"Prom is tonight, sir. I have to pick up Grace before I go."

He burped, grabbing a half empty bottle from the side table. "Well," he paused as if thinking about what to say next, "grab me another bottle before you leave."

"I'm not going to do that, Dad," I said.

The rest was a blur. Shards of glass and beer splattered across my face spraying the wall behind me. My dad's shouts grew louder as he rolled off the couch.

"You're a fake, Jacob! Everything you have is because of me! You're nothing!" He boomed. Those were the last things I heard as I walked out, slamming the door behind me.

This wasn't a masquerade prom but I felt the need to put on my happy mask before getting out of the car. It's cold stone molded to my face as if it was put on too many times. Every step taken towards Grace's front door felt heavier and heavier. The lights seemed too bright and the pathway felt longer than usual. I ring the doorbell and it vibrates my brain until I'm dizzy. She answered the door and I suddenly felt that warm feeling all over again. She was gorgeously dressed in a long red gown with a necklace that made her eyes sparkle. Her lips were covered in a thin line of gloss and her eyes were glistening with eyeshadow. The mask fell revealing my true emotion: love.

On the way to prom, I couldn't get what my father said out of my head. *Everything you have is because of me! You're nothing!* Though I'm used to his drunken behavior, this struck me; hard. *I* got my grades. *I* earned captain of the football team. *I* earned my scholarships. Working for myself is what got me here. I refused to become a drunk who couldn't accept the future and wallowed in his pain. Peering over at my girlfriend I smile and it feels good. She means the world to me and I

wouldn't be able to live without her. To wake up without her would be impossible. I didn't deserve her but she saw something in me that I never saw in myself. She was my knight in shining armor, my prince charming, my juliet. I would treat her better than my father could treat anyone.

The next few seconds were a haze. I remember Grace pulling on my arm bringing me back into reality, the blaring of a car's horn growing louder and louder. Her screams and cries ringing in my ear. She's screaming for me to slow down but I wasn't going that fast, was I? The steering wheel felt like ice piercing into my hands, freezing them into place. I looked into Grace's eyes for one last time as the car's headlights made them brighten and shine.

Maybe if I hadn't been so distracted or if I had grabbed a bottle of water instead of alcohol I might have gotten us there safely. No one wants to see their loved one crushed by the car you were driving or taste your own blood as it fills your mouth and lungs. Maybe if I hadn't stopped to talk to my father. Maybe if I had gotten the bottle for him. Maybe--just maybe--everything would be okay. I guess money doesn't buy happiness because I had everything I wanted and I still managed to die unhappy. Warmth spread across my body, cradling me in a blanket of both comfort and fear. I closed my eyes and dreamt of what our life could have been.