
LINDA OATMAN HIGH
WARNING:
MATURE CONTENT
"CELEBRATING YOUTHFUL CURIOSITY, DISCOVERY AND LEARNING THROUGH BOOKS AND READING"
Moonbeam
Children's
Book Awards
TEENY
LITTLE
GRIEF
MACHINES

Ticking … Tocking

My name is Lexi
(rhymes with sexy)
McLeen, sixteen,
and this is what I

believe:

we are each

Teeny Little
Grief Machines …

ticking …
tocking …

bombs
programmed to explode …

if we have not

already

detonated.

My Entire Family Is a Disease

Dad: Alcoholic. Depressive.
Borderline Personality Disorder.

Stepmom: Anorexic. Anger Issues. Bipolar.

The two of them together:

hoarders of cigarettes
and lottery tickets
that never win.

Blaine: Autistic. ADHD.

And me:
artistic.

That's what *they* say
anyway.

I paint
in shades
of blue.

The poetry
is just so

I

don't

explode.

Once I Carved H-A-T-E on My Arm

With scissors.

Just the tip.

Skimming.

Slicing lightly.

A tiny silver nip
of skin.

They thought

I must be a

cutter,

but I wasn't.

There was no knife.

I just
hated
my
life.

It All Started

After we lost
the Baby.

It wasn't our fault.
Carissa,
my little sister,

just died in her white crib
in my bedroom
one night.

Peacefully, in her sleep, all tucked in,
bundled, swaddled, surrounded by pink
princess bumper pads and soft fuzzy blankets.
She wasn't on her stomach.

I can still see her face, sweet,
pink-cheeked,
eyes closed, baby butterflied eyelashes like
tiny splayed paintbrushes wisping her face.
She wasn't breathing. I checked for breath.

Crib Death.

And I think she would have been
Normal
otherwise.

Bed Death

She was so pretty,
that bitty little sister of mine.

Just three weeks lived;
now one year dead.

I can't get her no-breath
face out of my head.

Sometimes I wish
we'd all just

get

Bed Death.

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

In one big lump of sob and weep.

Why was she taken in the night?
And when do *I* get some morning light?

Mourning …
Light?

I know, right?

Sometimes …

Life …

Bites.

The Sensory Details of Carissa Grace

Carissa Grace
was her name.

Carissa Grace McLeen:
three weeks
newly seen
in this obscene
old world.

Sometimes at night,
before I get a chance

to fight
the intense
memories,

I get swept
into the sensory
details
of Carissa Grace.

(Sensory details
are cool tools
for poets
to use,

but I mostly choose
to try to forget
the sensory

when it comes to
my little sister.)

When I'm swept
into Memory Land,
though, like crumb specks
into the dustpan of nighttime sky,
I'm mostly flooded with
the love,
cuddling
warm and soft,
to nuzzle the Baby

next to my chest.

We slept together
on my bed once,
her small body pressed
against mine.

Me flat on my back,
Carissa snuggly belly,
two heartbeats,
baby head,

soft breath
against
my neck.

Wisps of duck-fuzz hair,
whispery lips, chubby,
nubby-footed pajamas.

Baby Magic
soap smell,
powdery, clean,
sweet.

That was Carissa Grace.

She smelled like angels,

as if she came straight
from another place.

I wish she'd stayed.

The Stepmom Tanya

The stepmom—Tanya—eventually
became even
more evilish
after Carissa
died.

Anorexia ate her
alive.

Her bipolar disorder
became even more
disorganized.

Plus she just
generally
sucks.

She's dumb,
and how can I trust

somebody

who can’t even spell

anything

right?

Tanya's List of Chores for Lexi

Sweep kichen floor.
Toylet needs cleaned more.
Wipe bathroom dore.

I wonder if Tanya
can spell the word
"whore."

I
really
don't
care

… anymore.

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