



“Curse Margin” by Eowyn Garringer
3rd Place, Informal Essay 13-15

Curse Margin 1

First I should warn you, I have a lot to tell about these boys. Second I should warn you that, in truth, I've forgotten more of it than I care to admit. Third I should warn you that I can be very melodramatic. It wasn't as serious as all that, but I am as serious as all that when it comes to Them.

This is the incomplete story of the evening before Curse Margin left us.

First, some introductions.

Curse Margin: Indescribable. You really would have to be there. He loved a sports team that constantly disappointed him. He loved all animals under the sun, except ducks. He was afraid of ducks. At the very beginning, so long ago the exact events are lost to time, we were enemies but he became my padawan in time. Best friend of Juliana. They were constantly having massive fights, but they couldn't survive without each other. If he's reading this, he should remember to be himself. Not in a cheesy way, but on a very practical level. Also, please avoid putting the black rubbery stuff they use to fix cracks in the asphalt anywhere near your mouth. It didn't kill you the first time but luck eventually runs out.

Juliana: The closest thing to a real life main character I have ever seen. Our group didn't work without him. I would elect him president even if he ran republican. Constantly arguing with everyone. Had older sibling energy despite being second in his families birth order. Good at sports. Smart. Didn't like to cry in-front of people. Best friend of Curse Margin. Juliana, if you're reading this, don't become your dad, no matter how much you love him. You will change the world, the only question is how.

Golden boy: My brother. I haven't lost him yet so there's not much to commemorate.

Add yours truly and you have The Big Three. The Big Three was outlawed by Juliana's parents and frowned upon by his siblings, but that was very much on brand for the type of thing it was.

I could talk about the before-times for ages, but its only a story when things start to get sad. One day(Well, one week but close enough) both of their families were just- moving away.

Just leaving all of a sudden.

They were so casual about it. It probably wasn't the end of the world for the rest of them. Probably nowhere close.

We just silently came to the understanding we would pretend it wasn't ever going to happen. When we did acknowledge it the conversation usual included discussion of disabling the cars or somehow trapping their families in their houses with a number of convoluted schemes, most involving arson.

One thing led to another and we stumbled into our last day with Curse Margin like sleepwalkers. It was well past noon when it hit us. Me and Curse Margin were hanging out and we finally realized 'Shit, this is actually happening.'

Somebody suggested we walk to the Whataburger down the street. Thankfully, his clueless parents seemed to understand on some level that this was important. Juliana's parents didn't see it that way, which hurt us pretty badly. We all loved him. Golden Boy declined our invitation to join us, but my smallest brother accepted. He was losing Curse Margin too. We gathered up some cash and set off in a hurry. The sun was threatening to set on us already.

It didn't *really* sink in that we had less than 48 hours of him left. I don't think things like that are truly real until they happen.

We talked about a whole lot of absolutely nothing. Sports, trading cards, school and whatever meme he had latched onto that week. Anything to keep talking, anything at all.

Curse Margin got really nervous. He was scared of walking in the dark. I never even knew. There were a lot of little things like that, things I just realized when I didn't have time to learn about him any more. By the time we reached Whataburger the sun was making its way down the horizon. I don't remember what we ordered, it didn't really matter. We picked a booth next to a window and talked like this night was no more special than any other little adventure.

At some point a familiar van pulled up in-front of the restaurant. Golden Boy got out and joined us at our table.

It was a fun dinner. We used every single running joke we could remember and laughed a lot. I still sort of think about how the little specific languages between friends die.

Curse Margin gave me a dime from his change. I promised myself I would keep it forever, but I think I lost it two days later.

There was magic there that evening. It was already dark outside and we weren't paying much attention to the parking lot when a pickup truck stopped directly in-front of the window. Juliana got out.

I swear I could hear the 'this moment is emotional' movie soundtrack playing in the background. We were all together for perhaps one last time.

We could finally start to say goodbye. We all promised we would do this again. In five, maybe twenty years we would come back here and it would all happen again. Apart, but not separated. We guessed at who we would be by the time we returned to each other.

It was a good night.

At some point Juliana's dad took him away from us again and we were just the slightest bit alone, but still determined to enjoy ourselves. We had anticipated the possibility that it would get to dark to walk back. We borrowed an employee's phone and called Curse Margin's dad.

It took him a long time to get there. Curse Margin made up a little song, really more of a chant 'We're stranded at Whataburger'. He sang it really loudly. I'm sure the employees thought we were crazy.

Once we got home, we made a plan for tomorrow. Curse's family planned to get up at four and leave around seven (For what its worth they didn't leave the house until around eight thirty or so.) We promised to be there.

By far the saddest part, for all of us but most of all Curse Margin, was Juliana's conspicuous absence. They hadn't left yet, but his parents just could not be bothered. To this day I resent them for it. I'm sure they had their reasons but frankly I couldn't care less.

That moment at Whataburger, magical as it was, might be the last time Curse Margin and Juliana see each other. Ever.

Curse had to go home. It was late and in truth every minute spent with him felt like borrowed time.

Our parents said goodbye to him. I hadn't expected that.

I told him that he was basically a brother to me, practically part of our family, functionally adopted.

I wish I hadn't said it like that. He was adopted. The farewells didn't come naturally until the next day.

We were still trying to do to much too fast.

I don't remember if I cried or not. He cried a little.

Now Fort Martin stands empty and they re-painted his house the color of toothpaste and despair. His dad's attempted clover lawn has disappeared for good and their poorly trained dog doesn't escape any more.

I'll remember him forever. He was the best padawan I've ever had- that I'll ever have- despite his terrible music taste.

(I still listen to Horses but only because of you.)

We're halfway there and all that jazz. You once said you were born on a ship on a 'dark and stormy night'. I'll be honest, coming from you I could almost believe it.