

Junior Division (15 & Under), Prose
Kloey Murphy, Conception Bay South
The Weight of What Remains (an excerpt)

The thing about grief is that it doesn't just go away. It sits in the corners of your house, in your bones, in the places you can't quite reach. It seeps into the floorboards and settles in the places you once felt love and happiness. It clings, in the way a door doesn't shut quite right. It becomes what you feel in the silence. It's a nightmare, and it makes time seem like a curse. It lingers forever, no matter what you do or how far you try to run from it.

I used to wake up and think I could hear Connor muttering to himself while he read, Kayde getting ready to go out on his old bike and toss newspapers at people's houses to make some money to keep our bills up, Aron stumbling in the door after getting in a fight with god knows who, me having to bandage him with the little First Aid Kit we could hardly afford, but now I know better. I used to hope they'd come pouring through the door and it would all be a dream, a nightmare, but I knew that wouldn't happen, and I'd stopped believing a while ago. I used to sleep with the lights on; I was scared of sleeping without them around, but now I know the only thing to be scared of is remembering, remembering the things you don't want to remember but have to.

When Aron and Kayde died in that crash, I didn't cry. I couldn't bring myself to. I had to be strong, not for myself, but for Connor. He cried for both of us as I held him, wishing it would all go away and be some stupid nightmare, some prank on Aron's behalf. I hoped I would wake up and they'd all be there, but it was just me and Connor. At least I still had him, I still had one of them.

Soon, we stopped talking. I was too caught up in my work, and he was always locked in his room. I noticed he stopped eating, stopped hanging out with his friends, and stopped going to school. He stopped reading, and then he was just a shell of his former self. I didn't question it at first. I thought he was just growing up, changing. I knew I should've done something sooner. I wish I had done something before it was too late, anything.