

A VISUAL & WRITTEN JOURNEY THROUGH THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE



# SKIES ABOVE ARE CLEAR

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# Skies Above Are Clear:

A Visual & Written Journey Through the Human  
Experience

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SKIES ABOVE ARE CLEAR: A VISUAL & WRITTEN JOURNEY THROUGH THE  
HUMAN EXPERIENCE

by

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HONORS THESIS

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To all of you who inspired these pages  
& helped me become the human I am today.

For my parents, Rhonda & Chris. Thank you for  
the unconditional love and support you've shown me  
as I pursue my dreams.







# AUTHOR'S NOTE

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Hello, lovely humans!

Before the book begins, I believe that it is important for me to give some background information, as well as my hope for you in reading this piece.

As a native Californian, I had not experienced Texas skies until I arrived for college in 2017. I can honestly say that I have never witnessed anything like them. They are very special. They truly evoke an emotional response when I see them and I have been capturing them with my iPhone camera over the years (& yes, all of the images featured throughout the book are taken on my phone without any editing). I am so excited to share them with you.

As far as the writing is concerned, I am very aware that art is a medium that is up for interpretation. I value knowing that each person who approaches this text is coming from a unique set of life experiences and views on the world, just as this text has stemmed from mine. I encourage you to take away your own meaning and find what resonates with you!

This book is structured to flow chronologically, but it does not have to be read that way. I arranged the pieces specifically to have a nice arc if read in order, but they are also grouped by feeling/topic. This allows you to open to a section of specific emotions if that's something you need to hear that day.

Enjoy!







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LIVE







”

The greens & purples,  
The spiky, the smooth,  
The angled, the curved,  
The rushing, the slow.

All coexisting. All belonging.  
A space for still. A space for speed.  
All is needed. All is welcome.

A girl sprawls on a bench, headphones in.  
Nothing to hear. Nothing to see.  
A boy hurries to class.  
Hands in pockets. Head down.  
Nothing to see here.  
A mob of people exit a building.  
No one speaks to one another.

Surrounded by life, yet choosing to exist alone.

But we're not alone.

It's incredible just how not alone we actually  
are.

A camera, some actors, some subtle interaction.  
The occasional giggle echoes between the  
buildings.  
Some flowers. Some trees.  
Some people too busy to take in the private  
beauty.

The world is offering so many magical moments.  
The beauty in the intimate details.

We just have to be brave enough to notice...

... & be noticed.

“







”

I breathe deep,  
Conscious of the oxygen filling my lungs.  
I'm grateful for each intake,  
Grounding me, Keeping me present.

The sun shines proudly,  
Warm to the touch,  
Engulfing my skin in its healing light,  
The same sun that's been shining on me from  
the start.

It's been with me through it all,  
The good, the bad,  
Protecting me.  
Loving me.  
It's watched me grow.  
It's known me at all stages of life.

It's nostalgic.  
It's hopeful.  
It's loving.  
It's calming.  
It's peaceful.

It's life.

“







”

Suspended,

Held,

Hovering,

Trapped.

Bound,

Free,

Floating,

Falling.

The leaves, The soil,

The pot, The hanger,

Living a life of freedom woven within the  
intricate rope of macrame.

“







”

A new day.

Like clockwork.

It arrives right on time.  
The same way it did yesterday,  
& the same way it will continue to arrive  
everyday after that.

Fall into the routine.

Stick to the pattern.

Nowhere to go. You know what to do.

Begin. Execute task. Occasionally refill. Start  
again. Stop.

Repeat daily as needed.

These patterns blur together.  
Seemingly identical. Unintelligible.  
Slight variations, but stable.  
You can count on them. They're trustworthy.

Another day done.

You clock out.

"See you again tomorrow."

"Same place. Same time."

“







”

We made it this far.  
We made choices, decisions.  
Everything we've said,  
Everything we've done,  
Everything we've thought,  
Everything we've felt,  
Has molded us into...  
Us.

“





LOVE









”

The way your eyes squeeze shut as  
you laugh like no one's around.

Your belly laughs fill the room with a  
joy so pure and infectious.

Your sharp, witty comebacks could  
leave anyone speechless.

You draw the world in,

An energy so irresistible and  
effortless.

Unapologetically yourself and adored  
by all.

Your presence is addictive.

People gather from all over to  
experience it.

They find themselves reflecting back  
the beauty and wonder that the  
world sees in you.

Who wouldn't want to be around  
someone like that?

“







”

Your smile.

The way you look at the people you love.

The way you look at me.

I catch your eyes across the room.

They always say the same thing in a language I don't understand.

I want to understand.

Your beautiful, beautiful brain & charismatic spirit.

The simple intricacy of which you live your life.  
Living for the small details & the vast adventures.

Never satisfied. Never enough.

Am I not enough?

Enough for you?

You tell me one thing, you do another.

You have a terrible memory, but remember the important things,

& the tiny details I didn't think you noticed.

I love the way you throw yourself into your work, but also into your friendships.

You haven't been treated the way you deserve to be treated.

“







”

A wink.

A simple thing.

So much meaning in such a small gesture.

An eyelid flicker, that's all it is.  
A motion we forget about countless times.  
We blink & blink & blink.  
It becomes habitual.

No meaning. No worry.  
You know it will always be there.

A wink, however,  
It changes the game.

An automatic movement, distilled down to its  
most basic form.  
So much meaning behind the sliver of an  
everyday action.

What do you mean?  
What are you trying to say?  
I hear a thousand messages.  
How do you do it?  
How do you make me question everything in  
the simple close of an eyelid?

I melt, I blush, I write it all down.

You love me, You don't want me.  
You want me, but you can't want me.

But you want me to know...

“







”

You lock eyes across the room.

A simple glance.

You look away.

The tingling giddiness of a budding  
romance.

The fleeting moments & secret  
rendezvous.

The brush of the fingertips as you  
pass in the aisles.

This might be the start of something  
wonderful.

It could end in a moment,

Or it could last a lifetime.

The possibilities are endless.

Maybe one day, we'll look back and  
laugh at the distant memory of life  
without the other.

“







”

You're a thinker, a listener,  
An adventurer, an artist,  
A human, a mistake maker, a night maker,  
A lover, a teacher, a friend.

A friend.

I guess that's all we can be.

"For now," you say,  
But you kiss my lips and you tell me the perfect  
things I want to hear,  
& you tear me apart piece by piece.

You lure the world out in front of me, showing  
me all I could ask for, & then you take it away.

I shouldn't be selfish.

But sometimes you need to be selfish & I think  
I have a right to be selfish right now.

You find me music,  
You write me songs on the piano,  
You tell me how beautiful I am,  
You have real conversations with me,  
You want to spend time with me,  
You say the right things,

You're the perfect **boyfriend**.  
Except you're not.  
But what's the alternative?

I'll take the half-formed joy any day over the  
possibility of not seeing you at all.  
My heart cracks and flakes off, chipping away  
at the whole.

But wouldn't you rather love than not at all?

“







”

I thought I had a little more time,  
A little more time to make you fall  
in love with me.

But now we're apart,  
& apart is where we can't be,  
But you'll be fine.

You'll move onto the next.

She's always been there,  
Waiting for our time to run out,  
& now it's run out.

What did I expect?

It's earlier than we both had  
planned.

We were pulled off life support too  
soon.

Before you knew how I truly felt,  
How I feel,  
For you.

“







”

I let it go on too long.

I didn't know.

You had moved on.

I had moved on.

Oh the life that could have been lived in  
the in-between.

The drawn out, fall out of love.

The plastered smiles,

And lonely tears,

And endless excuses.

The silence was deafening.

Was it ever love?

I'm not sure.

Am I happier now?

Absolutely.

“







”

I trace your every curve,  
Longing to learn your shape,  
& wondering how I fit into the one  
left by the girl you loved before.

It feels comfortable.

It feels familiar.

I recognize patterns and repeated  
phrases.

I twist and wriggle around,  
Working so hard to be a match,  
A puzzle piece that looks like it  
should fit, but doesn't.

Just a girl, trying to find home in a  
place that was not only not meant  
for me,

But taken.

It always has been,  
and always will be,  
hers.

“







”

You cross my mind.  
I send the thought away.

You used to be a stable pillar in my overgrown  
structure,

Rooted deep in my foundation.  
A crucial support beam, keeping me from  
crumbling.

For one who used to hold up so much of me,  
How have you become nothing more than a  
passing thought?

It wasn't until I looked back that I saw how  
broken you were too.

You let me build a strong foundation around  
your cracks.

A fractured base.  
A deceiving facade.

You hid them well, until the day you took  
interest in a new structure.

You took your deceptive pillar and left me to  
crumble,  
A gaping hole in the outline of my life.

A breeze passed through, collecting the fallen  
pieces of me that scattered when you left.

I rebuilt.

Stronger than before.

“







FEEL







”

& just like that, everything's gone.

You're gone, they're gone,

I'm gone, we're gone.

Ripped from under us like a rug or an undertow  
that no one saw coming.

We thought we had time.

We thought we had memories still to come,

Laughs still to laugh,  
People still to love,  
Our lives still to live,

We thought.

How were we to know?

How were we to know we were singing our last  
song?

How were we to know we were dancing our last  
dance?

How were we to know our precious time was  
slipping through an hourglass that had been  
deceiving us?

But it looked so clear.



Maybe it wasn't the sand that was slipping too fast.

Maybe it was knocked over, shattering the glass.

A million sand particles thrown apart,

Forced to fend for themselves,

The concept of time broken entirely.

But why?

That's not for us to know.

None of us know.

No one told us.

How were we to know we might never see each other again?

At least not in this way.

I hope I see you again...

I wish we knew when we had the chance.

I would've squeezed you tighter & loved you stronger & tried harder to soak up every second,

Every detail.

Here's to the things that should've been,

& to the things that were gone too soon.

“











”

High above,  
Down below,  
In between,  
I don't know.

I don't know the day,  
I don't know the week,  
I'm not sure I even know the month.

The hyper speed blur of life reduced to a lag.  
A never ending loop,  
Moving slower than ever before.

Every detail, every intricacy,  
Is noticed, analyzed.

The picture so clear, yet unrecognizable.

It's hard to make out the jagged edges and  
steady curves of a figure so unknown.

A figure we've never seen, or taken the time to  
truly notice.

But now we're frozen,

Forced to acknowledge what's been looming  
around us all along.

Separate the important from the not,

And value the time we have with  
these things,  
these people,  
these places  
this life.

“







”

Too big, too small,  
Too curved, too flat,  
Too strong, not strong enough.

The mirror doesn't lie,  
Maybe it does.

Pictures don't lie,  
Maybe they do.

People don't...  
They absolutely do.

You don't look like what they want.

I don't look like what I want.

I pass the same mirror 4 times a day  
and meet 4 different humans in each encounter.

The same girl trapped underneath a shape-  
shifting body.

A fun-house mirror.

Morphing and confusing the poor girl.



The girl who grew up in a dance studio.  
The girl who spent every day being told to look  
in the mirror and fix herself.  
They didn't mean it that way,  
But...  
When your body starts to curve,  
and your hair starts to curl,  
and you can't find an angle to blend in with the  
rest,  
That phrase takes on a whole new meaning.  
Your self-confidence plummets,  
and you're moved to the back,  
And you can only think of one thing to blame.  
When your body is actually the very thing that  
lets you do what you love.  
You spent your days comparing your body,  
To ones that weren't meant to be yours.  
There is nothing wrong with your curves.  
There is nothing wrong with your curls.  
There is nothing wrong with you.

“











”

The world we once knew,  
Broken,  
Deformed,  
Hanging on by a thread,  
Yearning for the memory of the life  
before,  
Dangling,  
Weeping,  
Limbs outstretched,  
But strength fading.  
How much more can it take  
before it snaps?

“







”

The kindest smile,

A warmth & laughter that takes over a room,

A friend,  
A daughter,  
A life taken too soon.

She woke up one morning, not knowing it would be  
her last.

No one did.  
I sure didn't.

Social media flooded.  
Posts, stories, comments.  
A horrible way to find out someone you care about  
is gone.

A beautiful soul,  
So dearly loved.

Her memory reduced to the couple of photos we  
shared. They shared.  
Plastered online.

But how can that possibly encompass the whole you  
that you were?

Or make up for the shock of losing someone at an  
age you never should?

It's jarring. It's unfair. It's life.

& it sucks sometimes.

(Rest easy, sweet angel)

“







”

Never have I felt such uncertainty,  
It feels like with each passing day,  
More factors are tossed up in the air  
& none of them have come back down,  
I'm waiting for the moment they all come  
crashing down.

I'd welcome the tumble,  
As it would bring a new form of stability.

“







A vertical photograph of a clear blue sky with scattered white, fluffy clouds. The clouds are more concentrated on the left side of the frame, with a few smaller ones near the top. The word "BLOOM" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, serif font.

BLOOM







”

We hope,

We dream,

We plan,

Life throws curveballs,

We adjust.

We keep adjusting because that's what we do.

That's how we survive.

That's how we move forward.

It's beautiful,

It's messy,

It's complicated,

It's real.

“







”

I feel it in the sunshine,  
In the gentle breeze that disturbs the stillness,  
In the hum of distant music and laughter,  
It's just a moment.  
It's fleeting, but it's lovely.  
It's reassuring.  
All is well,  
Even in the moments that don't feel that way.

“







”

Hazy memories & distant daydreams.

The sun on the horizon strongly resembles cotton  
candy.

Faint laughter rings through my ears as children hurry  
down the sidewalk.

Pitter-patter.

Pitter-patter.

The sky lights up in hues of

Pink,

Orange,

Blue,

Radiating a guttural child-like joy.

It has faded over the years with each vanishing  
sunset,

But we can help restore it to its former glory,

& live again in the vibrance it once shared.

“







”

Through the darkness, I begin to find light.

It peeks through the shadows,

Like the morning sun through the blinds.

The peace.

The calm.

The serenity.

I want to remember it this way,

The world still asleep,

Noticing the hope in the unexpected,

Taking mental pictures and clinging to them with  
all I've got.

Every fiber of my being telling me to get up and  
enjoy the adventure.

“







”

I find simple joys in the smallest of details,  
When the sun streams just right through the blinds,  
The singular purple flower dancing in the wind,  
Taking stock of  
the colors,  
the textures  
of the world on my daily route.  
Stopping to take notice.  
Moving through space and time just a little bit  
slower.  
Enjoying every detail, every encounter.  
There is so much beauty around us.  
Imagine how much more fun life would be if we  
sought out the joy,  
and basked in the little things that make us smile.

“







# HONORABLE MENTIONS

Some more beautiful photos that needed to be shared













































The End