

Madison Marzullo

her and the baseball boy

March; the two blue lines on the gray-hued screen on the small, white stick
the cold, tiled floor of the dorm's community bathroom decorating her bare feet
the initial heart drop, the shock, the *fear*

only 21 years old
it seems nearly impossible
but life goes on

April; *thoughts* have drowned her, as if she has been thrown around like dust
the announcement turns her parents loving, her partner into denial

she loves him, she does not want to be alone
he just wants to play baseball, he has *no time*
she has so much work to do for her education
it seems nearly impossible

but life goes on
May; it has progressed, the *situation* is official
she cannot bring herself to leave

all he wants to do is run through the bases, *it is all he knows how to do*
one is 20, the other is 21
it seems nearly impossible

but life goes on
June; the summer heat makes her sweat, as does her *situation*
his arms swell from the weights, using frustration as his motivation

she loves him, the baseball boy
he is confused, the plan simply cannot go through
it seems nearly impossible

but life goes on
July; the last month she had promised herself she would *get it done*
he begs, mercifully, *how* would he manage?

this month would be the deciding factor; whom will she choose?
her parents, supporting her to choose her *situation*,
him, supporting her to choose a *restart*

the choice
it seems nearly impossible
but life goes on

August; she started buying clothes, decorations, asking family for support
he's been at practice, asking his dad for guidance

they are both feeling lost
the girl and the baseball boy

it seems nearly impossible
but life goes on
September; she has grown, significantly
he feels the movements and sees the photographs
the situation is real
she begins to let tears stroll down her gentle, flushed cheeks
he begins to hold her hand and caress her forehead, for the first time in awhile
it seems nearly impossible
but life goes on
October; the final two months, the moment is near
she is stressfully writing papers while swallowing vitamins
he is working out his financial situations
they are both becoming responsible
it's beginning to seem possible
life has gone on
November; the nursery is ready, the items are bought
she has packed a bag, full of items to celebrate what is coming
he knows the event is near, so he decorates her finger with a diamond
they have come together, slowly
it is possible now
life has gone on
December; the snow has fallen and the yellow-tinted street lights show through the darkness
it is the 26th day of the month, the year 2004
he holds her hand and wipes her tears
she is *exhausted*, but her decision is final
she is here
her baby girl is born
it wasn't impossible, it was done
life went on
her baby girl's life went on
October 2022; her baby girl writes a poem, dedicated to her mother's courage and strength
she talks about her mother and father: the girl and the baseball player
who had chosen to let her have life
her baby girl is an athlete, a friend, a scholar, a lover, a *person*
it is always possible
life will always go on
life should always go on.

- the baby girl who was given the chance of life

Fable

William MacDonald

Once upon a time, in the deep, dark forest; there lived four bears: Brown Bear, Black Bear, Panda Bear and Polar Bear. One day, all four bears woke up to find flower sprouts in each of their individual gardens, yet none of them had planted any.

Brown Bear saw the flower sprout and thought, "This flower will suck all the water from my other plants, my carrots will die!" So, Brown Bear rooted out the sprout before it could bloom into a beautiful flower. After a while, though; Brown Bear regretted it; his carrots became overgrown and took over his garden. He couldn't even remove the carrots; and now there was no room for even the smallest dandelion.

Black Bear discovered her flower before it blossomed, but a little bit later than Brown Bear. Black Bear thought "Hmmm, I know this flower will take water from my other plants, but I know this flower will be beautiful; and I'll always have next season to grow potatoes." So Black Bear took out her potatoes and let the flower grow, and after it had blossomed into a beautiful flower, went back to growing her potatoes. She had a delightful flower and lots of potatoes the next season.

Panda Bear was very excited to see a flower seedling in his garden, for he had been trying to grow one for a while, but hadn't had any luck finding seeds. He spent all of his time caring for the growing flower; watering it, and preparing flower pots for it. However, just before it was time for it to bloom, the shoot wilted. Panda was very sad.

Polar Bear saw her flower, and like Brown Bear, was going to weed it out. Polar Bear was allergic to the flower's pollen. Just when she was about to pull it from the ground, she saw

Panda Bear crying. Polar Bear knew that he had been trying to grow a flower, and that his had just wilted. She thought "Since Panda Bear wants a flower, but can't grow one, I'll grow my flower and give it to Panda Bear." So, Polar Bear raised her flower, and when it had bloomed, she gave it to Panda, and they were both happy. Panda thanked her very much and was overjoyed about finally having a flower of his own, and Polar Bear was happy that Panda was happy, and she could get back to her own garden.

You see, even if it's unplanned, you or someone else will enjoy the beauty of a flower; more than a successful garden of potatoes and carrots.

Most bears are very protective of their territories, their children (and according to this fable, most are protective of their gardens and flowers). We should all try to be like Black Bear, Panda Bear, and Polar Bear; and protect our flower seedlings. We should nurture them, make space in our garden (life) for them by taking carrots and potatoes out and planting them next season, after our flower has bloomed.

One fateful day a brushfire sparked in the depths of Africa. Herds of elephants became engulfed in smoke, filling their eyes and lungs until breathing became unbearable. Escape from this treacherous scene looked to be impossible. Among the group was a mother, almost to term with her baby. The survival of the other elephants was improbable, so the chances of the mother making it was not likely. As fate was almost certain, a feeling of love and protection overtook them. Realizing the future of the herd was in this baby's hands they did whatever they could to save this child. These elephants sacrificed helping themselves for another to have a future. This baby became a true reality, something so pure should never be second guessed. After all, life is a timeless privilege all living beings have the right to experience.

The inspiration behind this story is very personal, and comes from my own life and my mother's own experiences. She possesses qualities I strive to acquire. She is my biggest inspiration and who I mold my own morals after. The mother elephant represents her, my voice, protector, and first love. The baby is me, the one she chose to love. Much like fire, hate and selfishness can spiral out of control. Finding out about her pregnancy encased her with smoke, there seemed to be no escape from the explosion. The herd of elephants that helped the mother elephant represents everything my mother stands for. She stands for courage, kindness, temperance, and above all life. All of these virtues led my mom to prevail. She sacrificed everything she had for me, leaving her old life behind to give me a future. I hope women across the world can be as strong as her, and to have the courage to fight for what's right. I am forever grateful for my mother giving her baby girl a chance.

As the product of a saved abortion, I feel called to advocate for all unborn babies. My mother had the strength to save me, and by using her morals I can save more. From her I have learned that life is a beautiful reality worth sharing.

6. Katie Petrosky

One moment,
Two pink lines,
Three people affected by one choice.
Four parents to tell,
Five minutes of silence followed by, "Do you have a plan?"
Four jobs,
Three months too long to decide if I want an abortion.
Two kids forgetting their immature ways and making grown up decisions.
One choice, life.

Ten people asking me in the halls if it is true.
Nine more months of school to endure.
Eight teachers to inform about why I have been absent.
Seven hour school days,
Six hours of work to follow,
Five days of the week.
Am I strong enough for this?
Four weeks between seeing my baby on an ultrasound.
Three lives completely changed.
Two outcomes, boy or girl.
One beautiful child, brought safely into the world.

One family,
Two dogs,
Three children later.
Four grandparents over for dinner every Saturday,
Five o'clock mass prior.
Six little eyes watching the priest and the world around them.
Seven nighttime Bible stories read,
Eight o'clock bedtime.
Nine goodnight kisses,
Ten years later.

We made it.

#10 Grace Neubert

The Parable of the Cabbage Farmer: A Parable for Life

There once was a cabbage farmer who had been growing and cultivating his beloved cabbage patch for years — it was his pride and joy. Every day, the farmer would rise early to go out to the field to tend to his plants. Tenderly, he watered the cabbage and gave it fertilizer so that it would grow to become large and strong. Daily, he walked the rows inspecting each and every plant making note of which plants were struggling and which were flourishing. The farmer sought the best for his cabbage plants so that they would grow to nourish the people and communities that they would be delivered to at harvest time. Many other farmers in the area began to wonder about how the cabbage farmer had been so successful, as year after year he produced a bountiful harvest.

His neighbors noticed that throughout the rows of plants, the farmer planted herbs such as hyssop, peppermint, rosemary, sage, and thyme. “Why in the world,” they wondered, “would the farmer clutter his rows with all these other plants?” “Any successful farmer,” they thought, “would keep their crops separated, neat, and tidy.”

They also noticed that the farmer could often be found outside late into the night watching over the plants. Again they ridiculed the farmer, “He is so strange, why would he stay awake with plants?”

As the cabbage farmer continued to excel in his field year after year, the other less successful, jealous farmers finally humbled themselves and approached the cabbage farmer. They said, “Every year, you harvest almost 100 percent of the crops you plant in the spring, but most other farmers only harvest 80 percent of their crops. So, how do you do it?” they asked. The farmer replied with a question, “What do you do to protect your crops from the insects threatening to destroy them?” “We spray them in the spring, but it is inevitable that the bugs will

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destroy them. You know that.” they responded. The farmer nodded and asked another question, “How do you protect your plants from predators and animals seeking to destroy them?” The farmers responded, “We set traps, but the animals still surpass the traps and destroy our crops. You know that.” Again the farmer nodded. And he asked them one last question, “If you are all so willing to give up hope for your harvest every time you are faced with minor inconveniences like the bugs and animals attempting to destroy your crops, how do you expect that you will harvest the largest, highest quality of crops as I do?”

The other farmers, rattled by his questions, began to observe the cabbage farmer through a new lens. In the spring, like all the other farmers, he sprayed his crops to protect them from the bugs, but he also planted his herbs amongst the cabbage so that if the spray would fail, the bugs would be deterred from the cabbage plants by the aromatic herbs. He placed his traps strategically amongst the growing plants to remove predators from the field, but if the traps would fail, the farmer stayed awake and ready with his plants to save them from harm's way.

The cabbage farmer taught the other farmers a great lesson that day: that love, whether it be for one's crops or for another person means that one must sacrifice what is comfortable and convenient for the other.

So is life. Like the cabbage farmer, we all must come to appreciate and value the little plants—the babies, born and unborn—in our lives. We must cultivate and value our little plants, as much as the cabbage farmer did his, from the moment they entered the ground until they were grown and ready to make a difference for those that hungered. We must be like the cabbage farmer, then, and ask ourselves and others the challenging questions: Why is humanity allowing ignorant farmers to destroy 20 percent of our precious little plants? How can we as a society

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protect these little plants and be more proactive in protecting their lives from the moment of conception? What can society do to become more like the cabbage farmer?

The following is a recounting of a mother's love for her son as retold by Gabrielle Weisner

I feel overwhelmed, as if I'm drowning. There is no way out, I'm stuck. There are so many options, yet I feel as if there is only one, abortion. I'm only seventeen. I live with my mother and my hidden unborn child. My mom has been through so much with her divorce that my heartbreaking news would only make the situation worse. How do I tell her I'm pregnant.. but that I will not be giving birth to this child? I was sexually abused from the time I was three up until I was six making the decision seem easier in my head. I remember the nights when I was fourteen, drinking and doing drugs trying to drown out the pain from the sexual abuse. I have gotten better, but not enough to carry or care for a child. I was and am still hurt and I've damaged my body so much that I don't think I'm capable of loving or being loved. I've always wanted a child, but this was too soon. I'm only seventeen. I wish this opportunity would appear later in my life, when I am healed, right now I can not deal with the toll this will take. It is too much. I want to abort, to delete this baby from my life. Maybe if I get rid of him, my life will go back to normal? Maybe I can continue to heal and grow without this baby by my side?

After debating with myself, I realized I needed to tell somebody before going through with it, so I told my mom. She encouraged me to abort the baby and I was glad because then I would not feel the guilt and shame all alone. I debated about what to do for so long, maybe I should just keep him, maybe it was a sign from God. I need to see what I am capable of, "God gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers." I was determined to keep this baby, but I could not stay in such a negative and depressive household for much longer. I knew if my mother found out I was keeping him, she would verbally abuse me and I could not handle that. So I left. I went to a shelter for pregnant teens, but I'm only seventeen. I'm scared, anxious, yet excited. I can not

wait to see what the future holds. If I decided I cannot be a mother, I can always put him up for adoption. There are plenty of families who long for a baby. If I can not take care of myself, I will not have to put the baby through that pain with me. But for now, I am going to wait it out and see what I can do. I am determined. I'm only seventeen.

The nine months went by so fast but at the same time, so slowly. I could not stop time. I waited so long to decide that it was time for the baby to arrive. I was scared and nervous. As soon as he was born, his first cry sounded like music. It was the happiest moment of my life! Seeing his little face, I was so grateful that God sustained me. He gave me the courage I needed. Later, I learned that approximately fifty percent of the pregnancies in the United States are unwanted. This statistic made me feel better and less guilty about wanting to abort him in the first place. I was not as alone as I thought.

Today, I see Justin on stage in front of millions of people who love him and buy outrageously expensive tickets just to be in his presence. As I watch from my couch, I can not even imagine the pain and suffering abortion would have caused leaving me to wonder what his life could have been. Instead I get to watch what his life actually is. He is my Justin and to the world, the one and only, Justin Bieber.