

Years 11-12 Category Runner Up

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What matters is time.

I didn't think time mattered until my father died. I just believed time would always be there for me. But alas, it slipped through my fingers, and before I knew it, time mattered too late. People don't normally think about time, because talking about time leads to thoughts of death, and we all fear death. We all fear the unknown. But with no thoughts of death and time, we take what matters most for granted.

We are all born with an hourglass where the sand falls, counting down from our first breath to our last. You, right now, may have thought very little of death and time. You may think you have plenty of it, but all it takes is one car, one thought, one stray blood cell, one too many drinks, just one second, and that person you once had plenty of time with is taken. Because an hourglass can only take so much trauma before it breaks, and no amount of glue can hold together the glass and sand.

I watched the sand hit the bottom of my father's hourglass. I knew that was it. That was my last chance to hold onto him. Sitting there, grasping at the feeling of his finger wrapped around mine. Held my dying father's hand as he breathed deeply, body limp. His eyes closed off to the world, never to see it again. Skin growing cold. Measured breaths were taken mechanically, unlike just hours before when they had character. People don't realise the character that breath holds. What I am left with after that night was dying breaths where anyone could have been his last.

In. out. In. out. In.

I would sit like an eagle watching prey. Mesmerised by each breath he had taken. Because it was my signal, he lived, and I still had him. But the hourglass was ticking down, and the grains were falling faster. Time gave in. I remember telling him I would see him tomorrow. That I loved him. I don't, however, remember his response. That haunts me more than any ghost could. Even then I didn't realise how deeply time mattered, I couldn't see it through the naive thought that I had longer: that I could beat time.

The time I took for granted that I didn't think mattered is all I have left now. The hand I held to be safe crossing the street, the feet I stood on to learn to walk and dance with, and the eyes that meant safety and happiness when they looked into mine: all is gone.

I only had a short 15 years with the man. He will never see me graduate any higher schooling, me driving, any formal, any partner, my wedding - nothing. He misses it all. There is no sand left in the hourglass. There is nothing but a pot in the living room and an invitation he will never get to RSVP too.

All I can do now is never take time for granted: every experience, every step, every breath is my sand falling steadily. I will forever regret not taking time seriously, not treating it as if it mattered because, without it, we have nothing.