

Music Box Ballerina

Emily Forster

With the stirring of the cogs,
the dance begins anew.
A ballerina on a pedestal,
reaching for the sky,
her eyes just as blue.

A throbbing ache sinks deep into my body.
I can't go on much longer.

Her smile is perfectly content,
her arms delicately formed,
her posture molded and controlled,
and her legs—to metal they've transformed.

My legs feel heavy, immovable,
like they've turned to stone.
If I had wings, away I could have flown,
away from this world, the only one I've ever known,
and then maybe, possibly, I wouldn't be so alone.

My rusted joints move stiffly through the routine,
at the prompting of this wretched machine.
With a jolt lashing up my spine, it reminds me—
There's only one thing I'm allowed to be: happy.
Muscle memory is burned into my limbs,
subject to the machine's whims.
It dictates how my body will bend,
as I go through the motions to reach the end.
 Towards the sky my arms desperately extend,
 only to hear it played—hauntingly—once again.

All I know is the sound of that cursed note,
and the dance I once again start,
in this bleak world from which I cannot depart.

I speak not of the longing inside my mechanical heart,
 as repetition tears me apart.
 No time for rest, no time for anything except
 dissonant music ringing loudly in my ears.

As my muscles wither
 and
 decay,
 the threads of who I am begin
 to
 fray.

The song corrodes the longer it plays,
 discord carved into the marrow of my bones.
 Again.
 Again.
 I taste the metallic tang of blood in my mouth,
as my heart beats in time—
 Again.

Emily Forster is an accounting major who writes in her free time. She enjoys reading sci-fi novels. When she's not reading or writing, she's training for her next triathlon.