

Envy of Butterflies

Rachel Held

The small farm, where we felt at home, engulfed us on a summer day. I was by the barn with the triangle above the doors. I threw rocks at the triangle to practice for softball. Our sister was in the driver's seat of the glittery green truck, pretending to drive. You were in the seat next to her, playing music only you liked. The cool summer breeze swept cotton and white butterflies across the entire yard. I followed the butterflies and danced with them as I got closer to the music, escaping the truck.

I saw you two in the truck that mom had left half on. The air conditioner was on and cooled both of you off. One of you was a NASCAR driver in her mind. The other was the lead singer of KISS, serenading a crowd of thousands. Climbing into the truck proved difficult as I struggled to reach the seat. Once inside the truck, I cranked down the window with all my strength just so I could sit on the window frame. I swayed to the beat of the song you played and kicked my legs out of the truck window.

You started to sing, and I turned around to look at you. You were the one who could make anyone laugh, almost like you felt like it was your responsibility. I slid back into the truck and sat in the passenger seat with you in the middle. We all continued to sway to the beat of the song. Time seemed to slow down as I watched you smile. A true smile that I had never seen from you before. Fake smiles were your favorite outfit,

and you always had them on.

A butterfly came into the truck and landed on the dashboard, sun-bathing in the one spot the vibrations couldn't reach. You were staring at the butterfly. You leaned towards it. The butterfly, that finally escaped the breeze, just rested in peace. It didn't have a job to do or a place to be. It could just rest. I could see envy in your eyes. You struggled to feel like yourself. Always trying to be what others needed and could never truly be at ease. As you watched the butterfly with sparks in your eyes, I watched you. Your behavior was as if the butterfly finally eased your worries.

As the middle child, you had standards expected of you that I had never experienced. I didn't understand you, and you didn't understand me. You were the middle child, and I was the youngest. You liked rock and country music, and I liked pop music. Your favorite color was red, and mine was green. You and I were completely different, but I saw you. I knew you. I knew how you never actually smiled or laughed. I knew you would act like an adult. I knew that you tried to be what our parents wanted, even if it went against everything you actually were.

Sitting in that passenger seat, I was able to see you relax for the first time. You were happy, even if it was just for a few seconds. Our sister turned the volume up, and we could feel the vibration of the song on our feet. You laughed again, and I could see it. The sparkle in your eyes made it very clear. With our sister in the driver's seat and me in the passenger seat, you were happy. For the first time, you were happy to be in the middle.

Rachel Held, who is a Hagan Scholar, is a sophomore at UND studying English and journalism. She enjoys reading, writing, and watching movies with her dog. She likes to read and write poetry in and out of class. She also enjoys taking photos of nature. Her future goals are to study abroad and to be a published novelist.