

Discovery
Fernanda Bittencourt

Summer of '98

“Read a thousand books and your words will flow like a river,” a sentence read by Isla more times than she could count, and which she found not to be true. The girl would write until her hands went numb, and as if she had suddenly decided to despise every word she had written, she would rip off the paper and tear it until she couldn't make out the words she had jotted down just moments ago. “Why do I keep doing this?” she thought as she grew frustrated for every time her heart spoke, her mind spoke louder. “Maybe this isn't for me. Maybe my life would be easier if I just loved something else like math.” There it was that word again. Love. It caught her off guard the second she said it. The simple four-letter word uttered raised a quite familiar debate in the blonde girl's head. Did she love writing? She for sure didn't see herself as a writer, how could she? Writers were supposed to know what to write about, and they certainly didn't feel angry or frustrated while doing what people like them were required to do.

“Summer of '98, soon we will be sailing across the world,” were the words written behind the old photograph taken of her and her mom on their trip to Rhode Island. Shortly after that, when they went back to Queensland, her mom's passing took place. The grief she felt was like feeling homesick for a home that no longer existed. The hugs her mom gave her were such a simple gesture, but Isla would constantly find herself longing to feel her warm embrace.

Carrying the insurmountable grief with her everyday was something she quickly grew accustomed to, yet it didn't make it easier. “You can be afraid and still find the courage to do it anyway,” was a sentence the older woman would tell her daughter since she could walk, but it only seemed to deeply affect the young girl after her mom's demise. Putting the picture aside, the blonde teenager moved hurriedly to the wooden desk she had grown attached to, and quickly scribbled “In the summer of '99, a year after ‘soon we will be sailing across the world’ was written behind the blurry photograph, the two voyagers decided to be faithful to their sentence,” and for the first time in a long time, the girl's heart felt something other than sorrow: warmth.

Whether us humans like it or not, people come and go, that is the way of nature and there is no stopping it. But ideas can live forever as long as someone is willing to pass them forward, and that is what the writer decided to do. In that moment, even though her love for writing would never fade, her doubt in herself did, and in a split second, Isla did what many people take years to learn how to do: she believed in herself as much as her mom once did. For the following years, she would hold on tight and never let go of her ambition of being a writer.

Comentário do júri: A narrativa é extremamente engajadora e sensível. Isso se deve a estrutura textual bem construída, a transição de tópicos de uma forma suave e a concretude por meio de exemplos da própria narrativa, que aproximam a história do leitor. A história é perfeitamente verossímil, real, intimista e emocionante, trabalhando com suavidade e sutileza o sentimento do luto, transformando-o em energia que move em vez de estagnar. Com certeza, transmite o calor (warmth) que a narradora tanto procura para o leitor que se encontra com essa história.