

## REBOUND

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to drown?

To feel the water tearing at your skin -  
fighting to consume you.

To open your eyes and see the world slip away from you -  
smaller, and yet smaller.

To hear the world as if from a great distance -  
distorted by the waves surrounding you.

To watch your blood mingle with the grime of the river -  
swirling away from you.

To hear nothing.

To see nothing.

To feel

nothing.

Stop.

Pause.

Rewind.

Get up.

Watch the droplets of water leap up as you rise like an angel out of the depths, blood  
seeping back into your hands and shallow cuts fading like dusk into the night -

Get up.

Walk away from the ridge, heartbeat slowing and desperation losing its edge with every step  
you take -

Get up.

Run backwards across the docks - lift your feet off the cracks in the sidewalk - it brings bad  
luck, you know, and you don't need any more of that right now -

Get up.

Let the tears rise off your cheeks, let the scream die in your throat, let the voices silence in  
your head and run backward across the docks to where you came from -

Get up.

You have so much left to live for.

Let's pick up the pace a bit.

You're standing beside the apple tree where the tyre swing used to hang and you carved your initials into the bark and you swore that you'd change the world - really, it's too bad it changed you before you had the chance to change it.

You're walking backwards into the house now, watching dying flowers bloom again and crumple into the earth as though preparing for a sleep that would never come. The door opens and you walk inside, pulling it shut in front of you, sealing it off like a tomb.

You're seeing the words you wrote being unwritten.

If you're seeing this, it's too late.

If you're seeing this, it's too

If you're seeing this

If you're

If

You put the blank sheet of paper back in the drawer where it belongs.

And then you're lifting your phone up from the floor, the shattered screen becoming whole again - perfect, and unbroken. You watch messages being unsent and words being unspoken and tears roll up your cheeks, unshed - ironic, isn't it, that the person you love the best is about to hurt you the worst?

You're sitting on your bed, staring up at the crack in the ceiling, waiting for a sound, a sign, a signal - *something*.

A lamb to the slaughter.

Time to shake things up.

You're sixteen years old when you choose your name. It's a nice name. It feels... right. Like you've finally found yourself.

You're fourteen years old when you cut off your hair, hacking your locks off and letting them fall to the ground. When you look into the mirror, it's finally you who's looking back.

You're eleven years old when you first figure out you're different. Adding up all the signs. Two plus two finally making four.

You're eight years old when you hear the word "trans" for the first time in your life. *Girls becoming boys*, they tell you. *Boys becoming girls*. *It's ridiculous*. You swallow and force a laugh, but the word clings to you like a vine.

You're five years old when you first feel the wrongness. It presses in on you. Crushing you. *She. Her. Girl. Woman. Daughter*. It's not you.

And you're eighteen years old when you tell your mother, running to your room and shutting the door before she has a chance to react. You always were a coward.

You're eighteen years old when she tells you that you're mad, that you'll always be her daughter, that you're a fine young woman and you should stop pretending you aren't.

You're eighteen years old when you run to the docks and the water tears at your body but you hold on tightly to the faint shreds of life because you still want to live.

The words course through you like the blood hammering through your veins and you pull yourself up onto the wooden platform and sit and laugh and laugh because you're alive. You're alive. You want to live.

You breathe in and the air burns in your lungs and you're coughing and spluttering because you made it and you're alive and the world is beautiful.

You can come back from this.

You can come back from *anything*.

You can come back.

Come back.

Entrant's initials: TG  
Word count: 768