

Soft, grey rain blankets the city, softening the harsh edges, converting the hectic environment into serenity. The droning patter of water droplets muffles every sound until nothing but silence remains. City inhabitants take the tranquility of a storm for granted. They focus on the bone-chilling cold that somehow always seeps through their inadequate coats, instead of basking in the peace the weather provides.

During this storm, there is one dispirited girl who wants nothing more than to experience the bite of cold against her skin. If all she feels is cold, then there is no room to dwell on the jagged words spat from the lips of her mother, the one who was supposed to love her, only hours ago. *Useless. Worthless. Waste.* Each syllable threatens to consume her, to drag her down, down, down, until there is no return. Despite the overwhelmed girl's best efforts, sounds and images slowly knit together to form a complete memory of her emotional trauma. The final piece of verbal abuse manufactured by her mother shoots to the front of her thoughts, as lethal as a poison-tipped arrow. *I wish you were never born.*

Dark, vicious emotions simmer menacingly underneath a thin layer of fear. The misguided girl focuses on her dread of what her future entails without the surety of her mother's love, momentarily shifting her attention from the anger begging to surface. Choosing fear over anger is the wrong choice, though. Red-hot rage rips through her shield of panic, and once that barricade is annihilated, the girl's only path back to calm is closed.

Nightmarish claws drag the girl into the recesses of her mind, where her darkest thoughts lurk. She needs to run, to find a mode of egress for this razor-edged fury. Suddenly, akin to the eye of the storm, clarity emerges. One person is responsible for every word that hurt her and

broke her down. The girl molds her rage into a spear of malice and vengeance. Holding the weapon in her hand, she feels the weight of the dangerous resentment contained within the shaft. With a firm resolve, the girl chooses to use the projectile not against her mother, but to defend others who are incapable of defending themselves. She cannot change her past, but maybe, just maybe, the newly empowered girl can change the future of another scared, betrayed child trapped in an abusive storm.