A Lonely Girl and the Stars

 There’s a girl who loves the stars more than anything. At night she stares at them for hours on end wishing that she was one. To others they were just regular balls of light that were in the sky at night, but to her they were everything. They were beautiful souls, transformed into beautiful fires that light the night sky. To this lonely girl, the stars were her friends. The stars gave her hope that despite being lonely, the fire in her soul could burn bright.

 This girl, is me, Alene Wendale. My name fits me perfectly. Alene mean “alone” and Wendale is German for “wanderer” which fit my family quite well. Until a few years ago, my family constantly moved. Why we stopped? My brother, Isaac, had died. All my life, I had never had a friend. The only people kind to me were my parents and Isaac. At school I was bullied for everything. When I asked why I was named Alene, my mother said that I was going to be a true queen one day, and true queens don’t need a lot of friends.

 I never felt like a queen. I had no hobbies, nothing I enjoyed doing. I got anxious over everything, from public speaking, to sitting at a table in public, to just talking to someone one-on-one. I was a short, skinny girl with stringy brown hair and gray eyes. I shook a lot whenever I got anxious. I was also very obnoxious or quiet. There was no in between.

 After Isaac’s death, I only got more miserable. There was no one to talk to. Daddy was always at work and mom would do her best to keep busy and distract herself from Isaac’s death. After Isaac’s death we moved to some small town named McComb. The year of Isaac’s death, I did something terrible. I began cutting myself. I hid my wounds under long sleeves because I knew no one would think anything of it. I always wore a jacket and jeans.

 This year I’d be starting tenth grade. Isaac’s death was almost four years ago but it still felt like a fresh wound. My heart ached for the way Isaac used to call me “Fearful Dragon” before putting me in a choke hold and telling me he loved me. If he were still alive he’d be in eleventh grade.

 On the first day of school, of my tenth year, I got jumped a total of eight times, none of which I defended myself. It hurt a lot, but by now, pain was an old friend. My mom told me to wash up when I walked in the door covered in cuts, bruises, and other wounds. “Y…yes Ma’am.” I replied.

It was now October and the bullying only increased. I always stuttered, something I was picked on about and also something I desperately hated about myself. “Alene, dear. Why don’t you go to the principal about those bullies or fight back?” Mom asked, “You shouldn’t let people push you around.”

 “I don’t let them. But I prefer to not use violence. Violence is never the answer.” I replied.

Mom nodded approvingly. Once I finished washing up, I walked outside to check the mail. Three of the boys who jumped me today saw me and jumped off their bikes.

 “Hey reject! I hope you learned your lesson today!” The boy with red hair and a pig-like nose shouted. I ignored them and opened the mailbox. The boys walked over to me and shoved me onto the sidewalk. I picked myself up and grabbed the mail out of the mailbox. I tried to walk past them put a black haired boy grabbed my hair and yanked me backwards.

 “Where ya goin’ short stuff?” he sneered.

I fell back onto the concrete. I didn’t reply, not knowing what I should do. The pig-nosed boy kicked me in ribs. “He asked you a question! Now answer it!”

 Agony rushed through my body as I groaned. “I was going to go in my house, to help my mother.” I winced. I got kicked again before the boys grabbed my shirt collar and lifted me up, laughing.

 I wish they’d just kill me. I’d be with Isaac then. “You’re worthless! Just go kill yourself, slut!” The last thing saw before the world went black was a fist flying towards my face.

 *The darkness consumed me. All around pitch black. There was a soft whisper, like a breeze blowing through the night. “Worthless child!” the whisper accused.*

 *“No, I can’t be worthless. My parents love me, right?”*

 *“No one loves you! Your family just tolerates. You’re doomed to fail. Just! Give! Up!” The whisper criticized.*

 *There was a hollowness in me. My emotions were blown, gone, nonexistent. “I’m failure?”*

 *“Yes child.”*

 *A flood of voices began criticizing me, “Worthless!” they hissed. “Failure!” they cried. “You’re nothing!” They screamed.*

 *All of my hope that had lived on collapsed and died. I believed these voices and all that they said. I did not know who they belong to, but almost everyone would agree.*

 I woke up to see the sun was setting and daddy was standing over me with a concerned look in his eyes. I don’t know why he looked concerned, it’s not like he loved me anyway. I was a failure.

 “Alene, what happened?” He asked.

 I rolled my eyes. “It doesn’t matter, I’m fine.”

 “Okay?”

 I stood up, wincing, and picked up the mail in the yard. Dad and I walked in the house together. Mom had the table set up for dinner. “Alene, I’ve been waiting for you to get back the mail!”

 “She was asleep in the yard.”

 “Good heavens! Why?”

 I just shrugged and handed mom the mail. I then sat down in my assigned chair. It wasn’t really assigned, it was just the chair I always sat in at the table. “Mom, I want to change my name.”

 “Why?” Both my parents asked at the same time.

 I panicked. There was too much attention. Sweat began to pour from my pores as I stuttered rapidly. “B… b… b… because… A… Alene is… s… so.. b... b…bland, a… a… and l…lonely.”

 My parents gaped at me. Finally my dad answered, “Absolutely not! I don’t want to hear another word from you about this!”

 I nodded and began eating. While we ate, mom went through the mail. Then she got to my report card. I gulped as a lump formed in my throat. My parents read it carefully before frowning. “Alene, you NEED to bring up your grades! This is unacceptable!”

 Daddy handed the slip of paper. I read it carefully.

**Report Card: Wendale, Alene**

**Grade: 10**

**DOB: May 21, 2003**

**Courses:**

**ENGLISH 10: 57.3% - F**

**GEOMETRY: 27.8% - F**

**US GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: 80.7% - C**

**FRENCH YEAR 1: 81.6% - C**

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION: 80% - C**

My stomach dropped. I had tried so hard, and yet it hadn’t been enough. Nothing was ever enough. Tears stung my eyes but I didn’t let them pass. I finished eating and excused myself. I walked to my room and got some fresh clothes for when I finished showering. I also grabbed my knife.

 I turned on the water until it was steaming hot. Hot enough to burn my skin. Once I undressed myself I looked at my pale legs and arms covered in cuts and tiny scars. I added a few more cuts to my legs and arms. I cried as the blades sliced my skin. It didn’t hurt, I couldn’t even feel the knife on my arm.

 Tears streamed down my face because I, Alene, was a pathetic creature. I was nothing, worthless. And I knew, I knew deep in my heart no one, not a single living person on this earth, would miss me if I were gone. I continued to cry watching the blood turn the water pink as they mixed together before flowing down the drain. I stood in the shower under the water. No longer crying my emotions were shot, I was a hollow tree, slowly growing in a world full of pain, only to die in the end.

 After I bathed and washed my hair, I dried off and got dressed. I turned the water off and towel dried my hair till it was damp. When I opened the bathroom door dad was on the couch watching TV and mom was cleaning the living room that was never dirty. I went to my room and began to draw. I drew for hours on end until finally I fell asleep among color pencils, pencils, and paper.

 *I was falling. The wind tore at my clothes and my bare skin. My skin was a furnace and only rising in temperature. My descent began to speed up as my body burned. Orange, red, and gold flames danced on my body, and for some reason I did not scream. I was falling for minutes that seemed like years.*

 *Before I was less than two hundred miles from hitting the ground, my body turned to ash. Once my ashes lay on the ground they were lit on fire again. From the ashes I was reborn the same but different. My scars and cuts were gone, any trace of self-harm was no longer visible. Any scar from being jumped, any scar from the wreck that Isaac died in and I barely made it out of, any scar from when I accidently cut myself while helping mom cook, they were all gone.*

 *My hair was still brown but it was smooth, no longer stringy. My gray eyes were no longer dull gray but beautiful like the stillness of the sky before a storm. I wasn’t beautiful, but I wasn’t plain and horrific anymore.*

 I woke to my alarm clock buzzing that morning. The sound echoed through the room loud and clear. I sat up and peeled a piece of paper off my face. The paper had a human heart that was bleeding and sewed shut. I climbed out of bed and turned off the alarm. I put on a pair of jeans and a long sleeve shirt that had a wolf on the front. I was still covered in scars and cuts. I walked out my room to go eat breakfast. Mom cooked cinnamon rolls with bacon.

 I ate my breakfast, then grabbed my bag for school. “Have a nice day at school hun!” Mom shouted as I walked out the door. I took the path through the woods where no one else went. There was a legend that spread around saying these woods were haunted.

 I didn’t care, let the ghosts and monsters kill me. No one would care. They all wanted me dead. No one would miss me. The floor of the woods had a light layer of mist in the morning. I imagined I was walking through a magical forest on my way to slay an evil ruler and take back a kingdom that was rightfully mine.

 Before long I was in the school yard and on my way to the office to check in. The receptionist smiled and for a moment I thought she was happy to see me. *Don’t be foolish Alene! No one would ever be happy to see you!* I turned around to see the receptionist’s boyfriend standing behind me. I walked to the desk, quickly signed the check in form, and ran to go to my homeroom/English 10.

 I had grown accustomed to hearing voices in my head telling me I was nothing, telling me I was stupid, telling me I’d never amount to anything, telling me I’d never be enough, telling me to give up. Telling me all these things that I wished were lies but I knew they were all true. So it was nothing when they were purring, telling me all these things.

 When I stepped in Homeroom/English 10 forty minutes early my teacher was not surprised. “Alene,” Mr. Charles said, “why don’t you go make some friends. Go socialize.”

 I shook my head. “No thanks. I prefer to avoid getting jumped.” I sat down at my assigned desk in the back of the room. I pulled out a notebook that I wrote poems in and began trying to write.

 I didn’t get past the third line before the teacher left and a group of girls entered laughing. As soon as they saw me their laughter died. I dropped my head. They were all gorgeous, I felt like I shouldn’t look at them. I felt hideous around them.

 “Hey Alene.” Sierra, a girl with long blonde hair waved.

 “Hi.” I replied.

 “You look like you could use some help.” She stated and sat down next to me. She snatched the notebook off my desk and began reading my poems. “These all suck! Just like you!” she cackled, her friends laughing along.

 I stood up and mumbled, “P… please give t… that back.”

 “You want it back? Sure thing!” She smiled before ripping the pages. I stared in horror. Those poems were a part of me. Those poems were reflection of me, of my soul, my thoughts, and my feelings. Once she made the pages were torn to shreds she tossed it back onto the desk. “There you go.” She grinned.

 I slowly picked up the notebook. A tear rolled down my cheek and died on my lips. The girls took their seats laughing. I shoved the notebook in my bag and then slinging it over my shoulder I walked briskly out the room tears staining my face. I went to the girls bathroom and began sobbing quietly. Finally I got off the bathroom floor. As I stood the bell rang. I ignored it and walked over to the sink.

 I rolled up my sleeves and turned on the cold water. I began washing my face. One of the girls who watched Sierra tear up my notebook and just laughed about it, walked in humming. She looked at my arms covered in cuts and scars.

 “Oh. My. God. You self-harm!” Her eyes grew wide. She bolted out the room.

 I rolled down my sleeves not sure what I’d do. Before I could gather my thoughts she returned with Mr. Charles. “Mr. Charles! Alene is covered in cuts on her arms!”

 Mr. Charles tried to coax me to roll up my sleeves. I refused so he grabbed my arm and rolled up my sleeves his self. “Alene, I have to call your parents.” His voice stern. I looked at the girl. She wore a crimson smile.

 “Okay,” I replied, “Call them, they already know about it.” I lied.

 “Are you getting help?”

 “Yes sir.”

 “Okay good. Go to the office and call home. Say you threw up.” He ordered.

 I walked out the bathroom, grabbing my bag on my way out. I rolled my sleeves down once again. This isn’t good. What if I get sent to a mental facility. *No, they wouldn’t do that. Not if they actually cared.*

 I sighed as I entered the office. “Hello Alene.” The receptionist greeted me.

 “Hi, I need to call home. I threw up.”

 She handed me the phone and I dialed my mom’s number. “Hello?” My mom answered.

 “Mom? Hey, can you come pick me up? I threw up in the girls bathroom.”

 The line was silent for a minute and I thought perhaps she’d hung up or that the line cut out. “Yeah, I’m on my way.” She hung up and I said I’d go wait for her in the hall. The world seemed dull all the time. I never understood why. Did I just imagine it being brighter when I was younger? I looked at a painting of flowers in a vase. Most people found it beautiful but to me the colors seemed a bit more gray then how vivid most people said they were.

 “Alene? Come on, I signed you out.” My mom’s voice echoed in the empty hall. I got up and walked with her to the car. She bombarded me with questions about how I felt.

 “I’m fine!” I answered. Physically I was okay but mentally I was exactly that: FINE.

F – falling apart

I – Insecure

N – neurotic

E – empty

 I wasn’t lying when I said I was fine although everyone thought sometimes did. When we got home I went to my room and went to sleep at mom’s request. I dreamt that I was falling and then reborn again from my ashes like a Phoenix. When I awoke I noticed my door was open. I walked out my room and went outside.

 I saw an old rope in a tree a few feet in the woods. I walked to examine it. There was a loop on the end like a noose. It was about three feet above my head. I could easily climb to the branch it hung from.

 I shrugged and checked the mail. There were a few bills. I took the mail to my mom. When she saw me she raised her voice “ALENE! I JUST RECEIVED A CALL FROM MR. CHARLES!” I panicked, like always when anyone raised their voice. Mom calmed down a bit. “He says your arms were covered in cuts. Lift your sleeves!”

 When she saw the cuts she began to yell, telling me I should be ashamed of myself and why didn’t I tell her. She took all my knives forbidding me to touch another one. I went back outside, wanting to die, not wanting to exist.

 I looked at the noose hanging from the tree. I walked over there thinking about how kids often said I should kill myself. I climbed up the tree and put my head through the loop. I muttered “I’m sorry. I never wanted it to end like this.” I was joining the stars tonight. I jumped from the branch the last thing I saw were trees.