

From Afar

By: Nikita Ramlagan

The cardinal, the one that has perched on the branch of the green ash tree in the little park, continued to have its crimson-colored tuft. It only means that it has to be a male cardinal perched on the tree branch diagonal from the house. Female cardinals tend to be a blend of tan and grey. As they are known for their active singing, the cardinal begins its day as the sun brushes against the horizon and ends as the sun crosses paths with the moon. Throughout the day, they become social, in which cardinals tend to join in flocks with different species of birds.

March 12, 2012, was the last day that you would have taken your final lively breath. Only thirteen years old, my mind was unable to comprehend what occurred, but I understood this world became emptier. The summer of 2011 was the last time I saw you sitting peacefully on the nut-brown sectional watching General Hospital with the window half-opened in our family's two-story light yellow house in the middle of Thieriot Avenue.

You would say, "You look like an exact copy of your ma," as I engulfed you in my warmth, I say, "I missed you."

When the evening comes, the family sits in the concrete covered backyard as the northeastern summer breeze blows across our bodies. The cardinal perch on the green ash tree begins to sing its tune of two-parted whistles every two seconds for us to hear as the sun settles. You peacefully, consumingly watch the memory of all of us eating, drinking, dancing, and laughing as a smile appears on your face. A memory I hope you still carry with you.

It has been eight years of desensitizing the ache that has left. The taste of vodka and cranberry juice touches my lips, slithering down my throat, making the thought disintegrate. Sitting in the backyard, the humid southeastern summer afternoon continues to scorch my skin to a yellowish-brown scarlet mixture. My thoughts have calmed. There was no noise from the darkness today.

The sky has begun a haze of orange, purple, and red as the creatures of the day begin to fly home or crawl into the ground, going to rest from their day's work. The weeping willow has been swarmed with crows, squirrels, and American robins as they prepare for tonight's rest. The distinctive chirping of the crickets begins to consume my hearing within the grass. However, a faint two-parted whistle begins to sound through the air. Drawing my attention, I tread closer to the old willow tree seeing, for the first time in eight years, a friend. A crimson-colored cardinal perches on the weeping willow whistles its tune in the evening's shadow.

The cardinal consumes the memories of the days when there was so much life in that yellow two-story house. The cardinal that carries on the memories from birth to death watching from afar. The cardinal, lifting the heaviness of the yearning, metamorphosing the affliction. The cardinal continues to sing its song on a new branch.

“I missed you.”