Why are we here? Is it that we exist as a result of mere chance? Why the two individuals we know as our parents our parents? Why were we born in a certain place? What is the difference between chance and intention? These questions buzzed through my mind as I stared into the distance of the stuffiest classroom in Bellingham High.

My name is Bee Linton, I am now 40 years old but back in my Bellingham High days, I really hated school and just the whole institutionalized learning thing. Contrastingly enough were my parents – both intelligent and cultured professionals who encouraged learning at school and at home. They were the kind of parents that subscribed to National Geographic so my brother and I could inquire from the ‘interesting articles’, which I never read. I looked at the pictures, which I loved. The pictures took me places, lectures, grades and homework didn’t. There was also my older brother, Gale, a successful math geek who also happened to be on the rowing team. He was a young man of many facets. He attended Dartmouth, a school for the above average. I on the other hand was just below average and didn’t really know what I was doing. Besides hating school I just made sure I survived each day. Luckily, we lived in Bellingham Washington which is relatively close to Canada, a short hour drive and I was gone. That day in class I was not gone, I was sitting there, thinking, going through an existential premature quarter-life-crisis. Wondering why things were the way they were, feeling the irritation of the bloody boring routine that was familiar and really, *really* obnoxious to me. Familiarity and routine was all I knew, it sounded right but never felt so. Thankfully that was my last year of high school and that would be that, or so I thought.

That particular afternoon after school would fade into darkness. I remember peering out the window into the solemn gloom of the sky with no stars in sight. I turned off the fan and climbed into bed, there was and still is no better feeling than crisp clean linens. As I lay there I stared at the reflected streetlight that shone its way up to my window. Enticed by the light I hopped out of bed to open the window and smell the pleasant rain as each drop lightly pounded on the glass. I imagined the randomness at which each drop fell, imagining I was one of them who happened to land among everything that I came to call home. As I closed the window, the last pleasant whiff of rain was interrupted by a knock on the door. I ignored it, hoping it would go away, but the second knock was a bit louder. I glanced out the window once again and noticed a police car. I hurriedly made my way downstairs, quite fearful as mom and dad were away on a business trip in Louisiana. I caught a glimpse of the clock over the entrance door right as it struck midnight, certainly not a normal time to receive such an unexpected visit. To my surprise, I had opened the door to see Gale and an officer standing before me. Stuttering, I managed to greet them. “Gale….what a surprise! What exactly are you doing here…with this officer… I don’t understand” I felt lightheaded and dazed, there was silence.

“Mom and dad are gone Bee, they passed away early this morning in a terrible accident. I thought about calling you but I thought it would be best if I told you personally.”

Just then, time stopped. The rain held itself in place and I felt my blood rush to my head. I looked over at the officer in search of a denial that would negate this nonsense. As he began to explain I felt my head dissolve, everything I had known was changed… or was it gone? There were now even more questions that I figured would never be answered. A loud strike of thunder overcame the moment as the clock above the door crashed down and startled me into tears that I struggled to fight back. I would not cry in front of Gale, he had unfairly found the right to keep such news from me, it was then when I felt resentment towards him boil over, in silence.

“I understand how you feel, this is very hard for both you and I but I just want you to know I love you very much…” I accepted Gale’s warm hug, he was after all my strongest connection and support in a world where I felt so disconnected and confused. The officer disappeared into the rain that intensified as the night wore on.

“Let me get that mess.” Though Gale was trying to be considerate, I was still resentful towards him. The last thing he could do was pick up the broken clock he probably didn’t even notice until today. He lived for his successes and was not very present in mom and dad’s life or mine for that matter. He made it to Dartmouth and lived his life, he was an ungrateful, selfish jerk.

“You can’t just shut down on life Bee, I am also absolutely devastated. Mom and dad would not have wanted to see us like this…”

“How would you know Gale? You were never around. And don’t throw the clock out, I don’t want to get rid of *any* of mom and dad’s things… I am going up to my room, we can talk tomorrow.”

The silent tapping of each raindrop had turned into a rainstorm that rekindled the anxiety inside of me. I was just an indifferent 18 year old girl of which I figured came from the unanswered questions that normality had failed to answer. I was very much aware that there was a world out there that was much different than my current life. Now mom and dad were gone. Who would look after me? My tormenting thoughts and fears led me into the deepest of dreams, a dream that would change my life forever. The rain falling that night morphed into a parallel reality that transported me to a small boat in the middle of an ocean. I was greeted by a storm that somehow felt familiar deep in my subconscious. From a distance I saw a faint light. The questions in my head returned with more urgency than ever before. Each though running through my mind was briefly interrupted by the violent rocking of the boat, such that at times my I found myself distracted from the anxiety that was trapped in me, a feeling that was all too familiar. I approached the light, the rain still falling at full force. It took my senses a while to figure out I had landed near a lighthouse, a lighthouse so enchanting its luminosity radiated through the blinding rainfall. As I stared at the gleam of the calm yet poignant light, it continued to pour, dark heavy clouds hanging above me. I could still feel their weight.

The welcoming appearance of the place enticed me, and with a bit of fear and uncertainty, I walked in. The scent inside was of my clean linen sheets and the stairs similar to ones I had climbed before. A chill ran up my spine but the rush was too strong to go back. I ran faster up the stairs, reached the top room, and met the light that had greeted me as I landed. A muffled hum came from around the corner and my mind flooded once again with fear and anxiety. Tears overcame me and I sobbed like I never had before, it felt good to release the burdensome resentment I had carried for as long as I could remember. I wiped my tears and sniffles with the back of my hand, when out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of the person I wanted to see more than anything in the world, my beloved mom. She handed me what seemed to be a silky handkerchief, only to find out it was a piece of my linens. As I tried to thank her and express my love and excitement in seeing her, my voice was muted and all I could do was listen.

“Bee, I have so much to tell you… It seems as though we left you and Gale too soon. I just needed to meet with you one last time to tell some very important things, follow me.” We walked out to the balcony of the lighthouse and the clouds had cleared. The orange and blue smear of colors reflected by the sunset made me feel warm all over, all while mom held my hand.

“You see, Bee, the distant lights over there? Where do you think that is? What about over there? Both distances were polar opposites of each other, relative to the setting sun the lights glittered north and south. It was then when words came to me, and for the first time, I had never felt as certain in my answer as I did then, granted, I didn’t even know where the water current had taken me. I answered excitedly, “That over there is Vancouver - and over there is home! That is Bellingham!” Mom smiled and nodded, “And we currently find ourselves off the border coast, you could say we’re not really anywhere, isn’t that something?”

It felt nice to be nowhere, especially with mom by my side. We stood there for a while, listening to the sounds of the ocean, watching the distant lights flicker to the north and south.

“I really regret not giving you the time you deserved Bee… there are actually many things I regret and I wanted to tell you some things that you need to know before your time is up.” I nodded, “I want you to find balance. Throughout life you will find that anything and everything over the edge is too much, while anything under the edge is not enough…so find the edge, ask questions and earnestly search for answers that satisfy you, and most importantly, know that it is ok to be lost, that is what creates your story on Earth and as an individual being. There is ultimately an end to every story so it is best to live it with the thrill of anticipation.” She pulled out two clock hands and handed them to me, “This is to making every minute and every hour of your life count, and to living with intense purpose.” I took the clock hands and put them in my short pocket. Mom kissed my forehead and walked down the stairs to take the small boat that had brought me there, I followed her and unable to say goodbye, watched her fade west. I looked around and found that she had left me at a crossroads between the familiarity of home and the place I yearned to escape, she had also left me a guide from which I could begin my journey a starting point from where I could begin my quest for answers and where I could begin my story and find my own edge….

It was that dream after my mother’s death that allowed me to live less by habit and more by intention, and to make each minute and every hour of life count.