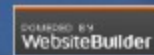




A large green rectangular area containing the "Non-Fiction" section. At the top right of this area is a small black button with the word "back" in white. Below the title, there are two blue buttons with white text: "Shadow of Light By: Angela Carrier" and "The Dream Catcher By: Seth Teegarden". The background of the entire page is a close-up of white cherry blossoms with a bee on one of them.

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Shadow of Light

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By: Angela Carrier

I gently snapped the plastic button to close the pink polyester dress around my doll's waist. I tighten the ponytail around her crimped yellow hair, admiring her sparkling eyes and dimple smile. My sister and I sit side by side, each manipulating our own Barbie Dream Houses. Her golden sun bleached hair wildly attacks the space around her head while mine hangs thick and dark and straight as bones. Her sea green eyes squint in crescent moon shapes, mirroring the arch of her Cheshire smile. My lids droop over russet brown dreamy eyes, hovering over my calm submissive expression. She is the light to my shadow. In our world of fantasy we do not hear the house turn quiet.

"Angela," my father's voice travels up the staircase through my sister's bedroom door, "could you please come downstairs."

I obediently rise off the pink carpet, carefully discard my dolls and leave my sister enchanted inside her imagination. My fingers brush across the snags in the striped wallpaper as my bare feet peddle down the shaggy carpeted stairs. I jump the last stair and swing open the door with my open palms as I fly to the landing. My father ushers me calmly into the family room and slides the panel door behind me. He joins my mother sitting on the piano bench and I make my way over to his stuffed recliner wondering what I did wrong.

"Angela, do you know about sex and where babies come from?" he asked me gently. Although my heart increased a beat embarrassment contorted my face, I was relieved to only be faced with the sex talk. I tried to avoid whatever explanation they had decided to come up with by laughing and answering yes. My dad only needed me to understand sex in order to confess a truth. His voice breaks as he begins by telling me that he loves me very much. My mother's shallow green eyes swell as she offers me her own declaration of her love for me. I try to sit still, sensing the serious tones directing their language. And then my father says, "I'm not your father."

My eyes shift from my father to my mother; the edges of their faces blur and swim together. A frog settles in the base of my throat and a hot salty tear stings the top of my cheek. My mother's shame streams down her face and causes her to cry out in pain. My dad's calloused hands scoop me up and huddle me onto his lap. My wet lashes blink into his chest and I snuffle in the smell of warm cotton from his shirt as he explains the reality of love's mistakes to a child. Words bury themselves beneath my tongue. He asks me if I wondered why I didn't look like him. I did not. The windows grew steamy as we cried through our pain and I was assured nothing had changed.

My legs managed to carry me aimlessly up the steps. I paused on the middle landing to catch my breath and to feel myself in the shadows before ascending to the light streaming from my sister's bedroom door. I took each next step leaving as much of my secret behind me. I look in through the doorway on my sister waiting for me to return, wanting so badly to enter her room the same as when I left. I don't know who I am, but you are still my sister.

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The Dream Catcher

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By: Seth Teegarden

One day I was digging through my closet trying to sort out all the junk that had accumulated there over the years. I never enjoy cleaning, but that day my mother asked me to sort out a few items that I could donate to the needy. "It would mean a lot to me," she said pleadingly. I never have been able to say no to my mother. While moving aside an old science fair project, I stumbled across my very first baseball glove. I had not seen that glove since I was a kid in little league; I thought that it had been lost after we moved back to Georgetown when I was nine. I could not believe I had found it here, seven years later, instead of lying somewhere in the Maysville dump.

My glove's appearance had stayed the same despite years of isolation and neglect. It was a Rawling's pitcher's glove, size 11, frayed and worn from summers of playing out in the backyard with my dad. It was a tan color, the dye from the glove's hide fading and bleeding out after being stretched to fit my hand. Folds and wrinkles had appeared on the palm where my hand had caught fly ball after fly ball, twisting the leather and giving it the appearance of an aged, wise face.

Whenever I played on a new field for the first time, I would take a handful of dirt from the infield and pour it through the webbing in my glove. I used to watch the sand trickle through, leaving a film of dirt, sand and what I hoped would be the skill of people who had played the field before me. It was kind of an odd ritual for a kid, but when you grow up watching The Sandlot and Field of Dreams, you believe in plenty of odd baseball rituals. My glove held onto a good bit of that sand. My mother eventually gave up trying to scrub it off, which gave it an even more aged look. "That old mitt looks like it is about to give up and die," my grandpa would say to me when he saw me all dressed up on game day. My glove never was embarrassed of its age though; it had not taken the time to learn the words "worn out" and "ragged." Its aged look gave me a sense of confidence.

If my glove would have been able to say anything it would have been: let's get this done. Its gritty, torn skin had the look of a veteran soldier ready to accompany me into battle. When I began to study history in middle school, I always thought of great American heroes playing with a glove like mine; it seemed to have all the aspects of their character. I know it probably sounds silly, but looking back I remember how much I cared about that glove. It almost seemed like a real person when I was a little kid.

Growing up changes people, however, and soon I had traded in baseball to pursue other hobbies. By the start of high school, I had probably went through about three or four gloves. Each of them were different, but none could replace my very first baseball glove. While other gloves soon became tools to play the game with, my first glove always remained a cherished childhood memory that I held close to my heart. It made me sad to look back and see how much I have grown over the years.

I sit staring at my glove now and wonder how I could have ever let so much time slip away from me. High school seemed an eternity away back then, and it was so easy to believe that it never really would get here. As the years go by it becomes harder to tell how things are going to eventually work out. Now I am playing golf, track, and soccer. I have not thrown a baseball in years... so why is it that every time I smell spring laced through the wind I think baseball? Memories sweep me off into another world, and I realize that maybe you never really grown out and away completely from anything.

Throughout my life, I have started to think that people behave like trees. We start small, and soon grown as high from the ground as possible. Memories cherished in childhood are soon too hazy to remember. I never worry that I am irrevocably changed. When I see my glove, now laying in a place of honor on top of my bookcase, I have faith that I will always be able to stay true to myself. No matter how we change and grow we will always have roots that will bring us back to certain places, people, and memories. These will help us remain who we are despite how the years may warp us.

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