On The Wall

Clairissa Breen
_St. John Fisher College_

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The water dripped from the faucet nearest the door. The little boy hid behind the toilet, in the stall closest to the window that opened onto the playground, and waited. He waited for school to end. It was the last day, one more hour and he could leave and no one would stop him. He took a deep breath, he was eight years old. His elder brother had been nineteen when he'd left. He'd sat in his car, in the garage, opened the door and turned on the engine. It was simple, but the little boy didn't have a car. He had sat in this same spot everyday, curled up in the corner, no teachers yelling for him to pay attention, until they'd read his record and then apologized in hushed tones. No big brother found as a substitute by his brother's guidance counselor the woman that gave him cookies because she felt guilty."

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No mother and father yelling and not getting the divorce because they thought their little boy needed them. When he'd first hid here, there was a magazine. It told him about this girl who slit her wrists to suicide. She'd cut down veins and died from loss of blood. It sounded like it would hurt, but he didn't care, he was going to put his arms in the cold water of the toilet until they started getting bumpy and then he'd cut them open, down the vein and he'd let the blood fall into the water, so the nice janitor wouldn't have that much to clean up. Then he'd have a funeral, with lots of people, more friends than he really had would be there. His mom would cry and his dad wouldn't touch beer for a week and there would be flowers and everyone would eat a lot and then they'd say nice things about him; his teacher would tell everyone about the report he had written on the book his brother had given him.

His parents would listen and be proud and then they'd eat together at the same table for a while and maybe they'd like each other again. He took the Swiss army knife he'd taken from his brother's before going camping with his friends. His brother had sharpened it on Thursday, the week he'd died and he'd died on Friday. He'd been looking out for his little brother. The little boy smiled and looked at the door of the stall as he put the knife back in his pocket. The bell would ring soon and he would go find his brother and they'd have fun and laugh and everything like they used to.

He read the phrases written by the older kids on the wall. "If I'm gone by summer, let my little brother know that I loved him dearly and I really did have to go; look after him and keep him happy
if you think yourself a friend of mine. He likes to read and he likes to draw and he likes marshmallows in his hot cocoa. And tell him I'm sorry, if you think you're a friend of mine."

The little boy read his brother's name at the end of the words and ran out of the bathroom in tears. He ran to the office of the guidance counselor who'd always felt so guilty. She smiled when she saw him and opened her desk drawer to give him a cookie. He shook his head and dragged her out of her chair. He dragged her down the hall and into the bathroom. He showed her the words written on the wall in his brother's casual script and handed her his brother's knife. She hugged the little boy tightly and cried. They left the school in her little red car, before the bell, and drank cocoa in a small corner diner, with marshmallows.

--Clairissa Breen