As I watched, my eyes sat farther back in their sockets than usual. She shook and shook and shook. Moaning and grunting muffled sounds of half-screams. And sweat dripped off my chin, and was lost in the carpet that hadn't been vacuumed in three months. I looked past her, at the fan in the window. It tried desperately to cool off the room, but its tiny blades, coated in think layers of gray dust, and months of agony, were no match for the 102.7 degrees that kept rising and rising. And she shook.

I sat at a table, about a foot and half from the bed, my elbows on my knees. My face in my hands. My heart in my throat. My soul, somewhere above me, turned away, unable to watch the violence. Piles of old and fresh medicine bottles, sat next to me, witnessing their failure, watching as their attempts to save were thrown from the bed, to the dirty carpet. Her eyes, kept blinking in rhythms of electrical currents. Her head, though connected to a stiff neck, and lying on a concave pillow, trembled, and her breath, though stale and dry and sour, quivered and asked questions. Her legs flexed, what little muscle was left and her feet locked up, wrestling the bottom sheet from around the corners it held onto. In the furry, flashes of reds and hues of pinks, cut through the thick and stagnant air, and my sister, though longing to cry, smiled, admiring her work; admiring what colors she had chosen to paint my mother's toes and fingernails with. It was the only the color in the room. Even the heat was dark.

I sat up in the folding chair, and felt as my eyes fell backwards. I looked to my left and into the big mirror that sat upon the young dresser. I saw six people, huddling, holding on. And I saw one person, letting go. And she was shaking. And I was shaking. And the plastic sheet cover was making an uncomfortable sound. And the fan wouldn't shut the hell up. And the lights wouldn't get any brighter. And the mirror wouldn't stop telling the truth. And she shook. And she shook. And she shook. And she shook. And then, she was still.

Born in a Room

Timothy J. Hetland

Author

Timothy is an English/high school education major in his third year at WSU. After graduating, he plans on teaching at a high school and then advancing his degree in English and film. "Born in a Room" was inspired by his firsthand experience watching his mother battle brain cancer in 2001.