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The Sum of Me

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The Solemn Goodbye

Amanda Duncan

The Sum of Me

Brandon P. Barnhart

Seventy miles an hour down a long country highway
The beautiful trees wrapping their arms around me
Reminding me that I'm almost home
My mind wanders to the sum of my life
A kaleidoscope of moments that are me

Riding with Me Maw in her LTD
Spotting blackberries on the side of the road
My cousins get out to help
Standing knee-high in the brush
Me Maw says, "Y'all watch for snakes!"

I freeze — looking and thinking every stick is a snake
Sitting in her kitchen
She drops a handful of berries in a bowl
With heavy cream and a sprinkle of sugar
Our reward for helping
Nothing tasted better

Spearmint kisses and forever promises
Under the willow tree by the lake
Reading our poetry to one another
Just a couple of crazy, vulnerable kids
Opening our hearts and souls to one another
Wasting a summer day together

A shadowy cove on the lake
 In an old flat-bottom boat
 Throwing out our bait and waiting patiently
 No need to talk, we sit and listen
 The sound of the water slapping against the boat
 The distant buzz of the bass boats across the water
 Ice-cold drinks and MoonPies
 We sit and fish – the joy and peace of friendship

Blasting through the Piney Woods on my bike
 The pure midnight air fills my lungs
 Laughing and joking all night with friends
 Finishing with coffee and a stack of pancakes
 Going to bed at sunup
 Looking forward to tomorrow

Bouncing up and down a runway
 At on old, country airport
 Learning to fly my dad's old Cessna
 Soaring above the lakes and pines
 Wiggling our wings at fisherman below
 Nothing beats the view

Church with Mom on Sunday
 Road trips with Grandma
 Domino games with Pe Paw
 Camping and hiking with friends

I wouldn't trade a moment of it.

When I die, scatter my ashes in the Piney Woods of East Texas.
 My soul never left



The End of the Road

Michele Cruz



Ash the Dog

Clair Jackson