

Forces

Volume 2024

Article 6

4-15-2024

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Recommended Citation

Limburg, Lauren (2024) "A String Called Curiosity," *Forces*: Vol. 2024, Article 6.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2024/iss1/6>

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Student Winner
NaNoWriMo Flash
Fiction Contest
November 2023

A String Called Curiosity

Lauren Limburg

Sometimes when the moon is full, and Venus is in retrograde, and the weather is exactly 43 degrees Fahrenheit, and your room is completely dark, a thin golden string will appear under your bed. It is on nights when you are not looking for it or on nights when you have forgotten. Usually, it is when you know just where to look or when the wind whispers a question. The string combats the darkness with its shine.

If you are brave, inquisitive, and hungry, you can even take hold of it. When you pull, it does not give in to your strength. It will not be unraveled. So, you are forced to crawl. The bed frame has become too close to the ground, and you cannot normally fit. But if you look in the right spot, just for a night, you will slip through. Now that you have made it under the bed, you are face to face with small memories that shine almost as much as the string. It gets tangled around some of them.

you find yourself getting closer to the bottom. You cannot see it, but you know there is an end. You will not fall forever.

With your feet on the ground, you begin to walk. You feel someone else just outside the glow of the string. They must have left the string because you cannot see them. They call out to you to join them in the dark. To come back with them. You do not listen. The hum of the string overpowers them.

They run past you in a huff of anger. They smell familiar.

The journey is long and short in equal measure. Sometimes the string goes over rivers that are too wide and too deep to traverse. It is okay to ask for help. Eventually, someone will give you a ride if you ask nicely. Sometimes the string takes you through whole libraries and museums. Stop and take a look. But do not dawdle or walk too far from the string. The path it is leading you on is purposeful.

You want to know where this mystical and magical string will lead you.

Your first broken heart. The first time you failed. The laughter and taunts of cowards.

However, those memories are not why you pulled on the string. You want to know where this mystical and magical string will lead you. It hums a faint tune as you grip and pull. You pass those obstacles, unwilling to be slowed down, and crawl. Darkness covers the floor.

As if the ground was never there in the first place, you begin to fall. You are gripped with fear. But you do not let go. You do not fall. The string buoys you. You descend. With every pull,

Sometimes there are other strings with other people. It is okay to ask them about their journey. They will do the same to you. Share what you have found on your way and share where you hope it will lead you. A kind ear goes a long way. Kind advice goes even longer.

But more often than not, you will be alone. The path will only have room for one. It is tempting to give up and go back. You may fall and scrape your knee on doubt and uncertainty. But do not be afraid, you will be fine. Once you learn the roads, it will be easier to navigate.

Keep walking until you find your answer.

Upon arrival, the string hums to let you know it will wait. It will allow this moment. You drink the purest water you have ever tasted. You speak in languages you never thought possible. You eat strange fruit that tastes like hope, a better future, and knowledge. You play a new instrument of your own invention. You laugh with the others that made it to this wonderful place. You are better for it.

You put the new memory in your pocket. You will want to tell the world about your discovery.

You put the new memory in your pocket. You will want to tell the world about your discovery.

Full of life and answers, you return to your waiting string. The string glows a little softer, but that is okay. This time you are glowing enough for the both of you. The path is not as narrow. The darkness is not as cold. You are

alone but not lonely. New memories shield you from the wind.

When you reach a wall, you are not afraid. You pull. Gravity lets go of your feet. You slowly begin to ascend, unafraid of the fall.

You are under a new bed. It is the same bed. But it is a bit more crowded. There are new memories, but they are not yours.

If you keep crawling, you will bump heads with another child. No, not child. They are older

than you. Their hands are also firmly gripping the string with the same intensity and fervor. You know their eyes and you recognize some of the older memories, the ones with more dust. You see the memory in your pocket by the bed frame.

When they ask you if it is still worth the trip, tell them yes.

Rustic Memories
Kimberly A. Catino

