

## **carrie-anne**

The sun is amazingly bright, so bright it feels like it will never go down, so stunning as to blot the grass into a flat plane of fuzzy white. Carrie-Anne runs up to me and says she's got something to show me. She's laughing as she runs on the cloud of grass. I want to keep playing smear with my friends, but I figure she wants to get into the shade – out of the sun, back into the dark recesses of the school, the way back hallways, into an alcove to kiss me and hold me so tight that we become one. So I shrug and she turns and runs away and I chase after her. Within the swirl of others on the playground, I don't think anyone else even notices. We run and run, into the woods.

We run up a narrow path. She is giggling, running in the shade of the tall old twisting trees. She says, "I miss this," huffing over roots and stones and over and around small mounds until we reach a little clearing by the creek. She slows and turns in the blinding sun and says, "I want to show you something." I stop about ten feet from her, looking down at her in the tall grass of the clearing. She looks up to the sky. The sun is blazing down on her in an amber haze. The misty, foggy light obscures her as if she's in a white cloud of light. Suddenly the sun begins to affect her. Maybe it's the concentrated heat of the sun, or maybe it's just the intense light, but she begins shivering, still gazing up. Her eyes go black. Her breathing is rapid from running. "It's time," she exhales between huffs, "I can feel it. . . . I can feel it happening. . . . My mom told me about this," she spreads her arms out from her sides, then raises them to the light, still huffing and shaking. She smiles a sad kind of smile. "I'm glad you're here. . . I'm glad you're here with me now."

I'm looking down on her from a low hill. She begins to glow in the haze of the white and golden misty light, as if in a fog of tiny dots of light, as if she's turning into sunlight, beginning to glow the same color, changing into light molecules, like a grainy static of sand – all fuzzy and diffused. The sun is shining down, white, then gold, pink and orange sunspots moving slowly in my view. I hold my hand above my eyes to shade myself. I squint to see her more clearly. Her skin starts to glisten and looks like it's turning all hard, as if the light is emanating from inside of her, fighting to get out.

At first it looks like she's going to turn into the very light itself, all fuzzy and tiny dots, but she is changing into an amber mannequin, the intense light or direct warmth affecting her somehow. It's as if tree sap is inside of her, slowly oozing out of every pore to cover her from head to toe, slowly pouring from her as she shivers.

Soon she is covered in a crusty amber goo, and then it seems to harden even more and glisten in the sun like a golden cocoon covered in a shiny glaze. I can see Carrie-Anne in it, all dark and golden – dark orange, burnt umbra, golden brown. She is slowly turning around and around until the amber casing cracks open and falls to the ground and crumbles into fine granules, like dark sand or cinnamon.

She rises in the light. Large wings begin to unfold from behind her back. She looks the same, but is a bright white light of a person, angelic and insect-like at the same time, but also kind of still looking like herself. There is a shimmering glow around her, a vague outline. But it is hard to see her through the bright sun and her glow of energy.

Her great, thin wings spread. She is shining as she rises, about ten feet off the grass now. The breeze has lifted her as it catches under her mighty glowing wings.

“Are you alright?” I shout through the strong wind. “Are you OK? . . . What is happening to you? . . .” I take a few steps to her, starting down the little mound of grass I am on. “Where are you going?” I step to the clearing of tall grass.

She shakes her head slowly, rising with the breeze. She has a slight, sad expression. Her eyes are black marbles, no longer her light blue.

I see her wings are silky and transparent and insect-like. They shake a little, like sails in the force of the wind. There are three sets of them, long and thin, broadening at the ends and crossing over like a dragonfly.

“Come back. . . . Come back down,” I wave her to me. But she doesn’t answer. I wait a moment as she hangs in the air, looking me over as if for the last time. “Talk to me,” I exhale in exasperation and fear. My voice quivers, “Will I ever see you again?” as I realize what is happening – that she is changing, that she can not come back.

She shakes her head slowly, as if to answer “No.” She is taking a long look down on me, then a gust takes her even higher, lifting her fifteen, then twenty feet in the air. She floats there for a moment, even with the tree line. Then she turns and drifts on the wind, behind some branches, into the leaves and sunlight.

That was the last I ever saw of her.

I think she was my girlfriend.

I think she loved me, really loved me. We used to kiss in the back of the school – always out of the sun – in the shade, in the darkness, back in the clammy, dank, dark recesses of the school, in the way back hallways, in a dark alcove. She used to kiss me and hold me so tightly that it felt like we’d become one. She used to hold me so tightly, as if some giant wind was coming, coming to pull her away.