

KARLY BECKWITH (9th Grade: Madison, Madison High School)
Level III SemiFinalist
Letter to Ryan K. Farmer, concerning his poem “The Cycle”

Dear Ryan K. Farmer,

My parents met in high school. My mom was just fifteen and my dad was only seventeen. They fell in love within the first few months that they met. They were too young to understand love and fought all the time, about everything. However, five years later they still decided to get married and have two children. But it wasn't a picture perfect family. I was young, and so was my brother when it started. We thought it was normal for mommies and daddies to fight every night. We thought it was normal for Daddy or Mommy to leave for a few days to “get away.” We didn't know what a happy family was because we didn't know they existed. Finally, all the fighting, crying and screaming ended. I was only four when my daddy moved out. I was only four when I watched my mommy sit on top of the stairs and cry every night. I was a little four year old girl trying to comfort Mommy and tell her everything will be okay when I honestly didn't know what was wrong. Wasn't Daddy just on one of his “get-a-ways?” But then I was in a new house, a very small house, without my daddy. When I finally got to see him, he was staying with his mom and dad. I'd always beg him to come back home, and he'd tell me that he couldn't because he had to be happy and he wasn't happy with Mommy. I started to get to spend time with him every other weekend. Mommy still cried every night. She started bringing around a lot of “friends” that would make her laugh, but deep down I knew she still cried every night. Daddy had his “friends” that made him happy too. If they were happy, so was I.

I grew up not knowing what love was and thinking I never would know what it was because I didn't know if there was such a thing as true love. I'd always see it in movies and always read about it in books, but I never actually experienced it. My family was never the family that told each other every detail of their day. We never had a deep conversation about how we felt. I never realized that we were different from other families.

When I came across your poem “The Cycle” it made me realize that I wasn't the only one. I always get this feeling that life is just a cycle, and I'm just going to end up just like my mom. My mom will meet an new “friend” and it'll be great. He'll make her happy and they'll rarely fight. Then it takes a turn. She pushes them away, and starts picking fights about anything she can. Then she takes the anger that her “friends” cause out on me, mostly because I'm the only one who can't leave her. I do not want to end up like her. “The Cycle” explained the words I could never get out. “The kids grew up, making the same mistakes. Thinking to be in love, to find out it was all fake.” Most kids grow up how they were raised. I was raised never knowing what a happy family was. Ever since I was little I've wanted my family to be that ‘picture-perfect’ family. I want to be happily married because I would never put my kids through the pain of having divorced parents. I want them to have a better life than that because that's what they deserve. I want to break the cycle. I believe I do not have to get divorced because my parents were. After all, all cycles have to come to an end somewhere, right?

Sincerely,
Karly Beckwith