

FATHOMLESS

Ally Fowler

Notting Hill and Ealing High School, London

Wind. Biting.

Trembling hands, arms, legs.

Cliff's edge. Alone.

The breeze makes the daisies at his feet shake with him. Their stems are bowed morosely, the melancholic heaviness that arrives with the autumnal winds weighing them down. Dry grass tickles his bare legs.

It's too cold for shorts now.

Hands in pockets, he tilts his head back, throat to the sky. The wind cuts through his ears. It bites at the ridges of his face, gaunt and jagged, eroding skeletal features into something deadly sharp.

He remembers gold. A smile spun from sunlight. A magnetic pull; he can still feel the tug in his chest. A shrill, ecstatic laugh echoes in his head. A laugh that no longer exists.

He remembers water. Churning, wild; the murky, bottomless depths a tauntingly perfect contrast to a bright, pale sky. If he thinks hard enough he can again feel the sting of dried salt in his throat.

He doesn't think too much these days.

The phantom sensation of icy water slips through his fingers as he curls his hand into a fist.

He remembers a cry. Was it his own? He doesn't know. They had ducked underwater together, on the breathy count of three. He had come up alone. He had fought for buoyancy, battered by waves, struggled to breathe.

Alone.

The thought doesn't sit right in his chest, like a puzzle piece carelessly forced into the wrong place. It was never meant to be this way.

He looks up at the dark mass of clouds that loom above him. Heavy. All-encompassing.

His head drops down again and he tucks his chin to his chest. Squares his shoulders. Turns to go home.

There will be sunnier days, he thinks to himself, as the clouds grow heavier.