

Junior Division Prose (16-20 years)

Faith Ford, Paradise

I Hope You Never Read This (an excerpt)

The words that hang heavy on my tongue and push back into my throat so I can barely breathe, let alone speak. I know what I mean to say but I can never figure out how to say it. It's driving on the highway on a too dark night or a too hazy morning. It's something I can just begin to see the outline of but I'll never see with full clarity. Of course, I can tell you other things. I can tell you how much I love you and how much you mean to me but I can never tell you that if I could, I'd swallow myself whole and choke on every inch of skin and bone. I'd cough up all the good parts that I could find, arrange them in a straight line, then shove them down your throat. I'd do anything to make you feel alive again.

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