

**I AM**  
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*Honorable Mention, Poetry*

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I am six or so generations from my mother and six or so generations from my father English. I am the rag-clothed orphan begging for a pence and a morsel of food. I am friend to the rats in the streets and enemy to the bobby protecting the nobleman's purse. I am silver spoons and fancy dresses. I am the town house and farms with plenty. From the nobleman to the beggar I am English by descent. I am the wish of a better way stowed away on a ship. I am a legacy sent to and assimilated by America.

I am the grandson of a poor preacher's son. I am his dedication to education that earned a graduate degree in chemical engineering and physics. I am his tired eyes rising from his bed every morning, lighting the broiler for the school as trade for a place to sleep. I am his work ethic that climbed a corporate ladder from surveyor to president of an oil refinery, receiving presidential recognition for his work on aviation fuel during WWII.

I am the son of broken dreams. I am the words "you are fired" ringing in my father's ears from one occupation to the next. I am each step down in duties as his formal education was no longer employable. I am rock bottom when my father's epilepsy lost his final job washing dishes. I am my father's legs that buckled over and over again and I am his strength to keep standing up. I am his blind faith that knew the cure to his demons were doctors in the Philippines. I am tests. I am medicine. I am the little wooden statue of a water buffalo resting on my father's desk. The carved wood reminds me that I am the hocus pocus that never worked. I am my father's continuing belief that faith will work. I am tears of joy and thoughts on heaven as my father prays thanks to God everyday.

I am tear stained cheeks as I watch my son pull breath in and push air out of his two hour old lungs. I am the bed he lies on. My lungs breathe in and he rises as I exhale he falls. I am a careful eye as I watch again and again. For a moment I am time. I am the cadence my son sleeps upon. My son breathes in and out quick and slow. He breathes short and deep breaths off the drum line. I am the tempo. My breath sets the beat. I am the moon that pulls the tides high and low twice a day. I am steady. I am the rhythm. I am the metronome my son will measure time with.

I am love. I am pain. I am happiness. I am sorrow. I am always growing. I am the road that brought me here and I am the road I take from here.