

Dear Ms. LaRosa,

Thank you for submitting to *Quills & Pixels*. We appreciated your submission and greatly enjoyed reading and discussing it. Congratulations! We believe that, contingent on a few revisions, “When I Knew” will be ready for publication.

Part of what makes this piece so strong is its compelling imagery. The childlike references to things like Poliwhirl marbles and robin’s-egg candies are excellent ways of establishing the mindset of the narrator, a naive and innocent eight-year-old girl. The portrayal of your father, a “Clydesdale Cowboy” character, also did a great job of setting the scene. Most moving of all was the description of your biological mother, and the grief you represent through the black suitcase. The images in your writing are outstanding, and put us right there with you in your reflection.

However, many of us were in agreement that the buildup before the scene in the nurse’s office was confusing, although some argued that the moment would naturally be confusing for a child and that this was a stylistic choice in the writing. Perhaps to make this clearer for readers, you could open the piece with the scene in the nurse’s office, and fill in the gaps of the family’s background as you go. Since the whole story is about the narrator’s earliest memory of realizing they were “stuck with the wrong parent,” the recollections about the dad’s weekend visits, the “weekends full of fantasy,” could be easily peppered in. Expanding on these details would also give readers a little more clarity. We don’t initially get a clear picture of the difference between life with the biological mom and with the dad and stepmom (the real mom). Though you do describe more of this as the piece continues, we as readers want to understand the stakes before we, too, realize that you are with the wrong parent.

We also wanted to see a little more from your ending. Again, we loved the suitcase metaphor, and the way it represented letting go of the grief in your own motherhood—but we were left wanting to see an example or two of this. Was there a moment you had with your own child, in which you realized that you’d broken the cycle? Instead of *saying* what you now know, consider *showing* what it took, and how you got there. Even just an additional paragraph that wraps up what you first started to notice as a child, and what you now clearly understand as an adult, would pack a final well-deserved punch in the story.

Thank you again for your submission. We look forward to hearing from you and reading your final draft! Final drafts will be due January 20th at midnight. Please send it, a 100-word bio, and an author’s photo to qp@ualr.edu.