

# The Broken Compass

By Jackie Zielinski

*Photo - Compass*

## *Third Place - Short Story*

Singing had always been my passion, my life, the most important thing in the world. Until, I was in a singing competition at my school in front of many people, and I totally choked. Forgot the words, panicked, and eventually ran off the stage. From that day on, I did not sing anymore. That part of me was just too scared to come out again. Deep down I missed singing. The high school concerts, the music, the crowds. Yet, whenever I thought about singing again, fear took over. The embarrassment, the humiliation.

Five months after that day I was at a Fourth of July festival in New Orleans, Louisiana with my family. There were advertising booths and shopping booths set up all along the streets. Also, there were rides, games, and a live band playing on a stage. I had parted from my family and was walking around by myself admiring all the creative booths people had put together, when I came across a booth that had a lot of antique jewelry. The first thing that caught my eye was a necklace with a small compass on it. There was something about the necklace I just couldn't let go. The compass had a gorgeous gold casing and the necklace chain was black. It was obvious the necklace was ancient, but I loved it.

I saw the lady who was running the booth. She was older, with her gray hair in a bun, and she was wearing a long red and white skirt with a navy blue shirt. When I asked her how much the necklace cost, she gave me a kind smile and said I could have it for free. After thanking her, I continued walking. While admiring my new necklace as I walked, I realized the needle was pointing East. Puzzled and disappointed, I made my way back to the booth thinking the reason it was free was probably because it was broken. The nice lady must have seen the look on my face because she just gave me the same kind smile and said, "follow your heart and do not give up on what you love". That made me curious. It was like she was trying to tell me something without coming right out and saying it.

I decided to think of East as right, West as left, and North as straight. When I got to the next street I turned right because the needle was pointing East. After I turned, the needle instantly pointed to North. So, I continued walking straight down that street. The first thing I saw when I looked up was a huge painting of a music note at an art booth. It was beautiful. but I kept walking. After I walked a little ways, the needle pointed West. So, I turned right at the next street.

On that street, there were music notes painted all over the ground. I adored them as I walked.

Soon enough, the needle pointed East again, but I was a little confused because the festival did not go down that street. I had decided to keep walking just to see if I could find anything. Then, I did see something at the very, very end of the street. It was a big empty stage with a microphone on it. That is when I realized what the lady back at the booth was trying to tell me. The compass on my necklace had helped me find my way back to my passion.