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cover
When you were a kid, where did you want to go? Disneyland? An island in the Caribbean? London, or a realm of fantasy maybe?

I dreamt of going to a place that I imagined when I was sitting alone downstairs, hugging my knees in a broken computer chair.

Here, no one is belittled. Instead, each person’s being and voice is valued, even opinions that are vastly different from others. I can speak without the fear of my words reaching no one or getting shut down.

No one at this place shrugs off another’s problems. They are not told they’re just going to just “get over it” by some well-meaning, but ignorant adult. Instead, everyone listens with their full attention and gives that person the comfort they need. At the end of the day, we all can smile happily.

If I could give this place a name, it would be called this: home. The hope of ever reaching a place like that seemed impossible.

At the time, life was a giant snare that trapped weak hearts like mine.

I hoped that I could find the place I imagined. I believed in what appeared to be an empty miracle.

The appearance of our first building didn’t give me any reassurance because bomb shelters tend to not allude positivity. However, during my years here, I was taught to not focus on external factors to determine my self-worth. The staff here, especially a certain open-minded, nature enthusiast and an overwhelmingly energetic teacher, listened to me when I needed it the most. My peers accepted my eccentric personality and different views on a variety of topics.

While my time at New Haven Academy wasn’t perfect, it was place I needed so I could blossom into an determined and optimistic individual. I no longer try to escape via fantasy. Instead, I have a drive to live in reality and try to change this dark world into something brighter, even if it’s on a small scale. Just like how I viewed NHA, I want this world to become a true home to me.

Kristi Jimenez
Class of 2017
On a train headed east of here
Where I'll end up I'm not quite clear
But I can't help myself I must be settling down
Until they stop this thing I'll get around

Pass through deserts with mountain streams
Outside my window the scenes serene
The day I find myself I'll be so very proud
But I will not get passes up in the crowd

Moonpools & Caterpilers - Hear
I know there’s California, Oklahoma and all of the places I ain’t ever been to,

but down in the valley with whiskey rivers

I am on my way I am on my way I am on my way back to where I started

The Head & the Heart-Down in the Valley
I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains
I looked to the children, I drank from the fountains
There's more than one answer to these questions
Pointing me in a crooked line.

The Indigo Girls-
Closer to Fine
Home is just an idea after all.
THIS IS A LOVE STORY
AS UNCONVENTIONAL
AS THEY COME.

Every night I wait
by the phone, and you call as
expected not a moment late.

I will pay anything because you are worth it. You keep me sane.
My days are full of anxiety, but you so smoothly calm my nights.
It feels like everyone shoves me into the dark. You are the only
one who makes me feel alright. Although you are in the dark
too, you are my little light. Your voice relieves the troubles of
the day. It is as if our love is normal, and I forget you are locked
away.

I used to think the world was as black and white as my brother
and sisters. My sisters who would always chase after their
jailbird misters. I can no longer judge them because I have
grown to understand how one can love a man who is capable of
doing things as crazy as the court says he has.
AND MY DEAR, THEY WILL NEVER KNOW YOUR VIRTUE. My defender when I was hurt by a soul not as kind as you. Who showed me the sky when my heart was blue. And cared for me in ways that my own father would never think to do. The only man whoever gave me his jacket when I was cold. And would know how to bring back my smile when my confidence was low.

It is almost as if they expect this behavior from us. We live in a city where not even the water is pure. Our country is trying to remedy problems the world is facing, when in actuality, we are the ones in need of a cure. The young black men from my city are guilty before they even see the court steps. Change is not coming soon enough and we are left wondering who is next. We stand alone but are grouped together like no other. Stereotyped as rambunctious and raised alone by a single mother.

This is a love story
as unconventional as they come.
They say I am smart, ambitious,
quirky and destined for college.
You are a product of the streets
who took the wrong path and is guilty and immoral.
If they were to ask, I would tell them:

Lawyers are made of glass.
They can be filled with anything, but
Forever shaped by their past.
The places they are from help mold
The people they become.
Iris DeJesus

Optimistic

Wealthy

Secure

Prosperous

Loving

Caring

Thronging

Powerful

True

Weaker

Bitter

Powerful

Fortunate

Dry

Offensive

Considerate

Indifferent

Upright

Wrathful

Annoyed

Fiery

Rough

Arousing

Scum

My

Weird

Laziness

Inhumane

Blamed

Noisy

Vile

Disgusting

Offensive

Shameless

Offensive

Foul

Close minded

with other

Vile

Only cares about self
In my illustration, I drew a woman battling her inner demons. To do so, she must first believe that she can defeat them.

We always talk about success and what happens after we achieve our goals, but what about the period **BEFORE** we achieve said goals? In order to reach the roads of success, **we must first walk the path of peril.**
I lost friends, the respect of my family, a healthy body, and my childhood. I lacked the common sense to integrate into any society: Azerbaijani or American. Over time, I became more aware of these effects. The once blissful hours of virtuality had morphed into tortuous sessions of monotony.

When high school began, I embraced the opportunity for change. My maxim became self-improvement by any means. I took advantage of extracurricular programs and ate more consciously. Long gone were the colorless days of the past. The world that I had previously ignored opened up through my practice of autodidacticism, as I researched topics ranging from botany to vexillology.

And, I bought the jacket.

I grabbed it from the rack and ran for the nearest store mirror. When the leather hoisted over my shoulders, the heavy surface dragged along my skin. Every move was accompanied with a squeak. The jacket was as gleeful to wear as I was to wear it. For once, I felt synergy with the mirror’s reflection. The guy who had wasted his life-disappointing my family and avoiding challenges - was gone. The shoulder pads hid my childish stance and its contours accentuated my newfound confidence.

Dude, you know what? I don’t need a new car, shoes, or any other stuff. My leather jacket is enough, though now worn and bent with age.
The Places we go....
COLOMBIA

Nia Gayle

WHY COLOMBIA?
I’ve already been to a couple of countries in Central America. Belize and Honduras. With the program I got into, I had to make a decision really quickly, so I thought not to go Central America again and go to South America.

SO WHERE ELSE HAVE YOU TRAVELED TO?
I’ve been to Belize, Honduras, Canada, Mexico, China, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and Tortola. I think I’m missing one.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO?
Paris. I’d like to go back to China, South Korea for college maybe.

WHAT’S WITH ALL THE TRAVELLING?
Well, (laughs awkwardly) I guess I travel so much because I don’t really get to go anywhere when I’m just home. So that makes me want to go everywhere. And then I just do it.

DO YOU SPEAK SPANISH?
My Spanish is ok. For the most part, I can understand what people are saying. I don’t feel nervous about it.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO?
I want to learn more about my host family because I haven’t really gotten any information about them yet.

HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO BE THERE, AND WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING?
Two weeks and the first thing that I want to do is walk around Bogota with my host family so they can show me things.
Graffiti on the Streets of the Colombian Captiol


"Colombian street artist Guache is known for combining ancestral imagery with geometric patterns and shapes. His vibrant work can be found all over Bogotá.

The street art movement in Bogotá took off six years ago, following the shooting of graffiti artist Diego Felipe Becerra by police. After graffiti protests across the city, the mayor decided to promote and finance artists within designated zones."

Nia on Guache:

"I think it's pretty cool that the government gave him his own space to just do art. Maybe it shows that Colombia is more accepting than other places."

Samples of Nia's Art
I dance in front of my mirror and sing along with my aptly labeled playlist, Music I Feel Girly To. In fact, I think Bonnie Tyler’s *Total Eclipse of the Heart* and Dolly Parton’s 9-5 are national treasures, in addition to knowing all the words.

Sometimes, I wish I was born an 80’s Pop Queen.

Or maybe a 90’s boy band member.

But, apparently, seeing this big, full head of hair, multiracial kid screaming “Just Touch My Cheek Before You Leave Me!” instead of rap lyrics—or maybe it is just the screaming—catches people off guard.

And while I listen to rap a lot, I really love those songs that make you want to throw glitter all over your room, too. Sometimes, though, dancing like a girl isn’t right for my mood, and I put on my glasses and listen to symphonies while doing homework. Other times, driving down the highway playing *Achy Breaky Heart* is really what I need.

Or maybe, I’m cooking and I put on some Southern Gothic. On the other hand, the girl I’ve been crushing on has finally said “yes” to a date, and it looks like *What a Wonderful World* by Sam Cooke is blasting on a speaker in my room.
I am different than most. Not in that I-wear-different-colored-plaid-socks-and-I-love-to-shout-some-obscure-phrase-that-I’ll-look-back-on-and-cringle, different. I was the unique, there-was-never-a-place-where-I-truly-belonged, different. At first it was something I struggled with.

I was too {insert race} to be considered {insert race}, I liked listening to country more than Katy Perry, and I was into Titanic while everyone loved Pokemon.

Where do you go if you can’t go anywhere?

Everywhere.

I realized I would have to make my own way. And part of that was defying the odds and loving being different. Screw the bullies; screw the people who didn’t think I was normal.

No one ever expects that. But, that’s the story of my life. I’m always defying assumptions.

You mean to tell me, when the SWAT team busted down the door in that Brooklyn apartment and dragged my dad out; they looked at my pregnant mom and thought “He’s going to grow up, volunteer for his community, and lead several student groups”?
Or after your football coach spent most of that practice calling you an idiot benching you, he thought that you would lead the team as Captain for a 7-2 season 3 years later? And those teachers who saw that 2.3 GPA freshman year, would be unsurprised to find out you pulled almost all A’s the following three years, several awards, and took classes at a Top Tier school?

Of course not.

As Miley Cyrus once sang, “Ain't about what's waiting on the other side. It's the climb!” I was supposed to be a statistic at almost every stage of my life, instead, I became the 2 in that set of binary numbers of 1s and 0s that make up life. I found bravery in the bravado of defying what the world screamed at me to be, but it doesn’t end with college.

Because my grandfather grew up in a hut, my mom was raised in an apartment, I grew up in a house, and my kids will grow up at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.
PATHS
Eric Durant
I've been to the darkest corners of California. Where my own community cast me off for being from an island rather than being a Chicana. My fast words and curly hair was not approved by the tan skins and slick straight hairs of the girls whose mothers did not know that their daughters pushed and threw dirt and trash at the new girl.

I want to go to a place where I don't have to hide my Boricua accent and can show off my flag with pride. I want to live in a place where I can be able to have friends from the LGBTQIA community and not worry that my mom will judge them as soon as they are out the door. I want to live in a place where freedom is a natural right and not something we fight for. Where hatred and prejudice is a myth. I want to be able to go to a place where I can freely love and be loved.
"It doesn't matter what skin you're in; it only matters what you believe in."

- CARLOS VALENTIN CRUZ, WATCHING MANDELA
I was no one. Socially speaking, I had friends. I wasn’t popular, but I wasn’t necessarily lonely either. Mentally, however, I was completely alone. I couldn’t tell anyone who I was, or who I wanted to be. That year was bad, but going into ninth grade, it seemed like it might be better.

I met Ky, at choir in the beginning of that year. I didn’t like Ky at first. We started talking at some point, when I finally stopped being an asshole, and Ky was surprisingly interesting.

Ky got their head shaved half way through the year. They changed their name, and became more of who they wanted to be. They also went back to the hospital, got their door kicked in by their grandma, and had two of their friends commit suicide.

It was as if I was eaten by a dog, and Ky was too, except the dog was then eaten by a wolf, who was eaten by a lion, then a tiger, then a whale.

Having short hair in a girls’ choir, when you’re not exactly a girl is not exactly approved. At the least, you’ll be put in the back, and possibly called on less. No matter what though, you’ll stand out like a sore thumb. It wasn’t too bad though. People were used to it. But it was the worst with Tom. He was the founder of our choir, with more power than the leaders.

He sat up on the edge of the cliff, pushing the leaders over the edge, into (us) a screaming pit of untamed animals. He had them teach us the way dog trainers would,

“Not like that!”
“Not too loud!”

They treated us human though--knowing we were--but Tom treated us like the dogs he apparently thought we were.

It is uncomfortable for someone to see your soul. He said something loud and fierce, but it was lost inside the moment. He followed it with his favorite “If you don’t want to be here just leave!” silently motioning towards them. Everyone stared, and Ky stood there silently, waiting a minute before leaving the room. I immediately felt a wave of anger and anxiety wash over me. I wanted Ky to be alright, I wanted them to be here not have to leave. This was followed by my departure so I did not explode, and Emma’s departure so they did not die.
I stood there for a moment wondering if Ky also felt as if the world was torn away. All I could see was the empty shell of the once vibrant and joyful place. I felt the pain others had felt here, and what I had often chose to ignore. I could never ignore it again.

**Will Tomorrow Be The Same as Yesterday?**

Some days are filled with sunshine and rainbows, ending by falling into bed and being both happy for the next day to come, and sorrowful that this day has to end. Other days are ended locked in a bathroom covered in tears, with a half shaven head. Overall, I tend to have more of the latter.

No one says anything, but at the same time, everyone screams as loud as possible. Noise fluctuates in and out, causing me to feel uneasy, but not completely sure of what I’m feeling. The lights in the church feel like they’re having a staring contest with me, desperate to win. They shine deep into my soul, blinding me temporarily, but not long enough to forget this shitshow that I am currently stuck in the center of.

The hours melt through the clock, minutes pass away like seconds. as I fight to regain my full consciousness, my head spins. I feel stuck in place, not in control of what I do, but I know I’m in full control of myself. I think I would know if I wasn’t, but I’m not sure of much right now. All I can focus on are the shadows set on the ceiling from the brightly colored stained glass windows across the room. The light moves around the room as I stay in my place.

My breathing changes. I can feel a difference in my heart, in my soul. The girl on my left moves a little, and I can feel the space around me.

This place hurts my head. It makes me mad that I chose to be here. I wish I didn’t, but I know I like it here sometimes. Sometimes it makes sense for me to be here, sometimes it’s fun. Now it’s not fun. Now I don’t want to be here at all. Anywhere else would be paradise compared to here.

I can hear my heartbeat faster and faster, It makes me nervous. That girl on my left says something to our leader, and she pauses to ask me a question, the great question:

“Are you okay?”

I respond automatically with a barely recognized voice, “I’m fine.”

Of course I’m not.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” the girl next to me turns to ask.

“Yeah, I’m sorry, I had a bit of a bad day.”

I force out a small smile, and she seems to buy it.

“Okay,” she responds, done with all my drama.
I climb into the car, glad to be as far as I am from the hell-hole of a church that I was in.
“How was choir?” my mom asks, unaware of my uneasiness.
“Fine.”
I speak in half a grunt and half a mumble, the words ingrained in my skull answer the question, not what I actually feel. My stomach turns when she says it though. It’s like my brain is a computer that she just through a brick into.

We pull into the driveway, covered in a shield of darkness. This protects my tears from being seen, but not them from falling. I drag my bag from the car, taking care to get in the house after my mom, not wanting to be seen. My head pounds.

*Why can’t she see me? Why don’t I want her to?*

I mentally break down on the ground, crying, twisting, turning. I physically stand still for a second, before quickly running through the dark.

It slowly occurs to me that I don’t fit in there. I’m not skinny, my hair’s not long enough, my outfits are old and passed down, I can’t sing for the life of me. In a split second, I decide the best way to deal with the problem set in front of me, is to take matters into my own hands.

The clock ticks and I set down my bag by the couch. I doubt my plan briefly, and head towards my room, before going towards my sibs and whispering, “Cover for me when mom and dad get back.” They sort of stare at me and nod, stuck in a zombie like state from too much youtube, and the unbelievable shock I am actually going through with one of my plans. I leave the room, full of nervous energy. The bathroom lights call me toward it. I run in, and lock the door behind me, standing there momentarily before bursting into tears.

*My hair means everything to me. In third grade, I used to hide my face with it, In seventh, I started dying it. My hair showed my mood, my personality. I had cut half an inch off a week before because I was in a bad mood, I colored it pink and orange when I wanted to be my own person. Now its fate rests in my hands, literally.*

I stare into the mirror, seeing my puffy tear stained face, my mid length, choppy brown hair, my ugly clothing, and my unforgiving thoughts, look back, scared.

*I’m thirteen. Thirteen is old, thirteen is too young. Thirteen is not the age to be going to therapy. Thirteen is not the age to be obsessing over what you look like. Thirteen is not the age to know you are not who everyone thinks you are.*
I pull open the right hand drawer, staring for a second at the patchy yellow paint covering it. Inside lays various bottles of hair dye, nail polish, and old make up. An utterly broken rainbow of trash surrounds what I'm looking for. A matte black plastic box protrudes from the top of the pile, the broken box opens to show a basically brand new pair of hair clippers.

I message one of my friends, the fashionable one. The one I tell some of my deepest shit to. I text her on the hipster, old version of wattpad. It takes her a couple minutes, but her message states clearly that she thinks I'm crazy.

"Are you alright?" She asks, but I can't tell if she means it.

"I'm not sure." I respond, quickly adding,

"I'm about to cut all my hair off."

"Did you think this through? Are you okay? How can I help? Don't do this."

Half way through, I regretted everything. My hair was everywhere, except, on my head. I felt stupid, like this was the end of the world. I was somehow atlas and my hair was the weight of the world, my stresses, my anxieties, everything that I hated. Like shaving my hair would solve my problems. My hair made my problems worse.

Gender stereotypes are the fucking worst. If it has never been pointed out to you before, females assigned at birth, cannot live a day with a shaved head unnoticed. For most guys, it would be a new haircut, or just normal. For me It was hell.

The rumors started circulating immediately. "She's gay!" both in that mean way, but also in that way of "Holy shit! Gay people actually exist."

This phased me in the least, because that's what they'd been labeling my friends since day one. What hurt me for some reason, was everyone immediately thought I was a guy. They pulled my tongue out of my mouth, and decided I was not the one who could tell them my gender. I was in the middle of a lot of deep shit at that point and the only thing I needed was a chorus of middle school students labeling me.

I think my motive was to rebel against what I thought choir should look like. Or it was to show them I wasn't who they always thought, or maybe it was to cut the weights of the world away. It accomplished none of it, whatsoever. My hair trapped me once again. Either way I was stuck in a cage of my own making.

Unable to stop myself from trying to break out.

I Don’t Want Other People To Decide Who I Am.
I Want To Do That For Myself.
- Emma Watson
Since my surgery, I miss playing soccer. I really miss it. They say it's a genetic thing, but I don't get it because my sister doesn't have it and neither does my mom. Only I do. I like being physical and doing things. I can't just sit here for three hours. That's why I want to be a paramedic and a firefighter.

"Leave that to the men. That's a man's job."

A male primary care doctor told me that when I told him that I wanted to become a firefighter. There's no such thing as “a man’s job” in my eyes. Jobs and careers are for any and everyone. No man can tell me that I can or can’t do something because I am a Hispanic female. I see myself as that firefighter with arms filled up with tattoos in the future.

I will be that firefighter.

not weak or screwed
Eager and ready to be free from the world I was used to, when I came to high school, I was like the Disney princess, Ariel. When I reached the shores, I was in for a shock. Finding my voice, both metaphorically and literally, was a lot harder than I thought it would be.

PAIGE BROWN

I KNOW THE WAY

Sophomore year shaped me into Elsa, with an icy heart, ready to freeze and anything that could hurt me. I was content in this bubble. But in it, I lost my creativity, my passion and my outgoing spirit. That was my weakness in high school—staying true to myself while gaining the strength and willingness to change and transform into a mature new woman.

In Junior year, I was Belle, realizing that I was trapped by my fear of the future, by the circumstances in my life, and trapped by my limitations as a person, I was ready for adventure in a great wide somewhere. Embarking on an internship and a search for the college that I wanted to go to was one of the greatest moments of my high school career. I learned that ultimately, my time at New Haven Academy had shaped me in ways that even I couldn’t quite express.
I am princess in search of, not a happily ever after, but a path worth fighting for. I am the princess of my own story—and in it—there were seasons of hardship, traversing deserts and lush vivid rain forests. There were endless oceans where I thought I would never reach the shores. And now, college is another part of my movie.

I see myself in Megara and Mulan who fought for themselves and what they believed in.

I am Moana.

The people I love have changed me, the things I have learned will guide me, and nothing on earth can silence the strength I have inside me.

I will carry you here in my heart to remind me that come what may, I know the way.