

An Attempt to Answer an Annoying Question: Final Draft

by Katherine Rancaño

Our Lady of Lourdes Academy is nothing like the stereotypical all girl school. There are no signs of flirty short plaid skirts or knee-high socks and there certainly isn't an all-boy school next door filled with attractive jocks. In fact, as soon as you enter the institution you might feel as though you just accidentally walked into a prison. The first sight of the school is dreadful, the doors are iron gates that lock automatically, giving the poor hopeless girl the impression that once she steps through those doors she is never coming out. Once inside, the simplicity of the building is striking: it is literally a square with a large patch of grass in the middle. The grass is a combination of lively green and dead dry grass, which clearly marks the illegal shortcuts students take to make it to class on time. In the center of this grass square, also known as the Grotto, is the statue of the blessed Mary, which is the heart of the school. To the right of the statue is a confusing metal sculpture, which resembles pieces of scrap metal welded together and later called art. To this day, no one has any idea what it is supposed to be, but it has been there for years. It was most likely a donation, and no one has had the heart to tear the hideous thing down. The old white walls are accompanied by yellow light fixtures, which give the school an ugly ominous glow in the early hours of the morning. The doors and lockers are painted sea foam green, which is yet another mystery in this school. Why sea foam green? Of all the colors to choose from, they picked that. The worst part is, the doors and lockers are re-painted every year in that same exact color. The student body resembles a Post Office. Its funny how in an all girl school the women are required to dress like men. They sport navy blue slacks, which by senior year are more of a sad bluish-gray from being washed too many times. They wear their penny loafers as slippers, the shoes look more like a poor man's rather than a middle class girl

who is paying a hefty tuition. Lastly, they wear white oxford button down shirts. This is what really screams, “mail man!” The most feminine piece they wear is a navy blue cardigan and the occasional bow on top of a crazy disheveled hair-do, which they claim is a bun.

Dear Diary,

I hate that I even have a diary. I think it’s so typical for a girl to have one. Sometimes I wonder why the hell I even write in this thing. It’s not like I’m ever going to go back and read all the shit I did freshmen year. I don’t want to remember freshmen year; it sucked. Sophomore year has to be better than all the crap I wrote in this book a year ago. Breaking up with JD was the last straw for me. I’m done. I won’t go back, in fact, I’m going to thoroughly enjoy being single. New goal: to be single all throughout high school. I guess that’s a little drastic, but what the hell. No one really needs a boyfriend anyway, they’re annoying, clingy, and often times way too romantic and gushy. No offense, but I don’t want to walk along the beach as you read a stupid poem you found on Google. Not my thing. My Mom thinks I’m depressed; she’s so dumb. Just because I don’t talk to her all the time she thinks I’m hiding stuff. I mean, yeah, I guess I’ve been a little down lately, but, God, I’m not depressed! Today, she called me the “antichrist” because I refused to go to church... Too bad I’m a part of Peer Ministry and leading a retreat.

The crowd was packed with sweaty hormonal teenagers dying to invade and destroy the house and drink the liquor in the locked cabinets. “This is so not my scene,” she thought, as she shoved her way through the crowd looking for a clean place to sit. Surprisingly enough, in the back corner of the room, there was a small space that was just big enough for one person. It looked extremely dirty and very much on the small side, but she could not have asked for

anything more. The space was much smaller than she had anticipated and she felt awkwardly wide as she squished herself into the little space. She was really beginning to feel out of place. Her hair was beginning to frizz and she could feel people staring at her, as if they knew she didn't belong. It was like she had "outcast" stamped on her forehead and no one had told her to wipe it off. From the corner of her eye she spotted her best friend stumbling towards her. Finally, a face she actually recognized. She felt a sense of relief knowing that she wasn't alone anymore. She took a second to really take in her friend's appearance; she was an absolute mess. Her hair was sticking out in all directions and her face was damp with sweat. Her cheeks were rosy, as if she had been running, and her eyes looked to have the inability to focus. She was unusually loud and had a goofy smile plastered on her face. She realized her friend reeked of smoke and alcohol when she got up to meet her. She was beginning to feel more anxious rather than relieved. Her friend grabbed her by the arm and dragged her across the room, knocking people out of the way and getting angry stares and degrading comments in return. As they walked out of the house, she could feel the warm humid air brush her face, and ultimately inflate her hair. She felt the sweat from her friend's arm on her neck and could smell the vodka in her breath. She knew this wasn't going to end well... They walked up to a group of people, who, all clearly intoxicated, looked to be having the time of their lives. She thought that maybe this wouldn't be so detrimental after all. The boy next to her placed his heavy muscular arm around her thin delicate shoulders. She had never been this close to a guy before, at least not one she had just met. Her heart began to race and she began to feel that familiar twisting feeling in her stomach. She knew this was the pivotal moment of the night; the moment that could change the way things had been going for her. The boy poured vodka into a shot glass and passed it to her, "Happy New Year's," he screamed. She hesitated, but before anyone could see the fear in her eyes, she knocked back the shot. She could

feel the cool liquid burn like a roaring fire down her throat; it felt more like drinking poison. There probably wasn't much of a difference; it tasted like shit. She wondered if one shot was enough to make someone vomit, she surely felt like it was. "I'm such a hypocrite," she thought. However, she knew that from that point on, she had gained some respect from these people. All she could hope for was that they would remember it in the morning.

I sat in the waiting room as I listened for my name to be called. My Mom kept trying to make conversation but all the talking and waiting was making me nervous. I could feel my heart pounding in my chest, and my hands became sweaty as they started to shake. My breaths were short and quick, and the only thing that was easing the pain in the pit of my stomach was the shaking of my leg. People stared as my leg quickly bounced up and down, they must have thought I was crazy. I still couldn't believe my Mom thought my stomach problems were mental. I kept telling her they were real, but this was the only way she'd shut up. A relatively young woman stepped into the waiting room and called my name, I stood up, and my Mom followed. I was grateful when the psychologist told her to wait outside. She introduced herself as Lucy, I found the name quite funny for a psychologist, it seemed so typical... Lucy the psychologist... All I could think about was the saying from I Love Lucy: "Lucy, I'm home!" I have no idea how that was relevant to a psychologist but I couldn't stop thinking about it. The room didn't look how I expected; I pictured everything to be white. White brick walls with white tables and couches, I even pictured Lucy wearing white. I guess my idea of psychologists was a little off. Apparently there is a difference between a psychologist and a psych ward... That was comforting... The room was yellow, with warm brown leather couches. There was an antique wooden table in the center of the room with flowers as the centerpiece. It looked like a mini

living room. I sat down on the large leather couch, ready to give this woman a run for her money. I was planning on making this the most difficult session she had ever had. But as soon as it started, my anger faded... She was normal. She wasn't sitting there trying to psychoanalyze me or tell me all the things I was doing wrong in my life. She was just listening. It was weird to have someone just listen, I felt like I was rambling half the time but she seemed interested enough. After an hour of talking and conversing, Lucy looked at me and smiled. The next thing she said was the last I ever expected to come out of her mouth, "You have anxiety and, unfortunately, you're making yourself feel this way." My mouth dropped, I felt like the stupidest person in the world. I had taken millions of tests and it all amounted to this. I had anxiety. The best part was, now that I knew I had anxiety I was getting anxious about getting anxious. Talk about a vicious cycle. I walked out of the room with my stomach in knots. I refused to look at my Mother; I felt that if I looked at her she would know that she had been right all along. I couldn't believe I was making myself sick... My life is just peachy...

She could feel the hot air from the bonfire warm her face as she sat on the sand, the roaring fire giving just enough light to illuminate the faces around her but not disturb the skies. She marveled at the sky above. She wished Miami would turn off all their lights, just for one night, so that the stars could shine like they did now. They looked like pieces of gold scattered on a black blanket, each having their own time to shine and pride in their brightness and size. If only people were like the stars; proud of who they were and each given the equal opportunity to shine. No one ever criticizes the stars; people simply admire them. Imagine if everyone treated each other the way they treated stars... She harped on that thought for a moment, and realized the people in front of her did exactly that. Her group of friends was more like her family. To an

outsider, however, they all would most likely fall under the category of “weird,” especially when you take into consideration their names. You have Duffoo, Trilles, Chile, Buzzi, Kandy, Young Sleeze, Celaya, and Baby J, who is sometimes called “The Fighting Fetus” because of his baby face. She felt at home with them, she was a part of the “crew” and “one of the guys,” which is how she acquired the nickname Bob. Unfortunately, that was just one of the many they had created. If she could pick a point in her life where she could stay forever, it would be here. All of the people she cared about in one place, all merged together despite the differences among them. This moment was absolute bliss for her; she would never forget these people and the way they’ve changed her life.

“I DON’T WANT TO GOOO!” I felt all the emotions running through my body and I was exhausted. I had been sobbing for nearly three hours and there was nothing anyone could do to make me feel better about going to that damn city. I looked like an absolute mess, my eyes were bloodshot and swollen from all the crying, and my hair wasn’t even tamable, let alone presentable. I was wearing the pajamas I had been wearing all day, and it was 5 o’clock in the afternoon. I looked like a walking corpse; God, I’m pathetic. I could feel the knot in my throat as I tried to explain once again why I couldn’t leave, but instead of words, all that came out was a pathetic cry; it sounded more like a dying animal. I lied in my bed and curled into the fetal position, I grabbed a box of tissues and cried some more. I refused to pack. Nicole and Chile were getting frustrated, they grabbed me by my arms and sat me up, Chile looked at me with her death stare, whenever she did that I felt like she was looking into my soul.... I felt naked. “Shut up and nod if you like the shirt and we’ll pack it!” I couldn’t help but laugh at that statement; was I really that ridiculous that I couldn’t even pack for myself? I thought about my future and

the uncertainty in it all, I could already feel the tears streaming down my cheeks. I quickly brushed the thought aside and tried to change my mood, I sat up and wiped the tears from my face. I looked at Chile and Nicole, who were folding my clothes and throwing my shoes into a suitcase, and said, “so I guess this pretty much means you’re my bitches, huh?” I got most of the clothes thrown in my face in retaliation. God I love my friends.

Beyond the sidewalk is the rugged unknown terrain.
Where the long blades of grass sway freely in the wind,
And angry dark clouds threaten those who dare to cross.
The alluring thought of wandering off the path,
Leaves a pang in the back of her throat.
But the scent of sweet freedom,
Tempts her back to the dangers beyond the paved haven.
The humming of the grass summons those with daring hearts,
To cross the threshold and walk across the edge.
As she steps onto the pathless meadow,
Bliss fills her heart and the adventure begins.
The saltiness of the earth engulfs her very being,
And the weight of the path is far behind her.
Suddenly, becoming tangible, becoming real.
Becoming free.

Dear Mr. Gatto,

You've asked me the most tortuous question anyone has ever asked me. At first, I thought this essay was going to be a breeze, something I can write up in about 20 minutes and then forget about. Do you enjoy picking apart the minds of young innocent adolescents with a question such as that? I've been sitting at my desk for almost 4 hours trying to answer, "who am I?" and I have absolutely no idea where to begin. I've had enough obstacles in my life to write a 12 paged paper single spaced, but so has the next girl, and I don't want that to define me. Moreover, I don't want to be defined by my anxiety either, that is not who I am. At least that's not who I think I am. I'm a blunt and stubborn 17-year-old, with a bump the size of Mt. Everest on my nose and a minor phobia of feet. I am extremely impatient and I am often criticized for walking around with a "bitch face". That, however, doesn't define me either. In short, I don't believe anyone can define themselves. I believe that if they can they're extremely narrow minded to think they are done discovering who they are. A person isn't static, we are forever changing and we'll never be the same for two days, you taught us that. The person I am today won't be the person I will be tomorrow. All I can hope for is that I am changing for the better.

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