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New Beginnings

 The date is May 29, 2019 and I’m finally walking across the stage of the Infinite Energy Arena with 1,200 peers and their families watching. I have been told that this moment is a strange feeling; relieving yet bittersweet and confusing all at the same time. I grab my diploma, turn to smile for my picture, and walk back to my seat, passing hundreds of kids that I grew up with but would never see again after today.

 “So how does it feel not being a highschooler anymore?”asks my mom as we walk to our cars after the ceremony.

 I was expecting this question. She knew that my senior year was the worst of my life. I knew she would ask but couldn’t prepare my answer because I still didn’t know how I felt.

 “Honestly mom it wasn’t what I was expecting. I prayed for this day to come faster and now that it’s here I wish time would just pause for a little. I’m not prepared mentally to be this old or to move on to this new chapter of my life and it’s all come so fast and I have never felt so lost,” I answer after thinking for a while.

 During the second semester of my senior year of highschool, I counted down the days until graduation. I always felt so alone, belittled, and detached. I thought that the second I walked across that stage, all of my mental issues and trauma from growing up in Forsyth County, Georgia wouldn’t be so damaging anymore; but afterwards all I could think about was how badly I wish I were walking into my highschool as a young and healthy freshman that wasn’t so badly tainted the way I am now.

 “Well honey it’s normal to feel this way! We told you it was a strange feeling and it’s not going to be easy,” replies my mom.

 “I’m just so mad that highschool was so bad for me. I know I deserved more than what I was given. I deserve to have good memories like everybody else and I just feel like I need more time. Everybody else is ready to move on because their expectations were exceeded and mine weren’t even met,” I blurt out at my mom, quickly becoming hysterical.

 I continue, “Everybody is so excited to leave for college because they can look back and happily reminisce instead of sit and wonder what was wrong with them. You tell me there’s so much more to life than my highschool experience but right now it seems like my highschool experience has set the path of my life.”

 My mom looks at me with eyes full of sadness and says, “I am sorry the people you went to school with do not see how great you are. I am sorry they treated you the way they did and I am sorry you feel this way about yourself because of them. You are worth so much more than what people from South Forsyth High School think of you. You are worth so much more than Forsyth County and there are people in this world that will see that. You will go on to do bigger and better things than any of the people that hurt you because you possess things they do not: loyalty, character, sympathy, and selflessness. Stop crying over people that do not matter. High school is over and you are no longer held down by the chains those people put on you and you should be happy.”

 I was left speechless; I knew my mom was right, as she usually is. My mom was the only person who knew how hard it was for me to get out of bed in the mornings or even just to go upstairs from my room. My mom was all I had for so long and she continues to be the person I vent to and confide in.

 When I came to Florida State University, I was hoping for a fresh start to recreate myself. I went through panhellenic recruitment as an attempt of making new friends and finding a place to belong. I knew it would be hard for me because nobody wants a damaged girl in their sorority.

 Question after question was thrown at me, “So where are you from? What did you do over the summer? Tell me about your best friend from home!”

 “I’m from Atlanta, I went to the lake, went shopping, and went to a lot of concerts over the summer, and my best friend is amazing and goes to Georgia Southern!” I lied every time they asked me a question.

 I thought I couldn’t be myself during recruitment so I lied to make myself look better. Looking back now, not in a sorority because I ended up in one I didn’t fit in with and dropped, I wish I had been myself. My mom is the only person I have admitted that to.

 I tell my mom every day, “I don’t feel like myself at Florida State. I haven’t clicked with anybody and I want to transfer in the spring. I’m not meant to be at FSU, I should’ve gone somewhere else.”

 She sees through my complaining and consistently tells me, “The grass is not always greener on the other side. The reason you are so unhappy is not because of where you are, it’s because of the way your brain operates now but that is something you can fix. You don’t have to be unhappy forever, Lauren. It’s just up to you to make the changes that are going to benefit you.”

 If it weren’t for my mom, I honestly don’t know if I would be alive today. Growing up in Forsyth County, GA poisoned my head and heart but she has always stayed by my side to help me see the light in all of the darkness and I know she will continue to do so.