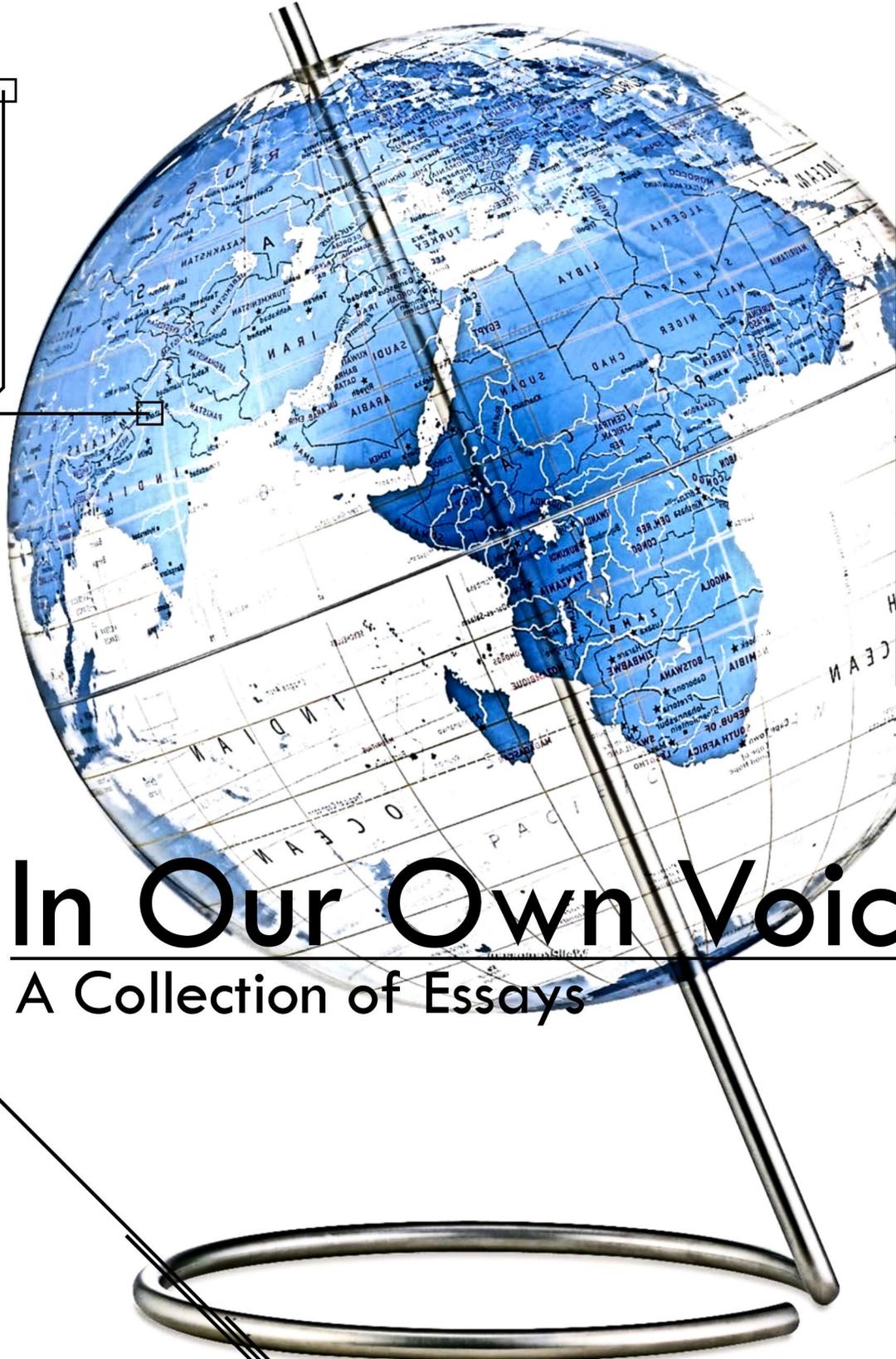




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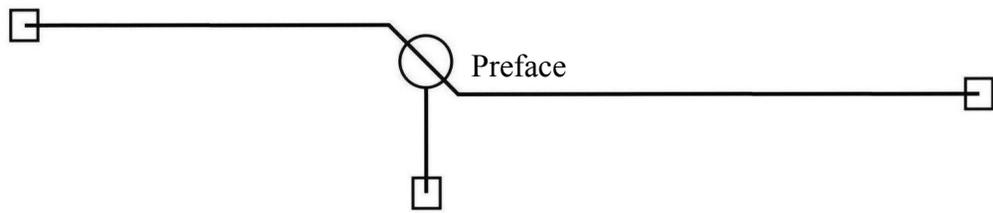


In Our Own Voices

A Collection of Essays



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
FULLERTON DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, AND LINGUISTICS



As editors of the Spring 2011 edition of *In Our Own Voices*, we proudly present a collection of essays from the talented voices of English 99 students.

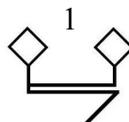
English 99: Developmental Writing, prioritizes the writing process, encouraging students to spend an entire semester working, reworking, revising, and refining their best essays. This collection celebrates the dedication that these students have put forth in their work. The essays published have been chosen from a large group of nominated texts, and stood out as exceptional.

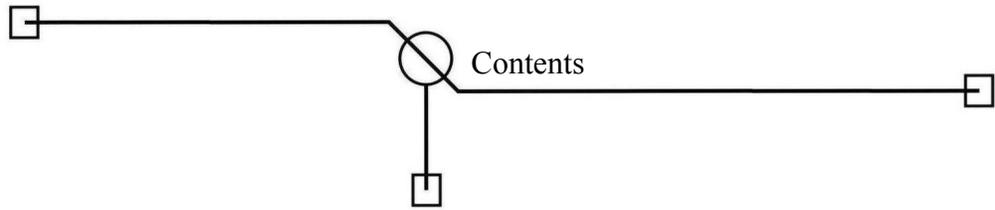
It has always been an aim of previous *In Our Own Voices* to value student writing, and to also give writers a platform to celebrate their distinct beliefs, ideas, and experiences. We hope this edition continues this tradition.

Thank you to all those who participated in this publication, from the selected writers, to the many nominated writers, to the instructors and Writing Center tutors who placed the nominations.

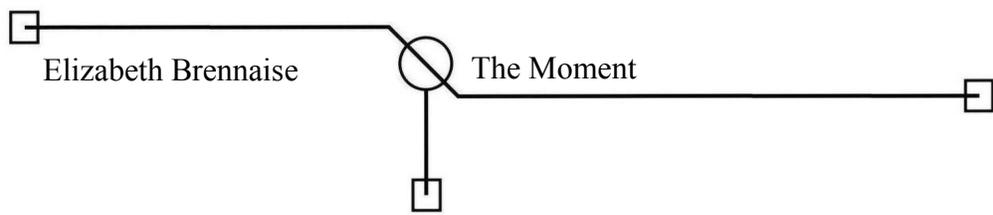
And to the readers, we warmly invite you to listen to the rich and dynamics voices of our writers. Enjoy!

Editors: April Dominguez & Edward Yoo



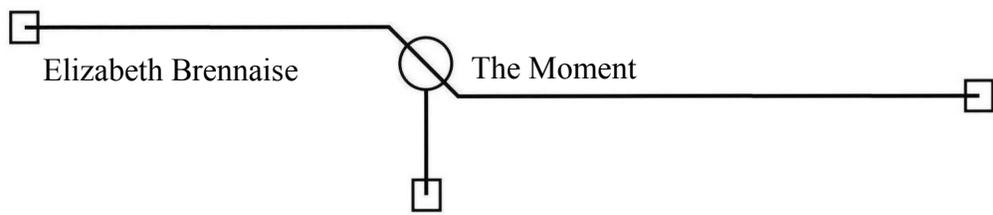


Elizabeth Brennaise	The Moment	3
Sayeh Khorsandi	Cucumbers for Thought	6
Diane Lee	A Place for Memories	10
Matthew Parreira	The Boy in My Reflection	14
Jasmine Price	If Only I Could Speak to Death	19
Garbis Tchillingirian	Sisyphus and WALL-E: Meaning in the Face of Existentialist Crisis	23
Evan Tobar	Health Center Dilemma	28



It was cold and damp. Drops of water were hitting my window as I drove around on dark streets, seeing only a glimpse of light as I passed buildings slowly with no notion of where I was going. Nothing looked even remotely familiar and I had no idea of the area I was in. I was stressed and frustrated from the anxiety of not knowing where I was going or even where I was. As it was, I was already running late, and that upset me more. I felt lost in more ways than one; lost in direction and completely lost in my emotions.

In my head, I heard my heart beating loud and I could feel it racing. While feeling the butterflies fluttering as the anxiety grew, I began to feel a chill, my blood racing through my veins as the anticipation built up. I was driving around in the pitch-black night, waiting for the text message to tell me where to go. Instead of driving around aimlessly getting deeper and deeper into oblivion, I decided to pull off onto a road that seemed darker than the rest to sit and wait for directions. As I sat waiting impatiently, I felt my hands growing colder as the nervousness grew. I sat there in my car in the dark of night and saw the flashing lights of the cars around me as they turned the corner. Instead of waiting alone with my anxiety, I thought, "I should just make the call." Picking up my phone, with all my frustrations flowing through my fingers onto the buttons, I dialed the numbers slowly as though I would change my mind before I hit the send button. I sat in the silence, pushed the send button and waited as I heard the dial tone ring and ring. I waited impatiently for the familiar voice to say anything on the other end. The rain began to pour down hitting the windows and the top of my car. I waited for that voice to answer my call. After what seemed like forever, I finally heard the ever so calming voice on the last ring. Two words were all it took to completely ease all my frustrations.

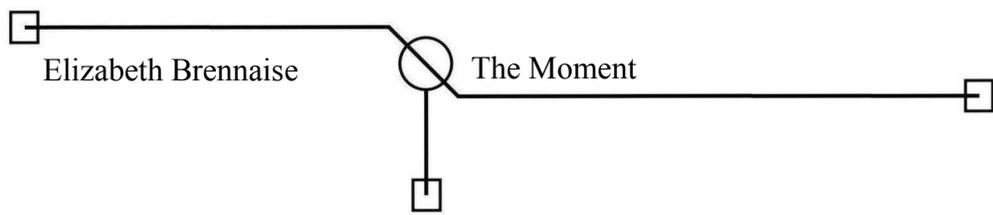


“Hi Baby,” he said. The two most comforting words I could have heard. My heart skipped a beat the moment he said those words. Being as frustrated as I was when I called, all of it faded away as soon as I heard his voice. My heart slowed down to a normal pace, and my blood began to cool down. I sat there hearing the rain, listening to him breathing as he waited for me to say something, to say anything. I was at peace.

I could finally breathe again, and all I said was, “I’m lost.”

He sweetly began to give me directions. He could tell I was still flustered even though I was calm. He used gentle words to guide me to where he was. I drove with him on the phone, hearing his peaceful breathing through the phone. He gave me directions almost as though he was my personal GPS. I knew I was getting close to where he was, from the directions he gave me. Things around me were starting to look like they should and what should be around where he was. I started to drive slower, knowing I was about to see him. I felt my hands getting shaky and I felt them clam up. The cold feeling that was in my hands before was back again. I felt my heart begin to race fast as I saw where I was supposed to be.

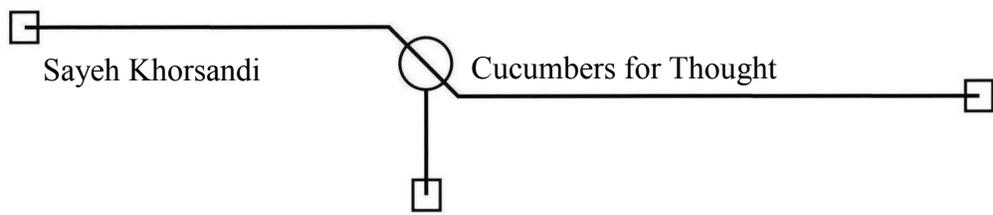
It was only sprinkling now, and there was a mist of rain hitting my window. I pulled into the drive way, parked my car, and that is when I saw him. He was sitting in his car in the parking space across from where I parked. The moment I saw him, all my fears were gone. I was back to being at peace. My heart skipped a few beats, but this time in a good way. I saw only his shadow in his car, but I knew I was ‘home’. I could feel it. He was still on the phone and we just sat there looking at each other. We both sat in our cars looking through the rain stained windows at each other. He made the first move, opened the door to his car, and I saw the rain hit his face. I hung



up the phone and began to slowly open the door. As I opened the door, I felt the brisk cold hit my face before the rain did. I felt the cold splatters of rain tickle my eyelashes and my lips. I saw him walk over to me, slowly at first and then I walked towards him. As we got closer to one another, I felt my heart racing and then getting slower as I got closer, knowing I was safe.

He opened his arms and hugged me with a warm embrace. I nuzzled into his chest and breathed him in. I heard his heartbeat, and I felt his warmth. I noticed the smell of the air around me, with the smell of freshly wet dirt, with a faint hint of mold from the rain. I felt his arms pull me closer and hold me tighter, he pulled my chin up and made me look him in the eyes for the very first time. I saw the passion in his deep brown eyes just looking into me. He saw through me. He saw my heart. He looked at me, and even with my hair a mess from the rain, make up faded from being hit with raindrops, he still thought I was the most beautiful girl in the world. He didn't have to verbally say any words for me to know he thought I was beautiful. His eyes said it all. As he pulled my chin up and I looked into his gentle eyes, I felt his love hold me. He pulled me close and pushed his soft lips against mine. I felt his desire on my lips, I felt the comfort of being close to him, and I felt his sweet gentle kiss.

He looked me in the eyes after he slowly pulled his lips away and said, "Even though I am just meeting you now, I know I love you. I love you." With tears in my eyes and feeling a lump in my throat and butterflies in my stomach, I looked at him and said, "I love you, I love you too." In that moment, I knew. I knew I found my future and knew I had fallen in love. I remember when I fell in love. I remember the moment I knew I was 'home,' I remember falling in love, in the rain.



Today I turned 18.

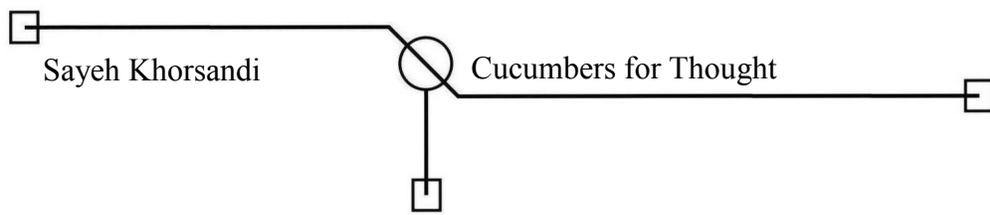
I rolled out of bed and slowly got ready for the day in my new dorm. I didn't feel special and sadly there was no breakfast in bed, although I will say I believe that 18 years of age is pretty significant. It's known to mark adulthood, responsibility, and maturity—qualities I believed I had already possessed.

I've always thought that when I turned 18, everything would change, and that overnight I would transform into an "official" adult. I knew I was able to buy lottery tickets, cigarettes & cigars, and other miscellaneous items, but none of that really mattered to me.

So, as I sat on my bed, deep in "adult" philosophical thought, waiting for my wisdom to come to me, I decided it was time to actually go on with my day. I went to my second day of my college classes, exactly what every person wants to do on their birthday, and everything was, well, completely normal. I had woken up thinking that today I would experience a new side to society. I was excited that I was going to enter and become a part of adulthood, with a brand new passion for life. That was all until I actually entered it.

So today, on the 18th anniversary of my birth, my mom took me with her to the Glen Ivy Spa to get massages, now that I was of the legal age of 18, of course. I had gone with her, excited to say that I no longer had to have her parental consent. Everything was going quite swimmingly for all I knew. There were saunas, jacuzzis, luxurious bathrooms, and amazingly soft bathrobes, basically every girl's dream when she imagines getting pampered.

After all of the nonsensical fun, my mom and I were called into the waiting room to get our massages. There were couches and chairs everywhere in this small room. The background



music was less like music, and more like the sounds of ocean waves and birds chirping. I guess it gave the vibe of serenity, or something to that effect. There were also numerous giant bowls of sliced cucumbers sitting over ice, beside every few chairs or so. After I had learned that they weren't a nice treat to snack on while I waited, I placed them under my eyes rather than directly on top. After the first week of college, I thought I'd skip the nonsense and go directly to the problem, which was the growing "bags" under my eyes. Real attractive.

My mom was called in a few minutes after we came into the room. I sat alone and started to realize that sitting in the room seemed somewhat too familiar. The doctor's office, that's what it was. At least the doctor's office would have felt a little more comfortable. I mean, aside from the coughing old people that seemed like they needed a travelling oxygen bag, and little kids that looked like they had gotten a transmitted disease from the school playground, at least there was noise. Not a peep was heard in this room. Don't get me wrong, sometimes I too like, and prefer the silence, but on this particular day I was looking for some exciting adult conversation.

A few minutes later, when I had realized that the chance for any conversation at all was most likely not going to happen, I started to look around and study the various women beside me. None of them looked alike, or were the same age, from what I could tell, yet they all did have something in common. Each one of their eyes was pealed to some kind of magazine, whether it was, Home & Garden, or Us Weekly, or the risqué Cosmopolitan, for the women who were bolder I suppose. All I could hear in this room was the flipping of magazine pages. I couldn't understand what it was in these magazines that had them so hooked. No one was looking at each other, or anything really, besides the page in front of them. I bet if they were blindfolded, they

wouldn't be able to describe what another person in the room even looked like.

I lied back down on my recliner chair; cucumbers still placed strategically under my eyes, wondering to myself what really is so entertaining about magazines. After a few minutes of brainstorming, I came up with the idea that it really isn't the content, or the captivating story about which Hollywood couple just got a divorce; it was more so about reading into someone else's life: someone in the public eye that was apparently more interesting than the lives we lead ourselves. We choose to spend an hour of our day, or however long it takes to read cover-to-cover, reading about other people, so for that amount of time, we can escape from our own thoughts and lives.

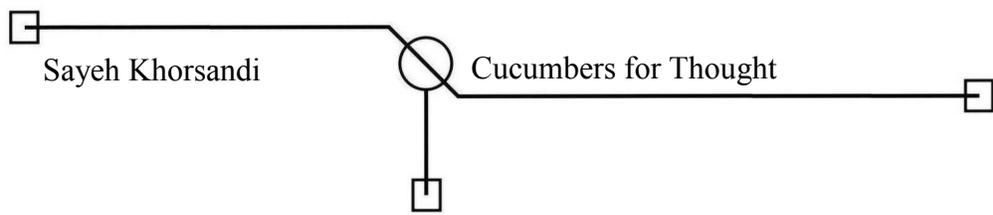
Personally, I enjoy all of the quiet "thinking time" I can get, because it is pretty rare during busy school days. I also thought that the adult women, being that they may have kids and jobs, would've enjoyed it too. I began to realize that maybe they were deliberately trying not to think, and that they knew as soon as they closed the magazine, all of the lists and events would come rushing back to their heads. To them, the idea of quiet "thinking time" might've actually been a scary one.

That thought overwhelmed me. It may have been true that I possibly didn't have as much stress as those women, but I too was now an adult, and it didn't sit well that one day, that might be me.

As a strange reaction to that realization, I instantly began to laugh quietly to myself. I don't know why I had the urge to laugh exactly. Maybe it was because I had put adulthood on such a pedestal and I was so quickly disappointed. Or maybe because the women I had always seen myself to be like, enjoying my days getting pampered in a day spa, were now what I hoped I wouldn't turn out to be. Maybe it was both.

I was later called in for my massage and that definitely turned out to be all I hoped I would be. I fell asleep to more unanswered questions in my head.

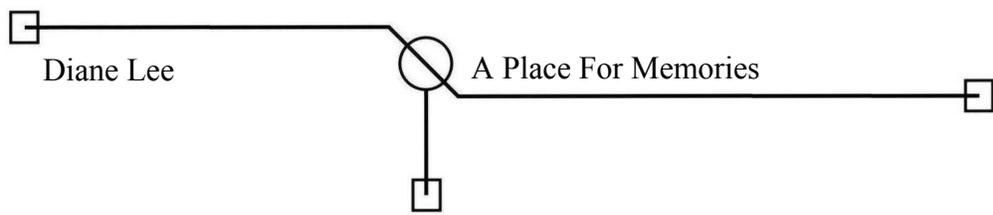
Later that day after leaving the spa, I was continually congratulated on my birthday and asked, "So, how do you feel?" I would then go on to answer that question just about the same way everybody always does—some made up lie about how we feel older, when we all know we really don't, and I wouldn't forget the big birthday smile.



Anyone can try to dispute it, but normally, a day or number doesn't just magically change how you feel. It was after I left the spa that I began to doubt my own beliefs. All I knew without a doubt, was that today wasn't just another day of the week. Eighteen was much more than just a number, or another birthday card that read "Congrats! You're one year older!"

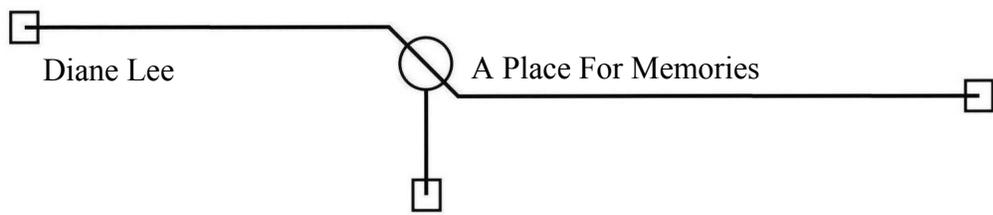
It might've felt like the end of my childhood, but more importantly, it was actually just the beginning of something much larger.

Today changed everything.



Childhood memories are the vague things of the past that most people think of as they get older. When one thinks of the way things were back then and how much the world has changed throughout the years, it makes a person appreciate those youthful days even more. From the television show “The Wonder Years” the main character Kevin Arnold states that “memory is a way of holding on to the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose.” It’s something that a person can always cherish throughout his or her life. Even though people must grow up, they will always wish that they could go back to the place they remember the most.

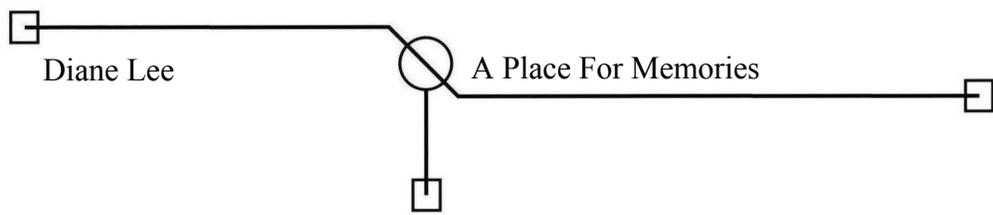
Though knowing that the past can never be forgotten nor can it ever be repeated, the best way to remember what it was like as a child is a day at the park. This place is where a child can use his or her imagination and become whoever he or she wants to be. At first taking in the fresh cold air outside, it’s a foggy morning with a gentle breeze brushing against one’s face as if the earth were saying its morning greetings. As one looks up at the sky it’s clear, without a cloud in sight. There are green trees and grass, with a concrete walkway surrounding Suzanne Park. There are swings, a jungle gym, a vast area of grass to play soccer or football, and a baseball field. On the side are benches for parents who watch their children as they get carried away in the midst of fun. To the right of the jungle gym are more benches underneath a tent like roof with three rusty grills in a line to the side for cooking. As one looks around one sees children running around, swinging on the swings, playing baseball, a child riding his bike, and their smiling faces of happiness. There are adults going for a morning run, parents talking, kids playing little league



baseball, and people doing tai chi.

As the parents sip their morning coffee it makes one's mouth water, from the thought of the warm, sweet, creamy, caramel Frappuccino coffee one could often get from Starbucks. As one turns there is sudden yelling, with two baseball games going on simultaneously on both fields. One can hear parents and kids cheering and chanting for their teammates as they hit the baseball. With the parents to the side and the kids sitting on benches behind a gate, they eagerly but patiently wait for their teammate to hit the ball. Hoping that their team will win, the kids cheer for their own team. More and more people and children begin to fill this park, with the sound of laughter, talking, and screaming. Though it is a chilly morning, the sun is rising slowly into the sky, and it feels as if it is sharing its warm rays and spreading its love not only to the people at this park but to the world.

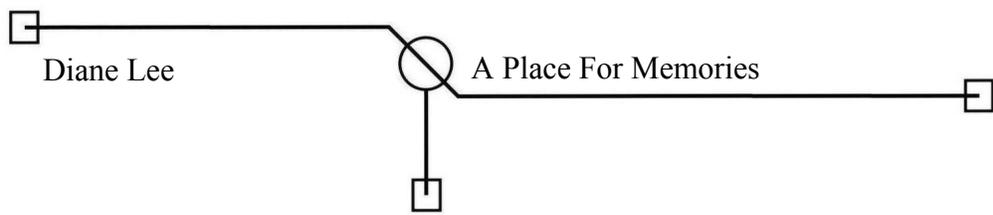
With everyone sharing this place, it's as if it is their own. Keeping the park somewhat clean, there's hardly any trash on the ground. It's such a peaceful and relaxing place where anyone can come whether it is the young or the old. This place brings the community together because it not only belongs to the children, but it also belongs to the adults. Showing the way the park is kept, indicates how much the people truly care about the park. It is where families or friends can come to enjoy the surroundings with the family environment it offers. Filled with love and peace, it is where memories can take place for children. When they get older they'll remember the times they spent with their friends and parents.



Children often believe that playing at a park is a world of excitement and wonder. Just hearing the laughter and seeing the kids run around, reminds a person of the joy he or she had as a child. Since there are many things children can do at this Suzanne Park, it reminds children of the times their mothers would bring them to a park from where they live. While waiting for their brother or sister to get out of school, mothers would bring their children to the park to occupy their time. What a thrill of walking hand in hand with their mom to the park.

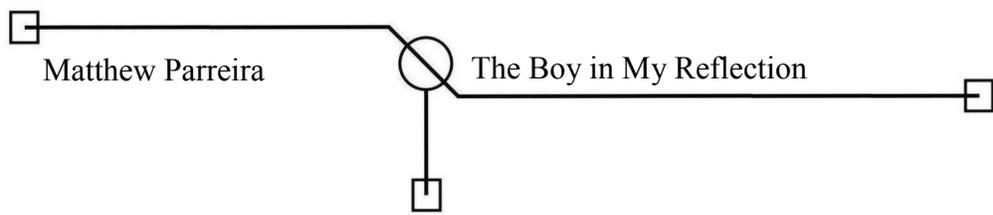
The anticipation of swinging on the swings, sliding down the static slide, swinging on the high monkey bars are some of the things a child would wait to do there. Children could swing on the swings and feel as if they were soaring through the sky, and pretend that the jungle gym was their castle. Swinging on the swings like a pendulum, a child often wonders if he or she could do a three hundred sixty loop around the swing set by swinging high enough. Though that never happens, a child still continues to try to succeed. Although a child is often afraid of heights, they seldom like sliding down the slide without someone either watching or going down with them. Since mothers are often by their child's side, they make them feel more confident knowing she is watching them. Loving every moment spent at the park, what makes it special for children is spending it with their mom. It makes one cherish the moments shared with her.

Though cherishing a moment becomes special when it is spent with a loved one, it's one of the things that are reminisced about while watching children interacting with their parents at Suzanne Park. While watching adults doing tai chi, it also makes one think



that a person is never too old to enjoy going to a park. Just like Disneyland it's not only for the young to enjoy but also for the young to experience and appreciate the environment.

As a physician and author named Deepak Chopra once said, "There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in." A memory often becomes a distant dream but is always remembered in the heart. Each time I go to a park, I now remember the times spent with my mom. As another person once wrote, "Always remember to slow down in life; live, breathe, and learn; take a look around you whenever you have time and never forget everything and every person that has the least place within your heart" (author unknown). Although I know that times and places change, this park will always remain the same in the mind of others. When they look back they'll remember the times they played, exercised, or hung out and the many memories they made when they were here. Just like Disneyland, whether they are the young or the old, they'll appreciate this place and wish they could go back to the place where they remember the most.



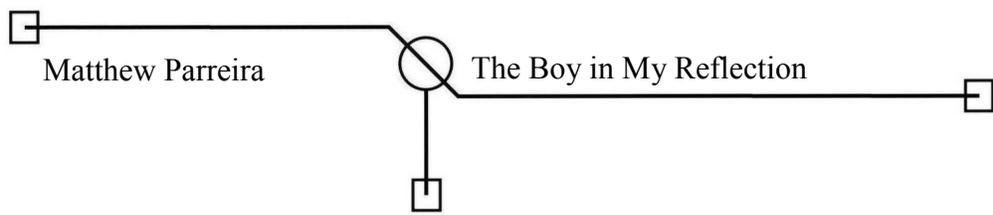
My family stands around me as the tow truck brings the remains. I look at this abstract piece of bent metal and glass, something similar to a sculpture you might find in an art gallery. I run my hand across the folded metal, feeling each bend and curve. My eyes begin to wander into the piece of art and through the shattered window. Among the rubbish, glass, and French fries, I see two seats. How odd it is that two seats sit inside a chaotic masterpiece? Before my brain can make sense of it, my head begins to sting a little. My hand reaches up to my head to hold down the pain and then I feel something, dry blood. I try to tilt my head up to feel around for a wound but my neck is still and hard of moving. I feel a gentle touch on my right shoulder; it is my mom. Without moving my head, I look up at my mom and sister with my eyes. They are crying. The tears roll down their faces as they stare deep into this piece of mystery. My eyes take themselves from them to the only remaining window. In my reflection, I see a boy looking back at me. The boy I saw earlier today. However, the person I am used to seeing in the mirror does not look like this. This boy looks blessed and thankful for his life, not ungrateful like me. I begin to think about it all: my family, the sculpture, the boy. Past my reflection, I see the passenger seat and remember who had been sitting in it: me. I had finally learned to be grateful for life.

I woke up to an unbearable heat shining through my window. It was midsummer and I should have known better than to sleep with my window opened. As I dragged myself out of bed, I heard the air conditioner working hard to fight the heat that was brought in through the window, but I didn't care. I carried myself to the bathroom to begin my daily routine. Once I made it over to the bathroom, I saw my sister Ashley standing six inches from the mirror putting on her eyeliner. She was leaning over her pile of junk that had collected on the bathroom counter. She

was such a pig, and I couldn't stand sharing a bathroom with her. The room smelt like moldy damp towels and burnt hair as she added to her countertop mess while getting ready. I knew she had been invited to the same party I was about to get ready for, but I was happy when she told me she was not going. The mess she created made me so upset that I did not want to see her at all that night. In a bitter mood I continued to get ready. My ride was about to come to get me and I did not want to be around her any longer.

With a few minutes left before my ride would come to get me, I called my mom to tell her I was leaving to go to a party. My mom did not care if I went to parties, but she always wanted to know where I was going in advance. I knew calling her right before I left was not very far in advance like she had asked for, but I did not care. She asked me the usual questions about how my day was going, what my plans were, and if Ashley was awake. I blew off her phone call and gave her the same simple answers I always gave her. I said anything to get her to stop talking. As I saw my ride pulling into my driveway, without a warm goodbye or a heartfelt I-love-you, I hung up the phone, grabbed my bag, and ran down the stairs.

I ran under the closing garage and over to my cousin Melissa's car. I remembered when she had first gotten that car. I had always thought that the interior looked like the latex used on Band-Aids, and the headlights looked like giant bubbles. I had never cared for green cars, but her car was such a pretty green that I often compared it to that of a mermaid's fin. I stuck my head through her window and asked her to pop the trunk. She told me that her trunk was full, that I should just get in and throw my things in the back seat. Once I maneuvered my bag through the passenger and driver seat I plopped myself down. Without thinking, I buckled my seatbelt like I



always have in the past. Then, Melissa put her car in reverse and we drove away from my home.

My stomach ached and made weird noises as if it was trying to tell me something. I remembered I had not eaten. No matter how hungry I was, I would not have asked her to pull over for food. I breathed a sigh of relief as Melissa admitted she was hungry and wanted to pull over to eat. I knew her decision to eat would bring contentment to my talking tummy. We pulled into an In-N-Out drive thru and all I could think about were fries. After we ordered ourselves French fries, we fought over who was going to pay. With little argument I gave up and allowed her to pay for me. We grabbed our food out of the little window and drove back onto the road.

The highway we drove on seemed to travel beneath us very fast; yet, no matter how fast we went, the highway never seemed to change. The endless black turf filled with cracks, dips, and potholes continued down our straight path. With a long journey ahead of us we decided to kill time with small talk. We talked about people who bug us, things we like, and who would be at the party. Most importantly we talk about how neither of us had ever been in a car wreck before. Who would have known that in about five minutes that would all change?

“I don’t think that van behind us is going to stop!” Melissa said aside from our casual conversation. But, I was too busy eating my fries to think about what she said. I saw her turning over to the left shoulder of the road and all I thought to myself was that she was crazy and paranoid. Before she could completely turn off of the road, I could see the panic in her hands. A sudden force of about 5000 pounds at 70 miles per hour hit us from behind! My head slammed back into my seat causing my neck to bend like a bendy straw. Glass came flying forward over my shoulders and into my lap. The fries that were in my lap flew over my feet. Everything

became blurry as my eyes were thrown around in circles. I saw us headed straight into the center divide. We smacked the concrete and crashed against the front of her bubble headlights. My head was thrown forward bending in the opposite direction and smashing my forehead into the car visor. We bounced off the wall and back into the road. The highway was covered in smoke and a chaos of cars swerving and dodging us. The tires withheld a long screech while spinning us into a still position.

Finally, the car stopped. In the distance I saw a semi-truck headed down the highway driving straight towards my side of the car. I turned to Melissa and her face was pale. Her mouth was wide open and her eyes were already tearing up. Half of her hair was in her face. I tried to make sense of what had happened but I remembered the oncoming traffic was headed our way. I turned to her and told her to get out of the car. She sat there in disbelief and shock. I knew I had to be the one to bring her to reality. I pushed my door open but it was stuck! The metal was so bent that it was morphed shut. As the adrenaline pumped through my veins I kicked open the door. Melissa and I escaped out of the highway and into the field next to us. We looked back at her car, but it was missing. The only thing that lay in front of us was an abstract piece of bent metal and broken glass.

“My car! Look at my car! Look! I am so sorry Mathew! Your mom is going to hate me! Look at my car!” Melissa began to realize what had happened. I listened to what she said and I looked over to the mesh of metal. I too realized what had happened, but I did not think about it. No longer were my thoughts filled with French fries, or parties, or the mess on the bathroom counter. I thought about how I wanted to call my mom more than anything, and how just minutes

before I blew off her call. I thought about how I did not tell her I loved her, or give her a warm goodbye. I thought about how the last time I saw my sister could have been the last time I would ever see her. I thought about how my sister was invited to come, and how she would have been in the backseat that was no longer there. I thought about me, and how I had always taken my life for granted.

I see a boy in the window, and I realize it is my reflection. Usually when I look into my reflection I expect to know what I am about to see, but this time it is different. The boy in the window has blood rushing down his face coming from his forehead. His eyes are open wide and his mouth is closed. His heart is filled with sorrow and his mind is filled with regret. He wants to talk to his mom and he wants to be with his sister. He wants to let them know how much they mean to him. This boy is strong. He could kick open doors and protect his cousin in the face of danger. But more than that, this boy is grateful.- He can look at the world around him and appreciate it. He is able to see the important things in life. I stare into his eyes as he stares into mine. We both blink at the same time. As I watch him, I can see blood dripping off his eyebrow to his cheek. I suddenly feel something on my cheek: blood. I go to wipe the blood off of my face and so does the boy. Together the boy and I move. Everything he does I do. Everything he sees I see, and everything he feels, I feel. The boy and I are one.

The pages flip from one scene to the next. “Why?” My own breath was loud in my ears, heart banging in my chest. “Fail. Failing! Failure!”

“Bang!” went the ceiling as I hit it waking from my nightmare. Panting for breath I found myself in my bed, now with a possible new bruise in the middle of my forehead. Groaning, I laid back down rubbing my forehead with my hands. I wasn’t surprised I actually hit the ceiling this time. I was expecting to outgrow the bunk bed months ago. Checking for the time, my hands searched blindly for the small rectangle.

“One, once again, ugh!” I threw my phone onto the little shelf. I didn’t get much sleep these days, when all I wanted to do was sleep! It was my getaway, but I wasn’t even given that. “Fail.” The word ran through my head like my irritating bird, who—speaking of—I probably nearly gave a heart attack. I used my phone as light, but Baby was fine, used to it now, she was still asleep. Sighing in relief, I closed my eyes and tried to sleep. But of course “fail” applied here as well.

First class was a blur. AP psychology was a great class and all, but when he started talking about body parts, how the brain worked, he lost me at seven parts! Maybe even before that, I’m not sure if seven was even the right number. I could be getting it confused with anything else he said. That’s just how my brain works! As I unlocked my locker, a pair of warm arms locked around my waist and soft lips kissed my cheek. I leaned back to him and tried my best to keep the tears from my eyes. George always helps make me feel better; if he couldn’t it was impossible to achieve. As that is true, his love also made it easier to cry. The pain ripped through me daily, but I hid it as well as I could from the world: the whole world, but him.

His hand pulled at my chin for my eyes to look at him. He traced under my eyes, wiping a tear when it came. “Long night again?” It wasn’t really a question. He already knew the answer. He knew the who, the why, the how, the when, all of it. I told him everything. “I love you,” he kissed both my cheeks, my forehead, my nose, my eyes, and then my smile.

“I love you too,” I smiled. “Everything was fine, everything was fine,” I thought to myself. Everything was back to normal—in my conscious hours that is.

The concrete was cold under my bare feet. Icy and smooth like frozen marble. The darkness filled the room almost as much as the smell, the smell of death from my memories. I could hear her, my little Angel, “You didn’t help me! You never helped me!” her thoughts were in mine, slowly stabbing at me.

“No, no I-I,” I searched and searched, but I couldn’t even see my hand in front of my face.

“You didn’t even try!” her thoughts screamed, hating me.

“I did! I did!” the defeat rolled over my body, but I kept searching.

On and on I went until I finally came upon a door laying far ahead, the only light in the forever darkness and it glowed like a fluorescent light bulb about to die. Behind the door could have been something dreadful, but I told the risk, hoping it was something better than the endless darkness, than her thoughts, than the smell that lingered from those horrible memories. I should have given up when the door didn’t open all the way; it could have been a sign, telling me that I didn’t want to know what was behind that glowing door. Not thinking straight, I pushed until the door flew open and hit the invisible wall.

The familiar room was there before me. “No,” I whispered to myself, seeing her there on

the floor again, still warm, but unmoving. “No!” I screamed!

“ –Wake up!” My body shook, not only from the strong hands on me, but from the fear I held in my heart as well. Clearly it was just another nightmare, but the truth of it hit me just as hard as if it was real.

The tears ran endlessly down my face, soaking George’s shirt. “She’s gone, she’s gone,” I said as I gasped for air. All of George’s comforting words ran over me, just his voice alone helped, but it could never take away the memory, the last memory I have of her. I remember touching her cheek, her body still warm. I remember how different it felt from the living her. Death haunted me, asking me questions as I walked. “Why did she die? What gives me a right to live, but not her? Why couldn’t I make a difference?” All of it adds up to an unsolvable equation that’s running through my mind, always ending with “Fail.”

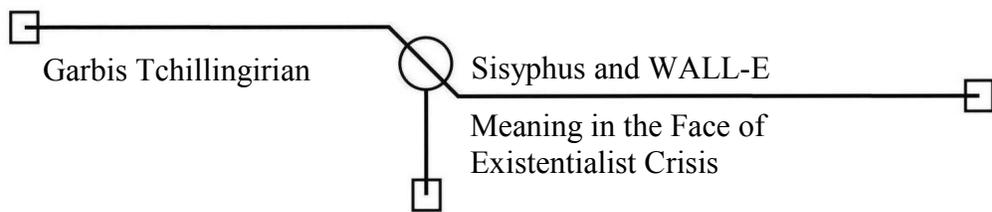
I looked around the room and saw the soccer game on. “Goal, goal, goal, goal!” the announcer repeated over and over for a single goal. The volume was so low, I assumed so it wouldn’t wake me. “No wonder I fell asleep,” I thought to myself. We were lying on the carpet in front of the television. Safe at home. Safe in his arm, now wrapped around me.

“I thought for sure you would sleep just fine, I guess I should have kept a hold of you,” he held me close, and played with my messy hair. “Go back to sleep. It’s okay.”

I laid there in his arms, but I didn’t want to go back to that dream. Her thoughts, “You didn’t help me,” rang in my head louder than any siren imaginable. Guilt covered me, even though I know it wasn’t my fault. I didn’t deal her death; no one was to blame, but Death itself. The memory of her lying on the blanks is forever clear in my mind. “If I was trained would it

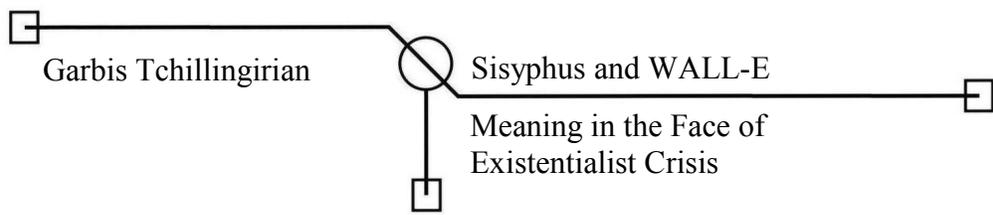
have changed anything?" The thought was pointless, but always seems to catch up with me, no matter how far away I push it. I am nothing but a child in this world of beings and knowledge. I can't stop Death. Death would laugh at me if it could. "Watching you suffer is the highlight of my day!" it would growl. Death stole her from me, like those before her and those that will come after. One day death will call and steal me away; that day I will be happy, no one can be taken away from me by Death.

I imagined how hard it would be to lose someone else, like a parent or close grandparent, but I have a horrible feeling it would be much worse. "My Angel," I whispered. George's arms tightened, but he didn't say anything, maybe afraid of making me cry, with his soft caring words. I took his advice from days ago and thought of happy moments I had with her. She wasn't just my angel; she was my guardian angel, one of the many. The more I thought of the good memories the worse I felt, because that was all gone, all in the past. I never again will be able to see her stop at the bus stop when we just left the house to go for a jog. Never again will I get to see the look on her face that says "if I have to get up, someone is in trouble." My favorite was playing hide-and-seek with her. She always cheated! As Precious followed where I ran the house, Angel sniffed the air and went right to me. It never took them very long to find me! How in those days I took for granted the time I had with them. Now Angel is gone, and nothing left, but memories and the haunting dreams of her stroke. It was hard on me, watching her go through strokes and not making it through, but people that really love you will be there for you like my family, which includes George. They will be there for anything, even for the death of your loving dog.



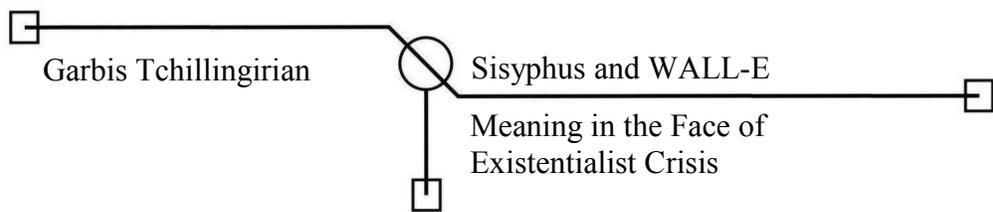
In an isolated wasteland, a lonesome WALL-E's (Waste Allocation Load Lifter - Earth Class) metallic sounds fills the desolate city, as he collects the trash left over from a long ago civilization. Completely alone, WALL-E enthusiastically continues his duties: collecting, stacking and building; repeating the same task every day for the rest of his known eternity. One must imagine that WALL-E is "happy." Next, we see a hunched man at the foot of a great mountain, looking more physically defeated than any human being has ever been, as he stares blankly at the task that lays ahead, as we look closer we see bruising and dried blood marks all over his body, we see his dirt ridden face running with perspiration, we see his tired eyes straining to keep open and the wrinkles that scavenge the once pristine face of a king, then we see his mouth, with marks of old age and wear. As he painstakingly lifts his head to see to boulder he must push up the hill, we see a faint smile emerge. What man would smile who is sentenced to a fate more horrible than death? No other man than Sisyphus, who is punished by the Gods to forever push a boulder up a mountain for the rest of eternity, which lead an existentialist writer named Albert Camus to write a philosophical essay titled *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus uses Sisyphus for his argument on the absurdity of life. WALL-E and Sisyphus are thus connected with an unmistakable lucid bond, which gives them both the energy to carry on. That bond is called absurdity.

We begin by looking at Camus work in the *Myth of Sisyphus*; In Chapter 1, "An Absurd Reasoning," Camus writes how our entire lives are built around the "hope" that the following day would bring us closer to death. He enlarges the idea to the whole human condition, by inherent human "need" for meaning in response to that just notion. Camus writes "There is but one truly



serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living..." (Camus 3). What Camus goes on to say, that in the realization of the absurdity of life, it leaves us with two difficult choices, either suicide or recognition of the absurdity (Ironically, by committing suicide Camus states it only leads to the "absurd" becoming more "absurd"). Camus for his argument states his own reasoning for not committing suicide "Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death, and I refuse suicide" (Camus 64). Camus is describing, how he had "revolted", by not killing himself, found the "freedom" by discovering meaning, and finally, acquiring "passion" by abandoning all hope and accepting the absurdity. In effect, Camus is saying by recognizing the condition one is in, one is only then sees one's true-life meaning.

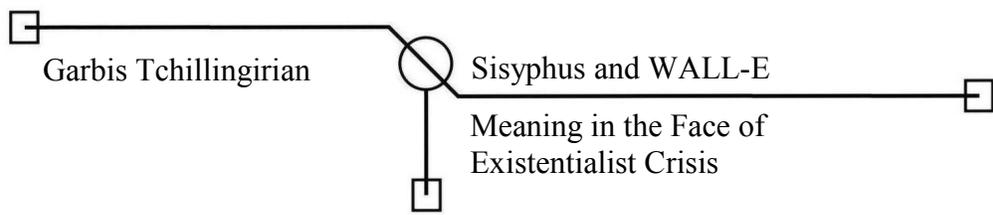
Sisyphus like the absurd man continues on living, thereby to Camus he "revolts" for doing just that. His day is filled with useless effort and unending frustration; he watches all his effort of pushing a bolder up a hill go to waste as he lets it roll back down the mountain, so he may once again begin to push it back up the mountain. Sisyphus from Camus prospective looks at his universe devoid of any meaning or reason, with no sense of existence or any hope. However, Camus states "What he demands of himself is to live solely with what he knows, to accommodate himself to what is, and to bring in nothing that is not certain. He is told that nothing is but this is at least a certainty, and it is with this that he is concerned: he wants to find out if it is possible to live without appeal" (Camus 53). Camus is saying that this situation is the exact condition needed, which allows Sisyphus to find meaning in his life, once Sisyphus realize his world is devoid of



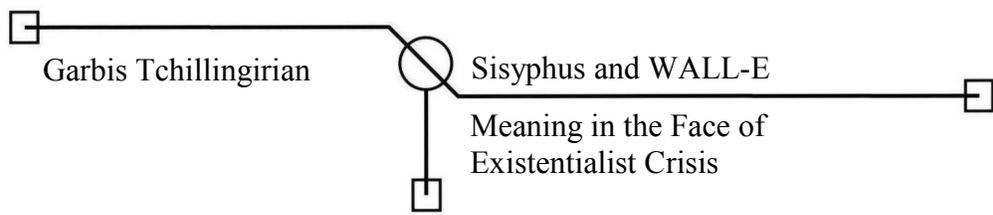
meaning he is than free to create it or as Camus puts it “to live without appeal.” When Sisyphus has accepted his faith, Camus states that Sisyphus begins to see the absurdity of the situation he is in and finally reaches a stage of acceptance or “freedom” in doing so. Camus closes the essay by writing "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy." (Camus 123). Sisyphus is “happy” only because he gave himself meaning in his existence. He ardently finds meaning by pushing the rock a different way every time. One day he will carry it, the next he will push it with his right hand, the other day with his left, one day he will push it using only nine of his fingers, the next he will balance it on his head and so on.

WALL-E’s fate is no less different then Sisyphus; he too is bound to forever repeat the same task for his known existence. Seeing the large “trash tower” WALL-E had meticulously built collapse over by the sheer weight, WALL-E comes to encounter the absurdity in the situation; like Camus said you can either commit suicide or find meaning in one’s existence. By not committing suicide like Sisyphus, WALL-E “revolts” by continuing to work in the face of absurdity. He discovers interesting objects while he is collectively picking up “trash”. This becomes WALL-E’s meaning to live; it becomes WALL-E’s “freedom”. WALL-E then finds his “passion” by savoring every moment of his life for finding meaning to continue to live and most of all finding himself in the process.

Understanding this logic is key in determining the way one lives their life. Taking the idea of mortality, another famous existentialist writer by the name of Jean Paul Sartre analyzes, Camus famous work *The Stranger*, which is based on a character by the name of Meursault, a man who is condemned to die “...there is passion in the absurd. The absurd man will not commit suicide;

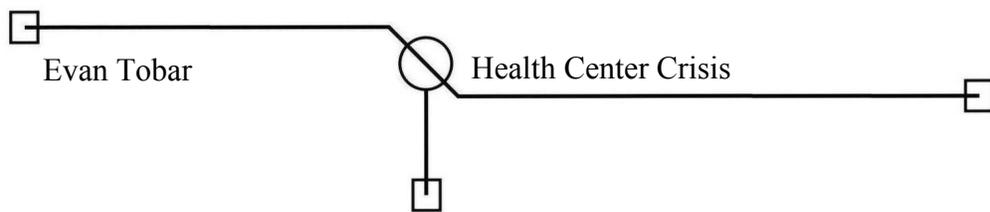


he wants to live, without relinquishing any of his certainty, without a future, without hope, without illusions, and without resignation either. He stares at death with passionate attention and this fascination liberates him. He experiences the "divine irresponsibility" of the condemned man" (Sartre 27). Sartre is saying with the idea of morality looming, and the true absurdity emerging we then are able to see meaning. Instead of escaping the absurd emptiness by committing suicide we should embrace life passionately, like Sisyphus who is punished by the gods to push a rock up a mountain for the rest of eternity. We are punished to do the same task every single day of our lives. The only difference is the way we look at our life; once we see the absurdity that exists around us, we then see the meaning of life for its entirety. It only becomes "tragic" when we become conscious of our meaningless condition. Conversely, by doing so we are able to accept our condition. We, like the absurd man, keep pushing the boulder up the mountain every single day of our lives. Some of us are unaware of this very fact and others are, however by accepting our condition for what it is and we then truly see that, "all is well."



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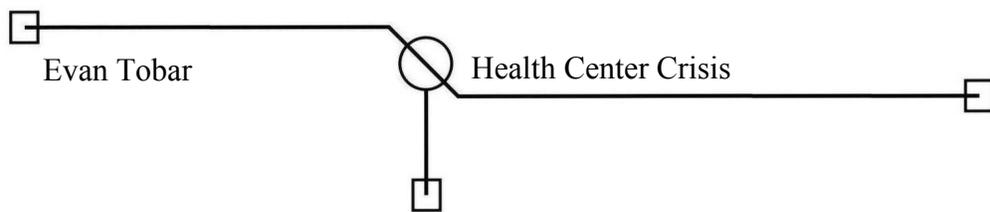
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The Student Health Center at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) demonstrates poor service toward students and faculty, but a solution such as expanding the number of Health Centers on campus may improve some of these issues. Thus far, as a freshman at Cal State Fullerton, I have enjoyed many of characteristics about the school from the excellent professors to the great food at the Gastronome. However, in early October I went down to the Student Health Center hoping to get a quick adjustment by the chiropractor. I expected to make an appointment to see a doctor within a couple of days. Unfortunately, the closest date available was not until early November. I scheduled for that day, and not only did I have to wait a month for the appointment, but if I failed to make the appointment I would be charged a twenty dollar fee. It is unacceptable to have patients wait so long for a doctor's appointment, especially if it is an emergency. Other problems with the Health Center include poor enthusiasm shown by the receptionists and the long lines that occur as a result of their lazy attitudes.

The Health Center makes it convenient for students, especially those living on campus to get check-ups for various medical concerns. At the Health Center, many appointments can be made such as: chiropractic, optometry, acupuncture, physical exams, or many other illnesses. It also provides a small pharmacy inside for patients in need of prescribed medicine. However, since there is only one Health Center on campus, on busy days it's not big enough to accommodate many patients. On busy days, the check-in lines get so long that they exceed passed the door. Because the waiting room is so small, patients are forced to stand or wait outside.

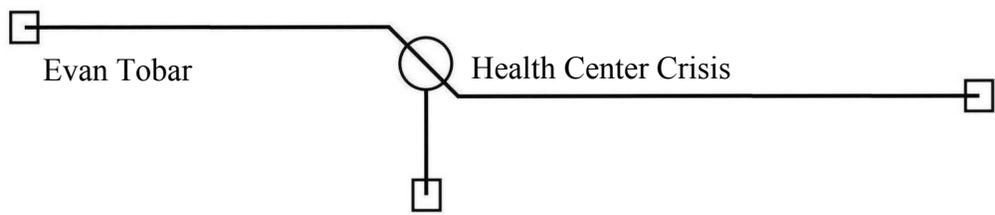
One reason for such lengthy lines is because of the poor work ethic displayed by the receptionists. The ladies slowly trudge around the office searching through files, or simply sit in



front of the computer all day. It is imperative that these ladies take their job more seriously, especially when sick people have to wait outside in the cold. With so many students and faculty, the Health Center tends to get booked quickly for appointments. It is almost impossible to see a doctor within a couple of days. The waiting time for appointments could stretch as far as two weeks to a month. Additionally, unless the appointment is canceled before the date, failure for arrival will result in a twenty-dollar no show fee. Because college students are so busy with school and jobs, it is unnecessary to charge twenty dollars for a missed appointment. However, this issue teaches students to be more responsible with their time management.

There are many things that the Health Center can do to improve the service toward the CSUF students and faculty. For starters, the building of more Health Centers on campus would be a great way to help patients get examined quicker. If a few Health Centers are on campus as opposed to one, students will have the opportunity to go to another center when one is too crowded. Another option would be to expand the size of the present Health Center, focusing mainly on the waiting area. A larger waiting area would prevent patients from having to wait outside on busy days. Expansion would also include establishing more medical rooms and doctors. More doctors would shorten the waiting time for patients. Though these ideas are possible, they would be very costly if considered. Therefore, the school could host fundraisers in which would benefit the building of more health facilities.

In order to establish these ideas, the Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) should be notified of these service issues. The SHAC is made up of students from diverse academic pasts and campus-community involvements. Because the Student Health Center is comprised of student



fees, the SHAC allows the students to have a say with any issues or concerns about the Health Center. However, they might not consider any of these issues as real concerns, unless a group of students with similar complaints stand together to change their thinking. A petition might be a great way to persuade the SHAC into addressing the matter. The petition would highlight the key points that make the Health Center a poor facility, as well as offering ways to change this dilemma. If more than one person has a complaint about the issue, the problem will be resolved much quicker as opposed to one individual.

More over, the service at the CSUF Student Health Center should be transitioned in a way that accommodates patients as soon as possible. The campus is just too beautiful and well organized to ignore such a noticeable problem. If proper action is not taken, students will opt to change facilities and go to another medical center. I highly doubt Cal State Fullerton wants a bad reputation for the mediocre service provided at the Health Center, especially when it's one of the top Cal State Universities. I encourage all students and faculty to demand a better medical system that will ensure prompt service and more energetic employees. Aside from the problems the Health Center may have, I am pleased to say that the chiropractic adjustment I received left me feeling comfortable and relaxed.

