

5-1-1999

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Recommended Citation

Harbaugh, Elizabeth (1999) "Leaving My Life," *Hieroglyphics: the NSU University School Literary Magazine*: Vol. 6 , Article 20.
Available at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/uschool_litmag/vol6/iss1/20

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Leaving My Life

Elizabeth Harbaugh

We stumbled into the room at 6:30 A.M. on the last day of TIP, with a considerable task ahead of us...cleaning. Lanier collapsed onto the bed; his eyes and nose were rimmed red from tears. He grinned half-heartedly, shrugged, and declared matter-of-factly, "It isn't my room." I decked him with a pillow. The scuffle lasted only a short time but was savage enough to awaken me. Within minutes, Lanier dozed contentedly, catching up on the hours of sleep he'd missed in the past two days, and I began the struggle of packing my life into two suitcases.

The drawers of the bureau were all open and overflowing with sweat-stained, smelly shirts and socks. My favorite pair, orange and grey striped airplane socks that my father had given me, had developed a tiny hole on the heel. My chilly toes made me anxious for their warmth, and I snuggled into them quickly. Newly tie-dyed socks flopped over the radiator in the corner like Lanier across the bed. I often wondered why the radiator was so out of the way. It had been such a loving companion, listening to all of my complaints and joys, and never ever interrupting. I felt it belonged in the center of the mess, not forgotten like an old toy.

Next to me on the bed Lanier whistled as his breath grew more regular. I slowly slid his glasses off his face and placed them onto the desk. His wiry arms were folded awkwardly beneath him, but his face was absolutely serene. Shaggy, dirty-blond hair covered most of his face and ears. A distinctive odor of shampoo and sweat emanated from him, appalling to most but divine to me. I put my face against him and softly kissed his rounded shoulder. *Hours... I despaired. In a few short hours I have to leave the greatest thing that ever happened to me.* Sighing, I turned back to the mess.

The desk next to the radiator was heaped with drafts of my assignment for class that were inked with comments, mostly negative, and crumpled into nothingness. My shower bag was thrown carelessly onto the desk, spilling my mango shampoo onto the floor and sending soap across the wood. *A Wizard of Earthsea*, a book assigned by Mrs. Darling as out-of-class reading, was open to page 158, as far as I had gotten in what I considered the absolute worst fantasy novel I'd ever read. *Narcissus and Goldmund*, however, was happily finished and had weakened my disgust for Herman Hesse.

It was definitely time to pack. I reached beneath the bed to retrieve the suitcases. The scraping brought Lanier to a rude awakening, and he lifted his face from the pillow in confusion. After a few seconds, he smiled on seeing me...a bittersweet smile. I turned and buried myself in his arms, conscious only of his gentle hands in my hair and his loving voice whispering in my ear.