

The Sheep

By Abigail Araya – Thomas S. Wootton High School

“Your hair is really big. It looks like a sheep”

Slowly, I remove my focus from the spread of chalk melting into the blacktop. I meet the eyes of the boy standing behind me - with straight and flat black hair. Streams of the afternoon sunlight beamed onto my face from behind his shoulder. I squint; sunlight penetrates the hair enveloping my face as fast as his words can pierce through each layer of curls.

Thick and warm fur, plagued with insects and tattered with grass. The image of a sheep stains my thoughts as the day continues. We are sitting in our respective spots on the mat for Mrs. Daugherty’s read aloud, beads of sweat settle on my cheek as the pounding of my chest begins to slow down. My classmates recover from the activities of recess and my mind remains restless. Diligently, I am scanning each row of the mat in front of me. Amelia’s hair is dirty blonde and flows effortlessly down her back. Eric’s hair is parted to the side, the coarse black neatly dented by the teeth of his comb. Jude’s brown waves brush against his chin before they are constrained by a tuck behind his ear. My eyes dart from one sleek and polished head of hair to the next. I notice one thing all of my classmates have in common, and one thing only.

My lunchbox swings in my hand as I march off the bus, prepared to tame the beast that was my hair- to turn into a shining replica of my peers. My hand latches onto the light switch and the plastic stool bounces across the white tiles of my bathroom floor. I step onto the stool, met by a reflection of the black, lustrous mane I once loved. Heedfully, each curl is placed in between the 350 degree titanium, followed by a smell I could only compare to a lit match, synchronized with an unfamiliar cloud of steam. My curls now lay straight and stiff, the rounded silhouette a shell of life that can only be broken by water.

The smell of burnt hair follicles fill the bathroom like light satisfies the dark. Promptly, my hour as a hair dresser is disrupted by the smell of lamb cascading through the seams of the door. Instinctively, I pick up the scent like breadcrumbs.

“Honey, who did that to your hair?” My mother looks at me from across the kitchen, concern consuming her face as she stands over my favorite slow cooked lamb. Before I know it, I sink into her turmeric stained sweater.

A sheep would not come home with remnants of the sandbox falling through her dense hair, and she wouldn’t sit criss cross applesauce in front of Amelia for a fishtail. She snaps hairbrushes in half, she runs through fields while her rows of braids do not move an inch. She is proud and carefree.