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Teen Writes

By Alexandra Reinecke



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inversely, instead spoke for our lives, which this particular night, had been less than exceptional enough to have spoken for themselves.

I think of what we spoke, which were things less transcendent than those the Quakers translated silently in wood carvings and butter pats. The directions to a party we ended up not attending. The irony of having to photograph a couple one half of which I'd liked and whose other half I'd confided in the liking. How the bartender had come to understand my Diet Coke addiction in one night. That we'd relieved the cut-glass bowl beside the spray deodorant of peppermint Lifesavers in little foils.

So, my friend's Toyota is more a confessional than a wooden ship, but it occurs to me there that there is a holiness in it, despite its deviation from its proscribed metaphor. Holy that we, both critical reasoning champions, fail to highlight aloud the constellations we discern as more than isolated dots. That we lie to each other out of a camaraderie that extends, if momentarily, further than our mutual respect for the truth.

So, I'm a pilgrim and I've lost my black sweater somewhere between now and then. So, we eat toast triangles with I Can't Believe It's Not Butter. So, we remove makeup. So, we watch "Gossip Girl" and I think regretfully of a person, across the room, I neglected to speak to.

So, in the morning, when I go home in bare feet and no more or less enlightened than I came, but no more or less enlightened than I had expected to become, I am thankful to have undertaken this journey, this pilgrimage, however strange.

I'm a pilgrim in the black sweater my mother used to wear for Thanksgivings, and my friend is radiant in emerald. We sit with a triple-stack of pancakes spread like a Torah between us, and I look at them how one might assess such a text, thinking how it is that prom has been a pilgrimage, or what Wikipedia defines as a journey "to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs."

A pilgrimage because I learned the holy stations - the chocolate fountain room, the poker room, a maze of windows and stairs - around the room in avoidance of the dance floor. A pilgrimage because I'd eaten buffet food, a forbidden fruit my mother had hitherto managed to steer my childhood free of. A pilgrimage because I'd witnessed emotions clear on other people's faces as on the faces of the saints and sinners who mourn and exult in stained glass.

I start in on the pancakes, thinking how it has been a pilgrimage, also, for its cosmetic rituals: at the nail salon the overheard comment, as I watched my nails dry under pillars of blue light, that "Asians don't go to therapy," at the hair salon, the smell of eucalyptus shampoo, at the MAC counter at Nordstrom's the strange weight of false eyelashes like tiny and jet-black butterflies paused mid-flight.

As my friend begins to cut spongy squares off the pancake stack, I think, also, of the irony which separates our pilgrimage and that pursued by those at Plymouth. How when the Quakers landed, they said "Let your life speak" - a factoid I know only from my friend's supplement to her Penn application - but how we,

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