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Mrs. Cannon

Socratic XII

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Dumpster Bonfire

I am one of the lowest scoring calculus students Mr. Watabe has ever had. I didn't pass any of the assignments. He even stopped roasting me; it was that bad. Every single day I would walk out of 3rd period BC Calculus crestfallen only to return an hour later for my daily lunch date with Mr. Watabe. He drank his Capri-Sun while I ate my quesadillas. He taught me all he could, but I wasn't progressing. Every night, I studied series and summations until it was too dark to see my miniscule writing on the pages. I rewatched every video he posted, did the homework sheets twice, and tried to apply math to everyday life in hopes that something would solidify.

I was hoping for a 4.0 my senior year, but calculus ruined that goal. I rode on a low C- every term. Calculus was not going according to plan. In fact, it was a dumpster fire. And yet, it didn't ruin me. I wasn't improving my grade, so in addition to my study dates with my TI-84 calculator, I put energy into making my environment one that invited success. Calculus became one of my favorite classes, but it wasn't integration by parts that brought joy, it was Logan Dunyon's extensive color-coded notes. It wasn't Riemann Sums that filled my bucket, it was Josh Beckham claiming he had perfect attendance when he only showed up once a week. It wasn't tangent lines that made me laugh, it was the constant banter between Mr. Watabe and Shyanne Davis. I turned my dumpster fire into a dumpster bonfire. Instead of a disaster, it

became a celebration. My grades were burning, but instead of getting frustrated, I roasted marshmallows in the flames of my failure.

The first book we read in Socratic XII was *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. In it, the author says “You see things vacationing on a motorcycle in a way that is completely different from any other. In a car you’re always in a compartment, and because you’re used to it you don’t realize that through that car window everything you see is just more TV. You’re a passive observer and it is all moving by you boringly in a frame” (4). I didn’t want to be a passive observer of my dumpster fires. I wanted to be an active celebrator. My supposed defeats could be turned into blaring victories if I created the right environment.

Throughout all my life, I had let my problems act on me instead of acting on my problems, and once I recognized that flaw, I strived to turn all dumpster fires into bonfires.

Senior year, I decided to TA 8th period in hopes of having time to do my homework. That idea quickly became a dumpster fire. I hardly got one chapter of Socratic reading done because of those crackhead freshmen. But I let it go and laughed with them, not about the skeletal system and process of osmosis, but at Mr. Kreitzer’s dad jokes and Octavia Mosher’s love of taking out the recycling bin.

Rather than complain that Print Comm took up so much of my time and energy, I started to appreciate the memories from those long days and late nights. By the end, it wasn’t the yearbook I stayed for. It was roasting Rachel Gundersen after her skiing accident so she would laugh instead of cry and asking Alexander Cannon about his new assignment only for him to show me beautiful designs and stellar photos he whipped up in his sleep.

Senior year became the best year of my high school career, regardless of the never-ending dumpster fires. Almost everything was taken away from the Class of 2021. But instead of

wallowing in our senior year, we celebrated what we had. We didn't have dances, so we turned senior nights for sports into a themed event: luaus and cowboys (twice). We turned the few opportunities we had into amazing memories. We could have stayed home and lamented our dumpster fire of school work and isolation, but instead, we threw on a few more matches, grabbed our cowboy boots, and celebrated our senior year dumpster bonfire.

The only thing standing between you and a good day is the way you approach it. Surround yourself with supportive people and brace yourself for everything to go wrong. Because not everything goes according to plan, and that's okay. Turn your bads into goods, downs into ups, sads into betters, and fires into bonfires.

