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Mrs. McKenny

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**My Landscape Identity**

“The best part of climbing is when it all clicks and gravity ceases to exist.”

- Legendary rock climber, Chris Sharma

For someone who’s never truly pushed their limit physically, this quote wouldn’t make sense. But for those who have, especially climbers aspiring to improve, the feeling that Sharma describes is incredible. It is the emotion of perfection.

A landscape identity is place where someone has a strong emotion or memory. It’s where a person might discover something new about themselves. I found my landscape identity climbing gyms. At this place, I found the challenges to be perfect.

Today, the day I’m writing this, is a perfect example of why I find joy at the rock wall. Over nine months, I became stronger from climbing. I worked my way up to the V4 plateau, and now I’m aiming to climb at the V5 grade. I was at LIED gym with one goal in mind: to complete the orange V5 route. At this point, I had every detail of the climb memorized. It’s a combo of nine moves which demand high accuracy and power. It’s not something an ordinary gym rat could do. However, I’m no ordinary gym rat. I could never be an ordinary gym rat. After warming up for twenty minutes, I was in sending mode, AKA *The Zone*. The route is under a steep overhanging arch with the start on the bottom left corner. I assume the start position: two slippery footholds under the arch, a good left crimp, and a slimy right under cling. Everything else falls away, all that matters is the wall and the orange rock climbing holds. I go left hand first in a big cross over to a long but slimy crimp. Next, I must take a breath. On breathing out, I jump and hit a big pinch that’s on the steepest part of the arch. Compress and hold. Ok, I’m stable – feet next. Right foot on a small grippy chip, left heel on the same long slimy crimp that my left hand is on. Move the left hand to the right pinch. Bump it up to the high left pinch that’s facing the wrong way. That’s crux one, the first hard part of the climb. Before I knew it, I had stuck crux two. Finally, I get both hands on the finish and the worlds comes back to me. I had conquered another V5, and I will soon shoot for V6.

Throughout my time in school, I’ve always been an academic. However, I tend to have some attention issues because my body wants to be worked just as hard as my brain. I also happened to hate lifting or running because it felt menial and I would get bored. There’s no motivation in boredom. So I found my perfect combination of mental and physical activity on the climbing wall. My landscape identity, the climbing wall, enables me to fully express my desire to be mentally and physically worked.