

Snowfall

By Alexander Golin
Freshman Fall

"So when do you find out from Yale?" I asked Mark as he pulled out his pack of Marlboros.

"Day after tomorrow." He flicked his lighter once or twice.

"Nervous?"

"Fuck off," he said with chuckle. He pulled out a joint from the pack of cigarettes and brought it to his mouth. The copper streetlamps lent a serene tint to the delicately falling snowflakes and the fresh white blanket on the ground; Central Park always felt so isolated in December. "When's Princeton get back to you?"

"Tomorrow."

"Damn." He brought the lighter up to the tip of the twisted paper and took a deep drag.

Mark passed me the joint. "Hey, thanks for doing this tonight, I needed something to calm my nerves," I said.

"Hey my pleasure. Let's go hang on that bench for a while, don't wanna end up on Central Park West before we finish," he said gesturing towards a secluded patch of asphalt, surrounded by a couple of benches.

"Good call," I said as we started making our way up the slight incline, periodically passing the joint back and forth. "I dunno what I'll do if I don't get in," I said, taking a seat on the bench, "I've cried myself to sleep over work too many times to have it all end with a rejection. This is my whole future on the line."

"Sometimes I wonder if the stress has all been worth it."

"I guess we'll both see soon huh?" I nuzzled my chin into my scarf and slid my hands into my pockets. It must have been less than ten degrees that night, but it felt comfortable.

"I can't believe this is our last year here," I said, staring up into the orange New York City sky.

"Remember that time in 4th grade," Mark began, already starting to chuckle, "when you ripped your pants right before you had to present your project on Christopher Columbus?" He laughed as he took another hit.

"I'm gonna miss this place," I said.

"I'm gonna miss you man! I really hope tomorrow goes well for you." He said as he exhaled. The smoke looked especially thick as it mixed with his freezing breath.

"And hey, if we both get in, we're only gonna be a few hours apart!" I said taking a final drag on the roach. Mark pulled out another joint and lit it. We sat in silence, passing it, looking at the expansive sky.

The subtle crunching of snow broke the silence and our ears perked up. We remained seated; it was probably just a squirrel. A flash of fluorescent red and blue lights penetrated the orange glow from the road we were sitting just off of. Mark's eyes opened wide, as he quickly shoved the joint into his mouth and began chewing. He said nothing but stared at me and stood up. I knew exactly what he was saying: just calmly walk away, everything is fine. We began to walk through the mulch, over the husks of hibernating bushes when a burly voice called out, "You two!" We kept walking, our heads down; we knew it was over.

"You two! Stop!" We had no choice. The car had pulled around in front of us and blocked our path. Two NYPD officers stepped out of the car, the floodlights at their backs illuminating the snow, which was starting to fall faster. "Take your hands out of your

pockets!" We both obliged and held our opened hands at chest level. This couldn't be happening.

The officer who had been yelling commands strode over to Mark and instructed him to place his hands behind his back. The snow whirled around me and it felt like the entire world was spinning. The other officer approached me and instructed me to take out my wallet and hand it to him. "Any blades or needles in here that I should know about?" he asked me.

"No sir," I replied, remembering my older brother's disposition when he demonstrated what boot camp was like. Mark didn't say a word as handcuffs were placed on his wrists and his head was pushed to the hood of the police car. It made a haunting thud.

"Do you have any drugs on you?" the officer said as he inspected my ID.

"No sir," I replied truthfully. I turned my eyes to Mark, who was staring directly at me. The wind started to blow directly across my face and whisked ice into my cheeks. Mark had another joint in his pack of cigarettes.

The officers searched me while Mark and I kept our gazes fixed on one another, and when the officers were content that I was free of illicit substances the officer said, "Well asshole, it's your lucky day." The snow was coming down harder now and I watched it pile up in Mark's hair and get caught in his eyelashes. I tucked my wallet back into my pocket, and lingered there, staring at Mark. "Well? Get the fuck outta here kid!" The wind whipped snow into my face and it made me squint my eyes, but I remained there. "No sir."

"No? You can't stay here kid. This is your last chance, now go!" the officer said taking a step towards me and placing his hand on his set of cuffs.

“I’m staying sir.”

The officer began approaching me when Mark’s bloodshot red eyes filled with fury and he yelled, “Go you fucking idiot, get the fuck out of here!” I wanted to stay, to say I’m sorry, it will be okay, we’ll figure something out, but all I could do was take one last look and turn away. I took ten steps before I started sprinting towards Central Park West, headfirst into the blinding snow.

The next day, the walls in which I spent the last thirteen years felt cold and unfamiliar. In class I could feel my skin crawling, my palms sweating. The teacher’s glances looked blameful and the students looked like strangers. I was the one who asked him to bring the weed; it was my fault. How could Mark ever forgive me for what happened when his entire future would be ruined?

Minutes and then hours passed as I waited for a text, a call, an email, anything from Mark that would make my heart stop pounding and my head stop spinning. The entire day it seemed like I was going to lose my balance at any instant. When I got the email from Princeton telling me I was accepted, I barely even cared. There was nothing I could do but keep waiting.

After school I sat on my couch and looked out the window. The snow had subsided since the night before and all that was left was the blackened slush. At long last my phone vibrated. I picked up before even checking the caller ID. “Mark?”

“Hey man did you get in?” he said with excitement.

“What? That’s it?”

“Yeah, so did they let you in?!”

“Umm, yeah Mark, I was accepted.”

“Holy shit that’s awesome! Congratulations!”

“Thanks, but what the hell happened last night Mark?”

“Nothing, man, it’s fine.”

“Mark you were arrested because of me!”

“Yeah I was arrested. But that’s all,” he said with finality. “Wanna play Xbox?”

“Yeah... sure... come on over. But... how aren’t you mad at me?”

“Oh shut up. Let’s play Halo.”

“So...you nervous about finding out tomorrow?”

“Fuck off,” he said with a laugh. “I’ll be over in fifteen.”

I hung up the phone and walked over to the window. The orange streetlights turned on and illuminated the street fourteen stories below. The snow had started falling again, gently shimmering in the copper light.