

Up a Road Slowly: Story of a Friend

In sixth grade, she ate Hot Tamales everyday. “Chewy Cinnamon Flavored Candy.” A dollar in the vending machine and her tongue was always red. 2006, the year we met at the all girls’ school in Los Angeles we would stay at until the end of high school. We became very good friends, unaware then that we would attend the same schools as one another for the next nine years. 2006- she had braces and her first half-sister was born. Her parents divorced when she was young. She has one full-brother. Her dad is remarried. He has a family of his own, with two other daughters besides her. She and her brother were home alone most evenings. Mom consistently sleeping at a boyfriend’s.

Countless cigarettes and five cups of coffee a day since the age of 15, the last time she *really* ate. Her hair is always messy. She used to come to class with her shoes untied, and somehow she never tripped. She is smart. She is always on top of her work, but no one would know just by looking at her. Frazzled, they may think. She takes copious class notes in class--color coded. A writer, or could be, should be, if she wanted to be. Musically talented. In high school, she constantly tapped her desk; silent rehearsals of her current piano piece. Junior year, obsessed with one boy. Senior year. Another. “*Finally*,” we all think. We didn’t know we would hear about him non-stop for the next three years. We would forget who she really is. Her story became *him*. She is in her own world. Your life, your story, uninteresting. She annoys the hell out of me, yet I can’t help but care. “I don’t get it,” my friend says. “How does she do it? How can everyone be annoyed with her and care about her at the same time?”

I once wrote: “She is somehow romantic and realistic, focused and frazzled, loud but quiet, oblivious and observant. She is the ultimate paradox.”

2015. I have a class with her now. Twice a week. We still pass notes.