

Sophia

by Claudia Inglessis '18

Sophia told me she was going to jump out of a tree at 8 years old.
Craving the euphoria of flying, delusional from the hot sun, and sure that gravity had its exceptions,
I joined her.

I broke my ankle twice,
but Sophia
she found her clarity in the open air.
Sophia needed to fly,
so she danced like her feet had wings.

and I loved Sophia,
because she smelled like honeysuckle
and her skin felt warm
and she made me feel like I was floating.

We frolicked through ballet class together,
grasping hands, waving arms, and tickling the floor with our toes.

and Sophia and I used to eat.
We stuffed snacks in our coats and crawled into corners,
tearing the bags open and dumping sugar into our mouths.
We stumbled giddily into ballet class with potbellies like drunken men.
Our teacher slapped Sophia's potbelly with her cane, and sneered
"I can see those pancakes you had for breakfast. Why don't you suck in a little bit?"
Sophia's chest ballooned out,
her ribs pressed against her pale pink leotard,
her abdomen carved into her body,
her face grew red
as she held held her breath,
I didn't see her exhale.

Sophia traded our snacks for ice water,
and our 2 miles runs for 10.
We raced through frigid trails,
cracking ice with our sneakers,
collapsing into snow drifts.
Sophia took my icy hand and laid it on her stomach
so I could feel her skin shiver.
She told me she felt empty.
I had never loved someone who was empty.

Sophia stopped dancing to fly.
She danced for the valleys between her ribs,
the indentations of her collarbones,
the light that shone between her thighs.

She danced with her eyes closed, covered every mirror in her house, showered in the dark.

I stopped catching Sophia dancing in her underwear,
and started catching her skipping lunch,
hiding food in napkins,
shoving toothbrushes down her throat.

Sophia shattered every light,
slammed every door,
made a spectacle of removing herself from my life.

She evaporated in front of me,
and I grasped desperately to keep her on the ground,
because I didn't how to love someone who let herself float away.

Sophia failed her auditions,
failed mirrors,
failed scales,
failed eating,
failed looking at herself,
failed at not tearing herself to shreds.

The shreds of Sophia floated around me like ash above embers.
I picked shreds out of the air for her to see.

I showed her the tutus that flew behind her body like a cape,
showed her the swings that took us so high our toes pricked holes in the sky,
showed her the tree we jumped out of.
I showed Sophia the shreds,
and she saw
herself.