

The Things We Carry

The black color has a muted shine and the jacket hangs loosely off his frame. He spent all of his money on a leather jacket. He said that his mom gave him money to buy a winter coat, but he saw the jacket hanging there and decided that freezing in the cold of winter would be worth it. The jacket has many pockets, and a cloth hood that he never wears, and instead leaves hanging down his back.

As I walk out of the shower and start to get dressed for school, my reflection in the mirror on my bureau stares back at me, daring me to look away. The shards of brown in my eyes look blank, like a soldier returning home after years of battle. My gaze falls to the contours of my face, and then to the fit of my t-shirt and jeans, but drops quickly. After a minute, I gather my hair at the nape of my neck. I expertly braid the sections together, tying it off just below my shoulders. He always liked it when I braided my hair. I slide socks onto my feet, and then lace up my sneakers, remembering that he used to have the same pair.

He loves baseball, but I love the smell of the grass and the roar of the crowd and the invincible feeling I get from sitting next to him. We're high on the colors and the smells and the taste of the slushies still on our lips. My friend May sits on the other side of me, her long blonde hair blowing over her shoulder. "Let's have a race!" she says. We run on the empty field next to us, the wind prickling my skin and the grass tickling my feet. But I lose. They have a rematch and I sit on the field, my hair blowing and my hands running through the grass next to me.

Suddenly, I am back in my room. The cold surface of the hardwood floor presses into my feet once again, as I slide my leather jacket on over my t-shirt. I feel better, stronger. Now, my eyes are piercing, and my gaze deafening. Instead of looking broken, I look tough, like someone who's been to hell but made it her kingdom, *like I've mastered the art of deception* I think, as a sly smile creeps across my face. I feel the same feeling of invincibility I had when I was with him, but this time it's all my own.

I'm 13 again, and the click of my shoes echo on the wooden floor of my school hall. I'm alone by the food table, and I'm wearing a black dress. My hair is frizzy from the rain and hangs limp down my back, the dark color matching my dress. I try not to look over again, but I do and his arm is around May. Her blonde hair forms perfectly shaped curls that stretch to the base of her back. My eyes are the color of my dress, and my heart breaking is loudest sound in the room. I can't wait to get the hell out of here.

I step into the living room and swing my backpack over my shoulder. Immediately my dad looks over at me, and asks "Are you ready?"

*Written by April Mihalovich
Tabor Academy*