

Subject to Change
by Jayme Mintz, Judge Memorial Catholic High School

I could hear their whispers. Normally I don't pay any mind to the chatter and giggles of my peers. I can't find any reason to obsess over the unnecessary gossip of people I probably won't see again. This was different. These weren't the shallow whispers of immature teenagers. These were the insightful whispers of three of my classes. The assured, hasty voice of Math; the deliberate, exuberant tone of Science; and the verbose, formal speech of English. They were gathered in a classroom, talking about me.

I wasn't sure why they would find the need. My personality could be described as your conventional brooding teenager. I rarely speak during class, I don't have and never will have social media. I prefer being alone over being with friends, I'm one of countless procrastinators, and my favorite flavor of icecream is vanilla. The only outstanding quality I have is that I'm an unrelenting pragmatist. They must have been talking about my grades. Just slightly above average in a school of above average people.

Sure enough, I heard math talking about yet another rushed assignment. Math mentioned how slowly I worked, spurring the other two to confirm their observations. English remarked how I would constantly fall behind on reading, followed by Math sharing stories of how angry I would get by my classmates talking. The only class that didn't have such tales to share was Science. Science was my favorite class, and the others knew it. It was a perfect balance between the two. Interpretation based on logic, multi-layered formulas and systems, figuring out why things happen. Science had no stories of me fuming in my chair and covering my ears during down time. Science had no emotional outbursts to report, regarding both anger and sadness. Math, however,

brought up one of my strongest reactions where I rushed out of the room after a song started playing, “Starry Night” by Don McLean. English mentioned vague journal entries about group therapy sessions and difficulty getting through the holidays. I couldn’t believe they brought that up. They promptly figured out someone had died but were left wondering who. I was left wondering why they would care and why I was so enthralled to see if they would find out. Just then, Theology walked in, saying it knew.

Freshman year was the year after my mom died, so English had to put up with my moping and venting. Time passed, and by Sophomore year my relationship with my step-mother improved. Subsequently, I wrote about my mother less frequently and in more equivocal terms. Looking back on it I wished I hadn’t at all. Now my classes were exchanging information about something that happened three years ago to a random student out of hundreds. I didn’t understand why they would care. I hated telling people because I couldn’t stand the well intentioned, yet empty condolences from people who didn’t even know her name. Why then, would Theology of all classes, stake claim to having the most understanding when I don’t even commit to understanding the class? I’m not a religious person and I barely comprehend the material that’s taught. Then it dawned upon me. I had told Religion, the class I had the least investment in, the most information.

Between the Theology teacher I opened up to during Freshman year and the project about a virtuous person during Sophomore year, my Theology class knew the most about my mom. It knew what she looked like (blond hair with a kind smile), small parts of her personality (unprejudiced and nurturing, though a bit neurotic at times), how she died (suicide), and her name. It also knew that, even though I don’t believe in a

heaven, I hope one exists so that she could be there. Science, the class I cared most about, was surprised that Theology (of all classes) had a more complete story. Though it was initially surprised, it understood the reason why. Inquisitive as always, Science hypothesized that the discussion about heaven and the afterlife led me to share these intimate details.

They were right. I thought of myself as the type of person who prefers to stay under the radar. I thought I needed nothing more complex beyond drifting through each day until I could escape to a screen. I thought I enjoyed the simplicity of having minimal meaningful relationships to maintain. I thought I was fine with not caring. Then why did I drop clues, like I was setting up a self-serving mystery? Why do I offer small hints about problems I would insist are insignificant when asked? Maybe I want to tell someone but I'm afraid of what will happen if I do. Why am I afraid of people knowing?

I have yet to answer most of these questions. I'm still surrounded by uncertainty that is only just coming into light. Though upon reflection, I am sure of one thing. I want someone to know. I want someone to know the whole story without cherry-picked information of my choosing. I want someone to know what I learned along the way and what I still have to learn. Each of my classes knew only small details to a story I've kept away but wanted to share. Each of my classes brings out part of my personality, and each one knows a different part of the story. I want each of my classes to know the whole story, so they can accompany each part of me in fully understanding the past and moving forward in the present. I opened the door in my English class and asked about the upcoming essay contest. If all it took was a bit of listening to ask myself much needed questions, sharing my experience will help me find answers.