

I read the torn out passage as I lie on my bed. Music glides through the room. *Carrying a single bag, the young man is traveling alone at his whim with no particular destination in mind.*

A large, amber envelope lays empty atop my sheets; from it sprawls treasured pages and passages from books, poems and letters from friends. I'm reading a short story embedded within Haruki Murakami's *IQ84*; a piece I've read many times. At surface level the story depicts a traveling man who finds himself lost within a town of cats. I recite the last lines aloud: *He knows that he is irretrievably lost. This is no town of cats, he finally realizes.... It is a place not of this world... And never again, for all eternity, will the train stop at this station to bring him back to his original world.* Effortlessly, Murakami paints a scene of inexplicable breadth that explores the capacity of human perspective in parallel to the fathomless expanse of the universe. I place the page down. Feeling the weight of the story heavy on my chest, I look up at the drawings that line my bedroom walls. Hands sprawl from a ticking-clock; dragons and weepy moons dance across purple paint. The images exist as drawings within the world of my walls, but beyond that they exist in a realm of myself, personifying parts of my character otherwise inexpressible. I grab a sharpie to continue the masterpiece, looking for space among hundreds of designs I've created with my friends.

"When a fire starts to burn bright," the song's mantra reverberates through my speakers, as a resonant bass slides in. Disclosure. I immediately think of my cousins. Last summer, like every summer, the ten of us gathered for a week of "Grannie Camp" where Grannie, along with less ebullient Grandpa, takes us to old amusement parks and hidden campsites. Sitting on my bed mesmerized by his iPod, Johnny chants, "When a fire starts to burn *BRIGHT*, it starts to *SPREAD*." Lauchlan walks through the cabin door and chimes in. I had played the song once,

never expecting all nine of my younger cousins to instantly love the electro-house beat. I nominate that we all play cards. I've taught them a new game, and I'm eager to play. *Slap!* Rufus slams down on the double twos winning the deck of cards piled on the wooden table. Johnny jokingly whines adding his trademark sarcasm as he pounds his fist against the wood. We're upstate Ontario in a wooden cabin. It's raining and there's not much to do, but even if the sun were shining you'd probably find us playing cards. These seven days are precious. They're the only seven where all ten of us can be together. With each year we grow older and grow closer, slowly threading our lives together before we begin to branch out into ourselves. For me, the foreboding sense of change hits hard. I worry that as we age, we'll lose the sense of family we share now. *And never again, for all eternity, will the train stop at this station to bring him back to his original world.* Murakami's words ring in my head. Has the train forever left the station where my cousins and I once played cards? *Slap!* Rufus slams down on the double twos winning the deck of cards piled on the wooden table. The train *has* left this moment, but the moment has always existed and it continues to exist in dimensions and spheres unfathomable to the naked eye. Somewhere the young man is lost within his town of cats. I have taken his seat on the train, with confidence that the stations of my life continue and that they will and always have asserted my existence.