

Eighth Grade Graduation Speech, Leyla Beban

Just imagine, you're walking down the Tanahana trail, right after it has rained. You can smell the wet dirt, feel the soft ground underneath your feet. You come across a fallen tree, the branches and twigs curving over the path to make a low arc. You duck under and step over a branch at the same time, the twigs scrabbling at your hair, catching on your clothes. With one last jerk, you tug free of the tree, and emerge to a beautiful sight: the ground before you is carpeted with soft yellow leaves. These leaves cover every inch of the ground beyond the fallen tree, layering the path with hundreds of muted yellow hues. This yellow-leaf road is a soft coat on the muddy ground—your feet feel a mushy, thin, but unbreakable barrier on the surface of the mud. The mellow-toned leaves are everywhere you look, turning the brown and green landscape into a solid yellow block of color. Here and there are scattered scraps of mud, where the leaves have been ground into the dirt by something—a deer, maybe, or another person.

The air is cool and crisp as you silently walk down the path, your eyes picking out the things that don't belong: here a squished, lonely flower, there a tall green weed that somehow survived the fall of yellow. On your left side, now, is a short drop, to an overgrown creek trickling through the forest. You have to be careful to stay away from the edge, especially after it's rained. The path gets a little steeper now, leading to rough steps of mud. Now the ground is really slick, and your feet keep slipping on the smooth leaves. By the time you get to the top of the shallow "stairs," your shoes have a coat of mud on the bottom and along the sides.

You pause at the top to catch your breath, and as you do, you turn to survey your progress. Below and a little to the left is the yellow path, looking serene and calm in the cold afternoon. To your right is a green expanse of twisted, tangled berry plants. Up and to your right are a house and a fence, but you can't see that because an oak tree is in the way. You look down at the soft yellow leaves one more time, knowing it will probably be your last. And you smile sadly because, while you will be sad to leave, you know this sight will stay in your memory forever.