



The Mercury
The Student Art &
Literary Magazine
of Gettysburg
College

Volume 2022

Article 5

May 2022

To San Diego, California, From Statesville, North Carolina

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Gettysburg College

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Recommended Citation

Oglesby, Katelyn () "To San Diego, California, From Statesville, North Carolina," *The Mercury*. Year 2022, Article 5.

Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2022/iss1/5>

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Author Bio

Katie Oglesby '23 is an English with a Writing Concentration and Political Science double major hailing from San Diego, CA but living in rural North Carolina. This year she has served as Magazine Editor for The Gettysburgian, New Member Chair for Alpha Phi Omega, and the Humanities Field Aide for the Gettysburg College Headquarters academic journal. She can usually be found perusing the books in the Musselman Library browsing room. One day, she hopes to be a fiction author.

To San Diego, California,
From Statesville, North Carolina

KATELYN OGLESBY

I haven't seen it in six months—
the place that gave me my name,
that taught me honesty,
integrity, gave me my heart,
and gave me my walls.

I haven't driven up that long stretch of road,
where I would pump up the gas a little
over the speed limit as I drove home,
haven't driven up the hill and turned
right at the third street up to the dead-end
lane my house made its home on.

I haven't seen those trees that
called me their own, the place under
rocks in the yard where I buried dead fish,
where I dug up roots and planted
my own, haven't seen the birds
we used to name walk along
our ramshackle wall from the star pines
to the olive tree.

I haven't seen the places on the walls
that my four-year-old hand used
to tear up, haven't seen the pink paint
of my bathroom or the plastic stars
on my bedroom ceiling that used to
glow in the dark or the photos in the
hallway to the garage, that hall of memories,
the shrine to my childhood.
I haven't peered through the half-circle
window to our cars in the driveway below
and haven't seen my neighbors smile and wave

and bid us good day on the streets
that I used to play hopscotch on,
and ride my bike down, and run along
to get the mail because I was barefoot
and didn't want to land on something sharp.

I haven't seen it in six months,
the place that made me a person,
the place that took my heart and
spit me out and told me I was
something then nothing then something again.
I don't miss the way the trees would
shake in the wind and the embers
would light up the ground and
our photographs would tilt
and the floors would move and we'd
all stand in the doorway waiting for it
to pass, but I miss
the community of those moments,
phone calls tethering us together,
are you okay? was that an earthquake?
are you evacuating for the fire?

It was those moments,
fear gripping me and holding me
captive, that I'd feel alive.

I haven't seen it in six months,
the city that gave me life,
the house that gave me home.
For all the resentment it gave me,
it gave me love too.
It gave me a best friend turned sister,
heartbreak turned lesson,
truth and meaning
and tears and scraped knees
and funerals and warmth,
so much warmth that it washes away
all the things that ever made me want
to leave.

I celebrate Christmas in my new house
and think how the light switches click
differently than the ones I used to know
and the stairs are steeper and I've never
had a bedroom on the first floor,
never had to drive twenty minutes
to get out of a rural neighborhood
and to a store,
never had trees this tall looming
over the backyard and sometimes
I miss our old pomegranate tree because that one
didn't dwarf me so much,
didn't make me feel so impossibly small.

This place may be my house, but
it doesn't feel like home yet.
It hasn't chewed me up and spit me
out so it doesn't feel like it's made
of my bones yet.

I think I left a piece of myself on Eclipse Road,
think I must have buried my heart
in the ground under
the floorboards and
in the walls.
Now, I'm fragmented,
a third of me left in San Diego,
a third in Gettysburg,
walking from Apple to the library
to Glat to the fourth floor of Breidenbaugh,
and the final third of me in small-town
North Carolina, trying to figure out
how to tie all my strings together
until I no longer feel so divided,
until a house in a place I didn't know existed last April
can feel a little more like a home.

But this Christmas, we sit on the couch we had
at our old house, just the three of us,
my mom, my dad, and me,

and I think that maybe it isn't the places
we live in that make a home,
that I can still have all those pieces
of me spread apart and be at home in
each of them uniquely,
that this new place can be home
even if it didn't build me.