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## Conversations By the Yellow Fire Hydrant

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## Conversations By the Yellow Fire Hydrant

### Author Bio

Hannah Rinehart is a Senior English Major with a Writing Concentration at Gettysburg College. She loves her position as Editor in Chief of the Mercury and hopes to continue into the editing world post-graduation. She studies Mathematics and German alongside literature and writing and spends her free time with her two cats, with German Studies and Mathematics Minors. She loves to read and write and works staff for The Mercury magazine.

## Conversations by the Yellow Fire Hydrant

HANNAH RINEHART

Sometimes, if I was lucky, I was able to catch the older kids running by my childhood house and play with them. The taller boys and girls—already in high school—whizzed by like the traffic that used Ross Road as a cut-through to the busier roads in front of our neighborhood. I watched these taller, lankier teens dart across my street to get to Reba Court even as a truck crested our hill. Their belief that their bodies were indestructible was something I wished I had.

Durham Manor was an expansive middle-class suburban community where some kids lived in smaller, one-story brick houses on one end, and kids living in the newer end with two story, brighter homes. But we all played outside together: in the sunshine, by the community basketball net in Reba Court, and in the Pit.

I was the oldest child in my family and had no clue how to play with kids older than me. I didn't even have older cousins. If I was in the right place at the right time, though, I could find myself playing basketball with Peter, and he would lead me to play with the groups of teenagers. He and I were both in sixth grade. Peter was younger than me by six months, but he was the youngest of three—one oldest sister who liked to drag him around by the ear, laughing, and one older brother who threw basketball and lacrosse balls at him a little too hard, laughing. He knew how to get and keep older kids' attention.

Being some of the younger children in our neighborhood, my younger brother and I were often babysat by older girls from down the street. My favorite was a girl named Eve. She was tall and had straight blond hair, and had large, squared, black glasses. She gave the best hugs. She looked like her mother, Sarah, who was friends with Mom. The majority of the mothers from Durham Manor knew one another and chatted in their uniform circles every school morning down the hill at the yellow fire hydrant. At the beginning of the day, that's where we all played while waiting to be picked up by our equally yellow school bus.

After school Eve and her friends, all the high school boys, and girls, could be found running from the corner with the yellow fire hydrant to

the Pit. That was what everyone called the water runoff, the giant field of grass sunken in, behind two rows of homes and met a forest on its other side. Four steep hills with two gutter pipes on either end of the field. It was the best spot in the neighborhood for touch football, freeze tag, categories, even sledding in the winter. I have a handful of memories there, and they all include Peter—running around, pulling on my hair, weaving around high-schoolers hips.

Peter was really close with an older boy named Reese. He was Eve's older brother by one year, and he had the longest brown hair that swooped past his eyes, and big teeth and an even bigger smile. He was just another one of the loosely behaved boys that ran around at Halloween with a skull mask drizzled in fake blood who hid under the truck in his driveway to grab at ankles. He was a boy who lived like every teenager in every other neighborhood. He was a brother to Eve just like any other brother.

I was in science class when I first heard of the accident.

“Did you hear? Over the weekend two high school boys drove into a tree after drinking at a party,” whispers reached me. They continued to say that they both were students at the high school we would eventually go to. I was confused, but those words stayed in my mind. It wasn't possible that they were anyone I knew. I only knew a handful of high schoolers out of the hundreds that could have been the ones responsible.

When my mom got home from work that afternoon, she approached me quietly, which was abnormal. She set down her bulky black purse on the table in the foyer and turned to me, sitting on the couch. “Honey, there's something you need to know,” she said.

I wished I could say I was as devastated as Eve, or as Peter was, but I could say that I felt completely shocked. Out of all the odds in the world, one of my neighbors, one of my kid neighbors, not an adult, not a parent but a child, died that day. Reese and one of his friends from another neighborhood weren't here anymore. I helped my mom bake a dish of lasagna for Sarah and her family and didn't ask Eve to babysit for a while. I gave her a big hug at the funeral. She squeezed my little body so tightly it hurt, but I wasn't going to pull away from her. I made a mental note to hug my brother as tight as that when I went back to him and Mom. I hadn't ever realized before that I could lose him like Eve lost Reese.

Weeks later, one afternoon after the high school kids got dropped off, me, Peter, Eve, two of her friends, and Peter's older brother were standing at the yellow fire hydrant. Peter suggested running to the Pit, but Eve just said, “I don't want to go there. I'd just see Reese.” Her friends stayed quiet, and we all nodded.

Instead we took turns seeing who could balance the longest standing on its yellow, stubby arms. Eve had stretched her arms out real wide and closed her eyes against the blaring sunshine.