

Ashleigh Mitnick

ENGL 1191

Daniella Castillo Vasquez

6 March 2026

Mitnick 1

The smell of pine hits my nose, I feel at ease.

It's distinct and fresh, the kind of smell that sits in the back of your nose and makes the air feel crisper than it actually is. The trees are tall, stretching towards the bright blue sky.

Woodchips get stuck in the soles of my sneakers as I walk down the hill towards the lake. My ugg slippers feel moist at the bottom from the morning dew.

The lake sits still. With the trees in the background making the scene appear as a bob ross painting.

I hear a laugh somewhere behind me, the sound echoing across the bunks, but I can't figure out who it is. I sit down on a picnic table and swing my legs around. My reflection from the sun shines bright, long and stretched out.

My red bracelet slides down my wrist each time I move. The string is frayed now, as the bracelet is now 5 years old. I roll it between my fingers trying not to stretch it out too much. The bracelet brings me back to when I was a camper, and when all my friends were at camp with me.

I shut my eyes for a second as the sun hits my face. When I re-open them, they smell fresh of "camp" changes.

The smell of rain on pavement overtakes my senses. The air feels thicker, warmer, the sun hides behind the clouds. The lake view has disappeared, but instead replaced with stone buildings, mountains and damp grounds from a recent storm. Water drips down from the balcony above me. I'm standing in the middle of a place that is new, but feels like mine already. A scooter rolls past and I hear talk about stuff I'm not familiar with. There are cafes with little metal tables filled with students and their laptops. A church bell rings somewhere in the distance,

as the clock strikes 12 pm. I look down at my wrist, my bracelet still intact. For a moment, I stare at it, confused. The bead catches the gray light and reflects it in a small circle across my palm. I swear I was just sitting on a dock.

The space around me is too real for that to make sense. A gust of wind moves through the street, carrying the smell of bread from a bakery nearby. I hear chatter and laughs all around. My chest tightens, as if I walked into a room and forgot something important. I touched the bracelet and it warmed my heart.

The fresh outdoor pine-like scent came back to my nose. It hit like opening a door. The lake flashes into my view again, bright and reflective under the morning sun. My legs dangle off the dock just like they were in the past. The sound of the water banging against the docks makes me feel safe. Someone called my name from up the hill. I turned, expecting to see one of my campers searching for me, but no one was there. Just trees swaying in the summer breeze. The bracelet slides against my wrist, but this time something feels off.

The air feels thinner, like the moment before a memory slips away. I lock a gaze across the lake and try to grasp every detail. The ripples, canoes, and view of the trees hitting the horizon. Then, I hear faint music coming from the girls' side headquarters. I know this place, it is familiar, but at the same time, it's slipping away. The bracelet presses hard into my hand, as I curl my fingers around it. I attempt to remember what day it is. Basketball games, cheering in the dining hall, what's for breakfast? The memories blur, like photos left to rot in the sun.

The sound of rain hits again. Not heavy, but the soft drips that fall from roofs and tree branches after a storm. Campus is quieter now, and the chairs at the cafe are empty. I sit down at one of the metal tables, and the chairs are freezing. My reflection appears faintly in the dark cafe window across the street. For a short moment, it overlaps strangely with another image in my

mind. Water instead of glass, sunlight instead of a dark gray sky. I blink, my bracelet still intact on my wrist. I twist it between my fingers again, slower this time. A strange thought pervades my brain. What if the bracelet isn't something I was given years ago, what if it's the only thing moving with me. I press it to my palm, and for a second I swear I can feel the lake under my dangling feet again. The sensation is so clear. A group of people walk through the square speaking quickly, their voices blending into a language I can't catch. I watch them pass and feel a sudden wave of distance, like I'm seeing everything from slightly outside of myself. I grab onto the bracelet extra tight.

As I sit back down on the dock, I examine the lake again. Now it looks different. As a young child, I would swim in this lake with my friends, not a care in the world. The biggest worry I had was the myth of the snapping turtles residing at the bottom of the lake. All my friends together, we were young with no real thoughts circulating through our heads. No one was worried about getting an internship or traveling to Europe. We would get out of the lake and hang our emoji one-piece swimsuits on the clothes line to dry. Then, run to the dining hall to grab a perfectly refreshing cherry flavored ice-pop. Now the world has become more real. All of those girls have gone on and left camp. Making it a distant memory. Me, yeah no, I don't feel ready for that just yet. So, now I go sit at the lake with campers of my own. Reminding them to soak it all in, because camp isn't forever.

Getting to my college campus, it gets darker quicker. I walk slowly across campus, my footsteps echo quietly. My mind often drifts back to camp, especially the lake. I can still hear the ripples in the water. I still smell that fresh cut grass scent. I stop near that local cafe and feel my bracelet on my wrist. In that moment, time slows down, as two important places touch the same

object. Two versions of myself touching that same bracelet. The bracelet sits warm against my wrist, holding memories of my childhood together.