

It is often said that one doesn't recognize the passing of time until it is gone. I have never believed this to be true. My whole life, I have been chasing after time. I am a lioness, streaking across the grasslands, dangerously close to the gazelle which gaily evades my advances. I desperately long to smash its beautiful frame into the dirt, violently tearing tendon from bone and bone from muscle. I fervently wish to pin this glad creature beneath my crushing weight, utterly demolishing it. Shards of bone will cut my flesh and splashing blood will shield my vision, but I will not be deterred; my passion will overcome every petty distraction. I desire to know that this sportive being will never run again, but rather remain ever in the grasp of my merciless claws.

This past year I have grown especially urgent in my hunt. I have pushed myself to the brink of destruction, and I feel my muscles growing weary, my breath turning ragged. I finished my senior year in high school sprinting. Last summer, I studied every day for hours so that I could retake my SAT and improve my already respectable score. Just as often, I practiced for Varsity golf, which devoured a majority of my time in the fall. Despite this, I took Advanced Placement Government and Statistics, simultaneously dual enrolling through Lansing Community College. In the spring came AP Literature and two more LCC courses. I earned an A in all these classes. I played the flute in the Symphonic Band, the most difficult, and thereby respected, of all the bands in my school. I still made time to volunteer for a total of over one-hundred hours as a member of the National Honor Society. In other words, senior year, I made sure to cover all the bases and to excel at each one.

Even as I was ceaselessly occupied with scholarly duties, I saw time zipping by in the corner of my eye. It thought it could whizz by without my noticing, but I am highly attuned to its every motion. A lioness may seem distracted as she laps the cooling water from the dribbling springs, or basks in the sun on a comforting perch. But she is always alert. Eyes wide and observant; ears twitching, searching; nostrils flared and seeking. A lioness is never truly at rest; she takes note of the gazelle, no matter how delicate or swift it passes by.

This sudden evasive attempt from time sends me into a frenzy. I take on more and more, leaving myself without even a minute to spare. I have thus deluded myself that I must do as much as I can with the increasingly scarce time I have. Time is moving so quickly, but there is much left to be done. However, I am only letting this precious time go to waste by being busy. Time slips away as these tasks I assign myself weigh me down. Time is picking up speed, and I respond by trudging needlessly uphill, dragging behind me a sizeable load.

Sometimes I feel that I am in the ocean, waves lapping over my head, salty liquid invading my nose, scratching my throat. I flail and splash aggressively to hold myself above. Nevertheless, the depths pull me under. A dazzling light hovers far above. I squint through stinging eyes, recognizing that the light is time, taunting me. I thrash, fighting to reach it. No longer am I a lioness advancing on my prey. I am a scared and lonely girl reaching for the saving light, weighed down by expectation. Rather than cutting the weight that is tied to my ankle, I continue my futile tactics convincing myself that if I try hard enough I will make it. Lower and lower I sink, the weight of duty tugging on my leg, the surrounding water compressing on my lungs. I can't breathe, but all I care about is that time has once again escaped my grasp.

To get me through the school year, I clung to the hope that once it was over, everything would be different. Better. But then came along my new job: communications coordinator at my local church. Next started summer classes through Lansing Community College. Not even a break in between. I love my job and I enjoy learning, but what life do I have outside of duty? Who would I be without another impending task?

With these ever-increasing expectations and responsibilities, I have learned to crave being busy. In turn, I have learned to crave chasing time, too. What was once an aggressive pastime has now become an obsession. I am not the only one caught in time's infuriating race. Matthew Kelly addresses this topic in his book "Slowing Down to the Speed of Joy." Lin-Manuel Miranda poses a similar question as the characters in *Hamilton* ask Alexander "Why do you write like you're running out of time?" The band Alabama sings of this incessant chase in their song "I'm In a Hurry (And Don't Know Why)." It is comforting to know that I am not alone in my pursuit of time. But I am also left to wonder how it has not been caught. Time truly is the most formidable force to have escaped innumerable assailants since the beginning of...well, time.

Most kids are excited to reach double digits. After that, it is exhilarating to turn thirteen. Once you have your license, you will achieve peak coolness. In just a couple weeks, I will reach that next desired milestone of legal adulthood. Just like any kid, I often dream of the freedom that comes with getting older. But this excitement is bittersweet as I soberly recognize that every birthday is a victory for time. Eighteen years sounds young, but feels so old. I have clung to the technicality that, at seventeen, I am still a child. In just a couple weeks, I will be a young adult. In only a few years, I will be middle aged. Soon enough, I will be older. Then, I will just be old.

In this race against time, I can never reach it. But sometimes the tears welling in my eyes distort the view and make it seem as though I have pulled ahead, that the end is already within reach. Sometimes my gaze is fixed behind me though it only hurts to look back. I should be looking forward. I should see that time is not racing me, that I am racing time. It is moving at a steady march, but my fear picks up its pace. I claim to miss the good old days, even though those days are now. I am so eager to defeat time in this race, yet reluctant as any person is to reach the end. Why, then, do I continue to pursue? What is pushing me to engage in this futile competition? It is not pride, nor curiosity. It is fear.

Eighteen years is a long time. Already I feel that I have not done enough in the time I have graciously been given. How will I feel after another eighteen years have passed? Will I have found the way to live that grants me the greatest fulfillment? Or will I be dissatisfied as I am now at my lack of meaningful accomplishment? Sure, I did well in school, but does that really matter? Is this what I want to define who I am? I don't think so. Then what? What do I want to define myself? I wander aimlessly, without purpose. I have no objective, no definitive goal. And the longer I sit here working desperately to find one, time gets further ahead.

At the beginning of this year, I was a lioness chasing time as though it were prey. But then, I was drowning, reaching towards time in utter agony. Now my stride has slowed, my energy diminished. I feel as though I am giving up my pursuit of time. I sit on the ground and watch apathetically as time gets away. In my head I reason that there is no point in chasing time,

it always will escape. I have reached a standstill, but time is marching on. My previously aggressive chase has left me without strength, without hope.

As this race has changed so greatly in just a single year - from hunting, to drowning, to nothing - I know it will change much more throughout the rest of my life. I only hope that, one day, I can walk hand in hand with time. And when we reach the finish line together, I will be content, joyful. I will have accomplished all that I set out to. I will not win the race against time, but maybe it is not a race at all. Rather, it is a journey, one in which time is best as a companion, not a competitor. I hope to one day accept this, having it reflect in every aspect of my life.