

Ava Arledge

Ms. Gruber/Mrs. Holston

Advanced Topics: American Language and Literature

3 October 2023

update

### I Guess I'll Never Know

"Mom, please come pick me up. I am having such a bad day." My mom received this text at least once a week during my freshman year at Cannon School. My frustration and resentment towards the school grew with each math class, student life, and community meeting. I recall the lump in my throat every morning, a mix of anxiety and dread making its presence known as I stepped onto a campus where I felt an unbearable sense of loneliness. The exclusivity of the girls in my advisory left me questioning myself, each of their synchronous waves of laughter and shared secrets was a piercing reminder of my hatred for the school. I was never anybody's first choice to sit with at lunch, and I was not particularly standing out in any of my classes, either. My potential wilted, not from lack of ability, but from the absence of a nurturing environment that drove me to improve. I could not help but daydream about switching schools, somewhere I could find happiness and fun in learning every day. The continuous bad days left me longing for a change, yearning for a new start that would allow me to thrive, rather than just barely survive.

March 10, 2022 was a date forever engraved into my memory, marking the moment that would unveil my future. From midnight to 8 a.m., my computer screen illuminated as I refreshed the Taft School admissions portal. And then, finally, the message arrived, a message that signified my new beginning.

"Dear Ava, Congratulations! I am delighted to tell you that your application for admission to the Taft Class of 2025 as a Boarding student has been approved by the Admissions Committee. We are thrilled to welcome you to the Taft School family!" Emotions surged, tears of

joy christening my moment of acceptance. I could not wait until the fall of 2022~~x~~ when I would be considered a Taft student. The thrill of acceptance <sup>pulsed</sup> pulsed through my veins as I stared at the screen, and without thinking twice, my finger slammed on the "Accept" button for my decision. Just one click, and the doors of a new destiny swung open. My parents' faces painted portraits of pride, and my dad exclaimed, "Taft isn't just a dream anymore, Ava. It's a reality, YOUR reality!" I couldn't wait to <sup>W.C.</sup> spill this exhilarating news.

The next day at Cannon, the words tumbled from my lips, spreading to friends, teachers, and classmates. I was leaving - Taft was my destination. Amidst the buzz and flurry of conversations, an unexpected wave of sadness from others crashed over my joy. My teachers expressed how my energy had, in ways I hadn't noticed, lit up the classroom. The kids in my grade explained ~~that~~ my absence would cause a void at school. Faces I rarely exchanged words with, unexpectedly, revealed a touch of despair at the thought of my departure. As emotions from others arose, a revelation struck - I mattered at Cannon. I began to view this school as a place where my energy bounced off the walls and my presence made a difference. My excitement rapidly turned into panic. Doubts and second thoughts, swift and piercing, stormed my mind. Was the allure of a new school blinding me to the value of the connections I already had at Cannon? That day, each class stretched into an eternity. The moment the clock struck three, I bolted to my dad's car, unleashing a flood of pent-up tears, representing the storm of confusion raging within me. Every drop questioned the decision - was Taft really where I was meant to be?

"Dad," I wept, a mix of fear and confusion guiding every word, "Have I made a mistake?"

"Ava, take a deep breath. You're getting cold feet; let's talk tonight," he assured me. I got home, went straight to my room, and <sup>redundant</sup> pondered deeply. I had spent a year at Cannon feeling like a shadow. Every girl's voice there echoed a haunting melody of solitude; each classroom reflected my invisibility. However, announcing my news about Taft revealed unexpected regrets. Warmth,

it would  
be  
interesting  
to hear  
more  
about  
this  
to  
counter the  
negative  
build  
up -  
that  
way you  
indecision  
is  
more  
believable

recognition, and a connection with Cannon and its people came to my view, casting a new light on a landscape I thought I knew. This ranked among the most challenging decisions I have ever faced. If I stayed at Cannon, I would be forfeiting a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I would lose the advantages of Taft, which included academic rigor, meeting new people, and so much more. But it also meant finally embracing the relationships at Cannon that had only now made themselves known. Staying at Cannon was clearly the more comfortable path, surrounded by familiarity, but attending Taft meant I would step into a world of promise, opportunity, and transformation.

In the silence of my room, each option weighed heavily on me, each a universe of possibilities and losses. An unprecedented conflict stirred within me. This decision was a compass directing the rest of my journey. I began to seek advice from others, texting my brother,

"I am just not positive that Taft is where I want to be." He responded, "You are never going to be positive about where you want to be. Everyone always has doubts. If they don't, I assume they are lying or stupid. Lying because they want to seem brave, and stupid because they're too dumb to see that there are downsides to every decision. Every decision you'll ever make comes at the cost of not doing something else. In my opinion, you lose a lot less by going to Taft. You never know what is the perfect thing for you... decisions would be easy if that was the case, but people lose their minds over big decisions all the time. Don't lose yours over this because it comes at a relatively low cost, and you stand to gain a lot." My brother's words echoed in my mind. While my brother advocated for me to attend Taft, he imparted a wisdom that resonated with me, and would for the rest of my life. Every choice, no matter how big or little, is a dance with gains and losses. I needed to stop asking myself, "But what if?" and start focusing on the reality of what is. The definitive answer of whether Cannon or Taft would have painted a happier ending to my story is one I guess I'll never know.

how do you account for this difference? why did you feel so much hostility when you were mistaken?

is all of this needed?

how did you come to your decision?

this is a repetitive said much above