Greetings from
FLATLAND
Livi Schroder

FLATLAN

...from above

What a view… the Crossroads of America! From above, you can see exactly what the members of the Eighteth Session of the General Assembly meant when they met in 1937. Patches of fields of soy and corn are sewn together by thin gravel roads. In late fall, the quilt browns, and you can clearly see the waves in their fabric. Rows upon rows of creases of harvested crops leave their decaying stalks to the mercy of winter. They follow the slight bends and dips in the road, reminiscent of a zen garden--lacking the intentionality yet mimicking the reflectiveness. A sea of brown, gray, beige, and green is harshly interrupted by blocks of concrete. The roads get wider and darker and populated. The warehouses gradate into houses and stores and offices that get taller and taller until they amass into the Salesforce tower--formerly the Chase building… we all still call it that.

Your peaceful view from the window seat of your afternoon flight is interrupted by the kid behind you kicking your seat. You were asleep for the majority of the flight, so it didn't bother you until now. Then, his baby sibling next to him, cradled in their mother's arms, begins to cry. A few seconds later, you can smell why. Across the aisle, a set of new parents look carefully into their sleeping baby's swaddle, both hoping they don't wake them and glad their baby doesn't cry like the other one.

And you finally land. The ground is comfortably flat--no more inclines for you. For a second, anxiety swells in your chest, as it always does. I can't be here, I need to be here. You look to the rain that has puddled on the runway and you can feel the rain welling up in your eyes.

You're home.

The O… Snuck… Doing

If I remem… of 2018. At the … second semester… tight internation… to the IB curricul… tered girl who w… who I was. I was… narrative, I'm ke… tense) privilege… want to be the … to my father. Firs… chaotic period o… adequacy and bo… ed me with had … do every wrong…

1. Smoke …
2. Drink a…
3. Lie abo…

I would g… to sneak out. S… long driveway, … security camera… Wallentine's hou… more expensive… my first joint an… effects. There, I…

But each … where I was and… ah. In January 2… One midnight, … were: my room… window was a s… dad was crazy … turn all the mot… setting them o… to make noise i… 16 year-old min… I could have co…

v…

1. Put my… like me sleepin…
2. Drop … der from my w…
3. Jump…
4. Start … flee quickly…

Someho… up, and I wen… then Sarah, as … drove 20 minu… ly nothing hap… ed--maybe to … everyone who… Jajuan, Sarah, … step-brother …

About the Car…

1. Deep scar on the front right. One wintry afternoon, while traversing a bendy, bowed street in a wooded neighborhood, my tires lost traction and I lost control. The car slid into a mailbox, leaving a deep metallic scar and a dented mailbox.

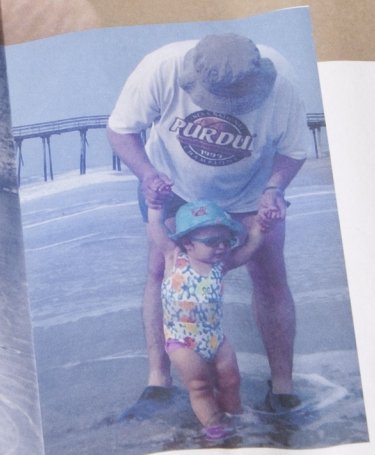
2. Big ding on bumper/brake light. In the school parking lot\, I was fucking around in the parking lot. I pulled up to my friends car in an awkward positioning. I backed up too quickly and inattentively and hit Sarah's bumper (same model as my car, actually). We have matching dents.

3. Missing headlight glass + scuffs on front right. Parking issue. No, not parallel. Into the diagonal type parking lot. I should start wearing glasses again probably. This is the gnarliest injury my car has felt.

4. Invisible scar on the front bumper. The only time I've ever hit a running car. I was making my way down a short slope to a stoplight, when my tires lost tread on the icy road and lightly bumped the car in front of me. While there was no evident damage to either car, it was a terrifying experience to hit a car with people in it.

5. Tiny scratches on the bumper. Backed into a car in the local ice cream places parking lot at 10pm. In my defense, there's no lighting in that lot, it's very cramped, and the person was parked illegally.

i wish i didn't have to lie to you. i just don't ~~want~~ think you'd like what i've become, who i've turned into. i'll still be your little girl for as long as you want me to.



Love,
Olivia

POLITICS COLUMN WITH THE SCHRODER FAMILY

SUE SCHRODER: Old, white, very conservative grandmother. Loves HGTV and Fox News.

"That's disgusting. Your mac & cheese is ready."

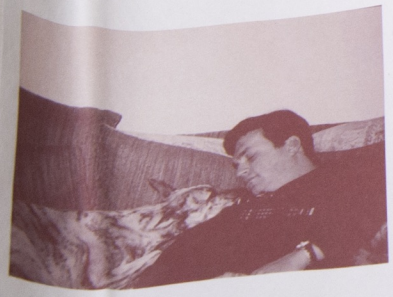
ROGER SCHRODER: Old, white, very conservative grandfather. Was on the 1954 state championship basketball team.

"You know, your grandma, dad, mom, and I are all very conservative. We don't want your values slipping away in college."

DANA SCHRODER: Mixed, iberal mother. Knits, reads, and watches CNN. Thought grandpa's comment was really funny.

KENT SCHRODER: White, moderately conservative father. Does not want to talk about it.

"Let's not talk about it."



OBITUARY FOR ROMEO

Romeo was adopted by the Schroder family at the age of 3 in 2012, and passed away in 2019, almost 11. Romeo was a happy, loving greyhound. He got his name because he greeted everyone with a kiss. He was afraid of tile floor and the stairs, but he always clung to your side. He starred in a lot of Livi's videos she made in elementary school. He loved dad more than anything in the world. He was a good boy.

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The One (and Only) Time I Snuck Out, and Why I'm Not Doing that Again

If I remember correctly, it was the first day of 2018. At the time, I was just about to start the second semester of my junior year, and I went to an up-tight international school for the sake of getting into a good college. I was relatively new to the IB curriculum, and I was a shelter, and relatively to not be sheltered girl who was very set in her ways and insecure. I didn't who I was. I was also very self-reflection to the past narrative, I'm keeping this year was a very tense) privileged and I had always been want to be the good, better junior year was a very to my father. First all these feelings of inchaotic period of my life, I had infectadequacy and boredom that Flatland had infected me with had grown so strong that I decided to do every wrong thing at once:

1. Smoke weed, though seldomly
2. Drink alcohol too frequently
3. Lie about my whereabouts

I would go over to my friend Sarah's house to sneak out. She lived in the woods and had a long driveway, so it was easy to hide from the security cameras when we left. We went to Will Wallentine's house most frequently. He went to a more expensive private school. There, I smoked my first joint and felt disappointed at the lack of effects. There, I first drank and made mistakes.

But each time I went to my parents about where I was and what I was doing, I was with Sarah. In January 2018, I wanted to do it on my own. One midnight, I decided it was time. The issues were: my room was on the second floor, and the window was a straight drop into a pit of rocks; my dad was crazy about security, and the process to turn all the motion sensors off was just as loud as setting them off; my greyhounds would be quick to make noise if they saw me leave. So, my genius 16 year-old mind devised probably the worst plan I could have come up with:

1. Put my guitars under my blankets to look like me sleeping (a la Ferris Bueller)
2. Drop and descend an emergency fire ladder from my window
3. Jump the 6-foot fence
4. Start my car that was parked outside and flee quickly

Somehow my sleeping parents didn't wake up, and I went to pick up my friend Jajuan and then Sarah, as we all lived close to each other. We drove 20 minutes to Will's house, where absolutely nothing happened. I don't know what I expected--maybe to smoke weed or drink a little--but everyone who was staying over was fast asleep. Jajuan, Sarah, and I talked to Will's college-aged step-brother for a while before we decided that there was no need for us to be there. It was an embarrassing venture. I wanted to fit in with that group of people so badly, but they clearly didn't care. That left a hollow, cold mass in my chest. It was probably the last time I saw a lot of those people.

Here comes the funny part. After dropping my friends off, I had to figure out how to get back in my room. For some reason I didn't think of that part in my plan of escape. I first tried to climb up the ladder. Here's the thing about emergency fire ladders: they're designed to be climbed down. You know, like in an emergency. They aren't so great for climbing back up. I guess the makers didn't want people returning into their fiery abodes. So, I swung back and forth, hitting the siding and window, being as loud as hell. I gave up, and eventually decided to just enter through the front door.

I set off the alarm, and I raced to turn it off. My dad ran to the staircase landing which overlooked the front door, and yelled at me like I was an intruder. I hadn't seen him that aggressive before, so I jumped. He realized it was me, and I rushed to explain that I had gone to CVS to buy "menstrual cramp medication" (talking about periods gets you out of a lot of confrontations). He looked at me, swaddled in dozens of coats, without a CVS bag in-hand, and believed me. He believed the girl that hadn't done anything wrong before. His daughter, who would never lie.

Maybe he didn't believe me. Maybe he knew. After all, unbeknownst to me, my parents had installed a car tracker. They could see when and where my car traveled at all times. How the fuck did they not know? They still haven't confronted me about it. No one has even mentioned it since then. Not even, "Remember the time you set off the alarm at 4am pretending to have bought period pills?"

I'm not sure whether it's the guilt of lying to my parents or the overall lame-ness of the whole process that turned me off from doing it again. It's probably a combination of both. After that, I stopped hanging out with Sarah and actually started looking down on her for continuing to sneak out. That condescension was misplaced and it ultimately drew us apart. I look back on that period of my life with both nostalgia and bitterness. It was fun to do stupid things. It's a rite of passage as a teenager who just got their license. But I can't overlook the emptiness it brought me. I wanted to escape the flatness of Flatland and be something dynamic. Lying to myself about who I was just made me flatter.

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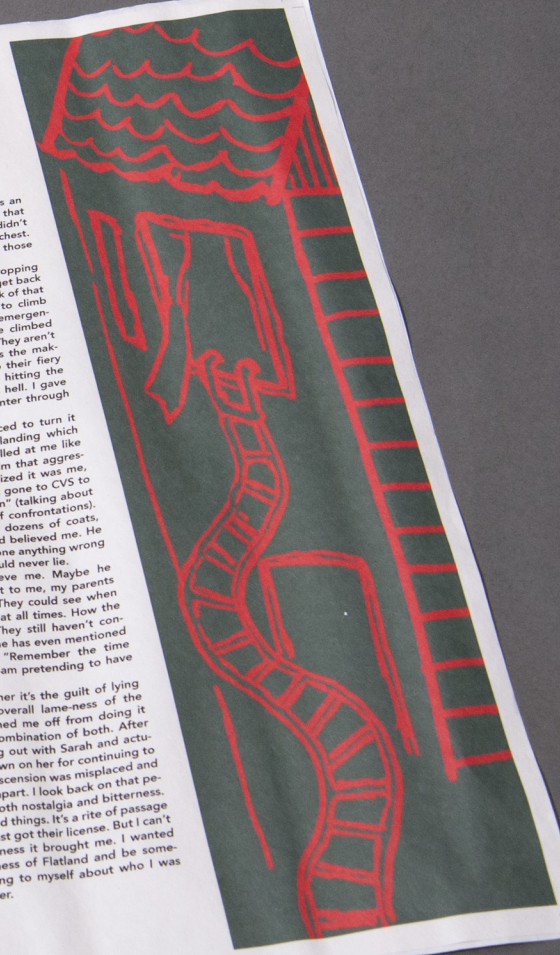

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above

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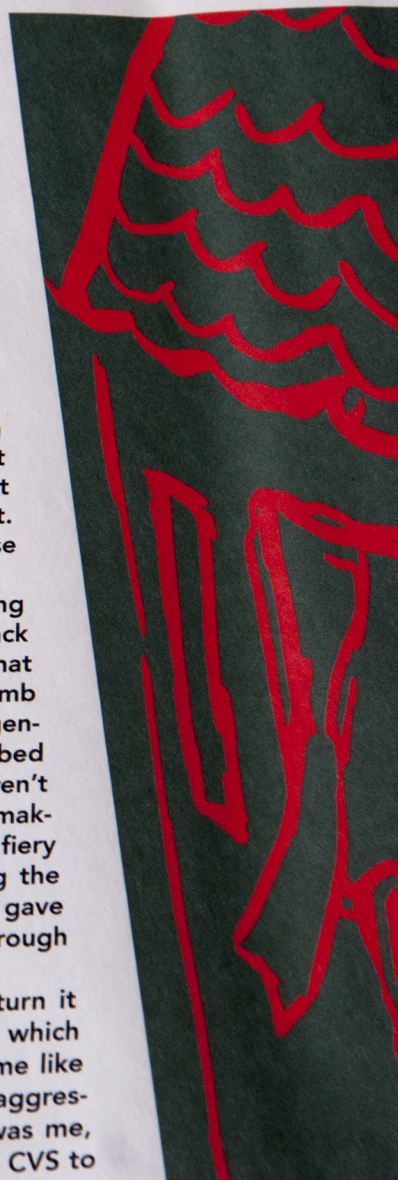

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