

# Yoga

by Beth Kohl

My dress was *not* the color of the ocean. Grandma Jen said it was, beautifully so, but it was not. The blue folds were far too bright, too perfect. *There is nothing oceanic about this dress.* But I liked how it looked on me, looked good. The dress that is; I can't recall what I looked like last time I glanced into that frozen frame of me. Mirrors aren't really too important, they just reflect. And as we all know a reflection is simply the bending back of a structure upon itself. At least, that's what I learned in AP Biology last fall.

I wonder how a person bends back upon themselves. I certainly wouldn't want to. Sounds painful—slightly yoga-ish. And I hate yoga. One time my two older, more flexible sisters convinced me to partake in the supposedly rewarding activity of a yoga video. It was not pretty. *Hmphs* and *guhhs* and *oofss*, that is what erupted from the uncanny mass of myself as I attempted to twist my body into very unnatural positions—*who does this? I am not silly putty, you skinny, pink-topped lady on the TV screen.* My sisters laughed of course. They found my sorry attempts amusing. I guess I did too 'cause I laughed as well. Laughed defeatedly through most of the experience. But I was humiliated—my pride was twisted all up and then deflated in a very un-ladylike manner. I couldn't help being a bit perturbed. *I am normally so much more dignified.*

But this is not about my dignity. It is about a transition.

I stood before a crowd. I donned a ridiculous, square cap and ginormous blue gown. One must note the mocking tone in which I say "gown." When I think of that word, my mind waltzes off to a far-away place that begins with "once upon a time" and ends with "happily ever after." I picture balls and prince charmings and all other sorts of magic pumpkins and chipper old women with sparkling wands. *This "gown" might as well be a pumpkin on me.* I stood behind a podium, trying to not shake, not stutter, not lose myself. Maybe Cinderella felt similar at the ball, but she at least had glass slippers to boost her self-esteem. I just had me.

How does one pass from a current state of being into another? And what can be said to a crowd of people—stone-faced and dull—when such a shift is occurring? This is *life*?

Well I said something. *Speech done, faculty appeased, diploma received, gown off. Check, check, check, check.* I stood before my Grandma Jen and a handful of other relatives. My un-oceanic, blue dress danced around impatiently in the breeze, the way I was not allowed to do. *Get me out of this crowd, tired of people on every side.* I just wanted a moment, one that was all mine, in which I could stop and think about what just happened. About life.

Citrus locks mingle with the earth like oil and water. There together, but separate. I have my moment now. My long hair is pressed underneath me as I lay alone in the overgrown field. Perhaps my curls will sit here long enough to be planted and sprout into something, hopefully not an addition of me though; I already have more of that than I know what to do with.

Four years. It's over now. There is no possible, un-humiliating, sane way to ever go back. I wouldn't want to either, even if there was. But that doesn't mean I know what to do next. For months people have asked, "What will you do after you graduate?" For months I have blabbered about anything and nothing that comes to mind upon their inquiries. But now I see what I wish I had said—*it's not about what I will do, it is about who I will be.*

These shifting periods in life—they just keep happening, don't they? I would be foolish to believe otherwise. And I will always be me in the midst of them, won't I? Of course I will.

So if transitioning is actually what makes up the majority of life, and if I am never completely changing my identity, what *is* the big deal? Circumstances will shift, different people will flow in and out, but I think it's safe to say I will someday look back on the *next* four years and see many parallels with the four I just conquered.

Conquered. That particular term often draws my memory back to a rainy summer afternoon. Those same two sisters had convinced me into a ridiculously dorky past time. We were re-enacting and somewhat re-inventing a *Lord of the Rings* battle. The oldest was Aragorn, valiant and passionate, bearing a sturdy blade that was closely comparable to a large stick. Then there was the next sister, Legolas, smooth, swift and graceful, grasping an elven bow which also appeared very similar to a large stick. And lastly, I was Gimli—fiery-spirited, stubborn dwarf. I got a little stick. I mean, an *axe*.

We orienteered through every acre of our woods like spies. That was the part where we worked to believe in the world we were creating. Finally the climax—the battle—took place in a field not unlike the one I now lay in. That was the part where what we were playing at became *real*. Many of our comrades died in battle, falling tragically to the bloody blades of the orcs. But we *conquered*. No victory could have felt more true. And as we stood on top of a nearby hillock, headed back into the woods, we turned to glance upon the battlefield. It was littered with bodies. Our hearts were full of accomplishment; accomplishment dirtied with pain. Aragorn made some touching speech and I swear to this day that she—being my oldest sister in reality—shed *actual* tears. Legolas too, started choking up. The battle was over and we were far too old to play such games. We all knew this. Perhaps that is where the tears came from. We weren't just walking into the woods, we were walking back into real life, uncertain if we could ever come back to this, this world of wonderment.

And I didn't cry. Because I just knew, we will always have fun together, we will always use our imaginations to go on great adventures, and all that is really changing is our race—dwarf to human being.

That was a joke.

All that is *truly* changing is the context of our adventures, the circumstances we find ourselves in when we *choose* to go on being us and having a blast doing it. We actually will do very similar things throughout the rest of our lives, for the human character doesn't allow for a very wide variety of changing, if looked at logically. I will be me and life will go on. Like it or not, I will just be doing a lot of reflecting—bending back upon myself and what I've already done. Like it or not, life is full of a lot of yoga.

