



The Pawprint



The 2019 Graduation Edition

As this school year comes to an end, for three quarters of the school, it's just another year in the books. But for the oldest students at Maple Hill, our seniors, it's 13 years in the books, and the beginning of the biggest transition we've ever had to go through. To get a little reflection on senior year and high school as a whole, we asked a few seniors for some of their thoughts and feelings as graduation comes closer.

Connor McGarvey- "I don't even know man, it went by in a flash."

To Connor, and I'm sure to many others as well, it's felt like high school has come and gone before we got the chance to really take it all in. Moments happen and before you know it, they're memories, and the whole thing is behind you. It may feel a little disorienting, or maybe very disorienting, but maybe the best thing to do is be happy that we all had the opportunity to create so many great memories, and be excited for all the new experiences that will come after graduation.

Tara Smith- "It's been a really great experience here; the teachers have helped us all mature into pretty good seniors"

Tara looks back on high school as a whole, thanking our teachers for what they've done to make us who we are today. The classes you took and teacher you had all play a role in how you look back on high school, and luckily at Maple Hill, everyone has had the chance to connect with their teachers in a meaningful way. Everyone has a favorite teacher who challenges them, and as a result, has made them a better person. So, as the final year of high school comes to an end, be sure to thank your special teachers for playing a part in making you the pretty good senior Tara thinks you are today.

Brayden Renslow- "As graduation gets closer, everyone gets progressively more freaked out, but no one wants to talk about it"

There's certainly a lot of truth in what Brayden thinks about graduation and how we've been

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discussing it, or maybe *not* discussing it. For many of us, this is the biggest change we've had to go through in our short lives, and everyone is taking it in differently. Often, we may find it hard to even talk about it with friends or family, because it's hard to think about a future where you don't see them everyday. This is the bittersweetness of growing up, but it's comforting to know that the people who really love you will never leave you, even if you may not see them everyday, or only once every few years. Your family and your closest friends will always be with you.

So, this is a big time for us seniors, and many of you probably feel a strange mix of excitement, confusion, uncertainty, and a weird happiness about the whole thing. It's like nothing we've ever been through before, so don't be afraid to do some reflection, some planning for the future, and also have some fun - enjoy the whole thing; it only happens once.

-Ryan McTarnaghan and Thatcher Deyoe



Letter From The Editors

Co-Editors in Chief: Lily Stephens & Jenna Wilkinson

We would like to thank everyone for another year of the Pawprint! We hope you enjoy this edition and we look forward to continuing to lead the Pawprint team next year.

Good luck to all during finals week, summer's almost here!

And congrats to the class of 2019!!

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The Pawprint Staff

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Graduation

SENIORS

What does the Class of 2019 have planned for after they graduate? This section of the newspaper is dedicated to our Seniors, so read to find out what they will be up to! Please Note: Only the seniors who submitted responses to the Google Form have been included in this section.

Name	Where to?	Major/Job?
Rachael Adler	Marist College	Biology/biomedical sciences
Haley Barber	Springfield College	Health sciences
Christian Beber	SUNY Cortland	Sports Management
Gabe Bermudez-Ellis	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	Business
Evie Bombard	UAlbany	Political Science
Elisabeth Brahm	Johnson and Wales	Forensic Psychology

Name	Where to?	Major/Job?
Stephen Burl	Work force	Maybe's Moving Co.
Lydia Chittenden	SUNY Cobleskill	Animal Science
Nodias DiTonno	Siena and Albany Law School 4+3 program	Political science
Evan Fink	University of Pittsburgh	Doctor of Pharmacy
Ryan Goettinger	Clarkson University	Computer Engineering
Tyler Hanrahan	Bentley University	Accounting
Liam Hardaker	Rochester Institute of Technology	Chemical Engineering
Mariella Hirschhoff	University at Buffalo	Architecture
Jacob Hoffman	University of Buffalo	Business administration
Alysa Houghtaling	The College of Saint Rose	Early Childhood Education and Special Ed.
Grace Hudgins	SUNY Oneonta	Education
Kendall Jenkins	Augsburg College	Biopsychology
Ashley Kolb	The Sage Colleges	Nursing
Evan Kulpa	Siena College	Business
Caroline Lafferty	Cornell University	Animal Science

Name	Where to?	Major/Job?
Nate Mannion	The Sage Colleges	Nursing
Rhonda McBride	College, possibly military	Undecided
Ryan McTarnaghan	Ithaca College	Cinema and Photography
James Miller	Siena College	Finance
Marybeth Owen	The Sage Colleges	Health Sciences/Physical Therapy
Nick Perez-Schrader	SUNY Purchase	Undecided, focus on film
Hunter Pomykaj	HVCC	Veterinary Medicine
Quinn Pratico	Utica College	Cybersecurity
Lenah Reid	HVCC	Dental Hygienist
Brayden Renslow	Rochester Institute of Technology	Computing Security
Wayne Scott	UAlbany	Chemistry
Kenny Shaw	Military	Air Force
Lexi Smith	HVCC	Biotechnology
Tara Smith	Utica College	Biology/Animal behavior
Olivia Sterantino	Lafayette College	Undecided

Name	Where to?	Major/Job?
Ryan Stuto	SUNY Oneonta	Sociological Criminology
Trent Svingala	Columbia University	Finance
Tim Wochinger	SUNY Purchase	Biology

Congratulations Class of 2019!



Memories

Please Note: Only the seniors who submitted responses to the Google Form have been included in this section.

	Favorite High School Memory	Favorite K-8 Memory
Rachael Adler	Tennis	Morning programs
Haley Barber	Drama club	Liam Danaher getting bananas flung in his mouth by a catapult on a field trip
Christian Beber	Winning sectionals in baseball and soccer	Philadelphia trip
Gabe Bermudez-Ellis	Senior prom	Morning programs
Evie Bombard	Nodiasus coming back to Maple Hill. I couldn't have done it without her	Morning program; it was always so fun and something to look forward to
Elisabeth Brahm	Mr. Carvel and his fudge	Field Day
Stephen Burl	Getting closer to and making new friends	8th grade Philadelphia trip
Lydia Chittenden	Spirit Week, the All Night Parties, and prom	Field day and the Philadelphia trip
Nodiasus DiTonno	The Stoneman Douglas Memorial Service	The bus
Evan Fink	Color Wars	Morning program
Ryan Goettinger	Science Olympiad 2019	Philadelphia trip
Tyler Hanrahan	Watching Osmosis James with Mr. Smith	Field Day

	Favorite High School Memory	Favorite K-8 Memory
Liam Hardaker	The senior trip	Field day and the parachute
Mariella Hirschhoff	My senior soccer season and being part of the Matchmaker	In second grade there was a gas leak in the modular village. It smelt bad, so Mrs. Williams took out her perfume and started spraying it because everyone thought that Colby farted
Jacob Hoffman	Graduation	Field day
Alysa Houghtaling	Both proms	Philadelphia trip
Grace Hudgins	Prom	Philadelphia trip
Kendall Jenkins	Prom	Field day
Ashley Kolb	Senior year Spirit Week	Philadelphia trip
Evan Kulpa	Participating in states tournaments in soccer and track	Philadelphia trip
Caroline Lafferty	Pep rallies	Philadelphia trip
Nate Mannion	Junior year XC with my friends/winning sectionals and heading to states with my team	Field day, field trips like Mystic, NYC, and Boston
Rhonda McBride	High school ending	Getting in trouble for climbing the glue shelf
Ryan McTarnaghan	Acting in the Matchmaker	Reading Star Wars books on Mr. Reischer's super comfy couch
James Miller	Playing in and winning sectionals with the baseball team will definitely be something I never forget	Any of the many field trips we went on throughout the years, they were always great and a fun time
Marybeth Owen	Yearbooks	Yearbooks
Nick Perez-Schrader	Winning soccer sectionals 3 times in a row	Philadelphia trip

	Favorite High School Memory	Favorite K-8 Memory
Hunter Pomykaj	Participating in Drama Club and acting in the Matchmaker and the Crucible	The original Morning Program when your parents could sit in the balcony seats and sing different songs
Quinn Pratico	All Night Party 2017	Philadelphia trip
Lenah Reid	Prom	Philadelphia trip
Brayden Renslow	A tie between the opportunities to lead the XC team and the cast of the Cabaret to huge success	Making animal puppets dance for a song during Shrek Jr
Wayne Scott	Rehearsing and performing the Crucible	Philadelphia trip
Kenny Shaw	Both proms	Philadelphia trip
Lexi Smith	My favorite high school memory is my senior track season because the team was one of the closest and most fun teams I have gotten to be a part of. It was also one of the most successful and positive track seasons I've had.	My favorite memory is from kindergarten when me and Jacob Hoffman would stay inside from recess just so we could write a story or make a book. This is where my love for writing started.
Tara Smith	Last year when Mr. Frese ate a handful of Tim's jellybeans unaware they were a part of the bean boozled game and not knowing there were nasty flavors and spitting them out of the second story window and then brushing his teeth all during class.	In 3rd grade when Ms.Nunziato elbowed Lizzy Brahm in the head on accident.
Olivia Sterantino	Every moment spent with my friends, even Brayden	Every snow day we ever had
Ryan Stuto	Montreal International Club Trip	Winning the Golden Shoe for Field Day
Trent Svingala	Pep rallies	Wasn't here
Tim Wochinger	Playing soccer for the Boys Varsity team and continuing on to win 3 sectional titles	Playing with all my friends after school at Castleton Kids

Senior Wills

Rachael Adler	I, Rachael Adler, leave my tennis skills to those who don't believe they are good enough to play a varsity sport!
Haley Barber	I, Haley Barber, leave senioritis to the juniors. Good luck next year!
Christian Beber	I, Christian Beber, leave my gym class to floater to Sean Lafalce
Gabe Bermudez-Ellis	I, Gabe Bermudez-Ellis, leave my incredible work ethic and undying love for education to every current and future student of Maple Hill
Evie Bombard	I, Evie Bombard, leave my voice and activism to Meadow Bombard. Keep fighting for what is right, good luck on this journey!
Elisabeth Brahm	I, Elisabeth Brahm, leave my senioritis to Paige Bleau and my humor to Emily Smith. I leave my energy and leadership to Statia Walker. I will leave my tardies/absences to Kaelyn Kulpa. I will leave my nap spots to Ryleigh Olsen.
Stephen Burl	I, Stephen Burl, leave my confidence in the younger students and their journey through high school
Lydia Chittenden	I, Lydia Chittenden, leave my basketball uniform to Jenna Hoffman
Nodias DiTonno	I, Nodias DiTonno, leave my constant tardiness to my brother, Jaden DiTonno
Evan Fink	I, Evan Fink, leave GSA to Derek Rossetti and Emily Smith
Ryan Goettinger	I, Ryan Goettinger, leave my two laws of physics to whoever can figure those out

Senior Wills

Tyler Hanrahan	I, Tyler Hanrahan, leave the tuba section to Elliot Charlebois and asking annoying questions to whoever wants it
Liam Hardaker	I, Liam Hardaker, leave my moderately average track skills to Aidan Percey
Mariella Hirschhoff	I, Mariella Hirschhoff, leave the first chair of the clarinet section and my oboe skills to Luc Charlebois, my concussion headband to Kaelyn Kulpa, my game day Snapchats and man cheer to Emma Pearsall, and the little motivation I have left to Sidney Tuttle to finish out her senior
Jacob Hoffman	I, Jacob Hoffman, leave my senioritis to everyone else
Alysa Houghtaling	I, Alysa Houghtaling, leave the softball pants with the holes in the pockets to Statia Walker, as she's now a leader for our team. I leave my parking spot to Claudia, as she deserves it. I leave all my late passes to Kaelyn Kulpa so she can get all her morning Dunkin runs in. Lastly, I leave everything else I had in high school to my sissy, Bubba or Gracie Houghtaling, as she is now the only Houghtaling left in Maple Hill
Grace Hudgins	I, Grace Hudgins, leave my love and appreciation for Elvira Horbata, because without her I would not have gotten through high school.
Kendall Jenkins	I, Kendall Jenkins, leave this town behind
Ashley Kolb	I, Ashley Kolb, leave senioritis to the incoming seniors
Evan Kulpa	I, Evan Kulpa, leave my left over lunch account money to Kaelyn Kulpa
Caroline Lafferty	I, Caroline Lafferty, leave my waffle making skills to Mr. Frese and I leave my passion for animals to Claudia Eckel and Hannah Brewer
Nate Mannion	I, Nate Mannion, leave the job of helping get the basketball team to the Glens Falls Civic Center to Rian Jewett, Blake Decker, Logan McGarvey, Jack Utter, and Dom Hirschhoff

Senior Wills

Rhonda McBride	I, Rhonda McBride, leave my stupidity and efficient procrastination to Haiden Zinzow
Ryan McTarnaghan	I, Ryan McTarnaghan, leave the secret key to Jack Sherwood
James Miller	I, James Miller, leave my high school experiences to my younger siblings, so they have a path to fall back on when they need guidance
Marybeth Owen	I, Marybeth Owen, leave the tennis court to the next tennis players who will shine
Nick Perez-Schrader	I, Nick Perez-Schrader, leave my pain and misery to anyone who is still in school. You won't need it but I don't want it anymore
Hunter Pomykaj	I, Hunter Pomykaj, leave my uncanny ability to name most, if not all songs that come on during our high school dances to Jack Pomykaj. He still has three more years of these songs, so I hope you'll learn them too amigo. Best of luck and have fun. Make it last Jackboy
Quinn Pratico	I, Quinn Pratico, leave my parking spot to...whoever wants it
Lenah Reid	I, Lenah Reid, leave strength to everyone trying to come to school on time
Brayden Renslow	I, Brayden Renslow, leave my role on the Cross Country team to Noah Albanese, a box of peppers to Tari Civerolo and Jenna Wilkinson, and most importantly, I leave the name "Linda" for Samantha Siciliano to carry throughout her life.

Senior Wills

Wayne Scott	I, Wayne Scott, leave several broken pencils, my view on Italian dippers, and my ability to do a passable dropkick to Linn Rosenberger. I leave several stuck sneezes, my lost golden pencil, my Photoshop license, and my index finger to Nate Taylor. I leave Makaila Maier my resistance to stress, and I leave my good judgement (what's left of it, at least) to Isabelle Ridgeway
Kenny Shaw	I, Kenny Shaw, leave lots of love and care to Tommy and Kiera Webb
Lexi Smith	I, Lexi Smith, leave my attitude, confidence, and horrible parking jobs to my sister Sydney. Remember you always need a little sass to help you get by! I also leave my 200 hurdle record to April Jacobs to be broken. Keep killing it in hurdles girl, your future is bright!
Tara Smith	I, Tara Smith, leave my bad park jobs to Statia Walker, my positive attitude to Jenna Hoffman, center field to Makaila Maier, and my patience to the next incoming senior who thinks senior year will take forever
Olivia Sterantino	I, Olivia Sterantino, pass on my French horn parts and all of Chris Bulan's "life advice" to Tari Civerolo (sorry)
Ryan Stuto	I, Ryan Stuto, leave my parking skills to Luc Charlebois
Trent Svingala	I, Trent Svingala, leave the eggnog vending machine to Brandon Selmer, "nog" as the team calls him
Tim Wochinger	I, Tim Wochinger, leave the Maple Hill soccer future to the Class of 2020 seniors. Make us proud next senior season!

A vibrant street scene in Havana, Cuba, featuring colorful buildings and classic cars. The street is lined with multi-story buildings in various colors like red, green, blue, and yellow. Several classic cars are parked along the side of the road, including a prominent blue car in the foreground. The scene is captured during the day, with a slightly overcast sky.

Student Voices

85 Random Things to Do Over the Summer

by *The Pawprint* team

- have a pj movie day
- go camping
- ride a ferris wheel
- go shopping
- pick up a new hobby
- go to a drive - in movie theater
- have a car wash party
- random act of kindness
- watch fireworks
- blow bubbles
- collect seashells
- go to an amusement park
- get a job
- perform for a crowd
- go to a paint and sip
- write your own book
- create a youtube channel
- have a balloon party
- don't eat a tide pod
- go to a theatre and say the word "Macbeth" before a performance
- have a water balloon fight
- go on a bike ride
- have a deep conversation with your fbi man
- go bungee jumping
- climb a mountain
- picnic at a park
- family game night
- have a slumber party
- meet someone new
- go to the beach
- stay up all night
- exercise
- visit a relative
- travel
- go bowling
- make a journal
- go paintballing
- play laser tag
- go on a date
- visit a zoo
- go thrift shopping
- do the required summer assignments
- look both ways before crossing the street
- go to a water park
- meet a celebrity
- have a backyard barbeque
- paint a picture
- go swimming
- learn to surf
- take a boat ride
- go to walmart and start yodeling
- try a new food
- go on a road trip
- go fishing
- grab a pair of tap shoes and go singin' in the rain
- have your first kiss
- join a book group
- get a new piercing
- have a Disney movie marathon
- go on a walk
- go to a festival
- visit a lake
- sleep in late
- listen to a podcast
- eat as much as you can
- ride a horse
- see a car race
- attend a concert
- train for cross country season
- go strawberry picking
- go to an aquarium
- tie dye a shirt
- go mini golfing
- make homemade pizza
- go people watching
- find shapes in the clouds
- spend time with family
- watch the sunset
- watch the sunrise
- make a short film
- pretend to have your own cooking show
- make up your own dance
- learn a new language (or make one up, it doesn't really matter that much)
- sneak out
- save a life
- read books

Goodnight: by Storm Stockdale

The sun flooded the atmosphere with a soothing, happy glow one chilly afternoon in early October. Crisp leaves swayed in the air as they fell, settling in various piles about the ground.

A young woman and her husband stood quietly in the kitchen of their newly purchased home, having gotten married only a year prior. All was quiet besides the soft wind and rustling outside. They stood for a moment, admiring just a fraction of all they had worked so hard for. The young woman turned to her husband, still quiet until his gaze met hers. He blinked at her expectantly. “A house is not a home without furry friends.” she said. However, this was no ordinary statement – she made it with purpose, and he knew it. He said nothing, only smiled and took her by the hand, leading her out their front door.

It wasn't long before they found themselves parked outside the nearby animal shelter. She hopped out of the car, first one out, and ran over to the other side. He was answering a text message, but she was hardly concerned with that. Now it was her leading him by the hand – “Come on, I wanna see all the puppies and kittens and cats and dogs!” she shouted excitedly as she dragged him towards the entrance, the sound of her sandals slapping against the ground filled the air as she ran and her giggles of excitement echoing through the parking lot. He smiled to himself about her child-like enthusiasm, to him it was precious, as well as priceless. A chorus of barks followed as they walked in, but as far as he knew, they had come here for a cat.

She stood in a room full of them, watching them circle their feet, eager for attention. She tried to pet as many as she could as they passed her, but one in particular caught her eye – a grey and white cat with extra toes. He did not circle her, he just perched happily atop her feet, purring. She wasn't sure why, but something told her she should choose no other cat, so she picked him up and brought him over to her husband and without a word, thrust the cat into his arms. He looked alarmed, as if he'd been handed a baby that wasn't his. She laughed.

“You like this one?” he questioned.

“Yes.” she replied, with a short nod as she said it.

He examined the cat.

“I must say, he is very cute.” he remarked as he gently held the cat's head in place by its jaw, just to get a good look at his face. The cat kept trying to escape his grasp. He eventually succeeded, and sneezed on his captor.

“Ah, lovely. Wonderful choice, darling.” She sensed his sarcasm, but it was playful.

“You bet!” She told him and headed in the direction of the dogs.

“I thought we only came here for a cat?” her husband mentioned, holding out the one in question to make a point.

“You expect me to leave here without even *looking* at the dogs?” she asked, raising an eyebrow as if to point out his foolishness in thinking she would.

He sighed, but said nothing.

She had been wandering down aisles of cages, but she suddenly stopped in her tracks.

He didn't see what she was looking at quite yet, all he could see that her eyes were suddenly flooded with with love.

Finally seeing what she was seeing, he was not surprised in the slightest – despite society’s view, Birdy always had a soft spot for pit bulls.

“You don’t even look at *me* with that much love!” he joked with her. She turned her head, smiling, with that ‘*oh, come on*’ look on her face, still petting the dog.

“You’re just jealous I’ll be spending more time with them than you,” she retorted, only half joking. “*Them?*” he echoed. “As in, the cat *and* the dog? We’re getting a cat *and a dog?*” he asked, pretty sure he already knew the answer. She shot him a look, *the look*, that said it all without having said a word. A staff member had been standing nearby while Birdy took a moment to meet the dog. She turned to her and asked “Could you excuse us a moment, please?” She simply nodded and turned on her heel to tend to other animals. Birdy crossed her arms and leaned her hip on a nearby wall, facing her husband.

“I want to take the dog home today, but realistically, we have to finish moving in before we’re ready for him to come home. The cat I can handle, the dog I cannot. Dogs are more energetic and I can’t have him in the way and up my butt while I’m trying to move large and potentially dangerous furniture. God forbid I drop it on somebody, *just my luck..*” she said, already sounding somewhat defeated, biting her nails and staring down at the floor.

He almost laughed, and wasn’t sure what to say, just watched her for a moment.

“Well, can they hold him for us temporarily? Put something on his cage that says he’s been claimed?” She held up one finger as if to say ‘hold on’ or ‘one minute’ and went off to ask.

“She said that they’ll hold him for two weeks, but after that the hold becomes void and he’s available for adoption to whoever else is interested,” she paused – “so we essentially have two weeks to get it together and if we don’t by then, we’re S-O-L.”

He nodded, “Got it.”

Landon and Birdy returned home, cat in tow. Birdy brought the carrier into the living room, setting it down and sitting beside it. She opened it exclaiming excitedly “Welcome home, little one, be free!” Landon came up behind her, and she turned her head to look at him, he kissed her quickly and then said “I’m about to make grilled cheese, do you want one?”

“I’m okay, but thank you, love,” and turned her attention back to the cat carrier. He slunk out, looking shy and nervous. Maybe it was best not to put him on the spot, so she got up and headed for the kitchen, sitting on top of the table, there were no chairs yet. She sat there for a moment before Landon turned his head to look at her.

“Can I help you?”

“I just came in here to talk to you.”

“About?”

“Anything!”

“Nah, you just came in here to hijack some of my food even though you said you didn’t want any.” he accused, the pan sizzling in the background.

“Did not!” she shot back, playfully pouting at him.

“Did too!” he said, grabbing a slice of bread from the bag and tossing it at her.

“Hey, that was expensive bread!” She told him, slightly annoyed.

“It was only one slice and it didn’t even hit the floor!” he replied, pointing to her thigh.

“I don’t care, gluten-free bread is expensive, and when you’re the one that does the grocery

shopping, only then can you come talk to me about *'only once slice,'* mmkay?!"

"Are we seriously going argue about bread right now?" he asked, half smiling and raising an eyebrow.

She hopped off the table and stood straight, hands on her hips, looking like she was ready to win.

"Yes, let's argue about bread!" she pressed, trying to act serious, but he could tell she was holding back laughter.

He laughed for her, shaking his head.

"You're ridiculous."

"No, *you're ridiculous!*"

He paused for a moment, smirking.

"Oh yes I am. I mean, I married *you* after all.

Her mouth dropped open a little, swatting at him playfully.

"Okay, rude!"

A suddenly rustling noise shifted their attention, Birdy having seen a tail and the end of a bag of bread rush around the corner into the dining room. She made eye contact with her husband

"Did he just - ...?"

and then peered around the corner only to make eye contact with someone else - the cat, looking guilty, a slice of bread dangling from his from his mouth. A second later, Landon was peeking around the corner too, both intensely watching the cat.

He broke the momentary silence.

"We should name him 'Bread.'

Birdy paused, considering it.

She turned to look at him. "We should name him Rye, it sounds more interesting."

And so Rye he became.

Birdy loved her pets with all her heart, she was so incredibly invested in them. Landon came home one evening to find her seated in centre of the living room, cat wand in one hand, and a rope-like dog toy in the other, playing with both pets and looking about as happy as she was the day they got married.

Rye liked to sleep on the arm of their couch, and every night before going upstairs for bed, she'd kiss the top of his head and whisper "Goodnight," very softly to him.

Once Waffle came home, their pit bull, (they had chosen to stick with the bread theme, and ironically, the colour of his fur was similar to that of a waffle) it was the same. He liked to sleep on the rug at the bottom of the stairs, so she always did her round, Rye first, Waffle second, and when she crawled into bed, she kissed Landon and whispered goodnight to him too.

In a few years time, Birdy found herself stepping over and around children's toys, happy shrieks and giggles echoing throughout the house as her four year old son, Lucius, and two year old daughter, Audelia, played together. She wasn't the same woman she was before, but because she loved her family, she learned to be okay with that. Her hair was often messy and up in a bun, dark circles seemed to be tattooed under her eyes. Her nails were always chipped and she felt she practically lived in pyjamas unless she went out with the kids.

.... And course, she *lived* on coffee.

Regardless of how much had changed though, she still always made time to say goodnight to everyone. Sometimes when she said goodnight to her pets, she'd sit with them for a while and vent about everything going on in her life. She knew they couldn't understand, but it didn't matter. They'd always been there for her.

And so it went -

"Goodnight."

Rye, Waffle, Lucius and Audelia, then Landon, even if they were all asleep. She was often last to bed.

Over the years, the house shifted and changed, the children grew, Mom and Dad grew older, but some things always seemed to stay the same. Rye and Waffle were always there.

In a way, things were back to the way they used to be. It was just Birdy, Landon and the pets again. The chicks had left the nest for college, and all seemed too quiet. It was then, that she realised how old they'd all gotten. Rye's bones were showing signs of age, Waffle didn't play much anymore, the kids were gone, Landon seemed burnt out on work and he too earned the tattoos of exhaustion. When she looked in the mirror she hardly recognised herself. But again, some things never change. "Goodnight." She whispered to each of her pets before tiptoeing up the steps and crawling into to bed beside her already snoring husband.

About a year had passed, and it was now time to accept that her little chicks were now fully grown birds who started building their own nests. No children yet, but they were both living on their own, and today seemed like the very worst day. Not only had a year passed, but Waffle did too. Bedtime rolled around, and so did sadness in the hollow of her chest. She kissed Rye goodnight as he slept on the arm of the couch as always, but when she got to the bottom of the stairs, she just sat down on that little rug and cried. She heard a creak above and looked up, tears blurring her vision. Landon looked down at her, his eyes full of sympathy. He was sad too, but the pets have never been his the same way they are and were hers.

"Come on, love," he said, as all he could do was pick her up and carry her to bed, holding her as she cried herself to sleep.

In the following years, her little birds built more permanent nests and new eggs hatched. She "learned" but never quite learned how to live without them and Waffle. She was all about her family, and seemed eternally paralysed by Empty Nest Syndrome. However, now she had grandchildren, and to her that was a beautiful thing. They loved to visit, staying in Lucius and Audelia's old rooms. Whenever they visited, they became part of her nightly routine, just as she had done with her own children. They also loved Rye, and she was now faced with the challenge of next time they visit, telling them that his time had come, and he's now with Waffle.

She felt lost, and unsure how to cope with the fact that the foundation of her family had gone to the grave. Before her human children, they were her children, her everything. Pets aren't "just an animal," they become part of you, part of your home, part of your family, and she never gave much thought to the day she'd have to say goodbye.

If only it was just another goodnight.

Again, it was like it was back to the beginning. The very beginning. When it was just the two of them. The only difference is, the silence was normal back then.

She was entirely different now. Her hair was white and time seemed to drag itself around the clock only to settle itself into her face. She remembered the time she looked in the mirror and hardly recognise herself, she could only laugh at that now.

The only thing that made sense was the house. It showed its age as her and Landon did. Except instead of a home, it began to feel like a cemetery.

Her unhappiness lingered throughout their life without everyone else and she could swear it was what made him sick.

Time only ever seemed too quick for her, and at this point, she was too frail to keep up. It seemed that no one else could ever escape it, and it came to take him too.

It made her want to smash every clock she saw, or even better, turn them back a few decades. Her lonely could never defeat the silence, and the only thing that ever did was the rattle on the house's old bones as she climbed the steps to bed at night. Her house was empty, and so was the ever-growing hollow in her heart.

"Goodnight." She whispered to no one in particular, a tear rolling down her cheek.

Maybe to the ghosts of everyone she ever loved.

The Pawprint



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