

Hello/Goodbye

“Hey, how’ve you been?”

“Great, you?”

“All right...I haven’t seen you all these years, how was school?”

“You don’t even know”

“I probably don’t”

This hasn’t been the first time. I used to sleep in your basement for Christ’s sake. We’ve stayed the same all these years and yet I can feel this gap. Like Hemingway’s white elephant, it was wedged between you and me and whatever conversation that just fizzed out. How many birthdays just our best friends talking and gaming? Ridiculous, two years and that’s all it took.

Here I am, a proud AP student, the crème de la crème of high school academics sitting awkwardly and flabbergasted for words that just won’t flow. It was supposed to be simply another party, right? The cliché hellos, pleasantries, junk food all laid out on the dinner table, basting in the sun from the bay window. All behind that familiar big screen in that ever so comfortable living room. But here I am, a stranger now. I put my lousy envelope on the corner. For lack of a better idea, I shoved a 20 in it and wrote some gibberish about graduation and surviving this and that. More faces drifted in, personalities I don’t know but names I can’t forget. With obscure bands playing from the iPod and enthusiastic recants of inside exploits, here I am, just sitting, holding my drink, staring blankly into the wall across the room. Conversation buzzes like white noise sloshing from mouth to ear.

As I picked at the emptying bowl of chips on the table, I thought to myself, *What am I doing here?* and then realized I was in a stranger’s house and in that stranger’s slice of life. Years of friendship spirited away like a kite in the wind and I am holding on to the last piece of string.

“Hey, well, I gotta go.”

“Oh, ok.”

“It was nice seeing you again, thanks for having me over, and happy birthday man.”

“Yea, thanks, see ya.”

“Yea, see ya.”

And I let go.