

Honorable Mention, Prose, Grades 10-12

The Things I Never Finished--Jonathan Cohen

My room is a collection, a collage, a cacophony of unfinished business. My life is a series of ideas that seem to dwindle in value the more effort I put into them. Every night, in the minutes before I sleep, my eyes dart around the room. I scan the frames that hang on the wall. I stare into the objects scattered all over the floor. I stare at the things I never finished.

There's a picture I took of a tree that lives on the wall opposite my bed. It is a really nice picture, it was too good a picture. I remember taking the picture and being in awe of what I had just created. I bought a fancy camera soon after and spent a week hunting for nice shots. Day one found me clicking away furiously. Any angle of the world that looked interesting in the slightest was documented. None, however, were as beautiful as the tree.

Over the course of the week I slowly used the camera less and less. Eventually the camera ended up in a box, and it has not been taken out since.

Underneath the tree on the ground sits a tennis racket. I watched Wimbledon once. Only once. A bit of research later, I was down at a tennis court, thinking I was about to become the next Djokovic. My forehand was quite good, my backhand was quite terrible. My serve would have made Novak cry. I headed home and left the racket leaning against the floor, thinking I would try again tomorrow. It wasn't picked up again. Instead it had slipped at some point and now lays flat on the hardwood floor.

In the corner is my most recent adventure. The guitar debacle wasn't too long ago, so it hasn't slipped yet. It still leans against the wall, waiting to be strummed. I had listened one quiet afternoon to Slash shredding a Les Paul to bits. It sounded incredible, the noise overwhelming the ears, traveling right through the canal to tickle my brain. My new electric guitar made the same noises, but I could never recreate what Slash made. I spent a while going over notes, working on scales, figuring out how the hell one does a barre chord. At one point I was able to do a very mediocre rendition of "Where Is My Mind." But eventually, as always, every day would see me pick up the guitar less and less, until I put it down for what was probably the last time.

I tour my past shortcomings every night. It's a somber walk through a harsh memory lane, until I drift off to sleep. I fall asleep wondering when I'll find my next hobby and whether or not it will last. Sometimes I think about how silly I've been. If I had any sense, I'd stop taking up these stunts. But I always end up falling asleep, hoping I'll discover something new in the morning. I keep spending my days searching for new ventures, on the off chance I'll find something I'm destined to finish.

Jonathan Cohen is in 11th grade at St. Louis Park High School. He's interested in film, photography, writing, video games, baseball, and trivia. He has won prizes in photography and/or prose each year for the last five years.