



Figs

Galen May, 2017



Figs

Throughout my life who I want to be has remained a mystery. When I was younger I went through clear phases of desires. I made my own wallpaper out of magazine cut outs during the phase of wanting to be a fashion designer. I left only the glue residue on the walls when I tore this down and replaced it with camouflage and trucks. I had charcoal dusted walls when I sat at the desk dedicating hours to AP art and painting myself in charcoal in the process. Today I have magazine cutouts on the wall, a shelf dedicated to the army and trucks, a drafting table set up beneath a wall-sized painting of a mountainscape, and stacks of books waiting to be read: waiting to be annotated to the point of not being able to read them anymore. To be loved to the point of falling apart, just like how I was shown love was supposed to be. Through the process of this destructive love of reading, I learned, the future is like a fig tree. "I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet.... I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose," Sylvia Plath explains in *The Bell Jar*. My ideas of my future had over-ripened and now sat stagnant in the alcoves of my room. Their smell still affects me and their presence is well known, but I am left in that fig tree waiting to see the fruit that I am willing to reach for. In my recent life, I have taken a bite out of one fig. I waited until it was perfectly ripened, and then I grabbed it. This was the fig of taking a gap year.

One thing no one tells you about making a choice about your future is that just because you are sure about it, does not mean everyone will be. I made the decision of a gap year before

junior year of highschool actually began, a fact most people do not know about the story. I sat in my fig tree with the weight of depression and anxiety looming over me. It felt that all figs were just out of reach or not worth the struggle reaching for. At this time, the number of figs were multiplying and taking the form of college names. Then I saw the gap year and there was this feeling. If my mind had been visible, up until this point it was a barren desert with a constant storm overhead, but the rain never reached the ground, never enough to help anything grow. Once I saw that fig though, the rain seemed to serve a purpose and I could feel the ground soaking up this new ability to create life and hope. I felt I could move again and I stood up for the first time in years to grab it. I bit into it experiencing for the first time in my life that flavor that had been hanging over my head for years. I might have had a taste once or twice before, but not like that one bite. I closed my eyes and watched peaceful rainfall in my head tasting that beautiful flavor of hope. It wasn't until I opened my eyes that I realized hope and the beautiful rain inside had come to life on my face in the form of salty tears. I looked up again and saw that the names of colleges were almost ripe, so holding onto my new future, I harvested them hoping that one day I will go back to it, try a bite, and hopefully love it. But I have made a choice to savor the time ahead of me, holding onto my one fig in order to allow myself the time to learn how to grab a ripe opportunity. The time to learn what it's like to see something you want for yourself and to go after it, despite whatever might be holding you back, be that mental or physical.