

# I Won't Be There

I was there.

I was there when it was senior prank day and all the seniors lined the hall and then in all the confusion of hall change a person suddenly yelled "Senior Freeze!" The little punctual freshmen were panicking like crazy to get through, but try as they might, it was hopeless.

I was there.

I was there when it was time to pick out prom dresses. We searched and searched and searched. I couldn't tell you how many stores we went to, even some twice; we went through numerous dressing rooms all packed with other young women trying to find their perfect prom dresses as well. I was there when we found it. The one. I mean the perfect dress. It was beautiful.

I was there.

I was there when the dress finally got its moment. The night it was meant for. It was gorgeous and made me feel happy. The group gathered together at the big floral clock behind the Capitol and the cameras started flashing. Everybody had a picture with somebody and just when you thought it was over a mom came along to take another. We moved to several locations around the Capitol. Poses were made, smiles were tired, and patience was wearing thin. I remember leaving with the shouted words of "make good choices" still lingering in my brain. We left to go eat at a restaurant nearby. Then it was off to a wonderful evening filled with waves of laughter and non-forced smiles. An unforgettable one.

I was there.

I was there when it was Senior Night for softball. The emotions were haywire: parents who set up were anxious and worried about the ceremony and players were preparing themselves to cry. The time was here and it began. There were only two names called that night. I walked out, trying to hold back my tears, My family and I walked through the teammates and coaches standing in a line to home plate. I stopped at the mark, looked on and smiled at the camera. The written words copied into the microphone were making people cry as thanks were given, love was shared, and memories were told, and that's when it happened, they fell, the tears fell. It was time for the coaches and the rest of the players to meet the seniors and give out hugs; the part where even more tears were shed. It was an amazing night and a beautiful occasion.

I was there.

I was there when my family took their seats as the ceremony began. I was there when it was time to walk out, just like it was practiced. I remember seeing so many of them in one row and looking over to a different one and finding some more familiar faces. Long speeches that seemed to never end were made. Finally, the names were called; name after name. Eventually, it was time to take the stage, the moment I'd been waiting for. They announced the full name; with each step came a prayer, one asking not to trip and fall and make an embarrassment. I was there when my family, being the family that they were, screamed and yelled their loudest to cheer. The principal's hand was shook, the "turn and smile" picture was taken, and then the exit down the stairs and back to the seat was completed. After, I saw all of my family reunite as one big group. Each gave a hug with claims of "I'm so proud of you" or "Congratulations" or even "You did it, kid!" Pictures were taken with each of them and Facebook posts were made afterward, marking this monumental experience one I'll never forget. Because it wasn't mine.

None of it was mine.

I was there for my sister's senior year.

None of it will be mine.

-A grieving senior from the class of 2020