

Sherap:

My lungs started burning as I creep up on my 4th mile of my 5 mile run. My teacher makes all of his students run 5 miles before sundown when we meditate, he says it will teach us dedication and mental strength. I wake up at 5:00 AM every morning and I have a 2 hour break before breakfast, in between chores. I run at this a time so I'm not running when the suns out.

I look up at the colors exploding across the sky as dawn creeps over the horizon. I slow into a jog as I reach the street where I used live. I come to a full stop when I reach my old home and bend over to catch my breath. I'm not supposed to see my family but this is the closest I can get to them. My bedroom window is boarded up like it has always been. Part of me is still mad that they sent me away but another part of me wants to forgive them.

I see the front door open and I dart behind a trash bin. My brother walks out with some food scraps and hands them to the neighborhood cat. I stand up and take a step but step back and duck behind the bin again and wait for him to go back inside. I know I should have talked to him but I didn't know what to say. I watch him go back inside and my heart aches. I desperately wanted to talk to him. My brother was the only real friend I had before I was sent away. He was 3 years older so he stayed behind to support the family. I turn my back and run towards the monastery. Tears well up in my eyes and I start to run faster.

When I reach the monastery I go to the well to get water, on the well there is a sign that says **DO NOT DRINK** I take a deep breath and walk away this happens much more than it should. I walk into my room that I share with 79 other boys without saying a word. We are not permitted to speak unless spoken to. Sometimes I forget what my voice sounds like and when I do talk it doesn't sound right, like it didn't come from a small 10 year old boy.

I smile at a boy that I share a bunk with and lay down on my bed. He is the closest thing to friend I have and we hardly ever talk. I bury my head in my blanket and try to stop the tears. Sometimes I wish I could speak to someone without talking about studying and who is going to make the best monk. To just be a normal boy for one day.