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April 7, 2018  
Riverbend CGS site

Ice skating, best friends, and *Love, Simon*. The unlikely trio that turned my senior year around.

I've never had a shortage of friends. Between Chancellor and CGS, there have always been people to hang out with and do projects with and have fun with. I'm grateful to not really *get* loneliness. But this year, everyone I would have considered to be part of the "group" sort of seemed to be drifting apart. I'm still friends with all of them, and they're all still friends with each other, as far as I know. But new friends arrive, old friends fall out, and, in general, people come and go. Thus I found myself more excited than perhaps necessary when a real, proper *group* presented itself to me.

Okay, well, it didn't *present* itself. It didn't fall out of the sky and land in my lap, an assortment of people with bows on their heads. We'd all known each other since at least freshman year, but due to (un)likely revelations and other boring filler stories, we found ourselves converging together only now. Two best friends plus three best friends, two boys plus three girls, two total nerds plus three slightly-less nerds— the five of us fit together perfectly.

The first thing we really did together (properly, each of us with the knowledge that there was an "us") was see the movie *Love, Simon*. To put it simply, it's a typical coming of age high school romance, but with two boys instead of a boy and a girl. We all went to see it, partly to flatter the resident gay friend (hello!), and partly because, hey— stories like that are important.

I had the best time. We *all* had the best time, no "worst of times" in sight. We laughed and cried and stole Sour Patch Kids from one another and spent the rest of the evening together. Sure, I remember it fondly because the movie was great and life-changing and all that (I totally didn't see it three more times), but I couldn't have had the same experience without my best

friends there with me. Honestly, I think the highlight of my otherwise average senior year happened with about three months left.

And the next day we went ice skating! Okay, backtrack. I was already over-the-top excited about this outing, between the recent Winter Olympics, a lifelong love of watching the sport, and an eternal bitterness that the Fredericksburg ice rink was turned into a church. We turned an hour and a half long activity into a day trip, driving to the nearest ice rink in Richmond and spending the morning downtown, before heading off to skate in the afternoon. There's really nothing better than wandering around a new place with your friends, stopping every few feet to take pictures of the street art and each other.

The actual ice skating was fun, too— nearly a month later and I've still got the bruised knees to prove it. We all performed about as we'd expected, with some of us showing off fancy footwork and great spins, and others happy to hobble along the wall in peace. I'm somewhere in between those, competent enough to zoom around the corners, but not enough to, say, have unbruised knees.

Neither of these events was inherently special or notable, except for the fact that I was with the people I felt like I was *supposed* to be with. It sounds silly, but even after three years of knowing these people and having friends otherwise, having a solid, sure *group* feels so comforting. You can know someone, be friends with someone for all those years, and one outing can totally change your perspective of them and bring you even closer together. Sometimes it almost feels like we all missed out on years of this friendship, which is kind of terrible, especially considering we're all going off to college soon. I love my friends, I love my friends that I didn't realize I loved. Did I realize it too late? No, I don't think so. We have this limited

time ahead of us and we're going to do as much as we can with it—like going ice skating and watching *Love, Simon*.