



Grace Isham Wilken

I look over to see Grace smiling sleepily as she draws open the dusty San Rafael curtains. “Good morn(yin)” she says, in her less-than-perfect, high-pitched imitation of Kanye West. Immediately she pops her AirPods in and continues to sit in her bed for another hour. What does she listen to in the morning? Well, just about everything. She pulls out her black leather bound bullet journal covered in doodles of flowers, stars, and multicolored stripes. Music floods the room as a new random album of the week plays while she illustrates its cover; this week is Fleet Foxes. She sits contentedly humming to herself whatever new song she’s learned. “Have you heard this yet?” There’s a constantly expanding and deepening collection of music playing in her

head. Without waiting for a reply, she clicks on her computer and a playlist materializes with everything she wants to share.

Later that day, as I walk into the room with tears dripping down my face, Grace asks, “I’m writing a new song, wanna hear it?” Of course I do. She picks up her ukelele and strums, closing her eyes with a smile on her face, giggling and making a face whenever she messes up a chord but always continuing. “What did you think?” is always the question that follows, knowing the answer will always be “I love it!” Her songs hang in the air after they’re finished, as if she suspends the music in the moment and long after. “Okay, now do you want to talk?” she asks with a warm yet concerned smile while still strumming a soft melody. She comes over and sits on my bed and doesn’t say anything else. She just sits there humming and smiling softly, and somehow I feel better.