

## Adam, by Samantha Abajian

"Who here is from Chatsworth?" That would be me as I opened the door and stared back at the 5'9 fearless freshman in the beanie, dickies, and scuffed docs asking me to vote for him for hall council president. In that moment, I couldn't begin to imagine the impact he would have on my



life, the way his charismatic character would become contagious. The guy who seriously knocked on almost every door in San Raf. I like to make fun of him for it, but yes, he did win, and no his tenacity isn't stopping there.

Adam's a sucker for a perfect view; you can tell from his wide bright smile that balances his permanent, sometimes unintended, pout face. Sure, it's not the aesthetic of Japan where he was deployed with the Marines in 2018, but the tender tones of an infamous shading Santa Barbara sunset were great in a different way. Standing in front of his mostly thrifted closet, his 30 jackets staring back at him, the fuzzy navy blue sweater called his name, just perfect for the cool breeze of the ocean. Yet,

the coldness couldn't ruin the serenity of the waves as they reflected the golden orange glow onto his soft beaming face.

The cold night Adam told me running around San Raf would be fun, I became distracted from the clouds of my heavy breath mixing with the crisp air as he enthralled me in stories of perseverance and his father's 'embarrassing' "marine dad shirt. As he casually talked about his fingers going numb in Japan, I thought about all the times I've complained when the weather drops below 80 degrees. I dramatically cover myself in countless layers, but he'll say, "Sometimes it's nice to be a little cold, it reminds you how fragile you are." I guess he has a way of making every moment warm.

Adam likes to disagree. I can't say it's my favorite trait, but the more I know him the more I begin to value his skepticism. Don't tell him I admitted that. At times he'll hold his tongue, mostly not to hurt my feelings, but I can see the counter argument in his face. If he were a cartoon it would be fuming red about to burst at any minute right before I say "what Adam, what do you want to say?" and he regains his bronzed complexion. I can't even get mad at his mocking tone or I'll end up with an odd look on my face trying not to crack a smile and our more serious conversations could never end without a laugh of reassurance.

"Hey big dog, let's eat." That was the first of many. Sometimes I'll get Buddy or Big Boy, and if we're lucky he'll come up with something new. It's fun to guess before I pick up the phone. The first time I ate with Adam, my new coworker who felt like an old friend stared at his plate and told me we were both thinking of how to appealingly eat the large piece of chicken in front of us, but he was just gonna "go for it." Adam always just "goes for it", like the night he put on his favorite navy blue Olympics sweater just before we headed out in pursuit of no particular destination. I couldn't help but feel a rush of gratitude while the notorious lime scooter carried us as we weaved through stumbling crowds, an air-pod shoved in one ear to listen to his favorite songs and the other open to listen to each other sing them.

I listen to Adam speak of his hardships, imagining every word as the slash of a sword slaying a 3 headed dragon. How does he do it? The way he has stepped on this dragon of adversity as a platform to rise and flourish through times that would have kept many people down. This trend I noticed after countless conversations, but would have never guessed from his brilliant, blissful eyes. Thinking of all the times I have let 'lizards' defeat me, Adam taught me how to use my sword. And I taught him that sometimes it's okay to put it down and take a break.

Apart from many similarities, like our love for cheese and shared hometowns and Egyptian heritage, Adam and I are like night and day. Yet, this was what created such a strong mutual sense of soundness and dependability; surely you couldn't really have one without the other. I've learned this through some of our unbeatable moments over a five star Carrillo meal or our long car rides home. I could listen to Adam's spirited stories or how much he loves his mom all day. Something about the red brake lights highlighting his face in the snug white kia forte. A Marty Robbins song carrying the captivating course of his words up and around the fuzzy dice and straight through me all the way to Chatsworth.