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Closing Ceremony Remarks
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“You will never be completely at home again, because part of your heart always will be elsewhere. That is the price you pay for the richness of loving and knowing people in more than one place.”

- Miriam Adeney

Home is a funny thing because as it deceivingly sounds, it's not a physical place at all. It's a feeling or environment or person that makes you comfortable and alive and familiar. Home is somewhere you can just be.

I have found a home at Marchutz, but I don't mean just at the studio even though I spend more time there than in host family's house. But my Marchutz home is wherever I am with the people I have come to love, learn from, respect and grow together with in the past season of my life.

I am home when John or Alan taps me lightly on the shoulder during a painting class and whispers some highly enlightening thought on art that I don't understand until three weeks later when it hits me during another session.

I was at home when we lived in Monet's gardens for 4 days and had our rooms in the most beautiful houses where Ruhee would wake up before 6 every morning to carefully set the table for our breakfast of nutella and toast.

Home is when our class is traveling on the train, and John makes us stand up and wait with our bags 20 minutes before we reach our stop because he's so frazzled when he thinks about all of us getting off in time.

I was at home when after a seminar discussion on Dante's idea of a work of art as “one simple flame,” we lit a candle and we watched it burn in silence for half an hour and what I saw in that flame I now try to find stroke by stroke in my own paintings.

Home was when we are painting Mt. St. Victoire and it suddenly poured to the point that our paint evolved from oil to watercolor but Alan made us keep going and convinced us we painted masterpieces because of it.

I am at home when we are all on the vomit comet (aka the bus that drives us too quickly on the winding road to the landscape) and even though we are exhausted and frustrated with our paintings from the day, someone hits someone else in the head with their easel and we are no longer just hopeless beginners in painting class but friends who laugh from deep in their cores with each other.



Home is when we sit in front of Le Concert Champere at the Louvre for over 2 hours discussing its color relationships and harmonies I think I am going to burst at the seams with art brain, when John gently asks if he can have a moment more of our attention. He then reads a T.S. Eliot poem that, as I stare at the painting I now have a deep relationship with, the words John reads settle in my soul and sometimes I think I actually leave the ground and ascend.

And lastly I am at home while one of the 14 Marchutz girls is sitting as we paint her portrait and I take a step back only to realize that unlike I could have done 3 months ago, I am not just painting her physical features but can see into her being and capture the qualities and movement and beauty I have come to know and respect about her.

So I hope a month from now, maybe two months, we each take a step back from our lives, wherever they may be, and feel something is not quite right, that maybe somewhere that felt so much like home before doesn't feel the same.

Because then, and only then, will we know a piece of ourselves is still at home in France and we richly loved and knew this place.