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Heaven's Lesson

BY HEAVEN SHIN

It was the day before our Greek gods play for our Western Heritage class and I was in a panic. My friend, Whitney, and I were set to play the role of Helen and Athena but we still hadn't found a dress for her. I scurried across campus, collecting different dresses that could suit her, and finally settled on a purple gown that I thought worked. The dress fit Whitney perfectly and I was excited about transforming her into a glamorous goddess, befitting her natural beauty. When my friends and I complimented her, she just smiled broadly.

Whitney was never one to boast, though she easily could have done so. While I struggled in Western Heritage, I remembered she was never behind in her work; whenever I went to her, she was always ready to help. She amazed me in all she was able to accomplish — 20 credits, double major, orchestra, quartet and more. Yet, she was always easygoing and never appeared stressed. I

would walk down the hall and ask her, "Teach me your way, Whitney," at which she would smile radiantly in the way I had come to expect.

While in Honduras serving as a short-term student missionary last Christmas break, news of Whitney's death stunned me. Just a few days earlier we were together in class and now to hear that she had died in her sleep after hiking in California was incomprehensible. After Whitney's death, I found myself having strange dreams, the last one on the morning of her memorial service at Andrews. In this dream, I saw her at school and told her, "I wish I could've been a better friend to you." She responded in a clear voice, "You have been a good friend, Heaven." I don't think this dream was Whitney actually speaking to me, but it led me



Whitney Watson and Heaven Shin

to think how important it is for us to value our friends.

As I was talking with another of Whitney's good friends, he told me that Whitney talked about the compliments I gave her. It was the last vespers we attended together and, as we were enjoying dinner, I told Whitney, "I think you're becoming even prettier!" It was a short compliment I

genuinely meant, but something that I didn't think she would treasure. I realized how often we don't actually express our praise, gratitude and love. We may think that kind words may not mean much but they may have made that person's day or encouraged them for another week.

Whitney's memorial service was a wonderful tribute to my friend, but as people spoke glowingly about her, I wondered how much of that she knew. I truly miss Whitney, but I have the blessed hope of seeing my friend again when Jesus comes where we can live together forever and I can tell her every day just how beautiful she is.

Heaven Shin is an Andrews University sophomore biology/pre-med honors student from South Korea.