***Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.***

The sails flap loudly, and the boom swings across the boat: “Comin’ about!”

I duck my head quickly and smile, licking my salty lips and feeling the wet spray through my windbreaker. My dad navigates our 19-foot sailboat through the San Juan Islands holding my six-year-old hand. I beg him to hook my lifejacket onto the bow rigging--a place where I face the tumultuous seas unaccompanied. Although my dad prevents me then, voyagers and their daughters know that ‘no’ almost always means ‘later.’ So, when the weather calms, I will mount the bosun's chair and pretend to steer off in pursuit of an uncharted course.

In fact, my family has always steered away from the well-trodden path. I was raised on Vashon Island, the ‘most liberal town in America’--an artsy, hippy utopia featuring a grand total of one bank, one medical center, and one town crazy. Most islanders, including my homeschooled self, ate raccoon stew, live ants, and stinging nettles; and I spent long days exploring the local wilderness and even tent camped across the country for three months. Seeking a new cultural experience, my family uprooted and headed south during my middle school years to Costa Rica, and I was swiftly immersed in Latin American culture. After six months filled with rainforest hikes and paddleboarding expeditions, my family continued the adventure landing in Carmel, California, and although I cherish my time in this foggy corner of the world, I am itching to explore further.

From having repelled down Mexican waterfalls and navigated Venetian channels, my blessed life has produced a constant pull within me to discover Earth’s intricacies and travel its oceans and skies, to feel the bite of the wind and warmth of the sun. I cannot ignore this deep-rooted call driving me to study in Spain next semester and leave behind my identical twin, whom I have known nine months longer than the world itself. I cannot ignore this call compelling me to traverse the darkest city alleys, share stories with foreigners, and one day, sail myself across the Atlantic. I cannot ignore this call to adventure: it is undeniably clear. The world's infinite wonders are before me, and it is impossible to shut my eyes. My daring, curious spirit will never stop leading me on voyages developing new knowledge.

However, this spirit does not pursue exotic locations nor luxurious beaches: I find adventure wherever I am. Whether it was unearthing my school’s need for female empowerment via outreach events, investigating articles penned by international women at a graduate school, or researching child soldier laws in Chad for Model UN, I have been unable to resist. This persistent, unsatiated need to discover will not be quenched by a week in Hawaii or a hike at Yosemite. There is no secret chili sauce, ice-cold glass of water, or magic pill. For some, contentment means being safe and settled; to me, it is just the opposite. My comfort zone is being outside my physical and academic comfort zones. Simply put, at summer camp I did not just admire Maine’s stunning lakes, I glided across them.

Whether trekking through an urban jungle, learning a penniless vagrant’s philosophies, or sipping an exclusive Starbucks in Singapore, venturing the unknown sparks pure joy and fulfillment in my soul. I am an adventurer, plain and simple, the girl who has chased stray dogs through pig pens, spoken Indonesian during village dinners, taught English to Balinese schoolchildren, and will now navigate new intellectual frontiers.

But...I am in luck. Soon embarking upon one of life’s biggest journeys, I no longer need someone managing the lines and charting the course. Each puzzle piece of my past forms the picture of who I am today, and as I take the helm, this fundamental core of my identity will demand me to be brave, leave the protected harbor, and cast off, eyes set on the infinite horizon.