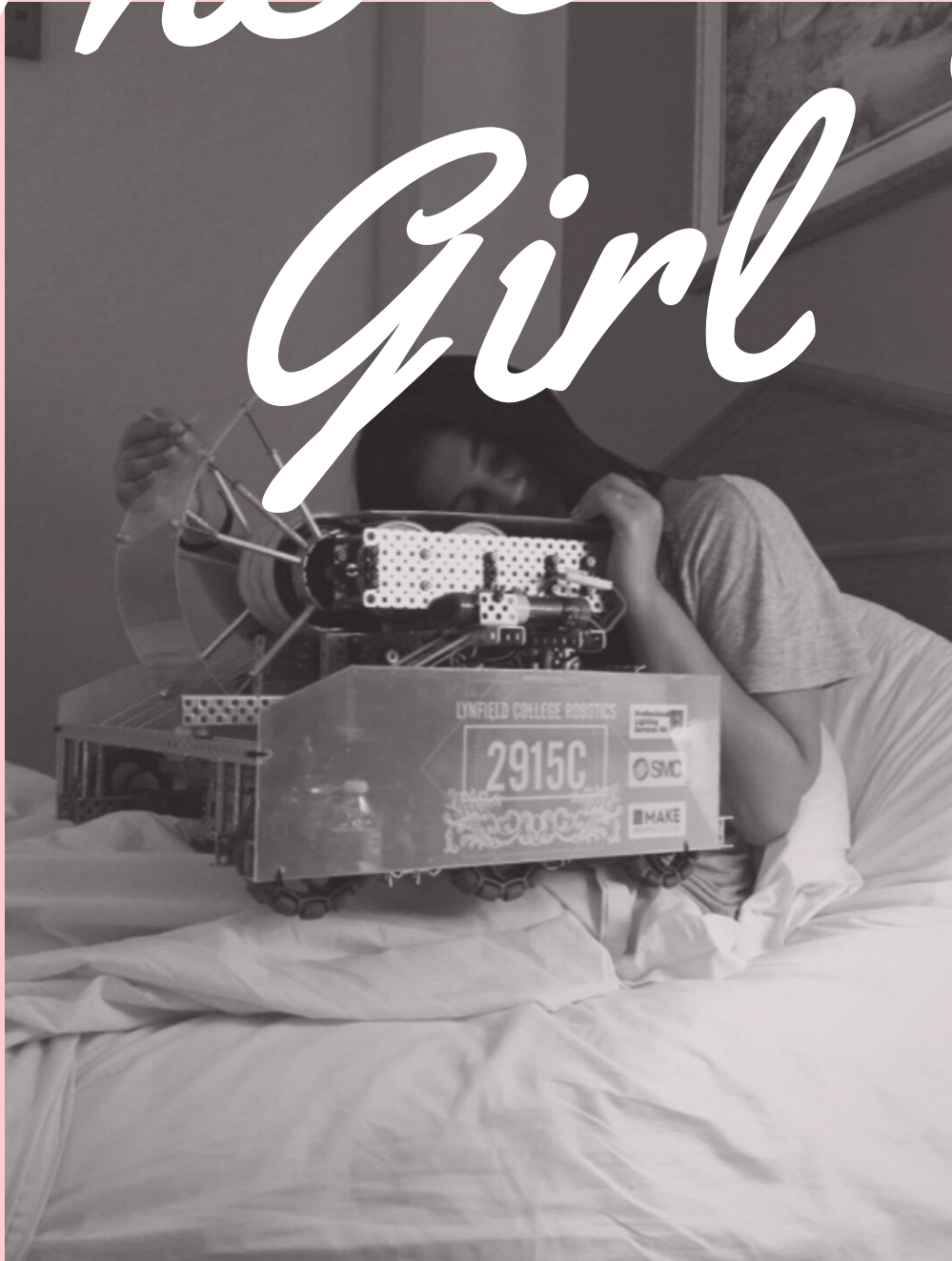


# The Only Girl

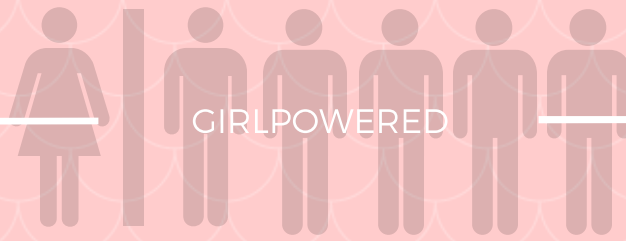
VEX ROBOTICS ONLINE CHALLENGE

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND



**GIRL POWERED**

2915A / LYNFIELD COLLEGE



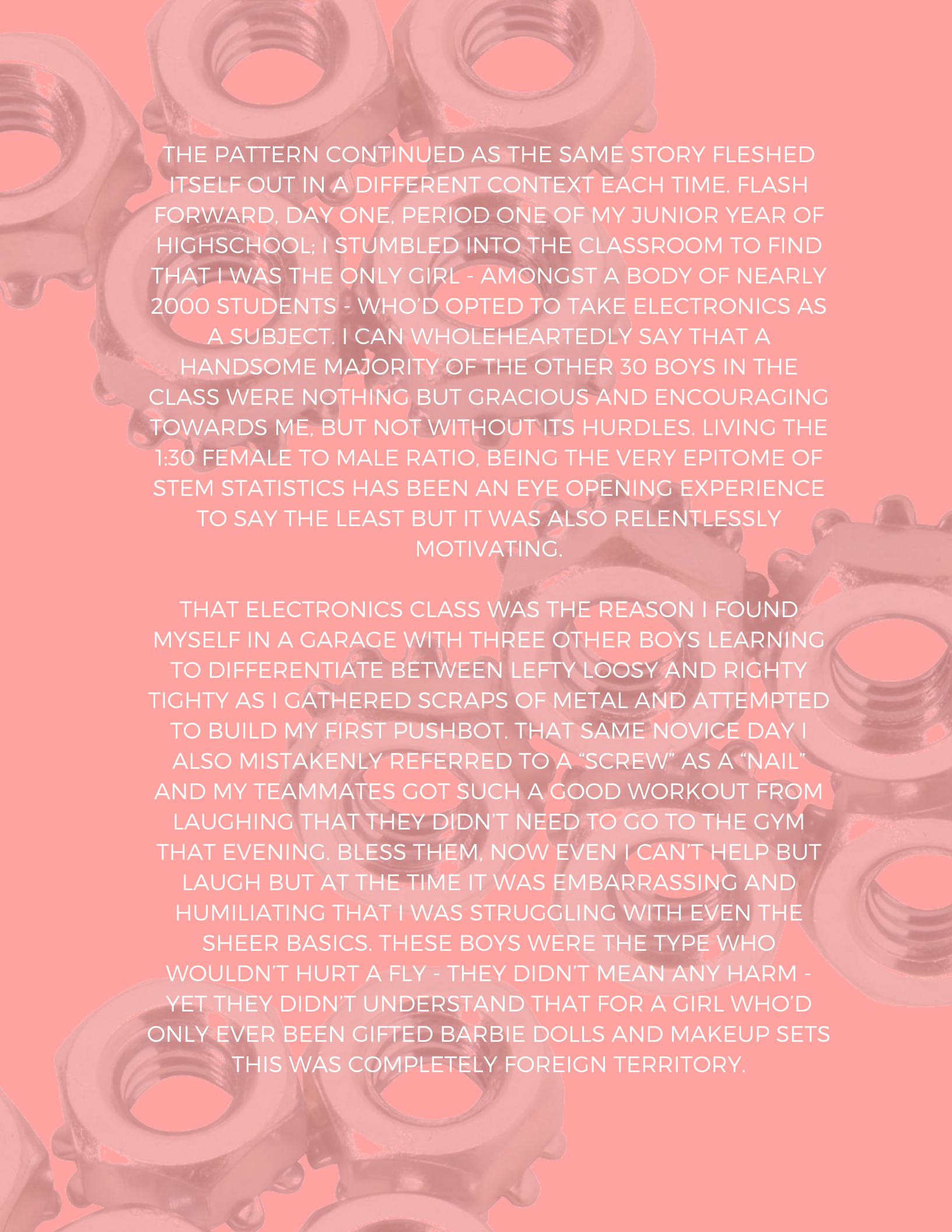
## THE ONLY GIRL

*I recently stumbled upon a quote that said “the greatest pleasure in life is doing something that people tell you that you can’t do” and I realized, that this has been a running mantra throughout my life.*

*I still vividly remember a day all the way back in kindergarten; barely able to walk, barely able to talk - most of us were the size of a footlong subway - and I saw a bunch of boys playing with Lego. I was a shy little thing back then but curiosity killed the cat; I started sitting down, just about to play when one said “oh no! Girls don’t play with Lego!”*

*So, being the mature and unstoppable preschooler that I was, I tattled on them and eventually got to join in on the fun. Life was simple back then, little did I know while stacking towers taller than I: I’d already stumbled upon my passion - and also the main obstacle that would come to lie between myself and my goals time and time again.*

*My robotics journey had started; as the only girl.*



THE PATTERN CONTINUED AS THE SAME STORY FLESHED ITSELF OUT IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT EACH TIME. FLASH FORWARD, DAY ONE, PERIOD ONE OF MY JUNIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL; I STUMBLED INTO THE CLASSROOM TO FIND THAT I WAS THE ONLY GIRL - AMONGST A BODY OF NEARLY 2000 STUDENTS - WHO'D OPTED TO TAKE ELECTRONICS AS A SUBJECT. I CAN WHOLEHEARTEDLY SAY THAT A HANDSOME MAJORITY OF THE OTHER 30 BOYS IN THE CLASS WERE NOTHING BUT GRACIOUS AND ENCOURAGING TOWARDS ME, BUT NOT WITHOUT ITS HURDLES. LIVING THE 1:30 FEMALE TO MALE RATIO, BEING THE VERY EPITOME OF STEM STATISTICS HAS BEEN AN EYE OPENING EXPERIENCE TO SAY THE LEAST BUT IT WAS ALSO RELENTLESSLY MOTIVATING.

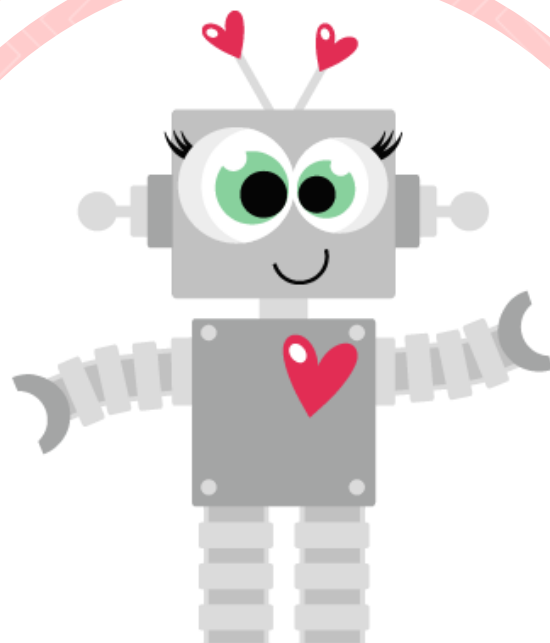
THAT ELECTRONICS CLASS WAS THE REASON I FOUND MYSELF IN A GARAGE WITH THREE OTHER BOYS LEARNING TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN LEFTY LOOSY AND RIGHTY TIGHTY AS I GATHERED SCRAPS OF METAL AND ATTEMPTED TO BUILD MY FIRST PUSHBOT. THAT SAME NOVICE DAY I ALSO MISTAKENLY REFERRED TO A "SCREW" AS A "NAIL" AND MY TEAMMATES GOT SUCH A GOOD WORKOUT FROM LAUGHING THAT THEY DIDN'T NEED TO GO TO THE GYM THAT EVENING. BLESS THEM, NOW EVEN I CAN'T HELP BUT LAUGH BUT AT THE TIME IT WAS EMBARRASSING AND HUMILIATING THAT I WAS STRUGGLING WITH EVEN THE SHEER BASICS. THESE BOYS WERE THE TYPE WHO WOULDN'T HURT A FLY - THEY DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM - YET THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THAT FOR A GIRL WHO'D ONLY EVER BEEN GIFTED BARBIE DOLLS AND MAKEUP SETS THIS WAS COMPLETELY FOREIGN TERRITORY.

*We've all heard about the gender imbalance in STEM fields, you can see it in the classrooms and you can see it in the workplace, but that was the day that my eyes opened to the fact that, most boys (men - whatever you wish) want to see their fields grow and are more than happy to welcome women as a part of that. Truth is that the front doors are open for many girls these days, but when you step through them it doesn't mean you're automatically in. It's the little things that make a big difference; patient mentors who are willing to show you different parts without judging you for not knowing the difference between a kepsnut or a locknut; teammates who will occasionally question or turn down your ideas - not because you're female - but because they aren't the best ideas; teachers who recognise that being the only girl on a team leaves you without a support system of others in a similar position - making all the little things, just that little bit more challenging.*





*The lessons I've learnt through competing in VEX and the wealth of knowledge I've gained from them is a vast ocean, in which, I wouldn't even have dipped my toes in a conventional classroom environment. VEX has proven to me that there are tangible and exciting applications of the often dreary maths, science and technology we encounter in the school system. It has made me confident that STEM may be challenging (especially when your program gives you a debugging/disconnection error each time you press download, or your lift - which was working perfectly in practice - breaks on the morning of the scrimmage) but it's not daunting. Nothing is more exciting than knowing that I am capable of creating some crazy cool things with a dash of hardwork and a pinch of practice. It's showed me that it takes a village to raise a child, the village being the team and the child being the robot and that translates directly in the workforce: STEM fields have no boundaries - that's what separates them from the rest. Somewhere in that limitless world there is a place for me and there is a way to incorporate my feminine side, the one that wants to make everything pretty and create the perfect experience for a user, with my passion for technology and computers - all without breaking a nail.*





*Today, at Lynfield College Robotics, where my robotics story first began; I am no longer the only girl. In fact, these days, I'm one of many. I've had the privilege of working with a team that recognises each individual for their own backgrounds and strengths and embraces them. We've won National Championships in New Zealand five years consecutively in the time that I've been a part of the team, world champs three years - and hopefully running. I am convinced that the sky's the limit.*





2016 VEX ONLINE CHALLENGES

# CREDITS

GIRL POWERED

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CREDITS:

MADE BY: JIA DUA

TEAM NUMBER: 2915A

NAME OF STORYBOOK: THE ONLY GIRL

SOFTWARE USED: CANVA

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