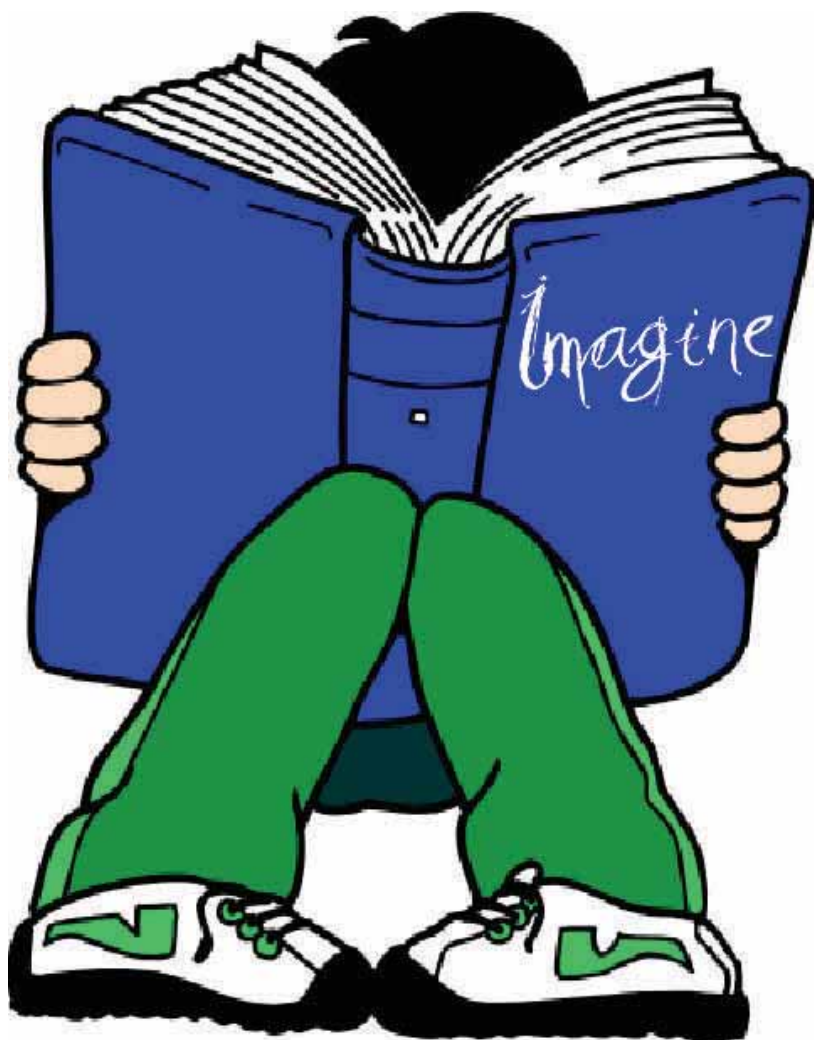




Imagine.

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Samantha Rhodes

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Lauren Warshauer

The Journal

Oh beautifully bound, hard headed great,
Why do you sit upon my desk and wait?
Why are you closed, what've you to hide?
Or do you not want me to see the secrets inside?

Oh, my love, you are heavy with thought,
And I cannot open you, is that my lot?
To be shut out from your innermost doings,
While you accomplish things of great beauty?

From the inside I feel passion, I feel flame;
And from the outside I see coldness, hardness and longing for fame.
Yet I cannot read the story of your heart,
For you are shut, and I am kept apart.

Oh beautifully bound, hard headed great,
Why do you sit upon my desk and wait?
Why are you closed, what've you to hide?
Or do you wait for me to read what is written inside?

Marwan Bishtawi

Carpet It

The wood-paneled floor was almost perfect. Almost exact, but not quite. The eighth panel in from the bottom-left corner was pale. The others were a deep brown. If we wanted to fix it, we'd have to re-do it all. A few hundred dollars. Get a carpet, she said. It'll hide the imperfection, she said. So she went and bought a carpet. Placed it perfectly in the room to cover the imperfect panel. There, it's perfect, she said. Next weekend is the party, I said. I need a dress, I said. So we went and bought a dress. Tried it on several nights before, just to be sure it fit. No, she said. Your scar is showing, she said. You need to hide the imperfection, she said. So we went and bought a shawl. I tried on the dress and shawl, no visible flaws. It's perfect, she said. Just don't take the shawl off. You don't want people to see your scar, she said. Hide your imperfections. Don't let others see what's wrong. Carpet it.

Emily Singer



Alexis Backer

These Old Hands

So much depends upon
These old hands.
Cut with wrinkles and age,
Frosted with old memories and past experiences.
Once vibrant with color,
Now a dull paste
Covered in dust
Lying on an old arm chair, resting.

Jailenn Morel



Alexis Backer

My Invisible Grandfather

I walk around my mudroom on this gloomy, rainy day while the fog is trying to seep through the cracks of the door. I aimlessly peer around the room, bored. My eyes catch sight of a black and white photo of my grandmother, Rose, and grandfather, Norman, walking down the aisle at the end of their wedding. A rustic, gold frame surrounds the picture with a majestic metal lace design.

I stare at my grandfather's picture and try to learn something about him. I see a smirk and a smile on his face. I know both of these contradict, but they make sense to me. If you had known who my grandfather just married, then you would know why he's smirking. He's got the best girl he could ever have and the girl that everyone envies. His eyes stare straight ahead. He is looking forward, toward the future. I bring the picture closer to my eyes and examine his clothing. I can't find anything, but that still can explain his character to me. He has long, black and white striped pants that are nice, but not too extravagant. He has a fuddy-duddy tuxedo jacket on, but it looks very similar to a man's jacket in the background. Wearing a white, rose-buttoned shirt was not his idea, but he tilts it to the side just to show his independence. The final thing I notice as I stare at my grandfather is his slicked-back hair. It looks very classy and efficient, like it was styled that way just for the wedding. The thing is, though, I know from other pictures of him that this hair was a normal style for him.

My eyes then move to my grandmother. My grandmother is one of the most loving people I know. As I gaze at her, in her youth, I see the same great love that she has for everyone, even today. Her beaming smile is evidence of her happiness. She is making eye contact with someone in the pews. I feel like it must have been someone close to her. It looks like a knowing glance, a loving glance. A glance of relief, and then also maybe a giddy glance signaling the start of her new life. My grandmother looks absolutely elegant in her wedding gown, like a swan stretching out its wings, ready to fly. Her beauty, combined with her great spirit, made her such a great person to everyone: a devoted wife, a caring mother, a terrific friend, and a loving grandmother.

The relationship between my grandmother and grandfather is something I would never experience, but I think their two linked arms symbolize everything about them. They held each others' arms lovingly, not too hard and not too soft. My grandfather's hands were broad and strong. He was a like brick. He was constantly supportive. My grandmother's small petite fingers may be beautiful, but they were anything but delicate. They were the mortar. She guided her family through the thick and thin. This combination of brick and mortar slowly built

the impermeable wall that became their family. From stories I have heard, they both had the same temperament and their personalities meshed together, just like their linked arms.

Is it weird to say that you have never met your grandfather? For me it is. I see pictures and hear stories, but it always seems like something is missing. Can you really know a person if you have never met them? I have heard countless times what a great man my grandfather was and how I am a spitting image of my grandfather. How can I follow in his footsteps if I have never met him? The answer is easy. It is written in that very photograph. The great love and courage he displays in the picture is something that I strive to emulate. My grandfather cared about his family more than anything in the world. That is something I can tell from the tone of my family members' voices every time they talk about him. His character is his legacy.

As I silently gaze deep into my grandfather's eyes, I really do see him come to life. I brush my hands across his face ever so lightly, like one would rub a baby, and I really do feel the essence of my grandfather come alive.

Robby Tiburzi



Nick Wallace

Face Paint

Hidden behind all that make up,
One day don't you wish she'd just wake up?
Perceived as so fake,
How many hours did all that take?

Living a lie,
Just trying to get by,
She covers herself in caked on face paint,
She thinks she looks so good that no one can come up with a complaint.

Trying so hard just to fit in,
Her phoniness should be a sin!
True self confidence is what she lacks,
Pretty soon she'll be so far gone, she won't be able to turn back.

I must hand it to her though,
She makes it appear normal just so.
She should feel pretty,
And naturally witty.
She should not be fake,
No one should ever just want to be a remake.

Melina Parello



LeiLani Brennan

One Click

It was the moment,
A making of a new history.
A little girl stands,
Along the crowded line
Of people, waiting for this moment.
Her eyes widen with delight
As she sees the newly announced president
Take stand.
People cheer affectionately
And the girl feels the momentum rising
As the new president
Waves, smiling.
She tiptoes her little feet
To get a better look.
He stands on the podium, ready to speak.
She takes her camera
Zooms closely in on the president's face,
Adjusts,
And with her little finger,
Clicks,
Away.

Jiin Kwon



Jessica Cysner

The Supermodel

People say my life is “amazing,” but amazing is still a word I don’t know. In fact, in this world away from home, I have much to learn.

In my Masaai village in Africa, the important thing was family. We know that it is not beauty that makes a woman, but what she has to contribute. Every year, a tourist group will visit the village. Their money supports the reservation in which we live, so in turn we share our homes and our lifestyle with the outsiders. It was last year that a modeling scout came through our modest village. From the beginning of her stay, to the end, she insisted I come to America, pursue the American Dream, and model. I don’t know why I finally gave in. Maybe it was the thought of adventure, or maybe I just felt like there was another place for me that I could call home. I didn’t want to admit that I was scared. My family supported my decision, even though I secretly wished that they would hold me back.

So I was in a place they called New York. The smell was what first caught my attention - a mix of horrible fumes I never knew existed. And then, a swarm of people like ants attending to various errands. All these frowning people were pushing their way through the packed sidewalks. In place of the grassy plains that I knew all my life, were skyscrapers as tall as ten giraffes piled one on top of the other. Where was the soft dirt beneath my feet? Where was that perfect line of horizon as vast as I could see? It was all blocked by the city made of concrete.

With no time to soak in this new environment, I was on my way to the first day of work. The scout introduced me to one of the designers and I felt uncomfortable as she looked me up and down. The only thing I understood was when she nodded her head to the scout and ushered me out of the door. They found me acceptable. Since I barely spoke English, I knew it was that nod that landed me a spot in the fashion show. I felt like a clown, the make up and all this powder made me want to sneeze. And then it was my turn to walk. The bright lights hit me with a punch. All these people were staring at me. With each step, I felt so in need of a friend. We were all strangers. There was no hint of a smile among the crowd, and it made the place feel cold, something not found in my village.

It’s been a year now. I’ve made friends. And next week is my first trip back to my tiny village, which I hope has not changed at all. I miss my family, but New York is now a part of me. There is now a home for me in the fashion world.

Anne Lyonski

Unknown

Until all sanity becomes a memory
And all memories fade, too.
Like sun-bleached colors;
They're too dull to serve a purpose.

Nobody likes them, anyway.
So it's fine
If nobody wants them.
They can continue fading until nothing is left.
Well, something will be left.
I just don't know what.

First-timers are always afraid.
Afraid of the unknown?
Possibly.
Or perhaps not.

Maybe they don't want to admit it.

Emily Singer

Hero, Heroine

“Do you know that your love is the sweetest sin?”

That was the first thing I asked her when I knew that she was the one. She made me who I was. We were the exact opposite: she had eyes as blue as the water, and I had eyes as green as the forest. She loved to read; I loved to write. She wanted the world, and I was willing to give it to her. It was too late; there was no turning around. She was the one for me, and I was the one for her. I saw her for who she was. I looked passed the negatives and saw her beauty inside and out.

We met in October. I remember the smell of pumpkins in the air and the way the colorful leaves would crinkle under our feet when we would step on them. You were sitting in the park reading, like you always do. It looked like the world couldn't defeat you, like you were above all the rest. You caught me off guard; the sounds of the barking dogs didn't even startle you a bit. Everything about you amazed me. I tried to catch your attention a couple times by running around your bench, out of breath, sweating, and a bit concerned about how my breath smelled. You looked up at me. I was so distracted by your presence, that I ran into a tree. You ran over to me in concern, using your soft hands to hold my head like a pillow. From that day, I knew you were the one. It was one of the best moments of my life. We walked around the park for a couple of hours and got to know each other. We stood on the dock and stared off into the beautiful sunset that. It seemed like this night could last forever.

We began going out and seeing each other more often. I remember the day I asked you to marry me. You looked at me as if I had spoken 80 different languages at once; you took a breath in. I thought that you were going to say no but then I looked deep into your eyes, the same eyes that made me fall in love with you the first time we met, and without you even saying a word I knew what your answer was.

We had twin girls, Andrea and Alyssa, and they meant the world to you. You would go high and low for them, no matter what. As the years went by, we grew older, and your health began to fail.

Cancer. That's what you had. That's what changed our lives forever. You were there one moment and gone the next. I wish you were still here. Everything seemed so much easier. The girls miss you terribly. I can't imagine what their life is going to be like from this day forward.

When I was with you, I felt like a hero, like nobody could defeat me. It felt like you were my heroine. Now, since my other half is gone, what am I? Since the first day I met you, I knew that I wouldn't be able to live my life without you, and I know I can't.

My mother died May 6, 2003 from cancer.

A day later my father committed suicide.

He left us a note and all it said was:

Do you know that your love is the sweetest sin?

Anonymous



Jessica Cysner

The Conversation

Something is not right,
 I think there is nothing wrong.
No, that there is an unnatural sight,
 I hear nothing but a beautiful song.

Can't you feel the earth trembling?
 No, I feel nothing but the breeze.
But I know it; humanity is crumbling,
 Ah, it's so beautiful sitting here under the trees.

Something is definitely happening,
 I'm sure it's nothing big.
Come now, can't you feel the sky burning?
 I need a six letter word for a baby pig.

When the world ends, you'll be sorry,
 When it doesn't will you cry?
I'm going to try to stop it, so no one will worry,
 I see the key word there is try.

Marwan Bishtawi



Vincent Lovallo

Theft

He ran out of the store with a dark black stocking covering his guilty face. It happened so quickly, leaving me frozen in my place. He took it. He took it all. Never in my life had I gone through something so terribly horrifying. Never had I ever been robbed of anything. Sure, a few things here and there from my bratty younger sisters, but never anything real.

I've always heard scary stories of robberies, but I was never smart enough to listen to the advice they gave me. In grade school, they always told us how to react to such a situation. They taught us what to do under the pressure of a gun, and what to do if ever sexually assaulted. I never listened to any of that. Since no one ever came up to me in a car asking if I wanted candy, I figured everything they told us must have simply been a scare. They were just annoying officials trying to get me to take ridiculous precautions that would never accomplish anything in the long run.

Clearly, however, I was wrong. Now, the world has lost its innocence through my eyes.

Alex Chill

Yogurt, Broken Trombones, and Caleb

Yogurt + explosion = really bad. The yogurt exploding all over Caleb Avery? Terrible. Awful. Close to catastrophic. Devastating. Horrifying.

The cafeteria. There are not many things that anyone can say about the cafeteria. There were a handful of octagonal shaped tables scattered across the chipped linoleum floor smeared with everyone's footprints. A creepy painting of a kid with what looked like a beer belly bulging over his pants was smeared on the wall, glaring with beady eyes at the students wolfing down food. Food that, when examined quickly, really has no resemblance to food. Occasional blobs, deformed vegetables, and chicken. Every day there was chicken: chicken fingers, chicken nuggets, chicken in a questionable white sauce, chicken hidden in a sandwich. And the odd thing is, the chicken is grey. But the status of our cafeteria food is not the real problem. It was the *actual people* in the cafeteria.

I'm not going to lie. The separation between the groups of people is obvious in our cafeteria. There is the jock table, every burly guy laughing with that same cocky, stupid grin on his face. There were the scary people who you just don't look at, surveying the whole room from their window side posts. The artsy type have their own style, seeming a bit dazed and distracted. These and other cliques are spread throughout the cafeteria, every group contained to his or her own social bubble, few venturing outside. The cafeteria felt barren and isolated, but it doesn't seem so to the untrained, older eye.

The lunch line is long, as usual. Shifting, uncomfortable people banged into me. I was shoved repeatedly into the wall, only to be moved away from the wall before having a rather heavy guy crush my foot under his ugly, mud-caked boot, feeling every tread imprint on my toes. I bit my lip and yanked my leg back. He looked down at me, grunted, and continued to crush people's toes underneath his massive girth. I rolled my eyes. *Men*. Some junior with messy black hair and really bad posture was behind me, tapping on the wall repeatedly. I cringed every time he slammed his fist into the wall, the rapping was driving me absolutely insane. I turned to him, glared, and returned to my position on line. He didn't take the hint. *Sigh*. The lunch today seemed like chicken. I glance at the menu. *Grilled Chicken and...* I didn't bother to finish reading.

"Want some?" The lunch lady grumbled. The woman had hair cut short and it stuck out from under a tightly fitted cap. She lifted the chicken with a shaky hand, and the tomato chunks tumbled off the charred skin.

"No thank you," I muttered, and continued down the line. I pulled the refrigerator door open and reached in to retrieve a yogurt with a smiling cow plastered to the front. I frowned instinctively. Somehow that goofy-eyed cow made a part of me break off inside. In a gloomy, restricted, cafeteria, not even a funny cow was wanted. I placed my change on the counter, right down to the penny, and stalked out of the line. I made my way to my table, slammed the yogurt onto the top, and threw myself into a seat.

"Whoa, are you alright, Kim?" Judy asked from across the table. She blinked her giant blue eyes a few times to emphasize the point.

"No."

Suddenly, the whole table turned to me, in a trance. I was hit with a barrage of comments.

"Who?"

"What's going on?"

"Tell us Kimmy!"

I inhale and then exhale. "Hang on, hang on," the whole table was literally shaking with anticipation. "I almost failed my math test. *Chris* hugged me. And my trombone broke."

"Wait, wait, wait. Back up. Did you say *Chris* hugged you? As in Chris McDouglas?"

"Yes."

The whole table leaps back and a chorus of "Ewwwww" fills the cafeteria. The tables glimpse over their wall and into our block for a brief moment. I shrink a little in my seat.

Again the hammering questions bombarded me.

"Ew! Why?"

"How?"

"Gross! What? Happened?"

"Disgusting!"

I put my finger to my lips and lean into the table. The rest of my friends follow in. Somehow, we think that no one will hear our conversation if we tighten our tiny table and talk in somewhat low voices and then blurting out obnoxious comments at loud levels so that the entire cafeteria could hear our entire conversation. And people wonder how secrets get around.

I mentally prepare myself for the traumatic story. "Okay, okay," I say. "So, I practically fail my math test right? A 69%, I didn't understand it at all. I obviously wasn't looking so bright..."

"Don't kid with us. You nearly failed," Judy chimed in. "You must have been hysterical."

I glared at her and the table gasped falsely. Giggles.

I cleared my throat. "Alright. I'll admit it. I was looking pretty lousy. But come on, a 69% is awful," I continued. "I felt an arm snake around my neck. And I started freaking out." The girls were literally jittering. "I tensed up. I had no idea who it was. 'Hey, cheer up.' I heard a masculine voice in my ear. And his breath smelt like, well..."

"Beef?" at a loss for words, Megan swooped in.

"Yeah. Like beef. 'It's okay, you'll do better next time.' And he basically suffocated me. He tried to make it really nice and warm, but I was disgusted."

Everyone's face was plastered in a different way. Judy wasn't really too shocked. She saw it coming. Laurie on the other hand, was doe-eyed and so close to drooling all over the table with her mouth agape. We all suspected she was obsessed with Chris like almost every other girl he hit on. The gravitational, ever present player of our school. Thalissa and Megan were both quivering in the corner. If you didn't know any better you'd think something really terrible had just happened. Then again, Chris McDouglas was quite a calamity.

"What's going on?"

That mellow, smooth voice hovered in my ear. Like a bass violin, it was deep and resonant. I feel my breath lodged in my chest. Painfully, I tried to inhale, or even exhale, with no avail. My heart beat rapidly. This was the perfect combination for a catastrophe.

Caleb Avery. Practically the only person capable of somehow seamlessly rotating from table to table, seeing invisible pathways and doors. He was able to cross over those walls.

"Hey, what's up?" Suddenly, my voice drops down low, crouching like his. *Oh no.* I think. *He's gonna get the wrong impression.* "Nothing much." I pulled my voice up again, but now it sounded too bubbly. Dang.

"Couldn't help but overhear that somebody had hugged you. What's going on?"

All my friends now had their eyes darting from me to Caleb. Well, except for Laurie, who was off in la-la land, which probably involved Chris and her frolicking through meadows with sugar coated flowers. These girls were like lionesses, looking for a kill. And right about now, they were telling me to do so.

"Well," I try to reach for my yogurt nonchalantly. "It's really no big deal." I picked the spoon up and bounced it between thumb and forefinger, "Honestly."

He smiles smugly, "If someone needs to be socked in the face, just let me know."

I smiled back coyly, yet I felt all the blood rush out of my face. My reverse blushing is at it again. I tried to pull the yogurt top off. No such luck. I pulled a little harder. Nothing.

"You don't have to, don't worry."

I pulled some more with zero luck.

Cool. I said to myself. Stay cool, right? Caleb is cool. I have to be completely smooth.

"So who hugged you?" Caleb's green eyes flashed. "Not Chris, is it?" He took a seat next to me at the table. Any blood left in my face drained out, like the stopper had just been pulled. So I avoided eye contact. I tossed the cup of yogurt to Judy. She yanked and literally propelled the yogurt across the table. She frowned. So much for staying cool.

"So who is it?"

I pulled on the tab one more time and BAM. I heard the foil peel off and then everything came to a screeching halt. I saw globs of sickening pink yogurt fly through the air, bursting outward, like some kind of volcanic eruption. I saw each of those globs splatter onto Caleb's face. Pink globs stuck to his golden hair, clinging like dew on a spider's web. He was now officially strawberry blond.

If I die here, don't say anything about it on my tombstone.

Rachel Oestreicher



Jennifer Martins

Time

I was not the pessimist. The sun was the pessimist for not shining. Yes, I blame the sun for not shedding any blasted light on me, and I blame the rain for pelting me with bursts of misery, and I blame the snow for burying me within the depths of my frigid miseries. Seven days. Them seven days. Them seven days with their set boundaries, and their set frames, and their set limits. Cruelty. They was cruelty. My heart did not fit in them seven days, in them 168 hours. My heart did not and has not yet fit within the span of the year. For that very reason, I hated them seven days.

Time will always be my worst enemy, for the successful man that once was my sanity kept walking and didn't want to wait for me. He didn't have time in his packed schedule for my heart, so he kept on-a-marchin'. It was only I that remained. My heart was my only asset. Them damned people didn't appreciate it. Them people cast me into a pit where only the weather would come to me. The only thing I had to keep me warm was the snow. Their timed weekly schedule did not have room for me. Their week did not have room for me. They did not have room for me or my heart. I'm alone. Oh God, why?

Marwan Bishtawi



Jailenn Morel

Maybe

Maybe one day I shall see the light,
And bow my head in the infinite sun,
For my candle does not glow very bright.

Muddled sleepless eyes fall into the night,
So I'm aware I am not the only one,
Maybe one day I shall see the light.

Ignorance and idiocy is not a pretty sight,
To look at for those who seemed to have won,
For my candle does not glow very bright.

And to all of those who have done no right,
You musn't look away nor foolishly run;
Maybe one day I shall see the light.

But I wish to leave this life and fight,
Fight with my will power and not a gun,
For my candle does not glow very bright.

One day I won't be falling, I'll be all right
And all of this benightedness will be done.
Maybe one day I shall see the light,
For my candle does not glow very bright.

Jailenn Morel

Rooftop

The shingles are black and jagged. They are stacked one on top of the other and jut out a little. The rooftop is slanted; if I were not grasping it, I would slip. There is a gutter at the end of the roof, and leaves have collected there. They are brown and torn; they've been there a while. We don't ever clean the gutter. The wind has grown strong; it whips my hair out behind me and then into my face. It flies quickly; a black mass in the air, bending and moving in the wind. I ought to push it behind my ear, but that would mean letting go of the roof. I don't want that.

There is no rain yet, but I know it's coming. There's something in the air that I can smell, like a wet towel; warm, damp, and heavy. There's thunder too, only it's far away, and I don't see any lightning. Once in a while there is a slow, soft rumbling distant, but closer now than ten minutes ago, and soon it will be here and there will be a storm. I wonder if the power will go out. What will they do then in the gym?

The dress is ruined. The leaves from the gutter have burrowed beneath its folds, and the fabric will be stained. It is navy blue, like the sky before any stars are out, the darkest it'll be. Mom says it reminds her of a nightingale. When she wore it, she says, she felt like she could fly. Would I fly then? If I slip and fall will I sprout wings and fly away into the storm? I don't think so.

The thunder is louder now; my foot slides a little. It's stuck in a shingle. I want to kick it off, but they are mom's too. I am in my mother's dress, and I've stained it. I am wearing her shoes, and they are scratched now.

Prom is supposed to be magical. When I was little mom would show me her tiara and tell me that she had been Prom Queen and she'd gotten a sash and other girls threw flowers at her feet. She said one day maybe I'd be a queen. Johnny asked me to prom in December. It's June now. I guess we figured nothing would change. Seasons change, though. Parents fail. Father's leave.

Mom acts like nothing's happened. She acts like I don't notice. Dad said he'd be gone a little while. It's been four months now. She acts like I still have friends over, like Johnny still calls. She pretends I haven't changed.

Two days ago she asked who would drive me to prom. I didn't say anything. So she drove, and said Johnny and I would meet there. They all were surprised to see me. Dianne, Grace, Jenny, Zac, Johnny. They gave me time, I know. After a while we all stopped trying. They see what mom doesn't. She'll build a wall and shut everything out and pretend it's ok 'till she dies trying.

I stood there awhile in the center of the gym, and I saw Dianne staring. She and Johnny danced. I never told any of them what happened. I guess then it might've been different. Dianne stared, and then she turned to Johnny and whispered something in his ear and laughed. They laughed together. That's when I ran.

It's drizzling now. I don't have much time. Mom is out, but she'll be home soon. There is no more wind, and my hair has settled. It is streaked in rain and shiny. I wonder if I stay here long enough will he come home. I don't think so. I want to see him again. I want to know why. Was it me? Was I a bad daughter? Was it mom? Why dad? Why aren't we good enough? I want to tell Johnny and Dianne none of it's my fault, but I know then I'd be lying. I know it could've been different if I'd been like mother and put on a brave face. They hate me now; they think I hate them. They don't know why. It's not their fault. It's not anybody's fault.

The tree is near enough to the roof that if I jump I can catch hold of it. It is an old tree; its branches are gnarled and twisted. It is a tree of haunted woods and scary stories; it has been there all my life. When I was seven, I broke my leg falling from its lowest limb. Dad carried me to the car, and we drove to the hospital.

There is a roar of thunder, the loudest yet, and the rain comes. It is pouring. The roof becomes slick, and the tree is writhing in the gusts of wind. I soak in its downpour.

I need to leave. There is a window on the roof; it is where I came through. The tree is so near, though. I want to jump. It's stupid, but I want to. I am wearing my Mother's dress. It is navy blue, like a nightingale. I will fly. I inch forward, and steady myself. I stand and wobble a little. I close my eyes. I am not scared. The tree is there; it will catch me. The branch is withered, but it is strong. I will wait. Soon a car will pull into the driveway, and mom will be home. We will talk. Tomorrow, I will tell everyone. There are questions still. I am not whole, but I am not broken. The pieces are there, scattered like shards of cracked glass. It is my due to pick them up. The air whistles around me, and my dress swishes back and forth.

I jump.

Emma Adler



Lauren Warshauer

This Is How It Feels

Whatever happened to forever?
No matter what, it can't be found.
Somehow it transformed into never.
I can't seem to ignore these feelings now.

No matter how hard I try to let it go,
I've always wanted you to know,

That this is how it feels
To be turned away from what you thought was true.
And this is how it feels
To not know what else you can do.
There's nothing more I want than to stop the hurt and pain,
And tell you this is what it means to be left standing in the rain
This is how it feels.

Jessica Rozycki

Change

Change – is it inevitable or do we put it into motion? The question makes my mind race; it fascinates me to see life and its people go from one end of the spectrum to another, to see things altered in a second. Flashing suddenly, life can be different in an instant. I've witnessed the change and have certainly been a part of it, but do I really understand the motion? Sometimes I wonder if it is just meant to happen, or do we and the world around us set it off like a chain of dominoes?

I've seen tainted personalities transform individuals into monsters. What really caused these changes? Was it outside pressures morphing these spineless souls? Was this desired, forced, or was it just meant to be? What really drives people to alter who they are? These changes have to be the result of a desire to blend in with the crowd, the desire to not be the odd one out. People, war, depressions, progressions — everything changes as time goes on. The road of life is altered each day. As everything shifts, everything morphs. And there goes the question again — does this change lead back to us? Why is there war present in our world? Why is racism, discrimination, bullying paramount? What is the real answer?

Change – It's not inevitable. I've seen first hand how people operate and how they work. I've witnessed how harsh, how cruel, how different people can become just 'because'. The world doesn't just go BOOM and magically change. Change revolves around people. If each human could change for the better, then the world would be a whole lot better than it is now. But that would never happen. Wishing for that is like wishing for a million dollars when you're just a bum on the street. The world is a hectic raceway of smashing cars and honking trucks. Not every single person can change for the better – I know this, but if we could try, if we could take that extra step, then maybe, just maybe, the changes we go through wouldn't be nearly as bad as some we've witnessed.

A girl can only hope, right?

Melina Parello

So Thank You, Sir

Thank you for helping me, sir.
For restoring hope to a hopeless life
And showing me my true potential,
You have shown me that I am an American
And that I can do what my family says I can't
That I can, and will, go on to college
And maybe even medical school.
That I will get married, have children, live my own life.
So thank you, sir, from the bottom of my heart.
You have shown me what it means to be free.

شكرت أنت, سيد, ل يساعدا.
You have shown us what it means to strive for change
And equality
Even under the difficulties of oppression.
Race, beliefs, and ethnicities are nothing but labels
That are meant to hold us all back.
So maybe, sir, by the time you have returned home
We will have solved this problem
And ended this war
So we can all live in peace
And no longer worry about gunmen,
Terrorists, and radicals.
So thank you, sir, from the entirety of our country.
You have shown us what it means to break the mold.

You have restored hope and shown us what it means
To live a happy, unrestricted life where dreams can come true.
Thank you, sir, for turning this corrupt and ruined world around.

Emily Singer

Lacey

I'm running on empty. The alarm clock buzzes earlier and earlier each day. I struggle with being a single parent to three beautiful children; Charlie, Mark, and Todd. Blessed I am. Cursed I am. I hold anger. I hold happiness. She left so suddenly. I never had a say in it. One morning, Lacey turned over and looked at me with her brown eyes. They blinked so softly. She smiled and caressed my face with those milky soft hands.

"Good morning," she whispered in my ear. I placed my hands around her, and held her like I did every morning - but I realized I never cherished it. I took those morning moments for granted. I always assumed I'd have her at my disposal. She knew I loved her with all my heart. But could I have showed it to her more? Most definitely. Lacey, my lovely Lacey. Why did she have to leave me? Why did she have to leave us? I look at our boys - they all have those beautiful brown eyes that used to gaze at me daily.

Lacey made those morning buzzes of the alarm clock easy.

Jenna Grippo

Just Keep Walking

“Everywhere is within walking distance if you have enough time.”

-Steven Wright

Just keep walking and don't look back, you have to get somewhere.
Just keep walking and don't look back, you have to get somewhere.
Just keep walking and don't look back, you have to get somewhere.

A home. Everything Amber wanted, everything Amber lacked. No bed with lavish pillows and down comforters. She slept on the couch of her mother's one bedroom apartment, with a paper thin blanket and couch cushions, which had been thrown away by neighbors as pillows. No closet packed with clothes. No mornings filled with “What should I wear?” Amber had four shirts, two pairs of shoes, including her Catholic school Mary-Janes, two pairs of pants, and a uniform all neatly folded in a brown box shoved in her mother's closet. A home for Amber consisted of a mother who came home every night with dilated pupils and a bad case of the munchies. Her mother was not what one would call a “motherly figure.” Calling this dirty, rundown apartment a home was pointless.

Amber continued to walk down the sidewalk, unaware of where she was going, what she was doing, and when she would stop. She had to find it, something, anything that was new. She had wanted anything; because where she was originally, she had nothing. The world was now her bed to sleep on, and hers to gaze upon. The world was her city to explore and, in turn, a way for her to find an appreciated life. Even with the odds against her, the world was Amber's.

She had been walking for forty-five minutes and was far gone from her neighborhood. The moon's reflection shone in a big window of the house she passed. White lace curtains draped over half the window and pulled to the side by a white tassel. *What did I ever do wrong in life to not deserve this?* Amber longed for this house and the people inside. Although she didn't know them, they had to be better than what she had. Amber's eyes trailed up the side of the house, up to the third story and then back down to the first. She gazed upon the perfectly trimmed grass, not a patch of death. The sprinklers turned on and left a coating of water over the lawn.

Amber paused for one more moment and then moved onto her new life. A bus to the airport was scheduled to arrive at any minute, and she still had two blocks to walk until she

reached the bus stop.

Thanks to her aging, senile grandmother who sent her ridiculous amounts of birthday money five times a year, Amber collected a good sum of money that was piling up under her bed. About five years of money, she hid from her mother. *She could never remember my birthday.* About five years of birthday money to keep to herself and use on a good day. Today was a good day. *Today everything changed and good days would follow and they would never stop. The good days would just keep flowing in and out like the blue waves at the beach.* She had about two thousand five hundred dollars; she knew that she was going to need more. She watched a street lamp flicker and some dead leaves get picked up by the breeze, whisked away.

If only it was as easy as that.

To be picked up by the breeze and leave. Get whisked around the world and watch new faces smiling everywhere and new images engraved in the mind. To be constantly changing from green, to red, to yellow, to brown. Just always having that ability to change. Never experiencing old, always new, until the cycle circles back around and starts over, and by then what was old seems new all over again.

The leaves danced over her shoes and down the street. She followed them making sure not to step on them and destroy the cycle. She almost felt alive following the leaves. Almost.

Then a thought. Her father was whisked away the previous year. He found someone better. The leaves gave some sort of hope. She was following in her father's footsteps more than ever, leaving her mom, except she wasn't leaving a daughter behind.

Jailenn Morel



Jessica Cysner

Definition of Love

Hearts keep beating faster and faster,
Nothing can make it stop.
Every chance I get,
I mess up and it makes me drop.

The definition of love isn't affection,
It'll never be that simple.
It's when that one person is missing,
And the whole day changes around you.
That's love I want.

A chance at a life
That's vibrant and fulfilling,
Is not one I'd like to live
Without that person I've been missing.

So here we go again,
On a journey that will never end.
In a perfect world, an image of peace
Is what we'll rend.

So I'll sing this song,
And hopefully I'll hear it back from you.
The process of holding my love back
Is harder than keeping myself true.
Love is not emotion,
But when your everyday life is changed,
When that one person
Disappears...

Alejandro Azuaje



Jailenn Morel

Achievements

Don't say that you didn't achieve anything,
Because you have.
You achieved birth.
You achieved laughter.
You have achieved love.
You have achieved our hearts,
Our love,
Our kindness,
And our hope.
That was all you.
You have achieved life,
And now death has achieved you,
And now sadness has achieved us,
And death will achieve us as well.
But for now,
Death can wait
Because we are still achieving life

Jackie Fonseca

The Human

Beware the haggard human
Do not trust his toothy grin
For 'neath a guise
Of kindly eyes
Lies a creature steeped in sin
Their putrid souls
Deep, ugly pits
Know not the pleasures of peace
Instead their sort
Insist on violence
'O! Terror, whilst thou not cease?'
The human seeks to undermine
And cares only for his own
Their packs ascend in thousands
He does not work alone
Upon their backs
They nurse pets of cool silver
Deadly, yet tame
Where we die
Their master scowls
Indeed, devoid of shame
Do they not see the world they have wrought
Is cold, and without light?
The human is a tyrant
Whose footsteps spew eternal night.

Emma Adler

An Unexpected Visitor

There was a faint tap on the window while I was home alone watching television. I assumed the tap was just a tree branch that was rustled by the wind or a bird who mistook the glass for an open window, so I ignored the tapping rapping. I continued watching television and eating cheese puffs from a party sized bag. By ten o'clock I was already half asleep. The fake cheese stained my fingers and coated my upper lip like a yellow cheese moustache. Ten minutes passed and the smell of sweat and cigarette smoke began to permeate through the empty house. It reminded me of my next door neighbor, who always had a cigar hanging out of his crooked mouth. He was not a person that I particularly liked or trusted.

The smell made me queasy. Mixed with my nerves regarding the thought of a possible intruder, I felt as if I was going to be sick. I shuffled into the pantry to get some crackers to soothe my aching stomach. Passing the kitchen, I noticed an eerie shadow by the window. Fear started to build up as I thought of what the shadow might be. I felt like a coward. I couldn't bring myself to look beyond the window, the anticipation was eating away at my insides and eventually, I would be just be an empty shell. I went back into the playroom and grabbed a baseball bat from the pile of horrific smelling sports equipment that I was supposed to put away.

On my way out the door, I tripped over a moldy soccer ball. My heart skipped two beats and I felt cold sweat drip slowly down my forehead and into the corners of my mouth. I went towards the pantry and took two steps closer to the window by taking two long, painful steps away from the pantry. I tiptoed as quietly as possible over to the window, the only sound being the crack of my big toe each time I took a step forward. I was in front of the window and the smell of sweat and tobacco was stronger than ever. I took one last deep breath, and before I could talk myself out of it, pushed the drapes away from the window. I swallowed hard as I looked around and saw nothing was unusual. The smell drifted away, but the uneasiness still lingered in the house.

Isabelle Scheck

Dogood

The town that I live in is called Dogood. This is because the man who founded it in 1887 was named Terrence Dogood. I don't know very much about him, only that he died of Cirrhosis, and his great grandson owns a grocery store on Pontiac Street called TooGood. The "Welcome to Dogood" sign that is nailed to the trunk of a sprawling oak tree that straddles our northern border has to be replaced at least twice a year, because neighboring Dodd County students spray paint an "N" over the "D." It's a ritual on the weekend before our sports teams play one another to "spruce up" the town sign. When I was younger, there was a gang in high school that was made up of teenagers who called themselves the Dogood4Nothings. They stole a case of 7-Up from TooGood, stabbed a dog, and then it was over. In a way, it is lucky our founder was named Dogood. The few interesting things that happen here wouldn't happen if he was named Terrence Jones.

The Sonnedys have lived in Dogood for over a century. I know so because my parents tell the story to anyone who will listen, and as their daughter I'm obliged to do so. My father is the proud descendent of Theo Sonnedys, who, legend holds, was best friends with Terrence Dogood himself. I don't know whether or not this is true, but it is a fact that in 1888, Terrence Dogood signed a document which bequeathed two acres of his land to Theo Sonnedys and his wife Gloria. It is here my family remains, four generations later. The Sonnedys are like the Dogood oak — our roots are deep in this town, and we have no intention of digging them up.

I sometimes hate the home Theo wrought. It is old, enormous, and sagging. The stairs creak and the roof leaks. Our ancestors hadn't counted on two things when they built the manor: one, that it would have to last over one hundred years, and two, that Sonnedys to come wouldn't have enough wealth to sustain it. I suppose if we took better care of our home, it might have remained beautiful. I've seen pictures of it in its prime, and it was something wonderful. When I was little, I liked to pretend it was the turn of the twentieth century, and that the walls and furniture were all brand new. I imagined I was Gloria Sonnedys and that my brother, Tom, was a serving boy who I would call on to sweep the floor or fan me on a hot summer day. In time, though, I stopped imagining. Suddenly my home became ugly and I wished the Sonnedys would pick up and leave Dogood behind.

In the woods behind our house there is a small stream that widens in the middle to form a tiny circular pool. It is deep enough to swim in, and if you float on your back, the current will carry you downstream until it becomes too narrow for you to fit. It is a wonderful pool. On a nice day, when you stand back and admire it alongside the evergreens and shrubs, the scene

can be likened to a postcard.

During the summer, Tom liked to play in the stream. This was allowed so long as someone was watching him. One day, in July, Tom decided to build a bridge of sticks across the pool. Our parents were at work, and I had been commissioned to babysit. When I asked him why he wanted to build a bridge, he smiled and he wanted to be a tightrope walker, like in the circus. I don't remember most of our day at the pool — I was studying for the SATs, my nose was buried in a textbook. Once in a while, I would look up from my reading to see that Tom was alright, but otherwise I didn't pay very much attention.

His bridge was not large. Tom finished it within an hour.

"Nola," he called "Watch me!"

I laid down my textbook. Tom mounted the bridge at the far end of the pool, and proceeded to tiptoe across it with his arms stretched out on either side. I smiled at him. He was proud of the little bridge, and grinned widely as he made his way towards me. Then, when Tom had gotten to the middle of the pool, I heard something crack. I didn't think anything of it; it could've been a squirrel snapping a twig in half, or a swallow closing its beak. Thousands of things crack in the woods. I don't think Tom noticed at all.

The crack sounded again, and I noticed the bridge sag. *Like the stairs*. Then it occurred to me what was about to happen.

"Tom!" I yelled.

Tom looked up at me, and then the bridge snapped. The bottom of the pool is lined with large smooth rocks. They are not jagged, or coarse; they are the type of stones that pave the sides of Jacuzzis and the walls of showers. Tom fell backward, flailing his arms, as though he was searching for an invisible hand or some air to hold onto. I screamed as he hit the water. There was a crack louder and more terrible than the snapping of the bridge. I ran into the water and dove underneath. Tom laid atop a large oval stone, motionless. I pulled him from the water, and as I stood in the center of the pool, his blood was carried downstream. I darted out of the woods and towards the house. Time stopped. Each stride, each thump of my sneakers against the dirt might've been a century. *Another generation of Sonnedys lives and dies in Dogood*. Tom was unconscious. I laid him down on the porch sofa, and called 911 on my cell phone. Pieces of Tom stained the cushions red as I cried. I wrapped his head in paper towels and held his body in my arms. Then, I waited. I listened as the pulse of my brother became fainter and fainter. The paramedics arrived, but I knew it was too late.

In the weeks that followed, I grew numb. The town of Dogood mourned and congregated nightly in our living room to weep. I spoke to no one. The doctors told me that it wasn't

my fault. It was an accident, a tragedy, there was nothing more I could've done. That wasn't true. I knew it. Deep inside, voices clawed at my conscience, and screamed "*You should've been more careful; you shouldn't have let him.*"

By September 4th, I had had enough. Late at night, I crept outside and stole my dad's car. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I had to do. Ten minutes later I reached the Dogood oak. If I was going to die, I was going to take Dogood with me. I clenched the steering wheel and prepared to slam down on the gas pedal. Then I saw it. The stop sign stood opposite the oak on the other side of the road. It had always been there, only no one notices a stop sign when you realize you're being welcomed into a town named Dogood. Someone had spray painted it. There, etched in black and clear as day, it read:

Don't STOP believing.

I don't believe in miracles. I don't believe in fate, or god, or destiny. Dad says the only way a person can know their future is to limit themselves. That night, I decide suicide ought to work also. Then, though, I realized I couldn't do it; that Tom would want me to live and that in spite of everything, I had to believe. One day, I could learn to forgive myself. It didn't have to be today, or tomorrow, or ten years from now. It would be hard and it would be heart-wrenching, but I had time, so I turned the car around and drove home.

Emma Adler



Joanna Spencer

March On

A boy sings down a winding road
Skipping along to his beat.
Kicking at pebbles and throwing away his troubles
while picking up his red sneakered feet.

A woman cries while riding her bike
Through the back roads of her small town.
The wind hits her face, screaming "Get out of this place,"
She cracks a smile, then frowns.

It's an old man's 80th birthday today,
The wrinkles cut into his skin.
He blows out his candles and hopes for a few more years
He's aging and lonely, and his body has gotten quite thin.

With this passing of time passing faster,
The problems have yet to commence.
And all you can do is sit with your hands on your face
And let your life fill up with suspense.

A boy sings down a winding road,
Skipping along to his beat.
He's got his whole life ahead of him,
So he picks up his step and his feet.

Jailenn Morel

They All Heard The Day

They all heard the mourning notes,
They all heard the keys.
They all heard the same old quotes,
They all heard the shaking knees.

They all felt the same regret,
They all felt the same.
They all could not forget,
They all felt no fame.

They all had their tombstones,
They all had their dirt.
They all had their day and age,
They all had their hurt.

They all remembered the golden days,
They all remembered the pain.
They all remembered that life is a maze,
They all remembered the gain.

They all heard those mourning cries.
They all heard her.
They all heard.
All but me.

Zach Mandell



Lauren Warshauer

A Heartbeat

What is life, if not a dream? What is a dream, but a tear? What is a tear, but a sorrowful heartbeat? Therefore, what is life but a sorrowful heartbeat? We live in life; therefore do we not live in a heartbeat? Our lives, which we value so much, are as minute as a heartbeat. But does not all life end also in a heartbeat? Therefore where do our hopes and dreams and tears and smiles go at the end of this heartbeat? Do they not reenter the silence of God's mind? We start in silence, and in a heartbeat, we return to silence. Think about how much effort we put into a heartbeat.

Marwan Bishtawi

The Journey to the Top of the Stairs

"Johnny, do you need help?" my sister, Greta asks me.

I shrug her off, grumbling, "I can do it myself."

"Those are awfully heavy bags there. Why don't I lend you a hand?"

I grit my teeth and bend my knees and thrust forward with all the strength I could muster. My muscles strain in places that I have never felt. They burn more and more, but I keep on going, telling myself to go faster, be stronger. I start to run. I close my eyes and run directly toward the pile. I drop the bag into the pile.

Everything starts to go black as I hear Greta scream, "Johnny!"

"Excuse me, mister? Do you need help?" a nice looking boy asks as he passes me up on my way the stairs.

"No, I don't need any help," I grunt, a little too harsh. Apologetically, I say, "I can do this by myself. Thank you, though."

The boy flashes me a kind smile, and I return the favor. His feet patter up the steps into oblivion, while I climb my Mount Everest one step at a time. I reach the end of the first flight of the stairs and take a break. The metal bars of the stairway cut into my t-shirt.

The cold metal bars send shivers through my body. As I look up, I wonder, why I am doing this? *What do I accomplish by going up ten flights of stairs?* I shift my weight and pain moves from my thighs to my head. The pain clears my mind, though. I focus and slowly edge myself up, step by step.

A step has the ability to symbolize many things, but generally a step is used for moving up. The thing that people don't factor into moving up is that there is also the chance that one may fall. People forget about that and they always bite off more than they can chew, or in this case, take steps that are too big for their strides.

That is why it is beneficial to go slowly and surely, one step at a time. It was the tortoise that won the race. I am the tortoise. I cannot stand up on my legs, which may slow me down, but this inability also makes sure that I can never fall, that I never leave the ground.

That is why I do not miss my legs. I have learned that I can be strong and independent without them. Legs can be both good and bad. I see it as eliminating the bad and regaining the good.

"Johnny, go long!" my dad hollers.

I am off and running as fast as I can. My arms are outstretched and I slowly see the football flying toward to me.

In a flash, I tumble down in a series of flips and turns. I have mud all over me. My knees and elbows are bloodied.

My dad shrugs, "Next time, run faster so you won't fall."

I reach the second flight of steps and lean down. I take deep breaths, knowing what I am doing is a challenge. I can't rush it. I am not able to. I am aware of my limitations. But this makes me stronger.

My legs warm up and I start to walk up.

"I'm going to beat you!"

"Eat my dust!"

Two little boys come racing down the stairs. They sprint past me without a single pause. Both are determined to show off their superiority. They have no idea what they are risking. I know that is not the way to go. That was the way I was raised. Now look at me. I am someone living off of a medical pension.

I had a job as an accountant, but it wasn't right for me. It is not what I am. I was raised to be something else. Something I now cannot be.

I am bursting with joy. My heart races. I feel the paper in my hand and my future brimming with success.

I almost reach my front door, and I realize my dream is going to come true. I have been accepted to the West Texas School of Performing Arts. I am on my way to my achieving my dream.

The steps have become monotonous. I am in and out of focus, all I know is that my body is moving and that I am going up. I continue to climb and that is all I need. I do not care how fast. That is not what is really important to me now.

I reach the final flight of stairs, and I do something I know I shouldn't do. I lay down. I rest. I slowly drift off to sleep, unaware.

I was sleeping on the couch when I woke up and heard sobs coming from the kitchen. I stand up, but then stop. I had forgotten how sore I was from last night's workout. I pause for five seconds and then force myself to stand.

I walk into the kitchen and see my mother biting her nails. Tears stream down her face. She looks as if she has lost everything.

"John... Johnny..."

"What is it mom?" I coax her.

"He's dead," she wails, and bursts into a hysterical fit of tears.

"Who, mom?" I ask as I try to shake the answer out of her.

"Your father," she murmurs and then passes out.

She had lost everything.

I awake later and the first thing I feel is the pain that is has flooded my body. I look up at the clock and I become aware of how much time and effort I have put into this. I am approaching six hours. There are bruises covering my body and whenever I move, I feel pain.

Then I remember what I set out to do. Am I going to give up, or will I make it to the top? I stare up and become painfully aware the amount of effort I will have to put in. I am determined to continue. I must.

I set off at a snail's pace, but at least I am moving. I try to withstand the pain.

"Faster!" Sergeant O'Reilly screams.

I run faster. I try to push myself to make it through the day. The pain I feel now is nothing compared to the feeling of extra work during eating hours.

I pass the line and stop. I feel the sun beat down on me, but it is nothing compared to the Texas sun. I miss my home, and I miss my family. But I am doing what has to be done.

I never wanted to be at this Army training facility, but I had to. My father was gone. Art school was out of the question. My mother needed help from my older brothers to survive on her own. Both of my older brothers went to the Army and came out just like my father, strong and stubborn, but they made ends meet.

When my father died, I felt like I had no other option. I wasn't ready for the real world. I could not go to college. I did the last thing I wanted to do. I joined the Army.

I am halfway there. I can barely feel my body, but I continue on. I dig for energy from the deepest corners of my body; I don't know if I can make it. I keep on going, anyway.

I pull my hood farther over my head to try to block the Iraqi sun. This is like no place I had ever encountered. It is a dry basin with no water anywhere, even in the air. The sun beats down relentlessly.

I wipe my hands across my eyes so I can see clearly. I try to focus to make sure there are no threats in the vicinity. My head becomes light, but I try to stare ahead.

I see the top. I hope that I can make it, but doubts still reach my head. I still don't know why I am doing this. I cannot explain it. Would there be a difference if I turn around now, never to come back? Who cares if I have no legs? They are an easy escape. I can take advantage of them. I can use having no legs to get into art school. I can play the sympathy card.

I hear sounds in the distance, and all of a sudden, I see a man jump out of his car. There are five U.S. Army vehicles behind him. He is a threat, so I react. I run after him as he disappears into a house. I hear him go upstairs and I follow. I rely fully on instinct. I reach the top step to the attic. I peer in and see the Iraqi man. Oddly enough, he is smiling. I see his hand and in seemingly slow motion, he presses down onto a button.

Everything turns black.

I wake up for an instant in wreckage. I hear shouts. People are touching me. I feel indescribable pain in my legs. I try to lift my head, but I pass out.

I reach the final two steps. I grit my teeth and prepare for success. I reach my hand out, but miss the banister. I feel myself slipping, but I catch myself. I reach out.

I wake up with bright fluorescent lights on me. I feel funny. I try to prop myself up with my elbows, but fail. I try to do it again, but I am too exhausted. I lift my head. I see a priest standing over me. Then I look down and see two stumps below my hips. I am petrified. I squirm.

"The cripple is still whole," says the priest.

My hands feel the top of the stair. I slowly push myself to the top and sit down. I feel good. I prop myself up with the railing and look down at the ten flights of stairs that I miraculously managed to climb.

I did it.

Robby Tiburzi

Indivisible

Feet crossed, back propped up, I sit in bed anxiously anticipating the results of the election. All that is on the television the last few weeks, well the last eighteen months have been politics, politics, politics.

Race and Age.

Black and White.

Men and Women.

Young and Old.

White Collar and Blue Collar.

Liberal and Conservative.

Trash and Class.

Blue State and Red State.

And they all come together. They cross bridges in Chicago. They stand side by side in Times Square. They talk to one another in the coffee shop to offer a friendly reminder to Vote. For all the division that has been highlighted, it's obvious that the line of division is invisible. The message is clear. Change is near.

Jenna Grippo



Alexis Backer

Choices

Looking around, each of us has our track,
Many different paths, each one is their own;
Thinking about which to take, my world goes black.

The world turns so fast, I can never look back.
Moving fast, spinning abruptly, I begin to falter.
Looking around, each of us has our track.

I long to do well, do something I can hack.
The path on which I walk, never the same tomorrow;
Thinking about which to take, my world goes black.

All the right elements and qualities I shall not lack,
I will make something of myself, who I am.
Looking around, each of us has our track.

Under the pressure and grueling work, I begin to crack;
Did I walk the right road? Did I choose the right path?
Thinking about which to take, my world goes black.

I will make something of myself at once,
Choosing my road will come to me some day.
Looking around, each of us has our track.
Thinking about which to take, my world goes black.

Melina Parrello



Lauren Warshauer

Masterpiece in Black and Light

Hurried brushstrokes in a blinding white contrast against ancient brick and clay.

Painted ceramics held captivated.

A scientist performs an experiment – anxiously awaiting any sort of result.

Excitement, joy, and immaturity in a single expression.

More captivated ceramics sit upon an earthen floor.

Faceless, yet captivated nonetheless.

A simple tool can do so much when not used correctly.

But still, it's not used incorrectly.

The scientist works furiously to force a result from this experiment.

A shape emerges.

Abstract in every way.

An upright bull.

The scientist succeeds – positive results, proven true by successors.

A masterpiece in black and light.

Emily Singer

To Grow Old

You could tell from the roads of wrinkles running across her face that she had been on this earth for ages. The crevices and folds of skin across her face showed every one of her emotions. Her pale grey eyes appeared as though they'd lost their color over the years, looking sad. With worn out hands and weary fingers, she folded her arms across her chest, staring straight into the television with those colorless eyes.

For years, she had awaited change, living alone for too long – nothing was the same since he was taken from her. Her husband was a war veteran who left her for good when his life came to a halt. It was so sudden. No one expected it to end like that – to wake up and have him be the only one who would be asleep for good. Alone, he left her to sit by herself in their weary old house with no one to talk to. Not even a pet to befriend.

She stood up from the chair. Her bones hurt. She was tired and achy. Slowly wobbling over to the hall closet, her heart began to race. Opening the door and reaching to the shelf, she pulled down a wooden box that was almost too heavy for her to lift. Steadily, she took the box back to the tired looking chair in front of the television and took a seat. A layer of dust painted the top of the box. Had it really been that long since she last opened it? With a swift gust of breath, she blew the dust away and let out a sneeze afterwards. Lifting the cover away, a wave of sadness crashed over her and she felt that same feeling of emptiness on the day she tried to wake her beloved other half.

Inside the box, her eyes gazed upon items belonging to her husband, things she put away after the death, for she could not bear to have them laying around while he was gone. Lying inside was a picture of the two of them on their honeymoon, with smiles from ear to ear. They looked so happy, as if they would be happy living life with just each other, forever. Invincible. Grasping the old sepia colored photo tightly, she put it aside and took out the next heart-wrenching item — a medal of honor he had received from the war. It sat there still glistening slightly. She perfectly remembered the day he received it and how he smiled so greatly that entire day as he hung it on the wall. Suddenly, a tear splashed down on the metal and gently rolled off the side, wetting the inside of the box. Sadness was all around. She was alone, and she knew she would be that way until she, too, fell into a sleep from which she would never awake.

Melina Parrello



Lauren Warshauer

In just that moment,
I knew there would be change.
I would be able to wake up every morning
And realize I could do anything,
Be anyone,
Be confident with myself,
And most importantly,
Be free.

Caroline Lukaswitz

The Folder

That thing, that thing
Sitting on my desk.
The monster there,
That terrible wreck.

What sins have I made
To deserve this curse?
This, this bitter fruit
Of my negligence.

Sometimes I wish
That I was bolder,
To have the courage
To clean my folder.

Marwan Bishtawi

Someone

And when you smile,
I truly understand.

And when you laugh,
It all becomes clear.

And when you seem to know,
It makes me think.

And when you confess,
It's hard for me to speak.

And when I stand to the right,

And you look to the left,

I realize you are not mine to neither want nor keep.

Jailenn Morel



Lauren Warshauer

The Realization

This is just to say
That I have fallen, and I can't pick myself up.
Because,
I have ignored your advice
And attempts to teach me,
So I can be hard headed and learn on my own.
So forgive me mother,
But,
I will tell you
That revenge isn't sweet,
And nor is not paying attention
When life's test is just around the corner

Jailenn Morel

A Friend

What are friends? Are they an arm, or a leg, or a tongue, or a mind, or a heart? Or are they none of the above, but do so appear? Or do they so appear, but do so assume that role? Are they a man, or are they a thought? For what is a man, if not acknowledged in another's thoughts? Do they exist in man, or does man exist in them? Do they make a man or does a man make up them? Where do friends live? In the mind or the heart? For what is the mind, but the thoughts of the heart? What is the heart, but the tears of the mind? By what are the measures of friendship defined? How are friends made, are they molded by clay? Or are they netted and caught everyday? Are they seen and brought to the heart? Or they made in the heart, and then set apart?

What are friends? They are neither an arm, nor a leg, nor a tongue, nor a mind, but a heart. And in your heart they are separate, but never apart.

Marwan Bishtawi

The Land of Milk and Honey

As he left the airport, I squeezed my eyes shut and tried to swallow the classic lump that formed inside my throat. I prayed to God that he would come back to America safely. People can say “everything will be ok” but really, the odds of that happening aren’t particularly in my favor. I’m so proud of him, but to be honest, I don’t think I want to risk the love that I have for him. Oh, Matthew. I’ve never seen someone so devoted, so courageous. As I opened my eyes, the last glimpse I caught of Matthew was of his short buzz cut, put together with his sturdy boots, army attire, and his award winning smile.

Israeli Defense Force, IDF, צבא ההגנה לישראל. It all means the same thing, the Israeli Army. Growing up in Israel, I know Matthew is mentally and emotionally attached to that land. Yes, Matthew, and the other thousands of people who feel the same way. He’s doing the right thing. I know it, but I can’t seem to accept the fact that he might not be coming back. Each day, when I hear about another Hamas rocket, I hold my breath until night, praying for that daily, relieving and anxious long distance call from Israel. Every time he’s on the phone, he’s still my Matthew, but not the same one that left New York. His voice seems more tired now, more hardhearted.

He says I should come to Israel. Come to the *Holy Land*, the *Land of Milk and Honey*. Frankly, I’m scared. I don’t think I could deal with the suspense of waiting for something to happen. Waiting for a bomb, waiting for a rocket, waiting for something else to go wrong. As much as he says everything is safe, it can’t be. Just from listening to the news, I can tell it’s not somewhere that I want to be, especially now.

As I stalled around the kitchen, sifting through mail, awaiting my daily call, I spotted a letter from Matthew. I thought it was so weird, since I speak to him every day, and he never mentioned sending a letter. As usual, the suspense of the letter turned into an intense fear of my love’s death. No. No. No. There is no way he could be gone.

Somewhat paralyzed, I ripped through the letter’s gold seal, not minding how I opened the envelope. With my breath held, I looked inside only to find a plane ticket. Almost as if he knew I was opening the letter, the phone rang with my daily Israeli phone call. Relieved to hear his voice but annoyed at the plane ticket, I picked up the phone. I quickly questioned the significance of the ticket. Like any man in love would, he was trying to convince me to come to see him. Although he knew I was uncomfortable with the idea, he always needed to push a little more. But, that’s him. Once he has his mind set on something, he won’t turn back. With that in mind, I threw away all of my other beliefs and said yes to going and *goodbye* to my city townhouse.

The ticket was for the second week in April, and the days of March were dwindling down. Only two and a half weeks before my departure, my mind was still racing with possibilities. There were bad possibilities and promising ones, but either way, nothing in my mind was definite. After my phone call with Matthew, I was completely shocked at my response, but, in a way I was so comforted by the fact that I was going to see him soon.

By the second week in April, I was all set to go. I even prayed at the airport before take off. I was horrified, but the religious feeling of the flight seemed to form a comforting zone for me. When I arrived in Israel, it was like nothing I'd ever seen before. There was a burst of prayer, and many of the people departed the airliner to kiss the land. I, being the all American non-religious one, was completely puzzled but insanely interested at the same time. How could someone feel so much of a connection to a place, a geographical location? To me, it was just the home and pride and joy of my beloved husband.

Alex Chill



Jailenn Morel

The Young Breeze

Hark, the young breeze
Doth wake the sleeping dawn,
And stirs the ancient trees,
As from him new things spawn.

See how the young breeze
Rings forth in endless song.
The suffering of man he sees,
As he casts away the wrong.

Lo' the newborn breeze,
From nothing came and to nothing goes.
The throne of mankind he doth seize,
As the old sovereign, he overthrows.

Marwan Bishtawi



Joanna Spencer

In the Garden

Conglomerated mini-cobbles basking in the 11:38 morning sun. Held together by a glue of cement, imprisoning the tiny pebbles in a permanent group hug. 2x2 squares, perfectly pieced together, leaving just enough room for some life in between. From the dark, hollow depths of the in-between cracks, a three-fingered hand begs for help. Reaching out to whom-ever, whatever will help, and his wife and their three kids. And they struggle to climb out of their imprisonment, but the 11:47 morning sun beats down upon them and the 11:48 morning breeze rocks them back and forth.

But they never give up.

Several 2x2 conglomerated squares to the left, an adventurer is adventuring. He weaves in and out of the tiny pebbles, exploring their rough, scratched outer shells. He knows the danger of stepping upon these rounded rocks: slipping and falling, heatstroke, or even death by human shoe. He has reached his destination. Securing equipment to the cavern's edge, he spelunks. And spelunks and spelunks and spelunks.

It seems as if he'll never emerge.

Until the 11:57 morning sun calls his name, and he re-emerges. He packs up his equipment and slings it onto his back. And as the 11:59 morning sun becomes the 12:00 afternoon sun, he makes his way back home.



Emily Singer

Lauren Warshauer

Dogs

Canines,
Doggies,
Mutts,
Pups,
Call them what you like.

They are unmatched
In intellect,
In loyalty,
In being.

Faithful animals with
Valor greater than most mortals,
Personalities as bold as bold can be.

Dogs will follow you into the depths
Of the woods.
When every other friend
Has chickened out and left you,
Alone and cold.

Yet the furry friend will not abandon.
A man dying under the rubble,
His last gasp somewhere near,
Never knowing where his life could end.

Until a friendly bark is heard,
And a dark nose
Pokes between the fallen rocks.
Another win for the dogs.

Crying hard and crying long,
A girl sits curled-up on the floor.
Yet who is next to her
With eyes glued to her face,
Breathing with her?
Her dog.

Dogs are guardian angels.
Dogs are blankets on a shivering body.
Dogs are a crutch supporting a bad leg.
Dogs are therapists.
Dogs are the closest things we have to
Perfection.

Rachel Oestricher



Alexis Backer

Ode to Science

Look at the world
In its current state,
The world's pallid glory
And the widespread hate.

What've we to thank,
If not science
Who had demolished fear,
And engineered defiance?

Let us all thank,
The ever popular new religion
Which worships fact
And shuns old superstition.

Look at how scientific research
Stopped the world from believing,
Rather created a new culture
Of objective reasoning.

How wrong we were,
In the days of old
To let faith enable us
To brave the cold.

How dumb we were
To allow belief,
Interfere with
Blissful relief.

Let us all now kowtow
To this new denomination.
Of men who dream
Of world domination.

For what are morals
In the face of fact?
Failure to question
Is failure to act.

Let us exploit God's nature
For the "Greater Good"
If it means that we will
Indulge ourselves on stol'n food.

Let us cast aside,
Our crude instinct.
What need have we for survival,
When we can think?

We do not need,
Our weakened flesh.
'Tis in white lab coats
That we shall dress.

"Corrupted society,"
"Declining Morals."
Such superstition,
Is only for mortals.

Let us burn the books of ignorance
With the joy of inquiry,
And record the day's benevolence
In a scientific diary.

And let us destroy,
The worthless works of old.
Shakespeare, Dickens, and Gibran
Need not be sold.

How naïve we were, loving
When science was so much better.
Now we can use machinery
To write a heartfelt letter.

Morals are outdated,
Our new sovereign is fact.
Failure to question,
Is failure to act.

No longer shall we trust,
Our father's loving arms.
'Tis paternity tests which shall certify
If we should believe our father's charms.

Why should we believe,
That our mother is our mother?
Send her saliva to the lab
To make sure before we hug her.

And *how* can we let old nanny live,
When she has acute arthritis?
Science dictates she be put to rest
So now, granny can no longer visit us.

And no way we can let,
Our precious baby live.
He has a mutation,
The machine is positive.

What are worthless morals,
In the almighty presence of fact.
Failure to question
Is failure to act.

