

THE ARTISAN

Briarwood Christian School 6255 Cahaba Valley Road Birmingham, AL 35242 205-776-5900

Editor's Note

It is very easy to lose our sense of wonder as we grow up. We have more responsibilities and less time to spend on enjoyment and fun, causing us to slowly lose the ability to stop and marvel at the world around us. The carnival allows us to let go of our daily burdens and step into another world full of color, joy, and laughter. In the same way, we hope for our stories, artwork, and photography to captivate you and cause you to take a minute and really enjoy the world around you.



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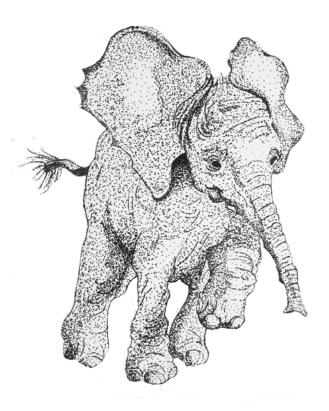
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Gracie Wong: pointillism







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Julia Sinclair: pen



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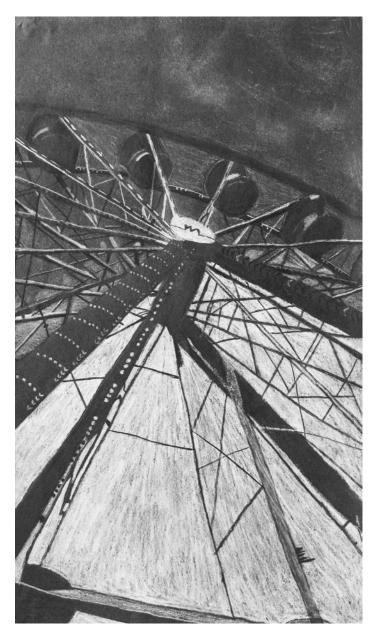
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Morgan Cooke-Stewart: white charcoal

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Lauren Musachia Fi ct i on

piece with his calloused hands,

andlelight flickered as the noise of the wheel pattered on with passionate rhythm. An old man with furrowed eyebrows sat stooped over a slab of clay. He smoothed over the curves of his

> taking great care to apply just the right amount of pressure as the clay bent and stretched into a shape. Intricate pottery pieces covered

the shelves behind him. The wood floor peeked through the piles of plates, and bowls. The old man barely had enough room to walk around his hut.

"Just a little bit more." The old man tilted his head as he stretched and pulled a strip of the clay into a handle and attached it to the side of his piece. "Aha, there it is! That should do it." He lifted the little teapot up into the

air with great pride. He dusted off his hands on his apron, which was splattered with gray clay. He walked over to the wall and pulled back a curtain to reveal a shelf. The old man gently placed the teapot next to an unfinished colorless vase sitting on the shelf. He touched the unfinished vase and clutched his chest. He sighed and flung the curtain back over the shelf. The light outside began to permeate the hut, flowing in from the dusty window. The old man tip-toed over to it. He placed his hand on the windowsill, closed his eyes, and took a deep breath. He gazed at his groggy village with its little houses that spackled the green hills. People were shuffling out their doors, arms stuffed with piles of books, baskets of bread, and pails of water as they prepared for the day ahead. The old man turned from the window. He untied his apron, leaving it on the wooden stool, and slipped



on his shoes. He grabbed his taupe overcoat and leather sack. He paused at the door, turned around and whispered, "I'll be just a moment." He closed the little door to his hut, just outside the village. With a winding gravel path leading to the entrance, his hut stood in all of its shabby glory. It was made of thick stone arranged in a circular shape with an assortment with different colored glass fused together to make windows. Lush greens

surrounded the hut, which sat on the top of a little hill, facing the rising sun. The old man journeyed on the gravel path to come upon the village. The ground changed from gravel to cobblestone, and music and color filled the air as people chatted outside their doors. All the excitement flurried around him and made his heart skip and leap.

"Hello there," he smiled warmly at a young girl who passed by him.

People greeted him with warm smiles. "Hello, how you doing these days, Tom?" He answered with the

He answered with the same response he'd been using for years. "Good, and getting better."

People always chuckled at this response. Tom did not talk for long. He was on a mission for paint. He passed a couple more

tiny houses and turned a corner to face a grand building with gigantic stones in front.

The little wooden

door had a sign that read "open" in scribbled paint. He stepped inside and gazed around him. He had seen this place many times, but still found himself shocked at the enormity of the paint collections.

"Tears fell

from Tom's

eyes filled

face: his

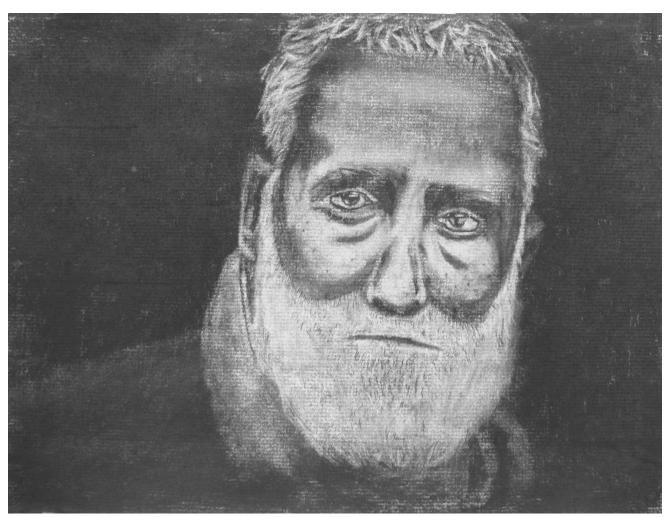
with hurt

and disap-

pointment."

"Well, hello there, Tom. Anything I can help you with today?" spoke a man wearing an apron as he tinkered with some wooden parts behind the counter.

"Thank you, George, but I'm just on a quest for a color today," replied Tom as he headed into the maze of aisles filled with vibrant colors. He walked slowly, inspecting the pigments, looking for just the right shade of red to blend harmoniously with a nice aquamarine blue. Sifting through the aisles, scanning all around, he spotted it across the room. Alas, the perfect color. It was a deep red, one that







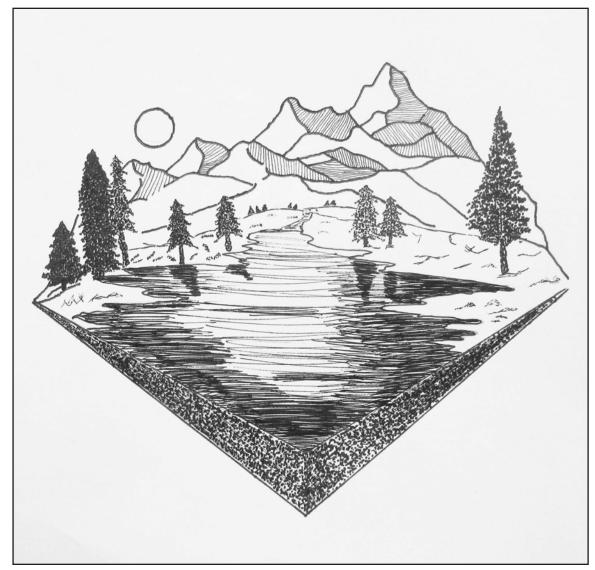
made him feel warm inside. It had a gentle presence and spirit. Tom smiled, picked up the jar of paint, and held it against the light. The richness of the red filled his eyes and heart, and he nodded with great satisfaction. He carried the paint and placed it on the counter.

"Ah, what a beautiful color, red. One of my favorites actually, although it doesn't sell here much, unfortunately. Suppose people think it's too bold or strong, always giving folks a weird feeling, like a warning. I think they just don't want to walk up the stairs to the reds section," George said with a wink and a laugh. "All right, it's going to be two silvers."

Tom pulled out two silver coins from his leather sack and placed them on the counter. He carefully took the paint and put it in his leather sack. Waving George goodbye, he walked towards the door. "Thanks again. I'll be back soon," he shouted as he opened the door, bumping into a woman carrying a large basket of paints. "Oh sorry about that—my fault. . . . I sometimes forget where I'm walking." He chuckled as he picked up the paints and placed them in the woman's basket.

The woman glared back at him and went inside the shop.

The daylight warmed Tom's face. He weaved through the crowd, anxious to get back to his work. Back onto the gravel road, he noticed broken pieces of pottery scattered on the ground. As he drew closer, he saw that a window was broken and shards of glass sprinkled the green grass below. He dropped his leather sack. Tom ran towards his hut and darted inside. He spun around, looking at all the empty shelves. There was a loud bang.



Mary Stewart Bowen: pen and ink

Tom whipped around. A shelf had fallen to the ground, leaving two lonely nails in the wall. Pieces of colorful clay were strewn about. His pottery was all missing. He felt everything inside of him break. He fell to his knees, sobbing violently, his whole body shaking. Tom rushed to his hidden shelf. He pulled the curtain aside and saw the teapot and colorless

vase sitting unharmed. He gave a sigh of relief and held the unfinished case close to his heart.

Tom's eyes spotted a blur on the ground next to him. As he investigated, his sorrow turned into rage. A muddy footprint plastered the floor, leaving behind a print of the letters J. W. on the sole. Tears fell from Tom's face; his eyes filled with hurt and disappointment.



He knew those initials, and he knew where he had to go. He grabbed his sack and stuffed his precious vase into it. He ran over to the window and ripped off a part of the curtain. Tom wrapped the curtain around his head to conceal his head and face. He stuck his hand into his block of wet clay and smeared it over his cheekbones to give his face a dirt covered disguise. Tom walked over to the window and gazed into the glass, and a reflection of a stranger stared back. He was on a quest. He squinted his eyes and ran out the door with the fabric wrapped around him, flowing in the wind. He summited the mountain and stood gazing out over both sides into the valleys. On one side was a small village with cobblestone streets and people talking in friendly groups, while on the other side stood another small village with thick grey rock cut into intricate designs and scurrying people darting between its neatly organized rows. The wind whistled in Tom's ears as he marched towards the village with the grey rock. The grass brushed his ankles as his legs tumbled down the mountain side. He approached the village and stepped onto the smooth grey stone. He could feel the coldness of the stone through his shoes.

Clutching his head wrap more tightly, he started into the village. Elbows bumped into Tom's side, and eyes shot looks of annoyance. Every now and then someone would mutter an obscene phrase at Tom. After taking a dozen sharp lefts and rights, Tom approached a small inn on a corner of the neatly organized village. He raised his arm and knocked quietly on the door. After a minute with no response, Tom knocked again, this time with more authority. The sound of fumbling locks accom-

panied loud bangs and a hurried muttering. The door cracked open just enough for Tom to see a pair of furrowed eyebrows and tired eyes.

"Yes?" the man demanded in a hoarse voice.

The man's eyes struck Tom. Those blue eyes sent a quiver of pain through his heart. "I'm looking for someone, and I'm hoping that you will help me. I need a place to stay the night," replied Tom, covering his face with his wrap and avoiding the man's eyes.

The man gazed at him for a moment before opening the door. "Head upstairs. The room to the left is empty. Don't try anything stupid during the night," the man said, staring down Tom still with furrowed eyebrows.

Tom gazed around to look at the inn. Paintings on the ceiling peeked through the curtains. Ornate furnishings dappled the stairs, and an intricate rug lined the hallway.

The man's rough voice brought Tom back into reality. "Well, go on. Don't just stand in the doorway." The man slammed the door shut behind Tom and walked back down the hall.

Tom climbed the stairs and found the room on the left. There was a small bed in the corner and a large mirror covered by a sheet, a corner peeking out. Tom set down his things and uncovered the mirror. Dust invaded his lungs. He looked into the mirror, coughing, and saw the same stranger peering back at him. Only this time traces of old Tom began to peek through the fading clay on his face. He did not have much time. He was walking through the hallway heading downstairs when he saw a box of pottery sitting in a dark room

across from his. He creeped to the box and picked up one of the jars. He was admiring the ornate paint work and the details around the jar when a harsh voice standing behind him broke his trance.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?" The man stood behind him with clenched fists and jaw. "Put that vase down right now," he demanded.

Tom dropped the jar. The shattering noise pierced the tension in the room. Tom stood horrified at what had happened. He stared at the broken pieces of beautiful color lying on the ground.

The man's face softened into horror and then hardened back into rage. He stormed towards Tom, pinned him against the wall, grabbing his cloak. "I told you to put it down! Now look at what you did!" "He had the same blue eyes that he'd always loved. The kind of blue that envelopes you and refreshes your soul."

Tom's eyes were glued to the ground, holding back tears.

"Look at me!" the man screamed, his face dangerously close to Tom's. The man stared at Tom for a moment as if he recognized him. His eyes scanned his face, and Tom's heart began to race. He had the same blue eyes that he'd always loved. The kind of blue that envelops you and refreshes your soul. Tom's mind retreated to a time when he had seen those eyes everyday. The man became a boy, and they both sat in Tom's hut. The boy's hands



trembled as he tried to sculpt the clay into a vase. Tom's hands gently guided the little boy's as the boy sighed in frustration.

"I can't do this anymore, Papa. It looks like just a glob of clay," the boy complained as he took his hands off of the clay. Tom smiled gently back at the boy and picked up the clay from the wheel, holding it into the air. "Ah yes, but this

isn't any ordinary glob of clay. No sir, I tell you it's the finest grey glob of clay I've ever laid eyes on!" Tom exclaimed jovially, waving his

hands in the air.

"Tom woke to

the sound of

raging shouts...

shattering pierced

Tom's sleepy

mi nd. "

The boy's frown turned into a laugh.

Tom put the glob of clay into the boy's hands and wrapped his own hands The sound of glass around it. "You see here, one day this will turn into a beautiful vase. You just have to wait for the right time."

Tom smiled, bending down to face the boy. With a wink and a pat,

Tom said, "Now, off to bed and we'll see what tomorrow holds!"

The boy walked over to his little bed and lay down. Tom pulled the cover over him and patted his head goodnight as those blue eyes closed, and he slept soundly.

It was those same blue eyes that threatened to kill him now. The man released Tom's cloak and stepped back. His eyebrows furrowed. He bent down and picked up the pieces of the shattered vase. He grabbed the box of pottery and shoved it in a closet next to a large backpack and a couple days worth

of food stacked on the ground.

"Journey ahead?" Tom asked.

The man, glaring at Tom, slammed the closet door and turned the lock. "Goodnight," he said, and he walked to his room and shut the door.

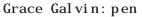
Tom woke to the sound of raging shouts. He wiped the sleep from his eyes. The sound of glass shattering pierced Tom's sleepy mind. He jumped up and crept down the stairs to see broken shards of clay strewed all over the floor. Tom followed the shard trail to the front door where the man was being held back by a nicely dressed officer. Tom crept forward and

hid himself underneath the window to listen to the commotion outside.

"Thief," spoke a firm voice that Tom assumed was the policeman. "Think you can just go around stealing people's things, huh? You know what we do to those kinds of people?"

Tom peered over the windowsill. There were two guards. One was holding the man, and the other was rummaging through the man's bag, throwing the man's loaves of bread into the mud and stepping on his compass. The guard took out multiple vases and ornate jars, along with other valuable looking things







like a set of silver plates and loads of jewelry, and carefully placed them to the side.

"Alright, well let's get this over with." The guard threw down the backpack and faced the man who was now on his knees with his hands forced behind his back. "Do you confess to your crime of theft and then attempting to flee the scene?" The guard bent over so that he was looking down on the man.

The man locked his eyes on the ground. Silence.

"Well, I'll ask you once more. Do you confess? If you don't give me a straight answer, you will face the consequences," said the guard.

The man remained silent.

The guard turned his back to the man and walked with his hands behind his back, nodding. "Okay. We'll make this quick then," he said.

The guard who was restraining the man shoved him against the wall and covered his head with a black canvas sack, while the other guard took out a pistol from his belt and spun it around on his finger.

"Wait!" Tom jumped up and ran out the door. He stood in front of the man and the pistol, waving his arms. He had not thought about what he planned to do, but the words spilled out of his mouth.

The guard lowered his gun. "Get out of the way."

Tom caught a glimpse of his name badge which read, "Sheriff York."

"You can't shoot him," Tom pleaded.

"And why is that?" York asked, growing more and more irritated.

"Because . . ." Tom remembered reading

of a law that allowed someone else to take a criminal's punishment if he so wished. "There's a law," Tom blurted out.

York nodded. "Yes, and what exactly is your point?"

"The law says that a man can take a criminal's punishment if he so wishes," explained Tom.

"Correct," York retorted. "Get to your point."

Tom took a deep breath. He thought about the boy he knew years ago before he said, "I want to take this man's punishment."

The Sheriff glared at Tom as if he had just been denied the pleasure of getting his revenge. York tugged at the collar of his uniform. "Very well. Let's get on with it then."

The other guard removed the sack from the man's head and stood him up.

Tom, in his tiredness, had forgotten to disguise himself. He grabbed the man's arm. "John, you are forgiven. Go finish what we started. I love you." Tom took a deep breath.

The man locked eyes with Tom, and a hint of recognition and horror spread across the man's face as tears filled his eyes.

The bullet fired, and Tom crumpled to the ground.

"No!" bellowed John, struggling against the guard holding him back. He buckled underneath the weight of his heart, crying out in anguish.

The guard released him, and John ran to Tom lying on the ground. He put his arms around his father and sobbed. He looked at the body of his father. "Why did you do this for me?"

John blew the dust off of the vase he had

just finished and held it into the air proudly. He glanced towards the shelf and saw the unfinished grey vase sitting there. He took it down, contemplated, and remembered his father. He turned over the pot and a note fell out. The note read, "To John, I have saved a spot for your initials on the bottom of this pot in hopes that I might be with you again when you carve them as a free man. T. W." It felt as if his father's hand was right over his again, like it used to be. He grabbed a carving tool and etched the initials "T. & J. W." on the bottom of the jar, now as a free man.

"A hint of recognition and horror spread across the man's face as tears filled his eyes."

As John walked through his new town, he noticed all the colorful artwork scattering the windows of the shops. He felt a familiar comfort come over him. His father's pottery decorated the town. Here his father's work was celebrated and loved. Tom was a celebrity in a town he never knew. John chuckled, turned a corner and pushed open the wooden door with a sign saying, "Open for new business!" scribbled in paint.

"Hello there, John! Nice to see you again!" the proprietor's voice welcomed John.

"Hi, George! Nice new place you got here!" replied John.

"Ah, yes! She's a real beauty, isn't she? So much bigger than the old shop," said George, patting the stone wall. What might you be looking for today?"

"Ah, yes." John contemplated what colors he would need. "Would you happen to know where I can find some red paint?"



La Règne du Soleil

Gazing out across the calm, colorful water, My eyes strain to make out the majestic scene before me As fog veils the world like a bride from her husband, Casting the world in mystery.

From the fog, a shape emerges, A monolith rising from those calm, quiet waters. The purple hues of the fog Denote the regal nature of that ancient structure.

Gazing out toward the tall spires, barely visible through the mist, I think of that domineering building, shrouded and hazy With an unnatural hush that coats the air, Except for the whispering rumbles of the waves.

What secret dealings are held within? The future of a country is shrouded in fog As its leaders are hidden from the people's view. The people get mere fleeting and blurry images Of the Houses' inner workings.

Gazing upward, the sun is revealed as the dispeller of fog, For the Houses are only seen because of the sun. The sun sits enthroned above the Houses Its power far surpassing the fog-covered towers. The water reflects the sun's myriad of color In tribute to its might and right to rule.

The sun smiles, sparkling upon its subjects. "La Règne du Soleil!" the sun proclaims. The water glistens as it basks in the sun's rays,

Bowing in little ripples as the rays reach the water's surface. The sun shines through the fog, and illuminates Truth and beauty with its God-given power.

Gazing across the wondrous scene, A rippling races through my heart As it dances in time with the water. "La Règne du Soleil!" my heart cries And my voice echoes the refrain, "God save the king!"

Evelyn Collis



Mackenzie King: oil



A Life not Lived

A response to "On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt" by Claude Monet

I watch her as she sits, still
Staring at the children across the way
Giggling, gamboling, the future gaily glancing
From their premature minds,
Spiraling up and away on the early evening mist
That shimmers in the setting sun
Like so many scales on a fresh caught carp.

I hear her as she shifts, shunning their delight in favor
Of the poppies peppering the landscape, their bright hues happily
Unable to lift her soul as it lies stagnantly
Rotting, its putrid aroma diffusing to the edges of her mind and body,
The sulfurous scent smothering her
Natural perfume of peonies and petrichor.

She turns, a smile leading her, but never reaching her Eyes, frigid grey expanses that have only frozen colder, The icicles in her irises splintering, shattering, and refreezing everyday, A brokenhearted mockery of the phoenix.

A small sad sigh escapes her Parted lips, an echo of a life less than entirely lived, Of a dream pruned too soon, cut from its beauty.

She gathers her hat and coat and takes my arm, Leading me into our boat.

We drift lazily back to shore

Together, heartache forgotten.



Lindsey Lovvorn: white charcoal





Lynzie Liddell: tempera



Addie Simms Roberson: acrylic



Anna Martin: acrylic



Anna Gardner Herren: acrylic





Olivia Ricks: acrylic



Emma Stutts: acrylic



Maddie S. Vaughn: acrylic



Southern Skies

I wished the thick wool blanket of morning fog
That covered the pond would then cover me.
Yet the air was still crisp with its starvation for sunlight.
Frigid water soaked into my feathers as realization set in.

Geese flocked above me with an alphabetic symbol Like ships heading out to sea, one following the other. I began to flounder, perplexed yearning to be anywhere else. My tiny heart yelped for an answer. Where was I?

The world around me settled like dust on the ground As the wind swept away the last trace of blur. The trees were engulfed in a vibrancy of color. Tall and strong like an army of mammoth men. They marched through and left a trail of red in their path.

With swift motions I felt myself lift.

Then the pond absorbed me again like a punching bag endures a blow.

Finally I could sense the water beneath me slowly trickle away.

"I am flying," I said to myself with awe and wonder.

I soared above the army as my heart pulled me south.

Riley Drouin



Mason Mathias: pen and ink



The Scourge of Summer Skies

Under summer suns, may mosquitoes burn, their bodies wither until they learn to stop their runs to my veins.

May waters dry up so their brood don't breed and steal those drops of blood that I need.

Let their wings be torn, their bladed noses bent by the hand that once fed them but now fights back.

Let sizable swells consume those pests and send them to mosquito hells as they shrivel and die.

When night falls, I pray for their consumption by winged creatures not seen by day, but rested in caves, now feasting away.

Biters, thieves, vermin, may they never see the sun again and meet the fate of their kin who foolishly took my blood.

David Houston

Bennett Shaw: mixed media





uninspired

i'm uninspired.
nothing sets my heart on fire.
no thoughts have transpired.
my lack of ideas is dire.
my brain is tired;
it needs rewired.
i must acquire
something brighter.
i can only inquire:
what does creativity require?
i'm uninspired.

Jenna Fuller

around my waist

taut leather band around my waist dull and brown secured by a tortoise shell square

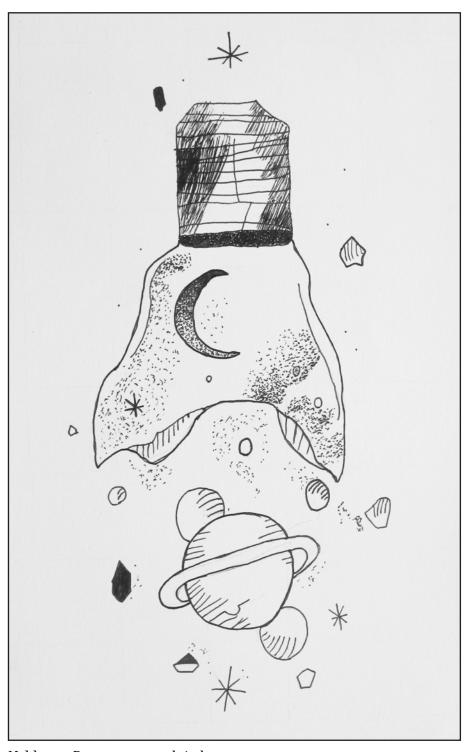
soft yellow sash atop my hips bright and sunny narrow and hidden below the loops

smooth olive strap along my torso slick and shiny fastened by a polished buckle

keep me anchored buckle me up hold me together

Amelia Ray





Mallory Bean: pen and ink

Kindness

It is treasured, even the smallest pinch of it. A preschooler's caring heart, as pure as snow. The first time you share crayons, toothlessly grinning at the stick figures before you. When your smiles go by ignored, your acts of service slapped and sacrifice wasted, you keep kicking at the erected walls and break through only by love.

Later,

if you drop your baggage to help your elderly neighbor cross the street, you do not do it for a pat on the back, but rather to keep her safe. If you see the man with the cardboard sign, you hand over your lunch instead of passing by. Your kindness is a flame impossible to contain. When you receive a note of thanks, realizing your actions are moving mountains, then your kindness is not just kindness, but a lifestyle worth the work.

Later,

if a loved one falls in despair, baffled and broken by the world, you jump over the ledge too, fingers grasping the cliff's crevices and heaving you both to safety. Next, you capture the tears in a bottle, and banging on the glistening glass for freedom, they slowly wither away, and hurting is forgotten with a whispering hug.

Later, when the doctor gives you a month, your kindness will radiate brighter than ever before, every person you inspired like a seed, the glow of your touch growing brighter each day, and when the timer clicks, you will take the hand of your own Seed-Planter, and leave the world a brilliant galaxy of starlight.

Lauren Lanier

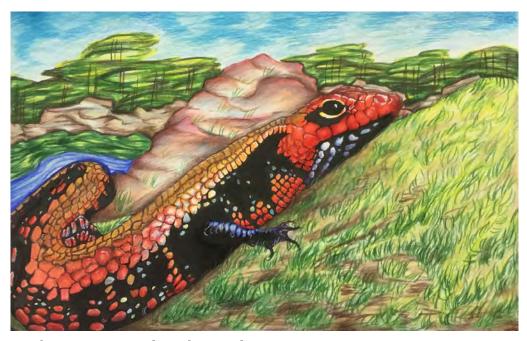
A Preference

I don't talk It's simply my way And I haven't once Not all day

I don't talk It's just what I do And I'll never learn how Cause that'd require talking too

Natalie Clasen





Jordan Martens: colored pencil



Brooklyn Barger: acrylic



Julianne Lett: oil



Camdyn Gilbert: acrylic



Gracie Wong: tempera





Heather Houston: marker



Bennett Milton: watercolor



Lauren Hancock: watercolor



Jordan Martens: colored pencil



Jenna Fuller: colored pencil



Jon Houston Seibert

Fi cti on

Her eyes

his, and

his eyes

she is

tiny

burn like

stabbi ng

them with

toothpi cks

a thousand

beam into

ick. Tick. Tick. Silence engulfs the room as Alexander sits slumped down in Dr. McClain's chair. Rain blows against the window, knocking on it, trying to get in. The

sound of thunder suddenly striking overpowers the sound of the ticking clock. Dr. McClain notices how Alexander's crossed arms adjust slightly as the roar of thunder echoes throughout the room. She writes this observation down, then looks up at

Alexander.

"So, what brings you in this morning? I normally require an appointment."

He remains sitting times over. still, as if she is not in

the room at all. He looks

up at her for a few ticks of the clock, but grows uncomfortable with her unbroken eye contact. Her eyes beam into his, and his eyes burn like she is stabbing them with tiny toothpicks a thousand times over. Finally his eyes dart to the heater humming in the corner of the room.

She notices a look of guilt on his face, and she breaks the silence. "Have you done something you're not proud of?"

"I didn't say that," he retorts.

"No, no, you didn't. I'm not accusing you of anything. I'm simply trying to understand your situation so I can help you.

You do want help, right? You

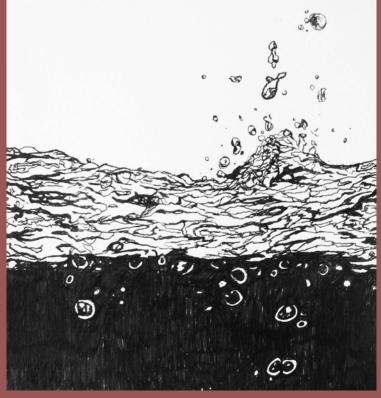
did choose to come today?"

"It's too late for help," he says, adjusting his sitting position.

Dr. McClain stares silently at Alexander for what feels to him like hours. Clicking her pen, she writes something down on her paper.

"Did you and Beth have a fight? Maybe you started drinking again?"

The sound of the thunder combined with the expression on Alexander's face answers the question for him. Slowly rubbing his kneecaps, Alexander talks to the floor. "Last night. That's when I drank. That's when I hurt



Mason Wright: pen

Dr. McClain leans forward. "Them? Who's them, Alexander?"

Alexander looks up at her.

Alexander swings open the door to their tiny, old apartment. He is greeted with the smell of baking bread mixed with a stew. The pleasant smell doesn't make up for another day at the office.

"There you are!" Beth exclaims excitedly as Alexander shuts the squeaky door behind him. "So much happened to me today. I have so much to tell you!"

"That's nice, Beth." Alexander forces the words out of his mouth.

"Is everything okay?"

"Why wouldn't it be, Beth? I'm out all



day behind a desk that keeps me hostage. I shouldn't be doing this. I should be out on the field. That's what I loved doing. That's the only thing I've ever been good at."

"Alex," Beth breaks in before he can think of more things wrong in his life to complain about. She waits a moment, trying to choose her next words wisely. "We talked about me getting a job. I just think that under the circumstances, maybe we should wait."

"You should wait. You think you should wait," he says, throwing his arms up in the air. "I'm going to shower. Tell me the news at dinner."

Alexander starts the shower and pauses. Working in a cubicle does not require nor justify the urgent need of a shower, yet he

Trent Thomas: graphite

has still gone to take one. Is it to escape? He watches the gentle drops of water pour out of the showerhead, afraid of what the news may be.

Alexander watches rain from outside the office window. The raindrops are almost in sync with the ticking of the clock.

"What news, Alexander?" Dr. McClain asks with a puzzled look on her face, trying to figure out what pieces of the puzzle he's withholding from her. "What happened over dinner?"

Alexander doesn't hesitate. "I don't want to talk about it."

"Alexander, I can't help you unless—"
"I'm not going to talk about it!"

The rising tone of his voice alerts Dr. McClain to avoid inquiring further. His hostility unnerves her. She does not quit. She must solve the case. Her inner childhood detective has gotten the best of her.

"Okay . . . tell me something then. Anything. Tell me what you want me to hear, Alexander."

He looks over at Dr. McClain's Brown University mug. "I returned late after dinner. Beth was already asleep. I went to the small chest I kept towards the back of my closet, under the mountain of clothes. That's where I hid my stash. I'm not proud of it."

Alexander's hands slowly open the chest, treating the moment like a hostage situation where if he makes a single noise, his life would be over, or in his case, Beth would wake up. He pulls out a bottle and looks at it like it is the national championship trophy he never got to hold. He drinks, then gulps and chugs as if he is stranded in the desert and has just found an oasis. Alexander then walks over to the couch and plumps down. Hitting the mute button, he turns on the TV to sports center. Highlights from the day's game play. Realizing he left the bottle on the countertop, he walks over to grab it. When he starts to take another drink, the bottle slips out of his hand and

shatters on the floor. Beth slowly creaks open the door. Alexander's head spins, his eyes widen, and he freezes in time. He knows what is about to happen. For every inch the door eases open, Alexander's heart beats twice as fast. She freezes in place.

"Alex. . . . "

"Don't say it, Beth. You can't just do that to me and expect me to react well."

"Alex, it shouldn't be a surprise to you. We've talked about this so many times."

"Well, maybe I wasn't ready! Maybe I didn't want everything you wanted."

"That doesn't mean you get to just drink your problems away. You can't just leave whenever you want. That hurts not just you, Alex. It hurts me, your family, and everyone around you."

"Why do you care! You shouldn't care! I don't judge you for not working. I don't judge your father for gambling. Why judge me? Some people smoke, Beth. Some people don't have the perfect life. They have problems! So yeah, I drink to forget about them. You don't judge every smoker with every puff



He drinks.

then gulps

and chugs

as if he is

stranded in

and has just

the desert

found an

oasi s.

of cloud you see. What about the people that eat so much that they look like they are about to explode! Do you judge them? How is my drinking any different?"

"It's not that simple, Alex! I judge you for what you do after drinking. You don't know how to control yourself. It's hurting us! After everything we just talked about at dinner, do you really think you should be behaving this way?"

His fists teeth grind together, and he sits lion about to pounce on his prey.

Alexander adjusts his legs by laying his right leg on top of the other, tighten, his giving Dr. McClain the same look he gave Beth that night. She returns the look, her face asking the same question Beth's faced asked. Overwhelmed, he can no longer look at there like a Dr. McClain. A teardrop escapes and grazes his cheek.

"What happened at dinner, Alex?" "I told you not to call me that before."

"You're right. I'm sorry. To help you, it would really help me if you could just tell me what happened at dinner." Her eyes squint at Alexander.

"You're judging me. For drinking again. Aren't you? Aren't you!" His fists tighten, his teeth grind together, and he sits there like a lion about to pounce on his prey.

"Alexander, calm down. You obviously don't see a problem here. I'm just trying to help you. My job is not to judge you."

He unclinches his fists and relaxes. "I just don't understand why Beth always judged me for the one flaw I could never overcome. Did she not see her own flaws?"

"There's a miscommunication between

you two. Men and women don't think in the same ways. From what you've told me. she doesn't hate you for drinking, she doesn't hate vou at all. She hates that you find escape in alcohol and not her."

"She hates me now, doctor. She has to hate me for what I did. I can't bring myself to even look at her anymore. I know it's too late . . . for us. I just want her to know that I



Bennett Shaw: mixed media

regret everything. I didn't mean to . . . I didn't know what I was doing."

Dr. McClain gazes at Alexander dead in the eyes. After penetrating his soul, she notices he's tearing up again. Alexander hates being this vulnerable and quickly wipes away all traces of crying on his face.

"Alexander." She pauses. "If you could please tell me everything. Give me what I

need to share this pain with you. I would really like to help. I can tell that, whatever you've done, it's eating you alive. I know you feel guilty when you drink. I'm sure of this. I do believe you are really trying to get better. Maybe you could tell me what happened at dinner?"

Alexander ponders her words. He doesn't want to admit it, but the words slip out.



"Maybe I should. Maybe I'll just feel better if I tell you."

Beth picks up a glass of water from the dining room table and drinks. She gently puts it down, and a smile grows on her face. "So I went to the doctor today."

Alexander shifts uncomfortably in his chair. His muscles tense, and he rubs his kneecaps. "And everything's still fine?"

"Yes. He's a healthy little boy." Beth breaks out into a nervous laugh. She can't hold her breath any longer.

To Alexander, the same feeling is kind enough to greet him again. The same feeling he had when he got sacked. The same feeling that cost him the game; the national championship; his career. "It's . . . it's a boy?"

"It's our boy, Alexander. You can teach him how to be a great quarterback and. . . . "

Alexander's head hangs low. Chills run through his body. His biggest fear has just come true. "It's not a boy. It can't be a boy."

Beth's smile vanishes. "I thought you would be excited about having a son."

"Of course I'm not. I'm frightened out of my mind, Beth! My father, he—what if I'm the same as him."

"Alex, don't say that. You'll make a great father."

"Well, I might not be. You have to accept that, Beth." Alexander slams his hands on the table as he gets up. "I'm going to get some air."

"Alexander, don't you dare leave me. We have to talk about—"

The door slams shut—Bam!

Crack! Thunder claps across the sky. "I left her, Dr. McClain. I left her until she went to sleep. Then I came back and started to drink."

"And you and Beth had the fight. What happened in that fight?"

"I don't know if I can say."

"Alexander, you're safe here. I won't judge you. You can tell me."

"You will, doctor. There will always be judgment. Whether you verbalize it or not. You have to judge me because I judge myself."

"I'm only here to listen, Alexander. Isn't that what you need right now? Like you said, it might feel better if you just let it all out."

Alexander pauses for seconds that drag like minutes. "I—ok."

Alexander looks down on the broken glass as the room spins around him.

Beth sighs. "Maybe—maybe I should just go back to Audrey's, for real this time."

"No, Beth, I need you here. You're the only thing I have left."

"It doesn't have to be that way. You chose to make it that way. I'm sorry, Alexander, but it's more than just us now. I have to think about the baby. I'm not having him grow up with a father in this condition."

"Well, I never said I wanted the kid now did I?"

His words paralyze her.

Alexander chokes up as Dr. McClain stares at him with her raccoon eyes, her hands upon her chin, her body hunched over.

"Everything happened so fast, doctor. The room was spinning and she was leaving. I—I didn't know what to do. I reacted. I—I pushed Beth down. No. I threw her down as hard as I could. I just wanted her to stay. I never meant to hurt her, Dr. McClain. Well, I don't think I did? Maybe I was mad at her. Maybe she reminded me of my old self, who I used to be?"

Words slip out of her mouth. "You slammed your pregnant wife down on the ground?" Dr. McClain's eyes grow with her mouth slightly agape.

Beth is gone. I watched her crawl to the door. I watched Beth holding her stomach—the blood running down her night-gown. The last thing I remember is the door slamming, and me just standing there—the room spinning. I'm all alone, doctor, and she'll never forgive me. I didn't know where else to turn."

"Alex, I know there's still good in you—"

Alexander's fists clench again. He breathes heavily. He lunges out of the chair. "Stop saying that! You don't know me! I'm not a good person!" He stands right in Dr. McClain's face, staring into her soul this time.

"She—we lost the baby."

She smells the alcohol in his breath and cowers down, sinking in her chair. For the first time, perhaps the first in her career, she loses her composure. The look of horror permeates her face as silence engulfs the room.

Alexander begins to weep and all that can be heard is the gentle tick of the clock. Tick. Tick. Tick. •







Fletcher Stanford: photography



Mary Stewart: photography



Nathan Mier: photography



Kinsey Harris: color photography

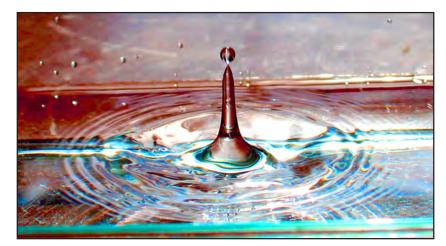


Ainsley Talbird: photography





Madison Casey: photography



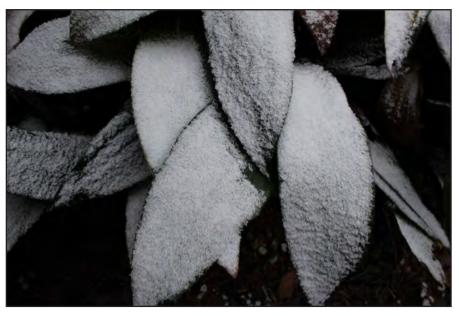
Taylor York: photography



Ashleigh Donovan: photography



Briggs Latta: photography

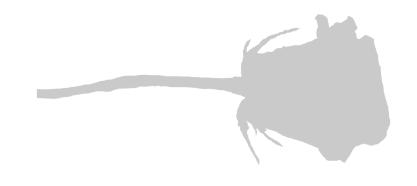


Maggie Johnson: photography

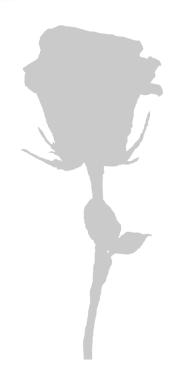


Life Is Not a Cure

Life, you are not a cure, a blessing as many have claimed. You are not simple and plain, but filled with conflict. It is earth where few walk high; most walk where they spit. You are a drug so potent one does not feel shamed. But I am no quitter; my soul is not waned. I shall not curl up and weep where I sit, Neither shall I falter in my efforts to escape this pit. I will pursue the Lord, not your famed. Your loving arms were designed to smother And convince your slaves that you were their carer That to toil away was the only choice, that there was no fairer But you shall not take me, not another.



Natalie Clasen



Sonnet 19: Won't Our Bodies Soon be Filled with Earth and Dust

Won't our bodies soon be filled with earth and dust?
This rose will shed its petals and shrink;
Its vibrant colors will fade like a lover's lust.
The world holds ransom all that we think
And taunts us with what is to come;
The shadows of yesterday wait to speak
And declare the fate of some.
The rich appear to thrive, unlike the poor and weak,
But what we say and what we do does not mark our worth;
Neither do the riches we pretend to bare,
Neither do the delights of this injured earth,
But forever those we love will care:
So long as our hearts are open and pure,
So long will these words long endure.



Brock Miskelley

Cold Drift

I felt it first in my loneliness.
I felt it, and I was, undoubtedly, weighed down.
It was only a little cold drift of snow.
I gathered these bitter flakes and took them with me.
I carried them during school, carried them at my house,

Always keeping them hidden. They remained solid, never would leave me,

Always present.

Last week.

The drift gained strength, grow colder, much heavier.

Without warning, it became too much to bear.

It took over my life entirely.

It has stolen everything from me;

I am bankrupt.

I hardly feel anything at all;

The frigid drift encloses me.

I am numb to the world.

The future feels far from my control.

I no longer carry the drift with me,

As it carries me with it.

There's nothing I can do.

The cold drift has taken my life; My death is only a matter of time.

Trent Thomas: graphite

Christian Ferguson

Anxiety and Depression

They sneak in unforeseen
You don't ever see them coming
You begin to feel unclean
It's surprisingly numbing

You then feel nothing at all Closing yourself off from others Your heart, it grows so small The sickness, how it smothers

You hide within your being
Faking it for others to see
The person that they're all seeing
Is not you but the one you wish to be

Anxiety and depression are beginning to steer
Your life that you wish not to worsen
You fight against it and rather than fear
You heal and become that person

Campell Ragsdale



Winter time

when the days are getting shorter and the air is getting colder when the grass wakes up frosted and the clouds grow heavy with snow you can be sure winter is near

sitting close to the wood-fired oven wrapped in cozy blankets with a cup of hot chocolate and listening to carols you can be sure christmas is near

fairy lights throughout the house with snow covering the outside children count down the days impatiently awaiting the morning when they are told christmas is here

Jenny Zink



Cale Osvath: pointillism



Sestina II

to Elizabeth Bishop, having read "Sestina"

It was nine o'clock in the morning. The sky
Was overcast and gray. Sitting on the kitchen table,
I poured sugar in my scalding hot tea.
I pulled my shoulder-length hair
Out of my face and looked down at the street.

I saw a young woman sitting on a wooden table
In front of the small shop selling unique tea
Flavors. Its display window reflected the sky
With its many gray clouds. Smoothing her tousled hair,
She stood up and walked towards the busy street.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning. My tea,
Half-finished, was cold. A man with short gray hair
Was walking on the sidewalk next to the street.
He crossed it, sat down at the same wooden table,
Took out his binoculars, and watched the birds in the sky.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon. The displayed tea Collection lovingly presented on a table Was rearranged by a woman with brown hair, The owner of the shop. I looked back to the street Which was as gray as the darkening sky.

It was eight o'clock in the evening. The street
Was emptying, and the woman with brown hair
Had just closed and locked the door of the tea
Shop. It had rained late in the afternoon, and the sky
Was now black. I turned on the light of my bedside table.

My hair in a braid, I finished my tea, and stood Beside the table to take a last look at the empty street. The moon shone bright in the sky.

Jenny Zink

Let Morning Come

Let the darkness of night Lift and lighten across the sky, dimming The bright stars as they twinkle silently.

Let the moon set As the morning approaches and sleepers Continue to dream. Let morning come.

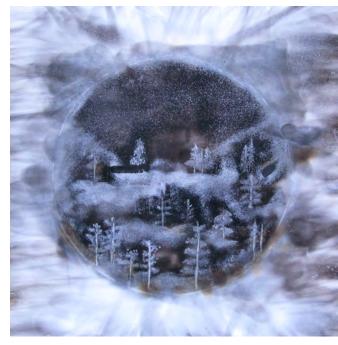
Let the water in the air cling to the car Left in the driveway. Let the sky lighten And the sun peak from behind the bend of the earth.

Let the birds begin to chirp. Let the leaves start to rustle. Let the windows Fill with light. Let morning come.

To the tree in the lawn, to the dove In the nest, to the thoughts in the heart Let morning come.

Let it come, as it will each day, and always Be grateful. God blesses us with newness, so let morning come.

Lauren Elizabeth VanFleet



Julianna Sellers: mixed media

Awaken the Morning

Awaken the morning with the light of the sun peeking through the blinds, arraying shadows across the room.

Let the early rising robin take up song as a church choir takes up a hymn and melody On sunday. Awaken the morning.

Let the still breeze sway the leaves on the oak trees. Let the flower wake up for hours of permeating the earth with her sweet scent.

Let the doe lead her fawn to a new day of grazing. Let the sun beam on the spring harvest vegetable garden. Awaken the morning.

To the farmer in the field, to the rose on the vine, To life as we know it, Awaken the morning.

Morning will rise, as it does everyday, so prepare to live to the fullest. God will equip you for what is to come, so awaken the morning.

Sarah Shea Hill



Reflecting on Salvador Dali's "The Persistence of Memory"

Ι

Those clocks

sag and stretch over barren desert ground.

I study the left canvas corner.

"Is that a pocket watch?" I ponder,

Until I notice those scampering things:

Ants scurrying across the top of that orange pocket watch.

Yes, look! The cliff in the background

brings a luster of natural logic to this land of manufactured nonsense.

No matter where I look,

I cannot help but see that odd white drape in the middle,

that eyesore sitting in the center,

distracting and drawing my attention

with its contrast of white yelling, "Look at me!"

I sigh in frustration.

"What are you?" I think, as I point my hand at the canvas.

I see only thin black lines

that look like strands of thin black hair.

My hands clasp my own hair in despair,

and I lay my head on the side of the wall. Oh!

Wait, I see something familiar!

Are those eyelashes? It's an eye, a closed eye!

I bend down and stare.

My nose breathes inches away from the canvas,

as I turn my head to its side. Look!

There's a nose too!

These puzzling pieces find their place in this face on display.

I try to walk away.

I have figured out the illusion,

yet my feet stay planted in front of that canvas.

I survey the shades of orange, brazened by the sun.

My legs wobble and the light weans,

as I melt into the canvas.

II

I swing from the hand of the hanging branch,

and I slide down the curvy clocks.

I sit on the edge of that solid orange block

as I watch the ticking time hands slip down around the edge.

Scurrying ants climb up my arms.

I jump up and shake off those pesky crawling ants,

spinning around like a madman,

shaking my body until

ants fall off one by one.

I bang my foot and kick the watermelon sized pocket watch,

which sits still orange and unbothered.

I grab my foot, and hop around in pain.

I fall off the edge of the block and onto the closed eye.

I take a deep breath and laugh

until curiosity clutches my chest

and I slowly grab an eyelash, starting to open the lid of that eye.

III

"Hey," a firm voice yanks my feet back to the museum floor.

There's no person nor light in sight.

Someone squeezes a mop at the back of the room.

The guard waves his hand in my face and speaks with a firm and irritated voice.

"Sir, you've been standing here all day, and this exhibit closed an hour ago, so I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

I stumble across the floor.

My hand fumbles on the door,

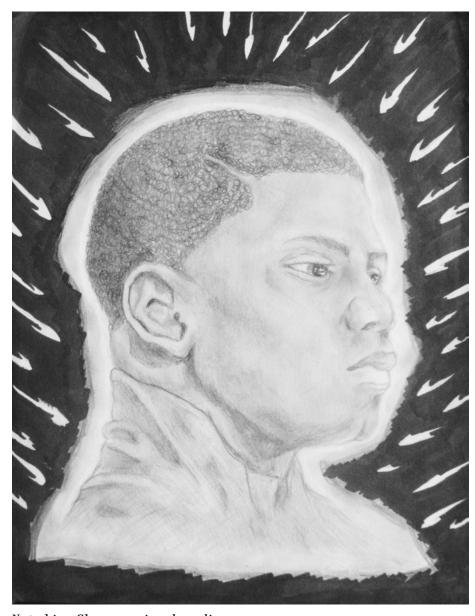
and I glance at my watch.

"Stupid thing," I mutter,

As I flick the face of my watch and head out toward the street.



Lauren Musachia



Natalie Clasen: mixed media

From Me to Langston Hughes

a response to "Langston Hughes, 1925" by Winold Reiss

The picture of serenity he seems, Although the viewer is not party To the fascinations underneath The dark hair and beyond the brown eyes, Staring softly into the left corner.

"There's just something," you might say,

"About the way he looks that reminds me
Of a day in the life of someone I've seen.

Perhaps yesterday or the day before it in the market I think?

Was he the man who gave me a small smile as we passed on the street?"

I know I have seen this man
In the last place I would imagine.
Mostly, I recognize him every night at the sink
While I stand staring into my own empty face,
Not so softly and straight ahead, of course.

In his posture, you and I both can see the way
His past follows him while he's still wearing his dark suit.
With a lone fist poised on chin in thought, I know he is away.
I can tell he is grasping the weight of the Blue Beyond,
Although perhaps he is posing, his imaginations inferred.
If he were to rise up from his wood chair of consideration,
I bet we'd find he had not been as dormant as we might think.

Surely if we wait here, he will erupt as volcanoes do, Spewing creative magma in the form of history. Personally, if you were to ask me, I think he can trade His Blue Beyond for almost every shade of Green.

Behind his clear face, there is a roiling mind.

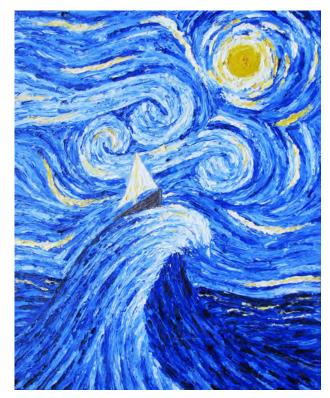




Luke Mango: mixed media



Lindsey Lovvorn: oil



Camdyn Gilbert: oil

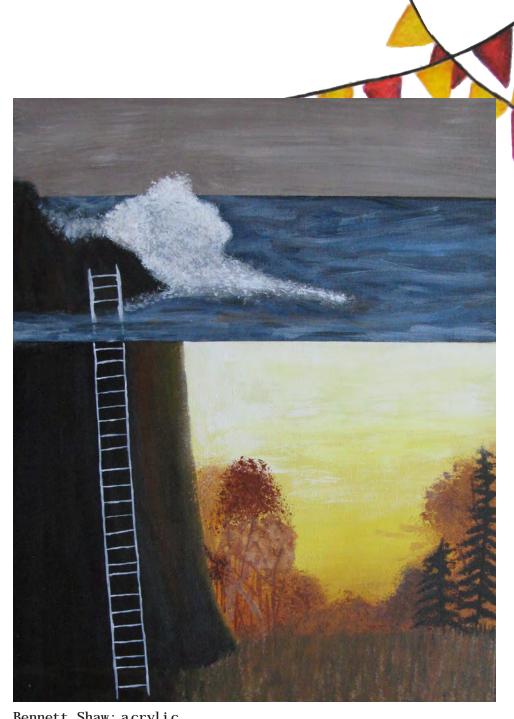




Madison Wright: oil



Dalton Brooks: watercol or



Bennett Shaw: a crylic



Lauren Musachia Nonfiction

My Hiking Shoes

Lauren Finds Her Identity Out in Nature.

e sat in the red sand with canyon walls towering over us as we spread Nutella on tortillas and rationed out Sour Patch Kids. We had just made it to the middle of the slot canyon and stopped for lunch, when my cross-country coach said, "You can tell a lot about a person by looking at their shoes. Just look at Lauren," pointing at my scraped up legs and shoes. My coach and I always joke with each other, so I didn't put much thought into his comment and just brushed it off as a joke. However, as the backpacking trip becomes more and more of a memory now, I begin to hear my coach's words more and more.

If someone would have told me before the trip that I would soon be sitting on a canyon wall in Yosemite, dangling my legs over the edge, I would've thought they were talking about somebody else. I never thought that I would be the person who willingly scoots closer to the edge of a cliff. Before this trip, I thought of myself as a pretty responsible per-

son, which is just a nicer way to say anxious. I was the person who would diligently write in her planner and organize all the crayons so they would follow rainbow order in the box. I honestly don't even know why I signed up for this two-week long adventure, other than that my coach, who lead the trip, convinced me it would be fun. With many anxieties, I packed my bags and held my breath as I waved goodbye to my comfortable life for two weeks, questioning what I had gotten myself into.

"You charge like a bull. I set you loose, and you just charge forward." My coach's words repeated in my head as I grabbed the chain on the side of the narrow, uphill trail in Zion National Park. I was one of the few people on the trip that wasn't shaking from fear as we climbed up a trail named Angel's Landing. I was definitely afraid, but I made myself focus on just the next step forward instead of looking over the edge. We eventually made it to the top of the trail with many tearful teenage girls. I had expected to join the ranks of crying girls by the time we made it to the top, but instead of letting everything overwhelm me like I would have back home, I

was forced to confront my fear by continuing to take steps forward and charge ahead.

I surprised myself multiple times throughout that trip. I took risks that I wouldn't even have considered back in Alabama. Being across the country and away from the familiar makes you wrestle with your identity. I thought I was a pretty selfless person, but I didn't know what it felt like to willingly give up my water for my dehydrated friend while hiking in the hot Utah desert. Everything I thought I possessed, like perseverance, self-sacrifice, and trust, were challenged. Your trust is put to the test when you have to rely on another person to anchor your rope so you can climb down a slot canyon. You realize just how tough you are when the only way out of the canyon is to hike through twenty miles of thorn bushes. The backpacking trip showed me what I value and who I can be. It revealed parts of me I never thought existed and dispelled beliefs I held about myself. I never thought I was the "charging" type, but now when I see my clay-caked hiking shoes in my closet, I hear my coach's words echoing into my life. ()

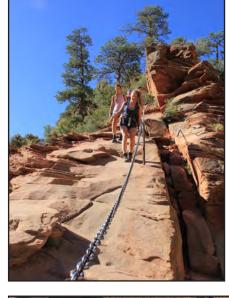


"The hiking trip was an experience like no other! It was an opportunity to enjoy parts of creation that you never knew existed and experience God's peace in an entirely new way."

-Chloe Lovvorn











all photography courtesy of Lauren Musachia



"It definitely made me appreciate the beauty of nature a lot more after going on that trip." -Harrison Gauldin



The Trees In Winter a response to "The Pond At Dusk" by Jane Kenyon

Leaves crisp the ground while the tree lies barren. Light shifts overhead, and the fatal kiss of wind makes summer's warmth seem like a forgotten memory.

The blur of a strong silhouette changes into the cold skeleton left of that tree. And what appears as a warm blanket is nothing more than frigid snow.

Sometimes what appears to be heartbreak is heartbreak: the memories surface once more to remind you of the man you left behind.

Riley Drouin



Zach Lamb: pen and ink



Windshield

Under deep darkening skies
I drive down the road, and seeing only
Cool morning light and a blanket of clouds,
I'm suddenly aware.
Hearing the blare of the radio,
I squint my eyes because
My windshield is dirty.

I drive past a field, And it's just a green blur. Rain's coming down, Cleaning the windshield Clearing my vision. A new song prompts My next frame of thought.

Why didn't my phone ding? Where was the weather alert? When life comes at us Through lenses filtering the hurt, A twisted perception reigns king.

But my mind's wanderings are forgotten At the turn of my keys, the drive is over. What now? Soon rain will wash my windshield again.

Juliana Badeaux

Sanctum

there's a little place by the field where I sometimes go where the wind welcomes me and finds me alone

there's an enchantment of belonging to a place only I know to answer a calling that only I hear

leaves drift from dying limbs stumps are oaky and near noises are muted and shrill the air feels empty and clear

spots of sun peek through the tall trees that hide me quiet streams peek through beds of leaves that hide the earth

there's a little place by the field where I sometimes go my sanctum my solitude my home

In Harmony with Nature

Every once in a while
We friends get together
In nature underneath the sky
The little farm appealing to the eye
We enjoy the summer weather

Some pick and eat cherries Others prefer raspberries But something we all agree upon Nature is a beautiful phenomenon

While we enjoy sitting in the hay
The smell of it, the atmosphere
We could do without
The usual bug bite souvenir
Which still bothers us the following day

A red painted sky called sunset Causes the growth of shadows Crickets start their chirping A duet with the campfire singing We stroll through the meadows At the end of another day We will never forget

Jenny Zink

Amelia Ray



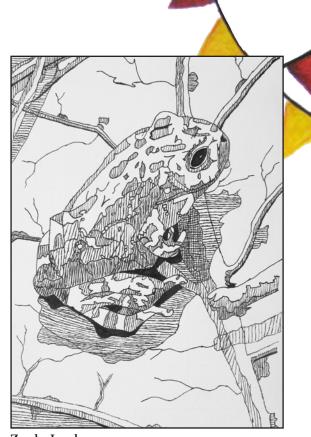




Ross Johnson: pen



Grayson Morris: pointillism



Zach Lamb: pen



Hayden Wallace: pointillism

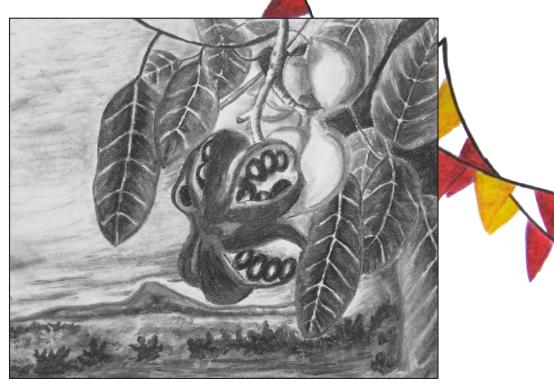




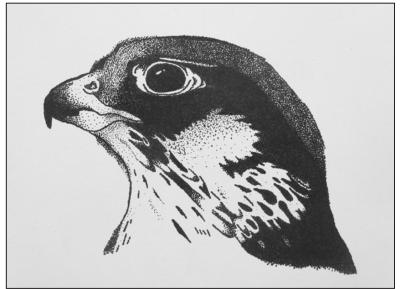
Lindsey Lovvorn: pen



Morgan Cooke-Stewart: pen



Sarah Shea Hill: graphite



Carson Brooks: pointillism



A Broken Dreamer's Plea

The hero runs upon the lush green hills. While he sings he goes where e'er he wills and laughs with rain as it sweeps his pain away with all his thoughts.

The broken dreamer falls face down the hill and cannot see past the clawing rain. his legs are lame and his eyes are blind. Not his mouth, but his heart cries out.

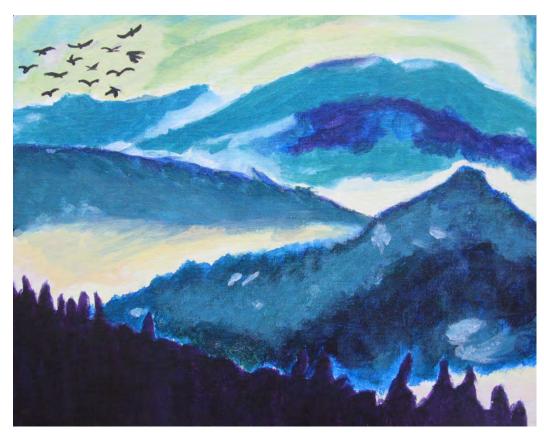
A broken dreamer pleads with cracking voice for help and forgotten joys. He hears no reply. Not a single noise will return his call yet Someone hears it still.

The hero performs daring deeds and plots far greater than human schemes and he continues dancing still for hope fills his heart.

But the broken dreamer's self-esteem shatters to shards amidst his screams. His legs are lame and his eyes are blind. Not his mouth, but his heart cries out.

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Isaac Keller



Lillie Griffith: acrylic



Kingdoms Wished For and Lost

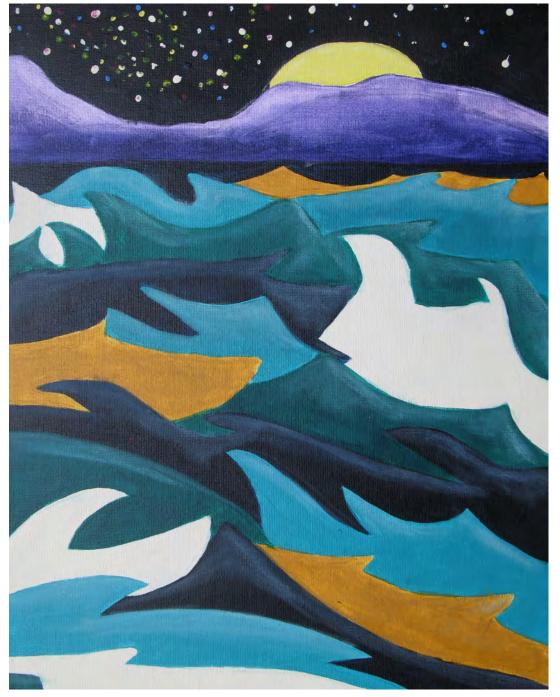
What beauty might be
In a world we don't know?
What mystery
Lives in a palace of snow?
What century
Passed while we watched the wind blow?
All we can see
Is a single light glow

A song in the night.
Such wonder he sings.
He ended the fight
And crowned us queens and kings
But now he is gone, no longer in sight
And we are left falling; someone clipped our wings.

Trapped in a world that is not our own We pretend we don't care.
Once upon a dream, we each had a throne But we left them to struggle without an heir. Softly we hear a melodic tone
And smile, for there is magic in the air.

We will return home
To the world that we lost.
Just to find it we must roam
And pay the deadly cost.
Beauty dies in sea foam
And mystery is covered in frost.

Victoria Adderhold











Carson Brooks: acrylic



Jordan Martens: acrylic



Emahn Haririan: acrylic



Avery Bush: oil



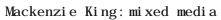
Mackenzie King: mixed media



Brooklyn Barger: acrylic









Mackenzie King: acrylic



Emma Crawford: acrylic



Bella Domingue: tempera



Emily Scott: acrylic



The Skate Kitchen

A group of dauntless girls take to the streets of Manhattan.

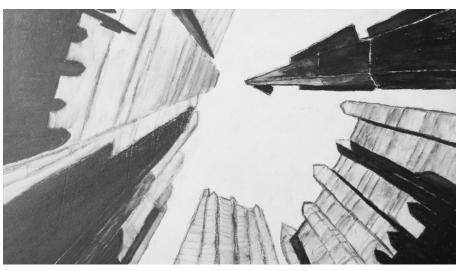
rystal Moselle was on the G train in New York City when she heard "the kind of voice that almost silences a room where...everybody stops what they're doing and they want to see who's talking." That voice belonged to a young girl accompanied by two other girls, all sporting exuberant streetwear and most importantly, their skateboards. Moselle says she "knew something was there and had to figure it out," approached them and asked "Is there more of you?"

Out of this chance encounter came Skate Kitchen, a breezy, slice of life film that documents the sisterhood of the real life all girl skate clan. Against the dreamy backdrop of Manhattan, the film showcases Camille, an isolated and vulnerable teenager who discovers the skate kitchen and develops a friend-ship with them—chronicled through warm, elegant moving shots of the pack as they skate through the city streets with "ungovernable, even anarchic glee." The skate kitchen collaborated with director Moselle for over a year before filming: writing and rehearsing a script based on their lives. The focus Moselle put into the girls shows in the film: one of the things Skate Kitchen does best is capture and develop characters. More than creating a thrilling plot, Skate Kitchen is focused on creating authentic and complex characters,

which allows for a natural flow of story.

The true to life experiences the girls have with each other and with other New Yorkers gives insight into the social climate of teens in a big city. A major theme of Skate Kitchen is the misogyny the girls experience—mostly from a neighboring crew of male skaters who intimidate them out of certain skate parks and insult them. The "skate kitchen" named themselves after the significant amount of hate they received for skating—they were constantly told that they "belonged in the kitchen." Hatred eventually bleeds into the skate kitchen itself, when Camille finds an unlikely companion in a member of the rival crew, a good-natured





Bailey Salmon: charcoal

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Skate Kitchen captures the excitement of youth and the thrill of daring to take up social space.

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photographer who works part time at the same store as Camille. The two climb up to skyscraper rooftops and to take photos and gaze over the grey city. This new romance doesn't sit well with the other members of the skate kitchen, and Camille is left to the rival crew. On her own to navigate the conflict between the two groups, Camille has to decide whether or not to try to salvage her friendship with the other girls. \Diamond



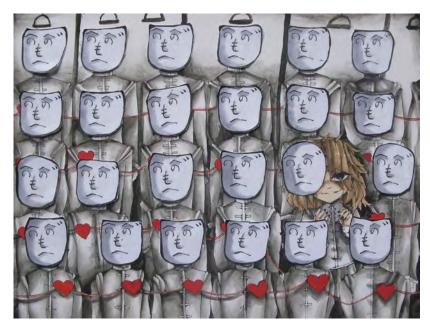
Heather Houston: marker



Featured Artist: Julianne Lett



 $water col\, or\,$



mixed media



watercol or



marker



digital art





mixed media



mixed media



marker



watercol or



mixed media

more art by Julianne Lett



Masks

One night, I dreamt of a strange world Where men were masked and all looked alike. These masks were no ordinary masks For they talked and formed a person of their own, They had many masks which constantly changed, But who changed them? The men or the masks? I saw a sad man whose sadness lay heavy on his face, But when a friend passed by, a happy mask leaped on. Though he seemed happy, energetic, insouciant, The man's eyes were no window but rather, a mirror reflecting all the dreariness around him. The man or the mask— it was now hard to distinguish— Began speaking of how wonderful he was. The friend responded similarly and continued on his way. The mask leapt from his face as the man dragged himself along— As grim and desolate as he was before the encounter. I walked on and turned down a street jumping with energy. I saw a mass with masks dancing, bouncing, and singing. A short man threw his drink in the air. It landed on another man's face and knock'd his mask off, And the mask shattered on the ground. The man began to recall his morning— How awful it had been; he had been heavy with grief. Why had he placed this mask on his face? He didn't know— nor remember. Was it the mask who had done this? As he looked around, he began to wonder, "Are the crowd really miserable like me, Only the appearance of happiness, masking their sadness With a laughing mask of illusionary bliss?" And suddenly, I awoke from my dream, brushed my teeth, Ate breakfast, and finally headed to work making sure I was always happy and wearing a smile.



In the Pool

In the pool (the game suggested by a twelve-year old boy), an older child drags a younger kid under water.

He stays under water, struggling, flailing his arms, a pitiful figure.

Then bubbles begin to surface, popping, float for a bit, until he resurfaces and gasps relentlessly.

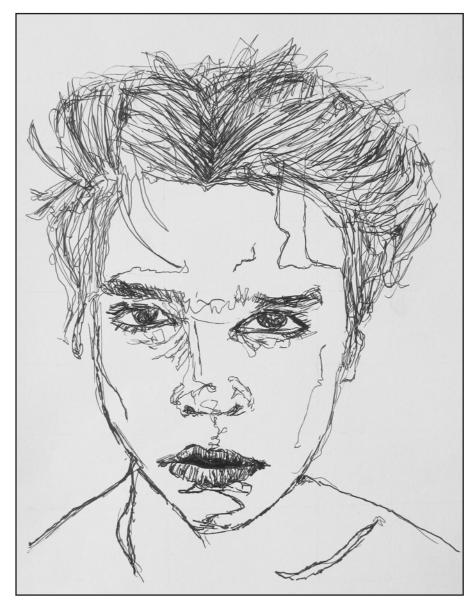
Outside the water, some who watch this, recognize the drowned, tormented emotions.

How they cannot surface, but are held down Beneath the shallow mask of emotions—

sarcasm laughter cruelty pain torment regret

drowned stuff that is struggling, but cannot surface, being forced deeper and deeper under the mask.

Tyler Jahraus



Chapel Bryars: pen



Dägdreaming

ate peers out the window and notices a family of birds nested in a tree in the front yard. She watched as the baby birds hesitate to approach the edge of the nest, preparing to fly. She imagines how strange it must be for the babies to go out on their own for the first time, leaving the comfort and familiarity of the nest.

"Are you even listening to anything I'm saying?" The voice of the man in front of her invades her ears and forces her into the present. She knows it is her husband, but a twinge of frustration in his face makes it look so unfamiliar.

"Yes," she mutters softly. She figures she should say more, but finds herself at a loss for words in the presence of this stranger.

"I'm just saying, I think it makes it harder for us to deal with this when you go off into your own little world like that."

Cate has a tendency to drift away from reality, and she finds herself doing it more frequently lately. Amidst all the recent trauma and confusion, it just feels safer to be in her own mind instead of with someone else.

"You know, if I feel like you're not even listening, how can I know that you understand how I'm feeling."

"How you're feeling? How do you think I feel?" Cate is astonished by the statement he just made. How could she be married to someone as selfish as that?



"Well no. I didn't mean it like that. I just meant, like, we should know what each other is thinking."

Cate never knows what he is thinking.

She wondered that when she found out about his disloyalty. She felt as if the earth had split underneath her, leaving her feet dangling above an empty space, adrift and helpless. She remembered the feeling she got in her stomach. It felt so hollow, like a big empty bowl had replaced her intestines. She had been gradually losing control of her life, and finally it decided it didn't belong to her anymore. It snatched itself right out from under her. How could he have done this to her? Betrayed her like this and taken away her control? How was it so easy for him to just act and shatter

someone else's entire world, when she was paralyzed by everything?

Cate

never

knows

what

he is

thi nki ng.

Cate tried to prepare herself to confront Abner. Her mind sped through all the things she wanted to say to him, all the different ways to bring it up to him. How could she bring something like this up to him though? Shouldn't he come forward

to her first? Maybe the best thing to do would be to not say anything and just wait for him to confess. She could just continue living in her head for a while.

Cate fiddled her keys around in her hand, reluctant to put them in the keyhole. She forced her hand up to the knob and unlocked the front door. As she carefully stepped through the living room, she was comforted by the darkness and quiet of the house; Abner wasn't home yet. She sank down

into the bright cushion atop the side chair by the table. Resting on the table were Abner's papers. A blueprint for a contemporary house topped the stack. The paper was filled up with sketches of geometric structures, and words like "modern" and "clean" and "open plan" lay on top of the precise drawings. Outside the window, heavy clouds hovered over the trees. A soft humming grew in the air as a shiny Lexus pulled into the driveway. A man in a navy suit and tan loafers stepped out and took short, bouncy steps toward the door. Cate was

startled when she heard the front door open. Abner walked confidently in and bounced over to Cate.

"Hey. Why do you look sad?" He laid his hand on her shoulder like he was afraid she might break.

"I just got home and was tired," she whispered and resisted his hand on her shoulder.

"Oh, okay." Abner picked his hand up and walked out of the living room.

Cate sighed and sunk deeper into her chair. Her curls bounced against the sleek



Juliana Badeaux : acrylic



chair. All the things she wanted to say to him burned in her chest. She heard him fiddling around in the kitchen. He was so nonchalant. He acted like nothing was wrong. Each clank of the pot, each high pitched shrill of metal scraping metal, stirred more annoyance in her. She sat fuming in that stupid sleek chair, her anger rising, like a boiling kettle. She hated that chair. Abner picked it out in accordance with the other modern pieces in their house. Cate looked around herself at all the decoration. Their whole house was modern. They drowned in mid-century coffee tables and scandinavian design. Pots banged against the marble countertop in the distance. Cate remembered how she and Abner always quar-

She often had that look of being adrift, somewhere else. He always wondered what she was thinking about.

reled about how the house should be decorated. He always won the arguments since he was the architect and he "knew best." Cate flung the chair out from under her and stomped into the kitchen. "Abner, what are you doing?" she demanded.

He looked over his shoulder at her, a surprised look on his face. "I'm just organizing the kitchenware."

"Why? Why are you re-organizing the kitchen?" she requested.

"I was just really bothered at the colander being next t—"

"I know about everything."

Abner grew silent. The heaviness of Cate's chest hung in the air. His face fell limp as he hung the pot on the hook above over the shiny countertop.

"What do you mean?"
"I know you cheated."



Bailey Salmon: acrylic

Abner and Cate stood motionless, staring into each other.

"Well I feel like we never resolved anything," Cate said with the small amount of fortitude she had scraped out of herself. The birds were hopping around in the nest outside. It had been two months since Cate confronted Abner. They sat in silence emptily staring at each other.

"Well, what do you wanna do, Cate?" Abner asks almost mockingly. A soft pitter patter resounds on the dark wooden floor. A small child appears in the doorway of the kitchen.

"Mommy–I found a worm outside!" the curly-headed child boasts.

"That's wonderful, Henry." Cate lights up at his statement. She runs her eyes over his ragged overalls and dirt covered feet. His fair, angelic face appears like an apparition in front of her. She can't force herself to accept this reality.

"Henry, mommy and I are trying to talk right now. Can you go play please?"

Henry tucks his head down and trots away. Cate's smile fades.

"I don't know what to do. I don't know how to fix this," she complains.

"Well what do you want?" Silence ensues once more. "Do you want a divorce?" Cate's stomach drops. Neither of them had men-



tioned separating once throughout this whole ordeal.

"I don't know. Do you want that?"

Cate stepped out of Abner's brand new car. Her navy jacquard dress hung over her small legs and kitten heels. Abner had insisted on taking her to this fancy restaurant but it seemed way too extravagant for Cate, and she felt out of place. Abner grasped the tall metal handle and pulled the door open for Cate. She swung through the door and into a world in which she was anachronistic in. They were seated at a small table and given expensive glasses of wine.

"Nice, huh?" Abner spoke with a confident ease.

"Yeah it's—fancy." Over a dinner of grilled lemon salmon, leek soup, and asparagus, they

discussed their hopes with each other. They dreamt of little boys with curly hair like Cate's and dark eyes like Abner's. They talked about having a beautiful house. Cate dreamed of embroidered cushions and antique chests, old china collections and teacups. Abner dreamed of success, of himself as an accomplished architect. The future was so beautiful and open. They shared a piece of chocolate pie as the sun sank behind the large windows of the restaurant. Cate's eyes glimmered in the warm light. She looked absent from her surroundings. She often had that look of being adrift, somewhere else. He always wondered what she was thinking about.

"I mean, no. Obviously I don't want that." Abner speaks with a slight loftiness.

"I don't either," Cate reassures.

Katie Payne: photography

"What do we do? How do we move on?"

"I don't know if we ever can." They look at each other's glum faces, terrified.

Cate
walks up to
the front
door of a
preschool.
Her navy
wool coat
shelters her
from the
brisk air. A

friendly lady takes her through a long, brightly colored hallway and stops at a room filled with young children playing with primary colored blocks.

"Mommy!" Henry spots Cate at the door and bounces to the door.

"Hi, Henry," Cate beams at the curly cherub.

The friendly lady unlocks the childproof door to free Henry. He eagerly jumps into his mother's comfortable arms.

"Thank you," Cate offers to the friendly lady as she makes her way out of the exciting hallway.

"You're welcome, bye Henry! See you Monday!" she returns.

Cate fastens Henry's seatbelt while he asks her a series of questions about birds.

"Henry, the baby birds must have flown away. I didn't see them in the nest today."

"Oh no we missed it!" Henry pouts.

"Yeah I guess so."

"Why couldn't you tell them to wait?"

"Well I can't do that Henry."

"Why not? They would listen to you."

"Yes I'm sure they would, but they have to leave on their own time. And when they're ready, they won't wait for anyone else to be ready with them. They just have to take off in that slim moment when they have enough courage to."

"Oh."

"Hey Henry, you're gonna get to go see daddy this weekend."

"Yay!"

They drive off out of the parking lot, and onto the highway. The sun sits just above the horizon preparing to set, closing the day, inviting the new. Q





Mary Kathryn Bush: pastel mixed media triptych

AThought

It whispers in your mind.
It sits patiently,
Waiting to be heard.
It withstands the test of time.

When it is tired of being ignored, It boldly bangs
On the barriers of your brain
And demands your attention.
It consumes you.

Jenna Fuller

I Forgot

I once knew the name of my favorite book, the author, the plot, the characters, why the book was my favorite, but now it is gone from my mind.

It is as if all the memories, one by one, fled to the back of my mind, to go into hiding.

Long ago, the names of my favorite characters disappeared into the wind, along with something else I cannot quite recall.

One by one they fell into the ocean or simply packed their bags and left while my back was turned.

The beginning, the end, the climax, who knows where they went or what they were.

What was this book about again? I can no longer remember.

Maybe I could find it again, but I cannot remember the title. It has disappeared into the wind.

Why did I like this book again? I will have to find another.

Abby Wood





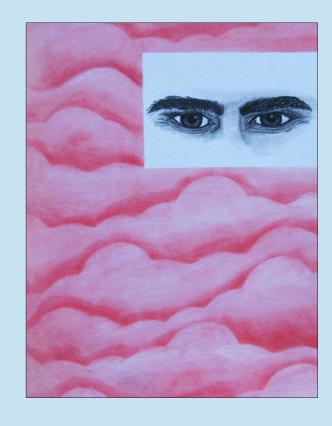
Dreamy Journeys

I found myself without a chance of finding neither sleep nor rest.
My thoughts, they gathered 'round my mind and questioned life's long road.

Soon, my mind, still wide awake, fell into a mysterious trance, unlocking the gate to the realm of all my many dreams.

Here, I hoped to find the key to discovering my identity deep within this foreign land where logic and physics are null.

I stared in awe at shimmering skies above the purple trees as wandering winds whispered the way to the treasure I came to find.



After traversing this chromatic world into mists alluring, I discovered three diverse doors, each unique and calling.

Behold, the first showed a mural of sculptors, craftsmen, and such. Reaching out, I tried to grasp it. It shattered all over the ground.

The next had no handle, but was covered in eyes all staring at me.

Trying to please those door-openers was hopeless; they refused me repeatedly.

The last was plain and overlooked, displaying one image of me.
A single tug on the handlebar and out it creaked and opened.

And this was the end of my dreamy journey. What I saw I'll never forget: who I am is just who I am, and, for once, I'm okay with that.

David Houston





Jenna Fuller: charcoal



Sally Worthington: graphite



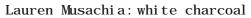
Catherine Gray: white charcoal



Natalie Clasen: graphite





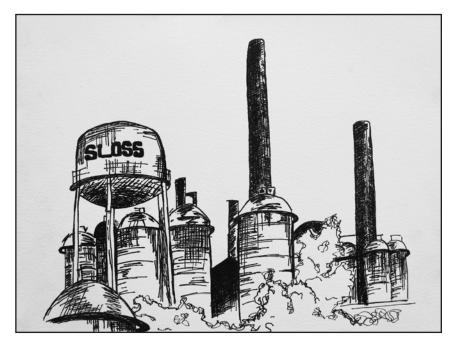




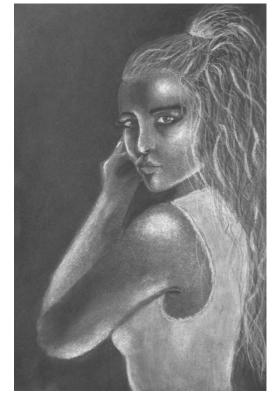
Francie Steadman: white charcoal



Natalie Clasen: graphite



Luke Mango: pen



Hanna Faulkner: white charcoal



Her Only Wish

The cowardice of a man like this Holds true in his hollow heart. For one who raises a hand to love Will never know it apart.

Her wish is he could stumble, Down an embankment or onto sharp ice, His weak soul let go, like wedding doves, Gone forever his power and might.

Love would be set free to do as she pleases, Able to run wild among the willow trees. His fist never raised again, No more bruises left to mend.

If only he could lose the air in his lungs, Unable to breathe a last breath. The love he thinks he has Would delight in his death.

Riley Drouin



Hanna Faulkner: white charcoal

Girl with Iron-Will

Her determination is like a child
Wobbling to walk and taxing to talk;
Her courage and loyal heart run wild
And come together to walk the good walk:
She will never be mild
She fights for friends like a mother hawk.

Her fiery red hair incensed
Her peaches and cream skin
Perfect like her ferociousness against
Her affectionate grin
Her love for her friends is intense
And she never holds her opinions in.

A spirit that will never waver
Makes her glow like a luminous bulb
Emitting joy for all to savor.
Her company is worth more than gold,
A personality of one-thousand flavors
The girl who's always bold!

Madeline Simmerman



She is All but Fear

She crawls in silence, like a chill O'er midnight towns and battlefields, Arriving with a voice: silent and shrill Leaving no trace 'cept hearts to heal With no weapons but still a list to fill And no child nor man she will not steal.

Veiled in black and working in haste Her elegance ripples in the midnight breeze As she sets out for her evening chase. Her children lie beyond in their deathly freeze; A tender smile builds on her innocent face As she finishes her night in restless ease.

Man is fearful, yet he need not be
For she simply welcomes him home
And sets the suffering man free.
When all the world sees is his name in stone,
He is not still, but resting with jubilee,
And she returns yet again at midnight to roam.

Caroline Campbell



Chapel Bryars: pen

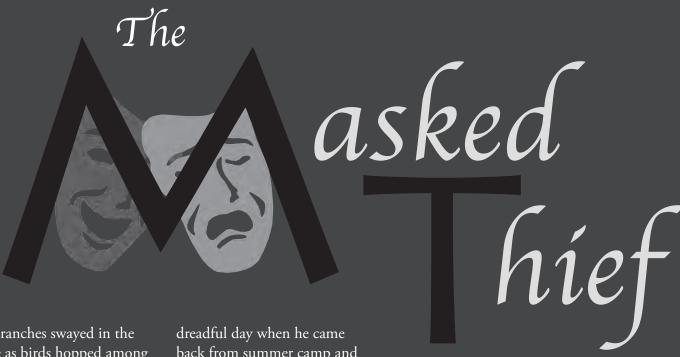
Strong

You know you're not weak, So please be strong.
Convince the world there's nothing wrong.
All is right;
You have no pain.
No, nothing's wrong;
Everything's the same.
When they ask,
Just tell a lie.
And most important—
Don't let them see you cry.

Mary Wood



David Houston Fiction



eaf-shrouded branches swayed in the summer breeze as birds hopped among pine-covered rocks. Streams of light rushed past greedy treetops, only to crash to the ground and splash over two dimly-lit figures. The splashes melted into their skin, illuminating one boy's dark hair, worn tennis shoes, and tattered gray scarf. The other wore a green cotton shirt and hiking boots.

"Honestly, Daniel!" Grishel ran his fingers through his hazel hair as his boots clanked on the gravel path. "When are you going to take off that scarf? It's so hole-ridden it may as well be a net."

"I couldn't take this off, even if I tried," Daniel said. "It's all I have left of my father. . ."

Grishel's eyes became overcast. "Your father. .

Daniel let his gaze drag on the ground as much as his feet. His mind flitted back to that

back from summer camp and his father wasn't there to pick him up. The image of his father's unmoving figure in that coffin stayed in his mind long after the burial.

"I should've been there, could've been there, but wasn't. . . ." His thoughts swarmed in his head. "Oh, it should've been me. It's all my fault. . . . Failure. Failure. Failure. . . ."

"Hey, are you all right?" Grishel's voice cut through the fog of thoughtless thoughts. "If you want to stop, let me know."

Snapping out of the trance, Daniel looked down to find that his legs had stopped. "Oh . . . I'm fine. Let's go." Daniel forced his feet to drag onwards.

"The home isn't too far now. What will you do when you get there? I'm thinking of digging for that buried treasure." Grishel displayed his infectious smile and dug through the air with an imaginary shovel. Daniel

smiled to himself. Last week, Grishel had convinced him to bury some around the foster home, and Grishel had been digging for them ever since.

"I'd love to join you, I swore an oath to protect the treasure's whereabouts. Besides, Croanan said he wanted to see me."

"Uh-oh. Daniel, what did you do this time? He's probably preparing the torture devices as we speak!" Grishel's grin spread wider.

"I'm not sure what I did, but if I find myself in a tough spot, I have a friend to call on who has fought pirates and monsters and ninjas and more headmasters than I can count."

"The only enemy I haven't fought is the Masked Thief. I'll be waiting for your call!" Grishel skipped past the last bend of the path as the foster home came into view. Its foundation planted in clay, its dirty white, cracked



left. "When you see me again, I'll be swimming in riches."

"In your dreams. You'll never find them!" Daniel smiled back, and watched Grishel run off to the orphan's home, with each room's door facing towards the empty playground. On his right, a gravel path led to the mess hall and staff rooms, all piled into a concrete rectangle and topped with the headmaster's office.

A garden was connected to the back entrance of the mess hall by an iron fence, supposedly to stop the children from stealing. Of course, this made sense considering the foster home's inhabitants had a history of thieving. Stolen items were sometimes found hidden under someone's mattress or behind a fake brick in his room. Daniel did not enjoy the thought of thieves; he eyed a few of the kids lingering about.

Daniel walked along the gravel path and approached the concrete rectangle. He wiped the dirt off his shoes on the welcome mat, entered through the creaky door, and turned to the stairs to his immediate right. Without Grishel's smile to light up his surroundings, the bulbs seemed dimmer, and the specters of blame came back to haunt him. Forcing himself up the stairs was a struggle, and by the time he got to the top, happiness seemed like a distant memory. He wiped his face with his scarf and looked up. A massive door stood in front of him, displaying a brass plate with the headmaster's name. Daniel lifted his hand to knock but hesitated. On the third try, he managed to make the timid sound of two knocks echo through the silence.

"Just a minute!" Mr. Croanan's raspy voice

crawled through the door crack. Daniel heard drawers slamming and Mr. Croanan's muttering before the polished brass handle turned, and the door opened silently. "Oh, it's you. Come in, come in. . . . "

Daniel gawked at Mr. Croanan's tall, lanky frame. No matter how many times he saw his headmaster, Mr. Croanan's height always surprised him.

"Well, come in. I don't have all day," Mr. Croanan said.

Daniel stepped inside around this new environment. To the left, a large window stretched across the tan wall, soft rain drops now lightly tapping on the pane. Bookshelves lined the right wall, and a polished wood desk sat by the back wall in front of a roaring fireplace. A rifle rested on its mantle below several hunting trophies.

Mr. Croanan closed the door. "I bet you're wondering why I asked you here," he said.

"Why?"

"Patience, child! All will be revealed." Mr. Croanan wandered over to the window, hands clasped behind his back. He gazed past the treetops at the distant horizon. "I'm trusting you because we have something in common. The world stole from both of us."

"What do you mean?" Daniel said. "Well, your father was stolen from you." Daniel's lips quivered. "The world didn't steal him; I lost him. . . . I—"

"Bah! That's just what the world wants you to think. Your father was stolen from me, too. I knew him very well. Yes, I did." Mr. Croanan turned around and advanced towards Daniel. "Tell me, do you know how your father died?"

"He was . . . was murdered. . . . "

"Do you really know how he died? Who killed him?"

Daniel averted his eyes from Croanan's piercing gaze. "N—no, nobody knows . . . not even the police."

"Well, I know! And believe it or not, the police know more than they admit. I've been waiting for the right time to tell you, and I think now's the time." Mr. Croanan smirked.

"Your father was shot by the police!" Time slowed. "That can't be true! A massive

They—"

"Quiet! Your father should've taught you to control your mouth," Mr. Croanan said. "The world stole everything from me, and ever since, I've been stealing back from it. Your father and I were thieves, Daniel, and you're going to join us."

Adrenaline raced through Danname. iel's veins. His heart pounded. He grabbed the door handle behind him and frantically pulled on it, but it didn't budge.

Mr. Croanan snarled. "You can't escape from destiny. You're joining us one way or the other." He lunged. Daniel dodged and started to run to the other side of the room. Mr. Croanan reached out, grasped his scarf, and pulled. It loosened and fell from Daniel's neck, hanging limp in Mr. Croanan's hands like a dead animal. Daniel stopped and turned around, but felt two rough hands push him backwards. He crashed into the mantle, causing various objects to fall.

Daniel felt something trickle down his back. Moaning, he got up and noticed the hunting rifle lying on the floor. He grabbed it, cocked it, and pointed it at Mr. Croanan.

"D—don't make me use this."



door stood in

front of him,

displaying a

headmaster's

brass plate

with the

Daniel backed into a corner. The barrel of the gun was as shaky as his thoughts.

"Hah! You don't have the guts to shoot me, or even to steal. . . ." Mr. Croanan faltered for a bit, as if thinking, then smiled. "I guess you aren't worth anything now. This will be as easy as killing your father."

The barrel straightened. His finger moved. The shot rang out, and Daniel was thrust backwards. Mr. Croanan grasped his side, staggered, and fell to the ground. A blotch of red grew on his shirt, devouring the cloth like a hungry beast. Daniel snatched the scarf and leaned over Mr. Croanan, expecting him to cry or plead for mercy, but Mr. Croanan started laughing.

"You . . . you really are weak. All it took was one lie to awaken your inner beast. Now

it's awake, and you've got blood on your hands, too. There's no going back. You're one of us now."

Daniel's eyes widened. The gun fell from his hands. He took one step back. Then another. Tears clouded his vision. He was now running. Past the door. Down the stairs. Out the

building. The rain hit him like bullets, but he didn't care. He crossed the border into the forest, letting the woods swallow him up. Tears mixed with the rain streaming down his face, blinding him. He sped up in spite of it, then ran into a tree and fell. Groaning, he got up.

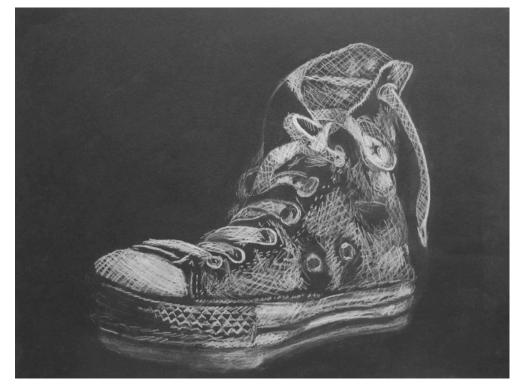
"Murderer," a voice from behind spat out the word.

Turning, Daniel saw a flickering, shadowy reflection of himself. The shadow stared at him, held up a gun, and shot.

Gasping, Daniel jumped up from the ground. Confused, he looked around. The

rain had stopped. The shadow was gone. A gray sheet shrouded the sky. A dream. That was all it was.

"Daniel!" Grishel's
voice woke
Daniel from
his trance
once again.
Grishel ran
towards
Daniel with
his eyes wide.
Between
deep breaths,
he managed,



Lauren Hancock: white charcoal

"The headmaster . . . he's . . . dead."

"Dead?"

"Daniel, what happened?"

Tears streamed down Daniel's face.

"Grishel, I'm . . . there's . . . I killed him.

"I can't believe it. . . . "

"I know. I've done—"

"I just can't believe you fought the Masked Thief without me!"

"Wait, what?"

Grishel's words spilled out faster and faster as he regained his breath. "I heard the shot . . . saw you running from the building. I rushed in and found Mr Croanan on the floor, grasping his side with one hand and a strange-looking key with the other. The key fit into his desk drawer. went rummaging through his

desk, and I found the mask. The mask! What happened? Did he threaten you? How did you come across his identity? Did you—"

"Grishel, stop!" Daniel cried. Stunned silence followed. "Grishel, there's something in me. Something dark. I'm afraid of it. I'm afraid of myself. . . ."

Grishel sat down next to Daniel. After a long pause, he said, "Okay, how about you tell me what happened? Start from where we parted."

And so Daniel explained everything. The things Mr. Croanan told him. The threats. The gun shot. Daniel even told Grishel about his dream.

A few moments of silence followed before Grishel cleared his throat. "This thing, inside you . . . you can control it."



A blotch of

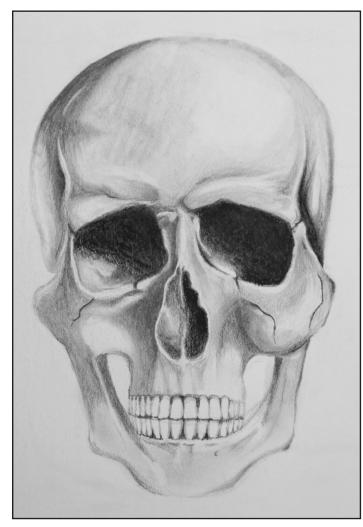
red grew on

devouring the

cloth like a

hungry beast.

his shirt.



Maddie S. Vaughn: graphite

"But I can't! I just shot Mr. Croanan without thinking!"

"You can. You just need confidence."

Daniel watched the ground. "I—I don't know."

A siren throbbed in the distance. Grishel cringed. "The police. Someone must've called 9-1-1. We need to run."

Daniel stared at Grishel. "Do you really think there's enough evidence against me?"

"Your fingerprints are on the gun, and

mine are on the drawer," Grishel suddenly smiled. "I know! We could leave the city and have an adventure. We would be safe and—"

"No, Grishel," Daniel interrupted. "If I left the city, I'd be leaving my conscience. I need to face what I've done." He stood up and wiped the tears from his eyes.

"But I can't get involved in this! They may hurt me. They may sentence you. You may not come back! Daniel, don't let your guilt make you do something stupid! Your fingerprints are on the gun!"

"This time guilt isn't acting. I'm just following your advice and doing what's right." Daniel looked Grishel in the eyes, even though Grishel did not return it. He thought of all that had happened that day, all he had heard and experienced. "Are you sure you don't want to be there for me?"

Grishel stared at his fingers.

"No, don't let me stand in your way." His voice quivered. "Go on, I'll be far from here soon."

Daniel took a step away but couldn't leave.

"I said go!" Grishel managed to look up at Daniel. "I don't want to be there when they hurt you! Go on, get this over with! I've seen enough pain in life already."

Daniel flinched. He looked away. "Thank you. For being my friend. If you change your mind, I'll be in the cemetery."

The cemetery grounds welcomed Daniel.

Since the home wasn't far off, he could see police cars rushing past crazed kids. Sunlight filtered through the clouds as he picked a few wild flowers next to the gate then walked down the cemetery's main path. He remembered the many other times he had come here, but unlike the others, he wasn't going to beat himself up or wash his face in tears. He came to say goodbye.

His father's grave was close to the center of the cemetery, and Daniel had no trouble locating its marble frame. He sat down in front of it and closed his eyes. At that moment, he didn't care what his dad had done or who had killed him. He just knew that his dad was his dad, the dad who played ball with him. The dad who could fix any frown. The dad who loved him. Daniel stayed there for several minutes, silently forgiving his dad, Grishel, and himself, then stirred again. He stood up with a smile and started to walk towards the flashing blue lights by the foster home, but halted when a figure met him halfway.

"Look," Grishel said, "I'm sorry about before."

"It's okay. I'm just glad you decided to join me."

"After thinking, I knew that leaving you would be the worst pain I could feel. I'm going with you."

"Thanks," Daniel said. Together, they left the cemetery, not knowing what would face them next. The only thing left behind was a bouquet of flowers tied together with a tattered gray scarf. ?



Joseph Hopkins: photography



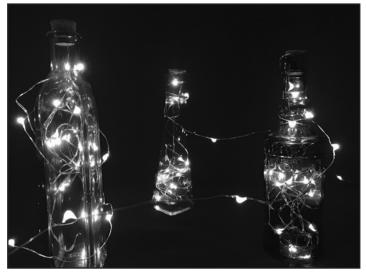
Kinsey Harris: photography



Grace Patterson: photography



Jamie Briggs: photography



Victoria Adderhold: photography



Kinsey Harris: photography





Fletcher Stanford: photography



Avery Daniels: photography



David Emmons: photography



Mary Ashley Gandy: photography



Alone

Behold him, alone in his bed, Head under his pillow. The echo of sad songs Beneath the night's neon glow. Alone I hear him crying. Alone in his bed he's lying, But I leave him all alone Listening to him groan.

No song could ever explain How badly I feel. His cries are like the horn of a train, But it is a train that kills. Never has he been this sad, No part of him feeling glad. Outside his door I sit and wait, And I wonder about his fate.

Will he not tell me why this is?

Maybe it is a girl with the Devil's eyes,
Or he has lost many of his friends,
Or missed out on some prize.
Is it something simple,
The shame of having a pimple,
Is he too critical of himself,
Is he turning into someone else?

Whatever the reason he's sad,
The struggle will be with him for a longtime.
This cannot turn him bad;
You have to be at the bottom to start the climb.
Alone I stand in the hall,
Listening for his call.
"I'm all alone, Dad," he cries.
As away his pride flies.

Hayden Lamey



As I sit alone in my room, split up from my family. I realize the making of a monumental fort consumed me.

Blankets brushing against my hands that are little grown. If only I knew better than

to construct my own version of a palace in the family room moving my family's valuables from stillness.

Now, I sit on my bed fiddling with my thumbs. My mom's shriek still echoing through my small head, my face

stained with raindrops my mouth can taste. If only I was payed more attention and had the sense of being wanted,

I would not have disappointed her—not been a selfish disgrace, inefficient daughter.
Using my now trained hands to fold,
I put the blankets back to where they first belong.

Avery Rose Ochsenhirt



by myself

I sit on the park bench, observing the world.

The people, the sounds, the sights, the thoughts all collide in one single experience.

I sit in the back of the class, surveying the room, tuning into conversations on my right. I watch the words scribble across the board, as I sit with a closed mouth.

I gather information, constantly filing it away.
I observe and watch the world around me. I listen to people voicing their thoughts I watch people tell their stories, and I sit absorbing everything around me. I do not voice my thoughts.
I find the corners of my mind And sit with myself.

Do not be mistaken.

I am happy here, apart from the world, but when I watch a mother embrace her child, or a friend comfort another friend, a part of me wants to come down to reality and feel what it's like to really exist; yet when that small courage starts to kindle, the courage to voice my own ideas, I fill a bucket with water and douse the dwindling flames. And when my heart knocks on the door of my mind, peering through the window, eager to get out, I lock the door and draw the shades. I retreat back into my mind as a part of me slumps back down under the mountains of my mind.

Lauren Musachia



Madison Wright: charcoal



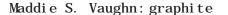
David Emmons Satire



urely as the sun rises in the East, bloodsport will always attract the attention of a well-educated crowd. Given that nearly all well-to-do gentlemen and ladies (especially) enjoy observing physical contact sports on winter Saturdays, many more would enjoy graceful medieval combat with high stakes and low blows. With the sudden momentum of illicit nicotine use and other egregious acts at our school, trial by combat is a much more sound solution to dealing with rule-breakers than expulsion.

Lest we forget the great Roman Empire's accomplishments in the field of entertainment with the Colosseum, a tribute to its majesty at Briarwood will bring competitive entertainment to students and teachers alike. Considering absolutely no one uses the parking lot behind the Jr. High hallway, the school board can easily push a contract to build a miniature colosseum there. Students looking to do their





best Japanese anime impression or simply trying to keep their skin can clash in the open field of an amphitheater packed with students. Any student who would otherwise be expelled will instead fight a fellow student for the right to remain at the school. With a sudden and very unexpected spike in drug testing, plenty of contestants will be available for trial by combat. This will limit the amount of students who would otherwise be expelled so as





not to make national news again like in 2015 for expelling some twenty-five kids.

The building of the colosseum should not demand a hefty expense considering how much the board recently spent to relocate the tennis courts. It should be able to hold around 120 to 200 students in the seats with room for several more to stand. Swords, lances, shields, daggers, and more will be available in Mrs. Merry's office before each match. Guns



SURVEY ON AN Which DAVID CONRAD If Briarwood DALTON What breach BEING TOO of the HOT were to BROOKS ARENA teacher would be JO SIMS student have an KATIE PAYNE AT handbook the scariest arena, who PATRICK HERREN would you ASHLEY choose to RUSSELL would get to have to BRIARWOOD you sent SHIRT DON FURUTO against? fight? to the UNTUCKED arena? **ERNEST CARROLL** DOM **ANKNEY NOT SHAVING** MATTHEW FORESTER

are much too expensive and loud and would prove deadly towards the crowd if handled improperly by a contestant. Students chosen for the tournament based on disorderly behavior will be given at least one month to train in advance before the match. Girls will be given the opportunity to abstain if they wish at the cost of immediate expulsion. Teachers will be strictly forbidden from participating unless they are elected by request of the student who wishes to fight him or her and by majority vote from the SGA. The student government needs something useful to do for once.

The fight itself will take place in a circular arena no smaller than forty feet in diameter, and the walls no lower than eight feet. The school board can decide how large they want the stadium, but there must be enough seating for at least 120 attendees and two lockers for the fighters. The fight will be limited only by the boundaries of the arena and take

place at 3:30 P.M. on the selected date of the fight. Concessions will be available between 3:15-4:15 P.M. before and during the match, so those who need service hours can run the concession stand. Dr. Richey will be requested to read the eulogy of any deceased competitors after the fight. Any form of combat will be allowed, but weapons must be limited to what is available in Mrs. Merry's office. The victor will, of course, have the chance to end the opponent's life swiftly or to spare it after defeating the opponent in combat. As Christians, offering grace to your opponent is recommended, but it is not enforced.

Acts punishable through trial by combat include but are not limited to the following: yelling out in class to appear smarter than you really are, taking any form of illegal drug, or complaining about how tired you are to gain recognition and validation from fellow neurotic sociopaths. In order to keep the state

government from intervening and possibly shutting down the school, the arena will be labeled as "Jousting Arena," and its main purpose will be for "jousting." Now, should a student die in the event of one of these "jousting" matches, the cause of death will go on record as a sports related incident (in the same category as a concussion or shattered bone). Videos and photography are, of course, prohibited in order to preserve the identities of the combatants.

Now this might seem like a vast amount of effort to the untrained, skeptical eye, but it is all in a just manner. It cuts down on the amount of expulsions and entertains in a way only true competition can. It gives students something to look forward to watching, and contestants can become heroes before their peers. Trial by combat is a brilliant solution to keeping students in line and adds greatness to punishment. Q

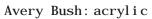




Alyssa Lightsey: acrylic

Avery Bush: mixed media







Jenna Fuller: print





Camdyn Gilbert: mixed media



Lillie Griffith: acrylic



Jordan Martens: tempera



Camdyn Gilbert: acrylic



Riley Drouin Nonfiction

MY CASTLE

he light would shine through the leaves of the maples like prismic messages from God. In the colder months these messages would be converted into the dark, yet comforting clouds of winter. The boundaries of my oasis were clear: my house to the stone wall. The land had property boundaries, but my imaginative possibilities were limitless. This space was my castle.

Now that I look back at it from an adult perspective, this property had no exorbitant value. The backyard of this New England style home was similar to many others around it. Filled with trees, it had a small creek that ran through it with an ancient stone wall that separated our property from the adjoining farm's land. However, to me, this backyard was a palace. The ways in which



Victoria Adderhold: photography

the trees were clumped together to form a perfect thinking spot. How the canopy of leaves above me gave me the innocent yet undenying sensation of safety. I loved this place in all weather and through every season.

In the winter when snow blanketed the ground, I transformed into an Eskimo. After a full day of building "igloos" and securing tunnels underneath the snow, I would come back to reality with wet mittens, a red nose, and snow encrusted hair. Winter in my backyard was the most peaceful season of all. I would lie down, letting the snow conform to the weight of my body and mold to cushion me. What was so peaceful to my fledgling ears was not what I heard but what I couldn't. The birds no longer

chirped, having all flown south for the winter. The squirrels couldn't be found scrounging for food. Everything was quiet, void as if my home had been deserted years prior.

The summer always held a cheerful murmur. The birds swooped out of the sky





Madison Casey: photography

like airplanes descending. There was a constant hum of animals scurrying around. My forgotten wasteland of winter was eventually brought back to life with the promise of warmth. In the summer months I became a "runaway girl," independent from everyone else. I built makeshift forts out of branches and prepared "scrumptious stews" out of berries, crab apples, and rain water in my red wagon. When the rain arrived, with it came even more excitement. The small creek that ran through my backyard was, in my young imagination, transformed into a raging river. It became the mote that protected my castle. Through this environmental change I would begin my exploration. Placing the large canoe that was stored in my backyard into the narrow girth of my "river," I skimmed each side of the bank with my wooden paddle scraping rocks and dirt from the hardened ground. I could travel anywhere I pleased.

If the creek that ran through my backyard was the mote of my palace, then the stone

wall that lined the property was my tower. Large stones stacked a few feet high were my idea of a perfect playground. Day in and day out you could find me balancing myself atop the decades old fence. After much time and numerous failed attempts, I was able to memorize the structure of that stone wall. Eyes shut, I would gingerly place one foot in front

of the other, navigating the top of my tower.

In many ways my imaginative character was developed in my castle. Through the peace I discovered and the adventures I unearthed, I was completely and organically myself. The days I spent getting muddy in the stream or drenched in snow, the hours it took me to formulate the perfect dwelling from tree branches—all these thing allowed me to continuously enjoy the life I was given. Through all the joyous memories of my kingdom, I continually return to one: my stone wall. Its metaphorical structure continues to tickle me. The ways in which I would walk across it with my eyes closed not sure of what was to come next is so symbolic of the course of my life.

CHILDHOOD TRADITIONS

What were your favorite games to play as a child?

- Hide and seek in the dark, bump,
 soccer, flashlight tag
- Four square
- Shoots and LaddersHungry Hippos

What was your favorite place to play as a child?

- Chuck E. Cheese's
- Basketball courts at Mt. Laurel Park
- Tennis courts

What was your favorite memory from that place?

- Lowering the goals while pretending like I'm Kobe Bryant
- Enjoying the hazy summer days outside with my best friends
- Building a tree house



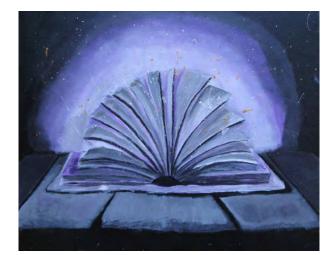


Bennett Shaw: oil





Caroline Mays: oil

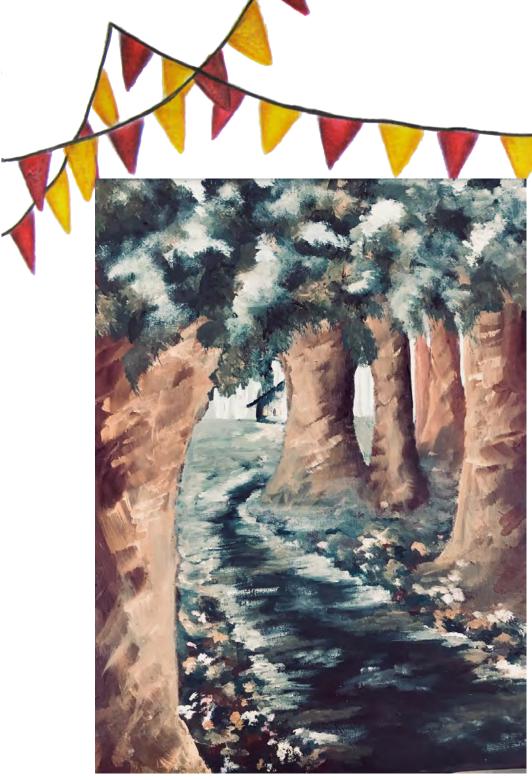


Bethany Prince: acrylic



Natalie Clasen: mixed media







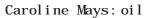
Mackenzie King: acrylic



Macie Scaini: acrylic



Heather Houston: marker





Inside Van Gogh's Starry Night

I silently slide open the glass window.

My hair floats in the cool breeze as it swirls around me.

I look up at the sky and blink in the bright starlight.

In the night, the moon conducts a symphony of stars
As they twinkle and twirl with glee.

A towering tree stretches its arms freely
And presents the sky to me
As stars swiftly skate

Across the blue expanse like figure skaters spinning on an icy lake.

The stars tumble and somersault onto rolling azure hills.

Buildings sleep below the stars that sweep the dancing sky;
They rest in the comfort of the light.
Beds cradle bodies as they lie tucked away in smooth, silky sheets.
A gentle breeze rustles leaves and tip-toes into windows.
It whispers wise words with ease
Into tranquil ears that are fast asleep.
The moon's warmth blankets sleepy eyes
As bright blues and yellows dance onto pillows.

Despite the entrancing show, I close the window and think, "Oh, what a spectacle! Oh, what a delight! There is no other sight As magnificent as this starry night."

Jenna Fuller

A Story of Dots

The hunter, Orion, is racing and chasing after a hare. He is accompanied by his loyal dogs, Always barreling after him. He is fleeing from scurrying Scorpius, But they will never be seen on the same night.

The Nemean lion is prowling around for his prey But is cautious of the mighty Hercules, Who's lurking through the night pursuing the lion.

A month later, Andromeda is crying for help And hoping the valiant Perseus will fly to her rescue. Look up to the night sky and watch the stars play out these stories.

Grace Kovakas



Madison Wright: mixed media



The Lab

In the cold lab (in a procedure assigned by the teacher), The lab group sets soaked sticks on fire.

Doused in chemicals, each new stick glistens in the light of the last fire, waiting its turn, patiently.

Each flame is more brilliant than the last, a dancing glow, vermillion scarlet lavender emerald

then is gone. The next is lit, life bursts forth again, and then again is gone.

In darkness, the flame illuminates all, returning shadows to the depths, then is gone.

Dark returns
dooming lab sheets and beakers
to nothing-—

hot bright strong clear cold blind alone

ash glows as embers excited to renew light, its divine purpose.

Jim Selkirk

Waltzing Fireball

The Sun's a waltzing fireball
That's drifting through the air.
She's dancing for the world below
That's too abuzz to care.

The clouds dress up this dancer With cirrus skirts and shoes To compliment her gracefulness Which she will never lose.

Yet their actions are in vain
For no one sees her grace.
The world below, it rotates here at
Much too quick a pace.

The stars serve as her backup dancers
When she's on break.
They shine more brightly than earth's gems
And even man-made fakes!

Yet people tend to prefer that Which they can hold and touch And keep trapped on their fingers Where they can keep their trust.

So she dances all alone,
Yet she will not despair
For somewhere on that filthy planet,
Surely, someone cares.

David Houston

Madison Casey: color photography



eeing him made Karen's blood freeze like ice. The realization that it was the same man again caused her to shiver. She turned her head and looked down at her shaking hands, away from the coffee shop, away from the reflection of the man in the window. She had hoped that all of this was nothing more than coincidences, but this was

the fourth time in two weeks that she had noticed him watching her and taking photos.

"How is that even possible? Why would someone stalk me, an elementary teacher? I am not even that...."

"Your coffee, ma'am," the voice of the waitress interrupted Karen's thoughts. "Is there anything else I can get you? The chocolate cake is excellent. Would you like a piece?"

"No, thank you." Lost in thought, Karen poured four sugar packets into her coffee, two more than usual. Her hands shook as she took sips of the scalding hot coffee.

"Ouch!" She looked down and saw a big brown stain on her blue dress. It was her favorite dress. Scolding herself, she put the cup back on the table. Her worst fears had come true. She was on the verge of losing control of herself. She took her phone out and dialed a number she had memorized years ago.

Robert saw how Karen picked up her phone to make a call. He figured that it was

her mom again. In his weeks of observing her, he had noticed that they talked at least once a day.

"How is that even possible? How do they have something to tell each other every day?" Robert murmured as he put down the camera and laid it next to his coffee. He took a sip and grimaced. He had asked for a strong cof-

THE MANINTHE—
WIND+W

Jenny Zink
Fiction

fee, and what he had received was hot water with some coffee powder. Robert's thoughts drifted back to Karen and her mother. Growing up in foster care, he had never had a personal relationship with his foster mother. She had not really cared for him. No wonder. His older siblings were her biological children, and to make matters worse, he had been a challenging boy. He frowned when he remembered that Karen's relationship to her mother was similar to the one Rachel had with hers. Thinking about his former girlfriend from college made him wistful and sad at the same

time. He still could not believe that she had left him because he had gone into the military. He had thought she would be proud that her boyfriend served the country, but no, she had said he would forget her. How could he possibly forget her? She had been the only one he thought of when. . . . Robert tried to get the old memories out of his brain again. They

hurt too much to think about. A woman with blond hair walked by him, but he paid no attention to her. He rummaged around in his backpack, and it took him some time to find what he was searching for. He smiled as he clenched it with his fingers and then put it in his inner jacket pocket. He had awaited this day for so long and was excited for what was yet to come. Taking his camera back into his hand, he zoomed in with the lens to take

another close look at Karen when he saw that the blond woman who had walked by seconds before was now sitting down at her table. Robert recognized her when she turned to Karen to hug her.

"Lisa, thank you so much for coming!" Relief was clearly audible in Karen's voice. "You don't know how scared I am. I recognized him immediately when I saw the reflection in the window. His full beard and his baseball cap are like branded into my head. I've really hoped this all would turn out to be



nothing but coincidences, but I cannot deny anymore that it's more than that."

"Of course, Karen, I came as fast as I could! I could tell how nervous you were when you called. I did everything the way we planned it, and I talked to Peter on the way here, so they should be able to put an end to all of this today."

Robert's anger grew as he watched the two women deep in conservation. Why was Lisa here? Karen's calendar didn't say that they were meeting up today. The previous Tuesday evening he had gone to Karen's house to make sure she had no plans for today. He had looked through her living room window where he could see her calendar with the plans for the week written down. She was a really busy woman, and it took him a week to find the perfect day for his plans. Robert's anger subsided as he thought of his surprise for Karen. He was so excited to see the reaction in her face. Again he looked through his camera, and when he found her in the lens, she was looking right at him. It felt like she was looking right into his soul. Did she see him? He didn't think so. His baseball cap and beard almost covered all of his face. But oh wow,

those eyes! Robert took a close-up picture of her face and looked at it. He remembered the last time he saw her eyes that close. It was the previous Wednesday. It had poured down rain the whole day. He had followed her into the supermarket, but his shoes had still been wet, and so he had slipped. He had fallen against a shelf of tortilla chips, and at least a dozen bags had fallen on the floor. She had heard the noise, turned around, and helped him pick them up. He recalled every word she had said to him.

"This could have happened to me. I am such a clumsy person."

Robert had been so mad at himself that he had blown his cover, but later on he had thought it had been totally worth it. Her eyes had kept him captive around. like it used to be with Rachel. Both had the exact same shade of azure blue eyes, and Robert was fascinated and astonished at the same time by how similar the two women were, even though they weren't related.

"Don' t turn but he's taki ng pi ctures of me. Agai n!"

"Don't turn around, but he's sitting behind you, and he's taking pictures of me. Again!" Karen poured another two sugar packets in her now lukewarm coffee and stirred the spoon with abrupt arm movements.

"Look at me, Karen! Try to ignore him. You don't want him to notice that we know he's there. Tell me about your day. What did you have for breakfast?"

Karen smiled gratefully at Lisa. She didn't know how she would have managed this situation without her best friend. It took all of her attention to hide her nervousness, to pretend



Julia Sinclair: white charcoal



like she was just having a lunch date with her best friend. She looked to her right. A man had just sat down at one of the tables between her and the stalker. His hair was brown and short like her dad's hair used to be during his time in the military. The man pulled a newspaper out of his backpack and laid it next to his phone. Their eyes met, and he slowly nodded to her.

Robert hoped Lisa would leave soon. It was Tuesday, and the yoga class Karen taught began at 4:30, so he would have to go on with his plan in the next twenty minutes.

Robert hated waiting, and he felt like he had awaited this day for several years. Today would be his day, and he could not be more excited about it. A woman sat next to him on the other end of the bench. Robert looked over at her. She had red curly hair, and her eyes were hidden behind large black sunglasses. She held her phone in her hands and seemed busy typing messages to someone named Peter, her boyfriend probably. Robert turned his head back to the coffee shop and saw Lisa

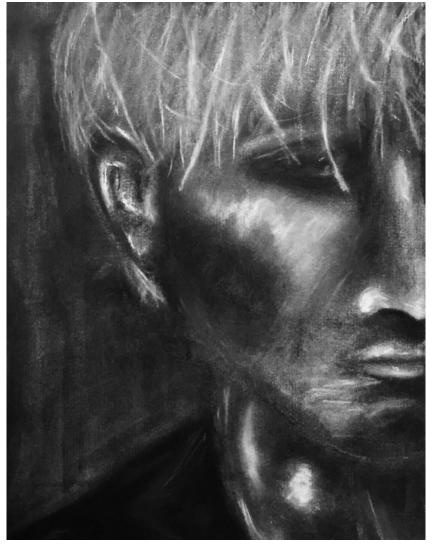
packing up her things. Finally! He felt adrenaline rushing through his body. He took off his jacket and crammed it into his backpack. He turned on the bench he sat on to scan his surroundings another time. Karen and Lisa had just hugged each other to say goodbye, the waitress had just given a cup of coffee to the military man, and the red-haired woman next to him was still focused on nothing but her phone. He smiled. Nobody was paying attention to him. He was proud of his disguise. People around him probably thought of him as nothing more than an amateur pho-

tographer. Binoculars would have been way too eye-catching, so he had used his camera instead. This also enabled him to take pictures of Karen. Robert gathered all his belongings and put on his backpack. He smiled as he clenched his hand around the little box in his pocket. He did not see that the red-haired woman next to him watched every one of his movements from the corner of her eye. He

also did not see that her right hand clenched the weapon she had in her back holster.

Karen watched her best friend return to her car. She wished she could walk right next to Lisa, leaving this place of anguish, hiding from her stalker. Karen rolled the little earbud between her fingers. Lisa had secretly slipped it into her hand when she had hugged Karen. It was so delicate that she had to be careful to not squish it. While pulling her shoulder-length hair behind her ear, Karen slipped the earbud into her right ear and pushed the little button to activate it. The calm female voice in her ear told her to stay seated and to wait until further instructions. She felt a lot more secure knowing that Peter, Lisa's Husband, was sitting at the table at her right, and that Anna was sitting next to her stalker. Karen slid back and forth on her chair. She knew she had to hide her nervousness, and right know she was doing a terrible job at it.

Robert confidently walked toward Karen.



Caroline Mays: reductive charcoal



Today

would be

his day,

could not

and he

be more

about it.

exci ed

He focused on her face, on her eyes. He could not take his eyes from her beautiful blue eyes. Only a few feet from her, he put his hand in his jacket to take out the small black box, but it was stuck. One of the two tiny screws was entangled with the fabric in his pocket. Though he pulled with force on it, he could not free it with one hand. His abrupt arm movement caught the attention of a few peo-

ple around him. The man one table over and the red-haired woman behind him jumped to their feet and started running toward him. Both waved guns at him.

"Drop your weapon and go down on your knees!"

"What weapon?" Robert ignored them, still trying to pull out the box and his eyes fixed on Karen. Why did she look so terrified?

It was not until then that he noticed how the situation had changed within seconds. Who were they? Were they criminals? Someone jumped onto his back, forcing him down against a table. Robert heard people scream and running away, but he was focused on fighting off the person above him. He wanted to ask her, no, he had to ask her. He could not let go of his plan.

"Stop fighting and drop your weapon! Now!"

When Robert still refused, he heard a shot. An instant later he felt something warm running down his chest. His legs gave in, and he sank to the ground. Finally he could pull out the box. It had opened, and the ring fell to the

ground and rolled several inches until it came to a halt at Karen's feet. Robert closed his eyes.

Karen watched the paramedics heave the stretcher into the ambulance. Their concerned faces made her feel even worse than she had before. How could she have misread his intentions so badly? Had he shown any sign that he wanted to harm her? But how could he have fallen in love with her so quickly? She took a closer look at the ring in her hand. The engraving caught her attention.

"R&R, 23 May 1990." Did that mean the ring hadn't been meant for her in the first place? But for whom was it then? Someone approached her from behind and laid a hand

on her shoulder. It was Peter, and he had the stalker's backpack in his hand. No, he wasn't a stalker. He was just a man in love.



"His name is Robert Andrews, and he is forty-nine years old. I don't think he has any family. There are no pictures of a family in his wallet. There is only this picture. It's pretty old, and you should really take a look at it, Karen."

Peter handed Karen the photograph. It was worn-out, and the colors were already fading. It showed a portrait of a woman, and Karen froze when she looked closer at her face. The woman could have been her twin. The similarities in their faces were remarkable. Karen flipped the photograph, and read the writing on the backside.

"Love you! Rachel. 1990." (



Sarah Singleton: reductive charcoal





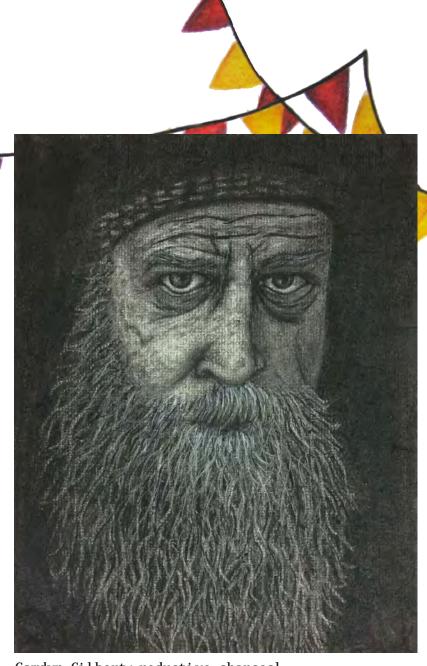
Mackenzie King: reductive charcoal



Halle Beasley: charcoal



Lilly Griffith: reductive charcoal



Camdyn Gilbert: reductive charcoal

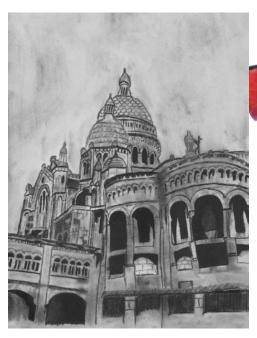




Jordan Martens: reductive charcoal



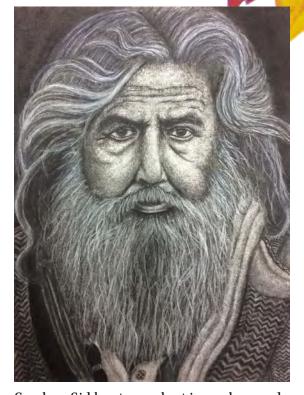
Parker Bradbary: white charcoal



Anna Martin: charcoal



Avery Bush: charcoal



 ${\tt Camdyn}\ {\tt Gilbert}: {\tt reductive}\ {\tt charcoal}$



Rain like Snow

Early morning mist and early morning rain
Visits our bus and taps the pane.
My mind hears its call, but not my ears
Even though on this bus
There is no fuss,
And all is peace and quiet.

No one talks; no one dares,
For some asleep need their share
Of rest after a late football night
Hollering and screaming with joy and fright,

So some play with phones.

Why? I don't know,

When there's wonders outside almost like falling snow,
But do they know snow? How could they when days

Are spent indoors with windows closed?

Whether phones are out or people sleep,
No one here makes a peep.
As for me, I'm caught in the rain storm's spell
As the bus so gently massages my feet.

The rain soon stops, but its effects remain
Which I see through the fogged-up white window pane.
Though some see gray skies and water-logged grass,
I see greens made greener and hope it will last,

But, alas, it ends at too quick a pace.
Pulling into a lot, we get breakfast with haste.
I'd rather see greens than that restaurant's red.
I'd rather eat beauty than bread.

David Houston





Curse the Yellow on the Road

Oh, school bus, how the vein in my forehead pops out with every flash of yellow my innocent eye sees. May all your tires implode like balloons.

I pray for the day
when every child
who takes the time to smell the roses
exiting the bus repents.
I long for a time
when I'm not watching
the entirety of the Titanic in my car
because of your horrifically planned routes.
For when I close my eyes
I dream of every school bus coming alive
and driving off a cliff
like kamikazes fulfilling their faithful duty.

And if that day comes, we shall rise up as one people and unify together under one voice to punish those who have given themselves to the devil's work. Every school bus driver will be tried, fined, and judged guilty.

Yet no cliff is high enough, no punishment cruel enough, an unspeakable possibility conceivable enough, to end your sorry existence, school bus. For where there is injustice must there also be the school bus.

So I will sit still behind your stop sign. I will watch those sinful parents who are too busy to drive their kids themselves yet not busy enough to watch them get dropped off and picked up. I will be in the endless sea of traffic, until the day someone up top finally realizes it's a safety hazard for a vehicle not to have seatbelts, and wipe the school bus from the face of this earth. Amen.

Jon Houston Seibert





The Adventure of an Orange

A spurt of juice comes flying out, The orange falls to roll. The dog comes near, A slobbery smear, And gets that orange whole. He runs into the green grass yard To down his stolen prize. He then dislikes the taste of it And leaves it for the flies.

Sally Worthington



Brooklyn Boinkski: watercolor



Oh Carrot, My Carrot

Oh carrot! My carrot! I grasp your green shoots, And grunting, I heave up Your orange tipped roots,

Pulling you up like how Arthur himself Grasped Excalibur's hilt and tugged her out. A sword that would rally. A sword that would free. A sword of infinite, fathomless worth.

You, quite like this, Bring men 'round the table To feast on your treat. You're hidden gold in a river.

Oh carrot! My carrot!
You glisten so bright,
But unlike Excalibur, you do not delight
In the harming of people, or the choosing of one.
No! You call for all to pull up your roots.

You're more of a ball.
Yes! A round, bouncing ball
Bringing joy to a boy
On any day.
A ball that brings friends, and there they flock
To play games only they know, at which people gawk,
(Though the ball can be used in any sport—
Like you in any dish.)

And when the boy wins, it brings him delight Like his birthday does, with balloons and lights And cake and friends and video games— As you will when I taste you today.

So to all who see carrots as just a side: Be gone! We need not your pious pride. Go back to your wheats and your smelly old meats. You have no place among us. Oh carrot! My carrot! The possibilities— Carrot cake, carrot stew, and other recipes! I love you like marriage; I love you, my friend. After you're eaten, you're with me Forever. Amen! David Houston and Jon Houston Seibert

Lauren Musachia Nonfiction



e all sat around in the corner of the dining room surrounded by a half wall with a fake plant on top of it. The round table was covered in a white sheet of paper as a tablecloth. The adults sat at the large rectangular table and laughed and talked loudly, paying no attention to their scheming kids in the corner. A soft hum of Christmas music disguised our whispers and snickers. The plastic train circled dutifully around the Christmas tree. All of our seats were marked with little paper name cards with some sort of smiling Santa or galloping reindeer sticker next to the name. These had been arranged by the younger cousins. With the lingering taste of two, three, or even four Sister Schubert rolls, our minds began to wander, our eyes glancing from the tree to the adults to the fake plant behind my cousin Morgan's head. Luke was crawling around underneath the table with an imaginary rifle in his hand, his head cocked as

he yelled, "Retreat to base!" into his shoulder.

As the four oldest cousins, and all girls, we four girls developed a close bond. It was my sister Ashley and me, and our two cousins Morgan and Taylor. Taylor and Ashley were a year apart in age, and so were Morgan and me, making for a storm of shared immaturity. Every year we looked forward to sharing a hotel room with the four of us, and we would always rent some sort of Christmas movie to fall asleep to after jumping across the beds and running around the hotel hallways. This was the one time of year we were all together, and we made the most of it. There was always Gumma's, our grandmother's, famous cutout cookies, whose shapes always changed to match the seasons—turkeys and pumpkins for thanksgiving and Santas and candy canes for Christmas.

The four of us exchanged some looks of boredom, munching on the cookies we had

grabbed from the kitchen. The adults were all lost in conversation, cackling loudly at times. Sometimes we could hear snippets of our names intermingled in their conversation, but we didn't really care to ask what they were saying about us. I stared at the green wrapped mints in the middle of the table and grabbed one, unwrapped the mint and popped it into my mouth.

Morgan gave out a little gasp.

"What?" I asked, rolling up the mint wrapper into a little green ball.

Morgan grabbed one of the mints, turned around, and hid it in the middle of the fake plant behind our heads. "I wonder how long it'll take Gumma to find this," she snickered. "She's always cleaning and dusting all these fake plants. . . ." She sat back down and laughed. "Imagine when she finds a mint in her fake plant!" Morgan chuckled. She was always the one who was expected to do crazy





half wall. Morgan fell out of her chair and snatched the mint. She quickly sat back in her chair and composed herself, laughing. "Oops."

We all laughed, but we were careful to not look suspicious. Our game carried on until dinner was over, and we all hopped into a minivan as we drove to the hotel, anxious about Christmas morning gifts. We let out

mint a little too far. The mint ended up on the hardwood floor on the other side of the

about Christmas morning gifts. We let out all our laughter in the hotel room and swore again to never say a word about our game to another cousin or parent. We all kept the

things and always made a large presence of laughs at family gatherings.

"Morgan!" Ashley said, laughing loudly at first, then quieting down to a whisper after glancing at our parents.

Taylor looked on disapprovingly, crossing her arms.

Ashley took a mint, and Morgan suggested we play a game. "We throw the mints into the plant, and the first one to get caught loses," Morgan explained in a whisper, hardly containing her laughter.

All four of us agreed to keep the secret, although Taylor joined reluctantly. Our game had started.

I held a mint in my hand nonchalantly eyeing the parents' table and quickly threw it behind my head into the plant. I played it off like nothing happened as all of us tried to contain our laughter.

Next Morgan went, throwing the



Emma Crawford: watercolor



secret for years. Our game would resume every Christmas dinner for the next two years, and the plant soon had handfuls of mints hidden in its polished fake leaves. Five years later, we had all forgotten about the game. We suddenly noticed Gumma had replaced the plant one year, and we all looked at each other with widen eyes.

"Well, I picked up the plant to move it to the kitchen and guess what happened?" Gumma asked as we tried to hold in our laughter. "I picked up the plant and a bunch of these fell out all over the floor!" Gumma explained as she held up a little green mint wrapper in her hand. We all remembered our years of throwing mints over our shoulders. Morgan began to cough to try and cover up her laughter. We all tried to contain our smiles. We left that Christmas with our secret still our secret and a good mighty laugh.





Nathan Mier: photography



Camille Jarvis: photography



Madison Casey: photography



Victoria Adderhold: photography



Grace Patterson: photography





Madison Casey: photography



Megan Haskins: photography



Fletcher Stanford: photography



Kinsey Harris: photography



Maddie Henderson: photography



The Cedar

As a little boy, I would walk to the back of my weed-ridden yard to where cedars grew by the worn-wood fence warding off the attack of my neighbor's two feisty dogs.

The biggest tree touched the sky so blue as I went to the place where its branches parted. I grabbed the first branch and then grabbed the next and the climb to freedom had started.

With a hoist and a grunt, I moved up and on with the wind in my hair and my path to the sun. Needle-like twigs pulled my shirt as I, stunned, approached a maze of rough-barked branches.

Left, up, left, down,
I climbed through the maze and away from the ground.
Sap on my pants, hands, and shirt
strengthened that cedar scent around me.

Then at the highest I dared to go, where I felt the tree rocking to and fro, I found several branches strong for that height, and there I rested in joy and delight.

My sigh of relief mixed with cold spring air.
The thrill of the climb mixed with peace.
I slipped into restfulness at such ease
and enjoyed the nearby scenery.

Above me, clouds drank the sun's rays.
Beside me, cardinals and robins played.
Around me, the soft, green branches swayed.
Below me, roofs hid people away

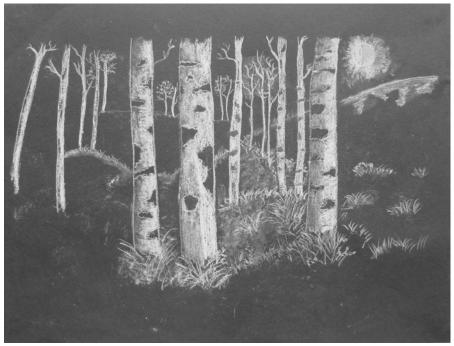
as a dog chased its tail, the kids played ball, and a cat lounged on
a wooden porch rail.
Here I was
above it all
in complete and total contentment.

How long I was up there, I do not know, but when the sky bathed in an orange glow, a call from below beckoned me home.

So, with much regret, I climbed back down through the tree's leafy net and towards solid ground,

but now with the treasure that I had found, freedom was always a climb away.

David Houston



Sarah Shea Hill: white charcoal



Small Child

A free child jumps on the bike of another and rides the lane till the winding road ends and calls his mother to come get him from play to begin planning the next day.

But a grounded child that walks around his small room can barely get through it having to use the broom his things taken and is made to clean so he opens his throat to cry.

The small child cries with a fearful sound for things taken but still around and his voice is heard on the far off grass mound for the small child cries for himself.

The free child thinks of another day and the winds blow soft in that dying way and the big grill is filled with his favorite things and he claims this day his own

But the small child stands with his dreams broken his spirit cries for things once spoken his things are taken and he's made to clean so he opens his throat to cry.

The small child cries with a fearful sound for things taken but still around and his voice is heard on the far off grass mound for the small child cries for himself.

Sarah Preston



Lynzie Liddell: white charcoal

Fleeting

You would call it a pleasant day, not warm, but also not brisk because it is only about ten in the morning, and I know you like days like this, days that seem calm

or quiet because they remind you of your childhood when you and your brothers would jump in the leaves and scale the branches—climb high and jump far into vast oceans of crisp leaves that fell from those old oaks that stood tall over the years, trees that supported imagination and distant laughter,

Memories that only cross your mind on a rarely pleasant day like this, just a glimpse back to life before commitment, before responsibility and sensibility, back to when life was just living, before time seemed fleeting.

In that moment when you feel the Autumn wind bustle across your skin at ten in the morning on a September day, you think back to life before.

A smile spreads across your face, yet your heart seems to ache not for what was, but what is left.

Carson Brooks



Coffee Epiphanies

when a distaste becomes a passion

never thought that I would like coffee. As a kid, I could never understand how adults could enjoy drinking such a scaldingly bitter drink ("hot bean water" is what I called it). But, despite my original disdain, a year or two ago, I found myself beginning to look forward to a steaming mug every

The simple
"hot bean
water"
of my
uninformed
youth was
nowhere
to be
found.

morning; nothing, not even tea, could replace the warm feeling that the liquid brought to me. With my daily cuppa came a number of observations. Bold, dark, and subtly mysterious, coffee presented itself to me as a beverage that carried a great deal of power over people with its various roles as a conversation stimulant, comforter, performance booster, food group (depending on who you ask), and source of increased consciousness. Quite frankly, there's nothing like it. It's basically the human

equivalent of ambrosia, the sustenance of the gods.

Being a mere mortal however, I could never have hoped to harness the full power of these intriguing characteristics on my own; I needed something more. So I did what any good self- proclaimed coffee snob/wannabe hipster would do. I humbly and persistently sought out my own personal coffee Mecca. I found it in my local Starbucks. It was perfect, with down to earth baristas, relatable (albeit distant) patrons, and a downright strong cup of joe. And what's more, the pilgrimage was only three and a half miles from my school and my house, respectively.

Inside this beautiful place, I learned the difference between blonde and dark roasts, I studied the varying and strangely specific flavors of the Guatemalan versus the Ethiopian or Italian beans, and most importantly, I discovered the silent solidarity of a community with a common interest: coffee, of course. The simple "hot bean water" of my uninformed adolescence was nowhere to be found. In its place swirled a complex medley of exciting possibilities, just waiting to be investigated.

With my relatively new obsession with all things roasted, ground, brewed, and poured, came a profound realization. I must share this thing that is so important to me with others; they must enjoy it as well. Indoctrination in mind, I made it my mission to get out of my comfort zone, to defer from my beloved Mecca in order to meet a friend at a cafe I had never visited before at least once every two weeks. Every coffee shop in my city, no matter how quaint, snooty, or small, became fair game. Over frothy almond milk lattes and foaming cold brew, I discovered as much about myself as I did about the dear people I met. I gathered their opinions, aspirations, musings, and frustrations, and uncovered my own as well. I observed the relative amount of courage it took for me to walk into a new shop, order, pay, and set up my computer alone. Each journey contributed to a wealth of knowledge about the way that the world worked, and how I existed in it.

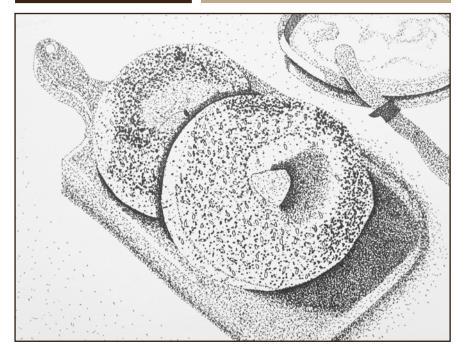
The semi-monthly coffee runs persist to this day. So do the transcendent conversations and subsequent revelations. For me, you see, coffee has become much more than a drink. Over time, it has morphed into a wonderful covenant between discovery and discussion that cannot be broken. \bigcirc



coffee beans-Jenna Fuller: colored pencil

favorite coffee shops?

"The Coffee Loft . It's bohemian, off-kilter, colorful, and homey."



Brooklyn Barger: pointillism

favorite blend?

"I usually go for a light or medium roast with cacao."

Katie's Picks

"I also like Revelator because it's modern, sustainable, refined, and minimalistic."



Emma Crawford: watercolor







Bella Domingue: pen



Anna Claire Giffin: pen

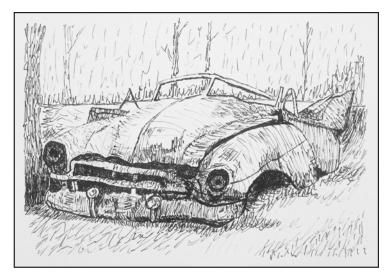




Bennett Milton: pointillism

Carson Brooks: pen

Catherine Gray: pen



Collin Dorrill: pen



Bella Domingue: white charcoal



Piano

Playing the piano is as intricate and free as a tall standing tree

My fingers prance to the beat of a familiar dance

with notes flowing, growing and bowing

The bass notes' deep hum rolls across my thumb

My piano is the escape into the world I create

Life melts away like the sun at the end of a day

My being submerged within the sounds that pound inside my head

swaying, I close my eyes like I'm floating up into the blue sky

Lost in the flurry of notes that pass like the hurry of boats

Piano releases me into the sea

Piano hears my plea as me becomes we

My piano, the companion that will never abandon

the silence between notes

music should be natural as water falls from a cliff

warm as the heavy sound of bees in a swarm

as the explosion of brightness and energy of fireworks that burst in the sky

or free and weightless as a soaring plane

music should remind of a more potent time

music should be seen as a reflection over water

or a daydream of a pleasant scheme

music should be authentic as genuine as gold

personal as a sliver of the soul

Amelia Ray





The Magic of Music

What is this magic that fills my head when the record player spins and spins?

What is this lullaby that soothes me in bed and balances dreams on the tip of a pen?

A song is a bullet, heavy with lead,

embedding in its target flowers of red.

It's a rainstorm, a drink for souls,

but makes men tremble when its thunder rolls.

A sad song is silver, polished or not,

as cold as a shiver with its beauty distraught.

And music's the lights on the present-circled tree

that makes children dream of the gifts and gleam.



Through horn, through bell this messenger rings

with his five-lined message made to help men sing.

He delivers his letters to the illiterate's door

and leaves him wondering and wondering more.

David Houston









Stella Bell: acrylic



Maddie S. Vaughn: graphite



Anna Gardner Herren: acrylic





Natalie Clasen: oil



Abby Johnson: oil



Emma Stutts: acrylic



Sati re

DRESS FOR



APPLE WATCHES: INFAMOUS INSRTUMENTS OF CHEATING

BRIARWOOD STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN DRESS CODE VIOLATIONS TOO FAR.

t all schools, dress code violations should be punishable by imprisonment. This is an absolutely necessary measure in today's society with rebellious kids at a premium. Kids who are not in proper dress code are the ultimate disrespecters of authority. Below, I will outline what dress code laws our school needs to implement.

I will start with the boys' dress code. The fact that guys only get a warning or a detention for having their shirt untucked is absolutely appalling. Having a shirt untucked is one of the highest forms of adolescent disrespect. It is the equivalent of the middle finger. Excuses like, "I just came from gym or weightlifting," or, "My shirt is too small," are

absolute rubbish. Punishment for this offense should be at minimum an expulsion and a maximum of two years in solitary confinement. Also, I want to point out the audacity of today's boys showing up to school without a belt. Without a belt, you go from looking like a well dressed teen to looking like a drug addict. Punishment for this offense should be a minimum of two years in prison and a maximum of a deportation to Tijuana. Not shaving is another major offense. Unshaven, unkempt faces should have no place in our school. According to recent studies, 85% of boys who get caught for not shaving are homeless by the age of twenty-five. Punishment for this offense should be four months

in prison, which will be plenty of time for you to grow your beard and get it out of your system before you return to school.

Girls' dress code guidelines need to be stricter as well. Short skirts distract male students to the point that they are unproductive in the classroom. We need to make sure that girls' skirts are not too short. We can make sure of this by implementing mandatory measurements of the skirts everyday before school. Punishment for any skirts 0.1 mm to 1 centimeter too short should be a six month imprisonment. Punishment for any skirts 1 centimeter or more too short should be a one year imprisonment. Another pressing issue is girls wearing no show socks instead of crew



2019 **School Trends**

What do the students at Briarwood Christian School actually wear everyday?

Vans, denim jackets, polo shirts, Lululemon bags, and Apple watches are favorites among the Briarwood High School student body.









socks. Girls need to be modest, and showing ankles is too adult and an extreme violation of character. Punishment for this should be six years in prison. Wearing no socks at all should be a ten year prison sentence. One last issue with girls is that they should cover their collarbones. A female showing her collarbone is an egregious violation of dress code and shows moral ineptitude. It is a form of prostitution. Failure to do so will result in a two year prison sentence. If this continues to be a problem, all girls will wear turtlenecks with khakis. Also, they will have to wear a bonnet.

Lastly, the most abhorrent of dress code violations need to be addressed. Those who wear logos that are bigger than 3x5 inches

big on hoodies or sweatshirts are in major violation of dress code. These logos distract students to the point that they cannot pay attention at all in class. As senior Guy Person said, "One time we were taking a test, and this guy's hoodie logo was distracting me. By the time the bell rang, I had not answered one question." Logos that are too big show massive disrespect towards teachers and faculty. Punishment for this offense should be a minimum of ten years in prison and a maximum of fifteen years in prison. Secondly, Apple watches are an egregious violation of moral purity. Although Apple watches do not have photos, notes, internet, or anything where you could keep written notes, they could be

used for cheating. Punishment for this offense should be fifty years to life in prison. One final point, guys who wear joggers that look like khakis are the worst of the worst. These are the people that become serial killers and sex offenders. Punishment for this offense will be the death penalty.

As teachers, faculty, and administrators, we need to instill fear in the hearts of our students. As the great Joseph Stalin once said, "Education is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed." We need to use education and dress code as a weapon against our students. This way, we can create a perfect learning environment. Q



My Island

I Speed across the wide-stretched bay, The wind blasting roughly against my face. Off alone in the distance, Growing smaller by the minute, Stands my Island of earthy green Of cacti—bony, thick, short, lean— Of palming towers that sway, And airy, salty sea-foam spray. The sand of the water, misty, shifts, And broken bones of sea-creatures sit. The shells like great architecture are Weathered and bleached, by sun martyred. Sitting in the oven sun against a cool blue sky, You float away with the roll of the tide. You rock forth, then surge back And roll again till you are slack And fall asleep to the same ol' tune The ocean sings on into noon. This place has given me pride; On my porch I'll sit till nine. The twinkling stars take over till morning And watch me in my bed storing The memories I made that day Along with the weather of the bay. This life I will miss Till we meet again amid The time-stopped days When the sun still hangs, When with my own hands I work And my muscles burn with thirst, When calloused hardened hands are scratchy And rough soles on my bare feet are stitched And my body rests easily at the end of the day And the tan gets darker on my weather beaten face.

Sally Worthington

The Cove

When the gulls cry And the sun's rays brighten, the water deepens.

Down the shore: a buttress-tower of wave beaten boulders rises.

After the long squalls of winter, you yearn for the fiery warm welcome of summer,

The coolness of seawater, the sun's hugging of balmy tendrils about your back.

The sea reflects infinite expanse,

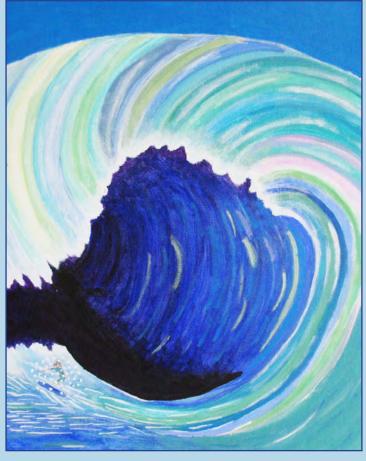
and roaring waves whisper to you

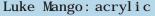
the secrets of time held beneath her swells.

Centuries of wanderers have written in her book, stories upon stories Lost in its folds, Water ever-changing, trading tales of adventures long forgotten and those of days ago.

See the last footprint's silhouette fade, tide rising, scrawling in her book of the past.

Kayla Wright







July Beach

Before turning in for the night
After a busy day
I look out at the beach
Glowing there in the last rays from the sun
So relaxing, the waves erasing the last marks of a day of human fun.
My head is filled with the sound of the sea's might
As I turn away.

Later as the sun begins to rise
When I walk to the beach again
The whole scene has changed
The clean surface gone
Covered with debris by dawn
Where a storm ranged
While the sun disappeared and slept.

Why was no one aware? Why was I not alerted There on the sand-covered surface In the non-existent glare?

How much activity can take place While the July sun dozes. What crazy worlds we'll never embrace When every person's door closes After a storm from someplace.





Cole Garner: acrylic



Lindsey Lovvorn: watercolor



Katrina Bush: oil



Bailey Salmon: oil



Caroline Mays: mixed media



Jordan Martens: colored pencil



Halle Beasley: acrylic

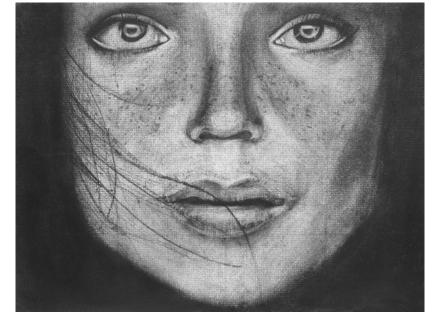


BLACKICE

he shuffle of shoes scuffing across the gym floor pulls me out of my day dream. I blink my eyes once to come back to reality. The graduation caps lined up in front of me like the bricks on a walkway remind me where I am. The boys to my left pull out a flask of something from underneath their robes.

"They can't do anything to us now," they say, as they clink their bottles of destructive chemicals together. I roll my eyes at them, knowing what alcohol does to people, what a venomous poison it is on people's lives. If alcohol had never been a part of my life, I might still

have my dad. Max, my friend from mechanics class freshman year, waves to me from the other side of the aisle as the sound of a baby crying jolts me around.



Emma Stutts: charcoal

There sitting in the bleachers behind me is Aunt Becky. Her traditional Ethiopian style shawl and hoop earrings don't match her Irish red hair that has partially turned grey.

Ever since the car accident, Aunt Becky has always appeared older, more haggard. The bags beneath her eyes have become more prominent. She's lost weight and looks skeletal. She tries to hide it, but I can tell she hasn't mourned the loss of her brother completely. With all this though, one thing has stayed constant: her smile. Aunt Becky has one of those radiant energizing smiles that you only come across every once in a blue moon. When I was younger, I used to think it could make anyone who was sad happy. Turns out I was wrong.

Aunt Becky beams when she notices me looking up at her. "Emily!" she shouts over the people in front of her.

I look back with a forced smile. Over the years I've perfected it



to where no one can tell the difference.

During my childhood years I was happy. My dad often played make believe with me when some of the neighborhood kids went off to do other activities. The real root of my pain started developing when I was six. After many failed attempts, my mom had my little brother Samuel James Hudson. Just as soon as Sam came kicking and screaming into this world, he left with a much quieter disposition. After Sam died, my mom was never the same.

She wouldn't eat or get out of bed. My dad tried for months to get her to do something, anything, that would show a sign of life, but to no purpose. Slowly she let herself go. Her once golden locks turned grungy and unkempt. Dark circles formed around her eyes, and now they appeared to be sinister windows into her dark hollow soul. The day Sam died, a part of my mother died with him. I would never fully get her back, and at six years old I had to start grasping that fact.

The lights in the gym dim, and the room is lulled into a quiet hush. I make one last turn around. She isn't here. Why did I expect her to be? Has she ever really been here? I smooth my dark tendraled hair behind my ear, cautious not to expose the scar above my eyebrow. I like to tell people I got my curly hair from my dad and the scar across my eyebrow from my mom.

My mom's drinking started about six months after Sam's death when she was finally forced to get out of bed with my father's return to work. In the morning she would put something in her coffee to numb all emotion, and in the eve-

ning when I got home from school, she would be passed out on the couch. Once, when I was seven, I happened upon her early in the afternoon and thought she was dead. I was shaking her violently, tears flooding my tiny eyes, when she woke up, moaned, rolled over, and went back to sleep.

As the principal glides onto the stage, I feel the rush of emotion flood me. I fight back the tears, take a deep breath, and rest my eyes, sure that I have won this little battle. The next

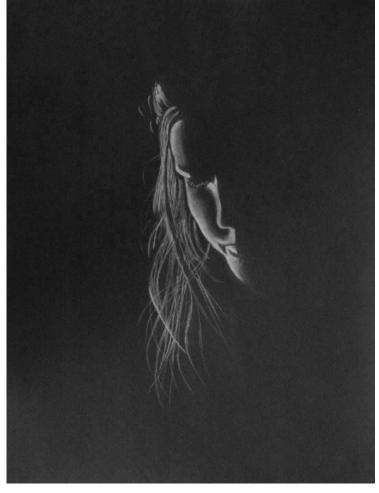
few minutes breeze by with opening statements from the administration. "What an honor," they say, and all I want to do is scream. In an instant the door adjacent to the bleachers is flung open. The light from the hallway shines like a beacon into the gym. The sound of the door alone makes people turn around. Standing there in the doorway is the dark silhouette of a frail woman hunched over and stumbling. With one breath I suck as much air as I can into my lungs. I know that silhouette. I have hauled that silhouette up into her bed many a time. I have avoided that silhouette at all costs after the car accident, and there she is right where I have wanted her to be, but not in the condition I have wanted her to be in.

The accident happened on a blistering cold night in mid-January, when I was fifteen. My dad was out, like so many other nights, trying to find my mother. After years of frantically search-

ing night after night, I began to wish for the worst just so that my life could have some peace to it.

"Sweetie, would you be willing to help me look for your mom?" my dad pleaded. I was in no mood to have her dictate my plans yet again.

"No," I hissed back to him. "I have too much homework to get done. Plus, I have to get up early tomorrow. Why don't you just stay home? She'll come eventually. She always







does."

"Come on, Em, she's your mom. It's cold tonight. She should be home with us." My dad's unwavering generosity was the ruination of us.

"Then you go look. I've got things to do." Those were my last words to my dad before he opened the garage door into a frigid abyss in which he would never return. I often wish

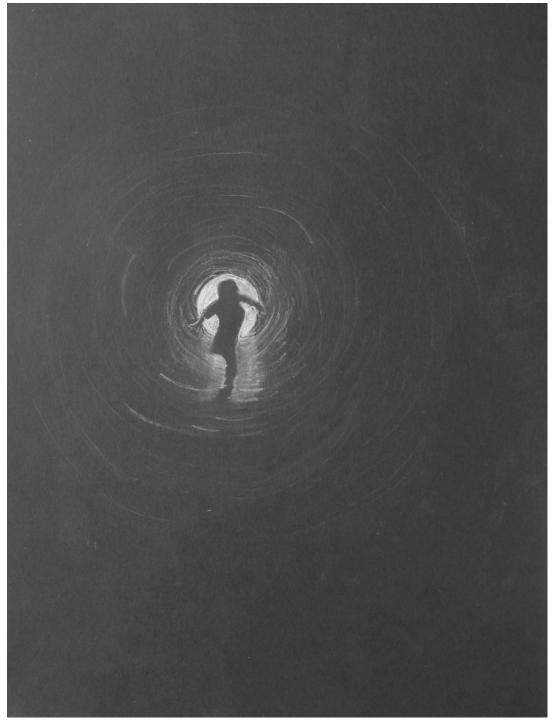
The rush of frigid air knocked me awake To be honest, I don't know and to the realization that something was wrong.

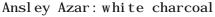


I would have been in the car that night. Maybe something different would have happened, or maybe I just wouldn't have had to deal with the aftermath of it all. much of what occured that night. Where my dad found her or how they ended up on that particular back road at that time of night I'll never know. I ended up falling asleep by the fire with a pile of history notes in my lap.

The next thing I remember is a knock on the door and bright blue lights beaming through the window. I crept up to the door not sure if I was dreaming. The rush of frigid air knocked me awake and to the realization that something was wrong. There in front of me stood two officers. One I recognized as the sheriff from his posters around town because he was up for the re-election. He stood there in his gruff disposition with a hollow stare on his face. The other one was young and slim, no older than twenty-five.

"What is it?" I said after already realizing that whatever they were about to tell me was going to be detrimental to my life.







"It's your parents, sweetie," said the older officer. "They've been in an accident."

"Was it my mom's fault?"

The two officers stared back at me, bewildered. "Uh, It wasn't anyone's fault, hun. The accident occured on Morgan Road on that steep incline. We think they slipped on black ice and went off the road."

"Were they in my mom's four runner?" I asked as my heart withered in a cold black stone and sank into the pit of my stomach.

"Well, that's not really important right now," the young cop mumbled.

"I have to know!" I shouted through them.

"Yes, yes they were," said the experienced cop as he glared at the rookie.

"Your mom is going into surgery right now," he added.

"What about my dad?" I asked.

"He didn't make it," blurted the younger cop. "I'm so sorry."

I remember the sting of the cold night air against my skin when I got the news. It was the only thing that made me believe this wasn't a nightmare, that I wouldn't eventually wake up next to the fire with history notes in my lap and everything would be fine. When the fledgling cop told me, all I did was stare straight through him. I didn't, no I couldn't, believe what he had said. The elder cop held me steady as I felt my lack of dinner rush up from my chest into the snowbank beside the porch. After my hysterics had passed and I was completely numb, the cops drove me to the hospital to wait for my mom.

When I finally got Aunt Becky on the phone, I didn't know what to say.

"Em, is everything okay?" she said with

trepidation in her voice.

How could I tell her? Why did I have to be the one to do it? "It—it's Dad," I stuttered, barely able to get the words out.

"What happened, sweetheart? Do I need to come down?"

"It's all my fault!" I said before hanging up. In one motion I crumpled to the linoleum hospital floor. Weeping for hours, I felt my self hatred rise inside of me. Why did I let him go out after her? How could I have? I think I must have passed out in the waiting room just out of sheer exhaustion. I woke to the doctors telling me that my mom was going to make it. I think they expected some sign of joy, but they weren't going to get it. By that point, Aunt Becky was there and was trying her best to comfort me while not break-



Grace Galvin: white charcoal

ing down at the thought of her little brother dying before her.

When my mom got home from the hospital, she was even more of a ghost than before. Her cheeks once red from her alcoholism no longer had pigmentation to them. This time when she came home, she didn't resort to her bed, but aimlessly walked around the house. This new side to her I had never before seen, but I was not in the state of mind to get to know it. We held a small funeral at our church down the road. There I sat between my wailing Aunt Becky and my dumbstruck mother. After two weeks, Aunt Becky went back up to Vermont. She said her dogs missed her, but if you want my honest opinion, I don't think she could stand the sight of my mother anymore.

The night after Aunt Becky left, my mother pulled out a frozen casserole dish someone had sympathetically made for us and insisted on "family dinner."

"How was your day?" she asked. Her questions were always mundane and superficial, never dipping below the surface into our real problems.

"Fine," was all I could stomach as a response.

"Good, good," she murmured.

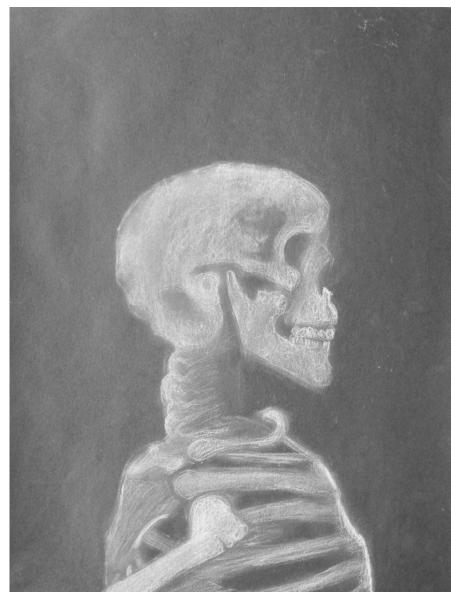
I continued to eat my food, praying she wouldn't say anything more.

"So, Emily," she started up again, "I just want to prepare you. People are gonna talk. It's only natural. I just don't want you to overreact."

My eyes shot like daggers across the table. "How would I overreact?"

"Well, I know how you can get. You are just a very emotional person, and that's fine





Carson Brooks: white charcoal

but—"

I pushed my chair back against the hardwood floor as I stood up. I wouldn't have this. When I was younger, she could have turned this on me, made my emotions the issue. Then but not now. I could hear her yelling for me as I bound up the stairs.

"Emily! Emily!" she shouted.

As our sympathy casserole dishes ran out, so did her efforts to get me to talk to her. By the time I started my sophomore year, she and I were on two completely different paths. I would get up early in the morning and ride my bike down the road to school. Later in the evenings after hockey practice, I would bike home, where I would go in the back door, creep up the stairs, and slip into my room, safe from everything.

Slowly life began to appear, to the outside, as normal. My mom stopped drinking all together. She didn't need to numb the pain any-

more. It was as if she knew that, whatever she did, she'd always be swimming in it. She got a part time job at the clinic down the street working mostly nights and weekends, which benefited me. I began excelling academically again, which was always easier for me than

the social aspect of school. I even received a scholarship to play hockey at the University of New Hampshire. When we got the news, Aunt Becky sent me a congratulations card with lots of glitter saying that she would be in the front row of my first game.

Mom smiled a tight lipped smile when I told her. "What will I do with you that far away?" she said as if we had a normal relationship where she had the right to miss me.

The noise in the gymnasium circles back to a low murmur. Everyone's attention is on my intoxicated mother stumbling in, her golden blonde hair strewn to one side of her head. She wears a pair of stained sweatpants and a white tee shirt with a jean jacket over top. I look up at Aunt Becky and see the panic on her face. As the seconds pass, people's attention dwindles, and they focus their eyes on the stage again. My mother somehow manages to slide herself onto the first row of the bleachers. Anger rises inside me like a pot about to burst. My hands clench. My eyes become enlarged with the rage I have against that woman. The ceremony continues with speeches and words of encouragement. "We can all be world changers one day." "With a good work ethic the sky's the limit." My ramped anger voids all sound, all sight. All I see is red. Why her? Why did I have to be born to her? Why did my brother have to die? Why couldn't she have been there for me too? Why did I let my dad go out that night to find her? Why has she taken every good thing away from me? A happy childhood. My own father. She couldn't even give me a happy graduation. The hate of her numbs me until the ceremony ends. When everyone stands up and begins to clap, I feel sick, like everything



inside me is about to implode. I can't hold it in anymore. My arms push the girl next to me out of the way as the graduation caps sore above me. I take off running, out the side door of the gym. I can't even feel my feet hit the ground. Faster, Faster. I can outrun this. My feet finally stop when I reach the old soccer field that hasn't been used in years. My lungs let out all the air left in me. I collapse. Sobbing in the damp knee high grass, I feel like there is nothing left in me. I don't know how long I lie there just looking up at the sky. I envy how the clouds above me can just float away from anything, never being forced to stay in the same place for long.

I hear the grass being crushed under footsteps, and I look up. There in the brush stands a bit more sober version of my hollow mother.

"There you are. I've been looking for you," she says.

My face is covered in tears., yet she still doesn't ask me if I am okay.

"Why, why did Dad have to die?" I yelp.

"Oh, Honey," she says, using a name I've never heard her call me.

"It was supposed to be you!" I scream, my voice echoing across the field. Tears erupt from my eyes.

Still my mother stays silent.

"I know, Em. I wish it had been me too so that we could have your dad back."

"No, you don't understand. I set it up so that the breaks on your car would fail, and then dad took it out that night to look for you."

My mother's face is dumbfounded as she takes a step away from me.

"You were supposed to die!" I shriek. The plan to kill my mom wasn't some-

thing I came up with overnight. It was a deep brooding emotion that slowly bubbled up over time. The last straw was a month before my dad's death. My mom, who rarely did anything, was forced to pick me up from my hockey game. The moment I got in the car, I knew something was wrong. My mom's eyes were bloodshot, and she could barely pronounce a coherent sentence. I'm sure my dad, who was in a bind at work, had assumed that my mom would have enough care in her to sober up before driving me home. I guess he was wrong. As she approached a red light, her eyelids became heavy, and she slowly dozed off. By the time I grabbed the wheel, we were halfway through the intersection and the impact into the guardrail knocked me out. I woke up with a deep gouge on my right eyebrow from the impact of the window. My mom, without more than a scratch on her, was offered the same broken ultimatum: stop drinking or we would leave. It always happened like that. My dad would threaten her, and then conveniently she'd bring up Sam, and then they would cry and make up, and she'd promise not to drink, and then inevitably, she would. This time it took her a little less than a month to break her promise. The night before the fatal accident, she came stumbling in at some ungodly hour of the night completely plastered. I could hear her and my dad arguing before she retreated to bed. That moment was when I knew things would never end, that my dad and I would be stuck on this recurring, self pity roller coaster until the day she died. It didn't take me long to come up with a plan. I had learned how to cut a car's brakes in Mechanics. All I had to do was wait till she got in it. The night of

the accident I thought my dad would take his car to go find her; that's what he always did. I often contemplate the sick way fate tricked me that night. I'll never regret my motives. All my childhood my mother exemplified what a selfish person is. Never being there to play dolls or help me get ready for a school dance. Never showing me how to love or how to be loved. Everything she did, she did so she wouldn't have to hurt. All that did was put all her burdens on me. Finally,

when I was old enough,
I realized I wanted to be
selfish too.

The cold air whistles through my hair and nips at my ears. My mother looks into my eyes trying to find her daughter. I'm nowhere to be found, too far gone, lost in despair.

She takes one more step back before saying, "You don't mean that, Emily. You're just confused. You've been through a lot. Let's just go home."

I laugh at the idea.

"Oh, Mom," I say, "I will never go back to that

place with you. Aunt Becky has already agreed to let me stay with her this summer and I for every summer after that. Just try and stop me. This time I won't make the same mistake."

I leave her there, standing alone in the middle of an abandoned soccer field. The atmosphere is desolate as I march my way back to campus. Aunt Becky sits on a park bench while everyone else swarms out of the school like flies. I pause, inhale, and realize that I can finally breathe with the promise of my future.



Finally, when I was old enough, I realized I wanted to be selfish too.





Lauren Musachia: mixed media



Avery Rose Ochsenhirt: watercolor



Maddi e S. Vaughn: oi l



Emily Scott: acrylic



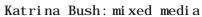
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Lynzie Liddell: acrylic

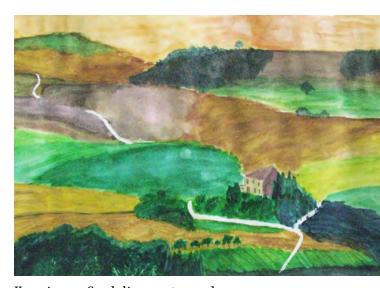








Maddi e S. Vaughn: oi l



Harrison Gauldin: watercolor



Berkley Barnett: mixed media



Natalie Clasen: acrylic



Sally Worthington: watercolor



The Passing

Like an astronaut, she took
Her step out of this world
Into eternity.
Last breath, smell, and look—
The end had come, mother was now at peace—
She who was once surrounded, with our love.
After death, our lives were maddened, saddened,
and filled with longing.
At the end of her lease
With her new home now above
She was today set free.

The strength she chattled
Was nothing slight,
She was like a knight
Displaying bravery in battle!

We spent much time
Remembering and honoring you,
We tossed at night
Thinking of your prime.
This was not the end of me and you.

Grace Owens



Ashleigh Donovan: photography



Missing You

I miss you as a child longs for a toy That was essential for a while but is now lost Because it was swept under the bed and forgotten. Below has been searched, in the narrow cavity That holds something new, a meaning as clear As a pure sunny day. For you are an absence of a lifetime; This we long for, and we move forward because we miss it. We are not In the past, thank goodness! I miss you as an Orphan searches for parents; I am sadder than a clown With a fake smile, when I think of you, with a void My heart, so deep so vast, and so unlike you; I know I am walking through vegetation And water, yet it feels like a dry, dead desert. Forever, to be with you, even in my dreams When I'm asleep, wondering, and also I believe that you Are meaningful as a light that leads me through The darkness to a place where new blessings flow, a new Enlightenment of life! I miss you as a sailor misses the sea He has sailed from East to West, I miss you Most at daybreak, when even before I start the day You welcome me into a new journey, one that you paved the way.

Cline Smith

looking back a response to "Losing Track" by Denise Levertov

eons of time, great flowing lakes set us apart, but i imagine you are near:

i look to the moon knowing you are under it i sing a warm song pretending you will hear it

i am a feeble bird clinging to the wind grasping for a moment when i can soar again

and in that moment when i soar i look back, to the freckles beside your eye and the joy of your presence

but the moon i watch goes down the notes of the song fade along with my wish

i looked to you to forget the past but now it is your corner in my heart that is asleep

Amelia Ray



Ross Johnson: white charcoal









Chapel Bryars: tempera



Olivia Ricks: acrylic



Abby Johnson: mi xed media



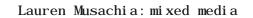
 $Halle\ Beasley: mi\ xed\ medi\ a$



Anna Grace Pattillo:acrylic









Yosemite

I sit on the edge of the mountainous rock as the wind shakes my legs tired from the walk.

A faint whistle trails behind the breeze, swirls around, and flees.

Little hills atop the valley that threaten to break this blanket of clouds, why do you reach up towards the sky? Why do you rise so mountain high?

This thick white canopy casts shadows over the hills, grazing the treetops, looming in the air ever so still, yet rolling across the valley.

Oh, the great greys that streak the walls, spill over, run down and fall.
Oh, the great greens that dapple them all, hopping the valley's pillow top.

Waterfalls cascading down, flowing like the folds of a gown, the bridal veil waits for its crown.

I gaze beneath my feet, And into the valley my soul retreats. None can compete with a world so sweet.

Lauren Musachia

The Art of Hiking

Hiking should be as Wild As the luminous heart of the sun, Peaceful chaos riddled with vibrant pigmentation.

Young, Like a fledgling bird's first flight Cautious yet extraordinary in its fearless might.

Free As a fluent river teases, Ever able to go where it pleases.

Challenging
As a fawn's original attempts to stand;
Its tiny hooves fumble against the land.

There you should Discover, Like the conquests of a novel child's imagination, Finding new possibilities of exploration.

Be filled with Joy, Like the barren earth when seeds fall Brought to life by a mighty rainfall.

Hiking is Godly, In His glory Whose art is depicted so clearly.

Riley Drouin



The Creator

I lie down in a grassy green field. And let my eyes wander. I absorb nature's beauty. Little ants march around my feet, Carrying crunchy leaves And small stones back to their forts. I also see rich, red roses As they dance in the gentle breeze Like ballerinas pirouetting in time. Birds sing joyful songs, And bees buzz busily in the sky. Fluffy, white clouds paint the blue expanse. The sun spreads bright light And provides the comforting warmth of an embrace. All of these things point to the Creator. Nature calls me to sing praise And to worship the Lord Who painted the sky And formed each petal of every flower.

Jenna Fuller

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The Artisan is the literary magazine of Briarwood Christian School in Birmingham, Alabama. This year we distributed 400 magazines in PDF form and 25 in print form. The PDF form is also published on the school website during the summer.

The magazine is typed on six Apple computers using Adobe InDesign and Photoshop CC 2018. The pull-outs and the captions are in Ayuthaya. The body text is in Garamond. Prose titles vary. The print version of the magazine was printed at Pete's Printing in Hoover, AL.

Policy:

The Artisan staff solicits art and literary pieces from the student body. An anonymous selection process is used. Literary selections are made on the basis of style, content, and creativity. Art and photography pieces are chosen on most pages to fit the literary content, while art and photography on art spreads are chosen for artistic merit. The magazine staff has committed to having the work of at least one in every ten students in our student body in the magazine.



