



North Plainfield High School was founded in 1896. Its first graduating class boasted three students. Many residents of North Plainfield and the neighboring town of Plainfield had favored the merger of the two communities, an annexation idea paralleling United States-Canada theories in vogue at the time. With North Plainfield located just north of the brook, it was popular to refer to the community as "Little Canada." Thus, high school students became known as the Canucks and the school adopted a bearded lumberjack as its mascot.

The *Canuckling* magazine, though not quite as ancient as the school, was first published in 1955 in hardcover with M. O'Brien as the General Adviser and F. Bockius as the Art Director. We are proud to be a part of this tradition, now in its 55th year, as we graduate a class of approximately 200 bright, shining students.

2010 CANUCKLING STAFF

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Our Sincere Appreciation to:

The English Department & The Art Department

Policy

Canuckling invites all North Plainfield High School students to submit original works of literature and art. Students may submit work to the English, Art, World Language, or Computer teachers, or directly to the advisers throughout the school year. All submissions are catalogued and subsequently judged for content and form on an anonymous basis by the editorial staff. The staff meets on Tuesdays to read and select submissions. Every effort has been made to ensure originality. Each student may submit as many pieces as he or she wishes. We ask that students place their name, grade and English teacher on the back.

Submissions cannot be returned. It is the hope of the staff that the magazine is representative of the creative talent of North Plainfield.

Colophon

Canuckling 2010, the literary and art magazine of North Plainfield High School, was printed with a press run of 200 copies on 28# laser stock and bound by Minuteman Press in Parsippany, NJ. The software used for the layout of the *Canuckling* is Microsoft Publisher.

Cover

Michelle Gomez, a senior, took the photographic image on the cover entitled "Under the Boardwalk."

Letter from the Editors

As editors of this year's edition of *Canuckling*, we are both proud and thrilled to bring to you the 2009-2010 edition of North Plainfield High School's literary and art magazine. The *Canuckling* staff has been extremely dedicated to reviewing and further showcasing the creative plethora of artistic, literary, and photographic talents of students in our school. We are excited to present this year's theme—*Collage of Dreams*. As a staff, we decided on this theme because we felt that it brings together the many aspects of hope, the future, and simply of one's imagination. From the dark corners of nightmares to the stagnant time we spend daydreaming, dreams undoubtedly permeate our lives.

Therefore, the theme was divided into five categories: **Daydreaming, Insomnia, Dream Catchers, For Every Dream There's a Nightmare**, and **Night Mirrors**. These categories explore many aspects of dreams, from reflections of thoughts and fantasies to ambitious experiences and illusions or fears created in the disturbed mind. Although choosing from the innumerable submissions that we received was not an easy task, we were able to choose many literary, artistic, and photographic pieces that really defined our theme and represented our school's diversity, cultures, goals, hopes, emotions, styles, and of course, our dreams. The editors and staff combed through hundreds of different submissions, selecting those that expressed the true emotions and mental images behind dreams, from the joy of daydreaming to the blood curdling fear of a nightmare.

-continued-

The variation and diversity of the submissions that have been published in this year's *Canuckling* are immensely vast and explore every niche of our students' dreams. Each story, poem, and image is pulled from the minds of students who walk through the halls of North Plainfield High School. We simply have tried to piece together pieces of an extravagant puzzle through showcasing such different talents in the *Canuckling*. Through this magazine, we aspire to take you through the dreams and imaginations of the students of North Plainfield High School. We share our literary and artistic works with you in an attempt to truly represent the wondrous aspirations of our students and their emotions. In doing so, we hope to reach out and unlock the doors of your imaginations so that you can connect with the experiences and perspectives of the students of North Plainfield High School.

Lastly, we are extremely grateful to our staff and advisers for their dedication, guidance, and support throughout the year. We hope that you enjoy the *Canuckling 2010* as you live the innermost dreams that represent the students of our school, and become a part of our *Collage of Dreams*.

Note from the Advisers

We are very proud of all the hard work this year's staff has completed. In this latest edition, you will find an assortment of poems, short stories, non-fiction pieces, and images that represent the diverse talents of the students at North Plainfield High School. This year we have also taken a look back by including on pages 14 and 15 an illustration and a poem from the very first issue of the *Canuckling* from 1955! Sit back, relax, and enjoy this year's *Canuckling*.

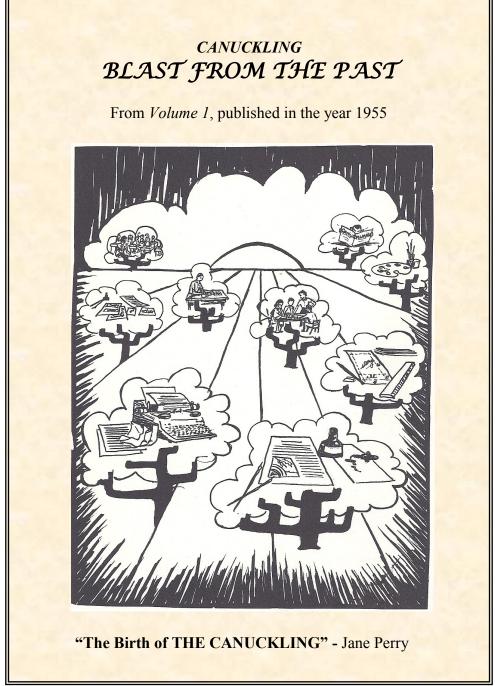
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CANUCKLING BLAST FROM THE PAST

From Volume 1, published in the year 1955

DESERT SONG Henry Lasko

Black cloaked clouds come racing by o'er starlit sky Over a desert o'nightly peace, lit sparsely by stars on high. Thunderclaps and lightning bolts, they shake the very ground! Rain and hail come pelting down a torrent with no sound. Quickly as the rain hath come, thus quickly doth the storm subside. Though she's short-lived, she's a vengeful thing and that's the thought implied.



Silence Is Golden Carline Leriche

What makes a small girl smile and giggle in delight? She fingers shiny things in wonder at their sight.

A jewelry box that is leafed in gold, that sparkles in the sun, Inside there are mysteries untold that spark imagination, anticipation, and fun.

She lifts the lid to view inside. Her mouth then gapes, Her mouth opens wide.

Her eyes then sparkle, The lid she slips closed. Sealing the box and the mystery it holds.

Only If You Dare

Samantha Knight Rain against my window, A steady beat like my heart's rhythm. As the day moves on, Closer and closer until it reaches its end, The beat continues, Though slower and slower each moment.

This day so dreary and grey, Filling my sight with somber memories of the days past where I felt the same. Days where the pitter patter acknowledged its existence only to have hopes of its end. Prayers of the constant rain ceasing. Drenching my window with pain and empty promises, Longing to see the end, Knowing that it was here, Though the next morning I rise. Rain against my window.

He told me that this will be the day. Calling judgment to the established world which The rain pours down upon. And I, still gazing out my window, Find nothing but rain.

Unlatch this barrier, Let in the shower, Breathe in the rain. This is the day, The day to live, The day to be free.

Gazing around at the shattered leaves, Fallen limbs, puddle of dismay. I have never felt so alive.

Time now approaching, Destiny knowing. So with one last look, I close my eyes, To find my eternity, With no rain, With no beat.

It's true, Only in death can one truly learn how to live.

Seeing You **Kyle Preston** Feuds are the way of man Human nature We do it more than others Finally we can't endure anymore So we separate like the Red Sea Days feel like months Months feel like years Destiny brings us together again like Spring is sure to come Our eyes meet as do the sun and ocean A lot has changed between us two You look older and your flaws seem through We sit secluded and talk for hours Memories and feelings rush back in me as a chill Fear restrains my tempted actions from touching and kissing You may seem different, you may have changed But deep down, I know us, we, and especially me will always be the same



Collage of Dreams 21

The Distracted Megan Martinez

The voices drift in and out. Everyone talks in jaded whispers...they know that even the slightest utterance isn't permitted. The black gaping hole in the room suddenly bursts into life with vibrant colors. The captive audience In red velvet rooms With thick plush curtains Watch the artificial performance with pleasure. All that is, except for us. We are the distracted.

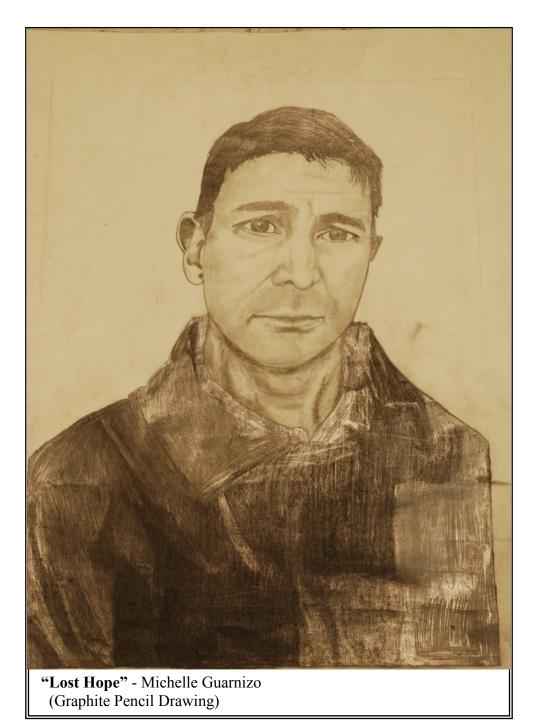


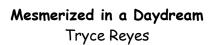


My eyes connect with yours. Those shining, piercing blue eyes. They crinkle as a smile spreads across your face. You pop a buttery piece of popped corn into your mouth And savor the saltiness. We glance at each other again, not even seeing the movie. Heat crawls up my neck, and my cheeks turn scarlet. You settle into your seat And wrap my hand in yours, and turn to watch the film. I stare at our interlocked hands. I am the distracted.

Ode to iPod Katherine Barna As I sit here With my headphones on, I watch the silver iPod Shift the blue bar Of music To the other side of The screen, song done. I laugh At the thought That it Speaks The words that I Can not say I've looked deep Into my iPod

That it is the beholder of my emotions For every song, Every lyric, There is a deep Emotion For me Hiding, like a Where's Waldo Puzzle When I am Нарру It keeps me floating on air. My escape, My treasure, My love story, My heartache, My entertainment, My beacon of hope, My life. 42 42 42 42 42



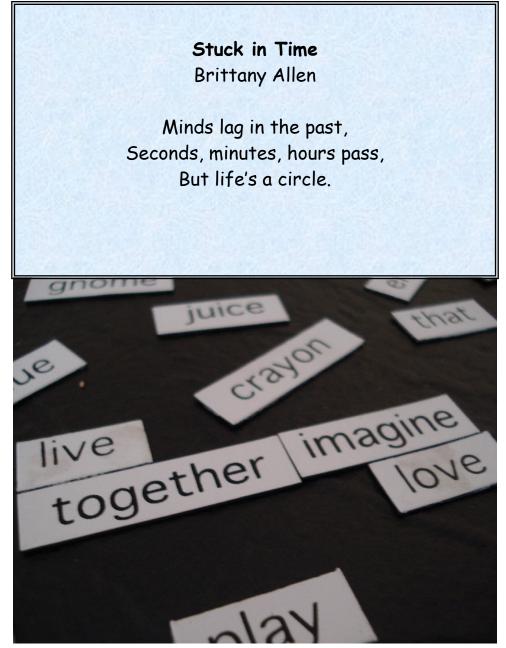


That smile I just can't seem to get off my mind It won't ever leave, it will haunt me Just like a widow and her dead husband We don't want it to leave But I get a fresh new picture everyday.

"Ripples" - Carline Leriche



"City Lights" - Megan Martinez (Chalk Pastel Drawing)



"Childhood" - Diego Orozco



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Your Love and Rose Petals Antonina Chwialkowski

Rose petals Falling all around me The weak scent in the air The memories of you Remind me of the good times we had One tiny little thorn pricking My finger reminded me Of how I felt the day you died Sad and all alone The sweet aroma of my rose Reminds me of how much You loved me, and brings us Back to watching football And how I always felt your love Like rose petals falling all around me

Collage of Dreams 31

Mocking Weather Christina Stoudt

The sun mocks me, Its bright, yellow rays dancing with glory, As my sorrow storms within me, I cry, But it does not rain,

The clouds mock me, Their darkening anger yells like thunder, As my happiness increases, I laugh, But the clouds remain,

The rainbow mocks me, As she runs a fashion show of colors, While my soul rots to the core, I plead, But she keeps posing,



The fog mocks me, With his confusing, constant questioning, As I see the answers clearly, I tell, Yet his doubt, growing,

The weather mocks me, It doesn't matter what I feel like, His monumental carelessness, Is the ocean without sand, It never ends, It just expands,

I never loved the weather though, I mocked in retaliation, The world collapses, The flowers bloom, Distaste is our mutual feeling, He'll never understand...





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Secrets Never Told Elizabeth Okereke

Whisper, whisper, whisper in the wind, Go down the street that winds and bends, Into the house on top of the hill, In through the back windowsill, Up the stair—into the room down the hall, Go to the little table, nearest the wall, Pick up the book—whose pages flicker in the breeze, Close the book—it'll make you sneeze For all you know the ghosts could've wept, For the words and stories the book selfishly kept, And when you too, grow weary and old, You'll weep and weep, for secrets never told.

Collage of Dreams 35



Villain Elle Christina Stoudt

I do not like the villanelle, So structured and imprisoning, Like the innocent in a jail cell,

I cannot stand the villanelle, I can't express what I'm thinking, I am dying to rebel,

The villain Elle is dark as hell, One mistake leads to complete changing, And she condemns you to a jail cell,

She forgot you had intended to do well, But you believed the boundaries were worth crossing, It's too easy to rebel,

> I'll return to the villain Elle, And as she wants, be routinely living, As if I were under her spell,

I'll get off my carousel, The one that's always spinning, Because what to me seemed right and well, Will always to her be as dark as hell...

Savior Billy Stevens

She cried While we sat helplessly and watched, this moving synopsis of our lives

He yelled as his character strangled in pain and said, an afterthought of a goodbye

I knew, while the flickering still lingered and stuttered that the climax would disappoint

She gasped as the final scene commenced and struggled to find a purpose

He was motionless while the simultaneous moment lived on and skidded to a halt and the screen dimmed to a faded black

I sat helpless as my body slumped, and understood while my flickering slowed, that our fate was tied to theirs

Dreams	
Eric Orellana	
My endless sleep,	
Feared immortal nightmare,	
Dreams turn insane.	
"Spider Walk"- Carline Leriche	



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Response to Laurie Halse Anderson's Speak Tiana Rosa

I love the book, *Speak*. It is awesome! It's the kind of book you want to finish in one sitting. I guess the reason why I love it so much is because I can connect with Melinda so well. She's not like your typical ninth-grader. She's outcast from everyone else except for Heather, the only person she talks to. For teachers who she likes, she calls them by their name. For teachers she doesn't like or get along with, she gives them nicknames like Mr. Neck and Hairwoman. It's somewhat cruel, but funny at the same time. That's what everyone likes, a sense of humor.

I find Melinda's sarcastic ways similar to mine. I'm also sarcastic about life at times, but not every moment of my life! I believe the reason for her sarcasm is because she's depressed. Sarcasm is a defense mechanism for her not to get hurt. If you never took anything seriously and let life just roll off your back, then you wouldn't be feeling so down about things. That's what she's aiming for: not caring. What I would like to know is why she does not want to care?

Her negativity also relates to me. I am a naturally pessimistic person. I am mostly pessimistic toward myself than others. For Melinda, she's pessimistic about everything. I understand why she's pessimistic toward high school. High school isn't always the "good memory" of someone's life. I think all kids feel negative about high school. The thing I don't like is how she doesn't give much hope to Heather in general. Maybe about joining a clique she was right about, but she gave no confidence to Heather in anything she tried. It's not healthy, but I know there's a reason why she sees everything as "the glass half empty." Not only is she negative, but also she's very shy. She rarely talks in school or at home. The reason why is because she thinks nobody will want to listen to her. She is already outcast by every clique in the school and feels very alone. I am also sometimes shy toward others, especially strangers. Being shy is very frustrating to deal with and at times a person can't help it. Sometimes it's just her nature to be shy and timid. It's not always a bad thing, but for Melinda it's becoming something that falls back on her.

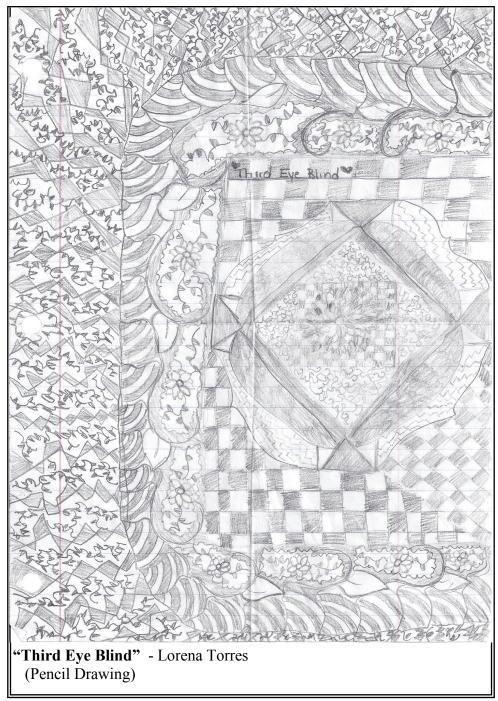
I also noticed that Melinda is always talking about her lips, mouth, and throat as being in pain or wounded. She bites her lip and that causes her lips to look bad or damaged. I think the reason why she keeps mentioning these things is because the lips, mouth, and throat are things you need to speak. This connects to the title of the book. I also bite, not my lips, but my nails and hands. I bite them for some of the same reasons Melinda bites them. The first reason is nervousness. Whenever Melinda is in a situation that makes her nervous she bites her lips. When I'm in the same situation, I bite my nails and fingers. Another reason is stress. When Melinda is stressed out she also bites her lips. I do the same with my hands. Lastly, it's out of boredom. Since it's become a bad habit, Melinda does it out of boredom and habit. For me that is also true.

Lastly, what I feel had the most significance in this book is her project for art. For the whole year she has to draw a tree in any and every type of mixed media. She enjoys art class, but doesn't like how she draws her trees. The tree, from what I believe, symbolizes communication. If you've ever seen a tree, it's usually very tall and its branches stretch outward. This is what people's voices and opinions do whenever they communicate. They go outward toward others so they can be heard. In an ironic way, she is forced to draw the one thing she isn't able to do: communicate. She can't draw trees well and is unhappy with it because she can't express or communicate with others in real life.

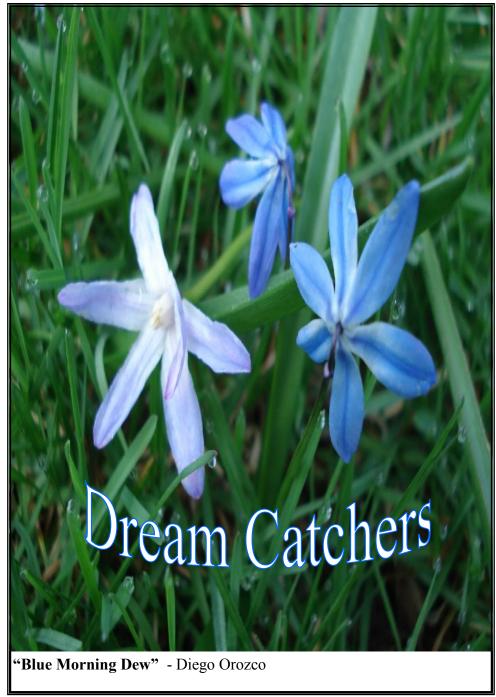


Haiku Samantha Knight

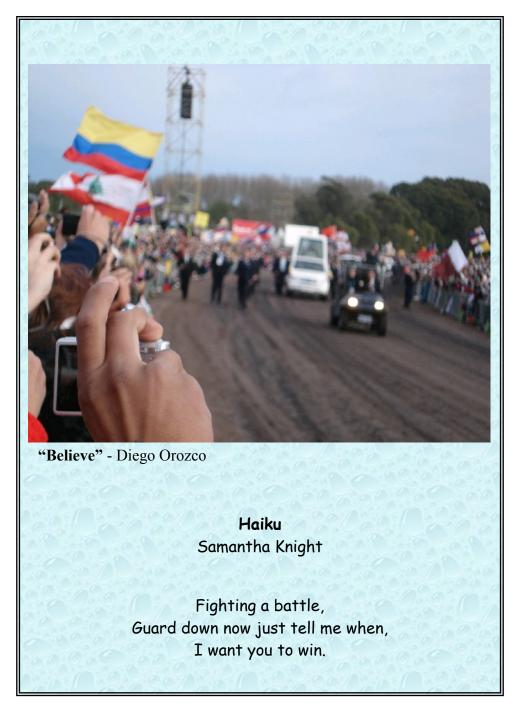
The cry of the mute, Though silent to you is loud, If you just listen.



Collage of Dreams 43



	Gift	
÷.	Emily Anne Giambalvo	
•		
*	It's not every day	
	That we get to experience	
•	A baby's first smile,	
	Or a loved one's endearment.	
•	A contented sigh	
*	Is rare to behold	
•	Nearly as unseen	
•	As the coward growing bold,	
	Or as a similar come clean,	
•	Or a bird learning to fly,	
*	Or a young troubled soul	
	Who can stop asking "why?"	
•	Hold on to those moments,	
•	They won't last forever.	
*	So hold tight to the good times,	
•	And never say never.	
*	Let go of the past,	
	But remember the pleasant.	
•	Today is a gift,	
	That's why it's called "the present."	
***	•	





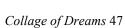




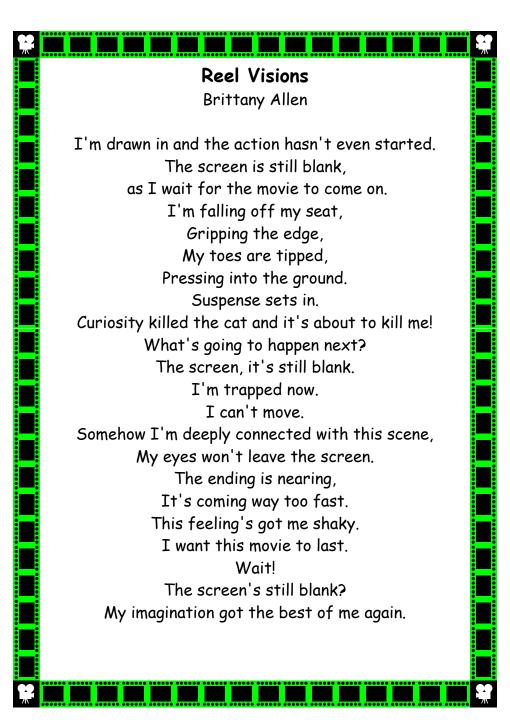


The Journey Bridgett Alvarez

We have all been there. It is probably the best Journey that we have all taken. No matter where we are, We can go there. It doesn't matter what time it is, Who is around, Or who is near you. You can do whatever you want there. It is a whole new world, And a different journey every time. You can take that journey However you would like. It can be day or night. It can be snowing Or raining Because it is the journey In your head. We all need to get away sometime. Even if it's all in our head, It's still getting away From everything. It is the best journey Because it can be whatever You want it to be.







Collage of Dreams 49

Ordinary Cat Christina Stoudt

She runs across the city skyscrapers, The moonlight making her cat-like eyes glow. She's skilled in her reflexes and stops the Bank robbers, saves the nation from the make-up that's supposed to improve you, Yet only leads you quicker and quicker to your death bed. V V

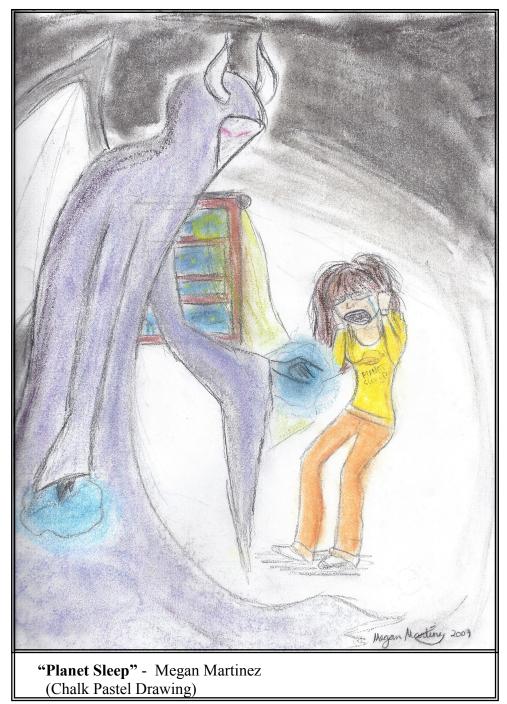
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But some days, a cat only does what she wants, She sleeps and sneaks around, She's so independent, not a soul Satisfies her on her mysterious journeys.

She's your friend in the day, But at night she pushes you away. She lurks alone, with no one, Maybe if I were part cat, she'd let me into her world. Then I could fight her And make her realize That deep inside she's like you and me, An ordinary girl.

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Collage of Dreams 51

Forever and Always		
Sarah Viera		
•		
Is true love forever?		
🙎 🛛 🛛 When you feel it in your heart 🚽 💈		
The tension burning up inside you.		
Holding his hand		
Kissing his lips		
The sweet taste of knowing		
you have him to yourself you		
His eyes looked on yours		
Is this what true love is all about?		
Laughing at his jokes		
• Watching movies together		
His arm stretching across your body		
Your head on his shoulders		
Safe and sound knowing he'll protect you.		
🖡 🔰 It's what true love has to offer.		
🙎 🛛 What would you do if you get lucky enough to 🛛 🙎		
Find your true love?		
Savor the good times		
They might not last forever,		
Is true love forever? When you feel it in your heart The tension burning up inside you. Holding his hand Kissing his lips The sweet taste of knowing you have him to yourself His eyes looked on yours Is this what true love is all about? Laughing at his jokes Watching movies together His arm stretching across your body Your head on his shoulders Safe and sound knowing he'll protect you. It's what true love has to offer. What would you do if you get lucky enough to Find your true love? Savor the good times They might not last forever, But the memories will.		
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"Faith Shines Through" - Diego Orozco

Dear Matt... Emily Anne Giambalvo

He tore open the envelope.

Dear Matt,

His entire world flipped upside down.

If you are reading this, it means that I am dead.

He plopped down on his bed, kicking off his leather boots in the process. He sighed, his long blond hair flying away from his face as he exhaled. This was it, Nate was dead. There was no other possible explanation. It was right there on the paper, in Nate's own scraggly script. Nate was dead, that was a fact, not a question. There was a question, though: why had Nate chosen to write to him?

Everyone knew that Nate and Matt were not the best of friends, were not even friends, actually. Heck they were not even acquaintances! Matt hated Nate, and Nate hated Matt, right? Matt had to think about that for a moment. Right, he decided. Or was it? Because if Nate really hated Matt as much as the rivalry between them suggested he did, then why was there a letter with Nate's handwriting on it, addressed to him, waiting in his mailbox today? The whole affair just didn't make sense.

Maybe this isn't even from Nate, he reasoned with himself. After all, Nate's been missing for months....

And even if Nate hadn't been missing, how would Nate have found him? As soon as Matt found out that Nate was missing, he himself had gone into hiding, hoping to finally leave behind the past that haunted him ever since he was a child. Was it possible that this was some kind of practical joke? But no, the handwriting was Nate's, Matt would recognize it anywhere. Besides, it would be just like Nate to figure out something like this, to send notes to people after he was dead. He probably set something up with the mailman. Nate was sneaky like that. Unless, that is, he wasn't really dead...

Matt looked farther down the page, and his stomach squeezed to-

gether painfully as he saw red splotches decorate the bottom of the page. Was that... blood? Yes, yes it was. It was most certainly blood, and Matt didn't have a doubt in his mind that it was Nate's. But then, in order to do this, plan all this out, Nate must have known that he was going to die, no? And how did he know that?

Matt sighed again, laying back on his bed, snuggling into the messy arrangement of pillows sprawled all over the place. The easiest place to start, he reasoned, would be the beginning - the beginning of the letter, that was.

Dear Matt,

If you are reading this, it means that I am dead. It also means that Roger has not yet managed to pinpoint my whereabouts, which, in turn, means I did a decent job at holing myself away. Yes, I say holing myself away. I did not go missing, Matt, as everybody thinks I did. I ran away. You, of all people, would understand why. After all, once I ran away, you were the lead man in Percy's Orphanage for the Extremely Gifted. What was it like, Matt? Was it everything you had ever hoped for and more? Did you have all that power and glory you often thought I possessed? Or, as your corresponding disappearance suggests, was it too much pressure, too much responsibility? Did they make you do things you wish you never had to do? Yes, I'm thinking it was the latter.

You are probably wondering why I am writing to you, am I correct? Well, the reason is this: Today, at around three thirty p.m., I am going to die. Or, to be completely truthful, rather, I am going to kill myself. Right now, it is two thirty-seven. I have less than an hour to live, Matt. And, if I may be truthful for once in my life, I'd like to divulge in you a little secret -- I'm scared. But I can't, no, I won't back down, not now, not after all I've gone through to prepare for this. Yes, I've prepared for this. This is not some rash, impulsive action committed by a rash, impulsive person. I have this all planned out -- How I am going to do it, where I am going to do it, and why. Oh yes, do I know why? Do you know why? Would you like to know why, Matt? To prove to everyone, myself included, that I, too, am human.

You always accused me of being inhuman, of not feeling, of not caring. Even when we were little kids in the playground, and I was being

bullied, I never let them see me cry. You called me a freak for that. You said I probably wasn't even human, that I probably couldn't even feel. Well I care about this, Matt. I feel this. This knife blade, it stings, burns. Oh, you would be filled with such bittersweet satisfaction if you could see me now. I'm crying! I, the boy who never laughed, never smiled, never screamed out when hit or flinched away from the incoming fist... I, who prided myself in that cold, heartless emotionless mask I wore, I am crying. You would feel so satisfied, Matt, so satisfied.

"But how did this happen?" you ask yourself. After all Matt, remember that I would never utter a sound as you beat me nearly senseless. I didn't cry out when you stomped my ribs in half, although the pain was so intense, I saw stars. I never yelled, never exploded, never cried. Look at me now. What happened? Simple -- I gave up.

You see, the only reason I fought so hard to stay in control, the only reason I was running as fast as I could to stay at the head of the race, was because I knew that as soon as I stopped running, you would stop chasing. I was perfect. Everyone wanted to be me. Everyone had different ways of showing it; some strove to copy my every movement; you, seeing that you could never be me, resorted to beating me, hoping to bring me down lower to your level. But everyone, you included, wanted to be me, wanted to have what I had -- The number one spot in Percy's House. Everyone wanted to be what I was, Percy's heir. Everyone wanted to be me. Tell me, what would have happened if I had suddenly stopped trying? They all would have stopped trying as well. That one thought, that responsibility, kept me going for years. I couldn't let everyone down. But then, Matt, a certain somebody taught me how to stop caring. They showed me that caring was stopping me from feeling, as contradictory as that sounds. And you know what? They were right. You were right. Being perfect meant being in control of everything, my emotions included. If I wanted to be the best, I had to stop caring what other people thought of me, even if what other people thought of me was the whole reason for me striving to be the best. Oh, the irony of life. So, I gave up on feeling, in order to gain complete control, losing my humanity in the midst. I did turn inhuman, Matt, and I am fighting now to fix that.

I never hated you Matt. I saw you more as an opposing player in

a game, and a worthy adversary. Someone who, while the game was going on, you fought against, but once the game was over, you shook his hand. Now, Matt, the game is over, and I am shaking your hand. We have both left Percy's behind us, as fate and necessity called us to do. We have both moved on, grown up, perhaps not literally, but mentally and emotionally. What more is there for us to do now, then to face our demons? You may do whatever it is you feel you have to in order to dispose of the ghosts that haunt your past; I am doing what I deem necessary to rid my life of mine. This is my final goodbye. I'm laying down my life to prove to everyone, including myself, that I am human. I can feel too. I can love and hate and lose just like everyone else. I'm not perfect; just human. I am human, aren't I Matt?

Aren't I?

Matt took a deep breath. This is the part of the page with the bloodstains splattered upon it. It made Matt sick to his stomach to look at them, but a part of him told him to continue reading. It wasn't even a want; he didn't want to continue reading. It was a necessity. He needed to do it.

I can feel this, Matt. I can feel the pain, the sorrow, feel the need to frown. I feel the anger at myself boiling up to the surface. Why? Why did I have to do the things I did, why did I turn into the person I became? I wish I could have been your friend Matt, I wish I could have been any body's friend. I wish there was someone here to stop me from doing this. But I'm looking around, and there's no one here. No one can hear me crying, Matt. No one hears me, no one cares. I'm scared. Fear is an emotion, is it not? Here, Matt, here! I'm feeling something! I'm scared, I'm angry, I'm lost. I'm confused. And God, I just can't stop crying. I'm feeling something! I feel pain, sorrow, hurt, and I'm full of questions. One question keeps tugging itself into the forefront of my mind -- What does it take for me to become human? Believe me, Matt, I am dying. I am dying for this. I'm fighting for nothing, and giving it everything I've got. So I need to know. Amid these tears, there fears, I ask you: Am I human now?

Matt knelt at the foot of Nate's grave. There were no words to express what he was feeling. There was a growling emptiness inside of him, filling him with its hollow nothingness. Nate, his hated rival, was dead. Nate, his hated rival, had killed himself. Nate, his hated rival, was gone. What was he supposed to do now? Go back to Percy's like nothing had ever happened? Keep running? He didn't know any more. Nothing made sense. He couldn't seem to think clearly. He should be happy, he should be ecstatic. Nate was dead, gone, forever! He should have been jumping for joy. Yet, here he was, down on his knees. The truth was, whenever he tried to think of what he was going to do next, an image kept popping into his mind, an image of a small, pale boy, with his face all bruised and bloodied, and with blood coursing down his arm. And a question kept ringing in his head, a question he couldn't seem to shake, couldn't seem to get rid of, couldn't seem to stop asking himself.

Am I human now? Matt knelt down, and cried.

"Thorny Tentacles"- Carline Leriche

The Dream of the Sunflower Tiana Cock

"It's the same everyday," the young boy mumbled to himself as he stared out the window, only to be faced with the usual, unforgiving winter storm. The blizzard clawed against the flimsy structure the boy stayed in, bearing its angry fangs with snow and ice. The small fire inside the fireplace whimpered with tiny cracks and pops of embers. The little boy, Ivan, held onto his teddy bear tighter with every growling wind outside.

"Why are you so mean?" Ivan asked the terrifying blizzard from inside his refuge. The blizzard replied with the same harsh winds. Ivan looked down at the bland scarf wrapped around his neck. The same scarf his older sister gave to him before she left. Memories of that departure flooded back to him. Be a good boy, Ivan, okay? I have to leave for a little while to find others in this land. We need to try to work together. We can't be separated in this country forever. People are struggling trying to fend for themselves. So me and your little sister, Nalitia are going to find the others. Here take this, a scarf made by me. I'll be back soon.

It's been a week since his older sister left. He's been staying in their frail home for the time being. There were no villages because everyone lived away from each other. The country they lived in had no order and had an unforgiving season, winter. The wistful Ivan looked out the window. In the opposite corner of the one room house, were his drawings. One was a picture of him and his sisters.

All the others were of the one thing he would see in his dreams. A tall, majestic flower with a vibrant yellow color on its petals and an earth-colored center. In each of his dreams, he would be standing in a field covered with green little fingers sticking out from the ground. (He had never seen grass before.) As he walked he would see a single flower, towering above the ground. For the first time, he felt a rush of warmth and happiness. This flower that had the shining aura of hope reminded him of the sun. On clear days, he would look up into the sky and see a shining ball of light. He always thought it was an opening to get into heaven, but no matter how fast he ran up hills or how far he climbed up trees, he could never reach heaven. It was because of the happiness it gave him that he called it a sunflower.

Ivan gazed out the window, yearning to find the flower of his dreams. He glanced down to his teddy bear.

"What should I do?" he asked his bear. Two void, raven-colored eyes stared back at him. "Well?" Ivan snapped back, getting irritated at the stuffed bear's slow response. For a moment, he glared angrily into the bear's eyes. Then he snapped back into reality, realizing he had been arguing with an inanimate object. He sighed. "I'm becoming crazy." He glanced back out the window and saw that the blizzard wasn't letting up anytime soon. Then a light bulb lit over his head.

"Hey, you know what? Maybe I could find that sunflower!" Ivan jumped to his feet, spinning in circles while clutching onto his stuffed bear. "It must exist! I've seen it too many times for it *not* to exist! And if I find that sunflower, maybe it'll let me talk to the people in heaven to help this country!" He was so happy and was bundling up for the journey, then another thought came into his head. "But," he looked outside the window and saw the winter beast outside. "It's dangerous. What if I don't come back?" He slid down to the floor, his happiness completely wiped away. He moved his hand around to find something to write on. He began to write with a pencil.

To my beloved sisters,

I'm going on a very dangerous journey. I'm going to find the sunflower that I saw in my dreams. If I find it, I'll be able to talk to the angels in heaven to help this country. If I don't come back, please don't be sad. Remember what you told me big sister? If you're sad the people who died will be sad too. So do what you told me before and sing. Sing to celebrate the life that person had. Sing a bunch of silly songs for me, okay? If I do come back, we can celebrate together! That's all I have to say, bye bye! I love you!

Love, Ivan

He put down the pencil to go over what he wrote. He placed it neatly on the rickety table and buttoned up his jacket. He put his bear in the middle of the floor and walked toward the door.

The only thing blocking him from the merciless blizzard outside. He put his hand on the frozen door knob and glanced back one last time to his stuffed bear.

"Remember to sing so my sisters won't be sad, okay?" Then he was out the door and into the beast.

The door was slammed shut behind him by the clawing winds. The cold stung his exposed skin and he buried his face further into his scarf. He was knee deep in snow and it was getting worse by the second. He had to keep moving or he would freeze to death. He kept treading through the snow, while the cold nipped at his skin, causing him to slowly become numb. "I have to keep moving, to find the sunflower," his voice disappeared in the roaring winds, being swept away with every word he said. He hated this, he began to run. Tripping along the way as the snow became deeper and the cold suffocated him. He could hear the winter itself laughing at him as winter blew more snow on him, to push him down. Ivan became enraged. The weather was mocking him! He struggled to his feet and stared down the invisible beast.

"I won't let you stop me!" he screamed at the blizzard, but the blizzard continued and blew harder. "I have to keep going!" He took a step forward and another and another. "Get away from me!" He ran faster and faster through the blizzard all the while Winter bitterly laughed at him. He could feel the blizzard finally taking a toll on him. His skin felt numb and he couldn't stop shivering. His breathing was shallow no matter how much air he tried to suck in. It only got harder as he dug his legs farther into the snowy hill, which felt like a mountain to him. The wind only became harsher and in an instant he was swallowed by darkness.

At first, all that he could see was nothingness. He couldn't feel anything. He couldn't hear anything. He couldn't see anything. Then he felt a slight warmth at first that felt like a small, flickering flame, and then it grew and an energy rushed into him.

"Am I dying?" he thought to himself. "My sisters will be sad. But maybe I'll be able to talk to the angels...to help the people...of this land." He felt himself, floating in nothingness. There was a shining light above, growing larger and larger. Heaven was opening its doors to him, once he entered there was no turning back.

"No," he whispered to himself. He couldn't die, he needed to achieve his dream. He needed to find the sunflower. He clenched his fists and screamed until he was brought back into reality. He was lying on the snow covered ground, with the wind ripping across him. Ivan used the strength left in his arms to pull himself to the top of the towering hill. He kept pulling himself across the ground until his hand grabbed something thick, sprouting from the earth. He lifted his head up and strained his eyes through the harsh winds. He could see that he was holding onto a thick, dark green stem. On the top was a flower, with a mane of gold petals. It was the sunflower.

"I found it," Ivan's breath was strained, his strength slowly being pulled from his body. "Please, Sunflower, tell the angels..." He was slowly fading into unconsciousness with every word he spoke. "To help...this land...and...the people." Before he could say more, he blacked out. $*^**^**^*$

At first, he could only lay helplessly as he heard panicked whispers and questions. He could only make out a few words.

"Is he...But what could...I know, but..." This concerned voice, it sounded familiar.

"Big...sister?" Ivan could only speak in a strained voice. His older sister eyes widened when she saw that her brother was awake.

"Ivan!" She hugged, mostly tackled, her younger brother, wrapping two arms around his small frame. "We were so worried! Everyone searched for you! When we found you..." her words were quickly turned into emotional sobs. His younger, quieter sister put a reassuring hand on her shoulder. His older sister calmed down, pulling away to brush off newly fallen tears from her eyes. "We thought you were dead."

"Wait a minute," Ivan was gaining some strength back and was now assessing this situation. "What do you mean by 'we'?" He looked around and saw people he didn't recognize. His older sister smiled back.

"We found as many people as we could and together," she gestured her arm toward the people in the room. "We're going to help build a country!" Ivan blinked. Then his eyes moved to his hands.

"The Sunflower," he thought to himself. "It really worked. It granted my wish." A childish smile crept onto his face and he laughed. He did it. He had found the sunflower and talked to the angels in heaven. The angels answered him. He couldn't help, but laugh. He had been right next to heaven.

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Days, months, and years have past. Together, the people of the land built homes which turned into a small town. A government was set up and a ruler was chosen. The people agreed to have Ivan's older sister be the ruler since she had set forth to unite the people. Even though she was ruler, Ivan received plenty of praise as well. He was treated as a hero when he told his story of facing the blizzard head on to find the sunflower. When Ivan was older, his sister granted him the ruler for his bravery. His two sisters went to rule smaller states. Little did they realize, but they had given their brother a huge amount of Iand. Five times the size of their lands combined. He continued to rule this vast land, but soon rumors about the ruler had spread.

People had called him King Ivan, The Insane. He had a tendency to talk to lifeless objects, sometimes to the point of lengthy conversations. He rambled about his dreams and his opinions, mostly his word was treated as law. He never seemed serious and always smiled and laughed. Even if he held out executions of those "bad ones" who committed crime, he would always be smilling. In short, he was childish.

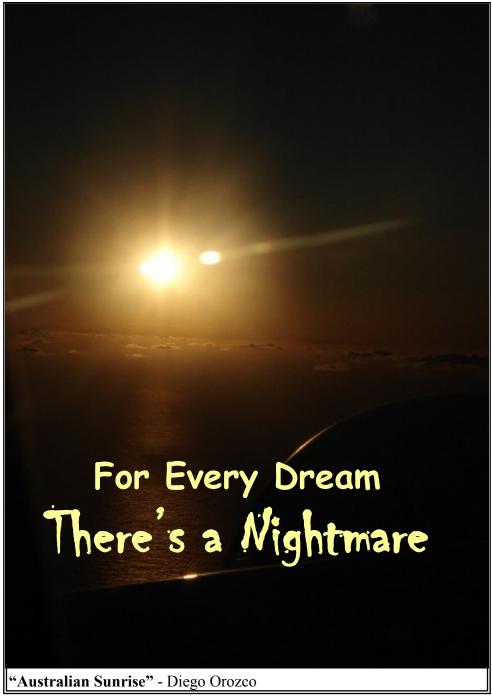
One day, he had told his royal court that he would be going out today.

"I will need an umbrella," he commanded, with a smile, which seemed to be surreal. One person of his royal court handed him a plain colored umbrella. He walked out the front of his large home and into the outside. It was a bland day, with light flurries gently falling from the sky above. The snow crunched beneath his feet. He was walking to the outskirts of the bustling town. He kept strolling along, humming a silly tune. It was getting dark by the time Ivan slowed down his pace. He was trending up a hill, a slight wind blew by causing the same scarf his elder sister had given him to flow along with the breeze. He finally reached the top, he had opened his umbrella. On top of the hill was the same towering sunflower that he had seen so many years ago. He shielded the sunflower with his umbrella and brushed off the light snow that had begun to pile on its petals.

"I found you so long ago," Ivan closed his eyes, remembering the nostalgic memory. "I feared that I would lose you, but dreams are lost so easily as you grow. So I wondered, how would I keep you?" The grin on his face grew, it was ear to ear. "Then I realized that we lose our dreams when we grow up, so in order to keep you," he pointed to his head, "I had to give up this." He was swaying back and forth, shifting his weight from one foot to the other like the small child he was back then. "I gave up on growing up, being mature, telling the difference between reality and fiction. It's so much fun doing that and I got to keep you too!" He crouched down so he was the sunflower's height.

"I was able to achieve and keep the dream of the sunflower."





A Poem for the Weak Maria Delmar Molina

You limp as if you walk the streets with Dignity and shame. You drag as if your body hauled chains of Guilt and remorse. You sulk as if the world is on your shoulders Silence is your only friend. I laugh as your legs give out underneath you, and You fall. I cry of joy to see your life wither away, Heavy and slow. I stare with a pleasant smile as your back breaks and sound Taunts you, your enemy. Your gentle ears can't take it, it sends a shot of pain to your Already paralyzed body. It all comes down to what you feel, but you Feel nothing at all. You're an empty shell. You deserve nothing more than my piercing joy. Break the deadly silence that accompanied you All along.

Chemically Insane Billy Stevens

I'd love to cut your wings My little carcinogen As caustic as it seems You don't need me

I'm not insane Only schizophrenic But you can't hear the voices As clear as graphite

I'd love to cut his lungs Your mercury soul To say the least, Disfigures the mind Crush me with your venom These porous words of yours Arsenic like butterflies, Drifting towards the end

I want to cut your wings So you can't leave again Scarlet voices tell me to Disaster in a carcinogen



Collage of Dreams 65

Illusion of Forever Kyle Preston

To think of his last words still pains me to this day. "I'll come for you, I promise. But until then, just remember. Forever mine, forever yours, forever more."

That was his favorite line from a book of poetry he read. It always kept his hope alive that we could make it through anything. Six months, two weeks, three days, and twelve hours. That's how long I've been held captive here in the enemy dungeon. Or at least I think that's how long it's been. I stopped keeping track as much over time. It feels more like six years I've been in here. With each passing day the walls seem to get closer. And as the walls seem to get closer, I feel my sanity slipping away.

It's so dim and lifeless in here. So quiet, the silence is unbearable. I disturbingly get a sense of relief when I hear the water dripping from the walls. Or the small section on my door opens up and they slide my daily meals in. I guess they feel it's their redemption to get into heaven.

Monsters. How could they think we were an inferior group of human beings? We may've not been up to par in technology, but we had an efficient and comfortable way of life. No one asked for them to "better" us. Our lives were fine and we didn't need technology to complicate things. But that's man for you—if you don't see it their way, there is no other way.

The day of the invasion is like a nightmare I can't wake up from. So intense, so terrifying, and so nerve-wrecking. So realistic, as if I'm reliving it over and over again. My people rebelled, they fought, screamed. But nothing stopped these invaders. Their weapons were just superior. We fought the good fight, but in the end it wasn't good enough.

The love of my life killed for me, protected me, and protected our home. He seemed unstoppable until he was stopped. We were in the middle of making love and he whispered in my ear, "Forever mine, forever yours, forever more."

Then we kissed and a foreign invader came bursting through our bedroom door. My love jumped out of bed automatically and took the soldier down almost instantly. We put our clothes back on or as much as we could until another soldier came in. My love reached in his top draw, grabbed a gun, and shot the second soldier in the head. I'd never seen someone shot before, so I was stunned, but it wouldn't be the last.

A third soldier came in and knocked my love out with the butt of the gun and his rampage was put to rest. I didn't think someone like my love who was in the army could fall so easily. Sometimes I forget he's human too. That's where the illusions come in. I was so used to being protected and untouchable that I thought my life was untouchable as well. More soldiers swarmed into our room. They grabbed me and put handcuffs on me. I resisted, but it wasn't good enough. They laid me down in front of my love who was now handcuffed as well and we stared in each other's eyes. His eyes were intense and deep. Like a calm, bottomless ocean ready to unleash a tidal wave we've never seen before.

Then another soldier walked into the room, but this one was different. I could tell he was the leader by his appearance. He was dressed in the finest armor I'd ever seen, had numerous badges, and walked with the pride of a lion.

He picked my love up with one hand and spoke to him in a foreign language and my love responded in the same language. This came as a shock because I didn't know he spoke more than one language. Was he an illusion too? Then I asked, "Why are you doing this?"

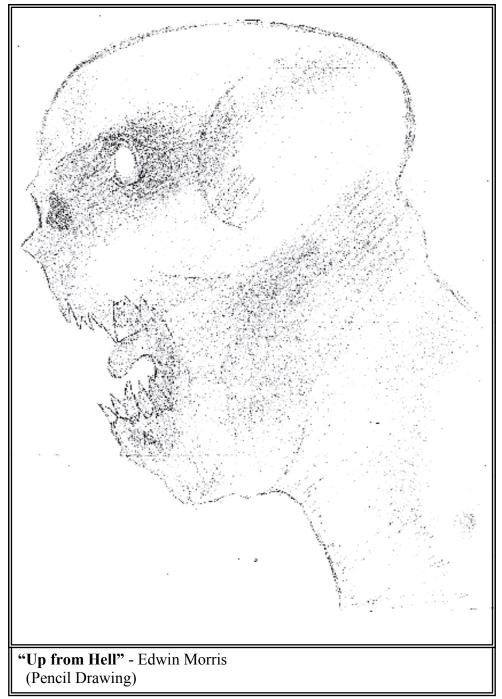
The leader glanced over at me and said, "Your people don't want to listen to reason, so we feel we should help our fellow humans and better you."

Suddenly, my love kneed the leader and broke his nose as he leaned down to recover. A soldier retaliated and shot my love in the back. He fell beside me and I crawled to him as I listened to his last words.

"My love, don't be afraid. We will continue to love passionately and live frivolously. Nothing will ever stop me from being with you. You are my heart. Be strong and keep your hope alive until I come for you. Think of me often. I will come for you, I promise. But until then, just remember. Forever mine, forever yours, forever more."

After that, I blacked out. I don't remember anything after that except screaming and crying from outside. I could hear the other women crying for their men. I was stronger than that. I knew my love would come for me. There'd be no need for tears. But it's been six months, maybe that was an illusion, maybe he wasn't coming. Maybe he was dead. I could still feel his touch though, so firm and strong. Mmm, I miss his hands. My mind may be slipping, but my heart feels perfectly sane, like it was never touched by despair. But I know the truth, it's all an illusion and that's all it's ever been. My perfect life, me getting out of here, and my love coming to touch me once again. It never existed, any of it. Maybe anything we humans believe is all an illusion. Nothing is ever guaranteed, so maybe nothing is ever real as well. But I know my sanity slipping into oblivion is real. I still see him and I still feel he's coming. Maybe that is an illusion, but my love for him is not. Forever mine, forever yours, forever more. Oh God, please let that be real.

"Butterfly Illusion" - Carline Leriche



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PERSUASION TO HELL

Samantha Knight

The air chilled my core. With each step I took, torture seemed to follow. Every time one foot had to take its new place in front of the other, I felt childhood youth drained. Boredom had become me, to the point where there was no hope for a smile or thrill anywhere in my near future. Yet, I trekked on. Following the words of our leading commander at the head of the group is what we did. Our group was one of twenty from the original group of forty-three. We all found ourselves here on a school sponsored field trip whose plan was to "educate our youth on their city's local history," at least that's what Mr. Cameron told us the day he handed out the permission slips for the trip. The permission slip read "Prepare for your minds to wonder and eyes to be awe-stricken by the vast local history you never imagined our very own Splitzdale, Ohio had. Please join us to journey through time at The Michael Douglas Museum of Local History." I thought to myself now, how completely incorrect and misleading that permission slip was. The permission slip should have read, "Come one and all to the most boring place on earth. Prepare to have your brains melted with lecture and leak out your ears onto floor. Caution: Floors are slippery when wet." That would have at least allowed us to know what we were getting ourselves into.

As we passed through room after room of what seemed to be useless nonsense and frivolous trinkets cleverly placed in each exhibit, our Museum guide, Kelly, stopped. This came as a huge shock to me because she had been speaking the entire time as well as walking constantly. I can't say that I even remembered a moment where she was silent. Kelly stood completely still and silent in front of an open door that had stairs leading down into another room. I thought nothing of it until a few minutes passed and we still hadn't moved. The others took this as an opportunity to talk and fool around, but I had to find out what was going on. I pushed my way through the sea of faces to Kelly's side.

"Umm, Kelly? What's going on?"

"What?! Oh nothing don't worry about it," Kelly seemed to snap out of a kind of trance as soon as she heard me speak and now reached for her walkie-talkie.

"Are you sure?"

"No. Wait, what is your name?"

"Roxanne."

"Okay Roxanne. Everything is just fine go back with the group. Everything will be just fine as soon as I get someone to come close this door. Then everything will be back to normal. No need to worry," Kelly rambled faster and faster with each word in a way that scared me deeply.

"What's wrong with that door?"

"Nothing! What makes you think something is wrong with it?"

"Because you won't shut it yourself and you're acting strange. Why don't you just shut it yourself?"

"Bill, we have a problem. The door's open and I need someone to close it," Kelly ignored me and spoke into her walkie-talkie. A voice within it responded. "Sure thing Kelly."

"I don't like this. What is down there Kelly?" Now I was more curious than scared.

"Nothing. Please don't worry about it. Let's just move on. It's time for lunch anyway. I've spoken enough for right now. Everyone let's head to the cafeteria. Just up those stairs and to your right students."

I really had to know what was beyond that door and why Kelly couldn't shut it herself. What was so important about that door? What in the world did it lead to? I couldn't stop until I found out.

All twenty of us entered the cafeteria and found the other group. My best friend Allison was a part of the other group and I had to find her. Out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of her curly red hair. I ran over to her. Allison jumped a little.

"Hey Rox. How is the trip for you so far? Hopefully just as boring as mine?"

"Yeah, pretty much, but there was one thing that was extremely different about my trip so far that I have to tell you."

"Well? Don't wait all year, just tell me!"

"There is this door that was left open, the guide stopped suddenly in front of it and was in some kind of shock. She didn't move or talk and barely breathed for a few minutes. It was like evil was behind that door and someone just let in the devil. It was so weird."

"What?! That's crazy. So what happened when she closed it? Did everything go back to normal?"

"See that's the thing. She didn't close it herself. She couldn't close it herself." "Was it like a really heavy door or something?" Allison laughed.

"No. She just like refused to shut it. She had to call some guy named Bill to come do it."

"Did you see him close it?"

"No, we left right away after she made the call. She told me it was nothing and to not worry about it but of course I'm worrying about it."

"Let's go see what is down there."

"How are we going to do that?"

"Umm, we are going to walk out and to the door, open it, and go down. How simple is that? You're the one who brought it up. Let's just go. We have an hour for lunch and no one will notice. Come on you're not even hungry."

Allison was right. I wasn't hungry at all and I was curious about the big secret behind this door, but I knew we weren't supposed to be down there. Why did Allison always do this to me? She was always the one to act in the moment and be spontaneous. I wasn't.

"Okay. Fine. Let's just go."

"Yes! Adventure!"

We both laughed as we locked arms and walked right out the door of the museum cafeteria without so much as a second glance. Maybe they thought we were going

to the bathroom. If not that is my story and I'm sticking to it. The door wasn't too far away from the cafeteria. Just down a flight of stairs and on our left. When we stepped on the floor containing the door my eyes shot right at it. It was still open.

"Why is it still open Rox?"

"I don't know. Maybe Bill didn't get around to shutting it yet."

"Is this an open invitation to search? I think it is!" Allison released my arm, skipped down the hall, and zoomed down the stairs that the door once concealed.

Slowly I walked toward the door. Although my strides seemed long it was if no matter how many I took the door was still the same distance away. Allison's head popped through the door frame. Her hand motioned for me to come closer and so I did. I finally reached the door and with a chuckle Allison was down the stairs again, into the darkness. I stood in the doorway and stared down the stairs. It looked like a bottomless pit to hell that no one ever hoped to return from. Why was I doing this? The door was big, bigger than most. Why wouldn't Kelly touch it? I reached a hand out and slowly eased it toward the door. Suddenly a hand came out of the darkness and pushed mine against it. When my hand touched the wood my heart raced and I felt dizzy. Images unknown to my eyes filled my sight. Kelly stood in front of me in the door way with her hand reached out for mine. I stretched mine toward hers, Just before my hand made contact, a man appeared next to her. His face distorted and a shackle was around his neck. Shocked my hand swayed from Allison's direction to his. The man now looked at me and leaned toward me. A feeling of sheer pain and utter fear stood the hairs up on the back of my neck. Inches away from me he stood, and I was motionless. Then just as quick as he appeared he was gone.

"What is wrong with you Rox? We have an hour let's go!" Allison pulled my hand and raced down the steps pulling me with her.

At the bottom of the stairs a light flicked on.

"Look at this Rox. It's like an old doctor's office. What do you think they did down here?"

Silent, from what I had just witnessed, I moved across the floor over to the tables that lined the walls. Old rusted tools were upon them. Dried blood covered them. I had the worst feeling ever now. The feeling that someone was watching me not only terrified me, but the sense that who ever was watching me wanted to hurt me is what was setting me over the edge.

"Al we shouldn't be down here let's go. We saw what was down here. Can we leave now?"

"Rox what is this?" Allison completely ignoring me.

"It looks like an old TV." I interrogated the television set with my eyes. What was its purpose here? A TV in an old operating room?

"Does it work?"

"I don't know," I worked my fingers across the many buttons until they found the power button. I pushed it and the screen lit up.

It took a few minutes for the screen's image to become completely clear but when it did we were horrified. A scene of people walked about. The room looked all too familiar. They looked like they were in pain. Blood streamed the floor. One woman sat

in the corner of the room shaking her head spastically and another walked aimlessly into the walls. On a table was a man with his skull opened and doctors attaching electrical probes to his brain. The man jumped with each attachment. The images were so real and so profound on the black and white screen. Suddenly a face with a doctor's mask filled the screen. His hand was shown and his finger pointed to me. My heart dropped. Allison shut the TV off.

Turning around to find the stairs I felt a sense of clarification. The room on the television was the room we were in right now.

"Al we have to go now! That room on the TV was this room! All those people were tortured in this room."

We ran frantically up the stairs and through the door with tears streaming our faces. No sooner than we had stepped through the doorway did we run right into a man. Terrified I hit the floor begging for my life.

"Whoa! What is the matter with you? Calm down." The man's voice filled the hall.

"Who are you?" Allison got out in between sobs.

I looked up at the man and saw that his name tag said, "Bill".

"You're Bill! You have to shut this door. Shut it now, shut it now!" I ed.

screamed.

"Oh trust me I'm going to shut this door for good." Bill took out a wool glove, placed it on his hand and shut the door. "There we go ladies. Don't ever go down there again. It's not safe. That room has seen some things in this town's history. This museum used to be an insane asylum and that very room down there is where they would do their tests on the crazies. So many people died. So many were hurt. And those doctors used to record their experiments and watch them on that TV down there. I'm sure you saw it. For the sake of your innocence I hope you didn't turn it on." Allison and I looked at each other in guilt. "So I see that you have. Well it's no secret then. Just stay away from this room from now on." Bill started away from the now closed door.

"Hey wait! Why did you close the door with that wool glove anyway?" I called to him.

"Well little lady, bare hands can't touch that door. It's a myth. If your bare hand touches that door when it's open you get trapped with all those lost souls down there. That's why no one touches it. Why? You didn't touch it did you?"

"I did."

"Oh no." Bill said under his breath.

"But it's only a myth Rox! Don't worry about it."

"Yeah you're right."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that girls."

I took two steps away from the door and Allison stopped me.

"It's going to be okay Rox. Trust me." Just then that very same man I had seen when we first went down those stairs stood right next to her. A smile formed on his face. Terror hit me.

With a crash the door slammed open and I was gone into hell.



"These Thoughts" - Alex Trinajstic (Colored Pencils and Ink Pen)



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Tessa Tanisha Rodriguez

There is a laboratory on a distant island near the shores of New Jersey. The laboratory has been discontinued however since the "experiments" being done there involved orphaned children. I know this because I'm the one that had the place closed down. My name is Mathew Wilson, and I worked at that God forsaken laboratory.

Two scientists were standing in front of a large glowing green tube. One was tall and skinny, the other smaller and chubby. They both wore the stereotypical long white coats and thick black glasses that only a scientist could love to wear. Inside the large tube was a whole lot of green gunk that was fortunate it couldn't get on you since the tube was so secure. There was a girl inside the large tube. She looked about twelve, maybe thirteen. It made me sick to my stomach that they could have her locked in there. There were wires all over her, and they had this weird thingamajig on her head. A little light bulb was on top of the thingamajig, and it was flashing a weird red light. There was also a faint beeping sound which I assumed was the girl's pulse. (Or measurement thereof.)

"How is she? Has there been anything strange?" asked the smaller scientist.

"She seems fine. There hasn't been any sign of a bug in the system yet. If there was I'm sure we would've noticed it. Besides, Tessa seems happy. Right now she thinks she's at the park. See?" said the taller scientist to the smaller one as he pointed to a small screen beside the girl in the tube. On the screen the girl (Tessa, I think?) was sitting on the swings

singing "You Are My Sunshine" happily by herself. It was awful the fact that she didn't even realize the world she was living... or not living in was out here while she was trapped in there.

"Ok then. Want to go get some lunch now?" asked the smaller scientist.

"Sure thing," says the taller one as he puts his clipboard on the desk beside him. "Let's get some sushi."

"Fine by me," chuckles the smaller scientist as they head toward the door. The taller scientist reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a card and slides it into the card slot. The doors open and as the scientists leave I roll into the room. (When I say "roll" I mean **roll**. Hey, is it too much for a guy to want to enter like a spy when he is pretty much acting like one? I wanted to have my cake and eat it too, y'know?)

I was the janitor of the laboratory, well sort of. I didn't really do my job entirely well. Anyway, the point was that when I found out what these guys were doing to these kids, I had to stop them. How could they take children and do this to them? I knew that they were working on something that was said to be "The Wave of the Future," but I wasn't expecting to find little girls covered with wires in giant tube things. Were they trying new ways of shutting up children?

Anyway, Tessa (that's what they called her at least) was trapped in the tube thing which I had no idea how to open, but I knew I had to try before the scientists finished their sushi and returned. I also had to somehow sneak her out of the laboratory without getting caught, cross the ocean to get to shore, and remarkably get people to believe or even just listen to the whole situation. And as of that moment I realized I was screwed. But I had to try.

I walked around the tube once, twice, maybe six times looking for some way to drain that green gunk and get Tessa out but I couldn't find anything. Just then I noticed the screen again and I saw Tessa in her la-la land. Tessa was dancing in a field of flowers in a pink frilly dress. Every little girl's fantasy. (Didn't she realize that that would never happen in reality!?) That's when I noticed a microphone next to the screen. Maybe this could help me talk to her? Wouldn't hurt to try, right?

I turned on the mic and stared at the screen as I spoke into it. "Hello?"

Just then I saw Tessa look surprised and turn to the screen. It was like she was looking right at me. Did she hear me? "Hello can you hear me? Tessa?" I asked.

"Whose there!?" Tessa asks scared. "Who are you?"

"Tessa don't worry. I'm here to help. My name is

Mathew, and I'm going to rescue you."

"Rescue?" she asks.

"Yes, you're not in the real world. The world you're living in is a lie," I told her.

"No. I don't want to leave. I like it here," she says.

"What!?" I asked surprised. "You're in a tube living a fantasy life and being observed like some sort of weird experiment!" I felt somewhat stupid for saying that but it came out of my mouth. "I'm trying to get you out of here! You should live a REAL LIFE!" I say.

"What kind of real life is there for an orphaned girl?" she retorts. Holy crap, this girl was either way too smart or brain washed. "I don't want to leave. I like it here. Go away. Go away, Mr. Mathew."

"I don't think you understand..."

"No, I do," Tessa interrupts me. "I told the doctor people I wanted to do this," she says. Did she mean the scientists? Wait, she wanted this?

"You wanted this?" I asked. Now I was very confused.

"Yes, I did. We all did. We wanted a happy life. Now go away," Tessa says to me, and she turns away from the screen and goes on with her dancing.

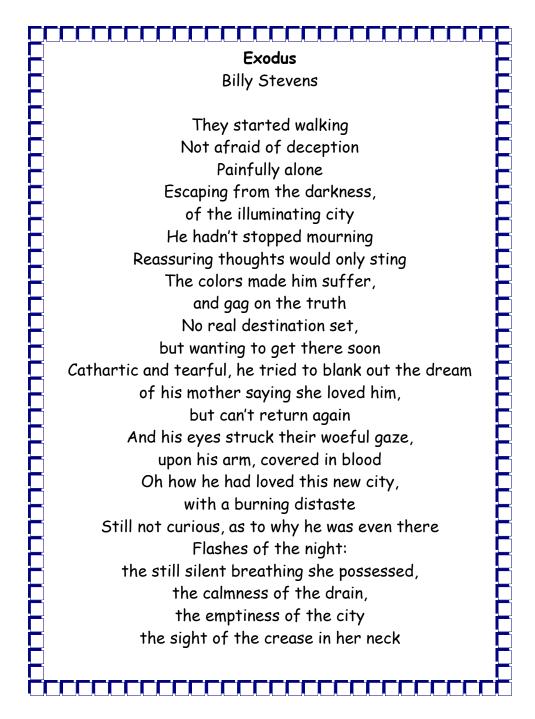
I turn off the mic and look away from the screen. This made no sense. I don't think she truly understands what's going on here. Doesn't she realized how this all looks from the outside? Living in a la-la land isn't a good thing either; she can't just stay there forever, right?

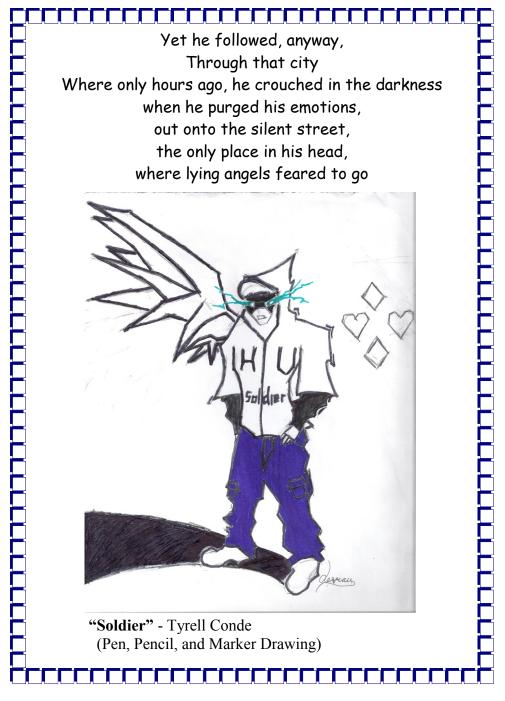
Suddenly I hear the scientists outside the door. I panic and hide behind Tessa as I hear them enter the room. As soon as they entered and weren't looking, I dashed out of the room. I headed for the nearest exit. Don't just think I gave up after that whole talk with Tessa. I did, but then I decided I was the one who was right, whether she thought so or not. I reported this to the police. They didn't believe. But the next week I managed to sneak in my camera and took pictures and got the hell out of there. (It was tough since security was tight, but I knew a guy and he helped me out once I showed him Tessa.)

All in all, I got the placed shut down. The orphaned kids (that were also found in tube things) were sent to foster homes, and Tessa ended up with a good family. I'm happy I could help. And I love bragging about that old laboratory on a distant island near the shores of New Jersey.



"O-Hell" - Hugo Aquino (Sharpie Marker Pen Drawing)



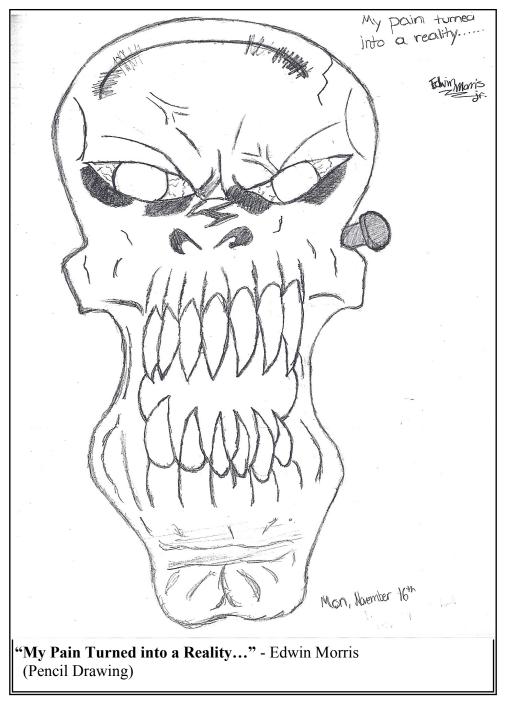


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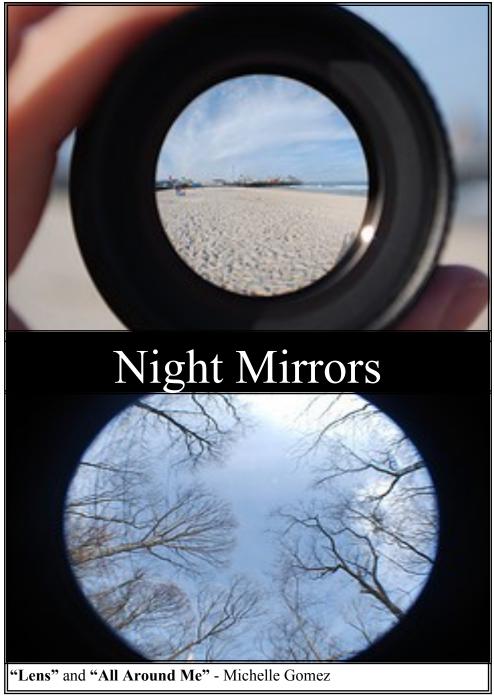
(C) (C)

BEAST Tanisha Rodriguez

Something inside him would not let him go IT grew inside him, alone in the cold And though he fought hard, IT soon became so... The day came when IT had now taken hold Ripping and tearing It finally broke free Now he wasn't Himself anymore... Now trapped inside what he had held within Oh the irony, he's the one now caged It seemed he knew it would win soon because... Something inside him would not let him go...



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Taxidermy Emily Anne Giambalvo

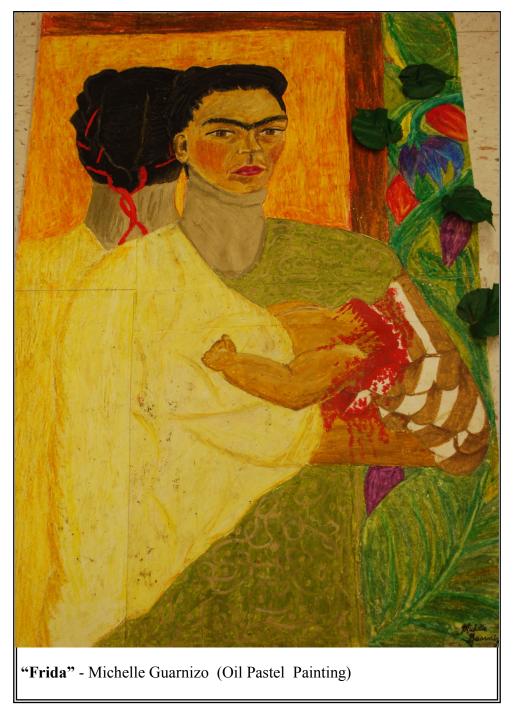
Life is taxidermy, Making paper dolls, Positioning them Along the walls,

People are animals Dying, dying, Just living proof: No one's trying.

Life is taxidermy It's all kismet. Visages are horrified, But it's all kismet.

There's no reproof For this iniquity Annihilate the liars Use alternity.

There's no saving us, Life is taxidermy.



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Everyone's a Critic Katherine Barna

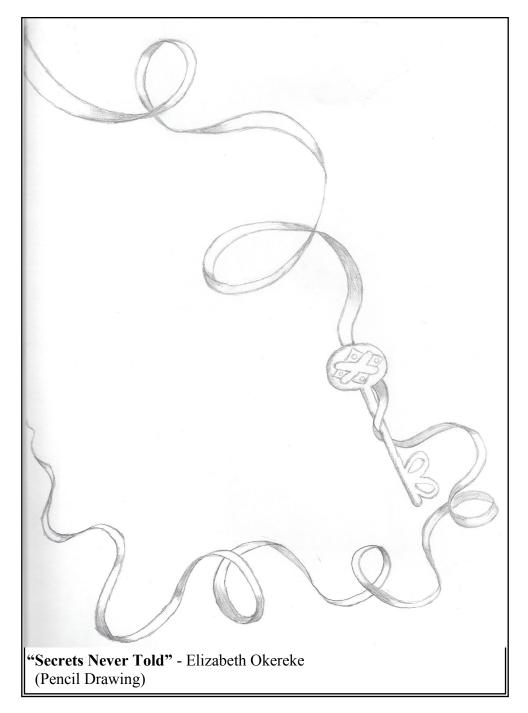
No one wants me to be myself, Everyone tries to mold me into new. I'm just like midnight, Split between two different personalities. I am night, sneaky and lying, hiding what is real in my darkness. Then I am day, cheerful and perfect Oblivious to the true reality around me. Fighting with each personality, Everyone acts like I am so great, 'til I turn around and they admit what they think. There is no middle for me. Some think I am easy, like a first grade math question or that I smoke, just as a chimney on a house. They judge by what they want to see, Never looking beyond my makeup and clothes. No...I am a simple girl learning, learning that not everyone is nice, that everyone judges on appearance. Everyone lies so they don't hurt someone or so they do. And these lies build who I am, The self-critical little girl.

Destruction of a Human Being Samantha Knight Death has become us. You can not hurt me anymore. The true beauty and desire we long for, The art of death. As I reside just past the gates of Satan's wrath, My soul smolders. Destroyed within the very hands which acknowledged its potential then set fire to its wick. Remembering those days.
Samantha Knight
§ Death has become us.
§ You can not hurt me anymore.
Example The true beauty and desire we long for,
§ The art of death.
<pre>}</pre>
\S As I reside just past the gates of Satan's wrath, \S
₹ My soul smolders.
\S Destroyed within the very hands which acknowledged \S
\S its potential then set fire to its wick. \S
Remembering those days.
The memories of those precious times,
Times when you were here.
Those sunshine filled moments where you were with me,
Although,
Not long after you left me,
≩ I left you.
Van laft va all
You left us all, But why must I be the one to suffer?
Now that it is over.
Those years of missing, wanting, striving,
For what they wanted me to be,
What they knew I would be.
For with one act.
For with one act, One precious, heart stopping moment in time,
I was what I wanted to be,
What I knew I could be.
الالم And I ask you,
₹ What is so wrong with that?
\gtrsim No pity looks and false terms of endearment given to me.
Destruction of a Human Being Samantha Knight Death has become us. You can not hurt me anymore. The true beauty and desire we long for, The art of death. As I reside just past the gates of Satan's wrath, My soul smolders. Destroyed within the very hands which acknowledged its potential then set fire to its wick. Remembering those days. The memories of those precious times, Times when you were here. Those sunshine filled moments where you were with me, Although, Not long after you left me, I left you. You left us all, But why must I be the one to suffer? Now that it is over. Those years of missing, wanting, striving, For what they wanted me to be, What they knew I would be. For with one act, One precious, heart stopping moment in time, I vas what I vanted to be, What is so wrong with that? No pity looks and false terms of endearment given to me. I am finally just me. All that I could ever be, All that I could ever be, All that I just wasn't ever good enough for you.
§ All that I could ever be,
\S All, that just wasn't ever good enough for you. \S
 I was what I wanted to be, What I knew I could be. And I ask you, What is so wrong with that? No pity looks and false terms of endearment given to me. I am finally just me. All that I could ever be, All, that just wasn't ever good enough for you.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

With your pushing and prodding, Your desperation for me to be better than the rest, Better than them all. Well, Have you learned yet? Or must another cycle go by before you open your blue eyes to see? Looking back I see all your flaws, All their problems, Everything you said was wrong with me, Yet, It was wrong with you. Not a single you, But all of you. Idragged myself through the true pits of hell all those years, Helping you. Aiding in all your sinful acts and trying so desperately to help. Yet once, A stricking ery of a lost soul's last breath, It sast hope, It slast plea for help to survive in your reality. And, No one heard. No one helped. So as you rise and I am not there to greet the dawn with you, And you say that I was selfish, Do what you have always done and curse my name. For I am free from your pain, Free form you. Sitting just beyond the gates of my fiery, true, reality. Finally. It's over. 

**Bones** Eric Orellana

As my bones slowly decayed, The world starts to spin, Blood covered the ocean, The stench of carnage filled the air, Bodies piled up left to right, Human torches lit the streets, While the houses were painted red, As my bones slowly decayed, I see his life flash before my eyes, As the belt rips off his skin, His mind goes wild with no where to go, He is driven insane, He destroys his leg, Just to get away from home, His eyes weep bitter blood, As my bones slowly decayed, My life withered away.



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#### The Lake Emily Anne Giambalvo

The water is a silvery-gray, dull and opaque. You see no bottom; there is no bottom. There is nothing but water and more water, swirling in slow, deadly tide pools.

The child is running. She isn't running towards anything, nor is she running away. She is simply running, for the sake of running. There is something strange about her. Ash-blond hair hangs limply in front of a languid, pale face. Her eyes are a weighted blue, shrouded and heavy with a mixture of fear and mystery. When she runs, her bare feet slap the twig-ridden earth, sharp stones digging into her soles. Yet not a sound does she utter. She runs faster if anything, seeming to welcome the blows with a wild, bemused expression.

There is something unsettlingly familiar about this girl, barely more than a toddler. I crane my neck, searching the trees for her face. There it is - and as I spot it, I freeze. Me.

The girl is me.

It's when I come to this realization that it happens. The younger version of myself slips on a clump of moist leaves. The young me falls and slides, heading directly towards... The lake. My heart skips a beat. A part of me knows that this young girl must never, *never*, touch the silvery water. But what can I do? I am trapped, the seemingly benign tree I have been leaning against having suddenly become a cage around me. I am abandoned, unable to move, unable to help, watching as the still silent version of myself speeds towards the deadly water.

Something moves. My heart thuds painfully in my chest. The waters stir, and mist starts forming over the center of the lake. The mist congeals into heavy, bruised clouds, hanging menacingly over the water, an ominous, foreboding blanket of evil. For the first time since I can remember, I hear a noise - The girl is screaming.

"No! No! Please, please no!"

Thick, cruel laughter circulates the forest. The clouds change rapidly into the depiction of a man, a demon. He is laughing heartlessly, and the noise is reverberating off the trees. The pure, saturated darkness in that one sound made my heart stop.

"Come forth, child," the demon whispers, his voice a slippery thread of deception. "Do not fight it. You cannot win."

The toddler digs her hands into the ground, trying desperately to stop her incessant movement forward. She bounces across a patch of stones, and with a sickening *crack*, her head bangs into a particularly sharp stone. Rubicund blood drips from the wound. Her breath is coming quickly, her eyes wide with terror. I can feel her racing pulse, the ache at the back of her head. The blood is coming faster now, falling in rivulets down her face and back. Her hands are bleeding now too, her feet a mangled mess. My own members burn as if they too are cut, which, I realize by looking down, is true. I'm bleeding.

The demon is larger, feeding off our blood and terror. "'Let the children come to me'," he quotes. He sneers. "Let the children come."

She is so close to the lake, too close. My weakening body thrusts

against the sides of my cage, trying unsuccessfully to help her, some way, some how. The demon smiles in anticipation as she slides ever closer. One bare foot enters the waters. The demon laughs triumphantly and reaches for the girl. She struggles, but cannot wrench herself free from the water's icy grip. As her body continues to submerge, she lets out one final, heart wrenching scream.

Then I wake up.



"Nautica" - Megan Martinez (Colored Pencil Drawing)

## **Eraser** Vincent Carroll

I hate my life, all I do is lick mistakes from some kids' paper. Everyday, it's just the same thing. To make things worse, a piece of me rips off every time I'm used. I get no thank you or anything, they don't even ask, I'm just picked up. Then later some kids find it so funny to poke holes in me and guess who makes them? The **Pencil**. That jerk's laughing it up always making a mess plus he gets a free shave every time he chooses not to work. Well the joke's on him, these kids are nasty. Our owner even picks his nose you know, he never washed his hands.

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Quiet Crying Girl Silence No More

Alone in a room Face wet with tears No one knows and no one cares Sad about life So she cuts herself with a knife Quiet Crying Girl Horrible life at home She always feels alone Wiping tears off her face because she feels ashamed and disgraced I should've screamed STOP! I should've told a cop but why would he care? Thinking of the pain made her shiver with fear I want to be LOVED! I want my PARENTS! What did I do wrong? "Being born," is what my mother said all along Quiet Crying Girl

#### Shortcut: A Memoir Megan Martinez

"I'm sorry Meg. I really thought she would let me walk you." He apologized while embracing me amiably.

"It's okay," I lied with mounting aggravation. My blood pressure was skyrocketing at the moment...I wanted to scream at him for making me walk out of my way to his house in the pouring rain to end up having to walk alone for a mile and a half.

"Here, I know you're probably freezing right now." He offered me a brown plaid hoodie and slipped it onto my arms.

"Thanks," I mumbled, slightly touched by my friend's gesture before putting my coat back on and crossing his wet lawn on my trek home. The dripping grass streaked water down my feet and I felt my left foot going numb.

As I padded down the street behind the Jewish Orthodox School, I decided that it would make more sense to just walk down Rockview and end up near West End than to back track all the way back to Greenbrook Road. With a decisive air I turned my back on the street that would've taken me back to Greenbrook Road and began my way down the winding path of Rockview. The rain began to fall harder and colder and I adjusted my back pack onto my right shoulder.

It felt like I had been walking for more than an hour. God, was this road always so long? I began to walk more quickly and passed two shadows of people. Soon the only thing I was aware of was the slap of my feet against the wet pavement, the harsh rainfall blended into white noise in the back of my mind.

I am walking down this road. I have always been walking down this road. I will always be walking down this snaking path, always, always, always, always.

I snapped out of my trance as I saw the Trinity Church in front of me and beyond it-West End School. I was only a few blocks away from home, another twenty minutes or so. It occurred to me that to walk the street behind the church (which I was closer to, as you know) and cut through the woods to the West End field would be quicker. I began walking. I placed my Jansport on both my shoulders and descended into the

woods. I maneuvered my way through saturated bramble and undergrowth. My left foot sank into the mud and I cursed under my breath as I yanked my black slip on shoe out of the muck. I berated myself for not wearing more weather appropriate shoes.

A mound of compost grew prevalent in my view and I became optimistic as I realized that I had bypassed the field altogether and was near the playground, which was much closer to my final destination, home.

Only a few yards from the base of the heap I realized with grim dismay that a river was standing between me and getting to the pile that would lead me home.

I decided to continue walking. I remembered that my friends Kyle and Bobby had crossed over at some point before, and I was sure that I would eventually find it. I didn't want to turn back now; the icy water seemed to have already seeped deep into my skin.

With every step I took, the rain got heavier. I felt that I must be near the crossing point, or I could just keep walking down until I got to the road. Suddenly I was at a point where the river branched off and left me unable to go any further. All motivation flooded out of me with this realization. The even heavier-than-before rain beat any kind of intent to turn back and go the normal way. I was so exhausted that I was considering swimming across if I had to, if only to get home as soon as possible. But as I looked at the slowly rising water I knew that I would try to avoid that fate as much as I could.

Walking around frantically, I began to look for some way across. One that didn't involve me getting soaked in freezing cold water.

Suddenly I saw a log but it was crossing to my left, not to my right where even now I could see houses just minutes away from mine. The log stretched all the way across but there were some gaps where the roots were.

The top trunk was a few feet off the ground and I pulled myself up with a vine which was protruding down. I hoisted myself upright on the log with the aid of the branches jutting outward. Once I was standing up, I pulled the chords of my backpack taut so that it wouldn't slip off my shoulders into the murky depths below. The water crept higher and higher as it swirled frigidly beneath me. I tottered and my heart dropped

deep into my stomach. Ms. B., my dance instructor's voice rang clear in my mind.

Stand tall, ribs in, pelvis square, shoulders back, head high, you wieners!

With this in mind I slowly inched forward. Half of the trunk was covered in bark while the other side was dangerously smooth.

*Grit means traction,* I reminded myself. *Traction means I don't careen off into the river.* 

Suddenly I saw a Plainfield Cop SUV approaching from the road on the other side. I crouched down and tried to hide innocuously as possible in my horribly noticeable red jacket.

The car sped right past me without slowing down, which I was almost offended at.

*Way to help the girl in the middle of a river*, I thought bitterly, ignoring the fact that I didn't want to be helped. I stood back upright and continued making my way forward. And about two thirds through I almost fell, but was able to scramble to a random branch jutting out from the middle of nowhere. I held onto it with both hands and took a moment to breath. After I gathered myself, I had to climb over the branch that had just saved me and scooted to the roots. I grabbed one of the roots until my knuckles were white and rested my foot on a lower root which was closer to the ground. I maneuvered myself as close as possible before reaching my foot out onto the ground and pushing the rest of my body on the land. I was in the middle of Greenbrook Park, which I had been forbidden from when I was younger since a murder had happened there a few years ago. As I went along, I saw only grass and the path I was on. The park was farther back, but as I walked along I saw geese and deer grazing. I didn't realize it until the deer stared at me intensely that I had been running. The geese nipped at my heels and waddled after me before giving up.

I kept running as I crossed the bridge back into North Plainfield and began to walk again until I saw the SUV and another cop car pull into the park and I began to run again, sure that they were looking for the "girl sitting on a log in the middle of a river." I ran all the way to the threshold of my door before slowing down, suddenly too exhausted to go on. I dragged my feet and my stepdad looked at me strangely before

saying anything. "Where the hell have you been?" he asked sarcastically. I drudged up next to him and sat down without grace onto the couch and began to spill my story.

"A Web of Pods" - Carline Leriche

#### Earth to Inhabitants: Can You Hear Me? Emily Anne Giambalvo

I am not what you think I am. I am not as I seem. Though you look and you study You still cannot see. You claim to be cleaner You say to "go green" Yet you litter and pollute In an unending stream.

You bicker and prattle You play and you tease But you seem to forget Ignorance isn't free. Wait until your children grow They must pay the fee.

This is not what I'd planned When I first came to be. I gave you shelter, I gave you rocks, I gave you food, I gave you trees I gave up it all For you, and for free.

But now the air is filled with smog, My children cannot breathe. My rivers are all drying, My forests cease to be. And I can't help but note: This isn't right; it isn't me.

#### **So Far to Go** Billy Stevens

"Sadie, Sadie, Sadie... what are we going to do with you?"

"I know! I feel like such a loser. Second guy in three weeks to stand me up. I can't be that bad of a date," Sadie said with a smile on her freckled face. That was one of the reasons Fred liked Sadie so much. She was always so upbeat.

"Well, I do have another friend who will be in town this week. He has nothing to do and is single," Fred suggested.

"I guess so. How desperate is he? My self esteem is pretty low at this point," Sadie laughed.

"I'm sure you'll have a good time. Here's his number. I'll give him yours," Fred said, handing Sadie a piece of ripped paper with several digits scrawled in bright red ink.

"Yeah, I'm not sure I could face rejection another time." The smile Fred loved so much was absent.

Plans were arranged. Through Fred's job, Sadie and his friend Jeff would go on a carriage ride. He would meet her at the city's main park at 7:15, just as the sun was setting. Saturday, February the 13th rolled around soon enough. Sadie was waiting for her date on the side-walk, wearing a simple black dress with thin straps. The remaining sun bounced off of her green eyes, turning them into glowing orbs of emer-ald.

Time slowly began to tick away, and before Sadie knew it, the sun had long gone, and the night air began to freeze her exposed legs. Shivering and upset, she reluctantly answered her vibrating phone from her purse.

"Hey," she recognized Fred's voice, "How is everything going? Thought I would check in to make sure all was well with the carriage."

"Everything's fine, except that my date isn't even here!"

"You're joking, right? I talked to Jeff this morning. Everything was good to go."

"Yeah, well, I guess I'll die alone then!" Sadie hung up the phone. Tears rolled her cheeks and turned from the crease in her mouth.

Saltiness added to her pain. She wiped her face and stormed off, visibly furious and incredibly lonely. Sadie walked the remaining eight blocks to her apartment, wind biting her green, tearful eyes.

She finally made it home. Threw her purse lazily onto the couch. Sadie thought about taking a long, warm bath. With a toaster. She instead slumped onto an armchair adjacent to her small kitchen island. This time, her house phone rang. Sadie slowly got up to answer it. Fred again. She then decided she would let it go to the answering machine. It was his stupid friend that ditched her anyway. Maybe it was all just a cruel joke. Now he was calling to let her in on the big punch line. She thought about the time her dad was supposed to take her camping to a lake outside the city. Sadie was so excited, but her dad never took her, never even remembered. She had cried all night after that, and never looked at her father the same way. She had never forgotten either.

"Here's a punch line for you: I hate you!" Sadie then screamed at the top of her lungs and collapsed onto the floor. "What's wrong with me?" she asked the empty space of her dim apartment, wiping her red eyes, matching the ink from the number still within her purse.

Fred left a message. "Hey. I know you're pretty upset. I would be too. I don't know why he bailed. If you feel like it, maybe we can go out for a drink. I mean... if you wanted to...I just thought...oh nevermi-..."

Sadie was fairly confused. Fred was one of her best friends. He had never shown any interest in her before. She has always kind of had a thing for him. She joyfully leapt to the phone to call him back. Sadie suddenly found herself really desiring a drink.

They met around an hour later at a bar a short distance away from Sadie's apartment.

"I'm really sorry. I didn't know this would happen," Fred apologized after they ordered at the counter.

"I-I guess it's ok. I just don't know why three guys both didn't show up three times in a row. That can't be just bad luck."

"Well, if they can't see how cool you are, then they aren't even worth your time."

"Thanks," Sadie replied, smiling for the first time in several hours. "So, what made you decide to ask me out?"

"Well, uh... you know. I figured you would be a little sad after

what happened." Fred started blushing.

They spent a few more hours at the bar. Sadie and Fred continued to cautiously flirt with each other, attempting to pass off their remarks as jokes between friends. This became increasingly awkward.

"Well. You probably have to get home soon. You, know, Valentine's Day tomorrow. Big day, making sure the carriages and flower orders all go smoothly," Sadie said, implying she didn't want the night to end. "Unless you want to hang out at my place for a bit?"

Startled, Fred responded,"Ye-yeah sure, I have time."

They walked back to Sadie's apartment, holding hands part of the way there. Fred hadn't been to her place, and wondered how serious Sadie was about this. She flipped the light switch by her door and said,"Voila! Not much, I know."

"Nice. I like the theme, very, gray." They both laughed.

Fred spied a slip of paper on her counter, written in small, slashing lines of scarlet ink that said, "Three down." He had a puzzled look before Sadie could snatch the note away.

"Grocery list," she nervously spurted out.

They both sat down on her couch, and sat in stillness uncomfortably. "Well," Sadie began. Fred silenced her by leaning into a kiss. He wasn't sure why, but he thought it would be the best thing to do at the time. "That was unexpected," she said as he finished.

"Let's go," Sadie said eagerly.

"Where?"

"You'll see." She grabbed her car keys. And headed out the door. Fred hastily struggled to put on his coat in order to keep up. He obliviously missed a separate note tossed aside on the floor by the front door. "Bye Daddy" it read in that familiar ink.

Sadie drove them for half an hour. Until she pulled into a park outside the city. The sign at the gate said "Closed at sunset." It was well past midnight. Sadie paid no attention to it.

"So, why are we here?"

"I used to love this place when I was a kid. It was always special to me," she lied.

Fred and Sadie got out of the car and walked to a lake reflected by the crescent moon that was perfectly centered in the sky. It gave off

just the right amount of light.

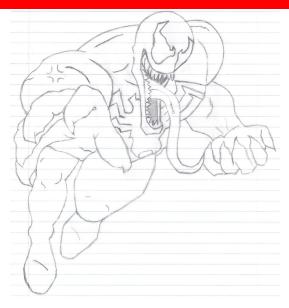
"Fantastic view," Fred commented.

"I love that shade of silver," she said, with aggressiveness towards the end of the sentence. Both of her arms were folded behind her. Fred walked ahead, and looked down at the water.

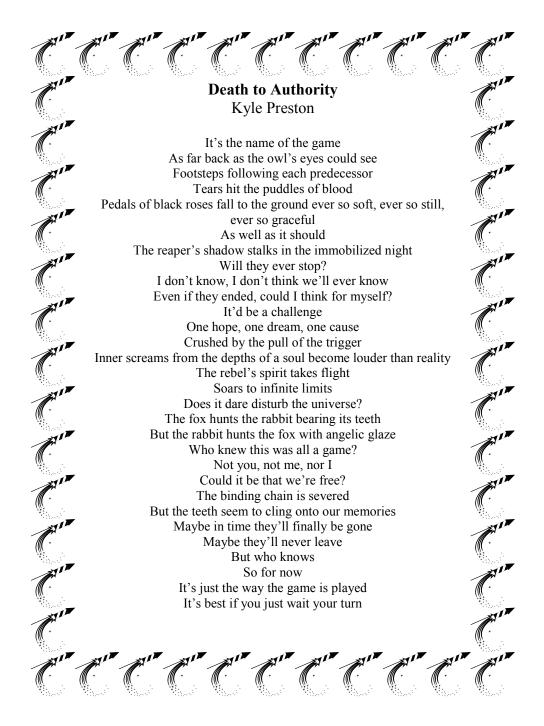
"You know, I've always been crazy about yo-" Sadie swiftly took the knife from behind her back and stabbed him between the shoulder blades. He cried out in pain, fell to his knees, soon after his stained torso hit the ground with a thud. She crouched, her knees on top of his legs and began to hack away.

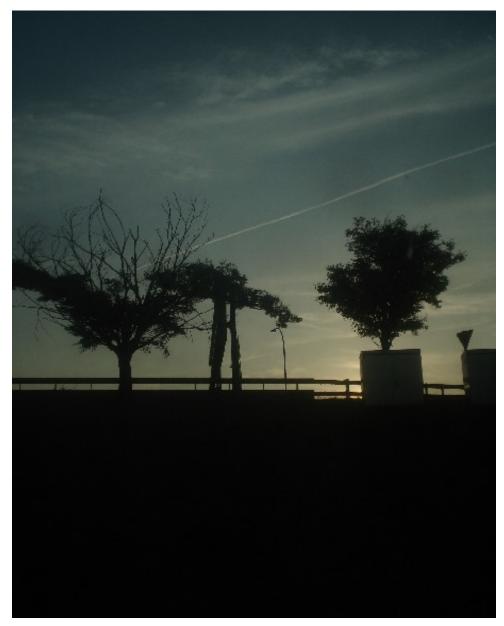
"You're free now! We can go home now daddy! We don't have that far to go!" Sadie shouted maniacally as she continued to stab and slash at his lifeless body.

Next to the car, by the side of some pine bushes, three still silhouettes on the ground could be seen. The sound of her blade cutting through skin could be heard. The silver crescent in the sky reflected Fred's red ink.



"Venom" - Edwin Morris (Pencil Drawing)





"Three Friends and a Wish" - Diego Orozco

# Canuckling 2010 Volume 55

# The Literary-Art Magazine of North Plainfield High School

34 Wilson Avenue North Plainfield, NJ 07060

\$1.00