

phaethon





Dolls cover photo by Brady Murphy

About Phaethon

The myth of Phaethon is simple. He seeks to know his father. So he asks his mother Clymene, and she tells him his father is none other than Apollo, the god of the sun. Phaethon goes to Apollo and asks for some proof of their relationship, and Apollo says he will grant him one wish. Phaethon wishes to drive Apollo's chariot that pulls the sun across the sky. The only being that can do this successfully is Apollo himself. Not even Zeus can pull the sun across the sky. Knowing this, Apollo tries to dissuade Phaethon from this task. This does not work, and Phaethon is placed in charge of the chariot and its horses that breathe fire. Doomed from the start, Phaethon loses control of the chariot and nearly burns up the Earth. The Earth cries out to Zeus for help, and Zeus strikes Phaethon dead with a thunderbolt. Phaethon, now a falling star, plunged into the river Eridanos still ablaze. His epitaph reads:

*Here Phaethon lies who in the sun-god's chariot fared.
And though he greatly failed, more greatly he dared.*

In the spirit of this figure, we at the Phaethon value bold, confident, daring, courageous, and risky fiction, poetry, and art. Phaethon is not a tragic figure. His actions, that of a mere mortal, for a brief moment of time are equal to an immortal. He did something no other mortal, or immortal for that matter, could ever do. His confidence, courage, and daring are an inspiration to all of us. We too, if we risk our very lives, can be gods.

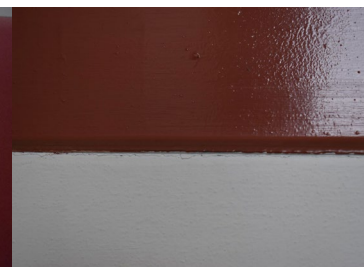
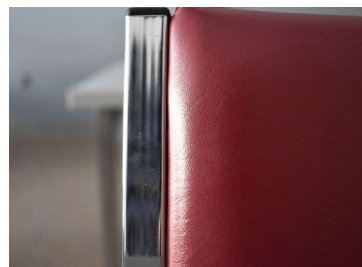
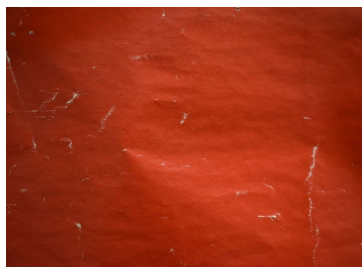
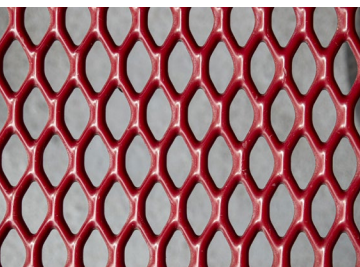
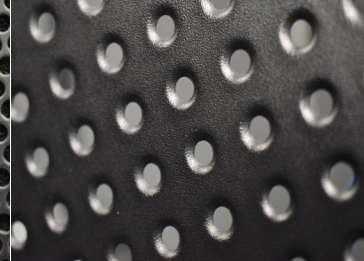
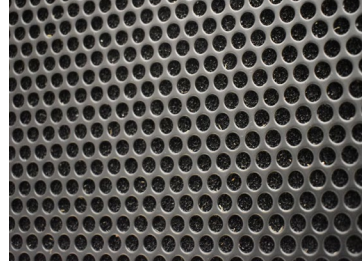
So we want pieces that challenge, inspire, stump, and move us. We crave new expression. New ideas. New connections. We do not value art that tests the boundaries of expression. We value art that obliterates them.

Faculty Advisors

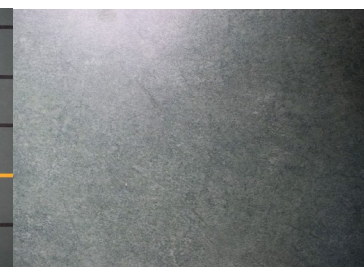
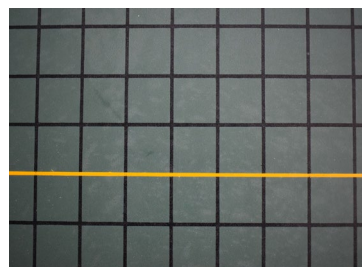
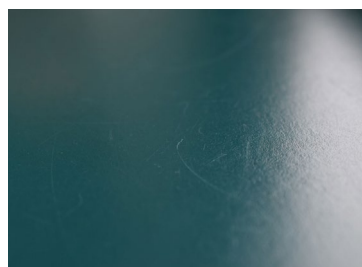
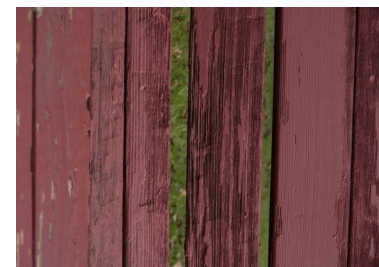
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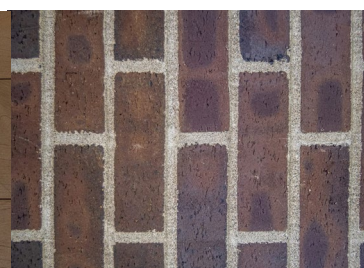
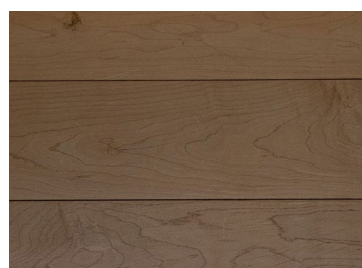
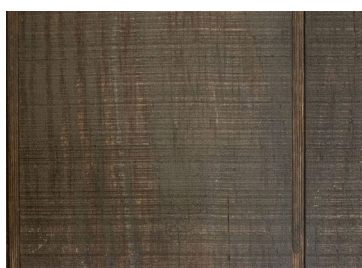
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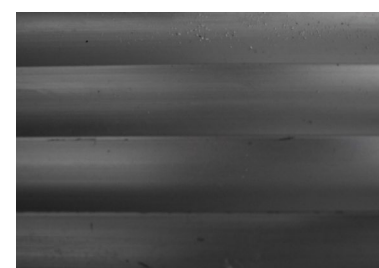
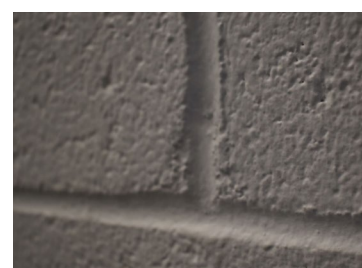
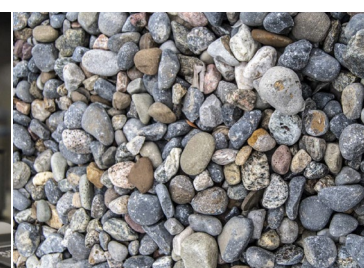
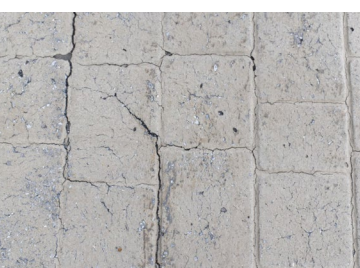
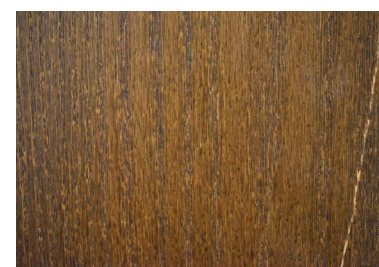
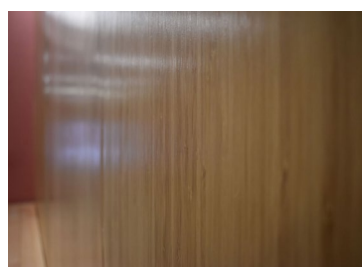
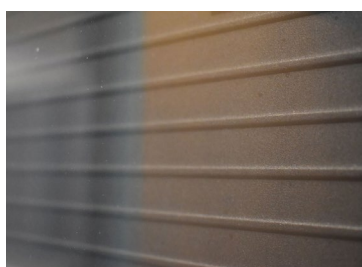
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Reflection of Trees in Woodhull Creek by Daniel Sargent

Confined Comforts

Aaliyah Williams and Aleks Ivanov

Desperation occupies the mind.
 Risks are taken by dangerous mentalities,
 But with the risks, there is the chance to feel "alive".
 Life yearns to revive the dead.
 And the dead wait for hope.
 A hopeless soul stalks the one thing that it needs.
 To be caught in the glimmer of light.
 A light that can be found only in the depths of your longing.
 It's not gold, it's something more than that, something that you can keep, but can't hold.
 A delicacy more valuable than your darkest thoughts.
 It's the thing that gives the needless, need.
 The rarity of it haunts you, but the desire for it comforts you.
 The touch of it wakes you, and the feel of it arouses you.
 Coursing through the veins, and flowing with genuine passion, it waits for your consent.
 And the desire for it grows by the second.
 Finally, you get to experience,
 A lover's touch.

THE WALLS WITHIN

Chase Kisker

As I enter my home, the stench of memory overwhelms my consciousness. Everything seems to remind me of him – the carpets, now a deep yellow, stained from all the years of abuse. What was once so pure and clean is now soiled and pungent, evoking strong feelings of disgust in every person who lays their eyes upon them.

The walls silently scream at me in an effort to force me to relive those horrifying feelings. The sound of the neighbor's bickering fills the air, surprisingly, this is the only thing I can look forward to, it is the only thing that distracts me from the pain surrounding me.

Everything is quiet, the kind of quiet which allows a person to slip under the hypnotic call of their darkest thoughts. Thoughts that break down the psyche until there is nothing left but a crude outline of what once existed.

It's odd, I should feel joyful about his departure from my life, but I don't. As I take a deeper look into myself, there is an empty shell, void of any feelings or thoughts. The only thing that exists is the many scars, both physical and mental, that will stay with me for all of eternity.

"Mac, you in there," a voice called from outside the front door, muffled by the layers of metal and wood that keep me locked away from the outside world.

"It's me, Davis, I was driving by, just wanted to see if you were okay." I didn't answer, lord knows the last person I wanted to see right now was my little brother, I hate that my entire family knows my pain, I wish I could just be left alone for once.

"Yeah, hold on," I reluctantly called out, "just give me a minute." The one thing he would never do. He's been so touchy lately, I think he's afraid I'm going to do something drastic, which I never would, I don't want to put my family through any more pain than I already have.

"Ok, don't feel the need to be in any rush." Another sly remark courtesy of Davis, one of the only people I know who can annoy you with his kindness alone.

I opened the door a crack, just to piss him off a little, we always mess with each other, even when things are as bad as they are now.

“You gonna let me in.” He said while cracking that same stupid half-smile he gives when he can’t decide whether to be serious or not, God, he looks more like Dad every day.

“Maybe, if you promise not to be an asshole.”

“Now when have I ever been that?” The half-sneer turning into his signature full, toothsome smile, man I really want to kill him some days.

“I don’t know, since the day you were born. Some people are just like that you know, an asshole from the moment they encounter the world.”

“I can never tell if you’re being serious or not, after 26 years, you’d think I’d have some idea.” His smile was getting wider and wider.

“And you may never know, I’d like to keep it that way.” We shared a mutual laugh after that one, something I don’t do much of nowadays.

“In all seriousness, how are you doing, I know it must be hard right now, the day after jackhole left.” That was his nickname for my ex, jackhole, rather fitting if I say so myself.

“I’m alright, it’s weird, not being scared and all, for once in my life I can breathe.” It’s true, “jackhole” wouldn’t let me do anything without his permission, everything I did had to have a sense of beware behind it, all to just go one night without another bruise.

“I know, but you’ll get used to it, what’s important right now is that you stay sane, have you kept up with your therapy?”

“Yes, Davis.”

“And you’re staying off the dope, right?”

“Yes, Davis.” It’s the only thing I can say to him anymore. His naivete can be infuriating but I try to be understanding, he doesn’t know what it’s like to be a heroin addict. But it really gets to me sometimes. The fact that he thinks it’s so easy to say away from the thing has you wrapped around its chemical-dependent finger. He doesn’t know the cravings I have to fight off every day, the random bouts of sickness that take over my entire being, the pounding headaches that make me want to rip my head from

my shoulders. He doesn’t know. And I can’t blame him because I really don’t want him to know.

“I know I sound like a narc, but you really have to be careful right now, you’re like a baby, anything can break you.”

That was the last straw. “I’m like a baby” what does that even mean? Does he think I can’t handle myself; I’ve been through so much shit that he would never be able to believe. I’m not a little kid who has to be kept away from everything because she’s too stupid to know any better. He acts like taking a stroll around the corner will trigger another episode.

“Yes, Davis, I know, believe me, I know.”

“Okay, I’m sorry, I just want to make sure that you’re doing good. Listen, I’m at your beck and call, anytime you need me, I’ll be there. I swear.”

“I know, but you don’t have to drop everything for me, I’ll be ok, trust me”

“Alright, just don’t shut me out, I care about you, and I don’t want to lose you again”

“You won’t, I promise.” And with that, he left, just like that. I wish I could have said more to him, explained to him that I’m not as fragile as he thinks I am, but I didn’t, I just kept my mouth shut, per usual.

I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to talk to him like normal again. When were kids it was easier, there were no drugs, no relationships, no deep scars left from a life of tyrannical hell. We just existed, we were free to be and do anything that we desired. Our imaginations could run wild with the expansive opportunities that waited for us in adulthood.

But now, that has been tainted.

The infantile dreaming of children has now become a harsh reality for both of us. Whatever “fun” we had has now been washed away by endless waves of suffering. My brother was my best friend, but the divide I created has left us with a bitter taste in our mouths, and a gaping hole in our past.

I hope I can fix it, but the years of not speaking to my family, the constant benders me and “jackhole” would endure, the fortified feeling of fear being forever molded into my persona. No, nothing can save me from that damage.

I’m lucky that Davis even cares enough to try and keep in touch with me, my parents have definitely kept their distance and the sad part is I can’t even really blame them.

If my child disappointed me as much as I have with my parents, would I make the same choices?

If I were in their position, would I really be any different? If my child disappointed me as much as I have with my parents, would I make the same choices? Can I really sit here and act like I would be any better?

These thoughts terrify me to the bone, and I don’t want to know what is at the end of the twisted path they lead me on.

The only thing that I can do is move forward and try to keep the swirling labyrinth of my life from closing in on me again, though I’m not really sure how to do this. I’ve never stayed clean this long. My brain is usually racked with a cluster of thoughts but now, I have this weird sense of clarity, something I never thought possible for me.

For once in my life, I feel my emotions and boy do they hurt. Usually, when the overwhelming reality began to creep its way into my mind, I would just shoot up, nothing took the pain away quicker than that. A person could get swept up in that feeling for months, which is exactly what I did, but things are different now. I’m trying to get as far away from my past as I can, but I would be lying if I said I never thought of going back. In fact, that is the only thing that crosses my mind whenever I have a free moment to think which fills me with so much fear.

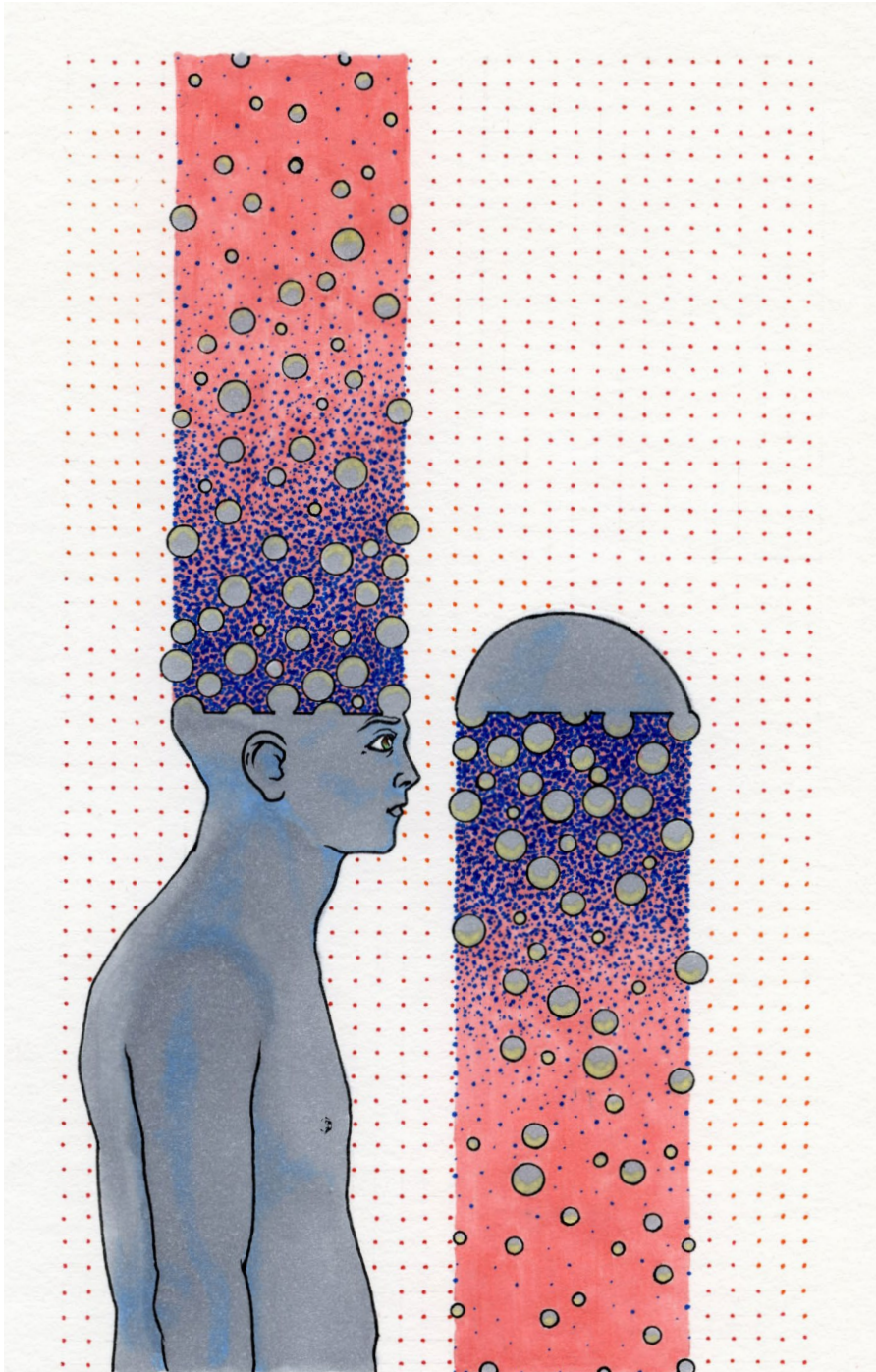
I don’t know if I can do this, to become the innocent little girl my family so desperately wants me to be again, I don’t think I could ever get close to that, but to be honest: I don’t really want to be.

This is my chance to shape myself into the person I want to be, not what my brother wants me to be, not what my parents want, and especially

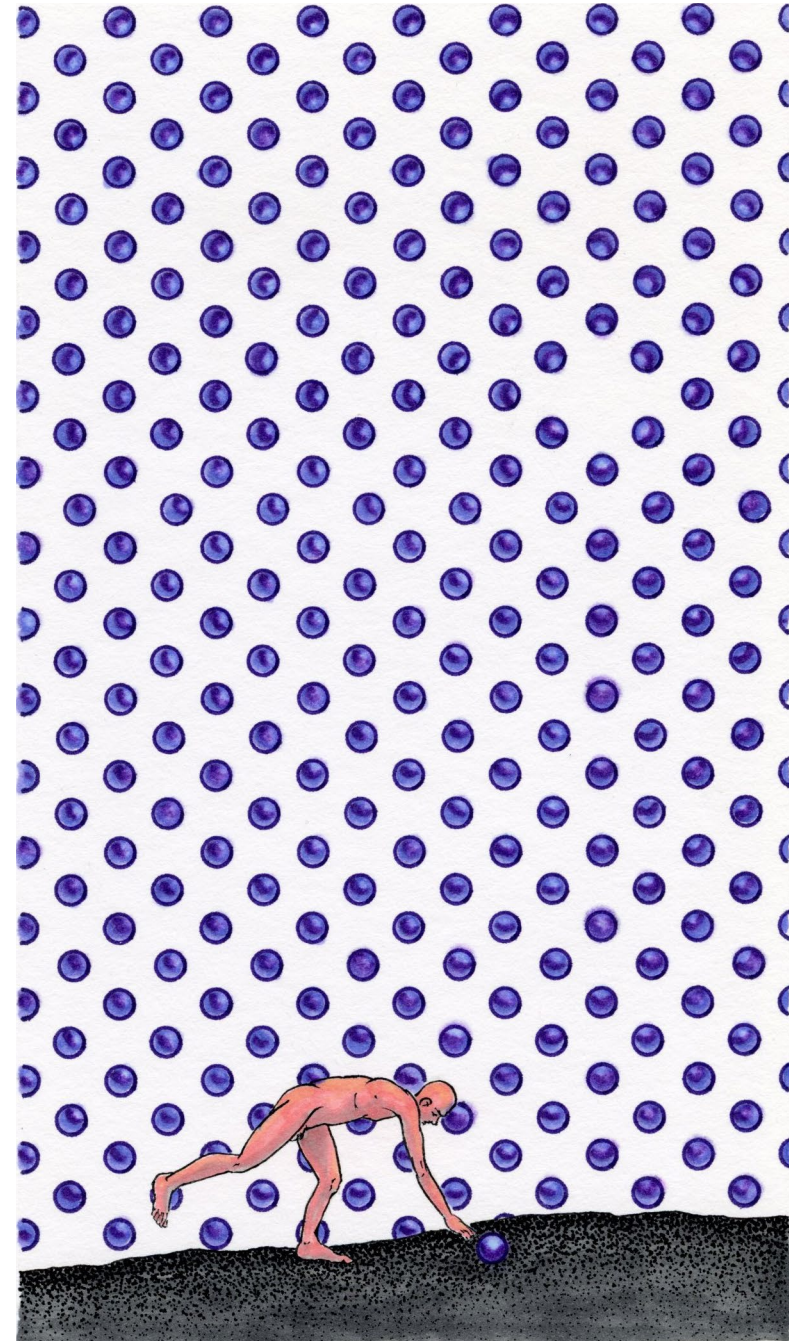
not what jackhole wants. I finally have the ability to become what I want, because at the end of the day that is what we all need as human beings. To be in control of our fate and the changes we endure, but one of the greatest things I learned in therapy (which isn’t much if I’m being honest) is to accept that I can’t steer my direction in life all the time. Sometimes, you just have to accept whatever falls into your lap, no matter how terrifying it is. It may not be the best philosophy to live by, but it’s all I’ve got to go on.



Winter Woods by Pat Gressler



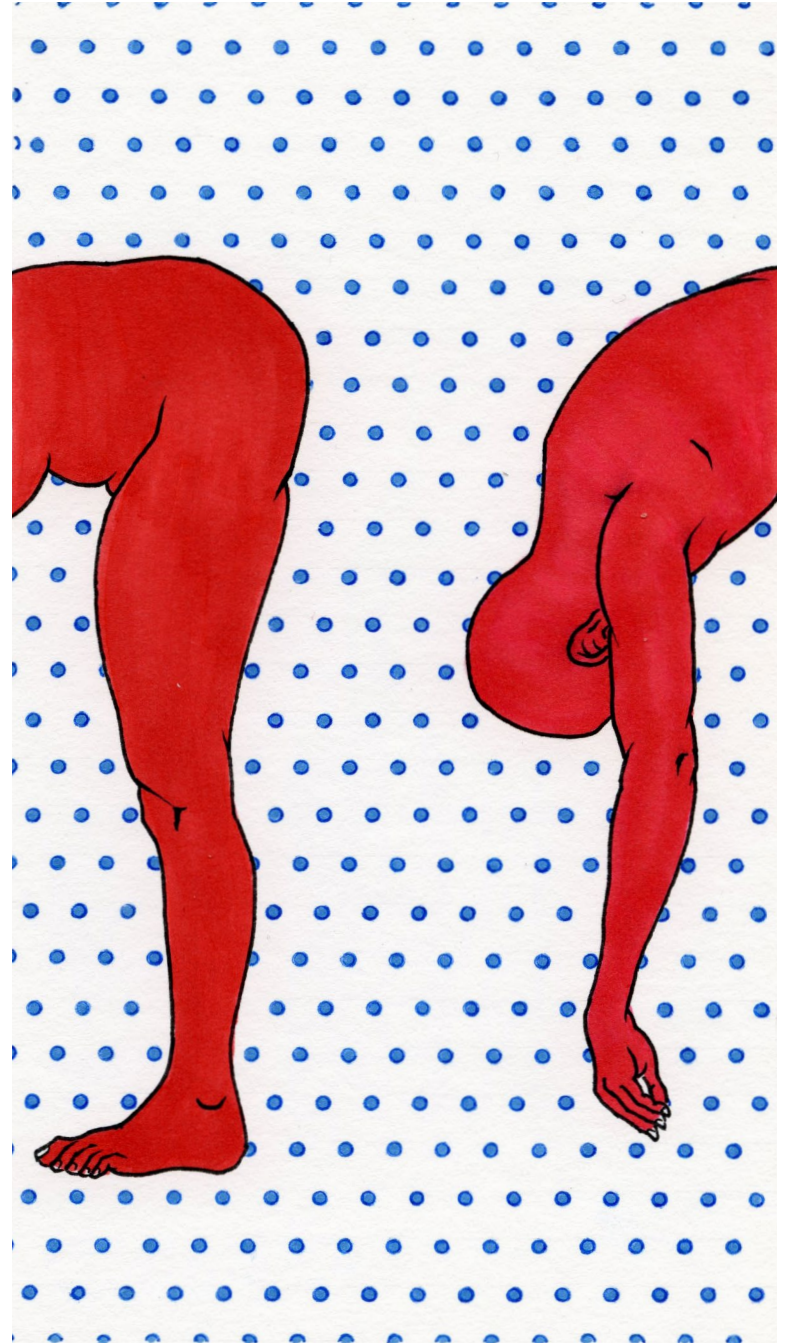
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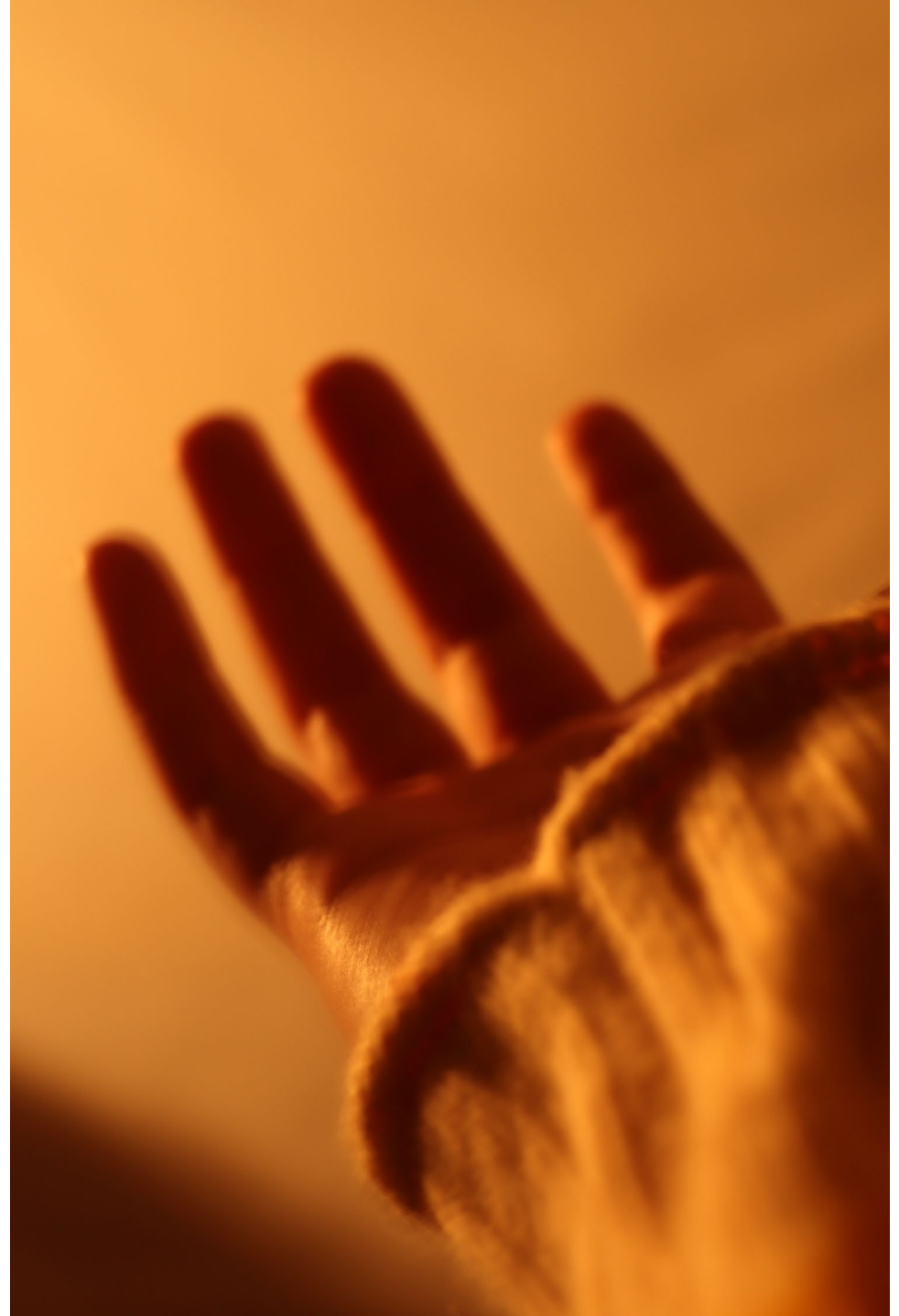
photography

spring 2021 + fall 2022





All photos this spread by Leeanna Bala







All photos this spread by Logan Kaufman





Leeanna Bala



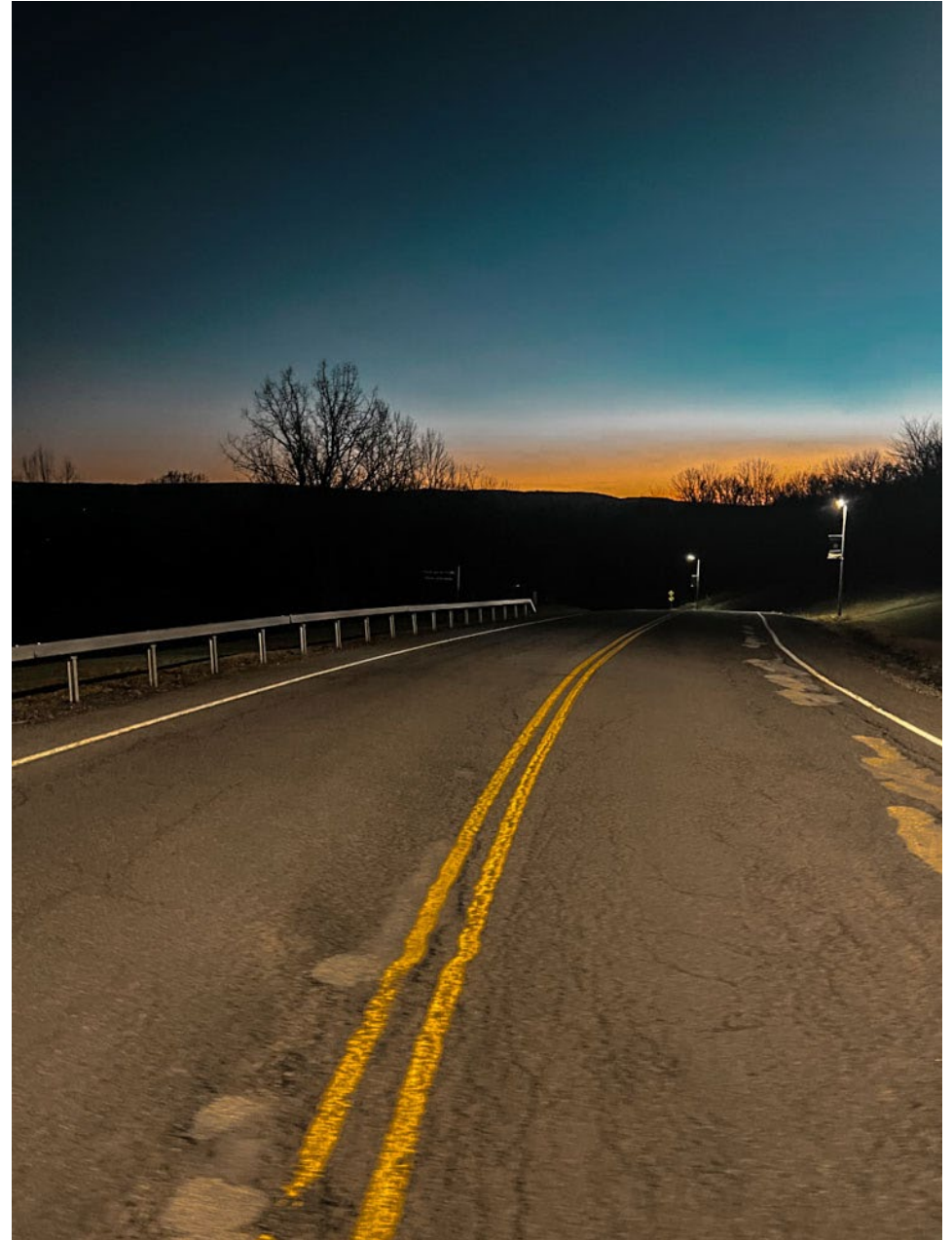
Jayden Norris



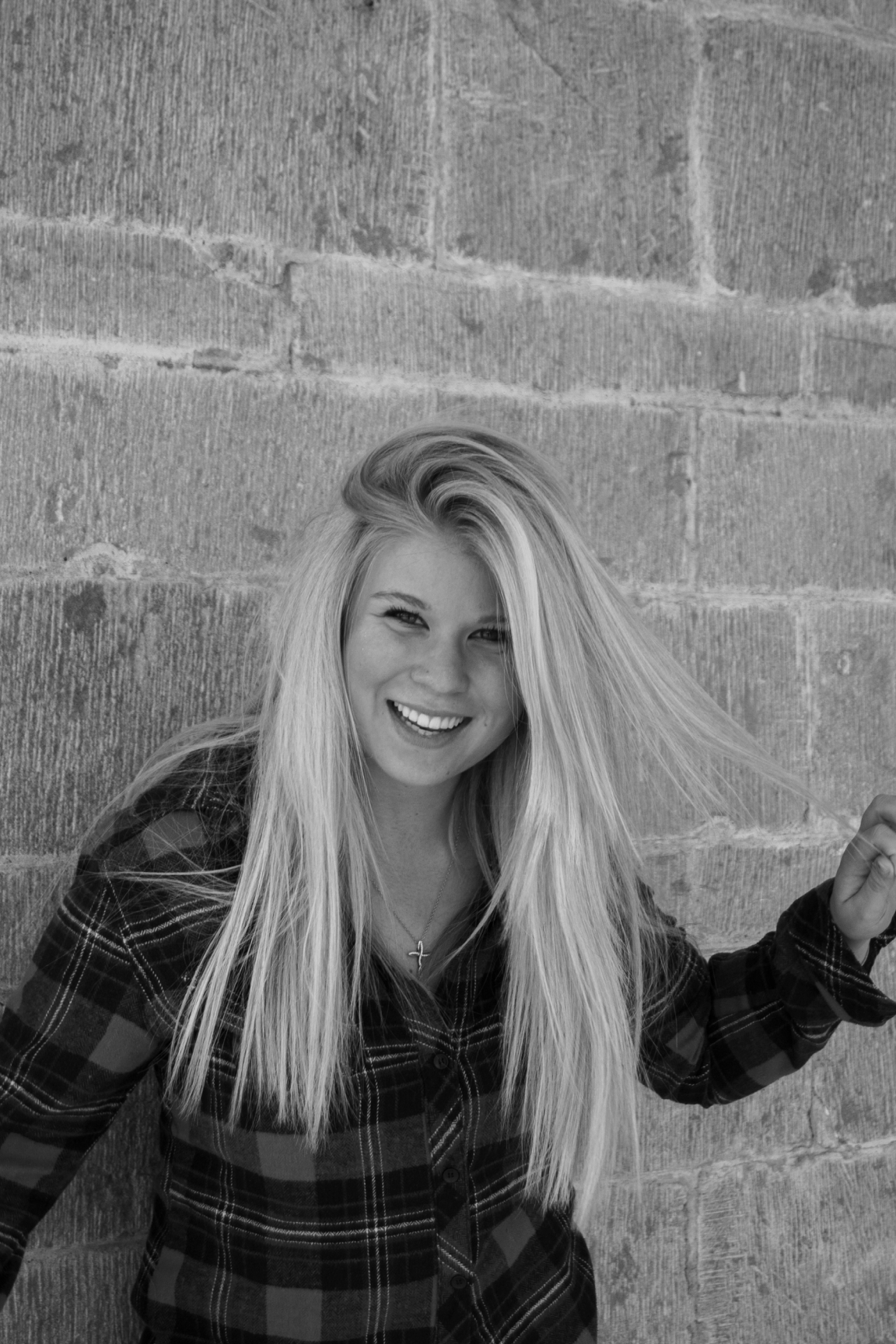
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Isaiah Ramsay



Blue Skies by Jayden Norris



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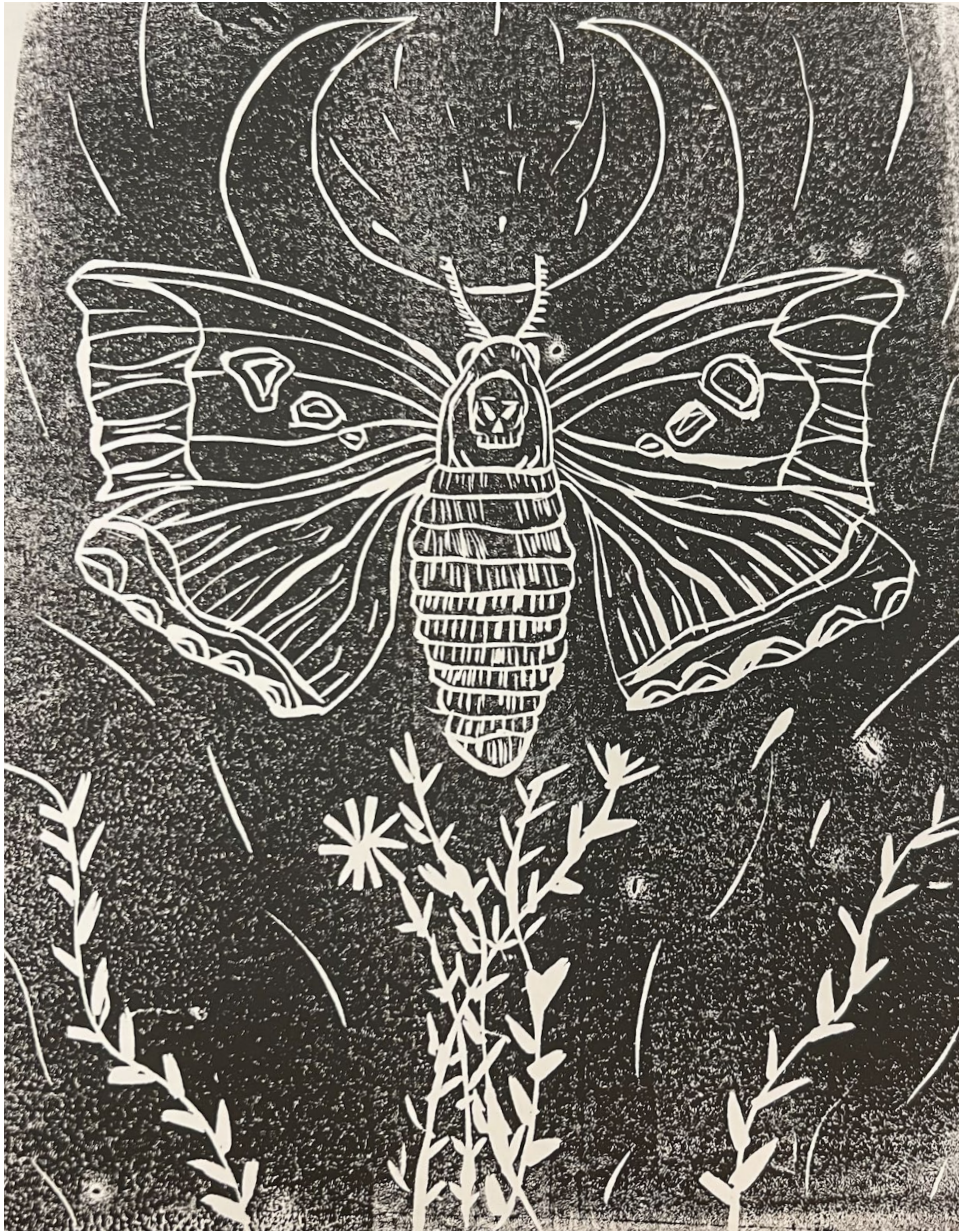


Leeanna Bala



Offer Creek by Jack Seaman





Nora Molina

Freedom to a Lonely Soul

Aaliyah Williams

Disappearing of oneself
 And fighting the temptation of isolation,
 Romance is only as dead as your patience.
 With time alone, loneliness invites you to remembrance
 And, with remembrance, you dwell on the comfort of solitude.
 It's your thoughts that tempt you into indefinite entrapment,
 But it's a battle you choose whether or not to surrender.
 With each surrender, you feel increasingly more empty.
 Emptiness engulfs your impenetrable soul and crowds your mind.
 Somehow, even with complete darkness, there is light.
 And over time there is a realization of value.
 This measly value tends to grow with patience.
 Patience which is fueled by an unexpected romance
 It allows even the most hopeless of hearts to live in hope
 And the most isolated of souls to feel free.
 Knowing only surrender, fear wanders in the minds of the victims of romance.
 Thinking there would never be a utopia for their kind.
 A bright white falls past their face as they drop their flag
 And, with fascination and skepticism, they break the bonds of their comfort.
 It's a dangerous place to find yourself when you're lonely.
 Not knowing how to live on the other side of emptiness.
 Not knowing what it takes to heal a dysfunctional mind.
 All your questions are left without an answer,
 But are all simultaneously answered without time's prevention.
 Quickly you realize that time becomes nonexistent
 Because you found the one thing in this world that answers questions without a warning
 And gives freedom to a lonely soul.
 Love.

Small Town Secrets

Josh Palmeter

The town of Ravens Hallow seems like any other normal small town in America. Friday night football games, parade every Memorial Day, main street booming with little mom and pop shops, and you would be hard-pressed to run into someone who didn't go to school with at least one of your parents. On the surface, our small little east coast town looks like a fever dream from Norman Rockwell. However, it's all a big lie. The truth is this town sold its soul a long time ago. There is evil here, and I intend to get to the bottom of what is really going on here.

"Okay, that's good. Stop recording." Mandy said while turning off the podcast equipment.

"So, what do you think?"

"I think you might want to take it easy on the energy drinks," Cliff said. "They are messing with your brain."

The sun was starting to set on yet another quiet and peaceful summer Saturday. Mandy was looking out the window at a kid riding his bike up and down the road not really paying attention to what Cliff had said. "That kid does the same thing all day every day you know, up and down all day long. Swear I've never seen him not on that bike."

"Are you even listening to me?" Cliff asked, still packing up his equipment. By himself, without any help as per usual.

"No, not really." Mandy looks back and smiled. The kind of smile that you know could turn into something one day if the pieces fall into place just perfectly.

"I'm just saying, nobody listens to these podcasts about little-nothing towns. People like Charlie Manson or the Nightstalker, Son of Sam. Nothing happens here Mandy."

"Exactly!" Mandy said finally giving Cliff her undivided attention.

"Don't you think it is a little strange, our town has been thriving for decades without any problems?"

"Nothing has closed down no matter the economy, we have a crime rate of like zero, I mean the weather doesn't even affect us here."

“Remember two years ago the blizzard that buried every county around us?”

“Yeah, what about it?” Cliff asked mildly interested. His mind was more on the carnival they were for sure going to be late to and the line for pizza fries that now will be twenty people deep.

“We got a dusting Cliff. Less than two inches where everyone else had feet. Don’t you think that’s a little strange?”

“Do I look like a meteorologist?” Cliff said interrupting. “We got lucky geographically I guess, the crime rate is low because everyone knows everybody around here, and I don’t know, we just got lucky during the recession Mandy. You act like it’s a bad thing. Take off the tin foil hat and let’s go enjoy the carnival.”

“Fine, but only because I want deep-fried Oreos. I’m not dropping this, and I will have you know I’ve got like 30 listeners to my small-town podcast thank you very much.” Mandy replied grabbing her backpack tirelessly trying to get one up on Cliff and win the friendly argument.

“How nice for you.” Was all Cliff had to say desperately trying to end the conversation. He knew the town was strange, Mandy often brings up good points, but he could never let her know that. Frankly, the topic of Ravens Hallow gives him a headache and a little tingle in the pit of his stomach. A tingle that can only be subdued now by pizza fries with extra cheese.

Mandy’s dad sat at the dinner table in the dining room working on his laptop when the two teenagers came barreling down the stairs. “Bye dad going to the fair, be back later love you,” Mandy yelled halfway out the door already.

“I’ll see you there probably.” Was all he could get out before the door slammed shut. He watched the kids leave the front yard through the window of the dining room and thought to himself maybe he should grab something to eat before picking up the wife and heading to the fair too. After all the prices at those food trucks get higher and higher every year, so why waste good money when there is food at home? He closed the laptop and took one last look out the window to make sure the kids

weren’t coming back. He locked the front door and went out the back to the little wooden shed in the backyard. Under the dirty old faded green rug in the center of the shed lay a trap door. The man unlocked it and went down the cement steps into a dark room only lit with a candle. In the corner of the room was a young woman in her early twenties in a cage. Her tired and frightened eyes met the mans, now red, glassed over, and snake-like. He grinned a smile revealing layers of razor-sharp teeth.

“So, what do you want to go on first?” Cliff asked. “I was thinking the swings or maybe the gravotron.”

“If you eat pizza fries first it will be a pukeatron” Mandy replied. They were almost to the end of the street when the kid on his bike rode by them again. It was the fourth time since they left the house that he had gone up the street just to go down it again. He looked about twelve, kind of dirty, probably wearing clothes from the Goodwill. Before turning off the street and onto Pine where at the end of that street the carnival would be waiting Mandy asked, “Think we should ask the bike kid to join us? He’s younger but he’s got to be lonely just doing that all day”.

Cliff looked at Mandy. “What kid?”

“The one on the bike that keeps riding around us. I think he’s new in town, he’s literally here all the time. I swear Cliff, you live in your own little world.”

“Sorry,” Cliff said. “Can’t stop thinking about the gravotron now.” As the two turned off onto Pine the boy on the bike road down the street again, stopping at the corner of Hayes and Pine watching them for only a minute before disappearing into a smoky mist, vanishing into the summer breeze.

The carnival was busy as always. When you live in a town where not much goes on you take any excitement you can get. Everyone was there, from the mayor getting ready to judge the beauty pageant to the goth kids that Mandy had often considered inviting to be guests on the podcast. It was loud but generally a good time overall. Pretty good size too, the woods beyond gave a cool backdrop when the sun went down, and the sky got dark. The only lights now were that of the fair.

Cliff got his pizza fries and Mandy her Oreos, her mom and dad had met up with them, mom stealing an Oreo from time to time. "You know those are like two bucks an Oreo." Her dad said. "Should do what I do and eat before coming here.

"But fair food is the best dad." Mandy said, "you only get this stuff once a year, it's special."

Her dad smiled at her "Yeah, I suppose you might be right, carnival night is a special night. Maybe I'll get some fried twinkies."

"Okay we're going on the tilt-a-whirl." Mandy said, grabbing Cliff's hand and running away from the eating area. Cliff certainly didn't mind. On the way, they ran into their favorite teacher, Miss. Whittle. She was eating cotton candy with a date, some dark haired handsome guy from out of town, clearly not a local but they appeared to be about the same age, early thirties. Cute couple.

"Hi, Miss Whittle," Mandy said while Cliff half-heartedly smiled and waved.

"Hey kids", she replied. "Having a good summer?"

"Who's your friend?" Mandy asked ignoring the summer question.

"Miss Whittle blushed a little, this is George." George also halfheartedly smiled and waved. "These two were some of my favorite students last semester." She said smiling.

"Oh, very nice" George replied not really caring about the situation.

"Well, you kids go have fun." Whittle said. "We're going to go take a stroll and enjoy the night." Both parties exchanged goodbyes and off they went in their respective directions. The teens off to the Tilt-A-Whirl, the adults to the trail in the woods back behind the fair.

It was dark and quiet back deep into the trail when Miss Whittle chloroformed George. She dragged him deeper and deeper into the woods until she got to the tree. Bent, old, and crooked, dead but still more alive than most would ever know. She lay George in front of it and watched as the roots came from under the ground and coiled around him like serpents.

In less than a minute he was gone. Miss Whittle stood there watching, finishing her overpriced cotton candy.

The night was starting to wind down when Cliff and Mandy decided they did all they wanted to do. They'd been there a good four hours having fun and chatting with some other locals. Cliff offered to walk her home but Mandy, defensive and emotionally confused perhaps on some level she didn't quite understand nicely declined. Cliff understood, plus he didn't want to walk all the way in one direction only to turn around and walk home in the other direction anyway.

"So," Cliff said. "Are we setting up the podcast tomorrow? Give those thirty listeners something to do?"

Mandy smiled. "Nah, I've been thinking." She started. "I still think Ravens Hallow is strange but maybe you might have a point. There are a lot of cool and nice people around here. You might have a small point about the whole tin foil hat thing too."

Cliff became intrigued. "Does that mean we can do something else tomorrow then?"

"Yeah, I guess for now." Mandy replied, "They are playing Creature from the Black Lagoon tomorrow at the movie theatre if you want to meet me there at like one thirty?"

"Sounds good to me," Cliff said, just relieved they didn't have to run around town tomorrow looking for hidden secrets and imaginary bogeymen like Mandy normally wants to do. "Alright, well if you are sure, you don't want me to walk you back home, I guess this is where we part, friend." Cliff said. Mandy just looks happily at him and nervously gives him a quick hug before walking away.

"The air is starting to get colder now." Mandy was thinking as she walked home. Summer is slowing on its way out and school will be starting soon. It was quiet, but not creepy quiet just peaceful quiet. Bats were in the night sky and leaves were rustling in the breeze. The lined streetlights kept turning off as Mandy walked past them as they did time and time again on her little night walks. "They are just lights." She thought to herself, nothing strange, no big deal.

INTRO TO
CERAMICS



Jenna Faulkner



Charlotte Boncella



Hannah Hoke



Caitlynn LaBreche



Nichlas Kamfjord



Caitlynn LaBreche



Kendra Walker



Bailey Harrer



Kendra Walker

Beautifully Tragic

Melissa Fitzgerald

My name is Samantha, but you can call me Sam. Yesterday, I was just your typical 16-year-old high school girl, with tons of friends, a school I loved, and parents I adored. How could this happen? Why would he want to hurt mom and dad? They loved everyone and helped anyone. In the blink of an eye, they are gone, and my life has forever changed. My little brother Ben and I are alone, homeless, and fighting for our lives.

“Sam, Sam, Samantha,” Jessie yelled, “Where do you go when you zone out like that? I have Been screaming your name for five minutes, Sam!” Little does he know, I go to a place I would rather not go, memories I would love to forget. It has been 15 years since that night, the night my life was destroyed, the night my brother Ben and I ran for our lives. I cannot tell Jessie this, I cannot tell anyone. I feel my life will always be in danger, and Ben, poor sweet Ben, he was only 4 when it happened, when he lost the only sense of normalcy he had ever Known. Until I find the monster responsible, I must stay silent, hidden, for I see him Everywhere.

“Jessie, I am just tired, I pulled a double, I am exhausted, I just need to sleep, the holidays are coming, and I need to make some cash, Ben will be coming home in a couple of weeks, and I just want to give him a great Christmas.” My little brother Ben is not so little anymore, he is 19 now and he has been gigging all over the state with his band Scarlett Fever. They are amazing and Ben is super talented. After we left our home in Lancaster, I was determined to fill his life with everything and anything to keep his mind off what happened that dreadful night. Ben picked up the guitar quickly, I found an old Fender at a thrift shop and was amazed at how quickly he took to it.

“You mentioned Ben coming home, what about your family, you never talk about your life, parents, grandparents, aunts’ uncles, Sam, I just want to know you.” Jessie pleaded.

“Stop pushing Jessie, we have talked about this countless times, my past is my past leave it there!” I screamed back at him. I know he means well, but his nonstop pushing is driving me crazy! Jessie is the first person I met when I made Springfield my new home. Springfield is so different from where I spent 16 years of my life, In Lancaster, Minnesota. It was becoming more commercialized and new high rises were being built

every day. Springfield is so small compared to my old home, with one stop light and a population of 5,000, I thought it was a good fit. I liked the idea of a small, quaint community, where everyone looked out for each other. I don't know... It just made me feel safe, and safety is what Ben and I needed.

Jessie has asked me repeatedly about my family, it's just a part of my life I cannot confide in him. He has been so good to me over the years, putting up with all my crap, he is a dear friend, my only friend and I would hate to lose him. It has been getting increasingly harder to keep my past in the past. I feel I may have to tell Jessie everything soon, partly because I feel I may lose him if I continue this path of mystery, and it may be the lack of sleep I have been getting lately, but I see him everywhere, I can feel him, the person responsible for the bloodshed that night.

Little things have been happening to me, items in my little one-bedroom studio have been messed with, towels from my bathroom floor were picked up and hung on the bar above the vanity, and my coffee cup the other morning was scrubbed clean and put away in the cupboard. I feel like I am going crazy! When I asked Jessie if he might have done it, he looked at me like I had two heads, and reminded me that he does not have a key. Last night, I knew I was being followed. How could He have found us? I was so careful, and it has been quiet for 15 years, why now? Just When I started feeling like I had a place to call home, a new life, both Ben and I are happy, cautious, but genuinely happy. I have decided I am telling Jessie everything. If he is back, I need help, I cannot do this alone anymore, and I do not want to. It is starting to get cold out, freezing for November. It does not usually get this cold until Mid-January in Springfield. As I walk home from the diner, I think about how I even began telling Jessie about my life before. How do you start that conversation? Will I knowingly be putting him in danger if he knows? Will he look at me differently? It is a risk I must take. I stuff my hands in my pockets and pull my hood up to shield me from the relentless wind, Boy it's cold! I have been working at the diner since I was 16, It was the only place that would hire me, no questions asked, they were desperate for help, and they even allowed me to bring Ben. But tonight, the hike seems especially long, I am fighting against the wind, and it is so dark. I stop at the corner to cross the street and notice a dark figure, there by the

light post.

"Relax Sam, you are just tired, and your mind is playing not-so-funny tricks on you," I say allowed to myself. I cross the street and the dark figure follows; my steps quicken as does his. My heart is racing, the frigid air is burning my lungs as my fast walk has now turned into a run, I slip and fall on the ice, my knees stinging from the assault, I steady myself and resume running. There, in front of me is my apartment, I fumbled for my keys and quickly let myself in, shaking. I locked the door and cower in the corner for what seemed like an eternity. I fumble for my phone, my hands shaking, it is time to break the silence, I call Jessie.

I hear Jessie's voice coming from the phone, I am trying to talk, but I feel as if I'm paralyzed with fear.

"Sam, Sam, answer me! Are you Ok?" I hear Jessie's voice coming from the phone, I am trying to talk, but I feel as if I am paralyzed with fear.

"Jessie, please come over, I need you, I need your help, it is time I tell you everything." There is no going back now Sam, I hope you are not making a mistake, I think to myself.

I hear a knock on the door, "Sam It's me, it's ok, let me in," I hear a familiar voice say. I want to open the door, but I cannot. Why can't I just answer the dam door? The doorknob turns, I thought I locked the door, I did lock the door, didn't I? I am shaking uncontrollably now, I cannot let him in, but I cannot move, my fear has me glued to the floor. The door opens slowly, and a man enters, a tall man with sandy color hair and a white coat. I feel like I know this man, do I know this man? I am so confused. Was I taken? Did that dark figure on the street take me somewhere? Have I been drugged? I am so confused; I am not thinking clearly. That's it, I must have been drugged. Stay calm Sam, think. How do I get out of this?

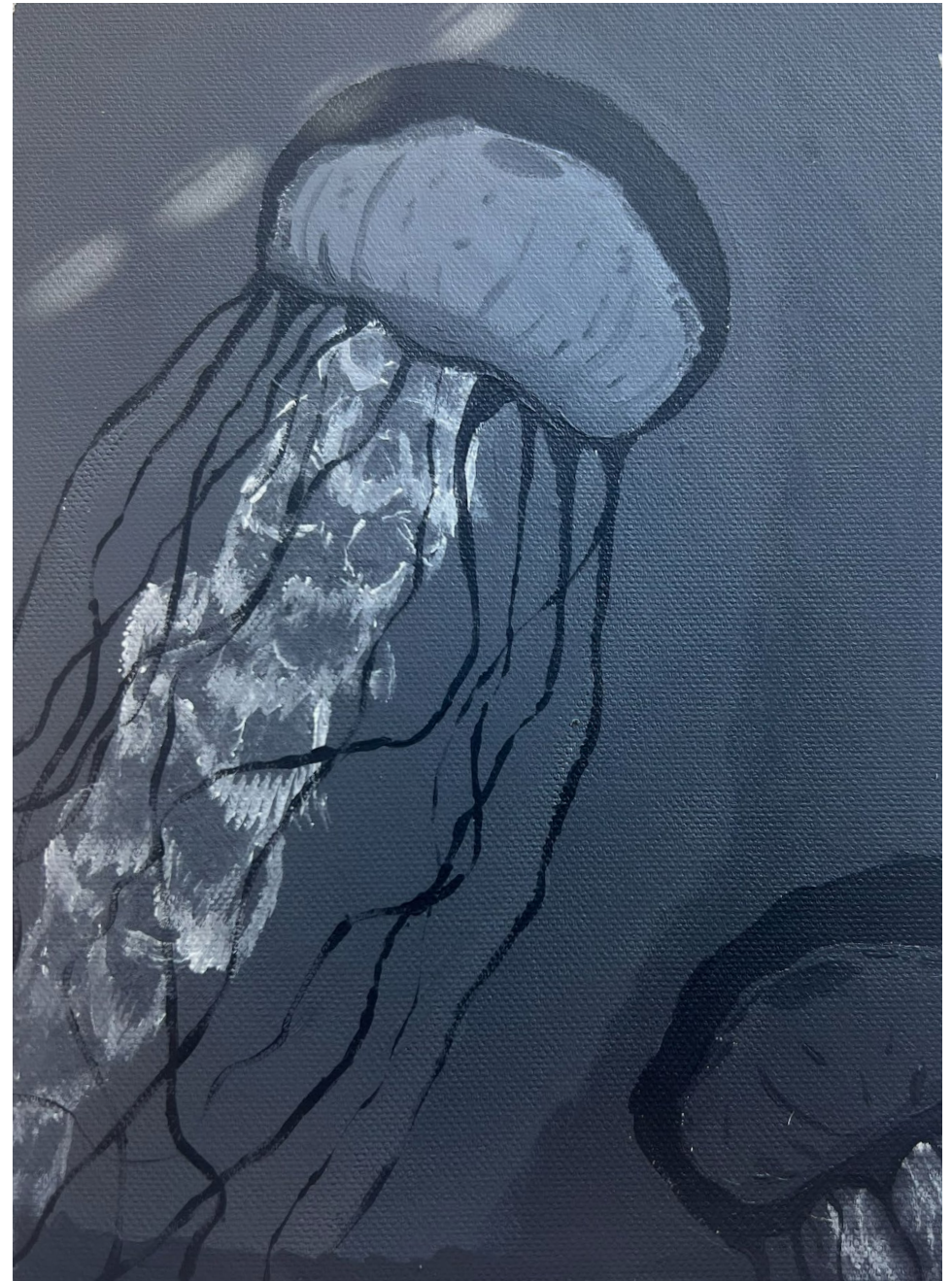
"Hi Ben, how are you feeling today, do you who I am? That is ok if you do not. I am Dr. Springfield, you are at Lancaster Sanitarium. You have been here about a week; do you know why you are here? Ben, you have a mental illness called multiple personality Disorder or dissociative identity disorder. It is a mental illness that causes you to have two or

more separate personalities, in your case Ben, I have only met Sam and Jessie and a dark figure that does not seem to have a name. Have you been experiencing gaps in your memory, your past, or perhaps everyday events? I know you are confused and probably scared, but know this, I am here to help you.”

My name is Benjamin, but you can call me Ben. I am a survivor of one of the worst cases of child abuse recorded. I was beaten, starved, and neglected as a child. I was taken away from my mom and dad when I was 4 years old, but the violent trauma caused my mind to split and make others, others that helped me, who protected me, who guided me when my parents would not. The others are everything to me. I will not lose them. Dr.Springfield says he wants to help me but helping me is to erase the others. I cannot let that happen, I will not. Good Luck Dr. Springfield, Good Luck.



Nora Molina



Nora Molina



Sunsets by Avion Harris

There is no growth
without discomfort.
Live every day
to the fullest.

~Avion Harris

What Heather Saw

Melissa Fitzgerald

Dispatcher: 911, what is the address of your Emergency?

"It's 42nd and 3rd street, please come now, my daughter is unconscious!"

Dispatcher: How old is she?

"She is 37. Heather! Heather! She is on her back, please hurry!"

Dispatcher: They are on their way.

"I am pushing on her chest, and she is making some noise, but she is Unconscious!"

Dispatcher: Okay, is she lying flat on her back?

"She is on her back, on her bed."

Dispatcher: Listen carefully and I am going to tell you how to do chest compressions. I am going to count with you. Okay? Try and go with the pace I am counting, keep up with that pace if you can, okay?

"Come on Heather, stay with me! Hold on, I think they are here.... hold on Heather, hold on they are coming.... up here!! Up here!"

The feeling of euphoria! The word euphoria, the only word I can explain how I am feeling right now. I feel amazing, pain free, weightless, why do I feel weightless? I am floating looking down at me, is that me? I look so frail and small, I see my dad, crying, I have never seen him cry before, maybe just once, when brother passed away two years ago, from drugs, heroin to be exact, his drug of choice and mine as well.

I can see the paramedics feverously working on me, pushing on my chest, each of them taking turns trying to bring me back, back to place I do not want to return. A place where I have known nothing but pain and sorrow, a place that has brought me nothing but fear and devastation. The light started to appear, the beautiful, glorious light!

A light so bright, so warm, so inviting and in that moment, I knew this was my death. I was not afraid, I was curious. Is this what it is like to fall asleep and never wake up? To dream endlessly?

I was traveling at such a rapid pace and before I could blink, I was in a

beautiful realm, a place of the purest beauty, vibrant colors, birds, and butterflies, and music! The most amazing music, purely angelic! I felt as if I was absolutely loved for the first time, unconditionally loved. I felt free.

What was this mystical unearthly light? Is this heaven? Before I could even finish my last thought in the distance between the mountains and the waterfalls, just beyond that enchanting light, was my brother. My brother was there to guide me to my new home.

“Heather, it is your choice whether you stay here or go back, I am here to help you decide. Every choice you have made has always been your choice Heather, good or bad, you were always given the ability to choose.”

That is when I saw my entire life, my life review. I clearly saw the impact my choices made in the world, how the path I chose to follow affected my daughters, my parents, my family. But this was different, I did not feel judged, I still felt I was in a place of total acceptance and unconditional love. I saw myself sitting on a urine-soaked couch in one of the many trap-houses I called home. The smells, oh, the smells of this place I called home, The smell of death, broken dreams, and shattered hope. A place people go that have already stopped living.

I saw myself slumped over on this abominable couch with a needle full of heroin in my arm. The only thing that made me not feel. I have had a problem my whole life dealing with my emotions and feelings, drugs and alcohol numbed me, numbed my pain. I saw myself being beaten, robbed, and raped in this place I called my home. It is what I thought I deserved, What I was worth. I saw myself calling my dealer the minute I was released from an eight-week hospital stay, I almost died then.

My heroin addiction caused sepsis in my pancreas and an infection in my heart where I needed open heart surgery to replace a damaged valve. I saw myself getting into the car with my dealer where he eagerly injected me with a dirty needle full of heroin, waited for me to slump over, and brutally rape me. This is what I thought I was worth.

I was trapped in a vicious cycle, a cycle I could not find my way out of. My drug addiction became me, it became more important than eating

and breathing. It became normal. At the end of my life review, I was presented with a choice, to stay here in a place where I total acceptance, a place where I do not have to do anything to be loved, a place where I am pain free or go back. If I go back, how would I know I will make it? How would I know I will live a life without suffering? I just knew at that moment that if I did go back, I would live fearlessly, I knew what death was now and I was no longer afraid to die and most importantly, no longer afraid to live.

I awoke in the hospital with a newfound sense of clarity. A profound sense of serenity, and happiness. My senses were suddenly wide awake. I could feel and for the first time I was not afraid to feel. It was as if I was reborn. I knew my purpose; I knew my responsibility to myself and the people I loved. I had to live my life sober. My addiction spiraled out of control; it devoured me! It took everything away from me that mattered, it almost took my life.

I realized that in a split second everything can change, and was given the most precious gift of all, a glimpse of what lies ahead. I know it will not be easy, my sobriety is lifelong battle, but it is a battle I intend to win. I now know without a doubt that my body will heal as well as my mind. I am not sure what happened to me that day, was it heaven? All I know it was some form of divine intervention. Before that day, I had no self-worth, I was hardest on myself, and I hated everything about life. I blamed my hardships on everyone and everything and never once assumed responsibility for my choices, until that day. The day I was given the blessing to look at my life from a unique perspective. On all accounts I should not be here, but I am, because I made the right choice that day, I chose life!

**I was absolutely loved for the first
time, unconditionally loved.**

I felt free.



All photos this spread by Jeremy Senko



Personal Experience Essay

Luke Edick

Sitting in the front seat, next to my mom, I was completely silent. That wasn't entirely unusual, though. But this was a different kind of silence, it was awkward and tense. I think my mom was able to sense it, as after a while she asked me if I was okay. This was a difficult question to answer at the moment, since I wanted to say yes, so she wouldn't worry. But I couldn't bring myself to. It wasn't true. Something had been weighing on my shoulders for a long time. I had to tell her or else I would get nowhere with it. "No", I had to force myself to answer. Finally admitting, both to her and cementing to myself, that I would feel better as a boy.

Obviously, this was a big shock to her, not what she expected. I'm sure no parent expects it from their child. It took her a while to finally answer, asking if I really felt this way. It reflected my feelings when I first thought about it, if I felt this way or if I was just attention-seeking.

I had a habit of trying to devalue my feelings, making myself feel like I was just faking everything. But I later realized that this was real. I didn't like living as a girl, I couldn't handle it anymore, it had become too much for my mental health. I

I didn't care since I was doing this for myself and no one else.

said I did, that I had been thinking about it for a while. I didn't like my body, my appearance, my name, or anything that would make people see me as a girl. After finally revealing what had been on my mind for so long, my mom had accepted it but wanted to wait to make sure this was what I really wanted. Pain shot through my body, because while I understood why she wanted to do this, it still hurt to hear. That I would have to wait even longer to receive the treatment I desperately wanted.

While I had to wait a while to finally go to a specialist, my mom allowed me to get my hair cut short. This may have been one of the happiest days of my life. While it wasn't an official treatment, it was the first step to living my life the way I wanted. It had already raised my confidence in my appearance. A little while later, my mom finally realized that this wasn't some passing phase, and that I really felt this way. So, therapy was the next step toward treatment. My therapist affirmed my feelings and didn't doubt me for a second. She was who ultimately made my

mom decide to finally take me to a doctor.

I was finally talking about getting treatment with a professional. It was now six months after I first told my mom about wanting to transition, and I was finally here. They prescribed me hormone blockers, and I couldn't have been happier. I had a way to stop my body from continuing with puberty, which was what caused me the most distress. Taking that medication over the course of a year and a half made me feel better than ever; more masculine. By this time, I decided to change my name. This was by far the biggest change I had done yet, since people would have to entirely change how they referred to me. But I didn't care since I was doing this for myself and no one else. It took almost half a year, but I finally got the paperwork that my name had been changed. My paperwork, my birth certificate, and my ID all now reflected how I saw myself.

It was a long journey, but after multiple years of professional treatment, I could finally say I was comfortable with myself. I didn't hate what was looking back at me in the mirror. I wore the clothes I wanted in public without shame. People didn't have any doubts about whether or not I was male. I was finally happy looking at myself. While I knew my treatment wasn't over, I was happy for now.



Fresh Cut Lavender by Vicki L. Brown

MAN ON THE BENCH

Chase Kisker

Everything seems to be magnified at night. The slight glimmering of the city skylights, just shining bright enough to see the path in front of you. The savory smell of hundreds of vendors simultaneously cooking their tempting treats in the hopes of gaining a profit. The ambiance of late-night traffic as it hums through every part of your being. I love it. So much so that I will spend hours of my time wandering around, following whichever cue life brings my way. But on this particular night, something's different.

Under the dim lighting of the city streetlights, I can just make out a bench on the side of the road. A place for weary travelers to rest their tired feet, but also a place for common scum to migrate in a futile attempt to find a somewhat comfortable area to sleep. The latter of which is happening now. By now, you'd think I would be used to the pathetic sight, but it never fails to get under my skin when it comes my way.

It's simply indecent, a man should have more dignity than to let random strangers see him in such a state. I'd rather dig a hole for myself and sleep under the ground for months on end than face the potential risk of judgment.

As I pass him by, I can't help the look of ridicule and disgust I give. I expected little to nothing from my actions as most people of his status accept the sneering glares from other upstanding citizens. They know what they are.

"Excuse me, sir," the bum sat up as soon as I made eye contact, "can I ask you a question?"

"I don't think so." He wants to ask me a question...me? A man who prides himself on his success, a man who climbed every rung on the social ladder to place himself among the powerful. What could he possibly want to ask me?

"Did you want to sit here, you look like you've been walking all night?"

Suddenly, everything changed. The man's clothes turned from the decrepit, hole-ridden mess that they were to ones reflective of importance. His yellow-stained shirt turned to a dark blue blazer, the sheen being so bright that I almost had to look away. His shoes, or lack-there-of, became light brown loafers. The leather was so expensive I couldn't believe he was walking the streets in them.

"Sir, I mean it, if you need to sit here you can, it's no trouble, I promise."

"No no, you were there first, I have no issues walking, this is what I normally do at night, just to relax."

The man then continued to stare at me in the most peculiar way. It was almost as if he were pitying me, I have no idea why, he was the one who changed in an instant.

“Are you sure, not to be rude or anything but, you look like you’re about to pass out?”

.....

I awoke on the concrete, everything was so cold, it felt like I had been teleported into the icy depths of Antarctica. I couldn’t stop shaking.

“Sir, sir, can you hear me? Can you tell me your name?” A paramedic asked me as he shined a light brighter than hell itself in my eyes.

“Yes, yes, my name is...my name...is” I couldn’t remember! How could I forget something as simple as my name?

“You went unconscious sir, do you have any knowledge as to why this may have occurred, does this happen often?”

“No, I don’t think...”

“Do you think, or do you know? I need 100 percent certainty on this.”

“I know, this has never happened before.”

He stared at me for a moment, he didn’t even try to hide the doubt he was so obviously feeling towards my statement.

“If you don’t believe me, just tell me.”

“I believe you, besides, we won’t know exactly what’s going on until we get you into the emergency room.”

“Emergency room! Do you really think that’s necessary?” I don’t need the hospital. The last thing I need is another damn hospital.

“Sir, you can’t even tell me your own...”

“I know my name, for Christ’s sake, I know my own goddamn name, its...its...” Come on, I know it, it’s right on the tip of my tongue, I know it.

.....

The hospital was dark. Darker than anything I have ever seen in my life. What little essence of brightness that was emitted from the piss-poor ceiling lights was drowned out by everything around it.

Everywhere you turn, death is there to greet you. As he stares at you with his cold, empty eyes, one can’t help but be tempted by his wordless call. Everything can be over, all the pain, all the fading memories, they can all be wiped away,

never to be felt again.

“Dad. Dad can you hear me?”

“Yes, I can hear you, the whole fucking hospital can.”

“There he is, are you feeling any better?” As I look into her eyes, I realize something: I don’t know who this woman is. Why is she calling me dad, I’ve never seen her before, never in my life.

“You don’t know me, do you? You don’t have the faintest idea.”

I didn’t say anything back. I couldn’t. This person is saying this to me so confidently. Of course, everyone is to blame but herself, she obviously made a mistake. She must be in the wrong room, she just doesn’t know it yet.

“Listen, we all make mistakes, I believe you’re in the wrong room.” After I said this, she began to cry. Not just cry, sob, her emotions were so deep I couldn’t wrap my head around them.

“I know they said this was going to happen, but not this soon, this shouldn’t be happening right now. They said so, they promised.” She spoke between cries. I started to think this woman was delirious, she had convinced herself that I was her father. How strange, the reasoning behind this baffles me.

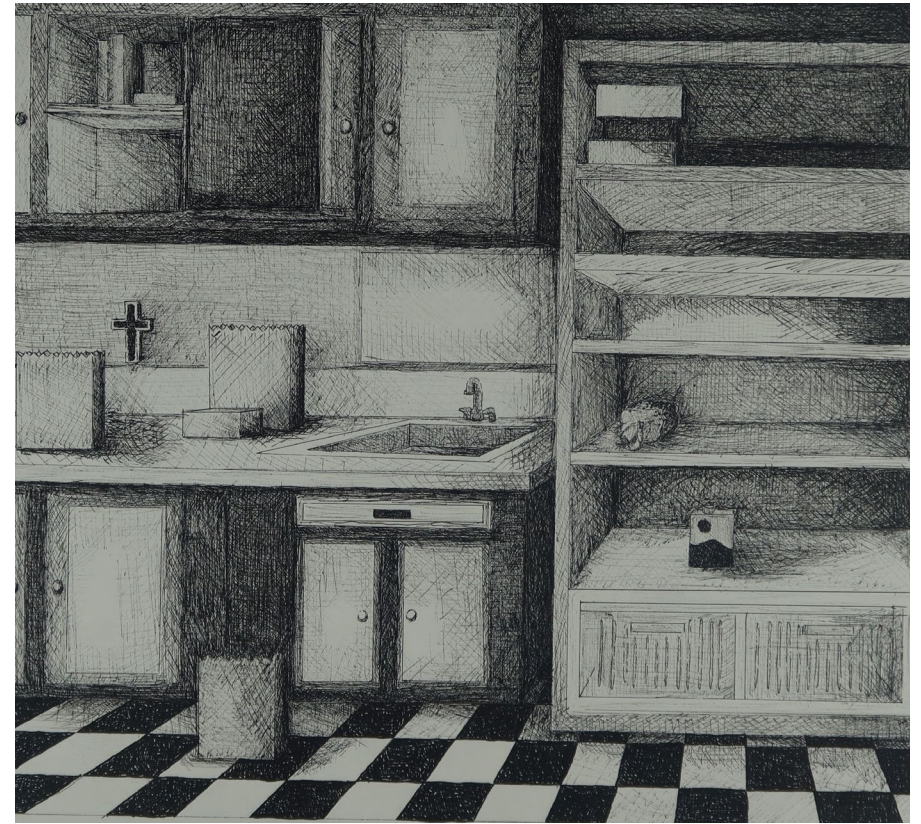
“Dad, I know that you probably think that I’m crazy. That I’m just some random woman crying by an old man's bedside, but you have to listen to me.”

Well, at least she’s more aware than I originally thought.

“Your name is Francis Barber, you live at 122 Newport Ave, Chicago, Illinois. For the past 50 years, you have devoted yourself to the law, becoming one of the city’s most infamous lawyers. My name is Loraine Doubois, you named me after your mother who you loved dearly, I married and had three children, your grandsons who you have spent numerous hours of your retirement with. Last year, you were diagnosed with a very aggressive case of Alzheimer's. You have fought hard against it but have had many instances like the one that has just happened. The doctors told me that you may lose a large portion of your memory, but they didn’t tell me it would be this soon.”

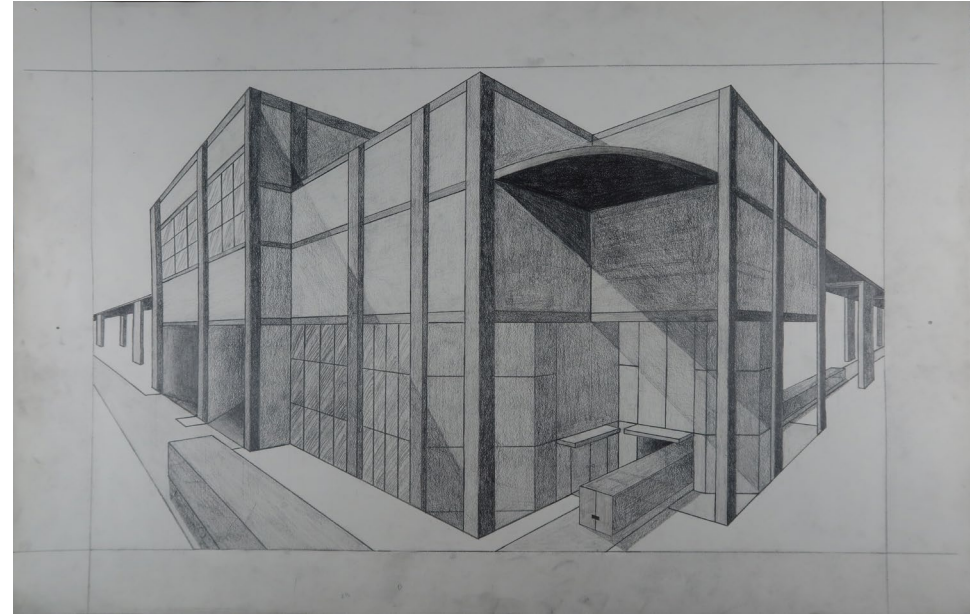
I sat there half listening to her, out of the window lying beside me, I could just see the crest of the sun as it began to rise from its gentle slumber, blessing this Earth with its light. A light that seemed to penetrate the hospital walls, washing the dark undertones with the warmth of a brand-new day. A brand-new opportunity.

Pen and Ink Drawing

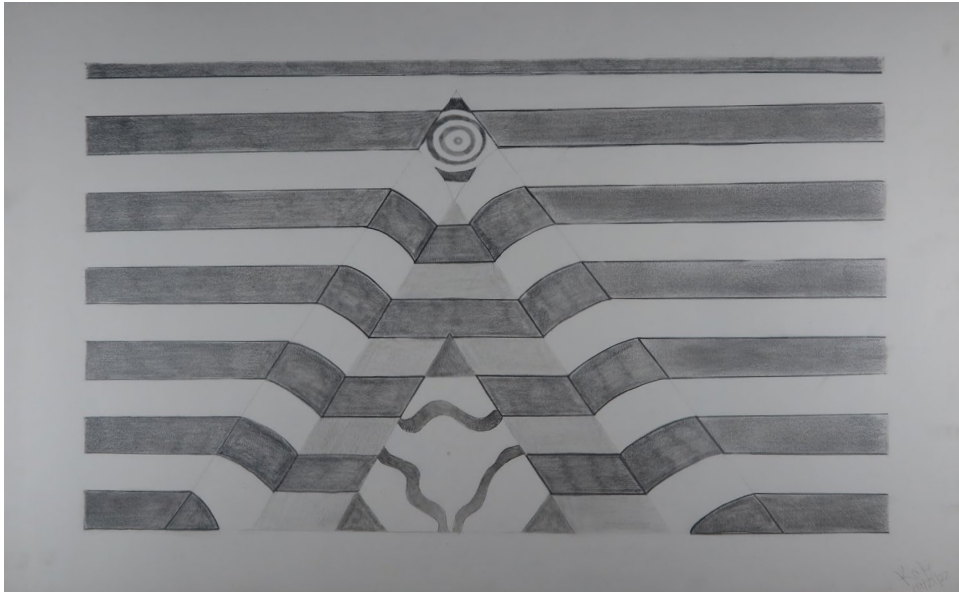


Kitchen by Charlotte Boncella

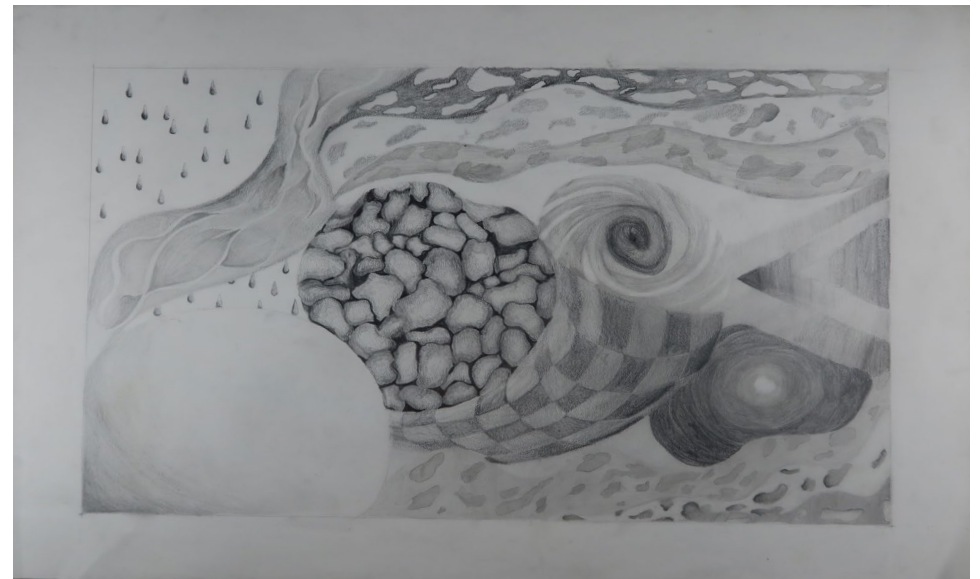
Graphite Drawings



Mansion by Tomotake Yoshimura



Triangle by Katherine Fogerty

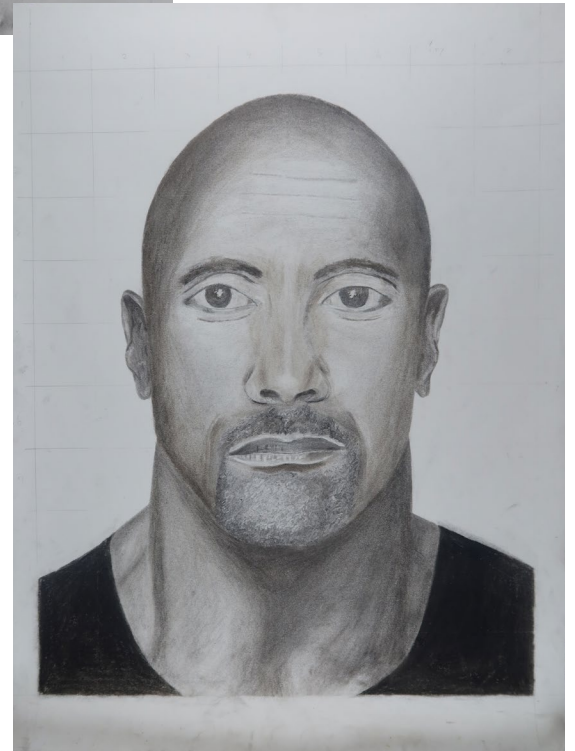


Lizard by Sarah Wood

Charcoal Drawings



Pennywise by Tyler Deluca



The Rock by Tomotake Yoshimura

PERSONAL ESSAY

Diana Ivanov

I'm an alien, I never quite fit in. A bright chaos spazzing in the sky. A ball of flaming blue fire closing in on earth. A meteor, crashing, a thunderous explosion catching the public eye. Silver liquid spills from this now dulled clump. Studying this charred mess of fire and stone it's soon discovered this was more than just a meteor. A capsule, the size of a human, crushed by the impact of pressure, was seized by scientists.

I'm foreign to society. A stranger. Curiosity spikes and cameras flash. I don't talk, and I can barely see anymore. Light's flash brighter and brighter until my mind fades away back into interstellar dimensions. I was different, weird. "A creature from out of this world." I'm scared and dying. People didn't see that though. They saw me but they didn't see me.

My vision's coming back, and I'm waking up. Where was I? Strapped down on a metal table, my body is forced into submission. The more I resisted, the more pain I endured. People surround my body, all kinds of people. People in white suits, people with cameras, people with journals, and people peering down at me. Their eyes wander my body, unsure of how they were supposed to react to the sight of me. Seconds passed, and they just stared, and I stared back, wondering what they were going to do with me.

They start to play with me, I am their lab toy. They feel my body around, and attach me to different machines with wires. They take pictures of what I look like inside. My bones and flesh screening on their devices. They mark my body; red lines, black lines, spotted lines, circles. I laid there, being annotated, studied, mapped out carefully. A tray sits nearby, scissors and knives, all kinds of sharp gadgets and needles. Needles that were being filled up by a man in goggles.

They see the way my lips look, shimmering pink stardust, but not the way they've encountered with others. The way my eyes glisten, a deep brown haze of stars and kaleidoscopic hues, my lashes long, droopy, in a sick kind-of way, dark circles cast under my eyes. They say the eyes look into the soul. Mine shine of cloudy glass, protecting the memories stored behind my lenses. Telescopic vision, bringing their eyes to my body, my skin; glittery, milky smooth. My veins stick out, bold, making a clean injection fast and easy. Colors seem to shine through me, my scars are fresh, my blood glistens blue. I have a jabbing pain in my forehead, a bandaid attempting to hide it. My wrists are bright red sand and my knees are yellow and purple. My skin is bumpy, and my hands are rough.

I feel them searching through my memory. Poking through every cabinet and drawer they can find. I feel them feeling me, my emotions and thoughts. A metal rod stabs through my head and suddenly I'm ten again, crying, wondering what is wrong with my body and caring about what I ate. Another stab, I'm thirteen, sobbing silently in the corner of the bathroom with a blade in my hand, and



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