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TIDEPOOLS

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EDITOR'S Z

Dear Reader,

When I asked our editorial staff what words came to mind while viewing this year's submissions, they replied, "contemplative," "liminal," "reemergence," and "transformation." These words are not only understandable, but deeply resonant, given that we are still individually and collectively reckoning with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are, supposedly, returning to "normal" life. Yet, as one of my students so aptly put it recently, "the vibe is just different." Channeling that vibe, all of the creators collected in this year's edition of Tidepools carve a window for us to witness a life mid-transformation—mentally and physically, socially and spiritually, and, above all else, artistically. In the following pages, you will encounter anger and grief and fear, but also the connective thread of an inward reflection that promises change and the hope to carry on.

Carry on, Readers.

lade Hidle, PhD Editor-in-Chief

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LOST AT SEA

Abby and Seth locked eyes at a bar. One look, that's all it took, six months later they were married and a year later they were stationed in Okinawa.

Abby cuffs her nose with her right hand to stop the blood from dripping down her chin. She looks up at her reflection in the mirror, which is hanging next to the dresser, in the master bedroom. Her sleep-deprived eyes are sunken deeply into her ghostly white skin. Her frail frame carries a beautiful baby girl on her left hip beneath stringy black hair.

She feels the world suddenly move at hyper-speed and slow motion all at the same time. Why won't he fucking leave the room?

Seth lunges at Abby, wrapping his tentacle-like fingers across her mouth.

Stephanie Flores

This fictional short story will captivate your attention while demonstrating the horrors domestic violence brings to everyday people. If you or anyone you know is experiencing this please reach out to the 24-hour DV hotline @ 800-799-7233.

A paper-thin wall separates them from the neighbors in the apartment over, and there is no way his reputation will be questioned for this quarrel.

Hope cries, wailing as her mother breaks free of Seth's grasp and stumbles around to find balance while still holding her.

"Shut that fucking baby up, Abby!" Seth shouts.

"Get the fuck out of the room, then!" Abby shouts back.

"Wipe your face! I don't want my daughter to see you like that!" Seth screams.

"Get the fuck out first!" Abby screams back.

Seth barricades the only exit with his large muscular body. His skin matches the coffeecolored door that he is pressing up against.

Mallory shouts from the other side of that door, "What's going on? What's happening?"

"I will call the police. Get the fuck out of the room, Seth!" Abby yells, her voice cracking in desperation.

With that threat, he leaves, ensuring he closes and locks the door behind him.

Upon returning home after this incident, Seth plops his body next to Abby's, his breath permeating liquor. With his head in her hands, she feels his tears escaping between her fingers. "It won't happen again," he says, sobbing. Her heart is as empty as that promise.

Japan is filled with rolling green hills surrounded by countless beaches. The kind of water that looks photoshopped. A blue so vibrant, it begs you to stay.

The weekend comes, and the family packs into their minivan for an outing.

"I know my daddy hit you," Mallory blurts out while sitting in the passenger seat.

Abby stays silent. She does not have enough time to respond as Seth walks around the van, making his way to the driver's seat.

"Let's go to the American village. We'll get those tacos you love!" says Seth.

Abby grins in agreement from the back of the van. Seth peeks at the rear-view mirror to see her reading a book to Hope in the back seat. Hope is not an easy baby. She is strong-willed but resilient. The position of the backward car seat bores her quickly, and Abby is always there to make sure she is entertained.

The family walks into the Mexican restaurant. Abby sees her friend Britney eating tacos.

"Hey!" Britney yells at Abby.

Abby stares down at her feet.

Britney yells again, "Hey, Abby, what's up!" She continues, "Are you kidding me? You are ignoring me?"

Seth glares at Britney.

The family orders their tacos to-go and leaves to eat at home.

Later that night, while her family sleeps, Abby tiptoes around the apartment. She gathers her passport and birth certificate. She places them in a small bag that holds a wad of cash and hides it in a storage cubby in the laundry room.

Abby sits on the concrete floor in a corner next to the cold washer. She texts her mother, "blue beach."

Her mother replies with one solitary word, "good."

She then deletes the messages.

What if I am making the wrong choice? What if he can really change? He can be sweet sometimes. I'll just stay until Father's Day.

Father's Day arrives.

"My buddy was telling me about an amazing, secluded beach. Do you want to go?" Seth proposes.

"Where?" Abby asks.

"Nago. It's two hours north of here."

"When?"

"Now. I texted Britney, and she'll take care of the girls."

"Britney Savior? I thought you—"

"She's a cheap babysitter. Fuck it."

They begin to walk out of their apartment. Abby's hands are full, she is carrying towels and a beach bag.

"Hey, can you grab my tanning oil?" she asks.

"Sure, where is it?"

"It's in the laundry room, thanks."

She waits for- what seems like an eternity for his return.

Why is he taking so long? Was it a horrible idea to have him look in the laundry room? Shhh, you're just paranoid.

Seth walks out of the apartment, gear in tow.

"What took you so long?" Abby asks.

"I had to use the restroom," Seth says, annoyed.

The surf is roaring, waves smacking against the beachrock with every hit.

"Hey! Sergeant Miller," a young man yells.

"Hey! What's up, Chicken!" Seth yells back.

At that instant, Abby turns back to return to the van; she has forgotten something important. She hands Seth the beach bag and towels to set up on the beach. Seth continues walking, making his way towards Chicken.

"Stoked to see you could make it, sir," Chicken says.

"Yeah, did you come with anyone?" Seth questions.

"No sir, this is my secret spot."

"You haven't taken anyone else here before?"

"No, sir. I thought I would share this spot with you, sir. Seeing ho—"

"Well, shit, an expert brown noser I got myself!" Seth says, interrupting Chicken.

"I just—"

"I am fucking with you, man!" Seth interrupts again and smacks one of his large hands on one of Chicken's small shoulders.

They lock eyes and both laugh with one another.

"Anyway, no kids today, sir?"

"We left the girls at the Saviors. You know 'em?"

"Hmm, husband's a British motherfucker, works in Motor T, right, sir?"

"Yeah, fucking weirdos, but his wife babysits and shit. They don't have any kids of their own, so she's obsessed with ours."

"Ay, that's cool. Do you want some plum juice, sir?" Chicken says with a wink.

"Why the f—oh, yeah, plum juice would be great," Seth says with a grin.

Seth chugs the bottle. Chicken leaves to give the couple some privacy. Abby returns and slips an item into their beach bag.

"Let's go for a swim, babe," Seth proposes.

"What if someone takes our phones while we are away?"

"Who? Look around! There is not a soul in sight and it's Japan babe, no one does that kind of shit here."

She slowly places her cell phone in their beach bag.

Fuck

"It's a beautiful day, huh?" Seth asks while stretching out his vascular arms.

"Yeah," Abby says ever so faintly.

"Let's get in the water!"

"I'd rather just lie on the beach and get good use out of my tanning lotion."

"It's Father's Day, I already have a built-in tan, and you have to! It is my day!"

"Fine, let's go," Abby says with a sigh.

They swim out with great force to overtake the volatile waves, using every part of their bodies to push forward. Abby can feel the pulse of her heartbeat vibrate through her eardrums. Between their gasps for air, they exchange glances at each other, the movement is similar to a ping pong match.

He looks up, she looks down. She looks up, he looks down.

"We're too far out, Seth. I am getting tired," Abby says while panting.

"Maybe you should be hittin' the gym more like I tell you to. It's fucking Father's Day Abby, can we do what I want for once?! God damn!"

"Okay, just a little more. I need to text Britney and my mom; you know how difficult Hope can be sometimes," says Abby.

"The kids are fine. You literally talk to your mom every damn day. I see a little tiny island over there. You see it? We could check it out, see if it's got crabs or starfish," says Seth.

"Sure," Abby says, as tears begin to form in her eyes.

Just a little bit more, Abby, then you can rest. It's Father's Day. It's Father's Day.

As they swim, heads above water, Seth begins to shout.

"So, what are you always talking to your mom about?"

"Just random stuff, I don't know, why?" Abby vells back.

"Just kind of weird," Seth responds.

"What? I can't hear you! The wav-"

The water pulls her down and fills her mouth, preventing her from finishing.

"It's kind of weird!" Seth shouts again. "You tell her how much you love me, right?" Seth yells, then chuckles. "You wouldn't leave me, right? I mean, I gave you everything. A child, money, you don't even have to work. The military pays for our housing. You have it made. I drink a little here and there, but what Marine doesn't? Our branch started in a bar, you know?"

He knows.

One look, that's all it took. The water wanted her just as he did, but the waves didn't have to beg for her to stay.

Seth arrives at the shore. While taking out Abby's belongings from the beach bag, a Father's Day card falls out onto the sand.

It reads, "Our love for you is deeper than the ocean - Happy Father's Day! Love Abby, Mallory, and Hope."

Tears begin to form in his eyes. His breath is permeating wine. With his head in his hands, he feels tears escaping between his fingers. He feels the world suddenly move at hyper-speed and slow motion all at the same time. Seth can feel the pulse of his heartbeat vibrate through his eardrums. The dinging noise of a text message pulls him out of his trance. He brushes off the sand from his hands and grabs Abby's cell phone from the beach bag.

"Blue beach?" The text reads from Abby's mother.

"Yeah, beaches are blue?" he texts back.

His hands are now violently shaking as he grabs his phone to text Chicken.

"Hey Chicken, if anyone asks, you didn't see me today."

"Ha, okay sure, no worries. I got you brother, sir." Chicken replies.

"I am dead serious, not one solitary word."

"On my mother's grave, I wouldn't, sir."

"Good."



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UNCONSCIOUS REFLECTIONS

Soleil Hernandez

Surrealism is my favorite art style because it allows for the expression of the unconscious mind through the depiction of unsettling, illogical scenes. I use my own hopes and fears from my personal dreams to serve as a source of inspiration.

NADIA STEFFAN

Dedicated to my mother; I wear your sweet smile on my face every day

STAGES OF GRIEF: A TRIPTYCH

- When you smile, your nose crinkles up like tissue paper
- Your bangs are long enough to tangle with your eyelashes
- So watching you blink is like watching a breeze stir the curtains
- White blonde as if washed out by midday sunlight
- You pronounce all of your
 T's, hold onto your
 R's, and your voice
 memos are accented
 by the jingle of the
 carabiner on your belt
 loop
- Your collarbones, one once broken just like mine
- Your hands, delicate, air-sign fingers to match your Gemini sun and rising

II

- We miss your bloom every spring, but I've made it here before the last of your petals have fallen this year
- I think you blossom early
 because you'd far
 outshine the other
 trees if you waited for
 them
- Sometime beautiful things come and go too soon
- Sometimes I feel like I'm losing you all over again
- I missed you when you faded from your bed in the living room
- Now I miss the memories I had of you as they fade, too
- I hold up my handmade
 Halloween costumes
 and try to find you in

- Purple Manic Panic stains all of your pillowcases
- You hadn't planned to DIY tie-dye them
- You also hadn't planned to graduate high school in your best friend's backyard
- But there you were, turning your tassel with your principal on Zoom
- So does it really matter anyway?
- You hadn't planned to pay \$500 a month to fear house centipedes creeping through the gap between your wall and floor
- But all your best friends live on the same block and Gaby has a balcony So we pin an empty La Croix

box over the hole in

Your legs, too long to straighten out when we press our feet to the ceiling above your

dorm bed

But just long enough that I have to tip my head

back and stand on my

toes when I kiss you

- These memories dance across the dashboard on my drive home from you
- My cheeks are the windshield and my tears are the rain
- I smear them away with my palms as the wiper blades vigorously follow suit
- And mourn our forty hours in heaven
- We dared not sleep during our last night
- But rather spent it with you laying on top of me
- Your ear to my heart and my nails tracing constellations on your back
- You go to your classes, laugh with your friends, enjoy the changing of the seasons
- But I don't know if I'll speak to you again
- You're alive as ever, yet I'm haunted by your absence

- the aging hot glue
- I go looking for you on the trails where our footprints lay side by side nine years ago
- I search for the pocket folder
 I saved your "good
 morning" and "Kate is
 driving you to practice
 today" notes
- I don't know how to talk about you without crying, so I skip both
- Do the five stages of grief include guilt?
- How long is that phase supposed to last?
- Some days, the pain is akin to the way your bark scrapes my skin when I sit with you
- A rough but sweet reminder that I'm surviving
- Other days, it's forgetting the sound of your lullabies
- Or writing down the questions I have for you and storing them in my closet next to your ashes
- When I visit you this time, I find a small new shoot pushing its way into the world, its bud tender and leathery
- The skin on the palms of my hands and the soles of my feet just the same

- our flimsy drywall hallway and smoke bowls of Wisconsin weed twenty feet above the isthmus
- You hadn't planned to move your mattress from the floor of a Madison apartment to a bed frame in the gay part of Kansas
- But now you're listening to a podcast on a porch swing in Lawrence and learning to love vanilla
- You hadn't planned for abrupt goodbyes, for life without her, for mourning the old you and the older you and someday this you
- But you were forced to
 stretch the boundaries
 of your comfort zone,
 shed your skin and
 step into a new
 version of yourself,
 conquer the
 discomfort of
 loneliness and
 estrangement from the
 familiar
- So maybe the messy, never-ending battle with grief is important
- I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy





TOO DEEP: DISPLAYED

Michael Potterf

What are you thinking? When posed with this question people rarely reply by showing images. Too Deep: Displayed illustrates my attempt at displaying the cerebral experiences I encountered as I worked through a myriad of emotions while creating my music project titled Too Deep. @the.mrp on Instagram

Herman

DANIELA MENDOZA VILLA

My name is Daniela Mendoza Villa, and I'm twenty-five years old.

I'm an English for Transfer major in hopes of becoming a high school English teacher and perhaps, one day, a community college professor. This is my third attempt coming back to school, but this time the support and love that surrounds me is immense, and I couldn't be more grateful. As they say, third time's the charm!

"My father had the kind of anger all fathers do. Loud and terrible. It lingers for your whole life."

- Katie Maria's "It lingers for your whole life"

"I am angry because of my father. I can hold a grudge like it's a hand."

- Halsey's I Would Leave Me If I Could: A Collection of Poetry

A father's anger is no comparison to the anger of a seventeen-year-old girl. My hermanita has our father's rage: terrifying and full of fire, its flames swallow me whole and leave me heaving on all fours. The anger within her rips from out of her throat, her wavering screams tear into my chest like teeth ripping through skin, and my hands don't know whether to go to my ears (to block out our father's screams), eyes (to block the sight of our father coming closer), or mouth (to block the hurtful sobs our father's words caused). Instead my hands tremble, fingers fidgeting unsure whether to grab her by her arms to hold her down or let her carry on, quietly watching her burn everything in her path until her own tears coming out of her big brown eyes put out the fire consuming her – the one thing she inherited from our father.

To clarify, my hermanita is not an angry child. She does not carry the heavy weight our father once bore on his shoulders, a weight which manifested his rage. He is mostly quiet now, the crackle of a candle next to his second daughter who is the embodiment of the threat a simmering match brings to forest grounds. She used to be a small quiet child with her hair tied up nicely in a neat ponytail, her bangs right above her eyes. Her clothes were colorful with lovely designs which were carefully picked out by our mother. My hermanita would scream out of delight doing her best to outrun the ocean waves or when I would come home from school because I'm her big sister and she missed me. But children grow up, and the mere ghost of the child she once was only makes appearances in moments of weakness.

"I'm trying, okay! Can't you see that I'm trying? Why can't you see?"

Why can't you see me? The last word is always left unsaid, hanging in the air. It must be difficult being the second daughter, the middle child. I will never know what it feels like, but I bear witness to the effects it has on my hermanita.

She has always been in the middle: the middle child, the middle birthday in August (she is the 21st, my mother is the 12th, and my youngest sister is the 25th), the middle in between conflicts with her friends, the one who got bullied in middle school, the only one who cried between my little sister and I when our parents brought up divorce. It seems the only place she is not in the middle is in the backseat of the car; there, we team up against the youngest one for the window seats. Being the middle child is considered a curse amongst most people, constantly being overlooked by the youngest child, overshadowed by the oldest, and overworked by themselves to prove their existence, that they are

here too. I guess that's why my hermanita's hair is now untamed and dyed different shades, her bangs covering her eyes; her clothes are dark and take inspiration from Japanese street style picked out carefully by herself; her large brown eyes are always done with black eyeliner and false lashes, and if you look closely enough you can see how fatigue and anger replaced her once starry-eyed glimmer. Where did it go, the wonder in her eyes? Who took it away? Was it age? The cruelty of her tormentors? Was it me? Was it our parents? Who? What? When? Where? Where is it? Where did it go? Why her? Why, why, why, why, why, why, why?

"I'm sorry, Dad! I'll try, okay? I'll try! I'm sorry, please don't – please – ! Mom, tell him no! Mom! Mom, please!"

I remember so vividly hearing the loud cracking noise my father's slap caused as it made contact with my cheek before I felt it. It wasn't meant for me. He had already yelled at me for my grades, but something set him off on my hermanita and he was charging

Where did it go, the wonder in her eyes? Who took it away? Was it age? The cruelty of her tormentors? Was it me? Was it our parents? Who? What? When? Where? Where is it? Where did it go? Why her? Why, why, why, why?

...our parents then were victims to their own torments, their own issues they lacked fixing – or better yet, believed they could fix by molding us into what they could have been.

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for her toward the kitchen despite her pleas, ready to hit her for her own terrible grades. To this day I don't recall how I got there in time for his hand to make contact with my cheek. I think I got in between them, pushing my father away from her, which sent him into a rage of fury that he directed toward me. I don't know, I don't care, I just didn't want him to hit her. Did he not know? Did my mother not know? Or did they choose to look the other way? This incident happened when my hermanita was in middle school; she was eleven and being bullied mercilessly. Of course her grades were going to be a reflection of her mental state, but our parents then were victims to their own torments, their own issues they lacked fixing – or better yet, believed they could fix by molding us into what they could have been.

As my hermanita was being tormented by bullies from the ages of eleven to fourteen, she was still expected to be better than me in everything after I had failed my parents consistently (through academics and life choices). She was expected to become everything I couldn't and set an example for our littlest sister to follow. Our parents were not going to allow my hermanita to slip through the

cracks and brush off school for play, or let her go out unless she had done absolutely everything she was told to do. If my hermanita would show any sign of struggle, it was brushed off, even blaming her for her own troubles because how could she have any? She was a child and had nothing to stress over – nothing my parents saw.

Our mom would say, "You should be asleep! Why didn't you start your homework earlier?"

"I did. I've been doing homework since I got home," my hermanita would reply, surrounded by workload for five classes each of which required two hours of studying. School was over at 3pm; it took her thirty minutes to get home, thirty minutes to eat, and, from 4:30pm until she couldn't keep her eyes open, she was doing homework. She went to an IB middle school, but I think "hell" is a more appropriate word.

"What do you mean you don't want to go to school?" Our father scoffed, "Don't be lazy. All you do is sit down and take notes."

"I just don't feel so good," she replied quietly, hiding the tears forming around her eyes.

She was being tormented by a boy in her class for the eczema around her mouth and arms and for potentially being gay (she's bisexual, just like I am, and knew the trouble that loomed in the horizon if our parents found out).

"Why did you tell your counselor you want to kill yourself? Don't be ridiculous. You have no reason to be sad. We have given you everything. You know there are kids with worse lives than yours out there, right? Some kids are starving and you're depressed? Por favor."

My hermanita would cry consistently, locking herself in our shared bedroom and scream into her pillows because our parents, the people who were supposed to console and help her, were telling her to get over it despite not knowing how difficult it is to be a young girl in a cruel world that demands she hand over her childhood with no promise it would reciprocate anything in return. Why did the world have to come after her? Rip away her childhood because she was quiet, shy – lonely? She never deserved to know what it feels like to want to quit, to want to

not keep going because she could see no other option. Holding the weight I should've been carrying was a burden I wish she didn't have to carry on her skinny shoulders, a burden I never should've let slip through my hands. What does one do with all that pressure, that suffering? Where does it go? What does it become?

I presume the swelling of her anger was inevitable. Something had shifted within my hermanita almost overnight.

"Can you shut up?"

The silence that followed was suffocating. My eyes went wide with shock hearing those words come out of my hermanita's mouth directed at our father. I stood up so fast, nearly toppling the chair over to defend her, knowing what was coming next.

"Just shut up, shut up, shut up!" My sister screamed. Her hands were in her hair, and she was shaking her head with such rage that none of us could react properly. My father couldn't even do anything. The surprise left him perplexed. He looked more worried by this outburst than angry; she just told him to shut up.

What does one do with all that pressure, that suffering? Where does it go? What does it become?

After that, her fury became more prominent; one wrong move and she'd be screaming, destroying whatever was in her way. She became so protective of her own peace that she became chaos. I couldn't touch her desk when cleaning the room because if one little thing was misplaced she would tear apart her desk, making a mess everywhere. None of us could tell her anything or she would get physical. I remember the night I tried holding her down, crying on top of her as I watched her writhe beneath me. The night we almost broke the television in the living room because I was holding her and she kept throwing herself backwards to make me fall. The night when I was going to see my friends, I got a call from my mother crying that my hermanita almost got into a physical altercation with our father, throwing punches at him, and that she didn't know what to do.

My hermanita inherited our father's rage. The more she transformed into a forest fire, the quieter my father got. The anger that had once consumed him was now clinging to his daughter-its claws digging into her shoulders, its sharp teeth grazing her neck—and I know he's the only one who can see that, and I know how deeply it saddens him. My hermanita has no other motivation, no other drive besides the rage accumulated over the years, the desire to be seen and heard how she wants and when she wants. As an artist close and dear to her heart once said, "And I've been a forest fire, I am a forest fire, and I am the fire, and I am the forest, and I am a witness watching it."

I, FLOW

Helena Westra

I believe it is one of my purposes in this life to learn to let go and find trust in my body, self, and intuition. Artistic expression is both a tangible and subconscious way for me to do this. I am reclaiming my power, letting go, and finding my flow.





EMERGING

Campbell Reyes

Cam Reyes is an Art History major at MiraCosta with a love for anything artistic. Writing poetry and creating art are some of her favorite things to do. She hopes you enjoy!

ALEXANDRA OMEL

I'm currently a student at MiraCosta and am working toward becoming a dental hygienist. I absolutely love to read and spend most of my free time doing so. When I'm not reading, I also enjoy playing the piano, working in my garden, and spending time with my family.

"Where's your favorite place in the whole world?" my twelve-year-old brother, Max, asks as we careen down a snow-covered mountain in our leaking, rusty, beat-up 1997 white Ford Expedition. That car has carried our family thousands of miles, and I love that rusty pile of bolts more than anything. We're heading home off the mountain from our grandma's cabin in Lake Tahoe after weathering the heaviest winter I've ever experienced, with it having snowed for almost a week straight, covering the world in a four-foot tall, clean, blindingly white blanket. Maybe that's not a lot of snow to some, but I've never shoveled so much snow in my life, and my arms are still feeling the ache.

But what is my favorite place in the world? My sister Jaiel, seventeen at the time and younger than me by two years, immediately shoots out, "Home!" and we all give a little groan, a little chuckle, a little laugh. I think we all knew her answer, and there's something comforting about the consistency, about knowing someone so well that you can predict their responses before you ask the question. But what's my answer? "I don't know," I say, honestly, thoughtfully. Then again, but to myself this time, "I don't know." How do you choose one place among hundreds? And is an entire city too broad? Do I pick somewhere that looks the prettiest, or someplace I have the best memories of?

The question is soon forgotten, as we leave our memories behind to watch the scenery in front of us, eat Goldfish crackers, and play a round of Travel Bingo and Rubber Neckers. But something about the ambiguity of this question makes it stick in my head, and I don't forget.

We drive for a few more hours, a drive we spend most of playing road trip games involving singing and counting and laughing. And lots and lots of laughing. But after driving for a long time on a lonely stretch of desert road in Nevada, we finally arrive at our destination, a destination that was unknown to all of us except our dad. He loves to surprise us like that, and I love being surprised, so when we start to see the first sign of civilization for miles, my excitement begins to build. "Where are we?" I ask from my seat behind the driver, my face pressed against the cool glass of the window that broke a few years back on a family road trip down a bumpy dirt road leading into Bodie, making it so that it no longer rolled down. "A little town called Tonopah, Nevada," Daddy replies, the smile clear in his words even though I can't see his face from my seat. "It's an old mining town that grew to be one of the largest cities in Nevada in its time, but now has only a few thousand residents. It's a living ghost town." At first glance, the town of Tonopah looks dusty, worn, and slightly dilapidated,



but all that is insignificant in face of the history we're looking at because this town is something straight out of history. "A living ghost town...Wow."

After a short drive through what appears to be the main drag in town, we pull off the road and into a parking lot behind a grand, slightly imposing five-story stone building, something that was clearly built in the town's heyday. "Is this where we're staying?" Mommy asks as we all unbuckle as quickly as we can, our legs cramped from sitting for so long in one position. "Yep!" responds Daddy. "It's the Belvada hotel, and they recently renovated it, just last year actually, in 2020. It dates back to 1907, and was originally a bank until they restored the whole thing to make it a historically accurate hotel. And this is where we're going to stay tonight," he finishes up as we walk up to the front of the building.

We pull open the heavy yet intricately engraved doors to step into a piece of history brought to life. My shoes slap lightly on rich dark brown wood before settling onto an intricately patterned plush runner that's painted in warm red and beige tones. The entire foyer exudes a warmth that feels real, and I can't help but brush my hand across the inviting light green velvet couches and easy chairs that

pepper the room, creating little corners and private sitting areas around hand-carved wood tables. My gaze travels upward and I stop in my tracks with my face pointed up, starting in awe at the detailing carved all across the wood ceiling.

"It's like stepping into the past," I whisper to Max almost reverently. I peer out the large picture windows that are framed by heavy, deep green velvet curtains to see the equally impressive Mizpah across the street, a restored restaurant and hotel where Wyatt Earp was said to have frequently stopped for dinner and a room. "It's like I could just look out here and see a guy ride past on a horse, or watch a horse and buggy roll by."

"It's straight out of one of your Louis L'Amour books, right?" Daddy asks me with a smile as he glances my way. "Yeah," I reply with wonderment, "it's exactly like that." And it is. As we check in and walk up the stairs to our room on the third floor, I can't hold back little gasps of wonder, as there's something new, but at the same time so so old everywhere I look. A safe with a one-foot thick metal door with several cranks and latches that'd been converted into a sitting room, an intricate detailed and boldly colored tile floor in the bathroom, a wrought iron bed frame,

We head out after breakfast of biscuits and gravy, which we eat on one-hundred-year-old plates in the Pitman Cafe below the Mizpah hotel, the same plates that Wyatt Earp ate off of.

...it's that land there, in the plains between the hills and among the shadows of those mountains that make me feel so deeply the pull of the past.

and the overall warmth and 1900s feel of the whole place just take my breath away. I go to bed feeling warm and happy tonight, filled up to the brim with the comfort of the past.

When I wake up, the air feels sunny and clean, as it always does in the early morning. We head out after breakfast of biscuits and gravy, which we eat on one-hundred-year-old plates in the Pitman Cafe below the Mizpah hotel, the same plates that Wyatt Earp ate off of. We drive south on Highway 95 and pass through Goldfield, a town that was once the largest city in Nevada, but that now has only a few hundred inhabitants. The history in this town rivals that of Tonopah, with old buildings, homes, and cars peppered everywhere you look. But it's where we go next that really blows me away. After Goldfield there are no towns or semblances of civilization for miles and miles, but it's that land there, in the plains between the hills and among the shadows of those mountains that make me feel so deeply the pull of the past.

When Max asked me yesterday where my favorite place in the world was, I didn't know then, but I do now. It's there. In between the beautiful hills and majestic mountains and nothing but you and the

blue sky, the clouds, the hills, and the occasional burro. I can see in my mind's eye a man on horse, or maybe it's me, traveling across that plain, under the shadow of the sky and between the hills and ridges, and it's just the most beautiful and touching image I've ever seen. As I look across that stretch of vast and all encompassing beauty, a wave of emotion hits me, and the beauty of the scene in front of me brings tears to my eyes. I don't know how to put this feeling into words, this feeling that the land is a part of me and I of it, untouched as it is by humans. The raw beauty and possibility of it all is indescribable and the motion of traveling slowly across it feels something like hope and love. I try to put this into words and explain it to my family, but how do you put into words such a deep gut feeling? I can't quite get it right, and Jaiel says slightly disdainfully, "It just looks like a lot of nothing." But I don't think so. To me, it looks like everything.

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RED

Michaela Garcia

Michaela Garcia is a painter and digital artist as well as a first-year student at MiraCosta. Her art usually focuses on female figures and animals.

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LYING IN WAIT

LANCE WOOD Growing up as a mixed-race person, Lance Wood was able to observe identity through multiple lenses. He aims to give a voice to the voiceless and demand accountability of those responsible.

This is Inspired by the Native people of this country and the diluted history that which has served to cover up the truth behind European expansion (takeover). The Great Plains are a sacred place and it has been a sacred place for thousands of years. The Europeans killed off and drove out the buffalo that which were the Native peoples' greatest resource. This was the ripple effect that created a catalyst for the Native's as famine, disease, and warfare rifled through the land. One by one, village by village, tribe by tribe, the Native people were forced into a European way of life or faced death upon their people. This poem is a culture testifying to the crimes against humanity.

Black light on a white cow, Whiskey and rye A broken feather and a ruffled brow Where are all the buffalo?

Desolation of the Great Plains Mother Nature weeps from her springs Flowing water with piercing blood stains As the village lies in its ruins

Why did they come?
Crippling silhouette of a demon in an angel's pelt
Death is their answer to a morning's sun
Every moon is an impending destiny for bloodshed

Why did they come?
Chanting of a summoning of ancestral beings
For the origins of Coyote shall cast a single pebble
Creating a tidal wave of revelations

This is the end of days in the Great Plains
The people scatter into tiny ants
Disposed of in every direction
There is no victory

Only the forgotten history
Of a culture buried beneath the leaves
and in between the memories of elders flees
The spirit of the people is awakening now

Hiding in the darkness upon the white cow.

No longer do we drink the devil in the glass bottle And reside in your prison- walled casinos A resistance is rising A reckoning becoming

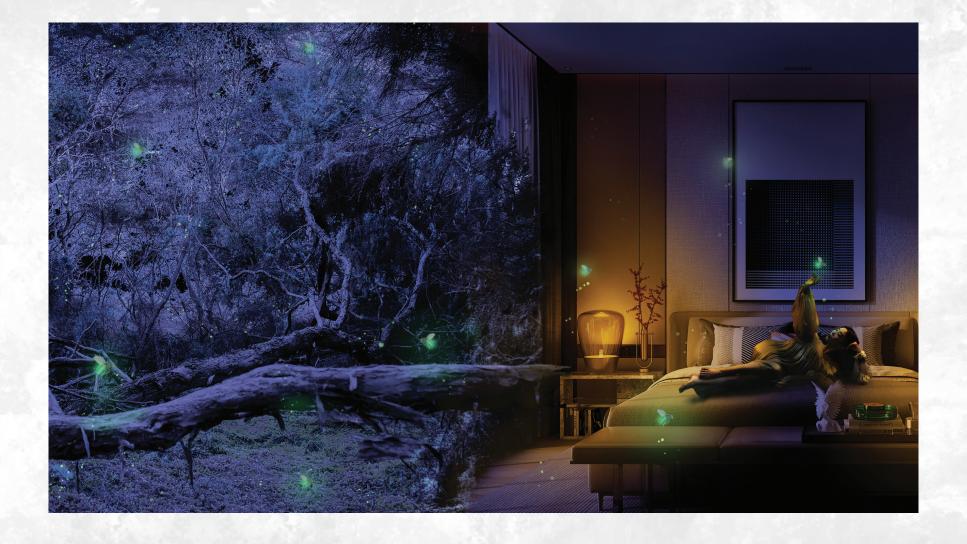
We are educated doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs
The tools you took away
We are using to take back
The time of reclaiming land is now

We the people are the black light Shining on the white cow

AMBER'S ROOM

Michael Potterf

In 3022 life seemed to be normal, until the world quite literally began to fall apart. It seems a glitch in the world's programming created time warps and unpredictable environments. Amber finds herself stuck in an unusual place and struggles to find her way home... If, "home," still exists.



66 (I think that was what people would call a) FILING 99

I remember that time we chewed gum together.

Sweet and minty, we mouthed and tongued the stretchy stickiness

How the flavor burst!

Even stung a little, as strong mints do at first.

We sat smiling, chewing gum.

I remember that time we blew bubbles together.

Air from our lungs momentarily wrapped in chewing gum.

We blew them big, and we blew them small—

Some bubbles popped before they could even be called a bubble after all.

We sat laughing, and blowing bubbles.

We did that for a while.
But our jaws grew tired, tongues bored.
The gum stiffened, flavor faded.
The air from our lungs no longer exhaled and inflated
Our chewing gum.
We decided to stop blowing bubbles then.

We spit out our gum.

I think it was thrown out of the car window

Or pressed thoughtlessly into an old receipt.



DIANA GUIRADO

This piece highlights the experience surrounding beauty and self-worth as a girl of color.

from Winx, neither is Kim Possible, neither is Barbie, neither is Lizzie McGuire, and neither is Hannah Montana. Picking at my skin. Concoctions of lime juice to brighten my hair and skin because we had no lemons. Turning from side to side in the mirror to make sure my butt wasn't "too big." The second-grade version of myself didn't want to accept not looking like them.

Sparkly vellow hair that freely flew about in

Britney Spears isn't Mexican, neither is Bloom

Sparkly yellow hair that freely flew about in the wind. Deep blue eyes that are the color of the ocean and the sky. Fair skin that would turn soft pink in the sun. Things that I had been conditioned to think were the epitome of beauty and femininity. I didn't even come close. Going to the beach made the differences jump out even more. While my friends played about carelessly in the water, I was fixated on my arms. The way my thick black hair would overlap in twisting patterns. The many moles that I inherited from my mother, in various shapes and sizes, splattered like ink stains on a white carpet. My skin would only get darker in the sun. I would lay under the umbrella, slathered in sunscreen once again.

As I was growing up, this self-criticism was not specifically encouraged by my family or those close to me. It was an influence much bigger than I could even contain. It was the fair and beautiful women on beauty products, whose bright skin and smiles spoke the language of beauty. The beauty supply stores sell bottles of hair lightening spray in mass quantities. Staggering amounts of lightening

creams and lotions. This expanded into adolescence when the only women I was compared to were characters stained with racial stereotypes. Never the heroine, always the maid.

Beauty is often seen as the measure of a girl's or woman's worth, and being so far from that standard negatively affected my confidence and self-esteem. I remember going to a church camp, and being the only woman of color there. All of the girls stood in a massive circle around the boys waiting to be asked to dance. Music played as I watched each girl be picked to dance. One by one. The lines of the circle faded out as time went by, eventually leaving me to be the last person standing. This meant I was the least desirable, the leftovers. The orange candies were left at the bottom of the bag.

However, this did not last forever. As I grew, so did the world. Movies and TV shows with strong Latina characters became more accessible. This representation made me feel seen. My tan skin and dark hair were now a trademark feature of strength and sass. Although I was still considered "exotic," I learned to separate myself from conventional beauty standards, surrounding myself with other women of color and appreciating our underrepresented beauty. After all, I wore the culmination of my ancestors' faces. The features of strong native women and their Spaniard captors. The faces of my parents who worked tirelessly to be able to live in a new country. I recognize myself now as a product of history itself. Instead of detaching from my culture, I must wear it with pride.

CONTEMPLATE

Isabella Parrales

I'm Isabella, nineteen, and a Studio Art major, and this is currently my biggest piece I've done and directly inspired by agnesgrochulska on Instagram! This piece was done in eight hours as it was an assignment I procrastinated on and is now one of my favorites I've ever made.:)



STRENGTH

Adriana Rossarolla

My biography about my art career might be different than the majority of artists. I started later, not late. I compiled years of studying human nature. From the deepest fears and the amazing glory of being alive. From loving as an act of need to loving as an act of freedom. I think these are important things to bring to an art expression. I summarize my life's purpose in the words of William Blake: "To see the World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour.

JOSE CASAS

Jose had three stories in TidePools 2022, and this year will be his second year with a story with a nostalgic look at how a boy used fashion terminology as his key to happiness, proving that there are no borders on potential and dreams.

I hated my sisters for the humiliation I had to suffer, while standing on the stool as I was wearing one of their latest creations of clothing. The pins piercing my skin and my bleeding made them scream because I might stain the delicate fabric or tear the pattern made of paper.

For several years as they were completing their training in Tijuana, "Corte y Confección" (fashion design and creation), my older sisters transformed me into a human mannequin. My other duty was to help them memorize with the flash cards all the fashion terminology. There was a debate in fashion that they had to provide proof of why buttons were better than using zippers.

It's a real skill to make the perfect fit for the buttons. If the hole was too wide or too big the buttons slipped out, or if it was too narrow the button would not fit, requiring the process to be redone. It appeared my sisters believed in buttons, not zippers.

I had to listen to endless hours of repetition about fashion: the different fabrics, hemlines, color trends, and other things I found boring. "They are older," my mother said. "You must obey their request."

I thought it a waste of my time because I wanted to be playing sports with my friends. I never suspected that in a few years I would benefit from retaining fashion terminology. Girls' fashion was not the stuff boys like me wanted to know or learn. I was a boy just reaching puberty.

In 1966, I was freed of this duty of being a human pin cushion. I became a farmworker like my father. We got up daily at four by four-thirty we walked to get on the pick-up truck with a camper shell that would take us across the border. Seventeen grown men rode in the back of the truck, just like sardines. At thirteen years old, I was the smallest and most agile. I got to sit in the middle row, facing the rear-view window. I saw the road benchmarks as we traveled to the fields, my only entertainment for the whole day.

We worked in Oceanside, California, so in our daily commute on the 5 Freeway heading north, I knew that after Old Town I would see Presidio Park. My most anticipated landmark was the building on top of the mountain next to Linda Vista Road. At the time, I did not know the name, but I would look with anticipation and admiration.

Our travels started in the early morning. The eastern sunrise served as a background for the castle. The morning sun rays reflected brilliantly on the windows. This, combined with the many lights illuminating the buildings, made for a rainbow of colors.

In my mind, this was majestic.

I later discovered that the building I admired was the University of San Diego, a private Catholic university. My father, like the other men in the pickup truck, never dreamed that they could send a son or daughter to study there. I also did not believe it would ever be possible for me to attend.

My father faced many challenges in his life. He did not know how to read or write. He had only six months of schooling when he was orphaned at the age of six. To send a son or daughter to study at USD, the tuition alone was my father's salary for the whole year, not including room and board. I never had a conversation with my father about my future.

My father was respected by all. Even the foreman in the fields would call him Don Pablo. In Mexico, the Don in front of someone's name would be the equivalent in the United States to a doctor, just as you would always use "Dr. Casas" when speaking to a physician.

My father ended his work in farming, making a lifechanging decision. The whole family left Tijuana. In 1967 we moved to Los Angeles. We never looked back, only forward. My parents believed that I must learn the English language to make a better future

for myself. I was placed as an ESL (English as a Second Language) student, trying to be a teenager to fit in and assimilate to this new culture. I had made enough progress in my English-speaking skills in two years that I was labeled "college-bound." As a young boy, I was motivated to fit in and to impress the young girls. It's why I learned English in two years.

Ironically, according to the school administration, because I was a native of Mexico, I could not use Spanish as my foreign language requirement. I had to take French. So, trying to adapt to my new country, I had no choice but to follow the program. The romance language and girls asking me to speak French to them is why I managed to add a third language to my overflowing brain. I had no idea that what I was trying to do was, for some, impossible. I had no choice, as my whole future was riding on my rising to the challenge.

My fairy godmother was working her magic, combined with this new program called EOP (Equal Opportunity Program). I managed to be allowed to enroll as a freshman at the University of San Diego in 1971. I had been invited to "the palace," but like Cinderella I also was the poorest in the kingdom. This was not an obstacle or setback for me since growing up with nothing you must make do with what you have. The other students of the university had never experienced hunger. I was able to eat without having to be hungry for the first time in my life.

The eastern sunrise served as a background for the castle. The morning sun rays reflected brilliantly on the windows. This, combined with the many lights illuminating the buildings, made for a rainbow of colors.

Back in high school, my counselor suggested that at USD I should major in Spanish, that this major would be my best chance of success, so that is what I did.

One of the students in my Spanish upper division class happened to work for the athletic director for her work study. The basketball coach had asked the athletic director for tutors in Spanish for his star players. They could not play if they flunked their Spanish class. My classmate mentioned my name and suggested I be given the chance as tutor.

This was the beginning of an upward spiral movement in my college life. I was able to make progress with the players. I used some of the best practices from my teachers in my English and French trajectory. I tailored my approach with low pressure and real-life lessons to see the benefits of learning Spanish and their desire to impress the senoritas.

In one of our tutoring sessions, I had a conversation with the captain of the team. The players were from many states, and he asked if we could go eat Mexican food in Tijuana. During this era, a rite of passage was for underage students to go dancing and drinking in the Tijuana night clubs.

Before long, I was serving as a translator and tour guide for players and their friends. The girls wasted no time in deciding to go shopping. I also became the fashion advisor. I could not believe that all this useless fashion information that I helped my sisters memorize started coming out of my mouth. The girls started talking about hemlines and how their dresses draped, and I became a facilitator that they could trust with fashion and their virtue. I started getting referrals from other girls asking me to take them shopping in Tijuana.

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I know that if I had not escorted so many students on the trips to Tijuana, they probably would not have invited me into study groups on subjects that I did not understand. I was lucky to have classmates not letting me fail. My fairy godmotheror was it faith?-put me at the right place and time for me to survive at USD.

I had another job working at the library. We had to read all the announcements that people wanted to place on the campus community boards. This was how I read the one about Resident Assistants getting free room, board, and tuition. At the bottom of the page, it read, "leadership skills needed."

I started by asking the head cheerleader how she managed to secure her spot. She said, "It was just like in high school; you must be popular to get people to vote for you." Thanks to the cheerleader's advice and with the influence of the girls I had helped with their shopping and my players that I tutored, I was elected sophomore class president. This is how I became a resident assistant.

I thought my sisters' fashion jargon,had been information I would never use. But the languages of fashion and Spanish became my secret weapon at the University of San Diego.

The process of becoming bilingual, bicultural and biliterate can be hard. The hard work and the process make most new immigrants usually quit halfway, when they are so close to gaining that "Aha" moment and things start to make sense.

I remember how I also felt frustrated because I could not learn fast enough. I was surprised and disappointed that my own ethnic people born in the United States would say, "Go back to Mexico," to the newest immigrants. They used the same hateful words (pochos) that their parents or ancestors had to endure for them to be born here in America.

I took the challenge of the pochos to prove to them they were wrong. I used that hate as fuel to demonstrate that my heavy Spanish accent was and is nothing to be ashamed of. I am proud to have been born in Mexico. I was able to get a four-year education from the castle and, like Cinderella, today I am living happily ever after.

I must explain that my life changed on my first day at USD, while I was in the cafeteria looking at the parade of girls coming to eat. My muse walked in her auburn hair, her blue eyes and the most beautiful long legs in that mini skirt walking in a regal authoritative manner. The boys in the group said she was out of my league and that she would never go out with me. Donna is her name, my wife and queen of over fifty years. I guess I just like to go for the impossible. Today, I am the King and captain of my destiny. As the great Cesar Chavez said to the farm workers, "Si Se Puede" (where there is a will, there is away).

To my sisters, I am grateful and I would gladly stand back on the stool and wear one of your latest creations. I am proud to be your human pin cushion and human mannequin.

I used that hate as fuel to demonstrate that my heavy Spanish accent was and is nothing to be ashamed of. I am proud to have been born in Mexico.



SPLIT PERSONALITY

Caleb Kawano

I photographed my friend here. This was shortly after one of our mutual friends had passed away that year. The split personality shows how we may see one side of people, the happy side, but there can be something else beneath it all, the sadness creeping in.



TUNED IN

Mimi Kennedy

Mimi holds a Bachelor's degree from UCSC, and is currently a student at Mira Costa studying Studio Art and Psychology. She is a visual artist who has recently reignited her passion for art and changed her career path to pursue a career in art therapy.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE:

A Slap of Truth in American Values

The ability to physically discipline our children has been praised as an effective form of teaching, with realistic and reputable results. And why wouldn't it be? The rationale, "Because... I'm bigger than you, and if you don't do what I say, I'm going to hurt you," is very straightforward in its reasoning.

Recently, the use of corporal punishment on children has been scrutinized. Some say this methodology of instruction is a gross overreach of power, that it results from an inability to remain calm and in control of the situation, or that the action of physically hitting someone is somehow assault. Let's put these alarmist claims to rest! We can lead by example. To demonstrate this tried-and-true method for correcting poor behavior in children, I propose the application of public corporal punishment in the form of Adult Spankings.

The generous distribution of Adult Spankings applied in public settings by officers of the law, offers a bold opportunity to prove the sincerity of that same method for children.

Katie Molidor

Katie Molidor is an adult learner with transfer goals. She is a MiraCosta certified Yoga Teacher, a mom, and a first-generation college student. She believes in supporting Emotional Intelligence to support a more mutualistic and empathetic understanding of life.

As Denis Leary once said, "Every job has parts of it that are a giant pain in the ass—whether you carry a penis or a purse." This crude but honest quote challenges us to hold ourselves to the same standards and expectations that we would place on our children. By acting in this way we become genuine persons of principle, to act otherwise would be hypocritical.

The right to spank our children as a form of correcting behavior is provided for and protected within the reasoning of our American legal system. It is acknowledged, legally, as an effective method for the guardian to emphasize their point. This reasoning can, and logically, should therefore also be extended to adults. If Americans want to keep sending the message that acts of violence are an effective approach to solving problems, this is how we do it. This is how we will stay strong, America. We will win wars, cut back on welfare spending, tighten our borders, and stop drug trafficking. The visual and physical message of a swift slap on the ass shows we are not afraid to put anyone in their place. There is a place for everyone, and everyone will stay in their place, or else.

The next time someone blows through a stop sign, double parks, or gets caught shoplifting, we could very well see them—this neighbor, teacher, doctor, or friend, —pulled to the side of the road, siren blaring, and lights flashing. We can stop and watch. It's okay, "Folks, there is something to see here!" A smile spreads across our faces,

and our eager eyes glow with anticipation, as we watch our friend or family member's pants lowered. We continue to leer over, and the police officer bends the individual over his knee. As the officer begins to delve out the spanking, we hear him crying, "This hurts me more than it hurts you!" We are humbled by this display of humiliation. But this is how we teach!

This approach eliminates the hypocrisy within our judicial system. It shows that we as a country feel violence is the best answer to solving issues. Not only is spanking our children an acceptable response to misbehavior, but every American citizen should also be given the right to learn from their mistakes by being spanked.

Americans love peace and happiness; that is why we have it written into our Bill of Rights. And we have learned that the best way to acquire peace is by force. The positive results of force have been well established in the United States since its foundation. We will never forget the Alamo!

The homeless, unemployed, alcoholics, and addicts we see today in America are the result of a lack of discipline. They didn't get enough spankings as children. Well, I am tired of being bombarded for change by the homeless. I'm tired of having to look at the ugly faces of the addicts on the corner. If these people got spankings, then maybe they would stop begging for other people's hard-earned money.

As a society, we can still create learning moments through compassionate dialogues and more patient practices. The court system will continue to exist.

But spanking is an American right. It is the best way to quickly, effectively, and lovingly correct poor behavior.

And if you break the law wouldn't you opt for the literal slap on the wrist rather than have to pay a fine or do community service? Some may argue that it is cruel to publicly spank adults, but to them I say, it is no more unusual than supporting wars.

The American justice system uses violence to punish criminals. Some people reject the use of electrocution and lethal injection to punish rapists and murderers on the basis that it is a grotesque and outdated method of correcting behavior. But using violence to solve problems is the American way. From TV shows and movies, our children's heroes save the day through violence. Our best adult-rated video games offer combative tactics and simulated mortal targets. Our favorite music lyrics talk about self-harm, violent acts, weapons, death, and war. The insanely popular TV series The Handmaid's Tale is all about the oppression of women. This television series has won numerous awards including two Golden Globes, six Emmys, and the Peabody Award for entertainment,

showing the overwhelming and unquestionable support for the public display of pain and violence.

By allowing our entrusted caretakers to physically hold us down, and oppress us into submissive, well-behaved adults, we can show our society how to live a life imbued with a sense of fairness, equality, and security. I know I will sleep better with the knowledge that my neighbor is going to adhere to the strict HOA bylaws, bring their trash cans in promptly, and remember to use parking passes for their visitors, or the next HOA meeting is certainly going to be a spectacular spanking spectacle for all to see.

The unnecessary time and funding spent on the incarceration of adults for small non-violent crimes take excessive amounts of taxpayer dollars away from people. This practice only succeeds in helping private prison corporations increase their yearly revenue. Many of the prisons within the United States of America are privatized today, meaning that they are corporate entities owned and controlled outside of the American Judicial System. It is a growing industry, allowing individuals to immorally profit off of the misfortune of the average defunct American citizen.

When we isolate and erase the sight of misbehaving adults in our society, we are losing the chance to create visual rhetoric that heavily discourages poor public behavior. In principle, the idea of public spanking for adults, as it is for children, should be socially acceptable in contrast to the current methods of isolation

used on incarcerated prisoners. The detrimental effects of loneliness, lack of human touch, and extreme isolation on the human psyche have been recorded (Leonard), whereas the number of positive encounters with the act of adult on adult spankings is remarkably high in comparison. An article published in April of 2017 on Menshealth.com by Alisa Hrustic, the Deputy Editor of Prevention, entitled "The Rough Sex Move Women Love the Most" claimed that, "After polling more than 4,500 people about their favorite kinks, they found that 70% of women and 61% of men are turned on by spanking during sex." This statistic tells us that as humiliating as spanking may appear, this treatment is actually pleasurable for adults.

Re-instituting policies of public humiliation through corporal punishment will encourage the public's acknowledgment of immediate physical consequences, i.e., Adult Spankings. The public correction of inappropriate behaviors is an avenue for our citizens to bring more awareness to community problems. For instance, we can publish Adult Spankings in local news articles for a more informed community. Public, adult spankings bear the opportunity to be more actively involved in community events. I know I would enjoy a cheery Saturday afternoon spent in the town center with my fellow good samaritans watching, for example, traffic jockeys get a good spanking for their inferior driving skills during the five o'clock rush hour. Wouldn't you feel justified and enjoy watching the wrongdoers physically pay for their mistakes? Me

too, but instead we pay high taxes so these odious criminals can sit in private cells with cable television.

Minor petty crimes are clogging up our judicial system on a daily basis. These small claims and minor criminal infractions tie up a lot of our funds and time for very little benefit. Few perpetrators can say that they learned a lesson when paying a littering fine or spending a day at a comedy traffic school for blowing a stop sign. But these small acts of microaggressions towards our society should be a matter of public domain as they directly involve an individual acting in contrast to our societal expectations for decency and decorum.

As a Republic of People, we can and should hold each other responsible for the poor display of behaviors by offering the option of corporal punishment to adults in the form of a public display of swatting the guilty adult on their posterior.

This approach bypasses the necessity for legal representation, a ticket or demerit on a driving record, and any jail time. With a reduction in the number of incarcerated adults for petty crimes and relief from the high cost of tickets for traffic

violations, we can help reduce the national debt, support the shrinking middle class, and divert funds from the judicial branch to more urgent national concerns. Publicly administered Adult Spankings encourage adults to choose the punishment they feel fits most relevantly into their current circumstances.

As adults of principle, the only fair thing we can do is to stop being hypocritical. If we admit to the violent actions of America on the world stage, it would entitle us all to a good, hard spanking. This display of our allegiance, bravery, and integrity requires us to uphold the longstanding American value of dominance through physical suppression. Our society needs a compassionate approach that cultivates empathy between generations. If we are not willing to subject ourselves to the same cruel punishments displayed to our youth, we should not continue to justify these grossly violent methods. All good Americans should get spanked.

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TOTALLY JUST COLORS

Remy Oropeza

"Totally Just Colors" is a piece created both out of pure fun but also in reflection of the struggles LGBTQIA+ youth face when wanting to express themselves, but have to remain discreet in a disapproving household.



5

UNDER THE EARTH

Bailey Schoelen

A spirited man listens to a home fall apart from beneath the earth. After learning that the limestones used to make lithographic prints were made of layered sea fossils, I became interested in exploring the world layered beneath my feet.



ON THE EDGE

Ilda Pablo

An ink drawing, On the Edge was made to depict a crime, whether it be a small or big crime. I decided to make this about the crime of leaving something open and on the edge, as if at any time it could fall.



67

LALLA WANDERS THE HILLS NAKED

JADE MACEOGHAIN

I wrote this poem as a response to fourteenth-century Kashmiri poet, Lalleshwari. Considered the first Kashmiri poet to compose in written form, she created a unique poetry style called Vakh (surprise—not adhered to in my poem), and her poetry has influenced modern Kashmiri songs, dances, and poetry.

Lalla rose with the sun, the birds bathing her in their song's glory. She was free of cloth, not worrying about the senseless weights of civility.

Lalla wandered open hills, green and colourful with life—flowers sent by angels, fruits borne of the Earth, shade brought by skies.

Her flesh bathed freely in the sun's brilliance, her hair unbound, her breasts free.—
She swam in rivers of warmed ice, spoke with nature's first children, and composed healing in place of religion.

Listen! This is what Lalla would say Written in her own Vakh
Listen, to the songs she gifted you—
Be the people she wanted you to be—
you are nature's second children.



XANDER, GODSPEED

Helena Westra

I have always looked up to my older brother, and I still do. He is an avid hiker and is currently studying mechanical engineering in grad school. I wanted to capture his determination in the face of his challenges. He is one of the most hardworking, driven people I know.

SOMEONE IN MY HOME Someone is They enter the

Someone is in my home

They enter the front door, stepping into the dark

And do not notice me

They take off our shoes, worn leather, placing them with mine

In the unneat row of shoes beneath the yarn cabinet.

He picks up my sweater,

Thick cotton, saffron'd yellow and slips it over our head

The kettle is warmed,

Tea is poured—tendrils of cardamom, rose, and

cinnamon rising-

And wander the narrow hall, into my strange room.

Placing themself on our—my—bed
He begins to read
I notice it is my hand holding the book, purple cover, black & white photo
Faiz Ahmed Faiz, in Urdu and English side by side
I feel its dry warmth, and he turns the wispy page.

We whisper prose together,

I coax us to the dining table remembering flowers and love

We use each other's hands to light a candle,

Warm flame casting its amber hue, pouring wine

Let us whirl as dervishes to the santoor from the red Crosley.

Turning around

In the soft dimming light, our shadows painting the walls

Nighttime stars enter the room

From the window to the left

We look at each other in the crackled mirror, and see we are the same.

JADE MACEOGHAIN

Jade is a first-gen Kashmiri-British scholar, majoring in English and Anthropology at ASU. They have presented at over fifteen conferences, with two academic articles published in Johns Hopkins Macksey Journal. This poem is a conversation between the author and their poetic muse, fellow Kashmiri writer Agha Shahid Ali.





I consider the text as an open element: graphic, theoretical, symbolic, and sound. Extension of my body. A literary life experience, between artist and viewer. Concepts nourished by social elements, forged in the boundless world of the Word / Image. I read myself inside gestures on paper.

FEAR AND ANGER

Manuel Ceci



SPOON

Susan Kogan

My son's grandparents gave this Norwegian baby spoon to him. I thought that I had lost it, but I recently found it in my kitchen junk drawer. Now it's a symbol of life and hope!

THE CHILL SPOT

Laverne Carther

LaVerne is originally from
Louisville, KY, The Derby City.
Growing up in Louisville, she lived
in a neighborhood where there
was always someone surrounded
by mystery or something that
could not be explained. She loves
to travel and looks at each city as
a backdrop for a good story.

Come in, lets go out to the back porch. Watch your step. Slam that door or it won't stay shut. It looks heavy but the lock freezes and you have to push it in, then slam the door,

Don't sit in that chair. I know it looks comfortable. It's an old La-Z-Boy, but unless you plan on getting pissy drunk, don't sit there. As soon as you sit on it, it reclines all the way back. That's why it's pushed against the wall, so if you are falling back, the wall will stop you. It only goes back up when you fall out of it or get helped out of it.

Sit over there. Three people can sit on that bench. I know. It looks like it came out of someone's car. It did. My granddad's old van. He needed a place to put it once he pulled it out of the van. You know nothing goes in the trash here. That van needs to go to the dump but as long as it turns over, it's valuable in this house. If that seat is too hard to sit on, that chair in the corner has a softer cushion. It's old but it's all wood. Be careful where your feet go when you sit. Old Buster is laying under it waiting on crumbs or beer. Anything that hits the ground he will lick it up. That dog is about as old as that La-Z-Boy chair. Both are the same color. You rarely see a full black German Shepherd anymore. She blends in well with that old rug under the chair. You don't know where the dog ends and the rug begins, but you can smell her. That coconut scent you smell is Buster. My grandmother

gets to spraying that air freshener everywhere. As soon as she gets a new can she goes straight to whatever she smells. Buster just happens to be the focus that day. Open the door, I will let her outside because if we don't this porch will smell like wet dog and coconut.

Don't bother trying to turn on the light. It doesn't work. There's no power out here. Plus the dark is relaxing. Light attracts bugs and people. We're facing the alley so you may not hear too many cars driving through it but it's always someone running through it. I don't know what they are running from, but when I was younger, I took that alley to cut off time getting home.

Hand me a Big Red out of that cooler. It's open, that lock and chain are just there to remind people to put a dollar in that box on the side before you open it. Grab that bottle for yourself. Ok, it's burning your throat. That's whiskey. The label came off. Grab the other bottle. Anything with a Coke label is whiskey. Grab the Sprite label, the clear stuff. That should have a sweet taste to it. That's wine. Whatever it takes to fool my grandmother. Grab that ice in that bag at the bottom. If you're drinking Night Train, Crown Royal or whiskey, pay double before you finish it because for some reason no one can get their money right after a couple of drinks.

I see you looking for that sound. That humming noise is coming from the radio. Lift those books up behind you. It doesn't look like it works but it does. Don't bother looking for a remote. You turn the dial to the right and it will come on. Stop looking

for the plug, it's run by batteries. It's already set on the station. You can't mess that up because that is the only station that comes in clear on the FM dial. Turn it up, then you will hear it more clearly.

This is my spot when I want to be alone. I know the screen doesn't stop all the heat and cold from outside, but it stops the bugs and flies. In the winter time, I put boards up. That's them behind this couch. They are really the old doors off of my grandfather's old house. He felt like he bought them when we lived there so he took them when we moved. They don't fit perfect but put those two behind that metal cabinet and they will stay up there. When it's cold, it is the best place to be because no one comes out here. In that bottom drawer of that metal cabinet is a bag with blankets in them. They are warm on a cold night and I have spent plenty of nights out here. Stop laughing. You know you have privacy when the door going back into the house is locked.

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ANONYMOUS

I was raised in a household that strictly frowned upon the act of crying, and for the longest time it was humiliating to be the sensitive one. Until I inhibited myself from emotions and alienated myself from my own identity. This is me reclaiming my story.

I choke out a laugh and paste on a wobbly smile as I stare at my reflection in the mirror. When did it get this way? I'm in the privacy of my room, so why can't I cry? My breaths are coming out too fast and my chest feels too tight. I'm overwhelmed and I desperately need to release all of this darkness held within me. Cry. I stare at my fingers; they tingle with numbness. Cry. I study my face in the mirror, there's nothing there. Dead, I do not wear my emotions on my face. Cry. Let it out. I'm shaking as I witness myself rocking back and forth in front of my full-length mirror. Cry, cry, cry, l'm chanting inside my head, or am I whispering it aloud now? I don't know, it seems I have lost control of myself. Or is it that I have too much control? I do not know, I do not know. "Cry, cry, cry, lust cry goddammit!" I'm dry heaving, gagging on the emotions I refuse to let surface. My pride rejoices. Am I strong now?

I told myself that I would write up an elaborate narrative on when and how it all began, only when I went to start it. Well, I found that I could not write. The thing is, I do not know when it first began, I cannot pinpoint a specific time when my mother first began teaching me to not cry.

Actually, I can't even recall a time before when I was not being taught to hold in my emotions.

So, alas, I could only gift a reader a glimpse of what used to be a familiar, recurring event in my life. Because, you see, a huge part of who I am today came from a family instilling "crying makes you weak" into children's mindsets. I was one of those children. But before you go ahead and hate that family, just know that they truly believed that they were helping set their children up for success in the real world.

But back to why I could never seem to cry and how that factored into the inhibition of my ability to trust.

I spent so much of my childhood believing that emotions and expressing them would debilitate a person, that when it came time to get personal, I could never. I was so disconnected from myself and my emotions that I often felt nothing—and whenever I did feel something, it was impossible for me to name it. This really became shockingly apparent when, during my senior year of high school, my teacher assigned PIQs or Personal Insight Questions. Students were expected to declare their stories and prove their growth to universities with these

answers. They were expected to get into these colleges through telling stories of themselves. I didn't even know who I was! I knew that writing about the sports I played or the classes I took just wasn't going to cut it. I needed to be creative and personal.

What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

I wracked my brain over and over for what I could possibly write. Running? No, I don't even like running nor am I great at it. What about discipline with my education— No, I'm always slacking off. And, anyways, it needs to be personal. Personal. My nightmare put into one, simple word.

And then it finally hit me: *Survival*. My greatest skill has always been survival. I finally had it, now to write about it...without giving too much away.

And here it is:

I fell in love with the ocean, the sound of waves crashing against the shore became a familiar song that comforted me in ways that nothing else ever could. The way it breaks apart when embracing the rocky cliff, only to mold back together again and again. Its blue-green depths that seem to hold so many secrets.

Staring into its expanse, I realize the ocean's greatest expertise is simply being there. No matter what the world throws at it, it continues to lay ever-defiantly

in our presence. It's here where the true connection sits, bonding me to the ocean because my greatest talent ever has been surviving through life.

The same way the ocean seems to break when obstructed, simply to return back to its whole form, is the same way I seem to bend and snap from the struggles of life. Eventually, always shaping myself back to who I really am.

The way the ocean fights through seasons of chaos, storms, and tsunamis; but always returns back to its calm, peaceful form is the same way I survive through the turmoil and craziness of life, still dutifully coming back to myself.

Even after being polluted by the hands of humans with chemicals, oils, and everything bad. The ocean still always somehow manages to overcome it, through time it returns back to itself. Even through these changes it still accomplishes in being its eccentric self. Just like the ocean, I've learned to deal with changes. Pushing through when it seems that the world is all too willing to reach out, grasping and dragging me down with grimy hands. When everything and anything appears to always be ready to taint me. Despite this all, I continually somehow carry on, washing away what pollutes me.

And when misfortune strikes, both the ocean and I, we remember how to survive. Thriving on adversity, in which we gain strength from. Always recalling that tragedy is a part of the gift of life.

Until I finally broke, I came undone, and it was mental breakdown after mental breakdown. I cried without tears, sobbed with snot running down my face, even wailed into the night sky at some point.

I'm proud of it, and happy with how it turned out. I'm so sure that I got the point across in a creative way and without giving anything away! How thrilling!

I turn it in.

My teacher reads it and compliments me on my creativity and overall writing. There's just one thing missing, a small something really. A personal connection. That is what I am missing. The feedback terrifies me, sends me into hysteria.

How do I say that for a while, the ocean both excited and calmed me only because of the possibilities? The endless possibilities in which I could die at sea. How do I say that my mother refused to ever let me cry?

I was a deeply miserable person and, yes, I was suicidal—but that was my own secret to keep. It was my story that I wanted people to know, only without me having to quite literally spell it out. I pondered whether to embed my secret in it or not How much could I lay out?

I wish I could say that I had some sort of epiphany or that it was at this time that bravery finally kicked in. But the truth is, I never revisited it to change anything. I left it as it was and, yes, I submitted it to colleges. Shockingly, or maybe not, I got into two out of the three colleges I applied to. I was elated and even made plans to study at one.

Then it kept happening. I was getting worse and, with the pandemic, it was just too easy to hide. I was back to the beginning of this story, only this was happening all of the time. Until I finally broke, I came undone, and it was mental breakdown after mental breakdown. I cried without tears, sobbed with snot running down my face, even wailed into the night sky at some point. All of those overwhelming emotions I refused to let out were rushing out.

Exhausted and desperate for an end, I went to see my doctor. I was petrified of what I wanted to do to myself because I did not want to exist. So, I told my doctor all of these things— how I couldn't even

swim anymore because the idea of drowning was too tempting. My prior suicide attempt. And all throughout the conversation, I did not cry. Yes, I thought. I am being strong.

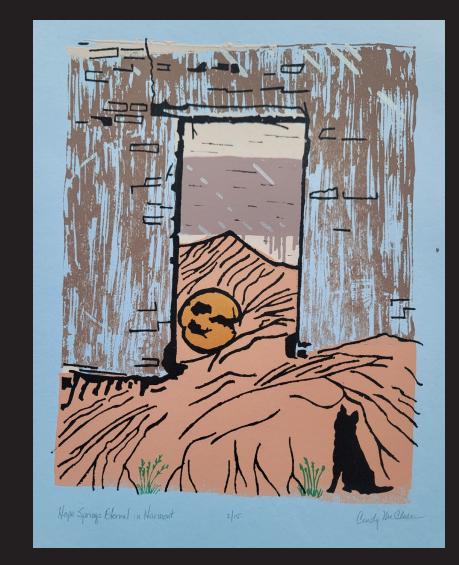
My doctor did not believe me. Neither did the nurse, for that matter. In fact, I was basically told that I was too pretty to want to die and that "many people love you" and many will continue to do so. It was all one ginormous slap to the face. But here I am now, alive, and what's more—writing about these experiences. Because since then I have learned quite a few things, and so has my family.

Pain is okay. Feelings are okay. Being human is okay.

And lastly: I am brave, not for never revealing my sorrows, but for *finally* doing just that.

Tragedy is a part of the gift of life.

It was my story that I wanted people to know, only without me having to quite literally spell it out. I pondered whether to embed my secret in it or not. How much could I lay out?



HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL IN HARMONT

Cindy McClure

This screen print image is based upon the science-fiction novel Roadside Picnic by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky and the Russian film Stalker directed by Andrei Tarovsky about the aftermath of an extraterrestrial event and its effects on the townspeople. There are seven colors printed before the final black key.

IN MEMORIAM

DENISE MUNGOR

I am currently a student at MiraCosta College majoring in Literature and Composition studies. I have been fascinated by stories, language, and poetry for my entire life, and I am very passionate about the crossover between these mediums. With this piece, I utilized the poetic strategies and devices I learned throughout the semester to craft my own art.

I can taste
the music in my mouth
The strums of the guitar
Taste like silver
The sky bleeds blue and
blushes terrible red
Like bleeding a rose—

Here the wars of my mind
Wind like the timeless
roads of purgatory
I kaleidoscope myself
Into a million fragments
That frey across the dimensions
I am as endless as the
As the blades of grass
That dance on the seabed

I see my family's face
I carry a thousand generations
In the brooks of my blood
I hear the old crones croak
They yawn like the giants
They are, cracking the sky with
Their dead-white voices

In my sleep
I dream of the millennia of souls
That push their will through me
From out of Africa's womb,
to the fangs of France,
To the thighs of California
They roamed.



Bailey Schoelen

Koi fish can be seen as a symbol of perseverance and transformation. In a time of certainty in my life, I stumbled across the unforgiving medium of monotype which offers little control over the outcome.



ARTIFICIAL HONEY

We were finally getting new work assignments today. Staring up at the sterile gray drywall from my cot on the concrete floor, I glowed with anticipation even though I could feel my back and quad muscles aching from the supply haul yesterday. No clue what assignments Seed and I would get, but we had the absolute worst one for the past three months: warehouse. Barrack rules dictated we couldn't be assigned a job more than once a year, so we'd be flying high for a while. I'd take generator maintenance over heatstroke risk in an industrial building any day. At least gen crew got to work at night. We were remote out here in Hemet, so when deliveries got here, that's when we worked, even at noon when everyone else was in the mess.

My lats screamed as I propped myself up. My boots and belt were on the floor, but I was still wearing the beige Dickies and teal Boys and Girls Club shirt marked "STAFF" on the back. The pipes in the walls were screaming from the AM shower rush and there were already the sounds of boots on concrete and men's voices outside in the hallway. We slept in, for sure. The toilet flushed as Seed walked out of the bathroom, already dressed in the same pants but wearing a Spiderman t-shirt in a kids' large. I was not a particularly large woman but I could still throw Seed across a room. She looked fresh-faced as she twisted her thick and wavy, light brown hippie hair into an alligator clip.

Emmi Bissell

Emmi Bissell studies Dance and Liberal Arts at MiraCosta College in Oceanside, CA. She is planning on transferring to CSU San Marcos to earn a BA in Geography and pursue a career in Geographic Information Science. Her favorite genres are science fiction and fantasy.

"Think we'll get mess? I heard the new union lead is sexist."

She was referring to a cushy kitchen job in a temp controlled kitchen. An envied post.

"I think the whole point of the union is to ensure fairness, yeah? I don't think Director Guerrero is going to reshuffle the assignments just because we flash our ankles."

"Better not flash those cankles of yours or they'll change the rules so they can put us in warehouse again."

I chucked my disgustingly old bumble bee Pillow Pet at her, which bounced off the thin drywall of our bunk-less bunk room as she casually dodged it.

"Ewwww don't let it touch me." She loved talking like a valley girl and had the most exaggerated vocal fry I've ever encountered. "You better wash that thing next trip into town or I'm throwing it away."

"Noooooo, not my only friend in this hellhole authoritarian bunk ruled by Supreme Leader Mustardseed!"

We cracked up and I hobbled to the bathroom. God I was sore. Seed had just flushed the toilet, so I decided to hold it until we got to the mess. We could only flush every twenty-four hours so going number two in a small space was a fast way to get served a bunk reassignment. I grabbed my face towel from our shared vanity drawer, filled with regulation toothbrushes and hairbrushes, bobby pins, boxes of soap, sanitary pads, the harshest

cardboard tampons in the world... those were Seed's, not mine. I dipped the towel in our wash bowl and wiped my face down before rubbing zinc all over it and every inch of exposed skin.

"You make fun of *my* name like yours isn't totally insane. Who names their kid X'Stacey!?," she poked.

"Meth addicts, that's who."

She was being insensitive, for sure, but I don't mind. My foster parents loved me before they died in the Sarin attacks in Andorra la Vella during Christmas, eleven years ago. They encouraged me to keep the name my unfortunate birth parents gave me. They also encouraged me to stay home and work my retail job during the busy holiday season since travel was so expensive. I learned about the attacks, and they never came home or answered their phones again. I put two and two together when the house was foreclosed on and then I was alone again. It was why I ended up at a protection agency, private mercenary companies that functioned like an old-school national military. It was shit work but they took care of you. Tons of people like me were here, too. We all got each other. Not Seed, though.

"Speaking of meth addicts, my parents say hi," she said.

"Do they still want you to go back home?"

"Yeah, they want me to be in their weird cult. I hate visiting them. It's the same work we do here but less freedom."

"It can't be that much of a cult... it didn't brainwash you, right? Otherwise, you'd be there now being a good little homemaker like, baking bread or braiding hair or some shit."

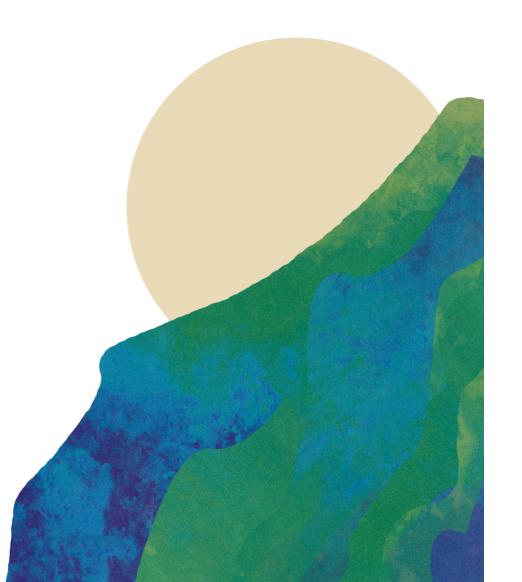
"Shut UP! Are you ready yet? We unloaded artificial honey last night and I want some on my Cream of Wheat. Let's go before it's gone."

She crouched to grab her pack and shuffled to the door.

"Fuck, I think I fucked up my knee last night. Lifting with your legs isn't safe if you do it 300 times in a row," she whined.

"I think Arjun has a brace. Let's ask him at breakfast."

I grabbed my pack and we headed to the mess.





A DESERT BLOOM

Holly Grow

Holly Grow is a Kinesiology, Health and Nutrition as well as Studio Arts major at Mira Costa. This watercolor represents the achievement of creation in the dazzling cactus blooms that came from rugged and inhospitable beginnings. This speaks to the potential and hope that are always possible.



SOMETHING OLD

Ailyn Ortiz

This watercolor painting shows age through multiple subjects. The hand of an old person holds a worn pocket watch. The blue calls back to films using a blue toning. I wanted it to feel like the hand is reminiscing over the watch.

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LORI AUSTIN

I moved back to San Diego in April 2016 to live near my elderly mother. She passed away in January 2022, just eight days from her 100th birthday. I hope my piece honors her indomitable spirit and helps others understand what they may experience when a loved one is dying.

The solemn-faced man at the doorway to my mother's bedroom wore blue latex gloves. "Would you please come in and remove her jewelry?" he asked. But Mom wasn't wearing any, I thought, as I walked, numb, into her room. Then I realized he meant the little gold watch on her left wrist. It was such a part of her that I hadn't noticed she still wore it. I pried open the stubborn clasp, feeling her cool skin.

I knew I would never touch Mom again. I felt I should take longer, take more care, removing the watch, but I also wanted this ordeal to be over. After all, I was sure Mom was gone. I had opened all the windows and the front door as soon as Mom died so her spirit could find a path to its new home. All that remained was her small body, a week away from its one-hundredth birthday.

Day Ten. Thud! That sound woke me from a cramped slumber on my mother's leather loveseat. I heard the exit music for Saturday Night Live playing on the television. Damn! Tell me I didn't hear that! I prayed.

I was at Mom's apartment for one of our usual Sunday Sleepovers. I'd bring her a home-cooked meal and groceries for the week, including cookies—lots of cookies. Mom never met a cookie she didn't like, but you'd never know it, she was so slim and trim. She also still lived on her own, but we both knew that couldn't last much longer. This week we had begun our sleepover on Saturday night because Mom had fallen the week before. She looked like someone had beaten her with a baseball bat, her left side covered with purple bruises and even a black eye.

"Mom, are you OK?" I called. But of course, she couldn't hear me because she'd taken off her hearing aids before going to bed. I rushed to her room and found her lying on her back on the carpet.

"Mom! What happened? I asked you to tell me if you needed to get up to go to the bathroom!"

Shit! If only I hadn't dozed off!

"I can't stand!" she said. "I'm sorry."

That was Mom. She hated asking others for help. I'll never know if she called for me and I slept through it, or if she just wanted to do it on her own. Mom gritted her teeth and grimaced as I gently helped her to her feet.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I know it hurts, but you've got to get up."

I was mad at myself for not preventing her fall but also angry at her for falling. Mom couldn't move like she used to, and she wouldn't accept it.

It had only been a week since the previous fall. Two days later my mother, my brother Hank, and I talked with her primary care doctor about Mom's most recent emergency room visit.

"Were you able to get up by yourself?" her physician asked about the fall.

"Yes, but do you think I need to go on hospice?" Mom asked pragmatically. She'd had the question on her mind for a while. A child of the Great Depression and a veteran of WWII and Korea, she was stoic and careful to disguise her true feelings. "No! There's no reason for that yet. But you might want to get a medical alert button. Then your kids would be notified and they could find you some help."

"We tried that already," I said. "She sent it back to the company after a week." On Day Nine I asked Mom how she was feeling as soon as she woke up. "Not good," she said. "I really think I should be on hospice."

I called my brother while Mom was having her usual pre-breakfast coffee and cookie, "Hank, Mom fell again last night."

"I'll be right over," he said.

We knew the jig was up. Mom didn't want to live like a prisoner in her own body. A former physical education major who made a hole-in-one when she was eighty years old, she felt fate had played a horrible joke on her. Hank and I didn't want to force Mom to do anything she didn't want to do. She had too much dignity—and too much moxie—for that. She said she wanted to die at home in her own bed. And being a former Air Force officer, she expected us to follow her orders. So, we did.

Mom and I spent Sunday afternoon sitting in her sunny living room and chatting. "I'll ask Robyn to stay with you while I go to work this week," I said. My best friend since seventh grade, Robyn was who Mom called "Daughter Number Two" ever since her mother died when she was fourteen.

She had too much dignity—and too much moxie—for that. She said she wanted to die at home in her own bed. And being a former Air Force officer, she expected us to follow her orders. So, we did.

Her king-sized bed seemed to stretch for miles.

"I'll pay you your salary if you don't go to work," Mom offered. "You care more about your job than you care about me."

"That's not true!" I replied. "I just need a break sometimes."

"Well, I need a break, too," she said.

Mom's response made me feel selfish and her neediness made me realize how sick she really was. Still, I secretly hoped I could escape from caretaking for just a few hours and go to work. I despaired about how I would manage Mom's full-time care in the weeks and months ahead. Then I called my boss and told him I could not work that week.

Days Eight and Seven I spent trying to convince the doctor and her staff that Mom required hospice care. At the same time, I found it hard to accept how fast she was deteriorating. She had always bounced back before, even walking on her own after breaking her hip.

By Day Six, I'd finally persuaded the medical world that Mom needed to be on hospice. She hadn't eaten anything since a bite of her pre-breakfast cookie on Day Seven.

"Gloria, if you don't eat or drink you will go to Heaven," the kind German-sounding hospice nurse said.

"I know," Mom replied. She had taken to her king-sized bed by then and wouldn't get out again. She had requested pull-up diapers because she didn't want to have an accident. Now the nurse brought out real diapers for her, saying they were supposed to be easier to change. But left on our own, Hank and I struggled with them. Plus, Mom had refused a hospital bed, which would have helped with the diaper changes. Her king-sized bed seemed to stretch for miles.

Hank joked, "We've got five Masters' degrees between us but we can't figure out how to change an adult diaper." Then we discovered bedsores on Mom's poor bony rump. Our amateur efforts weren't funny after that.

Besides our diaper battles, other instructions from hospice staff confused us or did not exist at all. "We'll send over the morphine and the anti-anxiety medication," they said after quickly demonstrating how to fill an oral syringe. "And we'll deliver the oxygen machine tonight and show you how to use it." Instead, we found a suitcase-sized machine with a bunch of tubes sitting outside her front door.

Luckily, my younger daughter is a nurse. She and her sister caught a flight the day after hospice started. I'm glad they arrived on Day Five when their grandmother, "Gramma," could still talk and tell them how much she loved them.

"You girls are my favorites," she said. It didn't surprise me. Once they were born, I knew where I fell in the family pecking order.

We all huddled on Gramma's bed that night. When she struggled to breathe, we attempted to get her to wear the oxygen mask. She refused, shaking her head furiously as we tried to put it on. We surrendered and propped her up on a triangular wedge pillow instead. My daughter showed me how to operate the oxygen machine and how to put the medications under Mom's tongue.

"We love you, and appreciate all you've done for us," we said. "We'll be OK. We'll take care of each other. You can go whenever you want to. We'll be fine," we lied.

By Day Four, Mom couldn't talk anymore. My brother and I knew she could still hear though, so we talked to her, and reminisced about our childhoods.

"Remember how I broke my leg in third grade when my friend slid into me at home plate?" my brother asked her. "And the coach carried me to your car so you could take me to the hospital?"

"Dad was mad at himself for working late and missing the game," I added. "When he got home that night and saw Hank with his cast and crutches, he started to cry. You were unflappable, Mom."

Days Four, Three and Two passed in a blur of caretaking and sleeping when we could. It was like having a newborn again. I slept on a cot in her room. I tried to anticipate when she needed the morphine to keep ahead of her pain.

Over thirty worried relatives and friends called during these days. We held the phone to Mom's ear so they could say their good-byes. It was cathartic for them, as well as for us, to see how much she was loved. "You were my second mother." "You never gave up on me." "You were my role model." Hank and I heard the same heartfelt comments over and over.

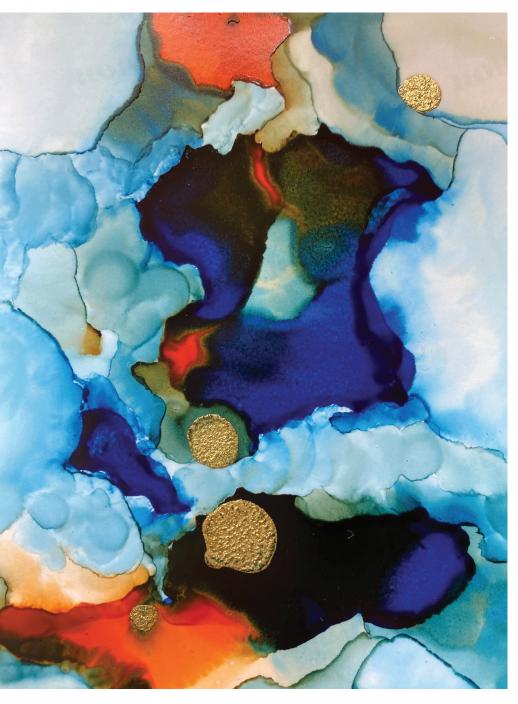
"Sorry, Mom," we told her, "It's another call. You're probably not happy about it, but at least you can't tell us 'No' anymore." We hoped for her sake the end would be soon.

Days Four, Three and Two passed in a blur of caretaking and sleeping when we could. It was like having a newborn again.

Day One. Fabiola, the home health aide, and I dryshampooed Mom's hair and then she gave Mom a sponge bath. Suddenly Fabiola looked stricken. "I think she just stopped breathing," she said. "Miss Gloria, can you hear me?" She checked Mom's chest with her stethoscope, then called in the time of death. "Mrs. Austin passed at 9:30 a.m.," she said, and closed Mom's one half-open eyelid. Fabiola continued to wash and change her, speaking softly to Mom the whole time. I was grateful for her kindness.

"Mom wanted to look good for her trip back to Dad and the rest of the family," Hank and I agreed. Then we hugged and wept, the shell of our mom on her nearby bed. We had done our best to honor her wishes. That was our cold comfort. Our mother's time had finally run out.

For us it was Ground Zero. For her it was Lift Off.



INK ABSTRACT

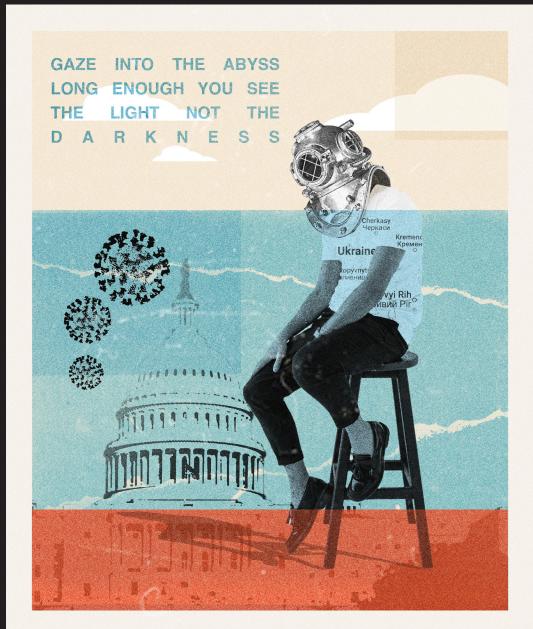
Susan Kogan

Fellow art students and I spent an afternoon playing with alcohol inks on photo paper. Some of our pieces turned out so pretty! And time together turned out to be so important for our friendship.

STAY AFLOAT

Jacob Hartman

Art and graphics give me a way to reach new people. I made this during the pandemic, where everyone needed a moral boost. I wanted to let people know that there's always an upside to every situation. No matter how overwhelming the world might be, if we stay afloat, we're going to make it.



YOU NEED TO KEEP YOUR HEAD UP

THE LIVING VEIL

It was six days ago that I saw it for the first time.

Just before my college classes.

I had been practicing my singing—probing the metal notes of my new chromatic harmonica, searching for a way to give the soul of my inner song a voice.

As always, alone—in my car.

To my left, ever near me, a large hawk sat surveying my progress.

Just as I was leaving for class, the phone rang.

The doctor spoke to me of the results of my biopsy, carefully dancing around giving me a straight answer.

Weary of her polite side stepping, I just asked, "So you are telling me that I have cervical Cancer?"

There was a brief, dense silence. "Yes," she reluctantly continued. "But we don't know what stage yet. More tests are needed, and soon, this is aggressive."

My feet began to take me towards class, they knew before I did what needed to be done.

Her words became the sound of the graveled asphalt, dispelling small rocks and dirt with an ominous crunch.

She was so sorry. I hung up.

The knot that had formed in my chest since I answered her call, reached up through my throat and pulled the tears, like more gravel—liquid stones, from my eyes.

My feet kept taking me to class.

Good feet. Wide. Strong. Grounded.

Holding back the liquid rocks, pushing them back inside, beneath my lids, I dutifully participated in my classes for the day.

I smiled. No one knew.

My feet kept moving me forward.

LEILA KING

There isn't much to say about myself other than I love my three children, adore my sweet dog and sing every chance I get. Everything else I am finds its way into my writing and maybe a poorly played instrument or two.

Driving to work after my classes I didn't sing.

The red light of the traffic light was stuck.

I didn't take notice.

Starring openly at the view before me...

Moonlight Beach, white sand-small glassy shore break.

The train bridge above Hwy 101, Encinitas, my hometown.

How many times had I taken in this view I mulled absentmindedly?

"Syrus." I spoke aloud.

"My girls." I half whispered under my breath, still pushing down those damn liquid stones.

The light, still an unmovable red.

Just then...

How can I describe seeing without sight? To tell you how the view in front of me never changed but became more.

The edges of everything I saw began to breathe, rhythmically pulsating in a slow unison.

Syrus, my beloved brother, was with me, right beside me.

I could feel the warmth of his love as it reached behind my eyes and dissolved each heavy, stone drop of grief.

The sadness became warm and retreated into the snake veins,

Back into my blood.

I blinked to restore clarity to my vision as everything had become fuzzy, blurred and yet I knew I had never seen this clearly before.

Syrus, and God, had gifted me this.

And I knew-This was the Living Veil.

In truth, I was shown it on the night after Syrus had been shot and killed.

I was eighteen and had cried myself to sleep on Syrus's bed, in his trailer.

In my dream Syrus woke me from my sleep. We were in a shapeless place of hazy light. Soft, Light.

He hugged me tightly and I wept. "Please don't go," I sobbed.

He answered simply, "I must, but it will be ok. I love you."

And he released me and walked down a path lined with trees. The type of trees I had never seen before or since.

He was absorbed by that muted, soft light, and then I woke up.

I don't know how long I sat at that red light, or how many dimensions vibrated before my eyes.

I only knew it was the same as I had seen 22 years before, and Syrus was showing me again.

When the light turned green finally, I expected the vision to fade, return to facades.

It didn't.

The days since have been a revelation of essence.

Doctor visits and research have given me something I never wanted to know.

My life expectancy.

In my case, depending upon surgical results, radiation and possibly chemo-

Around 10 years.

Give or take a few reliant upon how well my body "responds" to treatments.

I have learned that I do not care how many years "I have left."

All I want is enough time to make sure my children will have the means to take care of themselves when I am gone.

That is all I pray for.

And while night finds me awake, contemplating the aggressive, lethal and hungry cluster of cells in my body—

It is not with disgust or malice I revel. For I see it all through the veil now.

The Living Veil.

It swells and dips with ardor and envelops every sigh, every groan of pain from my cervix.

Yes, there is pain.

Constant now,

As I can feel it grow, multiply—invade.

People have told me throughout my life that I am cursed.

To write all the horrors and anguish I have had to endure one would think I am a liar.

But those who know.

Who stayed when everyone else abandoned hope (Kevin),

They know the truth of me, as I now know my truth.

Life is death and death is life.

They are the same.

Without the end of something there can be no birth of something else.

In all honesty I am grateful for the knowledge this malignancy has gifted me.

It has not taken my happiness but rather given my joy even more fervordepth-resonance.

The clear, unbridled beauty of this world seethes and glistens all around me,

And I can rest, basking in the sheer grace of the glorious rapture of the Living Veil.



BEFORE BED

Rachel Gama

I am a mixed media artist whose focus is to encapsulate the everyday moments of life through the use of color and composition.

HURT

Jennifer Walston

Jennifer Walston is a researcher and data analyst at UCSD. During quarantine she rekindled her passion for art through the Figure Drawing course series at MiraCosta College. One day she hopes to pursue a career as an artist.



MIRACOSTA COLLEGE

THE ABSENCE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

SERGIO MENDOZA ANTONIO

Sergio is a student majoring in Liberal Arts with an emphasis in Mathematics and Science but enjoys his free time writing. He hopes to transfer to a UC and major in Math and Economics. In his poem, he writes about the current state of the American Dream that needs to be heard.

Desde niños, our parents, mentioned the American Dream

The dream where freedom and equality are the flock of birds settling above the heavens

But name-call us "criminals" and "aliens" of our own land

The dream where every individual should not fear for their safety

But cage our children behind dark, cold bars

The dream that promises all wishes and desires from the thought of one's mind

But shatters the wishes of all Dreamers to pursue higher education

The dream that unfolds uncertainty and drawbacks

But oppresses our families with wages under six dollars in deadly working conditions

The dream that is supposed to be what is

But isn't

Too much, esta sacrificado para el sueño

Para cruzar la frontera

All that is left for our family is the disparity between our culture and loved ones

Para cruzar la frontera

All that is left for our family is the constant tension with paying bills

Para cruzar la frontera

All that is left for our family is being overshadowed by the higher class

Para cruzar la frontera

All that is left for our family is the persistent fear of la migra

Para cruzar la frontera

All that is left for our family is to leave our next generation in this new home to create the impossible and attain something bigger than ourselves

We don't want this prolonged nightmare to continue but to be eradicated and let the American Dream be the dream of dreamers.

Queremos la oportunidad to be unafraid of our families being separated from the government.

Queremos la oportunidad to strive for long-term goals that seem endless

Queremos la oportunidad to have our DACA siblings accomplish things they never imagined doing without the government intervening in their work.

Queremos la oportunidad to have our parents discontinue the longing pain of working hours in the hot sunny fields

Queremos la oportunidad a vivir la vida sin miedo y sin sacrificios.

We want the American Dream to become what our parents once told us as kids

The dream that is so mighty, so true, that it is all

DANDY LIONS

Julia Martinez

Art gives me a voice to express things that I don't always have the words for. It provides a connection to all things, and I have experienced tremendous healing through creating art as it encourages me to share the gift with others. If it makes a person feel, even if they don't like the feeling, or even the art, it has served a purpose. I also like to create art with children, because it is beautiful to witness their creative innocence. To that end, my future goal is to obtain an Art Therapy degree and help children express themselves and work through issues in their life through art.



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JULIE CRUZ

My name is Julie Cruz, and I am now a CSUSM student looking to enter the teaching credential program this upcoming fall. I write in my spare time, and this was an assignment I had been working on for Lit 120.

It wasn't a shock to me when my father started drinking. Sometimes I found myself justifying it. He needs this, I thought. Papi works long hard hours under the sun, so why shouldn't he enjoy his free time drinking a beer or two, I told myself.

It was a Sunday afternoon, his preferred drinking time. The bottle caps were spread across the backyard floor. Soon the botellas began to line up, one after the other; it was like clockwork except it had only been an hour or two. I heard my father talking to my mother. He had a loud stern voice. His voice boomed through my ears, and I knew it would be that kind of night. That night ended with him passing out on the couch. That night my mother went to bed annoyed and frustrated. That night I'd have to leave to avoid this mess. Those nights always began like this.

My father's drunken dance was like a child trying to walk for the first time. He stumbled over his own feet. He'd destroy everything in his path. It was when I knew this was only the beginning. He'd soon start to yell. I always knew the cycle. Next came the endless amount of love that my father never showed sober. My father teared up as he expressed his love for his first-born daughter, but I knew it didn't mean anything, not if he was drunk. Or perhaps it did;

that's what confused me. The endless Modelo cans were scattered in the backyard. The loudspeakers bumped corridos. My father always played these when he was drinking.

I tried to tune it out, the vivid smell of the beer. First, it was one, then two, then three and after awhile, it all started to blur together. His laughter filled the air and so began the scolding my mother gave my father. It was all the same: she would yell at and scold him but forgive him each time. I understood it. She loved him, adored him, so it wasn't a shock when my mother forgave him after he hit me. My mother will always forgive him. She loves him, maybe even more than I.

I tried so hard to forget it. It didn't mean anything, so why are these salty tears filling my pillow? I tell myself, "Don't cry. Don't let him see you cry; he won't care so neither should you."

The thoughts blurred my head, and all I could think of was how much I hated him until the next day when I forgave him because that's all I have come to know. The next day we'd act as if nothing happened, go on of course, and go on to relive the next event. I couldn't help but cry because he's my father, right? As much as I don't want him to be, he will always be.

When the next day arrived, my mother complained and yelled about him. It was a cycle too, though. She would say, "I don't know why he gets like this; you better tell him I'm not talking to him." Then he'd come home, and they would fight and then make up. My father always had a way of making my mother laugh; maybe that's why she forgave him each time. At times even I would forgive him too because, despite all this, he was still my papa. But why couldn't he be the papa all my friends had? Did I not deserve a father like theirs?

April's father adored her. I could tell by the way he answered her, he called her "Mija" and "Princessa" and "Amor." That was something I constantly wished for from my father. My mother said his childhood was rough which was why my father was the way he was. Will that mean I'll end up this way too then? Am I incapable of love because my father showed me no love nor affection? My mother also says we always bump heads because we're so alike. I think she just uses that to excuse his absence in my life.

My father never apologized, unless he knew he did something wrong. That day, he came into my bedroom while I was brushing my hair. I stood in

front of the mirror examining my long thick brown hair, brushing each coat until they were soft, straight strands. He stood by the doorway and took a deep breath, and I felt my mind wander. I knew my mom had put him up to this; she usually did because my father was not one to apologize.

"Mija," he said. I felt my heart break. To be called something so innocent yet sweet was all I ever wanted but not this way. It's an endearing term. When I worked at el mercado the customers would call me "mija" after I helped them with their groceries. They would thank me for my help and say, "Que dios te bendiga mija, muchas gracias," and each time I felt an ounce of pride and respect. This time it was different. This was not like those times. I felt sorrow in those four letters and, when I looked up, tears filled his eyes. He didn't try to hide it, which I admired. I wanted him to feel bad; I wanted him to feel remorse, and yet all I wanted to do was hug him and beg him to love me, to tell me how proud he was.

"Yes?" I spoke. As I uttered those words, all I felt was pain rising in my throat like shards of glass. Thorns wrapped around my throat causing tears to

He is my papa, he raised me, he took care of me, he was supposed to be my world. When I looked at him, I felt his pain. It was as if I could read his thoughts. I knew what he was trying to say but I needed to hear him say it.

form in my eyes. Don't cry, I thought, do not let him see you cry. I blinked away the tears before he could see. I lifted my gaze up once more and watched as he struggled to speak. I guess this wasn't easy for him either. It was like watching a child struggle to catch their breath, but this was no child, this was my papa. I feared he would step any closer. I was not ready to forgive him just yet, but as he stepped closer, I found myself releasing my breath. I hadn't noticed I was holding it. As he sat on my bed, he urged me to sit next to him.

"I'm sorry Julie, por lo que te hice ayer," he said. I sat down next to him despite my brain telling me to stay in my place by the mirror. My heart urged me to listen, and I could not stop the sympathy I felt inside. He is my papa, he raised me, he took care of me, he was supposed to be my world. When I looked at him, I felt his pain. It was as if I could read his thoughts. I knew what he was trying to say but I needed to hear him say it.

"You are my daughter; I love you so much. Don't you love me?" he asked. I couldn't stop myself from wiping my tears. My heart shattered into a million pieces, and my mind went blank. All I could think about was the moment he slapped my face. I had gone outside to tell him to leave my mom alone. I had told him to stop acting so dumb and before I knew it, I felt his hand across my face. My cheek was already warming up from his touch. It wouldn't leave a mark, though. That I was sure of.

I looked up at him again. "Yeah," I said. It wasn't a shock when he asked me if I loved him. He did that, perhaps to reassure himself that I would love myself no matter what he did. As much as I hated the man sitting beside me, I still hated myself even more for wanting his attention and affection. I hated myself even more for the little girl inside me who just wanted her Papi. I felt so dumb wanting his respect and approval. Maybe this is how my mother felt too.

It was a shock to me when he hugged me. Before I knew it, his arms were around me with his hand on my head. He let out a deep breath and hugged me tighter. I felt my arms stiffen against him while anger and frustration flooded my mind. He smelled of soil and sweat but a musk that comforted me. I felt forgiveness creep in, and my body softened until I wrapped my arms around him too. He said nothing, yet I felt everything he needed to say through this hug. I felt his praise and approval through this hug. I felt his warmth and affection, and I felt the recognition I wanted from him was finally in my hands. We stayed like that for a couple of minutes until, finally, we both let go. Without a word, he walked away, and I was left alone.

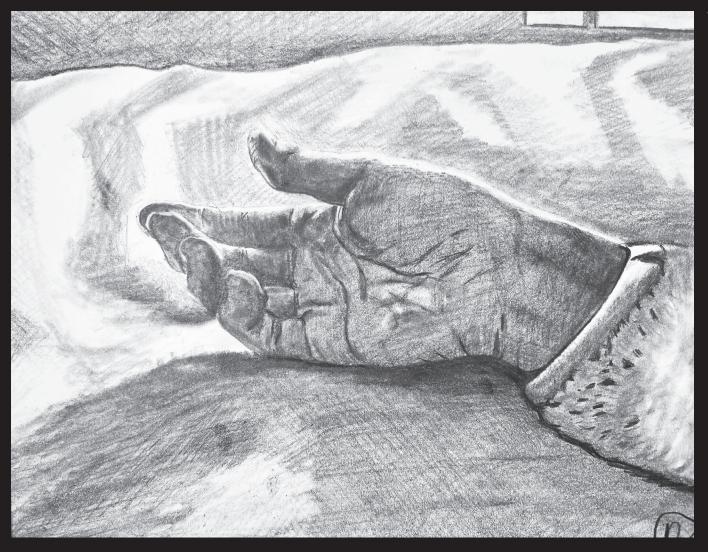
He is my father, and he always will be, even if he continues to break my heart and fix it each time.

SUN DANCE

Mimi Kennedy

Mimi holds a Bachelor's degree from UCSC, and is currently a student at Mira Costa studying Studio Art and Psychology. She is a multimedia artist who has recently reignited her passion for art and changed her career path to pursue a career in art therapy. This piece is of her and her stepfather who passed, celebrating the little moments and making a fading memory last forever.





PEACE

Adriana Rossarolla

My biography about my art career might be different than the majority of artists. I started later, not late. I compiled years of studying human nature. From the deepest fears and the amazing glory of being alive. From loving as an act of need to loving as an act of freedom. I think these are important things to bring to an art expression. I summarize my life's purpose in the words of Willian Blake: "To see the World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour."

JOHN EMERSON

THE VICTORIAN

Faye Stuart wanted to believe in ghosts. She wanted to believe so badly that she found herself staring desperately into the dark corners of her new apartment, waiting for a ghastly face to appear. But where others felt the icy cold feeling of eyes staring at them in an empty room, Faye felt something even more terrifying: no one, not even a spirit, looking her way.

It's something she never thought about back home. She was a casual non-believer. Friends would tell ghost stories and she'd play along, as if she believed. She would wonder if they themselves really did, either. Before her own grandmother had passed, she'd tell stories of the haunted house she grew up in. Faye believed her as a kid, but as she got older, her grandmother's childhood recountings felt more like fables; stories to scare the kids.

It wasn't until she made the big move to San Francisco after finishing four years at Fresno State that she truly considered the possibility of belief in the afterlife where a soul remains in, and continues to present itself in, the physical world.

She began to contemplate this when she found out that her apartment was over one hundred and fourteen years old. She was renting just one room of a beautiful Victorian home in the Lower Haight district of the city which, as she found out upon moving in, had withstood the famous 1906 earthquake that rattled the city and killed over three thousand people.

Cracks in the ornate crown molding and sidepaneled hallways proved her assumption. She could feel and smell the age of the building. Light leaking in through the giant bay windows in the front of the living room felt timeless, like it were the same sunbeams that poured in twenty-five, fifty, one hundred years ago. Who else had enjoyed this home?

She imagined the folks who had lived there back then: who they were, what they looked like, and what they did for work. Did they have families with them? she pondered. Or were they living alone, like me?

Did any of them die in the earthquake? she thought The idea was startling since she had lived her life up until this point in a home built in 1992 by her own father. A death had never occurred there, at least that she knew of.

Even if no one had died during the earthquake or died in her new home at all, Faye came to the conclusion that most, if not all, of the original inhabitants were likely dead. And given such a beautiful location, wouldn't they hang around if they could? That notion brought her to her next, most troubling thought: What if ahosts really are real?

All of those times her friends spoke of seeing, hearing, feeling, or even speaking to ghosts came rushing back to her. Could they have not been lying? Could that have actually happened? Did her grandmother's childhood home really contain all the lost spirits that she used to claim?

A feeling of disappointed exclusion washed over her. It was as if she had been missing out on some of the coolest of life's experiences, in which the dead came back to touch the living, except for Faye Stuart.

To allow herself to believe in ghosts also meant she would be welcoming in the idea that she herself, one day, could walk the halls of her Fresno childhood home for eternity. That thought sent chills down her spine. She had been eager to get out of Fresno for about five years, and now that she had finally managed to secure a paid research internship in the city and leave, the thought of being trapped there forever as a sad, translucent apparition made her stomach sink.

But maybe she could choose where she wanted to haunt. Haunting San Francisco would probably be really fun, although there were probably a lot of angry ghosts upset about the gentrification. Still, that would be better than eternity in Fresno.

Faye spent most of her time unpacking boxes thinking about the afterlife. It was a nice distraction from the confusing homesickness that was beginning to set in. For every belonging that she removed and placed in her room, she imagined where it would go when she died.

A ceramic ballet dancer, gifted to her by some distant relative for a past birthday, made her feel particularly melancholy. She hoped it would end up in the hands of someone who appreciated its beauty the way she did, but there

was no way to be certain. She pictured it being tossed carelessly in the trash after her funeral, its delicate glass legs snapping on its way to the landfill. It would decay in a pile of trash for hundreds of years, lonely and forgotten. She would surely haunt whoever was responsible.

If ghosts were real.

Which, she thought as she placed the ballet dancer on a bookshelf, they probably aren't. Her room was mostly unpacked, so she decided to head out and make small talk with one of her housemates who she could smell was cooking some potent Indian food in the kitchen.

"Hey! The food smells so good!" Faye said, turning the corner into the kitchen.

"I didn't make enough for you," her new roommate, Elouise, said with an uncomfortable grimace. "Sorry."

"Oh, no I—I wasn't saying I wanted—it's totally fine," Faye stumbled.

"I'll be done in like ten minutes if you want the stove, though," Elouise said, stirring the fragrant food in a pan.

"Ok, thanks," Faye said, leaving the kitchen. She concluded that Elouise was probably not the small talk type. She went back to her room and waited to go back out and cook.

She scrolled through her phone while lying on her frameless mattress on the old wooden floor. Photos of her and her mother sent a pang of sadness

through her stomach. She missed the comfort of her home, despite all of the reasons that drove her to leave. In the cold lonely apartment, with this weird housemate, her life at home seemed like it was already a thousand years in the past.

The thing about leaving everyone you seemingly can't stand behind is that you will still create a void. Faye had left her family to escape near constant arguments, to avoid her parents' crushing expectations, to not have to sit by and watch her mother face her father's abusive tirades. As terrible as all of that was, Faye hadn't expected to feel such sorrow once she finally broke free. There was now a gap to fill in her life. What would she do now that she didn't have family nearby to please? Who would she speak to about her budding career? They wrought havoc on her mind, but at the very least, they were people who cared about her.

She continued to scroll for a while, before hearing a creak in the floor outside her room. It sounded like her roommate was standing outside the door. Faye got up off her mattress and opened the door to inspect, but no one was out there.

"Elouise?" she said softly. No reply. She could hear the faint sounds of Elouise eating in the dining room.

She recessed back into her room, slowly closing the door.

Did she imagine it? Or could it have been...

It's not a ghost, Faye. Get over yourself.

Faye had studied psychology in school, and knew that it was more likely to notice things that may support your existing beliefs. As in, she was looking for signs and evidence. She wouldn't let herself fall prey to delusion.

Creeaaak.

The floor creaked again. Faye's heart started to race. She jolted up and swung the door open. Nothing.

She started towards the dining room.

"Elouise, did you hear something walking outside my bedroom?"

Elouise stared at her for a moment before blowing the steam off a bite of food on her fork and eating it. Mouth full, she responded, "the house is like a million years old. It creaks all the time."

"Oh, okay. Sorry," Faye mumbled, turning around to head back to her room.

"But I do think this house is haunted," Elouise said matter-of-factly.

Faye stopped dead in her tracks.

"You do?" she said, turning back around.

"Mmm-hm," Elouise hummed, nodding with another mouthful of food, "it's some old man, I think. I have dreams about him."

"Really?" Faye felt her fearful excitement growing.

"Sometimes he's just talking about random things, and I'm like, what the fuck is this old guy

doing in my dreams? But other times, he talks about how he died, and like how the city was his home, and about his dead wife...it's honestly boring sometimes but I listen cause I don't want him to, like, kill me in my sleep, or whatever," Elouise went on, stirring her steaming food.

"So you think he's...dangerous?" Faye asked.

"God, don't look so scared! I don't actually believe in ghosts. I think it's just my brain playing tricks on me, preying on my fears or something," Elouise laughed.

"Oh, yeah, me too. You're probably right," Faye shrugged.

Faye went to bed that night, only her sixth night in the city, unable to shake the image of the old man with the dead wife haunting her housemate in her dreams. She stared out the window, from which the only view was the siding of the next house over, while listening to every pop and creak in the structure. While pondering the history of the house, she imagined the world of the early 1900s. A certain song popped into her head, a slow swinging jazz song recorded on a phonograph, of which she didn't know the name. She had heard it somewhere in a movie. She pictured the old man and his wife, dancing to that song in her room. It was sweet. She hoped that if he really were a ghost, he and his wife were reunited to spend forever together.

But, she thought, they probably just died. Her whimsical imaginations were extinguished by the part of her mind that led her to the field

of psychology. The part of her that thought rationally. It told her that if she, at twenty-three years old, had not already seen a ghost, then statistically, they do not exist. But, she wasn't satisfied. She couldn't accept that answer. Faye spent the rest of the night tossing and turning and keeping one eye open, just in case.

Finally the sleepless night came to an end with the ringing of her alarm. Faye quickly got ready, brushing her short brown hair and sloppily applying some mascara around her tired eyes. She rushed out the door, determined not to be late to her new job. She made it a few blocks down the street before realizing she wasn't exactly sure where the bus stop was. She knew it was close by, but it was nowhere in sight.

She reached into her pocket to look it up on her phone, but it was empty. She swung her backpack over her shoulder and frantically unzipped it. After rummaging through with no success, she started back to the house for her phone. She ran up the slightly inclined street, which had her winded by the time she got back to her block.

Because all the Victorians looked roughly the same to her, and due to her exhaustion from the night before, she couldn't exactly remember which house was hers. She stepped back to look for her address on the sides of the houses. 1241...1242...1243! There it is.

She looked at the big white house, her eyes glancing up to the big bay windows up above.

Through the bright reflection on the glass of the foggy gray sky above, she saw something.

She saw the face of a sad old man staring back down at her.



A MURDER APPROACHES

Chloe Heidemann

This artwork is inspired by the Goddess Morrígan from Celtic mythology. She is most notably associated with a crow or raven. It was believed that a crow flying above a battlefield was indeed Morrígan herself. Depending on which side you were on determined if that was an impending cruel fate.

SYDNEY CORRELLI

"The Dark House" is a short story I pulled apart from a longer story I'm writing about my life. I use this story as a way for me to work through some of the things that have occurred in my life, and hopefully one day share with others that may have experienced similar situations.

My dad always used to get upset with me when I cried. After a while, I tried everything to avoid tears. Press your tongue to the roof of your mouth, and look up. It seemed to work for a little, until he noticed I wouldn't look at him when he was screaming at me. I started to spend less time with him. When I did get picked up from school to stay the weekend at his house, it was scary. I would dread the moment I had to rush outside of my school's gates to get to his car exactly at 3:10. If I didn't make it there in time, I was already prepared for a guilt trip or manipulation session. Aunty would always make me feel better by taking me shopping or blasting Enrique Inglasies in the car. She was my only peace at the Dark House. Even through all of these moments of anxiety for a seven-year-old girl, I was still daddy's little girl.

Then my brother came along. Not my full biological brother, but my younger half brother. When I held him for the first time, I knew I was meant to be a mother. I cried, just like my dad hated, but I didn't care. My brother was so beautiful, and I can't believe I almost hated him because his birthday is so close to mine. With this first touch on his fresh skin, I knew I'd always be there for him.

The Dark House wasn't just one house. I moved a lot with my dad, while my mom stayed in one house my whole childhood. Every house I lived in with my dad consisted of black out blinds and artificial light. I didn't understand why he did this when I was a kid. I just tended to think he didn't like neighbors looking inside our house. Now, it makes sense why he didn't want people looking in. If our house was made of glass, onlookers would see a sad man. A sad man who would buy the whole family a swimming pool, and the next day stab it with a hot knife. A sad man who would scream at his two-year-old child to stop crying. A sad man who would blame his girlfriend for any minor or major inconvenience, even if she had no ounce of control in the situation. A sad man who made his kids feel like they were never good enough. A sad man who had a temper. A sad man who lived as if he was still a child, bound with the chains of trauma.

Now my youngest sibling was born on the fourth of July. A day for celebration. A new daughter. Maybe one who would redeem the things I couldn't do. She had a light in her eyes that instantly told me she was going to be a fighter. She wouldn't be like me. She was going to be sassy, energetic, and creative. She would have a laugh to brighten up a room. With this first touch on her fresh skin, I knew I'd always be there for her.

I knew I had to be there for my siblings. I knew I had to teach them how to navigate around the Dark House. I knew they could try and be the right children for my father, and maybe he wouldn't hate them as much as it seemed he hated

me. Press your tongue to the roof of your mouth, and look up. Glue them together to make them stronger, and take him head on.

If I wasn't enough for him,
What makes me enough for anyone else?
He hated me,
I think because I reminded him of himself.
I don't think I'll be enough for anyone else.
Ever.

It's like touching a hot stove,
And first you don't realize the pain,
But then it hurts,
And blisters,
And stays with you as a scar.

I now carry that scar with me, Everyday, Thinking I'll never be enough for anyone else.

> My friends, My family, Men.

Because it all started with him.

If I wasn't enough for him,

What makes me enough for anyone else?

As a kid, I didn't understand why my father treated me the way he did. I would sit alone in my dark room in the Dark House and question myself. As young as eight years old. I didn't know what I said or did to make my father react. He would just explode. Tell me and my brother we were doing everything wrong. We were children.

I can feel the hurt inside my chest now. I would lie in my twin bed in tears and look up at the ceiling, holding my tongue to the roof of my mouth in case he entered. I felt so alone there. Always.

He never physically hurt me. He threw a chair at my brother once. When my full brother was a child he was diagnosed with Autism. Aspergers, to be exact. He didn't understand things the way neurotypical people did. This would often anger my dad, and he would blow his temper fast. I soon started to be extremely overprotective of my brother, but not in a good way. I would tell him when to speak and what to say, afraid that if he did the wrong thing my father would react negatively. Looking back, I regret ever doing this, because it's affected almost every relationship I've had. My brother resented me for a long time because I did this, which is understandable.

Press your tongue to the roof of your mouth, and look up.

I stood at the end of this dark hall, holding my two-year-old brother, screaming, and waiting. I don't know what I was waiting for, but I waited.

He never physically hurt me. But he put his hands on my step mom once. Multiple times, actually. My step mom is one of my best friends. Unfortunately she's only in my life because my father decided to cheat on my mother with her. Of course I didn't know that when we met. I call her Aunty, because she's from Hawaii and that's just what you call your parents "friends." She got introduced to me as Aunty, and it stuck. She's been in my life for as long as I can remember. I love her so much.

She never made me feel judged, and she always tried to help me understand my emotions when I was growing up. Sometimes, we just had a wall put between us because she doesn't understand the way my father has hurt me. She is too blinded by her love for him. Even when he's hit her. When my father, stepmom, and two half siblings still lived in the States, I went over to the Dark House every other weekend. At least for most of my life. There was a period of time when my father manipulated me so much to hate my mother, and move in with him. I would say that was the lowest point of my childhood.

Besides the point, at least I had Aunty. She was so devoted to my father, and I never understood it. He treated her like shit. He would lock himself in his room for three days at a time, texting her every few hours to remind her how much of a horrible human being she was. I never knew if this was the Bipolar Disorder, or him just being an asshole. Now I believe it's both, mixed with a little trauma. I was always there for her, a shoulder to cry on. Again, for as long as I can remember, I was helping everyone around me, but myself.

The worst memory I have occurred in the Dark House off Warmlens Road. My half sibling was only two, and I must have been at most ten. Aunty and my father had been fighting, but I don't remember what about, like most of their altercations. All I remember is holding my brother with tears streaming down his face, and mine as well. He was wailing in my arms, wanting to crawl to the end of the dark hallway into the bedroom that my father and Aunty occupied. I had to take care of him, and I knew this was not a good fight. I stood at the end of this dark hall,

holding my two-year-old brother, screaming, and waiting. I don't know what I was waiting for, but I waited. Hearing the screams and cries from both my father and Aunty in the bedroom, waiting. Through all of the overstimulation going through my head, I heard a loud slap. A slap that sounded like a fight scene I saw on TV once. Silence followed.

I don't remember what happened after that, but I remember that was the first time I knew my dad physically hurt her. The first time I realized it, I really hated him. I don't want to be pushed around anymore, I don't want to be called nasty names. An endless sea of hopelessness, Waiting for you to change. Waiting for you to love me how you used to. We never got married, I just sit here with a rock on my hand A rock that feels like a thousand pounds And it seems like an enchantment has been placed on it. Impossible to take off. I don't want the kids to see us fighting. The screaming, The bruises, But I can't seem to escape. Imprisoned by my own mind, And your promises. Let me go. Please let me go.



Chloe Heidemann

This piece is meant to express feeling extremely overwhelmed. It can feel too intense for your brain to handle at times, leaving you disorientated. Rather than "putting it into words," as the saying goes, I have put it into art hoping to convey this feeling with others.



ADDY JANSSEN

ACROSS THE VALLEY

CHAPTER 1

Presently

Nobody believes you. Those three words echo in my head as I sit in the chair of an empty, dull-looking waiting room. I anxiously await my first meeting with the court-ordered counselor, attempting to push any images of the incident out of my brain and compartmentalize them into one small shoebox to leave untouched on the top shelf of a tiny closet, buried in the depths of my mind. If only it were so simple to leave these things unsaid, but it becomes increasingly difficult to suppress the memories when I am constantly required to share my side of the story.

I get pulled out of my thoughts by a door abruptly swinging open and a sharply dressed woman peeking around the corner. She glances at me and then motions for me to follow her into a long hallway of tall wooden doors. We quietly make our way down the corridor, then settle on the very last door on the right. As we make our way inside, she slowly closes the door behind us, careful not to let it make any creak.

"I'm Doctor Josephine Wood," she says, quickly shaking my hand and taking a seat on a rather large leather chair. I take my seat on the tight, velvet green couch directly across from her, with an uncomfortably close range of space between us of about two feet. The distant buzz humming from the vents in the waiting room can faintly be heard over the lack of dialogue between us. The silence is blaring, causing my head to pound so aggressively that I am convinced this woman can hear it beating herself.

It is difficult to maintain eye contact with the earnest woman in front of me. I feel like I am inside of a fishbowl, on display for her. Or like a zoo animal behind a cage and I am waiting for her to throw peanuts and howl at me to entertain her. I know that she knows about my story, About my case. I don't doubt she has read about me in the media, and what everybody is saying about me. The things that I have done. Before I have gotten the chance to claim my innocence, she has already made her conclusions about me. She made them before I shook her hand to introduce myself, and well before I even walked through that door, into her incredibly unwelcoming office.

The room goes silent for what seems like a dramatically long time. I feel those eyes peering into me, watching every small facial gesture or body movement I make. The intensity is enough to make my palms sweat despite the overwhelming cold draft floating around in this small, dimly lit room. I remember what it feels like sitting in her seat, asking the questions. It feels demeaning to sit on this side now. To not only

lose my license, but to be forced into the role as a patient. It is soul-crushing.

"Look, you and I both know why you are sitting here today. We can't change the events that took place, but we certainly can work towards accepting what happened. But to do that, we need to be open to discussing the hard stuff," she says with a smooth tone yet a patronizing look on her face. I can taste the fake sincerity in her voice. Or, perhaps the artificial scent of lilies coming from the single wall plug-in air freshener actively polluting the only breathable air in this room is finally getting to me.

I blankly look at her while clenching my jaw and leaning forward in my seat. At this point, I am getting agitated. A knot forms in the back of my throat and I feel my skin starting to flush. This woman has no clue what I went through. Nobody does. No doctor or professional can begin to understand the story I have to tell. What happened cannot be explained by DSM-5 evaluations or psychiatric treatments. It was real. She was real.

"You won't believe me," I challenge. "It doesn't matter who I tell, because nobody is willing to believe me."

"And, what won't I believe, Charlotte?" Forget it. She isn't different from the others.

She won't be the first to actually listen. "It doesn't matter," I huff and lean back in my seat.

How do I even begin to defend myself after intentionally killing someone? And how could anyone ever comprehend why she made me do it?

CHAPTER 2

Several months earlier

"Small cappuccino for Charlotte!" A small woman with green hair yelled over the noise of coffee grinders and blenders to a sea of people in business casual attire. I politely maneuvered through the crowd and up to the stand where I saw the little cup with my name scribbled diagonally on the side. I thanked her for the cup and received a gentle nod and smile in return, as she made her way back to the madness of morning rush-hour coffee.

The little bell above the door jingled as I made my way outside, and I felt the chill air slightly breeze around me as I realized I did not bring a proper coat for the imminent change of autumn weather. Without paying attention, I nearly collapsed into twin girls running and laughing into the coffee shop with their parents walking close behind them. The woman who I assumed was their mother gave me a quick but sincere apology as she darted inside to tame them.

I always loved this time of year. There was something so special about watching the leaves change into those deep reds and yellows, covering the streets entirely. Despite being underdressed, I loved how the crisp morning air felt while enjoying my coffee before making my short commute to work. These small moments brought me joy. As I hopped into my car, I couldn't help but feel extreme abundance for the life I had here and getting to work in the field that I did. I felt empowered.

I started with a new client that day. The parents who contacted me gave hardly any information about their little girl's case. I was only informed in an email that she was recommended psychotherapy and needed to begin Monday. I enjoyed working with children the most out of all the clients I took on. They always offered the most fascinating insight into the thought patterns and behaviors they experienced. I often believed the children I worked with were more emotionally attuned than most adult patients I saw. Many of the adults I worked with found it difficult to even accept the deeper reasoning behind why they felt what they felt. From experience, children often had their experiences severely neglected. I guessed that explained why their symptoms remain overlooked until seeing me.

After pulling myself out of these thoughts, I entered the facility where I worked and unlocked the door to my office. I turned the lights on and cleared my desk of the miscellaneous files that I left for "the next day" to organize and will inevitably leave again for "tomorrow". I took out my laptop and began arranging my agenda for the week ahead. After my planning, it was time to meet my new client.

I walked through the corridor over to our separate waiting room, where I first laid eyes on a very tired-looking woman. Her petite frame was enveloped by a thick cream cardigan and her hair was clipped back, leaving a few pieces framing her gaunt face. Next to her sat a young blonde girl intently focused on a picture book titled "Flowers of Spring", a

detailed image of a lily of the valley taking up the front cover. The woman looked up at me from where she was sitting, then immediately rose to her feet and walked over to me with her hand out.

"Doctor Charlotte?" the woman pressed.

"You must be Enid. It is a pleasure to meet you," I replied, shaking her hand. Her eyes were hollowed in her skull with dark circles forming around them. She looked completely exhausted. I looked down at the small girl who now had the book closed and her gaze on me. She quickly looked away when I caught her eye.

"This is my daughter, Lilith. We were referred by her psychiatrist who suggested we come to you in addition to her medications."

"It's nice to meet you, Lilith," I said while bending down to her height. She held a timid expression as she backed her body behind her mom, grabbing her mother's hand. I stood back up and smoothed the wrinkles from my pants. "We will be bringing her back to our healing playroom where she will get acquainted with the space, and we can familiarize ourselves with each other in my office," I smiled at her.

After situating her daughter, I took the woman back into my office. She sheepishly sat on the sofa as I took a seat next to my desk. I watched her as she examined the room around her, taking in the shelves full of books, the plants that resided in every corner, and the art leaving no clear wall space. I offered her a cup of tea, but

she politely declined. I poured myself a cup and then initiated the conversation.

"Please share with me what's going on," I requested, taking a sip of my tea. She hesitated for a moment, almost like she was trying to find the right words to use.

"My daughter...something is going on with Lilith. She was diagnosed with bipolar disorder a while back. It was manageable for a long time and the medication she was on before seemed to be working. But I don't know what has been happening with her over the last month. It seems like she has regressed. I stay up with her almost every night now because she can't fall asleep. She either has horrible tantrums or she goes mute and refuses to speak to us. I'm trying my best to understand her disorder, but I am struggling," she paused and inhaled deeply. She was trying her hardest to hold back tears, but they started slipping down her cheeks. I handed her a tissue, and she proceeded to wipe her face. When she didn't continue, I spoke up.

"Finding the right treatment that works can be a long process of trial and error, especially as your daughter is experiencing severe symptoms of mania. I will do my best to provide her with therapy that hopefully helps her with the extreme behaviors and mood swings she has been experiencing." I gave her a sympathetic smile and she slowly nodded her head with sad eyes. "Your patience matters a great deal in this process."

After escorting her back to the waiting room, I made my way inside the room where Lilith was. I opened the heavy wooden door to see her sitting at the miniature table, scribbling on a piece of paper with a violet crayon. She wasn't drawing anything in particular, but instead covered the whole sheet in purple.

"Is purple your favorite color?" I inquired.

"No." She stated firmly without taking her eyes off the paper. I walked closer to the table and then took a seat next to her. I saw the crayon which was once sharp, now a shortened stub.

"What is your favorite color?" I pressed further.

"Yellow."

"Why did you choose purple?" I asked but she didn't answer me this time. I decided to drop the topic. "I'm Doctor Charlotte. Do you know why you are here, Lilith?" Again, she didn't respond so I decided to continue, "I'm going to help you through the big things you've been experiencing. Do you want to tell me about what has been happening?" She stopped coloring.

"I can't sleep," she muttered, looking up at me with an expressionless face.

"Do you want to tell me why you can't sleep?" I encouraged. I tried my best to get her as comfortable with me as I could. Children can take a while to open up, and I don't blame them. Nobody wants to talk about the things they are struggling with to a complete stranger. And as

I expected, she softly shook her head "No" and picked up the crayon again to keep scribbling. I resorted to a new strategy to get her to start feeling comfortable with me.

"Do you like to play any games?" She thought about it for a brief moment, tilting her head and poking her tongue out.

"I like to play line tag at school." I knew what line tag was, but I asked her to describe it anyway. "It's a game where you... where someone is it and then we're on the basketball court where the lines are, and you have to stay on the lines while you get chased," she finished, all while continuing to cover more white space with the purple wax.

"That sounds like a fun game," I told her with an eager tone, but she didn't look up at me. "Are there any other games you like to play?" I scooted closer to her.

"Red light, green light," she stated.

"I like that game too." She continued focusing on the paper in front of her, forcing what was left of the crayon onto the page. "What about hide-andseek?" She looked at me this time. "Do you like to play hide-and-seek?"

"Yes," she said with a small grin. Her full attention was on me now. I knew I was getting somewhere and I felt encouraged to keep this exchange going in an attempt at building some sort of relationship with her. I leaned forward a bit. "What do you like more? To be the hider or the seeker?"

"The hider."

"I think I like to be the seeker more." I smiled, and she smiled back. I noticed she was missing a front tooth on her bottom row.

"Do you have lots of dreams?" she asked, pulling my attention away from the details of her smile. I was surprised by her expressing more interest in the conversation. I didn't usually have a breakthrough this quickly when working with adolescents.

"Yes, I do."

"I do too," she said while focusing her attention on the ground and fidgeting her feet.

"How do you have lots of dreams when you're having trouble sleeping?" I asked with a hint of humor in my tone. Her smile faded though. I felt a shift in attitude from how our conversation was previously going. Her feet stopped moving and she looked around the room, then settled her gaze back on me. "What do you dream about?" I asked, breaking the silence. She seemed hesitant as if she was beginning to feel uncomfortable with me again. I decided to leave that subject behind, as I could tell she didn't want to speak on it, and I wanted to respect her boundaries.

The rest of our session was filled with random discussion here and there, mostly coming from my end. It was clear she wasn't fully trusting me yet, but we made a start today and a pretty good one, at that. I felt confident we could make progress here. As I started wrapping up our final exchanges, I remembered the book she had with her in

the waiting room. I noticed it under the almost completely shaded paper she created. I grabbed it for her as we both stood up to exit the room.

"I saw the flower you were looking at earlier. A lily of the valley," I commented as I reached for the door handle.

"She gave me one in my dream," she remarked.

I looked at her with confusion. But before I had
the chance to ask her what she meant, she had
already darted out the door to where her mom was
standing at the end of the hallway.

"Thank you, we will see you next week," Enid declared, as the two of them walked out of the building. I was left there in the hallway, thinking about what she said to me. She gave me one in a dream. I had a foreboding feeling in the pit of my stomach that I couldn't shake.

ZGUIDELINES

Tidepools publishes original creative writing (fiction, poetry, essays, comics, spoken word, and screenplay) and artwork (painting, drawing, graphic design, photography, mixed media). You may submit in more than one genre but must follow the submission guidelines detailed below. MiraCosta students, faculty, staff, and alumni are all eligible to submit work. Please do not put your name in your file, as all submissions are read blind. Identifying contact info should only be included in the submission cover sheet at miracosta.edu/tidepools.

Tidepools is always open for submissions, and submitting is always free. At the end of MiraCosta's fall semester in December, all work submitted during that calendar year will be considered for publication in the following spring.

All submissions selected for publication will appear in the print journal and online at the Tidepools website, and may also be featured on the journal's social media: @tidepoolspublishing. Published creators will be asked to sign a traditional publishing contract.

POETRY: 5 poem limit, can't exceed 2 pages

VISUAL ART: 3 piece limit

SCREENPLAYS: 1500 word limit

COMICS: 10-panel limit

FICTION & ESSAYS: 1500 word limit

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vorite plac eckers. But something about the Stion makes it stick in my head, ve year of eatitopla at the time nging and countin mything. We're heading ur grandma's cabin in ne heaviest winter I've memories behind to wan ng snowed for almost a us, eat Goldfish cracker orld in a four-foot tall, Bingo and Rubber Neck aybe that's not a lot of ambiguity of this quest ed so much snow in trip down a bumpy dirt road leading into Bodie, making it so that it no longer rolled do little town called Tonopah, Nevada," Daddy , the smile clear in his words even thoug can't see his face from my seat. "It's an old town that grew to be one of the largest cities

