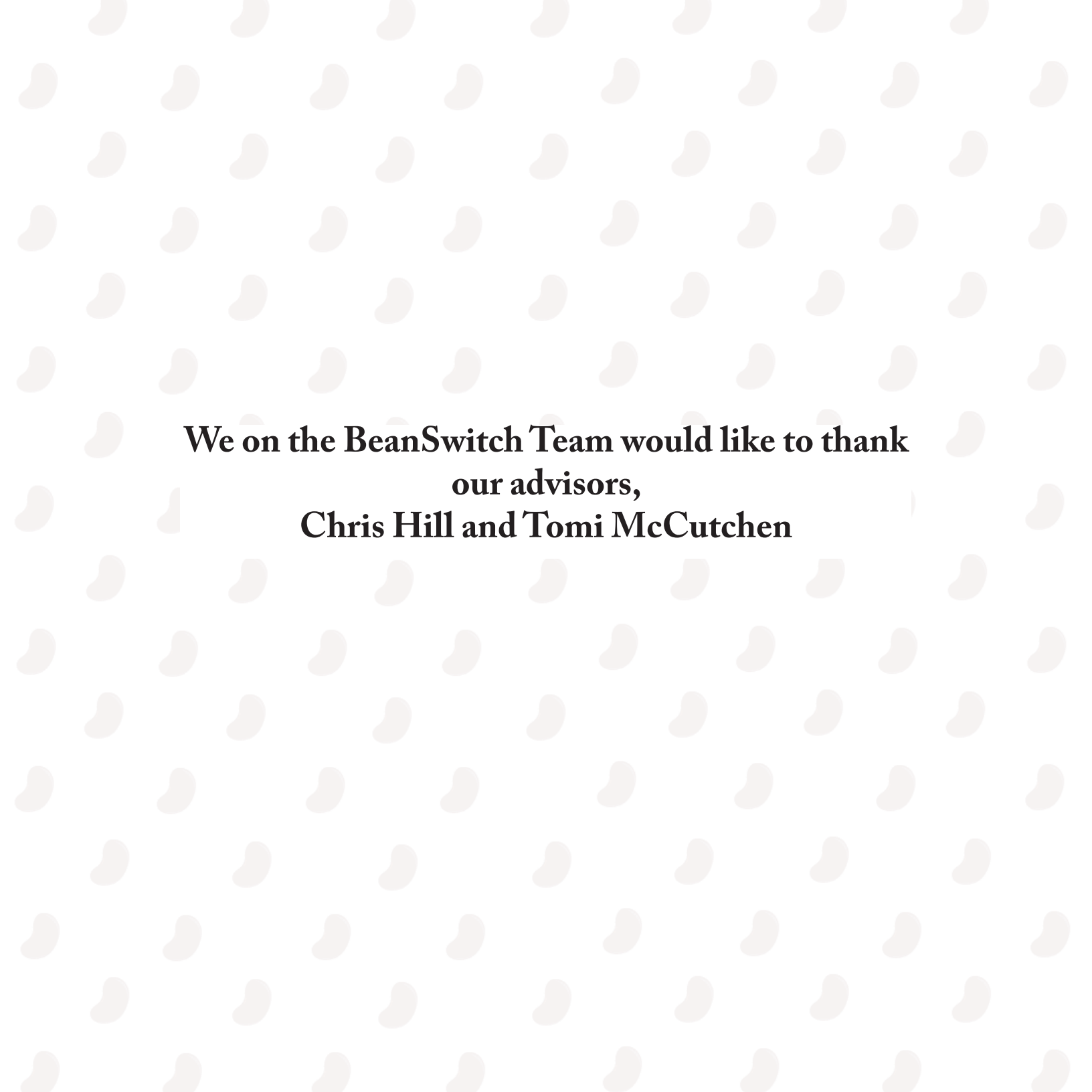


Spring 2020

BeanSwitch

Literature and Fine Arts

COUGHS



**We on the BeanSwitch Team would like to thank
our advisors,
Chris Hill and Tomi McCutchen**

THE BEANS



Anna Sison
Graphic Design Major



Alex Halbrook
English Major
French Minor



Aly Rusciano
English Major
Theatre Minor



Hailey Slaughter
English Major
Communications Minor



Zhariah Peaks
History Major
English & German Minor

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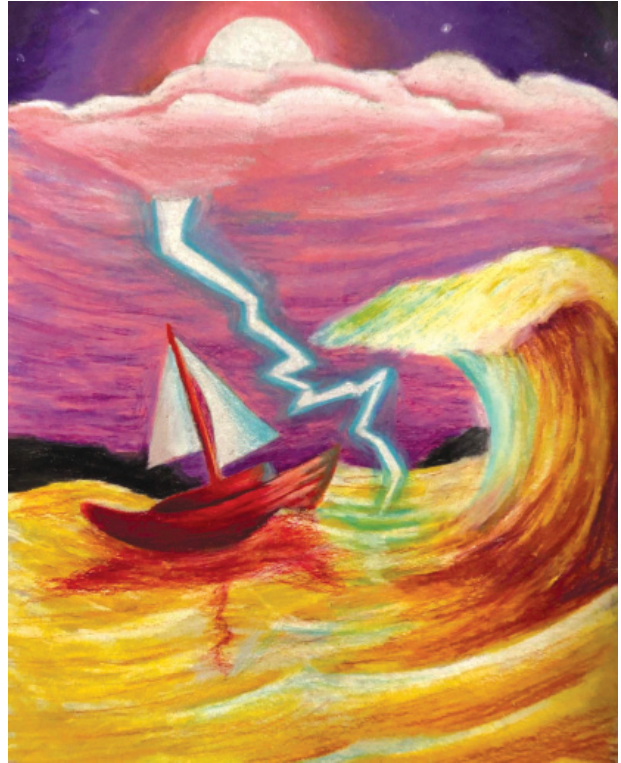
Katherine Knowlton
“Spring Blossoms”
Photography



Praise Pettes
“Homecoming”
Graphic Art



Dylan Schaefer
"Into the Storm"
Colored Pencil



Julie Mosley
"Shitty Service"
Charcoal



Dylan Schaefer
 "Have It Your Way"
 Colored Pencil

"Ode to Spam: A Collection of Short Poems"
 Zhariah Peaks

Pink mystery mass
 I can't afford real meat.
 Such is college life

Gelatinous goo
 Spam, like the mail from my school
 ignored and despised
 by those who lack good taste and
 those with high cholesterol

A ripe body
 when salted and ground
 can closely resemble
 my beloved Spam.

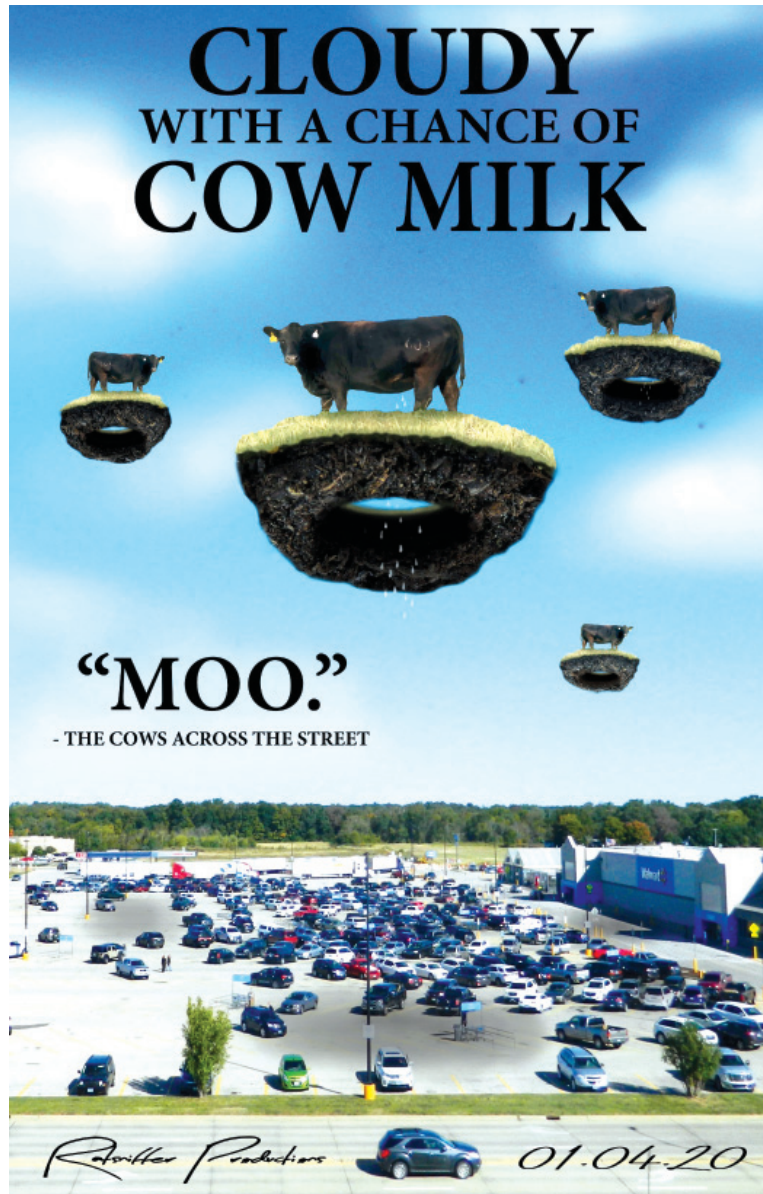


Alex McNeal
"A Fancy Lad"
Mixed Media



Isaiah Kennedy
"Disconnection"
Mixed Media

Bailey Radnitzer
“Cloudy With A Chance Of Milk”
Graphic Art



The Giraffes Got Out Again
Abigail Honbarger

As Leo's jeep rounded the corner into the neighborhood, he counted the number of necks sticking up from behind his backyard fence. They stood against the sky like towering orange jigsaw puzzles. Counting three, Leo held his breath until the last one crept out from behind an acacia tree. All was well.

Stella came out of the house to meet him as he pulled into the driveway. She had her hands on her hips, and her lips were drawn tight. All wasn't well.

"The giraffes got out again," she said.

Leo grabbed his safari hat from the passenger seat. "But I just fixed the gate. How'd they do it this time?"

"They made the calf do it. He undid the latch with his tongue."

Leo laughed. "They're conspiring against us."

"It's not funny!" Stella said. "Maybe they need to go back."

"On a ship for three months? No way!"

"They don't belong in Nebraska."

"Well, according to the poachers they don't belong in Kenya either."

The two locked eyes, each threatening the other to speak.

"I'm just tired of the neighbors calling to say your giraffes are tearing up their yards again," said Stella.

"Our giraffes," Leo said. "Besides, I'll find a way to keep them in."

Stella squinted her eyes at him, daring him

to lie again. He kissed her forehead.

"I promise," he said.

Stella took a deep breath, and her eyes drifted to the backyard.

"Then you better get started," she said. "There goes Geoffrey."

Twisting his head around, Leo spied the tan-orange patchwork of lanky giraffe legs wandering across the front lawn and into the street. He cursed under his breath and abandoned his hat darting after the animal. He waved his arms in the air to catch the beast's attention.

"Geoffrey!" he said. "Over here!"

With a swish of his tail, Geoffrey sauntered away from Leo between the carefully groomed lawns and white picket fences lining the road. Cars veered off into unsuspecting driveways, endeavoring to avoid the creature.

"Leo, catch!" said Stella.

She was standing on the front porch, an apricot in her hand. She tossed it to Leo who turned just in time to clutch it in the palm of his hand.

"Make sure the others stay put!" Leo said to her.

Then he went racing down the street after Geoffrey. By the time he reached the giraffe's side, he was panting for air. He jogged to keep up with the creature's step.

"Geoffrey, down here!" he said. "Time to go home!"

Geoffrey's nose must have been three times as high as Leo's as he waggled the apricot from below. The giraffe snorted, gazing over the tops of cookie-cutter houses. Leo couldn't tell if he wasn't noticing him or if he was pretending not to notice him. A woman down the street screamed for her children to

come inside. Leo's stomach went sour.

"Come on, Geoffrey," he said. "Please?"

As soon as he'd said it, Geoffrey spotted the apricot in Leo's outstretched fingers. He bent his long neck toward the sweet item, rounding on Leo faster than a cheetah in a Ferrari. The average reaction time of a human is one-fourth of a second, but in this moment, it wouldn't have done Leo any good even if his reaction time had been twice as fast. If he hadn't shut his eyes, he would have been able to make out every hair on Geoffrey's snout when it plowed into him. His chest heaved for the air that had been forced from his lungs by the pavement cushion beneath him. The wind from Geoffrey's nostrils tickled his hands as he sniffed for the apricot. Leo stuffed it under his shirt.

"Not yet!" he said.

Geoffrey badgered him with his purple tongue until his face and shirt were dripping with giraffe saliva. Leo thought it smelled like a spinach and landfill sandwich. Stella was going to love that.

It took him five or six times to get himself on his feet before he could lead the giraffe back the way they came.

"What's the matter with you, Geoffrey, huh?" he asked.

He tried to rub the soreness out of his back as Geoffrey stared at the apricot. He followed in silence, neck hunched over so that his head was level with the man's.

"You've got plenty to eat, don't you?" asked Leo. "And sunshine?"

Geoffrey clicked his hooves against the pavement and reached for the apricot with his tongue. Leo passed the fruit to his other hand. The giraffe's gaze followed it.

"So what's the big idea? Do you get bored?"

A low hum played from Geoffrey's elongated throat, the tone of wanting Leo recognized for the apricot. Just ahead, his backyard fence beckoned him forward like a blazing fire in a snowstorm. Then Geoffrey nipped the apricot out of his hand. It passed through the giraffe's jaws in an instant.

"You didn't even taste that!" said Leo.

He held his hands up in betrayal and exasperation, as if his favorite football team had just lost the Super Bowl. Then the towering beast broke into a gallop, careening toward the backyard—toward his wife.

"Stella, look out!" he said.

He swears to this day that his heart skipped two



Brandy Gaul
"Monochromatic Still Life"
Painting

beats as Geoffrey barreled at Stella. But without a moment of hesitation, she stepped out of the way, swinging the gate open wide. The giraffe thundered inside. Leo rushed up to help her push the door shut and firmly latch it.

"How did you get him to go inside like that?" asked Stella.

"What? Leo's face went blank. "How did you get him to go inside like that?"

"I didn't get him inside."

"Well, I didn't get him inside."

Stella and Leo eyeballed each other for a moment.

"Do you think he went in by himself?" asked Stella.

Leo stared off at something invisible. "Well, after the apricot..."

The realization hit him and Stella at the same time.

"You give him an apricot every time he gets out," she said.

Leo puts his hands on his head. "So he thinks..."

"...every time he gets out..."

"...he gets a treat. Like a game!"

Stella crossed her arms and clinched her teeth.

"You've trained our giraffe to be an escape artist."

Leo bit his lip, but then Stella threw her head back and laughed.

"I'll bet there's only one man on the whole planet who's taught a giraffe to break out!" she said.

Clutching her stomach as she giggled, she wheezed for air. Leo smiled, and his eyes danced, wondering if he should worry. He thought maybe he'd broken her. Then she clasped his shoulder and looked at him with huge eyes.

"We're gunna need more apricots," she said.



Anna Sison
“Marlbrain Carton”
Graphic Art



Images
Kaylyn Campbell

Slipping through my fingers like sands,
Too many to grasp, too little to hold onto –
The faces, the words, the voices,
The movements in blurred vision
Carried away on the wind...

Scratching my skin with icy sting,
Warming my hands with the sun...
Etching marks, speckled prints that last
Long after the wind dies.

What colors will shine,
What melody will rest,
When the hour glass is nearly done?



Michael Hinnant
“Amalgam”
Digital Art

9:35 a.m.
Shannon Merrell

Classrooms filled with children's laughter
fading quickly to screams of terror.
Hallways echo with shots fired,
and children huddle together in corners
finding comfort as best they can.

But you—you know this story,
woke up to it as you scrolled through
your newsfeed, clicking on comments
long enough to type your
“thoughts and prayers.”

Twenty kids herded to the back
of the classroom, unknowingly,
like cattle to the slaughter by teachers doing
their best to protect. One child screams,
“Help me, Help me! I don't want to be here!”

Someone in the comment section advocates
gun control, but you say, “Not now.
It's not the right time.” More
“thoughts and prayers” float by
becoming thousands.

Another child plays dead underneath
and surrounded by her friend's
bodies, bloody on the floor.
First graders, still babies, really,
dead by gun violence.

“It's the person, not the gun,”
you say. “Put GOD back in schools,”
you say. But please let's not talk about “it”.
If twenty dead first graders
can't convince you then
how the fuck can I?

(Quotes taken from actual Sandy Hook surviving children)



Chelsea Willis
“I'm The One Who Nailed The Nails”
Painting



Megan Bailey
"Paroxysm of Despondency"
Ink

A Good Mother is Hard to Find

Shannon Merrell

She stumbles home, clothes loose over bone.
Whiskey stained clothes; meth drips from her
veins
like mother's milk and she can't stand still.
She deserves to have this. One night—one fucking
night.
Because she's a good mother.

Something forgotten, she stumbles to the door.
Fidgeting, scratching sores until they bleed
like lies that have become her truth.
She sings, "Hush little baby, don't say a word...",
fumbling her key into the lock.

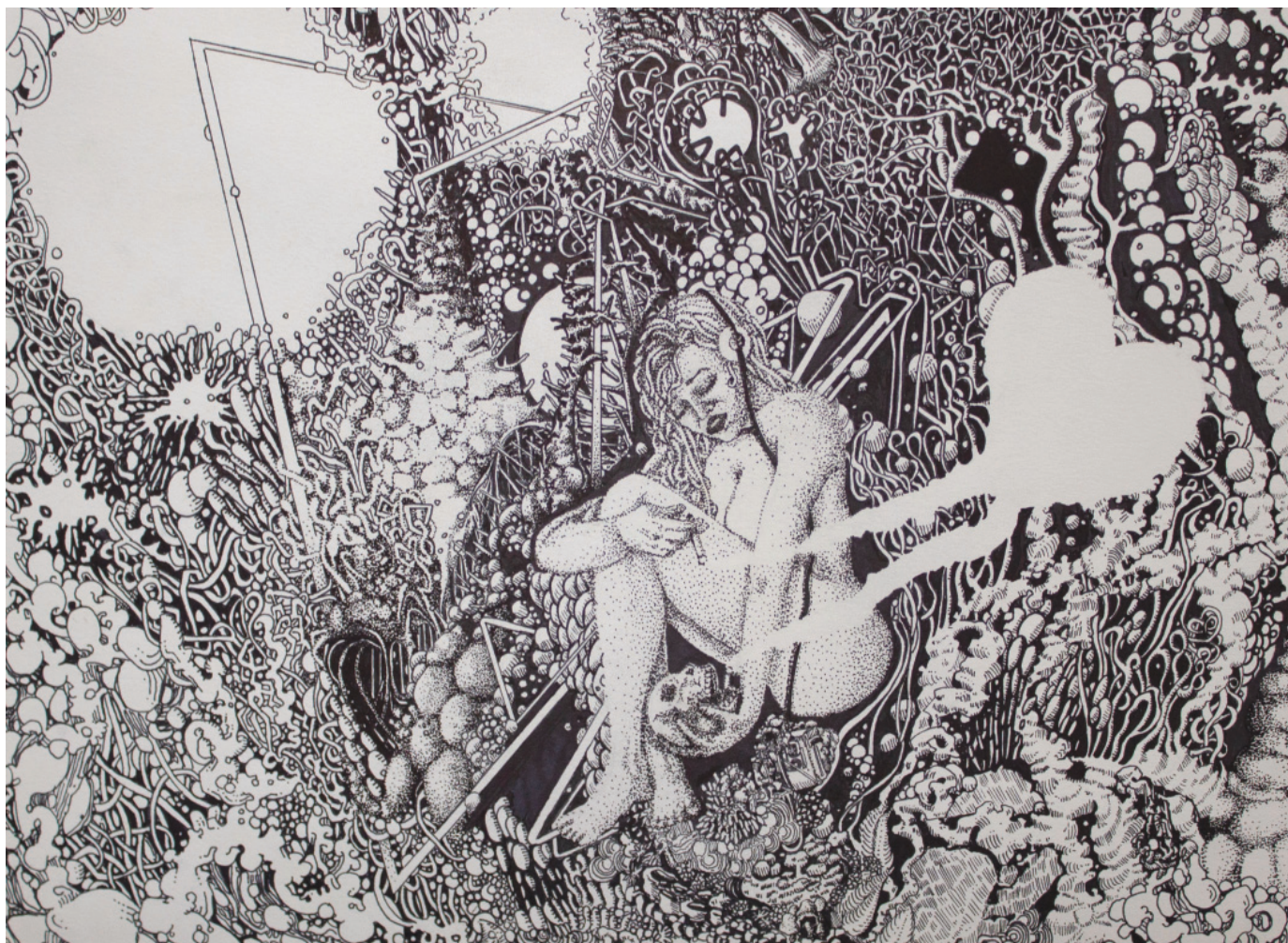
Dishes piled high, the sweet, rotten stench
of trash makes as she slides down the door, closing
it,
to the floor. She mumbles incoherently, grinding
her teeth
to the lullaby hovering like a shadow over the door
at the end of the hallway.

Inching her way across the hallway, sliding against
cold linoleum, the door at the end of the hallway
looming
straight ahead, standing still. Her eyes, deep hol-
low sockets
twitching in her skull as she tries desperately to
remember.
The lullaby waits by the door at the end of the
hallway.

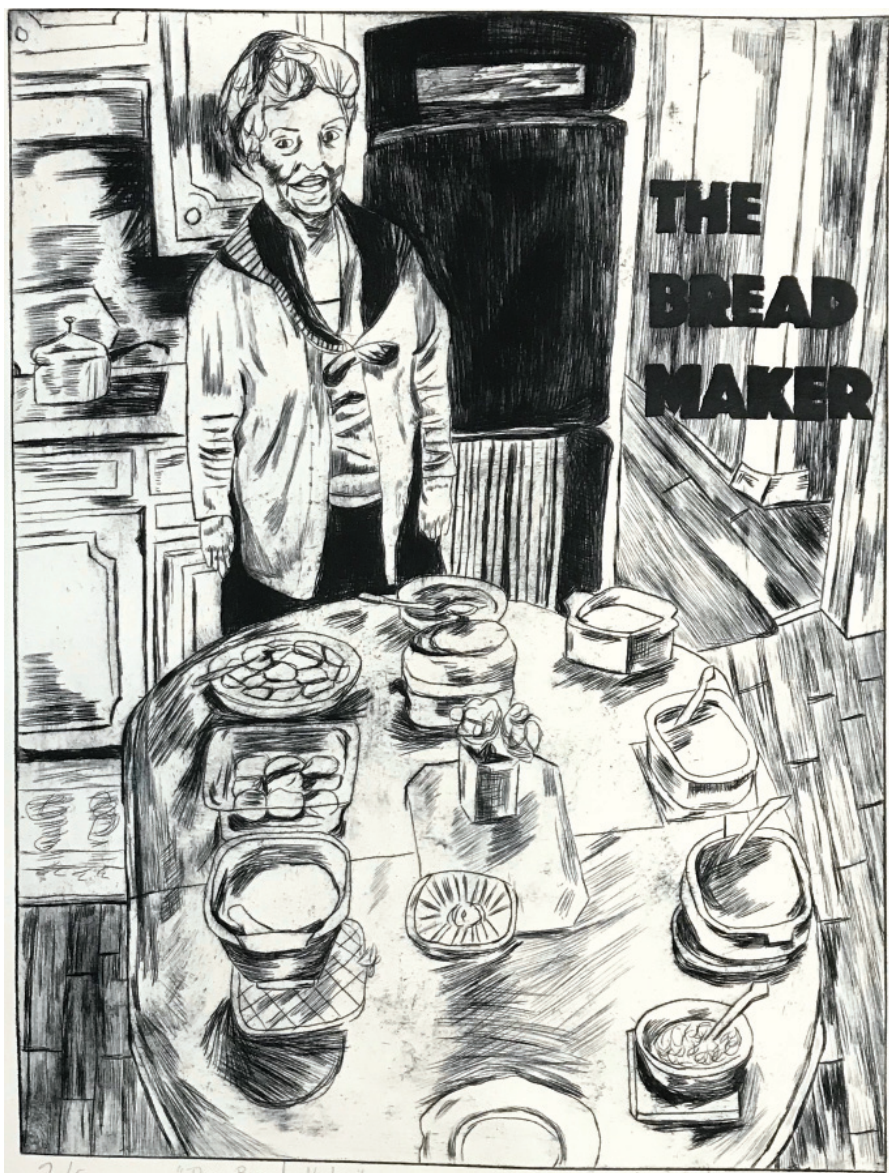
"It was only one night," she whispers,
cajoling herself, slowing time, stalling. "I deserved
it, I'm a good mother," she echoes, as the door
at the end of the hallway grows imminent; the
lullaby
in her head is pulsing, trying to break free.

Delivering herself to the door at the end of the
hallway,
grasping the knob, pulling herself up, slowly turning
(her mind) the handle. As the door releases, she
sees,
with perfect clarity what the door at the end of the
hallway
remembered.

Her throat closes up—she reaches to claw it out—
swallowing a scream,
Staring at the horror of her night out. The crib
stands still,
her three-month-old baby swaddled in the time she
lost,
a day turned into a month only seeming like a day.
But she deserved it. Because she was a good mother.



Grantley Waters
"Smoker of a Lonely Heart"
Pen & Ink



Racheal Roberts
"The Bread Maker"
Screen Print

A Love like Lasagna
Dakota Sanford

"Just a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down," Mertha sang as she slid her lasagna into the oven. "Medicine go down." She twisted her timer's knob until it reached the 45-minute mark. "Medicine go down." With a small sense of accomplishment, she wiped her hands on her apron and walked to the room behind her. The door was ajar and nasty coughing fits could be heard through it.

Willoughby, her daughter's son, sat in a firetruck-shaped bed, his face red and sweaty from three days of being sick. His eyelids opened and shut slowly. The poor boy had just turned six a little over a week ago and he was the only one energetic enough to do anything during his party. He rarely ever got sick, but Mertha knew that was not necessarily a good thing. Her mother had once told her, "Your body needs to be used to fighting to be able to battle." The 55-year-old woman smiled sadly at the memory.

"Gram?" the blonde, freckled faced boy called. He had made that nickname when he began talking, the nickname a result of his inability to say 'grandma'. "Is...dinner ready?" His speech was cut off by deep breaths as he tried to sit up.

"In a bit. You're lucky, you know. I never liked lasagna, much." Her grandson smiled. His bright green eyes shining with glee only a child could have. "You know, my grandma would take care of me when I was sick, too. She was much better at it, though. I remember she would tell me

stories and act them out as if she was there." The boy waited for her to continue. "Can I tell you a secret?" He nodded.

Mertha leaned in close and whispered, "I think she was."

"She was?" Willoughby asked, followed by a coughing fit.

"Well, I mean, I am her daughter and my father certainly didn't share our gypsy soul. Although my adventures with pirates and kings were a bit different than hers."

At this the child lost his smile. "I know none of those stories are true, Gram. I am old enough to know that."

Mertha laughed. "Dear, I'm not even old enough to know that. But," she sighed dramatically, "if you truly don't want to listen to your grandma's tales, then I guess I'll leave you be."

She stood up and placed her hand on the doorknob before she felt her grandchild's hand tugging on her cardigan. She chuckled to herself and sat back down beside him. His bucket he had puked in last night rested beneath his nightstand, filling the air with a sickening smell. The room itself was bigger than the woman's, but she preferred it that way. Her house was her family's house. Her food was their food. Her life was their life.

When she adopted her daughter, Tally, Mertha had changed her life drastically. She had to work more and never had time to socialize. Many people would not want to do that, she knew, but she did. In fact, the old woman claimed her greatest achievement was balancing her time between her job and her child, as a single parent, without negatively affecting either of them. Oddly enough, Tally had never become ill. She was a perfectly healthy girl her entire life. That was why she had let her mother take care of her son when

he became feverish.

The old lady tucked the youth in his blankets. Then, sniffed the air. The scent of smoke was heavy – almost enough to make her eyes water. Suddenly, she remembered the unattended oven currently cooking dinner. Her eyes widened in alarm.

“The lasagna!” She exclaimed. Running to the kitchen, she grabbed a pair of oven mitts off the counter, threw open the oven door, and quickly snatched the slightly burnt pasta out. *Hope he doesn’t mind it being crunchy*, she thought as she placed the hot glass dish on the wooden table behind her. Nothing in her house matched. Her seating was a mixture of rocking chairs and stools. There were no couches or television screens to be seen, only bookshelves and pillows placed in haphazard arrangements. The oddest decoration, though, was a tapestry that hung in her living room. The stringy art piece was gnarled and faded. What could be made of the picture was only a mountain with what used to be goats – and is now more so white clumps of fibers – climbing it. Mertha couldn’t help but feel like the tapestry was a mirror of herself. Like her, it had gone through a lot. Like her, it was beaten and old. Like her, it had lasted longer than anyone thought it would.

“Well, I got good news and bad news,” she announced as she re-entered Willoughby’s room. What she saw startled her – or, more accurately, what she did not see.

Willoughby was gone.

His window was still locked and everything looked untouched, but Mertha knew better. She raced to the front door just in time to see a shadow cradling the boy as it hobbled its way out

the door. He was fast asleep, as all children are when being taken by shadow-men.

“Stop!” she screamed. Grabbing her shotgun from off the wall, she ran outside. The shadow only became visible under the street lights, so the woman only had a few shots to hit it. Then, she thought about accidentally shooting the boy and stopped herself from proceeding. Her house slippers sloshed in the rain as she ran. Her apron, now soaked, whipped roughly in the angry wind. Her hair becoming tangled in its icy fingers. With every step the shadow took, the woman’s heart sank deeper.

She ran into the dark that the shadow-man blended into. She ran even when she knew she had lost him. She ran into the deepest dark – the dark no light could touch.

“Please!” She cried. “Please, don’t take him away from me!” She screamed, then sobbed, then screamed some more. Her voice was not the same as it once was, though. Her stamina was even worse. What she was once capable of, she wasn’t anymore. “Please,” she whispered, “take me instead.”

They heard her.

It wasn’t her words nor her voice they heard – not her thoughts, either.

They heard her heart.

And they answered.

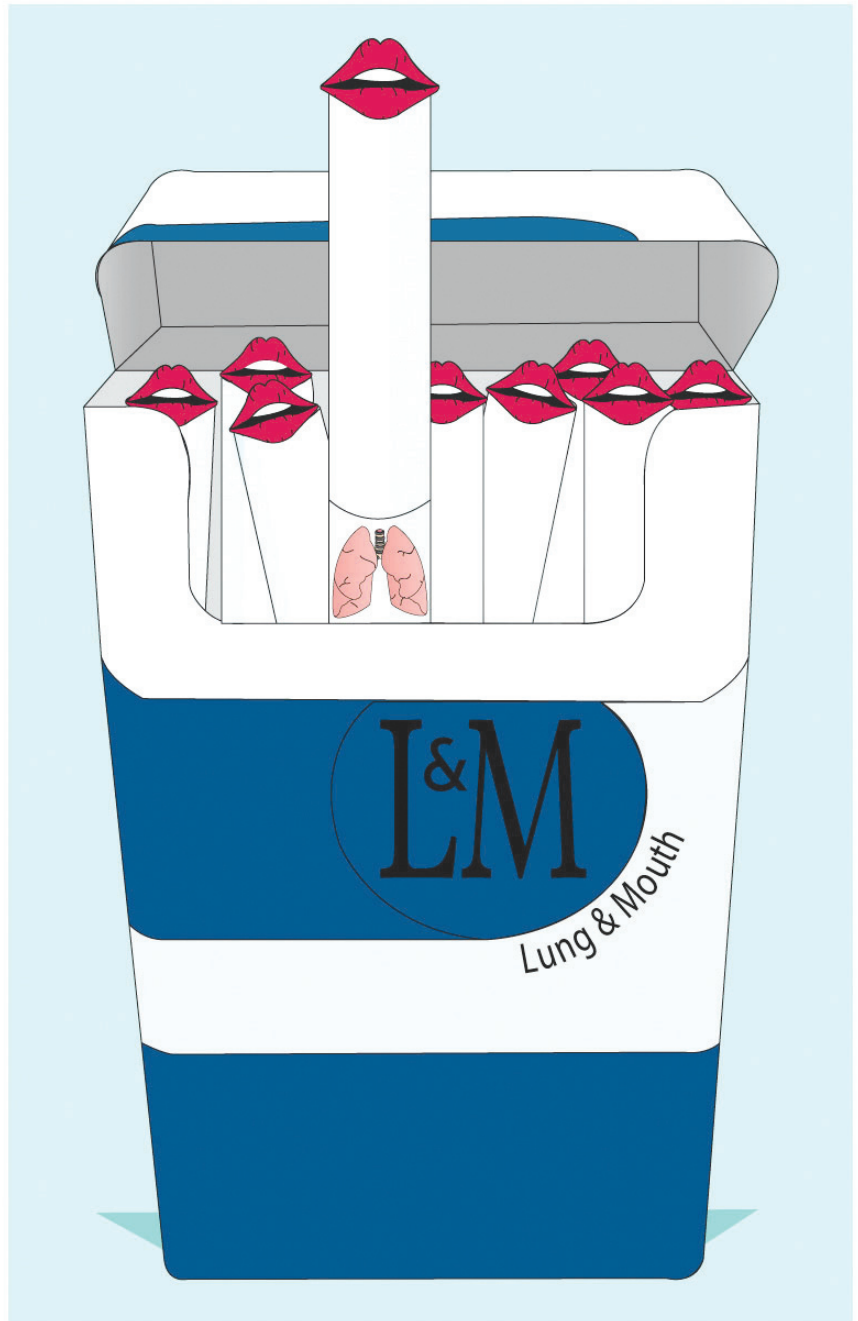
Kaylyn Campbell
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"Sixth Dimention"
Photography



Anna Sison
“Lung&Mouth”
Digital Art





Brianna Hinton
“Crawling Down Your Spine”
Chalk Pastel

Clockwork Anxiety
Lillia Dixon

i cannot see past to minutes nor hours;
my head is a clock with only second hands unaligned
the tick tick ticking is
piercing, pounding
unsynchronized gears scrape and screech
an idle apprehension creeps
to all-consuming unease
void of reason
spiraling
to acute dread
of occasion unknown



Anna Sison
 “Heart Failure Man”
 Digital Art



Kivarria Dye
 “Happy Reflection”
 Charcoal

Princess Memoir Collection
Aly Rusciano

Cinderella

Zipper clanked against the side of the plastic tub, creating a symphony that echoed through the empty laundromat. The scent of Downey filled the air, masking the musky odor seeping out of the stained walls. I watched as bright colored clothes splattered against the translucent porthole, my head spinning in unison with the sloshing concoction of bubbles and clothes. The water dipped and dived. Foam lined the outer ring of the porthole mocking the fact that I could not reach out and touch the frothy, white bubbles.

"Aly, have you taken all the white clothes out of the pile?" a voice asked from beyond the zippers' rhythmic melody.

I was pulled away from the entrancing bubbles and looked over my shoulder at my mother who was folding a basket of clean clothes. She rose her brows as she tucked the arms of my small pink shirt into a neat crease.

My eyes fell down to the table where I was sat with my legs crossed. A pile of dirty clothes laid before me, a small mountain in front of the bubbling wonderland of the washer. I had placed one white item of many into a separate pile. The job should have been done by now. I flexed my foot so that my tiny, sparkly tennis

shoe tapped the edge of the pile. Sorting wasn't fun alone.

"Go sit with daddy," my mother, who had walked up behind me, said.

"Can I still do the quarters?" I asked as she placed her hands under my arms and helped hoist me off the table.

She nodded. "Yes, I'll call you over when I'm ready."

I smiled as my feet found the floor.

"Now," my mother said, "go sit with daddy and behave."

I skipped down the aisle, sloshing washers on my right and clicking dryers on my left. My father was sitting by the laundromat's entrance folding a basket of towels. "Mommy said to come sit with you," I squeaked up to my father, my hands swaying at my sides.

He smiled down at me, his eyes warming. "Sit down, princess. I'm almost done."

I trotted over to the plastic chairs that were bolted to the floor along the windows. I hopped up onto one in the middle, kicking my legs back and forth as I anxiously watched my father put the final folded towel into the basket. "How much longer?"

"I think mommy is doing the last load."

"I'm bored. I can't watch the bubbles from here."

My father placed the basket of folded towels on a chair and sat down in the seat next to me with a huff, his arm stretching out behind me across the chair's ridge.

My shoulders sunk as I looked over at him with wide eyes.

He chuckled. "Mommy said you learned

something new in dance.”

“I did!” I exclaimed, immediately sitting back up, a huge grin stretched across my small face. “I can show you!” I leapt off my chair and skipped into the center of the laundromat’s entrance, standing before my father.

Looking down at my feet, I lined my toes up with the grout in the dusty tile. I placed my hands on my hips and smiled back up at him. “Ready! Now you count!”

“1...2...” my father started.

“No!” I said, stomping my foot down in protest. “Like the dance teacher!”

My father laughed and started again, “5...6...7...8...”

With each count, I bounced from the knees up. I first brought my right foot out and tapped my heel for a count, did a shuffle, put my toe on the ground and finally my heel. Then I brought my left foot out and followed the same pattern. When I was done, both of my feet were back in the center behind the grout line.

“Very good, princess!” my father said as he clapped.

I bounced back over to him too quickly, causing my foot to slip out of my shoe. I picked up the shoe and hopped back over to my chair, placing the small shoe on the seat. My father took the shoe in his large, hairy hands and held it out for me. I placed my foot in the shoe, holding onto his shoulder.

“You’re a big girl. How about you learn how to tie your own shoes.”

My eyes grew wide as my mouth fell open with wonder. I hopped back up onto the plastic chair and placed my feet in-between my

father and I.

We sat there in that position, my father bent over with his large fingers holding onto my left shoelaces and me reaching over my short legs to hold onto my right shoelaces. I followed his instructions and watched each movement his fingers made. The final buzzer went off before I even thought about the quarters mother had ready in her purse.

“What are you two doing?” my mother asked, a basket of clean folded clothes on her hip.

“Daddy taught me how to tie my shoes! Watch!” I said as I untied my left shoe and retied it.

“Good job!” my mother said with a smile before looking at my father. “Except you taught her backwards.”



Bailey Radnitzer
“Marvelous Mauve”
Colored Pencil

Rapunzel

The swiveling high chair squeaked as I wiggled my legs to and fro, my feet swishing from side to side

"Are you excited?" the hairdresser asked as she started braiding the left section of my parted hair.

I bounced my head up and down in excitement, my wide, missing tooth smile staring back at me in the large mirror.

"Usually they come in terrified," the hairdresser said to my mother who was standing on my right.

She laughed. "Not Aly. She's been waiting for her hair to grow out for months just to get this patch."

I couldn't stop smiling. The moment was finally here. My soft, blond hair had grown past my shoulders and I could finally get the one patch no one else in my troop had gotten yet. I would be just like the older girls!

My mother wrapped her fingers around the fluffy ends of my hair. "Once it's cut, there's no going back? You really want to do this?"

I nodded frantically. "Yes! I want to help a girl who doesn't have hair."

A soft sigh escaped my mother's lips, but a smile of pride spread across them. "Alright. You're a big girl now," she said as she squeezed my shoulders. "There's a little girl out there who will be very thankful to have such pretty hair like yours."

"She sure will," the hairdresser commented as she tied off the end of the left braid and moved on to braid the right part of my hair. "What level in Girl Scouts are you?"

"A Daisy," I said, my legs swirling in the air as I tried to keep the upper part of my body still.

"Will you get your badge tonight?"

"Not tonight," my mother answered for me. "All her gymnastics friends will get to see it first. We're heading over there after this."

"And then we get to go get ice-cream," I said excitedly.

The hairdresser tied off the final braid and looked at me in the mirror. "Ready?"

There was no doubt in my mind. My mind had been set the moment I had heard about the girls who lost their hair and that I could help them by giving them some of my own. Sewing a new patch on my vest was only a plus. "Ready!"

"Are you sure that's twelve inches?" my mother asked from the seat adjacent to the mirror. "The sections look longer than that."

"I can double check," the hairdresser said with a smile. She reached into a drawer and pulled out a measuring tape. The tape made a sliding noise as she held it up against my braids, measuring the length between the two ponytail holders at the top and bottom of the braids. "They're twelve inches exactly."

"It's going to be very short," my mother said, worry coating her voice.

My legs stopped kicking as I watched the hairdresser bring the sides of her hands to either side of my head, her hands pressing against my earlobes. "It'll be around here in the end."

"Aly, are you sure? That's really short."

I stared at myself in the mirror. My shiny blond hair flowed down over my collarbone, falling right below my shoulders. I'd always had long hair. I didn't know myself without it. But I didn't need it.

Even if I had short hair, I would be lucky to have hair when other girls didn't get any. Besides, I had plenty of friends who had hair cut over their shoulders and they were no different than me!

"I'm sure!"

But I wasn't quite sure how short it would be, or how I would look back at pictures and wish I had waited another couple months for those final inches to grow before I heard the crunch of the scissors and felt the weight lifted off of my shoulders.

My hair stopped in a harsh line that grazed across the middle of my ear. At a quick glance, I looked like a little sailor boy rather than a little princess. But I still smiled from ear to ear as I stared back at my new self in the mirror, ignoring the sinking feeling in my gut. I was fortunate enough to have hair that grew back, and, if I was lucky, it would grow back even faster so I could get another patch.

I skipped through the gym to reach my father and brother, my cheeks aching from the smile I had kept the whole car ride. "Daddy! Do you like it?" I asked as I approached him, flicking my new short do glamorously with my hands.

My father was taken aback as I approached. For a brief moment, his face fell, but I didn't catch his hesitation in my gleeful state. He smiled down at me and held out his arms. "Very pretty, princess!"

"You like it?" I asked through my wide smile as I hopped into his arms.

"I love it."



Bailey Radnitzer
"Sweet Pea"
Colored Pencil

Sleeping Beauty

A constant, familiar beep sliced through the silence I had been swimming through. The rhythmic beat of the high-pitched beep was joined by a frantic hustling from the right and a scratching plastic on the left. The sound waves pushed against the dark, safe bubble I had fallen into hours ago on the cold metal table.

The beeping grew louder, another higher pitch joining a beat after the already established familiar beep.

The hustling intensified as I floated back into my body. There was a tug at my right hip. A rub on my right shoulder.

The scratching of plastic got closer until I was being lifted up as something hard was pressed up against my back.

A moan escaped my lips.

I heard someone in the far away distance as they said, "Hold your breath if you can, sweetie."

I didn't know who the person was talking to.

"1...2...3..." the voice counted, which was followed by a loud click.

My stomach swirled.

Everything was still surrounded in darkness.

I was pulled forward as the hard material was removed from behind me.

"Hi, sweetie," said another voice from my right. "You are in the recovery room. You did such a good job!"

"Be sick," I managed to get out before what small amount of liquid in my stomach

erupted from my mouth.

There was a bag brushing against my chin in an instant, catching the throat burning liquid.

"It's alright," the voice said. "You're okay."

I was blinded by a stark white when I tried to open my eyes. I hurried back into the darkness, the absence of my body unfamiliar.

"Stay with us, honey. Your parents will be here soon."

I wanted to go back to sleep, but my body roared with the need to move. The knowledge that I needed to force myself to stay awake lingered for a moment at the front of my mind, but the thought was gone as the darkness reached out and grabbed me. It tugged on my arm, pulling me back towards the bubble I had just escaped.

"Hey, princess," said a voice softly beyond the darkness as a warmth danced along my left hand.

"Aly," another said as a warmth swirled along my left knee, "you did it! It's all done!"

I took a step out of the darkness, tilting my head towards the sounds of tight hugs, late night talks, and long car rides.

"You did such a good job," said the first voice.

A soft kiss was placed on the top of my left hand.

Rays of light broke through the inching darkness as I opened my eyes to find a hazy image of my mother and father leaning over me. My father held my left hand up to his face as he kneeled at my bed, while my mother stood at his side with her hand resting on my left knee. She squeezed my knee. He kissed my knuckles.

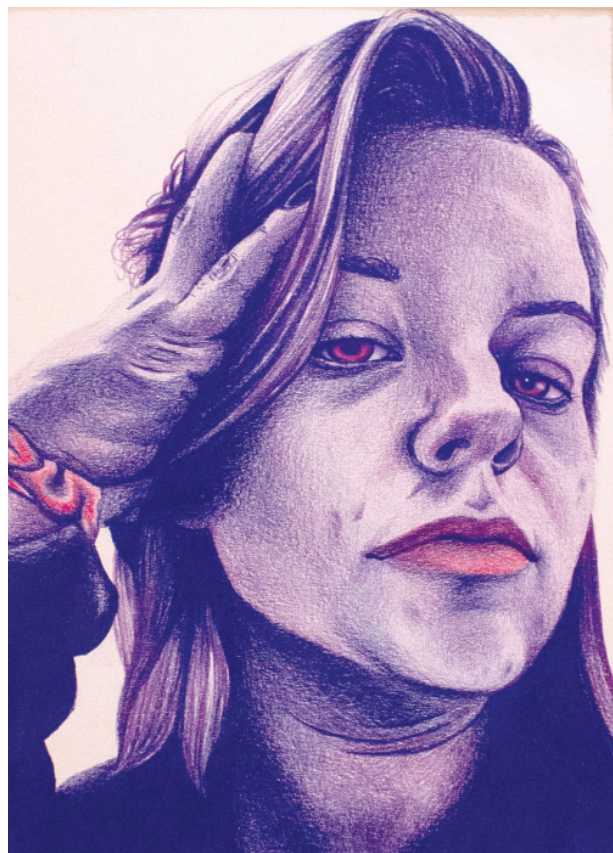
“The surgery went well,” said the comforting voice from earlier. I slowly turned my head to see a young woman in blue scrubs typing on a computer. She smiled warmly down at me. “She had some trouble waking up from the anesthesia, which is why you were called back, but she is doing better now.”

My mother gave my knee one last reassuring squeeze before walking around the bed to talk with the nurse. I wanted to know more, but not yet.

I blinked away what little of the grogginess I could and looked back at my father. The grogginess replaced the tears as I took in the soft wrinkles framing his worried eyes.

“It’s okay, princess,” he said as he brought a hand up to my cheek and wiped a tear away with his thumb. “I love you,” he whispered with his goofy smile.

“I love you, too,” I croaked.



Bailey Radnitzer
“The Week Before Finals”
Colored Pencil

Blur
Lillia Dixon

cascading crystal streams
glisten as they fall,
fragile saline beads
dive down between the lines
of those letters that you wrote to me;
i watch as the ink blurs and bleeds



Kaylyn Campbell
“New Beginnings”
Painting

Kaylyn Campbell
"Heaven's Windows"
Painting



Squirrel
Alex Halbrook

The sun had gone down while Becky was in her late class, throwing the campus into a deep darkness. Normally, the lamps scattered throughout the campus would light her way back to her dorm, but for some reason, tonight most of the lights were out. There were only two lamps in the quad to break the darkness. Becky had always been scared of the dark ever since her brother locked her in their toy box as a child, so when she saw the darkness barely pierced by the remaining light, her heart sank and her palms began to sweat. She rubbed her hands on her jean covered thighs, hitched her bag tighter over her shoulder, and started making her way across the quad with a far-off spot of light encouraging her forward.

The noises of the night—the wind rustling the trees and the soft chirping of crickets—were exaggerated in the darkness that surrounded her, making her nervous heart beat harder against the walls of her chest. Once she'd made it half way to the light, she started feeling a bit calmer, and her pulse slowed down, beating less intensely behind her ears.

But then one noise rose louder than the rest of the natural symphony of the night. It sounded like a sharp, quick scraping and grated against Becky's ears, echoing the sounds of her heavy breathing. The noise swelled around her.

The longer it went on the more it reminded her of a kind of... gnawing.

Becky started walking quicker toward the light in the distance, nearly running as she was surrounded by the sound of gnawing, scraping, and a high-pitched persistent screeching.

Is that a bird? Becky thought. *I've never heard a bird like that.*

The noises continued growing steadily louder, closing in on her, when she finally broke through the darkness into the small patch of light illuminating the path. She released a shaky sigh, leaning against the lamp post, grasping it tightly in her shaking hands.

The second she had passed the wall of light, the noises had stopped. Everything was quiet, even the sounds of the wind and crickets that had previously filled the air. Everything cut off in a deafening crescendo. Somehow, the silence was even worse. All Becky could hear was her own breathing and heart-beat, echoing in the silent emptiness around her.

As her eyes darted through the darkness looking for anything in the shadowy shapes, she suddenly saw a pair of small, beady eyes reflecting the light of the lamp. Becky froze, her breath catching violently in her throat, choking her. She was unable to look away from the glowing eyes that stared back, unable to move. Out of the corners of her eyes, she saw more and more eyes beginning to shine in the darkness around her. There was no movement, just the piercing stare of a thousand eyes locked on her shaking form.

The sound of scraping returned, like the sound of claws and teeth raking on wood, as the eyes started blinking, reflecting the light again

every time they opened, then getting lost in the dark as they closed. Then suddenly, Becky couldn't see them anymore, the sounds stopped again, and she ran. She dashed through the quad, back into the darkness, struggling to breathe as she sprinted toward her dorm. The sounds of paws running behind her followed her through the dark, when suddenly her foot caught. She'd lost the path and stumbled over an upturned tree root, sending her sprawling across the grass, clawing to get back on her feet and away from the approaching noise. As she struggled, she felt tiny claws scraping against her arms and legs, crawling across her neck, and reaching for her face. She felt a scream rip itself from her throat and tears flood down her face, mixing with the millions of tiny scratches now covering her face.

The next day, when the sun came up and students and professors flooded the quad on their way to class, Becky was found. She was covered in scratches and tiny teeth marks, barely recognizable to anyone that saw her. Everyone quickly noticed the tiny bloody paw prints surrounding her body and the thousands of fat, happy squirrels filling the surrounding trees. In the weeks that followed, the squirrels were rounded up and relocated to a stretch of woods where no humans would cross their path, but the fear the squirrels had triggered continued to follow every student who had to walk that same path in the dark.

Anna Sison
"Hey Becky"
Graphic Art





Kyle Kelly
“Lost”
Photography



Brianna Hinton
"Always With Me"
Mixed Media

In Alto
Praise Pettes

How is your dialect naturally poetic?
Your movements
Gesture
Your hand touches my exposed heart and feels the beat
I feel it
You take your hand off, and you don't wipe the blood off
You summoned a sheet of fresh watercolor paper
You slid your tongue on the page before you pressed it
You wet it
And it took the DNA in mini crevices when you pressed it
I remember every word
Every phrase as you said it
Looking up at you, see god
Hold my head as you pet it
You stitch me back up as the paper dries

It's dry
We burn the print as we plug into each other
I'm inhaling each of your exhalations
And we vow
Without the presence or permission of any other human
I want you to do it again
And again
Touch my heart
Wet
Print
Commit arson

I don't care that I sound crazy
It's just the way I feel



Brandy Gaul
 “Hungry”
 Chalk Pastel



Grantley Waters
 “Blood Moon”
 Pen & Ink

Letter
Hailey Slaughter

To the only friend who made me cry:

Today is your birthday. There was a time when I would start preparing for this day months in advance, trying to find the perfect present and typing out a long Facebook post to send at midnight so I could be the first one to wish you a happy birthday. It has been several years now since I have done any of that, since I have even talked to you. After I graduated high school, I stopped trying to contact you, and you never reached out. Since then, I have made all new friends at college, and judging from your social media posts, you have too. I thought that I had moved on, that June 3rd was just another day to me now, but here I am sitting on my bed writing a letter that I will never send.

It's days like this that make me remember all the good times. I think of all the memories we made together, kayaking at camp, singing at the top our lungs in the car, and playing video games in my living room. I replay all these wonderful memories in my head, and I think of what would have happened if we had stayed friends. In these moments, I almost regret letting our friendship die. Almost.

At first, I did not see the way you were. My mom told me you were a bad influence, but what did she know? You were my friend, and she just didn't understand you. Or at least that's

what I told myself. There were these little things that you would do, so miniscule that they really didn't matter. Except that they did, and they hurt. The first time I wore my 5 Seconds of Summer shirt around you, you made fun of me. Boy bands were stupid, and you liked "edgy" music. I tried to laugh it off because I thought you were just messing around, but you weren't. You genuinely thought you were superior to me, and you made me feel small. The fact that you didn't like one of my favorite bands shouldn't have been that big of a deal, but I was an awkward, insecure 10th grader desperately seeking approval, especially from you. You thought that they were a stupid band, that is until you secretly started listening to them. And you didn't tell me that you'd changed your mind about them because you couldn't bear the thought of being wrong. Better to let me feel self-conscious and insecure than for you to be wrong, right?

You would call me stupid in the way that friends tease each other, but you were dead serious. I tried to brush it off, but your words stung every single time. You would shatter me into a thousand pieces with every insult, every snide comment, and then try to hastily glue the pieces back together with a quick "just kidding."

All of your problems were always much worse than mine. I was supposed to be sympathetic and comforting all the time, but any problem I had was met with a "get over it" or a "stop worrying about it." I started believing that everything I did was stupid, that I was just overreacting. You made me hate myself. You took any light and joy that I had and squeezed it out of me until I had

nothing left; nothing left but you. And you were a black hole, swallowing me up until I wasn't even me anymore. I was just a carbon-copy of you because the only bands it was acceptable to like were the ones you listened to, and nothing was cool unless you discovered it or you liked it. I was nothing. I didn't matter.

There are some days, days like today when I want to text you and tell you all of this. I am selfish, and I want to make you feel guilty. I need to make you understand that even though I am very good at pretending to be okay, I was not okay back then. I was drowning, and you were the one holding me under the water. Deep down, I know that I will never be brave enough to send that text. Because you have no idea how much you hurt me, and you never will. As far as you know, I just stopped trying to talk to you, and that's that. I bet you don't even think about

me anymore.

This letter probably makes me sound bitter or gives you the impression that I often dwell on you and the past. However, the truth is, most of the time I do not think of you. Most days, I go about my business with my new, kinder friends, and you are not even a blip on my radar. The best thing for me was to get you out of my life, even though it was difficult at the time. Despite what you put me through, I do not hate you. I hope that you have changed, that you are a better friend to the people you know now. I hope that you bring light into people's lives instead of taking it away because I would not wish what you put me through on anyone. I guess I'll never really know. Maybe that's for the best.

Sincerely,
Me



Caitlin Sanchez
"Devour Me"
Print



Brianna Hinton
"Beautifully Preserved"
Chalk Pastel

“Ophelia”
Zhariah Peaks

It always struck me as odd
the peculiar positioning
of this troubled dame
her body floating serenely
only half submerged
in the immaculate blues
the life surrounding her
exquisite corpse
a tribute to wasted youth
her tender lips
the suppleness of her skin
wide eyes enraptured innocence
luscious locks beguiling beauty
arms outstretched
in derisible surrender
takes your breath away
especially when you
let your mind flutter
onto the realization
that it's a dead body.

You Exist
Lillia Dixon

you exist in the shades of a half-lit dusk;
golden shimmering brilliance tucking itself in
to a leaden horizon.

you exist in the rolling clouds of a tempest;
the whirlwind waltzing of the trees
and a deafening roar that echoes your name.

you exist in the loving eyes of your mother;
so captivatingly warm and kind
serene portals to a celestial soul.

you exist within that pendant;
swaying steadily from my rearview,
once umber now ivory
left tattered and timeworn.

you exist

if only inside of my chest;
an unwavering firelight gleam
never to be stifled.

Kaylyn Campbell
"Majesty"
Painting



Doggy Hell
Anna Sison

When I entered the doorway leading into my grandparent's house, I was greeted with the unmistakable smell of dog. Which wasn't unusual for a house that homes 13 dogs. When my grandmother started having hip issues and could no longer walk long distances, she filled her home with dogs to keep her company while grandpa was at work. But what was unusual was not one dog was at the door. "Strange..." I stated the obvious on my way in. "Grandma?" I peeked around the corner to the living room where I found my grandma in her rocker, "where are all the dogs?"

"Gone."

"Gone?"

"Gone!" She wailed, bursting into tears.

"What do you mean 'gone'? Grandma what's wrong? What happened?" I rushed to hold my sobbing grandmother.

"The fence got left open and they're all gone!" She cried and cried. "Tommy went out in the Ford to find them, my heart, my babies!" She stuffed her face in her hands.

It was hard not to think this was a good thing. My grandma had too many dogs, and I've never been much of a dog person anyway. The likelihood of getting all 13 back was probably slim and grandma could afford to lose some. But seeing my grandmother crying was almost

enough to make me wish they all came back. Almost. "Hey, it'll be ok. I'm sure granddad will find them." I stroked her shoulder and tried to calm her.

Just outside, I could hear the familiar sound of my grandfather's old Ford pull up, and very soon he was in the house with three dogs – a Maltese mix, a Chihuahua, and a Yorkie.

In less than two second, my grandma was on her feet and scooping up the now yapping pooches. "Maxie, Bella, Arnold!!" Three out of thirteen dogs, I could live with that. Still more than I was comfortable with, but they were grandma's one true joy. "Where did you find them?" Grandma was crying happily at the reunion.

"Down by Shyer Pond, chasin' vermin and barkin' at birds I'm sure." Grandpa scratched his head, "I saw the neighbor and he said he saw a few of the dogs at the park." He then turned to me, "Your mom also called, said she thought she saw one on your street too."

"Then Tommy, you go to the park and you go home and find the others." Grandma was quick to dictate. I opened my mouth to protest, but grandma started pushing both grandpa and I out the door, "Hurry now, before they wander any further." And that was that.

About the time I made it to my less-than-busy street of mainly old people, I started to wonder how I would even drag one of the dogs back to grandma's. If it was a small dog, I could just carry it, but since the three smallest dogs were already recovered the likeliness was slim. If the dog was big, I might could pull it by the collar, but since none of the dogs were leash broken nor trained that didn't

seem likely. So, if I couldn't get the dog I find to comply, I could just leave it, right? Its not like grandma actually needed all those dogs.

I decided that if I couldn't find any dogs by the time I got to my house, I'd go home, make me something to eat, and go back to grandma's and tell her I couldn't find any. That sounded like a great plan – but of course it was too good to be true.

Bark!

When I heard that deep bark behind me, that only a large dog could manage, I froze in my steps.

Bark! Bark!

Again, "Please don't be who I think it is." I slowly turned around and cringed at the sight. "Of course, it's you." Behind me stood the largest of all grandma's dogs, a Golden Retriever named Dixie. And unfortunately,

despite the breed's supposedly human loving nature, this one hated me. So much so that the first time she brought it home it bit me, and has tried every time after.

Bark! Bark! Bark!

"Woah there, no need to do all that." I held out my hands in front of me trying to calm Dixie, "If you let me go, I'll let you go. How does that sound?" Reasoning with the dog obviously didn't work because not only did it start barking more, it jumped a little closer.

I took a step back at Dixie's bounce forward, and that was enough to set it on a rampage toward me.

"SHIT SHIT SHIT!!" It ran toward me as I ran away, and the chase was on.

I knew my neighborhood like the back of my hand, and luckily it was trash day and all the cans were out by the road – I took full use of push-



Hunter Wanser
"A Little Red"
Ink

ing them over as road blocks to try and slow the dog, and taking corners slowed the dog down too. My goal was to get home. The door was never locked, if I could make it home I might be able to get away with my life intact. Home was only a couple turns and two short streets away – I could make it, right?

I kept running, leaving a wreckage of trash bins behind me – I'd gladly come back and pick up every scrap of trash if I could get home safely. Home, it was so close now. I took the last turn, and only had one more street to cross. I ran out of trash bins, and Dixie was closing the distance. All the adrenalin kicked in at the home stretch, my foot hit the street, and when it did time seemed to slow down, each step felt heavy, the dog's barking seemed to echo off in a far distance despite it being so close.

SCREECH!!

Tires screeching, and the smell of rubber was strong. I turned my head just soon enough to see the face of a young woman filled with horror and fright, and then it all went black.

I don't know how much time elapsed, but my mind vividly kept replaying the scenes, the dog coming at me, and the young woman's face. They kept replaying over and over until something started touching my face. It was warm, wet, and smelt disgustingly familiar. I groaned and it stopped, but a constant pattern of hot air puffs all over my face repeated and I could no longer stand the smell. I opened my eyes and saw three little dog heads above my face. Did I die and go to Hell? I groaned again,

this time as I sat up. I looked around the room and saw that it was my grandma's living room.

"Oh my god, you're awake! I was so scared; I didn't know what I'd do if I had lost you and the dogs in one day. Are you feeling alright?" Grandma rushed to my side – yet not as quickly as she did when grandpa first brought the dogs back.

I took a moment to see exactly how I felt, my arm was scraped, but there didn't seem to be any major injuries. "My head kind of hurts, side too, but... I think I'm alright?"

"That's good."

I kind of made a face, "Why am I here? Not at the hospital? Or home, where's mom?"

"You know how expensive hospitals are, and what your mother doesn't know won't hurt her. I'll keep an eye on you, don't worry." Grandma was unbelievable. Eccentric in every way. "Oh, but good news! Tommy found all of the dogs! Aint that wonderful!" Grandma's energy made the dogs around all bark, but one in particular startled me. It was the deep bark from before. I looked around and saw Dixie behind a fence in the kitchen. I glared and thought to myself... It should have been you who got hit.

Vrushank Mali
“Galaxy - A Tiny Wonder
Of Magnificent Universe”
Painting





Isaiah Kennedy
"Hi, My Name is Dane"
Ink on Stone Headge

A Door Locked
Chloe Sumrok

a door locked and unlocked and locked
again;
the feeling of picking concrete out of your
knees;
your father's footsteps outside of your
bedroom at night,
the loudest sound you've ever heard.

you hold a tadpole in your fist and you
love it, for a moment, before it slips out
from between your small fingers and
back into the water, disappears into the
silt.

a door locked and unlocked and locked
again;
the feeling of yanking a nail out of the
sole of your foot.
your mother's voice cracking into a
million little tears as she screams and
screams and screams and you don't know
what you did wrong but you know you
did wrong.

you tie a balloon to your wrist so it
cannot float away, but you cut it off to
watch it go, and you cry when it is gone.

a door locked and unlocked and locked
again;
the feeling of wind rushing past you as
you sprint barefoot through the woods;
your father's footsteps outside your
bedroom door, still, after all this time, as
recognizable to you as your own name,
heavy and hurried.

you are only a child and you wear a
necklace of thorns, a crown of beer bottle
caps, bags under your eyes as dark as sin.
you feel heavy.

a door locked and unlocked and locked
again.
you feel heavy.



Caitlin Sanchez
"September 1st 12pm"
Print



Daphne Lagrone
"The Light in the Closet"
Wood Box

Horse People **Shannon Merrell**

It was my idea to go horseback riding. I take full responsibility for the events that transpired.

My husband, Clay, and I decided to take the kids, Drake and Tatiana, on a mini-vacation, a weekend getaway, if you will. Our chosen destination was Cave City, KY. The area had plenty of things to entertain the kids for a full two days including Mammoth Cave, Dinosaur World, and Jesse James Adventure Park, which included bumper boats, an antique photo booth, alpine slides, a ski lift, a cave tour, and horseback riding. Not a one of us had ever ridden a horse before, so I thought that this would be the highlight of our trip for sure.

On the drive there I bring it up to Clay, who looked at me and said, “We are NOT horse people, Michelle.”

“But it will be fun! Come on!” I said, nudging him playfully.

His answer was a simple, “No.”

I knew that if I could get everyone there, and have Tatiana, our six-year-old daughter, plead with him, that he would eventually give in. He had a difficult time denying her anything. She had perfected the pouty lip and was successful with carrying it out 99% of the time.

We arrived at the Jesse James Adventure Park as soon as they opened, and I asked Clay once again if we can please go horseback riding.

Tatiana takes that moment to pipe in begging him, “Daddy please, please, please!” She hugged him around the neck and gave him the pouty lip, just as I predicted she would, even batting

her eyelashes for extra emphasis.

Clay gave me a go to hell look, but I could see that his will was caving. When we went in to pay, we had to sign this really long waiver stating that the park was not responsible for any accidents. I assumed this was just the normal paperwork, but already Clay looked worried.

“It’s not a good idea, Michelle, I’m telling you—we’re NOT horse people!”

“But we might BE horse people, Clay. How do we know if we are, or not, if we’ve never even tried?”

He rolled his eyes at me and sighed. I could see that he was only going along with this because he didn’t want to start an argument and ruin the trip. I appreciated this, but I knew that by the end of the day he was going to change his tune about horseback riding.

We walked around to the stables, the smell of hay and manure was strong in the air, and Tatiana started jumping up and down, barely able to contain her excitement at the prospect of riding a horse for the very first time. She grabbed my hand and pulled me along after her. I smiled at her, getting excited for her. Excitement was like a yawn in that way, it was catching. Even Clay was smiling at that point.

The stables looked old and barely kept up. That should have been our first sign, but I ignored it as Clay made gaping faces and started pointing beside me to make sure he had my attention and that I had taken note on the shape of things. I ignored him too. The horses looked tired; the second sign, but I pushed forward anyways—what the hell did I know about how stables and horses were supposed to look? This could have been perfectly normal for all I knew. It could have very well been the way things were supposed to look—a rustic charm, perhaps.

The guide we were appointed was working his very first day, and that—THAT—should have been our

final sign, but he seemed really nice, and I figured that Clay's attitude was just making me anxious. His name was Sam, and he explained to us that he would be guiding us on a three-mile ride. He asked how old Tatiana was, and I told him that she was almost seven. He stated that she could ride her own horse which made her feel very grown up and even more excited than she already was, if that was even possible. We all stepped up to our horses, and there was a step stool to help us up (which is nothing like I imagined getting on a horse would be like, I couldn't help but chuckle a little at the prospect of using a stool to get on a horse). Everything that I thought I knew about riding a horse, from the movies, was wrong.

The kids got on the horses first, then me, then Clay. Clay and I were beside one another with the kids directly in front of us. Clay looks at me and says, "When I got on my horse it sighed and told me to get off." He said this in such a monotone voice that I started laughing at him because this was who he was—always making jokes—making an experience that he was not comfortable with funny.

"It will be okay, Clay," I told him, shaking my head and laughing.

Before we actually got on the path, there was a photographer that took a picture of us each individually on our horse, so that when we came back, we could purchase these as a souvenir. This seemed wonderful to me at the time because, of course I was going to want a souvenir to show how much fun we had. Later I would wish that they had taken a before picture, as well as an after, so as to compare the two...

Sam is in front, and as he started down the path our horses start to follow him. The first thing I noticed is that from where it was raining all week,

Kaylyn Campbell
"A Quiet Place"
Painting



the path was muddy, and the horses were sinking in pretty deep. I thought to myself that they are horses, and this was okay. Horses walked in mud all the time? Right? Who knows, but this seemed like a reasonable assumption. We got about a half a mile before the path led into the woods and Clay's horse started to turn around. This horse literally just stopped and turned around, walking away, as if to say it was done with the walk and would no longer be participating, thank you very much, see ya later. I let Sam know that Clay's horse was no longer with us, because I realized that Clay was struggling with pulling and releasing the reins while talking to the horse like maybe he was some sort of horse whisperer or something.

I hear Clay say, "Stupid fucking horse. What the fuck are you doing? You're going the wrong way!" Clay looked over at me and said, "This horse is illiterate!"

I died laughing, "Well, what is it trying to read exactly, Clay?"

He shook his head at me, "You know what I mean. It's not listening to me."

The kids and I got tickled at him, and made jokes that, "Daddy must have gotten the retarded horse."

Sam told Clay to pull the reins a certain way when he wanted the horse to go a certain way. Clay did this and Sam immediately said, "Don't pull on the reins!" which cause Clay to let go of the reins looking confused and irritated. First at Sam, then me. I shrugged. I suppose because I was turning to look at him that my horse decided that it also wanted to see what's going on back there and started to turn around and follow Clay and Sam. Sam rides up beside Drake and Tatiana and told them to stay there (I mean, where else were they going to go unless their horses decided to turn around and follow us, in which case, what were they going to do to stop it? About as much as we did, I guessed) while he helped us get turned back around. By this time, Clay's horse was halfway back to the stables, and my horse was headed right behind him. The whole situation has gone completely wrong. We had no idea what we're doing and one guide between the four of us was not nearly enough, it seemed.

I somehow managed to get my horse turned back around, how exactly I didn't know, and caught back up with the kids while Sam was still helping Clay—whose horse was now just walking in a circle while Sam was telling Clay over and over to do certain things with the reins and Clay was, at this point, huffing and saying, "I don't know what you want me to do. I'm doing everything you say!" When they finally got back to us, I looked over at Clay and his blonde hair was matted all over his face where he had been sweating and he gave me a look filled with such irritation that I felt bad.

"I'm sorry your horse got turned around, Clay."

He tried to blow his hair out of his face, probably because he didn't want to risk letting go of the reins to push it out of the way. He failed at this and looked at me and said, "I just want this to be over with. It can't happen fast enough."

We are now all in line two by two and ready to get started. Drake's horse now decided that it was his turn to act retarded, and started walking into a ditch near the side of the woods, because why not? I thought to myself that these horses were completely mental, and that Sam didn't know what the hell he was doing. I was still trying to look at the positive because, all in all, the entire situation was really quite hilarious, and at the very least we'd have a funny story to tell when we're through.

We all made a joke about how Tatiana had the only horse that knew what it was doing. I guess we should have knocked on wood or something after stating that. Sam galloped up ahead to deal with Drake and his horse, and as he rode past Tatiana, her horse decided to take that moment to start running at full speed into the woods. I don't know if Sam running up beside her while she was munching some grass spooked her, or what exactly happened, but I watched as Tatiana rose up off the horse when it bucked and started to sprint off, and then she was falling off the side of the horse.

I could hear her saying my name over and over, "Mommy, Mommy help me." She was just saying it, not screaming, not crying, and this made me panic more—that her voice should remain so calm in the midst of chaos—no, just no.

I screamed, "Oh my God," tears formed, threatening to pass through the veil of my eyelashes. I was about to watch my daughter die in front of my very eyes and there was not a damn thing I was going to be able to do about it.

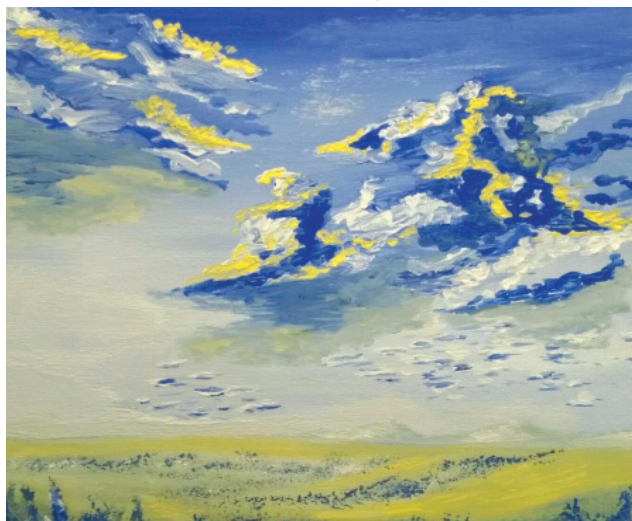
Sam hears me scream and looked at me like

I was insane! Me! He took off on his horse after Tatiana, who was still clinging for dear life onto the reins, but now sliding further off the horse and going under, and all I could think was that if she fell under this horse that it was going to trample the life out of her.

I look at Clay and screamed at him, “DO SOMETHING!” as I pointed hysterically at Tatiana.

Clay looked at me like I had lost my ever-loving mind and said, “What? I can’t catch that horse; my horse won’t even go in a straight line. I don’t know how to steer this thing!” He looked down at his horse and then towards Tatiana and said, “Stop, horse.” He looked at me throwing his hands up like, “See? The fuck am I supposed to do? I’m on a horse I know nothing about!”

I knew even as I screamed at him to do something that he was incapable. This feeling of uselessness invaded me, making me sick. To have to



Kaylyn Campbell
“Storm on the Horizon”
Painting

watch, as a parent, your child in danger and be completely unable to stop it from happening! I wanted to throw up...

I could feel my beating heart running away on that stupid fucking horse. My first instinct was to jump off my horse and run and grab her. I looked around frantically at how to accomplish this, realizing that I had absolutely NO clue how to get off this thing. I started to break out in a cold sweat—the pungent smell of fear itself—permeated the air around me. I couldn’t even breathe. As I watched her start to slide under, I could feel a scream building from my stomach and catching in my throat threatening to escape. I knew—I fucking knew—that I needed to remain as calm as possible because I remembered reading somewhere that horses could smell fear, but then I also came to the conclusion that if I could smell the fear in my own sweat then that option had probably come and gone.

I could see and feel and hear all of those things, and the fear just kept mounting up inside me. Of course, all of this happened within about 30 seconds, but it felt like so much longer. Drake’s retarded horse was still halfway in the ditch, so he had no idea what was going on which added more of a comical element to everything. The scene was playing out like something out of some sketch horror/comedy—something that was not really happening to us. I felt outside of the entire situation and everything was in slow-motion. Sam catches up to Tatiana’s horse and I could see that the horse was slowing down, stopping. Tatiana had hung on to the reins the entire time and I watched as she pulled herself back up on the horse. She, this amazing, wonderful six-year old girl, **PULLED HERSELF UP**. After everything. She was just like, “Ta-da!”

I was still in panic mode and told Sam, “We are NOT riding anymore! We will walk back from here.”

“You can’t,” he stated. “It’s too muddy.”

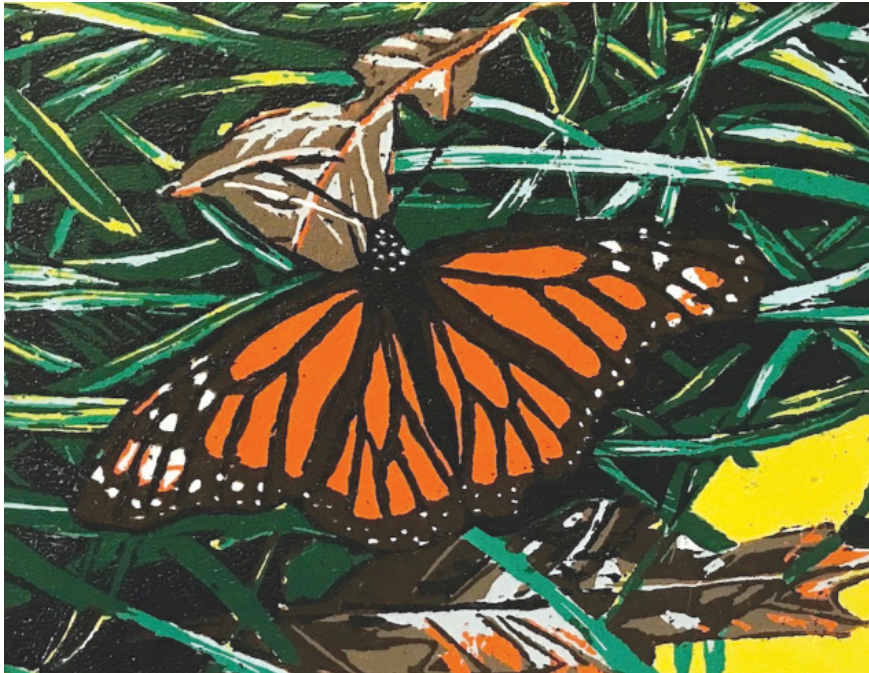
We made it back to the stables, uneventfully, although I couldn't say that we enjoyed any of it. Except maybe Drake, who still didn't really have much a clue about what happened. Nor do I remember how he and his horse got out of the ditch. When we were all off our horses we gather around Tatiana, hugging her, thankful she is all right. This lady came up to us and handed us our pictures,

[illegible]

Trajin Cheirs "Black is Beautiful" Digital Art



Jessica C. Rogers
"Bond of Mother and Child"
Painting



Racheal Roberts
 “La Monarch”
 Screen Print

“Where I’m From”
 Zhariah Peaks

I am from basin gut Murfreesboro
 and City of Music.
 I am from spring gardens
 and earthworms
 mud and sand
 in the land of Southern Suburbia.
 I am from deep country
 sweet tea and out houses.
 I am from the earth and her fields
 and the white silkie chickens clucking
 in their pen.
 I am from the light
 of the torch shining
 over the thousandth book
 under bed sheets after dark.

I am from pillow forts
 and living room camping trips.
 I am from a mother’s anointing
 and a father’s prayer,
 from granny’s dry spinach quiche
 and sacred deviled eggs
 and Thanksgiving dinners.
 From dirty bare feet
 and grubby hands.
 From fairy queens and warrior queens
 and African queens.
 I am from my ancestors’ agony.
 From their fear of boats
 and longing for freedom
 only troubled waters can give.
 From their toil in the splintering sun.
 I am from love and hatred.
 From skin both cursed and blessed,
 and kissed by sun.

Brianna Hinton
 “Crisp Red”
 Painting



Alex McNeal
 “Serpent Of Sorts”
 Mixed Media



Brianna Hinton
"Home Sweet Something"
Mixed Media



Amber Hoskinson
"Sleeping Lover"
Painting

OUR THANKS TO THESE COOL BEANS:

Chris Hill

Tomi McCutchen

Sarah Haig

Jason Stout

Doug Cook

And In Loving Memory Of
King Thomas

BEAN SWITCH
LITERATURE & ARTS