

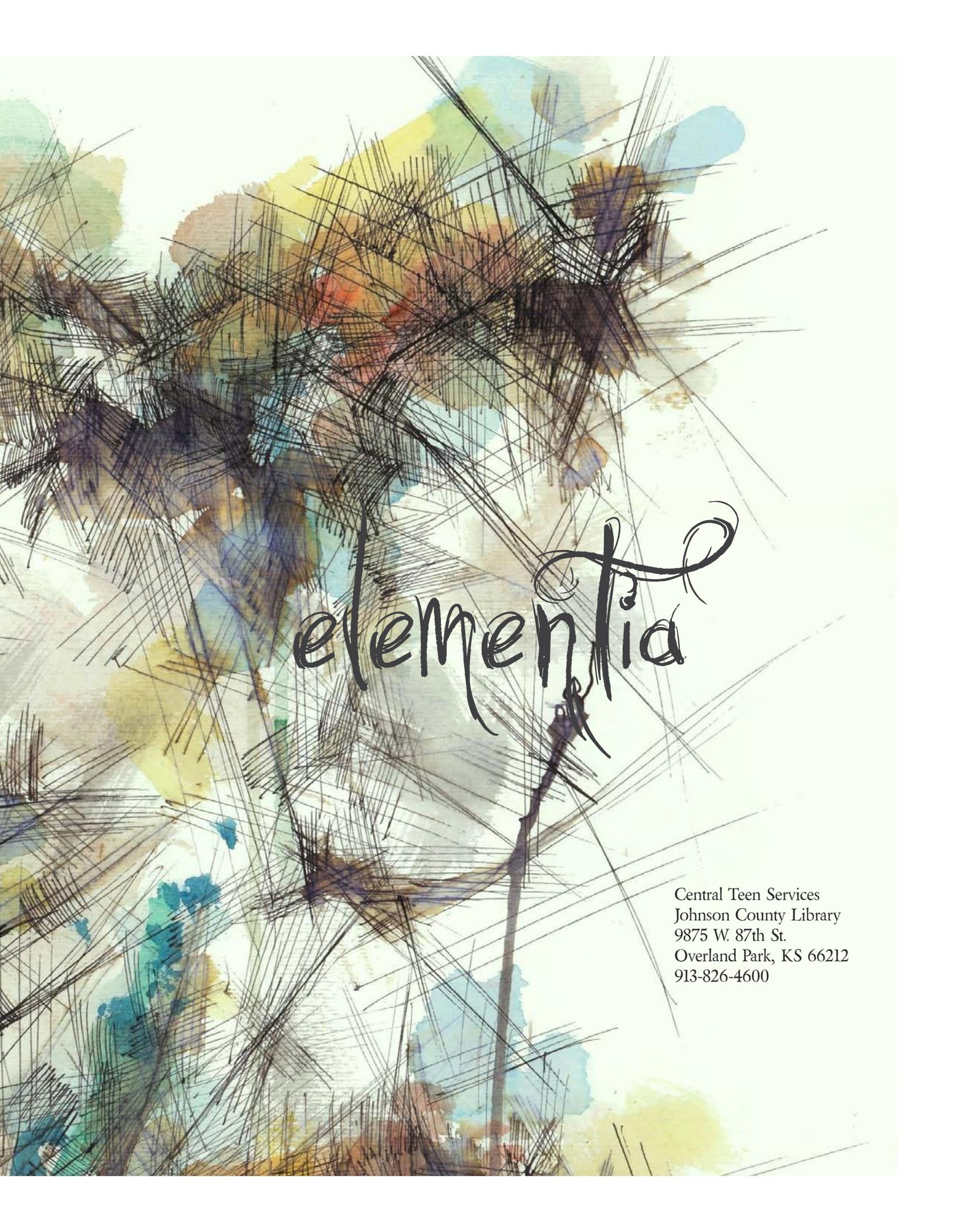


elementia

Issue XI

Cover Artist Michelle Chan
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"This is where you can find your soul if you dare. Where you can touch that part of you that you've never dared look at before."

Laurie Halse Anderson

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Stepping Out into



the World

KENDALL LANIER

People hide in the darkness of the day
They see it happen but they stay away
But today is the day that I speak up and say something
Being brave, not afraid
Taking a chance and stepping out
Being heard not reticent
Standing up and speaking out
Never hiding in the shadow
Seeing the world smiling in happiness
It's always a good day to be outspoken
Trying not to be shy
Stepping out into the eye of the world
Being a tulip in a patch of dandelions
Standing out, not hiding in the darkness of the day

Definitions

RYLEE WILSON

Who am I?

I am a puzzle. A million words and thoughts and ideas, feelings that fit together.

I can maybe identify some of them if

I look hard.

Some I have no idea what they mean.

Some are small, invisible.

Some are large, invisible.

But most of the time I ignore them.

I'm too busy adding, deleting, changing my puzzle.

Do other people see the picture?

Do they see pieces that I don't?

Are they busy adding to their own puzzle?

It's a three dimensional puzzle.

There are pieces on the outside that are changeable.

There are pieces buried deep, deep inside that even I don't look at.

There's the weird and the awkward pieces.

Their titles change day by day to favorite

and least favorite.

The artwork threatens to be

destroyed

by the want to be pieces.

The want to be pretty

smarter

kinder

normal

weirder

The -er's threaten to destroy my puzzle.

How many have found their way in?

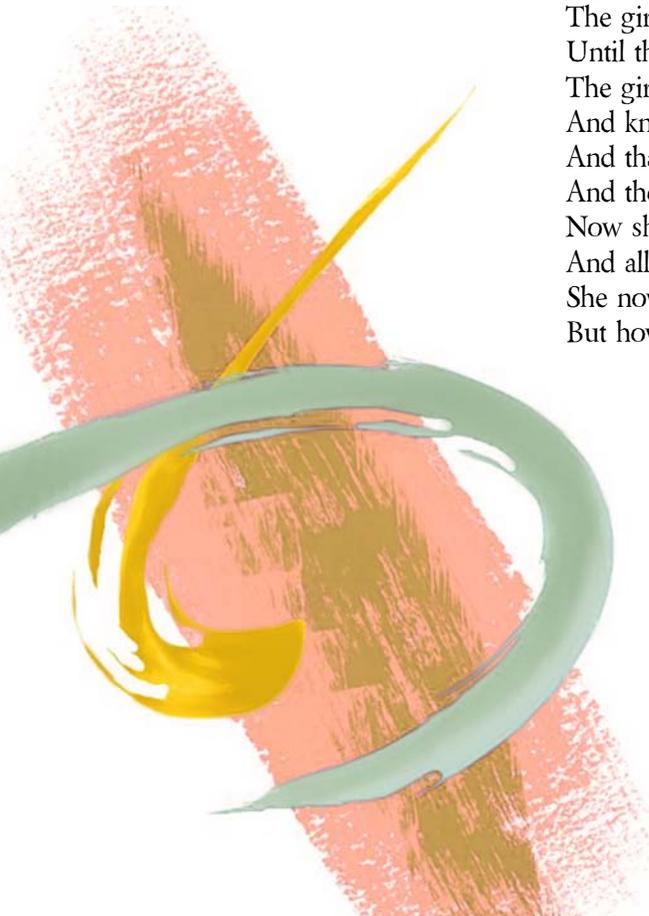
So many puzzles.

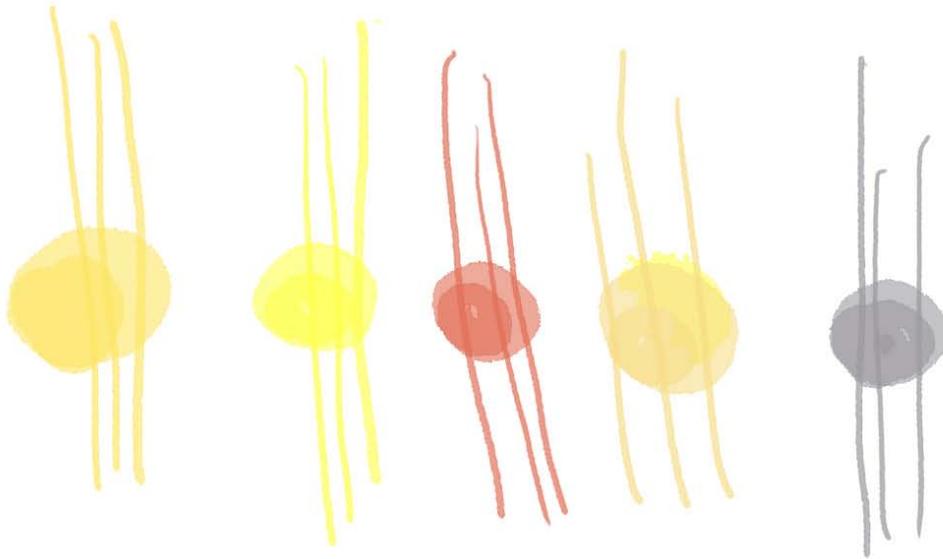
For so many people.

Secret Keeper

EMILY BIRGER

I'm the kind of girl who doesn't let go.
I'm the kind of girl who doesn't let her true colors show.
The girl who hides her sadness as if she's wearing a mask
And says that everything is fine.
The girl who pretends everything is sublime.
But on stage she's the only thing that could ever matter.
Not now, no, nothing can stop her.
The stage is her home away from home.
The stage makes her feel loved and never alone.
The girl inside never got shown or got to play.
The secret keeper locked her away and always
kept her inside and intended for her to stay.
The girl inside would yell and shout.
Until the secret keeper can't hold on any longer and lets her out.
The girl inside gets a breath of fresh air
And knows everything will be okay.
And that was the day the new girl came to stay
And the secret keeper got locked away.
Now she is like a rose unveiling its first petals during spring.
And all she ever does is sing.
She now knows it matters not what people think of you,
But how you think of what you do.





They called her Little, but Little was big. Little was tall, with stooped shoulders and an odd, loping gait. Mostly, though, Little was lonely.

She was like a dandelion in a field of perfectly cut grass – bright and beautiful to some, but ugly and unwanted to others.

Some of the “others” were her classmates. “Hey Little, how’s the weather up there?” a few of them would jeer. Some of the girls liked to trip her in the halls and laugh as she tumbled over her large feet. When she awkwardly picked herself up, they’d hiss, “*Fuh-reak*.”

Little said nothing. She never did. Inside, though, her emotions were tumultuous. Hurt, anger, hate – they burned inside her, an inferno itching to be released, but there to counter them was the true Little. The true Little doused the flames with a cooling, steady mantra of, “It gets better, it does, it *will*, it *has* to.”

Sometimes, though, the heat was too agonizing for the true Little to bear, and as she buckled under the weight of all the hate, the anger cooled to an unbearable sadness even Little couldn’t shield from the eyes of others. “Don’t mope, Little,” her parents scolded. “You’re big now.”



Impossible
have
found
for
name

The Dandelion Girl

AROOG KHALIQ



Oh, how Little *hated* being big!

At school, Little spent her recess periods as quietly as she could manage. She drooped against a different brick wall of the school every time and read, hoping her classmates wouldn't find her.

But they always did. They made a game of it, too. Whoever found Little first and took her book back to the main playground first, won.

"Here, Little, Little," she heard one of her classmates taunt. Another one mocked, "Here, girl." Little tried, but could not put names to her classmates' faces; they were always just nameless, faceless devils to her, there to torture her for no good reason.

And then they all pounced on her out of nowhere, like she was a canary and they were starving cats. Hands shot toward her book and Little curled in on herself, saying nothing, just like she always did. A sudden shout made all the kids falter – not Little; Little never raised her voice. It was the New Girl, Alex, with her hands on her hips and a scowl on her face.

"Are you deaf?" she shouted again. "I said, get off her. Get off her before I knock out your teeth!" And then a pudgy hand was in hers and pulled her up roughly. With Alex guiding her like a shepherd to his sheep, Little followed her toward the grass-covered hill behind the playground. Little was silent for a moment, studying the girl in front of her with awe.

Alex plucked a dandelion from the midst of the hill and dropped it into Little's lap. There was no roughness in her voice as she confided, "I'm a weed, too." She gave Little a hard look and stood, placing a hand on one hip and announcing, "But you've got to own it! You've got to embrace your weediness, Little! You've got to work it like it's fierce!"

Little smiled, taking those words to heart. Little is fourteen now, truly Big. She is no longer lonely. She is fierce.

"Who feels...like nothing is impossible when you try hard enough. Like dreams are never just dreams. Like life is a blank sheet of paper and everyone writes their own story. Who wants...To do something that goes beyond herself. To help people through hard times. To be optimistic about everything. Who tries...To never dwell on what she doesn't have. To be the best that she can be..."

KATIE REEG





Meet Me On the Battlefield

JACOB MCINTIRE

You see, I've been on both ends, the smile and the tear,
But still I stand after all of my years,
Perhaps a little wiser, maybe stronger too,
But I'm still nowhere close to what I'm meant to do.
And although I seem generous and incredibly kind,
Always being mature can make me lose my mind,
My biggest fear is keeping the wrong mindset and this luck,
Feeling trapped, as though here is where I'll always be stuck.

But after telling others of this burden I carry and the things that I bear,
I've found that the people who claim to listen, tend not to care,
So I'll just keep quiet, perhaps, I'll just bite my tongue.
But still I long to know what it's like to feel stupid and young.

I try to use my mind without burying my soul,
And I try keeping it together without keeping too much control.
Because the only thing worse than getting hurt after the fall,
Is when I harden my heart and feel nothing at all.

But I won't stay quiet; I won't keep these words inside,
Because people should know that I have no secrets to hide.
I'm proud of who I am, even if I don't know who exactly I'm meant to be,
And I really don't give a damn about what you think of my opinions and me,
Because after enduring all my own pain and all of the self-inflicted strife,
I'm the only one who truly understands my own life.

So you can bring on the tribulations and all of the trials,
And I'll bring my supporters and the strength of my smile.
We'll meet on the battlefield, and I'll prove both of us wrong,
Because now I know the weight I've carried hasn't made me weak, but strong.



I am a perfectionist. Even a simple task will take me a long time to complete. I often overdo things and when something is not faultless, I will hate it. I never turn in a project that isn't exactly the way I want it. That's why, while some students only spend two to three minutes on a project; I spend two to three days on it. I stay up late on some nights because of the urge to finish an assignment and make it right.

Perfect Me? ESTHER LEE

It is hard for me to show typical effort. Especially with the teachers and classmates expecting so much from me. Once I turn in a project that is beyond expectations, they will expect the same quality from me for the rest of the year. They tell me they know I will do an extraordinary job on a project. This builds a lot of pressure and fretfulness.

I strive to be the best and to reach the ideal, to never make a mistake in my work. I have an awful habit of being bad-tempered and argumentative when something isn't how I want it. Being like this brings in the issue of selfishness. Another trait that is unwanted.

I've been told I have trouble with managing my time effectively and that I need to be more productive. I need to finish all the requirements first and then after that, I can include the extra details.

At times, being a perfectionist has its benefits; however most of the time, I feel it would be better if I wasn't one. I guess nobody can have everything they crave for. But since life isn't perfect, I shouldn't have to be either.

Wallflower

MARGARET KOULEN

The wallflower sits and listens,
in the back of the classroom,
remembering each word spoken.

She never smiles,
never laughs,
has never shown emotion.

The few who know her,
know her mind is full of ideas.
But her thoughts are too embroidered with feeling
to ever think of showing them.

Then there are the talkers,
the populars,
the know-it-alls,
overshadowing the girl in the corner.
Who is not yet known.





"Most importantly, I don't want to just be another face in a yearbook. I want to be someone who people will remember for just being me."

GRETA GUSTAFSON

Life

VAUGHN MCMAHON

What is life?
Is it the short time between birth and death?
Is it a chance to do something?
If it is, then what?
Do we pursue happiness?
Do we try to help others?
Or are we all here to fulfill a purpose?
If we are, how do we find it?
We don't.
We do all of the above.
In the time period stated.
We make the most of our life,
We help others make the most of theirs,
That's it.

Hiding in the background.
Behind everything and everybody.
I'm missing something in me.

This is Me

BROOKE PANNELL

I wait at the end of the mat thinking those thoughts.
Thinking as hard as my brain would let me.
When I'm starting to run...

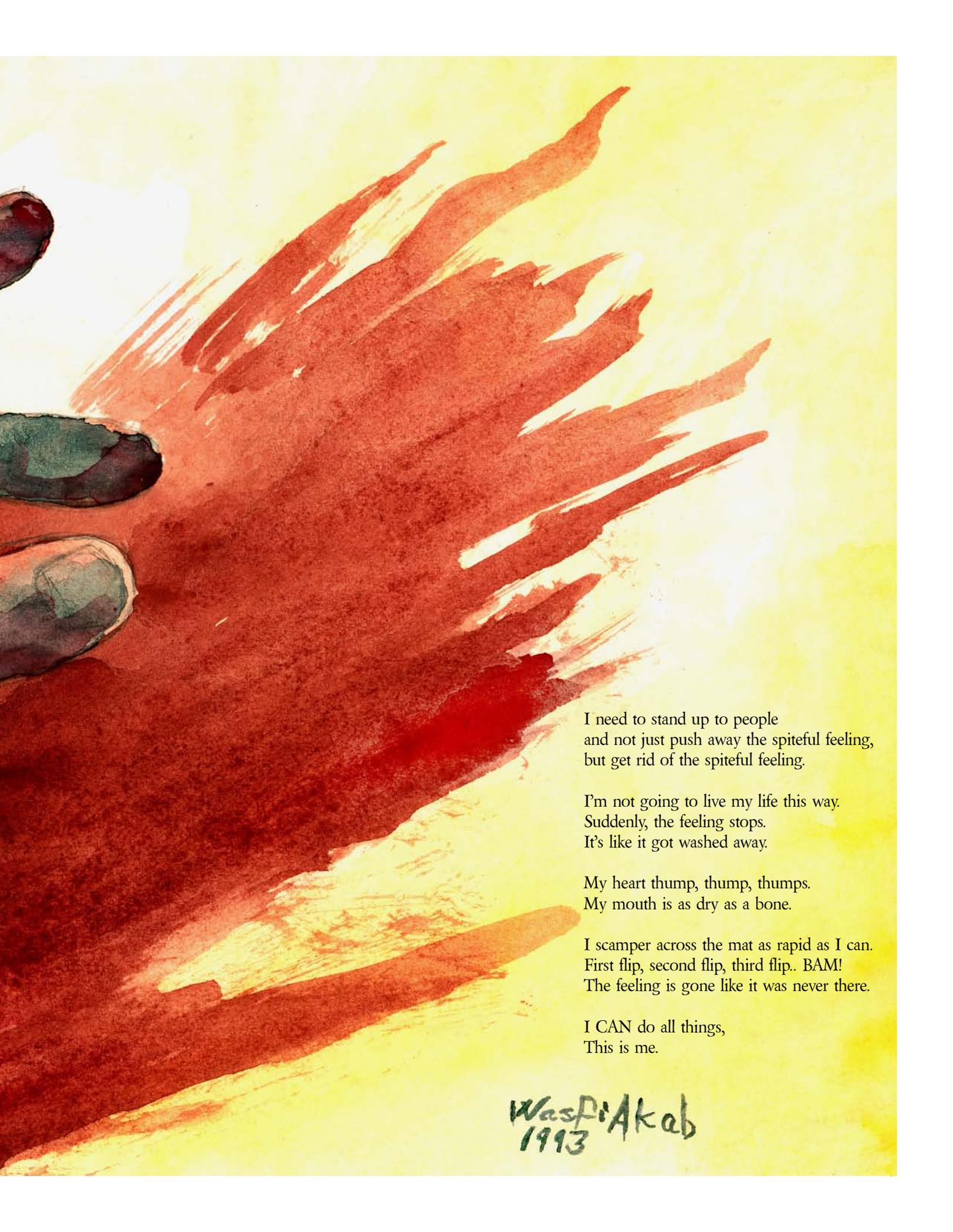
I stop immediately with a thud.
I have to be fearless and confident.
I realize I have to be that way at school too.

When I'm around people I have to put myself out there.
I think about the scene today at school.
Someone was alone.
I wanted to help but didn't speak up and go over there.

Gulp! I swallow hard.
Pushing through the feeling
in my stomach is the hardest thing.
I can't let people bring me down
and make me upset.
Being ignored or talked about is the worst thing.
I feel as if I'm just a tedious piece of rock.

I need to stand up to people.
I start to try and dart again.
I stop abruptly.
I'm not finished with my thoughts.





I need to stand up to people
and not just push away the spiteful feeling,
but get rid of the spiteful feeling.

I'm not going to live my life this way.
Suddenly, the feeling stops.
It's like it got washed away.

My heart thump, thump, thumps.
My mouth is as dry as a bone.

I scamper across the mat as rapid as I can.
First flip, second flip, third flip.. BAM!
The feeling is gone like it was never there.

I CAN do all things,
This is me.

Wasfi Akab
1993

Blonde

RACHEL KELLEY

Blondes are
Stupid
Popular
Ditsy
Un-athletic
Girly girls
Blonde is a label
Look at my personality
Look past my hair
Blonde is not me
I am
Smart
Athletic
Messy
Helpful
Nice
Labels are unfair
They look past the real you
Who cares about my hair?
What can I do?
No matter how many trophies I win
No matter how many A's I get
It never is enough
I try harder and harder
But it still is not enough
Some days I feel like I have to prove my worth
Like a knight in battle
Walls of judgment crash around me
Like waves that never end
But someday people will see me for me
The world will look past my hair
Labels will vanish into thin air
What would a world without labels be like?
How can we get there?





Where Did I Go?

ELIZABETH TRIPP

Who is this girl I see in the mirror?
This girl's eyes full of fear, caused by
Demons whispering in her ears.
Scared one day their words won't be lies.
She holds on, trying not to cry.
Each day wanting to die,
She finally cries.
A cry for help
More like a yelp
Or a scream,
But she next makes a scene.
Happiness is all she seeks,
But rarely does she get a peek
Of what life should really be.

*"The rustic smell and the crisp turn of the pages
let me live out my dreams. They inspire me.
They are the fairytales, and let me escape from
life. Then I finish them. And I am devastated
But they complete me, and interest me."*

JACQUELINE KEITH

Me as a Tree

REID SEARS

I am a tree
tall and skinny
my roots run deep
and my leaves are big,
and grow up high.
Nearby are my family trees,
from which my seed came.
A bit further are my friends
of all shapes kinds and sizes.
My bark may be rough
but that's just the surface
underneath it
is teeming with life and culture.



A collage of circular paper scraps with German text and a blue-toned face. The text includes "her", "der Die", "ls der Ha", "die ganz", "e werden", "nd das H", "mit gi", "dert Schr", "Der Se", "n B", "il", "en", "er ge", "an das ni", "so zugetan", "zu lassen und", "legen. Was gesci".

Me, The Book

EMILY KOHNEN

I am a story
my existence made for people to enjoy.
They skip over me
flip
flip
flip
to see only the things they want to see
not what they need to see.

They can rewrite me
with harsh words that bring tears
which blur my text so no one will know.

They judge me by my dull and dreary cover
but inside the chapters of my life
are full of exquisite stories.

My climax is the high point in my life.

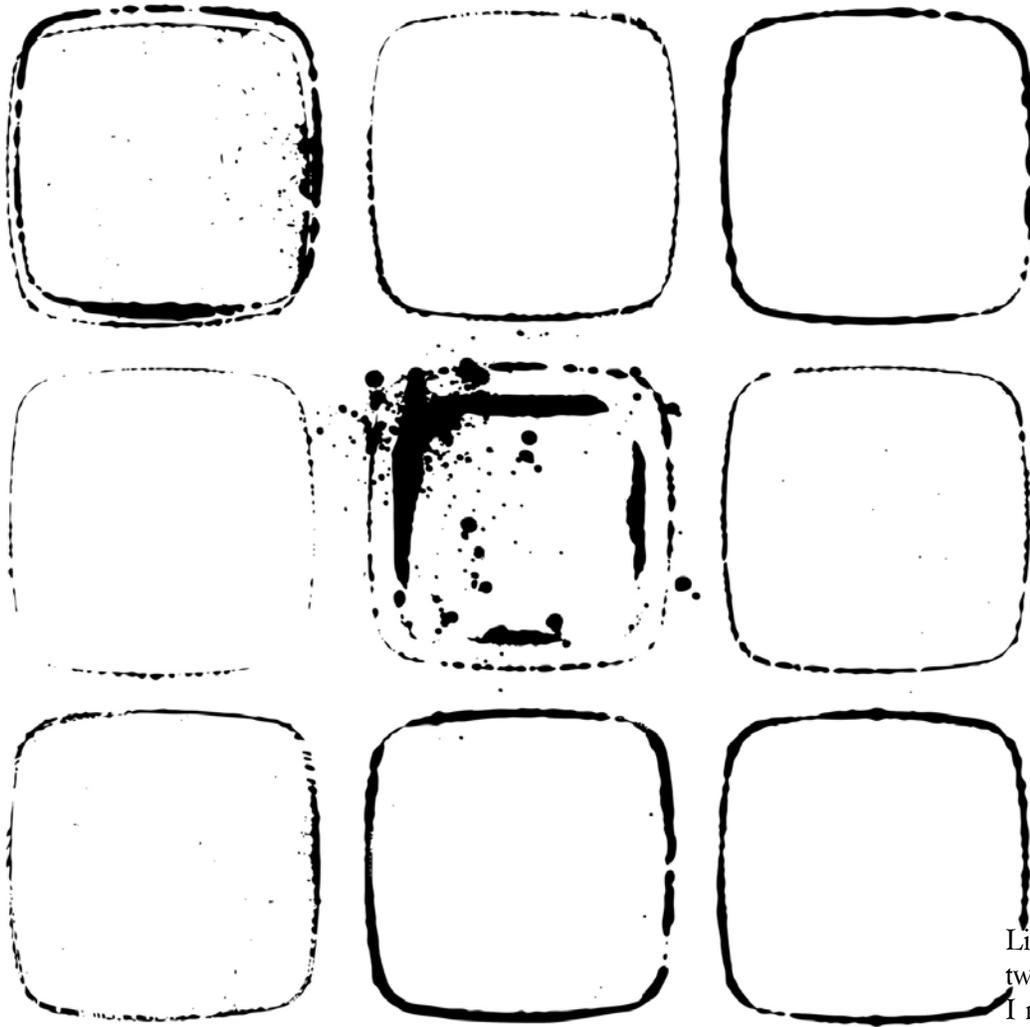
I am bound till someone opens me
and I open with a bang!

My eyes see significant things that count
my ears hear the "I love you's" and the "I love you too's"
and I feel the good things in life
this all goes down in my pages.

They think of me as a normal, not-so-extraordinary, next to nothing in my social status
but everyone has something unique on the inside
and it will come out with a sigh of relief.

Animals make up most of the words on my page
for they are my passion.

All this is me
and to see it in you
look through the pages and
pages of your life story
for only you can write it.



Bicycle of time
PAIGE BAILEY

Life is a bike going through
twists and turns.
I never get it on my first try,
so I keep trying and trying
until I can take my training
wheels off.
I might get a few scratches and
cuts, but that won't stop me,
from pedaling.
I go on roads, sidewalks
and paths.
Wheels turn as time goes on.
Then, I can pass my bike
down,
and the wheels
will start turning again.

Perception

ANONYMOUS

I found myself
staring out of my bedroom
window,
my eyes followed the footsteps
of the strangers walking below me.

I studied their walk,
their smile,
and the way their eyes lit up.
Then I studied myself,
my walk,
my smile,
and the way *my* eyes lit up.

I wondered who I was.
I wondered if I was ever good enough
and if I could ever be
what they wanted me to be.

I did not see myself
as what others said I was:
funny,
strong,
and kind.

I saw myself
as the contrary:
bland,
weak,
and selfish.

The more I thought,
the more I shattered my perception
of who I was.

The years went by,
still I thought I was the woman
who was bland, weak, and selfish.

I wanted to be a woman
who was
funny,
strong,
and kind.
The one who was
reliable,
promising,
and good hearted.

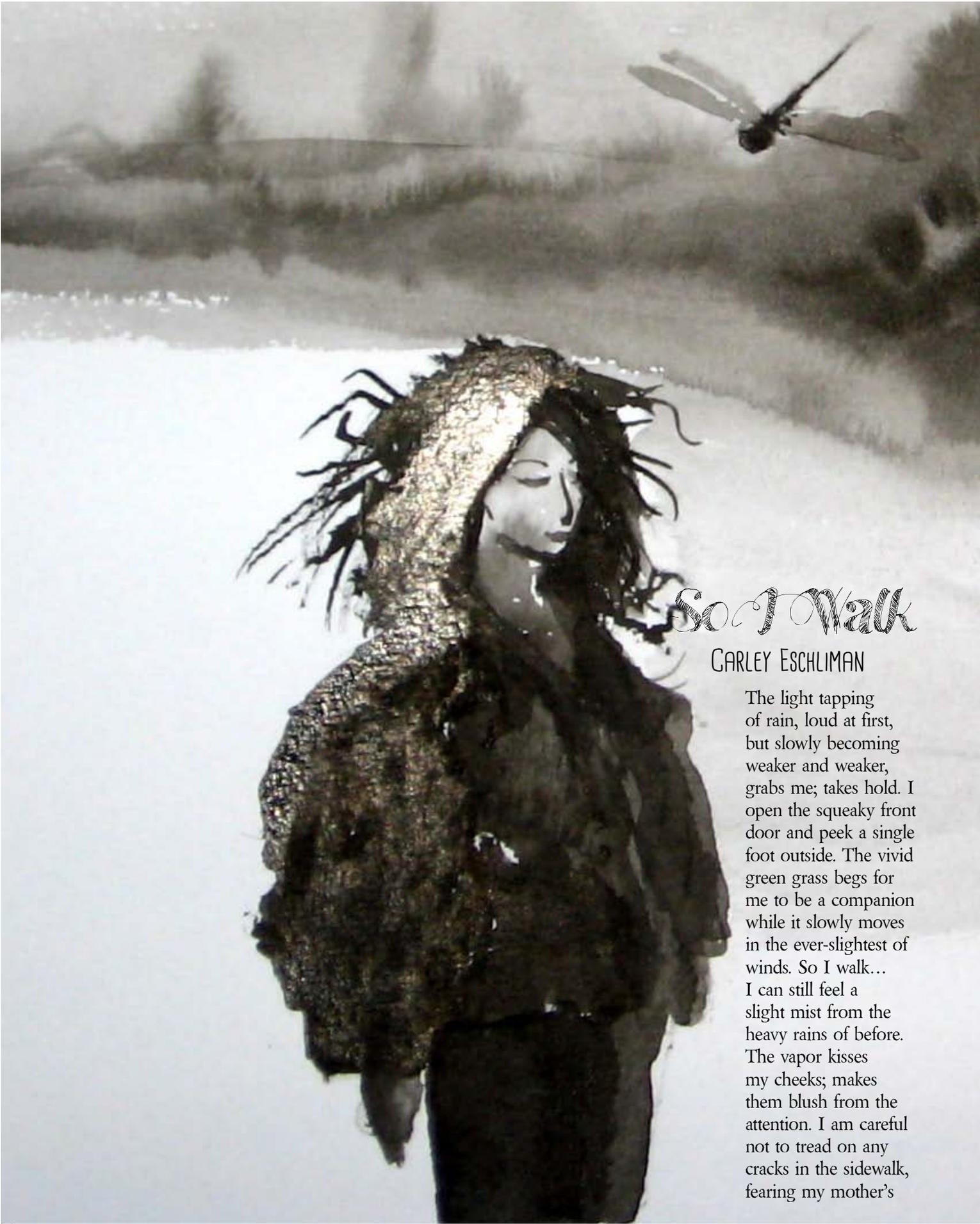
The motivation did not come from
showing others I could be
who *they* wanted me to be;
my inducement came from myself.

I wanted to change
and become a woman who
I chose to be.

I struggled omitting
the old and bad habits of mine
and as I slowly reached
who I wanted to be,
my perception of myself
was quite pleasing.
I was seen as a woman
who I wanted to be
from not only me,
but from the world that surrounds me.



PHOTO BY SCOTTY BURFORD



So I Walk

CARLEY ESCHLIMAN

The light tapping of rain, loud at first, but slowly becoming weaker and weaker, grabs me; takes hold. I open the squeaky front door and peek a single foot outside. The vivid green grass begs for me to be a companion while it slowly moves in the ever-slightest of winds. So I walk... I can still feel a slight mist from the heavy rains of before. The vapor kisses my cheeks; makes them blush from the attention. I am careful not to tread on any cracks in the sidewalk, fearing my mother's

Fears

SARA FULLINGTON

Fear of not being good enough,
World with Judgment.
People knowing everything about you,
Mistakes talked about
being judged feelings pain
we are who we want to be
people can be different
wishing of Living
in a judgment free world.

health. Not in any rush, I glance about, reminiscing about the days of youth spent entirely under this same sun. So I walk...

Memories of before cloud my sight almost like ghosts, they form their jovial faces out of the collection of moist particles residing in the air. I see my brother and me, climbing up the old tree, jumping, laughing, climbing, unaware that soon these actions would only be a memory. So I walk... I hear the calling of a lone bird, chipper and bright. I am unsure of what its cries mean, but it gives me a sense of comfort. My memories rush back of my neighbors and I having competitions of who could do the most realistic bird cry. I never won. The noises of these creatures were far too sophisticated for a mere mortal like me to replicate. So I walk...

Easily sidetracked, I bend down to sniff a flower in the beds of the nearby park. The scent of dew and earth fill my nostrils. How long had it been since I had taken the time to do such a simple act? Such a small thing, the smelling of a flower... So I walk...

I arrive at my castle of long ago. The pebbles under my feet rub together, mimicking the crickets resounding from the open field in the distance. When was I last here to rule over my kingdom, sit on my throne? The plastic and metal mesh together to create the perfect environment for any childhood fantasy, whether it Fish Out of Water or Lava Monsters. Oh, how I miss the playground. So I walk... My shoes sink into the mud behind the rusted backstop of the weedy kickball field. I can picture the

sweltering days of summer that forced our group to find refuge within the comforting arms of the trees. Their leaves, seemingly unaffected by the heat, became umbrellas of sweet relief. I spy a large spider web between two of the trees, homage to how long it had been since my friends and I had ventured off the path. So I walk... As I venture throughout my neighborhood I remember the sweet days of childhood. I reminisce about the memories that I have made over the years, and I see how those activities shaped who I am today. Maybe I should do this more often. So I walk.

Connotation of Me

KATIE MCNAUGHTON

There are so many, too many, humans in the world,
Who are silenced, forgotten, voices never heard.
We make snap judgments based on race,
Appearance, or simply the look of their face.
But each of these people in the world,
Has a story that needs to be heard.
Maybe it won't make a difference at all,
But at least try to listen to one little girl's call.

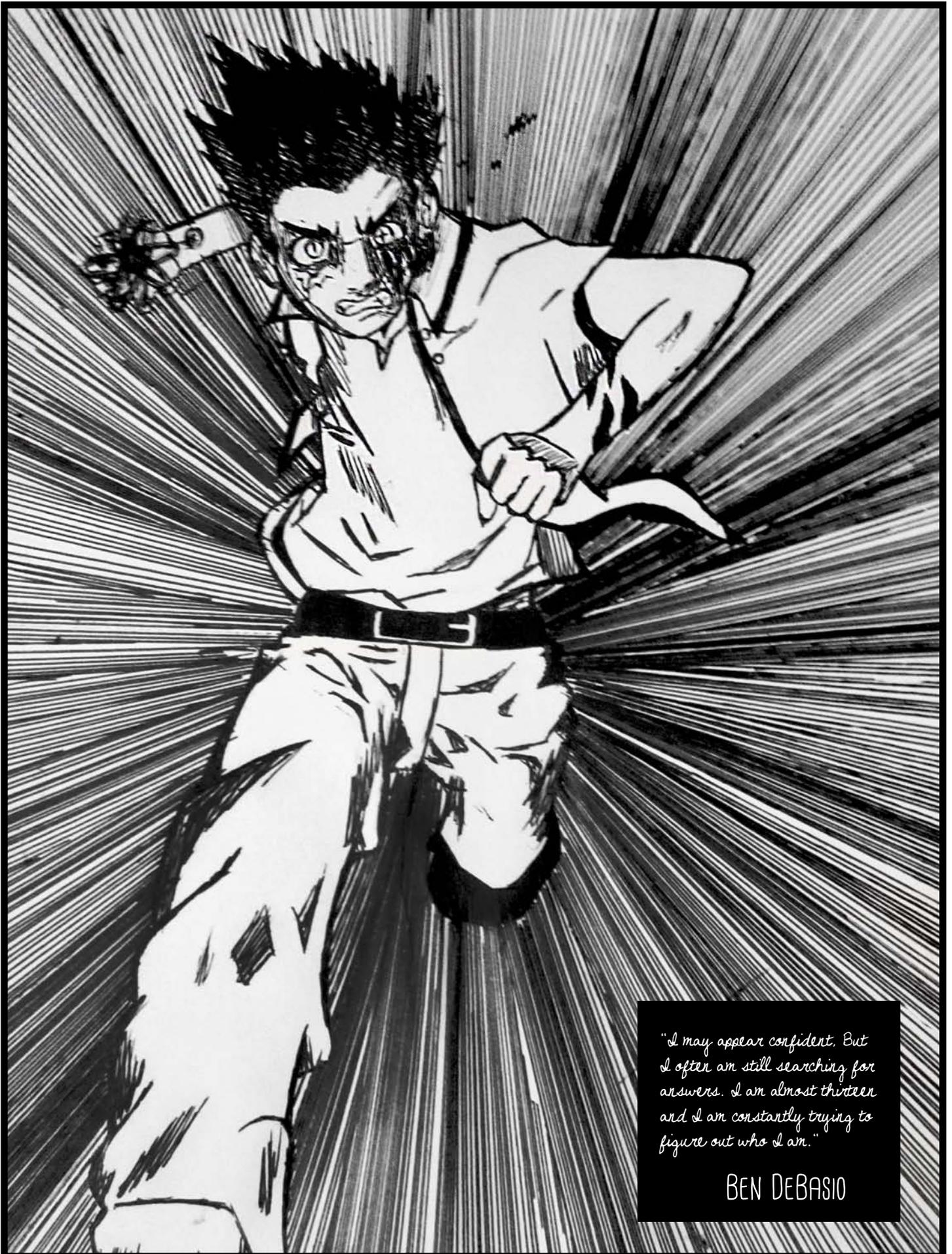
When I'm seen there's more than meets the eye,
What makes me more than a bag of skin with a soul inside?
To most of the masses, I don't exist,
Just a random name on a page of an endless list.
But there are those in my life to which I matter, a lot,
And for those people out there I'd gladly be caught,
Then put in prison till the end of my days,
And for me I'm sure they would do the same.

But people are more than those who surround them,
Each one tiny thread in a beautiful hem.
Without each person we'd all surely fail,
When we try to hang on without each other, it's to no avail.
So how can one go off without hurting the rest?
It's the challenge of life, you're put to the test.

We're all just a note in an off-key ballad,
Till we become the pallid face of an invalid.
So what are my hopes, dreams, and ambitions?
I hope not to fail, that's one of the things that I'm wishing.
But "Who am I?" The question still holds.
Well, we're both still wondering because I don't really know.

Do we ever truly get to define?
Who we are, while there's still time?
So maybe the question isn't "Who am I?"
Maybe it's "What?" or "How?" or just plain "WHY?"
So why define yourself when you don't really know?
I could say that I'm blonde or that I run slow.

We must all go on a journey to find our true selves,
The only way to become one cent in a sea of wealth.
But in the end, does it all really matter?
Whether you're worthwhile, unique, or a mad hatter?
Whether it's natural, disease, or a blow to the head,
It's stardust to stardust we all end up dead.



"I may appear confident, but I often am still searching for answers. I am almost thirteen and I am constantly trying to figure out who I am."

BEN DEBASIO

The weird stuff in my head,
can confuse thousands,
like a llama driving a car.

The unnatural stuff in my head
is pure nightmare fuel,
pumping through my veins into my brain.

The unusual stuff in my head,
is just sick and twisted to an extreme.

Have you ever seen a crooked life sized doll,
limping around a dark hallway.
You more than likely haven't.

Have you ever pictured,
a hospital,
for bananas.

Have you ever imagined,
a giant head,
filled with jello and pudding pops.

Have you ever
ate a nice meal then watched tv,
while on fire.

Have you ever
wore pants,
made out of beef jerky.

You probably haven't heard of these
strange and disturbing things.

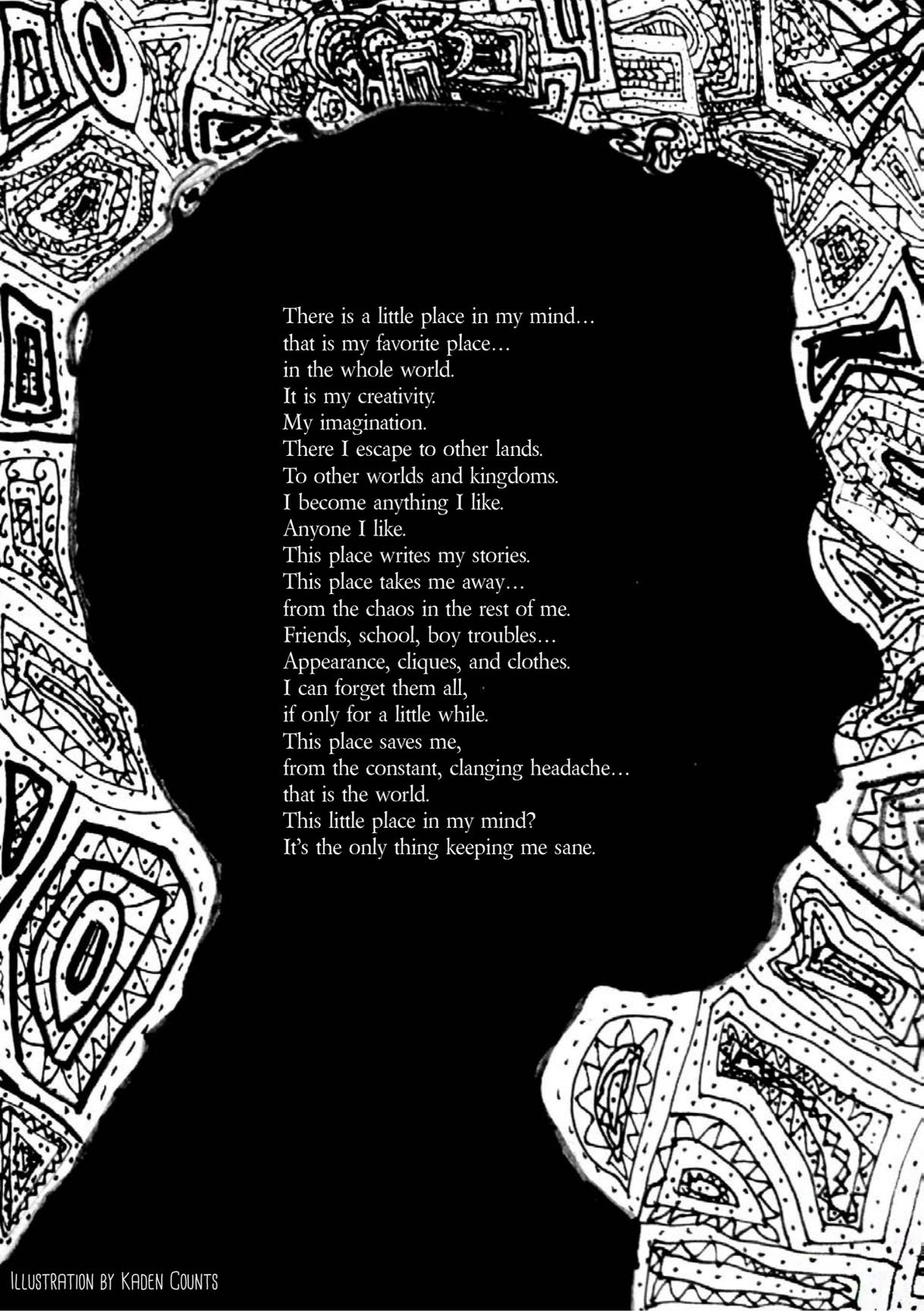
But they all exist

in my head.
My sick and twisted
head.

The Weird Stuff In My Head

MICHAEL CARTWRIGHT

My Sanity RAMYA CHILAPPA



There is a little place in my mind...
that is my favorite place...
in the whole world.
It is my creativity.
My imagination.
There I escape to other lands.
To other worlds and kingdoms.
I become anything I like.
Anyone I like.
This place writes my stories.
This place takes me away...
from the chaos in the rest of me.
Friends, school, boy troubles...
Appearance, cliques, and clothes.
I can forget them all,
if only for a little while.
This place saves me,
from the constant, clanging headache...
that is the world.
This little place in my mind?
It's the only thing keeping me sane.

ILLUSTRATION BY KADEN COUNTS

Hope

MARLEN SALAZAR

My hope is that we can forget about hate,
our prejudices, our unneeded bias.

Forget about making others feel bad about themselves,
oppressing them for being different.
We can forget about our pointless wars,
and instead, focus on restoring peace and order.

My hope is that no one will remain silent.
We will speak out for the silenced voices.
We will be the voice of reason and peace.

Listen to both sides of the story
before we judge each other.

False knowledge will become true
and understood well.

No more people are lonely
for they have people to go to
for comfort. For hugs. For anything.

No more locking ourselves
in rooms, with towels, lighters, and blades.
Blood no longer spilled over our own sadness.

No more tears streaming down red and swollen eyes,
hugging ourselves, as if it would lessen the burden
of sorrow and sadness
in small, dark closets and rooms.

The day we see beauty in everything,
even the ugly things, and cry.

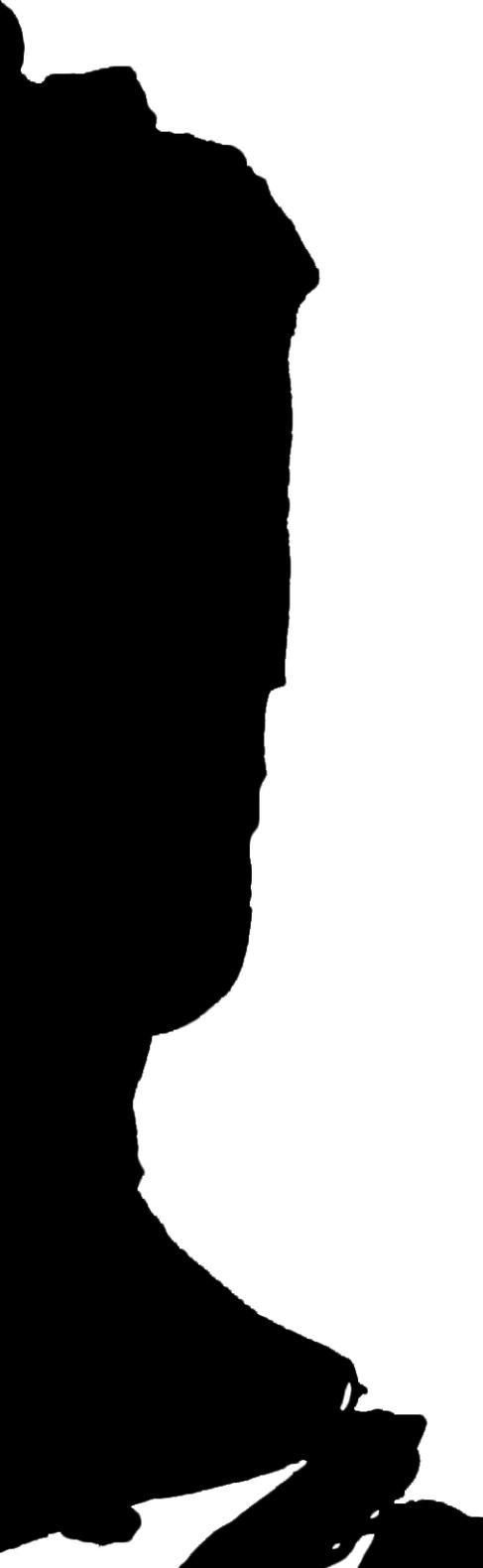
Not to be plagued by harsh criticism
but instead love.

My hope is for a perfect world
where hate doesn't exist.



Reading

AMANDA AKRIDGE



I could spend an eternity upstairs reading.
Under the covers reading, hiding like a bear for winter.
Skimming the pages all day.
In the world of Anne.
Flip, Flip, Flip, Go the pages.
Her always saying Anne spelled with an “e”.
Trying to get those freckles to go away with bright yellow lemon juice.
and turning her hair green. YIKES!
Always smiling and learning all day.
Skipping home through “Lover’s Lane” just like a rabbit...
Me, in the shoes of Anne.
Always laughing and wanting to cry with her.
At some points I am lying on my bed and roaring with laughter.
I am in the world of Anne all summer long.
Just as I am reading, I hear a knocking sound against my door.
The boom on the floor lets me know who it is.
“What are you doing in there?”
The time is ticking while they are intruding upon my time! UGH!
I tell them that I am “reading”!
But as soon as they ask what I’m reading about,
I tell them about the utopia planet of Anne.
Even though they have wandered on to something else,
I am still in the world of Anne.
Ignoring all they say,
thinking about what Anne and I will do next,
side by side.
And when I finish, I am still in the world
of the strong and red-headed girl.
Always so energetic like I would like to be.
The world of that spunky Anne,
imagining what we will do next side by side.

Faded

She is faded.
Worn out,
Worn down.
Time stole her crown.

CATHERINE STRAYHALL

She's no longer vivid, no longer bright -
A star that's gone out in the darkest part of night.
A crinkled photograph developed long ago,
Ripped and featuring nameless the world will never know.
A love that started strong but fizzled in the rain,
The stormy days too rough for that fragile thing to sustain.
A memory that disappeared as the years stacked up,
Slowly vanishing and slipping away into the dust.

A pair of eyes grown cloudy after a lifetime of being sharp,
Unable to see clearly though they once could read your heart.

She's just faded.

*"Shhh. Be quiet
and search inside.
Maybe you'll find
what makes you unique."*

ANNA PREUSS

Crown of Daisies

LAUREN HASSAN

I am but a girl with scars,
Not those that are seen,
The kind buried beneath it all,
I am but a girl with a dream,
Like any other you will see,
I am unique,
But still like any other,
I've been thrown,
And hit,
And threatened,
And smacked,
So I have grieved,
And cried myself to sleep,
I am like a crown of daisies,
Near the sky,
And smelling sweet,
But if you tug my petals,
I will fall to pieces.

*"There is a person behind all of the
makeup. A person behind the designer
jeans. There is a heart behind the
cashmere sweater. And there is fear
behind everyone's brave face. We are
all just people hiding behind the
makeup, designer jeans, sweaters and
the brave faces. Waiting for something
to happen. Something that would help.
Love and care for us. Giving us ease,
hope and a smile that would never
fade."*

MADelyn KINGSLEY

Different

SOPHIE SLUSHER

Talking with others
feeling so very different
never quite the same

Jokes at my expense
The others laughing so hard
Try and fail to smile

My smile is broken
Wanting to sprint far away
Please just be quiet



ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH ALBERT



*"I smile when people ask if
I'm all right But inside I'm
screaming and aching I feel
as if my world is an act I
act my smiling when I want
to kick and thrash everything
around me I act my laughing
when I want to cry"*

MADDY HUNT



Ordinary School Girl

HRIDYA KAKUMANU

I am an ordinary school girl,
I have homework,
I have assignments,
I have essays,
and I have tests.

I have lots of things to do,
lots of places to be,
lots of goals to accomplish,
lots of deadlines to make,
and lots of things to think about.

I have extracurricular activities,
a violin to play,
an Olympiad to compete in,
a piano to make music on,
and a tennis court to hit the ball back and forth.

I have opportunities,
choices to look at,
decisions to make,
chances to take,
and a selection to pick from.

But all of these things add up,
and together they cause stress,
pulling, pushing, playing with my brain,
creating tension,
and it keeps on building.

Finally I blow up,
BOOM!
Something explodes inside of me.
Because I can't take it anymore.
I can't handle it.

Then I turn into this sad little girl.
Confused and hurt.
Lost and wandering.
Trying to figure things out...
I feel small and powerless.

I lose all control,
bringing out the monster in me.
Tearing me to pieces.

Not being able to sleep at night,
I'm worried about the future.

My future determines the rest of my life.
No goals means no good grades.
No good grades means no college.
No college means no job.
No job means no life.

This stress is chained on to me.
It's crushing my spirit.
It's ruining my happiness.
It's taken away my freedom,
and all of my time is gone.

I barely have time for anything.
Barely any time for friends,
or movies,
or musicals,
or games.

I always ask myself – what if?
What if in the end all of my work doesn't pay off?
What if it doesn't get me what I worked so hard for?
What if my life goes to waste?
What if I'm not meant to do anything?

Sometimes I wish I could create more time...
but I can't.
I have no magical powers...
and I have to use my time very carefully.
For I'm nothing but an ordinary school girl.

Imperfection

DENNIS ROTHWELL

You could be a picture
Of gleaming perfection.
Indeed, an orchestra,
Of human without sin.
The world at your whims,
Subject to your knees,
Yet you ask nothing of them,
For every person sees,
That you are perfect.

Until You make a MistAke

and again

AND AGAIN

Until evErythinG falls Apart,

Even your RHyme.

Stop

ANONYMOUS

Stop bugging me
Stop discriminating
Stop calling me names
Stop the physical hurt
Stop shoving
Stop picking on me
Stop bringing me down
Stop laughing
Stop the breaking
Stop being a jerk
Stop the pain
Stop the hurt
Stop bullying me
Stop...
Just Stop!



Hidden Strength

CATHERINE STRAYHALL

I'm hanging from the edge.
Nothing stands between me
and falling but my own waning strength.
What if I fall? What if I seriously hurt myself?

I tried to face my past demons,
but all I've done is create more.
I've only ever felt this scared once before.
How long have I been hanging here?
Maybe forever.

My mind narrows to a single thought:
Don't let go.
Don't let go.
Don't let go.



"Who's experienced the bone-crushing feeling of being bullied? The tear-pulling fear of being abused again and again? The heart-piercing sadness when a loved one is lost?"
EMMA OLINGER

I can't hold on much longer.

Finally, rescue.
I act okay.
I'm not okay.
Arms aching, hands shaking.

Later: joking about it
Playing it off.
Laughter from others at the ridiculous situation.
I guess if you've never been stuck,
At any moment about to fall to

Pain,
And to hurt,
And to humiliation,
You wouldn't understand.

But I don't just remember the fear.
I remember something else:
I didn't fall.
I held onto that ledge.
I didn't give up.
Somewhere in me,
I found the strength to not
give up.
To never give in.

And I'll always have that memory.
When I was one slip
away from falling,

I
did
not
give
in.

Death Box Machine

the cheater
ANDREW CHRISTIE

One vision, that is all it took to know how it all ends. That was the idea behind the product 32F, nicknamed the Death Box. There were 380 of us, we were the test subjects who willingly volunteered for the test. Truthfully, I was just in it for the money. \$10,000 was what they offered for every year they wanted us. Sounded pretty good to me. Live normally, with an extra 10 grand a year, sure! I found out later that I would rather have passed on that now that I know better.

We stood in a line all of us waiting to put our finger into the little hole on the side of the box and get our vision. I assumed most of us didn't really think the box was that precise the way everyone was so impatient, like they had somewhere else to be.

There was only one more person and it was my turn. He was a bum looking guy with his raggedy clothes and had an odd fish smell with a side of B.O. I saw him walk up to the box with two men standing on either side with a white suits. The man on the right asked him what his name was and honestly I can't remember his first or last name but what I do remember is this.

He walked up slowly, suddenly second-guessing if he really wanted to go through with it. He stopped, looked back at the line, then asked the men in the white suits, "Does it hurt?" They looked at one another as if unsure of what to say, then finally the man on the left shook his head saying, "It should be fine. It really just depends on your vision."

Those were the words that finally told me that this could be bad. What if what I see puts me into some kind of depression and all I do is sit around until I breath my last.

Before I could think anymore he was done. When he turned around he simply said, "Beautiful." He then went to the next room where he would write down what he saw.

It was my turn to see my fate revealed. Even though I wanted to turn and walk out I really didn't want to be the wimp. Plus I did want that money. It would really make my life easier.

I step forward.
"Name?" he said.
"Zackary Stall."

I stepped closer to the box, reached my hand out and placed my finger halfway in the hole. I stopped and asked, "How accurate is this thing?"

"Don't know. That's what you're here for."
I took a deep breath. "Well shit, I came this far."

I pushed my finger in and that's when everything went black.

I found myself standing in a pitch black room looking into a mirror. Looking at myself in wonder I crept closer. My reflection didn't mimic me, in fact, it took a step back. I waved to see if it would wave back. No, nothing. Just the slight movement of air passing in and out of his lungs.

He started whispering something. I couldn't hear what it was he was saying.

"What?" I asked.

He didn't reply, he just stood there. Confused, I took a step forward. To my surprise, so did he. But before our feet could touch the ground gravity seemed to flip and I started to fall towards myself. Suddenly my reflection put the gun that I just now realized was in his hand to his head. As we made contact, everything went black. The last thing I saw was my own eyes. I didn't, to my surprise, see any death. I saw life.

Bang!

I snapped back into reality, confused more than frightened by the fact that I would kill myself. What were my reasons? I mean, I looked the same in the vision, so for whatever reason I wanted to kill myself it couldn't be that far off.

I turned around and walked to the door to continue the process.

Vacant Box

HANNAH JENKINS-MCCANN

The first box of society is the family, we're born into, the box referred to as home, where we are made and broken. Willingly kept within four lines, that we've been conditioned of what boundaries, can and will not be crossed.

The box which some are chained to, and held down by, invisible weights of grudges and discontentment by those who claim to love and pray for them.

The box is decorated with wallpaper of dismay, woven into regrets, memories smeared with scenes of artificial love, and what at the time, could not be seen for what it was "EMPTY REVERE".

Although the body can leave the box, and sometimes it does, the spirit can be trapped there. Waiting for redemption from those who built the box, whom have been held in such esteem.

Addicted to the box, and all its weariness, the spirit so close to submerging, sinking in the tears. Yet never quite losing the last breath of air, wherein hope can be found, to be set free.

For the rectification to the situation comes from the Lord above. The box can be left behind, if you let it go, for it's only seen in the midst of your soul.

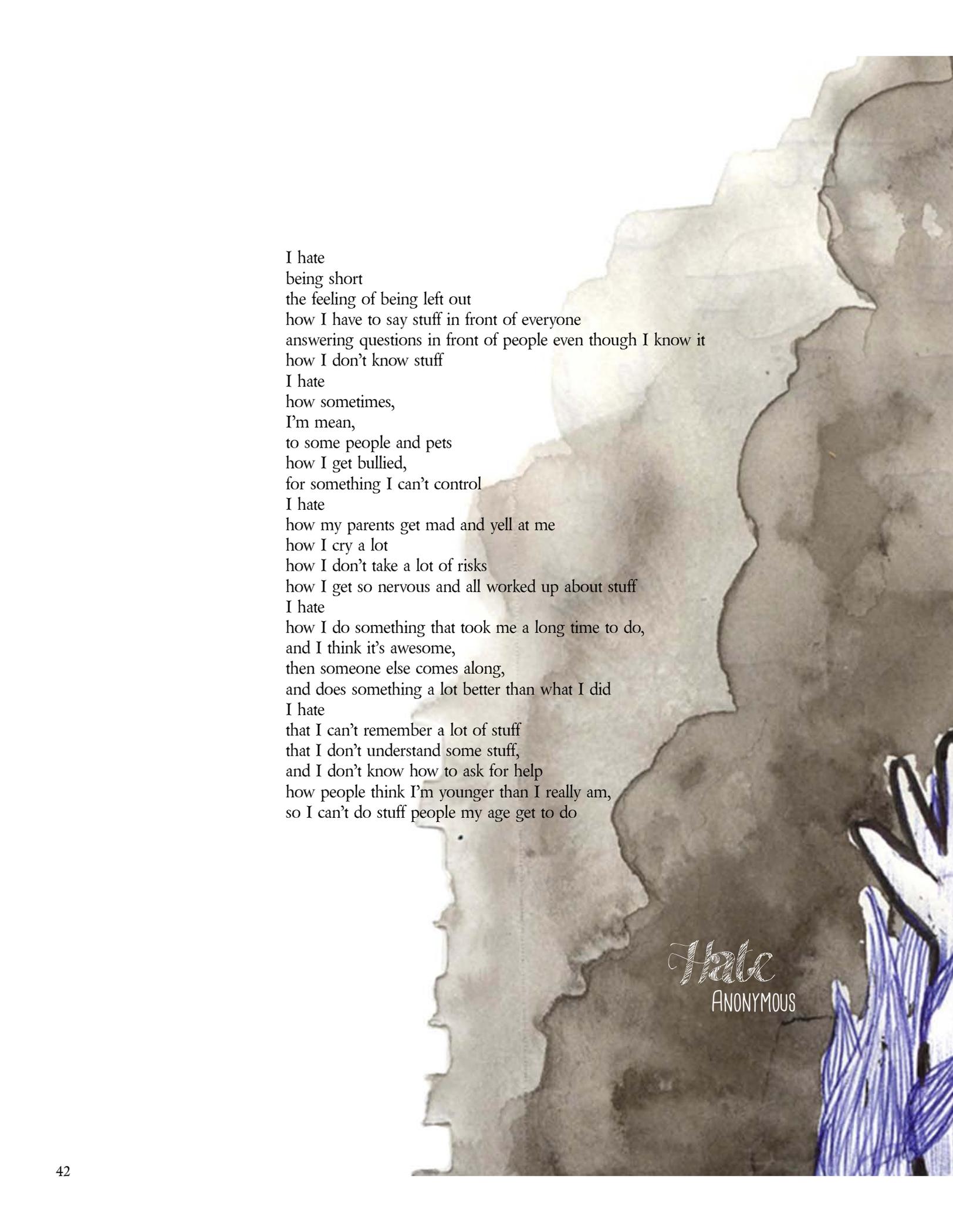


Roller Coaster

MATTHEW LIPPE

Life has been a roller coaster,
it's had missing tracks,
and breakdowns,
and plenty of bumps,
but I don't stop.
I don't stop in the middle of the ride,
even though there might be a downfall.
But I'm not saying there hasn't been high places,
but just be ready for a fall.
For I can't be at the top forever.
Dark turns will occur,
where there is no light at all,
but soon I will be out again,
climbing another hill.
Soon I will be at the top again,
but might go through a loop back to the bottom.
But remember this,
life will keep a rolling,
even through the ups,
and the downs.





I hate
being short
the feeling of being left out
how I have to say stuff in front of everyone
answering questions in front of people even though I know it
how I don't know stuff
I hate
how sometimes,
I'm mean,
to some people and pets
how I get bullied,
for something I can't control
I hate
how my parents get mad and yell at me
how I cry a lot
how I don't take a lot of risks
how I get so nervous and all worked up about stuff
I hate
how I do something that took me a long time to do,
and I think it's awesome,
then someone else comes along,
and does something a lot better than what I did
I hate
that I can't remember a lot of stuff
that I don't understand some stuff,
and I don't know how to ask for help
how people think I'm younger than I really am,
so I can't do stuff people my age get to do

Hate
ANONYMOUS



You Know What Hurts

ZANDER GLYNN

When racial slurs are used against you
When people leave you out because of your skin color
When people look at you because of your skin
When you know you're different
When someone spits at you because of your skin
When your own family won't talk to you
When your friends you call brothers leave you
When the person that you have trusted has given away your secrets
When the one you love most isn't there anymore
When your own parents give up on you
When the one you loved died but you left some words unsaid
When your friend's parents wouldn't let you hang because of your skin
When deep down in your heart you know you're doing wrong
When you look in the mirror and you are not satisfied
When you wake up and you still feel pain
When you see the ones around you hurt
When you hide your pain with a smile
When you need to be strong but you don't want to
Now You Know What Hurts

My Song

ABBY SUBLETT

It's hard to find who I am.
I know this could take long.
What sets me and others apart?
Where do I choose to stand?

I want answers to appear like the bang of a gong.
Reaching down into my heart,
or searching up above.
Finally at last, I find a song.

Not the music that appears on a chart,
but something that comes from true love.
I can express myself in music.
The tang of the tune tasted sweet, rather than tart.

Music, as peaceful as a dove,
or guitar sounds, electric or acoustic.
Songs, feelings from inside, love in my heart, enough.
Now not hard to find who I am.

I Am Color

MAGGIE NUSS

I am color.
When I score the winning goal in the soccer game,
I am a sparkling yellow that is as bright as the sun!
Sometimes, I have a rough day,
And I feel like a despondent blue that is as dark as the night sky.
Other times,
I get as red as lava
When I'm furious.
Also when I am super sleepy,
I get on my cozy bed
And feel like a gloomy purple.
When I want to play outside all day
I am an energetic orange!
I feel gross green when I don't feel the best as I usually do.
Other times, when I'm monotonous
I am a bottomless brown.
Sometimes I get embarrassed,
And I turn so pink that my face is like a tulip!
I am color.

Oh, Dreamin'



Oh, Dreaming dreams I've only dreamt to dream before

EMMA OLINGER



Standing in the middle of the stage
microphone taped to my face
singing my heart out

Handcuffing the mass murder who
has been loose for decades
lowering his head
into the cop car

Catching that tiny ball in my net
scoring the finishing score
end of a long and tiring lacrosse game.

Oh, Dreaming dreams
I've only dreamt to dream before.

Dragging the bow loose
across the cello string
faster and faster
until the scene decides to calm down

Dressed as a large, fat, purple sea witch
while singing to a skinny red head.

Pressing a yellow no. 2 pencil
against paper
writing to my heart's content.

Oh, Dreaming dreams
I've only dreamt to dream before.

Opening my laptop
one day to see the screen shining
with the number 5,000
next to a blue square with a white T in it.

Singing in front of a webcam
for the whole world to see.
Walking into a large auditorium
that has a large hanging sign that says
"Vidcon."

Finally meeting the idol
I've only dreamt to dream
to meet before.

Oh, Dreaming dreams
I've only dreamt to dream before.

ILLUSTRATION BY ELEANOR MENDELSON

I Wish

ANONYMOUS

I wish...

I could run like an Olympian
I could draw without restrictions
I could dance like nobody is watching
I could sing as pretty as a mockingbird

I wish...

I could be a world traveler
I could walk outside with the perfect weather every day
I could save all of the abandoned, abused, dying animals
I could live on the beach and get sand in the creases of my toes

I wish...

I could live on Starbucks without getting fat
I could win the lottery and save starving kids in Africa
I could own Pink and wear all the leggings I want to wear
I could be taller so I could get the ball every time I try to rebound

I wish...

I could be meet the big guy upstairs
I could kill cancer so it wouldn't kill anyone else
I could've met my great grandpa before he died
I could have a better and stronger relationship with my parents

I wish...

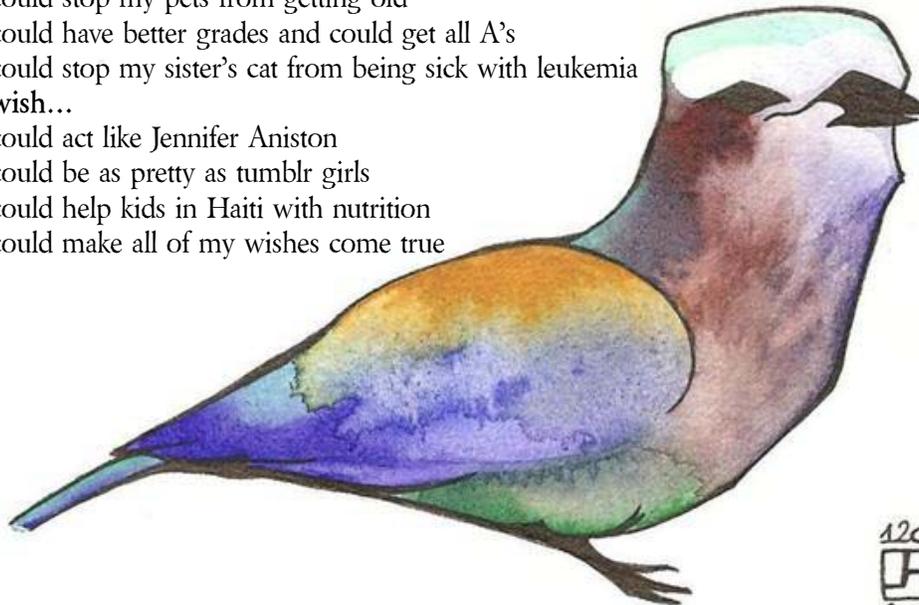
I could cook like a fancy chef
I could make sure there aren't people hurting
I could make school shorter so I could go home
I could be smarter and do so much better in school

I wish...

I could be a math wiz
I could stop my pets from getting old
I could have better grades and could get all A's
I could stop my sister's cat from being sick with leukemia

I wish...

I could act like Jennifer Aniston
I could be as pretty as tumblr girls
I could help kids in Haiti with nutrition
I could make all of my wishes come true



1208
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2006

Who I Want to Be

SHANTHA BURT

Of all the questions,
one stands out.
Who do you want to be?
I want to be someone whose life is overflowing with adventure.
I want to travel and explore.
It would be great to see monuments as bold as stars.
I want to have as much fun as a kid with a balloon.
I would love to tour the wonderful world,
or make new discoveries.
I want to do exciting and exotic things.
It would be nice to look back and be able to tell stories about my life.
I want to have success and achieve my goals.
I want to feel honorable.
In the most brutal times,
I want to be able to summon my perseverance,
and not give up.
No matter how tough it gets,
I want to be able to have as much courage as a warrior,
and overcome my fails and falls.
I can get through it.
I believe in myself.
I want to be someone whose life is overflowing with adventure.

A Wish

CARLY PEARCH

I Wish I could travel across the world seeing different
places and meet different people,

I Wish I could travel through time and space seeing
different times and worlds,

I Wish I could fly and explore the sky and all its wonders,

I Wish I could have superpowers and save people and
take down villains,

I Wish I could be a hero and save millions of people,

I know these things wouldn't happen,
But a girl can dream.

Tiny Little Things

REGAN ERWIN

lightly sunkissed skin and bright grey blue eyes
sympathetic, funny, crazy
daughter of a caring, loving mom named Carmen
who loves...
making new memories
gaining more friends
and...
laughing so hard my stomach hurts
who fears....
slithery, slimy, snakes
losing somebody I love
and...
getting made fun of
who wishes...
drama did not exist
math was easier
and...
everybody felt loved
who creates...
good memories
somewhat good grades
and...
no drama
who wonders...
what my life will be like when I'm older
what I will get for Christmas
and...
where my mom hid the rest of my Halloween candy
who dreams...
to make good money when I'm older
for my sister and me to be closer
and...
of a perfect world where everyone is loved
who remembers...
the time I got my fluffball dog
and...
not caring what others thought of me when I was younger
who believes...
that everything happens for a reason



I Wonder

EMMA SMITH

I wonder.
I wonder who the person I'll become in twenty years will be.
I wonder if I'll be helping someone in desperate time of need,
or saving someone's life on an empty street.
I wonder if the mountains I climb
Will be filled with sunshine as bright as the stars in the middle of summer,
Or rough and full of darkness like the clouds on a rainy afternoon.
I wonder if I'll decide to travel the world.
Meeting people who will change my life along the way.
Or maybe crowds and crowds will look upon me,
Cheering and clapping for more and more,
Of what I have given to the world.
I wonder if someone will look upon me,
And want to follow exactly in my footsteps.
I wonder if I'll seek dark empty holes along my journey,
That my mind will think I can never climb out of.
I wonder if the future that lies ahead is looking sunny.
I wonder if one day I'll be able to fill in all these blanks.
All I know right now is that when I grow up,
All I want to be is happy.

Dreams

DAWSON PLASTER

I Wish
To create new and innovative objects
For the joy of finding a new building block of the universe
To write the published wonder that will spread throughout the world
To smell the delicious food in front of me, soon to be in cookbooks everywhere
For the tiring but interesting duty of running thousands of electrical appliances
For the hard-earned, cold, smooth card in my pocket
For the wind in my hair and the spray of the ocean flying at me
To zoom through the air with a lightweight backpack
To travel Down, Down, Down to the darkest, warmest places on Earth
For the joy of playing with many furry and feathery friends
To provide temporary shelter and lasting memories
To tame the beast as fast as a jet
For the shaking, crushing speed hurtling toward a large object
To feel the club's resistance as it strikes something, and seeing the white streak fly away
For the jostling but weightless ride in a place
where I can see home





Dreaming of My Perfect World

ELIANNA OLIVER

Who wishes...

she could live in the sunny, tropical Bahamian world for a summer
she could experience the ear-popping adventure
on an airplane
going place to place
visiting the breathtaking sights around planet Earth
she could put her toes in the squishy sand everyday
smelling the salty fresh air of the ocean
but never having to leave
and call that place her home

Who dreams...

of the day she will step into an oversized balloon of many colors
and call it her own
and be nothing but sky bound
of the heart racing moment
when she could take the check from the man
standing on the stage
and proclaim to the world
“ I won the lottery!”
of going to the world’s most cluttered big mall
spending away on the latest fashion
but not getting a receipt fifty feet long
not getting a receipt at all

Who envisions...

herself looking good in the latest fashion
big bows the size of your hand
skater skirts
tights
and don't forget
those fold-over brown lace up combat boots!
having the time of her life
straining her voice
and being the biggest and boldest fan
at every KU men's basketball game.

Who wants a world where....

the darkness of cancer can drift away
never to be seen again
all sickness have cures

no longer putting people
in the longing pain of surgery
or seeing someone that they love
slowly shut their eyes for the last time
or hearing the last words
of someone so loved
and remembered.



Out
of
this

World

ASHER ABRAHMS

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

In my poem “Out of this World,” I explore the theme of oppression and the ways in which Leonard Peltier’s *Prison Writings* and Rachel Zucker’s “Paying Down the Debt: Happiness” evidence this central theme. As my poem progresses, I use my own life experiences and combine such experiences with thematically reinforcing quotes from Peltier and Zucker to juxtapose the hopeless nature of oppression with the human ability to remain resolute and find happiness in the most depressing and overwhelming of times.

My inspiration for this piece stems not only from Peltier’s and Zucker’s personal accounts, but from contemporary artists like musical group Macklemore and Ryan Lewis and poet George Watsky. These figures’ strong-willed, anti-conformity, go-out-and-live-life attitudes are evident in my work and its connotations. Merging the messages of all four of the above-mentioned influences allows “Out of this World” to reflect both my personal struggle and the ways in which my personal fight correlates with the fights of other, well-known human beings in the literary and musical worlds.

My fight is not only one of sadness, extreme stress, and hopelessness, but also one of perseverance, indefatigable determination, and hope. I believe it is this contrast that gives so much power to my poem. The human potential to experience such a wide-range of feelings is amazing. But, even more wonderful is the human ability to fight back; to continue walking even when it may seem like there is no path ahead; to endure; to carry on in the most trying of endeavors. This ability makes our lives holy. This ability is one of humanity’s most vital components.

Through the implementation of carefully calculated syntax, diction, alliteration, and extended metaphor, “Out of this World” makes a powerful statement whose intention is to leave the reader or listener feeling the intangible and ineffable sense of having just experienced something truly special. My hope is that this piece provides a very real sense of hope to the reader or listener – that although you may feel physically trapped, your soul knows no bounds.

I am quite satisfied with my final product. After days of brainstorming and more than four hours meticulously piecing together each stanza, I feel extremely proud of my creation. Never before have I so candidly opened myself up on paper. I not only feel a true sense of accomplishment in writing this piece, but also feel great relief in finally taking every emotion I have ever hidden away deep inside my being and getting those turbulent sentiments out of my system.

And, perhaps most importantly, through self-reflection, I learned happiness is a choice—a personal decision that can be achieved regardless of circumstance. As Macklemore so perfectly explains, “I don’t control life, but I control how I react to it.” “Out of this World” represents everything I have ever felt. This poem is every dark secret I have ever withheld; every twisted thought that has ever crossed my mind. This poem gives an explanation of true happiness; true hope. This poem is, simply put, me – in my most raw form.

¹ Peltier, Leonard. *Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sun Dance*. New York: Crazy Horse Spirit, Inc., 2000. Print.

² Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Vintage, 1980. Print.

³ Zucker, Rachel. *Museum of Accidents*. Seattle: Wave Books, 2009. Print.

Am always on edge here,
Always nervous,
Always apprehensive¹ of time.

*Time is a cannibal that devours the flesh of your years
day by day,
Bite by bite.
And as he finishes the last morsel,
With the juices of your life running down his bloody
chin,
He smiles wickedly, belches with satisfaction,
And hisses out in ghostly tones¹,
“You will soon be mine.”*

I know what it's like:

To stand, lonely, while the wind blows
still and calm through the air.
To be called gay for the shoes I used to wear by
*the vice-ridden instigators of the gravest social perils*²
To stress so much I stay up through the night,
thinking I have nowhere to go as I slip into the
fourth mental breakdown of the week. *Many nights
I lie in my bed and let my mind, my dreams, flow free,
conjuring up a future*³ I will work indefatigably to
reach.
To hold in so much hate I want to drown out the
good side of my conscience and kill the
people around me.
To feel out-of-this-world crappy. *Happiness, that
smoky potion fit for fools and rogues and those
susceptible to vanity*³
To not-so-seriously contemplate suicide.
Transcend to the other side, please listen up, hear
my vibe.

Realize *I've hidden away my suffering. I smile when
I feel like crying.
Laugh when I feel like dying*¹
So let go of every assumption you've ever had
about me.

Please don't think of me as some wise sage, my
heart's a book,
You just opened the preface and started the first
page.
So clear your mind, *tabula rasa*, eliminate the
mental cage
You've unknowingly created about me.

I work hard, but work hard foolishly.
Because I feel like *I've been consigned to the dustbin
of history*¹
An insidious force, an aura permeated with strife.
I'm way too caught in the waving flow that is life.
And I'm captain of this ship.
Sometimes we hit some turbulent weather,
But whether or not we make it through it does
not matter.
Because we gave it our best and, even when we're
gone,

The hull of our ship will continue to flow

Down,

down,

down

Until it hits land, small granules of sand creating
friction to slow it down.
Friction leads to stress, but it does not matter,
because, to me, it seems like we
Have already drowned in the mental augmentation
of societal predispositions.

*A mood can be overpowering,
Especially on those days when the endless privations
And frustrations of life
Build and build inside me*¹

Building, building, building up inside me like a
rocket.

Starting in my bowels.

Working its way through over twenty feet of large
intestine.

Up, through my throat.

I'm choking, dying with thirst

Because the fiery rage of this rocket blasting off
inside me is about to burst.

Like MOTHER F—

Like mother, “*Is that my destiny?*”³

No...

And I'm feeling under the weather.

It's raining hard,

I'm in a dream.

I step outside my body and look at me

And see someone who feels out-of-this-world
crappy.

But I walk: Walk on. Walk Through.

Because I spit it sick, slick,

surreptitious

with this prose,

And if you don't know what

surreptitious means,

Keep it a secret,

Shhhh...

Yeah, that's my middle finger,

The knuckle covers my lips

While my nail brushes the tip of my nose.

So put 'em up, salute the avant-garde indie bit

And screw the people who take sick satisfaction in
holding us in.

So now, *I have decided the time has come for me to
write,*

Not because I'm planning to die,

*But because I'm planning to live*¹

I know what it's like:

To love a friend so much I'd give him my life in
an instant.

To kiss soft, mint-scented lips and let my mind
flow freely.

To sit down on the couch and watch Alan go to
Vegas and mistake that ecstasy for roofies.

To hear my mother say she loves me.

To hear the soft, sweet sound of the Mourning
Dove sing to me.

And one day, Imma make it rain,

No longer under the weather because I've

endured the omnipresent emotional pain

Permeating my skin, bones, and veins.

But take a step back, see these words through a
different lens,
'Cus success to me is not about stacking up those
Benjamins
So some supercilious wife can drive her oversized
Mercedes Benz.

Can't you see? Open your eyes, look directly at
mine.

'Cus what we have here is so incredibly special.

Imprint it on your mind's

Canvas with indelible ink especially when you feel
like you're on the brink

Of sinking

Down,

down,

down

And thirty years from now, we'll look back on these
moments

And remember what it was like to truly feel.

Hopscotch down the thin yellow-dotted dividing
line of memory lane

And press your face against the windowsill.

Because we ... we are so “in it” right now.

So grasp that which is positioned

So precisely on the precipice in front of you and
hold it dearly.

But trespassers beware, be wary because nostalgia is
dangerous.

And I hope these words make you feel something
inside

'Cus this world is so damn beautiful.

So next time you feel hopeless,

Or trapped,

Or caged in,

Or out-of-this-world crappy,

Or thinking that you wanna kill your kith and kin,

Or stay up through the night sinking into your

brain's twisted reservoirs,

Think of these moments.

Think of all the beauty and love present on this
earth

And remember the context of the universe in which
we exist.

Ours lives have meaning.

*I refuse to believe that this existence is meaningless*¹

So!

What is the moral of this story?

Take my words into your soul and don't be worried

For me.

Sixteen years old – one-fifth of my life's story.

Because I refuse to be *consigned to that dustbin of
history.*

*There is some greater reality that exists within each of us,
An infinite realm beyond reach of all pain.*

I am undestroyed.

I know who and what I am.

I will never yield.

My body may be locked in here,

*But my spirit flies with the eagle*¹

*And no one blame me. It's my destiny*³

Because I am me.

I am out-of-this-world happy.

Once Glorious

ANONYMOUS

There was once a bright, new, shiny car
with a big engine and all a child's wildest dreams within.
This noble stallion would speed through all the others,
roaring by them like a lion chasing its prey
through its black-floored, circular jungle.
The shining beast would be dominant every time,
its metal body like golden armor glinting in the sun,
transforming it into a bolt of light
shooting, unmatched and elegant, through the tournament with overpowering growls,
and many followers cheering it on throughout its long, exhausting path to victory.
But, on this proud animal's final race to glory,
it found that its opponent, a beautiful creature even more magnificent than him,
was screaming past him with such untamed fury he couldn't believe it.
After the terrifyingly horrible race,
this defeated beast felt its hard, steel body
being lifted to a dark, dusty, unwelcoming wooden garage,
with all the other once proud, shiny, even glorious predators,
that had also once chased their own prey,
feeling free and invincible,
a blur of color, shooting through the air,
now sitting all rusted and broken,
also abandoned by the user,
who thought, even though perfectly good,
they weren't good enough anymore.
And now, our powerful, untamed stallion
has also been replaced by a newer, faster vehicle,
now among the once glorious.



"Dreams become actions
impossible becomes possible
it's what I love to do
becoming focused on my goals
reaching those limits
passing the bar
once I get a new idea
I go with it
I don't give up
I would like to change the world
if everyone was passionate
there would be no
failure."

GRACE ATKINS

Moving

ANONYMOUS

I walk through halls, the halls of a school.
It's a lot different than it was
Just five weeks ago.

I now know quite a few kids now,
They thought of me as the new kid,
The outsider, I don't know if they still do.

I think if they even thought I could be loyal,
that I won't be a burden
I won't ridicule them in front of their friends.
Why would I, when all I want is friends?

I think that I'm worthwhile because of those traits,
That they make me different from others.

I would want them to think of me,
As someone they could hang out with.
That's all that really matters.

But it's like trying to get past locked doors
Sometimes people open up and I seize my chance,
the chance to make a new friend.

I want to be someone,
that people aren't scared to be seen with.
But that will still take some time.

It seems time is my enemy,
How long till I make friends,
How long till I find my place,

Everyone's arms were open at first,
I made some great friends.
But now some arms are closed.

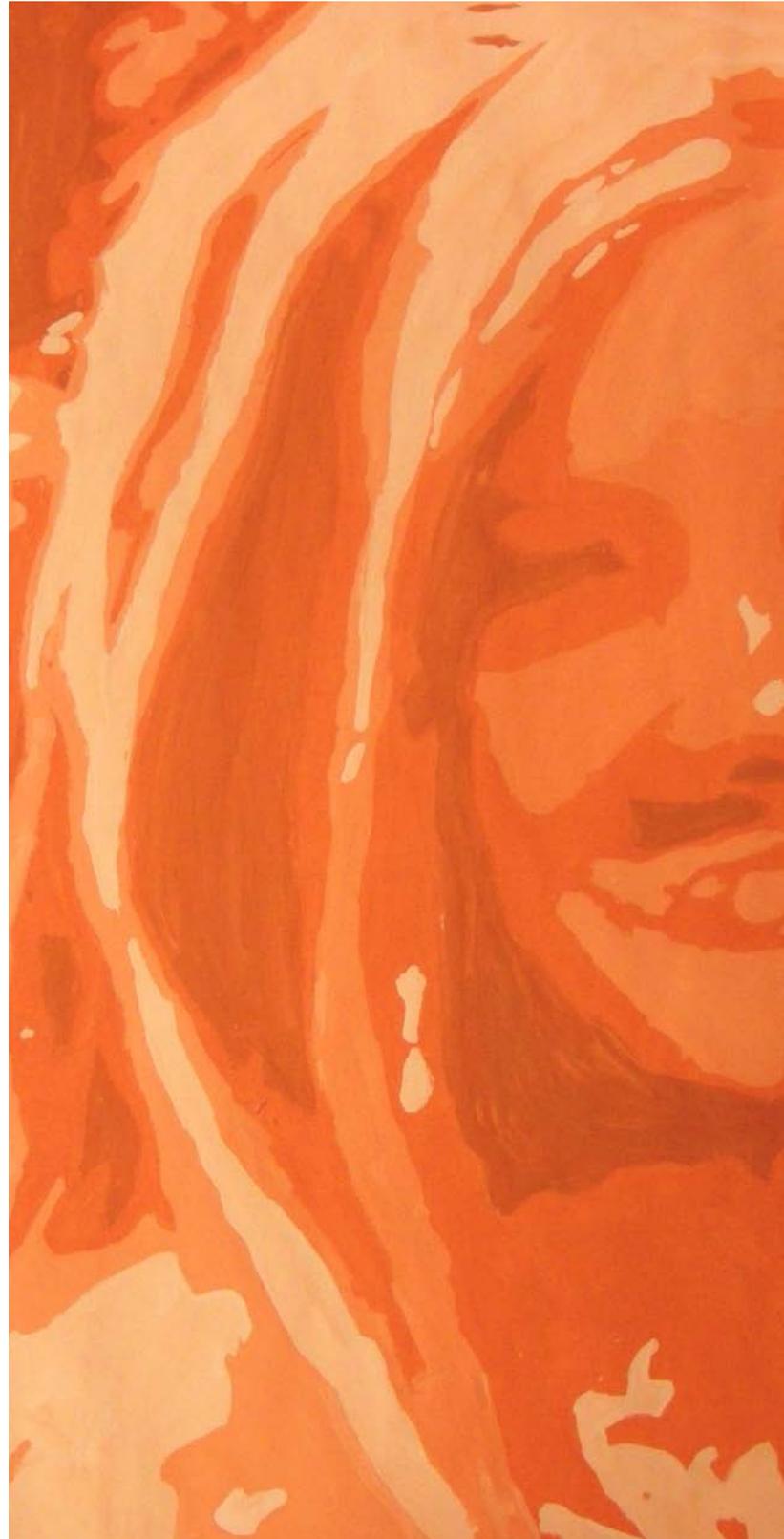
Since some arms are closed
I now have to find the gaps,

My old friends and I used to joke
About how bad it would be.

And now I am the one that moved,
It torments me like a laser light torments a cat.

But feels good when I make new friends
A bittersweet feeling
but now I have begun to accept it.

I just moved but now I don't mind
It's good for me.
But that doesn't mean it doesn't hurt.





Genuine
ABBY CARPENTER

I have been told
I am genuine
By my teachers
By my friends
By my family
When I was younger I wanted a different word
Humorous, pretty, or courageous
Now that I am older
I have realized
The word genuine means
Natural, legitimate, honest and optimistic
Enjoying every second of every blissful moment.
Caring about others first,
And not having two faces.

And I wouldn't want any other word to define me.

The Race
NATALIE GARTLAND

The start of the race isn't always easy
They say to just put one foot in front of the other
Then repeat
How can you repeat that when you're racing to find yourself?

People are always around you trying to be a motivation
But all they are is a dictator
They say, "do this" "be that"
You stumble in confusion and eventually
You fall

You're on the ground
Scared and lost
People are continuing to shout and command
In all the commotion, you have to find your own voice
The softest one of all
The one that has the most to say

You get up and keep running
You can see the finish line
The other's voices are fading
You're going to make it
You're going to make it
You've made it
You've finally discovered you

Now how do you feel?

Kids can't win.

We come home from school, too tired to work. We work, too tired to do homework. We are up late doing homework because we were too tired to do it earlier. We go to school, too tired to function correctly. We have to stay after school because we are too tired to function correctly. We stay after so late that we do not have time to work. We squeak by at work, not having enough time to do homework. We are up late because we were at school late. Sleep. Work. Homework. Sleep. School.

I'd feel oppressed, wouldn't you?

But it isn't really school itself that I feel oppressed by. Truth be told, I actually enjoy school. There is a certain joy in calculus and a hidden passion in writing rhetorical analysis essays. There is no nugget of gold humor equivalent in stress, though.

Let's talk about stress, baby. Let's talk about you and me. Let's talk about STRESS.

Stress is pressure put on the student. Stress is what causes the student to lose sleep, forget assignments, come to school bleary-eyed and messy-haired because they worked all night on that biology lab report. What are we, zombies? Kids should not be stressed. Why are you killing the youngest, brightest, most imaginative, energetic, passionate, and beautiful people before they have even reached their prime?

I have a personal answer.

Whenever I sacrifice my most valuable asset it is for my grades. Gotta get those A's. Gotta maintain that 4.0. I gotta be the very best, like no one ever was. (I even just had a panic moment – the vacuum that swirls inside my chest, pulling my hope and happiness, me remembering that I should be studying right now because I am floundering in AP Calc and I totally bombed that Latin quiz yesterday and and and...) But the primary reason I care about my grades is that they are my key to scholarships. If they were not so important, not crucial and not a summation of my value as a student(!), I would be taking different classes. I would be trying newer things. I would be the river that, when the floodgates open, courses through the valley and leaps and rushes as it naturally should. I and countless other students would learn better without that constant pressure. Grades no longer “keep the student in check”, they oppress the student, crush them, weigh them down with significance and value and heaviness even though they are only one little letter on one piece of paper.

If I don't get good grades, I won't get scholarships. If I don't get scholarships, I cannot follow my dreams. I would love to be an artist. But I also want to be an artist that lives in a house and gets to eat food regularly. Currently, I am shackled by the oppression of the stress of trying to get good grades. I do

not want to be shackled by the oppression of massive student loans, storm clouds overhead which block out the warm glow of financial freedom.

Do you see why kids can't win?

Everything academic the assiduous student does from the moment they enter high school is for colleges. Do you think I spend hours doing ACT prep for fun? (Though arguably, I did actually really like taking the SAT. It brought back pleasant memories of the PSAT. So for awhile there on that Saturday morning, I was actually smiling while figuring formulas and grammar. Giggle, endorphins.)

But I am an anomaly. School – LIFE – should not be this way. A student's value may be in their GPA, but a human being's should not. I wish my friends could be recognized for their empathy and kindness and not their test scores. (And I make my point: Sometimes these admirable qualities do get you awards and medals and stuff. But by nature, the most benevolent actions go



unseen. And nobody has ever gotten that heavenly Full Ride for their “happy helper” award.) And I know this sounds terrible, but no high-school student spends their Saturday at the homeless shelter simply because that is what they like to do. “Yes! I will volunteer nine hours today! I could be catching up on sleep or doing homework or studying but I love helping the homeless with all my heart so that is where I will invest my time.”

I will probably be chopped and quartered and disemboweled for this absurd statement, but can anyone honestly deny it? Perhaps they do love the homeless with all their hearts. But they also love Presidential Service Awards and National Honor Society memberships, too. Do you see what I mean? I sound cruel and satirical, but it really has gotten to the point where students like me can't do all of what they love anymore because society holds them to such a high, impossible standard. We all strive to be that Perfect Student, the one who makes colleges drool and financial aid officers throw money like it is an academic strip club. I've come to the realization that I will never be that person. Success is intoxicating: Now that I

am a National Merit Scholar, I am at the top of my class! Now I have won the Scholastic Art competition, I am what “they” want! But the high does not last long, for there is always someone better, someone smarter. At first this realization made me feel weak and inadequate. My latent competitive streak has led me to always be one of the highest achievers. The feeling that there are people who are better than me even after I've given it my all is kind of a smack to the face, if you can relate.

On my college odyssey, the oracles have told me that if I do what I love, I'll have success.

I have come to terms with myself. Since I'll never be the best – never be that perfect muffin – why shouldn't I just give up? But I cannot picture myself ever giving up, because what I love is a challenge, a fight, a code to crack. It makes me learn, and oh, how I love to learn. I dance in it and bask in it and learn to love it even if it is tough and tasteless as month-old hardtack. The trick to not dying of

Discourse on School ANONYMOUS

stress and boredom in school, I have learned, is training yourself to enjoy the difficulties. I've got that down (again, says the girl who enjoyed taking the SAT.) But you can't really learn to love stress. It kind of kills. Do you love what ends your life prematurely? (Well, barbecue and birthday cake, yes...) Now, if only I could get scholarships for reading a 1,100-page book in three days. Or getting to level 15 in Tetris. For learning calligraphy, just for kicks. For taking Latin, even though I do not want to study classics, sed quod pulchram historiamque literam scire cupidio. That would fry the stress leviathan in its tracks.

I wonder if colleges know what kind of person they are letting in. Someone who thinks. *Down with the system!* Someone who is conscious of their relevance in society. *Well, actually, um, that system is going to be educating me and helping me to learn more.* Someone who wants to change the world. *What kind of hypocrite am I? Using my own argument against colleges to be accepted into one.* Someone who is not afraid to be themselves. *I'll infiltrate them... from the inside.*

Well, you've been warned.

Untitled

TORI GARDNER

We're just dancing,
partying,
smiling. Having

Fun

For once in our lives;
being ourselves, knowing
no one can judge us. It

Is

Just the house, just the
music, intertwining with our
bones. Making us sway to the

Existent

Mass of rhythm and beat. This
place is exciting, thrilling, shocking;
all in one. Living right

Here,

In the moment, with people we
can dance with. Sweeping us around
the slick floor. Partying like everyone's

With

No worry or grudge. Like there's
no tomorrow. Acting like it's the end
of eternity. No worries at all. Just

Us;

Living until we can't anymore.



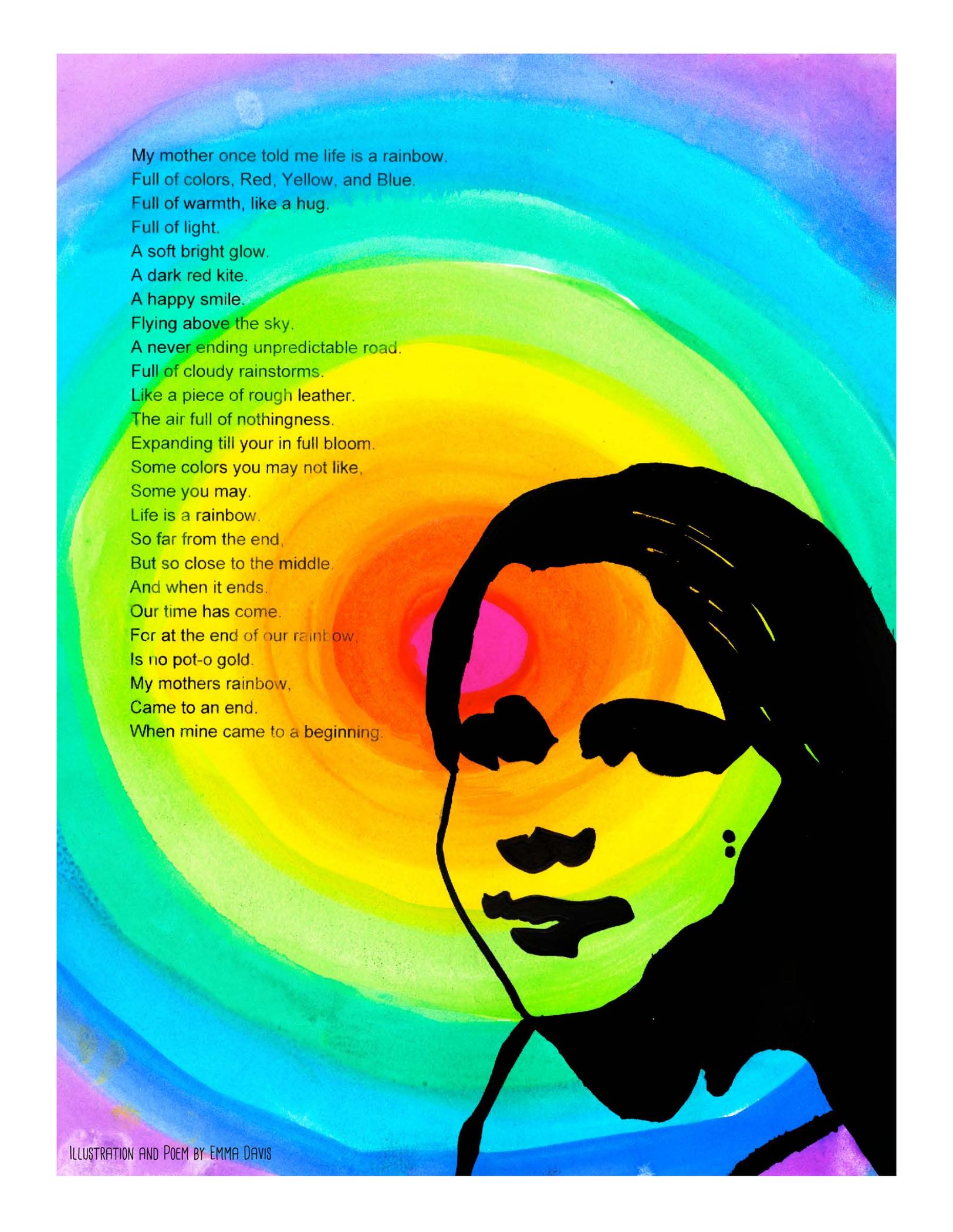
If only that person were on the same planet.
If only that person were in the same hemisphere.
If only that person were in the same continent.
If only that person were in the same nation.

If only that person was in the same province.
If only that person was in the same county.
If only that person was in the same city.
If only that person was in the same town.
If only that person was in the same village.

If only that person was from the same generation.
If only that person was from the same religion.
If only that person was from the same social status.

If only that person was from the same ethnicity.
If only that person was from the same race.
If only that person was from the same nationality.

If only that person was the same age.
If only that person was the same height.
If only that person wasn't the same gender.



My mother once told me life is a rainbow.
Full of colors, Red, Yellow, and Blue.
Full of warmth, like a hug.
Full of light.
A soft bright glow.
A dark red kite.
A happy smile.
Flying above the sky.
A never ending unpredictable road.
Full of cloudy rainstorms.
Like a piece of rough leather.
The air full of nothingness.
Expanding till your in full bloom.
Some colors you may not like,
Some you may.
Life is a rainbow.
So far from the end,
But so close to the middle.
And when it ends.
Our time has come.
For at the end of our rainbow,
Is no pot-o gold.
My mothers rainbow,
Came to an end.
When mine came to a beginning.

Athletes

JOE MURRAY

I am an athlete,
trying to train hard;
to reach the top.

SMACK!
I get knocked down,
but then I get right back up.

To continue on.
To be a champion.
I am an athlete.



The Job of a Catcher

CONNOR DURHAM

Seeing out onto the entire field and beyond,
Like seeing out onto a battlefield during a war
While being guarded by the tools of ignorance,
Being the catcher like the general of the team.

This is the job of a catcher
The vice president to the coach some say.
Getting an earful of the smack of the ball into the glove,
And the ping off the aluminum bat and seeing the ball soaring into left field.

This is the job of a catcher
On a dusty and chalky dirt field in May,
I have so much weight on my shoulders,
While still keeping my composure to show the team I can handle it.

This is the job of a catcher
To step up and be the leader of the team.
I play until my knees say no more,
Then I have done my job
the right way.





The Maple Tree

RAMYA CHILAPPA

Marina Green had always been the epitome of normal. She got good grades, but they were nothing phenomenal. She was pretty enough, but no great beauty. She had friends (did one count?), but was nowhere near a social butterfly. Even her parents were normal, her father being an accountant and her mother a housewife. There was nothing out of the ordinary about her at all, except perhaps her incredibly compassionate nature and amazing love for books. But for the most part, Marina had just always been the quiet girl overshadowed by her best friend.

Rosella Jemson was a hard girl not to notice. She was exotically beautiful, with thick black hair, tan skin, and hazel eyes. She was friends with almost everyone in tenth grade. Her mother had once been a dancer, and her father traveled all over the world as an ambassador for his big shot software company. With a best friend like Rosella, Marina was almost always unnoticed.

But Rosella was special to her. Even if she could have sat with anyone in the school, she always sat with Marina. She was Marina's safe haven, her one great outlet to the world.

And now she was leaving.

"I'm sorry, Marina," Rosella said, swinging her legs over the branch of the big maple tree in front of Recon High School, which was their favorite hangout spot, "But it's only this school year. My father really wants my mother and me to go with him to this one business trip. This could be a huge break in my dancing career."

"But it's junior year," the other girl protested quietly, "It's *junior year*."

Rosella did nothing but shoot her an apologetic glance.

And so the next day, Rosella Jemson packed up her bags and left for the airport with her family. And Marina Green watched her best friend and her family leave. *I'll be fine*, she tried to convince herself, *I'll be fine*.

It wasn't working.

No matter how much she missed Rosella, Marina still had to go to school. So the next day, she dragged herself out of bed, got ready, kissed her mother and father goodbye, and left for school. Recon High School, widely renown as the largest high school in the

county, was only a block over, so she usually walked there with Rosella. Today she walked alone.

While at her locker and getting her books, Marina took the time to listen to the people around her.

"We have a new student today."

"I hear he's been to jail *twenty times*!"

"Did you know he was expelled for beating up a kid at his old school?"

"Apparently all the kid did was ask him to move out of the way. Nicely!"

Her curiosity was piqued. A new boy? And a juvenile delinquent, apparently. She shook her head and started for class.

When she got to the classroom, she immediately walked over to the back of the room and set her books down on a desk. She knew that she'd be sitting alone today, since Rosella was gone. Her homeroom teacher, Mrs. Vanderbilt, walked into the classroom, causing the noisy chatter to cease.

Right behind her trailed a tall, sulky looking boy who had his hands shoved into the pockets of his hoodie. He had blond hair that flopped over his eyes, and his lips were pulled down into a scowl. His features were well-sculpted and aristocratic, giving him the overall look of a snobby prince.

This must be the new boy, Marina thought.

Chance Travers was not happy. His parents had moved yet again, and some idiot had decided to send his (private!) record to the new school. This place had been no different. Rumors followed him where ever he went. And it was made even more obvious by the way all the kids in the classroom were looking at him with a mixture of curiosity and fear.

"Class, this is our new student, Chance Travers. He's moved here from...where was it you came here from, Chance?" the teacher, a lady named Mrs. Vanderbilt asked.

He glared at her, before muttering, "California."

"California to Connecticut! What a big move!" sensing the negative waves rolling off Chance, the old woman smartly chose to move on, "Why don't you go take a seat next to...Marina. Marina, raise your hand please, dear. She'll be your partner in homeroom for the rest of the year, Chance."

He scowled.

A girl near the back of the room raised her hand, and Chance slowly made his way over. He sat down, and let the messenger bag slip off his shoulder, taking out a notebook and a pencil. While everyone else took out their supplies, he took the time to study his new "partner."

She had brown hair and bright blue eyes. She was pretty, he supposed, in a girl-next-door kind of way, but was nothing particularly memorable. Not like some of the other girls he'd seen.

She noticed him staring, and sent him a shy smile.

"Hello," she said, offering him her hand.

He stared at it for a moment, and then shot Marina a look that told her exactly what he thought of her. She got the message and retracted her hand, turning hurriedly back to stare at her own desk. Chance smirked, but it quickly slipped back into a frown. Was she afraid of him too? Was everyone?

"Hey," came the girl's soft voice.

Chance snapped out of his trance to realize that the classroom was filled with the quiet chatter of working. He must have missed the teacher's instructions.

"We're supposed to talk about ourselves. Try to get to know each other better," Marina said.

He glared at her. If the girl thought that he was going to talk to her, she was seriously delusional.

They stared at each other in silence for the next few minutes, until Marina began speaking, "My name is Marina Green. I like reading, animals, and soccer. I don't like broccoli or people who look down on others. My hobbies are making bracelets and writing poems. Now you go."

Chance stared at her stubbornly, but seeing that she wasn't budging, he sighed and reluctantly began to talk, "I'm Chance Travers. I like very few things. I dislike very many things. My hobbies are none of your business."

The girl didn't look taken aback or surprised at his curt response. She simply smiled at him and turned back to her desk to fiddle with her pencil.

He scowled, before deciding to stare at the chalkboard for the rest of class. When the bell

rang, he was the first one out the door.

Chance hurried out of the math classroom, gripping his books tightly when everyone moved quickly out of his way. The rumors people were spreading about him were really starting to bug him.

It was lunchtime, and he had decided to eat outside. No use taking up a table in the cafeteria when he'd be the only one at it.

On the way there, he heard a familiar voice shouting, "Give it back! Please, give it back!"

He followed the voice to the abandoned hallway of the old wood-working classroom. Hardly anyone went there anymore, but there were people in there now.

It was Marina Green, the girl that sat next to him in homeroom. Two tall, bulky seniors were holding what he assumed to be her lunch bag high above her head. Being as petite as she was, she couldn't reach it.

"What's wrong, Green?" one of the boys mocked, "Where's that pretty friend of yours that always helps ya out? Now that she's gone, whatcha gonna do, huh?"

"Aw, look at her," the other one laughed, "She's getting angry. She looks like a mad kitten, don't ya think?"

Chance wasn't sure why he did it, but before he could think about what he was doing, he had strode forward, grabbed the senior's arm, and twisted Marina's lunch out of his grip.

"Pick on someone your own size, you jerks," he growled.

"Hey Matt, that's the new kid. The delinquent," Ugly Number One said.

"I heard he's almost killed a guy before," Ugly Number Two exclaimed, looking at Chance with a mixture of awe and fear.

The two older boys practically ran out of the hallway.

"Here," Chance said gruffly, tossing the girl her lunch bag, "Be more careful next time."

Marina just barely managed to catch it.

"Thank you," she whispered, staring at the ground.

He nodded, "Whatever. Go to the cafeteria before someone else catches you."

Without bothering to wonder why he cared, Chance turned around and began to walk toward the school doors. It wasn't until he was outside on the grass of Recon High's front lawn when he realized he had been followed.

Marina wondered why he had helped her. No one ever had, until Rosella came along. And from what she had heard about him, he didn't exactly seem like the type of guy to do random acts of kindness.

For some reason, she found herself following him when he walked away and out of the school.

For a juvenile delinquent, he doesn't seem very mean. I'll eat lunch with him, she decided.

When he had reached the high school's front lawn, Chance seemed to finally notice her presence when he whirled around and glared at her.

"Why are you here? Why are you following me?" he snapped.

"To eat lunch with you," Marina replied simply.

"Go away," he grumbled, sitting in the shade of the large maple tree, "Go eat with your friends or something."

"I don't have any," she said as she took a seat next to him, asking herself when she had gotten so bold.

Chance stared at her in surprise.

Reading his expression, she explained further, "I only had one, my best friend Rosella. She went on a trip with her parents for this school year, so I'm alone."

He didn't say anything, but began to pick at the grass.

For the rest of the lunch period, Marina (being unusually talkative) chattered on about various things, while Chance sat and listened silently. She had even offered to share her lunch with him, since he hadn't brought any, but he adamantly refused. *I'm not hungry*, he said. But Marina was content talking, with him listening.

Because, unlike everyone else, Chance *listened*.

Chance was confused. The annoying girl from homeroom talked to him in Mrs. Vanderbilt's class and always found time to make conversation during passing periods. Every day after that faithful first day of school, she had followed him outside to eat lunch with him. He had grown used to her presence, and had even (dare he say it?) begun to enjoy it. But he was still puzzled as to why she even bothered with him. He never talked back, besides the occasional short *yes* or *no*.

One day, he finally snapped and asked her at lunch.

"Why are you always bothering me?"

She sent him one of her happy, innocent smiles that he knew would get her in trouble someday.

"Because, Chance," Marina said, crossing her legs and leaning back against the maple tree, "You're my friend. And even if you won't admit it, I'm your friend too."

They sat in silence for the next few moments.

"Marina," Chance finally said. She looked at him, startled. He had never used her name before. "Thank you," he whispered.

She smiled again, even more brightly this time, "You're welcome, Chance."

It wasn't much, but it was a start.

He hadn't shown up to school today.

And Marina's bullies snatched the chance to make fun of her again.

This time, they stole her books. She couldn't get to her third period math class without them. If only Chance was here...

She closed her eyes and clenched her fists. Why was she relying on him so much? If he listened to her, why wouldn't someone else?

"Stop!" she finally screamed, losing her temper.

The seniors stared at her in surprise. Marina Green had never, ever fought back before.

"How dare you!" Marina shrieked, letting loose six years of emotions, "If you don't give me back my books right now, you stupid seniors, I will tell

the principal all the things you have done to me in the past six years and MAKE SURE you have the nastiest detentions for the rest of the school year!"

They stared in surprise. Of course, they didn't hand back her books, but she used the distraction to pry them out of their hands. She turned around and began to walk to class, but something made her stop.

Standing there was Chance, grinning widely.

"Good job," he said.

She smiled back, feeling as if she was glowing. Because she had finally been *heard*.

At lunch that afternoon, Marina remembered something that had troubled her earlier in the day. "Hey, Chance?"

"Hm?" he replied absentmindedly, snagging a pretzel from her bag.

"Why were you gone this morning?"

He froze, his hand stopping before it reached the pretzel bag.

"Oh, that," Chance said. Was he blushing? "I was at the vice principal's office."

"Why?" Marina exclaimed, appalled.

He murmured something unintelligible.

"Say it again. I didn't quite get that," she said.

"Someone called you a spoiled, obnoxious brat for not talking much, okay? They think you think you're better than them because you don't speak. They called you some other really terrible things, and I lost my temper and punched them!"

Marina, who had been preparing to lecture him, felt her mouth go dry and the words suddenly leave her tongue.

"Are you mad?" he asked, turning his face away from her.

She reached out and took his hand, causing his head to snap up in surprise.

"No, I'm touched."

Chance tentatively curled his fingers around hers, and they sat without saying anything.

"They're not true, you know," he said abruptly.

"What?" she asked confusedly, turning her head to face him.

"The rumors about me. They aren't true. I transfer schools a lot because of my parents' jobs, and they finally got a permanent one here. I did once critically injure a kid and send him to the hospital, but I was only acting out of self-defense because he was bullying me. That's how the rumors began. None of them are true, but people enjoy gossiping. Especially the teachers, who have access to my record."

She rested her head against his shoulder, "I know."

Sitting there, with her new friend and her newfound confidence, Marina Green smiled. She traced the bark of the big maple tree with her spare hand, remembering all the memories made under it.

She breathed in the scent of fall on its way, feeling the heat radiate off of Chance. Even though Rosella wasn't here, Marina found herself looking forward to the school year.

Maybe it wouldn't be so bad.

U, I, and Growing Up

ERIC GUNNARSON

i, the definitive
the only you in the world
i am and you are individual
we are separate
we are absolute masters
of our individual perceived universes.

we do not converge, but in passing
we never finished each others sentences
we did grow apart
as we are meant to
you moved on into your world
i stayed stagnant
in mine

the years are not the problem
the problem is a repetition
repetition
repetition
of this grand delusion
that i can be more than me myself

i want more than me
i want more than what you became
i wanted to be the best
but lost sight of the fact that one can only
best and be bested
alone
there can be no we in a fight to the finish
and so we sit, in our own little worlds
discontented

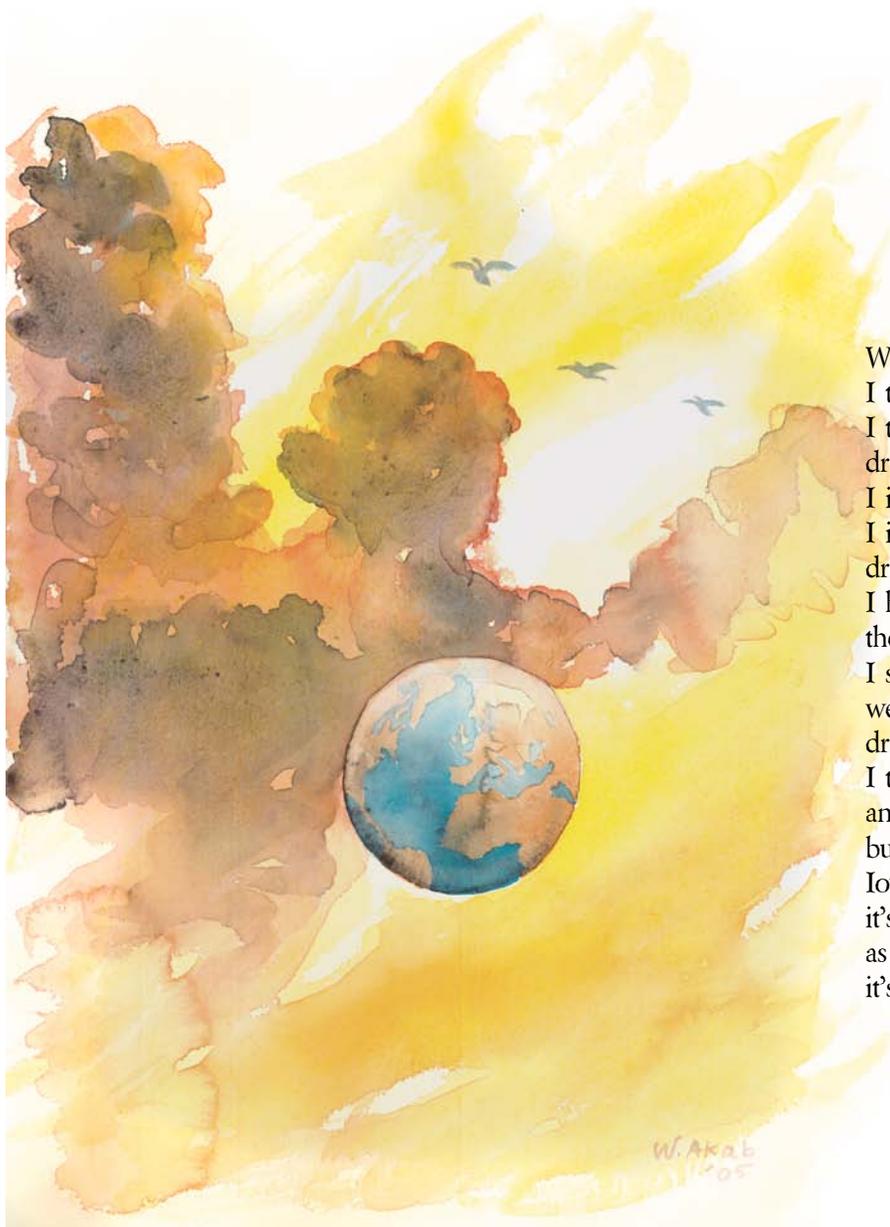
sometimes in a fleeting moment
i see you, the outer you.
you see what i want you to see
and we will walk by each other as shells
we were eggs once
we were not separate
but birth tore our union asunder
my brother.





"The world is like a library, a huge, sprawling archive of every word ever written, and we are the books that line its endless shelves. Everyone has their own personal differences, and no two people can ever be exactly alike. We form our own groups of people we get along with, just like books being sorted into genres. Every person has their own importance in the making up the whole of our world, just as every book is needed to complete a library. And most obviously, every book, every person, has people who care for them, and people who don't. You can learn something from every book and person you encounter."

LAUREN MCGRATH



Iowa

AARON PETERSON

When I think of Iowa,
I think of cattle,
I think of the rattle under the road,
driving by humble abodes.
I imagine cornfields,
I imagine barns,
driving by the farms,
I hear the rumble of tractors,
the thunder in the sky during summertime,
I smell the stink of the cows,
we should be nearly there now,
driving to my grandpa's house,
I truly think of Iowa,
and when I do I think of me,
but more importantly my family.
Iowa isn't just a state,
it's something that comes to mind,
as I pull into the gate to my grandpa's house,
it's like a section in my heart that says who I am.

Schools

AUBRY BEND MIDDLE SCHOOL

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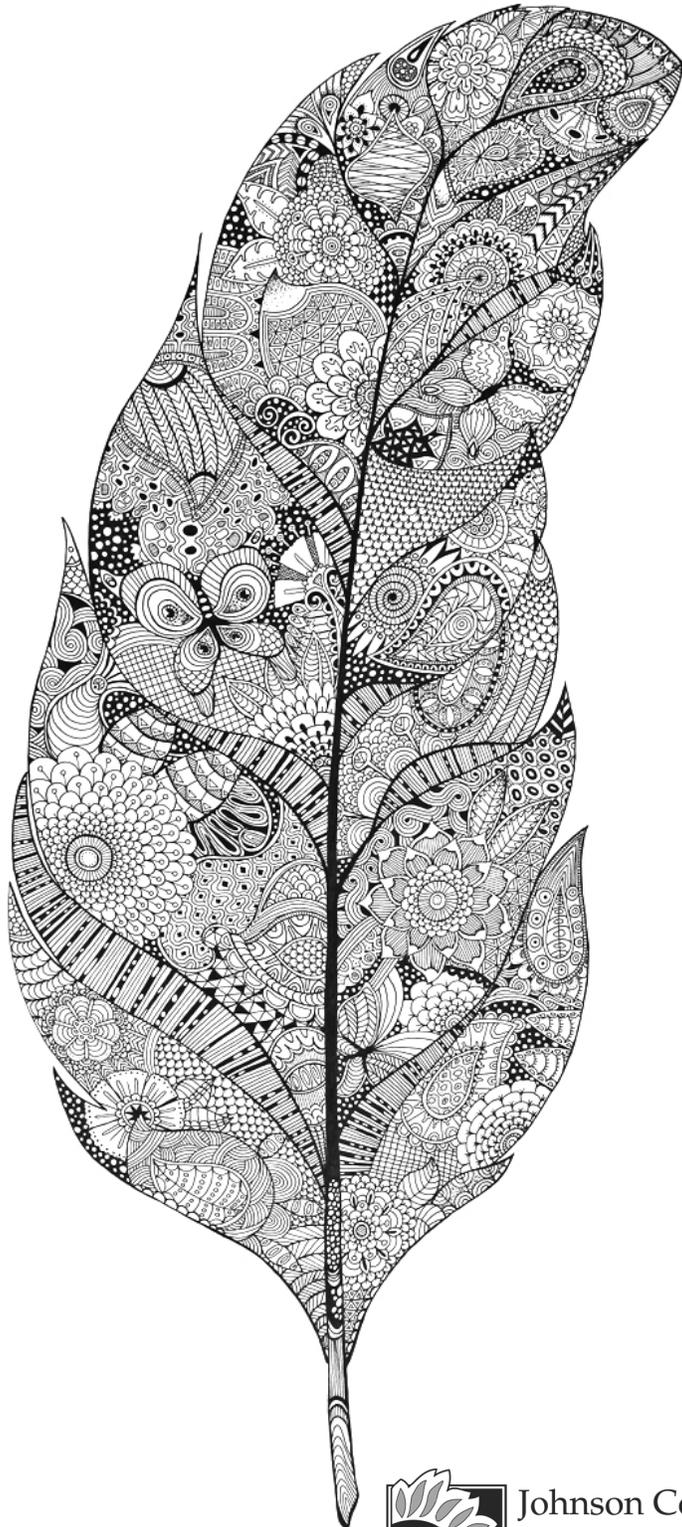
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