

elementia
issue V

“...though you had every reason,...you didn't come undone...”

-Helen Folasade Adu



issue V

a

literary

teen

zine

published

to

represent

&

elementia

uplift

atypical

creative

sublime

young

adults

Young Adult Services
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Johnson County, KS USA
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November 2007

Every day, I walk along the same road,
A path of work and play, the route I know.
Every day, I carry the same, tiring load,
A burden of hopes, fears, and woe.

Every day, I trudge along the path again,
Looking ahead, and not behind or to the side.
Every day, I think, this road's a little plain,
Maybe I could stray from it if I tried.

Today, I look to the side as I tread,
See the miracles that I have missed.
Today, I watch great acts instead,
Acts of love, beauty, and kindness.

Today, life isn't a straightaway
Endless, going nowhere for us all.
Today, life forks, and I must stray,
I can't be afraid to stumble and fall.

Today, I soak up all that I ignored,
To find peace I must look outside.
Today, I can finally be part of the world,
Enjoy everything that I have denied.

Today, if you're tired of that road,
Heed my advice, and see the light.
Today you can lighten your heavy load.
Just behold the world's wonders and delight.

~Rachel
Franklin, 12

elementia

atypical creative sublime young adults

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"who am I? I am a girl....with my words...I *could* change this world."

JDC resident, 15

elementia

atypical

creative

sublime

young

adults

Creative Force

Theo Goodloe
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Jenna Hager
Imaria Corrick



editor's note

It's the opposite of writers' block, when your thoughts over bloom and it becomes impossible to pick the best words...

to convey, to reveal, to display...all it is you hope to say. I say you, but I mean me. (-:

Ideas, are like journeys, in that you can't ever be sure where they will lead.

shall we relish in that notion alone?
yes. lets.

enjoy.

P.S.

Angela Parks: thank you for reaching out & for your patience. Together—our joint effort will make a difference, I'm sure of it. **Linda:** I'm not sure I could manage without you...& that's as honest as I can be...you are extremely important to me. **Katie:** I value your input. What you bring to elementia is priceless. **Kelly:** of all the books I've seen you reading, one in particular will always solidify what you encompass to me: Why should anyone be led by you. The better question is, who would not want to be led by you? and by you...I mean you. I think you've got what it takes lady...really. **JenT:** what would elementia be without you? it wouldn't. **Kasey:** thank you for your enthusiasm & support...you're stunning. **Dennis, Tricia & Ms. Jean Hatfield**—thanks for the interview four years ago.



Angel Jewel Dew

editor disclaimer: some submissions were edited for grammar and slight clarification

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Leslie Goodwin, 17



Leslie Goodwin is a **Shawnee Mission South** senior and has been writing since she was in second grade.

She previously won first place in the JoCo Stop Underage Drinking Prom Essay Contest, and hopes to continue writing inspirational essays for teens in the future. She is a volunteer at the Johnson County Central Resource Library and helps out with **elementia** and Homework Help.

Next year she will be attending the University of Kansas and will become an English major with an emphasis in creative writing. She hopes to have her first novel published by the time she is 21.

pg. 17

photograph courtesy of leslie goodloe

Rare Inspirations Judges

Imaria Corrick
Young Adult

Shawnee Mission North High School

Lynne Brown

Johnson County Library Foundation

Katie Manning
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Terri Snethen
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Blue Valley North High School

Brian Longfellow

Adjunct Assistant Professor of English
Johnson County Community College
AP English Teacher
Shawnee Mission Northwest High School

Zoë Christianson, 18

Zoë Christianson is a first year at **Macalester College** who plans to major in Creative Writing.

She has been actively involved with the Shawnee Mission West literary magazine, *Out of Hand*, as well as the newspaper, *The Epic*, and has won several journalistic awards.

One of her news stories, published in 2004, tied for 2nd place in the KSPA News Story of the Month competition.

Zoë also received a category of "Excellent" in the Yearbook Copy/Caption: Student Life category at the 2005 NSPA fall conference in Chicago.

She has been published several times in **elementia**, and is active in several online writing groups. She is currently an editor for Macalester's monthly student publication, *Thistle*, and is brainstorming ideas for this year's Nanowrimo contest.



pg. 16

photo taken by Kelly Sims; courtesy of JCL

elementia submission information

submissions are accepted
May 1-September 15
of each year

3 submissions only per individual

submissions must be typed and
accompanied by a submission form

for complete information on submissions
please visit

www.jocoteenscene.org/elementia

or e-mail dewa@jocolibrary.org
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Brooke Shippee, 20



Brooke Shippee is a **Rhodes College** sophomore who has been writing voraciously since the age of four.

She has been previously published in the 2005 and 2006 volumes of Shawnee Mission Northwest's lit mag, *Penpoint*; has had poetry and short stories appear twice in **elementia**; was published in the online literary magazine, *HappeningNow!*, and won second place in the 2006 Stephens College Sigma Tau Delta Poetry contest.

She is currently a staff writer for Rhodes College's weekly newspaper, *The Sou'wester*. Brooke leads dual lives in Kansas and Tennessee, where she is at work on her first book of poetry.

pg. 20

photograph courtesy of brooke shippee

"the girl I'm looking for...her footsteps are
so intimate and smooth like those of a rare white tiger."

-Edward Cooper Jr., 17

For information on the judging criteria and process, please contact dewa@jocolibrary.org



Guatemala Brooke Stanley

Bumping the van, our holey road twists
onto the dark side of each mountain,
drawing us into night and the nervousness
of a stranger at the wheel in an unfamiliar place.
The stars are swallowed, the moon gone
from the rough highway and jagged peaks.
Suddenly, I see an orange glow in the black,
beside the pavement, illuminating a face.
In an instant, night gulps the figure.
In our vehicle we have sped past, safe.
But more flames are jotted in the inky blend
of land and sky,
bright flares calling.

They would pull us from a tourist's wealthy comfort
to stand with them at the roadside,
huddled around trash heap fires,
watching heated cars pass as temperatures are falling.

We would learn that nights can still be cold
this far south.

We would learn the way hunger feels.
Our fingers would learn to stitch
brightly colored blouses, handbags, headbands, hats,
skirts, sashes, scarves;
To bead bracelets, keychains, earrings, necklaces;
to hold them out to Americans
to beg for one Quetzal, one-seventh of a dollar.

But we do not.

We ignore the firelit faces as best we can,
hoping to return to the gulping darkness
that scared us until we saw the lights.
We forget what we saw.
We drive away.





The hate that lived within
me, that inhabited my very core
Gone!

It has no home with me anymore
I've let it go
It no longer rules me

I'm free
To have joy unknown
I'm free
To claim love as my own
I'm free
To live life without a burden

Gone and Now I'm Free
Hannah E. Jenkins

Thank HA SHEM I'm free
Now I dance and thank him
Everyday.
It's gone.
I'm free

Iris: A Haiku

Hana Spangler

Spring brings the iris
budding from the sodden ground
life's color at last



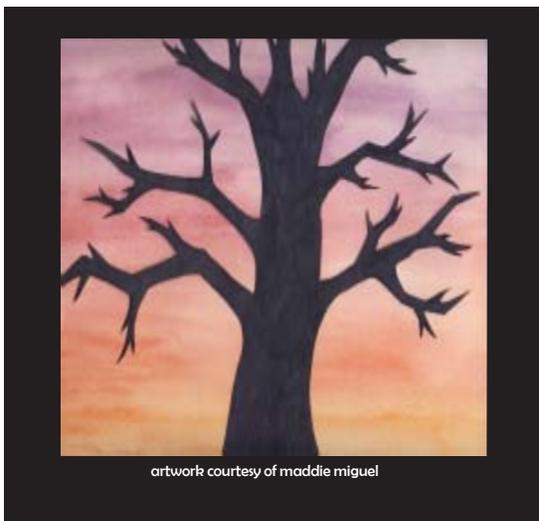
I Wonder Why...
Camille Christie

I wonder why
when I look up to the sky
dark clouds roll by
and birds don't fly, but die.

I wonder why
somewhere, where time flew by
the trees grew so high
up to the sky.
Now high in the sky
the ozone will die.

I wonder why
as ice caps fry
and the frog species go bye bye
that our leaders argue, and lie.

I wonder why
while pollution is so high
that it fries our sky
and gases make us cry.
I wonder why
we stand by.



Waiting to be Struck

Matthew Morefield

Sometimes I just sit there,
waiting to be struck,
with one poetic thought.
Other times I am struck,
with a line to my poem,
and I have nowhere,
to write it down.
Inspiration comes from,
nature and the world.
It comes from the people,
I meet,
the ones I love and hate.
Inspiration comes to me,
on its own schedule.
I do not choose to be
inspired.
When I am inspired,
I have no choice,
but to write.

Poetry Is...

Heather Martin

Poetry is nothing
But everything

Dances in dreams
That vanish when you wake
Coffee and cream
With a taste of cake

Simplicity found
In a hard drive
Books bound
To stay in an archive

Excuses made
With fake emotion
Ghosts that
Start a commotion

Unsaid words
Of unmatched glory
A long life
Without a story

A lone wolf
That runs in a pack
A rich man
Without a shirt on his back

Youth wasted
On the young
A snake
Without a sharp tongue

Poetry is everything
But nothing

Words Can Move Mountains
Rachel Franklin

There is a thing that is stronger than yourself,
That is from you; its plan is one of stealth.
White-hot insults out of a mouth are poured,
Never underestimate the power of a word!

Words can move mountains, statements will destroy,
Tossing about feelings as if the owner were a toy.
Expressions can be murderers, equipped with tongues of sword,
Never underestimate the power of a word!

Mean, nasty and hateful things can tear the world apart,
And hiding your burning cheeks can really be an art,
This great thing from inside us is certainly a lord-
Never underestimate the power of a word!

Next time you're ready to burst into a fight,
Remember to do what really is right.
Consult yourself and make sure those insults are not roared,
And never underestimate the power of a word!

The Song Within
Emy Blake

The lovely tune sounding brilliantly through the air
Wonderful feelings as the clear notes catch
The song shines and gleams, its rays golden and fair

As the words pour out, so does the sadness that lingers in the soul
The song is like a flower blooming after a long winter's rest
Falling tears dry up and are replaced with smiles genuine and full

No danger can occur, nothing can go wrong
As long as the melody plays on and on
There is nothing like the beauty and wonder of the song

It is indescribable the way it spreads light
Warming the heart and filling it with joy
The feathery wings of the song grow as it takes flight

The lyrics and the notes brush through the wind
All sorrow is forgotten, all troubles left behind
Gentle and sweet, the song is a friend

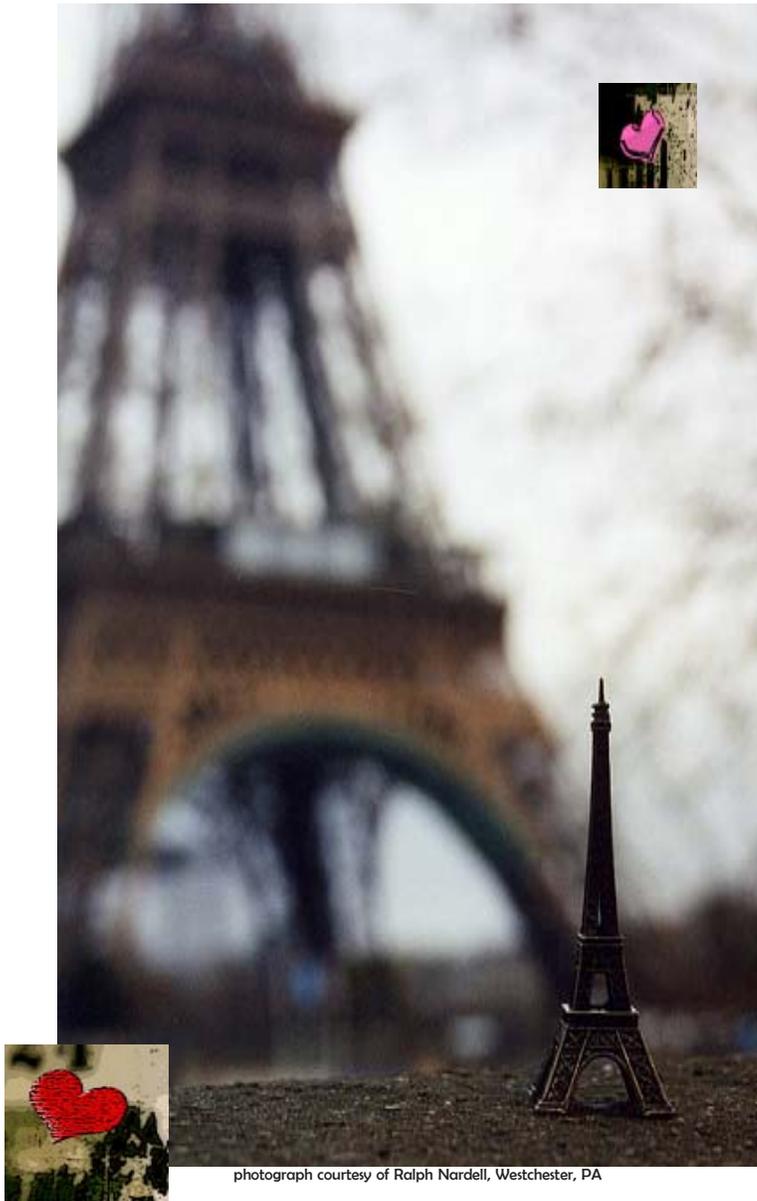
The song continues on, the heart pours out emotions
It tells of freedom, and joy, of truth, and hope
Vast and calming, the song is like the emerald oceans

The song is a candle endlessly burning
Staying strong, the flame does not waver
It takes away the darkness, takes away the yearning

The melody ends the fear and helps the courage begin
It brings a sense of rightness
Because this song comes from within

sketch courtesy of allison cline





photograph courtesy of Ralph Nardell, Westchester, PA

Love Like a Two Dollar Bill

Zoë Christianson

When I offered you
A heart full of love
You responded,
like this woman in a toy store
when I tried to spend a two dollar bill
a relative had given me
years ago, when I was young...
Keep it. It may be worth something someday.



A Spectacular View Leslie Goodwin

A cool breeze shuffled my hair, causing deep chestnut strands to tangle in my eye lashes. As my purse swung loosely at my hip, I slowly lifted my hand to shield my defenseless eyes against the brilliant sun. I exhaled deeply, letting the awe and amazement settle in the pit of my stomach. Rays of sunlight ricocheted off the monstrous beauty standing yards in front of me. Bustles of people popped in and out of my immediate view, blurring into tiny dots of color as they clambered excitedly to the royal peak.

Years of dreaming through hours of tedious classes where teachers snapped at me in their perfect accents, where foreign students snickered behind their knowing eyes as I said, “No, I am not horny,” instead of, “No, I am not hot,” led me to this moment. I was in the city of love. *Ab, Paris.*

Cafes with their red tablecloths and outstretched umbrellas lined the street corners. Women spoke in quick seductive tongues luring the waiters back for just one more glass of blood red wine. Men lounged on wooden park benches smoking cigarettes and reading *Le Monde*. Puffs of smoke lingered over their dark heads as a cigarette hung lazily on their bottom lips. Children giggled and wove their soccer ball around the sprawled out couples who were relaxing in the rich green grass.

My heart ached and twisted with envy. They lived this life every day. Shopkeepers displayed their “bon bons” and yelled, “Mademoiselle!” while they exhibited their best produce. Open markets leaked the sweet, sticky smell of lush fruit. Pastry shops wafted the scent of fresh delicacies out the window. Chocolate stands displayed rich, mouth-watering desserts. Fleurs stacked sweet beautiful flowers on their windowsills. A city of classical music, baguettes, and wine.



My breath caught in my lungs as a strange sense of comfort and belonging set into my bones. I wanted to live here, I wanted to call this place home, I wanted to raise my children in this elegant city.



Unfortunately, my plane ticket sat ominously in my purse, continuously nagging and pinching at my mind, reminding me that this stay was not permanent.

Carefully, I began weaving my way through the children, families, and couples chattering carelessly. My mind raced and buzzed as each step brought me closer to the monument. Tourists and French alike squished me into a single formed line until my hands met the slick railing. My head tilted up, staring at the thousands of steps I was about to climb. My heart raced and my eyes blinked incessantly. I prayed that this was not a dream, that I had actually boarded that cramped plane and flown myself to France, that I had actually spent the last five days exploring the city, that I had finally achieved my deepest dream.

Closing my eyes I lifted one foot and slowly brought it down on the steps. I felt the powerful metal below my feet and knew, at that point in time, that I was climbing the Eiffel Tower, and at any moment I would reach the top and stare over the historic, golden city. A city of eighteenth century buildings, Victorian, lush gardens, ancient castles, and contemporary museums of art.

“better than a diamond, better than jade...”

The steps flew from the balls of my feet, perspiration clung chillingly to the nape of my neck, and every breath evoked a thousand tingling senses. Chattering, swirling, panting, I

climbed until my legs formed into sticks of jello. Rays of heat radiated from the metallic floor and hovered around my ankles. I stumbled towards the outer railing, pushing through the mass of embracing couples.

My hands hit the burning metal, and my eyes clouded over. Hot, salty tears tumbled down my cheeks as an enchanted smile crossed my face. In the space of a thousand people the world came to a mind-altering halt. The Parisian language lazily filtered in and out of my mind, dripping groggily, as I swayed in and out of the afternoon breeze. Dazed, I picked up the camera hanging loosely around my sticky neck.

Snap.

The camera churned as it printed out the Polaroid. My fingers slipped around its edges as I flapped it in the cool air, drying the ink. Slowly, I turned it over. The colors were vibrant, the images were crisp, the memory was magnificent, but more than magnificent, it was rare. Rare that I could possibly be in this elegant city, rare that I had this amazing opportunity, rare that I could have this piece of evidence. A broad smile engulfed my face. It was better than a diamond, better than jade; this was my own rarity — a memory forever forged onto timeless paper.



part one

Cakes and Cookies
Jaden Gragg

Cakes and cookies, I wander along the face of the moon.
I sing a song too loud, and my feet twist in the holes and I walk sideways;
I am used to having someone there to hold me up.
But she is gone, and so I've resolved to become her.
I've told myself, I am going to be her, where we can live all day long here together.
Me and myself, me and her.
I am on the floor, slowly going crazy.

part two

The moon is my house and in the morning I will be queen for lunch.
I wander in and out of this castle on the moon I was banished to.
My name is dark and I am going to be her...I am going to be the girl I love.
The man, he is quiet, but he tells me a joke and I sing a song.
Cookies and moon cake and dusty milk, and craters and wishes.
It is so easy to trip.

part three

I am twisting on the cratered floor of my castle.
I'm singing songs of banished love, finally becoming her, and we are one, and that makes us two.
The old man laughs and says my addition is wrong.
One crazy girl and one beautiful girl do not make two.
They do not belong together, he chuckles.
Silly girl; wrong again.
I offer him a cookie. There are crumbs and moon-dust in his beard.
He is my only companion in this place. My love has left me with bigger promises.
She yearned to be free of singing and a girl with silly thoughts of love and sweets.

part four

The old man laughs again and spits chunks of me into the air, floating without gravity,
hung for me to snatch, whole again. Defiant.
I baked myself into those cookies, hoping those would tempt her home.
The old man got a huge laugh out of this one.
I am back on the floor.
Back on the floor, making more cookies.

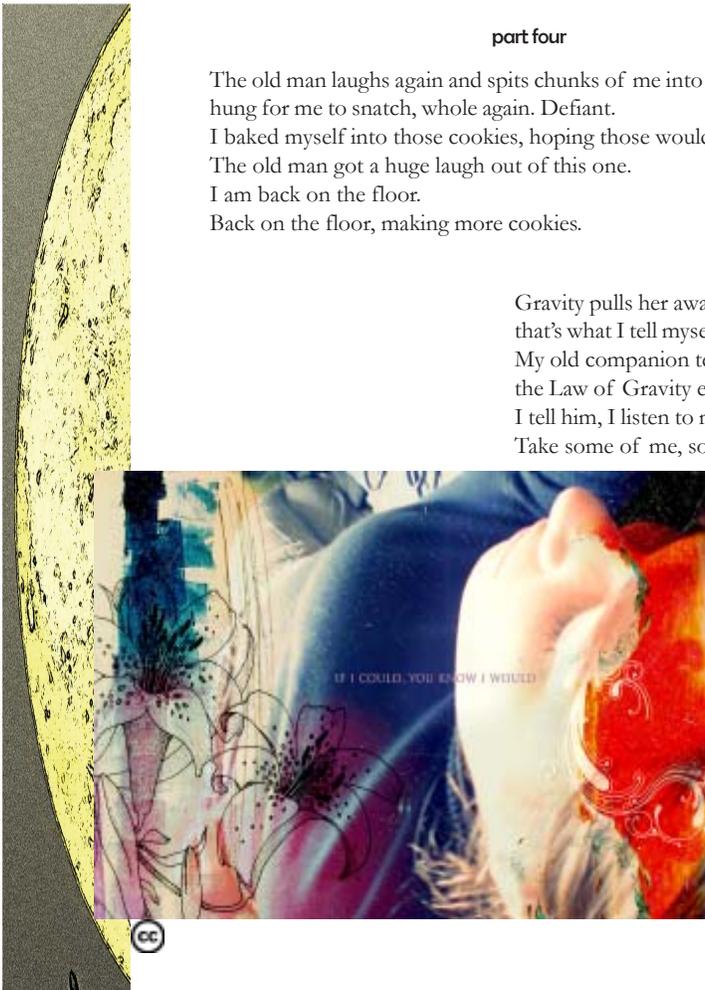
part five

Gravity pulls her away and takes her home;
that's what I tell myself.
My old companion tells me not only have I not mastered addition, I don't grasp
the Law of Gravity either.
I tell him, I listen to my heart and to eat another cookie.
Take some of me, someone, and never give it back.

gravity can have me.

gravity can have me.

gravity can have me.





“I don’t
grasp the
law of
gravity...I
listen to my
heart...”



Yeah, I’m a dreamer,
I dream of so many things.

But do you know what separates all
you other dreamers from me?
You all actually work to achieve your
dreams, you
dream about the future and what you
want to become.

Well, I’m different.
I can never follow my dreams,
All my dreams involve fantasy...fiction.
I dream of myself in places and
situations that are not possible.

I dream of being magical and being
beautiful, when I am really normal.
I dream myself in a way that looks
completely different than me.

I have straight, raven black hair, white
porcelain skin. My eyes are of the
deepest brown and my body was made
by Aphrodite herself.

But you know what, I’m not.
I have brown black hair that is too curly
for its own good. My skin is freckly and
I really don’t think you can call it
gorgeous. My eyes are simply brown
and I am husky, between fat and skinny.
I am not beautiful.

My dreams, they are filled with
adventure. Fighting evil and the horrid
darkness, being the great heroine who
saves the day. The one who has true
friends and a man who loves her with all
his heart.

But you know what? I am a dreamer, of
course my dreams are like that. I barely
have a friend who I am always with. I
never had a crush, a boyfriend, or been
on a date.

I am a dreamer, a girl who wishes to be
everything she is not in a world that can
only exist in my fantasy.

Yes, I am a Dreamer Mary Kaitlan Schmitt



Margot Newcomer Graduation

Standing on this stage, my life flashing before
My eyes, I remember a time of Youthful
Bliss where the impossible was possible.

Singing sweet melodies to Snow White and
The Wicked Witch, six with fans hanging
On to my every Judy Garland high note.

Caesar of the chlorinated battlefield at ten,
Standing ten feet tall, feeling I was the next
All-American Wheaties’ Box golden girl.

President of the UN while representing
New Zealand at thirteen, realizing that
Night dreams would be my reality.

But here I stand eighteen years small,
With only one piece of wisdom gained,
Realizing the possible is impossible.

**Quite simply,
you are a parallel revolution**
Brooke Shippee

Life is a never-ending coil
With twists and turns
And you are the one thing that I did not count on.

You are the mistake in a waltz.

1
2
3

1
2
3

1
2
3

1
2
3
4

You are the messy footprint on starched carpet,
You are a wrinkle on pressed sheets.
Your entrance was not marked
By a calendar day
Nor a smudge in time.

But you...

Quite simply,
In this parallel revolution,
You are the earth.

Your smile is the equator.
Your eyes are the horizon.
Your gaze is the orbit.

You are the gravity holding me in place.

You are limitless.
As the sky is to the moon
And the earth is to the sun.

And I
Am your zodiac
In this

Parallel revolution.



I love watching cows. They remind me of my blankets on cold nights, when all is freezing, and I need something to snuggle up with. Each cow is unique, like a snowflake. Sometimes it's hard to find the difference, but if you look close enough the picture becomes clear.

Just seeing them, in a meadow, by a stream, relaxing in their own private sanctuary. One they might have not chosen, but one they must accept.

I watch them closely, looking for a pattern. As they chew their food, twitching their ears, as if they remember something. From time to time the bell might ring, and every time they go to it to be milked, in a way that would seem to be a perfect society.

They all get in a line to milk as they always have, it never changes, never. And every night they go to sleep in their red barn as they always have. Never changes, never.

Then, as they come upon troubles in their routine, maybe a fly here or a mosquito there, they swat at them with their tails, and then walk away. They continue their task, if it was only eating or bathing in the sun and waiting, waiting for a refreshing sprinkle of rain, whatever it was, they go back to do it. In the same fashion; the same every time.

Many times I observe them calm, and under a tree -- a willow tree with a beautiful Spanish moss that covers the tree like a scarf.

Watching them graze in their particular mouth motion, swat a fly, move away. Repeat. Hear the bell. Walk slowly to their imminent destiny, the same way as they always have. Then, the way they always have, they march together, as a whole, to the stream. Then eat. Repeat. The second bell rings. They get comfortable to retire for the day, the way they always have.

Never changes, never.

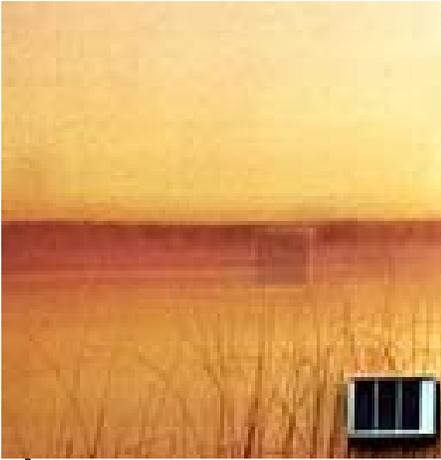
Tree

Claire Christie

The place many memories were made, where laughs echo throughout the woods. Splashes into the water below can still be heard and felt on a hot summer's day. The rope that hangs, worn and weathered from young hands, gripping it tightly. The wooden seat split in half many summers ago but still lays on the ground at the base of the nearby willow. Our names carved in the trunk, deep rivets proclaiming a time when my yellow polka dot bikini fit. When boys had cooties but if you got the cootie shot you could hold his hand for just a little while. The BFF and plus sign were added a little later. This time when innocence was as common wrapping us in happiness and friendship. And when this spot had become our place, to sit and laugh together; our world spinning out of control just a woods trail and backyard away. But when we were there we could go back to playing Indians or talking about rec. soccer, or build a fort from the brambles of the berry bushes. Where we could just talk and know that we would always be there for each other.

I miss our imaginary games. I miss our giggling and belly laughing together. The summer slumber parties and midnight snacks. I miss it all and you. I miss soccer practice and I miss acting like a tree.

Sometimes I walk down that path of growing up. I walk alone and come out of the brush into another world. Our place. The tree swing drifting in the autumn wind swirling around me. Grasping at the swing I climb onto the worn old rope and rest my head against the smooth intertwined surface. Smiling because even though time may pass and we may grow apart, I will forever know that this, this place of memories, will be forever our place.



Freedom Erin Ashley

The mountain trail is steep, and even I am having a hard time staying upright. The ridge I'm on is rocky and desolate, and I am the only thing moving. My chest is heaving as I struggle over the treacherous granite. At the top of my ledge, the rocks drop below a cove of pines, drowning beneath a sea of gnarled roots. When I was small it was my dream to climb these ever-present giants... Which of course was silly, they had no branches under twenty feet. I slid down the loose slope, landing on a covering of soft needles. The pines stretch high above me, converging over my head to filter the bright sunshine into bearable blotches. The trees march slowly up, out of their fertile soil onto the mountainous crags. I continue my journey upwards, to the top of the cliff that glared down at the city. The sunlight reflected cruelly off the metallic roofs and sides of the buildings. Immediately below me, fallen rocks lay sprawled on the shrubbery.

Over fifty feet down

I stood on the brink, the wind tousling my hair and the sun warming my back.

Time stands still, then ends.

Arms out stretched, I leap and soar above the rocks with the wind lifting me to its zenith.

The dream breaking loose.

To Fly,

To be Free.

purple &

Drip Drop Maggie May Price

Today is one of those days, where everyone stops to take a minute and appreciate what we have, rather than what we want. We worry about the tiny little things in life that don't matter, instead of the things that can change our life. Today is one of those days.

It feels comparable to a cool breeze on a windy night. It sprinkles lightly, yet still stays strong.

It tastes similar to the rainbow. The several colors combine into one and make rain.

It smells fresh, as if daffodils were picked from a meadow. They smell pungent with a relaxed feeling to them.

It looks as if golden drops have fallen from the sun. The drops tumble down from the sky making everything moist.

I can hear Mother Nature calling out to us. As we thank her for the sprinkle that we desired.

Rain, it drips down my cheek. As we jump and splash in the puddles. Drip-drop. We can hear the pattern of it, but then it changes once more. The joy and excitement that it brings us. Makes the world peaceful and content for a while.

The rainbow swiftly crawls out of the sky. We know that we now have to say goodbye. Rain, rain go away, come again another day.

Hawaiian Paradise
Daria Le Grand

The sky gleamed a radiant blend of colors which reflected on the glassy ocean. The aroma of varieties of flowers fresh from the fields lingered in the air. The wind blew violently, as if some powerful invisible force were pushing it heftily toward us, and my sister Kaya and I laughed as our hair was tousled by the wind. We romped around the beach, the warm sand clinging to our feet while clouds of it chased after us, rearing up to spray us in the face when we least expected it.

We picked up handfuls of sand and threw them at each other. I closed my eyes as I was blinded by the ferocious whirlpool of sand. I made a bowl out of my t-shirt and scooped sand into it. Then with a triumphant grunt I heaved the sand onto my sister who laughed and collapsed into the sand - giving up. I helped Kaya up and we raced to the shore where the water gently lapped and caressed the sand, making it wet and good to sink your feet into. We descended slowly into the water, allowing ourselves to become submerged in the thick blue blanket.

The sky darkened as shades of dark blues and purples quietly crept into it. My sister and I enjoyed the Hawaiian sunset as we bobbed gently up and down in the dark, mysterious water. Soon, our mom called us from her seat on the beach and told us it was time to go back to our hotel. And so our fantastic night came to an end as all good things do, though I'll remember that first night in Hawaii forever because it was so much fun and the scene surrounding us was beautiful. All five of my senses were drinking in their surroundings creating a gorgeous memory of that night.

in love

Untitled
Kati Klehm

Flying high.
Sunshine blinding me
Through my thoughts' shadowy veil
Happiness opening all the doors of my life
All decisions made,
Minute to minute,
Just flowing on the momentum
Of the world's energy
Ecstasy.

Dropping.
Roaring, deafening wind blowing in my face,
Ear-popping, stomach lurching,
8xs gravity freefall
To the ever growing ground below.

Impact.
A grey world
So many buzzing thoughts,
Nagging worries
Chaos in the orderly routine
Of normal life.

Above, clouds and smog distil the blue
That is so high.

Adaptation.
The greys take on dull hues,
A soft yellow there, a muted blue there,
Slowly adjusting
To life on the ground.

Temptation.
A spark of brightness,
Of the sweet, blue high above
Why bother waiting and working
When instant gratification is a breath away
Only a single chance for the blueness.
I take it.





Losing Lila

Jessica Sutter

It looked a bit like Lila, but it wasn't Lila. I don't know why people say that when someone dies they look like they're sleeping. Her skin was dull grey and colder than ice. Her long body lay limp and heavy on the stainless steel table. Her clothes were dirty and rumpled. I was glad she was facing up so I didn't have to see the fatal wound in her back, but looking at that would be better than looking at her eyes. They were too blue, horribly bright and staring, and seemed to be made of glass. Doll's eyes. Dead and still, they did not in any way resemble the sparkling, expressive eyes of the Lila I knew. Had she looked as if she were sleeping, I might not have accepted that she was no longer alive. It was the eyes that convinced me.

I was in shock as I stood there, immobile, staring at Lila's shell. A voice in my head screamed a thousand questions, whispered countless what-ifs. There are no words to describe the pain that overwhelmed me. I couldn't tell you how long I stood in front of her body; perhaps it was seconds, maybe it was hours. Time itself seemed to vanish. Lila was dead. Because someone had killed her.

The rest of the week was a blur. I received all of Lila's possessions; they arrived on Thursday afternoon in a moving truck. I helped the deliveryman carry them to my attic, I didn't look at anything. Policemen and reporters were forever knocking on my door, at all hours of the day and night until I was certain I would go mad.

"Could you answer a few questions? Do you suspect anyone of murder?" they asked.

"Are you sure it wasn't suicide?"

"What will happen to Ms. Anderson's world famous art?"

The list went on and on. They didn't know Lila the way I did, and still most of these questions were out of my reach. The only person who could answer them was no longer in this world.

The things that followed the murder were so trivial; I couldn't connect them to the death of Lila. Every morning as I woke up, I wondered how the paper boy could go on his route like nothing was wrong; how the sun could rise and shine like everything was just fine. Then there were days that I woke up and thought it was just a bad dream, only to trudge into the kitchen and find several messages on the machine, talking about the funeral. Eventually, I stopped responding. They could find someone else to burden with these technicalities.

Red roses or white? Cremated or buried? I didn't know. Lila never talked about death.

"...people with blurred faces walked down a busy street."

One thing that kept me from suicide was the thought of Lila's killer. Was he the man at the restaurant? The older lady walking a dog in the park? My wonderings became obsession. Where was the killer now? What was he doing? Does he feel remorse for his crime? Had he hated Lila, or even known her? Does he think about her at all?

I found it hard to see Lila's killer as normal or even real, but deep down I knew he was. Still, I swore revenge and promised myself would bring Lila's killer to justice.

Weeks spun into months. Months drifted into years. I still didn't look at Lila's boxes. I spent my free time looking into possible suspects, reading and rereading Lila's autopsy report. Even dead, Lila dominated my life. But it was an empty obsession. No matter what I did, she would always be gone, floating around in a void in some alternate dimension. Maybe she was in heaven. But Lila hadn't believed in heaven or hell. I wondered if I would find her when I died. I hoped I would. I'd search for all eternity until I found her, and we could be together again.

I quit my position as manager of the electronics store and studied to become a police officer. Eventually, I got the job. I worked constantly, and the other officers admired my commitment to my job. But there was something else different about me, too. I didn't go home to my wife, or help my kids get ready for school in the morning. I didn't even have a cat for company; I was alone in the world.

It was like when Lila died, my future did too. There was no light in my eyes. It seemed as if I was already dead, but still inhabiting my body on an Earth full of madmen and murderers.

I watched my life pass before my eyes; cold, unfeeling, robotic. Because of the field of work I was in, I was frequently around bodies and hospitals. Even when I was off duty I often visited doctors. They prescribed medicine and counseling; one therapist said that I had never gotten over the grief of losing Lila. I listened numbly, nodding in reply, wanting to be out of the doctor's office. The stench of sickness and death, mingled and barely covered by the smell of disinfectant and air fresheners, lingered in my nose for hours after I left.

One night after visiting Lila's grave, I dreamed of her. She stood in front of me, painting. She was most herself when she was painting. Sometimes, she used vibrant colors in a vivid depiction of something in nature, up close and personal. One time she used drab shades to paint a city, while people with blurred faces walked down a busy street.

Occasionally, she just painted a small square of color on a blank canvas. A part of me knew it was a dream, and I drank in her image. It was clearer in my mind now than I had ever recalled it.

In my dream, Lila spoke to me.

“I painted emotions,” she said in an echoing dream voice. “Remember? I always wanted people to feel what I was feeling. I got a rush knowing that my art made them feel that way. I didn’t waste time trying to make things pretty, I just put down what I saw, how they were.”

She looked at me. Here eyes were alive.

“I painted life.”

I awoke with a start, covered in sweat, was I just imagining the smell of lilac and paint in the air? I climbed up to the attic and stared at the dusty piles of crap around me. Lila’s boxes. I had never gone through them. With the same detachment with which I went about my life, I knelt and opened the nearest one. It held clothes. They smelled of mothballs and dust, but there was still a hint of lilac perfume underlying all the old, musky scents. Tears pricked my eyes. How long had it been since I cried, laughed, or even genuinely smiled? I thought of Lila. When did she not cry, laugh, or smile? How would she feel about my life now? I remembered all the times we had discussed our futures. She had dreams as big as the sky. I just wanted to be with her. Why couldn’t I have been killed, instead of Lila? She was life personified. Killing her was a crime, I realized, that had no punishment. No matter if, against all odds, I found her killer, what would I do? If he was given the death penalty, I would be sinking to his level to be bringing about such a horrendous thing. Someone probably loved Lila’s killer. Someone thought about him before she fell asleep. Someone has kissed him, hugged him, and missed him. How could I take that away? I thought of how much I would want to have a new start with Lila. I couldn’t have that, but I could give the murderer a second chance. That’s what Lila would have done, I’m sure of it. Yes, he had committed an atrocious crime. But “bringing him to justice” would cause only more misery, and God knows the world has enough of that.

I stood up, and continued to sort through Lila’s things. I smiled through my tears when I came across an old photo album and saw her beaming face, forever frozen in time. I could almost hear her infectious laugh. By the time I put the last box away, it was almost morning. The only thing left to look at was her art. I took a deep breath as I stood up and stretched my sore legs, then pulled the cover off the nearest canvas. Looking at the back first, I saw that it was one she had done right before she died; the date on the back was some two days before her murder. The painting was addressed to me. Puzzled, I turned it over. There was no doubt about the emotion she was trying to convey. And in that moment, Lila was with me. I made a silent promise to her to live the way I should have been living all this time. The red on the canvas quickened my heart and for the first moment in years, I relished the feeling of being alive.



Autumn Hearts*
Elizabeth Kelly

Silence is here again.
No whispering trees
Not even a howl from the wind.
The river no longer laughs.
The sounds of our happiness are gone,
But I will never forget that bright autumn day.

Autumn is here and you sit so close,
while I lay in eternal sleep.
The air is cool and the sounds return.
Just like you returned back to me.
Our hearts of happiness may stray far away,
But we’ll always find each other.
And we will never forget that bright autumn
day.



*excerpt





Vintage War
Dotty Harrison

Life to all, the empty promise
I've found something new
Take your script and watch it slip through
Cracks so obvious

And we still fight in vain
Who's the one that wins?
No one's truly saved
No room left to swim
Life to all, the empty promise



I've found something new
Take your script and watch it slip through
Cracks so obvious

And we're still caught in nets
Who's the leader now?
You can't deny the sweat
You're mopping from your brow

Life to all, the empty promise
I've found something new
Take your script and watch it slip through
Cracks so obvious

Next to you, I swear I see
A curtain over truth
Maybe time should tell us when to
Put away our guns



Straight Back To Nothingness

Becky Peda



Honestly, if you ever think about it
No one ever knows where to turn,
The corridors are melting into hallways
These hallways are melting into hell.

And come on, believe it
No one ever knows how f d up they are,
Especially when they are convinced they're fine,
When you have convinced them there's nothing to cry for.

But their tears are dripping like wax from a candle
And as you watch them they dry to a crisp,
They stiffen and stick, a pure shot of evidence
That their armors of battle have been ripped.

And as they turn to the left
There's nothing to be seen,
And as they turn to the right,

There's just nothing left.
So the hallways will keep melting
And our strange minds colliding
Until everything is gone,
It's all been discarded.

And the nothingness will turn into corridors,
And the corridors will melt into hallways,
As the hallways melt directly into hell,
And this hell leads us straight back to nothingness.

What the Fck You*

David Marrero

Every time that you
promise It puts me in this
constant positive mood then
you let me down

why don't you just stop it?

Getting my hopes up so high
why would you even bother?
This relationship slightly
reminding me of my father

You tell me you're gonna see
me Its almost been a week
Can't hardly think
You let me down I'm
so down I can hardly speak

Depression doesn't even
begin to describe the feelings
So I hide the feelings
Writing to override the
feelings

Truth

Maddie Miguel

Truth is lost in our society.
It's constantly altered into lies
that we all think is true but isn't.
Truth, although harshly real,
is transformed into gossip
confusing its listeners.
Sliding off the tongues
of well trained liars

Or is lying just covering up the truth
to make less people cry and wonder.
A superficial soft coating
protecting the hard bitter center.
So the truth can slide down easier
with just a touch of lies
down the ears of each person
that hears of it once more

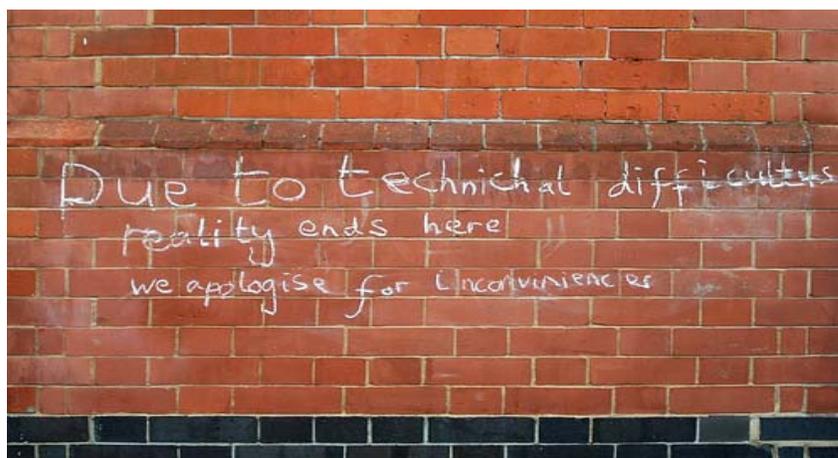


photo courtesy of jon nicholls;
london, england

*excerpt



I Am the Quiet Little Hispanic Girl

Stephanie Lara

I am the quiet little Hispanic girl,
Light skinned
people make fun of me
they say I am not the color I'm supposed to be.
But who cares? It's me not you!

I am the quiet little Hispanic girl,
That is going through problems
family members are sick.
God just please be with them. I love them so much.
You have to take good care of them.

I am the quiet little Hispanic girl,
once shy but not no more
I speak for myself, for no one else.
I once cared what people said
but like I said, now I speak for myself.

I am the quiet little Hispanic girl,
her life has changed after her dad left when she was young

but this
quiet little Hispanic girl
still loves her dad no matter how life goes.

I am the quiet little Hispanic girl,
That didn't really go out with her friends,
Mother was scared of me growing up
being a teenager
Made her think about my older sister, how she grew up.
She was young, age 16, got pregnant and became a young mother.

I told my mother she can trust me, I won't do nothing wrong.
I just want to go out and hang with my friends.

Please mom you got to trust me.

Remember, I am the quiet little Hispanic girl
that you know won't do wrong.

I am the quiet little Hispanic girl,
Who was once out of the circle
not cool
like the whole clique was
I didn't have the fashion,
the hair, couldn't wear make-up come on now,

I am old enough to change,
So I changed my style from '70s to 2000s,
From tucked in shirts
to untucked, cuter shirts
From loose same old pants
to tighter, cuter pants
From the shoes I had to wear every year
to Jordan's and Air-Forces
I plucked my eyebrows, I wear make-up now....

Yes, this is the "REAL" Quiet Little Hispanic Girl.



Wrong
Brittani Ball

What shall be wrong with me?
What shall I fear
What shall be wrong with me
is nothing I fear
For
If I shall fear what is wrong with me
I shall only fear myself
Even though you shall see me
you shall not know.
I am a person like everyone else
I have friends and family
A life of my own
I shall be loved by those who know me
And I shall love back with all my heart.



photo courtesy of
jon nicholls;
london, england

A secret that was not meant for ears,
Would be told for many years.
Some whispered words meant for a friend,
Would be overheard and spread without end.

Since one person found out
That which none were sure about.
Not knowing if it be false or true,
That is when it began to ensue.

Hell broke loose as rumors flew
About that which no one knew,
He was tortured by their evil lies,
It hurt him to look into their eyes.

Lonely in a world of hate,
Unable to speak and change his fate,
He had to sit by and watch the flames,
As he was called many bitter names.

The Secret*
Cole Fevold



You and Me

Robert Williams

Was' up with you and me
can you tell me that
I think the way you have been treating me
is flat out whack
I've been putting myself out there
as the months have gone by
But no matter how far we get
you continue to pull back
I can't believe you girl
you got me open like a book
You know I care about you
so why so many distraught looks
On those days that I'm real rude
don't pay me no mind
Just think of it
as my way of getting you off my mind

I see you messing with dudes
that don't give a damn
You blowing me off
and I'm the dude that really cares
So once again I ask
was' up with you and me
My heart is on lock down
you the one that got the key

Time and time again
I've been told to just move on
Yes, everyone else tells me
to leave you the hell alone
They say you don't act right
and I should continue to roam
But I don't listen, I'm as stubborn
as Rodney King's hair being took to comb
My heart is on lock down
you the one with the key
If you aren't going to do anything with it
go ahead and give it back to me



Stress and Comfort*
Melanie Leng

Sometimes, when the soft spring rain
slowly soaks the earth,
And lightly fingers everything,
Giving it a coat of droplets,
The color of everything begins to fade...
It darkens out the colors
And smooths out texture.
It creates a soft scene,
And when I stare up at the grayish-white sky,
The clouds seem to caress my head
While I rest near the windowsill
As the rain renews my mind
Like it cleanses the roads and trees,
And gives everything a tranquil tone.



photo courtesy of Lin Kristensen



Emmy Hartman
Stairwell

Alone,
I wait for
you.

I sit quietly
and picture
you,
wondering if
you will still
come.

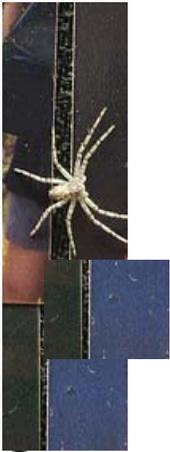
Though a thousand
stairwells
have I
traversed,
never has one felt
so alone and
empty
until I waited
for you.

The I hear
your footsteps
echo
off of the barren
hallway, and I
feel
you
in
my
heart

And
this barren stairwell
becomes our
haven
of safety and
comfort.
Our laughter,
our knowing smile of
shared warmth,
redraws the desolate walls
with the soft pastels of
hope and
love.

I smile and
am content
just to be in your
arms.

Though a thousand stairwells
have I traversed,
never has one felt
so much like
home
until I shared it with
you.



Spider
Ben Jensen

She was like a spider.
Walking youthfully and childlike,
on the verge of being crushed.

She was robbed of her innocence,
it was taken away before her prime.

She sat staring out the window,
the tears falling like the rain outside.

She was sitting alone with nothing.
Amongst the torn pictures of friends she let slip away.
Her love she put too much trust in.
She left her friends, and he left her.

She reminisced on what she once had
and looked at what she had now.
A dead flower, a few snapshots, thoughtless decisions,
and no one to turn to.

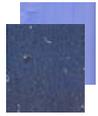
She cried as she watched her best friends of ten years walk away.
They were walking away because she had given up on them
She had given up on them, for her love.
The love that was gone.

Her decisions left her with no one.
Her decisions robbed her of childhood and left her with loneliness.
She sat without a friend and no hand to hold.
Her mistakes behind her and tears to mend.

She was gone.
She was alone.
She was the enemy.
She was the lost.
She was the child that had grown up too fast.
She trusted him too easily.
She was the one who put too much forward.
She was the one who loved and was left behind.

She was the spider.
She was crushed.

Dead.



JDC resident
Untitled

Being lost is hard to find...
wanting to leave my past behind
closing my eyes and counting to ten
waiting for my day to begin
looking at the dream I failed
can't go back now
that ship has sailed

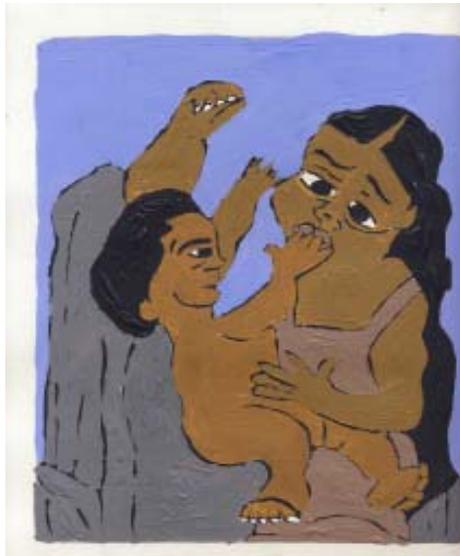
Untitled
Tayler Anne Klein

I broke the silence with a short cough. If anyone else had been in the sunlit room with me, they would have started and stared as if I'd broken a silence not meant to be disturbed.

I stepped into the doorway, my socks making soft patting noises on the wood floor. I brushed my fingers on the rough white walls, slowly so that I could feel every groove, every contortion that there was. In the corner sat an old four poster bed clothed in a white comforter with one white pillow. I slowly made my way to the bed and gingerly climbed on top of it while it creaked beneath my weight.

I looked around the once familiar room. The old lamp sat on the same nightstand, and the white curtain still hung on the white rods, enveloping the white windowpanes. The sun, usually a comfort, one that was warm, washed the bare room out.

The silence was back. No birds, no laughter, no music, no voices. Even the yelling would have been preferred to this.



painting courtesy of tabitha jenkins

Untitled
Roger Weaver

Life is green,
but death chose black.
A bully is mean,
but nothing like Jack.
If I chose a path
Would it be good or bad?
If I pick a side
Would it make you sad?
You left for so long
Now what should I do?
You left me cold,
Now I'm as hollow as you.
Life without meaning
Is it as bad as no fate?
Or would it be called
Purpose of heart at a slow rate.
I gave it my all,
But it wasn't enough.
I think I'll be done
Seeing how life is so tough....



Take My Fear

Ayah Abdul-Rauf

*DIM... DIM...
DIM... DIM... DIM...*

The soft, high note of the last key on a piano rang through the night repeatedly... and it was keeping someone up.

Freisha sat up in her bed with tired eyes, muscles still aching to sleep some more. If she heard that infuriating *DIM* from the piano one more time, she'd surely go mad. *There's only one person I know who would do something like this in the middle of the night...* she thought, climbing out from under the covers and pulling her robe on.

She tiptoed quietly across the lavish carpet to the drawing room and opened the door.

"Montagh," she whispered harshly, "quit playing that piano!! You're keeping everyone up!"

"No."

Freisha walked forward decisively and grabbed his firm hand. It was cold and clammy. The sound ceased. And the silence was deafening.

"Okay Monty... what's wrong this time?" she prepared herself for a wild explanation. Montagh was not your ordinary fellow. He pulled his hand away from her grasp and gave it a quick shake, as if she were poisonous.

"I had a nightmare," he said.

There was a pause. "Well, when people have nightmares, they tell a friend, or write it down, or go back to sleep—there are a number of things you can do, but most people don't go *playing the piano in the middle of the night!*"

He blinked at her frankly. "I do." Freisha just shook her head and sighed. "Come on," she said, "I'm tired, just go to sleep, please?" She started to walk away but he didn't move.

"You know what people fear the most?" he said darkly.

Freisha clenched her fists and spun around, exasperated and worried. He was staring at the ceiling. It was so dim in there and she couldn't see his expression, but she knew he was looking at the ceiling by the dark silhouette of his profile.

"We fear the unexpected..." his voice faded out, and he looked at her. "I can't go back to sleep. I won't."

I wish I knew what was wrong with you... she rushed over to him and put her hands on his shoulders, trying to return him to his normal senses. He looked up and grinned at her

"Do you like my nightmare?" he said.

The silence was still ringing. Freisha drew back sharply and watched him with unease as his hand stroked the side of the piano, as though it were a pet of some sort.

He looked dully at the key he had been pressing only moments before. And then... It moved. *DIM... DIM... DIM... DIM...*

Freisha's pupils dilated and she stepped further away with her hands over her mouth. "The... piano..." she said breathlessly, "it's... playing itself!"

He watched her drearily. "I've told you so many times..."

"Told me what?!" she exclaimed, looking wildly confused.

He blinked and turned back to the piano, watching it.

This can't be him... something weird is going on, this has to be a dream! She ran toward the door to try and open it to find that it was now completely smooth, and without the doorknob that had been there only moments before. She slammed on it, kicked it, bashed on it with desperation; but it wouldn't budge. Now her breath was coming in short gasps and she swirled around, hoping against hope that Montagh would reveal that this was all meant to be some sort of well planned joke.

But he was still staring at the haunted piano, and the sound of the *DIM* was driving her mad. Then she heard the clicking. And then she saw the sight that confirmed her horror.

Rainy Nights
Abbey Mock

I sit in my bed,
Rain pouring outside,
Sadness of the past flooding through my windows,
The night that my father left,
The day he decided I did not matter,
At a young age,
I was left alone,
On a rainy night like this one,
Hours past,
He returned home,
Threw things at the wall,
Forgot I was there,
Grabbed a beer,
Fell asleep,
My mother came home,
Knew what happened,
She could have done something,
But didn't,
She fed me,
Went to bed,
For years it went on,
My sister was born,
Looked exactly like him,
He took favorites,
He took care of her,
Even though,
He did not work,
He was a drunk,
Until one night,
A night like this one,
I was saved,
My uncle told him to get out,
He left,
Never seen again,
On rainy nights like these,
The rain cries my sorrow away.

Glory
Connie Hu

From afar
it melts into the brush.
Thick, thorny weeds
ravage its pitiful landscape.
It is forbidding terrain,
with a pothole landmine and shattered windows,
looking like gouged eye sockets.
Eternal no-man's-land.
But wait.
An abandoned archway
covered with flower remnants.
It beckons with some haughty grace.
It is...elegant.
And there, there is a swinging door,
clinging to existence by a single, rusted hinge.
Its squeaks are defiant.
To an onlooker, the sound is meager.
But to the animal inhabitants of the house,
they are the thunderous pounding of drums,
the rumbling solo of a soldier wounded in battle.

continued
from pg. 34

A large tarantula was slowly making its way across the carpet towards the piano. A black skeletal horror with tiny sharp bristles along all eight of its legs. Though the appearance of the tarantula had both surprised and frightened Freisha, she had never been known to have much of a problem with bugs of any kind. Montagh, however, possessed a severe case of arachnophobia. It was bizarre; he reached down and picked up the creature, letting it crawl along his arm.

Freisha's vision began to get clouded. This wasn't him, it couldn't be him; it was an imposter. An imposter that had somehow snuck into the drawing room to put a curse on the piano and,... spiders were coming in the swarms now, from corners and cracks in the wall, gliding down from the ceiling on silk strings from their newly formed webs. Freisha found herself in a terrifying panic, so scared that she lost her voice and didn't dare to move. Montagh stood, then walked toward her calmly, the spiders scrambling in his wake. His eyes were inspired as if from a demon.

"There," he said, "Now you have my fear." He kissed her on the forehead. "Good night!" Her breath caught, and she went out cold.

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Westridge Middle School
Allison Cline

**Yeshua Ha Mashiach Learning
Center**
Tabitha R. Jenkins
Hannah E. Jenkins

**johnson county detention center
(jdc)**

2 anonymous writers
courtesy of Kathy McLellan, Johnson
County Library Outreach Services



(not
available)



place light -
on a project-



silver.
and.gold



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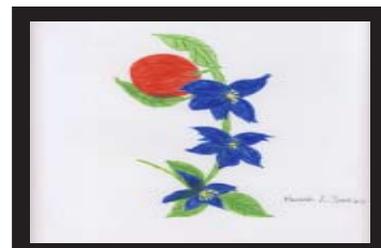


D'Arcy
Norman



bijoy mohan

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find thoughts, and no regrets. life of love, life of tests. sadness is past, evils are gone,
and love is left, to sing its song. letting it go? most likely never. singing the truth, and singing forever...

~Andre Smith-Toscano, 15

