

Alternative United Voices – Volume 10

A compilation of fiction, poetry and visual art from the students of
Tiohtià:ke/Montreal's Outreach high schools

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An Alternative United publication
Organized by Colin Throness



Find out more about Alternative United and read previous
publications online at alternativeunited.ca

Acknowledgements

This year's judge is the incredible Tara McGowan-Ross, an urban Mi'kmaq multidisciplinary artist and writer. Her work has been published in print and online, and she has been anthologized in various collections including *Best Canadian Poetry*. She is the author of *Girth*, *Scorpion Season*, and *Nothing Will Be Different*, the last of which was a finalist for the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust award for nonfiction. She lives in Montreal.

Many thanks to the Outreach Network's incredible educators, artists and enthusiasts, in particular Heather Hardie, Caitlin O'Brien, Katie Paglialunga, Launey Tomsin, Nicolas Williams, Iain Childerhose, Gary Iannacone, Annie Ogle, Ruwani Payoe, Heather Morrison, Jessica Hand, Jason Selman, Billy Mavreas, Vesna Trogrlic, Duncan Hurrell, Kelly Torchin, Penny Arns, James Bray, Paul Berry, Khalil Spivey, Nick "the Librarian" Warren, Christina Bosowec, Jason Gannon, Robert Leclerc and Jennifer Barrow, for their support and encouragement.

Thanks also to Craig Olenik and the English Montreal School Board, as well as the many generous friends and family who contributed to Alternative United's flash fundraiser this year. And cheers to Concordia University and the Department of English and Creative Writing for hosting our ongoing series of writing workshops—they were as inspiring and enlightening as ever.

This anthology wouldn't exist without the wonderful benevolence of John Commins and Christine Lachance.

These stories, poems and artworks were created in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal, historically a place of gathering and exchange for many First Nations, and we honour their continued presence, knowledge and stories as we share our own.

Lastly, enormous respect goes out to the young artists who participated this year. Your inventiveness, wisdom and courage will be alight in our memories for years to come, and immortalized in the pages of this anthology. If you keep nourishing these creative superpowers, they will protect you in tough times, reinvigorate you during down times, and guide you towards the best of times.

Printed in May 2025 by



Foreword

Time: we endure it. We need more of it. We'd like to think there's a lot of it left.

This is the ticking metronome of a life in motion, the unrelenting slog forward into becoming, and second chances, which will all eventually come to rest as loss and memory. This year, the students of the English Montreal School Board's Outreach Network were invited to explore the theme of *time*—and what they've given the world is a sharp and searing collection that grapples with the fragility of life, the inevitability of change, and the haunting proximity of mortality.

Many of the pieces in this anthology do not flinch from heavy truths: here is death, aging, grief, and consequence. These writers have met time not as a passive force but as a character, a nemesis, a prison, and a friend. What does time become when it's all you have left? How does pain echo through generations? What does growing up cost us? How does it feel to realize you're at the end of the line?

And yet, threaded through these meditations on finitude and mortality is the remarkable persistence of hope. These young creatives reveal a powerful instinct to document, to imagine, to invent new worlds and to hold close what matters. Here time is both a thief and a gift. We see resilience take shape. We witness young people writing their way toward understanding, connection, and meaning. Their honesty is disarming. Their talent is undeniable.

The pieces in this anthology remind us that time is not only measured in minutes or years, but in the weight of experience, the spark of imagination, and the courage it takes to speak truth from the heart.

It was an honour to judge the 2025 Alternative United creative writing competition, and an honour to introduce this extraordinary collection of work. These are the voices of the time that's yet to come.

~ Tara McGowan-Ross

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August 3rd
By Ella Battista

The hospital was a familiar place for me, but being surrounded by family was unfamiliar. That day both were happening. At first, they gave my mom and me our space to say goodbye. Then we left the room so his siblings, their partners, his in-laws, my mom's brother, and his parents could have their proper, private goodbyes. I felt good he could have those private moments with his family and loved ones. But when my uncle decided he needed to go back a second time I started losing it. It was the first time I expressed emotions that day because I wanted to remain calm and smile so that that could be how my dad would see me for the last time. I cried in the hallway and told my mom that they needed to hurry back out.

"Ella would like to see her dad, guys. Sorry can you wrap it up?"

Deep down I hoped he would say turn the car around let's go home on the ride there or change his mind in the hospital room. But he never did. I walked back in to see my once healthy, strong dad laying there weak after five whole years of fighting to stay alive for us, for me. My father, the strongest man I knew, was about to leave this earth willingly and I couldn't believe it.

Usually on Thursday mornings, we'd be bickering over something silly or wrestling for the remote control. Instead, we were now sharing our last hugs and words. I don't remember much of what we said but I remember I barely spoke. My throat closed up and I couldn't speak. That happened to me a lot, always so much to say in my head but I could not get it out.

He asked me what my favorite memories of our time together were and I couldn't think of anything at that moment. Although now I can think of so many. Like going ice skating and sledding after school, him showing me new music, showing me how to play piano and guitar, when I'd go downstairs at two a.m. and he was eating chips quietly, when we had those deep talk drives and walks late at night, when he'd build train tracks for me to play with, when he picked me up from tutoring in a dress because he went to some cultural thing that required it, when we'd play soccer or ping pong, when he played Michael Jackson in Mexico on stage, and when he'd call me during my break at school

because he knew I'd eat alone. I could think of so many moments now but in that moment I was frozen and terrified and I could only give him a hug. I'd known for a month before about his decision. I wanted so badly to tell him not to do it but my mom would always say

"It's his decision and it's for the best. We shouldn't wait until he's completely unable to walk or eat and wither away on the couch."

I listened because I didn't want to make this any harder of a decision for him. It felt like betrayal masked as love. Two o'clock, the time the doctor would administer the drugs to end his suffering, was coming faster and faster.

"If you feel like you need to leave the room please do. It's okay, we understand it's a lot to see," said the doctor.

Of course, I stayed. How could I leave the room knowing that I'd miss his final moments. I sat in the middle on the bed holding his hand. My mom sat on the other side of the bed, her eyes red and swollen. A doctor, with kind eyes and a quiet voice, entered the room explaining again the procedure, the medications, the process. I barely registered the words, my focus was on my Dad's face.

He looked at me

"Hey, Thumbs," he rasped, using the nickname he'd given me when I was small.

"I love you."

"I love you."

He squeezed my hand as they gave him the first dose of drugs.

"It'll be okay, sweetie. Don't you worry."

I watched the needle of drugs get shot into the tubes. I couldn't help but stare at that with a strange curiosity. His pupils widened and his last words were incomprehensible mumbles to everyone else in that room expect me.

Later, in the quiet of my own room, the reality of his absence crashed over me. It wasn't fair. He wouldn't see me grow and mature, he wouldn't know the new versions of me that were yet to come, wouldn't see me graduate from high school or college, and wouldn't see me walk down the aisle. Cancer had stolen everything, leaving behind only blurry memories that felt too precious and too painful to hold.

...

Now a year later the reality still hits me once in a while and it's still hard to not pretend he's not really just somewhere in the house. I can't tell you some new ground-breaking lesson or how to deal with death because there is no specific right way. Although I can tell you to express your big emotions, don't keep them in. Write about your favourite memories so you don't forget, look at pictures and videos, talk about it to even just one person. Losing your parent feels like you lost a whole part of yourself. But time will help you and it'll heal some wounds but never all of them. Some you will keep forever and that's okay.

Solitude

By Laila-Ann Lizza

Being someone who has spent most of their life not surrounded by many people gave me the opportunity to think. Sometimes, when you don't have people to distract you from your own thoughts, you can end up in a darker place mentally. Being a kid that always had a lot of things on my mind, made me seem less social to the people around me since I was always in my own head. As a young child, I remember being at school and feeling like I didn't belong there. I felt more mature than my classmates which made me develop a fear of speaking to them because I knew I would feel judged and wouldn't get along with them. I carried this fear into high school.

I observe the people around me constantly. How they carry themselves; how they speak, how they walk, their body language. Being a thinker made me wonder a lot about whether or not I'm missing out on "the normal teenage life" and have regrets about not taking certain opportunities.

Not having any form of social media gives you a feeling like you're missing out on the world. You can only rely on real life experiences to make you feel sociable, but only having one friend and not socializing with the people around me makes that hard.

Ever since I was 10 years old, I've had the same thought stuck in my head. I felt I was always missing out on life. As a 10-year-old, I didn't know why I felt that way. Now looking back on it, I had a lot of fears and a low self esteem. I would stay home a lot and only ever had one or two friends. I recall it being summer time, laying in my bed and the summer sun lighting up my bedroom. I would look outside my window. I would hear birds chirping and the trees were brighter than they are now.

I would hear each car pass by and wonder why everyone else was having fun and was out of the house and I wasn't. Being a young child with workaholic parents and older sisters who were constantly out with their friends, I was often left home alone. I never liked summer time because I would be home alone so much. I used to really like school and still do now because it gave me something to do. Now when it's summer, it always brings up old thoughts and feelings. It

makes me remember what life was like as a child and how things haven't changed much since then.

There are some stages in my life where I can get so consumed within my own mind that it feels like weeks and months just flew by me and I didn't even get to live them. Sometimes I look back and wonder where all the time went. It feels like I've been frozen in time. 2020 felt like it was last week when in reality, it was five years ago. Now that I'm in my last year of high school, it's very easy for me to get overwhelmed. I feel like I'm still 12 years old hanging out with my old friend group on a humid summer day, at the river eating ice cream, and laughing.

But now I have everyone around me asking what I'm going to do in the future and it makes me feel stuck. As a 16-year-old, I feel like I've just begun to live life. Why do I feel like I have to have everything sorted out? Why do the people around me look confused when I tell them I don't know what I'm doing in life? Even though I'm mentally mature and have a mature lifestyle, I don't feel like I'm actually growing up. My mindset is still stuck in its old place, as if the last six years did not pass.

I often think about all the things I'll never get to see or experience as someone who lives a very secluded life, the lifestyles I'll never live, and it makes my own world feel small. But, maybe that's the beauty of it. No matter what, the things and people around me will always be bigger than I can imagine. The strangers I pass in the street everyday or the people I sit next to on the city bus all have obstacles of their own to deal with and their own life to live. Even people like your siblings and parents have their own world, and when you think about that, you sort of feel like a background character in everyone's life. The world around us can seem smaller when you realize you're not the only one living a life of your own. I can get so tangled in my own mind that I forget I'm not the only person in the world. No matter how sheltered you feel, life is more complex than you think.

Basketball Trip to Toronto
By Kayla Marcone

I'd love to go to Toronto's streets,
Where basketball magic and city beats meet.
The court's alive with energy high,
As dreams soar upward, reaching the sky.
A trip to remember, with friends by my side,
The thrill of the game, a thrilling ride.
In Toronto's heart, I'll cheer and roam,
It's not just a game—it's calling me home.

Broken
By Julia

Pain that no one knows,
Rains, but never snows,
Walls of lies enclose me,
The windows of truth are forever closed,
Sealed by the ones most trusted,
I'm not scared, but broken,
They can take my soul,
But I will never stop fighting,
They can't see,
That I'm going crazy,
Because I must not cry,
I must not weep,
Or they will think I'm weak.

Lily
By Julia

One time there was a girl named Lily who lived in a boat that wasn't very big with her nice dad named Jack. She had no mom, just a dad but she was so happy because she loved her dad so much. Every day they would fish for food. She always loved to fish with her dad. Her dad was really good at fishing. She was five when they started living on the boat and now she was 13. Her dad didn't have much money but they loved living on the sea. Jack would teach her how to fish and he taught her where the good fishing spots are.

She wanted to have a bigger boat so she tried selling her fish but no one wanted to buy. That is until one person said she would buy some. She wanted it all. She told Lily that she would buy fish every day. Lily was really excited, but when she got back to the boat she saw her dad laying down. She went over and he said that he was sick. She was so sad, then he told her that he had severe cancer. He said he was going to die in a year, she started crying and ran away.

A bit later that night she came back to the boat and it was on fire. She didn't see her dad anywhere. She ran and called the police.

The police came shortly after they put out the fire and said that her father was dead and she was going to an orphanage. She was in the orphanage for a month before she was taken out by someone she didn't know. She said they were her real mom. She started crying and then she hugged her.

"I'm sorry for leaving," said the mom, then she said her name was Hanna. Hanna took Lily to her new home where her boyfriend was waiting to meet Lily. At her mom's house were two dogs that licked her face.

After a week she started school, she was nervous but when she got there, people were acting weird. They saw a news story about her. No one liked her though. No one sat next to her and she hated it. She had no friends on the first day of school or the second and two months went by without her having a friend. She was really sad but she stuck through. She passed the first year but she still didn't have any friends and some people even started bullying her in the next year.

She was very smart but she didn't feel smart, she felt dumb. She didn't like her life without her dad. She missed him a lot but she had to move on. She loved hanging out with the dogs, she would walk them every day. It was her only peace in life. She was in a very low place inside.

She never told her mom or her step dad what she was going through. Her life was torture for her but she knew that life was something that people would do anything for, so she did not want to seem ungrateful.

The next day was hard for her because it was Father's Day. She cried a lot on this day and her new parents decided to leave her alone because they didn't want to make it worse. They only said to her that she didn't have to go to school. She was very grateful. The next day she went to school and almost everybody made fun of her.

A few days later she was in her room colouring when her mom came in and said that dinner was ready, she got up and her mom saw her drawing and said it was really good. She was eating supper when her dogs walked in wanting food. She saw that they had no more food in their bowl so she got up and went to fill it with the dog's food. When she was walking back to the table her mom asked her how school was, she froze for a second then she quietly said it was good. Her mom didn't ask any more about it.

She was struggling in French class because she never learned French. The year went by and she still didn't have any friends but she passed in all her classes. In the summer she walked the dogs a lot with her mom and step dad. They also went fishing a lot, but her mom and step dad were very bad at fishing.

When school started she had a different mind, she was not as sad, she moved on from her grief. All the kids laughed as soon as they saw her except some kid that she had never seen before. He got up and introduced himself to her, he said that his name was Leo. He also said that he wanted to be friends with her. As soon as he said this the entire class said that he shouldn't be her friend and then they told him her story. He said that he didn't care about the past. She felt happy for the first time since her dad died. He was in all her classes and he would stick up for her if someone said anything mean to her.

The next day no one said anything mean because they were scared of Leo. Leo had big muscles and he was very tall. She was doing much better in school because Leo would tutor her every day after school. They were always together and he would always protect her. One day he said that he liked her, she also liked him so they started dating. He treated her like she was a princess. He loved her so much. He was always there for her.

She told her mom and her mom wanted to meet him so the next day she brought him to her house. Her mom hugged him and was so proud of Lily. Her mom could tell she was sad before but now she could tell Lily was happy. The step dad did not approve because she was young but he acted like he was okay with it.

Lily's life got much better and she eventually finished school, she got a good job and even got married. She lived happily ever after and never felt sad, she has a good life.

Poem of Life
By Yahoo

In the face of losers.
The whole time you smelled like shit.
Sliming through the mud with poop on your head.
Walking across the street naked.
Into a cage, you donkey.
Crossing a bridge on my head.
Through the pain of the cut.
Star gazing at your butt at night.
Tightrope on a cliff in your underwear.

Being different from others is not always a bad thing.
Home is a comforting place.
The way we live life is very interesting for others.
Sliming through the world can feel different at certain ages.
Walking away from problems cannot always resolve things.
Behind our heart is a kind person who messed up.
Into a world with such joy to be awake today.
Through the life we live we learn new things we didn't know.
Stare at the light long enough and you'll be blind.
The world is a very big place filled with bad people.
Tightrope on the edge of the world can be dangerous.
Putting yourself out in the world can be a good thing to do for yourself.
Making things right for others can affect how you change in life.

Become someone who you have never been before.
Watching others succeed can give you motivation to also succeed.
Help others to help yourself.

Rushing Water of the Creek

By Phoenix Coombs

[Content warning: depictions of blood, gore and violence]

The blood on his hands felt thick, heavy. Almost as if it could weigh him down. He barely remembered any of it. How it happened. What led up to this point.

Why?

Why had he done it? What told him to? The voices that whispered in his head before it was almost too sweet to deny.

All he wanted was to play in the creek. To have a fun time with his sister. But the grisly scene at his feet had proven that that had been the worst idea ever.

Her sides had been gouged out. Almost like a beast's claws had caught her sharp, tearing at the fabric of her green dress to reach the skin underneath. Chunks of it were missing.

No, not missing. They had to be somewhere.

Perhaps washed away by the rushing water, perhaps thrown far from him once it had been done. When he realized.

"No..." he mumbled, his voice barely escaping his throat. Soft and barely there. "No, no, no, no..." The same word, repeated over and over again.

His hands clasped over his mouth, smearing her blood across his face. His chin angled upwards, almost daring him to look away from the small body at his feet.

Oh fuck. He could see her rib cage, peaking out of the gaping holes where her flesh should have been. Her muscles and skin were completely ripped away.

You could have done worse.

What?

You could have done more damage. This is too mundane.

That voice wasn't his. It didn't sound like himself at all.

You could have torn into her throat. Watch her struggle to speak as blood filled her esophagus.

No... He didn't want to imagine it. He shut his eyes tight.

You're a monster. It's only in your nature. Your urge to be fed.

He felt sick. His stomach threatened to squeeze and wrench out whatever was in it. He was going to vomit.

He swallowed hard, hands still clasped over his mouth as his vision began to shake and blur and fill with tears.

I want my mom.

That voice was his. Every child's need when facing a crisis. The urge to be comforted, to be reassured. He wanted her to tell him that this was not his fault. Maybe a bear had attacked them. They were in the middle of the forest, weren't they? Maybe she tripped and fell on some very sharp rocks. That's what tore her flesh, not his hands—his blood stained hands.

His hands...

They were the giveaway. The blood on his hands matched the blood pooling at his feet. The blood oozing from the corpse. The corpse that—Was it still breathing? Was he hallucinating?

Was it a trick of his mind? The struggled rise and fall of her chest. Her lips slightly parted.

He had to put an end to it.

His gaze searched the surroundings before settling on a large rock. One just free enough from the riverbed that he could pick it up. Holding it over his head, positioning it so that he could put her out of her misery. One solid blow to the head and she wouldn't even feel anything anymore.

He could save her. *Help her.* He could—

Coward.

He couldn't do it. As much as he wanted to. His body wouldn't obey him anymore. Or maybe this was what he truly wanted. To watch the light fade from her eyes, to see her stop breathing. To see—

Crack.

A sharp turn of his head towards the noise. His eyes wide with fear, matching the look on his mother's face.

Her hand clasped over her mouth, her body frozen. Eyes fixed on the little girl's corpse.

But the boy felt relieved. His mother had shown up. He was saved. He could be free and lay in her arms. Feeling her rock back and forth and comfort him. *“It’s not your fault. It was an accident,”* she would say.

“You’re... You’re a monster,” was what left her mouth. Uttered in pure horror as she began to take backwards steps. Inching further and further from him before she broke into a sprint, fleeing the scene to return to the comfort of her own house.

“No... Mom.” He wanted to reach out for her, but he couldn’t. He tossed the rock down and began towards her. Seeing her run filled him with a feeling he couldn’t explain. *Panic? Fear? Both?*

He ran after her, not wanting to be alone.

He ran and he ran, but she was out of reach. Forever closed off from her monster of a son.

My Heart
By Kina

What you see in the world
Is what you have inside

Where love exists
Is where hate cannot

It's all up to me
And that's beautiful and hopeful and it's harsh and scary

If I let myself go
If I hold myself tight

If I decide to see the light
If I let my world shine bright

What kind of heart do I have?
I get to decide where it resides
My heart does not belong in the hands of this world or in this life

What you see in the world is what you have inside

If I decide to see the light
If I let my world shine bright

Love Overdue
By Henry Roy

The moment I laid eyes on you, I knew that I loved you,
but I fear that you might not love me too.

The hurt in my voice when I try to speak,
A trembling whisper, so soft, so weak.

Words I can't say, but my heart knows too well,
A story of sorrow, I can't seem to tell.

I know I am both soft and hard,
a balance of fire and fragile shards.

Such as the moon's pull on the ocean tides,
a tender wave, a raging ride.

Yet I am neither here nor there,
a whisper lost in the cold midnight air.

My heart is a compass, it turns anew,
It searches for love that's way overdue.

Vagabond Giant
By Aiden Vaillant
[Originally published in *Quist*]

After decades atop a hill, a colossal knight stomped down. He towered over peasants, every step causing tremors. His sword could cut rivers, his shield could block a stampede, and his armour could stop everything except time. Everything he owned was intricately handcrafted and ornate.

He fought twenty wars, defending whoever bid highest. He stomped out armies and crumpled castles, while shielding cavalries, and saving lives indiscriminately. When the wars had ceased for good, his armour was chipped and misshapen, yet no less strong.

With no purpose he roamed endlessly, never resting. After walking the earth multiple times, a lumberjack came to him.

“Excuse me, I don’t normally ask for favours but my axe is not strong and capable anymore, please help me cut down a mighty tree that has troubled me for years.”

The knight nodded and followed the man to the tree. He unsheathed his sword and plunged it into the ground.

“I am grateful for this gesture, but I am not strong enough to wield your sword.”

The knight responded: “Train until you can.”

Years passed as the knight continued to wander hills, valleys, and plains. It was now winter and all was snow. Three boys sat atop a small hill not knowing what to do. They saw the knight and screamed: “Hey Mr. Knight! Come play with us!”

The knight stopped and turned to the boys, then stomped to the top of the hill, leaving tracks in the snow. The boys stared up at him in awe as he placed his shield face down in the snow.

“Get in.”

The boys hopped into the gigantic shield one by one while the knight held it steady. They all counted down from three, and then were sent down the hill

screaming for joy. When they reached the bottom they turned back to the knight and called out:

“Again, again!”

By night the boys were too tired to keep playing so they went home, not before saying goodbye. Before the knight left to continue wandering, he first laid his shield at the top of the hill so the boys could use it again tomorrow.

The knight roamed almost every inch of the Earth, and then a woman yelled up at him: “Do you wear that because you don’t like your face?”

The knight stopped to look down at her, and she continued:

“You must be hiding something if you wear that helmet all the time. Let me see your face,” she demanded.

So the knight took his helmet off and took the first breath of fresh air he’d taken in what felt like millennia.

“Let me get a closer look,” the woman said.

The knight lifted her up in the palm of his hand and brought her up to his face.

“You’re a very handsome man.” And she kissed him on the cheek. The knight smiled and put the lady down.

“Nice to meet you, knight,” she said.

The knight had supper with the woman, and enjoyed their time together, but had to leave before morning to continue roaming the land. As a token of their time together the knight left her his helmet.

After twenty years the only thing the knight had now was his armour, dented, marked, dull, and crooked. He placed the rest of his armour in various villages from various continents.

The knight picked a field and laid down naked in the grass. Now old and weak he finally settled down and rested; forever he slept and slowly merged with the earth he wandered for so long.

Time passed and the memory of a giant knight that had slaughtered armies and saved thousands slowly faded. The only relic left of him was a colossal sword standing in the forest.

Take Me Back
By Zakary Morrison-Barter

I climbed the tallest peaks of Appalachia
I heard the call of love from the east
It led me to the city of angels
And into the jaws of the beast

I halted at my own doorstep
My house didn't look to be my own
The flowers in the vase, were dying anyways
Like the candles that light my home

I fear the sea of faces
That scream at me every day
Their judgement comes in waves
And I hesitate to say

I want to go back home
I want to see those fields
But now I'm all alone
A sad man on a golden throne

I miss the valley and I miss the sunrise
Here the sky is always turning black
So much destruction, laid waste to this land
Dead bodies crowd the railroad track

My mother, she was dying without me
And we cried together on the phone
I promised I would come back to her some day
And that leaving was the fault of my own

I shouted through the corridor
I sang a melody down the hall
I boarded my starship to Canada
No borders, no boundaries, no walls

Rid Me of You
By Zakary Morrison-Barter

Time, a frame of mind
An arbitrary measurement of the past, present and future
Something so powerful that dictates life itself
Yet that something can't be felt or touched

Time operates in the shadows, and it continues to work
Time doesn't care if its acting shirk
The reaper finds you, when you haven't a clue
And when that time comes, you'll have nothing to do

The clock won't stop ticking
The grave digger won't stop digging
It won't matter if you live or die
Time is deaf and blind

Why must we live in a time with time?
It comes and goes, it exists to prose
It causes anxiety, it causes stress
Time sucks, please stop it, at my behest!

Hunt
By Tanisha Thomassie Do

What is home?
Home is the arrival of
Our destination
Beyond
Epidemics of constant storms intensify
Where is home?
We all asked
Home is the proximity between a pirate and a ship
With the right sailors
A wonderful journey begins
Flowing on the gracious winds.

It Will Pass
By Alyssa Abdoo

I was seven, not violent.
I felt short green tendrils between my hands,
The sharp tops and soft bodies falling between my fingers.
The grass to me seemed begging to be ripped out, my mind made up.
I did things that made me happy.
No actions mapped out or options weighed out.

My sensitivity a piece of ribbon wrapped around a bouquet of anger pulled into
a bow.
The ends curled loops like the spiral of a snail's shell with no end and no
beginning.

I was 10 and from the solo picnics to the top of the wooden back garden patio
my sensitivity turned me inside out, covered my lips, ran down my face like a
sticky shared can of soda. Different, different, different. Like a record stuck on a
loop, the ticking of a clock and the mantra of no one knowing what to do with
me made a lolling pattern.
Friends came and left, emotions became stronger.

I was 13 and a dreamer, but from where did my dreams play out, daughter to no
one, emotions, wrapped up like a spool of thread left at the bottom of a drawer
leave me in peace.

I was 14, digging my own watery grave about mistakes and regrets, the past
flowing by me like one last bedtime story, tucking me under my own blanket of
woes and silent promises. My piece of mind was fragile and fleeting.

I was 15, and control of the one thing a young person like me had was a piece of
power I wish I never had. For one day, my emotions grew too strong even for

someone like myself, and voices were raised loud enough for the whole neighbourhood to hear.

I am 16 and the idea of doing one thing for the rest of my life makes me sick. In my mind, I am as free as a dandelion seed, my innocence and sensitivity scattered along fields and forests, mountains and backyards, each one planting a bright yellow flower.

At 45, I can only hope my smile lines run deeper than my scars. Each wrinkle proof of a time I knew so much less and wanted to know so much more.

I still hear the ocean in the hollows of seashells, a childish habit I still cling onto, I hear the waves all around me and I feel closer to heaven than ever.

Time is a far and fleeting concept for me.

The two strong brown pine trees in my backyard run through the pupils of my brown eyes. The needles fall in the spring and poke out of the first snows of the winter.

The coldness of the air making my breath thick and now the only thing passing me by is time.

At 87, in my mind I see my life and past memories branching out like an apple tree. Each branch of a fruit lay ripe and ready to fall, a past memory too close to being forgotten.

Past problems have long fallen onto the soft grass, the fruit spoiled and rotten now only serving as fertilizing for my past present and future.

Time had passed.

Split Duration
By Tianna Augiak

A place where I'm absent is where I'm non-existent
My presence is ideal and never idle
What I see is what I know
I know there's no era of prime in such grime
Every time is my absolute shine
Cause there's no time stopping my revolution
I flow while the world commits evolution
My moment now is to forget yesterdays and hope for tomorrow
No such rush
no matter what
all the dust will still brush
Hush now
Beyond my trust
I believe
I must flust

The Relentless Thief
By Gabriella W.

Flows unceasingly, always surging
Bringing change, both subtle and dire
Its path is ever evolving, without tire.

Of all the forces that shape us, time is the most relentless.
It's a steady march towards the future, a never-ending test.

The years they pass by like a flash,
Leaving wrinkles and memories brash.
The sands of time, they never stay,
As days and weeks flow away.

Change is constant, a fact of life,
Yet we cling to moments gone by.
Fearing the future, fearing the past,
Hoping to hold on, but this will not last.

In time's grasp, we gain understanding and grace,
Learning to navigate life's journey with a patient and steady pace.

Lia, My Love
By Dioni M.

He was different from anyone else, at least in my eyes. I met him when we were 15 and now we are 20. He was a good boy, he had a lot of friends but he also liked to be alone sometimes.

His name was James. Me and James were a couple for just a year, not because we were fighting or arguing badly, not because somebody cheated, not because we had a toxic or abusive relationship, but because of distance.

He said we were meant for each other and we were perfect for each other but I don't know what even changed. I was willing to wait to see him again but I guess I was the only one who fell in love. I was 17 when I moved back to Germany with my parents. I was really sad because I didn't want to leave him alone. He promised me we were not going to break up and he said that he was willing to wait. Maybe he found someone better than me or he just got tired of my messages. I guess I was really annoying. I warned him though that he was not gonna stay because I don't think that I'm a keeper.

It was all so confusing for me because he didn't have a good explanation to break up with me. I think it was because he wasn't ready for a relationship in general because he even told me that when we were friends.

"I don't think I'm capable of relationships, I can't have someone else's problems on my mind." Those were his words the day we broke up. Weird thing is, we are friends now. He said he sees me as friendly now apparently because of distance, of course.

I believe he wanted to find someone else, but why did he keep me as a friend? Why does he text me everyday? Why does he still say that he loves my smile because it's cute? I have so many questions. When I'm going back to Canada for Christmas he said he wants to see me. I honestly don't know why but I also want to see him but not just see him, I want him to answer my questions. What changed?

I know distance it's not easy but why did he ask me to be his girlfriend anyway when he knew I'm going to Germany. Why? Don't know.

I missed the way he used to say my name. "Lia, my love."

He is weird but not in a bad way. He is really kind and loving but I think he has some type of depression. Every month, his persona becomes happier or more sad.

When he broke up with me he was really rude but when he started to text me again everyday he became sweet again. My friends are calling me stupid for answering him. I can't just not answer him because I still love him, but I need to move on because I definitely wasn't the one for him and I'm so done. I'm tired and exhausted of waiting for love.

Drip Drop
By Lily Jolie

We've been drawn, we've been dropped,
from the deepest of depths, and the tallest mountain tops.

We never seem to stop,
flowing in a river of constant mold and rot.
And yet, that's not what we were taught,
This world grows goodness in the ground
While we're still floating in our sour currents pleading to be drowned.
In the never-ending, apprehending, deprecating tides full of dips and dives,
you only fall hard one billion times on a good day.
Time is funny that way,
fluid and flowing, like a stream of consciousness getting lost yet still forever
going...

It drips and it drops, and it twists and it knots into tight tiny archetypes for the
future being brought.
Brought forth as "new", yet only getting older,
old like the ground carrying "the new" on its shoulders.

Sleeping mountains forced to wake when *humans* crawled out from those
lakes,
Taking all, we couldn't wait, we whined for seconds on our plates,
To build our towns, castles, kingdoms
people shared and traded wisdoms,
God spoke through flames to the children playing games
Or maybe god had a son, his body left hung.
Seeds of faith grow and break
into long hanging branches woven into shapes,
dispersing and spreading moving like waves
So many versions, so many graves

Currents clogged
People fought
So the river slowed
In it doubt was brought
Art has power and all power is danger
When we played with colour our world was painted stranger

So they drip and they drop, till they bubble, till they pop
Pressure pulsing in the waters finds its way into the rocks.
Soil quickly fosters small but deadly monsters
breaking through the earth and playing people like imposters.
Challenging nights with dreadful fights got colder.
So people lit fires until burning buildings brought them closer.
And funnily enough, it was that closeness that made them warmer, not the
embers from the fires, just the bloodshed being over.

The Weight of One

By Rebecca Harvey

[Content warning: this story contains depictions of kidnapping and death]

Ezra adjusted his grip on the detonator, the rain plastering his mousey brown hair to his face. The wind wailed as it tore through the suspension bridge, stretching its cables into a harsh song of whines and creaks. Below it, a black and merciless river swallowed the rich drops of rain.

Coming from one end of the bridge was a bus full of people. Dozens of terrified faces pressed against the windows as moving lips muttered in silent terror. Strangers, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, friends.

On the other end was Fiona.

Ezra couldn't bear to meet her gaze. She was bound to a steel beam, with abrasions on the wrists, raw from struggling. Fiona's face was bruised with a cut slicing her rosy cheek in the place where the masked men had thrown her on the rubble.

"Ezra!" she shrieked hoarsely, "Look at me!"

His knuckles were white from his increased grip on the detonator. The words he couldn't bear to say caught in his throat and wouldn't budge.

"This isn't fair," he whispered, his voice barely audible over the storm.

A monotone, clinical voice crackled through an earpiece deep in his ear.

"Life is rarely fair. But fairness isn't the question here. Morality is."

Ezra was driving Fiona home from the restaurant. They had been laughing about some incident of their childhood. The laughter was rare for them. Ever since their mother passed away two years ago, life had become a grim struggle. Fiona took care of all the arrangements: the funeral, the house, and their mother's debts. She never grumbled about it.

"You always take the easy jobs," she'd teased him that night.

"Being the baby of the family means coasting, huh?"

"Somebody has to keep you humble," Ezra had shot back.

Then the black SUVs appeared and blocked Ezra's car. Masked men dragged the siblings out of the car before they could even move.

"Why her?!" Ezra begged, tugging at his bindings.

The masked men didn't say a thing to him, instead securing Fiona to the beam against her loud struggles. The apparent leader of the masked men had leaned down, his eyes locked with Ezra's. "Because she is the one you hold most dear in this world."

"Ezra, listen to me!"

As he looked up at his sister his chest constricted.

"It's okay," she said. Her voice was firm but Ezra could see the undeniable fear in her forest-green eyes.

"You know what you have to do."

"No," he said, violently shaking his head.

"Yes," she insisted. "Ezra, this isn't about me. It's not about us. I'm begging you not to be an idiot!"

The innocent passengers of the bus were in a panic. Ezra saw a young mother clutching her child tightly to her chest, her face wet with tears—an older man with wrinkles as deep as the river held his hands in prayer. A boy no older than 16 pounded his fists on the glass, staring Ezra right in the eyes, mouthing "please" over and over.

He turned his attention back to Fiona. "Don't ask me to do this," he said, his voice shaking.

"I'm not asking," she screamed. "I'm telling you. Press the button."

"I can't!"

"Yes, yes you can, you have to. If you don't, what's left of you, Ezra? What kind of man do you want to be remembered as? What kind of man did Mom raise you to be?"

The voice in the earpiece returned, "One minute left."

Ezra's head was pounding. He thought about the terrified faces on the city bus. This decision wouldn't just affect the passengers. It would impact all of their friends and family. Hundreds of lives would be forever altered by the simple press of a button.

And Fiona? She'd sacrificed her entire life, always, for others. She deserved far more than being left to die alone, cold, and wet on this godforsaken bridge because of some perverted moral experiment.

"What if they all die anyway?" he whispered. "What if it doesn't matter?"

“It does!” cried Fiona.

“Ten seconds,” the voice said serenely.

The detonator weighed more in his hand as he thought about the passengers and what Fiona would want him to do.

“Three.”

Ezra’s thumb hovered over the button.

“Two.”

He thought about Fiona’s laugh.

“One.”

The explosion rocked the bridge. Ezra fell to his knees, the detonator slipping from his hands. The bus was gone. He didn’t see it fall—he couldn’t bring himself to watch. But he heard the screams.

The storm was quiet now. He could only hear his violent breathing.

He looked over to Fiona, and she just stared at him, her jaw dropped in disbelief.

“You—”

Ezra did not say a word and looked away.

Why
By Maya Hertsman

Why should I?
Why?
Why even try?
If there's no good reason
Then I can't comply
You say that I must
That I need to adjust
But I just simply don't
Understand, so I won't.
A question incomplete
And with much defeat
You heave a great sigh
When I ask again: why?

Man Made Dove
By Maya Hertsman

And just like that
My guilt flew away
Not like a bird,
But a plane
Expect them back
In a few business days.

Stillborn Bloom
By Maya Hertsman

The cold near its end
Yet I've noticed that somehow
Nights have been darker

The winter subsides
And spring flourishes again
Turning me to green

2 a.m.
By Maya Hertsman

Non-mechanical
Gigantic breathing machine
Made of flesh and bone

Heart like a burnt wick
Set powerfully aflame
Now cannot ignite

Time
By Trinity Claybourn

The days are long
Weeks are short
Years move by within
A blink of an eye
The more I grow
The more I see through
Those childhood lies
I age quicker by the hour
Feeling taller like the Eiffel tower
Hovering over my younger self
Times goes by
Be careful how you use it

There's a Bird
By Trinity Claybourn

There's a bird
No, not the big yellow bird from Elm street.
There's a bluebird in my heart,
He wants out
But I've built so many walls
He can't break through
There's a bluebird in my heart
He is getting bigger
There's a bluebird
In my heart
The more he grows the weaker I become.

Nirvana
By Trinity Claybourn

Not much chance,
Completely cut loose from purpose,
She was unaffected;
There was a natural humour that came from her,
The curious feeling that swam through,
Everything was beautiful,
“I’ll just sit here, I’ll stay right here.”

Late
By Trinity Claybourn

Dad, you’re late
Every Friday night you would have to pick me up at five
Dad, you came at nine
Your time to bring me home is Sunday at five
Dad, when are you bringing me home?
Dad, you forgot to pick me up Sunday
It’s been eight years
You’re never on time.

Vision
By Sam

[Content warning: depictions of blood, torture and violence]

I'm blind. I was not blind my whole life but on one horrible day, I was going to get food for my family. I rarely go outside, like I go to school then come home and that's the most outside I get. I was helping my mom because my sister was not home and I don't have a dad in my life. So, I was the only option. I don't really remember what happened but I was walking to the store and then a car was just flying at me. I woke up and all I could really see was the end of the bed. Then I heard my sister and mom crying happy tears (I hope) then I'm awake.

Now I'm not 100% blind. I can see a little bit. If I'm in, like, hug range of a person. Anything passes that is a blur but I can see the outline of things. Apparently, I did not get hurt from the car hitting. What happened was glass went flying from the car and hit me in the eye. After four days in the hospital, I went home.

My life was a little hard for the first month. I love to play games but I can't be near a bright light. I have to put my brightness to zero to play games. When you play games. Normally on a monitor, you're close so I can see but it's a bit of a blur. So, it's hard to play games. Walking around was not that hard but all the furniture around was the problem. You can't really tell how close you are to a desk so I hurt myself on it a lot but I got used to it. Living my daily life is easier because I can see a little bit. It helps do things; I do have to be really close but at least I can do it.

It's been two months. Tomorrow, I'm going to a new school. I used to go to a highly educated school and it's hard. I won't be able to see the teacher work so I will just go to an easier school. I'm just going to sleep. I don't want to think about school.

Today I have to go to school. It was nice not having school for two months.

"Brother." My sister came into my room.

"Hi sister."

“I’m going to be helping you to school, and come down, Mom made food.”

“Okay.” I went to eat, then we left to go to school.

“Brother, when you’re done with school, call me and I’ll come to bring you home.”

“Don’t you have work? It’s okay, I know how to get home from school.”

“No, I will be home early today and fine, I will let you go home by yourself but you can always call me. Brother, are you nervous to go to school?”

“No, I’m not nervous. I know you’re worried about me but I’ll be okay.”

“Brother, have a good day at school and I love you brother.”

“Love you too.” This is my first time being here. I was told to go to the principal office. I didn’t really know if I was going the right way but this seemed like the place. *Knock knock.*

“Yes. Oh, you’re the blind student. I’ll help you get to class and you will have a personal teacher helping you in the school.”

“Is the teacher going to be with me everywhere?”

“Yes. I hope you have a good first day.”

It was weird being up here cause I couldn’t see them looking at me but I could feel their gaze. Nothing really changed. I knew the work so it was not that hard to understand. All the problems that I thought I would have went away because I had a teacher with me. My first day of school was like a normal day. It was not hard at all. I knew my sister would love to hear that.

Now I had to make it home. I thought my sister was nervous about me, I knew I should have called her, but then I wouldn’t have been able to convince her to let me walk home by myself. This should have been my house. My little red marker was still there. That was weird. Why was my door not locked?

“Mom, I’m home, hello... Is no one home?” It was rare for them to forget to lock the door. But knowing them, they were probably worried about me and just forgot.

Did I just step on something wet? What was that on the ground? It was blood. Was that my mom’s hand? “Mom, are you okay?” Why? Where was her body? “Mom, where are you?” This had to be a joke. “Sis! Hello, anyone?” What was that? Was that... how? Why? Why was it just her head there? This

couldn't be real. I needed to call the cops. Ow! I slipped in that blood. I needed to leave to go find help. This couldn't be real, this couldn't be real

I was crying.

The sound of a car door opening.

"What are you doing to me?"

Then I got knocked out.

"Brother, are you okay?"

"Sister, where are we, what happened to Mom? There's no way they..."

"Sorry brother, they killed her."

"No, this can't be real."

"Both of you shut up. What happened to your mom was because of your dad. He did really bad things to the people I know so I was just going to hurt him but he killed himself and I need to feel justified so I'm going to do the same to you guys."

"Please just don't hurt my brother. Just hurt me."

"No, sist..."

"That was the plan. It would make me happy, knowing that your brother is going to feel the pain that I felt so he's going to stay alive. I think we should get started."

"No, don't hurt her! Just leave her alone! Let go of h... Mmmmmmm..."

"Wow, he is so loud. Now it's time to have a little fun."

I just sat there and had to hear the pain in her screams. I wish I could have done something but I couldn't. Then I heard silence. Thinking about what could have happened to her made me pass out.

When I woke up, I was in the hospital. They told me what happened. All the people that did that went to jail. Because I had no other family to take me, I got put in an adoption home.

What was the point? All of them were dead. Mom, sister, what was the point? I didn't have anyone.

Mom, Sister, I miss you. Why did this have to happen to me? Mom, Sister, it might be time to join you.

"Poor kid, he lost all his family. I hope he is okay. I should go check on him. Oh my god! Somebody, call 9-1-1. Poor kid, why would he do this?"

Dolls Don't Cry

By Shylah

[Content warning: depictions of death]

I watched from the couch as little Marilyn played with her dollies. Oh, how she loved her dollies. She had Barbies, black and white, Polly Pockets, Cabbage Patches, Bratz, all the Bratz really.

“G-ma and I really splurged for you, didn't we, honey?”

Little Marilyn smiled. “Yes, Grandpa. I thought you said these were Mommy's, though? Ya know, I feel so connected to her through them, almost like she's here in the room with me right now.”

As I glared Marilyn in the face, I felt a slight drip of water roll off my head. Play it cool, I told myself. I needed to stay calm and aware, doctor's orders. I grinned.

“Come sit here, darlin'.”

Marilyn walked over to her grandpa's chair and sat in the center of his lap, leaving just enough room for her tiny legs to dangle off of him, held heavy and stable by the weight of her shoes.

“You know how much we love you little Mari. Sure, some of those toys were your mother's, but stop with the nonsense darling. G-ma and I work very hard to make sure that we can provide you a good life and keep our collectables. And who gets to play with all those expensive toys? You do! We work very hard to keep our children happy, is that understood?”

Frightened by her grandpa's face, along with the curiosities of his seriousness, little Mari said, “Okay.” But wait, “Children?” she asked herself.

G-ma walked through the door with gusto when the clicking and clacking of her shoes let Marilyn know it was time to leave the room.

“Doctor must be here,” she thought.

“Here ya go honey, head back.”

As Grandfather's head tilted, he felt the dryness of a Zolofit tickle the back of his throat.

“Ahem, water please.”

As the day passes by, all little Marilyn could do was play with her toys.

“Play, play, play, and yet all alone.”

Marilyn wondered why she wasn't allowed the luxury of other children around her but there was no asking why.

“Just do as you're told,” she told herself.

And so it continued, every day Marilyn would wake up, breakfast, living room time, leave when Doctor came, play time, lunch time, play time, dinner, and bed. Marilyn didn't go to school, she couldn't watch TV, and no one played with her. One day Marilyn got up and started to play in the living room, when she heard the doorbell ring.

“That must be G-ma and Doctor, a little early though, isn't it?”

With great fascination, little Mari was in awe and wonderment of who this doctor could be, what he might look like!

“Oh boy, there's an actual person in my house!”

With a silent excitement she wandered close to the living room, creeping slowly by the stairs, careful to not creak the wooden floor boards. Peeking through the cracks of the banister, Marilyn had never been so confused.

“There's no doctor! Why is Grandpa taking medicine, he's not sick! Were they trying to get rid of me!”

Enraged by the lies carried throughout the household, little Marilyn ran downstairs.

“G-MAAaaaAaAa!”

“I thought there was a person, a real one!”

“Marilyn, you have tested me enough, child!” G-ma was not happy.

“Go sit in your room. No. Toys.”

Understanding the limits her attitude had reached, scared stiff, Marilyn replied with agreeance.

“G-ma must really be mad, if she took my toys away.”

Sitting on the floor with nothing but boredom and thoughts of repentance, Marilyn glanced at her foot.

“Huh, this must be a birthmark, I've never seen this before”

“Wait, it looks like letters. Made in Germany?” she read.

Freaked out by the day's events and her newfound birthmarks, little Mari was not sure where to turn. All she wanted was answers.

“Where have I seen this imprint before?”

Lost in thought and completely disturbed, Marilyn remembered this specific tag from when she would pick out her toys with her Grandpa. Little Mari wasn’t allowed in the collectables room without Grandpa. She was only allowed to pick out toys from specific places. Just with the thought of going in and breaking the rules, it was as if she could hear Grandpa in her head: “Some things are better left unfound, sweet pea.”

“Huh, why am I not allowed in there?”

Marilyn built up the courage to sneak into the collectables room. Finally, having relief that she had made it in safely, she looked around, only to find what G-ma and Grandpa had been hiding this whole time.

“Is that a person?”

She tried to keep her calm, knowing screaming was dangerous at this point in time. Little Mari was definitely smarter than most nine-year-olds.

“Wait a second. Huh? Mommy?” Oh, the fear on Marilyn’s face when she discovered that her grandparents secret had been that they were freezing her mother, all this time she was looking at pictures of her, while they all mourned the loss.

“Oh my goodness. They really killed you.”

Tears welled up bigger than they ever had before. Little Mari couldn’t help it. Water started to pour.

“I have to run away. I need to get help.”

No time to pack, little Marilyn ran through the back door. She had never been outside before.

“Help, please, somebody! Help! they took—they killed my mommy!”

Marilyn wailed out but before anyone could hear to help her, G-ma grabbed her by the neck, dragged her through the prickly grass, and brought her to the basement. G-ma proceeded to slam her down on the metal table and rip her, limb from limb.

“You’ve been a bad girl Marilyn!”

“Ahhh, G-ma you’re hurting me!”

“You don’t listen, do you!”

“You’re hurting—”

A 911 call was made by the neighbour next door.

“911, what is your emergency?”

“Yes, hi. I have some concerns about my next-door neighbours. They’re an elderly couple, very sweet. It’s just that I saw a little girl running out into the front yard and I never had knowledge of a child before then. We’ve been neighbours for almost 12 years and the girl looked about nine. I just wanted to make sure everything was okay. I heard the little girl scream before and it sounded like a struggle or a fight.”

Given the address and information needed, police arrived only to find G-ma concealing the corpse six feet under, right in the backyard. Grandpa walked out into the backyard to see what had taken place.

“Don’t look like the villains are suddenly victims,” he said to G-ma.

“We are,” G-ma stated. “We lost our daughter.”

“Don’t try to justify it, Doctor.”

G-ma stared off.

“I breathe and let the cold silver touch me.”

“Ma’am, you and your husband will be taken down to the station for questioning, we have reason to believe that you are responsible for the murder of this little girl.”

“You are under arrest until proven innocent, anything you do or say will be held against you in a court of law, an attorney will be appointed to you if necessary.”

Shoved into the backs of police cars, G-ma wondered if her and her husband would tell the same story.

Investigators sat down to question Grandfather.

“So, do you wanna tell us what really happened?”

“Well, it was a few years back when our daughter had passed, little Ellie. It’s hard not to get choked up whilst speaking about it. We were just so heartbroken that we decided to get her cryogenically frozen, I couldn’t handle the thought of burying my little girl. After a little while the house was just too

quiet, ya know, a—and I studied science for such a large chunk of my life, it sorta felt like a no brainer.”

Tears squabble.

The detective got frustrated. “What felt like a no brainer?”

“You’re not gonna believe me.”

“Just say what you know,” the detective suggested.

“I used my position to get into a lab in order to place some of my daughter’s most primary body parts into her favourite childhood toy. Just to keep her around for a bit longer until the medical field found an advancement in technology to be able to bring her back in her physical form.”

Over to G-ma’s investigation.

“Well, you caught me, I’m willing to give it up. I was giving my husband medication to zombify him from all those annoying emotions and I told my so-called granddaughter that she was living with us and her mother died when she was a baby. And you know what, she believed me! Ha ha!”

She continued, “We had so many collectables, why not pick Ellie’s favourite one. There was too much tension in that house anyways, the girl was nothing like my sweet Ellie.”

This story had the detective confused.

“Even if your story was true, you’re telling me that you have no remorse for your actions, given the fact that this *doll* felt too?”

“Please, it was just a bunch of plastic.”

“Alright Ma’am. Well, thank you for your time but we will most definitely be having to dig up that evidence for further testing and evaluation.”

Days later it was understood that Marilyn was just a doll. Unfortunate for her, that’s all she was.

“Mr. and Mrs... Good evening, I am here to inform you that in the state of Oklahoma, a doll is not considered the same as a child. This is a rather rare situation and I want you to know that your story does check out. After your daughter’s passing, she was signed off to you, and what you did with her body parts was your business. You’re free of charge and we won’t bother you anymore. Thank you for your time.”

G-ma could not have been more through-the-roof excited about her freedom, though guilt should have been consuming her. Grandpa never told her how he felt, that he missed his daughter and now his granddaughter. He missed the feeling of her cold shiny plastic, and how she didn't want to look different because she didn't know she was. Grandpa would now spend the rest of his days a zombie in the presence of G-ma, trying his best not to mourn the loss of his two girls. Her sick and twisted game had become familiar to him, and now he missed his true family. All Marilyn ever wanted was to be a true little girl, and to play, not to be a toy.

Ghost and Demons

By Logan Lafortune

[Content warning: depiction of violence and death]

Just got back from a shift and you stabbed me in the back...

As a hard-working guy, I hate when I have to deal with something extra at work, and today, while I was behind the counter working my cashier and window duty, some strange guy walked in. At first, he wasn't so strange but that changed when he started crawling on the floor and barking like a dog. I didn't know if he was just crazy or he was pulling a stunt for social media, but it didn't last long though because my manager called the police and got rid of him. Once he was gone I still had an hour left on my shift so I just got back to work.

As I was leaving, that was when I saw the same guy from earlier in the park across the street from the McDonald's and this time he was on a leash barking at the birds. I didn't want to keep looking so I just waited to get onto the bus to head home. When the bus arrived, I looked for my bus pass in my pocket but couldn't find it so I started freaking out, searching for it in my pockets and still nothing. The bus driver said I couldn't get on without it so I had to walk home. On my way home, it started to rain so I walked into the alley that no one really passes through because of all the murders and rapes that had happened there, but I did because it was a short cut.

Nothing happened to me but as soon as I left I felt the feeling of someone behind me looking at me, but no one was there when I turned around. I told myself it was just me being tired from a long day and so I just walked home. When I got to my apartment building the elevator wasn't working so I had to climb up the eight flights of stairs. When I got to my apartment I put everything down and I went to take a shower. I was sitting in the shower when I heard something fall from my room. So I got out with a towel around my waist and walked towards my room to see what it was. When I had got there I fell to my knees after seeing the urn that kept my mothers ashes broken on the floor with her ashes spread onto my carpet. And that's when I felt the knife enter my back, again and again. My body on the floor was bleeding out but I still felt alive. Suddenly I was up again but I could see my body without a pulse on the floor

and my murderer. I couldn't see his face just yet, but when he turned around it took me a little bit to recognize him and then it hit me it was the guy who was holding the man-dog by the leash.

I still didn't know how I was still alive but it gave me an opportunity to follow the man who murdered me. He hid my body under my bed before leaving my apartment. When he got outside the apartment building he headed to the killer alley. When he got into the alley I saw him enter a house and I followed him. The moment I entered the house behind him I saw a lot more people like me, dead but alive.

There were about five of them and three were adults and the other two children around fifteen and sixteen. I could tell they were dead because he walked through one of them and when they saw me they looked more disappointed than surprised. I got to talking to them and they told me how they had all been killed by him or his man dog. They also told me that they wanted to get revenge and didn't know how because we could not talk to the living we could only move small items. When I heard that, I thought of the best way to get revenge and it involved me going back to my apartment to collect the murder weapon. I headed to my apartment with two of the adults and the rest stayed behind. We got to my apartment and went to my room to get the knife from my back, under the bed. When I saw my dead body, I felt sad that I had died, but I had to help the people I just met, so I grabbed the knife and we started leaving. As we were heading out the front door, the police showed up so I dropped the knife and when they didn't hear anyone answer, they kicked the door down and found the bloody knife right in front of the door. Me and the other two adults had to head back to tell the others the news, we got back and told everyone and we assumed we would have to wait a couple of days for the police to show up at the killers' door but they had arrived the night of and arrested the man. Once he was arrested we all started to fade away.

Dementophobia
By Gavin Wlasenko-Mayer
[Content warning: depictions of violence]

-Captain's LOG-#1-14:33[DATE-UNFOUND]: This is the SS PHORKYS, I am Private Francis Wayland Thurston, part of the medical crew. We are currently 500, maybe 600 ft, somewhere under the South Pacific Ocean. We hit or were hit by god knows what, all the Sonar technician and logistics specialists don't know either, people have been saying they think it was a torpedo. Out of the 100-man crew, 60, almost 70 men died just about instantly. In the last week, maybe week and a half, 12 more died. I'm thinking it must be a chemical weapon with the look of some of the bodies. I have demanded a quarantine, but the new "captain" refused, saying there was no need. We're down to 21. No matter how hard I try, out of that 21, four aren't going to make it another day, I'm sure of that. The rest are just barely holding themselves together. Myself included, got an open wound on my leg that just won't heal, and if any more water gets in I'm dead, the infections down here will kill me slow. I pray I don't go slow.

The rest of the crew is trying to fix up one of the radios; trying to send an SOS. I ain't no help with electronics, so I've just been trying to help who I can. I was able to find some time to take a break, and ended up finding a working computer. Turns out it's just short of useless, can't send nor receive messages. Only thing it can do is write logs. It was made for the captain to chart down anything important. I thought I may as well, when I find the time, log down what's been happening. At least there will be evidence that we tried.

-Private Francis Wayland Thurston-

-Captain's LOG-#2-12:29[DATE-UNFOUND]: This is the SS PHORKYS, I am Private Francis Wayland Thurston, the only doctor left. According to one of the radars we got working, we are 626 ft under the South Pacific Ocean. The last log was about two, maybe three weeks ago. We are a crew of 18. Those four I talked about last time, the captain demanded I spend all my time keeping one of them alive; well, alive is generous for his state. After

spending hours working I got him in a “stable” condition; but he’s practically a corpse. For starters, his jaw is just gone, he blew it clean off, his legs are bent all wrong, he wanted me to cut them off at first, and to be honest, if I didn’t think it would kill him, I would have; just to get him to shut the hell up about it, and to add on top, I think he’s braindead now. But hey, at least he’s still alive for better or for worse; I’m sure he’s so happy about that. I can’t believe that fool acting as a captain wants me to save this “waste of time” and supplies. Every hour I have to go and change the bandages holding his mouth together; if I don’t he chokes on his own blood. His hacking coughs echo down the halls, waking everyone up; not like I could get any sleep anyways. And they all want me to do something about it, because apparently, I’m the only fucking one in this tin can that knows how to change some goddamn bandages.

If only he had aimed a little lower.

I’m just a tool to them. It’s always “I want more food” or “I want pain meds” or “Help me with this” or “Go change Jack’s bandages.” They work the man with a hole in his leg like a damn dog, and they won’t even listen when I say we should quarantine; it will be on them. And all they do is sit around that damn radio doing nothing, and then they have the audacity to talk about me like I’m crazy. I am not crazy! I know what I hear! There is something outside, waiting. It talks to me, I know it does, and I’m trying to tell them what it says, but the way they look at me, their eyes, they never stop staring, like I’m some kind of freak.

I yelled at one of the crew hands the other day, some damn kid just wouldn’t stop staring, and guess what he said. He asked when was the last time I looked in a mirror and if I was okay. I know I don’t look too great, but I ain’t much worse looking than anyone else, but now this ass hat is asking when I last ate, and if I hit my head recently. I think he’s just trying to be nice, but I don’t believe that, I bet he just wants something from me.

-Private Francis Wayland Thurston-

-Captain’s LOG-#3-18:43[DATE-UNFOUND]: I am Francis
Thurston, I have no idea how long it’s been. God knows how deep we are now,

last time I checked we were 640, maybe 650 ft, doesn't matter now, none of us are making it out.

They tried to kill me, the three of them, but I'm sure they all want me dead. It all happened a good bit ago. It was late, well I don't know for sure, got no sense of time, but everyone was asleep. I was going to change Jack's bandages; that bastard can't ever give me a break, but just as I walked in, a sharp crippling, blinding pain hit my head, as I fell against a wall, time seemed to slow down, as I saw the wrench swinging back towards my face. The sound my nose made as it broke, the warm blood rushing down my face, the boot flying into my gut, the fists coming from my far left. Hit after hit after hit, I kept my arms high, waiting. I know I was going to die down here. I came to terms with my death long ago, but I would be damned if I was going to let them walk away from this. And as I waited, that's when I saw it, Eliot Millard, he hesitated. The look in his eyes as I pushed off the wall and jumped at him. I almost felt sorry as I gouged my thumbs deep into his eyes. His screams, the thudding as I bashed his head off the ground, over and over again. Tex Neville was the one to pull me off him; I wasn't suppressed, he was always the biggest. Yelling about me being the devil as he beat my face in, never stopping his punches as he dragged me up and down the medical bay. I reached for anything, bottles I'd smashed across his head, stabbed pens and scissors into his sides. But, nothing would stop him as he threw me into a wall, his giant hands wrapped around my throat, cutting off all air. The look in his eyes as he watched me try and squirm out, it could only be described as joy, shortly replaced with fear as he felt the shard of glass punch into his ear, over and over. He slumped down, I kept hacking and cutting only stopping to take breaths, just to go back to tearing at his face.

As I sat there on Tex's lifeless body, looking across the room, into the eyes of Alex Howe, he stood upright. In his shaking hands sat the captain's revolver, not aimed at me, but one of the portholes. I ran, not to stop him, or even in the way of the bullet as it rang out, but to get to the door, as the ice-cold water flooded the room, chasing me out the door, punching against me as I swung it shut. Blood and water covered every part of me; it was oddly nice to feel cold for once. As I looked back at Alex, his face held nothing but hatred with eyes that never left me.

As everyone came running, the steps were louder with the water holding their legs. They don't believe me. But I don't need them to. You believe me don't you. But now I hear it outside, louder. *He* wants my help, *he'll* free me. *He'll* free us all.

-Francis Wayland Thurston-

-Captain's LOG-# -00:00[DATE-LOST]: We'll be free, *he'll* set us free. I made sure they all welcome our saviour with open arms; the only hard part was finding somewhere to hang them, I'm sure *he* will appreciate all my hard work. By the time I made it to the captain, he seemed more hurt that I was holding his revolver than the fact I was aiming it at him. I saved the crew. The captain will see that soon enough, I'll show him the beauty of the depths. He can hear *him* now as well. He begs, but I know he wants what I want. We'll walk out together. We'll embrace our new god together.

-Francis Wayland Thurston-

Bloody Camera

By Atlas

[Content warning: vivid depictions of violence and torture]

The thick scent of fresh blood stank up the room. A still man drenched in blood sat on a chair. Slow breaths left his lips. The man slowly leaned up and ran his bloodied hand through his hair. The man got up and walked to a camera that was placed in front of him and the bodies. A small wave of his hand was sent directly to the lens. With one click he ended the recording.

“Fucking useless trash! Get me a beer!” a booming voice demanded Robert from the living room. Not wanting trouble again, Robert swiftly jumped off the dining room chair and to the kitchen fridge.

“Finally...” the voice grumbled.

“Daddy, you said you’d play with me.”

Robert stated softly, “Yeah, yeah. After this beer.” Slurred words of an empty promise seeped from his lips. Robert frowned and went back to his seat to finish his homework.

Robert spent hours at the dining table with his dad yelling at the TV screen about how his ex-wife was horrible and that nobody cared for him and that the world was against him. He tried to block out the sound by covering his ears but it ended up failing. He decided it would be good to take a break outside. He put his coat on and went outside to play in the leaves.

Robert made himself aware of every sound around him. The crunching of leaves, the blowing wind, the birds chirping and... the small pitter patters of a rabbit that had found its way into his backyard. A sense of ease crept upon him. The rabbit had slowly made its way towards Robert. Cautious hops come from the rabbit. It had finally stopped in front of the boy.

Robert felt a small urge in the back of his mind, but as quickly as it came it had soon disappeared. The honk of a car made the rabbit scurry away back into the woods behind his house. Loneliness washed over Robert as he watched the rabbit flee into the trees. He hoped it would come back someday. He really hoped it would come back...

Robert sighed as he decided to go back to his seat in the kitchen. He put his jacket on the back of the chair and took a blank piece of paper and a pencil. He spent hours drawing, he loved making art works to rid his thoughts of his lonely life and abusive dad. Sometimes he wanted to kill his father. How could the world leave a little boy in this horrible house?

More gruesome days went by with the same old routine. He got home, his dad yelled at him, he got him a beer, he went outside. Truly a dull, sad life. He sat outside in the backyard yet another day. Robert stared into the wilderness of the forest in front of him. He heard a small crackle of the leaves. Out popped a rabbit, the same one from a few days ago. Robert watched the animal curiously to see what it would do. After a few moments of staring at each other, the rabbit hopped closer to him as the leaves crunched under its paws. This time, Robert was prepared for the creature.

The rabbit was now a few centimetres from where Robert was sitting. Slowly, he picked up the animal and put it on his lap. For a while Robert stared at it with curiosity to see what it would do, but he soon found this was boring. He wanted a reaction. He wanted the rabbit to squirm and move. To show him SOMETHING... He held the rabbit like he was holding a stuffed animal, legs dangling with his arms wrapped around its torso with its paws over his hands. Robert stared a bit more at the rabbit. For a second there was a tranquil feeling within Robert. He felt at ease, but soon a sensation of dread washed over him. This isn't what he wanted. He wanted a reaction. Why wasn't the rabbit scared to be around a human? It was not a domesticated bunny. He felt angry with the animal's lack of emotion. Robert began to slowly squeeze the rabbit. Harder. Harder. And harder... The rabbit began to wriggle in his grasp, but Robert wouldn't let up. He just kept squeezing. The rabbit squealed and squirmed, fighting to breathe and live. Robert didn't care though he just kept squeezing its small torso, so much so that he popped a hole in its stomach. The rabbit began to scream and cry as the blood gushed out of it. The corner of Robert's mouth twitched, a smile threatening to appear on his face. He enjoyed this. His thumbs gauge into the hole in the rabbit's torso. Robert hesitated for a moment. He quickly rubbed it off and began to split the rabbit's torso open. It cried out more screams of agony. He pulled and pulled. Blood gushed out of the rabbit and its

squeals continued. The rabbit's soft flesh ripped apart, its guts spewed out into a bloody soup on the ground. After what felt like an eternity of torment for the poor creature, its pleas were heard and the release of death caught up to it. Once Robert noticed the lack of crying from the animal he immediately got annoyed and bored.

Robert looked over the small patch that he had dug and carelessly threw the dead rabbit in its poorly made grave. He enjoyed the most gruesome torture to animal. No. He loved it. He got a reaction. Something to play with. Something to keep his mind off his deadbeat dad. He finally found SOMETHING that he enjoyed. Robert had no moral compass. His father had never taught him what the world thought good and bad was. If he was happy that meant that it was "good" in his twisted mind.

Robert continued his torture spree of small animals. Days turned into months and months turned into years. Growing tired of rabbits, squirrels, and birds, Robert moved to foxes, stray cats and dogs. He killed these animals so much that the neighbourhood had begun to take notice of the lack of strays in the area. Most would assume that shelters had taken them, others thought people had adopted them. They had no clue about the cruelty that was truly happening.

All while Robert brutally slaughtered the innocent animals his father had only gotten worse. Robert was now 17, so close to moving out. He had gotten a job and saved up to buy a small apartment in the neighbouring town. He just hoped it was not sold by his 18th birthday which was in a week.

Anticipation rushed through his veins with each passing day, Robert prepared all he needed for his birthday. He stared at his preparations with a wicked grin on his face. Tomorrow was the day. He'd finally show his father. Finally show him the twisted son he'd turn into due to his willful neglect.

7 pm

A putrid five-hour wait left Robert anxious. He sat on his bed waiting for his father to stop yelling.

8 pm

Robert paced back and forth in his room. He bit and chewed at his cracked lips.

9 pm

He stood directly in front of his door staring at the wood. Deep and steady breaths left Robert's lips.

10 pm

Robert crouched in the corner of his room with his hands covering his face. He breathed rapidly and slowly claws at his face.

11pm

His father had finally begun to settle down. He could tell that he was getting tired.

12am

Robert's 18th birthday had finally arrived. He smiled and let out a sigh of relief and ran a hand through his hair.

Robert grabbed his supplies and opened the door. At last he had left his musty room. He saw his father asleep on the couch. Robert set up his camera to face him and his father. The camera blinked red as it began to record. Robert smiled towards the camera. He pulled out a rope and began to tie up his father and made sure the ropes were tight and secure. After he prepped everything, Robert smacked his dad awake.

"FUCK! Robert!? What're you doin'?! You piece of filth, untie me!" He yelled at his son with an anger that comes out everyday.

"No," Robert simply answered.

Robert pulled out a pair of pliers and walked up to his father.

"This is what you get for treating me like fucking nothing my entire goddamn life..." Robert harshly pulled his fathers hair back and shoved the pliers in his mouth. He set the pliers on a tooth and slowly began to pull and wiggle it out. His father yelled due to the pain. He was not ready for what else was in store for him.

Blood gushed from his father's mouth. He wiggled and writhed within the restraints. He tried his best to free himself but it only made the pain worse. When Robert finished pulling his tooth out he set it on the coffee table and began to go for the other ones.

Robert soon got tired of ripping at his father's molars. He wanted a better reaction. Something more exciting.

As Robert pulled out a knife with a smile he began talking to his father.

“This was just the appetizer... Let’s get to the main course already, I’m getting bored.”

Robert plunged the knife into his father’s stomach. He started to scream and cry. He shook against his restraints again. He kept trying to leave, but to no avail. He knew he wouldn’t get to leave. All the years of his neglect created this monster. Deep down in his shrivelled, alcoholic heart, he knew he deserved this. Blood gushed out his father’s chest as tears spilled down his face. His breath became increasingly staggered as he tried to keep his grip on life. Robert grabbed the open sides of his stomach and began to rip it open. Robert looked down at the blood and guts spilling out of his father’s stomach with a smile. He told himself that his father deserved this. He told himself that he was just. He would let the world know that he did the right thing. After years of neglect and verbal abuse, Robert finally felt content as he watched his father struggle to stay alive.

His father’s eyes begin to dim and he could see that he was leaving this world. Not one ounce of guilt even touched Robert’s mind. He didn’t care. Just how his father didn’t care for him...

Robert sat on a chair and stared at his father’s dead body. He turned to look down at his bloodied hands. He held his head down in his hands and sighed. He stayed still like this for a while. Slowly he got up and ran his hands through his hair. He looked at the camera and smiled. He gave the camera a goodbye wave as he clicked the button to finally stop the recording.

What I Once Was
By Atlas

Spun in a web of memories I dance around
All the fragments of my mind I stomp them down
One by one they leave me
Faces are gone
As I end the dance of torment
I can't see the faces in the crowd
Who am I
Who do I know

I've forgotten how to live
I've forgotten if I've ever known

I want to redo my mess ups
I wish I could turn back the time
Everyone goes on without me
I'm stuck in a day to day loop
I want to fight for my freedom
I wish I could find some closure
Everyone goes on without me
Can I be what I once was

Like a rabbit chased by a dog I run from everyone
It's destructive and I can't break free
I let the time pass me by as I continue to force down the memories
A dark eternity waits for me and I feel myself crumble
Can I keep this going
Am I really doing good
I wonder if they want to forget me
I hate to remember their pitiful faces

I want to redo my fuck ups
I can never turn back the time
Why can't I go on with them too
Get me out of my fucking mind
I can't to fight for my freedom
I destroy everyone with me
Everyone goes on without me
Can I forget them all too

It's not over
It's not over
I thought I could forget
But they come back to haunt me

I want to redo my mess ups
I wish I can turn back the time
Everyone goes on without me
I'm stuck in a day to day loop
I no longer want the freedom
I don't deserve the closure now
Everyone goes on without me
It's better to let them heal without me

Go on without me until the end of time
Go on without me until the end of time
Go on without me until the end of time
Go on without me until the end of time

Time Relapse

By Olivia

[Content warning: depictions of violence and murder]

The rain poured endlessly, while the lightning echoed over the empty streets of Paris. Ella swung her leather jacket over her shoulder and proceeded to storm out her apartment building, a shadow of a broad man appeared through the silky curtains on the fourth-floor window, watching her stomp through the puddles relentlessly. Hours passed throughout the night.

Matthew waited for Ella's return, pacing back and forth but his anger kept escalating. He damaged their apartment. Matthew left the apartment in fury, determined to track down Ella. He searched her favourite spots; the places she shopped, even the first place they visited on their first date, but Ella was nowhere to be found. That is, until he spotted her leather jacket. His anger grew, and soon he was screaming at her, throwing a tantrum on the empty street of Paris. Windows began to open, heads peered out, but Matthew's fury only intensified. He couldn't stop shouting. In desperation, Ella tried to run, but she couldn't escape. He grabbed her violently, his grip firm and unrelenting. The attention surrounding windows grew, whispers of their chaos spreading. Matthew couldn't stop himself, he beat her senseless. It was so bad he killed her.

The police surrounded the crime scene, taking Matthew away in handcuffs for manslaughter; but then, in the early morning, around four, Ella jolted awake, heart pounding from a nightmare so vivid it felt like reality. She glanced beside her. Matthew was still there, sleeping next to her. The rain poured outside, filling the silence. Matthew woke up again. The argument started again, as if nothing had changed. The same fight about the girl Matthew might have gotten pregnant. It was as though the day before was playing out all over again, the same words, the same tension, like time had looped and nothing was different. Ella stormed out of the apartment, her steps quick and powerful, she couldn't resist turning back, catching a glimpse of Matthew standing behind the window.

She needed a moment to breathe, so she went to her favourite café, seeking comfort with her usual drink. As she sat, she watched the world around her, but something felt off. The same man from yesterday slipped on an ice

cream cone in the same spot, and a woman's hair was once again caught in a machine, just as it had been the day before. It was all too familiar, too eerie, and it sent chills down her spine. Skating off the unsettling feeling, Ella stepped out on the quiet streets of Paris, but the silence was broken from puddles splashing and someone stomping. She turned the corner and froze, Matthew standing in the middle of the street, she knew exactly how this was going to end. She tried to run, but he was always faster. Before she could even get a head start, he gripped her wrist. Pulling her back with a force that made her stumble

“Stop!” he yelled, his grip tightening as his voice grew more desperate.

Her heart raced, as she cried out for help. He beat her until her heart stopped beating.

Ella woke up again, bruises marking her body, Matthew laying next to her, his presence suffocating. She wanted to run, but as he twitched in his sleep, fear kept her still. She waited, frozen, until he woke. The argument started again, just like always.

Frustrated, Ella stormed out, heading to her favourite café, she ordered something different, so at least something wasn't so familiar. As she sat there, the same routine repeated itself, and she wondered how long it would last. Ella knew she had to act quickly to break free from the endless loop that haunted her. Each day felt like a nightmare repeating itself, and she could no longer bear the weight of confusion and horror, desperate for a solution that didn't involve violence, but every idea she came up with seemed impossible. Deep down, Ella understood that something extreme had to happen, but she couldn't yet figure out how to make it work.

Ella bolted out of the café, her heart pounding as she sprinted towards the nearest pawn shop. She knew Matthew was out there, hunting her down once again. Inside the store, she quickly purchased a handgun and a hunting knife, both reassuring in her hands. She felt determined, she wasn't sure how this was going to end, but she knew one thing for certain, she was going to find him first.

She knew exactly what corner he was going to turn on at the exact moment but she was running out of time. She dashed as fast as she could to the corner to catch him, she bolted through the alleyways, almost tripping over her

own shoes, she got there with a minute to spare, ready to shoot. She patiently waited for him to turn the corner, the gun pointed to his forehead, he grabbed it fighting back, she pulled out the knife forcing herself to slash him, with a continuation of shooting him between his eyes.

The silence became loud, she didn't know what to do next. Ella ran as fast as her legs could carry her, but the speed was too much to bear. Her body couldn't keep up, she collapsed onto the cold, wet pavement. Her heart pounded in her chest, she wished with all her might for the nightmare to end. She had to keep moving, though, so she pushed herself up, stumbling through the rainy streets of Paris. She couldn't bring herself home, exhausted and overwhelmed. Ella's body gave in, she fell to the ground, her vision fading as the rain soaked her, and the world around her blurred into darkness. She woke up the next morning in her own bed, the nightmare still clinging to her, her eyes searching the empty space beside her, reality sunk in and she realized Matthew was gone. The nightmare had ended and it had taken Matthew with it.

State of Mind
By Novalee

Echoes of replays of those same nights when time came along to a bliss. I hated waiting for the end till it reached the sun, but it never actually ended, the latest of the never-ending screams I used to hear on a school night. I was restless at what my mind left for the blanks of what I could not see, locked away in my room. Now, I moved with the sudden switch as if I climbed over a wall I had never seen from behind. This was supposed to be fun as you grow out of your childish fears.

The party had started a long while ago before I entered. This wasn't the first, but it wouldn't be my last, or so I thought. The deepest part of me had never fled my locked room even then and now I felt the only person there was myself, since then that little girl inside me never left my side.

Every part of my womanhood I wish I could embrace without the slightest pain. I held on while time passed by, and I kept my balance to flow with the melody filling the house party. It was never going to stop till dawn at the latest, the more it went on I would fall and lose my balance. Different shapes of faces I once was familiar with before my eyes, I would only introduce myself from my gaze. That was always enough to tell the story about me and not another word...

They weren't any different to me but only in the same place, at the same time.

The night would go on because this was only the beginning.

The world and everyone around it belittled me like growing towers. I couldn't see any light over once it blackened my vision as they disappeared from my eyes as I left mine. My heart sank in this crowd compared to them. Why had I felt out of place? When I intended to drown the sight of being as a whole, to lose myself. Even from what surrounded to its sounds, it was another night of my loneliness till something would cut the sounds. It was more than a night that would only leave me helpless to what happened, it had been dragging my strings. Teleporting through time with the sudden rush, I never wanted someone to stop me, but nothing came with open arms, I had lost control. No

friends behind my trail leaving me with no one I could trust. Taking off from room to room searching for my room, my bed, at the least a sense of safety, but this wasn't my home.

Touches of the cold against my skin, the false sense of relief was the dark outside. Somewhat in contact with my ground to reassure myself. Was it all a dream with every knocking breath I needed to slow down, I must keep up with everything to forget about what I felt. Shifting changes in my life, I was scared of it all. I looked around to where I could run to now, when there was nothing for the little girl that never left her room, she was still there. I knew that because I watched her pain while I held her back for so long and she wanted out. She would push open my gates for a pointless moment for myself, letting my knees drag out on the ground. I let her walk through which made me break down. The hole that she caused in my chest, I looked down away from reality. All sounds faded from my ears, leaving me be, no one could hear me when I had been brought this low; even if they heard my cries I doubt anyone could see through me, whilst war was endless and buried in my mind. The matter of seconds drew itself so fast that I fell behind, I remembered speaking words without a need for balance. No longer laid on my reality.

The Window
By Novalee

The other side of my emotions
That side was held back from clear view
It was my way of painfully connecting
I bring myself to disconnect from them
Always and forever till it breaks me

Through my window is my sky, my view
The other side forbidden of connection
No one should see that side of myself
Skies that aren't seen, always been the same
Not a sun in sight but clouds went by
At times it would rain uncontrollably

Wind blew through my hair
Dirt underneath my laying body
Nothing could blanket me
I was cold, alone, mostly afraid
Where I didn't have control

I never wanted to be alone
Nothing was going through my view
Not a single sun that brought warmth
Even when I wanted it, to have it truly see me
To shine through my window
And for someone to see me
There I was a widow.

Her View of the World
By Novalee

Our whole life
I have been hiding
My whole life
Because her demons told her to
I have been running
my whole life
Because she was scared that someone would find us
Who? you may ask, no one had a clue
I have been lying
my whole life
Because that's what she told me I had to do to survive
I have been moving
my whole life
Because her demons never let her stay
Her whole life she never had a clue
Her whole life she was hurt and broken
Her whole life no one was by her side before us
Her whole life she'd been used, abused and that made her break and crack
Her whole life her babies have been taken again and again
But now my whole life I have to live with the pain of her not being the same
My whole life I am going to remember that she tried to take her life
My whole life I will remember how she looked just lying there silent and with
tubes, I will remember how she was sick, but I will also know that my mom is
the most strongest, resilient woman I have met and my whole life I will be
thankful that she wasn't taken from me too soon.
My whole life I will be thankful for you because I could not live my whole life
without you.

Hate is gray
It sounds like pain crashing down on you
It tastes like anger taking it all over
It smells like fire burning deep inside
Feels like hollow emptiness you can never escape
HATE

- ShyAnna

224
Love, hope
Fighting for, laughing with, living for
Today, tomorrow, forever
224

- ShyAnna

Pain is black
It sounds like nothing
It tastes like fire and wood bring my skin
It smells like smoke cutting my lungs
It feels like drowning in myself with no way out
- ShyAnna

Life gets hard sometimes
But you got to make it threw
Sometime it will hurt
Even tho life is hard sometimes
There is always a light inside
- ShyAnna

Math

A problem

Solving finding changing

We have our own problems so why do we have to solve yours

- ShyAnna

I am a pink rose

A flower that grew from hate

Beautiful but sharp

- ShyAnna

I went outside, and what did I find, a box to open, I hope no one will mind

I was tied on top with a bow of gray

That would define me

And inside I did see my past and families

So I closed it and put it away so I never have to feel the pain

- ShyAnna

I am a fire

Never been a liar

I burn so bright

My path in sight

I will make it out I have to try

- ShyAnna

Love?
Passion?
Pain and hate?
Some things never change?
Love?
- ShyAnna

I went outside and what did I find? A box to open. I hope no one would mind
It was tied on top with a bow of pink.
A tiny car was there
I see a little key by my feet with a note is there
It says even tho I am gone I still remember and I found peace
- ShyAnna

Lost in time
I am stuck in my past
Can't seem to let it go
I see it everyday everywhere I go
Memories become me
The feelings inside back in time I go
No matter how hard in my path it remains
I am living in my past
Because I feel it in my heart I always wonder I always hope that in time I would
find peace but it's hard because I am glued I am lost, stuck in my past, stuck in
myself.
- ShyAnna

Plz Don't Take Me

Being an indigenous women

I carry a weapon because I am scared

Plz don't take me

Scared of my shadow as I walk alone it's dark so no one will see if you just take me and when you do they won't care because they never do

Plz don't take me

They don't care cause I don't look like you white skin light eyes

And everywhere I go I have to be careful of what I say.

Plz don't break me

I am only 18 and I have been a victim many times. Where they looked in my eyes and took away something that should have stayed mine. Cause I am at risk and not because I am a woman but because I am indigenous and people say I am just nervous to walk alone but they don't know

Plz don't take me

When I take the metro everyday random men come up to me more than everyone else, it's like I look like someone they can fuck with or just say what ever they want to.

And it gets too much, just the other day a full-grown man touched my butt and what could I do, I am still a child, shouldn't be treated this way, but we live in a sick world of men who kidnap and kill little Native girls, women and children, they think they can take whatever the fuck they want

But they can't.

Plz don't take me

So yeah, I carry a weapon and you should too. Because if the cops won't care and other people too. I will do what I need to so that I am not the one they hang the red dress for

Plz don't take me

So that I can stand hand in hand with my Native sisters to make a change. The day they stop taking killing hurting our women girls and children

I look forward to the day that we feel safe enough to leave the weapon at home.

- ShyAnna

Someone I Once Was
By Lily

Cold and wet, the suffocating nature of a long and unpredictable storm. Something that had covered the pangolin's body, its vines hugging thick but unforgiving as it would corrupt whatever was left in the brain. He had crouched at a sign earlier with scribbly written instructions. *Lukey?* Why did he feel that name ring against his ear? Repeating and shooting into his head like an arrow of saviour.

Lukey Lukey Lukey Lukey.

In a state such as his, he couldn't possibly comprehend the value behind that, all he knew is it soothed an opening wound that had been growing since he had risen.

Pages in his head filled with the words he couldn't possibly speak. A distant shadow of people he thinks he should know fade away, replacing themselves with old faces that once had struck fear within him.

He hadn't the words to describe the sensation he lived in, the boy saw a misty reflection on the tank's enclosure, though this couldn't possibly be a reflection of him. No, no. This was not anybody he knew, someone must be standing outside the glass.

He Left Me Behind
By Yasmina Krsteski

As the days go by
Another sunset without him
Tears running down my face
Trying to cover my sadness
Carrying his name
Walking in shame
Because I have his face
Wondering what's on his mind
Is he okay?
Is he inside or outside?
Every crackhead I see
I wonder when I'll see him.
Every metro I pass
I ask myself
Is he inside or outside?
My head won't be the same again
Filled with questions
With so very little answers
First man to break my heart
First man to hurt me
Why do I ask?
Just to get little answers
He didn't even think to try
Seeing my mom cry
He left me behind
To give his love to someone else
Mom can give me answers
That he left behind
But not all my answers
He is good at taking

He can take and make a life
And keep living on
And what it is to live without a father
Something he won't know
Because he left me alone
he left me behind.
Walking with his wounds
But not his hate
I will have trouble with men
Because of him.
He doesn't even care
Because where is he now?
Probably can't remember his days
One day he'd want to come back
But it will be too late
The damage is done
He made me done
So thank you
For showing me what not to be
His failures helped me shape my success
My heart aches
For the things he won't do
why is it that his hopes are in the streets
Did he ever look back to see if his child was in need
We shouldn't have to wonder if our fathers could be reliable
Another night without him
Wondering where he is
People with their fathers
Laughing until they can't laugh no more
While I sit alone
Quietly watching them while I fear
If I'll ever see him again
There's not a day where I don't miss him

There's not a day where I don't worry
One day we will probably talk again
But I hope he recognizes the girl who I have become
With scarred wrists and teary eyes
I'm not the happy child he left
I'm something much darker.

Time
By Colt Collie

Trevor Williams
Dean Smith
Andy Collie

You may have heard of two
But not the last
mention Andy you say who
Talent wasted fast
Time

Thrown away
Gone forever
Freedom may never
Reliving the same day
Time

A game of 24 seconds for some
Basketball
A life of 24 years for another
Jail
Time

They all once had dreams
Of making the NBA
As kids
Best friends
Sharing the same court
Shooting the same shots
Time

Don't make the same mistake
Living your life with
Regret
Forever
Watching the ones around you succeed
While you face the consequences
Of your stupid decisions
Childish acts
Time



The Great Fall
By Jayden Malo

Why did it have to happen like this? We were supposed to grow old together. You promised me you would make it back ok, but you insisted on pursuing your dream of catching that damned fish.

That night I had a bad feeling, and I tried to warn you not to go, that the storm was far too dangerous to go out in, especially in your small fishing boat.

But you pushed me aside, as if you chose that aquatic creature over me, your own wife.

You told me it was the perfect time to catch the supposedly twenty-foot goldfish, but it was not real, how could such a creature exist.

The lights of that lighthouse were searching far and wide for your boat, when you didn't return the next morning.

It wouldn't matter though, you just couldn't be found, no boat, no wreck, no body, it was as if you vanished off the face of the earth with a trace to show that you existed.

But I know you were real, there's no way I imagined you and me together for the past ten years.

It's been a long time since I saw you. I visited the lighthouse every night begging them to continue searching, but after around the fifth time they said there was no use. That either it was a made-up story, or the work of a god, because people don't just vanish out of existence.

I cried for you, I'm longing for you, where did you go? Did you find what you were looking for? Was it worth it? Losing everything you had?

I'm starting to forget what you look like. What color was your eyes? What color was your hair? Were you even a nice person? Who were you?

I don't even remember your name.

Why did this have to happen to me? I think I'm losing my mind, or maybe it's already gone.

So today I'm going to that same lighthouse, the one that failed to save you, for the last time I will climb these stairs. I do remember one thing though, you used to always tell me to watch my step or I might fall. I was always lost in the words that I wrote. I wonder if it would be such a bad thing if I fell? Maybe you would catch me? Maybe you have before.

Ah... I remember now... Your name.

Anthony.

Checkpoint
By Jayden Malo

All I saw was red, blood everywhere, people yelling, this is it, this is where I go on to the after world. My eyes pan open and close, then finally they shut completely.

I blink my eyes open. The blinding sun is hurting my eyes. I thought it was pitch black. I turned my head as I caught someone calling my name.

“Azelf! Snap out of it.” It’s my friend Mesprit. “You’re acting like you just saw a ghost.”

My pupils dilate as they adjust to the brightness. I cover my mouth and clench my heart as I recall what happened. Did I actually just die? Was it just a dream? No, that was too realistic to be a mere dream. I had fully passed away right then.

Mesprit is trying to calm me down. “Why don’t we go get you some water?” she said anxiously. I agreed, we went to a tavern where she ordered me something to drink.

“How am I still alive? Did I come back from the dead, if so why is it daytime now?” I down a glass of water to try to calm myself.

“Don’t drink so fast!” Mesprit reminds me how we were on our way to the capital so I can be appointed a knight.

“We should go now, we don’t wanna be late for your big day.”

We head outside onwards towards the capital. We cross the roads of beige bricks, horses carrying wagons pass us.

“I know a shortcut,” Mesprit announces, as she takes my hand and drags me into an alley. We run in the laneways until Mesprit comes to a halt in front of me.

“What’s wrong?” I peek around her.

“Thieves,” she says as she tremble. Three guys of all shapes and sizes with knives are blocking the way we were heading.

“Give us all of your money if you don’t want to leave missing any limbs!” they demand.

I tell them, “We have no money on us so you can move on to the next victim.”

He looks at me pissed off. Next thing I know he is charging like a bull towards Mesprit with a knife like a jousting lance in front of him. Before I get a hold of the situation my body leaps in front of her, taking the knife straight to the chest.

“Oh crap!!” the thieves yell as they turn to flee the scene. I press my hand on the wound. With blood gushing out of me, I’m fading in and out of consciousness. Mesprit is crying, screaming for someone to come and help.

“Am I really going to die again? What if I don’t come back this time? Well, as long as she is safe...”

“I know a shortcut,” Mesprit announces, but I stop dead in my tracks.

“It happened again, I came back, but now in a different place in time.”

Why is this happening to me? I can’t deal with this! I DON’T WANT TO DIE ANYMORE!

My head hurts... I don’t feel good...

“Azelf, are you okay?”

“I think I’m about to break. Help me, Mesprit.”

It’s been almost half a million checkpoints now... That’s what I’m calling it now, a checkpoint. I’ve realized that it happens every time I die, and I’ve tried to prevent my death. But it doesn’t work, every time I die until I reach the next checkpoint, where I continue to die. Nobody can help me either. Mesprit always ends up being as useless as a kid in a wheelchair trying to use a bicycle. I think I’ve lost my mind.

I just want someone to help me...

Someone help me!

SOMEBODY HELP ME!

PLEASE HELP ME GET OUT OF THIS LIVING HELL!

That’s what I would ask if this was the first few hundred checkpoints. But I’m past that, why rely on someone in this world to come to my rescue... when they’re not real, none of this is real. But I can assure you that I’m a real person.

So please don’t finish reading this page, I don’t want to disappear.

I am real!

I AM REALLY REAL!

I'M REAL!!!

PLEASE GET ME OUT OF THIS STORY!!!

Pain
By Logan Roter



Dig Deeper
By Logan Roter



What Is Time?

By Ryan Baki

I'm sitting in science class, focusing on the lesson and doing my work, wondering if it's passing by fast or slow. I check the time, and I see that class is almost done.

All of a sudden, the bell rings. I check the schedule and realize I have history next. I never liked history. I still go to class. After what felt like halfway through the class, I ask the teacher for the time. "11:56," he says.

"It's only been six minutes?" I say but no response.

So, I sit there wondering, "What is time?" They say time is the same. It always happens at the same speed yet why does it feel different depending on what you are doing? Who invented the format for time, what if it was different, what if there was five months each consisting of 73 days. What if days were 26 hours, what if hours were five minutes instead.

The bell rings—why did it pass so fast the second I got interested? Why was it so slow when I was bored? Why do different people's brains make them take time differently? Is time real? Why is it expected to be the same for everyone? What if it's a system put in place to keep people in order and does not relate to the world?

The bell rings, wait wasn't class done? I look around. I'm still in science class, zoned out. It was all a hallucination, what felt like hours took place in a few minutes, I started going crazy. I zone out and think about it again. I wake up and look around, why am I in a mental hospital? I don't even go to school, I'm 43 years old.

I look around, I see a clock. The noise makes me go crazy. I find a lighter. I pick up the clock and put the lighter to the batteries, BOOM! It blows up the whole building. I wake up to someone's tapping my shoulder. Why am I still in science class?

Time Loop
By Jordan Narrainen Hylton

It's been four months, and I haven't gotten past June 17th, 2018. I've tried everything, from telling everyone I saw that I was in a loop, to killing myself, but nothing works. I always come back at exactly 3:48 a.m. I don't even remember what I was doing on the actual day of June 17.

I've come to the realization of a few things while I've been trapped in this loop, I can't leave my hotel building. I can communicate with the people outside, but I can't physically leave myself, like some type of barrier prevents me from going outside, and I've done every way possible to try and leave, including trying to jump off the roof of the hotel building.

Another thing I've realized is that even though I'm in a loop, my neighbour, Castrica, always wears different clothing one day after another, which shouldn't make sense, since I'm in a loop. Even I can't change my clothing; I've been stuck in this duck pajama set for ages. My friend bought it for me as a joke for my birthday, but it was comfortable so I used it.

Lastly, the lobby from 5 to 8 is completely empty. No one, including the secretary is there, until 8:06, where a group of six people walk in laughing, ignoring me and talking to each other like I'm invisible, with the girl of the group wearing a gold necklace and her boyfriend wearing an expensive looking ring.

FOUR LOOPS LATER

I tried talking to Castrica in these past loops. The first two I tried going at 7:36 a.m. and the second time was at 11:48, but she was talking to someone on the phone, aggressively. I think it was an argument of some kind. It ended off with her saying "You'll pay for that." So I decided to not approach her in that scenario.

The other two times were successful. I got to know her, she's the CEO of a big business company about protecting animals from abusive owners. She's just arrived at the hotel and I'm the only person who's approached her since I

was here, and then she said something odd. She said that random people seem to be following her around the hotel. She originally thought they admired her work, but then a hooded guy told her, “Watch your back, because you don’t know who’ll backstab you,” before running off. After the conversation she went back to her room, but when I went to go shake her hand, I noticed something—that was the same gold ring as the guy that I saw in the lobby at 8:06.

TWO LOOPS LATER

I decided to investigate the people who were at the lobby, and I figured out that they only checked into the hotel at 6:30, which is weird, because I doubt Castrica would give someone she only met for an hour and a half her ring, since it’s from her grandfather who passed two months ago, her time.

My next loop I decided to stay with Castrica the whole time, because I couldn’t shake off the feeling that it had something to do with her, but I couldn’t figure out the exact reason. From 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. everything was fine. We had fun hanging out with each other, but when it got later, she started to get more and more worried about her surroundings, clinging to me more often than not, and stuttering throughout our conversations. And then she said she had to go to the bathroom, but disappeared for the rest of the day, I figured she felt sick and went to bed, but there still was the feeling that something was wrong.

This loop I’ve come up with a hypothesis, that Castrica is being targeted by someone, but I don’t understand why, and what that would have to do with my time loop, but I decided to tell the secretary about it, so that he could protect him, but after he reassured me by saying he’ll take care of her, I didn’t see her all day for anything.

TWENTY LOOPS LATER

These past twenty loops I’ve been trying new things every time, but nothing changes. This time I am going to ignore her until we get to 4 p.m.

When 4 p.m. comes, I search drastically everywhere to see if I can find her for two hours, and when I do, it's already too late. I see her bleeding from her stomach, she had been stabbed, but by who? I have no clue, but I can't stand watching it anymore. I rush to the next loop. Even if I'm stuck here forever, I can't let this innocent woman die.

It's 4 p.m. again, except this time I know where she is going. I hide behind a corner near where I last saw her, and then I see it—she's walking with the secretary, when the guy who had the ring suddenly approaches her, with his group closely following him. I already know where this is headed, so I quickly turn the corner and push the guy away, yelling for Castrica to run away.

If I had known the guy was so strong, I would have kicked him while he was down, but before I can see anything, I have a knife in my stomach.

I feel it this time, I'm not coming back...

The loop had me here to protect her, save her, it never cared whether I died or survived, only her. As I slowly close my eyes, I realize that this whole hotel was a setup to kill Castrica. Everyone was part of it. The reason the lounge was empty was because everyone was here. The reason nothing happened after I told the secretary was because he was part of it.

As I close my eyes I feel a sense of relief. I don't know if I'm more glad or mad that I'm done with the loop...

Then I open my eyes—am I back? I thought the loop would have been done. I look at my phone, and it's there... June 18th, 2018.

Stacy's Music Box

By Joy

While renovating her bedroom floors, Marie realizes that one specific floorboard is placed slightly differently than all of the others, almost misplaced. In her head she imagines that somebody from years ago had hidden their mini treasure chest full of gold and expensive jewelry underneath. She gets really excited and rushes to inspect the floorboard. She steps on the piece on an angle and stomps her foot to reveal a dusty box. Her hands quickly wrap around the box without thought. In a rush she opens the box only to find a little ballerina in the center. Disappointed, she places the box next to her and continues her job. After a while she gets tired and takes a break. While getting up she accidentally kicks the music box and notices a note taped on the inside of the box, she had missed that at the first look.

The note reads:

“This ballerina is magical, she grants your wishes but be careful, she’s also mean. —Stacy.” Giggling, she loves that the writing is similar to a little girl approximately around the age of six.

“The imagination of a little girl is wonderful,” she thinks.

After a long day, it is now night and she’s very tired but cannot sleep. Remembering the box she had found earlier she plays it to sleep. Eyes getting heavier, under her breath she whispers, “I wish I had a cute puppy, with beautiful blue eyes and soft white fur.”

Waking up to the sun shining through her curtains she hears the sound of a loud cry, almost a whine. In a shock she runs to where the sound had come from and right away she falls in love with the puppy she had just encountered. Unexpectedly, the puppy looks exactly the way she described it in her wish. Extremely excited, she immediately brings the puppy into her arms and while hugging the puppy she talks into the puppy’s ears: “I’m going to name you Lucky.”

She then rushes to the nearest pet store and buys objects needed to care for a puppy.

On a budget she buys a leash, a collar with his name imprinted onto a charm, toys, food and a new fluffy bed for Lucky. She has a very productive day exploring the city with Lucky. She is happy that he is very obedient and listens to every command she says. Hours go by and after the most perfect day in her life it is now night and time to rest. Heading home she realizes strange behaviour in Lucky, he's very twitchy. Possibly super excited to head back home? As soon as she gets home she places Lucky's bed in the living room and heads straight to bed.

Early morning, still dark outside she is woken up to this loud pounding noise on the wall and questions what that might be.

"Is my house getting broken into?" she thinks.

Hesitant, she slowly and carefully grabs a heavy book to use as a weapon. Opening the light to the hallway, she is face to face with this gross, ugly, tall, and hairy creature. For some odd reason the creature slowly starts crawling towards her and without thinking she sprints back into her room in a panic. Pacing around in her room she randomly hears a bark that the creature had mimicked from Lucky.

"Oh no! Lucky is still asleep downstairs!"

Getting reminded of Lucky she quickly calls out for him and the creature runs to her and bangs on the locked and closed door almost as if he's responding to the call for Lucky. The door breaks down from the strength of the creature. Attempting to outrun the creature it then gets a hold of her leg and she hits it in the face with the book she had carried earlier. It lets out a loud whine and whimper sounding exactly like Lucky. The creature fights back and bites her in the arm, and with a lot of force she kicks the creature far back at such a great distance she has enough time to run and forcefully open her window. She climbs out and quickly dials 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency?" says a female voice on the phone.

"There is a monster chasing me! It has bitten me! Come immediately, I found a hiding spot but I am afraid that it will find me again."

"We have tracked your location. We are on our way. Stay safe."

Very frightened and waiting for help, she takes a quick glance at the bite mark and notices that the mark is similar to the bite Lucky had given her while playing. In her head she recites the letter she found in the music box earlier.

“This ballerina is magical, she grants your wishes but be careful, she's also mean. —Stacy.”

She realizes that the wish she had asked for that night before was granted but cursed as well. Second guessing, she calls out for Lucky.

“Lucky! Come here boy!”

She then hears a loud bark and fast stomping, too loud to be a puppy. Discreetly looking through her window she sees the creature sniff around and look for her. Finally putting the pieces together she quickly and quietly wishes for the creature gone, watching the creature disgustingly morph back into the cute puppy it once was, she hears a knock out of nowhere.

“It's the police!”

What horrible timing. Heading back into her room through the window she jokingly wishes for her arm to be healed and in complete shock her arm looks the way it did before the bite. Being so surprised she goes to touch it with the hand that had been holding her up, she feels the wind going really fast around her body and then she remembers that Stacy's music box is mean and this was the curse included with this wish. Falling to her death she wishes she never found that box.

Nibbles

By Joy

I sleep in extraordinary places when and wherever I please. I eat whenever the human butler puts these dry and crunchy rocks in my bowl. Once in a while, I get this delicious chicken or beef flavoured wet food that I can eat without having to bite so it's all gone in approximately ten seconds. From time to time, I don't mind the food he gives me but when the human butler makes his own food it has many different varieties of scents that make my stomach growl. Whenever he leaves his plate or bowl unattended, I sneak a bite or two, possibly fifteen if I'm feeling extra hungry.

I spend the majority of my time looking for these greedy sneaky robbers who like to steal my food from my kitchen that only the human butler has permission to use. I am on the lookout constantly though, they can never hide from me.

At this moment you can find me on the couch chewing on a PS3 cord because the human butler won't give me any attention. His eyes are fixated on the bright and blinding rectangle that is screwed onto the wall. After a while he yells at the rectangle which means he is in distress. I must come to the rescue and help attack. I chew harder on the cord which makes the bright light go away. I made it go away, human butler, do I get attention now? Instead, he yells at me while maintaining very strong eye contact.

"Nibbles! Why would you do that! That cost me money! Stupid black cat."

He then storms off angrily, I thought I had helped him. Still no attention from the human butler, I don't care though. I have better things to do.

I walk off in the opposite direction the human butler did and that's when I hear it. That greedy robber is trying to eat my food again! I run to where the noise is coming from and that's when I see the greedy robber eating a cookie. The audacity that mouse has! I run towards the robber and that's when it realizes that I've caught him in the act. He squeaks at me while I chase him around the room and then finally I catch him. He squeals and tells me that it was for his little mouse family hidden in the wall, and that's when I get it. The butler is hungry! He thinks I am family and wants me to provide for him the

same way he does for me. I bite down hard and search the house for the human butler. I search the food making area, the sleeping room, the couch with the big window I guard the house with, the room with that horrible and awful water sprayer, but he is nowhere to be found. I have to give this treat to him somehow but how could I if he's not here? Oh, I know! I will leave this treat for him where he sleeps so he can have what he calls a "midnight snack." I place the mouse down on his bed right next to his pillow. Shortly after, my eyes get very heavy. I am sleepy now after that intense hunt. I must wait for him to return.

An hour passes and the human butler yells out:

"Ewwwwwww! Nibbles! Out of all places, why my bed?"

And now I run.

Alexandra

By Joy

[Content warning: Depictions of gore]

Malachi had spent the entire day rotting in his living room, eating pizza, drowning his body in beer and playing video games. His couch has an indent on where he sits while the opposite side remains untouched. There used to be a person sitting there all the time, which was his ex-girlfriend Alexandra. It's been many months since the relationship ended and since then he has gained forty-five pounds. His day used to be filled with many things to do like bike rides with her, a walk to the park with her, a trip to the museum with her, and grocery shopping with her. Now he is left alone in his dirty apartment with stacks of pizza boxes on his kitchen table and empty cans of beer around the place. He hates his new life, whenever he looks in the mirror he doesn't even feel like the person he used to be. It is a completely different person to him.

He brushes all these feelings off and orders another pizza. Extra cheese, extra pepperoni with a side of extra large fries. Mouth thirsty for the delivery that will arrive any minute, he attempts to distract himself by pressing the "Resume" button that is on the television screen. About to continue Call of Duty Zombies, he hears the doorbell ring and a few knocks on the door. His stomach instantly growls and he quickly rushes to the door to retrieve his food that he had been craving. He then opens the door and at his feet he finds a cardboard box with his name boldly written across the box.

"Maybe there was a shortage on normal pizza boxes," he mumbles under his breath.

He brings the box to the kitchen table and grabs a knife to remove the tape that is used to keep the box shut. He struggles for a total of five minutes and then he finally gets the box open. Nearly drooling to satisfy his need for food, he drops it. What rolls onto the floor keeps him completely in shock. He goes pale and nearly pukes all over the place. What had fallen on the floor was the head that had belonged to his ex-girlfriend, Alexandra. On her forehead there is a sentence that had been carved on with a knife.

"I hope you missed me."

Poetry on the Court
By Bassim Ilyas

Dribble down the court feeling the beat, the crowd is alive, can't take a seat.
Pass to my teammate, making the play, shooting for three, it's game day.
Defense tight, we'll steal that ball, with teamwork and heart we'll stand tall.
Fast breaks and slam dunks, hear the cheer, every shot we take, we've got no fear.

Take Flight
By Bassim Ilyas

On the court where dreams take flight, with sneakers squeaking, hearts ignited bright,
A bounce, a pass, the crowds loud cheer with every shot the goal feels near.
The swish of a net, a moment divine, in teamwork and spirit our passions align.
Through trials and triumphs, we rise and fall,
In the game of basketball, we give our all.

I Am
By Mackenzie Reis

I am creative and unique
I wonder why people are mean
I hear kids laughing and playing
I see my future dog, tiny white fluffy dog
I want for people to bring peace

I am creative and unique
I pretend that I am always OK and happy
I feel the dirt under my nails from playing with kids
I touch the soft cheeks of my friends when they are crying
I worry that my little cousins will see the ugliness of the world
I cry when life gets too much

I am creative and unique
I understand that I'm different
I say, "You know my name, not my story"
I dream for the world to be a better place
I try to give people a safe place
I hope that I will get to walk across that stage
I am creative and unique

Just Blood
By Mackenzie Reis

We share a name, a history too,
But that alone won't see me through.
A family's more than flesh and bone
It's love that makes a place feel home.
You think that blood should be enough,
But ties can fray when times get tough.
You weren't there when I felt small,
So why should I now need your call?
Respect is earned, not just bestowed,
And hearts grow cold where warmth's not showed.
So understand, and hear me clear,
Just blood alone won't keep you near.

Girlhood
By Mackenzie Reis

Girlhood

We are told don't talk about yourself or you're self centered
Don't keep to yourself or you're selfish

Girlhood

Don't wear short clothes
Or it's your fault for them staring at you

Girlhood

Don't show your shoulders, you're distracting
It's not the boys' fault for staring

Girlhood

We are here for boys to look at
Not to accomplish anything

Girlhood

Girls are not objects to look at, we are human beings
We deserve respect
We are here to accomplish great things

Don't let them tell you what to do and what not to do

Borrowed Time
By Mackenzie Reis

I'm fifteen now, but it feels so weird
Too old for toys, too young to be feared
Time moves fast, but drags some days
Like it can't decide which game it plays
Everyone says, "*These are your years,*"
But they don't see my doubts, my fears
I'm stuck between "not yet" and "soon,"
Chasing dreams that fade like the moon
Memories come, then blur and bend
A year feels long, but minutes end
And I wonder if I'll ever find
A way to slow down my own mind
But maybe time's not mine to own
Just something borrowed 'til I've grown
So I'll write my name on every page
And learn to love this awkward age.

I Am
By Hanna Mbaye

I am creative and curious
I wonder how the world will be in 2035
I hear the song “Cinnamon Girl”
I see my future home, which is a luxurious New York apartment
I want more happiness in my life
I am creative and curious

I pretend to be childish
I feel like a spirit is watching me
I touch the sky
I worry about being alone all the time
I cry when I feel excluded
I am creative and curious

I understand that we should treat others the way you want to be treated
I say, “What goes around comes around”
I dream about being a successful person
I try to be more confident
I hope to have eternal fun
I am creative and curious

How I Have Changed Since Last Year

By Kelly Steczko

Famous author James Baldwin once said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until faced.” I think this quote is true, and I believe I have changed a lot since last year. I have matured, I have gained more knowledge and I have taken up new hobbies.

I think I have matured because I have learned to control my anger and walk away when I am mad at somebody. Last year I think I wasn’t that open to talking to someone. Now I have learned it’s better to not keep your emotions in a bottle until they explode in certain situations. There was an occasion when I felt mad and I went to Kathy to talk, and she helped me a lot with my anger. Another way I have matured is that I have been told in the past that I eavesdrop on people’s conversations; I still do this sometimes, but I have put more effort in trying to stop it.

I have gained more knowledge over the years. I have learned about tariffs and I’m more aware of the political events happening now. I have even started watching the news more often. I have even learned about money management, how to spend my money and how much to save.

I have new hobbies and interests. When I was a kid I never used to like music. Now I have taken up playing the bass and drums. I like that feeling when I’m on the drums when the beat just comes to me. It’s like I’m expressing myself in a whole new way. The bass is a little harder to play, but so far I’ve learned two new songs, One is “Another One Bites the Dust” by Queen and the other one is “Come As You Are” by Nirvana.

The other hobby I have taken up is basketball. I have played the game before but I only used to play it in school. Now I’m on a team playing real games, and learning how to be a good teammate.

So, what’s next year going to be like? Maybe I’ll change more. Maybe I’ll stay the same. I don’t know, but I’m looking forward to finding out.

The Power of Time

By Zach Messaoui

Time. Time decays, it heals and it creates. It's an unstoppable force. A simple yet so complex concept. What is time? Is it "what the clock reads"? Is it "tomorrow" or "yesterday"? Is it simply a mere "now" or "then"? The simple explanation is, according to Wikipedia, that "Time is a continuous progression of existence that occurs in an apparent irreversible succession from the past, through the present and into the future." It's a continuous timeline that keeps moving, never to stop, but is it really that simple?

Time is an interpretation. If a person was locked in a room with no windows, no sense of the world outside, according to studies, time seems to feel a lot slower for the person. It wasn't really slower, it was just their interpretation. Your mind can bend your interpretation of time. Time is relative and really just a perception. It's fascinating.

Time is not only a story but the founding principle of everything. What can be created without time? What can change without time? We as humans, according to the theory of evolution, became the species we are today throughout time.

We use time to measure and to mark our history, never to be changed. Time cannot be bent. Trying to change history would come with so many impossible contradictions. Many great things have happened in history throughout our time. So many changes, so many causes, so many consequences. All of it leads back to now, the present.

Time can be used as a powerful tool, not to be manipulated, but to be used. Time can fix broken souls, emotions. It changes people for the better. It creates connection, breaks them. It changes the world around us. Time isn't something people should be afraid of, but something we should embrace.

First Turning 13
By Jeremiah G.

I used to be twelve, a kid with scraped up knees and untied shoes.
But something feels different, I can't quite explain,
Like sunshine and thunder all mixed with rain.
Today I turn thirteen. It's finally here.
I'm stepping into a brand-new year.
No longer a child, not yet full grown,
A space in between, where I'm finding my own.
I feel a bit taller, my voice sounds weird
There's more on my mind than I once ever feared.
Friends are changing, so am I,
Questions swirl as time flies by.
I care more now about how I look,
And get caught up in a brand-new book.
Dreams are louder, thoughts run deep,
Sometimes I laugh, sometimes I weep.
Facial hair gets longer, looking for my own throne
What will I do, just me and my thoughts alone?

The Space Attack
By Graydon Tyler

Day 1. Aliens are everywhere, people running for their lives and cars smashed in the middle of the roadway. Buildings in flames. Aliens everywhere.

Day 2. I'm hiding right now. I am really scared. I am writing in my journal that I don't know what to do. My hands are shaking. Why is this happening? It's getting pretty late. I think that I should get some rest. Maybe everything will be good when I wake up. Oh god, I think I heard something outside my window. I'm going to check it out and I will be back quickly. Close call there was nothing there. Okay now I should try to get some rest.

Day 3. I had a hard time getting some sleep. Maybe I should look outside to see for anything. That's odd. There's nobody outside. Where are all the Aliens? Maybe I just had a dream, but it felt super real and I was scared for my life.

Day 5. Sorry I didn't write in my journal. I went to the grocery store for some food for survival. I ran out of food in my apartment so I decided to go. I had to be really careful.

I didn't see any Aliens or humans which I still don't know where they must have gone.

Day 6. I just woke up and still didn't get much sleep. I'm gonna take a look outside. What's that in the sky? It looks like a timer in the sky and it's counting down from 24 hours. What the hell is going on? Is this the Aliens?

Day 7. The last day. I didn't get any sleep. I am scared. I don't have much time left on Earth. I just looked outside and I got 20 minutes left.

Last 10 minutes. I am very nervous. I'm not sure what to do. Maybe I should go outside quickly and check for something or someone.

The last 5 minutes, I'm scared... My last meal was a bowl of Lucky Charms cereal. It was my favorite as a kid.

I am going to pray for the last couple of minutes before the end of time. I have heard my grandfather say this prayer. He was a preacher.

“When the time is right, I, the lord, will make it happen.”

The Man Dyed in Red

By James Martineau

[Content warning: depictions of suicide, blood and gore]

One day a man moved into a little town with his daughter. He had just divorced his wife and needed a place to live. His daughter loved to play hide and seek. Her dad always knew where she would hide so he played along. One day the dad had come back from some back-breaking work and his daughter was nowhere to be seen. The dad thought she was playing hide and seek, so he played along. After checking all the spots she usually hid in, he found nothing; it was no longer a game.

The dad looked in the house, then the street they were on. He told himself that he did not look in the house well enough, so he went back. He yelled her name out two times which was their way of saying game over. Her dad waited for her to say, "You're no fun!" as she usually did when he stopped the game. When she did not show up, the dad started to become a little panicked.

He ran as fast as he could to the front door, kicked it open and yelled her name. All the villagers could hear him cry for help, but they did not want to come to his aid. Since the rumours had been circulating about him. He could not believe no one would help just because of some dumb rumours. Rain started to fall heavily and everything went cold. He fell to the ground feeling hopeless.

After the rain had stopped, the depths of the forest were calling to him, almost tauntingly. He ran to the forest every day and could not find her. After searching helplessly, a month passed. A putrid smell guided him to his daughter's remains, laying down, eaten by maggots, worms, and left to rot.

As he walked back, he was slowly corrupted by hate. When he got to the house, all he could do was think and think as the room went cold and his fingertips froze. He listened to the clock go tick-tock, tick-tock, counting down the last seconds of his life.

Moments before he took his life he left a note. The note said "I will be back every year to take one of your children. The child will have two chances to

beat me in hide and seek. If the child is caught they will be killed gruesomely and without mercy.” While the dad hung himself, he slit his own throat, dying his clothes red with blood.

Six Years Later

A girl named Hanna moved into a house with her dad. Hanna and her dad tried to make friends with people in the village, however, everyone just brushed them off or gave them the cold shoulder. It was as if something was going to happen and no one wanted to make a connection with them.

Hanna was walking down the street one day and a chill had gone down her spine, so she started to pick up her walking pace. She could not help but notice people were pointing at her, telling her that she was the chosen one and that doom would soon meet her.

Hanna had woken up in a cold sweat, flipped off her bed and landed face first. Blood started gushing from her nose and got all over her favorite pajamas. Annoyed, she rushed to clean off the blood so it wouldn't stain. As Hannah was getting up she felt the same cold chill go down her spine. As she turned her head toward the door, a seven-foot-tall man dyed red, due to his blood, was just standing there.

In a moment of panic, Hannah yelled a deafening yell. The man dyed in red just stood there with a big murderous grin on his face. When Hannah's dad made it to her room the man dyed in red disappeared with a snap and a giggle and all Hannah could hear was “strike one,” echoing through her head.

Hannah's dad ran straight to her aid after the incident and made sure she was okay. After Hannah told her dad what happened, he let her sleep in his room. Hannah's dad thought that Hannah was just having a nightmare so he did not think that much about it. In the morning Hannah woke up with a distressed face looking like she had got no sleep.

During the day Hannah didn't have much to do so she helped her dad unpack boxes. Hannah still had some stuff to unpack so she brought it to her room. After putting everything away a note sealed with a drop of blood caught Hannah's attention. The note explained the man dyed in red's rules for hide and seek. Hannah grabbed the note and gave it to her father. He looked at the note

for two minutes and with a confused look on his face he told Hannah that it was just a blank piece of paper. Hannah took the letter back and there was nothing.

At sun down Hannah hid in her closet when she heard footsteps. Hannah's heart stopped as the room went cold like the night before and a tall shadow was standing there. Hannah peeked her head out to get a closer look. The second she peeked her head, two big bloodshot red eyes looked back at her. She yelped and hid back in her hiding spot but she backed into something weird. She felt a cold breath on the back of her neck. Hannah turned around and heard "strike two." Her heart dropped and she scrambled out of her closet. A big red figure followed her out of the closet and with the same murderous smile, the man dyed in red whispered, "game over."

Hannah yelled, "Wait!" The man dyed in red slowed to a halt and a grin appeared on his face.

"Found you."

Wants, Needs & Dreams
By Zuzu H.

All I wanted was to have fun, to play, but I was taken away, they don't even let me sleep, I barely even have time to take a bite or eat.

All day I stay out in the sun, still I'm not allowed to even fool around or go and run. I thought love, peace and fun was a simple basic need; aren't happiness and a release of some sort essential?

These long mornings are making me what they call mad and mental. Mother says she needs me, that I am also very strong and I am important.

My boss says I am worthless and weak. I thought what I had was alright but now I realize it was much better than I thought. What I have now is really not a lot. All of this change mocks me, surrounds me and makes me upset.

All I have now are the dreams when I am in my own bed. The old times are what I cherish, because now I have close to nothing, now all I wish for is just something.

Birds
By Zuzu H.

Birds, a lot like people, you'll see that they aren't actually so simple, they fly around all day, far far, up and away, down, here, there, elsewhere and everywhere. They always have a place to go to. People always find a place to run to or hide behind another person's back. We're often afraid that we may not be able to pick up the slack, trying to avoid attention, attraction and being out there, we hide under the trees, right underneath its shadows, while we watch little birds fly away and up right into the sun. We are envious but all we do is run from what makes us unique. Everyone else is always better, so we always try to be a poser or a pretender. We always are aware of another person's critique. Someday we may get a chance to soar high, right up into the sky.

Adventurers
By Ian Hamilton
[Content warning: Depictions of violence]

Ryan entered a bar drowning his beer with his party. They were enjoying themselves after a win against a few beasts in the Forest of Energy. The Forest of Energy is where magical beasts mostly stay to regain their energy. Ryan's party kills beasts to make money.

Ryan complained about the low pay he was getting from his party. They retaliated by saying how useless he is during the fights they are always in. Ryan fought back by saying, "I buff all of your attack damage, so what do you mean I'm useless." They argued so loudly that the bar owner came out of his office and kicked them out.

Ryan told them he was done with them and left. They cursed at him as he left. The next day, in the Adventurers' Guild, he applied to join a new party. The receptionist asked him to fill in some stuff on a piece of paper about himself. She said she would get back to him.

He started putting up posters about himself in the Guild and outside all over the city for people to see. A young woman approached; it was Ryan's childhood friend Serena. She was happy to see him and has been wanting him to join her party for a while. They both said hi to each other and got straight to the point.

They talked for one hour about each other and she wanted to introduce him to the rest of her party, and he agreed. They went to Serena's party, and they agree that he could join. They talked about their own abilities for a while. A few hours later they went into the Adventurers' Guild for a quest. They picked one that was hard; it was a C rank quest to fight off monsters coming near the capital.

As they were in the forest looking for some beast wolves to kill, they came across some travelling merchants with their stuff all broken. The group went up to them and asked if they were alright.

"No," the merchant Rich replied.

Ryan asked what had happened to him and the merchant said he was attacked. Ryan decided to heal all of them but one of them was dead and they buried his body and went on their way to slay the monsters who attacked them. They found demons in the forest and spied on them to see what they were doing next to the capital. They continued watching them to see what they were doing. The party found out that they were trying to attack the city with over 1000 soldiers, as the party was listening, they were also recording the demons' conversation with the magicians' staff.

The party ran back to the capital to show the king about what was about to come. They went straight to the king and gave him the recording. After the king saw it he gave the party a reward for the info. The king decided to get all the knights and adventurers ready for war against demons in two weeks. They did some training like sword combat and tried increasing their magical strength at the same time. After the two weeks preparing, they set out to the battlefield. They put up defenses and waited for the demon army to attack them, after half an hour they saw the demon army approaching so they all got ready and set out into the battlefield. The humans and demons fought, and Ryan saw blood flying everywhere.

As he was looking at the base, the king said now it's the Adventurers' Guild turn to go out and finish. Serena sensed a strong presence coming towards them, one of the adventurers warned them that he was a general of the demon army and he was as strong as the demon king. Ryan and his party decided that the rest of the adventurers would fight off the rest of the demon army from approaching the capital. As they were fighting the general, Ryan cast a spell buffing everyone's power. Serena and Lila cast a fire and water magic, but the general blocked it. Ryan broke through the ground and broke through the general's sword, he was impressed and decided to go all out. Ryan also decided to go all out and vanished. He came behind the general and pierced his iron body with mana. Mana is spiritual energy that enhances his strength and speed 10-fold. The general was confused on how a mere human could be this powerful.

The general died in that instant. Everyone was shocked to see Ryan be this powerful, but they couldn't say anything because now wasn't the time to be

talking. A few hours had passed, and all the soldiers were almost dead, but in the end, they managed to kill the entire demon army. Ryan and all the adventurers were tired and wounded but they knew one thing was left and that was the demon lord. As the demon lord was approaching, he looked at an adventurer and sliced his head clean off. Everyone was shocked at how fast he was able to kill one of the adventurers.

They fought for almost an hour and they managed to hold their own for a little while until they all ran out of mana. Ryan knew this so he teleported everyone away to face him alone. Everyone was mad that he would try and sacrifice himself to protect them but he knew it was the only way and he charged up all the mana he had left in his body into one single strike and so did the demon king.

They dashed towards each other and clashed with one single punch and a big explosion blew up the whole battlefield. Half of Ryan's body was gone but the demon lord was dead.

Ryan barely survived and was not doing well, but ended up making a full recovery.

Reconnaissance of the Flesh Impressionist
By Audrey Martinez

Warning!

This is a public warning from the Montreal Police department.
There have been multiple sightings of mimics in your current area.
Beware of these mimics, there is nothing we can do to help.

All you can do is pray.
Good night and good luck!

Entry log #1

Preparations

My name is Miko Martinez and I'm a mimic researcher and specialist and I'm currently working on a project, studying mimics in their natural habitat. I want to try to figure out how durable these creatures are, how they can exist in our world, and why they only eat humans. Mimics are grown from the crawl which is a meaty vine and they grow from a little bulb in the crawl before turning into a juvenile mimic, which they only hunt small stuff like mice or rabbits and such, and as they grow into adult mimics they learn to hunt bigger things before sticking to only hunting humans, for some odd reason, as an adult mimic is a red meaty humanoid figure with long fingers and limbs a permanent large smile on their faces and big bulging eyes. I'm attempting to acquire this data as mimics are a challenge to fight against as most of the time it's better to run away from a mimic rather than fight one, as they are very skilled hunters, as they are as dangerous as an unstable blackhole, and as of now they are known for being intelligent, resourceful, durable, very stealthy, stalk their prey for weeks on end before attacking, learn when their prey is at its strongest or at its weakest, and they hide in plain sight, hiding within furniture and using clothes as a disguise to better blend in. I'm on my way to an abandoned factory where a mimic had been sighted, there I will make my next log. Knowing how dangerous mimics were, I had to prepare for every eventuality. I grabbed my stun gun and a bottle of nitroglycerin.

Entry log #2

Exploration

Alrighty so I've made it to this dusty old factory. So far it doesn't seem that scary. I'm going to set up motion sensors around certain areas of the factory while I find a nice spot to stay. I'm going to stay in the factory to keep tabs on the mimic there. I'll make another log once I'm done setting up.

Once I finished setting up the motion detectors and the camera to record the creatures movement, I find a spot high up in the factory and it was a little room with a window overlooking a storage room, and a door that leads to a catwalk that you can only get to via a destroyed stairwell that was very difficult to climb up to, which provides some security if there is a mimic.

Entry log #3

Findings

Suddenly one of the motion sensors went off, telling me that there was in fact a mimic within the factory. Then the sensors stopped blinking. So, I went out to search for the mimic. I ended up walking up to an old couch in a staff room and saw the eye of a mimic peeking out from under a cushion. It wasn't red like a normal mimic; it was more a pink/peach tone kind of face with black eyes. I slowly backed away heading back to my safe zone. I was now in deep shit! I wasn't dealing with not any normal mimic but an elder mimic. They are smarter, more durable, and way better at killing and hunting. The mimic started searching for me, opening cabinets, and searching under furniture, looking around knowing I was probably hiding nearby. Knowing it was only a matter of time before it found me, I grabbed my stun-gun. Since the skin of an elder might be bulletproof, but is it shock proof? This may give me time to escape, I thought. I sat there and aimed the stun-gun at the staircase, seeing one of the mimics' hands grab the floor as it began to pull itself up. I fired, hitting the Mimic in the face. Shocked, it fell back to the bottom of the stairwell. It ripped the two dart-like electrodes from its face, retreating into the darkness. I had to go now, it was now or never. Mimics were never down for long.

Suddenly I thought, if I can't kill it from the outside, maybe I can kill it from within. An elder Mimic's skin is indestructible, but maybe, just maybe, internally it was just the same as us. So maybe if I use a grenade or some kind of explosive to blow it from the inside out. I mean it's my best choice of action given the circumstances.

Entry log #4

Beyond Recall

Suddenly I remembered the nitroglycerin I had prepared in advance, but I had no method to deploy it. I stood up and walked around the observation deck, searching for anything I could use to contain it. To blow it up from the inside out it needed to be swallowed. Suddenly out of the corner of my eye I saw an old dirty water bottle. Now I needed something to ignite it, looking around, I saw a leaking oil heater dripping in the corner. I put the nitroglycerin in the bottle and rolled it in the oil that had pooled beneath the heater. Hearing the mimic crawling back up from its fall I got ready. I would only have one shot at this, what could possibly go wrong, I could miss and the mimic could kill me or I could get caught in the blast, but I reckon I could survive that.

Entry log #5

Termination

I stood there watching the stairwell, knowing the mimic was down there, either recovering or looking for a way to climb back. I crept close to the stairwell to look down to see if it was still there. As I looked over the edge, its face was basically at my feet, its mouth was wide open! I dropped the bottle into its mouth as I lit the Zippo, tossing it into its mouth. I sprinted as far as possible, waiting to feel the explosion on my back. I heard a screeching sound and felt and heard the massive explosion. It blew me off my feet, as blood and guts flew over my head. Crawling back, I checked to see if it was dead, the mimic was missing its whole left torso and face, but it was still sort of kicking. I took my chance and fled the factory with my life intact; being the first person to ever damage or beat an elder mimic. I felt like a thunderbolt running out of that building. But in the end, I made it out alive.

Never Defeated
By Kyriakos Giatras

Hi, I'm Nicolas. Today I will be working with TellTaleStudios to talk about my experience in high school. High School was terrible. I was the awkward kid who had no friends and was also always anxious about everything. I was always told my interests and hobbies were rather boring. My peers at school would always put me down for my hobbies. I don't know what was wrong about the fact I enjoy helping my mom or the idea of me playing video games like everyone else, but my peers would always put me down for it.

One windy school morning in the middle of December, one of my classmates called my phone. I picked up not knowing who was on the other line.

"Hello?" I asked awkwardly because I knew no one who would ever call me. If someone did it was usually a salesman trying to sell a fridge or a microwave.

"Nic, it's Jordan from school," he replied.

"Oh, hi Jordan, how are you?" I asked.

However, he just ignored me. Instead, he was ranting about how it was "wearing-a-pink-shirt-with-a-sticker-on-it day."

I didn't quite understand the meaning behind it. However, he was my only friend in the whole country. I trusted him.

That morning I wore a bright pink shirt with the word "Sunshine" written on it in gold. I arrived at the school that morning. When I did it, I felt strange. I looked around me and no one wore a bright pink shirt. Lunch period came. I was walking to the cafeteria when I noticed my peers laughing. It was then that I realized no one was wearing a pink shirt. I was so embarrassed. They said things to me that made me want to shoot tears out my eyes like a gun.

One kid said, "Your shirt is so bright pink you look like a human-sized heart." Another kid said he hoped his mom didn't see me because she would think a pink warlock broke into her house.

I went home that day tired and sad. As I walked into my house, I threw my bag on the floor and ran to my bed. I didn't even acknowledge my mom when I saw her. I could tell my mom was empathetic for me even though she had no idea what happened. I could hear pacing and anxious murmuring from the kitchen. That's when I dozed off.

I fell asleep thinking I would wake up the next morning feeling better. However, my emotions already entered my unconscious mind. I woke up in an alternate world. This alternate world was pretty with an ongoing sunset, palm trees, a beach, and to the side was a giant green and healthy-looking forest. This place looked very appealing. However, there were abandoned villages and other temples. It seemed like a mixture of a beautiful but fearful world.

My mind was in shock. I didn't understand what had happened. A few seconds ago, I was just in bed. Now I was here.

I explored more until I could hopefully find my way out. All I could see was land, water, and trees.

I kept exploring, starting to think I would be stuck in this weird, pixelated reality forever. I was lost for hope! Suddenly, a giant blue monster creeped up to my face. It didn't touch me; however, it was so close up to my face I could feel its breath. We gazed at each other's eyes. He seemed sad. I could see its tears building in his giant eyes. He then stepped away and started crying.

All my childhood memories came flooding back, I was overwhelmed with sadness. He started talking, telling me about everything he'd gone through. And I understood him completely. Everything he cried about was about everything I'd gone through my whole life. I expressed myself fully to him. With no doubt, we related to each other. I realized I was not alone in the way I felt and this provided me with some comfort.

He warned me about the other creatures in this alternate world. He explained that he did not know what they were capable of. However, he warned them to be very careful around them. Thinking that was the last time I would see him, I started to walk away. Turning around I noticed he was following me.

I guessed we were on this journey together. We walked for a while. It felt as if weeks passed by. During the walk, I was thinking about my existence. I didn't think I would escape this false reality. The monster and I walked into a

forest. It was dark, dense with trees, interspersed with bodies of water. BOOM! Suddenly, dozens of trees fell simultaneously. My blue monster friend and I scouted. We suspected one of the other monsters would be out to kill us.

CREEEEKK. Through the field of fallen trees there was a slightly large figure trying to escape the logs that had previously flooded.

“Oh crap... Hello,” said the monster.

I responded with, “Who are you?”

He said his name was Mxro. He also explained to me that those trees that fell earlier were traps.

He elaborated by saying he didn’t trust anyone. He always felt like everyone hated him. As he was continuing, a word feeling rang inside of me. It felt like there was a pattern. Both times I ran into a monster in this reality, I felt a strong relation in multiple ways. Each time they explained their stories, it seemed as if no one cared for them. It felt almost like this reality was based around my life. If they felt like this, then maybe others did too. Maybe I wasn’t alone, maybe other kids at more schools were just as confused and scared as me.

I asked Mxro if he wanted to join my blue friend and I on our journey to find my way out. He said he couldn’t, saying we were trying to lure into a trap and end him at that moment.

I told him respectfully to quit yapping. I said, “I know what it’s like not to trust people, to be made fun of. I hate it and I unfortunately still go through it every day. However, trust me and I will trust you. We can trust each other.”

The three friends were now wandering around the terrain. They hadn’t even walked for five minutes before accidentally crossing paths with their biggest threat throughout the whole journey. The angriest of all. The blood monster. He was set to rage at everything. He deceived and he destroyed. The blood monster noticed them and started by picking up boulders, throwing them toward us.

Mxro and the blue monster both tried to run. I said to them “Don’t run, we need to trust each other. We need to plan to beat this monster.” They agreed. We ran to cover to quickly develop a plan. Mxro talked about the blood

monster having weak points on the back of its head and knees. I then told them that I would distract the monster to buy them time. “While he’s distracted, you both sneak up behind him and attack his weak points.”

We started executing our plan with me running up to the monster and making distraction noises. He seemed confused but he still took the bait. He started aimlessly throwing boulders from the ground towards my body.

Due to his lack of skill in aim, he missed. At that moment, the two monsters were positioned behind the blood monster. They simultaneously ran up to the blood monster’s weak points and beat the living hell out of it. As they hit the blood monster’s weak points, he shrunk. They noticed this and kept punching his weak points. He got so small he shrunk out of existence. You could see him rapidly decreasing in size from a giant to the size of an atom.

When he shrunk, he was so small he merged with the soil of this land. When he merged, a red wave covered the grass and the sea. Everything broken, object and structure was then instantly fixed due to the inexistence of the blood monster. Everything was pure.

I went to find my two friends. I couldn’t find them. I walked up to where they had attacked the blood monster. All I saw was colored dust on the ground. Right after I realized I was fading away.

I woke up in my bed from my real reality. Everything was back to normal. However, I remembered everything that happened in that false reality. I went to school that morning. The first people who I interacted with laughed at me and put me down for what clothes I wore. However, this time, I felt different. I didn’t get an urge to be emotional or run to the bathroom to hide for the first period. Instead, I just ignored them and continued my day.

From that experience, I learned to find ways to block bad people in my life. I’ve also learned a set of social skills around others while also being myself. Ten years later, I’ve made friends, written books and coded one of the biggest video games of this generation. I’m happy to be where I am today, and I couldn’t be any happier.

The Coming of the Hawk

By Lex Gomez

[Content warning: Depictions of violence and blood]

“Ahhhhhhhh!”

I heard my mom yelling from her room. I ran to see if she was okay. My father was there, drenched in her blood. I ran past him to see if she was okay. When I got to her, there was so much blood that I thought the room was going to flood. When I got to her, she gave me a lion necklace with the last little bit of strength that she had left, saying it would protect me. She died right in front of me.

My father took her away and said, “You know too much, just like your mother.” My father was adamant about sending me away to the dungeon. The guard came running fast to take me away. When I got down there, I could barely see anything, just a little bit of light shining through the bars covering the small window.

While in the dungeon, I was sitting down thinking of what had happened upstairs. When suddenly, a flash of light revealed some words written on the wall “*The one with the snake on his neck will die to the hawk. The hawk will set them free.*” Just then, I realized that I had a birthmark of a hawk on the inside of my upper arm.

From this, I gained a little bit of hope. Then I looked around the room and saw a lion statue in the corner that matched my mom’s necklace. It was the key to get out! I placed the necklace in the lion’s mouth, and it opened a hidden door leading to the outside of the dungeon, setting me free.

Once I got out, I ran to my friend’s house because I knew he could help me. When I got to his house, he looked sad, but when I touched him, he woke up and snapped back into his old self. I told him that my father, the Dark Lord, had cast a spell on the town, making everyone feel depressed and sad.

My friend said, “You need to stop him! Let’s plan. I will get the townspeople to revolt and distract the guards, so you can get to your father.”

Over the next nine days, me and my friend constructed a plan to kill the guards so that I can get to my father. On the tenth day, the plan was ready to go.

In the dead of night, my friend and the townspeople stormed the Dark Lord's castle, firing arrows towards the guards, killing some of them, starting the revolt. The townspeople charged in, killing more guards. Just then I saw a small door, finally a way to get inside the castle. I ran as fast as I could, just as I got to the door a guard jumped in front of me pulling out his sword trying to kill me. Just then my friend came running to save me. He stabbed the guard, spraying blood everywhere as he killed him.

He said, "Go get your father and free us."

I ran to my father's room, breaking down the door. He charged at with his sword, trying to kill me. He missed me, hitting my necklace, which saved me. I swung my sword, aiming for the snake birthmark on his neck. He blocked the snake, cutting his arm. A lot of blood flowed, making a small pool on the ground. I went for the snake again, and hit it, cutting his head off, splattering blood all over the wall.

The spell was finally broken freeing the people. I ran outside seeing all the townspeople celebrating me. There was no more rain, and the sun came out. It was the first time I had seen the sun since my mom had died.

Finally, I was able to rest. I walked back into the castle, sitting on my father's throne, staring back at the snake birth mark on my father's severed neck. As I started to drift to sleep, a beam of light hit my necklace, shattering it in half. A strong wind scattered the pieces out through the castle window, freeing me from the guilt of my mother's death.

Time Never Stops
By Laila Amimu

As time goes by,

There has never been such a thing as perfect timing.

Everybody seems to ask themselves the same question.

When will it ever be the right time?

Here's the answer to this tricky question.

It's up to you to decide because time doesn't stop for anyone.

You're the one that gets to decide when it's right, it doesn't need to be perfect.

There's no such thing as perfection but right is just close enough.

Une Mémoire
de Corinne Sévigny

My memory begins during summer of 2022, it was the calm after the storm on a gorgeous summer day on the infamous north pond. My family was sunbathing on the dock after playing a cutthroat game of Titanic, a family tradition of violently throwing the weakest link off the dock, (so basically king of the castle on water with grown adults). I had won the most games. Those who had lost against me had scattered away leaving me and my father at the dock.

He screamed from the water, “Lemme see how well you dive!” I was forced to tell him that I was unable to dive. He of course wasn’t shocked or appalled; he just looked at me with a kind smile and said, “Dive.”

I dove into the dark clear water of unmeasurable depths. After that my body felt like red lobsters were crawling all over me. I wiped the water from my eyes to hear a howling echoing around me. It was my father’s deep laugh coming from his belly. That’s when I knew I had a lot of work to do, unfortunately. I painfully pulled myself on to the tall dock and looked at my dad who was looking at me like he expected me to fly.

“What?” I demanded embarrassed.

“Well, jump again,” he said with a smirk.

I gave him this look he knew all too well, and he responded with a knowing expression and urged me to jump again but this time he explained that I needed to stick my legs together and dive head first instead of belly first.

So that’s what I did over and over until he said his famous two words: “Not bad.”

You would think he’d be very wordy since he was a journalist reporting unsolved crimes in Montreal but those were the two words he gave when something was really good. He kept our bar so high the only thing we could do was reach it. If you cooked him an amazing dinner worthy of the gods he would say “not bad” and if you cooked him a meal worthy of prisoners he would say “not bad” (maybe it was just so he didn’t hurt my feelings though...)

The thing you had to learn about my father was to read his face. It wasn’t always hard. This time I was reading my dad, proud that no matter how painful

the first three to four jumps were, his daughter was able to jump again until she had reached perfection.

Today, tomorrow and all the rest to come, I will remember this memory as my favorite memory with my deceased father, Albert Sévigny, and his confidence in me will shine through in all my actions no matter how hard or demanding they are.

Time in our daily lives
By Spyridon Apostolakos

Time is highly likely one of the most simple things about human existence, but it is abstract. We exist in our lives with time all around us all the time, yet what time itself is something which continues to evoke great interests, debate, and curiosity. From ancient civilizations to present science, time has been the cornerstone in our understanding of things around us. The way we exist with time, the way we measure it, and how it affects us all are interlinked and show that time is more than a way to keep track of things. Time is a concept that goes deep into our existence.

We can go back to the earliest written efforts to come to terms with time as far back as ancient history. Egyptians and Sumerians, among others, constructed the initial sundials and calendars to observe the motion of the celestial objects and thus developed a way of organizing human life in relation to the natural rhythms. Time was symbolic as well as functional in these early practices. Time was generally considered to be a force that was controlled by the gods, and human life and activity were part of an order in the universe. This assumption that time was a divine or supernatural force had a great impact on how ancient man understood his place in the universe.

With the development of societies came the development of ideas about how time was perceived and defined. The invention of mechanical clocks in the Middle Ages was a turning point, with individuals beginning to break time into smaller and more accurate units. This new understanding of time enabled the development of modern science because scientists could now measure and track events more accurately. Time had become a measurable quantity in itself, separate from nature, a machine that could be learned and controlled, with the invention of the clock. It introduced punctuality, industrial schedules, and efficiency requirements, all of which have become the foundation of modern life.

In science, time has been studied extensively, and new ideas that challenge our conception of its character have emerged. Albert Einstein's relativity theory, for instance, demonstrated that time isn't a relative, fixed value, but can be

manipulated depending on the velocity of the movement and the gravity. The concept, termed as “spacetime,” has immense repercussions concerning the way we perceive time as passing. It suggests that time is not a linear experience but one that can stretch, curve, and warp depending on the state of the universe.

At the individual level, time is a complex and subjective experience. While clocks and calendars quantify time, human beings are able to perceive it differently. Time would seem to take longer when a person is bored or stressed but time seems to pass when a person is having a good time. Psychologists mention age, attention, and mood as some determinants of our subjective experience of time. The nature of time is also something we are most likely to notice more and more as we age, something that makes us rush about and maximize every last minute.

In short, time is both a continuity and a highly relative experience. It regulates the way in which we structure our societies, controls our understanding of the universe, and dictates the way in which we live. Whether we look at it as a scientific occurrence, or an emotional one, time is perhaps the most influential and multifaceted force on Earth. Understanding time is not just crucial to organizing our lives, but to comprehending the essence of existence itself.

The Most Important Rule
By Menachem Mendel Leib Maizenberg

And the final rule, the most important rule. Never try to be the hero.

Trust me. Once the past is changed there is no way of changing it back.

We all heard the, “If I could go back in time, I would kill Hitler,” or something like that. I assure you, it is not how it seems.

Let me tell you what happened to my Earth...

I’m not from your Earth. I was born on Earth B3576. The history of my world was the exact same history as your world. I was born on May 30th, 2324. By that year, technology was so advanced that I built the first ever time machine. I was so excited to go back in time and witness great historical events. I witnessed the pyramids being built, I saw Mount Rushmore being chiseled. I even saw the fall of the Roman army, and many more.

One night I was sleeping in my bed, when suddenly I had an idea. I can go back in time and kill Hicholas Villiams the II. Hicholas viliams the II was the most corrupt, vile, wicked person of the 22nd century. He killed millions. He starved countries. He was the reason for World War III.

If I can go back in time and stop him from going into power, I can save millions or even billions of human lives. I was set. I raced to my time machine and put in the date. November 20th, 2187.

I walked out of my time machine and looked around making sure I was in the right time and place. At that moment, I looked up and I saw a holographic billboard reading, “Get the new iPhone 53X today!” I knew at that moment I was at the right time.

The moment had come. I went on to continue my mission.

As I walked throughout this time period, I stormed into the streets of Isranada. If my Colunios mini computer was correct, Hicholas Viliams the II was currently in the blonde house of Isranada.

I called out for a cab and asked the driver to take me to my venue. A few minutes later I had reached my destination.

The blonde house was bigger than I thought it would be. It had a huge green fence around the building and at least 20 bodyguards around the

perimeter. Luckily, I had advanced technology. I put on my shapeshifting tie. My shape shifting tie could shape me to whoever I wanted using Nacoty technology. My shapeshifting tie could scan the person I wanted to shapeshift into, then I could mold into the individual. I created this device to help me with the greatest April fool's prank.

My friend did not take the prank so well.

I decided to shapeshift into one of the hired guns. It was quite easy getting inside the building. It was time for my purpose. I walked into the royal living room.

There he was. In his throne. I recognized his face from all the history books I had read. His brown hair, his brown eyes, his short black beard. It was ironic that he used to be a history teacher. Now it was time to erase him from history.

Hicholas Viliams the II locked eyes with me. I took out my plasma heated 2000 gun and pointed at his brain. He begged for his life. I was feeling sorry for him, until I thought about all the lives he took. All the countries he starved. All the useless wars he caused. Without hesitation, I pulled the trigger. A green plasma shot out of my gun. It was done. I killed him.

Blood was everywhere. The walls were covered with Hicholas' blood. I didn't know how to feel. It was my first time killing anyone. The next second I heard sirens. I heard radio chatter from outside. It was the cops. I did not have enough time to clean up the mess. I turned on my shapeshifting tie, then I transformed into one of the police officers outside. I walked back into my time machine that I hid in a shed. It was time to get back to the present. I was finally at peace, knowing all the lives I'd saved.

I Fucked Up...

I stepped out of my time machine. It was hard to see at first. But the next second I regretted my decision. The horror I witnessed was unbearable. Ashes everywhere. Buildings were now just piles of dust. My neighborhood, my city, my country, my world, were all gone. Before I could go back, my time machine was no longer here. I searched around looking for clues of what happened.

After two days of searching, I came to a conclusion. I was the only human alive. It made no sense. I needed to know what happened. I settled to find resources from the ashes of my world. I could build a machine to examine the source of my world to shatter. I gathered as many resources as I could beneath the ashes of my world.

It took me twelve weeks to scavenge my sources. It took another 20 weeks to build my machine. I got through this long by eating cockroach and water that was left in burnt down buildings. I was going mad. No person should ever be alone that long. After what felt like a century, the machine was ready. It had super solar panels that could power a city. I turned my machine on. There it was. A clear view of what had happened to my world. It all started with... me. Following the murder of Hicholas Viliams the II, a new man went into power, his son, Hicholas Viliams the III. Hicholas Viliams the III was more cruel than his father. He declared a nuclear war between countries. The war went so bad the earth got destroyed. No one survived the nuclear war.

I could not believe my eyes. This all started with me. I had to fix my mistake. I needed to build a new machine by breaking down my machine I had spent weeks on.

I spent day and night building my new developed time machine. I had to try to fix my mistake.

When my machine was ready, I switched it on and pressed the button. Before I could blink, my whole universe ripped before my eyes. I accidentally created a machine that destroyed the whole universe. A while later, I woke up in a world. Not my world but yours. My machine did not only destroy my timeline, but it transported me to a new multiverse.

Time Loop
By Noah Léger

In the year 2019, a pandemic started called Covid-19. This virus was beginning to spread worldwide, and it was killing quite a lot of people. After the second year of the virus, we found vaccines. At first, we thought the vaccines killed the virus but it didn't. It took quite a long time for us to create a proper Covid vaccine.

The majority of the population was terrified to go out since the virus was getting everyone sick while killing a lot of people. Most people wouldn't be able to spend much time with family or friends. The virus also caused some airports to close, just so the virus can not contaminate other countries.

During the lockdown in summer, I would be outside biking around my area, even though my dad wanted me indoors. Even during holidays, I wouldn't be able to see my family. I was starting to miss our family get-togethers. There were restrictions on going out and there would be a curfew, and you wouldn't be able to go out by a certain time unless you had a probable reason.

As time went on after the virus, everyone was happy and stress-free but little did they know what was going to happen in the near future. After everyone in the world got the Covid-19 vaccine, they thought they wouldn't be able to get sick.

The first year after the virus, people started going out more often, or even going back to their workspace. There were a lot of job opportunities for the first few months but then most jobs got taken. The jobs that paid the most at the time were explorers, since they risked their lives to discover new areas of the world. These explorers were the reason we've found extinct animals or non-living species.

On January 15, 2025 there was a volcano eruption that ruined the west coast. The volcano affected North America and Central America. After the eruption, some explorers were called to check if the volcano was still active. The volcano that erupted was called Silverthrone Caldera and these explorers were quite stressed out since this was a dangerous volcano that nobody would want

to be active. The volcano affected most of Northern America and a bit of Central America.

The volcano ended up melting quite a lot of ice in Nunavut, and it wasn't good for the people around the areas that had rivers or lakes. This led to more ice melting and it would get more water flowing into different areas. There were quite a lot of fish that landed on shore, but that wasn't too bad since it made it easier to get food. The problem was that most of the fish there were infected by a disease that nobody knew about.

Anyone that ate those fish would get a disease, even if the meat was cooked. It was a disease that was slightly a bit similar to the Covid-19 virus. It took around a week for the people to realize that eating fish from North America or Central America, it would get you terribly sick, and medicine wouldn't even be able to help. So when those people who ate the fish went to the hospital, they realized they were sick from a disease the fish had and they couldn't do anything about it.

When those people went out in public without a mask, they could spread it without realizing it. If they coughed on someone or shared something with someone then they'd transmit the sickness. That is exactly how this new sickness was going around and it was slowly becoming global.

When the fish were being transported to other countries, the buyers wouldn't know that there were diseases in the meat. When most South American countries like Chile, Mexico, and many others got the fish, they'd resell it quickly since it wasn't a fish they could get easily and they'd be pretty expensive.

Most people that had the sickness were spreading it, without realizing it. The first few countries that had gotten the sickness were Canada, the United States, and smaller countries in Europe. When the Europeans got the disease and found out, they were the first to try and find a cure for the sickness. When they started to test the sickness, they called it "Valcovid" since it was pretty similar to the Covid-19 virus, and it was only found due to a volcanic eruption.

A year later, the scientist finally found a cure to the sickness but it wasn't guaranteed to help immediately. The first successful cure was in April 2026, and it took about two months to finally help the patient. When they found out it

cured them, they decided to make more but it would take more than nine months to make enough for the whole world.

The first country that found the cure was Switzerland, then France, but they started to explain to the other countries how to make the cure so it could possibly hurry up the process of getting rid of the sickness. As time went on, the cure was world wide and everyone got it.

If they didn't find a cure, who knows how many lives could have been taken from a disease that nobody knew about for the first few weeks. Luckily, the sick patients got the vaccine and they fought the sickness, and got through it successfully. This ended up being a well-known virus that was probably going to be history for the future.

THE END

Cherished Childhood Friend
By Ireland Kennedy-Scally

Days and days go by. My dresser lays cold, with him. My childhood plushie. Time ago I loved him daily. His fur clean, his tag new. He was my best friend, beyond anyone I knew. For nights and for days, he was there for me. We played together from before I could even think, even remember.

Now, a new age has come for me. I work day and night, to keep up with the times. He sits there, watching me. Seeing me grow without him. His fur now dusty, black with speckled skin. His tag, ripped and yellowed. Me, I am not ripped, nor am I dusty. I am going on without him. He lies among my paintings, and my jewelry chest. Waiting for the day I take him again, play with him again, show him I love him, again.

Time has gone through us both, as school takes all my time, his time gets longer and lonelier than I ever could have wished. We used to have this other plushie, a girl, his love. We three played together. But with moments so gloomy, she is gone. So am I. I replaced her, with a duller, less lively version, and he knows it's not her, and so do I. His eyes see through me, the lies I display.

Time created memories. I can still remember when I lost him, he fell under something I could not save him from. His ear tore, my tears stained my cheeks. I cried for him. Now I barely think of him. For a moment, I did, I tried to clean him, love him like he knew I did. But it went by so fast, a moment I couldn't hold. Even with not thinking of him, there will always be a cavern in my mind, a space where our memories flourish.

Someday my age hits me. I now must move on, and he must be gone. The box I placed him in, alongside his fake companion, now closed for time to take. Locked away in a vault no one will open, webs take the walls, and all he was, is now gone. Moments move so fast, sometimes you don't even know what you're doing to those around you, real or fake, plush or human. I didn't know what I did to him. I couldn't see it. He saw it. He saw me. Goodbye my once cherished childhood friend, may you rest in peace.

New Mission: Save the President
By Keandre Morgan

After recovering a stolen adamantium that was in Mexico, a skilled spy named Wilson was invited to a party at The White House. The president invited Wilson because he wanted to praise him for recovering the adamantium. Everyone at the party was having fun until four men arrived and began shooting up the place. Wilson quickly took out the shooters with his martial art skills, and got the party guests and the president to safety.

Wilson and the president went to the security room to check the security cameras for answers. They realized that the shooters were targeting the president. Wilson had a hunch of who was responsible but kept this information to himself. The president was then placed in a safe space until Wilson could find answers. Wilson had a hunch that the villain responsible was Sam Stern so he went looking for him at the warehouse he found him before. Wilson was shocked to find Sam Stern there. He and Wilson went way back. Wilson took him to jail for trying to blow up The White House but he broke out and nobody could find him until now. Stern admitted that while the shootout was happening he put a powerful pill in the president's drink—one that could make him lose control and have superhuman strength. Wilson had heard enough. He tried to grab Stern but was electrocuted with a taser and fell unconscious. Wilson woke up sometime later and tried to call his friend Hakim to tell him what happened, but he was afraid he was too late.

Meanwhile, the president was at home when he started losing control. His body began to grow and started to tear his clothing, and his face became twisted with anger. The security guards noticed and tried to stop the president from throwing tables but they were overpowered. The president ran out of the house and roamed the city terrorizing the citizens. Luckily, Wilson arrived in time to stop him. At first, Wilson tried to calm him down by explaining to him that he had been given a powerful pill that caused him to have superhuman strength but that didn't work. The only solution was for Wilson to fight the president but the president was too strong. The president punched Wilson so hard that he couldn't get back up.

Wilson thought he was finished. Lucky for him, Hakim came and distracted the president by throwing a smoke bomb at him. The smoke bomb was enough of a distraction for Hakim to slip Wilson an antidote to stop the president. Wilson saw everyone that got hurt by the president and that motivated him to get back up when he got back up he went after the president. The president tried to punch Wilson but he managed to dodge it. Wilson quickly injected the antidote into the president's arm. Within seconds, the president went back to normal and fell unconscious. While the president was rushed to the hospital, Wilson and Hakim used a satellite to track down Sam Stern and they found him in his old house. Stern surrendered and Wilson took him into custody.

Wilson drove to the hospital to check in on the president. The president was alright but he had a long recovery ahead of him. He thanked Wilson for all that he had done to protect him and the citizens. Wilson went to the bar with Hakim and celebrated another successful mission.

The Haunted Cabin
By Jason Boudreau Milhomme

ACT 1

There I was sitting in my bed barely awake looking around my room. I realized I should clean up a little. Then my sister barged in my room and told me that there was a haunted cabin nearby and that we should go check it out.

I mean I had nothing to do so I might as well. “Yeah sure let’s go. When do you think we can go?” I asked, but of course she didn’t know. Whatever gives me time to prepare for things.

A few days later she came back to tell me that she rented the haunted cabin for the weekend so we had more of a chance to get activity. She also said that I should bring a friend so I brought Debbie. She had always been into the ghost stuff more than I have ever been.

We were in the car yet I felt numb to the whole situation. I kinda just wanted to play my games at home, maybe listen to music or workout, maybe even read a book? Nah, who am I kidding? I don’t even read books unless I’m in school and I need to.

As we rolled up to the cabin, it felt like some cliché horror movie. There was fog everywhere. To the point where we couldn’t see a foot in front of us. It was starting to feel like the Silent Hill 2 game but instead we’re looking for ghosts.

My mind drifted off. Sometimes I just wished I had her back in my life. I would have loved to be with her and to think I had a chance with an angel like “Ada,” I muttered to myself. Why did I have to lose you out of all people? I’m meant to be better than this.

ACT 2

We finally found the cabin. It took forever with the fog. We parked further than we planned. That was fine. We had bags to hold the ghost hunting gear. I had no clue what was packed. I was just tagging along at this point. Who knew, maybe this was going to be fun or at least that’s what I thought till we walked into the cabin.

It was underwhelming to say the least. I mean this place was meant to be five stars but haunted, yet the place looked like no one had been here for years. I then saw my sister and Debbie setting up the ghost stuff.

“What does that do?” I asked Debbie.

“Oh well, it's meant to give off more energy so the ghost can be more active. It also lets us interact with the ghost that's here.”

Well, that was a detailed description. I just wanted to know the brand name of the equipment so I could look it up later. I looked at her, hating this moment and every other moment I have had with her. I was only friends with her because my best friend Ada and I got into a fight.

We hadn't talked in six months. I missed having her around. She was such a sweet person, especially with me. I was such an ass. If I could I would take her back as my best friend any day. I was also in love with her and when I found out she loved me back it was too late. We'd lost our friendship. There I was thinking I was gonna marry her someday, even though I never had the guts to even ask her out. I found myself getting sad over her again.

I put in my headphones and shuffled my playlist. The song “I just threw out the love of my dreams” by Weezer started playing—as if I needed another reason to think of her.

At that moment, it was as if I heard her voice behind me. I could smell her perfume like I always did when she hugged me from behind. I needed to go for a walk to clear my head, I told myself. So that's what I did. I took a walk around the cabin. An hour later I came back to see no one, just a toy chest. The song “I just threw out the love of my dreams” was still playing on loop in my headphones. I looked at the toy chest again and I felt the need to open it.

ACT 3

My heart was racing. I opened the box and found Debbie's body cut into small pieces.

“WHAT THE FUCK!”

I ran to go find my sister. This had to be some sick dream. All of a sudden, the forest turned into a white room. I was in a straight jacket. I looked

around to find myself in a padded room. I heard a knock on the white metal door. A woman entered telling me I needed to take my medication.

The next thing I knew, I felt pills going down my throat. Then it hit me. I was schizophrenic and the person I thought was my sister was actually a nurse that gives me my medication.

“This is so fucked,” I said, looking at my therapist.

“Like I told you, this episode happened yesterday, Doc. After that... well, I got brought here. I know it sounds odd, but it’s true. It all happened yesterday after you left!”

The Girl that Turned into a Wolf

By Sofia P.

Once upon time there was a little girl named Mia. She turned into a wolf when the moon came up. She did not have a lot of friends at school. She just had two friends. They were friends for a long time but Mia never told them that she was a wolf.

Mia did not tell her friends because she was scared. She kept on asking herself what if they are scared of her being a wolf or that they don't want to be friends with her. What if they go tell everyone? So Mia just kept it a secret.

Every time Mia's friends asked her if she wanted to sleep at their house, she said no every time, even if Mia really wanted to go to her friends' house. But one day Mia's family went somewhere but Mia couldn't go because she had school the next day, so Mia's family brought her to her friend's house for a few days.

Mia told her friends that she wanted to sleep in the living room. When the moon came up Mia went quietly to another room until she became a human again, but Mia couldn't see well and accidentally went into the room that her friends were sleeping in. They turned on the light and saw a wolf not knowing it was Mia. They were scared of her at first but then they realized that it was Mia so they were able to calm down.

They asked Mia if that was why she never came to sleep at their house. Mia said yes and explained everything to them. Mia's friends found it cool that Mia could turn into a wolf at night. They explained that they would have understood and wished that she didn't hide the truth from them. Mia's friends told her that she should always be herself no matter what people say or do and that if people don't want to be friends with her for who she is then they are missing out, but if they want to be her friends then they will like you for who you are.

That day, Mia learned that she didn't have to pretend to be someone she was not. She actually became more likeable and more people wanted to be friends with her.

There were a few people that were jealous of her. They were talking behind Mia's back and said things about her behind her back. This did not bother Mia because she was happy with who she was. Her true friends loved and accepted her for who she was.

The Forest

By Massimo Vitale

One sunny morning a hunter was drinking his daily coffee in the kitchen while reading the newspaper. Then all of a sudden he read about a 50,000 dollar reward to catch a creature in the forest nearby. The man finished his coffee and then decided to pack up his camping essentials: a tent, a lantern, food, water, his rifle and his ammunition. The man then grabbed his keys from the table in his room and got into his truck.

The man's GPS took him to a wooded area. He decided to park across the street from the forest entrance. The first thing that the man noticed is that there were no houses or cars around. The last town he saw was about an hour ago. He had to be cautious on his hunt because help was far away. The man also noticed a dense fog in the forest. Oddly, there was no fog outside the forest which he found weird. He also noticed the big tall trees all really close to each other. The man grabbed his equipment and entered the forest. He felt anxious about the fog. He struggled to see what was in front of him. After about two hours of walking and searching the forest, the man noticed that it was getting darker by the minute. He decided it was best that he didn't continue his search and makes the decision to camp on the spot. The reason for choosing this particular spot was because he had an idea of where the exit was located. He turned on his lamp and got inside his tent to sleep.

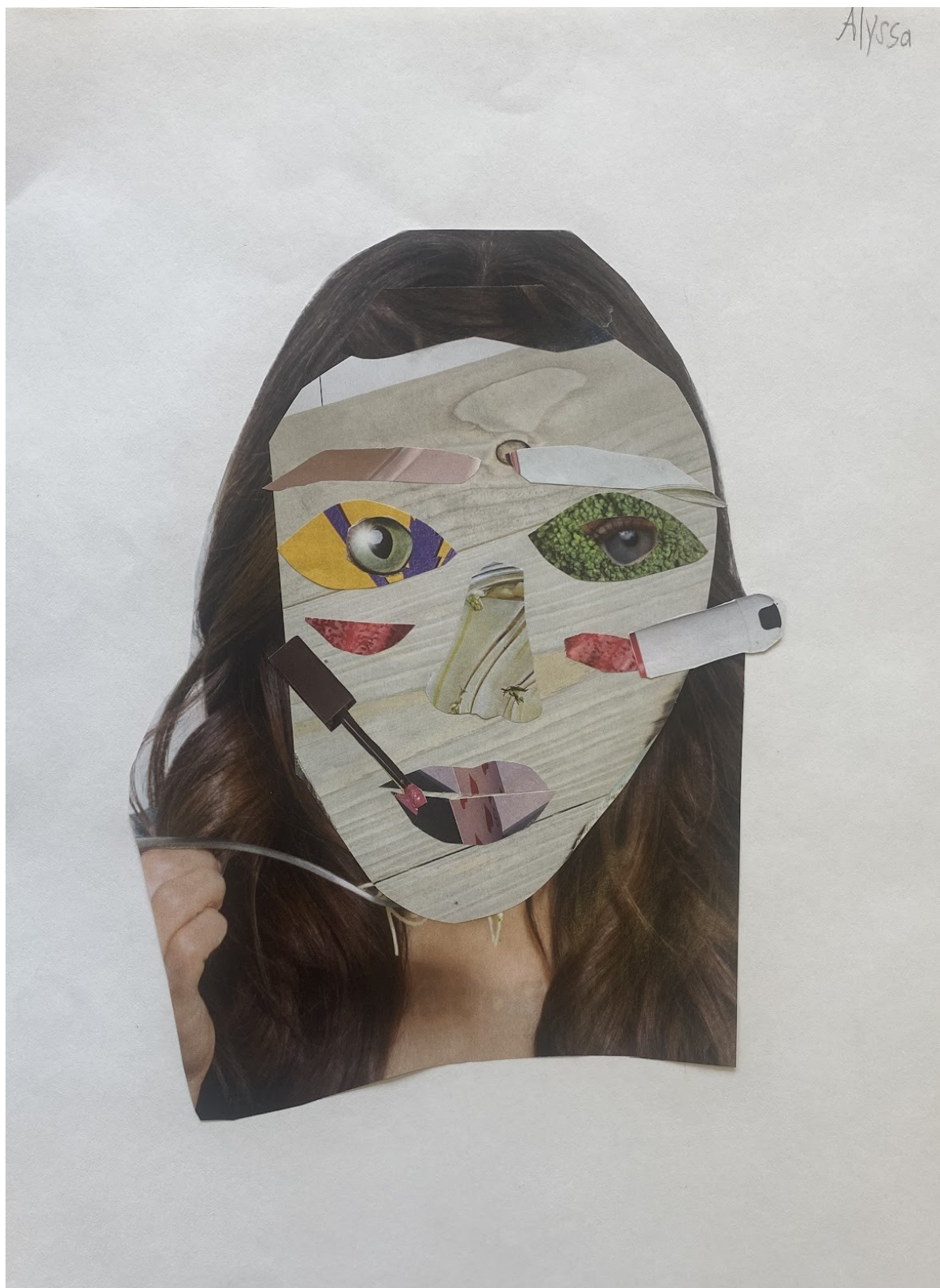
The man woke up to a noise in the bushes. He decided to go and check it out. The hunter was reminded of the many times he had hunted and how often he got scared when he heard a noise in the bushes. He told himself it was nothing. *It's probably a fox or a squirrel.*

All of a sudden, a big hand rose from the dark bushes. It was the creature. The man was frozen as he stared at the nine-foot giant. The giant had brown fur, bright green eyes and huge hands and feet. The hunter decided to make a run while loading his ammo into his rifle. As soon as he got to the gate he aimed his gun at the upper part of the creature's leg and shot. The monster appeared hurt but there was no way to know for sure. The hunter hurried to his truck and drove to the nearest town to report the incident to the police.

The man finally arrived at a police station in the middle of the town. He entered and asked to speak with someone urgently. He sat down with an officer and explained the situation. The officer said that he had heard about this creature but had not done anything to get rid of it because they didn't want to risk hurting themselves. The police officer told the hunter that they were planning to send people that had special training to get rid of the creature. He told the man to not enter the forest again. They would be marking it as private property until the creature was gone. The man said his goodbyes and headed home.

While the hunter made his coffee the next morning, he realized that life was worth way more than 50K and he regretted his decision to go hunt the creature. He should have thought twice before putting his own life at risk. At that moment, he decided to write a book about his experience. He became a wealthy well-known author and the money made from his book sales was more than what he would have made from catching the creature.

The hunter went on to live a happy life. He spent much of his time spreading his knowledge by letting others know that it was not worth risking your own life to become rich.



Alyssa Abdoo
Collage



Alyssa Abdoo
Collage



Alyssa Abdoo
Collage



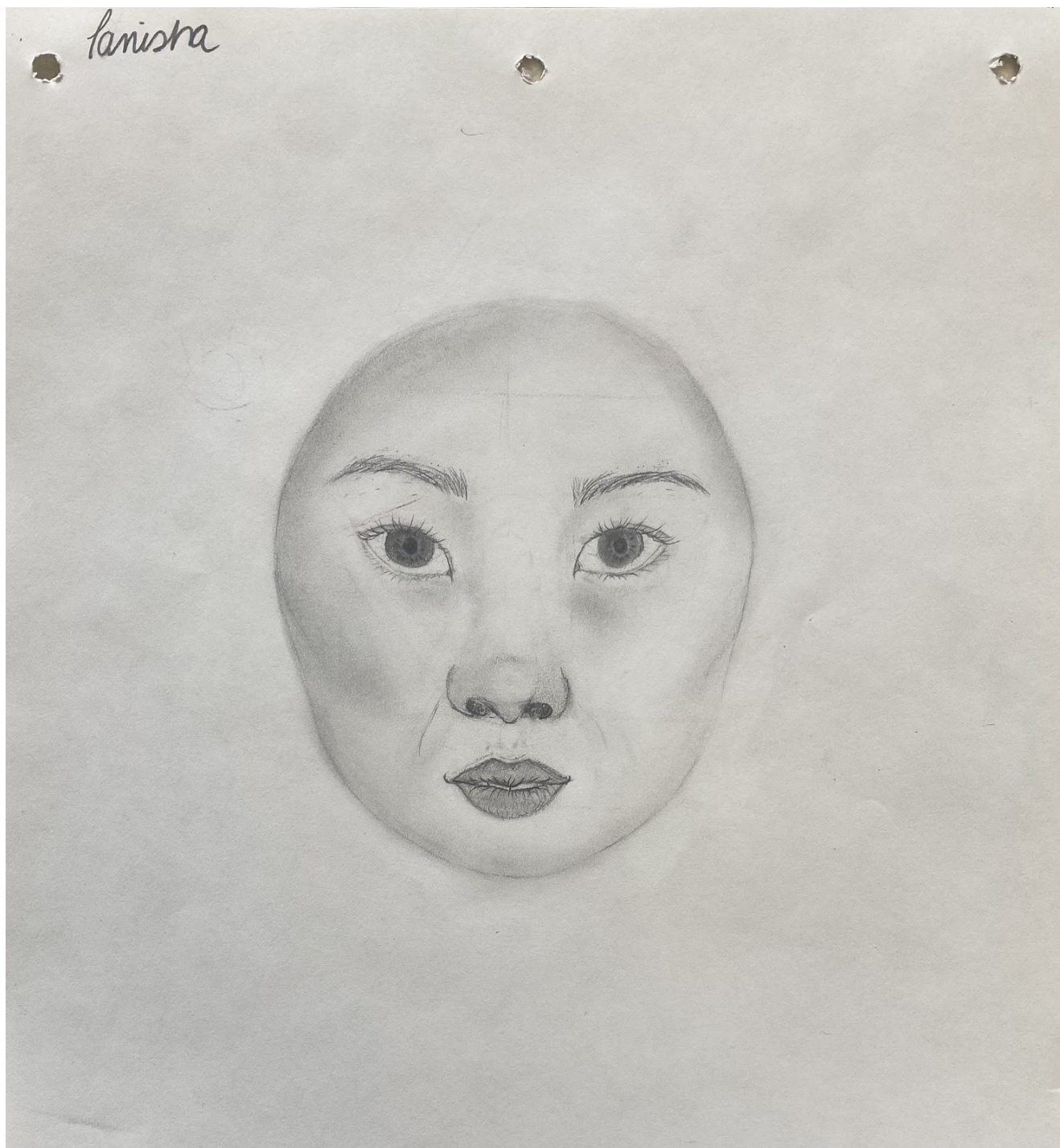
Alyssa Abdoo
Collage



Dioni M.
Coloured pencil on paper



Sadi Mahmud
Pencil on paper

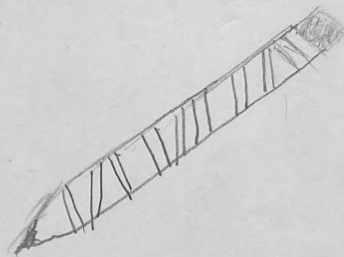


Tanisha Thomassie Do
Pencil on paper

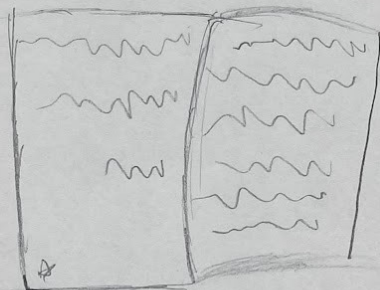
moon



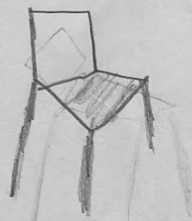
I Love THE moon



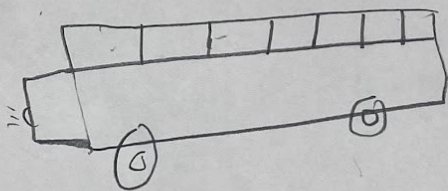
I was whiting About MEAN



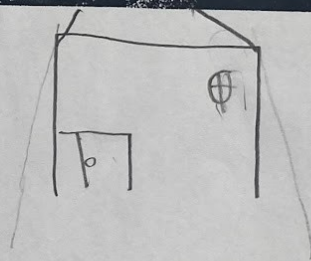
i was writing about
The moon while i was siting



i was Siting on that
chair



i went out and i saw the
bus



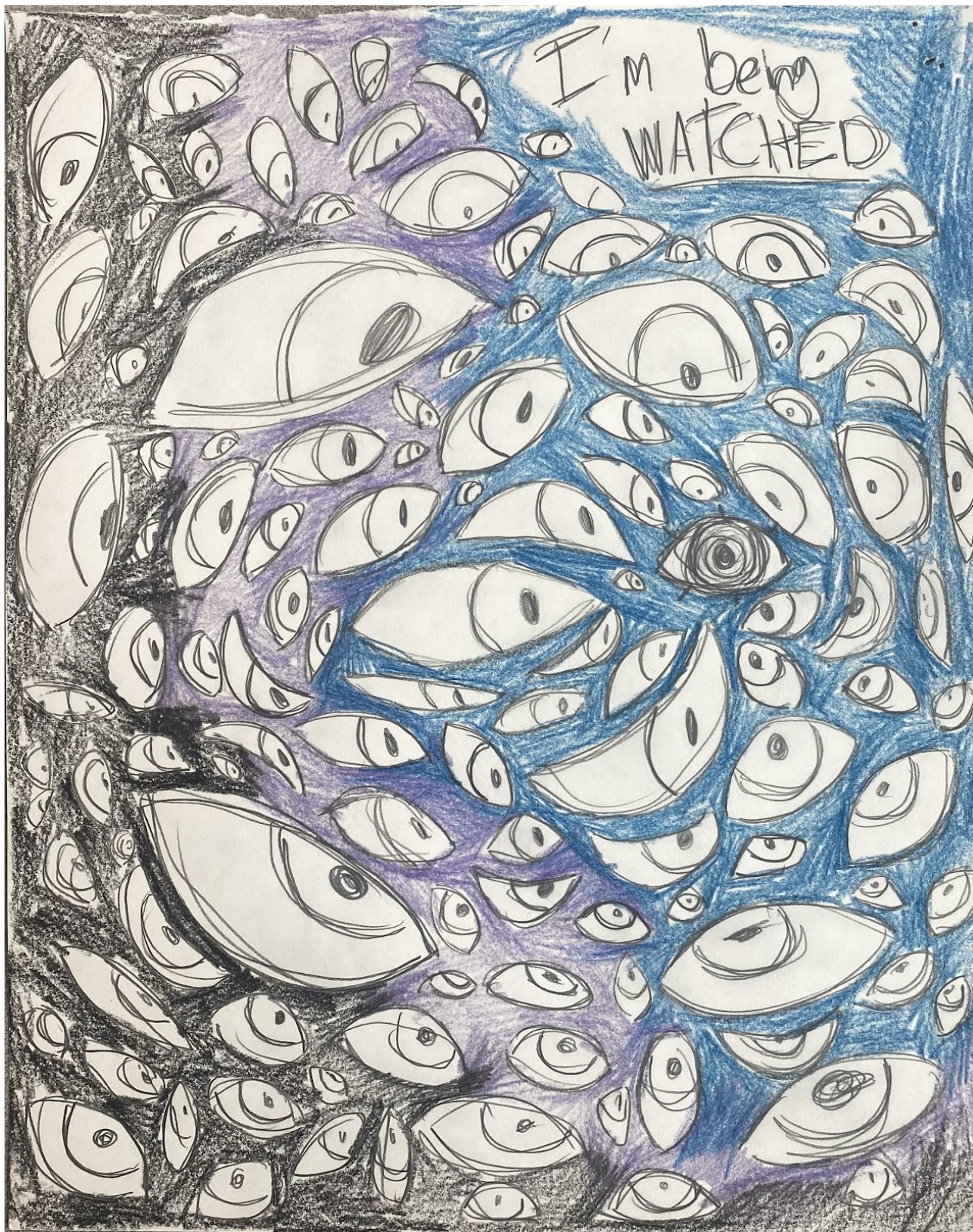
then i went back home to
rest

Mustafa

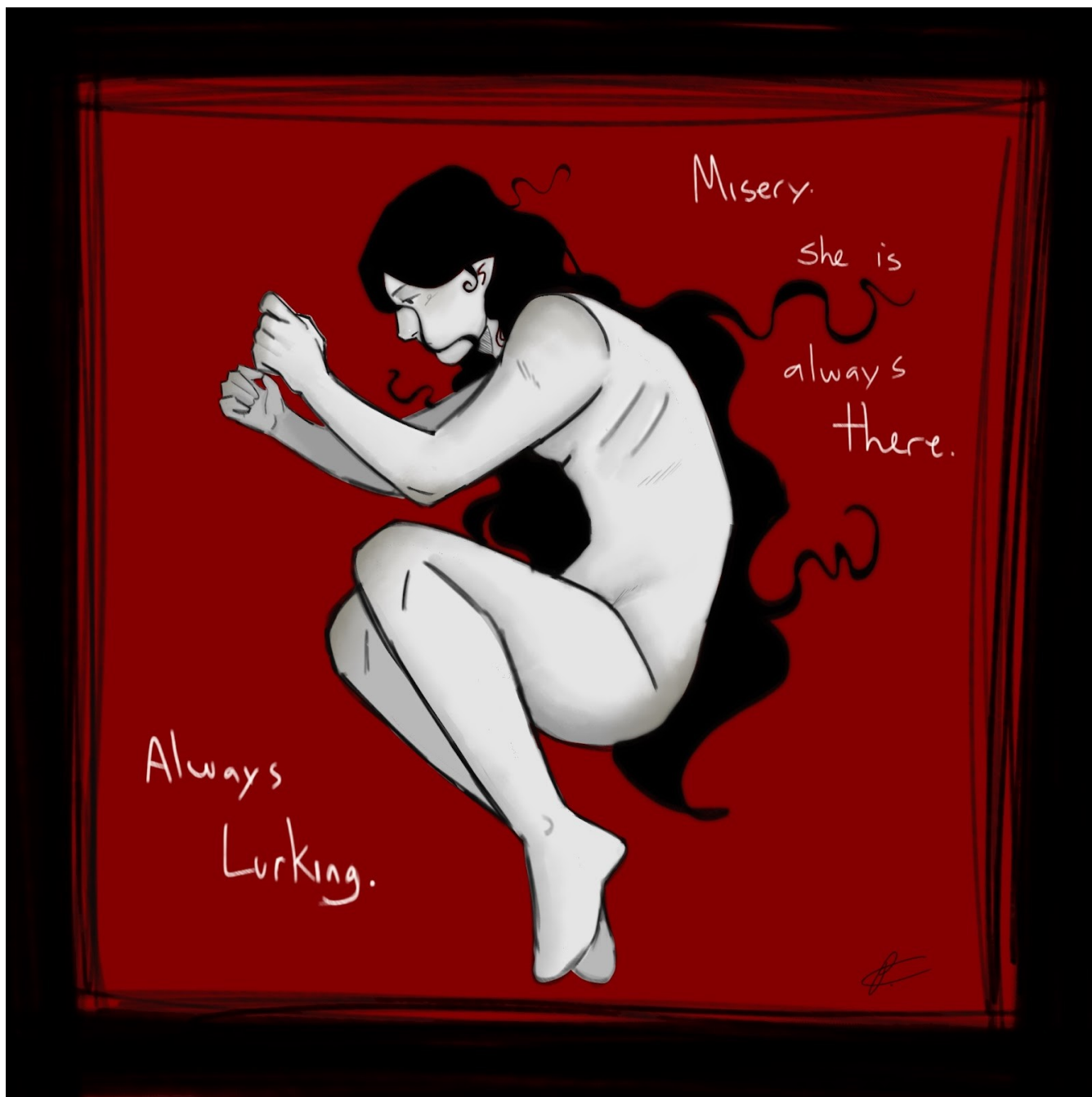
Mustafa
Pencil on paper



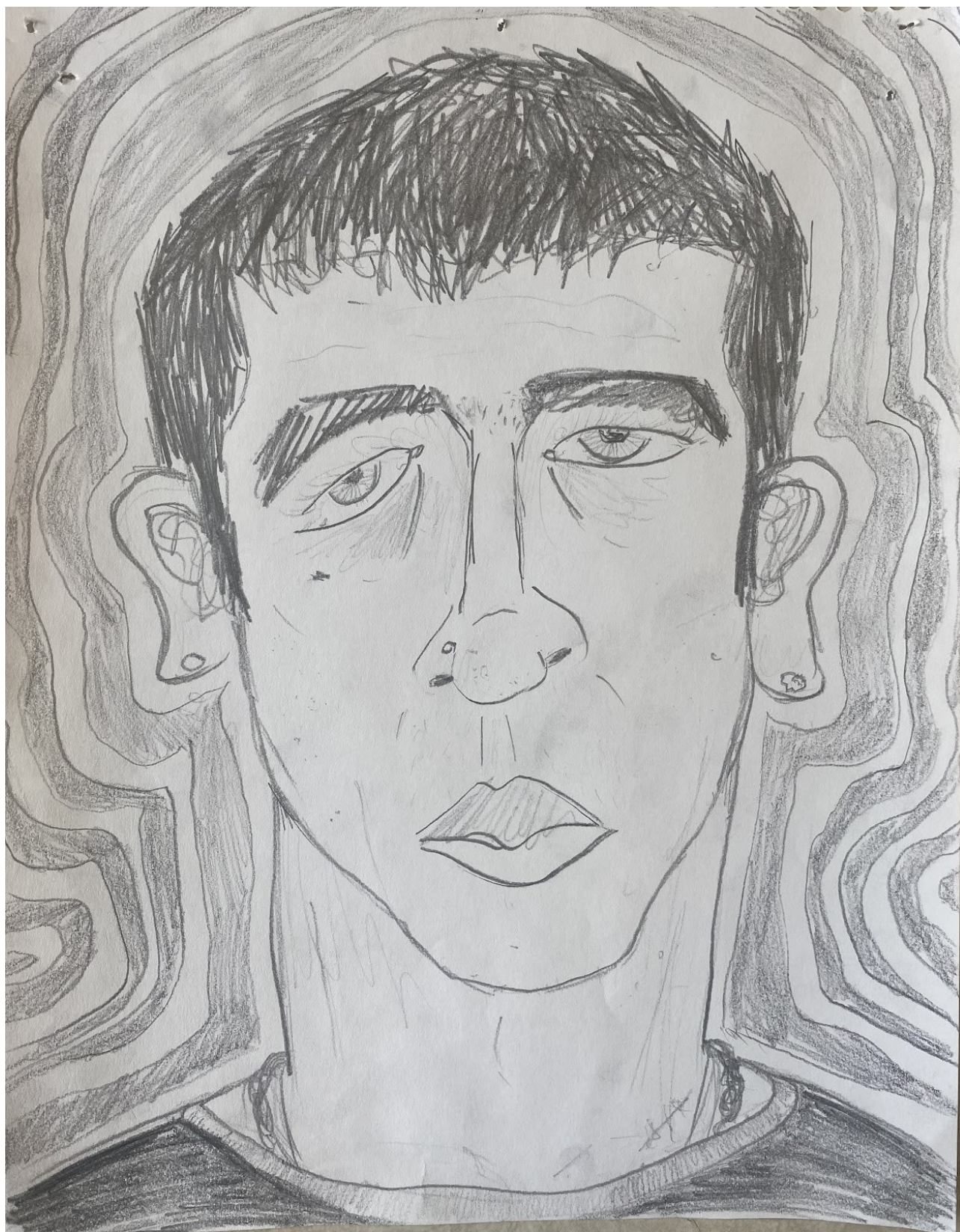
Phoenix Coombs
Ink on paper



Phoenix Coombs
Pencil crayon on paper



Phoenix Coombs
Digital art



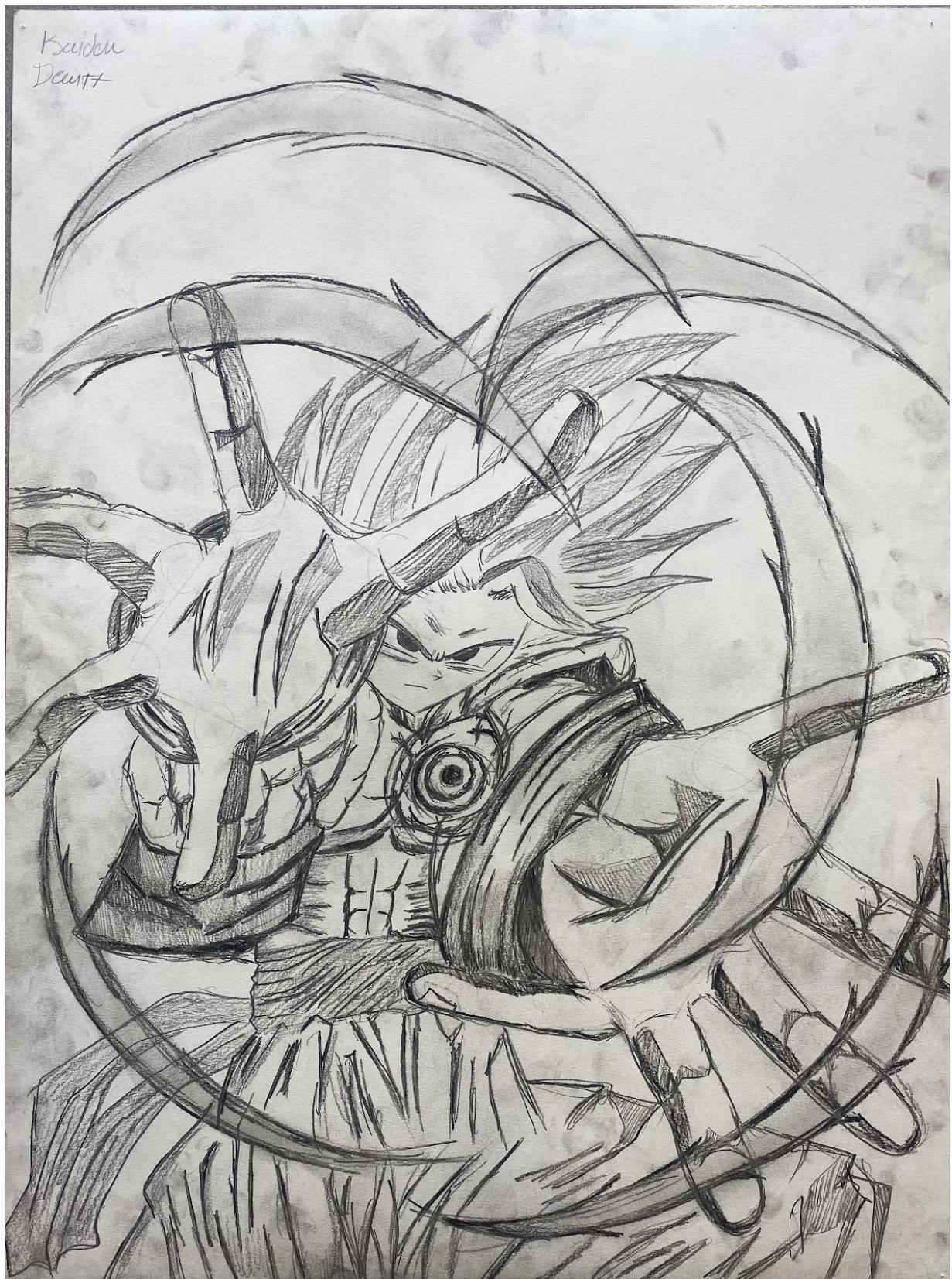
Aiden Vaillant
Pencil on paper



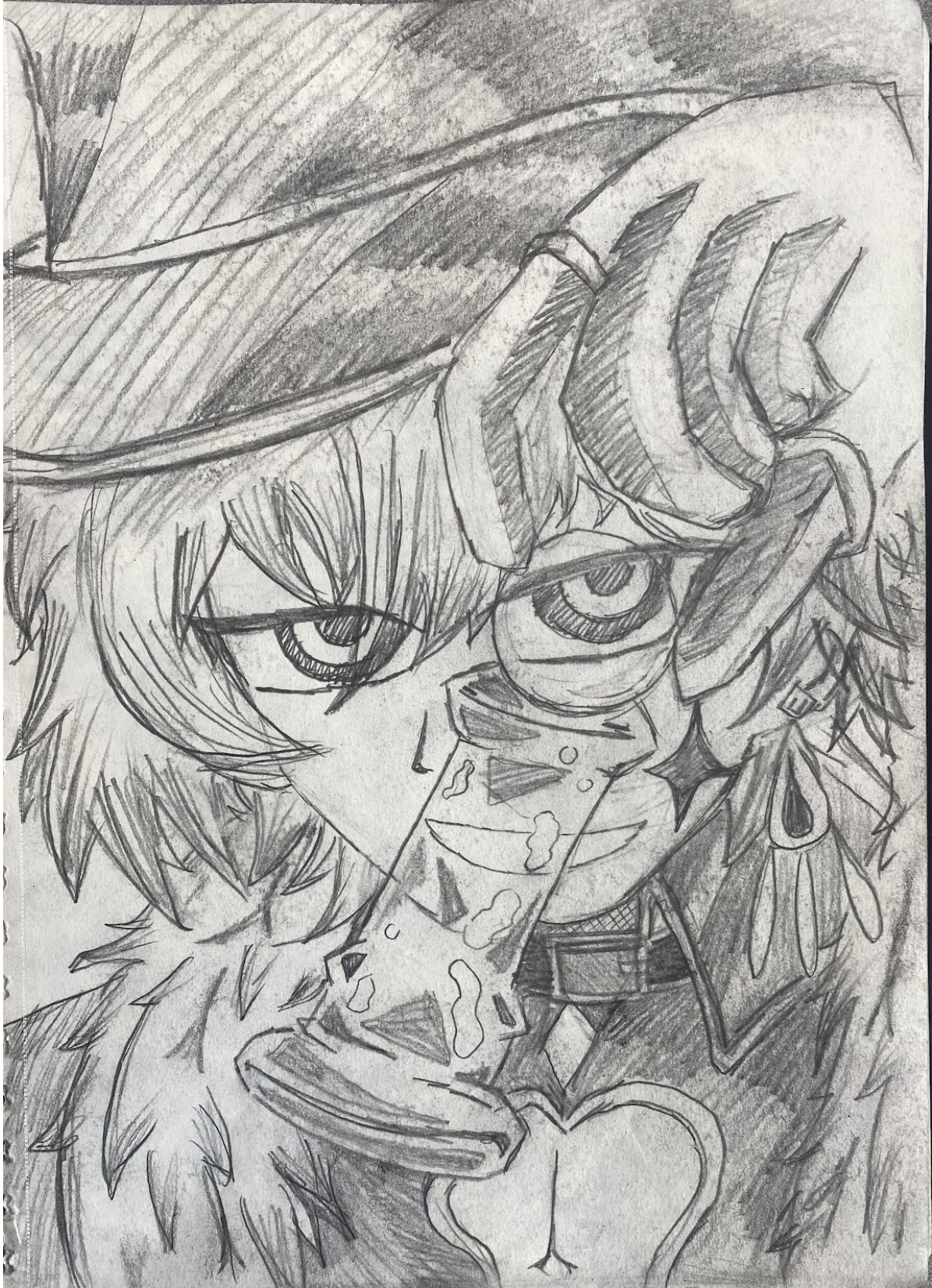
Aiden Vaillant
Coloured pencil on paper



Aiden Vaillant
Coloured pencil on paper



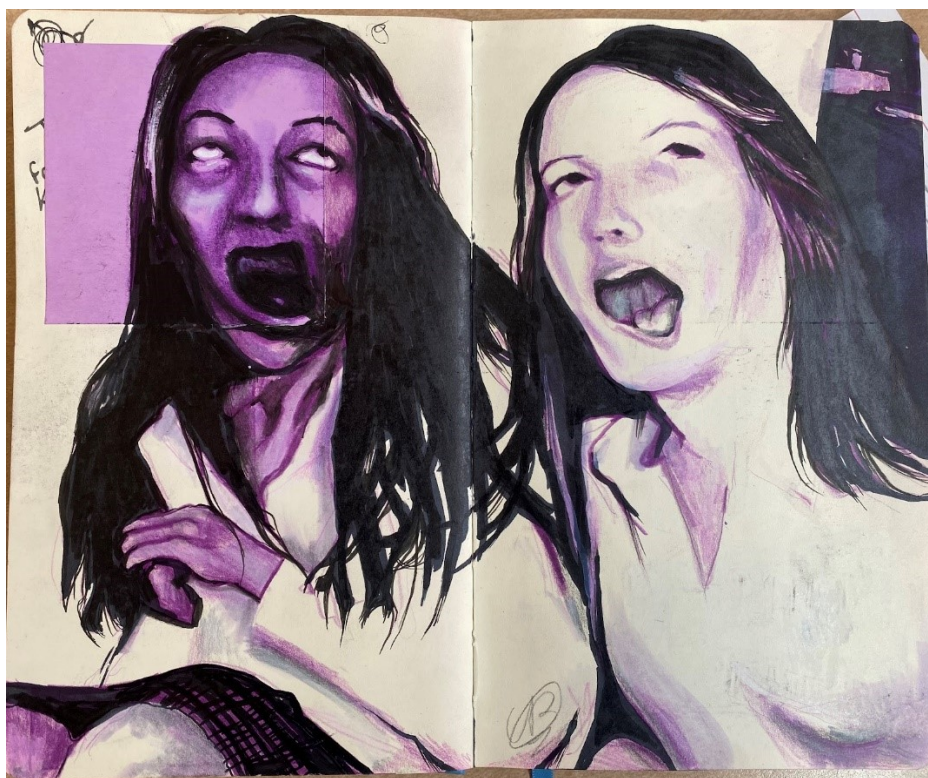
Kaidon Dewitt
Pencil on paper



Kaidon Dewitt
Pencil on paper



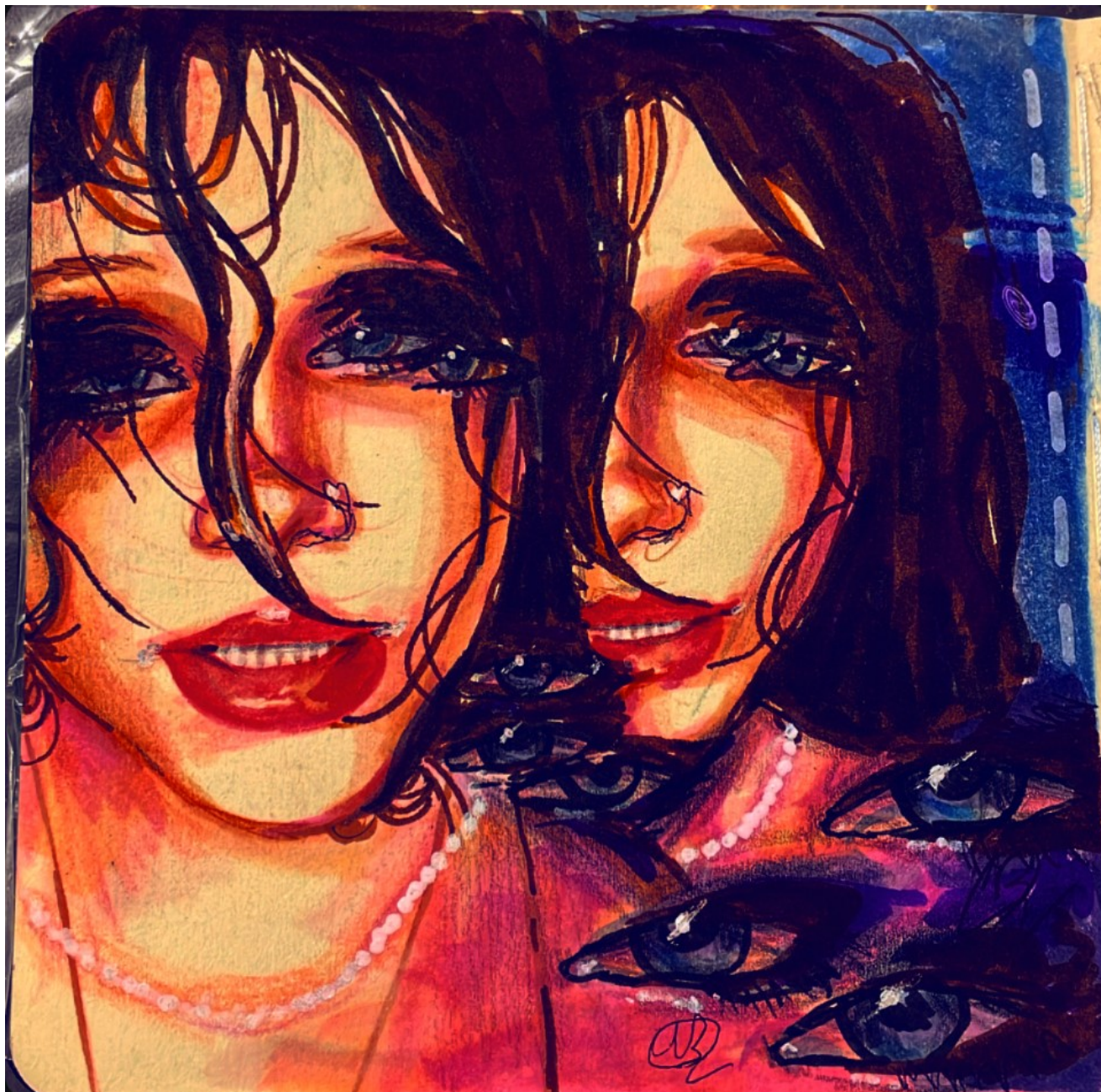
Kaidon Dewitt
Coloured pencil on paper



Kina
Mixed media in sketchbook



Kina
Mixed media in sketchbook



Kina
Mixed media on paper



Kina
Mixed media on paper



Kina
Mixed media on paper



Kina
Pen and ink on paper



Kina
Mixed media on paper



Jackson Knowles
Digital photography



Jackson Knowles
Digital photography



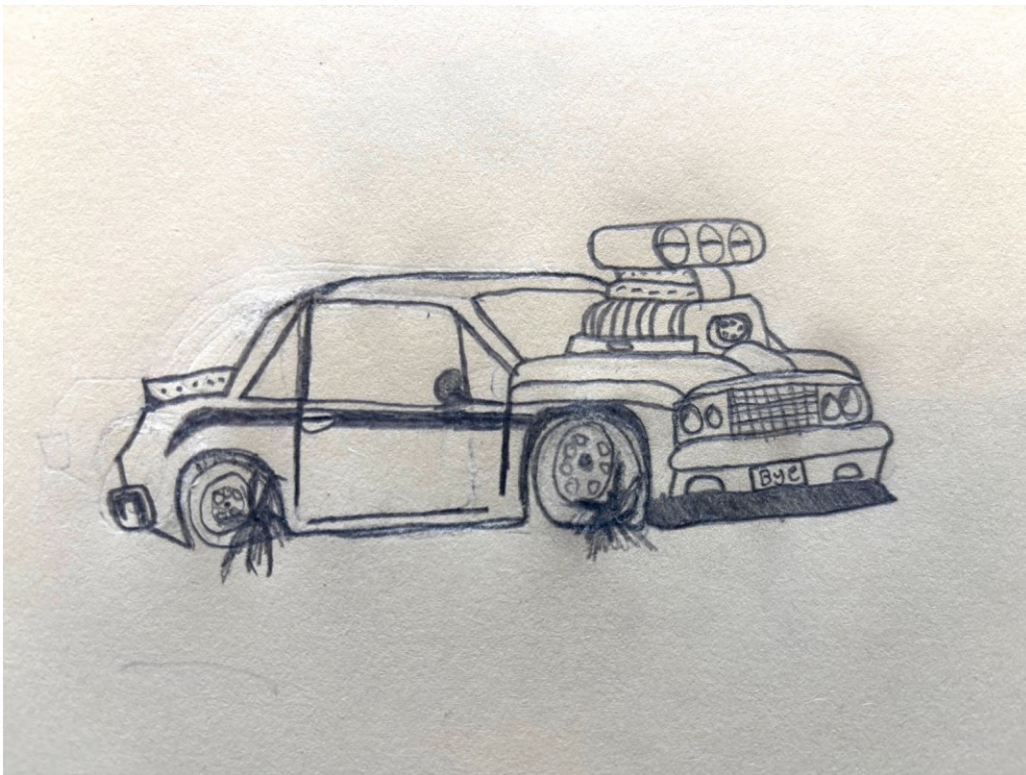
Jackson Knowles
Digital photography



Kayliegh Woodrow
Wood burning



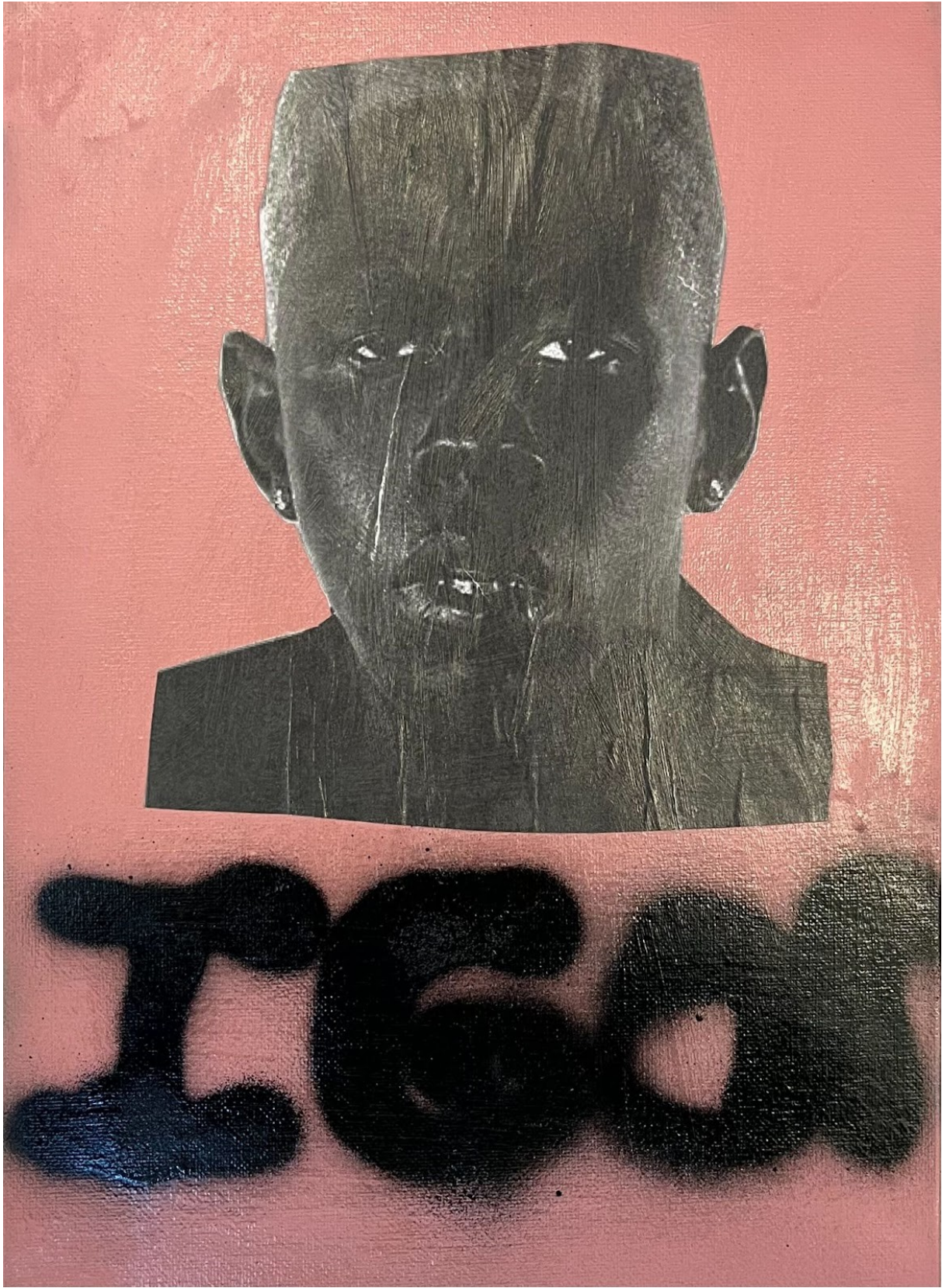
Kayliegh Woodrow
Acrylic paint on wood



Jonas
Pencil sketch on paper



Marley
Bleach painting on fabric



Marley
Image transfer and spray paint



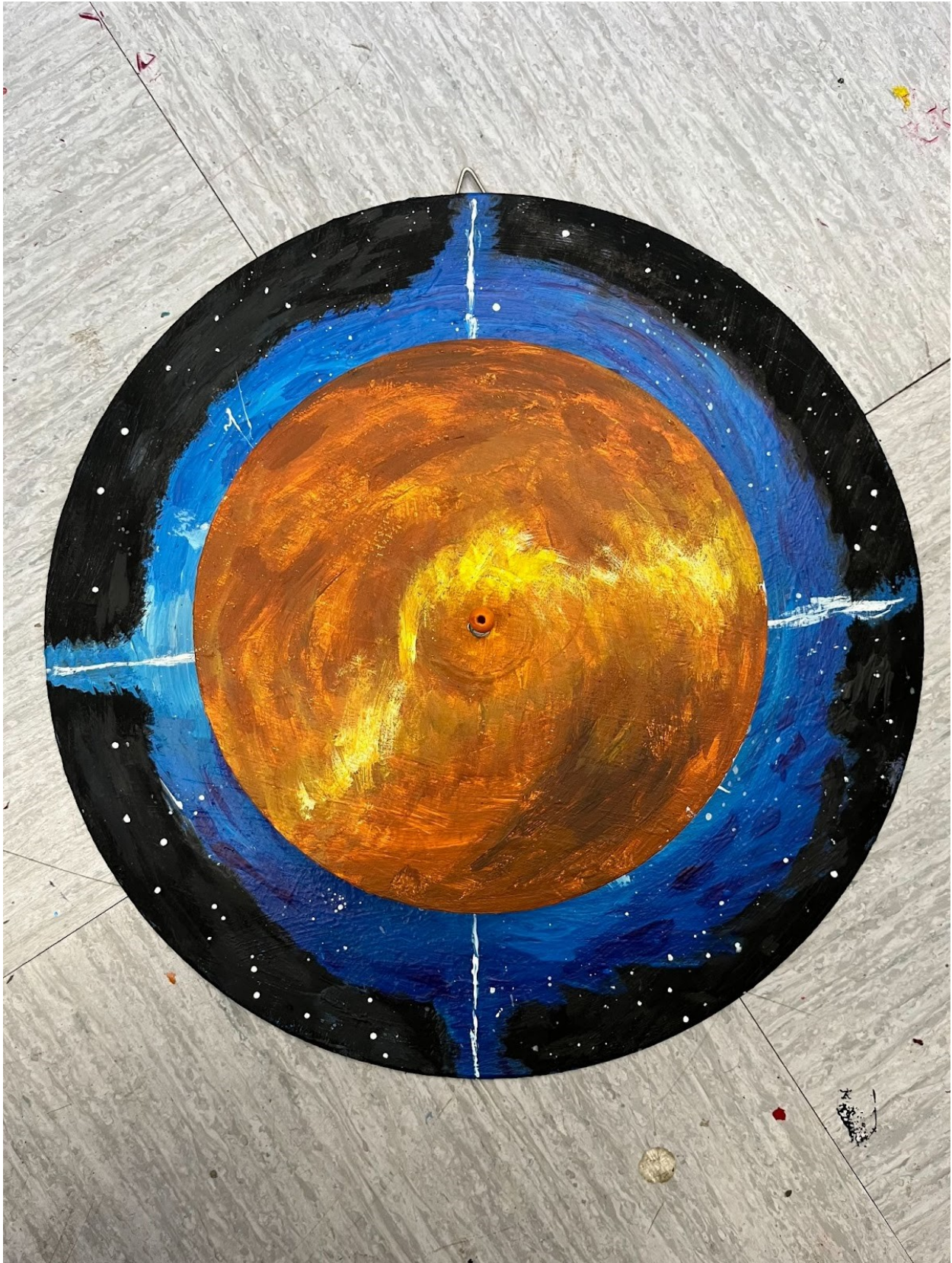
Robert Szymkowiak
Fabric, thread, paper



Robert Szymkowiak
Acrylic paint and coloured pencil on wood



Christopher Coveyduck
Acrylic and spray paint



Christopher Coveyduck
Mixed media, vinyl, acrylic paint



Christopher Coveyduck
Digital art



Vix
Photography and digital art



Vix
Papier maché and acrylic paint



Ellie
Mixed media, recycled and found objects



Mat
Light painting / digital photography



Mat
Digital photography



Shaughn
Paint markers on pressed wood



Dayvid
Acrylic paint on beans



Lex Gomez
Acrylic paint on beans



James Martineau
Mixed media sculpture



Gunner Jones
Watercolour on paper



Arzo Hussaini
Mixed media sculpture



Makhi Terrio
Acrylic paint on canvas



Laila
Acrylic paint on paper



Gavin Wlasenko-Mayer
Magic Potion

Tag reads: \$Sale! 19.99. Gets rid of two random bones. Buy Now! Wow!

How to use: Take a sip and watch two of your bones be gone and never come back. Best before 1945, not safe for kids.



Gavin Wlasenko-Mayer
Acrylic on canvas



Jayden Malo
Acrylic on canvas



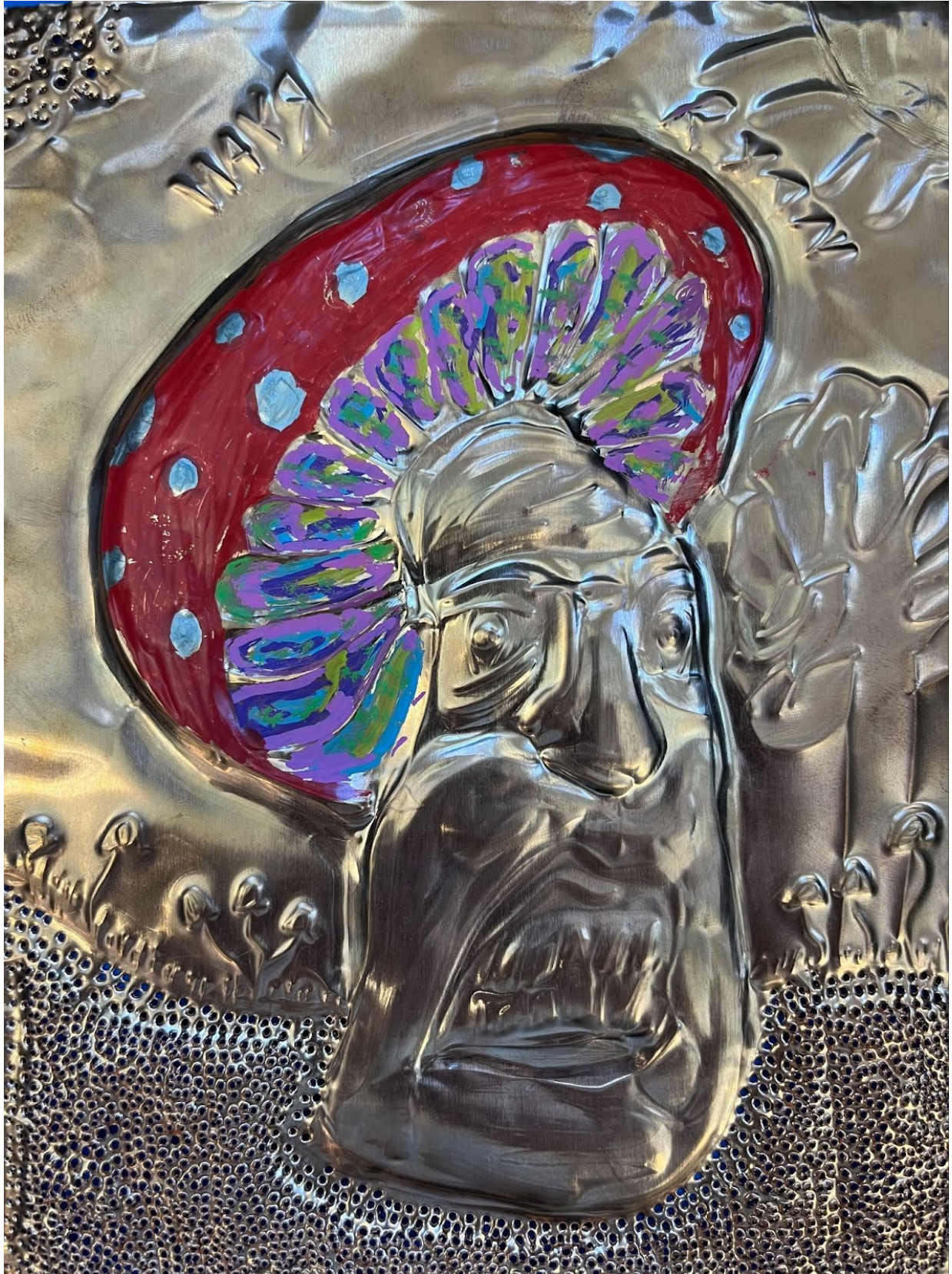
Jayden Malo
Acrylic and spray paint



Jordan Narrainen Hylton
Acrylic on canvas



Jordan Malo
Acrylic on canvas



Ryan Baki
Acrylic paint and metal embossing



Logan Lafortune
Wood burning



Melina Balogh-Grenier
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas



Kimisha
Acrylic paint on wood



Lily Clarke-Gauthier
Digital Art



Logan Roter
Acrylic paint on canvas



The gods (theatrical)
Maya Hertsman
Digital photograph



Maya Hertsman
Digital photograph



Outside Plato's cave or something idk

Maya Hertsman
Digital photograph



Maya Hertsman
Digital photograph



Inconsolable pathetic snowman

Maya Hertsman

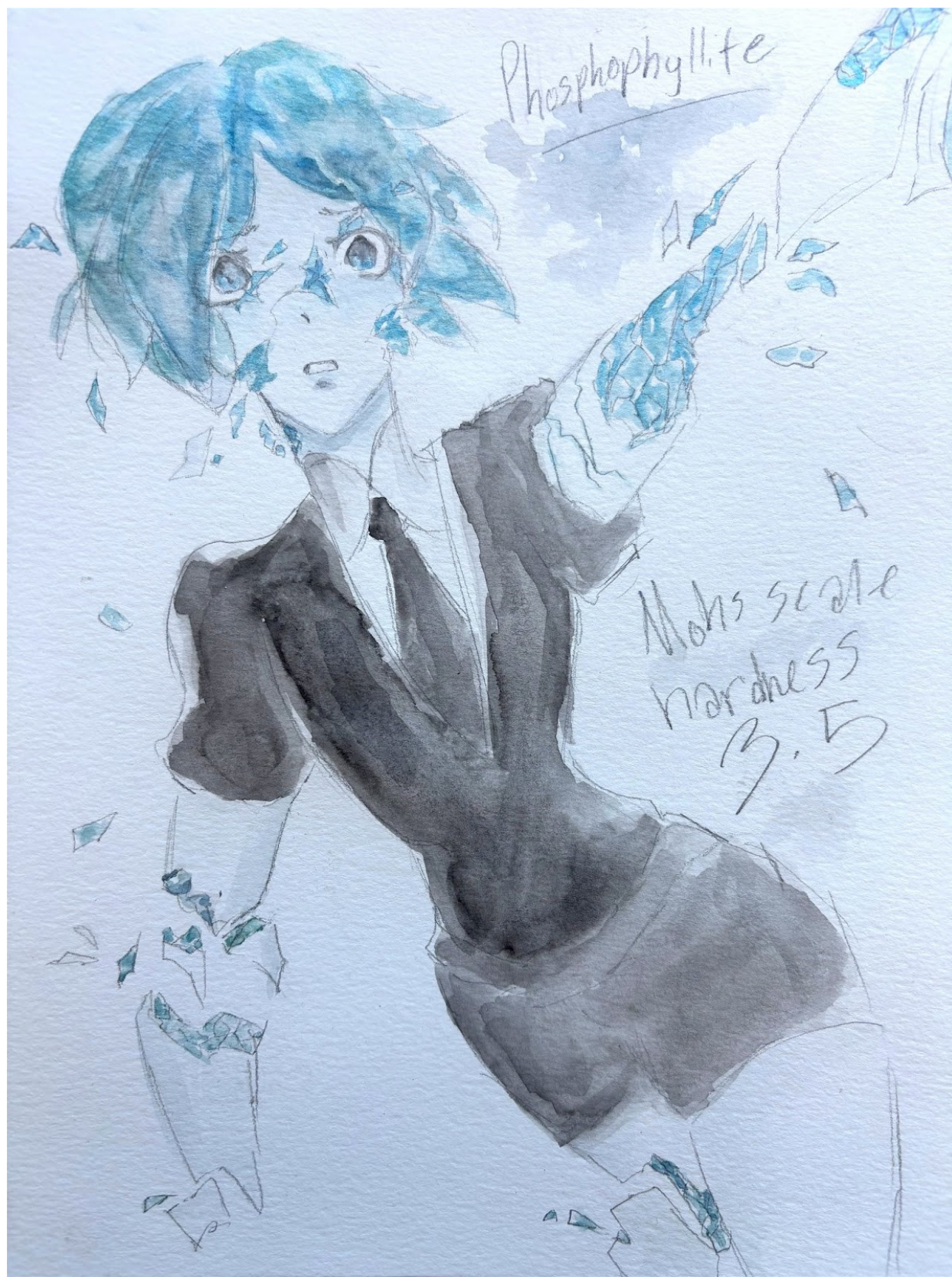
Digital photograph



Atlas
Mixed media collage



Atlas
Watercolour and markers



Atlas
Watercolour on paper



Meny Alkobi
Acrylic paint on canvas



Mimi
Acrylic paint and markers



Shylah Balcombe
Watercolour on paper



Shylah Balcombe
Acrylic paint on canvas



Neesa Campbell
Acrylic paint and spray paint



Olive Justicia-Acosta
Bleach painting on fabric



Olive Justicia-Acosta
Acrylic on canvas



ShyAnna Cecire
Acrylic on canvas



Olivia
Wood burning, water colour on wood



Rebecca Harvey
Upcycled wooden duck, fabric, styrofoam, acrylic paint



Yasmina Krsteski
Acrylic paint and glitter on canvas



Yasmina Krsteski
Bleach painting on fabric