



2019 Fall Art & Literature Magazine  
Timber Creek High School

# through eyes



# cover art

raining clouds from watery storms by alexis holmquist

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# imagination

poem by amaranth

My eyes see many things  
Like the ocean guarding our states  
The gray feathers of a pigeon's wings  
The uniqueness of others' traits

What you see is different than what I see  
You may see the lands of foreign places  
Exotic animals running around free  
The familiar looks of your friends' faces

I imagine things unknown in your eyes  
Islands floating among a pale blue sky  
Strangers, unknown to me, and their dreary sighs  
Dragons and angels, hovering high

What I see inspires such  
I know it is not that much





art by kiana sosa



*Through my eyes.* I envision difference  
And to all else, it makes no sense

# the in-between

story by henry hernandez

My eyes open and I see my body in a hospital bed. What the hell? I look around the room. It is a bland tan color. The decor is also bland. Everything about this hospital room is bland. My body's eyes don't open. As the life support machine tries to make my unwilling lungs to breathe, I take a deep breath outside of my earthly body.

My family is nowhere to be seen. I am seated in a love seat facing my human body. My body lays still— unmoving. It is almost as if I am in a coma.

"You are in a coma," says a voice behind me. I whirl my head around only to find nobody there. I turn back around and see my sister in front of me, wearing an all white A-line dress with lace sleeves.

"What?" I ask, not believing that my actual dead sister is standing in front of me. Then again, why should I believe? I'm outside of my body and I can see my freaking dead sister! She looks at me and cocks her head. "Hello to you too, Evelyn."

"What is this?" I ask, very much confused.

"The hospital," Amanda replies.

I glare at her. She realizes this isn't a time to joke around. What the hell is going on?

"You know, Evelyn, it wasn't your time to go."

"I died on my own terms, Amanda," I retort.

"You're not dead, Evelyn," Amanda replies.

"I can see that. I clearly failed."

Amanda seems taken aback. She pauses, ponders, and looks back at me. "Why did you do it, Evelyn?"

I look up at her as if the answer isn't obvious

already. I thought angels knew everything because they're the children of God or something like that.

"Your suicide came to our family as a surprise. After you died, all the pressure came onto me. All your dreams— Mom and Dad made me take them and make them my own. They upped the standards for me out of hurt and sorrow. The pain you caused ruined my life."

She looks at me, slightly surprised, but overall calm. "That may be right. But I know in all of my being that I did not die on my own terms, E. I wanted to be there with you and Mom and Dad. I had no thought to die, I was so happy. E, you made me happy." She crosses to the bed and laces her angelic fingers into my earthly body's fingers. Even though she is by the bed and not next to me at all, I feel her hands in mine. "Angels can't touch wandering souls. This is as close as I'm going to get to touch you."

Amanda looks down at my comatose body and trails her fingers across it. She looks back up at me. "Follow me through that door."

A door erects itself from the ground by the foot of my bed. She opens the door and disappears through. I feel my jaw drop, but I will myself through the door.

Stepping through the door, I realize that I'm entering my bedroom. It's different than what I remember. It's dimmer and oddly artificial... almost like a faded memory. My brown wooden desk stands by the window. The curtains are drawn. Amanda approaches the center of the room and twirls. She breaths in the air as if she is alive.



"It looks the same," she says, looking at me.  
"Yeah. I didn't change it," I reply, looking down.  
Every six months, we would remodel our rooms together. It was tradition. Amanda has been dead for eight months. I look back up at her. She seems disappointed. No, she is disappointed. I disappointed her and our tradition.  
"Will you change it?" she asks, hopefully.  
"No."  
"E, why?" She sounds surprised, almost taken aback.  
"I won't be alive to do it, Amanda."  
She looks away. I see her rub her cheeks with the back of her hand. I didn't know that angels could cry. She turns back to me.  
"You will survive. But that's only if you choose to." She turns to the bedroom door and makes her way towards it. She opens the door and walks through, disappearing in a flash of light. I hurry after her, not wanting to be left behind.  
I walk through the door, and I'm back in the hospital room. Except, I'm not in the bed anymore. Instead, there's a frail old woman. She lays peacefully as the monitors are turned off by the interns.  
An Asian doctor speaks to a family composed of a father in a suit, a mother in a day dress, and two young boys running around the room with no concept of death. The parents are crying while the doctor relays the information. The scene played in front of me makes no sound, as if I am deaf or watching a silent film.  
"That's you," Amanda says out loud. She stands tall next to me. "That's who you're going to be in the future." I look at her in disbelief.  
"There's no way that's me. I chose to die now! That's my final decision!" I yell.  
Amanda keeps her cool. "Is it?"  
"Yes!" I scream. "I want to die!"  
"And let others die? You can change countless lives. But you can't do that if you're dead."  
"Somebody else can save them," I argue.  
"But this is your destiny," Amanda replies, pointing to the scene relaying before me. Then the image goes away and we are in a black void of

nothingness. Somehow we stand on nothing and stay level.

"No, it's what Mom and Dad wanted my destiny to be after your plan went to shambles. It's your fault. I want to die!"

"I understand how you feel. But deep down, what do—"

There is a sharp piercing sound. Instantly we are transported back to the hospital. I am in the room looking over my body.

I look over to Amanda.

"CHARGE TO 200!" I hear someone yell.

Amanda looks back at me.

"Make the right choice," Amanda whispers to me. Although she is across the room, I hear her crystal clear.

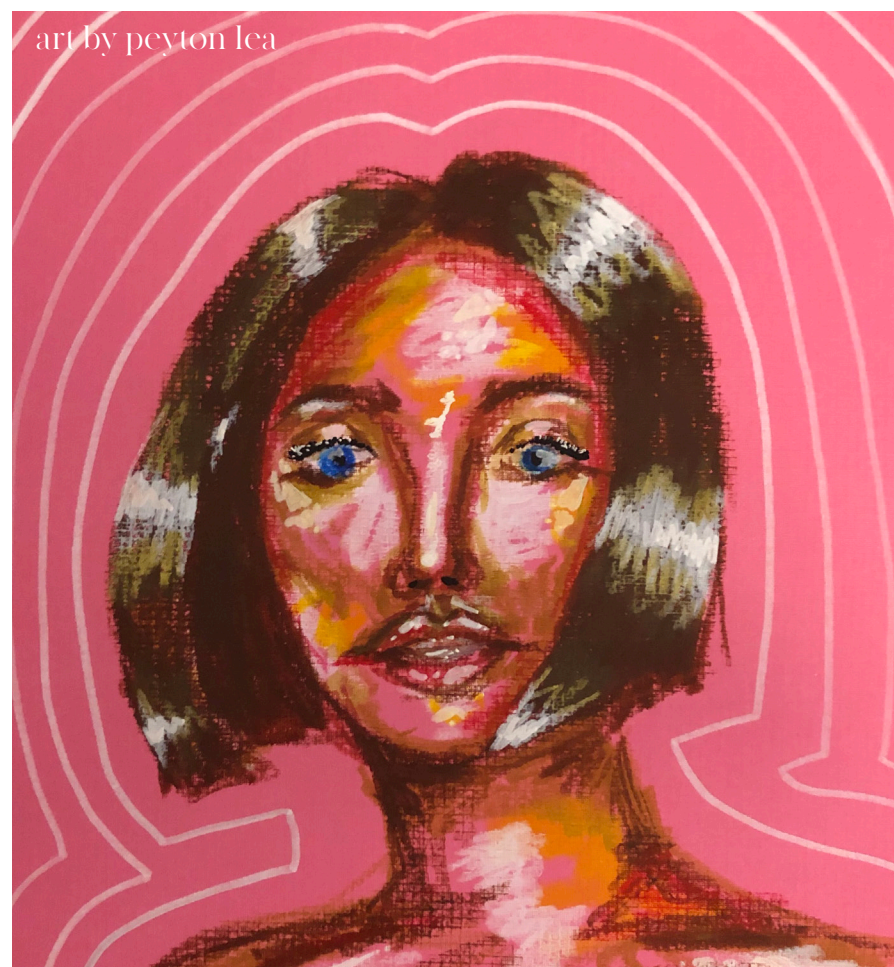
I take a breath and close my eyes.

I open my eyes. Amanda is gone.

She ran out of time. I guess Heaven is no different from Earth. Time is an illusion. And no one, not even angels sent from God, ever seems to have enough.

Standing over me is the doctor. He strangely looks like Jesus.

"Welcome back, Evelyn."



# brush port

story by jaycie lavin

Log 1 10/21/94 16:43

I made it. I'm actually here and ---  
I'm alone.

Y'know, it's pretty quiet here. So quiet I can hear my heart pounding in my chest like a jackhammer.

Log 2 10/21/94 16:50

I've been walking around for about ten minutes and every building is either completely demolished or barely keeping it together. As for the smell...think about spoiled milk, rotten eggs and old European cheese mixed together like a smoothie.

There is one thing I find quite surprising, though. Even when everything is falling apart, the foliage is absolutely beautiful. The grass is freshly cut and bright green, and the flowers are glorious shades of pink, red and yellow. It's astounding.

Log 3 10/21/94 17:10

I'm starting to realize that whoever's listening to me ramble probably has no idea who I am. Let's fix that. My name is James Crawford. I'm a reporter for a newspaper down in Missouri. Well, not really. Y'see, I could never find anything interesting to write about, so I never published anything. It wasn't until about a year ago I finally found something. Brush Port. You might be asking yourself, "what's Brush Port?" Well, Brush Port is an abandoned town just outside of Oregon. No one knows how or why it happened, but there are plenty of theories.

One theory that peaks my interest is that Brush Port was evacuated because of a radiation leak. If that's the case, then toxic fumes sure know how to garden. Despite all the stories, I came here to find the true reason this town is abandoned ---

And nothing is going to stop me.

Log 4 10/22/94 6:30

It's been approximately fourteen hours since I took

my first steps into Brush Port. other than what I mentioned in the second log, the only new discoveries I've made are what this town is like at night.

The quiet aura of Brush Port got thicker, almost like a blanket of fog. It was strange, and I could have sworn that something out there that I couldn't see ---

And it was watching me.

On top of that, it felt like I was spending the night at the North Pole. But, hey! It's morning now, so I can look forward to breakfast!

Log 5 10/22/94 12:05

Ok, so after breakfast, I decided to explore the town a little more, and you'll never believe what I found.

I found a vegetable garden with veggies as ripe as a peach in the warm summer sun.

I'm starting to wonder if people still live here. If they do, then I haven't found them yet.

Log 6 10/22/94 13:30

I've been thinking...

Maybe I should go to the nearby town and see if anybody's willing to answer a few questions.

Log 7 10/22/94 16:07

So I've just arrived at the neighboring town and everyone's staring at me like I'm some sort of monster. My best guess on why is that I probably look like I've been run over by a bus due to the fact that I've had zero access to running water for the past few days. But that's besides the point. I'm here to ask people about Brush Port, not so they can comment on my looks.

Log 8 10/22/94 20:20

After hours of searching, I finally found someone! She told me her name is Sally Walker and that she knows a guy who can answer some questions for me. The only downside is that I have to wait until morning to speak to him.



At least I get to sleep somewhere warm tonight.

Log 9 10/23/94 2:30

I'm so euphoric I can't sleep! I hope this guy won't mind if I record everything!

Log 10 10/23/94 7:35

Sally and I are currently on our way to meet up with the man at a local café. Earlier this morning, Ms. Walker filled me in a little on who the guy is. She told me his name is Toby Write and that he use to live in Brush Port.

If anyone can give me answers, it's him.

Log 11 10/23/94 17:55

The interview was incredible! Mr. Write welcomed me with a warm smile and we all sat down to chat. Our conversation started out with stories of what Brush Port was like when Mr. Write was a young boy. Based on those tales, I'd say Brush Port was a lovely town to live in.

When I got the chance, I asked Toby about the abandonment of such a pleasant town.

His kind face grew dark as he frowned. With a deep sigh, he told me that the mayor called for an evacuation due to an outbreak of some kind. When I pressed him to tell me what the outbreak was, Mr. Write quickly tried to change the subject.

In conclusion, he knows something about the outbreak.

After that awkward moment, I decided it would be best if I left, so we said our goodbyes.

Log 12 10/24/94 2:45

Can't sleep, again. But this is --- different.

I feel like there's something out here with me, but I don't see anything. To be honest, it's kinda creeping me out.

Log 13 10/24/94 5:47

Thought I would go exploring since I couldn't sleep, and I haven't really found anything of interest--- Wait... What's that?

Log 14 10/24/94 5:50

Ok ok ok, so---

I found something. I have no clue what it is, but it's definitely uglier than a wet koala. Maybe if I get a closer look, I'll be able to tell what this thing is.

Log 15 10/24/94 5:55

I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is that I managed to get a better look at it. The bad news is that I can't speak higher than a whisper or else this thing might hear me.

I should probably describe this thing for you guys.

It appears to be at least 8 feet tall and as skinny as a toothpick. The claws on it's gnarly hands are sharper than a sword, but that's not the worst part.

This beast's eyes are about as small as a pea, but their blacker than night. Just looking at those eyes sends shivers down my spine---

Crack

Oh shoot---



art by lauren quattlebaum

## **pour** poem by p.b.s.

you fill me with love  
but i am a broken vase  
with self-induced cracks  
that litter my body  
from which your love  
leaks out from within  
you see it flow  
but still you keep filling  
slowly applying pieces of tape  
to cover my cracks  
and make sure it stays

i wish i could fix myself  
and keep it all in  
but i need your help  
so keep applying those patches  
until my cracks seal for good  
and then i can fill you  
with the same love  
that you give to me

## **drops** poem by p.b.s.

i stare out my bedroom window  
at the falling rain drops  
the sound of thunder  
drowned out by the volume  
of my own

t  
h  
o  
u  
g  
t  
s

## **safe haven** poem by p.b.s.

where do i stay  
when im feeling shaken?  
where do i hide  
when i'm feeling hated?  
where do i rest  
with a mind that keeps raving?  
where do i sail  
when i'm not worth saving?  
wherever you are;  
you are my safe haven

## **pretending** poem by p.b.s.

i open up my closet  
where i choose to stay  
and ponder which mask  
i will put on today

with a permanent frown  
that i force into smile  
a tiring fix i've found  
to work for awhile

even with all my friends  
i still look at this life  
through a dirty cracked lens  
clouded by my own strife

the fact that i must face  
is im still pretending  
truthfully my case is  
approaching the ending



art by lauren quattlebaum

# skewer



# water wonderland

story by gato

I'm sixteen, and I'm tired. Tired of being me. Tired of walking the same hallowed halls of Rushmore High School day after day. Tired of sitting in a classroom, hearing the teacher's words but not comprehending. Tired of feeling like I'm not physically there. Like I'm three feet behind myself, watching my life from behind a pane of glass.

Once at home, the world is still, but the walls still suffocate me. The stale air keeps me only barely alive, teetering on the precipice of something else. I do nothing but stare at the shapes on the ceiling until I can no longer stand the imaginary images in front of my eyes. Without thinking, my legs carry me out the door.

I set out at sunset. I walk for nearly an hour. The silence of the empty streets calms me. The universe doesn't care about me. It won't even know I'm gone. The maze of streets is more forgiving than the labyrinth of hallways. It keeps no roof between you and the universe you answer to. I take the silence as a sign that I made the right choice. After the deed is done, it will just be me, and the darkness, and the silence, and the peace.

At long last, I reach the lake. I know my life will never amount to anything. Why not end it? Death is the only way out of the labyrinth of hallways.

I decided drowning would be a fitting death. I will die like I lived: with all my senses dialed down to zero and with the only sound in my ears being the rushing of my own blood. I take off my jacket and shoes and leave them by the shore as the last evidence of my existence. I chose this lake because it was man-made for fishing, not for swimming. When I jump in, it will be a straight shot down.

I stand with my toes at the edge of a rock and

look down at the murky waters. I take my last breath, close my eyes, and embrace the darkness. I jump.

I swim down, down, down, as far as I can go, eyes squeezed shut. To my surprise, the world does not grow quiet. It becomes louder the deeper I swim. The warbling noise, although louder than anything I had ever heard before, makes me feel safe somehow. I open my eyes. The water, once muddy and black, is now crystal blue. I see it in every direction. It envelops my body in its embrace, and yet it's so open. More open than the maze of streets, and infinitely more open than the labyrinth of hallways. It feels free. I breathe in and taste the most refreshing air I have ever breathed. It moves through every part of my body in a way oxygen never did. It's invigorating. It fills me with unfathomable energy.

I kick my legs as hard as I can until my head breaks the surface of the water. I swim to shore and hoist myself up the same rock I jumped off of. As I sit, soaking wet, I look out over the lake. It glows in the moonlight. I see every ripple of water and feel the cadence of its movement in my blood. I hear every cricket and passing car in the distance. I look up at the starry sky and see the universe for the first time. It sees me right back.

I stand up on my rock and walk back the direction I came from, grabbing my jacket and shoes but not bothering to put them on. It feels cold, but it's good to feel. I feel the chill down to the very marrow of my bones, and I love it. As long as I feel, and experience, I'll be happy. It's high time to experience the universe for myself.





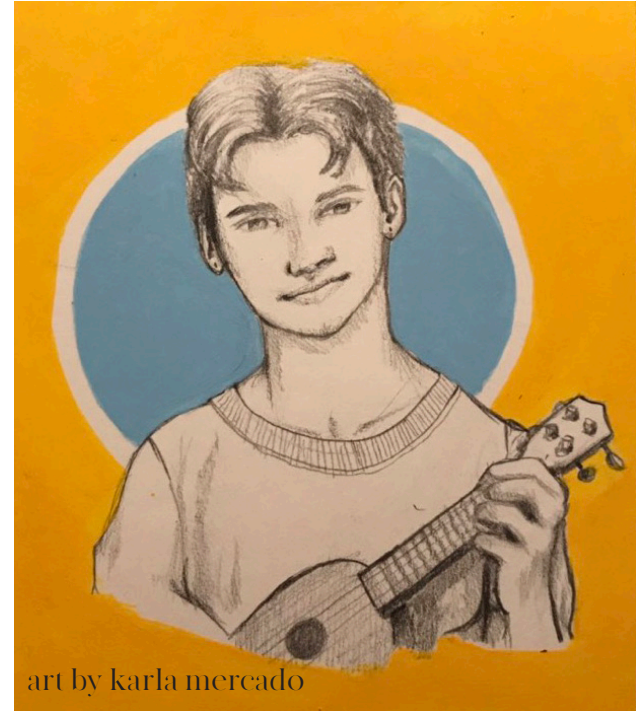
# where i was at the *end* of the world

story by ethan mitchell

What if..... what if you only had 8 hours left to live? What would you do? Would you hug your family? Would you see your friends? Would you go to your favorite place and simply fall asleep? Or try to build a bunker to survive the end of the world? Well, let me tell you what I did. I met with my family one last time. I hugged and kissed each one of them. I cried with them and laughed with them. Then I called all of my friends and told them to meet at our favorite place. I drove there and we talked, we laughed and we cried together. We held each other for a while then we parted ways to be with our families. But I...I called her. I went to her house. She ran out and hugged me while she was in tears. I held her as tight as I could then we drove to our favorite place. The mountains. We cried and laughed in that old

beat up Subaru. we recalled the night we met. The first date we went on. By the time we got to the mountains, the sky was already darkening. We climbed and climbed till we reached the peak at the top of the world and we just stood there holding each other for awhile. Then just as the flash hit she turned to me. Still sobbing and said:

"I'm so scared."  
I simply smiled and lifted her chin. "So am I. But I'm here with you, and I wouldn't change a damn thing." I kissed her just as the shockwave hit and we turned into dust as the world shattered.



art by karla mercado



# diamond waves

story by selah clark

The boat shook, the water tossing it forwards and backwards and backwards and forwards.

Bora's hands held on tightly to the smooth oak wood of the skiff. Her eyes squeezed themselves shut, forcing unshed tears out of them. She tried desperately to remember how she got into this situation.

Had she been on a large boat? Had she gotten lost? What happened?

Bora bit her lip as she realized that she couldn't remember. More tears poured out of eyes. She couldn't -

The boat shook again tearing Bora out of her thoughts. Right. Storm.

Lightning flashed overhead and a thunderous boom echoed. The young girl flinched and unconsciously gripped the tiny boat harder than before. The wood splintered into uneven chunks and stabbed the palm of her dark, caramel covered hand. A steady flow of blood trailed from the wound and tainted the water below.

The boat was jerked forward once again and Bora's heart skipped a beat. She couldn't keep going like this. She needed to find help or she would die here.

Her eyes darted around the waters and scanned the skies. Something twinkles in her peripheral vision. The girl snaps her head to the side and an audible whoosh follows the movement.

Bora feels a smile spread over her face. Maybe there was a boat! O or a lighthouse! Maybe- Bora's thoughts come to an abrupt halt. Her body freezes. The entire world freezes. 'What is this?' she questions. It was beautiful.

The waves that had been causing the girl's torment rose up high and curled downwards, creating a foamy effect when they landed. The moonlight shone down and illuminated each individual droplet making the water twinkle and shine like the rarest of diamonds.

Bora looked upon the waves in awe even as they got close. She looked in awe when they came down on her boat. She could feel only awe as the diamond waves finally engulfed her.

# doubt

poem by p.b.s.

the woodpecker sits in my tree  
and strips me of my bark  
she treks inside  
deep into the dark  
her pecking is relentless  
as she drills even deeper  
it leaves me restless  
but i was never a good sleeper  
she builds her nest and lays her eggs  
as they hatch within my brain  
she settles into the home that she's created  
and whispers her name, and it's one that is  
hated  
she croaks with harshness as she lets it out  
and i am afraid, because her name is doubt.

# the train

poem by pal

though the train is relentlessly screaming on its  
path  
i reach for the tracks  
grasping desperately to stop the train named  
time  
we whip past every scenic mountain view al-  
most as soon as we arrive  
tears fall on my eyelashes and are swiftly  
brushed off by the hand of the wind, stroking  
my cheeks and combing through my hair  
hopelessly, i try to live in the scenic views,  
the glimpses of a sparkling lake or mountain  
peak sprinkled with snow  
and, every so often  
the train stops for just a second, and i get to  
spend a tiny lifetime in the moment  
wrapped up by the once in a lifetime view  
but inevitably  
the train keeps going

i fear that one day i will be so far from where i  
boarded the train, that i wont remember these  
little lifetimes  
the mountains and lakes,  
ones i spend chasing  
ones i spent barreling towards  
ones i passed and watched as they shrunk in  
the distance



# autopilot

poem by clementine beia

i'm so tired  
yes i am an insomniac

but it is not because of my lack  
of rest

i physically feel fine

its something heavier

deep

in

my heart

and in my lifeless sighs

i'm tired of

people  
hope  
loneliness  
&  
pain

I've been so wrung-ed out by everyone  
that my heart is on auto pilot

waiting for something to finally set it  
back to

drive

# hem of my skirt

story by goldfish girl

since i was much younger you've held on  
tightly to the ends of my life.  
never close enough to love, never far enough  
to give closure and you're so determined to  
hold onto the hem of my skirt that it's taunt  
and ripping at the seams.  
i'm realizing that i've been running in place  
my whole life, not ever realizing you were  
controlling the strings.  
so now, after years of my blood being used  
for your pen i'm finally learning why i was so  
drained.  
you used that pen to forge my name into a  
book that kept me captive and quiet for so  
long.  
and you could count on my silence because  
the grip you had around my neck was just suf-  
focating enough i couldn't scream.  
so i've been coping with this exhausting si-  
lence since you planted it in my bones when i  
was too young to realize your faults.  
since i was too young to realize that the walls  
of a house aren't meant to quiet the cries of  
my mother, or to protect my sisters, or to stifle  
your sour scent from our noses.  
but i'm older now, and i can see every part of  
you now.  
so please.  
let go of the hem of my skirt before it takes on  
more strain than it can bear.



# the little ole flower

story by alexis boardingham

Me, why me? Out of every one of us, they choose me. Do they not understand that they had just ripped me from my family? And that now I will no longer grow? I remember being able to just let my white soft petals flow through the majestic air. Having the bees come have lunch with me, and having the nice warm sun kiss my face and the cold rain refresh me. Now all of that is ruined when these two little goblin looking things picked me! Not to sound selfish or anything, but these two had thousands of flowers to choose from. WWHHHYYYY ME! Thoughts began to flow through my stem: what will they do with me now? Will I be torn apart? Will they take my petals and

leave me bald?

After a couple of days had passed with just being held 24/7 they threw me in the cold solid soil, not sure where I was. Then all of a sudden I was lifeless! The last thing I remember was this small ugly foot coming down on my beautiful vibrant face. The human didn't even seem to care that I was resting there on the dry ground. It just came down with so much force that it took my breath right out of me!

art by karla mercado



# sunrise

poem by samantha anderson

I watch as the sun rises over rolling green hills. I lean my elbows on the cold stone frame of the paneless window I'm looking through and smile at the beautiful sight. Below me, gardeners are trimming hedges and pulling weeds from flowers. Their work is strenuous and they will likely be badly sunburned by midday, but I still envy them greatly. All I want is to be able to walk outside and feel the morning dew against my ankles or smell one of the flowers. I could never though. I was born into the wrong class. The women who are allowed to stroll through the gardens wear dresses as colorful as the flowers themselves, and their hair is braided out of the way of their faces, which are adorned with rouge. I wear an old white smock with a brown apron around it. My hair is also pulled back, but into a white wrap instead of a braid, and my face is stained with dirt and dust instead of rouge. I could choose to wallow in my sad reality, but instead I push the thought to the back of my mind. I lean further out of the window, hoping the sun might tan my pale skin or bring a shine to my brown eyes.

I drew back from the window when my fellow maid called out to me. "Lean any further and you'll fall through," she warned. My stare lingers outside for a moment longer and she yells again "Lass, get your head out of the clouds, you haven't got all day! I've already started your water for you. Come do your linens." I walk towards her and when I reach her she heaves the linens into my hands. I mutter a thank you under my breath and walk to my station. The soapy water that fills my washtub is hot and I prepare for it to burn my hands, and for the bubbles that rise from it to sting my eyes. I pick up a linen. It's yellow, like the sun I long to live under.

art by nina rush





Snow rests upon the ground in a thin white sheet, as if it is a soft feather cushion covering the grass and pavement below. The afternoon sky overhead is grey with clouds, everything a muted shade of its normal color. The crisp cold air bites at my nose and cheeks as I trudge through the ghost town, a dead silence hanging in the air besides the crunching of my boots in the snow.

My feet lead me along a frozen path until I come upon a building in ruins. It is fairly large, and in its prime it must've been a beautiful sight to behold. Extending a glove-covered hand, I gently press on the rich dark wood of the door. A loud creak echoes throughout the abandoned building as the door cracks open, allowing me to peak my head in before fully stepping inside.

I feel no change in temperature as my eyes scan the long corridor curiously, a hand delicately placed on the camera hanging from my neck. Small holes fill the tall roof above, patches of icy white littering the cold marble floors while faded pictures and art hang upon the walls.

I slowly begin to stride along the silent halls of the once magnificent structure, observing my surroundings carefully while the clack of my leather shoes resonates around me. My chest feels tight with nostalgia, taking more notice of how I walk out of sync. Like I am about to stumble with every step I take.

Soon I find myself at another set of large doors that seem to loom above me. I stare at the smooth aged wood for a moment, my chapped lips parting as white puffs escape my mouth like smoke. I raise both of my shaky palms up, pressing on the frosted door until it started to open.

A loud squeak fills my ears as the door reluctantly opens, taking one step inside before my entire body freezes like the perfect white around me.

Rows upon rows of chairs lie before me, dust and snow collecting on them as narrow walkways separate them from each other. At the very end of the room is a spectacular stage, the heavy curtains pulled back to reveal the polished floors covered in a fine layer of ice

story by nya rice

# frozen dreams

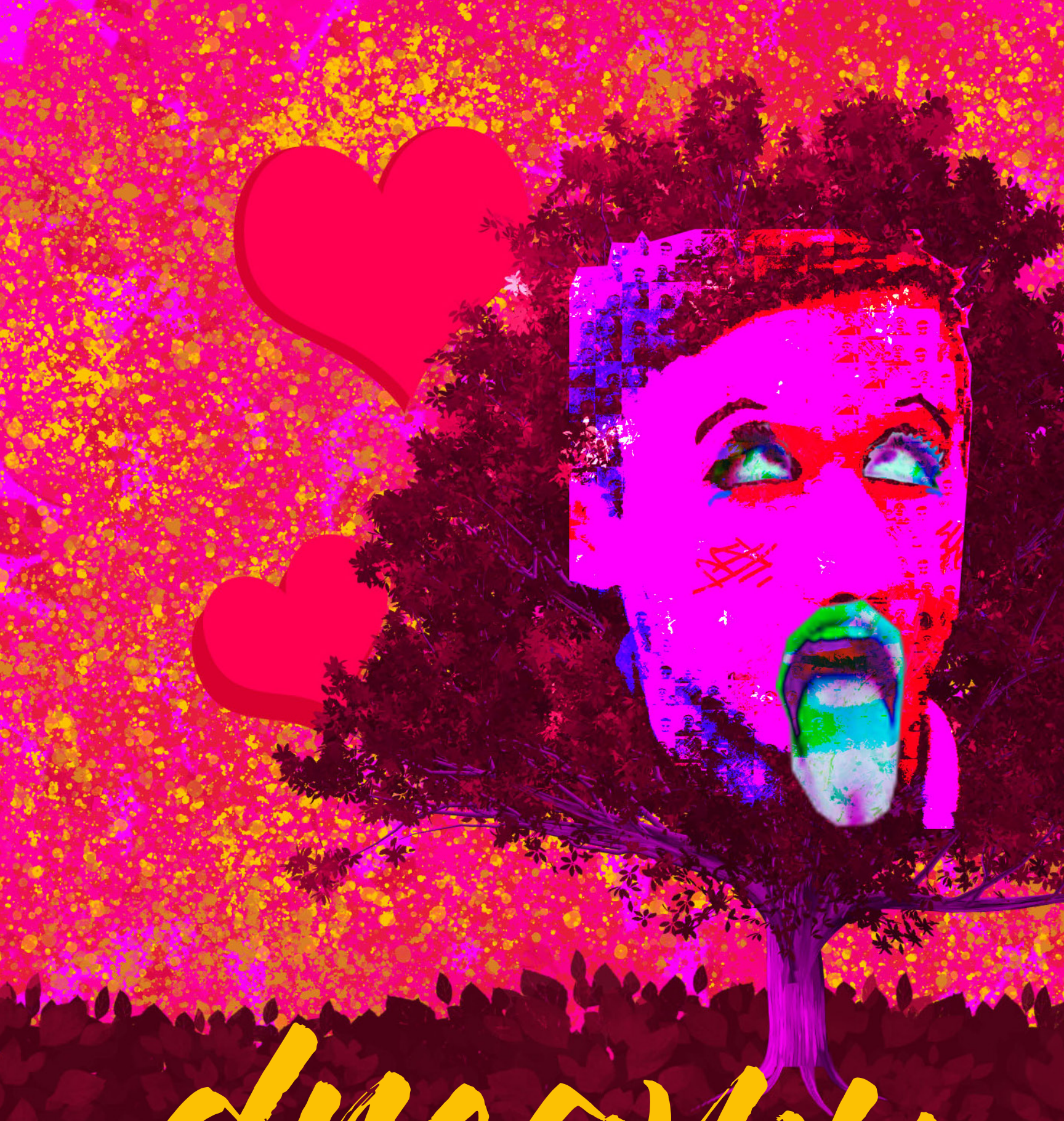
due to the giant crater in the roof.

My glossy eyes are wide like a deer caught in the headlights, thrown back in time to the days of silk ribbons and soundless words. Nights of dancing in the silvered moonlight, perfecting my art. But my time performing for the diamond waves came to an end far too soon for my liking. Now it was all just frozen dreams upon a platform.

Golden roses of light suddenly pour in from the cavity in the ceiling above my standing form, snapping me out of my nostalgic thoughts. I watch in awe as snowflakes danced in the light, each unique in size and shape. A choreographed dance instructed by the cutting breath of mother nature. A shimmering rainbow reflects off the pure snow, bringing tears to my eyes as I stand there reminiscing in my frozen dreams. I can almost see the ghost of my past self dancing among the white puffs. Performing art for the world was my passion in life, a skill I fine-tuned at an early age. There was nothing I would've rather done than dance and flow to the enchanting melody of the music. Yet life was cruel to me, and prevented me from doing what I loved most. But after years of grief, I moved on. Found a new passion that brings me joy. I capture art and the beauty of the world instead of performing it; as they say, when one door closes another one opens. I sniffle a tad, rubbing my cold pink nose with one mitten-covered hand while the other wipes the tears forming in the corners of my eyes. "Oh god, I'm an emotional mess..." I murmur quietly to myself, grabbing the camera around my neck and raising it up. With a small click of my camera, I capture my frozen dreams for all to see.

Satisfied with the natural beauty of the photo I took, I turn my heel and begin to tread back from whence I came. Leaving my frozen dreams upon a forgotten stage.





# dreaming tree

art by dana beckstrand

fall **19** art & lit  
magazine





poem by jin soo

# self love

I'm sorry if I don't say enough  
A relationship so fragile  
Yet the most sturdiest  
Thing I have.  
Happening over and over  
Self doubt takes over  
I'll treat you with more care.  
Let you know the  
Love I hold for you is true  
And that nothing past  
Or future can change  
The way I see you  
I know I hate you more than I should.  
I know I tell you that  
You're far from beautiful  
And that if you were born different  
Maybe others would see you differently.  
I'm sorry for making you feel worthless  
And unwanted.  
I'm sorry if I let anxiety rule us over  
What I wanted to let you know, I love you  
And don't let anyone tell you differently  
I know I try to change you  
More than I can say.  
I know if I look at you for too long  
I'll find something that doesn't please me.  
This fragile relationship broke  
Too many times.  
I ran out of fingers to count for how sorry I am  
I now need to let myself know that  
My self love is all I need





# save the sea

art by megan uvancey

fall 21 art & lit magazine





# illusions

poem by brooke dearing

I found out a reason that people  
don't like me.  
I was told it wasn't my looks, but my  
personality.  
Like a litter of dogs, I'm considered  
the runt:  
the way I shatter a fantasy by being  
very blunt.  
Through my eyes, the world is just  
so unfair.  
In thick and thin, people still live  
without a care.  
I can't seem to see through this film,  
leaving me annoyed.  
People don't want to hear the truth  
because their illusions will be  
destroyed.  
Believe me, I've tried to look  
through their goggles of life,  
but the reality of it all comes back  
barreling like a knife.  
What's not to worry about? There's  
evil in it all.  
God, just hold your breath, and let  
your heart rate fall...  
In every little thing, I see the un-  
avoided flaws.  
Traffic jam on I77, split ends, uncut  
cat claws.  
It's like italicized words in a blank  
world page.  
Wandering characters are the  
audience... and I'm center stage.



photo by peyton lea





# A mess

poem by goldfish girl

I've heard that you can fall out of love for the same reasons you fell in and I can see now that the combination of your clever mind and a way with words has lost its appeal because I have grown to become aware of the acid dripping off your tongue.

The cogs of self-preservation turning behind mocha eyes mean manipulation, not love.

And the suffocating pressure I felt to constantly provide apologies that I thought were necessary for your love were merely your twisted need for validation from someone you were just going to use and throw away.

I used to love your confidence and thought that it meant you knew who you were in this huge scary world, but really that's not confidence it's entitlement and stubbornness and selfishness, and you don't know anything about who you are.

I wanted to see you happy so bad that I slowly gave away every bit of myself until all that was left was a rotting mess on the floor of my childhood home, with the record you gave me for my birthday playing on repeat in the background.

I've fallen out of love because all the reasons I fell in turned on me. I never meant to lose myself in you so this mess needs to find a way to change the song on her own.

# she <sup>did</sup> it all for *me*

short story by ian atkins

A man loomed over a beautiful, ornate gravestone. The way his body was positioned did not allow the name to be read. The stone was carved of a regal black granite, square shaped but with small elegant curves. The sky was a somber gray and rain fell in a symphony of taps all around the man. It was as if God, if he was real, was letting his tears fall in sympathy for the man who had lost someone. Tears streamed down the man's cheeks. A curly mop of brown hair cast shadows across his face, which was contorted with the pain of grief. It was the face of a man who had known years of loss, longing, and regret. He spoke a simple sentence.

"I did it, Mom."

The man walked away from the gravestone, allowing the letters etched into the beautiful mineral to be read.

Nadia Locke

She did it all for me

The somber symphony of raindrops continued to fall.

A man and a woman sat in the office of a lawyer. The woman had long, straight brown hair. Her green eyes were red and puffy from crying. The man had a large mop of sandy blonde curls. His brown eyes held little emotion for the scene playing out before him. "Just sign here." A second man, the lawyer said. He held out a contract to the couple, well, now ex-couple. The sandy-haired man signed his name without a flicker of hesitation on his stoic, yet handsome features. The woman, however, faltered.

"But we have a son!" She cried, more tears streaming down her beautiful face. "How can you do this? He's just a year old!"

"For the last time Nadia," The man said, exasperated. "I don't love you anymore, nor do I love that child."

"I don't love you anymore"

Something inside the woman broke at the sound of those words. She silently picked up the pen and signed in shaky, yet beautiful cursive.

Nadia Locke

Two tears fell from her cheeks and stained the paper.

It was four months since the divorce was finalized. Nadia stirred a pot of boiling spaghetti noodles. There weren't many inside. Next to the pot sat a simmering pan of tomato. The pan wasn't very full either. Her yellow apron was slightly dirty and its color was faded. Her clothes were worn and old. Only sadness was visible in her beautiful, green eyes, nothing more.

"Mommy! Mommy!" A little boy's voice yelled. He ran into the room wearing an old looking halloween costume that resembled a doctor. The outfit was small, not quite reaching to his ankles or wrists. "Let me check your heartbeat!" He smiled.

They boy walked over to his mom holding a very old looking toy stethoscope. His brown hair was curly and wild, freckles littered his face and his large green eyes were alight with youthful innocence.

"You can check my heartbeat after I check how full your tummy is, Aiden," Nadia smiled lovingly at her son. She knelt down and poked his stomach. "Oh no, it's empty! You've got to eat!" She playfully exclaimed.

"But- Mom!" Aiden whined. "I can't eat while I'm on duty!"

Nadia chuckled at her son. "But a doctor can't save people if he's hungry." She said as she plated the spaghetti

There was only one plate.

"Yeah, I guess so," Aiden said, although he

didn't sound happy about it. He walked over to the dining table and sat down, eating his food while Nadia watched him lovingly. "How come you're not eating, Mommy?"

"How come you're not eating Mommy?"

"I'm not hungry right now, Aide." Nadia replied smiling.

"I'm not hungry right now..."

"Oh okay!" Aiden smiled. He quickly finished the rest of his meal and said, "I'm gonna go play with my toys!" He ran off towards his room.

Nadia watched her son run away. She picked up his dirty dishes and took them over to the sink to begin cleaning. As she placed them in the hot water, her stomach growled. Hunger pangs gnawed at her. Nadia's green eyes watered, and as she continued to clean,

Two tears fell into the water.

"Why do I do this?" Nadia asked herself,

looking at the ceiling and blinking away tears.

Why did she go to bed hungry so many nights?

Why did she work to the bone for so little pay?

Why was her life this way?

"Oh no! You need CPR!" Aiden's voice yelled from the hallway.

"Oh yeah," Nadia thought, a small, sad smile played at her lips. "I do it all for him."

All for him.

Nadia stood behind Aiden as he watched a video on her laptop. A clock on the wall read 8:30, about two hours after dinner. A video of a cartoon hospital was played on the computer screen. Aiden stared at the screen wide-eyed with childish wonder.

"I can't believe she fixed these toys mommy!"

Aiden smiled. "When I grow up and become a doctor I'm gonna save all the toys!"

"I know you will," Nadia smiled at her son. "I hope I'll be able to see that day."

"Do you think that dad will come back if I'm a god doctor like him?" Aiden asked his mom.

Tears pricked at Nadia's eyes. She gave Aiden a small, sad smile. "I bet he will. But you don't need to worry about that, okay? You need to worry about bedtime!"

"But I don't wanna!" Aiden whined. Nadia shook her head and closed the laptop. The two walked into Aiden's room. It was barren and small, old looking toys littered the floor. A twin



sized bed sat in the corner, it had plain, older looking blue sheets. Nadia turned on the light and tucked Aiden into his bed.

"Sleep good, I love you," She said, kissing his forehead.

"I love you too, Mommy," Aiden replied, smiling sleepily.

Nadia smiled softly back at him and walked out of the room, turning off the light and cracking the door open. She walked back into her own room. It's walls were barren and it lacked furnishings, only one old looking dresser. A full size bed with worn sheets sat in the middle. Nadia sat down on her bed and opened up her laptop. She closed the cartoon and opened another website, a bank website.

Her heart fell once again and tears pricked her eyes like tiny needles. The balance on the account was low, very low. All the working, all the hungry nights, all the times she went without.

Was it all in vain?

Nadia closed the laptop and laid on her bed. Her stomach growled and her body ached.

"When I grow up and be a doctor I'm gonna save all the toys!"

"Will I be here to see that day?" Nadia asked herself.

A single tear fell down her cheek.



Aiden Locke, no more than the age of fifteen year old, sat in the kitchen. Nadia, his mother, sat across from him. They both were at the dinner table and both their plates held filled, rice and chicken. It wasn't plentiful, but it was something. Nadia was still skinny, but her figure wasn't as frail as it had been twelve years go. The apartment looked nicer newer furnishings and decorations. The outfits that mother and son wore looked new, they fit as well. Nadia had gotten a better job and now had a steadier income to provide for herself and her son. Her life had improved over the last twelve years.

No more hungry nights.

No more going without.

No more wondering if she'd be there.

"That was really good, Mom. Thanks for making dinner," Aiden said to his mother, happy as ever. He'd grown into a handsome young man over the years, but his large green eyes still held their youthful glow, and his face was still flecked by freckles. He stood and put his plate in the sink.

"Thanks, Aide," Nadia said. "You're so sweet." She hadn't finished her food yet. Nadia's appetite had been lacking lately. Aiden tried his best to make sure that his mother ate though. Nadia was eternally grateful for that. "Make sure you eat too, Mom," Aiden reminded her after scrubbing his plate clean. He walked towards the hallway. "I'm gonna go finish some homework."

Nadia looked at her plate and smiled, her eyes almost welling up with tears. Not of sadness, however, it was happiness that overtook her. Even with all the despair in her life, she still had one ray of hope. Her light, her son. After all, She did it all for him.

Nadia continued to eat her food, albeit slowly. She eventually finished the plate and stood to place it in the sink. She turned on the faucet and started to scrub off all the excess food. Slowly, the room began to spin.

Her body felt incredibly weak.

Suddenly, Nadia's body gave out on her. She fell to the floor, landing with a thud. Aiden's footsteps could be heard running into the kitchen. Nadia's eyes fluttered shut, she

couldn't hold onto consciousness. Before she fainted all she could hear was,

"Mom?! Oh no, Mom!"

Aiden grabbed the phone off the kitchen counter. His eyes were wrought with fear. His a mixture of sadness and terror. His hands shook as he quickly called the emergency services.

"You'll be okay, Mom," Aiden cried. He held onto his mother's body and hugged her tightly. "You'll be okay." He repeated over and over again.

A single tear fell from his eye and hit the floor.

Aiden sat in a hospital waiting room. It was bland looking, white walls, fake plants, and a TV that played kids movie in bad quality. The awful smell of the hospital bit at his nose. It had been two hours since Nadia had collapsed. Paramedics arrived on the scene promptly, they told Aiden it was good he called so quickly. Aiden, however, felt nothing. Because it was all his fault.

A doctor walked into the room. "Mr. Locke?" He asked.

Aiden stood and walked over to him. He looked at the doctor with sad eyes. He couldn't take any bad news. She had to be okay, she was going to be okay.

'I'd be lost without her,' Aiden thought.

"Your mother's condition has stabilized.

We believe it was chronic organ failure and kidney disease from malnutrition over the years," The doctor said. "She's okay now. I suggest you go home and get some clothes and other essentials so that you can stay overnight. Okay?"

Aiden nodded and sighed a breath of relief. It felt like the weight of the world had been lifted off of him. "O Okay. Thank you, Doctor."

"You're a good kid, your mother is alive because of you. Be proud of that." The doctor assured.

'But she's also here because of me,' Aiden thought.

He nodded at the doctor's words and promptly left the hospital. Aiden caught the train and rode it back to his home.

Aiden walked back into the hospital doors about an hour later. On his back was a

backpack with his clothes, toothpaste, and other essentials. He held a duffel bag full of similar things for his mother in his right hand. Aiden was smiling brightly, no weight held his body down. He couldn't wait to see his mother. "Why does the doctor look like that?" Aiden thought.

The doctor stood outside the room Nadia was staying in. He stared at his feet and twiddled his thumbs, he was nervous.

"Hello, Mr. Doctor," Aiden said to the man. The doctor looked up in surprise, like Aiden had snuck up on him.

Like he was afraid to talk to him.

"O Oh, Mr. Locke... I have some bad news," the man said.

Aiden's heart dropped and his eyes widened. He already feared- no, he already knew the worst. "What happened?"

The doctor inhaled deeply, "While you were gone..."

"Your mother... she died."

Aiden dropped the bags he was carrying and rushed into the room. The doctor pleases that he wouldn't go, but his cries fell on deaf ears.

"Mom! Mom!" Aiden yelled. He ran to her bedside. She laid there, like she was sleeping. Her body, however, was lifeless, motionless.

Nadia's pale skin looked like it was as fragile as porcelain. Aiden wanted to reach out and grab her hand, but he was too afraid to touch her, in fear of breaking what little he had left.

"Don't leave me!"

Tears streamed down Aiden's face as grief pushed her jagged knife deeper into his soul. As he grew older he noticed it all. All the nights she went hungry, all the times she didn't want to move from working to the bone, all the times she went without.

"You didn't have to do it all for me!"

Aiden buried his face in her bedsheets and cried. He wept for what seemed like hours before the hospital staff pulled him away from Mother's side.

Now, Aiden Locke is all grown up. He was just hired as the head of gastrointestinal surgery at Johns Hopkins hospital. There was supposed to be a small ceremony and party in his honor, but Aiden wouldn't be attending.

He had a better place to be.

Aiden Locke stood over his mother's grave.

The rain created a symphony of taps all around him. He smiled a soft, sad smile at the beautiful, ornate headstone that had her name carved into it. Aiden spoke a simple sentence.

"I did it, Mom."

Two tears fell down his cheeks.

# overcome

art by gracie baker



# cyclical

poem by gato

words dropped  
like dominos falling.  
words kept  
behind guilty lips.  
doomed for failure.  
destined for therapy.  
you're just like your father  
who you hated.  
bestowing upon your darling  
children  
the gift of generational trauma.

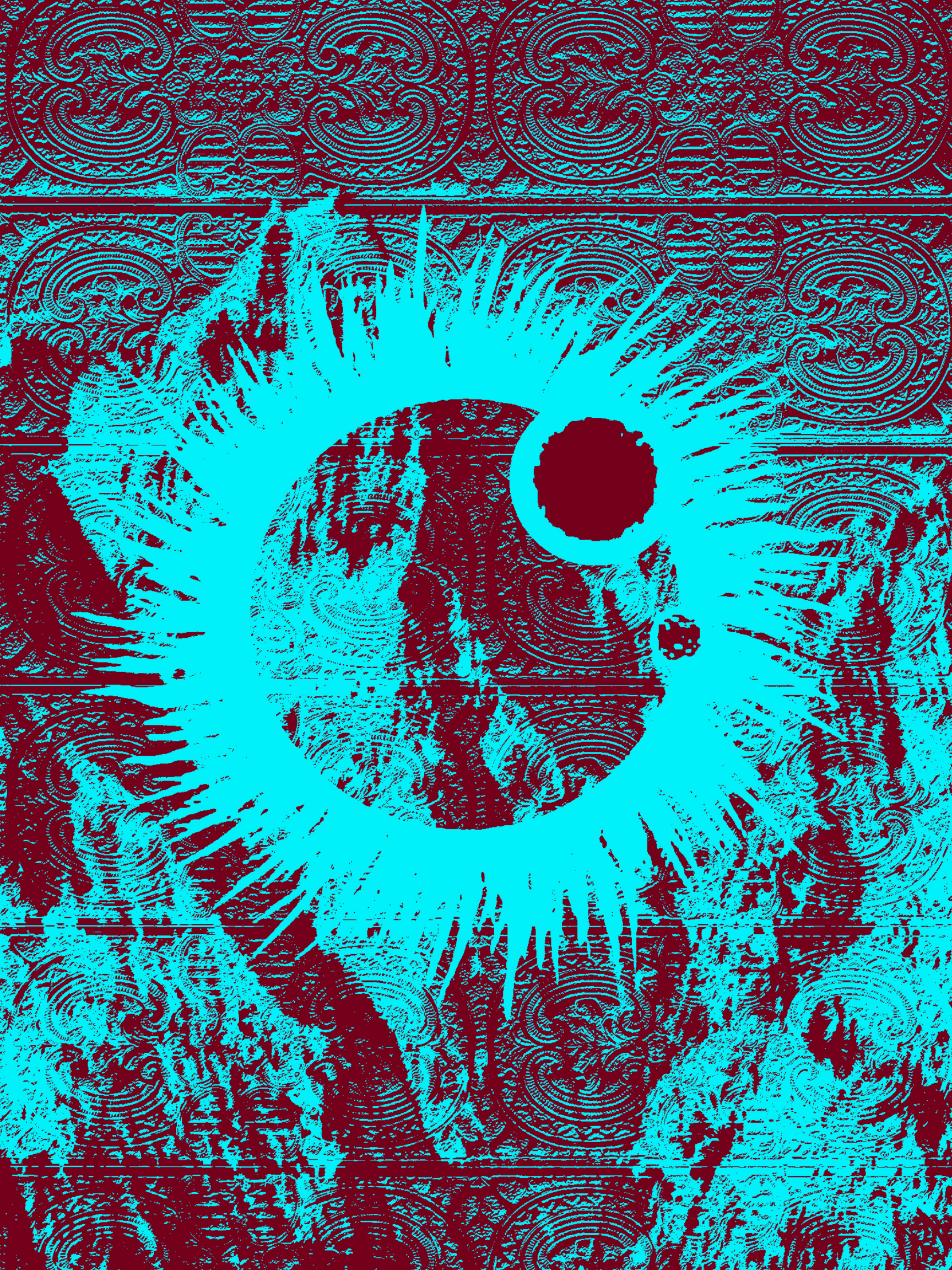
# maroon

art by troy savage southgate

blues

fall 29 art & lit  
magazine







# black marble eyes

story by morgan conklin

He was done.

Every detail was perfect. His deep crimson hair that always puffed up and stuck out no matter how much gel I used to tame the beast on his scalp. The small, round squishable face of his had no evil in it. His circular amber-tinted glasses he had to push back up every few minutes to make sure they didn't fall off. His tawny skin speckled with penny and chocolate freckles. I would always tell him that whenever he made someone's day a new freckle would sprout up on his face. He would hurry up to me some days and without fail I would smile as he bounced about and babbled about who's day he made better after he found a new freckle on his face.

We stayed cooped up together in my house, forging and creating our very own robots. I taught him everything I knew and Flint was always so eager to learn. From planning it to the final product. I was not his father, but many assumed so due to how close we were. In a way, even though we weren't related by blood he was still a son to me. I'd help him learn how to put on his pants and button up his shirts. Today, he wore the outfit I gave him. Those coffee colored pants went well with his peanut button up and dark brown shoes turning lighter from so much usage.

Every detail was perfect.

Except for one crucial thing.

His eyes drove me mad.

His black, marble eyes.

No matter how hard I tried to recreate the young boy who was crushed by my machinery I couldn't. The faulty cable holding up our creation snapped. Before I could even blink he

was crushed like a meaningless bug under the weight of metal and wires. The coroner says he died instantly, but I am no fool. I saw how Flint's body twitched underneath the hunk of machinery. In his final moments he stared at me. The eyes. The eyes pleaded with me. For help. Even after his head collapsed onto the concrete the eyes stared. They stared at me. The eyes. I felt the impending doom of reality as they watched me. Flint didn't watch me. The eyes did. Only the eyes.

He is gone, but he's in front of me. Right now. Except one thing is different.

The eyes.

No matter how hard I tried it was the one physicality I could not replace. I couldn't recreate the love and joy that shined in those eyes whenever he saw me. They would glimmer and sparkled with his unending happiness and ambition.

The eyes.

This is not the boy I would sing to sleep on a rainy night. This is not the boy that saved my wasted soul. He gave me a purpose. No; he was my purpose.

The eyes.

They look at me.

The eyes he- No. Not he. It. This is not my son.

This is an imposter I created with my own hands. Thousands of hours in a desperate attempt to get him back. How foolish of me. Without even knowing, I was merely the fool. Alone in my workshop with this creature of wire and no breath. I felt anger grow. No; not anger. Malice. Absolute hatred. Unending lividness bubbled and boiled out of me like a geyser suddenly erupting.

This machine was just that. A machine. An empty shell with no soul to fill.

I looked around. My creations. Every machine, paper scattered about, a hammer.

A hammer.

Slowly, I gripped its wooden handle and watched its metallic tip shine.



I pursed my lips in disgust. All of it meant nothing. I had the power to create as well as the power to destroy.

I swung at the cacophony of nuts and bolts with all my might. With a loud thunk all it did was merely dent his cheek. So I slammed my hammer down into its body. Again and again. I screamed. The intensity of my shout feeling like it was shredding my throat. With as much force as I could I grabbed its collar and rammed it into the wall. There was no resistance as I struck it over and over. Its forehead now caved in on itself as oil and wires spewed and wormed out of each wound and laceration.

The eyes.

They looked at me.

In those eyes it showed the autonomous being's first and final expression in the eyes.

Fear.

I couldn't take it anymore. I plunged the blunt part of the hammer deep into the eyes. They shattered, spraying me with glass and leaving the ground a hazardous zone to walk. My breath was heavy. The sound of my breathing was the loudest thing in the room. My ears and head pounding as I looked at the mangled corpse of my creation.

The eyes were no more.

Even with them gone I could still feel those black, marble eyes watching me.

a mess by goldfish girl

I've heard that you can fall out of love for the same reasons you fell in and I can see now that the combination of your clever mind and a way with words has lost its appeal because I have grown to become aware of the acid dripping off your tongue. The cogs of self preservation turning behind mocha eyes mean manipulation, not love.

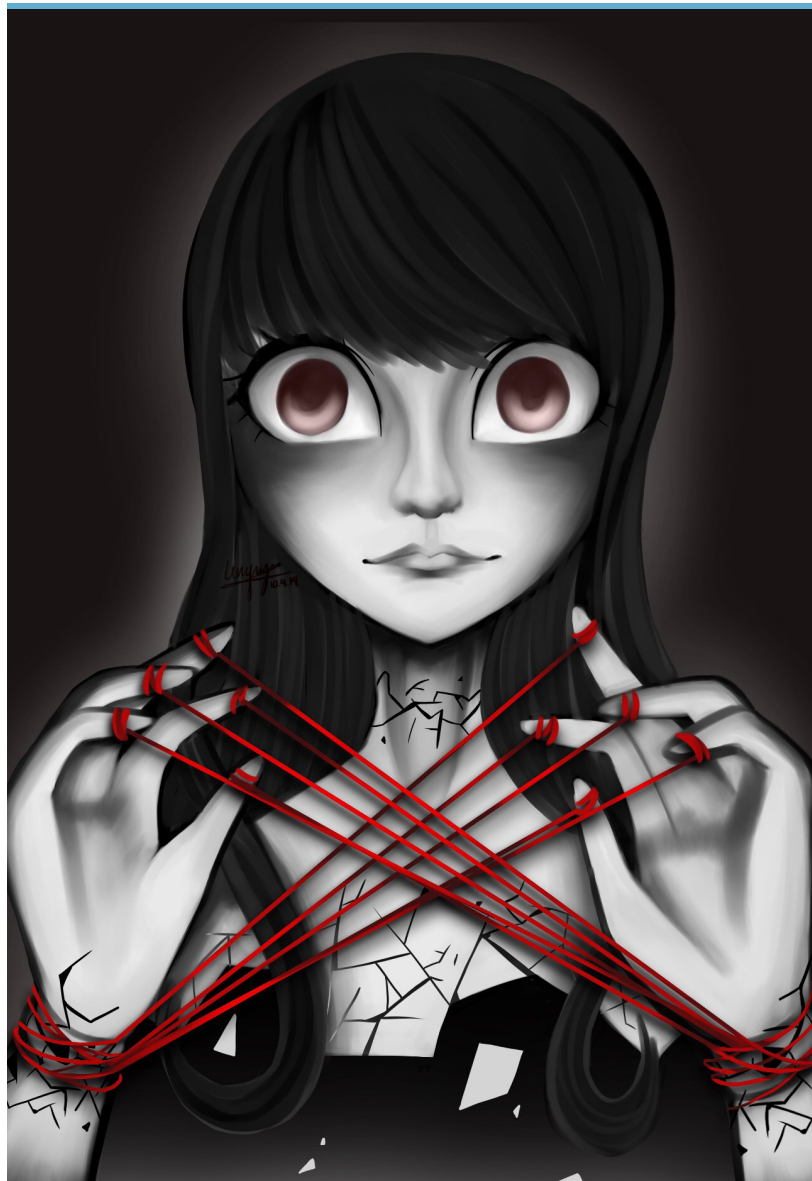
And the suffocating pressure I felt to constantly provide apologies that I thought were necessary for your love were merely your twisted need for validation from someone you were just going to use and throw away.

I used to love your confidence and thought that

it meant you knew who you were in this huge scary world, but really that's not confidence it's entitlement and stubbornness and selfishness, and you don't know anything about who you are. I wanted to see you happy so bad that I slowly gave away every bit of myself until all that was left was a rotting mess on the floor of my childhood home, with the record you gave me for my birthday playing on repeat in the background.

I've fallen out of love because all the reasons I fell in turned on me. I never meant to lose myself in you so this mess needs to find a way to change the song on her own.

## strings art by khoi nguyen



# fake smile

story by lauren blind

Unclenching my fists, I walk camly to the restroom disguising my pain as best I can. From the back I look like just another student, but from the front my eyes are flooded with tears like a dam that's about to burst. Analyzing myself in the dirty school mirror, I nitpick everything about my appearance. I look at my full face and don't blame Sara for condemning me. I convince myself that everything she said was true and I'm just sensitive. It is not Sara's fault that my life isn't equally as perfect as hers or that I wake up everyday and wish I didn't. I make a note in my head to apologize to her for overreacting. How many more lunches will end like this. I wonder as I stare at my puffy eyes. I look at my large body and wonder if everyone sees me like Sara, just something that needs fixing. The tears spill out as I think about having to finish the school day pretending to be someone that I am not. Someone who is confident. Someone who is not phased by Sara's superficial words. Every morning I remind myself that I am worthless because if I already believe it, it won't hurt as bad when I hear it from someone else. Right? I convince myself I will never be good enough for the perfectly crafted cheerleaders, yet I find myself

competing with them everyday. Looking down at my clammy hands. I tell myself that no one will ever want to hold them. "Why?" I ask myself. "Why me?" I say out loud, now questioning the universe. I grab onto the contaminated sink, refusing to look up at my nauseating reflection. It's time to get a hold of myself because I realize I've been in the restroom longer than the acceptable amount of time. I release my grasp from the sink and stand up straight, forcing myself to look in the mirror at my joke of a body. I look into the shallow mirror and search for a shred of confidence, but I am let down. After wiping my eyes and putting on the most believable smile I can manage, it's time to face the storm on the other side of the door. I strut into the cafeteria as if nothing happened and I already find myself longing to be back in the restroom where I don't have to put on a mask.



# a dead cow

story by jessa warren

It's muggy and hot. Summer in Texas is never kind. believe you me. I smell the fresh blood. No heart beats under my fingers as I brush them over her shoulder. There's no breath coming out of her lungs. My eyes dance over her mangled body lying still in the grass and my brain can't process that she's dead. How? I fed her just last night. There hadn't been any unusual occurrences. My dog didn't bark, my horse didn't spook. What was it? Stroking her shoulder, white broken up by brown. I can only hope she didn't suffer. Wiping sweat from my forehead. I allow myself to look at the killing blow. Her stomach is torn open and her heart and throat are gone. Her face is frozen in a look of confusion, so she must not have died scared. It seems like it was quick. I let out a breath of relief.

My other Longhorns mill about, wary of the body but otherwise unshaken. My eyes fly back down. The gashes are huge, as if somebody had taken a machete to her, but the cuts are clean. A machete is a tool mostly used for hacking, but the gouges are neat, almost surgical. How could such a large blade be used so carefully and precisely? Who would slaughter a whole cow without disturbing the rest of the herd, and why?

art by karla mercado



# the monster

poem by clementine beia

I wonder if all the scary stories my brother said were true  
I wonder if the monsters that were : ugly, slimy, noisy, and fat were true too  
I wonder if my dream of being everything was too big  
I wonder if i'll ever be good enough for my parents to do a jig  
I wonder if all my friends are real and not fake  
I wonder if there are any rules to break  
I wonder if i'll ever get all A's  
I wonder if the stars will someday say my name  
I wonder if finally my dad will come home  
I wonder if I will always be alone  
I wonder if band is where i belong  
I wonder if praying will help me get along  
I wonder if I cry will anybody see  
I wonder if I cry will they just let me be  
I wonder if I loved someone would I be happy  
I wonder if when i'm sad, someone will help me feel less crappy  
I wonder if wondering will get me hurt  
I wonder if wondering makes the pain worse  
I wonder if wondering is a waste of time  
I wonder if I have too much schoolwork to rhyme  
I wonder if i'll spend my life wondering about the things that didn't happen  
I wonder if wondering will make all my dreams blacken  
I wonder if something bad happens will life still go on  
I wonder if something courageous happens will I become strong  
I wonder if life hands me lemons will I make lemonade  
I wonder if someone gets hurt will i be at their aid  
I wonder if giving up is bad  
I wonder if being shy makes me look sad  
I wonder if teachers really care  
I wonder if I wasn't here  
I wonder if I believe will I keep dreaming  
I wonder if participating will keep me gleaming  
I wonder if wondering is a waste of time  
I wonder if I have too much schoolwork to rhyme  
I wonder if wondering is the answer

I wonder if wondering is the monster





art by lauren quattlebaum

# gargoyle



# unrequited

poem by anonymous

You brighten up my days  
In inexplicable ways  
And your smile drives me insane  
In fact it's embroidered on my  
brain  
Your freckle speckled face  
Brings me to an unfamiliar place  
And your soft green eyes  
Make me feel like I can fly  
I'm still yearning for the time  
That I can call you mine  
But it's really such a shame  
That you don't feel the same

# save me

poem by p.b.s.

when i freeze from the inside out  
when my mind is frozen and my  
heart is frosted  
when my blood slows and thickens  
and my skin cracks and shatters  
you are the blanket that gives me  
warmth  
shielding me from the cold  
you are the hot cocoa that sears my  
throat  
leaving the taste of your sugar in my  
mouth  
you are the fireplace i lay by  
mesmerized by your every  
movement  
i hope it'll last forever  
but at your departure  
ill be thrown back into my icy hell





# direction

art by ava cavazos

