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KALEIDOSCOPE

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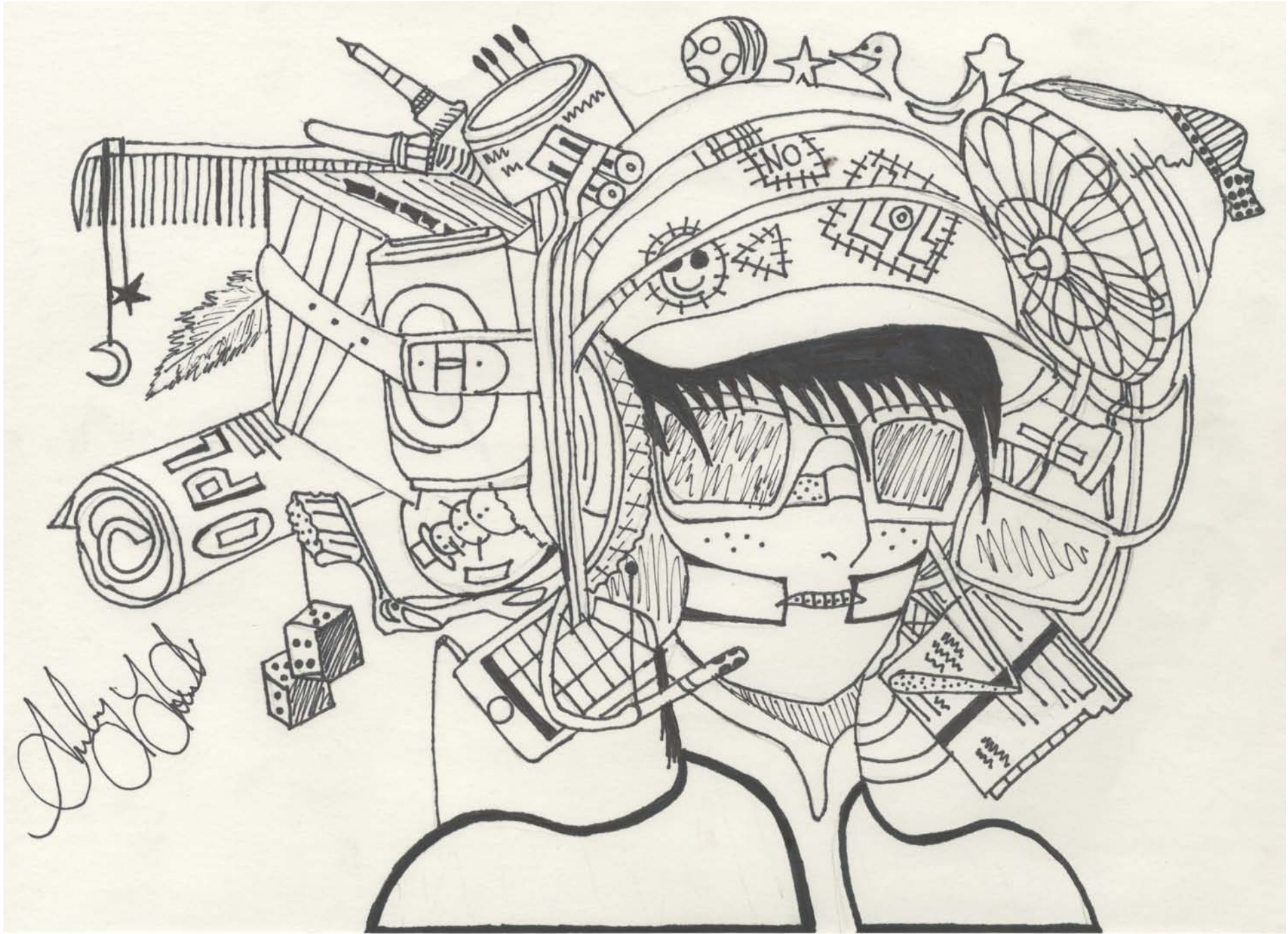
Letter from the Editor

Since its initial publication as the *Collegiate* in 1983, the *Kaleidoscope* Journal of Art and Literature has been publishing the very talented student artists at Spoon River College. I have had the privilege of contributing to or serving this great journal for three consecutive editions, first as a submitter, then as an assistant editor, and now as the editor. I feel honored to have witnessed the students step up every year and represent their college so passionately.

I would like to thank everyone that helped the *Kaleidoscope* along this year, including all of the faculty that provided assistance, whether it was helping us organize publicity events or allowing us to give presentations in their classrooms. As a special note, I would like to specifically thank Tracy Snowman, Sally Shields, Jade Powers, and Paige Edwards, who all respectively provided incredible service or assistance to the journal this year. I would also like to thank Barb Rowland and Doug Okey, the faculty advisors. Without them, this journal could not have survived long enough to see the print shop. The Titanic could not hold the amount of gratitude and respect I have for these two individuals, not just as faculty advisors or professors, but as friends as well.

I also had the pleasure of working with an incredible set of assistant editors. The *Kaleidoscope* had four assistant editors this year, two from Canton and two from Macomb. Jax Westin and James Grove were the assistant editors from Canton; Trista Miller and Raquel Coupland were the assistant editors from Macomb. Their hard work and contributions to this journal surely do not go unnoticed. They are all gifted and talented in their own way, as ambitious as they are creative. I could not have asked for a better crew. They truly made this experience all the more enjoyable and rewarding.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the *Kaleidoscope* thanks everyone who was generous enough to contribute their art to the *Kaleidoscope* this year. No matter how hard we try to reach the student body, it would all be in vain if not for the incredible personalities that are brave enough to submit their work. Art is a product of the human being, a small piece of a complex, grand and unique imagination that is as limitless as the cosmos. Courageous are the artists who dare to submit their masterpieces to an art journal, willingly offering their life's work to public review. Ultimately, our efforts as editors are useless without the women and men that present us with not only a piece of art, but also a piece of themselves. I was pleased with the large and diverse pool of submissions the *Kaleidoscope* had to choose from this year. This season, the harvest yielded a bountiful and beautiful crop; now let us feast. Enjoy!



Materialism

by Aubrey Foust

Gold Water In a Can by Katelin Deushane

At my school confidence was a drink you could buy
Each and every morning right off the bus,
Served either warm or cold, diet or regular
But, always more than any could afford

No one even had it for very long
Throughout the day, you'd see its mark—where it'd been spilled
Despite its problems, no one could get enough
People lined up for that gold water in a can

First in line, cruelty—captain of everything
He'd have to push and shove, but he'd be there
Looked to first, before all of the others
With a smile and a word, his discount would emerge
Next, anger and his group—sadness and doubt

They were the quiet kids. They didn't push and shove.
People let them walk through without hesitation
That group knew everyone's name and number

Some days love and logic would show, waiting calmly
Normally, hidden in their rooms
When they did come they spoke to each other
A weird language of symbols and mismatched phrases

Trust would be there, darting from front to back
She *always* had something to say, something to ask
If you didn't tell her the right answers
Only then would she be still and silent

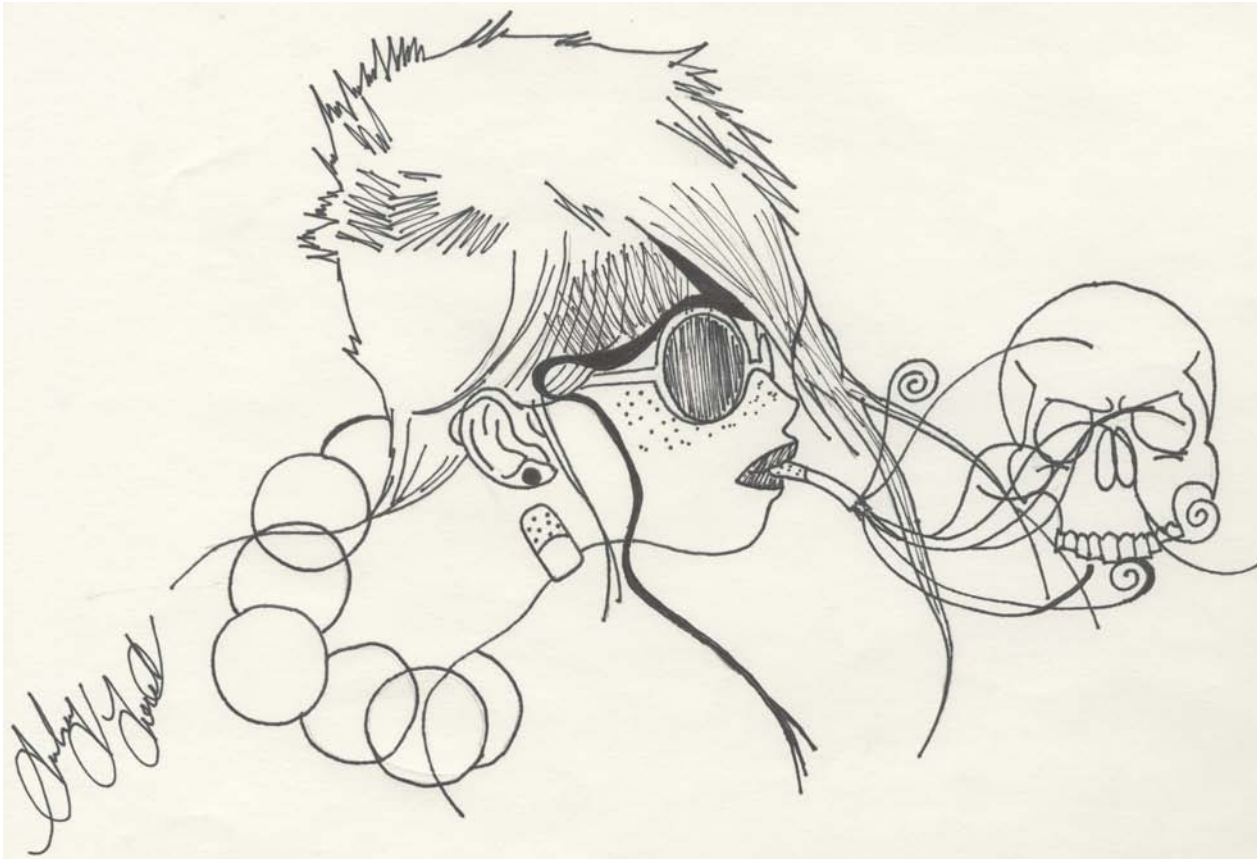
Kindness was home all alone fighting a fever
Seeming to be perpetually sick
When he wasn't he was in line
Always last, much too shy to be anything
else

5

In my world confidence is a drink, you
could sell
Each and every day, people line up for it
They're all there, pushing and shoving—
first, second, last.
Paying with a beat and a breath for just
one drop

Indifference

by Aubrey Foust



Careless Wishing

by Alex J. Breckenridge

Shackled by Tony Jackson

Here I try to exist in my sin.
Oppression and depression take away my grin.
My life has taken a turn for the worst.
I am the walking dead just waiting on a hearse.
Every day is just a dark gloom,
As I sit doing my drugs in the bathroom.
I have no hope and no desire to live.
I have lost my soul and have nothing to give.
It consumes my every walking desire.
It douses out my soul's fire.
I have come to the crossroads of life.
I have lost my kids and my wife.
It controls my every thought.
I am truly a slave to a drug that is bought.
A slave to an addiction.
Ever so real, not fiction.
Nothing left in my soul to fight back.
Day in and out knowing nothing but black.

6

"I wish for a giant twelve foot shlong!" the man cried.

"Are you certain, master?" the genie asked skeptically.

"Do not question me, wish-granter! Simply do as you were commanded!"

The genie smirked and granted the wish. The master felt a sensation similar to an erection forming, yet it did not stop for some time. When it did, there was a tight uncomfortable feeling in the master's trousers. "Rest, genie!" he commanded, "I shall summon you at a later time."

The genie dissipated into smoke, and the master summoned his wife. Although average in appearance, her personality was exceptional. But when the master attempted to lay with her, he found no pleasure whatsoever. His appendage was too long for comfort and too large to penetrate, let alone the struggle to remove his pants in the first place. Frustrated, the master blamed his wife and summoned the genie again.

"Yes, master?" the genie greeted, surveying the bed on which the wife lay.

"I wish for a trophy wife!" the master commanded, as if his wife were the issue.

"Are you certain, master? This will leave you with only a single wish remaining."

"Of course I'm certain!" the master raged.

"So be it."

The average wife disappeared and a literal golden trophy of her lay in its place.

"Damn genie!" the man cried, "You should've run for office!"

The genie smirked again.

"Final wish, creature of the fog!" the master said, "I wish for more genies!"

"You must be more specific, master." The genie had seen this wish quite literally a thousand times in his life.

"A hundred! One hundred more genies, you can count, can't you?" the man nearly screamed, and the genie simply confirmed what he already knew the answer to, "Are you certain, master?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" the man now shrieked, "What are you, a lawyer, too?"

Grinning, the genie granted the man his final wish and took its leave.

Gypsy
by Aubrey Foust



Rubber Band Ball Soul
by Shelley Jackson

Rubber Bands snap
Rubber Bands Sting
You just got to roll 'em up
So you don't feel a thing

Rubber Band Ball
Rubber Band Ball Soul

Rubber bands snap
Rubber bands sting
You can take the hurt
Or ball 'em up like string

Rubber Band Ball
Rubber Band Ball Soul

Rubber bands snap
Rubber bands sting
Time to roll more bands up
Keep doing my own thing

Free by Ashley S. Chambers

I had awoken with my head laid awkwardly against the bathroom door. I groaned at the crick that had formed in my neck as my eyes cracked open, only to have a sigh to escape from me as I saw the blackish red smear of drying blood and the glittering of shattered glass that littered the floor.

There's no telling how long I had sat there; knees drawn up to my chest while I ignored the sting from the deep cut in my right palm. But it couldn't have been too long; no one had come looking for me.

He sure as hell hadn't come back.

8 "It's only a flesh wound, it will heal fast enough. No one needs to know," I whispered silently to myself as I dug under the sink for something to bind the cut, ignoring other aches that protected the movement. The pain in my hand doesn't really bother me; neither does that fact that one of mom's crystal glasses now decorates the room in a way that it was never supposed to.

It's funny how one form of pain can almost cancel out another. Well, perhaps it just takes the mind off of it for a fraction of a second.

A shiver ran through me as I finished wrapping the bandage, and it was only then did I remember my state of undress. You tend to lose sight of such things when you're under such distress.

I would have to wear gloves. "Good thing it's winter time," I sickly joked to myself. But no laughter would come, there was no such thing after such darkness.

He had been in here once again.

What had the beating been for that time?

I don't remember.

But it was something miniscule, diminutive.

Disney movie?

Maybe?

Wait no; I hadn't watched one of those since the last

time I had gotten caught. Because, don't you see how obvious it was that the creators of Bambi were going to damn my soul?

Anyway, I guess the fact that I was once again clothed only in my skin was a boon for the bargain.

I leaned my head back against the solid wood door once more in order to release the scream that was forever clawing at my throat as the unwanted memories flooded around me. It stuttered before it tore at the tight stitches that had been sewn upon the inside of my lips, binding them in a way that never let the smile I wore fall. How eerie that strangled cry had become with tis silent yet earth shattering echo.

I needed to get up and clean the mess, wipe away the evidence, but no; I couldn't just yet. The shiver turned into a tremor and I could feel that my eyes were wet.

I hated myself for that.

How easily I had almost back tracked on the promise that not so long ago I had sworn. Once again I ground the words against my teeth, for him I'd cry no more. Choking back the traitorous sob, I close my eyes and for myself to relax. I was so weary from all of the whippings and I had become so tired of always being taunted with the reminder that I was going to burn in hell simply because I breathed. That was unless I followed his ever changing commands to the exact letter.

Slowly I was losing hope that there would ever be reprieve.

Shock steals my breath as the shrill cry of my alarm wakes me from the dark dream of my haunted past.

Gasping, I slam my hand down on the snooze button and fall back on my sweat drenched pillow. The covers lay twisted in complete disarray around me like the wind-blown limbs of a willow tree. But as I regain my surroundings I feel myself smile. I smile because I know all too well now. Even though these nightmares squeeze in through the cracks of the mental walls I have built to try and prove otherwise; I will always smile in their wake. Because I am now something he never thought I would be.

Free.

If My Alarm Could Talk
by Jenna Rocca

Cuddle up in my bed, counting sheep
My Deep hibernation is interrupted by a retched beep
Behind the alarming noise lies a deeper meaning:
 Good morning Darling!
It's 6 AM, and you've got lots of chores
So wake up, and cake up that pretty face of yours
Pressing snooze again? At the expense of your bed head?
Come on, get up and curl your hair instead
 Grab your books and don't be late
Prepare to learn about subject we both know you hate
They tell you it's the only way to achieve your dreams
Ha! We both know that's as false as it seems
 What happened to that little girl?
Who once wanted to travel the world?
Who valued things other than money or a college degree?
Who could have cared less about pretty?
 Well, guess it's not my place to ask
 I'm just an alarm so I'll do my task
I'm only here to remind you to chase a dream that isn't yours
 So run along now and do your chores

The Dream Eater
by Alex J. Breckenridge

Come, little one and let me tuck you in;
Don't mind as I gently peel off your skin.
Simmer down as I gently caress your skull,
Sink to sleep with my soothing lull.

It feels as a sleeping leg does, but inside your head.
Should I feed too long, you'd soon be dead.
Slurping all your dreams away,
Like one would guzzle a milkshake down on a hot day.

Come, little child and follow me.
Open your arms and give me the key.
Pour out that sweet nectar you humans call soul,
Open your mind to me and relinquish control.

So delicious is your essence which I drain,
Sipping it straight from your tender brain.
Your dreams are now forever mine to savor,
Upon my tongue, your nightmares are the tastiest flavor.

Slumber now, my lovely, and sleep tight;
For I save you to rejuvenate for another night.
Go limp now in my ethereal embrace;
There are other dreams that I must chase.



Clockwork
by Aubrey Foust

The Dream

by James Grove

As I laid my head down on the soft, white sheet of the bed, I turned and saw her laying next to me. Her auburn hair flowed down her creamy skin, covering part of her face from my view. She blessed me with her smile, a feature I much adored. I returned the kindness, eliciting the most wonderful giggle. I moved my hand to part her hair, uncovering the rest of her dreamy face. Her hair felt like the finest silk, and her face, the softest velvet. As I stared at her, as I moved through my little ritual, she didn't utter a word, didn't even let slip a whisper. "Who are you?" I questioned. She continued to say nothing, continued to stare back at me. "Please, just a name is all I need!" I begged her. She opened her mouth, and let loose a *bbbzzzzttt*. I opened my eyes, and turned towards my alarm. I silently cursed the infernal contraption. Look up at my ceiling; same dream, same girl.

Hatsune Miku

by Austin Sullivan



Broken **by Ashley Hay**

The pain is there

I can feel it as it clutches my soul

The harsh words hit me like bullets

I try not to think about what is going on

My Soul Is Broken

Tears build up inside

I try not to let them escape

The pain is just too intense

It cuts through like a knife cutting through flesh

I feel the wetness as the tears dribble down my face

1 I solemnly wipe the tears away, trying to hide my
2 saddened countenance

My Soul Is Broken

I go through the day pretending nothing is wrong

I pray to God and ask him to take away all the pain

I begin to feel as though I am nothing but a weak coward

I talk to my friends and they begin to make me laugh

I come to realize that I am so much more than a coward

I suddenly regain all my strength

I learn that there will always be a broken spot in our
hearts and souls somewhere

Through all of my struggle no matter what kind I always
hold faith in God

My Soul Has Been Broken....

But I Must Go On!

Hitler's Nightmare

by Alex J. Breckenridge

Hitler stood in front of a sleepy looking man of about middle age. His uniform was slack and the Star of David badge sewn onto it sagged like a dog's jowls. He yawned and began to look over Adolf. While he walked slowly around him, Hitler nervously glanced at the armed Polish soldiers watching him like a hawk. His back ached from the train ride that had brought him to this place. The soldier inspecting him lazily jerked his thumb to one side without a word. Another armed soldier directed the prisoner to his destination. "Where are you taking me?" Hitler demanded.

The soldier twisted his head, suddenly shaped like a serpent and hissed, "Ssssssilence, Nazi!" His forked tongue flicked wildly and the sound of rattling echoed through an empty Auschwitz. The white and red flag flapped lazily in the cold breeze. Hitler was led to a door that read KUNST LIEFERT¹ with Pinocchio standing guard with an STG-44 assault rifle in his hands. "Nein!" Hitler cried in disbelief.

"You are ein künstler², no?" Pinocchio asked.

"Ja," Adolf responded.

"Then in with you!"

"Wait!" Hitler cried as the serpent pushed him towards the door, "Are there truly art supplies in here?"

"Ja, loads of them," Pinocchio answered, his wooden nose growing slightly. Before he could contest, the serpent opened the door and pushed Hitler inside. Suddenly he was submerged by a thick gas, choking him and making him tear up. Through the smoke he could see Eva Braun and his German shepherd Blondi. He reached out for them, his two loves, when Eva revealed a large Bowie knife. She began to call for Blondi, holding up the knife. "Nein!" Hitler called over and over, but the gas stole his words. As Eva brought the knife down upon the dog, the gas claimed him.

¹ 'Art Supplies' (German)

² 'Artist' (German)



Aspiration
by Katelin Deushane

Sometimes I fear
That my muse cannot hear
That my cries fall onto deaf ears
Yet I try to push past the wall
Hoping that she may hear my siren's call
And catch me before I fall

1
3

Urban Girl
by Aubrey Foust

Sometimes
by Jax Westin

1
4
Sometimes I wish I told you 'I love you,'
While I stare at you, biting back my tongue
Sometimes I think it's just the things you do
That makes me fall and just come undone
Sometimes I want to yell profanities
Because you make me so mad
Sometimes you bring out the worst in me
But for that, I am glad
Sometimes I just want to hold your hand
And sing stupid love songs
Sometimes I call you 'My Baby grand,'
Because deep down, I know you'd do me no wrong
Sometimes I watch you sleep at night
And whisper sweet nothings in your ear
Sometimes I snore loudly, waking you up in a fright
And I know I'm all you hear
Sometimes I wish you'd just go fly a kite
Because of the stupid things you say
Sometimes we yell and we fight
But it's always you I want in my arms by the end of the day
Sometimes I over think things
And you roll your eyes
Sometimes I picture you as my angel with no wings
Because I know you tell me no lies
Sometimes you get bored of me
But I promise you this
Sometimes with you will be my all of times, just you wait and see
And I'll seal it with a kiss.

Reason

by Trista Miller

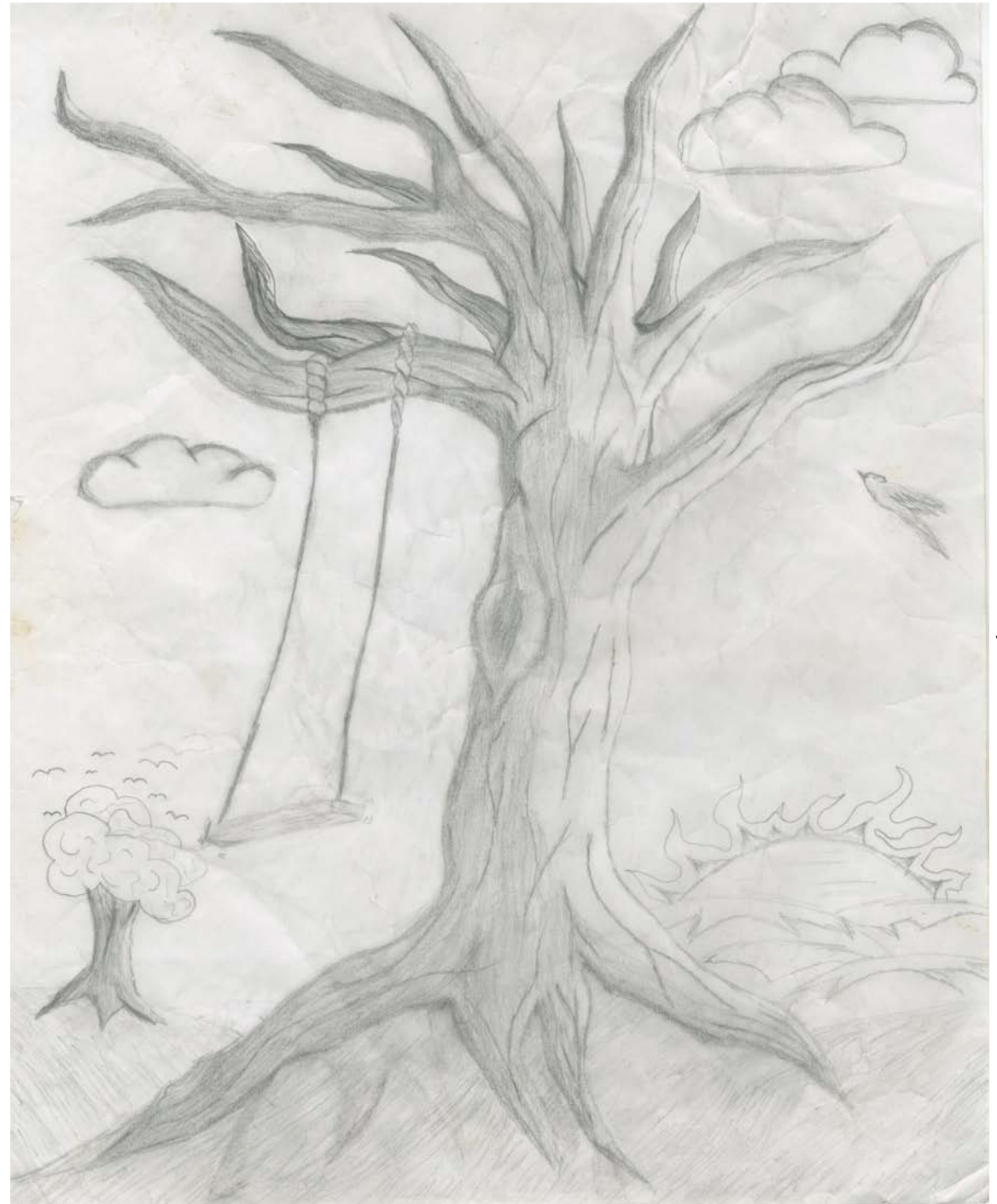
You give my life meaning
My heart reason for beating
My lungs strength to keep breathing
Me courage to keep moving
Without you, there would be no reason for me.
My heart, my breath, my life belongs to you
For you are my Light, my World, and my Air.
As long as I have each of you, I'll have all reasons
to overcome whatever is to collide into our lives
Everything within you is what makes me who I am
I gave you life; you gave mine all the meaning to keep living.

The Girl and Her Puddle

by Aaron Furr

Stephanie sat in a puddle. She knew her mother would be so mad! Mad at the fact that Stephanie's once white dress was developing stains that would never come out. Her mother would be unable to understand why Stephanie now sat, lazily staring around her as the puddle continued to widen. She was a bad girl, who deserved to be put into time out for the way she behaved. No, her mother would never understand why she couldn't move from this puddle.

From the front of the house came a loud bang, and then the sound of several voices raised, shouting out questions. Stephanie didn't move as the police response team came into the lit living room. She didn't react at all as one of the officers, an obvious rookie, started to gag and curse underneath his breath. An officer rushed over to her, lifted her from the puddle she had been sitting in, and cradled her in his strong arms. Only as Stephanie was forced from the puddle of blood that had slowly leaked out of her mother's mangled body did she finally cry out. The officer holding her cooed quietly to the traumatized child, turning her face away from her mother's broken body.



The Willow Tree by Austin Sullivan

Paint the Town Red**by Shelley Jackson**

Come all ye villagers,
Down to the store,
Pick out a bucket of paint,
And let your spirit soar.
Here we have crimson,
Reds for all seasons,
Scarlet, Candy, and hot
any palates and reasons
Come all ye villagers
Paint the town Red
Fences and houses
Faces and heads

Wings of Death**by Austin Sullivan**



Second
Place
by Mason
Fulton

Cover Art Contest Runners-Up

1
7



Third
Place
by Meghan
Landry



Echelon by Jay Ryan Pilger

Tragedy

by Cal Denecke

Tragedy can happen in an instant,
One day you wake up feeling great,
Feeling like you're on cloud nine,
The next it's all too late

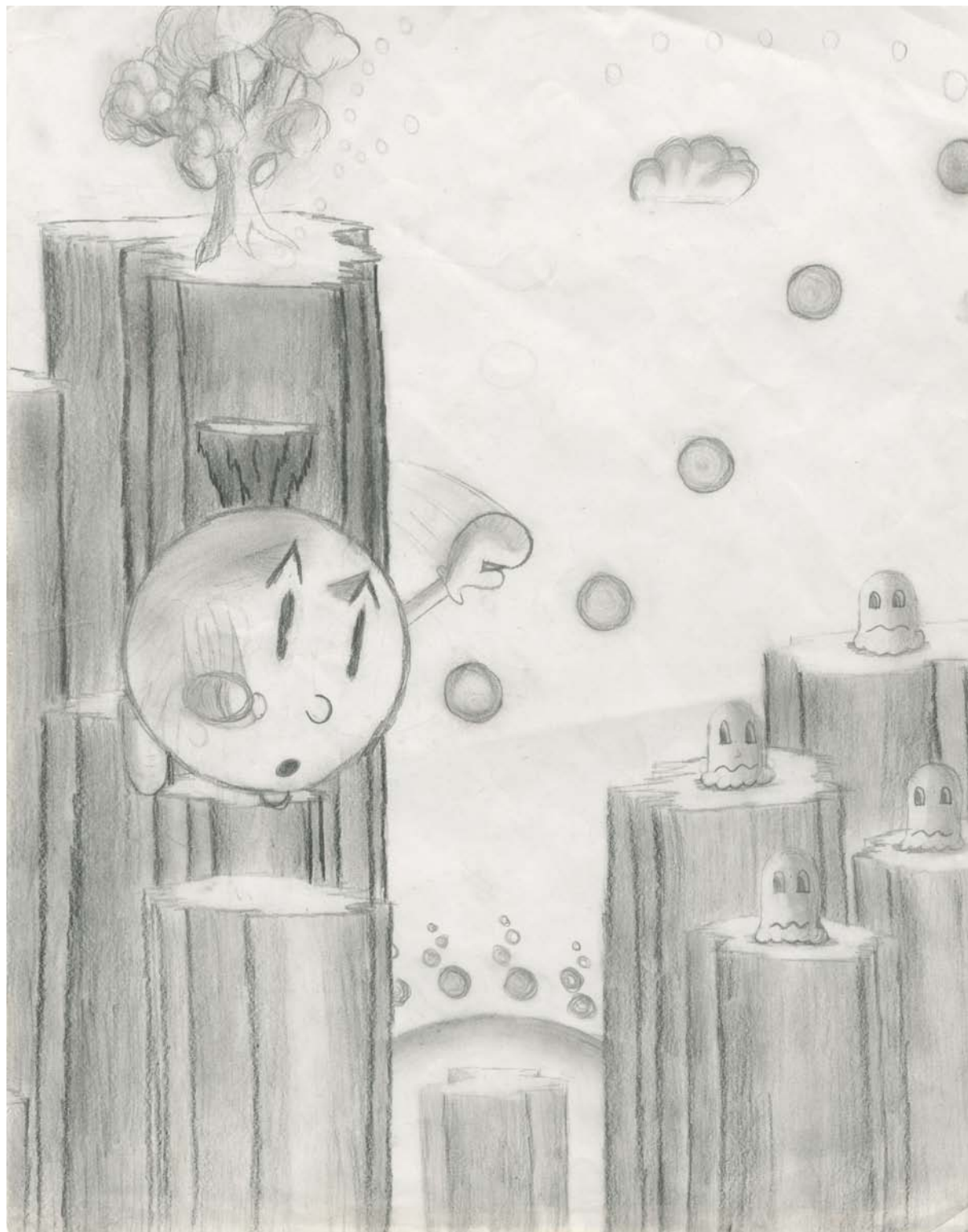
Tell people you love them,
Tell them you care,
Because once they are gone,
Life doesn't seem fair

Thoughts are racing constantly,
Asking yourself, why
Why did this happen to me,
Why did he have to die?

Stuff like this isn't supposed to happen,
I never thought it could be,
I just hope it's a better place up there,
And you're watching down over me

Days will come and go,
The story will still be told,
People will start to forget,
But the memories will never fold

Forever Pacman
by Austin Sullivan



Learning True Competition

by Danielle Barnes

Before the events that led me to be the person I am today, I had never chosen to be competitive among my peers or within myself. Never feeling good enough to compete in anything, I had refused to try. It has taken me a long time to overcome such feelings of inadequacy and it didn't begin to happen until I had reached a particular turning point in my life.

Looking around I could see Stella at the weight pile counting reps with each lift of the bar. Hip-hop music was blaring out of the pavilion as other women were setting up for their aerobics class. A number of women were in groups at picnic tables playing games and gossiping about the latest compound news. The quarter-mile track was just as busy with women making their rounds at various speeds. Everyone was dressed in what we referred to as their "grays": gray t-shirts and gray shorts. This was a typical day at the Federal Prison Camp for Women in Bryan, Texas.

20 Leaning back across the seats of the metal bleachers, resting upon my elbows, I watched as joggers and walkers passed me by. I had been working out for a few months building up my stamina for running. Several weeks had passed since the first time I tried to run around the track. The results had been a complete and miserable failure. Stressed out and feeling angry about being in prison and then not being able to complete even one lap around the track left me feeling discouraged. I had wanted to run to relieve the pressure of my circumstances and now I hung my head in shame wondering if running was something I just wasn't cut out for. Returning to my unit that night I realized that if I was going to accomplish running, it was going to take hard work and dedication. Besides, I had nothing but time on my hands anyway.

Since then I had made a great deal of progress, beginning with walking long distances and gradually increasing my speed to power walking. My roommate, Lauren, would join me on occasions, but after a few extremely fast-paced laps would say, "Slow down." Unfortunately, Lauren had a bad knee and that would keep her from maintaining the high speed we would achieve and I would slow down to accommodate her. She was a great motivator, though, and encouraged me to go to the track when there were days I didn't feel like going.

Eventually I took power walking to the next level and began to jog every other lap. I started with a slow pace and taught myself a breathing pattern to keep from hyperventilating and gasping for air. It was a success, but it wasn't what I was trying to achieve. I had to train harder and push myself further. I was getting closer to running my first mile.

Continued...

...continued

I could tell summer had finally come. It was a hot and stifling day in central Texas and the recreation yard was full of women. The air was dry and the slight breeze gave no relief to the sun's pounding gaze. I could feel the heat almost burning my skin and the sweat descending down my arms and legs. It was definitely warmer than I liked for being on the track, but I had been working up to this point, building up to reach this goal.

I reached down and tightened the laces on my old beat up jogging shoes. I grabbed my cooler and took one last drink before entering the track, careful not to drink too much because I knew large amounts of fluid could cause side cramps. I walked over to a grassy area next to the track and did several warm up stretches, preparing myself mentally and getting ready for the challenge. I adjusted my ear buds, placing the cord under my shirt to the Walkman clipped onto my waist band between my body and my shorts to keep it from falling. Finally, I was ready.

I took off walking, making large strides across the dirt and gravel-made track. The discomfort of the day's heat left my mind as my focus shifted to my breathing and my feet moving across the ground. I paced myself the first couple of laps like I had been doing for weeks, training for this moment.

Making the turn and beginning my third lap I sped up and entered into a strong run. Instantly I began the breathing technique I had discovered and drew upon my inner drive to succeed. "In, in, out, out, in, in, out, out," I chanted inside my head as the music played in my ears. Even the music had a perfect beat matching every pounding step that hit the earth. The wind created by the long strides was in my face, and I realized that everything was going just as I had envisioned it. My mind and body had come together in perfect harmony and I knew that I was going to make it to the finish and I did.

Completing that first mile was just the beginning of the many things I have achieved in life. I went on to run even greater distances and began a routine of running three miles every morning before breakfast. Every obstacle I endured as I continued to run was important to the journey. Running was my way of overcoming a subconscious belief that I wasn't adequate enough to compete in this world. In reality, it isn't the world that I needed to compete with, it was myself. I only need to be better than the person I was the day before.

After I was released from prison, I retired my running shoes, but am hopeful that one day I will run again. However, the lessons I learned through running and my prison experience has motivated me to try new things and accomplish many goals. Running instilled in me an ambitious drive to succeed in anything I attempt to do. Today I am applying those skills towards academic achievements and daily living. "Success is not measured by what you do compared to what others do. It is measured by what you do with the ability God gave you." –Zig Zigler

Lieutenant Lemonade by Alex J. Breckenridge

"Dad, what are you doing?" the son asked, looking into their garage at the ridiculous contraption his father had built. "I'm testing out my time machine, son," Roger said, making the final adjustments on his device.

"Do you really think that will work?"

"Of course," he answered, confident in himself.

"Where's your father? Dinner is almost ready," the boy's mother called.

"He's in the garage, he said he's going to test his time machine," the boy hollered.

"For the last time, tell him that I'm sorry they canceled his favorite show, and there's nothing much he can do about it."

"That's a lie, Christine!" Roger yelled from the garage, "They may have cancelled Lieutenant Lemonade, but it won't be off the air for long!"

"Just write them a letter, dear."

"Damn it woman, writing letters won't restore my Thursday nights! Action must be taken!"

"Time travel isn't possible, Roger, the idea is damned ridiculous! Dinner is ready!"

2 "Go eat, boy," the father grunted to his son. The boy left, and Roger stepped into
2 the machine's receiver. Christine popped her head into the garage. "Roger, are you really
going to try this?"

"Lieutenant Lemonade is the only thing in my life worth living for, Christine. I have to have closure." Roger looked up, and after seeing the expression on his wife's face, he added, "Well, besides you, of course. Lieutenant Lemonade and you, dear." The expression persisted, and he rolled his eyes as he added, "The boy, too."

"This thing looks dangerous, Roger."

"Don't worry, I built it myself."

Now Christine rolled her eyes instead, remarking, "Right, just like you built that broken-down excuse of a shed in the backyard."

Roger pretended not to hear her, and he adjusted the settings on the machine.

"Suppose this contraption even works, what is your plan, Roger?"

"My plan is to go back in time, become a fancy producer, and create Lieutenant Lemonade myself. Then I will have the closure that I- and all of the other loyal LL fans- deserve!"

"Couldn't you just write fan-fiction? Maybe start a convention or do some cosplay?"

Roger started mumbling angrily, and Christine just shook her head and left the garage.

"Don't die," she called on her way out.

Roger entered the final settings and pressed the button.

Hail to the King by James Grove

as tHe king takes the stand,
blood drenches the lAnd.
controlling with an Iron hand,
the wicked cLaims command.

as Terror grips the meek,
evil preys upOn the weak.

now Tremble, the voices shout,
but the Hatred drowns it out.
hear the kings' fall comE about.

now the Killing has begun,
the evlI blood shall come.
the wicked reigN now done.
aGain, the cycle runs.

Burning Houses by Katelin Deushane

Candle flame in the night
A tiny window burning bright
Orange and Red woven thread
Fill the space of the last word said
Burn my hands, warm my skin
Lest this threat of cold cave me in,
Deep in this dark is shame
Please bring me some light with your flame
If through the cracks darkness does show

The Night Watcher by Austin Sullivan





Children of the Indigo Tree by Jay Ryan Pilger

Postal

by Alex J. Breckenridge

Screams filled the air as elves ran for their lives. Their pointed slippers made frantic prints in the blood-stained snow. The automatic turret mounted on the sleigh rained bullets upon the peaceful village. The bag of toys had been carelessly tossed aside to make room for the gun. Toys for all the little boys and girls had been scattered, abolishing all the work put into them as they broke. The once joyful cry of *ho-ho-ho* now resonated through the village, curdling cheer into fear. The sleigh landing-bay lights flashed red and the speaker system rigged for the entire village now chunked out heavy metal, music evil enough that many elves would drop dead at the first poisonous decibel. The sky seemed to darken only to be illuminated by the fire of the turret. Steam rose from the heaps of elf bodies in the cold air. For a moment the bearded man let his finger release the trigger and he surveyed his work. The door opened beside the sleigh garage and Mrs. Claus walked out holding a tray of cookies. "You know I have high blood sugar!" Santa growled, suddenly pulling his pistol on his wife.

"They're for the reindeer, you oaf!" She hand fed each reindeer a chocolate chip cookie before saying, "Don't forget the launch codes, dear."

"What do I look like, an elf?"

"Don't patronize me, Christopher." Mrs. Claus finished feeding the elves before returning towards the garage.

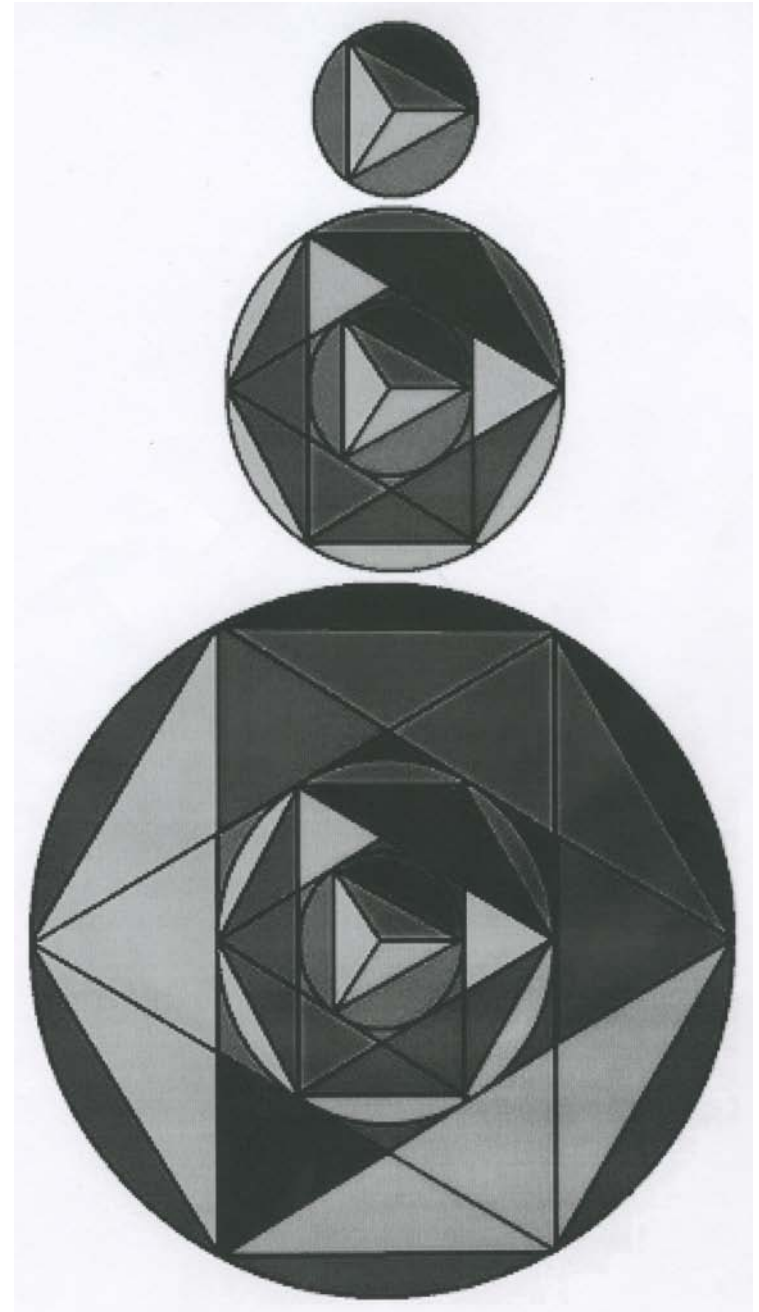
"I'll be home in a few hours," Santa informed his wife.

"I know it," she said, walking through the door.

Santa scowled and cursed to himself before taking the reins of his sleigh and making the last run of the last Christmas.

The Photo by Jax Westin

I can feel it deep down in my soul
I can see it when I look in the mirror
It's starting to consume me whole
This monster I see in the photo
I can't escape it
There's no relief
Every time I close my eyes, it calls out to me
Hiding in all the dark places in my body
Surrounding my every thought
It whispers lovely lullabies in my ears in the middle of the night
Bringing memories of all my favorite nightmares
And I cry out for help
But it catches the words before they can leave my throat
Leaving me mute to the world
So everyone around me thinks I'm fine
But I stand alone, wishing I was dead
It laughs in my face about self-loathing
And reminds me that there are no monsters under my bed
That it's all in my head
I see its reflection and spit at the monster who has consumed me whole
I choke back tears at the thoughts of what I must do
I can't destroy the thing inside me without losing myself in the process
But at this point nothing like that matters to me
And I feel it escaping my body with every drop of blood that floods the floor
I smile at the image in the mirror and for a second I can see my old self again
The little girl with dreams of tomorrow
She dries my tear stained cheeks before vanishing
And the monster takes its rightful place back inside me
I dig a little deeper hoping I can reach her in time
But deep down I already know it's too late
And I lie alone, in a pool of my own self-hatred
Still flowing out of me with the monster mixed in
It laughs at my tries to escape
I still see it when I close my eyes
There are no more elusions for me tonight
The monster haunting me has won
Daylight fills the air around me
And I'll begin the day going through all the motions
Putting on the smile everyone knows way too well
So they won't see my true emotions
The monster within me lives to see another day



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Clan Emblem by Brent Wrenn

Anonymous
by Katelin Deushane

Shh, Don't tell
Let's pretend all is well
This bruise, that scratch
Faded yellow beneath the new batch
They've been buried
Each new grave of stone and dirt unvaried

Shh, Don't tell
Let's pretend all is well
Flashing lights, aren't the only sight
Forget that night
Though the stars may burn black the next day
Trust, they won't stay

Shh, don't tell
Let's pretend all is well
Ignore the vine
From the shadows that twist and twine,
This toxic growth
Cannot possibly choke us both

Shh, don't tell
Let's pretend all is well
You go play without even a peep
And I will go to sleep
Words know how to hold their living breaths
Up until one's own death

Sea Green
by Trista Miller

Sea Green is a color that has a lot of meaning to me. When I see this color so much happens instantly but fades just as quickly. Sea green is the color of one special soldier's eyes, the only eyes I've ever been able to get lost in. When I see this exact color it fills me with so many good memories. In those few moments I forget about all the stress that hovers over me, the current mess that awaits me. The loud screaming and rough housing disappears and I'm more than content in that moment. I remember the very first time that I ever stared into his beautiful, sea green eyes, and I can feel how excited I was, I can feel all my nerves just dancing around, like it was happening right now. I recall conversations, hopes, and joy that I once held with the soldier. When I see the perfect color of sea green, I can't help or stop the smile that covers my face or the happiness that fills my chest, I welcome those few blissful minutes, I can escape. The color of his eyes brings a perfect image of his brilliant smile, his enthusiasm, his courage, strong will to overcome his fears (except spiders), and his care free way he carried around with him. I see him dancing around to his favorite music and I too just want to start dancing. That sea green which I've only ever seen in his eyes is happiness to me. It is faith and encouragement, kindness and gentleness. It's a reminder that I can love someone other than my three boys. I can't help but feel all the love I have and always will hold for that one special, intelligent, handsome, brave soldier.

Addicted
by Laurissa Pearson

Tic-toc
Goes the clock
Impatiently running in my mind,
Reverse the time, rewind.
Take back the sands
That run through my hands
But you will never understand.

Pitter-patters
Heart in shatters
Beating rapidly imagining that they have the right to
Criticize, compromise you.
I only ever showed support
Never pushing you unless it was my last resort
But my intentions you forever contort.

Flip-flop
My desires nonstop
Addicted to a fantasy you
Create, destroy, regenerate anew.

I can't keep enduring this
One day complete and the next biting emptiness
But you leave me with hungry bliss.

Click-clack
Don't look back
As I walk away from everything
Fiercely, desperately through feeling.
I'm not supposed to be here
Watching you act like you don't care
But it's crushingly still there.

Feet
by Shelley Jackson

Summer night
Moon high and bright
Sweat, a thin coat;
Six feet fall left and right,
Gravel road crunching,
Breathing comes in gasps
Roaring in the distance
Iron Monster coming fast.
Big feet lead little feet
Into fields of corn
Huddle there in terror
Human beast shouting,
Iron beast's blasting horn,
Corn leaving cutting skin,
As feet run to find haven
Three sets run from one
The endless night gives in to day
Feet blistered, legs scream
Bodies tired, hearts sore
Finally knees near collapsing
Knocking at family's door.

Helpless

by Christian A. Townsend

I see her pain, a pain that haunts her sleep, restless rumbling thoughts that causes her to weep.
Her smile is dampened by grief that bores deep to the bone, an emptiness that leaves her alone.
With eyes of hope she greets the morning sun, rays of hope as she presses on.
Joy is stalked by pain; hope by despair, purpose by doubt she no longer care.
Face to face in the mirror, seeking meaning, questions without answers.
Queen of dreams devoured by doubt.

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Truth

by Edwin Schoonover

What is truth?
What are lies?
Why do we hide such words behind our eyes?
Why do we force a smile when actually we want to cry?
This door is black, black as some days.
As we remember them they seem to fade to gray.
But that unsettling feeling never goes away.
What is it I may say?
It is our truths that we lie about to ourselves since in the end
everybody ends up....
Strong and okay.

What Happened to You

by Heather Kruzan

How do you accept drugs took over you?
How do you accept it and not be so blue?
The father you were the drugs took over you
A father so great
Man I sure miss you
Ignored I am
No calls from you
A new wife you married
You hardly knew her
It all makes sense for the drugs took over you
Pictures I see start to complete the puzzle of you
Transformed you are into the drugs are you
Buried so deep I don't see you
Drugs I see
It's all over you

Call of the Dead

by James Grove

I rush blindly in the darkness,
my bullets leaving one by one.
The light of salvation appears less and less,
my Black Ops training coming undone.

I hear the blood curdling groan.
I raise my gun and turn around,
the zombie unleashed an unrelenting moan.
One in the head, it's on the ground.

I look through my scope,
a massive swarm is coming
I abandon all hope.
I start running.

I hear "I'm not ready to die!"
I turn around, I must win at all cost!
I fought to the end, I really did try,
But now the game is over, in the end I lost

A Millennial's Plea

by Mark Negley

Where can I go to escape this world of constant dread,
My soul so weary and tried?
Into the churches I walk, longing to be fed, yet to my horror I do find:
Style, smooth, perfect places, with substance set aside,
No ancient doctrines taught, for which the faithful had died.
Instead of Christ, a sinner's only hope, I get morals and laws.
Practical tips for life I'm told, that only expose my flaws.
In this modern world, I get enough fakeness, flash and show,
Give me the hard truth, the truth that heals, at least now I know.

Love Trap
by Heather Kruzan

A love so confusing
Will it ever make sense
Jerry Springer it seems but I'm still here and loving it
About five years of love and games
A boy together
This surely is not a game
He's now two years old and this love we have together is still insane
I love you with no idea why
They say love will make you do crazy things
I can certainly say this is I
Love at first sight I never believed in
Now I'm caught forever in your trap and this I certainly believe in

Buried Alive
by James Grove

Anna slowly awoke; her senses were cloudy, and only the dull pain on the back of her head seemed to register. Panic suddenly swelled in her stomach as she realized where she was: the cold, hard ground of the forest. She heard the sound of digging near her body, which she realized she was bound. She tried to scream, but quickly realized her mouth was covered by duct tape. "You finally woke up from your nap," chuckled the figure standing just out of her line of vision. "You had me a little worried there for a minute. I thought I hit you too hard," the figure said as he continued to dig. Anna started to cry. The figure dropped his shovel and made his way toward Anna. "Shhhh, don't cry. It will be over," the figure whispered as he picked up Anna. He walked over to the freshly dug grave, and laid her in the pit. "You know, I love you darling, but every time I tried to tell you I got rejected. You always chose someone else. Sweet dreams, honey," chuckled the figure as he lowered Anna into the freshly dug grave.

This Is It by Frances Tate

It was twenty thirteen, I was eighteen and the world continued as it always had. We had missed every prediction of the world ending and it made the people of Earth forget that it had already begun to self-destruct. Just because the humans were too stupid to notice or care, did not make it stop. Nature has always known. Just like the squirrels know how to stock up on fat for a long, hard winter, or how the birds know to fly with the sun's position around the Earth. We did not know this. Humans had become incapable of remembering, remembering how to listen and to feel. We forget what it meant to be animals.

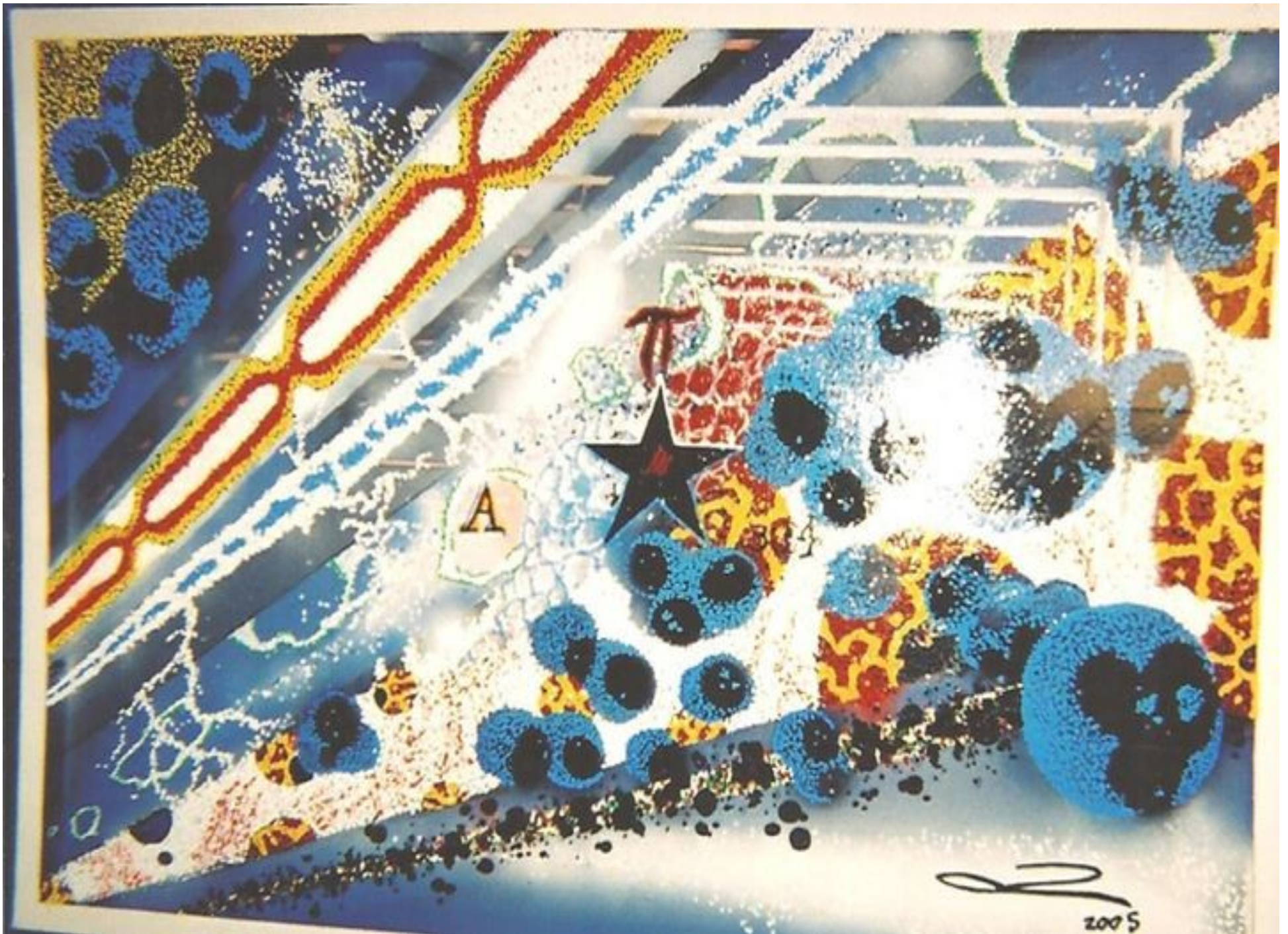
It was twenty seventeen. I was twenty two and the world slowed. I should have been graduating college with my first degree but instead I had to start protecting myself from my world. Our existence here on Earth had become too much and nature started to fight back to rid itself of the parasite infecting it. The oceans were first; they engulfed thousands of miles of our lands. The storms and rain had washed away our foods and our clean waters. That was the moment that the truth slapped all seven and a half billion people of this Earth in the face. We were going to die. Maybe not today and perhaps not tomorrow but before the sun sets on the world it will fall on mankind.

It was twenty-twenty. I was twenty-five and I should have been a four year employee at the office of my choice but instead I had to start fighting for my life. The degradation of the Earth had started killing off the human population. The natural disasters had claimed nearly two billion of us already. We tried to build shelters but nothing could withstand Mother Nature. It was our modern ice age. The religious called it the rapture, the apocalypse; they said only the righteous would be left standing. I do not agree, I do not believe any of us will survive this. Perhaps we were not meant to. Perhaps it was simply the end of our time here, just like the dinosaurs ruled for centuries, we did as well. Perhaps whatever magnificent creatures live here after us will find our remains as we have of our ancestors.

It was twenty twenty-five. I was thirty and I should be starting to build my family but instead I was trying to find the strength to keep moving. Only a few thousand of us remained and many of us were too old, or too young to carry on much longer. We had abandoned our homes and our things long ago as most of our concrete world had become desolate. The remaining populace of the world fathered on the land that was once called North America. In the beginning we had hoped that our sheer numbers could outlast anything but alas we knew we were wrong. So we fathered, we stayed, some of us just prayed. We all knew it would not be long now. We could not fight much longer anyway.

It is now twenty twenty-seven, I am thirty-two. I should be a wife and a mother but instead I am alone. It is time. There are only hundreds of us now. We father in an open field; it is muddy, nothing seems to grow any more even though the plants around us still stand. The storm clouds start to roll in. the people who remain that understand weather tell us this one is the worst we will see. We know they do not think that it is the last one. We have stopped hoping, we have stopped fighting, and we have accepted our fates. It is not the life we wanted but ultimately it was the one we chose. And now those choices will kill us. We stood in the field, blending in with the Earth around us, dirty and broken. We looked to the skies, to our fathers, to our gods; it began raining. We moved closer together holding hands as the winds began to pick up. We bowed our heads away from the heavens and at each other. One last time we looked into each other's faces and into the eyes of the unafraid. We saw the pain humans had felt through their existence. We felt the hatred that we had created in this life. We heard the cries of the men, women and children that had not even lived to see the atrocity mankind had become. And as the storm began pulling us and tearing us, we remembered. We remembered what it meant to be human.

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Overture of the Star by Jay Ryan Pilger