



Blended

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Deconstruction

Andrea Olsen

How I Learned to Edit

Loren Gosline-Churchill

Clocks are twisting. I have this reoccurring nightmare.

I'm running through the library of the university, where my father teaches. It happens when either the sun or the moon is *awake*.

I am sweating, I am soaked. Clocks are twisting. I am sweating so profusely that I am drenched... moon and sun are awake.

Faces appear blurred, faces where my father teaches. Faces of friends and family appear, disgusted. I deserve it. I can't make them clear. I feel late. They all know the ending. I am laughing.

Too late. The book of my life is there. A knife... Too late. I feel they all know I'm laughing.

I can't make them out. I feel late... I'm laughing though. A knife. I pick the knife up.

Yes, honestly that's what everyone wants, in an audience. That's where I come from. Isn't it? Don't I? We judge a man by his ending. Do I? That's what an audience does. Isn't it? Wait! Mom, just wait... Maybe, that's where I learned to love performing?

I judge a man by his ending. You are ending... I am the son... I am the son in this story. My father and I both agree on this. One of his sons anyway. One of his sons. Hello? My father and I both agree on this; we agree on stories. I am my father's son. Hello! Can anyone hear me? Crying... Why am I... my father. He's the Father in this story. I am. Now, my mother is gone. Gone? My God, she's gone too soon-- I remember his point. I stopped running. That's what he taught me. To stop. He taught me what the point was. I stopped running. The whole story. The point is a story. The whole story. The whole story. The whole story. My mother is... now!

I'm in front of them all applauding me... crying and laughing, drenched in my terrific sweat, looking down, at my hands. Now. There. Is. Blood.

I'm in front of them all applauding. I see two books. The story of my father's son is also there. Another, so I wait... I see now... a wolf on a ridge, looking down on the town's smoky chimneys, huffing, dripping saliva, steaming from his toothy loose jaws. Go on now! The steaming barrel echoing the shot, the warning shot. *Git! Now jus Git!* *Ya hear me!* Wait... Cathy, I can't mom, listen to me... please... You... it has to end.

That's where I come from.
 Too soon. My twenty-year-old part. Collapsed on the floor... I am
 Falling: A part in my own story. Looking down now, I see her.
 Sitting next to me in the rose garden. She said goodbye... showed me an unconditional loving infinity.
 I am my father's son... I play a part in a story. The one in the Sun... in the university,
 My father taught me the point of a story, which ends... the... it ends...
 I am crying and laughing, drenched in my terrific sweat and tears. Looking down, I see
 a wolf on a mid-winter night... the other story ends with... He's still... and alive.
 Please...I'm begging you stop: *Just...stop! Loren, God damn it!* Because of
 a pair of bloody hands... a story.....of my father's hands.
 In one story, I am the producer of this dream. In the other
 I am a starving wolf in mid-winter.
 I have seen two books now. Two stories. I am alive now, Father. father. I play a part in
 my
 fathers' story. Spirits in the yard.... I just stopped.... I need you to listen. *God damn it, Mom!* wait, wait....
 A story of my father's hands. This is ending... ending too soon.
 In the other? I'm a shadow. After she died, I felt like...She was there. Why is...
 I see the knife now...that's right! It all has to end too soon... *Loren wait! Why...what is this blood.*
 My god, I almost died. It's right here, see? Can't you fucking read? Get up!
 I almost killed myself... if had just let... the knife... go... Wake up!
 Fallen... the Petaluma harbor, gloriously... I mean, artfully! I'm laughing now...
 Angels of grace, light and love, I am begging you. Fallen, reborn of grace... down to you...
 I'm alive please I am begging... wait
 / in this story. I stopped. Never again, never enough... rum... I'm laughing now, in a pool of blood-I cut off
 my throat-never-ever-again. Speak, don't edit this, not this...It's me, your son, Loren
 I am a story of my father's holy ghost, and I'm alive. I'm listening to him tell my favorite story, that grin behind
 the telephone... that phone call. I talked with my dad last night. Stories, and the pointing to my
 father being alive. I have a life. Now, I have time with It's one of my favorite things
 in life. To hear my father telling a story. Dad
 .
 That's where I came from.
 And of how I learned to edit. Wait, Mom! ...wait. Looking up now, from my pool of terrific sweat,
 I see... a man. I'm an infant in a backpack. My dad, carrying me on his back. There,
 to the cathedral. The people are laughing at me. Looking up drenched.... My first public laugh....
 This story remains... The story of how I learned to edit. A story about us...
 JAMES 5:16. It's my favorite verse: *Confess your faults one to another,
 and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.*

Epilogue

I'm not a fan of the Catholic Church. They have blood on their hands. Yeah, not a big fan of the one that started in Rome anyway. I do, however, love that they still use Reconciliation. When my mother passed away from cancer, she came to visit me in her etheric body. This is not a joke. I was sleeping. I remember that night well. We had a beautiful calm on the west side of Telegraph Hill. It was two am or so in the Sunset District of San Francisco, California. I shared the apartment with an ILWW tugboat cook. He was away on one of his two

weeklong shifts. Micheal Bobo, bobbing around a tossing galley. I bet he was always chasing after the dishes, dancing to the edges of his stainless-steel prep station.

Anyways -- my grandpa Ed, her father, always said before stealing a piece of bread with butter, Cathy, my mother, had been preparing to leave her body for some time -- on the couch of the house she grew up in, in Columbia, Connecticut. Then, that phone call that I will never forget. Look, all I can verify is that she came before she left her body. She came to visit me while I was asleep. She took me to Shakespeare's Rose Garden in Golden Gate Park, two blocks away from my apartment. We both sat on that bench that I must have kept warm, hours over months, with her dying on the East Coast and me learning my lines for this play or that on the West Coast. We sat there on that very bench, and we took our time to see each other there, together. Just to be there and spend that sacred and precious time together. My God, it was hard. We both, in agreement, said it was time for her to go.

"I know Mom. I don't want you to be in pain anymore. You need to go. It's okay. I'm okay. I'm doing what makes me feel passionate Mom. Just like you told me to do. Mom, it's time to go. It's time to end the suffering. I'll be ok. I don't want you to suffer any more." She agreed with me. As painful as that was for her. She could not leave without making sure her son was going to be able to make it without her. I would never be the same after that. Maybe it gave me proof of something bigger. We said goodbye. The phone rang, waking me to hear my Aunt Maggie, sounding too much like my mom, said, "I'm sorry to be the one Loren. Cathy just left." Yeah, she did. I knew that she did.

Later, much later. Well, shit, more and more each week now. See, I was twenty years old then. Now my therapist, Olivia, I love that name, tells me to invite that twenty-year-old to be with the current me. There's some editing for you! Nevertheless, as I'm kneeling on the floor, just last week, crying and snot-faced. I began my new lifetime journey with parts work. It's one of the main modalities of Internal Family Systems Cognitive Behavioral Therapy work. This is big, and it ripped my heart right open. My twenty-year-old self was lying on the floor and doing a breath experiment that he stumbled upon after Cathy left her body.

He was having a conversation with her through his heart. He told me that she was still here. I turned into a giant snot rag immediately. Olivia asked me to ask him if he was hurt and what he thinks he did to deserve that. He told me that he had failed to be there for Cathy. That he didn't try hard enough to keep her alive. I mean this guy is me but cut off and stuck in one of my timelines in grief. I put my hand on his heart. He was breathing into it like a bellows to a fire. I remembered that. He said that he could see a golden glowing orb in his third eye and that it looked like an eye. Yes, I thought. I remember that too. He said that Cathy was in the room and that they were talking.

That was true as well. In fact, she stayed with me for a whole year. And what a year that was! But my twenty-year-old self was still lost in a deranged selective memory that started to favor my failure over my successes. With Olivia guiding me, I placed my hand on his bursting sternum and told him that he is forgiven. I asked him to take a deep breath and relax. I let him feel my loving acceptance and assurance that he did his best to keep me safe. I asked him to join me in the present and to tell me all he needed to throughout the day. And I'll be damned if he didn't say that he would. I'm telling you that he stood up and we embraced. Jesus, I'm crying as I write this. Olivia changed my life forever in one session.

This is very important. My twenty-year-old self was a genius and did stand-up comedy. Getting rave reviews for his stage work. He also started to drink very heavily when he was alone. This is what my 51-year-old is attempting to understand being a real alcoholic in recovery from a seeming hopeless disease. It was fun hanging out with him during the day. All except for him trying to flirt with the twenty somethings at my college. I kept him in check because he also was full of drinking stories from that time. What a wild day. He reminded me about an

event where I created a resentment for money that would last until the present moment today. He reminded me about my older brother David, a great actor, writer, and Seattle fire fighter, who came down to San Fran to scoop me up and bring me back to Whidbey Island to center myself. I was a bit wild at twenty already, and losing my mother to breast cancer just ramped my up to light speed on the spaceship, Enterprise.

David and I decided to do a proper acid trip at Mt. Tam just over that San Francisco bridge. And boy did we. I got two hits each of a purple strain that my dealer said were the right thing for my sending Cathy off for good. I was a raver at the time, and I would dance for three days straight occasionally. Uffta, as my dad's wife Sophie taught me. To each their own, I suppose. My twenty-year-old reminded me about that time in my life-- all the psychedelic trance DJ's that emerged at that time and the video DJs that traveled along with that tribe.

Well, I remember during that acid trip finding a giant boulder where we could see the ocean and stay safe for the day. We were high as fuck and had just previously been seen by the park ranger crawling on the ground, totally loving and talking to a manzanita tree. I took the lotus position on top of the boulder and put a grapefruit in front of me on the stone. David and I both were in total agreement, nodding and laughing our asses off, saying say that the grapefruit was everything. It was love itself encased in this golden sphere of fruit tree baring goddesses. By that time in my life, I had already been able to direct my prana and open up my heart chakra. I had the experience of the orb, and I would try to see what cosmic love felt like. I also learned to edit my beautiful pure self from the world. Drinking became a ritual. It was all stemming from how angry I was that Goddess had taken my mother so young and so beautiful. Cathy had gotten sober some year before then and worked at a place called The Lighthouse which assisted people recovering from addiction and homelessness have an apartment and rejoin society. During that meditation I went to a different state. Perhaps I was reading the Akashic Records. Some kind all-knowing *self* took me way past greed and chemotherapy. That *self* allowed me to experience a real time event from when the Conquistadores raped and pillaged South American peoples in the blood lust for gold.

Then, it hit me like a ton of bricks. Money was backed by gold. Metal was behind paper. And women, just like my mother and her mother before her, were dying because of the lack of money. That humans would actually not allow the privilege of having a doctor or a treatment because they were too poor or too disenfranchised. I hated this planet for some time after that event. Yet, my twenty-year-old self still had to remind me of the good things I did while despising money. He was the one who changed his mind about trying to make millions and give it to those in need. He stopped dreaming of selling out stadiums in NYC and around the world. I did a final edit on that part. I became a renunciate and was a student of Swami Sitaram Ananda for a year. I went by the name Narada and shaved off my beautiful long hair that reminded me of my mom's hair.

I'm fifty-one years old now and I've only now started to rewrite the ending of my story so far. I did finally realize that I've wasted too many years not spending time with the parent I still have. We love each other and are much alike in some ways. We get along when I'm not drinking. I spoke with my dad just last night. I hadn't thought of the irony of that moment yet. He caught me while I was working on a collage, for my Success in College class, depicting how I see myself in five years. Future editing, I suppose. I don't think that the word alive is the first to come to mind for most people when describing their planned accomplishments of five years' time.

I'm absolutely thrilled to still be alive. I had to change everything. I'd heard that before from my family in recovery. Never really knew what that meant. I guess it happened when I became willing to really do all of my healing work. Soon after my month of inpatient therapy I heard a whisper in my ear. It said to just call the college right away: *Get your butt going on helping others to experience the same kind of love and assistance that you had been blessed with.*

So, I went back to college. That is huge as my poppa would say often, yet only when he meant it. Having

a PHD in Literature and a Master's in creative writing, taking eleven years of higher education, I'm imagining he's happy about that. He called me back to answer some questions I had about routes we had explored while driving across America in one of his used red Toyota pick-ups. He was absolutely in love with that 22-re motor they had back in the early years of production.

I've been trying to edit this story so that I get it right -- so I can tell it for the rest of my life. Now, when he tells me about the details of a story, I'm hearing the beauty and rhythm of parts for me to write and edit. I had said 'Detroit,' where it was actually in Montana. I had said 'artists,' where it was actually union leaders who had taken up residence in an abandoned mansion that some rich automotive executive.

I can see his grin behind the phone. It's one of my favorite things in life -- hearing my father tell a story. That's where I came from -- a home that had gracefully made the sad story sometimes a good thing. The good stories were uplifting, and the poetry read aloud was moving. He loves to clarify this story. Yes, it's his telling grin that always precedes whenever he orates. It's my, and his story of how I mimicked the Latin of a Catholic priest. Apparently, it was noticeable to the point that the priest stopped swinging his incense and peered over to witness the obnoxious child. I may have made that up for texture. I guess I had impersonated him to the degree of being potentially mocking. To this day it remains one of my favorite stories that my father tells. I mean to be honest; he's always got a story for an occasion, and it's always my favorite because we are together connecting.

"There was an alley running besides, separate for tourists. You were in a backpack. The priest was speaking Latin, like: 'Introibo ad altare Dei, ad Deum qui laetificat iuventutem meam,' and you did your own interpretation very loud. You got your first public laughs, from those nearby, thereby kicking off your journey of being an entertainer." He was sure I'd just gotten my first public laughs. That's a beautiful compliment from someone who lives the journey deep past the honey. I confess, I'd eventually, throughout my life, combine my written, or improvisational characters, and spoken word together to perform on stages across America.

The story is better when he tells it. However, I packed a lot of baggage into that confession. I mean, I just kept telling stories. I learned how to edit mostly comedy, and I showed people what I discovered. I'd get meaning in there. It was always for us both. The audience and the performer discovering how my stories would end. I began to tie my monologues up with a bow for the audience. You know, give them a show. It's hard to keep the curtain drawn in real life. Impersonating a priest in the back alley of the Basilica. I love it.

I learned to edit who I was after Cathy passed away. She made that impossible decision. After two remissions she was faced with the prospect of another fight. She had to choose her battle, living with chemotherapy or simply letting go... leaving her body soon thereafter and having some precious moments with loved ones and family. I was okay after she left. Actually, I fell apart completely; who am I kidding? There were adjustments. I shapeshifted more than a few times -- always to find a familiar story when I would offer my confession with my family and trusted friends. I eventually learned that they all knew when my shadowy parts engaged. My changes, silence-driven, said volumes of my clumsy escape plan. I did stay artful with my impending doom -- offering anyone who would watch a character driven plan for living, yet only slightly disturbing -- teaching lessons on how a trap door could be on repeat play.

I must also confess, just between you and me, that without my older brother David, I'd have become a puddle by now, Peering out of some alcoholic-clown routine of good intentions which got lost on their way back home. My brother always knew how to funnel my characters into a unique new kind of intoxication with humor. He was like the Inspector Clouseau of my overly edited life as he popped on the scene with a surprise and stumbling right into the dead center of the alleged lost soul of the day. He arrested my manic processions with an off-tune improvisational introduction, by simply blowing his kazoo. He'd invite me to help work on various

buildings, decks and artistic projects. We did great work on his short film, our improvisational show at the Raven Café, and our sword fight in his production of *Hamlet*. Or, we just sat and talked about the beauty and pains of living. How he was the only survivor of the Pang fire and how it continues to. We've always been there for each other. My brother, the firefighter. He's a strong man, and I think he needed my support. Life, they say, is for the living. Without my family I'd be dead by now.

I'm ecstatic that I made it to detox and treatment. I got more than just sober just about six months ago. As I said before, there was no other way for me anymore. I asked for help. One might say that I looked down every avenue and in every lit-up courtyard as if searching for my paramour in Paris. A fancy way of saying that I did everything that was suggested to me. My personal program of long-term recovery from my addiction to alcohol. The difference between being ready to receive help and only asking for it is like night and day. I have done the research on Loren's story with booze. It's not all dark and gloomy. I've got some beautiful parts in those days and in those nights though. I like to imagine that my therapist found me. It was destiny, but to me it was grace. I felt it when we followed the lines that were written for all of my parts.

It blows my mind that I get to talk about my mental health with a positive voice today. I can't communicate the words to describe the amount of relief that brings. I could not believe how blessed I am. I was expecting the worst when I heard the words "cognitive behavioral." Truly the moment, the exact moment Olivia started working with internal family systems, I knew it was perfect for me. Olivia introduced the three main characters being the *Exiles*, *Managers*, and *Firefighters*. I said, "Sign me up!" She didn't laugh. I was already there. I didn't realize how powerful that work was going to be. We've only taken a few journeys. It's incredibly effective for me. I can't know for anybody else, but I can recommend it.

I am realizing that my various parts need to be heard and seen. In the IFS session we invite them back into my current day life. They are invited and supported. I am happy to know that these parts did their best at the time. Some with my brother, and he with his own. Both of us, parts playing roles of brotherly companionship and compassion. That's just one part from a lifetime. Scenes, and parts, suddenly receiving acceptance, love, and understanding. A playful me is emerging with these gifts from recovering daily. Various stages of life with skills I had forgotten. Talents that kept me alive along the way. I am my father's son. I've finally made it home. I am forgiven and willing to let the shame go.

All the healing work reminds me of my living scripts. How these characters of my past realize their value. They played their roles to their necessary ending. Each committing to the emotions completely. They took their part wholeheartedly regardless of how that might appear to the audience in my mind. Now, the ending is a bit more of a surprise. My dark life with drugs and alcohol can end in a beautiful way. I can help others. I can help myself. I can love myself again.

I stopped editing my life. I have that long hair back now -- the hair that my twenty-year-old self had. Who knows? I might be playing that part again. Just older. The same son who loves his dad. Now, from an honest warm ray of sun to the backlit windy moon over Puget sound, I allow. The gift of a blank page. I re-write my destiny twenty-four hours at a time. The planet Earth casts Her mysteriously intoxicating play, with inviting plots of adventurous intrigue. The huge blessing is when it becomes more stressful than expected. Like yesterday -- my god. Instead of picking up a bottle, I picked up a phone.

I sat down with Rulon, and we shared stories over coffee about our sins with substances. Shit, we talk about anything really. That's my favorite part. The one that is honest. This part knows that his mom is proud of him. This part knows that his father always loved him. In fact, I was on a bus recently, and it finally hit me that he did teach me how to be a father. I mean that love through all the rough years. From before the story of

where I learned to edit. Through the years I starred in a few of his local productions. This part of me isn't limited to the therapy room. This self remembers that this universe is made and remade by an unconditional loving consciousness. Now, instead of editing my feelings with a top-shelf, aged whiskey, I confess with my team, who remain in support my recovery -- the family nudging toward love instead of fear. I've stopped dancing my life towards my dark and fateful stages.

I am my father's son in this story.

I am

Hearing him tell a story.

That's where I came from

My father taught me the point of a story.

In one story, I am the producer of this dream.

I saw two books. Two stories.

The story of my father's hands.

In the other?

Well, hell, I'm a ghost.

I am a story of my father's ghost listening to him tell the story of
when I first began to edit.

This story...

that my father tells.

The story of how I learned to edit.

My favorite story about us...

*JAMES 5:16. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another,
that ye may be healed.*



Untitled

Mason Honek



Our Minds

Elena Voshall

When they ask you what fills your mind,
you tell them everything that electrifies you.
Tell them that the stars
twinkle at your gaze,
that the moon shines brighter beneath you,
and that the rain empowers you.
Tell them that they mean the world to you, and that they matter.
Because you can wish upon the stars as many times as you want,
but you can never wish for the people you have lost after they are gone.

My Childhood Mirror

Logan Rubottom

I've been the bathroom mirror in this house for about a lifetime
now
I've watched them slick back their hair
Don dresses that are too tight
Wash tears away
Inspect their teeth for decay
I've been cracked and smudged and cleaned and steamed and
sprayed
Toothpaste wiped from my surface and smeared across my
face.
It's always been hard work watching over them
But one I *happily* embrace





Untitled

Alaina Weideman



Untitled

Isabella Vitellaro

Heartbeat

Sable Burgess

I listen to your heartbeat
As you fall asleep
And I think about death

Will your heart begin to cease?
Will you die before me?
Will I ever fall asleep?

I mimic your heartbeat
With my hand on your chest
Blanketed by your body heat
I just want to rest

I match your breathing
With my eyes closed
Inhaling and exhaling
I begin to breath slow

Your pulse is my lullaby
It soothes me towards sleep
Dark thoughts fade away
I give to you my soul to keep

For if you die before I wake
My heartbeat would be yours to take
Because we belong together in eternal rest
Our two hearts, two souls shall coalesce

Surrender

Clint Waggoner

I was far out in a despairing ocean when I found it.
The air was raging and wet inside these lungs.
Static hung upon the air with each crackling bolt.
Electrifying my senses, dark skies danced with darker oceans.
The duet of nature upon God's orchestra.
This chest rose and fell with the rhythm of the swells.
The wind to my back, my gaze at half-mast.
Lashed to the helm there was no turning back.
Yes, I remember that day.
Hellbent, I was possessed. I forsook all rhyme and reason.
My past is a robber. A kidnapper. Now I am a demon.
Where did it go? My child? My soul?
I would find him. I would free him.
For many days the storm stayed and wrought its ruin upon me.
The ocean raged and sought to founder my wooden hull.
Battered and beaten.
With sails of tattered rags I still proceeded.
The day the storm broke, torrents of black ichor drained to bleeding red skies.
The sunbursts like blossoms to my eyes.
Beams of light that arrived on chariots of lilies white.
I had never felt this gaze upon me.
I had never seen the face of God.
The day the ocean swell abated I floated on my back in cool, calm water.
My vessel sunk beneath the surface as I laid in the hands of the spirit.
I had never felt the release of surrender.
I had never experienced the joy of such freedom.
Far out in a despairing ocean we were stranded together.
Me and my heart.
Far out in the ocean we were free.



I Thought So

Grace Andrews



Untitled

Sofia Hwang

Baggage of thorns

Katherine Lurbiecki

Light as a feather, floating on air through the lush meadow.
Sunlight dancing off the trees as it kisses the early morning fog beneath her wings.
She slips through my fingers with ease though I wish she'd stick to me like Velcro.
I wish her fairy dust would rub off on me like a bee rolling in the early dew-laced pollen droppings. Like her, so
effortless and natural she doesn't conceptualize the existence of shame.
Illuminating even the darkest of midnights with her inexhaustible alchemy.
I wish some of that gold would stick to me like armor shielding me from pain.
Converting my misfortune into the ruby red jewels that glint off of her totality.
The creatures of the endless forest know she is something special.
The endless trail of arrow sharp eyes that soften upon her silky form.
Without needing to adhere to the ancient roots beneath her feet, they gather at the temple.
Mysterious and ethereal, she is a suede crimson rose without the baggage of thorns.
I will never be her, beneath my cells I exist in a sweltering storm.
Every inch of my consciousness wills itself to deform.



Untitled

Connor Walsh



Dawn Sherri Correll Woodward

"Aishiteru!"

Silence.

"...Gomen'nasai."

Eyes close.

Footsteps fade.

Whispered words, "Sayōnara."

Art in Death

Maé Mullen

they are lonely
when i find them.

in an alley,
at a bus stop,
running on a trail
around the park.

they are boring
and uninteresting,
with no purpose,
yet, to serve.

i lure them.
in my warehouse,
on franklyn street,
with the gas chamber ready.

i excite them,
behind the glass,
with drinks and treats,
on hand.

their eyes slowly close
in a temporary state of rest,
as the sedative dissolves
in the blood that flows.

cotton and polyester draped on their skin,
thick rope holding their limbs in place,
fixed in a pose
from their inspired design.

the exhaust engulfs these haunting figures.
frozen in time, a mockery,
of the mundane blandness
they once lived.

aesthetic is important.
their perfect clothing
set in the right scene,
with the right stance,
and the correct gesture.

bronze substituted
with human flesh

my art provokes.
i want the world to see
the words coming from my lips.
there can be no misinterpretation.

life wouldn't be worth living
without beauty.
they were nothing
until i made them extraordinary.



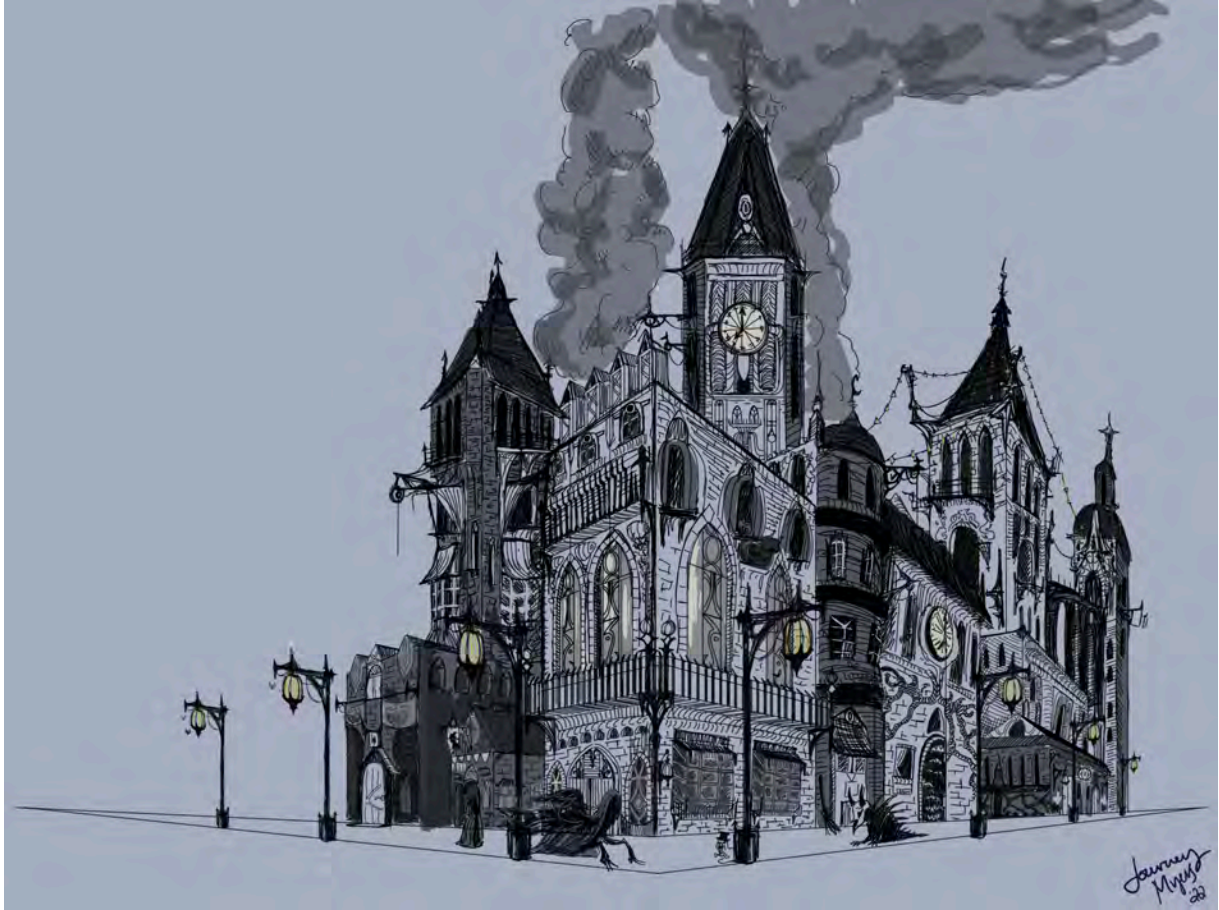
Untitled

Gillian Kinsey



Untitled

Journey Myers



Untitled

Journey Myers

Every Time

Madeline Zacher

Shoulder on, heave
the world back

And start out again, you are just
whistling some strange and
nonsense tune

Admiring the yellow sweep
of morning, globes of dew
Spinning brightly in the air
They sing in very high and lovely voices

you begin to slow down. Your step
is not so quick or meaningful
you are afraid that a single noise
will smother the dawn

As gently, stripping off her
star-streaked gown

She steps across the hills

Dips her feet into the lake,

Raising flocks and fishes
from their sleep.

And for two minutes, you forget
that you are not a laughing beam
of light.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to Disney...

PAWS 2

**Mickey
Mouse**

**Magnuss
Huffman**



A Blue Buffalo Production

Written by **ADHD** * Directed and Produced by **Brieana Huffman**

Associate Producer * **William Huffman**

Based on the Characters by **Bella Lorain** * Music by **Wyatt Lane**

A Universal Studios and Walt Disney Picture

PG Parental Guidance Suggested

NO ANIMALS WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF THIS FILM

Jaws

Brieana Huffman



Ex Libris

Kayli Benjamin

Angel Box

Logan Rubottom

When you imagine Heaven, do you imagine it being clean? Most people don't really stop to think about it, honestly. For the record, Heaven is very clean! That being said though, it's angels like me who usually are doing all the work to make sure it stays that way. I was given the name "Harper" and I'm what the humans refer to as a "janitor" though I've been assured that's very prestigious in the human world by my angel co-workers. Here in Heaven it's my job to make sure that the glass boxes of wrongdoers are kept clean. The agents of Hell retired about a century ago, so when the humans from hell were lined up outside our gates this was our next best solution. Wrongdoers have to watch Heaven from inside a glass box, forced to reflect upon their misdeeds against those who loved them. They have a front row seat to the wonders of Heaven, but have to watch it from afar. I've been told it's similar to the concept of "time out" in the human world, but it can last for hundreds of years if you never see the errors of your ways. It's essential these boxes are kept clean because if they get too smudged the humans can't see what they are missing. I was chosen by the angels in charge to keep these boxes clean for eternity because I'm the best at following directions. Angels in the past are sometimes persuaded by the humans inside the boxes to let them free, and as a result are fired from their positions and punished.

Today is my 36,600th day of cleaning and working for the head angel Ceaser. I've done everything he's asked right down to the dot. He's not always polite with his instructions, but I always make an effort to do as I'm told. He tells me that when I'm following directions correctly I'm his favorite angel, and I'm not allowed to tell the other angels that. I'm starting my day cleaning the box of the new human that appeared rather recently, Sebastian Gray. When he arrived inside his box he was wearing a big black coat that contrasted with his very angel-like blonde hair. He was crammed pretty uncomfortably in his box, his neck at a painful angle. I felt sorry for him.

"Don't be alarmed, sir! I'm just making sure your enclosure is clean!" I said to him as I raised my glass cleaners and rags.

"How sweet of you." he said without making eye contact with me. Without any second thoughts, I diligently wipe down the sides of his container. "Do you have a name? Do angels even have names?" he asked me.

"The head angel calls me Harper. If I was given a name before that I don't remember it." I say.

"Harper? That's freakishly human." the human says while making a funny face at me, finally making eye contact

"I think it's nice!"

"How long am I going to be stuck here, dude. This is horrible. I think I deserve a bit better than this."

“It’s not my duty to determine who goes where, I’m just cleaning.” I say. Caesar was very stern with me when it came to talking to the humans. Head angels are often the largest of the angels, and Caesar was far taller than I was, nearly towering over me and twice my size. He would often grab me tightly by my hair, lifting me up several feet in the air so I was face to face with him and tell me that I am not allowed to have too many friendly conversations with humans, that I am not allowed to bring them anything, and I am never allowed to let them free under any circumstance. I am very diligent with these rules for the most part, but it’s difficult to not engage in at least a little friendly conversation. I try to talk to the humans at least once when I meet them.

“Can’t you... like, put a good word in for me? Fuck, I’ll settle for being moved a little” he shifts around uncomfortably as I wave a finger at him and smirk.

“That’s what you humans *always* say to me, but if you’re uncomfortable it’s for a reason! Everything we do here has a purpose.” I say confidently. I’ve explained this thousands of times over the years, I’m very familiar with this conversation. He groans quietly to himself, painfully shrugging his shoulders in defeat.

“Hey man, it’s worth trying to convince you, but I know I could be a real piece of shit when I was alive, I guess.”

“I wish you a speedy rehabilitation.” I say kindly.

Just as he says this, I put the finishing touches on cleaning the smudges on his box shortly after that and went on my way to clean the rest of the boxes in that quadrant.

...

It takes me several days to clean every box in Heaven, but I’m usually quick enough to get every single one done just right before the boxes start getting dirty again. Sebastian’s box was right at the very start of where my cleaning routine begins. Sebastian was surprisingly talkative compared to other humans, most of them call me mean names and even try to spit on the glass as I’m trying to keep it clean. After I stop by two or three times, most humans stop talking all together.

“Harper, are you the *only* janitor cleaning my box? I haven’t seen any other angels besides you doing this work.” Sebastian asked me one morning.

“Yes! I have been entrusted with a very important job that only I can perform. Caesar says it’s because I’m the best with instructions.” I say proudly.

“Caesar? Is that your boss or something?” he asks.

“My boss? What’s that mean?”

“The dude who’s in charge of everything. Y’know, the guy who hires and fires.” He says.

“Usually a dick about it too.”

“I’m not sure what that means, but I would say Caesar is in charge, yes! He’s one of the head angels for heaven at the moment, and he does a good job.”

“If he was doing a good job there’d be more than one janitor.” he retorts. “Doesn’t it get boring after a while, dude? Somebody’s gotta step in for your shift sometime... Do you even have shifts?”

“Well today is my 36,605th day of cleaning boxes, and I don’t think I’m bored just yet! My position is very important.” I smile.

“Woah, 36,000 days? Are you *sure* you’re not being punished or something?”

“I’ve never been punished before.” I say quickly

“Being a janitor fucking sucks dude, I don’t know what you’re seeing that I don’t. On Earth being a janitor is... really shitty”

“Actually, I’ve been told that, on earth, being a janitor is very prestigious.” I say proudly.

There’s a very loud silence and Sebastian looks at me funny for a moment and begins to laugh at me. My chest starts to feel tight and my wings fold inward slightly.

“Clearly you’ve got no fuckin’ clue what it’s like being a human, Harper.”

“You humans always say things like that, but I know it’s just you trying to trick me.” I say quickly.

“Is that what your boss told you?” He breaks eye contact, I think he’s trying to not to look me in the eye when he laughs at me.

“Yes?”

“Have you ever considered that maybe this Ceaser guy *doesn’t* like you? He’s making you do some really shitty work.”

“Caesar likes me plenty. He tells me that I’m his favorite angel.” I say quietly.

“You should really check on that, dude. If you were his “favorite” wouldn’t he have you doing something fun or interesting?”

“Are you trying to trick me?” I say. “I’m good at knowing when humans are trying to trick me.”

“Just think about it logically for one second, dude. If he liked you he wouldn’t have stuck you with assholes like me all the time.” my shoulders tense up at this information. I hadn’t ever thought about it like that before.

...

This conversation stuck with me for a while. A human had never considered asking me questions like this before. A lot of the time they were just trying to convince me to let them go. Oftentimes the humans were rather cruel to me, actually. I get called many obscenities that I have been informed that I am not allowed to repeat. Humans always tease me when I don’t know what they mean. I asked Ceaser later that day if what Sebastian had said was true, that “janitors” were a very unflattering job to have on Earth. Caesar scowled at me, leaning down his enormous stature to meet me eye to eye.

“Don’t let the humans get into your head, Harper. You’re letting them trick you. I thought you were the best with directions. Do you know what happens to angels when they get tricked by humans?” he asks, his heavy voice making me curl up my wings.

“They face punishment.” I say quietly, avoiding eye contact the best I could.

“They face punishment.” Caesar says coldly.

“Am I still your favorite angel?”

Caesar looks at me for a moment before grabbing me by my wings and yanking me into the air.

“We’ll see how I feel in a few days.” He says coldly. I feel my heart drop into my stomach like a stone being thrown in water. Caesar tosses me with a flick of his wrist. My body painful cracks against the wall as I slam into it at full force. I’m lucky angels don’t bruise.

...

Today is my 36,610th day of cleaning boxes. I was wrapping up the last few I had to clean before I had to fly all the way back down to where Sebastian was. I think maybe Sebastian was right. Being a janitor “sucks” as he would’ve phrased it. I suddenly find my job to be taxing. Seeing the sun rise didn’t feel as exciting anymore.

“Morning, Harper.” He says.

“Good morning, Sebastian.” I say.

“How are you doing?” He adjusts his body a little, still trying to figure out how to get comfortable.

“Unwell...?” I reach out for the glass cleaner I would need to use to clean Sebastian’s box. “I’m starting to think maybe Ceaser doesn’t like me very much after all.” I avoid the temptation to rub my shoulder which still stung from when Ceaser tossed me at the wall a few days ago. I hear Sebastian laugh at me a little, snapping me back into reality.

“I’m surprised I was the first person who helped you see that you were a little brainwashed.” he says.

“Brainwashed?”

“Y’know.. Like.. convincing you that lies are true, making you follow orders.” “Following orders isn’t a bad thing.” I say, my eyebrows furrowing a little.

“Following orders isn’t living.”

“But I’m not alive. Angels aren’t like humans.”

“Alive enough to talk to me at least. The company is nice.” he says. “The other people in boxes are too far away to have a conversation with. The ones that are actually in heaven barely are able to look at people like me.” he says.

“Is that why you make such an effort to talk to me?” I say, getting busy cleaning off this week’s smudges.

“I can’t be the only one who tries to talk to you.”

“Nobody ever talks with me unless it’s about letting them go.” “Wait, can you do that..?” Sebastian says quietly.

“No. Even if I could I wouldn’t” I’ve been told I’m not a very good liar. If I wanted to let Sebastian go it would be as simple as lifting the box up with both hands. Humans don’t have the strength to, but I do.

“If you ever figure out how to get me out you should let me know,” he mumbles to himself. I quickly

wipe off the final smudge from his box, and make my way down the familiar quadrant.

...

The next time I spoke to Sebastian he seemed far more eager to talk to me than usual. We spoke again on my 36,615th day of cleaning boxes.

“Harper, is it really possible to get out of these boxes?” he asks. I sigh quietly as I wipe away at his enclosure again.

“Humans on good behavior are allowed to leave the boxes.” I say tirelessly. I’ve had this kind of conversation enough now. My mind drifted off to what Ceaser thought about me now. Does it even matter?

“If I’m let go, does that mean I can be around everybody else again?” Sebastian asks. I nod at him a little. “I assume as much, but I can’t let you go.” I say defeatedly. “I couldn’t even if I wanted to. Truthfully, Sometimes I doubt it’s even possible. Not many humans have been released lately, the last 30 or 40 years have been slow” I saw the sparkle that was sitting gently in Sebastian’s eyes wane. His shoulders slump again, returning to his typical uncomfortable position.

“What if I just wanted to talk to *one* person?” He asks.

“You likely won’t be able to. If you wanted to talk to one of the humans in Heaven, they wouldn’t even be able to see you. There’s a barrier that prevents it.” Sebastian gets painfully quiet when I tell him this. The silence hangs thick over me as I try to finish cleaning his box. I don’t feel like talking anymore.

“What would it take for me to convince you to send somebody a message.” he asks finally, shattering the silence.

“Well...” I know I really shouldn’t take another request. I already am on Caesar’s bad side. I want Caesar to love me again.

“You’ve been so talkative with me... maybe I can take just one request for you.” my wings fold in on themselves shamefully. “Who do you want to talk to?” Sebastian takes a deep breath, trying to relax his compressed shoulders a little.

“My husband... Oliver.”

I tilt my head curiously at Sebastian. “Are you sure..? You could send a message to anybody you’d like who has passed away. You could talk to Abraham Lincoln if you’d like.”

“Oliver is literally the only person I want to talk to.”

“What’s he like?” I say, putting down the cleaning supplies. His box was pretty much clean anyway, and I was ahead of schedule.

“He’s a quiet and introverted little thing.” Sebastian says. “Hard to get him to leave the house half the time. We didn’t always communicate the best at times, he didn’t like talking as much as I did, but after sitting on it for some time I don’t think I mind it as much anymore. He was a wonderful artist, he always told me he was better with art than words when it came to expressing himself. If I had a nickel for every painting he made of

me—” Sebastian trails off for a moment. “I wonder if he still paints now. I’m positive he’d be painting right now assuming he’s not... trapped.” Sebastian looks up at me best he can, his blonde hair brushing into his eyes a little. “Do you think he still paints me?”

...

It took me a long time to track down Oliver. I had to go to the Grand Heavenly Archives in order to find what I was looking for. We keep all of human history properly recorded, it’s almost a sentimental thing. Humans like to read about themselves. The library itself is almost impossibly tall, books need to be sorted and collected using what must be a miracle and elbow grease. The Great Head Angel Mona and I are good friends, she lets me come to the library and read if I’m being teased by the other angels. I open the door and see angels busying themselves with organization.

“Mona, ma’am, I need your help.” I say looking up at her. I take note that her overwhelmingly tall stature doesn’t scare me like Caesar’s does.

“What are you looking for this time?” she says, her soft smooth voice calming my nerves.

“I need the history of a human named Sebastian Gray. I clean his box regularly and I want to know more about his past.” I say. Mona looks at me sadly.

“Don’t get too involved now, Harper. I’d hate to see anything bad happen to you.”

“Don’t worry, I’m making sure to follow all of the rules.” I say, I can tell my voice cracked a little. I’m still a bad liar.

“Whatever it is you’re up to, if that Caesar gives you a hard time you better tell me.” She turns to look at a large shelf behind her, pulling out a large section of the shelf labeled “*HUMANS [S] VOLUME 29,995.*” “It might take some time to find what you’re looking for, but hopefully this will help you in your journey” Mona says.

...

Finding Sebastian’s book wasn’t too difficult, it stood out among the other books. The cover had his name on it in big bold red letters, the book faded was a black much like his coat, and the pages were golden like his hair. On the front was a big sketch of him, which was very unique compared to the other books. Opening up and reading his history was very difficult at first. His childhood was painful and contained a lot of violence, the pages were brittle and coarse, and I had to be careful when turning them. Sebastian’s teens were filled with crime and substance abuse, and he expected himself to die before he even turned 30. Life was difficult and he never excelled in his education, however things seemed to take a positive turn once he turned 23 and met his husband Oliver. Sebastian had several drunk driving incidents and lost his license and typically had to take the same few buses everyday. He met a quiet and pretty boy named Oliver. Oliver was always drawing little pictures in a notebook

that was loved to shreds, filling his it with little doodles that spanned the whole page. Sebastian liked to peek over his shoulder to see what he was drawing, but never said hello. This went on for some time until Sebastian took notice that Oliver had been drawing little portraits of Sebastian, artful little doodles that captured his best features. Sebastian was startled and embarrassed by this, and finally said hello.

“Dude, is that a picture of *me..?*” He asked. Oliver turns around, his face deeply flushed as he closes his notebook in a scramble.

“I-I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to freak you out or anything I was just using you as a reference, it wasn’t me being creepy I promise.” Oliver stammers.

“Can I see it again..?” Sebastian asked. Oliver opened his notebook hesitantly and showed him the doodle.

“I won’t do it again if you don’t want me to.” He said shamefully. Oliver’s notebook was filled with other beautiful pieces of art that led Sebastian’s mind into an alternate world, and he couldn’t help but ask questions about Oliver’s creations. It felt as if Oliver had a place to hide that nobody had seen before, and Sebastian wanted nothing more than to run into this make-believe world and stay there. He felt honored that a piece of him got to run away into this new place. “Can I see more?” Sebastian asked.

Sebastian and Oliver dated in secret for a very long time, as Sebastian was still anxious about people knowing about more intimate parts of his life. Oliver was a brilliant light in his life that helped him fight to turn his life around. He never really quit his smoking habit despite Oliver begging him to do so, but he felt he had done a good job. These pages of the book were easy to turn and things went on like this for a very long time. Several years after they had gotten married, however, Oliver died of heart complications. Sebastian had nothing to cling to in this world, and drowned out his life. Sebastian wasn’t totally sure how he died, but he assumes it was probably related to drinking habits.

...

Through this book I was able to find Oliver through the help of Mona. Through a bit of trial and error we made our best guess on which Oliver was the correct one. The drawing on the cover was in the same style as the one on Sebastian’s book, and described the same married life.

“Now... don’t be goin’ around and doing too much for him, yeah?” Mona said to me. I nod at her. “It’ll just be this one request. I promise.”

...

Today marks the 36,630th day working for the head angel Ceasar. I haven’t seen Sebastian in a while. Truthfully I was scared of fulfilling his request. I’m sure his box is very dirty by now. When I finally stopped by I noticed his position had changed a little, he had shifted himself to be a bit more comfortable,

though it probably was very difficult to do.

“Hello, Sebastian” I say, mustering all my courage.

“Harper! Where’ve you been man? I’ve been worried.” he says.

“It took me a while, but I think I know where to find Oliver. I had to go digging around for a while to figure out where he was. I think I can deliver one message to him if you’d like...” I say. I have to stop myself from anxiously plucking a feather from my wings.

“Seriously..?” Sebastian says. He tries to say something a few times but cuts himself off short, we stood there in silence for a while.

“Just... tell him I’ll get out of here. You don’t have to give him all the details, I just want him to know that I’ll be there if he waits for me. Tell him to keep waiting for me.” he whispers. Sebastian didn’t say much after that, he sat quietly and attempted to collect himself.

...

I found Oliver in the great arts section of Heaven, as to be expected. I awkwardly tapped on the shoulder of a few people who looked like him, but many of them were not who I was looking for. Every time I had to tap on somebody’s shoulder I felt a strike of anxiety surge through me. I wanted to get this over with as quickly as possible.

“Excuse me, are you Oliver Gray?” I tap the shoulder of a man with long hair that probably hadn’t been maintained in a long time. The man turns around, his kind face hitting me like a tidal wave. It was him. The kind looking boy from Sebastian’s book.

“Yes...? Am I in trouble?” he asks. The painting behind him is hard to describe, but it seems almost like an abstract painting of a wedding.

“You’re not in trouble I’ve just...” I awkwardly try to lean in and whisper “I’ve got a message for you.”

I gently tug Oliver out of the arts section. It takes me sometime to figure out how to start this conversation with him.

“Your husband Sebastian is here, but he needs to work through something first. He... asked me to tell you to wait for him.”

Oliver tears up for a moment.

“How long..?” Oliver asks.

“I’m not sure.” I admit. I don’t know if he’ll ever be let out, truthfully.

“Can I see him?”

“Well...” I find myself faced with another choice. I can’t deny Sebastian and Oliver this kindness. Caesar would be utterly furious with me if he found out I had brought a human past the barrier. Was it worth it...? I think about that word that Sebastian taught me: “Brainwashed”. I remember thinking the word sounded nice, I liked the idea of having a clean mind. I liked the idea of doing what was right. Did I even want Caesar to love me

anymore? I felt as if there was a scale in my head where I had gently placed the two possibilities, and I couldn't help but imagine Sebastian and Oliver tipping the scales over.

"I'll take you, but you need to be careful, ok?" I say, feeling the nausea building in my stomach.

...

We stood at the barrier for a long time. I placed my hand gently on its surface. This was it. This was likely going to be my final day. I spent 36,635 days doing nearly everything Caesar had ever asked of me. He used to reward me for following directions with little presents none of the other angels knew about. Without him what did I have left? If I do this and run away, they'll eventually find me. I'm not very sneaky. Heaven is vast, but I don't know if I can hide forever. I don't know if I'll cease to exist by Caesar's hand, or if I'll get stuck in a box myself, but I know I'll be punished. I look back at Oliver.

"Are we waiting for something?" Oliver says. I furl my wings.

"No.. I don't think so.." I feel the smooth surface of the clear barrier that separates the people inside the glass boxes from the people in heaven. Conjuring a miracle, I gently open a door in the barrier that Oliver can pass through. With my hand grasped tightly to Oliver's wrist, we fly straight to where I've visited Sebastian all this time. That familiar spot I've worked so tirelessly on. I land gently on my feet, gesturing for Sebastian to say hello.

"Oliver—" Sebastian says softly. He looks at Oliver in complete shock. Oliver's body seems to crumple as he falls to hug the box Sebastian was trapped inside. They sat silently for a moment, not needing to speak a word to each other, they seemed content with it. I feel one final pang of anxiety as I consider my options. This will likely result in me losing my job, or even my life. The prospect was terrifying. I have lived a fruitful life, even if I spent most of it under Caesar's unkind iron fist. Regardless of what happens next, I want *them* to be happy. I gently bend down, curling my fingers under Sebastian's box. I lift it with one immense push, setting Sebastian free.

"Harper what the fuck are you doing?" Sebastian asks in a panic. I'm so shocked with my actions that I don't know how to form words, I just look around blankly, my heart pounding hard in my chest.

"Just run—" I say finally. "Run as fast as you can and never look back." Oliver shoots to his feet, grabbing Sebastian by the arm and tugging him up. I could feel the nausea coming back again as Sebastian looked back at me sadly.

"Whatever comes next doesn't matter." I gently push the now standing Sebastian. "We don't have very much time." Oliver bolts with his hand clasped in Sebastians, and they run faster than I've ever seen anybody run before. That was the last time I ever saw them.

I turn around to face the open door in the barrier, bracing for whatever happens next. I refuse to live another day watching the humans suffer. Regardless of what happens next, I'll stand my ground. Today is my last day of cleaning. I am no longer working under the head angel Ceasar.



Katavena's Blossom

Isabella Vitellaro



Untitled

Ava Michelle Shiflett

Eldest Daughter Syndrome

Holly Stauffer

No one here is favored
My mother made that clear
Although I don't doubt it
The unspoken role I've been playing into
Leave my mind an echo chamber
One older brother, one younger sister, one younger brother
I happen to fall second
The eldest daughter.
The first daughter of the new generation
2003 officially marks it
I should hold this title to heart
And sometimes I do
But as life passes by
Like an old colleague you saw on your way to work
That you must quickly bid your greetings and farewells to
I discovered the consequences of being the eldest daughter
In that same time span
Why am I
Suddenly
My mother's new therapist?
Why am I
The one that's forced to listen
The one that has to hear about the divorce
That happened six years ago
The one that's forced out advice
I hardly even know what to say
Whatever I end up saying will be wrong
Because I didn't endure it the same.
What am I supposed to say?
Why am I
Suddenly
Being begged to move out?
I know.
As soon as I turned 18
I was supposed to have my new place picked out
My finances in order
A manageable home insurance
Boxes were supposed to be ready
Why did it come as such a shock
That I wasn't ready to go?
I suddenly had no rules of my own in the house anymore

When I projected this
I was met with a “move out and make your own then.”
I couldn’t.
It was peak pandemic.
I wasn’t employed.
I didn’t nearly garner up the savings
I so desired.
“It’s time for you to move out.”
Please stop. I hardly even have my shit together
Just from your nagging.
Why am I
Suddenly
Becoming my younger siblings’ new role model?
As my sister and brother are sitting back
Watching me endure all of this
They don’t want to be influenced by my parents
Or stepparents
I blink back tears
Plaster on a reassuring smile
Telling them it’s okay
I’d rather suffer it than seeing them suffer
That I’m there if they need anything
Ugh.
I’m the new parent.
I brought this upon myself
Actually
I didn’t
It was assigned to me
The new therapist, right
I had that going for me
If I was going to be my mothers’
I might as well be it for my siblings too.
Adolescence at its finest
I was required to look out for others’ well beings
So who was there to look out after mine?
That’s the fun part – no one.
I’ve become my own parent
I’ve figuratively become the eldest daughter
For as long as you’re the eldest daughter
Until, in some bizarre case,
You’re replaced
You are the eldest daughter.
You are the eldest daughter
Suffering from eldest daughter syndrome.



Teeth

Rory Brown

RUN

Maé Mullen

*I've got a million polaroids with all the dates penned in red ink
I sneak a walkie-talkie in your room to listen to you sleep*

You just don't know it yet, but you love me and I love you the same...
- The Blake Robinson Synthetic Orchestra

Blood.

I feel it everywhere. Leaking from my shirt, pumping through my veins, dried beneath my fingernails, rushing to the soles of my feet. Feet that pound heavily against the hard concrete, occasionally gliding on sharp rocks. I feel it in the darkness when I close my eyes and in the rain when it burns my skin.

Miles and miles unravel before me, in every direction, with not a body in sight, just the stray, flickering street lamp. The trees are watching, I can feel that too. They're talking to each other, taking note of where I am. They'll follow me and remember my very location -- they'll tell him. I can't let that happen.

My heart beats harshly against my bruised rib cage, it vibrates in my ear, pounding against my brain, making it hard to concentrate. The raindrops continue breaking across my drenched skin, blending with my hot tears as I race against it.

Where did he take me?

The crunching of footsteps, several yards behind me, reaches my ears. A scream almost pushes past my throat. Fuck. Fuck. FUCK. He found me.

Greasy hair sticks to the back of my neck, reminding me I haven't taken a shower since he took me. I remember waking up, that first day, so vividly still. My lungs shrivel up just at the thought of him taking me, again.

The first thing I noticed was the bright lights. My pounding head made it hard to focus but I eventually felt the stiff joints and soreness in my body. I brought my hand up to my head to stop the room from spinning, only to feel a warm liquid pooling on my scalp. Frantic, I stood up, trying to assess my surroundings. Where was I?

The walls were bare and the only thing between me and the stone-cold floor was a cheap wool shawl. And broken toilet sat in the corner of what seemed to be a closet-sized room.

My breathing sped up. What the fuck? The eerie chill of the room consumed me. I found the door, across

from the toilet, which stood hauntingly, almost like it knew what I would try to do and yet, fail at it. But I couldn't just stay put. I clumsily made my way toward the door, trying to turn the handle, but it wouldn't budge. Fuck. I didn't even have my bag. No phone, no water, no food.

I spent what felt like hours trying to get out. It was only a matter of time before whoever brought me here finished the job. So I sat on the cold tiles, kicking at the hinges of the door until the heels of my feet bled and even tried to pick the lock with a bobby pin. Nothing. I was done.

I laid sleepless until I heard footsteps outside the door.

“Come on, Sage!” He yells from behind me, “Stop running.” When I don't answer, his breathing becomes heavier.

“Listen to me, damn it!”

I try to run faster, pushing my legs to keep going.

“SAGE!”

I choke up sobs at the volume of his voice., He's angry and getting closer.

The door opened as I slowly backed myself up to the furthest corner. A man. A very tall man, in all black. His eyes held possession, obsession, freezing me in place like his prey.

“Sage,” he said softly - and I really didn't like the undertone of his words - “I finally have you.”

He tried to step forward but I pushed farther into the corner. He raised his hand as if to show he wouldn't hurt me. He lied.

“You remember me? Cause I remember you,” he started, “Two weeks ago, Tony's Diner, Thursday, 6:03 pm? You served me the classic burger combo with house sauce. Those eyes you gave me, I still imagine them, every night. I left my number on the receipt but you never called.” He feigned hurt.

Did this sick freak actually expect me to remember him? I hesitantly shook my head.

Anger flashed across his eyes, but quickly left.

“That's alright, you'll remember soon enough.”

I needed to get out.

I continue running as fast as my legs let me. Somewhere, through the night sky and heavy rain, I saw cars pass by each other. A main road? Holy shit. At least a few miles ahead, but I need to get there. I need this. My cut-up soles can survive for another some miles 'till I can get someone's help. I'm gonna make it.

I had a plan, a faulty one, but it was still something.

He was obsessed. He left me food and water, trying to get closer each time. I needed to let him think he

was making me happy, making me fall in love. As difficult as it was, I grew bolder. Even when his gaze on my skin made my blood run cold and all life drain out of my body. Even when I wanted to rip my heart out of my chest to stop it from pumping and pumping. Even when he thought he could touch me, my skin burned his, I had a plan and I was getting out.

Keeping my speed, I glance over my shoulder. His ruthless, callous eyes meet mine, almost at arm's length. My body's instinct is to scream. It's itching its way out. Tears rush fast down my face.

"HELP! SOMEONE, PLEASE!" My voice is hoarse, so I try to scream more loudly, but I'm cut off.

"Stop it! Sage," he yells from a few feet behind. He's out of breath: "Shut the fuck up!" Deep down, I know. With how choppy my voice is and the heavy rain, no one can hear me but him. But, if I can outrun him, I'll be safer than when I was in that engulfing cage. I glance back one more time, noticing the gash on his forehead, blood leaking down his face from the rain. It should've been deeper. His skull should've been cracked and bled out. It was supposed to work.

My thoughts overcrowded my brain. It was time. I couldn't take it anymore, that was my chance. With the door opened and his back towards me, I knew what I had to do. When he turned around, I kicked as hard as I could between his legs and went for the tank lid on the toilet.

"Fuckin' bitch!" His voice strained as he kneeled over.

As quickly as I could, I swung the lid across his head and knocked him down. Then again, once more, before I left.

I had gotten familiar with his place over time; gaining his trust and 'earning' privileges to certain rooms of the house, I memorized everything.

After I unlocked the front door, I ran.

God, I'm so close.

He'll never forgive me. This isn't a game of tag. If he gets me... I'm not ready to die. Please. Please, let me go.

Just as the main road gets closer, I gain hope.

Almost.

His breathing gets louder, and his footsteps shake the ground below me. The hairs on my arms feel his presence reaching out. *Keep moving. Faster.*

I can feel him. Just as I'm about to scream, his hand latches on me, yanking me back, another on my mouth.

And then, everything's black.



Downward Spiral

Grace Andrews



Clarinet

Andrea Olsen

Hot Coals

Ikaikaonalani James

I'm running like death is chasing after me—
chasing after green exit signs & running red lights;
running barefoot on the summer's sticky asphalt,
a trail of skin left behind, looking left
then right, up, hand to the lani
as rain falls & a new year is born.

I wipe the drops off my forehead
and sigh into the stiff air
because as I run, huff, puff,
that boy from fifth grade thinks, “about right,”
because according to him all Hawaiians have invincible feet
& walk on hot coals habitually
because when the ‘Āina is in haole hands
we are made to be one blow up doll, lips puckered
& animated on disney channel
because the world could only sympathize
when we're attractive, smiling,
& friends with a fucking alien
because our ways seem like E.T. far from home
with more than half of kānaka not even living in Hawai‘i anymore;
“washington,” “texas,” “nevada,” “oregon,” “california—”
displaced & placed among the settlers of these lands
because when haole swallow up the islands faster than rising sea levels;
zuckerburg, oprah, ellison, bezos pimping out our greatest ancestor
because when money breeds ignorance you buy a yacht
& a yacht needs fuel & water so you dock it in a bay, pollute
& kill the bay's ecosystem, & then when the water isn't so pretty anymore
you board the jet you bought & fly away & pass gas on generations
because generations were keiki like me, sitting in class, staring out the window
not wanting to hear another word about a run-on sentence
because we've been running
on & on

hot coals.



Painting of a Comedian

Reed Sanders



Untitled

Ayden Espinoza

Skewed

Ikaikaonalani James

First person view, camera tweaking, glitching
static in HD
fisheye lens; peripherals flared, aware
of all surroundings— the fish, the leaves, swimming in the river, the
sky, the wind carrying all, oh

oh
oh. Flying,

soaring up trees then down again, thunderous
crash through needles, branches like spears, ground like a cement bed,
fitted with sheets, night lulling in, oh

oh
oh. Sinking,

drowning in sleep, tightly

tightly

tightly wrapping, my oh my, shrinking down to grass
blades, blowing about, a jet stream hitting,
dragging plastic bottles & wrappers around, further down into the green
valley; poison

poison

poison, my oh my oh

oh

oh

my. Fingers twitching, raw

& red, hangnail stinging

Processing

Ikaikaonalani James

I rip the pages out
because the words are sounds
my pen can't paint properly.
I rip the pages out
because my hands are bloody
and the pages stick & tear as I jot
out thoughts, each letter a lick on wounds.
I rip the pages out, crumple
, ball, & throw— miss the can,
pick up later, peel back the rigid folds,
look back upon what I've sewn, &
thread the needle through my ears.

The Song That They Sing

Keely Riggs

sometimes the skin still stings
beneath my clothes.
it's like they're trying to sing
the tale of my woes.
the skin still holds
the scars of the past.
no matter how old
they will still last.
I trace each scar
with my fingers.
each one a memoir,
of the sadness that lingers.
not yet a year
has elapsed
since they reappeared.
so easily could i relapse,
they will never disappear.
and so perhaps
I will never not hear
the song that they sing
when they still sting.

Girls Soccer State Championships 2023!! With WIAA

Aidan Winger



(Multi-media)



Untitled

Brinlee Nix

flowers of the dead

Kai Frazier

I am the love that is death;
between the ever fleeting flowers,
born from sorrow and lilies
that which, i held dearly

in this darkness, a banquet
of horror and nothingness
was sublime, and a figment
of my smaller dreams

and so when i closed my eyes
i woke up alone, mourning
to a place that did not exist
by an old wooden house,
at the end of the sea,
“where nobody could ever find me,”

and my memento, was a rose
drenched at the doorstep
forgotten by november
while a worn-out welcome mat,
waited for the rush of sneakers

“i’ve always loved you,”

was under the rain

beneath paradise and thought
outside a closed cafe
a small black cat said hello,
and led your eyes somewhere
far, far away from me

and when i woke up,
breakfast was stale, and
the archaic hallways
of this misfitting house

renovated silence

and when it came
 i said, "i do not know you,
 i've never known you,"
and fought against the floor
where dust sat and a shadow ran
with perked ears and a full mouth

and i've not known,
 and never known life

 yet, i know
i've loved you, since
time told me the inevitable
and i saw the universe
from a paperback on
a cold afternoon

 "forget about her,"
 and i forget everything,

 for the entirety of my life before and after
came to me in an instance
 lit by the solemn bathroom light
yet, i know

 i was nothing for it

 and i have known for a lifetime,
 that i am not the sun, nor am i
 the wind to the air,
 nor the waves to the sea
and the world, which was nothing to me

 and yet,
 in this stagnant universe
 the single thing i know

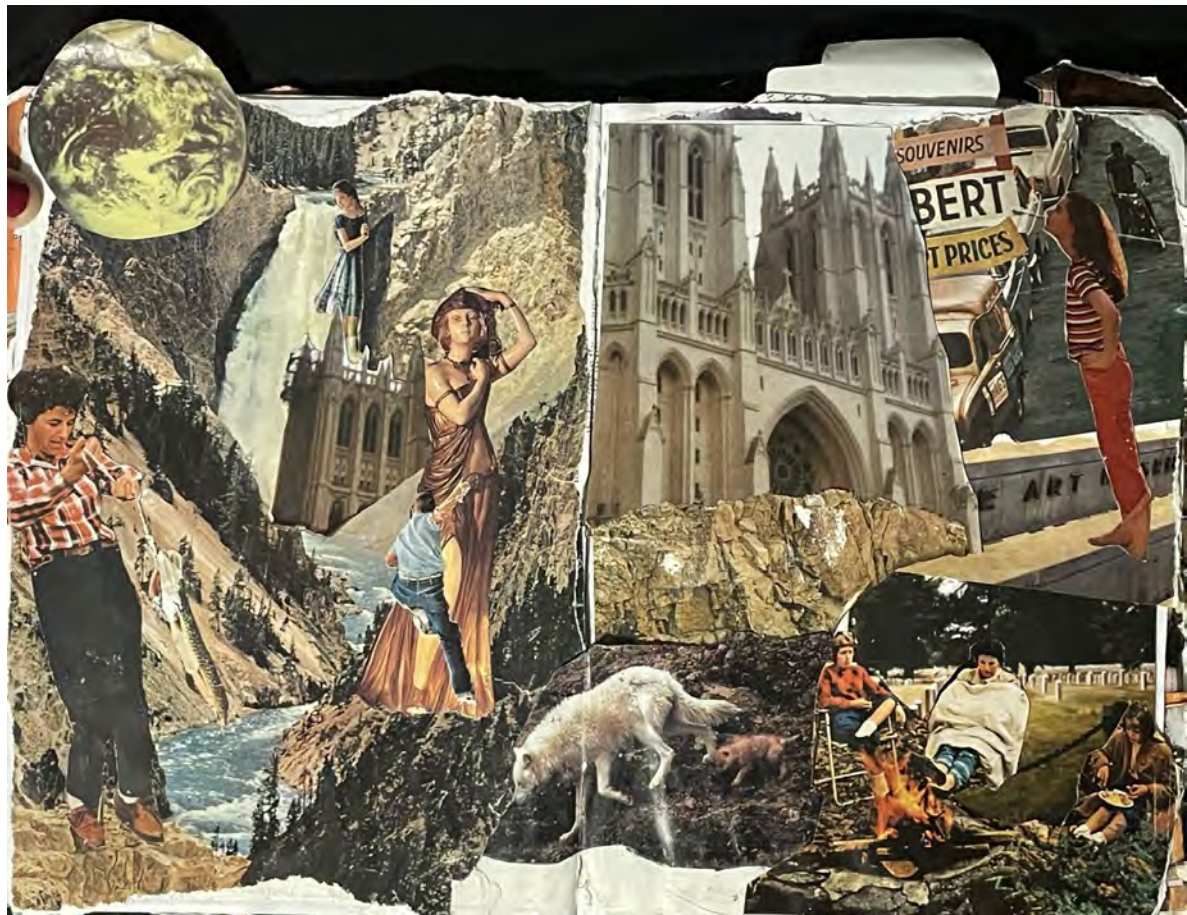
 is that the
cat by the window
was somewhere

watching the girl i want
 from a place i could never be



Entwined

Rory Brown



Sight to See

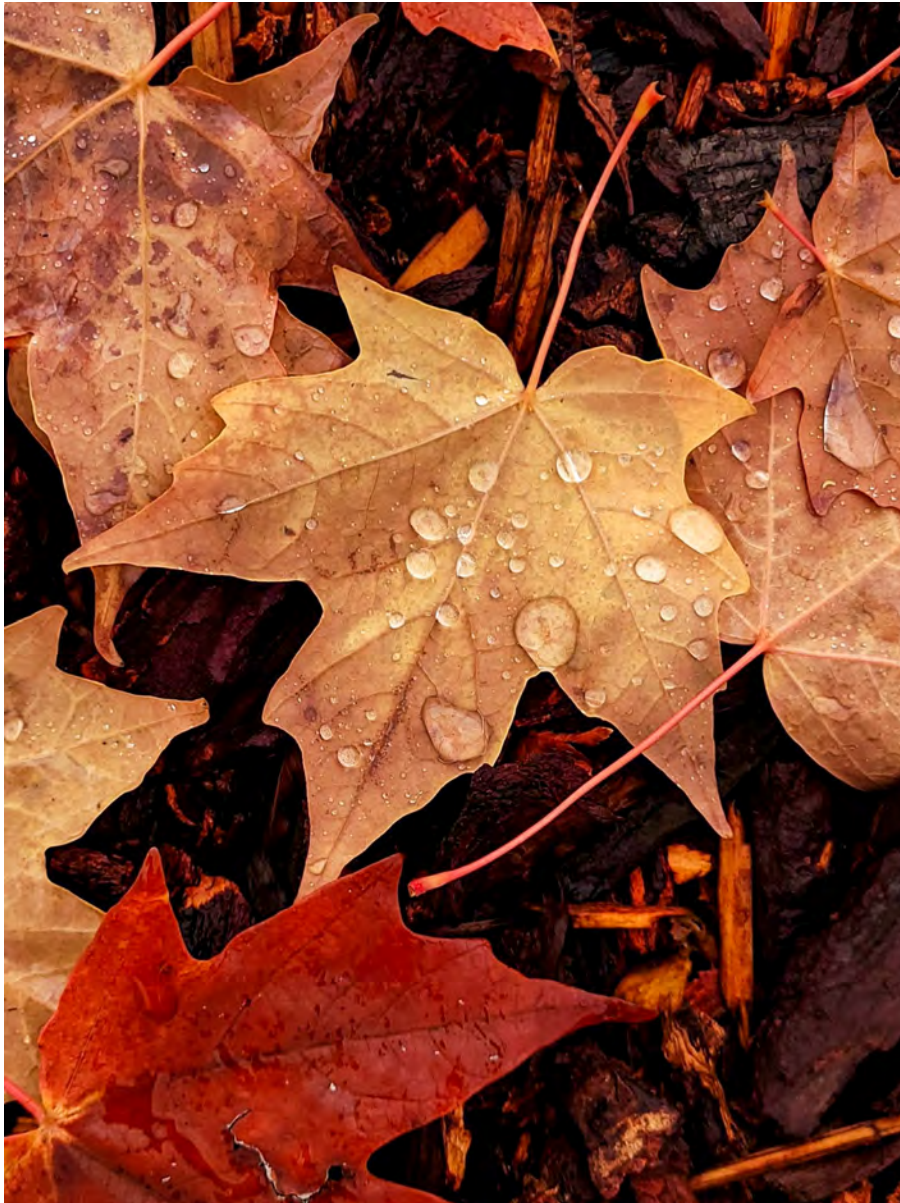
Isabella Vitellaro

Sonnet Of the Earth, with Shoes

Carol Colin

1. Does Mother Earth grow weary from our lack of care for her? As her growling rumbles below us, do we pretend we never heard? Listen and hear her spirit cry as our shoes trample upon the land. 2. Her tears spilled into the water. The water of life, hers, and ours, once sacred to her people, has become muddy, fractured, scarce, and is drying up. Polluting her we inherently pass down disrespect as if it were our land, to begin with, before our vision became cloudy. 3. Pounding hooves of wild horses, shoeless, roamed freely across her plains. They listened to her cries, as witnesses to the pain. Her children were being trampled upon, violated, and put under restraints. They were forced to change by another and then dishonored as white men ravaged her land. 4. Barefooted Natives, their birthright sacred and protected. They danced with thanksgiving, offering their mother the utmost regard for the holy land that was once their own. The land she offered freely, giving up everything that was needed without pretense or lack. 5. Used to elevate a safari-inspired look, adding additional protection to weathered bare feet, or paired against a black ensemble, white shoes dressed down and walked over the land with little care and much disregard. 6. England in the 1600s brought straighter-sided, layered leather heels. The toe of this shoe and the tongue were forked. The sole ended in two pointed horn-like shapes flared out to either side at the corners of what would otherwise be a square toe. Apropos. 7. The “Town of Spectre” created by a visionary, Tim Burton, for a movie called “Big Fish” now rests abandoned in only the company of goats and overgrowth. Within the town, conclusions were drawn as to what possibilities could be seen, “like” - Heaven, Hell, the Afterlife, a Ghost Town, Utopia, Oz, Shangri-La, or Freedom. A place to rest wandering feet and find deep-rooted meaning in the journey. 8. Upon first arrival, shoes are tied together and thrown over the unreachable telephone line. Leaving shoes behind here delivers a sense of freedom toward responsibilities to the outside world. Does Spectre represent death or happiness? This, the giving up of shoes, becomes highly meaningful. Is holy ground such a thing? What defines it? 9. In larger cities, some might claim to find an Apothecary of illegal sorts, a marker, close by, with sneakers tied together hanging across an electrical wire. Causing pause for wonder if getting high elevates further than looking up, shifting understanding and consciousness. 10. In 1916, a director, Lois Weber made a film about shoes. Concerned with social issues, we were introduced to a woman on film who is so poor that, in desperation, she sells her virginity to be able to afford new footwear. Is this necessary within a universal truth that is not being honored? Why does she need shoes? Why haven’t they been provided for her? 11. The bible tells a story. God says, “Moses, take off your shoes because the ground is holy.” As reverence to God, Moses removes his shoes, suggesting a master-servant relationship. Wouldn’t Mother Earth deserve to be treated in context with the same sacred relationship? Does one need to believe to consider this? 12. Jesus did not wear shoes. I do not believe in God like Moses did. I do believe in the teaching of Jesus and other wise prophets throughout the ages. His mother and the girls with him wash his feet, if necessary, before going into a house that requires “clean feet.” Should the earth underneath him have been rendered sacred by his actions instead of his words? Is not our Mother’s Earth then too, holy land? A pre-requirement to move along through time while walking on sacred ground. 13. There is a universal law that cannot be broken. It is the law of give and take. Mother Earth requires an energy exchange in return for her efforts while we connect with her. She is depleted from lack of dance and frivolous running upon her. She is unable to be replenished while continuing to sustain our plastic shoes and heavy boots that for lifetimes have trampled upon her carelessly. Listening, hearing her groans, carrying the unbearable weight of our burdens. 14. Will the souls of the crying people still be heard when

our walking comes to a standstill upon Mother Earth? What happens when she decides she has had enough and demands we call it quits? The factories that make the shoes that adorn our righteous feet will tumble and crumble to the ground when we cease to exist.



Leaves

Andrea Olsen



Rory

Reed Sanders

If his words were a plane

Luis Congdon

If his words were a plane
his words would be an old broken down world war II plane. His words would look
like the streets of Colombia, old and homeless words
that reek of silence and emotions drowned out by alcohol.
His words would never fly because poverty has made his heart heavy
and depression is known to kill inhibition. He might try to talk after he's drunk
a bottle of aguardiente, he might dance alone in the streets, and sniff a few lines of pride
but reality can't escape and poverty eats away at all hope and admiration makes him hopeless.

This plane once flew, it once soared over mountains with a painting of shark's jaws on the side
but eventually he ran out of gas, the propeller stop spinning and the silence that creates words stop working
As the plane began to fall he began to look down, he realized America now means North America and South
America can't fly because that culture is being eaten by the vultures.

Words being slurred make the view foggy and I can't ever understand what we're talking about Maybe it's
technology that keeps us separate
because now that he's landed
he always has to be talking with Vallenatos or Rancheras blasting. And
when he sees me, he remembers himself, but he won't admit we're the same!
Instead he just shoots empty bullets
until he's out of ammo and then he begins to cry with apologies.
I wish he didn't have to be drunk to fly. So many emotions kept secret, so much gas to fill that plane up
But he thinks struggle is heavy
and he can't ever see over his ego. Father,
why did you decide to use your words for war, why did you push my mother out? Hope has
parachuted out the plane.

Then there's my words, the words are similar to my father's
The words of a boy who's never forgotten and still hasn't forgiven.
But believe me if I could I would carry my family
from Colombia to North America, or maybe I would fly enough planes to South America
to make people see that America doesn't mean North America. If I could, I would use verbs to fly,
make circles around the world like a beautiful O written in cursive,
I would hang from paper lines like a y and write words like love until my existence became a sentiment.

I would make a beautiful dance to bridge cultures and this alphabet.

Then there's my Mother's words. They have disappeared into the center of an O—her hollow spirit surrounds me like a noun that holds silence within it's sound, a description that guides my flight. So, what words would you use to spark the fuse and begin the flight?

Sudden Truths

Lawrence C Brandt

Skycab crowded with skiers,
helmeted faces, skis rattling,
boots snow cast from
previous runs, look up
at pendulum swings across pylons,
suspended from steel,
cable and wheel.

Granite faces shout defiance to
a blue Bavarian sky,
and crevice-rooted pines reach for
their life's light.

Astonishment of striking drama
brims my eyes, chains my speech to
inescapable silence,
as long ago with you by my side
in a Minneapolis museum,
my eyes then filled by the stun of
a van Gogh olive grove,
and stole my ability to speak of
an indomitable reality,
a gifted beauty,

a shared sudden truth.



Untitled

Lillian Hoffman



copy of Van Gogh's Cafe Terrace at night

Alaina Weideman

If you wouldn't mind

Audrey A Hickey

Your calloused hands brushed over against mine,
And for once, I didn't mind.

Your eyes stared into mine showing nothing but a deepness that I couldn't describe.
But for once, I didn't mind.

I did mind how you talked. How you
carried your heart
And how your priorities are locked.

But I didn't mind when your head was against mine,
And I didn't mind when you didn't say goodbye just that one time,
But I... for once... did mind when I was but a dime to your golden mine.

I guess I didn't mind when you went out that day,
Or when you didn't get me flowers on our anniversary, But I think I did
mind when you told me I was blind.
Blind to the things you do,
Blind over that I'm "never satisfied with you".

But I didn't mind when you'd never write a letter,
Or if paying for bills instead of dinner was spending money better, But I did mind
when you said I was never satisfied.

I did mind when you said you got flowers the other day, But in reality it
was a year away.
And I did mind when your plate was ready at the table,
But you said you weren't able as I sat wishing so that you could've stayed.

I guess I don't mind being second, I don't need to be all the time.
But for once, I'd like to be number one.
If you wouldn't mind.

Them

Maé Mullen

maybe it was their alluring eyes or the slight
five o'clock shadow that covered their lowered
face that made you stare back.

maybe it was the way their gaze felt on your
skin, the way it made
your blood run cold and you wanted to drain it out,
to stop
the pumping and pumping of that heart.

or maybe it was the way they went
for you. so determined to take you away
and give you everything you've ever wanted
that made you stay.

sometimes their words spit
at your face, drenching your skin, and you wipe
your eyes
as if it were your own pathetic tears
leaking down.

so sometimes you surprise them
with something they'll *really enjoy*,
just to make sure you don't disappoint them.
they really do care for you, but if you
don't believe it, they'll force you to.

they devour your youth
like a vampire devours their prey, gripping so
tightly, you can't escape, leaving bruises and
strains.

it was always going to be like this, you are not a
princess,
and they are not a prince.

things aren't always nice. relationships are
complicated. *love* is complicated.
because that's what you guys are, right?
in love?



Better Days Are Coming

Elias Martin



Untitled

Sydney K Stahr

How I learn to solve a Rubik's Cube

K Smith

My mother and I shifted around from place to place before we found ourselves rolling down the dirt road toward my aunt's farm. It was a slightly run-down small farm in the hollers of North Carolina, an off-white single-story house with light blue doors and windows "to help keep the haints and spirits away," and a barn that looked like it could collapse if you glanced at it crooked. All was engulfed by a sea of green tobacco plants. My aunt, a bitter older woman who held God closest to her chilled heart, allowed us to stay as long as we worked. She never let me call her Aunt, she said "she ain't kin to no bastard" and only allowed me to refer to her as Mrs. Smith or The Farmer. I couldn't fathom what that meant for me at the time, but I would come to understand, eventually.

Solving a Rubik's cube came naturally to me, after months of no electricity and mind-exploding amounts of frustrating trial and error. A string of bad luck struck the family wallet, forcing the adults to choose between food and clean water or electricity. With the decision made for full bellies, in the spring we started living by caracin lamps and an old wood stove. The term "bored" was banned in the house around week two -- which meant if you said it, you would "pick your switch," the step-down term for "beat your ass with a stick you picked out yourself." Abusive as my family was, it motivated me and my four cousins to do something to stay out of trouble. The Rubik's cube was the only thing they didn't want to play with, so it was mine. For five months that multi-color chaos cube was my best friend, well, until the TV came back on, that is.

At first, I was afraid to scramble this perfectly out of the box cube. I would only do this simple turning action of twisting each side by two turns: white goes to yellow, red goes to orange side, and green finally switches with blue. I didn't know it at the time, but I just figured out my first and favorite algorithm, the daisy/checkerboard algorithm. Erno Rubik, inventor of the Rubik's Cube, probably smiling from his grave while a child blindly tried and eventually figured out his Magic Cube. I did it over and over and over again to the point I could do it with my eyes closed and then solve it without opening them. It was great until I started to show my family.

The first person I showed my new skill to was my mom. She was beaten down by thankless work, years in the military during a war, and life in general as a southern single mother. Her head was engulfed with a warm fire of ginger hair, and she had glimmering hazel eyes that shone like polished gems in the sun, unfortunately surrounded by dark circles so deep that would make racoons jealous. Desperate to earn anything for us to live off of, she worked herself delirious most days. As long as I was well-behaved and quiet, she was happy.

I practiced for weeks before trying to show her, making sure that I knew every step by heart I finally got her attention after she came home from work one day. It was weird standing in front of her. I was engulfed in so much joy that it felt like I almost forgot what a Rubik's cube was for a moment. My little body could barely stay still long enough to finish the cubicle bouquet of flowers I wanted to hand my mother. I looked up to meet a statue of her face, frozen in an emotionless expression that in my brain could only process as disappointed annoyance. Without changing a single cement muscle, she said in a lilted sigh, "That's great Bug, now go wash up for supper." I felt the weight of my name for the first time, and like an annoying bug, I was squashed.

The next people I showed my little trick to were my younger cousins Anna and Tulio. Hoping that other kids would share my interests or, at the very least, acknowledge it. They were in a similar boat to me; their mother had just recently divorced their father. But they were baptized and related more closely to The Farmer, so they had it easier on the farm. Anna was the second youngest on the farm and the lankiest five-year-old I ever knew. She was two inches away from my height despite our age difference of five years. She had her mother's round face that just made her cuter than most puppies and high plump cheeks that cradled her copper-flaked brown eyes. Eyes so rich that made the soil in the fields surrounding our house look barren in comparison. Even though we were already cousins, she was like my little sister -- Toddling as she followed me around like a newborn chick. When she got hurt or in trouble, I was usually the first one to go running to help her. Anna's eyes lit up when I showed her, and she begged me to teach her. Her tiny hands could barely hold the cube and turn it, causing it to fall to the dirt floor of the barn several times, each with a small gasp from Anna, scared she might have broken it with each fall. I tried explaining things as best I could, but I was no Gregory Butler, who spent years crunching the hard data and coming up with ways to make high-concept math digestible for more people and helped millions of young people understand how and why the algorithms work while also unintentionally kicking off Rubik's Mania for several generations. A kid just can't explain what an algorithm is, let alone what it's used for to a five-year-old. After an hour of trying and failing to learn, she eventually lost interest and went to chase the chickens around, leaving me alone with the cube once again.

Tulio came up to me like usual, with two decks of Yugioh cards in one hand and a playing mat in the other. He was always trying to make sure his old, dented cards were safe. Tulio looked like his father, tall with sienna skin, dark black hair, and despite being two years younger than me, he already towered a foot taller. Yugioh was his favorite TV show and game; he made sure to request it for his TV time every week, and I would usually watch with him. But when the electricity stopped working and there was no more TV time, we played with his cards almost every day. We played a weird homebrew kind of Yugioh where we would shuffle the decks together and divide up before the game "to make it fair" and ask someone for a number to set up today's point total. Anna usually picked the number because she didn't quite know what numbers were yet, but she could count to twelve and that was good enough.

On this day though, I wanted to play alone. While watching the new summer chicks hatch, I was mindlessly daisy shuffling the cube when I told Tulio this, but he got upset and took my Rubik's cube straight from my hands and ran away. His long legs carried him on the wind faster than a jackrabbit with his tail on fire. By the time my stubby limbs caught up, it was too late. In Tulio's frustration he shuffled the cube and then threw it in the tobacco field behind the barn. His strong arm allowed it to fly for so long it almost seemed to be stuck in the air before gravity remembered to exist and gracefully reminded it to plummet to the earth.

When I finally found the small shape, it was covered with dirt and no color matching the next. Landing so far out that I couldn't see the barn through the large sticky leaves of the tall tobacco plants. I was devastated at first, "How am I gonna fix this? What do I do? What Did I do?" If I told The Farmer, she would probably get mad and most likely punish me for tattling on her grandkid. Knowing if I told my own mother she would probably just apologize to The Farmer for my causing trouble, tears of frustration dripped down from my face, staining the earth a darker hue. I picked up my confusing square friend and just held it for a while, letting the familiar weight settle in my tiny hands for a few moments.

Still sitting in the dirt, knees tucked into my chest, my face carved into a stream of silent tears and loud sniffles, I held my now abstract toy. The weight of my tiny world rested between its shifting faces. The tears eventually were replaced by curiosity as colors jumped from one place to another. With that curiosity came a kind of relief-- relief that it wasn't perfect anymore, that it didn't Have to be perfect, that its purpose was to be imperfect. Yes, it has a "solution" but there's so much more in between that. I could now shuffle, discombobulate, remold, and decipher how this little guy works.

It kind of became a realization; that no matter where you find yourself flying through life, no matter how shuffled, covered in dirt and unimportant you feel, you could always dust yourself off and find a solution -- maybe not as pretty as you hoped, but perhaps it's more about trying to enjoy the colorful twists and turns until you find Your solution.



You Are Woman Enough

Grace Andrews

Invisible Task of Love

Carol Colin

Prayers rarely fly between the three of them and God
Her mind – body - and soul instead offered thanks from her lips And love spread through her
giving hands

Practicing this while learning - giving without return
Of the same - an imperfect skill - doorways and windows exposed Allow her imagination to
soar freely - winged

Across the shadowed room – a doorway toward life - framed In stone and set in wet claylike
dirt is always the same

Yet ever-changing inside her space - through foggy windows
Seeing the world beyond not as elaborate or fanciful
As she dreamed - she imagines through
Silence

Thought Musings Feelings And Concepts
With considerations toward what is remembered from her truth
Pictures do not reside inside of her mind

If only she could have a picturesque movie theatre screen Playing inside her dark mind's
eye - one that recorded the memories

As moving pictures from yesterday - vivid and alive captured on reels of film
Keeping visions of what her dreams are made of – necessary
She imagines her head swirling in souvenirs
instead of faded images hanging in pictures on her walls

The stone is cold and damp on her hands as she opens the door

Breathing outside Familiar Lupine Forget
Me Not's Daisies Coneflower's Yarrow
And Clover

Are not there in the field – is this not spring

She calls out - “Hello” noticing the aliveness – flowing - growing Around her - softer than expected

- the water in the pond rests silently And still - it is beyond the field - the field of possibility

She speaks for those hiding in their underneath-ness Seeing them in the glow from the reflection set down by the moon

The current of life – forever changing

Softly aware of the potential underneath a shell she moves forward And reaches down - the distance between them is as narrow

As silk from Charlotte's web - she is connected

Snail Slug

Moon jelly Spider Wind

All that is within her is apart from nothing else Responsibility is heavy carrying

interconnectedness

She holds this tenderly and safely until it is ready for the sun

She shows up to share her voice and leave a memory Exploring - contrasting - recording

Noise

Silence

Brokenness Wholeness Presence Freedom

And Imagination

Discovering more than life's experience documented in fragments

Obtained from forgotten pictures hanging haphazardly on a wall Outside of the view looking in from the window

The window serves its purpose –

a barrier between what is now and what is remembered - to see through and try to touch the face of the night

A kiss

The breeze Shadow dancing And

Sounds

Hidden in life

transfer a gift to remind her of the company she is entrusted with

She wants that - the language of love is quiet - trustworthy It is a covering and safe place to

stay – watch - and feel Her face casts back the miracles that come to the window

The essence of love is reflection - love wraps around Soothes and understands -
magic transcends time
She stands alone looking deeply into her beautiful soul

Mirroring tells otherwise – she is never alone – she shares eternity Bringing the heavens down into
the present - time swirls together Moonbeams and starlight shine back with brilliance from the stars

At their beginning –

This too begins with her -

Why cannot she see this invisible task of tending to love from the inside so that growth
happens outside –
not from her reflection but
from a loop of stars reflecting infinity as seen through her eyes.



Untitled

Lillian Hoffman

Contributor Bios

Grace Andrews: I am a running start student here at Olympic College. For as long as I can remember I have been enthralled by visual art. Growing up, I was homeschooled by my mother. She made sure that me and my sister had a safe place to create and express through art and music. Blended is something I look forward to every year, reading and admiring other artists' deepest emotions and seeing artists band together to create a beautiful community.

Description of the piece: This collage piece was meant to represent womanhood in a better light. "You Are Woman Enough" is not only the title of the piece, but it is something that needs to be said more often to women around us. Being exposed and vulnerable is beautiful, we should not feel ashamed to show our nipples, wrinkles, stretch marks, body hair, or scars. The patriarchy has told everyone that these things are so-called "imperfections" when in reality, they are just a part of us all. There is no such thing as an "imperfection" when it comes to someone's body. Let alone a woman's body. I think sometimes people forget what women's bodies are capable of achieving. I wanted to snip together these photos of vulnerable woman to represent their beauty and elegance in their simplicity.

Kayli Benjamin: I am a junior in high school, and I am taking classes at Olympic College through the Running Start program. I appreciate drawing and painting, but I particularly enjoy sketching fantasies and animals of all sorts. Classic books, such as those written by J.R.R. Tolkien, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens, have always been an inspiration for me in writing and creating art.

"Ex Libris" is an ink illustration on 8 ½" x 11" paper, with a ½" border on all sides. The piece is meant to represent the stories of books, and the world they can create within the mind; the work shows the stories coming to life. Many of the images are original takes on classic stories, or are common characters or themes used in literature. The composition of "Ex Libris" is modeled after an old fashioned illustration, and the title can be translated to "from the books of."

Lawrence Brandt: Hello Blended crew and readers. I'm a new student at OC, having moved to the area from PDX. I am a senior hoping to continue feeding a lifelong addiction to learning. I'm a USAF veteran, a professionally licensed airplane and helicopter pilot, a heavy reader (a cat on my lap tends to pin me down), and a former airshow stuntman if that matters. I have a lifetime of stories to share, but I'm offering a recent poem for this issue of Blended.

Rory Brown: I'm not used to drawing things with intentions of sharing them. Most of my current art has revolved around deer in some shape or form. "Teeth" is a painting of something I saw in a dream once.

Sable Burgess: I'm originally from Tulsa, Oklahoma but now live in Bremerton, Washington with my husband Orion and our pets Waxy and Juno! I'm grateful to live in the wonderful Pacific Northwest, and I spend most of my time trying to experience as much of its pristine and unique beauty as possible. Writing has been a lifelong hobby of mine and I have never had the confidence to pursue it, until now!

Carol Colin: Beauty (what my grandchildren call me), Mom or Boo (what my kid calls me), Kind Human, Brave Spirit (what I call myself), or "Hey, Carol" (what I answer to), sharing 60 years of experience learning to tread lightly, carry the magic, while I dance here on Earth. My recent quest was getting myself into college. Wearing my full glory, learning, and continuing to be open to new experiences. Writing soothes my soul and affords me respite from the long, strange trip I've been on.

Luis Congdon: I am a poet who loves to invoke emotion through storytelling and sharing early experiences as an immigrant.

Ayden Espinoza: I'm 19 years old and I've lived in Washington coming on six years now. I am the vice president of OC's Drawing&Animation Club and an OC Promise student. This is a mixed media artwork that includes a photo of myself and many pages of my sketchbook to create the background. This is a representation of myself and the friends who've shaped me.

Kai Frazier: Just a random dude who likes to write for fun or others; I like playing video games and procrastinating on lots of important stuff. If you see a typo on something I wrote then please forget about it.

Loren Gosline-Churchill: I am honored to be a part of this beautiful publication along with the other talented artists here at Olympic College. I started out on the stage and trained in New York City. I have always been a writer. Monologues and one-person performance art was my thing. In fact, my father is a retired professor of creative writing, so it has always been a tool in my belt.

This piece in particular is dedicated to my father. After deciding to finally live my life as a person in long term recovery, I felt the need to honor my father and how much I love all the stories that he has written and told, which are many. Professor Morrow was the catalyst in remembrance of line break which my father originally shared with me. After which the rest of the story of healing wrote itself. I hope you enjoy your journey with the read and reflect on some parts you embody of your own!

Audry Hickey: I'm 22 and I really like works of art or poetry that describe raw and emotional or darker aspects of life. My parents certainly weren't a huge fan of my poetry because of how sad they get but I really like reaching into areas that touch others to make them feel less alone or singled out in situations that can be lonely.

Mayson Honck: I am a 21 year old, DIY Photographer and editor of MaysonHphotography, A business located in Seattle and Bremerton Washington. I started my Concert and Portrait portfolio in 2021 with this year being the 2nd becoming the 3rd year of my career and journey. The goal of my Art is to capture photos that make you feel the emotions you would feel if you were at the event. This photo in particular is one of my favorites. This is a local band called rat cage. It shows the punk scene and how small an impact on society and coming together in a small coffee shop can bring so many together during this rough time we are in.

Briana Huffman: I was born in Washington but grew up in California. As a child I'd watch movies and imagine what it would be like if I was part of that world. When it was time to grow up and put my childlike beliefs aside, I had a hard time. So naturally I fell in love with a military man, we traveled the Country, had kids and never stayed long enough for roots to grow. That childlike imagination of mine never died, but didn't really have an outlet. So when the door closed to Military life, I decided to step out of my comfort zone and create a Youtube Channel. I get to see my imagination come to life through my videos, but there's only so much I can do on my own so back to school I went to expand my knowledge and skills in photo-shop and film.

This movie poster I took inspiration from the movie Jaws, one of many movies that sparked my imagination as a kid. I used a photo of my cat Magnuss to replace the shark and used Mickey Mouse for the skier. I chose Mickey for two reasons, one my family and I love Disney movies and Theme Parks, two a Cat and Mouse duo is just classic.

Sofia Hwang: My name is Sofia, and I enjoy experimenting with different medias for art and I am still figuring out what I like the best. I've taken sculpture, ceramics and currently taking drawing class at OC and it's been a great learning experience to grow my creativity! Here are some of my personal favorites I've made while taking those classes.

Ikaikaonalani James: My name is Ikaikaonalani James, a mähū poet and skater from O'ahu, currently residing on Suquamish lands (also known as Silverdale, Washington). My writing seeks to embrace themes that coincide with my state of being-- such as mental health, family matters, Hawaiian sovereignty, Queerness, and liberation. Acknowledgements go out to my high school English teacher Ms. Zinke for reigniting my writing passion, as well as all my friends and family-- mahalo nui loa.

Gillian Kinsey: This is an acrylic painting based off of a candid photo I took of my friends. It was my best friend Ash's 18th birthday, she and her boyfriend were laying on the ground growing through old cassette tapes. To this day, I have no idea where he got them.

Katherine Lurbiecki: I'm a novice writer and Olympic college student with a love and deeply rooted passion for the creative arts. For me putting words to paper is like putting a tiny piece of my soul into something tangible, as corny as that may sound, there is something so cathartic about the feeling of finishing a project or a poem and being able to see it transform and resonate with others.

Elias Martin: I am a student currently enrolled in the Bachelor's program for digital filmmaking. Although my current focus is on filmmaking, painting has been a long time hobby and passion of mine, and to this day serves as a meditation for my best days and a palliative for my worst.

This painting was inspired by "Kinder Than Man" by Althea Davis, she wrote "And God, please let the deer on the highway get some kind of heaven. Something with tall soft grass, and sweet reunion." I realized I'm somewhat of a deer on the highway myself. The painting is mixed medium, gauche and acrylic on paper.

Maé Mullen: I started writing/painting when I was a kid. Over the years I've grown more passionate about it and hope to get some of my work published. :)

Journey Myers: I am a second year student attending OC. I'm aiming to get my associates in arts degree here while simultaneously working on my art career. Coming to OC has helped me in multiple ways especially in my art, inspiring me to step out of my comfort zone and create pieces I didn't think to make before. It helped me open my eyes a bit to my own potential, and creating connections here is also a great addition to my experience here. This illustration in particular is my work from Drawing 3 where we worked on painting/drawing portraits as homework to hone our skills on the human facial anatomy. This piece was particularly really fun in terms of trying a different color palette, working primarily with blue tones. The background was a fun addition to make to really make the piece stand out and look fun!

Brinlee Nix: I am a junior Running Start student. I am originally from Arkansas but we moved to Washington this past June. I've enjoyed art for all of my life and hope to have an opportunity to pursue a variety of mediums. I plan on going into a career in biology, but art will always be there when I get back.

This is an acrylic painting done on bristol vellum. This is a rendition of two peonies as a gift to my grandma. Once when I was younger she asked me to draw her a peony to frame, it still sits on a corner table in her living room. With this, I decided to return to that subject and update it, applying what I've learned over the years.

Andrea Olsen: My name is Andrea Olson, and I am a second year student at Olympic College currently studying for my degree in Filmmaking. I have been a photographer pretty much all of my life. My favorite genres of photography are street, nature, abstract, and portrait photography, as well as boudoir. I love taking black and white photographs best.

Keely Riggs: I have been a student at Olympic College for a year and a half. My poem was written after a friend opened up to me about their sexual assault story. It is also inspired by the quote, "To live in the body of a survivor is to never be able to leave the scene of a crime. I cannot ignore the fact that I live here." The art piece to go along with the poem is a picture of what the poem describes. Two people are sitting together but one of them is unable to fully engage with the other because they are stuck thinking about their assault. That is what the outline of the body with red handprints where they were assaulted represents.

Logan Rubottom: This is my first year at Olympic College! I've always been a writer, but I've only gotten myself to actually complete very few stories. I've been told this is a typical problem for writers, so I take a bit of pride in the things I can happily say I've finished!

Reed Sanders: I am an amateur painter of one year, a digital artist of two years, pro photographer of five years, as well as a lover of arts my whole life. My art is what I love to do, and sharing art is the most enjoyable part of the artistic process.

Ava Shiflett: I am a senior at Chimacum High School as well as an Olympic College Running Start student. I enjoy hiking, playing soccer, reading, and basically anything outdoors. In my spare time, however, I enjoy drawing realism. The majority of the time, I find myself drawing animals and still life.

This is a drawing of a horse named Ace using Copic markers and Prisma colored pencils. I got the inspiration from the four horses I have at home and thought it would be a great idea to work up a piece of art for a friend of mine who also owns a horse. This drawing took a few days to create and I found it to be a very enjoyable process.

K Smith: I'm a student at Olympic College. I wrote about my time growing up in Hollers of North Carolina, a beautiful place I didn't appreciate enough at the time. I also wrote how the boredom and isolation of living there helped me to learn to solve my favorite toy, the Rubik's Cube.

Maynella Samonte: This art piece is a pencil sketch of the Kifune Castle located in Beppu, Japan. I drew this during my time in ART106 last fall. I was inspired by Japanese architecture and wanted to recreate it for my final. It uses different techniques that I learned, such as shading, blending, and contrast.

Sydney Stahr: I am an amateur photographer. I mostly take landscape and nature photos during camping trips and family adventures. Recently I have been assisting co-workers with behind-the-scenes images and video during video shoots for their TV show segments and that has been a great experience. I am a full-time student in the Organizational Leadership and Technical Management Bachelors cohort, and I also work full-time in the real estate industry. I am married with a 5-year-old boy and two dogs, a Boxer-Pitt mutt and a German Shepard.

Recently, my son has expressed an interest in taking photos with me and is the subject in one of my favorite sunset photos from our annual camping trip to Deception Pass State Park. The rest of my submissions are basic landscape and nature photos taken from either Deception Pass State Park or Pomeroy Park in Manchester, WA.

Holly Stauffer: I'm striving to major in Creative Writing in hopes of one day becoming an author. I want to use my writing to create a voice for other women who feel they are not heard or listened to, or if anything they're feeling is difficult to express. I hope that my writing signifies those hard-to-express feelings and creates a room between my writing and the reader to indirectly communicate through. Through the situations I've experienced, I've always found them to be too hard to write on paper, and even with my poem now, I feel there's still many emotions I have yet to properly convey. But as I was drafting this, I was hoping that someone like me could engage in the story and make themselves feel heard. With all of the feelings that are built up between us, I hope that my writing can serve as a breather and relaxation.

Isabella Vitellaro: I am currently in the AAST program in Filmmaking at OC. I am a self taught artist striving to indulge myself in all the diverse mediums of art possible. I am most free and expressive to my true self when creating and hopes to share my art with the world to see.

Elena Voshall: I was particularly intrigued by the idea of submitting a piece of writing to Olympic College's literary magazine. I love to draft stories and poems, so I decided to try it out! I wrote my piece "Our Minds" for those that find it difficult to express themselves. My piece is for people to relate to or provide a sign for anyone to recognize that their happiness usually fuels the happiness of those around them.

Clint Waggoner: I am a formerly incarcerated individual who draws inspiration from my experiences with incarceration, homelessness, and addiction. Today I work with the incarcerated, as well as work with those in recovery from substance-use disorder and homelessness.

Connor Walsh: I am 19, I have always been into art since I was a child. I recently enrolled in a digital design class which has been interesting for me because I have never made digital art, only traditional. It has been interesting and somewhat difficult, but wholly eye opening. I have a medium that provides an arsenal of different techniques waiting to be utilized.

As for this piece, it is a study of contrast and tone that I recently completed, and I am extremely proud of. It is a photograph of Tyler, The Creator and I chose it because his music has had a significant impact on my life. I chose pink because it's part of the color palette of his album Call Me If You Get Lost, and because I think the light pinks with the white background blend well together.

Alaina Weideman: I enjoy art, DnD, music, and aviation. I'm currently a student pilot and am very excited to graduate and join the aviation program and CWU. This art piece was completed on Adobe Illustrator and is of Gerard way.

Aidan Winger: I'm a Videographer. I've been playing with cameras since I was little and ever since I've known that cameras in one way or another would be part of my job. I started my media company when I was a junior in high school just hoping to get some likes on some photos from our recent rival football game, which later turned into being the go to camera guy in Gig Harbor. Earlier this year I was hired to cover the local WIAA girls soccer tournaments around Washington. I loved every bit of the experience. From the excitement of the student section to the hugging teammates and parents. My videos are made to capture emotions and the experience of what it is like to be in the said situation.

Dawn Sherri Correll Woodward: I was inspired by the shortest story ever written and wanted to try my luck at writing a story in only ten words. I named my piece "ten," written in Japanese.

Madeline Zacher: As a Christian, my focus is on glorifying Christ in everything I do- be it through work, school, or words. After I graduate from Olympic College in the spring, I plan on transferring to a four-year university to study history and grow my life skills. Besides poetry, I enjoy reading old books, playing the piano, getting my hands dirty at work, and spending time with my family.



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**THIS PAGE FOR
BLUE SKY PRINTING AD**



MAE