



ChannelMarker

Volume 23 • 2024



ChannelMarker

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**TIDEWATER
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

From here, go anywhere.™



2023 Reading Panel

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Haiku Series

Sarah Walsh

Funeral of Youth

Fight back your tears now
Time to grow up, leave your past
Holding back your fears.

Adulthood

Wake me up again
Is this a dream or nightmare
Should I be afraid?

Mother

Gripping tight to you
I can't bring myself to go
Feel safe in your arms.

My Apartment

Sweet smell of freedom
No more parents, no more rules
Living on your own



Portrait

Aaron Alvarez

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Her Story of a Toxic Relationship

Sarah Walsh

It was the year 2020, I was cashiering at Food Lion, my first ever job. I'd like to think I was really good at it, customers would come and go, but this one always found a way to catch my attention.

His blonde hair and blue eyes, his laugh and how he always bought the same tea and sunflower seeds every day. One day I finally grew the courage to ask him for his Snapchat, I had just moved into the area and really needed friends near me.

Eventually we were hanging out every single day, making out and other things.

I thought I had finally found my person, and it was convenient he lived only 5 minutes away.

I never thought I would be the one tied down with a boyfriend, I was more of a free spirit, but this was someone I wanted to tell everyone about.

I did end up telling everyone including my parents, this was the first boy I had actually meet my parents which was a big step.

At this point I felt stuck, everyone in my life liked him better than they liked me, but when we were alone, he was not so likeable. After dating for a couple of months he became a completely different person, like he had been hiding a whole other side of him from the world.

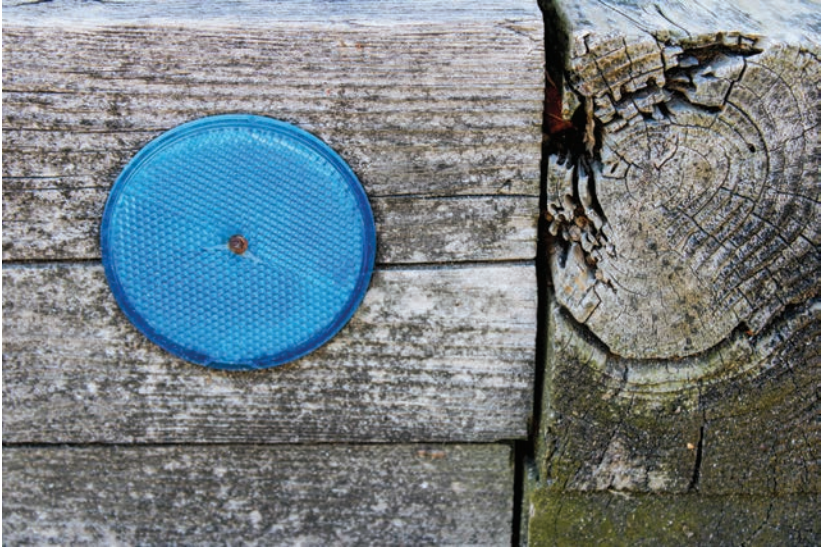
When we were alone, he would scream and yell at me for no reason, sometimes he would hit me and find a way to make it my fault.

"You were talking to a male coworker," he did not like it when I gave any other guy attention. He always acted like I was cheating on him even though I thought he was the love of my life.

He told me no one would be willing to put up with me the way he does,
that no one would ever love me and if I left him, he would hurt himself,
he convinced me that there was no way out of this relationship.
I felt like I was being suffocated and convinced
myself that this was normal,
I continued to tell myself that this is just how love is and no one is perfect.

Most people ask me now, "Why would you stay?"
but I really did believe all the lies that this man was feeding me.
I was vulnerable and in love with a monster,
one day he almost killed me, and I knew I needed to find my way out.
I turned him against me and found a way to make him break up with me,
if it was his idea to leave me, then he wouldn't hurt himself,
and it did work.

Thank God I learned self-love and that I do not need a man to feel loved.
I hope that anyone else going through something
like this knows that it is okay to speak up,
that there is a way out and that no one deserves
to endure such pain from a loved one,
do not make excuses for that person, there is no excuse for their actions.



Untitled

Grace Mosmiller

Digital Photograph - Imaging and Concepts in Photographic Media Arts



Untitled

Joseph Clayton

Ink on Bristol Paper - Two-Dimensional Design



Tip Your Drivers

Nicholas Daniels

I am certain that everyone remembers the chaos that came with that wonderful global pandemic that visited us three years back, in the not so far away year of 2020. Had I known that that year would be so important to not just myself, but the entire world, I would have been more careful to record my experiences in a way some amount safer than the incorporeal, flighty platform of memory.

In that year, I had officially outgrown the first truck that my family owned. I have always been a tall person, but in 2020, it could not be ignored as easily as it had been before. So, my family made the decision to purchase a new vehicle, a truck that could safely accommodate by height while also serving the purposes we had already been using a truck for. We bought a truck, and we loved it. We loved it so much that we even went ahead to buy a second one.

As we all know, vehicles like cars and trucks are far from free. After purchasing these vehicles, we had come up with new monthly expenses to tackle. It was something that we could not sufficiently handle with our current income if we wanted to continue living at the same standard. My father and I had been told at the dealership about an industry that had recently become especially important to the world: delivery!

It makes sense, really. The world was shut down, and a massive lockdown that everyone was... sort of obeying... would be the perfect time and place to start delivering food to people's houses so that they did not have to venture into the big scary plague-filled world to get their hands on a meal they did not cook. So, with that idea in mind, that is exactly what we did.

We registered with a food delivery company called GrubHub and began our work in early 2021. I have to say, those nights were fun. At least, in hindsight, they were fun. I did not think so as we were going out there, but overall, the experience was positive. I spent many of those nights out there with my father having decent conversations with him, and of course, delivering food. We had a lot of people tip us well, which we appreciated

due to GrubHub's way of paying their delivery drivers. Unfortunately, not everyone was so considerate.

I understand both sides of that problem, and I am not going to pretend like I was ever particularly salty about certain deliveries in which there was not a tip, but I was quite salty about people who would make extremely specific requests, act rude in our short discussions, and then refuse to tip. I remember that my father would often be quite angry with these people, and I, as a disinterested fourteen and fifteen-year-old teenager, did not often care to become quite that mad.

Just like the hindsight which allows me to enjoy the long nights with my father, I also have a particular hindsight that lets me see how annoying some of these people were. Having just one person, usually near the end of the night, who would treat us poorly and refuse to tip was usually enough to sour the entire night. Like, if you insist on being rude to me, you can at least pay me for it.

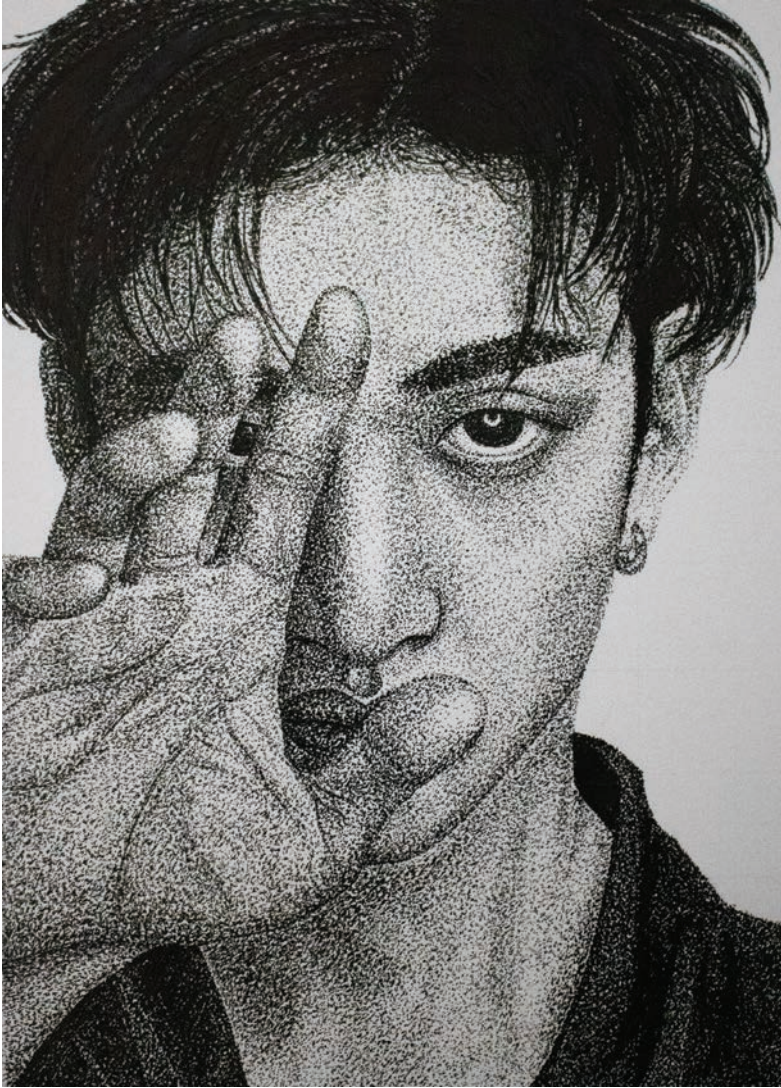
To disarm your possible worried thoughts—no, we never did anything to the food. We did not compromise our services to complement our anger. We were very thoughtful about how we delivered the food, and that did not change because we were dedicated to being good people. However, that does not mean everyone in the business of delivery will share that specific quality. So, just maybe, tip your delivery drivers. Do what you can, it will certainly keep their night going.



Untitled

Arron Dietrich

Digital Photograph - Imaging and Concepts in Photographic Media Arts



You

Kendall Chavez

Ink on Bristol Paper - Two-Dimensional Design



Belief in Magic

Nicholas Daniels

Do you believe in magic?
Do you see within our world
old men in purple robes and hats?
Have you searched far and wide for fiendish women
covered in shades of black and red?

These examples mislead the very best,
driving them to seek the illusion and not the truth.
Magic is here, it is there, it is everywhere.
It is in friends as it is in pets,
and most of all in lovers.

It is hard to see the magic in this world,
hidden behind the horrors of hate and pain.
Yet, what else do you see in the sunny fields,
the hometown houses and childhood memories?
What else can you see in the arms of a lover
besides that which is truly magical?

Settle down for a while,
take a long, restful moment.
Look at the calm scenes around you
and the magic they possess will make itself known.
The magic is present most of all
in places we cherish, and in places that cherish us.

When you experience these things
and the feelings they have bestowed upon you,
I will ask you one more time;
Do you believe in magic?



Untitled

Arron Dietrich

Digital Photograph - Imaging and Concepts in Photographic Media Arts



Backyard of a Childhood Home

Nicholas Daniels

I've always enjoyed the feeling of that old backyard, the way the sun shone down on the acres of tall grass, and the way it felt cold, even in the sunshine. I'm used to heat by now, but it was never so common up there in Washington. The air felt like a crisp drink. The kind of drink you'd have in the wee hours of the morning, strangely cold and clear. The animals that ventured through that yard always seemed more peaceful than the wild would naturally let them be. Eagles nested there, kept stock of their chipper youth. The feathered beasts showed themselves to us many times, though I was too young to remember. I recall this yard by only one memory, a memory coated in a bittersweet film, like an old movie wrapped in plastic. The scene of a yellow balloon floating gracefully into that wild blue sky, while grass tickled my chest. We were never there for very long, and I haven't any more memories of it, but still, I sometimes miss that childhood backyard.



Portrait

Delaney Reynolds

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



The Little Girl Who Dreams of a Forest

Stella Tripp

A little girl and her brother removed a dam from a small stream in the middle of a forest. While no one knew it was them who let that stream flow, they felt accomplished. Every week they came back to make sure the stream was healthy, and every day they cleaned it up a little more. Eventually, the stream was teeming with life and had pure cold water running through it. That summer spent in the forests of Massachusetts sparked something in that little girl that would stay with her the rest of her life. That spark would lead her to where she is now and where she will be in the far future.

While she no longer lives in a forest, she still loves all the natural things around her, including the wacky and weird. She would make mud balls with her brother and watch them explode as they hit the ground. She would make magical potions from berries and leaves; she'd fill a plastic tub with water and let it warm up in the sun to become a hot tub. That little girl would stare at the many little bugs on the ground and try to not interfere with their lives. She was even more enthralled by the wonders of the natural world and how it worked, and while her "experiments" were not of standard scientific quality, she loved doing them anyway.

That little girl is not so little anymore, she can ride a bike and travel around the neighborhood by herself now. She has moved far, far away from the forests of Massachusetts that she grew up in. This new rocky place had much less nature than she was used to, it was quite barren. She lost some interest in the outside world for a long time but would occasionally make room for a quick bike ride to a local park to watch the ducks and fish. She was in a lull of inspiration but a small Garden Club in her school would help reignite that flame. She wasn't the best at keeping plants alive, but she loved learning about how different plants have different benefits to a garden, not just looking pretty. During this time, she even overcame her fear of spiders as she learned how important they are in keeping plants safe from other bugs. Her years spent in the Garden Club would help her come out of her shell as more of a leader and help her

make long-lasting friendships. Once she finally had to leave Garden Club, she had decided what she longed to do with the rest of her life.

This is now the present, and that little girl is me, Stella Rose Tripp, I know, a fitting name. I decided to pursue my love of plants, and nature in general. The natural world still amazes me to this day, the weird ways that plants exist in our world are simply put, astounding. Not just how they exist but how their existence helps us in other ways than just being food or pretty. They are medicine and cures for diseases we didn't know could be cured. I want to make a difference in the scientific community, to maybe change some people's points of view, or change the whole world in general. This planet will never be fully doomed even after we are gone. The Earth will find ways to heal. This little girl is no longer little nor a girl, she is a woman who will make a difference in the world.

This woman became a well-known Horticulturalist in English-speaking countries, she has revolutionized how cities are planned. No more concrete jungles or grey landscapes, greenery, and nature will cover sidewalks, walls, roofs, and doors. Climate change, while still being a large issue is known by all and is actively being worked on, the air and water are cleaner than ever before. Using the increased knowledge of plants and learning from indigenous communities we have found medications to help with cancer, and while it will never be truly gone it has saved the lives of millions. This is a far, far future, though maybe not as distant as one would think. It is an ideal future, and while it is my hope to help the world and achieve these fantastical goals, I know my limitations and the world's limitations. That little girl might just start by helping in little ways.



Untitled

Alaina Baadte

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



The Struggle of Family

Stella Tripp

Struggles come in all forms.
Like flaming butterflies
Beautiful devouring beasts
All consuming, taking every drop of fuel.

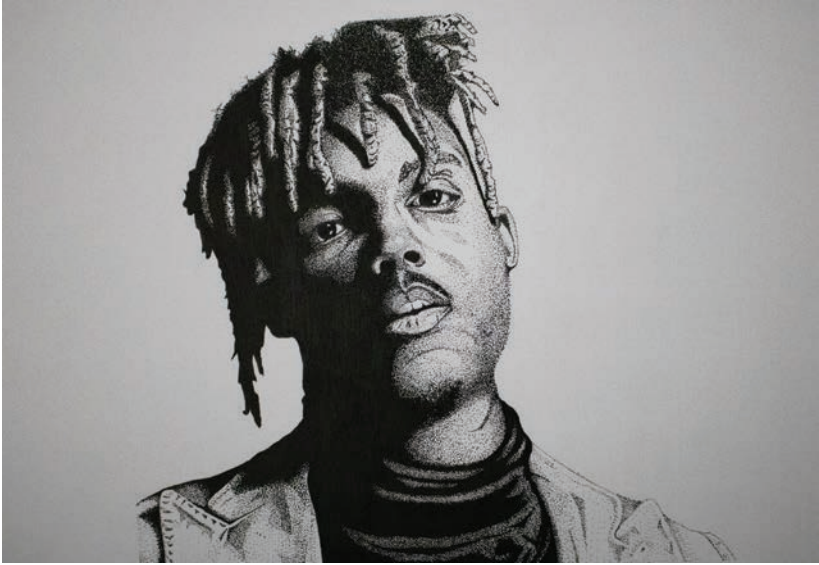
The crackles of the flames of struggle illuminate
The chaos and turmoil of divorce
The tearing of my family
Ripping and shredding like a piece of paper to a saw

It was chaos, no hope for order.
Hard calls were made.
Voices were raised.
Relationships broken yet to be mended.

Wounds still sore to the touch
Aches and pains all over
Scars that will never fade.

The meaning of family forever changed.
Those found family, closer than before.
New friends, lost lovers.
Learning new lessons, learning to love.

Moving on is hard, no one knows the answer.
No one will.
Each person will learn from their struggles.
Some will move on; others will stay stuck.
I will prosper in my new life.
Not letting anyone hold me back.
Not even myself.



A Legend That Will Never Die (Juice WRLD)

Quadarius Donald

Acrylic on Bristol Paper - Two-Dimensional Design



Untitled

Paige Holmes

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Red Maple Road

Cheyenne Weaverling

I pace around Red Maple Road as I whisper the lyrics of melodies that we once shared; a swift, everlasting circle of my footsteps as I surround your territory. I don't know why I'm here. A part of me wishes that you'll feel unsafe with me lurking in your neighborhood like this. I want you to see me. I swim in this dream of familiarity, passing by neighbors that once knew me as your best friend; the brace that once hugged Megan's neck is gone and her girls that we used to babysit have grown up. Do they recognize me now? It's been two years. The sunlight seeps from the clouds like the yolk of a runny egg; I miss your omelets. Our friendship clings to me like how the hairs of your cats would cling to my clothes after a long day at your place; recalling restless nights on your bedroom floor, wooden tiles forever stained with nail polish and ambiguous acrylics. Goblin's meows echo in my ears as your voice echoes in my heart. Your brother rides his bike across the block; we catch glimpses of one another and I sense a mutual recognition. Will he tell you of my appearance? Will you care? A guitar strums in my earbuds as I continue to inhabit these lands of our past. Our history. The sweat soaked in the seams of my shirt cannot combat against the nauseous chill that pierces through my bones when I inevitably run into you. My moss-coated resentment for you is no match for the bile that I am forced to swallow as my heart beats out of my chest. I hope you feel sick to your stomach when you see me in the same way I do with you; and I hope you're reminded of me when you hear my favorite songs. I'll haunt your streets like you will forever haunt the space under my bed. I'm reclaiming Red Maple Road.



Glass Eyes

Cheyenne Weaverling

As you peer through the shards embedded in your eyes,
you see fragments of me racing to meet the standards
of everything that has ever willed itself into existence
and I know you don't have the slightest clue
as to why our brains are wired differently.
Your life is a crystallized beaker unlike anything I have ever seen before.
I can never visualize your origins.
You live in this orb that is reminiscent of your eyes,
sliced by the fangs of your windshield that would
ultimately birth a being of the same substance.
I am your glass child; yet my attempts at translucence are unachievable.
I am a product of derealization disguised as intoxicated lust.
Your hardly noticeable stitched-up mask of
a face continuously watches me;
I am the interior of the ambulance that you were never able to see.
The moment that the tabs on your tongue finally dissolved
is the exact occasion you've decided defines my existence; and yet
I was there the day they were placed in your mouth.
Pursing your lips like you always have, and I wonder
if they smacked against one another like they do today.
Clinging to the strands of your long hair
because it opposes your glory days
and using me as your own vintage vanity.
I bittersweetly imagine a brief millisecond in time, frozen from the icicles
staggering among the edges of the vehicular
threshold awaiting your future.
A quick glimpse of your reflection in the window
before the inevitable frostbite; you see me.
This event led to my birth, but you don't know that yet.
Your ship sinks as déjà vu sinks into your stomach.
I relate and sometimes search for this feeling I have conceptualized
in companions and nostalgia.



Untitled

Gabrielle Rover

Digital Photograph - Advanced Photography I



Hound

Ezra Harrison

I'm the starving hound curled up beneath your feet and you are my only salvation. My bloody claws stain the cold snow of your doorstep pink. I bare my teeth at you, I am tired, my tail is tucked between my legs. Please don't leave me to die, I am weak, and without you I will not survive. I'm just a rotten dog, I'll snap my jaws at you but only because I'm scared, only because I've never felt warmth like you before. I am a sick thing, and before you I've only known the cold, the night chills my weary bones, and I yearn for nothing more than your tenderness. I know not how to be gentle without causing harm. For every need I've had, I've clenched my teeth, and spilled the blood of another; the scars on my body, a mere testament of my past. But now, I ache for a gentler life. And so, I willingly submit at your feet, surrendering myself to your mercy, ready to endure even if my heart may bleed.



Untitled

Reginald Leach

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



And Then I Held Her Hand

Alexis Knighten

I wasn't at all sure about what kind of mother I wanted to be. I wasn't even sure I was going to be a good mother. My mother decided to ghost me when I was 19 years old, seemingly wiping her hands of the responsibility she had to my sister and I of being our mother. Up until my surprise pregnancy, I was on the fence about having children because of that. It seemed like a curse because her mother had abandoned her as well but at a much younger age. She was an okay mom until she decided that "Life has to raise you." This is what she said during a brief conversation we had in my attempt to reconnect with her for a third time. I hadn't heard from her since, so the fear of subjecting my own child to that type of mindset sits with me until this very moment. I've shared this with my husband, Jaboris, but you know how some men are, the wounds of trauma are never really a big deal to them. He wanted a baby and his mother, my now new mother, constantly hounded us about making one.

"Where is my Grandbaby? Where is my Grandbaby?" Val nagged until one day she got what she was begging for.

After believing I had food poisoning, I concluded that my period was late. Like REALLY LATE. I rushed to the drug store and practically cleared a home pregnancy shelf of its tests. After the fourth test read positive, I was in utter disbelief. "What the hell? What the hell? What the HELL?" I chanted as if those words were a spell that would magically result in the next test being negative. Apparently, that's not how witchcraft works. Strong energy of intention must be had not just dumbfounded shock if you want certain results in your favor.

Now was not the time to be pregnant. We had just gotten through the pandemic, and I'd just gotten a job at Planet Fitness to get back on my feet after not working for five long years because I was severely depressed. I wanted to work my ass off with total disregard for my body for \$10 an hour to save enough to return to school. I'd exhausted my free education funds provided by the military five years earlier. I deemed it as a waste of

time because I eventually hated being a half-certified aircraft mechanic. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, but I was sure sacrificing with a low paying job and getting back to school would provide some answers. So, why was this happening now?

When I heard my daughter's heartbeat for the first time, I wanted to cry but the tears wouldn't fall. I felt joy and fear all at once. She's going to be a person that I helped create, God help me. My pregnancy was smooth, but I made room for complaints. Did I crave watermelon and pizza constantly? Yes. Did I think I was fat? Of course. Did I cry watching *Last Chance U*? Like a big baby. Were my feet swollen towards the end? HELL YES! All of this was going to be worth it, at least that's what everyone kept telling me.

My appointments went fine except for one where my doctor wanted to confirm if she said we were having a girl. We were both confused when the latest ultrasound came up strange this visit. The conclusion was an enlarged clitoris that she assured sometimes happens and would shrink to normal size by the time she was born. Looking back, I knew I should have asked more questions but I trusted my black doctor's opinion and experience.

I went for one last ultrasound when the technician stopped midway through instructing me frantically to go to the hospital located across the street from the office. Nervous, I rushed to join Jaboris in the car, telling him to get us to the hospital. After checking in, I was informed that my baby's heartbeat kept dropping. She had to come a few days sooner than I thought because no one knew what was going on with her heartbeat. I was terrified. I'd read that black women have a high mortality rate when giving birth in American hospitals. I decided in that moment the statistics didn't matter. I wasn't going to die. And neither was she.

As I endured an emergency C-section, I told myself not to close my eyes or fall asleep from exhaustion. I'd been up for a day and a half, but when they showed my daughter to me covered in my pregnancy juices screaming at the top of her lungs, I was overcome with relief. She was diagnosed with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, CAH for short. I was so convinced that I'd done something wrong, but doctors reassured me, although rare, sometimes these things happen. She'd be fine with the required medication to manage her condition. I felt like I'd already failed as a mother... and then I held her hand... Janiah Oshun, what breath of fresh air when I already felt like I was suffocating. That's when things began to make sense, and all my fears began to melt away.



Pancake Delight

Alexis Knighton

Loving you is like being served freshly buttered pancakes
with crisps edges every morning after making love every night.
Before I met you I was a kid scribbling in my worn down notebook
trying to make sense of what a true love really was.

I watched all the movies trying to figure it out,
Love Jones was cool and sexy but left me wanting more,
Love and Basketball was too complicated and
so was The Notebook, they didn't give me the answers I yearned for.
Did we have to weather storms to reach calm shores?

Naw.

It wasn't until you strolled into class wearing that navy blue buttoned
down collared shirt with those grey freshly pressed Dickies to complete
our mandatory high school uniform, that I knew something was different.
It's cliché but I felt the butterflies began shifting in the pit of my stomach.

Then we spoke and I was hooked on your unintentional charm.
You were odd... I found out young that I love odd men.
You didn't talk like the rest talked, you didn't think like the rest thought,
I was disarmed under your simple spell, your sophisticated nonsense,
your earthy scent that I desired to bathe in.

It. was. that. simple.

It must have been love at first site because here we are years later,
every day is like the first day we met except now you're my soulmate.
A smitten grin overtakes me as I watch you
savor every last bite of those syrupy
savory perfectly triangularly cut pancakes I made with love... just for you.



Untitled

Victoria Parsons

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Untitled

Molly Dickson

Digital Photograph - Advanced Photography I



Untitled
Tyler Walker

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Save My Soul

Tanisha Amos

Save My Soul Jesus
Help me Holy Ghost
These are my prayers
I would cry because I need this the most
Lost and Hurting
Is saying the least
Addiction is a beast
Save my soul sweet Jesus
For I am so weak
The Holy Spirit heard my cry
This is no lie
My soul needs saving
Every day of every week



Delayed Reaction

Lorin Pullen

I bought a house. In the middle of a pandemic and spending half of my time out to sea, I bought a house. After we closed, my realtor commented that it's normal after the first week to have a tinge of buyer's remorse. To this day I haven't felt that. Maybe I didn't have enough time for myself to get to feel that way. Or more likely, I didn't feel a lot of things most of the time, and this was just another event to add to that list.

As a single mom in the Navy, I had to have a lot of help. My sister had moved here with me to look after my daughter while I was away. Without my sister, I would have had to wait almost six years to be able to move my daughter here. She did more than just watch my daughter. She was the one who ended up signing the final paperwork for the house. I got to read that it was finalized in the middle of the ocean in my shop. It was in the middle of the night. I sat down on a hard, unforgiving circular metal stool and pushed my knees as close as I could get to the counter. The constant but soft hum of the ship's machinery was in one ear and in the other, an earbud playing "I Just Wanna Be a Pickle" by Natalie Burdick. The bright blue light of the computer screen screamed at my eyes as I opened my email. There was the email from my sister, congratulating me. I just bought a house. I didn't feel good or bad. It was a fact that I accepted, I bought a house.

I didn't feel it after moving in, but I did have a different familiar feeling creep in. I would walk into the kitchen, a room with huge windows and lots of natural light and feel depressed despite it being one of my favorite things. The warm morning rays on my face. Everywhere I looked it was a beige nightmare. The upper half of the walls in the kitchen was a light beige, and the bottom half was a deep red. The cabinets were beige, the light switches were beige. The rest of the downstairs was beige or a slight variation of beige on top and below it, chocolate brown. I couldn't escape the beige. The weight of the beige was heavy on my being. I would end up on the couch after work mindlessly scrolling on my phone just to past time

to be able to go to bed. Time smushed together in a way that made life feel unreal. I didn't know yesterday from today.

Through the next year, I slowly worked on personalizing the house. I painted over the beige of each room. Starting with the kitchen, the walls changed to white with a forest green covering the cabinets. Each room had its own color, a horizontal stripe of dandelion yellow in the center of an otherwise white wrapped the living room walls with one corner of two walls a slightly darker yellow triangle was painted with the point meeting about a foot away from the carpet. The dining room changed to a pastel purple that resembles a light shade of periwinkle. The entry way turned into a welcoming but muted robin's egg blue. Each room gave me its own experience.

About a year and a half after buying the house, a lot of things had changed. My sister got engaged, had a kid, and moved to her own home about five minutes away. I wasn't swimming in a sea of beige while being home. As I sat on my faithful couch, I had this realization. I no longer sat here waiting for time to pass me. I didn't have the sinking hole in my chest that gobbled any emotion before my brain could react. I was happy. I was safe. Here I could exist on any emotional plane I held inside me. I couldn't remember a time where I had these consistent feelings before. I didn't just buy a house a year and a half ago. Possibly, for the first time, I had a home.



Portrait

Shah Rasesh

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



A Martini with Three Olives

Kiyah Edwards

Sundays inside my grandparents' house were for God, football, family, and martinis with three olives specifically. A sophisticated drink I used to think. I grew up to be more of a rum and Coke kind of a girl. As the Sunday football game filled the hallways of my grandparents' house, the kitchen was busy. I used to watch my grandmother waltz around the kitchen cooking every component of our family meal. I would stand there and think to myself how she did all of this with a martini with three olives in her hand. If my grandmother were still alive today, she would answer the question by reminding me that she was a jack of all trades. As the martini shaker continued to shake, she put my little hands to work as I was given the task of setting the family dinner table. A great task I used to think, had to be just right. One folded napkin, one dinner fork, followed by a spoon. Always making sure everything was center and perfect. Of course, never forgetting the coasters for the martinis is arguably the most important part. The dinner table sat six, and nothing stopped us from herding together as one and enjoying our meal as we did every Sunday. Many times I didn't remember what the adults were talking about, because I was always told to stay out of grown folks' business. Since I couldn't tie my own shoes yet, and not nearly old enough to drink martinis, I choose to embrace the feeling of the love that was inside the room. The laughter as we reminisced on family memories we heard over a thousand times. If those walls could talk, it would sing sweet memories of my childhood I wish I could relive.



Untitled

Paige Holmes

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Untitled
Cherami Earls

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



The Lesson Learned

Tabitha Blanton

The classroom holds a wide array of students
sitting at their desks,
taking notes with their yellow pencils,
sun shining through the windows.

Then a question is asked.
A hand is raised
among a sea of blank faces.

An answer is received
through the filter of patronization,
sneering of jokesters,
and the judgmental eyes of classmates.

While a question was asked
a new one was raised
and answered without words.

Another day begins and another class starts.
amidst the muted gray walls,
students get out their notebooks
and prepare to learn.

A question is asked.
no one speaks up,
they're ready to move on.

Confusion paints a student's face
as they try to figure out the lesson
with what they've learned
on their own.



Untitled

Paige Holmes

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Pointe Shoes

Leo Ameika

“Chest up!”

It is the halfway mark of my five-week intensive program at a prestigious ballet school. With regular academics suspended for the summer, prospective dancers from across the country have swarmed to elite schools like bees to a honeypot.

“More like vultures to a carcass,” I think to myself: a primal hunger permeates the sweat-filled room. And not just one that manifests on dancers’ frames, with ballerinas forgoing lunch in favor of an extra 20 minutes on the treadmill. This hunger lurks behind cruel eyes. They size up the competition; they glare when a student nails a particularly good pirouette; they periodically flit to our teacher for approval. The teacher who is now approaching me at an alarming pace, cane in hand.

“I said, chest UP!” He draws back my suspenders with long, gnarled fingers, then releases them like a skilled archer letting an arrow fly. My nipple is the bullseye, and I can’t hold back a yelp as nylon connects with flesh. “You look like my 95-year-old grandma, with how much your tits are sagging.”

The combination has ended by now, and all the other dancers snicker. I muster a meek smile and hope he doesn’t notice that my lips would rather form a scowl. But I’m not off the hook yet.

“Don’t get me started on those wrists. This isn’t a vogue class—you’re a man. Act like it.”

“TWHACK!” He strikes my forearm with his cane. Corporal punishment is technically prohibited these days, so he makes sure to be just light-handed enough to avoid leaving a mark. Not a soul dares laugh this time. A pall has settled over the studio like that over a casket at a funeral. Rather than bristle with rage as I normally would, I feel tears of embarrassment well in my eyes. The teacher has already moved on

though; he hobbles toward the front of the room while announcing the next series of steps. Though I notice their once-mean eyes soften, my peers hastily return their attention to classwork—fearful that they could be next.

I'm relieved to be standing near the back of the class as I slip out the door without attracting too much attention. A nearby stairwell beckons to me, a hidden refuge where my sobs won't be heard. I heed its call. Weak. Too feminine. Never going to make it as a dancer. A torrent of pessimistic thoughts threatens to splinter my skull.

The cycle continues over and over. I hang my head in my hands, and teardrops squeeze their way through my fingertips to spatter on the harsh floor below. Inevitably, the wave of self-deprecation dissipates—but it is instantly replaced with anger. Where I am, there is no room for behavior that defies tradition: men must be stoic and are prohibited from practicing pointework, while women must remain petite and surrender to the control of their male partner. And I must be crazy for loving this art form so much, I think.

My cheeks have dried by the time I hear the door to the stairwell open above me. A familiar sound echoes off the walls, one that seems like it belongs to a strange, three-legged creature: a footstep followed by another, with an irregular third beat striking the concrete in between. I leap to my feet. Would fleeing be worse than facing the cane?

"Leo? You in here?" my teacher calls out. I allow myself one big exhale, and tentatively walk up the stairs. A gaunt shadow splays on the wall before me. When I round the corner, I am immediately met with an outstretched, wrinkly palm signaling for my silence. "You don't have to apologize for leaving my class. I understand it can be difficult at times." I slowly nod. Maybe he is here to console me.

"But you need to learn something: in this industry, we all must leave parts of ourselves at the door." His lips draw back in a way that reminds me of a snarling badger. All my hopes for compassion vanish. "Unless you aspire to be a circus act – if you really want to be a professional one day – you'll need to understand that."

"Yes sir." I barely register the words as they tumble out of my mouth.

"Ballet is not for sissies."

I want nothing more than to object. To stand my ground and cry out, "You're a gay man, just like me! You should know how I feel!" But my vocal cords do not cooperate. I say nothing.

Satisfied with my response, he motions for me to leave with a dismissive flick of the wrist. I dash up the stairs, holding my breath in anticipation—and to avoid inhaling his oppressive cologne.

When I return to the dorms that house us that night, my male roommates are sprawled on the couch. "Hey Leo, look at this!" They're watching clips of decked-out cars doing donuts in a parking lot. Beer cans litter the ground, and a crowd stands far too close to the swinging vehicle's path for my comfort.

"Yikes," I say. "You don't think people get hurt doing stupid shit like that?" Their furrowed brows and gaping mouths betray their confusion as they turn to meet my gaze. "I'm gonna head to bed. See you tomorrow." The door to my room squeaks shut behind me and I am faced with the emptiness of an unfurnished dorm. The night is agonizingly quiet – no soothing raindrops or whistling winds drown out the crass banter from down the hall.

The next morning, I am back in the classroom, surrounded by the same four grey walls. They seem more suffocating than ever, the fluorescent lights and lack of windows even more prison-like. Today I don't meet the prying eyes of my classmates. I don't look in the mirror. I don't want to do anything. Nevertheless, it is time for the first combination. I sigh and ready myself, standing with heels together and tracing my wrists – my too-flourishing, too-feminine wrists – through preparatory position. The first few measures of the piano accompaniment sound, and I flex my muscles and puff up my chest.

But this is no ordinary, monotonous melody. This is the overture to one of my favorite ballets. A tale of heartbreak, hauntings, vengeance, and sacrifice: *Giselle*. All thoughts are dispelled from my head and replaced with only music. I arch backward in an elegant *cambré*, and when I straighten, an air of calm settles over me. My heart swells in tandem with a crescendo of the pianist's tune. My vision swims before me, but not in a way that is alarming; the other figures in the room seem miles away, like distant marionettes. They are not on this stage—it is my space to enjoy.

Ruffles of tulle cascade over my hips like a soothing waterfall. A glistening tiara adorns my brow. I am no longer Leo, but Giselle herself! By the time we make it into the center of the room, I have forgotten all about the events of the previous day, the unnecessary tension in my muscles fading as I bend and turn. With each leap, I soar higher and higher, the jewels of my bodice slicing through clouds like skyscrapers. I don't even feel the exertion of my movements; everything is pure ease.

Class ends in no time, and when I bow to our teacher the avatar within me curtsies instead. I grab a snack and leave the room to enjoy the 10-minute break we're entitled to. Seated across from a group of my classmates in the narrow hallway, I bite into my protein bar and rest my eyes. I haven't felt such peace in months.

"Hey Leo, look at this!" My lids snap open as a young girl excitedly hands me her phone. I lift the screen to my face—she is showing me the latest edition of Dance Magazine. A male dancer in pointe shoes poses proudly on the cover. When I glance up, genuine smiles reflect back at mine.



Untitled

Arron Dietrich

Digital Photograph - Imaging and Concepts in Photographic Media Arts



Departure of My Familiar

Shannon Vega

In the heart of our home, within the sanctuary of familiar walls,
my faithful companion had woven her spirit into the fabric of my soul.
Her eyes, a beautiful cold blue, were always warm to me,
mirrored the love I felt for her, a steadfast anchor in my life.

I gazed into those wise eyes, eyes that had witnessed the changes in me,
and whispered my gratitude for the years of unconditional love
and unwavering companionship. My words whispered against soft fur,
perhaps not understood, but deeply felt all the same.

As we walked the quiet path to the realm of farewell,
I felt the weight of inevitability pressing down upon my shoulders,
a burden both heavy and delicate. I was dreading this day, this time,
and I have a feeling she knew. Before we went she crawled into my lap—
one last time. In her own way this was her goodbye too.

In the tender hours of morning, we took her in,
I felt sorry for making her sit on a cold table, having strangers poke at her,
but I wanted words of hope. A message that this wasn't it,
but it was her time, and had been for longer than I'd known.
Somehow she held on, and I know she did that for me.

I cried onto that cold table, a friend's shoulder,
alone in a quiet bathroom. My heart broken for the friend I had lost,
but the time spent together would never be forgotten.
She was my home, a piece of me, my constant company.

In the stillness of her departure, she was no longer in pain,
I knew that though her earthly form was no longer beside me,
her spirit would forever be near. And in that realization, I found solace—
in the gentle eternities of memory, where love would forever remain,
where a part of her will forever reside.



Untitled

Syriane Faure

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Untitled

Syriane Faure

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Untitled

Tina Geissler

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



What's Her Name?

Shannon Vega

The year is 2015, or maybe 2012,
my concept of time has always been terrible,
no matter of a tiny ticking watch could save,
what is important to note is that I was driving,
the cool Alaska air whipping at the window,
my brother in the passenger seat, chatty as ever.

Apparently, what we were discussing prior was
as lost on me as the time,
because all I recall is it switching to relationships
of which my little brother has had many and I,
especially at the time, had close to none.

He asks me, "Is there anyone you like?"
To which I balk in response.
The kind of scoff that almost makes you spit.
Why is my little brother asking about my
relationship status? Why does it bother me?
I should change the subject, because I'd rather
not get into this, and I can feel myself heating up
faster than the old 2001 Ford Focus I'm
driving in the middle of fall.

There was something I had been meaning to tell him,
putting off more like, because I wasn't even sure it was
worth mentioning, he's my little brother after all,
and despite how much I claim to not care about
the opinions of other's his mattered to me,
we were supposed to be close,
and I hated this feeling of lying to him,
of not being the open book that were with one another.

So, when he asks, "There's no guys you like?"

I start to feel a little defensive,
this is a stupid conversation for one,
he doesn't actually care if I'm interested in anyone,
and why does it have to be a boy?
Why does it always have to be a boy?

To him I say, "Why are you asking?"
And I feel my skin start to prickle,
my throat goes dry as the Sahara,
because he has another question,
"Do you like any girls?"

I'm still silent for a long moment,
listening to my heartbeat in my ears,
"Maybe?"
Then it's his turn, he's quiet, I'm quiet, then,
"Okay, cool. What's her name?"



Untitled

Bryce McBride

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Grandma is a Ghost

Tracey Pippins

The aroma from cookies to spaghetti,
smiles on faces, and stuffed bellies.
Now replaced with tears and empty stomachs.
With an empty seat at the table,
We know that the plates will remain empty.

Emotions change just like the seasons.
The sun that used to feel warm and
fuzzy, is replaced with a darkness that
is cold and freezing. Winter brings
a pain that will never go away.

Christmas the time of decorating and baking
turned into memories and visiting a grave.
The ominous feeling of emptiness. Instead
of giving presents such as clothes and decorations is
now left with giving flowers, and wishing of the ability
for people to live forever.

The memories are nonexistent for those who were young on
that dreaded day. The memories and stories will
never fill the void of not knowing a grandmother.
Going to a funeral as a youngster thinking grandma is asleep while
others knowing it's a sleep that will not end.

The wounds are still fresh as a daisy but painful
as a gunshot wound. Grandpa misses his other half
knowing he will never be whole again.
Thoughts that one day he will see her again is what
keeps him going.



Untitled

Paige Holmes

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Untitled

Grace Mosmiller

Digital Photograph - Imaging and Concepts in Photographic Media Arts



The Past Won't Die

Tracey Pippins

Alone, emptiness, floors turning into your bed.
Waking up on the cold, unforgiving floor.
Memory is blank and blurry.
Days bleeding together and nights seemingly nonexistent.
Empty bottles that can't fill the void inside.

Parties became an everyday occurrence,
flies coming out of my wallet whenever it was opened.
Seeing the 7/11 sign multiple times a day knowing
what the purchase would be.
Clerks' concerning facial expressions that
were ignored.

Piles of broken glass in the kitchen.
When the bottles run dry so does hope
of getting sober. Breath that smells flammable
mixed with clothes so dirty they should be burned.

Waking up in the middle of the night in a pool of sweat.
Knowing the person looking back in the mirror is different.
Wondering why the past just won't stay buried.
Realizing the past is always going to be there.
Wondering, what if?



Untitled

Paige Holmes

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Blue Flower Virginia

Michael Murdoch

Kevin, just like any other weekday, packed his lunch and headed to the office, ready for another 8 hours of mostly busy work with the occasional watercolor conversation. His work in sales for a pencil eraser manufacturing company was draining. He usually finished his daily tasks within the first few hours of the day and attended long meetings in the afternoon. Boredom and work were synonymous for him.

On his way to the office, driving half asleep, a sparkling billboard caught his eye. "TANDEM SKYDIVING, ONLY \$200!" read the billboard in a font that seemed to Kevin too modern for its own good. I could never do that, he thought, passing the billboard by like any other on the road, although something about it stuck out in his mind. Maybe he could do that after all, though the ruts already formed in His mind kept replaying their steady voice, and so did his habits of driving, because soon enough he found his car in the parking lot of his office building.

"Morning Kevin!" Polly smiled as she walked past his car, Kevin stumbling out of the driver's seat. Polly always had a different look about her. Perhaps it was the freckles and strawberry blonde hair, the bright colors she always dressed in, or the genuine smile that always seemed to be on her face. Maybe some sort of combination of the three. At any rate, Kevin always enjoyed talking to her. She seemed different, almost as if from another planet.

"Morning," Kevin dully responded. He felt as if he knew he should be invigorated and ready for the day, but coffee was just about the only thing that got him up anymore. He lived in some sort of funk that he never seemed to be able to get out of.

Sauntering over to the office, he sat down at his gray, bland cubicle. Color was foreign to him. He dressed in mostly whites and grays, and on special occasions a pair of black slacks, though those were only for serious events like weddings, and funerals, and things of the like. His internet connection and his mind dragged as he completed tasks. With nothing

else to think about, he couldn't shake that skydiving billboard. It was so... vibrant. He'd never seen anything like it.

In an attempt to clear his head, he went to go get some water. Polly skipped along to refill her bottle as well, happily engaging Kevin in conversation. "Hey! How was the rest of your day yesterday?"

"Ok," Kevin responded. It hit him how long it had been since he had responded "good," or even "bad." Everything just seemed so pale and bland now. "I saw a billboard for skydiving on the way here, though. Can you believe someone would willingly jump out of a perfectly good airplane?"

Polly laughed and replied, "Kevin, I've jumped at least 50 times now. As a matter of fact, I know a friend who works at the local place around here, and he probably works for the place on that billboard. I remember him saying his company was trying to advertise more this quarter."

"Really!?" Kevin almost shouted, raising his voice. A few coworkers gave him side eyes, and after quieting down a little more he said, "That's incredible! But I could never do something like that. I mean, I've got the worst fear of heights in the world. And, besides, \$200 seems like a lot. That could be used for a retirement fund or a savings account, or something more important, you know?"

"Well, if money's the issue I can probably get you a discounted rate if you want," Polly said, poking at his fear. "I can go with you if that would make you feel more comfortable."

"Thanks, but I still don't know. I mean, why even bother? It just seems so... so... I don't know, but I think I'll pass." Kevin started backing away to his cubicle. Skydiving was quite intense. Why should he even try? It may very well be a wasted experience.

"You'll never know how fun it is until you try."

Kevin made eye contact with her. As he looked into her eyes, he saw something different about her, a peace and hope he had never felt before. Maybe there is something to this skydiving thing. Sighing, he responded, "Well, alright Polly. What day works best for you?"

"How does next Saturday sound?"

"I don't have anything going on, I guess that day will work."

“Alright! I’ll get in touch with my friend. You’re going to love it! See you up in the air!” she bubbly said as whisked away, returning to her cubicle.

Well, time came and went, and Saturday morning finally arrived. Turning around in his bed, Kevin reached for the light on his lamp stand. It had a few old trinkets on it, a stack of thick books, many of which Kevin had started but never had finished, and his childhood stuffed animal. A lamb he called, “Lamby.” He stared at the toy and sighed, wanting desperately to fall back asleep, but he had a plane to catch.

After going through the usual steps when waking up, things like brushing his teeth, taking a shower, and getting dressed, Kevin made his way downstairs for breakfast. Two slices of plain white bread toast and black coffee, just like any other morning.

About an hour later, Kevin nervously stepped out of his front door. Phone in hand, he typed in the address to the skydiving hanger. He never really drove anywhere besides the normal places of life, be it his job, or the grocery store, or the occasional visit to a friend’s house. Going into the country an hour away from his apartment complex was something different. His hands relaxed on the steering wheel as the budding trees on both sides of the road flew by. April had just begun, and it was finally starting to become spring. He even found himself turning the volume up on his stereo and listening to one of his favorite CDs, something he hadn’t done in a long, long time.

Fear kicked in as he rounded the corner into the hanger. The mental battle was intense. Oh, no, I really can’t, but I want to do it and it could be such a great time. Kevin was lost. When his eyes rested upon Polly’s, though, all the worry disappeared for a moment. She waved him over after he got out of his car and peace seemed to wash over him.

The preparation was rather typical, signing a waiver, getting suited up by his instructor, those things of the like, but it was rather dizzying for Kevin to experience. Despite all the emotions, gravity could no longer hold him down. He had made up his mind to jump out of that plane.

And that is exactly what happened. What a wonderful experience it was too. The pale landscape of Blue Flower, Virginia, and the neighboring counties was an absolute joy to see. The rolling hills, the fields of bright flowers coming into bloom, and the sparkling lakes and rivers all seemed to come together in a beautiful symphony, like colors splashed upon

a canvas for a stunning, breathtaking view. Kevin couldn't remember experiencing anything like this, ever.

"How'd you like it?" Polly exclaimed as Kevin touched down after her.

"That was amazing! I would love to go again," replied Kevin, with a massive smile on his face.

"Huh, I never knew you had dimples."

"Yeah, my mom always talked about them when I was a kid." Kevin hadn't seen them in a while either. "Thanks for everything today."

"No problem! I'm always a little hungry after a skydive, would you like to join me at the local café?"

"Absolutely!" A midday tea with cucumber sandwiches and all kinds of baked goods followed after. It was a lovely conversation, both Kevin and Polly felt invigorated and content after their lunch. They returned to their respective homes, both with smiles on their faces.

When Monday morning came, Kevin jumped out of bed, ready for the day. As he turned off his alarm clock, he stooped down to smell the vase of multicolored flowers he had placed next to his stuffed animal. They reminded him of the landscape of tints he saw as he gazed on the countryside. Inhaling the fragrance of the flowers deeply, he sighed, but not one of those sighs you have when you're worried or in anguish, one of those sighs of relief. The ones you get when a great deal of good has happened to you, and you can't help but be thankful for the life you get to live.

As he gazed into Lamby's eyes, a smile brimmed across his face. He no longer felt like he needed its memory, because the memory had replaced itself with his life in the present. It became an object of joy instead of an object of longing and dependence.

Moving away from his bed, he got dressed, throwing on a pair of khakis, a light lavender button down shirt, and a dazzling royal purple tie, all of which he had picked up on Sunday. He felt it was time for a change of wardrobe; after all, it is quite bland to wear the same things day in and day out.

The drive to work was ever so lovely, Kevin was shocked at the number of sights he hadn't noticed before. Even the gas station seemed to be more saturated and lively. Hopping out of his car, he whistled one of his favorite tunes as he walked into the office, smiling.

Finally, his dimples had found their place.



Portrait
Shah Rasesh

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



The Blue Door

Brandon Requizo

My eyes grew wider as I walked toward the blue door. A feeling of dread filled the air as soon as I locked eyes with my mother. “Chris has pancreatic cancer,” were the only words that spilled out of her mouth before her eyes began to weep. I held the hands of my cold-blooded stepdad to provide the warmth needed to raise his temperature. The silence in the room grew unbearably loud. Slouched into the chair, nestled by our TV, my brother Jordan stared blankly at the bare floor. What is going to happen now? I guess time will tell.

October’s breath filled my lungs with aromas of dewy grass and smog from the street nearby. I stood on the front porch admiring the effort it took to embellish every inch of my eerie yard with tombstones. Halloween was the distraction I needed. Drenched with the sound of an electric guitar, my brother drowned in a sunken melody that echoed throughout the neighborhood. It was his way of escape as well. The days began to blend like the watercolor paintings I made in kindergarten. I knew how quickly cancer could spread; however, to see it in person was truly frightening. Chris spent his afternoons wrapped in a pile of blankets about two feet tall to warm himself from God knows what. He always seemed to shiver no matter what the thermostat was set to.

From what I saw, Fox News and Facebook were his favorite pastimes. I never questioned it. I was more concerned about how he placed his unrinsed, paste-ridden toothbrush on the bathroom counter, how he avoided eye contact with me at the dinner table, or how he would make promises to my mom he knew he could not uphold. Jordan and I held our comments to ourselves most of the time, but we knew we could not bite our tongues for much longer. The days stood short as the nights grew colder. Tensions within the walls seemed to creep closer. Doctor visits became a daily occurrence for my mother, and making dinner for myself started to feel like a repetitive video game. I had already won “Top Chef” by the time Thanksgiving came around. Chris’s chemotherapy had started and our whole family expected his cancer to be a blip. Mounds of medical

equipment created their own island in the center of the living room. Pamphlets concerning cancer treatments found a home on our kitchen counter and ate every square inch of it. I found myself overwhelmed with the absurdity of clutter. I always made sure my room was spotless; I could eat off my floor if I wanted to.

Apprehensiveness consumed my gut and turned my stomach inside out. My conscience knew something I did not want to accept. It was challenging to get through school knowing my life could change in a matter of seconds. After just one treatment, Chris's doctor advised him to cancel any further visits because he could not handle the harsh chemicals contained in chemotherapy. Any hope that remained on the surface, sank like a ship lost at sea. Chris's demeanor changed quickly.

"Brandon," Chris said quietly. "If I seem to be mad, don't take it personally. I'm just having a hard time."

I nodded yes and continued through the narrow hallway towards my bedroom.

Rain slapped my window violently as thoughts rummaged through my head. I scrambled for peace and all I found was dread. This December is going to be unforgettable, I thought before my brain powered down for the night.

Jingle bells clattered at the storefront of my local Walmart. It did not feel like Christmas. Presents were not going to wrap themselves, so I became Santa that year. Yards of wrapping paper stretched across my teeny room. I carefully wrapped each gift until it was picture-perfect. The sound of Christmas carols suddenly dissipated as I heard the front door whip open. My mother had just got back from work and rushed into her bedroom to see how Chris was doing. I crept up to her bedroom and peered through the gap between the door frame. The theme song of "Game of Thrones" played as I saw my mother kneeling near the side of her bed with tears that glistened in the reflection of the television. I walked in quietly and hugged her so tight my arms could have fallen off. Chris's breath shortened with each tick of the clock. Concern washed over my face as he seemed fine just a moment ago.

"Do you think he is going to be okay? Do we need to call 911?" my mother asked frightfully.

"I think so," I reluctantly replied.

Sirens wailed as I hurried to clear the path of debris that surrounded the front door. It was below freezing by the time my mother and I both arrived at the hospital. Placing my thoughts on a shelf, I bathed in the red light projecting from the emergency room entrance. Chris was rushed to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) faster than my eyes could blink. Dull and lifeless shades of beige paint blurred my vision the faster we walked through every corridor. By the time we had reached the correct room, Chris was already attached to a million different devices that Frankenstein himself would use. I decided to go home for the night as soon as his bedside monitor was considered stable.

Ring! Ring! The sound of my phone awoke me at 5:00 a.m. to begin Christmas morning. Jordan painfully picked himself up from the comfort of his bed and plopped onto the couch cushion nearest to our Christmas tree. Huddled near the warmth of our fireplace, my mother and I distributed the presents between the three of us. Tired expressions spewed from each of our faces as we opened each gift. My mother gathered her purse along with a number of blankets and knick-knacks to head to the hospital for Chris. Jordan and I spent Christmas alone that day with the rest of our family as Chris's relatives and closest friends visited him in the ICU.

Holding my hand, Chris mumbled words to me through tubes that stretched miles down his throat. A stream of warmth swam up my arm and into my heart. Although nothing I heard was comprehensible, I knew he meant well. Surrounded by family, Chris swallowed the alcohol-stenched air for one last time. Thoughts bounced against the walls of my brain as I imagined each time I walked through that blue door. The living room blinded me with light. The chair Chris inhabited grew darker with each step that I took. Love encompassed the entirety of my brain. Tensions faded and fell into the abyss; I gave one last look at the man who challenged every aspect of my life.



Untitled

Shah Rasesh

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Untitled
Shah Rasesh

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Portrait

Ella McCann

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Not My Fairy Tale

Lillian Munro

My husband is dead.

Four simple words. Yet, despite that, I'm still struggling to process them. Mother was right, marrying for love will only end in tragedy.

I'm not sure how long it's been, but it's felt like several lifetimes. It feels as if he's still with me, hovering over every step I take. Standing just far enough away so that I can see him from the corner of my eye. Filling any space I'm in with a cold version of himself.

Even now, sitting in the parlor, I can still feel his gaze slicing through me.

On the outside I feel like an old doll, being dressed up to hide the cracks and stains that show my age. Only I have two large stains that will always be noticeable; my two daughters.

I can almost hear my mother's voice echoing around the room: No man would marry a widow, let alone one with children.

She's right. She'll always be right.

Mother had found a man who had lost his own wife some time ago. The best piece of all, she had told me, is that he has his own child, so there would be no chance of him rejecting my own.

The sound of the door opening draws my attention and in walks my husband-to-be.

He's dressed in a fine-tailored suit, much nicer than anything I've ever seen my own father wear. He's young too, probably barely older than myself, which is surprising, most widowers possess silver hair.

He offers his hand, introducing himself, but I don't hear any of his words. Instead, my attention is fixed on his outstretched hand.

A dreadful chill creeps up my spine, followed by dead hands that grip my shoulders. This is wrong, I know it is, but what choice do I have? Marry a man, that I don't know nor love, or be disowned by my family and live on the streets with my own daughters?

The choice is simple: I will do anything for my daughters. I will make sure that they never have to suffer or struggle as I have.

Forcing away the ghostly grip, I silently say farewell to my lost love and accept the man's outstretched hand. He kisses the back of my own hand, before dropping it and turning towards the door he came from.

The wooden door opens slightly and a little girl in a lacy blue dress slowly enters. She moves from the door to beside the man, a delicate smile on her lips. His daughter no doubt.

His eyes light up as he looks at her and who can blame him? She is undoubtedly the most beautiful little girl I've ever seen. Sun blonde hair that falls in perfect tendrils past her shoulders, and bright blue eyes that sparkle, matching her soft blue dress. Her small, delicate features make her resemble a new porcelain doll more than a living girl.

The man sets a gentle hand on his daughter and introduces her as Cinderella.



Untitled
Miles Watts

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



A Time Before

Lillian Munro

The floor is hard against my stomach. The metal frames of the bed above feel more like a cage with each breath.

The floorboards creak under the familiar weight of Mama walking down the hall. Turning my head slightly, I see her bare feet entering the room, the edge of her dress just out of sight.

Like always, she takes her half steps and she moves towards the opposite wall where her closet is.

I don't move. I don't breathe. But my eyes still follow Mama's movements. I can hear clothes and hangers being pushed aside. Shoes knocked onto the floor in a flurry. Finally, in almost a triumphant gleam, she pulls out a cardboard box.

It's a relatively small box, I doubt even a single shoe could fit inside.

Mama sits down among the mountain of shoes and curtains of clothes and starts to open the box. She digs through it before taking out what has to be the oldest photo I've ever seen.

It's all gray, with long cracks of white making it impossible to truly see the picture. Mama holds it so delicately as if a single breath would turn it to dust.

Setting it back in the box, she takes out another photo, this one a bit more recent, but only by a little. It shows a woman, dressed in a fancy old dress with her pale hair up, it reminds me of a picture I've seen of Grandma's Mama. Mama smiles sweetly at the photo.

The next photo she retrieves is a woman in a sparkly dress dancing. Her light hair is cut short and there's a feather on top of her head. She's dancing with her arms out, next to a man in a similar pose. They actually look kinda funny. Mama starts to laugh at this photo, her body swaying as if she can hear the same music as the couple.

I almost let out a gasp at the next photo. It's in color. It's another woman, with blonde hair like Mama. It's straight and goes nearly to her waist. She's decorated in bright colors that match the man next to her. His hair is nearly as long as the woman's with a mustache on his face, and what looks like a cigarette between his lips.

Mama starts to laugh louder at this photo, before retrieving another one. This time I know it's her, the woman in the photo looks just like Mama sitting in front of her. In the photo, Mama is sitting in a hospital bed, her hair messy and a band on her wrist. In her arms, a sleeping newborn baby. Mama starts to laugh louder.

Shifting slightly under the bed, I take a closer look and notice a man beside her. He's different from the other men in the photos. He's looking at Mama and the baby, and Mama is looking at him. I look at Mama sitting in front of me, laughing louder than ever. Only she's not laughing, she's crying.



Untitled

Ruben Medina

Digital Photograph - Advanced Photography I



Untitled

Ruben Medina

Digital Photograph - Advanced Photography I



New Light

Michael Boehmcke

Soft summer winds flow through the street,
gentle caresses of Gaia's hand to each face.
The wide avenue bustles with people, smiling
faces and extended hands of greeting.
Some have stopped and sat with friends, some are
chatting with the gardeners. Children run and laugh,
weaving through a crowd without a stranger.
The sunkissed breeze lifts the scent of fruit, hanging
low on the trees, to fill the arcology's every level. A
little boy is handed an orange by a helpful teen.
They do not remember.

Once the world was aflame, an
ashen ember left to sputter.
Demagogues screamed and twisted people's
minds, making allies turn against each other.
Parents against children, brothers against sisters.
Pathetic people sent innocents to kill
innocents again, again, again.
There were haves who just kept having, having,
and have nots who were only allowed silence.
Walking corpses sold our futures for more than
could ever be used, and belched miasma unending.
They signed a death warrant for a billion souls
while leaving for where grass was redder.
Monsters preyed on fear and suffering, while
cultivating them with every moment. Disease
left unchecked to save the owners cents.
Food left rotting to keep profits fresh.
Empty home. Empty street. A sky
without stars, and nothing to eat.
Nothing but the monsters who said they loved us.

I remember what the world was before.
Cruelty, hatred. Division, suffering.
It is not my job to teach horrors to the youngest. It
is to tell them how we chose to be free.
We took a stand, and stood together. Every person who suffered,
man, woman, machine, and everything in between. We screamed
until our throats dripped red. We forced them to see every drop we
bled. We laid down our hands and refused to be their slaves.
The masters came, with whips and chains, to tie us to the line.
There was a spark, then a fire. They tried to put it out,
to burn us out, but the light had grown too bright.
Everywhere it shone the flames leapt higher.
We ripped them down from their pillars of glass and marble.
We brought them low, and made them one of us.
They screamed treason, they sobbed oppression.
When you live a life of privilege, equality must feel like prison.

There are few who are in prison now, and most are on their way to reform.
You cannot steal what everyone owns, after all.
Everyone's voice is heard, even those in (prison). Everyone's needs
are met, even those who once denied those needs from us.
People live to be who they want to be. They
express what they wish to express.
The air is clean. There are no borders to cross, or nations to invade.
Nobody owns another, or claims that which others make.
I wish I did not need to remember any other time.



Left Upon the Wall

Michael Boehmcke

I walked through an empty lot, where gentle winds stirred dried brown weeds, urging them to life they no longer had. I saw twisted vines stretched from hangers left upon the wall.

Beneath my boots, the crunch of bleached gravel changed its tone, gleaming splinters and rotten shards begging me to knock a door that could never open. I felt the sun's familiar warmth fall to bleeding shadows, darkness unobstructed by burnt out lamps, left upon the wall.

I walked through the foyer, past boots and coats, strewn across the floor. A gleaming key, an empty box. A fraying scarf, a plastic shovel. I brushed past a hanging leash, left upon the wall.

I found a table set for three, but the crunching of porcelain beneath my toes told me of the fourth. I looked out empty windows at an empty lot, watching as rust flaked from the creaking frame. I turned away, and bumped my arm on peeling paper, left upon the wall.

I stepped over shattered stones and twisted metal, each step sending a twirl of stars into the broken sunlight. I saw for miles standing on that ledge, past stone squares and metal trees. I stepped down, and heard laughter and sneakers on dirt. I turned, eyes wide and hopeful. A pitch black sun stared at me from the shattered wall flanked on each side by outstretched arms. I reached out, and touched my hand to shadowed children, still playing, left upon the wall.



Into the Dark

Michael Boehmcke

I watched the slow, mechanical ticking of the machines that were weaving in and out of her arm. Tubes of red and dripping white were interspersed across pallid gray skin, a green bag slowly inflating and deflating, forcing fresh air into the withered form that could no longer take it in by its own effort. I looked between strings of gray hair, each strand coarse and wiry, to the deep canyons that ran seemingly without end over her face. Where once distinguished features stood proudly upon her, now lay only the ruins of time on biological tissue.

“Why did we wait so long?” I whispered, shaking my head as I traced the path of each beep on the monitor, a jagged peak the only sign of her still maintaining any part of herself.

Her eyes, caked in dried and cracked mucus, opened. The pupils were no longer the dark, incisive points of curiosity that had studied every facet of an ever changing universe. They had become clouded, and gray, visual acuity traded for a few more years of seeing shifting blobs of color. Her pale lips opened, the sagging skin barely parting despite monumental effort.

“You look... as beautiful as I remember.” The hoarse whisper barely registered above the background hum of mechanized life.

“You look like death got lost.”

“Perhaps. But at least I won’t be hiding from him.”

“It’s not hiding if you destroy your enemy. I call that victory.”

“Can’t you let an old woman be. I don’t need my last days wasted with inane prattl-.”

Her breath caught, for a moment, and her eyes widened as the machines whirred, bits flipping in desperation to stave off the inevitable. The green bag stretched to its limit, before releasing its payload with all the grace of

a hurricane. I watched her spasming coughs as air returned, and imagined the relief as her lungs stopped burning, their begging for oxygen postponed again.

"You know you didn't have to go through all this. You could have taken the Restructites years ago," I sighed and pursed my lips, lowering myself to sit on the edge of the bed. "You could have skipped years of back pain that way."

"Back pain is part of being human! Twelve thousand years of human history and every one of us had a bad back." She smiled, proud of her own misery. "It connects us to our ancestors."

"What about our ancestors that didn't walk on two legs?"

"Bah, I'm sure they stubbed a toe or something! Why can't I just die the way I want to?"

"You're going to die this way. We can't change that anymore."

A hush fell over the room. Even the beeping of the monitors became muted, as the corpse trembled in the bed.

"At least I'll die a human. Restructites take that away," The old woman muttered to herself. "Why do you care anyways? You don't have to feel this."

"Because if you took them I wouldn't have to see this," My voice wavered as I gestured around the room, my eyes locked on hers. "We wouldn't remember this."

She was silent. She lay still and licked her lips. She swallowed heavily.

"You don't have to be here. The doctor can do it."

"We have to be here. Both of us. I made that choice a long time ago."

"I was young then, I-I didn't know that there would be all... this."

"We saw what happened to grandma," I said, breaking my gaze and looking down to the smooth tiles on the floor. "We knew it wouldn't be easy then."

"Why didn't you change my mind then?"

"We didn't want to," I said as I stood up, walking around the bed to the control panel. "We wanted to die human."

I input the code that the doctor had given me when the procedure had finished, and the control terminal changed, three red switches appearing on my interface. I turned one off. The room grew quieter.

"Oh..." A near whisper came from the bed. "It's time, isn't it?"

"We always hated people copying us."

"You're right about that." She chuckled and leaned her head back.

I felt my face flushing, and my eyes were burning. I blinked away the salty drops and flipped the second switch. The room went dark, the last critical pieces carried her life by a thread.

"Before... we go, beyond the unknown," she said, grasping her fading strength. "Come, and listen."

I crouched next to her, leaning in. "What is it?"

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have made us do this. We should have taken the Restructites."

"You know I wouldn't have made us do anything different." I spoke softly, assuring her of our inevitability.

"Perhaps, but it was still wrong. I should not have made us see this. But that I cannot change," she spoke with clarity, her voice unfaltering against the winding down of her clock. "I beg of you, live and be free. Experience what we have not, learn what we could not. Live for you, not for me."

"I cannot do that. I can't live, if not to live for myself. We know that."

She smiled and nodded. Her eyes closed, and the last switch flipped, my interface became as dark as the room. I placed my hand across her head and watched as skin fell past skin. Cold metal pressed into cooling flesh, the lost connection of one who had become an incompatible two.

I stepped away and wiped my tears, taking a shaky breath as I opened the door. I stepped out into the bright light and smiled. We had another whole life to live.



Still Life

Kelly-Rae Walker

Charcoal on Paper - Foundations of Drawing



Still Life

Kelly-Rae Walker

Charcoal on Paper - Foundations of Drawing



Glass-Blown Buffoonery

Cameron Rysavy

Joe has just arrived home from thrift shopping. He is a collector of clown figures, particularly glass-blown clowns. Each glass-blown clown is unique and hand made. Joe has a display case full of these clowns. He themes each shelf and organizes the clowns accordingly. For the clowns that are dressed in royal attire and look smug, Joe has a shelf in the display case. Another shelf is for clowns obsessed with comedic props such as balloons, instruments, and rubber chickens. And another shelf is completely dedicated to clowns who all look like they are seated at a bar and grill.

Joe places the new clown in the display case at a table on the shelf that resembles the bar and grill. Then he notices this clown is different than the rest of them. It is made out of porcelain instead of being glass-blown. Seeing this difference, Joe realizes it probably shouldn't go in this display case, but before he can put any more thought into it, he is stung by a pack of bees. You see, Joe had recently taken drastic measures to rid his property of a beehive that had been bothering him. Unbeknownst to him, the bees had swarmed back, seeking revenge for their toppled home. Regardless, being caught horrifically off guard, he passes out due to pain.

In the display case, the clowns at the bar and grill are all intrigued by this newcomer, a porcelain clown. When the waiter clown approaches the table, he asks, "What'll you have?" The other clowns order, but the porcelain clown's foreign language stumps everyone. He resorts to hand signals. The waiter clown, perplexed, guesses, "So you want sawdust in a glass of milk?" The porcelain clown nods, and the waiter clown yells, "One order number four!" to the chef clown in the back.

As time goes on, despite the language barrier, the different clowns seem to be communicating and getting along just fine. One clown at the table, who is clearly incredibly drunk or at least has eyes painted to mimic drunkenness, stumbles over. He listens to the porcelain clown's

incomprehensible speech for a moment, then chimes in, "I don't know what you just said, but I completely agree."

As word got around the display case that a mysterious newcomer had appeared, the smug royal clowns wanted to see this rumored clown for themselves. So, they employed their ninja clown bodyguards to stealthily move to the bar and grill shelf and kidnap the porcelain clown. These ninja clowns are experts at dealing with stealth missions, carrying out every order of the rich clowns. As they move along the rafters of the bar and grill, they lower themselves with ropes. When the time is right, the ninja clowns snatch the porcelain clown in a burlap sack and hoist him to the upper shelf housing the royal clowns.

As the regal and extravagant clowns crowd around the new porcelain clown, they pepper him with questions, including but not limited to: lineage, craftsmanship, era, region. But as all the clowns on that shelf converge to one point, the floor gives out and it starts raining clowns on the adjacent floor below them.

Some clowns on the next floor down were prepared for something just like this and pull out umbrellas to help shield them from the falling onslaught. Some clowns wave their rubber chickens and cheer as they see this as the downfall (in a literal sense) of the royal and smug clowns who are falling from the ceiling. Clown shoes fly everywhere. With the weight of all the clowns who reside on the floor added with the impact of the falling clowns, the floor collapses again, and all the clowns then fall into the bar and grill.

In the bar and grill, panic sets in as two entire floors of clowns rain down from the ceiling. Food and beverages fly everywhere. Clowns run around and overreact. Some of the clowns in the bar and grill are cheering to bring the house down. Some of the clowns try to fit themselves into a matchbox car to escape the mayhem, but once the dust settles, their entire world lay in ruins leaving all the clowns to recline amid the rubble and contemplate the meaning of life.

Joe, regaining consciousness, recovers and gets up. Seeing the wreckage of the display case, he immediately assumes this is the work of those bees. Talking to himself, Joe says, "Next time I'm out, I will have to buy some pesticides so I can end this once and for all." Then he sees the porcelain clown sitting on the top of the debris; he grabs it and moves it to another one of his display cases which is full of porcelain clowns.



Citrouilles en Bleu

Abigail O'Leary

Acrylic on Bristol Paper - Two-Dimensional Design



Dancy Tangerines

Natalie Pietzak

Oil on Canvas - Painting I



Diary of a Lonely Girl Entry 1: Machine

Karolyn Morris

I know that I'm destined to befall a great tragedy. I feel this unknown entity pulling me towards it, like a fish being reeled from its home. Part of me is terrified by it. Suddenly I am nothing more than a child, crying and crawling into their parents' bed. The other part of me wants to indulge it. To gorge myself on its unknown sweetness, afraid I may never get to feel it again. It is why we ride roller coasters and jump out of planes. To catch a glimpse of it for one moment.

But I do not ride roller coasters or jump out of planes. Part of me feels like I don't do much of anything at all. I move from chair to chair. From room to room. I go through the daily routines then I go to bed. When I wake up I do it all again. Being a human is so much easier when you pretend you're a machine. Repetitive but not tiresome. My limbs do not ache because I am nothing more than metal and bolts.

When I am human it is not hard for me to bleed. So much is able to penetrate my delicate skin. When I am human it is not hard for me to cry. So much is able to penetrate my delicate heart. I am not a victim. I will be a machine girl. Things will no longer just happen to me. I will be the thing that happens.



Portrait

Kalayah Smith

Digital Photograph - Introduction to Digital Photography



Baby Teeth

Karolyn Morris

Bug corpses illuminate my kitchen
Trapped in their
fluorescent graveyard
box dye stained my adolescence
And the inside of my bathtub

Expired makeup
Hand me down clothing
\$6.00 coffee
Over baked scone

Forgotten hobbies
Overindulgence
Diet channels
Skin and bones

Sugar babies
Overexposure
Commodifying
Stay at home culture

Rotten flesh
Funeral roses
Am I really changing?
If no one notices



The Journal

Charlotte Hayes

In 2010 after learning of the earthquake in Haiti, I needed to find a way to help the children. I decided I wanted to go on a mission trip. The first step was to find a group whose mission was to help children. I searched the internet for about a month, found a group based in New York, and made plans to travel with them. I was asked if I were afraid to travel alone, especially with people I did not know, my response was, "I lived in Italy and traveled all over that country by myself, how different could it be?"

The next month the adventure would begin, before I could think of going out of the country, I had to be given a few shots and medicine to take in case I became ill. I learned how to pack seven days of clothing in a carry-on bag. The day had finally come, and I was off to a country that was in turmoil, unsure of my living conditions and traveling with a group of people that I had just met for the first time at the airport.

As soon as we left the airport headed to our home for the next seven days, I felt the heat from the sun, and the conditions were like the earthquake had just happened. My eyes began to tear up as we drove down the streets. I could see people in the street under makeshift showers nude, and rubble was everywhere. Our accommodations were located in a guarded compound that also housed an orphanage. At that moment, I knew something about this place would be in my heart forever.

The next day, we were taken to our assigned mission, a damaged school filled with children. The school was located far out in the country with nothing but fields surrounding us. I was told that the children who attended the school were poor, many had only clothing on their backs, still in shock from the earthquake and losing family members. Each day I tried my best to keep a smile on my face and show the children that they are loved, and we made sure their stomachs were full before they returned home.

I was approached by a young man; his name was Ezekiel asked if I would be willing to help him with his English. I responded, "Sure if you will

agree to help me with learning Creole French?" I forgot to mention that we had a translator to translate for us. Every day we met and worked on our languages. I found out that Ezekiel had lost many of his family members and was basically all alone. As the days went on Ezekiel became more comfortable with learning English, as for me I think I learned a few French words.

The last day of our visit to Haiti and school had come so fast, my emotions were all over the place. I had developed a bond with the children and made new friends. When Ezekiel arrived, I noticed the sadness, the same sadness he had the first day we had met. We went over some words, and to cheer him up I presented him with a gift, a brand-new journal to keep all his words in. He held it tightly. I said that I would see him when I returned and that we would continue to teach each other our languages. To my surprise he said, "That's what they all say, and they never come back."

"That is not the way it will be with me." I told him Haiti is my second home, and I will be back.

It has been over 13 years since my first trip to Haiti, and I can remember it like yesterday. I can still see the hurt and hear the children's cries, but I also feel the love they showed me. Each year that I visit Haiti, I ask if anyone knows where Ezekiel is. No one knows. I pray he has grown into awesome young man, has continued his studies, and has a family of his own. I pray he still has the journal and when he looks at the words, he remembers all those who taught him, not as people who did not come back, but as people who cared.



Three Pears

Sue Welker

Oil on Canvas Paper - Painting I



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