LABYRINTh Magazine







Fotoweek DC Award-Winning Photo by Shannon Smythe Student Competition - 1st Place, Animal Category

Labyrinth Magazine is produced by the students in the Journalism 2M class at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, VA, under the direction of Taki Sidley. Students used Adobe Photoshop CS5 and Adobe InDesign CS5 to edit and lay out the magazine. The magazine was printed by Imaging Zone in Springfield, VA.

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Visit us at www.labyrinthmagazine.com to view more student work or visit us at www.wearethetitans.com to become a patron of our efforts.

Thank you for taking a look.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

This year's Labyrinth staff has done an amazing job taking on challenges and coming up with new ideas that we hope will carry on to next year's production. For the first time in the history of the magazine we published two editions, a smaller magazine focused on the results of a contest we held and this larger, end-of-the year magazine. Next year we hope the new staff will expand on this idea and make the magazine a quarterly, with November, January, March, and May edtions. I am proud of how hard everyone on the staff has worked and I thank them for doing all they have done.

I would also like to thank all of the contributors to the magazine throughout the year. Without the many wonderful submissions we received, there wouldn't be a magazine. With this in mind, I urge you, T.C.'s students, to continue to submit your work. We love to look at it and read it. Again, it makes our work possible.

Lastly, I would like to thank you, our readers. It is our sincerest hope that you enjoy this celebration of T.C. Williams High School's many artists, writers, photographers, graphic designers, actors, and musicians.

I am so pleased with all that we as a school have accomplished this year and hope that we can continue to "raise the bar" in the coming years.

Enjoy!

Haley Harrington



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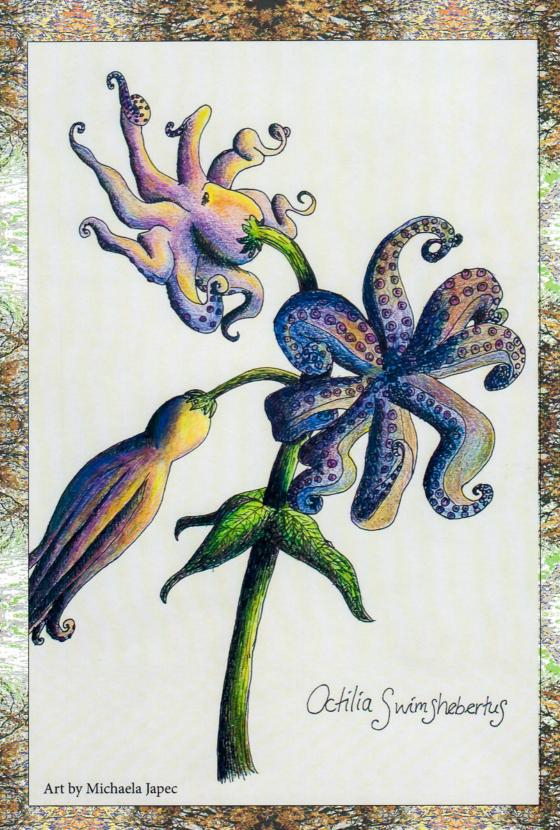










Photo by Grace Dunn





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Photo by Tyrous Morris

Life Behind Glass

We are the only ones Stuck in the snow globe of time Watching memories resurface Like blizzards from the past We are the only ones Who can't be saved Eternally sentenced To a life of reliving Our visages reflected on The glass Creating the illusion of freedom, and When we ask the question Why? They stare at us from the outside And turn our world upside down Watching the snowflakes hit the sky

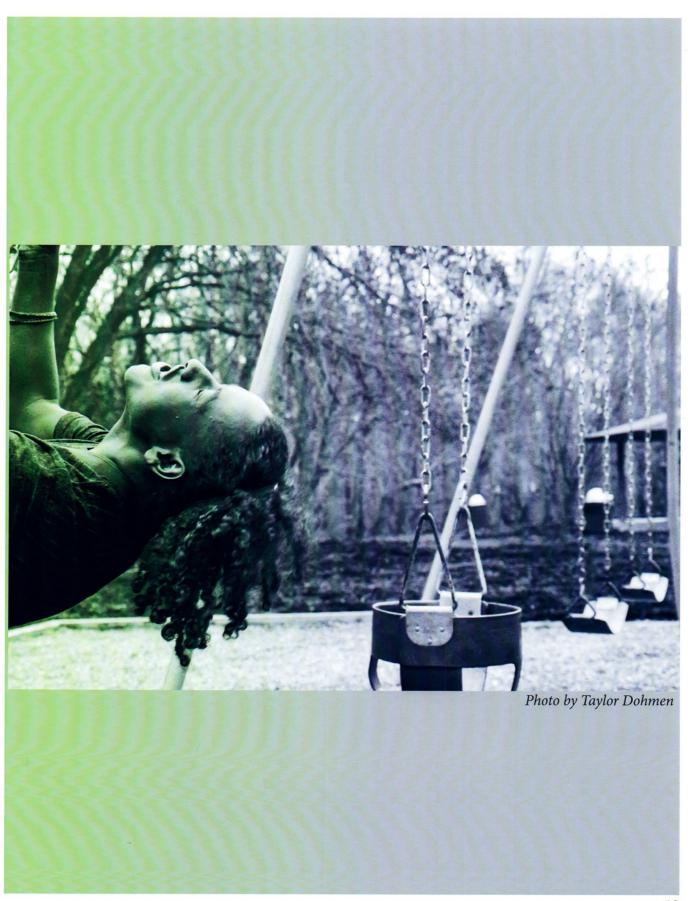
~ Sarah Paez







Photos by Caleb Vogt













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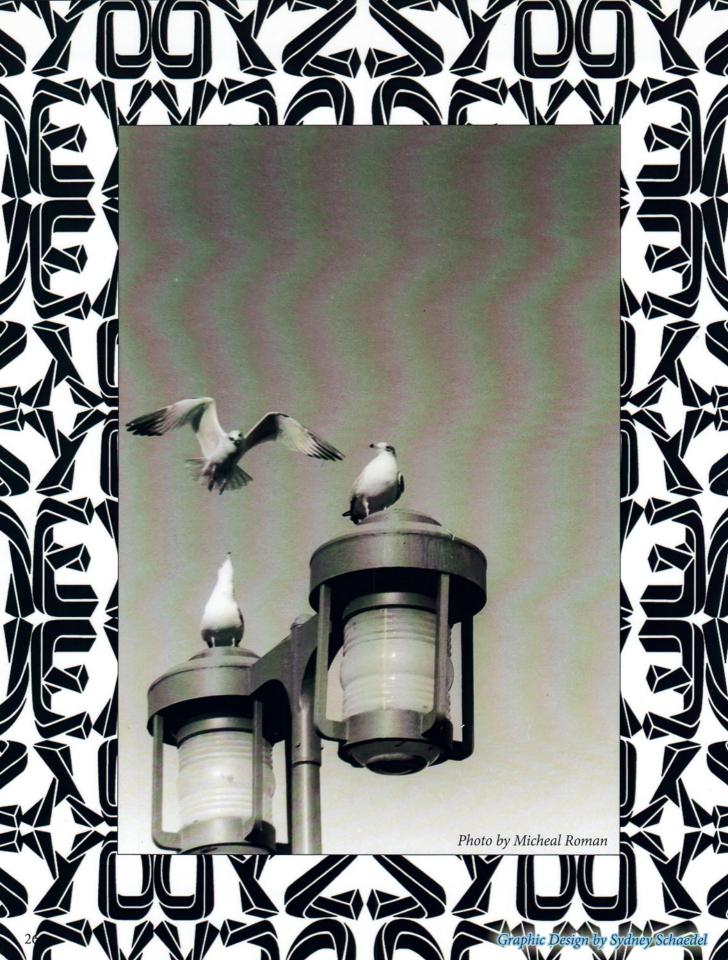


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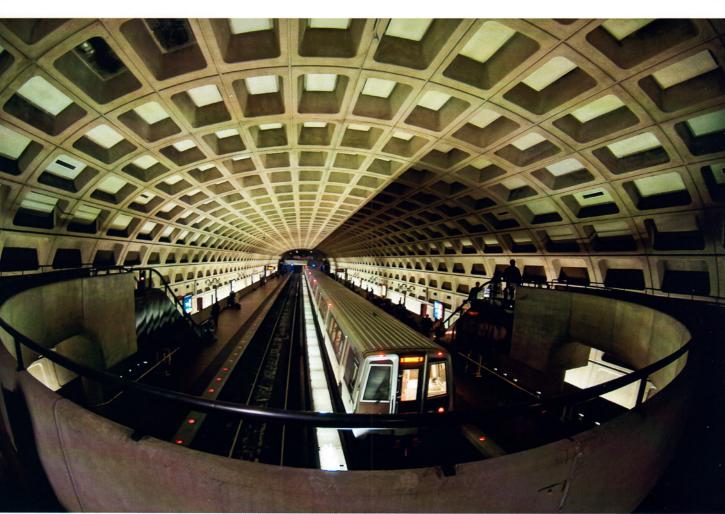


Photo by DaShawn Eubanks



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Photo/Art by Alexandria Clark



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Photos by Emma Canfield





Pause love

Pause Love

Before it's too late

Breathe before they rehabilitate your fate

Breathe like the need for oxygen in outer space

As if our entire race

Was breathing within the cosmos

Inhaling figments of unknown materials

Where aligning with the planets seems like miracle

Because I don't plan to be a star

I would rather skip the supernova phase

For bountiful meaning in symmetrical space

But it seems that the Milky Way is in our way

Aspiring with major flaws

Towards hazardous yet isolating walls

III breath

But if I cease to breathe another universal breath

Make sure that they know that our alignment doesn't end at death

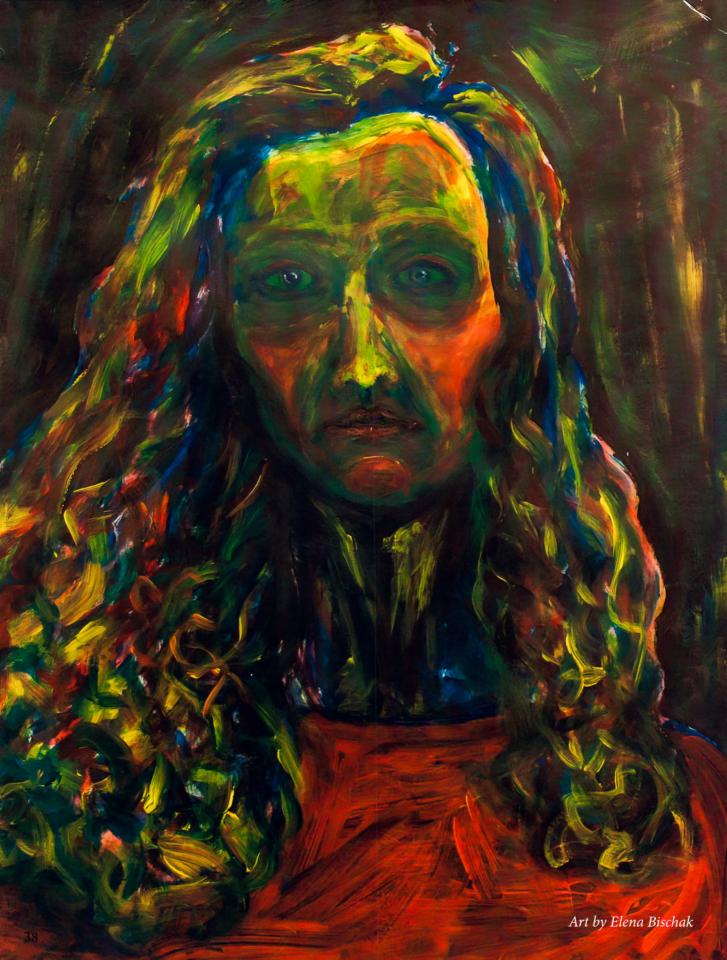
It continues throughout the aging mind

So pause love

Before it's too late

Breath before death rehabilitates your fate

~ by Conrado Castro

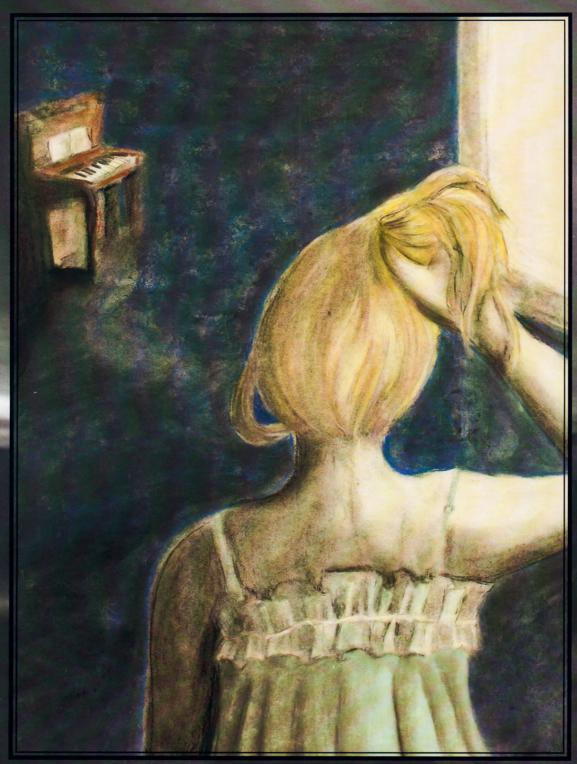




Art by Hannah Clark



Art by Emily Flanigan



Art by Marvin Ayala

Dreamer 201

by Emily Schulman

Sometimes I couldn't tell what was a dream and what was real. I used to be able to tell. They used to be worse at hiding the imperfections and keeping me from remembering.

But when I woke up in that alcove and felt the stark absence of Violet's mind I knew that something was wrong. It might have been that it was a dream but Violet's voice wasn't one I could hear and I could always hear her voice even through the perpetual rain. That was more important.

I sat up and moved out of my alcove in an attempt to find her like moving around would help. I eased onto the platform and stood up. The platform was a bit like a balcony and a bit like a walkway and was too narrow for comfort, but I couldn't think inside of that alcove. There was only enough room to sleep, not even enough room to sit up. What would I need with something other than sleep? The dream was life.

But I had Violet.

I used to have Violet.

A voice rushed through me, becoming part of my thoughts.

Dreamer two-oh-one. Come with me.

I looked up, startled. Someone had come up and I hadn't noticed. Someone had gotten two feet away from me and I hadn't noticed. The feeling of something being wrong intensified and my fingers tapped the seams of my loose pants. It was still easy for me to frame the thoughts I wanted the other dreamer to hear.

Where are you taking me?

Away. There are consequences for your actions.

What did you do with Violet?

Come with me.

What did you do with her?

I didn't sound angry. It was hard to feel anything strong in the Dreamer Place where everything was washed out in gray scale, but my words were as calm as the minds of those dreaming. It was as if I were noting something about the weather which was always rain to keep us from picking up thoughts they didn't want us to. Except—

It is two miles to your city spire. You need to start moving soon. Wouldn't want you to get caught by a patrol, hmm?

I nodded, keeping the harsh, cutting thoughts at the back of my mind.

Not nice thoughts, two-oh-one. A bit too confident for someone who hasn't followed yet.

I did fall. I did.

But with Violet's help. I had never been able to trust the dream state like she had and I couldn't find her through the rain and something was wrong and—

And that was what was wrong, hitting me in the face. Sunlight streamed through the large windows. I could see to the smudge of mist that surrounded the city spire I had come from. It was wrong; it never stopped raining there.

The glass of the windows exploded inwards, covering me with cuts that felt too real for it to be a dream as I covered my face with my hands and—

I woke up in a cold sweat, my heart beating faster than I thought was possible. It had been a week since I had left and there were still the dreams. They still had traces of the thoughts of the other dreamers even though I was miles away from them. I ran a hand through my hair. It needed a cut but I was still too spacey to cut it myself and my mother didn't have time.

I swung one leg out from under the tangled covers and was in the process of getting out of bed when a flash hit me.

Ready or not, here I come!

I could feel Violet's mind at the edge of mine, even with the medication. We were that close even

before the fall of wood smoke and things were the same as they had ever been. I would pick the easiest hiding spot and she would close her eyes and find me with that *smile*. And she was always the better dreamer.

There was a knock on the door and I was back in my beige room. I focused on the door as my vision cleared. The flashes had come back since I had left the Dreamer Place. The stability of other dreamers kept the memories in place but there wasn't a safety net out here. They were treatable but I was on enough medication as it was to keep me from picking up too much from other people's minds and I preferred memories to the cold of a lonely mind.

"Come in," I said.

The words were foreign. No one spoke in the Dreamer Place unless they had to. The council were the only ones who spoke voluntarily. The rain kept thoughts quiet but without medication it was easy enough to converse. It was hard to get used to talking again. The things I said were wrong or too fast or too sharp and the things I wanted to say stayed at the edge of my mind but no one here could read them and—

And my mother came in. I couldn't focus on her as well as I could on the area around her. Wisps of graying hair formed a ring around her head against the blue of the hallway.

"Breakfast is ready," she said.

I'm worried about you.

The thoughts came unbidden, but I reached out to the edges of other's minds by instinct now.

I nodded, forcing a smile that was met by one just as fake. I pulled on a shirt. It felt soft in comparison to the clothing in the Dreamer Pace and it was lighter in color, making my pale skin a bit less obvious.

You need to get out and do something. You can't just stay here.

"I'm going to the store," she said. "Can you watch Cynthia?"

I nodded. Cynthia was five and beautiful. Everyone thought it. And she didn't know my face. She had been one when I left. I could tell what was behind those captivating blue eyes and shining hair; fear of the unknown and a hate that ran so deep she barely remembered why it was there for a brother who had left without saying goodbye. There was no way she could know my real intent with the whispered stories our parents told.

I stood up and pulled on pants. "Breakfast," I said. "Where?"

"In the kitchen," my mother said. "Help yourself. Your dad had breakfast earlier. He's gone off to work."

I followed her out of the room. My father was a politician. A liar all the way through and I didn't trust him one inch and he could tell. It was worse now. I couldn't always hear before and even when I could I didn't know that people could keep from lying and be honest except for Violet and—

She pulled on a coat and left the apartment. I walked into the kitchen and put some eggs on a plate that was at my place. I poured some juice into a glass. Before I left she wouldn't have trusted me nearly alone. Even with Violet. Especially with Violet. She knew we were together in a state that wasn't quite dating but wasn't platonic enough for friendship. She was afraid of hormones or us getting so involved in each other that we would ignore Cynthia. My mother would stay as chaperone but now—

Now there was no point.

Cynthia poked her head through the door as I sat down, coming in from the hall that connected the bedrooms.

"Is mommy here?" she asked.

When's she going to be back? Don't like him.

I tried to ignore her thoughts, as painful as they were to listen to.

I stabbed a piece of egg with my fork. "Store," I said. "Back later. Breakfast?"

Hungry. But not someone I know, don't know you.

"PleasemayIhavesomeeggs?" she asked.

The words rushed together. Hunger always won with her. Little kids could never figure out how to skip meals without complaining, never had to go twelve hours without a bite to eat or moving or sleeping. The Dream State was never the same to me as being asleep. I could usually tell, find the inconsistencies. I could never believe the pre-dream wasn't going to fall out from under me. That endless plane in one direction but ever increasing sky in the other, the horizon becoming smaller and smaller until I reached the edge. But I had never managed to trust that if I fell I wouldn't be suspended there forever or hit a surface that was a hundred

leagues down. But there had been Violet and-

I stood up and scooped some eggs onto a plate before handing it to Cynthia. She took it and scurried back to her room. Afraid. Of me?

I'm not a scary person. A bit thin, half an inch shorter than average. Try and keep small so I go unnoticed. Stay within the lines even when there's Violet and—

And I had to stop thinking about her some much. She was gone. It was within the rules and I had always followed the rules. They had never been wrong before. Not completely. And there was a flash and—

And there was Violet, standing out in the rain in the summer of sea spray with arms outstretched. There was salt on my lips and I couldn't remember why.

Come on!

She turned and *smiled* at me and held out a hand.

And our hands brushed just enough to give us a hint of what two minds together might be like even through two layers of latex. And we were soaked to the bone but we didn't care because at least we were together before the fall of wood smoke when everything fell to pieces.

I blinked away residual colors from the flash. They were stronger than normal. It was getting more and more difficult to tell what was real and what wasn't. Dreaming was becoming too easy. I rubbed my eyes in an attempt to get fully awake. That working wasn't likely but there was no coffee in the apartment. Even if there was I couldn't drink it because of my medication.

Which reminded me.

I hadn't taken the pills yet and it was after breakfast. It wasn't too late for them to do some good but—Might as well just skip. Couldn't do too much harm. Not from just one day. They wouldn't be watching me that close.

Right?

The stairs that wrapped around the outside of the city spire were quiet. There was a low electrical hum that permeated the air but it was easily ignored. I wasn't picking up too much yet and I was eager to get a bit of quiet before things got too bad. They were fine in the Dreamer Place where the rain helped muffle everything. I could just see it as a smudge to the northeast. But here the sun was warm and everything was in focus for once. The trees were tingeing an orange color that I hadn't seen since the fall of wood smoke. The sky was as clear as it got. There was always a bit of mist around the edges that the weather centers couldn't quite work out. I leaned over the railing. I could almost see the park where Violet and I had first taken our gloves off. It was amazing I still knew my way around after four years. And—

I heard the cracking of glass and shards flew past me towards the ground and I turned around and—Someone had come up behind me. Male, taller, too tan to be a native to this part of the world. His features were sharp. He had an almost nervous look like he wasn't comfortable talking to me. I glanced up and the sparkling windows were intact.

"You're a dreamer, right?" he asked.

The voice made me wince. Too harsh and too loud. The accent made it clear he was a visitor to the world.

"Used to be," I said.

"You still are, right? You just got kicked out. The council didn't mess with your brain waves or anything."

"Technically."

But being in a place without dreamers wasn't really being one. What came with being a dreamer was useless. There was no shared dream space. The dreams I had were taken from the minds of others or my deepest fears.

I glanced down at his hand and saw the recorder. There was a blue light blinking. I turned around in protest.

"Why are you talking to me?" I asked.

"I'm doing a bit of a piece on dreamers," he said. He leaned against the railing. "So why'd you get

kicked out?"

I must have looked shocked or offended.

"I didn't mean to pry," he said.

"No," I said. "It was Violet."

"So there's a girl involved."

I nodded, gripping the railing with a vengeance.

"She helped me fall and I got kicked out. I have no idea what they have done with her."

He nodded even though I am sure he had no idea what I was talking about. He turned around and pointed to the Dreamer Place.

"That's where it is, right?" he asked.

I nodded. It was unexpected that an off-worlder would know where the Dreamer Place was. Most worlders didn't know where the nearest one was.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"We did our research." He smiled and held out a hand. "My name's Stephan. What's yours?"

I slid away from his hand and shook my head. I had been patient enough with this foreigner and I didn't want to leave Cynthia alone for too long. My mother was still at the "store" "shopping" but I knew what she did in her free time. I wasn't going to tell her husband. Not yet.

I started up the stairs, ignoring his queries as to where I was going and why.

Hand on the monitor, click, enter.

"Cynthia?" I asked.

Still asleep. Could feel her dreaming of better times and things that had no words.

I let the door swing shut behind me and sat down.

And Violet was there, playing hid and seek again.

Cheater, cheater. You didn't take your meds this morning.

Neither did you.

And she smiled and closed her eyes and began to count.

And when I reach one hundred we can run and run and be free again. Don't you remember that?

And I hid behind a tree and she found me and *smiled* as I opened my eyes. And she took off her gloves and took my hand and we ran and ran and—

I was nudged forward as the door opened and I jolted awake. The door opened more as I moved away. "Did you fall asleep, honey?" my mother asked.

She edged into the apartment and closed the door. She was wearing different clothing and didn't have any groceries.

"Yes," I said.

"Did your remember to take your meds this morning? I didn't remember to remind you until I was in traffic."

For a moment—just a moment—I thought about lying.

"No," I said.

"No?"

She looked half shocked and half disappointed in me. For all the years that she had trusted me to manage my medication I had never forgotten and then this time—

And it wasn't that bad. There was no haze surrounding my thoughts and my vision was sharp. I could understand what was going on for once even though I kept falling asleep.

"Just remember to take them tomorrow, okay hon?"

I nodded and moved to the side so she could get out of the hallway. From what I could pick up, her husband wouldn't be home for another few hours.

"Is Cynthia still asleep?" she asked.

She hung her purse on the coat rack and went into the kitchen where I had thankfully cleaned up after breakfast.

"Not anymore," I said.

Cynthia had just woken up and was rubbing her eyes as she walked into the kitchen. She still man-

aged to look beautiful despite her golden hair sticking up in four different directions.

"Hey, hon," my mother said.

She picked Cynthia up, wincing slightly as she figured out that Cynthia was a lot heavier than she looked.

"You're getting heavy," she said. I need to go to the gym more often. "Did you two have lunch yet?"

"Nope!" Cynthia said. She smiled wide, revealing her two missing teeth.

She never smiled around me. Didn't trust me. I didn't trust her either.

"Not hungry. Big breakfast," I said.

My mother looked worried, maybe just a bit.

If he's sick they'll find out I let him skip a day.

"Go and lie down, okay hon? Tell me if you get hungry," she said.

I nodded and walked into my room.

I wasn't sick.

I needed to get away. I needed to find Violet. Maybe need was too strong of a word. I wanted her. I wanted to be able to see her and break free of the clouds and see her *smile*.

And like that it was decided.

There was very little for me in this place I managed to call home after four years of living elsewhere, romanticized by a mind starved of people who cared. My parents had Cynthia who showed no signs of being a dreamer. They didn't need someone like me, a failed dreamer who had lost a name and never gained a new one. I was just a number even if no one out here used it.

But I am two-oh-one.

I sat down on the floor and wrestled a bag out from under my bed. It was dusty but it would do. I put a few changes of clothing into the bag, folding them up so other things could fit except—

What else did I have? What else did I need? I was storming the castle. They would test me by dream

or thought, not by sword or gun.

And again the colors and sounds swept through my mind.

And I was in the dream state back in the Dreamer Place; in the pre-dream where I had spent hour after hour trying to trust, trying to fall so I could move freely through the dreams of others. There was dirt stretching out as far as I could see and a horizon which was bit by bit disappearing as I walked forward.

Come on.

And Violet was standing next to me, holding out her hand. A projection. She was an avatar, but it was Violet controlling her and I took her hand.

Gloves dropped to the dust-covered ground.

And we ran toward the horizon.

"No double-dreaming, dreaming, dreaming. Find her, her, her."

I can't go over the edge with you. Have to hide in the rain. Luck.

Luck.

We touched foreheads for a moment before she let go and disappeared back into Violet's mind where she would do their best to hide but it wouldn't work. But I kept running towards the edge and I jumped—

And my eyes flew open.

I stood up, shaking slightly. I didn't want to remember what happened when I fell. I had lost Violet, gaining freedom while losing the reason for it.

I left the bag.

And I walked outside and ignored what my mother was saying and I left.

And I left for Violet.

The miles to the Dreamer Place went fast. I didn't have time to think. It was better not to. What I was going to do would be better unplanned. They couldn't deal with spontaneity. Plans came from the mind, dreamed up by the subconscious and the council dealt with dreams. My dream was to be my only weapon.

It got louder as I got closer; the noise of people thinking and dreaming. The rain tried to drown ev-

erything out so we could think without using another's mind. Most of the time it worked, but it left everyone as shells. A body needs sunshine, even one who lives in a dream world.

And I still couldn't hear Violet. Even when I was close to the doors and could see the dreamers wandering inside the glass building like an ant farm I couldn't hear her voice.

I knocked once.

The panic set in quickly. I could feel it rise through the dreamers and burst into a frenzy of worried thoughts.

No one's supposed to knock. No one comes here. Why is someone here? Who is this?

They scattered to their alcoves and let one of the half-dreamers deal with me. They could hear thoughts if they concentrated but they were unable to enter the dream space. They kept things in order when the council failed. One of the half-dreamers opened the door and I stepped in.

"What are you doing back here, two-oh-one?" he asked.

Harsh words shot through the otherwise silent space.

I am here to find Violet.

He concentrated for a moment to try and figure out what I was saying before shaking his head.

"I'll have to talk to the council," he said. Go ahead. I will wait.

He turned and I reached forward and-

He fell to the ground and—

And I hadn't meant to do that. Maybe give him a rush of thoughts to convince him to let me come but not leave him on the floor. I never meant to do that.

But there wasn't time. I had to keep moving. I had to find the council. I had to find Violet.

The halls were still the same. There were half-dreamers trying to find me but they couldn't. I could hide too well and I could hear them through the rain. Even the real dreamers would be hard pressed to find me. The dream clouded their thoughts, made them weak. After a while all they did was dream through scenarios the council gave them.

But not me and not Violet. We had each other. There was no comfort in the false worlds. Things weren't right there, things could fall through. Violet was my rock. And Violet—

I didn't know why the dream wasn't enough for her. I hoped in my heart of hearts that the reason was me, but I didn't know.

And then-

I was there. At the end of the hall. The ceiling was high and the walls were shaped so that the slightest whisper from the thirteen council members would be echoed to the middle of the room. The single woven mat was empty but they were there. Waiting. For me?

"What are you doing here, here, here? We told you to leave, leave, leave."

The words echoed around the room, bouncing off of one wall or another.

I can't leave Violet. What have you done with her? I stepped forward.

"Two-oh-one. Don't come closer, closer, closer. We don't want to have to hurt you, you, you."

"But we will if we have to, to, to."

They weren't lying. They could lie. But I had to find Violet.

I stepped—

And I woke up in my alcove.

And Violet wasn't there. And that was wrong.

But I had been there before. I was dreaming and if I know I'm dreaming I can break out.

"We can keep you trapped here, here, here."

Their voices cut through the dream state.

But I could escape. I could fall.

"Not without help, help, help."

I moved out of the alcove, carefully now that I knew I was dreaming. They made their dreams accurate. If I fell it would hurt. If I met Violet.

Violet, I could find-

Couldn't think about it. Had to act.

I ducked around the one who came to throw me out and ran down the steps. If I could remember, if I could find—

Left, right, left, straight and on towards the end until—

There were her thoughts. Faint, but there.

Violet!

But it was still a dream. And the Violet behind that door—

She turned. And she wasn't Violet. She didn't smile at me or say hello, just—

You deserved this.

And I woke up, heart beating fast as the dream state shattered around me. I could almost see fragments of the dream in front of me, bits of sound and color. There was the blue of Violet's eyes, there the sound of running down the hallway. As my vision cleared I saw that someone had moved me to the mat.

"We warned you, you, you."

You didn't have to do that. All I want to do is see Violet.

"Don't lie to us, two-oh-one, oh-one, oh-one."

There was a silence filled with the pitter-patter of the rain.

She doesn't deserve whatever you've done to her. I didn't want her to do this. I didn't want her to help me fall. Just let her go.

"We cannot do that, that, that."

Why not? What's stopping you from just letting her go?

I stood up. From the stiffness of my muscles I had been dreaming for a few hours before breaking out of it. I would have to find her on my own. I turn and ran, feeling the stiffness leave as I moved. They would know where I was going but I could get there faster.

Twenty minutes of hunting faint whispers and trying not to think led me to her room.

Knock once, try the knob, enter. Her room was bigger than the alcoves and she was standing with her back to me.

Violet?

I'm here.

She turned and *smiled*. Even through everything she had kept her smile. She looked more worn than she had when I had last seen her. Her eyes weren't as bright, her hands were shaking. But it was her.

I reached out a hand.

She shook her head. Time for reminiscing later.

I—

I nodded and withdrew my hand and turned towards the door. Violet followed, keeping close. I could feel her body heat near my skin and—

And I turned and brushed her hand just so I could say that I knew and I was sorry and—

And there was silence but for one voice whispering on the edge of hearing. It was her voice but it was wrong, disjointed.

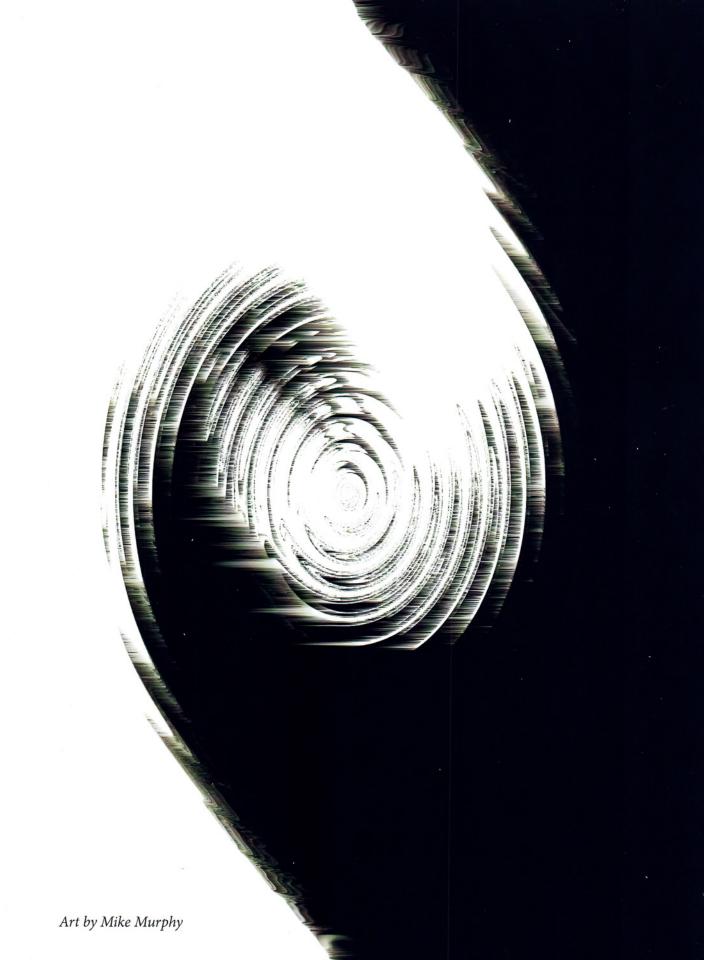
"Thank you for walking us through what you have done wrong. Time to wake up, two-oh-one."

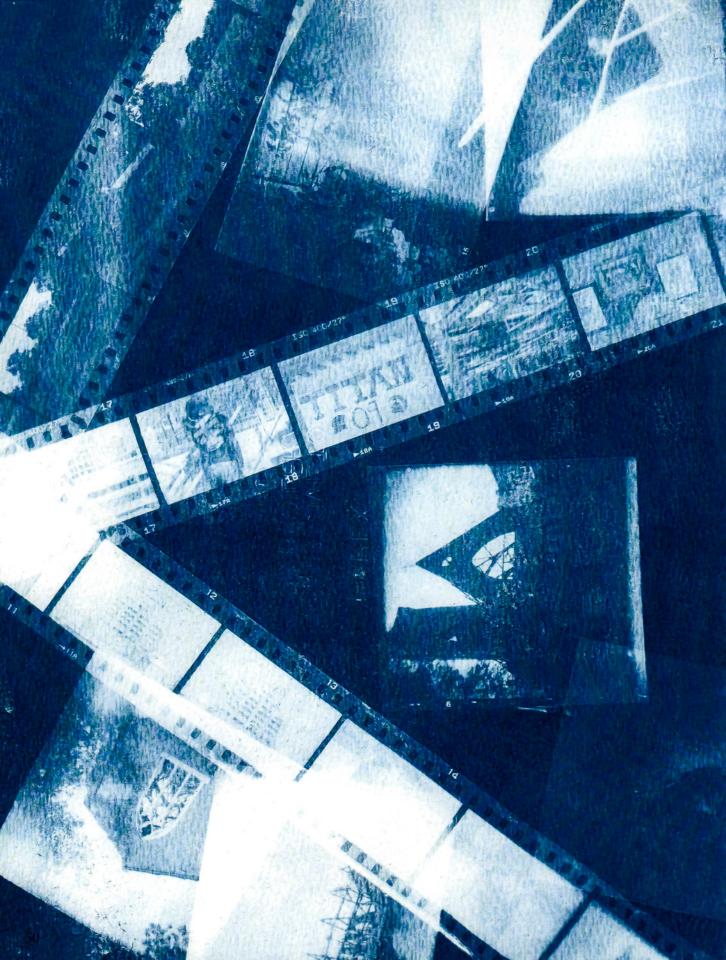
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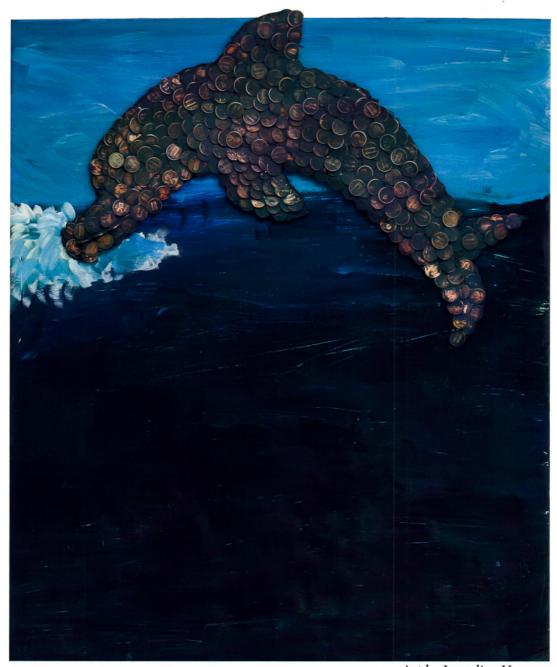




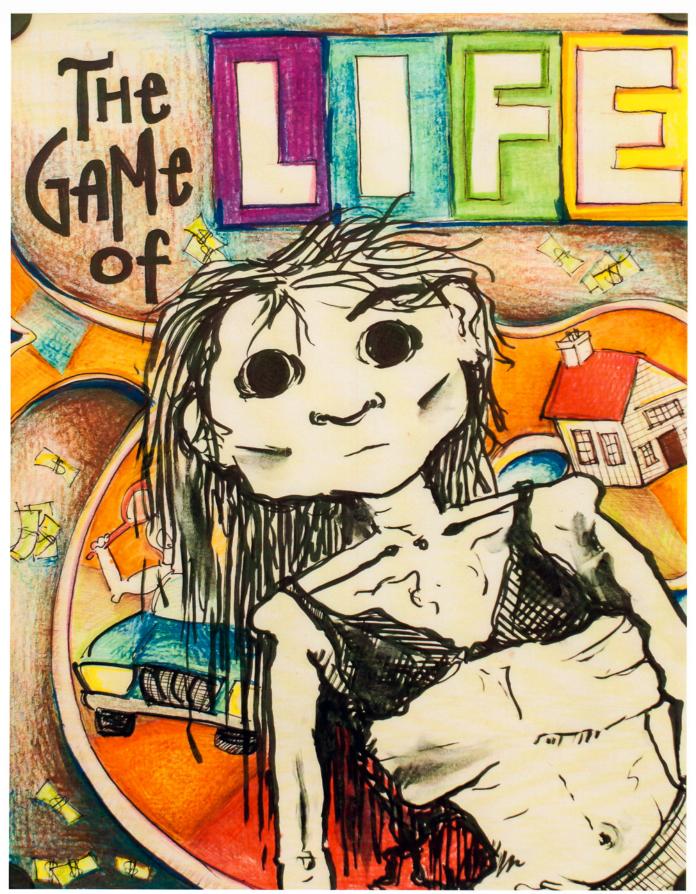
Art by Nathan Giordano







Art by Jaqueline Vasquez



Art by Alexandra Lemke



Graphic Design by Shacolbe Horn

Summer Days

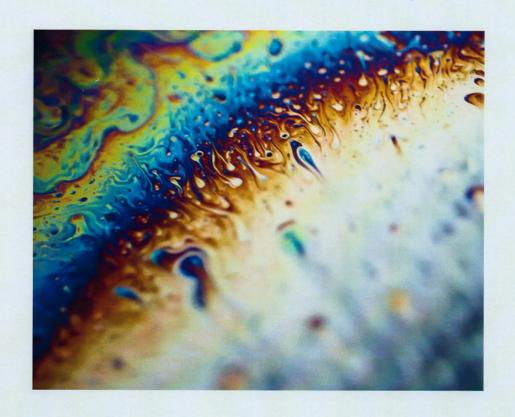
The sun is shining on yet another perfect day. Blue skies, fresh air, allowing time to fly away.

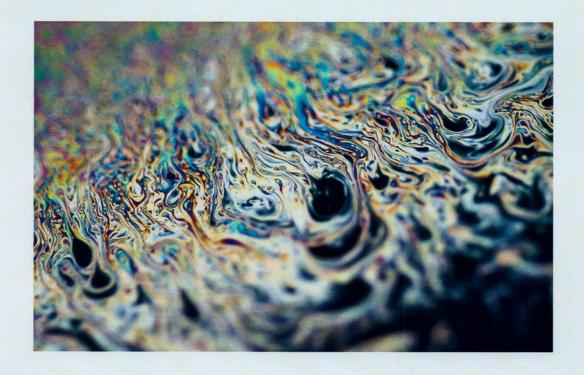
Calm and collected, unlike my hyper friends. We sat there in that park, until that day's end.

Now the school year's begun and our relaxing time has ceased, but I'll think back to the days where of my problems, school was the least.

Sitting on the green hills with the sun shining down, on those perfect days with them, it was always hard to frown.

By Brenna Lancour





Photos by Skye Whitlow



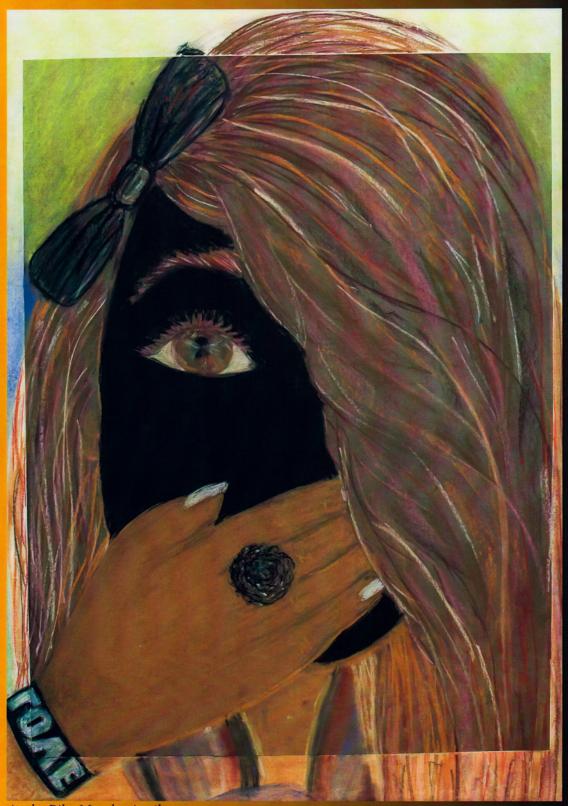




Photo by Shannon Smythe

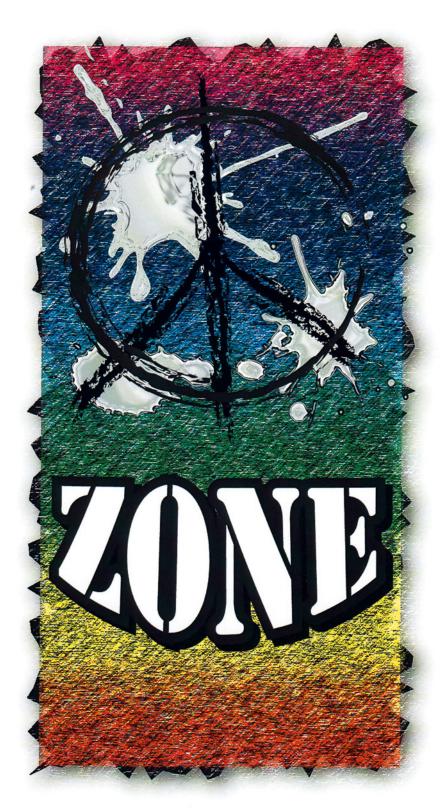


Photo by Emma Bartley

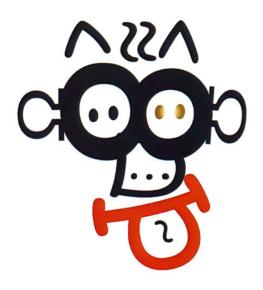


Art by Biky Morales Aguilera





Graphic by Jack Delaney



Graphic by Tori Hargrove



Graphic by James Cooper



Graphic by Sydney Schaedel



Graphic by Markel Murphy

Watching, Waiting

by Stephen Lockett

Jeffrey Andrews was born on the 25th of December, 1928, in the small town of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, but even then, as he drew his first breaths, it was watching, waiting.

When he reached the age of three months, he was baptized at Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church. There was much rejoicing and people singing praises to the Lord. His parents were among the happiest, but even

then, amidst the singing and joyfulness, it inched ever closer, watching, waiting.

By the time he was eighteen months old, little Jeffrey Andrews was speaking in broken sentences and walking by himself. His parents taught him morals, ethics, and religion, and they delighted in his happiness, knowing it could only last so long. One day he told his mother "When I get big, I'm gonna visit the stars!"

"Of course you are!" his mother replied cheerfully, but she knew it was far from the truth. It was looming over them, watching, waiting, knowing that when the time came Jeff would be unprepared.

Its first strike was when Jeff was three. One night Jeff was supposed to get a little sister, but his mom never came home. It had taken her. His father was inconsolable when he returned with his new sister, Faith. It relished in the pain, soaking up the tears of sorrow.

Jeff often questioned his sister about what happened to his mom, but she insisted that she couldn't remember. His home always seemed somber to him after his mom was gone. His dad was always working and

his sister and he were left in the care of a nanny.

He learned to love his nanny, Olga, as if she were his mother. She was always near when he wanted her there, and almost seemed to disappear if he didn't. In time, he nearly forgot about his mother, except when some picture or offhand comment brought a tear to his eye. But as he was quick to learn, happiness is never long lived in this life. It never strayed far, always watching, always waiting.

Every Christmas and Easter, Olga would return to Russia to celebrate the holidays with her Eastern Orthodox family. When Jeff was twelve, Olga never returned from Mother Russia after her Christmas vacation. It had taken her. The pain of her leaving lessened over time, but Jeff had been especially close to her and never fully recovered from the loss. Throughout all of this, it was still there, tormenting him, always out of

sight but never far away, watching, waiting.

Jeff had an uneventful life from then until college, where he met and married his wife, Lillian. She had sat next to him in his Chemistry class and had always tried to change him from his lazy attitude and nonchalant character. He had become a dashing young man that was as bold as he was strong, with supple joints and an open heart. He became infatuated shortly after meeting her, and began the intensive process of courtship immediately. After dating for two years, they decided to get married.

Jeff returned to his birthplace and native church in Oak Ridge for the wedding ceremonies. The pastor of Oak Ridge Presbyterian read the vows, and they both said "I do." Everyone was happy, but Jeff knew what happiness led to, and he always had the voice in the back of his head saying that it was there, watching, waiting.

He and Lillian lived a happy life for the next twenty three years, even though they knew it was lurking in the shadows and around every corner. It came for her after a week-long second honeymoon in the Bahamas. He was unpacking the car while she went to unlock the house. When she went inside, he heard her scream and rushed in as his heart began to palpitate. She had been stabbed by what seemed to be a burglar, but he knew the truth, it had come. He voiced a silent plea to his God to help her or to have it take him in her place, but his supplication was all for naught. She was gone. He vowed that he would never again be truly happy, for the fear that it would strike again. Again it was pleased, feasting upon his anger and unhappiness, watching, waiting.

The next thirty years of his life were lived in solitude, waiting for it to come for him, refusing to love or be loved by anyone. He searched far and wide for the thing that had taken his beloveds, and tried to trick it into finding him multiple times through numerous machinations. To his execration, No matter where he went or what he did, it was always out of reach, tormenting him, evading him, watching, waiting.

Jeff was aware of its presence, here or there, in the shower, on the street, even at church he felt it weighing on him, keeping him from accepting happiness. It dragged out the inevitable, and he was never content. Finally,

on the 12 of April, 2007 it came for him, now an emaciated old man. He was on his death bed when it arrived.

"Why have you tried to evade me by making yourself unhappy? Did you really believe that I was only taking those you were fond of to make you miserable?" it asked.

"No, I only regarded the pain of loss as a punishment I could not endure, and you made me

perturbed from this long time of waiting." he replied.

"Those you loved were lost anyway; you only gave them the gift of happiness before they left with me."

"I only assumed as much, but it was I who took the blunt of the misfortune, as you wantonly purloined my loved ones one by one."

"Yes, but is it not better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all?" it cunningly

replied.

"Of course not; the pain of a loss is far greater than the benefit of happiness provided by it."

"Then come with me, and depart this life contently, knowing others lost nothing when you passed."

"That has been my purpose, so that others need not endure my sufferings." the old man stated.

"That is a sophism, someone will always grieve for the departed, such as your sister and her family, and they were only denied the happiness of your smiles and warmth while you were here. But your time has come, and there is nothing you can do to change the past."

He began to weep, but after a time of sorrow, he agreed. The icy fingers of Death wrapped around him and it took him away. It is here even now, lurking in the shadows, peeking around corners, looking for you, looking for me, waiting for us all. It waits for us with a diabolical contentedness, knowing that our time will come, and it will be there, watching, waiting.



Photo by Carmen Cruz



Queen Selmon

Queen Selmon It might be true That I'm the opposite of you But doesn't the sun always make room for the Doesn't the moon always make room for the sun We can combine as one Organism In the solar system Dancing to the adopted rhythms of our ancestors Because Q Brilliance is in your lineage In scripted-on papyrus With brush strokes of desirable pain From Ghana to Mali to Songhai From Nubia to the Blue River I await your arrival Cause I know Tough tribulations should always be caressed by your patience You symbolize wisdom in its purest form And speak Amharic while I speak numeric Yet I feel reborn You understand That a palace is not a need But an attractive luxury indeed You're my Ethiopian queen

~ by Conrado Castro



Art by Rosslyn Crutchfield



Photo by Gina Cattanach



Photo byAngela Gomez

Trying To Be Someone Else

Dear Me, Stop trying to be someone else You'll only end up hurting yourself Don't try to fit in You never have, so don't try to begin Because that's the way you've been blessed You're completely different from the rest They fell for the real person inside The person you're trying to hide Please don't give in To try to be like "one of them" I know you're just scared That if you're yourself no one will care But they will love you even more, isn't that worth being yourself? The only people that like who you've become Are the jerks that everyone finds dumb I know how amazing you could be I know that from the love you've shown There's so much amazing personality to ravage And that's who I'm trying to salvage I mean these words with all my love So listen to what I've said above Take it to heart and hold onto it Never let anyone take it away

Love, Myself

~ by Kristiana Hibbitt



Art by Sara Taricco



Photo by Toi Friddle



Photo by Michaela Lynott



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Photo by Miranda Jones

The Walk Down Redondo Avenue

by Sarah Paez

Charlene felt the brisk October wind cut through her body as the sun began to set. The sky was in that ambivalent period between dusk and nightfall—a flat palette of gray. Charlene's teeth chattered as she tugged her thin cotton jacket tighter around her waist. She checked her watch every two minutes and quickened her pace.

Dinner was 30 minutes ago, and naturally she was late coming home from her friend Ella's house. Her parents trusted her so they had not called, but maybe they trusted her too much. Charlene earned A's and the occasional B, ran track, sang in choir, and had never partaken in illegal substance abuse. She was the perfect sixteen-year-old.

Charlene, high strung, still cared that she was late.

She checked her watch a fifth time. It was 6:30. A chill wind caught her off guard, causing Charlene to shiver uncontrollably. It was one of those shivers that made her feel uneasy and nauseous, as if, like her mother sometimes said, "A goose walked over my grave." The saying didn't make much sense. Geese weren't particularly creepy animals, so having one walk over your grave didn't strike her as disturbing.

Charlene wiped her clammy hands on her jeans and sped up a little more. She walked to the pace of a song that had been playing in her head all day—"Magic Man" by Heart. She had watched *The Virgin Suicides* that weekend and there was a scene where Josh Hartnett playing Trip Fontaine walked—glided—down the hallway to the beat of that song, to the adoring stares of adolescent girls.

If she weren't such a good girl, Charlene would have dated a boy like Trip Fontaine by now.

"Come on home, girl," mama cried on the phone...

It was pretty surprising that her mother hadn't called her yet. She was used to hearing the frenetic buzz of her phone whenever she was at least twenty minutes late, and by now she was probably about forty minutes overdue.

"Too soon to lose my baby yet, my girl should be at home,"

The piercing sound of a horn startled Charlene out of her head. A green Buick full of old Hispanic guys zoomed past, making catcalls. "Ooh, mamacita linda," she heard one of them yell. This had happened numerous times when she walked down Redondo Avenue and it was just par for the course. Yet, she still felt mildly sickened and her skin prickled with unease.

But try to understand...try to understand...

Her watch now read 6:45. Still no call from her mother. By now the sky was menacing gray instead of a safe, dreary gray. She could see the twinkling outdoor lights of the Italian restaurant up the street, which reassured her. But as Charlene approached the restaurant, she could see the lights were strewn all about the outdoor area and strung up haphazardly, and that gave it a dilapidated look.

Try, try, try to understand...he's a magic man, mama...he's a magic man...

She heard sirens in the distance. They sounded like they were coming closer and closer to her location.

"Come on home, girl," he said with a smile...

As she walked, Charlene looked at the ground. She was tired of looking at the sky. She felt enclosed, as if she were about to suffocate. Out of the corner of her eye, she noticed something odd on the sidewalk. It looked like a large leaf, so she ran toward it because she really wanted to step on it and hear the satisfying crunch, but as she neared it, she stopped dead in her tracks.

It was a dead squirrel, lying there with its belly exposed. There was blood pooled underneath it. She screamed involuntarily. She had to look away after ten seconds—just keep walking, just keep walking—but she couldn't help stealing glances at it as she walked on.

"I cast my spell of love on you, a woman from a child,"

Charlene could see the swirling red and blue of police lights in the distance. She felt a little excited jump in her stomach and immediately regretted it. What a sick thought, to feel excited about someone else's pain or death. Somewhere deep inside of her, though, she hoped it was one of those gruesome accidents they talk about for at least a week on the news. Then she could brag to her friends, saying, "I was four blocks away when it happened! Can you believe it?"

But try to understand, try to understand...

She passed the accident about five minutes later. It had happened in the middle of an intersection, and it was big; she could tell from the amount of police cars (10) and ambulances (4). When she craned her neck, she could make out a large truck and a very small, green car that had been crushed beyond recognition. She stared for God-knows-how-long at that car. Oh, God, I wonder if anyone is dead, she thought. How could a person—especially the one in the totaled vehicle—survive such a crash?

Oh...oh...try, try, try to understand...

Traffic was backed up for miles and Charlene knew there was no way the road would be open for the rest of the night. There were dozens of onlookers, police officers, and medics. People rubbernecked. She couldn't wait to get home and tell her mom about the accident, although doubtless she had probably already heard about it...

He's a magic man...oh...he's got the magic hands...

Maybe she should call her and tell her she was on her way. That thought hadn't occurred to her until now. How strange. She had been so worried about getting home on time yet she hadn't even called to say she was going to be late. Maybe it was the confrontation that scared her. Yes, that sounded right. She despised confrontation.

"Come on home, girl," he said with a smile...

She gave one more look to the accident before heading on to her house. Now she could see bodies being loaded onto stretchers, but she couldn't tell if they were dead or alive. She shuddered, and whether it was the wind or the thought of death, she couldn't tell. It was completely dark now. She checked her watch—7:05, Christ! She started half-running down the block and turned the corner to get to her house.

"You don't have to love me yet, let's get high awhile,"

She sprinted up the steps to the door, whipped out her key and unlocked the door. She didn't even notice that all the lights except one were out and there was no car in the driveway until the screen door banged behind her. Her mother had probably gotten stuck in traffic on the way home from work. The accident must have backed up the street further than Charlene had thought.

But try to understand...

She turned on the lights because it created the illusion of safety. Then, she switched on the TV and radio because the more noise, the better. Her stomach growled.

Try to understand...

Charlene collapsed on the couch and decided to channel surf to ease her anxiety but something caught her eye on NBC. It was the car accident from down the street; she could tell because she recognized the surroundings and the crushed car.

Try, try, try to understand...

She turned the volume up. The headline flashed along the top: Car Accident Kills Two. Her breath quickened. "Tonight at around 6:45 p.m.," a news anchor with perfectly coiffed blonde hair was saying, "a utility truck smashed into the driver of a green Ford Taurus sedan when the truck driver ran a red light. The crash resulted in the deaths of both drivers. The driver of the Ford was a 45-year-old woman..."

He's a magic man...

45-year-old woman. Green Ford Taurus sedan. No, that couldn't be right. That was her mother's car. Her mother's car, smashed beyond recognition. No, she had not just walked past it. No, her mother was not dead. No.

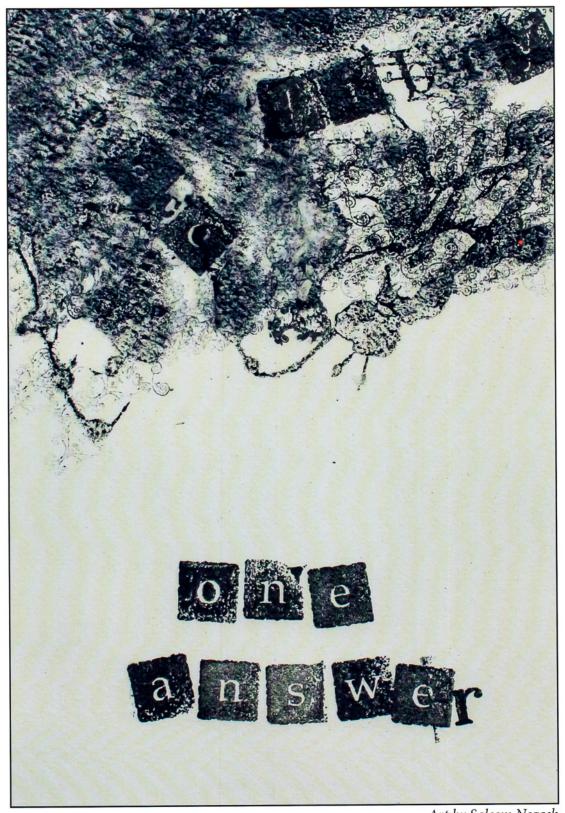
"No," she spat at the TV. "NO!" she screamed, but it was a strangled scream, a kind of primal scream that made her throat raw and her eyes water.

Then, the phone rang. It rang four times. Charlene already knew who was calling, and it wasn't her mother.

The End



Photo by David Salazar



Art by Saleem Negash



Photo by Kate Banchoff

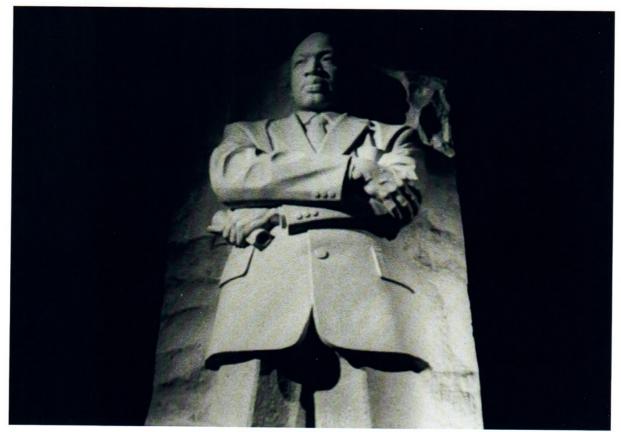


Photo by Bassel Chokr

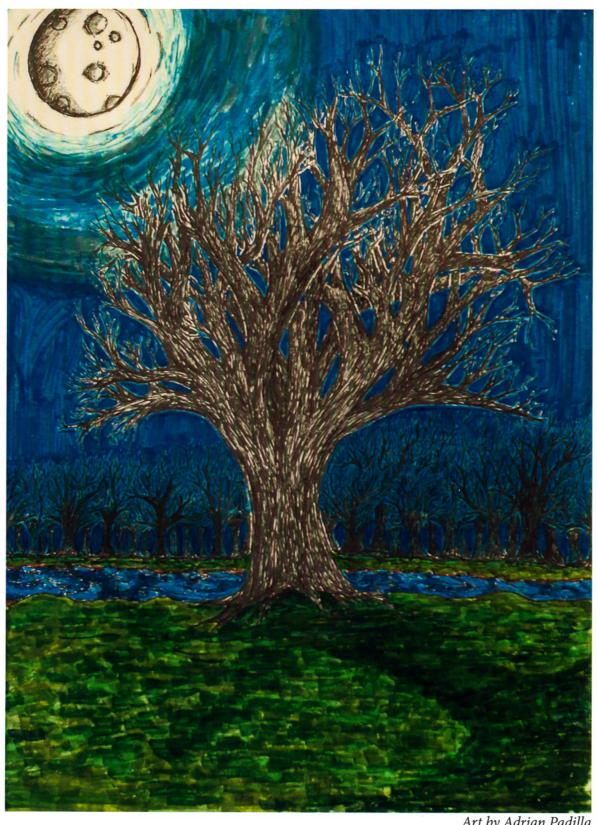


Photo by Michael Roman









Art by Adrian Padilla



