



Literally Mercy
2017

Mercy Academy is proud to present the 16th annual Literary Magazine

Literally Mercy

Magazine Edited by:

Kalei Merilatt '17

Abigail Just '17

Cover Art:

Film of Memories by Abigail Just '17

A special thanks to the following:

Mr. Michael Johnson, President and Amy Elstone, Principal

Mrs. Laurel Wyatt

Mrs. Jean Belvoix, Mr. Steve Hammer, and Mr. Michael Braaksma

Mrs. Stephanie Heitz, Technology

The creative writing students of Mercy Academy

The art students of Mercy Academy

Derby City Lithography

Special Awards and Recognition

2017 Kentucky Derby Museum Art Contest High School Division

1st Place - Grace Morrison
Honorable Mention - Bethany Michels
Honorable Mention - Neci Harris
Honorable Mention - Erin Rose

National Art Honor Society Activities and Achievements for the 2016-2017 Chapter

Created and donated 20 works of art to Mercy's Annual Benefit Off Broadway Fundraiser
Donated profits from NAHS "Decorated Christmas Candle" fundraiser to Norton Children's "Art Cart Program" which provides art materials to children at the hospital.
Provided over 30 photos of student artwork for *Literally Mercy*

2017 New Voices Young Playwrights Contest

Finalists

"State of Mind" by Kara Kelly
"Back in Time" by Mallory Kreilein

Semi-Finalists

"Who Can? Merman!" by Star Adams
"Bingo Wings" by Brianna Blasi
"Picture Perfect" by Abigail Just
"Fluffy's Pet Shop" by Taylor Land
"Hopping Away from Hunger" by Riley McCormick
"Summoning Spirits at a Sleepover" by Sarah Mrozinski
"Monsters Who Want to Be Loved" by Natasha Nail
"Hush, Hush, Mrs. Pantomime" by Julianne Wise
"Up, Up, and No Way" by Meghan Wooster

2017 Iron Writer Challenge

Champion

Kelsie Merilatt

Finalists

Logan Barnhart
Mallory Kreilein
Kalei Merilatt
Meghan Wooster



Ayesha by Taya Senn

Dear Reader,

Each year, the literature and art in this publication continue to be imaginative gifts to the Mercy community. It is with great honor that I present to you this edition of *Literally Mercy*, our award-winning literary magazine. This publication is produced by our creative writing classes under the guidance of Mrs. Laurel Wyatt. The student art is selected and prepared for publication by Mrs. Jean Belvoix and assisted by the National Art Honor Society.

The willingness of our students to share their talent and personal expression inspires me. This journal captures the imagination of our students this year, as they have explored the full breadth of human emotion and engagement.

Congratulations to our creative writing class and art students for their wonderful contribution to the legacy of *Literally Mercy*. Now, please enjoy the artistic voices of our young women.

Sincerely,

Amy Sample Elstone '94

Principal



Thirst by Caitlyn Tumey

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Mercy Sisters by Abigail Just

The Waves of Life by Mallory Kreilein

Life may be like a circle,
But it is also like waves of the blue sea.

Everyone is on inflatable rafts,
Bobbing along with the tides.

Up and down,

Up and down,

Letting the ocean carry us on its mighty shoulders.

But, sometimes the sea can get choppy.

We can hang on tightly to our rafts,

But sometimes we fall off.

We are thrown into the restless sea,

Alone and frightened.

The sea carries our rafts away,

They are just out of reach.

We must learn to tread the waves

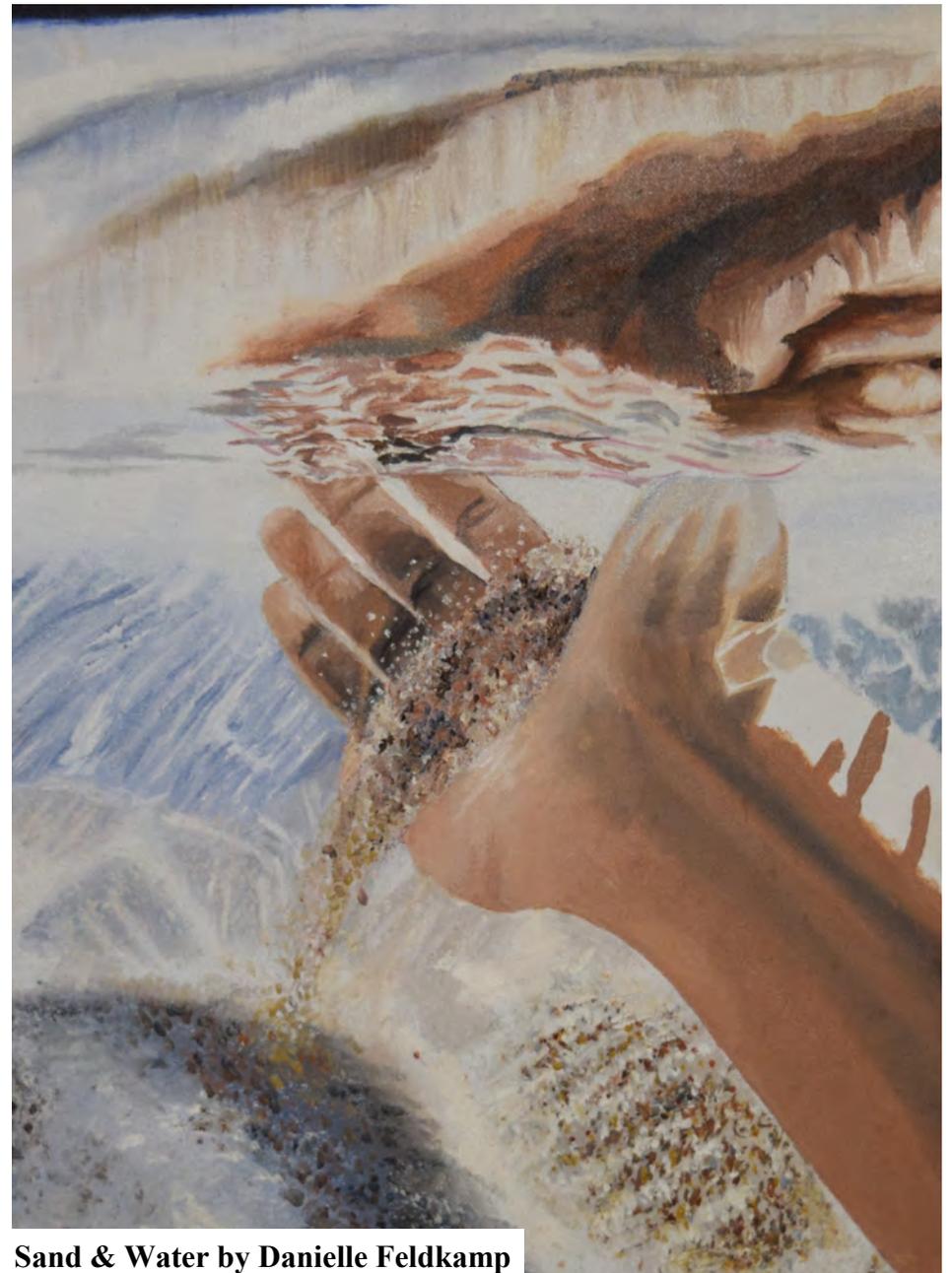
And stay afloat

In order to return to our raft.

When we return,

The seas will calm

And the waves of life will start again.



Sand & Water by Danielle Feldkamp

Beautiful Chaos by Abigail Just

And I thought you were sane. I must admit, the way you conned me into believing your façade of falsehood was a clever feat indeed. You presented yourself in such an effortless manner that I played right into your twisted hands, not once second guessing your motives. I had even considered you a friend.

Now, as I stare out into the sterile and desolate hallway of the psychiatric ward of the hospital, I can't help but feel trapped by your insolence. It was your mimicked charm and charisma that enticed me, that took my guard down and turned it into something heedless. It also was your pretend smile and your fabricated movements that landed me in this prison cell furnished with nothing but a table and chair so carefully wrapped in bubble wrap. The best part is, nobody knows it was you.

You took my face, my name, even my mannerisms, but I still have the one aspect you lack – my mind. It is the one place that you could not fully access, and yet, you still managed to fool them. It's incredible, the way you tap your foot in the same way I do, and the way you tuck your hair behind your ear so diligently. What may be even more concerning is the way you fooled me. I wanted so desperately to believe that I was imagining your slow accumulation of who I was, but you became my mirror image. You became me.

Now I'm surrounded by nurses with concern and pity as their only accompaniment. Therapists show me ink blots in attempt to pick at my mind, but I continually disappoint them when I tell them that all I see is a cat on a leash. This is what you've done to me; you've forced me to question my own sanity at the cost of my freedom. I'm under lock and key, while everyone else roams freely in the world beyond these walls. They enjoy supper with their families and can breathe in the fresh air of the place I once called home.

It's not the kind of insanity where you witness a carved pumpkin speaking to you, it's the kind of insanity where you don't even recognize yourself in your own skin. Mirrors become your worst enemy because you are terrified of what you might see, yourself or the one impersonating you. The elements of your being become obliterated by the confusion, but no longer. This place with its empty walls has served as a platform for self-realization and reevaluation of all you have taken from me. I have gradually found myself again and have noted my sense of originality that I initially lacked. I have rediscovered my light thanks to you. So, thank you. Thank you for pushing me to be me, and for helping me to find this space of such beautiful chaos.



Can You See It? by Kennedy Scott

High School by Olivia Burris

Started out at the bottom, looking like a baby,
Being treated like one too,
Never sure how to act.
Immature and naive at the beginning,
Look how much has changed.
Not sure when, it all happened so fast.
Had to do some growing to get where I am,
Learned a lot since I've been here.
Maturing was just part of the ride.
Made friends and lost some too.
Even the ones you least expected,
That's just how it goes at a time like this.
The work keeps multiplying,
And your time keeps shrinking.
You get less sleep, but it's expected.
You see it all coming to an end,
It's fast and clear now.
Moving on to the next chapter, not sure where to begin.
Everything will be alright in the end.



720 Days Later by Neci Harris



Behind Her Back by Kelsey Miller

Oh Silly Girl by Meghan Wooster
Oh silly girl,
How much did you have to drink?
You must have flirted and led him on
While your dress teased him
Was this really all his fault?
Oh silly girl,
How could a girl do a man's job?
You are merely fragile like glass
The superior suits would cause shatters
What good is a delicate disaster?
Oh silly girl,
Why are you wasting time in textbooks?
You are too simple minded for studies
A woman's work belongs at home
Who could take you seriously?
Oh silly girl,
How could you ever find love?
You are an enduring mountain
That no one would want to climb
Do you honestly believe a man would fall for you?
Oh silly girl,
Why are you still fighting?
You have been beaten and rejected
Yet your voice is still screaming
When will you give in?

A Tear Fell in Vietnam by Shelby Sherrill

Not always was I the one in control. My older brother, Jax, kept everything in order. My baby sister, Opel, never left my side. Mama could never get her to do nothing, nor could Jax. It always had to be me telling her what to do. She never listened to nobody. I didn't mind being that person for her. She never knew our father, anyhow.

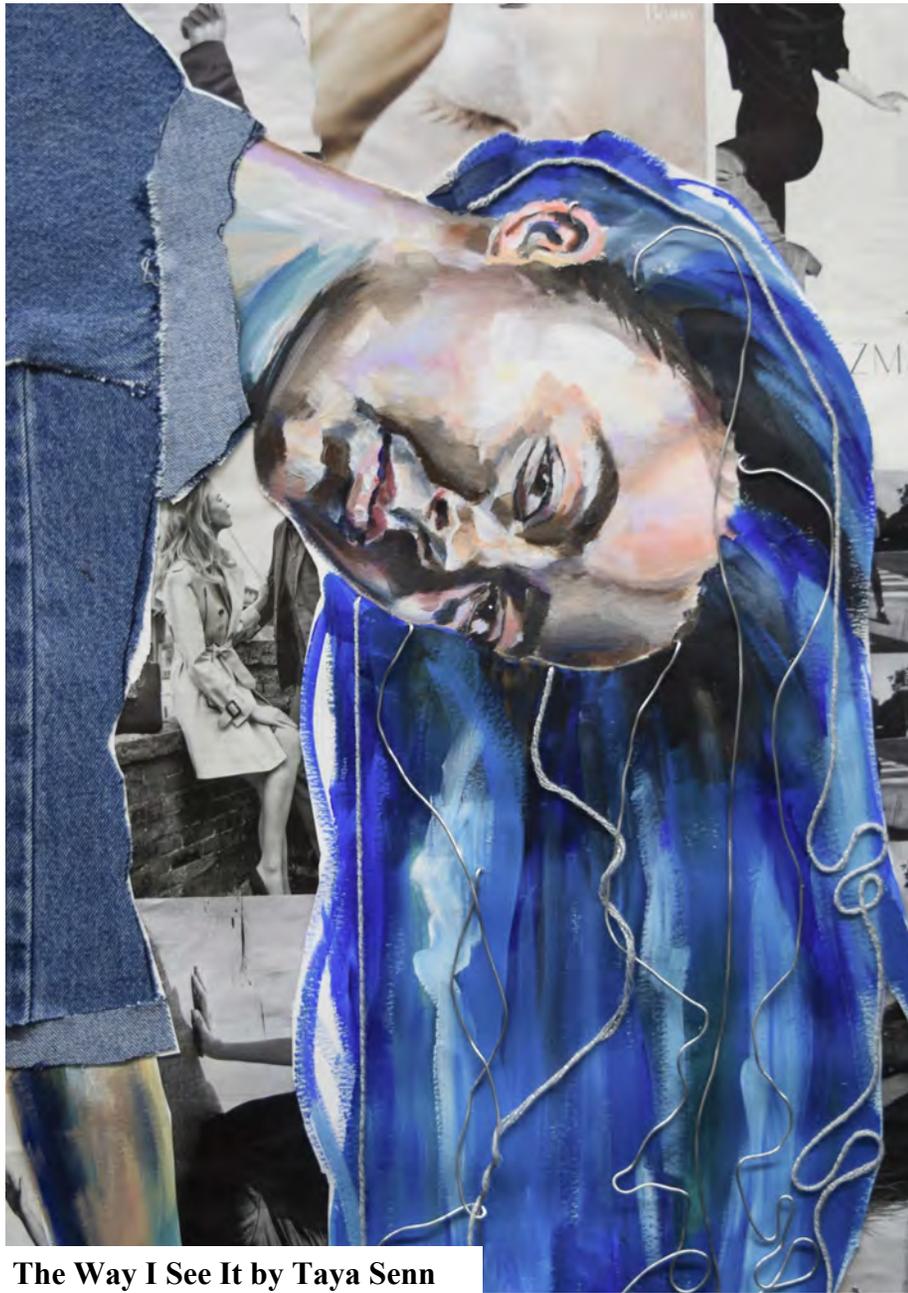
A couple months ago, Jax left for college with the little money he worked hard to get. Mama could never be happier, knowing she wouldn't have to re-live the pain she did when our father died in the Second World War. I've never been the smartest brother when it comes to school. Jax made his decision to avoid the draft by putting himself through school, but it's my turn to make the decision. I've got so much to think about before making this life choice. Mama would be worried sick about me just like she was with dad, and Opel would be left with no one.

Our father was always the man I looked up to. I wanted to be him when I grew up, and now that time had come. I'd found myself in his shoes. After being drafted, I had a part to play. I knew my mom understood.

The battlefield was truly horrifying. I was lying in the sand with my weapon ready, trying not to show my pain to the other guys. It was too late. They knew how much pain I was in and how bad it was. I pulled out my letter addressed to Mama, Opel, and Jax, then handed it to the closest soldier to me. As I took my last couple of breaths, I knew the pain would be over soon. The only thing rushing through my head was Opel. A tear fell, and the pain was over.



My Youth by Lucy Hess



The Way I See It by Taya Senn

Jealousy by Natasha Nail

She becomes jealous,

And along with this id, she is overbearingly zealous.

Although she walks upon a path of righteousness,
In her heart she stumbles upon a boulder of sinfulness.

She becomes a willow tree

Begging for the wind to cart her towards a split of glee,

Yet, if it is to abide,

Her lungs are unceasingly intoxicated with carbon dioxide.

Quicker than a falcon, she is stripped from her luxury of breathing,
And heavier than an elephant, she is buried underneath a pile of seething.

As her ribs almost physically constrict against her heart

She grapples to save her spirit from falling apart.

The Village with No Faces by Maggie Hackmiller

The girl ran into the clearing, wildly looking around her. She burst through the bushes, only to find herself falling headfirst into the ground. Above her stood a small building and all around the building were more buildings. For some reason, the little village looked like it had come from a different era of time. She didn't see people at first, but slowly others started coming out. Strangely enough, they all wore clothes similar to the landscape.

“Are you okay?” a man asked from behind her.

“I'm fine,” the girl stuttered. She turned around and walked into the village. Many of the villagers stood and stared at her. It wasn't threatening; it was just more of a normal curiosity. It was just like how she was looking at them.

“Do you need somewhere to stay? They have an open room at the inn on the corner,” the man said. She nodded, and was walked to the inn. The inn was only slightly taller than the other buildings. It was one of the only two buildings that had a second story on top of it. She could have sworn she had seen shutters slam closed in the window to her left.

Two ladies dressed in 19th century clothing came out. They both held fans, and made sure she had a nice room. They must have been twins, since they looked almost identical. She couldn't ask, as she had been closed into a room by herself. The only thing she found different about the room was the letter that was nicely laid out on the bedside table. The only words scribbled on it were, “Don't go outside past sundown.” The little girl put down the paper.

Of course, as all little girls would do, she waited until sundown, and made her way outside. She met no resistance on the way down, which she felt was odd since the villagers had seemed like they watched her every move.

Finally, the door creaked open, but she quickly shut it due to what she saw. She had seen the villagers, all walking around exactly like they had before. The only different thing about them was the fact that none of them had faces, only blurs where they should be.



Touch by Meghan Wooster



Artist in Color by Bethany Michels



Insomniac by Olivia Clements

Sometimes Giving Up Is the Strongest Thing You Can Do
by Abby Amburgey

I step up on to the altar, shaking, sweat running down my forehead, a dead expression on my face. I prepare for the saddest speech I'll ever give. I walk with my hands in my pockets so I look casual. I take one deep breath, the only breath I took that day. I look up and I see the congregation of people all expecting me to share a single moment that would fully commemorate my wife's life. Looking over at my three children, I feel their pain. I feel sorry for them. It's not fair they're going through this at such a young age. They deserve the world, not this. I then think I shouldn't have to do this either. I begin: "Leann decided she was going to cook one night." My wife's family laugh immediately; they have heard this story a thousand times. I decide to tell this story to keep the atmosphere light. I continue with the story explaining how my wife was going to make chicken, so she grabbed a microwaveable box of chicken. I then explained to her that she wouldn't really be cooking because it's already prepared. My wife in shock said, "How does it stay fresh in this box!?" I still remember the smile she had on her face after I explained how to cook the chicken. She was truly beautiful. I stop talking, choking on my words as a big sob forms in the back of my throat. I try to swallow it back, but a few tears manage to escape, rolling down my cheeks. At this point I was mad, anger rushing through my veins like poison. I was mad at cancer, myself, God, my kids, my tears. I could slowly feel myself losing control. My wife was my rock; she kept me sane. She was the cure to my depression, but, of course, there was no cure for her. So I finish the story and walk back to my seat. I hug my kids, and then I lost it. I sobbed because I didn't finish my eulogy I wrote. I'm sure it disappointed my wife. I wish I would have asked someone else to give her eulogy.



Change by Carol Paul

Heartless for Homeless by Logan Barnhart

I have experienced it all; you haven't. I sat in the blizzard the winter of 2014 that you said was the worst cold you've ever experienced, as you sit in your heated home, your fireplace to the left of you. I have experienced the worst heat wave the city has ever seen. I experienced it alone, dehydrated, and hungry. People pass me every day, not even bothering to look down from their pedestal at me; turning up their noses and the volume on their phones. They walk the same route to work every day, taking a pit stop to spend \$9.75 on the same coffee; walking past me, everyday. I am ignored. You only understand what it is like to be a human and treated like an animal if you've experienced it. People are monsters, and they treat other people like monsters, unless they are of the same monstrous species as them.

Detour by Star Adams

“Where were you last night?” were the last words on the radio I remember hearing before everything went black. My family and I were on our way to Destin, Florida for Spring Break. I had been telling my twelve year old sister, Brianna, how the ocean looks so pretty, especially right at sunset. I just knew this was going to be the best trip ever! I think we had been driving for at least an hour when my worst nightmare came true. I felt an enormous push, almost as if someone was trying to push me over, and then I heard my mom screaming, and that’s where things get fuzzy.

When I came to, I heard someone weeping silently, so silently I thought it might be inside my head. I looked around to see if I could try and figure out what had happened. As I looked to my left, I saw something strange. It looked as if my sister was hanging from the roof of the car, until I realized that I, too, was hanging upside down. I struggled to get my seatbelt off, and I thought, “Geez, my head really hurts.” As I touched my head, I noticed it was bleeding, but I couldn’t focus on that until I had Brianna out and safe. So as I squeezed through the tiny backseat window, I ran to her side. Her door actually opened, and I was able to safely get her out. As I looked her over, I noticed the only injury she had was a seatbelt burn on her neck.

“Have you seen Mom and Dad?” Brianna asked looking into the front seat. Panicking, I looked with her and noticed that they were gone! My mother’s purse was spilled out onto the ground beside the car with everything inside scattered around it. Then I noticed the blood on my dad’s seatbelt and the open car door. As I looked around, I noticed that there was a van that had wrecked into a tree near our car. I didn’t remember seeing that van before. I told Brianna I was going to go over to the van. As I stepped out of the car, I saw an old newspaper with the headline: “Police Searching for Man Accused of Murdering Wife.”

“We need to find help and fast! Is your phone still in your pocket?” I asked Brianna.

“No, when we were eating I put it in the seat pocket behind Mom. I’ll go check to see if it’s still there.” As she was looking for it, I realized my phone must also be in the car. As I was looking, I found my phone on the ground next to the car, but glass was shattered all around, so of course it wouldn’t work.

“I found mine! And it still has 75% battery!” Brianna yelled. I took the phone from my sister and dialed 911. It rang then told me the call had failed. I looked to see how many bars we had and the phone said NO SERVICE.



You're My Favorite by Taya Senn



Escape by Lexi Newton



Blueberry by Kennedy Scott

Depths of the Sea by Bree Blasi

I never thought I
Could end up this
Sad, but oceans
Crash and now I
See that people do too.

It is as if I was drowning
In a sea of misery
And the only way to be free
Was to give up and
Let the waves take me under.

But then one day,
The ocean calmed itself.
The opportunities and secrets
That surrounded the deep abyss
Did not scare me anymore.
It was then that I realized

It is life.
It goes on.
I have learned to swim
With the movement of the waves.
I cannot let them
Take me under anymore.

Anna's Hummingbird by Julianne Wise

A cry sounded. The baby's call for help was faint, but it echoed through the night, piercing anyone's ears. The baby willed itself to wail until its call would be answered. Traveling the cold winter night, the cry sounded in a nearby forest. Within this forest, was a beautiful garden. It contained the richest and most vibrant flowers. These flowers were magical flowers, and could withstand the harshest weather. The cry was heard by a hummingbird. She was a curious and adventurous hummingbird, and she questioned the sound. She sought out to find the source of such sadness. She started flying toward the sound, the echoing pitch drawing her keen attention. She was a blur of motion as she flew low to the ground where the flowers grew, or high above in trees and shrubs. With her iridescent, emerald feathers and sparkling, rose-pink throat, the hummingbird resembled a piece of flying jewelry.

She perched on the window sill of the baby's room. When the mystical bird perched, her broad, powerful wings tucked in where the wingtips met the short of her tail. She peeked inside, and a cradle lay in front of her eyes. Peering down, the hummingbird lay still in awe of the baby. She admired the baby's innocence and beauty. The baby continued to cry, and the hummingbird wanted so badly for the baby to stop. What could cause the baby such corruption and pain?

"Sh. Hush little one," the hummingbird soothingly said.

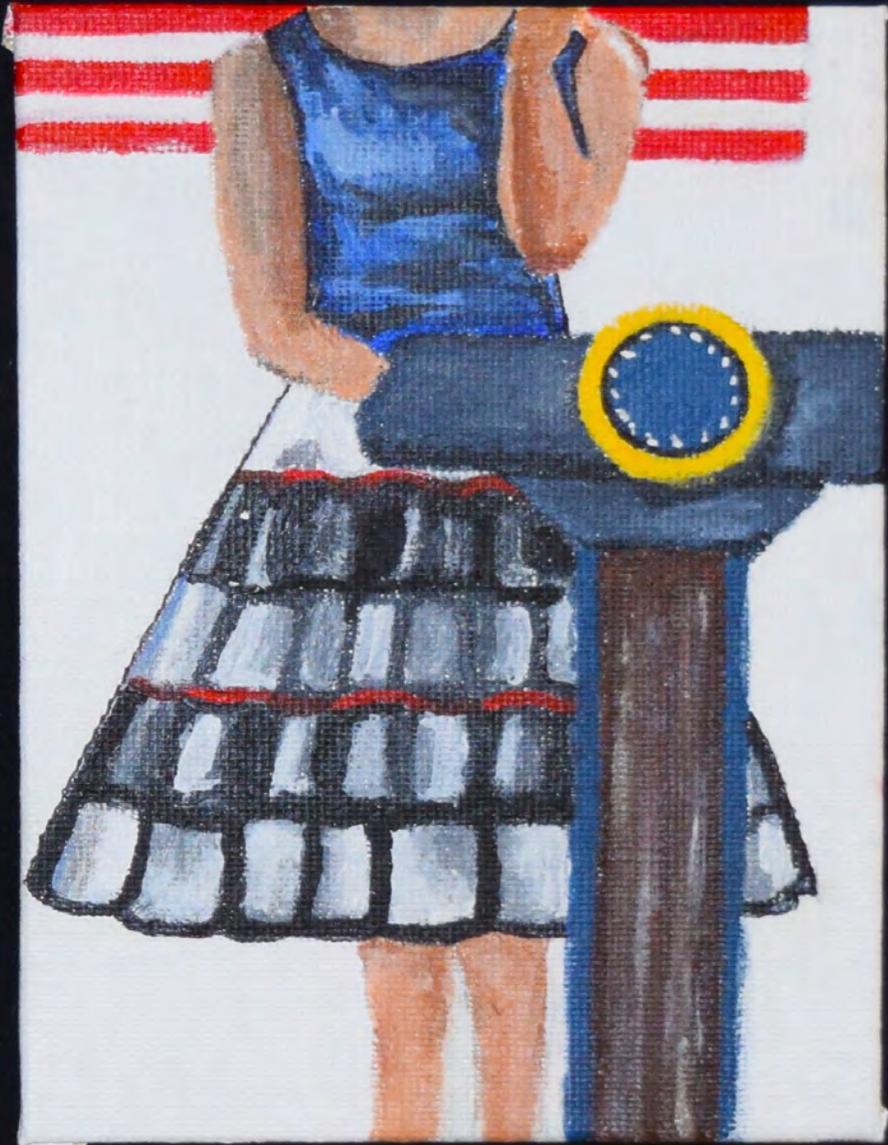
She glanced around the crib, trying to find something that could bring the child serenity. The baby was bare, and the hummingbird noticed that the open window was allowing a draft to pass through. She nudged the window closed, ensuring that the cold winter breeze wouldn't enter the nursery. The child was still cold. Her tears streaked down her cheeks, the cold weather causing them to crystallize, trapping her emotions into a tangible sickle. The hummingbird sought around the crib trying to find an item that would bring the child comfort. A blue baby blanket was draped across the head of the crib. The hummingbird noticed the soft article, and her beak snatched the covers, revealing the beautiful headboard of the crib. It was a wooden crib with dainty carvings. The perimeter of the headboard emitted a Victorian aura, with flowers of different shapes and sizes, giving the crib a feminine vibe. The detailed flowers bordered around a carved name that read "Anna." The hummingbird carefully draped the blanket over the child. She used her short beak to tuck the edges of the blanket around the baby. She swaddled the child in the soft fabric, allowing heat to be insulated.

"Anna," the hummingbird cooed. "Hush now; I'm here."

As the child became warmer, her crying slowed and soon came to a halt. The hummingbird continuously repeated her name. She began to hum a song; the lyrics were inaudible. The repetitive humming soon soothed the baby to sleep. The only sound that was emitted was Anna's peaceful breathing.



Resilience by Shelby Pfeiffer



Shelley P. Peckham



Meeting Place by Brooke Griffith

Behold, but Beware by Riley McCormick

Love is petrifying; it brings you into its arms just to squeeze the life out of you. It's like when your grandpa, that you haven't seen in forever, hugs you and squeezes way too hard, and it leaves you waiting there, tugging on his sleeve. In between each breath you are saying, "Grandpa, I can't breathe." But grandpa will eventually let go and say, "Sorry honey." But love, unfortunately, does not. It holds on to you until every ounce of energy you have left has vacated your body. It shows you the pain of death, before you actually have to experience it. It's like that one star that isn't covered up by the rest of the clouds that are scattered across the night sky, waiting there, shining so bright, and teasing you with its beauty. You don't know of any other stars or their beauty, just the one, the one that captures your eye and you can't stop staring at it. Love makes you feel as if you were the only person during that day that God was focused on, as if he was just set on making your day the best, but other times, the worst. Love can gradually make your world disintegrate, leaving you with nothing, like when you step on a fall leaf and it crumbles into bits and pieces. Love cannot only turn your world upside down, but it can also bring it to a halting stop. Love is a "Trespass at Your Own Risk" sign. Love comes and goes quickly and may just change your life. Now go find that life-altering love we all seek, but beware of what you might find.

Oh, Drat! by Kara Kelly

A dusty gray rat made his way out of the hole in a wall he called home. Ratcliffe was a rat on a mission, one to woo his beautiful neighbor, Raticia. She was a lady rat with fur as white as snow with the cutest splotches of black Ratcliffe had ever seen. They had built their homes around the same time and had gotten to know each other over the years. His heart grew in his tiny chest whenever they crossed paths on their midnight raids in the kitchen. Food sometimes forgotten, Ratcliffe would always ask her the same question.

“Hey, Raticia, how are you this evening?”

“Hungry,” she always replied.

“You should check under the table, that human always drops those peanuts you love so much.”

“Actually, I hate peanuts, Ratcliffe.”

“What? Since when?”

“I always have, but you always bring me peanuts so I gave up trying to tell you.”

“Oh, my bad,” Ratcliffe said, embarrassed. “Is there anything else I need to know about?”

“Well, now that you mention it, I really hate when others chew their food loudly.”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“I always hear you munching all the way from my hole!”

Ratcliffe felt his ears heat up and tucked his long, pink tail in-between his legs.

“There’s something else I need to tell you, Ratcliffe.”

“What else could you possibly have to tell me, Raticia?”

“I’ve been leading you on for a while now.”

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t always enjoy your company, sometimes you can be quite annoying.”

“B-but I don’t understand, so you just spend all of your time alone? No rat likes to be without a friend.”

“Oh, I’m not alone, Ratcliffe. I have Vermin to keep me company.”

“Vermin? Who the hell is Vermin? There are no other rats living in this house but us. I’ve checked!”

“You wouldn’t know him; he doesn’t roam around at night like us.”

“But how does he get food if he doesn’t raid the kitchen?”

“I have to bring him food; he’s too big to leave his hole.”

“Wait, let me get this straight. This rat, Vermin, is too fat to leave a hole that he made in the wall?”

“Yes, that’s right. I hunt for food with you at night, and once you go back to your hole, I visit Vermin and stay with him til morning. What else do you think I would do with all of those peanuts?”

“I-I don’t believe it. You’ve been lying to me this entire time!”

“Well, it’s unfortunate that you feel that way. You know you can come with me to see Vermin if you want.”

“Why would I want to spend time with the rat that ruined my life? I have to go, Raticia.” Ratcliffe said in a huff, scurrying back to his hole. Raticia shrugged her tiny shoulders and dashed to a hole on the opposite side of the wall on a mission to woo her big, beautiful neighbor.

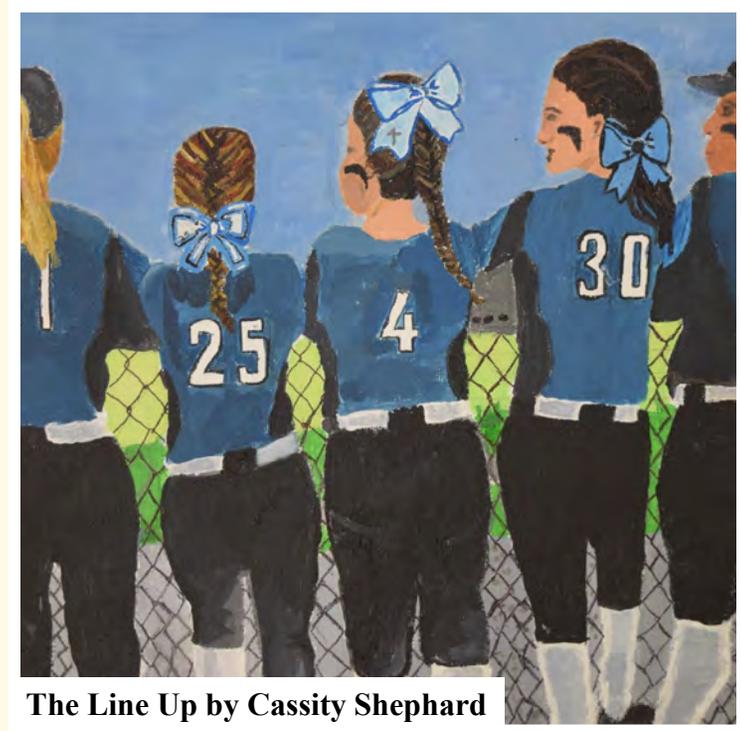
Lost Dreams by Melina Gnadinger

Littered around the empty, eerily silent room are off-white, paint-splattered canvases. Some of the art is easy to identify, and the swirls of colorful oil paints could even tell a story. Others are failed designs or projects that had been abandoned, all hope of ever completing them scattered in the wind. The studio seems lived in and heavily trafficked, but not by more than one person. There's a path through the clutter of art supplies and paint-stained towels, which leads to another room.

This secondary room is full of lost dreams, forever imprinted on the few canvases lying about. There are open sketchbooks scattered across a messy desk, sketches showing. Most are half-finished, although they show no signs of completion in the near future. This room showcases the works that have been long-since forgotten, the faded colors giving a sense of hopelessness. There are colorless portraits of people with blank facial expressions, eyes staring out into the dusty mess of used paint tubes and ruined paintbrushes that were never thrown out. Incomplete works of art that once had a vision behind them, all sitting vacantly.

The studio itself was a mess, as if a tornado had run through it.

It seemed that things had been thrown about in a blind rage. There were paint-covered palettes and stained paintbrushes, desperately needing to be cleaned, and several idea-filled sketchbooks, waiting to be used. There were a few broken canvases scattered here and there, some littered in speckles of color that were once vivid, others nearly blank, a sad reminder of art that could've been, but never was.



The Line Up by Cassity Shephard

Synopsis of *The Oculus Chronicles*, a novel by Taylor Land

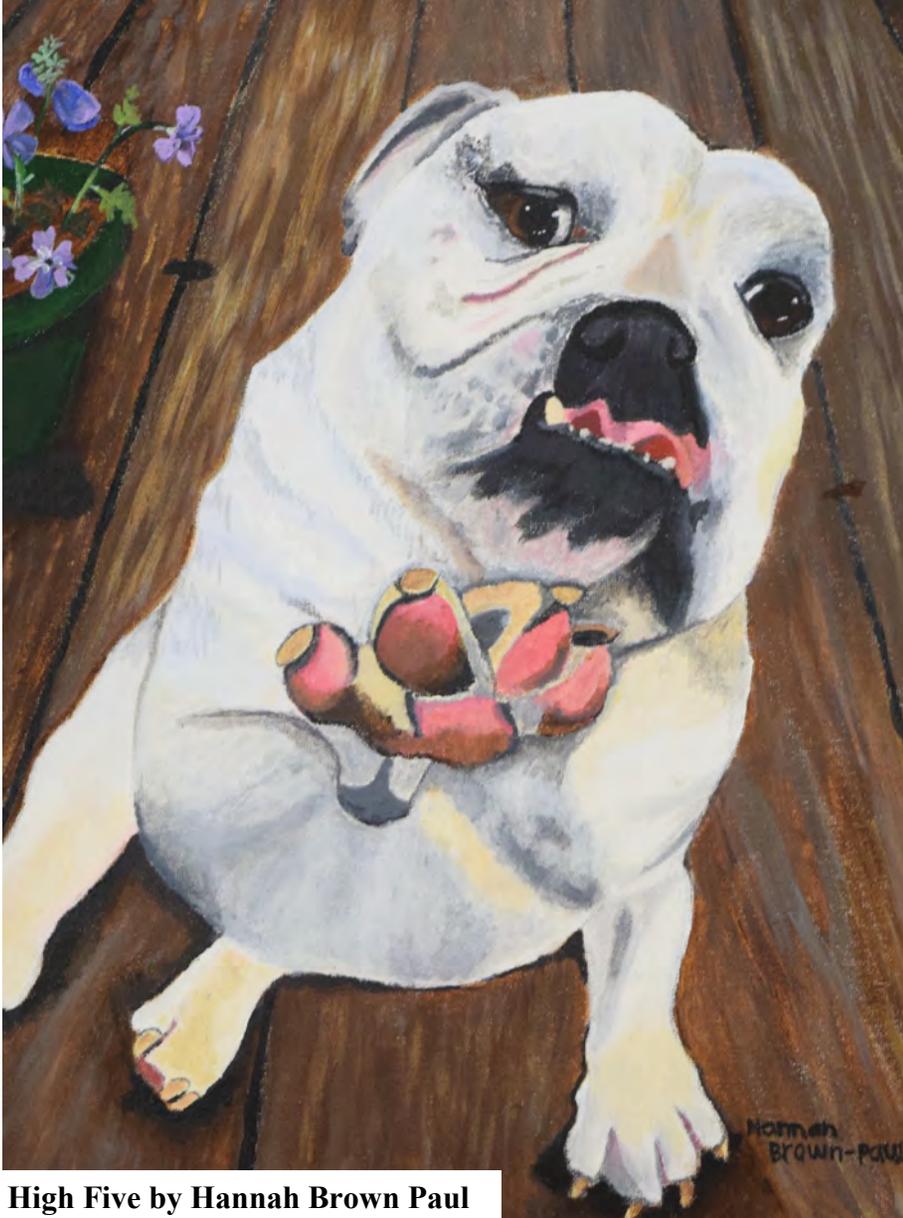
The future has always been thought of as a time of peace and evolution, where humans have advanced and solved all of their problems; unfortunately, these are all lies. In the year 2523, humanity has reached the peak of technological advancement. The human race has begun to spread along the cosmos, and aliens are now taking residence on our planet. The problem lies with the monarchy that these Earthly inhabitants live under. After the King and Queen commit secret acts of inhumanity, it is up to their daughter, Athena, to right their wrongdoings. With the help of her AI system, she is able to obtain a device that can send her back in time to stop her parents from committing any crimes. Unfortunately, something goes wrong, and she is sent back into the 1950s. Athena partners with a resident of that time period named James to find a way to send her back to her present day. Will she be able to make it back? Only time will tell.



Orange Sherbert by Caitlyn Tumey



Mirror, Mirror, on the Floor by Kennedy Yurt



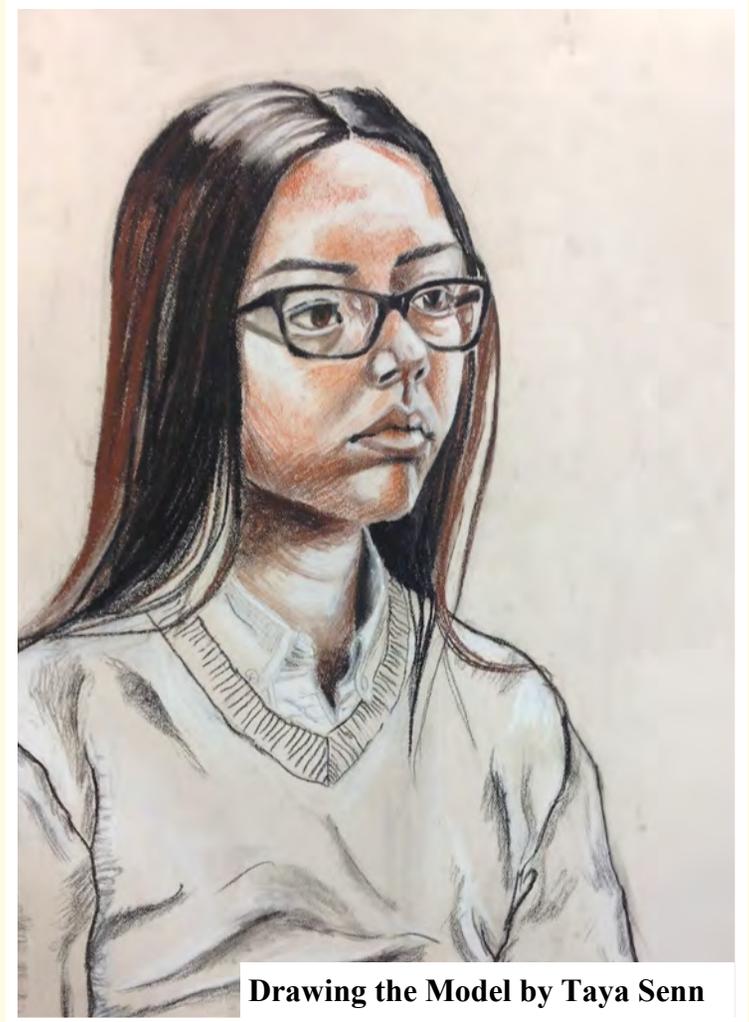
High Five by Hannah Brown Paul



Smile by Ashley Baker

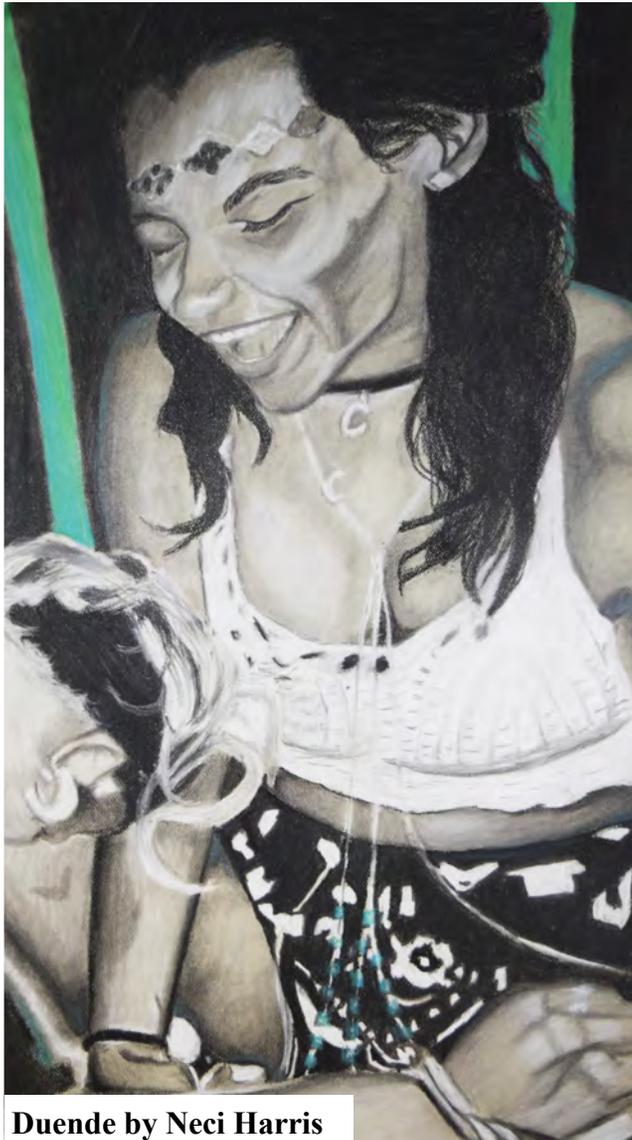
Cracks by Kelsie Merilatt

I can see everything through the cracks of the walls. The cracks reveal the fractured structures of the families that live around me. To the right of me is the Sherrard family. An aura of wealth surrounds them. Mr. Sherrard is a round man who wears the exact same expensive suit every day. What people fail to notice is that every day Mr. Sherrard wakes up before the sun rises to go to work and does not return home until after the sun sets. While he spends all day at work, his wife takes their three children to school. Alejandro, the oldest, and Robert, the middle child, share a lunch. Marie, the youngest, is brought a lunch every day by her best friend Lily. Lily is a shy girl. The type of person who is nice to everyone she meets. She couldn't harm a fly if she tried. Many people tell her she gets that quality from her dad. He is an outgoing man who is extremely friendly with everyone, at least that's what they think. While most children are excited to go home, Lily is excited to go to school. Behind closed doors, Lily's dad is not the nice man everyone experiences outside. He turns into something dark and foreign. Across the hall I can hear the sound of a belt cracking followed by muffled cries. The next day Lily is dressed in long pants and a sweat shirt because the weather has suddenly become "chilly." As she makes her way to school, she passes Dylan, a mischievous seventeen year old that lives to the left of me. Yesterday, he was caught vandalizing the community church. When he came home that night his parents were too busy fighting to even acknowledge or reprimand him for his wrongdoing. Upon retreating to his room Dylan rebukes God for not making his parents pay more attention to him, for not making them care about him. Instead of being bathed in a reassuring silence, Dylan is assaulted by a deafening wave of his parents' screams. People believe no one knows what goes on behind closed doors, but it is the cracks that reveal their secrets.



Drawing the Model by Taya Senn

The Missing Arm and the Missing Wing by Sarah Mrozinski



Duende by Neci Harris

A giant, slumbering dragon lays before me, so large that it takes up half of the main entrance to the castle. Its scales glimmer as the sun hits them. Different shades of purple, green, and white shine on the crumbling castle walls. Its tail thumps against the ground as it exhales, and one of its wings flaps once before flopping back onto its back. Upon further examination, I realize that it only has one wing. There is only a small stump left where its right wing should be. I graze my fingers over where my left arm would be, feeling a sense of empathy for the sleeping dragon.

I remember my reason for being here, feeling the cold handle of the dagger in my hand. I try to take a step towards the beast but the floorboards beneath my feet are old and they groan, making the dragon aware of my presence. One of its ears flicks up, and its head slowly follows. Its eyes open. They are pure black, but not threatening. It stares directly at me. Its nostrils flare, and steam envelopes the surrounding area. When it clears, the dragon is face to face with me, staring me down intensely. It looks down to my left side and slowly moves its head down to nudge that side of me, nearly knocking me down with its strength.

“Human,” it starts. “Have you come here to kill me?”

“I’m sorry, dragon, but I have. And I will not leave without a fight!” I say, standing my ground once more.

“I can sense that you would feel guilty in doing so. And how do you expect to kill a dragon my size with one part of you missing?”

“I was born with my arm missing; it’s all I’ve ever known. But that doesn’t matter because I’ll still be able to kill you and save my village!”

“Human, I admire your courage, but I could kill you in a second. And besides, it seems like we have something in common.” It leans its right side towards me for emphasis. “I too am missing a part of me since birth. I was outcast by my fellow dragons and now I live alone here. So before you kill me, would you like to talk? I do believe that we may have a lot more in common than you think.”

I pause for a moment, fixing my gaze towards the silver dagger in my hand and pondering the idea of forgetting my task and remaining here for a while. I finally throw the dagger and the paper behind me and nod at the dragon, taking a seat on a nearby tree stump as it moves its head down towards me.



Game On by Amber Reed



Light on Water by Bethany Michels

Biracial by Jordyn Sanders

Lord, Lord why did you make me black?

Black is the color of dirt.

Black is the color of a
bruise when beaten.

Black is the color of the
tire-beaten streets.

Black is the color of the
demons that work with the devil himself.

Black is the color of
dirty dusty coal.

He says, "Black is the color of your father who protects you."

Lord, Lord why did you make me white?

White is the color of
staining bleach.

White is the color of the
deadly anthrax.

White is the color of
spooky ghosts.

White is the color of the
addictive drug cocaine.

White is the color of
bones that represent death.

He says, "White is the color of your mother that made your beauty."

Lord, why make the creation of black and white?

The Lord says,

"The yin yang is black and white,
Meaning peace.

The panda is black and white,
Meaning gentle strength.

The zebra is black and white,
Meaning balance."

I am a new creation of the Lord.

Secrets by Beth Tudor

“Where were you last night?” James asked EJ. “The party was so lit!” he exclaimed. EJ thought to himself: *He can't know where I was. No one knows. It's so hard to fit in here. Everyone is rich and cool here. I'm just EJ. I'm not special. Well, unless you consider a criminal to be special, then I'm the most special thing since sliced bread. But it's not like I wanna be a criminal. It's something I have to do for my family. It's what we have to do to survive.*

“EJ? You good bro?” James questioned.

“Yeah! Yeah! What's up, dude?” EJ answered.

“Where were you last night? Why didn't you come to Britney's party?!”

“Sorry man, I had to stay at home and babysit my sister. My mom had some stupid dinner to go to.”

God that sounded so stupid. He has to know I was lying. I've kept my cover for four years. Why is this year becoming so hard? People here can NOT know who I really am. They won't be okay with it. I'm dirt compared to them.

“Ah, okay, man. Just make sure you're at the next one! Things aren't the same without my crazy bro there!”

He believed it? “Bro” he said. He doesn't know anything about me. He may think he does, but little does anyone know. See, I'm poor. Poorer than dirt. My family is barely surviving. The only thing keeping us alive is myself having to go and steal things. Every night I go out and find any food I can, and if I can't find anything, I steal. I also occasionally break into people's houses to steal clothes so that I can stay up to date so that people think I'm “rich” like they are.

“Alright, yeah. I'll for sure be there! See you tomorrow.”

At least I hope I will. I never know if I will get caught or not. So, everyday being able to show up to school is a good day. I hear everyone talk of all these parties that I wish I could go to. I can't. I always worry of James' father catching me. He is the chief of police, and all.



This Is My Good Side by Grace Morrison

Insanity by Kalei Merilatt

I think there is a little inside of us all

The thing that makes us wild

When we know we are to be calm

It's the fire that ignites the struggle within our bones

The light that strives to stay bright

Wild and free

As it wishes to be

The thread to life and living

A single thought and feeling

This is truly in the simplest form

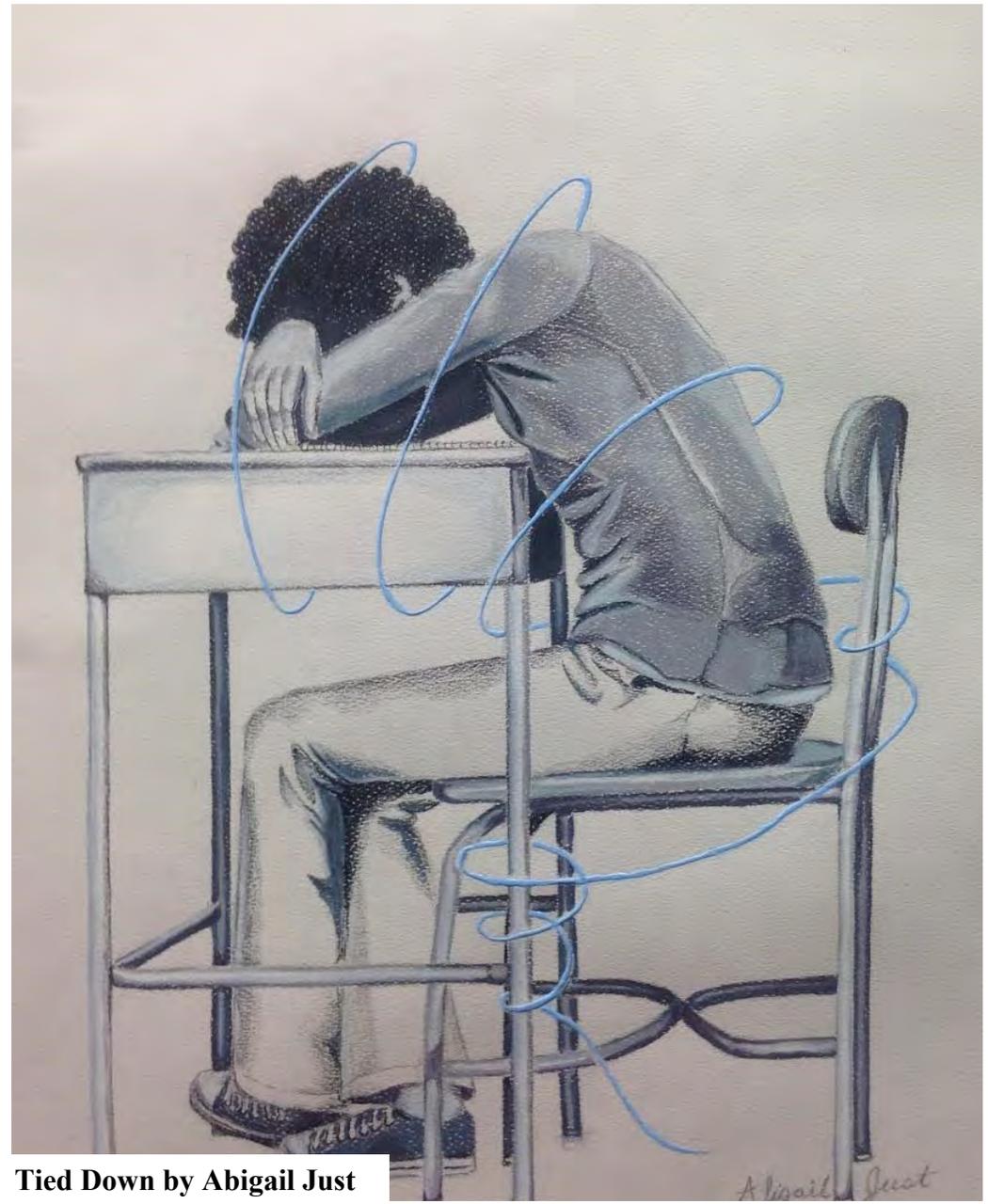
Insanity.



Braid by Rachel Jefferson



Standing Tall by Jenna Kessler



Tied Down by Abigail Just



Sunblock by Kennedy Scott



Back Row: Maizie Molyneaux, Savannah Foster, Savanah Reccius, Neci Harris, Rachel Banta, Danielle Feldkamp

Middle Row: Skylar Perkins, Lauren Cox, Bethany Michels, Savanna Brashear, Julia Pifine, Bailey Blacklock, Brooke Edelen, Emma Fitzgerald, Rachel Jefferson, Taylor Hedges, Jessica DeBeer, Grace Morrison

Front Row: Elizabeth Snodgress, Marissa Lotz, Caleigh Blazis, Olivia Clements, Sarah Drury, Chloe Bailey, Lexi Newton, Emily Ramsey, Abby Crawford, Erin Rose

Not Pictured: Jill Vorreiter, Kennedy Yurt

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