

Banner Bold



VHS

2022

UNBOUND

Ventura High School's Creative Showcase

UNBOUND

2021-2022



In Loving Memory of Austin Gambill

Courtesy of Kaden Anderson,

It's really hard having a piece of your life disappear without warning and having to just keep going on without it. I think life is like a puzzle and the important things in your life are the pieces, and what memories you make and impacts you have on other people with those pieces creates a picture of your life. When something great happens in your life, you gain a puzzle piece, and it makes your puzzle all the more beautiful, but when we encounter suffering and struggle in life, a piece of the puzzle is crinkled, ripped, or is even taken out of the picture all together. Every person goes through life and collects and creates beautiful pieces, but every person has also had a piece of their life puzzle taken out of it and we are left with less pieces to create a beautiful picture then we had before. I have been blessed to get a lot of pieces added to my puzzle over the years, but I have also had pieces taken and had to leave the puzzle with a hole in the middle. For me one of those pieces was Austin, and I can't help but wonder what he would have been able to accomplish in life and how my life would be different if he was still alive today. He was such a kind person and worked so hard in sports and achieved at a high level in school. We became friends and for freshman and the first half of sophomore year, we were friends and would hangout at lunch and train together in cross country and track. He was a great example of a person that wasn't going to be what others wanted him to be, but he was going to be the person that he knew he should be in order to be the best person he could be. When he passed away I was saddened in a way I had never been before and have never been since. It was so hard to think that he was simply just gone and that the world would keep turning. Over two years later and I still wonder about Austin. I know that if he was here today the world would be better off and so would I, but I also know that

In Loving Memory of Austin Gambill

because of Austin and how many people he affected I was able to come together with those people and create new friendships and memories that are priceless to me. I am going to miss Austin every day until I get to see him again. I am very blessed to have met the people I did and connect with people I never had before. He was a very important person in my life and he will always be. Austin, I love you man.

...

Courtesy of Vincent Cook,

Austin Gambill, a friend, teammate, and classmate. From the day we met, we became friends. I first met Austin in Tigres, the Ventura track club, and we ran together in those middle school days, and later on in high school when we became Cross Country and Track and Field teammates. In high school, we became closer, and became classmates who shared every assignment from the science fair, to homework assignments. We worked together to tackle every assessment given to us. He will always be remembered for his humbleness, how he strove for excellence, and much more. He has impacted the Cross Country and Track and Field team, and forever will. His memory will forever go down in history, and the impact he has created will go with him forever too. He has changed the world for me and I will always have a place for him no matter where I go, because he had the impact and change that everyone should strive for. Thank you Austin Gambill for taking part in my life, and changing me for the better, I will always remember you forever.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to, Michael Beeler for his generous donations and dedication to our class!

And a big thank you to Mr. Raney without whom, none of this would've been possible.

Thanks to Ms. Lewandowski for always supporting our floral whims.

Thank you to, Principal Cervantes for you supporting the arts and creative endeavors.

Letter from Advisor

Dear Readers,

Writing is hard. Art is hard. And what makes it even harder sometimes is sharing it. How many hastily written notes or poems do we all have hidden in notebooks, or sketches or paintings tucked away in a closet protected from the harsh eyes of judgment. But perhaps sharing is the most important part of creating.

For the last two years we have been hiding ourselves in a way. Whether it be isolating at home, hiding behind a black rectangle on zoom, or obscuring our faces with a mask. It's been hard to share anything.

But this year's *Banner Bold* and every piece of art and writing contained within represent an effort to be seen, to be recognized - like distress signals being sent from beyond saying, "I'm still here."

These pieces represent overcoming. We have all overcome so much recently and are still struggling to overcome so much else. It's hard to overcome something alone. So let these pieces remind you that you're not alone. You are not alone in your struggle to overcome whatever battle or obstacle in your life you are trying to conquer.

Thank you to all who contributed.

Sincerely,
Mr. Raney
Banner Bold Advisor

Letter from the Editor in Chief

Dear Reader,

The 2021-22 Banner Bold is the first edition to be published physically since 2019, so it means even more to us that we were able to participate in the making of the magazine. This year's theme, chosen by our Banner Bold staff, is "Unbound". Though the process of settling on a theme wasn't the easiest one, once we had found it, it felt right. For the past two years we've been holed up, held at the mercy of disease, and because of it we have never been further from one another.

The purpose of this year's theme is to not only reclaim our freedom, but to explore new freedoms and experiences that the past two years have presented us with as we move on in life. That is the beauty of it, right? To find the good in a time where everything seems worsened by our global circumstance, because there is much we have been given despite all that we've lost.

I hope that, with this book you hold in your hands, you'll be comforted by the words of your fellow students, and learn that their happenings--though personal and unique--are not all that different from your own.

Happy reading,

Isabella Ramos
Editor in Chief
Class of 2022

Letter from the Assistant Editor in Chief

Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing to read banner bold, and thank you to everyone who supported us, whether that be working on a submission or buying a Valentine's Day Gram, as we make a comeback after 2 years! At the beginning of the school year, we went through a long process of elimination before we settled upon this year's theme, 'Unbound', which we think perfectly suits Ventura High School's resilience and perseverance despite all of the challenges we've had to endure.

After a thorough review of every submission, we have selected pieces into the categories of Poetry, Nonfiction, Fiction, Art, and Photography that we believe have shown advanced craftsmanship and dedication, and have awarded submissions that showed outstanding work and caught our attention. Although we were able to include a lot this year, due to a lack of submissions into the Foreign Language category, we were not able to include that section. And as a reminder, the submissions reviewed were done anonymously. If your piece was not selected, we encourage you to submit again next year!

Thank you,
Emma Johnson
Assistant Editor In Chief

Banner Bold Staff

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This Year's Winners!

Grand Prize:

Displacement Divided by Time by Penggao Tang
(Nonfiction)

First:

Paola Chavez Flores (Art)

Inman Costa (Photography)

Queer by Emily Rauch (Poetry)

Opened Eyes by Mirella Toledano (Nonfiction)

Unbound by Katie Rundle (Fiction)

Second:

Sidney Cruts (Art)

Avery Kightlinger (Photography)

Still I Remain by Avery Kightlinger (Poetry)

Cafe de Abuela by Kayla Tafoya (Nonfiction)

Bloody Pines Debacle by Marissa Prado (Fiction)

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Displacement Divided by Time
by Penggao Tang



For the majority, 8 years is an enormous amount of time in their lives, so much can happen in so little time. In my case, 8 years has been half of my entire life, and it is also the amount of time I've spent in the United States as of now. I've changed many many times throughout this short span, adapting to the ever-changing environments in each stage of life. However, I would have never gotten to the present if it weren't for the few in the beginning, those who gave me a push downhill, gradually gaining speed and driving myself forward.

Those few popped out in my mind often to remind me of the people that influenced the person I am today, those to never forget. Ms. Palacio her name was, not only my third-grade teacher but also my first in the US, who taught me in my earliest days, from the basics to the little less basics, she was very patient with a boy who could barely communicate, as a result of his shyness and cultural difference.

"Oh my god Peng," a classmate in shock, "you're from China? That's so cool" I thought this was a very weird and unfamiliar first interaction between me likewise most of my classmates then, it felt rather foreign than welcoming although I did join in the middle of a school year. I understood that it wasn't every day a Chinese kid immigrates to the school, but I would prefer a simple "hi" or "hello", which would've been much easier to interpret. This lasted for 2 more years, where each time they called me by my name, remind me I should've chosen an "American name", something along the lines of "John", "Jake", or "Jack".

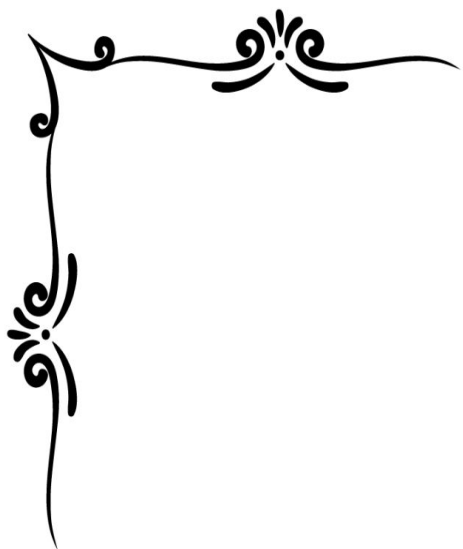
On the other hand, Ms. Palacio gave me a different vibe, she greeted me with a comfortable, "Hi Peng, nice to meet you". In which I replied, "nice to meet you too". The simple interaction set up a mood for that class for the remainder of the

school year, for she made it easier for me to adapt to the new environment.

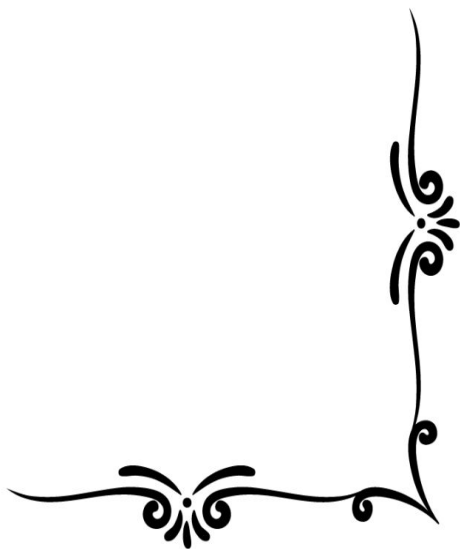
During normal lectures, the students would do their worksheets (also sometimes mine as well), while I would be doing different English learner activities with Ms. Palacio in the back. She went slow and made sure I comprehended the minute details so I can move on as soon as possible. These details unquestionably played an important role in understanding the structure of the education system in the US.

As opposed to the classroom, I had a difficult time communicating with some of the other students who wanted to hang out with me. In an instance during recess, “Hey, Peng what do you want to play?” a girl asked. “Yeah, let’s play touch!” I replied without acknowledgment of the meaning of the term “touch”. Embarrassed and shocked, the girl ran back to Ms. Palacio’s classroom with a group of her friends, reporting what I’d just said. “Ms. Palacio! Peng just said he wanted to play touch.” Of course, my lack of experience in talking to others in English led to me realizing the situation too late so I couldn’t explain myself clearly. To my surprise in this situation with no backing off, Ms. Palacio understood my intentions, therefore, answered to the girls, “I’m sure he didn’t mean it that way, I think he was trying to say ‘tag’.” With relief, everyone was reassured and heartened, thus we undoubtedly made a wonderful memory that day.

Not too long after, that school year came to an end, then I had to say farewell to Ms. Palacio with the most gratitude, following this brief but sweet experience, above all, the boy who seemed distant from this environment beyond his expectations and sudden change of lifestyle found a comfortable sanctuary among the differences. I am both thankful and sentimental about the beginning that gave me momentum for years to come, the tides ready to rock this boy’s boat, as well as the change in the system set to alter his understanding.



POETRY





Queer

by Emily Rauch

My sight rested upon a flower in bloom
immodestly I indulge in the beauty that captivates
For it is only my nature that I insensibly misdeed
The fondness of spring blesses with many offerings
Fields full of floral variety; bonny and ornate
An allure of a Marigold draws in the envelope of my mind
Divinity sensationalized, enamoured by the pure and gentle
Dialect without spoken sound, our eyes understand the rhapsody
of bewilderment
I lustfully pick the leaves from forbidden fruit
I succumb to my direful senses, while guilt resides without an
existing invite
Why is it forbidden?
I plead with he who shall never let those asunder
Shall those who act out of love stay plentiful?
For why generate a sin continuously?
I will never be of maternal bliss, nor thrive through the shadows
of a lie
It is not of pride or prejudice that I would not surrender at the
hands of a man
Nullifying your beckon and call, to vail is not justice
To prevail a love that is pure and refined
My love is for she who is alike; identical in the proposed manner
Akin in collective energy, capable of acquiring a warmth
unparalleled to a single body
Warmth to be resonated through an incarnation but thy matter is
of utmost solitude
Solely and euphoric
I plead the temptations that I am willfully designed by

To remain inclined to the motifs of my character, I subsist
One crowd espouses to implore, the other hesitant
Fear-ridden of the unknown are those who choose to be
oblivious

Denominate me as a heathen though I act a saint, I am the pillar
of your refutation

Filled with spite and riddled with hate, you stain my reputation
and deny my dignity

I, rejoiced by a love of my own, am deprived by the crowds
imposed upon me

I am my own divine justice, undeniably myself
Yet with our parallels, without the bias nor your contempt
There persists a fond queerness in the quarry of minds.

...



Still I Remain

by Avery Kightlinger

(Authors note : this is a rendition of Maya Angelou's, Still I Rise)

You may see me in my normal state,
but like the truth I refrain,
staying withholding and unknown,
and yet still I remain

Does my isolation offend you?
Why you ask am I so cold?
Because I am clueless with what I
feel,
but I maintain my heart of gold

Unlike your daughter and son,
your trust I must regain,
even with endless tears being
shed,
I still find a way to remain

Did you want me to be like the
others?
Forcing their genericness down
my throat?
Chests filled with guilt and regret,
I wish I could start on a whole
new note

Does my independence frighten
you?
Afraid to watch me grow,
you turn your timid to anger,
attempting to press pause and go
slow

You may grasp me with your
voice,
in my room I shall detain,
sitting constantly overthinking,
and still, as anticipated I still remain
Do my attempts to change catch your
attention?

Does it come as a surprise?
That I want to differ and be there for
you,
and yet you cut me with your sharp
blackened eyes

Out of our history and our shame,
I remain
In our drain of disdain and utter
pain,
I remain
I am but a mere child seeking out
love,
welling and swelling I endure each
metaphorical shove

In search of new ways to express
myself,
I remain
into an epiphany that I must shelf,
I remain
Throwing away my guilt and putting
on a smile,
I have just accepted this is who I am
- so this pain is no longer
worthwhile.
I remain, I remain, I remain.

I Am Your Sun
by Ciara Placencia

If I was your moon, look!! I am beautiful too. You only love her for she is your moon. I give you daylight, I warm your sea, she is so much colder, and smaller than me. So why choose her? What's the fun? I run the solar system. I am your sun. It could've been Venus or Saturn and her rings, but why choose those? Why her?

Of all things. Her light isn't her own my light is the only light she's ever shown, I know you love her for her elegant phrases but why choose those? Over my scorching blazes. Is it because I am a few million miles away? She brightens your night, but I run the day. If I was your moon I'd do the same, but just for existing she gets the fame. Maybe in a dream we will get to meet. But you'll lose all your beauty thanks to my heat. No matter what I'll still love you the same, for I am your sun, forever remain.

Unbound

by Olivia Sletten

You do not have to be bound tight
You do not have to continue to be restrained,
gripping to worldly lusts, possessions and assumptions
These walls have been built around you to “keep you safe”
Boundaries to keep you from expanding

Meanwhile the clockwork of life keeps ticking
Meanwhile living and living free is in your hands,
if you just let go
Let imagination in
Let creativity grow
Let love anchor

Wherever you are coming from
with whatever baggage you carry
Don't let impossibilities blind you

Open up your minds eye to the opportunity of an
Unconfined
Unchained
Unruled
Unleashed
Unlimited
Unbound experience of this thing we call life
Living like the clock is about to chime

My Family House

by Marley Haener

4690 North Barton was my
address for forever.

That was, until about three years
ago.

Still, those three years

Felt like nothing

Compared to those other thirteen
years.

Those were some of the best
years,

Because the concept of
three-hundred-sixty-five days

Had no real meaning.

We were just kids,

Time only mattered when it came
to nine o'clock,

Begging to watch just one more
episode.

Back then, one could count on
things.

Always: waking up when the sun
was still down

And the fog engulfed my Barton
house.

Always: jumping on the
trampoline until our legs

Turned to jelly.

Always: hosting Thanksgiving,
Christmas, and all of the
birthdays, Because our Barton

house was the family house.

Always: playing shuffleboard

And having Sunday Night

Football on in the background.

Always: having people over –

Our Barton house was never, ever
empty.

Just three years ago

We had to say goodbye to our
family house,

Forever.

And although it feels like a
lifetime ago,

It will always and forever be my
favorite place

On Earth.

From time to time,

I look at pictures

From when I was new to the
world,

And new to my Barton house.

That feeling of finding new-old
memories

Is unmatched.

How can one so deeply miss
something they don't even
remember?

I'm Still Me

by Victoria Cortez

I know I'm all that you got
But you're holding too tightly
I don't want to lose you so I
listen
I know that you don't mean to
be
But you're manipulating
You lock me up
Trying to protect me
But then I'll shut off
It's frustrating
And draining
Not being able to be me
No matter what I'm still the
same
I need to grow but you're
clipping my wings
and locking the sunlight away
That won't help me
How will I learn
How will I grow
How will I know what I want
If this environment is
smothering
There needs to be a balance
And understanding and
acceptance
Not tolerance
I'm my own person

With my beliefs
My ideas
My likes and dislikes
My triggers
My pleasures
And you can never change that
You shouldn't take that from
me
I know it's scary not being I'm
control
But I'm a person
And you can't help me with my
journey but I'd love it if you tag
alongside and support me
I'm still me

The Double Entendre

by Isabella Ramos

Bound?

I don't think I ever was.

Not particularly.

Maybe I was metaphorically bound,
or maybe emotionally?

I don't think there was ever enough time to realize just how stuck I
was,

so I never even imagined being free.

I always told myself, it'll be over soon.

But it never is.

I'll get to rest.

I won't.

It seems I'm always breaking promises to myself.

But I bend myself like some great contortionist
to accommodate every last demand.

Until I'm bound.

Wound so tightly.

Strung too high.

And no one ever bothers to reach.

I really did think,

something else would save me. That I

would get to breathe the moment some outside force came in and said
"STOP"

A bodiless booming voice bold enough to battle the binder.

Not that I know what it is exactly that I am bound to.

Perhaps I'll never know, yet

Nevertheless

It's worth knowing I can set myself free.

It's worth knowing I can still

be free.

Murky

by Katie Smiley

My body slows as I wade
through the increasingly dense
and exponentially rising waters
of stress and life.

The sun no longer shines this
low into the earth. Flowers no
longer bloom. The once
joyfully-silent air is now heavy
with words of despair and
overwhelm.

My lungs wring out the murky
sky for something fresh and
rejuvenating. My ears search
through the white noise of
chaos for something peaceful.
My hands feel through the
swampy waters for something
to hold onto.

I see the bright and shining sun
far into the distance. Peeking
out and waving hello behind
clouds of stress.

With each impossible step, my
shoulders jam further down
into my body, my back gets

more hunched over the weight.
I slowly wade towards it, but I
am being pushed further back
by that one math assignment,
and that other English essay.

I stretch my neck, desperate for
fresh, clean air but I cannot
ever get close enough to feel
what that type of freedom is
truly like.

Where I Left You

by Victoria Cortez

Dear, stranger

What would've happened if I never spoke to you.

Would you be where I left you, or more further down.

Maybe further along.

That night when you scared me.

Your farewell that creeps in my mind.

The adrenaline to try to reach you so I don't lose you.

I kept trying to call and text you.

I sent you help, I got a friend to visit you.

To make sure you were okay and not cutting.

Bleeding your soul out because nobody was listening.

I imagine what would happen if I never got through.

Flashing red and blue lights so blinding nobody can see through.

And yelling washing out from all the sirens that are surrounding.

Why do you do this to me?

I dont think it's selfish at all.

Please just talk to me.

What would've happened if I never got through?

Through the phone?

This far apart I just want to see you.

I know you'll get far after talking with you.

I'm glad you're around even if you'll never see this.

I care too much and I love you.

Love, your friend

Egalitarian

by Hugh Murphy

I am back where I began,
Merchant of cancer,
Reflecting pool reflecting heat
on my back,
Leaves invade,
Some lie sunken and dreary
while others float like tectonic
plates,
Spots of dirt and grime,
A disease brewing to infect the
world,
With the cure brewed right
through the glossy doorway,
Rocks sit like Hemingway
novels,
Glaring observers and tyrants
of their domain

Myself

by Elsa Safranski

I celebrate myself
Even though I live in a
different country
Have different skin tone from
my peers
I celebrate my culture
And the history of my country
And when it's in conflict
I celebrate myself
Even though some people
would say
That Africa is one of the driest
place
I celebrate myself forever

Colorblind

by Victoria Cortez

If only I listened to them
This sticky situation
This mess
I wish I can just undo it
Because I didn't want to be this
close
I say no but your actions make
it seem like I said yes
Until I finally did
I tried to suppress the
uncomfortableness
And just submit
You never loved me or you
wouldn't have done this to me
I'm fake you can say
But don't pretend that I never
cared
Because why would I have
been there
Please get control of your
friend
Tell him all the things that we
did
Because it's drowning me
This guilt of not being able to
change the hurt I put you
through by not getting help

I should've left the relationship
from all the red flags
But I was colorblind
You'd say how you'd hurt
yourself so I stayed as long as I
could
I tried
I should've gotten help
Before it developed more
Please teach me all the ways to
stay away
I didn't leave because I thought
if i did

... you'd end up dead

Inhabitant

by Buck Balling

There's a dead spider in my
typewriter.

I can see him though the type
bars fossilizing with the ribbon.

His six legs almost shattering
in the crossfire of the letter q
hitting the page.

qqqqq

4 legs gone into the springs
Into the skeleton of the typer.

Fed to the letters and ink.

qqqqqq

His web torn, swaying in the
wind of the paten

The threads dissipate at each
ring of the bell.

QQQ

Time Flows Backwards In

My Head

by Mose Cook

The vast canvas of black
painted across the sky and
dotted with stars

And the Sun dips behind the
waves coating the sky in
red-orange flames

The fiery orb of heat and gas
hanging lazily in the sky

And like the sunset, the sunrise
is just as majestic

And I turn the dial, I flip the
hourglass

As time flows backward in my
head

I'm just another teenager

by Victoria Cortez

I know I may be on my phone
But it's not my world
It's to escape
For me its inspiration
Photography and music
And art
Within my hands
I know I may seem rude
But I'm not trying to be
I have problems too
And they aren't as black and
white as you think
I'm struggling like others are
I may be young
But I'm not dumb like you
claim I am
I love the breeze and I'm not
somebody who wants to live on
their phone their whole life
I want to feel alive
And sometimes it's tiring so we
all escape
Don't say you aren't the same
You say I can't live without my
phone
But neither can you
My slouching isn't just a teen
thing as you claim it to be

The gravity of the world is
heavy
And its pushing us all down
And everyone has it hard
enough
Stop stereotyping me
With how I'm just another
teenager
How I just wanna party and
live like nobody is listening
How I just wanna sleep around
How hanging out is always
with the wrong crowd
How having a break from my
phone is traumatizing
It isn't for me
If you get to know people you
would see
I'm just another teenager
Who wants to be understood
and who wants to be loved
I'm nothing you make me out
to be
You better watch me as I
shatter all of your beliefs

Spectrum

by Victoria Cortez

In the world nobody's
experience is the same in this
strange weird way
Peoples pronouns are changing
And people's beliefs are
growing
Individualism is advancing
Society is growing but it
sometimes takes a step back
like we all do
Progress is weird it goes
forward and can dip in an
instant but it doesn't erase that
growth because it learns what it
needs
Amazing isn't it?
There's all these spectrums
And people fall into different
spots in this line
No specific order just follow
your design
Of your heart
I think preference is fine and
people saying "it's not real,
people are just trying to be
different"
Only taste buds can change
preference
And if they explore themselves

they can grow and that change
is not forced but let's the person
know
What they are comfortable with
and what they like
No church or organization
should take away a person's
spectrum and place the person
somewhere else
Preference may come from
trauma
And they just can't stand it
because that's what they are
taught to do
If somebody likes neither
Both or same
Or they're a bit in between
Experience shapes people
And we lie in this spectrum a
bit different from others
Because we are individuals

Why do I have to be a girl

by Felix Duran

Mirror mirror why must you remind me of my insecurities
Everyday I look at you just so you can judge me
Then I ask myself, why am I not good enough
Here I am staring at my reflection being reminded that i'm a
girl

Mirror mirror why do you make me feel ashamed
You tell me "I'm a girl, I should appreciate it, stop being so
ungrateful"

I can't seem to escape you, you're in the bathroom, the
bedrooms and the stairway

I'm forced to see you each day but that's okay

Mirror mirror why are you so quiet now did I make you
frown? Oh well it's not like you are alive

I just sit there knowing that what I see in the mirror won't
be what I want to see

I see my reflection, do I really look like that

I always get hate because of that but now my mirror is just
like them

Lose weight then you'll be pretty

You're too big to be a girl

Stop eating, do you want to die?

I cover my ears and I all I could hear is those words repeat

Oh mirror why can't you just be clearer

I'm not a girl and this mirror reminds me that I am

I'm not a boy either, I'm in between weird right?

Mirror mirror can't you reflect what I want to see

I want to see someone with really short hair with a sharp
jawline and a flat chest

But all you show me is a feminine girl that keeps eating me
alive

Moonlight Symphony

by Joel Hernandez

One time, I heard a song
When life seemed the most unfair
It took me to this beautiful place
And I saw the girl that waited
there

She glistened in the moonlight
Putting my heart at ease
The whole world fell as silent as a
mouse
No rustling of the trees

She took my breath away
Looking at me, gaze so kind
A moment where I wasn't
entranced
Was a moment that I couldn't find

There was nothing that could hurt
me
However, something felt amiss
Was this okay? Was this reality?
Captivated upon a kiss

What was this that I was feeling?
Bliss, peace at long last
I was lulled off to a faraway land
No thoughts of present or past

And as I let my breath go
As fast as the blink of my eyes
That girl, that world faded away
And noises started to arise

The small speck of fear within me
vanished
That's how I knew I was fine
The melodious song of the entire
world
Enlightened these new ears of
mine

When the going got tough
I would return to that place
The girl would always be waiting
there
A warm smile upon her face

How lucky I am to have found it
For it blessed me with an
epiphany
What was once a masquerade, is
now a sweet serenade
Praise the moonlight symphony

Starving

by Victoria Cortez

Starving can become an addiction	It started from messing up my
I found out the hard way	priorities
Everything people wanted me to	Every person in this situation is
be	different
I mended	But for all of us its damaging
And bended until I can fit people's	No matter how it started
expectations	I'm starving for control
Me, personally it never started	I'm starving for recognition
because of my weight	Hey, look at me and I can be what
I needed control and leverage over	you want me to be
something	But at the end of the day it's not
Anything	enough
Even if its draining	And i get stuck in my lungs
It seems like you're in control in a	I'm starving for peace
moment	I'm hungry for dreams
But you can't fall out of it	I'm hungry for it all to stop
Especially on your own	The blurred vision
I would know	And the fainting feeling
And its controlling	I don't want to eat
The anxiety	Unless I can have what I need
Of people's opinions	And I need help
Of my own mind	I need the expectation to be
The body knows what it needs	healthy
But I don't have an appetite	Because I'm just human
A will to eat	And I'm starving
this lump in my throat just	
reminding me that everyday	
somehow I'll have to eat	
It started from name calling	
It started from anxiety	

Immigrants

by Karely Legazpi Torres

We come from beautiful countries
with a beautiful culture
and traditions that have to be
preserved
but we have been fleeing
of our corrupt government
and the poverty of our country

We come to fulfill our American
dream
to earn money honestly
to be able to study
to have better life opportunities
to help our families
to be able to settle here

We come from anywhere in Latin
America to unknown lands
to be able to succeed and fulfill
our dreams
we do not come to remove jobs
we do not come to be humiliated
we do not come to despise our
work
We do not come to be judged by
our skin color

We walk days and nights to get to
the United States
a country with many opportunities
with good education
with good salaries

with a good economy
and with a better quality of life

Many of us are undocumented
but we never lose hope
that one day we will return to our
country
to see our families
to see our friends
to go back to the place where we
grew up

We are tired of always being told
"go back to your country"
"you don't belong here"
"Pinches Mexicanos"
"This is not your country, you are
nobody here"
"Beaner"
"Here is America you should not
speak in Spanish only in English"

We are tired of there being
discriminated against us in schools
When a Latino causes an accident
And begs for an apology, he is
sentenced to life in prison
But if an American
Makes a shooting at a school
And he has no regrets, they let
him go free.

<<continued on next page>>

There is a lot of discrimination
against Latinos in the United
States

They do not value the effort we
make for the good of this country
They only see us as drug dealers
Or they see us as bad people
Or people who come to destroy
this country
But none of that is true

We come in search of a better
future
We come with hope
We come with dreams
We come longing to leave our
families
But always with a lot of
enthusiasm
To be able to change our life

But despite everything
The good
The bad
The sad
And what is to come
We are proudly Latino and we
love our roots.

Unbound

by Mae Stepan

Underneath soft blankets
head resting on his upper chest,
perfectly and comfortably placed
in the crook between
his shoulder and neck

In the blue light of my room
now facing each other
the love in our eyes matched,
reflected so perfectly
like a polished mirror

Seeing his face like this-
noticing every flawless detail,
how soft his cheek feels
in the palm of my hand
and his cheeks rise,
how his eyes crease and teeth
show
in the most beautiful smile I've
ever seen

His eyes sparkle
like ripples in the ocean
on a bright summer day,
the smell of safety and home
surrounding us like a bubble
as if it was only us
to exist in the world

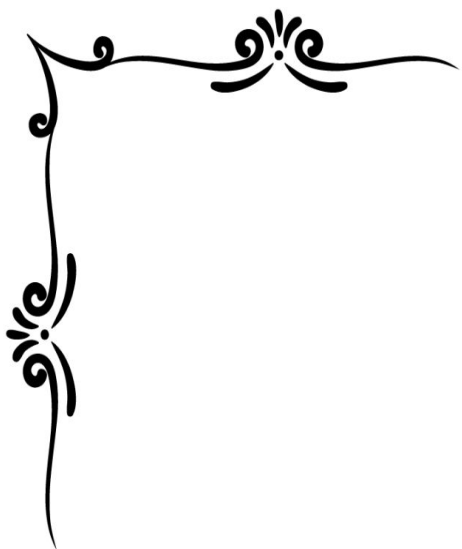
But what is most truly captivating
lies in the smallest of
indescribable details
how in this blue light,
the freckles scattered so neatly
atop his nose and cheeks
seemed to sparkle like stars
in the clearest of night skies

I run my thumb over his cheek
wishing I could place
a speck of silver glitter on every
one
so he could see his face
as flawlessly as I do

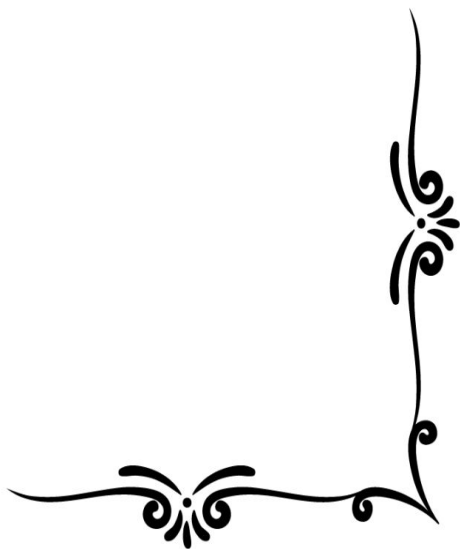
and in that brief moment
I was weightless,
as if I were a bird in flight
floating on a gust of wind
lifting the weight of gravity off my
wings

No longer tethered to the ground
as if all the chains
of life's sorrows and pains
suddenly broke away
and I was unbound.





NONFICTION



Opened Eyes

by Mirella Toledano



The smell of strawberries immediately greeted my nose. We have arrived, I thought. Grabbing my cart, a narrow one-wheeled- like barrel cart, and swinging it over my shoulder,. I could see people already huddled towards the small truck which held all their lunches and essentials. I Could feel the humbleness of the people around me. As they greeted each other with such happiness that tears swelled up my eyes. I wondered how they still managed to smile even after all this time. As the clock hit 6:30 people ran to grab their badges. The badge that would keep track of the amount of boxes they would make. The sound of beeping would be heard for the next few minutes as people entered work. I could see their energy, energy that I hadn't seen before as they quickly grabbed boxes and baskets for strawberries. They were looking into another long day of labor.

It took a lot of talking from me to my father to take me a week and experience the labor of working in the fields. At the end he agreed with the exception of me backing out whenever I became uncomfortable.I helped my dad make boxes of strawberries. I would stop and look around to see the years of experience people had as they continued to push through. Sweat creasing their forehead, sitting down in their curco, a row in a field, but still continuing to push their cart forward.Most of all I could see my father in front of me finishing his curco as he got a new curco and repeated the whole process again.

The pain of a thousand needles poking through my lower back w. Would be the pain I and the people around me felt. Hearing my father call my name,. I knew we were taking 15 minutes.Sticky with sweat, dehydrated, and throat feeling dry,. I looked down at my watch, 3:30pm. One hour left, I thought. We

sat and ate the few tacos my mom made in the morning. They were no longer warm but cold and dry. My father would always look at me tiredly and say "Echale mas ganas" ' Put more effort as field workers would say the same thing when he was young

As the clock struck 4:30. People hurried to finish their boxes as it was time to go home. Giving baskets to fill their boxes, gathering strawberries. They helped each other. People retreating to their backpacks and leaving their badges. Joining one last time, they looked tired and dirty but still having that glint of happiness in their eyes that the day was over. I felt numb as the warm breeze passed by. We walked on the dirt path, passing the rows of strawberries. A wave of sadness washed over me. They were what caused years and years of pain towards my parents. They were the eye openers for me.

My summer with my father was something I wanted to experience. I wanted to know as long as I could remember what my parents did everyday. Just to bring food to the table and keep a roof over for my four siblings and I. How when we were all small they could only afford us a small studio home. Which they would make seem like the biggest house in the world as children. That no matter how tired they come home each day from work they always make the effort to raise us well.

Café De Abuela

by Kayla Tafoya



1671. ARABIA. KALDI. A GOAT HERDER. AND. HIS GOATS. The story goes that Kaldi had noticed a strange behavior in his goats. Pupils dilated and their urge to stay up and not sleep. Confused, he tried the same red berries. This caused him to have a sudden wave of energy and, like his goats, didn't allow him to rest. He reported this observation to the local monastery, and together they came up with the idea of using the beans in water. So they roasted them under the coals of the fire, raked them out, crushed them, and added it to the water. And that is how the world's first cup of coffee was made.

During its evolution, humans had discovered many new ways to drink it. In 1864, two brothers from Pennsylvania had invented a self-emptying coffee machine. This allows them to sell prepackaged bags of coffee and distribute it to everyday people. Now we see bags of coffee, ranging from the whole bean to the smallest form for espresso, ready to be bought then and there or shipped across the world.

Kahveh(Turkish). Koffie(Dutch). To finally. Coffee. The world now can't get enough of it; producing/selling more than 166 million 60 kilogram bags of it in the year 2021. But there are different types of coffee; ranging in flavors, roast(color), and location it was cultivated(grown). Now in the present, we see many different variations of the prized bean. From lattes to cakes, most people can't get enough of it. Coffee now includes a ton of choices to choose from to customize your own drink, even the milk. But a new flavor that is becoming very popular in the younger generations, a simple iced latte with honey and lavender flavoring, with, or course, oat milk(which is my favorite, so I'm a bit biased).

The process of making coffee is very similar to harvesting nuts, with a 5 step process before it gets shipped off, in cutely decorated bags or just before it's served. The steps include; 1)Picking, 2)Milling, 3)Drying, 4)Removal, 5)Roasting. The whole process can be tedious, mainly because you have to watch and be patient.

When picking your cherries, try to choose the reddest looking ones(30-50), those are perfectly ripe and ready to make that delicious brew. Milling is pretty much just removing the seeds(mostly known as beans), from the cherry. There are special machines for this, that separates it all pretty quickly. But just scoring the cherries and pushing out the bean will do. Then let the beans dry for about 5-6 days, while looking for imperfections. And then the most important part of making coffee, the roast. Most roasting sessions are done by the color = the flavors you want. Like Professional Chef Joshua Weissman suggests, "I recommend stopping your roaster {or stop roasting} just before the color you want. The residual heat will roast it more.". Most of the time your roast color represents what flavors you want in your coffee; Light brown, a stubble nutty flavor to Dark Brown, a deep and robust flavor.

\Then wait 3-4 days to allow the beans to develop flavor and dry out. After that comes the grinding, and with different sizes come different techniques/recipes of coffee; a harsh ground typically is used for regular stepped coffee while the tiniest, almost powderlike is used for espresso. You can buy whole beans and just go to a grinder machine, typically at Trader Joe's or CostCo, and choose what size you need. I didn't know about these magical machines until last month when my cousin and I bought whole beans and almost broke the machine at a Trader Joe's. Which reminds me of the first time I encountered the process of making coffee.

I was in the 3rd grade, sitting in the living room of our small apartment with my grandma and while we were watching a Mexican program, Telemundo, from telenovelas to all of a sudden a documentary of coffee. It was a lady in her home talking about how much she loved coffee and wanted to make it. Then it jumped to a coffee orchid and its owner. At the time I was very confused, but my grandma's eyes were glued to the screen. She called me and told me to get her notebook "Dame mi libreta, el rojo, y un lápiz(get me my notebook, the red one, and pen)", so there I went. The whole 1 hour and 30 minutes we watched the program, she wrote down everything. The tip of the pen never left the paper. And when it finished all I heard was "Quiero hacerlo." (I want to make it).

In the next few days, whenever I saw her, she was planning, writing things down and talking to friends of hers. Then one day when I came home, skipping down the road with my sister, we saw her holding a big box. And inside were the coffee cherries, with one nod of her head and a "Vamos, a cocinar." (Let's go cook), our coffee journey began.

Milling. We didn't have a miller so I ended up breaking apart a machine for mashing corn and a cheese grater. I don't know how but it worked. The precious bean was exposed. We waited for them to dry, for what felt like years, but it was only like 5 days just so we could get to the roasting. My grandma was very extra and wanted us to do them by hand over the stove, so there my sister and I went standing over the pot on top of Disney Princess stools. We kept rigorously mixing and mixing the pots trying to get them as evenly roasted as possible.

My sister's was lightly roasted, "Como tu pelo mija, dorada.(just like your hair, golden)", my grandma said. And mine, she told me it would be her favorite, a nice dark roast. I was pretty positive that it was burnt but with the beautiful aroma coming from the house. It was a success. Then the waiting game, another couple of days, just so we could pack them up and give them to our family. We put them in little paper bags that my sister and I decorated with "Cafe De Abuela", hugely printed on the front. That week when I opened the door to the home the smell of that brown bean hit me in the face. I saw my grandma looking at the newest specials for stores while drinking from a pink mug and she looked at me and said "Pruebalo."(try it).

My parents like to blame my grandma for my "addiction" to coffee, but I think it was that moment that made me appreciate the labor of love in cooking and anticipation of something good. Thinking back to that memory, it really showed how even though I was tired and didn't want to do it anymore, my grandma, forcefully, made us finish and we completed what I thought was impossible.

It has gone from just a regular "cafe noir", the one that started it all, to the thousands of Coffee has always been a comfort of mine, making the high energizing drink in some way brings me relaxation and tranquility, even just for a bit. It's a bit ironic in some way, something so energizing making me relaxed. But don't you worry it ends up changing my mind just after I drink it.

Moments Unbound

by Emma Johnson

When I was 10, I went to my very first concert. It was not by free will of course, I was dragged there by my overly enthusiastic parents. In my mind, I had developed the preconceived notion that it was going to be the worst night of my life. I was expecting for there to only be adults drinking alcohol, overcrowded seats, and excruciatingly painful music. What I did not expect was the sheer power of Paul McCartney's presence. The exact second he appeared on stage, the crowd erupted in welcoming applause and satisfaction. With just the first few beats of his former songs with The Beatles, exploding out of astronomically large speakers, he generated such joyous energy. Never in my life had I seen community expressed to this extent. There were drunken college students holding hands and skipping in a circle, singing with all the voice they could channel, completely oblivious to the world around them; just living in that moment. There were policemen standing and smiling at their carefree nature, eventually joining them in complete and utter content. There was a crowd of 56,000 individuals solemnly muttering the words of Blackbird when a wave of realization hit them; this is temporary. But we learn to make the most of what we have, and live in the moment unbound.

Losing Myself Twice

by Grace Wilson

It was the night after the incident. My mind blank and my body stiff, I sat there on my friends sofa in shock of what had just happened. My phone rang and buzzed every 5 minutes, different relatives and friends questioning if the news was true. I couldn't move or think. I felt abandoned and alone, despite all the noises my phone was making telling me otherwise. I had lost my mother. The process of grief that had begun felt like an emotional cancer. Lack of support and care caused me to sink to the bottom of a pool that no one was ever meant to swim in.

My grieving process began with disbelief and denial. The next few weeks in my home I felt alienated, not just in my surroundings, but in my own body as well. I felt like a shell and in it was a confused little girl, questioning if it was my fault or if it was all just a bad dream she would soon wake from. My own thoughts argued like children fighting for a toy, except the toy in this situation was the pondering question: "Why?" If only it were that easy to answer. I began bargaining with myself. I put so much pressure on myself about the whole incident to find a person to blame, eventually I found myself looking right at my own finger. Almost every week I apologized to her friends and family. No one but me blamed me, yet I still found this need to punish myself for all the bad that had been done. So I did. I ignored all red flags in every relationship and let people walk all over me, until I felt like nothing, because that's what I thought I deserved.

My whole life I was able to adapt quickly, yet I couldn't now. For 6 months I sat on the couch in my living room. Crying, eating, starving, throwing up and slowly watching my body shut down. My friends were absent and my family was broken. I sat there feeling sorry for myself, then I remembered just how much

pain everyone else was in. Anger and confusion filled my mind and only sent me further down my spiral into a dark and lonely abyss created by the faults in my ego. I wanted to help others but I couldn't even help myself. I was a shell of a person and a ball of emotions. I was a heartbroken little girl whose only company were the tricks her mind played on her.

Throughout the whole situation, there was something that always bothered me: pity. So many people felt pity for me, and that on the surface level is expected, however it stopped at pity. There was no empathy or sympathy, calls and texts to reassure me it was going to be ok. People constantly going out of their way to avoid me, I felt like a hazard. One year after the incident we moved. I left that house behind, I just wish I was able to leave the things that happened in that house behind too. I put so much faith in that leaving would magically fix it all. My mind became a cloud, heavy and damp with lonely thoughts, and quarantine only made it worse. Now I was alone with that cloud. I felt so much anger, not only towards myself, but to others as well.

No one ever prepares you for the worst part, acceptance. You have to admit to yourself that they, whoever they are, isn't coming home. Acceptance is a journey, one that I am still traveling. I try coping with dumb jokes or laughing at myself, but that's just it, I'm the only one laughing. All that liquid gold to cover up tears that still haven't been wept. It's all an illusion to try to help myself, an illusion that doesn't work. I see her in my dreams and she haunts my memories. Sometimes when I look in the mirror, I cry because of how much I look like her. But as the years go by, I can tell that time is slowly helping me accept what has happened. Slowly I am swimming up to the surface of that pool.

Struggles Within: My Journey with Weight

by Abigail Escalante

March 15th, 2021: A date I will always remember and hold dear to my heart. That day was the path to the rest of my life.

Ever since I was a toddler I have been overweight. My struggle with weight has been a huge part of my life, and I'll always have to struggle with it somehow. Although I was always overweight, I never realized how much bigger I was than my friends until middle school. Middle school was the first time I ever really cared about my appearance. No one ever really complimented me about my appearance. Compliments I got were always about my heart or personality, which is great.

I always seemed like the happy kid who everyone always saw with a smile on my face, but little did they know that I didn't like how I was. I guess that is part of the game of life though. Trying to fit in even when you don't.

I wasn't alone in this battle because I have had family members who struggled with this also. I saw two of them go through and finish the process of getting weight loss surgery. Although I never thought this was for me until a little over a year ago one day when my mom and I were on a long drive. I broke down crying about how much the number on the scale broke me, we decided it was time for a change.

A couple months later I went to a special bariatric doctor to talk about the possibility of getting the surgery. It was a lot to take in, but I dove right into the process to help basically save my life. Some people don't understand that getting the surgery doesn't magically fix everything. I still have to put in so much work everyday. It is just a tool for me to change my life and it is up to me to change it.

The next half a year were some of the hardest times in my life, especially March. March 1st was the day I started the pre surgery diet. Only protein drinks/shakes, clear liquids, and jello. That was my life.

Sitting there with my family eating delicious smelling food while I was stuck with my strange smelling soup broth and a protein shake. It was pure torture, but I would do it again in a heartbeat.

March 15th, 2021 before the sun even comes up I am out the door on the way to the hospital. I felt the cold-crisp air on my face as I walked out the door. I sat in the car with my black sweatpants and Ventura High School sweatshirt on. I walked in the door of the hospital smelling the typical hospital smell. I was scared of what was to come, but excited at the same time.

Sitting there waiting for my new beginning was so nerve wracking. I couldn't believe that I was about to get this thing that will completely change my life. I sat there debating if it was worth it, to go through all this pain, but I knew that was just the nerves talking.

I got all checked in and after a while they prepped me for my gastric bypass surgery. The nurse's cold hands touched my warm skin. Ended up setting me up on the bed before I got rolled away. I got lifted onto the bed and taken away into my future.

The pain I felt when I woke up was unimaginable. I wanted to go back in time and not have the surgery. Not feel the constant pain. It was beyond belief. I woke up screaming and crying asking for help. I eventually got pain medication, but it didn't help much. It was the worst pain I have ever felt, but I don't regret going through it and I would do it again in a heartbeat. My life has been so much better since March 15th, 2021. The day my life permanently changed.

Although today is still a struggle, I am way better off than I used to be. Now I am 100 pounds lighter than I was. Everyday is still a battle. The surgery was just a tool and now I have to put in all the work, but that is how life is. You will have help along the way, but your life is in your own hands. If you want something to change, you need to go out and do it for yourself.

Reject Tradition, Embrace Modernity

by Alejandro Hernandez

There are very few guarantees in life, but one of them is change. Change often presents itself through several mediums, whether that be through societal attitudes or technological advancement. However, reaction to change is much more important than the change itself. For the purposes of this essay, antagonistic attitudes towards change will be referred to as "conservative," and supportive attitudes referred to as "progressive." Apathy and other viewpoints on change will be ignored since they aren't as significant.

I would fall into the progressive category. I believe that change is a vehicle for progress, and that progress leads to true liberation. The liberated can come in the form of various minority groups, but can also occur to society at large. For example, within the past few decades, the societal consensus on same-sex marriage has become favorable. According to Gallup polls, in 1996 support for same-sex marriage stood at 27 percent, while in 2021 support reached a record high of 70 percent. A majority in favor had only been achieved around 2011. A change in the American stance on same-sex marriage brought the country closer to gay liberation, while also freeing society from the chains of tradition.

A common phrase among some conservatives is "reject modernity, embrace tradition." The words should be flipped. Instead, tradition should be rejected and modernity should be embraced. That is the progressive platform. Tradition has its strengths, and not all traditional ideas are necessarily bad ideas, but they can be recycled into a stronger modernity. Practicing 19th-century medicine today would be outrageous. It has been rejected for some time now. Instead, its roots were taken and used for compost, allowing modern medicine to spring into its place.

Similarly, traditional ideas (which are often from the 19th century or before) on race, sexuality, gender identity and the like

must be salvaged and then promptly rejected to make way for the modern understanding of those concepts.

If outmoded medicine is no longer accepted then why should outmoded concepts that affect daily life be accepted?

Once a new understanding is reached and it is put into practice, then the affected group or groups of people will achieve a higher degree of liberation. For example, in the United States, it became understood that segregation against people of color was not acceptable. This freed people of color from the chains of tradition (segregation). It did give them a higher degree of liberation, but it did not liberate them entirely. There are still issues facing people of color at the present time and embracing modernity

in opposition to those issues will lead to an even higher degree of liberation. It may not be known what true liberation looks like, perhaps it is something beyond the realm of the imperfect world. What is known is that the next step in the potentially infinite staircase of liberation is possible, and it is known that it will happen through change.

There will be growing pains along the way. Change may not come easy, especially to those whose minds may still be locked by the chains of tradition. People continue to argue from tradition. "That's just the way it is." "But it's a tradition." It is about doing things the right way." That is a conservative mindset, one bound by tradition. It may be difficult to correct. It however can be achieved. The solution is to simply let go of the old and let in the new. Beliefs beyond their time, beliefs that are dark colonial remnants. Examples of this are homophobia, misogyny, and racism. All must be let go in favor of progress. That is progressive change, leading to a newfound liberation for the commons.

Escape

by Sunday Bouvet

Having divorced parents, sometimes you feel like you need to escape. Escape from the drama, the arguing, the favoritism, and everything else. Sometimes you just need to disappear. Luckily enough I started playing soccer at age five and found that it helped me, it helped release my frustration and anxiety. I finally found my escape. A place where all I had to do was think about myself. No one else, not taking care of my little brother or accommodating my dad. Although, with games on the weekends, of course per usual, my dad had to complain about losing his time with me and my brother.

When I was on the field, filling my lungs with that crisp Saturday morning air waiting for the referee to blow the whistle, nothing else in the world mattered more than kicking a ball into a goal. Growing up on the field, I created some life long friendships and had amazing opportunities. I traveled from Bakersfield to Santa Barbara, and I even got to play at UCSB.

In my older years of playing, practices became more of an excuse to get out of the house and socialize, than it was an escape. Getting older, the more I realized that maybe soccer wasn't my complete escape. I soon realized that my parents would argue over who was paying for my cleats, or who was paying for the registration fees, and who would drive me to practices. It started to get negative and my escape started to feel like a burden.

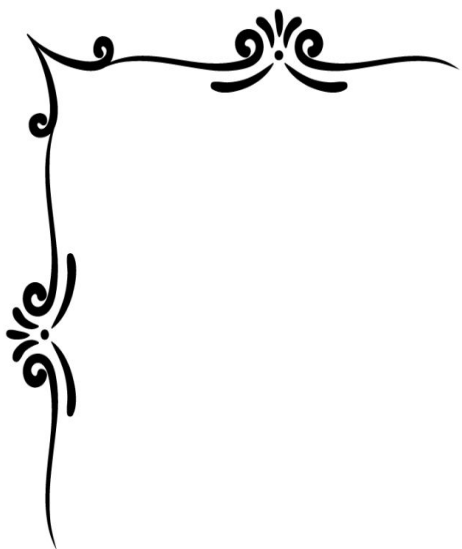
My last few years of playing were so much fun, I met some amazing people, unfortunately I sprained my ankle and I injured my knee, causing me to go to physical therapy. And because of that, it led me to finding what I want for my future career.

When the summer before freshman year came around, I was still playing AYSO and tryouts for the high school started early into the summer. I was nervous, but thankfully they had a few workouts days before the actual tryouts. Well, needless to say, I didn't make it past the second day of workouts. I couldn't do it, I was intimidated by the other girls, I wasn't confident enough, I wasn't in good enough shape, my world just came crashing down.

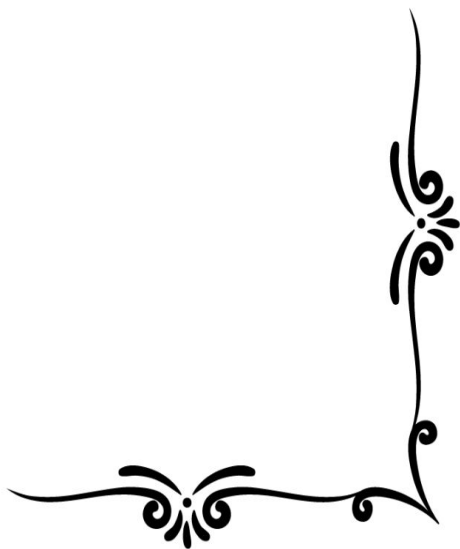
The sport I played for 11 years, I just couldn't play anymore. My escape was gone. I was stranded. I didn't know what sport I was going to play in high school, I didn't know what I was going to do. Around the same time of the soccer workouts, the basketball team was having their tryouts. One of my life long friends was trying out. And somehow, she convinced me to try out with her.

I had never played basketball before and I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

Surprisingly, I made the team. I began my journey with basketball and I slowly yet surely began to fall in love with the sport and it now became my outlet, my escape. I've made such strong friendships and connections. As I started to fall out of love for soccer, I started to fall in love with basketball. I'm so thankful I found basketball when I did. Growing up not only playing, but watching sports has really made me the person I am today. It's taught me about teamwork, putting in the extra time and hard work for success. The fighting and the problems will never go away. And one day, my days on the court will end, forcing me to find yet another escape teaching me how to face my problems.



FICTION



Unbound

by Katie Rundle



She never had a friend quite like loneliness. Its familiar gnawing at her heart; the way it hung over her like a shadow which would accompany her wherever she went. It was terribly comforting, and even when she was with her closest friends she was aware of the way it slowly crept toward her; enveloping her in a gentle hug that threatened to squeeze tight and never let her go. Like a child desperate for the warmth of its mother, she felt herself reaching for its familiarity at times; finding solace in the pain that took root in her heart and bloomed throughout her chest. If loneliness was alcohol, she would be an addict, and on nights like these she reached for the bottle with an aching heart and uneasy hands.

She had gone to an old friend's wedding. It was a happy occasion; with lanterns hanging all around the venue illuminating the bride and groom's smiles. As they said their vows and looked at each other, eyes sparkling with the innocence and naivety that can only belong to young lovers, she found herself thinking of her own wedding. It had not been nearly as polished, as she had said her vows under a rickety arch instead of in an elegant chapel, but it had been just as special. Beaming with the promise of a life filled with love and acceptance, of new hardships and new wonders she would face with her partner, the world had seemed almost infinite in its possibilities; the sky's vastness concealing the future's secrets.

And only 3 years later he was gone. A drunk truck driver had pummeled into him as he was driving home after one of his late night shifts at the hospital, and the car had shattered onto the highway with him in it. And suddenly she was made aware of how life could take something away from you in an instant; how nothing was promised and everything was always at stake. She was made aware of this when two policemen had come to her door, somber expressions worn on their tired faces, and taken off

their caps; when she suddenly bent over, her pregnant belly becoming weights strapped to her limp figure, the panic and paranoia she had felt when he hadn't picked up his phone in the past few hours confirmed.

The pregnancy had been difficult- terribly difficult, and she had found herself praying weeks before the birth although she wasn't religious. *How can I do this without you?* She asked this as she stared at his perpetually smiling photograph in a small wooden frame at her bedside; as though if she stared at the picture intensely enough he would come alive and return to her and answer her question.

And although she loved her child- *Luca*, she had named him; she also felt a fear that gripped her heart and threatened to leave her in gasps whenever she stared at him for too long. A fear that he would be taken from her too; that he would light her life as his father had only for the sun to set and she be left alone. He was beautiful, with his father's green flecks in his eyes and his bouncy curls, and she was glad that she hadn't named Luca after him since she didn't think she could bear any more reminders than were already present. For when she looked at him she saw both her past and her future; that which had ended and that which had just begun.

And when she stared at him for too long, her innocent boy with a gentle smile and a joyous laugh, she felt both an intense love and a profound sadness; and wondered how two emotions that she had always considered to be completely separate could mix so seamlessly into one.

She knew that people had expected her to move on- almost everyone had, retiring him into their memory as one places a dusty book they had read long ago back onto its shelf. But she was afraid of moving on. It seemed a betrayal to him, to their shared life and aspirations together during those three years, to merely toss his memory like it was an unwanted item and walk away. Yet at times his absence seemed to be more profound than his presence had been. For there were still nights when she woke up from a terrible nightmare and gripped his side of the

bed for him only to remember that he was gone, and days when she expected to hear the light shuffle of his feet before he embraced her in a hug only to realize that would never happen again.

It was on these nights that her loneliness felt the most suffocating. At times her pain would be so great that it felt as though a weighted blanket was pressed against her chest, reducing her breaths to short bursts and making living a struggle that she was tempted to give up with every passing day. And yet whenever she felt such overwhelming hopelessness she remembered her child; her little beacon of light in her dreary and mundane life, and thought that if God was real he showed himself in her son's glistening eyes and innocent smile.

She knew that she must keep trying for him. Trying to merely live; not to enjoy life but to at least escape from the depths of her depression. Her soul had felt raw and uncovered since her love had died; unbound and naked. Left by herself, she was made aware of life's vastness and her smallness, and she began to search for the pieces of herself she had lost with her husband in that great abyss. Perhaps they had died with him and were gone forever; but she knew that she must look if she at least hoped to become somewhat intact again.

And so she began to get better. She started to feel joy again; not the whole thing, but remnants of it, and the feeling was so foreign to her that she at first mistook it for delusion. She learned that healing is not a linear path, but instead a great land with hills of highs and pits of lows, and on those nights she was stuck in a pit she reminded herself that she would find her way out and be on top of a hill once more. She learned that as she was unbound so was life; and in all its pain and beauty it had not forsaken her but instead allowed her to experience its endless dimensions and depths. And as she began to find pieces of herself she had feared were lost forever, she also discovered new ones.

So as she stood there in that gleaming chapel reflecting on those years that followed her own wedding, her loneliness from seeing the happy couple dimmed and her heart began to swell with pride.

Pride that she had continued on despite her fears and sorrow; pride that she had the strength to care for Luca despite her doubts that she was not the mother he deserved. She had thought that her child had given her a new life where the life with her husband had ended, and although this wasn't entirely false she now realized that she had given herself a new start. She was brave; she was strong, she was free. She was unbound.

Bloody Pines Debacle
by Marissa Prado



Tabitha was not looking forward to attending her new school, especially in the middle of the school year. She had heard from her parents that they were in a bit of a pickle with their financial situation so they decided to pack their things and move to South Carolina, where they could settle down in a place that would go easier on their wallets. However, Tabitha thought that maybe her parents went a bit extreme with their idea.

They ended up in a pretty shady looking area with plenty of trees growing around the nearby homes. A bright side to it, though, was that there was a school down the street from the house the family moved into, which was also surrounded by trees and a lot more than the amount of trees in the neighborhood. It almost felt like the entire area of the school was just buried in trees and the name of the school, Pine Hills High, held true to its environment. A majority of the trees were a mix of pine and occasional oak trees and it almost looked like there was a full-on forest in the back of campus. It was a place that Tabitha could see herself growing comfortable with, but what was stopping her was the part of her new neighborhood that made where she lived shady — and this wasn't about the trees, but the vibes she felt coming off of the site.

Tabitha had enjoyed her fair share of mystery dramas, horror, and true crime to feel a little uneasy about this new school she'll be attending, but she's been trying to teach herself not to judge things based on appearances. It's stopped her from many things in the past, which is why she set a goal to try new things in this new setting. Even though the school had a good student count, a little over a thousand, and the buildings

themselves seemed well taken care of and attended to, the overwhelming amount of trees couldn't help but make Tabitha feel a bit cautious.

And on top of all of that, she was also starting school in the beginning of the second semester, so she had stuff to catch up on. The students there, both in her grade and upperclassmen, were pretty much already separated into their own cliques, so making friends was pretty much marked off with a question mark on the checklist of things to do to survive her new school — maybe figuratively and literally — and one of the necessities for promoting at the end of the year was to complete a certain amount of community service hours by that time, so she needed to jump on that as soon as possible.

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The first few days of school helped Tabitha settle in and when she felt like she had the time, with homework and everything, she took the opportunity to find activities to do to earn those hours. After the bell rang to dismiss students from their last class, she took the handle of her wheeled backpack and rushed over to the office. Although, there was a small problem; she still didn't really understand the layout of the school yet. And since she was in a hurry, she figured that she'd ask around so she could keep moving.

She spotted a boy at his locker who was scrolling through

his phone. He had swoopy, short brown hair and was wearing a red beanie, violet shirt, denim pants that were slightly wrinkled, and a lime green backpack that was slung across his shoulder — although an odd color, went well with his outfit.

As the boy pointed to the direction to the office, Tabitha thanked him and blindly rushed down the hall, almost bumping into another boy who seemed to be wearing an open jacket over a tank top. Fortunately, he moved out of the way in time because Tabitha had processed his existence after she had passed him due to her focus on getting to the office.

She pushed through the glass door to, what had the appearance of, an ordinary school office and had a high ceiling with large windows on either side of the entrance. She tucked back a piece of hair that fell from her bun and walked over to the receptionist to ask about opportunities for community service. She fiddled with the sleeves of her slightly oversized hoodie as the lady was speaking to her. As the lady at the desk gave her a slip of paper with information on it, Tabitha saw a girl walk out of the principal's office. She had dirty blonde hair and was wearing a red tank top and black leggings. The receptionist went into a separate room as the girl was walking towards the door of the office but then was met with another blond boy sporting a burgundy pullover walking into the office at the same time. It seemed like they knew each other and the last time they had spoken, it was not a good encounter.

The girl ended up pushing past him, very upset and possibly crying. Tabitha adjusted her glasses before she trailed behind the girl out of concern. Tabitha spotted the girl in the other building, sitting on the floor and leaning against the lockers as she silently cried into her arms. Tabitha silently debated with herself about whether she should go over to the girl or not but ended up

leaving for the bus stop after the girl got up to go to the restroom, most likely to fix up her makeup.

On the slip of paper that Tabitha got for community service information, it told her to go to the student drop-off area near the far left edge of the school that Saturday at 8:00 am. Though, that was all it really said — nothing about the type of work that she would be doing and how many hours she would be receiving. But, maybe the person in charge would tell her about that information when they got there.

Tabitha arrived a little early and spotted the girl who was crying near the lockers. As she and the other boy argued that day, Tabitha picked up that her name was Maisy and the boy was named Chris. She decided to go up to her and ask to wait with her since she had held herself back last time and wanted to try and step out of her comfort zone, but Tabitha made a quick trip to the restroom. When she came out, a couple of other kids were standing near the area too. One of the boys had black hair, she'd never seen him before, and the other was the one she almost bumped into in the hallway. He was holding a familiar looking backpack until a third boy came out of the boy's restroom and grabbed it from the tank top boy's hands. It was the same kid with the red beanie. The three boys must've all been friends. A few minutes later, two other boys were approaching the area from the other side of the sidewalk. It was Chris and a tall boy with a letterman jacket. Chris got closer and stood near Maisy. It looked like they were still upset from the other day, so Tabitha watched for if anything were to happen again before it was finally time for work.

The principal met up with them and once it was settled that these were the only kids coming to do community service, he told the group to follow him. He led them all into the library and

to a big table near the middle of the room, covered with stacks of papers. He instructed them to organize all the papers and if they complete the work within a certain amount of time, they will earn 5 hours for their work but the longer they take, an hour will be removed.

The kids surrounded the table and each got their own piles of papers. Tabitha wound up between the red beanie kid and the tank top kid. Next to the tank top kid was the black haired kid at the end of the table and on the other side was Maisy, the letterman jacket kid and Chris. The room was mostly quiet with some side conversations, including the black haired kid mentioning the eerie lighting in the library with the lights half on and Tabitha agreeing with him, adding in her own thoughts that she's had about the school as well.

Through the different conversations going on between the three boys, Tabitha learned their names; the red beanie kid's name was Mason, the tank top kid's name was Frazer, and the black haired kid was named Brendan. Along with that, Tabitha could occasionally hear chatter from the other side of the table and the only other name she heard that sounded unfamiliar to her was "Dan" so she assumed that it was the name of the boy with the letterman jacket. She saw that he stepped away from the table to pick up papers that had scattered across the floor of the room but something felt... a little off? For Tabitha, at least. Maybe it was something about the style of the library? The interior had stairs at the front of the room leading up to an elevated section where there was a huge wall of books and a podium with a statue on top and the way it looked was somewhat creepy. She couldn't really explain it but...

"Guys..."

Everyone turned to where Dan's voice was coming from and...

Wait, why was Tabitha's heart thrumming so weirdly? Just a minute ago, it was completely normal, but the way that Dan wasn't moving and fixed on a singular spot on the floor was concerning somehow to her. But, why? It could just be nothing. There was no reason for the air to feel this tense.

The group moved over to where Dan was and looked down at the same spot his gaze was upon and...

A bloody knife.

What?

So many questions filled Tabitha's mind and she was sure that everyone else's brains were rattled too. She felt her chest fill with this sort of pressure that dissipated as quickly as it arose. She never would've expected that her suspicions would be proven true and that she would be roped into such a mystery that would turn into something much, much bigger as her school life, as she knew it, would come to a quicker close than she would've imagined.

Part One: The Launch

by Daniel Smiley

Roger Chaffee Schedule: 5/7/73

4:30: Wake up call.

5:00: Breakfast with backup crew and Deke Slayton.

5:30: Suiting up.

6:30: Leave for pad 39A.

7:00: Getting into Constitution.

7:30: Checks, checks and more checks.

9:30: Go time.

That was my schedule for the morning of May 7th, 1973. My first thought was, “I can’t get up at four in the morning and launch in a rocket five hours later!” So the mission planners moved wake up time to 9:00, and Apollo 18 became a night launch. When I woke up that morning, I felt as nervous as a fish in a penguin exhibit. All of a sudden, I had memories of where I was when the Apollo 13 news broke. And I remember firsthand the Apollo 1 fire. As I said my last words before the launch to my wife and kids through a telephone in quarantine, my 12-year-old son asked me, “Daddy? Can you bring me back a moon rock?” From that moment on, I was devoted to going through with the launch, no matter what.

I practically leapt into my pressure suit, and was suited up faster than my fellow astronauts who had already done this a million times. As this was my first flight, I was nerve-cited - a word my daughter had come up with when she was seven, meaning nervous and excited. As we waved for the photographers, I couldn’t help but wonder which one of those cameras might capture our last moments before we climbed into the 36 story Saturn V, a three stage rocket designed by Wernher von Braun. The Saturn V’s stages were, in respective order, the

S-IC (First stage), S-II (Second stage), and S-IVB (Third stage).

On top of the white and black stack was our silver ship, Constitution, with her escape tower.

Because I was the Lunar Module Pilot, or LMP, I got in second. First was the commander of the mission, who would land on the surface of the Moon with me. After I got in, the CMP entered the command module. The CMP who would stay in space while we were on the Moon, but would still be able to talk to us through mission control. The hatch was closed, and now began the grueling two hour wait until liftoff. Ed White and Gus Grissom had already waited through several of these experiences in their lives, so they promptly fell asleep. Therefore, I became “in charge” of the cockpit, which meant I had to be the one to check all the switches and dials for Launch Control. Eventually, Gus and Ed woke up, and it was time.

There must’ve been thousands of dials, buttons and switches, and I had memorized all of them. Even though I could only reach the systems controls, the right half of the dashboard, I had been trained to use all of them in case an emergency happened. That included the abort handle. The abort handle was a small red piece of metal the commander clutched during takeoff. Although the system changed for each launch vehicle, the basic principle remained the same. If anything at all went wrong (such as the propellant leaking, catching fire, and blowing the rocket up, or only two first or second stage engines fired, or anything abnormal at all were to happen), the commander would pull the ring.

I was reminded by a startling fact: the fifteen minute ride from the preparation area to pad 39A was longer than our twelve minute voyage into space. At first, this seemed hard to believe, yet as time went on, this felt more believable, as my nerves were mentally prolonging my final moments on Earth before liftoff.

At last, when we got off the truck, we got a glance at the majestic beast. Filled to the brim with liquid oxygen and kerosene, the first stage alone stood 138 feet into the sky, ready to ignite at a moment's notice. Below the five F-1 engines was an in-ground basin. I radioed Launch Control, who said it was to be filled with water seconds before ignition, to prevent the expelled propellant from bouncing back into the engines. This would cause the bells to overheat, melt any and all pipes in the engines, and destroy our chances of flying today, along with our lives. Great. Just what I needed. One more variable to worry about.

As we clambered into the elevator that would take us to the command module, Launch Control informed us that there were some storm clouds brewing overhead, but they would pass momentarily. Launch control was in charge of ensuring that launch proceed well, and if it didn't they would also be in charge of ordering abortion of the mission, and they even had the power to detonate the rocket if needed.

We stepped out of the lift into the white room, a white box that extends to the rocket. Inside were the last humans besides each other we would see before coming back from the Moon. Günter Wendt and his technicians would help us into the vehicle, just as he had been doing since the first time Americans went to space. In fact, Günter had helped both of my crewmates onto Liberty Bell 7 and Gemini 3 and 4.

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the rocket up, or only two first or second stage engines fired, or anything abnormal at all were to happen), the commander would pull the ring.

This would cause the command module to disconnect from the service module, and the escape-abort system (which were the four high-pressure solid state rockets resting above our heads) would pull us away from any catastrophe.

As I entered the spacecraft, I couldn't help noticing how clean and pristine it looked. Gunther smiles at me from outside, and I knew he had some tricks up his sleeve. "Hey Ed, can you look under my seat?"

"Well what do you know? There's sandwiches under there for all of us!"

Gus Grissom was delighted to find he had received a corned beef sandwich from the same deli that John Young had smuggled another corned beef sandwich for Gus's Gemini 3 mission. I informed the crew that this would be our last "real" meal. From then on, it was only prepackaged, dehydrated, and canisterised food until we splashed down.

"Apollo 18, this is Launch Control here. All systems are go, we are ready to resume countdown. T minus thirty minutes."

Finally! After that delicious corned beef sandwich, I was ready to light this puppy. As the computer systems ran through the final checks, I began to pray. I was not a devout Christian, but I knew that this mission would be the most dangerous one yet, so I prayed for comfort over myself and protection for the crew.

"Launch control to Apollo 18, you have your final go for launch. T minus one minute. Godspeed."

I could almost feel the vibrations as the clock started ticking down. The vibrations coursed through the cockpit as the liquid kerosene and oxygen rushed to the combustion chamber,

their destruction imminent. As the clock came closer to zero, time seemed to slow down. With Ed White on my left and Virgil “Gus” Grissom on the far left, I was surrounded by legends. Ed White had first flown on Gemini 4, where he was the first American to walk in space. Gus Grissom became the second American in space when he flew on Liberty Bell 7, the second Mercury mission. Both astronauts had amazing backgrounds, and lived for this type of adventure. For me, this was my first flight. Just being near them I felt like I was cool. But that nearly changed on January 27, 1967. But that is a story for another, less stressful time.

All of a sudden, I could feel a tremendous roaring sensation, as if the mechanical beast I rode was starting a push that would start here, in Kennedy Space Center, and end where no man has gone before: the dark side of the Moon. I could barely hear the flight director announce to the world that the greatest expedition of mankind had just lifted off. As we started our ascent to low earth orbit, the pressure pushed and pulled at us, as if we were being crushed by a thousand Saturn Vs, the monstrous beast we were riding. Slowly but surely, the pressure increased, until I couldn’t take it anymore.

Just as I was about to cry out, I could faintly hear “Third stage shutoff” from CapCom. We lurched forward in our seats, and as a reminder that the only home I knew of was gone, I saw sporadic nuts and bolts floating across the cabin, which had fallen in cracks during the build. They posed no danger to us, but it would be a lot easier if we didn’t have them flying around the cabin during reentry. As I looked around in wonder, I could see that I was not the only person amazed with this display of magic known as microgravity. But my crewmates were looking at something even more spectacular, something out of my wildest dreams. As I looked out of the center window, the silent earth

spun below me. Without a doubt, that experience changed my life, and I can never look at anything the same way again. But as I wished I could stare out that window all day, for eternity, Houston came online. It was time to get back to work.

Trigger Warning: Depression, anxiety, substance abuse and implications of suicide.

The Stages of Her Episode - A Fictional Tragedy

Anonymous

Monday, 8:45 pm - Worry

Checking. Double-checking. Triple-checking. Are my alarms set? Do I have my ringer on to make sure I hear my alarms? Do I have my to-do list ready for tomorrow and the day after that? Constant routines and mental checklists flood my brain everyday from the moment I wake up to the second my head hits my pillow to go to bed. My notes app is so packed with all the thoughts I had to get out right at that moment, or else I would forget. Ah yes, my biggest fear, forgetting. The majority of my day I spend ruminating about things that aren't in my control, but I need them to be, to give myself a sense of peace and relief.

8:58 pm - Frustration

It's always "mental health is talked about too much and is too normalized" or "mental health isn't talked about enough." No one is ever happy with how much you have to say about yourself or how little you have to say about yourself. Pay over \$100 for a (1) therapy session, take a bubble bath, do some "self care," they'll tell you. Put on a face mask and all your problems will go away! These go-to temporary solutions for permanent sufferings are getting old. There is little accessibility to outlets and resources that are actually helpful, unless your family is rich and/or has connections with people in the psychiatric department. Why does it have to be so hard for teenagers to get help?

9:30 pm - Reflection

It really is a constant cycle. Wake up, go to school, go to work, eat dinner, sleep. Rarely do I ever have time for things I love to do, even then, the fun in it has disappeared, faded. My life has become so repetitive it's hard to keep track of what day it is, and I dread every extra minute I have to spend on this planet. I've dealt with so much gaslighting and manipulation that it's a struggle for me to validate my own feelings, having to reach out to family and friends for reassurance that the way I'm feeling is "allowed." I am getting tired.

9:32 pm - Epiphany

Nothing actually matters. We all consume copious amounts of media everyday, with everyone addicted to their phones. It's all temporary happiness and relief. You are all just little buttons on a screen to me. Crypto currency is some big joke and NFT's are taking over the world quicker than the goddamn pandemic. The rich man just keeps on getting richer. What even is real at this point?

9:49 pm - The Last Straw

I'm so tired but I can't sleep. Bawling my eyes out, I can barely see. Completing busy work for 3/6 classes because my academic success = how good of a person I am. School has completely drained me. The only exciting part about school is getting up to leave. Anxiety and paranoia constantly creeping up on me, making me wonder, am I just hallucinating all this? Am I making this up? I'm so in my head about everything, that I see the world through a lens of self-consciousness. It's truly such a disappointment that the English dictionary doesn't contain the words I could use to express exactly the way I've been feeling. It actually feels like more of a chore to try and verbalize the intense emotions I'm feeling, than it is to continue to sit with them.

10:41 pm - *Depersonalization*

I look in the mirror and I can't even recognize myself anymore. Dad's xanax bottle is empty, and so is my head. Finally the pain is going to go away. Finally I can feel true bliss. I will no longer be a burden to anyone. Call me selfish, but I was more than desperate to escape this living hell.

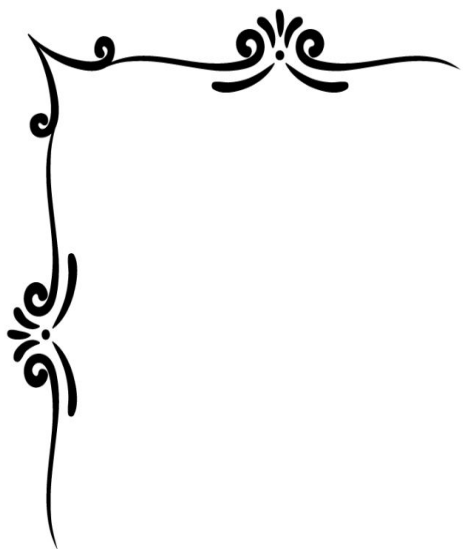
11:01 pm - *Relief*

My time is coming to an end. I feel it. Waiting for the Grim Reaper to come around the corner any minute now. I just wa

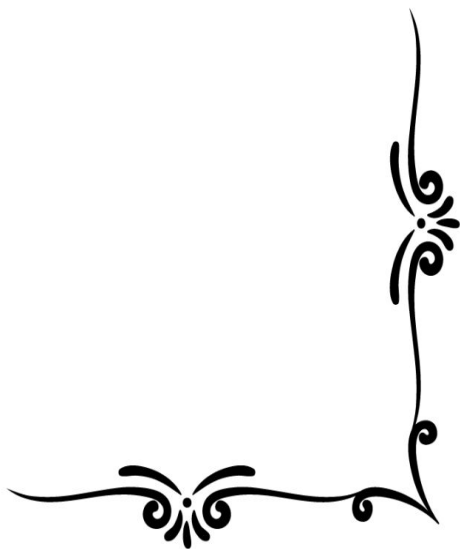
11:02 pm - *Oblivion*

Tuesday, 12:01 am - *Regret.*

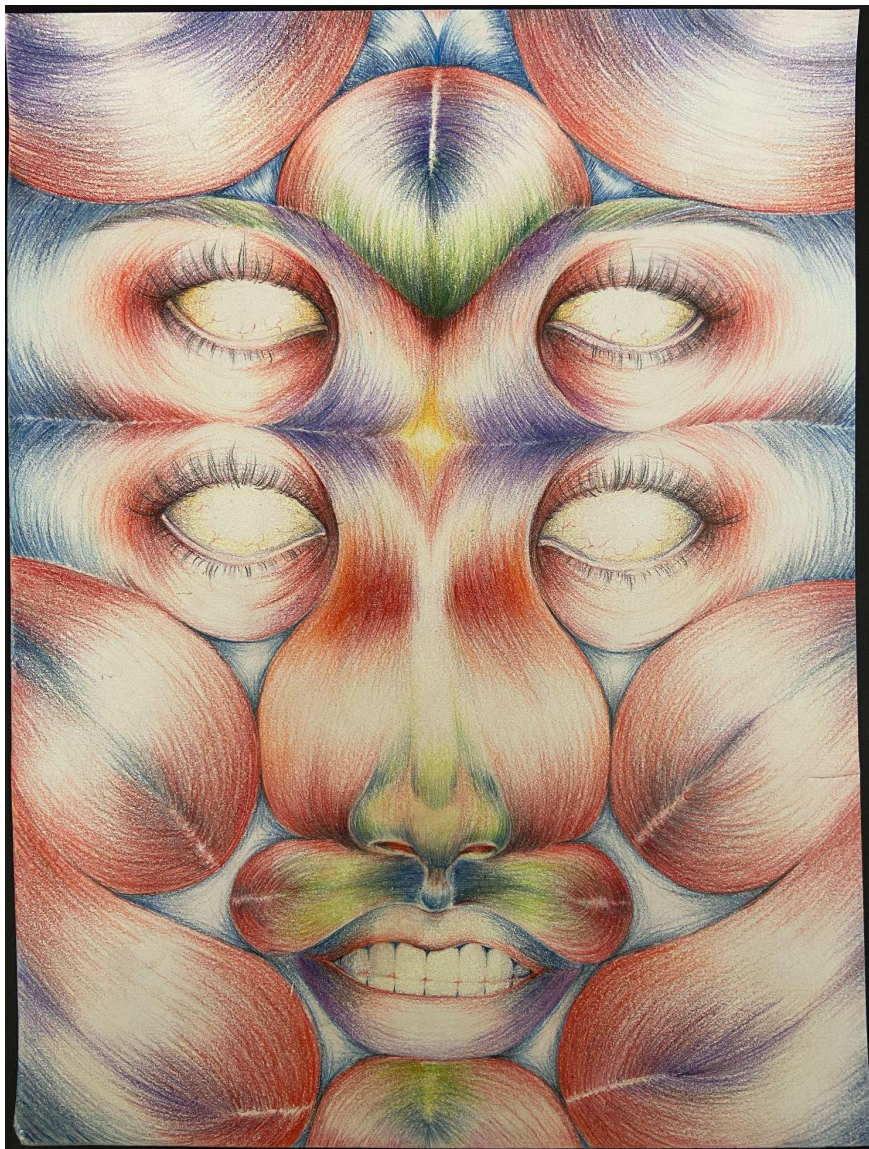
The weight that has been lifted from my chest has now been thrown onto my loved ones; The hurting I suffered from was transferred to them. My body hurts with guilt, knowing that I have given the burden of grief to my family, who has found me lying on my bed. I wish I had given more signs that I wasn't okay. I wish I had known that I wasn't alone. I wish I was more patient. In simpler terms, it wasn't worth it.



ART & PHOTOGRAPHY



Paola Chavez Flores



Sidney Cruts



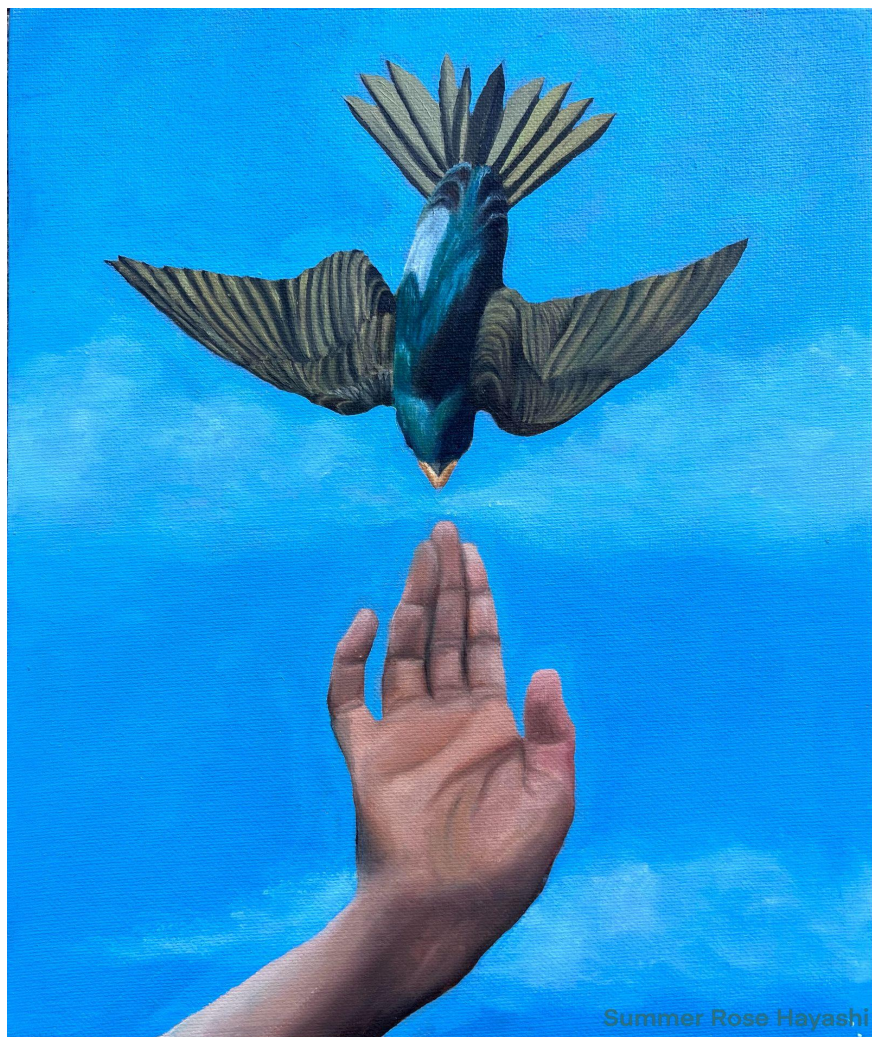
Olivia Ball



Makayla Nguyen



Summer Rose Hayashi



Lauren Shoop



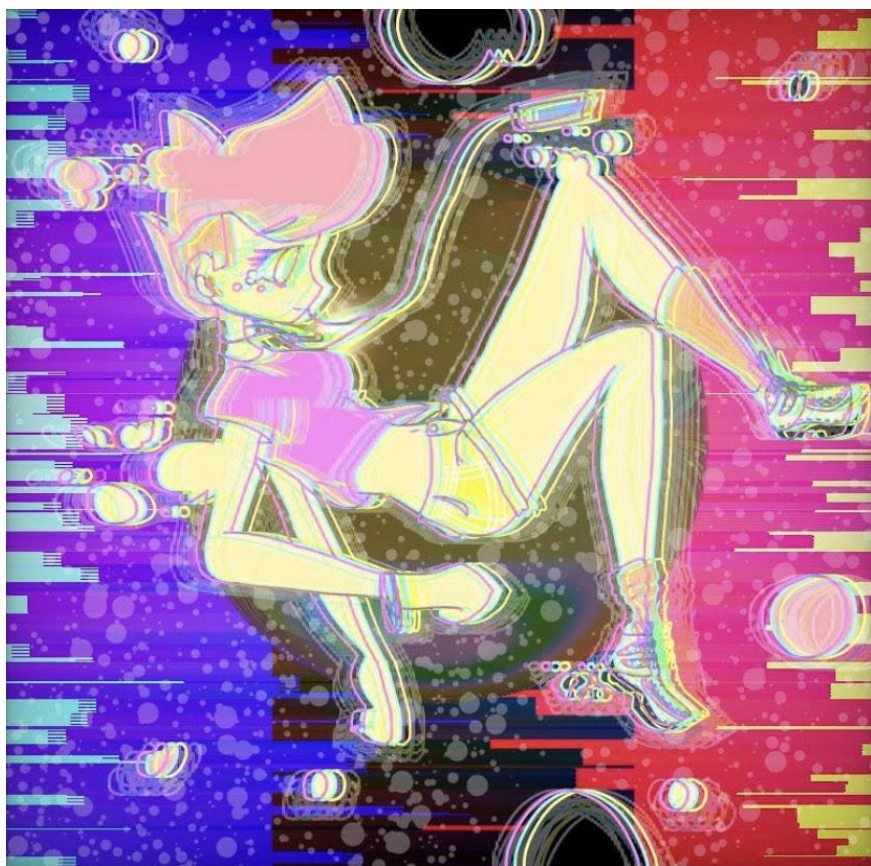
Victoria Cortez



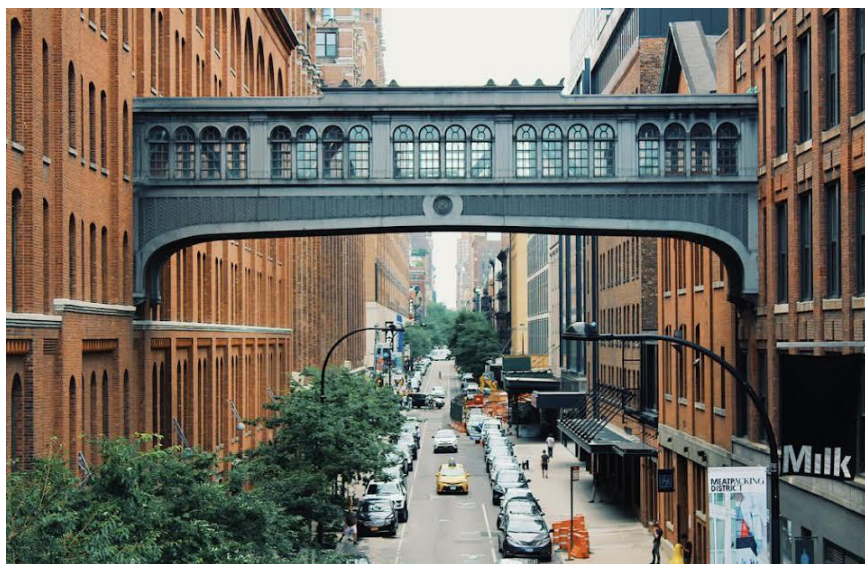
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Lucille Field



Inman Costa



Avery Kightlinger



Athena Thasiah



Sun Down
by Isabella Ramos



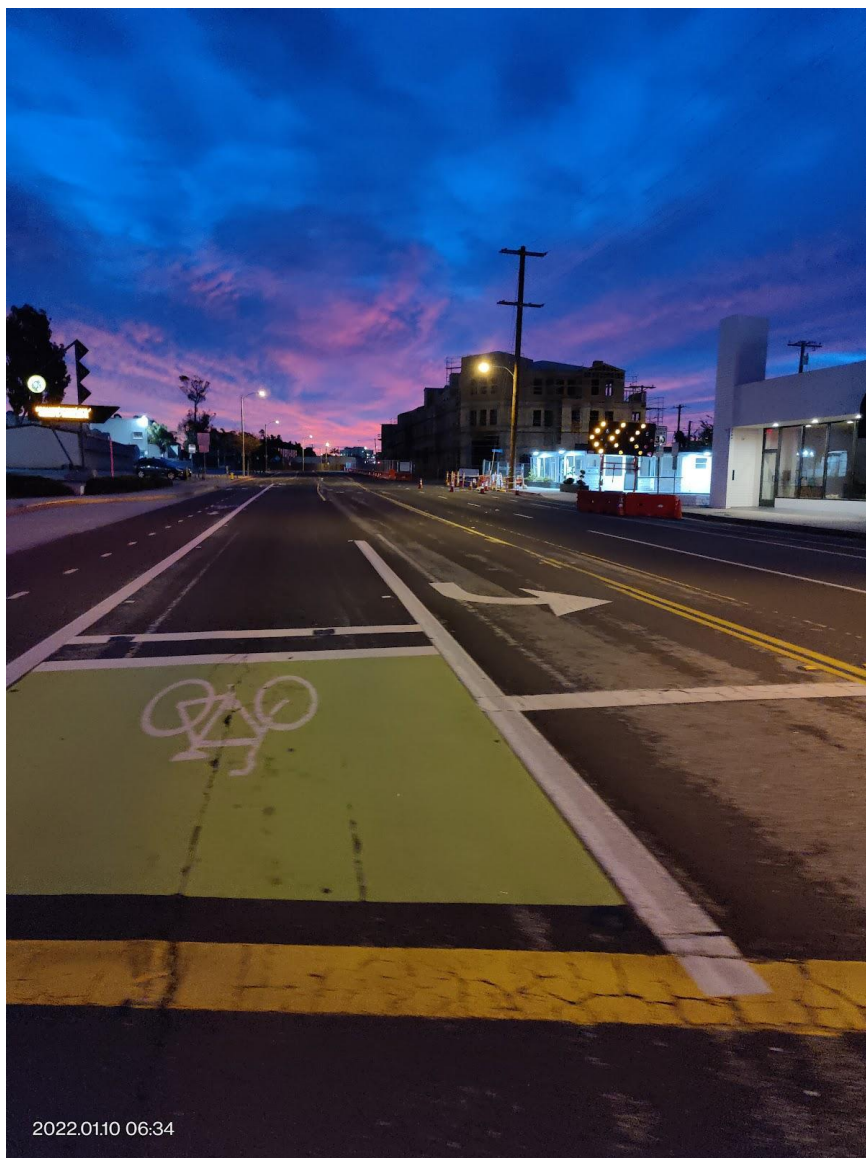
Athena Thasiah



The Channel Islands
by Emily Gonzales



Axel Osuna Diaz



Victoria Cortez



Avery Kightlinger



**“In the stillness of the mind I
saw myself as I am -- unbound.”**

- Nisargadatta Maharaj

2021-2022