

# Hang On, Let Go

ATLANTA GIRLS' SCHOOL

2019-2020 LITERARY MAGAZINE

Cover by Veronica Speyer

# Dedication

To the AGS Community, whose creativity and strength has shone brightly in the face of global challenges. We continue to be AGS strong.

# A Note From the Editors

This year's theme, "Hang On, Let Go," was inspired by the school's theme for this school year: "All of Life is a Journey". We wanted to use this edition to examine the challenges presented to us by the founder's charge. Within it, AGS co-founder Emily Ellison calls on the community to "choose courage, integrity, and wonder". We must hang on to the things that matter: our identities, our relationships, and the things that we love. Simultaneously, we must let go of the things that prevent us from thriving in our environment. In other words, we must pack lightly in order to express ourselves fully. Art and writing require full creative freedom, unburdened by the stressors of the world. Creatives must be open and honest with their audience in order to be successful. At AGS, we are already bold and open with the rest of our community and our creative pieces should be no different. So, we invite you to flip through the pages of this magazine and partake in the signature openness of AGS: the common willingness to share wholeheartedly with one another, because this is what makes us great.

- Madison Marsh '20, Kimberly Kassis '20, Veronica Speyer '20, Lelia Tolbert '20





Art by Wood

# How to Spot Merfolk

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## How to spot merfolk

Go to the beach, letting your feet pick up the tiny grains of gold.

Get as much as you can, the merfolk like watching the sparkle of it sucked up by the sea.

Pick up the largest shell you can find, and while holding it, think of your favorite childhood memory. They are attracted to favorites, since they crave attention and praise.

Before you approach the water's edge, make sure you have an offering on hand.

Anything salty will do; rock salt, french fries, even a tear if it's in a container.

The salt reminds them of their home, so they view you as less of an enemy. If you go in without it, and the merfolk are around, they will not hesitate to mess with you.

When you have all of the items, step into the water, slowly and carefully.

The merfolk are curious of their non-aquatic companions, but just like fish, will quickly retreat if you move too fast. Gain their trust first.

Once in the water, the waves will begin to push and prod. Don't worry, they're just observing you, and your differences. This will continue on for a bit, and then they will make their choice.

Be warned. Merfolk are picky, but very possessive. If you truly wish to see one of the merfolk, follow my instructions. It's very rare for them to accept you, but if they do, prepare for the beauty of their land and people. But be aware that with that beauty comes a sacrifice of freedom, trapped beneath the waves. And all your loved ones will find is a forgotten seashell, devoid of warmth.

It is not as dazzling as it seems.

By Cyrenity Augustin

# Ode to a Ball of Yarn

By the Poetry Writing Workshop Winterim Class

String of the Fates, the hobby of old  
women, you are soft like a soulmate.

Infinity sign of destiny, never-ending,  
we cannot find your beginning.

Thin but strong, you are a spiderweb,  
tightly wound, a vessel containing only  
yourself. You are the remains of sheep,  
future clothing in which to wrap a wolf.



Art by Veronica Speyer

# Ode to a tree

Life is like a tree  
Growing slowly, patience  
Surviving bad weather, strength  
Adapting, changing and regenerating  
Sleeping in the winter, rest  
Budding, new leaves, birth  
Falling down, never to recover, death



(Ode)

By Leela Salisbury





Art by Veronica Speyer



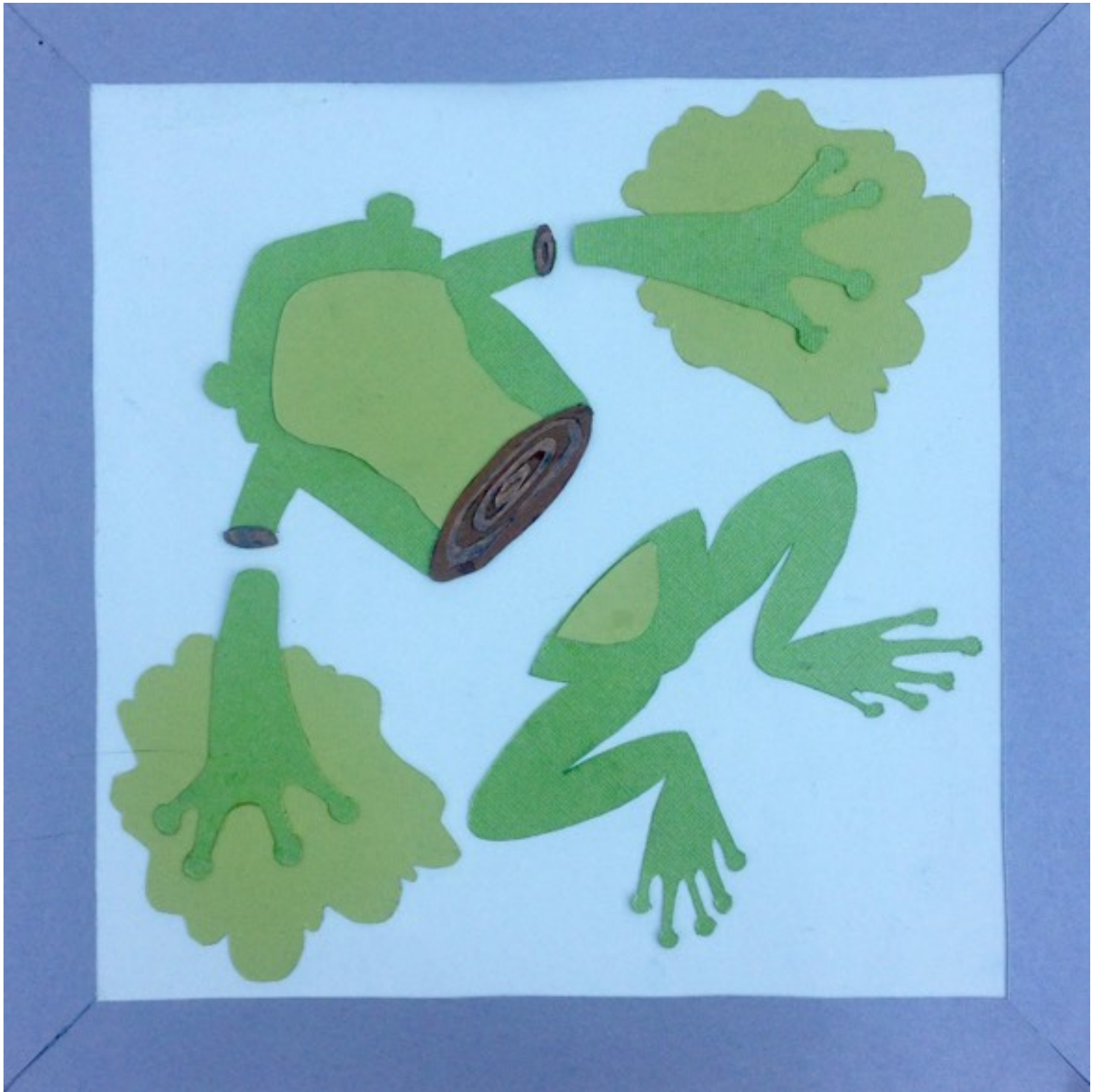
# Trees

By Krista Rosen

Nutmeg tree branches,  
Hands gripping the rough tree bark,  
Among the spring leaves.



Art by Kelly Hagearty and Jaia Williams



Art by Wood

# Marlow

By Kimberly Kassis

If I had it my way, my bunny Marlow would have a tiny sombrero to give her flat head extra style. Even though she's a devout vegetarian, I hate the idea of her never experiencing Taco Tuesday or Cinco de Mayo at a Mexican restaurant. Unfortunately, Amazon -- my go to -- has other plans for me. Most of their tiny sombreros are made out of straw. Any reasonable person knows that a rabbit would eat the hat, and I know Marlow would devour it in five minutes or less. There are felt ones, but they carry a hefty price, making me realize I am not their target customer and leaving me wondering, who is?

Marlow and I have a few things in common -- I too love cauliflower and am most social when I'm near an AC pumping air vent -- but I didn't realize this at first. I wish I could say I adored her from the minute we picked her up, but I didn't. While I did create the obligatory Instagram account, the feed showed a love I didn't feel. Marlow easily frustrated me and couldn't do anything right. She wasn't Cinnamon.

For eleven years, I had a different bunny named Cinnamon who died suddenly at the end of my sophomore year. Cinnamon would sit for hours watching Netflix and could find chocolate to eat anywhere (even if it was five feet above him on my bookshelf) while Marlow prefers to hop in circles around the room and isn't interested in this sweet at all. Even Marlow's appearance felt foreign, her lop ears the opposite of Cinnamon's upright ears. These differences, in addition to the difficulties of Marlow not knowing how to use her water bottle or climb the stairs, drove me crazy. Why couldn't she be normal?

I realize now how unfair I was being. I was basing normal on Cinnamon instead of accepting that Marlow would have her own normal. When Marlow was different from Cinnamon, I hated her for it, and when she was similar, I felt burdened with guilt for being able to love her. At my core I am loyal, and it felt like I was betraying my past by enjoying my new present. So I pulled away whenever I caught myself falling in love with her, scared of moving on.

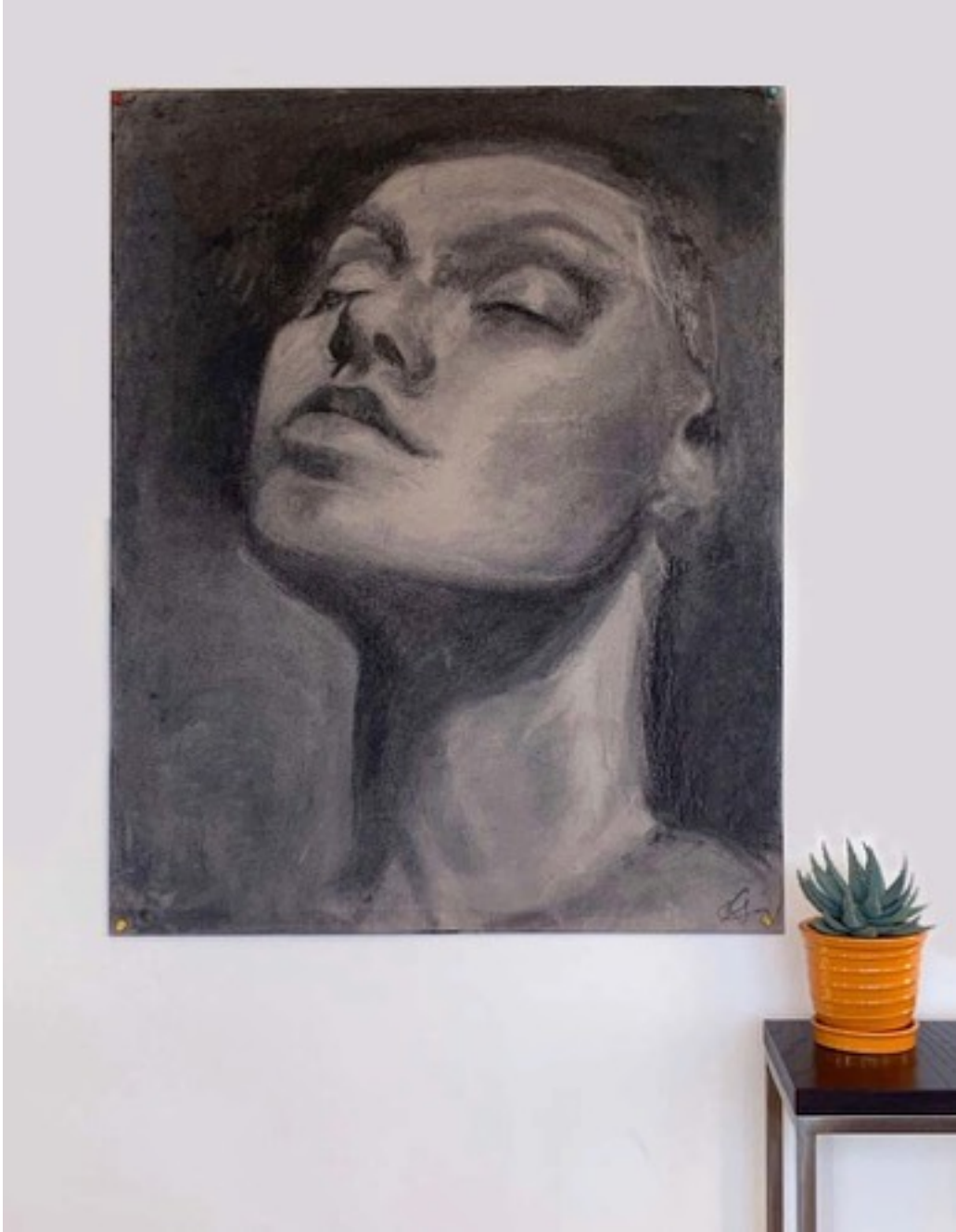
And then one day, while staring at the double life-sized size picture of Cinnamon on my wall, it dawned on me. I'd already moved on from the past. Cinnamon was gone, and no matter what, I was going to have to live in a world without him. Change is often hard to embrace, and this was one that was scary to face, but it was unavoidable. I had two options: live in a world where I widen my heart for Marlow or a world where I focus on the



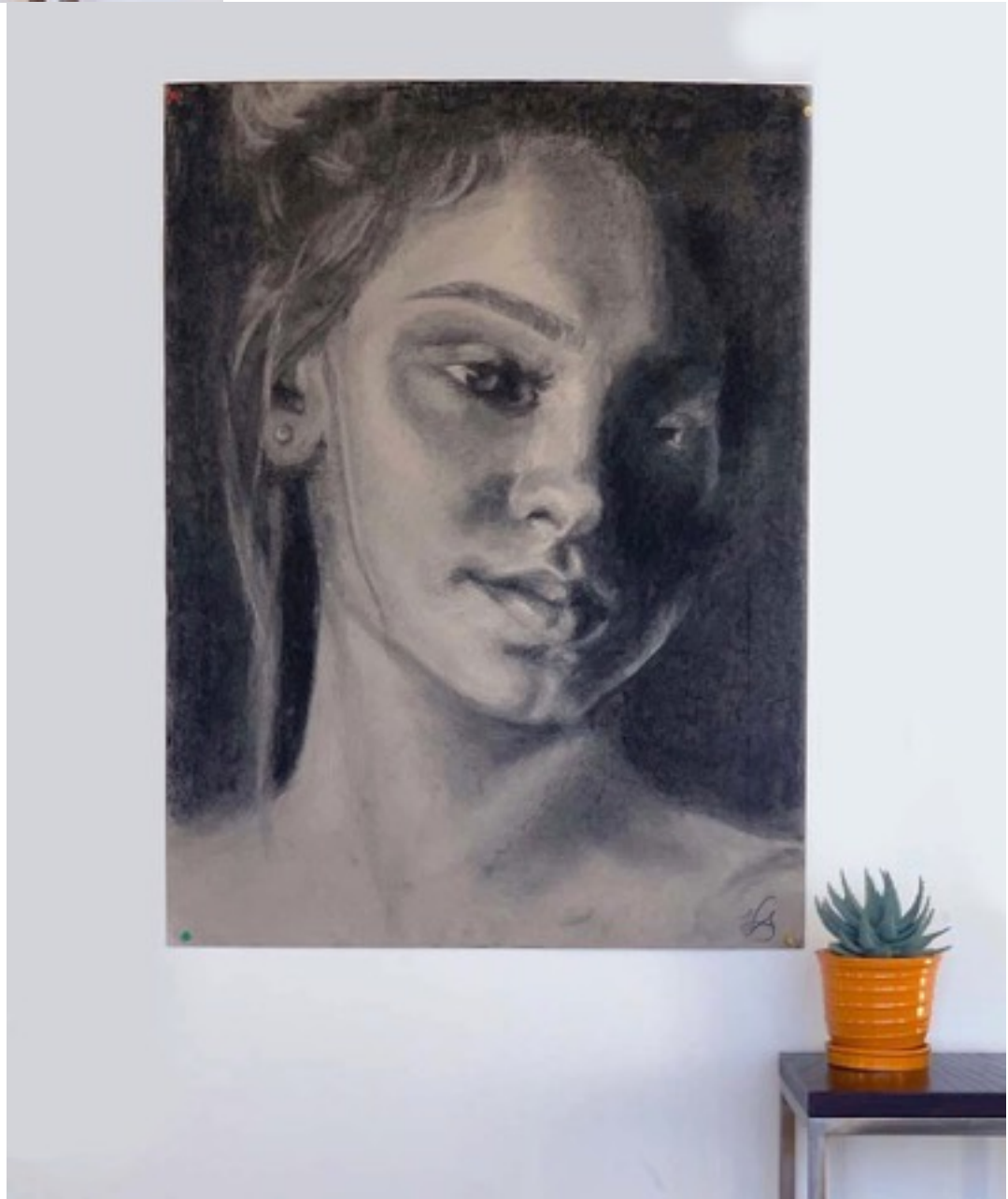
Cinnamon-sized hole in my life that can never be filled. Marlow couldn't take away the pain of losing Cinnamon, but at the very least she could add comfort to my daily routine.

And that's how it started. Then, with each day, I let myself love her a bit more. I cheered her on as she learned to use her water bottle and taught her how to climb the stairs so she could visit me in my room. Instead of wedding myself to the same relationship I had with Cinnamon, I focused on forming a new bond. Now, I'm a "nickname person" and a "treat overfeeder," something I never was before. Don't get me wrong, I still miss the past, but now I couldn't bear to go back if it meant erasing my present. I've come to the realization that change can be painful, but it can also bring something wonderful and new if I embrace it. Cinnamon could've never pulled off a sombrero, and that's okay.





Art by Veronica Speyer



The sky was a shade of midnight, the pavements shined with drizzle and reflected the glistening lights from lamp-post. I splashed along in my cozy rain boots, my brown, Hersey-colored hair parted to the side. The rain always seemed to comfort me. Maybe it was the sound of the delicate drops hitting the ground. The satisfaction of jumping into puddles of water, drenching the field and others around you. Watching rain gives you, personal time bringing back all the memories. I like to believe that there is music in the rain. I hear a lullaby, being sung through the raindrops. A simple tool of relaxation.

I look up to the sky, and the droplets ease upon my face. I smile at the man in the moon. In the distance, I hear faint noises of two different people shouting at each other. My face falls, and I am no longer smiling. I close my eyes, my arms reach out into the air as if I am longing for an embrace. My hands and arms stretched to God, as a form of prayer.

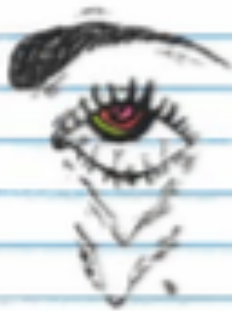
*Please, let my parents stop fighting.*

The rain might be known as experience. I know it as my getaway.

By Sasha Menzie



Acid :



Art by Tei' Loir Reeves

# NIGHT TIME MADNESS

By Cyrenity Augustin

DALIA: Margo's sister, responsible but nervous.

MARGO: Dalia's sister, impulsive.

TUCKER: Dalia and Margo's friend, loyal and perseverant.

OFFICER BRIE: Police officer, impatient and easily annoyed.

OFFICER TALON: Police officer , conspiracy theorist and observant.

BIGFOOT: Formal, elegant.

MARGO and DALIA are seated in a cabin, a soft light streaming in as the sun begins to set. DALIA seems nervous, while MARGO watches with a slightly amused expression.

MARGO: So, how long until you start panicking?

DALIA: I'm not gonna panic! I'm fine, it's fine.

Another moment of silence, before MARGO speaks up again.

MARGO: Really? Because you look like your panicking right now.

DALIA: Iâ€™m not panicking.

MARGO: You're also really bad at lying.

DALIA: Shut up.

*The silence falls over the two, before Margo sighs and stands up, heading to the door.*

MARGO: I'm going to get some fresh air. I'll be right back.

DALIA grabs MARGO, stopping her from leaving.

DALIA: No way! It's almost dark! It's dangerous!

MARGO: Oh come on Dalia, I'll be fine. The sun is still out, it's barely even seven. Just calm down.

MARGO opens the door and steps outside, leaving a worried DALIA to pace back and forth.

DALIA: Oh gosh...mom would kill us if she saw us outside so close to dark. Especially now of all times. (Glances to door, before shaking head and turning away) No, no I need to stay here. She'll come back.

DALIA sits down, trying to calm down and breathe. She sits quietly for a couple of seconds before jumping to her feet and rushing out of the door.Â

DALIA: Margo wait up!



On the other side of the stage, OFFICER BRIE and OFFICER TALON walk in, looking around the forest with a tranquilizer gun and nets.

OFFICER BRIE: I can't believe that chief sent us out so close to dark. Wouldn't it be better if we looked tomorrow morning?

OFFICER TALON: Yeah, but the boss wants us to start today. Better to clear out some areas than to have to start looking from scratch in the morning.

OFFICER BRIE: Guess so. (Gestures with gun) Why are we even out here anyway? So some wolves are going through the trash cans, that's what happens in the wilderness. Not like we're encroaching on their home or anything.

OFFICER TALON: Boss wants us to make sure the residents stay safe. She's in charge we follow her orders. (looks around) Besides, from what I heard they don't think it's a wolf doing it.

OFFICER BRIE: Huh? What they think it's a bear or something?

OFFICER TALON: No, they think it's some kind of monster wolf or something. That's why we're checking it out.

OFFICER BRIE: (Sarcastic) Yeah sure. That sounds right. Maybe we'll find Big Foot too. Hey, we can even search in the lake for Nessie.

OFFICER TALON: Nessie isn't in the US.

OFFICER BRIE: That's not the point, Talon.

OFFICER TALON: Come on Brie. Let's just get this done so we can get take out.

OFFICER BRIE: Yeah alright.

*OFFICER BRIE and OFFICER TALON walk off, scanning the forest before exiting.*

*DALIA enters on stage, a nervous wreck as she makes her way through the woods.Â*

DALIA: Margo where are you, it's getting dark!

DALIA looks around, and when there isn't a response holds her face.Â

DALIA: Please tell me you didn't fall in a ditch or something.Â

*While DALIA continues to worry, mumbling to herself as she looks around, Tucker comes up behind her, a hood pulled over his face. He extends his hand, building tension before suddenly tapping DALIA on the shoulder.*

DALIA: (screams and turns around) Don't kill me!

TUCKER: Woah there! No killing from me, promise. (Takes off hood)

DALIA: Tucker? (Relieved, before becoming annoyed) Why'd you sneak up on me like that!

TUCKER: Well I wasn't sure whether or not you were you!

DALIA: What do you mean you weren't sure?

TUCKER: Well you could have been Margo, or Big Foot, or some shady murderer.

DALIA: Well it's me, and- (pauses) wait, why are you out so late? You should be home!

TUCKER: I know I know, I just was curious as to what was going on. Apparently there's been talk about police officers coming into the woods. I was going to head back, but then I saw you. (Crosses arms) Speaking of which, why are you out here?

DALIA: Margo ran off, even though I told her it was getting dark.

TUCKER: Sounds right. Want help looking for her?

DALIA: I appreciate it, but it's okay. I don't want you to get in trouble, and she's my responsibility. I'll find her.

TUCKER: Hey Dals, you know she's not really your responsibility, right? I mean yeah, she's your sister, but you don't have to stress out about taking care of her.

DALIA: She is my responsibility. I'll take care of her until I don't have to anymore. Right now though, I just need to make sure we get through one day at a time. (Looks at sky) Actually, more like one night at a time.

TUCKER: (wary) Well, if that's the case she's my responsibility too, which means I'm helping.

DALIA starts to protest, but TUCKER intervenes and cuts her off.



TUCKER: Nope, nothing to argue about it. I'm not leaving and you can't make me.

DALIA: But the-

TUCKER: Nope.

DALIA: Tucker I-

TUCKER: Nuh-Uh.

DALIA: Mmm...fine.

TUCKER: There we go. (Puts hood back on) Lead on.

*DALIA gives him a look, before continuing her walk through the woods, TUCKER following her.*

OFFICER BRIE let's out a groan as she walks through the woods, shining a flashlight in front of her as she walks. OFFICER TALON follows her, not as loud and with his own flashlight.

OFFICER BRIE: This is why I don't like outdoors. Weird smells and cold. It's annoying.

OFFICER TALON: You like the beach and that's outdoors.

OFFICER BRIE: That's different, and you know it.

*OFFICER TALON admires the surroundings, turning off his flashlight. He looks up with a smile.*

OFFICER TALON: You have to admit that the view is amazing.

OFFICER BRIE: (follows his gaze before shrugging) I guess. Sparkly.

OFFICER BRIE continues on leaving OFFICER TALON on the stage. He lingers, smiling at the sky before following her off.

*DALIA and TUCKER step out from some bushes, Tucker with a lot less pep in his step. He's tired and possibly in pain as he comes to a stop, crouching on the ground as he holds himself. Dalia notices, and looks at him.*

DALIA: Tucker? Is everything okay?

TUCKER: Yep, yep just...feeling a bit...off.

DALIA: (frowns and crouches in front of him) Do we need to take you home?

TUCKER: No Dalia (scratches head, revealing a furry hand) I'm fine.

DALIA stares in silence, before grabbing his hand. She shows it to him.

DALIA: (stern) Oh, really? This is fine?

TUCKER: Huh...I wasn't expecting it to come on so fast-

DALIA: Tucker go home! You're going to get worse the longer you're out here, and if your parents find out you were here past curfew we're both getting in trouble.

TUCKER: But Dal-

*DALIA points back the way they came, unwavering in her stance. TUCKER opens his mouth to speak but is quickly shut up by DALIA giving him a pointed look. He slumps, before turning and walking off the way the two came on. There is silence, in which DALIA sighs and turns to leave, before TUCKER slowly steps out from behind the bushes, holding his now furry arm.*

TUCKER: Please?

DALIA: (groans, before turning around opening her mouth) Tuck-

TUCKER: I won't cause problems, promise! Just let me stay with you until you find Margo. Then you can march me back home. She's my friend, and I need to make sure that she is okay.

*DALIA is silent before eventually turning and motioning for him to follow her. TUCKER grins and steps out from the bushes, running to catch up as she goes off the stage.*

*MARGO is sitting by a tree, breathing heavily as she looks up at the stars. She considers them for a few moments in silence before sighing and going to stand.*

MARGO: I should get going. Dalia's probably crying her eyes out right now. (Looks around, before laughing nervously) It would be great if I knew which way home was.

*MARGO looks around again before walking off stage, a tail previously hidden showing from behind her. As she steps off stage, OFFICER BRIE and OFFICER TALON step on, shining a light on the tree MARGO was leaning on a few moments before.*

OFFICER TALON: I don't think there's anything here. We should probably get back to the city before it gets too dark.

OFFICER BRIE: Finally! (Lowers flashlight) I was wondering how long you were going to make us stay out here.

*The two walk off stage the way MARGO did, while DALIA and TUCKER run on stage, Tucker hunched over with more fur on his body.*

DALIA: (frustrated) Ugh, where is she? She knows better than this. When I get my hands on her I'll-

*MARGO bursts out of the forestry, covered in branches and leaves and out of breath. She has gained more wolf like features, with ears and fur covering her arms and face. She spots DALIA and runs over, hugging her tight.*

MARGO: (relieved) Dalia! Thank God I found you, I thought I was gonna be lost in here forever.

DALIA: Well maybe if you hadn't run off you wouldn't have gotten lost in the first place. (Hugs her back, smiling) I'm glad you're okay though. (Looks at Margo's ears and fur) You're lucky you found us when you did, you're already halfway done. (Turns to leave) Let's get you and Tucker back home before this can get any worse.



*The three turn to leave, and take a few steps towards off stage before OFFICER BRIE and OFFICER TALON walk on, having their own discussion.*

OFFICER BRIE: Yeah, so I told the guy-

*She stops when she notices OFFICER TALON isn't listening any more, and follows his gaze before her eyes land on the three, frozen in a panic. She reaches for her gun, pulling it out as OFFICER TALON speaks.*

OFFICER TALON: All right what are you three kids doing out here? And why (Looks at MARGO's fur and wolf features) are you dressed like a wolf?

MARGO: Uh...I-

DALIA: (turns around, hands up) Hi! Uh, we were just...on our way to a convention.

OFFICER TALON: (skeptical) Convention, huh.

DALIA: Yeah. It's, um, about...anthropomorphic animals? (Gestures to MARGO and TUCKER) They're really big fans of dressing up.

OFFICER TALON: Right. (Puts hands on gun) I'm going to need you two to turn around with your hands up.

DALIA: Sir, we just-

OFFICER TALON: Now.

*There is a pause, before TUCKER and MARGO slowly turn around, eyes lowered as they wait for reactions to their appearance. There is a brief silence, before OFFICER TALON speaks up.*

OFFICER TALON: Names.

MARGO: (warped voice) Margo Valso.

TUCKER: I'm Tucker Willsprout...

DALIA: (mumble) Dalia Valso.

OFFICER TALON: Right. (Moves hands away from gun) Get going. I don't want to see you wandering out here again. Got it?

*Surprised, the three look at each other before they look back to him, nodding. OFFICER TALON motions for them to leave, and the three run off, exiting the clearing.*

OFFICER BRIE: (shocked) What? Did you actually buy that?

OFFICER TALON: Nothing says they were lying.

OFFICER BRIE: (frustrates) Everything says they were lying! The kids had weird claw hands and fur! What more is there to know?

OFFICER TALON: (Turns to leave) What are you going to do, drag a bunch of wolf kids to the car and drive them to the station? How are we going to explain that?

OFFICER BRIE: I don't know! You're the one that said to follow the boss and find the weird wolf monsters. (Motions to where DALIA, MARGO, and TUCKER exited) Well there they go. What are we gonna do about it?

OFFICER TALON: (turns) Brie, they are kids. I'm not going to take in a bunch of kids because we saw them walking around at night, All right? And besides, it's not like anyone would believe us anyway. (Pauses, before looking away) Let's just go. You're hungry, I'm tired, and they aren't really bothering anyone one.

OFFICER BRIE: I- but- (speechless, then grumbles) You know what, forget it. You owe me some spring rolls.

OFFICER TALON: (amused) Sure. Spring rolls for you.

*OFFICER BRIE stomps out after OFFICER TALON, the two nearing off stage before TALON stops and looks to her.*

OFFICER TALON: How much do you want to bet Bigfoot is lounging around here somewhere?

OFFICER BRIE: If Bigfoot is out here I'll buy you a feast for dinner.

*OFFICER TALON and OFFICER BRIE exit, ad libbing about how possible it is for Bigfoot to be living there. There is silence before BIGFOOT steps on stage, looking where the police officers exited.*

BIGFOOT: (posh accent) Poor fellow. (Shakes head and clicks tongue) Going to have to miss out on a whole feast.Â

BIGFOOT turns to the audience, giving a knowing look before walking off stage.

END OF PLAY



# Through Their Eyes

By Zoey Poole







Art by Veronica Speyer

# And This Time, I Mean It

By Kimberly Kassis

*We weren't meant to be.* The words fill Jade's head and they reek, the toxic tendrils of letters wrapping around her thoughts and suffocating the air of reason until they are all that is left. The solitary scent of uncertainty as she wonders what his words mean.

Her boyfriend Noah, well ex-boyfriend now, said the words over three weeks ago, but the cliché breakup line still lingers with Jade. How could he know they weren't meant to be if she didn't? Was there a sign from heaven that she'd missed and Noah had received?

The wind and racket picks up in the tunnel, and Jade steps out of her trance as the Tube grinds to a halt before her. She joins the rush to get on and reaches up to grab a handrail. She won't get a seat until at least another thirty minutes when she is farther from the city limits.

The train lurches forward, and Jade shuffles to keep her footing, not wanting to bump the man behind her. She gives him a quick glance over the shoulder. He's muscular and blonde with a tucked-in button down and probably has actually started saving for his 401k-- the complete opposite of Noah. She wouldn't say the stranger is her type, but maybe that's a good thing. She has a tendency to typecast her boyfriends, and considering her single status, diversifying the cast might change the ending. The last thing she needs to be burdened with is another relationship terminated with the classic *it wasn't meant to be*. She'd already experienced that joyride three times this year.

At this point she'd prefer a man to break it off by calling her a crazy psycho. That's something she could at least blame herself for. But being meant to be...? Do these men really expect her to align the stars in their favor? Is that what they're looking for?

Meant to be only happens in the movies, the kind that litter every TV channel during Christmas and Valentines with the unrealistic swoon-worthy suitor existing only for the viewer's dreams. But even Jade had forced herself to get over that dream years ago when reality slapped her in the face. No one had yet to inspire her to run onto a tarmac and stop their flight from taking them away, and she's doubtful anyone ever will.

Even with the uninspiring choices, she's sick of riding solo, and the idea of facing another sorority sister's wedding alone in two months makes her want to stir up an engagement-breaking scandal. Being a bridesmaid required giving a cheery toast to true love after a day facing a deluge of questions about her romantic life, all of which is only worsened by

the spring setting of pollen clouds and bees buzzing about as if they too want to know why she can't settle down with a nice Christian man.

The train grinds to a halt, and the boy behind her moves closer as new people pack in. If she was in a rom-com, she'd fall into his arms after losing her footing, and they'd look into each others eyes and know they were soulmates, stars aligned and all.

She purses her lips, an idea forming. It's not a moral one. It corrupts the "meet cute" as a whole, but it's an extra layer of security to avoid another we-weren't-meant-to-be excuse and maybe land her a plus one. It's a risk. He could not catch her or not ask her for a drink after their shared laugh and cosmic eye contact is made, but if she tried it on enough different people, it's bound to lead to results. Even her worst lab assignments from college had positive experimental errors.

She takes her hand off the handrail and rummages through her bag to take out her phone and pretend to look at it, taking the stance of the train riders she habitually despised: the ones who think they have the balance of a gymnast and then proceed to stumble about as the Tube turns.

The boy still has his headphones in, nose now in a book. Perfect. He isn't getting off at the next station. Jade inhales as the train starts to slow. She's not looking for forever, just a new ending. It's now or never.





Art by Kelly Hagearty and Jaia Williams





Art by Veronica Speyer



Art by Wood

# Black Girl Magic

By Elise Gill

**B**eing black doesn't come with privileges. Wearing my natural hair in an Afro scared that someone will

**L**augh at my untamable thick black hair.

**A**fraid of what others think. When in a store accused of being a

**C**riminal because of my skin tone. Watching my people get

**K**illed for no absolute reason. No, I don't talk

**G**hetto, I don't live in the hood, I'm not dangerous, my hair isn't dirty, and I don't look like every other black person.

**I** am proud to identify as an African-American. I am honored to have

**R**osa Parks as my ancestor. I

**L**ove my beautiful chocolate brown skin. I appreciate my

**M**elanin. I love rocking my

**A**fro puffs. I tell myself every day that this is who

**G**od made me and that I will never change.

**I** am African-American and I wouldn't

**C**hange it for anything.





Photo by Kelly Hagearty and Jaia Williams

# Untitled

By Sloane Komery

Love is really good  
It treats you well like love should  
Love is like a shining light  
But will also bite at night  
And leave you with tears tonight



Art by Veronica Speyer





Photo by Kelly Hagearty and Jaia Williams

# Untitled

By Sloane Komery

The world was good, until humans

We messed up the world

Diffuse toxins,

global warming,

forest fires,

animal abuse,

cars,

factories,

and oceans with plastic

Why do we kill the earth?

Maybe because humans are selfish

Humans don't care about the earth

People need to change

All people

The world was going into human

We messed up the world

Politics,

sexism,

racism,

and uneducated people

We need to support every

LGBTQ+, women, and everyone in general

People should not make laws about women's bodies



People should not look at someone  
differently because of their sexuality

To change

Be a feminist

A LGBTQ+ supporter

Vote

Become vegan

A world climate activist

And support the earth and people



Art by Veronica Speyer







Art by Veronica Speyer

# The Murder of Dee Dee Blanchard

By Audrey Cole

On June 14, 2015, Claudinea “Dee Dee” Blanchard was murdered by Nick Godejohn and her daughter, Gypsy Rose Blanchard. She was found in her bed laying on her stomach with three day old stab wounds in her back. Worrying Facebook posts noticed by friends and neighbors led to the discovery of Dee Dee’s body. It appeared that her daughter, Gypsy Rose Blanchard, was missing and was thought to have been kidnapped because her medications and wheelchair were still in the house. Gypsy was found in Wisconsin with her then boyfriend, Nick Godejohn. The two had met online and had been in a relationship for three years. Godejohn traveled by bus to the Blanchard home with the intention to kill Dee Dee because Gypsy had asked him to. Gypsy believed the murder was necessary so that she and Godejohn could be together. During the murder, Gypsy hid in the bathroom with her hands over her ears to muffle Dee Dee’s screams and cries for help. Afterwards, the couple engaged in sexual activity in Gypsy’s bedroom and took \$4,000 from the house.

Dee Dee Blanchard suffered from a condition called “Munchausen’s by Proxy” which caused her to believe and induce medical conditions upon her daughter that could not be medically proven. Dee Dee forced Gypsy to stay in a wheelchair and have a feeding tube put into her stomach. She claimed her daughter suffered from leukemia, asthma, Muscular Dystrophy, seizures, and visual and auditory impairment. In most cases, Munchausen’s by Proxy is motivated by personal financial or emotional gain, for Dee Dee, it was both. The Blanchards received vacations and donations from the community, including trips to Disney and a house built by Habitat for Humanity. Gypsy Rose said in an interview that she felt “trapped” and would have done anything in her power to get out of that situation. Dee Dee had lied to everyone about Gypsy’s falsified medical conditions and even her age. Though Gypsy was born in 1991, Dee Dee, on separate occasions, would claim her daughter was born in 1993 and 1995 to make her seem younger. Dee Dee Blanchard was also physically abusive to her daughter, on multiple occasions, beating her with a coat hanger or tying her to a headboard. After Dee Dee’s family confronted her about her care of her daughter, she changed her name from Claudinea to Claudine. Although family members also suspected Dee Dee of poisoning her stepmother, it was never confirmed whether she was poisoned.

There were over one hundred pieces of evidence to convict both Gypsy Rose Blanchard and Nick Godejohn. Everything from the knife used to stab Dee Dee Blanchard to

the medical files from Gypsy's hospital visits was presented as evidence. The text messages between Godejohn and Gypsy Rose were also used in court. In this case, there are many accounts of sexually explicit content in text messages as well as the events that occurred between the two. When police entered the Blanchards' home, it was cluttered and filled with garbage except for one large linen closet filled with precisely organized medication which solidified Dee Dee Blanchard's Munchausen's by Proxy diagnosis. It was revealed that Gypsy never spoke during doctor's appointments which allowed Dee Dee Blanchard to lie and create her daughter's supposed illnesses. In January 2017, Godejohn's trial was postponed to December 2017, then again to November 2018. He was found guilty of first degree murder and was sentenced to serve life in prison as of February 2019. Godejohn's lawyers argued his own mental illness had obscured his judgement, asserting the murder was just Godejohn doing what he had been asked. Gypsy took a plea deal, was convicted on a second degree murder charge, and was sentenced ten years in prison in July 2015.

There is an abundance of history and evidence to consider when determining the fairness of the ruling. The strongest evidence presented, in my opinion, is the admission of guilt from both the accused. Based on the volume of eyewitness accounts similar to each other, it is safe to assume they are fairly reliable. Of course, there is some speculation as to if one heard a detail, it is possible he or she would "remember it" as seen in the Bugs Bunny effect. However, the eyewitness accounts of Gypsy and Nick together match the security footage at the bus station. The reliability of Gypsy herself in her interview with ABC News also comes into play. When her trial was broadcast on television, it was a shock to people who knew her to see her walking around the courtroom. The public naturally came to the conclusion that if she lied about being sick, Gypsy could have lied about any number of things. Gypsy also had thought about getting pregnant to force Dee Dee to accept her boyfriend. Godejohn never commented on this plan, and instead pushed the option of murdering Dee Dee Blanchard. In my opinion, the effects of Dee Dee Blanchard's condition on Gypsy's own mental state drove her to seek help from an outside source to escape a horrible situation she felt trapped in. A healthy adult may have been able to handle the situation properly, whereas Gypsy's abnormal childhood left her with a skewed sense of reality and morality, ultimately leading to the murder of Dee Dee Blanchard.

# Selections by Charlotte Hayden

## **Dust:**

You may not see me often. Some never do. But it's different when it comes to you. Some never talk to me, or they haven't in a while. But you always give me a small wave or a smile. I'm more likely compared to rain than the sun. But that's ok with me. I like the rain. Only seen or heard if you really focus on it. Sometimes it even goes unknown, until it is needed to be known or noticed. Rain is like me. Dust in the corner of a wall. Like me it's unnoticeable, quiet, and small.

## **Fingers:**

I know your story. I see it quite clear. Perhaps somebody is whispering your story into my ear. Bitten and ripped from nerves, even crooked tones, with calluses and all. But everybody has a rise that leads to a much needed fall. Don't be scared to show your scars. It's nothing to be ashamed of, it's just who you are. People's scars may not show like yours do, but trust me, they linger. It just so happens that your scars are engraved in your finger.

## **Toothpaste:**

Some spit me out because I'm too strong. Some keep me in, or wash me out with water. Some do whatever they can to remove the stinging bitter taste. But once I'm out, I am out for good. Nothing you do can replace. Cruel and mean words are just like toothpaste.

**Inevitable:**

Who wants me? Where do I stand? Death seems so far yet life seems too close. Would life be easier up above or rippled like the sea? You may feel like nobody wants or loves you, or they never will. But I have something to say. Death isn't just plain blackness. Instead it's never a new day. To do what you want, and chase a fear away. Death is inevitable. It will happen when it's your time. But that's not for you to search for or find. I know through salty tears it can be hard to see. But at least one person loves me for you are never alone. And that person is me.

**Ocean eyes:**

I see ocean. I see trees. I see love, hate, and please. I see sadness, salt and all. I see confidence staying strong and tall. I see giving up, I see pushing away. Even when you are sad, you ask if I'm ok. Calm like the ocean. Curiosity like skies, all inside your big blue eyes

# America? By Zoey Poole





# Different Hearts

Abigael Lashers

Pseudonym for Sasha Gabrielle

I bet you don't know how it truly feels  
The pain of this poem, the pain of this ordeal  
I know that this problem seems really simple  
But this problem is becoming a really big ripple  
We don't need to stand apart  
So I say we start to listen to our heart

On the news, I see only wars  
Closed eyes, mind, hearts, and even closed doors  
Closed doors, you might ask, but to who  
To people like me, and possibly to people like you  
And I don't mean to be rude  
And I apologize on my seemingly crude mood  
But I simply won't stand  
Not until us, humans, learn to be one—hand in hand

Society should not base us off of color  
Or even compare us to one another  
Society is poor when they yell at you for being in a certain religion  
Guess what, that's your decision  
You can love, who and whomever you want to love  
God loves you regardless, our Heavenly Father from the above  
I don't understand why us women constantly surrender

People are people, why care about the gender

And maybe, you might actually know how this feels

The truth of this poem, the truth of this ordeal

And this problem is becoming bigger

These words are starting to pull an imaginary trigger

Yes, we all have hearts

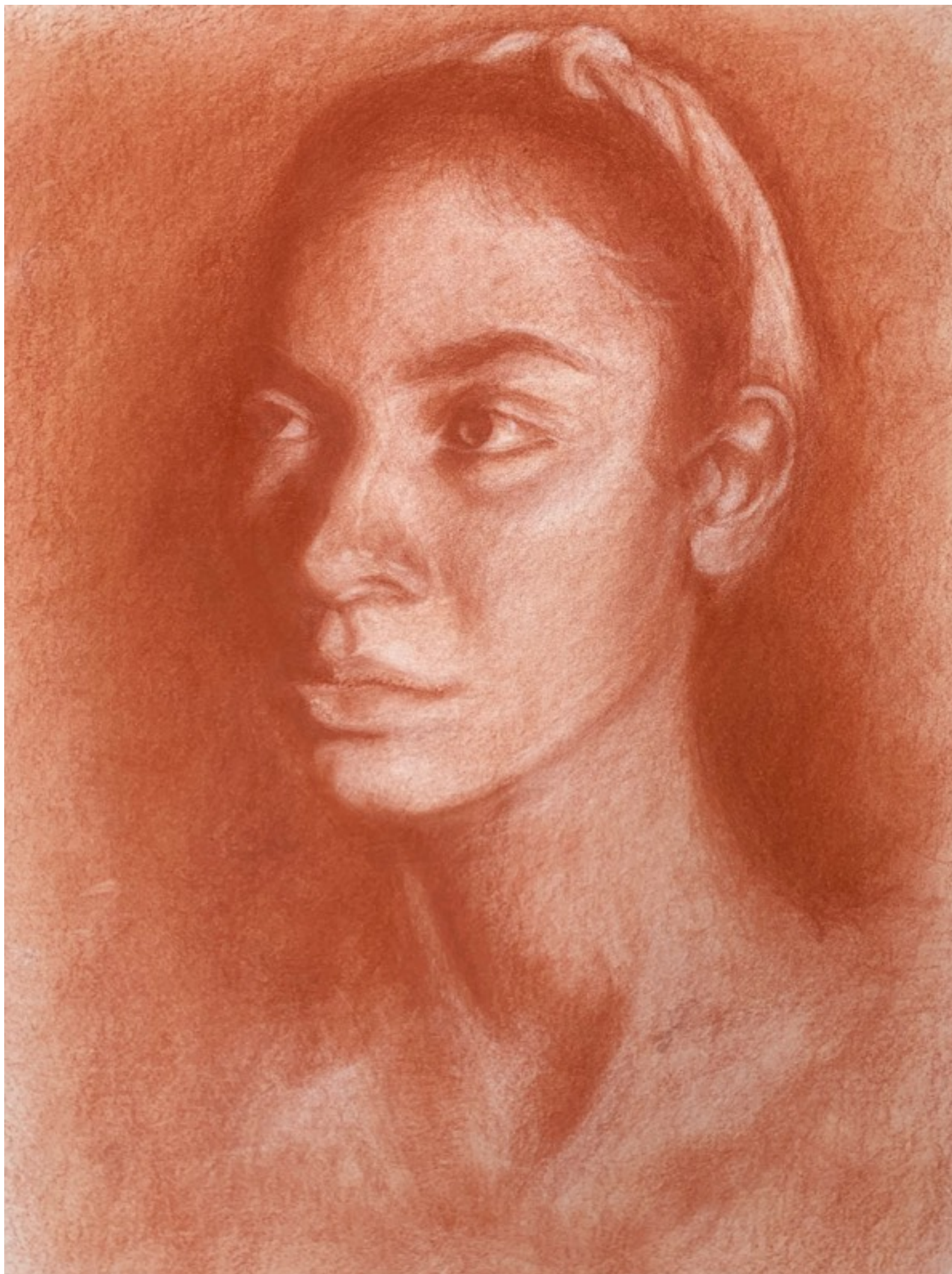
So, let's just be kind to each other

Yeah—that's a start



Art by Wood





Art By Veronica Speyer





Art By Veronica Speyer

# Scattered

By Ellie Tinley

## ACT I

### Scene 1: Esther's Bedroom

*Lights up on ESTHER LEVENSON (a put together girl with a high ponytail), LOGAN DEM-NAL (An average boy), and ADELINE GARNER (a petite girl wearing a skirt with blonde hair that covers part of her face) sitting on the floor/bed/chairs of ESTHER'S bedroom. The room is neat with a made bed, light blue covers and a white desk. Throughout the room are soccer and academic awards as well as pictures of ESTHER and the friends. The friends are talking and laughing with a bag of chips and some pillows. In walks BAKER SHORTLY, a tall boy with glasses and short hair.*

BAKER SHORTLY: Sorry I'm late. Tutoring.

BAKER leans down to where ESTHER is sitting and does a friendship handshake with her.

ESTHER LEVENSON: Baker, you're a genius. You don't need a science tutor. Besides, we can study together.

BAKER: It was actually the math tutor today, and I need it.

*ESTHER rolls her eyes and eats a chip. BAKER places his backpack on the floor and joins the others by sitting on a chair.*

BAKER: You have too much on your plate to be helping me with math anyway.



ESTHER: (Esther jerks suddenly as if offended) No I don't. I'm fine. (The others give her looks as she overreacts to this statement. She calms down and takes a short breath) I'm fine. Really. Everything's fine. I have time.

LOGAN DEMNAL: Calm down Esther. We know you have everything under control. Anyway, auditions for the play were last week, Romeo and Juliet, and I got cast as Romeo. Me, Logan Demnal, Romeo. I love it. (Everyone is excited and congratulates him on getting the part by patting him on the back, giving him high fives, and saying, "Good job.") Thanks guys. I can't wait to tell my dad. He's always really supportive of everything I do. The night he comes to the show we usually go out to dinner afterward and share a burger— ooh and one time we just got milkshakes. He's the best.

ADELINE GARNER: (ADELINE talks in a quiet voice. She is not melodramatic but more of a soft/sweet person) That sounds nice. Acting seems funny but imagining myself up on a stage in front of hundreds of people, (She shivers) no way.

LOGAN: It can be scary, but knowing my dad is in the crowd makes me feel a lot better. The play is really fun the only thing is the rehearsal times are crazy and with SAT prep and college tours I just don't know how I'm going to manage. They said junior year was going to be hard but this is a lot. Rehearsal is three hours a day every day of the school week for two months so that's...

BAKER: One-

ADELINE: One hundred twenty hours.

Everyone looks at ADELINE with awe and confusion.

BAKER: Adeline, how did you-

ADELINE: Lucky guess.

*ESTHER'S sister, DARBY LEVENSON, bursts into the room carrying a radio. She appears to be younger than the friends and has her hair in a sloppy ponytail.*

DARBY LEVENSON: Esther! Esther! Guess what? Guess what?

ESTHER: (ESTHER stands) Darby get out! I told you not to just barge into my room without knocking.

ESTHER stands up and starts pushing DARBY out of the room.

DARBY LEVENSON: Wait! Look at what I found it in the attic!

DARBY fidgets to turn on the radio and ESTHER groans.

ESTHER: Can't you wait until my friends leave?

DARBY LEVENSON: Wait, wait!

*DARBY gets the radio to turn on.*

RADIO PERSON #1: Sorry folks we're interrupting your afternoon tunes for a frightening news alert. I'm joined by Dr. Greyston to inform us on the issue.

DR. GREYSTON: Yes, and I wish I was not here under these conditions. Our world has little time left and there's nothing we can do about it. NASA has just informed us that a me-

eteor is heading straight for earth! With the size and speed of this giant meteor we have evidence to believe we won't survive. Pack your bags! Move to Mars! This is the end of the wor—

ESTHER turns off the radio.

ADELINE: Oh no.

DARBY: Yes! No more fourth grade!

ADELINE, BAKER, and LOGAN stand and look panicked.

ESTHER: Oh calm down the world isn't going to end. I got this. I can handle this.

*Adeline looks hurt.*

BAKER: Come on Esther this is not something you can handle. (BAKER goes over to comfort ADELINE) Besides based on what they said, the world is going to end and there is nothing we can do about it.

ESTHER: (pacing) No no no! This is not how junior year is supposed to go! I have college selections almost decided. I am being recruited for soccer and receiving academic scholarships. This can't happen!

DARBY: Okay well mom said we can make "the world is ending" cupcakes so I'm gonna go.

*DARBY skips out of the room.*

LOGAN: Esther, this sucks for all of us. I wouldn't be able to be in the play-

ESTHER: Get a grip Logan. You're in a play about teenage romance. I'm talking about the rest of my life. I have big things planned. My life is mapped out in front of me. Every move I take after I leave high school affects my future as a whole!

BAKER: Esther! This isn't just about you. If the world ends we all die. Don't you think we all have plans for the future? Or at least plans made for us.

ESTHER: What does that mean? I make my own plans.

BAKER: Maybe you did, but not all of us get to pick and choose how our lives go!

ADELINE: What do you mean, Baker?

BAKER: Nothing, it's fine. It doesn't matter anyway. Think about it guys, the world's ending. (He says this sarcastically but also realizing the world's ending)

ADELINE: Yeah, and in a way I feel like we don't even know each other.

*The friends calm down and find a new place to sit and after a little while Logan speaks.*

LOGAN: At least I won't have to hear my dad's rage anymore.

*BAKER, ESTHER, and ADELINE all turn to LOGAN.*

BAKER: Huh?

ADELINE: I thought you love your dad. You always talk about how he's so supportive and how you two are so close.

LOGAN: Well I may have been making him seem like someone he's not. I mean he may come to my plays but he's always telling me how terrible an actor I am.

ESTHER: Logan, is it... abusive?

LOGAN: He doesn't hurt me.

ESTHER: (In a comforting tone) verbal abuse?

LOGAN: (Surprised) What? No not at all. He's hard on me that's all.

ESTHER:(In a comforting tone) Like how?

LOGAN: Well after I perform we do go out to dinner, but then he usually gives me corrections like, "Do better" and "That was the worst performance I've ever seen."

The friends look at each other.

BAKER: Logan, those aren't corrections. They're verbal abuse.

LOGAN: No it's not. You're making it seem like something it's not. (He turns away from the group)



ESTHER: Does he ever call you names?

LOGAN: Well sometimes he calls me... gay. (Looking down but then brushing it off) But that's just because I do theater... (He looks up at his friends) right?

*ESTHER walks over and places her hand on LOGAN'S shoulder as he begins to cry, realizing that his father is verbally abusing him.*

ESTHER: Logan, I know it's hard to accept that that's what's happening. Verbal abuse can come in different ways but we are going to help you.

*ADELINE and BAKER join the other two and they all take a moment to hug each other as LOGAN wipes his eyes.*

ADELINE: I know it must be (Pause) terrifying.

LOGAN: Yeah, terrifying.

ESTHER: But you know we are here for you right? (LOGAN nods) Or would be here for you if a meteor wasn't about to crash into Earth.

ADELINE: I know how you feel Logan. I feel that way everyday.

LOGAN: What?

ADELINE: That fear. That fear of someone around you or more like everyone around you in my case.

LOGAN: What do you mean?

ADELINE: I know what it feels like to live in constant fear.

ESTHER: What do you mean?

ADELINE sighs and stands as BAKER eats a chip.

ADELINE: That math problem earlier, my answer wasn't just a lucky guess. (Pause) I'm smart, like really smart.

*ADELINE walks over to ESTHER'S desk where she picks up a whiteboard and eraser. The whiteboard has the date displayed on it. The date is April 1, 2019. ADELINE looks up at ESTHER as if asking to erase the whiteboard. ESTHER nods back as if saying yes.*

BAKER: Like how smart?

ADELINE: (Writing on the whiteboard) Smart enough to know that the square root of 795 divided by the square root of 326 multiplied by the square root of 489 equals (Takes about five seconds mumbling numbers and math terms to herself) 34.5325932997. And that was just the first problem that came to mind.

The friends stare at ADELINE.

BAKER: Why would you not tell us this before? You're a genius!

ADELINE: Because I was scared, (correcting herself) am scared of disappointment. I have a billion fears, but disappointment is number one. I thought if I told everyone how smart I am they wouldn't accept me or I wouldn't be good enough. I don't fail tests but I don't push myself to my full potential. But now I wish I could have done things differently.

ESTHER: So you would have just been okay living your life never showing how smart you are?

ADELINE: I guess. I just thought it was better to keep it to myself and not risk disappointment than share my talent and risk being ostracized by everyone.

LOGAN: Well, I know we would never push you out. I guess this means all three of you are geniuses and I'm the black sheep of the herd.

*The friends share a small laugh.*

ADELINE: Of course I'm not comparing my situation to yours, Logan.

LOGAN: I know. It's okay.

BAKER: Well Adeline can take my spot in the smart group.

LOGAN: What do you mean?

BAKER: (BAKER says without hesitation) I hate science.

ADELINE/ESTHER/LOGAN: What?

BAKER: And math.

ADELINE/ESTHER/LOGAN: What?

BAKER: (BAKER lets out a breath) It feels so good to let that out. I hate science and math.

LOGAN: What do you mean you hate science and math? You're like a genius or something.

BAKER: That's the thing. I'm not a genius. I just understand the topics. When I was five, my mother noticed me writing down numbers I saw around the house. So she started teaching me about the numbers. Then she gave me a pet frog and I stayed up all night reading and researching all about frogs and other reptiles. She then taught me about science. I understood it so she signed me up for the gifted program at my elementary school. Just because I'm smart and understand the topics doesn't mean that I want to study them for the rest of my life.

ADELINE: I'm sorry Baker. It must be really hard to study topics you don't enjoy 24/7.

BAKER: It is. (BAKER looks down) But I can't tell my mother. She has my life mapped out until I'm 30. She was planning on me graduating high school and then it's off to Stanford spending the next four years of my life studying physics and after that, Princeton to study mathematical physics. It makes me sick.

ESTHER: But math and science are all you study Baker, it's the only thing you spend your time doing. If you don't study math and science, what will you do with your life?

BAKER: (BAKER stands up with excitement) Exactly, I don't know what I want to do with my life and I'm okay with that. (ESTHER looks confused) I don't need to go to some cut-throat prep school. I don't care where I go. I want to explore different topics and ideas. I want to study literature and artwork and try sports for once. And maybe one day I can travel the world and see animals in their natural habitats and try food I didn't even know existed.

ADELINE: If only the world wasn't end-

ESTHER: I-I don't understand.

*ESTHER stands and walks away from the group and sits down on the edge of her bed.*

BAKER: What's not to understand? I want to explore other fields!

ESTHER: And not have a plan?

BAKER: Exactly.

LOGAN: (Noticing ESTHER) Esther, what's wrong?

ESTHER: I don't know I guess I'm just... jealous.

BAKER: Of what?

ESTHER: That you can just not have a plan and explore all the world has to offer.



*BAKER excitedly walks over to ESTHER.*

BAKER: Then join me! We can travel the world together. Go to museums and try different foods.

ADELINE: (ADELINE quietly jumps in) Well, the world is ending so I don't think you guys can-

ESTHER: I can't.

BAKER: What do you mean you can't. You can do whatever you want!

ESTHER: It's not that simple. I have a plan that I was going to follow if the world wasn't going to end. I'm smart and a star soccer player. That's how I was going to get a job. By using my talents not exploring the world.

LOGAN: Why can't you do both?

ESTHER: I don't have time to waste on traveling and exploring. I need to make money and take care of myself like always.

LOGAN: What are you talking about Esther? You do so much and you always find time to do it all.

ESTHER: Well doing everything is kinda...stressful.

LOGAN: Esther Levenson stressed? Please.

*The friends let out a couple giggles*

ESTHER: It's not a joke guys! I'm stressed! More stressed than any of you! (ESTHER starts pacing around the room throwing her hands in the air) I pick up Darby everyday after school and bring her home and my mom asks her what trouble she has gotten into not even glancing at me. I go to soccer practice than come home and work on homework for the next three hours. After that I try my hardest to work on stupid SAT prep. When my mom and dad aren't busy with sister, they come into my room and ask how I'm doing and if I need help. Of course I say I'm fine because I can already hear Darby breaking a lamp or spraying the hose on the couch. My parents don't need someone else to worry about, they have my sister and she's a big enough worry. So yes, I'm stressed because the SAT is are a mess, my parents don't know I'm drowning, and I barely get five hours of sleep a night!

*There is a moment of silence between the friends.*

ADELINE: I had no idea about the stress you are going through.

ESTHER: It's not your fault. (ESTHER sits back on the bed) I guess I didn't tell any of you because I didn't want anyone else involved. If I wasn't going to tell my parents then why tell my friends.

ADELINE: I know Darby. She's a handful.

ESTHER: Yeah, but I can't give her all the blame. I should have told my parents about my struggles.

BAKER: Do you want to explore like me?

ESTHER: I don't know. I mean don't get me wrong I love soccer and academic topics are fine, but I just want my parents to notice me.

LOGAN: I understand that, Esther, we all do.

*ESTHER smiles softly.*

ADELINE: Why did we do this guys, hold in so much? Cause now we finally know each other and it's too late.

LOGAN: Yeah, and maybe now we could stand up to our fears.

ADELINE: I could show off my intelligence.

ESTHER: I could come clean to my parents and tell them I need help.

BAKER: I could explore the world.

LOGAN: I could stand up to my father.

BAKER: Wow. Our lives are really...

ADELINE: Scattered.

*Darby casually walks into the room eating a cupcake as Baker says his line.*

BAKER: Yeah, one big scattered mess.

DARBY: What's up with you guys? You look depressed.

ESTHER: Get out Darby. The world's ending we're not exactly in the best moods.

DARBY: (laughing a little) Why don't you guys turn back on the radio?

*ESTHER, looking a little confused, goes over to turn the radio back on.*

RADIO PERSON #1: (Laughing) Well thank you again Dr. Greyston for coming down for this very special day on the air. Happy April Fools Day Petersberg! Thank you and good night.

The radio cuts off and there is a moment of silence between the friends.

LOGAN: Well.

*Lights go black. End of show.*





Art by Wood



Art by Veronica Speyer



# Autobiography of Seto Li

By Anaya McGhee

To begin, my birthday is November 7th, 2018. I was adopted from a PetCo. I left behind my furry friends. Only to be welcomed into a home. They are probably happily munching on a piece of pineapple. With so much room that I could have completed a marathon just by running around in it four times.

After a few months, my mother noticed how stinky I was. She gave me a bath in a plastic hospital tub using Dawn-- too bad I didn't take swim class-- then she wrapped me in a towel and dried me off as gently as possible. Did I mentioned I peed on her leg twice while she was drying me off?

I returned to my house and dashed off to my room. She laughed at me and coaxed me to come out. I would not budge. So she left me alone and went downstairs.

I remember this one time that my mom sat me down in her lap. It was warm and comforting. Then... I got too relaxed and peed on her lap. Boy, was I laughing. What can I say, she should have got me a cuddle cup or perhaps a blanket.

From then on, she did not let me roam freely on her rug or on her bed. At least not until I got a cuddle cup for Christmas. I can say that I really enjoy eating broccoli. Grandma likes to play little games with me. Grandpa spoils me.

I really miss seeing the Evergreens in my natural habitat. There is talk that I might get a brother. It gets so lonely.

Right now I'm staying happy with what I have.

Broccoli stalks laced into my pellets. Yum.



Art by Kimberly Kassis

# Bringing the Home Spirit: An Ode to Villanova University

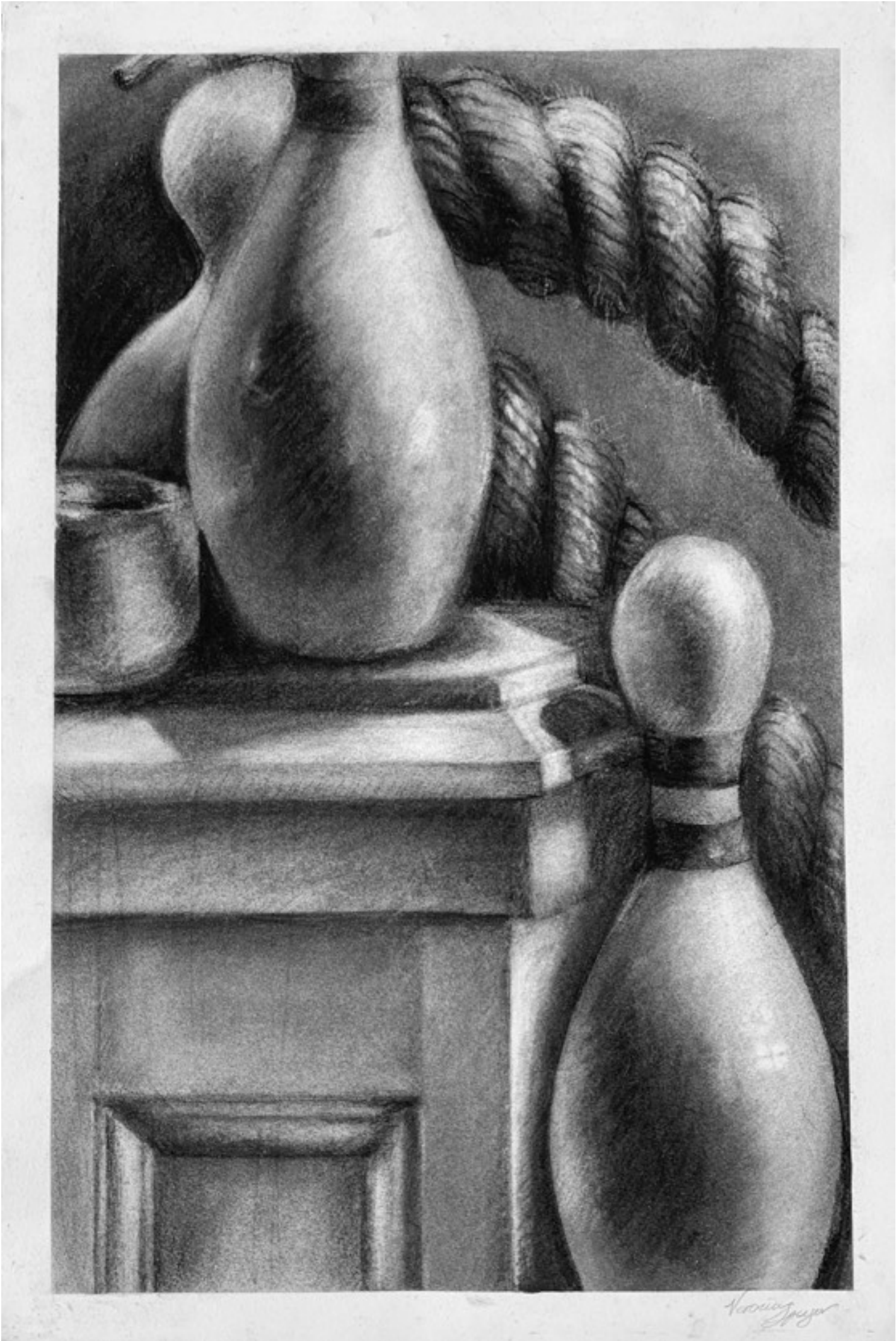
by Madison Marsh

I live in Atlanta. Famous for our centers dedicated to teaching about our storied involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and our numerous LGBT+ friendly spaces, we strive for a community of not only tolerance but for the celebration of differences. Because in Atlanta, we know we are equally the same as we are different. We complain about the same things: traffic, potholes, chicken bones on the ground. But we bond through those shared experiences. I have seen the city, my city, at its highest points: banded together to protest gun violence and making our voices heard in our local and national elections. We are a proud city that defends our name to the end and frequently declare our original creations as the best. With the best hip-hop music, the best food, and even the best neighborhoods, we have it all. I have also seen Atlanta in its lowest points: devastated by rampant gentrification and homelessness and overcome with polarizing political divide. Saddled with the effects of a crumbling infrastructure and oversaturated housing and labor markets, the citizens of Atlanta have seen strife. But, they have also seen the joy of living in our city. We are always only a few miles away from a great adventure. I can head to the southside and catch a non-stop flight to almost anywhere from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the busiest airport in the world, ride to the Beltline for a fun bike ride, or see some great musicians perform at Lakewood Amphitheatre. The limitless possibilities are a symbol of the diversity of interests and identities in the city.

The Atlanta Spirit, one of perseverance, adventure, and inclusion, is what I would like to bring to Villanova. Even the highest achieving students occasionally fail. But only those who are able to grow from their failures have the possibility of becoming the best and I believe every student has this potential. Villanova frequently challenges its current and prospective students to “ignite change”. But in order to complete this task, the student has to be willing to lean into the discomfort of learning and that includes the sting of failure. They also need to be intellectually curious and adventurous because that desire is what pushes students to dive further in their studies and sets them up to be diligent and successful leaders in their careers. And to be inclusive, they have to be willing and able to work with others, on projects or teams, that are different from them but still feel as though they are an important, recognized member of the group or community. It also requires the understanding that the identities of others are crucial to how they see the world and should be considered when incorporating them and attempting to understand their perspective. This will also be uncomfortable as it requires knowing when to listen, especially when someone is explaining a part of themselves that might be difficult to understand. And just like Atlanta



taught me that all of these actions are necessary to create a high functioning community, I want to work to ensure Villanova students have the same high-quality environment, especially knowing that not all students come from the same great city that I do.



Art by Veronica Speyer