

Atlanta Girls' School Literary Magazine 2018-2019

See Me



Cover Art - Tierra Williams

Dedication

For the AGS community,
whose work and support has
been the reason for this
magazine.

For Ms. Hasty,
whose work has often gone
unseen. We see you.

Notes from the Editors

Why do our parents often tell us to not judge a book by its cover? Why do college admission boards loudly proclaim their use of a “holistic” process? It is true that we should not look at and judge people based upon their superficial qualities, such as their appearance. We should instead strive to see them, truly see them. And to do so, we must not only examine their outward appearance, which admittedly may tell us some things about that person, but also what they say and do not say to us. Since elementary school, our English teachers have emphasized the importance of reading between the lines and this practice can be extended to our interactions with each other. Read between the lines of my life and you might be surprised at what you find. So, I am asking you to see me, truly see me. And while you are reading this year’s issue of the literary magazine, I am asking to see the talented artists and writers who have created these pieces. You may know them or you may not, but by examining their pieces, you might be surprised at what you see.

- Madison Marsh

In a world where so many voices are lost and overlooked, this magazine takes a new approach. Our commanding theme of “See Me” demands that AGS girls’ art and writing is visible to all. By submitting their work, AGS girls are claiming their words and art and not letting them remain unshared. They are letting their peers see them. When creating, a person is often at their most vulnerable. While it may be scary to submit, it is crucial that AGS fosters an environment of acceptance of our peers’ work because it is important that women know that their art and writing is valuable, wanted by the world, and deserves to be seen. To my AGS peers, keep sharing your work even when you don’t think it’s perfect because it’s the only way you’ll grow and create a world where the work of women is just as prevalent as the work of men.

- Kimberly Kassis

This past year, we've seen a development of teenage voices emerging and speaking up about issues that they find important. Despite our age, young voices have become our source for new thought and interpretation, so what better way to showcase that thought process and passion than within a literary magazine filled with strong female voices? From comedy writing to graphic design, this magazine brings out the true character of AGS through the mediums of art and writing. With our theme being "See Me", it reminded me of the idea of a new perspective from the next generation. There is so much media and culture that gets thrown at us every day, making it hard to appreciate the true beauty of the art that is right in front of us.

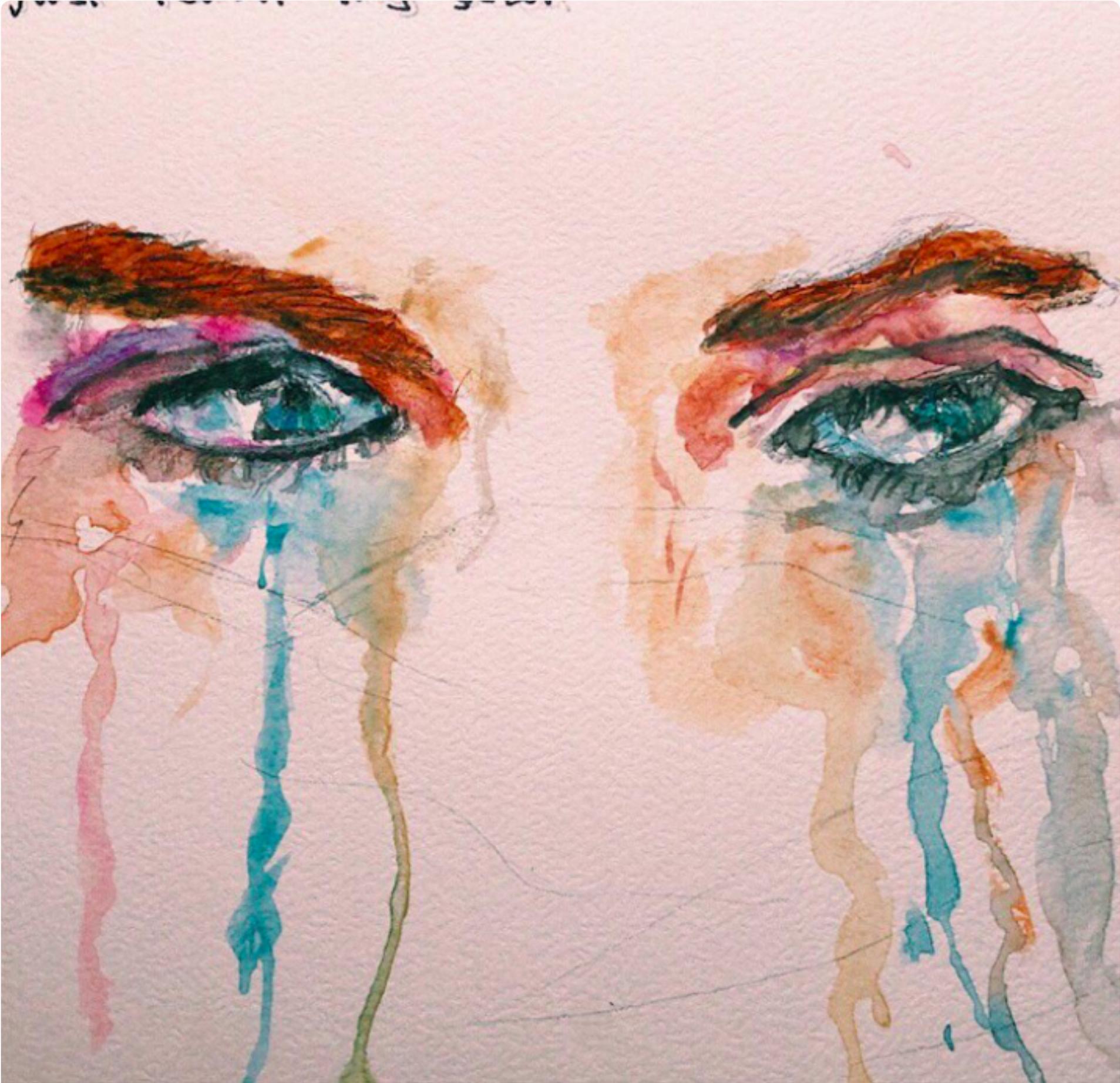
Not only is this magazine dedicated to the variety of teens that will see it and be inspired by it, but it is also for the older generations who will hopefully look at this magazine and get excited for the future of art and gain a new perspective. Our theme, "See Me", uses a part of the AGS theme open eyes to bring attention and shed light on art that expresses individual culture, struggles, and passions. See Me brings out each girl's work but blends together their variety to create what I see as true feminine power in the arts. This magazine is the product of months of work from students, teachers, and editors, and we

are really proud of everyone who was willing to share their work with the world. It is that bravery that starts new conversations and sparks inspiration.

- Leila Tolbert

Stained Cheeks

By Audrey Mast



Rage - Abby Phillipott

I'm connected to the sky with a string

Holding my chest high

To stay dry

Looking down being quiet don't sing

Only pulled up by noticing

A thousand other girls are doing the same thing

My friend, my sister in arms, clenching her fist so hard it rains blood

Her voice shaking with anger

She's humming in purple and red, they say that's weakness not danger

Her words are met with thick mud

We want to smother her, lava to rock, contain her

We avert our eyes from her flood

Then once in a place nobody knew my name

I commanded in braided confidence

Don't speak to me that way, each letter bottomless

And another girl said to me, feel no shame

Boiling rain tied with a lavender and pink bow burst to flame

Emanating power, she claimed

The rope from the sky shriveled, I'm just beginning to know

I don't have to sit like a lady to stand up tall

I'll yell, thunder and lightning will liquify then fall

Watch me yell and cry and smile and grow

I'm allowed to overflow

Me and her are lava and you wish you didn't see our magenta afterglow

Selections from Tonya Underwood

The Dreamer

She is reading in a tree
Unlike any other
Where perhaps imagination runs wild
The darkest of leaves
So big yet so small
Old but new
A tree where you're finally free
The book
Unknown
All that is opposite
Because all is guessed
She is the dreamer
Let her dream

Without You

Without you
I think my heart would break in two
Who knows what you would do
Without me

Camping

Do you remember the day you went camping
The sun shining
fresh air
fish
Maybe the splashing of the river
Do you remember now?
The sound of crickets in the night
And when you sleep the dreams of what you did that day
Or fear of having to leave the next day
You will be back
Worry not
The adventure is never over

When You Reach Me

(Inspired by Rebecca Stead)

Today he couldn't have seen me anyway
I haven't gone back yet
Complicated
I whirled around
Right behind us, light
Think, oblivious to us
One direction, time is just a construct actually
Beautiful, it was studded around with,
Diamonds. Every moment in time is a diamond of light

[When You Reach Me by Rebecca Stead(pg.102)]

Afternoon

Yellow sun, cold rain

No matter what

She's there

I'm here

Everyone here together forever

Playing outside in the tough ground

The happiest moments in the afternoon

The beautiful girl is playing

Then is asleep

Although the sun goes down the

Pleasure is still waiting

Yellow sun, cold rain

Reminiscence

By Tierra Williams



The Revolution of the Black Panther - Madison Marsh

There's a comment on Twitter that reads

Why do black people love Black Panther so much?

It's just a movie

And right below it another,

Black people always acting like Wakanda is real.

What?

Wakanda isn't real?

We never would've guessed.

A seemingly perfect entirely isolated African country

Which possesses the world's most precious metal

was never imperialized by Europeans

And has Chadwick Boseman as king

I wish

But why do you think we want Wakanda to be real so bad?

To see ourselves as superheroes and kings and queens

and scientists and warriors.

Things we only used to dream

Get to be a leading role

Instead of comic relief.

When I say Wakanda

I don't mean another movie.

Though I wouldn't mind seeing a sequel or three

I mean

Let us forever foster the black excellence

That can be seen

When I say Wakanda

I mean a mystical land of fantasy

A place home to my aspirations and dreams

A place where I can be whatever I want to be

When I say Wakanda

I mean a place where I don't need to say

Black Lives Matter

Because everyone already knew that anyway



Photo - Kimberly Kassis

The Power of Friendship - Taraji James

Picture a girl in fourth grade who has friends but not real ones; she was tall but always felt so small. She looked happy, but she was sad often. This girl was me in fourth grade. I was sensitive, quiet. My original friend group became friends with someone who bullied me, and no one else would even talk with me when I sat with them at lunch. I was stuck and I was alone, but let's skip a year later. I'm in fifth grade; I'm doing better. The bully finally switched schools. My friends and I started the school year off on good terms. Then we got a new student, Martha. In elementary school, my favorite thing was to try to make friends with new kids. Because back then I didn't have a best friend, I was obsessed with finding or having one. Martha was from Miami, Florida. She had long brown hair and beige skin, and when Ms. Reid, my teacher, introduced her, I felt something within me. I had no idea what it was, but I knew it meant something good, and it did. So from that moment I tried to talk to her and it almost felt the world tried to make it impossible for me to talk to her. But I finally got to her at lunch, in the lunch line actually. I got to go wherever I wanted

in that line since I took my own lunch. I finally talked to her, introduced myself to her, sat with her at lunch, and hung out with her during recess. It was so much fun. I didn't have that much fun with any friend before; this was so different and I loved it. So we exchanged numbers, we FaceTimed almost every single day when we got home, and we talked about everything together. We were best friends, something I longed for for the longest time. But, as usual, bad things happen. People got jealous of our friendship, the same people who treated me badly before, the same people who used and ignored me. They tried to separate us, they partnered with one of us so we couldn't be partners, they tried to hang out with only one of us at lunch, or say "Martha is a bad influence on you." But it never worked and we soon found out what was happening, so we confronted them. They said, "Taraji, you don't hang out with us anymore. You only hang out with Martha," I never was one to tell it exactly like it is, but Martha definitely was. She told them, "If you really wanted to hang out with her, you would have been more than ok to talk to her with me than

try to split us up.” After that, they stopped. Martha did what they never did for me; she was the friend I needed. She stood up for me, she told me the truth, she made me believe and made me stronger, and I would not let people walk all over me. She is and was a true friend. After that, I continued to learn from her and she learned from me, like the time a guy pushed past me outside, and she got so upset that he didn't apologize, so she made me walk up to him and ask for an apology. When he didn't? Well, Martha couldn't stand for that, so she walked up to him and gave him a stern talking to, about how I “deserved an apology” and he soon apologized. We had so many good times, like sleepovers. We even made a YouTube channel together. We spent months at recess practicing for a talent show that never happened, but she stood with me that whole year. She even got to finally go to come to my birthday party. I was so worried she and my AGS friends wouldn't get along, but I was so wrong, especially she and Bebe got along. We all went to Target and ran around and had fun. It was great. It still is now. Even though we see each other less, it doesn't mean we're less close. We even recently had a sleepover, our first one in a while, and it was amazing, we watched TV, did makeovers, and made breakfast sandwiches. There are so many more memories

to come; she's gonna be able to to see me in a musical for the first time, we'll go to each other's birthdays, I have planned something for us to go to Candytopia, and in a few years for her Quinceañera. But no matter what, she continued to make me better. Every day we chat, or text, or call. I could never ever picture a life without her. For her being there for me, and teaching me the true power of friendship.

Analysis of Nekfeu's "Mauvaise Graine" - Sawyer Theis

This is an analysis of the chorus and third verse in Nekfeu's number one song on Spotify, "Mauvaise Graine." In this song, Nekfeu raps moments of his childhood and his perseverance through the hard times that ultimately shape who he is today. He describes his tenacity and resilience through relationships with his friends. Many of the song's lyrics are written in the third person, which reinforces the idea of unity that is the core foundation of, again, who he is today. Nekfeu discusses the problems that impacted his adolescence when he settles his disputes with old enemies and talks about the importance he attaches to respect. During his career, Nekfeu's friends were there for him during the easy times however, they weren't there for him when times got rough -- they backed out. They ultimately had different morals from him. He trusted them, but those people hurt him.

The chorus highlights the hypocrisy of people, especially in relationships, that keeps Nekfeu strong; however, also cautious when forming new friendships. Nekfeu concludes his chorus by letting the listeners know that he has nothing to do with the people who betrayed him. Nekfeu says he will always remain honorable, which is why he prefers death to dishonor, as stated in the song, and he is faithful to his family. The continuous use of "my" emphasizes the idea of a strong cohesion of his team and best friends, which is s-crew.

In the third verse, Nekfeu raps all of the struggles in his life, from youth to current day, that have positively impacted or shaped him in some way. He uses the word "Cartesian", which relates to Descartes ideas' implying rational, logical, and methodical values. These adjectives would not describe Nekfeu's impulsive and unpredictable personality (which suggests he is a bad seed and is the title of the song). He apologizes for these characteristics of his personality if it has ever hurt anyone. The seductive and compulsive side of Nekfeu is highlighted in the third verse. He admits that most men just look at women's breasts, rather than their hearts. He first looks for something serious and meaningful, but if that proves impossible, he then begins a superficial relationship based on sex, similar to some other men.

After the middle of the verse where some people may call him sexist, Nekfeu reassures the listener by saying that he and his team will and always will respect women. He then tells

the listener that degrading the image of woman is very common in rap, where rappers treat women as a prize to be won or a superficial object. Nekfeu goes on to say that he wants to apologize for other men who may treat women this way. Then, bringing the attention to his sister, he thinks of another man treating his sister this way and the pain that would bring him, not to mention his sister. This evokes a sense of pathos in the listener because many of his listeners have siblings who they love too, and some men may take advantage of them. He wants to protect her from this "degrading image" that many men picture women as and the pain inflicted upon women.

Nekfeu's sister has always supported him, ever since his debut, and is always enthusiastic about his upcoming songs. He compares himself to a sportsman and his sister to a supporter; this metaphor highlights the cohesion of his family and its importance. Nekfeu addresses a new topic close to the end of the third verse and warns the listeners of the dangers of alcohol. He says he too has been there and empathizes with whatever the listener is going through, which evokes a sense of ethos in the listener. This proves Nekfeu is a human and is not perfect from head to toe. He has scars. He has bruises. He has experienced pain, too. The rap encourages the listener not to sink into addictions, as they are often fatal.

Nekfeu dives deeper into his past and tells us about his expulsion from school when he was younger. Nekfeu has openly discussed many of the struggles he has faced in his life, where many artists wouldn't dare to ruin a perfect reputation and would be too scared to even admit to them. Nekfeu then points to the separation that existed between his parents and that actually settles in many families. Nekfeu continues to warn his audience about this way of life; even though it may seem exhilarating, it will continuously involve danger that will linger on for the rest of their lives. He adds that many friends he had made in the streets are now in jail for various crimes. This part of the rap has a primary purpose of dissuading the listener from going the same way as his old friends.

Nekfeu speaks of himself in the third person towards the end of this verse, identifying himself with his age and origins. He traces his life back to his childhood and discusses his previous job before rapping. He tells us that it was at this time that he chose to become an artist to escape from the pain of his sullen life. Nekfeu addresses a recurring theme in rap:

the fact that he remained true to himself and his morals, despite his success. He also says that he does not have a false image that he shows only to the media and his fans; he is the same person when the camera turns off. This reinforces the idea of his sense of honor and sincerity. Nekfeu says he will always remain true and faithful to his relatives and tells the listener to not forget the people who matter to them in their lives.

Lyrics from Mauvaises Graines by Nekfeu

[Refrain]

J'ai côtoyé des gens qui parlaient d'amitié
Mais qui n'avaient pas du tout les mêmes valeurs que moi
Ceux qui te font rigoler quand tout va bien
Mais qui ne seront jamais là quand le malheur te noie
La mort avant le déshonneur, la mort avant le déshonneur
Pour mes mauvaises graines
La mort avant le déshonneur, la mort avant le déshonneur

[Couplet 3]

Pardonnez-moi, je n'ai pas l'esprit cartésien
Je viens de Paname, y'a pas de quartier sain
Moi, je ne veux qu'une femme, mais je ne suis qu'un homme
Si je n'vois pas ton âme, je regarde tes seins
On les taquine mais, les femmes, on respecte
Ne crois surtout pas qu'on aime cette image dégradante
C'est super triste, moi, je pense à ma sœur
La meilleure supportrice, tout en haut des gradins
Tu te noies dans l'alcool, moi, je faisais de même
Est-ce que, dans ta tombe, t'assumeras les rres-ve ?
On m'a viré de l'école depuis déjà deux mois
Mais maman vient d'tomber sur mes relevés
Man, attention, ça t'amène à des tensions
Parmi les gars d'l'époque, y'en a pas mal en détention
Maintenant, le jeune Grec fait d'la manutention
Mauvaise graine, je veux m'évader dans l'son
Viens dans ma dimension, le même sur scène ou en loge
Le même, pieds nus ou en Nike
Mon ami, le talent, ils font qu'en parler, nous, on l'a
On a freestylé dans l'allée, de long en large
On est les mêmes sur scène ou en loge
Les mêmes, pieds nus ou en Nike
Mon ami, le talent, ils font qu'en parler, nous, on l'a
On a freestylé dans l'allée, de long en large, ouais

Gymnastics - Elise Gill

The equipment is all spread out.

The image of a gymnast working hard.

Coaches coaching their classes.

The mats covered in chalk.

The taste of feet at the start, but other at the end.

The taste of the mats when you fall,
The taste of the cold refreshing water.

The taste of the vending machine snacks.

The smell of sweaty gymnasts.

The smell of chalk.

The smell of the fresh new equipment.

Gymnasts chatting.

Coaches yelling.

Squeaky bars.

The roaring sound of the springboard.

The pounding noise from the floor.

The feeling of grips on your hands.

The sweat dripping down your back.

Your hand touching the equipment.

Chalk under your fingernails.

The feeling when you get a new skill.

The feeling when you do gymnastics.

How to Spot Merfolk - Cyrenity Augustin

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,

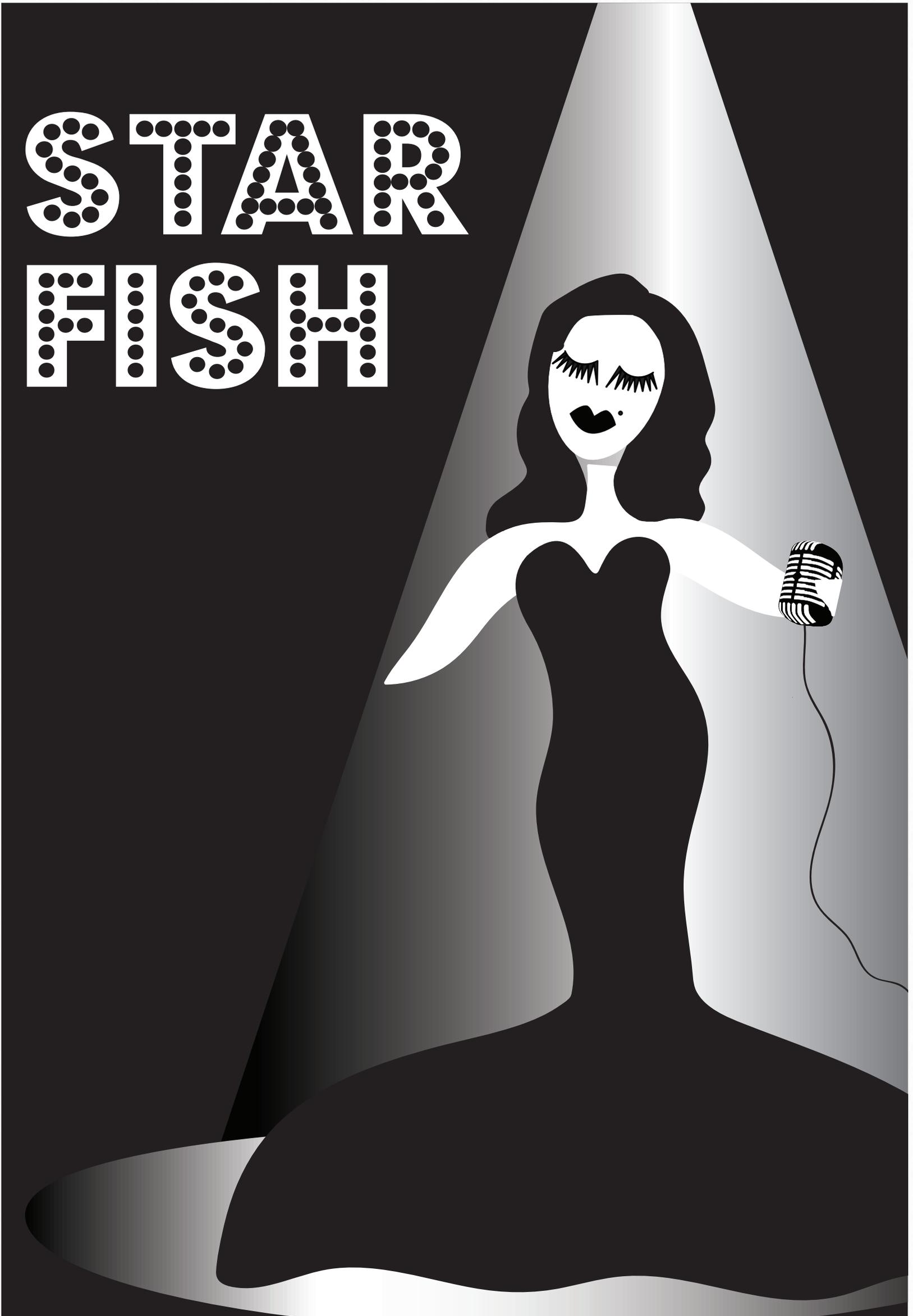
but if they do, prepare for the beauty of their land and people. But be aware

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.

STAR FISH



La Statue de la Liberté

La Statue de la Liberté

La grande statue est à la port de New York

C'est un bien representation des droits fondamentaux aux États-Unis

Liberté d'expression, parole, et opinion

Elle est l'emblème du liens entre la France et les États-Unis

La dame est emblématique à tout le monde

France a offert la statue aux États-Unis

Pendant la guerre d'Indépendance l'armée française aidait l'armée américaine

France offert l'aide cruciale aux révolutionnaire américaines

Le marquis de Lafayette à été un bonne chef

Ensuite la guerre, France été la première nation à reconnaître officiellement

La Statue est un symbole de l'amitié

Elle signifie l'indépendance

Elle signifie la flamme de justice

Elle signifie l'histoire des États-Unis

Et tout d'importance, elle signifie l'alliance franco-américaine

Elle est la Statue de la Liberté

by Natalie Rinck



Art - Sawyer Theis

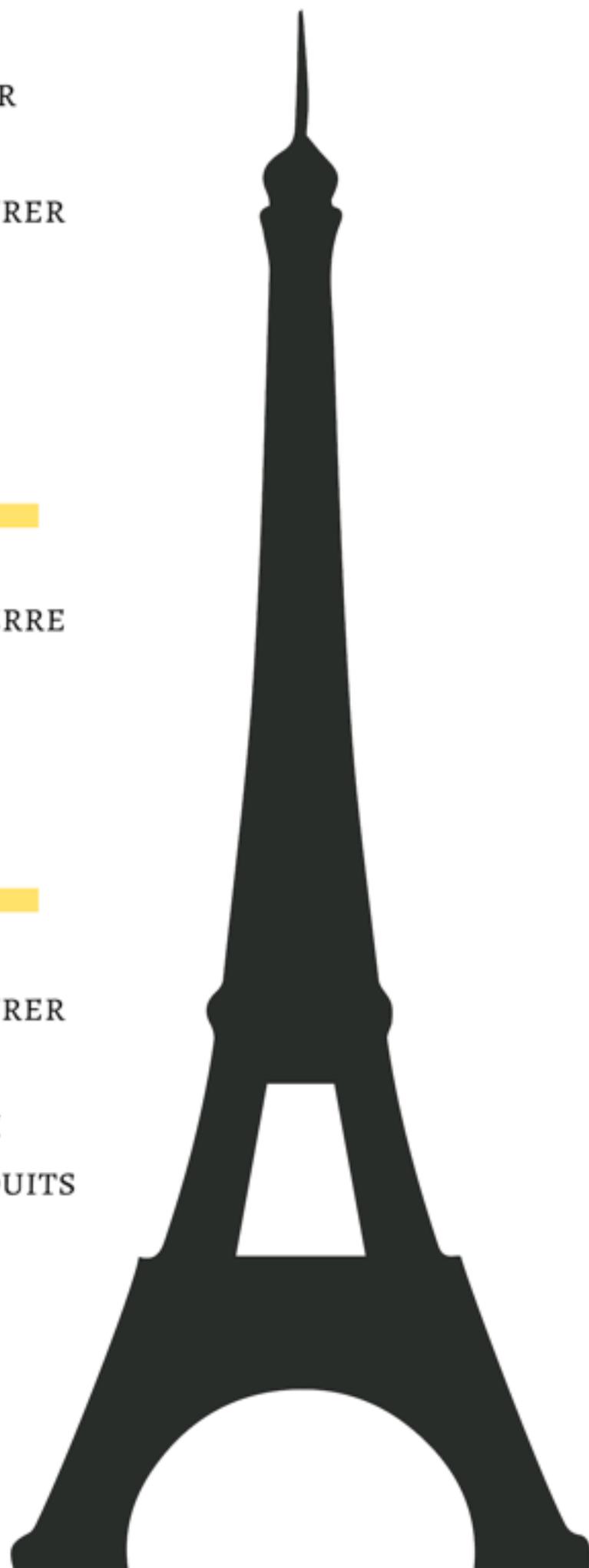
Marchent pour le Changement et pour une Différence

By: Malaika Alilaw

LA POLICE COMMENCE À S'INQUIÉTER
COMME ILS PULVÉRISENT DE L'EAU DANS L'AIR
LE GAZ LACRYMAL VA DANS LEURS YEUX
LES ENFANTS DE FRANCE SE METTENT À PLEURER
LES VESTES JAUNES SE MULTIPLIENT
ILS N'OUBLIERONT PAS UN MEMBRE
ILS MARCHENT POUR LE CHANGEMENT
ET ILS MARCHENT POUR UNE DIFFÉRENCE

LES RUES DE FRANCE SONT VACANTES
COMME LA VIOLENCE EST ATTENDUE SOUS TERRE
LES MAGASINS SONT FERMÉS
COMME LES INCENDIES SE PRODUISENT
ILS MARCHENT POUR LE CHANGEMENT
ET ILS MARCHENT POUR UNE DIFFÉRENCE

LE GAZ LACRYMAL VA DANS LEURS YEUX
LES ENFANTS DE FRANCE SE METTENT À PLEURER
LES VESTES JAUNES PENDENT À L'APPUI
COMME LES ÉTUDIANTS DE LYON MARS AUSSI
LES ÉTUDIANTS DE LYON NE SERONT PAS RÉDUITS
AU SILENCE
MÊME SI LES AUTORITÉS TENTENT DE LES EN
EMPÊCHER
ILS MARCHENT POUR LE CHANGEMENT
ET ILS MARCHENT POUR UNE DIFFÉRENCE



Romance Movie Love Stuff - Alexandra Newberg

I hate romance movies

genuinely, who would want to make themselves cry?

maybe they are for the hopeless romantics

but with them I can't identify

it might just be Valentine's Day or the sad feelings inside but

I will still hate romance movies no matter how hard I try



Photo - Alexandra Newberg

When Things Fall Apart - Lelia Tolbert

I was standing in the midst of the rumbling Times Square on a Monday night. It was the first day of October, but you wouldn't have been able to tell that fall had even begun because, rather than the array of warm colors shifting through the breeze above me, I saw the white lights of the electric city shining over me. I couldn't breathe. I closed my eyes and tried to take in my other senses, but the sounds began to mesh together and the smells became more unfamiliar. It blended into a quiet place where I stood there alone in the midst of thousands, and yet no one knew I was there. When I opened my eyes, I saw a red maple tree rooted in the middle of the sidewalk beneath the Times Square ball. I blinked once then twice and rubbed my eyes but it remained in place, happily drifting through the breath of Times Square. How could something so vibrant stand unnoticed? People passed by not even paying a glance and yet how could I, blocks away, stand there and not be able to focus on anything else but that tree. I guess people were distracted by finding something better than what was standing right in front of them. Or maybe I was distracted by the one thing that I wanted most and ignored the effort of finding beauty in the electric city I was in. I just couldn't help but focus on that maple tree though. You should have seen it, so precious and delicate but so deliberate and strong. I smiled and thanked whoever you thank for bringing such beauty onto this Earth and then I began to make my way through the crowds and toward the maple tree. My steps started as a purposeful walk but turned into a jog, and then into a sprint. I was aimlessly running through patterns and dodging anyone who blocked my path. When I got to the center where the ball drops every year on New Year's, I paused and took in the view of the outstretched branches that wrapped around the space. It was just me and it. No one else, nor anything else could have stolen my focus from such a beauty. I stretched out my hand and placed my palm on the rough bark. I breathed in as I wrapped my fingers around the curves of the trunk and closed my eyes as I let the air escape my lungs. I had forgotten to breathe all this time, but for some reason, the air seemed so fresh as I stood under the maple tree. When I opened my eyes and watched my breath smoke through the darkness, the leaves of the maple began to pluck off one by one and dissolve before they hit the concrete. The roots dragged the trunk into the ground and I tried to hold it up but the pull was too strong. The bark scraped the palms of my hands, so I let go and stared as the naked maple stood at eye level. I watched it drown in the concrete and sink into the Earth, and I tried looking around

if I could find help; I screamed and yelled, but no one seemed to hear me. I looked back down and all that was left was a tiny stem with a bud that grew from a crack in the sidewalk. As water filled up my eyes, I closed them and let a tear stream down my cheek and drip onto the crack. When I opened my eyes, the strobe lights of the city blinded my vision and I tried to focus and look for the tree, but I knew it was gone. I felt a woman pat me on the shoulder and ask if I was okay, but I couldn't answer. I was choking on everything I had lost, everything that had left me, and everything that was missing. Of course, then someone saw me, but the woman was too late. What I didn't realize though was that the only thing that was missing was my own willingness to see what was right in front of me. I ignored the beauty of the electric city and the lives of the people in the crowd and instead focused on what I wanted. I guess maybe I had been wrong. Maybe wishing for a want was as stupid as believing that a maple tree stood in the center of Times Square, or maybe it was worth it because I got to see what I wanted most even if it was only for a short moment. That short moment, however, doesn't have to be over. It can forever live in my imagination, even within a reality. It is a matter of meshing the reality with the imagination, in which I find myself able to love what is right in front of me.



Photo - Alexandra Newberg

Ferris Wheel - Payton Dinkins

The next night he is waiting for me
I escaped on a free pass
I hurry us down the street,
Afraid someone will see me
We arrive as the lights are being darkened
Magic appears in the distance, waiting for us
A golden glow his hair is right
Surrounded by magic
On this forbidden adventure
Around and around
Good ride
You really want to go on
Are you sure?
The wheel turns and never stops

Stephanie - Sophie Tinley

Mother
Steady and strong
You act as my shelter
From every storm life sends my way
A home



Photo - Alexandra Newberg

Alone Time - Courtney King

Recently, I was feeling run-down, frustrated, and discouraged about a variety of things, from school, to extracurriculars, to colleges, and beyond. It was like I was trapped in this never-ending cycle of completing tasks, one after the other, for others. I would go to school and do my work, then go to tennis practice, then run errands for my mom, then do my homework, sleep, and repeat. On the weekends, I was visiting my grandmother, or cooking dinners, or hanging out with friends. It's not that I don't enjoy some of these things, it was just that I felt that I was losing control of my life. I was so focused on pleasing others and accomplishing all these tasks that I wasn't doing anything for myself.

One weekend came along, and I promised myself that I would take a day and do nothing but what I wanted to do. All. Day. Long. As I woke up, thoughts swirled in my head of all that I needed to accomplish in the next few days. But, I quickly brushed them away and made room for the things I wanted to do. After watching an episode of one of my all time favorite childhood shows, *4 Weddings*, I got up and got dressed in a comfortable, casual outfit and set off on my journey. My mom had mentioned to me that she needed me to return something to Pier 1 Imports. For some reason that store makes me smile and I love looking around at all of the holiday themed items. After going there, I was hungry for lunch. I drove to my favorite restaurant, Gusto, and sat down all by myself. This was the thing that haunted me the most about this day. I had never sat down and eaten a whole meal by myself at a restaurant. I choose a seat by the window and just gazed out onto the bustling street in front of me. All different types of people passed by, old and young, families and friends. But the highlight of my time there was for sure the sight of a five-year-old boy and his little sister hopping and jumping over the cracks in the sidewalk, trying not to "break their mother's back." I was finally full and set out to go see a movie. I had no clue what was playing or at what time. I just showed up and asked for a ticket to next showing movie. It happened to be *The Upside*, which was based on a French movie I had watched about a year ago. I sat in a row with no one around me and laughed and cried through the whole movie. The movie ended and on the way home, I blasted some of my favorite songs and sang along. I came home to an empty house and turned on the TV again and enjoyed a little mid-day snack. So, now here I am writing about one of the best days of my life, however simple it maybe. This is all to say that sometimes the best medicine is a little time to yourself.



Art - Peyton Cherry

The Wrong Address - Kimberly Kassis

The plane ticket was just another aspect of the bizarre mail Loretta had been receiving, but despite her mother's insistence, Loretta wasn't going to pass up a free trip to Los Angeles. She didn't care if someone was waiting at the airport to kill her. She had to get out of Oklahoma, and California took her one step closer to the fake life she'd been living for the past seven months.

The letters started coming back in August. At first there were only a few. They were always addressed to Serena Bea, the most gorgeous face to grace the movie screens, but despite the address on the letter always being for Serena's studio, they came to Loretta in an envelope with her address. Every week she received multiple letters from troops, who poured their hearts out to Serena as they wrote from the beaches in France.

Loretta knew she shouldn't have opened the letters--much less have responded--but by the time twenty were piled on her desk, she could no longer resist. She couldn't bear to think of the men overseas never hearing back. That's what she told her mother during the daily reprimands, but in reality, she enjoyed the thrill of being someone else for the twenty minutes it took to write each response and the fantasy it evoked. She loved being Serena Bea.

And now here she is in California. Her first airplane ride. Her first time out of Oklahoma, and not a murderer in sight. She can't believe her luck.

She hoists her suitcase under her arm, taking careful steps down the stairs and onto the cement, the warm California breeze blowing her sun streaked hair in her face as she turns to look at the plane one last time.

A man clears his throat. "May I take this, Miss Wright?"

He knows her name. Her stomach does a flip. Is this the end?

Loretta looks at him, keeping one hand on her suitcase while she eyes his black cabbie

and suit for a potential threat, her mother's ridiculous speculations creeping into her thoughts.

"I'm with Serena Bea. She asked me to pick you up."

Loretta continues to stare at him. She is in for it now. She can't believe she'd even brought some of the letters she still had to respond to with her, evidence of her crime.

She looks around her at the other passengers disembarking, running away would only make her look more guilty. "Of course." The driver reaches again for her bag, but she declines his offer. She would be holding tight to the letters.

If she was being honest, Loretta hadn't thought much about who sent the plane ticket. She didn't care. Like the letters, she figured it was just another part of God taking pity on her dull life. She curses herself as she gets in the cab. She should've known God was too busy to play games like that. But if he didn't send the ticket, then he didn't send the letters, so who did?

The drive from the airport to the studio is silent, but Loretta is not too nervous to enjoy the palm trees and new scenery. Might as well enjoy it if she ends up behind bars. At least she would be locked up in a state that isn't Oklahoma.

The movie studio isn't as spectacular as the drive to it was. The driver parks the car in front of one of the bigger trailers and opens her door. Loretta tucks her luggage under her arm and, with her free hand, shades her eyes as she gets out.

"She asked for you to wait for her inside. She'll be back from the set shortly."

Loretta looks back at him. He is getting back in the car. She is on her own. Not like the driver would be much help, he worked for Serena after all.

The dressing room is spacious with a velvet chaise and armchair, and Loretta takes a seat

in the chair, not leaning back all the way. The room smells like fresh cut gardenias and Chanel No. Five. The air only smelled this good back home in the tiny local department store. Loretta had never been one to love the natural fragrance of dirt and grass like her mother's other children. It was how she knew she didn't belong in Oklahoma.

The trailer door flies open, and Serena walks in, still wearing her sparkling costume. "The infamous Loretta Wright," she says, with a flourish of her hands, her voice not as breathy as it is on the screens. "You've seemed to make yourself at home here." She takes a seat on the chaise resting on her side. "So tell me, which is better: my dressing room or my mail?"

Loretta's face pales. "I don't know what you mean." She pushes her suitcase under the chair with her heel.

"You know lying causes wrinkles."

Loretta had never heard that before.

Serena stands up and rests her never-done-labor-a-day-in-her-life hands on Loretta's shoulder. "You had an influx of letters." She squeezes Loretta's arm. "You won my dear. Out of all the random young women in the states I sent my letter from the troops to, you received the most responses. The men love you, and because of that, the women will fear you. You're going to be my project. The next star of Hollywood."

Loretta shakes her head as everything she dreamed of when she was writing the letters is offered to her. Sometimes she dreamed things solely because she knew they would stay dreams. "You're the star of Hollywood," she says to Serena, her voice one notch above a whisper.

"And it's exhausting," Serena groans. "I'm tired of trying to stay young forever, but I'd be damned if I didn't have a say in the fresh face that replaces me."



Photo - Alexandra Newberg

flower girls - Abby Philpott

my honeysuckle

a smile and messy hair, sweet and everywhere I looked
I picked pieces of you when I was seven behind the playground
and haven't tasted you since

I never saw the rose's flower
she's all thorns and edges I mistook as delicacy
either she never bloomed or died a long time ago

candytuft

iberis was snow white
pressed into the kind of picture book I wanted to own
two months to read and a year to forget
I never really understood the story

my pansy stands tall but leans
I pulled out her petals and wished on them
I watched the petals wash away into a thick rain

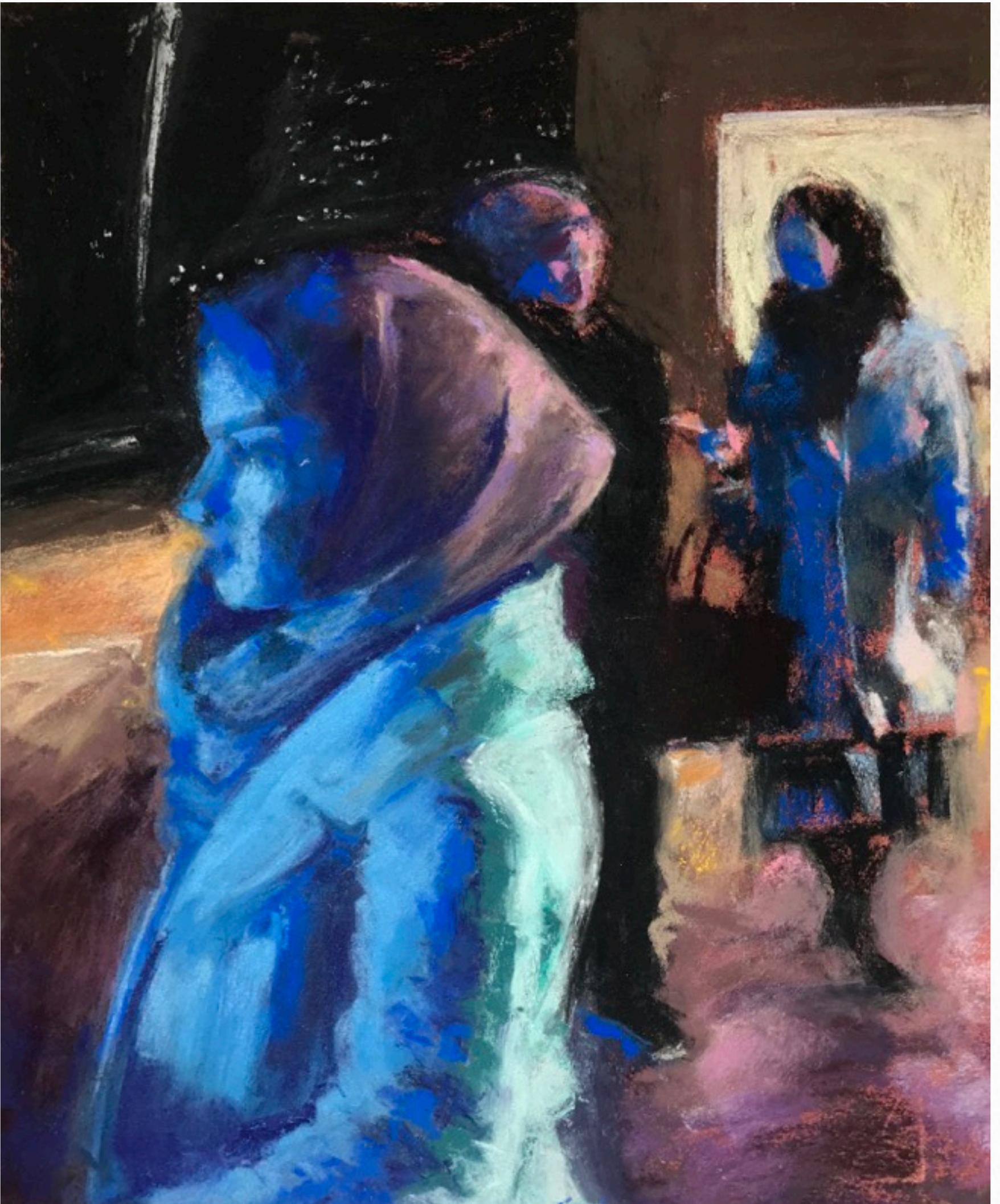
snapdragon is bouncy and bright
she's a fistful of red and a bushel of laughter
a thousand I love you's and more yet to come

a sunflower has the soulmate kind of lure
she will love and sing until she burns out
she turns towards you because she finds the sun in your smile

orchid, cryptid, I couldn't describe you if I tried

you uprooted yourself and then danced in the rain
a rare masterpiece found at a grocery store
faded purple and speckled with violet

my carnation
dusty pink and a sparkling stare
soft and crinkled, she laughs like the wind
I just spotted her and can't take my eyes away
I'm scared that if I touch her she'll wilt



Like a Moth to a Flame - Tierra Williams

Trail Mix - Lelia Tolbert

I want you to go on Google maps right now and look up Franklin County, Maine. It's near a small body of water called Webb Lake in the city of Weld. You know what? Don't even bother because you probably won't even be able to find it. I don't know how my grandparents found a house there. I don't know how anyone could come across Franklin County, Maine on Webb Lake and go down five hundred rocky roads and find a little red cottage and say this is the one. The closest grocery is an hour away, the water comes from a well around the back of the cottage, WiFi is unheard of, and the cottage fits a total of three beds if you include the wire bed within the couch. So when you take an entire Tolbert family of five plus my nana, who totals to an extra three people, you can imagine the tension that would shortly rip my family apart within hours of arriving at the cottage plus the sleeping situation. It's my favorite part of summer; well, it was. My Nana just sold the cottage this past summer; it was just too much to handle on her own, too scary to live in all summer alone, except for the two weeks when we were there. I mean, I would be pretty scared if I were her, living in a cottage on a lake in the middle of nowhere in the center of Maine on an empty rocky road with bears and moose as your next door neighbors. But don't get me wrong; when we were there, it was a party.

I would take my brother and sister frog hunting, I saved up my allowance and purchased myself a purple kayak that I used to practice my surfing technique, I went on two-hour runs with my mom, and I did the crossword and sudoku puzzles in the Times. But that usually only lasted for the first day. The second day consisted of me staring into space at the wooden beams of the ceiling. The third day was me trying to bake a pie with no eggs. And by the fourth day, with one piece of pie left, the only sounds that came out of that cottage were the screams of my family in a full out investigation on who ate the last piece of pie. As each day went on each summer within that little cottage, we really all got to know each other for better and for worse. I mean, you could only flush the toilet once a day, and the single shower held warm water for a total of a good thirty minutes if we were lucky. So it wasn't unusual for my dad and me to get out of the house on the fifth or sixth day.

We've gone whitewater rafting, we've canoed across the lake, we've gone on a moose hunt, we've picked across acres of blueberry bushes, but my favorite outing was when I

I had just finished my ninth grade year. My dad woke me up at six o'clock and told me he would finally take me to hike Little Jackson mountain. I had been waiting my whole life to hike L.J. I packed up my backpack, sprayed on a pound of bug spray, made a peanut butter sandwich and got in our new rental car. Little Jackson, or L.J. as I call it, is the baby mountain attached to Big Jackson that is about a four-mile hike, which according to my Nana should take about four hours. But with my dad, it's more of an eight-hour hike, or in this case a ten-hour hike. He likes to take pictures of all of the flowers, unique mushrooms, and pine trees even though we've got some of those in our backyard, but he claims that they're different. But the selfies were the main part of the hike. He had to get all of the right angles. We also took snack breaks every thirty minutes, or whenever we found a big enough rock to sit on. We've got a whole system going when we hike. I run up the mountain and find the best rock and then sit on it for about thirty minutes while I wait for my dad. And then once he makes it, I get a handful of trail mix and do it all over again.

We had been hiking for about two hours and were sitting and eating our M&M trail mix. Everything was going just as I had expected. It was a beautiful July afternoon, the smell of pine filled the air, a cool breeze rustled through the branches, and the sound of birds and the nearby creek were the sounds of mother nature at its finest, until my peaceful meditation was interrupted by a rustling in the bush in front of me. My dad told me to stop chewing, get behind the rock, and put my backpack over my head. He picked up two stones and began hitting them together as he stood in a squatted position facing the bush. Now, I never did Girl Scouts or anything like that. I am a ballerina, so the outdoors have never been my strong suit. My dad grew up on a farm, but if you saw him now with his doctor's coat, Gucci belt, and spiked hair, you wouldn't even be able to imagine him or me in this type of situation, but here we were, crouched on Little Jackson in the midst of preparing ourselves for a bear attack. I mean, we had watched Animal Planet, so we knew to hit the stones together to make noise but not much beyond that. If anything, I told him to not run or climb a tree, not that he could climb a tree if he wanted to. He had already pulled an entire tree out by its roots on our last hike just from leaning on the trunk.

My heart was beating out of my chest. I had seen many moose in my life but not a bear. What if it did attack? What if my dad was mauled to death? I had no cell service, there were no people in sight, and we were running low on trail mix. So I did what any fourteen-

year-old girl would do in this situation. I sat crouched behind the rock and ate some trail mix while waiting for the bear to come out of the bushes and eat my dad. It was kind of like watching a live-action movie with a front row seat. Actually, let me take that back, it was more like a horror film, something kind of like *The Shining*. I literally almost peed my pants when the bushes started to ferociously rattle and I saw a leg emerge from the greenery. A human leg. My dad stopped hitting the stones together and lowered his eyes with a smile as a friendly gesture towards the middle-aged man in the neon orange jacket. It took everything in me to keep a straight face at the mountain's maintenance man who passed by, but once he was out of sight, I actually did pee my pants but from laughing so hard. We probably looked like idiots, or at least my dad. We laughed about it for a while as we ate more trail mix and took a couple selfies and then continued on our way up L.J.

My favorite show in elementary school was on channel 61: Animal Planet. It was called *I Shouldn't Be Alive*. It highlighted a compilation of stories from people who got themselves into unfortunate environmental situations but made it out alive. I never would have imagined being a physical miracle like one of those people, not only once but twice in a day. But I am here to tell you that I survived. Now don't get me wrong, I love my spontaneous outings with my dad, but when you have two people from the city of Atlanta climbing a pretty challenging mountain in Converse with a bag of trail mix (without raisins), there's a point where things like this are just too dangerous for urban southerners.

I think our main fault was in our research ahead of time. Let me rephrase that: our lack of research, because we didn't do any. We just thought it would be a good day for a hike so we found a trail and hiked it. What we didn't read was that they were doing construction on Little Jackson so there were no markings once you got up to the upper half.

As my dad took more selfies, I continued making my way up the mountain while dramatically singing the "*Star Spangled Banner*". It's what I usually do when in Maine; I think that's why I love it so much. You can sing at the top of your lungs and no one will hear you, but I wished they could've because I was really hitting those soprano notes as I made my way up, following each blue marking in sight. I must have gotten really into it because at some point I realized that I hadn't seen a blue mark in a while. I stood up on a nearby rock to get a panorama view and see if I had missed it, but there was no blue in sight. I tried retracing my steps

but I couldn't remember which way I had come from, or which way I was going. I sat down on the rock and yelled my dad's name even though I knew he wouldn't be able to hear me. So I sat and waited. And waited. And waited. Five minutes turned into ten, into twenty, and then into thirty and he still wasn't there. I began to assume the worst. I was positive that he had been murdered. I had been watching a considerable amount of *X-Files*, so I considered the idea that things had gone as far as him getting abducted. Or maybe he had had a heart attack and died. Or maybe he had been mauled by a bear. I thought this was it for me. I began thinking of ways I could find water and food and was reassured by the sound of a nearby stream next to a familiar set of bushes that looked like blueberries. I knew I was going to make it. I picked myself up off the rock. I was not about to die out here. I screamed my dad's name louder and finally got a reply. He told me to stop yelling because I was scaring all the wildlife away for his pictures.

From that point on, I decided not to climb ahead, but I wasn't wrong when I said I thought I was lost. There really weren't any blue markings. But we kept hiking in the hopes that we would find some sort of marking. Nothing. I think the problem with this image was that a fourteen-year-old girl was leading while her forty-three-year-old dad took selfies and artsy pictures of mushrooms and toads. But when I got a glimpse of a large pond off to the left, all of my worries subsided. I knew that pond. That was Tumbledown pond, which meant we were on a completely different mountain, but at least we knew that we weren't lost. My dad suggested that we swim across the pond but I was not about to get wet again after just drying my damp shorts, so we walked around the pond and unwrapped our sandwiches.

By that time, it was already three o'clock, so I was completely starved. I demolished my sandwich to crumbs as my dad fell into a deep slumber for his afternoon nap. I sat there for about an hour, watching the clouds and trying to meditate on a nearby cliff, but my meditation was shortly interrupted when I felt raindrops on my scalp. I ran to my backpack and pulled out my umbrella but a huge gust of wind came up behind me and blew it out of my hands and over the cliff. By that point, my dad had already awoken, and we quickly picked up our picnic and started running down the bald cliff and back towards the forest of Tumbledown. With a two hour hike ahead of us, I was determined to shave it down to an hour and a half. You should have seen me. I swear I was swinging on the trunks of trees

trunks of trees over boulders and rivers and dodging roots as I hopscotched across stones. It was kind of like one of those dramatic movie scenes like *The Notebook* storm scene plus an action twist.

When I made it to the bottom of the mountain and saw the wooden outhouse and road I couldn't have been happier. I mean, I still had to wait another hour for my dad to climb down the mountain (he claims he has weak ankles) but I knew I was a survivor.

When we got back to my Nana's cottage, I opened the moving car and jumped out onto the dirt road and kissed the ground. I had seen that lady do it in the movie *Gravity* when she made it back to Earth, and I had the same urge. I was finally home. Sitting on the porch was my mom eating the last piece of blueberry pie. I guess we live and we learn.



Photo - Alexandra Newberg

didn't i tell you i would write you a love poem?? - Alexandra Newberg

Maybe it's the way you push me away when i try to hug you
And maybe it's the way we talk about marvel movies or maybe it's
Daring to interrupt class to talk about my attempt to apply to colleges or
It could be the times we were sick in France or
Scarfig down fries but
Only i know you actually like me,
Not as joke but for real



Photo - Kimberly Kassis



Art - Sawyer Theis



Photo - Alexandra Newberg

The Earth Is Fine - Abby Philpott

Based on the poem *War is Kind* by Stephen Crane.

Do not weep, the earth is fine.
Although someone's children starve and cry,
As our brave soldiers march mercilessly by and by,
We must focus on our homeland!
Let us love our country,
The earth is fine.

Ignorant men raise their voices to gallantly cry,

Climate change is a fraudulent lie!
These waters will not rise to drown our cities,
Lawless fires don't burn the hopes of the young.
All the while, God looks down on Her creations,
Beautiful, innocent, doomed
They die.

Do not weep, the earth is fine.
We raise our shaking fists to the sky
A dark smog stalks closer as we tremble,
Just like our cities quake and break,
As monsters in uniform wander the streets for prey.
Do not weep.
The earth is fine.

Tired revolutionaries sing out again and again,
Their lyrics hoarse and wary.
What happens when the last of them lie,
Defeated, tired, weakened, and beaten?
Do not weep, my love.
I shall try not to weep, my love.
The earth is fine.



Photo - Kimberly Kassis



Roadtrippin' Widows - Leila Tolbert

Estimated run time: 10 minutes

Characters

MIRNA: an 81 year old southern widow

NANCY: a 77 year old southern widow

JUDY: an 80 year old southern widow

Scene begins with NANCY giving MIRNA directions from the passenger seat with her map and JUDY sitting in the back, listening.

MIRNA: Ok, so a right up here.

NANCY: No, I said left.

MIRNA: Ok, so left.

NANCY: Oh wait, no a right. Wait let me get a closer look. Hey Judy will you pass me my reading glasses?

JUDY: Which ones?

NANCY: The red ones, please. *(Puts on glasses)*. Ah here we are, much better. My eyes must be getting old, should've eaten those carrots. Yep, take a left up here.

MIRNA: Well you know when you're coming up on eighty there's nothing to be ashamed of.

NANCY: Ha, yeah that's the truth. The millennials these days just make it look so easy.

JUDY: Yeah, tell me about it. I mean Jen uses that site, oh what's it called, Wazz, no, Waze. You know the one that speaks to you when your drive, but that's all just too complicated.

MIRNA: Now is it the pro or deluxe version?

NANCY and JUDY both stare.

MIRNA: Ok ok lighten up will ya? Earl used to live for that stuff. Geez, I remember when the new paper map versions came out and then GPS. He was in hog heaven.

JUDY: I always preferred good old paper maps. Jen is always trying to get me on sites like a what's it called... (*snapping*) U-bear and Maps for google but it's all just a money pit if you ask me. I tell her she can do what she wants, but not to involve me in any of it.

MIRNA: It's what you gotta do sometimes.

JUDY: (*nodding*) Mh-Hm.

NANCY: It's really a shame, you know. I remember growing up, we would play games in the car with our old stash of maps, but now you just don't see that anymore. I mean it's 2018, where are the self flying cars? I guess that's the world for ya, always proving you wrong whether it be in a good or bad way.

JUDY: Mostly bad.

MIRNA: Oh Judy don't say that. Listen, I know it's been a hard week.

JUDY: I mean not my worst, but definitely an adjustment.

NANCY: Well, we are all here for you.

JUDY: No you really aren't. You don't understand what it's like. One minute he's here and the next he's not.

NANCY: Here, come here.

JUDY: Stop, don't touch me.

NANCY: Mirna get over! This is the exit.

MIRNA swerves into the right lane.

MIRNA: When I lost Earl I didn't think I was gonna make it, but look at where I am now. Don't worry, this trip is gonna be good for us. We need a break from being old.

JUDY: Well when you get to be my age and all your friends are dead, including your husband, it's hard to ignore.

NANCY: I'm not dead.

MIRNA: Okay ladies lift up your feet, here we are in 5, 4, 3, 2. Whoo Hoo. We are in Maine! I repeat we are in Maine.

JUDY: I wouldn't be too excited if I were you, the cottage is really just a mosquito muck pond.

NANCY: Well maybe things have changed. Hasn't it been a while for you?

JUDY: Well when Gary got sick, he wanted to spend as much time up at the lake as possible. Gosh, he loved the lake, but we couldn't stay as long as we'd hoped. It's just not gonna be the same without him. I've got to figure out what to do with all of his boats and the electric bills and water line, cause you know he used to deal with all that.

MIRNA: Did you say boats? You never mentioned boats before. Oh goodness Judy can we go tubing?

NANCY: Mirna you act like we are ageless.

MIRNA: If anyone here is ageless it's you. I mean look at you!

NANCY: It was all my mouth exercises back in the day. Or the pilates. Or my daily squat routine (*winking*).

MIRNA: Ha yeah, sooner than later I'll be needing oil to loosen up these knee joints. Lately I've been feeling a little rusty if you know what I mean.

MIRNA lifts up her knee and begins rubbing it while she drives with her other knee

JUDY: Mirna put your hands on the wheel, it's getting dark.

MIRNA: Remember when you told us that story about your friend who hit that moose up here after her sewing class and had moose turds in her sewing bag.

MIRNA begins laughing but NANCY and JUDY stares.

JUDY: Yeah, well it's a real thing you know. Moose up here are no joke.

MIRNA: Well, I would bet. Oh, I hope we get to see one. I've always wanted to get a glimpse of a moose.

JUDY: Well, you may be in luck. I read in the paper the other day that there's a new baby on the lake. Apparently there've been some sightings of the family around shore.

MIRNA: Okay, I'll keep my eyes peeled. (Looks down at gas tank) Oh my god, we're on empty; eight miles left of gas.

NANCY: I saw a sign back there that said the nearest station was fifty miles.

MIRNA: Well, this is it.

JUDY: I think I may have packed a tank in the trunk. Here, pull over and let me check. My mother used to tell me you can never be too prepared.

NANCY: Wise woman.

MIRNA pulls over onto the grass.

MIRNA: Oh don't worry dear, I'll check.

JUDY: (*hopping out of the car*) Oh no it's okay, I've got it.

JUDY goes around to the trunk.

MIRNA: Oh, get me a snack while your back there, would ya.

JUDY: (*yelling*) Don't worry I found it. I knew I had put it back here. Okay Mirna, we've got some hard candies and some coke.

MIRNA: I'll take a caramel.

JUDY closes the trunk and gives MIRNA the gas and candy. MIRNA starts filling up the tank.

NANCY: Hurry up, according to the map we've only got about an hour left.

MIRNA: Ok then, well let's get the show on the road.

JUDY: I don't know, just be careful, we don't need to be rushing anything.

MIRNA: Judy, relax, don't you trust me?

JUDY: You know I really don't.

MIRNA: Okay. Uh. Well then...

Awkward silence stands for several seconds.

JUDY: Trust no one. That's what Gary always told me. People just speak junk. It's all just junk.

It's like one day the doctors say your husband's fine and the next you wake up and you're a widow. I mean how bout you try waking up to a dead husband. Dead. Everyone's a damn liar. It's just ridiculous. It's all a sham.

JUDY crosses her arms and looks out the window.

MIRNA: Hey Judy listen, I know it's hard. I've dealt with heart attacks, car wrecks, and cancer and you're right, death is the worst part of living.

NANCY: Or is it the best?

MIRNA: No. And you know what? I don't think it's ever goin' to get better. But look on the bright side, you're next.

JUDY: I know.

MIRNA: Have you figured out what you want to do with him.

JUDY: With who?

MIRNA: Gary. I mean I know for now the mortuary is holding on to him, but have you thought about cremating or burning?

NANCY: There's no difference.

MIRNA: Oh wait, burying. With Earl, I sprinkled him on top of the mountain he proposed to me on, you could always do something like that.

JUDY: I mean Gary always said he wanted to be cremated, but I just can't bear the thought of him being turned to ash.

MIRNA: *(turning back to face Judy)* Well, you could buy a nice oak casket. Casket shopping can be fun, maybe help get your mind off things.

JUDY: I don't know, Mirna. I just don't want to be dealing with any of this.

NANCY: Mirna eyes on the road. *(sighing)* Dealing with what Judy? He was your husband.

JUDY: I know that Nancy, but I just don't want to deal with any of this.

NANCY: Well what, are you just gonna... (*Screaming*) Moose! Mirna watch out!

MIRNA: Oh sh...

Everyone screams.

MIRNA swerves to the right but the minivan crashes into the moose.

MIRNA: (*moaning and looking up*) Is everyone alright?

JUDY: (*rubbing her head*) Oh god, I think so... (*looking up*) Oh god, Mirna.

NANCY: Oh my god.

Everyone turns to the back of the car and sees the moose's head stuck in the back right window.

MIRNA: You think it's dead?

NANCY: Dead, dead!? Mirna we've got a buck peering in our rear. .

MIRNA: And you think I didn't notice!

JUDY: (*rocking back and forth*) I believe in God the father almighty. The maker of heaven and earth and in...

MIRNA: Judy relax, let me go get my phone and call the police.

NANCY: Yeah, and make sure all of our stuff is okay in the back.

MIRNA gets out of the car and goes to open the trunk and begins humming as she rummages through the bags.

MIRNA: *(stops humming and looks closer at something in the trunk)*: What is th... Oh my god. Oh my god! *(yelling)* Uh, Nancy get out here and give me a hand, would ya?

NANCY: *(yelling as she gets out of the car)* What do you want?

MIRNA: *(whispering)* Nancy, get over here right now. Listen, I think I just saw a hand in the back trunk.

NANCY: Mirna, what're you talking about. Stop trying to make things worse.

MIRNA: No I'm serious Nancy, look.

MIRNA lifts up one of the bags and a hand lies underneath.

NANCY: *(jumping back)* Oh my lord. Jesus Christ. Is it dead?

MIRNA: Think so.

MIRNA gets closer to the hand and begins shaking it and feeling for a pulse.

MIRNA: Yep, definitely dead.

NANCY: Mirna, who do you think it is? Why is there a body in the trunk of our car?

MIRNA: Here, wait let me pull this stuff out real quick.

MIRNA unloads half the trunk and steps back to process.

NANCY: S-----.

MIRNA: *(whispering)* Judy.

JUDY: *(yelling)* Mirna did you call yet?

MIRNA doesn't reply so Judy gets out of the car.

JUDY: *(yelling)* Mirna?

MIRNA and NANCY continue staring at the trunk.

NANCY: Judy, what have you done?

JUDY: *(rubbing her hands on her face)* Oh god, I forgot. Okay, I know it's bad. I know. It's just that I didn't know what to do with him.

NANCY: What do you mean you didn't know what to do with him? I thought you said the doctors took him.

JUDY: *(panicking)* Well, I-I just didn't know what to do.

NANCY: You didn't bring Gary to the hospital did you?

MIRNA: Oh god Judy. Oh my--

JUDY: Shhhh. I know, I know. Listen, when I woke up on Sunday I tried waking him up, I did everything, but he wouldn't.

NANCY: But--

JUDY: I didn't know what to do with him, so I kept him in the house. The trip was two days away so I didn't feel like I had enough time to deal with the mortuary. I couldn't just leave him at the condo so I packed him in the trunk.

NANCY: (*yelling*) Judy, we've got a dead body in our trunk! How do you think that makes us look?

JUDY stops talking and looks up.

NANCY: (*yelling*) Why didn't you tell us?

JUDY: Stop yelling. It's not my fault I didn't know what to do.

JUDY bends down in front of Gary and strokes his hair and prays.

JUDY: (*concerned*) Oh lord. Oh my god, what are we gonna do?

MIRNA: Well for starters, we've got a moose's ass hanging out of the back window.

NANCY: (*whispering*) Stop making things worse.

JUDY: (*sobbing*) What have I done?

NANCY: Judy relax, we are going to return the body and set things right. (*whispering to Mirna*) What are we gonna do?

MIRNA: Don't worry, I've got an idea.

MIRNA takes a saw out of the trunk of the car and walks to the moose.

NANCY: Mirna--

MIRNA: You can never be too prepared. Good thing I didn't forget to pack it.

MIRNA begins sawing at the moose's neck.

NANCY: What are you doing?

MIRNA: Well, we don't have all day now, do we? I'm not wasting my time waiting for the North Woods Patrol. And I'll tell you one thing, I'm not spending my night out here on this deserted highway either. So you can either help me or sit around and watch.

NANCY: Okay fine.

NANCY Goes to the other side of the moose and grabs the saw to rub the neck off.

NANCY: Oh I think I feel the bone!

MIRNA: Great, halfway done. Jesus this thing's got a tough bulk. A burly fella.

NANCY: What are we gonna do with the body?

MIRNA: We'll just leave it on the side of the road.

NANCY: Ok and the head?

MIRNA: Wait, watch out. (*shouting*) Timberrrrrr.

The head drops into the car.

MIRNA: Just keep the head where it is. It's fine if the antlers hang out a little.

NANCY: But Mirna that's gonna give off a terrible odor in Judy's car.

MIRNA: Does it look like I care, I mean we've already got a dead body in the car, besides, I've got some Chanel N°5 in my purse, just sprinkle some of that on the head.

MIRNA and NANCY get into the car.

MIRNA: Okay, y'all, let's hit the road.

JUDY stands up.

JUDY: (*panicking*) W-We can't just leave a headless moose in the middle of the road.

NANCY: (*rolling eyes*) Well Judy, if you want to move it, then by all means, we'll wait. It's not like we're in any kind of rush.

JUDY: I know, I know but I'm just w-worried that someone will find the moose later.

MIRNA: Yeah someone probably will, but I've got bigger problems. I've got your dead husband in my trunk and as the driver, I am responsible for all of my passengers, even my dead ones.

JUDY: There's no way we're goin' to get to the hospital before it gets dark. It's hours away.

NANCY: Well we need to get on the road now then.

JUDY: No.

MIRNA and NANCY look at each other with confused looks and get out of the car.

MIRNA: What do you mean no? What do you want us to do with Gary?

JUDY: Shut up.

MIRNA: What? What'd you just say?

NANCY looks back and forth between Judy and the carefully wrapped garbage bag and rests her hand on the side of her face.

NANCY: (*looking at Judy*) How'd you do it?

MIRNA: Do what?

NANCY: I'm not talking to you.

NANCY steps closer.

NANCY: Judy, how'd you do it?

JUDY looks down and drags her feet around the pavement.

NANCY grabs onto Judy's shoulders.

NANCY (yelling): Judy how did you do it! Answer me.

JUDY looks up at Nancy and smiles.

MIRNA: Oh my god, you didn't.

MIRNA steps away from JUDY.

NANCY: (screaming) Judy answer us. Did you kill Gary or not?

MIRNA: How'd you do it? Why would you do it? I thought you loved him.

NANCY: Maybe not as much as we thought. You told us it was cancer.

JUDY: I got bored.

NANCY: You got bored. No, that's not boredom, that's sick. You're sick.

JUDY grabs onto NANCY'S wrists and digs her nails into them. NANCY winces with pain.

JUDY: Sleeping pills aren't sounding so bad now, are they? You will never understand. If you had been there and had had to take care of him you would've been just as bored as I was, but no one ever understands.

MIRNA: Judy, you're scaring me.

NANCY: (disgusted) Unbelievable.

MIRNA looks down by her foot and kicks around a rock. She whispers something to NANCY.

JUDY: What'd she just say to you?

NANCY: Nothin'.

JUDY: (screaming) Tell me. Nancy, tell me now!

JUDY digs her nails deeper into NANCY'S wrists.

NANCY: (yelling) Mirna, do it now!

MIRNA picks up a stone by her foot and hacks at Judy's skull until it is completely crushed.

NANCY: (rubbing the blood from her wrists) Did you get her?

MIRNA: Did I get her? Nancy, you know I do CrossFit. Why would you even ask me that.

NANCY: Do you think she's dead?

MIRNA: She's as dead as Gary is.

NANCY: (sighing) What a day.

MIRNA: I'm starting to get an ache in my knee joints.

MIRNA rubs her knees caps and then straightens up.

MIRNA: Anyway, help me get her into the trunk.

NANCY: I thought you did CrossFit.

MIRNA: It doesn't mean I'm not eighty-one though.

NANCY: You're right about that.

NANCY and MIRNA lift JUDY and stuff her into the back trunk.

MIRNA: I think our work here is done. (looking at her watch) Oh my, and would you look at the time, almost half past eight!

NANCY: We better get up to the lake before it gets too dark.

MIRNA: Yeah, we don't want to hit a moose.

NANCY: (getting into the car) Oh god what is that smell?

MIRNA: Oh shoot I forgot.

MIRNA pulls out her Chanel N° 5 and sprays it in the back of the car.

NANCY: (breathing in) Ah, genius Mirna. Much better.

MIRNA: That's what I'm here for. Oh, do you have the keys to the cottage?

NANCY: Yep, they're in Judy's purse.

MIRNA: Ok great. Well, I think we're all set.

NANCY: Yep.

MIRNA: Webb Lake, here we come!

The End

A Realization - Gabrielle Williams

It's like this poison is being forced down my throat.

I deserve better. I'm not going to be a pushover anymore. I really deserve better. It has been way past time I stop being a doormat. I swear I deserve better.

I deserve better than you who broke my heart, better than you who cut me off, and better than you who kicked me while I was on the ground. I will no longer be accepting this.

I feel a plot twist coming on. and you can perceive me as rude, entitled, angry black girl, whatever you want. but I can't sit here and take this when I know I deserve better. I've finally cleaned off my glasses. now I've got to find it somewhere in me to be my own hype man.

My Tutor from Hell

Benny: 8 year old boy, rowdy but sensitive. He's a carefree boy who wants desperately to impress people.

Xapnoshadon (Xap): pronounced Zap-no-sha-don and Zap, 17 year old demon, violent and passionate, eagerly waiting to bring pain and suffering.

Mom (offstage voice): Middle aged woman, working mom. Very stressed all the time.

Dad (offstage voice): Middle aged man, stay at home dad. He is stubborn and old fashioned.

Scene One

A young boy, BENNY, sits on the floor with a blue crayon in his hand. He has bandages on him and looks messy. The room is cluttered with some clothes strewn about. There are musical and dance posters around. There's a desk stage right with some books on it and a bookshelf is next to it. Upstage right is a bedroom door, upstage center is a dresser with more clutter on it, upstage left is a bed and more mess stage left. BENNY sits on the ground and reads from a math book in his lap.

BENNY: If I have ten pennies, five nickels, a dime, three quarters, and a dollar how much money do I have. Pennies are one, nickels are five? Five fives...

He counts on his fingers, but miscounts.

BENNY: One two three four five, one two three four five, one two-

He buries his face in his book, giving up.

BENNY: This is too hard.

The offstage sound of a car driving up and a door closing.

BENNY: Mom's home! She'll help!

He stands and goes to the door before stopping as he hears an offstage conversation.

MOM: Honey, how long until dinner?

DAD: Well hello to you too, dear.

MOM: Just come get me when dinner's ready.

DAD: Hey wait! You can't just come home and go retreat to your office!

MOM: (*frustrated*) I have work to do. What do you need?

DAD: I need Benny to stop complaining about his homework!

MOM: And?

DAD: You're the mom! Go help him!

MOM: Excuse me? I worked all day and I still have work to finish! I don't have time to handle him!

DAD: Well, I handled him all afternoon!

BENNY recoils from the door and gingerly walks away. The conversation goes on as he slowly walks to his bed and looks under it. BENNY takes out a moving box with "Sylvia's Stuff" written on it in sharpie.

MOM: And I dealt with my computer dying! That erased my notes! Then my boss was staring at my butt throughout the entire presentation, which I had to make up on the fly. Oh, did I mention that all the people in that meeting were the men who are going to decide on whether or not I get a raise? Then I come home and you expect me to come back and do homework with Benny?

Offstage angry footsteps and a door slamming.

DAD: Mary, Mary wait.

More footsteps and another door slam. BENNY opens the moving box and takes out a thick black book. The book seems incredibly ancient and has sinister designs on its leather cover.

BENNY: Maybe I'll just use one of my sister's old books.

He opens up the book on his lap and flips through the pages.

BENNY: Math help, math help, math hel- oh! she has this page marked! Magic helper from another dim-en-si...dim-in-sion. Call a deem-on using a summoning circle! Trace these symbols, give blood, and say these words. Seems simple enough!

He sets the book down and grabs his crayon again. BENNY begins to trace the circle on the floor, looking to the book for reference. During that the argument continues followed by another slammed door.

DAD: It's just hard for me to help him.

MOM: Y'know, I thought this'd be easier for you after Sylvia left home. You only have to help one kid with homework! This shouldn't be hard for you!

DAD: Well I'm not the mother!

MOM: I'm sorry what?

DAD: I'm just saying that I don't have that sort of parenting nature.

MOM: Oh yes, because I'm a woman I can perfectly parent a kid after having a stressful day.

DAD: Well it's in your biology-

MOM: Isaac, you did not just say that to me. I'm going out for a drive.

DAD: Please wait, I didn't mean that! Mary-

An offstage door slams and BENNY jumps. After a moment, he shakes it off and looks down at the circle. He double checks it then takes off a bandaid. He gingerly puts it in the

circle and reads from the book.

BENNY: (struggling, incantation)

Onraop niah itzaos

Cotasalon ir zananos

Aresatiel Repozepton

Ramot suhascodb Xapnoshadon!

There's a beat before suddenly a plume of smoke rises from the circle and standing in the center is a young woman. She looks about 17 years old with goth clothes, long black hair, and an evil look in her eye. At first she seems to be human, but she has long pointed horns fixed cleanly on her head along with a flicking pointed tail coming from her lower back. XAP looks around and stretches, not noticing BENNY yet.

XAP: Heeeeelllllllo! Oh damn! It feels good to finally be in the land of mortals!

She gestures as she speaks as if she's performing, getting increasingly violent with each statement as she goes on.

XAP: So! You have the pleasure of summoning the mighty Xapnoshadon of the seventh circle! What do you need? Someone beaten? Dismembered? Tortured? Beheaded? Smashed into to a bloody pul- (*freezes and spots BENNY*) huh?

BENNY: Hi, I'm Benny!

He waves and XAP does a double take.

XAP: What?

BENNY: I'm Benny! That's my name.

XAP: Is this a joke?

BENNY: No! Oh, I like your hair and your horns! Can I touch your tail?

Not waiting for an answer, BENNY grabs at it.

XAP: Hands off brat!

She abruptly pulls away and looks at the circle. She points at it.

XAP: Who drew that- Is that crayon?

BENNY: Yeah! I drew it with Blueberry Blue!

He triumphantly holds up the crayon.

XAP: *(deadpan)* Okay ha ha. Who really drew it?

BENNY: Me!

XAP: Well where did you learn to draw that? Who taught you?

BENNY: No one, I used my sisters book!

He motions to the black book and XAP picks it up. She skims the page.

XAP: Huh, so you traced it from her Necronomicon, wait. Wait. This ritual uses blood! You're a kid! How did you get a blood sacrifice?

BENNY: I used my band-aid from my scraped knee!

He excitedly shows off his scrape and XAP sneers at him.

XAP: So in summary: You, a human child, summoned me, an all powerful demon, by tracing from a book with crayon and sacrificing a bandaid?

BENNY: Yeah!

XAP: (*Snapping*) This is degrading! (*a beat, to herself*) Fine, fine whatever, you can handle this, Xapnoshadon. A kid summons you, no one's ever said what to do in this situation. Maybe it was a mistake, he was tracing after all but- Maybe it wasn't. Maybe the kid's like some little psycho! I can work with this. (*addressing him*) So! Small mortal boy-

BENNY: Benjamin! Call me Benny.

XAP: Benny. You have the privilege of summoning me, Xapnoshadon, daughter of the lord of the seventh circle of Hell!

She bows deeply.

BENNY: Hi, Xap-snow sha...I'll call you Xap!

XAP: (*stands*) Fine. What can I do for you?

BENNY: I'm stuck on a math problem! (*shows his math homework*)

XAP: What is that?

BENNY: My homework!

XAP: You summoned me to help with math?

BENNY: Yeah?

XAP: (*increasingly fed up*) I am the daughter of the minotaur- guardian of the seventh circle of Hell! My entire life's purpose is to cause pain and misery and to torture sinners! I could destroy your worst enemies and make them cry like babies but instead you want me to help you with- (*She grabs book and squints*) Multiplication and addition?

BENNY gives a timid nod and XAP slams the book back in his arms.

XAP: Dammit!

BENNY looks at her with a frown and she falters for a moment.

XAP: I mean darn it. (*annoyed*) Well I hope you're happy! Now I'm stuck here until we finish your stupid math homework.

Beat of tense silence, XAP is brooding then BENNY slowly holds up his homework. XAP groans loudly then snatches it.

XAP: So what do you need?

BENNY: I need to finish my multiplication tables and then do the extra credit problem at the end. If I finish that my teacher gives me a sticker! (He beams at an unimpressed XAP)

XAP: Charming. Huh, so this is what they teach in human schools. At your age I was taught the proper ways to shoot flaming arrows. That's what we learned in the seventh circle.

BENNY: Whats the seventh circle?

XAP: (*irritated, sets book down*) Hell is split up into nine circles. I'm from the seventh one-violence.

BENNY: But what's Hell?

XAP: When people die, if they deserve to be punished, then they go to Hell. Depending on how bad they were, they go to different parts of it.

BENNY: Oh! What happens in the other circles?

XAP: Well the first circle is Limbo.

BENNY plops on the floor and XAP frowns, but dismisses it. She explains each circle with spirited hand gestures.

XAP: It's kinda stupid, in my opinion. All "non believers" go there, but I don't get the whole punishing people for not believing thing. It's stupid and a waste of resources in my opinion.

BENNY: Huh, what about the others?

XAP: Circle two is Lus- *(catches herself)* Love. For the people who love too much.

BENNY: You can love too much?

XAP: *(Quickly)* Yes. Anyways, the third circle is for Gluttons- people who take too much.

BENNY counts the circles on his fingers along with XAP as she explains.

XAP: Food, money, land, stuff like that. Then the fourth is Greed-

BENNY: OH! Oh greed is when they want a bunch, right? So people who want everything go there!

XAP: That's right. The fifth is for people who were too angry and the sixth is for heretics.

BENNY: What's a hare-a-tic? *(He frowns and scrunches up his face)*

XAP: Well if the church said something, but a person disagreed with that, they'd be a heretic.

BENNY: I don't get it, but okay. *(looks at fingers, he's holding up seven)* Oh! Seven! That's

yours right? Yours is next!

XAP: Right, the seventh circle, for people who were too violent.

BENNY: Yeah!

XAP: *(laughs)* Then the eighth circle is for people who committed fraud. That means they lied a lot.

BENNY: So- *(counts his fingers)* you said there were nine circles, what's the ninth?

XAP: Treachery, people who betrayed other people. That's where the boss lives too.

BENNY: Who's your boss?

XAP: *(disbelief)* Benny, don't you go to church?

BENNY shakes his head.

XAP: Huh, well he's like the king of evil...sort of.

BENNY: Is he mean?

XAP: The meanest. *(matter-of-factly)*

BENNY: Why do you work for him then?

BENNY: You don't have to punish people.

XAP: I guess. It isn't all that bad, though. I mean I got to hang out with the centaurs in the seventh circle. *(notices BENNY's confusion)* Centaurs are people with the lower bodies of horses- Oh! Oh wait! Okay Benny, centaurs have four legs, like a horse, yeah?

BENNY: Yeah?

XAP: So let's say that there are three centaurs, how many legs are there in total?

BENNY: Hm so one has four. Four times three. Hmmmmm this is hard.

He counts on his fingers and, after considering it, XAP holds hers up with him.

XAP: Stay with me. Let's think about it like addition. So one has four. The second also has four. Four plus four?

BENNY: Eight!

He jumps and stands. BENNY holds up eight fingers, the same number as XAP.

XAP: Then the third. Four more, eight plus four.

BENNY: Eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve? twelve!

XAP: Yes! Four, plus four, plus four. That's the same as four times three. Multiplication!

She puts her fingers down and bows slightly, smiling.

BENNY: So like lots of adding?

XAP: Simply speaking, yeah.

BENNY: Oh, okay! I think I get it? Maybe.

XAP: Good. Okay now do this one on your own. There are five cerberus's. Each cerberus has three heads. How many heads are there in all?

BENNY: What's a cerberus?

XAP: (Annoyed explaining) A three headed dog, now how many heads are there in all?

BENNY: Three?

XAP: (increasingly furious) NO! Each dog has three heads, there are five dogs! How many heads are there?

BENNY: Three plus three?

XAP: Three plus three five times! Fifteen. It's fifteen!

BENNY: O-oh. Uh hm.

XAP: Here's another cuz you're clearly not getting it. (pacing) There are four angels. Each angel has-

BENNY: Two wings! I know that one!

XAP: (seething) Right. There are four angels. How many wings are there overall?

BENNY: Two, plus two, that's four. Plus two is (looking at his hand, confused) Five-

XAP: Wrong! Four plus two is six! Why the fuc- (censors herself) heck aren't you getting it?

BENNY: It's hard...

XAP: (*a sharp, harsh laugh*) Hard? Growing up in Hell is hard! You don't even know what suffering is. This- (*aggressively motions to workbook*) This is easy!

She throws the book down then paces, her back to BENNY as he pouts.

BENNY: You're not very nice.

XAP: (*whips around to BENNY*) Nice? Well duh, I'm a demon from Hell! I'm not nice! (*she explodes*) I was bathed in blood as an infant and fed the souls of the innocent! The cries of the damned were my lullabies! By the time I was a week old I could behead five men in under a minute! All I do is torment people for eternity, brutalizing and beating them until they're begging me to kill them again- until they wish they were never put on this sorry excuse for an earth. People hope to their God to avoid meeting demons like me! I am what is waiting for the souls of the damned. I am not nice. I am not a math tutor. And I am not going to stoop low to help some whiny brat with his math homework!

She looms over BENNY, who takes a terrified step back.

BENNY: But-

XAP: (*gives up on censoring*) Just go ask your damn parents for help.

BENNY: I can't.

XAP: And why's that?

BENNY: They're too busy or they don't wanna.

XAP: (*the edge fades from her voice*) What?

BENNY: (*starting to sob*) Mommy w-works all the time and-and doesn't wanna be with me and daddy says he shouldn't be h-helping because he's a boy.

He breaks down and XAP's anger completely dissolves.

XAP: Oh.

BENNY: An-And they yell about it and I'm too scared to ask any more! I asked a b-bunch earlier but d-daddy kept yelling and mommy wasn't home. I-I always asked my sister for h-help but now she's away. She left a bunch of books she said she used a lot, so I took

one of them.

XAP: *(slowly understanding)* And summoned me...

BENNY: But then you just yelled! And you were mean and didn't teach me anything!

XAP: *(attempting to be comforting)* Hey, I'm sorry-

BENNY: No you're not!

XAP: I didn't mean to scare you. I was just mad.

BENNY turns away from her and crosses his arms.

XAP: Benny, I'm sorry. I'll help- I won't yell again.

No response. BENNY's giving her the silent treatment. A moment of hesitation from XAP.

XAP: I know what it's like to have parents who argue. My mom and dad are both demons, my dad's the Minotaur. He has this whole big angry bull thing going on and doesn't shower a lot or keep anything clean. He yells all the time and never calms down. My mom thinks he's an assho- *(corrects herself)* crass and unrefined.

BENNY looks over his shoulder at her, curious now, but still upset.

XAP: They loved each other, sure, but they argue a lot. Mainly about how to raise my brother and me and how to care for themselves, but small things too, like what'd be for dinner. And when two demons fight it's...intense. Then when they weren't fighting, they were doting on my brute of a brother. He was always so cruel and he killed so many people. They loved him for it.

BENNY: Did he help you with homework?

XAP: *(bitter laugh)* Oh no. He wouldn't help anyone. And my parents didn't either. They just assumed I would eventually be horrible and violent by myself. *(increasingly upset)* They said they'd disown me if I couldn't live up to my brother. So I just worked alone to make them proud, but nothing was ever enough for them. They only focused on my brother and he never helped me out. I was alone.

BENNY: ...like me?

XAP: Yeah. Like you.

The two look at each other in silence. There's a long beat and a strange understanding passes between them before XAP holds out her hand. BENNY then takes it.

XAP: C'mon, let's get to work on this problem.

XAP: So you have ten pennies, five nickels, a dime, three quarters, and a dollar.

END



Photo - Alexandra Newberg