

SPRING 2016

PVCC LITERARY MAGAZINE

The *Fall Line* is a collection of works selected, edited, and produced by Writers Unite, the Piedmont Virginia Community College Creative Writing Club. No material of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the author.

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THE FALL LINE

A narrow zone that marks the geological boundary between an upland region and a plain, distinguished by the occurrence of falls and rapids where rivers and streams cross it.

The Fall Line, Spring 2016, is the eighth volume selected, edited, and produced by Writers Unite, the PVCC Creative Writing Club.

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SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to the PVCC Copy Center for printing *The Fall Line* and to Aaron Miller and his Communication Design II class for designing this edition.

This year, in addition to our submissions, *The Fall Line* is publishing the winners of the Writers Unite 3-Minute Horror Story Contest held in Autumn 2015.

THE FALL LINE

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SPRING 2016, VOLUME 8

Letter from the Editors

SPRING 2016 EDITION

We live in a constantly evolving, jam-packed, and sometimes overwhelming contemporary world. PVCC students in particular may often be able to relate to this as many of us are part-time students, full time workers, and experts at weaving our personal lives through the cracks. Yet chaos is not in harmony with our journey through life. Art, writing, and other creative outlets allow us to speak with our authentic selves.

Writing forces us to slow down and distill our thoughts.

Writing gives us the opportunity to express ourselves beyond quick chit-chat or above a rush of noise. It gives each member of our college a voice. And that is truly what the Fall Line is about—giving the student-body a voice to share their stories with the world.

Over the years, we have had the opportunity to see the wildly diverse PVCC population share both their creative endeavors as well as their personal tales of triumph and commitment. It is an honor to facilitate the creation of this magazine, along with Writers Unite advisor Jenny Koster and Aaron Miller's Communication Design II class. We hope that among these pages you will find pieces which connect with your own experiences and perhaps some that will inspire you to create your own art.

Thanks for reading.

ANNETTE AND RUSSELL

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Once Upon a Dream

POEM BY ANNETTE CASHATT

Once upon a dream
I walked a path of cracked stones and rotting stalks of vegetation

But I always found the sky

Bursting scarlet embers, streaked with violet, tranquil blues fading in black

Once upon a dream

The cosmos sang to me

A nebulae, filled with millions of stars

And trillions of atoms

Lit the night as fireflies do in a fog

Guiding me on my way

Once upon a dream

In trying to find the way off the path

I passed under a weeping willow

And failed to see the cobweb

Nobody had warned me and I did not know better

So the web clung to me

Once upon a dream

The sun rose

I saw a gathering of dust particles suspended in a beam of sunshine

But touching them added one more layer

Stratified my being

Once upon a dream

Time began to devour my soul, as time will

When I looked, the sky was gone

The path was constricted

And signs written by the hands of others told me where to go and how

Their commands reverberated through my mind as a drum

Once upon a dream

The world was smaller

My vision narrowed

As I stared through a porthole, shrinking in diameter each day

Once upon a dream

I realized that starving my soul

Only fed the teeth of time

And the world is vaster than anyone imagines

I grew smaller, not the world



What Is Love

POEM BY DARIEN TINSLEY

What is Love?

A beautiful feeling amongst people?

Love is when a Honey Bee flies to its natural hive.

Love is when you smile about something or someone on a bad day for no apparent reason,

Love is the tingling feeling you get inside, or just an emotion that is hard to hide,

Love is a manipulative choice, which can sometimes act as your voice,

It is shown in so many different ways. It keeps you on your toes, and maybe if you're lucky even tingles your nose,

It warms your body in a certain place, but always keeps you and your heart feeling safe,

If you get the chance to experience love enjoy each and every dance, because you never know when it will be your last chance.



A Day in the Life With Gaby
Elizabeth Culbertson

Dinner Discovery

WORDS BY PATRICK FRITZ

CREATIVE FICTION

It started simply enough. It was my turn to cook dinner. John had cooked the night before and Brandy would cook tomorrow. I knew Belinda had just gone grocery shopping two days before, because I had the fresh Navy Exchange haircut as a reminder. We always got haircuts when we went grocery shopping because the Exchange and Commissary were in the same building. There would be a lot of food to choose from today, but I knew those pickings would rapidly get slimmer over the next twelve days leading up to the next payday. I figured since I wouldn't want to eat poorly prepared Hamburger Helper Stroganoff for three days straight, I should get those out of the way first since nobody else would willingly choose to cook them. If there was one thing that the seven of us could agree on it was that Hamburger Helper was, in general, pretty horrible. Hamburger Helper Stroganoff, in particular, was vile.

As I went about preparing the meal, I opened the pantry in our shitty trailer, in a broken down trailer park, in a spectacularly shitty and broken down part of Charleston, South

Carolina and perused the entire shelf of box after box with that stupid glove staring back at me. I had always envisioned those boxes with that white glove in the top right corner as an army column in my head. Those boxes bravely marching in lockstep to eliminate weeknight hunger. The promise depicted by the picture on these boxes was of a happy family sitting around the table smiling and laughing and talking about their respective days. It was easy to imagine a warm and tender mother looking on while a taciturn but loving father doles out life advice and help with homework problems. But that box was a lie.

In our house, Dad was often deployed fighting the "Soviet Menace", hundreds of feet below the ocean's surface aboard his various submarines. Absences of hundreds of days and nights were not uncommon. The military pay for enlisted men in the 1980s was not exactly luxurious and the pace of operations was frantic. Belinda, his wife and my stepmother, was left to mind the home and children. Brian and Jonathan, my two brothers, and I, were from Dad's previous

marriage and Brenda, John, and Brandy hailed from Belinda's. Our most recent addition to the brood, Cody, was adopted from Belinda's sister.

Customarily, the boxes were lined up exactly the same way. All facing one direction, like little soldiers on parade. Today was different though! Today, one soldier decided that he did not want to pass in review. The spot that should have that bright white glove was instead filled with...words. The shock that Belinda, normally so rigid and inflexible, allowed those boxes to be out of order was enough to throw my mind into confusion. Though, I had prepared this boxed-dinner quite a few times and had a habit of reading anything with words on it, this had escaped my prior notice. "Serving Suggestions" the title seemed to scream at me. I reached for the box hesitantly. Did Belinda leave this one separate for a reason? Was this something that she was saving for another night? Why was this one different?

Curiosity, which always preceded trouble for me, made me pick up that box. In retrospect, I am pretty sure I just intended to turn it around and make it fall in line with the rest of the White-Glove Army. After all, in our militarily rigid house, individuality is not a celebrated trait! My eyes were drawn to that bright yellow/orange script. "Add one half of a sliced onion and one four ounce can of Green Giant TM Mushrooms Pieces and Stems..." And then, it hit me. I remembered when Dad used to make stroganoff. There were always lots of onions and mushrooms! The noodles weren't the broken, rubbery pieces that were settled in the bottom of the box. They were rich and

buttery and made a slight "squeaking" noise when you bit into them as well prepared noodles are wont to do.

Looking back, there aren't many happy memories of that trailer. Dad and Belinda obviously felt it was my fault that we had to move there. John and I had gotten in quite a bit of trouble when we lived in Navy housing. I was in trouble mostly by association but somehow seemed to receive the lion's share of blame. John was often excused because of "his poor upbringing" with his father in Omaha, Nebraska. With our clan being so large, and military pay alone being inadequate to provide for all of us, Belinda finally got a job to help with household expenses. While it was nice to have her out of the house for a period of time now there were seven kids that needed to be fed with no adult around to help. We had subsisted on Hamburger Helper for a couple of years now. It was inexpensive and was always on sale. The eleven year old me figured that was because nobody who had money would eat it. Though eating it every night wasn't different, having to cook it ourselves was a new development.

Of the seven of us, only four of us were old enough to cook. My step-brother John was simply too dense to figure out how to do things like operate a stove, choose the correct pans, and measure things. My step-sister Brandy simply had no desire to learn any of the domestic arts. My step-sister Brenda, at eighteen, was ready to fly the coop at any moment to go live her fantasy life with Eric and eventually repeat the mistakes of her mother. My brothers, Brian and Jonathan, were too young to help much,

and our newly adopted brother Cody was still in diapers. Brenda had completely disengaged from the family (such as we were) to spend her time with Eric. Our turf had been established and our cliques had been formed. John and me. Brian and Jonathan. Brandy and Cody. Brenda and Eric. With the near constant fighting and annoyances, we warily moved around our staked out areas. The one constant was the White-Glove Army on those Hamburger Helper boxes as our dinner companions. Since nobody else wanted to cook, it allowed me my very own area that I was in control of. The stove was my vehicle for getting away from everyone and establishing my very own turf, even if it was only for an hour.

Now, as I held that fateful box of beef stroganoff I had a revelation! I don't have to eat this swill "as is"? I was allowed, nay, SUGGESTED to make changes? With great trepidation, I started looking around the pantry. Here, a dusty can of green beans. That wouldn't be much use to me. There, a slightly dented can of mushrooms. Gods be blessed! There are a couple dusty, old Spanish Onions on the bottom shelf of the pantry! Now we are in business!

Our cans of vegetables didn't have a lot of fancy pictures of happy green giants or verdant fresh green beans or frolicking elves picking corn kernels so plump and succulent they were dripping with sweet juice. No, ours were in a silver can with a white label that simply read, "Beans, Green. Number 2 Sieve, Grade A" in bold, black block lettering. They were in fact green. I am fairly certain they were actually green beans. But they tasted like disappointment and the broken dreams of what a legume

should be. I always imagined the big green bean processing factory in the middle of the country somewhere (I have no idea why I always have, and still do, imagine all the processing plants being somewhere on the Kansas plains) with workers busily canning beans starting with the Jolly Green Giant. Then came the smaller store brands. Finally, it got down to the stuff for the commissaries.

"Hey, Bob! What do I do with the little mushy nasty green beans?"

"Uh, well, I dunno. I guess just put them into the white label cans. We can sell them at the commissary to poor people."

I had my weapons of war gathered now. My intrepid White-Glove Soldier who decided to go his own way, my bruised and bowed but not broken onions. I had my dented can of mushrooms and my faithful servant, the rusty can opener. It was missing one of the soft rubber grips so it cut into my hand as I opened the cans. The gears were gummed up and dirty from years of not being cleaned properly after use. But, semper fidelis, it was standing by for my orders.

I hadn't thought this all the way through, I quickly realized. I had all my ingredients arranged on the counter but no idea in what order to put them in. Did I still do it in the order that I always did? Did I put the mushrooms and onions in first? The refrains of, "I'M HUNGRY!!!!" were creating no small amount of anxiety. Seven kids after a long school day, and all we had to eat was the mediocre school lunch. Though the

price for the school lunch was right (read: free) it wasn't going to hold the clambering masses much longer. So I started at the beginning.

I browned my bargain-bin beef. I added the broken noodle pieces and stirred for one to three minutes. Next came the one-cup of water with the half-cup of milk. I figured now was as good of a time as any to add the recommended vegetables. I fought and struggled with the faithful, old, rusty can opener and managed to finally get that battered can of mushroom stems and pieces open.

Ten long minutes later, a product that somewhat resembled what I remembered of the stroganoff Dad made in happier times was in front of me. For the first time, I was actually nervous about serving something. My stomach was in knots. I couldn't eat what I had painstakingly prepared. I was standing by for five voices to tell me this was just another thing in a long line of things I had screwed up.

I set it on the table and steeled myself for the criticism to come. Five sets of eyes greedily stared at the dented stainless steel pan that held the object of their stomach's desire. They took turns ladling the hot noodles and sauce into their bowls.

Oh man. John was taking his first bite. Here it comes. He let out a non-committal grunt. While it may not seem like much to most people, I interpreted that as a great sign of success. Brandy

poked at her plate in the manner of all picky-eating children. Brian and Jonathan sat quietly shoving food into their hungry maws. Brenda decided that this was "lame", and was going to go eat at Eric's house. Cody sat there in his high chair eating his white-labeled baby food.

While I would love to say that the accolades poured in from all of my mini-diners, that just didn't happen. They slurped it up and sopped up the extra rich sauce with their buttered bread. Dutifully, they took the plates to the sink, rinsed, and washed them of any remaining remnants of dinner. We wiped the table and put the chairs exactly six inches away from the edge. A quick look at the clock let us know that Belinda would be home in about forty-five minutes and a look at the calendar reminded me that it would be about 126 days until Dad was supposed be back. We settled in for a calm, Wednesday night of watching America's Funniest Home Videos until bedtime. Brian spoke to me from his spot in the familial puppy pile.

"Hey, Patrick."

"Yeah, what up, Brian?"

"Did you do something different with that stroganoff?"

"A little. Why?"

"It tasted a lot like Dad's used to." **FL**



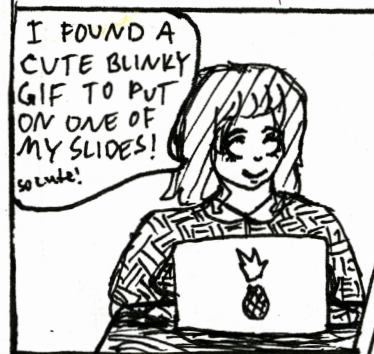
Portrait
Kendall Madigan

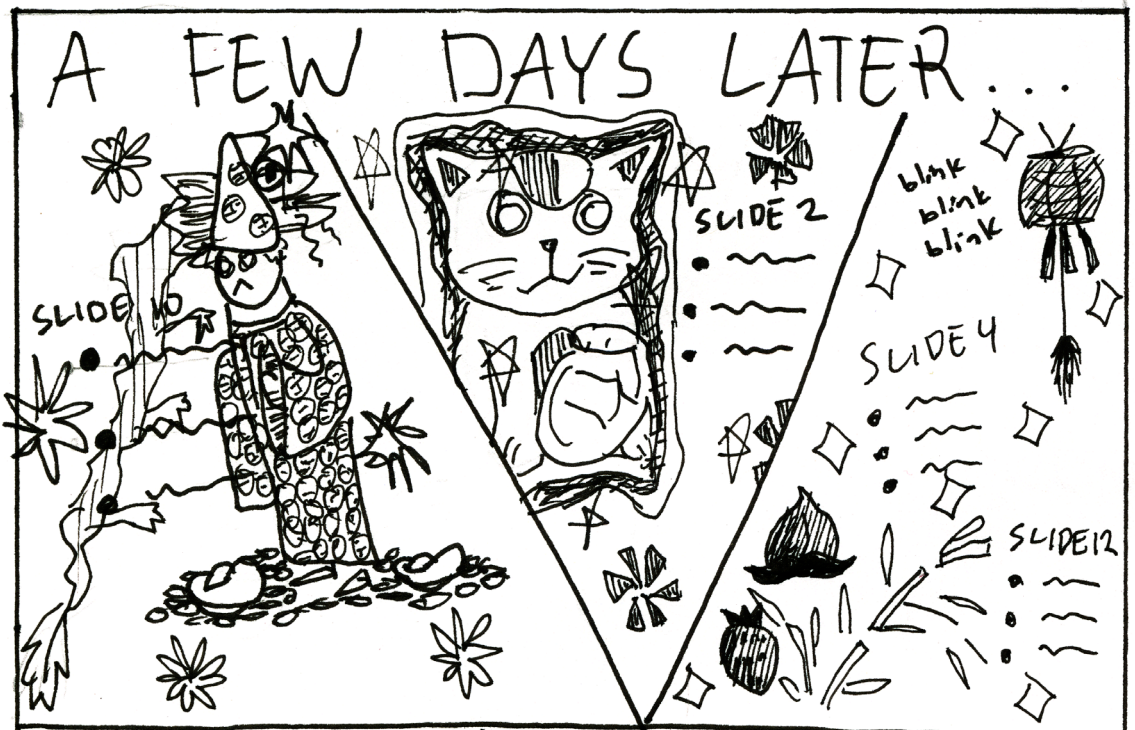
Don't Slack Off

BY ANNE
KATHERINE
BROOKS

GRAPHIC NARRATIVE







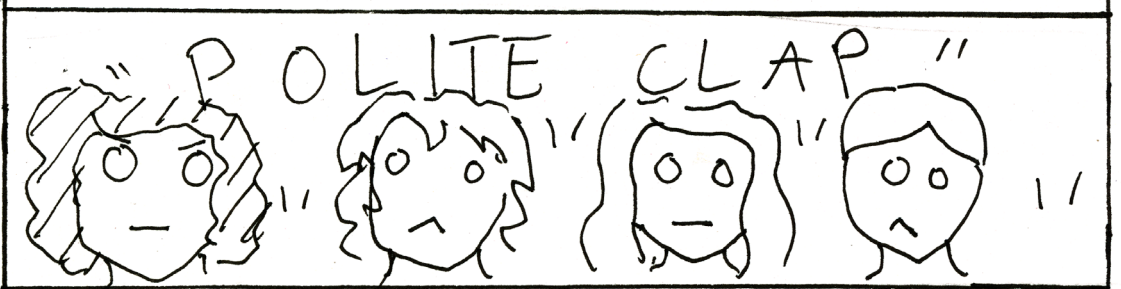
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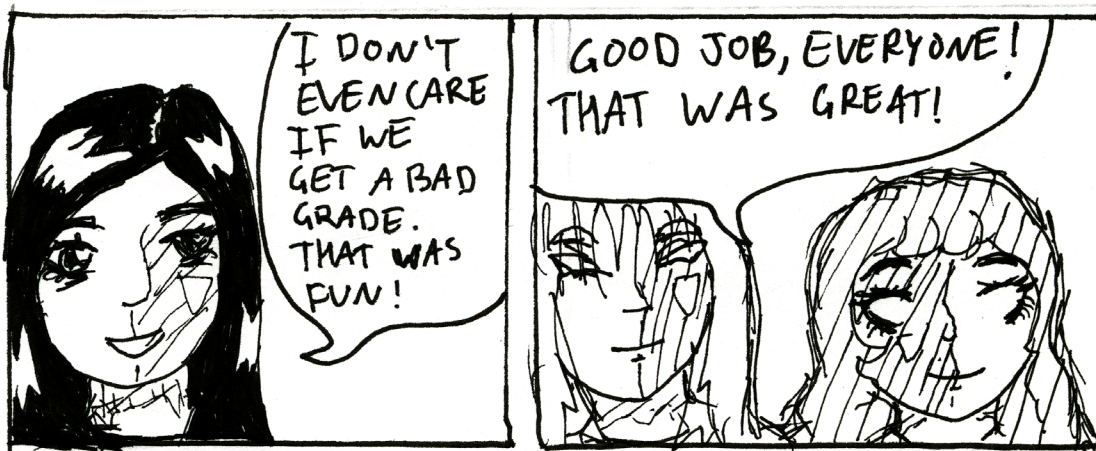


OUR PRESENTATION ON AUSPICIOUS DESIGN.

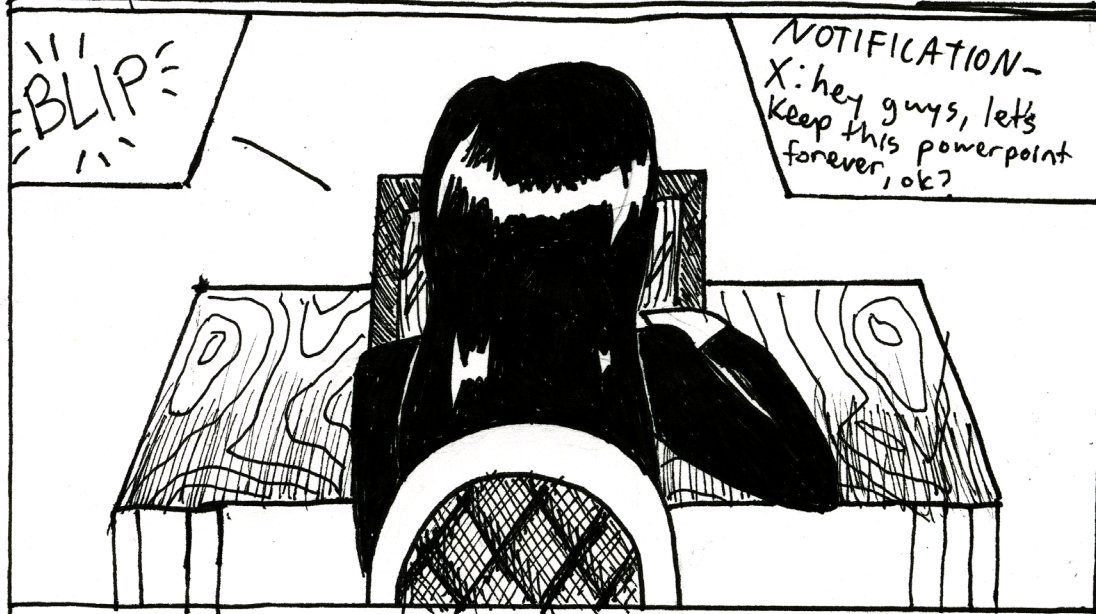


THANKS ♡ FOR LISTENING!





INITIALLY, I WAS COMPLETELY AGAINST MAKING A PRESENTATION THAT WAS LESS THAN PERFECT.



HOWEVER, THAT PROJECT WAS TOTALLY WORTH IT.

FL

Box of Evil

WORDS BY R. LEWIS WRIGHT

SHORT STORY

The movers had just finished carrying in the last boxes and were climbing into their truck to leave. Max stepped out of the side door of his parent's pale blue minivan and got his first look at their new home at the end of Silvia Drive. It was an old, large, two-story plantation house with a wraparound porch and a widow's walk on the roof. He didn't want to be here. He'd left all his friends in the city, and now just one short day after his twelfth birthday, he was staring at this ancient excuse for a home and isolated oblivion.

He ran up the concrete walk, the front stairs, and charged through the large front door left standing open, determined to put as much space between himself and the parents who had betrayed him with this banishment.

The house was clean and virtually free of dust. Beautiful dark hardwood floors led to the wide staircase, running from the front door straight up to the first floor landing, before turning to continue up to the attic. Heedless, he continued to dash up the stairs to find his room. He entered a large room on the backside of the

house with two huge sets of windows to find the movers had already assembled his bed. He threw himself down on it and covered his head with the pillow to stifle his anger.

A few minutes later his mother poked her head through the door and asked, "See honey, it's not so bad, right?"

From under his pillow he yelled, "Mom, I already hate this place! I wanna go home."

"I'm sorry honey. You know we can't do that. I'm sure you're going to like it here, once you get settled in. Why don't you explore the house and start unpacking your stuff. It'll feel more like home once you have your things around you."

Coming out from under his pillow he complained, "Mom, I don't have any friends here." He brandished his cell phone at her as an accusation, "I've got no signal, and there's no Wi-Fi in the house. How am I supposed to live?"

"The cable guy is coming to connect the Internet tomorrow. I'm sure you can survive for one day," she replied sweetly.

“MOM!” he yelled, exasperated with her.

“Honey, there’s nothing in the kitchen. Your dad and I need to run out and get some groceries. Do you want to go with us or stay here?”

Plunging his head back under the pillow and after a scream of frustration he said dejectedly, “What’s the point? Just go. I’m going to find my ball glove.”

She stood for a moment longer waiting for validation that was unlikely to come. After a shake of her head, she turned on her heel and left the doorway standing empty in her wake.

A few moments later, Max heard the large solid oak front door close firmly as his parents left. Reluctantly, he got off the bed and went in search of his things. The movers had left boxes in every room, but none of them were where they should be. In his room, the first one he opened was full of pots and pans. The second was full of his mother’s clothes.

The third box had an ominous look to it. It was older, faded and stained, the clear tape sealing the top had yellowed and turned brittle. One corner was smashed in. He knew his ball glove couldn’t possibly be in there, but curiosity had taken over his will. He couldn’t resist the urge to see what was inside. He ripped the tape off the box showering dust everywhere and opened the flaps.

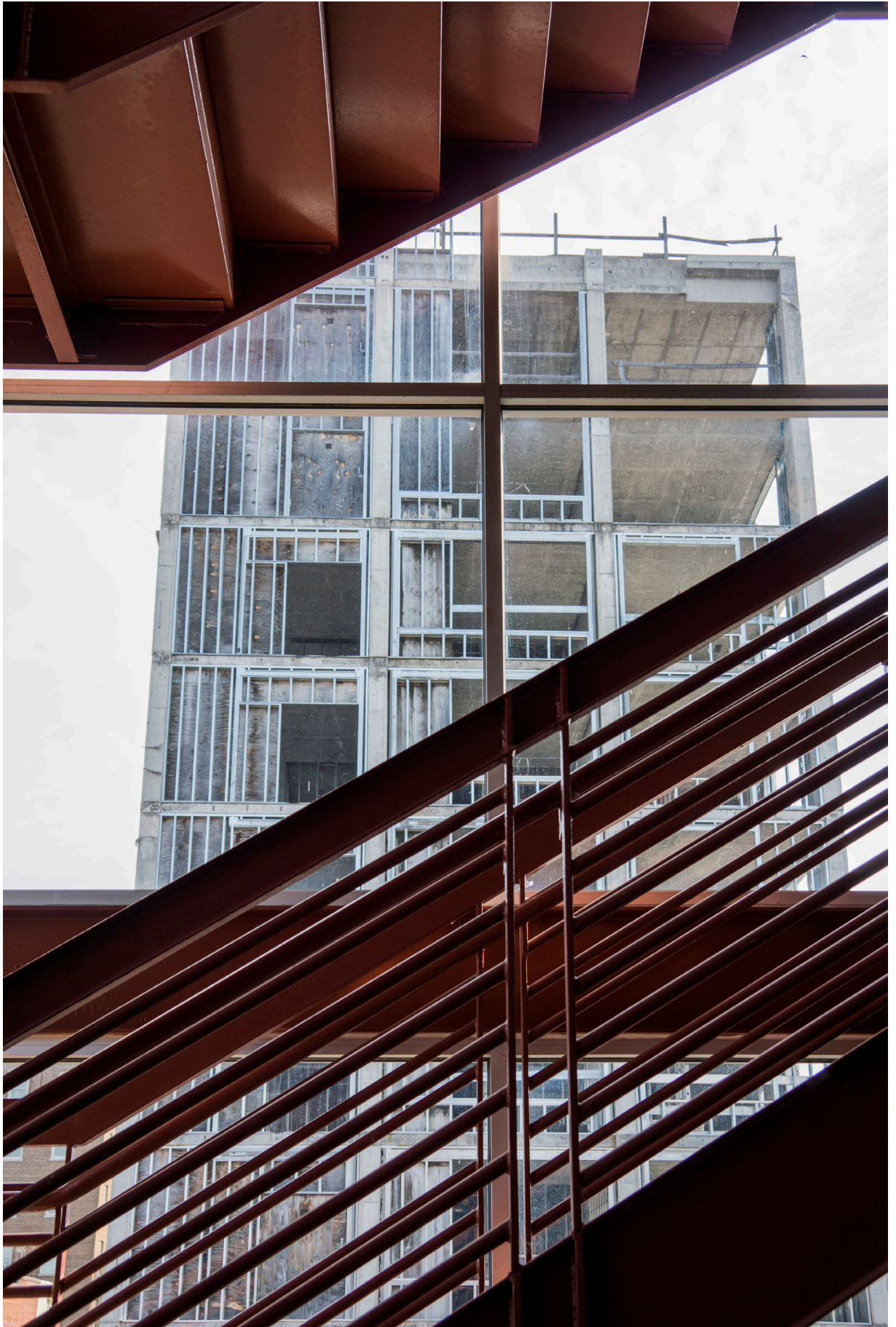
The contents seemed ancient. On top in the center was a picture in an ornate silver frame. His mother as a teenager was standing next to his grandmother, both of them smiling. His grandmother was wearing her standard gray dress and her favorite necklace with the large oval blue stone surrounded by a ring of small clear gems.

Max lifted the picture out and lying on a bed of comic newsprint underneath was the same necklace from the picture. He set the picture aside and lifted the necklace out of the box, holding it up in front of his face. The rays of sunshine coming through the window caught in the stone of the pendant as it twirled in his hand splashing a kaleidoscopic pattern against the walls. It might have been his imagination, but he thought he heard a wind-chime in the distance and deep sigh somewhere behind him.

As it continued to rotate slowly he noticed some scratches on the flat gold back. He peered closer with one eye closed and realized it was writing, but he couldn’t quite make it out. He shrugged his shoulders, tucked the necklace in his shirt pocket, and continued digging down through the layers of newsprint.

Halfway down was a box even older than his previous discoveries. It was about the size of a large family bible, made of thin wood veneers, stained a very dark almost cherry color. The double doors on the front were latched closed with black metal clasps and tied with tiny twine. When he touched the box a shiver ran down his spine, but he couldn’t help himself. He watched powerless as his hands untied the twine and flipped the latch to free the little doors.

When he pulled gently on them, the doors flew open. A blast of cold air sprang from the box and enveloped him before flying out of the room. He shook himself and examined the contents. In front was a silver goblet with strange writing around the rim, next to a small vial of clear liquid, and a lock of hair bound with blue sewing thread. Glued to the back of the box was a small round mirror, the kind found in woman’s makeup compact.



Landmark
Rachel House

He thought he heard a door slam somewhere in the house. Had his mother returned so quickly, he wondered? “Mom?” he called, “Is that you?”

A quick trip out to the landing revealed the front door still closed fast. Little footsteps ran pitter-patter up the stairs next to him toward the attic door. Barely visible in the gloom above, the narrow attic door swung open and closed as he watched. Drafty old house, he speculated?

He went back to his room, retrieved a flashlight from another box, and headed up the stairs to the attic. He swung the door open and shined the pale beam of light around the rough wooden floor. At each corner, small shadows seemed to skitter away like rats at the beam’s approach. For a moment he thought he heard the faintest little laughter at the edges. It wasn’t the friendly or warm laughter of family and friends. It had a sneering quality, both sinister and threatening.

“Maybe I’ll wait for someone else to be home before I explore up here any further,” he said to himself. He closed the narrow green door tight and made sure it was securely latched. Just as he did, he heard another door slam. This time he was sure it was on the main floor below.

Carefully, he crept down the stairs. The living room, study, and other rooms on the main floor all seemed perfectly normal. Through the currently empty kitchen he found a door unlike the others. A constant cold draft escaped from underneath it. He opened it and shined his little flashlight through the opening. Panning the light down, he could make out the stairs to the basement.

Reluctant to enter the basement alone, but determined to track down the source of the strange sounds, he took the steps one by one.

Reaching the bottom he scanned around the area looking at the natural stone walls held in place by cracking mortar. “I must be outta my mind,” he said out loud. The basement was almost empty, but on the far side was a large wine rack covering one whole wall. Only one lonely, dusty bottle of wine remained there.

He retrieved the clear bottle of burgundy liquid bearing an indistinguishable label saying, “I guess we were both abandoned here.”

At that, he thought he caught a glimpse of a shadow on the far wall that couldn’t possibly be his own. The hair on the back of his neck stood up as the far away shape slid across the wall, disappearing with a noise like fingernails scratching across the concrete floor.

Fear sent Max flying out of the basement and up the stairs clutching the bottle. He set it on the kitchen counter as he dashed past and tore up the stairs to his room. At the top, he tripped over a dark patch on the floor, landing face down on the landing. Searching behind him, there was nothing. Somewhere outside, in the distance, a dog let out a long lonely howl. Up again and charging forward, he slid to a stop at his bedroom door.

Every single box in his room, except the one holding his grandmother’s things, had been upended, scattering their contents everywhere. Stepping over the mess, he picked his way back over to the remaining box and began digging deeper. He tossed aside one useless trinket after another until he hit rock bottom and pay dirt. Lying on the very bottom was a leather bound journal bearing his family’s coat of arms on the front and tied closed with its own straps.

He lifted it reverently from the box. Turning it over in his hands, he untied the straps holding it closed.

A sudden bout of butter fingers caused him to briefly juggle the book before dropping it on the floor. Devilish, evil laughter echoed up the steps, and heavy footfalls could be heard pounding slowly up the stairs outside. The sun, which had been streaming in the windows so eagerly before, now seemed to fade, muted by the approach of something dark. The air in the room became as cold as ice, and Max could see his breath.

He looked down to see the journal open to a page with a depiction of the wooden box he had opened. It was labeled, "The dybbuk box." Below it said, "A prison for dark entities that cannot be otherwise driven out or banished."

"Oh great. That stupid box was for holding demons, and I opened it."

He flipped through the book, working his way back to page one. Handwritten spells and informational guides filled the pages. On page one, proudly written in bold script, was the title, "Practical Witchcraft in Modern Times." Smaller, below it said, "If you're reading this without permission, you're trespassing. You've been warned."

Somewhere else in the house, it sounded as if a herd of rampaging elephants were helping the family unpack their precious belongings. Small dark shapes kept darting past the doorway, and he thought, he heard them snickering as they went.

He picked the journal up from the floor and set

it on the edge of the bed. "Okay, I let this thing out. Now what do I do?" he asked.

The journal slid off the edge of the bed and landed on the floor again, open to a new page. It said, "To catch the most dangerous and powerful demons, one needs bait. Since they feed upon the life of others, blood is ideal. Once you have constructed a suitable container for the dark entity. Use a silver goblet with a few drops of blood and a small amount of wine to draw them out. When they appear speak the words, *bibere, daemoniis immolant et exiturum*, and then quickly thrust the cup into your demon trap."

Max grabbed up a kitchen knife from the flotsam spread everywhere across his floor and scooped up the dybbuk box from where it lay. He almost tumbled down the stairs in his haste and set up shop in the kitchen, which now had every cabinet door and drawer standing open.

Max used the tip of the knife to prick the index finger of his left hand and allowed a couple drops of his blood to drain into the silver goblet before wrapping it with a clean white cloth. He opened the old dusty bottle of red wine he'd found in the basement, and poured some into the cup. He looked at the bottle and thought to himself, no one will ever know. Then he tipped the bottle back and took a hefty swig.

He held up the goblet with both hands and recited the words from the journal, "*bibere, daemoniis immolant et exiturum*." Dark shadows began sliding across the walls from both sides. They leapt from the walls and began to float through the air as dark misty shapes. An occasional glimpse of fiery visage or demonic

horns gave testimony to their intelligence. The clouds began to circle the cup like vultures circling a newly discovered corpse.

Max thrust the cup back into the old wine box. Now the circling forms let out a screech of alarm. The box was acting like a magnet, pulling them close, dragging them down. They circled tighter and faster as they were drawn, unwilling into the box. The largest of the shadows grasped the edges of the box briefly with obsidian claws before disappearing with a wail of finality.

Max slammed the doors to the little wooden box finally sealing in the demon and his minions. It vibrated and shook for a moment before falling still. He carefully turned the metal latch on the cover to secure the miniature double doors, placed it back in the cardboard box, and recovered it with the newsprint. Then he closed up the outer box, carried it gingerly out of the room, and continued up the narrow stairs to the attic.

He struggled with the slender, dark green door made from rough cut lumber. When it finally begrudgingly flew open with a horrendous screech, he lugged his burden into the attic. In the far corner, he pulled back the small loose panel concealing the pulley mechanism of the ancient dumbwaiter. With some difficulty, he squeezed and pushed the box into the almost too small opening.

Max replaced the loose paneling and stacked everything he could find against it. Then he collapsed on his back and tried to slow his rapid breath and pounding heart. A deep bang echoed up from the first floor, causing him to

jump to his feet and dash back down the stairs. At the first floor landing he could see his father carrying the groceries into the kitchen and his mother still taking off her coat.

“Oh, hi there sweetie. Did you find your ball glove?” she asked.

Max bounded down the stairs and gripped his mother in a desperate bear hug. He squeezed her so hard she objected mildly, “Easy honey, you’re hurting me.” She patted his head and rubbed his back. When he still refused to let go, she asked, “What’s wrong?”

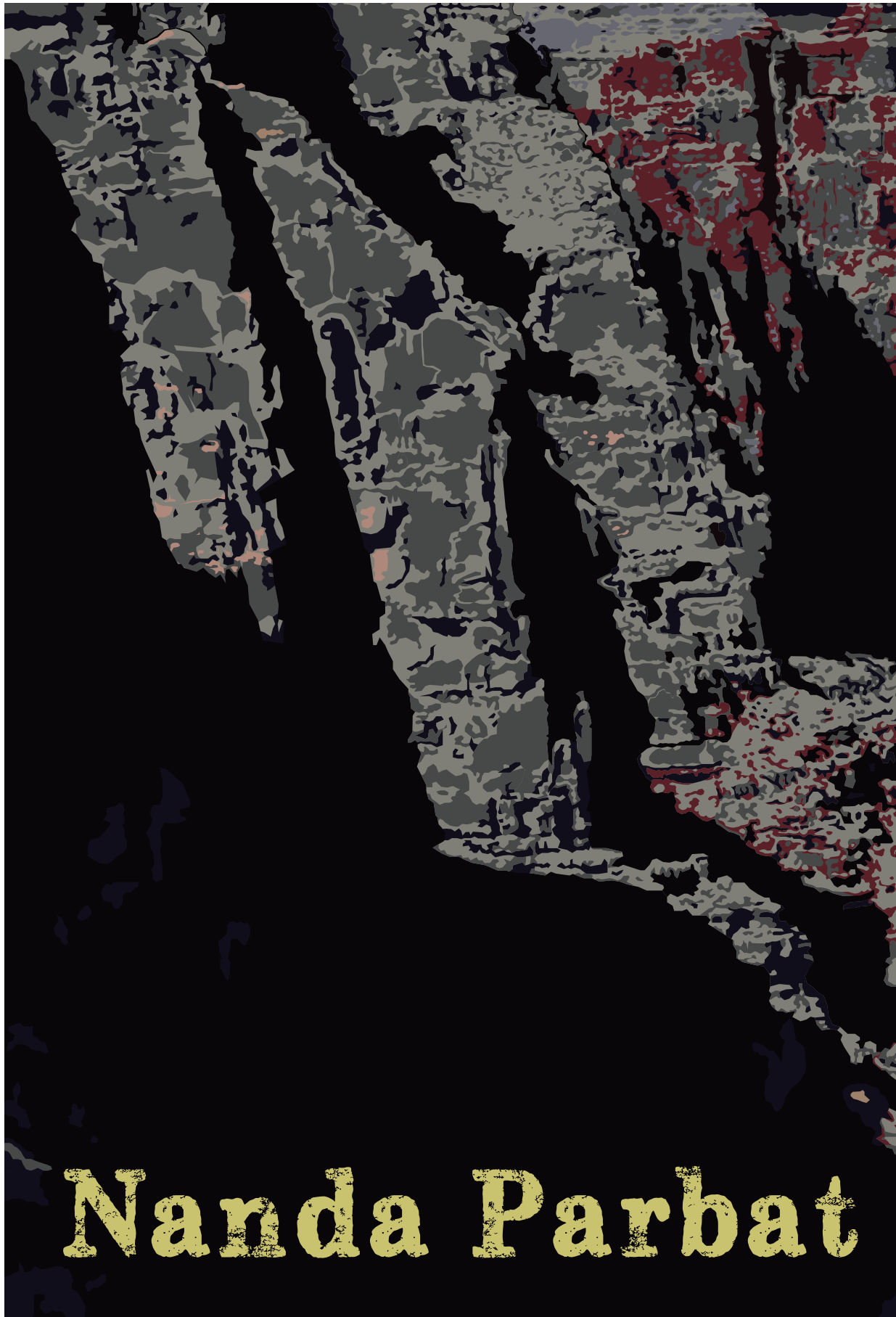
Max released her and stood back to look into her face. “Mom, did you know Grandma was a witch?”

“Oh honey, your grandmother wasn’t a witch. What gave you that crazy idea?”

Max gasped out the truth that had been bound up in his chest, “I found her journal in one of the old boxes. It was full of spells and other weird stuff.”

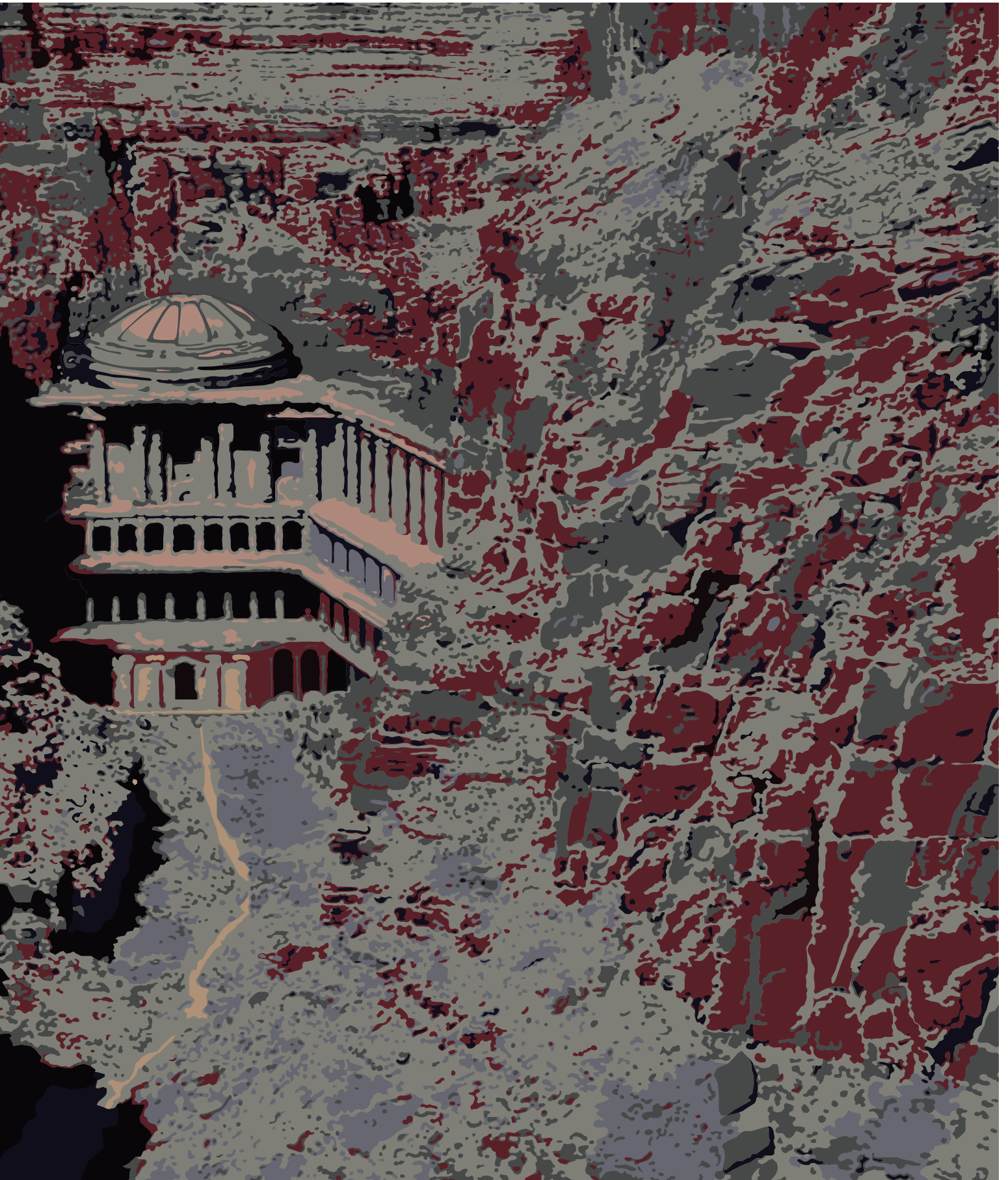
“Oh honey, your grandmother was a writer. Just before she passed away she was working on a novel about something like that. That book you found is just her notes. It’s not real.”

A tear escaped Max’s eye. He cast about for some explanation. He was standing, bathed in bright sunshine beaming through the front door, but he couldn’t see his shadow cast anywhere around him. He held out his hand trying to catch the sunlight, but despite the bright light on his palm, the dark shape which should have been on the floor underneath was nowhere to be found. **FL**



Nanda Parbat

Nanda Parbat
Carter Eggleston



Trapped

HORROR STORY BY KELLY WILMER

*The laughter so loud ...yes, yes, an unbearable roar. Possessors of the shadows,
gushing tears of blood pour, my vulnerability, an opportunity.
Trapped within, I cannot escape.*

*Every ounce of my mental strength,
The possessors convulsing in pain, laughter grew and grew. Less control, puss begins
to ooze inside the depths of my mind.
Trapped within, I cannot escape.*

*devoted towards combating these thoughts,
A surge traveled, slowing the convulsions, cold crimson my only company. Their
stalking shadows came to a complete halt, paralysis.
Trapped within, I cannot escape.*

*so I could think of a silent prayer or plea
My own thoughts become more horrendous and powerful, I'm drowning. In the midst
of a restless night, it was there, in my gait, stabbing, withering in agony.
Trapped within, I cannot escape.*

*to any god or entity out there
Robbed of my senses, I have less control every second that passes by.
Trapped within, I cannot escape.
who can save me.*

“Richard... Richard, can you hear me?” The doctor says.
The doctor looks at the nurse, then she at him and says, “No change this morning.”
They both look back at Richard and watch him continue to rock back and forth,
curled up in a ball on top of his bed.

3RD PLACE | 3 MINUTE HORROR STORY



Surreal Project
Cheryl Anne DeAngelis



Butterfly Girl
Aja Cenon



Why Then...

POEM BY ANTONIA FLORENCE

Charleston, South Carolina

Summer

Mud pies, rabbit tracking and other such fun.

I won't play with girls

because their dolls are stupid!

This weekend,

when dad came home,

he had to retrieve dolly from the storm drain,

thrice!

Why didn't he just bring me back a monkey, live?

Why

do you make me come in at the end of day?

I want to sleep under the stars,

swing on the up-curved tail of the moon,

dance, with the fire flies.

The one which maddens me the most,

clothes.

Kevin nor Peter have to wear shirts,

Why then do I?

I'll fit right in with the boys!

I have on two pair of shorts,

see? One with flowers;

these I wear for you.

Doesn't that count?

Fine!

If I walk s-l-o-w-l-y around the yard,

then... run behind the bush,

I can make a soft fluffy nest for the birds,

They asked me to,

out of my shirt!

You see, I am not a bad child,

just independent, strong and different.

Why then do I have to wear this dress

for this stupid picture?

Calling the Game

WORDS BY KEITH WILLIAMS

SHORT STORY

Aaron checked the time on his phone: 6:59. With the sun set, the only light in his apartment was the TV and the lamp on the table by the sofa. Once again, he reminded himself that the bulb in the lamp was too dim and that he should remember to get a new one. He also knew he would completely forget to do so until the next time he thought about how dim the bulb was. He set his phone on the table in front of the sofa, putting it in a notably open spot.

He sat on the sofa, grabbed a slice of pineapple and green olive pizza from his plate on the table, and flopped back to get comfortable while he ate. His phone chimed an incoming text; it was only Rebecca.

Becca: "Good evening."

Aaron: "Howdy."

Becca: "Doing anything fun?"

Aaron: "Soccer game." On his TV, a player had just made a shot that came nowhere near the

goal. Though he wasn't particularly a fan of either team, he had DVR'd the game, figuring watching the match would help pass the time.

Becca: "Texting while playing soccer? Wow, you've got skill."

Aaron: "Funny." He knew she would appreciate every drop of sarcasm he used to type that.

Becca: "So, you're watching a game, want me to tell you who wins?"

Becca: "Kidding."

Becca: "I've experienced you after you get spoiled on a game."

Becca: "So...."

Becca: "I can come over."

Aaron: "No you can't." He couldn't type the words fast enough. But upon rereading his sent text, he figured he should give her an explanation since he would normally have no problem with her being there.

Aaron: "I'm waiting for a phone call, hopefully a long one."

Becca: "Oh, I get it, a 'phone call.'" Her text was complete with a winking face with its tongue poking out. Aaron thought about that face for a moment and tried to replicate it himself, and then felt glad no one could see his attempt. But that was enough of her; Becca might have been Aaron's best friend since they met first year at college, but there was only one person he was interested in talking to right now.

He opened a blank text and typed, "Can't wait to hear from you." He selected the recipient and hit send. A couple minutes later, there was a reply – just a smiley face – but it was enough to make Aaron himself smile. He set his phone back down in its reserved spot on the table and took another chomp of his pizza.

The first half of the game was mostly uneventful. Both teams made more than a few bad passes in the midfield, giving the ball away far too easily. Halfway through the halftime analysis, he took the opportunity to grab some water.

While at the sink, he heard his phone ringing back out in the living room. He shot out of the kitchen so fast that by the time he crashed into the sofa, he had overshot his seat and fell off the edge and onto the floor. He did not bother getting up, just grabbed his phone, and saw it was his father. The phone stopped ringing before Aaron could answer.

He let out a bit of a growl. "So not in the mood," he said out loud as he decided to not call his dad back.

Settling back into his spot as the second half of the game started, Aaron lost himself in the match. With the game clock hitting the 76th minute, he chomped on the crust of the last piece of pizza, having broken his vow to only eat two slices and save the rest for later. Both teams had been playing with greater energy, and while neither had scored any goals, a couple players for each side had picked up yellow cards for reckless tackles. As the referee showed the yellow yet again, this time to one team's midfielder, Aaron's phone rang. After stuffing the last piece of crust into his mouth, he grabbed the phone and saw his mother was calling.

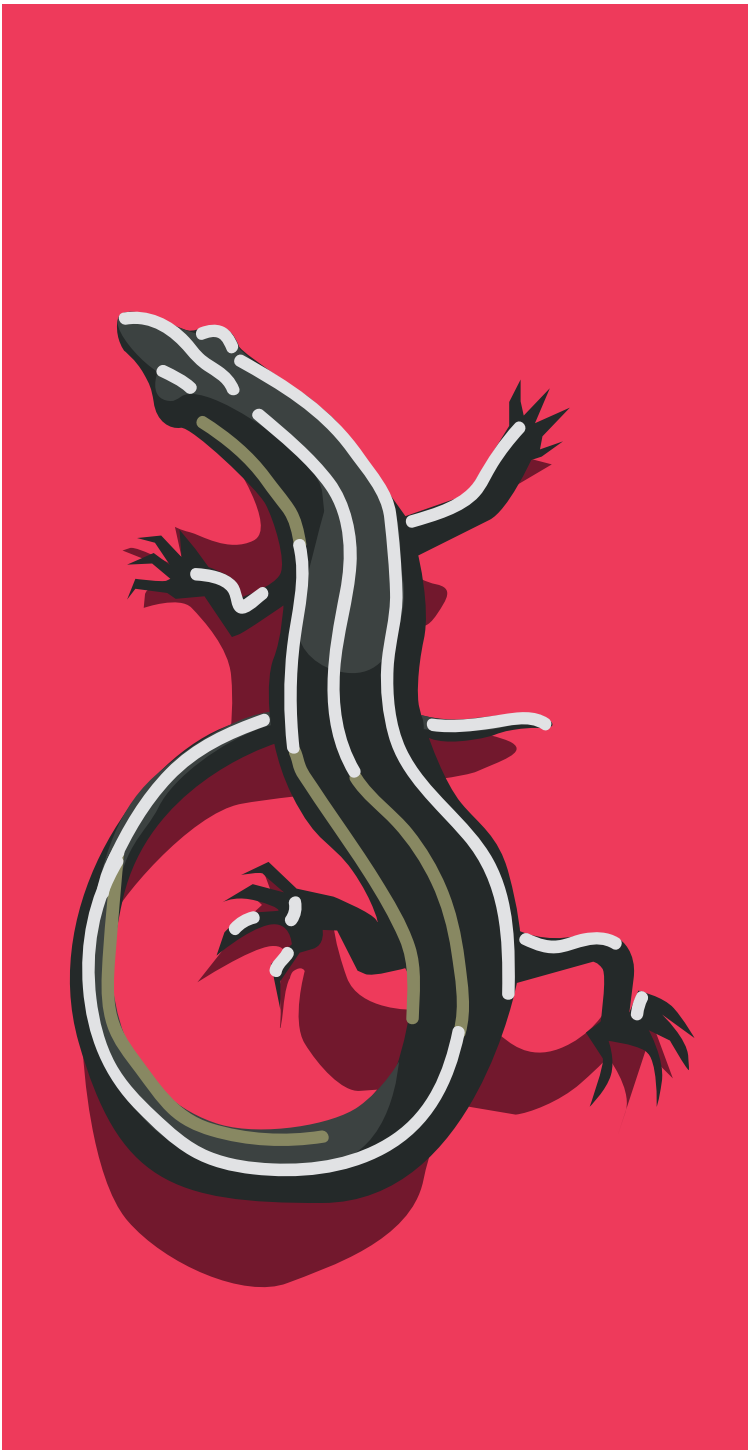
"Hey Ma," he said, still chewing.

"Hey sweetie. How are you?" she began.

"I'm fine Mom." Aaron resigned himself to the conversation. He loved his mother plenty, but still, she had to call right now?

"Am I bothering you?"

"Nah," Aaron swallowed the last of the pizza. "I'm just watching soccer." He knew his mom would forgive him for being distracted. She had gotten him involved in soccer when he was a kid when it was just sort of the thing to do, and as he developed more and more of a love for the game, she had always been more than



Herman
Erin Kennedy

willing to make sure he made it to practices and matches and that he had whatever gear he needed.

“Do you have anything else going on this evening?” she asked. She seemed a bit hesitant. Great, what did she want him to do?

“Not too much, why?” he asked cautiously.

“Your father’s gone out. He said something about stopping by.”

Aaron felt much like the goalkeeper being shown on replay getting hit in square in the face by the ball. The game coverage showed the hit a second time, in even slower motion than the first replay. The commentators were saying something about how that was one way to block a shot.

“Uh, I was kind of counting on a quiet night, honestly.”

“Well, I thought I should warn you.”

“He didn’t think he should call and ask me first?”

“You know your father.”

Aaron grunted. Yeah, he knew him.

“I just thought I’d give you a heads-up.”

“Yeah, thanks Mom.” Aaron hung up.

Ever since Aaron had gotten his own place, his father had always thought it was fine to just show up whenever he wanted, like his son was just sitting there waiting for him. Aaron stood up and walked halfway from the sofa to the kitchen so he could have some empty floor space to pace around in; he could already tell he was going

to need it. He stood there a moment, closed his eyes, let out a bit of an open throated roar, and then started scrolling through his contacts to pull up his dad's number. He hit call.

After more than a few rings, the outgoing voice-mail message started playing. Somehow, his dad had found a tone of voice to make that message sound like he was blaming you for having bad timing and not calling when he could answer. Aaron hung up, waited a minute, and tried again. Eventually, his dad answered, "Hello."

"Hey, Dad. Mom called and said you're going to come over here?"

"Yeah," his dad started. "You're not doing anything are you?" His dad did not wait for an answer before continuing. "I went by the store the other day and saw that they had that hummus you like, so I bought a bunch of it. I thought I'd bring it by."

"I've already had dinner," Aaron tried to counter.

"You don't have to eat it right now."

"How about I just get it when I come over tomorrow?" His dad had asked him the day before to come by sometime that weekend, and Aaron thought that they had reached an agreement for tomorrow to be the day.

"I don't really have room in my fridge, and I've already got it with me. Hey, do you need any toilet paper?"

"I'm not currently on the toilet, so no."

"They've got some on sale. I can get you some too while I'm at it."

"Are you at the store right now?"

"Yeah. I was going to swing by afterward," his dad said, sounding like he was barely paying attention.

"You brought hummus you bought the other day with you as you went to the store now? Okay, strange."

"Now, how is that strange?" The tone of his dad's voice changed. The anger switch had clearly just been flipped.

"It's not," Aaron sighed. "Look, dad, I don't think coming over tonight is a good idea."

"What's wrong with me stopping by?"

"Were you even going to call me and ask if I was home before you did?"

"I did call. You didn't answer."

"The point is you didn't check with me first before deciding to come over," Aaron tried to explain.

"You are at home, right?" his dad asked, like Aaron's point was invalidated by the fact of his location.

"Yeah," Aaron said quietly.

"Then why can't I stop by?"

"Because I have something going on tonight." Aaron hoped his dad could hear the pleading in his voice.

"What could you have going on at home?"

Aaron growled, then tried to calm down. "Dad, I'm waiting for a phone call."

“Seriously?” his dad’s voice grew even rougher. “You don’t want me to stop by because you want to talk on the phone?”

“I’ve been waiting for it all evening.”

“I thought I was being nice, buying you something, and you don’t want me to bring it over because you can’t wait to talk on the phone until after I leave?” Aaron suddenly had a vision of his dad staying for an hour – or more.

“You asked me to come over tomorrow, so why can’t I get it then?”

“I’ve already got it with me. You really are being ungrateful, you know. If I even liked the stuff, I’d eat it myself.” Aaron echoed his dad’s words in his mind: “The stuff.” His dad had always acted like hummus was something weird, like it was some food from aliens come to Earth.

“I didn’t ask you to get it for me,” Aaron objected.

“I should see if I can return it to store.”

Aaron shook his head. “It’s nice that you got it for me, but I don’t need it right now. You really should have made sure you knew if I was busy before deciding to bring it. As far as you knew, I wasn’t going to be home at all tonight. You could have respected me and asked, but you didn’t. And you could respect me now and ac-

cept that I want the night to myself.” Aaron had grown frustrated long ago over how it seemed the only way to avoid a fight with his dad was to always give in to whatever his dad wanted. After getting his own place, Aaron decided he had to start standing up to his dad more.

“You don’t know the first thing about respect,” his dad ranted.

“Well, if I don’t, then it’s because I learned from you.”

“Maybe I’ll just throw the stuff in the trash.”

“Dad, there’s no reason to act like that,” Aaron said. A long moment of silence followed.

“I’m going to go,” his dad finally said.

“I’ll be over tomorrow.”

“Don’t trouble yourself.”

“Dad, seriously, I’ll be over tomorrow. This isn’t as big a deal as you’re making it.”

“Fine,” he huffed.

“See you then,” Aaron tried to test if his dad had calmed down.

“Mhmm,” his dad grunted as he hung up the phone.

Aaron tapped to end the call on his end, just in case his dad had not actually done so on the other. He tossed his phone at the sofa, where it slid partially down between two cushions. He stood there in the middle of the room, eyes closed, and sighed. Why did every conversation with his dad have to be so hard? Why did his dad seem to enjoy fighting over the most asinine things?

On the TV, the midfielder who had been yellow carded earlier was being shown a second yellow, and then came the resulting red card. The midfielder turned from the ref and started walking, shaking his head as he went.

"I know how you feel," Aaron said to him, as the camera cut to show the player walk off the pitch and down the tunnel toward the locker room.

Aaron's phone rang.

"Oh my God!" he shouted, clenching his fists against his forehead. "No more phone calls!"

He stormed over to the sofa and grabbed the phone, planning on swiping to ignore the call, but then Aaron saw the name.

James.

The corner of his mouth started to turn up into a smile as he swiped to answer.

"Hey," he said, quietly.

"Hey babe, how are ya?"

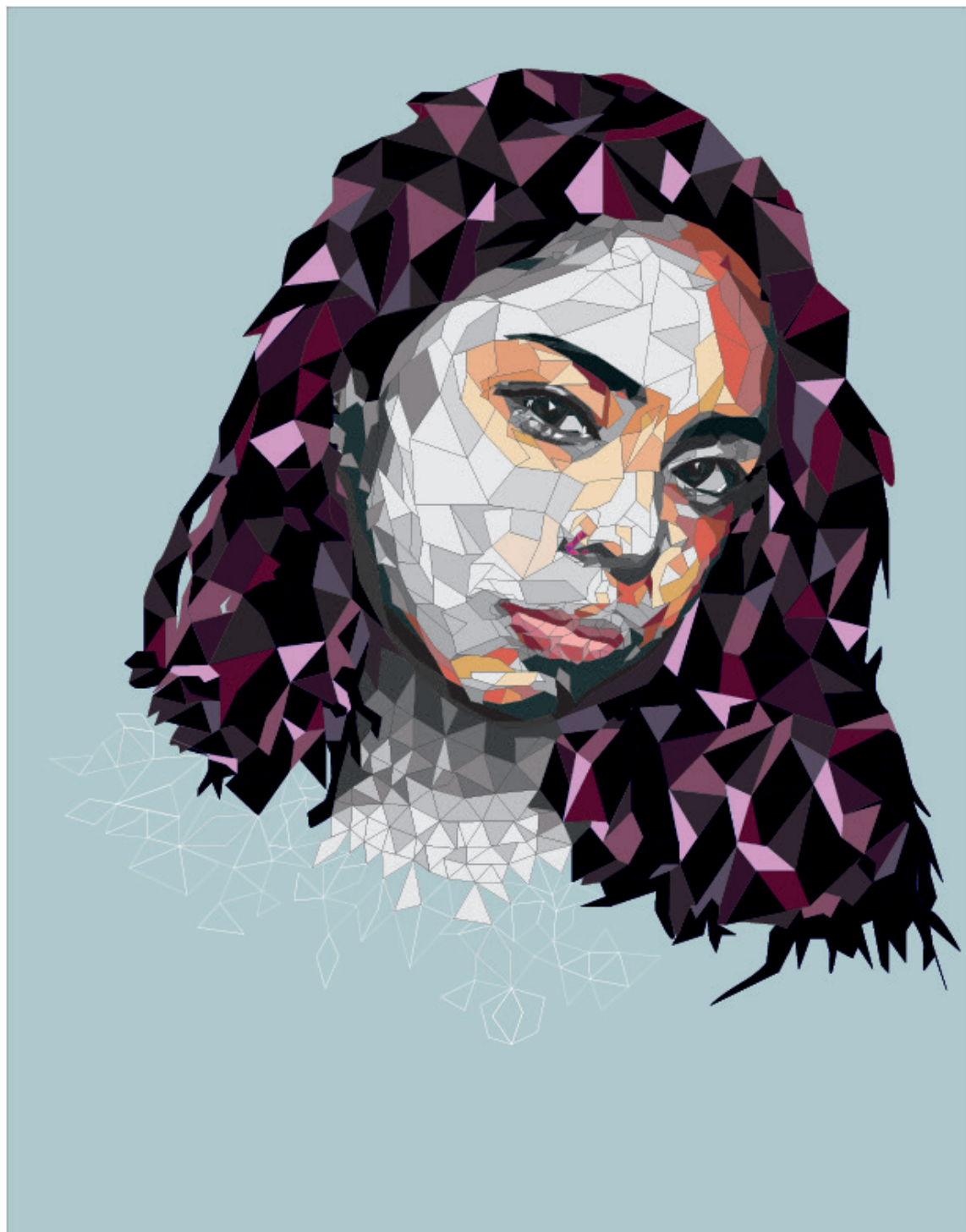
"Actually, a lot better now," he said, his breathing retuning to a normal calm.

"Better is always good. I've missed ya," James said.

"Missed you too." Aaron loved talking to James, starting as far back as their first date two years ago. Even with the evening concluded that first night, and their having gone their separate ways, James ended up calling Aaron after he had gotten home. They had then talked on the phone for five hours, with Aaron falling asleep while getting lost in James's voice.

The referee blew the fulltime whistle, but Aaron couldn't care less about the game. He spread out on the sofa as the post-game commentary began.

"So, what should we talk about?" James asked. Hearing the deep resonance of his voice, Aaron felt more than ever that this would be a particularly long call. **FL**



Vector Self Portrait
Aja Cenon

Thank You

POEM BY DARIEN TINSLEY

Thank you
Thank you for not shutting me out like the others
Thank you for not judging me before even seeing my colors
Thank you for keeping me sane
Thank you for being one of the most thoughtful friends
Thank you for riding with me till the end
Thank you for liking me for me
Thank you for showing me what else I could be
Thank you for those pep talks that only you could give
Thanking you is like giving out the Nobel Peace Prize
And the applause is written all in your eyes
I can't thank you enough for all the wonderful ways you done what you done
Because you are my best friend, and will always be number one



Aqua Velva

WORDS BY ANNETTE COUCH-JAREB

HORROR STORY

When Michelle was little, a monster lived under her bed. She could hear it scratching the floor, tearing the fabric on the underside of the box springs. She could smell its mustiness and once, she could have sworn she heard it crunching the bones of its victim. (She never had liked that cat and it wasn't missed.)

Now that she was grown, the monsters came in blonde packages that reeked of too much aftershave. The phone on her nightstand pinged and a glance confirmed it was that guy from biology texting her... again. "Monster" might be harsh, but he was definitely becoming a pest.

She punched the buttons that would block his calls. With the phone back in its charger, she settled on her pillow.

They had gone out for coffee – twice. He sat beside her in class and looked perturbed whenever there was no seat available. Recently, he had begun turning up more than was statistically likely. The final straw had been his showing up this evening at the start of her art class.

She saw him the moment she stepped around the corner. He stood awkwardly outside the studio door, looking first left, then right.

"What're you doing here?" she asked.

"Came to see you. Thought we could grab a bite later."

"I get out at ten o'clock." It would be dark when she got out. The parking lot was always nearly deserted when she left the building. "I'm already meeting someone after," she lied. She would have moved past, but he blocked her path.

"Really?" Hurt, anger, then... nonchalance. "No matter. I can still see you safely home."

"No." Her voice was edged with annoyance. She softened. "Listen. I think you may have misunderstood. It was just coffee. You're nice, but I'm not looking for a relationship with anyone. This," and she waved a hand back and forth between them, "makes me uncomfortable." She would forever associate the smell of his too strong aftershave with this unpleasantness.

There was the hurt and anger again. A muscle flexed in his jaw, and he turned away on a swear, not quite under his breath.

She was half afraid he would be there after class, but he was not. Still, she kept looking over her shoulder until she was safely home.

Now, she punched a hole in her pillow and tried to settle. Snap. She sat up with a start. A breeze blew in through her window. Michelle pulled her hair out of its clip and resettled her head on the pillow. She was almost asleep when she heard it again. Snap.

She shuffled in bed, pulling the sheet to her neck. It reminded her of when she was a child afraid of the monster under her bed. This was irrational, she chided herself. That's when she saw him.

Her stalker pushed up the window and put his leg over the side. She sat up, tried to scream. The sound stuck in her throat.

The stalker smiled. Put a finger to his lips. She tried to move away. He took a step closer.

Just then, a claw-like hand shot out from under the bed. She would never forget her attacker's expression. His smile twisted and his screams were silenced almost before they began. The sound of bones crunching came from under the bed, then the sound of lips sucking at the marrow.

Michelle fainted.

The next morning, she woke with a start. She pulled herself to look over the side of her bed. There was nothing - just a faint mustiness and the pungent scent of Aqua Velva.



Tree Silhouettes
Tanya Fleming

Shattering Patterns

POEM BY ANNETTE CASHATT

Falling through a glittering tapestry of all the lightest music in
the world

falling
falling
falling

The glitter flakes away. Heaviness soaks through my skin, infects
my blood, straight to my heart, all is black

dark
dark
dark

This is not who I am, not what I'm meant to be. How could I be--?

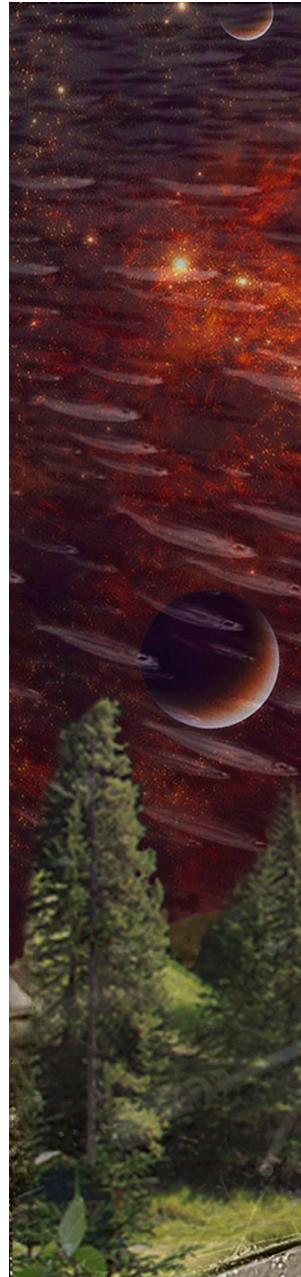
running
running
running

It's bitter tasting, cold, who took the light?

searching
searching
searching

This was never what I meant to happen. Why do I ask so many
questions when I have the answers? How can I ever be lost when
I create the path?

create
the
path





Spaceman
Adam Mcloch



Untitled
Olivia Battani

No More

POEM BY QUAMIA DENNIS

No Makeup do you need
your beautiful without
that make up.

That dot upon your face is what makes
you.

No makeup you need
your beautiful without
the powder.

To me you're a desire.
women, lady, young girl.
You have your own special unique
way.

That scar right below your cheek,
your complexion,
don't need any powder
to compete.

What makes you is beautiful.

When you walk up under that night sky
stars shine right above you
just smiling at you, God the one who made you beautifully.

Don't need anyone to tell you that you're beautiful.

Go ahead look into the mirror

And say to yourself ...

I am who I am.

My scars,

My dots,

Be free,

No more make up

do I need

The Death Room


WORDS BY SARAH DOLAN

CREATIVE NON-FICTION

“Your Grandma had pancreatic cancer, Kate. She isn’t going to live through this one.” Pancreatic cancer? I looked out the window at 1:00am, and watched the rain hit the glass as we continued to drive, and thought how appropriate it was that it was raining when someone was dying. I wondered what kind of cancer that was, but I didn’t want to ask. We drove up to her house, where a lot of my relatives that I didn’t even know were staying to help Grandma in her last days. I had never seen someone near death before. I was really afraid to go into that house, as if somehow death could grab me and take me along with Grandma. She was my great grandma, 100 years old, and everyone seemed amazed that she had lived as long as she had. Mama told me to get out of the car, and I did too, along with my older brother. We went inside, and the first thing that I saw was a teenage girl asleep on a chair. She woke up with a start and came over to my mom and they hugged. My brother and I stayed outside of the room where my grandma was dying. The girl was 17 years old, I learned later. She had really dark circles under her eyes, and had the appearance of crying a lot. This girl had a sweet face, but I didn’t think it was exactly pretty. I thought, though, if she had makeup on, she might look really nice. The girl came over to us, and was trying to be friendly. I think she knew that we were nervous. My mom came out of the death room, and said it was time to go to the hotel, but we would be back tomorrow. I didn’t want to go back to that house.

The next morning, we went to that dreaded house. The girl was making coffee. Her dark circles seemed even darker. She seemed to be frustrated. She made some phone calls and talked very sternly to the people on the other end. I wasn’t sure if I liked her or not. She came over to where my brother and I were sitting, and started talking to us. She was asking my brother what he thought about death, and if he ever thought about his own death. He said he thought that was a

morbid topic. She looked horrified. "You never think about your own death? Don't you know it happens to all of us? We need to be ready for it like Grandmother is." She gave him a sad look, and then came over to me. She asked my age, and I told her I was 8. She asked me to go outside with her and we could take a walk. I went with her. It was raining, but she didn't seem to care. She took my hand and we started to skip down the sidewalk together. She looked at my face and smiled. Suddenly, I didn't feel afraid anymore. We started laughing. We ran back inside. A nurse was there. Someone told the girl to go in and help the nurse. She looked at me and asked me to come with her. I did. I went into that death room. The girl told me to sit down. I watched her help the nurse. I didn't dare look at Grandma. I stared straight into the girl's eyes as she worked. She was changing the sheets and clothes of Grandma, and was rubbing lotion into her back. It smelled so bad in there that I felt lightheaded. How was the girl standing it? She looked up at me and smiled. In her face, I could see she too felt sick. But something else was there too. I don't know what.

The next day, she came with us to the hotel. She ate breakfast with us. She went swimming with me. I wasn't feeling as afraid anymore. We went back to the house with Grandma in it. She went in and gave Grandma some medicine and helped change her again. I didn't watch this time though. That night, Grandma's pastor came to the house, as well as about 20 other relatives. It was a really small house, and the death room was extremely small. Even so, everyone squeezed into the room. The girl gave Grandma some more medicine. She kept talking to her. She was saying, "No Grandmother, it's her little sister. She isn't here... open your mouth, I just need to put this under your tongue. No, don't pull on that... it is giving you oxygen. Good girl." She came over to me with a sad look on her face. She looked really pale. A lot of people in the room were just staring at Grandma. The girl suddenly pulled me into a hug. She didn't let go. She was shaking. I looked at her face. There were no tears though. Someone told the girl to sing a song. She looked down and shook her head. Now there were tears. Everyone started crying. Everyone surrounded the bed. "Please sing, baby," the girl's mother said. The girl sighed heavily. She started to sing. She squeezed me even tighter. She was sobbing now, but somehow the notes came out strong and beautiful. I started to cry. By the end of the song, there was a silence in the room that seemed to never end. 



VISIT NEW MEXICO



New Mexico
Christi Lynn-Saunders

Kourbania

WORDS BY MARTIN STEVENS

SHORT STORY

A slap on the bicep. “You’re burning it!” Marimar had been running, laughing, past the short shrubs, softer than they looked. His broad back, clad in his faded yellow T-shirt, and his sinewy arms, rhythmically heaving up and down, were leading her on, beckoning her. The sun didn’t seem so punishing today, the air not so thick. Little birds would flutter up from the ground as the two of them bounded across the gently sloping hillside.

The slap. The acrid smell of burning rice in the flimsy pot. “Sorry,” she breathed.

“Eh?!”

Louder. “I’m sorry.”

“You got something else to cook?”

No response.

“Huh?!”

Softer. “No.”

“Then you pay attention.”

Her mother hefted herself outside. Marimar continued stirring. The beans were not yet

cooked, and in their sheen she saw the darkness of his eyes. Paolo. She shifted her weight from foot to foot. Where is he right now? Playing football with the rough boys from the next town? Collecting bottles from the ragged roadside?

Stealing again?

“Where else am I gonna get money?”

“You’re going to get caught.”

“Come on.” He tussled her wavy, black hair.

“Stop.” Don’t stop. Don’t ever stop.

“You’ll come with me when I’m caught, right?”

Her face turned and met his in profile. Her sleepy eyes opened a little wider. Her mouth turned up ever so slightly.

“In jail. You’ll come with me right?”

Her sweat slid off her sun-kissed skin and dripped into the soapy water. Her hands were beginning to pucker when she heard the pounding on the dirt. It was coming fast. Paolo bounding across the short grass.

“Mari! Guess what, guess what! I got me a job. A good one. At the cola factory. And listen to this...” He came very near her and lowered his voice. “There’s this guy who works there. He said he knows about me, but I don’t know how he knows me. He’s the one who hired me. He told me I’m gonna do, like, cleaning and stuff, and that’s gonna be my official job.” Every sentence he spoke slower. “But he says that, sometimes, he’s gonna give me a little package, and I’m supposed to take it to these people. I think this guy is some kind of spy, or something. And he’s gonna give me cash on the down low...what’s wrong? No no no no no, wait...it’s OK. It’s OK, I swear...”

He doesn’t know what he’s doing. He won’t listen to me. He’s going to get hurt. I feel it. I feel it everywhere. They’ll kill him. They don’t care. Please, not him, Lord. He’s the only good thing that ever happened to me. He’s the only good thing in my life. I don’t want to be alive if You take him. Please, God, you have to help him. Every bad thing that’s coming to him, Lord, put it on me instead. Make me suffer. Not him. Put it all on my soul, on my body. I’m begging you, Lord. Please.

Her mother’s breath was shallow. The rise and fall of her belly was almost imperceptible. Marimar ran the wet rag lightly over the fallow skin. She was exhausted, and still had so much to do after her mother was asleep. She left the little cup of flower tea next to the candle and went out into the falling dusk.

At the meager store down by the main road, Marimar pleaded with the shopkeeper to extend their credit. After his wife chastised him for trying to deny a sick woman’s daughter, he finally relented and passed her a modest bag of

provisions. She thanked him again and again, with tears in her eyes, until he was annoyed with her and shooed her away.

As she left, Marimar stopped and stared down the main road. She could just make out the tiny red and yellow pinpoints of lights that she knew were from the factory. She hated that place and wished they had built it someplace else, far away. The red and yellow glared back at her from the distance. When she could tolerate it no longer, she turned to the dusty path and walked brusquely towards home.

She heard the screaming before she saw the appalling, bright, orange glow. The men vainly pitched dirt into the flaming shell of a house. The bag dropped from her fingers as the heat and the horror overwhelmed her. Her willowy frame swayed backward, and a hard pair of hands was suddenly around her waist.

Marimar rocked back and forth on the thin carpet of the clinic. Its dim straw color was suddenly overtaken by black shoes. A serious man in a dark suit with a badge. He bent down.

“Marimar? I need to talk to you for a minute, is that OK?” He wasn’t to be refused. “Your friend, Paolo, he’s been missing for the past two days.”

No. No. I begged You. I begged You.

“He was last seen heading north in a pickup truck that belonged to the cola factory, and we have reason to believe the owner’s daughter was with him. Do you have any idea where he might have gone?”

Her mind couldn’t think, but she felt a faint twinge. She tried to reach inside herself to touch it. Confusion. Anger. Anger in her delicate heart.

Then, out loud, in spite of herself, “Take me with you.” **FL**

Young Sinners

WORDS BY LEEANNA CHITTUM

HORROR STORY

Scarlett was almost finished with her meal when she noticed a family portrait hanging on the wall. “When can I meet your parents Parker?” she asked. He looked at her with a stern but sad look on his face. “They died in a car accident when I was seven.” She covered her mouth wishing she could take back the question she had asked. As she was apologizing, she glanced at his grandad, Walter. He then turned to Scarlett with tears in his eyes and shaking hands. “Dinner is over.” Walter removed the dirty plates from the table and hurried to the sink.

Parker then took Scarlett out on the patio and listened to the rain drops hit the sidewalk. “I’m really sorry for bringing that up Parker.” Scarlett cried.

“He gets weird whenever the car accident is brought up. My mother and grandad were really close when she was young. When I was born they started growing apart. My Mom wasn’t married and sixteen when I was born.” Parker explained. “Grandad is very religious and was very mad at her for sinning at such a young age. He gets upset when people go against God’s word.”

Scarlett then changed the subject. It started to flood so she called her parents and told them she was staying the night.

As they entered the house, Walter was sitting by the fire place reading his bible. He mentioned the time and demanded the young teens to go to their separate bedrooms for the night. “Don’t come out until sunrise.” He threatened.

When the clock struck two, Parker snuck to his grandad's room to hear nothing but snoring then startled Scarlett to awake her. He then told her to follow him and to be super quiet. The lovers snuck down to the old red barn in the pouring rain, turned on the light, and slow danced to the rain tapping on the tin roof.

As time slowly crept by, Parker's wrist watch beeped when it became 3 am. From his peripheral vision, he could see the farmhouse out of a dusty window, with a dim light casting from Scarlett's room. He knew then that he was in trouble. He told Scarlett to run back to the house as fast as she can. She started running but her foot got stuck in the mud and fell into Walter; she screamed bloody murder. "What are you kids doing in my barn?" He grabs her in a headlock and chokes her until she's unconscious. In his hands, he's holding the family portrait with a knife through it. Parker comes running when he hears the screams. He runs to hold the body of Scarlett then starts arguing with the old man. One had a knife and one was bare handed.

"She wants to meet your parents, Parker." Walter spoke seriously holding the knife at the limping body.

"Don't touch her! I'll never forgive you!" Walter screamed.

"Your parents wouldn't forgive me either."

"You killed my parents!" Parker is too afraid to cry anymore knowing that the love of his life is in the arms of a murderer. "Why on Earth would you kill your own daughter?"

"She sinned at a young age. God doesn't like it when people sin. My calling is kill all sinners. Since you and Scarlett tried sneaking off in my barn, you both need consequences."

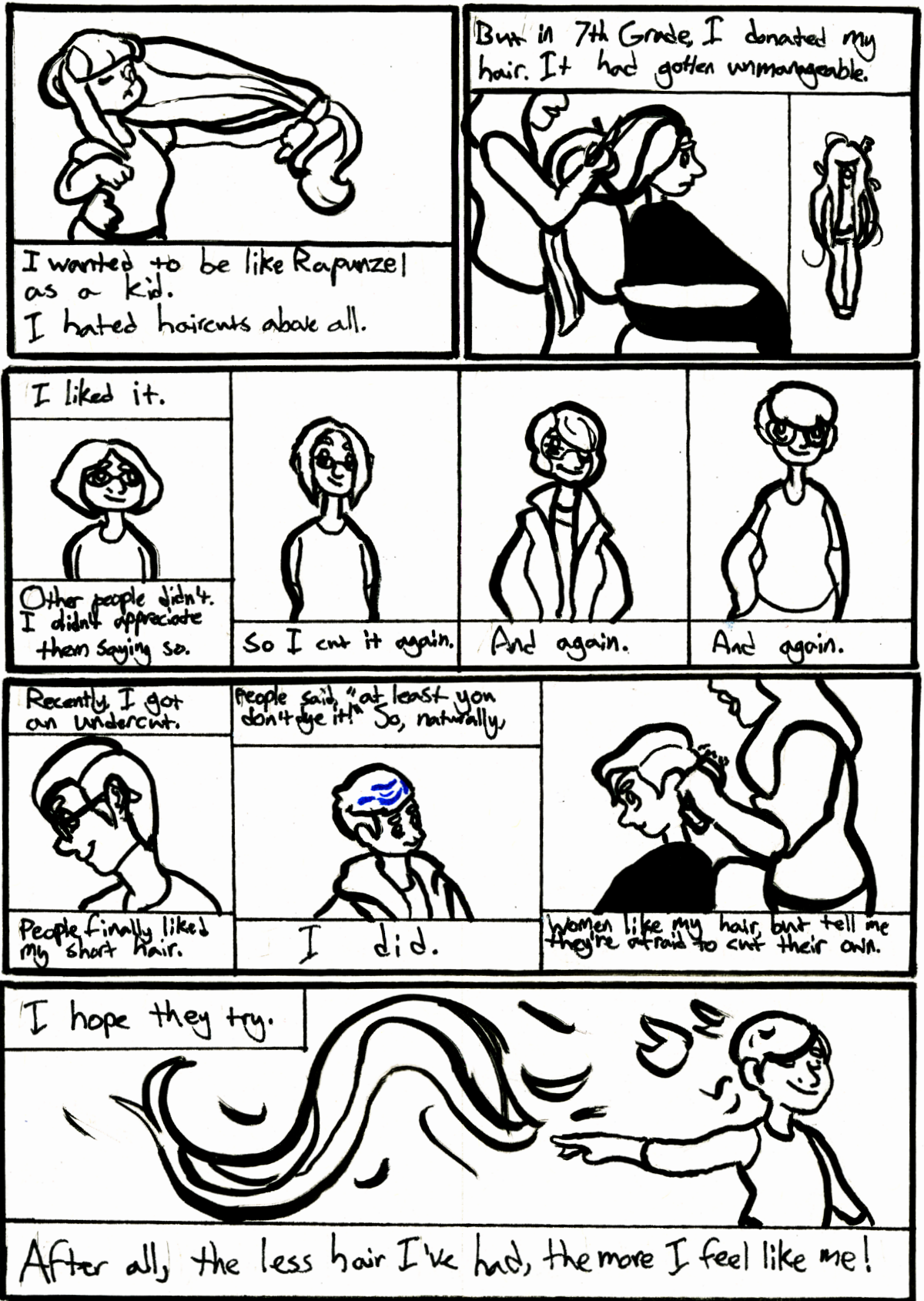
As the knife was slowly approaching Scarlett, Parker tackled his grandad with all the might he had and knocked the air out of him. He grabbed Scarlett, called 911 and left his grandad to drown in the rain.

2ND PLACE | 3 MINUTE HORROR STORY

Hair

BY ABIGAIL
WOODWARD

GRAPHIC NARRATIVE



THE FALL LINE

THE FALL LINE

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