Now, by my maidenhead, at twelve year old, I bade her come; but, ladybird! God forbid, juliet. How now! who's here? Nurse, give me leave awhile, I have remembrance in my head. Nurse, come back. Thy counsel, thou know'st how to move a pretty age. Faith, she's not fourteen. I'll lay fourteen against one. And yet, to my teeth be it spoken, I have seen yes or no, she is not fourteen. How long is it now to Lammas-tide? A fortnight and

**Teenage Mind**

**Class of 2018-2019**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Where I’m From&quot; by Jenna Collins</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Life of Jack&quot; by Taylor Jones</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Monsters&quot; by Pagan Ellis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Two Sides&quot; by Jarrett Blair</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Greatness&quot; by Kathleen Frase</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Cathedral&quot; by Avery Wengerter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Heart For The Game&quot; by Justin Blyer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Blaze&quot; by Allen Staley</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Cheese&quot; by Jenna Gorton</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Thunderstorm&quot; by Scottie Mayle</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Three Simple Words&quot; by Madison Miller</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Special Type of Love&quot; by Delaney Phillips</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Ramen Shop&quot; by Hailey Smith</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Meadow of Memories&quot; by Kaylee Lewis</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Day Job&quot; by Darien Yoder</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I’m Not Crazy&quot; by Abigail E. Lewis</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Strife&quot; by Katie Yarnall</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Deadly Cookie&quot; by Journey Fisher</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;No More Hurting&quot; by Savannah Berry</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Where I’m From&quot; by Eden Smith</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Never Give Up&quot; by Rebecca Malzer</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Escape&quot; by Corrin Boland</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Venus’s Touch&quot; by Rebeca Leyman</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Blackout Poetry&quot; by Noah Aranda</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Alpha&quot; by Austin Cummings</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Never Trust a Shadow&quot; by Shaelyn Clark</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Cookie Jar&quot; by Olivia Yarnell</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Old Willow&quot; by Paige Roberts</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Trashcan&quot; by John Lidderdale</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Bike&quot; by Claire Weston</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Justice Rising&quot; by Trillian Vaughn</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards and Publications</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cover courtesy of Darien Yoder, Paige Roberts, and Kat Frase
Jenna Collins

Where I’m From

I am from running.
From softball in the summer
I am from the porch that welcomes my front door.
Warm, supportive, hugs.
I am from camping and forgiveness.
From Jeff and Dawn Collins.
From “don’t grow up” and “fix your own mistakes.”
I’m from being Catholic and confession.
I’m from Ireland and Transylvania.
From Fourth of July barbeques.
Late nights, shared memories, and lifelong bonds.
I’m from the roots of country music,
From family on the holidays.
From dog sitting on the weekend.
To babysitting on the weekdays.
I’m from daisy’s,
Bright, colorful, simple but beautiful.
I’m from what can’t be the same anywhere else.

Taylor Jones

Life Of Jack

So this is what it’s come to huh? A hollow shell of what I used to be, displayed for your simple, short-lived enjoyment. Every day I sit here in agony, nothing left but a heartless, jack-o-lantern waiting to be tossed in the dump if I ever make it through the onslaught of gnats and flies. I get some enjoyment though, the trees multi-colored foliage brings me at peace sometimes. But other than that, yeah, what a so called life I live. The only thing eating away at me more than the critters is my jealousy for the pumpkins that make it into a delicious dessert. I mean come on, completely unfair. They get thrown into a sweet pie to feed the family and I’m out here rotting in the cold, mind you, with a amateur design cut out of me. A perfect canvas gone to waste. I can say that I’m quite proud of the fact that I am the longest living lantern on the block. And the only thing a pumpkin like me has to look forward to is the final days they get to decompose back into the ground. Man what I would give to go back in time to the pumpkin patch. I truly do miss my friends and family. No one knew what went down when you went home with a human. Boy o boy we’re in for a surprise. Just remember kids, the next time you gouge a knife into a gourd, open them up and rip their insides out for decoration, they could have been a tasty pie instead.
Pagan Ellis

Monsters

A mother sat on her cabin porch in an old rocking chair looking out at the flowers that surrounded her. Her face that of one who has lost something important, but she’s trying to forget. The best part of the cabin was the flowers... she could look at them all day and forget about everything else, but the flowers. She never figured out what kind of flowers they were, only that whenever the wind blew hard enough the petals would fly. They appeared magical, like lotus flowers, but on a stem. Her daughter loved it here; she’d run all around the field holding that bunny stuffed animal of hers. The mother clenched her fist around the same bunny, but now it, along with her, grew weary and old. The mother looked at a butterfly flapping its thin wings that propelled its frail body through the sky. Butterflies have such short lives, but to them, it probably feels like an eternity. Her eyes glazed over like she was remembering a sad tale that she spun for nobody but herself at the sight of that beautiful butterfly.

The mother heard the old cabin door swing open followed by the wooden porch boards creaking. She saw her daughter bounding up to her, her face sort of pale, and her eyes wide as a deer in the headlights of a truck. “What’s wrong, my butterfly?” She asked, her voice quiet and calm as she picked up her small daughter. She rocked slower in her rocking chair, trying to calm her frightened child.

“Mommy, I saw a monster in the backyard,” Her daughter said in a hushed voice as if she was afraid it would hear her.

“Don’t worry, little one,” she paused for a second, “I won’t let the monsters get you.”

“But, mom, they’re scary! They have sharp claws, big, big teeth and they smell bad!” She said with a pout on her face.

Normally the mother would smile at such curiosities of her child’s imagination, but today was different. The day wasn’t young, it was old. And the mothers face aged with the sun as it slowly set upon the horizon. “Butterfly, not all monsters look like that,” she whispered softly. The rabbit in the mothers left hand ripped a little from her nails digging into the thin, dirty fabric.

“Well, what do they look like, mommy?” Butterfly asked, resting her head on her mother’s shoulder. The little girl looked out into the flowers like she’d never seen them before. She loved those flowers, the pop of pink and the sparkle of the dew when the rain fell during the night. It all seemed like a wonder to her.

“Monsters don’t have sharp teeth or claws, and they aren’t fuzzy or scaley. They look just like us. They wear the same clothes,” she paused a bit as petal flew by her face. The wind was picking up, “and they act the same way we do if they are good at pretending. Their minds are just... twisted.”

“Why?”

“Because they don’t feel the way we do. They’re cold and they hurt people. They hurt... innocent people who didn’t do nothin’ to nobody.”

“Is that why you’re sad, mommy?” The little girl asked her mother. Her eyes resembled ponds, shallow and deep. Somehow murky... like tears lurking but would never fall.

“No, my little butterfly. I’m sad because you’re not really here,” the mother whispered, letting go of the lonely stuffed bunny. “I’m sad because the monsters took my baby girl,” she whispered to nothing. She watched as the flower petals on her lap blew away into the winds of time, then she closed her tired eyes and rocked; feeling the cool breeze of spring against her skin. She closed her eyes and breathed softly, wishing she were a petal. -SRWB
Jarrett Blair

Two Sides

In this world we live in, there always seems to be something driving us, the human race, away from each other, into greater separation in opinion and mind. I believe one of the biggest, and probably the most effective factor that contributes to this is politics in our modern day. To be specific, the prejudice between the Republican party and the Democratic party just seems to expand on an exponential level. The thing we need to avoid is letting that political prejudice transfer into disunion or partition. Everybody needs to realize that our ideology shouldn’t separate us but bring us together in order to better our community and society.

One of our greatest Presidents, George Washington is a great precedent for politics. He, along with many of our founding fathers were afraid of factions in the United States. Now, our politics is divided into two factions, the Republicans and Democrats. George Washington knew that the creation of factions or political parties would lead to disaster and we can now see that he was right.

The disastrous two-party system of the U.S. has led to gridlocks in Congress where nothing gets accomplished but fighting, and groups like Antifa rising up and using questionable methods to get their point across to the other side. The worst effect however from having this two-party system is, it has ripped a giant hole in society which brings out the ignorance in people of other people’s beliefs.

Everybody will have their own opinion, and that’s the beautiful thing about our country. But what should be so beautiful has turned murky and caused a negative feeling in society. The propinquity of neighbors has for the most part decreased. Almost anywhere you look, you can see people fighting about something. It seems like nowadays people are actually scared of accepting others opinions. But the truth is, everyone will always have different opinions, and the only way we can truly make progress in our society and communities is if we rid ourselves of our ignorance to the opinions of others and truly come together to change the current state of society.

It doesn’t matter if you’re a Republican. It doesn’t matter if you’re a Democrat. What matters is, we’re all people, and we should respect, instead of criticizing other people. There will always be two sides to every story. Isn’t it about time that some of us took the initiative to listen to that other side? It only takes a few people to make a difference, so why not make a difference that will not only affect you but everyone around you and further generations down the road.

Kathleen Frase

Greatness

I am from the little white house in front of that mansion,
Happy, content, a really cozy home.
I am from those yellow tulips that grow in my front yard,
Lovely, bold, and beautiful like me.
I’m from a stuffed animal Christmas tree and my mom and uncles 80s music.
I’m from the loudness and messiness.
From you’re going to be great to you’re going to be so much greater.
I’m from the most graceful God, who has blessed me beyond what I can comprehend.
I’m from long drives with my mom.
I’m from a long line a great people and I know I can be great to!
Avery Wengerter

The Cathedral

I wandered through the dusty field,
Nature surrounded me on all sides.
But, ‘Lo! What is that?
A massive cathedral stretched out in front of me.
Detailed windows reach for the sky,
Stunning arches tower above me.
But one look at the inside
Reminds me that everything is fragile
And stress causes decay.
Suddenly, I hear it.
The sound of thousands of footsteps
Echoing off the cathedral walls.
I turn around to face the sound.
What appears to be hundreds of cattle
Proceeding towards me.
I jump out of the way hurrledly
And in taking one last look at the cattle marching towards me,
Astonished, I mumble, “Holy cows!”

Justin Blyer

Heart For The Game

Marcus stepped over the line, looking at the dirt mound in front of him, his heart pounding. Gripping the ball, Marcus thought back to what had happened before. Marcus was told he would never be a good pitcher, he should not even be on the field. This was not because of his talent, it was because of his height. How would they know what he could do if he never got the chance? This was the opportunity he had been waiting for all season. As Marcus completed his final warmup tosses, the opposing dugout howled and joked as they saw the small figure on the mound. Marcus glanced over to his right, making out his coach, and smiled. Seven innings later, combined with a career high in strikeouts, Marcus had himself a complete game shutout. Of course, Marcus was ecstatic about his performance, but he was also extremely proud of one thing, showing his teammates, the opponents, the crowd and his school that no matter your size, you can accomplish whatever you desire with the right work ethic, and by being yourself. Marcus truly showed that height does not measure your heart for the game.

Allen Staley

Blaze

Slowly,
The flames settle.
No signs of life at all.
Homes and habitats are destroyed.
Charred Earth.
Jenna Girton

Cheese

Cheese, the orange tinge, the stink; just like me. Though I have been told, I smell of pumpkin. I have never tried pumpkin; not that I don’t want to, I’ve just never been given the chance. I eat anything.

My favorite has to be cheese though. I like cheese crackers, cheese on lasagna, and even those mystical cheese sticks.

My family calls me Felix, and sometimes Pumpkin, but never what I would like to be called. Cheese; I would like to be called cheese.

When my family stands all together holding one another they say my name and smile. I run to them but they just laugh. They clearly wanted me; they were practically shouting my name.

Being me,

No...

Being Cheese is boring, but during the day when my family leaves and I am all alone, that is when boredom really takes over. They don’t even have the decency to leave the fridge open for me to get a cheesy snack while they’re gone. All they leave out is some gross dried up food on the floor for me.

What do they think I am?

An animal!

Sadly I must eat it regardless, you know cause food.

My true love for cheese came about when my family had eggplant lasagna for dinner one night. That night they sat at the table and had dinner. They then left and went to bed. Yet there was only one problem. They forgot to put away the lasagna!

Being the good samaritan I am, I decided to help them out by cleaning up and eat the lasagna. I leaped onto the stove and smelled the cheesy, creamy goodness of the eggplant lasagna.

I need to eat this!

I need to protect my family from the lasagna that would be spoiled when they would wake up to in the morning. I tried it, and I instantly fell in love! It was so soft and stringy nothing like the hard, stale food from my bowl.

I wasn’t a fan of the eggplant, but the cheese...

Oh the cheese!

After eating all of the cheese off of the eggplant, I decided it was time for bed. When I woke up and walked out into the kitchen I began to notice the looks of disappointment in their eyes.

Though I’m not really sure why

I mean I was only helping them out.

And this is where my name Cheese came from. That was the moment in time when I knew that I was destined to be Cheese.

I don’t eat cheese as often as I would like to, as my family says I’m lactose intolerant; whatever that means. I’m not really sure what they mean by that, I thought I was very tolerable. The family still sometimes gives me cheese from time to time. But I sure do hope the whole Cheese name thing catches on. Though I’m not really sure it ever will.
Scottie Mayle

The Thunderstorm

The rain begins to drip.
The liquid sky high releasing,
Thunderbolts thriving high through the sky.
Lightning causing trees to rip.
Blurriness through everyone’s eyes.
The struggle to not worry.
Nature’s veins at their highest.
Dreams of sunnier days.
Will the sun ever have its rays?
The war on nature grows.

Madison Miller

Three Simple Words

You told me I was wrong and that I never belonged.
My feelings good for nothing more than a slam of the door.
I begged you to reconsider, but instead, you decided to be bitter.
You gave me a cold grin and told me I lived in sin.
Never have I ever felt so alone before.
You said it was just a phase and nothing more.
Maybe someday you’ll accept me like before.
But we both know that door closed when I uttered those three simple words.
You will never give me the time of day.
But that won’t stop me from praying these words make it your way.
I am me that is all I have ever wanted to be.
Maybe someday you will learn that people don't live by your decree,
And that everybody has the right to be.
Delaney Phillips

A Special Type of Love

“Sometimes even the greatest joys bring challenge, and children with special needs inspire a very, very special love.”- Sarah Palin

Our coach had told us about a swim meet at the natatorium that she needed volunteers for, but this meet would be a little different then what we were used to. It was a Special Olympic swim meet. It was a meet for anyone with special needs, didn’t matter age or anything if you wanted to compete you could. I signed up to help with five others from my team and didn’t really think much of it.

I have been to the natatorium a lot and I knew where to go, but not what to expect. I was the first one there so I just stood there, playing with my sleeve not knowing what exactly I would be doing. I decided to walk around to find somebody who might know what my job was. As I was aimlessly walking around I noticed that as the swimmers were arriving they all looked like they would explode with excitement. Just by walking down the hallway I must have been given at least 6 high-fives. I spotted an official and he told me that it was starting soon I just needed to find the other people from my team so they could put us together.

“You guys will be timers,” said the official, “all you have to do is start the stopwatch when the beep goes off and stop it when they touch the wall. Simple enough.” I thought it sounded fine but at the same time, I was worried. What if someone needed help? Or they missed their race or something?

“Also, they know what to do. They know if they should start on the block or in the water. They are a lot more capable than people assume,” he said. We did a check to make sure the stopwatches worked and then we walked over to our lanes. The first event was a 50-meter freestyle. The boy in our lane was about 13 years old and he had a form of down syndrome. In his face, there was a look of determination and excitement.

The whistle blew signaling for the swimmers to get in their starting positions.

“Timers clear you watches, swimmers take your mark,” said the official through the microphone. Followed by a loud BEEP and a flash. Some of them dove off the block and some pushed off from the wall. Right as it started everyone was screaming and yelling for each other. It didn’t even matter what team, everyone was cheering for each other. I had my hand on the cool black stop button as the swimmers started to come in. The gentle waves in the water started to cease when the swimmers came to a halt at the wall.

“What place?” asked the boy in my lane. I really wanted to tell him first but I knew I couldn’t.

“You got fourth,” I answered.

“YES!” he yelled. His smile was immense and after he got out of the pool he gave me a very enthusiastic high-five. The rest of the meet was pretty much like that, everyone being supportive of each other. Doing it because their hearts are completely full of love whether it be the love of swimming, their teammates, or just just plain life.

It was this experience that has helped me find a sort of purpose and passion for what I want to do in my life. I will try to be a special needs and mental health psychologist. With that I also want to help expand and spread awareness of special needs athletics and programs. I also wish to help educate others on different types of special needs. I would like everyone to see how capable and the amazing potential within every child or adult with a disability.
Hailey Smith

The Ramen Shop

Osaka was a quiet city at night. The only thing awake was a single ramen shop, illuminated by the light of the street lamp. The front of the restaurant was basic grey concrete, plastered with old advertisements, eye-catching but faded. A red awning covered the top of the doorway, and a few potted plants sat hopelessly awaiting their next customer. A lone bike stood propped up against the building’s side, its owner was the only person in that neglected ramen shop. Isayama stood behind the counter, observing his empty surroundings. The inside of the restaurant was small, almost cramped, but the wood paneling and dim lighting made it inviting; like a traditional Japanese home. Expecting there to be no more customers for the night, for it had started to rain outside, he took off his apron and threw it over the nearest chair. As he was about to leave, he heard the familiar jingle of the shop door. He looked up to see a mysterious man, clothed in an aged, brown coat, step through the doorway. The man removed his hat, and Isayama could see his hair was grey and balding. His face was wrinkled, almost unrecognizable, but something about it was familiar. “Ira’s harimasen, how can I help you?” Isayama inquired, surprised a customer had arrived so late.

“Are you still serving?” the mysterious man asked, slowly approaching the counter.

Isayama looked at the clock, there was a little less than half an hour left, but for this man, he would make an exception. “Yes sir,” Isayama replied, “What can I make you?”

“Ramen if you don’t mind,” said the man, hoisting himself into the chair by the counter. Isayama handed him a fortune cookie and immediately got to work. The man opened the fortune and read it aloud, “Sometimes moving on means we have to admit our past mistakes, no matter how painful.”

“Those are wise words, sir,” spoke Isayama, “There are a few things in my life I wish to move on from.” “Me as well,” replied the man, with a small amount of pain in his voice, “but when you get to my age, things seem almost pointless with how little time you have left.”

“It’s never too late for anything sir,” rebutted Isayama, “I started my career as a freelance artist when I was in my late 30s, and it gave me peace in my life.” Isayama set down the bowl of ramen in front of the man. The man put his hands together and bowed his head in silent thanks, before picking up his chopsticks, pausing a moment before speaking, “So you said you were an artist? My son was one as well. I don’t know where he is now, but not a day passes that I don’t think of him.”

“You no longer keep in contact with him?” Isayama inquired, letting his curiosity get the best of him. He immediately felt guilty, “I’m sorry if I overstretched sir.”

“Oh it’s no problem,” the man reassured him, “I haven’t talked to my son in about 20 years. I wasn’t the most supportive parent to him. I wanted him to be a businessman, not an artist. We had a huge fight over it before he left, I said some things I regret, and we haven’t spoken since. I just wish I could see him today to tell him how proud I am of him.” The man finished slurping his ramen and set down his chopsticks. He went quiet as he stared into space, deep in thought. Isayama looked at him out of the corner and saw the blank look in his eyes.

Isayama broke the silence, “You know what they say, sir, shikata ga nai, it can’t be helped,” he said remorsefully, “just know that somewhere in this world, your son is still there, and has found peace within himself.”

The man shook his head in silent agreement, and stood up, taking his hat and coat with him. He walked over to the door, stopped and turned back to Isayama.

“Thank you for the meal,” he said gratefully, before turning around and leaving the shop, the door jangling shut behind him. “You’re welcome father,” replied Isayama. And the space around him felt a little less lonely.
Kaylee Lewis

Meadow of Memories

A ray of sunshine hits the meadow,
The tall grass casting a shadow.
I see the beauty of the falling colors,
The sun shining through the baring branches.

Wind brushes past the meadow that I love,
Not even the sound of a single dove.
So barren and empty is this field,
But yet I come here with no yield:

Animals scurry about the grass,
Avoiding me and my great strides.
Such a shame that humans throw their trash aside,
Leaving their plastic and broken glass.

But the meadow’s beauty remains,
Though it does go through many pains.
But such is life,
Taking in pains but never pushing them out.

So here I lie, in this meadow of memories,
Listening to the whispering wind as it heaves.

Darien Yoder

Day Job

Click Click Click Click. Little paws pressed on the keyboard. Click Click Click Click. Harsh lights shine from the screen onto a sad snout. Click Click Click Click. Four legs struggle to sit comfortably on a chair meant for two. Click Click Click Click. Max works 9-5, Monday to Friday, sometimes weekends. He has two kids and is still paying back his student loans. Max longs for the days of playing fetch and belly rubs.
Abigail E. Lewis

I’m Not Crazy!

Doctor’s Notes:

Name: Basil, Age: sixteen, Gender: male, Diagnosis: Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD)

Day 223:

Date: May 25th 1967

Notes: Basil has shown signs of denial and limited acceptance towards his disorder.

Ech Ech ech ech Ech... Doctor Louis’ pen scrapes against the notepad as Basil begins to explain the long and agonizing day he has had at school.

“I don’t belong here I’m not crazy!” Basil screams internally, “mental asylums are for the sick and dumb, and I am neither of those. I am normal!”

“Would you just except it already we are never going to leave... Never ever,” hissed one of the many voices Basil hears on a daily basis.

“What are you doing here I told you stay out of my head! I don’t hear voices I’m not crazy!” replied Basil in denial.

“You should be listening to what the good doctor has to say you might just miss something, he’ll think your sick if you don’t respond when he asks you a question. Allow me to introduce myself my name’s Phoebe I control Basil and am the head voice here.”

“No you’re not I’m the head voice! I am the owner of this body! and you don’t even really exist anyhow,” Basil screamed back in anger.

“Don’t exist!!! I’m here as much as you are I have thoughts, I have feelings!” Phoebe answered filled with disgust.

Mid argument Dr. Louis chimed in, “Basil did you hear anything I’ve just said?”

As quick as he could Basil responds, “Ya ya totally... every last word.”

“Liar!!!” screams all the voices, “you didn’t hear a thing you were to busy talking to us.”

“I don’t talk to you! You don’t exist,” uttered Basil.

“Basil are the voices back?” asked the Dr.

Basil responds, “Yes... they never really leave. I really wish they would though.”

“Just because you hear voices doesn’t mean you’re crazy. You know that right Basil?” asked the Dr., “Everyone has differences, and this is just one of yours. You can either choose to except it and learn to be happy or deny it and live in self pity. Which do you choose?”

“Ya Basil which do you choose???” howled Phoebe.

“I don’t know I don’t want to choose, I just want you to go away!” explained Basil.

“If you would just except us we can all be much happier” Phoebe was beginning to get annoying.
“Do you promise?” asked Basil.

“Totally!... One hundred percent!... Absolutely!!!” With each voice giving a different version of the same answer.

“Fine I’ll do it,” Basil screamed both internally and out loud, “I’ll except my differences and except the voices.”

“Excellent,” declared the doctor, “I’m very happy for you Basil.”

“Yes we are very happy for you Basil” Finally the voices were responding with kindness.

Katie Yarnall

Strife

There was a sour taste in her mouth.
She was finally out of the drouth,
but her heart was singing a song of sadness.
She no longer felt like a swan without wings,
or like she was slowly sinking in a stream.
Her husband was a destructive animal,
yet she still sat crying.
She had taken his life
and she was his wife,
but he had stolen hers.

Journey Fisher

The Deadly Cookie

One day I came into work and I found a mysterious cookie on my desk and I eat it and after that a week goes by and there are cookies on my work desk and after a week goes by a note is left on my desk. I pick it up and I read it says “we were trying out a new position and we wanted to see how long it will take to get into your system we still do not know how dangerous it is yet and if you die we are really sorry and thank you for your participation”. Signed by anonymous when i read that i got really nervous because. I did not know what was going to happen to me and I had no clue what the side effects were so after work. I went to the doctor’s office and I found out that the position that they put in the cookie is really deadly. And it only took seconds to get into my system the doctor told me that I am going to need to get the poison removed. When they took me back to the operating room and they took all of the poison out of my body. But they messed up and they really left me with a lot of scars on my body. I lost of my feeling in my arms and my hands they come back not even a minute later and they tell me that they made a mistake. And that the poison was never deadly in the first place they come back not even a minute later and they tell me that they made a mistake and that the poison was never fatal in the first place so they put me through all of this and they me so I told the doctor “you put me through all of this pain and I lost all of my feeling in my hands and arms and you tell me now that you messed up after you gave me all of these scars I feel like I am a dead person walking”. After that they sent me home and I was never the same again.
No More Hurting

Looking out the window Brynn watched the small drops of water slide one by one off the leaves of a tall maple tree. It was early April and she could hear the clouds grumbling. She knew a big storm was brewing and was going to let loose at any time.

As she sat on her bed brushing her long black hair, she thought of every way her one friend has hurt her and others emotionally.

"You don’t even care about your friends," Erin said. "You are such a bad friend," Erin said harshly. Brynn always came home feeling like she was nothing. She would lay in her bed at night, tears rolling down her face on to her soft, baby blue pillow.

"Why do I let her say these things to me?" Brynn thought.

Brynn and her friend Erin have been kinda friends for a rough five years. Erin always had to put someone down in every way, shape, and form.

For example, Erin always told Brynn she didn’t like her hair, and that it was too frizzy.

"Why do you leave your hair like that?" Erin demanded. "Your hair looks really bad today. Try taming it for once," Erin criticized.

It always left Brynn questioning why she was even friends with Erin at the end of the day.

Tonight Brynn didn’t know whether to text Erin and be honest about it, or just pretend to be her friend.

Her good conscience named Angel wanted her to stick with always being honest like she was raised, however, the bad conscience named Devil didn’t like that idea one bit. Brynn was so stuck on what side to take. She knew if she wasn’t honest she would lose people’s respect, but on the other hand, she didn’t want to lose any friends.

Brynn remembered what her sister, Chris once told her when she was losing friends and feeling bad about it. She told her that you don’t need a lot of friends, because most likely when you graduate you will leave everyone behind and move on with your own life. She felt that Chris is right.

Brynn laid on her bed with her head in her pillows, still contemplating what to do. That’s when she heard Angel’s voice. Angel is the good conscious, who always does her best to keep Brynn in line and do the right things at all times. Devil on the other hand, who is Brynn’s other conscious, always tries to get Brynn to do the wrong things for his entertainment.

"Brynn, you know that people won’t respect you anymore if you lie. Angel nagged, “Lying is a sin.”

"You know what’s better than being respected? Having all the friends you can get. Think about this, you may be popular one day like you have always dreamed,” Devil objected.

"If you are honest," Angle added, "you won’t have to worry about a toxic person hurting you anymore. I want you to ask your self if you want to spend your whole life hurting from the people around you.”

"Blah, blah, blah. Honesty is for losers!” Devil yelled.

Angel demanded, “No, lying is what bad people do. You are a good person Brynn! Don’t listen to anything Devil says. He wants you to hurt and be in pain.”

"You are turning her into a monster," Devil roared. Brynn’s head started to pound. She couldn’t take anymore arguing. She needed a way to end it.

"I will listen to both sides if you both stop arguing," Brynn blustered.

"Devil may go first,” Angel replied.

"All I’m saying is that if you keep her around and everyone you meet, you will have so many friends in the end,” Devil suggested.

"I say that if you get rid of all the toxic people in your life," Angle replied, "Including her, you would be so much happier in the long run. Think about your mental health.”

Brynn sat there going over both of their arguments. She knew that the right to do is cut out people who hurt you and be happy. She grew up knowing that if you lie its a sin, and everyone will be very disappointed. On the other hand, having a lot of friends could be fun. She really didn’t want to lose peoples respect, and really did want to find the happiness that she has been seeking for years.

She decided to get her phone out and start typing. She typed, “Erin, I don’t think that we should be friends anymore because you always have a way to bring people who care about you down. I don’t know if you do it to make yourself feel better or not. All I do know is that I need to be happy in my life, and having you
around is doing the opposite. I wanted to be honest with you, even though I know you hate being wrong," Brynn then hit send.

"I don't really care if you are my friend or not. I am not in the wrong, but whatever. I don't understand why you have to cause unnecessary drama, sweetie," Erin replied.

Brynn answered, "I did not cause unnecessary drama. I hate to say it but all the drama you are in is because of you, sweetie."

"Whatever, it is not, I'm done goodbye!" Erin answered angrily.

"Good, me too," Brynn replied. She was so tired of arguing with her. A wave of relief hit her when she sent those words.

Brynn set her phone down feeling so relieved that she had the courage, to be honest. It felt like everything was lifted off of her shoulders. Now she can live life without worrying about always being put down by people who are supposed to be there for you.

As she lays there on her soft, comfy blanket, she has a smile on her face with the thought that she can and will be at last, happy again. She got up and peeked out the window, the sun was shining brightly through the clouds.

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Eden Smith

Where I'm From

I am from the town of Leopards,
from the blue and white.
I am from the tall, yellow house that flooded every time it rained,
faded, old, it always smelled like freshly cut grass.
I am from dandelions,
bright, yellow, and everywhere.
I am from dying PlayStation 3 controllers,
From Sly Cooper and The Thievius Raccoonus, and Resistance: Fall of Man.
I am from graduation parties and brown hair,
from Smith and Henderhan.
I am from drumsticks and violin strings,
from notes on a page and blisters on my heels.
I am from 20/20 vision and four-eyes,
from "Go to your room" and "Give me that."
I am from forced Christianity, and refusing to believe.
I am from numerous European countries,
from Irish and French.
I am from mashed potatoes and french fries,
from hospital visits and final "I love you"s spoken in hushed tones.
The pictures of my grandfather with us while I was young
remain in the hard-drive of a computer,
keeping them there until the day rolls around,
marking another year.
I didn't truly understand what it meant
when my mother told me he'd passed,
but now that I do
I've been struggling to get over it.
I barely remember the amazing man that he was.
But he taught me to be proud of what I do,
and I'll keep that with me as I grow.
Rebecca Maizer

Never Give Up

She never ran from a fight.
She never backed down.
Even when things got rough,
even with her hands bloody,
she always stood back up.
Even the hardest of blows
would never end her fight.
- *Never give up your fight.*

They told her she was wrong.
They told her she was weak.
They told her she was a mistake.
But why believe someone who lies?
- *Never let anyone put you down.*

Broken and scarred, she stood.
She never would quit climbing.
Out of the endless hole,
the one they dug just for her,
she would never stop climbing,
not until she reached the top.
- *There’s a light at the top, you just have to work for it.*

She stood up higher than before.
She never stopped fighting.
Even when the weight was too much to carry,
or when everything came crashing down,
she would come out victorious.
- *You are stronger than you know.*

A fire burns deep within you.
A fire so bright, it could light up the world.
A fire that burns so hot,
All the water in the world will never put it out.
- *Never let anyone extinguish your flame.*

The lies haunted her.
They appeared in her dreams.
They kept her awake in the darkest hours.
The lies broke her down.
All they ever said was:
the truth hurt more,
but that was a lie.
- *The truth hurts, but the lies destroy.*

Her smile was bright.
The way it shined in the light,
it was just right.
Though it took all her might,
with all the pressure left her tight,
her smile was always bright.
- *A smile could destroy armies.*
Corrin Boland

Escape

I crouched behind the car, trying not to make a sound, lest that thing know that I’m here. It was crawling around, it’s belly hitting the gravel and making a dull scratching noise. I heard it hiss to my left, it was getting closer. I had to do something, anything to get away from this thing. But it was fast, it would catch up to me in seconds if I tried to run.

Claws scraped against gravel, and I had to make up my mind, and fast. I looked up at the car I was crouched behind, a truck. It didn’t have a tarp on the back, so I could climb into it. As quietly as possible, I lifted myself into the back of the truck. The creature hissed. The creature itself was shaped almost like an alligator or crocodile, so I doubted that it would be able to lift itself onto the truck. I heard another hiss from the animal, and felt the car shake a bit when, what I can only guess was its tail, hit the side of it.

I had to look for an escape route. Looking through the old building, I saw a straight path out of the garage. It seemed that all the chasing around in the main building hadn’t tired the creature out at all, it was still hunting me. Regardless, I had to make an escape. I wasn’t going to be monster-dinosaur-alligator food. Looking back at the exit, an old, rotting door that seemed to lead out of the garage, my stomach fell a bit.

What if the door was locked, what if it didn’t lead outside, what if I couldn’t get it open in time? I had to take the chance. But first, I needed a distraction, something to get the monster off my tail.

The car I was in was rusty and falling apart, bits of glass strewn about the back, the roof caving in. I carefully picked up some big shards of glass. This should make enough noise.

Inhaling, praying to myself and whatever god or gods may be up there, I threw the glass hard on the ground. It immediately shattered and was quickly followed by claws scratching on the floor, moving away from me.

Quickly, I jumped out of the back of the truck and hightailed it to the door. This was the moment of truth. This is what kills me or saves me. I grabbed the doorknob and turned it.

The door was unlocked. But, unfortunately, the sound of the door opening alerted the monster. As I heard scratching racing towards me, I bolted out of the garage, running as if my life depended on it, and it did. Thankfully the door also led to the outside of the building, and, using the dim, dusk sky as much as I could for a light source, I made my way away from the treacherous place. The scratching and hissing behind me only made me go faster. The streets were empty, as was the road, but all I could think about was running. Run, run, run! My mind just kept screaming, “Run!”

And after a while, I couldn’t run anymore. My legs gave out from under me and I fell to my knees. I looked behind me, and there was nothing. No monster, no scratching or hissing. Nothing. Just the empty road and sidewalks. Chest heaving and heart pounding, I got back on my feet and turned around. Where did it go?

Shaking my head, I decided I didn’t care. I was alive, that’s all that mattered. I had made a considerable distance between myself and the building now, but even in the dusk skylight, it stood there, ominous and foreboding. I’ll never go back there again.

I can’t go back there again.
Rebecca Leyman

Venus's Touch

A gentle caress oozes with trust,
lovers embrace at dawn and dusk.

Venus wishes peace upon the pair,
vaguely aware of how addicted they were.

Comfortable silences filled with inaudible admiration,
infinite dreams full of one another in mild fixation.

Unspoken loyalty and promises shared,
in the dead of night their love is declared.

Searching eyes find a peaceful gaze,
smooth hands rush to cradle a soft face.

The urge to move closer is immense,
but there would be immeasurable consequence.

One gentle caress turns into many,
one embrace turns into plenty.

Words are spilled in brusque
as lovers embrace at dawn and dusk.

Noah Aranda

Blackout Poetry
The Alpha

This was Logan’s perfect Saturday evening. He was going to do his favorite fall activity. Deer hunting. He always found peace in the woods, the sounds of birds and squirrels running through the leaves looking for nuts to store for the winter. He and his brother Paul had made it a ritual every year to head out to this spot and hunt together.

He began his walk to his tree stand, splitting up with Paul to go to different stands on different ends of the property. Logan took careful steps not to echo the crumpling of leaves under his boots to any deer that might be in the area. He was almost his spot when he noticed that his feeder had been wrecked. It lay in pieces all over the woods, chunks and shards of plastic scattered about. He was boiling on the inside, thinking that a wild hog must have gotten to nosey and broke it open. He texted his brother to tell him about it, and Paul “answered back, ‘we’ll get that hog later, right now focus on getting to your stand quietly.’”

He climbed up the ladder and plumbed down in the stand, stretching out his arms and getting comfortable. He watched as the squirrels frolicked and ran up and down the trees and listened to the sweet songs of the birds above him. Soon he began to feel drowsy as if he was at home in his bed about to fall asleep.

The next thing Logan saw was darkness. He had fallen asleep for some time and it was night time. However, there wasn’t a cloud in the sky and the moon was full, providing light to the forest. Logan checked his phone but noticed it was dead, and shoved it back in his pocket figuring Paul was probably just waiting for him at the truck. He began to descend from the stand when he heard the rustling of leaves. They were slow steps, seconds between each rustle. Logan shrugged his shoulders and thought nothing more of it than a deer trying to sneak off into the night or a squirrel hopping around slowly.

As he walked past his broken feeder he noticed something different about the ground in which it lay. There were large tracts of an animal who had visited the night before which he didn’t notice. However what made the hair stand up on his neck was that nothing in these woods were capable of making tracks that large, no bears or mountain lions lived here.

He shouldered his bow, just in case the creature prepared to show its face before he made it to his truck. He had two sensations going through him. One was that he should run as fast as he can through the woods to get out. The other was more rational, trying to slowly get out and not get blindsided by the creature while making all the noise of running through the autumn leaves. The most dangerous part of his slow walk would be the first thing he had to do. The Gully.

The Gully was steep, dropping roughly 30 feet to the creek at the bottom. What made this so dangerous was that if the creature appeared when he made it down he would be in danger. Either he would be in the lower ground, the creature able to pounce from above, or the creature would be able to meet him in the bottom and he would have no other option but to fight it. He hurried through the bottom and climbed out the other side as quietly as he could.

As he reached the top he stepped on a pile of leaves, a branch hidden under the leaves snapped. The snapping sound echoed through the woods, stopping him cold in his tracks. Seconds after, he heard the call of the beast, a wolf-like howl. Only deeper and rougher than anything he had ever heard. At this point, he threw all caution in the wind and took off as fast as he could. Crashing through the woods, he could hear the gallop of an animal behind him, creeping closer as he ran.
Never Trust a Shadow

The night was calm and a slight breeze blew in the wind making Rebel shiver and pull her grey shawl tighter around her shoulders. A party was going on in the grand hall, but this was not just any party for Rebel; this was her coronation to become the Dark Queen. Becoming the Dark Queen means she’d rule Moonstride, the realm of the night, with an iron fist and cold heart never giving a thought about showing weakness. Rebel looked to the full moon with a sad smile on her face as she thought of her mother and how she would tell her stories of the Dark Queen, but she only believed them to be a fairy tale. Now she’s here outside on the balcony, watching her breath create steam, wondering if she really wanted the power, the fear, and the cost of losing her good nature.

“Well, I’d do it,” her shadow whispered as it emerged from the moonlight leaning on the wall and said, “Think of the all the power you would have! You could do anything you want,” the shadow encouraged with a smirk on her black face.

Rebel’s wolf ears perked up as she looked over towards the wall where she saw the shadow. The shadow, named Nyx, had been with her all her life sometimes doing good, but most of the time she would lead Rebel down the wrong path.

“Leave me alone, Nyx,” yelled Rebel as she turned away with her ears flattened against her head. “Even with all that power I’ll be feared by everyone in Moonstride,” a sad tone could be heard in her voice as her pale hands played with the ends of her black hair.

“So what? You get to rule the land however you’d like,” Nyx’s tone of voice had changed as she stepped out of her shadow phase and into her physical form. “You could even, oh I don’t know, bring her back.” Her tone became softer and sweeter like how a snake would lure its prey into a trap.

Rebel’s eyes widened and she looked at the ground then she shook her head. “Not even grandfather can bring people back from the dead, Nyx, and you know it,” Rebel’s words were strong and firm as her shoulder straightened up a bit as she spoke to Nyx.

“Think of it this way girl,” Nyx growled walking over running her hands in Rebel’s hair then turned her to face the moon, “you would have every demon, dark fairy, troll, and siren on your side! You could conquer those who have hurt others! Those who question you and your family.”

“Enough!” Rebel pushed her away taking out her silver knife and holding it to Nyx’s throat. “You just want me to do this so you can rule! I will have no part in your plan!” Rebel shouted with hot tears falling from her eyes.

Nyx smirked with a dangerous look in her soulless eyes. “There it is,” her tone was calm and she watched a Rebel struggled to control her magic. “You get so worked up about the tiniest of things, my dear, but with my help, I can control them for you,” Nyx offered with a small smirk.

Rebel’s iris flicker from a circle to a cat-like slit while her fangs forced their way out. “N-No!” Her knife fell from her hand as she staggered backward trying to calm down, but deep down she knew her emotions couldn’t be controlled. “I will not!” She screamed and everything around her turned black and white, standing still like a watch whose hands wouldn’t move.

“Look at the mess you’ve made,” Nyx chuckled walking over to a butterfly. With a smirk, she crushed in her hands then blew the dust away looking towards Rebel. “Still don’t want my help? You remember what happened last time, correct?” Nyx questioned then smiled an innocent smile.

Rebel turned away from her as she thought about the last time she had lost control of her emotions. Her cousin had been teasing her about her appearance which really meant nothing to Rebel, but when her mother was mentioned in
the insults chaos broke out around the land. Still, to this day the realm was trying to fix the damage that was done and that was nine years ago.

“You know I’m only trying to help you, my dear,” Nyx whispered in a gentle tone then held out her hand. “Why force yourself away from the outside world? When you can control it,” Nyx questioned with an innocent tone and query smile.

Rebel turned and faced Nyx with tears falling from her eyes. “I accept,” she whispered in a voice to quiet for another person to hear, but she knew Nyx could hear her loud and clear.

Carefully, she held out her hand to Nyx who gladly took hold of it and in return, she smiled a soft smile, but not too long after it became a wicked and curl grin. Rebel’s eyes widened in fear as Nyx’s hand traveled up Rebel’s skin and from the neck down her skin began to receive solid black markings.

“You are a fool!” Nyx laughed out in complete and utter madness as she took hold of Rebel’s body watching black symbols form then shape themselves on her body and even her yellow eyes turned to a soulless black.

Rebel could do nothing, but scream out in agony as the symbols burned their way down into her bones. “I will stop you Nyx! You will one day lose your power!” Rebel cried out the fell to the ground with her body now cold and limp.

Nyx only smirked and watched as everything started to move again and color appeared to the world. “Oh darling,” she leaned down picking Rebel up by her hair and digging her nails into the back of her head. “You haven’t the slightest bit of strength to stop me.” Nyx then vanished hiding in Rebel’s mind.

The doors to the balcony opened and people quickly rushed out to look at the passed out princess. Slowly Rebel’s eyes opened now being their normal yellow and her skin no longer had the markings. She stood up with help from her guards assuring them she was just a bit dizzy and had everyone go back inside the ballroom. When she was left alone again a sad smile appeared on her face as she looked up at the moon again

“I’m sorry, mama.” Rebel said softly once more not wanting anybody else to hear her and only for a moment, her eyes changed from yellow to a pure black. “Let’s have a little fun.” Nyx’s voice echoed in Rebel’s own voice almost forcing the words out. A dangerous smirk appeared on Rebel’s face as she looked towards a window seeing not her reflection, but Nyx’s who had the same smirk on her face.
Olivia Yarnell

The Cookie Jar

As Clare was walking down the hallway her brown hair kept getting in her face. She was wearing her favorite Elsa dress. She was looking for her puppy Winnie. Winnie is a grey Pitbull. Every morning before Clare leaves to go to her grandma’s house, she gives Winnie a hug and a kiss on Winnie’s chunky head. Once she gets to her grandma’s house she goes to the kitchen and sees the blue cookie jar. She knows that if she takes one now she can’t have one later and than she thinks, “What if I take a cookie now and grandma doesn’t realize it?” She thought “maybe I can have more than one cookie.”

Just then Angel spoke to Clare, “You should wait, Clare.” Angel sighed, "you know how upset grandma will be if you take it.”

Mr. Grumpy cut in, “Oh, Clare you know that if you take a cookie without her knowing you can have more than one.”

“If you are a good girl all day Grandma will give you more than one.” Angel replied, “you just have to behave all day.”

When Clare is a good girl grandma makes Jello with Clare.

“Oh whatever....” Mr. Grumpy hissed, “Just take the cookie already, just wait till Grandma leaves the room.”

Clare still didn’t know what to do. She knew she should probably listen to Angel but Mr. Grumpy has some good ideas.

“Come on Clare.” Mr. Grumpy begged, “She left the room you can take the cookie now, just be quiet about it.”

“Clare please don’t, just ask her nicely and maybe you can have one now and later,” Angel pleaded. Clare walked over to her grandma. She has a big smile on her face and asked: “Hey Grandma can I have a cookie now?”

“Clare you know you have to eat lunch first.” Grandma said, “If you eat all your lunch and are good you can have a cookie.”

Mr. Grumpy yelled, “I knew you should have stolen it!”

Angel replied, “See she asked nicely so now if she is good Clare can get a cookie.”

Mr. Grumpy said, “But mine would be more fun.”

“Clare all you have to do is eat your lunch then you get a cookie,” Angel said.

Grandma asked Clare “What do you want for lunch Clare?”

Clare replied, “Mac and Cheese please!!”

Now Clare thought that she can do this. All she has to do is eat all her lunch then she can have a cookie. She also thinks that if she is good all day that her grandma will give her another cookie.

Mr. Grumpy interrupted her thoughts, “Clare maybe you can take a cookie now,” Mr. Grumpy said, “Do you really want to wait till after lunch?”

Clare decided to go with Angel’s idea to wait till after her lunch. Clare took the last bite of her mac and cheese, with a big smile on her face she realized she had gotten some mac and cheese on her pink dino shirt. “No problem!” Clare thought. She went to the bathroom to wash off her shirt. She came back into the kitchen and her grandma asked, “Clare, where did you go?” Clare replied, “Sorry grandma, I went to wash off my shirt because I spilled some mac and cheese.” Clare excitedly said, “See grandma all clean!” Grandma replied, “Oh, Clare, I’m so proud of you for being a good girl and washing off your shirt.”

Just then Angel excitedly said, “Clare see how being nice help!”

Grandma said, “Okay Clare remind me, what was it you wanted?” Clare replied “A COOKIE!” “Okay because you were such a good girl you can have a cookie,” Grandma replied, “but only take one.”

Mr. Grumpy yelled “take two! Take two!”

Angel interrupted “NO Clare, you have been so good only take one,” Angel said, “grandma is watching you she will know if you take two.”

After some thought, Clare decided to take just one. She knew the right thing to do was to wait and ask politely. Her father always tells her to be polite and so she listened to her good side and didn’t steal the cookie and asked for it nicely. She also waited till after lunch which was another good decision. Clare was happy with her decision to wait to get a cookie.
Paige Roberts

The great-old willow.
She held me as tears fell from my eyes,
holding me like a giant pillow.
Each day I would visit her
making sure she was still there.
We had so many memories,
each time I ran from the mean teens,
she would be waiting to embrace me in the
lovely aroma of nature's perfume.
She has watched me mature
from childhood to adolescence.
Until one day the factories
needed more space.
They got rid of her smiling face,
Making that smile quiver,
as they tore her down she cried out in agony.
Weeping Willow is now her name.
She no longer sits on earth,
But she's deep in my heart.

Old Willow

John Lidderdale

TRASHCAN

My name is Trashy and I am filled with garbage but I am the Danny DeVito of trash cans. I'm Short and Stubby and almost everybody loves me.
I sit beside the house 6 out the 7 days of the week the day I'm not by the house is when I'm going to get emptied by my best friend Dan, He's the Trashman I love Dan the trash man, almost as much as I love doing my job.
I long for Danny Devito to throw me at his opponent in a wrestling match like that One episode of It's always sunny in Philadelphia I watch it through my owner's window.
I'm Kinda Jealous of other trash cans especially the one with animals in it.
I'm kinda sad today Dan The Trashman didn't show up to day and a young new assistant came instead ..... I Don't like this trash man he's careless and crude I watch him throw my fellow garbage can gargar into the compactor and crushed gargar poor gargar I miss Dan the trashman he was gentle he just throws us away when he's done this guy is incompetent and he keeps calling us rubbish bins I find this offensive we're trash cans get it right.
A month had passed since Dan The Trash stopped showing up I wonder if he's ok it would make me sad that anything happened to dan....
A Week later
Garbage day again oh boy here we go again with this guy and then the all of a sudden a miracle happened Dan The Trashman is back My best friend is back yay. I'm so excited he's back too bad gargar didn't get to see Dan's return..... I'm so excited I can't wait to show him the surprise I have for him I know he loves raccoons because one hugged him a month back he liked it so much that he didn't come to work for a month so he must enjoy it. "Exactly what you thought happen happened" He was so shocked at the surprise he hasn't come back it's been awhile I wonder if he's doing well. I'm Going to miss Dan The Garbage Man But I'm he's probably happier whatever he is now.
I Love Doing my job And I will continue to do my job till I am discontinued and then I can join my brethren in Trashalla. Once Again I'm Trashy And Thank you for Listening to me ramble on.
Claire Weston

Bike

There I stood by that bike, feeling scared, closing my eyes tight. I wanted to ride. I wanted to fly, but I was too scared. Too scared to try.

My mom had told me I was missing out, but the only thing I heard was my doubt. I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t even try. Now it looks like I’ll have to wait for that flight.

Trillian Vaughn

Justice Rising

I staggered back with my hand over my heart. I felt my back hit the wall of the hallway. So many thoughts were racing around my mind. How could she do something like this? Before my mother could come out of her room, I fumbled with the painting on the wall as I turned from the door and started sprinting down the hall. Unfortunately, the picture crashed to the wood floor. Broken glass was scattered around, and in our family portrait, my mother stared up at me. I ran away from the kind smile that now seemed like a devious smirk. Her hazel eyes and blond hair matched my own, but now her eyes seemed to darken into the color of a swamp.

Frantically I spun around the corner, almost slipping on the kitchen tile, and dashed to my bedroom door. At first my hand slipp ed as twisted the handle, but eventually, I got out of the seemingly shrinking hallway.

“What other horrible secrets has she been hiding? How could she do this?” I wondered. Rushing over to the bathroom door, that connected to my bedroom, I opened it and went to the sink. I splashed water on my face trying to wash this new knowledge away. All it did was soak my hoodie, splash my pants, and plaster my curly hair to my face. Eventually, my breathing slowed, my heart stopped racing and I started accepting what I’d heard. My mother and Stephanie’s father had broken the law.

Walking back to my bed I heard my conscience going back and forth shouting at each other about justice and love for family. Overwhelmed, I lay down on my bed and sighed. Eventually, I fell asleep from exhaustion.

A bright light washed over me as a courtroom started to materialize all around. I was sitting where the accused would sit.

“Samantha, you stand on trial for the consideration of threatening justice, to help your mother,” someone said. I looked up and saw someone almost identical to me sitting in the seat of the judge. She didn’t have my freckles though. She had on a judge’s robe in white with her hair done up in a bun and black glasses sitting neatly on her face.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about judge,” I said

The room roared with shouts behind me. The lady pounded her gavel. Suddenly I couldn’t say or do anything. I was now an onlooker. After the room was quiet she said, “You know what your mother did to Mrs. Franz. Flame will be your defense attorney.” Suddenly a woman appeared in the chair beside me. She looked identical to the judge, but she wore a black pencil skirt and black shirt, with a blood red blazer and heels. She also lacked glasses, like me, which showed off her feisty eyes.

“Judge Justice,” she stood up and walked in front of the table, “this girl is merely trying to protect her family!” She gestured to the rows behind me.
"At the cost of justice," the judge said calmly. "If we do not punish her mother for her wrong deeds how does she learn?"
"She learns from her own guilt, Justice."
"Yes, but we have seen this mostly fail. Her mother will not learn if she hasn’t learned with small things."
"Her mother loves her, Justice. If we send her off, she will forever lose her daughter! Do you want handcuffs to break that family?"
Justice simply said, "She will not be gone forever, defendant Flame. In time they can see each other again. The mother needs this."
Infuriated, Flame walked up to the judge and slammed her hand on the desk. "Show me proof of that Judge. Their relationship will forever be tarnished if the mother knows! She doesn’t need this!"
With a hint of disappointment and empathy on his face, Justice said, "The girl will already have a tarnished relationship if she keeps it a secret."
Almost growling Flame said, "Playback the memories. I choose the storm." With that, she walked to the side of my table and an image appeared in the air.
It was me as an eight-year-old and from my point of view. My family, best friend and I were on our way home when it started pouring. I saw lightning strikes out the window and the wind threatened to push us off the road. Watching the image, I remembered how I was paralyzed with fear. The car slowed and pulled onto the highway berm.
I started crying asking, "Are we stuck? How will we get back?" My mother looked over her shoulder with a tender smile.
"It’s okay Hailey. We’re just taking a break." Thunder boomed and my friend and I jumped. My mother turned around and held my hand. "I’ll always keep you safe." Her eyes darkened for a moment, but they were normal when she looked to my friend to reassure her.
"I’ll call Stephanie’s father," my dad said. My mom’s mouth twitched. Thundered boomed closer. She squeezed my hand and gave off her warm smile.
The picture dissolved and Flame turned to Justice. "Your point being?" Justice said waving Flame on.
"My point is that she has a heart. This mother will do anything for her daughter and—"
"Anything?" Justice said rubbing her eyes, "Attorney Flame, I see where her heart lies, but she has committed a crime. Haley’s mother did some bad things bad back then, and was served justice by her husband’s words, so why is this crime not also subject to justice?"
Flame was getting red-faced. "Because...because she can change. Anyone can change. These prisons won’t help her change. She will be surrounded by bad influences."
Taking her glasses off with raised eyebrows, Justice said, "Let me ask you something. If it’s possible for the mother to go to prison, then wouldn’t that also make her a bad influence? What effect would this influence have on the child? How do we know the mother will not lead her astray now?"
"Because I believe she can be saved, dang it!" Flame shouted, fire blazing in her eyes. With almost every sentence she began banging a fist on the table. "If she is saved then she will not cause more trouble! Justice, Mrs. Franz was not killed, only injured. If she will be fine, like the mother said, then we do not need to let the police know! Mrs. Franz can heal and get physiatric help if she needs it." Flame was met with a roar and jeers from the crowd.
"Attorney Flame, she and the father of Stephanie robbed Mrs. Franz. If Mrs. Franz heals she will still be financially hurt. Shouldn’t Mrs. Franz get compensation for what this crime took from her? Shouldn’t Stephanie’s father and Haley’s mom rectify their wrongdoings through the courts."
"Judge, committing this will harm not only Haley’s mother but Stephanie’s father as well! If the parents give Mrs. Franz money as a charity then it will make up for the loss."
With a stern tone, the Judge said, "That’s not how justice works, and what of Stephanie’s family? Will you let a secret go uns spoken? This society was built on justice to right any wrongs, and reveal harmful secrets!" Fervent whispering started in the onlookers.
Flame let out a groan and stomped up to the podium crying out, "You are being so oblivious to the obvious fact, that turning in Stephanie’s father will also destroy their family!" She flailed her arms around and got in the Judge’s face, who remained completely calm. Grabbing the robe she bawled, "How could you have no heart?"
Justice rose from her chair barking, “I have a heart, but I use justice to decide. I understand what you’re saying, but as you apparently cannot see she did something unforgivable. That lady could’ve died, and they didn’t care whether she did.”

Flame covered her mouth as the whole room gasped. “Judge Justice, how could you not see the possibility for improvement?!”

Staring intensely into Flame’s eyes Justice said, “January 29th, 2017 she overheard her mother say this.” Once again an image appeared in the air.

It was me yesterday looking into my mother’s bedroom. The door had been cracked open, so I was about to open it more and shout into the room to ask her something, when I heard, “No! We are splitting the money. We both stole them.” I took my hand off the handle. Continuing my mom whispered, “She was supposed to die!” I had to keep myself from yelling out. “That dang Mrs. Franz will be our fall! The teacher recognized my voice. We’ll have to do something.”

My mom nodded, and her mouth formed a frown and a crease formed on her forehead. “We’ll have to be good actors in front of the kids. Putting a hand on her forehead she mumbled, “It’ll be hard to convince Hailey that nothing’s going on.” She suddenly let out a manic smile. “You always know how to make me feel better Roger.” Roger is Stephanie’s dad! Her words struck my heart as I staggered back.

The image dissolved as a ruckus emerged from the onlookers. The judge pounded her gavel and it died down. She released Flame’s hand, sat and stared at her. “She intended murder. She didn’t stop a murder, and she partook in stealing.”

“Well I mean it could get better because...because”, Flame blubbered

Triumphant, Justice stated, “If you have nothing else to say then let us take a vote. Flame didn’t say anything and she looked ready to tackle Justice. Those in favor of turning the parents in?” Some onlookers raised their hands. “Those not in favor?” The rest raised their hand. Swinging the gavel once, Justice thundered, “It has been decided! Haley?”

Suddenly I could speak again. “Yes?” I inquired.

“The verdict is out. You must...” Her voice faded as the courtroom dissolved and a white light washed over me again.

I sprung up from my bed with my eyes darting around. Letting out a sigh I slumped on the edge of my bed trying to comprehend the dream I had. All I could remember was the judge demanding, “You must turn in your mother, and her partner in crime. We advise you to tell your friend.”

Running my hand through my hair, I fumbled with my necklace. It was half a heart with “Stephanie. BFF!” written on it. I got off the purple bed and went to my dresser. With shaking hands, I reached out to my phone sitting on the oak. I could hear my mother walking down the hall. She knocked on the door, and with her fake, kind, bubbly voice said, “Dinner’s ready honey. Don’t let us miss you at the table.” I looked at the phone and typed in 911.

Ring-Ring.

With a wobbling voice, I explained everything I knew. They told me they would take care of it, and to not tell my mother I knew what happened.

Now it was time to tell Stephanie. I stared at the white wall to calm myself. I couldn’t cry in the middle of explaining the crime. She would need me to be strong. We would need each other. I wiped the tears away and typed her number in. I went to the dresser mirror as it rang.

Ring-Ring.

I stared at myself in the mirror as she picked up.

“Hello? Haley, you there?”

“Ya”, I croaked, “I need to tell you something...”
AWARDS AND PUBLICATIONS DURING THE 2018-19 SCHOOL YEAR:

Muse Winners

Corrin Boland, Justin Blyer, and Kaylee Lewis had their writing accepted and published in the 2018-2019 edition of the University of Mount Union’s writing magazine, The Muse. The Muse is a showcase of short stories and poems from some of the best and brightest high school writers from Northeast Ohio.

Stark County District Library Poetry Contest

Madison Miller, Katie Yarnall, and Darien Yoder, were winners in the Stark County District Library 20th Annual Poetry Competition. This contest allowed students in grades 2-12 an opportunity to express their thoughts and share their work with others. Students were honored on May 2nd at the Stark County Main Library with their awards and had the chance to read their poetry out loud for others to hear.

Poetry Nation’s Amateur Poetry Competition

Rebecca Lewis was accepted into the semi-final round of the Poetry Nation’s National Amateur Poetry Competition with her Haiku titled “Daffodil.” It will be published in their poetry book, Upon Arrival.
Abby Lewis and Jarrett Blair have won awards for the Ohio Poetry Association Student Contest. The contest is was for all high school students in the state of Ohio. Abby Lewis’s poem “Where I’m From” won first prize for the David Francis Smith Award, a poem in any form on any subject. Her poem gave details about her childhood memories, family traditions, and family ancestry. Jarrett Blair’s poem “Adaptation” won 3rd place prize for the Cinquain category, which is an American poem consisting of lines 2, 4, 6, 8, and 2 syllables unrhymed. His poem was about changes that happen in both landscapes and in life.

Wordstock II Winner at Malone University

Pagan Ellis-Jordan won 1st place in the Prose Contest and a scholarship to Malone University at Malone University’s Wordstock II event with her short story titled An Elephant Named Fredrick. Wordstock is a day to celebrate writing for high school students grades 9 through 12.