

The Bell Tower Arts Journal

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Regan Minkel

Editorial Board

The editorial board for the journal is comprised of full-time faculty members from the English Department, the Visual Communications Department, and the Fine Arts Department. The editorial board has the final approval on all selections and publication decisions.

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The selection committee for *The Bell Tower Arts Journal* is comprised of student members from the English Department, the Visual Communications Department, the Art Department, and faculty advisors.

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About the Title:

Just as the Bell Tower at Tyler Junior College chimes on the quarter hour to mark the passage of time, it reminds students of the harmony which surrounds them in their educational pursuits. Music, dance, theatre, art, athletics, and academics blend to make Tyler Junior College a beacon to the community, the state, and the world at large. As the echoes of the chords filter through the oaks, their vibrations tremble far beyond the confines of the brick archways and winding walks where students gather. Tyler Junior College is a lofty tower of educational opportunity for students who have come from all parts of the world. *The Bell Tower Arts Journal* proudly hails the accomplishments of its hallowed halls and beckons those who would seek both its traditions and the promise of tomorrow.

~Judith Bateman, English Professor, TJC

Editorial Policy:

The Bell Tower Arts Journal is sponsored by the Psi Gamma Chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, the National English Honor Society. We accept submissions of poetry, short fiction, non-fiction essays, photography, and fine and graphic art by current Tyler Junior College students. We accept submissions for consideration only during the fall semester each year for possible publication in the subsequent spring semester. The Bell Tower Arts Journal is entirely student generated and seeks to provide a publishing venue for the rich artistic expression of TJC students.

Our goal is to create a publication that is a high quality, content-rich source of literary and artistic expression on a wide range of topics and themes. Therefore, we seek unique, insightful work displaying vivid, lively language and artistic skill.

All submissions **must** be the original work of the student writer or artist who submits it for consideration or publication. **We do not accept previously published or plagiarized work.** Every attempt is made by the editor to assure originality. All literary pieces will be submitted to turnitin.com for an originality report. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of each student to submit only his or her own literary and artistic work.

Moreover, while we strongly support intellectual freedom as the right of every individual from all points of view, we do not accept work deemed pornographic, profane, exploitative, or that seeks to cause injury to an individual or group.

Tyler Junior College gives equal consideration to all applicants for admission, employment and participation in its programs and activities without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability or veteran status.

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MORNING'S PROMISE

Ellie Barham / Tyler

Oh, my darling
Look up and you shall find
The morning is not far away
I know, I know
The night has been long
The wink of the stars was hidden
And even the moon
Did not show its face
But now the dawn is near
It waits until it can wait no more
And then the darkness will melt
The light will wash it away
And the sky will ignite
With a thousand colors of the sun
It will warm your face and dry your tears
And when they are found by the glow of gold
Even the deepest shadows
Will kindle
Oh, my darling
I know, I know
The night never lasts



FRANKENSTEIN
Elizabeth Canaan / Watauga / Clay

HOMESICK

Ellie Barham / Tyler

When the days are short and the nights come quick and cold, I like to wrap myself in the warmth of my favorite memories: summers at the lake. There is no place that causes childhood recollections to flood back so strongly or fill me with such sweet sentiment. Even in the darkest winter, I can reminisce about those long, vibrant days, permeated by laughter and saturated with sunscreen, and I can feel the sun shining on my face again.

The days always began when I woke up with the sun still slung low in the sky. I tip-toed down the stairs, biting my lip with each creak, and padded across the house to the back porch. I sat on the cushioned glider with my grandma, the dawn air cool on my skin and the scent of coffee warm in my nose. I would drink in her company, and we would talk of our anticipations for the day and our hopes and dreams for the future.

Once the rest of the household had woken up, it was time for the daily adventure to ensue. The most adrenaline-filled part of every day at the lake was racing my siblings to the boathouse. I remember tearing across the sprawling backyard, my bare feet dripping with dew, dancing around twigs and sweet gumballs. Once I reached the pier, I slowed down. I treaded lightly on the careworn boards, warped with age; splinters threatened to pierce my tender feet. Gradually, I made it to the end of the pier and the boathouse. My siblings and I sprayed each other down with sunscreen, squealing as the cold mist hit our skin. My arms and legs stung where it touched cuts and scrapes, testaments of previous escapades. I can still feel the sunscreen caked on my face and dried, sticky on my body; my second skin for the summer.

Standing at the edge of the lake, the water lapping gently against the grassy shore, the possibilities seemed as endless as the cobalt sky overhead. From the moment I stepped into the water, the hours began to blend into happy bliss, and time became illusory. The warm, murky water, infused with sunshine, became

my haven. I withdrew into the waves, my heart swelling with the peace of running on my own time, filling the lazy day with my passions rather than school or chores.

I rested in this contentment until I was interrupted by my grandma's voice, calling. Everyone splashed to the ladder of the deck and heaved themselves out of the lake, water dripping from their drenched swimsuits. We waited, dancing around my grandma like moths to a light, while she cut into the watermelon. One of the culminations of my summer was biting into the watermelon, ice-cold and sugar-sweet on my tongue. I would let the ruby juice dribble down my chin, staining my sun-bleached swimsuit pink. When I had eaten down to the rind, I would leap into the lake again and wash away the stickiness.

I relished the rest of the languorous day, caught up in my reverie, until I was interrupted by something else: the dinner bell. It echoed across the extensive backyard, ringing in my ears. I waded to the shore as swiftly as I could, but it was like trudging through syrup. When at last I reached the edge of the lake, I bounded up the sloped yard, following the bell's metallic chime. As I neared the back porch, heavenly smells of spice and savor filled my nose. Dinner at the lake was always spectacular: grilled, buttery corn, steaming sweet potatoes, peppery ribs. Everyone consumed as much as their bellies could hold and then settled back into their chairs with sighs of satisfaction. The adults engaged in drowsy conversation, but my siblings and I buzzed with excitement.

We bolted down to the lake once more. The sun was beginning to dip below the horizon. The sky was shot with blush and gold and fire. Fragmented scarlet highlighted the ripples of the lake. I stood at the shore until mosquitoes began humming around my ankles. Goosebumps spread over my arms and legs as I plunged into the water, cooled by the dusk. I held my breath and floated on the surface, surrounded by color and light.

Summers at the lake are some of my most cherished memories. Even now, when the magic and warmth of the lake house are lost in the past, I can remember how it used to be: freckled noses and sunburnt shoulders, daydreams and watermelon smiles, setting suns and happy hearts. It is all stored in my memory, ready to be relived whenever I need to escape.



YELLOW ROSE

Lawrence Burns / Longview / Photography



WORLD OF AIL

Larry Bonilla / Tyler

We are all pharmacists
prescribing a new dose.
It's truth. It's delusion.
The victims of good faith
scream on roofs, hoping you hear,
that we're damned to the void.
"Pyramids are Pillars.
Collateral is safe.
Selfishness is just greed."
To go back to basics
we break reality—
Level the ground for truth.
This new pill will corrode.
Yet, you yearn to consume
to keep this World of Ail.

WITHIN THE CUSP OF NOTHING

Jackson Carlisle Bell / Lindale

Accompanied, but alone, there he lay.
Polar to divine; rue consumes mind.
Despite family silence left to say.
Denial accepts all succumb to time.

Filled with uncertainty comes the last breath.
With Sight shut, he could see, someone else's eye.
Knowing man's greatest enemy is death,
he looked to himself and refused to die.

Hunter, beyond strength, observed with a tear.
The tear washed away all man's wrath and hate.
Empathy triumphs, "The cycle ends here."
The man defied all; he forgave his fate.

Pilgrimage complete, death laid down his scythe.
The man discovered the meaning of life.



GRIT

Emily R. Chadwick / Omen / Graphite
Pencils on Paper

POINTING SOUTH

Brooklyn Gundling / Friendswood

The ring doesn't sparkle like it used to. Unpolished silver does that after 5 years. The metal sits cool on my finger. It doesn't fit on my ring finger, so instead it holds a place in the middle of my hand. The compass is textured, arrows pointing in different directions all layered under each other, but the one that catches my eyes every time is the one-pointed South. I should look at the Northmost line, I know this. I don't know why the Southbound one pulls me in so.

Jeremy gave it to me. His daughter, stuck in a hurricane. He told me it was to remind me of how proud he was of me. Proud that I was the one who took charge- who kept it together- the one who carried his other children through the canals of our once dry neighborhood. But all I see is the burden they gave me. The emotional weight forced upon me as I held my mother's hand while she sobbed, the lead in my stomach as I lifted my brother over the fence, the scream that I swallowed when my foot lost itself in the drowned rocks along the street.

He's proud of me. I used to repeat that to myself during the bad times. I tried to remind myself that he loved me— that I was his child too. But I think that was something so far forgotten for us both. I no longer was his daughter, but his confidant, his therapist, his moral compass— the tv show he watches after a long day to help his thoughts wander. A once great love between a father and a daughter turned to static. He loved me once I'm sure, but now he only loved what I did for him, for all of them. Now, when I look at the ring, I see my family. Like the once-silver lines, they fade into the background, leaving behind one arrow: the arrow pointing South. It points back at me, and I remember that the only thing I need to worry about now, is myself.

FREEDOM

Rebekah Drake / Longview

The screech of owl, the scream of hawk
The roar of wave and the crash of sea
The whistling wind on mountaintop
The endless view of far horizons
Each carry in it freedom's cry but does it carry yours

A quiet moment all alone
A hand held close in love
A gaze of infinite care
A sigh of peace without a fight

Some scream and wave a colored flag
But what do screams for nations bring
They bring division, fear, and pain
When hands held out are what we need
And shoulders set on which to lean

To lift another and help them breathe
To bar the way
To stop the bleeding
Maybe this is freedom breathing

To release the past and open the way
Brings hope and healing for a new day
Freedom may sing or scream or roar
And sometimes freedom is a closing door.



LOVE AT FACE VALUE

Andrea Davis / Arp / Photography

ROMANTIC PERFIDY

Yahnissi Flores / Tyler

Remember that evening
when you shattered my heart?
I laid there in sorrow,
my world falling apart.

I will never forget
the betrayal that you chose.
My best friend,
a friend to a foe.

You left me that night.
You left, unspoken.
The truth is that you
left my heart broken.

He picked up the pieces.
He glued them together.
I can't believe you left.
You promised forever.

He loves me more.
He's everything you weren't.
I heard this upset you.
A man's pride is hurt.

Get off your knees.
You don't know the pain.
Stop with the act.
You are the only one to blame.

The tables have turned.
He has lifted your curse.

For karma's best friend
is a woman who's hurt.

Poem

THE LAST GOOD DAY

Marissa Krnavek / Waxahachie

It was November 23, 2017. The day was unseasonably warm, and everything was peaceful. The sky was a bright blue, and the sun was shining. My twin, older brother, mom, and I were staying at our grandma's house. She had been diagnosed with stage four lung cancer a couple years prior, so we made it a routine thing to visit her. This time was different, though. The day after we got there, she had to be admitted to the hospital, which extended our stay. We had visited her every day, and it seemed as though she was getting worse and worse. However, on this day, she was her old self again. It was the last good day.

We woke up around eight o'clock in the morning. My mom and grandpa were already at the hospital with my grandma; my dad was on his way to pick us up and take us there. We got up, and started getting ready. We fed her two dogs, Bailey and Jazzy, showered, and dressed. By the time we were finished, my dad was knocking on the door. In his hands were donut holes, kolaches, and chocolate milk. I remember us being so excited to eat those donuts. I wonder now if they would have tasted differently had I known that this day was the last day I would talk to my grandma. After we ate, we said goodbye to the dogs and piled in his truck.

When we got to the hospital, we hopped out of the truck and made our way to the big glass doors. My twin, Percy, and I were acting excitable and crazy so that people wouldn't notice how sad we really were. We were jumping, yelling, and screaming. As we approached the door, our dad abruptly stopped us.

"Listen. Before we go in, I need you to understand that your Grammy is very sick. When we get in there you can't be acting all crazy," he sternly stated.

"Okay, we understand" I said to him.

After this discussion, we walked in the door and headed up the elevator. The hospital had an overpowering bleach smell. It felt cold and lifeless, like a graveyard. Even though I've visited before, I still felt anxiety as we went up to her room. It left me shivery and almost breathless, so, I held my twin's hand for comfort.

After an elevator ride and a walk that felt like it took a million years, we finally made it to our grandma's room. But before we went in, my dad stopped us again. "Remember what we talked about," he reminded. We all three nodded, and he opened the door. The hospital room was bright white; there was a white couch next to a white bed. The only thing that wasn't white were the ceiling tiles, and my grandmother's nightgown they let her wear. It was her favorite one with dark purple butterflies on top of a lavender base. We noticed our grandma sitting there, but something was different. Today she's laughing, talking, and being her normal self. When she sees us, she's so happy that tears came to her eyes. In that singular moment, it felt like she would make it through this. I had hope that it would all be okay.

One day later, my grandma was taken out of the hospital on hospice. Two days after that visit, she was put into a medically induced coma. The cancer became too much for her body to handle, and the doctors knew this was the only way she wouldn't feel pain. "If she wakes up, this'll be the worst of it," the doctor informed.

Unfortunately, she never did. She died three days after we had that visit. It was the last time we ever spoke to her, and it was the last good day.

SHE

Yahnissi Flores / Tyler

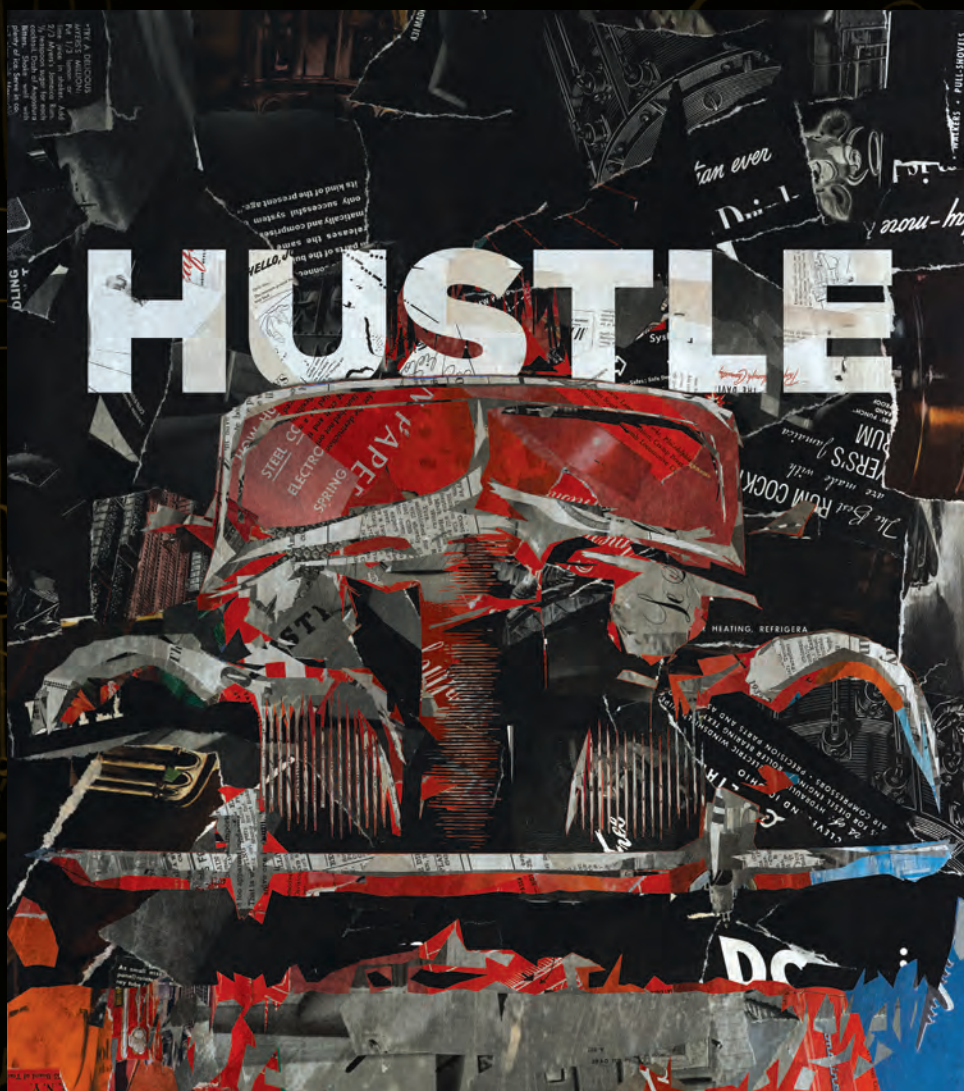
The moon cries when it rains at night.
 Chest churning, a hurting heart.
 She weeps in silence, careful to not make a sound.
 The moon is afraid to cry aloud.
 She will wake the children sleeping in their mother's arms.
 She will wake the women sleeping in the arms of someone else
 biting down,
 counting stars.
 Who knew the moon was afraid of the dark?



THE NIGHT SKY

Mariana Gatlin / Troup

What do you see when you look at a blank white canvas?
 Some see opportunity or pureness.
 Others think it's boring.
 Now, what do you see when you look up at the night sky?
 A vast beauty that holds more power than people
 care to admit. So, when a
 white woman tells you, "you ain't
 pretty," remember the canvas.
 Remember the sky, and know
 that your color is beautiful.



BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

Aaron Crow / Canton / Collage



FUNNEL CAKES

Aidan Dean / Tyler / Photography

I WISH UPON A FLIPPED COIN

Mariana Gatlin / Troup

I wish, I wish, upon my heart,
for paler skin, or slightly dark.

A mix of white and brown I am;
A type of genetic anagram.

Tan in summer, a golden glow.
Oh, how I wish to burn my nose.

Flip the coin and you will see,
a washed-out version— a winter me.

I still hear voices whispering,
“You’re so pretty, but not white enough for me.”

Poem

DEATH OF NIGHT AND BIRTH OF MORNING

Rebecca Packard / Tyler

With a sorrowful sigh, the world is once again conscious of the approach of the nefarious night. The voiceless villain catches the hidden, deepest corners first, darkening what was already dark, and such are the places that the nagging night is most reluctant to let go of. The stars are timid, the moon is absent, and the inky clouds seize and stain the open sky that the previous day endured. Colors are lost as they are helplessly engulfed by a sinister sea of void. A foul fog spills over, and everything beneath it silences under its crawling caresses. The deeper the land settles into the depths of the dark, the hazier the hope of light becomes. The clawing desperation in the darkness descends with the dying breaths of dreaming for a glimmer. Overpowering is the strength of this nebulous nemesis, and vain is this vengeance against the night. Yet, just as the triumph is lost, behind the clouds an idea intercepts.

Ancient, yet true. A mere memory from the forgotten ago touches first on the summit of a hallowed hill. A droplet of gold adorns its apex and slowly sinks to clothe its expectant entirety. Sly and solemn, the sun's smile unfolds into a glorious grin as it breaks vividly over the surrounding, hopeful trees, cascading their beaming boughs with a crown of light. The once fiendish fog that gripped the land is now a valorous veil being swept aside by the tender hands of the mellow morning wind, granting the light to gaze clearly at the world it beholds. Candid and clear, colors are remembered upon where they lay as they are tailored to the growing beat of the sun. A lavishing lake mimics the color of the sky with its glistening lace garnishing across its glossy surface and it paints dancingly on the captivating cliffs overlooking them. The hill, the trees, the fog, and the seas all remember the light that was enigmatically engulfed in the erstwhile night. The day has come.

DAY BY DAY

Joseph Hernandez / Tyler

“Just one more day,” I tell myself,
“One more day and then I can relax.”
But that’s not true. It never is,
Because when I’m done with this
I’ll move on to the next impossible task.
Everyone tells me to take a breath and relax,
That I need to take a break or I’ll crash.
But I can’t. There are only so many days
In a human life, and not enough to do it all.
So, I have to make every second count.
I know the symptoms of burn out—fatigue,
Insomnia, lack of motivation, tears.
I’ve experienced it all. But I’m too young
To experience these things. “You’re just a kid,
What do you know about stress?
You have no children, no house payment to make,
You don’t even have a full-time job!”
That’s fair, I suppose. I can’t afford a house.
So, I live with my family. No children because
Who has that kind of time? I only work
Two part-time jobs when I’m not in class.
I’m only 22; what do I know about stress?
I’m too young to be stressed.
So, I move from one never-ending goal
To the next, in an endless pursuit of a finish line
That I have yet to see anyone cross.
But I’ll get there one day. Otherwise,
What is the point? Until then,
I’ll take it day by day.

Poem



MONUMENT OF SIN

Aaron Crow / Canton / Adobe Photoshop

LOST IN THOUGHT

Joseph Hernandez / Tyler

A clear, blue sky sprawls out above me
endless and empty, not a cloud in sight.
The sun is obscured by brick in front of me,
Yet, it's warmth tells me it is still there.

A cool breeze, invisible yet impactful,
provides respite from the scorching air
which darkens my skin. The ripples of wind
give hint to the cooler season to come.

The greenery of the grass and trees
has yet to gray, and the leaves are abundant.
Fall is in full swing, yet nature has yet to notice.
Late as usual, the seasons take their time.

The roaring of engines mingles with the rumble
of tires, creating a symphony of the road, a song
of hustle and bustle of people traveling to and fro,
to endless opportunities or countless jobs.


People around me are walking to mystery places
with hidden tasks in mind. I wonder about
their stories. Their hopes and dreams, and fears
and regrets, all what make them human.

As I sit here, lost in thought, a wave of apprehension
washes over me and I suddenly remember something.
As I look down at my watch I am wracked with panic;
I am late for my class!

BEES FOR FIZGIG

Victoria Hoover / Alto

On a drowsy afternoon late in spring,
A little dog lays under a worn porch swing.
Huge of heart and small of frame,
Fizgig Falcor is his name.
He might not pause to scratch a flea,
But he'd give a paw to catch a bee.
Stretched out in a sunbeam on his side,
A noise makes the dog open both eyes wide.
And what before him does he see?
A hideous, humongous, honeybee!
With wings so large they stir his fur,
A monstrous black and yellow blur.
Perhaps from as far away as Nepal,
The thing's the size of a tennis ball.
Seeking for a giant flower,
Chainsaw buzz of great bee power.



Even though bees always sting,
Fizgig bounds up like a fast-freed spring.
Onwards rushing quick to chase,
The greatest foe he'll ever face.
No second given to reflection
He seeks that huge bee's vivisection.
Matching every zag and zig,
A fearsome warrior is Fizgig!
His fur is bold, and his eyes are bright,
Closing in for the first delicious bite.
Potted plants knocked over, throw rugs tossed like gauze,
No obstacle will give him pause.
With jumps that seem gravity-defying,
Teeth and claws and much fur flying!
Showing what he is about,
He bites again and spits it out.
With every bite and every snap,
He closes in to spring his trap,
Bounding from the porch with a colossal leap!
The little dog rolls over in his sleep.
Eyelids flickering as he dreams of bees,
Nose quivering like he's about to sneeze,
Paws flex and twitch in ecstatic joy,
His tail softly thumps. What a very good boy!



GLACIAL WATERS

Aidan Dean / Tyler / Photography

9 MONTHS...3 MINUTES

Matthew Hopkins / Canton

All of time bowed and stood still.
Chaos and uncertainty coming to a halt,
With all waiting for a simple breath.
A couple stared in anticipation and finally,
There was a breath and time moved once more.

Our baby.

The man erupted in joy with the doctors,
Entering, a man and now a father.
He cried and hugged his wife,

His mind whisking him away into the future.

He fantasized of the birthdays, games,
Reading bedtime stories to the greatest gift the world could give.
Watching his child grow into a wonderful person,

All while he was there.
Nothing; nothing could take this away from him.

The doctors lifted his baby, placing them into the mom's arms.
The nurses overwhelmed with joy, bringing a new life into the world,

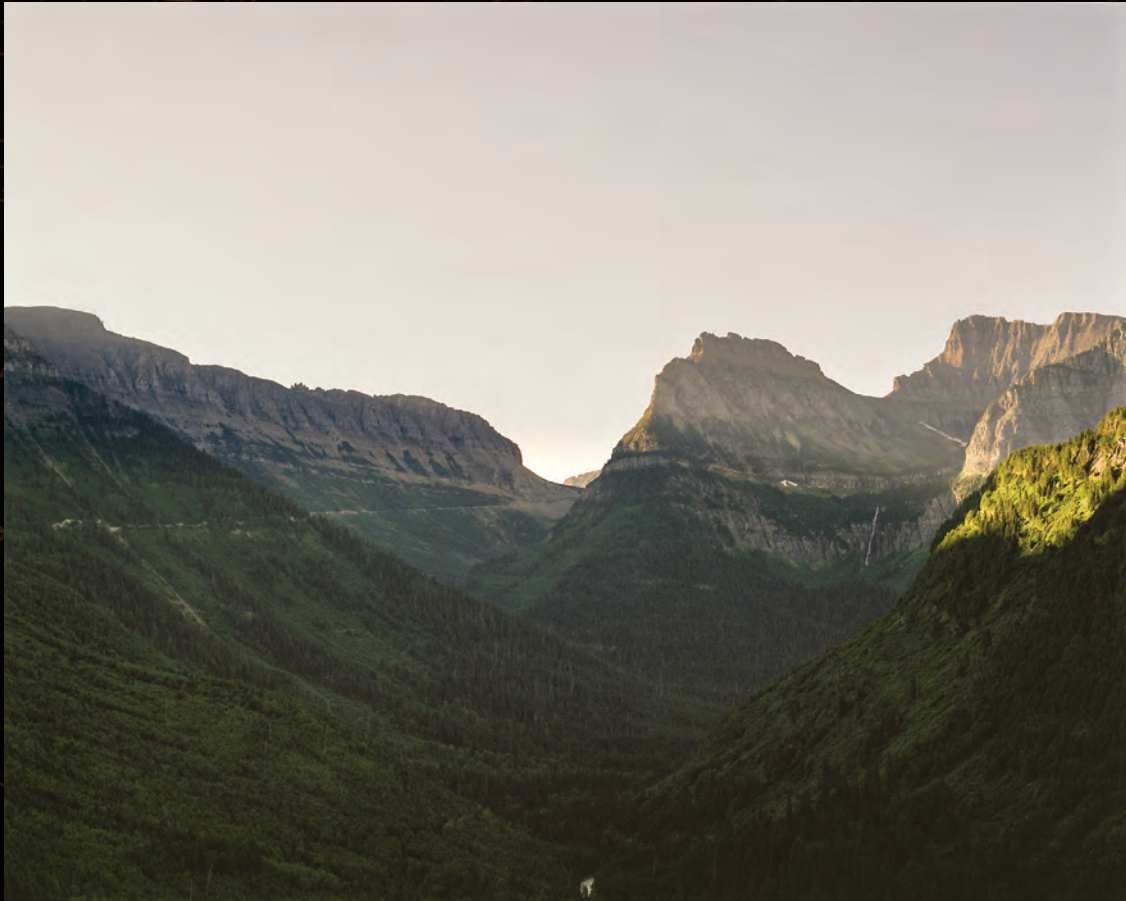
Stop to announce for all to hear:

Name: Kumao Awaya.

Born August 6th, 1945 at 8:12 A.M. at Hiroshima General Hospital.



UNTITLED
Diane Forbus / Tyler / Acrylic



GOLDEN LIGHT

Aidan Dean / Tyler / Photography

IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING

Audrey Lassanske / Brownsboro

I have the fondest memories of us.

I love where I am now—who I am now—on my own, but I want you to know that who I am on my own now is *because* of the fond memories I have with you.

You left me with a version of myself that I have come to cherish with all my being, my favorite version of myself from my life so far—

The version of myself that you helped me build out of the most beautiful pieces of the puzzle that I am.

You started by pointing out the corners, the four pieces that are the most obvious, that anyone can pick out about me quite easily—*joy, optimism, kindness, stability*.

I took time to think about these qualities in myself, recognize and acknowledge them as the pieces that have always been the most prominent.

I'm happy that I could share them with you.

I filled in some of the spaces, but then you reminded me of the pieces that I had set aside long ago—

Pieces that I had meant to come back to, but then forgot about.

Child-like playfulness, curiosity, wonder, artistry—

Pieces that I had known were there and probably even used a few times without noticing, but forgotten how important they were to me.

You, however, could see them the entire time, knew they were there, and got excited when I picked one up and tried to see where it could fit.

I reintroduced myself to these parts of my puzzle, grew to love them again, placed them at the forefront of my mind and began to live by them again as if they had never been overlooked.

I'm so grateful that you could share them with me.

We continued to piece the puzzle together, with you adding a few parts of your own and both

of us contributing little things and special moments that made us, *us—small adventures, admiring nature, long walks, losing track of time.*

So many pieces that were, and still are, so special to me.

Although we no longer share these things, the thought of them still brings a soft smile to my face.

I miss being able to share them with you.

In case you were wondering, I still love you.

I still see you as the same spark of inspiration and the same masterpiece of beautiful existence that I saw the day we first clicked.

In case you were wondering, I still carry the pieces that you gave me of yourself.

Insatiable imagination, saving time for self-reflection, your fire, competitiveness, and uniqueness that made an incredible impression.

In case you were wondering, the puzzle of myself that we pieced together is very much missing its co-creator.

But, in case you were wondering...

I am *joyful, optimistic, stable, and kind*. I am an *artist* with a *child-like playfulness*, who *wonders* about the world and is ever-*curious* about things I have yet to learn.

I enjoy *small adventures* and *long walks, admiring nature* and *losing track of time* being in awe of the wonderful lives that we have on this planet.

I *take time for myself*, but I have an *insatiable imagination* that makes me believe that anything is possible, and boy can I get *fiery in a competition*.

These things are what make me *unique*, and I hope they make an impression on others, just as you made and are still making on me.

In case you were wondering,

I love the fond memories I have of us.

I hope there are more to come.

I love the puzzle that is myself.

I know there is more to come.

In case you were wondering.

Poem



LOCH

Harrison Hebb / Tyler / Oil on Canvas

SWIMMING LESSONS

Allyson Liner / Bullard

I can feel myself falling.
I swore it wouldn't happen again
But your eyes are made of oceans,
and I don't know how to swim.

I know I should know better.
In fact, I do.
I know how this story starts and ends.
I've seen it countless times.

However,
your charming smile captures me,
and by this point, I'm already yours.

Poem

GRATEFUL WITH LIFE

Carmen Garcia Llanes /
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

Grateful because I was born,
and I can live this mountain of emotions
called life. Thank you for this tremendous
adventure that fills me with joy,
sorrows, laughter, tears, surprises...

Thank you, life. You have given me so much.
I am very grateful for your unforgettable experiences,
which I would repeat a thousand times more,
for all the moments and memories
that propel me into a living future
and that flood me with happiness.

There are so many things that I like about you....
But sometimes, you put obstacles
in my way, obstacles that I have to
overcome in order not to fall, but I thank you, life.
Thank you for the moments in which
you make me fall and then you teach me how to get up,
even stronger.

What else can I say about you, dear life?
I am just a beginner who is
discovering you. Sweet, yet bitter life,
what else do you have to offer me?

Formidable life, which you end with death,
I promise you that I will live you intensely,
without mediocrity. I won't allow you to pass over me without
having lived you to the maximum.



THE WOLF AND THE SAMURAI

Kiley Hood / Winona / Digital Art

FALL

River Sessions / Tyler

Fall. My favorite season. A time for cuddling up in a thick wooly scarf with a hot cup of tea to take in a good book. Just walking down the sidewalk, among the rain of autumn leaves was enough to get me in the mood.

I unlock my apartment door, kicking off my boots in the entranceway.

"I'm home!" I shout.

I place my bag on the kitchen island, opening it to reveal my treasures. *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and even a collector's edition of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven*. Halloween is right around the corner, so I'm well overdue for some spooky reading.

All I need is some tea. My favorite mug and a package of tea are on the counter. I didn't get it out before I left. Oh well. I heat the kettle and fix it quickly, adding my requisite five tablespoons of sugar. I go to grab *Dracula* from my bag but find it missing. It didn't fall on the counter or on the floor. Curious.

I check the couch. Amazingly *Dracula* is set right atop my favorite blanket and Missy, my black cat, is looking up at me expectantly.

"You know what time it is, don't you girl," I say, patting her head.

She meows in reply.

"Reading time," I announce.

I pick up the book and place down my cup. Reading posture engaged. Blanket on lap, cat on blanket, opened book and hand rested gently on cat. The only thing that could make the mood better is a bit of rain.

I open to page one and already I was sucked into Harker's journey to Transylvania. I always loved Stoker's writing style, even if others found it had too many layers of narration. I'm already flipping to the next page until a shiver travels up my spine. My hands grow cold as I hear a deep groan from behind me.

I turn to see a shadow towering over me. Its hair was black and seemingly wet, its body contorted unpleasantly. Only the creature's one red eye and gapping toothy mouth stood out from its shadowy frame. It groans again, staring straight at me.

"Oh, sorry, Luna," I say. "I got absorbed again."

She groaned in sarcastic assurance.

"I know, I know, but it's just so good! I can't help myself."

Luna growled, diving headfirst into the book. The book rose into the air before slamming down on my head, spine first.

"Ow! Ok I'm sorry! I'll slow down."

The book dropped back into my lap as Luna unpossessed it, nodding as she returned to her spot above my shoulders.

"Page 1 again?"

She nodded.

"Groan if I go too fast again."

She nodded again, groaning to shush me.

Who knew ghosts were such bibliophiles?



ST. PETER'S DOME

Barry Jacobs / Tyler / Acrylic

MY TEARS FALL

Anastasia McKay / Tyler

My tears fall
like autumn leaves
getting ready for
winter to come.

My heart begins to wilt
like a white lily that's dying.

I feel so alone
in a house I call home...

The waves,
they're getting restless.
These things I feel inside,
they make me feel worthless!

It hurts like hell.
Still, I smile
through the pain.
Even when it feels like
it's pouring rain.

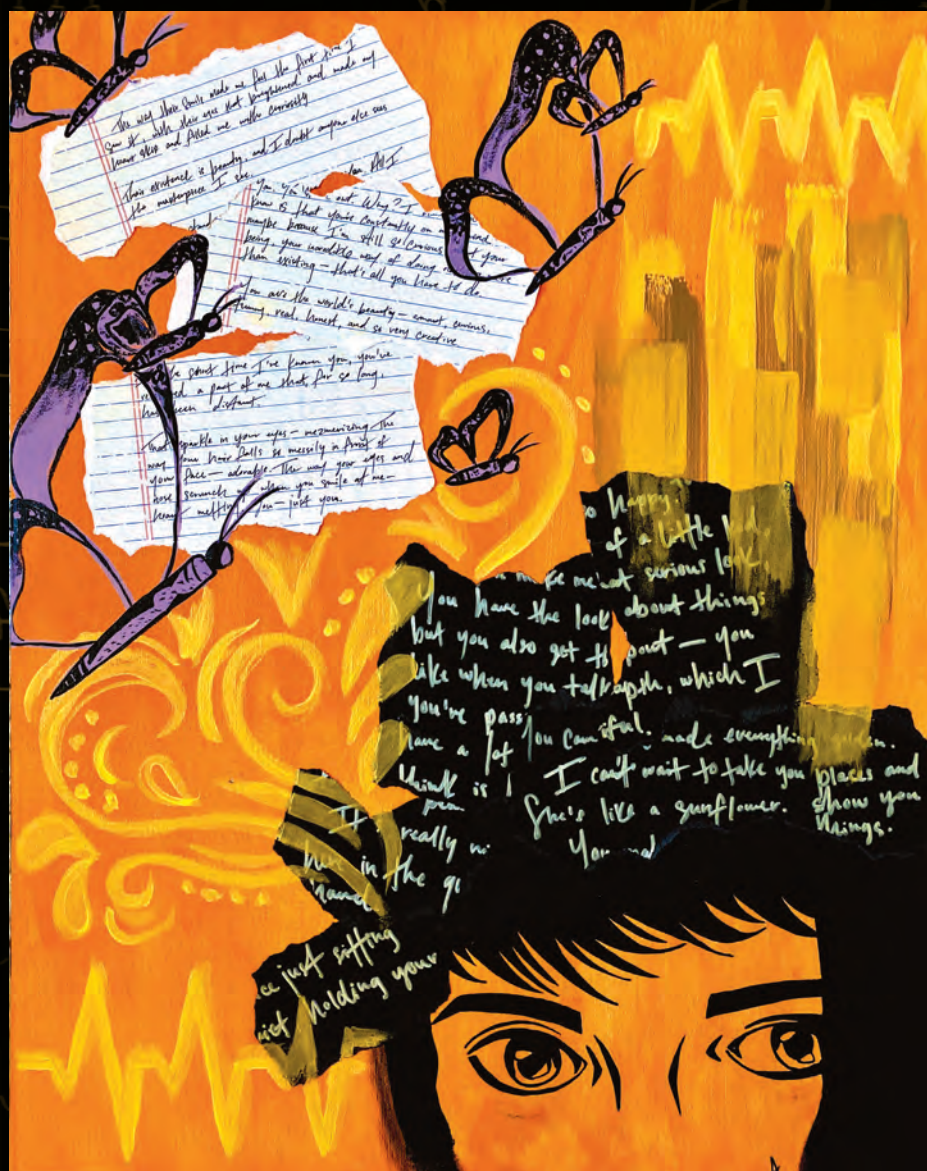
Fighting an enteral hurricane
inside my head
as I can only lay in bed.
My tears fall like they're
riding on a sled.

Poem



EMOTIONAL HEALING

Marisa Dubose / Tyler / Photography



THIS IS WHAT FALLING IN LOVE LOOKS LIKE

Audrey Lassanske / Brownsboro / Collage & Acrylic



CHRYSOLINA FASTUOSA

Lauren Mullins / Tyler / Prismacolor
Colored Pencil

NEURODIVERSITY

Alejandra Ontiveros / Yantis

Research everything you can.
My actions, words, and why I can't have a better attention span.
Write it all down or it might slip away.
When? Why? Where? Who? I'm doing the best I can.
Speak like them.
Stutters, mute, fast, slow, I'm thinking faster than I've ever ran.
Look like them.
Makeup, clothes, shoes, accessories, I don't remember who I am.
Eye contact.
Stare intensely, look away, look down, this is harder than any exam.
Don't move too much.
Leg bouncing, counting fingers, shuffling around, can I get better tips from any program?
Take your headphones off.
Loud noises, overstimulated, focus, I am beginning to feel like a hologram.
A normal person wouldn't talk, think, act, or express themselves like me.
A normal person wouldn't research how to function normally.
A normal person wouldn't understand how hard it is to be seen.
Spectrums, but each one of us seen differently.
Spectrums with no representation on T.V.
Spectrums create our personal misery.

Poem

NOVEMBER

Irene Ramirez / Alba

October welcomes a loneliness that cannot be explained— there is hope and dread.
Nostalgia and routine accompanying the sensation of loneliness— I know this all too well.
I know what is to come.
Autumn is full of decay— everything beautiful hides something ugly.

October has passed— November has come.
November has never been kind to me.
November is when I feel the most unlovable— The cruelest! So hollow! So alone!
November is the emptiest month— so I give until I am empty, too.

The cruelest 30 days I shall live— maybe that is why I was born to this month?
A hollow space between October and December, yet again— a person and sorrow?
Maybe, that is why my anger is like phantom pains— always aching for what was? What should
have been? What could have been? This month, a ghost of my years— reminding me of all the
what ifs.

Each day, I ask: Will tomorrow recognize me? — Will I endure this week? —This day, this hour,
this second, *this*— can I? How much longer?
Will December ever find me? Will January grieve me?
Will I survive— can I?
Please November, be kind! be kind! be kind! for once.



COLORFUL CRAB
Robin Ragland / Tyler / Chalk Pastels

A TEST OF FAITH

Joshua White / Tyler

“Oh, the wretched beast has returned once more to torment me, my Lord. Is this a sort of penance for something? A labor I must overcome to prove my faith? No. No, it can’t be so, Lord. I cannot accept that the demon harassing these sacred halls is here on your blessing. The monster that steals holy offerings and erodes the hearts of the temple’s acolytes simply cannot be more than a disturbance; a dangerous distraction from our faith. Lord, I pray for forgiveness. Some of the younger ones have certainly been feeding the beast, and I fear that even amongst my peers there are those who have strayed and found comfort in the demon. We have strayed, my Lord! But, no longer. I am confident that with heightened security and quick wit, man will triumph in the face of the beast. However, I have difficulties convincing others to help ward off the invader. It just goes to show how dangerous the little monster truly is, my Lord. Even if I alone must stop the beast from ruining the sanctity of this temple I will do so, my Lord, and I believe I am well on my way to accomplishing this. I’ve discovered that in all the chaos the creature brings, it has its habits. Last night, I crept out into the halls and waited ever so patiently along one of the paths the monster frequents, and I was successful in ambushing the beast, my Lord! It stood right before me, ears twitching as it eyed me down with a whole loaf of bread stolen from the kitchen in its maw. A whole loaf, my Lord! I became as frightening as I could, with my arms above my head, stance broad, standing without fear, and mustered the closest sound to a roar I could to frighten the beast off so it never returned. To my utter dismay, the blasted creature just trotted past me with your offering. Nevertheless, I learned from the experience, and next time will be different. I must ask, though, my Lord, if this truly is a labor you planned for me, why, oh why, must it be a fox?”



↳ You GET BUTTERFLIES

WHEN I'M STARING YOU ↳

—DOWN, DOWN ↳

WATERSIGN

Irene Ramirez / Alba / Digital Art

THE HILLS

Joseph Ritter / Marshall

I'm standing in a field.
 The grass is made golden by the sun's gentle kiss.
 The sky is the perfect shade of blue with no clouds.
 In the distance the Hills are rolling
 creating waves across the earth's surface.
 I start walking towards the Hills
 but
 with every step I take
 there is a resistance.
 A pull back to where I used to be.
 A pull back to the reputation I used to hold.
 As I continue to walk, it feels like I am being watched.
 Like I am being hunted.
 Preyed upon.
 And my hunters are looking for any mistakes in my steps.
 For any change in my cadence that shows a weak spot.
 For a chance to pull the trigger.

As I lay in the ground,
 Now back where I started,
 I hear this voice inside me say,
 Get up!
 Go again!
 Do not let them hold you back!
 And I am torn.
 Do I let people continue to see me the way they always have?
 Or, do I go?
 and push through
 every gun shot
 that pierces my body
 as I grow
 and grow
 and grow
 and become more powerful in my mind
 and in my words
 and in my ability to use my voice?

The decision is made.
 I rise up.
 I look to the Hills.
 And I start walking.
 And with every step I take
 there is a weight
 and a pull
 and a pressure
 to return where I was.
 But I won't.
 And I can't.
 Because I have to grow.

I have to let myself grow.
And I have to let myself go.
And now
I'm halfway to the Hills
and the gunshots
come barreling in
like I am a lion chasing after the population,
like I am the villain for growing.
But still,
with every shot,
I pick myself up.
I put one foot in front of the other no matter how painful it may be.
And I step.
And I step.
And I step.
But every step I take I feel like I lose a piece of myself,
like I lose someone I have always known,
and it is so hard to keep pushing
because everyone is now starting to see a new person,
someone they didn't know existed.
But every step also gets me closer to the place I am meant to be
and gets me closer to the person I am meant to be.

And so, I decide to keep fighting.
And fighting.
And fighting.
Because I know who I am.
And dammit, I know where I am meant to be,
and who I am meant to become
and what I am supposed to do.
And no one.
No one.
Will ever
be able
to tell
me
otherwise.

I finally reach the Hills.
And the bullets are still pounding me.
It is a miracle that I have made it here.
And I turn around.
And I look everyone who is trying to tear me down
straight
in
the
eyes
and I say:
I've
made
it.
And I turn back around,
and the bullets are still flying into my body.
And I let them be the force
that pushes me
in
to
The
Hills.

Poem



ROUND & ROUND

Cody Peters / Lindale / Photography

THE POWER OF VOICE

Joseph Ritter / Marshall

Your voice is like water.
The ability to flow
smoothly
eloquently
but it also has immense power.
Power to crush trees with its weight,
power to uplift cities
and uncover
the truth about what they were built upon.

Your voice is also fire.
The way it can rage through nature
destroying
everything that dares to stay in its path.
But no matter the force it destroys with
it always
gives birth
to new
life.

Poem



MYSTIC DESERT
Esther Reifel / Rusk / Acrylic



Photo

$\vec{r}_c = [3, 3.5]$
 $\vec{r} = [6, 2]$

ALCATRAZ

Hillary White / Longview / Photography



SNOWY MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE
Kathryn Satterwhite / Jacksonville / Acrylic on Canvas

LEAVES

Zach Stoner / Lindale

The annual hecatomb begins.

Veins

once full of life

bleed into red

into death.

Curled by cold

their bodies

fall through fall air.

Loss

upon loss

ushered into doom

by applause.

Is our joy cruel?

Is our awe at the end of so many

appalling?

Sometimes

beauty hides

in suffering.

Poem



CAT SKULL
Jaclyn Walker / Chandler / Ink on Paper