

2017



Energy

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***Energy* Submission Guidelines:**

Any part or full time ANC student can submit to our student magazine. Each student can submit a total of five different pieces, consisting of writing and/or art.

Submission Categories:

Fiction: Short stories should not exceed 3,500 words (about 15 pages).

Poetry: There isn't a restriction on length, but poems must be submitted in the exact form that you desire it to be published.

Non-fictional Works: These should not exceed 3,500 words (about 15 pages).

Art/Photography: We accept all forms of visual arts; please send a jpeg file of the photo of the artwork.

How to Submit: Please send your work as attachments to ancenergysubmissions@gmail.com. In the body of your email, please make sure you type your name as you would want it published, the titles of the works, and a phone number. If you have any questions, contact jdorris@smail.anc.edu (or come by the C-Wing). **We are accepting submissions from June 1, 2017-April 1, 2018** for the next edition of the magazine.

Table of Contents:

Payton Jeffries	Cover	
Megan Thomas	Playing House	p. 5-6
Hannah Yost	A Day's End	p. 6
Alex Miles	Untitled	p. 7
Willie Williams	I Thirst No More	p. 8
Payton Jeffries	Hand Study	p. 9
Payton Jeffries	Engel	p. 10
Joseph Taylor	Being a Redhead	p. 11-14
Will Saylor	Untitled	p. 15-16
Taylen Smith	Grozny, Chechen Republic, Russia	p. 17-26
Will Saylor	Don't Judge a House By Its Shingles	p. 27
Michael Bradford	The Last Day	p. 28-30
Bryan McClain	A Scary World	p. 31
Payton Jeffries	Red Riding Wolf	p. 32
Taigianna Fore	I Am	p. 33
Alex Miles	Untitled	p. 34
Rachel Johnson	Sites	p. 35

Shannon Timms	Stranglehold	p. 36-39
Rachel Johnson	Death in Beauty	p. 40
Christopher Caveney	L1	p. 41-43
Autumn Bennett	Hope	p. 43
Rhoda Yost	Witch or Wonderful?	p. 44-48
Kayla Napier	Untitled	p. 49
Abigail Smith	Collage	p. 50
Andrea Jackson	Haiku	p. 51
Lexie Ray	Casting Away	p. 51
Olevia Hughes	Birth	p. 52
Sydney Wakefield	Love Doesn't Always Win	p. 53
Kimberly Guy	Her Weeping Death	p. 54
Tonda Keys	A Dawn to a New Day	p. 55

Playing House

Megan Thomas

Let's play house

Pretend things are perfect

Walk over the broken glass

Into the bedroom

Hear the cries of the unknown faces

See the smiles of the kids

If you only knew

What was behind them smiles

Let's play house

Pretend that families stick together

Walk out the door

Into the unseen world

See the people

With the blank faces and scars

If you only knew

Where they came from

(continued)

Let's play house

walk away, never come back

Take one drink, never the same

Take one pill, come back for more

A Day's End

Hannah Yost



Untitled
Alex Miles



I Thirst No More

Willie Williams

O' your splendid beauty can't be denied,

An African Tulip prancing in weeds,

O' but, I pray these feelings would subside.

My Love Oasis, my hearts do concede.

Seems just like yesterday all hope was lost,

Far and close, the scenery is pleasing,

One sip from your nectar, what would it cost?

My heart can't stand your salutary teasing.

I'm willing to take that chance, for I thirst,

To be with you not only in my sleep,

My Love, are you a blessing or a curse?

Your well of love, does it run sweet and deep?

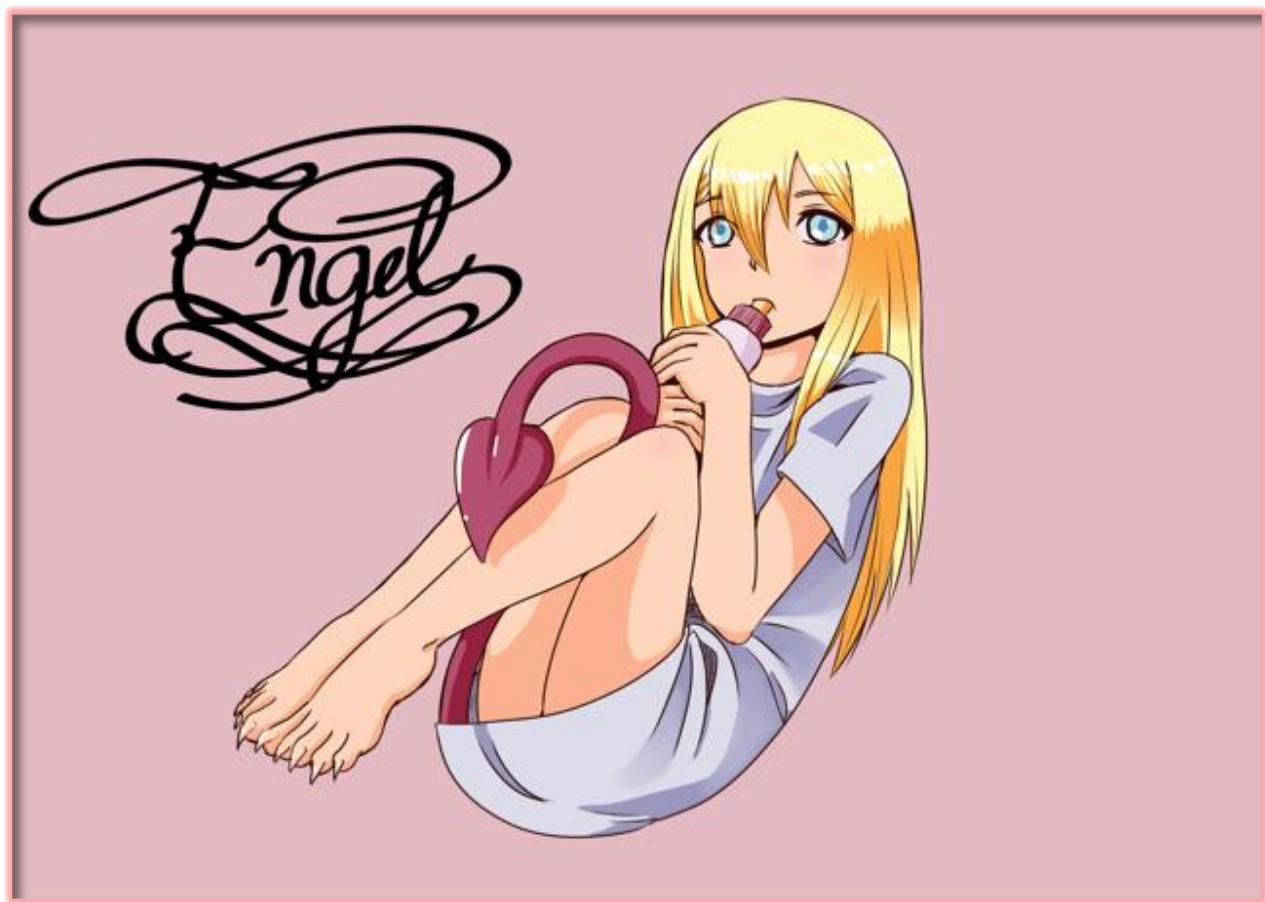
Revived by your love, I search no further,

Fill my cup, "My Tall Glass of Water!"

Hand Study
Payton Jeffries



Engel
Payton Jeffries



Being A Redhead

Joseph Taylor

It's not easy being a redhead. Not the Aisle-Five-At-Walgreen's, instant red hair; a true ginger-hued, pale skinned redhead. Having red hair comes with its own special sets of problems and challenges. Sunscreen is a must even on a cloudy day, melanoma is real and scary, freckles are forever and so to is the mockery and stigmas that one endures when burdened by a copper mop. It's time that redheads are recognized as the true minority in the world. Afterall, red hair would be the only minority qualifier that would transcend all others. A person can roll snake eyes in the genetic crapshoot and wind up a ginger regardless of gender, race, nationality or geographic location. We redheads are already suffering the disadvantages that any other fringe or minority group faces; we deserve the advantages that come with minority status, too.

Redheads should be treated like the treasures that they are. We are rare. Red hair only occurs naturally in 1-2% of the entire human population. That is roughly 75 to 150 million souls worldwide. While that doesn't exactly make us the human equivalent of a unicorn, it's still extremely rare when compared to the other 7.25 billion people that don't have red hair (Cumming). And yes, that's billion with a B. Another way of putting the rarity of the often mistreated carrot top into perspective is to realize that for every redhead alive today there are roughly fifty people who aren't plagued by red hair. That's two average sized classrooms in any school, anywhere in the country, without a single redhead. That's five football teams with no redheads. Ten basketball teams. A string orchestra or an entire platoon of soldiers all without a single red haired individual. No, not unicorns but most definitely Black Rhinos.

We Rhinos face the everyday horrors of avoiding direct sunshine like Lestat de Lioncourt as well as regular applications of sunscreens with SPFs in the triple digits because we simply must. No one is asked to be a ginger; it's thrust upon us without anyone ever having bothered to

consult us as to our wishes. Why then is it fair to further injure the auburn-haired by means of mockery and insult? It isn't fair and as the real jewels of humanity we deserve better. With minority status, making fun of a ginger would no longer be something relegated to the playground; it would become a matter for the federal court system as a hate crime. The school yard bully would be forced to consider hefty fines or jail time against how bad he wanted to make his Ron Howard inspired joke. No longer would our red haired beauties be forced to compete against naturally tanned contestants in beauty pageants. The Miss Redhead USA Pageant would ensure a fair and equal playing field for our porcelain dolls. Ginger boys and ginger girls would compete for ginger scholarships to attend the best ginger schools. Kick A Ginger Day would become National Ginger History Month and classes throughout the country would teach about the accomplishments of Alexander the Great and of Thomas Jefferson and William Blake, even if there wasn't a single redhead in the school. Red haired people would rise to power in new jobs made possible by newly augmented hiring regulations that would state that a specific number of Raggedy Anns and Andys be hired regardless of his or her competency.

This would all just be a start, of course. With recognition as a minority group gingers everywhere could lobby for protections similar to those afforded to endangered species. Like Spotted Owls, we would be allotted sanctuaries to live in and allowed to do so in as natural a manner as possible while being monitored in a way that would ensure our happiness and further survival. New construction wouldn't begin with a single shovel full of dirt being disturbed unless an impact study was first conducted. After it was ascertained that no local populations of ginger peoples were to be bothered, then the work could proceed. If any problem were to arise the National Association for the Advancement of Colorless People, or NAACP, would step up to defend our affronted brothers and sisters. Some confusion may ensue in the beginning but things

like that are to be expected with any kind of social change. We few and true would stay informed of the progress of the movement for recognition and stay abreast of all things red on GET, the Ginger Entertainment Television channel. United in a worldwide front, the rights of gingers everywhere would be fought for and a clear, unified voice would be heard shouting, “Say it loud! I’m red and I’m proud!”

Some will argue against all of this as a nonsensical waste of effort, time and money. It wouldn’t be. A minority group should be just that: a minority of the population. In just the United States alone there are an estimated 6-18 million redheads making it the largest single population of gingers on the globe. Yet when compared to Uncle Sam’s 55 million Latinos, the nation’s largest recognized ethnic or minority group, it’s a drop in the proverbial bucket (Stepler and Brown). And still, despite this ever widening gap, there’s not a single school for the children of red haired people that move into a community to work, nor is there a single tax incentive for gingers to open a restaurant that makes ginger-centric cuisine. And why not? We hard working redheads could certainly use the financial boost, too. Perhaps a little help from the government is just what some red haired entrepreneur needs to finally break ground on the store of his or her dreams. A store that would cater to a specific clientele with everything a ginger requires like horrible straw hats, long sleeve t-shirts and sunscreens that won’t crack or fade for five years and can be applied with a roller in a single coat.

Politicians, recognizing the importance and influence of the redheaded vote, would pander to us on television come election time. In an effort to seem to be in solidarity with redheads, an office seeker might casually drop the word “ginger” in conversation. Emboldened by our newfound sense of self and of finally belonging to something we would collectively shout, “NO!” “You people can not use that word! That’s our word!” Then talking heads would

debate the politician's faux pas and whether or not it's an offensive word given the advancement of a ginger person's rights in the last fifty years. Finally someone will point out that, when used by a redhead, it's pronounced "ginga" and that's the only acceptable way for it's use but the debate will roll on. Ultimately, it won't matter if the politician wins or loses; the only real power in government will belong to the lobby groups, like the National Association of Redheaded Broadcasters and the Red-Haired American Medical Association.

What really matters in the end is this: None of this has to be forever constrained to words on a page. With just a little effort, just a little sweat from those orange tinted brows, it could become a reality and gingers everywhere could finally be recognized as the one true minority of humanity in the world. No longer would the UV levels and the cruelty of children rule our days. As sure as God wears sandals we would have our day and at last receive our recognition. And with that recognition would finally come the love and praise that we deserve instead of the jests and pain that we despise. Say it loud! I'm red, and I'm proud!

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Untitled
Will Saylor





Grozny, Chechen Republic, Russia

January, 1994

Taylen Smith

The thunder of the bombs exploding in the distance rattled my bones. The stench of my sweat, gunpowder, and smoke filled my nostrils and lungs, nearly choking me. The night air was crisp and below freezing, filling the air with ghosts of my breath. My ears rang from the recent gunfire, but I kept running down the dark alleyway to my father's office. My father had not returned home from work this afternoon as he usually does. My family and I were worried sick over him, and I made the stupid decision to try and find him to bring him home safely. It was incredibly dangerous in the city at night especially alone, female, unarmed and on foot. But the only weapon my family owned, my father kept with him always, and my father drove our family's only car to work this morning. It didn't matter to me though, because I would risk my life for my father and anyone else in my family, for that matter.

Chechnya has been in political distress for years, and now the Russian Federation is attempting to regain its control over our home. Russian troops were brought in to Chechnya to fight us and the Arab Mujahideen, who are on our side in the war. The Russians have been bombing cities and killing innocent citizens. Tonight has been the worst of the destruction so far, with nearly half of the city devastated by several bombs. My brother whispered to me in the kitchen earlier this evening that the Russian troops would shoot citizens that got in the way. I feared that my father had gotten in the way, and that was why he hadn't come home yet.

I was nearly three blocks away from his office. My legs were beginning to burn from running all the way across town. Up ahead at the end of the alley, a person turned and came barreling towards me. My blood froze, and I stopped dead in my tracks. As the person came

closer, I noticed that it was a middle-aged woman with a headscarf on. She had tears pouring down her cheeks and was waving her arms frantically.

“Уходи отсюда!”

“Get out of here!” She yelled at me.

The woman kept running past me and turned at the end of the alley, looking back at me as she did, and disappeared from view. I knew I had made a mistake. But I was almost to my father’s office now, so there was no turning back until I found him.

I heard the screaming before I saw what was happening. There were people running chaotically through the street. A thick cloud of smoke hung low in the air. I took a deep, unclean breath, and made a break for it, heading across the street. I managed to make it across two more streets on autopilot, with no recollection of doing so, to the street that my father’s office was located on. I was so unaware of my surroundings that I hadn’t noticed that the buildings on this side of town were utterly destroyed. There were no people on this street, but I could still hear the screaming from only two blocks away. Dust and smoke still billowed off of some of the buildings, and I could see that this was the result of one of the bombs that had shaken the city earlier tonight. I jogged down six buildings to my right and stood in front of the ruins of my father’s office. Hot tears spilled over my frozen cheeks. This was why he hadn’t come home.

Somewhere close by, I heard shouting once again, but this time, it sounded as if someone was giving orders instead of fearing for their life.

Russian soldiers.

I couldn't wait around and mourn my father now; I had to get out of here before I met the same fate as him. I turned back around and headed the way I had come, pumping my burning legs as fast as they would go. If I could make it back home to my mother and brothers safely, we could get out of the city. We *had* to get out of the city, or we would die here. I rounded the corner to the alley that I took before, and slammed into something large. I took a step back and met the empty, steel-grey eyes of a Russian soldier. He furrowed his brow and the next thing I knew, the butt of his rifle was in my face and everything went black.

I don't know how long I was out, but it was still dark outside. It had grown colder, and although I was accustomed to the cold winters here, I was probably close to hypothermia. I looked around the street to see that I was alone. The soldier left me here, lying half way in the alley and half way in the street. I tried to sit up and noticed that my head felt like it had exploded. I touched my forehead; my hand was wet with blood. I remembered the cold look in the soldier's eyes, and wondered why he even left me alive. Slowly, I tried to stand up. My head was swimming and I was feeling nauseous.

Shouting stopped my thoughts short. Flickers of light danced between two of the shops down the alley directly across the street from where I stood.

Flashlights.

It was probably more soldiers like the one I ran into. The shouting and the lights seemed to be headed toward the East side of town.

Where I lived.

Where the rest of my family was.

By now, I'm sure my mother had figured out that I was gone. My family would be devastated when I told them what happened to my father. If I got the chance to. I had to get to my mother and brothers before the soldiers did and get them out of the city.

I took off sprinting down the street toward the East end, even though my legs felt like gelatin. It was ten blocks from where I was to my neighborhood. I passed the first four streets before I managed to catch up with the soldiers with flashlights that I had seen, and decided to continue running in the alley behind the buildings on the opposite side of where they were to stay hidden in the shadows as much as possible. I wasn't sure what they would do to me if I was spotted and caught this time. I was lucky that I was even alive right now. I passed the coffee shop on the corner of the street which meant that I had three more streets to go before I was in my neighborhood. Suddenly, the vision in my right eye went black and it started stinging. I used the back of my hand to wipe away the blood that had trickled down my forehead into my eye. My vision came back, and I nearly tripped on a crack in the busted pavement.

Finally, I made it to the corner of the street I lived on; all I had to do was make it down to the fifth house on the left and I would be home. But this part of town looked strange in the inky blackness of the night. There were no streetlamps to help me see in the dark. Something wasn't right here. It was hard to make out what was wrong, so I walked across the street up to a house to get a closer look.

The houses had collapsed. There were still plumes of smoke snaking up into the sky. The entire neighborhood had been bombed. Which meant my house was, too. This had probably happened while I was unconscious, because I didn't feel or hear the explosion this time. I tore down the street to my house to see its fate and prayed that my family had made it out okay.

My once inviting, white house had crumbled into itself. It was in ruins, and now so was my heart. I crunched through the dead grass up to what was once the front door, which was now hanging mostly off of the hinges. The exterior walls on the left side were half as tall as they once were, and most of the roof had fallen in. A sharp gust of wind sliced through the air, and the exposed wood paneling in part of the roof that was hanging in midair made the slightest groaning noise. It was too dangerous to try to go inside.

Movement on the ground to my left caught my eye. I bent down to see what it was. A small piece of ripped blue cloth was snagged on the corner of the barely attached door. My little brother's blanket. They had made it out after all.

I breathed a heavy sigh of relief. I didn't have much time to feel relieved however, because the shouting of the soldiers with the flashlights I had seen returned. I looked down to the west side of the street where I had come from and saw their silhouettes carved out by the moonlight. They were getting closer down the street, and would see me standing here soon. I had to get out of here, quick. Forcing my feet to move, I peeled across my yard to the left side and down the gravel alley that was in-between my house and the neighbors'. The running had warmed me up a bit; I didn't feel nearly as cold as I was before. I was too afraid at this point to feel anything else at all.

My feet carried me six crumbled houses down into the alley before someone called out.

“Девушка!”

“Girl!”

I was spotted. I risked looking behind me to see how many people I had to outrun. Three soldiers were closing in on me. I couldn't see enough in the dark to tell if they had weapons with

them, but the chances that they did were high. Running away from soldiers who probably had weapons wasn't one of my best ideas, so it would be safer if I hid until morning. It couldn't have been too long before it would be dawn anyways. I had to find someplace to hide for now. Fast. One of the houses could be a sufficient place to hide, but I had to risk it falling on me. This was going to be a risk I had to take because the soldiers started yelling after me again, slurring their words and laughing. They were drunk, which made the danger of the situation escalate.

I cut left between the tall fences of two houses to buy myself some time to hide without being seen in the process. I decided to climb the wooden fence of the fourth house that was on my right. Toys were strewn all over the backyard, and a swing set was lying on its side. I hoped whoever's children the toys once belonged to made it out of the city safely. The house was relatively intact much to my surprise, except for the roof on the right side of the house; there was a gaping hole exposing it to the night. I walked through the yard into what appeared to have been a kitchen, carefully stepping over the fallen back door. Once inside, the damage was less obvious. There was plaster dust and glass all over the floor from a broken window, but the furniture and appliances seemed virtually untouched. As if someone just got up and walked out without warning. Straight ahead was an archway to a room in the front of the house, which I assumed was a living room. I went into the hallway on the left and into the bedroom on the farthest end of the house.

The first thing I saw was the bed with a rose patterned quilt. The bed looked so warm. A chill ran through my body. I had forgotten how cold I had been. The walls were blush colored, and it was decorated with notebook paper artwork. The drawings and paintings weren't done by a skilled hand, probably a young child's. I touched one of the paintings on the wall. It was a

crudely painted picture of a family. A man, a woman, and a little girl. The picture made my eyes well up with tears. It was something I had lost tonight.

I was alone. My father was dead. And I had no idea where my mother and brothers were. My poor little brother was probably so afraid and cold. My older brother was probably scared, too, but didn't want to show it for fear of upsetting my little brother even more. My heart ached for them. I had to find them.

Lights flickered outside of the window adorned with lace curtains, and I heard the soldiers calling out again. They were here, and I had to hide. I would probably be found out and tortured, raped, or killed. The closet on my right was the only place I could hide in the room. I wouldn't fit under the small bed. I slid open the closet door to find an abundance of little girl clothing, shoes, and boxes on the floor in the corner. I slid the boxes over and crawled into the corner. Sliding the closet door shut, I was masked in complete darkness, and stacked the boxes so that I was mostly hidden by them. Minutes went by, but they felt like hours. I knew I would have to stay here until at least dawn but it would be a long while still.

I didn't realize that I had dozed off, and was startled awake by a crashing noise coming from somewhere inside the house. I covered my mouth and held my breath for what felt like forever. I strained my ears to try to hear if someone was in the house with me. I heard a soft click and creak as the bedroom door that I was in opened. The wood floors groaned slightly under someone's footsteps. They rattled some papers and opened drawers of the dresser. My heart felt like it was going to explode out of my chest. A hot tear rolled down my cheek. I did not move a muscle. I couldn't be found. The footsteps moved towards the door and stopped right in front of it.

Oh, God.

The moonlight illuminated the bedroom just enough that I could make out the two dark shadows that the person's feet made from under the closet door. Slowly, the closet door slid open. Steel-grey eyes stared back at me. Two more tears spilled over my hot cheeks. I knew that this was it. He was going to kill me this time, or torture me in ways that I never knew existed.

Strangely enough, he put a finger to his lips, slid the closet door closed, and walked out of the bedroom, quietly closing the door behind him.

My mouth hung open idiotically.

Why had he just left?

Why would he let me go?

Maybe he recognized that it was me he had knocked out with his gun and felt bad. I had always thought of the soldiers that were making a mess of our home to be disgusting, vile creature. But they were still human. I slid the closet door open a crack to see that the soldier's flashlights shining in the window were moving on down the street. I let out a deep breath I had been holding in for far too long. All I had to do now was wait here until dawn and then I would leave the city. I'm not sure where I would go, or where my family went, but I had to get as far away from here as possible and find them.

What felt like an eternity later, but was probably just an hour or two, the orange sunrise came bleeding in the room from under the closet door. I got myself out of the closet and looked out the window. It looked like the end of the world outside. Maybe it was the end of the world as I knew it. I saw several people walking down the street. Some were covered in dust with blood

running down their faces. Some seemed unharmed, and hugged their coats closer to their bodies. There were small children, people my age, and even a few elderly people. It looked like they were all leaving, getting out of this nightmare.

It was time for me to leave, but I couldn't head out with nothing. I had to find some supplies. I left the child's bedroom and went across the hall into what I assumed was the master bedroom. The bed was still made, as though someone had just made it before heading out to work.

But they wouldn't be back.

I looked in the closet of the bedroom for a bag of some sort and found a black backpack that I could fill up with supplies. I searched the clothing hanging up for a heavier parka that I could exchange for my worn one. Luckily, someone who wasn't too many sizes bigger than I am had a blue one at the back of the closet. I put it on and left mine on the bed. I felt a pang of guilt for raiding a stranger's closet and stealing their things. I pushed the thought to the back of my mind and decided that it was the only choice I had. I switched my thoughts to my boots, which were relatively new and should hold up just fine.

I left the bedroom and headed to the bathroom. There was a medicine cabinet above the sink that I searched and found an unopened first aid kit in. I stuffed it into the backpack and went to the kitchen. This side of the house was much colder than the other because of the gaping hole in the kitchen ceiling. There was a light snowfall coming in through the hole, with a small dusting of it on the kitchen floor. To my right beside the fallen back door was a cabinet pantry. I searched the pantry and took six granola bars, four bottles of water, and a small box of crackers. This would have to do for now because the backpack was starting to get full.

I decided to go back into the other side of the house to the bedrooms to see if I could use anything else. I stood in the doorway to the little girl's room. The sun was slowly rising outside the window. After last night, I was almost surprised that the sun decided to rise still. I looked around the little girl's bedroom, at her paintings again. I really hoped that she was okay, even though I didn't know her. As I turned to leave finally, a small doll on the tall dresser in the other corner of the room caught my eye. I walked over to the doll. She was made of cloth, had dark hair, wide, brown eyes and was dressed in a pink lace dress. I picked the doll up and put her in the backpack. I put the backpack on my back and walked out of the room, closing the door as I left. I made my way back to the kitchen and rounded the corner to the living room. Everything in here was still in its place, as the rest of the house was. It was a cozy room with carpet floors and floral couches that looked rather old with folded knit quilts laying on them. I made my way to the front door of the small family home and walked out onto the front steps. The morning air bit at my cheeks, and I zipped the parka all the way up. I had to face the city and whatever I found beyond it alone.

I walked out onto the street as feather light snowflakes fell onto my hair and into my eyelashes. I started walking down the street, heading west out of the city. I'm not sure what I would meet along the way to hopefully find my family, but I couldn't stay in this desolate city anymore. I had to leave everything I've ever known behind for the possibility of never being able to even find my family. Or what was left of my family. Maybe I would be able to find the little girl whose bedroom was my refuge for a time and return her doll to her. Maybe I would die out here, alone in the cold. I couldn't know the answer to the possibilities unless I tried to find out what could happen. Even though it meant that for now, I was on my own.

Don't Judge a House By Its Shingles

Will Saylor



The Last Day

Michael Bradford

The day started out like any other day for me in July. It was hot like it always was in Arkansas. The heat made my brown hair look almost black from all the sweat. I had to keep taking off my glasses to wipe them off so I could see. It wouldn't have been so bad if I had only lost some weight before summer got here. It was always hot in this town during summer. This could be because we were surrounded by fields of crops. There wasn't much shade to help get out of the sun. Blytheville used to be a very busy town. This all changed when the Air Force Base was shut down. The town almost became a ghost town after this event. Looking back on it I find that to be funny now.

My name is Mike, and I am in my early thirties. I made the decision to go back to school to try and make a better life for myself and my children. Like most people, I have had some hard times in my life. I was married once, but that didn't work out in the long run. I guess it was just my fate to go through the things that I did. I never really thought much about all the ghost stories at ANC. I just chalked it up to people making excuses to why they quit going there. Boy, was I wrong on that one.

It was the last day of school for me when everything changed. I had finished all my work except for a paper I needed to turn in to my instructor; my computer got a virus so I couldn't just email it. He told me that he would be at the school later that night so I could drop it off to him. I had never been to the school at night but it sounded like a good plan to me.

I remember when I first got to the school something just seemed strange. I noticed there were more cars there than I would have thought to be there. As I started to walk to my instructor's office, I could hear some strange chants coming from the biology lab. I started to get

worried when I heard the chants. Why would people be chanting in the biology lab? The question I should have asked was why I didn't run from there at that moment.

I got as close to the wall as I could and peeked into the classroom. The things I saw going on in there would haunt anyone. There were people dressed in robes all chanting around what looked like a hologram. It was almost like a mist floating in one spot in the air. Its eyes resembled that of a cat. They had this shine to them that made the light look as if it were reflecting off of them. The color of the eyes looked just like the red in a camp fire. It almost looked like the eyes were on fire.

As I stood there I could finally make out the chants they were saying, "Take the student as our sacrifice." They just kept repeating this over and over. It took me a second to figure out that there was no student in the room. That's when it hit me, I was going to be the student that they would sacrificed. I knew my teacher didn't like me that much; I was always bothering him on the weekends. This just seemed to be going a little overboard in my belief though.

I turned and started to run away from the classroom. Of course it would be my luck that I would trip and fall over a box in the hallway. It made a loud sound when I fell to the floor thanks to all the books in my backpack. I tried to get up and run but I couldn't move at all. I heard a shrieking sound behind me. At that moment my body just flipped over by some strange force. I found myself looking right at the hologram. This was no hologram it was an actual ghost that wanted me for something. As I looked at the ghost my life at the school just flashed before my eyes. I could remember my first day at the school and how nervous I was. I remember when I finished my first semester with a perfect 4.0 GPA and how proud I was of myself. I saw all the teachers that I had taken classes with during my time at ANC. I even remember one of my teachers telling me, "We do our best to prepare you for what will come after school." I always

just thought she meant this about the job I would get after school. I guess I was wrong on this like I had been wrong on so many things before.

The ghost started to open up its mouth and I could feel my soul being drained from my body. I was just stuck there watching as it drank my soul like a milkshake. I didn't feel any pain while it did this to me. That was the shocking thing to me in this situation. I must have been stuck there like this for twenty minutes. It seemed like forever though in my mind. The ghost finished taking my soul from me and just vanished. I was surprised that I wasn't dead after it finished with me.

Most people would never know that I had my soul taken from me after the event. My boss always said, "I wish I had more workers like you." If he only knew what that would mean to have more workers like me. I never enjoyed life after that event at ANC. I was just an average person with no soul left in me. I did win employee of the month six straight times, but I never enjoyed the praise I got for it.

A Scary World

Bryan McClain

What a scary world we live in today

Why can't violence be like dust in the wind,

Why can't all of our problems just blow away,

Just blow away like dust in the wind,

Protesters killing the boys in blue,

Crooked cops killing us too,

We must stand as a people against this madness,

And save our hearts from feeling all of this sadness,

Such a scary thing to walk out of the front door,

And realize that this country is at war.

Red Riding Wolf
Payton Jeffries



I Am

Taigianna Fore

I am NOT who they say I am!

If I were to be a word in the dictionary, I would be *extraordinary*.

Something like a TIGER,

Because you'd never know when I would strike.

People told me that I would get nowhere in life

So growing up, I picked my act up & started to strive.

Instead of building anger, I took it as encouragement.

Because of my failure?

Would be their success & that's not what I inherited

& I refuse for anyone to say I was just like the rest!

So every move I make, will always be my best.

I am Not who they say I am!

So many people try so hard to stand out that they're actually fitting in.

So the only way to stand out nowadays is to stand in like the old days & fit in.

Most times you have to lose to win,

But I crawled before I could walk,

Walked before I could run,

And I ran before I could spread my wings

& now I've found the real me within.

I am NOT who they say I am!

BUT !

I AM who I SAY I AM!

When the winds are roaring & blowing

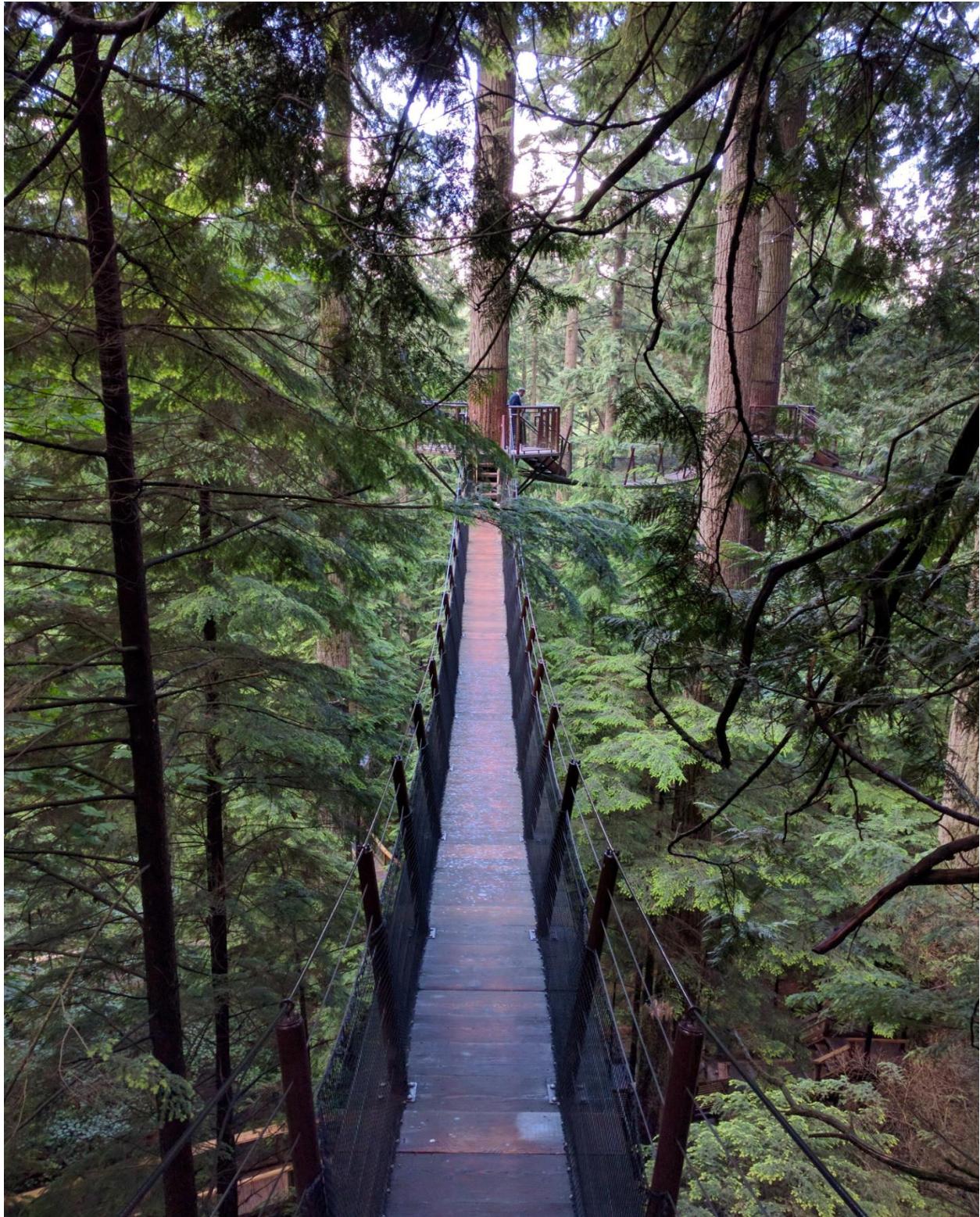
& everyone is blowing away in that giving up stage

You will see me in the mist

Striving for Excellence!!!!!!

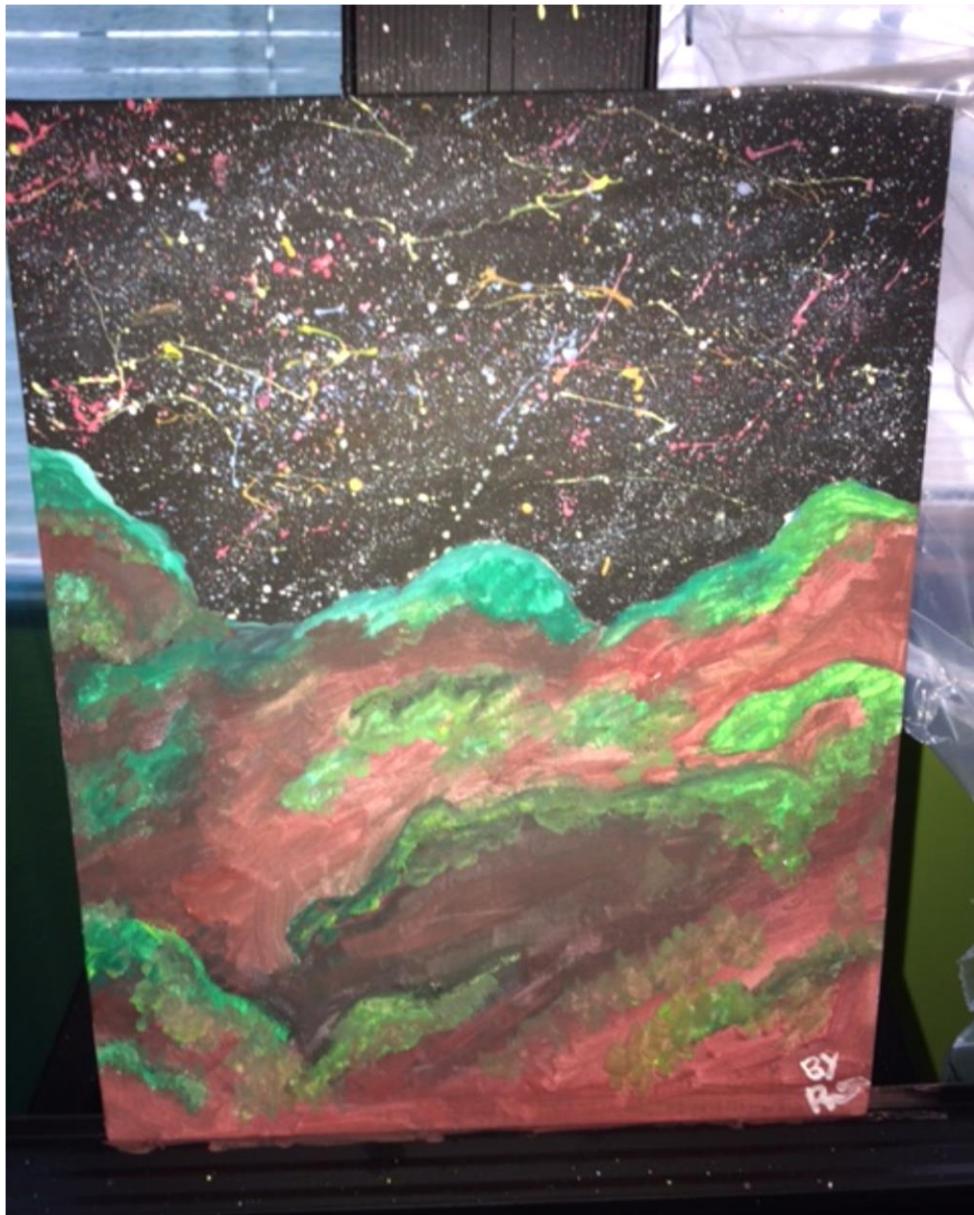
Because I AM who I SAY I AM!

Untitled
Alex Miles



Sites

Rachel Johnson



Stranglehold

Shannon Timms

I have always had an ability to overcome things. Even when I was younger I had the courage to overcome any obstacle that got in my way. I was always known as a go-getter who always faced things head on and never accepted defeat. As a young man who had just graduated high school, I was about to step into a world so dark and unforgiving that anytime there was any amount of light at the end of the tunnel it would quickly be drowned out by the screaming voice in the back of my mind telling me to take another pill. I had always heard about addiction but never fully understood it. Addiction is a very real and serious disease that changed my life as well as the lives of those around me.

As a teenager, my life revolved around playing sports, working with my dad, and hanging out with my friends. I loved to play baseball and basketball and I did so daily. Playing baseball and basketball with my friends was as natural to me as breathing air. I was always active doing something, whether it was playing sports or working with my dad. I was a happy and loving person eager to live, laugh, and learn. I was very well liked, in fact, I was voted Mr. RHS my senior year. If I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't have accepted that honor as I am sure there were others far more deserving. After graduating high school, I decided to work a couple of years before going to college. That decision still haunts me to this day.

I had only been working my new job for about two weeks when I did something that would change my life forever. It was a night like any other except I was feeling sick. I remember details such as the dusty, moldy smell of that warehouse, the cold, crisp feel to the air, and the sight of the fork lifts whizzing by. I remember feeling like I had been hit by a truck; I was so

tired and sore. A co-worker noticed that I wasn't working as hard as usual and could tell I wasn't feeling well. He came over to me and held his hand out and said, "Here take these, they will make you feel good and get you through work!" I asked what they were and he replied, "Hydrocodone, they are pain pills that will give you energy and make you feel like a million bucks!" I had never been the type to take anything even if I was in severe pain. For some reason that night I gave in and took the two pills. Sure enough, fifteen minutes later I felt awesome and was working circles around everyone else! Little did I know, I had just awoken a sleeping beast inside me that was waiting for his time to come out and indulge in all that was good and all that destroyed!

The two pills I took that night at work quickly became four pills every day. I told myself it was ok because I needed them for pain and didn't think I could possibly get hooked on them because they were not like other drugs. At least that's what I thought! Within a week of taking those two pills, I was already buying them daily from the same guy who offered them to me the first time. It was all downhill fast from there. I started to crave the pills. I craved them like a kid would crave candy except I would do far more to get them. I spent my hard-earned money, and a lot of it, on those pills every day. I soon found a doctor who would write me my own prescription and I was still buying them as well. I would take anywhere from ten to thirty per day. One more was never enough. My addiction had me in a chokehold and I could not break free. I craved them in every way possible, from the sight of them, taste of them, feeling them in my pocket, the touch of them hitting my tongue, and even the sound of the pills rattling in a bottle. The pills were not only an obsession but now an addiction as I couldn't go a day without taking them or I would get sick. The only way to make it better was to take some of those little beautiful gems and wait for the explosion of pleasure, energy, and feeling bulletproof to hit me

and make me realize that all my problems were gone again. My problems and stresses were piling up by now so not only was I addicted but I was also running from my problems. I was neck deep in the addiction already and I was about to realize that I was not only hurting myself but also everyone around me.

I thought I was hiding my addiction well but I was only fooling myself. My family knew what was going on and they couldn't stand it any longer. It was obvious to anyone who knew me that I was no longer the same person. My wife had to deal with the most as she lived with me and she is the one person who knows me inside and out. My family tried talking to me multiple times about my addiction but it didn't do any good. Nobody was going to get through to me at that time because I didn't want them to. I would say what they wanted to hear just to get them off my back then I would go on feeding my addiction acting as if I was all that mattered. I was so selfish and put my needs before my wife and even my own kids, and at the time, I didn't even realize it because all I was worried about was my next fix. My kids deserved a better dad than that and my wife deserved the man she married. My wife was beginning to reach her breaking point and was ready to give up on me when something changed in me. She knew the person she fell in love with was still there somewhere. That's why she had held on as long as she did.

I decided to try to get off the pills for my wife and kids. I learned that was not going to work and that I had to quit for myself, so that's what I did. I quit for myself and used my wife and kids as motivation. I went through hell in those days. The physical withdrawals were horrible and that wasn't even the worst part. I soon had to start dealing with emotions that I had been drowning out with the pills before. I was broken and torn and felt like I would never find myself again. It took time to find myself again and I am still working on getting better every day as I continue moving forward.

Addiction is a disease that millions suffer from, but it is a treatable disease and it can be overcome. Addiction has, and will continue to, destroy families everywhere. Addiction will chew you up, spit you out, and leave you lost within yourself begging for answers. I have been sober for almost five years now! I am glad I had the courage to stand up to my addiction and face it head on and beat it. I am glad I have a loving wife who never gave up on me because there were times that I would have given up if it weren't for her. I have finally overcome that screaming voice in my head telling me I want pain pills! I am glad I have finally become one with that light at the end of the tunnel.

Death in Beauty
Rachel Johnson



L1
Christopher Caveney

It has been awhile
and what a glorious time
should never forget

it was just a bone
metal announces presence
feel the coming storms

the pain is still there
so much is different now
it will always change

muscles like to twitch
nerves burning like fire ants
numbness desired

a deep breath is work
the fresh air is bliss
strengthening the core

(continued)

a mile can be walked

this future will not be lost

it must be fought for

observing limits

goals set much higher today

reaching precedes grasp

appreciation

much more than ever before

having cried and laughed

the darkness is gone

they surely have saved this life

quite humbled by that

Oh sun, my old friend

scent of medicated sweat

rebuilding function

manifesting strength

(continued)

waiting to thank all of you

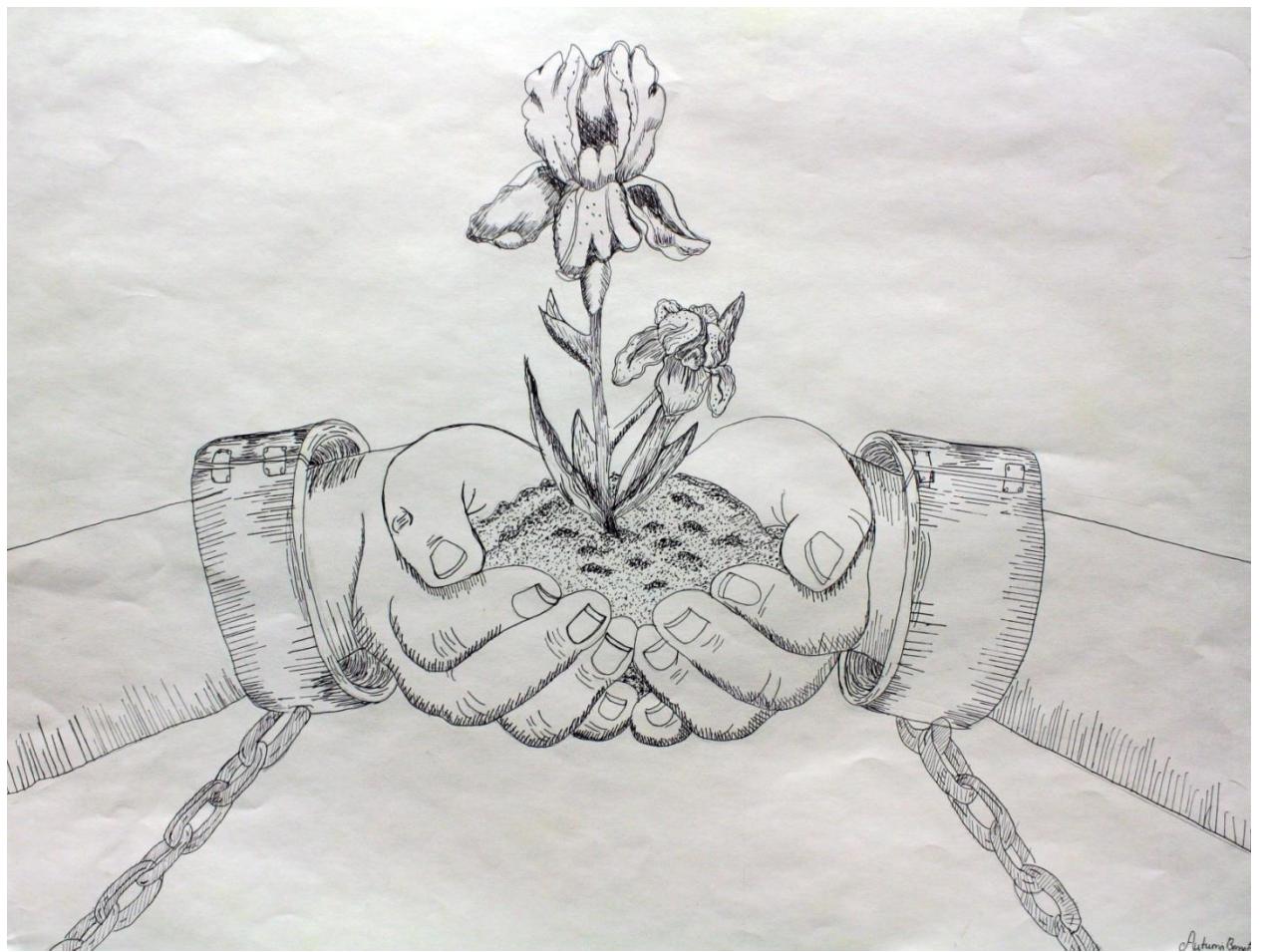
giving back someday

so blessed to be here

healing from the inside out

confident grateful

Hope
Autumn Bennett



Witch or Wonderful?

Rhoda Yost

“No, Paul, I won’t go in there all by myself!” I stomped my foot.

“Rhoda, I have to go to my own class now, or I’ll be late. Just go on in.”

I stared as Paul raced across the playground toward the sixth-grade wing.

My lower lip pooched out as I crossed my arms. *Why is Paul being so mean leaving me here alone? I wish Mama didn’t have to take Robbin to a special school, so she could take me to meet my teacher.*

I peered through the window. A hunchbacked old lady stood behind the teacher’s desk. She was short and bony with a bun on the back of her head. Her cheeks were crisscrossed with wrinkles, and her dark face looked all dried up like a prune. I gasped. *Was that a wart on the end of her nose?* If she’d had a black, pointed hat, I would have been sure she had arrived on a broom. I shivered, and sobs shook my shoulders. Tears dropped from my chin as I scooted to the end of the step. *Will I be safe if she can’t see me, or does she have a crystal ball to see outside her room?*

An eternity passed before my best friend Brenda Beahm and her mother appeared around the corner where I was curled up, crying on the step. Mrs. Beahm

put her arm around my shoulder. “What’s the matter, Rhoda? I’ve never seen you like this.”

“M-Mama had to t-take R-Robbin to school and P-Paul wouldn’t go in with me, and the teacher looks like a w-w-witch.” I wailed and threw my arms around her neck.

“Rhoda, you don’t need to worry about Mrs. Hudspeth. Mike had her three years ago and she is a nice lady. Why don’t you come in with us to meet her?”

I wasn’t sure I’d be safe, but at least I wasn’t alone. As we entered, I still hid behind Mrs. Beahm, but Brenda was excited, pointing toward some of our friends from the year before. I peeked around Mrs. Beahm for a better look. Mrs. Hudspeth’s face was even more wrinkled up close, but there was no wart on her nose.

“And who do we have here?” A big smile spread across Mrs. Hudspeth’s face as she greeted us. Her voice wasn’t scratchy like I’d expected.

“My daughter Brenda and her friend Rhoda are both in your class.” Mrs. Beahm saved me from having to speak, although I did manage a small smile and a nod which was my normal greeting for strangers.

“I’m thrilled to have you in my class. I’ve heard wonderful comments about you both.” She laughed softly without the slightest hint of a cackle. “We’ll have a

special year together.” Mrs. Hudspeth looked at Brenda, then at me. I think her eyes twinkled as our eyes met.

Mrs. Hudspeth showed us to our desks, which were beside each other because our last names were Baldon and Beahm. I looked around the room. Bulletin boards with colorful fall leaves waiting for our papers, bright posters advertising an upcoming Scholastic book fair, and shelves full of books lined the walls. No crystal ball in sight! Tina hurried over to show us where to put our lunches. I placed my new Disney school-bus lunchbox on the shelf. Goofy was the driver, with Mickey and Minnie waiting beside the steps, while Donald peered from the back window.

When I turned around, I saw it— propped in the corner by the shelves. Sure didn’t look like a witch’s broom to me.

“Please, stand beside your desks for the Pledge of Allegiance.” Then the principal came over the loudspeaker: “Welcome to Florence Black Elementary School for this school year. Please stand beside your desks for the Pledge of Allegiance.”

After the pledge, a sixth grader read a Bible passage and short devotional. Since the past two years had begun each day the same way, I started to feel at home. I didn’t even notice when Brenda’s mom left the room.

Reading groups were formed during the first week of school. Some teachers snapped at kids who stumbled over words, but not Mrs. Hudspeth. She explained how the rules for letters work, or why the word was pronounced that way. We all liked how patient she was with slow readers. We liked knowing we wouldn't be laughed at for messing up.

Mrs. Hudspeth's heart was as big as all of Texas. We knew we were safe with her.

↔

As I taught through the years, I tried to make each child feel welcome like I had felt on that first day in Mrs. Hudspeth's class. Like her, I've never been a beauty queen, but I could greet each person I met with a smile to let them know I cared.

One year a student was repeating third grade. We met before school began and I assured him that we would have a great year. I asked if he would be my helper for the year, since he had already been through third grade. I explained that he had a few gaps in his knowledge, but the other students were learning all of this for the first time. I knew he was smart and possessed more energy than most students, but had more interest in being outside than sitting still in a classroom. The previous teacher had kept him in from recess due to unfinished work. We

decided that since he could run so quickly, he would race around the school building several times a day. He loved running up the basement steps, around the building, and back downstairs while someone timed him. He could then return to his desk ready to focus. We were both excited when he completed the year ready for advancement.

Twenty years later, Mama called to read Mrs. Hudspeth's obituary to me. Memories rushed back of that first day in third grade when I learned that *beauty is more than skin deep*.

Untitled
Kayla Napier



Collage

Abigail Smith



Haiku
Andrea Jackson

Skin of melanin

hair that defies gravity

Black girls are MAGIC

Casting Away
Lexie Ray



Birth

Olevia Hughes

The glory of a birth, how beautiful.

With precious love and joy comes forth life.

Women give birth, not without pain and strife.

Life anew, everything is wonderful.

All your dreams are, for right now, colorful.

Your body is now stressed under the knife,

Truth be told you've never felt more alive.

Yet, no sound can be heard, how critical.

An enormous fear flushes, face to feet.

All your hard work is now finally done,

You now hold your precious little baby.

A true Adonis to your disbelief.

The fragile being you should've called son,

Now sleeps peacefully for eternity.

Love Doesn't Always Win

Sydney Wakefield

He fell in love with her exquisite smile,
The curve of her hips that made him go wild.

He had dreamt of her walking down the aisle,
Picturing a life with her and a child.

The wedding was grand, and they all rejoiced;
But now, it was sadly time for goodbyes.

There was something vile the bride never voiced;
These thoughts would someday lead to their demise.

He lived in bliss during their whole marriage;
She had found pleasure in other places.

They brought home his baby in a carriage;
Only so long could there be glad faces.

John found out that love does not always win,
As his wife, Alison, went on to sin.

Her Weeping Death

Kimberly Guy

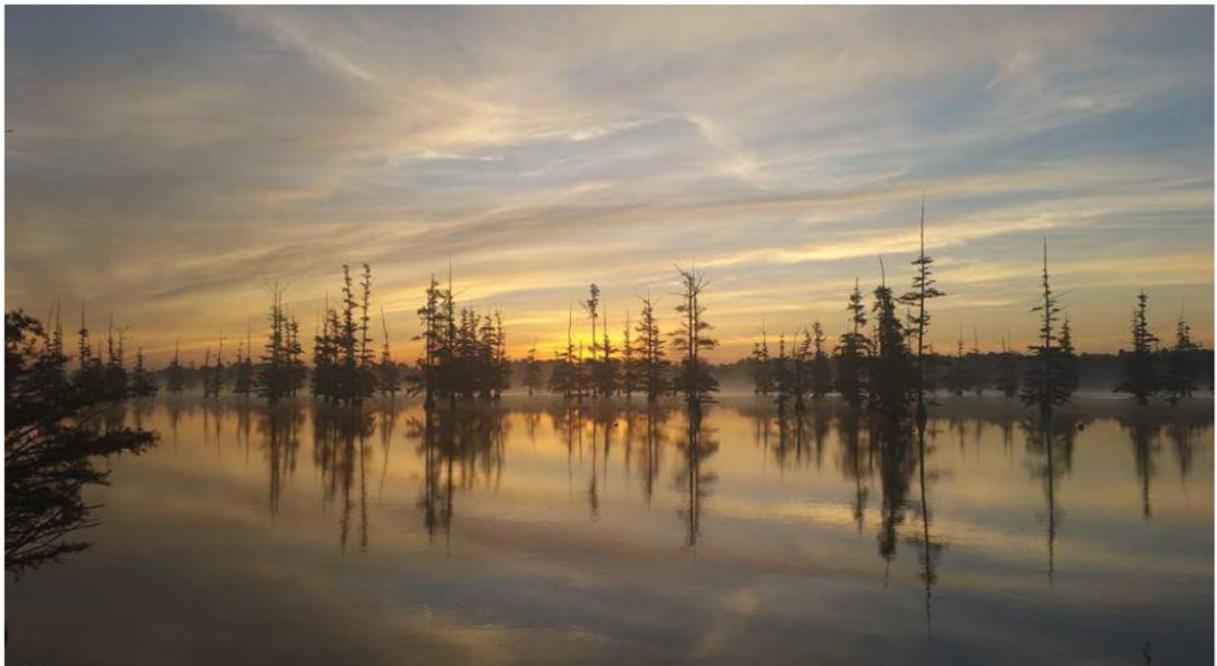
She dries her tired eyes as the days pass,
In the distance a weeping willow stands,
She is trying to forget with every glass,
In these miserably wearly, cold, dark lands.

Emotions so high she can hardly bear,
The time has come since she has chosen her fate,
The willow will end her horrid nighmares,
Because none of the drinks could compensate.

The wind howling its warnings and sorrows.
She is longing for that beat that quit singing,
Ever willing to forget tomorrow,
Quick to ignore the voices still ringing.

Her child now gone and buried down below.
In the willow, her body left swinging.

A Dawn To A New Day
Tonda Keys







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