



# INSPIRED INK



Drawn by Autumn Wise

Graphically designed by Autumn Wise,  
Brandon McCulloch, Breonna North, and  
Amani Hawash

# INSPIRED INK

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Thank you for picking up the first edition of Inspired Ink! This year, we have read, reviewed and collected exceptional work from high school students in Mr. Neal's Creative Writing and English classes to bring you ORVA high school's first Literary Magazine. We had so much fun putting this magazine together, and the fact that you are reading this is a credit to our wonderful staff of copy editors, story architects and layout designers for all the time and effort they put in and to everyone who let us showcase their amazing work. I would also like to send out a special thank you to Mr. Neal for his ideas, support, and the use of his classroom. We are all so proud to have been a part of this magazine and so excited to share it with you.

Graham Greene, a British author and novelist once said, "Writing is a form of therapy. Sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation."

Lives are complicated. There are more shifting scenes, tumbling emotions, and confusing plot twists in real life than you will ever find in a book. Our hope for the following stories, as with all art, is that instead of comparing them to your own life, you use them as means to escape from it. Not to hide from the trials you might be facing, but to find hope in some little world you discover between the lines of a poem, or in a friend found woven into a piece of fiction, much like you might find a lion and a witch in a wardrobe.

It's true, keeping your mind completely open to creativity takes some practice. The world is filled with ticking clocks and tight schedules that like to make us work like robots; getting up at the sound of an alarm and going through our day constantly glancing at the numbers in the bottom right corner of our computer screens. But creativity is what makes us human. It sets us free of the clock for a little while and allows us to create, imagine, tell stories, and paint pictures in our minds.

Unfortunately, there are an alarming number of people who don't see that creativity goes hand-in-hand with education. They don't see that imagination makes us better students, stronger job candidates and happier people. Fortunately, I have found people who do believe in ~~fairies~~ creativity. And I have discovered secret gardens of it all over our school. That is why we have put this magazine together for you; to show you the gardens of inspiration our peers have created this year.

So, without further delay, turn the page! Wonderful stories are waiting for you just around the corner. On behalf of our whole staff, please read, escape, explore, and enjoy.

Audrey "Dree" Wojnarowisch

Student Editor

# INSPIRED INK

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## Nonfiction

### “If I Fall” – Samantha Slauson

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Optimism is such a strange thing. One minute you may feel as if you were on cloud nine with so much hope in your heart you fear of it bursting right inside of you, but then that feeling disappears with a snap of a finger—just like that. Your face falls into a frown, there is an odd taste in your mouth and the feeling of failure fills the pit of your stomach until you have to hug yourself to make sure you won't fall apart. It's one terrible rollercoaster.

It's what I feel whenever I walk into the hospital, and then exit it a few days later with nothing but anger following me back home. No one is at fault, not directly, and I've told myself over and over again not to blame these poor doctors trying to stabilize my heart while simultaneously train my legs and brain to make it realize that no, walking actually does not hurt, but what else am I supposed to feel? Patience for the time wasted with false diagnoses? The chronic pain they found in my legs was about as rare as wolves were in the United States, and the only way for it to go away was more physical therapy than I ever imagined my body being capable of handling.

“It's going to be okay,” they keep telling me.

Usually, that is my cue to leave the room to cool off. The endless circle of anger, annoyance and sadness was exhausting. Physical activities such as boxing helped and are therapeutic, but nothing beats a good book or a new story swirling in my mind to help me focus on something else and transfer any strong emotions onto pieces of paper. These pieces tend to end next to my trashcan in a heap of crumbled potential, but everything was finally *out* and afterwards I'm drained enough to have a civilized conversation.

It was just another day of trying to get out of bed without outside help when my mother got the call from the hospital. They wanted to try the physical therapy with me one more time. I thought it was nothing but a waste of time, but two months with controlled therapy and new medications was nothing we couldn't accept, and so I went on to pack my bags; nothing I haven't done before.

Admittedly, walking into a children's hospital with a stoic expression and no hope in your hand was not the way to start off, but the nurses welcomed me with open arms. They even seemed to be

sympathetic and understanding, something that made me feel better about staying here, yet also bad for making this bright place seem a little darker with my mere presence.

The walls in my room were blue, the hard sofa on which parents slept from time to time was an unappetizing color of olive and, “Welcome Samantha!” was written in big letters on a whiteboard next to a pair of wooden cupboards with a television attached to the wall. Swallowing a sarcastic remark of having been in this very room, number 312, many times before, I thanked the nurse and settled in for the night.

Dr. Hoyer wouldn't be in until tomorrow morning for the therapy planning wouldn't start until the morning so I took this as an opportunity to use the mostly empty movie room to prepare for what was to come. My parents left because visiting hours were over, and I found myself missing my mother who would now tell me to sit up straight and stop frowning or else I'd get wrinkles before my time. With a sigh, I straightened my back and smiled at an eight year old walking in with her mother—the little children's parents were allowed to stay until bed time. She waved at me, but fell asleep soon enough, and seeing her yawn made me tired so I settled in for the night.

It was dreadful to say the least. No hospital bed in the history of hospital beds has ever been comfortable and when the clock struck midnight, I moved over to the distasteful green sofa to close my eyes. Before I knew it, it was the next morning and a new nurse opened my door without knocking and grinned at me so brightly I thought I was going to have to acquire a pair of sunglasses.

“Good morning, sunshine,” she said softly, “I'm Rebecca and I'll be your nurse for the day. Go on and get ready so I can take your vitals and we can get on with your day.”

“Sure thing,” I mumbled, practically running to the restroom located in my room. Something in her hazelnut colored eyes made me think that if I didn't get on with it, she was going to drag me in there by my hair yet keep that smile on her face. My kind of nurse.

The rest of the day consisted me of talking and... of me talking some more. The doctors, therapists—be it physical or

mental—and nurses all knew be by now, and yet they wanted to know the same old boring things about my life, how I was dealing with the chronic pain in my legs and how I felt about it. I was considerably less moody compared to the day before and answered everything with a brave face, but soon reality of my situation sat in, and I had to work hard to keep a straight face.

Melissa, my physical therapist, made things easier on me, but I still let my mood weigh me down, letting it slow me down even. “Five more, Sam, come on,” Melissa urged for the third time in twenty minutes and I held my breath as I finished my sit-ups despite knowing better than to do so.

This was becoming routine behavior for me, and Rebecca had no troubles whatsoever to tell. She came back from vacation when I was one month into my hospital stay. No one's given up on per say, but they have stopped trying to cheer me up whenever I walked into a room. Everyone would smile at me and wish me a good morning, but that was it. Rebecca was different; she demanded a good day and if I didn't have one, she sat me down to write a list of things I wanted to improve on the next day.

She was retying her ponytail for the fifth time since coming to sit with me in my room when she said, “Listen, I know how you feel, Sam, I do. But you've gotta turn that frown upside down. The situation you're in right now is crazy and we all know it, but you're never going to get out if you won't work for it. You have to remember that hard work and dedication *always* pay off.”

Her words had a bigger impact on me than I thought possible. It seemed like such an easy mindset, but after having been disappointed by too many people in the medical field, I let myself think that this was simply the way things were. I was so wrong. I couldn't believe just how wrong I truly was, and decided to work on myself. What if I truly made it out of here healthy? There was no way I could keep the frown and the attitude.

Things changed drastically for me. Whatever feelings I had toward optimism and its disappointment vanished from my mind. I could hardly remember why I ever felt that way just two months ago. There will always be times in which I will fail, but who says I should stay on the ground if I fall? That wasn't me, not anymore.

## “My Inspiration” – Carlton Quist

“BUT HER  
MOTIVATION HAS  
BECOME A  
SOURCE OF  
INSPIRATION  
FOR ME.”

Though I had only been at my grandparent’s apartment for a month, the time spent there seemed to go on infinitely. The dull interior of the house matched the mood of the visit perfectly well, which was a stark contrast to the bright and sunny days being had outside. Every passing day the sun would run over the mountain in the morning, towered above the city in an empty blue sky during midday, and in the afternoon would set over three dead volcanoes; these are some of the things I observed from the window as I sat bored, missing home. The hot air of an Albuquerque summer day gave the illusion of more tension growing as the days before the end of our visit quickly came into view –this feeling was comparable to being inside a crowded elevator. This extended visit had a purpose only my mother and I were aware of.

I had felt very distant during the visit to my grandparent’s house; I had barely made any attempts to talk to my grandmother, whom this trip was made for. In an almost snowball-like effect my grandmother’s health had gone down hill over just a couple of years. The last house she and my grandfather had owned had a carbon leak that was at the time unknown to them and gave her many health problems, making a move necessary. The damage was done and they moved into a small apartment with 2 smaller bedrooms and a decent sized living room that I spent the majority of my time in. My mother and two sisters were more often found in my grandparent’s bedroom; crowdedness and I do not share a loving relationship, besides the people the room was cluttered with a huge TV, a large bed, and a variety of walking devices, which usually helped steer me clear away from their room. Though I was not the closest with my grandmother we did share a common interest, psychology. When we could we would talk about the subject or watch shows on

it; however that was not to continue for much longer. Unbeknownst to my sisters, my mom and I knew my grandma’s health was catching up to her and this longer than normal visit was due to that fact.

Sitting on my grandparent’s old brown couch I looked out the window through the blinds which penetrated the darkened living room with a glowing light that revealed dust particles invisible to the naked eye. My family was saying goodbye to my grandmother in the other room which left this room almost silent, only broken by the faint heart beating of my grandmother’s oxygen machine. Being the last to say goodbye, I made my way into the small room as my sisters and mother left. As I walk in to my grandparent’s room she asked me for a hug and I did, it was a strange feeling knowing this would be the last time I’d be able to hug her. Her grip was weak and her arms were shaking because it caused her pain but she still didn’t attempt to stop. She looked at me with her big bright eyes and wrinkled face and said to me, “You know, this is probably the last time you see me before I die.” Without saying a word I nodded. “I just want you to know whatever happens, I’ll always love you. I know you’ll make a great psychologist someday, I know you will.” After an exchange back I left to the car where everyone else was waiting. Looking out the window to the setting sun, I knew what she said was the push I needed to definitively decide on my career path. A month later she would unfortunately pass away but her motivation has become a source of inspiration for me, and I’ll do my best to work towards that goal for the both of us.

## “Rain Dance” – Mya Whitney

I was lying in the middle of the ocean perfectly afloat rocking softly from side to side. The sea surrounded me and held me in a tender embrace as the tide gently thrashed against my sides. I looked up at the sky where the clouds migrated and changed shades like a blurry kaleidoscope. It was so peaceful, I almost didn’t trust it. Despite the suspicion I felt, I continued to wave my hands and legs from side to side creating tide angels. Something didn’t feel quite right, so I closed my eyes as tight as I could, causing me to see spots behind my eyelids. As I opened them, I saw my bedroom ceiling and felt my crisp sheets beneath me. The sound of my alarm clock echoed in my head. I made a big fuss when I stood up, because at that moment, every cell in my body would rather go back to the sketchy ocean dream than go to school that day. Today, every cell in my body is glad that I didn’t listen.

The whole morning was a blur, as were most mornings. I brushed my hair and teeth, got dressed, and actually remembered to eat something. Rushing out the door with my backpack slung over one shoulder, I put my earphones in and turned up the volume as loud as I could. Listening to Ray Lamontagne and Van Morrison were the only way to properly start my day. I stepped out into the crispy Oregon air, soggy leaves slushing under my converse. I was reluctant to get into the car and go to school, so I stood there for a moment trying to think of a reason as to why school could harm my life and why I shouldn’t go that day. Honestly, I wanted to avoid doing *anything* because in a few short weeks, my family would be relocating to the coast and I’d have to leave all my friends behind. The thought made my stomach ache with sadness, but I brushed it off and a moment later, I concluded that none of my ideas were rational so I took the walk of shame into the front seat next to my mom and began the ride to prison (also known as “school” in most dialects).

I arrived that day fashionably late like I did most days, but Mr. Soter, my first period study hall teacher thought it was quite distasteful. I brushed off his snappy comment as I walked through the door and took my seat next to my friend Maia. We shoved our

desks together and began to whisper about pointless things. The whole room was softly buzzing with light chatter. There were a few kids at the teacher’s desk, making jokes and kissing up to Mr. Soter as usual. There were some on the computers researching for the Romeo and Juliet project, and of course, a few messing around with the telescopes in the back. Maia and I however, sat in the middle of the room doodling on each other’s hands, taking pictures and texting friends behind the cover of our overstuffed binders. First period was everyone’s least favorite place because only us freshman were required to attend. Naturally, everyone (even teachers) were bitter about this mandatory class, so we all wasted the time in silent protest doing almost anything besides studying. Even Mr. Soter sat at one of the lab stations arm wrestling students most days.

After first period was algebra and science, two things I definitely chose to forget. Two laborious hours later, the saving grace of the lunch bell rang in the hallways, bringing everyone back to life. As I stepped out into the hall, it was its usual chaotic mess of scattering teenagers, rushed and anxious to leave or get a good seat in the cafeteria. I was one of them. The local pop radio station blared in the hallway speakers and shook the ground slightly. The blue tiles seemed to move like a conveyor belt, but it was only the push and shove of hungry teenagers that made the ground seem to slip from beneath my feet. Finally I made it to the hospitable safety of my group of best friends. We were like a big family at school, extremely close and ready to make the best of that rainy day.

Huddled together, we roamed the halls with our usual mix of causing commotion and debating whether Red Hot Chili or The Offspring were a better band. Everyone was laughing, arms around one another and I was being carried on the back of my best guy friend River. Truthfully speaking, the jam packed hallways weren’t particularly safe for someone as small and clumsy as I. The day was average, as comfortable as a crowded school could be. **Cont. on [Page 5](#)**

## “Rain Dance” (Cont.)— Mya Whitney

The halls were teeming with even more students that day due to the rain. My friends and I however had enough of the cramped melancholy building and decided to withdraw into the showering courtyard.

We traveled to the exit and got a running start through the doors. The rain poured down like it was trying to drown us and the air had that fresh scent that only showers could bring. Seconds later, we were all completely soaked from head to toe and laughing hysterically. Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion, like those indie music videos where you don't really know what the heck is going on, but you really enjoy it. I still clung to Rivers' back for dear life as he jumped and danced around. It seemed that amidst all this pandemonium, everyone was strangely peaceful. Every time I made eye contact with someone, we made a silent connection as if we were reading each other's minds. Our body language was impulsive and audacious, but when I looked into my friends' eyes, I saw peace and happiness. Next thing I knew, my group of ten best friends was joined by ten more, then about 20 more, until the whole courtyard was scattered with teens dancing in the rain. Wet mops of

messy hair and hoodies surrounded me, everyone surging, jumping and splashing each other as the radios top 40 hits blasted through the schools PA system.

In this moment I discovered something very important about my friends and I. Even though we were reckless, and maybe *too* carefree, we were happy. We did whatever felt right, not because we had to but because we *wanted to*. Long story short, that rain dance was the best hour anyone could ever have at school. It was that day that I realized my time here in high school was fleeting hopelessly. I looked at my friends around me and couldn't help but feel abnormally happy. Life was so short and I didn't have time to be sad about changes. I had to take advantage of life, and days like these were never to be forgotten. I think that day I realized what my life was about. It was happiness. When you're a teenager, you're herded through life like sheep and I think at some point you need to decide whether you're going to mindlessly roam with the crowd or break free onto your own path. That was the day I broke free.

**“EVEN THOUGH WE  
WERE RECKLESS,  
AND MAYBE TOO  
CAREFREE, WE  
WERE HAPPY.”**

## “Finding Inner Peace”— Brandon McCulloch

As the cold, winter day progressed, golden rays pierced through the shadow-like clouds overhead. As I watched out the window, I felt the urge to enjoy the sun while I could, for I knew that it wouldn't be long before an opportunity like this would fade away. Though the outside air was chill, only a light jacket was needed. Almost in a rush, I bolted out the door, ready for whatever lay ahead.

I watched the ground as I went, observing where animals had stepped. The tracks seemed to shout, “Here I've been, and here I went.” A simple print in the mud, one could sense all that happened. A mother deer and her fawn, wandering along the edge of the field, are startled along the way to the nearby creek. A larger deer is chased down the field by a wolf or two, eventually outrunning the vicious hunters.

As I neared the creek myself, eyes fixed on the ground below my own feet, something moved in the bushes next to me, causing quite the startle. Luckily, it was only a songbird, which sang its wondrous song as it flew away. I immediately turned my attention toward the clear, motionless ocean drifting above my head. The clouds had vanished, revealing a slow-setting sun. Out in the distance I noticed birds dancing in the air, making flips and pirouettes at ease. As I watched, amused, I slowly started to notice the flowing of the water, resonating through the air. A clear, fresh scent, from both the pines and the water, opens the sinuses wide, wide enough for the deepest breaths possible. The chaotic sense one gets from listening to the current is just as easily a relaxing sense. Standing beside the water, I closed my eyes and opened my ears. I try to focus on nothing more but what I hear, and I sigh, a sigh of relief. My muscles loosen, my shoulders fall, and I feel refreshed.

As I move ahead, I look into the dense tree line beside me, watching for anything harmful. I slowly enter the shadows created by the setting sun below the treetops. Here I hurry along, for the air is considerably colder here than in the sun. The back of my hands started losing their color, and gaining another. As I left the freezing shade behind, I noticed people shouting from a nearby house. They were surely adults, based on the sort of language I heard. Soon, a car was heard approaching the house, and a child got out right after it parked. Shouts of joy could be heard from the small child, reminding me that we all were once young. A dog barked as it was chased by the child. I started to wish I was once again that young.

About half through my journey, I felt quite calm, having just about escaped the binds of stress. However, I wasn't free just yet. I keep walking, sure I was going to be released by the time I got home.

On the side of the path was an old, seasoned log. I pulled my machete out of its sheath, the handle's diamond pattern provided extra grip for a more confident swing. I raised the blade above my head, creating a wave of stress through my body, and I struck the rough, rigid surface of the log. The loud thud, followed by a metallic ringing, was the sound of the final barricade falling. My body, mind, and soul were at peace. Within each swing, the stress flowed through my arm and into the ground beneath. Its final resting place, I wouldn't be seeing any more for a long time.

I sat down, leaned against the log, and watched the sun set. Once the golden rays stopped shining upon the log, I slowly walked my way home, admiring all the things I loved the first time around. In a few days, I'd be ready to return, observe, and relax once again.

## “The Yellow Bus” – Delyla Butler

There's a break in the thick cloud cluster, a little trickle of light floats through the dark, misty mass and to the barely awake ground under my feet. I can feel the soft, damped mountain air warp around my body as the small water particles moving higher into the early morning's sky. It's chilly standing here, but the wait isn't long and sure enough, the sound of loud clanking metal can be heard rumbling up to the turn. I take a little cautious step closer to the road, to be able to see the bus when it arrives, but to also be ready to take my place on the vehicle. The yellow bus stops in front of me, and the group of children standing around me. One after another, we step up, up, up until everyone who was waiting at the bus stop is on safely. After a quick headcount with a mumbled, “One... Two... Three... Four,” the driver slowly eases off the brakes and we begin to move.

Because of the high population in our school, the buses are a bit cramped, thankfully though I manage to find an empty seat. I sit down and put my backpack on the rest of the seat as though it's a guard warding off any unwanted visitors. But don't misunderstand, this isn't an act that's meant to be selfish, I saved the extra seat so my friend would also have a place to sit. As we pull up to her stop in front of the house she lives in, I move my bag and welcome with warmth of my friend with a still-tired smile and a gentle wave of hello. Our minds are still hazed in the afterglows of sleep, so we don't say much to each other after that. I look out the window and my friend plugs in earphones to listen to music.

The passing scenery looks so much different in the soft morning light than it does in the hustle of the bright day. Everything is quiet, calm. Even though most have to be places and important itineraries to go over in their heads, I always feel that the morning is the most peaceful time of day. Watching the thick brush, tall dew covered trees, and the slightly blue sky as we pass by it brings a content feeling of hopefulness that the day will be kind.

Around a bend in the road I see a curl of smoke reaching out of the trees towards the sky. It's a thick, dark cloud that mares the early blue sky with an ugly shade of deep gray. Curiously, I look around at the others on the bus to decipher their reactions. Most are asleep, still not a part of the morning world, but some are also looking out the front window of the vehicle with expressions that range from worried to completely neutral. I turn to the smoke outside again; it's gotten thicker, denser. And we're closer to it too.

The driver must see nothing at all, because she continues to move forward, closer and closer.

We reach the turn. There's a collective gasp from the front row of passengers and as the middle part of the bus pulls up over the turn, I see why they gasped. The kids are rushing to the left side of the bus, pushing and leaning over each other in hopes to get a better view. The driver of the bus stops in the middle of the road, almost directly in front of the house that's on fire. The flames that lick the sides of the house are huge and look angry. You can hear the sound of the floors burning and collapsing, furniture and walls caving in and crashing down. The red flames swallow the structure whole, it almost doesn't even look like a house at all. Windows, doors, walls, they're all burned away.

The sight of this house on fire holds us all to our seats, no one talks or moves for what feels like hours. But in just a few seconds, a boy a year older than me speaks up, no longer consumed with shock. “Hey!” he shouts towards the bus driver, “we have to call 9-1-1!” And he's right. No emergency crew are anywhere in sight. There's no one on the road, besides our bus. I'm not sure at that moment if that's a good sign, or something terribly horrific is about to play out before my eyes.

The driver gulps like a goldfish, nods her head frantically and pulls out her mobile phone. I realize my friend is now awake, the poor thing must have been startled into consciousness from all the commotion. To show a sign of comfort for her obvious distress, I put my arms around her in a tight embrace. She pulls back and looks at me, then out the window to the house. Quietly, as if afraid to speak, she asks, “What happened? That house...” I shake my head and tell her that I don't know.

She stares at the house she ask, “Do you think... there's people in there?” I want to say, “I don't know” again but no words will leave my mouth. The thought of people, innocent people just waking up, starting their day, in the house... I could feel a heavy dagger of sadness, pain, and guilt rip through my chest. Thinking about a situation like that made it hurt to breathe. Every cell and atom in my body was saying, “No, no, no,” over and over again.

Through the turmoil of it all, the heavenly sound of sirens greets us all. Everyone on the bus takes a deep sigh of relief. Help is here, we're going to be okay. The firemen

jump out and prepare their hoses; another one runs to our bus and tells us to evacuate the vehicle. He rushes the group of us far from the scene of the house and one by one asks every person if they're alright. After the quick check of our safety he goes back to help his crew. The other first respondents have now arrived and the once quiet, sleepy road is filled with police, ambulances, fire trucks, shouting and loud noises. Again, each of us get looked over for injuries more thoroughly by the paramedics. No one who was on the bus is hurt, just shaken up. The EMT's understand and tell us that another bus is coming by to take us to our school. Each other parents or guardians have been called and will meet us there. Everything will be okay. No one dares to ask if there was people inside the house though, too afraid of what the answer will be.

The ride through the wooded part of town is over and the bus has come to a stop in front of the school building. Kids, parents, teachers and the like are milling about anxiously every which way, crying and frantically talking on their phones. Slowly, in a painstakingly orderly fashion, every passenger gets off the bus one after the other. After a headcount and confirming all kids are present, we're allowed to go to our loved ones. I run over to my mom, doubled over on a small bench in front of the school sobbing uncontrollably into her hands.

“Mom, mom, it's me, it's me. I'm okay, I'm alright,” I tell her as I pull her hands away from her face and wrap my arms around her in a warm hug. I can feel her tears soaking into my shirt, but I can't find it in me to care. I squeeze her tighter, just to make sure she's here, that I'm okay. Everything is fine. She lifts her head, wipes her tears and then mine, which I didn't even know where there, and kisses both my cheeks. She holds me in her protective embrace again and utters in a shaking and broken voice, “You're okay, you're okay.”

A few days later I found out the house was thankfully empty at the time. The family that lived there had already left for where they had to be for the day. It's reassuring to know that they're okay, but I don't think I'll ever forget that day. A sleepy, slow morning broken by a harsh flash of reality and how quick everything you own can be gone forever.

## “A Procession of Voices” – Megan Davidson

Maybe it was the fact that it was the fourth time that year that my dad and I sat down to watch *Jaws* together, or maybe it was just three times too many. I remember him rattling off the lines, perfectly in sync with the movie, from across the house when he went to grab another soda from the fridge or through the too-thin walls when he stepped outside for a smoke. He didn't even need to see what was happening on the screen to know what to say, and I'd be lying if I said my 9 year old self didn't think that was the coolest thing ever. Sunlight would stream through the cracks in the brown curtains and paint patterns across the wooden floors. The sound of the movie drowning out the noise bleeding out of the kitchen, sounds of my mother making dinner and asking, again for the *n-th* time, “Haven't you seen that movie enough times?!” But I would ignore her, and Dad couldn't hear because he was

still outside. It wasn't much, and it's small really, but it was in moments like those when I felt the most at ease. Like the ticking of a grandfather clock with the pendulum swinging back and forth, I was content to go on like that forever.

Maybe it was the 24-hour long marathon of *A Christmas Story* we watched on TBS every year without fail, much to the chagrin of my mother, because god if she didn't hate that movie. And it didn't matter that the glow of our Christmas tree would cast a glare on the television screen, because my dad didn't need to see what was going on to know exactly when to say the exact make and model of that stupid BB gun in perfect unison with Ralphie. **Cont. on [page 7](#)**

*“It wasn't much,  
and it's small  
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## “A Procession of Voices” (Cont.)— Megan Davidson

our laps to properly pay attention to the movie. We were never the type of family to use our dining room table for anything other than catching junk mail anyway. The smell of sugar cookies baking in the kitchen, always in the shape of a candy cane or Christmas tree (because somehow they always tasted better that way), would make its way to our noses and steal our attention away from the television once our plates were all but licked clean of the holiday foods. It wouldn't make a difference in the end, the movie would continue to play well into the next day, and somehow he was able to switch perfectly from the gruff voice of the Mr. Parker to the whine of the little brother, Randy, and at 12 years old it was still the coolest thing ever.

Maybe it was the *n-th* time we sat down together in front of the TV to watch *The Sandlot*, the *n-th* time I pretended to be irked at the fact that my dad was once again talking over the movie, but I secretly didn't really care because I was talking over it right with him. And something about the way he laughed, deep and hearty when I did told me it

wasn't exactly a secret, he knew I wasn't mad and I knew he wasn't mad and we continued to relay the lines verbatim even though those kids on the screen had, to put it kindly, a colorful lexicon. He said to me once "I watched this when it first came out, before you were even born," as if that should mean he gets to voice the better characters. But it was okay, because I was 15 and it was still the coolest thing ever. He let me voice my favorites, anyway.

Maybe it was all those times, all the "we're gonna need a bigger boat"s and "you'll shoot your eye out kid"s and of course the "you're killing me smalls," that now, even though my dad is 1,900 miles away, I can sit down in front of the TV by myself and watch *Jaws*, or a *Christmas Story*, or *The Sandlot* and I'll say both my lines and his in time with the characters on the screen. I'm 17 now and it feels a little lame, a little less than cool when it's only me and not my dad and I. I'm 17 now, and hope if I ever have kids down the road, a long, long way down the road, they'll think it's the coolest thing ever like I did once.

# Poetry Section

## “Happy!”— Breonna North

## “A Collection of Haikus”— Mya Whitney

What  
really confuses  
me is how

**GREAT  
I FEEL WHEN  
I WRITE**

down  
everything  
here

this  
should  
be

what  
I do every  
day

even  
though I  
know

likely  
unbearably  
cliche

all  
of this  
is

for  
a teenage  
girl

I now feel I have  
to admit I confirmed my  
utter inconceivable idiosyncrasy but  
at least I feel really good  
this is my therapy just  
call it what it is  
perhaps I should  
schedule myself  
appointments  
with this dumb  
blank sheet of  
paper and some  
writing utensil with  
an intent to make me  
something beautiful and  
even if I don't, I'll have made  
something at least and practice  
makes perfect, in poetry and art and  
life in  
general  
so just  
let me  
a few  
more years

In the ladies room  
A blue ink pen on the floor  
Poem on the wall

A quick little song  
I wrote it on a napkin  
Lost at the diner

Ink upon my hand  
There was a world written here  
But it washed away

It's spontaneous  
Anywhere and everywhere  
A story unfolds



Original artwork by Brandon McCulloch

### “Three”— Brandon McCulloch

Wherefore hath the loved ones gone  
The ones you thought you knew so well  
Thoughts were shared with the only one  
Those times have seemed to quell

Time never shared its secrets  
Until the time is right  
And if you happen to quit  
You'll wonder through the night

Love is a delicate thing  
Not to be corrupted  
For it's a song to sing  
Not something to tread

### “Thawing”— Students of Literary and Composition Analysis II

The hard pounding rain continues to fall,  
The water trickles down the new-bud plants,  
Once again, I hear the old drummers call,  
Lancing down to dismiss my newfound cants.

A certain rose bud opens to my eyes,  
Time and time again I've taken the stakes,  
Now I can see into the bright blue skies,  
Tallying in my newly lost mistakes.

Faults fade away, like tides ever-shifting,  
The trees, reaching for the high skies, will sway,  
I look to the sky and see clouds drifting,  
Pinks, blues, reds and yellows, wash me away.

Renewed with the dying of the harsh frost,  
Springtime take me where I will not get lost.



### “The Void”— Jonathan Godfrey

Space, the final frontier,  
An empty void of curiosities,  
Our final barrier on our search,  
For new life and new meaning,  
For beings that reason and employ  
logic,  
Perhaps we are searching for our-  
selves.

### “Fire and Ice”— Autumn Wise

You're fire, and I'm ice.  
In the beginning it felt right.  
Slowly, I began to open my eyes.  
Your words they burned,  
and mine sliced.  
You're always too hot,  
while I'm always so cold.  
Storms rage when we get too close,  
but staying apart is just too hard.  
Loving makes us vulnerable.  
Fire can be filled with hate,  
but ice can be unforgiving.  
Fire can be forgiving,  
and ice can also be forgiven.



**“STORMS RAGE  
WHEN WE GET  
CLOSE, BUT STAYING  
APART IS JUST TOO  
HARD.”**

### “One”— Brandon McCulloch

Love is a link;  
A link, from heart to heart,  
From person to person,  
But why does it start?  
  
It pierces your soul,  
It engulfs your heart,  
It fills in a hole,  
But why, just why, must it start?

Some people want it,  
Some people need it,  
For some - love is a curse.  
But what is love?  
  
It's a happy thing, indeed,  
For it's the warmth on which we  
feed.  
Without it you'd be cold,

For love is what you need.  
  
Love must start,  
It must fill your heart;  
It kills the man it avoids,  
That's why, just why, it must start.

## “Unequal Symmetry”— Breonna North

jamming my side  
 into the edge of the  
 counter and I can't  
 get you to let me do  
 it again to the other

you accidentally scratch my arm as you up and grab your book so I raise my hand automatically  
 you say a subtle sorry and I mumble an it's all good and it is and my hand traces absently over to  
 the other arm and your eyes flicker over but you know oh you know what I'm going to do my best  
 to do so you grab my hand just before I can drag the nail over the other arm evenly and I look up

now the horrified face  
 belongs to both stares

and you don't understand I need it on both sides you don't understand how I don't feel right now  
 I require equal pain but you comprehend not all the turmoil I feel trapped within an imperfect skin  
 but your grasp tightens as my savior in nail form grows closer and you begin to whisper I can do  
 it I can beat this and I am laughing because it's not something I need to beat it's something you

must allow me to do  
 it's not bad pain if it  
 keeps me sane is it  
 you release my hand

## “Two”— Brandon McCulloch

Minor problems may seem  
 major,

While you leave the major  
 ones alone.

Don't stress the small stuff,  
 you've been told.

You didn't listen.

Now, your problems grow,  
 Blossom, in ways unimagi-  
 nable.

You're emotions start to  
 flare up, but

You are trapped.

You are now a prisoner of  
 your own world,

Controlled only by what  
 stress sees fit.

Your emotions fury, you're  
 at wit's end,

You see the key to your  
 problems.

You fix only part of your  
 problem.

You've started a chain reac-  
 tion,

You're relieved of all the  
 stress.

You control your life.

You're living free.

**“YOU ARE NOW A  
 PRISONER OF YOUR  
 OWN WORLD,  
 CONTROLLED ONLY  
 BY WHAT STRESS  
 SEES FIT.”**

## Fiction

### “Eerie Mirror”— Madeline Lambert

“IT REMINDS ME OF  
THE KIND OF ATTICS  
YOU SEE IN SCARY  
MOVIES THAT I’M  
TOO AFRAID TO  
WATCH.”

Walking up the creaky wooden stairs into my family's attic, there are treasures to be found. Hello, my name is Olivia. Hidden in the darkness of the long narrow room, there are labeled boxes and locked chests, furniture pieces that belong to my great grandmother hidden away under blankets, a coat rack, some lamps and framed paintings my mother did at the beginning of her and my father's marriage. That was long before I came along. There were vintage dresses that old metal manikins modeled, a vanity that's mirror had a thick layer of dust, and a bunch of other small miscellaneous things. I didn't know what I was looking for. My eyes were still adjusting to the too dimly lit space. The only light there was, was coming from the outside, but a giant wardrobe was in front of the window so only rays of it were able to get in.

I have to admit, this place was kind of scary. The old wooden floors creaked at every step, everything had a blanket of dust, furniture pieces had covers over them so they wouldn't grow old looking. It reminds me of the kind of attics you see in scary movies that I'm too afraid to watch.

Then all of a sudden I heard someone whisper my name, "Olivia, Olivia, I'm right here Olivia. Come and find me."

"Yes mother?" I shouted down the stairs. A waiting for a minute, but she didn't respond. My heart then started to race, my palms became sweaty, and I was the only one in the room. If someone would've walked up the stairs I would of saw them. I would have heard the creaky floors.

"Olivia I'm right here," the voice said to me again in an even louder tone. Even though I was scared out of my mind, I went towards the voice, "Yes, that's it, follow my voice. That's a good girl."

It led me to a mirror that was covered in a drape. Pulling it off it revealed a beautiful standing mirror. There were metal roses at the top and their vines wrapped the rest of the frame. It was a glossy white and was just tall enough so I could fully see myself. Unlike the rest of the things in this room, there wasn't a speck of dust on it. The glass didn't have a single finger print, not even a smudge.

"Hello there Olivia, I've been waiting for you to come up

here for quite some time," the voice said. Who are you? Where are you?" I asked, turning my head back to face the room. There was still no one there. Suddenly, I felt a slight tap on my shoulder,

"I'm right here, silly." Gradually turning around I had a petrified look on my face, my palms and the back of my neck were sweaty, and my knuckles were clenched white.

There, then before me, I saw myself, merely just my reflection. My knuckles loosened, I gave out a sigh of relief. "Don't look so scared, it's only 'lil old me, Sara," my reflection spoke. No longer did it mirror my image. She smiled and crossed her arms. Taking a step back I tripped and fell on my butt. Slowly I began to move back. "Now is that the right way to greet your sister? I haven't seen you in fifteen years. Wow has time flies," she said. I couldn't get a word out other than,

"Y- y- you're my si- sis- sister?" I sat there on the floor in utter astonishment. I didn't know whether to be scared or in wonder.

"Not just sister, but twin sister. You're obviously the pretty twin" she explained, "now come on and give your sister a hug". Her arms stretched wide out from the glass. Slowly I stood back up to my feet and leaned in for a hug.

But all of a sudden Sara grabbed me and pulled me into the mirror as she stepped out. I banged on the glass but it wouldn't break. Unlike she, I couldn't even have a hand go passed. All I could do is press my hands against the cold glass. "Oh my dear sister, you may have got the pretty but I surely got the brains. It's a shame that our first time meeting ended like this. I feel bad but I've been cooped up in that mirror for fifteen years. Oh wait, sixteen years today. Happy birthday Olivia." she said to me with a smirk on her face before walking away. "Oh, and this is my gift to you".

Without hesitation Sara knocked over the mirror. As it hit the ground it shattered into pieces. I watched as Sara walked away portraying as me. I hit and banged on the glass for help but no one could hear me. Most likely no one would ever hear me. Turning around, I saw that I was alone in a dark cold space. A single tear rolled down my face and just like that, my life ended.

### Tuesday at 7:25 AM— Delyla Butler

Light twinkled in from the open window and softly roused Wallace from his sleep. He rubbed his eyes awake and stumbled into the bathroom, much more unbalanced than usual. Paying no mind to his surroundings, he begins his morning routine. Brushing his teeth, washing his face, getting dressed; everything is mundane but at least the sun is out. After he's done in the washroom, Wallace wobbles on his shaking legs downstairs. He turns into the kitchen and is greeted by the back of his wife, Claire. He

greeted her with a simple grunt of a hello. In reply Claire's head twists a full 180 degrees and she lets one single deafening squawk. In the blink of an eye her entire body evaporates into mist. Wallace slumps into a chair at the table and pulls out a newspaper, sighing, he says, "Not again, Claire."

## “Gutter Flower” – Liam Negrón

A wet breeze brushes against me and I reach for a blanket, then smile. Guess I left the window to this wreck open again. I feel coarse fibers of the cot with my fingertips and carefully stretch my back as I get up – careful not to move too fast from its stiff position. Then I yawn and my smile widens. I open my eyes and let the slightly unfamiliar room fill my vision again. A splintery observation deck with a shelter ceiling and poor insulation.

“Home.” I cautiously test the word, then sigh. The room is sparsely decorated with forgotten telescopes and spyglasses next to a mini-fridge and a wheeled seat I had bought. My entire wardrobe is either on me or lying in the corner, and the closest rest rooms are sixteen floors below. But this is exactly what I’ve been working towards. A second chance on life that forces me to face the question of who I’ll be, how things will turn out, and whether or not I’m able to take the chance I have had to make. I have no regrets.

I rub my temples as I think of the constant yelling and violence. Of things said, and the hopeless feeling that every teenager in town felt the same way I did. Barred by threats and “parental” laws used to the wrong extremes. I had spent so much time being mentally abused, I didn’t even know who I was until someone came and shoved it in my face.

I catch my reflection in a window and see how far I’ve come. I’m not a kid anymore. For the first time, the person in the mirror is beginning to look familiar. So this is what I look like living a dream with a fresh start. In this small space set away from the world; the perfect place I can watch it from.

The doves sing in their nest. I look up. My roommates are reminding me to eat something before they leave for the day. I peer out the window, wondering if I should go with them. Maybe I should get a breath of wet metal again. It’s been a while since I stepped out there, but I have errands to run. I pick up yesterday’s list from under my pillow and read the checked items carefully.

“Pass out free-tickets to the ballpark, write song for depressed friend, buy a few oatmeal cookies for the birds, tell the old lady next door she’s beautiful, thank random people on the street and give them roses, and walk around the block smiling... okay, great, and the unchecked errand is... deal with her.” I glance at the phone, then out the window to the bustling city below.

I get up from my cot and venture out-

side, onto the ledge. Vertigo threatens to overwhelm me again but I laugh as I feel the surge of adrenaline begin to pump through me. The doves burst from their nest and fly around me before diving down to the streets below. I spread my arms out and angle my palms in front of me so I can feel the wind against my skin, buffeting against the inside of my coat. Is this what the doves feel each time they get up in the morning? Then memories sober me and my arms drop to my sides.

Cars go by below me. I watch as beggars set up their posts between the streets and children play on the sidewalk. Life was continuing on its way.

“Why can’t I do the same? Why can’t I let go?” I whisper into the wind, “I’m not everything good like she told me I was. I’m not the boy who never backs down-- at least, not yet. If it weren’t for that stupid misunderstanding... if I had told her she was loved by *someone* and she mattered to me,” I catch my breath and internally scold myself for falling so deep into my emotions again. Turning away from the view below, I echo something she had said to me once when I asked why the rain always followed me.

I even remember the faint smile on her lips when she said it, “Because you are the epitome of all things good and wash every one of their pain wherever you go... just like the rain.”

Looking into the sky, I can’t see anything but tears. Sympathetic, but unusually on-time, the clouds seem to know how I feel. But the pigeon begins to sing. What a joke. ‘*Who needs me this time?*’ I think to myself as I pick my spyglass to check the poor neighborhood she lives in, half hoping I wouldn’t see anything, half-hoping I would.

“And there she is.” I whisper breathlessly. Held in the view of my spyglass was a tall teenage girl with sun-touched white skin and white-gold hair, seemingly lost in a crowd that blurred around her. It’s been a long time since I last saw her. So long, I wasn’t even sure it was her at first. But those eyes... she has the kind of eyes that reflect her heart, a sad silver-blue no one ever seems to notice. Though I had done my best to forget, they still have enough intensity for me to feel her pain--even at such a distance. But this time they were tired eyes, and it was a kind of tired I couldn’t allow anyone to feel. This was the poor angel I took it upon myself to protect. Who I tried to be everything for. Everything she needed. But that was before I was pushed away. ...I need to do this for the both of us.

The gutter inches away from my feet gives up its red rose-lily and the flower is swept with the water to the edge. I lunge for it. Time to become the rain--everything I could ever be to her--for one last time.

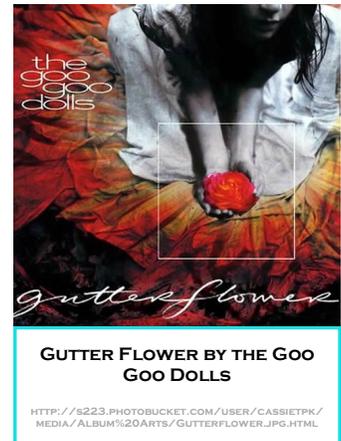
I slide down the support rail of the building and hold onto my gutter flower, remembering the year we had together. Or was it years? It went by so fast and yet... I don’t think I had ever been so alive. Suddenly, all those moments from the past year came flooding back to me as I slid down the wet metal so fast the rain seemed to be flashing upward. All the moments we laughed together. All the moments we cried together. The moments our relationship began and the ones that lead up to its end. Now, as time seemed to rewinding, I could give at least one of us a second chance.

All those years I spent focusing on pain and doubting myself suddenly turned over. I was meant to do this. I told her I would always be there for her... that I will still love her just as much when she finally figures everything out. And so, I’ll be waiting for the phone that never calls. I’ll be able to move on, but never forget a second of it. I whisper the lyrics to our song for the first time in months and jump off the last few feet of the railing, throwing myself into a run. I won’t hide from my fears any longer.

“And I don’t want the world to see me, ‘cause I don’t think that they’d understand. When everything’s made to be broken; I just want you to know who I am.”

\* \* \*

Here I am. The girl who’s finally had enough. I’m tired of people controlling me. Playing god with my life. I’m tired of living with everything that’s been done to me. And I’m tired of living with the people that did them; pretending I’m stupid, submissive, and in a sick love. But my mother, after everything I said and did, don’t I deserve better than to be shut out? I was telling the truth and she thinks I’m a lying slut! Her own daughter. Well, if that’s all I am to her-- I feel the bricks in my pockets--then I’ve had enough. **Cont. on page 12**



“I WON’T HIDE FROM  
MY FEARS ANY  
LONGER.”

## “Gutter Flower” (Cont.)— Liam Negrón

A hooded figure runs through the rain, hands in his pockets. He dodges through the crowd as though late for something important and speeds close to me as he tries to run past. Too close.

“Mmph!” I pull a half spin as he crashes hard into my arm and I begin to fall.

But the boy catches me with a firm grip and gently pulls me back up, the hood covering his eyes. He parts his smooth lips as if to say something but I cut him off and

tell him I’m alright. Same lie I had been feeding everybody for years.

His mouth closes and he gives me a soft smile. “I know you’re not. Sorry for the bump,” and he dashes away.

But that voice... I know I’ve heard it somewhere before. I reach into my pocket again but, instead of harsh brick, I feel something smooth and fragile. I pull it out with care and gasp as I realize what had happened. I hold a brilliant rose-lily in my hands and feel something in me warm. I

look up to the sky and let the mixture of rain and sunlight warmly splash against my face.

“So beautiful... how could I not notice you before?” I stare up at the sky in wonder, then remember the hooded boy and turn three-sixty in the crowd.

“Where did you go?”

## “You Are What You Eat”— Amani Hawash

I have an incredibly...circular figure. Yes, I know, I shouldn’t be so judgmental of my body shape. But I am actually round. There’s also a hole inside of me... literally. That’s right, I’m a donut. Let’s rewind a little. Two years ago, I won a contest at my local 7-11. I won the prize of getting donuts for life at Krispy-Kreme. “I could eat these every single day.” I would say. “Be careful, you might turn into one!” others would joke. Fast

forward a year, having eating at *least* a donut a day, I’ve gained lots of weight. “You are what you eat” people would say. I ignored them, and kept eating my daily donut, day after day. My transformation to a donut was all very sudden, actually. One day, I noticed how round I was getting. Then the next day, I had a huge, gaping hole. A couple of weeks later, some colored sprinkles and frosting emerged. Then, before I knew it, I was a

chocolate donut. I have since been trying to get back to my human body. As they used to say, “You are what you eat”. So now I eat humans. I think it’s working, too, because that dreaded quote hasn’t been said by a single person. Probably because I ate them all.

## July 1998— Breonna North

Ever since I can remember, my father has been a strict man with a heart of gold. My memories of painting with him and smearing watercolors in his beard are as strong as memories of him sternly telling me to put the bullfrog down and stop torturing him. Somehow, he never managed to lose his cool.

My strongest memories begin at age 5, when he stopped working. On his better days he’d entertain me to give my laden mother a break. “My pillow!” I would scream, yanking at the couch pillow.

“That’s right,” Dad would say. “This Is my pillow.” He’d hold it firmly with one hand.

“No, I said *my pillow!*”

“I know! And I said that’s right, it’s mine!”

“Daddy... It’s not yours. It’s *mine*. Em, eye, en, ee!”

“Yes, it’s not yours. It’s mine.” He’d wrap his arms around it tightly, grinning at my bewildered face.

“No! You don’t get it! *Miiiine!*”

“I agree! It’s *miiiine!*” He’d let his voice mockingly soar along the high, whiny notes I’d used, making it a song, trailing off with an “*ieeyieeieeene*” and I wouldn’t be able to decide whether to laugh playfully or cry of frustration.

“Psst,” my mom would whisper from the sidelines.

“Sten. Say it’s Sten’s pillow.”

“It’s *Sten’s* pillow. That means it’s mine.” I’d smile innocently at him and hold my hand out for the pillow.

“Oh-ho-ho!” My father’d laugh with an exaggerated realization. “Well why didn’t you just say so?”

Yet as time wore on his adventures out of his room occurred less and less frequently. I would have to come to

the master bedroom to see him.

“Daddy, you wanna paint?”

“Later, bud; Daddy’s tired.”

I remember watching my mother tenderly change the bandages that were perpetually around his neck. I can’t remember him without them. Blood and open wounds fascinated me; red liquid like paint that’d been left out too long seeped from his mangled skin. His puckered neck and slack jaw raw and gory, I’d only catch a glimpse before my mother would softly ask me not to watch.

At one point while he could still make it down the stairs, we brought all the hair clips we could find fastened them in his thinning hair for the last time. I giggled as he turned to me with a lopsided smile and asked me earnestly, “Do you think it looks good?” After some time, the sick taste of my parent’s bedroom on my tongue, the rough cracking of my father’s voice, and the heat that stung my eyes every time I entered became more than I could handle. In turn, my childish boisterosity became more than he could handle most days, so as I grew I saw him less and less. I’d stare at my paints, their caps shut tight, thinking about creatures that eat away at throats and wondering at the state of life.

One of the last times I saw him downstairs was his birthday. The star-spangled cake had two candles on top, a 3 and a 0. It had tasted of baking powder and rich, sickening butter. My father had grinned sadly at it as we sung; his back was slumped, devoid of the dominance and pride his posture had shown before; all he could manage was a strangled thanks to my mother. His beautiful voice was ruined. He could hardly blow out his candles. In July of my 6th year, people I’d never seen before began to pour into our house. Middle-aged men with potbellies and skinny women with grey hair streamed in, cars filling our driveway over a few short weeks until it

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**“AS TIME WORE ON  
HIS ADVENTURES  
OUT OF HIS ROOM  
OCCURRED LESS  
AND LESS  
FREQUENTLY.”**

---

was as packed as a mall parking lot on Black Friday. Old relatives I’d never heard of and friends of my father came to hug my emotionally and physically exhausted mother over her swollen belly and sit in my parent’s room or play with me until I could almost forget the abnormal color of my father’s face and shiny scalp.

I woke with a start in the middle of the night to fire truck sirens and roosters crowing and an acrid taste in my mouth. A no-longer-stranger called me from my bed frantically and my body forgot sleep. I knew.

## “July 1998” (Cont.)— Breonna North

The circle around his bed was a somber one, friends and relatives and strangers in white gowns and pajamas and face masks, the screen next to his bed showing a single, still, horizontal line, a soft whine agitating me. He wasn't moving. The breath you could hear from a million miles away had been replaced with an eerie stillness. The machine rang restless in my ears and I ran to my mother, bumping aside her arm so I could wrap my arms around her without her belly getting in the way.

Staring up at her, I saw her nose red and her eyes full of the hated wet I'd seen from them all, trembling lips and shuddering breaths.

I didn't ask her for clarification, but stood there for an eternity, confusing mumbles around me telling of relatives, brothers, friends who couldn't make it in time to say goodbye.

The funeral day was crisp and clear, wind whipping at us playfully, stealing our warmth, but not too much for the sun to warm us again. My uncles lifted his old shell on their shoulders; it was a grim, yet

strangely proud and defiant band. We sang his favorite hymns, spoke of his favorite activities, proclaimed thanks for his joy in serving the Lord, and watched his casket lower deep into the ground.

Mother and I were the last to leave. Our house began to empty. Goodbye to all the people I'd met, goodbye to those who'd brought the food and the flowers, goodbye to friends and relatives and strangers. Promises we'd never keep and farewells that were too sincere, and the last person left as I chased behind, wishing they didn't have to go. The life had left the house. It had left the smell of fake flowers and real flowers and old tuna casseroles, the lingering smell of an old wound and the everlasting taste of tears.

I'd sit amongst the flowers to drown out the smells of death and stare at the picture on the pamphlet, a picture of a young Daddy with nothing around his neck. It wasn't the Daddy I knew but it'd have to do. I found myself spoiling our watercolors and letting them drip

down my face; they'd stain my clothes and cheeks, imitating the hot tears that by now I'd utterly run out of. "He's in a better place, he's in a better place, he's in a better place."

The quiet house lasted almost five hours before it filled with life again.

Murmurs of excitement and tears of joy overthrew the deathly silence. The anticipation of our small party of two – almost three once again – brought the house into a happy bustle that paralleled the last week, but on a brighter scale. The sound of hopeless weeping for the old was replaced by the hearty wailing of the new. Smiles appeared on faces that hadn't seen smiles for months. Flawless skin, tiny toes, red skin, and satisfied gurgles became our hope. We'd nurture her, feed her, cling to that life like there was no tomorrow. And so the circle continued.

## “Grateful For Life” – Autumn Wise

Tears washed down my face with the fresh pain. My hands slightly shook at my sides as I stared at my parent's graves. It was hard to breathe past the lump in my throat that was building as the need to cry became greater.

A black mass of mourners surrounded the fresh mound of muddy dirt with umbrellas, listening to the pastor speak as the rain poured down. I didn't have an umbrella. I let the rain soak me as I stared. I knew my hair stuck to me and my black dress was looking like another layer of skin. My tears had already messed up my make-up so why even try to keep it tidy.

All the eyes that looked toward me were full of sadness and understanding. I wanted to yell at them in anger. They didn't understand that their feelings were wasted on me. All these people I didn't know but saw that none were resembling my parents. I had no idea if my parents had family. Let alone if their family was still alive.

I knew now that I was an orphan and that in my parents will they gave me everything they owned. I had no want for any of it though. The mansion that I had called my home was now a memory. Now it was my cell, my place of misery and loneliness.

After the funeral people tried to talk to me but I just went through everyone and quickly disappeared, slipping through the crowd. I walked the many streets and pathways throughout town, heading for the place I always went when I was upset.

Only after about two hours of walking I felt the salty sea air on my skin. I turned a couple of corners and came to the beach. The ocean stretched far and wide and seemed endless. The water was vicious crashing on shore and then rolling back out to come back even more powerful.

I had lost the heels a while ago. The cold sand felt nice on my feet as I walked down the beach to a big log that I sat on. I pulled my knees to my chest tight and just sat, watching the beautiful waves.

My mind was off in a far away place thinking about just three nights ago.

"Mom, I'm home." I yelled as I came in the door.

I dropped my backpack into a nearby chair, then I started to pull off my jacket.

"Sweetheart, you're seventeen, take your things to your room" Dad said coming out from his study shaking his head.

He gave a warm smile, though, and gently he kissed my head.

"How was school?" He asked.

"Awful. Why can't I have a tutor?" I said angrily.

He sighed, looking at me. He knew I didn't make friends and I was made fun of at school. Something about me made me not fit in. I was beyond beautiful and rich, but there was something that made people fear me.

"We had this talk," He sighed. "School is important to have that experience."

I felt anger.

"To be laughed at, picked on, all because I'm some weirdo." tears pricked my eyes.

He saw the hurt in my eyes. He had a sad look on his

face and went to wrap his arms around me to relax me but I pulled away. Hurt showed on his face. I grabbed my backpack and ran up the staircase to my room.

I threw all my stuff into my closet. I went over grabbing my laptop and turning it on. A knock came at the door. I didn't say anything, and they opened it coming in.

They were silently waiting. I looked up to see my mom's arms were crossed, as she looked at me with anger.

"Your poor father thinks we're torturing you." She said.

"You are!" I yelled.

Instant hurt came to her eyes and she became upset. I never yelled at anyone or was this mean. Something in me was angry at them though.

"We just want what's best for you." She said soft.

I looked away, no longer able to meet her soft motherly eyes. Still I couldn't bring myself to apologize. I listened to her heels fade down the hall, as she retreated to find my father.

That was the last time I saw my parents. Now, I was sitting alone looking at the sunset, wondering what I should do next with my life. I had fortunes and a house, but not a single person in the world.

The sound of rocks clattering interrupted me from my thoughts. Looking behind me I could see a cloaked figure heading towards me. I had a slight rush of fear. Wondering who possibly would be out this late, while it's pouring down rain. Then I shrugged it off, feeling silly for my fears. **Cont. on [page 14](#)**

## “Grateful For Life” (Cont.)— Autumn Wise

“THE ONLY SOUND  
WAS THE ROARING  
WAVES, CRASHING  
AND BEATING  
AGAINST THE  
ROCK.”

Looking back toward the enraged ocean, I watched powerful waves crashing into the rocks, then pooling into a little cavern between the rocks.

Suddenly, out of the corner of my eyes, I saw something reflect brightly from the street lights above the cove. Quickly, jumping up, I twirled around. Fear shot through me as I saw the black figure, now towering over me with a knife drawn.

His hulking figure reached for me, and tried to grab me. I stumbled backward, tripping in the sand that was engulfing my feet. The figure took this chance, and jumped to grab me. I rolled out of the way, and pushed to my feet. Not looking to see if he had fallen, or was right by me, I ran toward the rocks.

The sand made every step agonizing, and made my legs burn from the effort. Sounds of protest and groaning came from just behind me, showing that my procure was having even more of a difficult time than me.

Reaching the rocks, I grabbed onto the wet slime of the moss, using it to pull myself up onto the smooth rock. Once on that one, I reached to another, but before I could reach it a hand wrapped around my leg, trying to pull me off of the rock I was on. I flailed and kicked back as hard as I could. A loud sickening crunch came, and my ankle was released. A deep cry of pain filled the coast, and I didn't look to see what was happening.

I climbed higher and higher, not knowing where else to go, or what I was going to do when I reached the top. My only thought was to get away. Just as I was about to reach the last rock, arms wrapped around me. I screamed, and tried to latch myself to the rock. But its smooth surface wouldn't allow my hands to grasp it.

In a last effort to get away, I let go. The figure was not ready for it and he stumbled backward. I brought my elbow back with as much force as I could, and felt pain explode as I made contact. The arms disappeared around me, and I looked back just in time to see the figure stumble backward then disappear over the side of the rock wall.

I sat in stunned silence, the only sound was the roaring waves, crashing and beating against the rock. Slowly, I took steps toward the edge of the rock, leaning over just enough to see into the water below. The water was black, and reflected like a mirror that rolled and crashed. It filled the cave below with water, pounding and breaking the rock. The power would have knocked the air from any human's lungs to be filled with water.

It felt like I was standing and staring for hours. My body trembling, soaked and freezing, eyes locked on the spot where he had disappeared, and my breath trapped in my throat. Right when I thought I was going to explode with ecstasy a black beanie floated to the top of the water.

I fell to my knees, fresh tears running down my face, and a laugh escaped from my lips. Such happiness, never feeling so happy in my life. I began to wonder with so many questions, but I pushed them away.

I just watched the ocean, so full of power and life, and such beauty. At that moment I was numb, and nothing hurt. Later I would deal with everything. Sitting back on the rock I just watch, for hours of peace, just being thankful for life.

## YouTube Links

Here is a collection of videos made by our wonderful ORVA students. Enjoy!

### The Men of the Stage— Sabryna Damm

In [this](#) video, Sabryna shares her own poem, “The Men of the Stage”, and combines it into a short film she made at a 1975 concert. Sabryna is a Youtuber, so you can also check out some of her other great videos!

<http://goo.gl/DUxwuu>

### An Incredible Journey— Ryan Pierce

Ryan narrates his writing about his journey through Boy Scouting and receiving high honors in becoming an elite Eagle Scout. Click [here](#) to watch it!

<http://goo.gl/TQ96Mk>

### Shakespeare's 139th Sonnet Rapped— Breonna North

Breonna, also known by her rapper name “Queen Bre”, demonstrates her skills in [this](#) video of her rapping to Shakespeare's 139th Sonnet. She even made the instrumental herself!

<http://goo.gl/wGDlif>

### ORVA Talent Show 2015— The Leadership Team

Showing off their awesome talents, ORVA's Leadership Team entertains us all with this hilarious video! Click [here](#) to watch it!

<http://goo.gl/a1rDZX>



Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, *Candy Rapper!*

## INSPIRED INK

Meet the students that took the time to collect and edit the pieces for Inspired Ink, and also write a portion of them!



Breonna North (left)  
Story Architect



Autumn Wise  
Story Architect



Brandon McCulloch  
Copy Editor



Audrey Wojnarowisch  
Editor in Chief



Amani Hawash  
Graphic Designer