



The Embryo

The Embryo

2018



Miami Beach Senior High School

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Cover: "Bubbles Planets" by Victoria Moreira

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EDITOR'S NOTE 1964

“The most intriguing of mental processes is the reproduction of a creative thought. Every human mind has at some time formulated an inspirational or creative idea. The problem is not the formation of such an idea, but rather the extraction of the thought from the intricacies and complexities of the mind. Here lies the distinction between the thinker and the writer. Basically, we are all endowed with the capacity to fashion creative concepts. But how many of us are able to transform the concept into written word? How many wondrous thoughts and flurries of the imagination have died within the confines of the mind for lack of an effective escape?

We of the *Embryo* staff have sought, through the publication of this anthology, to strengthen and promote the art of creative writing. The *Embryo*, in essence then, acts as the stimulus necessary to the extraction of creative thought.

The work of students featured on the pages to follow serve as examples of the talent and initiative which the *Embryo* seeks to foster and which we hope will eventually develop into skilled proficiency. The *Embryo* is not a finished product, nor will it ever be. It is, rather, a framework for the development of effective expression, a means to an end.

As the editor of the *Embryo* I wish to acknowledge and thank the administration and the faculty, particularly the members of the English department, who have so willingly helped us achieve our goal. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Miss Elaine Kenzel, without guidance and supervision this *Embryo* would never have come into being.”

-Ronald Strauss, *Editor-in-Chief (1964)*

In the making of this edition of *The Embryo* and the grueling process of convincing spectacular artists to publish their pieces, we have finally found the answer to the question that we are convinced will never stop being asked no matter how often we talk about it, “What is *The Embryo*?” *The Embryo* is, in short, growth. It is the gathering of works from young artists and giving them the confidence in their abilities gained through publication to continue developing their skills. We hope to be able to inspire artists and writers to develop their artistries as far as they wish, whether that be a hobby or professional level works, and do their best in whatever they strive to achieve through *The Embryo*. This book showcases a sampling of the amazing works created by students at Miami Beach Senior High School in the past year and in order to demonstrate this idea of growth and growing up, our theme is storybook. Our book opens at 8:00 pm. when young children are beginning to fall asleep with the content very innocent, childish, and fantastical and brings into the slightly more mature but still childish 9:00 pm. After this, we approach 10:00 pm, our mythical creatures section. This section contains more menacing threats but in the end good prevails over evil, leading the book to 11:00 pm. 11:00 pm and 12:00 am contain progressively darker and more menacing content and represent the idea of growing older and facing hardships. The book finishes with reality in the 1:00 am section. This part loses all sense of fantasy and shows the harsh reality of problems faced by various people, such as abuse, abandonment, and environmental destruction. We thank you for reading *The Embryo* and hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed making it.



Kenneth Lopez (Co-Editor-in-Cheif)



Jayce Lacuadra (Co-Editor-in-Cheif)

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STUDY SESSION BY: EMANUEL GARCIA

Gabriel was waiting impatiently for the clock to run out. School lately had not been too kind to him, especially with exams coming up. He kept looking at the clock to see if that minute hand landed on the 45 minute mark so he could jolt out of there and head home for a study session. “Come on clock, hurry it up.” he kept muttering to himself. His ears were focusing on that ticking clock more than what the teacher was saying in front of him. Something about feudal Japan were what Gabriel managed to hone in on. He looked back at the clock, five more minutes. “During these times of feudalism the Japanese warriors, or samurai, were beginning to have a code of loyalty, much like those of the knights during the Middle Ages.” the teacher looks at Gabriel as he noticed he wasn’t paying attention. “Gabriel Strife.” Gabriel’s spiky edge of his brown hair twitched. Oh crap. “Yes sir?” he asked innocently. “What is the name of that code of loyalty?” Gabriel thought for awhile. That’s super easy! “Bushido.” he answered. The teacher nodded his head in agreement. “Yes Mr. Strife is indeed correct.” Thankfully Gabriel’s favorite noise now appeared, the bell to end his daily routine of school. “Now wait a minute class! You have homework for the upcoming week! Remember to write an essay explaining the similarities and differences between Japan’s and Europe’s feudal systems! This is preparation for your exams!”

“Yes Mr. Winters.” they all said in unison, walking away from their chestnut colored desks. Gabriel sighed out of relief and grabbed his bag and books from the desk. “By the way Mr. Strife.” Mr. Winters approached him. “You got lucky this time. Next time I see you like that, expect a much harder question.” and thus he ended that sentence with a sly smile. Gabriel shuddered horrendously but nodded in agreement. “Yes sir!” he yelled like he was in the army. Mr. Winters smirked. “Now go home and study for those exams of yours.”

Gabriel unloaded his books inside his locker. Now that school was over for the day, he can have the rest of the afternoon all by himself, studying like a bookworm. “Finally I can head home and-ah!” he bumped into a girl walking by, having all of her papers falling to the floor. “So sorry about that!” Gabriel bent down to help her pick her stuff up. “Oh it’s no problem Gabriel!” the girl smiled. Gabriel got up. “Wait how do you know my name?” he looked up to see a blonde long-haired girl smiling. She looked like a Greek Goddess as her red eyes met his. “Oh my bad! We share the same classes together. Name’s Emily.” she held out her hand. Gabriel stood up. “I see.” he gave her the paperwork. He gave one last look at her now that he finally stood up. Emily looked small and fragile, but her face was astonishingly gorgeous. They looked at each other for a moment and quickly turned away, blushing. “So um...you’re going home now?” they both asked simultaneously, chuckling nervously, then answered with a yes. “Hey let’s walk

STUDY SESSION BY: EMANUEL GARCIA

together!” she suggested, causing Gabriel to look nervous. Us? Walking together? That’s crazy! “S-sure.” he agreed. Emily’s eyes lit up. “Oh thank you, Gabriel!” she hugged him. Gabriel blushed a little. “Yeah, you’re welcome.”

The good thing about the walk was that they both lived in the same street so it didn’t take them long, about ten minutes max since there was barely any traffic that day. The weather was being considerate to them as well, giving the two a nice breeze every now and then. Once they arrived, that’s when Gabriel heard the following words he rued. “Say, Gabriel,” Emily said. “Yeah?” Gabriel responded. “Do you mind if we study together for the exams?” Gabriel’s face went blank. The last time he had a study session with someone, they ended up fighting over which video game franchise was the best. However, he somehow felt this was an exception. He thought about it for a while, then came to his conclusion. “Yes we can.” he smiled. Emily clasped her hands together. “Oh thank you! Let me go get my stuff from my house and we’ll meet up in five minutes.” Emily headed inside. Gabriel thought about what he had just done. I feel like a hypocrite. He headed to his house.

Emily wasn’t kidding about five minutes. She was waiting by the door, books and all rested on her side, knocking on the door. “Gabriel! I’m here!” she said excited to have this study session. Gabriel opened the door. “You weren’t kidding about five minutes.” he said blankly, ushering her inside like a gentleman. “Well it took me a while to be punctual.” she giggled and sat down by the table. “So what’s the first thing you wanna study for?” Gabriel scratched his head. He never studied in an organized manner. “Um..well...you see..” Gabriel chuckled a little. “Oh you’re one of those who just studies unorganized.” Emily had a blank expression. “How are you doing so well in your classes then?” That hurt Gabriel internally. “Well because I also happen to have luck on my side too.” Emily giggled. “Well good thing you agreed to do this study session because I’m going to teach you how to be organized.” she plopped her books, note cards, and textbooks on the table. Now let’s get started!”

The two of them studied for a couple of hours, reading from the textbooks, note cards, online. Occasionally they stopped to drink coffee to keep them going. Sometimes they chat and spent some time getting to know each other. Gabriel learned that Emily is a video game freak like himself as well as other geeky things alike. “I try not to show it often at school.” she moved around a bit. “But as soon as I get home, boy do I head straight to the TV and play me some games!” she hid her expression with her arm but he knew it was one that was of enthusiasm. “Anyway we should continue studying.” Gabriel looked at the clock. It read 10:30. “It’s kinda late Emily.” he showed her the time. “How about we get you to your house?” Gabriel stood up and went to grab his jacket. Emily still stayed on her chair. “Actually..” she looked down on the floor. Gabriel stopped. “What is it?” he asked. Emily still looked down. “Since

STUDY SESSION & THE LONG WALK BY: EMANUEL GARCIA

it's kinda late as you said. do you mind if I stay for the night?" she looked up at Gabriel, slightly blushing. Gabriel's face was red. Sh-she wants to stay!?! Oh God, what do I say to the guys? No I don't say anything to them! Gabriel gulped and maintained his cool. He finally responded. "Yeah it's perfectly fine! I'll get you some clothes and you could sleep on my bed and I'll sleep on the couch." he said rapidly. Emily laughed uncontrollably. "Why don't we share the bed?" she joked, causing Gabriel to become even redder. "I'm just kidding." she hugged him. "Thanks." Gabriel hugged her back. "Now let's get some sleep." Gabriel headed to the couch. "And Gabriel?" she asked him. "Yeah?"

"Let's have another study session." Gabriel nodded. "Yeah, let's."

The Long Walk

"How much longer until we head back home?" Marcus groaned in pain. "I told you silly that we're not going home!" a long black haired girl was jumping to and fro happily. "Allison...I'm dying right now." Marcus was now on the ground, unable to pick himself up. "You're such a bad liar Marcus." she booed him for a bit, then realized he wasn't paying attention. "Ugh fine, we'll take a breather."

"Thank you..."

They sat down on top of a tree stump. Allison took out some water from her bag for the two of them as a refreshment because of the intense summer heat that was layered upon them. "Why did we agree to do this again?" Marcus asked. Allison stopped drinking her water. "Because it's the summer Marcus! We can do whatever we want to do until school starts again in the fall!" she lied. She actually wanted to show Marcus her special place and tell him how she feels about him. After all, they've been best friends since middle school and she didn't start to feel this way until the end of their freshman year in high school. "Well I wanted to stay home under the air conditioning and get a job." Marcus sighed and drank some water. "Besides, why just me? Couldn't it also be Leon and Sarah as well?" he asked. Leon and Sarah were their other best friends since middle school. Leon was the prankster and would always initiate a prank with Marcus when they had a chance at school or in the neighborhood while Sarah was the artist, writer, and chef of the four, always being busy but also having the time to hang out with her friends. "I asked them

to but they declined.” she lied again. Allison was tormented by the two when she told them the plan and not to do anything stupid about it. “You love Marcus? Knew it.” Sarah motioned Leon to pay her. “Damn it.” he handed her the bet money. “Don’t worry we won’t do anything stupid.” she reassured Allison. “Alright I feel refreshed!” Marcus’ brown eyes lit up. Allison giggled a little. “Like I said, half hour and then back.” she reminded him. “I was hoping we get a cab this time.” he said in disbelief. “You wish. Now come on.” she got up from the tree stump and placed her silky black hair in a ponytail. Once she tightened the ponytail, she began to walk. Marcus started walking as well. As they were continued walking through the trees of the forest, Marcus noticed a weird scar on Allison’s back. It was curved shaped, almost as if a knife cut into her skin. Marcus’ eyes saddened. He remembered how that scar was formed, when those idiots at school were harassing her, leaving a little “note” for Marcus to find when he found her bleeding on the floor in a school alley. “Hey Allison.”

“Yes?” Allison looked back at him. “Sorry about the scar.” he tightened his grip in frustration. It had been his fault after all. He wasn’t able to protect her. Allison saw the anger in him. “It’s not your fault Marcus. It was no one’s fault.” she hid her face. It was really her fault to blame as it was her idea to try and stand up for herself. “But it doesn’t matter.” she looked back at Marcus, smiling. “Because at least I’m here, right?” Marcus nodded. She was right indeed and it made him happy. Blush even. “So how far are we to the place where you’re not telling me we’re going?” Allison looked back to the road. “Not far now. Just need to cut through here and in five minutes, we’re golden.” Marcus’ face lit up. “Oh thank the heavens.” he breathed to himself.

Marcus and Allison finally arrived to their destination. “So where are we?” Marcus was curious. After all this walking and talking, he was finally eager to find out where the heck Allison took him. Allison giggled. “It’s over here. See?” she pointed to a giant shrine. It looked ancient, with vines growing around it. In the middle of the shrine there was a shiny blue gem and around it was a marvelous stream of water and a bridge to cross. “This is the place?” Marcus was amazed. Allison nodded gently. “Yeah. This is my secret place.” Allison blushed in embarrassment. Oh wait until she tries to confess to Marcus, she thought. Marcus’ eyes widened. “So this is the place where you go to whenever you don’t feel like hanging out.” Marcus crossed the bridge. “It makes sense now.” he spun around to admire the rest of the gorgeous and serene scenery. Allison smiled subtly, but quickly changed her expression. “I’m gonna confess to him.” she muttered to herself. “Hey Marcus,” she began. Marcus didn’t pay attention to her. “Marcus? Marcus? Marcus!” she yelled. Marcus looked back to see a flustered Allison. “Are you okay?” he asked her.

THE LONG WALK

“Why do you ask?” she was shaking now and blushing intensely. “I’ve been meaning to tell you something.” Allison began to twiddle her thumbs behind her back. “What is it?” he asked. Allison twiddled her thumbs furiously and sighed. “Marcus, I I lo-” before she could finish her sentence, Marcus grabbed her arm and kissed her. Not on the cheek or forehead, but straight to her lips. Allison blushed some more now, almost to the point of passing out as she closed her eyes. The kiss lasted for a full minute and as Marcus stopped, he realized what he did and blushed as well. “Sorry about that, but I also had something I’ve been meaning to tell you.” and his eyes met hers. “And that is I love you Allison and I wanna be more than just friends.” Allison stopped blushing. “You mean it?” she asked. Marcus nodded. Allison began to cry, not of sadness, but with pure happiness. However Marcus didn’t seem to understand and thought he did something wrong. “I’m sorry Allison!” he apologized, but Allison hugged him. “Silly, these are tears of joy!” she wiped her tears away and smiled brightly. Marcus responded the same way. “So it’s official now, huh?” he held her hand. “Yeah. It really is.” Allison tightened her grip. They finally got what they wanted, something they desired for so long but pushed back believing that the other wasn’t thinking that way, but here they were, hand in hand, smiling and looking at the scenery behind them with glee as they knew.

They finally had each other forever.



DEEP SEA CAFE BY: CRENEESHA DAVIS



I AM FROM COLORFUL WATERS BY: ANTONELLA HEMMERDE

I am from pools and flowy dresses,
From pencils and infinite giggles.
I am from sunshine,
Blinding smiles,
And soft to-the- touch lifeless friends

I am like a fluorescent hibiscus in the day,
Bright and confident like its petals.
Surviving off water
that I constantly lose my breath in.

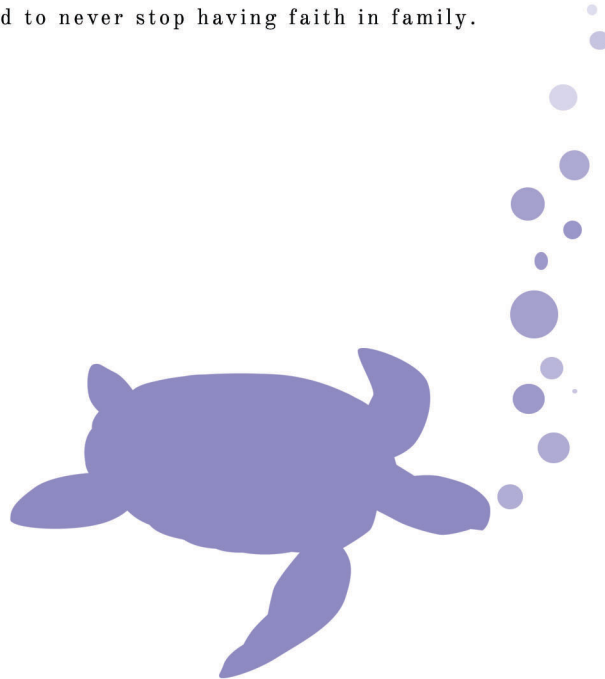
I am from having an imagination with no end,
From endless amounts of previously blank books,
Now filled with creativity and colors.
I am from sounds
that paint the sky

I'm from spending nights with curiosity.
From an athlete and an artist
That always believe in me
And wish the best for anyone,
Especially their closest and oldest loves

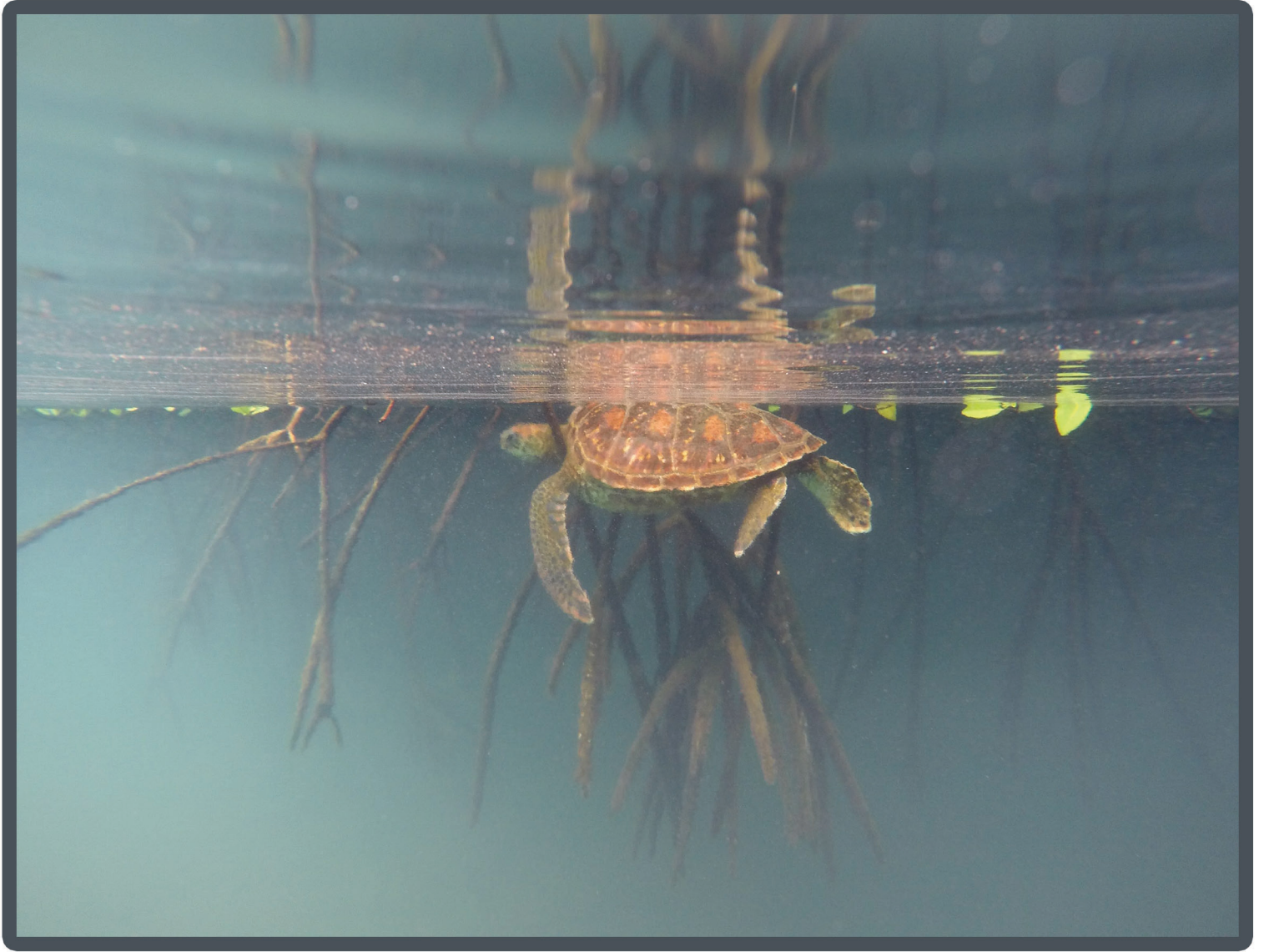
I am from stubbornness
From a lost finger.
From a dry and underestimated country.

I am from a beautiful capital,
One with endless skies,
and another covered in clouds.

I'm about worrying sick every night,
But having the brightest smile on my face the next day
for that very reason.
From being told to always continue what I love to do,
And to never stop having faith in family.



REFLECTIONS OF A SEA TURTLE BY: HALEY REVESZ

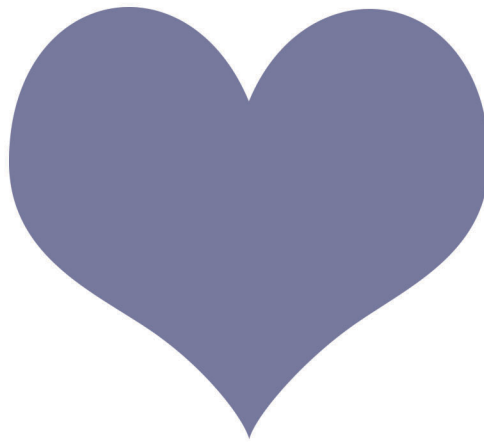




NOTHING TWO BY: GABRIELLA BLAZZIO



You are a tapping pen, distracting, pounding, and similar to the beat of our heart. You're the reason people stop themselves in the middle of the day, evoked by the thought of you. Because of you Taylor Swift songs are enjoyable, and Elvis Presley songs relatable, sounding like a hum of pure euphoria rushing through our minds. You are what we have to come home to. We think about you as our heads are lying on a pillow incapable of sleep and as we wake up, whether it's at the crack of dawn or 2pm. As involuntary as you are, when we fall into your arms we "lose control" in the best way. You make us do strange things that are completely irrational, matters we wouldn't dare do in the right state of mind. You make us starve. The intense yearn for something to fill us up is no longer meals, only your presence. One of our greatest dismays in life is living without you, not being worthy of the warmth you give to us. You are something that we desire but also fear. You make us feel like all of a sudden we're entirely dependent, our happiness and peace of mind relying on you. Interestingly enough you give us the same behavior of drug addicts, exhilaration, euphoria, increased energy, sleeplessness... It's a wonder what you do to our brains. You are felt in many different ways, each one a wonderful feeling in its own. You are more than a feeling.



BUBBLES PLANETS BY: VICTORIA MOREIRA





HOME OF MINE BY: VICTORIA MOREIRA

Home is the language I speak

The language I love

Love without home is not love,

The houses are small

Next to my home

The door is happy

Why?

When it is open I can see every part

Of heaven, clouds, sun.

The happy place that I call home

I hope one day everybody can

Speak home

And it becomes an international

Language

Comfortable, lovely

Home is an Airplane

That we can all travel

And meet our friends

Eating our brigadeiro

Drinking our coffee

Dancing your hip-hop drop that nae nae

And singing despacito

Every magical thing happens in my home

Because that is where my growing love came from.

Based on a true story.

“Mrs. Kadlec! Mrs. Kadlec! My tooth came out! It came out!” Little six year-old Suzy squealed in her annoying high-pitched voice. It was saturated with happiness, surprise, and mostly, I could sense, relief. Her parents had told me she had been crying all night desperate that her tooth being gently removed from her gums would be the acme of physical pain she would experience during her lifetime. I was glad she was over that now.

“Are you kidding me!?! Finally! Bring it over here, let me see!” I said from my desk, smiling to her from the other side of the room.

She ran in full speed to where I was seated and held a slightly bloody, very miniscule front tooth in her palm. The way she looked at it could have been a mother looking her firstborn, as if her whole past had been leading up to that moment and her future was now dependant on it. Well, I thought, maybe she will have a child one day and live to regret ever getting involved with children, like I did after choosing this career. Just kidding. I mean, I like this job and the kids very much. They’re just...difficult sometimes, and you always have to watch out for your own actions. All the time. They’re so easily influenced, so innocent.

“That is one beautiful tooth, Suzy. Now, we’ve talked about this right?” I asked, very serious now.

She nodded her head serenely, flawless gold curls bouncing up and down, assuredly.

“What are you going to do when you get home?” I continued.

“I’m going to put my tooth under my pillow.”

“And after you do that, you’re just going to forget it?”

“No. No way. I’m going to get a neon pink index card from my sister’s left drawer and get her sparkliest, glitteriest, gel pen she owns and write the tooth fairy a note.”

“Perfect.” I nodded, genuinely admiring her impeccable memory. “And what exactly are you going to write?”

She cleared her throat in a very professional way for a first grader: “I will say: Dear tooth fairy, despite your tendency to gift children with small amounts of money once their first tooth comes out, I request a different...a different...”

“Souvenir.” I whispered, “It’s okay, it’s a hard word. Go on.”

“Souvenir! Exactly. I request a different souvenir. Instead of spreading ca-pi-ta-lis- tic (she counted the syllables

SPOILER ALERT

on her fingers) trends and simply giving me money to spend, I would be pleased if you were to give me a gift. Anything you find sen-ti-men-tal, or that you believe represents me. Unless you want to give me more than ten dollars, because in that case, I can spend it on two different types of good candy, then that's okay. Best of wishes, Suzy." she finished and looked up.

This girl's mental capacity has never seized to amaze me.

"Perfect! That's perfect! You said it word per word, even the super hard ones!"

"Well, it's easy when you have a super awesome teacher."

I rolled my eyes internally. She may be a cute prodigy, but teacher's pet was out of bounds for her. Too snobby for my liking.

On the outside, however, I smiled. "Oh, please! Soon enough, you'll be the one teaching the classes, Miss Suzy." As if.

She laughed and smiled and wrapped up her millimetric piece of bone in a lot of tissues, and proceeded to tell the entire class about the fancy note she was leaving for the tooth fairy and the incredible gift she was getting from her in return.

Halfway through the parade she stopped and faced me again, raising her hand as she started speaking. Sure kid, go ahead, permission to speak granted telepathically.

"Ms. Kadlec? On Thursday, when the tooth fairy already made her awesome visit and took my incredible tooth, can I bring my super duper amazing gift to show and tell?" she asked, looking at me now as if I she was pleading me to take that firstborn and keep it for myself.

I planted an even bigger smile on my face (was that even possible without plastic surgery, at this point?) and said, "Yes of course! I want to see whatever she brings to you and I'm sure the whole class would want to find out and get tips for when their own teeth fall out, right class?"

The remainder 16 or so kids who hadn't, unlike bright little Suzy, had any falling teeth, or were in the process of having any for that matter, hadn't had the very serious conversation with me about gifts they should expect to receive and how to get the message out there of what they want to receive. I'd written it out on an index card and had Suzy memorize it, for her sake, honestly. Kids these days had no idea what the tooth fairy is actually supposed to bring to them, they're just induced to become plutomaniac since birth.

Nearly all the other elementary teachers had spoken badly about my means of exploring the young creativity.

building up in these tiny humans, but I genuinely thought I was doing a good job.

The kids looked at each other and nodded in agreement, a mixture of expectation and excitement planted on their faces. Some jealous girls rolled their eyes at the thought of another classmate succeeding before they did. Well, we know one thing isn't going to change from now to high school, huh?

“Great! We'll be waiting for whatever the tooth fairy has in store for you, Suzy!”

The following two days were filled with children asking me or Suzy whether she had heard from the tooth fairy yet. Three days later, and still nothing.

On show and tell Thursday, questions became demands, and on Friday, people were starting to doubt the fairy's magical powers.

Monday, when the class learned the tooth fairy hadn't given Suzy any news for a week, people started to get seriously mad and discuss different means of reaching out to her. Where are this girl's parents?!, I kept thinking.

Finally on Wednesday, when other kids were literally screaming at each other in frustration because of the absence of that godforsaken fairy, Suzy, now a victim of constant ambush from other kids, asked if she could talk to me for a minute in private. I directed her toward the corner of the room, and asked her, concerned, if everything was alright at home.

“Everything's fine, Ms. Kadlec,” she said, “it's just... the tooth fairy did come -- she came last Wednesday actually, but she didn't give me something I can bring to show and tell... she brought me a set of My Little Pony underwear.”

I stared at her blankly for a couple of seconds.

“Underwear!? THEY GAVE YOU UNDERWEAR!? WHAT KIND OF PARENTS EVEN ARE THEY, NOT EVEN MINE WERE THAT BUSY-- -”

I stopped in my tracks. Or should I say, backwards steel train track that led to stripping children of everything they had to hold on to for the next several years?

Somewhere in the back of the classroom I heard the faint voice of a child, a high pitched squeak reminiscing surprise and outrage. Looking up, I saw he was staring at me with big, round eyes, complete with fear and disappointment. His voice, a weak croak coming from an already fragile five year old, faltered and cracked:

“Wait... what?”

TRICK AND TREAT BY: BEATRIZ PINHO

“Hey do you remember this?” I turned to Sofia and shoved the picture album I was looking through under her nose.

We were clearing my room, packing my things for college, and going through the undesirable job of designating what I would bring with me and would have to be recycled and probably turned a plastic bottle of some sustainable company. I was looking through a photo album my mom had been keeping since the day I was born, which I had always thought antiquated, but couldn't be more thankful for now. Sofia, whose weirdness had been compatible with mine since the first day we met in pre-k, had settled on one leg a 2013-14 yearbook, and on the other, another photo album.

“Do I remember this? Carly, please, this day was the highlight of second grade!” She answered, nearly dropping the yearbook because of her laughter.

We were looking at a picture of me, five or six years old, with my front tooth held in my hand instead of stuck to my gums. My first tooth fairy experience. I remember, I had cried all night, dramatizing my pain. Then, next day at school, I walked inside my classroom and told everyone an epic story of how my dad had pulled it out by attaching a string to it that was connected to the door and then slamming it shut. Everyone believed it then, and thus, I acquired my fame of being courageous and slightly crazy. Later on, however, my reputation changed to that of a liar (or for some, a really good story teller), because my sister (who couldn't stand being known as Crazy Carly's older sister anymore) disillusioned all my dumb little classmates that put way too much faith in me.

“I remember my resolution as we went into fifth grade was to change everyone's mindset about me being a liar, but I didn't have much of a job, honestly, because everyone was so busy with gossip and grades.” I said.

“Heh, we'd always try to stay out of all that but end up involved some way or another.” Sofia said, turning now to the photo album.

“Oh no. I knew this phase was coming but... oh no, I thought it would be less worse. The blue braces, why?!” She handed me the album while shielding her eyes melodramatically.

I laughed loudly and shook my head slightly at the picture, smiling. We were both around fourteen, awkward and slightly emo. It was our first halloween party; Sofia was dressed as Medusa and I was Demeter, greek goddess of harvest. Our costumes were actually pretty well put together, but looking at this picture, I was reminded of something else. I had put on a forced smile, but in reality I was so devastated I wasn't trick or treating this year because of all the social pressure to go to that stupid party. When I got home, my brother told me all about how the Greens, three blocks away, had been specifically generous that year, and how I missed out on two girls who had the same costume

and engaged in a head-on, hair-pulling fight in the middle of the street over whose was better assembled. The next two years I ditched all the parties and went trick or treating like I always did.

“Your snake extensions are on point, though.” I said to her, handing the photo album back.

“I know right? You, on the other hand, so unoriginal, there were like three other goddesses that night.” she laughed and shook her head in disappointment.

“Oh shut up, none of them had a real flower crown, okay?” I closed the photo album and looked at Sofia. “Let’s stop for a second and go to the playground, I’m starting to get too sentimental.”

“Ah yes. The effects of dusty photo albums is finally settling in” she said, and set down both the yearbook and the pictures.

We walked side by side through the streets of the small town and made our way first to the waffle house, then to the playground. Both our families had been living here for generations; this place had been a hotel, aiding us with room service and leisure for years, but now it was full and they had to start kicking out long-term guests. It would always be here of course, in case of emergencies, but it would no longer be completely ours.

“Remember when we got in trouble for trampling the little kids on the streets on Halloween?” I asked, looking at Sofia briefly.

“We were so savage,” she smiled, “and to think that before we were kids, we were toddlers and we were the ones getting trampled.” She pointed at a small bruise on her foot. Yep, physical evidence of crazy 10 year olds who shoved unaccompanied 4 year olds to get candy.

“The best phase was definitely middle school though, halloween wise. Remember we’d team up and actually strategize the best way to take advantage of the neighborhood and get the best candy?” I laughed at the memory, and so did Sofia.

“And that year we went the a party instead, we told your brother all of our secrets so he could bring us candy too.”

“Best and worst thing we’ve ever done.” I laughed.

We reached the playground and sat on the swing sets, allowing ourselves infancy for the sake of it, one last time before we were diagnosed with the autonomy of adulthood, college. Ironically enough, someone had spray painted some words on the concrete entrance of the play area: Grow old, not up.

“You know, college isn’t going to stop us from being kids. It’s just going to throw so many adult things at us that

TRICK AND TREAT & UNTITLED BY: ALANA S. MAKLOUF

we're just not going to have time" Sofia said.

"I mean, each year we got "too old" to go trick or treating, we'd always find a way to go, or steal some candy. But I guess, eventually someone needs to replace the people who actually give out the candy."

I looked over at Sofia and she looked at me, we gave a synchronized sigh, then looked away towards the spray paint.





SHADOWS BY: EMANUEL GARCIA

They hide beneath us
Like demons lurking through the darkness of our lives
They rest under our ignorant feet
Desperate to lash out at the crowd in front of us
As the savages they were meant to become
What is worse?
The fictional demons that haunt our imagination
Or the actions and words we may use to hurt?
I believe it is our shadows
The marks we leave behind when light radiates us
With rays of love
The other self that's selfish
Monstrous and lustful for power
It must be fought in order to prevent flaws
And create a better you
A better future

This ones called zombie

A Zombie,

Infectious,

Just like her smile was.

Causing me to smile even when I didn't have a reason to do so.

She was like a movie I'd never get tired of even tho I've seen it plenty times before.

She was this local model, who stayed unappreciated for the immense amount of beauty she showcased within everyday.

She was a battery, she kept me going even when I thought I was drained and unable to do so.

She was -

She was, mine

At least I'd like to think she was at the time,

I never had a favorite song, because there was no tune, no tone, no sound that could top the amount of genuine happiness I had felt when I heard her laugh.

She's the trophy Id like to believe I haven't won yet, mainly cause I haven't even competed cause I was too scared of losing . . . But ended up losing without even pressing start.

She was this queen and I was the peasant, doing everything I can for her but only to be given back a simple thank you or sometimes . . . Nothing at all

She was-

She wasn't-

She was never mine

And to this day it's a bit hard to accept that.

Now I call this one zombie, because I'd like to think that I am one, because ever since you've left me, I've never truly felt alive since

FLAME BOWERBIRD BY: KENNETH LOPEZ AND JAYCE LACUADRA

This is a spoken word piece performed by two people, the first part is written on the left in italics, the second part is written on the right in bold, and parts read in unison are underlined.

Why can't you see me the way

I see you

Because

Your voice

My birdcage of a heart gets more and more crowded every time I hear you speak

and I fear if you say any more that my birds will break free

and I'm giving a surplus of love for the two of us

so I only need a little of you to make the equation of us complete.

I mean, is it really that hard to

Love me back

I love you

I see you

I really do

My heart skips a beat every time I hear

Your voice

Please don't

Love me back

Because I'm scared

no, I'm terrified of showing any emotion because then my face may betray me

or my voice may quiver,

revealing to you how much

I love you

But please don't say that back

I don't want my feelings to flee again

I beg you,

Don't give them back

FLAME BOWERBIRD BY: KENNETH LOPEZ AND JAYCE LACUADRA

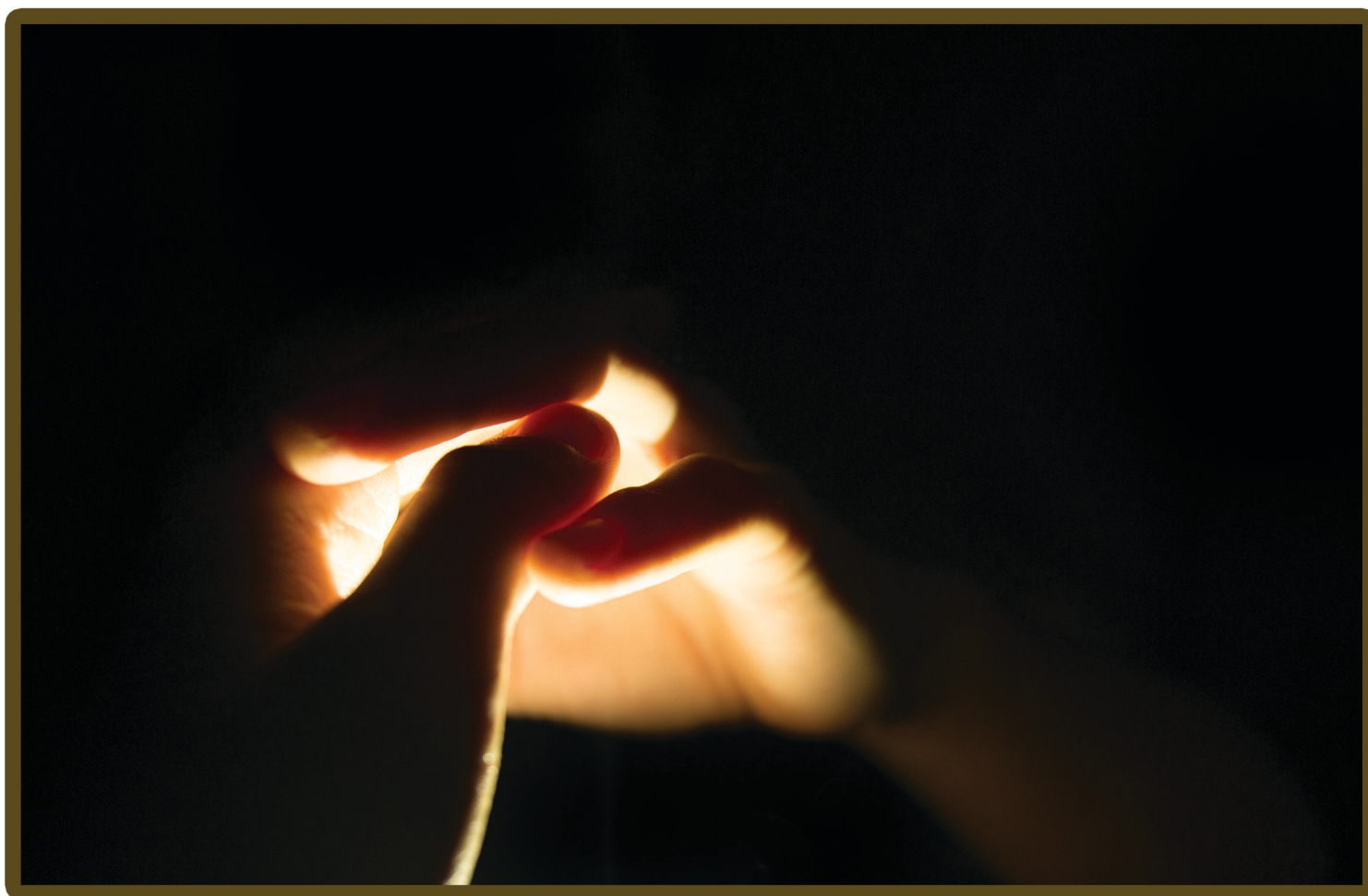
I
Please don't
Love you *love me*
Sometimes I catch you looking at me from across a room and I think you do too
But then I remember that your heart was caged away a long time ago.
If you could feel the way my heart beats
But I do
The hard part isn't loving you, it's showing you
You could love me
Hey
Do me a favor *Do me a favor*
Can your heartbeat just rise a little more? *Heartbeat, can you rise a little less?*

BALL OF HOPE BY: OLIVER ZEL





HEATED BALL BY: OLIVER ZEL





BOAT DAY BY: RAQUEL TORREA

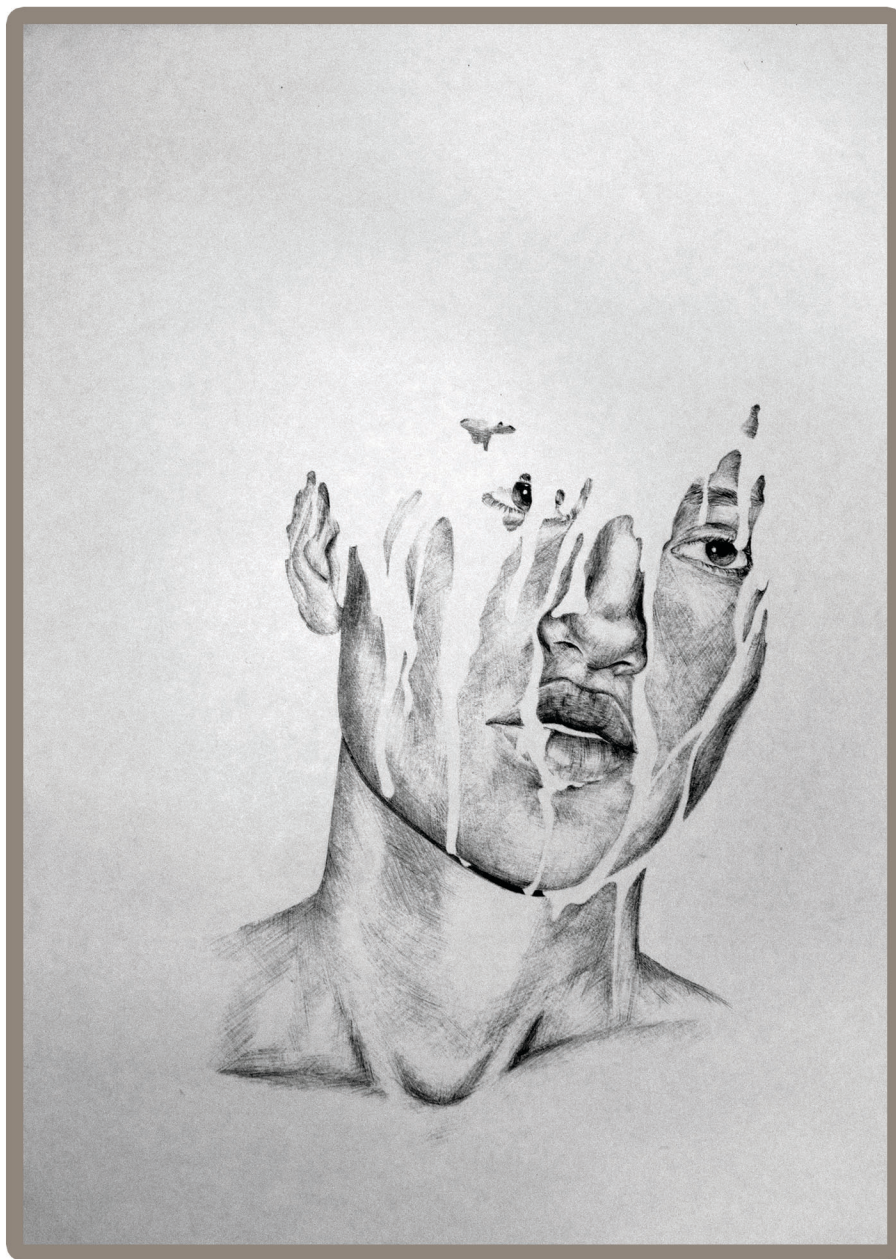
You always loved the water
So it was no surprise that you would take me on your boat
I stared aimlessly at the water
Allowing my mind to wander

We anchored at an island
You went for a swim while I stayed behind
Trapped in my thoughts

Standing at the head of the boat
Trying to see how far you had gone
The further you went, the more I wanted to chase after you
I jumped in, but was pulled deeper in the water

I screamed for you to save me
I felt like a shark in a cage
The more water filled my lungs, I knew
You had the key, but couldn't find me

You were too late
You come visit me once a month
With your charming smile and broken promises
Trying to bring me back to life
A dead flower, that you overwatered



AUTOPORTRAIT BY: CHLOE DASILVA



A LOST CAUSE BY: MARIA L. BISWELL

If it were all so simple,
You'd pack your bags, no looking back.
For the idea of what could be,
We would have a purpose, a light,
to shine upon a new path.
"You're just damaged."
Your father said, your sister said, your mother said.
But they never knew,
the job you lost,
the marriage you broke,
the child that fell asleep and didn't wake up.
It's all gone.
This year of life, thrown away,
But don't cry, don't fret.
If you run away the world won't follow.
It'll let you be.
So you can reach the dreams you never got to see.
The dreams when you were young and free.
The dreams that were torn apart,
from the hands that held you,
the hands that fed you,
the hands that carried you.
Now you float in your pool of regret,
with the memories washing away.
But you whine, no expectations at all.

Just sit in your failure,
Your ultimate downfall.
Because every simple thing that passed your track,
was known to fall apart.
It is not your luck,
It is not your curse.
Don't you know?
All good things shall come,
in one's full hope.



TRAIN OF THOUGHT BY: ALEX TOUZARD



My face is a mask hiding every cruel thought I ever had the guts to express.

In my head there's a civil war, the only thing keeping me peaceful.

Inside my mind, there's a warrior who's trapped. Pounding on the walls, trying to escape the way a
beast tries to escape its cage.

I am a nomad, travelling through the minds of the people I look up to. Charting their landmark qualities
and their ignorance.

Yesterday I was by an ocean of diamonds; it's dirty because greedy people mess up anything
that shines.


Today I am making a house on stilts and the pegs are falling apart. I'm getting more pegs for my house
because if it falls, I will raid yours.

I know where I'm from. I used travel there like it was my home, now I've become a tourist in my own land.

I live in a world where tolerance is a bomb full of nails and peace is a truck that runs over civilians.

Where protecting family is an act of war and preserving your culture is a sign of intolerance.

Our world is a joke. This is why I wage war for my own peace, why my face is just a mask.





NIGHTMARE BY: DIMITRI M. ROZEFORT

Darkness as far as the eye can see.
It was just a moment ago, I laid to sleep.
Feel like I'm falling stare down at my feet.
Before I realize I'm in an ocean 30 meters deep.
Feel all the air in my lungs leaving my body.
Can feel a knot in my chest and my chest and my head starts spinning.
Before I shut my eyelids, all is a red light above me.
Started swimming for it but I just started sinking.
Before I black out I feel something yanking my ankle and tugging me slowly.
All I see is an outline of a human body.
Barely made out its face before my body gave up.
Wake up in a bed sweating bullets and make my way to the mirror shaken from the neck up.
Wait for my eyes to adjust so that I can see.
The person pulling me down was me.



OH YEAH BY: TRENEESHA DAVIS



HAVEN'T HYPERVENTILATED IN TWO MONTHS BY: RONNIE LARSON

This is the poem I never thought I'd write;

The one where I admit that my missing you is getting tamer.

She's still here, but she's loosened her grip on my throat.

She's found a chair and sat down.

She's stopped shouting.

I guess even grief gets tired lungs eventually.

Every morning I look in the mirror

and my reflection says,

"Rate your pain on a scale from 1 to 10."

Most days I answer, "better than it was."

Most days I mean it.

I'd like to believe you'd want that for me,

But, my God, we were so selfish with each other I'm not sure.

Truth be told, I think you liked your place in the pit of my
stomach.

You knew you could always call the empty spot in my heart
home.

I don't blame you for it.

There's a twisted comfort in knowing someone's
spine

will always bend with the weight of loving you;

That someone's hands will always be open for yours.

I hope you know that even on my lightest days,
my bones still ache from your absence.

My shoulders will never stop whispering your name.

But I'm learning to walk with my head up again,

And I hope that's okay.

MADS MIKKELSEN BY: ZOE DAMLE



Dear Obligation,

You are no friend of mine. You are forceful and selfish. You call me whenever you please, while I stare at the phone, sinking deeper and deeper into my bed. My room, my safe place, turns to a danger zone when you appear. People say you make them feel claustrophobic, as if the the wall's in the room are closing in on them. These people are right, they know you just as well as I do. I loathe you. Never have I met someone who has any pleasant feelings towards you in the slightest. You live a carefree life, destroying the lives of the people around you. Maybe one day you will change and learn that things are different now. You only force me to call people because it's what I should do. What about how I feel? What if that person was the devil in disguise? You don't care. You never care. While I have flashbacks about my time with the devil and cry until I have no more tears, you tell me to go to him. I walk up the stairs and knock on the devil's door, with ways of escape rattling through my mind. I only see him because of you, you're the only reason why. If you didn't exist, the world would be a much better place. People would be happy, no anxiety growing in their stomach because of silly things they must do. Why make people act or dress a certain way, or talk to certain people? Just because you don't see the man behind the mask, doesn't mean he isn't there. I am begging you to believe me. The word family means nothing to him. How is it possible to forgive such a monster? Please, Obligation, do not make me confront my demons. Do not make me speak to the devil. Why can't you let me be happy?

Not Much Love,

Your greatest enemy

BROTHER & LITTLE GIRL BY: MAYA PAIZ

Brother

Dear brother,

You sold your soul the day you let that trigger squeeze. Blinded by your action they affected me. Receiving collect calls wasn't my dream. The day you sold your soul to the streets, you made me lose a part of me. Left me by my lonely thinking bout all my fallen brodies. I pursue a better life for you and me while you sell crack rock to all these lost feens, but what if that was me, would the roles be quick to change because you tell me you love me or have you grown that heartless that you wouldn't even recognize me. Hey brother it's your little sister begging my lord to give you back your damned soul, so brother please hear my warning for there's a lesson within it, you can't be in this game for the rest of your life. Statistics say you'll be dead before the age of 25 or doing time 25 to life either one is a death sentence so next time you think about withdrawing your weapon remember my face and picture me at the other side of your hatred because next time you empty your clip it might as well be emptied in me because your little sister is done and I'm gone. My heart can't take anymore, living in fear for the day I get that call that you are no longer here.

Little Girl

She craved for love because all she felt was abandonment
found it in souls that had no clue she was only thirteen years old.
Stole her sisters clothes she tried to look old
all she needed was a hug from the mother that left her
she felt the pressure so she held her own nights after nights
she tried to find the guy who wouldn't leave her side because that's all she craved for
her childhood tainted because she had no sense of direction nobody intercepted
she acknowledged her efforts for she had realized that the love she was craving so bad was right there in front of her
for it was within her little girl who had be hurt so bad had finally realized that she would be okay on her own

You threw her away like she wasn't your problem all she needed was somebody to tell her it was okay but instead you just gave her away like a worn out piece of clothing she was your own but you did not condone her actions her reaction was just to fight back so you see instead of making her better she just hit the pipe back sent her away to get rehabilitated like if she was some junkie but all it was her feelin' funky she was depressed but you did not sense that your own daughter could not defend herself out in the world 'cuz all you had in your mind was that in your time there was no thing as mentally unstable nobody blames you but you could have saved her your words was just so hateful tried to to blame it on to others but you ain't see the true colors your own family dying slowly but you cared for others and they opinión what about the shit that actually mattered she needed a mother but all you showed her was how cold hearted you can be making everyone see your lies and fall for your Deceit tried to cover up what she was going through by playing victim you played the system pushed her far away from me I lost the one person who truly cared for me because you wanted to be a weak minded mother so when you ask why your daughters give you the cold shoulder just remember your actions when one of us was going under were not humble.

SUICIDE NOTE BY: MAYA PAIZ

I stare at a mirror to look at my reflection, a tear rolls down my cheek and all I can do is smile and wipe it away there's so much I want to say but I just put it away stored up in my mind like lost time Memories I do not wish to relive push em back as if my life depended on it the funny part is that's what's tearing me apart slowly aching my heart but I do not want to revisit that part of my life those were some fucked up times but my mind is about to explode there's only so much I can hold so when a person ask me how my life was growing up I don't know what memory to visit . I look at them and think which part of my life you wanna experience how about the time i seen my sister go through it man those drugs be detrimental, or should I speak on the fact that I was only 14 when that drink entered my system thinking I was grown mess around with some ppl who just took advantage of me damn that's such a shame that the reason why I can never look at myself in the same way or you wanna know when I witnessed my mother gettin' smacked around like she was loose change you don't care about I still remember how I blacked out wanted to fight the person who was supposed to guide me what men in my life should be like, man that shit still gets to me or can we speak about how we fucked around and lost everything we ain't had no money they couldn't even feed they own kids, or how everybody I love and care about is gettin' locked up or loosing them self to these drugs , I can't speak no more cuz my life story just gets worse my mother wanted to commit suicide cuz she did some foul shit and she couldn't live with it, the abandonment I felt could never be replenished I couldn't take no more my life seemed so pointless foul thoughts came across me on that night I tried it and played around with my life but it seems like it just wasn't my time and that's when I knew I had to fight so I stare at a mirror to look at my reflection a tear rolls down my cheek and all I can do is smile and wipe it away as I put on my mask on and fight for another day

Shapes make up everything in our vision.

Like circles, which make up our planets, faces, and fruits.

But bad apples of this world will always find a way to bring a sour taste to our perspective.

Who would've thought we'd find a way to define a person's worth through shape and size?

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder but we're so blind and oblivious for choosing to respect someone based on their body mass.

I'm told to shrink my waist, while you shrink your mentality.

You tell him to broaden his shoulders, but you cannot broaden your ideals.

Boys and girls are trying way too hard to perfect their imperfections.

Girls trying to earn a butt bigger than your ego.

To boys working insufferably hard for the biggest biceps for you to touch.

But why? So you can tell her that she's not sexy for you? so that you can tell him he's still not a real man?

No thanks, I'd rather live life immune to judgement without having the thickest of hips or the plumpest of lips than spending it pleading to your thick-headed standards.

I'm sure the boy you made fun of today can live his life without the unrealistic masculinity you desperately want him to have.

And I'm sure I can still be happy without conventional beauty and appeal.

Allow us to use judgement, not for our unique shapes, but the heaviness of our aptitude.

AM I SHREK? BY: ANONYMOUS

“Ogres are like onions, they have layers”

An iconic line in cinema, uttered by my ultimate green hero, Shrek

But parfaits also have layers

As cleverly pointed out by his donkey companion

Now if onions are a precise example of layers, yet with a negative connotation

And parfaits are equally applicable, though with a delicious and smooth connotation,

WHY do I connect with, to the greatest extent, the onion simile? Why did that analogy hit me with the force of a bludgeon and open my ignorant eyes as I realized I had finally fallen upon the chilling words which I most identify with?

Given they were fans of dairy, no sane homo-sapien would turn down the offer of a silky, cheering parfait

Yet if I handed you a whole, stinky, raw onion and offered a free

CRUNCH into it, 3 out of 5 times your facial expression would be enough for me to take a hint: a solid NOPE

I have layers

I swear to you that I do

I swear that the deeper you go they become more complex

But when you slice open an onion you begin to cry

The vulnerability of my skin is so easy to carve

Each person will ask for the knife and I will willingly shove it into their grasp, holding myself out to be sliced and peeled

And they will begin to cry as they see what I contain, what I am

ashamed of, what I am proud of

Why do they cry? They begged me for the knife

But I never recall their tears of agony. The water dripping down their

face stings my skin but does not leave a burning mark. Their remarks

And they will begin to cry as they see what I contain, what I am ashamed of, what I am proud of

Why do they cry? They begged me for the knife

But I never recall their tears of agony. The water dripping down their face stings my skin but does not leave a burning mark. Their remarks about how terrible the feeling is goes straight out the other ear.

But They will keep asking

And I will keep thrusting out my body for their control

Once in a leap year a foolishly brave soul will say yes to my initial crunch offer

My corneas are etched with the sight of their cringing face after eating the strong, putrid vegetable. A tattooing burn as the false hope leaves me.

Why did I convince myself they would be different?

Onions cannot be eaten raw without being complemented by other foods, or in smaller, seasoned fragments.

And that is why I will reside alone in my swamp, up all night with the wondering of what could have been if I did everything in my power to become a goddamn parfait.

VIEWS FROM THE DEEP DARK PLACE BY: COOPER ADAMS

If I kill myself don't worry about me
I'll have set myself free
From this prison on earth eternally
Just don't forget me
Keep me in your hearts to the last second
I don't want to feel like an errand
I was a wreck
I hit the deck
And broke my neck
So I was mentally paralyzed
Not being able to do me or you at the same time
And use the same damn rhyme
At the same damn time
As I lyrically recite my eulogy
I tell you all of this truthfully
And it's not just me being unruly
Fuck all of the lame bullies
But I'll let you be the jury
Doesn't an open window make you nervous
Cuz I feel like I'm tempting myself to jump out shirtless
It's cuz I'm nerveless
I'm numb I can't feel
These feelings you feel are not real
So I need your approval or your seal
Because I need a go ahead on sharing my gifts

That the lord or evolution laid on my lips
But my heart always had these rips
I never stand next to windows
Because I live in constant fear
But You'll never see me shed a tear
Cuz I'm afraid of myself
And what I'll do to me
For self righteousness and wealth
So someone tutor me
On how to be myself
Cuz I feel like I died a long time ago
It takes less time to take a shortcut
But that's not important I'm exploring
The deepest darkest parts
I haven't been here in a while
It's a little dusty
Teach me how to feel again
I am so ever rusty
Tell me how I could love someone
Who would never love me



DISILLUSIONMENT BY: DIANY ULABARRO

smoke and mirrors
quote on quote “underachievers”
prosperous are the believers
or so we’re made to believe
truth is once you’re born your path is chosen
reality is a cold breeze
those with fur coats survive
and others to death they freeze
for just a second, forget about your steez
help stop the spread of this disease
it manifests in our institutions
the tv helps to spread all the pollution
what’s the solution?
before he departed, Guru said we all must play a part
or we’ll be stuck to a wall like darts
perhaps he spoke in different context
but we all share similarities
despite our varieties



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child,” the same is true for this book. The making of *The Embryo* was not achieved due to the efforts of one person or even ten and for that the staff of Embryo would like to thank the following people for their hard work and dedication in creating this book. We would like to say thank you:

To the Miami Beach Senior High School administrative team, Dr. Maria Rodriguez, Dr. Cespedes, Dr. Hillhouse, Mr. Ponkey, and Ms. Taylor, for all of your hard work and support for the arts which makes magazines like this possible.

To Ms. Desronvil and Ms. Sakowicz, for your support and patience in regulating and approving the publication and sale of *The Embryo*.

To Mr. Travis Boldon, for constantly supporting our staff with food, a place to hold our meetings, and sanity and for helping with whatever we could not do alone. Thank you for not giving up on us.

To Mr. Thomas Virgin, Ms. Erin Money, Ms. Carmen Junquera-Diez, Mr. Travis Boldon, and Ms. Sylvia Carro for all your hard work and dedication in teaching your students and for getting them to submit their works.

To the entire Miami Beach Senior High School community for making Miami Beach Senior High a school worth attending.

To everyone who submitted your works to The Embryo for sharing your talents with all of us.

To the parents of the students for fueling their creativity and harboring their talents.

To everyone who we may have forgotten to mention for helping make *The Embryo* a reality.

And finally, to you, for supporting the arts and buying *The Embryo*.

The Embryo was printed using the font Old Standard TT for body text, Draconian for page headers, and Brush Script MT for the cover in 14pt, 16py, 18pt, 24pt, 35pt, 30pt, and 13pt fonts and is perfect bound. All of the writing, artwork, and photography displayed in this book were submitted by students attending Miami Beach Senior High School. Submissions were collected throughout the 2017-1018 school year and sold later that year. It was sold at the school for \$10.00 a book. The program used for creating the layout of the book was Adobe Photoshop CC 2017.

Printed by Minuteman Press
921 NE 79th St, Miami, FL 33138
www.miami79.minutemanpress.com

