

# JORDAN JOURNALISM'S



Cover By: Katelyn Martinez (8)

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# Hope

By: Michael Martinez (8)

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Losing something dear is a heavy cost,  
It leaves a hole that can't be lost,  
The memories stay, the pain remains  
But time will heal, and ease the strains.

The emptiness is hard to bear,  
The silence echoes everywhere,  
The tears they fall, the heart it aches,  
But slowly hope, the sadness breaks.

The world it seems so dark and cold,  
The futures lost, the past is old,  
The presents bleak, the mind's a mess,  
But the strength will come, in time, no less.

The hurt it fades, the light shines through,  
The memories stay, but you comes too,  
The heart it mends, the soul it heals,  
And life goes on, despite the feels.

So if you've lost, and feel pain,  
Just know that hope will come again,  
The love you've lost will always be,  
But new love waits, for you to see.

# What Goes On When You're Not There

By: Makenzie Calandres (8)

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Middle school, every elementary schooler's dream. Middle school, a place where you meet new people, worry about dating, smoking, and fighting. A place where good turns to bad and bad turns to worse. But within all the bad there is in middle school, there's some good. Like athletes who are trying to go college and then the big leagues if they have it in their sport. And being one of those is hard. Having to manage both in-school and out of school practices with homework and trying to maintain above 85% on every grade.

It's hard, especially when you start to worry about how you look, and boys. How they think about you. That is exactly what is happening in the life of this young girl. Top volleyball prospect hooked in drama and boys holding her back from being herself and performing like she should in her sport.

Everything was going well as she started her last year of middle school. She just got back from traveling the US for her sport, she has a boyfriend, and a few close friends. That's all she really needed and wanted for the year. She was set. As days go on fast because she's managing every sport she does with school activities. Life was great.

But slowly as the year progressed, things started going downhill. Her boyfriend and her split due to different reasons. She slowly lost all her school friends and they started becoming close with the ex. They started being loud and obnoxious, and all she could do was sit there and just wait till it was all over. I mean after all, she is moving districts for better volleyball chances.

But day after day, having to wait till that clock hit 11:11 was a dread. Just the thought of her own ex best friend who knows a lot about her and her ex boyfriend being best friends to the point people think they're dating is just disgusting. More and more days pass and the less she cares the louder they get. Multiple times their teacher has had to tell them to get on task and to be quiet. It got to the point where she started skipping class and going to her favorite coach's class. She was so over the whole- "Do you see how they act with each other?" "They look like a couple." "Oh my gosh!" thing.

More and more time progresses and they grow further and further apart. He's doing good in baseball, she's doing good in volleyball. He's still doing stuff to surround himself to be near her, but doesn't want to make things too obvious. Both of them are still trying to find love within themselves, but as they get to high school, everything will change as they won't have to see each other anymore. She's leaving the district for better volleyball opportunities and he's just transferring schools for better baseball opportunities. Both have hopes to find someone that'll love them for them. You never know how coincidental the world really can be.

# Don't Let Them Take Over

By: Ayana Soto (8)

Fear of things that  
people can't control,  
running out of breath  
where you slowly can't blow.

The voices in your head  
won't shred away,  
they get louder and louder  
day by day.

You start to shake and fidget,  
to where your mind can't comprehend it,  
Your mind is a blur  
and everything goes quiet,  
but your mind doesn't.

Constantly asking yourself  
"What if?... What if?...What if?"

Thinking of things that can possibly  
go wrong at any  
MOMENT.

You continue to stress,  
Your head begins to ache and ache,  
And the pressure doesn't go away.  
Thought after thought,  
tear after tear.

And all you have to think to yourself is,  
"Breathe in...Breath out..."

# I'm Happy to Go

By: Lily Cenicerros (8)



Dark clouds surround the sky  
the room instantly turns black  
Dead Silence  
trying so hard to keep my head high

The room fills with darkness  
a frightening darkness  
*Drip Drip*  
tears roll down the window  
the storm is starting

Thunder yells for help  
Lightening strikes for comfort  
*Drip Drip Drip*

The tears grow faster  
dripping rapidly down my face  
I look around the room  
Where did all the time go?  
When did the clock stop ticking?  
*Tick, Tick, Tick, BOOM!*

All three years of the raging storm  
finally calm to enjoy the green  
What kind of storm will it be  
When I open the door?

The sentence repeating in my head  
"Why are you so afraid?"  
I'm so scared to move onto the next  
Each season and each hour  
Will it be rumbling or hail?

*Drip, Drip...*  
The sky wipes it's tears away  
and as I've stepped out  
I wonder again  
rumblings or hail?  
Will it be neither?

The bright sun  
peaking out of the dark clouds  
maybe neither  
beyond those clouds  
calm brightening pink appears  
causing me to stare and take a breather

I look around the room to see that  
nobody cares  
Nobody worries about  
the hail or rumblings  
Everybody in their chairs  
laughing and smiling all around  
stopping me from creating a frown.

# Breaking the Cycle

By: Malina Gonzalez (8)

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Don't you hate it when you have to watch every move of every person in your life because you don't want to repeat the past? When you're so stuck in the past that you can't move forward? Or when you have trust issues because someone hurt you in your past? Doesn't it suck trying all over again? It sucked for Aliza too.

The bell rings for the first period. "Oh crap we're gonna be late," Aliza said to CC. CC had been Alizas' best friend since the third grade. They'd been inseparable. They've had each other's shoulders to cry on and eachothers company to laugh with. And that wasn't going to change just because of a new year but a lot of other things were going to change.

"First day of high school and first period of a new year," Aliza said as she took her seat while wishing her and CC had the same homeroom. She may not have been with CC, but she was in the same homeroom as Mathew. They are going to see each other everyday for the rest of the year.

"That was a good thing right?" she thought to herself. Mathew was her boyfriend, and had been since February of 8th grade. "But what if that changed all because of Sarah," Aliza thought, letting it get the best of her.

The teacher walked in, being later than Aliza. And behind him, walked Sarah. "Oh... my... god! Why does this always happen to me? Why can't I get a break? Why does Ms. Homewrecker have to be here?"

Aliza panicked in her own head, not letting anyone know what she was thinking. She kept her head down hoping that Mathew wouldn't see as he was walking over.

"Hey Liz," Mathew said to Aliza as he sat next to her. He bent his head over trying to see Alizas' face since it was down.

She picked her head up fast and smiled as if she wasn't just thinking the worst thoughts imaginable to a 14 year old.

Mathew started talking about his summer. He went on about how much he loved spending time with her and all the time he got to spend surfing with his friends. He basically went to the beach everyday.

Aliza loved all of that for him, but she couldn't help to think about one thing. That picture- the one that Mathews' friends posted of Mathew at a house party and Sarah standing next to him. Aliza wondered if she was there, would anything else have happened. Would she have knocked the hell out of Sarah? "That would've been nice," she said out loud.

"What?"

"Oh nothing Mathew, sorry I was thinking of something."

"What were you thinking of?"

"Umm, just about a present my mom got for my sister."

"Oh yeah, your sister's birthday just passed, right?"

"Yeah, she turned 6."

"Oh nice!" Mathew said as the teacher clapped his hands for everyone's attention.

"Hello everyone, I am Mr. O. I'll be your home room teacher this year," Mr. O said.

Aliza wasn't really paying attention. She was too busy texting CC about how Sarah was in her homeroom and how she was going to ruin everything. She felt as if her entire world was over. When the day was finally over, Aliza rushed home.

She just wanted to lay down and take a nap. It is horrible when you have to go home to a loud family after a long day, and you can't open up to them. That was Aliza's life. Her mom sat on the couch and started talking about her day at work, but Aliza was kind of in her own head so she just smiled and nodded. She looked down at her phone and her eyes started to tear up.

"Liz, are you ok?" her mom asked.

Aliza just nodded and walked away. For some reason Aliza had the urge to look at Mathew's and Sarah's Instagram. She saw that they were both active and following each other. Yet Mathew was active, he was still ignoring her text. Of course she couldn't help but overthink. She layed in her bed and cried.

"Why do I have to hide this from my family? Why can't I date? Why does Sarah have to like Mathew?" Aliza thought then quickly fell asleep.

The next morning she realized she slept through the entire evening and quickly got up to get ready for school. She never eats breakfast but thought today might be a good day to start because something in her gut told her something horrible was going to happen.

She started walking to school and met CC at the corner of the street. "Hey are you ok?" CC asked.

Aliza nodded her head but CC doubted she was fine. Aliza looked up and smiled and CC knew something was wrong. Every time Aliza is about to cry she smiles so try and keep the tears away but it never works. I guess it helps her if she can still make everything look fine, but CC knew her better than that.

Aliza looked away and started crying while they were walking onto campus. CC quickly hugged her while she wiped her tears away and acted like nothing happened. Aliza didn't want to talk about it so CC didn't push.

When Aliza walked in, her heart stopped and all air was sucked out of her. Right there, her heart broke and she lost faith in love.

Mathew and Sarah were kissing and had their hands all over each other as if Mathew was single. The second he spotted Aliza, he quickly rushed over.

"Liz, I swear she kissed me," Mathew said.

Aliza looked him in the eye and said, "Tell me the truth."

"I am," Mathew lied.



"NO YOU'RE NOT! You can't lie to me. I know you too well. I know when you're lying!" Aliza shouted. She took off the necklace he gave to her on valentines of 8th grade.

A few months went by and with the help of CC, Aliza was almost over him. But she knew that if he came back into her life she wouldn't think twice and she would go back into that relationship with him. She had done it before! Mathew and Aliza were on and off again over the past few years.

"But this time it had been months!" She told herself. "I won't get back with him, yet I'm still thinking about him." Aliza thought. "The back and forth isn't healthy and I'm not going to continue the crazy cycle over again!"

It was December now so obviously Aliza had made new friends, including Ethan. She was in fifth period when she saw Ethan staring at her. Fifth period was science and they had become lab partners.

Ethan had been watching Aliza all year. He watched her go from a happy freshman to a sad and depressed state of a shell. He watched and tried to help break the shell, bringing back Aliza to the girl he instantly felt something for. Seeing that Aliza hadn't continued to fight for the relationship, he thought this might actually be his chance.

Ethan moved his chair closer and their hands touched. She kept her hand there knowing that she liked him. She appreciated his humor and his small talk. She enjoyed being around him. She felt something for him and it was clear to her that he felt something for her, but Aliza was too scared to give relationships another try.

Mathew's relationship really messed her up. From the time they broke up until now, Mathew and Sarah had been on and off. Aliza didn't feel bad; she considered it, what goes around comes around. Karma. She never interfered with their relationship because that would have been a mess she didn't want to have to clean up.

"I have to make the first move," Ethan thought. He leaned in closer, but he was shocked when Aliza leaned over and kissed him first. The entire class was shocked but no one said anything. They just stayed in their seats and kept quiet. They both pulled away and smiled at each other.

"This is a weird place to make the first move," Aliza thought.

"So," Ethan said.

"So," Aliza replied.

"So? These idiots say so?" CC thought from the other side of the class.

Throughout the class Ethan and Aliza came to the conclusion that they were "talking." That's what you did in ninth grade, you talked.

Eventually, word got around to Sarah that Aliza was over Mathew. Mathew was no longer interesting to Sarah. And naturally, Sarah started liking Ethan.

Aliza was furious, "This homewrecker always wants what I have. Why can't she ever just stay out of my life? Why does she always want to come back? Why does she always copy me? Did she have family problems or did she not get enough love at home?" Aliza thought. She started getting a headache just thinking about it.

And just like in the past, the same things started to happen. Aliza would see Sarah forcing her way into conversation, being in places Ethan would be in. Aliza didn't want to lose Ethan, but she couldn't face going through the same thing she did with Mathew. Aliza realized that she needed to tell Ethan that she just couldn't do relationships.

CC felt bad, thinking about everything Aliza had been through. She had seen her best friend close herself off, get down on herself and stop trusting people. But then she had seen all that Ethan had done for Aliza. He was there for her, was patient with her, waited for her, and supported her.

"You can't let her throw what the two of you have away!" CC told Ethan.

"I don't want to and I won't. If she won't listen to the text messages I sent her, I will prove to her that Sarah is nothing to me." Ethan expressed himself. "Aliza is everything to me. I never want to see her hurt. I think I need your help!"

"Aliza, if we don't leave now, we are going to be late!" CC called from outside Aliza's bedroom door.

"I really don't even want to go. I'll probably run into Matthew and Sarah," she snorted, "or worse- Ethan."

"I still don't know why you felt that you had to end things with Ethan. He seemed like a decent guy."

"Yeah until Sarah got her hands on him. She ruins everything!"

CC rolled her eyes and hurried Aliza out of the door. CC drove and missed the exit to the movie theater. "Wasn't that your exit?" Aliza questioned.

"Shoot!" She looked back. "I think it was. I'll just take the next one and turn around."

Aliza pulled out her phone and checked the time. CC always kept the clock in her car 5 minutes ahead. She claimed that she was always late, so if she got there 5 minutes late, she was actually on time. Aliza never understood her reasoning, if she knew she had the 5 minutes, what was the point? But according to her phone, they still had time to get snacks before the previews started.

CC slowed down and turned into the park just past the theater.

"CC, this isn't the turn either. We really are going to be late and I'm not going to let you blame that on me."

"Hush child!" CC giggled.

Aliza followed her gaze to see what appeared to be a little picnic set up. A plaid blanket laid across the opening just under the tree providing shade. There was a basket, like an actual picnic basket, set out on the blanket. Aliza allowed herself to drift into what might have been with Ethan. And just like that, she saw Ethan standing by the car door.

Aliza gasped and looked at CC betrayed. "What is this?"

"Just listen to what he has to say," CC said as she unlocked the doors.

Before Aliza could grab the doorknob, Ethan opened her door and extended his hand. Aliza could feel her face blush just as her heart started knocking on her chest to escape.

Ethan took her hand helping her out of the car. He then brought her hand up to his lips kissing it gently while not breaking eye contact with her. “Hi,” he whispered.

“Hi,” was all Aliza could manage.

Ethan intertwined his fingers with hers and walked her towards the blanket he had spread out for them. He held her hand, helping her to a seated position, then released her hand. He opened the basket and began to pull out all of Aliza’s favorites. He had her favorite drink, her favorite sandwich, her favorite chips, her favorite cookies, and even her favorite candy.

“I’m sort of familiar with your past and CC might have alluded to you having trust issues, but I am going to show you that I am not like any of them. I am going to prove to you, I can be trusted.”

Aliza sat there with her mouth open, shocked by how generous and gracious Ethan was being. She listened to him explain that he doesn’t trust a lot of people, but how he’s never had the same kind of connection with anyone as he has had with her. He told Aliza that he wasn’t like all the other guys, just like she wasn’t like all the other girls.

After they finished their lunch, Ethan stood and held out his hand to help Aliza up. “So what do you say? Will you take a leap of faith and trust me?”

Aliza felt the sting of water clouding her eyes. As much as she feared her heart to get broken, she feared the loss of a wonderful guy and a beautiful relationship even more. She smiled, lifted to her toes, and kissed Ethan. “Yes!” she said against his lips and kissed him again.

# Frienemies

By: Kailey White (8)

Frienemies, oh frenemies,  
Like a puzzle with missing pieces,  
Their words and actions can deceive,  
Leaving your heart feeling uneasy.

They smile and laugh, and seem so kind,  
But their motives are hard to define,  
One moment they're your friend,  
Next, they're crossing the line.

It's hard to know who to trust,  
When frenemies are everywhere,  
So keep your eyes open wide,  
And be cautious, if you dare.

For some may be true friends,  
While others may be foes,  
But with time and patience,  
The truth will surely unfold.

So hold your head up high,  
And stay true to yourself,  
For in the end, the frenemies,  
Will reveal their true selves.





Art Work By: Leah Cantu (8)

# Dark Secret

By: Marley Nervais Morales (8)

The night was warm. The heat of the room almost caused me to sweat. I miss that warmth now all I feel is coldness. It's cold here, although I don't know where I am. I am so cold. As I lay on the softest bed I've ever felt on my stomach, my body tense, numb, and shaking I hear the sound of the thump-thump I recognized from a couple of hours ago.

"Hey, Claire!" My friend Marissa shouts from across the street with someone next to her I can't quite recognize.

"Hey Marissa," I somehow manage to shout quietly.

She crosses the street waving to her new friend to follow after her. Marissa somehow always had the power over anyone no matter what she could make a friend anywhere. I was the exact opposite. Marissa always tried to help me "come out of my shell."

"Who's your new friend?" I asked jokingly as she crossed the street.

"This is Ethan," she said, winking at me. I looked at her suspiciously as she introduced him.

Once they get to me I finally get a good look at Ethan and my breath gets caught in my throat as I look into his enchanting eyes. They were so blue like the ocean pulling me in deep.

"Hi," he says simply.

"Hey," I manage to choke out.

As Marissa continues to talk about her day and things of that nature I don't break eye contact with Ethan. He's tall with oddly pale skin. The kind of pale that would be concerning.

"Hellooo!" Marissa drags out snapping her fingers at me.

"Yeah?" I say unaware of what she's saying.

"Ohhh," she says with a smug look on her face. "I think I see someone I have to talk to," she says with an unsureness in her voice, very clearly lying.

Once she left, "Are you okay?" Ethan asked.

"Uh yeah I'm okay sorry," I said unsteadily.

"Want me to walk you home?" he asks with a beautiful smile on his face. I nod my head and smile.

Once we arrive at my house I look up at him with a sad expression on my face and say "This is me" I say with a sad tone.

"Not happy here?" he asks.



“How could anyone be?” I realize how much of an overshare that was but I can't seem to care. I feel as if I had the best conversation with someone who cares. I mustered up the courage to finally say, “Can I get your number?”

“I don't have a phone,” he says sadly.

“Oh I'm sorry”, I say feeling immense embarrassment.

“I'll see you later,” he says and kisses me on the cheek.

I feel my face get hot as he walks away. As I walk into my house I feel the sadness of hearing my parents yelling in the other room wash over me. I walk into my room and lay in my bed feeling the comfort wash over me.

Thump. Thump.

I don't recognize those footsteps. I suddenly feel a wave of uneasiness wash over me and I tense up and shut my eyes hoping I'm just hearing things. Suddenly I regret my choice as I hear the thumps get closer and closer. I regret my choice of sleeping with my back to the door. My breathing becomes heavy as I hear my door creak open. I feel my heart beat faster and my body suddenly gets sweaty. I feel my bed dip next to me as I start crying softly with fear overflowing my body.

“Hey honey,” I hear a voice I recall so easily. Ethan. My first instinct was to scream. I opened my mouth but it's like he read my mind and immediately covered my mouth with his big hand.

“Don't be afraid honey,” he said in a sweet loving voice that could melt anyone's heart. “Now I'm gonna let go of your mouth and you need to promise not to scream. Do you understand?”

I nod my head yes. He slowly takes his hand off of my mouth and places a kiss on my forehead then black. It all went black.

Now I lay here in a room cold and shaking. Then I hear the beeping and woosh of something I don't recognize it. I try to turn my body over but feel I can't. I'm stiff my body is stiff. Why can't I move? I suddenly begin to panic.

“Don't panic honey,” Ethan says softly.

“WHERE AM I?” I shout through the lump in my throat, tears welling up in my eyes.

“Don't be afraid honey,” he says lovingly looking deep into my eyes as his ocean-blue eyes begin to pull me in which suddenly gives me a feeling of calmness. He grabs my stiff body and holds me in his arms. “Don't cry darling,” he says, whipping my tears with his thumb.

“Ethan, where am I? I promise I won't say anything if you just let me go. Please, Ethan.” I say with panic in my voice.

“Oh honey don't you see I can't do that,” he says kindly.

“Please Ethan” I whisper.

“You're mine now and I can't allow you to go somewhere you're not happy. I love you, Claire.”

What?” I said confusedly.

“Claire, I have chosen you to be my wife.”

I feel my face fall into a confused expression and I begin to cry. “Ethan I can't you're insane?!” I shout.

He breathes deeply still holding me tightly, “Don't say that Claire. You love me don't you?”

“Ethan, I just met you!”

“You don't understand, do you?” I shake my head no with more tears falling. Ethan continues as he wipes a tear from my cheek. “I've been watching from afar- well up here actually.”

“Up where?” I interrupted him.

“You'll see,” he says with a smirk. “Now, as I was saying before you interrupted me, I've been watching, waiting initially for Marissa. Then I saw you and everything changed.” He paused for a minute. “You're so much better than her Claire. You know what it's like to struggle. You know what it's like to be forgotten...like me.”

“What are you talking about? Ethan please just let me go.”

“I'll let you move now.”

I felt my body again. I could feel my arms and my fingers moving. Immediately my instinct is to jump out of his arms and when I do I can see how hurt and offended he is by this.

“Claire please don't be upset at me,” he pleaded as he walked closer to me.

“ETHAN I NEED TO KNOW WHERE I AM!” I yelled.

“Please Claire I love you,” he said as he grabbed my face forcing me to look at him. His eyes were so enchanting I couldn't look away. “Just come see it with me,” Ethan said sternly.

“Okay. I will,” I said, being persuaded by his eyes. I slowly followed behind him.

Ethan paused, “But first you need to get changed. You in PJs isn't the best first impression, is it?” He asked playfully. “I brought some clothes I think you'd like.”

I look over and see all my favorite clothes from my closet. I take this time to look around at the room I'm in. It's just like my room back home but nicer. How is this possible?

“Oh. Do you like it?” I look around the room slightly astonished at the accuracy.

“We could make some tweaks here and there if you'd like?” Ethan says in that calming voice I regret trusting so much.



“H-How did you do this?” I stutter slightly.

“I wanted you to feel comfortable in your new home,” he says.

That sense of normality was immediately gone.

“What do you mean ‘New home’?” I say uneasily.

“Honey, I already told you to get dressed so we can go,” he said sternly.

He looked deep into my eyes and almost in a trance I complied, grabbing a plain black shirt with a lace trim and blue jean shorts. I look at him and almost instantly he says.

“I’ll just yell when you’re done.” I nod slightly and almost as a cue he typed something on a keypad and the door slid open and he left. So many thoughts running through my mind panicking.

Just when I thought it couldn’t get any weirder, I looked up to see speakers and hear, “Come on honey we don’t have all day. They’re waiting.”

Too scared to defy, I quickly get dressed and yell for him. I hear the sounds of beeping I heard before and the door slides open. My hands shake as the door opens. My expression immediately softens when I see him.

“Are you ready?” I nod my head eagerly looking for an exit.

“There’s no way out, without me knowing honey,” he said almost angrily.

“How-” I am quickly interrupted by him.

“Don’t even start honey, let’s just go.”

I nod my head.

Walking around this place is surreal. I’ve never seen anything like this. The walls are metal and keypads are at every door. I look around and see family portraits with Ethan in them. I notice how far ahead he is from me. As if he was reading my mind he stops and turns to look at me. He walks over to me. My head lifted as he got closer trying to keep up with his height. He smiles his perfect smile and I feel at ease. I bite my lip nervously. This feels wrong. I should be panicking.

“Don’t fight it, honey.” He says leaning in. Then I hear an unfamiliar deep voice down the hall.

“Ethan it’s time,” the man says. Ethan walks over to the man. For the first time, he seems uneasy. His body is stiff when he shakes the man’s hand.

“Claire come, please,” Ethan says uneasily. I walk over to him slowly. I look him in the eyes as I walk over and I feel safe. I can finally make out the man’s face. He looks just like Ethan but older and with grey hair and eyes that as bright green like a forest full of greenery and a beautiful waterfall. I look in them and can hear that waterfall. I feel in a deeper trance than when I look into Ethan’s eyes.

“Claire,” Ethan says annoyed.

He looks familiar. I’ve seen him before.

“Hello, Claire is it? I’m Eric. I’m Ethan’s father and this is the committee.” He says as he opens the door he's standing by pointing. All these people look familiar. Then it all comes back in a flood. My dreams, is this the reason I've been having these weird dreams lately?

“Have a seat and we’ll explain those dreams, honey,” Ethan says sweetly. I simply nod. I want to say no I want to shout and tell them to let me go but I can't. I think the words but they don't come out of my mouth. I sit on the only empty chair. The head of the table. This feels strange to me as I look at these people I notice how beautiful they all are beautiful colored eyes and smooth pale skin. They all look like Ethan. I look at him with a scared expression on my face. “Please help me,” I repeat in my head.

“You probably have so many questions, tell me, son. What is she thinking?” Ethan looks over at me and frowns.

“She knows about the dreams and she also wants to know why she’s here,” Ethan says in a low voice.

“Perfect! These are simple questions we can answer,” he exclaims.

In shock, I struggle to speak. All that comes out of my mouth are mere mumbles and whimpers of fear.

“Father please just let me sit by her,” Ethan says with a sympathetic look.

“Oh for heaven’s sake- fine!” His father says annoyed. Ethan gets up eagerly and rushes over to me. I can't help but fear him. This guy I had trusted so much and wanted to be different. He put me here. I still have no idea where I am or what I'm doing here. Ethan looks at me almost offended. He gives a threatening look to the person next to me and they instantly move. He sits next to me and put his arm on my hand. As a reflex, I pull away. He is cold, almost lifeless.

“Okay, we can get to the puppy love when we’re through here,” Eric says annoyed.

“Yes, sorry Father, please continue.”

"Now Claire, let’s start with why you're here. Ethan chose you. As you may not understand our family is dying. Once Ethan is gone there is no one else to take over the throne.”

“T-throne?” I say almost breathlessly

“God Ethan really didn’t explain anything did he?”

“All he said was that he has been watching me, and that we are to married,” I say, a little above a whisper.

“Okay, well, firstly as I was saying we need someone to take the throne after Ethan eventually passes. We think that person might be you or eventually your child.”

I feel the color drain from my face. “Ch-Children?” I pause to take a deep breath. “I’m sixteen years old. Please let me go please!” I say with tears in my eyes. Fear and anxiety fill me. Embarrassed to cry in front of these people, I put my head in my hands.

“Oh god no! Claire we won't force you to have children now of course. I think with time we won't have to make your decisions for you.” I look up slightly and see him flash a sympathetic smile at me.

“Well to shorten this conversation, Ethan and I can continue our meeting with the committee ...You and Ethan will be married in a week and there's nothing you can do. I'm sorry. I know this is unexpected and all happening so fast but Ethan chose you and I believe my son has good taste.”

“W-what do you mean a week?”

“I-I have no choice either?” I say breathlessly. I get up fastly pushing my chair backward roughly in a panic.

“Son, will you please escort her to her room to help her she's in a panic?”

“No,” I say standing, “I have more questions.”

“And Ethan will answer those questions for you,” he says in a condescending tone.

I look at Ethan as he gets up and put his arm on my back. “Don't touch me!” I spit angrily. He looks at me sadly, but I don't give in immediately looking away from his eyes.

“Okay, let's go then,” he says with his head held low.

How does he expect me to want his touch when I just found out that I'm to be married to a man I barely know? I still don't know my location. These thoughts run through my head as I walk out of the room. Eric says something about finishing the meeting himself as we walk through the door. Ethan types the number '0128' on the keypad and puts his hand out for me to walk first. As I walk in front of him I look around this place and think of every possible way to get out.

“I told you there's no way for you to leave without me knowing about it,” Ethan says quietly. Not a fan of my silence, he stops abruptly and grabs my waist to pull me in a dark corridor. I roughly try to push him away but his grip is so strong.

“Ethan please,” I say annoyed.

“Look Claire, I love you. I know this isn't anyone's dream romance but I need you to know that I do truly love you. We are going to be married and that means you can't hate me forever,” he says trying to look into my eyes. I turn my head to avoid his gaze.

“Come on Claire look at me please,” he says annoyed finally grabbing my face gently to make me look into his eyes. Something is different this time. I don't see in them I only see through him.

By: Yosif Ali (7)

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A boring day at the new job. My computer sits directly in front of me. Although it sounds uneventful, little did I know, perhaps the worst of my job was about to arrive. It starts on an echoing ring on the telephone. I pick it up with a sigh. It sounds odd, but I was sort of excited for *SOMETHING* to finally happen.

“911, what’s your emergency?” I say to the person behind the phone, while half of me doesn’t want an answer.

“My son.. My son is missing!!” The woman behind the phone yells at me as if she didn’t believe the words coming out of her mouth.

“Okay ma’am, I’ll need you to keep calm. Can you please provide us with your address?” I say to her in an urgent enough voice, but one to make sure she doesn’t get more stressed than she is already.

After a long 10 minutes passes of the woman informing me of her address, and some details I can report into the Missing Person File. She gives details on his looks and tells me what happened. She had been at the market near her home for about 3 hours. When she had gotten home, Loph, her son, had been gone, with a busted door lock. I put every piece of information, significant or not, into the file.

## *MO*

My partner and I are called into a home. The details given were of a mother, which a child was missing. In the patrol car, I collect my thoughts and look out the window while my partner leads us to the home. When we enter the neighborhood, I observe the people standing outside and take a long glare at them all. They all stare at the rolling vehicle entering their area. They seemed scared, and confused. By a quick glance of this area, I immediately noticed the poor conditions these people live in. Many people had a look of guilty fear painted all over their face, but I decided to ignore it, and focus on our current case. The mother’s child, Loph, was missing from the home since around 5PM. While I’m completely zoned out of everything around me, I’m drowned in my thoughts. I immediately start to suspect the mother of some sort of involvement. Even if she didn’t directly do anything, she may know more than we’re being led to think she knows. Perhaps an altercation occurred in the past, or a person connected with her is out for her, I’ll never know until we start the questioning.

The vehicle halts at a stop and my partner sighs. I immediately shake my head and begin to focus on the present moment. I open my car door and slowly walk behind Josh, my partner, as he knocks on the door. Josh positions behind me as he lets me lead the



speaking and entrance. Suddenly as we stand at the front step, a click of the door surprises me. A short woman with white and black hair tied up in a bun answers. She seems surprisingly put together and I start to make mental notes on her appearance and behavior. She seems to move strangely and shakes with every movement. I completely put that aside as an anxious reaction to something big happening.

“Good afternoon ma’am, we’re here for a missing child’s report. Is this you?” I confidently announce it to the woman.

“Yes sir, please, come in.” She says almost instantly.

We enter the home and I look around. Following the theme of a dirty neighborhood, her home seems to be a complete mess with all types of items lying around. Parallel to the door, a couch is welcoming us to have a seat. I calmly ask if I may sit down and she accepts. Josh sits beside me while she sits on the couch nearest to us. I turn to her and bring out my clipboard to begin to start all the details needed. I begin by starting a warm introduction and asking her about herself. As we speak, I learn her name is Jen. I quietly observe her movements and the way she speaks. She speaks in a calm soft voice with no emotions. I clear my throat to begin the serious, important questions that may lead us to who did this, or where this child has gone.

“So, Jen, this is where the important questions come in. Do you know anybody who may have wanted to hurt or take Loph, or had something against you?” I say to her in a serious voice that should tell her we need a good answer.

“I may know just one thing. My ex-husband Ron had seemed to hold a big grudge when I got a lot of the money in the divorce. I definitely suggest you question him.” She says quietly. I take another note of her slightly unsure tone of voice.

We got a few more details and location until I felt happy with the conclusion of the questioning. Me and Josh get up off the couch and say goodbye to the woman. Next stop coming, Ron.

When we arrive at Ron’s home, it seems a bit more luxurious. The man seemed to have a lot of money with a bright white car in the front and a beautiful garden guarding the home. Me and Ron walk on the narrow path to be careful of stepping through the grass track. When we arrive at the door, I begin knocking. After a couple of minutes of knocking, I hear a yell from the inside telling us he’s coming. Slowly, we see the door creak open.

When I can get a good look at the man, he is a taller man, with wet dark black curly hair. It sits atop his head like a strawberry’s leaf. I infer the reason it took some time to answer was due to him in the shower. I begin to speak.

“Hello sir, we’re with the NYPD, may you please come in with us for a statement?” I say to him in a more assertive tone.

“Uhh.. sure. What’s wrong?” He says in a cool but genuine concerned voice.

“You know Jen? And Loph?” I ask him.

“Of course I do.. Why? Did something happen?” He slightly heightened his voice in an increasingly worried tone.

“No sir, we will just need you for some questions at our police department.” I tell him, not completely giving away our built up case for him to know what it’s about.

“Alright..” He says, in a more relieved voice.

I take him into the car with Josh and we go on our way to the department for the investigators.

Three days have passed since the questioning. I sit down on my chair and begin to look through the updated report. It seems like they’ve found some new things about it. I feel intrigued to check in. I look through to read what they’ve got down.

When I open the report, I begin to skim the paper. By the time I’ve finished, I feel genuine anger and confusion.

On the document, it states the man we met had not seen either of them in a long time. He’s been paying child support for the mother but still didn’t get updates or get to see Loph. It seems the mother has now been under suspicion for the kidnapping. All this new information stresses me out so I lay back and close my eyes.

About an hour later, I get quickly woken by a ring on my telephone on my desk. I jump up and swear under my breath for letting my consciousness slip to sleep. I quickly pick up the phone and respond with an introduction and announcing my name.

After a bit of talking from the phone, my eyes widened. I’ve been called in to go look inside Jen’s home. She’s flagged as dangerous with a possible firearm. I get prepared and get ready to go with Josh.

We finally arrive back to the familiar home I’ve grown to fear. I again, step on the steps, and knock on the door with Josh. This time, though, I stayed strapped with a weapon by my side. I knock loud and announce my warrant to enter the home. Quickly, Jen opens the door and her eyes widen. I yell for her to put her hands up to the sky and get to the floor. While Josh gets her, I look through the home. While I enter her room, I notice a door. When I open the door, I hear deafening commotion from behind me, and a couple screams following 2 gunshots. I grab my pistol and quickly run to the living room.

When I enter, I see a blinding sight I had wished I never saw. Jen was splayed on the floor and Josh was yelling at me. I ignore what he has to say and instead lay my eyes on the lifeless body. I look at her bloody arm and with an open grasp, a small gun lays shortly beside it. Josh quickly calls for backup and aid. While the services were on their way, I began to slowly walk back to the small door in her room. Standing at the door, I take a deep breath, blink a couple times, and open the door. When the door opens, it’s dark with a staircase directly behind the door. I walk down slowly and get a flashlight to see what’s ahead of me. Looking around the room, I see another door. I quickly hurry my

pace, as my stomach turns, as if my body knows the worse case scenario better than me. As I arrive at the next door, Josh sits at the room door staring around. I yell to him to tell him my new discovery, and I begin to open the door.

When I open the door and peek in, the darkness in the room drowns my sight. From what I can make out of the area, a bit of a small table, or object sits on the wall. I grab the flashlight out of my pocket, and turn it on directly towards the room. Finally looking inside, I see a horrifying sight. The object in the room isn't an object at all. The object is a child, tied up, mouth choked, and wide eyes.

# Nature

By: Madison Garcia (7)

Nature is all around us,  
beautiful and dangerous.  
On the internet, it shows the beauty.  
In real life, it shows the dangers.

The internet shows beauty.  
The lovely views of the world.  
Plants are both beautiful and dangerous,  
That nature is loving and sweet.

Real life shows both the beauty and dangers.  
That it's not always beauty that you see in the view.  
That plants aren't always lovely but dangerous,  
That nature isn't always sweet.

Natural disasters cause destruction,  
even when it restores life.  
People only go outside when it benefits them,  
Not when they should, even when it doesn't benefit them.

Nature is both beautiful and dangerous,  
Lovely and sweet  
Amazing but scary view of the world.  
The world will always be dangerous and beautiful.

# Trust No One

By: Gianna Marques- Ozuniga (7)

Every Senior class gets a free trip to the carnival every October. I've been looking forward to it since I was a freshman and saw all the giant upperclassmen board the giant yellow bus, then disappear from school for two days. They leave after lunch and stay at the carnival until midnight. Most of the time after the park closes they all go over to someone's house to throw a party. Then they have a senior skip day the very next day so they can recover from the night before. This has been a tradition since my grandparents were in high school, and has been passed on from generation to generation until it was finally my turn.

My heart beat anxiously the whole day and especially harder at lunch. That must've been the longest 30 minutes of my life! I slowly ate my cold sandwich that my mom packed for me hoping that time would move faster, but it didn't. Aliegh's endless chattering didn't help either. She went on and on about how excited she was to go through the haunted houses and go on rides and eat funnel cake, but what she especially kept bringing up was landing a kiss with Ethan. "Even if it's just a peck," she said. I swallowed my sandwich hard. while giving her "a look". I guess she knew what I was thinking telepathically because she cocked her head back and chuckled "What?!"

"Nothing" I responded, "Just that you're focused on the wrong things."

"Am not," she put down her sprite then blandly chewed on a soggy fry that was served with the school lunch.

After what seemed like an eternity the staff finally loaded our senior class onto the bus. The ride was only about 45 minutes to the next town over. Aliegh took a nap on my shoulder while I listened to music and read. I don't read much, but when I do I can't keep my eyes off the book. After I reached the 18th chapter the bus took a huge halt lifting half the class off of our seats and waking up Aliegh.

The carnival was sorta empty, there were a few people but at times it felt like we were the only people there. I mean it was a random Thursday in October at noon.. What did I expect?

As we walked around the park my body felt like it was about to overheat. Texas in the fall is not for the weak. Eventually the sun set, the wind picked up, and many people showed up. I shivered in line next to Aliegh while offering me her jacket. "Take it, I really don't need it." she insisted.

"If anything I'll ask Ethan to give me his". I rolled my eyes and chuckled. From the way Aliegh talks about him you would think they were together. It's a complicated situation actually. They've been flirting since Sophomore year, but neither one of them feel the need to make a move.



The line progresses and we step onto the ride that Aliegh convinced me to get on, despite all the twists and turns that are guaranteed to make me barf I agreed. We get strapped in and I clutch Aliegh's hand as I close my eyes. The ride starts off slow. I let out a huff and opened my eyes "This isn't that bad!" I shouted against the extremely loud music. The ride then jerks back and forth and back and forth. I close my eyes immediately and squeeze the hand that is entangled in mine.

The ride finally ends and Aliegh looks more nauseous than me. I guide her to a trash can praying she doesn't puke all over me. She staggers over and places both hands on each side of the bin. Her head is practically all the way inside, so I pull back her hair so it doesn't touch the half eaten hot dog and the rest of the soggy food. "Oh my God, are you okay?" I asked, trying not to look at what's going on inside the gray bin below. "I'm fine, I'm fine" She insisted in between blowing chunks. "I'm just dehydrated" She said, looking up and around to face me. "I need water, and maybe a hot dog". I laugh while still holding her hair up.. Just in case.

We walk up to the first food stand we see. A slightly older man, who might've graduated last year or the year before, and very good looking, attends us. "What can I get you, two beautiful ladies?" he asks with a genuine smile on his face.

"Two hot dogs and two waters please" I ask, blushing a little. I fluster into my bag looking for my card. It must've been at least 2 solid minutes of awkward silence while I desperately tried looking for my card, which happened to just vanished out of thin air. Ashamed I look up trying not to look too embarrassed. "You know what it's fine, I think I have a few granola bars in my bag".

As we turned to leave the sweet man interrupted me, "There's no need mam," he smiles. "It's on the house".

Aliegh looked at me with a smirk.

I hesitated at first, but I was famished as well. "Thank you so much sir, I'll pay you back soon".

As I'm taking my food from the counter he speaks again, "You can repay me by letting me take you out". The smirk that Aliegh had on her face grew into a smile. I look at him completely on cloud 9. I can barely reply.

"She would love to," Aliegh responded.

He looked at me for confirmation to which in reply eagerly shook my head. "We can go right now," he said. "Gibby can cover my shift for now. GIBBY!" he shouted after a short pause. A small stubby teen boy ran up to him sort of annoyed. "Please cover my shift while I hang out with my two friends...." He drifted through his sentence.

Then I remember I never gave him my name. "Mia" I smiled.

"And Aleigh" she chimed in.

“My two friends Aleigh and Mia,” he nodded his head. Gibby wasn't really all that interested, he didn't even notice when we left the stand.

“You never told me what your name was,” I blurted after we finished our food and walked around the carnival for a while.

“Paul,” he said, “my name is Paul”

“Okay Paul, what sorts of rides do you recommend?” Instead of responding he grabbed my hand and guided me (and Aleigh who was following slowly behind) to this ride that looked about 10 times worse than the last one we went on.

Aleigh took a deep breath contemplating if she should go on after what happened last time, the fact that she ate didn't help either. “You know what guys, I'll sit this one out,” she said, almost terrified.

“Are you sure?” I asked kinda hoping she would get over her fear and accompany me with this stranger I met 30 minutes ago. She nodded pretty violently then went to sit down at the bench next to a little kid standing on his tippy toes trying his best to reach the height requirement

The journey up the flight of stairs seemed never ending. The conversations Paul was holding kept me a little more focused on what he does for school and a little less focused on how high up we were.

After a not so long wait Paul and I get strapped into one of the carts. I looked down then looked back up to a reassuring gaze from Paul. This was the first time I noticed how well green and hazel mix together in one's eyes.

Almost simultaneously our hands interlock and I close my eyes bracing for impact. “All clear”. As soon as those words left the intercom the cart went racing forward at the speed of light, or at least faster than I could catch my breath. The whole time I pushed myself upright praying I wouldn't fall, I could tell Paul was doing the same.

Once we got off the ride, we found Aleigh sitting down with none other than Ethan, with his arm around her! Once I caught Aleigh's eye we both smiled at each other. Ethan saw very quickly and got a little embarrassed. I guess Paul sensed the tension, so he suggested we all go on the ferris wheel.

The Ferris Wheel went a little higher up than the last ride we went on, but for some reason I felt a lot safer. Maybe it was the way he put his arm around me and smiled or how smoothly he brushed my hair away from my face and kissed me.

I've had a few kisses in the past, but none of them as intense as the one I just shared. To be fair the other two were both at a birthday party during a game of spin the bottle in 7th grade about 20 minutes apart from each other.

In the cart in front of us was Aleigh and Ethan also sharing a kiss, except it was a little grosser.

The rest of the night we played games and rode rides, until there seemed to be nothing else to do. “How about we go to a haunted house?” Ethan suggested.

Paul’s face lit up. It was like he was waiting hours for someone to ask him to a haunted house. I brushed it off as him really liking haunted houses. Kind of a strange interest for someone who wants to go into the medical industry.

We chose the house all the way towards the back of the park, where all the kids have seemed to steer clear from. It was completely pitch black.

The only light that illuminated the area was the one that lit up the entrance of the house. Maybe to make you go into it.

When we walked in, there was a little kid sitting in the corner of what seemed to be the dining room. His face looked melted off and his legs were amputated. He was shrieking at the top of his lungs begging for help. He was even crawling trying to get our attention. Alighe pointed out that it was kind of weird that he was trying to interact with us, because most haunted houses don't allow their actors to touch the people walking past them. That little boy gave me the chills. I've never seen a scare actor so young and so talented before.

As we moved forward into the kitchen, we heard older jazz music that seemed to have originated in the 40’s. Against the music we heard bubbly giggles from two older ladies in maid uniforms who looked to be making batter for a cake.

As we walked in more, we saw a younger lady handcuffed inside the oven. Her skin had blisters and boils due to the astronomical heat levels that the oven produced. She had tape over her mouth so her screams were muffled. It wasn't like we could hear her that good anyway, her screams were so distressed her vocal cords sounded tired and worn out.

Aliegh looked like she was fixing to throw up again. So was I. Paul put his arm around me to reassure me he was still present.

We slowly shifted past the sinister older ladies into an arch that led into the living room. Immediately the sound of static caught my attention. An older television standing on two brown cabinets that had what looked like mold growing inside.

“Oh my god!” Shrieked Alighe against the static.

I turned my attention to the right.

On the couch, was a man who seemed to be completely deceased with a deep, defined hole in the middle of his skull. The wall behind him was splattered with red. Absolutely horrified, we all sprinted up the stairs that were parallel from the man on the couch.

As soon as we got upstairs, the whole top floor was a maze of mirrors. I was a little confused because this theme did not match with the one downstairs. Reflecting off the mirrors were dark red lights that gave me a deep headache.

As we tried to find our way through the maze, I felt my eyes rolling back into my head. Left and right I kept bumping into the reflection of myself in the mirrors. I've never had this effect from led lights before. My head started spinning to the point where I couldn't concentrate on who was behind me, or if the people I kept seeing through the maze were a reflection or actually behind me.

Eventually I realized that I was walking alone, slowly going insane. Growing a little frustrated, I tried to find the others, but it was no use.

My mind was wandering for what seemed like hours until I tripped over a large something on the floor. I squinted my eyes to try to figure out what it was.

“Aliugh!” I cried. I sobbed and sobbed over her dying body praying this wasn't real. I shook her until the muscles in my body gave out. I layed there next to her slowly losing my vision and slowly going into madness because of the excruciating pain inside my temple.

“MIA!” I heard a familiar voice, that made me feel a little better about all this confusion that seemed to happen so suddenly. Just as I thought I was going to be rescued I'm being pulled through the maze by my hair. My scalp starts to bleed because of how hard I was being pulled. I slowly turned to the mirror and there in the reflection looking back at me were those green eyes that seemed to mix so well with hazel.

....

I woke up. Not in my bed like I had hoped to be. I woke up in the front of the haunted house sitting at the dining room table. My vision was slightly better but what had gotten worse was the headache, it felt like a bug was inside my brain killing me from the inside out. It took me a while to realize I couldn't breathe and my shirt was stained scarlet , but as soon as I did a young lady walked into the door. She was about the same age as me. Next to her was a slightly older man, who might've graduated last year or the year before.

“Gross that looks so real!” She laughed.



# Trail Run- To Be Who She Is

By: Chloe Best (7)

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There she stands, the reflection is a mocking of who she wants to be.  
She sees a person, but is it the right one?  
The questions.  
The answers she can't help but to give herself.  
The love, the hate, the change,  
all strangely connected.  
She doesn't want to be who she is.

She stays frozen, she's just there  
phone in hand, hand ice cold,  
the girls being confident.  
the guys loving the girl.  
How could she ever be like them?  
she wonders about the wonders of herself.

How does it feel to be who she is?

The realization strikes her mind.  
Parts of her she could never bring herself to love,  
suddenly spoke the soft words,  
"Why me?"  
Could she answer the question?  
No, not yet.  
Her beauty could be seen by everyone but herself  
Her Beauty  
She can change how it feels to be who she is.

To love herself might seem far away,  
but today she can start that rigorous journey  
Seeing herself in the mirror, never seemed so simple  
She knew that in some way, she could do this  
To try will be the right way  
She might love who she is.



Art Work By: Abby Rice (7)



# Windows

By: Elizabeth Robinett (8)

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“John!” I shouted.

“What Ryan?” he replied.

“Stop here,” I said to him.

“In the middle of nowhere?” Cody asked.

“No, well yes but there is a cabin that I rented for the night because I knew it was going to get too dark to continue, we will leave at the crack of dawn. We need to rest,” I explained.

“Smart thinking ahead, Ryan,” John said.

We get out of the car and walk into the cabin. It’s nice and cozy, warm and comfy. There are no bedrooms, one bathroom.

“Where are the bedrooms Ryan?” Cody asked.

“There aren’t any, but there are three couches right here.” I replied. I take another second to look around, I notice that the cabin is covered in paintings. Not one blank space on the wall. There was something odd about the paintings, they were filled with old people. One old person per frame. The old people’s skin was slipping off of their faces, barely hanging on. Their eyes almost popped out of their head. Their hair looked like burnt plastic with almost nothing visible.

Cody and John noticed my lack of attention. “Ryan, what is it?” John asked.

“Sorry, it's just.... do you see the paintings on the wall?” I replied.

“Dude, I didn’t even notice, those are really creepy,” Cody said.

“Yeah, but we are just here for the night and we will leave in the morning,” John says.

“Okay I’m gonna get ready for bed.” I say. We get ready for bed and turn off the lights, the cabin is pitch black. We go to sleep.

“Chirp, Chirp.”

I heard the birds singing, I barely opened my eyes and immediately closed them. Light was pouring into the cabin, almost blinding me. I kept my eyes closed for a bit longer to prepare myself for the blinding light, I started to think. Why was there so much light when we turned the lights off last night when there were no windows, only paintings. I opened my eyes and John and Cody were missing, nowhere to be found. I looked around, there were never any paintings. Only windows.

I stand up so fast my eyes turn black. Once my vision returns I burst out of the front door.

“JOHN!” I shout.

A few seconds later... “CODYYYYY!”

I ran back into the cabin. I search every nook and cranny trying to find my two best friends. I gave up a few minutes later. I ran into the living room and packed up everything. Cody and John's things were missing. I pay no attention. I run out with my bags and look for the car. My car is missing too. I start to run, leaving my bags in the middle of the road.

I run and run and run not looking back. There is something in sight, a gas station. I ran inside.

I grab a bag of chips and a drink. I go to the counter, put down my things, and pull out my wallet. I hear a noise coming from the corner of the room. I look back and see a TV.

“3 boys missing. Ryan Smith, Cody Renolds, and John Bridges. Ryan’s car was found on the side of the road with claw marks.” The reporter says, voice monotone.

I pay for my things and run out of the store. I sit on the bench on the outside. As I open my bag of chips I think. How did my car get on the side of the road? Why weren’t Cody and John there when I woke up? Why weren’t their things in the cabin? Where were Cody and John?

I look up and see something in the distance. A group of old people, looking much younger than the old people in the pictures. I counted them, there were the same amount of old people as there were in the frames. They get closer to the gas station and look at me. Eyes popped out of their head. They walk past me looking above me. There was something oddly familiar about them. I get up as soon as they are inside and the door closes. I ran to the direction where they came from.

As I get closer, I see that they came from a ditch on the side of the road. I go into the ditch. I see my car, and Cody and John’s things! I look around and smell something just awful. I look down and see Cody and John’s bones with little bits of ripped skin and blood. I ran out of the ditch as I called 911.

“911 what's your emergency?” The operator asks.

“My...my my friends! My friends are dead and there is a group of old people roaming around. They were super old but now they aren’t and and and.”

“Sir, I need you to calm down. Breath, where are you right now.” The officer cuts me off.

“I am uh I don’t exactly know. There is a gas station about 60 feet away from me. I'm by where the um Ryan! I am Ryan. I am near where the car was found,” I say.

“Okay we are sending someone your way,” she replies. She continues to talk, I look up and see the old people coming my way.

“I NEED you to hurry!” I say, cutting her off.

“I sent someone your way. I just need you to stay calm. What is happening around you?” she asks.

“The old people I was telling you about, they...they are coming towards me!” I say. I look up and they are standing there looking at me. I slowly see them shift back into their original forms. I know it's too late. “I am going to die here please help!!!” I say.

I hear the officer talking but I am not listening, she is merely a noise in the background. I get on my hands and knees and crawl into a ball covering my head, preparing myself for death.

“SCREECH!!!!!!!!!!”

I jump but stay down unsure of what happened. I slowly lift my head. The old people were gone and a cop car was sitting in front of me. There was a man exiting the car and he came up to me.

“Are you Ryan?” he asks.

“Ye..Yes I am Ryan,” I replied.

“Okay I need you to stand up slowly and come with me,” he says.

“Ok,” I replied. I get in the back of the car and look around. Where did the old people go? I look back and see my car, the old people are standing behind a tree looking at my car. I look back at the officer.

“Officer, the old people are right over there!!” I say. I dart my head back so fast it hurts. The old people were gone. I look back and the officer was not there, taking his place was one...single old person staring back at me.

My heart pounds...

“Ryannnn.” The old person says in a shrill voice.

“How..h...how do you know my name?” I reply

“Don’t be silly, I’m Cody. Your best friend. We need to go, John is waiting for you, I could just save you for myself though I’m feeling quite hungry” He says.

“You're not Cody, Cody... My best friend Cody is dead.” I say.

“Ryan, I am Cody, this is who I truly am. Who John truly is. Who you truly are.” He replied.

“No you're a freak and I don’t know who you are but you're not my friend!” I said raising my voice.

“Now you’re making me mad Ryan...” He said getting quieter.

“Stop. Stop whatever this sick game is. It’s not funny, let me get out of this car.” I say. I turn to the door and pull on the handle. It’s locked. I turn back and look at the front seat.

No one is there. The old person. The officer. No one. The car was still moving though, very fast. I quickly look in front of me and see the end of a cliff. I turn to the door and pull on the handle with all of my strength, beating on the windows. Doing anything and everything to get me out of this car. Before I knew it I got to the end of the cliff, my life flashed before my eyes and before I knew it, I was at the bottom of the cliff.

“What a great short story Kyle. Really interesting. I loved all of the twists.” Mrs.Gossling said.



# Disasters

By: Dejah Perkins (7)

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No one thought that going to the park could kill you. Sarah walked behind her sister Emilie and her friend Taylor. Sarah and Emily were 14 and Taylor was 16.

As they were walking Emilie heard a noise, “Did you hear that?” she said looking back.

“No? Taylor, did you hear anything?” Sarah said, looking at Taylor.

“No, I didn’t, are you feeling okay Emilie?” Taylor looked back to Emily.

“Uhm yeah... I’m okay, I’m probably only hearing things.” Emilie continued to walk looking back every few minutes. Emily heard another noise a few moments later, it sounded like rustling in the bushes behind them.

“Okay, I know I’m not the only one who heard that!” Emilie yelled, beginning to feel frustrated.

“You need to calm down Emilie, there are no noises.” Taylor said, looking at her with a hint of anger and annoyance.

“Okay then, you don’t have to be so rude about it.” Emilie said, falling behind, Sarah going to her spot.

Sarah and Taylor continued to talk as Emilie was far behind trying to investigate the noise. They were so caught up in their conversation that they didn’t even notice Emilie wasn’t behind them anymore until they heard her scream.

“Emilie?” Taylor called out for her. “Emilie! Where are you?!” Taylor screamed, “Sarah, Where is Emilie?” she questioned her friend.

“What do you mean, Wasn’t she right behind us?” Sarah looked behind them, only to find out Emilie was no longer following, Sarah turned and retraced their steps to try to find her. Only to find Emilie laying on the ground. Taylor was right behind Sarah, Sarah looked to her sister’s lifeless body.

“Emile? Stop joking around, this isn't funny.” Sarah said, shaking Emilie.

“Maybe she passed out?” Taylor said, looking at Emilie confused. “Check if she's breathing.” She said not knowing how to help.

“She’s not breathing.” Sarah said quietly, Taylor hummed in confusion. “I said she's not breathing!”

Sarah immediately called for help, dialing 911 and explaining the situation to the operator. Within minutes, an ambulance arrived and Emilie was rushed to the hospital. Despite the best efforts of the medical staff, Emilie was pronounced dead shortly after

arrival. The cause of her death remained a mystery, and the incident left Sarah and Taylor in shock and grief-stricken.

Days after Emily's death, Sarah and Taylor started to experience strange occurrences. They would hear faint whispers in their ears, see shadowy figures in the corners of their eyes, and feel cold spots in the middle of a room. They soon learned that the park they visited was rumored to be cursed.

According to legend, the park was built on sacred ground and disturbed the spirits that resided there. The curse was said to bring misfortune and death to those who dared to enter the park. Sarah and Taylor became convinced that the curse was responsible for Emilie's death and their own haunting experiences. They vowed to warn others of the danger of the cursed park and never to return.

# A Rebel's Acceptance

By: Xyaris Walker (7)

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If there was one question for me to ask you, how far would you go to find yourself? How many years does it take to find it? My answer would be “probably forever.” You don’t just say stuff, and you find where you belong right away. It takes time. And that fateful day was the start.

To keep this short, I ran away due to some corruption in my hometown of Jemima. At the time, I thought I was making a dumb decision to leave, but my brother’s behavior was enough to stay. Do I regret leaving? No. But I can imagine what my parents felt after I left.

But that didn’t matter anyway, after running in the forest I saw a cottage that had the bright colors of a lollipop. I walked up to see if anyone was home, and there was a lady somewhere in her early 40’s, with a face that looked like she was in her late 20’s. “What are you doing here? It’s night time, and you should be in your home.” Her voice sounded like a 20 year old also. “I’m Kellie... Kellie Rivers. I don’t go by Wills anymore.”

“What a unique name. Please enter, and by the way, I’m Sadiya, one of the six nations' sages, me being Jemima’s sage.” I was sad to hear the sage retired, but I’m glad she’s still alive, and well.

“I guess you also ran from Jemima’s corruption?”

I nod, because at the time, I believed everything.

“Jemima did have its fair share of bad publicity.” I agreed with that statement, and I still do now.

A few years into my training, I managed to learn more about the elements. One day, she told me about Jemima’s history, and in one chapter, a page about my family, but one statement in that book was: “The choosing of the next heir is extremely important, but as of recent, the choosing was called “favoritism, bound to happen, and unfair.”

The only people running it are the Jemima royals, and with only Jemima people being selected, it really breaks the inclusion statement since their build in 1867.”

Then knocking came. “They’re here for you, here’s your stuff.” She told me to run upstairs, and climb out the window, and before the guards entered, she gave me “the book of sage’s spells.”

I grabbed my belongings and escaped through the window, and ran. The more I ran, the more places I saw. I saw the exit to whatever is out there, but then I saw a man in a gray cloak.

The man looked at me, he removed the hood of the cloak to reveal himself to be Markie, my rival. “Hey scar Kellie.”

I gave him a serious look, “I told you to not call me that.”

It looked like he was about to attack me, but I noticed it in time.

I sent in vines, but Markie dodged. I decided to send water into the direction of a bush, where he was hiding. The final strike was when he was trying to run, I used teleportation to catch up to him.

“Give up, the only thing you can do is retreat to your kingdom, and tell all your lies about me being the villain, but you also have some enemies on your side.” I said, alongside a mad look.

“Fine. You won this time, but once I complete my goal. Jemima will be free from evil!”

I gave a smile. “Well, I’ll be going. I accepted myself, maybe you should too. Besides, I know being heir is a lot of work.”

As I walked away, Markie got up, and walked back. “Welp, this is the beginning, thanks Sadiya.”

I may be called a rebel, but not all rebels are bad, they can have a good heart, even behind a serious look. And I know that’s true.

# Here Comes May

By: Sloane Beacker (7)

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March brought April,  
April brought showers next up is May,  
but I don't want May flowers  
I want the rainy nights that comfort me,  
and let me tight  
I miss the the aftermath,  
natural green tint on the vibrant,  
soaked leaves it creates  
a peaceful encasing feeling like no one believes.

But now comes flowers; the beautiful reaction.  
They are beautiful but only that.  
Why would the rain leave me?  
The roses only exist to trap the rest  
resist to nap.  
They resist blooming in the rain.  
Why can't they let the rain stay?  
I suppose it's for the best,  
I know I'd grow tired if it'd always shower,  
if it'd be raining every hour my perspective might go sour.

That's how I got here,  
when anything goes normal I'd want change.  
So I'll never know my true desire,  
not until something spontaneous were to perspire.  
But somethings will always be a mystery  
it'll be blinked away never making a mark in history.

But accepting this won't change  
my feelings about it, my opinion.  
it'll only calm me  
but it's enough until next year  
when April floods back in the cycle  
will repeat.  
It'll rain for 30 graceful days then retreat.  
I look forward to it even if I go through defeat.



# 2023 Jordan Journalism Literary Magazine

Art Work By: Samantha Anderson (7)

