Ink

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Succor

by: Alyse Arellano

"I can't say I'm entirely sure why I'm here."

Her voice was soft, playing idly with silky rose petals between her fingertips, watching as they creased, fell, and crumpled into seeds on her chest.

Her roses didn't need those petals anyways.

Above her head, the psychiatrist's *tosakin* goldfish swam in futile circles, their brilliant fins swishing in time with the projected ripples of water on the ceiling.

She turned to the psychiatrist instead.

He laid ramrod straight across a Freudian chaise, and though he was supposed to be staring at the ceiling, his eyes bored into hers.

"After all this, you're not sure why?" He asked, his voice cracking as if he were upset, immediately swiveling his head towards the ceiling with all the speed of a startled cat.

The seeds on her chest began to wiggle and sprout out roots. She glared at the seeds, whose roots immediately began to sway gently.

Better, she thought, as they dug into her chest, finding purchase in her veins.

She looked back over to the psychiatrist, who was now eyeing her enough that she felt she should sit up. Maybe she would have if the rose bush on her chest wasn't there.

"Tell me, do you think any of this is real?" He asked, gesticulating wildly at everything.

She looked around, and found herself getting inexplicably mad at the goldfish around her head. "Yes. It's all real." The psychiatrist's smile was both crooked and sad. "It's only real until you wake up."

Commonwealth v. The Witch

by: Alyse Arellano

We listen to the preaching from the other side of the bar,

The victim's screams could be heard over the witch burning on the pyre.

The Only Man

by: Alyse Arellano

A man sits on an alcove near the top of a mountain, his legs crossed into the lotus position. His posture is erect, yet from him radiates a sense of serenity and grace that suggests the upmost comfort that a being can achieve. Covering nearly every bit of his body is ink; not permanent but meaningful regardless. All of it is scrawled numbers and archaic mathematics, very nearly illegible with the overwhelming quantity.

On his knees the fingers of his hands are tapping out what would have been the ancient Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* if on a piano. It has been lost to time for quite a while. His eyes gaze calmly forward.

In the distance there is an orange glow, highly discernable against the dark night. It caresses what lingering droplets of moisture still exist the air until you can barely tell the corona from the source. The hue is vibrant and screams danger; with only the most miniscule suggestion of salvation and sanctuary.

Reaching for it is the abyss.

He stares at the city, poised right at the edge, and as it vanishes slowly he thinks of how the view could be considered closer to a sunset than anything. He hasn't seen a sunset in this life, but he remembers them from many of others.

The abyss is the end of all things, and that city is the final sunset as it winks out.

He closes his eyes as the final light vanishes, and ponders this last fracture of the universe. His hands still at the thought, and his smile is melancholy. He ponders all that he has seen: the beginning of time, the spread of life, the rise and fall of civilizations, and now the last vestiges at the end of all things.

He stands, dusting off his plain white pants needlessly, and sighs as the abyss closes in on him as well. It is time to move past the transient state.

Melanin Memories

by: Annie Dhoot

I do not have fond memories Of grandmother baking cookies In a large flour covered apron

My nani did not do that.

She fried up pakoras with her chai

Puttering around with a ramal in her bal

Paath soorndha through the radio.

I didn't sit at the dinner table With a plate of mother's meatloaf Waiting for my father to say grace

Mom stood in the kitchen making rotis While dad snuck extra loon into the sabzhi And my neelay chappaled pahr kharkai dhekde si.

Yeah, your memories sounded foreign to me, too.

Medusa

by: Annie Dhoot

I remember screaming. I couldn't have been much older than three but I remember screaming out as grandma rubbed a bar of Irish Spring through my matted curls. We weren't poor, but the concept of no-tears baby shampoo was nonexistent for my immigrant grandparents. Same with tangle sprays and conditioner. Nope, it was a bar of soap and a wide toothed comb, kept wet with a steady stream of tears.

But I endured. Because afterwards would come the almond oil scented apology. She would massage the oil through the knee length tendrils and then plait them up into thick braids. I remember peoples "oohs" and "aahs" at the long curly strands. The older Sikh aunts and uncles would look on approvingly at the uncut whips that were attached to my head. My brothers looked on disgustedly at the twin

snakes that would bite at them if I 'accidentally' turned my head too quickly. I was pleased with both reactions.

All was well until it was time where I was expected to take care of my hair all on my own. Using real shampoo was a small consolation compared to the sheer effort I expended to wash it. I developed my first vendetta, against the marketing lie that was no-tears shampoo. Do you know how hard it is to braid your own hair? There's a reason they always show girls at camping braiding each other's hair; it's a group effort. And here my snakes turned on me, I tried and tried to wrangle them into some sort of orderly braid, and failed. The scrunchied ponytail was a big look for me circa fourth grade.

It became something I dreaded. It took an hour to wash, all night to dry, and so much effort to tease out the knots that formed in my curly tresses. I knew my grandmother valued my long uncut hair; it's a religious tenet in Sikhism. I'm not really religious. I took my father to a SuperCuts in the nearest city and a middle aged woman took a pair of scissors to my shoulders. The serpent was slain. My grandma cried and I rejoiced.

Until I got home and washed it myself. The washing was a breeze. So was the drying. I fell asleep blissfully unaware of the morning to come. Sixth grade picture day and I had what that jerk Chad McCurty called a 'curry afro'. Turns out not adding any oil to my hair made the curls expand to their full potential. The summer in the sun brought out gleaming reddish streaks. The snakes had risen up in their fury at being cut. Again, I cried.

Then Victoria Lepe had a sleep over. Not a big deal, except Victoria had a worldly older sister. She was in high school and had all sorts of cool girl stuff, like a hair straightener, this magical device where two burning hot plates of metal were pressed together with your hair between

them to make it pin straight. All of us girls took turns singeing our ears to get hair that looked like dried straw. We knew we were hot shit. As long as there was absolutely no moisture in a ten foot radius of us.

All through high school this was a pretty standard look. Occasionally, wrangling with a curling iron would take my own natural curls, burn them to a crisp, and reshape them into identical pieces of something that looked like blackened spaghetti. Cheer sleepovers were spent with Jenna standing behind me, holding a canister of flammable hairspray in one hand and a 400 degree iron in the other. Ah, youth.

Of course this couldn't last. Medusa might masquerade as a goddess sometimes, but my hair had enough of my bullshit. And honestly, I missed the days of Irish Spring a little. They were easy. They didn't take special shampoos or expensive burning hot devices. But the allure of 'good hair' is still too strong.

Monster

by: Annie Dhoot

I used to get these really terrible nightmares. Like piss in my bed screaming crying nightmares.

Where I would call out for my grandpa to come and save me every night nightmares. And it wasn't like anything terrible happened in my sleep. But right before I dozed off, some kind of gremlin face would pop into my head. And then it would morph into other gremlin faces, with teeth and horns and these long wrinkled fingers covered in dried blood and gristle that were reaching out to me. Clowns and children and the elderly and dolls and witches and

leprechauns, everything just morphing over and over and over into something scarier every time. And my heart would race but I couldn't get away unless I opened my eyes, but my eight year old body was so tired I couldn't do it. So I succumbed until some little corner of me would rise up and scream and fight and piss.

But I couldn't sleep. And even then, I wasn't good at communicating with my family. I knew I was afraid, but I didn't know what I was afraid of. I would sneak Coke cans and ragged copies of Harry Potter and Artemis Fowl into bed dreading the moment when mottled grey fingers would reach for me. I started falling asleep in class or on the school bus. I needed sleep, and I was getting it anywhere I could. In second grade I had six citations for falling asleep on the school bus. I sat hunched over in the principal's office with tears collecting in the bags under my eyes.

Look, I don't know how to explain the logic for the next part here, but this is what worked and this is what happened. Maybe I just hit a point where there kinds of self-preservation mechanisms kicked in, maybe I grew up. Either way, I decided to fight back. If I saw a monster, I would just become a monster too. An even bigger monster with sharper claws and scarier teeth. I wouldn't let these things get to me because I was going to go out and devour them first. It didn't work just to become a monster hunter, to be myself with armor. I fought too long against these dragons, and the only thing that cut it was to breathe my own fire.

But then the fire spread out of my dreams. All of a sudden I applied monster logic to all my life. Suddenly if someone commented about my brown skin in a school where I was the only nonwhite student, I commented back about the blemishes freckling their face. And then I became proactive about it. So if I was the monster hounding this girl for her too short jeans then she couldn't monster me back

about the peach fuzz on my upper lip, right? And if I called him out on not being able to pronounce 'zizzors', nobody was going to see that every other sentence I wrote was a run on, right? There was nothing out there that could attack me, because I was going to be the scariest most intimidating thing. And it still worked. And here's the thing, nobody fought back in real life. Sometimes the nightmares would struggle with me but in the daylight of an elementary school playground, nobody did.

Maybe if right then I was the only ugly beast, I could have stopped monstering. I was an insecure girl going through puberty but so was every other girl. But here's what I found out: I wasn't Grendel. My sharp teeth were hidden by lips smothered in lip gloss and my clawed hands were coated in sparkling lacquer and clutching a Starbucks Frappuccino. That made me Beowulf. Along with a gaggle of other girls in Abercrombie, I wasn't a monster, no, we were having fun. I was funny. And everyone knows monsters aren't funny. I was just a regular pre-teen girl; cute, empathy-less, and willing to eviscerate you with words if I felt insecure or threatened.

The monsters in my dreams stopped visiting soon. And I wish I could say that they stopped scaring me and I magically stopped bullying at the same time but it didn't work that way. I was still who I was and, yeah, one day I woke up and I didn't like that. But I had been a monster for so long I didn't know how to be anybody else. I could call it different things, sarcasm, sticking up for myself, being a bitch. But I knew I was still that eight year old girl huddled up in my bed somewhere.

They say a monster is only a monster if it is treated like one. And after years and years of treating myself as something dark, wrong, flawed, I began to accept it. I was always raised to think that good nice girls didn't think unkind thoughts about other people. But I did. So if I wasn't

a good nice girl than I was a monster. And if I was damned to be a monster I was going to be the best damn monster.

Eventually, my own beast was tamed. In a way, monsterhood did give me confidence. It developed as a self-defense mechanism, but once I embraced it, I decided I was okay with the ugly. I am a monster. I will feast on tender flesh, but like, only if the occasion calls for it. My hands are veiny and cold, but they're also soft and smell like almond body butter.

I spoke to Zizzers the other day. Yes, the nickname stuck. He doesn't remember much of the monstering. He remembers laughing about how we picked on Samantha for having a pet worm. And Samantha remembers laughing at how we made fun of Janessa's nose. To them, that's what middle school was, a cesspit of insecurity where we learn our first coping mechanisms; how to block out bad memories. I didn't really learn to block them out, but I can twist them into stories with heroes and villains

Zombie Apocalypse

by: Anthony Morales

The stairway is dark. I fidget with the lock on the door with worried survivors telling me to hurry. I manage to undo the lock and we burst through the door. We make it to the rooftop of the Woodland Memorial Hospital. Winds are racing through the sky, crying as the wind tears across the surface. I see the helicopter's rotors spinning, creating the illusion that it is a grey disc floating above the body of the aircraft. This is me doing everything in my power for the

quickest solution. We have no time, I hear the undead making their way up the stairs. I command those who have followed me to get to the aircraft as fast as they can. We all rush to it but the undead have started pouring out the door chasing after us. I can't escape my problems. I turn and unleash hell upon the vile creatures in the form of bullets. I need to face my problems head on. The bullets rip through their flesh and liquify their rotten and diseased brains. Some of my friends begin to vanguish the monsters with me but they are coming faster than we can kill. Thunder strikes the earth as rain begins to fall creating a disheartening atmosphere. I'm the last line of defense. Barely holding off the cadavers from the helicopter. I shout at the pilot to leave me behind. I must help everyone...even if it kills me. With no fight the helicopter leaves. I scramble over to a tall air vent and climb on top. The corpses pile around me, reaching for me as if I was an idol. Problems seem to chase after me. I see the aircraft disappear into the mist. They are safe but I am doomed. I can help everyone but myself...I don't even try. I pull out a C4 trigger. The rain swells up. My sorrow is gathering. The mist intensifies. My hope is shrouded by fear. The thunder roars. My anxiety grows stronger. I pull the trigger. Explosions go off one floor at a time. The fires reach the rooftop and come at me like a ravenous demon. The flames engulf me. I destroy myself by helping others.

I wake up. That was fucking awesome!

When...

by: Ashley Dawson

When I saw you I liked you....

When I liked you I loved you

When I loved you I let you.....

And When I let you I lost you.....

88 Seasons Went By

by: Ashley Hernandez

The seasons wiped the trees off our land, and a house grew from the ground like a wild flower. My brother and I were a part of the land. He was the sweet jasmine that my mother grew along the back vard fence. And I was the dipladenia vine that grew on the front porch of our house. We lived on the same land but our experiences were different. In the winter the rain filled up the only indent in our cement and I splashed in it. How could I not look over at my brother and enjoy how he danced in the rain? Spring came and love was in the air I watched the kittens run by me while my brother enjoyed scaring them and tangling them up in his arms. Summer made me angry and disgusted when I would see the glazed mask that covered my brother's face. How could I not see the bees that stung him and left their sticky mess in plain view? How could I not see his insecurities? Fall came and I was just another year older and felt a little higher into the sky but I could not see how much fence my little brother had covered. To me it had been only a season.

Dear God

by: Ashley Hernandez

Dear God, I hate hide and seek We have all heard that if we search we shall find I'm not very good at playing hide and seek But I played for you In order to feel safe at all times I don't need any man, But I need your love in my life I am not the crying type So my tears go dry when it is time to ask your forgiveness Are my prayers not coming from my heart enough? Those thoughts make me believe nothing is enough I haven't lost hope, My frustration takes over me I am in the dark. My hand is ready to hold on to any movement in front of me Please stop hiding I still have not lost hope.

The Horry

by: Bradley Geiser

There was one possession left. After catching bits and pieces of the important game at my cousin's eighth birthday party, I had missed most of the second half on the car ride home. The Kings had led by a margin that would be enough to win quite easily in most games, but they never made things easy, and after a half-court shot (that was

released well after the buzzer), the Lakers made it another game. I hated the Lakers. I hated their stupid team. I hated their stupid city. I hated their stupid fans. And I hated their stupid existence. Everything about them made me angry. The Kings had to win this game, and I did not think they would screw it up.

As we pulled into the driveway there were just 18 seconds or so left, and the Kings were up by one. I made it inside in time for the final possession. Had we hit one more red light, I would have missed it. Had my dad driven a little bit slower, I would have missed it. Had the slightest delay occurred, like one extra goodbye to my grandparents, or one last game with my cousin, I would have missed it. But I didn't. As Kobe missed the shot, I was thrilled. In seemingly indefinite time, I watched the ball bounce off the rim, slowly make its way to Vlade Divac's hand, ricochet toward half court, past Chris Webber, and into the hands of Robert Horry. It was like watching a plane crash in slow motion as I watched the ball leave his hand, go over the up-looking Kings, and through the basket. For the next 20 minutes, I stood there, silently staring at the TV rethinking everything my 13 year old mind could rethink Life. Love. Happiness. Anger. I was a broken child, and to this day, it is to blame for the monster I have become...

The Hit List

by: Bradley Geiser

Bailey the Butcher Larry the Looter, Kerry the Killer, Sherry the Shooter, Perry the Preacher Gary the Geezer, Phillip the Phony, Willy the Weezer,

Old Lady Shelly, Young Lady June, Omar the Orphan, And a Hippy named Moon,

A singer, a writer, A bum, and a cook, A child, a fiddler, A cop, and a crook...

You're next...

Thine Mighty Rangers of Powerful Morphs

by: Bradley Geiser

Six Rangers of Power, Rangers of Might Lord Zordon hath assembleth together Battle the puddies, as beacons of light, Keepeth evil away for forever.

Repulsive Rita, hath now escapeth After 10 thousand years trapped under ground She's finally free, and vows to enslaveth She screameth, she shouteth, to those all around.

"Tis time for morphing!" thine rangers unite To put Rita's goons in their rightful places. Nigh do they forfeit, thine rangers will fight, As the foes feel their fists in their faces.

Go Mighty Rangers, Go! Fight on, my friends Or Rita will smite us, and thus it's the end...

Dr. Seuss Meets Pokémon

by: Bronte Williams

"Red, Blue, or Green. Please take your pick." I couldn't decide which one would stick Up for me in a fight or a game of wit. But I stared at the table for a short bit. "Blue" I say as I reach down to grab, "Sorry that one's taken" said that ol' crab. "Of course. I meant green" and I reached for that, "That is too. By a girl in a hat." "Well then red, would be the obvious choice." I tried to pick it up, but then heard that voice Say "That one is gone too" the professor whispered "Geez! Are any left?" I yelled and I histpered. "Actually, yes. But he's a bit mean." "I'll take it! I'll take it! I'll take him all sheen!" Then out came this little yellow rat, I grabbed at him and he threw me back.

"We will be best friends," I promised him then. But he just turned around, and that was the end of the conversation, but I still took him with glee. I finally had a Pokemon with me.

Stuart White



Hilario Aguirre



The First Time I Watched Porn

by: Carlos Mendoza

The first time I watched porn, I became a man. I didn't know exactly what it meant, and I still don't think I do, but I knew it was true from that moment on. It was that I must have been four, not a day younger. Keep in mind, these were the days when years meant the world, and being "and a half", amended every instance of informing "I'm four." They needed to know, I'm four and a half. "I'm four and a half, and I know things now," because there's no way a three year old could have known what I knew, and even less, felt what I had felt. No way could blood have rushed through three year old veins in such a similar way, in the same vein of chocolate syrup running down a motel drain. They would have burst the pipes, and my three year old body would have been left hemorrhaging lust all over the concrete. You have to know she was my Marion Crane and I was her own personal little Norman Bates. Guilty of something, I know that, but what exactly, I couldn't tell you in the slightest. I wanted to stare slack jawed, to grab, to hold with little hands, to maul, to roll with, to nuzzle, like a tin foil fork spooning sterling silver, I wanted to be on her, I wanted to lip lock, I wanted to be a man, assertive and assured. I wanted her, just as did Alfred Hitchcock, to star in my own little personal narrative.

The first time I watched porn: Porn was sitting on a park bench, eating a popsicle, her lips tinted red from the artificial dye, left turning blue from the cold, with a light underlying pink by the nature of god. I don't know why, but I was fascinated by the back and forth motions, sawing away at her teeth, leaking melted cherry-red ice down her chin. I was stuck by the slurp, the nonchalant way her hand flicked the popsicle in and out of her mouth, and the pop that would come with it; a pop that would echo inside of me for years to

come. This was no video my friends, this was real life. Banned from TV, in all of its raw glory, only viewable in reality. No static, or iridescent, sepia-toned cable box bullshit, this was: One of the older girls from the neighborhood eating a popsicle at the park down the street. Rated X. No one under seventeen admitted... except me, because I was four and a half.

I would spend some nights picturing her naked, my imagination the only compensation for the lack of a better reality. I pictured her as best I could. Long billowing hair, breasts, what I believed to be breasts, her trademark popsicle dripping in one hand, and of course, her penis. I was only four and a half mind you, I can't be held accountable for not knowing she most likely didn't have a penis, although it makes sense now. Something just seemed odd about the matter; not wrong by any means, just odd.

"Hm? Her penis." It was a phallic fallacy - a phallic fantasy. It was the best I could do at the time, and it was still good for, what it was.

The first time I watched porn, I became a man. The first time I watched hardcore porn, I became disgusted.

It Takes a Village to Raise a Kid, It Takes a Kid to Raze a Village

by: Carlos Mendoza

My best friend in high school was named Adam, and we were inseparable. "Summer and Autumn," they'd say, just to make fun. We weren't gay, but everyone would say we were. Yes, I think we loved each other, but we weren't gay. To level what we had to a three letter word so constricting as "gay" wouldn't do what we had justice. But since when did gays get justice in this country any way. No, we weren't gay but we did kiss, and we happened to be men. It was like a sport to us, an expression of our physical capabilities.

My father used to watch boxing. That was a sport. If you ask me, boxing always looked a little gay to me: all the tip-toeing in sparkling shorts, sweat drenched and heavy breathing, men leaning against each other, a little nibbling, even biting, pounding the head, then muscle-to-muscle when they were too tired to fuck each other up. And if they held on to each other for too long, the referee would pull them apart, like "Hey, you're being too gay! Get away from each other, ya' little fags! America's watching!" But they'd always come back to each other, just long enough to whisper another "I love you" and "I know" into each other's ears, before being pulled into their respective corners. Somehow though, this shit was manly, so we equated what we did to boxing. "You wanna go box?" we'd say. But we weren't gay. We had rules. Nothing below the belt. Stomach and above was okay, but below the belt, no way. We weren't gay. We were boxing.

Then and Now

by: Christopher Holden

Didn't know what to expect in your neck of the woods
Guess I'll stick around long enough to check if it's good
You came to me when I was at my weakest
When alls I had was music pumpin' out the speakers
You lead me to believe I'd be worry free
Used to take my time but now you hurry me
You convinced me you were more important than my music career

Like it's alright to let it go - I won't be a loser in here

Do I go on ahead and make this simple trade
My happiness for homework and a fucked up mental state
I'm at a personal conflict of interest
The battle for time between careers is constant and endless
I'd rather be a better rapper than a better person
Come to think about it, you're the reason why I'm still
rehearsin'
So for now on I'll approach life from a different angle

If it's worth it, take that risk and bet the bankroll

These days when I reflect on years
Can't help but to accept I've shed some tears
Of course I'm glad that I've made it this far
But I won't come up short when I aim for the stars
I gravitate towards those on a higher level
Can't have what I want – I'd rather die than settle
And what I want is this sophisticated Latin queen
You're missin' out if she's one you haven't seen
Long black beautiful hair, caramel colored skin
Can't speak for anyone else but yo, I ain't like other men
I'm glad you can laugh it off, but I understand the shit gets
old

If it seems like a raw deal you let them other chicks get sold Not a diamond in the dirt, you're shining right in front of me Of course I notice, how could I not have seen If you don't get what you deserve than demand more And don't let anyone compromise what you stand for

Bitter Sweet

by: Elizabeth McNamara

The hummingbird's wings
Keep on beating
Never sit down
Must keep feeding
Pause here......Pause there
Don't slow down wouldn't dare
The humming bird
Must keep feeding
Never let down
Or wings cease beating

I Do What I Do

by: Emma Brunson

I rise with the sun because he hurt me. I sleep to the moon because he can't hurt me anymore. I speak loudly because women everywhere scream in agony hoping to be heard, acknowledged, or saved. Too scared to sleep, too scared to be awake. I look at myself in the mirror because although he sinned on me, I can still find grace in others. I stand shoulders wide because the tears and blood I have shed have been shed on many shaded faces of women all over the world. I share because those women need help; those women are being crushed into a mortar with words and hands of hatred. You're nothing, he says. You're irrational, wimpy, ignorant, naïve, and immature. I will change you, he says. You're worthless, he says. I conquer because I don't need

change. I excel because I am a woman of strength and knowledge. I'm strong, I say. I'm intelligent, wise, mature, and in control of myself. I don't need changing, I say. I'm worth it, I say. I don't suffocate because turning hatred put on you into a fire to burn others will singe your hope for humanity. I don't drown because I can turn that fire into warmth. I express because women everywhere need that warmth. I do what I do for you, because you need to know you're worth it, just like I needed to know I am.

Burned

by: Jennifer McKnight

Eternal flames buried deep inside Screaming in pain singed hearts eventually die

You burned me alive when you were never by my side No matter how much I strived my love for you died

Burned inside
You selfish bastard
Too coward to fight
for any love with your daughter

These words are wasted,

on your delusional thoughts You can't fake it till you make it, when it comes to the love you have not

Crackle, Crunch, Smack, Click

by: Jennifer McKnight

The double doors to the school library were near impossible to open myself while I was armed with a coffee, textbooks, notes, and my laptop. "God dammit!" I dropped a textbook and some loose notes, as if I wasn't overwhelmed enough as it is. I scooped my things up and entered the library. It was finals time so I struggled to find a seat. Everyone looked stressed out and I noticed I wasn't the only one wearing sweats and a messy bun. I settled at the table by the window seated with three other students cramming for their own finals.

With my coffee by my side and my notes spread out to see, I pulled out my study guide. This had to be a joke, it looked like the teacher had just copy and pasted the index of our textbook, like that narrowed anything down for me to study. I only had one more day, how could I cover an entire textbook today when I still had three other classes prepared to ruin my life? Avogadro's number, Stoichiometry... what did any of these things even mean?

Staring at the hundreds of terms my eyes began to blur so I looked up from the paper, distractions were everywhere. A table over from mine, there were two girls whispering about a party. It was as if the more I tried to concentrate on my science terms the louder and louder their voices got. I hoped those dumb bitches would fail out of school, who the hell gave them the right to have a gossip session here in the library while some people were trying to study? I could feel my temper rising, I held my tongue, but I glared their way. I only hoped they would notice and feel the fiery hate in my eyes towards them so they would shut their traps. I was ready to walk up to the girls when my attention was redirected.

Crackle Crackle. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. Smack. Smack. To my right, a tall skinny boy opened a bag of Cheetoh's and started to dig right in. If the crackle from the bag and the crunch from the chips wasn't enough, apparently this boy didn't know how to fucking chew. With every handful of chips he devoured, his mouth would fly open revealing orange chewed up mush. Every reveal would include a loud smack until finally he would swallow. I stared at him with a look of disgust on my face. I could care less about hiding how I felt about him, I was exhausted and I had exams to study for.

In that moment it was as if every movement screamed and every sound was amplified by megaphones. Cracked knuckles sounded like grenades going off in war. A girls swaying foot felt like a car was speeding past me on the freeway. Pages were turning constantly and each one sounded like a wave was breaking in this terrible storm. The noises and the movements were so overwhelming I could feel my heart rate increase, my mind felt clear of all logic but my senses peaked. I couldn't stand it any longer, and I snapped at the click of a pen from a boy who sat straight across from me.

Click, Click,

I snatched the pen from his hand and threw it across the room.

"What the hell is wrong with you?" He whispered.

"What's wrong with me?" I whispered back, "It's you and all you other fuckers who don't know how to stay quiet in a damn library!" my voice was rising.

"Look," He said "I'm just trying to study for exams like everybody else."

"Well maybe if you pen clicker and Mr. Cheese Puff over here could stay fucking quiet for a damn second, maybe we could all get some fucking studying done!" I could feel more eyes on me but my mouth had already taken over "How does it feel getting interrupted?! Let me just click in your fucking ear. Click. Click. CLICK! Tell me, how does it fucking feel?!"

"You're insane! If anyone's interrupting it's you! God damn, I'm out."

I could feel that the words coming out of my mouth were nonsense, but I didn't care anymore. I grabbed the bag of Cheetoh's from the kid next to me and I threw them at the boy walking away.

He looked back at me, he was incredulous, "Crazy bitch." And he turned back around and kept walking

"I'm crazy! You're the crazy one! I'll kick your fucking-"

"Excuse me miss," A slightly frightened elderly woman, the librarian I was assuming, gently grabbed my arm "I'm sorry, but you're a distraction here in the library, I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

I shrugged out of the woman's hand and started back towards the boy, "Hold on, I just have to settle this."

I grabbed the boy from the back of his shirt, "No one gets off on calling me crazy! I'm not letting you just fucking leave!"

He whipped around, "First you want me to be quiet or leave and now when I try leaving you attack me? Just get the fuck away from me!" He pulled out from my iron grip on his shirt, ripping one of his buttons, and then sprinting to the exit.

"No! No! No! Fuck you!" I started running to catch up with him, but before I could I felt the librarian grab my arm again, "get away from me you old bitch!" and by first reaction I turned around and slapped her.

She fell to the floor and other students rushed to help her, "I'm okay, I'm okay, can someone just get security?"

Students were looking at me in shock and some looked like they were going to try and calm me down but my attention was quickly redirected when I saw that the boy had almost reached the library exit.

I started sprinting to the door, everyone had messed with me too long, and I wasn't going to let one more person get away with it. I was almost caught up to the doors when I suddenly felt two men grab my arms at both of my sides.

"Excuse me miss but you need to calm down if you don't want anyone pressing charges for assaulting the librarian."

"Pressing charges? Assault? No, I have finals this week." I was trying to get out of their grip, but they were too strong.

"No miss, you better hope you'll still be allowed at this school to take your finals."

"No, you don't understand," I pleaded as they dragged me away "It wasn't me, it was the pen, and the cheese puffs and the knuckles..."

Leaving the Nest

by: Jennifer McKnight

With blood stained hands I toss a body over the dock and into the lake. A crimson red cloud grows in the water meeting with a glare from the morning sun. It had been a long night, but I had triumphed over the bastard. I had sworn to him that he'd pay for what he did. Now his body would slowly disintegrate into the earth while his soul be damned to hell.

I could hear birds chirping. I sat and watched the baby bird, ready to leave. It spread its wings and flew free of its nest and its family. I heard teenagers in the distance laughing, excited to be gone from their parents with a taste of freedom.

I rinsed off my hands in the water. I smiled at the lasting ripples from the body and said, "Goodbye, father."

Morphing to Our Demise

by: Jennifer McKnight

Flames of greed lay in our eyes Acts of Compassion and love have faded Slowly morphing into what we despise

An act of injustice, no one will rise The rich get richer, proud of the taxes they evaded Flames of greed lay in our eyes

No one hears the starving child's cries

The line between morals and law have been jaded Slowly morphing into what we despise

Holding strong to our lies Acting as what we hated Flames of greed lay in our eyes

This is what destructive values comprise We are the monsters that we've created Slowly morphing into what we despise

Selfish actions are to our demise With ourselves, we should be infuriated Flames of greed lay in our eyes Slowly morphing into what we despise

Love Returned

by: Joelle Toney

A love returned that was never quite learned
As I left, grew and changed he was off doing the same
And when our paths converged again he was all too different
than he was back then
as I became enlightened he was indoctrinated and the ropes
tightened around his heart
Brainwashing, you see, is more of an art
He became more concerned
With a brand more deeply burned into his chest than my love
ever was

He was militarily interned
Led to believe what we deserved are men on our behalf
spilling blood
Before me he stood, the terrorist
He saw himself the protagonist
As we agreed to disagree
I felt my palm close to fist
Enraged I couldn't believe what we had would end like this
We were supposed to be engaged
The military killed my fiancé

Dr. Meowers

by: Lawrence Uribe

Roams the house as his domain
Deep stare out the window
Past the rain
Softest fur and greenest eyes
Jumping 'round from spot to spot
Sleeps all over except in his cot
Mortal enemy with my legs
Hates the sight of my shoe lace
Constant bitter of my face
Way to proud to ever beg
Doesn't like the fancy things
Prefers a plastic bag over its toys
Very serious all the time
Quieter than a French mime
But if you touch his scratching post

His castle
The thing he probably loves the most
He will challenge you with his paws
To a duel of the claws.
And he will win.
For he is a learned Doctor.
Master of the Martial Cats.
Champion over Killer Rats.
Smarter than Cats with Hats.
Wild like the College Frats.
Deadly like the sawed off Gats.
For this is his domain
And ruler he shall remain.

Garage Show

by: Lawrence Uribe

Walk in to my garage
Take a seat or make a stand
Up the neck I run my hand
Volume up and tone down low
Plug it in, tune the strings
Let it ring
A to C
F to B
E to D
End with G
Practice shapes and a quick lick
Turn on distortion and let her rip

If I could give just one good tip Never let your good form dip Sing out loud A day of playing don't you skip Strumming fast Your fingers hurt One last chord Hold the note Pick scratch to the top Say goodnight To the imaginary crowd Undo the strap Unplug your guitar Cut the power and the light Wait for the show tomorrow night. *******

Hunger

by: Lawrence Uribe

The bullets ricocheted off the back of the tank like the rock we would throw at wall in the alleys back in NY. Next to me laid the bodies of fallen comrades. Our tank had been hit, left with a big gaping red hole that reminded me of the brick pizza ovens back home. "God how I miss pizza" I thought. They'd cook the best stuff back on the east coast. I was paying no attention to the scattered and bloody appendages around me because I was so, so hungry. "What did I do to deserve this?!" I huffed as I nonchalantly fired the tanks missiles. As I put my thoughts to sleep and ignored my hunger pains, I shot the missile again, and again, and again. Suddenly I felt a hot shooting pain in my stomach. I thought to myself "damn, this hunger will kill me." I looked down and

saw pizza sauce or so I thought. The pain got stronger. I wasn't hungry anymore I was dying. "You think they got pizza in heaven sir?" No response. In my agony and pain I hadn't realized the tank had stopped moving. Everyone around me was dead and I was dying. Dying for a slice of pizza.

My Brown Queen

by: Luis Cruz

You taught me to love, you taught me that I can do whatever I want. You taught me that being brown is beautiful, that waking up to Mariachi is a blessing. You taught me that being red is beautiful, that my being is an act of love. You taught me that I am your little Aztec warrior, and I should be proud of who I am and what I can do in this world. You taught me that I should claim my land, and shout my name from the highest of mountains. You are my Brown Queen.

Battle

by: Luis Cruz

Your lifeless body lies above the sheets, Like mountains, your breast caress the morning sun, Our anger awakens the beast we feed, When the night light rose, our battle begun.

The restless battle of conquering you, The engagement of the sun and the moon, Your love is something I want to push through, But our affection has yet to fully bloom.

With every stroke of my sword you cry, And with every stroke you endure pain, I bathe in your river, it won't run dry, I watch you set as I begin to rise,

You lie there motionless above the sheets, I have conquered you above the red sheets.

Perfect Imperfections

by: Marissa Harris

A handsome young man stands in regal pose; no one laughs as jovially as him.

Though of his countenance fair he clearly knows, his smile so bright it makes others look dim.

On matters of taste, he is not well read, nor does he care for the lilt of a dance.

Yet for me it is no more clearly said; my heart skips beats at his every glance.

Our actions are taken at my own pace, real talk and honesty; don't keep me blind.

As we lay, arms wrapped in a warm embrace, love that can only strengthen over time.

Every whisper meant as a promise, sweet moments that are sealed with a sweet kiss

Terror

by: Marissa Harris

There is a monster inside me, twisted and grotesque, growing stronger each day. I can feel its claw elongating, bones and muscle forming, the constant beat of its heart. The steady rhythm is out of tune with my rapid pounding. The monster silently waits to escape the imprisonment of my body, waiting until its own form is fully developed. Occasionally it will nudge my innards, a reminder of its presence, wearing down my frantic nerves. When the monster is ready to emerge, it bites and claws through me, tearing me apart. Blood pours in violent waves. Cries of terror and agony erupt from my soul. Everything is pain, I see nothing else. The static in my brain roars and crashes, then darkness. Pain becomes a throbbing ache.

It Snot Funny

by: Maya Thompson

I've always had a love-hate relationship with my nose. It started out with love. And by love, I mean an absolute lust to stick my finger into it whenever possible. It was fascinating. I could stick my smallest finger into a hole in my face and retrieve something sticky and disgusting! All children love sticky and disgusting, right? I know I certainly did! The only reason I got up off my butt and learned to walk was so I could be mobile while still jamming my fingers up my nostrils. Those were the glory days, back when booger stains on tiny pairs of jeans were the biggest nose-related issue at hand.

That is, until I withdrew my finger and promptly bled all the way down to my elbow. I didn't know noses could bleed back then! What was an innocent kid to do, when their personal treasure trove was flooding with blood, of all things? As any normal child would have done, I stared at it for a good few minutes before going completely ballistic. It was then that my mother told me for the first time, "Don't pick your nose so much! You inherited nosebleeds from me!"

Thanks, mum. Remind me never to let you choose my genes again.

Time passes. The nosebleeds don't. Though, I'd found out that I had the ability to start them at will, which was nice when tests rolled around that I didn't particularly want to take. Fifth and sixth grade were both filled with bloody papers and frightened kids, both of which were quite amusing to a sick little child like me. But hey, if you were picked on up until this point, wouldn't you use your ability to spurt out blood without injuring yourself to scare the living daylights out of your tormentors?

It's a shame my mother didn't feel the same. Once again: Thanks, mum. $\,$

I began to hate my nose once more after the first cauterization. For those of you who don't know about this God-awful procedure, allow me to paint a vivid image of it for you. Imagine when your foot falls asleep, and you can touch it and not feel a thing. That feeling occurs inside your nose, and spreads rapidly to the entirety of your mouth and throat due to mucous movement. Eventually, once your face and nose and throat are all numb, a stick with silver nitrate is stuck up there and the blood vessels inside your nostril are fused together via a chemical burn.

Sounds fun, doesn't it? I had three done on each nostril. It was then that I decided to hate my nose again.

However, I haven't had any bloody Niagara Falls leak out my nose since my last cauterization, so I suppose those procedures were successful. They left my nose unharmed, and didn't mess up my ability to recognize scents for more than a few days.

As far as loving my nose goes, I must admit to enjoying scent-based memories, and I have more than a few of those. The scent of hot chamomile tea reminds me of a hotel I stayed at in Mendocino at the age of four, lying in too big of a bed and counting the dust motes shimmering in the orange sunrise. Stereotypical smelly old lady perfume reminds me of my grandmother, back when she used to be kind, and how big her house looked when I was very small. The salty air around the ocean reminds me of the first time I fell in love. (I never quite fell out.) And the smell of fruity candy reminds me of life in the dorms, when I shot a purple skittle out my left nostril and hit my roommate in the forehead with it.

I suppose you could say it's funny, how intimate a relationship I have with my own nose. But I say it's snot funny. Definitely snot.



Amber Sorenson



Ashley Dawson



Angel Fajardo



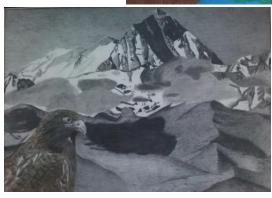




Gustavo Angel







Vanessa De La Cruz



Makayla Freed



Old Summers

by: Maya Thompson

My dream, my very first dream, was to speak a new language, something entirely new, something that I could create, something that no one but me could ever understand. I created my own language when I was seven. I only spoke it to my best friend, and even then, she shrugged her perfect little shoulders one day, flipped her blonde hair away from me, as if shaking away something as insignificant as a mosquito, and hummed through sticky-sweet cherry lip gloss, "Do I know you?", even when I spotted those ladybug earrings I spent my whole month of allowance to buy for her eleventh birthday. I wanted them, but I couldn't change my own earrings for another two and a half weeks.

I turned thirteen, but the following few years melted away with the heat of the sun and the heat of those seven ohso-deadly (but so desirable) sins, personified, transformed into all those boys I swooned over, crashing and burning, just to crave the thrill of prepubescent lips pressing against unfamiliar tasting flesh. I spent every last one of my pennies on every last one of those greasy-faced, acne-ridden boys — not men, boys — as if they were going to make me their bride when summer finally came, as if.

I was seventeen when my curly hair was shaved off in the dorms to make up for the lack of air conditioning in that dingy eight-story building, Mehling Hall, where the power went out monthly, and the elevators daily. I lived on the eighth floor in the all-girls dorm, there were more women than I could count, and I somehow knew I'd wind up much less straight than when I entered.

Jessie B was the first. She called me the John to her Sherlock and when I thought it was love, I watched the show on BBC and I finally realized what a toxic relationship she was modelling ours after. There's no such thing as a high-functioning sociopath anyway. I broke up using God as an excuse, told her I needed to find Jesus in my life, too bad I was an atheist. My body was filled to the brim with anger and regret, pouring over the top in a gelatinous nature, like the foam on the rim of the cup in all the Budweiser commercials. Charisma was the next, and the last, because I only had two pairs of sheets back then, and we ruined one together.

Twenty led me back home, to my family, my parents, and my baby brother, who I have to reach up to hug now, who speaks more eloquently than me, despite sarcasm being his native tongue. I swore I'd never look back at the me I used to be, over and over again as I repainted and refurbished my room into something straight out of an IKEA commercial, with beige and grey replacing the vibrant blue that matched my mother's eyes back then. I remembered that color when I dropped myself carelessly onto the new futon, uncomfortable and springy, and turned on my iPod to drown myself.

I never noticed how many songs weren't in English before, and I never noticed how much I crave that feeling of leaving, far, far away from home before. Only then did I realize that I missed the feeling of leaving, far, far away, to start entirely and completely anew.

Vince

by: Maya Thompson

Chuff. Inhale. Exhale.

Dark. Cold. Safe.

Chuff. Inhale. Exhale.

Where are the fluids, he wonders. Sigh. Wait. Don't move. They're coming soon. Black turns to white. Vision returns.

Chuff. Inhale. Exhale.

The oxygen in his nose is colder than usual.

Here they come. White men in white clothes and cold grey masks. A monochromatic snapshot, unchanging between blinks. Maybe not anywhere. Blink. White. The men look at him blankly and hold up his arm, poking and prodding at it.

Moving his eyes feels like sandpaper. His arm is white and stick-like. Bone threatens to tear the skin. Maggots come to mind. Gross.

He notices her standing at his bedside. Staring. Smiling. Little button nose and soft eyes. Why do you do that, he wants to ask, why do you do that? She always watches him. Since he came here, seven years ago, she always watches him. The men don't notice her.

He can't answer any of their questions and they know that. No saying no. No refusing The Treatment. You cured cancer, they used to say, you cured HIV, arthritis, diabetes, AIDS. Long words with no meaning anymore. He can't move, can't say no, I don't want to participate anymore. At some point, he remembers, he could. He wishes he would've. No sense dwelling on it now.

The wires and machinery are suffocating him. He can move his eyes and his tongue. Sometimes the toes on his right foot. Speaking hurts too much. His fingers were

rendered useless a long time ago. He can't feel her hold his hand anymore.

Today, the white, white people say, it's time for you to—muffled behind the masks. That's all he needed to hear anyway. He succumbs. They inject him. He prepares himself to sink. He can't shut his eyes but his vision leaves when he feels the cold creeping up the vein in his left arm like a worm. Blood rushes past his ears and through his body like violent, overflowing rivers. Beeping and whirring join the cacophony. So loud. So, so loud.

It stops with a flash. He blinks. The men are gone. The machines are gone. The numbness is gone. He sucks in a breath, all on his own, letting it fill his body with fresh air, so clean he can taste it. He sits up. He's outside the white room. His fingers brush against something that feels like porcelain skin. He notices someone sitting with him. Looks like that girl. Her voice titters and lilts like a songbird.

Are you ready? She asks. No response. He hadn't heard her voice in such a long time. Years, it seems. She touches his face with warm hands and shuts her blue eyes and kisses him as gently as she would a newborn. Everything around him disappears to black, peppered with shimmering blue and red stars. He's in space, floating between constellations and galaxies, leaving behind a streak of pale, pale blue. He recognizes the color, as if from a distant memory, too grainy and blurred to make out anymore.

Are you ready? The universe asks. No response. The stardust feels like silk against his hands, and he notices the shape of the girl's pink face in the interstellar clouds. Metallic smell, soft feeling, juxtaposing senses. His mouth is dry. The little glowing girl in the sky swallows his weightless body like a pill with milk and he can't feel a thing until his feet touch the ground.

Yellow-green grass crunches beneath his bare feet, and he moves his toes to feel the dewdrops on his skin. He's got clothes on again, real clothes, soft and thick, denim and cotton, hands in his pockets, a minty taste on his tongue. The autumn colors fall around him and he feels his hair move. Black and green dye, thick in front of his face. The orange sunset tints the clouds pink. He wishes his eyes would widen more than they could, to absorb more of the beautiful world. See more, feel more. He wonders if this is a memory when he hears faint music, remembering its existence. Vibrant color overwhelms him from all directions and he breaks into a familiar feeling smile. He falls to his knees and weeps to the world with open arms.

He's never felt more alive.

He looks up through his tears and sees the girl with outstretched hands. Smiling at him, her cheeks flushed. She's beautiful, hardly even fathomable. His smile spreads painlessly across his face as he reaches out. Touches her with purpose.

As he sucks in loud breaths through his sobbing laughter, he hears something in the distance, far away. His arms pulse with cold anticipation. Shiver.

Are you ready, Vince? Someone asks. Yes, he screams in breathless ecstasy, yes! I am ready!

And then the world starts to die. Birds fall. Trees wither and buildings collapse. The sky turns to grey and the grass rots under his feet. The girl's gasp is lost in the destruction as her black hair swashes out to the side. Blocking her face from view. All black.

No, he whimpers, come back, don't go, come back, *please*.

Darker and darker, his clothes turn to tatters and his hair dissolves in the chaotic, chemical-scented wind. Falling, down, down, into nothingness. He reaches out for her hand.

She falls down without him. Her pale skin and pink lips and blue eyes and button nose all enveloped in her black, black hair. Black as the sky.

He hits the ground. Black turns to white.

Chuff. Inhale. Exhale.

Where am I? He asks to nobody, because he knows the answer already. His throat hurts too much for words. Tears settle into his ears as he lies on the thin bed. Naked. Afraid. Numb. His fingers don't move.

You've been cured, Vince, the masked, white figures say, you're safe now. Everyone is safe now. They show him a small vial, close enough to his face to focus his vision on its contents. But the body does not take its eyes off the nurse in the back, with the black hair, the porcelain skin, and the cold, grey mask. Eyes shut painfully. Voices all around him. Nothing he understands.

Zyprexa. Geodon. Haloperidol. Chuff. Inhale. Exhale. Antipsychotic. Hallucination. Chuff. Inhale. Exhale. Dark. Cold. Alone. Chuff. Gasp. Cough. Schitzo.

Do Not Give Him Money

by: Pan Soonsawad

Bob grew up in a rich family in Alaska. He graduated from high school almost half a year ago and refused to study or get a job. All he did was sleep all day and play games on the Internet all night. Out of the blue, one

morning, he asked his parents if he could go to Europe. Bob's father was a friend of mine, and he came to me to discuss the issue. I looked at his white hair and his worried eyes and told him this:

"If you truly care for your son, let him go. But do not give him any money."

The next day, Bob came to me and demanded to know why I had said that to his father.

"At least you can go," I said to my angry friend.

"How can I go without money?" he shouted, "I want to see the world before I go back to college!"

"Then please, do it," I answered. I didn't say anything else. Bob left quickly, slamming the door behind him.

A while later, I heard that Bob had found a job as a woodsman in the forest. Because Alaska has long days in summer, he can work sixteen hours a day. The wages in one season would allow him to travel around the world.

I heard that he traveled around the world for two years and then came back to college. In three years, he was finished with that too, and he was working as a chief engineer. One day, I heard a knock at my door, and there he was. We spoke for a while, and I wondered how he changed so dramatically. I eventually asked him for a reason, and he responded with a story.

Bob was with his friend Jack on a mountain near the forest where he worked. It was so quiet and peaceful in the mountain, and it nice to go there when he was not working. Suddenly, there was a sound that pierced the silence, invading their ears. Both of them drowned in a cold sweat after hearing the shrill cry. They thought it might be a ghost at first, and they were beginning to panic. To overcome their fear, they searched for the origin of the noise. Finally, they

found a mother wolf who was caught in an animal trap, clamping onto her leg.

He looked at the animal trap, and realized that it belonged to an old man Bob knew, a worker. People like that trapped the animals as a hobby, and to sell the fur for family income. Unfortunately, on that day, the old man was taken to a hospital in an emergency helicopter with a sudden heart disease. Therefore, the mother wolf was likely to starve to death in that trap.

Bob's idea was to let the mother wolf go, but she looked so wild. He could not come near her, for fear of her lashing out at him. He noticed that the wolf was lactating, and he knew then that she must have babies waiting for her nearby. Bob and Jack were trying their best to find the wolf's lair, and finally, they found four little wolves, and carried them out of their den and to their mother. They placed the pups near their mother and allowed them to come to the mother wolf. Bob and Jack shared their food to the mother wolf so she could remain alive.

Bob and Jack decided to set up their camp near the mother wolf because she couldn't defend herself while she was trapped. After five days, when Bob approached the mother wolf, he noticed she was wagging her tail gently, so he felt confident to earn the wolf's trust. After another three days, she allowed him to approach her in order to free her from the trap. After she was freed, the mother wolf did not attack or run away, and instead, she licked Bob's hand and let him treat her leg wounds. When she could walk again, she left with her pups, but she looked back at him and Jack several times.

Bob still felt the adrenaline in his body, and he had to sit down and think. He eventually came across a thought.

"If a man can make a fierce wild animal lick his hand and become a friend, why can't he tame a person and become friends?"

He decided that from now on he would show kindness to others. He learned to show sincerity to others, in hopes that the other party would return it. He joked to me that even a beast can do it. He knew that he could always show sincerity and kindness to people, no matter how annoying or pestering they are. All people are different, but that doesn't mean that they are bad. Once you understand them, they can even become loyal friends.

He wound up being promoted each year and progressed very quickly. The most important thing to him was living happily every day. He knew that people who help others are often happier than people who ask for help.

The saying goes, "Tis better to give than to receive," and his life has confirmed the truth of this statement. He said he was grateful for the experience in the forest significantly. It has been benefiting him ever since.

This is the only thing that we desire that we will cherish. The persimmon's frost has only come to give a sweet flavor. Man has to be trained to grow up completely. If one person finishes college and still does not know what he wants to do, it is reasonable to send him to purify himself in the outside world. Give him a chance to seek an identity of his own and experience life.

Do not give him money, he will earn a living for himself.

What is the Difference?

by: Pan Soonsawad

What is the difference?
"Eyes" look the same
But "views" differ.
"Ears" look the same.
But "perceptions" differ.
"Mouths" look the same
But "speeches" differ.
"Brains" look the same
But " thoughts" differ.
Are humans different or are we the same?
"Minds" are the same
But our choices are different.

We don't need to listen to the noise.

The noise is other people.

The noise brings you down.

The noise is a vulture

That eat our dead dream.

Instead of listening to the noise

Find people who inspire you.

The people who inspire you

They have their own dream

When dream come together,

They cannot be torn down.

They only get stronger.

The difference between what we dream and what we

We need to finish what we need and we can finish what we dream.

Reaching that dream like eternity.

need.

Right here, right now, in this moment, we do not need to 'Answers' in all aspects of life at all. However, no matter what anyone says,

I do not need to know. Life is not something to be rushed. But as the season, winter is not seen to be transformed into summer. Spring was not in a hurry to change the fall. The tree grows in its own way.

Believing that by the time I make choices that suit me. With no other choice I am led to the decision of what ought to happen. What I do not know, it will be revealed in the end. But now is not the appropriate time for me to be informed of the outcome, including how to travel to the destination.

Perhaps the 'I' may be the sweet stuff. I slowly opened the door to what must be what was expected. Perhaps the chaos may lead to unravel the unexpected. Is it better for me to let go of the things that I do not know. Let myself be surrounded with mystery. Stay in the present. Enjoy a taste of the fascinating life like anyone who is not fully satisfied.

And then perhaps the answer I was looking for, it may be exacted to arrive where I do not have to seek remedies. Do not be offended by the stress and suffering or direct us into bondage. Believing that the answer to all things will come to me. At the time it was set that should happen. Wrong?

A Soldier's Creed

by: Peyton DeLaughder

Sitting in a trench in the desert storm,

Waiting for the day we go off to war.

Knowing not when the angst becomes the norm.

Sleeping in the sand it makes me feel poor.

Battling and fighting day in and out,

Wishing I hadn't signed up for this day.

Fighting for something we don't know about,

All I can do now is sit here and pray.

To fight again I have only regret.

To be a soldier is to bring swift death.

My humanity lost I will forget.

We fight and kill to our very last breath.

I fight and kill to live another day;

My humanity is the price I pay.

Head in Hand

by: Peyton DeLaughder

Head in hand.

Head in hand.

I lay here,

Trapped in this,

Endless abyss.

Time goes by

As I lay,

With my head in hand.

Head in hand.

Head in hand.

Is there never a time

When I am free From this Endless abyss? Head in hand. Head in hand. Forever shall I walk In time long forgotten. Past is past. Future uncertain. Present is frozen, In time. A time I wish, That would cease to exist. As I lay With head in hand I am left to wonder, Why am I To suffer the way I am?

Joyous Chaos

by: Peyton DeLaughder

Since I was a boy,
You graced my ears.
With the most profound
sounds of your grace.
Your sound was ugly,
to those that misunderstood
what you truly wished to express.
Beauty in chaos is what it is,
to find oneself
in your crazy bliss.

Chris Fiori





Curiosity

by: Ruthie Fields

I'm a child of wonder, With mysteries deep inside, A child without many answers, To the questions asked, or tried.

I'm afraid to open up to others, Not knowing if they will care, About the pain I have inside, And what it is I need to share.

I can't really explain to them, Of how my insides feel, For I have had this pain so long, It begins to seem unreal.

The pain comes from not knowing, Who brought me into this earth, For I haven't met the woman, Who one day did give birth.

She also doesn't know, My whereabouts or my name, Curiosity is not fun for me, It's not like playing a game.

But do you ever wonder, If you were in my place, What your real mom looked like, Is there a smile on her face?

Or wonder your own religion, Medical history and your roots, Whether you have a sister, Or a brother in your boots.

How you got green eyes, Or why your hair is brown, Why you have a cowlick, Or possibly a crown.

You wonder where she lives,
And if you have a dad,
Thoughts come over you,
Whether she is happy or is she sad.

Inside I will ask myself,
Does she think of me as much,
As I have thoughts of her,
And longings for her touch.

Whether or not to look for her, And coping with what you find, And will she want to see me, Or am I a thought she left behind.

Imagine how one feels, To experience throughout the day, People who ask you questions, And you don't know what to say.

I ask myself this question, Which brings me only tears, Where are the answers of my past, The history of my childhood years?

It must take a lot of courage, When a woman cannot give, The child she carries inside, A home in which to live.

I do know that this woman,
Who did give birth to me,
Had to have loved me very much,
To let go and set me free.

Her Voice by: Ruthie Fields

I am battered and bruised
Alone on the floor
I am numb from the pain
As I crawl towards the door.

The smell of tequila Lingers in the air I begin to feel sick I need air, I need air.

My nose dripping blood Has ruined my shirt I crawl out to my car I'm now covered in dirt.

I need to clean up
My kids are at school
I know he's inside
He is drunk, he is cruel.

I sit by my car My thoughts are unclear My heartbeat is racing I'm completely in fear.

Do I scream or stay quiet Keep crawling or be still Am I free, Am I free Is this real, is it real?

I hear him approaching He's calling my name I hear his laughter As if it's a game.

He again yells my name More loud than before I have made it inside I unlocked my car door.

In a fetal position Curled up in a ball I reach for my phone And I place the call.

I hear sirens approaching
As I put down my cell
I did it, I did it
May he now rot in hell.

His wrists are in cuffs
On his way to the jail
I remember the words
"There will be no set bail."

I am given a hand As I exit my car The beatings I suffered Will sure leave a scar.

This wasn't the first time
Nor second or third
But maybe this time
My voice will be heard.

Blinded

by: Sarah Austin

The feelings I felt, I wrote down in words. The truth is false, the world absurd. Nothing is real and nothing is fake, This is the life for granted we take.

To live a life is to walk away. Then the world will crumble and sway. We believe we think and have free will, But really we sit stiff and still.

Like puppets and dolls are we.
Too happy and blind to see.
That nothing is real and nothing is fake,
This is the life for granted we take.

The Soul Hunter

by: Sarah Austin

Zero checked his watch: 11:59. Not long now. He stood in the Metro tunnel, his back to the tracks. The soul in his jar was waiting to be released. It's not going to Hell or Heaven.

"You must not have gotten something done," he said to it.

It can't hear him.

"Hopefully the transit is a good one, the last guy came back as a pigeon. But between you and me, I think he pissed off someone upstairs."

His watch chimed and a door appears in the wall. Zero shoved the jar through the door and turns to leave.

"Tobias, wait."

He knew that voice. Satan. Lucifer. Beautiful face, ugly soul. Whatever. Either way, this guy was bad news.

"I haven't gone by that name for a century and a half now, dude."

Lucifer rolled his eyes. "I have a job for you."

Zero checked his watch. "I have to get back to the bar. My lunch is over in twenty minutes, bro."

Lucifer's eyes sparkled with confusion. "What is a 'bro'?"

He sighed, "What do you want?"

"I need you to collect a soul I got in a deal."

Deals mean that the soul was still encased in a body. "Name?"

"Mae Willows."

Zero's body went cold. "Mae Willows?"

Lucifer nodded. "By tomorrow, Collector."

12:01. The door disappears.

Mae Willows was Zero's co-worker from the bar. She was the girl Zero has been fantasizing about giving his heart to. They weren't terribly close, but he was pretty sure he loved her. Who had sold her soul? Who could do that to a girl as innocent and pure as Mae?

Acid turned in his stomach. Her innocence and purity was, no doubt, the reason Lucifer was in such a hurry to obtain her. Zero started to sweat, despite the snow that drifted down the stairs from the city. To retrieve a soul from a body was to separate the shell from the energy. Zero had to kill Mae for her soul.

No way. He had to figure out a way to save her! Zero's upper torso constricts. There is no way to save and he knew it. Once a deal has been made, a soul must delivered. But he had to know why. Why Mae? What made her do it?

"Zero, you never came back from lunch," Mae said as she stops before him.

He was perched on the hood of her car. "Mae...."

"What's wrong?"

"You made a deal with Satan?"

Her face changed instantly. "We all have our secrets, Soul Collector."

"Why?!" Zero shouts. He was beyond confused.

"There are things in this world you will never understand!"

Then realization hit him. No mortal would know about a Soul Collector, deal or no deal. Whatever Zero was talking to, it was not Mae. "You were never Mae at all, were you? How old are you?"

She smiles. "Much older than you."

Tears want to burn their way through Zero's eyes, but he doesn't let them flow. "Who are you?"

A deep, throaty laugh sputtered from her mouth. "Sweet little Mae, so innocent. I couldn't help myself. I knew my Dark Savior would love her, so I tricked her. She thought she was saving a helpless soul trying to get home, and like a flower she opened for me to consume her!"

"The deal."

It laughed again. "You could save her-oh wait! You can't, you soulless sub-species! You're just a thing, created for nothing more than to collect souls and deliver. Neither Holy nor demonic. Just something that falls through the cracks like a cockroach, only surfacing when the stench of death is strong!"

Zero lunged at it, but stopped. It was Mae...but it wasn't.

Mae's eyes rolled, "just take me home."

Zero took out his jar and opened it. Mae had been dead for a while, whoever this soul was, had killed her when she took Mae's body. Both the souls traveled through the eyes and mouth in a gray light into his jar.

The body of Mae fell to the ground empty and lifeless.

Zero checked his watch: 3:00 am. Twenty-one hours until the door opens again. He looked around the Canadian city. It was time for a move again. Maybe New York, or maybe a little further to Australia. He thinks as he walked away, leaving the body and his past behind.

Monterey

by: Spencer Alexander

I stand on the balcony at the back of my motel in the city of Monterey. O, how I will always remember the calm, cool atmosphere bringing relaxation and comfort through my body, and the view of a colorful vision. The sound of the ocean fills my ears with harmonic music. From afar, I can see more of Monterey across the bay, where it shines at night and reflects off the ocean. The sounds of the cars and people remain behind my hotel. On the beach, I could see people jogging and walking by, playing fetch with their dogs, swimming in the ocean like they were in heaven, and tossing Frisbees to one another. I always feel like I too am in heaven. All around me, I have seen a beautiful place with wondrous possibilities and a true feel of a strong and active life. O

Monterey, how I have missed you for more than five years? May we meet again someday in the future.

The Finish Line Awaits

by: Stefanie Santos

It was fall of 2014, and I had arrived and obtained my bib. The cold cloudy sky rested above us all. I didn't know anyone around me, but I did know they were there for the same reason. As I jumped in place, trying to warm-up my body, I could only hear myself breathing. I was not thinking of anything, nothing at all. My mind was blank, empty, like a vacant house waiting to be furnished. But I did know one thing: what I wanted, to cross the finish line and feel proud of myself. This would be the experience that would boost my confidence. I was determined and willing to give it my best.

We all stood at the starting line when we began the countdown at ten. "5, 4, 3, 2..." the gunshot went off, and everyone began to run. They ran like they were the Roadrunner being chased by Coyote from Looney Tunes. I ran behind a large crowd of strangers, but I did not push myself to run as fast as I could; I did not want to use up all my energy. When I followed the same path that was put together from orange cones, I felt like a plane on the runway ready to take off flying. As the people ahead of me began to slow down, I thought "Hmm... Maybe it's the first obstacle of the run?"

I had never been in an obstacle race, so I didn't know what to expect. As it was my turn to go through the obstacle, I had to crouch down to my hands and knees, and crawl under a structure that looked like an uncovered teepee frame. As soon as I started to make my way through the obstacle, I could feel my hands, knees, and legs sinking into the thick dark mud. Every time I tried to pick up my hand or knee, the mud would weigh me down as if I had cement blocks chained to me. Trying to get the mud off, I stomped around and then continued with the course following the perfectly aligned orange cones. As I jogged through the cold breeze, the mud started to dry; it looked like a dry crackling desert, only darker.

A few feet from afar I could see the next obstacle. As I approached it, I heard a loud thump! Someone had fallen off. The obstacle that we had to face was an upside down boat that we had to walk across. Along the side of the boat, there were paint brush like strokes of mud, created by hands and feet from those who had slipped or fallen off. I was scared and nervous. I certainly did not want to fall, but it was a challenge I had to face; sometimes it's the little challenges that can have big results. I made my way slowly across the top, careful enough not to slip. After hoping off the boat I felt proud, and thought I could do any other obstacle that came my way. Even though the boat was not big or very challenging, I had conquered my fear.

After completing a few obstacles, I felt confident in what I was doing. Running through the crowd full of mud, I felt like I was in the zone, just enjoying my time, having fun, running, and doing what I like to do: be outdoors and enjoy nature's beauty. I found myself standing in front of the last obstacle. I had to climb up a net made of rope and down through the other side. I don't know exactly how tall the structure was, but it was quite the distance from the ground up. I began climbing the rope with my right foot, then left, right, left, and so on. Halfway up, the rope started shaking. I got nervous as I started seeing more and more people climbing up. I was still stuck halfway like a piece of chewed

gum underneath the sole of a shoe. I took a deep breath and continued climbing. Finally, I reached the apex of the structure! I sat on top for a couple seconds to take in the view of my first 5k run, and I swung my leg over and slowly climbed down. Near the end of the structure, I jumped off with a big leap and started running.

As the path of orange cones led me to a hill, I could see the other runners ahead of me. One by one went down an inflatable slide into a water pit. Turns out that was the last obstacle of the run, and passed that was the finish line. I was so ecstatic to slide down and cross the finish line. The course workers watered down the slide to make it more slippery for the runners. I got on the slide, slipped and slid away like soap slipping out of a pair of hands. I felt like a little kid again, one who was playing on the playground and going down the big scary slide for the first time. Splash! I went into the water pit and was drenched in muddy water. As I stepped out, my black converse squeaked. Full of water, my shoes weighed my feet down, but just steps away, the finish line waited for me and the runners behind me to cross it.

Going to the 5k run and accomplishing my goal, I felt so proud of myself. I learned that no obstacle, big or small, in life can stop me from achieving a goal. As long as one is determined, dedicated, and most importantly passionate, one is capable of doing anything.

Never Staying Home Alone Again

by: Susana Villagrana

It was not the best night for scary movies. I was home alone on a cold, dreary night. What was there to do? Nothing, but sit there wrapped in blankets watching movies. Not just any movies but the type of movies that give you the chills, make you hide your head under the blanket, and keep your feet up so no one will grab them.

My home was dark and scary, when I heard a loud "bang!" Someone slammed the door. Who could it be? I was home alone. My brothers were an hour away, asleep by now, and my mom two hours away, working. My voice screeched, "Who's there?" No one replied. I felt like I was in one of those scary movies. I silenced the television. Should I call my mom? Should I call the Police? What if no one is here and it's just my imagination? Should I check if someone is there? What if there is? They know I am home. I heard a fiercer "BANG!" this time. I ran outside, planning on calling the police. I forgot my phone inside! What will I do now? I do not want to wake the neighbor; it's late. They already don't like me, for my loud music. I decide I will run in grab the phone and run back out.

As soon as I turn toward the door, I see a black shadow. The shadow was very tall, thin, almost stick-figure like. I couldn't make out the face. Was it a girl? Or a guy? It got closer and closer. I had nothing to defend myself with. It was right in my face when all of a sudden, Boom! I feel a sharp pain, then everything goes black...

I wake up in a cold, unfamiliar room. Where am I! What time is it? I get up to look for a door, a window, something to try to escape. I see the door. With some hesitation, I start to open the door, when a loud alarm turns on. Oh no! Will the shadow come to get me? Will I find my

way out? I get the courage to walk out of the door, to find a long hall way. The alarm stops, when I close the door. To the left there's a big window, where the sun is blazing in. To the right, there are lots and lots of doors. I go to the window hoping someone will see me and come to my rescue, but there is not a person in sight. I notice I am on the second story of a light blue house with dark blue trimming. Where am I? Where is the staircase? I hear a door close. I hear footsteps coming closer and closer. Thump, thump, thump is all you can hear. As I reach to open the window, the slow thumps turn into quick stomps. Faster than I can hop out of the second story, window, it grabs me. It's hands are rough and its sharp nails claw into my skin. Once again, I am out cold.

By the time I reawaken, I am in the same room I was in the first time, but this time I was not alone. I saw a familiar face. It was my neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Rosas' 12year-old daughter Cathy. She was about four feet, eleven inches with crazy blonde hair. It looked like she hadn't brushed it in years. I asked, "Where are we? What are you doing here? Is this your house?" I was puzzled. She laughed then replied with a scary smile, "Don't you know silly? This is my house. My parents and I come up here when we have visitors like you." I felt like crying, "What do you mean visitors like me? Where are your parents?" Still with a smile she replied, "Stop asking so many questions! It's time to play." I screamed, "No!" I was so scared and mad. All I wanted to do was go home. She kept insisting me to play with her dolls when burst, "You are too old to be playing with dolls! You and your family are crazy lunatics! I am going home!" She started hysterically crying. I'm guessing her parents heard her crying, because they were upstairs in the room fairly quickly. They were screaming at me as if I was there child and they had done nothing wrong.

I searched the room, to find an antique candle stick lying next to Cathy. I had to play things smart if I wanted to get out of there alive. I said sorry to Cathy and gave her a hug, so I could sneak the candle stick. I snatched it and hit her on the side of the head, she just fell to the ground. Next were her parents. Cathy's mom was about five feet tall with blue eyes and nice combed hair which made her look so nice when she came over. Today she reminded me of a witch. Cathy's dad was the opposite of them. They were short; he was six feet tall. They used to look happy. He always had an ugly face on. I didn't know how I was going to make it out of the house. Would I ever make it out?

When Cathy fell to the ground, the dad ran to her and the mom ran to me. I ran towards her, too. I lashed at her but she was too quick. I missed but I kept running. I ran to the right of the hall where I saw an opening. Another hall. This house is huge! I found the staircase. I flew down it, as fast as I could. Cathy's mom was what felt like a few steps behind me. I never thought I would get out of there. I was so tired, but I just kept running.

I ran for what seemed forever, but it was only three houses down from the "Crazies'" house. I banged and banged on the door till someone opened it. The old lady was about to scream, until she saw me out of breath and crying. She hurried me in and locked the door behind her. Before I could explain, I saw the phone and called the police. I was so relieved when I heard the lady on the other side of the phone say," 9-1-1, what's your emergency?" Before I could reply to the operator, I heard loud bangs on the door and screaming coming from Cathy's mom. She was accusing me of hitting her daughter with the candlestick I had in my hand. The old lady was so scared and I was so shocked I couldn't speak, that the old lady took the phone from me. She told the 9-1-1 operator all the information she needed to know and before I

knew it the cops were there pulling Cathy's mom into the police car. The car ride to the police station could not have been any longer. When I walked in the first person I saw was my mom. She was scared and crying. I ran up to her and hugged her as tight as I could.

Since this day, I have not been able to stay home or watch scary movies. I have tried everything to get over this tragic day, but nothing has helped. As for the Rosas family, Cathy recovered and is in a mental hospital while her parents are in prison. They were convicted to twenty-five years in prison without parole for each child they had kidnapped and killed. While they're in prison living the life of being protected by officers, housed and fed by the government, I am stuck out in the world, where there is no one to protect me or to pay for all the bills of my counseling and doctor visits.

Our Contributors

Amber Sorenson: Amber loves taking pictures, and says that it is her escape from life. Whenever she gets stressed out with tests or essays she loves to escape and take pictures of the world around her. She is planning on going into teaching.

Anthony Morales: Traversing all of California Anthony Morales decided to take a break and go to WCC, failing to figure out what he wants to do with his life. He decided to major in Journalism so he can one day review video games, a passion he has had since birth.

Bronte Williams: Bronte enjoys writing about everyday situations. She has been at WCC for about three years and next semester, she is transferring to Sacramento State as an English Major.

Carlos Mendoza: Carlos Mendoza is a local artist, who goes by the stage name of "Idegad". He is involved in music, film, and literature. Carlos grew up on documentaries of ghosts, aliens, Hitler, and the occult. He is an advocate for self-awareness and self-confidence.

Christopher Fiori: Chris is a self-taught artist who has been practicing since he was 9. Thirteen years later, he still uses basic mechanical pencils as a medium, and loves drawing tattoo art, with an emphasis in Japanese or Latin art.

Christopher Holden: This will be Chris's last submission to *Ink* as he will be transferring to UC Davis in the fall as an English major. He encourages all students who have a talent for art to consider submitting their work to *Ink*. Christopher

would sincerely like to thank everyone who has made his experience at WCC a memorable one.

Elizabeth McNamara: Elizabeth is a student who is currently enrolled in Kevin Ferns' English 1B class. At 28, she is rejoining the ranks of students after 10 years away from it.

Emma Brunson: Emma is a singer-songwriter who enjoys writing about social issues, particularly those about domestic and abusive relationships. Her goal in life is to help men and women everywhere know they are worth saving. Everyone is worth it. She also loves pizza.

Gustavo Angel: Gustavo is currently a student at WCC who wants to transfer to UC Davis and become a civil or structural engineer. Aside from art, he enjoys fishing. Gustavo uses his art to appease stress from school, work, and life. Math is his favorite subject and something he is very passionate about.

Jennifer McKnight: Jennifer lives the life style of an old woman who enjoys baking, crocheting, crafts, sewing, reading, writing, and weekly episodes of *Survivor*, but she also has a high sense of adventure, and loves getting tattoos, traveling, nature, and doing things that push her to the limit and scare her half to death.

Joelle Toney is majoring in genetics but is a passionate writer and social justice activist. She enjoys learning about systematic injustices in the United States and abroad to help solve them. Most of her writing comes from personal experience, history, and her own social commentary.

Lawrence Uribe: Lawrence wants to live a writers' life: late nights, cheap wine, and smokes with an old typewriter. His goal is to eventually be published, with *Ink* being his first step in that direction.

Luis Cruz: Luis is a first generation born Latino who grew up in Napa, CA. Two of Luis's favorite hobbies are making people mad, and making people think. He believes that when peoples' emotions get stirred up their true personality comes out. He tries to invoke these within his writing.

Makayla Freed: Makayla Freed is 20 years old and is from Williams, CA. She is currently finishing her 2nd year (4th semester) at WCC. She loves science, and is majoring in biology. She also enjoys listening to music, playing the guitar, and volunteering at her local elementary school.

Marissa Harris: Marissa is a Texas girl, dog-lover, and Marvel fanatic. Once she is done here at WCC, she plans on transferring to Texas State University.

Peyton DeLaughder: Peyton DeLaughder is a student who has a special passion for writing. Aside from poetry, Peyton enjoys writing lyrics inspired by his favorite metal artists.

Ruthie Fields: Ruthie is a second year student at Woodland Community College. She is a single mother of two beautiful girls ages 20 and 10. She is currently working on her AS degree in social and human behavior and will be graduating in December 2015. She hopes to make a difference in the lives of those who have struggled or who are struggling with some form of abuse.

Sarah Austin: Sarah has been published before in her high school's magazine, but, for her, writing is more than being published and having others read and judge. Writing is an outlet of emotions and feelings that she does not need social skills for, for expressing the "normal" way. Writing creates a reality she understands.

Spencer Alexander: Spencer is a quiet, but nice guy. He usually keeps his mouth shut to avoid saying anything random. He's currently a stage actor at the Woodland Opera House. He has great ideas, but sometimes struggles to bring them to fruition.

Stefanie Santos: Stefanie comes from a small town, with not much to offer, in the Central Coast. Moving here, to Woodland, the day after graduation was a sudden change, but a good one. She's about to finish her second semester here at WCC hoping to continue her education

Susana Villagrana: Susana Villagrana is a beginning short story writer. Susana is both a part-time Woodland High School and WCC student and a math tutor at the Tutoring Center. Susana is hoping to graduate a year early from high school and transfer to UC Davis in Fall 2016 to pursue her major and make the world a better place through math.

Know Your Ink Team

Alyse Arellano

The wannabe philosopher that designed the cover. Reads far too much, and writes sporadically. Attempting to get a degree in genetics.





Annie Dhoot

Annie is the youngest child of three, and is pursuing a degree in chemistry. She's a voracious reader and a neurotic writer. She once threw up after eating too much cheesecake on a bet, but she also made \$5.

Ashley Dawson

Ashley is a student working on her AS in human services, and plans to transfer and major in psychology. She submitted an original poem about life. She also has some pictures that represent a peaceful moment in time. In her free time, she enjoys reading and photography.





Bradley Geiser

Bradley is a student who has been at Woodland Community College for more semesters than he can remember. After taking a break, this is his second semester back, and his second semester with *Ink*. Bradley enjoys writing on all levels, be it short stories, poems, or blogging over at Sactown Royalty.

Maya Thompson

Maya enjoys writing short stories and practicing cartooning. As a 20 year old sophomore, she believes that no matter what anyone says, you can learn a lot from video games.





Pan Soonsawad

Pan is in her second semester at Woodland Community College. When Pan isn't at school she enjoys playing her harp. Pan's goal is to eventually open her own business.

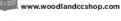
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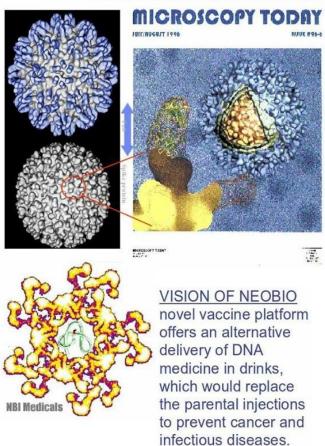
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