



THE

*Auburn
Edition*

“The world is but
a canvas to the
imagination.”

Henry David Thoreau

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The Auburn Edition’s Mission Statement

“Cookies”

I was eating cookies, and inhaled on a breath,
And then one started talking, and scared me half to death.

“Hi, how ya doing there?” the ginger bread man said.
But talking cookies freak me out so I bit off his head!

Simon Atkinson

Mystery Girl

Caroline Smith

Emily got up, packed her school bag, grabbed her cleats. She liked to work out at the beginning of the day rather than the end when she had loads of homework to finish. Grabbing a granola bar from the pantry, she yelled out to her family that she was leaving. Emily raced to school, not wanting the morning traffic to interfere with her workout time. The drive wasn't so bad, she found a short cut through the tall grass in a field that connected to a dirt road which led her to the back of the school.

Putting on her cleats, eager to beat her time from the day before, didn't notice the figure from afar who appeared to be watching. She quickly got up from the rough surface of the track and positioned herself on the starting block. *One, two, three.* Pushing off the block, Emily used all her strength and progressed into a sprint. One of the reasons Emily liked to run so much was because it was a great opportunity to not focus on all her problems and focus more on her breathing. She didn't have to worry about Rebecca and her mean followers, or how she still didn't have a dress for the school's homecoming.

The school bell rang through the crisp October air. Emily snapped out of her daze and jogged over to her bags, not wanting to be late for her first block class. She ran into the locker rooms, took a shower and dressed into her uniform, a white long sleeved button up shirt tucked into a grey skirt along with white ankle high socks. Too busy rummaging through her bag walking out the door, she bumped into the boy who was watching her run earlier.

Jack always watched Emily run in the mornings while working on his homework in the grass. He loved how she looked like she could run forever, he wished he

could learn from her one day. Jack had always had a tiny crush on Emily but whenever he tried to talk to her it always came out wrong. It all started the first day of 9th grade when all the mean girls were taunting Emily because she was new and instead of crying she remained calm and was resilient to their rude comments. Therefore, from that day on, Jack admired how she didn't care what people said about her. However, he never told anyone because his friends would make fun of him.

"I just wanted to say that I think you could position



“Courtyard” by Boston Hill

yourself better when starting off the block,” Jack said sheepishly, about to hit himself for saying the wrong thing again.

Emily, noticing his shyness when around her, grinned and replied calmly, “Next time instead of watching me from the grass, come down and show me.”

Jack chuckled, both made their way to the courtyard where all the students met up before their classes.

The school bell rang and Emily grabbed Jess, her best friend, by the hand and together they ran out the school to their cars. They wanted to get to the dress shop before the other girls in the grade beat them to it. Walking into the shop, Jess made herself a nice spot on the couch in the waiting room while Emily tried on dresses. Finally, after trying on the whole store, Emily discovered a beautiful white sleeveless dress that fit just right on her.

Jess’ eyes almost popped out of her head when she saw how gorgeous the dress looked on Emily. It glimmered in the lighting whenever she moved, making her the center of attention in the dressing room. Excited that they found the perfect dress for Emily, quickly put it back on the hanger and brought it to the lady over the counter.

“I’m sorry they did this to you,” picking up the dress while she talked. “I could mend this for you if you want.”

Walking out the store, the mean girls awaited. Rebecca, the leader of them all, snatched the dress out of Emily’s hands and together the girls ripped it up. All of a sudden, a woman appeared from the store which scared the mean girls away, dropping the dress and running. The lady turned out to be a seamstress who worked in the back of the dress shop.

With pity, the seamstress walked up to Jess and Emily, “I’m sorry they did this to you,” picking up the dress while she talked, “I could mend this for you if you want.”

Emily let Jess leave to go get ready for the dance while she stayed with the seamstress who was going to help sew up her dress.

After the seamstress helped mend her dress and made Emily look like a goddess, she gave her a phone and warned her, “Although I have made you this wonder-

ful gown, you need to leave the dance at exactly 10:30. Otherwise the dress will fall apart again.”

The seamstress told Emily to put a timer on her phone that should go off a little bit before 10:30 to give her some time to leave the dance. However, through all of Emily’s excitement, she didn’t put a timer on her phone and she rushed to the dance where her friend, Jess, awaited.

Emily drove up to the homecoming dance, which had already started, and opened the door. To her bewilderment, everyone stopped and starred at the beautiful girl. No one seemed to recognize her because of the neatly stitched mask covering all but her eyes. The music started playing, the crowd parted as she made her way to the middle of the floor, and at the table sitting alone was Jack.

“Would you like to dance?” the unrecognizable yet beautiful girl asked.

The boy looked up startled.

“I’d love too,” Jack replied, clearly shocked from the dazzling dress reflecting the disco lights that hung from the ceiling of the auditorium.

The two danced the night away. Emily and Jack never lost eye contact even when they had to split to dance with other partners. Both laughed the

whole time, enjoying watching the other stumble while trying to figure out the steps to the dance. All was well until Emily looked down at her phone and realized that she had forgotten to set a timer, allowing her one minute to leave the dance. She collected her things, told Jack she had had a great time but that she had to go, and ran out the school doors unknowingly dropping her phone the seamstress had given her.

Emily arrived at her house in the ragged dress the seamstress had fixed earlier that day. She hummed to the tune of the last song she and Jack danced too while skipping up the stairs. She plopped down on her bed and daydreamed of how the night could have ended, and if Jack would have danced with her if he’d known it was she. Emily quickly fell asleep with the thoughts dancing in her mind.

Emily woke up early the next morning with a great

plan. She was going to tell Jack that she was the beautiful girl hiding behind the neatly stitched mask. First, she made sure she had enough time to get to school and “accidentally” run into him in the hallway and tell him. When Emily arrived at school, she quickly got her books for first and second period and made her way to where Jack was propped up against a locker. However, when she made an attempt to talk to him, he was too busy talking to his friends about who they thought the mystery girl was, without realizing she was the one.

Jack set up a booth in the hallway later that day, destined to find the girl he had so much fun with dancing the night before. He would let anyone in the school come up to the booth, if they got the password right they would be the person who he danced with. The mean girls figured out a while before that Emily was the mystery girl when they saw her rip off her mask once outside of the school building on the night of the dance. One of the meanest of the girls, Rebecca, though to herself while doing her work in the study hall. *We should trick her into thinking that we're helping her when in reality we are just getting Jack to ourselves.* Content with her idea, she made her way to Emily who happened to be in the same building.

“Hey Emily!” Rebecca exclaimed in an almost peculiar way.

“Um Hi,” Emily replied hesitantly, still upset with how Rebecca and her friends had treated her the other night by ripping up her dress.

“I just wanted to apologize for the way I treated you,” sighed Rebecca, “I found a phone on the ground outside the dance. Is it yours by any chance?” Rebecca questioned even though she already knew who’s phone it was.

“Yes!” Emily exclaimed, happy someone found her phone that the seamstress had given her, “May I have it back?”

“Well I can’t just give it to you,” Rebecca trailed off, ready for her plan to go into action, “You’ll need to give me the password and if it is right I’ll give it back.”

Emily weary at first, whispered the password into Rebecca’s ear. After being told the password to Emily’s

phone, Rebecca ran to the booth where Jack was slumped in his chair.

“3126!” She panted triumphantly, exhausted from sprinting across campus.

“Huh?” Jack looked up startled.

“The password,” Rebecca started, now a bit agitated, “is 3126. Try it.”

Jack quickly typed the password into the phone and gulped, it worked. His mystery girl who was so nice at the dance turned out to be Rebecca. *Just my luck, she could have been anyone in this school but Rebecca.* Not knowing what to do next, they both looked wide-eyed at the other but for different reasons. Rebecca, because she was so excited that her plan actually worked and now Jack would be hers. Jack, because he was now with the meanest girl in the school and he couldn’t believe how she could possibly be the one he danced the night away with.

Emily, who had seen the whole ordeal go down in the hallway along with the other students, stood there limp. She didn’t know what to think or feel, so many emotions were flooding her brain. *Should I go up and call her out in front of everyone? Ugh no, that would make me look bad and I don’t want to start a fight. Hmm what do I do?* Not Knowing what to think, she went home and locked herself in her room.

While Emily was in her room debating what to do, Jack took Rebecca out on a date to his favorite restaurant. He pulled out her chair and she sat down, putting the napkin in her lap. They both ordered steak and a ginger salad from the menu. During the meal Jack stood up and took Rebecca’s hand, asking her to dance with him. She put her napkin on the table and went into the middle of the restaurant where other men and women were dancing as well. The song that Jack and Emily danced to the night before filled the room. Rebecca and Jack started dancing to the slow song, but the whole time Rebecca kept stepping on Jack’s feet. He wondered how they could have danced so perfectly and smoothly the other night and now they were barely in sync with the music.

Soon after the dinner with Rebecca, Jack dropped her off at her house and went home. Still confused on her lack of dancing skills, he pulled into his driveway.



“Rebel” by Daphne Conover

Turning off the car, he got out and was about to unlock the door to his house when he noticed his next door neighbor's room light was on. Even though he was outside he could hear the familiar music coming from the house. Destined to find out if the noise was coming from, he saw a figure in the window, dancing to the song.

To clear her head, Emily turned on the soft slow song she had danced to with Jack. Emily grabbed the ragged dress and put it on. She danced around her room and all her thoughts evaporated. Humming to the music, she didn't notice Jack watching from below.

Jack realized that he had made a mistake by believing Rebecca and rushed to Emily's front door. He rang the doorbell and waited. Emily opened the door and was shocked to see Jack standing there with a huge smile on his face.

"You're the one," he whispered.

"Yes."

And with that, they danced the night away, but this time she wasn't going anywhere.



"Vroom" by Caden Brown

“Honeysuckles”

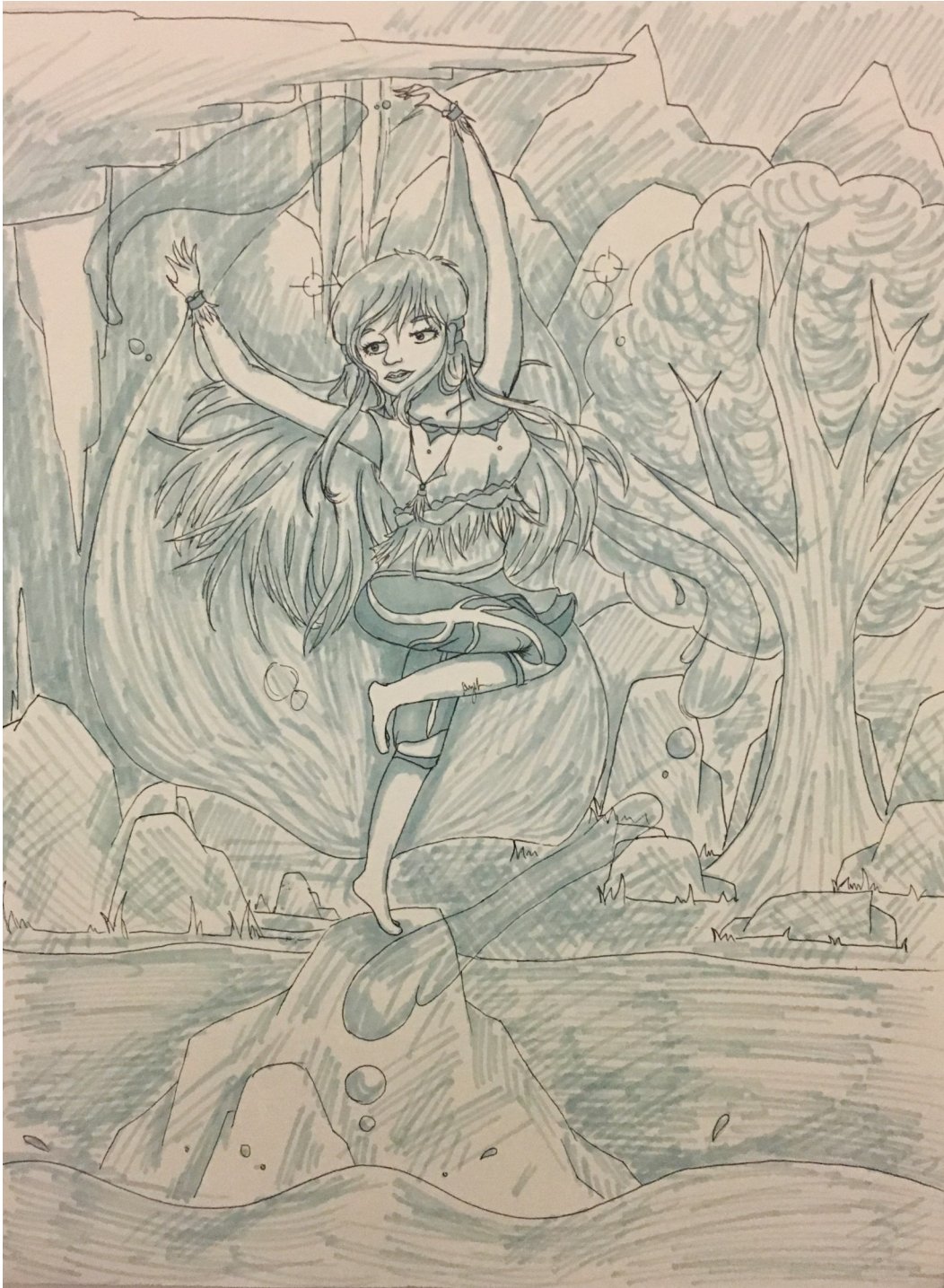
Do you smell that
The sweet smell of honeysuckles
Bringing bittersweet nostalgia
Into my mind

I want to rip apart my brain
And find that memory
And pull it out
And burn it in a campfire

Abby Bowling



“Fall in the South” by Connor Chaney



“Mystic” (art) by Angela Fan



“Pink” (art) by Yeeun Cho

Bombing Out Your Young Sensitive Dignity

Kathryn Duffield

The first time I held a gun I was about eight years old and I was standing over a glaringly orange painter's bucket halfway filled with cold water. Behind me, in a straggling line, were another ten kids who were bouncing excitedly on the balls of their feet. It felt like everyone was staring. My hands were becoming wobblier by the minute, and it was making all the adults in the room nervous. As my eyes scanned the tile floor of the unused University classroom, I was wishing desperately for any one of the tiny cracks to open wider and drag me away. Everyone that had gone before me in the line (I had quietly shuffled farther and farther backwards, until I hadn't been quick enough and had been handed this black *thing*) were already clutching at their wet pellets in their little plastic baggies, boasting about how "easy" it was, how they "hadn't even been scared", and how they "did this all the time out behind their house." Meanwhile, every *bang*, every click of the trigger being pulled, terrified me senseless.

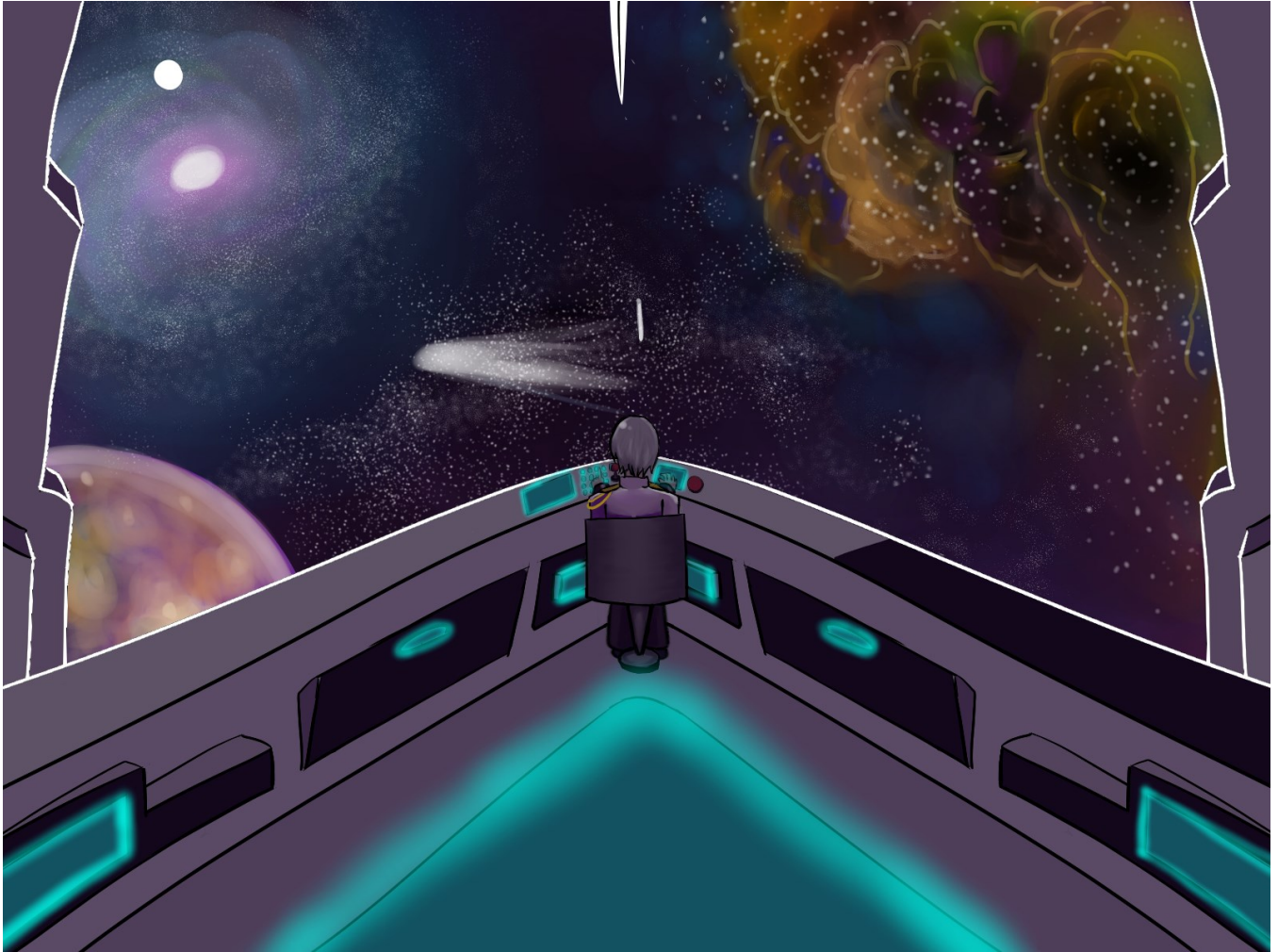
Let's roll the tape backward a bit. I'm eight years old, living right in the Heart of Dixie, and I'd never seen a gun, let alone touched one. It's summer and I'm having the time of my life at Science Matters (a science camp I went to for at least seven years) at the University, and our main focus this week is Forensics. I'm ecstatic when I first hear. I loved reading Nancy Drew; had devoured all of my mom's old books by this point, and had eventually resorted to reading every series that was even a glimmer of a spin-off. Forensics, I sigh to myself, and real-life detective work. This is going to be the best week of summer ever! And I'm right, up until this point. Before this we had learned about fingerprinting, and even done it ourselves. We learned about what things can be left behind by a person at a crime scene, and about what DNA is, and how it is an indicator of how "everyone actually is completely unique," which is also a way of identifying them. By this point, I've gone about halfway through the week without incident, but that was all about to change within the span of fifteen minutes.

I don't even remember what we're studying, because the second firearms are even mentioned, I just know I start looking disinterested. I stop even pretending to pay attention. I'm tired and I didn't get a lot of sleep the night before, and anyway, most of the boys at my school brag about going hunting and about how they shot this new gun of their dads and how cool it all was. I'm just not really into that type of thing, and besides, what are they expecting me to do, pull a trigger? It turns out that, yes, actually, that's exactly what they expect me to do. So, I huff and shuffle awkwardly on my stool, ready to get this experiment over with so I can go back and sit down.

That's when the first tremor hits. I wasn't really that ecstatic about this to begin with, but as Mr. Brian demonstrates the proper safety techniques for what must be the third time, I feel a tiny bit of nervousness creep into my chest. I shove it down. Mr. Brian says that: "This is what is known as a "BB" gun, but actually is an "Airsoft" gun that I will use to show you..."

And I wonder what on earth a "BB" and an "Airsoft" are, and what is even the difference between the two.

It turns out that an Airsoft is a gun that shoots plastic pellets, which, I suppose, is better than straight up metal, but still. My nervousness ratchets up again, higher this time. We all get up off of our stools and try to form a line, but everyone is too excited and the teacher has to shout three different times



“Nebula” (art) by Grace He

to get our attention. By this point, I can tell the New Lady is getting kind of irritated by all of the loud voices. New Lady hasn't been here at all this week and I think she's only here to help with this lesson

"Quiet!" she shouts, and, feeling rather vindicated, I shush people, even as they glare back at me. I point towards the teachers and they roll their eyes. I roll mine right back, but turn around to face the front. The teachers have gone off into Lecture Land, which I'm so used to by this point that I just scan the classroom for something interesting. The poster of the Amazingly Rainbowtastic Periodic Table™ is plastered to the wall just above the double doors. The words are too small to read, so I squint hard before deciding to ignore it.

I tune back into the lecture; we've reached the halfway point by now.

"...and this is a place of learning. We are only borrowing this lab, so we have to be respectful. Just down the hall from us are classrooms and offices. Even though most of them aren't in use because of the summer months, we still have to make sure that we're not so loud that we disturb the others in the building. Remember we have to use *inside* voices while..."

I look closely at the gun sitting on the station two away from where we're gathered. It doesn't seem like much of anything from over here, nothing like what I imagined. From the way people describe them, I guess I had sort of assumed it would be *bigger*, or something. Maybe more impressive? Maybe there should be sparks going off everywhere. Or, fireworks, miniaturized fireworks.

"It's loud enough in here with all the echoes, without all of you using your outside voices..."

It's winding down; I can see the younger volunteers getting antsy. This probably isn't their favorite part of the class either.

"I understand this is exciting, but remember, inside voices guys, so you can hear Mr. Brian. He'll tell you instructions as we go through this, and though it isn't dangerous if done right, ya'll still need to be ready, understand?"

Everyone nods.

"Kay then let's get started," New Lady says. Her short, brown hair swishes with her as she turns back to Mr. Brian. The whispers start up as soon as her back is turned.

"Oh my god, why is she so uptight, we weren't even talking that loud," says Hayley.

"I know, right?" agrees Hayley's friend Sophia. Sophia is basically there just to agree with everything Hayley says. I ignore both of them. A girl I'm pretty sure is named Emma scoots next to me in the snaking sort-of-line.

"It okay it I cut?" she asks. I turn around, certain she must be talking to Sophia. Another "popular" one, ugh.

"Hey," she pokes me. "Can I get in front of you?"

I stare for a minute, and as she huffs out a sigh, turning around to head towards the back of the line, I say, sort of quietly, "Yeah, it's fine."

She smiles at me, "You sure?"

"Yeah."

That was the straw that broke the camel's back.

The line, already, if somewhat messily, in place; Mr. Brian decides this is the time to demonstrate how we are going to use the Airsoft.

"Alrighty then," he said. "First in line, Andrew, let's see how you do with this, shall we?"

The boy approaches the bucket with a confident swagger that I don't feel. A shiver sweeps through my body, but I'm not sure why. There isn't anything wrong. All I can see of Andrew is his back. Then the line shuffles forward to get a better look, and he disappears completely.

There's another tremor. Bigger this time. My eyes shutter, and I flinch from nothing. A moment of silence. For what, I'm not sure.

Then, a *pop-bang-clash* that sets off the unsuspecting-anticipation, the grinding terror that makes black spots grow up across my eyes, like when you sit up too fast and your head hurts and you can't see anything but the little pieces of light that blind you. Time splinters, and there are words, but I don't hear them. Sights, but I don't see them.

Everything is out of order, and, blinking, I try to get a grip on reality. It works, for all of ten seconds, and then it happens again. *Pop-bang-clash*. The grinding terror, the black spots, like blinds pulled open. *Pop-bang-clash*. *Pop-bang-clash*. Spots. Terror, panic, everything too much, too close. Closer, closer. *Pop-bang-clash*. Too loud, too close. Breathe, breathe. Crowding closer, closer, to get a glance. Shuffle backward. *Pop-bang-clash*. Bump past people. Breathe. Breathe, breathe. Breathe. *Pop-bang-clash*. Stop.

Eyes peek out from between clenched lashes. It's stopped. Why? The slosh of water echoes across the shiny tiled floor as it circles down into the drain. A hose is turned on, and water splashes directly into the bucket's orange cavernous depths.

I sigh briefly with relief, and try to get a grip on myself. Try to convince myself that wasn't as scary as I think. It doesn't work. Everyone's still so excited, but I duck behind people trying to reach the end of the line before the front reaches me. The other kids give me weird looks that make me feel self-conscious and I freeze, staring straight ahead, feeling like my feet are almost rooted to the floor. Every muscle tenses in anticipation as the bucket is lowered to the ground once more.

I feel a few more shots ringing in my chest, reverberating right down to my toes and across my tongue. My heart thumps deeply in time. It reminds me of the chorus of the song people sing at pep rallies, and that I heard in that movie my dad was watching with the knights. Something to do with "We will, we will rock you!" and a *Boom!Boom!Clap!* in the background. I wonder, desperately, if I could fake being sick, or maybe ask to go to the bathroom and hide out in there until the demonstration is over. It's too late, though, after being pushed and prodded towards the front, ducking away and out of sight, and after what feels like almost textbook avoidance, I'm finally at the front of the line.

"Okay...", he squints at my nametag. "Kathryn. You remember what I did?"

I say nothing. I can't move, can't speak; I can feel nothing but the looming, eager hoard behind my back. Just barely out of view; a blur of motion and impatience. He takes my lack of answer



“Many Secrets” (art) by Daphne Conover

as confirmation, then says in an undertone, "This is how you're going to want to hold the end."

He shows me the grip one more time, and then hands me the gun. The handle is vaguely wet and feels like holding a sweaty hand. The trigger is slick with it, and I wonder how many people have held this gun. How many hands have touched it.

It's such a tiny thing; barely a hand-span and a half, but my fingers feel thick and unwieldy as I turn, heavily, towards the bucket. It's more substantial than I think it ought to be, weighty, like I'm holding an entire world in my hand. And I am, as strange as it sounds. I'm holding worlds between my fingers. I'm holding something that can mutilate flesh, destroy bone, something that can maim, can murder, that is the cause of so many people's devastation and grief. I'm holding it. I'm *holding* it.

I'm holding it, and I can't. I just... I can't. My fingers, that draw across sheaves of thick white paper, that scribble my name at the top of schoolwork. My fingers that open and close doors, that sift through the back of my closet, that draw up the covers when it's time to go to sleep. My fingers that turn book pages, that spread marmalade across toast in the morning, that stoke down the silken sides of my cat, that peel oranges and hard-boiled eggs with great difficulty, that zip up my jacket when it gets cold, that clench monkey-bars and swing handles, that hold tight to everything I can't lose. My fingers that are clean of violence. That have never touched to hurt, never felt the blood pumping beneath skin and felt the urge to spill it, never caused pain. I am eight years old and innocent in the eyes of the world. I am fiercely protected by people I do not know, who would defend me with their life if it came to that, and my fingers are virgins to violence.

But, they are all staring so closely, eyes measuring my every move. *Am I allowed to say no?*, I wonder, distraught. *Am I allowed to say, no, I can't do this, I can't hurt someone.*

But, I'm not hurting someone, am I? There's nothing in front of the barrel but slowly cooling water and the bottom of a bucket. There is though, there is. There is someone's life in my hands, except that that there isn't. There's no one there, but if I pull this trigger, something will change. Something will be different. Something visceral, something important. I won't be able to say I've never shot someone, because I'm shooting the very essence of a person, I'm shooting their belief. I am shooting what could be. I'm giving in to a potential future, where I could be alright with guns. Where I am numb to their effects, because I'm so used to them around me, because I've shot one before and nothing went wrong and nobody was hurt.

Shooting this gun will prove I can do it, but it won't prove I'm a good person. It won't prove I'm brave or clever or anything else. All it will prove is that I don't care; that I don't feel the weight between my hands. These two paths that stretch out inside of me, their ends so impossibly obvious to anyone with eyes opened to the world around them. I can see myself five, ten, twenty years later, living a life. Living a lie. A full-body shudder and I lay the gun, still loaded, un-shot, in the palm of his hand and walk away.

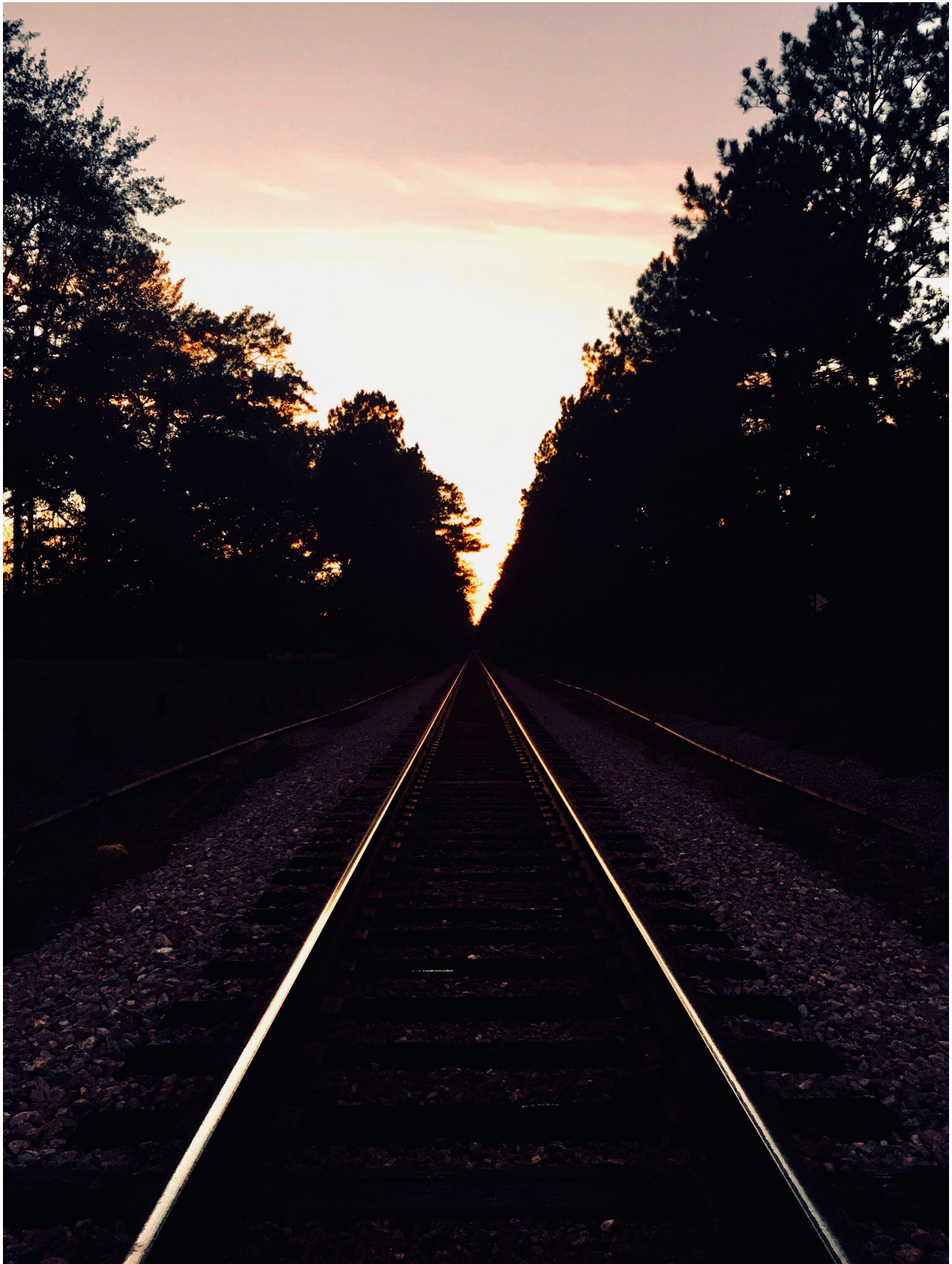
It's been said that we all look to the past through rose-tinted glasses, who's to say that isn't true? Perhaps, they're a bit more orange for some people. Perhaps, they're more what some would call "protective eyewear," but still, the past is what we look back on and reflect upon. Past events shaped us, just as much as we shaped them. They influence us, whether consciously or unconsciously, making our decisions and impacting our actions indiscriminately.



“Lily Pad” (photo) by Caden Brown



“Flowers at AJHS” (art) by Sara Pierce Cohan



“Dusk till Dawn” (photo) by Connor Chaney



“Oranges and Purples” (art) by Eunice Lee

The Cons of a Stallion

“Be careful, Claire,” my grandmother warned. “Trust your gut.” I internally rolled my eyes and hopped out of the air-conditioned car. My black leather riding boots thudded against the ground, billowing dust into the hot day. I practically ran into the barn, startling the handlers.

Casey, the head trainer, nodded in recognition and gave me two halters- rope bridles used to catch horses and lead them back to the barn. “Go round up Toaster and Panera,” she instructed.

I found the ponies in question and brought them up to the forest green barn. I usually rode a horse named Ben, and opened his stall door but Casey stopped me. “He has a leg problem and isn’t going to be riding today. The vet is on his way to help him.” I blinked, confused. “Am I going to ride one of the ponies, then?” I wondered aloud.

Casey cocked her head. “You can ride Charlie. I think he’ll be good for you.” She turned to Hollie, the stable hand, and told her to rein Charlie.

Five minutes later, Hollie returned with the stallion in question. Hollie’s normally relaxed face seemed tense as she tugged on the lead rope. Charlie snorted and tossed his coppery head. Bigger both by height and proportion to Ben, he stood with a wide, belligerent stance. His short, cropped mane stood straight up like a zebra’s, but onyx colored. Although I felt mildly nervous, I hooked Charlie into the stone wall, fastening it to his halter to keep him still. Pulling out the brushes for grooming, I turned to Charlie and began to brush him. He whinnied loudly, impatiently stomping his huge hooves, and I stepped back warily.

Like a scene from a movie, he leapt up from the ground onto his brassy, russet hind legs and whinnied, tossing his head. He ripped the thick ropes holding him *from* the wall like they were no more than pieces of yarn while I watched, mouth hanging open. He stormed past me, galloping away, creating a racket as he charged past the other horses. I blinked, beginning to chase after him, but Hollie stopped me and headed after the wild horse herself. My throat felt dry and my gut wrenched. Charlie would be a challenge to ride, that was for sure. While I groomed and fastened the tack on the ponies, Hollie heaved Charlie back into the barn, but he seemed worse than before. Should I agree to ride that horse? Could I manage to control that rampant animal?

I secured the equipment onto Charlie, though he tried to crush me against the wall multiple times. As I pulled him to the training ring, he almost ripped my arm from my socket, resisting with every step.

Casey ordered me to mount and I carefully sat on the burning hot saddle, posture stiff and vigilant. He refused me from the beginning, backing up when I told him to walk, tossing his head when I kicked him to trot, and yet Casey ordered me to canter. My gut tightened apprehensively and I took the crop she offered. I nudged Charlie and he refused to move, but barely brushed the crop to his shoulder and he took off. Though it was a strain to my arms and core to direct him to where I wanted, he cooperated, however reluctantly.

Casey finally directed me to jump. I swallowed nervously and directed him to the three-foot jump near the side of the ring. I clicked my tongue and kicked him and he bounded towards the jump. He kicked up dust as he ran, clouding my vision. I bounced strangely on him as he landed and his steps turned uneven and wild. While I attempted to fix my seat, I accidentally brushed my crop against his neck. I froze as he felt the leather end rub against his throat. Berserk, he tossed his head, loudly whinnying and neighing, and started galloping around the ring. Panic rose up my throat, choking my startled yelp.

The shouts of my trainer, the other riders, and the other horses melded into the background when Charlie started bucking. My eyes widened as nausea washed through me, my hysteria clouding my thoughts, reins slippery against my sweaty, clenching hands.

I remembered what my stepsister told me the year before. She had been leaning against a barn, watching the horse inside, and she told me that if a horse be-

came too uncontrollable, the best thing would be to throw yourself off. "If you can't control the horse, there's no telling what could happen. If you throw yourself off, you could be saving yourself from a worse fate," she had told me. "Being willing to purposefully fall off is sometimes braver than staying on."

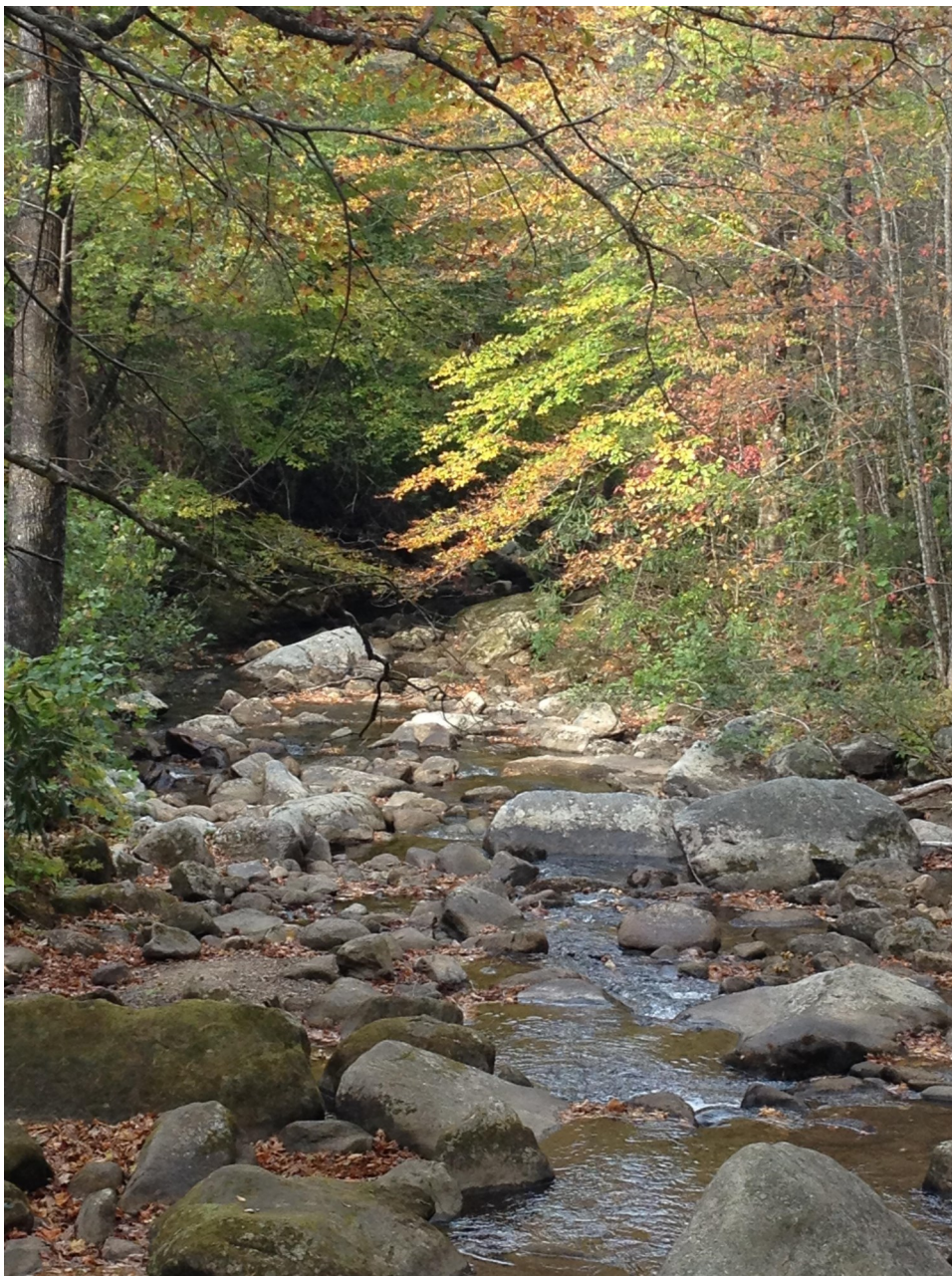
I snapped back to the present, still fighting to regain control, but Charlie neared the jump again. Suddenly, I knew: I couldn't stay on that horse if he leapt. Still unbalanced from landing strangely, I would fall off, onto the hard wood, where he could crush me against the post and plank. I needed to abandon ship before he jumped. As he careened closer, I felt strangely calm and focused when he neared: ten feet, seven feet, five feet, three feet- I swung my leg over his side and hurled myself off. My head thudded against the sandy ground, but remained uninjured, thanks to my helmet. My eyes cracked open as I rolled onto my stomach, groaning, to see a massive, neatly trimmed hoof surge towards my head.

It all happened so fast- all I remember was knowing certainly that that his hoof would kill me, and suddenly my arm blocked my face. I felt the dull impact, heard the wet thump, and the feeling in my arm faded. He leapt over the jump and halted, snorting. The sky seemed incredibly blue as I lay on that warm sand- so, incredibly blue as I lay there.

I stumbled up clumsily, clutching my arm. "I can't feel my arm." I muttered, blinking, in a daze. Casey sprinted over to me, wrapping an arm around my shoulders. Adrenaline still coursed through me. "I can't feel my arm." I said again. Now the other riders headed over to me. Charlie stood in the corner of the ring, still, watching. "I can't feel my arm." I said, my breath hitching. Sand covering my boots, pants, the hoof-shaped cut on my arm, now gushing blood. I stumbled towards the barn, muttering an apology about not being able to ride right now.

I should've known, but I rode the horse anyway, and now my wrist, swollen and bloody and stiff, had paid for it. The barn seemed too quiet, too still, as if the very horses sensed my injury. I stared at my dusty boots, regret climbing through my veins. Arrogance had nearly gotten me killed, and now all I had left was bitterness and frustration. As I sat in defeat, holding my wrist to my chest, I waited for my grandmother to pick me back up.

Claire Sykes



“Fall River” (photo) by Kathryn Duffield

“Rain Music”

Kathryn Duffield

the clunky air conditioning
 in the corner
 clicks its way on
 percussive drums of
 rainy-hands on tin roofs
 rusty gutters
 rattling in time
bum, bum, bum,
 the leaky ceiling thumps
 to the beat
 as clear drops fall into
 cracked, white, plastic
 bucket
 found on the side of the road,
 abandoned,
 three corners down
 cars fly past below
 adding their bloated roar
 to the din
 and the orange tabby from
 down the hall
 scratches incessantly at the door
 yowling every
 two or
 three minutes
 and the water drenching
 the pavement and the people
 sings to its own tune
 as everything clashes and bashes
 together, until the city is filled
 with grey
 rain music.

“I’m sitting on a cold leather couch”

Sofia Foradori

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch
With piles of tissues
Like mountains
That in my mind
I'm climbing them
To escape
This place

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch
With my sister and cousin
That have always been
My best friends
But they cannot
Take away
My pain
And I
As hard as I may try
Cannot take away theirs

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch.
That pulls my skin
Every time I stand
As if
It doesn't want me
To leave
And neither do I.

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch
As people
Come by
Speaking mostly to me
Saying,
"I'm sorry for your loss."
As if
That will take away
The pain
Of me "losing"
Someone close to me
Again.

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch
When a man
In all black-a preacher
Enters the room.
I look away, wishing
I was
Invisible Girl from
Fantastic Four
Or I could blow away
Like a dandelion
In the wind
So I don't
Have to talk to this man.

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch
When he stands in front of me
And I stand
With the couch giving
Its familiar
Pull on my skin
And he acts
As though I have met him before
Though I have never
He says
"I'm sorry for your loss."
Just like everyone else
And then
He begins to lecture me
About god
And it only makes my pain worse
That he was late
And is now
Telling me
To have faith
In a god
When I have no faith
In myself.
And all I can think
Is that funerals
Should be for the living
To remember the one they have
Lost
Not to give thanks
To the god
That took
Their loved one
Away.



“Self-Inflicted Achromatic” (art) by Eunice Lee

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch
In a room
Full of people
Who have caused
Me pain
Like "god"
And the preacher
And my step grandmother
Who I once thought
Was sweet
When I was too blind
To see
The devil tail
She was hiding
And the one I have lost

Who deserved
So much more.

I'm sitting on a cold leather couch
With people
All around me
But in my mind
I feel
Alone
With my only company
Being the pain
That I will carry
Till it is my turn
To be in the
Wooden
Casket.

“Interrogation is for the Guilty”

For months I dreaded the gray walls, the stone-cold chair, the blinding lights, and the blank expressions of the police. Any human could imagine what came next, but I wanted to stay in what was, full of ignorance and hope, and no gray walls filled with the secrets I could never tell.

Every time began like the last, I would enter the empty room, sit down in the stone-cold chair, stare into the blinding lights and the police's somber faces. They would nod, and I would begin.

"Brooklyn Marie Jones for the Kansas State Police Department on the case of Shelby Johnson."

And with that came my deep breath, as if inhaling the story I would tell and the thoughts that came with it.

"I was standing outside the library on a normal-"
Normal. That word. Would anything be normal after this?

"-fall day, waiting for my mom to pick me up from a study day."
More like praying.

"And Shelby was reading my essay, pointing out a few grammatical errors-"
A few grammatical errors? She was pointing out every little thing you'd done wrong!

"-she always read my essays and edited them, just to be helpful-"
Helping you? She brought you down you idiot! She made you feel self-conscious and horrible about yourself! You act like this girl was a miracle and the best thing that ever happened to you, but you forget moments like these. And don't forget to mention how tired you were of it and how you wished she would die!

"But suddenly, she stops talking, her eyes wide with fear. Before she can speak, I hear a shot, a bang, the sound to end her, and I'm watching her lifeless body fall down like the leaves from the trees. Her eyes, locked into mine as if saying, help me."
*How could someone wish this on someone?
How could I wish this on someone?
How could I wish this on my best friend?*

And that's where I end, I leave the stone-cold chair, blinding lights, blank expressions, and the gray walls that hide my secrets.

But I leave them without detail, a trace, of the hardest part to get off my chest.

The secret I can never tell, or I'll be behind different gray walls with bars with no escape.

I pulled the trigger.

Sofia Foradori



“St. Joseph Church” (photo) by Elizabeth Fox



“The Air of the Night” (photo) by Laiken Pickering



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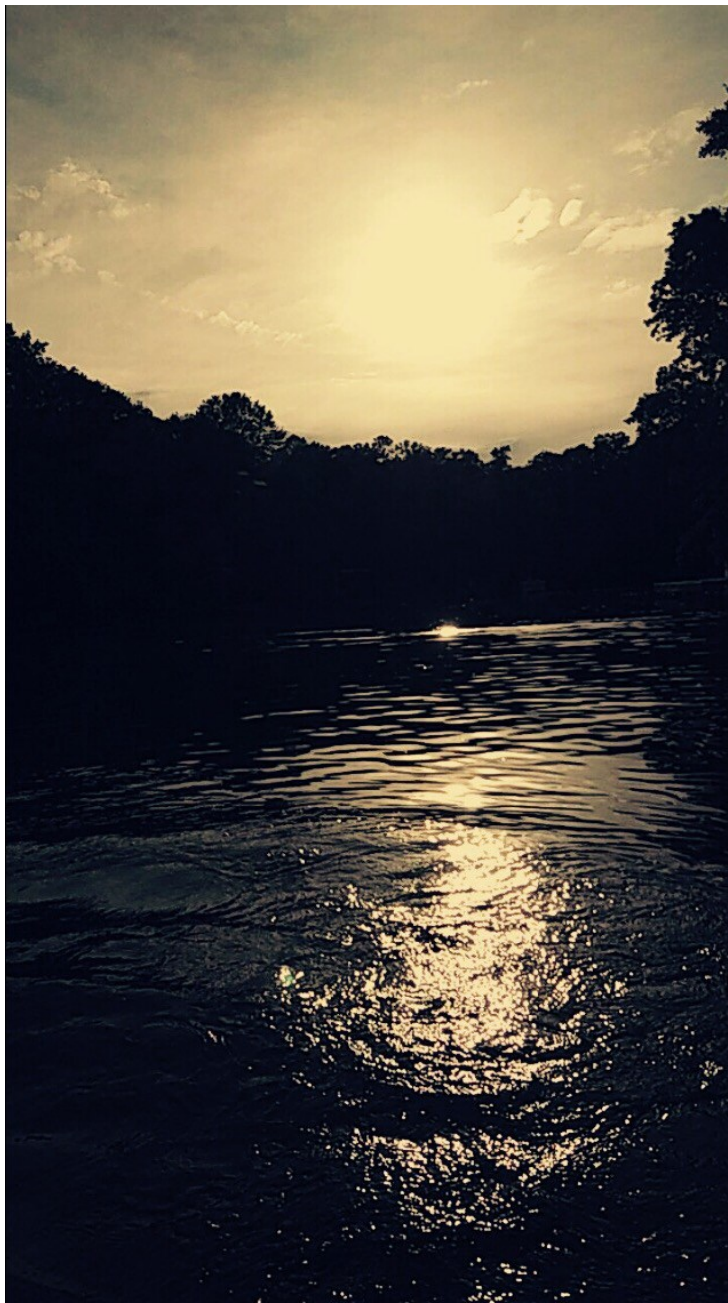
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“The Beauty the World Creates” (photo) by Abigail Hamby

The mission of *The Auburn Edition* is to promote and showcase the literary and artistic talents of all students at Auburn Junior High School. All works in this magazine were created by eighth and ninth grade students at AJHS.

The Auburn Edition staff works during each school semester to publish a digital magazine that showcases the writing/art/photography of the student body. This magazine is published digitally at the end of each semester. The staff solicits and receives submissions for the magazine from the students, publicizes the magazine, submits writing, art or photography, and then selects entries and assembles the magazine for digital publication.

If you are interested in having your work featured in the next issue of *The Auburn Edition*, you can see Mrs. Landers or Ms. Ferrell for a submission form.

Volume 1, Issue 1