



THE
AUBURN
EDITION

stories • photography • poetry • art



"CREATIVITY
IS
CONTAGIOUS,
PASS IT ON."

Albert Einstein

Cover Art

Ignite

By Isabella Jackson

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Balance

By Joshua Glasscock

Train of Thought

By Stella Weigel

It's been over a year since everything changed. 16 months, 534 days, 12,816 hours, and 768,960 minutes since I started to question things. These things aren't important, but to me they were everything. And it all started with one person, one conversation in the middle of a grocery store, 10 minutes at most. We talked of trivial things: school, small memories, normal life things, things that should be harmless. A conversation that was boring to her but meant the world to me. That meant so much that now I'm writing a letter at the dead of night, packing my bags, and buying a \$15 train ticket to the closest furthest place I can think of. She probably doesn't remember what was discussed, but I do. I remember everything so vividly because I've spent countless hours scrutinizing every word she said. And the words that she said under her breath made my mind spiral for the following hours, days, months, and now a year and a half.

The conversation went something like this:

"I haven't seen you in forever, you look great, how's everything been?" Asta said in a calm voice.

"Yeah, I'm doing great. Nothing much has changed. Uhm what are you doing now? Are you still playing soccer? I miss the days when we would play all day practicing."

I knew she quit soccer because she never posted about it anymore. She never posts anything anymore. I knew she quit, and I still asked because I forgot what life outside of it was. I was so blinded by my "perfect" life, at the time I couldn't understand any of the things Asta did. I thought I wanted to know why she changed, why she moved, why she didn't post, why she never responded to calls or texts, and why she seemed like she pitied me.

Why would *she* pity *me*?

"Well actually, I quit soccer after I moved. It wasn't the same as it was when we were younger," Asta's eyes looked in the distance as if they were looking into the past, looking at our younger selves playing in the large fields, giggling from dusk to dawn. Not a care in the world. But quickly her eyes snapped, and she was back in the moment.

"Everybody misses you. Coach, Becca, Maddie, even Ethan," I said with a slight chuckle.

"Oh my gosh, how's Ethan doing? Is he still playing football?" Asta asked with curiosity. She actually cared about what I had to say next.

"Uhh... yeah he is still playing football; he is actually team captain now. He's doing great. Actually, him and Maddie won prom queen and king last year," I answered with caution. I didn't know if she still liked Ethan or how much she cared about him but the eagerness in her voice when asking about him made me flinch. We didn't talk much but I knew that voice. I hadn't heard that voice in a while. It was Asta's old voice.

"Oh...that's great. Hopefully he'll get scouted by a college and maybe he'll get a scholarship," her voice went back to normal but her eyes that glimmered at first were now a blank slate again.

"How's New York been? It's quite the change from Texas."

"It's great... it's cold and the culture is a lot different. I really like it. I feel like the change of scenery has given me a new outlook, and I love the rush of the big city. I even go to a big school. I love it."

OK. Not going to lie, these words made me mad. I can't remember why, I think I was jealous, but I had no reason to be jealous of *Asta*. Why would I be jealous of *her*? I didn't want to move. I liked my small city. I liked knowing everybody. I liked that I always knew that I would make the team. There were never any questions, there were no reasons for me to be jealous. I had what I wanted, or at least what I thought I wanted.

"I'm glad you're enjoying it. If you don't mind me asking, why are you back in town?"

She spaced out again, as if she was trying to remember why she came back. Her eyes dropped and she began to stutter. And in that moment I knew that my simple question had a complex answer. Something that maybe she didn't know the answer to. Something that I would never be able to understand.

"Oh uhh," *Asta* stumbled, taken aback. I guess she wasn't ready for this question. Maybe she thought that she could end the conversation quick enough to skip over it. "My dad wanted me to come for Christmas."

Her dad, I forgot about him. I hadn't seen him since she left so there was no reason for me to think about him. They never had the best relationship, but I'm sure that after the move things got better.

"Hmm, how's he doing?" there is no excitement in my voice. I just wanted to keep the conversation going.

"He's doing good. He usually visits me in New York but this year. It's been a while so both him and my mom wanted me to come back here." I knew she was trying to sound happy to be here, but it was so easy to see through her act.

"That's great, uhm I'm glad we ran into each other, and I hope you enjoy the rest of your visit."

"Yeah, me too. Well, it was great seeing you, and I hope that the rest of soccer season is good. Maybe you'll win the championship."

I thought that was the end of the conversation, that was all she had to say. But then, under her breath, I heard these simple words:

"I hope you get to see life outside of Alpine."

She doesn't know I heard her because I didn't believe that I heard her. *What in the world could she have been talking about?* I thought to myself. And this is the day I began to pay attention. That is the day my life started to change.

So, now I'm here in my room, crying. Not because of some boy or some fight with a friend or because I lost a game or failed a test. Actually, it's because none of that stuff has happened. Nothing in my life has ever been real. I've lived a sheltered life perfected and curated to the extent that it is unrealistic. My mom gave me friends. My mom's friends' daughters are my friends. And my dad's friends' sons are the people I crush on. My parents convince me that soccer is what I enjoy, but it's not. In fact, nothing I do is what I enjoy. And I don't know what to do. God help me.

Alaska

By Courtney James



My whole life was set up from the beginning. I would never experience hardships, I would never have to struggle to fit in, God, I wouldn't even have to think about what I wanted to do, to make my own decision, because everything was set in stone. There was never a question, never a moment where I thought that maybe what I was doing wasn't what I wanted to do. That is the worst feeling ever.

I can feel the tears trickle down my face onto my pillow. I can feel a snake slither up my throat just to come out in a sob.

To be honest, I never really cry, and when I do it's happy tears. Those tears look like morning dew on a rose. They are drops of summer rain trickling down a car window. But these tears look like frost on a piece of wood. And these tears rolling down my face feel like a snow storm, a storm that's been brewing for a while, a storm that you feel coming, that you can see forming on the horizon, a storm that you ignore because sometimes ignoring things is easier than confronting them.

Eventually my tears stop, and I realize how stuffy my room is. That was when one of the last things Asta said to me before she moved popped into my brain:

"Do you ever look at the stars and think about running? Don't the stars look so free? And the branches swaying in the moonlight, don't they look happy?"

I thought she was crazy. I didn't understand why the stars would make her want to run away. But in this moment I realized something: I want to run. I want to run until my lungs hurt, I want to scream until my voice disappears, I want to see the stars from a different perspective. I want to see the stars from New York, from L.A., from Tokyo, Paris, London, from everywhere, anywhere; as long as it wasn't here.

So I'll write letters to all those I care about. I'll explain what's been going through my brain for the past 16 months. I'll write to them while I'm gone, I'll throw away my cell and buy a disposable phone. I have enough money saved from working at the local ice cream shop for

the past 5 years. I'm supposed to go to college, but I've never really wanted to go. I never had a dream college. I tried to convince myself that I wanted to go to Penn State because of soccer but I didn't get in. I was accepted to New Mexico State University, it's close and it was in our budget. But now it seems bland. Everything seems bland. *It's getting late.* Time is running out. I need to get busy.

So I began to write.

“Do you ever look at the stars and think about running? Don't the stars look so free? And the branches swaying in the moonlight, don't they look happy?”

Dear Mom & Dad,

When you wake up, I won't be here. Y'all wake up around 9 a.m. and by then I'll be long gone. I'll be somewhere in the middle of nowhere. Experiencing new things; living the life I long for. For the past year and a half I've been thinking. I know I don't do that a lot. But I've been thinking. Thinking about everything. I'm tired of this boring town, and I know that I would get a taste of something new in college but even that is too boring. I want to see the world, I want to make my own friends, I don't want to have everything set in front of me. I want to have flaws

and I want to fail and succeed and learn. I want to live a complex life. I want to see neighborhoods where houses are different. Things are diverse. I want to get out of our perfectly curated town, and I want my life to have flavor in it. I want to meet people with personalities outside of their favorite sport. So I'm leaving. I'm going to try and live my own life, by myself, with no help. I have enough money to last me 7 months or so and by then (hopefully) I'll have a job. If I don't, I'll come home and start new, but I want this. I want this more than anything. And I hope y'all can accept and support me and my decisions. I'll send you letters updating you on my life and how things are going. I will miss both very much.

*Much love,
Mal*

My parents will be shocked for sure. I've never done anything spontaneous before so this will most definitely be a surprise. I hope they don't call the cops or something stupid.

Anyway, everything is set up now. I bought my ticket to California. I don't know what I'm going to do there but the people there seem to be happy. I'll try to make my way around the country, and maybe I'll venture into Canada too. I don't know why I'm doing this, but I do know that it's what I want. Even if things take a turn for the worse I won't regret my decision because I'm finally doing something that makes me happy.

The time is 4:00 a.m. The stars are starting to disappear, but the sun has not started to show itself yet. I have time. The stress is starting to get to me: am I really going to leave the small town of Alpine, Texas? Am I really going to leave my whole life behind? I guess so. The train leaves at 6:00 a.m. I have two hours to finish packing, buy a phone, and leave.

Two more hours before I leave behind the home that holds all my memories. Two more hours before I leave behind the only place I've ever known. I guess I better start preparing.

45 minutes later, I have finished packing all the things I need. About 14 outfits, my teddy bear, snacks, toiletries, pictures, books, and all of my cash. I look around my house one more time and say my goodbyes. Then I leave the house, go to Walgreens, purchase a disposable phone, and head to the train station.

After about 15 minutes of waiting, the clock strikes six. I hear the intercom announce my trains boarding. After 16 months of confusion and regret, I am finally doing what I want. I pick up my valise, stumbling because of the weight, and step onto the train. And with that one step, a one-thousand pound weight is lifted from my chest.

Goodbye home.

I am finally free.



Columbus River Dragons

By Anna Grace Pennisi



Tiger Pumpkin

By Courtney James

Pumpkin Patch

By Ella Hatley



Over the Meadows

By Doyeon Kim

Over the meadows,
And under the shadows.
Flying with swallows,
And dancing with willows.

Running like a breeze,
Going as I please,
Moving with ease
Faster than bees.

Such lovely skies,
Beyond it lies.
It is joy to the eyes,
Going for miles.

Bright is the sun,
The day just begun.

Orange Bandit

By Courtney James



She and I

By Kaylee Tisdale

She is beautiful

She is smart

She is loved

She is taunting me wherever I go

She knows I can't be her

I am hideous

I am dumb

I am despised I am stuck like this

I know I can't be her

No hope for me for I am already gone

I wish she would stay instead



Macy

By Courtney James

I wish I could have a happy ending
Like the protagonist of this tale,
But the nature of fate is just so unbending
Written so that antagonists always fail

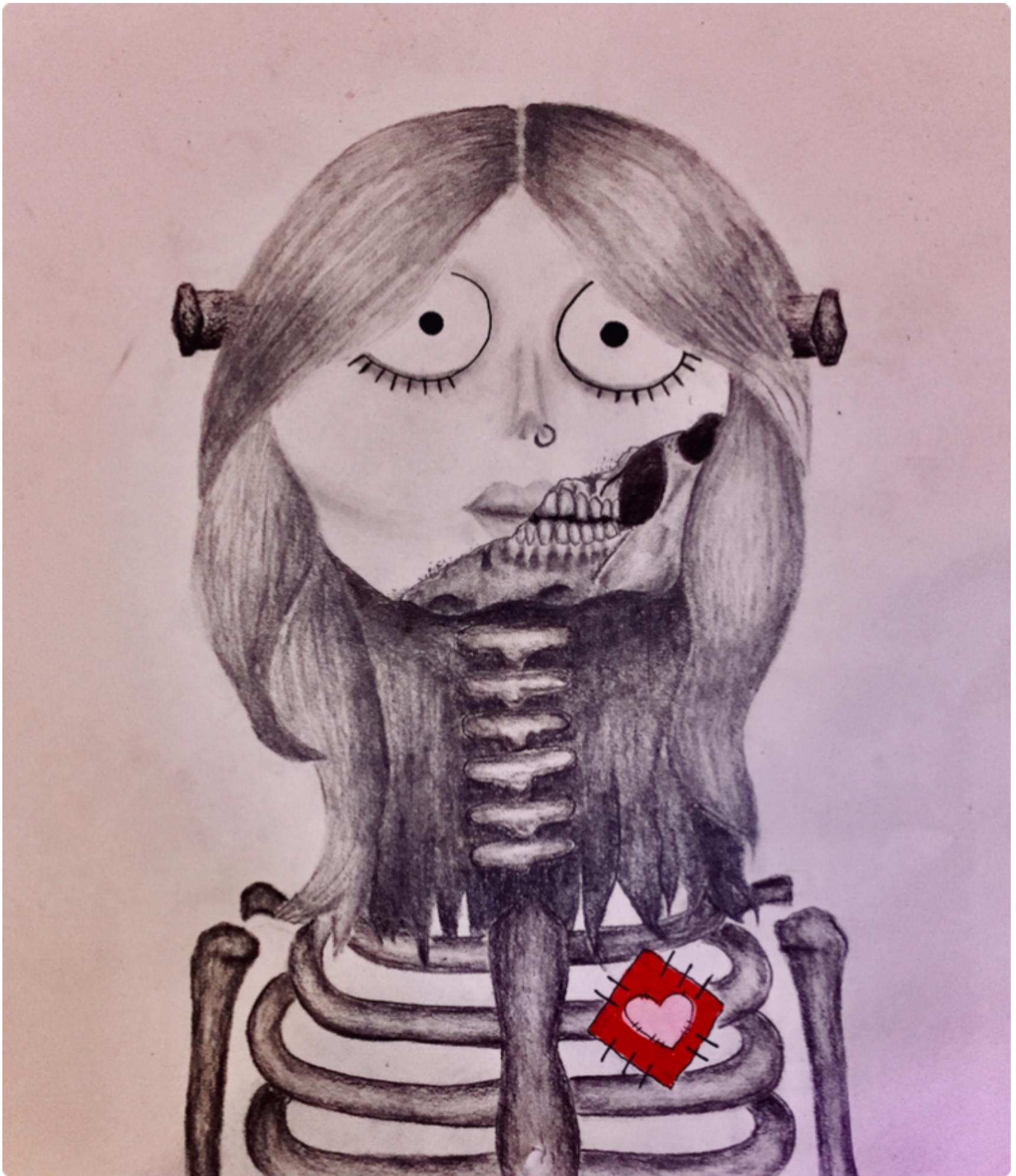
If time was just more lenient
And if life was just more just,
Maybe we could be a little disobedient
And we could finally learn to trust

For only when the nights are cold and snowy
We can dance with no lights,
Though our dance may not be very showy
We can finally run off and take flight

Oh the pain an antagonist may feel
Maybe one day we'll be able to heal,
Oh the woe of an antagonist's tale
Maybe one day, we shall know what life entails

An Antagonist's Tale

By Em Tran



Tim Burton Self Portrait

By Rylee Singletary

Mirrors and Marionettes

By Em Tran

when he looks in the mirror,
all he sees is someone who doesn't belong.
his reflection is sickening to his eyes,
pale face, dull eyes, wrecked mind.
he couldn't bear to look any longer,
and closed his eyes until fog set over,
closed his eyes until his mind was sober.
he was just a marionette on broken strings.
left in the corner to rot in a painful peace.

he just pleaded help for years, upon years,
hoping that someone out there could just
hear.
he stared at the door, just a few steps away,
but no matter how much he tried, he couldn't
move.

it was like his body was not his own,
like waves on the beach,
swaying to and fro.

those shadows hang heavy on the wall,
until the door opens just once more.
as the light filters in, he thinks he is saved, yes
saved,
but he was just left alone and ignored.
bye bye, goes the door.

in the mirror lies a broken boy,
who's just been constantly played like a toy.
his hands were now stained with a crimson red
and everything was just messing with his head.
his eyes were closed and his hands were
clenched.
he'll never, ever be the same again.

there is a boy who lives in the mirrors.
his reflection now, could have never been
clearer.
what stares back at him, he wish were never
real.
what he lacks, is someone, someone to help
him heal.

Taiten

By Em Tran



Dreams

By Isabella Collins

Down

Rests

Every

Aspiration of

My

Soul

If I let go of my dreams

Sunny Feelings

By Kounte Threadgill



Remember Me, Please

By Stella Weigel

Soon you will be going off into the world
And soon you will branch out and drift away
And while I accept that you might forget me I hope you remember these things:
I hope you remember science class
All the inside jokes we made, big and small, most we've already forgotten.

Except for the one about...

I hope that when you see a raindrop
you remember the time we ran home with Crocs slipping underneath our feet in the
pouring rain
And the time we tried to catch the falling leaves
Because we believed
that they would grant our dreams

Although you might forget my name, or my face, or where we met.
I hope that when you look at the stars, the sound of our laughter echoes in your mind.
Reassuring you that everything will be alright

I may just be one leaf on your tree of memories
Or a fish you passed on your way through the sea
But any memory you have left of me
Is enough to satisfy my mind.

The Last One

By Alexia Roath

I pull the stained cream bedsheet off my legs, fully uncovered, lying on my back. I sit up, stretching down until my chest touches my knees. Breathing out, I perch back up and look around the empty apartment room. Wrinkled clothes piled up on the floor, pots and pans flooded the kitchen sink, dust gathered on surfaces. The cracks in the wall grew and spread throughout the space, coming alive each time I look away. The springy mattress lets out a groan as I get to my feet and walk to the once-alive fridge. I open the door as its hinges creak with pressure. I peer inside, sighing as my eyes roam the foul-smelling compartment. Leaning forward, my hair falls out of its bun to the sides of my face, hugging my sweaty cheeks. The only thing left in the warm refrigerator was cheese and apples and various berries and uncooked moldy meat. I close the door and stand in front the fridge, hand still on the handles, and close my eyes tight, breathing in and then out.

I wish I wasn't in a mess like this. I wish things could go back to normal.

Three years ago, when I had woken up, with no one else in the house, the neighborhood, the city, no one else in the world. I was all alone.

I rose out of bed, too sluggish to be fully awake. I stumbled to the bathroom, eyelids half open, and gazed up at myself in the mirror. My eyes had reddened, cheeks had flushed, hair had matted. I looked down at the sage toothbrush and lifted my toothpaste from the side of the sink to cover the bristles of the brush. I scrubbed at my teeth and walked back to my bedroom and flopped onto my patterned duvet. Across from me was a picture of my graduation, my gleeful face along with my crying family. I had my graduation hat and robe with my diploma, my parents were dressed formal for the first time they had in years. I felt a small smile cross my face as I stood up to go back to the washroom. I turned the sink handle, but no water rushed out the tap. The smirk I once had was now gone. 'I forgot to pay the bills' I tried to explain to myself. I spat the mint paste out into the sink, dabbing the cotton towel around my lips, and walked to my closet to change. I picked up a plain white tee and pulled on ocean blue jeans. I walked down the stairs. "Charlie! Nari!" I yelled, "Did you guys forget to tell me about the water bills?" I was now in the dining room. No answer. "Mirae?" My roommates did not answer. I've woken up to a couple of them not being here, but never all three of them gone. I decided not to have breakfast; I was going to be late. I snatched at my bike and helmet and set off to the awaiting shift at the coffee shop. No cars had passed me, making me wary of the city. Had

its heart stopped beating? I cycled through the empty streets as I looked around for an answer to the quietness. The wind whistled past my ears as I moved my legs quicker and harder. I reached Buddy's Coffee Shop and left my bike isolated on the avenue and pushed the heavy door open, quivering. There was no one. No one left in my town. And no explanation for their disappearance.

I pace toward my nightstand, pick up my makeshift bow and arrows, place them on my back, and reach for my daggers. My hand hovers over the three silver blades.

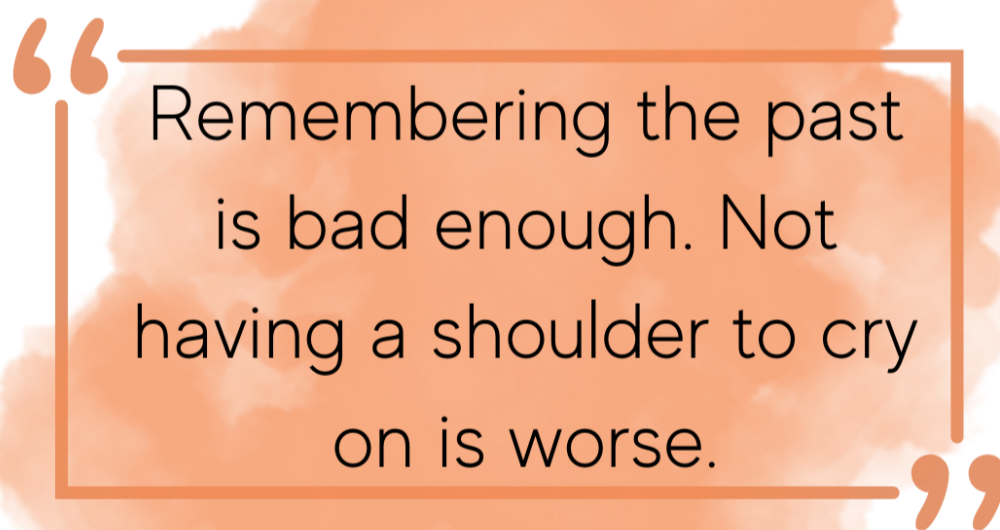
Remembering the past is bad enough. Not having a shoulder to cry on is worse.

I grab at the knives and stride to the door, pulling it open, the sun blaring on my face. I squint up at the sapphire sky and slam the door behind me. The grass blades root onto my shoes, sowing me in place. Rubies drip onto the green below me, I turn my head from the sky to where the red was coming from. My hand loosens its grip on the silver as more blood floods from the shallow wound.

When I think too much, I have a too high pain tolerance. I feel like it's a super power that I'm forbidden to have.

I drop the daggers onto the cushion of turf and shake my handkerchief out of my left pocket. I dab at the blood, crimson red staining the white cloth. "I'll wash it later," I whisper to the wind. I bend down and seize the three cutters, carefully positioning them on my makeshift hunting belt. I stride out, away from the safe house, towards the foggy water of the lake. Twigs snap beneath me as I hike past the abandoned neighborhood houses.

Nature had taken over many of the alleys and cottages. Trees grew out of cement, flowers stemmed out of windows, rats poked out of sewers. No one was left to make sure nature was kept in its place—I, for sure, wouldn't do it. Why should I care about other's houses when no one cared about it themselves?



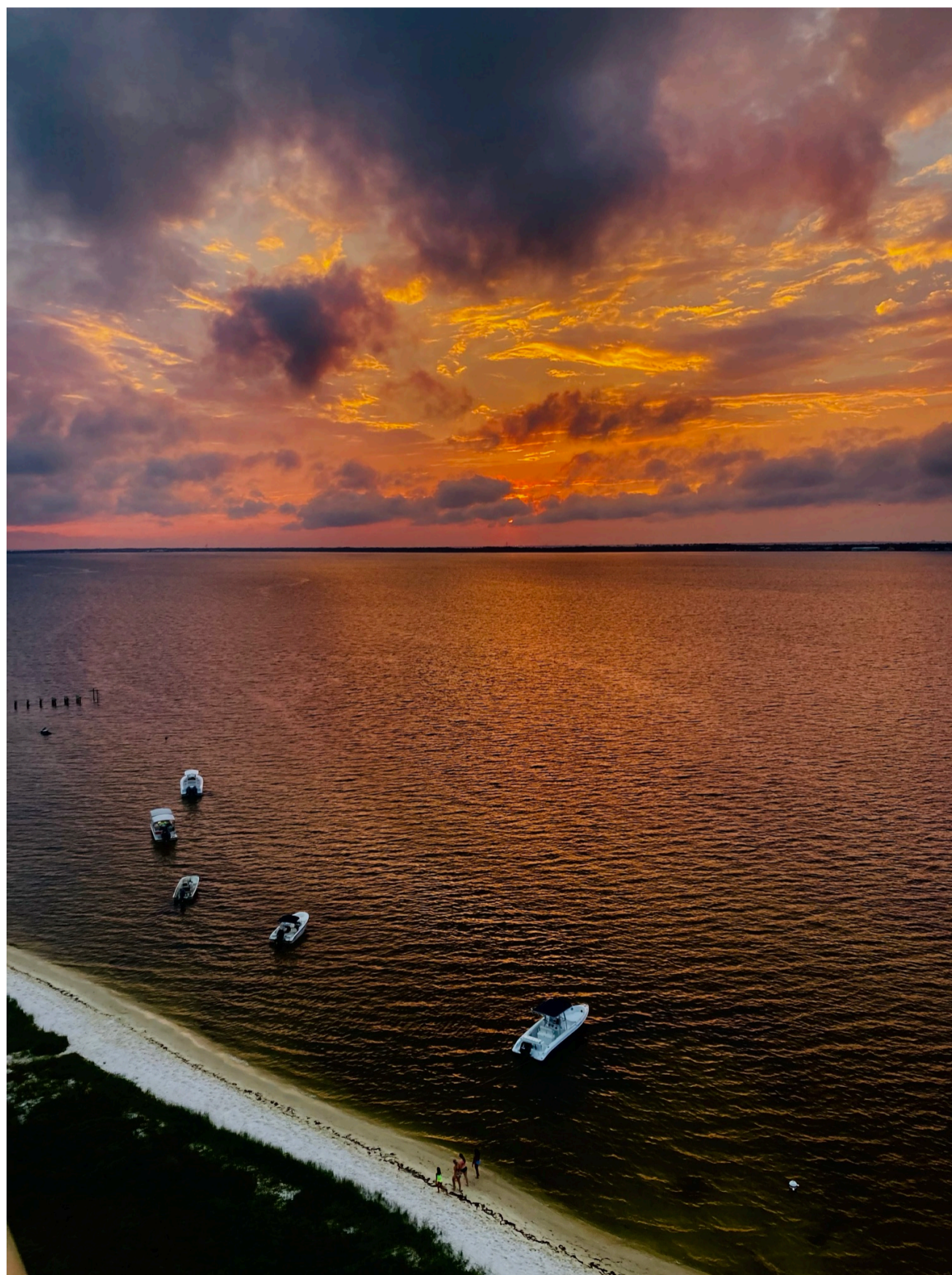
“Remembering the past is bad enough. Not having a shoulder to cry on is worse.”

I keep my eyes straight, trained on my destination. As my feet pull me along, I get closer and closer to the water. My bow jumps forward and backwards, bouncing off my back. I stop when my feet reach the precipice. I gaze down at my reflection. My hair, disheveled; my face, blackened with ash and dust; my eyes, reddened. I lift my cotton shirt over my head and pull down my leggings delicately. I lay both garments on the bank and slide my shoes off my frigid feet. Splashing into the water, I sink my head underneath. The water hits me as I close my eyes to savor the cold washing over me. I float back over to the pile that was my clothes, and lift a dirk off my belt and drift back to the place I was before. My wet hair drapes over my eyes, and I get ready to pierce at the water. I stand still in the lagoon, fading as I blend into the water.

A silver disfigured shape swims toward me as I stab at the water, the droplets blinding my view.

Hall's Sunset

By Isabella Collins



When I pull my arm up, there's a fish on the other end. I smile as I wade through the water to my clothes. The fish flops on the end of my improvisational spear, desperate for a way to break free of the cycle of atrocities.

I bite down on the flesh, careful not to bite down on any of the minuscule bones. I look around the forest-like area. The place has overgrown tremendously in the past three years. Trees loom over the roads, creating shadows on the meadow of weeds below. The sun burns down at such an intensity, only to get cut out by the green canopy. The dense wind stalks in and out the plantation, leaves sink into the carpet, and get swept off to a new region of the world. The solitude of the borough felt calm, but offered a lingering baleful tenor.

I shove the last of the pink flesh into my mouth, getting up to begin my trek back home. I gather my supplies, turning west to the direction of my temporary dwelling. As the sticks and leaves crunch under my worn-out boots, I hold my head down, as if careful to not make eye contact with the people around me. I once again stroll past the neighborhood houses, this time looking up at one. Involuntarily, my feet glue in place. My eyes widen, my arms go limp. A black figure stands in the window of the second floor. It calmly holds its hand up, waves, and its head tilts to the side. It perched at the window, looking queerly at my standing in place. Another hand, one not appearing to belong to its body, snaked forward, placing a firearm at the temple of the thing in the window. I open my mouth into an oval and stared, unblinkingly, not sure when my flight would trigger in me. A loud bang rang through the air as the body in the window limps forward, shattering the glass, collapsing on the flower bed beneath.

My legs gain consciousness. I run as swiftly as I could, away from Death himself. As I scamper up to my door, it was standing ajar. I had no time to think as I scurry under the frame of the entry, kicking it closed with my foot. I stand in the middle of the quiet room, gasping for my breath. My hand calmly places its palm on my chest, heaving up and down along with me. My eyes dart around the room.

Had I really seen a person? Let alone a person dying?

I stalk to my moldy window, looking out before I close the blinds.

Should I protect myself? Or go see what's out there?

I chose the latter.

Everything ready, I prepare to stalk the dead wasteland. I haven't been to the city since I found out. Since the memory started to haunt my every waking moment.

Bow in hand, arrows in backpack, knives on belt, I walk toward the main road.

I remain careful not to walk on the jungly cement. I walk under the trees, watching every movement around me. The sun blended rust orange into sapphire blue.

Had what I seen earlier been a trick? Was I going mad, spending all these years alone?

I pick up my slow pace.

If there was someone here, well. What would I do? Would I be friendly? Would I be wary? Would I simply dread seeing them? Would I kill them?



Mountain View

By Ellie Richards

I near the city, one step at a time. The wind thins out the closer I get to the skyscrapers. The orange hue thickening. Standing on the grass at the edge of the bridge, I take one last glance at the safety behind me. I take an arrow from the bag on my back and load it in the bow I hold in my right hand. I near the cement. The sound of water running far underneath fills the air. The tides grow in the moonlight. I place my feet on the bridge's plaster. One shaky step at a time, I stagger across the structure.

The other side grows larger and the bridge grows smaller and the threat of night becomes intenser. I decide that during the night, I would sleep in an office, the office of a person who is no longer in this world.

My foot touches the inner city. My eyes blind by the white light shone in front of me.

I lift my arm up above my eyes, scrunching my face at what is in front of me. The skyscraper had its lights turned on. Neon pink and yellow signs swirl up at me, enticing me into the building. The artificial lights light up the sky and send a beam up toward space. My arms flop to my sides as I drop the very thing that was to protect me if someone were here. Almost, as if in a trance, I wander to the glass door, peering into the abyss. Dozens of machines line the walls. Cables run on the floor. Tables stacked with open boxes of molded pizza. I step back and look up at the unread sign: *Late Night Arcade*. It was an arcade. My head twists around looking for a source of the sudden iridescent light. When I see nothing, I stroll to the door, pull it open, and step inside.

My eyes adjust to the white glare. They widen once they're tamed, and I walk toward the deserted tables. Lifting the top of the cardboard carton, I scrutinize the green and white fluff growing on the pizza. My nose crinkles at the scent as I quietly close the lid, closing off the abomination to the world. I turn and gaze at the outdated gaming machines stuck to the painted wall. I saunter to them, placing my right hand on the scarlet joystick. A slight smile creeps up on my face. Although the computers wouldn't turn on, I move the stick around in circles, pressing the button labelled as 'jump' and let out a laugh.

I hadn't been to an arcade since I was a child. I hadn't had a fun rush of adrenaline. I haven't felt enough joy since the incident. I forgot what it feels like being happy. I forgot what true happiness was.

My hand leaves the controller as I back away from the machine-filled wall. My feet shuffle back as I look around the building. I turn my back to the new wonders and walk to the doorway. I inch the glass open, and step outside. One by one the buildings to the right of me fill the darkness with milky white luminescence. Then, the buildings to the left, until the whole street is full of light.

Figures as black as night stand on the end of the boulevard.

They slowly tread toward me.

My feet beg me to run, but they're clung to the floor. My hands twitch down at the floor, picking up the daggers I had left on the cement. I still stood, fixed in place. The three hooded statures came closer and closer, only a couple structures away. My foot drags behind me, the only movement I've made since seeing them.

Now only being a couple steps away, my shoes still stuck on the ground. A cloaked figure stands in front me, towering over my trembling body, the other two pausing on either side. Black hoods cover every inch of their skin, only the torn flesh of their hands visible. White masks engulf their face. Imitation eyes and imitation lips and imitation eyebrows were painted atop the crème covers. The faces peer down at me, looking at the various sins I've committed. A low grumble escapes the lips of the shadow in front of me.

"We've been watching you for a long time. We'd like you to join us."

My eyes widen as my foot slides back. My head slowly inches to the left, then to the right. Disbelief stains my face.

I remember back to this morning, a shape in a hooded cloak falling out the shattering window. My head stops shaking when my eyes land on the arcade, the building alive and full. A brown rat scurries on the table I was once standing by. I hear another noise. "If you heard. . ." the guttural voice continued, "we'd like you to join us."

My head turns back to the three, my eyes swelling with tears. "So," I start, "all this time. . . there were other people? And. . . you didn't say or do anything—until now? Until three years later?" tears stream down my red stained cheeks, my voice quivering at the end of every pause. The cloaked persons show no reaction. Still they repeat their frequent phrase, "We'd like you to join us." A hand reaches out to me. It levitates in the air as my head turns down to look at it. A single tear drops down my face, all alone. My breath labors as I try breath in and out. My chest heaves up and down, slowing as time passes. The figure's hand stays in place as I stay staring it. The hand, wrinkled with labor, finally relaxes, its fingers curling in. The cloaks on the side take their hands out from behind them, and disappear in the midnight next to them, their hands somewhere in their cloaks.

I eye the two figures. My lips part, a sigh escaping. "I don't know what for." I murmur. My head's hung, looking down at the inches between our feet. I suck my breath in and look at the ivory mask. "We've observed you and would like you to join us." it repeats.

"N—no. I can't. I don't know what for."

"We'd love for you to join us."

"Not until you say what for. . ."

"Join us!" It bellows at me. The figures on either side of the shape, blathering, free their hands, gripping a metal object in one whitened fist. My mind races as I try to come up with an answer.

What if I join and they were the reason everyone disappeared? Would I find out the reason and way everyone disappeared? What if I join and they kill me? Or worse?

"I-I. . . I ju-" a shot booms through the melancholy street. Noises ring in my ears. My vision goes in and out as I sway back and forth on my feet. My head spins. My eyes unfocus as the black cloaks walk toward me. I feel myself sink to my knees, rocks puncturing into my dermis. My hand reaches up to my stomach, warm liquid leaking onto my hand. I look up at the figures, one grabbing my legs and one yanking my arms and the other watching the scene unfold. My eyelids grow heavy. I struggle to breath, struggle to not fall to their mercy. I feel myself swing under the cloaks. An audible groan escapes the figure who was watching. I can't make out what he's saying. I turn my head slightly and see it walking for me, a hand raised. The hand collides with my face.

Everything goes black.

Bright lights blind my eyes. I squint up at the fluorescent white. I shuffle in the soft mattress, sitting up and looking around the room. The room, white as day, had cabinets full of scissors, pliers, string, scalpels, forceps. My eyes widen as I try to escape the uncertainty of the colorless space. On the right side of the room, a door opened, revealing more cloaked figures than there were before. They walk into the room slowly, not sparing me a glance. I watch their every step. I look down at my forearm, plastic tubes in my arms. I follow the tubes up to a machine, lines sparking up and down on it, small beeps each time it resets. Tape holds the tube in, keeping the needle in place. Footsteps echo in my ears. I look up, a decorated mask looking down at me. Hands behind its back, the figure leans forward, no longer wearing a cloak. My eyes search for life in the painted eyes. It doesn't say anything, only watch me. More of the masked figures take off their cloaks, keeping the masks on. They wear thick black cotton shirts, with black trousers held up with a black belt. Once all the other people are settled in position, the observing shape speaks.

"We'd like you to join us."

Lake Powell

By Courtney James



About the Magazine

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 year to publish a digital magazine that showcases the writing, art, and photography of the student body. This magazine is published digitally at the end of each year. The staff solicits and receives submissions from the students, submits their own works, publicizes the magazine, selects entries, and prepares the magazine for digital publication.



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