

TRIAD

Vol. XL



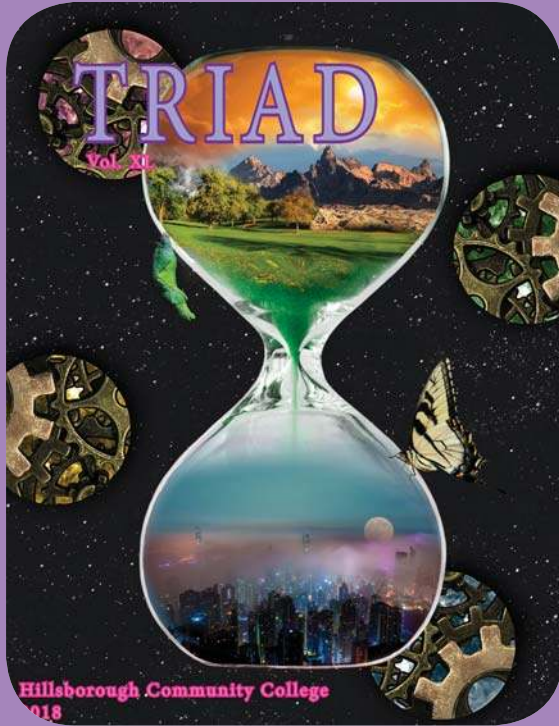
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Editor's Note



Cover Art by
Chien-Chen Wu

Hillsborough Community College
College P.O. Box 5096
Tampa FL, 33675-5096

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Volume XL

Hillsborough Community College provide opportunities for creative minds and qwerky ideas from students and professors to join together and show the world what they have to offer. Our college, with its five campuses, cheers on their students as the put their artistic abilities to the test. As you read through our 2018 edition of the Triad, I hope you will marvel at the beauty of the students' pieces which they have created with their hearts.

Art comes in numerous forms. This edition includes paintings, photography, poems, and short essays. Each piece shares part of the artists' souls that they were willing to have publicized.

Through the support of Professor Gaspar, students were excited to submit their art in hopes to make a difference in someone's life. Thanks to HCC, students are able to take the next step in exploring different artistic fields that can guide them into the next chapter after finishing at HCC.

I began my college journey in 2016 right after I graduated from high school. I have cherished every moment at my community college and have grown more into the person I am meant to be. I plan to transfer to a university to continue the journalism journey.

Katie Loudermilk
Editor-In-Chief

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Arranged

By Jacquelynn Landaverde

There is-- and always has been-- one person who knows where I keep my secret place of foods. Of course, I have different hiding spots of many different things, but this is the most important collection. It contains three things: Cassava Chips, Purple Fanta and Limon Flamin Hot Cheetos. I made sure that there is only ever one person who knows where it is in case of an emergency. That person is my best friend, Kamila, who is 1,064 miles away.

So, it was a surprise when I came home from school to find Alejandra sprawled out on the couch with Cheeto fingers and a bottle of my special drink on her lap. On the floor next to the couch, my Family Sized Cassava Chip bag lay along with the wrappers of snack-sized Cheeto bags.

"Aleja!" I screamed. Wide-eyed, she let out a blood-curdling scream as I lunged at her, taking the last bit of my drink that was in her Cheeto clutch. I grimaced at the backwash but tried to let it not show on my face.

"¿Adonde? Where did you find these?" I growled. She scrambled behind the couch, tears falling down her face, "Lo siento, perdon, I am sorry!"

"Brinley," a stern voice called out. I turned around to find mama standing at the door frame to the kitchen, looking confused. "¿Que paso? What on earth are you doing?"

"Mami," I whined, "she ate it all! She ate all of my snacks," I complained.

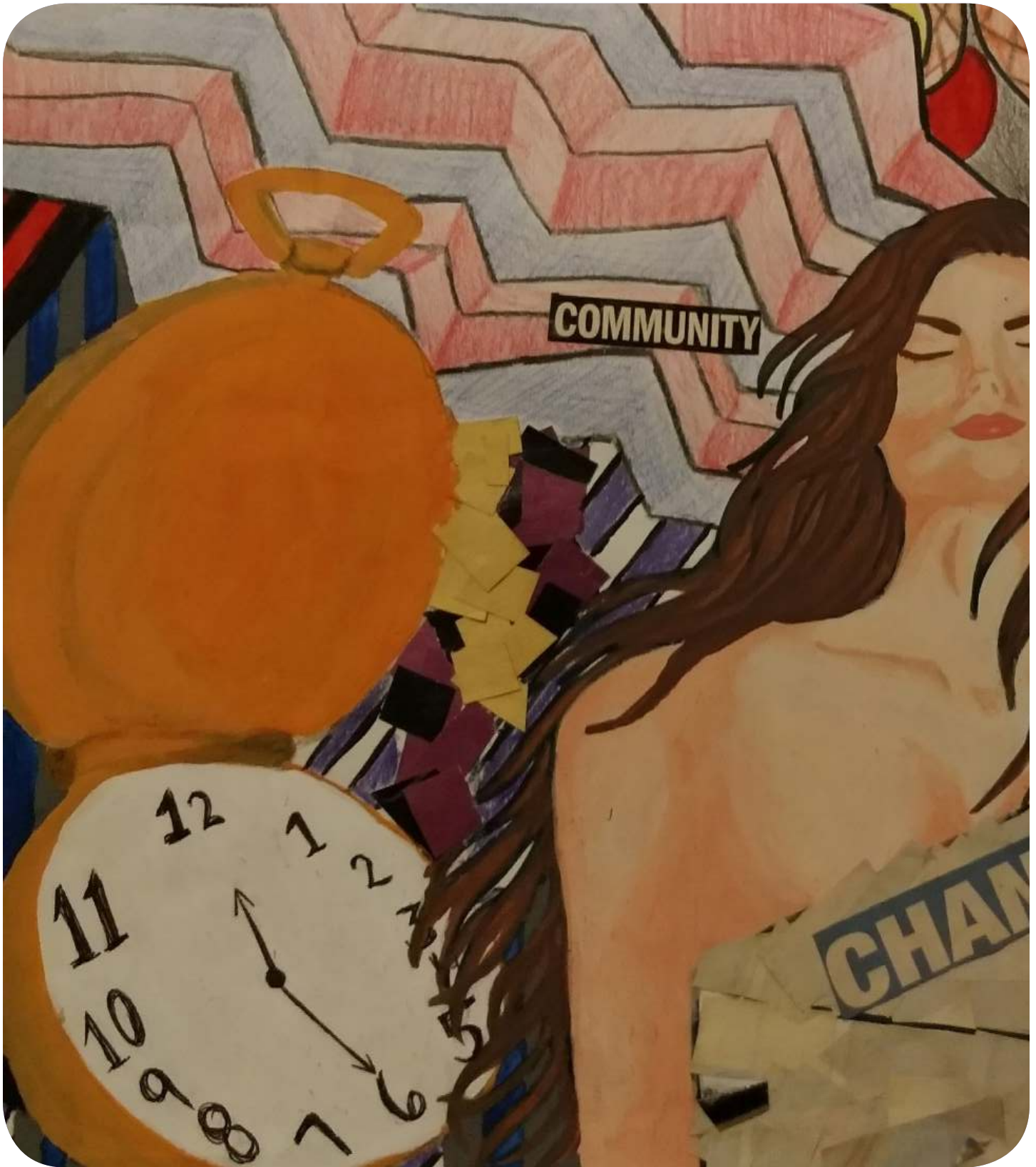
At this, a smile grew on her face, "Mi hija, do not worry about that. We will have plenty of money to buy you anything you want soon enough!" I looked at her like she had gone absolutely insane! "Well, when you were younger, an old best friend of mine, from Venezuela, had the idea that if we have children around the same time, they would get married. At first, the idea sounded crazy, but then I took into account that they come from a family of money. If you marry them, you will inherit their money. Now, the boy-- let's just say that he is not in the best of places right now. She finally reached out to me again, to remind me of our little plan.

"It has been six months since you turned 18, and she just reminded of it! Now, I thought about you and how strong-minded and brilliant you are, and how you are fast to correct if gotten wrong," she took a deep breath, quickly glancing at my confused face. "The boy-- he is a year older than you, a great boy, he really is. I bet he is even chulo, but that is not the point. What I am trying to say is," she paused, taking my hand, "he needs you. A girl who will set him straight, and use her strong mind against him. Plus, I already agreed to this before you were even thought of."

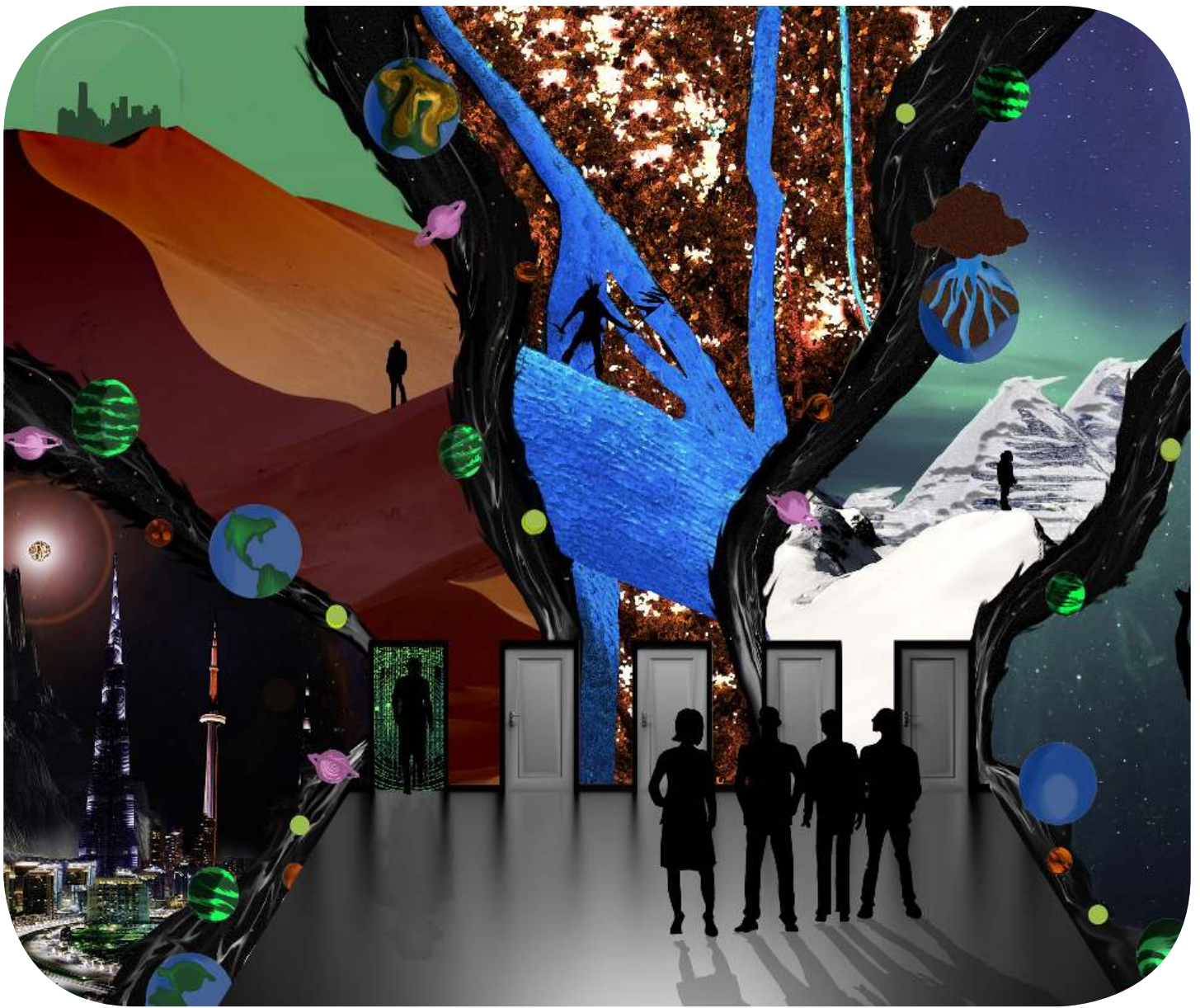
"So you are saying..." I trailed off.

You are going to get married," she squealed.

Leave it to my insane Puerto Rican mother to arrange my own marriage before I was even thought of!



Community has Gone
Catherine Hernandez
Art



Multiverses

By Jason Roldan
Art

Beauty in the Dark

By Katelynn Murdock

Close your eyes and see what I see
Life in the soul
Beauty in the mind
Love in the heart
Turn the lights off
Turn your mind off
Turn life off
See as you should
The truth
Don't watch the madness
Listen to the minds
Learn from the talk
Don't let your eyes do this
Let your ears show you
Listen to the voices
Pay attention to the conversation
Notice the silence
Follow my voice
You cant see me, but I can see you
Fear of safety
Fear of freedom
Fear
Why so much
You see what they want you to see
They see what they want
Sound is precious

Listen to the steps behind you
Pay attention to the whispers
Notice the silence
Beauty is silent
Silence is precious
You have to cherish it while you can
Remember what they told you
Follow the rules
Hear them
Remember them
Learn from them
Teach them
You can hear more than you can see
You can't see what you can hear
Don't let the beauty distract you
That's what they want
See what you want
Not what they want
Close your eyes
Only fools see beauty
Beauty is a sin
Beauty is immortal
We dont need beauty
Beauty needs us
Close your eyes and see what I see:
Beauty.

Little kids rock at Gasparilla

By Jason Turner



Giving young and lesser known artists a chance to show their craft is vital to growing any type of music scene. Without young blood, the art of live performances will die out. The Gasparilla Music Festival does what it can to make sure that doesn't happen.

A big part of the Gasparilla Music Festival is what it does for children. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that donates money and music instruments to schools. At the festival, they have areas set aside for young people and people who are young at heart.

There is an entire area named Kids Interactive. In that section, they offer face painting, recycled tunes, where people can play instruments made from old parts and a place for children to dance and play with hula hoops.

Not content with just having activities for children, Gasparilla Music Festival books them to perform.

One of the first singers this year is JudyAnne Jackson. She is a 10-year-old country singer from the Tampa Bay area. Her set consists of just her singing with either her guitar or her ukulele.

She sings some cover songs like Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down," The Animals' "House of the Rising Sun" and Old Crow Medicine Show's "Wagon Wheel." Jackson also performs original music. One of the songs was written just three weeks before the festival.

Jackson started playing piano when she was 5 and bought her first guitar with allowance money when she was 8. She says she loves playing music because it makes her feel good and recently had the opportunity to play at Madison Square Garden.

Another group at the festival is Little Kids Rock. It is a class, much like School of Rock, where the children play all the instruments and sing everything. Some of the people in the current group don't look like they are big enough to even hold their instruments, but they hold their own.

For a chance to support local, young and talented musicians, go to the Gasparilla Music Festival next year.



Your Neighbor Sells Humans

By Kelley Perez

Some people say that prostitution is a victimless crime. My position on the subject is that prostitution is a catalyst for human trafficking, which subsequently creates numerous victims. As a human trafficking survivor, I have firsthand experience and knowledge that prostitution creates victims not only in other countries but in our very own neighborhoods. Prostitution is breeding human trafficking right under Tampa, Florida's nose through the internet and brothels disguised as spas.

If prostitution were to be legalized, human trafficking would become easier because women could be trafficked in plain sight with no fear of repercussions. The argument is that if prostitution is legalized the industry can be regulated, but how does one regulate an industry where people in positions of authority are victimizers? Prostitution is defined as the act of engaging with someone in sexual activity for payment. Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor. Sex traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to lure their victims and force them into commercial sexual exploitation. In efforts to combat human trafficking, the lower house of French parliament passed a bill that decriminalized prostitution but instead went after anyone responsible for hiring a prostitute. This has been implemented in other countries and is successful because the women who are selling sex are no longer afraid to report crimes against them.

Slaves are all-around us, hidden in plain sight: the dishwasher in the kitchen of the neighborhood restaurant, the kids on the corner selling cheap trinkets, the man sweeping the floor of the local department store. The people responsible for this modern-day slavery are not the typical pimp depicted in movies with a fur coat and chalis in hand. They are somebody who fits the description of a neighbor, like a 27-year-old middle-class Tampa housewife.

How does the girl next door get trafficked? Is she kidnapped? Is there a gun to her head the whole time? Most of the time, the answer to these questions is no, and the process is much subtler in nature. My story started off with me trying to get out of a domestic violence relationship. I went to The spring domestic violence shelter in Tampa, Florida, and stayed there for five of the allotted six weeks. When the sixth week was approaching, a woman I had known for a while (Ally) called me out of the blue and asked me to come to her house for a visit. I showed up at her house which was a beautiful condo in an affluent neighborhood. I began explaining my dilemma to Ally, who quickly asked me to move in with her. I went and got my belongings that day and moved from The spring domestic violence shelter into Ally's condo.

Ally told me that she would be happy to help me renew my cosmetology license and help me get basic tools so I could get back my life I had lost due to my abusive relationship. Before moving in, I knew that Ally was an escort, and I had no problem with her lifestyle because she seemed to be OK with it, even glamourized it. The first night I moved in, we partied all night. Then, the next day, Ally said that if I wanted her help renewing my cosmetology license, I would have to escort with her and earn the money. I was completely broken from being in the two-year domestic violence relationship and felt I had no choice. When living in someone else's home, it is almost like there was a gun to my head to do as I was asked so I had a place to stay.

As I began doing "dates" with her, I would want to go to sleep, but life was moving all-around me, so I had no choice but to smoke speed with her. I couldn't sleep for days, not because I didn't want to but because I wasn't allowed to either because of the drugs or her. Finally, I was exactly where she wanted me to be, and she said, "Don't worry sniff this and you will be able to sleep."

By this time, I was seeing things that were not there, such as Drug Enforcement Administration ninjas all-around me and people coming through walls.

I snorted what she put in my face at that point with no questions asked and fell asleep shortly after. At some point, I was awakened with speed. Even though everything was so blurry, I remember Ally and her boyfriend standing by my bedside, and as I woke up, they immediately got me high. She and I worked for another couple of days before I was given whatever downer was available to help me come down and sleep.

One time, Ally and I got into a fight, and after that, she took my purse containing my Social Security card and identification. I remember having thoughts and even saying to myself "This feels like human trafficking"; however, even in the center of being trafficked, I didn't believe that it could happen to me. I was so broken and so drugged up and then down that I never realized that I was much stronger than Ally. I could've easily kicked her door in and got my purse back with my makeup, Social Security card and identification. The trafficking went on for a total of two or three weeks, the time span is fuzzy, but when I was awakened by someone trying to inject me with something in my foot that was my limit of patience. I got up and informed Ally that she needed to give me money so I could leave, when she refused, I was told to leave.

I went downstairs as things were spiraling out of control and locked myself in a half bathroom to begin the detox process. The first day, periodically, Ally would knock on the door to tell me to make money or leave. The second day is when things started to heat up; I was very sick from drug withdrawal, and Ally began banging on the door. I was still in a chemical fog, but I was gaining mental strength. The third day Ally banged on the door, I opened it, and she swung a vase at me I ducked and laughed at her. By now, much of the fog was lifted, and I remembered I was a human and had rights. I told Ally, "I want you to hit me." I then explained to her that, in the state of Florida there are domestic violence laws that if a homeowner is arrested for domestic violence, for as long as the person assaulted lives in the home, the homeowner would not be allowed on the premises. This bad news was almost too much for her to handle.

I then told Ally this is what was going to happen: "You are going to give me some of the money that I earned, and then your boyfriend is going to drive me to the hotel of my choice. Every single item that you have taken of mine will be returned before I leave. Otherwise, start the eviction process because this is going to be a fun month." I was strong enough at this point to walk around and went to the kitchen to grab something to eat since I had not eaten for the three days prior. Ally phoned her attorney. At this point, he told her the only thing she could do was evict me.

Ally's next move was to call several friends over so they could do drugs in front of me. Ally then said to me "I know you want some." With a big smile on my face and a peace about me, I told her, "No, I don't. I'm not you, and this isn't my life." I am not going to die alone as a hooker in a hotel room I am going to be a mom to my children." At this moment, Ally realized all the chains that she had bound me with were broken. She called her boyfriend to come downstairs and told him to take me wherever I wanted to go. Ally gave her boyfriend money to give me, and money to put on a prepaid debit card so she could continue to post ads for escorting on Backpage. After Ally returned all my stuff, I got in the rental car, and Ally's boyfriend TJ began driving me to a hotel.

I had nothing against TJ because he was just a duck that she was using for his condo, but my saturation point had been met. TJ was high on speed rambling about non sense because he had been up for several days, and I couldn't have been more irritated. TJ went into a Walgreens to load money onto the prepaid card, but when he came out, he looked confused and said that he didn't remember how much money he was supposed to give me. I reminded TJ of what we agreed on, and he then tried to call Ally, and she didn't answer.

Soon, TJ and I were in front of the hotel where I was going to stay. I looked at him with tears in my eyes and said, "I don't want to have to hurt you, but I'm going to take that card from you then light the headliner of your rental car on fire if you do not give me my money." He still wouldn't give me the money, so I pried it out of his hands. I checked into the hotel and Googled "how to quit being a prostitute." Something popped up, and within a very short time, someone named Emily from the Zonta Club of Pinellas called me and asked me if I had been trafficked. I replied "no," but she then started asking me questions related to the elements involved in prosecuting human traffickers. At the end of our conversation, she said, "I'm sorry to tell you, but you were trafficked."

It started to click in, but I still felt like everything that happened was my fault for using drugs. We hung up, and I didn't really expect anything from the Zonta Club because I felt like everyone else failed me. Emily called me three days later and asked me how I would feel about going to a safe house in Texas. By this time, my ex-boyfriend had found me, and when I refused to go with him he punched me in the face. To this day, I still have a ball of scar tissue there.

Texas sounded great! Hell, Saudi Arabia would've been fine!

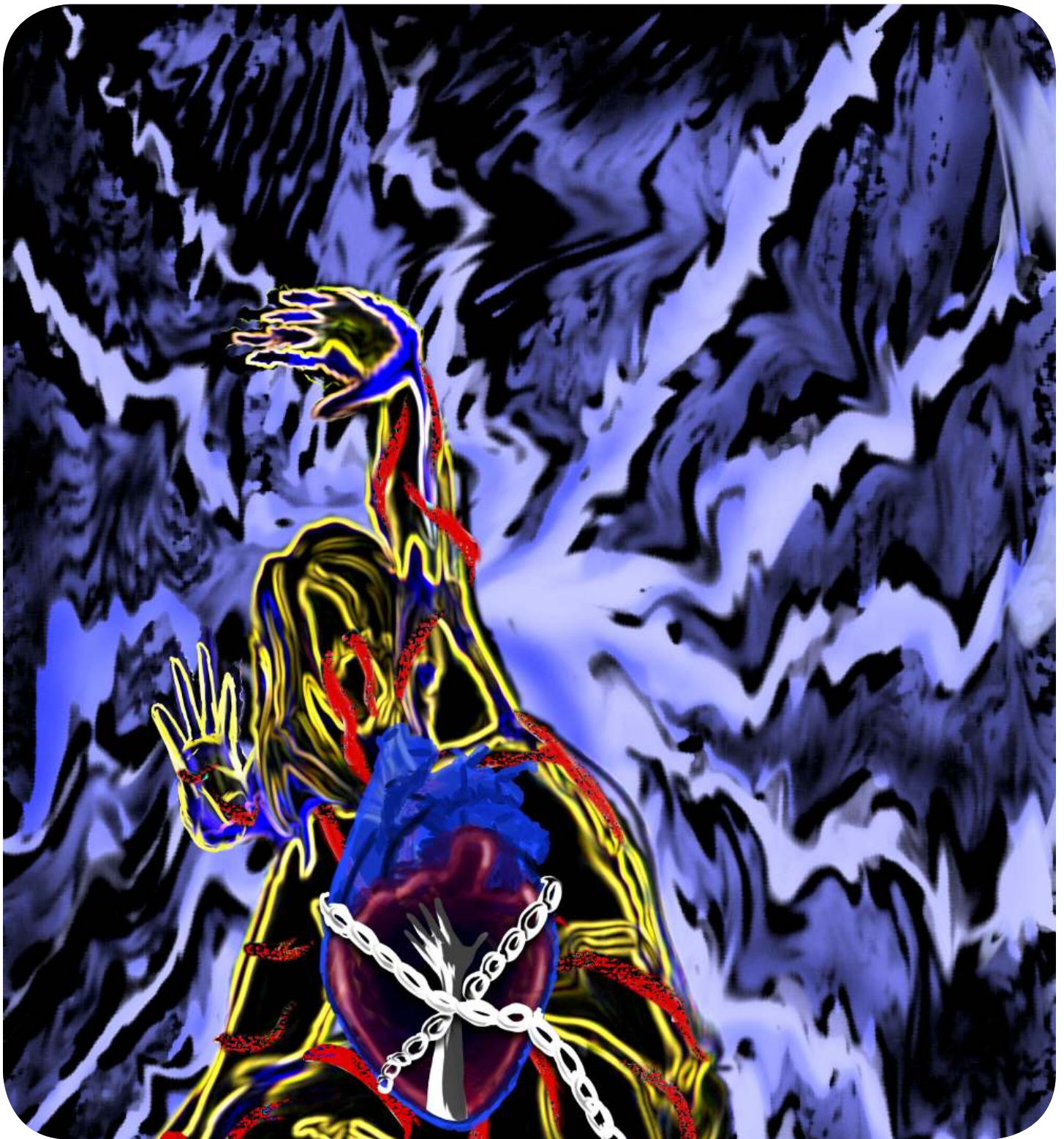
By the end of that afternoon, a stranger who I had never met purchased a plane ticket for me to go to Texas in two days. Since I was out of money for the hotel room, I called my ex and told him I was leaving town. He asked if he could come pick me up, and I said yes. After getting back to his house, the woman from The Zonta Club of Pinellas called me and asked if I was safe for the next two days until my flight left. When I told her no that I was back at my abusive ex's house, she said, "I'll call you right back." About 10 minutes later, she told me that I had a hotel room booked at the Beach Hotel in Clearwater and asked if I could get there.

When I asked my ex to take me, he said no. I knew if I stayed at his house, he would sabotage my departure in some way, possibly by taking my identification. I dropped my pride and called my parents. They left immediately to come get me to take me to my hotel. I waited until the last minute to tell my ex I was leaving. I told him my parents and two children were already on the street that we lived on.

For some reason, he didn't put his hands on me, he just told me how dumb I was and that we should be spending this time together. I didn't hug him goodbye. I don't even remember saying bye to him, just the shocked look on his face. I got into my parent's car and my two children were there waiting to greet me; I hadn't seen them in two years because of the drugs and abusive relationship. They greeted me with open arms, and after we ate, I was dropped off at my hotel. I checked in, and laid on the bed, took a deep breath, and knew that my life was just beginning. It occurred to me, though that I had no money for food and called Emily from the Zonta Club and asked her what I should do. She said that she would call me back. Five minutes later, a lady named Donna Lancaster called me and told me that she had paid for everything that the room was on her credit card to order whatever room service I would like.

The next step, I boarded the plane to Texas to start my life over. I still talk to Donna and go to anti-trafficking events with her, hoping to help others with my story. I have been sober for two years now and haven't looked back.

Prostitution is not a victimless crime. Even willing participants of prostitution are victims. Prostitutes are raped every day, literally by johns and metaphorically by society's stigma and unwillingness to help. Until prostitution is regulated through decriminalization, countless victims will suffer in silence with the fear of recourse. It is time to go after the people who purchase the service of a prostitute and not the women. For the people who are still OK with prostitution, I ask you what if it was your mom or your 10-year-old sister? Because no matter what bad life choices landed sex workers in this life, they were someone's daughter or sister before becoming a prostitute. If it isn't good enough for a family member to do it, then why is it OK for anyone else?



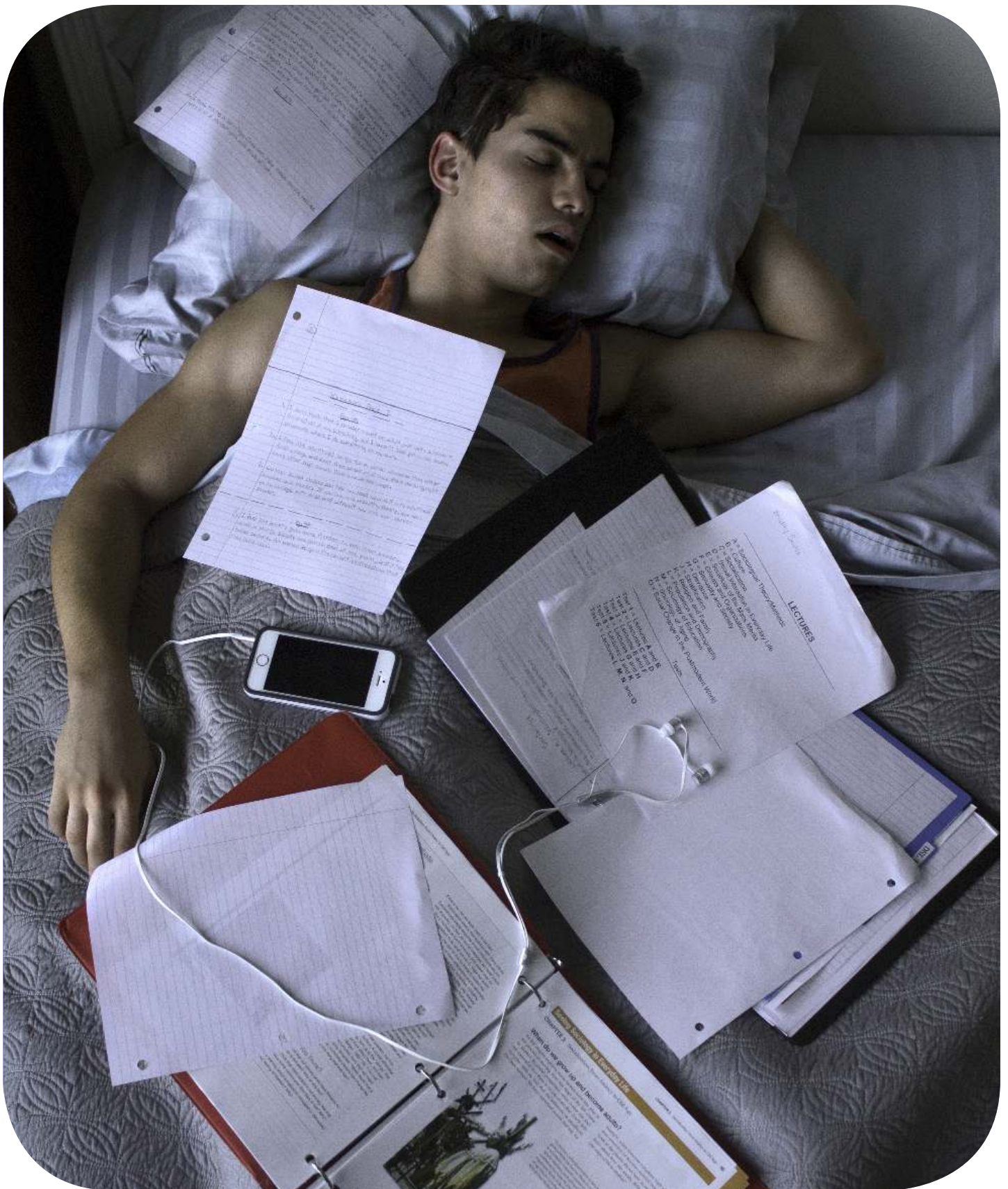
Depression
Jason Roldan
Art

Individual

By Keshawn McMiller

3:17 a.m... it's the fourth time this week you've woken up in the middle of the night, and you can't go back to sleep. The bags under your eyes are piling on as if you were filling an ice cream cone however, your thoughts are anything but sweet... instead, they are clouded by a haze of laughter, pre-dispositioned judgments and fear. Fear of arising to an ongoing world where, J's and a swoosh can keep you in the loop, where men on horses are more valuable than the fabric itself, and no Gucci Gang means you can't hang- (with conviction) you are... different. You ponder some thoughts and let out a soft-hearted chuckle... how did a parents' words on your first day of school, "Just be yourself," slowly transform into "just fit in" or how your best friend Michael of nine years decided he didn't want to hang with you anymore, because you jammed out to Sibelius's Violin Concerto in D minor after class on those headphones that couldn't quite contain the sound as well as Beats, and you can't even read music...

You see, labels are pros at either uniting or dividing us... "I say popular girl with makeup," you say, "stuck up and entitled," I say "tall and muscular guy," you say, "dumb athlete." Well that "athlete" just so happens to be learning how to code in hopes of developing their first app... and popular girl? Well, let's just say Kyrie Irving isn't the only one with a Ph.D. in ball handling... That would be the case, if society hadn't pressured and pressed these two through its cookie cutter molds we call stereotypes, oh what could've been... There's a lesson to be learnt here, and it starts with this definition. Individual:(noun) or better yet, a person. Not, a weirdo, not mentally deranged, not living in the Stone Age, or under a rock, a person, just like you and just like me. So why not be individuals for once? You may just come to find out, you were never alone after all...



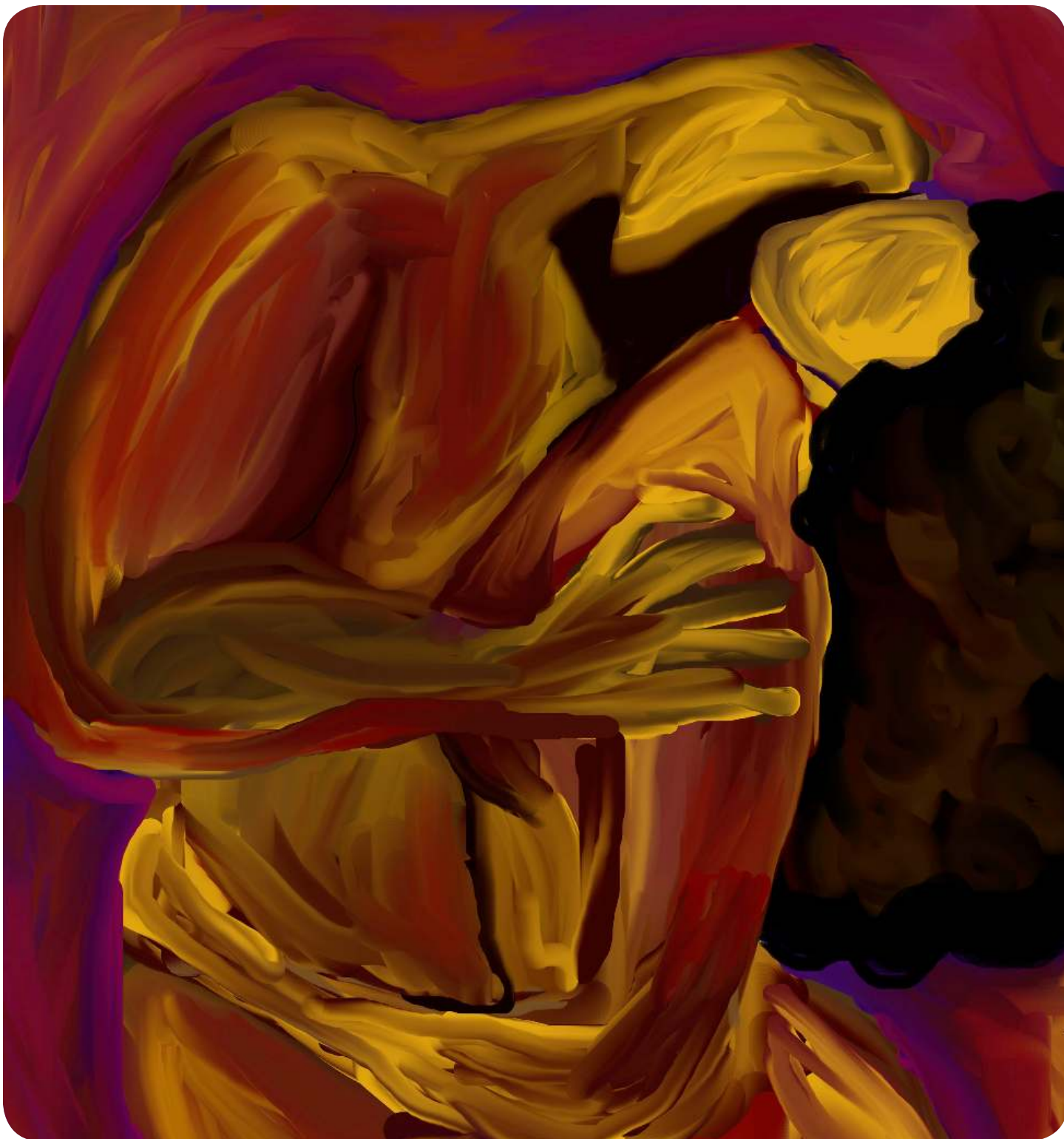
Overslept
Kyle Santos
Photography



Lady Plays Her Jazz

By Xavia Hill-Prater

Art



The Lovers
By Xavia Hill-Prater
Art

Some boys love dolls

By Katie Loudermilk



Hobbies are a healthy escape from reality. They give people something to help focus their passion. John Whiting, a resident of Riverview, has an unusual one: he loves dolls. Big dolls. His home is a display case for his unique collection of vintage mannequins he has gathered since the 1990s.

His collection began at the age of 19. Whiting was working at JCPenney and his boss had a room filled with mannequins that he was planning on throwing away. Not wanting to see the mannequins end up in a landfill, Whiting asked if he could take some home with him. His mother found out the next day and told him he could only keep them if they were kept in his room.

With limited space, Whiting ended up having to sell a few of them to local boutiques.

This began his life-long hobby. Throughout the years, Whiting has bought, traded and found mannequins that were thrown away by department stores. Most stores now use dressing forms for displays as opposed to the realistic looking mannequins.

The trend of mannequin displays started in the early 1800s and died down in the early 2000s. Whiting was a window dresser and was laid off due to major department stores closings because it is cheaper for smaller stores to use dress forms. But that did not prevent Whiting from enjoying his passion of dressing up the mannequins.



Whiting is now the merchandising manager at the Plant City Marshalls, and uses his creativity through decorating the features and displays throughout the store. However, he brings his work home and turns it into a stress relieving hobby.

The moment one walks into his home, the first thing that comes to sight is a Tyra Banks' look alike mannequin greeting guests at the front door.

But she is not the only one; there are mannequins displayed from his living room to the upstairs lobby. "I change the outfits twice a month to correlate a theme or season of the year," explains Whiting. He also changes out the actual mannequins.

One of his spare rooms is filled with extra pieces waiting their turn to be featured. "Whenever my friends and neighbors come over, they always expect to see something different," said Whiting. He influenced a neighbor to start her own collection. "I enjoy showing them off when I host parties and teaching people about my collection," says Whiting. Whiting is not the only serious collector. There are over 1,000 people who collect them worldwide.

There are countless Facebook groups who exchange innovative ideas for decorating or selling their pieces to one another. He is good friends with about 50 collectors. In the past, Whiting has been private about his interest. Now he is willing to educate others about his unique collection and invests his free time into discovering new looks and trends. Whiting is a perfect example of what it means to express one's creativity, and to be bold with what is interesting.

Flavors of Home: From Illinois to Florida

By Destinee Johnson

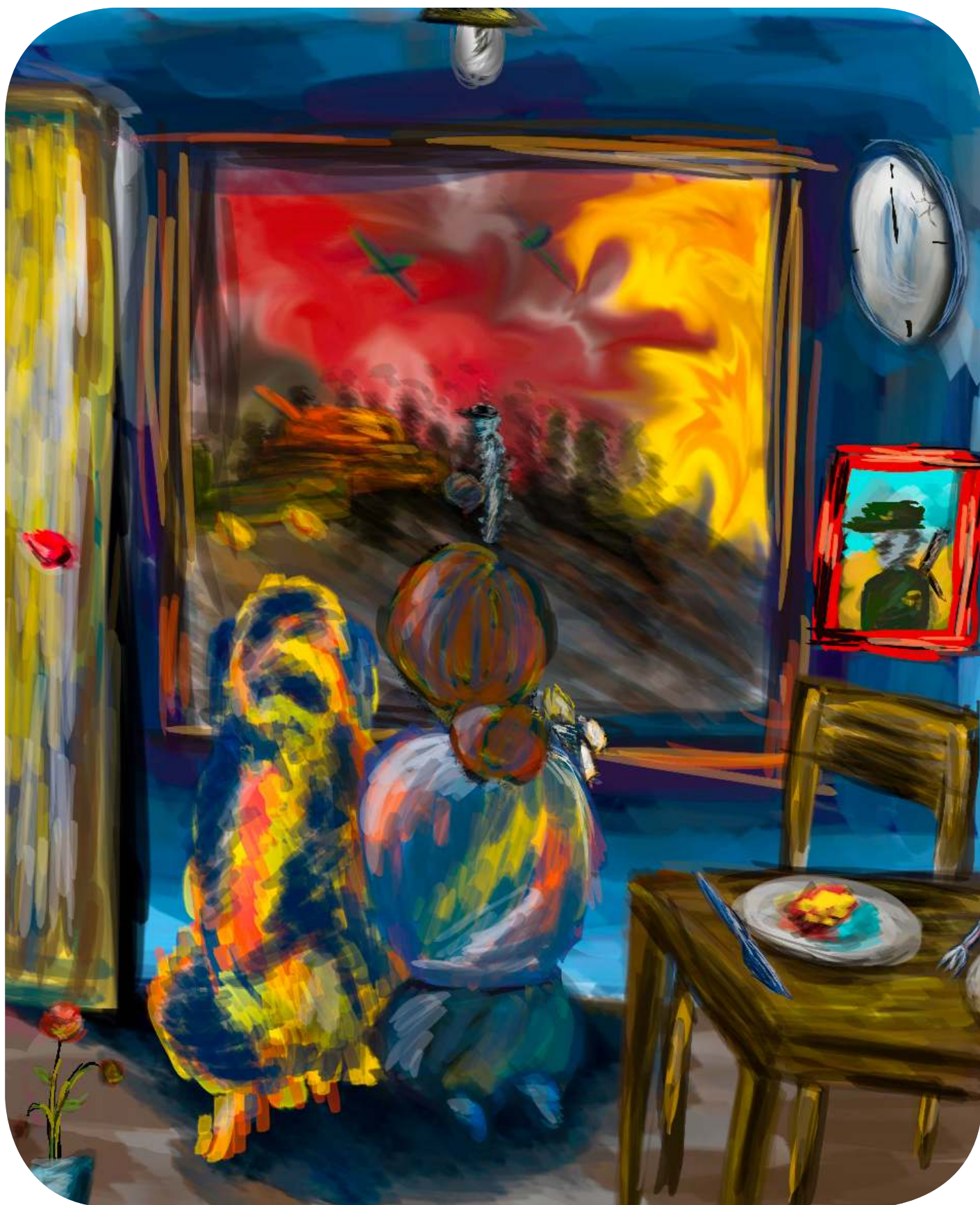
They say when you think of home, you think of a place
But that's not exactly true for me
When I think of home, I think of many places
You see, home is not just the physical dwelling that your bills get sent to
It's not just the place where you eat or sleep either
Home is where your heart is and I learned that very quickly after I moved
from Illinois to Florida
Don't get me wrong, I love Florida
I'm one step closer to my dream, FAMU
I've made strong friendships
Had a few birthdays with 80 degrees
And I discovered a destiny that I had never seen before
Florida to me will always be "home"

But there's something about that 17 hour road trip or two and a half hour
plane ride that makes me smile
There's a type of excitement that only comes when I hear the pilot say,
"We have landed in Chicago. It's nice and sunny, with a high of 45 degrees".

My legs began to unstiffen, when the green sign on the highway indicates
that we are 15 miles outside from the place I called home

We pull up to our hold house, eager to get inside
But it's not the house that makes it home
It's seeing friends and family
It's going to my old church, and singing again with my sister
It's eating Harold's Chicken, drenched in mild sauce
It's going to Garrett's after leaving the airport, and getting my Chicago mix
popcorn
It's driving past the United Center, where the Chicago Bulls and Blackhawks
have played for many years

It's reliving old memories, yet making time to create new ones
And yes, it's even snow blizzards and shoveling until your hands get numb
This was, is, and will always be, "home"



Hope

By Chieh-Chen Wu
Art

Our love is like a Café con leche

By Rayna Garcia

Our love
Is like a café con leche
Wake up early so you have the time
To put the work in
Simmering slowly over the heat
And boiling over all at once

Saved just for the people closest to you
Make a cup for your mom
Because she taught you how to do it
After all
It reminds you both of Home

Two spoonfuls of sugar
A little bit of elbow grease
To whip up all the bubbles
Half a cup of milk
And whole lot of espresso
Poured slowly over the back of a spoon
Warm to the touch

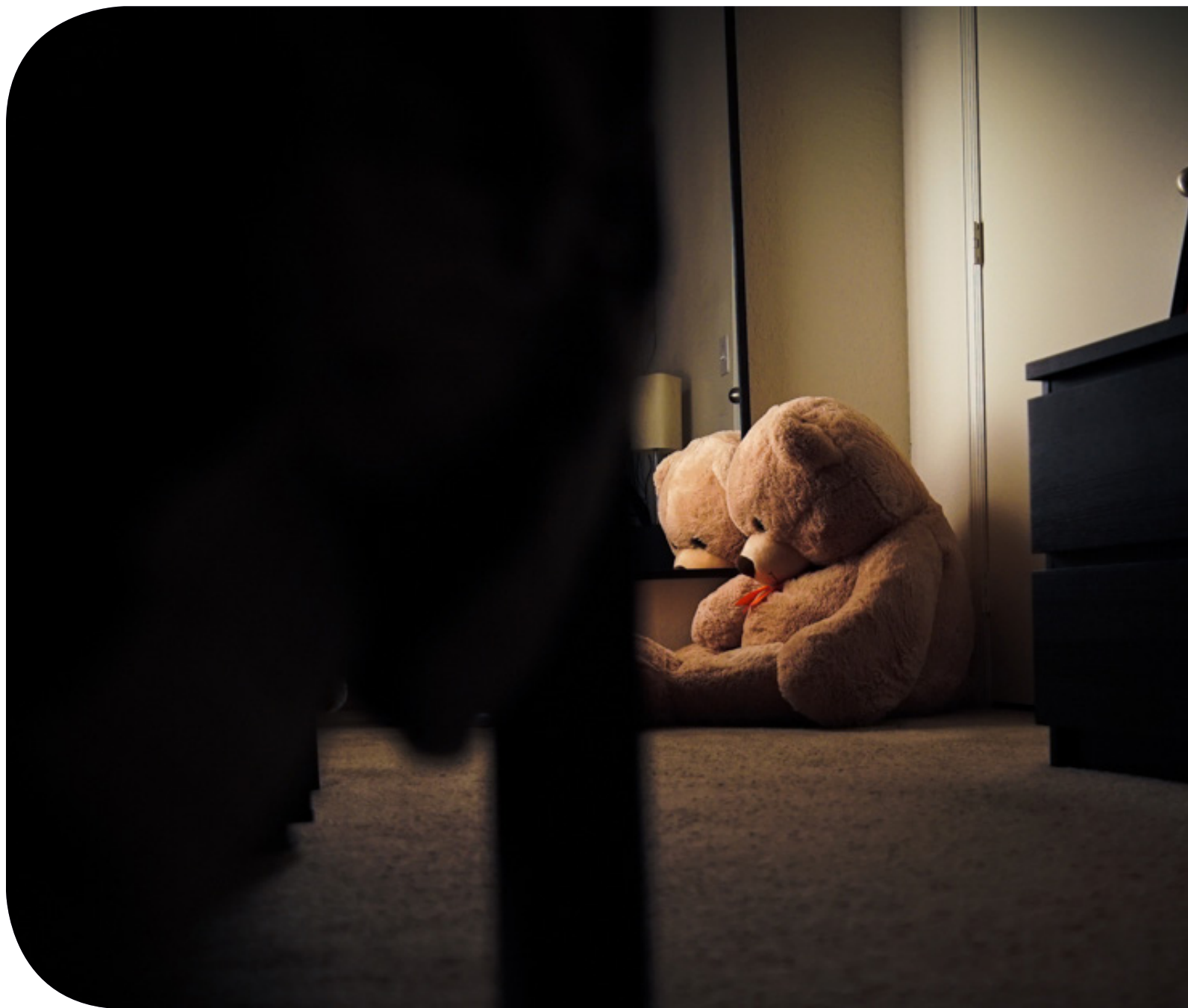
So hot it's steaming as it meets the air
Let love sit for a minute
Let love cool down
Come back to it when it's just right

The kind of love that keeps you up all night
Keeps your heart fluttering

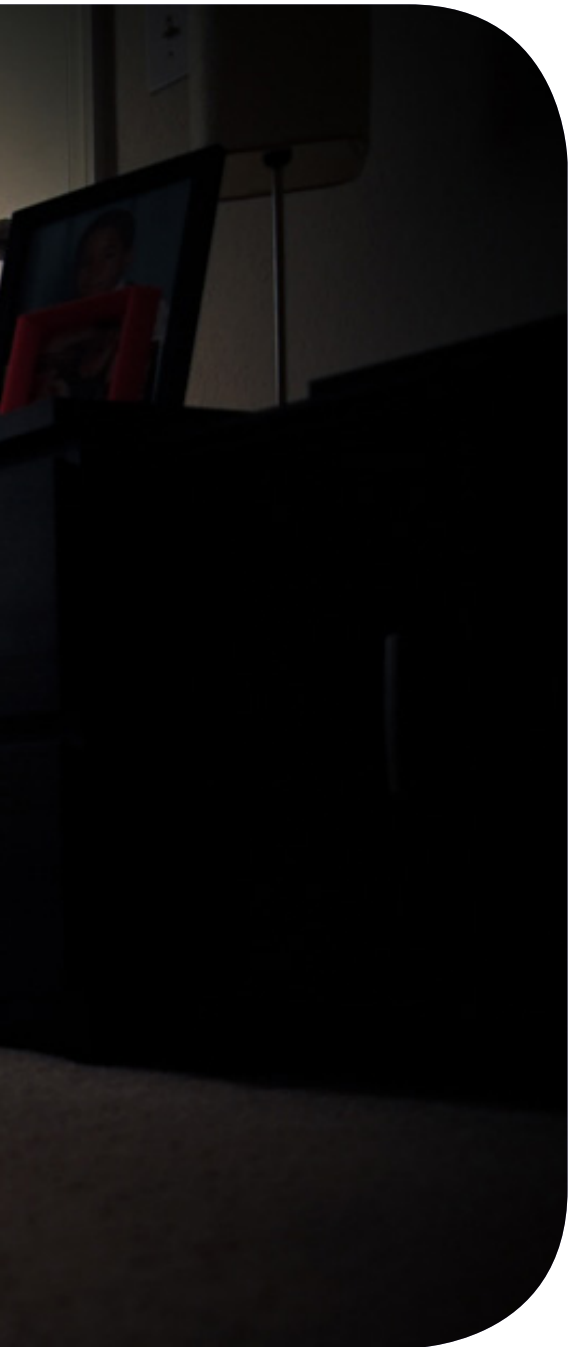
And still keeps you waking up
Early in the morning
For a cup of coffee together
That smell to welcome us into a new day
Like a warm hug
And a kiss that says,
Have a good day, my love,
You're going to do great.



Eqaulity in Love
By Catherine Hernandez
Art



Bearly Alive
By Luis Ladera
Photography



Good Boy

By Jessica Fuentes

I could not do anything, I was helpless. The broken vase inches from my nose, being able to see the ridged, jagged pieces. If only I was brave enough to help her. I couldn't move, I felt as if I was out of my body watching the havoc take place in the slowest pace. Hostile blows lash one-sided. Until finally it came to a stop, making the air feel tight and unbreathable.

The silence was deafening. I saw the dark red blood roll across the floor as if the room was at an angle. Footsteps stride as he neared me. Closer and closer, not yet knowing I am lying behind the couch. Holding in my breath for as long as I could bare.

That smell, I know that smell. The coffee shop on the corner of the block. The smell I could easily identify is strong. Could I use this to find her killer once this nightmare has ceased?

Obliviously, no one in their right mind is going to be able to help me.

His heavy boots thump louder than my protruding heart-beat as he parades over to her breathless body.

Oh no, the hair collected against the baseboard swirls across my nose and all at once without any control in my stiff body.

"Ah-choo!"

Beady eyes bulge from his unkempt bushy face. There was a pause, I do not think either of us knew what to do.

A single drop of sweat rolled down from a thick vein coming across the side of his forehead. Within a moment he drops beside me. A spark ignites in his eye followed by a sigh of relief.

He proceeds to say with a grim smile across his face, "Hey there buddy I ain't-gonna' hurt cha."

The man gives me a pat on my head and swoops me up with ease. With a scratch behind my ear he whispers:

"You're my good boy now."

A Child's Prayer

By Richard Cantu

Standing in my ripe strawberry dress, as
we got ready for church, mom frantically
brushing my hair would say,

"Kisses are shortbread cookies, dipped
in raw honey."

While grandma would squeak, from the
rickety rocking chair,

"Absolutely not, kisses are chocolate
covered sour cherries."

My daddy would bellow with a can of
Mellow Yellow,

"Hugs are blueberry pies. Tart at the
start, with a warming embrace, and sweet
once you realize you're done."

Grandpa would let out a snicker. His
voice sickening sweet as red velvet.

"Hugs are popcorn balls.
Held together with molasses."

From the back pew in church, sister
leaning in would spout.

"God is made of grape juice and bread."

Brother groaned loudly, twisting around
me.

"God is ambrosia and angel food cake."

While I find their words savory and
satisfying to devour. I question their
flavors, and their level of taste.

Because kisses are salsa and chips,
that mom and dad make fresh at home
every Tuesday.

Hugs are pancakes drenched in maple
syrup made on cool April mornings with
grandpa and grandma, as brother and
sister sleep in their beds.

God is toasted ravioli that we eat every
Sunday from the soup kitchen at church.

Amen.

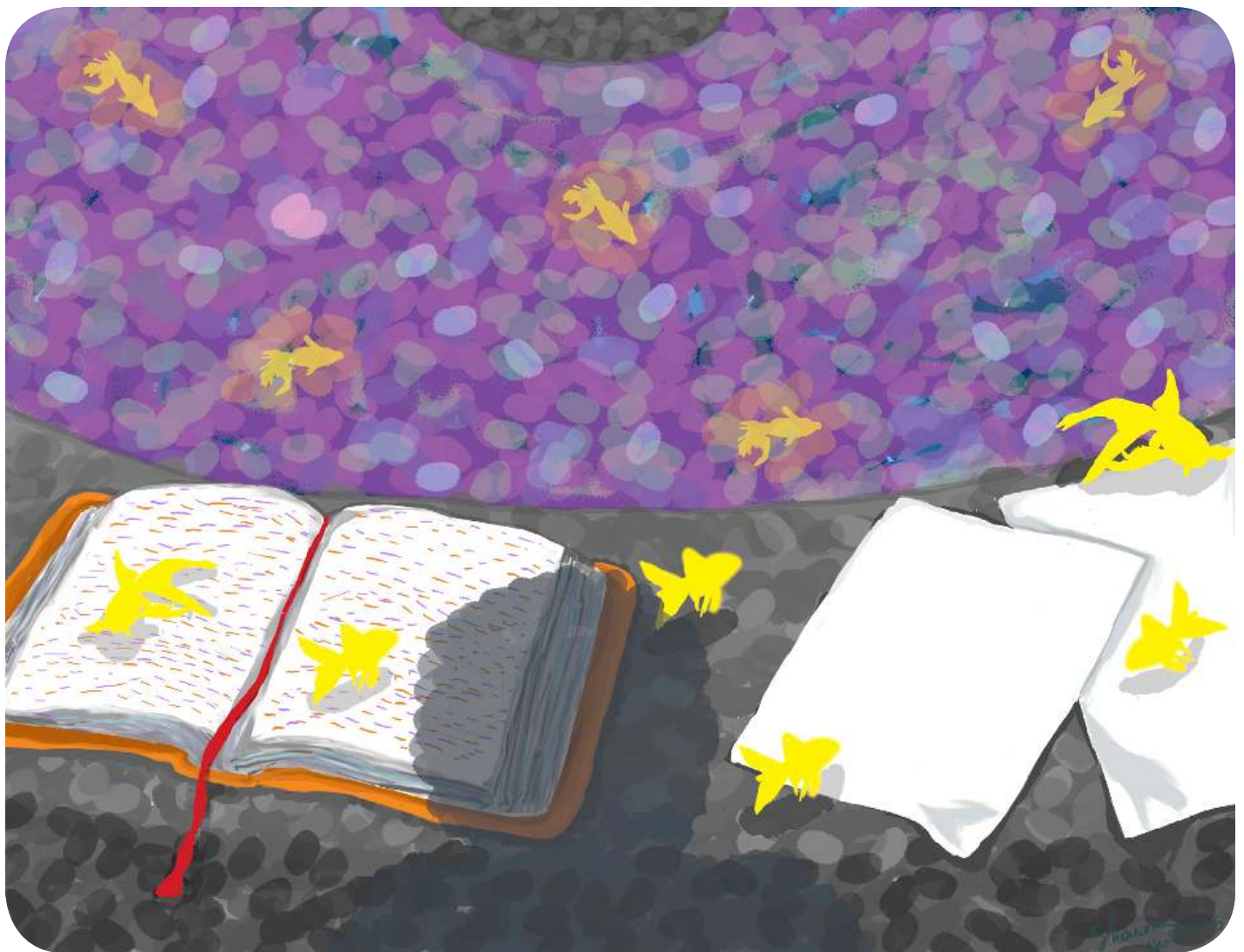


Freedom
By Chieh-Chen Wu
Art



Flamingos

By Zuza Junczak
Art



Fountain of Imagination
By Shawna Huskey
Art

The Meeting

By Anna Saxon

When our blades met for the first time, I knew my brother was holding back.

“Don’t,” I told him, and his grin grew wild. He began slashing and thrusting, left and right, up and down, and I was laughing. I did nothing with my own sword for I was not as skilled and he moved too quickly.

In a single moment, it seemed, he slashed too forcefully and tripped forward, regaining his balance without the sword in his hands. I heard him call my name as I fell backwards.

Suddenly I was hearing the cries of my mother and father, the shouts of my other siblings, and the boom of thunder as lightning lit up a night sky.

The next moment, the shouting stopped.

Now I find myself somewhere entirely different than home. The lightning and thunder continue around me, rain starting to surge down from above. My eyes are blurry, unfocused and dancing wildly about, trying to make sense of the dark scene as stone ground trembles beneath my feet. I can make out the hilt of a blade extending away from my ribs.

Suddenly my figure contorts itself to the rocks below, a jolt of pain emanating from my left breast. I try to stand up, to move my arms, my legs, even just a finger. But I can do nothing. My body is no longer under my control.

Panic rises within me as I struggle against my invisible bonds and something hot begins to drip down my chest onto my abdomen. What is that? I cannot look. I order myself to stay calm, but still the swell of horror spills into my stomach, my chest, my limbs, my head, filling them and escaping through my eyes and nose and mouth.

Enough! I scream, though I make no real sound. I must be strong. I must get back to my family.

And I would have adhered to this assertion more heartily, had I not found out, at that

exact moment, that I was not alone.

A dragon.

A dragon with scales like a woven hide of shadows, with eyes the deep color of midnight skies and mourning clothes, and a sinewy body that seeps from the gloom as if it had once been contained by the ink in a bottle, but a clumsy hand had reached and struck it, allowing the beast to escape. She flares her ebony wings, lightning illuminating the heavens above and silhouetting elaborate vein networks running throughout the thin membranes. She fixes a piercing gaze onto me, as if stripping me away layer by layer to gaze at my very soul. She is not sinister, no. She is cold. Indifferent, but here with a purpose.

My heart pumps frantically and my lungs struggle to inflate. The rain begins to come in sheets and my ears ache as the reverberation of thunder matches the roar of the pouring rain. Terror shoots through my body like the lightning explodes through the endless expanse of sky. It spurs me to defend myself. To run away. To scream. To never lay eyes upon this awe-inspiring, horror-inducing beast again. But I cannot. I’m still immobile. Stuck. Some unknown power still has me in its clutches.

Peace, Cordella. A single voice calls out my name, clear, deep and rumbling, greater even than the din of the storm around me. How did I hear it? I do not know.

That must be the dragon’s voice—I know it is. How can she know my name? I did not see her move her mouth to speak aloud. It was as if she spoke within my thoughts. How can she put her words into my head? I stare, petrified, into the dragon’s eye before me.

I have heard tales of dragons. I remember the stories my brother would narrate, where dragons take hold of humans’ minds. In some cases the outcome was favorable: like when the hero ran away with only one lost

limb, perhaps after slaying the beast. Other times, I have heard, the dragon simply descends upon a home to pluck a victim, and the captive is thenceforth considered dead. The reason behind a dragon attack is not common knowledge; my brother would usually fill in this information with his own fanciful thoughts.

But how can these recollections be a comfort when there is a dragon standing right here in front of me? When it seems I myself am the subject of a dragon horror story?

This time, the alarm rises up inside me before I can barricade it. It tries to escape through my open lips, but the thunder masks the sound.

No. I cannot be cowardly. I cannot grovel in fear simply because of my brother's tall tales. I struggle against the power ensnaring my body, my chest dripping, my intake of breath dragging, rattling. Something in my core begins to heat as rain pushes its way into my eyes and nostrils.

Did I not command you to be at peace? The dragon's voice rumbles in my head again, and my heart beats quickly—too quickly—like a cluster of galloping hooves.

Do not worry, little one, she says, seemingly amused. She shifts on her talons and tilts her head to the side, as if to get a better look at me. Your Time has come.

Then suddenly the presence of the dragon fades and I feel a release on my mind, an image materializing in my vision. It is myself, back at home with my family.

For a moment all I feel is an overwhelming sense of relief. My eldest brother cradles someone's head in his arms, my father at his side and my mother and siblings surrounding them. I almost smile and laugh at their unity, taking a step forward, about to open my mouth to make a jest. But then I notice.

Blood.

Blood is everywhere. It is coming from the person in my brother's arms. Who is it? My siblings shift, and I see.

The blood—it is coming from me.

I am the person in my brother's arms.

A sword sticks out of my upper ribcage and red flows from it, painting my clothes and my brother's hands. I see I am splayed awkwardly across the ground, my head on brother's lap, the dirt underneath me turning into reddened clumps of mud. My brother is weeping, rocking himself back and forth over me, my father standing close, stunned. I hear my mother singing, crying.

Heads veiled with doctors' masks come up from behind, surrounding my family, speaking quietly if at all. They endeavor to wrest my brother away from me, struggling as he cries out, trying to push them off. When they remove him, their hands lift me gently to a wooden cart.

Now my head begins to feel as if it will explode, like my eyes have seen too much and are filling my skull with all the blood that pours from my wound. I see my body there, but I feel my body here.

I look down—and I am transparent. I see through my own limbs and torso, I see through the sword in my ribs, through to the ground. But I feel myself stand behind my family and the doctors and the cart, watching myself bleed.

I struggle to catch my breath, my shoulders rising and falling faster and faster as the scene unfolds. My brother falls to his knees, calling me. No one objects, no one tries to pull the sword out. Why don't they? Why don't they remove the blade, stop the blood, something?

I want to cry out, cry out to the faces behind the doctor's masks and beg them to do something, to save me—to put me back into one body, and to end the seemingly endless stream of red that is coming from the me on the cart, so that I can be with my family, comfort them. But all at once I am torn away from the doctors and my family, spiraling back into cold the presence of the dragon.

A scream is trapped in my throat, and I feel myself try to fling my limbs outwards, as if to regain some sort of balance. And this time, I feel the freedom to move, finding that I am no longer ensnared by invisible bonds. Immediately I go to grasp the blade, to draw it out of my flesh, and then to flee back to my family.

But. . .my arms. I have no arms.
Where are they?

I look down. And I see only light. I no longer see a body; I no longer see even transparent limbs. Only a shining area of light where my body once stood.

Where is my body?

“Where? Where is it?” The words screech out of my mouth before I can contain them. I hear screaming, over and over again. Am I screaming? I do not know. I want to vomit, but I cannot. There is no body to be able to vomit.

I do not have my body.

The dragon remains silent, only fixing her great eyes upon me.

“Put me back,” I scream again, again, at her, sudden anger clawing over me and making my vision go scarlet.

The dragon lowers her head.

It is your Time. You must come with me now.

She starts to approach me, and the landscape becomes suddenly different, darker. A look of frustration—worry—crosses her scaly face as I begin to hear another voice, murmuring urgently. Surely, that is not the dragon. What is the voice saying? I cannot tell. The dragon rustles her wings as she treads toward me, speaking over it.

You must come with me. No one can escape their Death. But then I hear only the murmuring voice. The ground begins to tremble so forcefully I fear I will tip over. Then I remember that my body has gone.

“No,” I choke. I will not be this dragon’s next victim. I close my eyes, praying that I will live, that I will make it away and see my family again.

When I open my eyes, I am nearly blinded.

Light floods my view and the dragon vanishes, the scenario changing so instantaneously, I find myself dizzy.

“Cordella...Cordella...” The voice calls my name, syllables of the word dropping into silence as they are spoken. Is that my brother’s voice?

“Cordella!” I hear again, with more clarity, coming into a state of conscious enough to feel my garments are wet, sticking to my body.

I tremble violently as a chilliness spreads through my extremities.

Another flash lights up my vision. Once again the dragon is before me, staring coldly into my pale face.

You have escaped my clutches this time, little one. But I will return. One day you will be mine.

Then she is gone, and I am left only with darkness and the murmuring voice.

“I’m sorry, it was a mistake; I didn’t mean to,” the voice cries. “Please, wake up!”

My eyes fly open, my lungs empty, and I try to suck in air. My brother is crying, reaching out towards me as I lay on the wooden cart, the sword still lodged between the bones in my chest.

“Where did she go? Where did the dragon go?” I struggle to keep air in my lungs, the hilt of the sword rising and falling with each shallow breath. Doctors and family form a circle around me, their faces white and their eyes red. My brother takes a step toward me, then collapses, sobbing, across me.

“The dragon—where is it?” I reach out for my brother’s hand, for comfort. He takes it, crying softly, and whispers to me.

“Rest, sister, rest.”

And suddenly I understand, with complete clarity of mind: My brother’s tales of dragons are wrong. There is only one dragon. One dragon, and I have just met her.

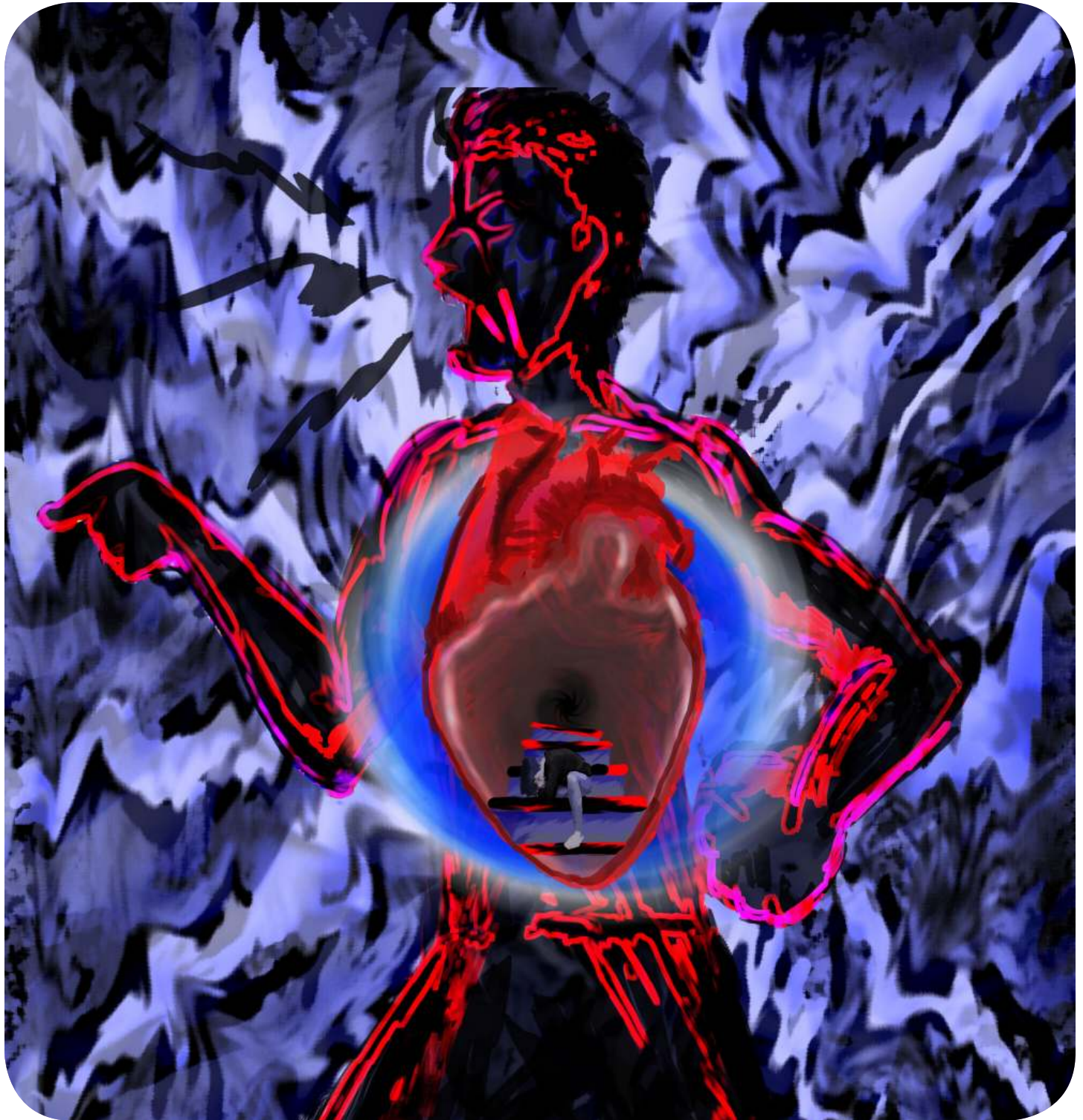
She is called Death.



Good Always Wins
Chieh-Chen Wu
Art



Art Comes to Life
Ali Al Masri
Photography



Depression through Chaos
Jason Roldan
Art



Divided Mind
Xavia Hill-Prater
Art

*The length
of my skirt*



YES

IF SHE'S DRUNK
ENOUGH

MAYBE ANOTHER NIGHT

NO

NOT A CHANCE

*is not a scale of how much
I want it*

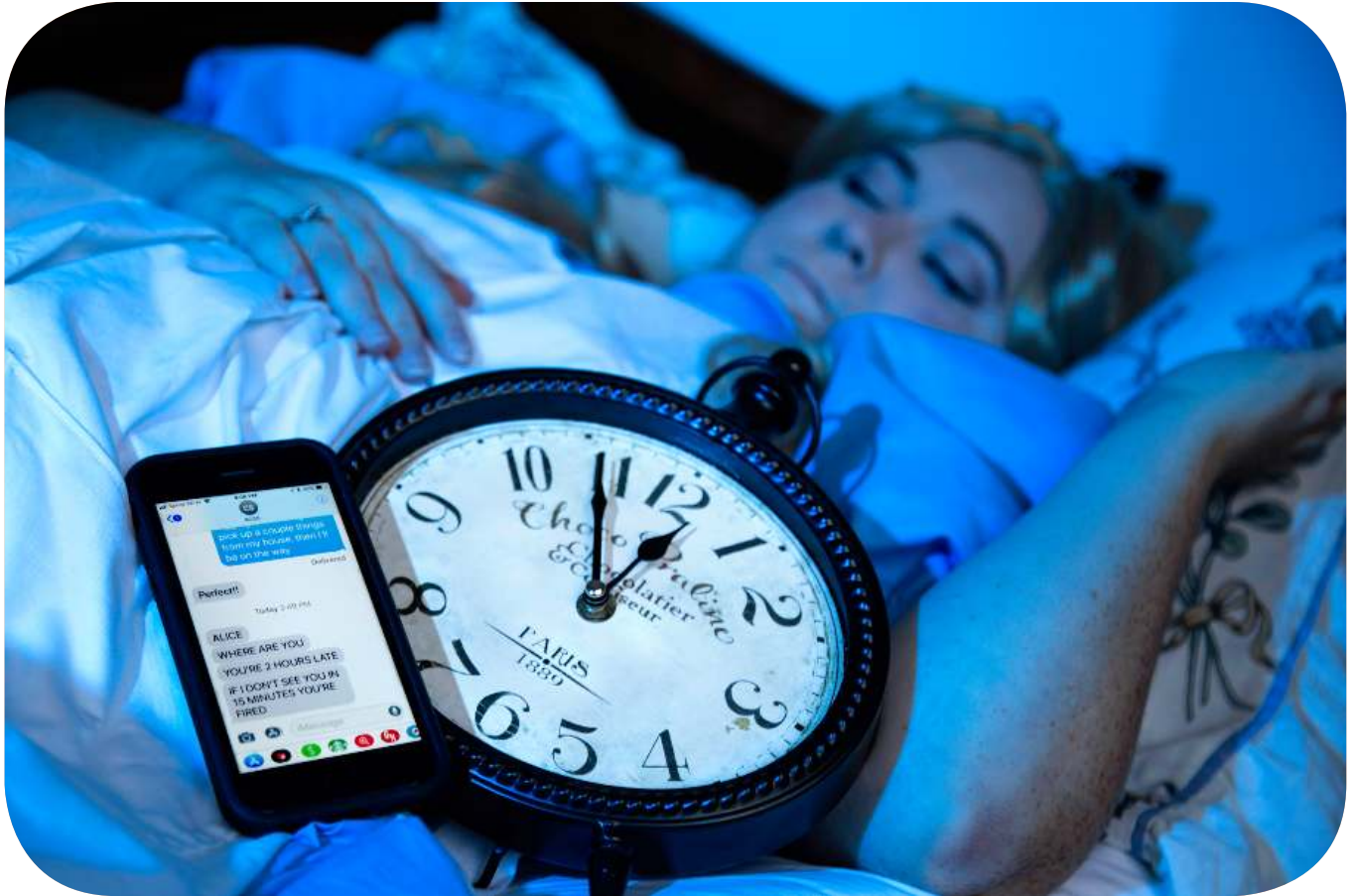
Length of my Skirt
Kate Villanueva
Art



The Weight of Weight

Johanna Nimmo

Photography



Wonderland Sleep
Carys Stogdill
Photography

Awards

College Media Association

Apple Award

2014, 2015

Columbia Scholastic Press Association

Medalist

1983, 1985, 1986, 1993, 1994, 1995, 2007, 2008, 2009

Collegiate Crown Awards Finalist

2009

Society of Professional Journalists

Mark of Excellence

Best All-Around Magazine

1983

Associated Collegiate Press

Hall of Fame

1999

Pacemaker

1990

All American

1985, 1989, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003,
2007, 2008, 2009, 2013

Florida Community College Press Association

General Excellence

1985, 1989, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2003,
2006, 2007, 2008, 2009

TRIAD Staff





Hillsborough Community College
2018