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**Front and Back Cover**

Art Contest Winner: Joyce Johnson
Collection: untitled

My name is Joyce Johnson. This is my second semester at Allen Community College. I have always had an interest in painting. My interest peaked in high school. I have tried to focus my paintings around a theme that dealt with emotions. By studying artists like Van Gogh and Giacometti, I hope to convey the emotions the subject of my portrait was feeling. Even though I am a Chemistry major, I have a passion for painting members of my family and international orphans. It is a calming past time while studying full time at Allen.
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Thunder, the Sleeping Giant
By Jeremiah Ruiz

The vibrations shutter the house
The roar from its mouth sends shivers
Hair stands to attention at its calling;
   He follows brightness
   Yet ends in darkness
Young children scream as they shake
Their tender bodies shivering with fear
   Make it go away they wail
   But his power is too great
   He has lives for centuries
   But he has no life.
His master precedes him with light
   A flash across the eerie night
   He unleashes his wrath
Smashing his hammer to the ground
   His fury is far from over
   But yet there is peace
   He will surely come again
   But until then, he sleeps

Hello, my name is Jeremiah Ruiz; I am a senior in high school. I am currently homeschooled and I plan to attend MCC for college. I enjoy writing, and I hope that you enjoy my poem I have written entitled: Thunder, the Sleeping Giant.
In immense sympathy I wish I could dissolve into other people feeling what they feel, seeing what they see, thinking what they think to somehow grasp the loneliness and tremendous pain people endure. Wishing I could indulge every waking moment that doubt illudes their heart. On my knees I beg that redemption be showered upon us. Realizing that I relate to them more than I could have known. To grab hearts and warm them as they deserve, to hold them high and keep them strong is a power I wish I held. Compelled into darknes destroying everything I’m meant to have forgetting life as it knew me. Drifting in the wind as a passerby everyone looks at me with empty, blank stares. But I know. I know this world continues to program people to ignore emotions as if they are not important. The blank stares that attach themselves to the faces of innocent people are just a product of this decaying world. We are one. Although we never really see it that way until its too late. In those blank stares are years of beautiful, heart wrenching, sad, and happy experiences full of significance. Blank stares are the canvas for the tragedy that ravishes people freely.

My name is Kaylee Whittaker, I am 18 years old. I attend Allen County Community College in hopes to major in social work. I would love to work for Child Protective Services some day. I chose Allen County because it fit my budget better at the time. Lately though, I have been contemplating going to school to be an EMT and eventually a Paramedic. I have not completely decided yet. I enjoy swimming and playing softball. I also like to think I can write. Or try (haha). I enjoy music very much! I love analyzing lyrics. I love when a song explains exactly how you feel. I have two sisters and my parents are divorced. I decided I’d submit something I’ve written just because I’ve never really done something like that before.
Tough Love
By Harley Michael

Have you wanted to cry
until there is nothing left?
Have you wanted to dive into the sky
just so you can live?

When it all sinks in
are you bound to explode?
You don’t want to be a mistake
but you’ve been told.

What hurts the worst
is that you don’t say shit.
You want to talk
but your heart has been sewn shut.

You have false answers
for questions never asked.
Lie to me,
Tell me it’s okay.

I’ve still got a heart to break.
Don’t want to open up.
I can’t let it out.
With two mouths sewn shut

It’s not easy to break through.
Why can’t it stay inside?
Like birds that stay together
we can live in the sky.

I don’t know why I take it
I knew you lied
but I stayed by your side.
I helped you through.

I tried.
I tried for you.

I am 21 years young and will be finishing my Associates degree a semester early. I am currently working two jobs, as well as working towards a double major in Social Work and English education. I write for fun and hope to eventually publish a book. Once I get into a four year college I would really like to be able to focus on school and put my ideas for my books together.
“Karen,” I whispered in her ear. I crawled over her and tugged on her arm. “Karen, wake up. You’ll be late for school.”

The light from the single bedroom window streamed in and hit Karen’s messy blonde hair, highlighting it. She moaned and rolled over, burying her face in her pillow.

“Karen!” I glanced at the clock on the nightstand, surrounded by a plethora of unsorted socks and half read novels.

7:00. Come on.

I tried to tug on her once more, but my transparent hand passed right through her.

Suddenly, she sat up with a gasp of alarm. She stared at the pink digital numbers Hello Kitty clock for half a moment before suddenly bounding out of bed. She passed right through me.

My mouth opened in a silent cry as the familiar shock of cold flooded through my body, but I shook it off and followed her. “Karen, let me help!” I stepped around a mountain of dirty laundry piled on the fuzzy pink rug and ran into her messy closet. “Wear purple. Purple’s your favorite.” I eagerly pointed to a fuzzy purple sweater.

Karen didn’t respond, not hearing a word I said as she grabbed a black hoodie and yanked it over her head. She raced into her bathroom. The dirty sink was cluttered with hair products, flat irons, and makeup. It smelled like wet towels and toilets. Her large mirror was cracked on the right hand side, so her image was oddly distorted. Used towels hung from the curtain rod. Karen hated the old Mickey Mouse stickers her mom had plastered on the wall when she was seven. She’d adored them back then. Rushing after her, I stood at her shoulder, watching her in the mirror.

“Let me help,” I begged.

Then, to my absolute delight, Karen turned and looked right at me. My excitement was squashed when she scowled, her brow wrinkling adorably in annoyance.

“What are you doing here? I’m going to be late!”
“I know, I tried to wake you,” I said, trying to show her how much I wanted to be useful. “But you didn’t hear me.” I touched her shoulder. This time, my hand didn’t pass through. I squeezed her shoulder gently, holding my breath.

“My alarm must have turned off,” she grumbled as she rummaged in her drawer for something. I knew she was looking for her eyeliner, and quietly pushed it in her direction from behind the faucet. She snatched it up and began applying it.

My thoughts drifted back to the countless times I’d let her practice makeup on me, even though I was a boy. She’d said it helped her get good at putting it on herself, and I didn’t mind if it made her happy.

“I’m sorry,” I apologized. “Tomorrow morning I’ll try harder…” I trailed off, watching the recognition in her eyes fade.

*She can’t see me anymore.*

My heart sank as she put on makeup, tossed her hair up in a ponytail, and hurried out of her room. I wandered out of her bathroom, not following her this time.

Karen used to see me all the time. I could count on her to see me. We had slumber parties every night. I told her stories. She snuck me food from the kitchen; I always let her eat it. I was the first person she told new jokes to. I was with her when she got her period. I kept all of her secrets. Now, I was lucky if Karen saw me once a day.

I sat on the pink, fuzzy teacup seat by her bookshelf and folded my long legs to my chest, struggling against the burning sensation in my eyes.

*Her glasses!*

My head snapped up. Sure enough, her black-framed glasses were perched on top of her computer monitor. I jumped up, hoping against hope that I would be able to hold them. No matter where she was, at any time, if Karen’s heart didn’t believe in me, then I became like a ghost; transparent and figment.

*Let me take them. I’ll show her that I just want to help.*

Reaching out to her desk, I held my breath as I touched the glasses. My fingers didn’t pass through. Relief surged through me and I snatched them up and ran out the door. I ran past Karen’s mom and her baby brother. They didn’t see me, but I was used to that. When I first came, it took just a short time for me to understand that only Karen could see me. That I was here just for Karen.

Looking around the house, I could see her coat missing from the open front closet.

*Missed her.*
Undaunted, I evaporated through the front window and re-formed, running down the sidewalk. I heard the loud brakes of the bus and saw the doors close as the last of the waiting students boarded. I didn’t even bother to sigh, knowing exactly what I had to do. The headaches she got if she didn’t wear her glasses were awful, and I couldn’t stand the thought of her suffering like that.

I tucked the glasses in my pocket so no one would worry about a pair of black-framed glasses floating through the air down the sidewalk. Karen’s school was several blocks away, so I had to hurry if I wanted to catch her before her first class.

One time, I brought her sour gummy worms during her English class and we started giggling too loud. Karen got in trouble with her teacher. I felt really bad, and promised never to bother her like that again.

You never bother me, she had argued.

Approaching the school, I saw clusters of students standing outside of the flat, one-story building. I slowed to a walk and craned my head, looking everywhere for my girl. I saw groups of her friends, but she wasn’t there. It was nice outside, and I couldn’t imagine Karen going inside before the bell rang.

Walking up to the front door, I pressed my face against the glass, looking for her inside. Chewing my lip, I drifted among the high schoolers, one hand shoved in my pocket and clutching her glasses. As I neared the edge of the crowd, my heart leapt when I saw a handful of kids standing over in the shadows of the building. Karen’s signature curly blonde hair stood out among all the black clothes. I jogged over to her and approached slowly.

I edged around the circle of the group until I was right across from her. Her eyes widened and I knew she saw me. I grinned and waved at her, but she turned away, drawing on the cigarette between her fingers. Shifting uncomfortable, my smile faded, but I stood by to wait patiently for her.

Most of the words she and her friends were throwing around didn’t make sense to me. They all smoked as they waited for the bell, which came mercifully after just five minutes. My smile returned as they broke up and Karen hung back from the rest of them.

“Ren, you coming?” one of the guys asked, looking back at her. Something inside me reared up and I wanted to scowl at the dude, stick my tongue out, or something.

It’s my job to worry about her.

“Yeah, be there in a sec,” Karen mumbled, scuffing a toe on the ground. Once he left, she looked up at me. Her milk chocolate eyes sparked and her mouth was drawn in a tight line. “What are you doing here?” she hissed at me.
My face fell and I inched closer nervously. “You forgot these,” I whispered, pulling out the glasses.

Karen’s eyes narrowed. She grabbed the glasses and shoved them in her backpack. “I don’t need these anymore, okay?”

My eyes widened at her sharp tone and I took a step back. “I—I’m sorry, I was just—”

“Look, I’m not a little girl anymore,” she snapped. “I don’t need you, got it? So stop following me around. I mean it, this time!”

“Stop?” I asked in shock, heart sinking to my toes.

“Yes. I actually have real friends now, no thanks to you, so you can go find some other poor, lonely kid to have slumber parties with,” her tone was cold and threatening.

“Are you sure, Karen?” I asked, mind reeling as I looking at her.

Please...I know you can do this...I just want to help...

“Are you deaf? I’m sure! Now get lost.” She shoved past me and hurried after her friends up to the school.

I stayed where I was and felt nothing but the building emptiness in my throat and chest.

But I love you.

Jessica has been writing fiction for nearly four years. She loves reading Young Adult novels and watching superhero movies. Jessica was homeschooled all the way through high school and is on her second semester at Allen Community College as an English major. She plans to transfer to Sterling College, where she will pursue a Creative Writing and Editing degree. Jessica’s life is never boring on her family’s ranch in Humboldt, Kansas, with three sisters, three dogs, two cats, and a name-less horse.
The sun radiantly burst through the treetops casting a web of shadows across the gravel road where he stood. Tommy paused for a moment and wiped the beads of sweat off his grizzled forehead before planting his pitchfork firmly in the ground and resting the crook of his elbow against it. Everything about this moment was perfect from the wheat in the fields slowly dancing in the breeze to the melodious sounds of the robins as they flew overhead. It was as if someone had painted a masterpiece just for him. He let himself go into the feeling of awe that had overcome him. Tommy wanted to remember everything about this spot in time. He had never been the type of man to get overly sentimental about things but this was different, this was the first time since they had arrived in Thayer that he felt happy. The stress of living this life had never really bothered him until his wife had gotten pregnant. For the last eight months he often found himself wondering if he would be a good father to his child or if raising them in the country was a the right thing. Since birth he knew farming was the life he wanted to live, the same with his father before him and his grandfather before that, but what if his child didn’t feel the same? It was a question that plagued Tommy’s mind night and day but had seemed to melt away for the moment. For now his mind was clear, that is until he heard the most frightening sound he had ever heard. It was as if the picture of peace had just been shattered right in front of his eyes. In that moment his heart stopped. The pitchfork slowly fell to the ground as Tommy’s feet began moving underneath him kicking up clouds of dust with every step. His eyes locked on the farmhouse that lay dead ahead.

When he reached it he swung the door open carelessly forcing it to collide with the siding of his one. He slid through the laundry room into the kitchen where he stopped. He raised his rough hand and ran his fingers through his course hair. “Ethel!” he screamed for his wife with no response. “Honey?” still nothing. He paced through the kitchen pushing any negative thoughts about the origin of the scream from his mind, attempting to clear his head to no avail. Just as he was ready to break down he heard a mumble coming from the neighboring room. His eyes grew as he slowly stepped toward the entryway and saw the feet of his beloved scattered across the floor. He dropped to his knees and slowly slipped his hands underneath her tense body. “Ethel honey, what happened?” he asked fearing the answer. She panted as she wrapped her arms around her stomach, “It’s time Tommy. The baby’s coming.” Time stood still in that moment. Tommy was frozen. The next contracting and grunt from his wife snapped him out of the fog that had engulfed him. “Call the doctor” she said sternly yet somehow in a loving and
calm tone. He slid his other arm beneath her legs and gently raised her onto the couch before proceeding to the next room. When he reached the phone it felt as though the operator took an eternity to connect him although it had only been a few moments. “Yes, doctor?” Tommy said with a quiver in his voice “It’s Tommy Barsch and my wife Ethel has just gone into labor. We need assistance immediately.” He didn’t even wait for a response before he hung up. Another grunt from his wife and Tommy was back by her side. She was so beautiful. He could remember the exact moment he had first seen her. She was a school teacher and he had been doing some painting on a barn across the way. It was a Tuesday and class had just ended but when he first glimpsed her beautiful smile he knew his life had just begun. She was the definition of beauty back then. Tall, dark haired, timid but strong and he knew right then and there that he was going to marry her someday. A tear slid down Tommy’s cheek as he recalled that wonderful afternoon. He placed his hand around his wife and her gaze turned toward him. A small smile crept across her face. Up until that point Tommy had been in a panic but seeing that smile again put everything into perspective. This was his wife and she would soon birth his child and they would be a family. All the uncertainty vanished as they sat in silence and waited. When they heard the engine of the doctor’s car Tommy stood and went to the door. “Hello Mr. Barsch,” The doctor said “Might I say it is a bit surprising that your child is arriving today. I wouldn’t have guessed it here for another week or so.” Tommy gave a slight grin as he led the doctor through the kitchen into the living area where his wife was. “Well, I reckon he couldn’t wait.” Tommy replied. Both men walked into the room where Ethel lay on the couch and the doctor began emptying his bag. “Mrs. Barsch, nice weather we’re having aye?” the doctor joked as he took out his tools and began checking Ethel over. She didn’t get a reply out before the next contraction began and she had to grit her teeth to stifle a scream. The doctor raised his eye brow in a curious manner and moved to the foot of the couch. Without as much as another word he raised her dress and motioned for her to push. Tommy thought this odd as he had seen the birth of his brothers and knew there was normally more preparation before this moment. “Shouldn’t I boil you some water? Or get a towel?” Tommy said questioning the doctor’s technique. “Had this been an hour ago when the contractions started, yes, but seeing as how your wife waited until the last possible minute to inform me of the delivery there is no time for that.” The doctor replied. That sounded like Ethel, never wanting to admit she was in pain until the last possible minute. That was one of the reasons Tommy had married her. When the screams started again he had to leave the room. It was too horrifying to watch his wife in so much pain. He pulled a chair out from under the kitchen table and sat down. He was going to be a father. Any minute now his life would change drastically. As he thought more and more about it he couldn’t be happier. A family was all he ever wanted, whether or not they chose to be farmers didn’t matter to him, he just wanted a happy and healthy baby. He leaned over the kitchen table and interlocked his fingers in front of him. He closed his eyes and slowly drifted his head down. “Dear God,” He said “I know I am not the best man to ever walk the earth nor am I even a good
man at times, but if you see fit to give me a healthy baby I swear I will always try my hardest to raise it right and be the best man I can be for this child.” Praying, Tommy had done it since he was a young boy but never to this extent. He had always prayed for his parents and the people his home town but praying for his own child was different somehow. “Tommy?” the doctor said as he peeked his head into the room. During his moment of silent prayer Tommy hadn’t noticed the screaming stop. He quickly opened his eyes and turned his head to face the doctor. “Would you like to meet your son?” a smile filled his face as the doctor said these words. A son. He stood up and quietly walked toward the doctor. When he entered the room there was no crying, no screaming, just the faint sound of an infant’s breath as it rested upon its mothers arms. Ethel turned her head toward her husband with tear stained cheeks and nodded for him to get closer. “Tommy,” she whispered “This is your son, Kenneth.”

My name is Jordan Grindol. I was born and raised in Topeka Kansas. I graduated from Washburn Rural High School in 2012 and took a year off before starting to attend Allen County Community College for my Associate in Arts degree. I spend my free time hanging out with my friends and family and watching movies. I really enjoy watching a movies and trying to figure out what exactly the director and writer were trying to accomplish with a certain film. I also enjoy writing and one of my major goals in life is to become a traveling writer and photographer for well known magazines.
This time, I think. This time I will get that orange tom cat. He doesn’t see me, I’ll just sneak up on him. I start to creep forward when all of a sudden, BOOM. I jump awake. One of my humans dropped something in the kitchen. Maybe that means they are making food, I think. I get up, stretch my old bones, and jump down off the couch.

I walk past the large box that the humans cook food in. I think they call it “stove.” No matter what it is, it always shows another toy poodle when I walk past. They say it’s just me, but I’m not so sure. Well, it does look like me. I see my own black fur, and my purple collar with its pink, heart-shaped tag, but I still don’t trust this other dog.

The human in the kitchen is the one the others call “Mom.” She is walking around, doing her morning routine, always up before the sun. She is packing her bag to go to work, so she doesn’t see me when I walk into the kitchen. “Mom” is eating a piece of toast and is dropping crumbs everywhere. She walks into the other room, and I follow, so I can continue licking food off the floor.

When I follow her into the room with all the water, she is standing in front of another human, one that looks just like her, but this one is in a box. She brushes her light brown hair out of her eyes and she puts on powder on her face, while the box human does the same. She always tries to cover up the mole on her chin, the one with the little hair sticking out of it, but never quite manages it.

As she finishes up, she puts her horn rimmed glasses back on and turns around. “Fluffy? When did you get up, girl? Wanna go outside?”

Now that you mention it, I do need to go outside. I lead the way to the back door, and wait patiently for her to open it. Normally, she’d turn on the porch light, since it was still dark outside, but the human called “Dad” hasn’t fixed it since it went out a few days ago. Guess I’ll
just have to rely on smell, my eyesight has been getting worse lately anyway, better get used to it. She opens the door and I jump down the step and wander off into the yard.

I’m a ways off from the house, out by the alley, where I’m not actually supposed to be, but I like it out here. I take a deep breath of fresh morning air, and that’s when I smell it. A cat. But not just any cat, the cat. That orange tom cat from my dream. I bet I’m still young enough to catch it. I take off after it, and it notices me. It starts running down the alley, kicking up gravel with its paws as I chase it. It feels like we run for blocks, for miles, but in reality, I don’t know how far we’ve gone. My paws start to ache, my lungs burn, and I start to slow. The tom cat, still young, gets too far ahead of me. I lose sight of it and come to a stop.

I lick some melted snow off the ground and sit down to catch my breath. My humans will be worried, better make my way back home. I turn around, to retrace my steps, but I’m not sure which way I came from. I start sniffing the ground, trying to find my own scent, but the snow is cutting off all the other scents except its own. The sun is coming up, so I can see a bit better now, although I wasn’t paying much attention to what was around me on my way here. I was just focusing on the bright orange tail in front of me.

I start to walk, trying to find a direction to go in. Wait! I bet there are paw prints, there is snow on the ground. I start to look around, but I’ve been walking in circles, trying to find my scent. I’ve made so many paw prints in the snow, I don’t even know where they start. I decide that I can’t just stand there, the sun may be coming up, but it’s not getting any warmer. I start walking. I turn down an alley way, thinking it looked familiar. Human houses tower on either side of me, casting a shadow, and making it colder. My heart is pounding, I am getting scared now. Why did I have to chase that stupid cat? I’m lost now, completely and totally lost. All the houses and trees and even the cars look the same.

The day goes on, and I spend it wandering through the small town. Looking for any sign of my humans or my home. I stop under a bush; that still has some leaves on it, to rest. I hear shuffling next to me, and I poke my nose out and sniff. It’s a person! I look out and realize that it’s one of the humans that walk all day, and bring paper to my humans, the paper they always get upset about, the “bills.” I don’t really like these types of humans, they make my family upset, but maybe this one can help me.
“Woof, woof!” I bark as loud as I can, to make sure he hears me. He just stares, “Damn strays.” Then he walks away. He thinks I’m a stray dog, he doesn’t want to help me. But I’m not a stray, I have a home, and a family. I bet they are probably worried, and are mad at me for running off. I should move on, I think, and I move out of the bush, and continue walking.

It has already started to get dark again, and has gotten even colder. I can stay a little bit warm, because my fur is really long right now. I’m moving through someone’s yard, when the sky opens, and snow begins to fall heavily. It builds up fast and I start to move slower. I look down at my paws, the snow is already thick enough that my one white paw is almost completely invisible.

I trudge through the thickening snow, and come upon a small bridge. I’ve never even seen this bridge before, I know that I am a long ways from home. I go to the bridge, trying to find some shelter from the snow and wind. Underneath the bridge, there is a small cardboard box, turned on its side. The box is soggy from the snow, but it’s the only shelter I have. I stumble into the box and lay down, my muscles are stiff and sore, my body is shivering, and I’m tired. I lay there, shaking, for what feels like an eternity, but was really only a short time.

As the snow falls all around me, building up on every side of the bridge, I close my eyes. I should have never ran off, I should have stayed where I was supposed to be. My breaths become easier to take as they slow down. I stop shivering, and my muscles stop hurting. I feel relaxed, and exhausted. I slowly drift off, and have one last dream about that one orange tom cat, that got away.

This is my last semester at Allen, and then I start at KU in the summer. My major is Biology and I’m minoring in English. I’m planning on being a zoo keeper once I graduate. I enjoy writing, but do not do it very often. This story in particular is based on my own dog. Fluffy, who was lost last year.
Haikus on Stumbling Through Conversation

By Harley Michael

My voice has no slack.
Once the line is tossed, there
is no coming back.

Now and then floating
calm water all around,
sitting quietly.

Occasionally
people will nibble causing
ripples. Exciting!

Few people will drag
your bobber under, trying
to suffocate you.

Seldom, you snag rock
or tree where you cut the line
or struggle to rise.

Either path chose: I
rise out of sap becoming
more, or begin new.
1st Place Creative Writing Club Open Form Contest

Friendship Dressed in Black

By Reagan Greenwood

When I was a little kid, I rejoiced when my parents told me that I would have to move to a new town in a new state. I remember thinking it was the coolest thing. Not many people moved from my hometown, so it made me feel special and important. However, moving at the age of seven and seventeen are two completely different things.

I stared at my car, which remained untouched in its newly claimed parking spot. Was transferring to a new school my senior year really necessary? Last night I spent nearly two hours trying to convince my parents to let me finish the year online. It was an attempt which obviously failed. With a loud groan, I slammed the front door shut behind me and crawled into the driver’s seat. I could skip, but something told me skipping the first day would not put my parents in a good mood. I didn’t know anybody in town however, so grounding me would be pretty pointless.

The parking lot was a giant maze. Cars driven by careless teenagers zoomed in and out of parking slots, kids on bikes popped out of nowhere, and random clustered of people paid no attention to the bright red car that I was in control of. I kept driving until I reached the very end of the parking lot which was completely vacant.

“Now or never,” I sighed to myself as I pulled the straps of my book bag over my shoulders and started trudge towards my new prison.

I had thought that the parking lot was bad, but it was nothing compared to the actual school itself. The walls were lined with hundreds of lockers and where there wasn’t a locker, there was a door leading to a classroom. People covered every square inch of flooring. I found myself twisting between students and teachers. I looked around me, trying to find a sign stating which room the office was, but found none. There was a red headed girl with glasses chatting with two other girls. They looked pleasant compared to the others that I had seen. I sucked in a deep breath and redirected my route in their direction.

“Excuse me,” I called out over the constant roar of the teenagers surrounding me. I smiled politely at them but they did not return the offer. If looks could kill, I would have been
six feet under a decade ago. My confidence diminished immensely but I had already interrupted them, I may as well ask. “I’m sorry, I’m new and I was just wondering if you could tell me where the office is?”

The red head scoffed and pointed in the direction behind me, “Down there. You’ll find it eventually.”

I muttered a half-hearted “thank you” and began walking in the general direction that I had been pointed in. I cursed under my breath as body after body rammed into me. I felt invisible. I had been to plenty of new schools and each time I have had my fair share of jerks, but never had I felt so vulnerable in such a short amount of time.

After ten minutes of walking aimlessly, I found a sign with Office written across it. I opened the door on the left, revealing a tall boy dressed in all black seated in a chair. He was slouched so far down that it hurt my own back just to glance at him. No one else was in the room and what little feeling of security I had just obtained, vanished once again.

“If you’re looking for the office, you’re in the right place,” the boy joked and flashed a smile at me.

“Oh,” I stuttered when I noticed that he had a black lip ring in his lower lip. The boy smiled smugly and jabbed his thumb towards the desk behind him, “Martha will be here in a bit.”

Martha? He was on a first name basis with the secretary? He must be in here often. Just then, a middle aged woman with her brown hair piled into a bun on top of her head came out of one of the side offices. She smiled at me and bided for me to come closer.

“By the way, Thane,” she spoke turning her head to the boy dressed in black, “Mr. Torres would like to speak to you now.”

I watched as he rose to his feet, his legs extending him far more than six feet above the ground. “Thank you for your time,” he said to Martha and then turned towards me, “best of luck to you on your first day.”

His choice of words caught me off-guard, but I recovered fast enough to thank him before he disappeared into, what I assumed was, the principal’s office.
The thing with school was I didn’t mind going to the classes. The last school I attended was a small private school so most of my classes were just a review of what I had done last year. The part that I hated was in between classes. I hated having to walk down the hallways with a bunch of people that paid no attention to me. However, I would take an eternity of passing periods than go to lunch once.

I timidly walked through the line, allowing the lunch ladies to drop whatever they had prepared onto my tray and told them thank you when I reached the end. I turned around to face the hysteria awaiting me. There were so many tables, almost every single one of them occupied by a group of people. A table occupied by two boys that I had in my chemistry class caught my eye. Before I could lose my courage, my feet carried me across the cafeteria floor. I slipped into the seat next to them and smiled. They looked at me and then at each other. Without a single word, both of the boys picked up their trays and left me at the table sitting alone.

I could see the glances people gave me and I could hear a few stray words as they walked past me. However, I never said anything in response. My stomach churned and I felt like I was going to throw up. I was in a room filled with hundreds of people, yet that’s where I felt the most alone.

“What? They had pizza up there? Dude, now I’m upset.” I looked to my right to see the same tall boy dressed in all black as he seated himself next to me. I glanced around the room to see if he was lost, surely he must be.

“Am I in your seat or something?”

He looked at me blankly for a moment before bursting out into deep laughter. His eyes crinkled shut and his smiled so big that I could see dimples carve into his cheeks. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to laugh so hard,” He apologized as he blinked away tears, “I just saw that you were alone so I figured you’d want someone to sit with. No one deserved to sit alone at lunch.”

“Oh, well thank you,” I smiled before taking a bite of my pizza, “I’m Karlin, by the way.”

“Thane,” he stuck his hand out and I accepted the gesture and shook it, “Karlin? You don’t hear that one very often.”

I shrugged my shoulders, “I can’t say I hear Thane all that often either.”
“That it true, but anyway, how’s your first day been going so far?” Thane asked as he began peeling an orange.

I groaned, “Awful. I hate it here. I don’t have any friends. Everyone I try to talk to looks at me as if I have the plague and then run off in the opposite direction. I don’t know what I’m doing wrong.”

“You’re not doing anything wrong,” Thane commented and I waited for him to continue, “Okay, like those two guys that moved, they have always been the smartest people in the entire school. And I heard that you put them to shame today in chemistry.”

“I just answered the questions if I knew them,” I defended.

Thane nodded, “which was a majority of them, right?” When I didn’t answer him he continued, “and I heard that Rebecca, the red head over there with the glasses,”

I followed his hand motion over his shoulder to see the same girl that I had tried talking to this morning.

“Yeah, a rumor is going around that she doesn’t like you because you’re pretty. At least she knows when someone is more attractive than her,” He smirked at me and I instantly felt heat rise into my cheeks.

“So what are you saying?” I asked, ignoring his comment.

“I’m saying that people at this school only care about themselves. They don’t like competition. And as for you not having any friends, I’m a bit offended because I feel like friends sit together at lunch.”

I took a good look at Thane, taking in his physical appearance. He was a tall, blonde boy with the broadest shoulders I have ever seen. He definitely was not the type of friend I thought would make today. I usually tried to stay away from people with piercings and tattoos, but he was, without a doubt, the nicest person I had met in a long time. He seemed to genuinely be interested in what I had to say by the few conversations we had together. Plus, he did call me attractive.

Who was I to judge him based on how he chose to express himself. I hadn’t heard anything bad about him and he didn’t give me any reason not to trust him. Beyond his punk
look that he chose to adorn himself with, he was a sweet guy who could actually care about me enough to where I didn’t absolutely hate this place.

“Well,” I smiled, “I guess I can’t say that anymore.”

I was born in Liberal, Kansas. I lived in a small town called Plains, Kansas with my parents and three siblings. My third grade year I moved to an even smaller town called Burlingame, Kansas. I stayed in Burlingame and attended the local high school until I graduated in 2015. I will be attending Pittsburg State University, located in Pittsburgh, Kansas, in the fall of 2015. I plan to major in English with emphasis in creative writing.
Author Notes: Character gender can be swapped for any character. As long as Alex and Hidden Alex are the same gender is does not matter if they are boy or girl. If you switch Vanessa and Jason's genders their new names could be Victor and Jessica.

ALEX: About 17. She is very self-conscious. Until otherwise stated she needs to wear a jacket or long sleeve shirt and jeans. She does dress nicely, however. She can also have makeup, nothing over board, but more than natural color. ALEX is not a plain girl. Bullies have recently taken over her life and she doesn't know how to escape from them. She creates HIDDEN ALEX in her mind as 'true' form of herself. ALEX wants the pain of her life to stop.

HIDDEN ALEX: (If you can use twins for ALEX and HIDDEN ALEX do so) She should look as much like ALEX as possible. She is a made up figment of ALEX's imagination. She is supposed to help her through this hard time but doesn't know how. That leads her to do worse by ALEX. She wears all black, long sleeves, and long pants. If she has any make up on at all it should be very natural, with the only dark part being eye-liner. It is also important to understand that although HIDDEN ALEX speaks and looks at other characters that they can NOT see her. The only character that can see her is ALEX.

MRS. PHILLIPS: About 36. Has a very kind demeanor. Also is a teacher at the high school. She can tell that ALEX is upset and wants to help. However, she has great trouble reaching out to ALEX and getting her to reveal what is bothering her. Her primary goal is to help in whatever way she can.

VANESSA: Also about 17. She is the stereotypical high school girl. Dresses in a preppy style and wears a decent amount of make-up. She is good at pretending to be someone's friend and switching from that pretend mode to the mean girl mode of a bully. VANESSA is a bully and a liar and a deceiver.

JASON: About 17. He is NOT a stereotypical high school boy. He should not dress like a jock or a nerd. JASON is a regular looking boy. He wears shorts or jeans and a t-shirt. There is nothing extremely different about him. (His character's purpose is to show that ANYONE can be a bully) JASON is also a jerk and a bully.

ENSEMBLE: These are the extra cast in the classroom scenes. They are not needed but would be dressed as other high school students. They could also attend the funeral but have no real need to. They should be very emotionless, or follow suit with JASON and VENESSA in personality. ENSEMBLE are also bullies, or they are kids who don’t realize what they are doing.

SETTING: This one-act is held in the present day. There are a few scenes that can be hinted to with the very basics. There is a classroom scene, a bedroom scene, hallway, and funeral. The hallway and funeral do NOT need actual set pieces.
Scene 1

(Lights come up to reveal a classroom setting which faces Stage Left. A school bell also rings as the lights come up. (This can be an easy scene change if it is behind the grand curtain) MRS. PHILLIPS seems to be in the middle of a lecture. Some students are listening some are whispering to their classmates. 10 or so desks are in the room with one being an isolated desk Down Right. HIDDEN ALEX sits in the isolated desk at the start of the scene.)

MRS. PHILLIPS: Class, pass forward last night’s homework please. Then get out your books and open to chapter 15.

(ALEX enters Stage Right.)

ALEX: Sorry! I'm sorry I'm late. (Hands late slip to MRS. PHILLIPS.)

MRS. PHILLIPS: That's alright. (Worried.) Take your seat. (ALEX goes to sit and HIDDEN ALEX moves to stand behind ALEX.) Alright class. As I was saying-

(Lights down and a spotlight shines on a small group of students. Anyone not in the spotlight freezes. There is also a spotlight on ALEX. JASON is sitting on top of a desk while the students listen to him intently. HIDDEN ALEX sits or stands near him also listening.)

JASON: Look at her. She sits all alone, she never talks to anyone!

(Spotlight off of JASON and that group freezes. Spotlight comes up again on VANESSA who is standing with students gathered around her. Once again, HIDDEN ALEX stands near VANESSA as she did around JASON. Spot on ALEX stays up.)

VANESSA: I heard, she is a real slut. I wouldn't doubt it. Just look at her, (Beat as they all look toward ALEX and then back at VANESSA.) She looks the part, alright. I would never be caught dead around her!

(Lights come up and everyone except MRS. PHILLIPS looks at ALEX, who now has her head down. HIDDEN ALEX is slowly walking towards her.)

ALL (except MRS. PHILLIPS and ALEX and HIDDEN ALEX): She’s different. Rumors say she’s weird. Avoid at all costs. (ALL freeze.)

HIDDEN ALEX: Do you hear that? Do you hear what they are saying about you?

ALEX: Yes.

HIDDEN ALEX: They don't like you. They hate you...

ALEX: I know.

HIDDEN ALEX: How long can you pretend? How much longer until you take your mask of and show who you really are? Reveal me? Or reveal these? (Shows ALEX her arms.)
ALEX: *(With fake shaky confidence.)* They will never see you. They will never find out!

HIDDEN ALEX: Of course. No flaws when you're pretending...

*(A school bell rings and the kids unfreeze. They pack up and exit Stage Right.)*

MRS. PHILLIPS: Alex, will you stay for a moment please?

*(ALEX is hesitant but once the other students are gone she and HIDDEN ALEX move to the front of the class.)*

MRS. PHILLIPS: Alex, I have noticed some odd changes in your behavior this semester.

HIDDEN ALEX: Don't let her fool you. She doesn't really care.

MRS. PHILLIPS: Your grades have dropped and you seem less social than before. And, I've... well... heard some things that concern me.

HIDDEN ALEX: Keep hiding Alex. Don't be a problem. Don't be a burden that other people have to care for.

MRS. PHILLIPS: Alex, I feel the need to ask. *(Beat.)* Are you okay?

HIDDEN ALEX: Lie.

MRS. PHILLIPS: *(Noticing ALEX's hesitation.)* You can talk to me, Alex.

HIDDEN ALEX: *(Mildly angry.)* Lie to her!

ALEX: I'm fine.

HIDDEN ALEX: Good girl.

MRS. PHILLIPS: And the rumors?

ALEX: Are just rumors.

MRS. PHILLIPS: Okay. Just know, that there are people here for you. You are not alone.

*(HIDDEN ALEX is rolling her eyes and lets out a scoff.)*

ALEX: *(She starts to get up.)* Gee... thanks.

*(The curtain starts to close and ALEX and HIDDEN ALEX step through the curtain before it closes all the way. The school bell rings again and they stand Center Stage.)*

HIDDEN ALEX: Why did you lie?
ALEX: You told me to!

HIDDEN ALEX: You're weak.

ALEX: Why do you do that?

HIDDEN ALEX: Do what?

ALEX: Why do you always put me down? I thought you were here to help?

HIDDEN ALEX: You need someone to tell you the truth and someone who won't lie anymore. I am helping. I am making you stronger by helping you realize who you really are. Once you realize that moving on with life will be easy.

ALEX: I am not despicable.

HIDDEN ALEX: You can't fool me. I am the one person you can't lie to, Alex. You will never be able to lie to me.

ALEX: Shut up!

HIDDEN ALEX: No. I won't shut up. (In her face.) I won't lie to you, Alex. I am not a liar. I am not weak or pathetic.

(JASON and VANESSA enter from Stage Left together while HIDDEN ALEX and ALEX exit State Right.)

VANESSA: Did you see what Alex was wearing today?

JASON: Yeah…

VANESSA: Don’t you think she looked stupid?

JASON: I don’t know… I guess.

VANESSA: Well I think so, and everyone else thinks so too. She is so weird. Why doesn’t she talk to anyone?

JASON: (Uneasy, as if he doesn’t want to be in the middle) Who knows? But guess what I heard about her?

VANESSA: What?

JASON: Never mind here she comes again...

(ALEX enters again from Stage Right)

VANESSA: Nice hair, Alex. (Said while laughing.) Don’t you think, Jason?
JASON: (Takes a moment to think) It really outlines her face, which helps to show off all that acne.

VANESSA: Yeah, it does! Maybe if you wore some make-up, the boys would like you.

(ALEX continues past them, saying nothing, but holding back tears. Lights go down and they all exit.)

Scene 2

(Lights come up and curtain is still closed. There is now a bed, a dresser, and a chair Down Left. ALEX is sitting on the bed with her knees curled in close to her as she looks at a laptop. HIDDEN ALEX enters from Stage Right.)

HIDDEN ALEX: How are you today?

ALEX: I am fine.

HIDDEN ALEX: We have been through this, Alex. You can't lie to me.

ALEX: I said I am fine!

HIDDEN ALEX: Just because I wasn't here... doesn't mean I don't know what you were doing. I told you not to post that picture.

ALEX: I know.

HIDDEN ALEX: You look so stupid... now in the comments everyone confirms it. Everyone hates your pictures and status's.

ALEX: I thought maybe just once they would be nice.

HIDDEN ALEX: To you? Why would they be? You are a recluse, a weirdo. No one likes a freak, Alex.

ALEX: What do you want anyway?

HIDDEN ALEX: To talk.

ALEX: I don't want to talk.

HIDDEN ALEX: Come on. (Sits on the chair and makes herself comfortable.) It's not like I can go blab a secret. I'm in your head. You are only talking to yourself.

ALEX: I said I don't want to talk.

HIDDEN ALEX: Fine. That is completely fine. Because I already know what's wrong. I already know who you are.

ALEX: And who is that?
HIDDEN ALEX: Me. (Beat.) You have everyone fooled. They think life is all fine and dandy for Alex. I know better. I know you, your feelings, and your memories.

ALEX: Shut up.

HIDDEN ALEX: Why? Does it make you mad? Are you mad that someone sees through your lies? Does it make you mad that someone might actually see who you really are? Does it make you mad that someone might actually care?

ALEX: (Jumps out of the bed.) You will never care about me!

HIDDEN ALEX: I am the 'only' one who cares about you!


HIDDEN ALEX: (Grabs ALEX's arms and pulls up the sleeves.) I know this! And I 'do' know you. (ALEX pulls away from her and turns her back on HIDDEN ALEX) Do you want to know what else I know?

ALEX: Go away!

HIDDEN ALEX: I know you believe them. The kids at school. And you should. (Relaxing on the bed again.) They are absolutely right about you.

ALEX: (Almost in tears.) You're wrong.


ALEX: (Exasperated) I. Am not... Pathetic! (Crying now.)

HIDDEN ALEX: Then what are you? What are you, Alex?

ALEX: (Falls to the ground, dropping the items.) Scared! ... (Quietly) I am so scared.

HIDDEN ALEX: (Sincere and hands ALEX the pocket knife.) Shhhhh. It's okay. It's okay. I know. I know...

(Lights fade to black out.)

Scene 3

(Lights fade up and curtain opens to reveal the school scene once again. It is okay to use the bell sound effect again. Students are talking to each other. ALEX and HIDDEN ALEX enter from Stage Right and all the students stare. HIDDEN ALEX sits down but before ALEX reaches her seat VANESSA speaks.)

VANESSA: Alex, will you come talk to us for a moment? (ALEX does.) We were all just wondering something.
ALEX: What?

VANESSA: Well, people have been talking, and I don't believe them of course. (VANESSA is pretending to be nice.) But I want to hear from you.

HIDDEN ALEX: (Suddenly very concerned. This is also quiet and to herself mainly.) Oh no. She isn't ready!

ALEX: What is it?

VANESSA: Well. I don't mean to be rude but...

ALEX: Just ask. (A hint of a smile comes across her face.)

VANESSA: Okay. What is under your sleeves? (She reaches for ALEX's arms.)

ALEX: Nothing. (Recoiling.)

VANESSA: If it is nothing then show us.

ALEX: Wh- Why do you want to know?

VANESSA: I want to prove them wrong. (Kids are snickering.)

ALEX: Just take my word for it...

VANESSA: Come on, let us see! (Is teasing her now. HIDDEN ALEX tries to get to ALEX but the kids are in her way and she can't get through.)

ALEX: No!

(ALEX tries to back up but runs into JASON who holds her still while VANESSA pulls her sleeves up. She laughs and points at ALEX with victory on her face.)

VANESSA: I knew it! HAHA!

JASON: You were right! Dude, look at those scars!

VANESSA: She cuts! The little emo cuts!

(JASON lets go and starts to laugh too. ALEX falls to the ground and is holding her stomach. She looks sick, but is also crying.)

JASON: The poor little emo girl! She must have such a hard life!

VANESSA: What could possibly be so bad in your worthless life?

ALEX: Stop it!
JASON: You just want attention! You stupid whore!

VANESSA: You probably don't know what real depression is!

JASON: You have it so easy, freak!

ALEX: Please stop it!

VANESSA: Why? Are you going to cut again? Is the little goth girl going to hurt herself?

ALEX: STOP!

HIDDEN ALEX: (Finally makes it to ALEX's side.) Get up! Come on, Alex!

ALEX: Make them stop! Make them stop! (Holding down her ears.)

HIDDEN ALEX: I can't! You know I can't!

JASON: If you are 'so' depressed, why don't you go kill yourself?!

ALEX: Make them go away...

HIDDEN ALEX: You have to get up!

VANESSA: Yeah! Go end all of your 'sadness'. Go die!

JASON/VANESSA: Go to hell!

HIDDEN ALEX: Don't listen! Alex, you have to leave! Run!

(MRS. PHILLIPS enters from Stage Right. Several beats as she looks around and students freeze in fear. After several moments of silence ALEX looks up and sees her. She runs out of the room and pushes past MRS. Phillips who is in shock at the scene she has come across.)

MRS. PHILLIPS: I demand to know what was going on in here! (Several beats of complete silence.) Every one sit down. NOW! I will ask only one more time... What just happened? No one wants to own up? Fine then. You all will get two hours of detention and I will be calling every single one of your parents. What I believe I just witnessed is... sickening. I expected better from this school. I am going to go calm her down. When I get back, if I so much as hear a squeak out of any of you... I will personally march you down to the principal's office and have you suspended. Is that clear? (Silence.) Good.

(MRS. PHILLIPS exits Stage Right and lights fade down as curtain closes again. Lights come back on as HIDDEN ALEX follows ALEX onto the stage from Stage Right.)

HIDDEN ALEX: Talk to me, Alex!

ALEX: Are you happy now?
HIDDEN ALEX: What?

ALEX: Are you happy now? Is this what you wanted?

HIDDEN ALEX: Wha- Of course not! I-

ALEX: You what? You've been telling me for months how useless I am! Or how those... monsters are right about me! This is exactly what you wanted.

HIDDEN ALEX: No, it's not!

ALEX: Then what did you want?

HIDDEN ALEX: I wanted to- I wanted to help you. *(This is said as MRS. PHILLIPS enters from Stage Right.)*

MRS. PHILLIPS: Alex, are you okay? What's going on? What happened back there? Why are you crying?

ALEX: Nothing. I am fine.

MRS. PHILLIPS: That was obviously not nothing!

ALEX: I am fine! Go away!

HIDDEN ALEX: Tell her. Tell her!

*(MRS. PHILLIPS freezes as ALEX shakes her head no.)*

ALEX: No. I won't do what you say anymore!

HIDDEN ALEX: Wha- You need to. You need to talk to her.

ALEX: I don't need to do anything. You are not in charge of me anymore.

HIDDEN ALEX: What do you mean?

ALEX: I mean, the mask is off. You wanted to be seen? Well here you are. Here you are in all your glory! I am you now, all that is bad about me is revealed. They found out. Now you get to be the one who is lost. Now you get to see what it is like to be scared!

HIDDEN ALEX: Don't do this!

*(MRS. PHILLIPS unfreezes.)*

MRS. PHILLIPS: You stormed out of class. How is that fine?

ALEX: I-I needed to use the restroom.

MRS. PHILLIPS: And that makes you cry?
ALEX: No. I have allergies. *(Is still tearing up or crying.)*

HIDDEN ALEX: Stop lying! I was wrong before! This has gone too far. You have gone too far! Come back!

MRS. PHILLIPS: Alex...

HIDDEN ALEX/MRS. PHILLIPS: Talk to me!

ALEX: I am in control! I'm fine! I don't need help. I don't want help!

*(HIDDEN ALEX and MRS. PHILLIPS step back.)*

MRS. PHILLIPS: *(Hesitantly.)* Why were they laughing?

HIDDEN ALEX: Trying to be heard but obviously can't. Because they saw our scars.

ALEX: I tripped.

MRS. PHILLIPS: Why won't they tell me that then?

HIDDEN ALEX: Because it's a lie!

ALEX: I don't know.

MRS. PHILLIPS: Please, stop lying to me, Alex.

ALEX/HIDDEN ALEX: I'm not.

*(MRS. PHILLIPS reaches out but ALEX is already leaving toward Stage Left. As HIDDEN ALEX calls after her MRS. PHILLIPS freezes again.)*

HIDDEN ALEX: Alex? Alex! Where are you going?! I'm sorry! Don't do this!

MRS. PHILLIPS: Why won't she talk? This is to herself.

HIDDEN ALEX: Still cannot be seen. She's scared.

MRS. PHILLIPS: I want to help...

HIDDEN ALEX: Me too! She just... She finally broke.

*(HIDDEN ALEX chases after ALEX and lights fade to black out.)*

Scene 4
(Lights come up and it is the bedroom scene again. HIDDEN ALEX walks in from Stage Right to see ALEX with a rope.)

HIDDEN ALEX: What are you doing?

ALEX: Why do you care? (Carefully tying it.)

HIDDEN ALEX: Because, I was wrong.

ALEX: No. You and everyone else were right. There is no point in denying it. I am only a bother, a waste of air.

HIDDEN ALEX: No you're not! You are loved-

ALEX: By who?!

HIDDEN ALEX: Your friends?

ALEX: What friends? Everyone at school thinks I am a freak!

HIDDEN ALEX: Your teachers?

ALEX: Sure, Mrs. Phillips caught on real quick, didn't she?

HIDDEN ALEX: Me!

ALEX: (Gets off the bed and crosses to HIDDEN ALEX.) You? You love me? Then why didn't you show it?

HIDDEN ALEX: I tried- I thought it would make you tougher. I didn't think it-

ALEX: That's right you didn't think!

HIDDEN ALEX: Give them one more chance. Give ME one more chance! Please?

ALEX: No.

HIDDEN ALEX: Why not?

ALEX: Because, I am tired. I want to do this. I want to die.

HIDDEN ALEX: Please, listen to me!

ALEX: You betrayed me! You lied to me! I know the truth now. (She starts to climb onto the chair.)

HIDDEN ALEX: Please, Alex! Come down!

ALEX: I know who you are. (Looks into a mirror. And starts to cry.) And I don't love you anymore.
HIDDEN ALEX: Don't do this! *(Also crying now.)*

ALEX: *(Pantomime tying the rope up somewhere onto the ceiling. Then puts the loop around her neck.)*
You're not real.

HIDDEN ALEX: Alex!

ALEX: And you can't save me.

HIDDEN ALEX: NO!

*(Lights to black out as ALEX jumps off the chair and it falls over, making a large thud sound.)*

Scene 5

*(Lights up and curtain is closed. Nothing is on stage except the students and MRS. PHILLIPS and an easel with a picture of ALEX and some flowers. Students are dressed in white shirts. MRS. PHILLIPS is in black to mourn. HIDDEN ALEX comes from Stage Left as VANESSA steps forward and starts to speak.)*

VANESSA: We were great friends! Alex and I talked all the time during lunch.

HIDDEN ALEX: *(Runs up to VANESSA who does not even flinch.)* Liar!

VANESSA: I will really miss her. I will miss my best friend.

HIDDEN ALEX: You never said one nice thing to her!

*(VANESSA steps back and JASON steps forward.)*

JASON: She always seemed so happy.

HIDDEN ALEX: You barely knew her!

JASON: I don't know why she would do something like this.

HIDDEN ALEX: Because of you! She did this because of you!

JASON: I will really miss her and her smile.

HIDDEN ALEX: No you won't. You're a liar, a jerk, a kill-

*(JASON steps back and MRS. PHILLIPS steps out and it stops HIDDEN ALEX mid-sentence. HIDDEN ALEX slowly walks up to her as she speaks.)*

MRS. PHILLIPS: I noticed signs.

HIDDEN ALEX: I know.
MRS. PHILLIPS: I noticed them too late though. I couldn't help her.

HIDDEN ALEX: Oh no. Don't. You tried. Don't blame yourself.

MRS. PHILLIPS: I wish I would have noticed sooner.

HIDDEN ALEX: Her mind was made up. It's my fault! Not yours!

MRS. PHILLIPS: She didn't deserve this. And I didn't help...

(Shes steps back.)

HIDDEN ALEX: It wasn't your fault! It was theirs! It was mine! I killed her. Alex is dead because of me. I killed her! (Every one exits the stage and lights fade to Center Stage where HIDDEN ALEX stands alone.) It was me. I did it. I killed... myself. (Crying on knees now.) Come back! I want to go back. Alex, come back! We are sorry. I am sorry! I want to go back. I regret what I did. Why can't they see me? Why can't they hear me? I don't want to die. I want to go back...

(Muffled cries and they fade away as ALEX returns to the stage dressed in all white and is now wearing a very nice SHORT SLEEVE shirt. She looks a bit happier now. HIDDEN ALEX freezes on the ground and ALEX stays silent for a moment.)

ALEX: Why are you crying? I know this is sad, but you don't need to shed tears for me. No one cried when I was alive. Look. (Shows her arms to the audience. My scars are gone. I am not crying anymore. I am somewhere happy. I don't know what to call this place... maybe Heaven? I think its Heaven. But, I never thought I was good enough for Heaven. When you picture an angel, I'm sure your first thought isn't a young girl with cuts, bruises, and a tear stained face. Angels are supposed to be beautiful. So stop crying unless you're sorry. Sorry for the names, the sadness I went through, and the pain they caused. I didn't want to die, not yet anyway. I just wanted it all to stop. I wanted the pain to go away! What I did is sad, and I regret it... I wish I could see Mrs. Phillips and tell her the truth. But I never want to see the others again! They did that! (Motions to HIDDEN ALEX behind her.) But now, I don't feel the pain they all caused me. (Beat.) So, stop crying, because nothing bad ever happens to angels.

I have been a student at Allen for only a year and am planning on majoring in English. I write because it helps to clear my head and keeps me going at times. My hope is to one day be an author and writer. I also enjoy photography and spend a lot of time with my puppy.
There was celebration and mourning going on around me. Why wouldn’t they celebrate, the war was finally over. I, however, couldn’t move a bone in my body. In front of me lay a girl that could’ve been asleep, but I knew she wasn’t. I couldn’t feel any of the emotions running through my head. Should I celebrate, or mourn for this familiar girl in front of me? Her blonde hair, which waved like the wheat in the wind, was now cut close to her head for easier management. If I looked closely at her body I knew what I would see, so I chose not to do so. Somehow though, I could describe in great detail exactly what I would find. The pain that struck her heart was somehow my own; however, it was subsiding and getting further away. The center of her chest would reveal a small hole and, surprisingly, there wouldn’t be as much blood as one would expect from a bullet. Death would have been instantaneous judging from the range that the shooter had been.

I raised my eyes as a boy sat down on the other side of her body-her brother. Same blonde hair and blue eyes that she had; they were twins after all. His eyes were filled with tears as he stared down at her body. His hands shook uncontrollably as he lowered two fingers to her neck, still hoping for some sign of life.

“No pulse.” The words barely made it past his lips before a broken sob escaped them. He slowly closed her eyelids over her lifeless eyes. Now she really could be asleep, if you ignored the wound in her chest.

“I know,” I replied to his words even though I knew he couldn’t hear me. Hopefully, someone would get him something to eat and a place to sleep tonight.

I stood as he finally broke into full blown sobs. As I walked away, I could feel my body grow lighter with every step. Like someone had lifted a weight off my shoulders, I was floating away from everything. No more fighting, no more crying, no more death.

Before I left, I knew I had to look back. I needed to hold onto the memory before it was all wiped away. I needed just one more look over my shoulder at what was once my body.

My name is Samantha Abendroth and I am a student at Allen County as well as at Santa Fe Trail High School. I am taking pre-requisites at Allen County and considering getting my Associate of Arts degree with an emphasis in writing. When I graduate high school it is my goal to also have my Associates from Allen completed. I will then be moving to Flagstaff, Arizona where I will continue working on my Bachelor of Arts. I have written numerous short stories over my short life time, however, have never submitted anything for publication.
Additional Art Submissions

Thunderstorm 1
By Meghan Burenheide

[Image of a painting depicting a thunderstorm with lightning]
Ellie May
By Nevada Finton-Millis
Cleo
By Maley Sherman
Additional Writing Submissions

The Betrayal
By Jonathan Dehn

I loved you, I thought you loved me truly
But you lied to me when we were in love
This hate and love cycle makes me weary
My heart hurts, finding no peace of a dove
Why? Why? Why? You left me for a fickle dog
He doesn’t love you, he wants to use you
I loved you dearly, were you blind in fog
That swayed you away with an empty woo?
So are you happy? Happier than in my arms?
He did not love you, he left you when done
You stabbed my heart, betrayed me, did me harm
But he is gone away, you have no one
I loved you, but no more, your lesson be learned
The eye is not always right for what it yearned
Eyebrow Game
By Catlin Lindsey

Dearest eyebrows,
Oh, how I love you.

Your perfect arches and flawless shape is endlessly sought after.
If one could fight a war over eyebrows,
You would be the eyebrows who launched a thousand ships.

Night and day,
I tend you.
Plucking horrifying stray hairs,
Shaping your arches,
Even bestowing one of you
With the finest of silver hoops,

Money can buy.
My love for you is the truest of true.
Forever will we be together.
Forever will I bask in pride,

When people whisper “eyebrow game strong”
As I walk bye.
Foam Cup
By Felesha Bonnell

Take a drink
Feel soft, smooth foam on your lips.
How easy would it be,
To bite down?
To rip a piece off?
To show some pathetic strength
against a defenseless object?
Too easy
Yet,
You do it.
Then another and another
Until all that’s left,
is a pile
of wet, crunched chunks.
You did that.
You destroyed it.
With no thought,
or consideration
you tore it to pieces,
Ones that will
never
fit together again.

That is bullying.
Dream Carefully
By Alexandria King

SCENE 1. Movie Theater-Night
Woman screams. Black out. Scattered breathing and leaves rustling. Woman is running from something. She stops to catch her breath on a tree. The killer comes from behind and has a knife to her throat. This plays on the screen. Zooms out to Movie Theater. SARAH, a rebel teen, sits by her FRIENDS (COURTNEY CINNAMON, ABIGAIL SMITH, SHELBY BAKER, and KIM MARTINEZ).
SARAH. (Whispers) Guys... Guys...
AUDIENCE MEMBER. Ssssshhhhhh.
SARAH leans back in seat and watches a little more of movie.
SARAH. Guys... Why are we here? Can we go?
ABIGAIL. Sarah. Stop being a bitch. The movie’s almost over.
SARAH leans back again and starts to fall asleep.

SCENE 2. Abandoned Warehouse-Night
DAWN ULRICK’s hands are tied up above her.
DAWN. Please. Let me go. I won’t tell anyone. I-
KILLER. Sssshhhhh. (Pets her head) Do you like it? (Shows knife)
DAWN. (Whimpers) Please.
KILLER. (Smacks) I said sssshhhhh. (Puts knife to DAWN’s cheek) You have a very pretty face. It looks just like my wife’s. (Suddenly stabs through her cheek)
DAWN. (Screams)

SCENE 3. Movie Theater, as before
SARAH. (Screams)
AUDIENCE MEMBERS jump then look annoyed and friends look at SARAH in shock. SARAH composes herself and watches the rest of the movie.
SCENE 4. Movie Theater Bathroom-Night
SARAH and FRIENDS laugh as they enter the bathroom. SARAH walks to sink and looks in mirror.
COURTNEY. Sarah! What happened?
SARAH. (Shrugs) I had a nightmare.
SHELBY. Wow. That movie must have actually scared you, huh?
KIM. (Laughs) Now, who’s the wuss?
SARAH. Still you.
EVERYONE but KIM laughs.
KIM. I hate you all.
KIM leaves then followed by FRIENDS. SARAH stays behind and looks in the mirror for a second.
FLASHBACK to knife in DAWN’s cheek.
SARAH shudders then follows friends.

SCENE 5. Zapka’s Living Room-Night
SARAH walks in. GAGE is sitting on the couch watching a football game. CHRIS is in the kitchen cooking dinner.
GAGE. Hey, honey. How was the movie?
SARAH. It was predictable as every scary movie though. Who’s playing?
GAGE. Chiefs and Dolphins.
SARAH. Cool. Well, I have homework.
CHRIS. (Off camera) Sarah, is that you?
SARAH. (Yells) Yea!
CHRIS. Come here!
SARAH. (Sighs)
GAGE. Good luck.

SCENE 6. Zapka’s Kitchen-Night
SARAH walks in. CHRIS is at stove.
CHRIS. Where were you?
SARAH. Out.
CHRIS. Don’t use that tone with me young lady. I told you that the dishes had to be finished before you were to leave this house. And what’s that? (Points to sink full with a few dishes)
SARAH. Dishes.
CHRIS. Huh uh. You are grounded.
SARAH. (Yells) That’s so not fair! Why should I always to the dishes?
CHRIS. As long as you live in my house you will listen to my rules. Is that clear?
SARAH. (Mumbles) Whatever.
CHRIS. What did you just say?
SARAH. (Loud) I said, yes dad.
CHRIS. That’s what I thought. Now go to your room.

SCENE 7. SARAH’s Room-Night
SARAH throws self on bed and screams into pillow. TAYLOR, Sarah’s sister who looks a lot like her, enters.
TAYLOR. Hey are you okay?
SARAH. What are you doing in my room?
TAYLOR. I heard you and dad fighting. I just thought I would see if you are okay.
SARAH. I’m fine. Leave.
TAYLOR leaves.
SARAH lays back down and falls asleep.

SCENE 8. Knight’s House-Night
EMMA KNIGHT just drowned her three year old son and now she is holding her five year old son by the shirt while she is yelling at her mentally handicapped seventeen year old to get the knife. STEVEN KNIGHT, the eighteen year old, does so and gives it to EMMA. EMMA thrusts the knife into the chest of the five year old and he screams. EMMA continues stabbing the child until he is dead. EMMA turns to STEVEN.
EMMA. Where’s Emily?

STEVEN. (Shocked) No, mama. No Emily.

EMMA. Steven. Tell me where she is now!

STEVEN. No, mama. No Emily.

EMMA. Now!

STEVEN. No, mama. No Emily.

EMILY. (Off Camera) (Whimpers)

EMMA. Come on out sweetie. Mommy just wants to play a game.

STEVEN. No, mama! No Emily!

EMMA pushes STEVEN. STEVEN falls over and strikes head against cabinet close to where EMILY is hiding.

EMMA. Steven! No!

EMILY climbs out of cabinet, sees her dead brother and crazy mother holding onto him. EMILY runs out of the house.

EMMA. No! Steven come back to me.

SCENE 9. Sarah’s Bedroom-Night

SARAH sits up quickly and looks around. The lights are still on. SARAH touches her face and realizes she has been crying. SARAH puts her face in her hands and sobs.

SCENE 10. Greenview High School-Day

SARAH is at her locker, she is obviously extremely tired. KIM walks up.

KIM. Sarah, are you okay?

SARAH. Yep. Why?

KIM. You seem out of it. Did you get sleep last night?

SARAH. Not very much. I’ve been having weird dreams lately.

KIM. Oh. I know what you mean. I’ve been having some weird dreams too.

SARAH half listens as they head to class. She keeps having flashbacks to some of her dreams.
SCENE 11. Current Events Classroom-Day

MRS. HARVEY is at the front of the classroom handing out newspapers. SARAH takes one.
SARAH and KIM sit down.

MRS. HARVEY. All right class. Today we are going to be going over what has happened. No doubt most of you have heard about the tragedy.
Murmuring throughout the classroom. SARAH looks at newspaper. The article is about the Knight family. SARAH turns pale as she looks at the picture of the Knight family.

KIM. (Whispers) Sarah? Sarah?!

SARAH. What?

MRS. HARVEY. Sarah! Welcome back to Earth.

SARAH. I’m sorry. What was the question?

MRS. HARVEY. I was asking you to read next.

SARAH. Where are we?

MRS. HARVEY. On the 3rd paragraph.

SARAH. Emma Knight is now in jail after her 7 year old daughter managed to escape the tragedy and informed the neighbors what was happening at her house. When police arrived on the scene, Emma Knight was cradling her eldest son, Steven Knight, age 18…in...in...her arms...
As she reads on she becomes paler and paler. She faints. STUDENTS, KIM, and MRS. HARVEY rush to her and someone calls 9-1-1.

SCENE 12. Harrison’s Basement-Night

There are candles set up around a circle of TEENS. They appear to be doing some ritual. Then... they spin the bottle. They play Spin the Bottle. NICK brings down food and looks at some of the other people. They give a smug look to him.

NICK. Food’s here.

TEEN 1. Oh good. I’m starved.

ELLIOT comes out of the bathroom and runs into TEEN 2.

TEEN 2. Dude, did you hear what they’re doing? (Laughs) They put nuts in Sharon’s food.

(Laughs)
ELLiot. Okay? Why is that funny?

Teen 2 laughs, shrugs, and goes into the bathroom.

Nick puts food down on table and everyone sits down and starts eating. Sharon is off a little ways. She is bigger set and obviously not part of the group. Sharon takes a bite and then stops chewing a looks around at the group. They are snickering except for Elliot who is looking at her worriedly.

Sharon. What?

Nick. (Snickering) Do you like the food?

Sharon. If that’s a fat joke...

Sharon looks around the room. She drops her food and looks around the group. She grabs her throat and rubs it.

Sharon. Wat-?

Sharon eyes get big as she picks up the food and examines it. The finely chopped nuts are hard to see but there. Sharon throws it down and then tries to stand up. Her face starts to get puffy and she starts to turn red. She gasps for air and then falls down. Elliot rushes to her side and grabs her wrist, looking for a pulse. He drops her wrist and looks at her face. He slowly backs away from her body. Teens stop laughing and smiling. The room is silent except the music coming from the radio. A few moments pass before anyone speaks.

Teen 2 comes out of bathroom.

Teen 2. Hey! Who died?
No One is Amazing Like Gaston

By Alexandra Bolyard

Walking through the forest, with LeFou at my side, I can only think of her. Ahhh, Belle, she is such a beauty. “LeFou!” I shouted, getting his attention.

“Yes, Gaston?” LeFou doting on me like he should be, answered immediately.

“I have decided. You remember Belle? The odd girl who reads...from our village? It is unusual that she reads, isn’t it? But I can change that...I have decided that I want her to be my wife. She is the most beautiful girl in the village, after all, her name even means ‘beauty.’ Who else deserves the most beautiful girl in the village except the most handsome in all the land? I deserve the best. Don’t I? Wait, don’t answer that, I already know the answer. It’s yes!”

“That’s a great idea, Gaston! All the other girls will be very upset though.”

“That is a sacrifice I am willing to make,” I say as I strut past a pond. I look at my reflection, God, I am handsome. My chin is strong and my hair is dark and flowing. My red tunic makes my muscles bulge, and my eyes shine. There is absolutely no way that Belle would ever turn me down. I’m perfect.

As LeFou and I make our way into the village, I catch a glimpse of her. She is walking down the street, her nose in a book and her light brown hair tied back in a blue bow. “Look at her, LeFou, she is perfect. Well, not as perfect as I, but close.” I pick up my pace and make my way towards her. “Belle!”

She turns around, a look of excitement, or fear, on her face. Well, if it is fear, she is only scared of losing me. “Bonjour, Gaston. How are you?”

She can’t get enough of me. “I’m wonderful, Belle! Just got done hunting for the town!” Then I launched into the story of how I tracked down a buck the size of six men, and took it down only using my fists. She looked on in amazement. She was so amazed, it almost looked like boredom, but it was most definitely amazement.

“That’s great, Gaston, but I must get going. My father might need my help.”

“Okay, Belle, you go do that. I will see you later. Or rather, you’ll see me, because I’m much taller,” I had to chuckle at my own cleverness.
* * *

It was the next day, and everything was set up. I was going to surprise Belle with a wedding! She’ll love it, because she’s getting married to me.

“LeFou! Is everything ready?”

“Yes, Gaston! We have the food, the priest, the flowers, everything. By the way, you look great in your fancy, new tunic.”

“I know, LeFou, I know. Now remember, when we come out, start the band,” I said to everyone that was gathered there, “Now I must go propose!”

I sauntered up to the door and knocked. “Oh, Belle, it’s me.”

She opened the door a crack and peered out at me, “Hello Gaston, what can I do for you?”

The poor girl couldn’t even open the door all the way, so I pushed it open with my enormous biceps to help her out. “Belle, I’ve pictured something. Our life together. I come home after a long day of hunting and providing. You have dinner on the table, and while I eat you give me a foot rub. It will be glorious, with our dogs and seven sons by our side. So, will you be my wife?” I ask, already knowing her answer.

“That’s not the life for me, Gaston, I’m sorry. I can’t marry you.”

“Excellent! The wedding is already set up outside…wait. What did you just say?” I couldn’t have heard her right. It sounded like she said no. But that would be ridiculous.

“I said no, Gaston. I’m sorry.”

No? What does she mean no? No one says no to Gaston!

“You need to leave,” she said as she moved towards the door.

“We both need to leave, to our wedding.” She leaned against the door, and I leaned in closer. “You know you want to ma—“ but I didn’t get to finish. She opened the door and quickly moved to her left. I lost my balance, being of such strong stature I’m quite top heavy, and fell out the door. I tumbled down the steps and into a puddle of mud. I have never been this angry or embarrassed. I vowed to myself then. Belle will be my wife, one way or another.
Later that evening, I was sulking in the pub. Although I was depressed at first, the local town’s people sang about how great I am, and that cheered me right up. “They are right, LeFou, no one is greater than Gaston.” As I said that, Maurice, Belle’s father came bursting through the pub doors, looking disheveled.

“Belle’s been taken! By a huge hideous beast! That lives in a castle! Someone must help me, please!” He was almost in tears, he was so upset. But his story is so ridiculous, no one believed him. He’s always been rather eccentric.

“Is that so, Maurice? What did this ‘beast’ look like?” I ask.

He started describing it in detail, and it was like no animal anyone had ever heard of. A few men picked up Maurice and threw him out, while the rest had a good laugh. But while everyone else was laughing, I was hatching a plan with my intelligent mind. “LeFou, come with Gaston,” and we melted away into the night.

* * *

The plan was in motion. The doctor was going to take Maurice to the asylum and the only way to get him out would be for Belle to marry me. It was perfect. And really for her benefit, I’m amazing. I had gathered a mob of town’s folk to go to their house, and we made our way up the path.

I stomped up the stairs, and in a determined stance, I banged on the door. “Belle! Maurice! Open up!”

Belle opened the door, her father looking around her, “What is all this, Gaston?”

The doctor spoke then, “We have come to take your father away, miss. He is ranting about seeing a beast that doesn’t exist. He is scaring the children.”

At that the men of the town scooped up Maurice and carried him to the carriage.

“Stop!” Belle screamed. “He’s telling the truth!” She ran back into the house, and came out seconds later holding a silver mirror. “Look!” she said and held the mirror out to us.

The first time I saw the beast, I kept thinking how hideous it was. A hush fell over the crowd, and I knew what I had to do. I was the hunter, the protector of the village. I had to get rid of this threat to them. “We must slay that monster!”
“No! He’s harmless! He wouldn’t hurt a fly. He’s kind and sweet and gentle,” she looked at the mirror longingly. The way she should have been looking at me. She has feelings for this thing. I will destroy it. Belle will only love Gaston. I grabbed the mirror from her and marched my mob to the castle to destroy this beast.

* * *

I was on the balcony, stalking the beast, rain pouring down my face. “Will you defeat Gaston with your kindness and gentle nature?” I say, mocking Belle, who was standing in the door way. It lunged at me then, claws and fangs coming at me. We grappled and fought for what seemed like hours. I was using my dagger, him his claws. We stabbed at each other, wounded each other. My dagger flew out of my hand and I was defenseless. I raised my fist to hit him, but he knocked me backward before I had a chance. But unfortunately for him, I landed right by my fallen dagger. I picked it up without him seeing, but Belle saw.

“Look out!” she screamed to that hideous beast.

But it was too late, I plunged my knife deep into his stomach and felt his blood run down my arm. The beast fell. I stood up, and walked towards my prize, Belle. “You are mine, Belle.” Then I felt my feet lift off the ground as I flew to my right, over the stone railing. That beast was not dead yet. He got the better of me. But my flight was dramatic, and glorious. No one falls like Gaston.