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“Art is chaos.”
-Miriam Robledo
The Author’s Tools
Omo Eko

Drip, drop
The wind blows
The tapping tree on the window pane
The stars that glow
The light in her eyes
The crick in his neck
The students bustling
The old man’s regret
Things of wonder, pain, and lives
Overlooked, unseen
Unappreciated
Unimportant, unnoticed
Ignored
These are the tools of artist
The mundane of the humdrum lives
Mingling with the opposition of the world
The expanse of a painter’s brush against the light of day
The musician’s vibrato distressing the untouched air
The dancer’s shoes tapping to the day’s silent symphony
Stream of consciousness
Color on top of white
The rush of sound
The pose struck in quiet deliberation
The sounds of life
The moments of us
The perspective, the voice
The invasion of vision
Like the heart’s beat in time with the clock’s clicks
The smell that rattles your bones with reminiscent daze
The shudder of a lock clink into place
The awakening of awareness
The death of bliss
Words flung across the open air
Lives ruined or saved with little black letters on white stationary
Truth almost stinging as it rings
Written, immortalized, sung, and pivoted
Expressed, oppressed
Depressed and gone
Seen, felt, heard
Done
Remembered or forgotten
Like the leaf stuck in amber
The crash of a butterfly
The silence of a gunshot
The method of beauty
Of poetry in the senses
Passing over the dribble of droplet
The tapping of a branch against the stark white pane
Too obsessed with components in the stars
And finally the art
Told in different ways
Made in different styles
Illustration of the same things
Meaning different anythings
The tone, the movement
Invoking the blood flow
The climax, the synthesis of it all
Generational gaps, clash of the sexes
Money classes, time lapses
Distance and perspective
Felt, feared, and loved
Here, there
Gone, just arrived
Expression of art, perspective, and life
The final sense still striving
Enhancing the threads of life
Stuck to the seat as the world passes by
Feeling the burn as the tired coffee tries
Incessant ramble in the mind denying sleep
Like acid down your throat
Like blood in your veins
Similar to heartbeat, but without and with the pain
It’s the breathe in your lungs as the city lights dim
It’s the thoughts you drown in, never wishing to swim
The tragedy of a war never fought
The screams of a child as their temper creeps in
The subconscious subconsciously grasping at the do’s and
do not’s
The toneless undertones of unspoken expectations
And then all of it for nothing
Nothing
Or it would be
If the dancer didn’t sing without their voice
If the writer didn’t paint a vision worth more than it’s
words
If the singer didn’t act with every rise and ritardando
If the artist just stopped
What would be lost if the artist didn’t capture the forgotten
thoughts
Of a world clambering to be individuals
Unmindful of the stars
Too concerned with the calculations
Shunning the clouds as the roll by in droves
Too caught up in work
Losing the time as they try to find their ‘place’
Stupidly unmindful of the tragedy of peace
Yet perfectly reflecting the misguided conception
Of Self, of domain
Of the power or force
The torture of an education
Trying to find what was lost, only to lose themselves
Salvaged only by babble of loose cannons
Not captivated by the orbs themselves
Fixated on the pain of age
The prattling of the daydreamers and the quiet adventure seekers
Capturing the invasion of vision
Locking you in the midnight dream
The job of an artist, creator, maestro
Preserving the awful taste of the tainted history
Restoring the restrained grace
Bringing back the cast out
And keeping the reveries safe
Wielding daily lives and past joys like rapiers

Besting the hapless fuddy-duddies with whip like wit
Unacknowledged but there
Hidden under the seams
Of the humdrum of mundane life
Tools working under supervision
Taking notes with and sans precision
Masters marking ticks
Keeping track of what the rest would miss

Human
By Jamie Lee
By Clem Smith

Walking through old neighborhoods
with cracks in the pavement and gaps in the woods;
Cracks, through which green grass grows and
Gaps, where nature’s children show
a family resemblance,
resilience.

Don’t believe me? Look again.
See the struggle without end.
See the flowers that grow from graves.
Watch the world as it decays,
don’t let fear avert your eyes,
remember that rain comes from cloudy skies.

And the shadow of death will be washed away.
Sunrise warms the dawning day.
Forests may fall in hungry fires,
but in their place, we will build spires
that reach to the sky.
At least, until they topple too
And the cycle begins anew.

Life and death and life and death,
Our time is only borrowed breath.
Bird is the Word
By Griffin Rone
The Storm
Elizabeth Bigham

The still quiet before a storm, the world motionless in anticipation of the wind and water.

The clapping and crashing of invisible hands in the sky, you bury your head.
Flickering darkness, you hear it dying slowly, the pitch falling into a sputtering stop.
Your heart pulsing, beating out of your chest and into your throat, into your eyes,
And the warmth leaks out of the corners, making your cheeks sparkle like the windows.
There is nothing but the four walls around you, the smell of petrichor seeping through them.

You are surrounded by a symphony of chaos, your fragile body at the mercy of the tempest.
You feel everything, the cold air and rattling vibrations that consume every inch of the universe. And all
you can do it sit and wait, shivering, sniffling and wiping tears from your blurred vision.

Another blast shakes the Earth, your eyes shut tight and your hands press against your ears,
A cry passes your lips, so helpless and weak, so desperate for someone to hear it.
You think that this will never end, and you will forever be a slave to time and a prisoner of fear.

But then they come, torches held by guileless hands, eyes wide in fear, and then relief.
She sits down beside you, holding you so you can feel her warmth and her breathing in and out.

He stands guard of the door, knees shaking while standing as tall as his short stature will allow.
They are scared too, each roar bringing your bodies closer together, breath bated in anticipation.
He decrees contrived oaths but she cracks jokes. You laugh together, drowning out the storm.

They wait with you while the gale rages on all through the night, and you feel safe, peaceful.
He shakes you awake, pulling you out of the closet and through the front door into the wet air.

The grass is thick, water collecting on your bare feet as they both smile in wonder.
You all hold hands and gaze up at the sky, the clouds dissipating to reveal a vault of majesty.

The Earth is glazed by a heavy layer of moonlight, strange shadows creeping onto young faces.

The world is tranquil, the insects, birds, and animals making a soft whir in the background,
You hold your head high, an innocent grin spreads across your face, light dances off your eyes.

You have weathered the storm.
Our Ruin
Charlotte Hedley

As you look into my eyes
Can you feel the guilt
Staring back at you
My hands are cold
Not being held by yours anymore
Your heart is frozen
Unable to reciprocate
Or feel anything, for that matter
God help me, it hurts.
I wait for you
As I always have
But you never arrive
My stomach pains
Still not of illness
Are just symptoms
Look at the bigger picture
Rome Has Fallen
We are doomed
I can feel your heartbeat
From a mile away
We are synchronized
But still drifting
You recoil from my touch
As if I am some sort of plague
Hypocrisy has become a theme
Yet to be analyzed
You pretend to care
I pretend that it doesn't hurt
We go through the motions
"Whatever's easiest for you"
A smile, a broken heart

Signaling that it's all
Falling apart
I've never been so intrigued
By the way you look at me
No longer with love, or affection,
But more with hate, and disgust
I am tired
It is evident
The bags under my eyes
Slowly are growing
I am tired
Of waiting,
Wanting more,
Wishing for better
I am tired
Every day is a disappointment
Yet to be had
I have become negative
In my search for happiness
Cynicism is me
In the beginning,
I was joy, hope,
All you ever desired
And even more,
Not yet discovered
In the end, I am nothing, a shell.
Emotionless, uncaring
hopeless, unfeeling.
I echo the words I once meant
Trying t
o attain the feelings long gone
“Images create imagination when there are no words to explain it.”

-Alston Zhang
Closure
Ella Harris

"What do you want?" he commented harshly as he hesitantly sat down across from me. I winced when I heard the anger in his voice, scared that it might happen again.

"I... I want closure," I said timidly, carefully choosing my words and avoiding eye contact.

"Why? We've already settled it."

"No, we haven't." Pain was evident in my voice. "You yelling at me and telling me I'm a horrible person is not closure." His harsh façade seemed to soften, worry flooding his eyes. But it was only for a second, as he quickly put his wall back up and bit back with some surprising words.

"Fine. Go ahead, spit it out." I nodded and took a deep breath, I'd finally be able to say what I've wanted to say for several months.

"Why was I the selfish one? How was I being selfish when I sacrificed my well-being for you? The six months between our confession to each other and... the argument... I was suffering silently. For six months, I was given this false hope that someone actually loved me, only to have it brutally ripped away from me.

For six months, I doubted and feared that you just pitied me and said you loved me because you felt bad for me. And who would've thought I was right? I wasted all this time on you, only for you to rip my heart apart and destroy my self esteem and personality. I went through all of this just so you could be comfortable. Just so you weren't pressured or forced into a relationship. I treated you like a fragile piece of glass, but all you did was shatter me," I let out a huge huff as a weight was lifted off my chest. He looked startled at my outburst and accusations. However, seeing as he wasn't going to say anything, I took the chance to continue. "At least, I learned something from all of this. Yeah, shocking, but I did. I learned that no one will ever be able to love me. No one will ever care about me. Nobody will ever care at all because I'm unloveable.
Because I'm so 'vile' and 'disgusting' and 'horrible'. Ugh, I was so stupid to believe that a 'whore' like me could ever find love. So, thanks. Thanks for helping me realize this. You've been a huge help." I was breathing heavily and tears were streaming down my cheeks by the time I finished. I looked up to see him in the same state, heavy breaths and tear-filled eyes. He almost looked shocked and saddened, but I wasn't buying it. I was done dealing with his acting and fake feelings.

Surprisingly, a deafening and violent silence encompassed us, scaring me that he had not yet responded. He was usually very quick to bite back with some sort of comeback or defensive insult. The silence almost grew too much to handle, until he finally spoke.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I never meant to hurt you, I-" His response was very rushed and hastily put together, but it seemed sincere. Seemed. I quickly interrupted, not wanting to listen to some sort of half-ass excuse. "Save it. I couldn't care less anymore. We've had our closure, and I'm ready to move past this," As soon as I said this, I swear I saw something break inside of him.

"But... but I was hoping we could try this again. I do love you! I love you so much, and I'm so sorry for what I did to you. I just want a second chance to make things right." Tears were flowing freely from both of our eyes, but that didn't matter to me. I was over it. I was done. I wasn't going to risk going through that treacherous hell again.

"I'm sorry, but... we're never happening. You had one chance, and you messed it up. This isn't some sort of fairytale where you get a second chance and win over the girl. This is real life where you get one chance and a broken heart," I started to stand up and collect myself. "I'm sorry, but this is it. I hope you have a nice life, it's been the worst." And with that, I walked away, leaving behind two broken hearts and one destroyed boy.
Learning Foreign Languages

Foreign languages seem humdrum and daunting
As unnecessary as possible
Hire a bilingual guide when traveling
And he no longer has any trouble
Ignoring civilizations hidden
He belittles their charisma and charm
Mastering languages becomes his burden
He desires to fathom the world on a farm.
Enjoying French cuisine sans essence of French
Praising Kungfu sans history of Chinese
He is hypocritic so as to clench
Truths when he personally disagrees
Global awareness is boost’d via languages
Multilinguals put us at advantages.

Home
By Amber Jared

"I wanted to prove the ‘Westerners’ who think China does not have blue skies wrong.”
Most People
By Emma Petersen

BEEEEP, BEEEEP, BEEEEP,
Both eyes open; the desire to close them lingers.
One leg inches toward the edge of the bed, but gives up the strenuous journey.
The other fails to attempt.
Both hands tug the layer of heat that is deemed a blanket.
One mouth opens;
      SIGH
Most people have coffee.
Yet my feet must touch the cold, cold floor
And my hands must brush the hair and sleep from my face
And my back must be cracked, my posture corrected to my usual hunched-over position
And I must wait in line.
DRIP, DRIP, DRIP
And I must yell;
      HURRY UP
Most people have warm showers.
Although, cold water cascading down my back can stimulate my senses.
      FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT,
The screams of my fellow inmates are
      what
      truly
      WAKE
me up, though.
      SIGH
I wish I could go back to sleep.
Stay Gold
By Jhansi Kolli

My mom talks about this wallpaper she used to love as a kid. She said it looked as if golden thread had been woven through it, but it was not the beauty that made her love the wall paper it was the ambiguity. The golden lines twirled around each other and allowed the imaginative viewer to see whatever they wanted. My mom preferred figure drawings. She crafted the golden wires into faces. She saw: old men, young boys, pretty girls and old hags. She saw these characters when she allowed her eyes to relax. She allowed herself to look at things from a different perspective. She aligned the scrambled and made it beautiful. To this day my mom says when she showers she still sees faces. Faces formed out of fog and water droplets on the shower door. These faces do not haunt her though. They fascinate her. She uses the world around her to create vivid characters that she draws or paint. My mom truly sees the extraordinary were other people just see ordinary.

Modern Love
By Alyss Masundire

Be my watercolor tattoo, my California sky, my coping mechanism, my 5 hour long spotify playlist, my 2 am distraction, my instagram aesthetic, my relationship goals, my early morning Starbucks, my motivation, my inspiration, my lazy Sunday, my best friend, my inside joke, my exasperation, my subtweet, my 11:11, my mine.
Scars On His Hands

The darkest part of his body were the scars on his hands, they were deep and made him look like a man. They were deeper than any other parts of his fingers, they were almost unnoticeable unless you let your eyes linger. They were on both of his hands in the spaces in between his two middle fingers. He never said anything about them except that they were here since birth, I liked them a lot and still words are not enough. I couldn’t quite figure why I liked the feeling on them against my skin, then one night in bed it finally sank in. In a dark room, full of hundreds, I could pick him out of a crowd all I had to do was feel the distinct feeling of his scars on my fingers and I would know it was him, I would know his hands in an instant, I would know the feeling on my skin.

Late Night Talks

We closed our eyes and tried to go to sleep but it was hard trying not to make a peep. Finally, he rolled over, his hot breath in my face, and asked me if I wanted to stay awake. I pulled myself closer to him and asked about the space inside his head, I asked him about the scar on his left arm and he told me his favorite color was red. We talked about the best bones in our body and temporary love, we even talked about the heavens above. I told him I should go to church more and he laughed and then agreed, and then he asked me about the books that I read. I went to my shelf and one by one told him them all, from the ones I read recently to the ones I read when I was small. The sun was beginning to rise as he leaned in and kissed me, I let him do it although I knew he wouldn’t miss me. I made him cereal and then the sun was full in the sky he got up and left with a simple goodbye. My body aches for him sometimes, but only right before I sleep, I lay and remember his body in between my sheets. But as time keeps going I remember him less, I don’t think of his body, his mind, or his mess.
Jamestown
By Maddy Ellis
What was she like?
Cheeks like roses
Tiny button noses
Sunlit hair
Not a care
Where oh where,
Did she go?

What was she like?
In days before
Thoughts would soar
Dreams alive
Dancing jive
Along a flowered path
And feel no wrath
Raining upon her
Tiny,

Happy,

Mind

Who was she?
I see
No glee
Just gloom,
I presume
Surely,
She was doomed?

What about him?
Innocence
Foolish sense
Silly games
Passing days
No one to please
Emote with ease
Who is he now?

What was he like?
Before youth ends
Multiples and dividends
Memorizing.
Yet still surprising
Become discouraged,
But show

No

Sign

Who is he now?
Broken hearted
Thoughts departed
No second thoughts
Life comes in droughts
He hasn’t heard it in so long

What were they like?
Years count down
Friends come around
But only few
You thought you knew
Cliques and trends
Is there no end?
Let him be him,
And let them be them
No lies to truthfully defend

What happened?
Young children died
But they all survived
Many casualties
Same usualties
Daily life
Inner strife
Is this what it’s like?

That girl inside,
She wants to hide
The boy you knew
He does too
Only humans,
Personified
And
It’s
Okay

to cry.
By Clarice Kiser
The Six Eyes in the Sky

Every night ended with the rough contact between my knees and the hardwood floor, fingers interlaced, and elbows propped up by my mattress. Every prayer was generally the same, wishing for things that every kid born into an average life would wish for from a supreme, unseeable being—good health for the family, normality with regular resources, and the occasional bargain for a pony.

Since most of my desires were mundane, most wishes were granted. I had a happily average childhood that left me thinking that God, my Heavenly Father, would never betray my trust. But then again, I have trust issues.

I stopped praying consistently when my family moved for the fourth time. By then I was nine and had begun discovering things. I moved on from sincere child innocence and began to take on the early characteristics of a pre-teen. My knees were no longer chaffed, my fingers hardly ever placed together, and my mattress didn’t bear any elbow indents.

As I grew older my eyes widened from my Mormon perspective, and I was able to see how elegantly my family hid things. My parents have always been non-confrontational communicators, and when they did fight, they would do their best to hide their outbursts from my sisters and me. I never heard them when I was smaller. Now my ears had grown and were willing to accept the sound waves.

Crawling out of bed and crouching on the tile in a shadowed darkness, I would silently observe the passive aggressive words, shouting whispers, and sarcastic jabs being thrown. I would sand my nails on the floor while past problems were drug up to make a statement about a new issue.

By eavesdropping I heard old arguments being dusted off and brought to the table again, although; in other instances, I learned something new. That was always strangely exciting in the way I felt like a spy, even though the information was negative news that would crush my naive spirit if I thought it through.

Then, around the time I was eleven—a true pre-teen with the maturity level of a teen—Mom began to talk to me as a friend more than a daughter. She was fighting more, but also gaining her independence. I was absolutely willing to throw down boundaries to be considered such an equal. I was now better than a spy hiding in the background because I was in plain sight. That’s when I found out why my praying ritual wasn’t a ritual anymore.

My mom was always the habit holder. She did something; I did something. She did it again; I did it again. She stopped praying; I stopped praying. I didn’t even notice that it was a pattern created by her because children willingly follow their parent’s example. Coming from a family that stayed ‘within our own’ and didn’t socialize much, they were my only adult examples. That is, besides my school and church teachers.

She stopped reminding me to pray at night. Sometimes my brain lost the idea of prayer and I simply forgot, whereas other times I ‘forgot’ on purpose. Church became a hassle. I mean, every Sunday I had to shower (which was the worst task you could ever possibly have forced on me, a real tom boy rebel), brush my hair (insanely curly locks which can’t be managed but had to be managed by me, myself, and I since I wouldn’t let anyone else touch me), brush my teeth (the bristles of my toothbrush always poke and pinched my gums), and the ABSOLUTE worst part of the process…wear a dress. Yuck.

Even after that awful ordeal was over I would have to sit and wait while my three other sisters were put through the same routine. By the time they were ready I had usually, unless I was having a particularly obedient day, messed something up. After I was fixed and loaded into the car, our eight-membered family would sit through the ride only to get out, move onto our general, in-the-back—because-we-were-always-late bench and sit for another hour, listening to one, two, or all of these statements in various versions: “God is our true Heavenly Father. Jesus is the son of God. The Holy Ghost is our subconscious.”

Members of the Priesthood, Relief Society, or the general church would be called to the podium to speak to the entire congregation. I would mindlessly sit on my dad’s lap, pressing my fingerprints into the bulky, ‘smart’ phone’s screen as I clicked on the Tetris block to turn it sideways. It slid into place, but the phone’s screen lit up with a call and my dad’s hands were electrified with a mission: turn down the volume. He escaped the embarrassment by placing me on the empty seat next to him and running out of the room. So I picked up my Strawberry Shortcake coloring book from our handy-dandy church entertainment pack. My stomach grumbled, gaining a few eyes turned with growing anger at our noisy family. I turned back to the pack, grabbing out three plastic baggies. One filled with Crayola crayons, another with Oyster crackers, and the last containing rainbow, psychologically fooling fruit loops.

The next hour would be spent, in my earlier years, singing primary rhymes that I can still unnaturally begin humming or singing to myself today. “Follow the prophet, follow the prophet, follow the prophet, don’t go astray! Follow the prophet, follow the prophet, follow the prophet, he knows the way!” We would discuss hugely important and influential, spiritual lessons that children under eight could never hope to comprehend. Yet, I sat there and sang
and hummed and clapped and allowed the words to stimulate nerve pathways in my brain that cannot be easily damaged.

I recall sitting amongst the group of children as always, pondering the amount of time it would take for me to be out of that semi-comfortable plush chair and dress onto my trampoline at home. The leader gained everyone’s attention, beginning the lesson.

“Now, kids, what TV shows are appropriate for you to watch?” At ten, my thoughts immediately went to Disney shows. Zach and Cody! Phineas and Ferb! Hannah Montana! Kim Possible! Wizards of Waverly Place! As people began to say my thoughts aloud, I became distraught.

“Goodness, no. Nope. That is too mature for you guys. Try again.”

Eventually all the shows we actually watched and enjoyed were listed, so we retraced our memories to find other shows. “Dora the Explorer?” I spoke up, teeth controllably chattering and eyes squinted.

“Why, yes. That show is perfect.” Utter shock. I stopped my teeth from chattering and fully opened my eyes to stare at her.

The final hour was a smaller community of children nearer my age. Only those in the same grade attended with a single Primary teacher. We engaged the Bible and the Book of Mormon in our—teacher-lead—conversations. I generally sat with my upper back gracing the plastic and metal of the chair, my butt (a word I wasn’t allowed to use) nearly slipping out of the edge, my feet flat, arms folded. Other times I sat with my legs gracefully folded very lady-like, arms still crossed, flat back against the chair’s entire material and bum (the word I was allowed to use, sparingly) also touching the back of the chair.

When I wasn’t being forced into this tedious routine, I began to fall out of it.

One night, a Monday which would have usually been spent doing a family religious activity, my mom told me the news. Another move. A move to Ohio. So, I began stock piling soda-pop and candy bars, researching hotels nearby, printing out maps to locations necessary to my schedule, and saving money. Just enough to survive on my
own for, well, forever. After preparations for about three months, I drafted a farewell note for my family— a rough draft. My mom found it. She couldn’t have even waited to discover my secret until I had a good, well-written letter.

She came into the room, crunching the white paper beneath her claws. “Josie! If you ever even THINK of running away I will sick the police on you. Is that what you want? To go to juvy at your age? The rest of your life ruined?”

I faced the wrath of a fearfully trapped, sympathetic mother that day. She feared that she might lose me. She understood my isolated emotions, having always followed my dad wherever his career took him and not willing to stop the pattern now.

That’s when I began to create my own habits. I threw myself into the new Church of Latter Day Saints in Ohio City, Ohio. I made quick friends. Friends that I actually enjoyed? Occasionally. Friends that were very religious were willing to accept me. Friends that weren’t my mom. I began praying on my own.

I had the classic pre-teen/teen rebellion, but I switched things up a tad. Instead of going to the outrageous extreme of drugs or inappropriate relations with boys, I became super religious. Not exactly what most kids would do to spite their parents, but hey, you do what you’ve got to do.

My dad’s side of the family was thrilled to learn that at least I was throwing myself into Mormonism. Mom’s lack of religious zeal and habit had my sisters skipping church, prayer, family meetings, etc. It was just my dad, his family, and I. So I gained reinforcement from them, and hearing my numerous aunts and uncles cheering on my spiritual work made the snowball spiral faster and faster down the hill. Even though most of them lived in Utah or Idaho, knowing family supported me helped. I read the Bible and Book of Mormon every day and began my progress on the Young Women’s goals.

My rebellion seemed to be a success thus far, so I took it up a notch. I began to use my Mom as a tactic for sympathy. I would tell people that it was really hard to have such a negative influence in the family. People believed me and called it a pity. “Such a shame.” She became a Satanistic role model that needed to be pulled back into the church for her children’s sake.

I was, weekly, listening to “Joseph Smith is the true prophet.” “God is our true Heavenly Father.” “Jesus is the son of God.” “The Holy Ghost is our subconscious.” I got tired of it, but I told myself that exhaustion was normal and I had to push through the annoyances to be able to go to heaven. At a certain point, I stopped caring about rebelling against my mom. I truly began to fear death. I feared the judgement day. I thought anything I did would not be good enough to get me into heaven. And that, to a very low self-esteemed, paranoid twelve year old, was gut-wrenchingly terrifying.

My Sunday school teacher stood in front of the small, four person class with her back to us. Her skirt flowed with ripples of wrinkles and danced on the floor. She stained her shirt sleeve with chalk dust as she drew on the board. The levels of the after life. A better person would face final judgement in the wonderful “heaven” of the Celestial Kingdom. A decent person may end up in the Terrestrial Kingdom. The worst end up in the Telestial Kingdom. Those in the Celestial Kingdom can visit anyone they want, but those in the Telestial Kingdom can’t visit anyone. She wouldn’t be able to visit me. My mom’s dark, dark brown eyes, rounded cheeks and chin, and suave, short black hair all appeared in my mind. I was told this before, she’s not going to make it into a higher place with me. Now that thought terrified me even more.

How could I have comprehended that fact? My (ex) best friend, the person who brought me into the world and had, thus far, carried me through it successfully, was not going to be with me when my life on Earth was over. She was going to be in an awful place, where sinners are punished for their sins. She would be forced there simply for not believing and studying the Mormon religion. Where is the fatherly love in that structure? My trust was betrayed, and my paranoia grew.

Instead of thinking and reflecting for myself what the church’s message meant for me, and accepting my mom and I’s different beliefs, I tried to push her back into the church.

Before, I was talking about my mom to gain sympathy (something I still feel horrible about), but now I was saying things to get her to Heaven. It was a mission I had to complete.

The mission failed.

Actually, the mission back-fired. Kids began seeing me not as the poor child whose Mom doesn’t have faith, but as a spawn of someone who doesn’t believe in our Heavenly Father. They approached and wiggled around me with caution. I was viewed as weak, about to snap out of the church at any moment.

I continued to go, despite my self confidence issues and embarrassment. I wanted to get into Heaven. I wanted my mom there with me.

I realized that my attempts were futile, and that I was only making life worse for myself. So I continued going with my head down. I didn’t talk to people much. I became a turtle lurking in the shadow’s of its shell, only
popping out to grab a bite of lettuce. I only did what I had to do to reap the benefit of a good after life. For some reason that included Wednesday night church.

Awkward—my mom had to drive me. Wednesday nights had the sexes separated, the boys at one end of the chapel and girls at the other. I generally didn’t even remember that it was a night for both genders. That is, unless I heard the scuffing of tennis shoes on the gym floor and shouts as someone scored. The boys generally played sports, while the girls generally made crafts or baked.

I was thirteen. Officially a teenager. Officially the only sibling from my family to attending church.

Another Wednesday night rolled around, so my mom’s car reluctantly rolled into the parking lot. She never turned off the car, only quickly dropped me off and drove away. If I was taking too long when she came by to pick me up, she would park in the back of the lot and wait for me to text her that I was ready.

I entered the halls, a wonderful, floating cake smell tingling my nostrils. My pace quickened and when I found the Young Women’s room everyone was seated in their normal chairs talking amongst themselves. In the front of the room, underneath the chalkboard and placed carefully on a table, was a batch of beautifully frosted cupcakes.

I sat down eagerly and waited for the lesson to start. Looked like we were going to be baking, smh.

A few minutes later, our teacher got up casually. Everyone’s attention diverted to the front of the room. She picked up a cupcake from the middle, turned toward us, and licked the frosting off the top. She placed the cupcake back. I could generally contain my physical reactions to the odd ways of my faith, but I could not help myself this time. Eyebrows a downward, furrowed ark, frown deep and confused, eyes painfully searching for the answer.

She told us to line up and all enjoy a cupcake. So we did. Then we sat down and began eating.

When we were all seated, she picked up the tray. The cupcake with no frosting was the only one that remained. She went on to tell us that that it was left because none of us wanted it. None of us wanted it because it had already been used. Just like if we have sex before marriage, we will have been used and no one will want us.

My mom didn’t have to wait in the back of the parking lot, I left a little early that day. I felt ‘sick’. I felt I was sick in the head for ever wanting to have sex at all.

On Sunday I went to church with my Bible, Book of Mormon, Young Women’s Progress Book, and journal in hand. I sat through the “Joseph Smith is the true prophet.” “God is our true Heavenly Father.” “Jesus is the son of God.” “The Holy Ghost is our subconscious.” Finally they were over, and I went to class. Everyone was shifted in their seating arrangements. The teacher’s seventeen year old son was in Bella Pugh’s chair at the front of the room. So I moved my one chair over and said nothing. He noticed me and began talking about my dad. Everyone loved my dad, he was good at blending in and using sympathy just the right amount.

Then the boy addressed me, “Hey, Josie! I forget…is your last name spelled with a P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n or s-e-n?”

“S-e-n.”

He referenced the other Peterson family, the one with seven boys, all very devoted. Their last name was spelled with an s-o-n.

“Oh, that’s right. Because the other Peterson’s have all sons, and your family has all sEnners.”

For some reason, I had to use the bathroom because, for some reason, I had to cry.

It didn’t happen overnight, or because of that tiny little comment, or because of the other snide remarks I got from people, but I fell out of the church. My fear continued while my faith had been stopped for years.

For a bit, I was nothing. I was lazy. I was a sEnner. I was unfaithful. I was damned to hell. I was whatever people thought of me. Then I actually began to ponder religion for myself. I went to a couple of friend’s churches. None of them felt like I belonged or believed.

I found out that some people simply don’t believe in a God at all. At first, that astounded me beyond all belief. I thought about it a lot.

My eighth grade science teacher held a debate for the class. One side had to argue that evolution and the big bang theory formed all existence, while the other side had to argue that God created everything. I was put onto the side that had to argue for the big bang theory. I thought about going with the certain cliches, “why would God do such horrible things to people if he loved us all so much?” I had an epiphany. I’m sure others have said this millions of times before, but I was incredibly proud of myself for thinking of this argument. “Well if God created us, then who created God?”

I went to my next class but only thought through this issue. People create religion in order to make sense of the world around them, which is a difficult thing for the brain to comprehend. I decided I didn’t need that interpretation of the world. I’m fine on my own and whatever happens in the afterlife happens. If I find a religion I enjoy, great. For now, I am an atheist.
First step was to simply stop going to church. That, in itself, was difficult because of the letters, texts, and invitations I continued receiving from members. I would take the pink, white, cream envelopes, rub them between my forefinger and thumb while walking to my room. I’d open the shallow top drawer of my dresser and release my grip, letting them float into a pile of worn Mormon notebooks, the Bible, and unopened letters.

I learned more and more about the world outside of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints bubble, emerging from under the rock. I no longer felt the need to wear a shirt over my already one piece bathing suit to social events, or a long sleeve shirt underneath a tank top, or cringe when someone said crap. I made new friends that I whollistically liked, and I liked their mistakes too. Well, I may not have liked them, but I was able to stand people’s mistakes.

My ex-best friend was my best friend again. Now she had two jobs, my mother and my comrade. We would talk about what our original ideas for “the afterlife” were. We would joke about things completely unrelated to religion. I loved talking to her without a looming awkwardness or guilt hanging over my head.

So much judgement from those who claim to follow an accepting and loving God. As I thought of my grandparent’s judgement I saw eyes in the sky. Six of them. Two for the Heavenly Father, two for Jesus Christ, and two for the Holy Ghost. I leered at the six eyes in the sky, and I won the staring contest. I blinked, no longer seeing anything but the stars.
Peace and Reconciliation
By Margaret Jones

At age 11, she said:
Peace is the colors of a rainbow
That shines up between the clouds in the sky.
It sounds like birds chirping on a warm spring day.
It feels like soft, squishy pillows that surround me.
It smells like flowers in a colorful meadow.

At age 17, she says:
Peace is respecting each other, believing in one another;
sharing our minds, hearts and bodies.
It sounds like the wind blowing in the Scottish Highlands
It feels like getting lost in the lyrics of a song
It smells like old stacks of vinyl records in a music shoppe
It tastes like a warm glass of green tea with lemon
"Every flower is a soul blooming in nature."
By Alston Zhang
Fire and Ice
By Anna Jones

We were like fire and ice
When we were hot
We were also so cold
We were in a spot
That showed us we should let go

We were a great match
But that fire burned out
Some ashes still remained
But the spark eventually wore out
And the ashes fell to the ground

We also acted like the peak of winter
Harsh and cold, no mercy on each other
But somehow from that freeze
The beauty of snow came onto us
And things were alright

Fire and ice go hand in hand
In a relationship that needs to end
Because you have to have a balance
Of fire and ice or else you'll freeze
Or burn to death
1886
By Elizabeth Bingham

The streets of London were dark as the winter bared its fangs. Quite a dreadful season it was too, no one was as blithe or energetic as in the other seasons. Perhaps it was because they had to spend time with one another without the luxury of being alone for a more than a minute or seeking sanctuary in the out-of-doors. Socializing is hard to do when you neither like nor share anything in common with your peers aside from social standing. Sometimes even that isn’t enough to make the forced inter-personal communication tolerable.

The date was the sixth day of January in the Year of Our Lord 1886. All of the pleasantness of the Yuletide season had much worn out by that time, even the liveliest of faces turning dour. My daughter and I had most reluctantly accepted a colleague’s invitation to come to his countryside manor for the New Year, and had arrived at the home of Lord Evansby in Litlington that same day. It was around eleven at night when I first had any real conversation with my hosts and the other present guests. The Evansby estate had accommodations, it seemed, for the entirety of a small village. However, there were nine of us present in the sitting room, four sets of notable couples and then myself. There were four children as well, but they had long since retired to their own chambers.

There we sat in plush chairs, sipping tea around a fire. I had no desire to participate in the conversation, for it was mostly long-winded tales about trading endeavors to India and China. I merely sat back and listened, occasionally nodding and making affirmative (or sympathetic) comments in passing as the situation required. I observed the others, noticing how unlike them I was. All of these men were married to quiet, well-spoken women, and held high positions in lucrative trading companies that fed off the commonwealth. They were also all of the same build, with strained waistcoats to match their lavish lifestyles. Their thinning hair, finely trimmed moustaches, and drunkenly flushed cheeks were a testament to their wealth.

All of a sudden, the conversation turned towards me.

“How long have you been without a wife, Inspector?” Lord Abernathy asked, raising the bottle of bourbon to fill his empty glass.

“Nearly three years,” I stated, my voice a bit more than a hoarse whisper (from a combination of limited use and poor health).

One of the ditzier women present inquired, “Did she leave you?”
I chuckled a bit to myself. “No, she, well… I cleared my throat, “She died.”
A quiet murmur spread its wings and flew around the group. It was this way at all gatherings that I went to. No matter who I was with, the most interesting thing about me was my deceased wife.

“How did she pass?” a younger woman directly across from me asked. She was leaning forward, a questioning expression on her face.

“Come now, Molly, that was quite rude. The man obviously doesn’t want to discuss it.” her husband said to her (a Mr. Crawford, was it? or perhaps Cramwell?).

Molly shrunk back, “Oh yes, you’re right. Please pardon my rudeness.”

“It’s quite alright,” I spoke up, rather curtly. “If you really would like to know, she died of what was ruled to be cholera.”

“Ruled to be?” she asked. “You sound as if you’re not sure.”

“Tell me,” I said to her, “as an investigator at Scotland Yard, is it not my job to be skeptical?”

“I suppose it is,” she nodded, intrigued, “but what does your skepticism tell you?”

“That’s quite enough, Molly!” her husband nearly yelled, his face red with embarrassment. “Please go and wait for me in our room.”

She lowered her head in shame, “Y-yes. I think I will.”
“I believe that we shall take our leave as well,” Lady Evansby said, rising with the rest of the women.
“Are you sure, my dear?” the lord of the house asked.
“Quite sure,” she smiled, “the hour is late and we must all be tired.”
“Very well,” he said, “if the women are retiring for the night, would you gentlemen care to join me in the lounge?”
Standing up, I added, “I believe I will also be taking my leave from tonight’s activities.”
“Really?” another man said, surprised. “Is something the matter?”
“Nothing of consequence,” I reassured them. “I am nearly spent for the day. I have been indisposed of late and the trip here has done me no favours.”
“T am sorry to hear it,” he said, “but if you change your mind, we will be awake for a while longer.”
“I will keep that in mind,” I waved to them, “Good evening.”
I made my way out of the warm sitting room and into the hallway. I walked to the stairs on the east side, taking in the numerous portraits and trinkets along the stone walls. There was a slight draft coming in from the windows, and I shivered as I opened the door to the stairs. The upper halls were just as opulently decorated. I noticed a large tapestry of an ancient battle hanging outside the door to my room as I entered. My small suitcase was sitting on the floor by the foot of the bed, having been delivered by the manor’s servants earlier in the night. I opened it, taking out my dressing gown and nightclothes. Quickly changing, I headed back out to the room next door. When I was just outside, I knocked, then quietly entered. My daughter, Amelia, was sound asleep in her bed, her chest rising and falling with her slow breathing. As I turned to leave, I stopped, glancing at the wall-sized mirror to the left.
I was a good bit thinner than I remembered myself being, paler too. Grey hairs had crept in among the black, and the dark circles under my eyes had become more pronounced. I wondered if this was what it was like to be nearly forty.
I left the room, closing the door as softly as I could. Suddenly, I bumped into something behind me. I whipped around, startled, only to find the woman, Molly, standing behind me.
She had been frightened as well, as I saw her with her hand over her mouth.
“Sorry!” I whispered, “I didn’t see you there.”
“No, it was my fault,” she responded, “I should have been paying attention to what was in front of me.”
“You’re quite all right,” I tried to reassure her. “Molly, was it?”
“Yes sir,” she nodded, “but I’m afraid I’ve quite forgotten your name, Inspector.”
“You may call me Victor,” I extended my hand, “Inspector Victor Hanby of Scotland Yard.”
“Victor,” she smiled as we shook hands, “that’s a lovely name.”
“As is Molly,” I said. “I must say, Molly, you are an incredibly inquisitive and observant individual.”
“Ah, yes,” she blushed with embarrassment, “Hamish says that they are some of my poorer qualities.”
“I will have to disagree with your husband on that in particular,” I told her, “they are rare qualities that are refreshing to see every once in a while.”
“Really?” she asked, perking up.
“Really. Most of the people that I work with don’t have nearly enough of either,” I explained. “Pardon my asking, but what has your interest piqued in the realm of the dead?”
“Oh, no,” she put her head in her hands, “it’s not that at all, sir! Really it’s not!”
“Then what could it be?” I asked, “Perhaps physiology or some other realm of science?”
She looked up, smiling sheepishly. “Truly sir, the only thing that I am interested in is the body itself. It’s such a miraculous thing to see work. I used to be in training to be a nurse, but I couldn’t continue once I was married.”
“Why not?” I inquired, “I’m acquainted with plenty of married nurses.”
“Hamish wanted me to be at home more,” she explained, “He said that he wanted us to be able to spend more time together.” She looked at her feet, “I think he thought I may have been unfaithful had I kept working.”
“Were you?”
“Good heavens, no!” her head snapped back up. “I would never dare to turn against Hamish’s wishes!”
I saw her eyes. They were fearful, but of what? Of me? Something about her body language made me
believe that she did not entirely trust me. She looked like she was hiding something, something that gave
sorrow to her trim face as well.

“And I would never imply that,” I tried to say calmly. “But, my dear lady, you seem frightened.”

She crossed her arms, adjusting the collar of her gown. “Well you are verging on the realm of prying,
str.”

“My apologies,” I said, “I don’t normally socialise. I also happen to exhibit the inquisitive
investigator’s folly. The realm of dinner parties and conversation are quite foreign to me.”

She laughed, “You are such a curious man.”

“It is my job,” I smiled.

“Oi!” a call came from the other end of the hallway.

Her red-faced husband, waistcoat struggling to fit around his torso, marched towards us. He was
fuming, almost seething with rage, and I was caught by surprise when he grabbed me by my collar.

“What do you think you’re doing with my wife?”

“We were just having a conversation about current affairs,” I lied, trying to distance myself from his
massive hand, “goings-on in the world and such.”

“Don’t play me for a fool, Inspector,” he said through his teeth, “you were trying to come onto her!
Your heart is so longing for your departed wife. She is a weak-willed woman, she would have accepted
your seduction had I not stepped in.”

“Hamish I—”

“I will speak with you later!” he cut her off, curtly.

“But will that entail ‘speaking’?” I interjected, “Or are you going to hit her again?”

He straightened himself, tightening the grip on my shirt, “And what exactly are you trying to imply,
Inspector?”

“I’m not implying anything,” my voice was shaking, his knuckles beginning to dig into my windpipe,
“I am telling you that I know that you beat your wife a simple process of reasoning. A reasoning process
at which you yourself have just attempted and failed astoundingly.”

“I- I can’t comprehend how you could make such a serious accusation!” he stammered, his blubbering
burgundy face beginning to bead with sweat.

“Well,” I began, throwing my hand up to try and wrench his mitts from myself, “her subservient and
overly-submissive attitudes as well as obvious anxiety problems lead one to believe that something has
been happening to cause her distress. She is also in very conservative clothing whenever others are
around, even with the current evolution of social normalities and fashion. Her attitude towards your
marriage seems like she wants more in life than what she is currently receiving, but she is somehow stuck
and there is no leeway on either side of the issue. Now, looking at your behavior, you are paranoid,
aggressive, authoritarian, hot-tempered, and quick to put down opposition, as seen from tonight’s display.
Hardly a far cry from the stereotype of one who would strike his wife. But now that I’ve gotten a closer
look at your hands, since you attacked me, there are bruises along the knuckles and slight discolorations
on the palms of your right hand. I assume I don’t even have to say what that implies, but continuing on.
I can tell by the way your hand is balled in a fist that you would very much like to punch me in the face to
stop this endless prattling, but hold on a moment more, I’m almost done. If you were to hit me, it would
prove my theory that you are not only a colossal imbecile, but also violent. However, if you do not hit me,
you cannot assert your dominance nor disprove my theory. Either way, I can take this accusation and
bring it before your peers, instigating questions, prompting further accusations and further action, as well
as a sense of alienation and loss of esteem by your colleagues, or rather, business partners. So, the choice
is now yours, and I am thoroughly interested in what you are going to do next.”

Naught but silence rang out after I had finally closed my mouth. I knew, then, that I had won. If my
“opponent” had not been enraged before, he definitely was now.

He loosened his grip on me, and, with a downturned gaze, muttered, “You bloody bastard,” before
letting me go entirely.

My feet were once again planted on the ground, and I coughed to catch my breath, rubbing my neck
gingerly. “It seems like you’ve chosen to try and disprove my theory, sir,” I commented, “but
nevertheless, I would suggest treating your wife with as much respect as she deserves, lest I make my speculations public.” Of course, the barmy fellow was still quite overwhelmed with the matter, and thus muttered something about retribution and waddled off down the hall, leaving Molly and myself alone once again.

We stood in silence for a few moments as I watched her husband retreat to his chambers, until I felt Molly wrap her arms around my waist, her warm face pressed into my back.

Her muffled voice was difficult to distinguish. “What was that?” I asked.

“Thank you,” she told me, and I could hear her shaking voice as she cried tears of relief, “no one has ever been able to stand up to Hamish like that before, myself included.”

I bowed my head, clasping her warm hands which rested on my hips, “It’s my job to attempt to alleviate the struggles of those around me, but I’m glad that this time I was able to make a difference, however insignificant.”

“You’re right,” she pulled herself away from me, standing proudly as I turned to face her. “He probably won’t remember any of this in the morning, considering how much he drank tonight. But it is the small victories that give the timid the courage to become strong.”

And then she laughed, in spite of herself, with tears streaming down her face. I joined her, the tension having dissipated from the night. Her young face was so joyful, like a wild lark who had just been freed from its cage. She reminded me of days gone by, when I myself was young and married, when naught but a few feet stood between myself and pure felicity. She was beautiful.

But suddenly, her face became blurred, and the hall seemed to tilt and twist before my eyes. I felt a familiar, biting pain in my side, like a blade was forcefully being thrust in as it corresponded with a mallet being beaten across my skull. I felt my legs grow weak, and I fell back against the stone wall to brace myself upright, clenching my teeth to attempt and distract from the agony. I heard Molly’s distraught voice, and felt her icy hand against my perspiring face.

“Inspector?” her eyes gazed concerned upon my miserable state, “Inspector, what’s wrong? Are you alright?”

“C—” but I could barely speak, “Could you help me to my room?” I looked up to meet her aspect, a plea in my eyes. “Please…”

“Of course,” she took me under my arm, supporting my weight, though she was a good bit shorter than I.

“What is your pain, Inspector?” she asked urgently.

“How do you mean?”

“I’m trained as a nurse, do you not remember?” she took each step with care and kept her eyes trained on me, “If there is anything I can do, I need to know.”

“I am—” I cleared my throat, “very thankful for your assistance, but I’ve got this under control.” She scoffed, “A likely story.”

At that moment, the door in front of us was flung open, and my daughter Amelia appeared from within. “Father!” she cried, running towards us. “Has it happened again?”

“Again?” Molly asked.

“It’s a condition,” Amelia explained for me, “when he’s overstressed or overworked, his body acts up.” Molly responded, a stressed note on her voice, “Has it been treated in any way?”
Left with Just Bones
By Amber Jared
my mother
By Lexi Sullens

my mother always chose the wisest words
until she lead me to say “i do”
to a man who does not say “i love you”
in the 5 am light or even after many lights
to the paper between his lips or multiple
sips of what’s in his cup
i should have trusted myself
when i noticed the money
only fades away
i listened to those around me and
now i am in bed with a man who
loves gin more than my eyes
i lay beside him thinking he will love
me one day … if i continue to stay
he will learn to love my imperfect marks
that are not shown in that tight red dress
he picked for me to wear
he will learn to love what i find amusing
and not only when i stumble over words
in front of his friends and he calls me a ditz
little does he know he is tearing me apart
to where no one will love me … to where
i hate myself and my words because they
are always covered by his brutal screams …
night after night
he should know not to take me out anymore
my mother wouldn’t have.
that’s for sure
“Scribbles on the page age, unlike you and me.”
-Emma Petersen
-Editors Note-

Hi guys!

I am very excited to introduce the third edition of Webb’s literary magazine, the Muse. Let me give the Muse’s social media a quick shoutout: go follow musewebb on instagram!

A few notes on this year’s edition, it was selective. The Muse has begun a blog on wordpress (link in the weekly newsletter), so we had so many submissions to consider. I selected the ones I felt represented the Webb school with as much artistic emotion and creativity possible.

If you wish to submit for next year, email musewebb@gmail.com or emmavpetersen@gmail.com.

Thank you so much for reading! Hope you enjoy this, and thank you so much to all of the amazing artists and writers at Webb who share their fantastical or real experience through the creative outlet that is art.

PS. suggestions for improvement are always welcome! Constructive—CONSTRUCTIVE criticism is accepted.