

A close-up photograph of tree bark with a rough, fissured texture. The bark is dark brown with some lighter, yellowish-brown patches. The word "CAMBIUM" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters with a thin black outline. The letters are positioned horizontally across the upper portion of the image.

CAMBIUM



Feather River College

Cambium

A Humanities Journal

Quincy, California



Cambium at Feather River College nourishes intellectual and creative communities on our campus while allowing students to apply what they've learned. The journal also serves as a bridge with local communities, creating connections between the campus community and regional writers, artists, and other community members. *Cambium* is an opportunity for aspiring and established artists and writers in the community to share their art and writing.

Cambium is the annual humanities journal published each spring by Feather River College (FRC) in Quincy, California. Students interested in creative writing and small press publishing are encouraged to participate on the editorial board.

Visit <https://www.frc.edu/english/cambium>
for information and submission guidelines
or contact the Editor-in-Chief at NGrose@frc.edu.

All rights revert to the author upon publication, and we expect *Cambium* to be acknowledged as the original publisher in any future chapbooks or books.

Our address is Editor-in-Chief, *Cambium*, Feather River College,
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Quincy, CA 95971

The views expressed in *Cambium* solely reflective of the authors' perspectives. Feather River College takes no responsibility for the creative expression contained herein.

Content Warning: *Cambium* provides an open space for writers and artists to exchange ideas. Some of the selections in this journal will include topics that some readers may find offensive and/or traumatizing.

Cover art by
Brittany Harmon

<https://www.frc.edu/english/cambium>



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Chris Connell

Will Lombardi

Art Editor

Josh Olivera

Student Editors

Tanner McCutcheon

Jake Cook



Faculty Editor Bios

Chris Connell—Chris Connell is a professor of English at Feather River College. He has a long and deep interest in creative writing of all kinds and enjoys helping students develop their creative chops in the Creative Writing classes. He is supposedly writing a novel and a book about bees.

Nikki Grose—Dr. Nikki Grose has loved stories for as long as she can remember. When she was a child, she devoured books. As an adult, that love grew throughout her college years and eventually led her to the world of composition. She believes that stories have a strong power to educate and unite us, provide opportunities to question and challenge ourselves, and are at the basis of everything we do. Sharing stories and encouraging writers and other artists who tell stories through visual means is an important part of the work she wants to do—thus, *Cambium* was born.

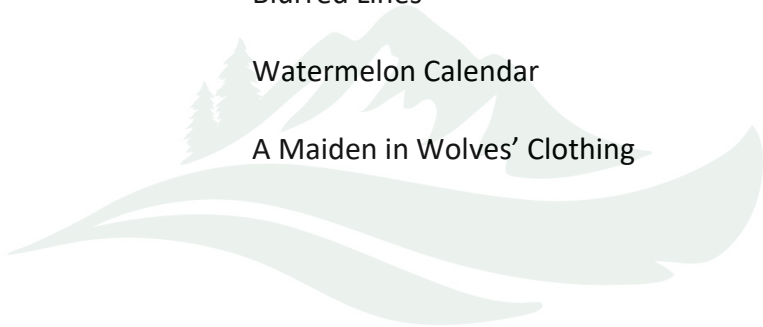
Will Lombardi—Dr. Will Lombardi lives in, loves, and works to protect the wild landscapes of the Feather River Watershed and the communities that depend on them. He is dedicated to sharing and exploring local history, literature, and art.

Josh Olivera—Joshua Olivera is an artist and professor of art in Quincy, California. In addition to making art and teaching, Olivera has worked as a fly fishing and whitewater guide and enjoys backpacking and bike touring throughout the western United States. All of these activities inform his studio practice and provide a sense of responsibility, to help ensure that these places will endure.



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From the Eyrie

Eyrie can be defined as a nest, specifically of a bird of prey, such as the Eagle, and is typically located high in the mountains. The Eyrie of the Cambium, then, is our roost.

The word cambium refers to a tissue layer in plants that provides cells for the secondary growth of stems and roots. Secondary growth is vital—it occurs after the first season and results in increased thickness, which can offer vital protection for plants. In this way, *Cambium* offers us a metaphor for our own growth—the way we learn, grow, and strengthen ourselves through visual and written stories. Let *Cambium*, then, symbolize the work, dedication, and growth of our own students and community members in and around Feather River College.

Groundwater keeps our rivers flowing and replenishes our water systems to help seed new life. In this way, let us think about how our bodies feed from the groundwater of our souls.

Groundwater

The zone of saturation
has permeated into our bodies

Ice melts, snow slowly recedes
from the shaded soil and duff

The petals of spring flowers unfold,
pollen spilling from the wrinkled corolla

We are waiting.

—Nikki Grose



I'm the Pen

Jordan Branham

I'm the pen
I'm the ink that seeps between the cracks
An oh shit moment
I'm the back handed compliments
The read between the lines
To get the message
I'm the voicemails that no one leaves
The incorrect information on Wikipedia
I'm the FaceTime you didn't expect so you dismiss it
I'm the rip in the grocery bag
"Damn it not the oranges"
I'm the text in lower case letters
I'm the no emoji's
I'm the acrobats with no stunts
Just a tease with no sleeves
I'm the miss calls
That no one ever replies to
I'm the clown without the jokes
I'm the taxi that never stops
I'm the final notice before all your tears get evicted
I'm the catch and the phrase
I'm the hi without the wave
I wish I gave this much more to myself
So, I can move forward
Not look back
And
Question what if?
I'm the glance
You didn't know what to make of
I'm the long pause after a conversation
Because you didn't know what to say
But you blew up like Mentos in Pepsi
Then said it was "ok"
I'm the LED lights that turns to blue
Because all I think about is the constant
Déjà vu
Because I'm the rain that hits the glass and claps back at you

I'm the foot on the break that slips
I'm the person that will never remember your name
But always your face
I'm the Why?
Without the "who", "what" and "where"
I'm the moon without the sun
Because what would you have to look forward to
If I'm not time, then what's forever
Because there's no forever with you
I mean me
Because who was this all about
You see
I'm all the odds
Never even
I'm the Benadryl without the
Antihistamine
I'm the Advil
That didn't get rid of the leftovers in your brain
I'm the dream you can't remember
That random memory flash back of when you were 10
It's either now or never
But hear me on this
Somethings are meant to be forgotten
Just not this.



Untitled

Jacob Cook



Distinguished Disorientation

Mia Martinelli



I Hate this Job

Max Shmelev

My job sucks. I walk in, in the morning, pull the time card out of the slot on the wall, and slide it into the clock in machine on the wall. My idiot manager is too cheap to buy a new one so I have to swipe my card like 10 times before it registers it. Finally, I walk down the hall past My manager Tim's office and into the employee locker room. I set my bag down, kick off my tennis shoes, and open up my locker. I briefly looked inside, only to realize I forgot my work pants in the dryer at home. I let out a huge sigh and reluctantly walked toward my manager Tim's office. I knocked on the door and heard a faint and congested sounding voice say,

"What?" I reply with "It's Kira", then an even fainter "Come in."

I open the door and see Tim sitting in front of his computer furiously typing. He instructs me to sit down and to give him a moment to finish his email, so I do just that. I sit there and look around his office for a bit. The walls are completely empty, aside from 3 pictures to Tim's immediate right. One picture of a woman who I can only assume is his sister, because no one in their right mind would marry or date a person so miserable and self conscious that they become a manager of a McDonalds just to look like he has confidence and is in control. Definitely not me. The other two photos were of his tiny teacup poodle, and a selfie of himself at a golf course. After a few moments, His royal highness, Timothy McDonalds Manager III lifts his eyes up from his laptop expecting me to say something.

I clear my throat and tell him, "I need to borrow pants for my shift today, I left mine at home."

Without a word, Tim stands up with a grunt and walks over to the left corner of his room behind his seat and pulls a pair of extra large black pants from a dusty box. He hands them to me, and I say, "do you have any mediums?" He stares at me, then turns around, and starts ruffling through the box until he finds a medium at the bottom of the box.

"Will there be anything else, princess?" Tim says in a mocking tone, I was taken by surprise when he said this and all I could say was "Thanks, gorgeous" and closed the door. I walked down the hallway again and got ready for my shift.

"30 minutes until my lunch break" I think, while glancing at my watch. I look up and the next customer is standing in front of me already.

"Hi sir, welcome to McDonalds how can I help you?"

The guy orders two big macs, two orders of large fries, and a large coke. "Your order comes out to \$15.36" I say in the fakest customer service voice I could muster.

"Awfully expensive aint it?" the customer ask.

"I don't make the prices sir."

He stares at me with the most intense blue eyes I have ever seen, I stare right back. While I stand there behind the register, completely tunnel visioned in this guy's eyes, I feel a tug on the collar of my shirt, the tug turns to pull, and the pull turns into this customer dragging me across the front counter and onto the ground of the restaurant. He picks me up and puts a gun right next to my ear. At that moment I don't feel fear, I am completely calm and it is almost like I can't hear the man screaming for money from the registers and threatening my life. Time

stands still. I only snap out of it when I hear a loud booming voice coming from the back of the restaurant.

“LEAVE NOW AND YOU WILL NOT BE HURT. STAY, AND YOU WILL LEARN WHAT TRUE SUFFERING REALLY IS.”

The robber replies “I’m the one with the gun, I make the rules.”

After a moment of silence, a gunshot comes from the kitchen and the man restraining me lets go. I turn around to see him falling down on the floor where he stood, the slap of his lifeless body on the floor is something I’ll never forget.

I watch the robber lay motionless on the blood-soaked McDonald’s floor mat. I feel paralyzed in my own body, unable to move until I feel a tap on my shoulder. Tim stands before me and outstretches his hand. I take it and follow him back to his office, where he gives me a blanket and some water. He sits in the chair right next to mine and tends to the cuts and scrapes I sustained when I was pulled over the counter. Once I am bandaged up I look at Tim, and a wave of emotion comes over me. This guy who I’ve always hated, who has made my life miserable, just saved my life. He shot a person through the wall without even seeing him. I turn my head more to look at him full on, close my eyes, and I lean in to kiss him. I’m not sure what came over me, but at that moment my manager, Tim, was the sexiest person I had ever seen and I was ready to marry this man. I continue leaning in expecting his lips to meet mine, but I don’t feel them. I open my eyes and he is standing up by the door. He looks at me sitting there, laughs, and says, “I’m sorry Kira, I am happily married for over 28 years. You should find someone your own age to do that with.” I hate this job.



Adaption

Alicia Manning



Big Chillin'

Lindsey Gaspers



Worth the Risk

Olivia Schuepbach



Steam rises off of the lukewarm pond that lay in front of us.

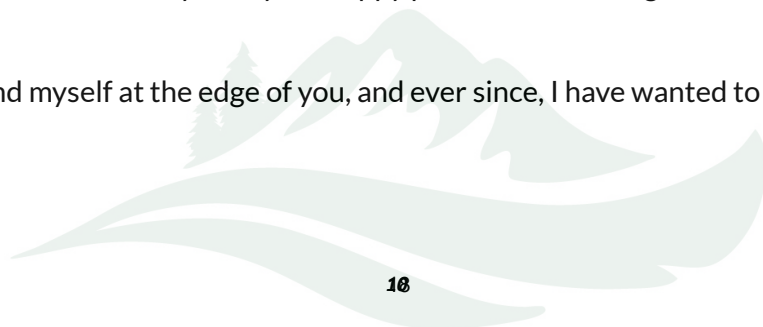
A reflection of pines and a peaking sunrise beams off the water top.

I sit on the hill above you, forming my admiration into words.

You tread below me on the bank, casting out for a morning catch.

Quietly, I sit and observe you in your happy place, I never thought I had a happy place.

But then I found myself at the edge of you, and ever since, I have wanted to get to the center.



Your arms are the walls that protect me from harm and break my fears.

Your smile is the muse that inspires me to put these thoughts on a piece of paper.

We joke about how deep this man-made hole of water is, but we see no end.

The walls of this pond drop off like cliffs, and run deeper than one can see.

This pond is, in its own way, my love for you.

Unfamiliar, sudden, even a little intimidating.

But I love a good scare, my own psychological horror flick, you are the main star.

If I am going to be afraid of anything, at least let it be loving you.

Feelings I still can't quite express to you, so I just continue to write and babble.

But these words could never be quite as breathtaking as you are.

As I perch up here with my birds-eye viewpoint.

I trace your sandy curls with these eyes of mine.

The perfect photo on the water top diminishes as you skip a rock.

As you turn to me, the smile on your face is all I need to know, it is worth the risk.

American Valley

Shasta Partain



Weathered—Beckwourth, CA

Connor LaPerle



Saturated

Dasha Petrov

Amidst the leaves the ground, soiled by rain. Covered- neglected.

Surrounded by worms that eat the dirt that's otherwise useless. By slugs that grow slow, gluttonous, juicy- on dead leaves they can't help but indulge themselves with.

Wet and sticky I am one of them. Disgust these hideous organs secrete.
Slimy, and weak a mess of palpable interests discarded I am.

Buried amidst the leaves, joined by algid soil. I descend with the rain.
life away from light, thought for my stomach. I fill it, with dirt, grime, and soot. I devour.

Sunk into the soil, I am, the dirt the worms gorge themselves on,
and once I make way, deep within its belly, become the worm itself.

Amidst those leaves, the slugs, the sticky slime, the wet unfiltered soot,
I lay, until a shrew discovers me. I gurgle in its mouth as it ingests me as one limb.

Saturated by the acid, I begin, to digest.



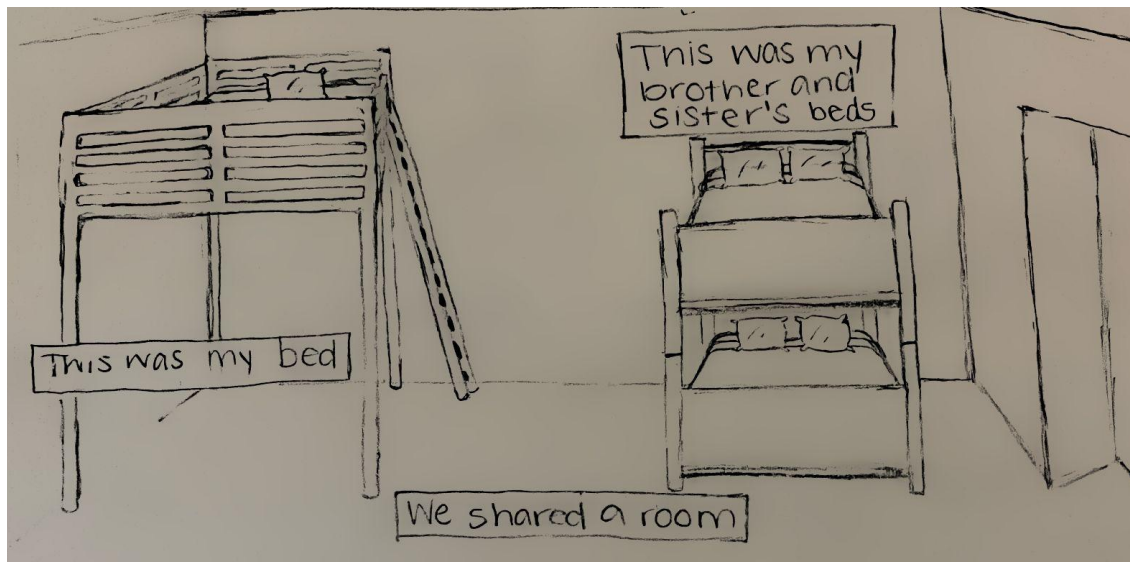
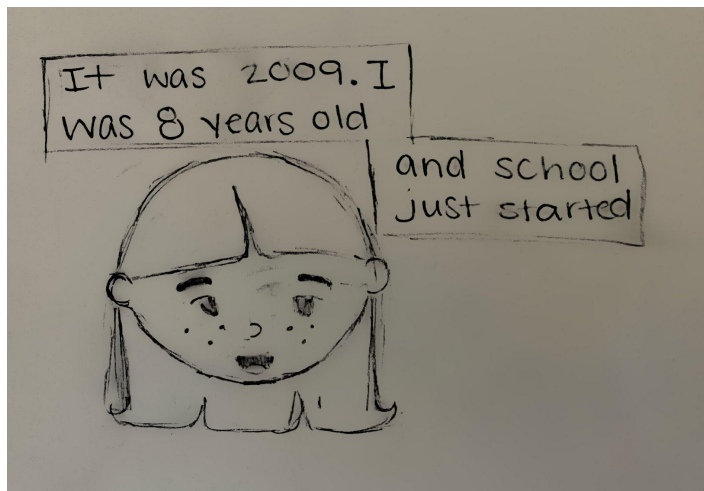
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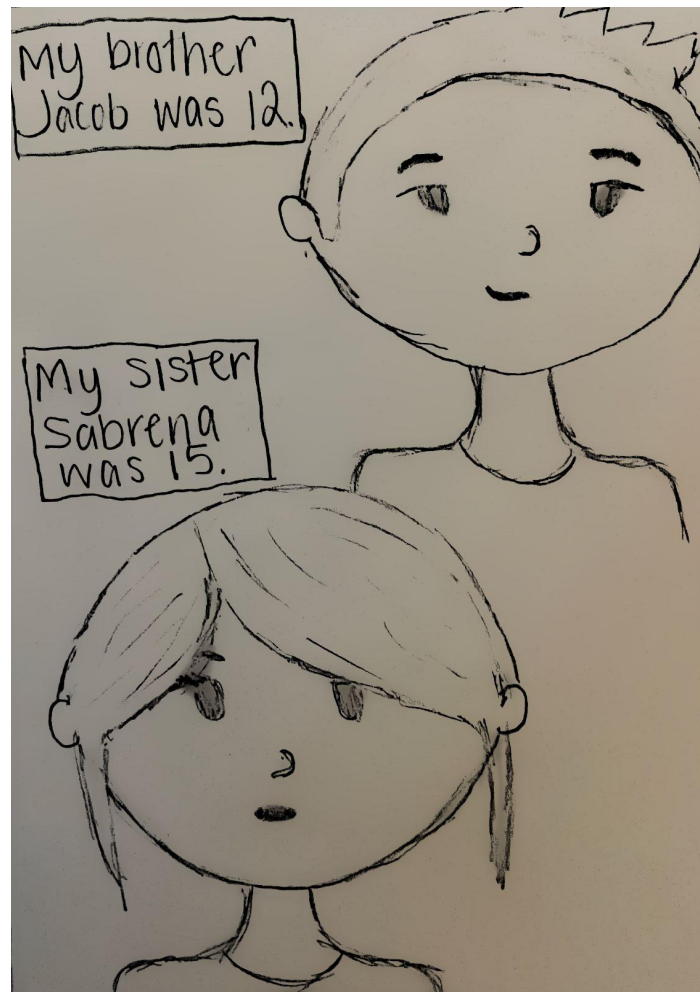
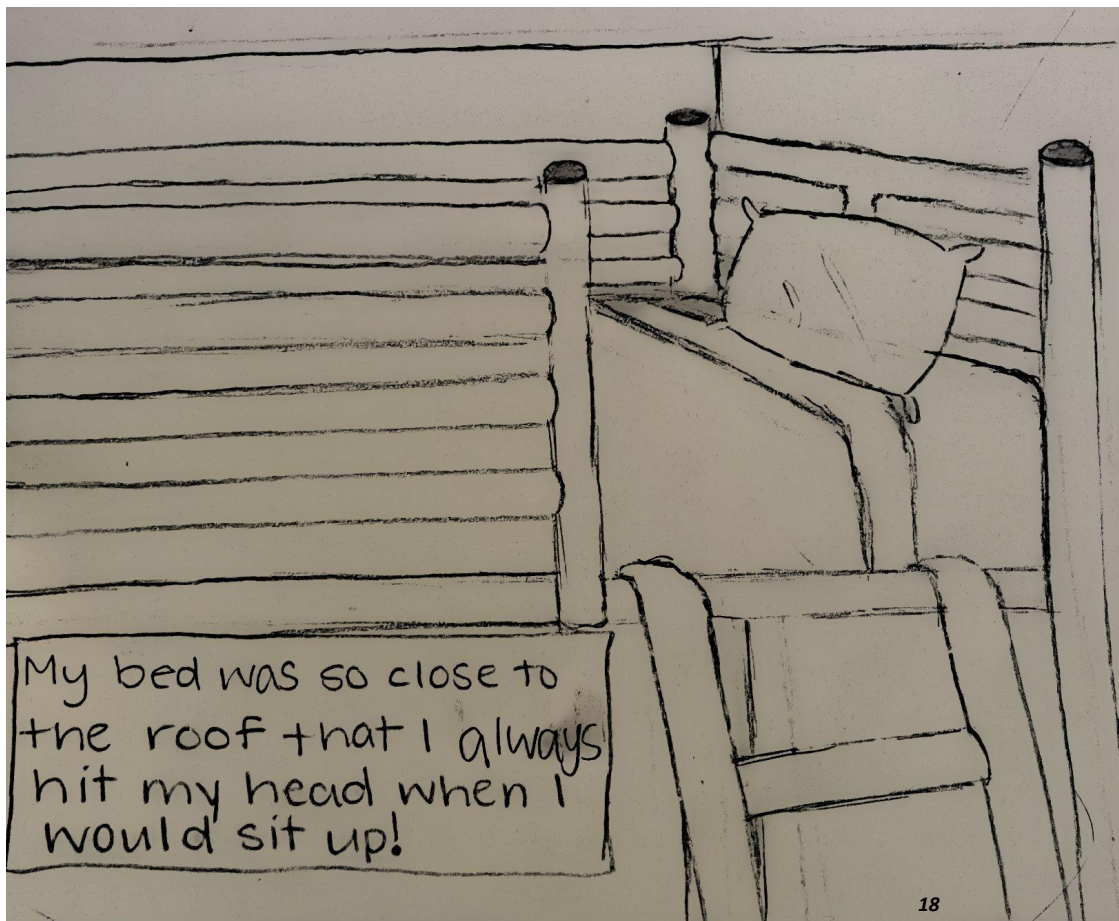
Teagan Lopez-Schrammel

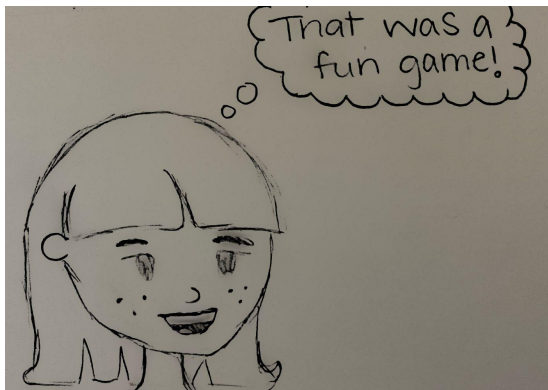
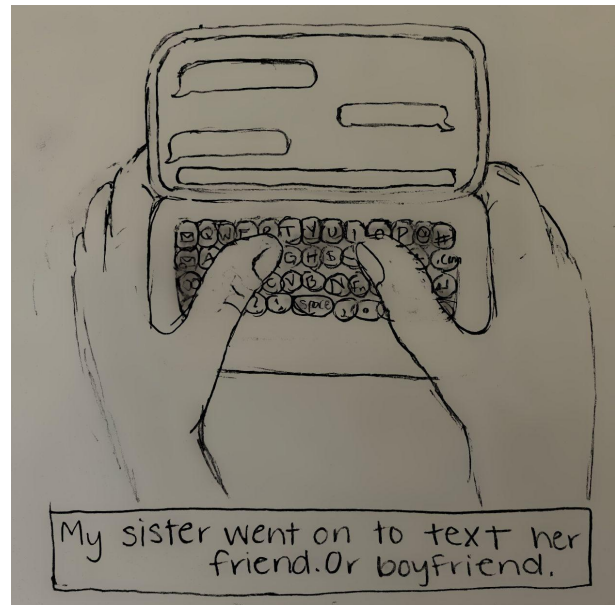
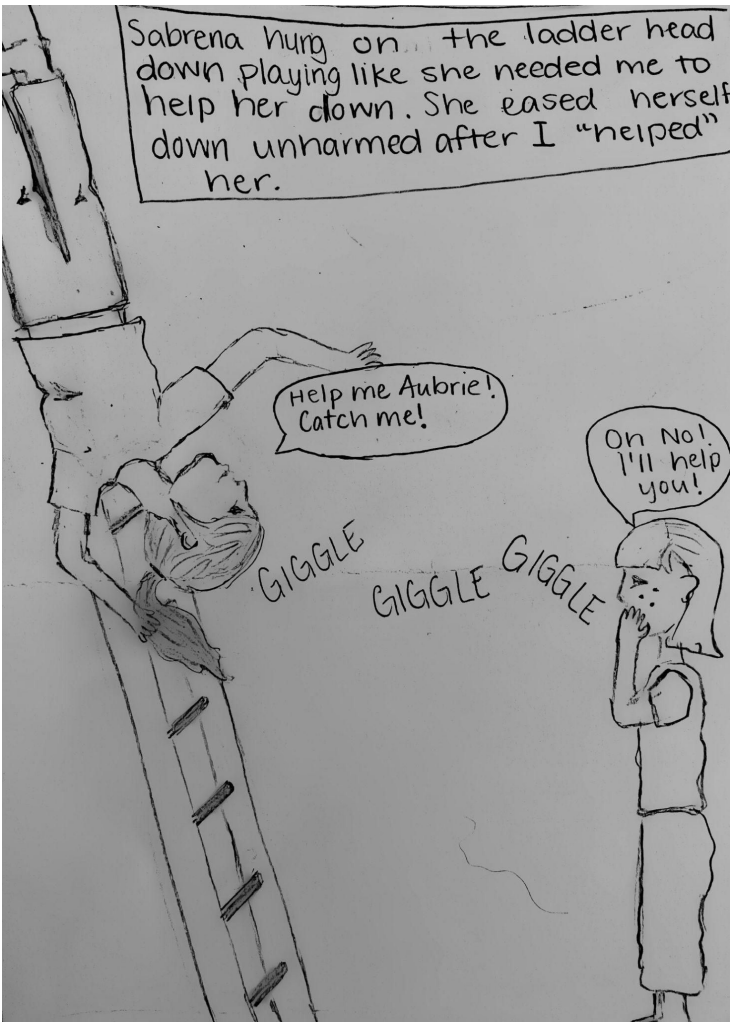


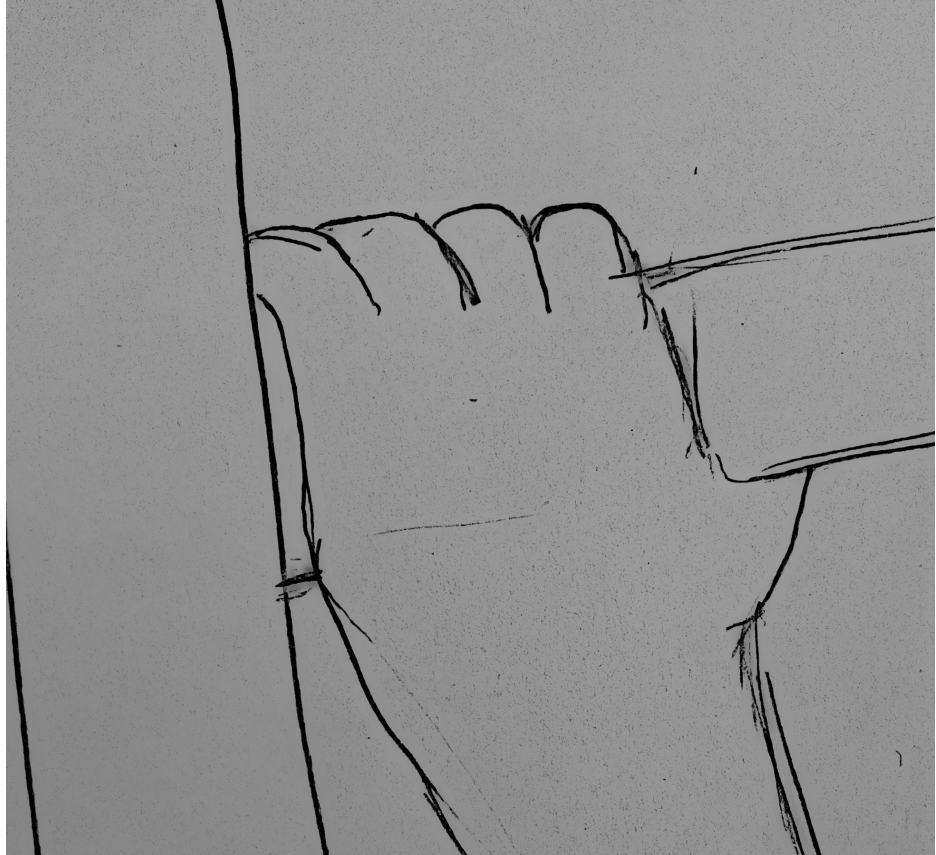
Still Smiling

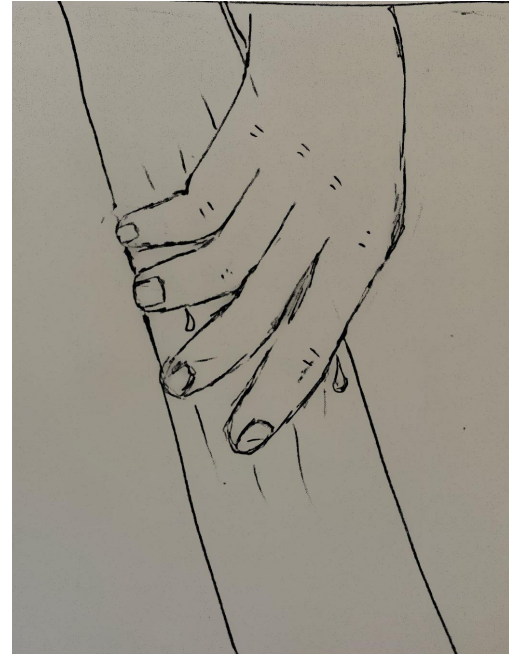
written & drawn by: Aubrianna
Keeler



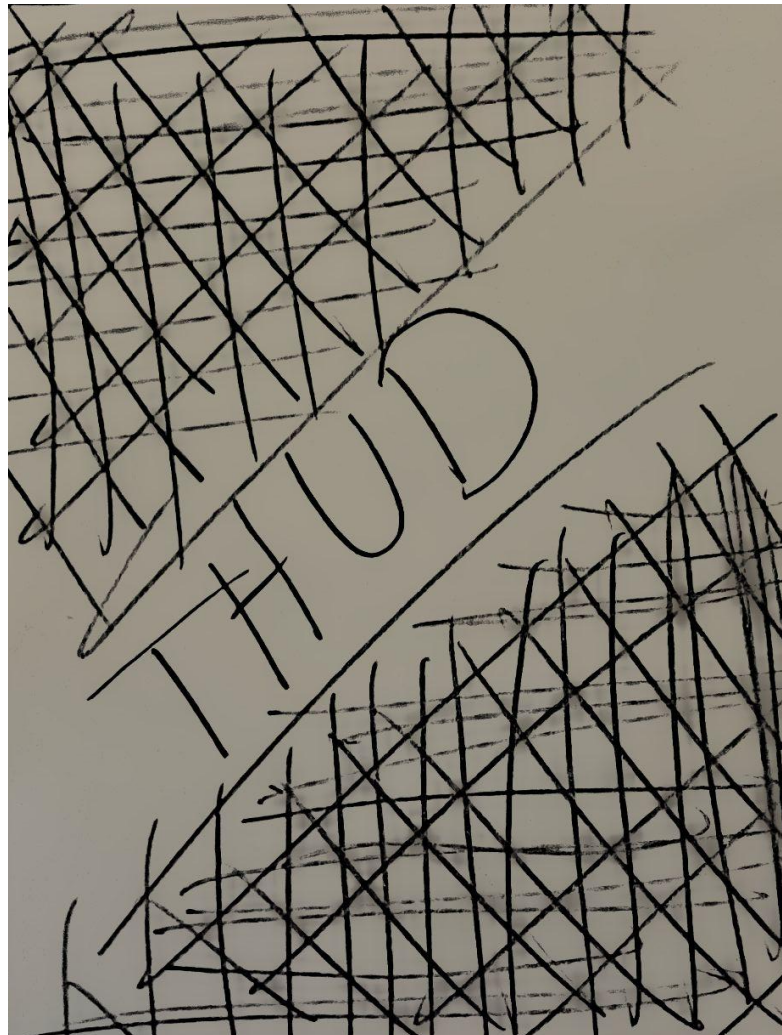
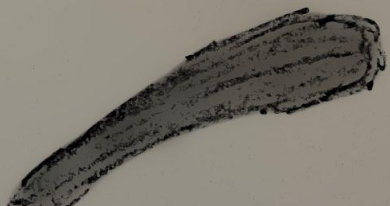






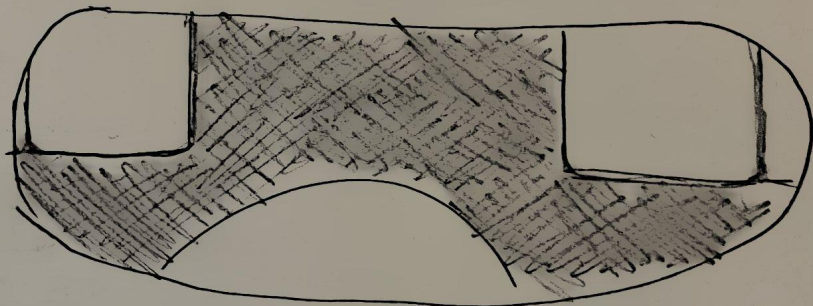


OH NO





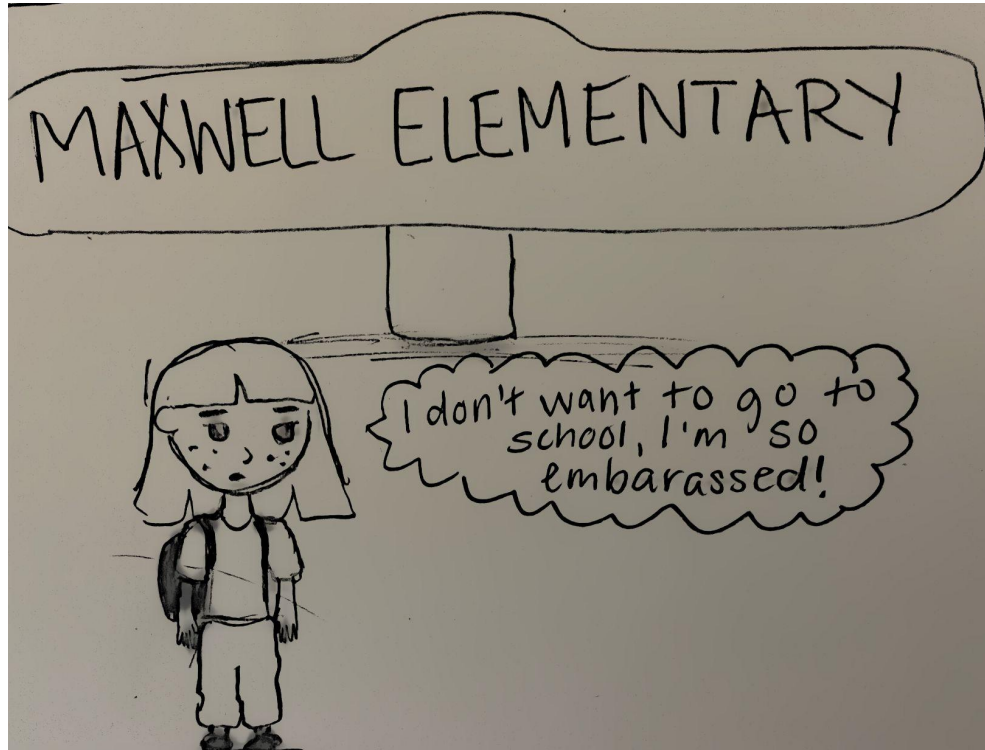
My two front teeth were knocked out!

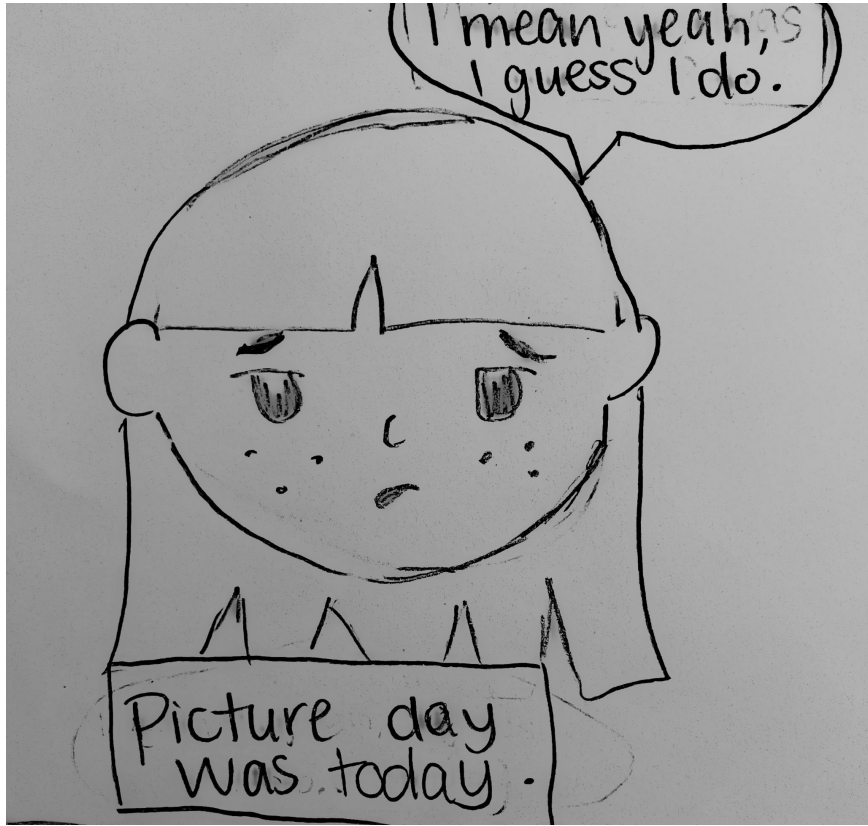


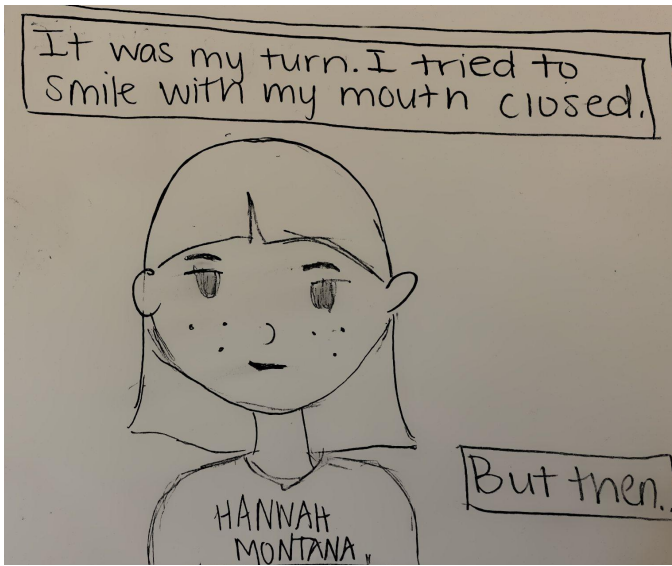
Mom I can't
go to school
like this!



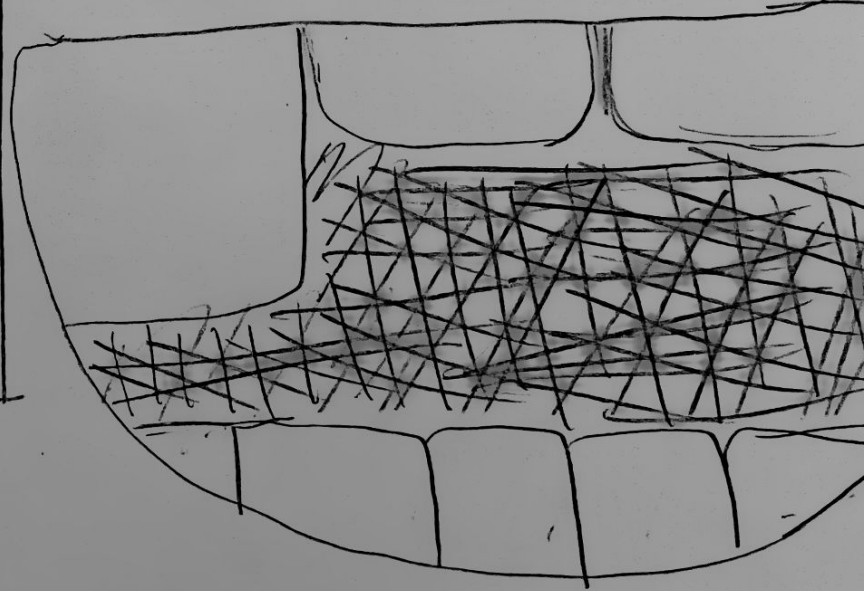
I know you don't
want to honey,
but you have to.
Look at the bright
side your teeth will
grow back at the
same time!







I learned to embrace the
suck. Things would get better.
My teeth were growing back.
It just takes time.
I had to be patient.



Let's Not Wang Chung Tonight

Kenneth McCann

Disclaimer: The following essay has been created for the sense of humor, by the mind of someone with too much free time on their hands. While many of the ideas can be presented in an academic capacity, the points presented in the essay are for the purpose of entertainment and lines where things are stated such as Mr. Chung (nobody in the band has that name) are said are thereby used for comical effect.

"I'd drive a million miles, to be with you tonight". These are the words that that hit song from the eighties starts off. It briefly catches my attention while scrubbing away at dishes in the back of a restaurant.

I dip my hands back into the scalding hot water with those words bouncing off the inside walls of my mind. While my hands turn the same color as the Saturday night lobster special, a realization hits.

A million Miles? In a night?

Hold on! Let's figure this out. If we were to assume that the average night is approximately eight hours (based upon the average number of hours that a human being needs to sleep), then we could divide those million miles by eight hours. That means that the average speed per hour is one-hundred and twenty-five-thousand miles per hour. That's pretty damn fast.

Let's put this into perspective. If you look into the average circumference of the earth, it falls just short of twenty-five thousand miles. That's five trips around the earth per hour. Forty trips around by the end of the eight hours.

Now, while I am all for grand gestures of love or admiration, this seems to be both a waste of time and excessive to reach a goal. Speaking of grand gestures, why can't we make them a little more grounded in reality. Where are the gestures that state if you lived two miles away, I would walk half a mile in scorching hot weather before turning around and going home because there is a better way to get to you. Or if you had one-hundred dating profiles I would say yes to forty-seven of them before actively questioning why you have so many dating profiles and what would necessitate the need to have so many.

Back to the issue of the opening of the song why does he need to go so fast. Even physics must have a problem with this statement.

Taking into account the approximate circumference of the earth, and the speed at which the troubled Mr. Chung is travelling at, there are several issues to take into account.

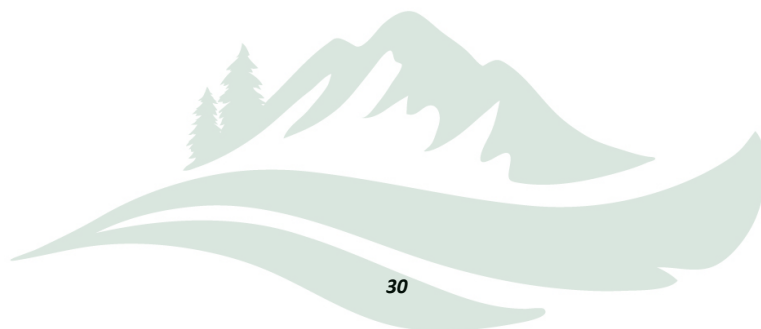
To better understand the argument at hand it would help to have something with which to compare Mr. Chung's speed. The best comparison for this would be the international space station. According to the Kennedy Space Center the International Space Station (ISS) circles the earth once every ninety minutes at an estimated seventeen-thousand-five-hundred miles per hour at ground speed. Ground speed would be how fast something would be travelling if it were actually on the ground. The ISS on the other hand does not travel across the ground, it instead operates somewhere in the area between earth's outer atmosphere and low earth orbit

constantly at or near the border of the Earth's atmosphere. While I couldn't find an estimation of the ISS's actual speed, I remember a few years ago reading that the ISS travels at around eighty-one to eighty-three thousand miles per hour. No this is a lot closer to the speed at which Mr. Chung is travelling at but not quite there.

With this information for comparison, we can look at the issues at hand. The ISS maintains its speed to stay at a certain distance from earth's gravitational pull. So where does that leave Mr. Chung? Is he escaping earth's orbit? This has its own factors to consider. Once a car hits a certain speed it generates more force going over the top of the vehicle instead of under it, this allows the vehicle to ply to the road enough to maintain traction at higher speeds so they don't either fly off of the ground, or lose their ability to turn. This is commonly referred to as downforce. I'm not sure the amount of downforce the shocks on a car can withstand, nor the amount of force caused by wind resistance that a car can take, but I'm sure that it isn't one-hundred and twenty-five thousand miles per hour. Furthermore, this leads to the question of how much force could a car constantly withstand before it falls apart.

If this issue gets examined the area in which the scientific research can be narrowed down to a certain area. The band Wang Chung is a band centered in the eighties coming from England. This can narrow down the field of research to cars from the eighties that were available in England.

The reasons presented in the paragraphs before lead me to conclude that Wang Chung's *Everybody Have Fun Tonight*, isn't about love or partying but either a desire to leave Earth's orbit, or about attempting a mass suicide. So let's not Wang Chung tonight.



Untitled

Matthew Goff



Untitled

Teagan Lopez-Schrammel



My Mind

Cheyanna Burnett-Griffith

A place like space, I feel so alone
I am tempted to quit.
Many thoughts swarm my brain
As I try to convince myself of the positive outcomes
If I stay,
If I remain.
I try to keep it in,
But it's getting too much to bear
Or is it? Just an excuse for my disheartened actions
Things I cannot take back
Things I cannot change
The people I've hurt...
It all seems so strange.
Now I think to myself,
Why me?
Is this the life I need?
Must I suffer in order to persevere
Or should I persevere so I don't suffer?
Tonight, I lay on my bed wondering to myself
If I give up, who would mind...
My family, my friends, perhaps my other half
All because of the things I've done in the past.
Now I'm overthinking and I want to cry.
But then after all the tears, it's like why.
I will feel the same
Nothing won't change...
Change, Change, Change
Over and over again
It's like a tape recorder but it's stuck in my brain
And my mind don't know how to move on
Should I dwell and be left with all this pain?
Or find a solution to feel better.
Maybe, others will think that the second choice is the best
But for who? For myself or for them.
I just want to be happy
All I want is great life
But this cannot happen if I don't try.
So I will ease my mind and go to bed,
Hopefully tomorrow, I will be out of my head.

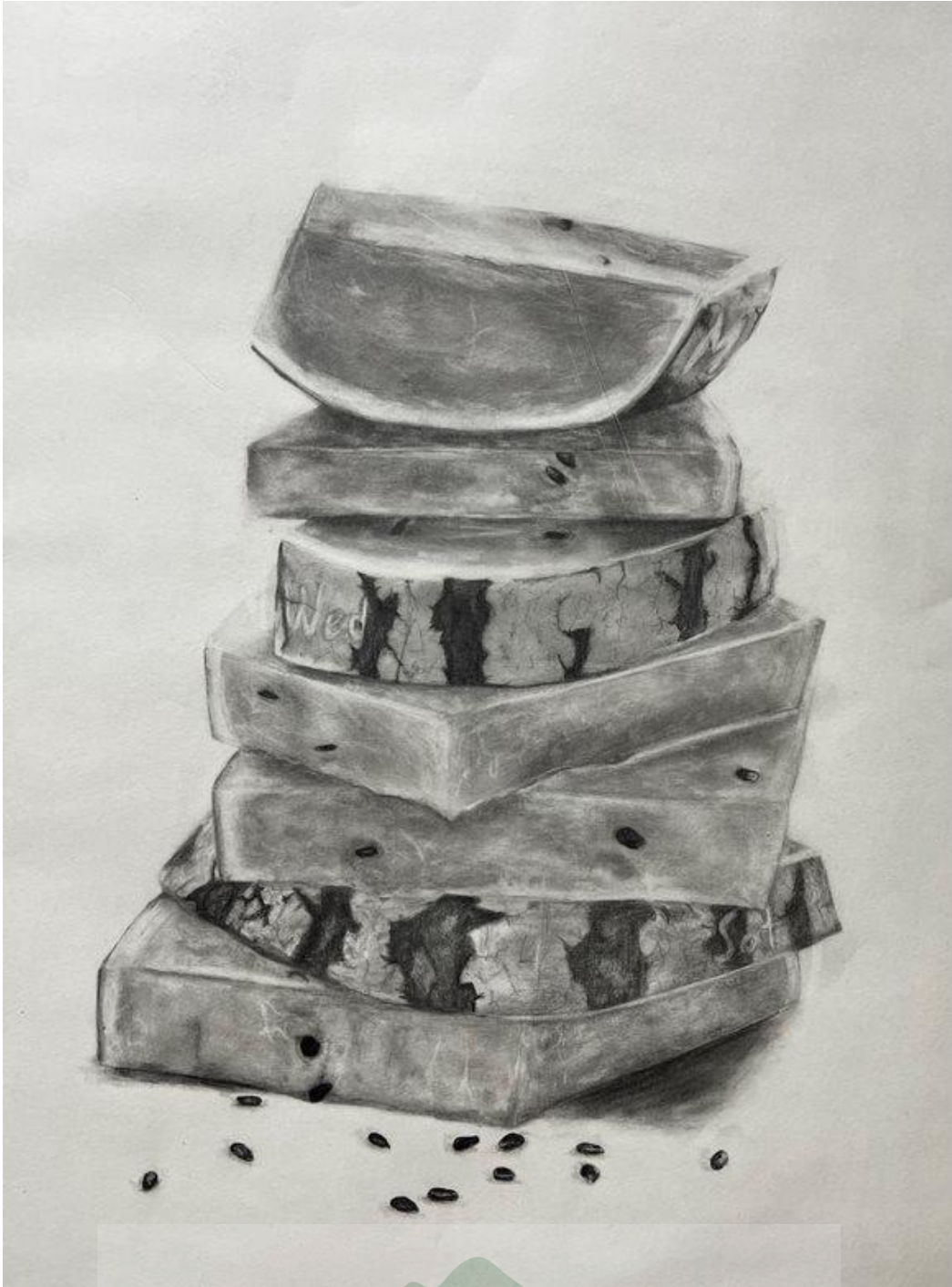
Blurred Lines

Lindsey Gaspers



Watermelon Calendar

Alicia Manning



A Maiden in Wolves' Clothing

Evi de Bois

Once upon a time, there was a young maiden who was loved by everyone in her matriarchal village, but particularly by her grandmother, who adored her. The maiden would always wear a riding hood that she was gifted by her grandmother which suited her. Its deep redness matched the color underneath her fingernails and the depths of the rage she felt within herself whenever faced with the misogynistic presence of ravening predators. In this way, the riding hood was a reflection of her person, a reflection that could stop any wolf's heart.

One fateful day, the maiden's mother said to her: "My sweet girl, take these breads and red wine to your grandmother. She is strong and independent, but even the strong need company. As always, be mindful of your surroundings. As always, trust your instinct."

"Not to worry, Mother," the maiden said, "for you and Grandmother have shown me the path to walk and I know what pace to keep."

The maiden set off into the dark forest, walking along the path where flowers grew abundantly, their purple hoods swaying in the wind. It was a path she had taken before, and although it was never the same, she always found her way.

Grandmother lived on the other side of the forest since she set out to study herbs and enjoy the latter part of her life in peace and quiet, away from the bustle of the village. The maiden loved visiting her grandmother, who shared her wisdom and kindness upon each visit. It was the kind of wisdom that empowered her, the kind that you can't find in books, the kind that must be lived to be learned.

"Flowers," Grandmother would say, "although delicate and beautiful, can be the most deadly. Unlike the sharp blade of a weapon, flowers have no need for brutal force. They need but a delicate hand that clears the path of any weeds and that tenderly loves them while they blossom to reach their lethal potential." Yes, she loved her grandmother, and with each visit she blossomed.

Caught by the early summer breeze that carried the scent of the first bloom, she leaned against its push, enjoying the warmth and tranquility it brought as one season spilled into the other. Standing in the middle of the path, her moment of blissful freedom ended abruptly. The hair on the back of her neck stood up as she noticed a shadow sliding from tree to tree.

"Who's there?" the maiden called out. "Make your presence known."

"No need to worry, fair thing," said a deep and raspy voice. "I am merely passing by."

A wolf appeared from behind the maiden with a smile so bright, its unnatural appearance turned the maiden's stomach.

"I am not a thing," said the maiden. His tone awakened a fury within her that was felt throughout generations, an unrelenting force that made its way to her core.

"My, my," said the wolf. "Such an attitude does not become a young lady like yourself. I was chewing on a nice rabbit when I caught wind of a smell so sweet, its metallic undertones drew me to this path."

"It is not my intention to be enticing to you," said the maiden. "Or to be attractive, nor to smell sweet, merely to make my way to my destination."

"And where might this destination be?" the wolf asked impatiently.

The maiden, who had now grown tired of the wolf's banter, picked up her pace and said, "Nowhere you want to be. Leave me alone, wolf".

The wolf, angered by the maiden's indifference towards his presence, now leaped in front of the maiden.

"Now listen, you wretched girl, you will follow me into the forest and I will have my way with you. If you come with me, I promise not to take any vital organs and you might survive this encounter."

The maiden looked at the wolf. His eyes were widened with insanity, he was salivating at the mouth and overcome by desire.

The maiden smiled mockingly, unshaken by his violent proposition. "Dear wolf, I do not negotiate for limbs, and I will not go with you. You won't get a lick for a taste."

Furious, the wolf threw the maiden to the ground and mounted her. The scent of sweetness overcame him.

"Oh I think I will," said the wolf, who proceeded to lick the maiden's arm and open his jaw wide, ready to devour her. His stomach contracted, his eyes closed, and the last thing the wolf saw was the maiden, smiling back at him with an intensity that had mirrored his own deranged bloodlust.

When the wolf regained consciousness, he found himself convulsing and tied down from neck and limb.

"Ah, my sweet child, how kind of you to bring your grandmother a treat," said an old woman as she sharpened a knife.

"No trouble, Grandmother," said the maiden. "This one wasn't very bright."

The wolf lifted his head. The maiden had taken off her riding hood, and the sweet scent had vanished. Instead, he could now make out a different type of sweetness, one that was sickening. Its familiarity clung to his widened nostrils as fear overtook him.

"Wolfsbane!" the wolf growled.

"No," said the maiden. "No, we do not call it that. It's women's bane and yes, dear wolf, you've been poisoned."

The wolf looked around the grandmother's house, and to his horror he saw familiar faces, mounted above the fireplace. The wolf let out a blood curdling howl. His unanswered call echoed in the empty eyes of his brethren, as the glass substitutes did nothing more than reflect his sealed fate.

The little old lady approached the wolf, inspecting his body and each useful part.

"Oh, what large ears he has!" said Grandmother. "The better to make mittens with!"

Grandmother took her knife and sliced the wolf's ears off. Blood trickled down his fur, its warmth contrasting the freezing touch of impending doom.

"Oh, what large teeth he has! The better to make a necklace with!"

Grandmother proceeded to extract the wolf's teeth, which hesitantly released from their sockets with a nauseating crunch that was muffled only by the wolf's screams of agony.

“Please,” pleaded the wolf. “Please let me go and I won’t ever bother you again, maiden.”

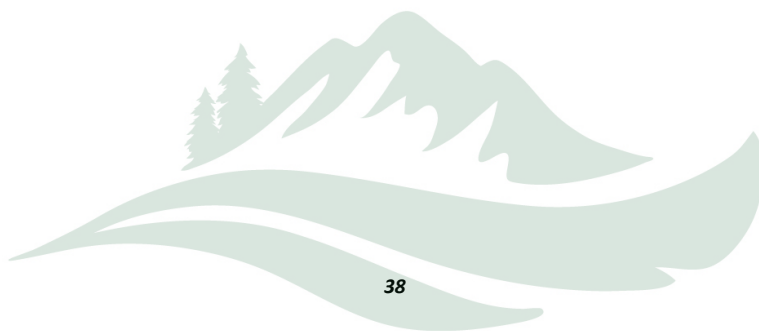
“Oh what a kind heart he has,” Grandmother said.

“All the better to rid the world of,” said the maiden. She stood over the wolf and looked him in his eyes. The eyes that had once given way to insanity now looked for mercy, but they found none.

“I am Little Red Death,” she said. “For my riding hood is soaked with the blood of wolves who came before you”. She plunged the knife into the wolf’s heart.

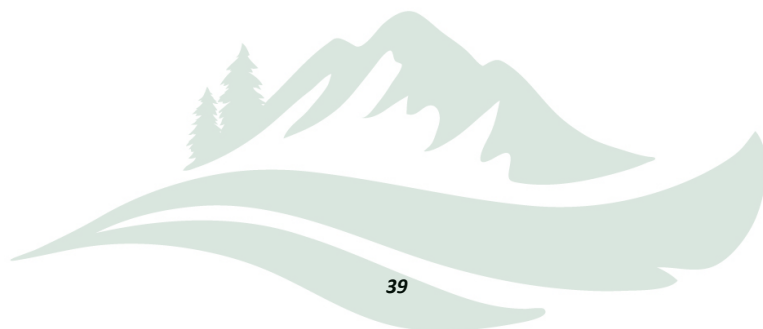
Night had fallen, and the maiden decided to stay and sleep in Grandmother’s bed. As she looked over to her grandmother, who was sleeping cozily under her wolf pelt, the maiden smiled.

The world had never seemed safer.



Sardine Lake

Shasta Partain



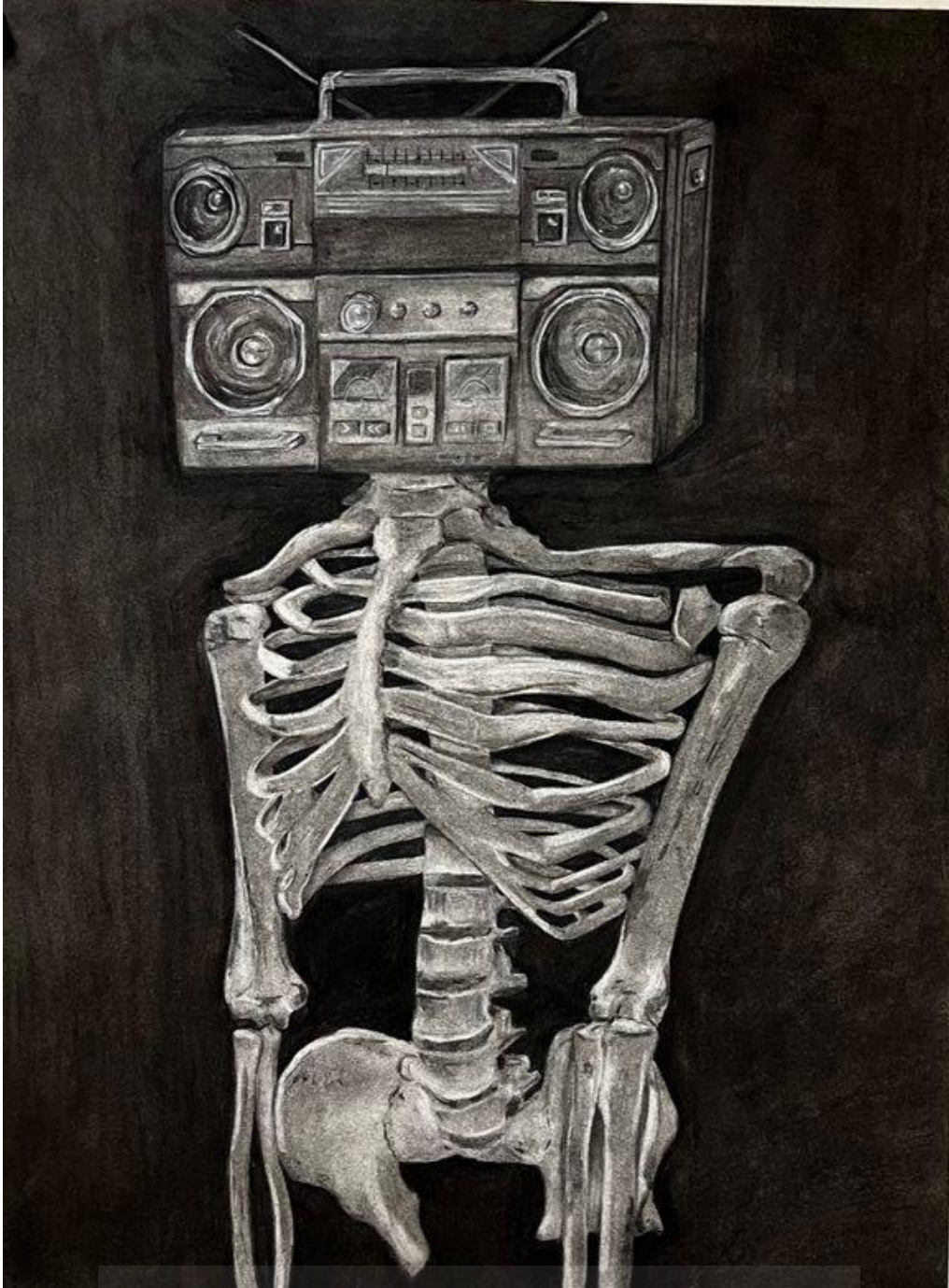
A Stranger Appeared

Haleigh Stickney



Radiohead

Alicia Manning



Untitled

Amanda Forbes



Corruption

Gregorie Marincas-Bucy

I found the world silent in the garden, dried up in the aftermath,
It had been killed by corruption, pollution of our minds,
The children wandered to and fro, poking it and asking why,
But the fire had died in its heart, and was shriveled into a raisin,

A generation of do-gooders lookin' to make an easy life,
A man with no money whose eyes only saw dollar signs,
An advantage and a game, everyone was playing,
They didn't know they'd fallen in 'til it was too late,
Now, they're shackled to the sea floor, drowning in their own inaction,

Did you look closely?
Can see you now?
You chose this life,
It's yours now,
How?



Trying not to Blink

Lindsey Gaspers



Conscious Fractals

Lindsey Gaspers



Clinically Expressed

Ashley Underwood

Thomas stared at a clinical clock, on a clinical wall, from a clinical chair. Below the clock, the wall held various posters on mental health and the power of positive thinking. The one he was currently drawn to, was an image of a kitten dangling from a tree that read “hang in there.” Thomas’ father cleared his throat beside Thomas’ mother. They each sat in a chair identical to his own, staring at the same white wall, saying nothing. The ticking of the clock was a boom in the silent room as Thomas awaited his fate.

As if being summoned by thought, Dr. Timothy Boward, Thomas’ new psychotherapist, opened the white door into his white office and beckoned each of them inside. Thomas’ parents each sat beside him on a long, firm, sterile couch.

“Welcome. It is so nice to meet each of you,” Dr. Boward smiled at each of them warmly before his eyes stopped on Thomas, “So, how can I help you all today?”

But, it was Thomas’ mother who answered, “Thomas recently opened up to us about the idea of ‘Transitioning’ into a woman,” she used her fingers to accentuate the word transitioning. “We’re here to get an idea about why this is something he wants, and whether this is something that his father and I can reasonably support.”

Dr. Boward nodded at her and steepled his hands in front of his mouth before he spoke. “Well, to begin, it is good that you are opening up a dialogue at a time in which it would be beneficial for Thomas to think about beginning various forms of hormone therapy, should you all agree to go that route. Studies show that 98% of adolescents that begin hormone treatments as part of gender affirmation during adolescence, will continue to use these treatments and therapies into adulthood as they transition into the gender which aligns with their identity, and the sooner an individual starts after puberty, the better the likelihood of passing as transgender. Which is the goal for many, but not for everyone.” (9)

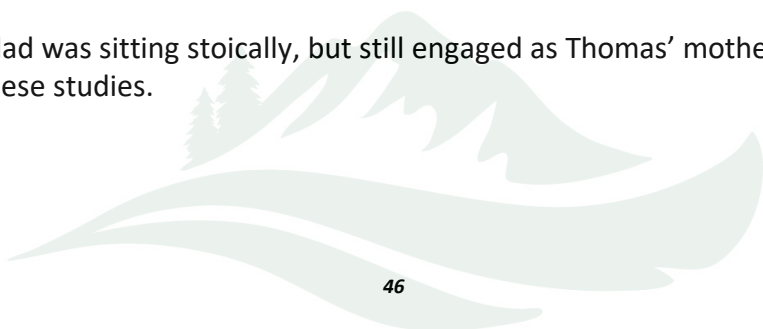
“Well,” Thomas’ father replied, “I suppose that is good to know, but I know that I speak for myself and my wife when I say, that our biggest concern is that Thomas changes his mind later.”

Dr. Boward nodded understandingly as if this was a common concern, and Thomas’ mother chimed in then.

“What I want to know,” she began, “is what causes a perfectly healthy boy to want to change his whole identity before he really knows who he is?”

Dr. Boward nodded at her and began again, “Well, there have been numerous studies on transgender, or gender dysphoric, individuals that it could benefit each of you to read. These studies have found proof that there are:” he ticked each cause off on his fingers, “neurological components, hormonal components, psychological components, as well as a hereditary components as to why an individual experiences gender dysmorphia, and decides to transition.”

Thomas’ dad was sitting stoically, but still engaged as Thomas’ mother asked for further information on these studies.



Dr. Boward was patient with her as he began to speak on the various neurological causes of the transgender identity.

“In a couple different studies, it was found that in transgender individuals, some cortical regions show female indicating volume and thickness, and it should be underscored that cortical thickness (CTh) presents as a female to male morphological pattern. (7) FJO Boucher discovered that neurologically, people with gender dysphoria have brain structures, which more closely match the gender to which they identify, than to the sex they were born. This study also confirmed a difference in hypothalamus function between males and females, and by extension those who, due to body dysmorphia, transitioned into the opposite gender, through testing both genders’ responses to Androstadienone (an odorous artificial steroid that resembles androgens).” (2)

Thomas’ father scratched his neck and lifted his hand toward the doctor as he spoke, “I don’t really understand what all of that means doc. It’s a little complex to follow for a layman.”

The doctor chuckled kindly as he nodded his head at Thomas’ father.

“In layman’s terms,” Dr. Boward replied, “The tests showed that there are both: neurological, or brain, structures, as well as natural brain functions, which may cause an individual to identify more with one gender over another, even if it does not match their assigned sex at birth.”

“So what you are saying is,” Thomas’ father continued, “That Thomas’ brain may be built differently and that may be part of why he says he identifies as a woman?”

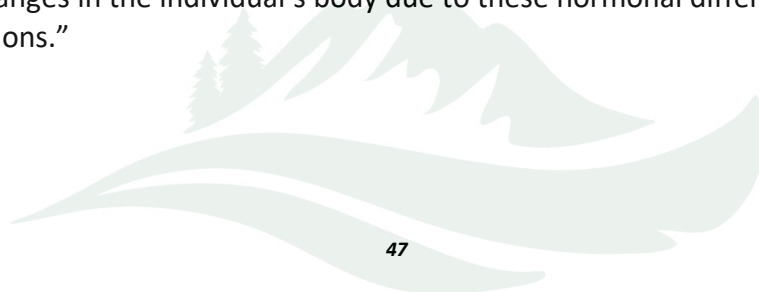
“Yes,” Dr. Boward responded, “the research indicates that the brain’s structure of androphilic transgender women (or trans women who are attracted to men) with early-onset gender dysphoria are closer to the brain structure of cisgender (or heteronormative) women and less like that of cisgender (or heteronormative) men.” (7)(10)

“So then would it be the neurological differences in Thomas’ brain that create the hormonal causes you were talking about?” Thomas’ mother inquired.

“Well, the brain is what supports all unconscious bodily functions, so yes, to some degree, that would be a safe conclusion,” Dr. Boward answered.

“Now, what kind of hormonal causes for this “body dysmorphia” you were referring to?” Thomas’ Father piped in, also adding the air quotes.

“For instance,” the doctor began, “data has shown that certain allele and genotype combinations of Estrogen Receptors alpha, Estrogen Receptors beta, and Androgen Receptors suggest a biological basis for transsexuality and gender identity. (6) Additionally, steroid hormones playing a role in gonadal development of fetuses have long been studied and shown to elicit an effect on the fetus brain’s sexual development. These fetal hormones may initiate a cascade of effects leading to a change in the size of various regions of the brain, the number of nerve cells and the relative quantity of neurotransmitters. (2) Also, in some males with a 5-alpha-reductase deficiency, conversion of testosterone to dihydrotestosterone is disrupted, decreasing the masculinization of genitalia. (10) All of these can begin at a very young age or in the womb as the individual grows and begins to develop, and they may cause some physical and structural changes in the individual’s body due to these hormonal differences, including some brain functions.”



“So really it is hard to tell?” Thomas’ mother asked curiously, “whether the brain is causing the hormonal changes or the hormonal changes are causing the change in brain structure?”

“Yes,” the doctor replied, “But both the neurological and hormonal differences discovered in these studies further support the reasoning that gender dysphoria, is not simply a psychological phenomenon.”

“But are there also psychological causes?” Thomas’ mother inquired, lifting her hand toward the doctor for emphasis, “Or are you saying that studies have concluded that there are only physical indicators as to why someone would want to transition into a different gender?”

“Of course not,” Dr. Boward denied, “there are certainly psychological causes for individuals that identify with gender dysphoria. For instance, gender dysphoria found in those assigned male at birth normally follows one of two paths: early-onset or late-onset. Early-onset gender dysphoria can be witnessed in childhood.” (10)

“Sometimes the gender dysphoria will temporarily wane and then reoccur, but it does not have to,” the doctor added. (10)

“These cases of early-onset dysphoria are most commonly attracted to members of their natal sex (or the sex they were assigned at birth). Late-onset gender dysphoria will not be depicted in early childhood (some report having wished to be the opposite sex in childhood, but they did not openly admit that to others), and it is common for those assigned male at birth, with late-onset gender dysphoria, to have a proclivity for cross-dressing with a sexual reaction.” (10)

“Do all of the psychological cases have to do with sexuality?” Thomas’ father asked next.

“No,” Dr. Boward answered, “Some do, but some also certainly do not have to do with the individual’s sexuality. A 2005 review of cases, like David Reimer (who had his parents reassign his gender in infancy due to a botched circumcision), showed that nearly half of natal males reassigned as female in childhood continued to live as women into adulthood. This included individuals who were aware of their medical history. This may indicate that gender assignment and related social factors, hold major sway on long-term gender identity or when someone chooses to transition.” (10)

Thomas’ father scratched his head in what looked like overwhelm before he spoke to the doctor again, “I have an uncle who was what you referred to as “late-onset,” again with the air quotes, “gender dysphoria. He enjoyed cross-dressing and going to drag shows for example. Is it possible that he could have genetically passed on the dysphoria to Thomas?”

“Though not directly, since he is an uncle to Thomas, he may have an ancestral relative in common with Thomas, like a great-grandparent and so forth, that may have genetically passed down some of the physical or hormonal traits indicative of gender dysphoria. One indicator of a hereditary basis for transgenderism is a study conducted by Milton Diamond. In it, Diamond found that 33 percent of identical male twins were found concordant (meaning like-minded) in identifying as transgender. (4) Studies has also been completed which support the theory of the CYP17 as a candidate gene of female to male transsexualism and are indicative of a loss of female-specific CYP17 T-34C allele distribution pattern which can be linked with female-to-male transsexualism. (1) Additionally, studies have indicated that reduced androgen and androgen signaling may be one causation of the female gender identity of male-to-female transsexuals.” (3)

Thomas' mother put her head in her hands, before raising her gaze to look at the doctor, "So, is it possible then that we passed on the genes to Thomas that made him want to transition?"

"Yes," said Dr. Boward kindly, "though it would be no different than passing on a trait for brown hair or blue eyes. It is not something that we can directly help, it is simply a part of us."

Thomas' mother was quiet for a moment before she spoke again, "Is there any possibility that it may be my fault due to my pregnancy or labor?" Tears slowly grew in her eyes, but she refused to let them fall.

The doctor answered with a shake of his head, "Unless you willingly participated in administering the fetal steroids we talked about earlier, or Thomas had a congenital or genetic disorder at birth like Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) which is a genetic disease in which adrenal glands function defectively, which are endocrine organs that participate in the creation of sex hormones (5) or Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS) which is a rare genetic condition caused by a mutation or omission of the AR gene, creating an inability of androgens to induce their effect on tissues pre- and post-birth, (2) then it is likely that your pregnancy did not impact Thomas' desire to transition."

Thomas hadn't spoken for the entire session, but the doctor had witnessed him slowly begin to melt into the couch beneath him.

"How are you feeling Thomas?" the doctor asked, "Do you have any questions or anything you would like to discuss before we adjourn for this week?"

Thomas sat up in his seat and smiled for the first time since he had entered what now felt like a bright and cheery office.

"I just appreciate you taking the time to educate us." Thomas answered, "It has been pretty confusing for me trying to work through my body dysmorphia alone, and I'm grateful that now it feels like I could talk about this with my parents and they might have more ability to talk through things with me. I finally feel seen and understood."

Thomas' mother leaned over and gave her son a hug. "I am glad for that too."

Thomas' father rubbed his hair back on his head and smiled, but didn't say anything else.

Dr. Boward pulled three sheets of paper out of his desk and handed one to each of us.

"For homework this week, I would like each of you to take some time looking at one of the studies that I spoke about and coming up with three questions or comments for us to discuss as a group next week."

Each of them nodded in varying states of smiles, but all content. Dr. Timothy Boward, in knowing that he had the ability to support and educate families like Thomas', it made his job all the more satisfying and fulfilling. He was already looking forward to the growth he expected to see from each of them next week as their communication about transgenderism had been blown wide open.

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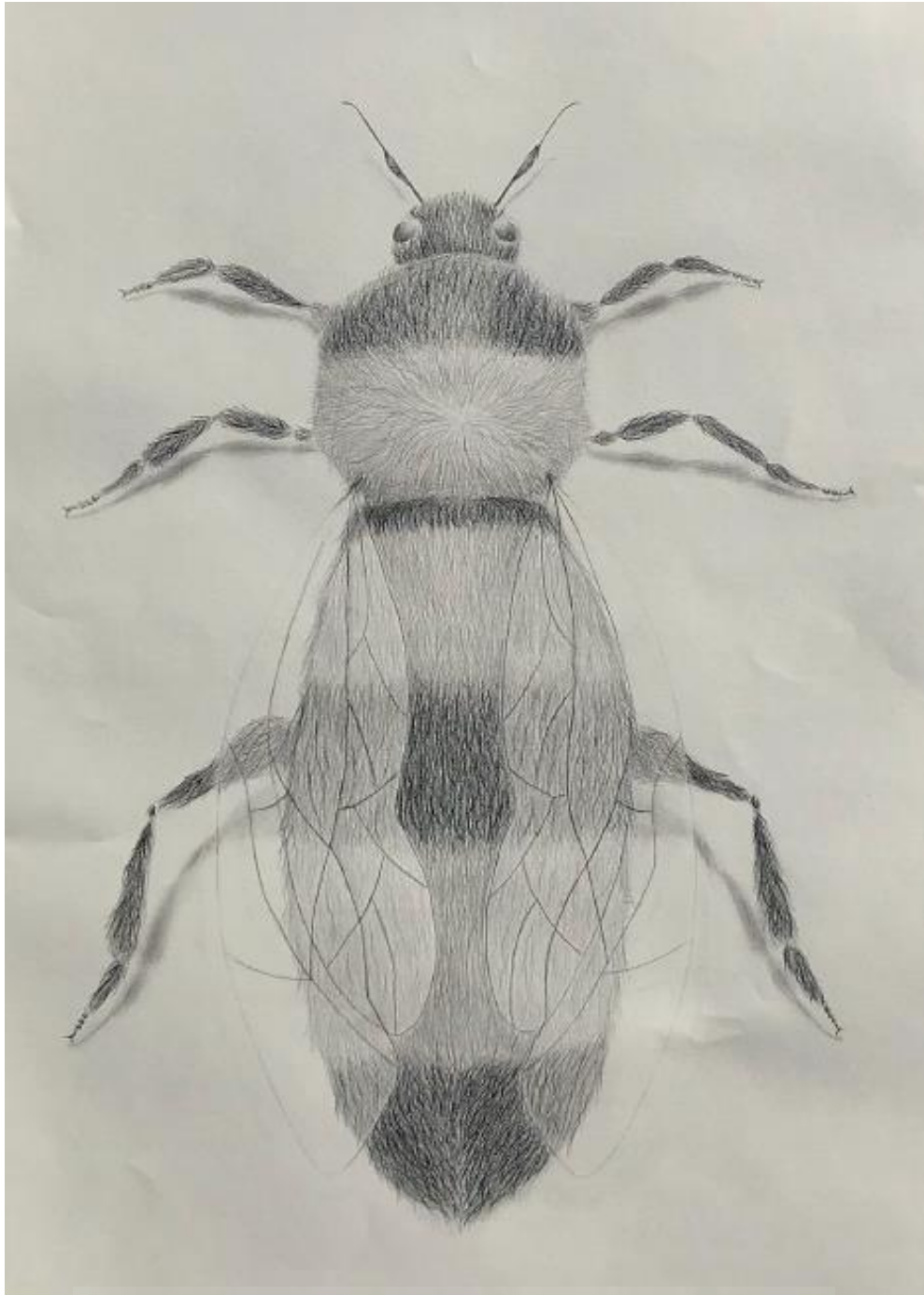
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Untitled

Amanda Forbes



How'd This Bone Get Here

Lindsey Gaspers

Field Journal #1

Name: Lindsey Gaspers
 Location: Humberg Valley, Tasmania Kooyum?
 Date of entry: 11/30/2024 Time: 12:07pm
 Date of trip: 11/02/2024

Weather on trip: beautiful sunny day, clear skies
 notes: date of trip dawn told us to prepare for very cold weather and we wore very very warm clothing, helping with restoration (Kevin) in Humberg Valley for beavers and w/ my Watershed Protection and Restoration class, now upon entry I've been wanting to draw the specimen since I found it and now since we have all of my required entries for SN completed I can take the time now at lunch to get it done

Ridges remaining spine?

What animal did this come from?
 Deer? elk? cow?

smells funny* kind of like an old bookstore

Top Bottom

faded mottling of color, wonder how old it is?

clinks links in chain like a puzzle

almost looks like a face here like a skull, patterns and reflections in everything

← ragged edge where the bone was fractured

top ridge of spine

quick sketch of top view →

wings to old ribs?

hollow tunnel through

solid spine

Age, Specimen, species? How did they die? How did the bone become severed from the rest?



Survival

Gregorie Marincas-Bucy

Cutting your soles on the grit beneath your feet,
Did survival drive you to edge?
I wanted to ask you where you went,
But you'd died a million years before,

Between the 9 and the 5, survival became the only priority,
They're waking up all hours of the night,
Dreams only exist in shadows of unlived lives,
Monotony breeds dissatisfaction with authority,

But at least you're alive,
Even if it's not what you wanted.
Your dream vanished before your eyes,
I don't know how to apologize,
For the things you lost in the tedium,

How'd we live to decide that survival means acceptance?
When they cried in the birthing room, didn't they want to live?
I thought you wanted to live,
I'd give you a chance, if you had half a brain,
But you're afraid of the world beyond the suburbs.



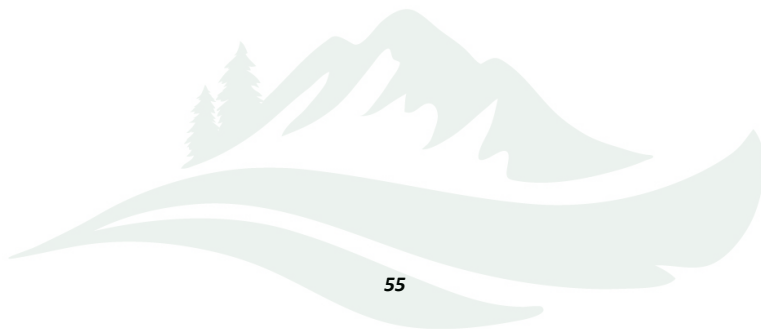
Untitled

Amanda Forbes



Safety

Alicia Manning



Clear sky though sun has already gone behind the western range. Nature Journal Tresa Herrod



Populus tremuloides

Sierraville Aspen Grove
Ca → 7 m. South
of Hwy 99 E. side of Hwy 101

Populus tremuloides aka Quaking aspen

This small aspen grove are just about all the same size & height.

Leaf
• Photosynthesis takes a break
* noted - some chlorophyll still dominant at the tops, but anthocyanins (yellow) dominant most throughout grouping.

• Was there an older larger "parent" tree before these?

* Several clusters of similar size aspen near by.

← Or has this area seen fire on the landscape, generating new sprouting all at once?

← why do the leaves begin so high up on the trunk?

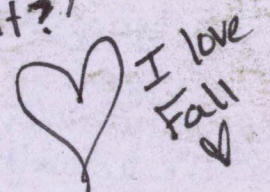
• I think the marks that remain where prior year branches were that look like eyes are creepy & cool

* note: There are many similarly sized mixed conifers surrounding the grove of aspen I observed, however I did not include them in my visual documentation.

← Why are the bottoms of almost all of these black 7-10" up from the ground?

Why has this year had less variety of fall color?
Does the Indian Summer have something to do with it?

• temp read in my car at my arrival is already 35°
I imagine lows of

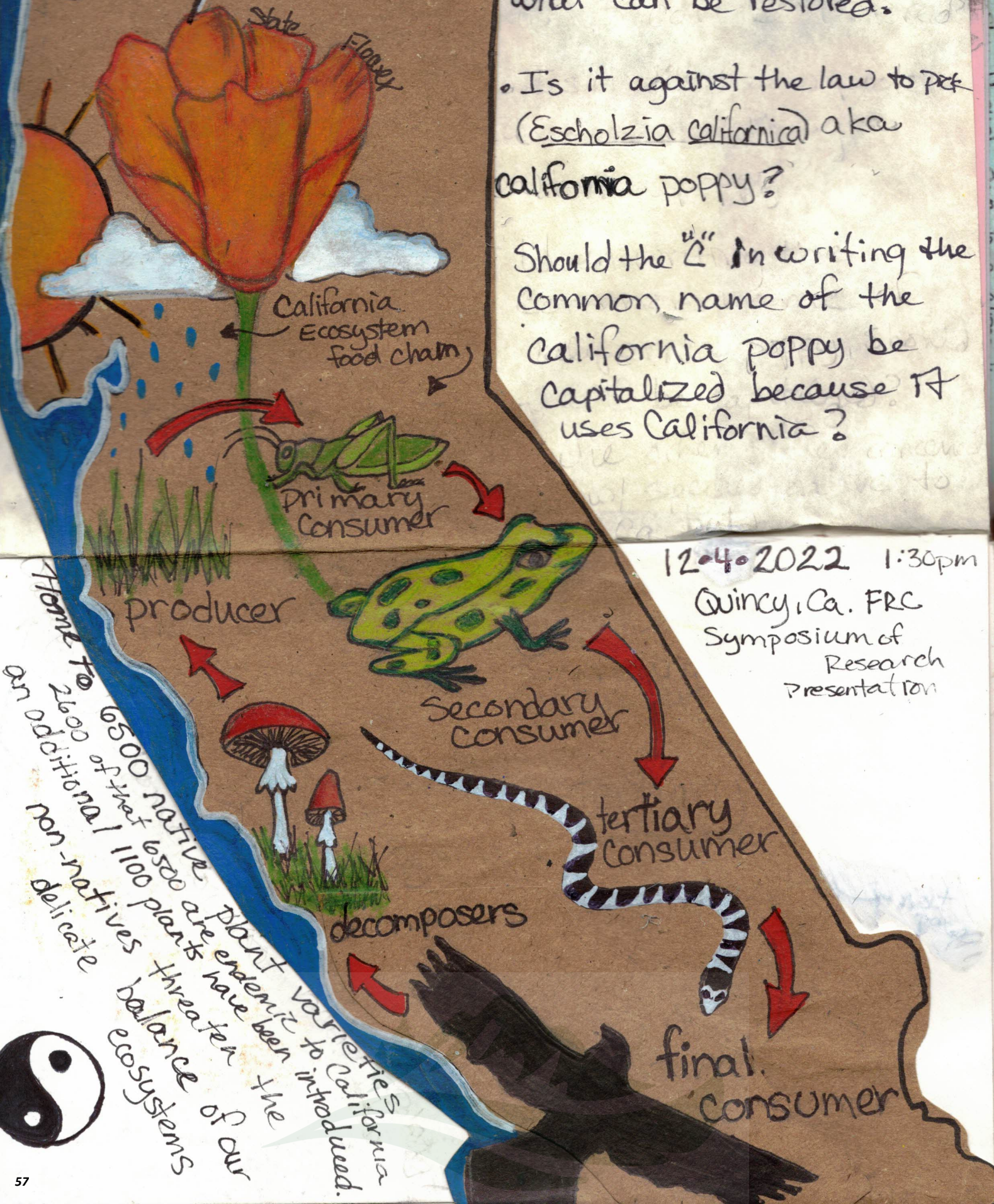


California

Have we humans done more damage then what can be restored.

• Is it against the law to pet (Escholzia californica) aka California poppy?

Should the "C" in writing the common name of the California poppy be capitalized because it uses California?



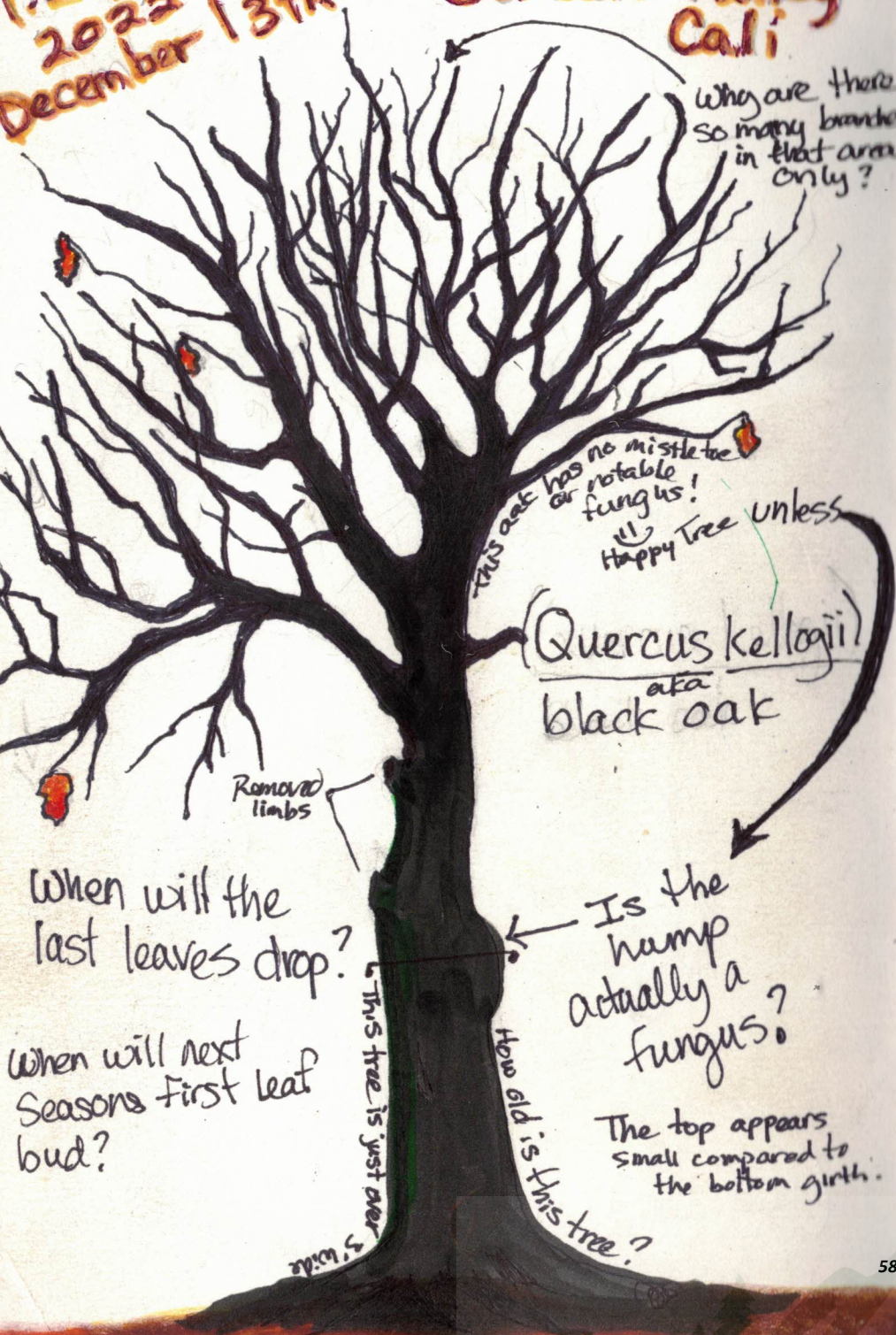
12-4-2022 1:30pm
Quincy, Ca. FRC
Symposium of
Research
Presentation

Home to 2900 additional 6500 native plants are endemic to California
 1100 plants have been threatened by the
 delicate balance of our ecosystems
 plant varieties introduced from non-natives



1:20pm
2022
December 13th

Garden Valley Cali



Why are there
so many branches
in that area
only?

this oak has no mistletoe
or notable
fungus!
Happy Tree unless

(Quercus kelloggii)
aka
black oak

Removed
limbs

When will the
last leaves drop?

When will next
seasons first leaf
bud?

This tree is just over
2000 y

How old is this tree?

Is the
hump
actually a
fungus?

The top appears
small compared to
the bottom girth.

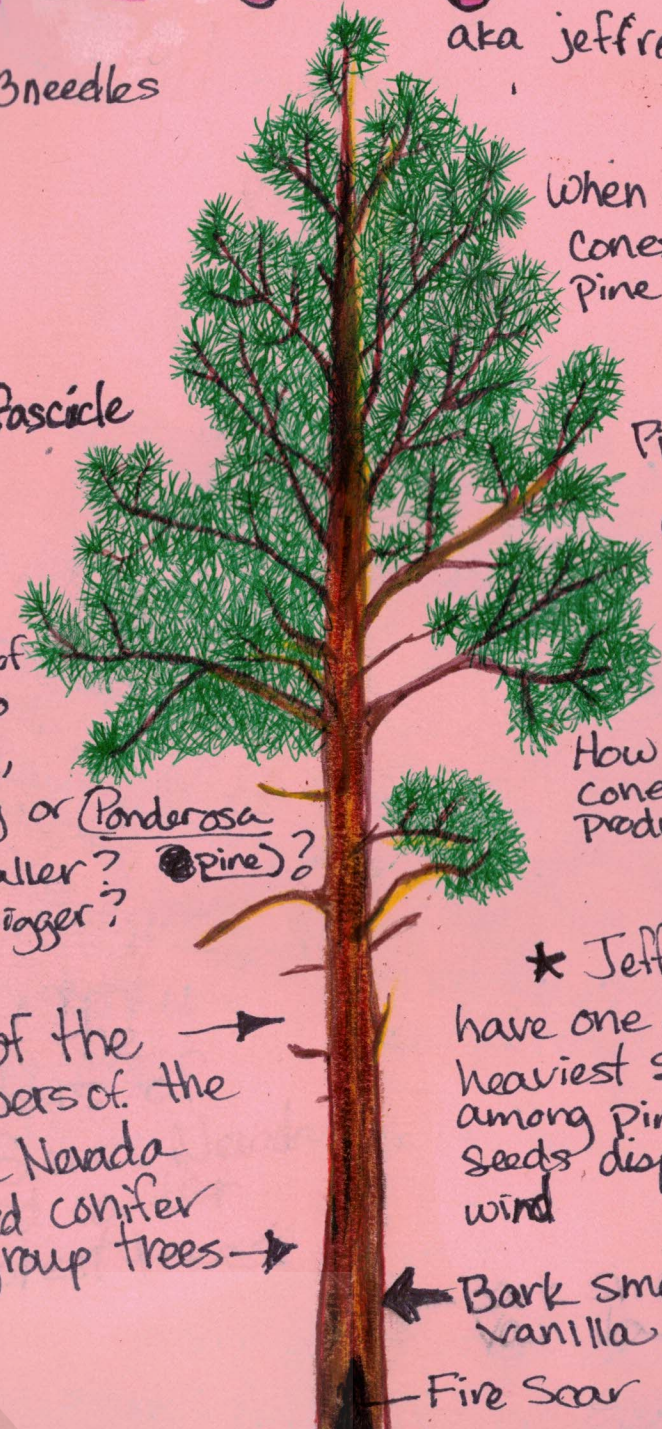
December 4th
2022
Georgetown, Ca.
4:20pm
aka jeffrey pine

(Pinus jeffreyi)

not actual size

3 needles

fascicle



When are the
cones of jeffrey
pine produced?

Pine trees
are
evergreens

Which of
the two
species,
jeffrey or Ponderosa
are taller? (pine)?
or bigger?

How many
cones are
produced annually?

One of the
members of the
Sierra Nevada
mixed conifer
group trees →

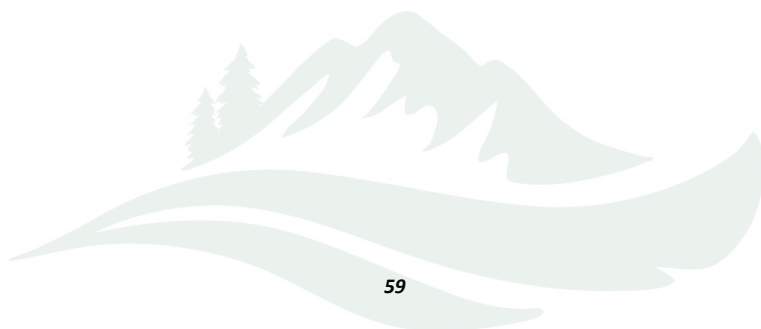
* Jeffrey pines
have one of the
heaviest seeds found
among pines whose
seeds disperse by
wind

← Bark smells like
vanilla

← Fire Scar

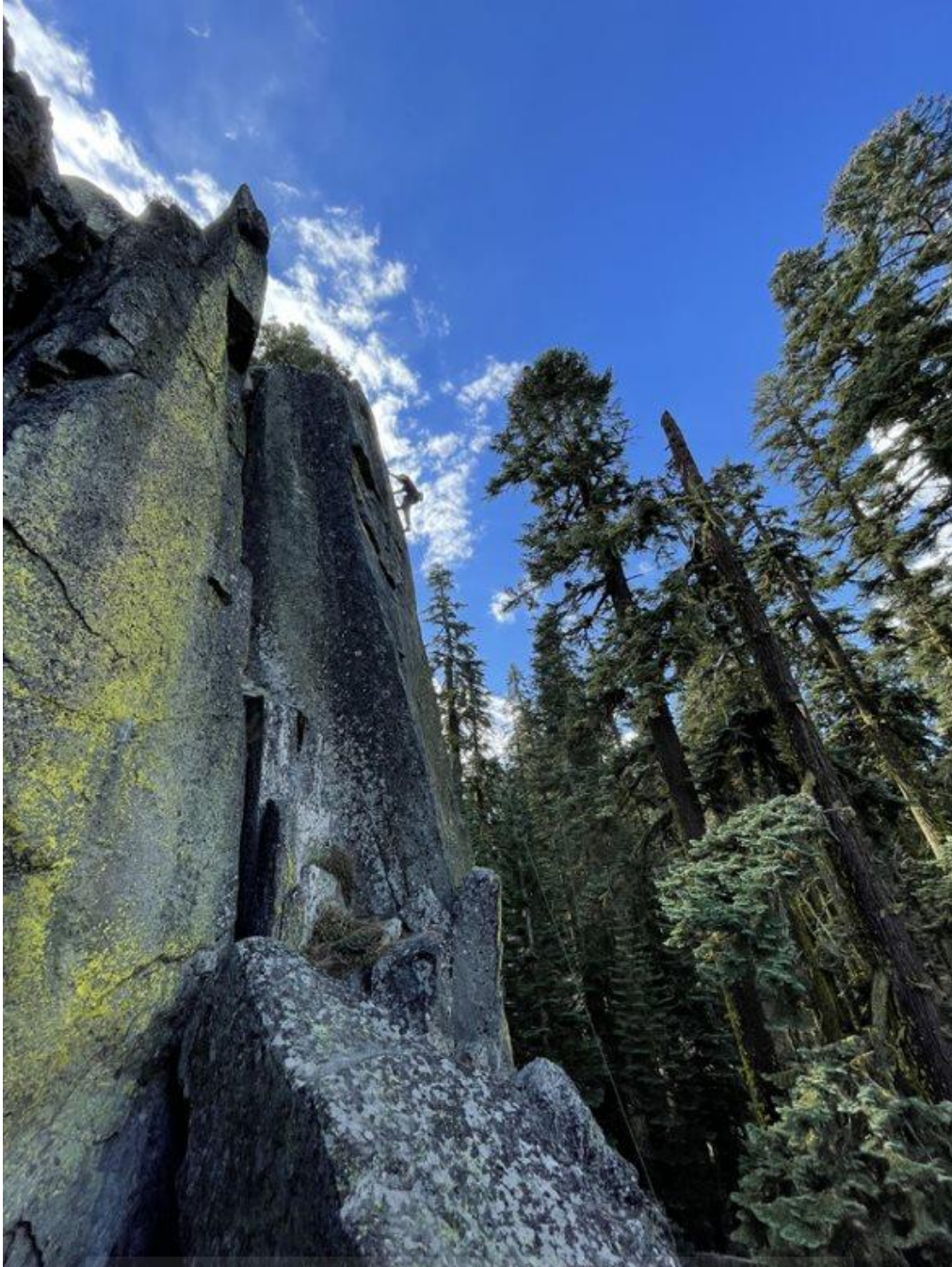
Untitled

Shateka Palmer



Untitled

Simon Dauth



Reaching Nirvana

Mammon

The pine trees danced in the wind with all their charm, resonating with an extraordinary aura encompassing the land. A few small clouds in the sky watched as the planet's lustrous star set in the distance. Golden light rays reflected off the ocean mass below, overlooked by a series of overarching hillsides. Each blade of grass moved to the tune of the collective ecosystem, all existing within the sublime setting of Astoria.

Astoria was a cordial world that consisted of a singular land mass and a large ocean. It housed several diverse habitats, from seemingly endless fields to rocky marshes. Many an animal lived out their lives in these lands. All these critters were associates working collectively to prosper equally from their labor. There were no enemies to name, only peace among all community members. If such a concept was even obtainable, one could claim this to be a near utopia. It never got too warm here, yet neither went freezing. Everything seemed to exist in balance, a divine order that improved all lives within its domain.

As the sweet birdsong sounded above, it became clear that this moment was broadly significant. Today was no ordinary day. The beings of this realm had waited much too long to witness the land illuminated as so. They had patiently sat by as the days rolled along, turning into months and moving into years. Every passing second had accumulated toward this point, a period in time that would lay in the regard of all creatures moving forward. Today was the day that everything would cease to bear all resemblance to prior conceptions. The world would undergo a new beginning, a progression towards a stage that would transcend all previous Suffering.

All the animals of the realm had gathered together on the hills adjacent to the waters beneath. Present were the deer from the Central Plains, the hares from the Southern Meadows, and even the great dogs of the Northern Reservoir, only to name a few. Everybody was there, and all were eager to step into the unknown. Many were indeed nervous, as nobody quite knew what to expect. The scriptures were rather broad and indirect, only referencing some form of mass renewal within the realm. The mystique worried some and only fed into the excitement of others. Regardless, all the animals were ready for the moment to commence.

The immense sky above grew into a deep pink haze as the sun continued to lower in the frame relative to the horizon. The light glistened off the ocean waves, leaving many an animal's gaze fixed in awe. The smooth coastal breeze brushed against the thick wool of Vercing the Mammoth, whose heavy feet traversed the top of the centermost hill toward its peak. As chieftain of the collective tribe of all animal folk, it seemed fateful that he would stand up tall against the oncoming uncertainty. Though towering in nature, Vercing had a delicate heart. He treasured the lives of every individual in attendance, a love he had held for the entirety of his multi-decade reign. No matter what events played out within these final hours, he would remain a beacon of fortitude for all animals. That was his position's utmost duty and his greater purpose in life.

His momentum halted at the peak of the hill, where he declared the ancient prophecy:

"For all of those across the land

*From valleys low to hills that stand
If calmly, they get through the night
Then all as one shall see the light
And on the day when the star hangs close
After the Mammoth has called his oath
The past will set on worlds aligned
And a grand Restart will then arise."*

The crowd behind him stood still and remained silent. Vercing took a few steps back, turned around, and spoke:

"May a Deer Clan representative please recite the Animal's Oath?"

A bit of murmuring arose from a bundle of deer as if they were unsure who should speak. After a prolonged commotion, one deer's head rose above the pack.

*"Through our time upon this earth
Through tribulations and rebirth
We've come to learn that we are bound
Upon a set of rules, we found
Though nature leaves the world in hate
With prey and they, we can't debate
As fragments of the spirit force
We can transcend and change our course
No longer will the hunters dine
Upon our friends who aren't as strong
This vision, one that's quite sublime
Will align us with what is divine."*

The spokesperson returned to their previous position. Vercing took a deep breath. He raised his right foot, then brought it back down to the ground with thundering force. His firm command had made its mark, separating the animals into two distinct groups. The great Mammoth chieftain marched into the newly created space between them and bellowed a message:

"Throughout my reign as Chief, I have overseen critical progress toward our collective vision for all animals. While an absolute utopia was never truly obtainable, we continued to strive for a better life. Even with all of our flaws, we constructed a system that would protect the fundamental freedoms of everyone. If any of you were to assess our situation before we began this transition, I highly doubt your perspective would be very optimistic. However, we persevered regardless.

Our example can continue to motivate society succeeding the Grand Restart if we allow it to. Remember our experiences leading up to this point when considering our way forward. Learn to recall the storms we had to push through even to have the right to stand here today. Adversity is but a mere obstacle in the way of a steadfast will. No matter what comes within our path, we adapt and overcome. Let that be our philosophy of the present as well as the future. We have come much too far. We will prevail."

Vercing's many peers - lined up in rows - stood up tall and proud, chanting:

"We Will Prevail!"

"We Will Prevail!"

The resounding echoes of the animal's cries flooded their hearts. Pride coursed through their veins. This moment was theirs, their time to shine. It couldn't have mattered less what the Grand Renewal would bring upon the land. Nothing would tear apart the brothers and sisters of this kingdom. The bunnies stomped against the ground as the deer pounded their hooves. The dogs howled as a pack, and the cats roared gallantly. The birds sang an illustrious tune as Vercing gazed upon the display in awe. He couldn't quite explain the overwhelming emotion filling his heart at that moment. It was like traversing through a lucid dream, solely able to command a colossal avatar through their illusory dominion. He smiled to himself. An imperfect world never felt more perfect than this.

Amid the current commotion, no one seemed to notice a sneaking snail from down below. This individual's name was Elizabeth, and she was present that day to make a declaration following the animal's oath. Though miniature, this wasn't to detract from her somewhat deceiving speed. She made her way out from the masses and passed through the wide lane splitting the two hordes of animals. She even made her way past the Mammoth chief, who was commonly observant enough to notice even the slightest motion around him. She darted (relatively speaking) toward a slab of rubble just beyond the mass of critters, as she figured they could hear her better if she stood upon a platform. Once there, she attempted to speak to the group.

"Excuse me?" she asked.

The other animals still couldn't pinpoint her muffled voice, but Vercing heard her this time. He slightly gestured toward his audience, beckoning them to go quiet. As the congregation turned silent, his gaze turned toward Elizabeth.

"Miss Snail," Vercing said, "what brings you to seek our undivided attention?"

Elizabeth's lengthy stalks pointed toward the Mammoth, allowing her to glimpse his enormous stature. She, at the very least, was exceedingly intimidated. She knew he had a kind soul underneath the many tons of muscle and wool, but she was extremely tiny, and he towered above. She took a deep breath. There was no reason to fear this animal. She came here to declare her statement, and that was what she would do.

"Good evening, Sir Vercing of the Many Hills. I am called Elizabeth and come from the Marshlands of Western Astoria. I traveled here today to attend the widely popular Renewal gathering, though I have personal reasons for doing so."

A few animals in the back snickered while others stared intently at Elizabeth's alluring nature. Her shell was of a lovely brown hue, complemented by a crisp spiral design. She had even polished her shell before arriving, adding to her intricate beauty. That wasn't even to mention her mellow green skin. She was absolutely an elegant creature, though many still wondered why she stood in front of them in the first place. Vercing thought the same.

"And what *personal reasons* may those be?" replied the Mammoth.

Elizabeth grinned. "I am quite glad you asked."

She crawled gradually off her platform - toward Vercing's right foot - and looked upward.

"If you wouldn't mind," she said, "I would like to sit atop your head."

Vercing paused, perplexed by her sudden request.

"My... head?"

“Why yes!” she exclaimed. “I would rather enjoy viewing all of our friends in attendance before I continue.”

Elizabeth was *much smaller* than him. This size difference made his mind wander. His peers had always revered him for being tall. Friends and acquaintances presented themselves with complete respect whenever he walked by. They always showed proper mannerisms, and no informality was ever seen or heard. That could be partly due to his status as chieftain, but people reacted like this even before. Perhaps they were intimidated, or maybe they connected a massive frame with higher importance. He had always been the largest animal in the land, and even though he often thought of the lives of others, he rarely considered one of a snail. Her past experiences in life had to be almost exactly opposite to his. That left him intrigued and willing to help her if it allowed her to feel tall for once.

Vercing laid down his outstretched trunk on the ground.

“Will this help?” he asked.

Elizabeth looked into Vercing’s deep pearly eyes. She could see it in his innocent gaze. He was just as kind as her family had told her. Since she generally had trouble interacting with strangers, she was thankful that he happened to be such a willing listener. She pushed herself onto the edge of his trunk, hanging on with all her might. He gently swung her up onto his head.

“Why thank you, kind sir,” she babbled.

Vercing chuckled to himself.

“Much obliged.”

Elizabeth stood firmly atop Vercing’s head and announced her declaration:

“When one is to let go of the self and all desires that come with it, they have reached Nirvana. Nirvana is a state of true freedom where suffering ceases to exist. Only in this state can an individual or society transcend the cycle of karma and reach closure. This finality is the eternal bliss beyond that which is a physical hindrance.”

Vercing looked up at her.

“That’s a wonderful thought...” he commented. “How did you come up with it?”

“Well...” she continued, “I didn’t exactly *come up* with it, per se.”

“How do you mean?”

Elizabeth crawled down Vercing’s forehead and onto his trunk below. She felt it essential to make eye contact with him in this scenario.

“Well, it just... came to me. I don’t know quite how to describe it.” She pondered to herself for a split second. “It was sort of like a prophecy if I say so myself.”

The other animals near jumped out of their skin, in complete shock.

“A *prophecy!*?” they shouted.

She looked at them, startled by their immediate uproar.

“Somewhat, I guess. I don’t know. That’s the only conclusion I could devise.”

“That’s rather odd, though,” Vercing stated, setting Elizabeth back on his head. “We hadn’t had a prophecy foretold since before my kind even arrived at the Many Hills. Perhaps it was a dream?”

“There’s a possibility of that,” she replied. “Though this seems much too significant of a message to simply arrive to me in a dream, you know? Regardless, I have been pondering the exact language used in the message.”

"In what way?" Vercing asked.

"Well, the message states that 'Nirvana' is some sort of 'finality.' It also states that when one reaches this finality, they transcend 'physical hindrance.' Translated to a way of speaking I can understand, Nirvana is a society's final state in which they reach a point beyond physical hindrance. I am assuming said hindrance directly relates to suffering. They might be referring to the same concept."

Vercing grew worried by the sentiment of a "finality." He figured he would attempt to get some clarification on the matter.

"So, I need to ask since I'm not quite understanding." He paused for a long second, gulping nervously in the process. "A finality means final. As in, *final*. That is a correct assessment, I assume?"

Elizabeth looked down at Vercing's worried gaze, catching his drift.

"That seems to be correct, yes."

Vercing froze in fear. Would this be the end of Astoria as they knew it? What could that possibly imply? He pondered that thought, and it left him a bit concerned.

"Uh... let me just... think about that for a bit," he said.

Vercing looked down at his feet. She must have been dreaming, *right*? At least, that was his hope. Even so, what did *finality* imply? Would everybody on this hill cease to exist after the *Grand Renewal*? Alternatively, the social structure could be thrown into chaos, with predators eating prey like they did in the dark ages. He honestly didn't know which of those thoughts was scarier to him. These thoughts were too much uncertainty for his brain to comprehend, and he felt ready to have an anxiety attack.

Elizabeth took note of Vercing's shift in composure.

"You know," she said, "maybe a finality isn't so bad."

Elizabeth's words puzzled Vercing more than anything she had said before.

"How do you mean?" he asked, concerned.

"Well," she responded, "think about it this way. Nirvana is a bliss intended for those who have risen above all forms of self and suffering, correct?"

"According to the definition you stated, yes," he said.

She looked down at Vercing.

"Well then, don't you suppose we have earned this fate? Regardless of what happens to us, we put in years of effort to surpass the suffering of previous Astorian societies. If you ask me, we have earned a one-way ticket to Nirvana. Perhaps if we let go of that which we fear to lose physically, we will be accepted into the welcoming arms of something much greater."

These words proceeded to open up Vercing's mind. Of course, that was what he missed. All beings pass away eventually. Nothing could last forever. And, even if immortality were achievable, would eternal life be worth the pain? The physical world was full of temporary obstacles that felt like they could change the scale of reality within a narrow perspective, but Astoria had outgrown that. What was forever worth if the soul stayed blind?

He had decided. He and the other animals hadn't made all their progress just to go through life in the same world as before. There was no room for stagnation. He was ready to embrace uncertainty. He was prepared to reach *Nirvana*.

"Thank you, Elizabeth. I needed that."

Elizabeth's heart fluttered as she looked at the sky. She hadn't thought about it before, but Astoria's star was much bigger than what showed up in her family's photo albums. It set a majestic atmosphere, an aura that transcended all experiences previously during her lifetime. She couldn't quite explain the overwhelming emotion filling her heart at that moment. It was like traversing through a lucid dream, solely able to command a colossal avatar through their illusory dominion. She smiled to herself. An imperfect world never felt more perfect than this.

Seven trumpets sounded from the heavens, one after the other until all went silent. A white eagle appeared from the clouds and landed soundly atop Vercing's head. The divine bird softly grabbed Elizabeth's shell by his beak and placed her onto the Mammoth's trunk. He spoke a verse that none living in Astoria had ever heard before:

*"For all you know, you must forget
In the void of mind, all will be set
When trumpets sound from worlds divine
We shall commence the end of time"*

The animals of Astoria could only watch as their sacred star collapsed onto itself. It fell inward, then retracted, resulting in a demonic echo shattering the fabric of sound. The Many Hills rumbled, and the valley wilted. Vercing, Elizabeth, and all who stood on that hill observed a viscous fury of light and gas slicing toward them. It had become abundantly clear what their fate was to be.

Vercing valiantly stood up against their incoming doom without fear in mind. He felt at ease, as if this moment was meant for him. Perhaps he was chosen to lead his friends into one last adventure like the ancient prophecy foretold. He hollered the animal oath for one last hurrah.

*"For all of those across the land
From valleys low to hills that stand
If calmly, they get through the night
Then all as one shall see the light
And on the day when the star hangs close
After the Mammoth has called his oath
The past will set on worlds aligned
And a grand Restart will then arise."*

Inspired by the Mammoth chieftain's courageous stand, the animals shouted the oath alongside him.

*"For all of those across the land
From valleys low to hills that stand
If calmly, they get through the night
Then all as one shall see the light"*

*"For all you know, you must forget
In the void of mind, all will be set
When trumpets sound from worlds divine
We shall commence the end of time"*

Doom was close to Astoria's waters. The lights filled the frame of the entire sky, and they only raged closer as the moments passed. With finality inching closer and seemingly

nowhere to look but onward, Elizabeth knew where she wanted to be. She turned around and looked into Vercing's deep pearly eyes. She could see it in his innocent gaze. He was just as kind as her family had told her. She generally had trouble interacting with strangers, but for that day, she was thankful that he happened to be such a willing listener.

Vercing, for the final time, looked into Elizabeth's small beady eyes. Sure, he had only met her that day, yet he felt intrinsically bonded. She opened his mind in a time of need and gave him the energy to face off against the oncoming uncertainty. Though towering in nature, Vercing had a delicate heart. He treasured the lives of every animal that day and would continue to do so as long as his soul reigned free. He wished to cherish the remainder of this finality with a newfound friend until death did its part.

Elizabeth and Vercing looked at one another, accepting their fate. Here was the end of everything that had been and the coming of all that was to be. There was no need for despair, as they had worked hard to share this moment. Her head rested against his as the radiation flooded their bodies. They had reached Nirvana.



More than a Valley

Juan Perez



Untitled

Shateka Palmer



1973

Evi de Bois

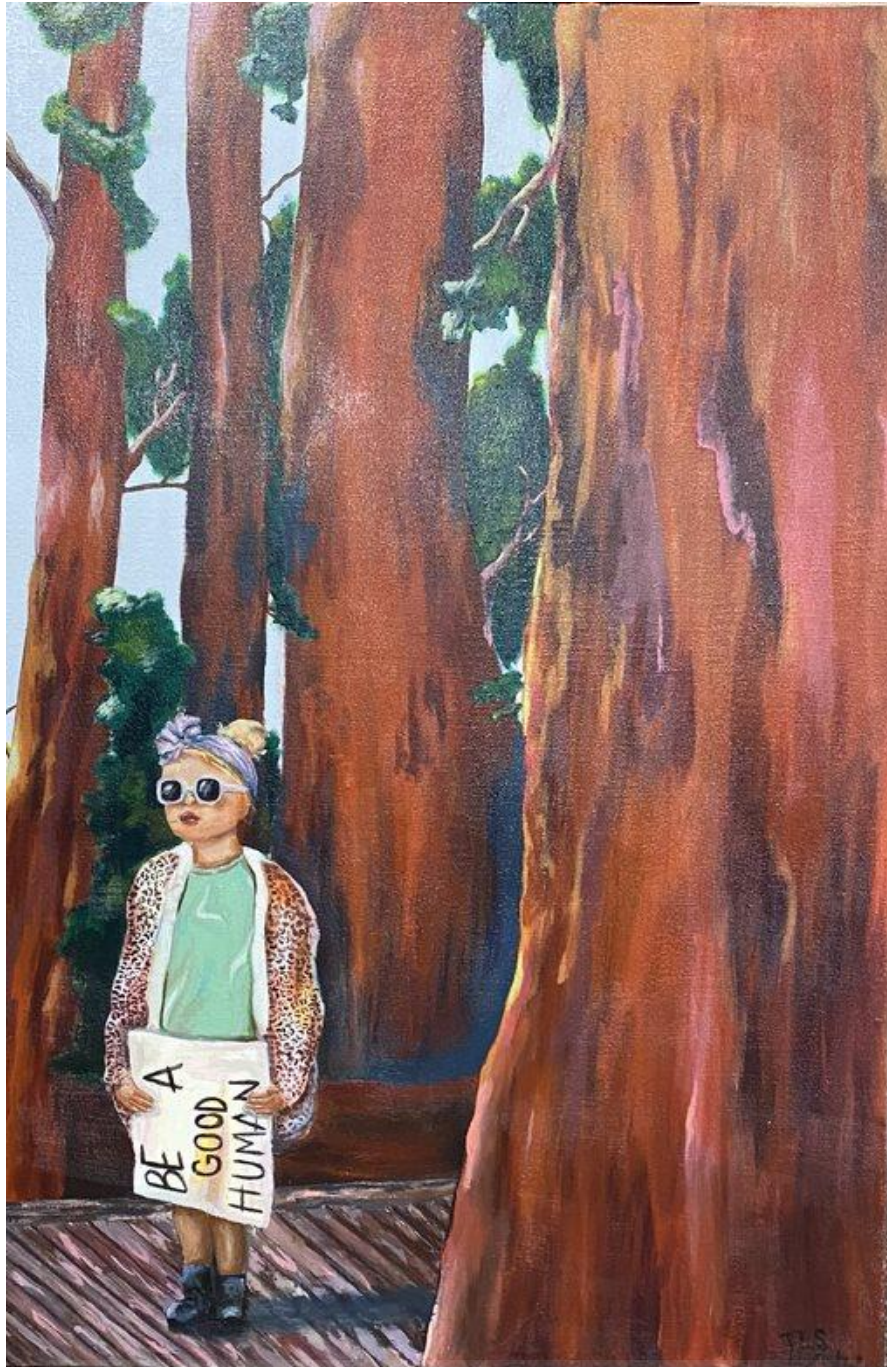
The embers of injustice breathe life to fires of discontent
On the ashes of my assigned role I will stand
No word spoken
No word written
No word evoked or acted upon
Will be lost in the roar of this blaze

I bleed deeply as the cycle repeats
Of the darkest red that I can find within me



Untitled

Teagan Lopez-Schrammel



Resilience

Courtney Moore

Have you ever been told you can't do something because of the way you look? I am sure that most of us have, in one way or another. Whether or not you were told you were too short or too tall, too fat or too thin, or any other reason that you were told "YOU CAN'T", almost everyone has been in a situation in which they were told they were not good enough.

I was told by multiple members of my family that enlisting in the Army was a stupid idea, because there was NO WAY I would make it through basic combat training. The only person who believed in me was my dad. He told me to use their doubt in me to fuel my determination to achieve my goals.

This is my story..... An Army recruitment officer came to my High School when I was 17. He talked to everyone about the joys and benefits of joining the Army. Motivational sayings such as: "Be all that you can be" "Army of one" and "Army Strong" were plastered all over the auditorium, as Sgt Slaughter spoke to the senior class about how "Joining the Armed Forces can be fulfilling, rewarding, and educational"...etc. Most of the senior class wasn't paying attention; even I zoned out for most of it until he started talking about the college benefits! You can go to school while you are enlisted and you can also use the G.I. Bill when you get out; which pays for books, and tuition, and gives you a monthly housing allowance.

At this point, he had my attention. I was intrigued, because not only would I get away from my hole-in-the-wall town and crazy family, but I could also get an education too; that was exciting! Especially for someone with no college prospects. I thought it was the only way I was ever going to be able to get a college education.

I went home and told my dad I wanted to join the Army. At first, he was hesitant, but after I gave my arguments for college, making something of myself, and getting out of my small town; he understood and encouraged me. The same recruiter from my school, Sgt. Slaughter came to my house to bring the paperwork for my dad to sign since I was not old enough to sign for myself. My stepmom didn't like the idea of me joining the Army and leaving home. She told me that "if I was your biological mother I would not allow your father to sign those papers." I laughed when my dad rolled his eyes.

Around Christmas, we went to my grandparent's house. All the family was there of course, which made it easy to tell everyone at one time that I had enlisted for Active Duty in the U.S. Army. I brought everyone into the living room to make my big announcement. I made my big speech explaining all my reasons and then waited for their reaction. I thought there would be mixed reactions to my news, but boy was I wrong. Instead, it was nothing but negativity. Everyone began asking me questions like: "How are you going to make it through basic training?" and "Do you know how hard it's going to be for you"? Then there were the comments, such as you're not big enough, you will never make it, you're wasting your time, and my favorite "you are going to embarrass yourself and the family".

I was infuriated! Did they really think so little of me? Why did they think I couldn't handle it? I realized I was tiny; I weighed all of 95 pounds and I still do not reach 5 feet tall, but my dad believed in me and taught me that I could do anything I set my mind to.

My first obstacle was getting through MEPS, the medical exam you have to go through before you could go any further in the process. I almost didn't pass my physical, because of my size, but I made it through. Then I had to take the ASVAB test, which tests your intellectual abilities. I passed that, too. Then thirteen days after my high school graduation, my parents took me back to the MEPS station and I shipped out to Fort Jaxson, SC, for Basic Combat Training (BCT).

At first, I was terrified and wondered what I had gotten myself into. The drill Sergeants started yelling before we ever made it off the bus. After the initial shock wore off it wasn't that bad, as long as you could follow directions. I spent a couple of weeks in a transitional unit before I was moved to my actual training unit. Again there was a lot of yelling and a variety of different exercises if you did not follow directions, but I told myself *I could do it over and over again*. Through the multi-mile ruck marches, the multiple PT tests, and various firing ranges, I kept telling myself *"you have to prove them wrong, you can make it through this!"* and *"You got this!"*. A bunch of really good friends I met along the way encouraged and helped me all the way through. I graduated after 13 long weeks of 12-mile ruck marches, outdoor training exercises, obstacle courses, rifle training, and Physical Training. Whew. It wasn't easy.

I had changed a lot during this experience, not only mentally but physically as well so much so that my step-mom no longer recognized me. I had gone from a measly 95 lbs to 115 lbs. For the first time in my life, I felt good about my weight and myself in general. I was so proud of myself, but my journey was not over yet!

My next obstacle would be my AIT, in layman's terms it was job training. AIT was a lot more relaxed than basic training was. After the first week, we were allowed to go out on the weekends around the post and there was soda at the DFAC (cafeteria). Sadly I missed soda so much in BCT that I went a little overboard and ended up in the hospital for 6 days. I was really worried that I was going to be sent home, but I just got moved into the next starting class and had to go through my first week of class a second time. That was hard for me, too. Many of the people I went to BCT with had been in my previous class, so when I had to start all over I got discouraged.

Like clockwork, I started my mantra "you have to prove them wrong, you can make it through this!" "You got this!" So I pulled up my bootlaces, metaphorically, and I kept going. By the time I graduated from AIT, I was among the top of my class and was given the honor of flag bearer, despite my small demeanor. I had done it! I was graduating. I had done it, despite my family's disbelief in me. When you graduate, a bulletin is put in your home newspaper and you get to choose what it says. Would you like to guess what mine said?

"To all those who said I wouldn't make it... Thank you".

If they had not said those things I may have given up, but I was determined not to let them be right. I was not weak. I was not "too small". I could do anything if I tried hard enough, and I did!

The moral is don't let anyone hold you back from your dreams or ambitions, especially your family.

ALWAYS believe in yourself!



Untitled

Aubrianna Keeler



Research Story: A Story of Queer Exploration

Jamie Johnson

Content Guidance: This story in no way contains accurate information about any current or previous FRC students and horses. Even though the story is loosely based on the past, all events are fictionized to better suit the research presented in the story. Any similarities to the truth are simply coincidences and should be interpreted as such.

Today was the first day of the ranch skills short course. It was one of the most immersive classes I've had at FRC; I was nervous for a lot of reasons walking into that classroom. I didn't really know anyone who was taking the course. I was a sophomore, and the class tends to have a lot of freshmen. It was an ag class, but I was queer. In the year that I had been at FRC, no one in the ag department was openly out like I was on the upper campus. That always made me feel like I was living in two worlds because the queer identity never overlapped with the academic identity. I was dreading dealing with that all month. But I walked into class at 8 am anyway.

We started with lectures during the first couple of days. The details of which I won't bore you with, but I did learn everyone's names and a little bit about them. I clicked with about 5 of the students and knew the other two sophomores from other classes. The other dozen or so freshmen had gathered in their collective groups as well. My group started hanging out during lunches and doing things in town here and there, sharing personal information and getting closer.

Helen, a lesbian, still had a year of high school left and had spent a lot of time working on ranches. Marshall, a trans man who was questioning his sexual orientation, was another sophomore that I got along well with. Travis was trans and newly out as such. He was a really shy kid that had taken a gap year and took the class to learn what college and agriculture were like before he committed to a full year. We all laughed quite a bit about how we had come together as a group and how we created a largely queer class when no one expected it.

Eventually, we end up making lots of jokes with one another much of the time. One of the longest-running jokes was studying queerness in the rest of the animal kingdom; and here is the story of that running joke. It's lunchtime and we're sitting as a group in AG 1601. We're typically the one group that stays in that room during the entirety of lunch, even though others will swing in now and again. We're laughing again.

"Guys, homosexuality's gotta be known in over 10% of species worldwide," (4) one of my friends pipes up.

"I wonder how they know. WAIT: Are there people that study gay animals for a living?!?!?" Helen quickly pulls out her phone to google it. I do the same. The conversation dulls a little in the meantime, but everyone's invested in the answer.

"Basically yeah, some scientists spend years researching gay animals and why they do it." I chime in, answering our questions.

"I bet we could do that. We'd make great gay scientists." Helen responds, making all of us laugh.

Marshall groans at this point, laughing, "You can't be serious about that. We're riding

horses in this class, not studying wild animals at college.”

“Why not? It looks easy. See? Most scientists don’t even try to prove animals are homosexual. They just study SSBs (same-sex behaviors) where animals just do gay things.” Travis answers, now doing his own research.

Marshall looks over the article Travis had found before answering, “Okay, but that’s still not my point,” He laughs, “And that’s not even the same as studying the gays. That’s studying gay things happening.”

“Wait, but some actually do!” I jumped into the conversation again, reading an article I found. ““Primatologist Paul Vasey (2002) proposes to speak of homosexual preferences only in contexts where a male prefers to have sex with another male... In his view, a preference always entails some kind of choice... Vasey provides a list of five criteria...”” (1) I then list off the criteria in my own words. “For an animal to be classified as truly queer in a scientific setting, the choice between the same and opposing sex must be available at the same time, both mating choices should be sexually preceptive, the sexual behavior must be finished, as well as the subject must be uncoerced to make a choice and follow through with it. That sounds hard to do without human intervention, but possible.”

“Wow.”

“Cool.”

The conversation meandered around that conversation for a tad longer, but class was called to session shortly after.

A couple days later the conversation popped up again as we were walking home from class. We had been assigned our horses and caught the freshman of our group on the horses’ backgrounds a day prior. Two of the mares seemed to have a pretty close bond and we knew that they were often utilized in the breeding program when possible.

“You know, maybe our horses are gay for each other and that’s why only yours usually gets bred. She’s the bisexual fem whereas this pretty lady is the butch lesbian that dreads pregnancy.” Helen mentioned this to Marshall as we unsaddled in a group before going to lunch again.

“You know what: that makes a lot of sense. I wonder why that happens.”

I pulled out my phone quickly to google it. “Welp, I guess it’s time to do more research during lunch.” I punched in Research study why animals are gay to find something. Quite a few research studies popped up and closed my phone to finish up with the horses before looking into them.

“Look; the concept of pleasure is a reason for gay behavior. This source states “The German entomologist Doebner, suggested that male cockchafers “make use of other males to satisfy their violent procreative urges, probably taking them for, and overpowering them as, females in their blind passion” (1) Another states, “Their [study] had a sex ratio of 62 percent males. Therefore, some males on the lek didn’t have access to females. For those who wonder why these males didn’t simply walk away... Due to [high levels of testosterone and luteinizing] hormones, males cannot but start courting whoever they meet.” (1) The last one I found says, “Sex may also acquire a function to mediate control of power for the attainment of pleasure.” (8) Basically, all these examples show that sometimes animals are gay because they just want or crave the pleasure of sex behaviors.”

“That’s cool. I wonder why else animals do gay things.” Travis commented, finally

falling into the interest of the subject. The rest of us started to pull up more research papers following other reasons why animals are often displaying gay behaviors. We spent the rest of lunch scouring the internet for that information and eating.

We walked back to the dorms together that day, sharing what we found because class was back in session before we had a change to during lunch.

Marshall started, saying “Basically, the social glue theory is applied to gay animals because social glue is made up of organized behaviors used to hold groups together socially. A study said, “Cumulative culture relies on our proclivity for high-fidelity imitation... Commensurate with this proclivity to copy others comes a tradeoff that behaviors that are functionally irrelevant will be easily maintained and transmitted.” (7) But I didn’t really know what that meant until I found the rest of studies, but it basically means that things like gay sex, once established as a strictly social behavior, will be used and taught to others. I found that bonobo females, a primate species, use gay behaviors for exactly this reason. That study says, “The researchers reasoned that lower-ranked females would solicit more sexual interactions than higher-ranked females in an attempt to develop bonds... The researchers believe this can subsequently strengthen an individual’s social position within a group, thus increasing both access to resources and reproductive success.” (5) So even though it’s not necessary for those primates to actually be gay, the benefit of using gay behaviors means a stronger social glue in the community and thus a more well-off community. I really liked the quote, “Homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgender are usually as much a part of animal social life as heterosexuality, regardless of their prevalence.” (2) because it makes it clear that LGBTQ+ behaviors are just as much a part of many animals’ social behaviors as the norm and that includes humans, too.”

We paused, processing that information before.

Next, Helen talked about the social dominance theory. “So gay behaviors used to assert dominance between individuals or create a social hierarchy within groups falls under the social dominance theory. Sex can be seen as communication for, and I quote, “what an ethologist would call ‘dominance’ and also a medium to achieve cooperation. If sexual behavior is the mean of... communication involving relationships of power between two individuals... pleasure can be manipulated to achieve control over others.” (8) Another study says that this theory “postulates that same-sex interactions represent ritualized dominance displays that help reaffirm the hierarchy, with the mounter thought to be dominant over the mountee. Some primate studies have generated empirical support for this hypothesis.” (6) One last example I found was “In cattle egrets... [where] male-male mountings seem to be directed towards establishing hierarchical dominance (Fujioka and Yamagishi 1981, Lombardo et al. 1994).” (8) I think this one is pretty easy to see in a lot of animals without studying it.” She huffed, a little out of breath.

Last but not least, I talked about the bisexual advantage theory just as we entered the dorm parking lot. “A lot of research that I found points out that being bisexual is more advantageous to many species than homosexuality, which prevents procreation, and heterosexuality, which greatly reduces the success of things like pleasure, social glue, and social dominance without the use of same sex behaviors in the animal kingdom. I read a study that said, “Some of the non-human animal studies may be applicable to bisexual humans. One hypothesis, then, may be that bisexuality is evolutionarily advantageous and that homosexuality is an over exaggeration of this. Thus, the benefits of bisexuality would outweigh

the reproductive costs of homosexuality.” (5) And the cool thing is that I found out that certain bats are seasonally bisexual. The researcher proclaims, “This eastern Australian bat species lives in large groups but are segregated by sex outside of breeding season. As such, many bats are likely 'seasonally bisexual'. Males and females have been observed in sexual and affectionate same-sex behavior.” (3) I thought this was really cool.

“Yeah, I think all of it is interesting, actually. I know I bashed on you guys a little about it at first, but it’s cool information.” Travis finally jumped into the conversation again and we walked to dorms, ready to take showers and eat dinner independently.

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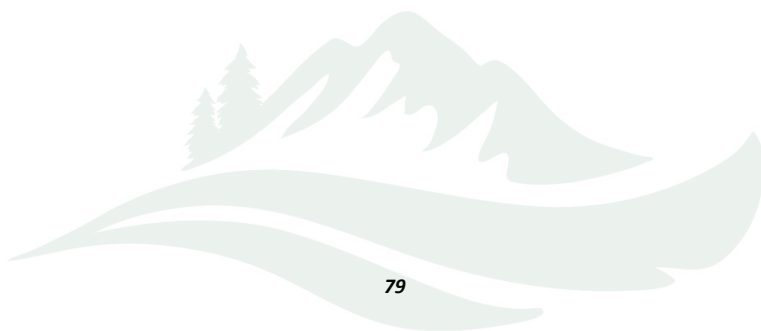
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Untitled

Kassidy Cecil



A Snake's Peach

Kenneth Roach

It was a dark and cold night. Man it was so cold I could see my breath from each word I spoke. I was on the block chilling with my main man Deazy. Deazy was a small fellow with a big temper. Deazy's stomach let out a huge growl.

He said, "Aye Rae I'm starvin' man, we out to Jackie's." Jackie's was the best soul food place in all of San Jose.

Before I could reply I got a call from the trap house. "Yeah who this!" I exclaimed as I waited for the code phrase.

"The Milkman." A deep monotone voice answered. From the voice I could tell it was the boss Montana. He sounded serious.

"Yeah what's good?" I asked.

Montana then said "It's work by Seven Trees. Come to the trap. I got the cash for it in a duffly by the door. It's a big one tonight. If all goes well, we'll get the whole hood lit with this one." Montana hung up.

"What's going on?" Deazy asked. I guess he could tell it was serious from the expression I had on my face.

"It's good D we got work. We can get something to eat after." I said in a calm voice. "We out to The Jets though, we got to get cheese from the trap." It was something Montana said that

didn't sit right with me. He'll usually tell me how much cash we'd be carrying and what we'll be picking up. Also to put the cherry on top we usually only make deals in our hood. Seven Trees is on the other side of the city. Something was up, I just couldn't quite tell what it was.

So Deazy and I pulled up to the trap house. I knocked twice on the heavy steel door.

From behind the door I heard a faint "Who is it?"

"U.S. Postal." I said.

"Shipping or receiving?" The voice replied.

With an impatient sigh I replied "Receiving."

I began to hear a series of locks open up. As the door began to open it let out a high pitched creak that was loud enough to pierce an ear drum. As Deazy and I walked through the door I felt the warm smack of air hit my face. It was refreshing. It was quickly ruined by the foul stench of crack and marijuana. The mixture of smells was bad enough to make you lose your mind. The person who opened the door was my little homie Pip. Pip was a 14 year old boy. He was light skinned, about 5'7" 130lbs with short hair. Pip joined us about a year ago when his mom died in a house fire. Pip was homeless when Montana found him. Montana looked in his eyes and could see he was hungry. I liked Pip he reminded me of myself when I was younger. Young and money motivated.

Pip proceeded to walk us down a hall as he said, "What's up y'all?"

"Chilling" I said, "Starving"

"You ain't never lied" Deazy added.

"How long you been here?" I asked Pip. I know he works long hours sometimes.

“Since like 3.” Pip replied. It was 10 P.M.

We got to the end of the hallway and as Pip opened the door to the room we needed to be in I said, “Go around back and get some air or something. I know you’re tired.”

“Alright.” Pip added as we dapped each other up.

Now this room was my favorite room in the whole Trap House. There wasn’t really much difference between this room and all the others in the trap except for one major thing. This room was filled with beautiful curvaceous women. It was truly amazing. They were there to count money and weigh product. They were stripped-down to their bra and panties to prevent theft, but I think the people in charge just liked seeing them naked. There was one rule I stood by when I would go into this room. Do not touch any of the women. It was such a high risk. You never know if any of the higher ups liked them. One wrong move and you could coincidentally get offed. There was one girl in particular I just couldn’t resist. Her name was Georgia, but everyone called her Peach. Georgia was something special. She was the most beautiful girl I’d ever seen. She had honey brown skin that was as smooth as silk. She stood at about 5’3” with curly black hair that looked like freshly steamed ramen. She had a smile so bright it outshined the stars. Each time I’d catch her gaze my heart would become like butter on a hot skillet. She was 19 about a year older than I. Her looks weren’t even the best part about her. Her mindset was so dope. Unlike the other lovely women there she had a plan on leaving all of this. Back when I used to be at the trap more often she used to tell me about dreams of studying abroad somewhere. She loved to learn history. For some odd reason I always imagined myself going with her. I loved her. She was one of my closest friends in this struggle called the game. I quickly scoped her out in the sea of women, boy was she gorgeous.

“Hi Georgia!” I said enthusiastically.

Her face lit up. “Hey Rae.” She replied

I walked over for a delightful embrace. Her hair smelled good, like fresh Granny Smith apples.

“Haven’t seen you in a while.” She said.

Smoothly I replied, “Been holding down the block.”

Her face grew dim into some sort of frown. I smiled in an attempt at reassurance. I failed.

“You got what I need?” I asked in order to switch subjects.

“Yeah over there by the door.” She replied sharply.

“You know how much it is?” I asked. I was trying to find out how hot we would be riding around with this money.

To my dismay Georgia replied, “No, Montana came to drop it off and said, ‘This is for Rae and Deazy when they get here.’ After that he just left.” Then she said, “It was kind of weird he looked uneasy and he barely even stuck his through the door.”

Hearing this information did nothing but up my suspicion. I walked over to the door to get the black duffle bag. When I tried to pick the bag up it was so heavy it jerked me back down. Just how much money was in the bag, and what was it that we were supposed to get? Putting more strength into it I picked up the bag. It had to be like 30 pounds. Montana wasn’t lying when he said this was a big drop. I looked over at Deazy. He was entertaining himself with one of the women in the room.

“Deazy you ready?” I asked.

Deazy then said “Yeah we out.” Eyes still fixated on the half naked woman.

“See ya later D” Georgia said to Deazy.

“Later Peach.” Deazy replied.

I started towards the door.

“So you’re not going to give me a hug?” Georgia exclaimed.

“My bad.” I replied meekly. My head was in a different space. I hugged her and she squeezed me tight. I wanted to kiss her.

“Are you ok?” I asked. She never really did this before.

“Yeah” she said in a soft voice. “I just miss you.” My heart skipped as I heard those words slip her breath. She continued. “ You never come around anymore and I miss seeing you.”

Smoothly I replied, “I miss you too kid. I’ll see if we can do something tomorrow. You know, if we’re not busy.”

She smiled. “Ok.” She replied softly.

“Rae let’s go!” Deazy said impatiently.

“My fault D.” I said.

“Alright see ya later kid” I said to Georgia.

“Ok Rae. I’ll text you after I’m done with this.” She said as she gestured to the whole room full of money and drugs.

Deazy and I left the room and walked down the hall. As we were letting ourselves out the door of the trap house Pip gave us a farewell.

By the time we’d gotten to the drop spot in Seven Trees it was 11 P.M.. Deazy and I were just chilling in car. Quite literally I might add. It had felt like the temperature dropped 10 degrees.

Deazy asked, “You know when we’re supposed to make the drop?”

“Not sure.” I said. “I’ll call Montana.” I slipped out my phone and dialed Montana’s number.

“Hello who’s this.” Montana answered.

“The Milkman. Special delivery.” I replied.

He said, “Yeah what’s going on.”

“When’s this all supposed to go down. We’re hungry.” I said.

Montana then answered. “Be patient. It should go down at 11:30.”

“Also how much money are we carrying and what are we picking up?” I questioned.

“It’s \$735,000 in 50 dollar bills. Don’t worry about what you’re getting. Oh and once you make the drop call me. I’m going to have you bring it to me.” Montana answered in a sort of malicious tone.

When he said this, I almost threw up. Not once in my life have I ever been this close to that much money. It was practically staring at me in the backseat.

“Alright.” I said. Montana then hung up the phone.

I looked at Deazy and said, “Bro!”

“What.” he answered.

I frantically expressed, “It’s \$735,000 in the backseat right now.”

Deazy said, “There’s no way. I have to see this for myself.” Deazy reached toward the duffle bag and I grabbed his arm.

We looked at each other and I said, "If there's really \$735,000 in that bag do you really want to mess with it."

He nodded and said "You're right." Deazy started reaching for something in his backpack.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I need something to calm my nerves." Deazy said as he pulled out bottle full of codeine.

"It's \$735,000 in the back and you're really going to sip lean." I said sharply.

Boldly Deazy replied, "Yes! It's too much going on and that really just threw me."

He seemed distraught. I said, "What's up bro, you cool?"

He took a sip of lean then said, "Not really. I've been having dreams of death. I feel like I'm going to go any of these days. It's really been messing with my head because who's going to take care of my momma. I'm all she's got." He took another sip then continued, "I gotta get out of this man. I'm stuck though. I don't have any other options. I--"

I cut him off. "Are you crazy dude. You're super talented. You know how people work, go into sales. You're the only person I know who can flip a zip in 3 days."

Deazy nodded in agreement. I continued, "Besides after this we'll probably get paid something nice."

The amount of money in the backseat was getting to me too. "Let me get a sip" I said laughingly.

The time had passed and it was already 11:35. "They're late." I said. "Doesn't any of this seem weird to you D."

Deazy said, "What do you mean?"

I replied, "Yo think about it. It's like everything Montana is having us do is out of protocol. 1. He didn't tell us how much cash we had. 2. We're all the way in Seven Trees. We really only do business in The Jets. 3. He won't tell us what we're picking up."

Deazy quietly said, "Yeah, it almost sounds like a set up."

I laughed and said, "Montana wouldn't-" I turned my head to see Deazy pointing a glock at me. I was literally staring down the barrel of the gun. "What you doing with man?" I said.

"You're smart Rae. What do you think is going on?" said Deazy. I couldn't answer. He continued, "Montana is paying me \$735,000 to off you. When he pitched the idea I thought it was outrageous. Then I started thinking about the money and how my mom and I could finally get out of this. I really love you Rae, you're like my brother. For my mom though, I'd kill the whole city."

I was feeling so many emotions. My phone lit up. It was text from Georgia. Never did I think that earlier tonight would've been the last time I saw or spoke to her. All I could think was, *I should've kissed her.*

I said "Do what you got to do."

Deazy replied, "No. Not here." He commanded that I give him the keys. I did as he said. Deazy continued, "Step out the car, and leave the door open."

Slowly I got out of the car. Deazy did the same. As he was getting out of the car I was looking for ways out. It was only one way in, one way out, and it was in Deazy's direction. Quickly before Deazy turned around I grabbed some dirt off the floor.

Deazy started towards me and he said, "Turn around!" I just stood there. Again he said, "Did you not hear me I said turn arou--"

I threw a handful of dirt in his face as he was talking and darted past him. The throw left a dusty cloud for him to choke on as he wiped the burning dirt out of his eye. I was out of that lot and hit the street when Boom! I felt several excruciating pellets hit my chest. The force from the shot knocked me down. It became very hard to breathe. I could feel each minute of my life slip away with each breath I took. I saw a tall heavy-set man stand over me. He was wearing a black trench coat and fedora hat. The hat had a white ribbon with a peacock feather tucked into it. I recognized it was Montana. He had a short barrel shotgun slung over his shoulder.

He leaned over me, pointed his gun at me and said, "This'll teach you to mess with my peach."

With every last bit of strength I had left in my body I spit a thick and bloody loogie in his face. The last thing I saw was intense rage when Montana pulled the trigger.



Stumped—Lake Almanor, CA

Connor LaPerle



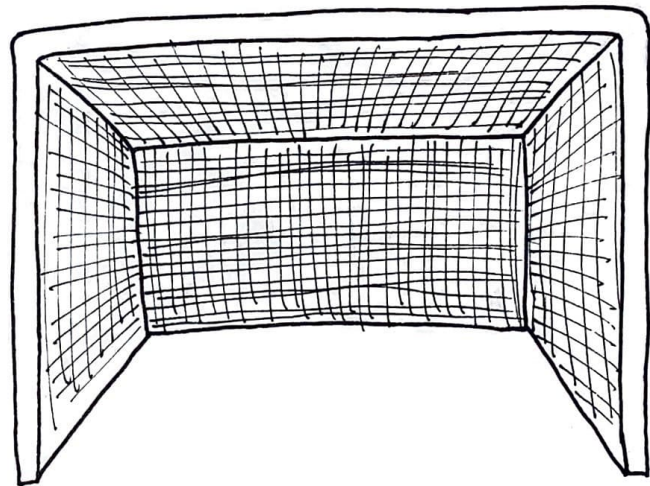
Corner Store—Reno, NV

Connor LaPerle



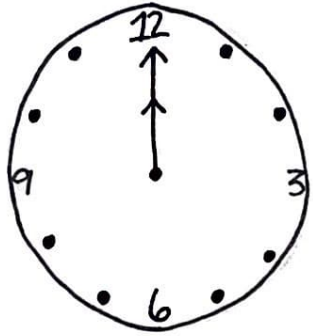


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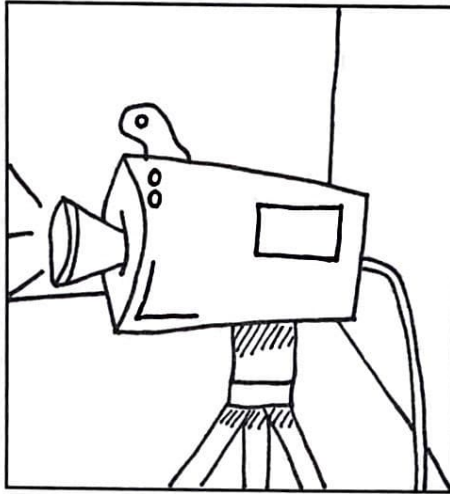


PLAY

CHEYANNA BURNETT-GRIFFITH



At 12 o'clock, the lady promptly walked into the



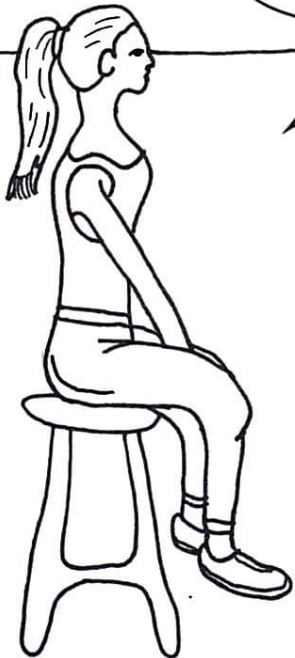
She gave me a countdown



LIVE!

Are you ready?

As ready as I can be!



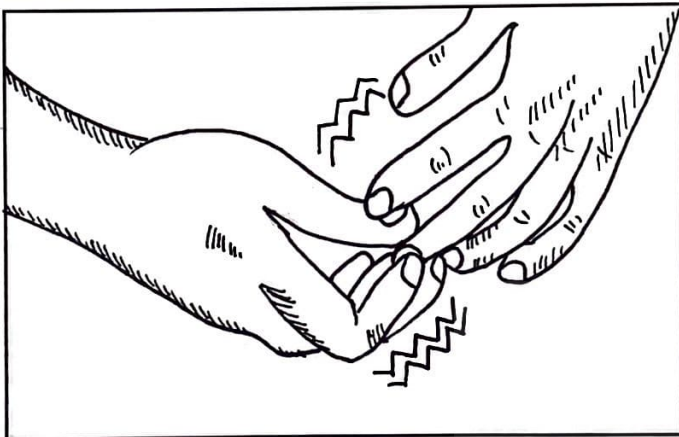
The camera started recording, LIVE! On national TV!

LIVE

And so, I began... Telling my football story...



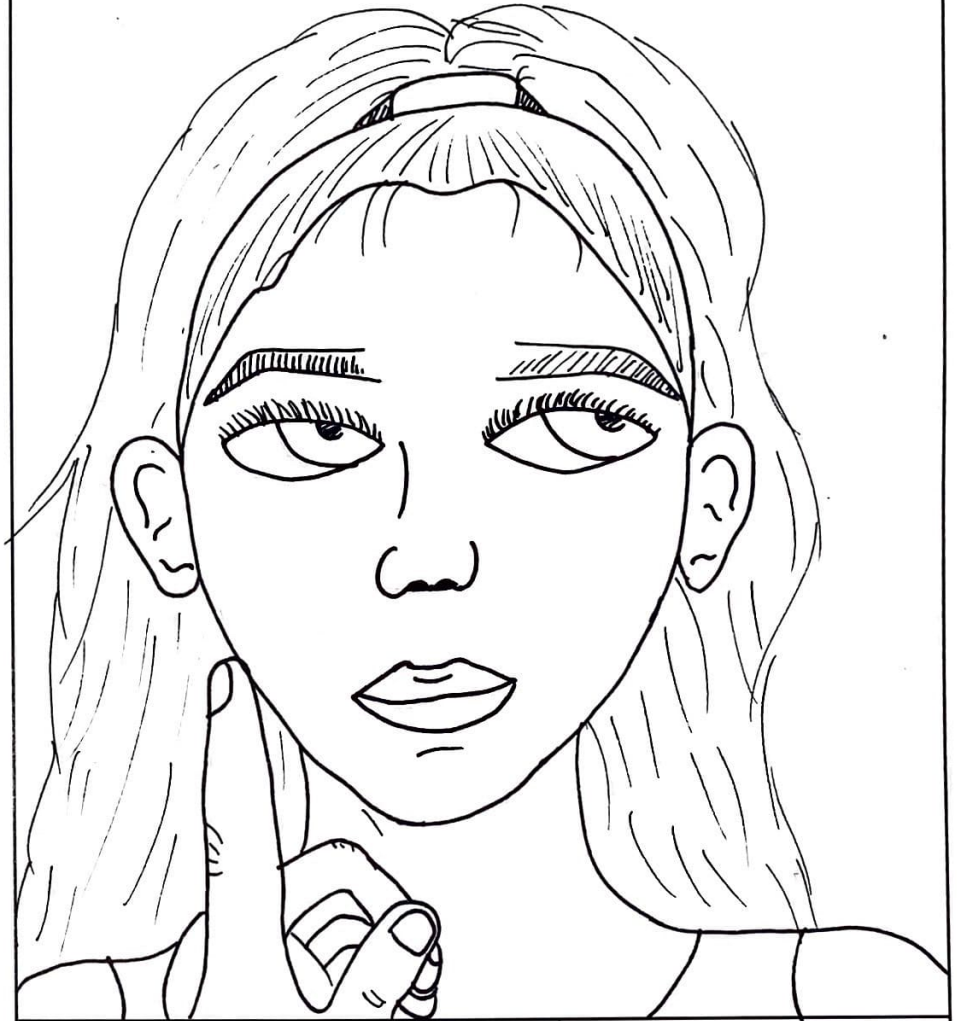
"Hello Barbados, my name is Cheyanna Burnett-Griffith, and I am 23 years old..."



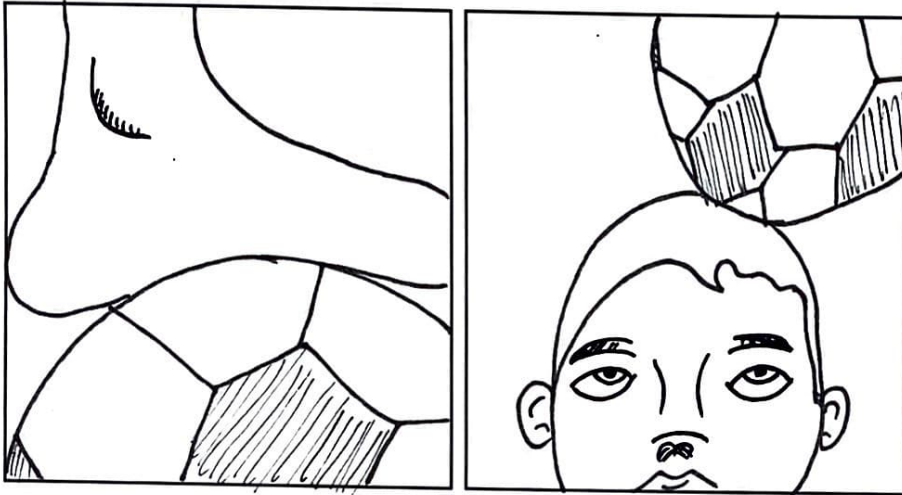
The interview was going smoothly, and the nerves died down quickly.

90

So, tell me, how did you start playing football?



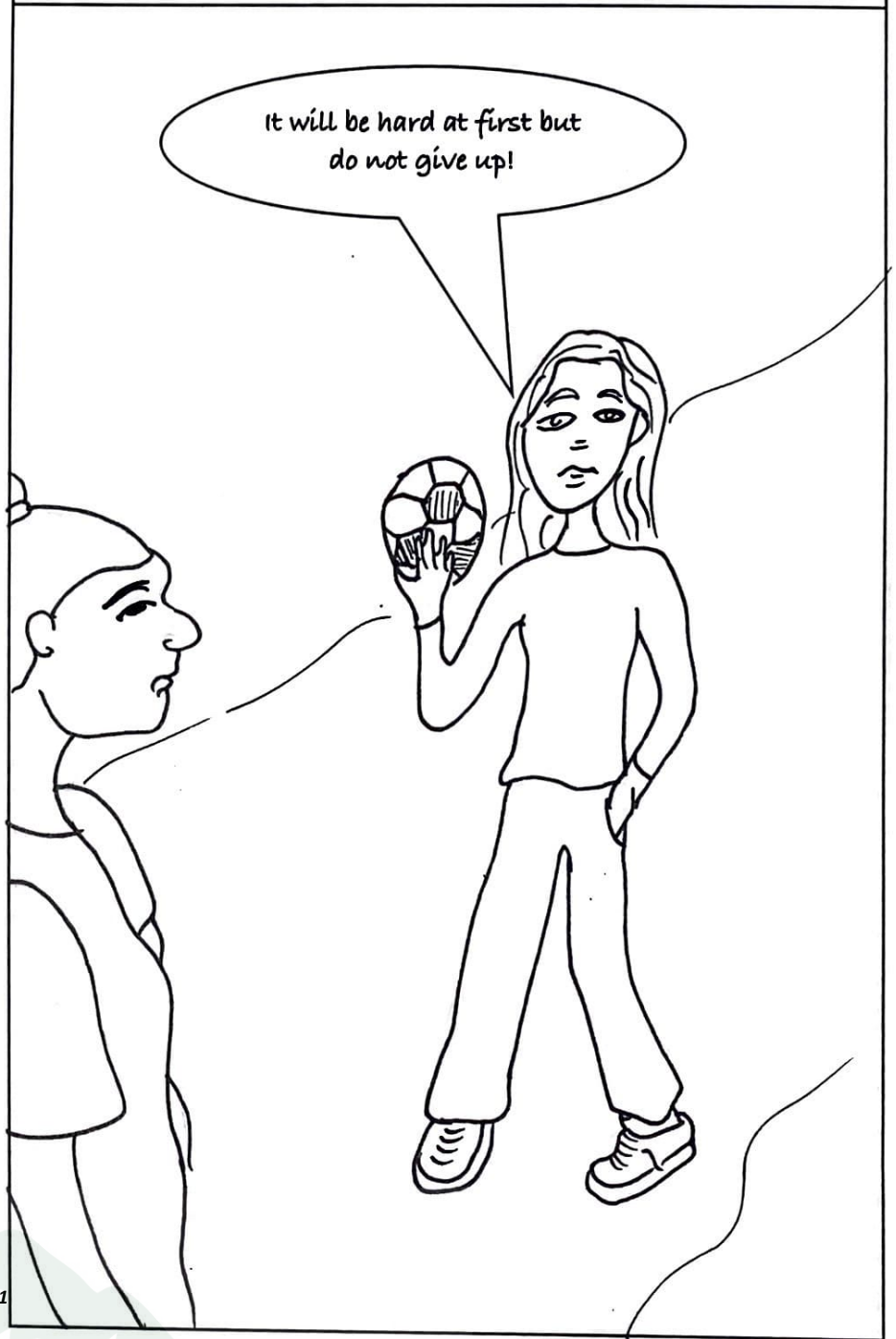
It started when my cousins and I were playing games in the streets of our hometown. We went and got a football and started playing but I had no clue what to do. So, my cousin, Karon pulled me to a side and gave me a quick lesson of the basics so that we both had time to join back in.



We ran around chasing the ball for hours. I just ran and rarely touched the ball because, the few times that I did, I'd always mess up.



When we were all tired, Karon came over to me again. She said that I should take the ball home to practice more by juggling it.





That is how I began...

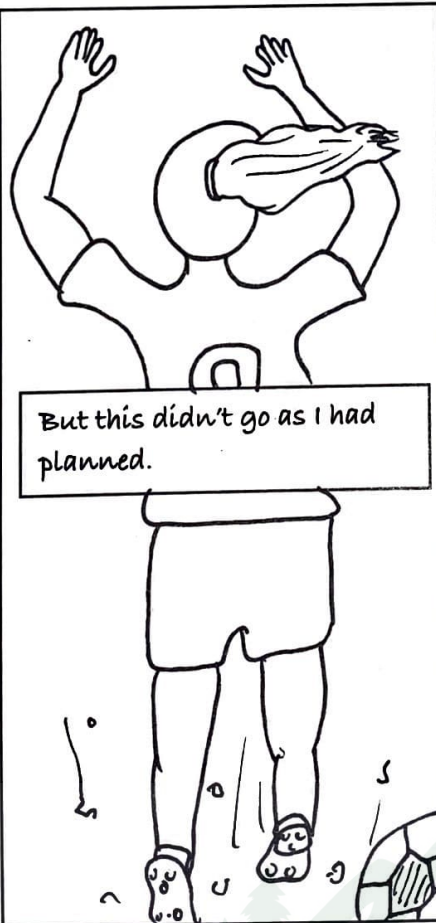


They all started laughing at me and said that girls cannot play football.

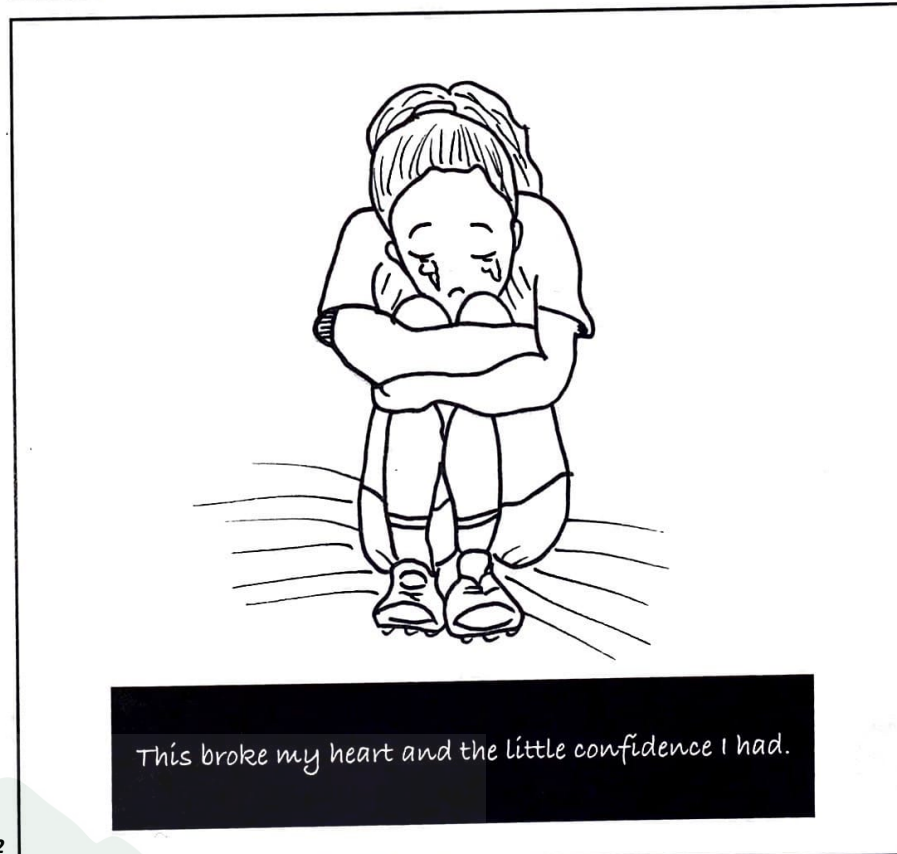
After getting the hang of it,



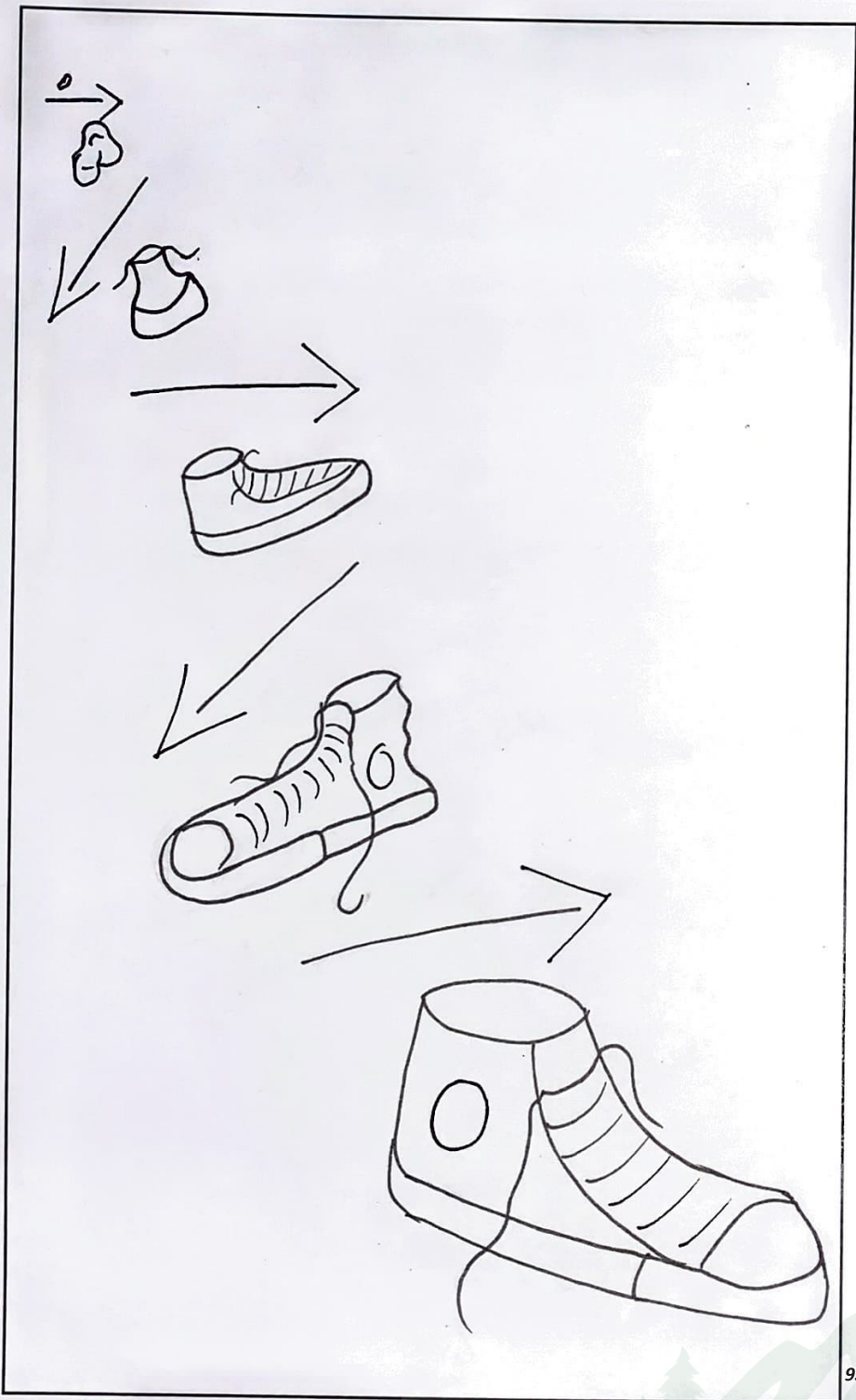
I decided that I was going to try to play with the boys at my primary school.



But this didn't go as I had planned.



This broke my heart and the little confidence I had.



But instead, many days after school, I would take the ball and run up and down the streets. Using shoes and rocks to make drills.

Because that is all I had...

And I wanted to be better!

The lady interrupted...

How did that make you feel? How did the neglect and gender discrimination work out into making you the player that you are today?

Well, of course I was really sad, but I did everything I could to prove to those boys that I can play too!

In secondary school, I tried out for my school team and made it.

Then months later, I was invited to play for the national team.



Ever since then, I have been playing on the national team.



I felt ecstatic and overly happy every time I stepped onto the field before each match.

As I was speaking about this, I thought of Judith Butler right away.

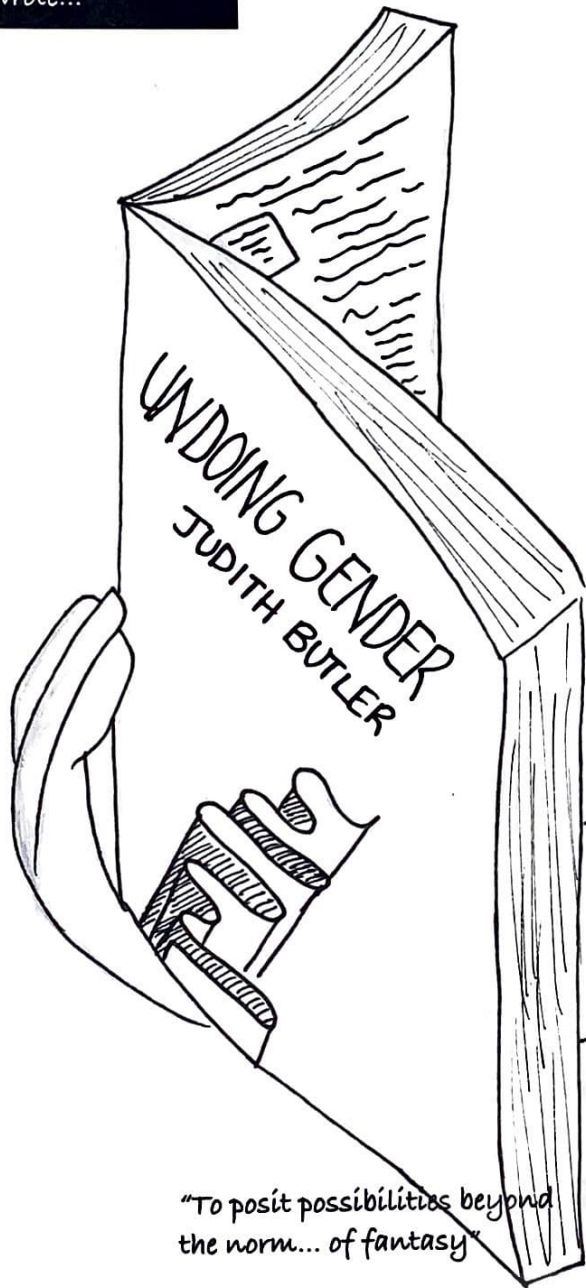
To be precise, in the book, "Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy"

JUDITH BUTLER

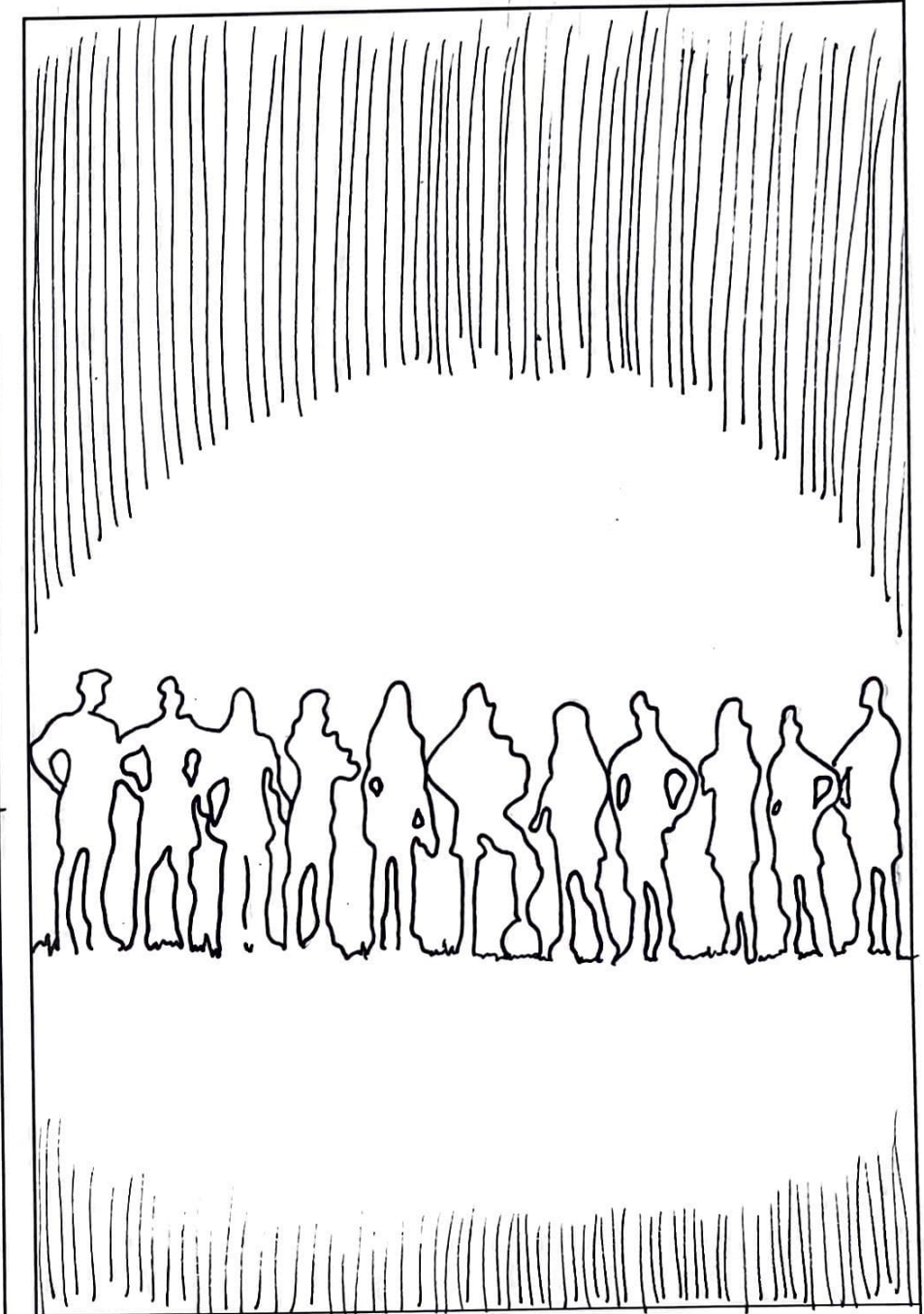


In this book she spoke heavily on sexual norms, but this has significance to what I am speaking about; girls wanting to be seen as footballers.

She wrote...



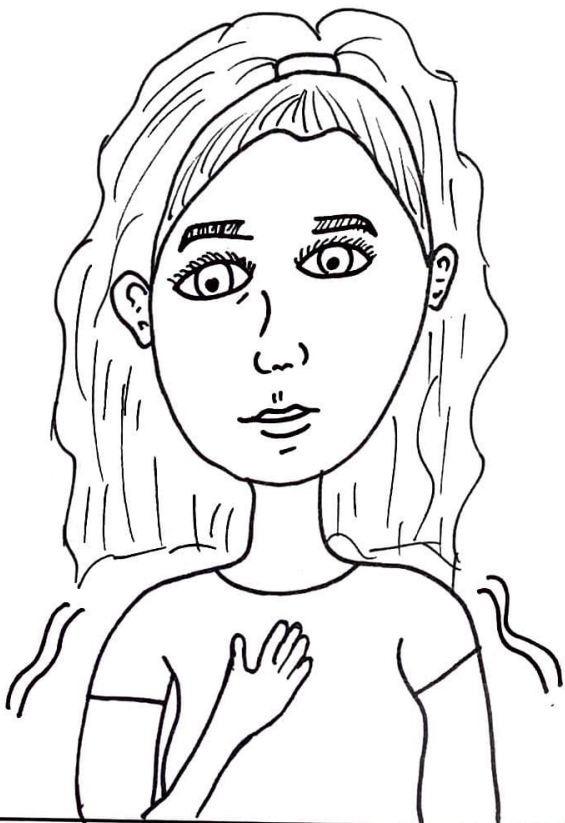
"To posit possibilities beyond
the norm... of fantasy"



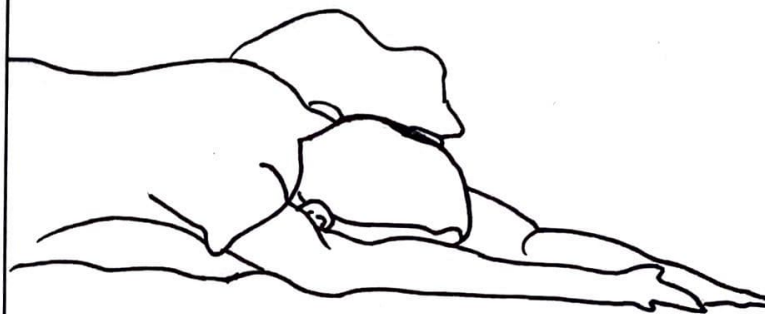
us females are changing the way society views football to be
played. We are bringing our fantasies into reality because we
want to play, and we will.

Do you still remember your first game? How is it different from your last?

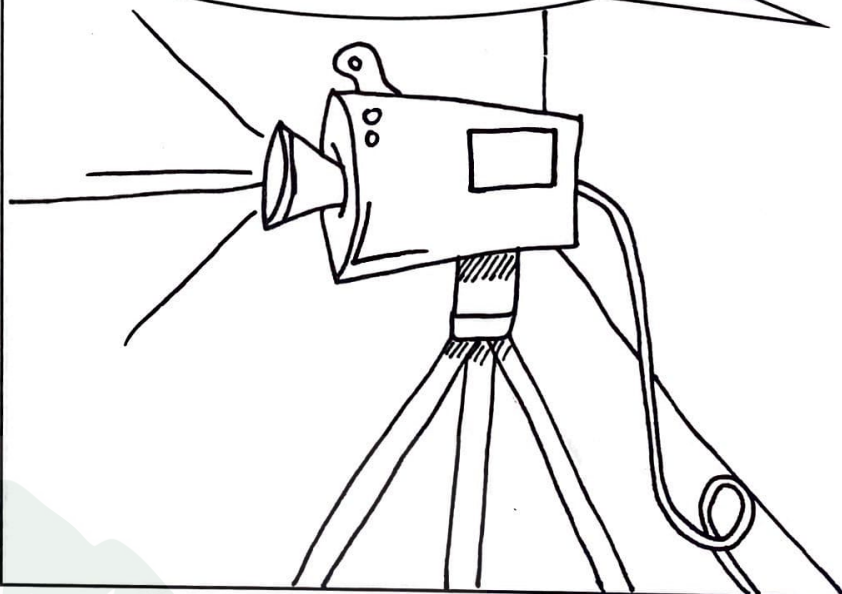
"The first time playing for my country, I was very nervous, but I calmed myself and played the best I could..."

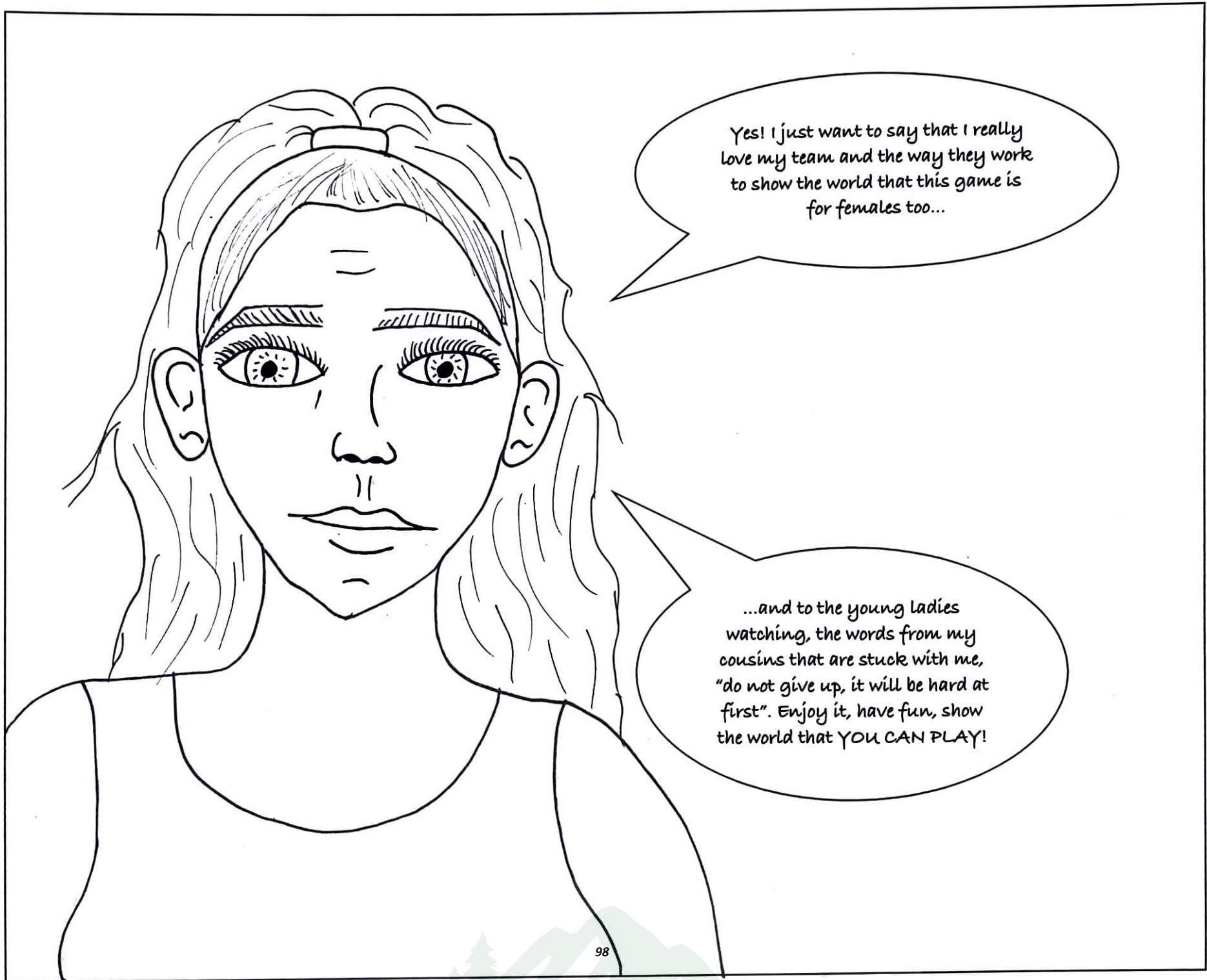


...to compare, I can say that I am a different player now because I have learned so much, from many different coaches. The last game I played, we left everything on the field. We worked so hard that people who watched commended us"



Any last words and advice for the younger girls watching this live interview?



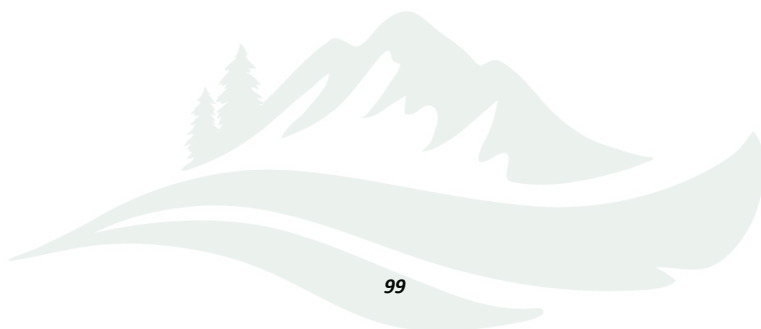


Yes! I just want to say that I really love my team and the way they work to show the world that this game is for females too...

...and to the young ladies watching, the words from my cousins that are stuck with me, "do not give up, it will be hard at first". Enjoy it, have fun, show the world that YOU CAN PLAY!

Untitled

Sydney Madrigal



Untitled

Franchesca Martins



Untitled

Amanda Forbes



Contributor Bios

Cheyanna Burnett-Griffith—My name is Cheyanna Burnett-Griffith and I am 23 years old. I am from Barbados and I am a soccer player. I wrote this poem one night I struggled to fall asleep and I couldn't get out of my head due to personal pressure and struggles that I am facing.

Simon Dauth — is photo is of an FRC student climbing in Yuba Pass. This photo was taken during an ORL climbing course in the fall semester. I think this capture represents the program in a subtle manner. This photo also represents a program of which many FRC students are unaware of.

Evi de Bois — Please refer to my writing to learn more about me.

Michael Hammontree — I'm Michael Hammontree. I was an English major at FRC, and probably the most recluse of them all. I was born in Chester, CA. I have a passion for writing fiction. I hope to publish a novel someday.

Tresa Herrod — Nature Journaling is an account of observation, questions, and our connection to the environment in which we live. The 3 entries included are coursework from ENVR 120 Sierra Nevada Natural History with Dana Flett. (*Populus tremubides*), , (*Quercus keloggii*), (*Pinus Jefferii*) and California ecosystems food web.

Jamie Johnson — Jamie Johnson is a sophomore at Feather River College and is graduating in Spring 2023 with an associate's degree in agriculture. A face many people recognize on campus, she has spent much her free time at FRC involved in the campus garden, Eagle Pride, and student government as secretary.

Connor LaPerle— My name is Connor LaPerle. I grew up in Greenville, California and I'm a business major at Feather River College. I enjoy film photography and exploring nature.

Sydney Madrigal— My name is Sydney Madrigal I'm 18 years old and I'm from Klamath Falls Oregon where I live with my parents and we breed, start and compete on American Quarter Horses.

Alex Marincas-Bucy — My name is Alex. I'm 18 and a high school student at Plumas Charter School, who is also attending classes at FRC. I am passionate about history, politics, philosophy, and poetry. All of my poems are based on my life experiences.

Gregorie Marincas-Bucy — My name is Gregorie Marincas-Bucy. I am a 16-year-old high school senior at Plumas Charter School and am currently taking classes at FRC. I enjoy reading and

writing and am currently in the process of writing a novel. My submission to Cambium consists of poetry based on socio-political themes.

Mia Martinelli — I am a senior at Downieville Jr/Sr highschool. I have been making art my entire life, practicing different techniques and mediums. More recently I have been experimenting with charcoal, watercolor, and scrapbooks. Art will always be a passion of mine.

Franchesca Martins — I am Franchesca Martins and I took this photo on lake Pend Oreille in Sandpoint Idaho, a lake that has been a huge part of my childhood. I grew up visiting this lake every summer and have continuously enjoyed taking photos of the beautiful sunsets.

Kenneth McCann — Kenneth McCann is a former student of FRC who graduated with a major in English and likes to write humorous pieces that would otherwise just occupy his mind until he cannot focus on anything else.

Tanner McCutcheon—Tanner McCutcheon (who goes by the pen name of “Mammon”) is a Philosophy major at FRC who resides in Taylorsville, CA. When not going on nightly walks, he loves listening to a wide variety of music genres and analyzing the works of independent artists. A creator at heart, he enjoys finding inspiration within life's slightest details. The paper is his canvas, and few rules apply. Expression is critical, and art is liberation.

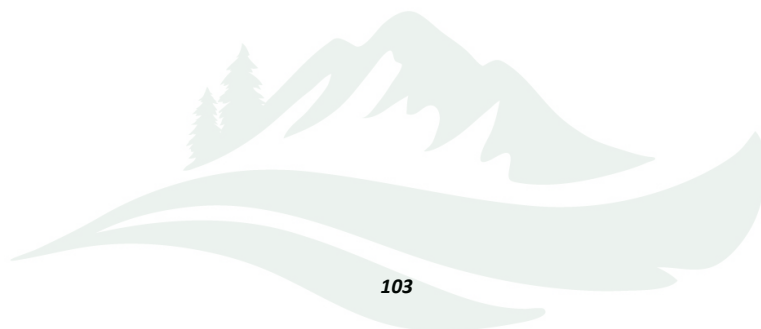
Courtney Moore — I am a Wife, a Mom, a daughter, a veteran, and a student. I enjoy crafting, writing, and spending time with my family.

Kenneth Roach—Kenny plays football for Feather River College.

Olivia Schuepbach—Olivia Anne Schuepbach was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area and moved to Plumas County in 2021. She is a sophomore at Feather River College working on her AA in ECE. She has a passion for creative writing, working with preschool children, and bonding with and training equines.

Haleigh Stickney—My name is Haleigh Stickney, I’m a sociology major in recovery. I’ve lived in Quincy since 2017. 2022 was possibly the roughest year of my existence. This poem and piece of artwork sum that up.

Ashley Underwood — Ashley Underwood currently attends Feather River College as an undergraduate working toward her associate of arts degree in sociology. She aids on campus in the Office of Instruction. Her ambitions include earning her doctorate in psychology to become a clinical psychologist; she is excited to pursue a profession that will provide meaningful support to vulnerable populations in her community.



Other Contributors

Jordan Branham

Kassidy Cecil

Jacob Cook

Amanda Forbes

Aubrianna Keeler

Lindsey Gaspers

Matthew Goff

Teagan Lopez-Schrammel

Alicia Manning

Shateka Palmer

Shasta Partain

Juan Perez

Dasha Petrov

Max Shmelev



Submission Guidelines

Our submission period begins each year on November 1st and ends on February 28th.

Please note: We do not accept email submissions. All submissions must be uploaded through our website: <https://www.frc.edu/english/cambium>

For general queries, please contact us at NGrose@frc.edu

We welcome submissions of prose (essays, non-fiction, fiction), poetry, art (photography, sketches, drawings, paintings, or sculpture art).

All submissions must be de-identified and accompanied by contact information (name, address, telephone, email, and a brief (fewer than 50 words) biography; include the title(s) for each piece submitted.

We do not accept previously published work, but we will consider simultaneous submissions and expect to be notified immediately of acceptance elsewhere.

We will accept up to five poems, photos or artwork pieces or one work of prose (fiction or nonfiction) from each author or artist. Prose may not exceed 5,000 words.

