

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved dress, is lying down and reading an open book. She is surrounded by a vast sea of books of various colors and sizes, creating a dense, textured background. The lighting is soft, highlighting the woman and the book she is reading.

Mcc Literary Review **2025**

*The
Scribbler*

Table of Contents

“A Sky Without Limits”	3
“Everyday Magic”	4
“Every Second Counts”	5
“Flowers Blooming in Coal”	9
“Funerals”	10
“Hands That Heal”	15
“Popsicles and Pretty Pink Curtains”	17
“Selfless Thief”	19
“Soar”	25
“Trust”	26
“Twilight”	27
“The Game of Sorry”	28

Winners of The Scribbler Literary Contest 2025

HSP	1st Place	“Twilight“ by John Kitchens
	2nd Place	“Flowers Blooming in Coal” by Jaaslyn Griffin
	3rd Place	“Everyday Magic” by Ashlyn Wright
HSE	1st Place	“The Game of Sorry” by Madeline Bass
	2nd Place	“Popsicles and Pretty Pink Curtains” by Madeline Bass
CCP	1st Place	“Soar” by Marie Roberts
	2nd Place	“Trust” by Sydney Harrison
	3rd Place	“Justice?” by Scotty Stokes
CCF	1st Place	“Hands that Heal” by Alexis Ott
	2nd Place	“A Sky without Limits” by Alexis Ott
	3rd Place	“Selfless Thief” by Briana Tamayo
CCE	1st Place	“Every Second Counts” by Jeremy Sollie
	2nd Place	“Funerals” by Daetreeona Johnson

A Sky Without Limits

By: Alexis Ott

The sound of laughter filled the air as Maya ran through the field, her notebook clutched tightly to her chest. At sixteen, the world felt like a puzzle she was determined to solve. The sun kissed her brown skin, and the breeze played with the coils of her hair.

She stopped at the edge of the hill where the sky stretched endlessly before her. Maya opened her notebook and saw pages filled with dreams scrawled in messy handwriting: astronaut, writer, engineer, artist.

“Do I have to pick just one?” she asked the clouds.

Growing up, Maya had heard stories about the world’s limits. Too loud. Too dark. Too much. But those words didn’t live in her mother’s house.

“Maya,” her mom would say, “you are limitless. You carry generations in your veins, and with that comes a responsibility—to dream big.”

Her mother often spoke of “black girl magic” as if it were stardust flowing through their veins.

At first, Maya thought it was just a phrase, something people said to make them feel good. But as she grew older, she realized it was more profound. Black girl magic wasn’t just about defying odds; it was about rewriting the rules, reclaiming narratives, and radiating brilliance in a world that often refused to see it.

Maya remembered the stories her grandmother told her—of ancestors who found freedom in their voices and strength in their unity. Those women planted seeds of hope in soil that wasn’t always fertile, yet they bloomed anyway. It was their resilience, their unyielding belief in possibility, that Maya carried with her now.

She glanced at her phone, a text from her best friend, Amara: You ready for the science fair? The fair was a small thing in the grand scheme

of her life, but to Maya, it was everything. She’d built a model of a sustainable city—a city where everyone had a place.

In that city, little girls with brown skin and bright eyes could see themselves as anything they wanted to be: doctors, artists, CEOs, or explorers of galaxies. It was a place where magic wasn’t just a word but a way of life, where diversity was celebrated, and where every voice mattered.

When Maya arrived at the fair, she noticed the curious stares. She felt the weight of the expectations and doubts that seemed to follow her wherever she went. But she also felt the magic—the invisible armor forged from love, history, and dreams.

As she stood before the judges, her voice rang clear: “This project isn’t just about sustainability.

It’s about possibility. It’s about creating a world where everyone—regardless of race, gender, or background—has the space to thrive.”

The room was silent for a moment, and then applause erupted. The judges announced her as the winner, and for a brief moment, Maya let herself bask in the glow of the achievement.

Later that night, as she lay under the stars, she thought about the journey ahead. Black girl magic, she realized, wasn’t just about what she could achieve; it was about how her achievements could inspire others. It was a light that could ignite other flames, a ripple that could become a wave.

She smiled, her dreams now brighter than the stars above her. Yes, the world was full of possibilities, but so was she—and that was the greatest magic of all.

Everyday Magic

By: Ashlyn Wright

In the quiet of the morning light

you brewed the coffee just right.

Steam rising like dreams we chased,

in those moments, time embraced.

But shadows crept as days wore on.

The laughter faded: love was gone.

We danced in echoes of what we had.

Now memories linger, both sweet and sad.

In every glance a spark remains,

a bittersweet reminder of joy and pain.

Though life moves on in shadows deep,

your everyday magic I'll always keep.

Every Second Counts

By: Jeremy Sollie

As anyone who has sat through a choir performance of “Seasons of Love” from *Rent* knows all too well, a common year in a life amounts to 525,600 minutes. Although the tick of the clock maintains the same pace whenever the number resets each January, it nonetheless feels faster each time. It can be challenging to keep track of moments from one’s journey as the road behind you lengthens and the pace accelerates. That’s why for over a decade, I have recorded one second of video every day. Doing so has left me each year with a six-minute video that preserves the people and moments most important to me—while granting me a greater appreciation for how much a single second can hold.

This undertaking began in the summer of 2012, when a podcaster I followed on social media shared a video he had been working on for several months. Linked to the video was a TED Talk by an entrepreneur named Cesar Kuriyama who had the idea of filming one second every day between turning thirty and thirty-one. Inspired by Kuriyama’s presentation, the podcaster began to film moments from his own life when his next birthday rolled around. With three months now completed, he shared a ninety-second work-in-progress with his followers. As someone who spent much of his childhood making videos with a camera in his hand, I found the concept appealing as a natural progression and fun experiment. Considering that my seventeenth birthday

and senior year of high school were both around the corner, the timing could not have been better. Therefore, on July 26, 2012, I pressed record.

Filming a single second once a day might not seem particularly demanding. It did not take long into the first year for me to find otherwise. The one simple, yet crucially important, component of the project—actually filming those seconds—was easy to deprioritize amidst the pomp and circumstance of a senior year, where real life looms over one’s head like a grand piano. It was also easy to completely forget. More than once, I found myself in bed at 11:30 p.m. with the sudden realization that a day was about to pass without any footage captured. When these moments happened, I had little choice but to take the notepad and pen I kept by my bedside and write a message to fulfill that 0.003% of the video. Despite this, I do not consider the initial video a failure. Moments with my friends and family were featured throughout, along with major life updates such as my graduation, my first real high school job, and the purchase of a new vehicle. However, what started as unique and exciting soon became another daily chore. As a result, when I eventually hit my eighteenth birthday and gifted myself a finished video, I took the remaining months of 2013 off to decide whether I wanted to continue the project another year. The positive feedback to my video from those around me, as well as the mental reset from the break, pushed me to give filming one second every day another shot. This time starting on January 1, 2014,

and following the calendar year, rather than going birthday-to-birthday.

My second attempt was far more successful. I no longer struggle to fill my days thanks to the lessons I learned from the previous year of filming, college, and employment. The initial video served as a proof of concept for the people in my life, which made it easier to incorporate them more freely. They began to identify me with the project, and I began to identify myself through it. Twelve months later, continuing to film into the following year was something I committed to without hesitation. Before I knew it, eight semesters became a bachelor's degree, one job became four, one bedroom at my parent's house became three rooms at my own house, and one year of seconds became twelve.

If, as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, and one considers that a second of video consists of twenty-four individual frames, then a year of one-second clips is worth 8,760,000 words (for perspective, the entire Harry Potter book series amounts to roughly 1.1 million). As a result, even an unremarkable second from an uneventful day carries inherent value. A day when the most notable thing that happened was watching my favorite TV show in bed might seem like a wasted opportunity when watching it back at the end of the year. However, it can play differently five years later when living in a new house with a different television, and that beloved show now ended. What was once an afterthought is now a living memory. After I showed my first video to friends at a get-together for my birthday, one of them jokingly pointed out how many seconds featured my childhood dog



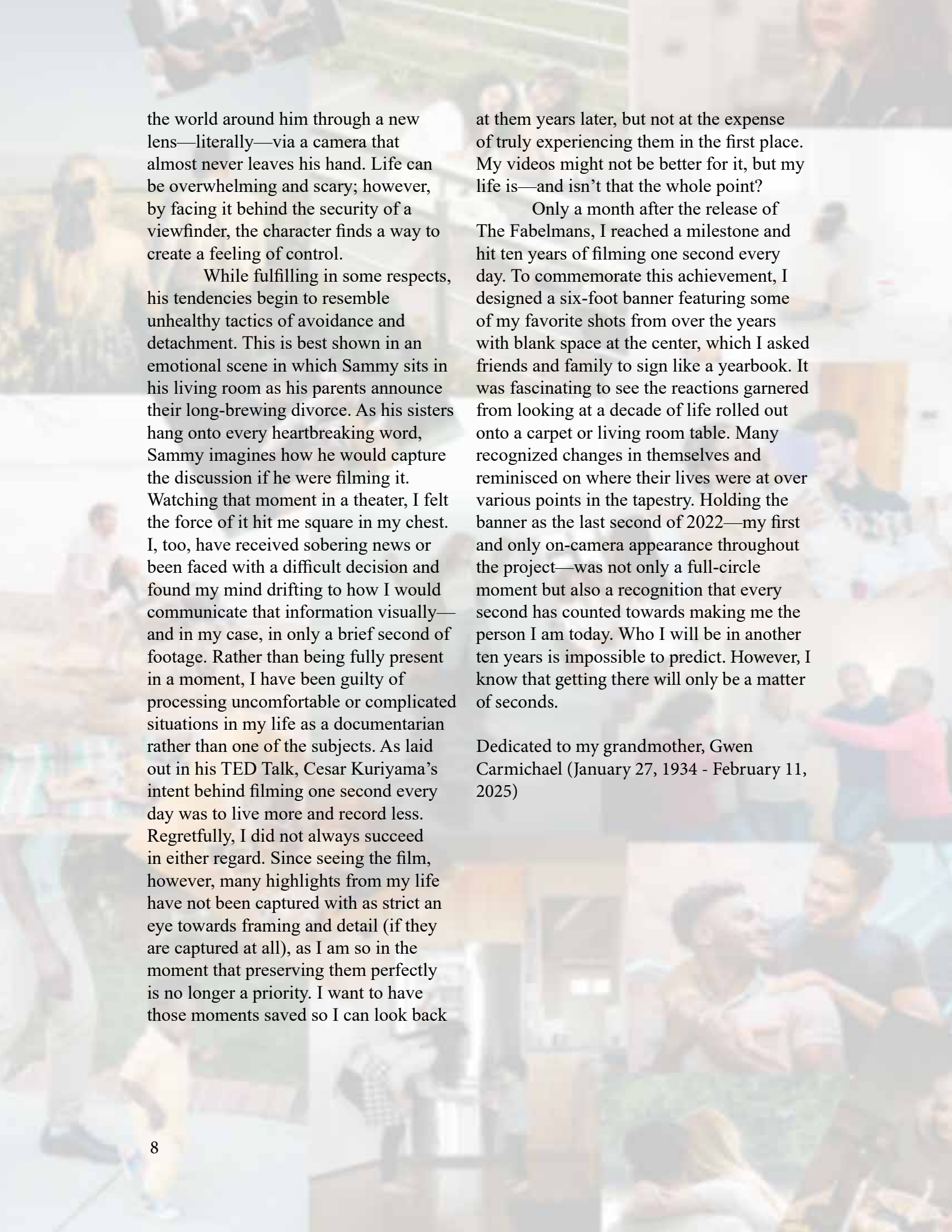
Oreo. To be fair, there were more than a few. However, two years later, when an undetected tumor unexpectedly took him from my family, what I was left with to remember him by wasn't nearly enough. That meant that when my grandmother elected to stop treatment for her cancer almost a decade later, I felt a need to capture aspects of her I wanted to preserve, many of which could not come through in just a picture: her wry grin after a joke, the way she would pat my hand before I left her house, the "boy" she would add at the end of "I love you." Despite many difficult months, she is still with us as I write this. However, when the day comes when that is no longer the case, it will hurt a little less knowing there is somewhere I can visit her.

As I prepare to enter my thirties, I am grateful to have so many treasured moments from the last decade-plus of my life archived, including trips around the world; the process of finding and renovating my first house; the courtship, marriage, and early days of parenthood between my brother and his wife; and the start of my relationship with a former high school classmate, who can be glimpsed in several of my early videos before reappearing with a vengeance in 2024. Where I once found myself realizing, with only minutes to spare, that a day almost passed without filming a second, it is now an unconscious part of my routine. Even though I came to find beauty in the mundane, the amount of time early videos devoted to sitting inside staring at screens

inspired me to do more with my twenties. Watching my videos in close succession, it is easy to see the blossoming of a life better lived—of new places visited, new relationships formed, and new passions discovered. In my early twenties, I would sometimes go to an event or accept an invitation primarily because it gave me something to document on an otherwise empty day. Putting myself out there has led me to a path of opportunities and invitations with greater appeal than merely adding to a video. Years later, I no longer have to seek out ways to fill my days. Instead, I frequently struggle to choose a singular moment by which to remember them.

Feeling a growing need to preserve my life has not always been a beneficial thing, however. Several years ago, I received what felt like a direct attack when director Steven Spielberg released a semi-autobiographical film about his childhood, titled *The Fabelmans*. In the film, his surrogate character, Sammy Fabelman, discovers a love of filmmaking at an early age. That love evolves into something more complicated as he begins to process





the world around him through a new lens—literally—via a camera that almost never leaves his hand. Life can be overwhelming and scary; however, by facing it behind the security of a viewfinder, the character finds a way to create a feeling of control.

While fulfilling in some respects, his tendencies begin to resemble unhealthy tactics of avoidance and detachment. This is best shown in an emotional scene in which Sammy sits in his living room as his parents announce their long-brewing divorce. As his sisters hang onto every heartbreaking word, Sammy imagines how he would capture the discussion if he were filming it. Watching that moment in a theater, I felt the force of it hit me square in my chest. I, too, have received sobering news or been faced with a difficult decision and found my mind drifting to how I would communicate that information visually—and in my case, in only a brief second of footage. Rather than being fully present in a moment, I have been guilty of processing uncomfortable or complicated situations in my life as a documentarian rather than one of the subjects. As laid out in his TED Talk, Cesar Kuriyama's intent behind filming one second every day was to live more and record less. Regretfully, I did not always succeed in either regard. Since seeing the film, however, many highlights from my life have not been captured with as strict an eye towards framing and detail (if they are captured at all), as I am so in the moment that preserving them perfectly is no longer a priority. I want to have those moments saved so I can look back

at them years later, but not at the expense of truly experiencing them in the first place. My videos might not be better for it, but my life is—and isn't that the whole point?

Only a month after the release of *The Fabelmans*, I reached a milestone and hit ten years of filming one second every day. To commemorate this achievement, I designed a six-foot banner featuring some of my favorite shots from over the years with blank space at the center, which I asked friends and family to sign like a yearbook. It was fascinating to see the reactions garnered from looking at a decade of life rolled out onto a carpet or living room table. Many recognized changes in themselves and reminisced on where their lives were at over various points in the tapestry. Holding the banner as the last second of 2022—my first and only on-camera appearance throughout the project—was not only a full-circle moment but also a recognition that every second has counted towards making me the person I am today. Who I will be in another ten years is impossible to predict. However, I know that getting there will only be a matter of seconds.

Dedicated to my grandmother, Gwen Carmichael (January 27, 1934 - February 11, 2025)

Flowers Blooming in Coal

By: Jaaslyn Griffin

A flower bloomed in coal?

Who would have thought that after a flaming fire of inconsistent love there would be a tulip sitting above the ashes of our past, the pain of every word we never meant to say but came out anyway? There's a rose unburned from the constant feeling of being betrayed by the letters, vowels, and consonants that come from your lips? How?? Just how can a beautiful pink rose be untouched by the heat of your anger and disappointment?

Oh! Look!! Another... flower? This one is crushed, broken and destroyed by the unfailing love you have always given me, but.... Why does the great benefit of your warmth destroy me?...

A flower bloomed in coal?.... I understand it now. Your words hurt me, your actions of gratitude perplexed me, your service of love kept me still.... You.... you controlled me Yes, a flower bloomed in coal. Only because of the hope the original foundation always had in place for good things to prosper and grow.... That's why I sit here, watching flowers bloom in coal.





FUNERALS

BY DAETREEONA JOHNSON

Whenever I attend certain events (funerals, weddings, baby showers, or bridal showers), I always think about my own. I never understood why I did that. I probably have planned my event more times than I can count. In the midst of the event, I am planning my own in my head. I am planning the whole event to a T. I am so glad people are not mind readers. Now true enough, I will not be able to experience my funeral because, you know, I will be dead, but I guess my mind does not know that. I can plan like having the dress I want to be buried in, who I want to do my eulogy, and who I would like to speak at my funeral. For the events, I will plan who will attend and speak at my funeral, the gifts I will get at the showers, the look on my bridesmaids' faces, and who will make a toast. Out of all those events, the imagination of my funeral sticks with me the most. The looks on my family's faces, the reading of the obituary, and the smell of the food at the repast (if you know, you know). The most recent funeral was my uncle's funeral. I will never forget my older cousin speaking during the funeral "You have two dates: your birth date and the death date but neither of those dates matter. What matters is the dash in between. What matters is how you live your life from the day you were born until the day you die".

Besides the fact that I plan my funeral, I have planned other funerals in my head as well. As an overthinker, I have determined that I try to think about things before they happen. If I think about things before they happen, I will be able to handle them with no feelings when they do happen. I have planned several family members' funerals in my head for no

apparent reason. It's not that I want them to leave by no means, it's just me trying to see if am I able to live without them. An old wives' tale states that if you have a dream about someone dying who is still living, they will live a long life. So, I see a long living life for my parents, my uncle, etc. I learned that a lot of people do it, so I don't feel so bad anymore.

I saw a post one day that said "If there was a book that told you when you would die and how you would die, would you want to read it?" Of course, many people would say "No!", "Nada!", "Never!" I think I would. I imagine that if I knew that I would die in a car accident, I probably would never get in a car again or if I knew I would die from choking, I probably would eat every meal very, very slowly. Thankfully, "No man knows the day nor the hour, only the Father" (Matthew 24:36).

I used to be very afraid of death but now I am content with it. It's just knowing that death is it. Which I know "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is to gain" (Philippians 1:21), and with God, there is eternal life. It's the feeling of everyone and everything left behind afterward that gets me. We are just supposed to enjoy the rest of our lives without them. Life goes on I guess but grief is real. I could be riding down the road and I hear a song that makes me think about someone I lost and now I am trying to hurry and dry my eyes so I can see the road or a picture of them could pop up and it finally hits me that they are gone. The first year after someone dies is always the hardest but I think every year is just as hard. I don't think a person gets over someone dying, I think he or she just learns how to deal with them not being

there. Life without them will never be the same but thank God for the memories because that is all that is left. Like after the funeral, what happens next? We go from crying and shouting to smiling and laughing. I do know you have to laugh to keep from crying sometimes so I'm guessing that is what happens. The day after and even the day of them dying is just like an unexplainable shock. The guilt is there for not spending enough time with them even though no one knew that their time would be cut that short. The awkwardness of trying to grieve but also trying to plan the service is unexplainable as well, especially with a big family and making sure everyone's opinions are heard and respected. It just blows my mind though. I will never forget my younger cousin's funeral for her daughter. The sound of her crying begging God not to take her daughter still has not left my mind and that was months ago. The eulogist stated "Check on the family. Don't just check on them after the funeral is over. Don't just check on them around the deceased's birthday and other days that she may think of her. Remember when you go home, it'll just be another day for you. Their life will never be the same unlike yours. That's the thing about funerals. Everyone checks on the family a day or two after the funeral and that's it. Keep checking on the family. Check on them months later, call and visit them. Losing a loved one will never be easy no matter how much time has passed. Another sound from a funeral that will never leave me was my uncle's funeral. My granny cried screaming "Not my son, let me see him just one more time".

His funeral was over 15 years ago

and my granny's was 12 years ago. For both of their deaths, I remember where I was when I got the word that they were gone. My Granny had been sick for a while. I remember her telling me "When I get well, I'm going to do your hair". Unfortunately, she never got the chance to do it. I came home from school on a Wednesday and saw the look on my mom's face. It broke my heart. I got closer to her and said "What's wrong? Who died? Is it Granny?" She couldn't say anything. She just shook her head. Time stopped. I fell out in her arms and thank God she caught me. I woke up and ran to my dad and asked if it was true. He hated to break the news but he could not lie to me. During her funeral, I remember just crying to my aunt. I was only 14. I expected to have my Granny there my whole life. I always say "My Granny taught me everything in life, but she never taught me how to live life without her". As much as I want her back, I would be selfish to ask her to come back and suffer just to make me happy. As much as I needed her, God needed her more. For my uncle, he was sick as well. I remember I was in the den with my mom. I woke up like it was a normal day. I looked at her and she told me he had passed away. I remember going right back to sleep hoping it was just a nightmare. Unfortunately, it was not a nightmare, it was real life.

Another thing that gets me about funerals is that we are supposed to be full of joy at funerals but are supposed to be full of sorrow at birth. When a baby is born, the baby is born into sin. Being born into sin is why we should be crying but no one thinks of it like that. We are

crying for the baby to come into this world safely, and look as adorable as ever, and pray for the mother to have a safe and successful delivery. After the birth, the baby is then taken care of by their parents. The baby eventually grows into childhood then teenage hood then adulthood and somewhere during that time, they begin a relationship with Christ if they choose. They admit that they are a sinner who sins and needs a Savior and want to turn away from their wicked ways, they believe that Christ died and rose again for their sins, and confess that Jesus Christ will be their Lord and Savior. Lastly, God will call them home to live eternal life with them. When it comes to the funeral, we are supposed to be happy that they do not have to live in this sinful world anymore. The deceased gets to live in paradise with the one and only Savior or is sentenced to damnation. For me, we cry because we lose some of the best parts of us. I am 26 years old and I have lost all my Grandparents, but I was only able to meet one. I lost 3 aunts, 3 uncles, and 3 school teachers who deeply played a big part in my life. I lost a few cousins and a few other family members. So where did we get our emotions mixed up when it comes to certain events? A funeral is called a homegoing because you are going back to the home of where you came from. Earth is not our final resting place but only our temporary destination. In John 14:2 "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you". As my Pastor said today, 'Jesus is coming back and He's coming to take us home. The place He has prepared will never be at total capacity. With this whole world's population, there will still be enough room

for all His children".

Thirdly, when it comes to funerals, I do not understand why certain funerals touch me more than others. Like said before, I have lost many people in my years of living. Another thing I never understood is why the main time families gather is for funerals. It's like I will be numb to the fact that they are gone. When I went to the latest funeral of my uncle, there were no tears to cry and I do not know why. I spoke to my therapist about it and she stated that just because I know them does not mean I have to cry about their passing. It is normal to feel nothing at all for one person and to not be able to take the news of another. I just didn't understand because I have cried over actors' and/or actresses' deaths in series and movies but not over some people that I have seen daily.

Fourthly, I never understand why the main time families gather is for funerals. People from all over the country come for a funeral no matter the notice. From my cultural experience, we usually have a funeral about a week after we hear the news. Anything longer than a week is unheard of. Also, we always ask a certain number of questions after someone passes. "Who has the body?" We ask this because each funeral home is different. "How did he or she die?" We ask this because it could have been natural or another reason. "Did they have any insurance?" We ask this because funerals can be very expensive. If funerals cannot be paid for by insurance, people are going to be out of a lot of money which leads to fundraisers, such as fish fries and/or T-shirts. Now, whether or not the answers

to any of these questions are anyone's concern, we are going to ask. Now, a few questions arise after the funeral, such as, "How was the funeral?" We ask, that for many different reasons such as family members shouting, arguing, or even fighting. Also, an uninvited guest could have appeared at the funeral as well and left everyone speechless. Now that small, simple sentence leads to many follow-up questions including: "Was the funeral sad?". Additionally, of course, a funeral will be sad, but some funerals are sadder than others. "Did the family take it hard?" There are some funerals where the family does not cry at all and there are some when the family cannot stop crying. Both are normal reactions depending on the person. When it comes to that question, it leads to people being surprised if certain members cry more than others. Another question is "How did the body look?" and that is asked because people try to determine whether or not the deceased looks the same as they did before they passed away. Now in our community, the obituary is one of the most important parts of the funeral. We ask "Did you get an obituary?" due to the fact that some funerals run out of obituaries. Also, the obituary contains all the important information about the deceased including the life history, family and personal pictures, and the funeral schedule. I have been told it is bad luck to throw away an obituary, so I have kept every obituary from every funeral I have attended. Lastly, the question that comes up by asking, "How was the food at the repast?" can start or end a conversation. Everyone knows that "funeral chicken," "wedding cake," and "baby shower meatballs" are the most

important part of the events. A full-blown conversation could be had over those few questions.

Finally, when it comes to death, a new life comes. Growing up, I was always told that "someone dies around the same time someone is born" and, "death always comes in threes." I never understood it but I always heard "God gives and He taketh away." Another phrase could be the "death rattle" at the end of someone's life and the beautiful cry and smell as the new bundle of joy comes into the world. When it comes to death, there will always be a homegoing. When it comes to birth, there will always be a homecoming. In comparison, there is no way to prepare fully for either. This is considered the circle of life. Some lives can be shorter and some can be longer. The best part of life is that it begins in the middle rather than the beginning or end.

Hands that Heal

By: Alexis Ott

Jada stared at the worn-out textbook sprawled across her kitchen table. The pages were crinkled from a coffee spill the week before, and the corners were dog-eared from countless hours of study. The book represented both her dreams and the weight of her reality.

It was 2 a.m., and the only light in her small studio apartment came from the flickering bulb above her and the soft glow of her laptop. She had an exam in the morning, a double shift at the diner the next day, and rent due at the end of the week. Jada rubbed her eyes, trying to ignore the gnawing ache of exhaustion.

Becoming a nurse was the only thing she'd ever wanted. From the time she was a little girl patching up her cousins' scraped knees to volunteering at her high school blood drives, she had always felt a calling to care for others. But dreams, she had learned, didn't come easy. Especially not for girls like her.

Her parents had passed away in a car accident when she was seventeen, leaving her to navigate adulthood far earlier than she should have. There were no safety nets, no fallback plans, and no one to catch her when she stumbled.

She worked nights at the diner, attended classes during the day, and spent what little free time she had studying.

But the obstacles seemed endless.

Last week, her car had broken down,

forcing her to spend hours on public transit. Her job barely paid enough to cover rent, let alone tuition or groceries. And then there were the whispered comments from classmates who didn't understand what it was like to juggle so much at once.

"Jada, you've got to be realistic," her manager at the diner had said one night. "Maybe you're spreading yourself too thin. Nursing school's not for everyone."

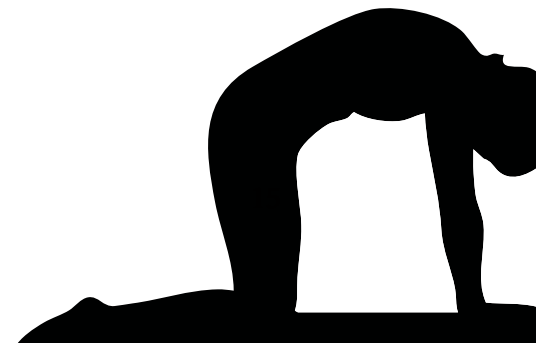
The words had stung, but Jada had smiled politely and walked away. No one understood the fire that burned inside her, the determination to rise above everything that tried to hold her back.

Now, as she sat at the table, her stomach growled—a reminder that she hadn't eaten since breakfast. She ignored it and turned back to her notes, writing out the steps of CPR and the stages of wound healing. "Keep going," she whispered to herself. "You've got this."

The next morning, she barely made it to class on time. Her bus had been late, and she had spilled coffee on her only clean pair of scrubs. Her professor raised an eyebrow as she slid into her seat, but Jada didn't care. She aced the exam despite it all.

After class, she rushed to the diner, tying on her apron as she stepped through the door. The work was grueling, but Jada kept her head down, focusing on the thought of one day trading this life for one where she could wear a stethoscope instead of a name tag.

That night, as she walked home



in the rain, her phone buzzed. It was an email from her school's financial aid office. Her heart pounded as she opened it.

Congratulations, Jada. You've been awarded the Dr. Simone Nursing Scholarship. This scholarship recognizes students who demonstrate resilience and commitment to healthcare. Funds will be disbursed to your account immediately.

Jada froze in the middle of the sidewalk, tears streaming down her face. For the first time in months, she let herself feel the full weight of her struggles. But this time, the weight was lighter.

She wasn't out of the woods yet—there were still bills to pay, shifts to work, and exams to pass. But for the first time, she felt like the world wasn't entirely against her.

Later that night, as she sat back at her kitchen table, Jada looked at her hands. They were calloused from work and trembling from fatigue, but they were strong. These were the hands of a future nurse, hands that would one day heal others.

She picked up her pen and went back to studying, the fire in her heart burning brighter than ever.



Popsicles And Pretty Pink Curtains

By: Madeline Bass

Everyone has that one thing that they think about on the daily. Is it an object? Is it a person? Mine is a moment in time that changed my perspective.

June 12th of 2012 will always be on my mind. As a girl at the age of six, I loved what every six year old loves. Swimming, playing in the sun, banana popsicles, and the color pink. That day was like every other day, except my little brother and I were staying with our grandparents. We woke up that morning ready for the day. We had breakfast, put on our swimsuits, and went straight to the swimming pool. I swam until my fingers pruned and my legs went sore. Our parents were out of town that week so our grandmother went to the store and bought our favorite treats. Mine, at the time, were banana popsicles. After I got out of the pool, I, of course, asked for one.

We went about our day laughing all the way to the end. As it got to be my bedtime, my grandparents walked me upstairs and tucked me in. My room was decorated with the prettiest pink curtains. We had gotten them a few weeks before. They were my favorite. I fell asleep quickly because I was excited to repeat the day I had just had.

Shortly after I fell asleep, I awoke. I felt someone's hands wrap around my body as I got lifted from my bed. Trying to wake up and look around, I rubbed my eyes. I looked to see who was holding me, but the only thing I could sense was the warmth of the room. Why was it so hot? Had I been sweating? Then I heard my grandfather say, "We have to get out of the



house. Now." He carried me out of my bedroom. My bedroom where my toys were. My bedroom where my makeup, my jewelry, my tea set were. My bedroom that had my pretty pink curtains hanging next to where I had just been lying. Everything was so close, yet so far away. I was still half asleep, yet so aware of where I was.

As I was being carried down the hall, the only thing I could see were thick layers of smoke.

Smoke that filled the walls of my grandparent's home. A home that carried treasures. A home that carried memories. Something wasn't right. Being carried down the stairs, I reached my hand out to feel for something. Anything. My hand hit the wall, and for some reason I knew that I wouldn't get to touch it again.

Still not able to see, we finally got through the back door and it was like a breath of fresh air. I could breathe; I could see. My grandfather kept walking.

I turned to look over his shoulder only to see flames. Flames that engulfed the walls of my grandparent's house. The house that my mother grew up in and everything she grew up about.

I eventually came to the realization that the only thing I was wearing was my nightgown. That was all I had. My grandfather sat me down on the grass beside my grandmother, who was holding my six-month old brother.

We sat there, only to look at what we were losing. There was nothing to do. No one to call. Just sitting and watching.

After around thirty minutes, the firefighters came. We got to use a phone to contact my parents. That was when my mother told us that she had gotten a call from a neighbor who told her that the house was on fire, and she would lose everything. My mom wasn't concerned about all of the materialistic things she was losing. She was shaking in uncontrollable silence, because for fifteen minutes of her life, she didn't know if her children were alive. Her six year old daughter. Her six-month old son.

Neighbors came, prayers came, but we were left with nothing. We left the property with the clothes on our back, wondering what to do next. That

night, we were taken into a neighbor's house until my parents got back into town. We all drank some water because we were dehydrated from the intake of smoke. Then, the lady that we were staying with asked me a question: "Little lady, would you like a popsicle? I'm afraid the only flavor we have is banana." That was the moment I knew everything was going to be alright. My grandmother looked down at me and said, "That's your favorite! Sweetie, I believe your guardian angel just sent you a present." I ate my banana popsicle knowing that I was blessed. Blessed with a community of good people. Blessed with a good family.

This day will always be on my mind because of the lessons it taught me. It taught me that everything happens for a reason. It taught me that you should spend time with the people you love. It taught me that you should be grateful for the things you have. Everytime I think about this day, I learn something new.

During special holidays, June 12th of 2012 is a common topic brought up at my family's dining table. We talk about the lessons that were learned, the memories that we have, and the people that we love. But at the end of these days, I go to my room and fall asleep in my bed, right next to a new pair of pretty pink curtains hanging above my window.

Selfless Thief

By: Briana Tamayo

He placed his right hand on the railing as he slowly stepped up the stairs. It was pouring. The clouds showed no sign of stopping anytime soon. The man attempted to place his left hand over the other. His direction messed up as he missed. It wasn't that his aim was off. Ravi had simply forgotten that he didn't have that hand anymore.

A couple weeks ago, Ravi had embarked on a journey that ended up being more than he could chew. For centuries, the deep caverns of the south had been a long-lasting terror. Most people who ventured in never made it back out. Many souls that got lost in the inner networks never saw the light of day again. Tales of multi-headed beasts, endless pits, and various other rumors plagued the caves. It was a miracle the mercenary was able to leave with just a lost hand. Ravi's will for his goals was greater than many luckily. After the incident, he ventured back to the kingdom where he had initially started his quest. He sought for anything that could prepare his sanity for the horrors he needed to go back to.

Ravi let out a strong sigh after balancing himself on the stairs. His remaining hand traced along the railing with a tight grip as he went up the steps.

Finally, he was under the shop's awning.

The wooden door opened with a gentle squeak. The bells on the door let out their familiar chime. Lights from the candles inside flooded around him. As soon as he saw that, Ravi threw himself in as fast as he could. He was dripping wet, shivering, and needed a place to rest. The warm air of the store embraced him like a lover's hug. Ravi placed himself at a table near the front. His eyes looked along the display window outside. The sound of God's tears running along the streets was much more soothing than living it.

The mercenary's face finally softened. He hadn't really had any time to relax when returning either. There was the threat of ravenous ivy plants with brains and coyotes howling in the distance. Now, all he had to worry about was the wrath of the shopkeeper for tracking water in.

It was good luck that his favorite shop was open so late. The man who ran it was a night owl and offered his goods to those in need at the darkest hour. 'Odin's Cauldron' was designed with people like Ravi in mind. For those who had dirtier jobs with barely any honor.

No matter the origin or reputation, they were accepted. As long as they didn't have a previous history of stealing from



his shop.

Ravi took a moment to ruffle up his dark hair after trying to dry it with his hand. The leather glove he had on made the tiniest creaks as he looked around his bag. His fingers found the map he was looking for. He untied the scroll and rolled it out on the table. Various markings, crinkles, and stains displayed its age. There was the location of the caverns, and he was attempting to recall the layout from memory. Ravi took a quill from the front desk to sketch it out. He eventually reached a path where he just couldn't remember anything, either from being distracted by a monster or by the darkness. He groaned in frustration and placed his head against the table for a moment.

"What is it this time?"

Ravi lifted his head after hearing Odin. The shopkeeper stepped from the back of the store and made his way to the other. His presence crept gradually as he got closer. Even if it wasn't the traditional welcome a citizen would expect, it gave the mercenary a sense of home. In all the chaos in his life, Odin had remained constant and genuine.

"Don't say it like that. Makes it sound like you don't like me."

He leaned against the table with his elbow on it. The left arm was concealed for the moment. It was a rather jarring sight he wanted to wait to show.

"You're not a favorite."

Odin leered back. His cloak dragged against the ground. It circled around the table as he sat on the other end from Ravi. It complimented the window's long curtains that touched the ground. The overall shop was decorated with towering shelves, hanging potions, and ingredients from all kinds of nations. It was reflective of the old

mage himself. Lanky, aged, and filled to the brim with knowledge.

"That's not a no, is it?"

Ravi found the courage to smile for the first time in days. The older man just rolled his eyes. Odin placed a finger against the wood and began tracing it in a circle. The other man watched closely as it began to form in another shape. The outline glowed for just a second before a tiny orb of light rose from it. Odin handled it very gently as he placed it over Ravi's map. Every stroke and drawing were easily visible now. The writing had caught his attention, and he was curious. What could this man be scheming with a destination this dangerous?

"Oh, that's helpful then!

Candlelight is difficult for me to write in. Thanks."

Ravi's attention strayed to the ball of light. It was bubble-like with the warmest glow without the downside of burning wax.

"I did it for my own sight.

Besides, I had to be sure my eyes were screwed in right. You're not actually considering climbing down there, are you?"

"That's why I came to you for advice. Maybe a spell or two?"

He smiled at Odin with a cheesy grin. Ravi considered batting his eyelashes too. However, he remembered the mage never liked that.

"Waste my time, sanity, and resources for a frivolous quest for you to search for treasures that might not even be there?"

He leered at the other.

"I figured you'd say that, but I

need your attention. Please, it's important."

The shift in the man's tone made Odin look back at Ravi. He raised a brow wondering what he could possibly offer or explain.

"It better be good."

"It is, just listen."

The mercenary let a light frown take over. This mood was very rare for Odin to ever see. He only leaned in closer to see what he was talking about. This is when it finally showed itself. Ravi raised his left arm. The end of the arm was covered in thick bloodied bandages. Any trace of a hand had been torn away. It made Odin almost shudder.

"What the gods?" He whispered.

"Yes, I know. I decided to be a moron and try to go to the caverns in my own. It's how I lost a part of me. Which is why I came here. I knew no normal doctor could've done anything. So please, is there anything you can do to heal me? Or even bring my hand back?"

Ravi's eyes lowered to the table in shame.

"Ravi, you... gods. Stay here."

Odin grumbled before standing up. He swiftly made his way to the herbs shelf. He took a crimson red root and fused it with a turquoise plant. At least, it seemed like that in Ravi's eyes. There was a light poof of light before Odin arrived back to his side.

The plant was now a light purple with leaves sprouting out gradually.

Ravi looked in awe. He had seen the mage do various healing tricks, but this seemed to be the fastest working one. He just worried how much this was going to cost. The herbs didn't look cheap.

"Ravi."

"Never do something that idiotic

again. I can't have one of my most loyal customers dying on me. You're one of the few people I don't mind in this forsaken kingdom. To hell if I'm just going to let you go. Give me your wound."

Ravi put it forward without much thought. Odin had scolded him like this before, but it was more personal. He knew this was his way of caring. The mage delicately unraveled the bandages to reveal the true damage. Grizzly was the least you could call it.

"It would take intense sorcery to bring back part of a limb. I'm talented, but not all-powerful Ravi. This herb will make sure you don't get infections, or further bleeding at least. How long did it take you to get here?"

Odin then pressed one of the large leaves against the end of Ravi's arm. The mercenary attempted to respond, but he flinched at the stinging sensation. He clenched his teeth as he made his arm go against the surface. He finally relaxed into the searing feeling. The older man wrapped a couple more around the wound before tying it in place. Odin took his seat next to Ravi to make sure he put it on correctly.

"Some days," He said quietly. There was a weird guilt building in his chest.

"Some days? You've been running around like this? You didn't think to pack any medical supplies beforehand?" Odin growled.

"Of course I did! I just didn't think I'd need so much. My resources were already gone when I had only spent a day there. Then, what happened..."

Ravi made a stern rebuttal. The mercenary felt very naive now. Feeling

helpless to a whole world full of surprises and suffering because he just didn't know. The exact opposite of how he thought he should be. A failure in his own craft. Not the sly fox he grew up to be from his environment. He looked down at his boots. Then Ravi opened his hand to stare.

"Why?"

"Huh?"

Ravi looked at the mage with a tiled head. "I know you're a smarter man than this. You were practically opening your arms to embrace the reaper with a hug. Why were you venturing down there on your own? There's probably a deeper problem here. Isn't there? So why?"

It felt like sharp wire had suddenly been wrangled around Ravi's throat. He was glad he was being direct. However, even the mercenary wasn't sure how to phrase it out loud. The younger man looked away with a light clench in his jaw.

"I know you don't bother with people's personal stories. Why are you pushing yourself for me?"

Ravi let Odin swivel more bandages and leaves together. The mage gave him a barely legible smirk. A huff left Ravi's nose.

"I asked the questions first. Answer. If you must know, I'm just curious. You've held the land's most advanced heists. I've seen you clasp gorgeous gems that shined like stars. The last one you brought here belonged to royalty. Tell me. What's driven you to go into the south caverns?"

Odin finished his quick wrap with one last tie. It was personally overkill in the mercenary's opinion. The fabric and leaves hugging his skin were relaxing now at least.

The rain that had been beating on the window mellowed down to a light shower.

Ravi traced the healing aid on his arm. The fabric was both rough, but smooth enough for it to not be uncomfortable.

"I suppose even someone like you could enjoy some good gossip. Haha..."

Ravi made one last attempt to try to smooth his way to the discussion. His eyes lowered once more.

"Odin, It's my wife. There was an incident. I don't want to recall all the details. I'll just say it was bad enough that the castle's top mages had to be involved in her recovery. They saved her life, but it put me in a debt that could last generations. I've failed my family once by letting her get hurt. I must be the man she needs by getting us out of this mess. I don't even know how Celeste still loves me."

The truth made Ravi's mind spiral. It was searing to think about the situation directly again. He had promised her various times that he would be everything she needed. He was deeply in love with the future they could hold together.

However, it felt strained now. All these promises had flickered away the moment Ravi felt he wasn't there for his wife. If even this gold from the caverns couldn't save him, they would be hopeless. That's when Ravi felt a wooden staff smack the back of his head. Not super hard, but harsh enough to make him yelp.

"The last thing she would want is you wallowing in pity. Pull yourself together."

Odin said while smiling because of Ravi's face. It scrunched up like a cat's face at sour fruits.

"There was no need for that!"

The mercenary raised his voice after he stood back up.

"You're not that upset about it anymore, are you? While all of this is upsetting to hear, I don't think it's something you can't come back from. What matters is that you're both alive. Last you told me is that she's a woman who mirrors your resilience. Both of you are living dangerous yet brave lives. I'm assuming both of you were okay with the possibility of one or the other being hurt."

Odin's expression went back to a neutral one. He scratched his chin a bit while speaking.

While Ravi didn't appreciate his approach, he understood what he was getting at. Both men looked up through the window after hearing thunder.

"You're right. I guess I'm just frustrated this is an issue I can't just run from. Celeste wants to keep her life here with her family and even have a kid someday. I would go out of my way for them. It just wouldn't be right of me to bring someone into the world knowing it would be awful. Wouldn't it?"

"That's the ethical dilemma of all humans, isn't it? No one is asked to be born, and we suffer. The experiences make it worth it to push through. It's rough to see you like this. I have some ideas for you, Ravi."

Odin slowly rose from the seat while holding his back. After a gentle pop, the older man made his way to the back of the store. He gestured to Ravi to follow.

The mercenary walked past the silk curtain to see what he was being led towards. The back of the store contained a couple more bookshelves. However, each book was unique. Their spines had certain

sigils engraved in them. Each came with their own metal crests as well.

Ravi's eyes went wide seeing all the sparkle. He watched as Odin reached for one and began flipping.

"One of the closest ways mages have discovered regeneration is by praying to certain gods and then creating a concoction during a half-moon. You'll call the details boring, I know. Essentially, I need access to a certain flower. However, it's located on vines from the very place you just escaped."

"Is there really not anything else?" Ravi lightly groaned.

"Not unless you want to travel farther than this kingdom's area fifty times combined."

Odin raised his brow at the man in annoyance.

The younger guy looked defeated. He wondered if he would have the strength to ever go back there. Sweat started gathering in his palms.

"Which is why I'll be willing to accompany you to the labyrinth in the southern caves. If you want me to tag along, I do expect you to protect me physically when you can. I may be a decent mage, but you can still bruise easily."

"You're serious?"

Ravi looked up in bewilderment. The older man shut the book with one hand with a gentle thud. Dust clouded around the room which Odin waved away. He walked back through the entrance and stood by the room's doorway.

"I've been wanting to be more than a store owner for some time now. Initially, this place was created to be a melting pot of knowledge. It strayed from that over

the years as I became more obsessed with performing well financially to stay alive. This isn't what I've always wanted Ravi. Nothing about this settlement is what I've sought after. This place isn't who I am, nor who I want to be remembered as. Studying for that long in schools made me yearn for my purpose. You already know what you want to do, and you're fine with it. Seeing someone younger than me being okay with who they are...It infuriated me. Everyone else who's come in here has the look of regret in their souls. Not you, though. I realized I've been thinking foolishly. You deserve your chance, and I want to seek out my destiny. Let me help you on this journey, Ravi."

Odin put out his right hand. The thief had the glimmer return to his eyes. Hearing all of this at once

was overwhelming. He appreciated it all though. The glove met the mage's skin with a firm grip. Their hands shook sternly, and Ravi smiled.

"Sounds like a deal then. Just be sure to give me a hand when you can, yeah?"

"Shut up and help me get ready then. We'll leave in a day."



Soar

By: Marie Roberts

Beneath the weight of doubt and stone,
a seed was planted, uncertain,
alone. The soil cold, nights unending—
yet deep within, something stirred.
Storms passed, winds howled,
but the roots held.

Bruised, but unwilling to surrender,
it reached—clawing through the earth,
toward a faint, distant light.

Trials mounted,
and whispers circled like shadows,
unseen, but felt.

The path, unclear.
Still, it pushed, through rock,
through the ache of becoming.
Morning cracked open the sky—
fragile wings, unfamiliar, stretched.

Where dirt had buried hope,
feathers grew,
tentative, but real.
The winds softened,
not an enemy now,
but a partner in this fragile ascent.
Unsteady, then certain,
it rose, higher, higher,
leaving behind the ground that once
held it still.

Each bruise, each scar,
not a mark of defeat,
but proof of the fight.
Strength forged in struggle,
this unnamed creature—
now flying, unafraid.

From above,
the earth is smaller,
and the past, distant.
What once was heavy,
is light.

We fall, we rise,
we grow, not for wings—
but for the flight.



Trust

by Sydney Harrison

*What it is like to not trust yourself
is to sit and cry in your car
and not enter your apartment
because your car does not have
a knife or a lighter.*

*What it is like to not trust yourself
is to sit and cry in your car
and not drive to your apartment
because your car does not have
your sleeping pills.*

*What it is like to not trust yourself
is to stand still in the shower
because your razor is tucked in a drawer.*

*What it is like to not trust yourself
is to cry yourself to sleep
because it would be so easy to turn over,
swallow all your sleeping pills,
and drift away into oblivion.*

*What it is like to not trust yourself
is to keep it all inside
because nobody else can understand
what it is like to want to die.*

*If you cannot trust anybody else in this world,
at least you should be able to trust yourself,
but you cannot.*

*What it is like to not trust yourself
is to try to trust God,
but God is no where around.*

*He is not here to hug you
and tell you it is all right.*

*He is in Heaven
dealing with bigger problems.*

*What it is like to not trust yourself
is to be utterly alone in this world.*



What it is like to want to die.

Is to be utterly alone in this world

Is to stand still in the shower

What it is like to want to die.

all inside





Twilight

by John Kitchens

In twilight's hush, the evening stars alight
their silver whispers and the fading light.

The willow bows, its' shadow long and deep,
as night's soft fingers cradle me to sleep.

The river's song flows gently through the vale,
a murmured tale that rides the evening gale.

The moon, a lantern hung in velvet skies,
reflects its glow in silent lover's eyes.

Beneath the arch of ancient, watchful trees,
the whispers of the wind weave melodies.

A symphony dances on the breeze
and carries secrets of the midnight seas.

The world in dreams becomes a boundless sphere,
where hopes and fears alike can reappear.

The dawn will break, but now, in night's embrace,
the stars, like diamonds scattered, find their place.

Game of Sorry

by Madeline Bass

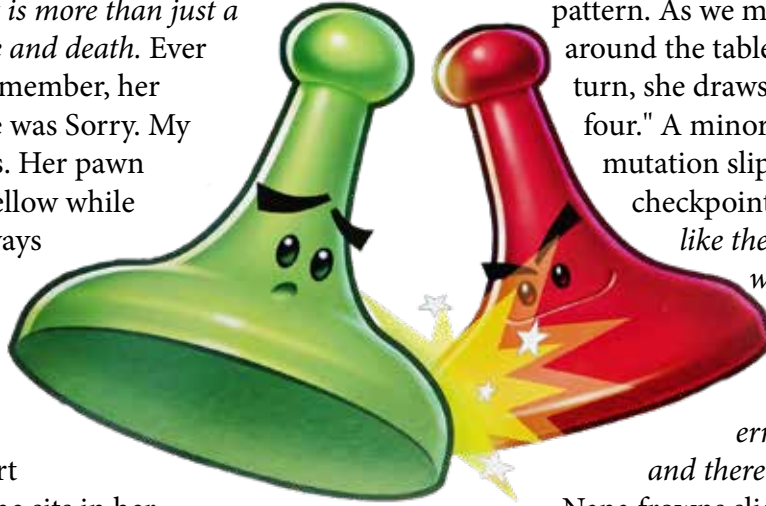
Interphase, mitosis, repeat. Interphase, mitosis, repeat. The cell cycle is painfully beautiful. It is fashioned to create the smallest unit of life: a cell. Each step is a careful game of growth and replication. With the synthesis of DNA to form daughter cells, and checkpoints along the way to prevent defective duplication, what could go wrong? Sometimes, things do go wrong. A mutation slips past the checkpoint, an error goes unnoticed, and the result is more than just a game—it's life and death. Ever since I can remember, her favorite game was Sorry. My Nana's, that is. Her pawn was always yellow while mine was always blue and my brother's was always red. Her yellow pawn sits in the start zone, while she sits in her chair, wrapped in a warm blanket, patiently waiting to draw the right card in order to move forward. She's completed interphase. No division has been made, but we're about to enter the G1 phase—the first checkpoint of the cell cycle. Laughing, she places that opaque pawn a few steps ahead of mine. She knows how to play her cards. My brother moves his first pawn into home, having completed one full round. Cells continue to grow, DNA replicates, and the cycle advances. One by one, the stages of mitosis, prophase,

metaphase, anaphase, and telophase, are completed.

THE CELL HAS DUPLICATED!

Halfway through the game, Nana and I each have two pawns at home. My brother has three. The competition is light-hearted, but I see her strategic mind working beneath her warm smile. She draws a card and moves her third pawn out of the start zone. We're all focused, hoping for the perfect draw. The game is tense but familiar, a comfortable

pattern. As we make our way around the table back to her turn, she draws a "back up four." A minor setback, like a mutation slipping past the checkpoint. *The body, like the game, does what it can to correct these mistakes, but sometimes the errors accumulate, and there's no going back.*



Nana frowns slightly, the only hint that her body is no longer playing by the same rules. But she laughs it off, moves her yellow pawn backward, and with a light in her eye tells me, "You can't win every time, sweetheart." *Cancer cells can't win every time, either, but sometimes they do. When they do, they bypass checkpoints, sneak past the body's defenses, and continue dividing uncontrollably. I see now that Nana's experience with cancer is like playing an impossible game. No matter how many good cards she draws, the disease always finds ways to send her back time and time again.* Another turn passes.

Her laughter fills the room, but it sounds different. Softer even. We're reaching the final rounds of the game, the last few moves. Her pawn is almost home, almost safe. *But the cancer is relentless, like the deck of cards that keeps dealing her the wrong hand. She fights, strategizes, moves forward when she can, but cancer keeps forcing her back to the start zone. Her cells, perfectly formed not too long ago, are now duplicating with errors. There's no undoing what has already begun inside her body.* I glance at her across the table, and for just a moment, time stands still. We're not just playing a game: we're living it. Nana's battle with cancer isn't just a random draw of bad cards. It's the result of her body's cells losing control with the basic process of life working against itself. She draws her next card, a Sorry card, sending one of my pawns back to the beginning. "Oops," she says, flashing that familiar, playful grin. In that moment, I realized how powerless we are to control the cards dealt to us—both in this game and in life. *Just at the cell cycle can only duplicate so many times before the errors becomes too great to fix, Nana grows weaker. Her body is reaching the point where no more turns can save her.* We continue, but the mood is different. The game feels longer than usual, the turns slower. She has always been the strongest person I know, but that night her body betrayed her as she trembled, reaching for the next card. It's my brother's turn. His last pawn slides into home, and he wins. Nana laughs, her eyes shining with joy, but it's clear she is tired. Her yellow pawn remains just

shy of home. *The game, like life, doesn't always have a perfect ending. That's when I realize it's not about winning. It's about the journey, the moments we shared those evenings spent around the table, playing and laughing, even when the cards weren't in our favor. Nana's body may have been overcome by the unchecked divisions of cancer, but her spirit, her love for the game, and her love for us remained steadfast.* As I pack up the game, I think about the cell cycle once more. Just as cells reach a point where they can no longer divide correctly, our time with Nana reached its natural end. But the memories, the lessons, and the love she left behind are the parts of her that will continue to grow, to live on in me and my family. Nana's yellow pawn didn't make it home in our game of Sorry that night. But in our hearts she'll always be there, just one step away from home. Love, memory, and time will keep her close forever.



Editorial Statement by Amy LaFleur

This issue is a rebrand of the MCC Literary Review formerly known as *The Apocalypse*. Since the last issue of *The Apocalypse* coincided with the COVID Pandemic and all the horrors that came along with it, I thought it best take the journal in a new direction. The first step in this new direction was to rename it *The Scribbler*.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a scribbler can be either one that writes carelessly or a minor or insignificant author. Thus, this new name is intended to be ironic as *The Scribbler* aims to publish well-written, polished works by authors capable of making it big one day.

This issue's theme, Everyday Magic, emerged from the chaotic aftermath of the COVID Pandemic. Like a phoenix, people rose from the ashes of their former lives with a clearer vision of what actually matters. For many, loving life again was rooted in finding beauty in the little things. Readers can see this phenomenon in the wide range of topics included in this issue. Some focused on the beauty of twilight; some on beautiful curtains and tasty popsicles; and some on the lingering memories of a cherished love sparked by a simple cup of coffee. Some works included here exist outside the theme; however, most of these works focus on the fleeting beauty of life in some capacity.

I hope that readers leave this issue with new eyes, eyes ready to behold the magic of everyday life.

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A large, dense pile of old, colorful books, likely from a library or bookstore, filling the background of the image. The books are of various sizes, colors, and thicknesses, creating a textured, layered appearance. The colors range from deep reds and blues to lighter yellows and browns, suggesting a wide variety of subjects and eras.

MERIDIAN

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