Muse of Fire 2025

Welcome to the 2025 Edition of Muse of Fire

O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend The brightest heaven of invention... — William Shakespeare, Henry V

We are delighted to welcome you to this year's edition of *Muse of Fire*, The Colorado Springs School's literary and arts magazine. The title, borrowed from the prologue of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, calls upon the spirit of creative brilliance—a fitting invocation for the pages that follow. Within this collection, you'll find an inspired array of student work in fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and visual art, all crafted with skill, imagination, and courage.

The pieces gathered here were created across the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 school years, representing the diverse voices and talents of our student body. Each work reflects the distinctive energy, insight, and inventiveness of our young artists and writers, and we are proud to celebrate their vision.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Hans Wolfe, Director of the CSS Arts Department, whose dedication to mentoring and championing student creativity has made this publication possible. His thoughtful leadership continues to nurture the artistic spirit that defines our school community.

Thank you for joining us in honoring the creative achievements of our students. May these pages spark your imagination—and may your summer break be restful, joyful, and full of inspiration.

Warm regards,

Dr. Samuel Wells & The Editorial Team of Muse of Fire

Cover Image: "Stay Away from the Dark' by Meia Aime

Literary Works			
Title	Author	Page	
A Sketch of a Stranger	Sasha Wen-Carew	5	
What Makes a Skeleton	Meia Aime	9	
The Influence of Greek Theatre	Mia Vargas	12	
Line, Call and Break	Anonymous	16	
Back to Consciousness	Norah Owens	19	
The Road We Took	Grace Prater	22	
Spring	Kathyrn Shulman	23	
The Root of Torment	Tristan Kumar	24	
7 Minutes	Anonymous	30	
My Birthplace	Anonymous	32	
Personal Statement	Jordan Seto	34	
The Marvels of Industrialization	Lucas Bednar	36	
Arson Lessons	Anonymous	38	
Rondo	Jordan Seto	38	
Foreword	Anonymous	40	
Telling the Truth: Child of Divorce (Pamphlet #69)	Phoebe Haskell	44	
Artis	tic Works		
Untitled 1	Phoebe Haskell	8	
Untitled 2	Phoebe Haskell	8	
Inheritance	Norah Owens	11	
Untitled 3	Phoebe Haskell	18	

Muse of Fire 2025 Table of Contents

Dragon	Summer Bauer	21
Eye of Eventide	Meia Aime	23
Image from Dante's "Inferno"	Margaret Galka	24
Tea Party	Norah Owens	32
Frankenstein	Margaret Galka	34
Untitled 4	Phoebe Haskell	37
Illustrated Page of Orwell's "1984"	JohnCarl Edwards	40
Character Sketch	Eloise Kelly	45

A Sketch of a Stranger By Sasha Wan-Carew

Nine years ago my father packed his belongings and left our home in rural upstate New York. There was no warning, no message about where he was going or why he was leaving. I was fifteen, and remember that his absence caved my mother into the thick black blanket of depression. I coped with his sudden departure by burying myself in textbooks of biology and chemistry and constant studying.

I am twenty-four now, left home for pre-med, aced the MCAT, and am starting medical school at the Oregon Health and Science University this fall. OHSU has always been a dream of mine. Being surrounded by the lush forests of Portland, and the supportive art culture, all while studying medicine to help people sounds like my own Hogwarts. I am moving forward with my life-or so I thought until four weeks ago when I received an email from my father to the address I use for work and publishing research. At first, I thought it was just some sketchy guy emailing me, posing as my father, but the more I read, the words formed sentences that only he could have known. He started with one of those "remember when" stories. This one was particularly about how I loved to swim in puddles at the park on rainy days. Then, he sang praises about my work on Glioblastomas and how I must be incredibly talented for having received an internship at Barrow Medical Foundation-stalker much? After a paragraph of sugarcoating, he asked me to come take the train to meet him in a rural town in Maine. I must have read and re-read that question at least a hundred times just to make sure. I still have questions about why me and why now after all these years. I remember thinking that he had already caused my mother and me enough pain over the years, that I didn't know if I could handle actually seeing him again. But I knew that I wanted answers and the feeling of having closure felt too great to turn the offer down. Why would he leave? Why would he risk causing his wife and child immense amounts of pain? Maybe we could heal our relationship or I could tie the broken strings of love back together between my parents? There are so many unanswered questions that I need answers to. Medicine has always taught me to find answers and sometimes that type of thinking can control every cell in my body in more ways then I would like. But when I have questions, I need answers, and that will always be a part of me.

I visited my mother last week, and was supposed to be heading to Oregon by now because I start school in a month, but instead, I find myself in an almost empty station, sketchbook open to an empty page, waiting for my delayed train to Maine. The smell of years of cigarette smoke is embedded in the brown brick walls of the station and a stagnant broken clock reads 12:00 on the wall. A shiver crawls down my spine from the eeriness of the station and my foot starts lightly tapping up and down. I could get up and leave but I remember my mother still sitting in the same house, in the same chair, draped in the same suffocating scarf of depression. If I go to Maine, then at least there will be answers that can be brought back to her. I look down at my notebook opened to a clean page and a feeling of calm washes over me. I love drawing because I feel like I can control something. The feeling of the pencil connected to the palm of my hand which is connected to the paper is just...well, there is honestly no better feeling. There is a man sitting across from me, waiting for the delayed train to rural Maine I assume. I start sketching a portrait of him. He has a cigarette in his hand, and a thick book with a blue cover on his lap. His glasses are skinny and I can see the reflection of my pencil in them. His grey hair sticks up from his head like a mad scientist and his eyebrows are scrunched together like he is trying to make sense of the book he is reading. I start sketching his nose which is plump with splatterings of freckles like stars in the night sky. His lips are cracked like a dry baguette and his moustache is thick and grey-curled at the ends with too much gel. He is wearing a button up black coat that hangs over the sides of the bench, followed by black pants which seem too baggy and pair of freshly shined black leather shoes. As I finish the rough outline, I go back to shading his face and when I look up at him, there is single tear slowly rolling down the bridge of his nose. The man reaches up to brush the tear from his face and as he does, he looks up at me and his eyes hover over my sketch of him. I quickly turn back the page to one of my previous sketches, hovering over the lines with the tip of my pencil, pretending like I am drawing. I hear him mutter something beneath his breath as he shifts his glasses.

The sound of the train approaching saves me from having to explain myself and I quickly pack up my sketchbook and pencil into my falling apart Fjallraven blue backpack. The doors screech open and I feel like I am stepping into one of those old fashioned trains in those black and white movies. It smells musty, and the seats seem as though they are going to fall apart at any moment. I find a seat in the back and the man I was sketching sits across from me, face

still buried in his novel. I take my sketchbook out of my backpack and accidentally flip to the sketch of the man. I look up to make sure he is still occupied with his book, but instead he locks eyes with me.

"Is that me?" he says while using an ashy finger to point at my sketch.

"Uh, yes I suppose so," I stammer, breath caught in my throat.

"It's good, very good," he responds.

I tear the sketch out of the notebook and hand it to him, hoping that it will end the conversation. He takes the drawing and tucks it into the back of his book. Instead of ending the conversation, the drawing opens a gateway for small talk and I want to disappear into the seat of the train.

"Well, we've got seven hours we may as well get to know each other," he says.

I start by telling him about my father, and that I got into medical school. Of course I don't tell him my name or where I am going to medical school because he could be a serial killer for all I know. He tells me he owns a bookstore in Maine and that he was just visiting his grandchildren in New York. I am about to return to drawing when he pulls the sketch of him out of his book, hands it to me and says,"Well Kalea, stay safe out there and when you see your father, show him your sketch of me and tell him I've been trying to reach out."

Then, he slowly gets up from his seat, grabs his belongings and disappears into the front of the train leaving me with more questions than answers.





Images by Phoebe Haskell

What Makes A Skeleton by Meia Aime

The Beauty of Success

Perfection, in reality, is unachievable, but we can certainly run towards it. Maybe it is life's necessity. How often is the word "perfect" thrown around? Oh yes, that's perfect. That dress? The perfect size! The flight leaves at 5? Perfect! That will give me time to... and so on, and so forth. Perfect. It surely is a real thing then. And if it is able to be manifested in the simplest of things, then perfection is achievable in the grandiose show that is life. The Beauty of Purpose

Conformity is one of society's largest mishaps. It is everyday that children are taught to be someone. They are molded into an unnatural shape, and constrained by the tightest of barriers. They must amount to something; they cannot be nothing. They are told they owe their elders some form of grace, some form of success, so that elders feel they did not go through their hardships for nothing. They are constructed. And by enduring that construction, they are torn from the inside out. But that is no matter. As long as such children amount to something. Make your parents proud. Make your partner proud. Make your society proud. Make your nation proud. And only in death shall you be rewarded with the rest that you earned.

The Beauty of Standard

Value is something every person strives for. For without value, there is no meaning, and there is nothing. When models are represented as the mannequins of human brilliance, the young of society will flock to be as wooden as they are. When "famers" are the epitome of control, the young of society will be crushed and told down if they cannot reach the same level of accomplishment. We must all be valuable. We have to mean something. We have to hold our

standards and bathe them in the purest gold. We must be the most beautiful. The slimmest. The most powerful. The most intelligent. The wealthiest. It is not a suggestion; it is a requirement. Then, we can be someone. When our value has reached the limit of the sky, we will know we have achieved immortality.

The Beauty of Challenge

Pain is the best determinant of how people will turn out to be. How they react to it. How they utilize it. If they utilize it. Suffering brings the biggest reward. We are taught to endure that hurt. Endure it and make it strengthen us. If we are hit, we absorb it so we are stronger. We do not let it control us. When we are presented with a setback, people might call us failures for not figuring out. They might tell it to us every day of our lives. It is then our job to not let such a statement waver us. It has to empower us. All of the abuse, mental and physical, is necessary for growth. In the end, our death will turn out to be the most painless of occurrences.

Perfection, Conformity, Value, and Pain are the apocalypses of the world. Perfection serves as the basis of a crippling mentality and perpetual suffering. Conformity serves as a societal problem, where they fear their children will result in nothing, and in the end, their children are entombed in their own harmful void. Value is almost a neutral level, where to want it can be used as motivation, but to hold it over the head of others is to humiliate them. And Pain, while a cause for growth, if used to excess, will inevitably cause mental and physical trauma to the victim. It should not be used as a method of manipulation, and over continuation, is an instigator of depression.

These are what make a skeleton.



Inheritance by Norah Owens (cast iron & felt)

The Influence of Greek Theater by Mia Vargas

Greek theater has shaped art and emotion with its timeless narratives that go beyond the stage. "Greek theater is not only responsible for iconic plays like *The Odyssey* or theater language, but also the very tropes and genres that we interact with today" (Frazier). People now are still recognizing the legacy of Greek playwrights. Homer, whose poem *The Odyssey* has not only served as an important text in literature but has also been made into theatrical productions, was a Greek poet who had a strong influence on theater. "Theater as we know it was invented by Greeks, and the art of playwriting blossomed in the fifth century" (Art 118). The Greeks practically invented theater. They were the reason that people have theater today and why modern theater is structured the way it is. The art of playwriting began in ancient Greece, particularly during the fifth century. Playwrights like Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides wrote influential plays (Withers). Ancient Greek theater had one of the biggest influences on the evolution of theatrical arts. Its structure, techniques, and themes inspire and influence upcoming playwrights and performers.

The structures that Greek theaters had are still used in modern theater today. When looking at almost any modern theater, people still see the Greek influence everywhere. For example, in the Royal Opera House in London, the structure of the stage and the house directly reflects the setup of the Theater of Dionysus in Athens, where the majority of theatrical shows took place. In Athens, most of the theaters were amphitheaters. Amphitheaters consist of the orchestra stage, the theatron, and the skene. The orchestra stage was a level, circular area in the middle of the theater where actors would dance, sing, and interact with each other (Englert). Actors could be seen from almost all sides of the stage, but not always from the back of the amphitheater. "The acoustics of the open-air theaters were remarkably effective" (Art 121). Although it was not easy to see from all points, the shape of the amphitheater allowed people to be able to hear quite clearly. The orchestra stage was where the chorus would usually perform. The main actors would typically be on the proscenium, which is a raised part of the stage that is beyond the orchestra. The next part of the theater is the theatron. The theatron refers to the seating area section of an ancient Greek theater (Gill). It is the seating area, or the "house" in modern theaters. It is one of the most significant parts of the theatrical structure because it offers a place for spectators to sit and watch. The theatron typically wrapped around the stage. The last section of the theaters was the skene. The skene was a building behind the stage area that was a tent for the changing of masks and costumes. The skene was also used as a

background that an artist would paint to portray where the actors were. The background, or skene, is where people got the word "scene". In the Royal Opera House in London, the stage is elevated from the orchestra pit, which is similar to the proscenium section of the orchestra stage. The amphitheater structure is also shown in the Royal Opera House, with the seating arranged in tiers around the performance area. This is an example of the Greek influence on modern theater structure.

The structure of the shows was also very similar to the structure of modern plays. In more recent plays, such as Friedrich Dürrenmatts tragicomedy *The Visit*, playwrights still follow the three-act structure. This connects to Greek theater directly because the Greeks also followed the three-act structure, which consisted of the prologue, parados, and exodus (Englert). These were the most important sections of the plays. The prologue is the part where the narrator (usually a member of the chorus) enters and provides a brief explanation of the setting. Often, the narrator(s) will give some sort of foreshadowing toward what the play will be about (Englert). The narrators provide the necessary information that the audience might need to know, and then they proceed to the parados. The parados is the first song that actors sing as they enter the orchestra or proscenium. Finally, there is the exodus. This is the conclusion of the play. The play's theme and lessons are typically discussed (Frasier). As an influence of Greek theater, modern theater still uses the three-act structure. However, the modern adaption has a few more sections to the acts. Typically, there is the exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The exposition and conflict are the same concept as the prologue, the rising action and climax are a more in-depth and longer version of the parados, and the falling action and resolution are the same concept of the exodus.

The techniques were another important part of Greek theater. The use of masks and costumes was a necessary part of theater. Masks displayed emotions and gender and helped audience members in distant seats see (City Dionysia). The masks were pivotal for defining characters through exaggerated expressions and allowing actors to take on multiple roles, including different genders. Additionally, masks gave a practical function by helping visibility and amplifying actors' voices with the megaphone piece, making sure that all audience members could follow along with the performance, even from distant seats. Today, The costumes, along with the masks, helped indicate the social status, gender, and age of the characters. In the ancient Greek world, costumes were extremely exaggerated to show each character in the production from as far as 300 feet away (Gruber-Miller). The use of elaborate and oversized costumes helped show specific traits and roles so that even spectators who were far from the stage could understand the characters depicted in the

production. In modern theater, people use big costumes and bold makeup to exaggerate their looks for the audience. Some plays now even use puppetry to portray animals and fictional monsters.

There were two major themes in Greek theater; tragedy and comedy. "There seem to be two general patterns of life which most plays imitate: one culminates in tragic defeat, usually death, and the other in a joyous procession or union." (Barnet 7-8). Greek tragedies and comedies had a big influence on the themes in modern plays. Plays like *The Death of a Salesman* and *The Complete History of Theatre (abridged)* are modern tragedies and comedies that follow the same ideas as Greek tragedies and comedies. *The Death of a Salesman* addresses the loss of identity and a man's inability to accept change within himself and society, while *The Complete History of Theatre (abridged)* highlights the foolishness and disorder on stage. In comedies, foolishness and mistakes are laughed at. In *The Complete History of Theatre (abridged)*, the character named Bill mistakenly says, "To the sloping fields where olive is grown!" while Stan says, "(in a loud whisper) Olives! Olives! Plural!" (Thompson 17). This is a moment where a mistake was made, and the audience laughed at it. This is an example of how Greek theater influenced modern theater.

To conclude, Greek theater has strongly influenced how theater structure, techniques, and themes work. It made a big impact on plays over time, showing how powerful the behind-the-scenes of plays can be. From way back then to now, Greek theater has kept making culture better with its timeless beauty and importance.

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Line, Call, and Break by Anonymous

"Check, call?" The switchman asked.

"Call, check." Foreman responded.

Another miserable, angry day. The clouds agreed with him; today was another day of bleak, suffocating fumes and lines. The cancerous growth that the company called 'Progress' was only a sunspot in the far-away horizon that demanded Foreman's attention. Every day had meant something, before. There's more time in the past than the future. Now, there was always another line to fold and a crew to check.

The switchman was new. He didn't have the cold and dead eyes quite yet, but Foreman knew it would come; it always did. One day, the switchman would sit by the rails and start to recognize their job -- thus, their fate. The rails: a prison of giant, metal trains and confining boxcars.

Today was special, but special never means anything good. The engineer wasn't there, thankfully. Foreman was never good with names, but that engineer always tried to talk. The rails still needed their grease and care, but talking should be reserved for orders. The cold chill of unworked metal demanded time and attention; it wasn't true love, but it was good enough for Foreman. The metal never talked back.

The voice on the far side of the rails called again. "Th' rail's cork is bent."

"Fix it."

"Heard."

Maybe the new guy wasn't all bad. He knew when silence was the best course of action: always.

The creaking of a rail echoed throughout the yard, a sure sign of muscle fighting metal. That damn novice was hurting the rails. The battle always ended the same, so why did the metal fight? Why did it resist against certainty? It always bent the same, always moved the same. Day in and day out, everything moved the same. Every train that rode the top of its silver steed risked buckling the track, and it was the engineer's job to fix those imperfections. Today, however, Foreman and the switchman had to split the duties. The switchman had to learn to love the rails. If you watch the cold silver for long enough, it tells you what it needs.

"Foreman, sir?"

The new guy still had more to learn.

"Check." Foreman's voice strained to keep steady, his anger from the switchman's disturbance scarcely concealed.

"You'll want to see this." The switchman's voice sounded unnatural; he must have been forcing an even tone. Foreman had a reason to be angry; what did this fucking neophyte have?

Grumbling and stretching, Foreman turned away from the rising sun that gave his rails their ethereal beauty. Every muscle and bone ached from the years of labour that sat like sediment in every movement he made. If he wasn't loyal to the rails, he would've cared for his figure. His muscles are in his arms, for bending. The rest of his body was left behind, in the office. It's better that way. He only needs the rails.

One foot, then the other. One step, then the next. One line, one call, one crew. Each leg was lifting a hulking frame, and each impact with the ground lifted dust. Finally, Foreman sees it.

Red. A stream? No, another line. Stuck, painted. Paint? No. A line of red, stretched vertically along the front of some train's cab. The switchman, thin and narrow, stood as a mirror image in parallel with the red. Both were staring at Foreman. The red was splashed, almost as if somebody threw a paint bucket on the front of the train.

"Ross' gon' be handin' a long partin' goodbye." The switchman trembled slightly. Ross. The engineer. "Down in hell I reckon. Wouldn't shut up!"

Neither would the switchman, apparently. Think. Red. Not paint -- blood. A painting of blood. Ross was gone. Foreman's head hurt.

"Do you think they got to 'em? The rails?"

Sharp. The rails are sharp, and they need grease and care. Why was the switchman still talking? Why couldn't he understand that he was hurting the rails? And why was Foreman's head still pounding?

"Me, I reckon he jumped, but this blood's got a day of time if I had to guess. I can't find 'em, ah, the body. The birds must've got 'em, the bits."

The sun burned into Foreman's back. His shirt was uncomfortable, and his head was throbbing, and the switchman wouldn't stop talking. Foreman got closer, still silent and looming.

"I guess the company's gonna hire another of us. The rails need three, you know? Hey, do ya see something? What are ya doing?"

The rails didn't need the switchman.

Foreman's muscles and bones ached. His arms were tired after such a long day of work. The



rails were greased, cared for, loved. Satisfied. Tomorrow, Foreman would come back and see that faraway horizon. The rails would still be there, shaped and cradled. The battles always ended the same. One line and one call. One man and *his* rails. Every breath of the wind carried only a gentle creaking of metal settling. The trains that passed through would never understand. It's peace, and it belongs to Foreman.

Image by Phoebe Haskell

Back to Consciousness

by Norah Owens

Loud noises in her ears: buzzing, ringing, a steady beep of a heart rate monitor. Bright lights in her face: sunlight through the window, fluorescent lights overhead, a blinking LED on the rolling health monitor. A hospital room? Why was she in a hospital room? What had happened? How long had she been there?

Panic gripped her lungs. She looked at her hands and the chipped pale pink nail polish that decorated her fingertips. She felt a sharp pain in her shoulder and a dull ache in her head. She took a deep breath and grasped the crisp hospital sheets in clenched fists. The plastic hospital bracelet dug into the side of her wrist: twenty years old, university student, admitted February 22nd. What day was it now?

A brief memory. She was in the car, white-knuckling her floral steering wheel cover as she tried to navigate the dark roads. She had left her father's house in the swirling snow. He hated her now, she thought. She couldn't remember what they had been fighting about, just the tone of his voice--*Get out of my damn house, no daughter of mine will associate with one of those*--and she left. That was why she didn't live with her parents anymore. She had been on the way home to her apartment. She shared that apartment with Carter.

Carter. Her best friend. *Just her best friend?* She can't remember. Right now, all she knows is the warmth that fills her chest when she thinks about Carter and all the little details she could remember about her: the closely-buzzed undercut on the left side of her head, her cedarwood scent that permeated through their living room, her bright smile with one crooked tooth that poked over her lip when she grinned. She loves Carter. *But in what way?*

The snow comes back to her now. There were huge, wet flakes plopping on her windshield and her side mirrors, rapidly accumulating on the road in front of her, and she tried to stop at the last stoplight before the turn into the parking lot, and the car slid. Her right tires caught the curb, the car tilted and tilted, and her head slammed into the frosted-over side window. Then the world went quiet, and she ended up here.

Another realization--the day she met Carter was bright and shiny in her mind. They were randomly-assigned freshman roommates sharing a tiny, box-shaped dorm room with broken air conditioners and dusty windows. They spent long nights bonding over introductory history textbooks and ridiculous medical drama tv shows, curled up on Carter's lumpy twin-size mattress or crammed into a corner table at the bustling student library. In the blink of an eye, Carter had become the most important person in her life. Now, they did everything together, cooked dinner in their apartment and drove to the campus parking lot and met in the dining hall for lunch around busy schedules of anthropology and music theory, or sociology and Romantic poetry.

She sat up straight in the hospital bed, stretched her arms out as far as she could without pulling on the IV line stuck to the inside of her elbow. She reached for her phone on the short table beside her. Dead, of course. She looked around the bland room, four tan walls, white window blinds, a heavy door adorned with laminated papers in the opposite corner. A small rainbow poster read, *SAGA meetings, Wednesdays at 6:30 pm, second floor of the student library--*why was that striking her right now?

She heard loud footsteps in the hallway outside her hospital room, the kind that came from heavy combat boots thudding on the cold linoleum floor. Carter wore heavy combat boots in the hallways as she walked--no, marched--to her next class in the social science building. She thinks that she loves Carter. She *loves* Carter. Did Carter even know?

Oh. Another memory. The only time she had ever fought with Carter was when Carter tried to bring a date, some girl from a coffee shop, on their weekend trip to the city. She felt so irrationally angry that it wouldn't just be her and Carter, and she never understood why. Now she understood. It was jealousy, the wish that it was her who was dating Carter, even though she had never loved a girl in that way before. It was wrong, her dad said, she was supposed to grow up and get a degree and marry a nice man and have a handful of grandchildren. Yet thinking about loving Carter felt like a puzzle piece was clicking into place, something she hadn't even known about herself before. What if she hadn't survived the car crash, had never woken up, had never gotten to tell Carter that--

"Michelle!"

A voice cutting through her thoughts. The familiar rush of warmth into her chest. Gentle waves of cedarwood radiating throughout the sharp, sterile scent of rubbing alcohol and industrial cleaner. As strong arms wrapped around her, short buzzed hair tickled her cheek, and gentle fingers danced across the swollen bruise on her left cheekbone, Michelle didn't worry about the memories she was still missing. Carter was here; surely, that was all she needed.

There, enveloped in Carter's arms, she felt more complete than she ever had before.



Image: "Dragon" by Summer Bauer

The Road We Took by Grace Prater

I was driving home with a friend, The road ahead seemed endless, When we saw her, Barefoot, Walking along the side of the road.

"Should we pick her up?" Cozette asked. But I didn't say anything, The heaviness of it all settled in my chest.

Days later, She came back, Dirty, distant, Wandering, Like something I couldn't quite wake up from.

The house felt tense, Every move I made Echoing with something lost.

I couldn't help but stay alert, My nights filled with restless thoughts, Haunted by things I didn't understand. Yet the days kept going, Even when my heart stayed stuck.

We passed her again, Her figure fading in the distance, A story we couldn't quite hold onto. My mom sat next to me, Her quiet tears speaking louder Than any words we could find.

The scars are still there, But I'm holding on to hope— A quiet, fragile kind of hope Maybe, over time, We'll find healing.



Image: "The Eye of Eventide" by Meia Aime

Spring by Kathyrn Shulman Summer's coming Pale skin gone Running in the sun Isn't it fun No school soon I'm gonna miss it when it's gone



An excerpt from: Tristan Kumar's The Root of Torment: Volume One: A Girl With A Dream Just Friends

I always knew Harry. We met in high school and we were good acquaintances with each other. He was into business and I always heard him wanting to make his own business one day. He was pretty cute. I don't know why I never asked him out though. Maybe it was just my nerves getting the better of me. Or maybe something was off about him. I always dreamed about being with him in my fantasies, but knew that I wasn't good enough for someone like him. So I gave up. After graduating, our class had a party to

Image by Margaret Galka

celebrate before we all headed off to our lives, and I remember Harry and I were alone and no one was bothering us. I could've asked him out in the summer... but I didn't. I don't know why. He was definitely into me as well, but I was too shy. And going into college, I was barely going to see him anyway. I left the party and put it aside after much regret for not asking him out. We both went to different colleges, and eventually I moved to Colorado Springs. It was somewhere nice and quiet, and I enjoyed going there with my family as a kid. I was in a medical profession and I needed a nice calm place to calm me down so the nerves and intensity of being in a medical career wouldn't catch up to me, and that worked perfectly. I worked for a hospital for many years in general surgery, and I got a well known reputation. My life was fine until I met John. John and I met in a bar. He was drunk and I was drunk. We did some things that we weren't so proud of, but we decided that we were pretty good together. It was mainly his idea to make our relationship more than just a one night stand. I agreed, not giving it much thought. John was into real estate, and selling mountain homes in Colorado was a suitable living for a man like John. He was strong, had black hair, and was a good fit for a scrawny person like me. I liked being with John. Until he took it too far. After only a year of dating, he proposed to me. I was very hesitant, but I didn't want to show that to him. I accepted his proposal and we got married. I didn't pay much mind to my decision which was a bad thing. We

bought a small cozy house outside the city and lived happily together. I wish the story ended here. I didn't want anything to change, but it did anyway. One night, John came back home drunk, and I tried to help him calm down, but he was too far gone. He began to hit me... a lot. I tried to fight back, but I couldn't. I sat there helplessly as he eventually tuckered himself out and went to bed. I bandaged myself up, but every Saturday night, he would always come back from the bar, drunk as usual, and hit me. He thought it was a fun game to play to hear me cry. As shown by my decision to marry him, I wasn't very thoughtful and couldn't defend myself or my opinions well at all, so he continued to hit me like I was a punching bag. This continued for five months, and I couldn't do anything about it. But one day, I slipped up in surgery while trying to fight back the pain from last night's beating. I made a mistake and someone else had to take over. The person luckily survived, but my boss fired me, and for good reason. I wasn't fit to keep working in a medical field if I needed the medical help myself. It was unprofessional and dangerous, so I left.

One night, I had a plan. I knew that John was coming home later that night and ready to beat me again, so this time I would sneak out. So I did. I snuck out to my car and drove away from our house, just to escape for one night. As I drove, I saw other happy couples and wondered what would happen if I left him. I was seriously considering it, but something was burdened inside of me to keep me with him for some reason. I kept driving, trying to focus on the road ahead of me. I eventually arrived at a bar, not the same one that John usually went to, and stepped out of my car. I went inside and heard the song '*As the World Caves In*' by Matt Maltese playing overhead. I sighed as I sat down.

"What can I get ya, ma'am?" the bartender asked politely.

"I'll just get a shot of something strong; something to get my mind off things," I said and he nodded as he turned around. I sat in silence for a moment before I saw someone look at me through my peripheral vision.

"Long time, no see, Evelyn," the man said as I looked to my right. It was Harry. I weakly smiled as my eyes widened.

"What the hell are you doing here, Harry?" I asked as I got up and hugged him.

"It's a calm place to settle down, y'know," Harry said, the same charming voice as all those years ago. I smiled, remembering cringey but good times with him. "You look like shit! What happened??" Harry said as he looked at the bruise on my face. I shyly covered it with my hair.

"It's nothing..." I said, but he calmly brushed away my hair and revealed it again.

"Someone's hitting you..." he said in a haunting tone. I pushed his hand away and turned away.

"It's fine," I said as the bartender handed my shot to me. I nodded and took it immediately. I winced as it entered my system and set it down.

"Why are you here?" he asked me.

"I just wanted a drink," I said as I asked for a refill.

"Fair..." Harry said, wanting to push forward on what was going on but also not wanting to scare me away. "Well, if you need someone to talk to, then you can talk to me then. As a friend, y'know."

"Yeah, thanks. I will... just probably not tonight... it's gonna be a long night..." I said.

"It's *going* to be a long night? It's already like 11! What does that mean?" Harry asked. What I meant was that it wouldn't matter what I did, John would be waiting for me back home.

"I..." I started, really wanting to tell him but not sure.

"It's ok, Ev," Harry said and I looked at him with a comforting smile on his face. "You don't have to tell me everything. This is the first time I've seen you in around 8 years."

"I know, but..." I started, bracing myself for what I was going to say, "You know I always liked you, right?"

Harry blushed and chuckled. "Yeah, I knew," he said and I blushed as I turned away and took another shot. "But did you know that... I did too?" I gagged as I swallowed the shot. I set down the drink and looked at him in shock and confusion. He laughed.

"What?! I don't even look that good, I'd be a drag on you!" I said.

"You think I care about appearances? Just because I look good doesn't mean I want someone the same. Besides, I look for personality. I've had a lot of... people in my life. They did things to me and... I was blinded by their appearance to see who they really were. But in those dark times, I remembered you. You, in my opinion, are really cute and you have an amazing personality and I was kinda hoping that I'd find you here tonight because..." Harry admitted, but he suddenly stopped.

"Because...?" I said, really wanting him to go on so I could get what I always dreamed of. He sighed as he looked away from my hand. I looked down and saw my wedding ring. My heart dropped as I covered it.

"You seem happy though..." he said, disappointed. I gulped, wishing that he never saw that. I had a choice; I could tell him that I hated John because he hit me and wanted to be with him instead

or go back to living my terrible life. "I should get going then... it was nice seeing you-" he started, but I stopped.

"He hit me!" I yelled, wanting him to stop. I uncovered the bruise on my face as he turned around.

"Who?" he asked as he turned around, ready to listen and care.

"My husband, John. We got married a bit ago, but ever since then, he's been hitting me every week and if I go back, he's gonna kill me for trying to get away! I can't go back, I want to be with you!" I yelled as tears began to run out of my eyes. So much built up pain inside of me was finally coming out. Suddenly, my knees buckled and I prepared to fall until John caught me. He helped me stand as I hugged him tightly and cried into his arms. He stood in shock, not sure what to do. Then, he grabbed onto me as well and held me tightly as he rubbed my back with his hand.

"You don't have to go back, I got you," he said as I cried even more. So many thoughts were running through my head from all the stress and pain in my life. I just wanted someone to listen.

"I don't want to be with him anymore..." I said in a shaky voice, but he shushed me.

"I got you, Ev," he said in his warm voice as the other people in the bar continued looking at us from what had just happened.

I rubbed my hands together as I looked out the frosty windshield.

"How do you want to do this?" Harry asked me in the driver's seat next to me. We were in his car which was parked outside, "We could call the cops and report John for domestic abuse, or we could handle it ourselves—"

"No... I don't want you to get hurt..." I said and he nodded in understanding.

"Cops?" he asked and I nodded.

"C-Can you do the talking though...?" I asked and he smiled.

"I got you," he said as he dialed 9-1-1.

"9-1-1, what is your emergency?" the operator on the other end here.

"Hey, I just wanted to report domestic abuse. The husband of my..." he looked over at me,

"Friend. His name is John..." He turned to me again, wanting a last name.

"John Thomas," I said and he nodded.

"John Thomas," Harry repeated into the phone.

"How long has this been going on?" the operator asked.

"Around five months now," he said as I looked at him in awe of being my savior.

"Alright, what is his address?" they asked.

"6421 South Crystal Avenue," I said and Harry nodded at me.

"6421 South Crystal Avenue," Harry said.

"Alright, we're on our way. Is the wife of the abuser there?" the operator asked and I gulped. He looked over at me.

"Yes. She doesn't want to talk though... I hope that's ok," Harry said.

"That's perfectly fine, just making sure that she was safe as of then. Alright, thank you for reporting this. Bye," the operator said.

"Bye, thanks!" Harry said as the operator hung up. He sighed in relief as he put away his phone. He turned to me and I immediately went up to him and kissed him on the cheek. I came back and looked at him with tears in my eyes. Harry chuckled as his eyes glowed in awe.

"Thank you, Harry," I said. He looked back over at me and smiled.

"You're welcome, Ev. Now, where to?" he asked and I sighed.

"Can't go back home until he is gone, so... you could drop me off at a hotel I guess," I said.

"You sure? You can always stay at my place if you want," he said and I thought about it.

"Actually... that'd be amazing," I said as he smiled and turned on the car. We drove through the cold city at night as I looked out the window, a heavy burden in my chest finally being relieved. Several minutes later, we arrived at a small house.

"We have arrived," Harry said happily and I smiled. We both got out of the car as snow began to fall softly. We walked to the door and went inside.

I looked around the dark and cozy house.

"Uhhh, don't come in yet!" he yelled as he ran to another room and began to frantically clean up his mess. I chuckled as I continued walking down the hallway, looking at the pictures of him and his family. I walked to his kitchen and sat down in the dark room as he ran back and smiled as he brushed dust off his clothes. "Perfect. Want anything to eat or drink?" he asked as he went to the fridge.

"No, I'm good," I said as I looked at the calendar on his fridge and saw the top of it being "*December 2043*." He nodded as he sat down across from me.

"You can have the bed, it's upstairs. I'll get the couch down here," he said. "Hot water in the shower, I can run by the store tomorrow and get new clothes if you need them too. Anything I'm missing?" he said, clearly nervous about having me over at his messy house. I chuckled.

"That's too much, I can't thank you enough," I said and he blushed.

"Oh, sorry. Well, you can head up when you're ready then," I said and I got up.

"Alright, well... see ya," I said and he nodded happily. I smiled back as I went upstairs. I stepped onto a creaky floorboard as I approached the bedroom. I opened the door and saw it all neatly set for me. I chuckled, imagining Harry sprinting up here and making the bed in less than a minute and running back down. He was very cute though. I took off my winter jacket and set it on the edge of the bed. I laid down on the bed and sighed as I looked out the window as the snow slowly fell. It was already around 1 AM at this point, though it felt much longer from all that happened that night. I yawned and eventually closed my eyes, needing my much deserved rest.

I woke up in the middle of the night and coughed, my throat being very dry. I looked around my room and when I did, I saw someone standing in the frame of the doorway. I tried to move, but I couldn't. Was I still dreaming? I gulped as the person with glistening white eyes stared into my soul. Slowly, they backed away from the door and closed the door softly. I looked up at the roof as I tried to calm my mind and somehow fall back asleep from what I had just seen.



Image by Meia Aime, Solar Plate intaglio print

7 Minutes by Anonymous

Deep breaths... yes... Deep breaths... I've found myself in a terrible circumstance. I've been left alone with my thoughts. Perhaps it wasn't so terrible... it was self-inflicted after all. I've been left alone with many of my thoughts before. Deep breaths... yes... One... I don't remember the first few years after I was born. Who can? Things happened, I'm sure, but I only know because someone has narrated

some memory of me, to me. I have no one to do so now.

What about that time when you were three? Oh yes... A little birthday celebration. I had quite a lovely cake. Strawberries on top, and some sort of chocolate mousse. Time flies when you're young. Deep breaths...okay... Two...

Naturally, there are some moments I can't ever seem to get out of my head. Even from way back in my younger form, they've lived almost perpetually. Left alone out in the cold...

Ah... I had been left outside before. Not quite the best time, not at all. It wasn't an accident either. I don't remember how long I stayed out there. I was crying. Perhaps I had done something wrong.

Deep breaths...slowly... Three...

I've met many people in my lifetime. Good friends I've never talked to again. Bad friends I've never talked to again. And some friends I've seen now and again. Just a few.

Best friends forever? What's the meaning of such a phrase?

Well, I haven't seen her in forever. I don't think we can be best friends if I haven't seen her in forever. I don't think we'll find each other in another lifetime anyway. People move on... I've moved on.

Deep breaths... one at a time... Four...

Some people are quite the interesting characters! But then again, we're all interesting. Why is that? It's some form of prejudice, that a person is exemplified by other, similar, people we meet along our lives. It's impossible to deduce the majority of behaviour from a person, when it's impossible to even meet the majority of that certain type of person.

Why is it so complicated?

I know not. Wouldn't we rather be complicated than simple? Someone told me I was complicated more than once. They were quite the distasteful character. I was disappointed in my lack of judgement when it came to character. We don't know everyone. I do not. I knew that person once and I'll never know them again.

Deep breaths... quiet... Five...

No... why am I thinking of such obscure things? Philosophy is not important right now. What's important...? I don't know... I surely am not... The thoughts are crowding my head. Thoughts of life... thoughts of my life.. Thoughts of my life as viewed from other perspectives... Even now I can't think for myself...

Family...friends...pets... What a wonderful life...

I loved my family. I loved the people I called friends. I loved my little animals. My cat. My puppy. I'm sure they loved me too... I'm certain...

Deep breaths... nearly there... Six...

If they loved me, how did I end up here? Maybe it's because I didn't love myself enough. Maybe

it's because I was hurt by some of them. I ended up making the wounds deeper. Now here I am... a river of red liquid covers half my face while my hands tremble and I take...

Deep breaths... Seven...

I've found myself in an unfortunate circumstance. I left myself alone with my thoughts and the gun. The gun was very close to my thoughts. At one point, I felt it touch my mind, and suddenly, my mind felt nothing at all. Deep breaths...



Image by Norah Owens, "Tea Party!, Silver Key Scholastic Art Awards, Sculpture

My Birthplace by Anonymous

My birthplace is very significant to me. Not because of the landscape or the area but the memories that shaped my early childhood with the people who raised me. It's not an exciting or exotic place, but it was simple. It was a quiet neighborhood on a no-outlet street. You could hear the distant sounds of the highway but the main sounds were children playing. I remember looking out the window, watching my brother play with the neighbor boys. Watching them go off jumps on their scooters and the clink of skateboards on the homemade rail my brother's dad made. I remember my mom complaining to my brother when I accidentally hit the porch lights with a basketball because he took the blame. I remember the rainbow chalk stains on our cracked driveway that washed away with the heavy spring rain. It was a simple life. It was quiet before people started moving here. Colorado had half the people that it has now. I remember waiting in line for the small ghetto ice cream place I could bike to. The line only had a few people, because not many people knew of it. Today, the line wraps around the entire little building and my old picnic table is occupied by a family that isn't mine.

These changes in my city ping my heart but not more than the change in my family. Growing up, my brother was my best friend. My parents taught me many things, but it was my older brother who taught me about the real world and skills I still use today. He taught me everything about sports, things I use every day at practice. He taught me how to get out of trouble, and to talk to our parents in a way to get what we want.

But when he turned around 15, he stopped teaching me things. He left me to find out things for myself. It hurt. A lot. I rarely ever see him anymore. He has always been reserved but not so much that I only get grunts and a few words from him a day. The only contact we really have is the occasional hello when we both go downstairs to eat from the refrigerator. I hear my parents whisper about him, worried. But it makes me mad when they talk badly about him. Even though he seems like a stranger, it hurts me that they talk about the one person I looked up to for the first thirteen years of my life. The memories of our early life together still runs through my mind, making me defensive of the little boy I once based my personality on. The best times I had with him were hitting our neighbors with rocks from a slingshot while they road their bikes, him teaching me how to do a backflip on a musty old mattress in our backyard, chasing each other on the playset of a nearby park, and so many things are forever engraved in my memory. My home may seem like an average place

in a run-down Colorado neighborhood, but to me it is the place where I became who I am today. My home isn't just a place on a map, but the people I love and used to know.



Image by Margaret Galka

A Personal Statement by Jordan Seto

Everyone watches movies—mainly the basic Disney ones, the Marvel ones, or even light-hearted ones. The movie that makes me reflect on who I am as a person is *The Great Gatsby*. I have always had a fascination with the cover of the book, with its big eyes behind thin-framed glasses and the deep blue background. I did school projects on this book anytime I was allowed to, amazed by the Roaring Twenties and how incredible that time period was and how it majorly influenced me.

My mother even bought me the book, and I took it on camping trips with my school as well as trips to Europe. I was aware of the basic story: a love affair, extravagant parties filled with drugs and alcohol, and, in the end, death. But I never truly experienced it for myself until one night at 10 p.m., when I was on a plane flying back to Colorado from South Carolina and finally had the opportunity to watch the movie.

My mother had told me not to watch the movie before reading the book, which might have made it even more intriguing. So, I turned it on, and as the audio blasted through my ears, I was pulled into the world of Gatsby. At first, the movie was slow, and I was tempted to skip to the more exciting parts. Until I met Daisy and heard the story of her and Gatsby's relationship. I remember thinking, *Wow, how romantic—Gatsby buys an entire mansion just to be close to the love of his life, staring at the green light across the bay every night because he loves her so much.*

But part of me was also conflicted. Daisy's cheating husband frustrated me. But for obvious reasons, I felt a connection with Jordan Baker. We share a name, our honesty, and our caring and thoughtful nature toward friends. The parties in the movie were mesmerizing—everyone dancing, drinking, and having fun while still being clueless about the alluring Jay Gatsby.

When we finally meet Gatsby, we see his deep love and true connection with Daisy. Both of them want to be together and live happily, but when they confront Tom, Daisy can't seem to be clear about what she truly wants. This leads to a series of tragic events: Tom's mistress, Myrtle, is hit by Gatsby's car—driven by Daisy—and then Myrtle's husband, seeking revenge, kills Gatsby.

At the beginning of the movie, Gatsby made it clear that he wanted to have an impact on the world while still being with the woman he loved and only wanted these things, thinking that they would make him happy. However, as his secrets about how he became rich are revealed, he loses everything, including Daisy. In the end, the only person who comes to his funeral is his one true friend, Nick. Everyone who once spoke about Gatsby, attended his parties, and admired his wealth abandons him, leaving him to die alone.

This story taught me an important lesson: even the things you want most can end up hurting you. Longing for something—whether it's love, wealth, or status—won't necessarily bring happiness. Instead, it may leave you feeling lonely and disappointed. You have to find happiness within yourself, not rely on others to bring it to you. *The Great Gatsby* is an incredible story that has left a lasting impact on me, and the lessons it teaches will stay with me as I navigate life on my own.



Image by Phoebe Haskell

The Marvels of Industrialization by Lucas Bednar

The marvels of industrialization have been seen throughout the world. Horses and large sailing ships are quickly being replaced by the much more efficient trains and steamships. This is having a great effect on the state of living of the population. Additionally, these new, wonderful, and

very industrious advancements are being featured in more art than ever before. Recently, an art exhibition was held in the Royal Academy of Arts. This exhibition accurately showcased many new advancements in our new world.

In the painting about farm workers in the western United States, steam powered machines can be seen harvesting the crops and tilling the soil. A few years before the painting, the extremely laborious work of harvesting the crops and tilling the soil was left to the farmers (some on horseback, some not). In more recent years, human innovation and brilliance has invented new machinery for the farming industry. Using these new technologies, farmers can spend less time in the field, and more time with their families. This is all due to the efficiency of the new technology brought about in this industrial age.

In *Workers in a Coal Mine*, humans are seen working alongside machines. The scene is lively and bright, welcoming the onlookers into the new industrial age. Additionally, the scene is a great depiction of the new factory system in which many workers provide labor in a single place instead of many different workshops. This new factory system greatly improves efficiency in many tasks. This allows the consumers to have more reliable sources of necessities.

The painting, *Iron and Coal*, depicts many workers in a factory manufacturing parts for the new innovations. With such an influx in available laborers, many workers formed labor unions. These labor unions ensure fairness for the common workers by implementing minimum wages and fair working hours and conditions. Therefore, even if you are an unskilled worker, you are still able to find a job and are protected from some of the tyranny that comes with big business.

The art exhibit told the story of human progress by means of the industrial revolution. Farming efficiency was highlighted in a painting of the American west. Additionally, the factory system was showcased and more efficient work was depicted. Finally, the exhibition saw the

37

advertisement of labor unions so that the common man was not excluded from the benefits of this new, great era. We live in a time of thriving innovation and industrialization. It would be a crime not to capitalize off of this opportunity that we have been given.

Rondo

by Jordan Seto

Aches aches aches Head pounds Making your rounds Aches aches aches

Head pounds Standing around Work surrounds Head pounds

Making your rounds Things end Lines blend Making your rounds

Aches aches aches Its fake yet others real It hurts as i heal Aches aches aches



Illustrated Manuscript page from Orwell's "1984" by JohnCarl Edwards

Foreword

by Anonymous

Throughout my life and many others alike I have struggled...it's not always bad though there are lots of moments where life IS sunshine and rainbows.

In 2020 during the summer I got to know an amazingly horrible person who I had known since birth. That summer it was almost as if I was wearing a blanket every day. It was warm and comfortable, soft and welcoming. Every two weeks over summer break I would go to see a man who we will call martin. Martin would constantly spoil me and my sister whether it was giving us money to play the arcade games in the bar or letting us ride ATV's with friends. I always had a good time. This is how life's supposed to go right? Well according to my mother when your father figure (who you know as martin) is taking substances and threatening your life isn't normal. Even to this day I still find it hard to believe that I ever thought that this was acceptable.

I'm My Own Worst Enemy

"Hey dad, what were you doing outside with your friend and what were you putting in your mouth? Was it that green stuff you hid from me and my sister? Is it bad?" I said after walking back inside of the house. He responded by saying "you really are ignorant to the real world. Maybe if your mom would let you live with me you would be smarter." I decided to take my leave from that conversation by running to the shared bedroom and crying for a while. About 15 minutes later I found a piece of paper and a pencil next to one of my dads guns. I decided to pick up and write a sloppy and imperfect sentence asking if he would stop smoking the substance. It read something like this "Hi dad I love and care about you so could you stop breaking the law mom says its not safe." After finishing the note I gave it to him while he was sitting in front of the TV. He looked it over for a few seconds then set it down on the table next to him. He then told me "I can't read this crap."

So I tried to tell him, from my trembling legs up to my slowly closing throat I said "Dad please don't get mad at me I'm only trying to make sure you're ok because I love you! But can you please stop... *im sorry*" he stood there for several seconds and looked at me almost as if diciting whether to hit me or to yell. I slowly started to back up but I was slow like a caterpillar.

He then started to raise his hand as if to strike. I could see my sister out of my periphery and quickly turned just to say "Grace, me and dad are talking. You can use the TV in the bedroom if you

want." I will never forget the smile I saw on her face. It was the one of the few times she was truly smiling that I can remember. She skipped off to the bedroom. Dad then started shouting. My ears were ringing as if I had an ear infection. He then bent over then put his hand on the table next to his firearm and started reaching for it saying if i tell mom she wont get to see me or my sister ever again. That is when my will left me. I fell to my knees and started punching his legs. I have never wanted to be bigger and stronger in my life.

He started to walk away out of his fury. This is when I learned that if I was never there, never born I could have been happy the world could have been happy.

This memory will stick with me forever. It is as clear as a crystal ball even now and will be until I die. And this thought of the world would be better off without me would stick until I turned 14. Only to be getting truer and truer.

Secrets are Meant to be Kept

Secrets are meant to be kept to keep people safe and "protect" them but they do hurt. Once I had come home from Martin's house I sat and waited until I was alone with my mother and my adult cousins who were living with us at the time. I then fell apart like when you microwave a cold tortilla and try to wrap it. And just like that over stuffed tortilla everything came spilling out. It was a mix of protecting Martin and deeply wounding myself. I lied and minimized the situation beyond belief. This was still enough to ruin my father's life and convince my mom to get a court order against him making it illegal to see or be near us.

Love yourself.

Telling the Truth: Child of Divorce (Pamphlet #69)

by Phoebe Haskell

Children, stop reading. This is a message to the parents: If you are reading this, you are a concerned parent who wants to help your child navigate your divorce. I understand that "Divorce is difficult for all members of the family. For children, trying to understand the changing dynamics of the family may leave them distracted and confused" (FamilyMeans). My pamphlets will help your child learn to be okay with your divorce.

Now, everyone knows you hate your ex-partner, but you don't want your child to know that. If this applies to you, I must encourage you to realize that this essay is guided towards the particularly *sensitive* child. You know the type. They cry when their ice cream melts, they whine when a chair is too uncomfortable, and they display desperation when things don't go their way. If I am describing your child, they are definitely struggling through your divorce, so hand them this pamphlet and they will learn how to accept their new life as a Child of Divorce.

To the children: You are sensitive, and therefore it is likely that you are a highly observant child. You understand that mommy and daddy, mommy and mommy, or daddy and daddy, don't like each other very much anymore. They fight often, and by often I mean constantly. You hide under the table and cry while they scream at each other, with just cause. I understand how you're feeling right now, and I am here to help you. Pamphlet #69 will answer all of your questions.

1. <u>"Is it my fault?"</u>

Your parents will tell you no, the divorce isn't your fault. They will tell you that they love you with all their hearts, and not to worry your pretty little head. Your parents are liars. You are totally at fault. Why? Because no matter how sweet and loving you may be, children are clingy little monsters, and they hide the TV remote, causing their parents to scream at each other and throw

42

couch cushions across the room. Think of all the stress you put on your parents: asking them to look at your hideous drawings and pretend that you're interesting, forcing them to listen to your endless detailed stories about your *definitely sentient* stuffed animals, and demanding they buy you your first training bra in the third grade. See? It *is* your fault.

2. "Do my parents still love me?"

A better question is, did they ever love you? Remember the time in second grade when both of your parents forgot to pick you up from art club after school? Remember how you sat in the principal's office with a lollipop while she tried to reach them on the phone? Remember how it took three hours before your mom picked up? Exactly.

3. "Am I getting a new Mommy or new Daddy?"

Most likely yes, however it is important to remember that your parents are not skilled at relationships and will probably fail again. You will have a new mommy. But, the catch? Your new mommy will be with your old mommy. Meanwhile, your dad will have several girlfriends who will include: an anti-vaxxer 27 year old aromatherapist in a cowboy hat, a woman who wants a baby after 6 weeks, and a woman who steals his pet tortoise. Not to mention the endless parade of dates with girls he meets on Bumble, Tinder, or Bristler (the dating app for bearded men). Every time you see him on his phone, you will wonder if he just swiped right.

4. "How will my parents' divorce impact my future?"

Simply put: your sad childhood will result in a sad adulthood spent eating instant noodles and microwaved mashed potatoes in your apartment with used leather furniture. Then, your parents will not only not love you, but *they will also be disappointed in you*. Actually, "divorce is associated with an 8% lower probability of a child completing high school, a 12% lower probability of college attendance, and an 11% lower probability of college completion" (Shaheen and Gordon). What a

coincidence: the time it will take to drop out of college will be the same amount of time it takes to microwave your mashed potatoes (fun fact: two minutes).

This is all the information that will fit in Pamphlet #69. If you have more questions,

please consider purchasing the sequel that covers such questions as:

- "Can I sleep in bed with Mommy? Every night? For the next 6 years?"
- "Where am I going to live? Will I sleep on a mattress in the corner of the living room? Which corner? The one with the spiders?"
- "What do I tell my friends? Is there a pamphlet for them?"

YES! Check out other pamphlets in the Telling the Truth Series:

- Telling the Truth: Drugs, Yah or Nah? (Edwards et al). Pamphlet #80
- Telling the Truth: The Bright Side of Teenage Pregnancy. Pamphlet #36
- Telling the Truth: Gaydar? Pamphlet #54

Works Cited

Edwards, Alexis C, et al. "Associations between Divorce and Onset of Drug Abuse in a Swedish National Sample." *American Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 187, no. 5, 16 Nov. 2017, pp. 1010–1018, https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwx321.

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