

**Community College of Denver
Student Literary & Art Magazine
2015 & 2016**

OUR GLASS



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Hi!

Ourglass, now in its 36th year of publication, is the journal of the English, Graphic Design, and Visual Arts departments at Community College of Denver, dedicated to providing a forum for the poetry, prose, drama, design, and artwork of our students.

Please consider submitting your work to Ourglass. If you are attending CCD or have attended in the past, you are eligible to submit. Submissions are accepted between September 15th and March 24th of each year. We accept submissions of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama, and artwork, as well as any interesting combinations thereof, exclusively through our email address: CCD.Ourglass@ccd.edu.

All work submitted must include your name, phone number and current email address. Submit one story or essay at a time; poems can be sent in groups. Send in only low-resolution copies of artwork; we will contact you for high-resolution versions at a later time.

Due to the sheer volume of work we must consider, we can only notify you if your work is chosen to be published. If you don't hear from us, please do try again next year! We love hearing from CCD students and alumni.

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Thanks,

The Editors

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Harmony Sheehan

He ebbs,
In seahorse multitudes-
Tight-walk of
Iron & paper,
Gemini angel.

On the table
Lies
One molecule away
From speed,
Broken in half now
When it wasn't
Before.

I study
His cheesecloth heart,
Soaked bandages
Of endless round table
Discussions,
Scavenged paper for his
Diamond ideas,
& bologna sandwiches.



Cayla Cave
The Lover's Linocut

linocut print, 2015

Best in 2D Design & Mixed Media,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016



Xiao Xiao
Kerrigan

watercolor, 2015



Is that insecurity

Cracks over time

Like a coconut

You don't know what to do with,

Until it is open-

With its tart milk,

& the equal joy & loss

In breaking something.

K
Visual
Scapes
EYES

Claudia Graham

It was oddly strategic the way it happened. She would call me right before in manic rage. I would drop what I was doing and sprint down the block. My record timing is a minute and thirty seconds but it didn't matter because I was always too late. I would find her huddled in a corner of her room, clutching the damage to her chest. There was always a strange and quiet calm in the room that served as a reminder that the storm had passed and I was only there to clean up the wreckage. I would take her arm, clean it, give a silent thanks that another one passed without needing stitches, and hold her until she recaged whatever had been let loose in her beautiful mind. It was ritualistic except that I would never know when it would happen again. It could be days, a week if I was lucky, and that was the scary part.

Yet here we were and it had been a month. I stole a glance at her and saw that she had managed to get green paint up to her elbows. Despite being on the top floor of the empty parking garage, the air was placid, hanging there in the July humidity, leaving no interference between the spray paint and the concrete wall. So how she still littered herself in color was beyond me. The paint made the criss crossing of scars stand out, silver and sharp.

She took a step back and squinted up at what we had done so far. She was filling in the owl I had outlined for her while I added details to feathers where she painted, using my hands to smear the paint while it was still wet to add the texture. This was one of the largest murals we had done. She put her paint can down, signaling a break. I sat down and rubbed my neck, smearing the green I had on my fingertips across the base of my hairline. Claire laughed as I realized what I just done, the tinkling of her giggle echoing off of the walls.

“Ahhh, how am I going to even know if I’ve washed all of it off later?” I chuckled.

“Here, let me see.” She took a paper towel (standard to our supplies) and pressed it to my neck and began to laugh even harder as it just spread the dark green around. I reached around and wiped my fingers down her face, leaving streaks of green down her cheek like war paint, a battle being exactly what I started. It was a massacre of shirts, faces, and arms with aerosol emerald and no survivors. With a truce we collapsed breathless, her happy shrieks echoing in my ears and even louder in her bottomless eyes.

“We look like aliens from a poorly funded foreign film.”

I pointed to the top of my head. “We’re missing the tinfoil.”

“What are the chances we have that in our supply bag?” While she moved towards a yellow and pink gym bag from the 70’s that she knighted as our supply bag, I surveyed our mess, the thought of being more careful playing tug of war with Claire’s laughter.

“Do you think we’ll ever get caught?”

She shrugged, at me or the lack of tin foil, I’m not sure, and sat down next to me. “They would have to know that you and I exist first.”

She was right. She and I were quiet kids. We had good grades, were in the marching band, had a quiet group of friends and floated in the gray area that was a safe haven for all of the average kids with average lives. Only, she was a bright blue beacon in that gray area for anyone who knew her well to know she was anything

but average: with the way her laugh bubbled up inside of her, the way her smile stretched slowly across her face, and how her eyes held crystals even when they were red rimmed and swollen.

Her smile crept its way across her small face then, pleased with the poetic quality of what she had just said. I had a suspicion that the poetic essence of this was her favorite part. It was just two kids who never get in trouble or serve as any nuisance at all, giving their small suburban surroundings a graffiti problem.

She looked down at her paint-covered arms and started to trace her scars like a slightly morbid connect-the-dots. She ceased abruptly the moment she saw me watching and tried to cover up the moment by removing the physical evidence of it, pulling her arms to her chest. The similarity of the movement brought me to her room and the way her eyes clouded over like oncoming rain let me know she had gone to the same place.

“So....” I began. “How are you?” She looked up at me with a grin, shaking the thoughts off of her with a shiver.

“I’m fine, really.” She patted my knee.

“I just...” I swallowed. “Just wanted to make sure. It’s been a while...and...” She just stared at me, eyebrows raised expectantly, until I finally trailed off. “I mean, is the painting helping?”

“Yes, Sam. It’s helping. I’m good.” I caught her face growing darker before she stood up and pretended to give the owl her full attention. I stayed on the ground and pulled my knees in. My thought process was that if I retracted my physical being enough, my words would come with me and take up less of the oxygen.

"I just worry about you," I said softly.

"I told you the painting was helping, Sam. I really don't think we need to talk about it."

"All right." I retreated, white flag waving in the way I occupied myself with a frayed shoelace.

It felt so much like eternity before either of us moved that even the stifling air seemed to jump with surprise when she stirred. She walked over and pulled my arms from around my knees and curled into my open lap. I folded around her and she laid her head on my bicep.

"I'm sorry," she mumbled into my arm. "Thank you for worrying, Sam."

"I see you, Claire, never forget that."

"I won't, I promise."

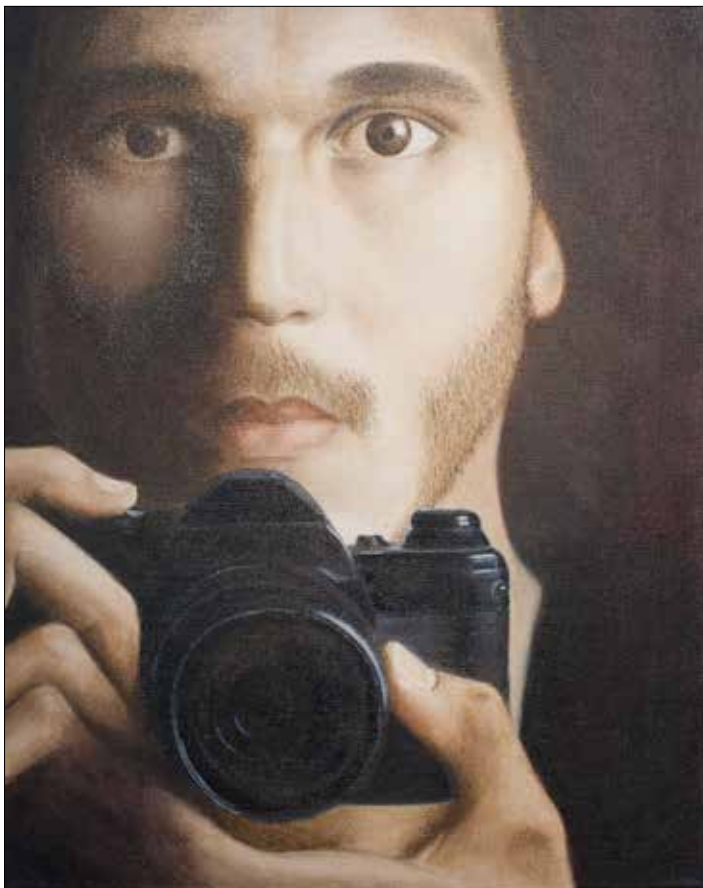
"Cross your heart?" I felt her smile against my arm.

"Always."

I looked up at the eyes of the owl, empty and concrete colored. With the same thought process Claire broke the silence. "I'm thinking multicolored geometric shapes for the eyes."

"Like tie-dye?"

"No!" She laughed. "Like kaleidoscope eyes."



Tania Lopez
Ziko

oil on canvas, 2016

Best in Painting II,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016

THE PROBLEM
SOLUTIONS
with
Mates

Amber Dorr

Ugh, traffic duty sucks ass. Lola, the Chief that I unfortunately have to listen to, put me on traffic duty today as punishment for yesterday.

Apparently I'm not supposed to shoot at someone after they put their gun down. He was shooting up a park for goodness sake! He put seven kids in the E.R.! At least nobody died. Still, I shoulda aimed for the shooter's head instead of his leg. Besides, it's not like he would be dead for real. He would have just been reincarnated after a few months, so he would still have the opportunity to meet his soulmate.

But that all went against protocol, so Lola stuck me here, that bitter young hag. Just because she's been at the station forever and hasn't found her soulmate, she punishes me for her loneliness. I should be the chief by now, but freaking Lola just had to be born ten years before me so she has more experience. But I actually care about my job, unlike Lola who just mopes about how she wants to get old already. I swear she will be the only chief this place ever sees again. No matter how many cases I solve, no matter how much better I am than her, she still has ten years of experience on me. She could find another job, but I think she just sticks around to torture me. It's her silent way of saying "Fuck you, Rebecca; if I have to suffer alone, then so do you." Like I said, she's a bitter thing.

First time I went to school was to be a pediatrician. Then I figured out I hate children, so I took up an internship at the police station and that became my career. I've been working here for thirty-five years and still look the exact same as I did when I started. I still have the same unwrinkled tanned skin, and dark thick hair I had on my twenty-first birthday. Probably the only thing that's changed are my eyes. Once they were bright and optimistic, back

when I still believed having a soulmate was a good thing, but now they had wisdom of the years I had lived.

One of the many problems with soulmates is the discrimination with age. If you look like a teenager, nobody takes you seriously, but when you look in your twenties everyone treats you like an adult. Funny, the respect others show you when they aren't sure if you have days or decades of experience in your field.

It was a slow day, no major crimes to deal with. At least none that I was allowed in on because of friggin' traffic duty. Cruisin' around town all day was fairly boring. I sighed and turned on my flashers. Some dickhead was jaywalking.

He stops right in the center of the road and stares at me, a hand above his eyes to shield them from the sun. "There a problem, officer?"

Of course the guy has no regard for the cars behind him honking for him to move. I wave for them to go around. "Sorry!"

"What did I do wrong?"

I pull him out of the street to clear the traffic and push him against my car. I start to pat him down, as is procedure. He had a good body. "Jaywalking."

"Don't you have other criminals to deal with? I'm not dangerous."

"Slow day at the station."

"Then just give me a ticket. You can't lock me up for that."

Friggin' watch me. If Lola has a problem with it, she can suck it. I read him his rights and cuffed him, throwing him in the back. He

grumbled to himself about unfairness in the system for the first five minutes.

Anyways, that whole stereotype about cops and donuts? Well the only reason that exists is because freaking Fred always grabs the discounted kind from the grocery store on his way to work. He's new here, an intern, trying to suck up and make people like him by offering donuts. I live alone, I pay bills alone, so yeah if someone offers me free food, I'm going to take it. So thanks Fred, the last six pounds I gained are your fault.

We were almost on the highway when I glanced to my half eaten donut wrapped up in a napkin on the passenger seat.

"Hey, guy, you hungry?"

"If you're offering. I could go for a McNugget and shake."

"Yeah, no. I'm not gonna spend money on you." I pulled off to the side of the road and turned off my flashers. I opened the door just a crack to toss him the donut, but he grabbed my hand fast and pulled me in, slamming the door behind us. My hand was all warm and tingly where he grabbed it. I dismissed the feeling by pretending it didn't exist.

Just great, now the donut was inedible because I dropped it on the floor when he grabbed me. I glared at him and grabbed the donut, smearing the icing all over his face as revenge.

"What was that for?"

"I offered you food. You should be thankful."

"They were leftovers," he complained and crossed his arms.

Somehow he had managed to pick the lock on the cuffs.

“Most cops aren’t that nice.”

“But now I’m all sticky!”

“Sounds like a personal problem.”

The guy wiped his face the best he could with the back of his sleeve. “No need to get all angry.”

“This has never happened to me before; I have every right to be angry. I’m stuck in the back of my own car!” I was nearly screaming. My cell phone was on the passenger seat and my radio was — my radio! “Shit, I’m dumb. Actually, no, we aren’t stuck. I’ll call for backup.”

But who to call? Not Lola, she would love it too much if I messed up as a freaking traffic cop. And my usual partner, Lyle, was busy on a case. Fred would probably be listening though; it was worth a shot.

“Fred, you listening? Want some on the job training? I’ve got a code... code donut. Sure, let’s go with that. Over.”

“Heck yes!” His reply was almost too fast, as if he had been waiting for this opportunity. “I mean yes ma’am, thank you very much. Over.”

I told him where I was and waited.

“So I’m guessing it’s a bad time to ask you for your number?”

“You think?” I crossed my arms.

“Fine. I’ll ask again later.”

“What are you, a magic 8 ball?”

“Baby, I’ll be whatever you want me to be.” He sent me a flirtatious wink. I rolled my eyes as response.

After a moment of silence, the guy turned to me and stuck out his hand. “We might be here for a few minutes, might as well get to know each other a bit. I’m Logan.”

I raised an eyebrow. Was he seriously trying to make friends with the cop who had just arrested him? Regardless, I shook his hand. “Rebecca.”

“So Becca —”

“Rebecca. I don’t do nicknames.”

“Becca it is then. Becca, how old are you?”

“Twenty-one.” That’s what I always told people. They didn’t need to know that I’m a pathetic lonely loner who has never found her true love or other half or soulmate or whatever you want to call it. That’s the problem with soulmates. You can only start aging once you find them, and by then your family and friends could have already passed on.

“Well sure, we both look twenty-one. But how old are you really?”

“Fifty-six. Happy?” God, this guy was persistent.

Logan laughed. He had a good laugh, one that would make even my mom smile on one of her bad mood days. “Now that ain’t so

bad. Fifty-six is young compared to me.”

“And how old are you?”

He shrugged. “Dunno. Old enough to stop counting.”

“And you’ve never found your person?” My friend Pete was like that. He had been a sailor in the first war. He owns a bar now, casually hitting on all his customers and whoring about trying to find his soulmate. No matter how many people he picked up though, year after year he didn’t look a day past twenty-one.

He smiled at me now, sending me a flirty wink. “Don’t you think that conversation is better to have over a date?”

I rolled my eyes. Sure, he was attractive. Nice hair, perfect amount of muscle, pretty face; at least he had his looks going for him. But I wasn’t about to get my heart broken again, not by someone I had arrested.

“Why are you talking to me?” I asked him seriously, turning my head slightly to look at him better.

He looked confused at that. “Whaddaya mean?”

I rolled my eyes. “I arrested you for a stupid reason. Why aren’t you getting angry with me?”

“Ah!” He clapped his hands together gleefully. “So you admit it was a stupid reason. Does that mean when rescue comes, you’ll let me go?”

“Not a chance.”

“Worth a try.” He shrugged and leaned back, closing his eyes and

starting to whistle a happy little tune. How was this guy so happy all the time?

My radio started making the usual static sound before I heard Fred's voice. "I'm here! Where did ya go? Over."

My head perked up and I glanced out my window. Fred was standing not too far from my car, glancing around as if hoping to spot me by the grocery carts. I tapped the window hard until he noticed.

"Rebecca?" Fred walked over, looking more confused than normal. Fred was one of the lucky ones; he had already found his soulmate pretty much as soon as he turned twenty-one and was aging well. He was still young, but it was evident that he looked at least a couple years older than me. "Why are you in the back of the car? And who is that?"

"No one. Just some guy I arrested."

"Logan." Logan raised his hand, trying to get our attention. "My name is Logan."

"Hi Logan!" Fred flashed him a big smile and waved.

"Fred! Now is not the time for that."

"Right. You said I could have some on the job training?"

"Yeah. Lesson one: open my car door."

"Sure." He pulled the door open and I jumped out, slamming it behind me so Logan was still in the back. "What else do you want me to do?"

“Lesson two: when you get back to the station, lie to Lola. Don’t tell her what happened.” I pushed past Fred and got in the driver’s seat.

“That’s all you wanted from me? To open the door?”

“Yup.” I tried to ignore Fred’s crushed face. Poor kid probably thought I had an actual important job for him. “Now skedaddle.”

Fred called out something, probably thanking me for getting him out of the station, but I was already driving away and didn’t hear.

I knew I would get an earful from Lola for putting Logan in custody for a few hours, but at this point I was beyond caring what she had to say. It was actually kind of entertaining to watch her lecture. Lola was the kind of person who, like many others, had made herself look older so she seemed less lonely. Dyed gray hair and bad plastic surgery to put in a few wrinkles, she looked more like one of those weird almost hairless monkeys.

I left her office after nearly an hour. My partner, Lyle, was waiting for me. “So I talked to that guy you brought in. He wanted me to give you this.”

Lyle held out a scrap of paper with some numbers scribbled down. Even after I locked up Logan, he still wanted me to have his number? I shook my head and pushed the paper away, Lyle was always trying to hook me up with someone. “Not happening. Not interested.”

“C’mon, Rebecca, you haven’t dated since high school.” He would know, considering he was my last ex. I was young and naive once, I understand the allure of having one person to call

yours. You stop aging at twenty-one, and then when you find your soulmate, you two start aging together. It all sounded perfect when I was a kid—having someone to love me forever. For a time, I had thought Lyle was the one.

I get it now though; it doesn't always work out as a perfect fairy tale. We broke up a few years after turning twenty-one, realizing neither of us had changed. The years went on and we got over it. Now he's my partner in crime and the only one I trust to watch my back.

"Just take the paper, Rebecca. What's the worst that could happen?"

Worst case scenario: Logan could be my soulmate. Lola would still be chief. I had made it a silent competition by this point—who could stay at the station longest. If I gave this a shot and it worked out, I'd start growing old. I would die.

That's another problem with soulmates. While we might be cursed to stay twenty-one until we meet them, we can still die. A car hits us, a building falls on us, someone shoots us, and we die. For a little while, and then our soul is reborn. We don't remember our past lives, of course, but we know how many times we have died. It's just a knowledge all of us have, a flickering number behind our eyelids when we close our eyes. Me, I've died two hundred eleven times. I keep coming back though, because I haven't met my other half yet. They say once you find your soulmate and grow old together and die of natural causes, then and only then can your life be completely over.

"Whatever," I say, but I take the paper anyways.

I'm not sure what got into me, but a few months later I must have been feeling pretty lonely because I called Logan. He seemed

happy but not surprised that I had finally called and invited him out. We were at a bar because everyone at bars looked twenty-one; they were all meeting people and trying to find their soulmate. Nobody judged you at a bar for being young like they did at a coffee shop. When I dated Lyle, we had gone out to places like that only to be looked down on by older folks who were probably all thinking the same thing. Those two aren't meant for each other; look how young they are.

"I'm glad you took a chance on me. Took you long enough to call. Why did you take so long anyways? Daddy issues?"

This arrogant fucker. Why did I have to be stuck with him of all people? "Both parents, actually."

"Really? Do tell."

"They thought they were soul mates for the longest time; they were naive and in love. They weren't aging as you were supposed to once you found your other half, and that isn't exactly something that goes by unnoticed. Took 'em till I was nearly nineteen before they finally broke it off." It really was as simple as that. Warren was our new neighbor, see, and he invited dad over for beer and sports every other day. Dad started aging; mom wasn't. It didn't take mom too long to put two and two together. After all, what was the point of being with someone when they weren't your true soulmate? This issue had broken up more than just my parents.

"Ah. Well sometimes it works out though. Can't give up just because of them."

That was true. My sister Elva had married this guy Ben for money.

They started to show signs of aging and thought that it might have been meant to be after all. Turned out Elva's soulmate was Ben's brother, and Ben's soulmate was his secretary. I guess in that case it worked out a lot better than these things usually do; everyone ended up happy. She is still my sister and I love her dearly. It's just a bit odd to me that my younger sister looks older than me.

My phone buzzed; it was a text from Lyle. That sucked; I'd have to waste half my drink. "Sorry, gotta go. Suicide. Catch you later?"

Oh no. I think I sounded a little too hopeful there. Ah well, hopefully he didn't notice.

"Count on it."

The problem with soulmates is the suicide rate goes up year by year. Not that it really matters; they will just come back, be reincarnated, within the month. I've worked too many cases where someone kills themselves because they spend too long alone. A hundred, two hundred years, still not finding their significant other can literally bore them to death. I suppose they think when they come back and have a chance to live a new life, they will get lucky and find their person that time around? Whatever, fellas, you do you. Me, I wouldn't kill myself for something like that. Like, if I'm going to live forever, I want to remember it, right?

I didn't see Logan again for another couple weeks. It wasn't all that long in the great scheme of things, but to me it felt like forever. Just perfect; now I was starting to miss the loser. We were at a bar again, but it was around lunchtime, so it was fairly quiet.

"Why did you seem so hesitant to ask me out?" Logan interrupted

the comfortable silence. It was strange how easily I felt like I could trust him.

“I don’t know. Scared, I guess? I did try to find my soulmate in the beginning; didn’t work out.” I sighed and took a sip of water; it was too early to drink even for me. “And I was busy. Being a detective isn’t always easy.”

You’d think that if someone was your soulmate, then you would have to meet them eventually; it’s only fair. But the world is so big with all its lands and seas, it’s impossible to visit everywhere, even if you are around a couple hundred years. You still gotta have a place to sleep, you still gotta eat, and to make all that possible, you gotta get a job.

“I see.” He didn’t sound convinced. “Well, I sure am glad you came out with me. Where do we go from here? Your place or mine?”

“Neither.” I laughed and shook my head, already standing up. I had to get back to work. Lyle would be wanting me at the crime scene soon.

The next few months we met up every now and then, and every date ended the same. He would ask me to go home with him, I would decline, and we would set a date for the next weekend. He seemed very interested in my life: how often I’ve died, if I remembered anything, weird stuff like that. But whenever I asked him about meeting other versions of me, the other incarnations of his soulmate, he was quick to change the subject.

That’s fine; that just meant I’d have to work a little harder to get to know him. Not that I wanted to get to know him. At least that’s what I told myself until I found it, my first gray hair. Google said

it was either cancer or a sign of aging. And I was pretty positive I didn't have cancer.

Logan was apparently my soulmate; he was the only new person I had met in a while. I knew everyone else in this town, and usually it's the same people I lock up. Travis for selling drugs by Walgreens, Vanessa for shoplifting, Lexi for prostitution, Connor for bar fights. Never anyone new. And then I meet Logan and start getting old. Fun stuff. I hadn't told him anything yet though, just to be sure. Besides, I had asked him out first. The least he could do was confess his love first.

Logan was entertaining to be around, when he didn't get in the way of my work, that is. Recently though he'd been asking me a lot of questions about the case I was working on. There was a murder a few days ago and we were still trying to catch the killer.

"Lyle thinks it's the wife, but I'm not so sure. They were decently old, not enough to be frail but enough to be noticeably aged. They were soulmates. Why would someone kill their soulmate?"

"To be immortal." He shrugged, though he seemed mildly uncomfortable. "Did you ever want that? To be immortal?"

"No." I hadn't really thought about it before, at least not to that degree. I figured I'd be a loner from just not meeting my soulmate, not by killing them. "Though it would be amazing to see the look on Lola's face when I become chief."

After a moment of silence, I spoke again, mentally trying to piece together a puzzle. "Think anyone's done that?"

“Done what?” Logan seemed caught off guard. He was staring off in the distance like he was prone to do. He never would tell me what he was thinking about though.

“Kill their soulmate. Not just once, but again and again. Cheating death, becoming immortal. Think anyone’s done it?”

Logan shook his head. For someone who was asking all the questions about my job, he sure was queasy about this sort of thing. I had seen enough over the years to know what he reminded me of. He changed the topic quickly and started tapping his leg, a nervous tick. Like someone not wanting to be caught. I pretended not to notice.

I was a decently good actor, at least I hoped I was. For the next few months I continued going on dates with Logan; I had to be sure before I did anything stupid. I wasn’t going to let Lola stick me back on traffic duty. I pretended like nothing was wrong on our dates, all the while being torn up on the inside.

This man, Logan, my soulmate, was someone I had grown very fond of over the last half a year. I might even — dare I say it — love him. But he was playing me as a fool, acting through this relationship while I fell head over heels.

I didn’t agree to go home with him till I had everything figured out and planned for. He lived in a ranch style home, out in the country, far enough away from any neighbors. My gun was at my hip, loaded and ready to fire. I had done my research and checked my evidence; this had to be done.

“So about your soulmate. Other me’s I guess? You never met me before?” I asked as he walked me to his front door.

“Oh no, I have.” He sighed, sounding sad. I hoped his voice was genuine, that he loved me enough to actually care. But even as I thought that, I knew how foolish I was. “Several times. Only, you never stay alive long enough for us to grow old together.”

“Bummer.”

“Yeah.”

Before he could unlock his door, I pushed him into it in a way I hoped was seductive. “Maybe I could make you feel better.”

Okay, I wasn’t a great actor. After months of never offering him anything and now literally throwing myself at him, he saw right through me. Before I had time to reach for my gun, he whipped me around, pinning my hands above my head. I was defenseless. “What did you have in mind, sweet cheeks?”

“I said no nicknames.” It was a low blow, literally, but it was my only chance. I brought my knee up as hard as I could to his groin. He screamed and let go, giving me only moments to dash away. He had quick reflexes though, and stuck out a leg to trip me. That bastard. One hand still covering his crotch, he sat on my back, making sure I couldn’t get up.

I was decently strong, had to be for a cop, but I wasn’t in the best physical position right now to do anything. And Logan, though he wasn’t fat by any means, was pretty heavy. I couldn’t even reach for my gun because it was tucked into my belt.

“Now now,” he teased. “That’s no way to treat your soulmate.”

Momentarily forgetting my position, I gasped. “You knew?”

He seemed to find that amusing. "Course I did. I recognized your soul the first time I laid eyes on you."

"Impossible." I gave all my strength into bucking my hips. It was just enough to get Logan to lose his balance and for me to roll away and pull out my gun in one swift move. I pointed my loaded weapon at his stomach. This was totally against procedure, but who cares? What Lola didn't know wouldn't hurt her. Besides, I was not going to do traffic duty again.

"What are you doing?" He was shaking, his eyes darting all over. Either he was legit scared or he was a darn good actor. Probably a bit of both. "Put the gun down."

I reached for my cuffs with my free hand, but Logan was too quick and snatched them before tossing them as far away from the house as he could. "These again? Someone's kinky."

I glared at him. Shouldda shot him the second I detected movement. Shooting your soulmate was harder than I had thought it would be.

"Okay, no sense of humor. Got it."

My hand trembled against the trigger. Despite myself I had fallen in love with this guy over the past few months. Sure, I thought he was an idiot, but it wasn't till recently I thought he was a murderer. "I have died two hundred eleven times. Never grew old with my soulmate."

Logan glanced around, looking for an escape. Idiot didn't have any weapons on him to defend himself. They must have been hidden in his house somewhere, waiting for when he could lure

me inside. He was like a predator, stalking his prey and waiting for the kill.

“Well, here’s your chance. You believe we are soulmates, yeah? If you really believe that, you wouldn’t kill me. You don’t want to kill your soulmate.”

I moved my gun, angrily pushing it upwards into his chin. I was in charge now. “Yet you didn’t seem to have a problem killing me all those times.”

“Why would I want to do that?”

“You want to cheat death, become immortal. Whatever your reasons are, you have been hunting me down every time I am reborn.”

“Smart girl, I’ll give you that.” His smile was twisted, as if he were proud of me for coming to that conclusion. He looked me in the eyes then, as if he wanted me to be proud of him, too. I felt sick to my stomach, realizing the man I loved was a lie. Everything Logan had done or said, it was all just a trap. And, like an idiot, I had fallen right into it.

“You disgust me.” The words didn’t hold the venom I had hoped they would.

“It wasn’t always easy, you know. Sometimes you were in another country. Sometimes you were a man. Though I did get lucky a few times and manage to find you when you were still an infant.”

“You killed a baby?” I hated kids, but even I could never be that much of a monster.

"Sometimes you were a twin. Sometimes I killed the wrong one first."

I ignored the unsettling feeling in my stomach. I couldn't help it; I imagined my little sister, Elva, dead by his hands. "Someone like you doesn't deserve to live."

"You won't shoot me." He smiled again, a maniacal glint in his eye. "You never had the balls to before."

"Give me another reason not to shoot." Why on earth was I letting him do so much talking? He might be my soulmate; I might love him. That didn't mean I liked him enough to let him live. He was a danger to society. He was a danger to me. I should have shot him by now. I should stop stalling.

"You aren't a cold-blooded killer." He was looking scared now; he knew I had all the power.

"You're right," I said. "I'm not you."

"Please, Becca —"

"Don't." I sneered, trying to ignore the stinging in my eyes. "How many times have our roles been reversed? How many times has it been me pleading for my life?"

If Logan would kill me every twenty-one years and live forever, so could I. I'd find my soulmate again in twenty-one years and take care of him again. And then one day I would become chief and say goodbye to Lola.

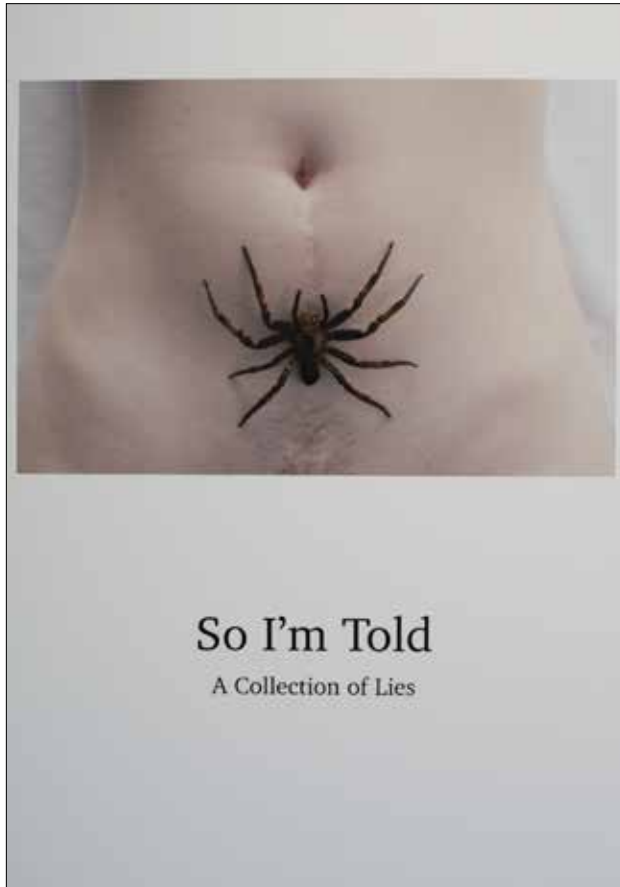
"You aren't vengeful." As scared as he was, he sounded confident in that fact.

"Wanna bet?"



Amanda Lorenz
Alyssa Von Kirkbride
charcoal, graphite, 2016

Best in Drawing I,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016



Hannah Jacobson

So I'm Told

digital print, 2016

Best in Photography,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016



"A woman who has had sex
is as unto a piece of used
chewing gum, a hamburger
half-eaten by another
person, a piece of tape that
has been stuck to a dusty
surface"



She wore a half smirk,
just enough to be convincing.
Her pants, contrary to caressing her legs, merely fell down them;
She had no one to impress.
Sitting at the bus stop pondering the Moon,
while everyone else was pondering her,
she was fearless in these tiny moments.
Watching her intimidating gait,
I'd a swore every step she took assisted the world go round.
She exuded discipline,
never exploiting those she made so desperately vulnerable.
Her eyes betrayed nothing but courage,
the kind of courage you can only know with the power of god lying just below your stomach.
We never exchanged a word.
I didn't think thank you would suffice.
Besides, she wasn't vain enough to understand.
I never got her name,
any of them.
But I knew everything I needed to.
She didn't need to be worshipped;
She wanted to be loved.
And like a one dimensional Christian,
I was only capable of the former.



Lauren Sievers
Dansk Solnedgang (Danish Sunset)
acrylic on canvas, 2016



Huong Tran
Lady

acrylic on canvas, 2015

Juror's Choice,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016

An apple is an apple.
A flaccid branch from a willow tree is just that.
I see a crack in the sidewalk,
I kneel and touch it,
I wasn't deceived.
I meticulously wipe the condensation from the bathroom mirror,
revealing someone I've known my whole life,
deliberating the apparently innate commitment we made 24 years ago.

And yet, the way she placed her bookmark,
seconds before departing the zero,
extinguished the very word commitment from my mind.
Because commitment implies effort,
of which, I would need none.

Could it be so simple?
If an apple is an apple,
and that which plunges from the sky to dampen these pages is always rain,
is an angel not always an angel?

Or do these tropes blind me,
relieving my pupils with wistful promise.
Instilling in me a sixth sense so mercurial,
a sense of hope.



I sit here,
alone with others.
All of us in relative proximity,
temporarily neglecting our infinite isolation.

Empathy is our currency,
and we barter stories and sympathy
in an attempt to perpetuate the illusion.
Maybe we don't die alone.

I shan't fret though.
For what has been more worthwhile
than the futile pursuit
to quench our lust for connection?



Lorena Aranda
Praying Figurines

floral foam, 2016

Best in Show,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016

Willie Cornelius
FOURTH
of JULY

"Guess what we're having for breakfast this morning, Baby Cole?" Sam said.

"Waffles. We always have waffles on Thursday, Sam," Baby Cole responded, thinking to himself today is the big day.

"Baby Cole, have you given any thought to what we talked about yesterday?"

"Yeah."

"Cole, salvation is a free gift from God. The only thing you have to do is accept His son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as your personal savior and ask for forgiveness for your sins and you will receive the gift of salvation and righteousness," Sam said.

"Righteousness? I can't believe what I was hearing right now. You mean to tell me if I accept Jesus as my personal savior, God will see me as righteous?" Baby Cole responded in a tone of voice filled with doubt.

"Yes, it says in the second Corinthians 5:21 'for he hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'"

"Sam, you sound fucken insane. Look at what I have done and the situation I'm in right now."

"Yes, and should I remind you that Christ was once in the same situation as you're in?"

"Yeah, but he was innocent and I'm not."

"But through the blood of Christ you can become innocent."
Sam responded in an earnest tone of voice.

Baby Cole tried to eat his breakfast, but he wasn't hungry. The only thoughts that were going through his mind were the gift of righteousness from this Jesus dude Sam so much believed in and the Fourth of July.

Baby Cole got to thinking about the Fourth of July: I know what I could have done that day. That beautiful girl I met at the train station who gave me her phone number a week before the Fourth of July. I could've called her. The way she was smiling at me after she gave me her phone number and said, "Call me." That was a sure bet. I could've asked her out and spent my Fourth of July with her.

The Fourth of July: I know what I could've done that day. I could've gone over to my brother's house. He would have been drinking and partying on the Fourth of July and when he's drunk he's a soft touch. I could've easily borrowed \$500 from him plus got drunk for free.

The Fourth of July: I know what I could've done that day. I could've taken Mike up on that offer and helped him move and made an easy \$300. It sucks to work on a holiday but that \$300 was a sure thing.

The Fourth of July: I know what I could've done. I could've just stayed in bed and watched TV all day and lounged around the house. Hell, I'm not that big on celebrating holidays anyway.

"Lunchtime," yelled Sam.

Its lunch time already, Baby Cole said to himself. Time sure flies when you're playing those 'what if' games with yourself.

"Guess what we're having for lunch, Baby Cole?" Sam said.

"Fish," Cole said indifferently, knowing that they always served fish on Thursday.

"I think I will pass on that fish today, Sam; I'm saving my appetite for dinner tonight."

"You sure, Cole?"

"Yeah. Hey, tell me more about this righteousness stuff, Sam."

"Righteousness simply means to be right with God. This is what Jesus has done for us. He has made us right with God by paying the ultimate price for our sins."

"Yeah, but I'm a convicted murderer, Sam. You know that."

"So were Moses and David and it says in the Bible God spoke to Moses face to face as a friend and David was a man after God's own heart."

"All what you're telling me makes no sense, Sam. You sound like a guy that's two cans short of a six pack"

"But it's all true."

Baby Cole lay down and decided to take a quick nap before dinner. But he couldn't sleep. He just lay there thinking about all what Sam had told him. Several hours passed.

"Dinner time," yelled Sam.

Baby Cole thought to himself, "Damn, the day is sure going by fast."

"Guess what's for dinner, Cole?"

"Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, corn on the cob, apple pie, and to wash it all down some Coca-Cola," Baby Cole replied.

"Good guess, Baby Cole," Sam said with a big grin on his face.

"I should know what's for dinner, Sam. I personally ordered it." Cole smiled back at Sam.

"Baby Cole, why? I don't understand. You're a tall good looking guy, you're intelligent, strong and I have known you for years and I know you have a good heart. Why did you have to throw your life away like this?"

"It's complicated, Sam," Baby Cole said.

"And I'm a complicated man," Sam replied.

Baby Cole stared around the six by eight foot prison cell that he'd called home for the past 15 years. A small black and white TV, a toilet, a sink, a small stainless steel mirror, a bed with a thin mattress, two sheets, a rag tag blanket and a bible.

Baby Cole looked Sam right in the eyes. "I'm about to tell you a story, Sam, I have never told anyone before," Baby Cole said. "Did you know that at one time I was the biggest drug dealer in South-Central Los Angeles?"

“Yes I heard that rumor circulating around on the prison yard.”
Sam said.

“Sam, it was unbelievable. It all happened so quickly. I went from selling dime bags of weed to selling kilos of cocaine in one year. For over ten years I ran one of the largest drug operations in South Central L.A., making over \$50,000 a day. But one day my wife went out of town for a few days to visit her sister in Minnesota and left me to watch our six month old daughter. I got a call for a 20 kilo deal. Usually I would send one of my runners to do the deal but I wanted to meet this new customer. He was a she and I was told she was fine as hell. So I went to the deal myself, leaving my six months old daughter home alone. What was supposed to have taken two hours turned into 24 hours. I lost track of time and when I got back home my child was dead; she died from dehydration. The coroner ruled her death an accident. But I knew and God knew I killed her. Well, after that day I became my best customer. I went from being a big-time drug dealer to a big-time drug user. And the rest is history, and here I am.”

“Sorry to hear that, Cole.”

“I’m right where I’m supposed to be. I should have to pay for that day and all the other wrong that I have done in my life. I can never forgive myself.”

“Baby Cole, you may not be able to forgive yourself but God can and will. It says in the Psalm 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has He (God) removed our transgressions from us. See, man judges differently than God. In man’s eyes you have big mistakes and small mistakes, you have felony and you have misdemeanor. Whether you kill someone or steal a candy bar,

it's all the same to God. There is no big sin and no small sin in God eyes; sin is sin. God is a perfect God and he will give a perfect judgment."

"Sam, I find all this hard to believe."

Sam just smiled. "Cole, just believe, the faith of a mustard seed is all that you need to receive salvation and the free gift of righteousness from God."

"I'll give it some thought, Sam," Cole responded.

"I have other inmates to feed. I'll be back later to talk to you some more. Enjoy your dinner, Cole."

"Cool."

"Damn, this chicken is to die for and this apple pie is the best," Cole thought to himself while eating his last meal. And then Sam came to mind, and Baby Cole just couldn't help but feel sorry for poor Sam. He comes to work with a big smile on his face and a song in his heart every day despite the fact that he lost his wife and two sons in a car accident. And just think: the drunk driver who killed his family only walked away from that accident with a few minor scratches. And to make matters worse, the judge only gave that drunk driver five years' probation for three counts of vehicular manslaughter. If that was me, Cole thought, I would have killed the judge and that drunken asshole that took my family away from me. Cole remembered when he gave Sam his condolences and Sam just smiled and said, "They can't come to me but one day I will be with them." Cole remembered thinking, "Those damn Christians; Sam and the rest of them are all crazy."

Right after Cole took his last bite of apple pie, he thought about his life and what was to come. He dropped to his knees and prayed and asked God to forgive him for all of his sins and ask Jesus in to come into his life. Right after he got off of his knees, an incredible peace came over him and all the hate and anger in his heart was gone. He felt love for God, love for himself and for the first time in his life love for everybody. He felt like shouting love! He sat on his bunk crying tears of joy. He also felt forgiveness for what he had done to his daughter. He felt it was okay for him to forgive himself because after he got off his knees, he knew in his heart that God had forgiven him. Soon after Sam with four other prison guards came to Cole's cell and Sam, with a long look on his face, said to Cole, "The court denied your stay of execution, Baby Cole, and the governor refused to give you clemency. I'm sorry. We will be back in 10 minutes to get you."

"The Fourth of July: I should have followed my gut feeling that day; something told me not to do it, but I needed to get high. Why did I have to pick the Fourth of July to rob that store? I knew he didn't have a gun behind that counter. But in a million years who would have thought he would reach for my gun? Why did I have to pull that trigger?" Baby Cole said all this to himself.

"It's time, Baby Cole. Cuff up," Sam said. Now Sam had seven burly prison guards with him to assist him in escorting baby Cole to the electric chair.

"Accept the Lord, Baby Cole, as your personal savior right now, because, man might not forgive you but God will. He's full of love and mercy," Sam said with urgency in his voice.

"Thanks, but no thanks," Cole replied with coldness in his voice. But under his breath and out of ear shout of the other guards he whispered to Sam, "I did."

The biggest smile came across Sam's face. One of the other prison guards looked at Sam smiling and said, "Are you glad to see him die?"

Still smiling, Sam replied, "Yes."

While they were strapping Baby Cole into the electric chair, he thought with amazement, "It's true what other convicts had told me. There are exactly 54 foot steps from my cell to the electric chair."



Cayla Cave
Album Shoe

cardboard, rubber bands, glue, record album, 2015

Best in 3D Design & Sculpture,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016

**Last
Chance
Lost**

Theresa Cole

I stared without purpose at my reflection. I couldn't muster the strength to hear the story that my lifeless eyes were screaming, so I focused on the obnoxious gold trimmed mirror. "This is something Liberace or Little Richard would have in their homes," I thought. These random thoughts permeated my mind as I sat at the vanity in full wedding day regalia. I was stunning in the designer gown and veil purchased by my mother. The gift, meticulously thought out, was the perfect fit for a wholesome church girl, such as myself. Of course the color, creamy ivory, was specifically chosen by her to represent the blemish of my non-virginity. We couldn't have the Holy Ghost-filled guests talking about that, now could we? I was drowning in the waves of pre-wedding prep. There were bridesmaids flowing from one end of the cramped dressing room to the other, moving like waves about the room. As one squeezed into her gown, another snapped pictures on a Polaroid instant camera. Someone else was complaining about not finding her shoes. Even this commotion couldn't snatch me out of the zombie-like trance of my empty reflection. I watched this typical wedding preparation scene play out through the haze of white stratus clouds, which encompassed the room, as I sat motionless. "Somebody please come talk to me. If one of you comes to me right now, I'll tell you that I don't want to do this." I willed them to my side to no avail. Time raced forward. My opportunity for escape was ticking away with each minute passed. I was contemplating running out the emergency exit door located in the back corner of the crowded room. "I could run out," I thought. Then I noticed the white sign attached to the heavy metal door. It read, "Alarm will sound when opened," but it might as well have said, "You're doomed."

I nibbled my French manicured nails and waited for the next opportunity.

Without notice, I was alone in the dressing room. I stood up and headed over to the cheaply made full-length mirror that was leaning against the wall near the front door. I had to lift the layers of satin and lace that hung from my body like an anchor, to step over the piles of clothes, sneakers, and hair care products. I looked at myself for the first time that day. Even the burden that clutched my heart like a surgical clamp couldn't keep my mouth from opening and letting out a gasp of approval. At that moment I decided to recognize how beautiful I looked. I stood there and looked into my reflection. I stared into my eyes and remembered a day that we spent at the Henry Dorly Zoo. I decided to be beautiful on that day more than two years ago. My mind traveled back two years to a day we spent at the Henry Dorly. He held my hand the entire time, as we went from exhibit to exhibit. We watched the African antelope hop across their man made habitat as the sun beat down our backs like lava. He looked into my eyes and understood me. "I'm looking for someone to enjoy my life with," he said. I was like a deer caught in the headlights of his words. "What are you saying?" I asked. "I don't want to live life by myself," he responded. Those words led us to this place. I never asked where I fit into that equation.

Now I'm standing at the entrance door of the church cathedral. Stained glass absorbed the sun and sprayed colors throughout the foyer. My last chance for escape was lost as my father wept upon seeing me. I was going to tell him that I didn't want to do it and that I didn't care how much money had been spent or if my daughter would be raised in a fatherless home. His reaction was the kibosh on such a notion. We embraced for what seemed like several minutes. I gave a nod to the coordinator who opened the heavy oak doors of the church. Full teardrops began to stream down my face as I took the first step into the chapel.

I smiled anyway.



Liad Sherer
Octopus

steel chains, steel plate, 2014

ALmost
AD
a
Jeannie Madrid

Almost-Dads don't get to brag, so I never tell anybody about how I was almost a Dad. Whenever they ask if I have kids, I don't say, "Not that I know," and laugh, "Hee-Hee-Hee," like a dirty old man. I know.

I don't drink. I am blow-dry, crackle-dry; and she, from whom had always risen humidity, is dust flowing through my fingers. I thirst for her voice's liquid warm coat and I long for the damp tenderness we shared between sheets. But her answers are short, and her eyes see I am no hero. Albertina snaps me cold sober. She is strict business when we go to the clinic. She is pregnant; I am the father. I am surprised I could do that.

On the other hand, Albertina, because she has a son, should not be surprised. I would have a baby with her because I enjoy seeing Albertina mothering. I like the kid. I like Albertina. I even love her, but she doesn't love me, and she doesn't love pregnancy. Her son is old enough to go to public school, so I go along with Albertina's choice.

On some level the choice has little to do with me, but on another level, I know I should do more. I hold back because my questions sound absurd to my own mind. I want to ask the doctor if it is twins because I am an identical twin. Is it a boy? Is it long? We are tall people. I try to stall for time.

"I'll put my guitar up for sale to pay for the abortion," I speak into her apartment's vaulted ceiling.

"You will not use my pregnancy to sell your guitar!" Her voice pierces the air.

I duck defensively but her anger leaves its echo inside my brain. I didn't know she could be madder than three hells. I am sober. Life is boring. Not drinking makes me a weak fighter because I constantly worry if I can go another round without getting drunk. Certainly I can't last until after the recommended lifetime it would take to raise a kid, or two, or three. I'm spineless. I want Albertina to pay for half, but I don't want her anger, and I wish she'd at least arrange it, but I'm afraid to say anything.

So, I call Planned Parenthood because I think they offer discounts, but they don't. I like Laminaria, seaweed, inserted in one visit to activate the process, and completed the next visit, but Albertina adamantly refuses because she wants a single visit abortion. I keep calling.

The receptionist for the doctor I finally choose asks how Albertina can be my girlfriend and I not know how old she is. This makes me remember we are virtual strangers, so I don't protest when we finally get to abortion day, and a handsome doctor makes me leave the operating room.

A nurse is witness, but I don't trust her. She could scheme with Dr. Handsome Porn Star (I'll call any man doing my old lady a porn star) to let him make love to the woman and keep the money. I don't know what goes on behind the door, but Albertina says the abortion really hurt. She also says she feels, immediately, better. I don't understand.

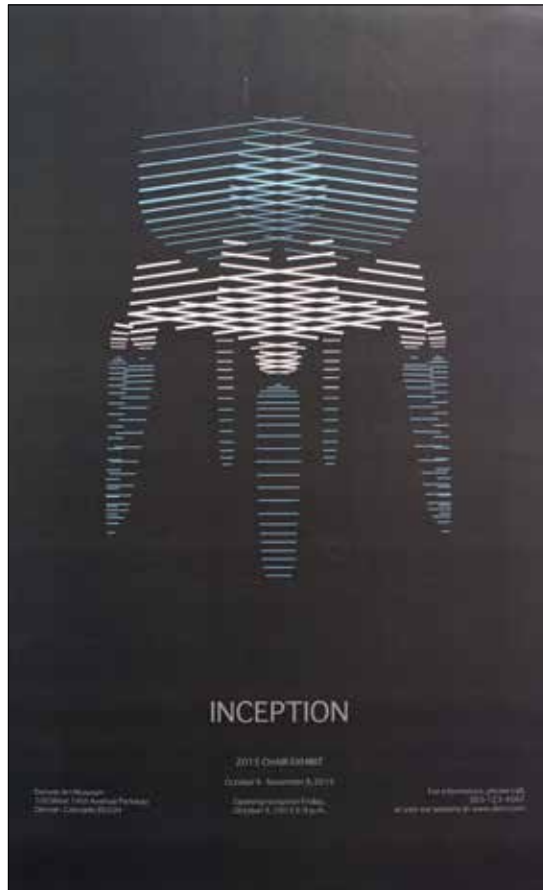
I understand less; I drink more, and she is busy with family. I am alone on the outside, cheated. I admit to myself I have fucked up. I never get another woman pregnant, but I was almost a dad.



Leon Romero
Kid in the Crown

acrylic, collage on canvas, 2015

Best in Painting I,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016



Stefanie Bednar
Inception

print, 2015

Juror's Choice,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016



Lauren Sievers
Think Pink

ink, 2016

Best in Drawing II,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016

Fools ERRAND

Kelly Kracke

I used to be an advocate for peace. Throughout my adolescence and into early adulthood I envisioned myself as the bringer of peace, on scales even naïve for a sixteen year old. The world seemed as though it would be a well-oiled machine where there was no conflict, no pain, no suffering. With absolute peace, the Earth wouldn't be our only oyster. No, the universe would be our oyster. But these endeavors were easy to embrace for an ignorant, relatively unchallenged soul like my younger self. I hadn't the experience yet to relish the non-peaceful. Back then, life was so much simpler.

Despite the overt struggles I've been through, a large majority of my life has taken place in the confines of what I will label peace. Sure, I've been through foster care, lived in relative poverty most of my life, trudged through paralyzing depression, even lost my best friend when I was nineteen. But all of these events happened within a relative vacuum. By which I mean, I was doing nothing in the way of engaging the rest of the world. In those times, I just let life happen to me, and I was completely okay with that. This is what I mean by peace. Everything was taken care of as far as I was concerned. Working at Wendy's for minimum wage barely paid for rent and booze, but then again, that's all I aspired to. When I was sixteen, I battled with the existential angst every teenager does, but I had nothing to worry about beyond that; my Mom took care of everything else while I just waited to be great. This is the vacuum. When my best friend died, I faced the most potent pain I had ever felt, but it wasn't impeding anything because at that point I was just merely drifting. It wasn't until my first day of college that I got the pleasure to meet genuine adversity.

Implicit in the word adversity is the idea of a struggle, a fight, two forces meeting, presumably one benevolent and one malicious. My vacuum of a life, this overarching peace I had known for my entire existence, met its match when I finally decided to take responsibility for myself. College was the means by which I declared war. My foe is an admirable one. It can seep into every facet of one's life, it has no shortage of sensitive intelligence on its enemy, and its range knows no bounds. Indeed, my life was peaceful until I came face to face with the very real possibility that I might fail and actually give a shit about it.

This is the war I wage every single day I wake up and every single night I slip back under my covers. Adversity cannot be considered as such when you have nothing to lose. I found this out when I realized the folly of all my previous years. When I made the deliberate choice to attend college in the hopes that I might actually make something of myself, that is when I really had something to lose. Taking an active role in life is the hardest endeavor I've ever undertaken, and after a year and a half, I'm still barely treading water. But every singular day that I keep myself afloat is significantly more valuable than a month of just letting it all pass by, not even attempting to reach out and let my fingertips slide along it as it passes. War is merely the consequence of the impediment of one entity by another. Because I was not really striving towards anything until I started college, I wasn't even able to engage in war. You can't impede that which isn't moving.

Nowadays, there's hardly a moment I don't think of the necessary steps it'll take to get into the State Department, or the upper echelons of the UNHCR, or the Governor's Mansion. Albeit, every other step is a stumble for me; still, the stumbles mean something now; they actually have weight behind them. The idea

of adversity being worth its weight in gold has been a running theme in my life as of late. When I reflect back on my life and remember how convinced I was that greatness would just come to me, all I see is wasted time. To be fair, some of this time was spent in deep contemplation on the doctrines of Buddhism. This was my first peek into the notion that suffering was something to be revered, not averted. But even then I thought armchair philosophy was going to lead me to enlightenment. This false sense of entitlement didn't start to dissolve until March 14th of 2014.

National Geographic aired a special documentary on television about life aboard the ISS. The whole production was spectacular. But near the end, they pointed the cameras out one of the ISS windows to show a sunrise from low-Earth orbit. To say this image tugged on some heartstrings would be a hyperbolic understatement. At that moment, I decided I need to, at the very least, give myself a shot at seeing that same view in person. Sitting on my Dad's couch in the basement of my Aunt and Uncle's house, I knew, probably more than I knew anything, that view would not just come to me, I had to go to it. Two months later I had my GED and I was enrolled at the Community College of Denver on my way to being an astronaut*. It wasn't long until the 18th of August, the first day of the rest of my life, dawned on me.

Even though I hadn't articulated it then, this was also the day I realized that peace was a fool's errand. This was the day I adopted a doctrine of war, a war on complacency and entitlement, on marginal living and menial goals, and most of all, on failure. Because if you're not at war, you're not facing adversity, and if you're not facing adversity, you're not moving forward.

* *My dream of being an astronaut was short-lived. I switched my major from physics to political science after my first semester.*



Justin Taylor
watchiwa choudo naini ga juuyou ka mitsukeyou toshite itu
digital print, 2016



WE'RE

**#the FUC KING
NERDS**

Matthew Carron

“Dude, Mike better not fuck this up for us.”

“I’ve known Mike since grade school and Mike may be a lot of things, but a fuck up, well, yeah, he’s a fuck up.”

“We just have to get him away from that junkie skank.”

The Fucking Weirdos, minus their singer, sat in the back of a beat up 1994 Ford Econoline van in a shitty neighborhood. The air was smoky and the light was dim and dark. The three men were all wearing leather jackets. Instead of buying new jackets, they patch up holes and tears with silver duct tape.

“Melvin, pass me another beer, dude,” Joey said.

“Joe, you gonna be able to keep a beat this show?” Melvin asked while passing him a beer.

“Fuck you. I’m a functioning drunk. Fuck it,” he said throwing his hands up. “I’ll do a bump before we get on. I’ll be fine,” Joey said. The sound of another can of beer opening echoed through the van.

“Yeah, do a bump and we’ll have to keep up with your manic drumming,” Melvin said, laughing while scratching a Bad Religion cross buster logo into his jacket.

“How do we get Dixie away from him?” Greg asked. “Knowing him for so long, he always gravitates towards the wrong person.”

“Like his mom,” said Joey, wrapping his tattooed fingers around a joint and inhaling. The three exited the van and walked into Garageland.

Garageland was named for both the Clash song and the fact that during the day it's an actual mechanics garage. It should have been named Attack Your Senses. The venue was situated a block from the dog food factory, so it smelled like shit on a hot day in India. The PA was cheap and blown so the sound pierced your ear drums. Your feet stuck to the ground, every night ended with a fight and everyone spilling their cheap beer on the floor. And the patrons couldn't bear wearing any other color than black shirts with white printed band names on them.

Garageland was out of the way, so you knew no jock cops would come around and shut down the show. It was out by the factories, where you buy drugs when your connection can't come through or you just feel like getting robbed.

Down the alley from Garageland, next to the faded blue dumpster with graffiti, sat a young throwaway couple smoking cigarettes and sharing a tall can of Pabst Blue Ribbon. They were unwashed and wearing denim jackets covered in patches that were held on by safety pins; the same could be said for their pants covering their legs. Their feet were protected by damaged combat boots. They weren't too far from the muffled sound of drums, guitars, and screaming voices pouring out of the back door of the garage.

Dixie laid her hoodie-covered head on Mike's shoulder and took a drag off of her cigarette.

"I swear right now, I'm alright," she said. She moved her bleached hair from her eyes.

"We're like that part in that song, "the dirtiest lights shine the most". I can't remember whose song it is," Mike said.

“Actually, I don’t even like that song, just that part’s cool,” he said. He finished the can of beer and threw the can onto the asphalt. “But what makes that part cool is that it’s so Clash inspired. Clash were pure. Clash was the only band that mattered.”

“Clash was fucking perfect,” Dixie said.

“I’m just thinkin’ about you slipping and falling into me,” Mike said.

“The floors at the Raven are slippery. I didn’t do it on purpose,” Dixie said. “Plus I was high, so there you go,” she said, laughing.

“Hey, what time do you start?” she said.

“I don’t know, like 15 minutes, maybe,” Mike said. “Joey’s probably fucked up again; we’ll probably only do like 4 or 5 songs,” he said.

~

Inside the venue, the band looked for their fearless leader. Melvin walked to the merch table where their friend Spaz was selling their stuff. They had two items for sale, a 5 song ep pressed onto a 7-inch record, and a black shirt with the words “FUCKING WEIRDOS” spray painted in big white letters.

“Spaz, do you know where that fucking idiot Mike is?”

“Neah, not since we got here. He left his tuner here so I’m sure he’ll be back.”

“Cool,” Melvin said.

“I think he went to get high with that blonde burn out,” Spaz said.

"Fuck, thanks dude," Melvin said. "Punk or lust, dude doesn't get it, y'know?"

"Yeah, he's probably a million miles away by now," Spaz said. "Are you gonna play that song about Mike fighting with his ex and her dad getting involved? That song is awesome."

"That's why I wanna find Mike. I wanna get the setlist down," Melvin said.

"What's that song called?" Spaz asked.

"Don't ask me. All of Mike's song titles are ripped off of other bands song titles," Melvin said, shaking his head.

"That girl is trouble," Spaz said. "And Mike likes trouble."

"All hard luck kids do," Melvin said.

~

Back at the dumpster, Dixie sat up and brushed Mike's jet black hair away from his face. "And after, we'll push off and get lost, right?" she asked as she ran her fingers through his mohawk. "Or do we have to wait 'til later?"

"Neah, we'll push off after. Just wait for me," Mike said. He held her hand. "We don't need to be like my ma. She was always lost." Mike took a drag off his cigarette. "No matter the time, she was lost."

"What's her name?" Dixie asked.

"Waste of space," he said, laughing.

"I'm serious, Mikey."

"Her name was Darla."

"I like that name," Dixie sat up and lit a cigarette. "I never knew my mom. She died when I was like 4 months old."

"That sucks. I'm sorry," Mike said.

"Love the one you have, it won't last long." Mike turned to Dixie and gave her a weird look.

"Whatever," Dixie said, pushing her hair off her face. "I honestly don't know if I can wait that long."

"C'mon, don't be greedy. You can wait."

Dixie moved to face Mike. Her face was crinkled.

"If I say I can't fucking wait, then I can't fucking wait," she said.

"Look, you can wait. Besides, I gotta find out if it's clean or if it's that shit the coppers have been lacing," he said.

"Who sold it to you? Besides, that's the news tryin' to scare people."

"Babe, like eight people are dead from a bad batch. I just gotta ask Wes where he got his from. Just wait, baby."

"Fine. Just don't be an ass about it."

"Fine," he said, throwing his hands up.

"Let's go. I gotta grab some shit from the merch table before," Mike said.

Heading into the sardine can of a venue, Mike & Dixie walked to the Fucking Weirdos merch table.

“What’s the matter?” Mike asked Dixie.

Dixie scratched her neck and arm.

“I don’t know, I itch. I probably got lice or something from the animals in here.”

“That’s fucking gross,” Mike said, shaking his head before heading to the small stage up front.

After pulling his guitar strap around his head and attempting to tune his guitar, Mike grabbed the microphone. He noticed Dixie was standing with her back to the wall, facing straight at him.

“Good evening ladies and scumbags. We are the throwaways, we’re the losers, we’re the creeps, we’re the trash they don’t fuckin’ want. We’re the FUCKING WEIRDOS!” Turning to his drummer, he started the countdown.

“One Two Fuck You!” he screamed into a shitty microphone before launching into a beautiful, out of tune and all around sloppy mess. More Misfits than Ramones. The band launched into their first song, “Rotting”. Out of the 20 or so people watching, only a few were slam dancing. After their second song, “Decycling”, a few more people were slam dancing; most were just nodding their heads to the off beat drums.

“Thank you is what we’re supposed to say after every song but fuck it,” Mike told the crowd. “This tune is, well, a bit of a rager, it’s called—”

"Isn't the Weirdos already a band?" Some jerk in the crowd shouted.

"Excuse me?" Mike asked the heckler.

"Yeah, I said isn't the Weirdos already a band name? Mr. Original."

"Well, yes the Weirdos are an older LA band, but we're the Fucking Weirdos so fuck you, wanker," Mike said, laughing. "Now, back to the program at hand. This tune is a fucking rager; it's called "It's Too Bloody Anyway". Take it away boys." Mike wasn't lying; it was a rager. Kind of like Misfits fronted by CIV from Gorilla Biscuits. Mike took the time to divert his attention from his guitar to look over the crowd. Dixie wasn't standing at the wall anymore. He looked around the room and saw that she had moved to his right but was still positioned against the wall.

In the middle of their token song about anarchy, "No Time Cards. No Managers", a fist fight broke out in the middle of the pit. The punks can sometimes police themselves, sometimes not. This was one of those times they wouldn't let two skanking assholes fuck everything up. They separated the two men fighting and the Fucking Weirdos proceeded.

"Everyone all right? Yeah?" Mike asked the crowd. "The Fucking Weiridos will not have any fucking fights at our shows," he told the scene. "Ain't nobody here care about how big your tiny pecker is." The crowd responded with laughter. He looked out to make sure Dixie was nowhere near the scuffle. She wasn't; she had moved closer to the window but still on the back wall.

"So this one's for the two Nancy's," Mike said, laughing. "So this one is a cover called "Big Mouth Small Man," he said before screaming out the countdown at the top of his lungs.

“One. Two. Three. Four.”

The punks always go crazy for Minor Threat. It’s also a good way to rope in the straight edge kids. After, Mike’s eyes searched for Dixie. “This one is for a, well, she knows. It’s called, “I Write Four Letter Words on Bathroom Stalls in Union Halls” Mike surveyed the small crowd and couldn’t find Dixie. He turned his head to his guitar knowing where she was.

~

Outside by the dumpster where she told Mike she’d wait for him, Dixie was pulling out a small black leather carrying case. When she unzipped it, she pulled out a small zip lock sandwich bag filled with a white powder, a syringe, a shitty gas station green lighter, and an unwashed spoon bent right where the spoon gets round. She spit into the spoon, then carefully poured the white powder into the spoon before lighting the bottom of the spoon. Dixie put the syringe into creamy white liquid and pulled back the plunger. She took off her belt, tied it around her arm, but before she put the needle into her arm, she stopped. She could hear Mike scream “One Two Fuck You”. She smiled behind made up black eyes.

“For some reason that guy loves me,” she said out loud before taking a drag off a cigarette butt she’d found lying on the pavement.

“But, I love him as well.”

Her attention was drawn back to the needle. Dixie pushed the needle into her arm, piercing her tattoo of a snake, pushing the plunger down, and falling back against the dumpster. Her eyes closed with bliss.

She gasped.

Dixie's eyes opened with the speed of a train.

She tried to lift her body, but it was too heavy.

She gasped again and took her last breath.

Her body leaned against the dumpster; vomit fell out of her lifeless mouth. A needle hung from her arm.

~

"Listen scumbags, you've been all right tonight. But we've got to go. Andy, our bassist, is on house arrest and has to be back by 10. Thank you. We've been the Fucking Weirdos," Mike said before leaving the stage. He walked back to the merch table and grabbed his bag.

"Johnny, you seen Dixie?" he asked the young punk selling merch.

"Not since before your set. Did you get into a fight?"

"Neah, just ain't seen her."

The rest of The Fucking Weirdos had congregated at the merch table. Mike walked away.

"Can you believe that? Holy shit. We were good." Melvin watched a small crowd gather to buy a seven inch or a shirt.

"Mike," Joey said, raising his hands, "didn't fuck up."

"Yeah, he handled that fuckin' tosser so well," Greg said.

The three young punks sat around drinking beers and congratulating each other.

Mike walked out front and put his guitar and amp into their van. Dixie was not out front with everyone else. He walked back into the venue, grabbed a beer, and walked out back. Heading down the alley, he saw Dixie's boots by the alley and headed that way.

"Babe, you missed one of best shows." He gulped back his beer and lit his cigarette.

"There was a fight, a fucking fight in the pit." He slammed back his beer. "I think we could do a proper record, yeah," he said and still got no response from Dixie.

It was dark out, but he could see that Dixie was lying against the dumpster.

"You greedy woman." He wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"You couldn't wait? Is this how our life together is going to be?" he asked.

He sat down next her body, chugged the rest of the beer and threw his cigarette to the side.

"Let's see how much you left me," he said while looking for the bag.

"Ahh, just enough." He collected the items he needed.

Mike pulled the needle from Dixie's arm, wiped away some of the dried blood. He spit into the spoon, then carefully poured the white powder into the spoon before lighting the bottom of the

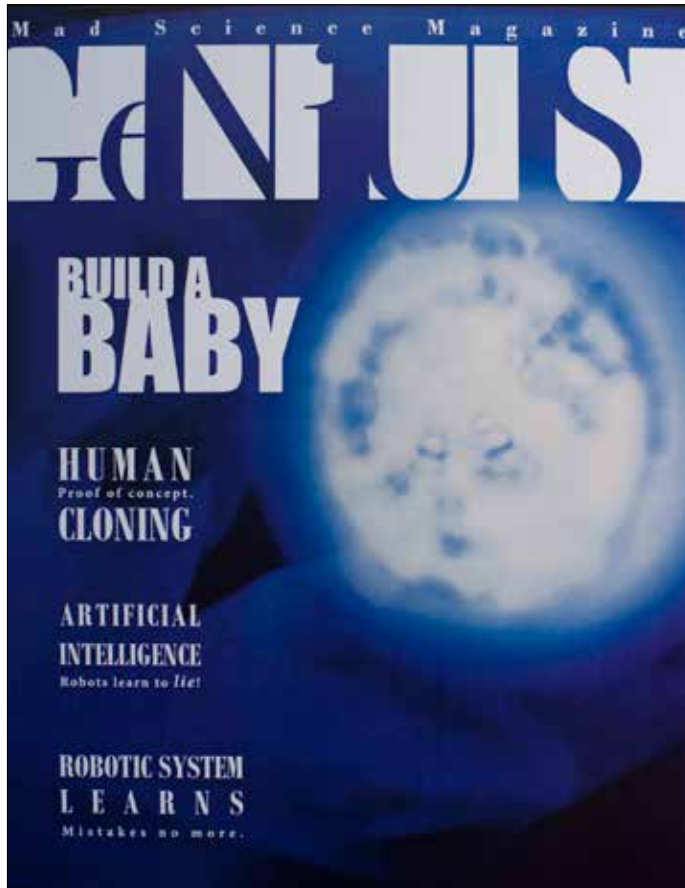
spoon. Mike put the syringe into creamy white liquid and pulled back the plunger. He took off his belt, tied it around his arm.

“You may be greedy, but I do love you,” he said sarcastically before putting the needle into his arm and pressing the plunger down.

He gasped.

His eyes shot open and his body fell back against the dumpster.

“Wwww...weird,” he barely uttered as his eyes closed.



Tania Lopez
Genius Mad Science Magazine Cover
print, 2015

Best in Graphic Design,
CCD Juried Student Art Exhibition 2016



Tania Lopez
Commander
styrofoam, 2015

Jeremy Hirtzel

SENAP

You walked by, fist clenched, jaw stern, and eyes set on me. You wanted to hit me; I could see it in your eyes as we walked past each other. The only thing stopping you was the councilor standing right behind you. All of the red lockers passed us by and I went into Freshman English where you were supposed to sit next to me and we were supposed to talk and laugh through the whole class.

We would always be doing something everyday together. We would smoke left over cigarettes that people abandoned on sidewalks or parking lots and you would always be the joker of our group. You liked to mess with all of us, Kyle, Brandon, and me, and then once you made the joke, you would smile and swipe your hand through the air at us and almost yell, "I'm just joshin ya!" and we would all chuckle even if it wasn't funny. Then we would walk back to find my cigarettes to smoke. We all made excuses why we smoked at such a young age, but the truth was that we all just thought that it was cool to blow smoke from mouths.

We got off of the bus and began walking to your house, knowing your dad wouldn't deal with you going over to my house till after we pretended to do homework up in your room. When we got there, your dad would ask us about school and we would just tell him some random thing we could recall from English class together and that was usually enough to let us escape to your room. Once there we would play around with Yugioh cards and smoke cigarettes from your "stash," that was actually just a bunch of left over cigarettes that you managed to take before your dad could throw them out. Then eventually we would get bored and go out again and walk around the neighborhood looking for cigarettes. If it was still just you and I we would go

across the street to Target and steal things from there. You would always ask to see my phone whenever someone seemed to be looking at us weird and after a few minutes you would pretend to call someone and strike up a fake conversation with someone named "Jay" and how we can't seem to find some random thing he wanted. After about five minutes of listening to this fake conversation, most people no longer were paying attention to us and we would walk in the rest room where we would begin to rip apart packaging to everything we had stuffed into our pockets while the other kept watch. Then we would walk out like we did nothing. For a while it actually worked.

Then one time while we were making our escape, we heard, "You boys find everything all right?" from behind us. I looked first and saw a security guard holding one of the empty boxes of Yugioh cards. I quickly nodded and turned back around, just wanting to get through the apparent safety of the doors. You managed to keep calm compared to me and responded with, "Yeah, we were just browsing." He never followed us out the doors, but we quickly ran as soon as we were out of sight of any windows, and we both agreed after that that we weren't going to do anything incriminating at Target any longer.

We ran up and down a hill like a bunch of fools. Once we got to the top, we would roll down. The hill was maybe six feet high and even that's being generous. We didn't care at the time what anyone nearby might have thought; we were high and just trying to have fun. Finally we calmed down and just lay there in the grass staring up at the sky and laughing at how foolish we were. Then we decided we would go back to my house, but something was wrong. You couldn't get up in your current stupor and we laughed even more at your laziness and I offered you my hand

and you proceeded to grab hold and as I tried to pull you up, you just sat there, hovering maybe an inch above ground in a fiddle position around my arm and quickly laughed and said, "Dude! This is so fun." To me it wasn't; I was the one having to hold you up, but I still laughed at how childish you were being. Then you said, "I was just joshin ya!"

We walked through the parking lot looking for cigarettes once again. Except this time Brandon was with us. None of us trusted him; he was a compulsive liar, but we still listened to him this day. He recommended that we go car hopping. At first you and I said no to his stupid idea, but eventually he tempted us. I was to be the look out. We walked through the parking lot while you and he went around jiggling the handles on cars. A surprising number of them actually weren't locked at all. Once you guys got in, you stole only small things such as cigarettes; in fact I don't recall us taking anything else. I sat back from you guys and would tell you when cars were turning towards us, but you guys only listened maybe twice. We called it a day after about an hour of this and made our way back to our neighborhood, but first you wanted to smoke a little. So we took cover behind a fence with a bunch of bushes and trees. I remember we saw cop cars twice drive by us and that's when it was obvious that someone had called them on us and so we sat there for a while. I told both of you that we should leave everything in shrubbery around us, but Brandon managed to talk you out of it and I, at the time, didn't want to be the odd one out, so I kept the cigarette pack on me and walked with you guys. A cop drove by us and that's when Brandon whispered, "Ditch your shit." As we made our way onto a hill behind Target and I threw my pack in a tree, I walked by and you guys followed suit in other bushes and trees we passed by. However, the cops were already suspicious of us for obvious

reasons and they turned on their lights and pulled over toward the curb where one cop jumped out and told us to stop. We froze and I remember Brandon saying something I couldn't make out. Then the cop asked us why we went back on top of the hill. No one else spoke up and not wanting to get in trouble, I stated, "We were going to go to Target", but by then there were three other cops around us and they asked us to sit down. After we sat down they began searching the trees and bushes where they found everything. It became very obvious to them that we were the kids that just happened to match the description of kids that were breaking into cars. We were freshmen in high school and we were being this foolish.

They took us to the police station where they called our parents. After that night it was safe to say that I was done with everything we had been doing, except smoking. You and I would still remain close friends and your dad still liked me and my mom still liked you.

We were playing a variation of bloody knuckles, where we would take a coke can and begin to karate chop it, except when it was your turn you had to hit whichever point was the highest point on the bent can; whoever bled first was out. I remember at the time you were really depressed, and you had begun cutting yourself. You were cutting yourself in front of me this time. Everyone of our "friends" at the table attempted to cheer you up, but it wouldn't do any good. Eventually they did something that made me sick and would lead to me losing contact with all of them: they turned their heads away and just decided that their fellow friend could go ahead to do this stuff in front of them and that if they didn't see it, it was fine with them. I remember looking at all of them with disgust while they began starting a new conversation with each other. I couldn't take this. "If you don't stop, I'm going to tell

someone," I said as the table fell quiet. "Go ahead," you dared me. I tried to talk you down telling you that it's not worth it and you just kept pointing at my arms, stating that I did it way before you and even though I told you I stopped, it didn't help.

After lunch we had a longer passing period than usual, so I went to the councilor. I told her everything that you had done. She asked a lot of questions: "What is he using to do this?", "Which arm?", "For how long?", "When?" etc. I felt my stomach turning, but I told myself what I was doing was right. I went to my locker, got my things for English class and I talked with Katie, the only other person who would have done something if she had lunch with us. I didn't tell her anything, but she could tell I was disturbed and so she made me laugh as we parted ways. I turned the corner and that's when I saw you. The smile instantly dropped from my face. Everything felt like it had fallen off the earth except that hallway. You walked towards me, fist clenched, jaw stern, and eyes set on me. I returned your look, and tried to keep calm. You felt betrayed, you hated me, and you were sad. All at once. I could see it all in your eyes. The only reason you would be leaving her office is if you did something like refuse to stop, or refuse to work with her. You passed by me and I went into class. I don't remember anything else about that day. I had betrayed my best friend.

As the months went by, our parents kept in contact. You were sent to a mental hospital. You hated me and wanted to hurt me and I couldn't blame you. I was the one who put you there in the first place. You began to change while you were in there. You began ask your dad to buy you darker clothing and you slowly changed into someone who knew nothing but hate. After about a year you were out, and you were living two towns over.

The doorbell rang; I got up from my video game to go answer it. As I opened the door, I jumped back a little and my heart sank. It was you. I used the door as a shield between us as I felt the anxiety welling up inside of me. I knew I should say something, anything to you, but my mind was racing a million miles an hour and the use of words escaped my grasp. I saw your dad's truck in the driveway and slightly relaxed. You spoke first. You said that you were now living with your mom two towns over and that you wanted to "hang out".

We went out and smoked a little and you stayed the night. I remember you wanted to go out, but I was against it. I maybe saw you one more time after this day.

I have no idea where you are, or even if you are alive.

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ON THE COVER

Leon Romero

Kid in the Crown (detail)

acrylic, collage on canvas, 2015

pg. 56

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