

# Knight Writers



- 2019 -

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*Knight Writers  
Anthology*

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*2019*

*Middle Georgia State University*

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## Table of Contents

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<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<i>Dr. Lorraine Dubuisson</i> .....	5
<b>Family</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>“Family”</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>Fatima El-Jeaid</i> .....	7
<b>“My Blessing”</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Amaya Smith</i> .....	8
<b>“Title”</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<i>Darci Dillard</i> .....	9
<b>Between the Lines</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>“The Beast”</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<i>Sophie Knight</i> .....	11
<b>“The Fishing Trip”</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<i>Andrew Golden</i> .....	12
<b>“Pineapples”</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<i>Jewell Allen</i> .....	13
<b>“Books are my safe place”</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<i>Lucy Wiegert</i> .....	14
<b>“A Complex Necessity”</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<i>Kate Maddox</i> .....	15
<b>“My Personal Best”</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<i>Caleb Hill</i> .....	16
<b>A Significant Sacrifice</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>“Steve... I mean Alex”</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<i>Kirsten Villarreal</i> .....	18
<b>“Time”</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<i>Lydia Belflower</i> .....	19
<b>“Do You Believe in Magic?”</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<i>Morgan Pritchett</i> .....	20
<b>Judgment</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>“Staring Eyes”</b> .....	<b>22</b>

<i>Veronica Lee</i> .....	22
<b>“The Necklace”</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<i>Hannah Hermann</i> .....	23
<b>“Corrupted Judges”</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<i>Sophie Knight</i> .....	24
<b>“The Game”</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<i>Leslie Fernandez</i> .....	25
<b>“Judgment”</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<i>Brianna Crockett</i> .....	26
<b>Noticing</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>“Washington’s Blaze”</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<i>Dustin Yearty Jr.</i> .....	28
<b>“Unfortunate Events”</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<i>Matthew Bland</i> .....	29
<b>“The Shot”</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<i>James Raleigh Hagler III</i> .....	30
<b>“Another Earth”</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<i>Trinity Bowie</i> .....	31
<b>Friendship, Love, and Feelings</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>“Friends”</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<i>Savanna Landrum</i> .....	33
<b>“Hold On”</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<i>MiShayla Brown</i> .....	34
<b>“Sticks”</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<i>JR Fordham</i> .....	35
<b>“Love”</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<i>Lucy Wiegert</i> .....	36
<b>“Friends”</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<i>Mia Crooms</i> .....	37
<b>“Diego”</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<i>Anita Lawson</i> .....	38
<b>“Far Past ‘Just Friends’”</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<i>Joni Lumley</i> .....	39
<b>“Joy is the thing with petals”</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<i>Harlie Corner</i> .....	40
<b>Index</b> .....	<b>41</b>

# Foreword

*Dr. Lorraine Dubuisson*

Knight Writers 2019 brought Bleckley County High School freshman Honors English students onto the MGA campus for a day of instruction in poetry followed by a writing marathon. These students represent the best and brightest that Bleckley County has to offer, and the English Department was happy to host these college-bound writers as they learned more about poetry, the writing process, and the opportunities MGA provides its students. MGA students Sara Kathryn Smith and Allison Warren led instructional groups at the Knight Writers Camp, and MGA students Sarah Bentley, Nikea Conyers, Heather Dudley, Jacob Durant, Brittany Ervin, Sydney Hilliard, Hashondra James, Parker Jennings, Lara Persiani, Lashonda Robinson, Raequel Sank, Sarah-Jane Sawtelle, and Allison Warren were involved in the creation of this digital anthology of BCHS student writing. These students represent the best and brightest that MGA has to offer, and they also represent MGA's commitment to experiential learning and undergraduate research.

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# *Family*

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# “Family”

*Fatima El-Jeaid*

Defining family can be a tough thing as the word “family alone is a powerful word that conjures up multiple different meanings and emotions. Some say family can be anything that involves love, others say differently. Seems like a small word to describe a big meaning though. It can mean many different things though, depending on who you are and your perspective of things. In reality though, families are not always what they seem like on the outside. Houses can hide a lot from the outside world, whether it's good or bad. In fact, families can be one of the most complicated things in people’s lives. Some are happy and together, the replaying image of a “perfect family.”

On the other hand though, some fall apart and no longer put trust within each other. The way people think of family in the modern world makes it seem as if every family has to be perfect and together. Those who don’t fit under that are eccentric or weird. Truly though, it's all a part of life. You can't control who your family is and how they function. Sometimes it's not even that you hate or dislike one another, it merely comes down to the fact that you may be either so alike someone or so different than someone that you just clash. You can't help that though, even though it may seem inequitable.

While you may think that family are just people that are blood related to you or the person you marry, it means much more than that. Family in my book is all the people around you that truly love you, care for you, and those you can trust. The ones that you can confide in when things get hard. Someone you don't even have to speak to, you can simply just be with and be comforted by their presence. The people that influence you and that you look up upon.

One’s family can be much more than the ones you share a house with, in fact some sit right before me as I write this, and I know that they'll love me no matter what. My best friends and their families, all what I consider a part of my own family. Some people don't consider it to be that way and that's okay. Sometimes though it’s just nice to have someone you can really talk to without worrying that you'll get in trouble (with your parents) or get told on (by your siblings.) So, family really is an indecisive word when it comes down to the real meaning behind it. Even through the tough times, your real family will be the ones right beside you the entire way.

# “My Blessing”

*Amaya Smith*

Growing up I had four sisters and one brother. Two out of the four of my sisters lived with me, and they were my younger sisters, Jasmine and Kiley. My brother is older than me, and his name is Julian. Together we grew up together living with only our mom. Then on my birthday my sister Jasmine and I moved to Bekah and Brett’s house, and my older brother and other sister moved in with Lora and Rob. They were members of our church and decided to take care of us since our mom could not.

Bekah and Brett had been married for around six years when we moved in, and I found it strange that they did not have any kids. I did not ask Bekah why she did not have kids until a while after. Bekah said she and Brett had been trying to have a child for some time now. Nothing worked, and she could not get pregnant, not once. I always felt bad for her, but she always told us she was blessed to have us. When she told me, I decided I would pray every night and ask God to give us a baby.

I was now 13 when something big happened. There was another family that had the same problem as us. There was four kids and one momma who could not take care of them. The two youngest kids she had Ansley, who was 1, and Colten, who was 3, came and moved in with us. I was more than excited to finally have babies in the house. I loved having Ansley and Colten, but we knew it was temporary. Ansley and Colten lived with us for one year, and then they went back to live with their mom. I could not understand. Why would God allow Bekah to finally have babies and then take them away?

The whole year after Ansley and Colten left was hard, but there were some good things that happened. We bought a beautiful house on the lake and moved in at the end of that school year. It was something exciting for everyone, and for a while it took my mind off of having a baby at our house. That is until we had at three babies born into our family. Their cuteness made me want our family to have a baby more than ever, but we knew Bekah could not have a baby. The thought of us ever having a baby almost left my mind.

In December Bekah had a doctor’s appointment. My sister and I thought it was an average doctor’s appointment until we saw Brett. They then told us Bekah was pregnant. We were so excited! I however could not wait to know what the baby was. From the start I always thought it was a boy, and we finally found out what it is. Everyone was hoping for a boy, so Brett could have a son who could carry on the Bowen name, and the baby ended up being a boy!

I am more than ready to hold Branch Elliot Bowen in my hands and watch him grow up. God surely does not disappoint. I have been praying for this baby since I was 9 years old, which is six years ago, and God was listening. His timing was different than mine, because his time was perfect. This has taught me not to make plans but to pray to God and trust he knows what he is doing, because he will give you blessings beyond what you can imagine.



# “Title”

*Darci Dillard*

Food is a word that reminds me of my family. Walking in my grandma’s house with the smell of fresh cookies lingering in the air, seeing many ear to ear grins welcoming me, squeezing my cheeks, and receiving strong bear hugs like we have not see each other in years are things that make my heart happy. When Grandpa yells dinner is ready kids, grandkids, and even the dogs run to the dinner table, take their “assigned” place, and interlock fingers with the persons at their side ready to say grace. The grandkids, my cousins and I, all laugh and snicker after the blessing because Gramps does not talk too loud, and we are on the far end of the table so all we hear is a loud “Amen.”

For most families the dinner table is normally where all the talk is but not with my family. My grandma cooks the best meals so we have no time to talk. In every direction I look someone’s mouth is always stuffed to the maximum. When we are as miserable as we can get and cannot fit another bite of that twelve layered chocolate cake into our mouth, we make our way to the living room. Around the fireplace is where the old folks are. Trying to get comfortable for their afternoon nap but are interrupted by the sounds of squeals and laughter coming from the grandkids in the back bedroom. Quiet it down back there or go play in the basement my grandpa will say. We all giggle because he knows we are all scared to go down in the basement and continue louder than before.

My family is quite small so we all have a one-on-one relationship with each other because we are always together. I have cousins that are older than me and some that are younger than me. So I guess you can call me a “middle child.” Most middle children say they feel overlooked because they in the middle of the youngest and the oldest child, but I love being in the middle because I get to experience the quality and values of life from an older and younger perspective.

When I play with my younger cousins, I reminisce on my younger days and think about how fun it was to be a kid. No worries or cares of the world. Just loving life and everyone in it. On the other hand, when I hang out with my older cousins I ponder about my future. What am I going to do with my life? Am I going to stay here in Cochran or move elsewhere? It is an intimidating thing to think about; however, I am going to grow up, get older that is just part of life. I am just thankful that I get to go through life with some of the best people at my side. Family is something I truly value because no matter what I do, what I might say, or even how I act, they will always be my family. There is nothing in this world that can cause my family not to be my family anymore. Some relatives may not be the easiest person to get along with but they will always love me and care about me forever.

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# *Between the Lines*

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# “The Beast”

*Sophie Knight*

Fear is the creature with talons,  
To tear through your emotions  
And rip apart your every dream.  
It’s merciless and rabid.

It cripples you.  
It clouds your judgment,  
Making you overanalyze the decisions you make each day.

Your hands shake,  
And your heart beats out of your chest.  
You can’t catch your breath.  
The feeling consumes you whole.

It’s there,  
In the darkness,  
Ready and waiting to pounce.  
The Beast is nearly unstoppable,  
Its weakness found deep in your heart.

We hear it whimpering  
During the times when you feel strong.  
It cowers when it is faced with courage,  
And suddenly you cannot hear it anymore

# “The Fishing Trip”

*Andrew Golden*

I have always loved fishing. I mainly fished small ponds and a few lakes. One year, on my 11th birthday my dad told me that during the summer, we were going to travel down to Florida to go deep sea fishing. I had always wanted to go deep-sea fishing but I had never had the opportunity to do so. My dad also loved fishing, but not as much as I did. I would stay up late at night and watch fishing videos on my Xbox until my mom got onto me for being up so late. I looked forward to this trip the rest of the school year. Finally one day after school let out, it was summer time!

The fishing trip was planned for late that summer, so I had to wait around two months before we would make our way down to Florida to go fishing. In the time that I had before the trip, my friend Billy and I fished this small pond down the dirt road his grandma lived down. We would hang out at his grandma's house and go fishing all day long. That is pretty much all I did leading up to the trip.

There is an idiom out there that states that there are many fish in the sea. On this one day, that phrase was not only figurative, it was literal. We were out in the ocean, fishing rods casted out. It was only a matter of three minutes until the fish started biting. It was one after another for about an hour. Then, there was a calm for about thirty minutes. All of a sudden, we see one of our rods go from looking like the letter I to looking like a C. I could tell that this was going to be the biggest fish that I had ever seen. The fish was so strong that it was pulling the boat against a current.

We spent about forty-five minutes trying to tire the fish out so that we could haul him into the boat. We could not yet tell what species the fish at the end of our rod was. All we could tell is that he was at least three times the size of our boat captain, Big John. After around an hour and a half of fighting the fish, we finally tired him out enough to reel him in and pull him into the boat. When we got him close enough to the boat to see him, all of our jaws dropped. This fish was around 13 feet long and had to weigh around 500 pounds! This was the highlight of my deep-sea fishing trip in Florida. This is the one father-son trip that I will always remember.

# “Pineapples”

*Jewell Allen*

Pineapples are rare. Well, at least pure pineapples are. Lately, it seems as if pineapples are non-existent. Joy is a pineapple. The sweetness inside that joy makes you feel and the crown it makes you feel like you're wearing, is what I mean. People will often put up protective “spikes” to make sure nobody steals their joy. Joy is also one of those things you have to receive at the right time. You also have to harvest a pineapple at the right time.

It seems to me as if people are not completely sure where joy comes from. We never really know exactly the source of where it came from, it appears out of the blue. Well, have you ever seen a pineapple tree? What about a pineapple bush? Yeah, a lot of people haven't. We just see pineapples in the store or at a vendor. We often do not see where joy comes from but enjoy it where we find it.

I miss my pineapples.

I've been writing about this topic a lot lately. I've jotted notes down about it, I've written an essay that somehow won a whole contest, yet it still puzzles my mind. Where did my pineapples go? Now and then I get a pineapple that makes my day, but my pineapples always grow legs and run away or something. I just do not understand. Other people always seem like they have their pineapples with them all the time.

I know other people do not have pineapples. I want to do something to help them. Living without a pineapple isn't good for a person's soul. The worst part about not having pineapples is the loneliness. You miss the crown and sweetness you feel inside, and you watch other people wear and feel it so long, a kind of numbness fills you. It becomes hard to recognize pure pineapples. However, we have those few seeds who enter our lives, grow pineapple bushes, trees, or whatever, and give us an endless supply of our very own pineapples.

# “Books are my safe place”

**Lucy Wiegert**

I like to read some books.  
I read in little nooks.  
It's cozy and nice,  
And worth the price  
Of not using my textbook.

Some books are long to read  
Others I read with speed.  
They are all fun  
But there is one  
A lesson I always will heed.

Books can go into your mind  
And stay for quite some time.  
Just like a movie  
Cool and groovy,  
They always can be combined.

# “A Complex Necessity”

*Kate Maddox*

A narcissistic view would say we are born, we live, we die. As someone who tries to see the best of everyone and everything, I do believe this is quite a dreary outlook. What about your hopes, dreams, and your moments in between. What about love. Now you might have taken this as I was talking about love as that “complex necessity,” but when I said hopes, dreams, and love, how much of that did you find boringly motivational as you looked at your watch and thought about what’s sitting in your fridge? Sorry, I kind of tricked you. As a society that revolves around food, you’re not to blame that your mind drifted to it as I droned on about emotions when you could be warming up last night’s leftovers. So yes, your mind drifted to food, but what really is food? Not its chemical makeup, nor its composition of proteins, lipids, and carbohydrates. No, what has food been made into, and what has it made out religions, cultures, communities, society, and world.

Food can be a celebration. With different spices and smells whirling around, clashing cultures can come together to make something new and wonderful. It is something that can bring people together in unexpected ways; a person with food passion can drive cross country through all types of neighborhoods, through the suburbs to the downtrodden in society, their interests and ideas could soon meet. A new friend can be invited over for dinner, or an elder could teach the new generation the family recipe. “Let’s grab coffee” could turn into a lifetime together and “We could meet for lunch” could be the reunion of companions who haven’t seen one another in years. A family dinner could be the only rest from the storms outside; food can be the confetti of life’s party.

Food can be forged a dark and twisted thing. While it is something we all need, some wish they could take it as a suggestion as society pressures them to look different. It could be something that tears families apart with different cultures quarreling. And hungry on the streets are those living meal by meal, wondering when we will ignorantly throw out foods that we just “don’t like” or “it just tastes weird so I don’t want it.” Fingers could be slipped into the rib ridges of the ones who don’t have access to this complex necessity.

Yet still we cherish this complex necessity. We fly to far away countries to feed the malnourished and find new love. We laugh and giggle at the top of the Ferris wheel as dad sneaks a bite of our cotton candy. Chocolates are delivered, and old love can feel young and wistful again. Your older sister takes you to get an ice cream as you two sit in the parking lot sweaty and happy from the summer heat. It is the mortar for existence. Food, which at first glance could just be taken as a fundamental part of life, is so many different feelings and memories for everyone making it the complex necessity.

# “My Personal Best”

*Caleb Hill*

I have always enjoyed being outdoors. This is probably a good thing because my dad owns a farm and I have spent most of my summer days working outside. That is not the only thing that I do outside, from baseball and church softball to work to hunting I am outside, but one of my all-time favorites is largemouth bass fishing.

I mostly fish in our ponds on the farm. What I do is pond hop that is where you go from pond to pond fishing. I have two favorite ponds out of the 15 we have. One where you catch a lot of small bass and another where you catch fewer but bigger ones. There was this one time when I caught my personal best in the second pond I was talking about. It was a sunny summer day, and it was getting late so I decide to go and do a little fishing I put my 16 foot boat powered by a 46 horsepower trolling motor in the pond. The pond is about 25 acres.

It was really going slow nothing was even hitting my bait. As I started to come in to go home I told myself only a few more cast so I tossed my junebug colored (blue with black specks) lizard on the tip of a point where some lily pads and grown up. The lizard landed on the top of a pad so I pulled slightly and it slipped off and sunk to the bottom. As it hit the bottom I felt a slight jerk. So I tightened up the slack in my line and jerked back real hard to set the hook if it was a fish. It was indeed a fish. He started stripping line out of my reel so I tightened up my drag. I started reeling in when he got tired and quit stripping line out. That is when he jumped out the water trying to spit the hook. I kept the line tight so he wouldn't spit it.

I got him close to the boat but he was too big to pole flip him so I reached down in the water and grabbed him by the mouth. He jerked one time and then I opened up his mouth and brought him out the water. I reached under the seat to get the scale to measure him. My adrenaline rush gone now, I hung him on the hook of the scale. The scale was sitting at 8 pounds and 3 ounces I locked that in my head so I would never forget. I set him gently back in the water and waited till he was ready to go and let him swim free.



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*A Significant Sacrifice*

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# “Steve... I mean Alex”

*Kirsten Villarreal*

We have all heard of the show Jeopardy and if you haven't well I hate to tell people who they can and can't be but, you are missing out. However, if you do not know about this show it is a game show trivia but instead of a question being asked and answering with the answer, the answer is given and you must answer with the question. In the end whoever has the most points goes to the next round or is rewarded however much money they have won. Jeopardy has been around since 1964, I bet if you were to ask your grandparents maybe even your great grandparents what the first show they remember watching on one of those black and white TVs they would say jeopardy. We would all know who the Jeopardy show host is by a picture and the hosts who's name I thought was Steve or something along those lines, is actually Alex Trebek, I was way off. Alex Trebek has been the show host of Jeopardy for 35 years now. On March 6, 2019 Alex Trebek announced that he had been diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. He also said and I quote "Now, normally, the prognosis for this is not very encouraging, but I'm going to fight this... I plan to beat the low survival rate statistics for this disease," The life span after being diagnosed with this type of cancer is usually only a few weeks. With that being said I have a very strong feeling that he will beat the cancer and live because if he does die then who will be the Jeopardy show host? Even if they did find another host to replace him it just would not be the same. Plus so many people love this show. So within a few weeks we will all find out if my strong feeling was right or not.

Keep fighting Steve... I mean Alex.

# “Time”

*Lydia Bellflower*

If you think about it, everything on Earth revolves around time, whether it being past, present, or future. Time is an understated element of our lives that we so rarely appreciate. There are a few overrated phrases dealing with time, for example, time is limited, spend your time wisely, time is precious, etc. We tend to overuse these sayings and the meaning seems pointless, but I find them to be absolutely true.

The sad truth is that we always wish our “precious” time away without realizing what we are saying. What I notice the most during school is peers saying they’re ready for the class or day to be over with. These are the times you should make your memories, what you look back on when you are older. Enjoy your journey of life. Time will fly by so quickly without you realizing it, then you begin wishing time back, to slow down, or stop. We all wish that we could go back to a certain day, month, year, etc. Unfortunately, that can’t happen and that I know of, nobody has made a successful time machine yet.

Not to sound dull, but from the moment our lives begin, the countdown starts. God sets everyone a “timer” differently, yet none of us know how long it is set for. This is why you should call your grandparents, go spend time with your friends you haven’t seen in a while, or even helping your brother out with a project. As I mentioned earlier, everyone’s “timer” is set differently, so you never know if your shot at one of these moments may be your last shot.

From experience, I found out the harder way that you never know if it’s your last time seeing someone. Of course I wished to go back to the last time I saw them and hug them a little bit longer, but I realized something very important. If you spend quality time with someone, you’ll have something to smile about one day when they’re gone. You can think of all of your good times, conversations, laughs, and memories you had with them.

My last point is that technology is a great time killer. Technology is great, but it can be unfortunate in many ways. From the many distractions, games, and social media, technology steals your time and memories you could be making. When we are bored, we’ll take out our phones just to pass the time. When you have nothing to do is when you should be doing all the things I mentioned earlier, like visiting others, helping out, etc. Something that I’ve noticed among people today is that they are simply glued to their devices. One day I was eating out with my family and I saw a girl having lunch with her grandparents. She wasn’t spending any time at all with them, instead she was on her phone paying no attention at all to them. I did feel bad for her grandparents, but I felt even worse because the girl didn’t realize how blessed she was for having that time to spend with her grandparents. I can’t even explain how much I wish I could have lunch with my grandparents again, but I know that I made the most of my time with them and listened to all their stories they told me many times.

So, will you fulfill the time God has blessed you with? When it all comes down to it, will you get the best of time or will time get the best of you?

# “Do You Believe in Magic?”

*Morgan Pritchett*

Do you believe in magic? I can tell you that I do. My name is Randal Smith and I *can* do magic. For example *poof* now you don't have on any socks. Obviously I'm kidding. Please tell me you didn't check. But no I am serious I can do magic. I did not notice it at first it was just subtle things. Whenever I was little and I would get mad and throw things I would throw them so hard then never be able to find them again. Another instance is animals always seemed to do what I say. I would tell my cat to fetch and he did. Everyone found it really weird, and honestly I can't blame them. My favorite memory is when I went to the Atlanta zoo when I was five and yelled come out of your cage and dance to the penguins. Sure enough they tried their hardest to get out. They were also dancing while they tried to escape, I guess I did not make it clear enough I wanted them to escape first.

But now I just use my magic for good. But I am NOT a superhero! I do not even fight crime I will just help random people. For example if I see a homeless person, ten-thousand dollar might just somehow fall out of a window on their lap, or someone loses their pet I may just happen to find it. Nothing to big. Like I said I am not a superhero. No one knows about my powers except for me. I would like to keep it that way. If even one person finds out they will always come up to me like a celebrity, do this, do that, can I get just one-hundred dollars?

Today I saw a homeless man looking for his hat. I asked him why it was so important to which he replied, "It has all my money in it. It had 10 dollars and that was supposed to be my food money today." I decided that I was going to give him a new hat and one-thousand dollars instead of ten. He refused my money. He told me that he did not want my money and that he had worked for the ten dollars he had. I started to get frustrated because I was trying to be nice and this man is refusing my gesture. We began to argue, and of course people can't mind their business so they crowd around. Guess who the bad guy is. It's me! There would be no way for me to look like a good guy. I began to get frustrated and I accidentally yelled at the people to never speak again and to leave. That was the first time I have controlled humans. Someone far away got it all on camera and posted the video. This was the first time people have ever discovered that I have powers.

Anytime I went out in public people swarmed me either asking for things or insulting me for arguing with a homeless man and making it to where those innocent people could no longer talk. See they don't understand I am not the bad guy. I did not do that on purpose. "And scene, I need you to play the victim card a little harder please. Make the viewer sympathize with you and make *them* believe you are the victim. Start over!"

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# *Judgment*

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# “Staring Eyes”

*Veronica Lee*

Judgment is the piercing look someone gives you when you may not be doing anything at all. It has the feeling that you will never really belong, even though you knew you never would. Judgment is also something that will never leave because it is part of humankind. It is instinct to have certain judgments on what types of people you hang around or the activities you do every day. This is something that everyone should have until it tells you what you cannot be or how you could always be better even though you are your true self.

Feeling like you will never belong has always been a factor in how people act. Dr. Seuss said “Those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind.” I believe true friends do not care about your quirks. They know that you make a difference in their lives by not being just like everyone else; they do not try to change you. But when they do it is for the better, making you more open-minded or getting you out of your comfort zone. True friends should make you feel like you are on top of the world even when you are at the worst moments in your life. They lift you up so you are not ashamed to be you. They let you be the you that wears what you want, the you where words do not make you feel damaged, and most of all the you that is proud to be in your own skin.

We all know we judge the people around us. Maybe not intentionally, but out of our human habits. Walt Whitman stated, “Be curious, not judgmental.” which means you need to get to know the person before you have an opinion of them. You can always try to think positive about the people around you by finding the best in them. Always strive to make someone else's life better and picking them up when they are down. You do not know what happened to them last week or a couple of minutes ago, you do not know their life story. You do not need to be those glaring staring eyes making them feel worthless because we all know what that feels like.

# “The Necklace”

*Hannah Hermann*

There once was a girl named Lucy who lived in a town called Judgment. Lucy was the type of girl everyone wanted to be friends with. She was happy, playful, nice, and loving. Lucy had friends named Anita and Leslie. She loved her friends for their personalities. Lucy and her friends had experienced many adventures in their time of friendship. The townsfolk claimed that the friend group could find trouble in the calmest of seas. The girls would laugh and say, “The trouble always finds us.” When the girls were not solving mysteries, they would often climb trees and hang out at the beach. One day the girls were at the beach when Lucy saw something shine towards the town lighthouse. She headed towards the lighthouse and called out to her friends. The girls were excited because they knew a mystery was about to be upon them.

The girls approached the object and were perplexed when they saw what it was. Anita went to pick it up, however Lucy blocked her path and stated, “No one is going to touch it.”

Anita, who was confused, stated, “It’s just a necklace.”

Leslie responded with, “Now Anita, you know that things may not always be what they seem.” The girls, who were very curious, circled the necklace in awe. It had a very fine chain and a pendant that looked like it belonged around a queen’s neck. The pendant was a deep purple merlot diamond encrusted with smaller diamonds all around the edges. The girls were certain of one thing; the necklace was far from where it belonged.

The girls were all pondering what to do, when all of a sudden, they saw a group of men nearing their spot. Leslie grabbed the necklace and the girls ran as fast as they could back to town. The girls all knew who to go to; after all, this wasn’t their first rodeo. Leslie said, “Sheriff, we found this necklace out on the beach and men were coming for it.” Anita chimed in, “We couldn’t just leave it, I bet those men are thieves!”

“Let me see it girls,” the sheriff said. The sheriff examined the necklace and was in awe. The sheriff knew this wasn’t his department so he called the local antique dealer to come over. The antique dealer was very excited and rushed over to the sheriff’s department. The antique dealer took one look at the necklace and stated, “You found this on the beach!”

“Yeah, do you know what it is?” asked Lucy.

“This young lady is the long-lost necklace of Celeste Stuart!” the dealer replied in an awed manner.

Lucy, the history lover, asked, “The princess who vanished in the fifteenth century after her castle was ransacked?”

“Yes,” the dealer exclaimed.

The girls helped the sheriff catch the thieves who stole the necklace from its owner. The girls tracked down the owner and invited her to town to get her necklace. The family was happy to tell the story of Celeste. It turns out Celeste escaped from the castle and fell in love with the noble who helped her escape. The princess cherished the necklace, which was given to her by her parents on her eighteenth birthday. The family was hosting their annual gala when the thieves struck. The family made a hefty donation to the town’s sheriff department and headed home. Lucy and her friends were happy for the memories they had received and were ready for the next adventure!

# “Corrupted Judges”

*Sophie Knight*

The trees do not judge.  
Their lives are spent focusing on  
themselves,  
Growing and thriving.  
They share the sunlight and the soil,  
And, together, they live.

So why in our lives should we judge?  
The leaves do not judge one another  
For falling off the branch and floating away.

We have become the corrupted judges of  
those who are different,  
Those who break off the given path  
Do not replicate the mistakes of others,  
Or try to blend in.

They should be free, celebrated.  
For they have broken the chains, which  
once held them back.  
You cannot help but watch with envy,  
As they conquer the feat, which daunts you.  
They possess more courage than the people  
who follow the obvious route.

You see,  
We cannot choose who we are.  
Instead we must find this deep in our  
hearts.

But if what we find makes others the object  
of scorn,  
It is we who have been tainted by the  
devious nature of society.

The envy we feel towards others sparks  
hatred in our hearts,  
A poisonous, toxic substance that is hard to  
escape.  
We begin to judge them,  
As if we have the right to do so.  
The jealousy distorts our vision,  
And the courage of others amazes us.

But we must remind ourselves of the water,  
The trees only compliment the water.  
For it shines brightly,  
In a different way.

We should love one another,  
Just as the trees love the water,  
And their branches provide shade.  
The roots of the trees taking in the water,  
As they help one another grow.  
Of which the trees are not jealous.  
The water glistens and shines, sparkling in a  
serene manner.



# “The Game”

*Leslie Fernandez*

Judgment  
Judgment, once in the face of it you'll never  
leave  
It's something that can never be avoided  
It can be a cruel and harsh thing  
But if you're lucky enough, not that  
damaging  
It comes in all forms  
Be it if they talk about your clothing,  
Or about your personality  
Worst of all, if they judge all of you  
It's like standing in front of an audience,  
But instead of the audience  
It's the face of judgment  
This thing that is being faced is like a test  
Just a simple test  
A simple test that can leave you lifeless  
Just four Rules and you pass  
Rules:  
Look Presentable  
Always be prepared, you never know when  
they'll judge  
Be confident  
Last rule, this last rule that I tell you is the  
most important one out of all of them  
One that will always help you win this  
horrid game  
And by never, I mean never  
no matter what you do just don't do it

Never look them in the eyes  
Once over with, you will know if you passed  
or not by the feeling of their gaze on you  
If you pass may I wish you the best of luck  
But if you were not good enough  
May the Gods have mercy on you  
They live by their motto  
Once you've failed, it'll ring in your head  
and forever stay there  
“Once a failure, always a failure,” they say  
Not caring about one's feelings  
Just going along  
But all of this torture for the excitement?  
Or the fun?  
All of this for a game of horror?  
A game that was never meant to be  
A game that leaves you doomed for the rest  
of your life  
Thinking about what you did wrong  
Leaving you miserable, because you were  
not perfect  
That's how the game work  
This horrid game of judgment  
I warn you,  
A fair warning,  
that you never play this game  
I hope that you never as well  
Never play this game  
This game that was never meant to be.

# “Judgment”

*Brianna Crockett*

Lillian is a young student at Middle Georgia State University, it only being her second year. She was a cheerleader for the football team the previous year, but decided she'd rather watch from the bleachers instead; she had a loving family consisting of her mother, father, and younger brother. She was not the most popular girl, though she sometimes acted like it, and had some good friends, she was an all-around pretty well-off person.

Lillian was making her way to Memorial Hall, but she felt the eyes of other students watching her as she walked. She shook the feeling off as she never really cared about the opinion of others when it came to how they felt about her. Lillian was approaching the stairs when she noticed that Luna was sitting there, writing, alone as usual. Luna was a freshman at the college and never really fit in. Her parents had died in a car crash a week after she got her acceptance letter, her older brother attended Duke University in North Carolina and didn't have the time to contact her, not even through text. Her grandparents despised her, believing that she should have died in the crash, not their kids, and blamed Luna for it. Luna had no friends at the school and was a rather shy and closed off person; she only ever talked to her friend Kai, but that was rare and usually off the school campus. The anniversary of her parents' death was coming up, and Lillian could see how upset Luna looked. Lillian looked at Luna with glistening eyes, but her eyes were not glistening with tears, but with mischief. Lillian walked over to Luna, outstretching her arm to pull Luna up, only to shove her down, hard, back onto the steps. Luna's things went flying everywhere, and students around them stopped to see what had happened. Lillian took this opportunity to make a scene,

“Maybe your grandparents are right! You should have died in that crash. Then you wouldn't be here, so scram outta my walking space you little freak! Everyone despises you, your family, the students at this school, and me especially.”

Tears built up behind Luna's eyes, and she broke with those final words. “You think you're the queen bee, that you can run this school and everyone in it. I know I deserved to die, I want to be with my mom and dad too, ok? Stop acting like you can use my past against me, you know nothing about me, so stop acting like it. I've done nothing to you, you judgmental little brat!” Luna stormed off, tears running down her face like a dam opened behind her eyes, giving a release to the pent up anger and pain she'd hid. Lillian stood, fuming while playing back what had just happened, she wanted to die, a lame excuse to make Lillian look like the bad guy. Students resumed their normal activities, acting as though the entire scene had never even happened, but one girl was frozen to the ground. Her name is Frieda, and not much is known about her other than what she had done that day. She found the ability to move again and ran off after Luna. To this day no one knows what happened between the two girls, but Luna showed up the next day, and the day after that, and was finally acting like herself again. Maybe Frieda was the friend Luna never had, but needed so bad.

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*Noticing*

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# “Washington’s Blaze”

*Dustin Yearty Jr.*

It was beautiful this time of the year. In the evening, the White House was outlined by a beautiful violet and tangerine sunset. Old Glory waved proudly on the lawn. Now, our flag lies on dead grass and a pile of rubble. Ever since 2021, at least. We tried to reason with the North Koreans. But they rarely listen to words. And in turn launched a missile directly on the capital. They took this opportunity to invade. Since the strike caused an EMP and disabled all electronics and communications, we could only allow them to. We fought in D.C. for 3 years. Their platoons started shrinking, but in turned gained strength. It was the final showdown, however, that these Norks showed us all they had. Casualties on both sides were measured in millions. But the outcome showed me our men did not die in vain.

We circled the Washington Monument, which was more like the Washington Boulder due to a helicopter attack. We were facing the last battalion in the area, but they were the strongest. All of their machine gunners and RPGs were members. Just as I finished my directions, the rubble of the monument shook. I was confused, but then I heard the tank. And the Norks. And the bullets. I yelled for everyone to run to a nearby hotel where we had a stash of heavy weapons. Bullets flew past us like hawks. Luckily their tank’s machine gun jammed, as it fell quiet. We took this moment to thank Kim for being cheap. Once inside the hotel, I grabbed my rifle. I looked down my sight and looked for a target. There was none. Fear was the only emotion filling my brain. Not a single soul lay beyond my barrel. Just as I started to take deep breaths to calm myself, however, when the tank I heard earlier climbed over the rubble of the monument and rolled right towards us. It was a T-62M, a metal monster that could destroy a platoon in less than 5 seconds. And it was heading our way.

I tried looking for a rocket launcher, but there was no ammunition. I was running out of time. The tank had already fired a smoke grenade to conceal its path. I looked down at my chest to check my ammunition. My eyes widened. I had a full bandolier of frag grenades. I knew right then what I must do. I sprinted into the smoke. I could hear yells of disagreement of my actions from my squad, before they agreed to give me covering fire. I walked slowly into the gas, my hand outstretched so I could feel my way around. I felt something at last. A long metal tube. My heart raced, for I was feeling the 115 mm cannon of the tank. I was at my objective. I reached for my bandolier, when I suddenly rose in the air. The crew knew I was there and raised their cannon to catch me off guard. I had to hurry. I grabbed the frags and slid them into the smoothbore cannon. While grabbing one, I pulled all 7 pins simultaneously. The clock was ticking. I dropped and booked it back to where I came from. From inside, I heard Norks panicking and trying to escape. Once out of the smoke, I was jerked forward from the blast. As I was laying on the ground, still dazed, a shadow emerged from the smoke. I pulled out my pistol and aimed. It was a Korean General. He was surrendering. It was over.

Finally.

# “Unfortunate Events”

*Matthew Bland*

One day when I woke up my mom was yelling at me and telling me to hurry up and get dressed. I was confused at first, but then I remembered that I had a baseball game that day. My mom then told me that I had overslept. I was really worried. I could not be late to this game. It was a really big game, and our coaches were strict about what time you showed up. I got out of bed and put on my baseball clothes. I only had 10 more minutes to get ready. This was not enough time because I still wanted to eat before I left. I skipped some of my regular morning routines. I went and ate a muffin really fast. I still had three minutes to spare. I used these three minutes to make sure I had all of my gear.

When I thought I was ready I headed for the field. It was not a long drive for me, five minutes at the most. I looked at the clock. I still had seven minutes until I had to be there, so unless there was a lot of traffic I would be there in plenty of time. There was no traffic, but unfortunately for me there was a drunk driver on the roads. I was about one minute away when the drunk driver swerved into my lane causing me to run off into the ditch. I had a wreck only hours before the biggest game of my high school career. I was devastated. I did not think I was severely injured which was a good thing, but there was no way that I was going to make it to the game. My right knee was hurting and I felt like I had a concussion. I called my mom and she came to take me to the hospital. When we got there the doctor said that I did have a concussion.

I felt so bad because I could not make it to the game. The whole time I was at the hospital I was thinking about the game. After a while my mom got a text message that said my team had won. It made me feel a lot better. I had been in the hospital for 4 hours now. I was almost asleep when the whole team walked in my room. This made me feel really good because I knew the team cared about me.

# “The Shot”

*James Raleigh Hagler 999*

Ten minutes left in the game and we were down by 17. For the NCAA basketball championship, a lot was at stake on and off the court. One I had the only perfect bracket in the world and if we won I would get a lot of money, and my fourth championship was on the line. We were playing Duke for the championship with the best players I have ever played, but my Liberty Flames have the best to ever play.

We started back and I got the ball and drove in to score now down by 15. When they started to drive down the middle my teammate Austin blocked the ball, I grabbed it and shot a wide open three and got fouled. I made the free-throw, and got back on defense. They drove down the middle and got a layup, but I got down the court and passed it out to the wide open man for another open three, now we were down by 8.

Duke called a timeout to stop our hot streak, but I knew that was not going to stop us. When I was sitting down I saw the stats, and I had 53 points, 18 assists, 9 rebounds, and 8 blocks. You would think we were winning with that stat line, but we were down. I told Austin to get open and get back on defense as quick as possible, there was only five minutes left in the game.

Duke has the ball and was trying to take a three, but I jumped up and blocked to down the court to where I got it and passed it out to Austin for the three. He got it, we were down by 5. They went right back down trying for a layup and missed it I got the rebound. I passed it up court to Austin for a flashy dunk, down by 3. They got the ball drove for another layup I just tip it for my tenth block of the game. Austin got the ball and we ran down the court he passed it to me for a three, swish, the game was tied. With only a minute to go we were on a 19 to 2 run.

They had the ball going back down the court. They drove to the basket and made a layup, but the wasted 30 seconds. Austin got the ball and went to mid court they had him locked up. He passed it to Drew our power forward and he passed it to me. There was ten seconds on the clock when I got the ball, and the crowd was on their feet. I stood there dribbling for five of those ten seconds, and I did a little step back. The defender fell I looked at him and shot, and as I shot the wide open three the crowd went silent. Swish, the greatest sound of I ever heard, and the crowd went crazy, so did my team. I was living the dream, and nothing could stop me now.

A few months later it was draft day and the Atlanta Hawks had the first two picks in the first round. Me and Austin both watch the draft that night and saw that I was the first overall pick which I knew because they called me then Austin got the call from the Atlanta Hawks. We were going to be teammates in the NBA. It was our dream come true, from little kid to grown men making millions of dollars.

# “Another Earth”

*Trinity Bowie*

You see, I am not from this world. I am from a place, far, away, in a small galaxy about three thousand light-years from Earth. In this galaxy there is only one planet, called Happily Ever After. Well it is exactly as it sounds. The galaxy is small because the minds of the people are small and with no knowledge of how the universe actually works. I tried to teach them but they simply don't get it. They think I'm crazy but I'm here now aren't I? In another galaxy, on another planet telling you of my adventure, but to be completely honest, my story doesn't start with me.

My journey began in an old barn. Where a man named Julian met a farm girl.

“Who are you and where did you come from?” Asked this small farm girl who seemed very unfit to work a farm.

“I am from... up the road,” he replied, “and I wish to see the owner of this house.”

“You can find him passed out on the couch probably.”

“Well, I'll ask you then. Do you happen to have a car that I can borrow?”

“A what?” The girl said tilting her head to look at the door.

“A car. You know, it takes you places quicker than walking, runs on fuel.”

“Sounds like some crap old Merta would have in her shop.” She sounded annoyed. “Listen Mr. whatever your name is...”

“It's Julian.”

“Thanks. Mr. Julian. I have so much work to do and it is getting real late, so if you don't mind, I would like it if you could leave now, please.”

“Could you at least point me in the direction of this Merta you say has a car?”

“Um, sure. Follow that street out there till you find an angry mob. Good day.”

Meanwhile, on the other side of the town, I was slaving away, when the loudest ruckus started up outside. All kinds of town people were banging on my door and shouting. They did that a lot at that time of day. I was at the prime of my inventing when a rock came hurling through my window and immense speeds and I ducked for cover. The nerve these people must have. They think I'm crazy and need to die. More rocks came hurtling and bashing my things, but as the rocks became too much of a mercy for me, they threw lit torches instead. My things had caught fire. I rushed to find things I needed and put them safely in the alley behind my shop. The fire began an uproar almost louder than the crowd. They had no intention of giving me a fair trial for my “crimes.” They were out for blood.

I stumbled out of my burning building to find two young adults standing there.

They told me how they had met in a barn and the young man had set out to find me. He of course did not know how to get to my humble abode and got lost on the way. The girl, though hesitant to leave her farm, went to help him after a while. The young man, who I learned was named Julian, seemed to like my gadgets. The girl was not amused. She was obviously from around the town.

Long story short Julian needed my help to get back home and the girl, who finally told me her name was Sam, decided that she liked Earth better than Happily Ever After. She stayed and, ironically enough, lived happily ever after and so did I.

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*Friendship, Love, and  
Feelings*

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# “Friends”

*Savanna Landrum*

Amelia and her friends love to go on adventures. They often stop at restaurants because Amelia is always hungry. Gary always pays for Amelia’s food, since he is her boyfriend. Some of her other friends bring their significant other too. Anna brings her boyfriend Cody and Diego brings his girlfriend Ryan.

Brycen is always taking pictures to post on Instagram. Diego is always joking around with Ryan. Ryan gets mad and walks off and then Diego chases after her. Cody always makes Anna laugh so much, she can’t eat her food, so Amelia steals it. Gary then steals Amelia’s food to make her mad. Amelia then hits Gary because Amelia loves her food and hates it when people take it. Anna always orders chicken strips even though these restaurants carry other food that she loves. Hanna is always telling Anna to order something different, but she never listens.

Lucile and Les just hang back and enjoy the show. Les sometimes makes funny comments to the things Hanna says. Hanna, laughing, gets mad at her. Lucile does not like drama so she often asks her friends to hush. They never listen to her, even though they probably should.

Once they leave the restaurant, they go back to their adventure. On this day, they went to a theme park. Anna and Cody went to go ride the biggest roller coaster there. Brycen took out his phone to take pictures. Amelia took Gary to her favorite food stand, the one with the cheese fry buckets. Gary ended up buying her one, of course. Hanna and Lucile went to check out the animals. Les, Diego, and Ryan started playing tag. They all found something to do.

Amelia ate her fries and then called Anna to see where her and Cody went, since they had just ran off.

“Hey, where are you?” Amelia asked.

“We are about to ride this roller coaster.” Anna said.

“Ok, well have fun.” Amelia said as Anna hung up.

Brycen found Amelia and Gary and hung out with them for a while. Anna and Cody met up with them after they got off the roller coaster. Anna, of course, showed them the picture she took of her and Cody. Cody then rolled his eyes because he did not want her to post it, but she did anyway. Gary started picking on Brycen for not having a girlfriend. Brycen told Gary that he didn’t have time for one. Lucile and Hanna came and showed them pictures of the animals. Cody eyes shot up when he saw the picture of the horse.

“Anna, come with me to see the horses.” Cody said.

“Why?” asked Anna.

“Because I like horses.”

“Oh my gosh, Cody. Ok, I’m coming.”

Cody and Anna ran off to see the horses. Amelia had the great idea to go find Les, Diego, and Ryan, so they took off to find them.

They were about to give up when they heard Les yell their names. They all were tired, so they decided to head home. They met up with Cody and Anna at the exit, do they all walked to the dim parking lot. Cody and Anna got in his truck. Brycen hopped into the back so he could pick on Cody. Gary and Amelia got in his truck. Les, Diego, and Ryan jumped in Ryan’s car. Lucile and Hanna got in Lucile’s car. They met up at Chick-Fil-A and ate and then they got back into their vehicles and went home.

# “Hold On”

*MiShayla Brown*

Mean girls take a look  
They snicker and laugh  
She tucks her hair behind her ears  
And puts her head down  
Avoiding eye contact at all cost  
This is her life  
It has become routine  
But it doesn't make it easier  
The girls who once were her friends  
Now stay away  
Scared of associating with the “freakshow”  
Her mom doesn't get it  
Her dad is not around  
She has no one to tell  
No one with whom to vent  
Just the judging eyes of stuck up girls  
At first she tried to not let it bother her  
She ignored them thinking they would stop  
But they didn't  
They kept on  
And somehow she kept going  
But now she feels herself caving  
Falling under the pressure of their mean  
words  
A mean comment equals a part of her heart

She knows she can't live like this forever  
What is she going to do when there is no  
part of her heart left?  
She has ideas but she pushes them away  
Hold on she tells herself  
Hold on  
Then one day a new guy shows up at school  
He looks at her  
She looks away  
She figures his eyes are going to hold  
judgment like the rest  
But they don't  
He walks over to her  
She looks up  
“What's your name?” he asked  
And just like that she felt a spark inside her  
again  
That was the start of something beautiful  
The building of friendship  
And the rebuilding of self-love  
And at that moment  
She had never been more thankful that she  
held on

# “Sticks”

*JR Fordham*

Today was the big game. We were playing against a really good team. We were going into the game after losing last week to a good team that this team had already beat. We could tell that this team had a lot of confidence coming in since they were the only undefeated team in the region. We had nothing to lose so we came out fired up and ready to play the great game of baseball. In the first inning we came up to bat and we scored one run after I hit a single and Conner hit a double to move me around to score. They ended up striking out the next three batters and it was our turn to go into the field. They came up to bat and answered right back with a run to tie the game up. In the second inning we put up two more runs and the other team answered right back with two of their own.

This team was not going down without a fight. The score was pretty much the same until the sixth inning when we let them score another run so it was now four to three. When we came up to bat in the top of the seventh inning we knew we were going to have to fight to come back of top. We came up with the right mind set. We wanted to hit the ball. Our first batter struck out. Our second batter grounded out to the shortstop.

It was my turn to hit with two outs. I had an 0-2 count and I was in a pretty big hole. The next pitch I fouled off into the backstop. The next pitch was a ball. The last pitch was a good pitch to hit and I swung hard at the ball and hit it between left field and center field. The ball dropped between them and I ran around first base wanting to get a double off of that hit. The ball was thrown in and I made it to second as the ball got there.

I was safe.

But the next batter struck out leaving my stranded on the bases. Just like that the game was over and we were all disappointed in the loss. We all knew that we could have won that game. We just weren't swinging at the right pitches and it ended up costing us the game.

# “Love”

*Lucy Wiegert*

Love is the thing with butterfly wings,  
It perches in the heart.  
Thoughts of joy and happiness it sings  
And it says it will never depart.

Through storm and sunshine,  
The butterfly stays.  
But I know soon will be a time  
The butterfly will go away.

This butterfly goes without a warning,  
And leaves my heart for awhile.  
When it leaves my heart I have great mourning,  
But when it comes back I smile.

Have you ever had the butterfly visit?  
'Tis an incredible feeling.  
After the butterfly leaves, then is it?  
The emptiness inside takes healing.

Many butterflies have come and gone,  
Silly crushes and infatuations.  
From these “loves” a thought is spawned  
A new kind of love free from expectations.

I have seen this love in the worst,  
I have seen this love in the best.  
A love, as strong as thirst  
A love, you would never had guessed.

This is the only love always to be.  
A love that reminds me of home.  
A love that is for my family.  
A love with me wherever I roam.

# “Friends”

*Mia Crooms*

There once was a group of friends. They all went out to eat one day with of a couple of other people. Diego brought his girlfriend, Ryan. Anna and Amelia brought their boyfriends. Anna brought Cody. Amelia brought Gary. Cody and Gary felt bad for their single friend, so they invited Brycen to come with them.

Gary bought Amelia her food, so she was happy, seeing that she was broke. They all ordered their food and sat down. They were having a great time. Brycen and Cody kept making weird jokes that made everyone laugh. Especially Anna. She almost choked on the milkshake she ordered. Everyone already knows she only started drinking it after she took a picture.

Since they all know each other pretty well, they know that Amelia does not share food. She gets angry when people take her food, so they seem to take her food just to make her mad. She started to take everyone else's food as revenge. Lucile and Hanna are acting like the moms of the group and telling us to stop stealing each other's food, but they no one ever listened. They all shared each other's food instead.

Once all the food was gone, they all sat there talking. Amelia eventually said, “I don't wanna go home yet.”

Anna got an idea, “Let's all go to the movies!”

The rest of the group immediately agreed and they all piled up in Cody's truck. Anna sits in the passenger's seat so she could talk to Cody on the way there. Amelia, Gary, and Brycen sit in the back, with Gary in the middle, since he's the skinniest. All the rest are sitting in the bed of the truck. The people in the truck bed were being extremely loud, and Anna couldn't hear Cody, so she told them to be quiet.

When they arrived to the theater, they bought tickets to a comedy movie. Once they got their tickets, they lined up to get food and drinks. Amelia of course gets a lot of food because, somehow, she's still hungry. She also gets an Isee. Cody bought Anna some chocolate.

Once they got their food, they all piled up in the movie theater, which was almost full already, but had enough seats for them to be seated together. The movie started, but Diego can't stay quiet for too long, “Hey. Hey, Ryan.”

Lucile could hear him from her seat, so she whispered, “Diego, be a little quieter.”

Diego has a little bit of a hearing problem, so he yelled, “What?”

A man sitting in front of Amelia, stood up and yelled at Amelia to shut up because he thought she was the one talking. Gary stood up and said to the man, “Hey, it wasn't her, so can you chill?”

The man got angrier and stuck his hand in Gary's face, so Cody stood up, grabbed Amelia's Isee and threw it in the man's face. The whole group of friends stood up trying to calm Cody down, but only Anna was able to. Once he was calm, that's when the theater employee came in to escort the friends out.

Once they were outside, almost all of them, busted out laughing. Lucile and Hanna were the only ones that didn't. They were getting on to all of them for getting kicked out. They eventually gave up and laughed too. They all talked for a while and laughed about what happened that day, but the best part was that they were together.

# “Diego”

*Anita Lawson*

My name is Diego. Well, not really. Diego is what some of my friends call me. There’s actually a really funny story of how I got this name. It all started when me and my friends were in the hotel room after a long day of running around Disney.

“I’m so tired,” Ryan said while plopping on the bed.

“If you’re so tired then why were you just running around?” Camryn asked.

“Because Cam,” Ryan sat up, “I’m like a sleepy tired. I still have a lot of energy.”

“That makes no sense,” Kenley rolled her eyes.

“Let Ry do Ry,” I said as I pushed her off my side of the bed. Ryan got off the floor and got a Gatorade from her bag. We laid down watching tv for an hour until Camryn got an idea.

“Why don’t we just prank call people?” Camryn asked.

“Because that’s childish. What are y’all 12?” Kenley said rolling her eyes and crossing her arms.

“Last time I checked, you’re younger than all of us,” I said. Kenley hit the side of my head.

“You didn’t have to hit her like that,” Camryn laughed.

“C’mon Kenley, it’ll be fun,” Ryan begged bouncing on the bed.

“Okay, but if we get in trouble, it’s not my fault,” Kenley said. We all crowded around my phone. I started scrolling through my contacts looking for people to call. Since it was almost 12 in the morning, not too many people would be up. Lucky for us, most of the people in my contacts were teenagers.

“What if the people we call ask for our names?” Kenley asked.

“Good point,” Camryn said, “Ryan your new name is Tony. Anita, you’re Diego. Kenley you’re Dante, and I’m Carlos.”

“How did you think of those names so fast?” I asked. Camryn just shrugged her shoulders.

“Why boy names?” Ryan asked. “I think you’re forgetting we sound like girls.”

“Ryan you have a boy name. It shouldn’t make that big of a difference.” I rolled my eyes. Ryan knocked the side of my head, and I fell off the bed.

“Yeah. Also people won’t think it’s us if they think we’re boys,” Kenley explained while getting me off the floor.

“Okay guys, let’s get to calling!” Camryn shouted.

It has been a couple months since the prank calls happened. To this very day we still call each other by those names. I feel like deep down, Ryan, Kenley, and Camryn will always be Tony, Dante, and Carlos. It’s almost second nature for me to call them that. Those names might just be names to some people, but to us they mean so much more. The names are a reminder of that night, and that night meant so much to me.

# “Far Past ‘Just Friends’”

*Joni Lumley*

For Christmas the first year  
He gave you a ring  
Not an engagement ring,  
But one that promises he will stay.

Through the rest of your years in high school  
You continue to accept all the love;  
All the wonderful gifts.  
Sadly you could not do the same.  
You couldn't give back;  
You couldn't bless him with all the gifts,  
But he didn't care.  
All he wanted to do was love;  
Well love and care for you;  
Help you through the rough.

Not caring about how others judged you,  
But how you judged one another.  
Helping each other to thrive and become better;  
Challenging to see who could be the best,  
So that each could be on top.

Year after year,  
You both continued to love.  
Distant with college,  
But still fighting for the love of one another.

Finally graduating,  
Both get to meet again;  
With even stronger love  
Because you knew each was right for the other.

Meeting again was a blessing.  
Being at the same place working;  
Being able to see each other again,

Just like every day in high school.  
One day something changed;  
You were no longer just friends  
For he proposed to you,  
And asked you for your hand.  
With excitement and relief  
That your dream finally came true,  
You accepted it.

You got married the following year  
To the love of your life.  
Started building a life together;  
Working even harder so that one day  
You could have a family of your own.  
That you would watch grow up  
Just like your parents did,  
And cry with tears of joy  
When you realize that  
They too have found the love of their lives.

# “Joy is the thing with petals”

*Harlie Corner*

Joy is the thing with petals  
That's clothed in morning dew  
And wakes to the melody  
Of a cheery yellow songbird  
It raises its face in rapture  
And watches  
As the sun shatters the dark  
It bathes in radiant light  
Leaves raised towards the sky in reverence  
And revels at the glorious day  
It beholds  
A light breeze tousles its crown of gold  
And whispers in its ear  
Beautiful lies  
But it hears them not  
For all it listens to  
Is the lilt of the bird  
The breeze turns into a gust  
Spinning discordant lies  
Lies of misery and sorrow  
Whose icy breath tears at its petals  
And blows them into the greedy mouth  
Of the wind  
But it does not falter  
It does not tremble  
Instead, it dances with the wind  
A dance of celebration  
For even in the midst of destruction  
It hears the aria of the bird  
And listens for the lyrics it knows by heart  
A song of resilience  
And a promise of what is yet to come  
And as it grasps to the psalm of life  
It finds joy  
In the humble song of the lark  
And it whispers into the wind “I am here”  
Just loud enough to be heard above the squall  
And it rejoices in the light of day  
Just as those who find their thing with petals  
Will surely rejoice in the light of day.



# Index

<b>Allen, Jewell</b>	
Pineapples.....	13
<b>Belflower, Lydia</b>	
Time.....	19
<b>Bland, Matthew</b>	
Unfortunate Events.....	29
<b>Bowie, Trinity</b>	
Another Earth.....	31
<b>Brown, MiShayla</b>	
Hold On.....	34
<b>Caleb Hill</b>	
My Personal Best.....	16
<b>Corner, Harlie</b>	
Joy is the Thing with Petals.....	40
<b>Crockett, Brianna</b>	
Judgment.....	26
<b>Crooms, Mia</b>	
Friends.....	37
<b>Dillard, Darci</b>	
Title.....	9
<b>El-Jeaid, Fatima</b>	
Family.....	7
<b>Fernandez, Leslie</b>	
The Game.....	25
<b>Fordham, JR</b>	
Sticks.....	35
<b>Golden, Andrew</b>	
The Fishing Trip.....	12
<b>Hermann, Hannah</b>	
The Necklace.....	23
<b>Knight, Sophie</b>	
Corrupted Judges.....	24
The Beast.....	11
<b>Landrum, Savanna</b>	
Friends.....	33
<b>Lawson, Anita</b>	
Diego.....	38
<b>Lee, Veronica</b>	
Staring Eyes.....	22
<b>Lumley, Joni</b>	
Far Past 'Just Friends'.....	39
<b>Maddox, Kate</b>	
A Complex Necessity.....	15
<b>Pritchett, Morgan</b>	
Do You Believe in Magic?.....	20
<b>Raleigh Hagler III, James</b>	
The Shot.....	30
<b>Smith, Amaya</b>	
My Blessing.....	8
<b>Villarreal, Kirsten</b>	
Steve... I mean Alex.....	18
<b>Wiegert, Lucy</b>	
Books are my safe place.....	14
Love.....	36
<b>Yearty Jr., Dustin</b>	
Washington's Blaze.....	28