

Tower

A literary magazine by the students, for the students



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Monarch

Laura Rounds
photograph



Fascination

Hannah Campeanu

You smile and your lips are a raspberry curl,
like sprinkles on ice cream against your skin.

Your eyes are always moving, seeing, smiling.
Taking it all in at the speed of light.

You tilt your head like the twist of a key.
The doors are open and you come in as you please.

Peace of Mind

Abby Stuart

Betrayal
Slow and steady and dark
It plants its roots where you can't
pull them out
Blurry faces haunt you
Like shadows

Working so hard to get there
But never quite fitting in
Trading Peace of Mind
For Friday nights

Those storms have been weathered
But, they cannot be shown.
What's done is done,
Copyrighted pages
Pain-filled regret
Back-stabbing, pain-filled, heart-
wrenching regret
Fear; Now-what?-Who's-there?-
WHAT-DID-YOU-DO-TO-ME?!
regret

When you thought you knew them

Strangers hissing in the dark
You close your eyes,
But you still see
The vital piece of you,
Not where it should be
And the fragment you left behind
You put it away,
For Peace of Mind

Just a Stranger: a One-Act Play

Wendy Landers

Cast of Characters:

Girl About 16 or 17 years old. Average in appearance. Somewhat melancholy expression

Guy 30+ years old. Wears loose tie and vest. Hair messy. Seems content.

Setting: The stage is a cemetery. Tombstones are all around, each with varying amounts of grass or flowers in front of them. The biggest one is upstage left, a man sitting against the stage right side of it. The lighting is bright and the backdrop is a blue sky. A girl enters stage right. Her hands are folded and she seems sad. She looks around and is startled by the man leaning against the large tombstone.

Guy: Oh, don't mind me. I'm just admiring the scenery.

Girl: Sorry, I didn't mean to intrude.

Guy: Intrude?

Girl I mean on your... meditating.

Guy: Oh no, I'm not meditating. Just sitting here, thinking. What about you? What brings you to this garden of the dead?

Girl: Why should I tell you? You're a complete stranger.

Guy Why wouldn't you tell me? I'm a complete stranger.

Girl (*pause*) Well, if you really want to know...I was planning on leaving.... This life. I just think it would be better for everyone if I wasn't around.

Guy: Oh, yes, I see. Obsession with death is a sign.

Girl: Don't try to talk me out of it. I've made up my mind.

Guy: Oh don't worry about me. I'm not the suicide hotline. It's not my way to tell people how to live their lives, or cease them in this case. (*Pause. She crosses to stage left trying to ignore him*)

I love coming here, though. I'm here every Monday afternoon.

Girl: Why?

Guy: Oh, I dunno. Monday just seemed like a good day.

Girl: No, I mean, why do you come here so often?

Guy: It's an interesting place. It's full of stories.

Girl: How do you mean?

Guy: Stories. Of the people buried here. Take this one, John Howlett. Died 1932, born in only 1912. This man was only 20 when he died. How do you suppose he died? What do you think it was like for his parents? Losing a child just as he had reached adulthood?

Girl: It must have been hard...

Guy: But what of his parents? I can't find any other Howletts here. They weren't buried in the same cemetery, what do you think that means? Maybe they weren't very close. Maybe they disowned him for some reason. Parents were a lot more disciplinary back then. For all we know they might've been the most hateful parents in town.

Girl: But-

Guy: Or this one, Walter Pearson. Born 1914, died 1946. Just after the second World War. He was at the right age to be in the service when the war started, so maybe he was drafted. He died after the war ended. He fought, but didn't get killed in it. I bet he went mad. Just straight out loony from the shock of it.

Girl: That's enough! I don't like your making all these rude assumptions about these people. This is meant to be a place of sorrow and solemnity. Show some respect!

Guy: Sorrow and solemnity? You're almost right.

Girl: Why? What do you mean?

Guy: Yes, it's a place of death, but look. What do you see covering the ground? Wonderful green grass. What's that you see in front of the tombstones? Flowers.

Girl: So?

Guy: Life. All around us. There is just as much life as there is death here. You look and see the greyness of the tombstones, but you ignore the green of the grass.

Girl: That's... well, yeah, I guess... (*Sits down against a tombstone*)

Guy: And who do you think planted these flowers? (*touches a flower*).

Family. Loved ones. They planted 'em years ago, and they still pop up every year.

Girl: Yeah. That's nature. Big deal.

Guy: Ever heard of symbolism? God, what do they teach in schools these days? These flowers are a symbol for their families' love. Remember good old John Howlett? We don't see any of his family buried with him, but we do know he was loved. He's got flowers growing on his grave. Someone cared enough about him to plant those.

Girl: Well, I guess I never thought about that...

Guy: Love doesn't die, even when both the people have. These flowers prove it.

Girl: Yeah, that does kinda make sense.

Guy: Heartwarming, innit? A place of death like this is really filled with so much more.

Girl: Yeah. (stands up)

Guy: (Walks around, looks at more tombstones) I don't suppose you've got any family.

Girl: My mom and a brother.

Guy: What about your dad?

Girl: Left when I was a kid.

Guy: Must have been tough.

Girl: Doesn't exactly give me faith in the human race.

Guy: Why should it? The human race's job isn't to give you faith.

Girl: (Pause) What about you? You have any family?

Guy: A wife who I never see because of her work. (looks down) My father died a few months ago. That's when I first started coming here.

Girl: I'm sorry.

Guy: He was a horrible man. Drunk every night, hit my mum, some times wouldn't get home 'til two in the morning.

Girl: Sounds terrible.

Guy: But I knew he loved us.

Girl: How do you know that?

Guy: Because he did come home. He threatened to leave my mum so many times, but he never did. My sisters never thought he loved them; they thought he cared about nobody but himself. He made



If Only the Sun Would Shine

Brenda Soyden

Strung by coarse waves,
Over hearing the seagulls screech.
Alone in the stone-cold breeze,
standing.

Burnt down to the ground,
like a wash-down whipped-out shack.
Left with only a memory,
heart bleeding.

The sky cries,
as pain seeps deeper.
Wishing for wings to fly away,
hoping to rise above it all,
dreaming.

Fortune Favors the Bold

Shana MacKinnon

Carrie's fingers shake as she breaks open the fortune cookie. Everyone else is laughing and shouting the phrases contained within their own, and it would be weird if she didn't open hers. She is not weird. She is normal.

Where are you going? it demands in block letter print and light blue ink.

"I don't know," she says, relieved, "I'll find out when I get there."

"What?" her friend asks, snatching the slip of paper. "What a lame fortune. Get a new one."

"Nah, they're always lame anyway. What did yours say?"

Where are you going? echoes in her head for the rest of the week.

"You opened a fortune," she accuses her mother, backpack still slung over her shoulder as she hovers in the doorway, white take-out containers scattered about the table.

Her mother looks up, face streaked with tears and eyes glazed. Carrie wants to go to her but doesn't – she needs to learn her lesson. "I got you one," she says.

"Get rid of it."

"I got you one," she snaps, stronger in giving this order which should be a statement.

Carrie doesn't realize she's reacted until she's staring at the crushed cookie and paper in her hand.

You walk your path alone.

"I'm eighteen. I'll be fine."

The guidance counselor manages to look both irritated and dismayed. "Don't you have any family members willing to take you in? Your mother's death was so sudden."

Of course she does – uncles, cousins, even her older brother has offered. No aunts, of course. Her mother had been the last one left. It's so, so tempting to take them up on it, because she's terrified and tail-spinning, but – You walk your path alone.

"I'll be fine," Carrie says, and the counselor grimaces. She will be. She'll keep repeating it, and maybe this is how she forges her own fortune.

Carrie twists her engagement ring about her finger, not liking the look on David's face. It's been seven years since she last read a fortune, and she feels an ache for one now, to know what's coming.

"Have you thought about children?" he asks.

"No," she says, firm and a touch desperate, "Never. I don't want them."

"Oh," David's crushed by her answer, already drawing away from her. No, that's not what she wants. She refuses to be alone.

Carrie pulls herself flush up against him and feels the tension running through his body. She cups his face with her hands to make him look her in the eyes, "We could adopt. Or – or you could have kids. I'd raise your kids. Not mine, but I'll raise yours. I will, I'll love it. Okay?"

She really will, has already fallen half in love with the image of raising a little girl with David's dark hair and brown eyes, of having a beautiful, normal daughter.

David smiles, confused but pleased, "Okay." He kisses her then, and she nearly goes weak with relief.

This curse ends with her.



Imaginary Picnic

Laura Rounds

Photograph

Revision

Kayla Mann

You asked a life
Like you've dreamed
I must be confused
In what you mean
For your convictions
Remain unseen
And yet you stand
Andy yet you say

You hate to simply
Rise and shine
You weren't suppose
To live to die
I wonder how
That it could be
I lost your wish
Forgot your dream

For only you could get away
To want to run
No fear for change

And now you stare
With rueful eye
You dreamt a future
Based on lies
I've listened close
Your passions fade
For dreams you've had
Have been replaced

And in yourself
You feel disdain
Blame it on
An act of fate
Bur you set out
One faithful day
And you're the reason
For this waste

The Light

Skyler Oliveira

Eyes open
I cry
Weep because I feel the pain
I believed to never exist
Hurt from the hatred
Envy from the evil around me

Eyes open
I feel death
Of those I love
The inevitable darkness I dread

Eyes open
Sadness comes over me
Sorrow which cannot be explained

Eyes closed
I dream
Dream of a place where there is
No pain
No hatred
No death
No sadness

Eyes closed
I forget these things
And see the white
That beautiful light

Just a Dream

Skyler Oliveira

When I look out of my window, I see the world. When I look at the world, all I see is darkness. When I close my eyes, I see the images I want to see.

First, I see the ocean. I see the white sand reflecting the sun and the waves gently crashing onto the shore. I feel the warm ocean breeze blow through an open window and smell the salty sea air. When I turn my head, I see a young woman walking along the shoreline. She is in a simple, yet elegant, white, cotton dress. Her long, full hair blows across her shoulders in the gentle breeze. As she strolls along, the water gently rushes over her toes. Coming up behind her is a man. He is dressed in khakis and a white button-down. He has a gentle, loving demeanor. As he begins to walk next to her, he lovingly encloses his hand in hers. She looks up at him and smiles. He smiles back, and they walk. Together they walk along silently, peacefully, and happily. Children now come into the picture. A young boy and girl who are dressed similar to their parents playfully run around the man and woman as they walk. The sun is slowly setting over the deep blue waters, filling the sky with hues of pinks, violets and orange. They are content in this simple moment. All four of them now walk out of sight down to the other end of the shoreline.

Next, I see a peaceful meadow. The tall grass sways gently to the side in the cool breeze. As I look out farther, I see a single Cherry Tree in bloom. Its sweet smell is carried in the breeze to my nose. I inhale, smile, and observe.

Underneath the tree is a young girl. She sits there in a modest, cream-colored dress with simple embroidery along the hem. She is writing in a leather-bound journal. As I watch, I also listen. I hear the soft scribbling of her pencil on the papers of the journal. I hear the soft rustling of the Cherry Blossoms in the breeze. I hear the soothing babble of a nearby brook as the water runs along over the smooth grey, pebbles. Soon, the pencil stops, and the girl slowly lifts her head to the sky. She closes her eyes, letting the warm sunlight shine on her face. unbearable, I just close my eyes to see the light I need. She has light-brown hair which glimmers in the light. Her face is soft and angelic. A white horse with dark-brown spots speckled along its back gallops in from the East. Although this horse is massive, it is graceful in its movement, barely making noise as its hooves touch the ground.

Spring Flower
Skyler Oliveria
Photograph



Independence

By Hannah Campeanu

She laid back in the grass
And thought slow soft thoughts.
She picked her favorite color
From the hues in the sky.
She laughed low to herself,
Tasted air on her breath,
And pinned the sun in her hair
With a satisfied sigh.

Kino Bay Sunset

Skyler Oliveira
Photograph



Stress in the End

Kayla Mann

My heart's racing, my mind's losing.
Time's wasting, head's aching.
No reason why...
Gain control, or lose it...
When I cry.
What's my purpose today?
Too many things standing in my way..
Am I losing touch, this world asking too much?
Making choices for the better.
Or am I better off not.
Weighing what I want with what I've got.
Remembering all the responsibilities I forgot.
Try to focus on what I can but,
Again ask myself why?
It even matters in the end.

A Dream for the Fall

Paige Welch

Upon one knee
A body does stand
Like a soldier in war,
Straight-backed
From the harsh authority
With hands clasped in prayer
Praying for forgiveness

The prayer, spoken
"Our Father who art in heaven,"
Is how it begins.
Beneath the knee
The ground weakens to sand
The ground dissipates, changing into air
And the stone body of flesh and blood falls.

Ice forms on the lips and tongue
And stunts the prayer.
Down,
Down,
Down,
Farther and farther
As the wind screams in the ear
Whispered from the lips
Is there an end?
A sight comes near
solid ground.
As the body hits
The eyes flutter open in a room
And look around.

Wheels on the Road

Genevieve

There they road across the land,
Wheels on pavement,
No music at hand,
They road all night,
No one in mind,
Only object and the road in sight,

Time it passed,
Small stop for gas,
This journey then ended on an in-pass.

Pulled over,
Smoke rolled all over,
The car shook,
Eyes dry from weariness and dirt.
Then it clicked,
The reason it had stopped,
Was for us to handle it,

On our own,
We broke the mold,
The car itself,
Broke the tone,
We became independent, figuring out where to go,
How to go on our own.

Old Memories

Skyler Oliveira

Painting



Sunshine in a Sleeping Mind

Anonymous

Nightly escape from reality.

Golden field

Late afternoon sun shining

Bathing high grass in warm, hazy orange.

August breeze

Like music.

Clam

Peaceful

Dreamlike.

Running – no strain or resistance

Sparks igniting every fallen footstep,

No sound escaping

Being, thinking, trying-

No.

Just running.

Blades of grass, rays of sun, intensified.

Imagined.

Particle catching light

Wafting through the air

Hopes and dreams posing tangible matter.

Every fiber exuding joy and love,

Encompassing.

Accepting.

Loving.

Wishing to never wake.

Public Speaking

Paige Fitzgerald

Standing there in the middle of the room.

All eyes on me in this gloom

Waiting for me to fill the silence with my words.

Glares piercing me like jagged swords

Skin pale, eyes go white with fear

Voice only loud enough to be heard near

Suddenly a light brightens inside of me

My eyes were blurry but now I see

Fluently the words stream through my teeth

Already I'm reading passed the lines beneath

Like dusk to dawn my voice from weak to stronger

At dusk with fear though at dawn no longer

From sleepily faces turn to understanding nods

My face brightens, happy to get my point across

My hands sweaty but feet stand secure

My words spread out my ideas so pure

My heart from the hum of a humming bird

To the steady beat of a drum it spurred

My nerves slowly disappear

Everyone is listening including the rear

When I leave the stand

They give me a hand

Feelings of relief spread through

Because of the ideas that I grew

Fears faced

Doubts replaced

A fear that needs to be concurred

Maybe with this paper I entered

Everything happens for a reason

But with this assignment I have only begun

To reach for my goals

And to what the future beholds

Edge

Wendy Landers

A group of friends

Congregating by a ledge

On the other side,

Nothing

Just a drop, no bottom

Like walking into a tunnel,

The eyes can only see so far

Inches away from comfort and joy

Lies peril and uncertainty

Most ignore it

They remain blind

To the mouth

Ready to swallow them

And only one regards

The too-close abyss

But says nothing

And lets the crowd

Remain blissfully ignorant

Balance

Skylar Oliveira
photograph



Earth

Paige Fitzgerald

Aromas of blooming flowers
Falling leaves fill the air
With whispers of autumn
The faint smell of pumpkin spice
And cool weather
Carried on the breeze

People gather round and gaze upon its magnificence
Soft greens and deep blues
Make up some of the radiant shades
Inhaling and exhaling
It is like water to a fish

Never quiet
Always bustling
The sounds of animals
Can be heard from miles away
Going about their business
Eating, sleeping, playing

Always fluctuating
Sprouting, growing, withering, dying
Throughout earth's cycles there is beauty
Emerging from the ground
The life shall grow
Creating new life through its course

Budding upward generating existence
The ending is approaching
With the ending of fall
Brings the exquisiteness
Of barren trees and silence

When spring draws near the trees shall fill
With flowering pedals and whistling birds
Fragrant and lovely
Budding, growing, withering, dying
Earth is always stunning

Oliver

Kate Silverman

The young girl sat pushed into the table, toes barely brushing the ground at age nine. Her father, mother, and older brother of four years accompanied her at the table. "How was your day, Jessica?" Her father inquired slipping the fork from his lips. "Good." Jess sneaked a couple peas onto the floor for her pooch companion. "And yours, Jake?" father, glanced toward the boy, who shrugged. Jess dropped a piece of steak down to the growing pile of scraps. She wondered what was taking Oliver so long to discover the delicacies, but then again, he often was too slow to beat her parents to finding the treasures. And nothing was changing tonight. Her mother slammed a knife and fork down, obviously flustered "Jess, for the last time, pick your food off of the floor. . . it isn't going to just disappear!"

"No, mom, Oliver can't go hungry again! He'll get sick."

"Jessica Lynn. That is enough with this imaginary friend business, you're much too old for this!"

"But, Mom! He's not imaginary; here I'll call him, Oli-"

"No!" The mother stood up, "Pick up those scraps then go to your room. No dessert. And, and... ".She sighed and sat back down as Jess crouched down to gather the food. Jake snickered and shook his head. "Freak."

It was the stereo-typical elementary school playground. Children were jumping from swings, trying to beat the next in distance; girls either chasing their crushes around the playground, or gossiping while hanging upside-down from monkey bars. The jock boys played four square to win, and the curious ones searched along the outskirts of the playground, scavenging for double spined pine-cones or oddly shaped rocks, once in a while stumbling upon the third grade outcast. The one who always seemed alone to the outside world, but still appears to be content with talking to her imaginary friend; constantly babbling away to him, yet never making any real friends. From kindergarten to first grade, she had not been the odd one out as many of her fellow peers also has fake friends. But the difference was, they grew out of these childish habits. Jess was the exception. Her imaginary dog seemed more real to her than the classmates who had given up on trying to befriend her. Getting older, kids started to catch onto the fact that Jess's behavior was not normal. And along with this realization, came the inevitable bullying that most outcasts faced.

"Hey, tell your dog to move, he's stepping on my foot!" The boy with red hair, yellow teeth and vibrant freckles named Shamus pointed at his toes, dramatically squirming them in discomfort under his sneakers. He turned to his cronies for approval, and they all began giggling. More of the boys jumped in.

"Yeah, and he smells bad, too! Do you ever wash him?"

"Do you ever wash yourself?" One of the bullies burst out, to which the rest of his gang doubled over in screeches of laughter and amusement.

Jess piped up, "He's not even here. He's digging a hole over there." She jabbed her finger through the air towards the empty sand pit. The boys slyly looked at one another, and then Shamus stepped forward.

"Oh yeah? Well I think you're crazy, and you can't go to this school anymore." He lunged at her and snatched Jess by the wrist. The four other boys grabbed her and together they flipped her over the fence, and ran off to class as the bell rang. She got a red slip for being late to class that day.

Ever since the bullying began in third grade, Jess's parents had encouraged her to learn a lesson from the bullying. It was obvious to her that they weren't going to stick up for her in this situation. Once, Jess's parents had believed in Oliver and Jess didn't understand what had changed. In kindergarten, they had been fully aware of his presence, but as time went on, they seemed to grow more and more disapproving of him, until eventually they refused to acknowledge his existence. Jess thought of the time when she first introduced Oliver to her mother.

"Did you make any friends at school today?" her mother had inquired. Although Jess had not, she knew that telling her mother the truth would be a disappointment. She had gone over her school day in her head, thinking of who she had met that day, any semblance of a friend she had made. Then, she remembered that familiar brown spotted dog that had broken into the school playground. She automatically realized it was the same dog who she had credited her rescue from tragedy with a few years before after seeing him run off from the scene. Jess and a few other children had run over to him before the teachers had shooed him away.

"Yes I did! His name's Oliver." Jess smiled up at her mother, who proceeded into urging jess to invite him over for a play date.

The next day when Jess returned home from school without her playmate Oliver, her mother was very confused. "So, where's Oliver?" her mother peeked out the windows top make sure that the boy she was expecting wasn't waiting outside.

Jess began petting the air at about the height of her belly. "He's right here, Mom!"

Jess had imagined Oliver standing before her mother, plain as day, wagging his tail, and panting, brown spotted ears perked. Jess's mom instantly caught onto her daughter's imaginary friend, and decided to play along. What harm could it do, right?

Her mother began petting the air at the same level as Jess.

"What a nice friend you have here, Jess!" At that moment, in Jess's mind, the invisible figure she was petting was no longer a figment of her imagination, but had become something much more real. Her mother believed in Oliver, along with her father who was later introduced to the dog. At that point, Jess believed that Oliver was bona fide and there to stay.

Jess pulled the covers tight to her chin, preparing to sleep before another days torments by her fellow sixth graders. She thought about how her parents didn't realize that nothing would make Oliver go away, not taunts from school children, not preaches from her parents, nothing, With these thoughts writhing through her mind, Jess thought of how Oliver was lying under her bed at that very moment, and she knew that she couldn't give up on the dog who had once saved her life.

Everywhere around the neighborhood there were ghosts, vampires, superheroes, giant walking fruits, cowboys, any character thought up by any stretch of the imagination. Each carried plastic pumpkins, pillow sacks, paper or plastic grocery bags, all filled with various kinds of candies. The echo of ringing doorbells and spooky soundtracks could be heard throughout the neighborhood. It was Halloween and Jess was ready to go, dressed as a Dalmatian dog. She made her way throughout the neighborhood, with Oliver.

Jess had hit just about all the houses, and now was making her way home, once in a while returning the houses with the better quality candy. But mother had wanted her home by eight o'clock, and it was nearly seven forty- five. She began walking steadily faster, realizing that she'd need to book it to avoid consequences. Most other people were already indoors now, turning their porch lights off to signify that

they were out of candy. Jess noticed the eerie glow cast by the streetlamps, stretching her shadow as she ventured throughout the streets accompanied by Oliver who was trailing slightly behind. He was hooked to a black leash in Jess's firm grasp. The trees began making noticeably more noise, scraping against each other, creaking in the fall wind.

"You shouldn't be outside this late, freak." Shamus stepped out from the shadows, with two other goonies with him. All three of their faces appeared unnaturally pale due to the white face paint and red blood stains around their mouths. They were aiming to be vampires, perhaps. Jess kept her head down and kept walking, keeping Oliver in mind. "Especially on Halloween." He scoffed, "You might get beat up, or robbed." Shamus yanked the leash from her hands and tossed it to the ground. "Leave us alone! Please, just don't hurt him!" The boys all stomped on the leash, and Jess cried out, "Stop it!"

One of the other boys began imitating Jess, "You're hurting Oliver, stop it, stop it!" his voice was whiny and nasally.

"Oliver, do something!" Jess began pleading towards the leash.

"Jeez, she really is crazy!" The red-haired vampire got closer to Jess, and she could smell the chocolate on his breath. "Give me your candy, freak."

Jess began running, but the boys caught up, and grabbed her wrists, her candy fell, the bag tumbled down the street as it was released from her grasp, its contents spilled everywhere.

"So she's a Freak and an Idiot!" the three boys laughed, and began gathering up the candy and stuffing it into their pockets, making sure to push Jess back down every time she tried getting up, but after a few seconds of intervals between picking up their candies and keeping Jess down, the boys realized that something was wrong. The red head squinted at his fistfuls of candies in the flickering streetlights, then he dropped all of the pieces in disgust.

"Sick...gross!" he backed away "It's not even worth it. See you in school, Freak. You're gonna owe us for this." The boys left the scene of their crime.

Gradually, Jess rose, brushed gravel from her scraped knees, blood beginning to seep from the subtle wounds. She stumbled over to her scattered candies, and crouched down to see what had scared the boys away and saved her the rest of that nights' potential torment. To her surprise, the candy had fallen into piles of fresh dog feces, which

encrusted each wrapped, smeared on skittles packages and caked in-between candy necklace beads. At that moment one thought overwhelmed her with joy. Oliver had saved her again.

She couldn't sleep that night. Thoughts of everyone who had ever doubted her flashed through Jess's mind: Shamus and his endless years of torment and Her parents and their lack of support towards her. She'd never even had a real friend. Then she thought of how Oliver had always been there. He'd been the point of stability and reassurance within her life that she could always count on, nine times out of ten, that is. Still though, nobody was perfect, and Jess understood that. She understood that Oliver had her best intentions at heart, and she couldn't afford to lose him as a companion. Jess thought about a lot that night, and eventually came to the conclusion that it was all on her shoulders to acquaint her parents and Oliver, and to finally convince her family that she wasn't crazy. She knew that showing her parents that Oliver was still there to protect her, would unite her family, Oliver and all. Jess began putting a plan into action.

"I'm going out for a walk with Oliver, Mom!" Not waiting for a response from her mother, Jess opened the screen door and ventured onto the pavement driveway, jaw set in determination. She walked around the block and checked her watch: 2:20. She sat down on her lawn, lie on her back, and eyes closed. Oliver was sure to be close behind. Jess opened her eyes. 2:25. She walked back to her house, calling through the screen door, "Mom, Dad! Come here!" They both made their ways outside, obviously a bit curious to see what their daughter had in store. Jess stood on the sidewalk, fists clamped. A vibrant red sports car was coming. Come on, Oliver. Show time.

"Jess?" her mother called uneasily. Jess's father began to move closer to his daughter as he sensed something was not right about this situation.

Seizing the opportunity, Jess took a step into the road, right in the cars path of travel.

"Jessica!" All in a matter of seconds, her father had pushed her out of the cars way, the two rolled to the other side of the road. Out of breathe and shaken up, her father was obviously flustered, "What were you thinking?"

"You didn't even give him a chance!" Jess stood and cried in frustration "You never do!" She fell to the ground, hands over her face, tears streaking her cheeks. Her mother ran over and threw her arms around her daughter.

"Don't worry, Jess, we're gonna get you help."

"So tell me, who is Oliver?"

"My dog. I don't need to be here, you know."

The therapist smiled kindly, pushing her glasses up on her pointed nose. "It's always nice to have someone to talk to though, right? Especially after your little incident."

Jess nodded, closed her eyes, and looked down.

"How long have you had Oliver as a pet?" This lady was persistent. But Jess actually had to think about this for a minute. Her first memories of Oliver had been at about four or five; Jess had been about to venture across the road to retrieve a ball as a car was coming. She had been pulled back out of harm's way, in the nick of time. The tug at her belt was still lingering. The gust of wind as the car sped by. The sight of that brown spotted dog running away around the corner, Jess was sure he would have saved her again, had her father not stepped in first.

"I was young."

"I see," the lady jotted down some notes. She then addressed Jess's parents, sitting side by side on the plush couch. "And how did you first react to your daughter's imaginary friend?"

Jess clenched her fists, "He's not imaginary." The therapist just smiled, and nodded, then turned back to Jess's parents.

Her mother began, "Well," she let out a deep sigh, "considering it was only in about kindergarten to first grade when we met the Oliver character, we accepted it as normal childhood behavior. "

Jess's father jumped in next, "But now we can see that Oliver is holding her back from so many things. She's bullied, she has no friends at school, and now she's going to extreme lengths to..." her dad struggled to find words "to convince us of his existence."

The therapist jotted down some more notes, flipped the page of her legal pad, scribbled something, then ripped the page off it and handed it to Jess's parents.

"Childhood friends are completely normal at this age, and I'm sure it is just a phase. Jess will grow out of it soon enough." She smiled a tight lipped smiled at Jess, then continued, "But in the meanwhile, these prescriptions will insure that there are no more...accidents. Nothing too heavy, just a few medications to help Oliver leave you alone." Jess didn't like the sound of all this, but her parents seemed quite pleased. In no time, the family was back at the dinner table again, trying to act like it had been any other day. The only noticeable difference was that beside

Jess's plate, her parents had left two tiny green pills in a paper cup for Jess. How considerate.

"This supper was great!" Her father patted his stomach and leaned back in the chair. "Now, don't forget to take those pills, Jess."

"We know it'll be strange at first, but it's a new tradition we'll have to get used to." Her mother smiled over at her daughter, who looked down into the cup. Jess realized that her parents weren't going to give up, so she took a big gulp of water, then in a fast, fluid movement slapped her hand to her mouth and quickly swallowed. She smiled at both of her parents, who were obviously very pleased.

"So, Jake, how was your day?" Her father moved onto his son who was deeply engorged in his comic book. Jess stood, and told her parents she was tired.

"Why don't you go to sleep then, we're very proud of you, see you in the morning!" Her mother winked at Jess, who turned, rolled her eyes, and then headed up the stairs. Halfway up, she opened her hand, revealing the two green pills she had hidden in her palm. Jess smiled to herself, and looked up to see Oliver waiting at the top of the stairs for her.

"Come on boy, let's go."

Jess lay on her stomach, eagerly gazing up at the blaring television screen which was broadcasting her favorite show, *Victorious*. She grabbed a handful of the lightly salted pretzels her mother had provided for her, and proceeded in alternating between placing one at a time into her mouth and onto the floor to her right. She chomped obnoxiously as young children tend to do, and rubbed her crumbly fingers off on her hot pink stretchy pants, whose contrast against her bright purple t-shirt was quite obviously not thought out by the third grader. After taking a few more pretzels for herself and nudging the pile on the floor over just a tad to her right, Jess wiped her mouth with the back of her left hand and began to giggle, gazing off to her right. She sat up, with legs crisscrossed eating apple sauce and reached out and began stroking an invisible figure behind the pile of pretzels, about eight inches off the ground. A slight smirk spread across her face as she let out a high-pitched giggle, abruptly pulling her hand away. "Oliver!" she screeched, apparently shocked by something this unseen presence had done. "Oliver, don't lick me!" She rolled over onto her back, and put her right arm up, using her left arm to guard her face as she made it evident that there was something attacking her from above, although her cries of delight revealed the attackers friendly nature. Jess wrestled on with her imaginary friend.

Looking on from inside the kitchen, accompanied by two cups of tea, two half eaten blueberry muffins, sat Jess's mom and the therapist, Doctor Canny. Her mother shook her head and looked down, clearly disappointed and confused. "I just don't understand. Every night I see her swallow her pills. . . Doctor, I watch her do it! But obviously," her mother thrust a defeated arm towards the scene in the living room, wearily holding her pointer finger up, "she is showing no improvement, to say the least."

Doctor Canny nodded and bit her bottom lip, observing some notations on her note-pad. She glanced up toward Jess who at this point had picked up her Junie B. Jones book and was contently reading it out loud, stopping ever so often to gaze at the unseen figure before her, and to make sure she still had his attention. The doctor shook her head.

"Within all my years of dealing with these kinds of situations, over-active or involved imaginary friends and whatnot, I had never encountered a more..." her eye brows knitted together and her lips pursed as she sought after the right word, "a more, developed bond between a child and her imaginary friend. At this point I struggle to accept that a 'friend' of this intensity could be merely a figment of Jess's imagination. Their interactions are like none I have ever witnessed. The power of Jess's belief in it, and convincing nature of his existence has gone too far. Is there anything else she has been doing that is more out of the ordinary than usual?"

Jess's mother breathed in heavily through her mouth, leaned back and ran her fingers through her hair. "Yes, actually. Her speech has been slower... more slurred. I began noticing it a few weeks ago and didn't think much of it, but it's getting more severe day by day. She's also been tripping, stumbling around more often, just acting more clumsy in general, but she always blames it on the Oliver character getting in her way."

Doctor Canny took a sip of her tea and jotted down some more notes, glancing toward Jess in the living room, who was oblivious to her observers and had begun stroking the figure beside her as she read. Every once in a while Jess would stop, and nod, or agree with something she had heard her friend say. Jess's mother shook her head, blankly staring straight forward and touching her pointer finger to her lip, obviously in either deep thought, or trying to forget everything. Doctor Canny clicked her pen closed and set it on the table with a decided nod, "Yes, so we'll have to get heavier observations and begin taking more drastic measures, to end this once and for all." She looked at Jess's mother who seemed to be on the verge of crying at this point. "Don't worry, we will beat this!"

"I don't like being here, Mom." Jess looked hesitantly toward her mother as she sat on the doctor check-up bed, clad solely in a pink hospital gown she had gotten to pick out herself. Her mother sat on the guest chair beside the bed.

"We're just getting you checked out. Doctor Canny recommended it, and well, I think it's a good idea."

Jess looked down at the string cat's cradle she was working on, and arched her eye brows skeptically. In a low tone, she whispered "Oliver doesn't like Doctor Canny, Mom." Jess reached out, hugging the invisible figure in front of her and bringing it towards her on the bed. Jess's mom said nothing. For about five minutes, the two sat in silence, each overwhelmed with their own thoughts. But soon enough, Doctor Mendel had come into the room equipped with his stethoscope around his neck and his clipboard in his grasp.

"Hello, Mrs. Haslow. Hi, Jessica. My name is Doctor Jennings." The lean, clean shaven brunette doctor nodded towards the two. The doctor sifted through a few of his documents on the clipboard and sat on his stool.

"Alrighty Jessica, looks like we'll be doing some blood work and a physical today." He smiled warmly at the little girl, who was cradling the dog in her lap. After setting up his needles and taking some blood from Jess's right arm.

When the blood work was done and the doctor had cleaned up and applied a band-aid to Jess's arm, the doctor stood up clasping the two vials of blood he had taken. "Alrighty, I'll bring these to the lab and we'll begin testing as soon as possible, then we'll call you back in if the need calls, Mrs. Haslow." Jess's mom pressed her lips together and gave a curt nod as she crossed arms over her stomach. He left but returned soon enough, ready to begin the physical exam. The doctor began with the usual procedures, holding the stethoscopes to Jess's heart, then her back, having her cough twice. He took her blood pressure and used his light to peer down her throat. "Alrighty," Doctor Jennings smiled at Jess, "everything seems to be just fine so far." Then he had her lie down, first on her back with her tummy up and began pressing on certain parts of her body, he did the same on her back side, until he came to about halfway up her spine, where he suddenly stopped. A worried yet curious look occupied his face as he felt around the spot a little more. "Hmm..okay, Jess, please sit up for me." She did as she was told. He asked her to tell him about her favorite food.

"Well, I like...s-spaghetti and chocolate cake the best-" the doctor nodded and abruptly stood up. He began feeling around the crown of her head, slightly pressing on her temples feeling down the base of her neck. His concern was now obvious in his face.

"What is it?" Jess's mom's voice cracked with worry as it cut through the intensity in the room.

The doctor stopped prodding Jess and met the mother's eyes. "We can't wait for the blood results to come in. We must start CAT scans immediately." He stood up and asked to speak with the mother alone outside. The two went into the deserted hallway, and the doctor breathed out a deep sigh. "I have just felt two small to mid-range tumors on Jess. Her slurred speech and your reports of her unusual clumsiness made me want to check in her head since those are big giveaways. These seem to be rather high--grade tumors since they weren't here her last visit about seven months ago, that means they are growing faster and will be more aggressive. The tumors seem to be spreading, so they're classified as invasive and will be more difficult to remove if there are more than the two I've already found, but the scans will determine that for us." He put his arm on the mother's shoulder, who looked completely shocked. She was at a loss for words. Slowly, she brought her eyes up, which were starting to well-up with tears, she wiped them away and inquired,

"What's the treatment? Will she need chemotherapy? I don't. . . " she clenched her fists and looked away, tears streaming down her face. "I can't believe I didn't notice."

"There's no telling exactly what she'll need, treatment-wise at the moment, but for now all I can say is that this is the explanation for her 'imaginary friend' Doctor Canny told me about. If there is another tumor situated near her thalamus then that means he was a hallucination to her all along. But hallucinations caused by brain tumors can seem as real to the victim as I am real to you.

Her clumsiness could be a result of tension on her cerebellum." He stopped, realizing that this was too much all at once for the mother to handle. He reached his hand out and patted her shoulder again, trying to force a reassuring smile.

"We have a world renowned team of pediatric neurosurgeons here; we'll take excellent care of Jessica. Don't panic too much until after the scans."

The mother nodded and looked back down, wiping another tear from her eye.

Meanwhile back in the room, Jess sat and waited for her mom to come back in, and to find out what was going on. Why was everyone acting so weird? She felt fine. . . just a little dizzy, and drowsy, but that had become a normal feeling for her! The Doctor had seemed so nervous when he checked her back though. Actually, now that she thought about it, her middle-lower back had been rather sore lately.

"Oliver, do I have anything on my back?" Jess questioned her canine companion. She began feeling along the base of her spine, running her fingers up towards her shoulder blades, but Jess's fingers halted as they reached the sore spot on her back that she had hardly paid attention to up until this point. Her fingers felt a small lump, quite firm, but also very tender. It seemed to be about the size of a dime. Jess pulled her fingers away gradually and stared down at her hands. What did this mean? She looked over at Oliver. He looked so peaceful, resting on the end of her bed. His presence was so reassuring, so familiar to Jess. She reached out to pet him, glancing toward the doorway, hoping for her mother and the doctor to enter. Jess wasn't quite sure what to make of the whole situation, or how to react to it. All she knew was that something was wrong with her; something serious. Oliver sat up, wagged his tail twice, and nuzzled his nose into Jess's arm.

"Good boy." Jess sighed, hugging him tight. She closed her eyes and lay back down, with the weight of Oliver on her chest as he nuzzled closer to her. She remembered all she'd been through with this dog, the bullying, everyone's disbelief in him, their apparent doubt in her sanity, visits to psychiatrists, the endless years of torments by Shamus and how Oliver was always there for her. Jess smiled faintly and ran her hands over Oliver's silky dark fur, resting her hand on his head. If the two had been through all of that, then they could get through anything. Anything including whatever that lump was on her back, whatever the doctor had discovered, whatever this new dilemma was. The door knob turned, then clicked open. Jess sat up. Her mother walked in alone, and Jess looked expectantly towards her. Her mother's arms were wrapped around herself, as if she was giving herself a hug. Her head was tilted down, as she walked forward.

"Jess," she whispered, gazing toward her daughter, revealing her blood shot teary eyes, she walked over and sat on her daughters bed, embracing Jess in a tight squeeze, leaning her head on Jess's shoulder. Not being used to affection from her parents, Jess froze. Her mother let go, but didn't rise from her spot on the bed. . "I'm. . ." she brushed her hair behind her ear, staring meaningfully at her daughter, "I'm so sorry."

Jess stared straight back, remembering all the times her mother doubted her, all the times she had lost patience or merely ignored her daughter: the lack of affection and understanding. Jess hardly considered this pitiful lady in front of her to be a mother; a provider, yes, but not a mother. But as she looked on at her mother sitting on her bed, so obviously yearning Jess's forgiveness, she must finally realize how wrong she had been. Something had changed in her mother. Jess could tell. She really meant this apology.

Jess reached over and clasped her mother's hand with her own, smiled over at Oliver who still lay on her bed next to them, then directed her smile up towards her mother.

"It's okay now, Mom." She glanced back to Oliver, "It'll be okay."

Notebook

Allyson Feugill

Constantly filled
With thoughts of a stranger
harmed,
from what is taken away
words,
that want to be forgotten

Imbedded with scars
from the lost memories,
moments now gone,
given tattoos
with a more permanent ink
living trees weep,
killed.
their remains being abused,
bodies being scratched,
clawed at by humans

Lines filled
with personal thoughts
dreams,
memories,
maybe just absolute nothingness

like a list of things to do,
scribbles,
or a telephone number
Some buried,
or sent,
far away reaching someone in

the unknown
a family member
or a lost friend
Everyday filled
more and more,
continuously being used

It's an escape
for prisoned thoughts,
unspoken words,

trapped in a mind.
it's a simple way
to vent,
or express ones creativity,
it's the treasure of a writer

Merciless

Kayla Mann

Blood shall spill
This dark Night
Tears won't fall
Sense no fright

Long for strength
Yet I fail
Wishing to just disappear

Guilt will surface
Passions fade
Pain takes over
Guide my way

Blood shall spill
With no fight
Can't be strong,
Not tonight.

Revealed

Hannah Campeanu

A few words on paper
Simple shapes and twisting lines
That spell out my insides
For all to see.

I take a little ghost-bird
In my hand
Whisper my dreams to it
And it flies off into the world.

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Title page:

For next year's edition(s)

Submission Forms are available from Mrs. Kneisley. Please email
dkneisley@pinkertonacademy.org for your submission form.

Note: In the interest of fairness, all *Tower* entries are evaluated **anonymously** to ensure that no bias is present. All names are removed once the entries are received, and each author's name is replaced with a number.

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Colophon

col·o·phon *n.*

1. An inscription placed usually at the end of a book, giving facts about its publication.
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