

Knowing Your Place



FALL 2016

Part I. Adversity & Internal Conflict

My Place as a Woman by Alexa Marquette

Throughout my life, I have been told to act like a lady. Think like a lady, they tell me. Be delicate, like a flower. Be soft. Two full decades of my life have been used as conditioning, teaching me to act, talk and think a certain way because of what I have in between my legs. From an early age, I wanted to challenge the boundaries of what it meant to be a girl. Growing up with two older brothers, I recall wanting to be like them without changing who I was. I wanted to be as wild as the thickets and trees growing in the woods behind our house. I wanted to play with pocket knives and toy guns the way my brothers did, yet also with my dolls. I wanted to be heard like my brothers were heard, but when I let my voice break free, I was shushed by my mother as I heard the words:

“Alexa, be a lady.”

Now, nearly twenty-one years old, right on the cusp of “true adulthood”, I know my place, having been able to define for myself what it truly means to be a woman. I have been told for years what I should and should not be, simply for the sake of others; to fit into their categories and be what they consider ideal. However, being a woman doesn't mean sitting quietly and looking pretty. In this day and age, being a woman means so much more than that. Being a woman means having an opinion and voicing it. Being a woman means being as loud as you want or as quiet, being as profane or proper as you see fit. It means having the choice to be the CEO, or to stay home and raise children. I am not afraid to challenge the stereotypes of how a woman should act and what she should be. Sometimes, I am a drop of water on the softest petal of a pink rose; other times, I am the storm that brought it. I know my place as a woman, so that means I am not afraid to be whoever - whatever- I want to be.

Silent by Stormi Gentry

I live alone inside my head,

Silent.

People quietly walk right past me,

Silent.

I'm struggling to breath, no one notices me,

It's silent.

Dark, and empty, and painfully silent.

I try to speak, but no sound leaves my mouth.

Or perhaps I'm screaming, but no one's listening.

They're silent.

They watch me with judgement filled eyes,

Daring me to say a word

So they can push me back

Into silence.

I have no one near me, and it's lonely.

Suffocating

Silent.

Run by Andres peña

And as I ran and ran and ran I realized I was running nowhere

I was running, gasping, with no breath to a place that did not exist

I knew it didn't exist yet I ran through the rain to find it

Each time I ran and ran even faster with a slight hope that always

lost to a sad realization

I realized that me running was the only reason I had hope

Whenever I stopped running I knew i had no place to go, so i kept

running

I ran through every rain drop of fear, sorrow, and pain

I was running to my home, but did not realize i was homeless

I sprinted to my hospital, but forgot there was no doctors

I ran and ran for my life, but forgot that this run had already killed

me

Masks of Society by Jierem Paloma

I am not who I truly am,
For what is true for me
Varies from time time.
Knowing all of me confounds my view.
I am Strong
I am Weak,
I am both Afraid and Brave,
I can be Kind and I can be Mean,
At times I am Shy and other times I
am Outgoing.
What I have been and what I will be.
Both are the same, as they are me.
Truths in the past and truths in the
future.
Those masks I once wore, are all with
me,
Exchanged with a new mask forged of
new truths and experience.
Or a mask of the past,
I take off my mask and put on
another.
Never will I show my true face, it is
simply not possible.
For the hands that strips me and
dresses me in new mask,
Are hands that I do not own.
Rather they are hands of society.
I let the world mask my face.
I dream emptily, still, and passive.
As I let my face hidden from society.
I am not who you see I am.



Social Anxiety by Bianca Salcedo

You're running.

For a second you're okay, though, because you can focus on the feeling of the warm sun on your skin and the way your hair blows over your shoulders, on the way the wind brushes your cheeks, so carefree and gentle. You can hear the sounds of other people running, far behind you, the sounds of shoes on the pavement echoing like a distant, constant drum. You can smell the wet grass and wet sidewalks before you, all warm and untouched, as if it's just rained. You can take in the sight of the bright outdoors, and you find yourself itching to frame the way the sun peeks over the clouds in the sky. You take a deep breath, inhale the crisp, clean morning air, and you're at peace. You're okay.

But you're falling.

Not literally. Not in a way that makes you crash and tumble and scrape your skin bloody and raw on the sidewalk beneath your feet. You feel like that's what's happening, though; you feel like you've been struck by a sudden blow, and you begin to slowly burn inside and out, as if every part of you is being scraped to nothing inside of you. Your legs, your lungs, your heart—they ache, and you ache, because with every step your heart pounds faster and your lungs burn and your legs become wobbly and they shake, and they tremble, and they slow and you're falling.

The sun feels like it's scorching. Beads of sweat dot your forehead as you grow unbearably warm. The wind is angrier around you; it whips your hair hard against your cheeks, and you brush the tendrils out of your face before they suffocate you. The sights of green grass and warm sunlight become shaky and distorted and make your eyes burn. The air, now, is poison; it's steadily filling your lungs and you think not again and not me, not me, and you're gasping for breath and your chest is heaving and your legs are screaming and you stop. You stop running. You let your body double over, and wipe the sweat off your face, and you stop.

The world has not changed. It's still just rained, and the air is still fresh and cool. The sun is just barely peeking out, hardly risen from the sky. The scenery around you has not blurred, and the smell has not become toxic. You can still hear the sounds of others running, the sound of their feet steadily drumming closer and closer, their rhythm unbreakable and their pace unmatched. But then there's you, panting, your heart pounding hard and quick in your throat. You taste blood in your mouth, sharp and metallic and oh so familiar, and you rub the red, warm skin of your face, ashamed.

You wait until you've regained your breath, and then you shakily stand up straight. The warmth in your face fades. The sweat on your forehead dries. Your lungs stop burning. Your heartbeat becomes steady and slow, and you take a moment to rest your hand where your heart is, just to feel the proof beating against your fingertips. You start to walk, slow and unhurried, with your shame heavy in the bottom of your stomach as you try to forget that you tried to run in the first place.

Everyone starts running past you.

My City by Chloe Giron

When we're young we're often influenced by the people around us. Their thoughts and opinions become our thoughts and opinions because we believe that what they're saying must be true. This concept is exactly what caused me to formulate a negative opinion about the city I grew up in.

I was born in Santa Clara, California but I moved to Stockton, California just before my fourth birthday. Because of this, my memories of living in Santa Clara are very vague, but I know everything there is to know about Stockton. When I tell people I'm from Stockton they always make a face or have something negative to say. This doesn't offend me, it makes sense. Stockton is, after all, the 2nd most dangerous city in California and is notorious for its high crime rates. It's a well-known city for all the wrong reasons.

At a point in time, Stockton was, of course, just like any other city. When I first moved to Stockton in 2002, it wasn't known as a dangerous city. In the coming years it slowly started becoming what it is now. Because of this, growing up in Stockton through its transition from a regular city to a dangerous city was an interesting experience for me. Although I didn't see Stockton through the same eyes as everyone else, their opinions started to become my reality. Not only would I hear negative comments about Stockton in the news, in magazines, and in newspapers, but I would hear comments in my everyday life. Words like "dangerous", "homicides", and "ghetto" were among the many words I heard each day. Before I knew it I began to dislike the city I lived in. I wasn't proud to be growing up in a city full of crime and danger. I couldn't wait for college because I wanted to move away. People in my high school always talked about how living in Stockton was a vicious cycle and how difficult it was to escape it. I didn't want to be that person who stayed in Stockton for the rest of my life. I thought about how I wanted to be successful and independent. How I wanted to live in a city where nothing but great things were said.

It wasn't until I moved away for college that my opinion on the city I was raised in completely changed. I only moved about 50 miles from Stockton, but it made all the difference. I realized how different the people and culture are from city to city. I felt out of place in the city I moved to. I felt as if I didn't belong. It wasn't easy bonding with people who were so different from me and didn't share the same interests and experiences as I did. There were no similarities in music, hobbies, or forms of expressions. I often found myself having to explain my choice of words or feeling lost.

I realized that even though I didn't grow up in one of the safest cities, it didn't mean that it was a bad city. At the end of the day, it is a place I call home. Growing up in Stockton influenced me and is a part of who I am. Growing up in Stockton provided me with many experiences and opportunities that have helped shape the person I am today. The culture is engraved in me and is something I will carry with me forever.

Burning House by Alexa Marquette

Strife is
grounded in
hope,
while also holding you
in a
house
that
caught
fire.



The Sailing Head by Jierem Paloma



Part II. Hardships & Change

Distorted by Ashtyn Bracamonte

I remember the first time I realized my mom didn't love me. I mean she never really made food for me when I was hungry and she never talked to me or asked me how my day was, like the moms in the books I read do, but the first time was really clear. I was walking around my neighborhood looking for food because I was starving. I was even more starving that day that I had ever been before since it had been a day since I ate my last bag of chips. The street I was walking had no streetlamps and it was completely silent. The kind of eerie silent that makes you wonder if you're the only one in the world. I found some food in the trashcan and I decided to go home. When I got there, I opened the door and I walked in, and I immediately heard yelling. I wasn't sure if my mom was yelling at me or the cat like she sometimes does when she goes crazy. She came around the corner and I knew it was at me. She made this face of anger that I will never get out of my brain. Its stuck there, burned there forever. She screamed at me to get out. She shooed me before I turned around. I knew not to fight because my punishment would be worse. She pushed me out of the door and said "Stay outside because animals belong outside."

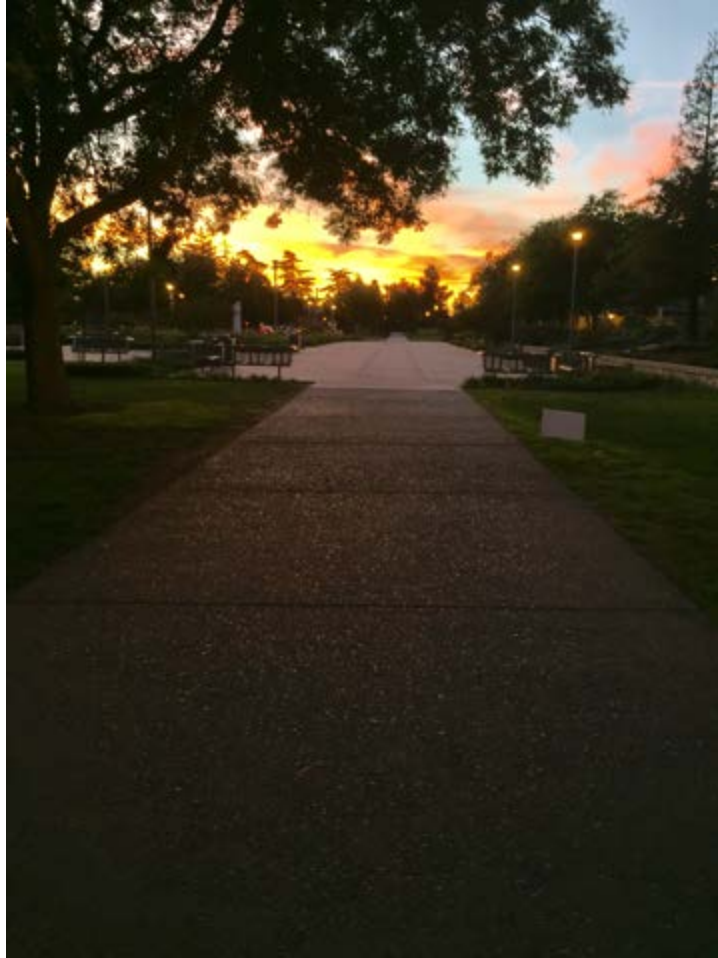
That day I decided I was going to live for myself. I was used to being alone anyways, so it wasn't a new thing. I did everything alone. I didn't mind as long as I had my notebooks. I sat alone in the halls and drew people. Especially the ones who called me names like "stutters," since I had a speech problem and couldn't get my words out clearly. I had never had the strength to fight back. I drew them with no face and their bodies were distorted. Some only had one arm or one leg and some had no heads. I drew them as ugly as I could think. The person I drew most was my mom. I made her worse than all the rest. She never had arms, but unlike the rest, she had a face but no mouth.

As I was drawing one day, one of the people I despised, the one I drew almost as much as my own mother, came up to me and grabbed my lunch. I started to fight back but every time I spoke, he'd mimic me. He threw my lunch on me and my food stained my shirt. I furiously walked to the bathroom. When I looked in the mirror, I screamed "I'm never coming back here again." I walked right out of the bathroom and started for home. I didn't calm down on my walk home. All the way home, I'd thought of ways to put the bully down for what he did to me. I was still angry walking up the steps to my door. As soon as I opened it, there was my mom. Her face was mad but I had already thought of all the ways I'd get rid of her.

Before I even got to the closet to put away my shoes, my mother was yelling. She didn't want me home. I ignored her like usual, but this time she was really mad. She was screaming louder than she ever had and for the first time, she hit me. She didn't stop. I tasted the blood on the inside of my cheek. I felt the sharp pain shooting up my back from when she kicked me. I heard the sound of the belt on my skin and I was completely helpless. Eventually, she stopped hitting me but she didn't stop screaming. When I could finally get enough strength to pick myself up, I wiped the blood away from my lip and silently walked away.

I never spoke to my mother again after that. I became independent which wasn't too hard since I had already had experience most of my life. She never apologized. She never yelled at me again. I don't know where she is now. I don't know if she's dead or alive, I don't know if I ever had any other siblings, I don't know if she ever ended up living with someone else. But I miss her. I've been alone since the day I walked out of that door and never came back. Today I lay awake at night thinking about the spiteful things she told me. I think about the sound of her voice saying those cold-blooded words and I think

about how sad I've been without her. Maybe I shouldn't have walked away because I realized pain was better than the nothing I feel now. I let go of the one person who knew my name.



The Effects: An Interview with Nam by Chrysta Borba

My grandmother, whom I call Nam, was born Cynthia Lee Thompson on September 15, 1954. In 1960 her parents got divorced and the beginning of the instability. 1961 was her first out-of-state move, going from Washington to Oregon. After this, she began to move frequently all around Oregon due to her mother marrying her stepfather. At the age of 13 her parents abandoned her for a year, leaving her with her grandparents with no notice. After this she began to move back and forth between her grandparents and parents. She married Victor Allen Caton on November 9, 1973, three days and three weeks after meeting him at a birthday party. Moving to California with her new husband, my grandmother has only moved four times in the last 43 years. They have three kids together and five grandchildren.

Q: When you think of your childhood, what places come to mind? What sensory details do you remember vividly?

A: I would say probably Lacey, Washington and my grandparents. They were always there when we needed them. They were always in the same place, the same house. I remember sitting on the dock and fishing and making cookies with grandma. That was when grandma got tired of cleaning fish and said that if we caught fish we had to clean them ourselves. That was when I quit fishing.

Q: What was your childhood like?

A: I would say probably unstable from moving all the time. Uhm... The fact of living different place, different towns, different environments, different people like every year for the first twenty years [of my life].

Q: How did this affect how you saw your place in your family?

A: Always trying to make everyone else feel comfortable for the fact that I never felt comfortable. Being the oldest child, I always tried to make everyone else feel stable and comfortable.

Q: How did constantly moving affect you emotionally, intellectually, culturally, or spiritually?

A: Emotionally it would be by shutting down to protect your emotions. I think it gave me the drive to improve to be better. To go after the things I wanted, to be able to take care of myself. That's one of the things that scares papa, he can't take care of himself but I can. I lived in a town like Atwater then I moved in Seattle. I think it's one of the reasons I don't like to go out and go. Being insecure in big cities, they still scare me. It's like you feel insignificant. You never get the town bonding. You don't spend enough time to get those. That's one of the reasons I enforced the fact that we were only going to live in one town and the kids were only going to go to one school. I wanted to make sure they had stability. I guess it's the same thing with [you and your sister], that you have those ties to certain people to have the stability. Two of my sisters are still moving around, although one of my brothers is stable. It affected us all, just in two different ways.

Q: Did it ever get easier moving as you got older?

A: No. I don't like change, I don't like being uprooted which is probably why I wanted to move after I got retired. Now I'm debating it because I don't know if I want to put myself through that again.

Q: How long was it until you felt stable and comfortable?

A: I don't know that you ever do.

Q: Why?

A: Because you always feel like it could be pulled out from under you for any reason. It's like you're always looking for something that's going to pull the ground out from under you and everything will be gone. And that's kinda why I've always tried to protect [you and your sister] from your instability growing up [and tried to make sure] you had stability.

Q: Do you think this fear is from constantly moving throughout your childhood?

A: I think it's a combination of the environment. I grew up in and constantly moving. I was tossed between grandparents and parents. For example, my high school years I spent one in California, one in Washington, one in California, one in Washington. Every year it was a different school and different environment. So yeah, I think it was from moving about. You never get roots or get attached, you're going to be moving soon anyway.

Q: How do you think this changed how people saw you and the labels they gave you?

A: I think people thought that I was, I don't wanna say stuck up, but not outgoing. Introverted I guess, just not social.

Q: Did you have any escapes from reality?

A: I did a lot of babysitting to get away from the situation. Other than that, I just kept to myself and did reading or I remember my grandma bought me painting stuff. Like the paint by numbers I got you.

Q: Do you think you've finally found your place?

A: No, I don't think I'll ever find my place.

Many face displacement throughout their lifetimes whether it's just one move or several. My grandmother took over two decades for her to find stability, besides her grandparent's house. Displacement greatly affects someone's ability to find their place, and often makes them afraid to become attached to their surroundings. Now that she's retired, she wants to move out of state again because she became used to moving places that it's now ingrained in her character.

Soft Girl by Alexa Marquette

soft girl,
baby pink lace,
milky white skin,
slender, gentle fingers.
soft girl,
bruise painted body,
like constellations on
a canvas of flesh
soft girl,
the human personification
of a yield sign.
soft girl,
takes hits from life
that feel like the fists
of the people she
had trusted.
tough girl.

Losing Your Place: Divorce through a Teen's Point of View by Samantha Corgiat

I, having been raised in an active Catholic home, have always been taught that divorce is not an option. I completely agree with what I have been taught not only by my parents, but by my church, which is that when two people get married, they are not only making a promise to each other, but a promise to God that they will work together to do His work for the rest of their lives. When I get married, the purpose of the ceremony will not be to satisfy the law. The celebration will not be wholly over the fact that I found someone to be in love with. Rather I will stand at the altar, promising God that I will remain with this man I have chosen to be my husband for the rest of my life, and I will celebrate getting to have and keep such a promise with God. Of course the fact that I will have found a partner to share life's adventures with and to learn and grow with will be a fantastic part to the whole, but the center of my life and my marriage will be the Lord. I will refuse to let my human emotions, impulses, or even boredom, elements which sow the seeds of divorce in most cases, create a fracture in my relationship with God or my spouse.

Despite my beliefs, divorce is real, and becoming more common than not in today's society. The element of divorce that concerns me most is the effect it has on the children of the couple to be separated. Adults tend to minimize the effect divorce has on their children, when in reality it opens up the door to psychological and social disaster. I cannot imagine my parents not being together, not working through a fight, so it blows my mind how little of my friends have parents that are married. A lot of my friends' parents have boyfriends or girlfriends, which is another factor I am not sure how I would handle. These friends of mine with disunited parents all seem to have one thing in common, which is a blurred sense of where they belong. Through an interview with a close friend, who for privacy purposes I will be referring to as John Doe, whose parents separated when he was 13 years old, I discovered three fundamental truths that add up to this unclear view of "place".

First and foremost, divorce is something that crushes hope. It teaches kids that it is okay to give up when the going gets rough. Rather than working through their problems, kids see their

parents lose their tempers and take the easier way out. In the recent interview I conducted with John Doe, he professed that his initial thought upon hearing his parents' plan to part ways was that he "Didn't want it to be true...held onto hope that it would blow over and everything would go back to normal". When things did not return to their regular pattern, John's hope, not only in his family remaining a united front, but also in any kind of love ever being lasting, vanished. In that moment, he decided that the best way to avoid ever being let down again was to stop being hopeful. After all, if one has no hopeful expectations, one can never be let down.

The second repercussion I have witnessed is a decrease of self-confidence. John Doe confessed that he "Thought it (the divorce) would make my parents love me less. Whenever they fought it put them both in a bad mood, which made me want to just stay away from them, creating a physical, as well as emotional distance". Feeling unloved, unwanted by anyone, and especially one's own parents, would cause any person to feel unsure of themselves. A child is likely to constantly wonder whether he or she is of any importance when his or her parents are constantly occupied with their own problems. With the destruction of confidence in one's own family comes a lack of self esteem in general. It is common for divorce to leave kids asking themselves, "if not even my parents love me, how will anyone else?" In addition to lacking confidence in themselves, kids start to become insecure about what the future holds for them. They realize that life as they knew it is over, and begin to doubt that they will ever be part of a stable family again. In John Doe's case, the confusion he experienced as he watched his family divide is what caused him to lose faith in himself and his future. As a result he lashed out by disregarding schoolwork, a task his father had always been keen to emphasize the importance of. With the center of his life failing, John saw no point in striving to succeed any longer.

The final ramification on children that comes from the separation of their parents is a reluctance to commit. In John Doe's case, he had to witness the heartsickness of his mother, something no child should have to see. He mentioned that in the being of the divorce he saw his father significantly less often, and "Living with mom full time was hard because I hated seeing her in pain." Noticing what loving someone, then being let down could do to a person, John lost all interest in connecting himself deeply to anyone, or anything. Following the divorce, he decided that anytime he felt himself started to care about anything, he would detach himself from the situation immediately, terrified of being abandoned again. Later, when John started spending time with his father again, he recalled being accused of choosing one parent over the other. At times, he still feels that way, explaining, "If I hang out with my dad, my mom gets upset. If go with my mom, my dad gets mad. It's like no matter what I do, I'm always choosing between my parents. It puts me in a weird state of limbo, never knowing what the right thing to do is". Because of this, John has come to the solution of simply saying "whatever works" anytime he is asked which parent he would prefer to spend a given day with, rather than committing to one parent or the other. His biggest fear when it comes to commitment is that he will end up hurting the person he does not agree to commit to, so he decides to commit to no one.

All these elements make finding your place quite a trying task for a child with divorced parents. First, there is the hopelessness of ever finding a place at all, when the place you knew so well suddenly crumbles. Secondly, not having the self esteem to take risks that could lead to possible failure, or the confidence to trust other people, hinders a person from striving to go out and find his or her place in the world. Afraid not only to be hurt again, but also to hurt someone else prevents these kids from making commitments. The totality of these effects adds up to a hinderance of social and psychological capabilities, fogging a child's view of their own place in this world.

Part III. Pathways & Growth

Journey by Kendra Souza



I Will Overcome by Michael Hildebrandt

To take my hand, and walk with me a bit.

For that is all that I will ever ask.

To ask so much, I seek a perfect fit.

My journey thus holds no such easy task.

To long for friendship; Calling out in pain.

My voice falls silent—I am not the norm.

No, I will not contribute to your chain.

No, I can't change this. I will not conform.

For now, I know that I can make a change.

It's not in me, but in society.

To live, to laugh, to love. It's not so strange.

The closet opens. People gasp and flee.

Society, it holds us all in fear.

But now, I've never seen this world so clear.

Oh, the places I will go by Juryn Calimquim



“Oh, the places you’ll go.” I wanted to do things, big things, but I didn’t know what. I wanted to know what my purpose was, what I was going to be, and what I was going to do with the rest of my life, but I didn’t. It seemed as if everyone else had a plan, and I was the only one lost. In only a matter of months I was supposed to figure out my “plan.” So much pressure was put on me. Every family gathering, this was the topic of all conversations. “What are you going to be?” “What are you majoring in?” “What’s your plan?” I had all these life changing decisions I felt I had to make in such a short amount of time, when I could barely decide what to wear each morning. The truth is, I had no clue where I was going, but I soon realized that it was okay.

It was my sophomore year in high school when one of my friends, a senior, told me exactly what she was going to do once she graduated. She had it all planned out. She was going to go into the military, serve her time as an officer, get all her education paid for, and have her dream career as a traveling nurse. This inspired me and I figured by the time my senior year rolled around I would have it all figured out just as she did. However, I couldn’t of been more wrong. When it was finally my senior year, I was clueless as to what I wanted to do after I graduated, let alone how the whole college

thing worked. I had a deadline, and there was no time to waste going back and forth with majors or what school I wanted to go to. All of this was new to me, yet I had to figure it out or else it seemed as if I wouldn't be able to do these "big things", whatever they may be, that I have always dreamed of.

Everyone else seemed to have it all figured out, except for me. I was in a school filled with future doctors, lawyers, and pro athletes, and then there was me. I always thought that with all these years of school behind me, I would have found my true calling by now, but I hadn't. Some people had a passion for a particular sport, or a subject, but there was nothing that I learned, or became passionate enough about in my 17 years of life that I would want to do for the rest of it. I didn't want to get stuck hating the rest of my life because of a bad career choice. My mother is a prime example of this. Every time she comes home from work she seems so miserable. The last thing I wanted was for me to make the same mistake choosing a career, going into it, hating it, and being stuck with it. If I am going to spend the rest of my life doing something, I want it to be something I love not just something I have to do to make a living. But how would I do this with this deadline? Then I realized, I didn't have to nor was I alone.

As I grew more and more stressed over what I should do, it became clear I needed to get some advice and who better to turn to than my parents. Talking to my parents, they gave me the assurance that I didn't need to know exactly how the rest of my life was going to fan out. They also made it clear that this decision that I was making wasn't going to permanently affect my life like I had thought. The confusion, the indecisiveness, the anxiety, they could relate to because they had both been in the same position. My mother told me about her switch from being a kindergarten teacher to a registered nurse, and that even though being a nurse stresses her out to the max, there were still things she loved about her job and wouldn't change for the world. That was her place.

What this taught me was that this "deadline", really doesn't mean much, for I still have so much more life to live, and time to figure out what my sole purpose really is. As far as those who seem to have their entire life figured out, that can always change. Each day we learn new things about ourselves; what we like, what we dislike. We are constantly changing and so are our passions and goals. Experience, trial and error, and time are needed to find your purpose, your place. You can't just wait for this place to come to you, it has to be found, and it's with these experiences, both good and bad, that it will. "When things start to happen, don't worry. Don't stew. Just go right along. You'll start happening too." -Dr.Suess

Where Do You Stand? by Lynsey Hillberg



Crossing Over by Kendra Souza

A teardrop
that won't fall
A teddy bear
worn out and dirty
A locket
with two smiling faces
A picture
that will never be framed
A prayer
repeated every night
A journal
hidden under my pillow
A single phrase
I can never unhear
A sympathetic stare
I wish to avoid
A child's painting
of a happy family
All these things are mine
They are my childhood
And they fill my home now
As I cross into adulthood
I look around
And I see these things
I close my eyes
And I see these things
They are mine
They will always be my childhood

The



Beginning by Julez Craddock

Once I was a seed
Then I grew
I was on my hands and
knees
Wow time really flew

10 years later
I grew to 3'4"
Soon I would be player
I wonder what's in store

It's been 18

I'm about to open a new
door
So far I've kept clean
But yet I still wonder is there
more

Will I cower
I ask myself
Is my time really worth 10 an
hour
Or should I trust myself

They tell me to go to college
That's what I need
It will give me the knowledge
So I can succeed
I opened the new door
It came to a room
I saw 3 more

I'm lost and confused
I have to choose soon
Time can't be reused

I start to head forward
Thinking I had nothing to
lose
Then I became hesitant

Forward seemed to be a
ruse

In which I was a resident
I almost forgot
There were still 2 more

So there I thought
Where do I belong

I wish I could peek behind
each door
I don't want to choose wrong

While Society said straight
It didn't seem precise
I could feel their hate

I have to choose right

I looked left
It felt full of stress
I had to choose
In what felt best

I stepped to my right
Grabbing the knob I closed
my eyes
I gripped it tight

I knew if I fell
I could still rise
I opened the door and
walked in

Scared I chose wrong
I opened my eyes
I thought it'd be my downfall

There I realized
I was a breed
Whose life wasn't finalized
When I was a seed

The Path is Narrow by Britiel Bethishou

It's not every day that I doubt the career I'm pursuing, but it does happen often. My older cousin counseled me that to pursue a job in the medical field will be a difficult but rewarding undertaking. She's a pharmacist, and is currently teaching as well. Sometimes I feel so overwhelmed with everything I have to do to reach my goal that I consider abandoning it completely. But I've come this far, and I'm not giving up.

My ultimate goal in life is to be a medical doctor, a physician. I want to be able to help people who are hurt or sick get better and get on with their lives. I feel like it's my duty to humanity. The path to becoming a doctor is narrow to begin with, and only gets narrower. There is immense knowledge and responsibility that comes with being a doctor, and so it takes many, many years before anyone can obtain a license to practice medicine. It starts in high school, in my opinion. When I went to high school I took classes that challenged me; I always enrolled in honors or AP courses whenever possible. I was told doing this would make college a little bit easier, and anyways that it was smart to start early. My grades were always good, about ninety percent A's and ten percent B's. Doing well in high school means you can apply to and later attend better colleges, which in turn help you get into better medical schools. In college, you can major in anything you want and still apply to and get into medical schools. There are just a few specific courses that most medical schools require a student to take in order to be eligible as an applicant. I could major in English if I want and still get into med school. But I didn't. I'm majoring in biology, which is a very demanding major, which makes the most sense to me. In addition to doing well in school and having a very high GPA, medical schools want applicants to be very well rounded as a person. This means partaking in extracurriculars, like research, volunteering, working, internships, shadowing doctors, and more. Sometimes I feel so stressed about everything on my current schedule-- school, homework, volunteering, clubs-- that I wonder if majoring in biology is worth it. In the end, I always manage to convince myself that this is the best decision for my future.

And that's what it's all about, isn't it? Our future? I want to have a bright future. I want to live a fulfilling life, and I sincerely believe that working as a doctor is what I need to do. Then there's always the desire to provide for my future family. I would never want them to go without, and I want to be able to give my children a bright future too. For as long as I can remember, my family members have been drilling it into my head that I should be a doctor when I grow up. I can't ever recall a time when I wanted to be anything else. Education is very important in my family, and so pursuing a career which requires lots of education was pretty much my only option. I don't, however, feel restricted by this in any way. Being constantly encouraged to be a doctor has actually made me want to be one. I've gone around telling everyone I've met for the last eight or nine years that I was going to be a doctor when I'm older. One downside is that I can't very well back down now, can I? There have been so many expectations put into this that I feel like I would be letting everyone down if I just quit this path. I hate that word. Expectations. It just makes me feel tired when I hear it. It's never used in a good way. I've always heard it used in a way that requires time and energy from me. In addition to being expected to continue walking this path until the end, I can't stop because I never gave myself the chance to develop other interests. I have no idea what I would do instead.

It only gets harder. That's the realization I wake up with every day. The path only gets narrower. And of course, I've always known that. Nobody told me it would be easy to try to become a doctor. My place in this world is to struggle for a little bit. I sacrifice some of my social life, I sacrifice an easier, carefree life, but I gain my purpose. I know my place is to walk a narrow path that leads me to happiness.

Star-Gazing by Meagan Gallman

I started quite some dream last night about how it would feel
if I grabbed hold of a far-off star and let it lead me across the
seas.

They say to follow the current, to just go with the flow,
but something else is calling me, and where it is I do not know.
Yet I will find the tinkling voice calling from the well,
singing from the hilltops through the rain and through the hail.
It wants to take me somewhere new where I have never been,
and you can never be too sure of what might lie ahead.



The Imagination Association by Samantha Corgiat

“That’s the real trouble with the world, too many people grow up” -Walt Disney. This is a quote written by a man I look up to very much because he promotes the importance of staying young forever. Some people see eternal youth as an impossibility, but Walt Disney and I look at adulthood as something that one should never fully strive to acquire. Being an adult is scary not only because it means it is time to take on responsibility, but more so because it puts creative minds at risk. When people become adults, they stop wanting to be spontaneous. When you're an adult, everything must have order, must be done for a reason, must follow a schedule, and must be serious. I fear the day that I will question the point of going midnight bowling, or driving to Denny’s at 1:00 am to satisfy a crippling pancake craving. Sleeping is far less valuable than time spent memory making with friends memory making.

Due to my reluctance to ever fully grow up, I have reached the verdict that my place is in an elementary school classroom. Having tutored first graders at a local after school program for the past two years, and begun my education as a Liberal Studies major, my love for the spontaneity, energy, imagination, and pure joy that can only be found in children could not be more clear to me. My favorite thing about kids is that they do not take life too seriously. They think about the happy things, and wholly forget the bad. They speak the truth, no matter how brutal, and see no reason not to. They are forgiving, do not hold grudges, and are quick to come

to the aid of their peers in times of trouble. Those traits, as well as several others I have witnessed in elementary classrooms over the last two and a half years, solidify my belief that I would much rather spend my life working with children than sitting in some office, or traveling around in a business suit. A box full of crayons, glue, books and soon-to-be art projects seems to me like a much more satisfying load than a briefcase filled with paperwork.

My goal once I have my own classroom, my place, will be to promote creativity, and the frequent use of, what I consider to be the most important element of the mind, the imagination. After all, in the words of Albert Einstein, "Logic will get you from A to Z, but imagination will get you everywhere". With the use of imagination my students will travel the world, go back in time, visit unexplored planets, write stories, compose music, all without ever leaving campus. I am confident that there will be a substantial amount of self-discovery in these imaginative journeys. By using the imagination on a regular basis, students will constantly have their creative juices flowing, share the things they are thinking, and bounce ideas off other students. This will teach teamwork and collaboration. Most importantly, imagination is key to staying young.

Although I strongly believe my place to be in a classroom, the physical room is not what I am referring to. The environment that is my place will be created by the students I teach. With that in mind, my students and I will be spending a lot of time outside, another place that I feel the imagination can run wild. Not only that, but I believe that spending time in the outdoors plays an equally effective role in keeping a youthful spirit. Being one with nature gives people the power to open their minds, take a step back and see how little their own personal problems matter. It is a great reminder of how small you are, and how much bigger the world around you is. Sometimes it is easy to forget that the world does not revolve around you, and that there is always someone who has it worse. Feeling small is a crucial part of staying young. Children do not stress about problems for extended periods of time, and they do not think too deeply on those issues either. Rather, they think of a simple solution, and put it into action. They do not over think or have second guesses if their plans are different than expected. Children live in the moment, and without regret. If adults would venture out into nature more often, their sense of youthfulness could be replenished.

To grow up is to lose the tendency to find happiness in simple things. When a person reaches adulthood, he or she suddenly begins to believe that "money" and "happiness" are interchangeable terms. For this reason I will make it a point to emphasize the lack of value money actually has, and promote the donation of excess money to charities. In order to keep hearts and minds young, children must learn to be generous, and realize that money is made enjoyable when it is given away. Of course some must be kept for survival, but most of the money people deem a necessity, is in reality excess, for luxury. I will remind students that luxury is not happiness. Nothing material is. Children are aware of this, and exemplify that fact through their constant desire to play games with one another, to share discoveries, drawings, and creations they make with everyone around, and to give tons of hugs. Children are naturally cognizant of the fact that the best things in life cannot be bought, which is yet another reason I wish to stay young minded.

I am a child at heart, and forever will be. Children are simple minded, but no less intelligent than most adults. They see and say things as they are, without beating around the bush. Kids have very impressive imaginations, and are thus able to create most intricate adventures out of seemingly nothing. I myself find happiness in simple things, like family movies and cookie baking. I avoid stress by remembering that no matter what troubles appear, I will get through it and life will go on. I remember that I am a minor detail in a gargantuan universe, which I am inclined to think is the way children feel being surrounded by adults. With that said, being in a classroom where I am constantly reminded of the importance and wonder of being young is truly the place I belong.



Know Your Place by Lynsey Hillberg

My first place was Jiangxi, China. That is where I was born in 1998. In that place the government had decreed that couples could have only one child. In that place the culture said that a couple should have a male child. Giving birth to a male child brought honor to a woman. Giving birth to a female child brought disgrace. How could a family prosper and enjoy life without a male child? In that place there were many baby girls like me. There was no place for us in China.

When I was almost two years old, I came to a new place. Everything was different. Sounds were different. The words I knew didn't make sense with these new sounds. Smells were different. Foods were strange. I must not have had enough to eat in my last place, because I would hide food in my car seat and in my pockets. In my old place, I must have eaten salty foods and fish, because in my new place my favorite food was smoked salmon.

In my new place, I had someone to help me, my sister Joslyn. She was four years old. She played with me and talked to me, and helped me with all these new things. She stayed with me, and she shared her toys with me. She loved me, my mom and dad loved me too, even when I cried and cried. It was hard to be in a new place. Would I be able to stay in this new place? Or, would I go to a different place? I didn't know. After days and weeks and months and years, it wasn't a new place anymore. It was my place.

Growing up my place was sitting at my drawing table with pencils, pastels and water colors. It was also on the piano bench practicing the music that was assigned to me, and playing the music I composed in my

head. My place was taking care of my parakeet, my gecko, my dogs and my chickens. My place was with my family on trips to the ocean, to the mountains to museums and art galleries and theme parks.

Now my place is a university student, striving towards another place, one that I am not sure of yet. I want to complete an undergraduate degree in Biology and then go to either Medical School or Veterinary School. I have three and a half years here, before I go to another place. When I do, I know I'll be prepared for that new place. It will be a place that I have chosen myself.

Finding New Paths by Cheyenne Johnson



Part IV. Nature & Freedom

An Open Letter to Nature by Jasmine Singh

Dear Nature,

You just might be the best thing that has ever happened, and I've encountered sliced bread. You're the one who is accepting of all, even though you get angry sometimes. You bring serenity when times are rough. Your schedule is also quite flexible so I can see you when I please.

You show me that the sun will always come up, until it won't, but then it won't matter. I never show enough gratitude. I don't think I have even shown how much I care. But deep down inside, I think you know I care. There are others who don't get to enjoy your presence. I feel bad for them. They don't know what a great friend they are losing. I can go outside and read a book with you. We can talk. You're a great listener. We go to places where the WiFi doesn't reach and my phone becomes useless. There I feel an even stronger connection.

We think together and create plans. I get my agenda and we plan the week. You remind me to write some time in to keep for myself, and possibly for you too. I assure you that I'll never forget you, until I do, but then I won't even know myself by then. But thank you for being you.

Sincerely,

Jasmine

Flourishing in
Desert by
Peña

the
Andres



the ocean's call by Celeste Salcedo

She tilts her head back, closes her eyes, and takes a deep breath. The scent of salt, sharp and poignant, reaches her senses first. Then, there's the melodious racket of seagull calls, the rumbling sound of the incoming tide, the cold water against bare toes, perfect footprints left behind in the wet, compacted sand, in its rich brown color so different from the grainy white it actually is.

The sky is blue, blue, blue, and clearer than glass, the sun bright and high and warm on her shoulders. The faint, familiar scent of sunscreen lingers, just under the other smells she's experiencing. Kelp, washed ashore in bunches, winds up under her feet soon enough when she doesn't look where she's going. A gaggle of small children run by, plastic shovels making hollow thunks against brightly colored buckets, their excited chatter foreign and undistinguishable from the roar of the crashing waves.

A surfer runs by with a board the color of ripe bananas, so yellow that she practically squints to see its design clearly, shielding her eyes from the sun's rays. She almost misses the shell fragment just under her heel, as it is white and half buried, but she picks it up anyway, running her fingers over its jagged edge and weathered creases, before a lifeguard's telltale red uniform flashes past and a whistle blows, half in jest, towards someone who's in over their head.

"Aren't you going to go in?"

Her heart feels as if it'll burst from her chest. She's floating, she's flying, she's soaring. The shell in her hand digs in her palm but not uncomfortably. Her eyes stay fixed on the rippling water, the tide crashing in white foam, getting close enough to feel but not close enough to submerge.

Her eyes close again. There's laughter right next to her ear, nearby, but then fading.

"Come on!"

An arm brushes hers, feet pound, and she hears it all, knows by the shrieks that arise that the chilly water has caressed the limbs of others, and a smile settles on her lips.

How can she explain it?

It's more than euphoria, it's more than freedom, it's more than intensity.

Aren't you going to go in?

It's home.

Farming by Jierem Paloma

Once upon a time,
a farmer ploughs his land.
Perfect and fitting for his needs,
Tomatoes, cabbages, potatoes,
Food that he enjoys is placed into the plot of his land.
It was his land.
Nearby another farmer lived,
He does not take care of his land.
His pesticides overflowed into his neighbor's
And the man who owned the perfect land,
No longer owned a perfect land.
The man dies from eating bug infested food.
His harvest was no longer able to sustain him.



Trees



Water



Paths



Mountains



Love



Benches



Stairwells



Flowers



Flying



Castles



Music



Animals

My Places by Lynsey Hillberg

Freedom by Alexa Marquette

The music
I heard was
composed by
night,
elaborated
with the colors
of
a city
of liberation

Ducks 'n
Samantha Corgiat



Trees by

My Place Is What I Make It by Chloe Boswell-Dondorf



Part V. where we belong

Breathe by Michael Hildebrandt



Stacked by Ryan James

A question set up,
To cause discomfort and pain.
They don't even know my name,
Yet they cause me unbearable shame.
My rocks stack in my mind
Leaning left then right
ready to fall at anytime
Walking through the hall
All eyes glaring my way
Whispers and mumble
The rocks begin to weigh
When will they crumble
When will they fall
It's hard to stand anymore
I want to fall to the floor
I need to go
But where
My rocks have tumbled
Nowhere left to go
So



Place by Jackson Cummins

With them, I am Jack, J, Jek, a slew of nicknames. I am the quite voice on call, the mad laugh at the end of a game, the cheer of victory. I am a friend, a confidant, an ally, and a teammate. They spend time with me, and I with them, laughing together, screaming together, playing together, having fun.

I am not Jack.

When I am with those two, I am Sky. I am that joyful laugh, the concerned glance, the reassurances and love of a friend and family. With them, I am open and free, showing everything and hiding nothing. We share the pains of loss and betrayal, and we hold each other up. We are

pillars of support for each other, best friends through thick and thin, ready to help with a smile or hug or a shoulder to cry on for each other. We are inseparable, friends til the end of time.

Nothing will tear us apart.

I am not Sky.

With her, who I am doesn't matter. I am the kiss, the smile, the laugh and the gaze of sheer adoration. I am the voice that delivers mush and cheesy lines with a heartfelt smile, in love and loving it. She calls me Sky, and we have no secrets. I tell her everything and will always be there for her, and she is the same for me. We will not allow anything to break our friendship at least, as neither will survive now without the other in their life.

I am not the one who doesn't matter.

With my family and strangers, I am Jackson. A small, quiet boy who likes to read and play video games. I don't speak much, and I seclude myself. They don't know how they feel about me, and I keep myself from them. Given time, they may see past the shy face and quiet voice, and see the joy, support, and sunshine within. They may hear the name given only to those trusted the most, see the love carried, and hear the laughter of a person who has no gender, no titles, and no cares.

I am not Jackson.

Alone, I am nobody.

Alone, we drop every façade. Alone, we drop the face of the shy Jackson, the rambunctious Jack, the caring Sky, and the loving one whose name does not matter. We are quiet. We are somber. We talk, we cry, we sing, and we die. Alone, we wake up every morning. Alone, we take a pill every morning, and wait until the tendrils of darkness and depression and dissociation peel away from our skin and mind, let us feel like our body belongs to us. Alone, we sit, watching and laughing and crying. Alone, we work to break our walls, to let ourselves be Free when we are not alone. Alone, we enjoy books, and games. Alone, we contemplate death. Alone, we speak to our therapist. Alone, we write. Alone, we craft these new worlds that spring forth from our mind and put them down onto paper and print and hide them away from all eyes, cherishing them and keeping them to ourselves. They tell Sky, Jackson, and the one with no name to release these works, to share them. Alone, we are anxious. Alone, we are peaceful. Alone, we talk to

ourselves. Alone, we listen to ourselves. Alone, we debate. Alone, we struggle against ourselves. Alone, we deal with the loneliness and oppression of company, alone we deal with heat and cold and life and death and light and darkness. Alone, we are many.

When we are alone, four are awake.

When we are alone, Sky tries to bring us to work. Jackson works at the barriers we held in place, trying to show the happiness we have now, trying to open us up to the world and allow us to be open and free with the world. Kerry works from the inside, working through the backlogged years of depression, anxiety, fear, anger, and despair we kept inside and never let out. And the one with no name seeks outlet, turns to pens and words and keys and sounds, funneling what they can out through these, letting the scum within us pour out and become something beautiful.

I am many, and we are one. We are different, and we are similar. Many others are no doubt like us, but we are unique as well.

We have no name, and we have many names. We wander through endless halls, changing faces and names and titles with every step. We search desperately for a mask that fits so we can rip it off and bare our soul to the world at last.

I have many names, and I only care about a few of them. My home is alone, and my safest place has few with me. I am a creature of solitude and yet companionship. I am depressed and I am joyful. I am one of many contradictions, and many consistencies. I do not care, yet I am so careful. My places are varied and yet the same, for I am many, and we are never Alone.

A Place by Stormi Gentry

Everyone deserves a place,
A place where they belong.
A place to feel welcomed, and safe, and most importantly
Loved.
Everyone deserves love,
To feel like no matter what happens,
Someone will be by their side.
Loneliness corrupts even the lightest souls
And fills them with negativity.
Happiness is being free to speak and joke and go about life
Without fear.
Everyone deserves a place.

Hopeless Romantic by Kait Breton

The iris shines in the moonlight
Bundles of them smell so sweet
I meet my love to my delight
My heart began to beat

I saw him for the first time
It was love at first sight
He was all mine
As we danced through the night

He loved me
I loved him with all my heart
I felt so free
We were both hit by cupid's dart
I was confident he was the one
Until my dream was finally done

Destination America by Andres Peña

The light skin, blonde hair, ocean like blue eyes—I was so amazed. Coming to a land I never knew before, a land “flowing with milk and honey” was a unique experience. Though actual milk and honey didn’t flow like in the biblical land of Canaan, it was described to me this way. Being born in Mexico, raised in Mexico, educated in Mexico, people would always describe the U.S. or as we would say “El otro lado”, as a place where money was abundant. I imagined a land of butterflies and hummingbirds. I imagined the other side of the border to be place where there was balloons on every corner of the street, where these light skinned angel like people would hug and say hi to everyone on every corner of the street. I dreamed of this land of freedom.

It happened so quick. One day I was playing with my compas on the dirt road with sticks as guns and brooms as horses and the next day I was on my mom’s lap with my dad and two other siblings in a truck for three people on our way to “El otro lado”. A couple days later, we were in “El otro lado”. A family of five living in one room with a shared kitchen and bathroom. I remember the light skin, blonde hair, ocean like blue eyes. These are the angels I imagined. Where are the balloons? Where are all the butterflies and hummingbirds?

My destination was America. I didn’t expect this to be America. I didn’t see angels. I did see demons. I didn’t see balloons, but I saw hate. I didn’t see butterflies and hummingbirds. Instead I saw racism and injustice. However, America is part of me. America gave me a life. I saw past the imperfections of America. I am not from America. This isn’t my real mother country, but it is that mother that raised me into who I am today. I love America. I may not be from America, but I am an American with destination.

Shadows by Chrysta Borba

Social identities can be inhibiting whether it be in social situations, finding a job, or fitting in. However, they can be advantages in some cases. They provide the base of one’s identity. They give you a background, they give you individuality, and they are an important aspect of who you are. My gender is perceived as weak and frail, but it is not who I am. I know my sexual orientation creates enemies with those who disagree. I know my religion is frowned upon by those who see it as inferior. There might not make me unique but they are part of who I am. Others might see me as simply a white female from a low-class family, but that is not who I am. People in today’s society seem to forget that.

Although social identities do provide the basic structure for your identity, people seem to think that’s all someone is. They don’t see your pain, passion, or the stories your eyes can tell. They

see your religion, sexuality, social class, and even skin color. They rarely see you. This can prevent people from finding their place and causes so many to feel lost. It creates barriers and pain, it kills the possibility of relationships (platonic or sexual) and inhibits the possibility of growth among the community. If more people were able to see past the surface, able to see the story behind these labels, so much could happen. I believe if people were able to open their



minds and expose themselves to what is different fascinating things could happen.

You by Jackson Cummins

There are many places in all of our lives. These places can be actual places, a house, a library, a park, or even a cafeteria. They can be mindsets, the quiet of solitude, the gentle softness of one wrapped within blankets and kept warm and safe by the comfort that surrounds them, the fiery anger of one outraged at some defeat or aspect, or even the support of a friend. They can be the environment of a game, a book, or a story. Some of us have many places, and others have few. Some places we cherish, some places we fear, some places we love, and some places we hate. In some places you are at your best, and others at your worst. Each place is different, and so are you. Nobody is the same throughout every place, and everyone changes. The only thing that remains the same is your soul, your core, your heart, whatever you wish to call it. Deep down, something sacred and unique remains, touched and shifted by the things around you but still undeniably *you*. Some run and hide from this, others embrace and cherish it, and still others ignore it or push it down so deep that it can never be found. In one place, or in many, this precious thing will shine out and show your true light, who *you* really are to the world, whether you want to or not. In these places, be it for better or worse, you are at your truest in these places.

Tell me, when do you become *you*?