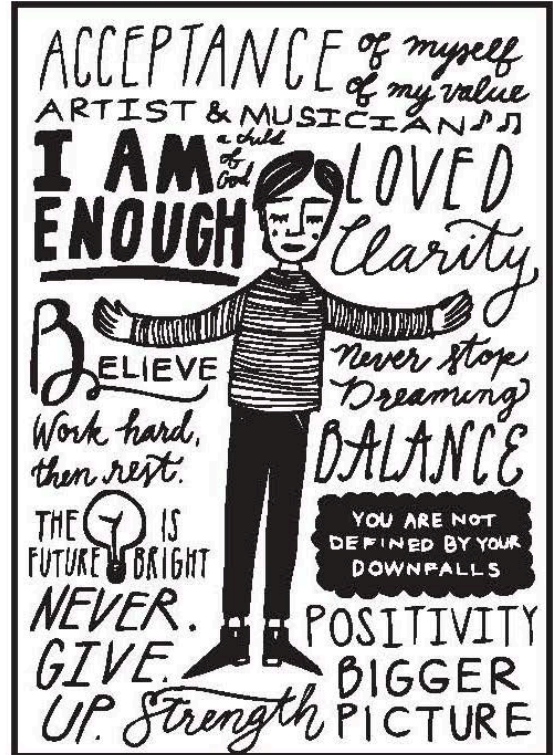
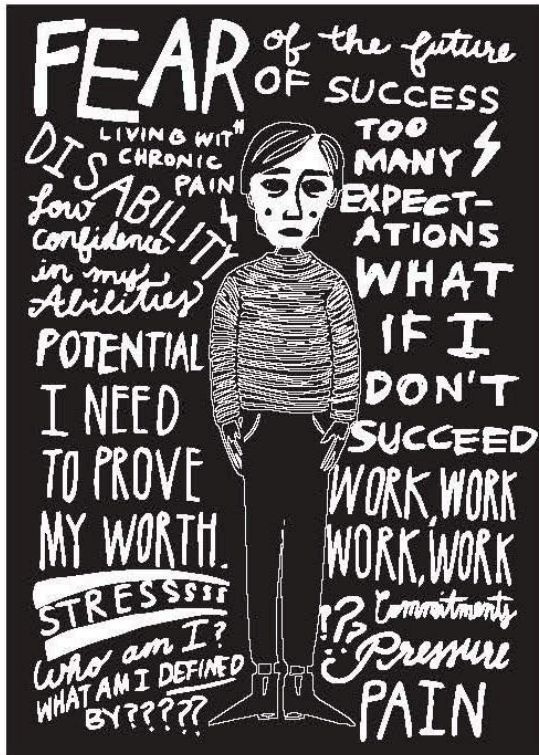


KNOW YOUR PLACE





LISTEN TO TRUTH. KNOW YOUR PLACE.

IMAGES BY ESTHER MOONEYHAM

*“If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy,
the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.”*

-C. S. Lewis

A POEM HALF-FULL
BY HANNAH GISSLER

One step in the right direction
Is often four in the wrong.
An attempt to achieve perfection,
Normally the aim of the throng.

But to accept ones' own situation
May not be simple, that is for sure.
But I do have one final summation,
Pessimism is never a cure.

TRANSITION
BY MARY GILMORE

Crying, whimpers, fists
Closets, dark, silence
Gentle whispers, car ride, uncertainty
Warmth, kisses, love
At last

DORM
BY KATIE PAREDES

The white walls so plain
Trying to make it my own
How can this be home?

“WHAT WILL I BE?”

BY BRANDON BETTENCOURT

Off to college to earn a degree,
but which do I pick,
for there are many to select from you see.
My choice will dictate the rest of my life so I must choose with thought.
I must delve deep into the loves and passions I have sought.
At the same time, I consider what will take me far in my journey;
business or economics maybe?
Maybe I could be a spinner of superhero tales or those of an anti-hero renegade?
No, for that would surely cause my progress to retrograde.
I will stick with an accounting job.
Yes for that is what accumulates money,
and money is our world’s ultimate and essential key.



PHOTO BY BRANDON BETTENCOURT

“We are torn between nostalgia for the familiar and an urge for the foreign and strange. As often as not, we are homesick most for the places we have never known.” –Carson McCullers

WHAT A MYTH . . . BY MAXIMILIANO RODRIGUEZ

What sets me apart from the rest of humanity can be observed in my line of birth, in my taste in music, literature, and the fact that when I am running low on energy I depend on Duracell batteries whereas my peers use Energizer. I shop at Costco and not Kmart, I smoke Lucky's and not Marlboro reds, and this makes me who I am today. There is hardly a damned difference between a five-year-old, and myself, but how I cling to my individuality! Should I not cling to it; who would I be without being chained to something like my "individuality"?

If all that I have to show for my lifetime is an AARP card and a family scrapbook, there will have been nothing that I did that no one has, or will have, done. I will have gotten married, had a family, and bought a house with an off-white picket fence with a "customized" auto parked in the driveway to really make my mark on this world. My only mark will have been all the fecal matter and trash I left behind my rotting corpse.

But that will have been enough: to live as did my father, and his father before him, and his father before him... There is very little that I can do or amount to that can truly be my very own in history and to come. That is what lets me to sleep every night: "you are not the first and you definitely will not be the last. Rest easy, #60091." This will have been adapted from what my wife Jane will tell me every night before crawling under the blankets to escape this mediocrity: "This is not the first day that I love you and it definitely will not be the last. Rest up, Sisyphus."

THE JONESES: THE ABSURDITY BY MAXIMILIANO RODRIGUEZ

I was born into the Joneses. My rank in society has already been picked for me. What am I to do when there is such a blatant existential lack in the framework society has chosen for me: a worker, a prole, a consumer? It beckons the Self to emerge: we can either ask the sun for a reprieve or we can grit our teeth and smile like bastards.

But even then we are limited! One may say 'We are all too human,' but that would be too easy! We have come to a paradoxical point in our existence where we are dependent on society rather than it being dependent on us. I have yet to encounter a machine that can get the job done without the human being directing it! Even still, this does not bode well for the human being! We are, as a whole—myself included—so afraid of breaking away from what society demands. It seems, as John, "the Savage" in Huxley's Brave New World, and Christopher McCandless, protagonist of Krakauer's *Into the Wild*, have so boldly observed, the only way to cut ties from society is to go outside of its boundaries and die alone. Such boldness is beyond my scope of being (at this point in time). At any rate, what I can control is whether I choose to smile or to shrug my undaunted shoulders, or die alone with a bottle in my hand.

I would like to think that I can live among the Joneses and still maintain, but sometimes it seems beyond the realm of the sane! "Get busy working or get busy dying" my capitalist neighbor says to me, as he unbuttons the top buttons of his holiday sweater. To some degree, I must participate, I must mingle with Absurdity. I must defend the benefit of having my little life and the absurdities therein. I must keep living, even if the impetus is not apparent. I must go on.



PHOTO BY MAXIMILIANO RODRIGUEZ

“Be easy. Take your time. You are coming home to yourself.” - Nayyirah Waheed

“Don't think. It complicates things. Just feel, and if it feels like home, then follow its path.” -R. M. Drake

KNOWING YOUR PLACE BY LAUREN MARTINEZ

Times are Changing--
Moments which seem everlasting, omnipresent,
Are suddenly Tangible and fleeting--
We are told to Live in the moment,
To treat Every Day as our last--

But if We Act as though there is no tomorrow,
What is left of our future? Should we not
Plan ahead? For college,
For employment?--
We must Sustain ourselves as adults
While never losing Our Childhood spirit--

Though this balance
Is hard to come by,
It becomes a necessity through all
Which we are expected to endure--
While at the same time,
Remembering where we came from--

We Can Leave,
But Never Forget--
Our Place is ours to Remember,
No matter what may Change--

IDENTITY CRISIS BY CLAUDIA GUEVARA

I am not Mexican. Not every Hispanic is Mexican like everybody thinks. There are hundreds of other races in Latin America, including Columbian, Puerto Rican, Brazilian, and Nicaraguan. My family comes from El Salvador, a tiny country in Central America that is about the size of Massachusetts. When I explain to people that I am Salvadorian and not Mexican, they always say “that’s the same thing”. Let’s get one thing clear, it is NOT the same thing. We both come from Aztec origins, but at one time, a group of Aztecs broke away and migrated to El Salvador. Our cultures and customs, even our language, changed throughout the years, and became what it is now, something *very* different than the Mexican culture.

I am not offended by being called Mexican, but nobody wants to be mistaken for somebody they are not. I don’t resent or even hate the Mexican community or its culture, I actually have a lot of Mexican friends and participate in some Mexican traditions. I am, however, a proud *Salvadoreña* who doesn’t let the stereotype others place on me affect my love and pride of my country.

I say I am a proud Salvadorian, but I often question myself and wonder why I don’t do the things other Salvadorians do. I eat Salvadorian food, I speak Spanish fluently (and yes Spanish from El Salvador is a bit different than Spanish from Mexico), I even occasionally listen to Salvadorian music, but this is not all it takes to get in touch with your culture. I constantly ask my parents about the history of El Salvador, and I have tried to adopt some of the customs we have. Salvadorians value family above all else and I want to become closer to my family. I want to get more involved with the rest of the Salvadorian community in my town and school. I want Salvadorian friends and I want to learn about them and their customs and ideals.

I want it to be obvious to people that I am not only Hispanic, but I am Salvadorian, and I am proud of it.

“It’s a funny thing coming home. Nothing changes. Everything feels the same, looks the same, even smells the same. You realize what’s changed is you.” –F. Scott Fitzgerald

TREES BY HANNAH GISSLER

Where I come from, if you are driving at dawn to who-knows-where down an old, gravel road, one would expect to see trees, and that is all. This is not because nothing else is to be seen, but that nothing will stand out in such prevalence. The trees blend together into a wall of green and grey and the rattling of the car windows falls into the background. When you drive long enough you no longer see the barbed wire fences, rusty “Beware of Dog” signs, old mail boxes, and unfinished projects in the yards of your neighbors. Unlike people in town, your drive would not get a view of anyone’s well-manicured front lawn and flower bushes (if such things even existed here). Neither would you see the trees in sterile rows as you would in the Valley. But that is why we live here; that is why we chose the wilderness.

It may be hard to imagine the appeal of our life in the trees, and I even wonder at this myself. The winter brings snow and the summer brings fire, for one is constantly at the mercy of nature. Power outages are a seasonal occurrence, lasting a few weeks on occasion. Going shopping is a daylong endeavor when one accounts for the driving time. We will drive thirty minutes to get to the closest Walmart and an hour and a half to Costco. We would never walk to our friend’s house, or even to our closest neighbor’s, unless we want a workout.

But, surprisingly, we stay. “Why?” you may ask. Well, because we can sing in our driveways anytime we feel like it and do not have to hear any complaints from our neighbors when our dogs bark at night. We are constantly surrounded by wildlife, no matter the time, with many deer, squirrels, birds, and bats. We can see the stars at night and can go weeks without hearing a car horn from our kitchen tables. We experience a different meaning of freedom than most; we experience the freedom of the wilderness.

With a lifestyle so different from what the average Californian experiences, it is easy feel like we live in two different worlds. When everyone has chickens in the back and dead grass in the front, we find a new identity. We find freedom as we live among the trees.



PHOTO BY HANNAH GISSLER

100% COTTON: MACHINE WASH WARM BY KATIE PAREDES

I'm wearing my mom's blue shirt. She hasn't worn it since the late nineties, and I don't think she even knows it's still around, let alone that I have it, but I do and I wear it, nonetheless.

I found it this summer. I spent most of my summer on different vacations, and on the rare occasion I was home, I was aimlessly gathering things for college. I don't even remember what brought me to my parents' closet. My mom and I, typically, don't share clothes. But that's where I found the shirt.

High up on a shelf, in a clear plastic tote with seven other sweaters I'd also never seen my mom wear. But the blue shirt was different. It's a denim button down. It's faded and worn and soft. It has a small patch on the left, breast-pocket that says "Disneyland/ Established 1955" with a small picture of Mickey Mouse. I assume she got it there when she took my older brothers in 1995, two years before I was born. Yet somehow it found its place, next to Christmas sweaters, high up on her shelf.

It's too big. I have a feeling it's still too small for my mom, but it's too big for me. It hangs off my shoulders and it is too big in the waist. Contrary to the popular fashion of oversized and slouchy, this shirt, while fitting that description, is no longer fashionable. I have to wear it with leggings if I wear it outside the house, which I rarely do, because it's too short to be a dress but, as a shirt, it's too big.

I brought it with me. When Mallory came over, on the Wednesday before I left home, to help me pack my clothes, I packed it. I knew I wouldn't wear it to class because it wasn't "in style". I doubted I would clean the apartment in it. But I brought it anyway.

I wear the shirt. I wear it around the dorm. I wear it before bed. I wear it while getting ready in the morning. I wear it in the evening after I've worn an uncomfortable outfit all day. And today, I wore it to class. I debated wearing it, which is not like me at all. I've never cared what people thought, but college made me care. So I'm surprised that I'm wearing the shirt.

It smells like my mom. I don't know how it could possibly still hold her scent after all this time it's been in the closet, unworn. But it does. I don't wear perfume when I wear the shirt. I know exactly why I don't. Because then it would smell like me, and I like that it smells like my mom.

It's only now while writing this that I realize why I wear it. I notice that I wear it when I miss my home. When I need her scent to comfort me, I press my face into the sleeve and, for a second, I'm home. My mom has no idea that I wear it or that I have it, but it's the most important shirt I brought with me.



PHOTO BY KATIE PAREDES

UNTITLED BY CLAUDIA GUEVARA

Hated,
Ignored,
Rejected,
Because of Him,
Because I dare to believe,
Because I choose not to conform,
I stand true to my faith in the face of oppression and adversity;
Because I choose to fight for what is right,
Because I dare to deny the world,
Because of Him,
Accepted,
Forgiven,
Loved

HUMAN BE-INGS BY JAYCIE WILDERMUTH

Identity is an ever-developing, individual, internal struggle with your values, experiences and self worth. Some people can get stuck having something they do define who they are as a person and their worth. But your identity is so much more than that. As a friend of mine says, “we are human BE-ings, not human DO-ings.” There is so much truth in that, that who we “be” is so much more important than what we do and although its bad grammar, its a perfect mind set. I had a personal struggle with this when I tore my anterior cruciate ligament in my left knee while playing competitive soccer. It seemed like my college soccer dreams as well as my self worth and my identity were slipping right through my fingers and I was forced to reconsider my long held identity as just being Jaycie the athlete.

For those unfamiliar with the common yet serious ACL tear, it can be considered one of the most devastating injuries for an athlete, especially a female athlete, to sustain because of the extensive reconstructive surgery and year long recovery. Like many competitive athletes, it was my worst fear. I was a strong and fearless center back, playing in one of the biggest college showcases during the fall of my sophomore year in high school. The play was over before I realized I had been high-lowed, dislocating my knee and laying on the ground writhing at the pain that now seared through my left leg. A week later I came to feel the even more excruciating pain that I couldn't play and even losing a few recruiting possibilities because they had been at the game and witnessed my injury. “We can afford an athlete who hasn't been hurt like you”. I heard these words at least twice by schools that I was interested in playing for. To say the least, I was crushed. I felt alone and misunderstood and confused at why this happened to me? The fearless and invincible one? And so began my slow and painful recovery and the struggle of who I was without soccer.

Vulnerability is not a feeling that I ever associated with myself because of my strong and independent nature, both of which I held as a big part of my identity. Laying in bed, completely helpless and useless after my ACL reconstruction was a time of great reflection and humility. My family had to help me with everything. And I literally mean everything. I watched my hard earned, athletic body wither away into a skinny and weak resemblance of the athlete I was before. It was in this time of self reflection that I came to realize how minute and temporary a materialistic identity built solely on my athleticism was and even how much I took for granted my athletic ability and my healthy body. One day when I can no longer play, when I start my own family, when I am no longer young and beautiful, who is the girl inside that will live on? I consider myself fortunate that I learned this lesson young, at home, and surrounded by people who love me and support me before being off away at college playing.

So what are the things that are in my soul that actually define who I am and make me Jaycie Wildermuth? It's more than being an athlete, being an honor student, having an amazing family, or being a strong independent woman. I am identified by my faith in Jesus Christ and the purpose given to me to love and serve others because he loved me first. Being someone who can encourage others with a smile or a compliment. I am a joyful person who can brighten up any room I walk into. I am a faithful friend and a compassionate listener and so much more. Being able to step back and realize these things not only made it easier to recover and live without my sport but it also made me a better

athlete when I came back, that playing soccer is just something I do and doesn't in any way change my value based on how I perform.

Scars tell a story without words. When I look at my scar on my left knee it speaks to me strength, courage, perseverance and even more so the joy and beauty of life. I never want to take my healthy body for granted and I will play and be excellent at my sport for as long as I can. Even in a cheesy way, I look at it and am reminded of how beautiful imperfections can be. When we realize how irreplaceable and invaluable we are, we start acting like it. I get to bring meaning to others because I have meaning, and that is forever more valuable than being a good athlete.

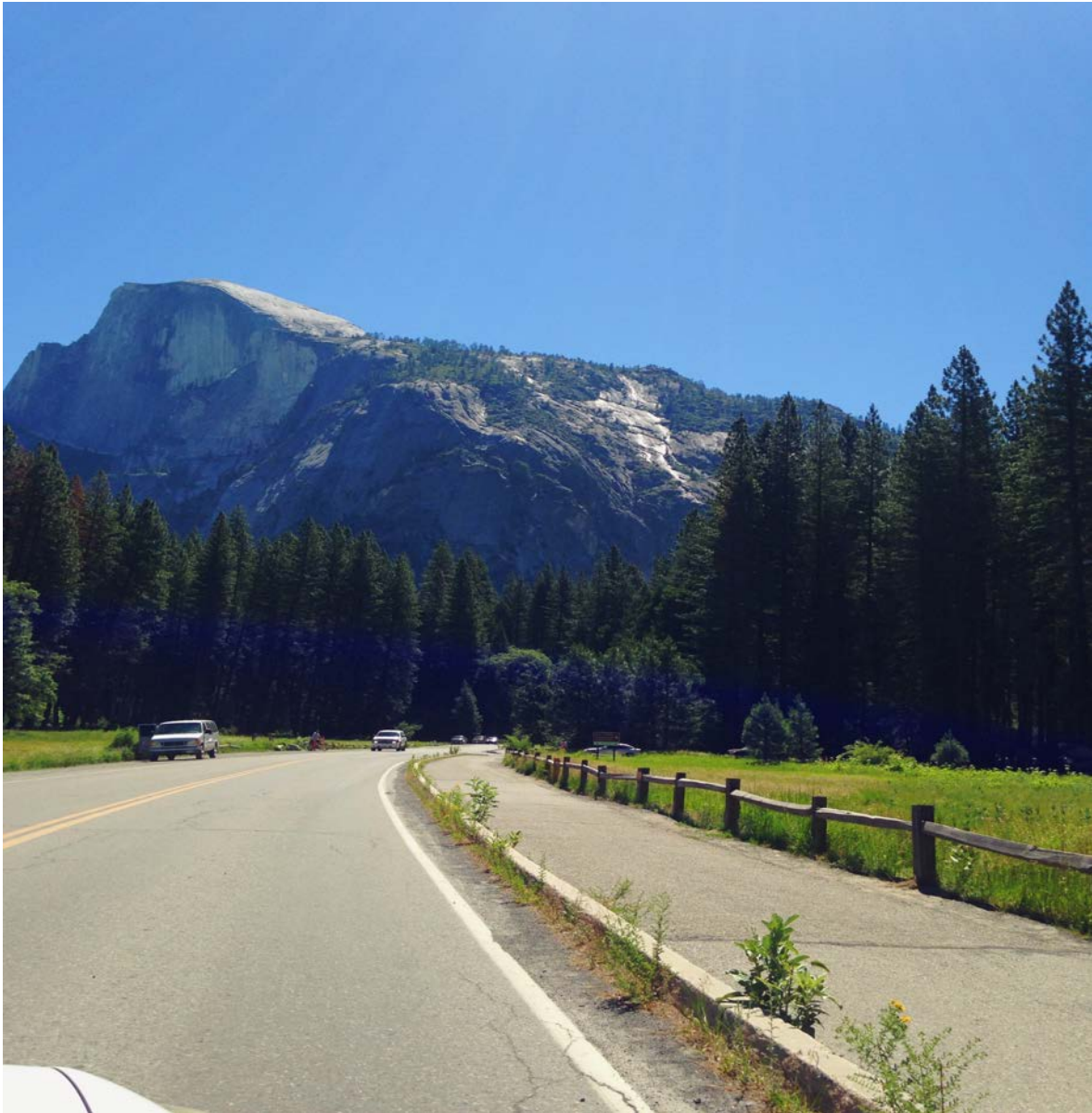


PHOTO BY JAYCIE WILDERMUTH

10 THINGS PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION ARE TIRED OF HEARING

BY MARY GILMORE

1. Just think positive thoughts.
2. Stop being so self-absorbed.
3. You just need to get out more.
4. Snap out of it!
5. Things could always be worse.
6. Some people have *real* problems.
7. You don't have a reason to be depressed.
8. It's all in your head (duh).
9. Cheer up!
10. Everyone gets depressed sometimes.

"I'm building cities around my heart, and I just hope they are the kind you'd love to get lost in for the day, an evening, or your version of forever." -J.R. Rogue

THOUGHTS ON A DISTINCTLY HUMAN EXPERIENCE

BY ESTHER MOONEYHAM

I walked up the stairs of MSR, heart pounding. Doubt in my mind, fear in my heart. Three years had led up to this point. I had to drop out of high school halfway through my junior year because of health issues. Chronic migraines. Headaches had hung around me since I was sixteen and had worsened until I wasn't able to go to school. Until I wasn't able to get out of bed. For a solid year I was trapped in a dark room, only coming out to eat. People tried to support me - friends came over with balloons, sat awkwardly on the couch while I squinted at them in my pajamas - unable to take the sunlight that streamed through the windows, much less make decent conversation. "But Esther, I don't understand, everyone gets headaches!" After a couple weeks they stopped coming.

I proved to be poor company, and my disease was hard to understand. Sometimes I was fine. Most of the time I acted fine. They suspected it couldn't be as bad as it was made out to be, after all, I wasn't dying. But at the same time, the evidence that it was worse than they suspected was overwhelming. All of it was too much to process. It didn't fit in a nice box. So mostly I sat in bed alone, dreaming of freedom. Part of me was relieved that people stopped coming to look at me - assess me. Part of me was angry at them for giving up on me so quickly. Most of me tried to convince myself that this wasn't happening, that it couldn't possibly be happening.

For two years I tried medication after medication. Weaning on, weaning off, until we were out of options. My neurologist asked me, "So, out of everything we tried, which one worked best?" I was horrified. Two solid years with no results. The part of me that had maintained that my migraines were temporary was dealt a deadly blow. All I heard was that there was nothing else that could be done for me. My future suddenly looked dead, surrounded by darkness. So I stopped all medications, stopped going to UCSF. Embraced the disease, convincing myself that I was accepting my lot, when in reality I was just ridding myself of any negative emotions. The only problem with deadening your emotions is that you can't just deaden the bad, you have to dull them all. The good. The joyful.

Deceivingly quickly I slipped into a depression. This was my identity. I was migraine girl. It became so wrapped up in who I was - after all, it affected every aspect of my life. It stripped me of my independence, took away any dream of higher education. I was stuck, still in the grave of chronic pain. I remember being able to clearly visualize my depression. I knew what it looked like. Most times it was indistinguishable from myself, but then I would catch glimpses of it - a heavy darkness that clouded everything, put a dark connotation on everything. But it was the apathy that scared me most. It snuck into every aspect of my thinking. Sometimes I would jerk awake, like someone living in a nightmare, and I would see clearly my twisted thinking - my apathy - I could see depression, not surrounding me, but nearby. Waiting for me to go back under. I would have panic attacks, afraid to leave clarity, knowing I needed help and that I was too afraid to get it. "I can't place this burden on my parents - they've gone through too much pain already."

But finally I couldn't take it anymore. In a rare moment of honesty I told my therapist what was going on. She immediately ratted on me, to her credit, and I was quickly prescribed an anti-depressant with pain-management qualities. I started taking it and suddenly everything was clear. My head was clear. My energy was up. I experienced my first week completely pain free in three years, and in horror, I realized how bad my pain was on a daily basis. I had never had a break - I was deluding myself on every level. I was sick.

The anti-depressant kicked me out of my rut and I started crawling back into life. I took some art classes in San Francisco and learned the ancient art of letterpress. I started my own business making cards. It was humble beginnings, but it felt like everything. That summer we started going to the Pain Management and Neurology centers at Stanford. By that point I was off the anti-depressant and ready to try Botox therapy, something that had been discouraged by previous doctors because of its invasive and radical approach. It worked immediately. As my strength grew, I started teaching private music lessons, violin and piano. My music studio started growing and I started traveling to art fairs selling my letterpress cards. I was excited about life, I was finding my place. Then came the day it hit me: it was time to apply for college. I was ready.

I was afraid, nervous, excited. So I applied to Stanislaus - I couldn't be a full-time student, but I could start. The honors program contacted me and I was floored. The last four years had wrought havoc on my self-esteem. To feel desired by the honors program was incredible. I had checked everything off my list except for one thing: contact disability services. I was gun-shy - part of me hoped I wouldn't qualify for disability, more of me knew I couldn't survive without extra help. So with heart pounding, I thudded up the stairs of MSR. It was disappointing how quickly it became apparent that I fit perfectly into the services they offered. I hated the idea of being labeled "disabled," of being in need of extra help, having to rely on the kindness of my professors to get through school. "Get through school." I didn't want to just get through - I love school, I've always been good at it. It wasn't something I just wanted to check off my list. It was something I wanted to internalize, really experience deeply. I wanted to feel like I earned my degree, not skated through because I had disability aid.

So where is my place? I'm still trying to figure it out. I still have headaches a lot, but most of my migraines are cut out by Botox treatments every three months. People don't understand why I love school so much, but the people who don't understand usually weren't denied education. I view college as the realization of a dream deep in my heart - fostered while I was lying in bed in darkness, dreaming of better days. These are the better days. I fear the future - conquering school is my present goal, but part of me is preparing myself to have to start my own business. Not necessarily because I possess a deep entrepreneurial spirit, more because I can't really anticipate someone who would be super excited to hire me. Although I am much better, I'm still pretty sick. Not reliable. In need of a lot of help. Who knows, maybe the day will come when I can walk away completely from migraines, but in the present I have to stay realistic.

So what is my place in this world? At the moment I'm trying to stay away from labels. The disability label is just too depressing and limiting for my sensitive spirit. It has too much of an overtone of pity - and I hate being pitied. I can't embrace being disabled, I can't accept the pity. If I do, I stop fighting, and in order to survive this I have to keep fighting. Constantly looking ahead. Though I do have fear about the future, I also have excitement. I'm starting to find my passions, which is a much more exciting place to be. That's the place I want to embrace.

HOW TO BUILD A PERSON, AMERICAN-STYLE
BY HANNAH GISSLER

Ingredients:

1 pound of Social, Cultural, Sexual, Racial, Religious Identity (Be sure to include identity mixtures that involve all categories.)

A pinch of Personality Spice

1 package of Virtues Mix©

These mixes can usually be obtained pre-sorted based on what is in season at the local markets, but can be also be gathered online, through different educational systems, or as a result of experience. If one is lucky, their mix may include such ingredients as compassion, empathy, open-mindedness, tolerance, patience, optimism, decency, truthfulness, conscience, and reliability. If one is not so lucky, as may be feared of the majority of the population, do not be disheartened as the lacking of such characteristics will not necessarily cause any loss of opportunity or success and the opposite characteristics are guaranteed to be supplemented in their place.

1 Dash of any of the below recommended characteristics which include, but are not limited to:

Humor

Talent

Conviction/Personal Drive

Industry/Work Ethic

Cleverness

Individuality

Extroversion

Charm

(Remember, when including such characteristics, that their opposites are sometimes just as popular or accepted among a group of people, though not necessarily accepted publicly.)

A sprinkling of Self-Esteem, add until mixture reaches desired strength

A smidgen of Hobbies and Interests

ATTENTION:

Be aware that social prejudices, tendencies to form stereotypes, and senses of superiority often resemble personal identity. Be sure to identify ingredients clearly before adding them to a mixture. In the case of a mix-up, it is advised to include large doses of self-satisfaction and close-mindedness to impound the effects of the mistaken ingredients. (It is believed that if one is to include such qualities the individual might as well not doubt their own mistaken convictions.)

All of the above ingredients are optional. Private studies have shown that the inclusion or exclusion of any of these listed ingredients does not guarantee the success of the person one wishes to build. If the desired person is needed to be successful or privileged, it is recommended by the editors that steps are taken towards the complete replacement of all cultural/social/sexual/racial/religious/etc. identities with ones that align with the majority of the society, even if such replacements would decrease the quality of life of the person by removing the individuality, personality, and heritage that differing identities may allow for. If such replacements are not accommodated, prepare the individual for a life impeded by barriers of stereotype, exclusion, and inequality.

LIFE OF CASSIDY
BY CASSIDY FERRELL

Tennis Poem

Tennis is all in.
Tennis is my family.
Tennis is my life.

Playing Cards

Cards is my game.
I am queen of Las Vegas.
I never lose in cards.

Ping Pong

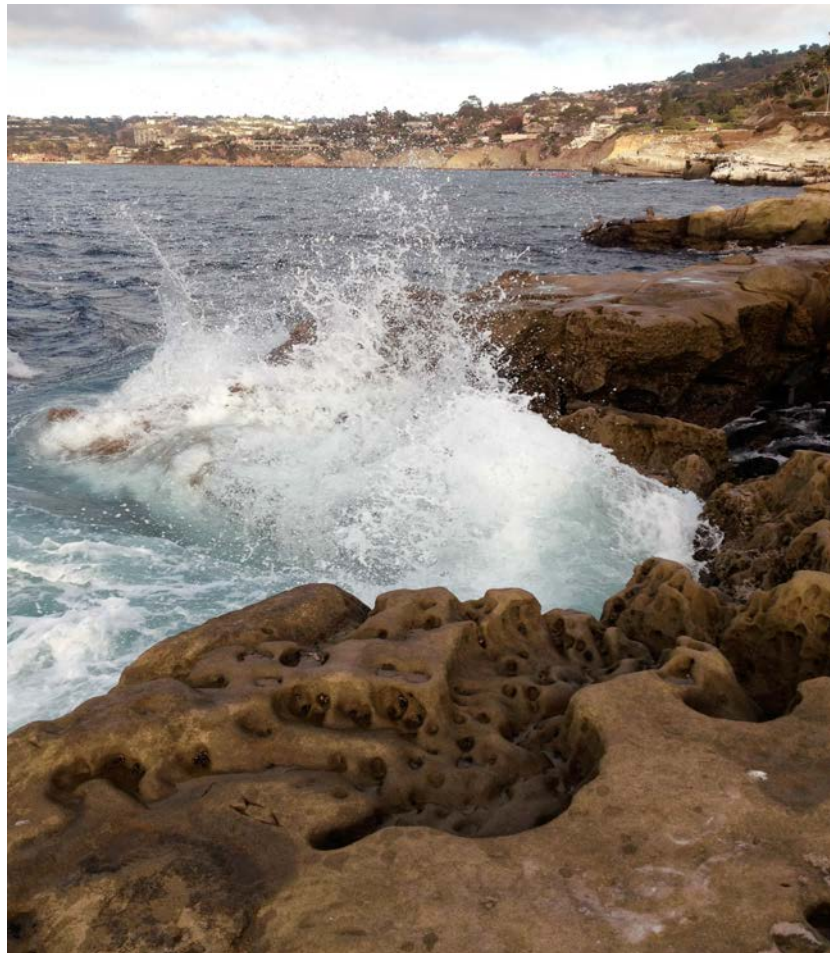
I am 40 and 0.
The paddle to ball feels like magic.
Ping pong is my life.

Candy

My nickname is Wonka.
I have secret candy cabinet in dorm.
Life consists of candy passion.

S IS FOR SAN DIEGO
BY CASSIDY FERRELL

Amazing Beaches. Cassidy. Drawing Extravagant Families. Great Home. Intellectual. Just
Knowing Life Makes Notoriously Opportunities Perfect. Queen. Remembers Sunsets. Tennis
Undermines Various Wonders. Xavier Yells Zero!



CONFRONTING THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT COMICS

BY BRANDON BETTENCOURT

Since I have delved into the comic book world, I have found that people have misconceptions about comic books, mainly about their maturity. Of course the biggest falsity is that comics are for kids and if you are older than ten years old and reading comics then you really need to grow up. Whether this comes from stereotypes or poor first impressions of the content of comics, it is seriously wounding their credibility. Maybe it all comes from the stereotypes of the “nerds” who read comics, play video games, etc. which if so is quite ridiculous and ignorant. From the comics that I have read over the past year I have seen many beautiful pieces of work that have contended with top selling books both in value and in serious themes of human condition. My hope is that this can be brought into light for more to see, hopefully leading to undermining the current stereotypes.

It seems that when people judge comic books they think about the maturity of Super Friends or the over the top and cheesy Batman TV show from the 60’s, as if all comics are written with the same PG feeling. I was even asked by a kid I was looking over at sixth grade camp why I read comics because according to him, an eleven or twelve year old, I was reading something that was for kids. This wasn’t a big deal, I mean come on he’s twelve, but it’s sad to see that the stereotypes affect those so young to where it can be carried along even further. I don’t know if the stereotypes from the movies and TV shows set in the 80’s about the nerds and jocks have somehow lived through to even this day, but it gives those of us that are into the “nerd” culture a bad reputation. I have even annoyed people by talking about comics when I’m not talking to them directly as if other discussions cannot be about what they are not in to, which what they are usually in to is reality TV and believe me many comics are more mature than that. This constant slam has led to the major discrediting of the caliber of work that the writers and artists produce on a weekly and monthly basis. Thankfully, while many comics have been trumped by stereotypes, some have managed to slip through the cracks such as “Watchmen” and “Batman: The Dark Knight Returns”, which are both pieces of work that have received widespread acclaim, critically and commercially. These were both sold according to the description of graphic novel as to disassociate them with comic books which may be one of the reasons that they were held in such high regard. With the classification of graphic novel, Time’s magazine recognized “Watchmen”, written by Alan Moore in 1986, in their list of the 100 best English language novels published since 1923. In addition Time also recognized “Batman: The Dark Knight Returns”, written by Frank Miller in 1986, as one of the 10 best English language graphic novels ever written. These two are just the tip of the iceberg, for there are countless other comics not sold as graphic novels, but still are of the same or greater quality.

I have read comics that deal with the burden of immortality on mortals, the resistance against dominant Fascist governments, and the loss of humanity in an apocalypse, all of which contained mature content consisting of gore, violence, politics, and anything else one could think of. The effect is achieved not only by the writing, but also by the beautiful and epic artwork which should not fail to be acknowledged and celebrated. Honestly some of the best pieces of art that I have seen in my life come directly from the pages of comic books. It is quite admirable as well because one must recognize that one artist may be working on many comics at once and they must hand draw every page of the comic week after week. It is awe inspiring the quality of work that they are consistently able to put out no matter what they must draw in the comic. The combination of all of these aspects of comics has pulled me into the culture and has continuously captivated me with the abundance and assortment of stories, the grand consonant art work, and

the thoughtful themes which make the comics genuine and mature pieces of literature.

Although comic books may have started as colorful and kid friendly, major strides have been made to mold comics into the developed and mature pieces of literature they are today. Many of the greatest selling comic books are able to put up a stiff competition through their use of visually appealing artwork and dynamic story telling through themes that would be considered, to most parents, inappropriate for kids. Even if these comics are not sold under the identification of graphic novel, that does not mean that they are any less mature, in fact I have read pieces of work with more adult content than “Watchmen” and “Batman: The Dark Knight Returns”. Sadly I don’t know if the stereotype will ever go away any time soon, especially with the output of cartoons and movies, especially Marvel movies, which people make their assumptions from. I will keep my head up though for in the recent and upcoming years the superhero genre has been and will continue to be given proper attention through the slew of movies that are exposing individuals to the vibrant and abstract genre of comics.

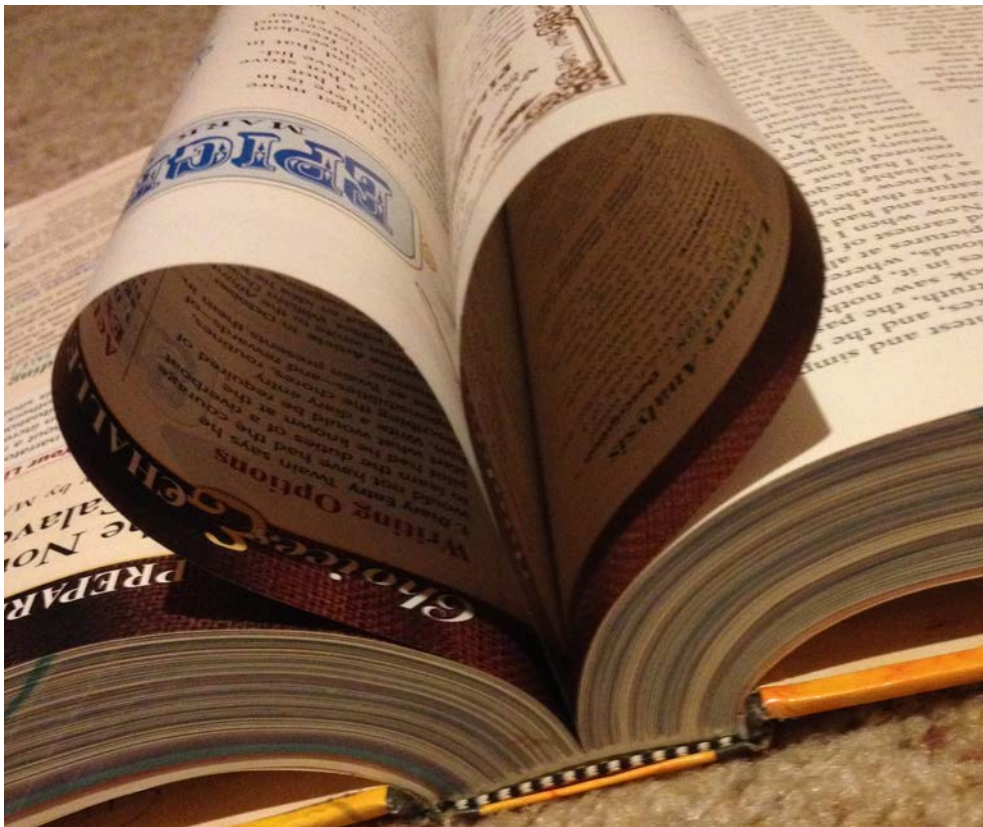


PHOTO BY HANNAH GISSLER

“The best moments in reading are when you come across something - a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things - which you had thought special and particular to you. And now, here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out, and taken yours.” - Alan Bennett

YOUR PLACE
BY PARMEN DHILLON

Knowing your place
People telling it to your face
I'm part of a pallet
I'm a blip on the planet

Your place in your family
Must achieve greater academically
Expectations on your shoulders
Momentum rolling against you like a huge boulder

Your friends are your soul oppressors
The art of peer pressure
Their craziness is high it's something you feel you need to outdo
Even though you truly want to be more subdued

Through the darkness the light comes
Now you see how much you were dumb
The answers you needed weren't out there
They were inside, just gotta be aware

When you let someone put you in "your" place
You get stuck at first base
Your voice has to appear
The only one who chooses your place is the man in the mirror

"My soul is from elsewhere, I'm sure of that, and I intend to end up there." -Rumi



Photo by Josh Pack

FINDING MY PLACE

BY EMILY YONAN

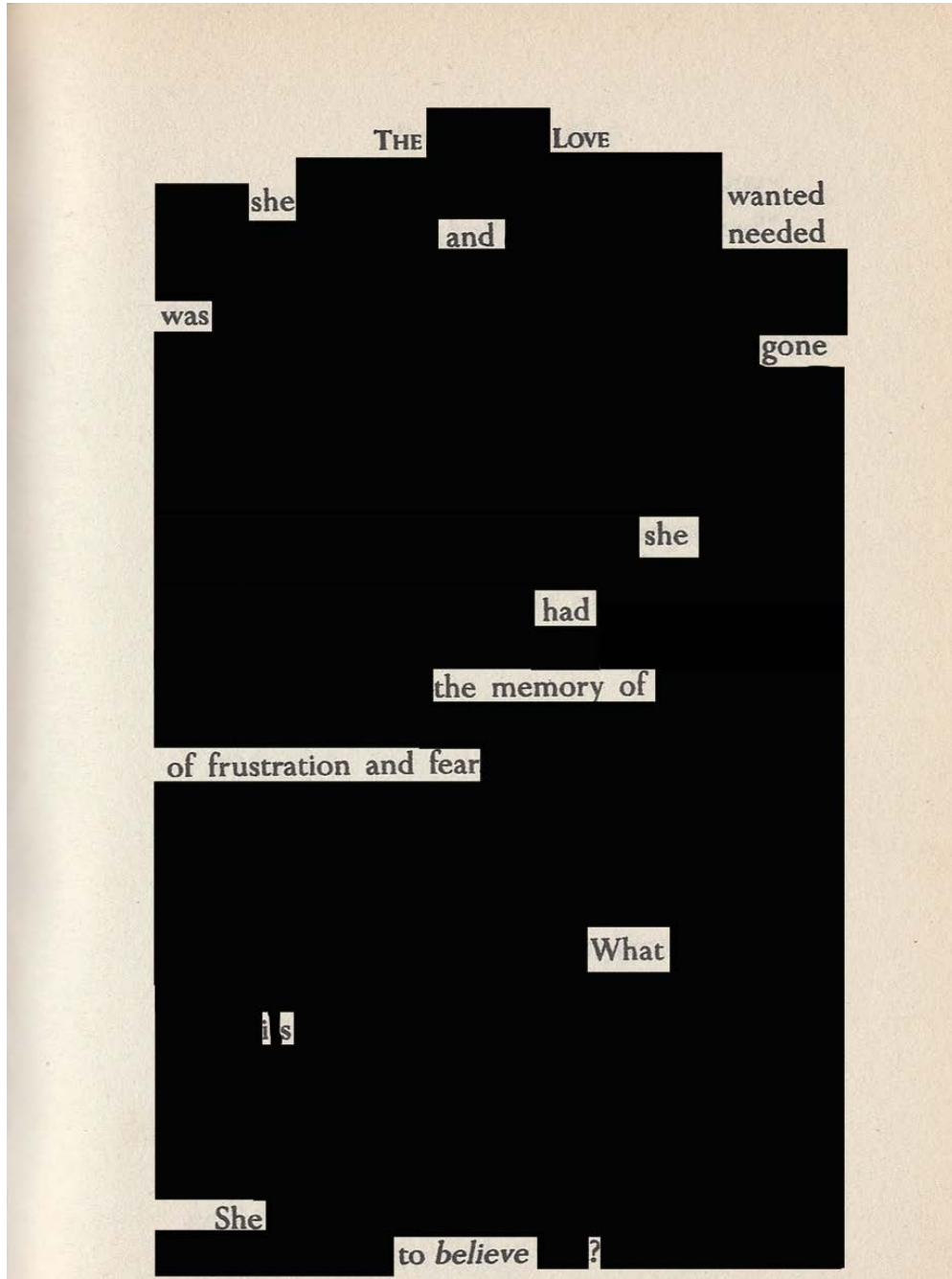
I always thought that when I turned eighteen everything would change, I would move away to a big city on the east coast, find my passion and become the person I have always wanted to be; I have learned that dreams are often not the reality. My parents are not too fond of financially supporting me to move across the country with no plan, hoping I find it eventually. And yet, how is a person supposed to grow and find their passion when they are always doing the same thing, surrounded by the same people? I have spent my whole life doing things that I knew would please others that I am not sure what it is I truly enjoy. Growing up I have always heard that I need a plan for my life, and so I have become good at making everyone think that I have everything together and I know exactly what I am doing; when in reality, I am just trying to find my place because it is not yet known to me.

I have realized that I have an impressionable mind. I allowed people to put a certain career in my head, tell me which colleges I should apply to, and told me when I should wake up and go to church. I followed the path that others laid out for me so well, but I realized I no longer wanted to live just following the path that others made for my life. I was never even mad at those people for putting those ideas in my head, I was only mad at myself because I never spoke up for what I truly wanted. I never fought hard enough for myself, and so often I never fought at all-I just nodded and said, "Okay."

It's been difficult trying to figure out what it is I love and what I want to do and not what others expect me to do. The one thing I know to be 100% true in this life is that there is a God who has an unfailing love for me. However, at one point in my life I even began to wonder if God really was all that I had been led to believe...or had I just been *led* to believe it. I struggled with doubts about God, but the great thing about Him is that He is incredibly patient and merciful and over time, revealed Himself to me. I have made my faith my own, the rest I still need to try and figure out, but I am starting to think it is okay to not have a set plan for *everything*.

There is a great peace in knowing that throughout this life I will never be alone. God has placed people in my life that I can look up to and learn from. I am learning to fight for myself and voice my opinions more often and with more confidence. I am learning that there are so many different opportunities and chances that I need to take in order to find what it is I love. I am learning that this life is crazy and uncertain, but it is even more so beautiful. Although I do not know where I belong quite yet, I am just beginning this journey of finding and knowing my place and I have no doubt that it will be one of the greatest adventures of my life.

THE LOVE
BY GABY PALOS





PRESERVATIONS COFFEE AND TEA:
MY PLACE (YOUR PLACE?)
BY ANA GONZALEZ

Coffee, tea, art, and hipsters are the main elements that contribute to the rich and unique atmosphere at Preservations Coffee and Tea, or simply Coffee and Tea. Coffee and Tea is a local business located in the heart of downtown Modesto; it is a simple, down-to-earth coffeehouse that offers comfort and peace for many people. It has been my sanctuary when life gets too overwhelming, or a place where I can have a delightful chat with a friend. Coffee and Tea has become like a second home where I enjoy every minute of my time with a sweet yet bitter hot/ cold coffee or tea.

Coffee and Tea provides a sense of joy and creativity from the moment you arrive because you are presented with smiling faces and an array of colors. The baristas at Coffee and Tea are friendly people that are always willing to help you by recommending delicious drinks based on your taste preferences. They are also patient and charismatic which contribute to their outstanding customer service. The colors in the coffeehouse are provided by the different paintings displayed every few weeks that are hung on the walls from local artists. The art pieces offer a sense of comfort and creativity. Dark color schemes make the mood serene, and bright, vivacious colors make the mood fun and spirited. On the bottom floor there are two vibrant painted tables with different patterns and details, and three wooden tables with black chairs that make the place feel authentic and homey. On the top floor there is a small room that overlooks the bottom floor; it contains a small corner couch and a bar area where you can spend hours working on your laptop.

Preservations Coffee and Tea is the ideal place to spend your hours working or just having a lighthearted conversation with a friend.

“I like this place and could willingly waste my time in it.” –William Shakespeare

“Collect things you love, that are authentic to you, and your house becomes your story.” –Erin Flett

MY HEART’S HOME

BY JAYCIE WILDERMUTH

Sweet faces of my family and
Forever friends
Saturday morning smell of
Coffee and pancakes
Dad’s famous tri tip
College Game Day
Queen size bed
Long hugs and talks with
My mama
Hometown
Smiles and
Contentment
Hamburger pie and
Home cooking every night
Sport talks with Dad
Loud cheers for the 49ers
Or Giants
Wrestling my little sisters
Church on Sunday
Movie nights
Thrift shopping
Friday night Papa Murphy’s
Comforting
Project Runway reruns with my
Sisters
Visits from family
Hot chocolate and movies
In Fall
Good music
Sweet memories
Nails done with
My favorite girls
Driving around while
Singing out loud
Ice cream every night
Happiness
Family

Dance parties while
Doing dishes
Kisses from someone special
Study hard
Play harder
Getting ready together
Netflix and
Neck pillows
Late night Target runs and
Laughter
Bed head and
Yoga pants
New places every weekend
3 best friends and
Never enough toilet paper
Wearing sweats when I
Need to do laundry
Friday night lights
35 sisters
Playing the beautiful game
Bus rides and
Necessary naps
Growing and
Learning
Loving and supporting
Traveling Cheering section
Cute cards to decorate
Pictures to remember
New adventures
Locker with my name on it
Phone calls with
My Brother
Living my dream
With people I love
Sharing is caring
Happiness
Family

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS
BY GABY PALOS

My heart has an unusual home
Its home lives and breathes
Its home smiles and laughs
Its home smells like cedar leaves, sage, and Brazilian redwood
Which mixes really well with my black vanilla, frozen pear, and blooming gardenias
Both warm scents that make me feel love
Its home tastes like freshly baked snicker doodle cookies
Which is perfect for every season, whether it be fall or summer
The kisses its home gives me are all signs of
Endearment
Acceptance
Care and
Love
Its home makes it possible to endure everyday because I know
That at the end of each day
My heart has a home.

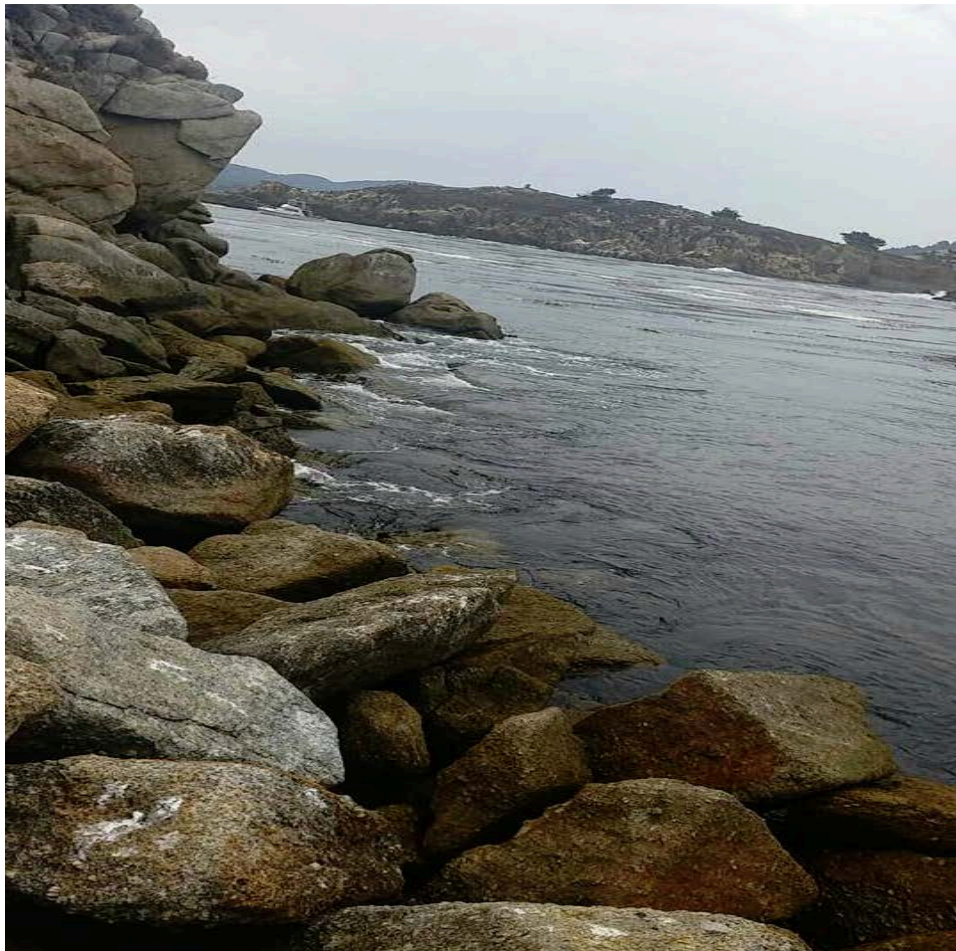


PHOTO BY GABY PALOS

HOME

BY JONATHAN ZANZAROV

Home is my comfort zone, a safe haven,
Inside, evident is preservation.
Devices everywhere, no wear-and-tear,
You have entered my compulsive despair.
But do not worry, there is enjoyment,
A lot of gaming, and no employment.
My own home is a special residence,
Let my tears of joy be the evidence.

“There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort.” –Jane Austen

THE FAMILY LIST BY PARMEN DHILLON

1. Be a good son.
 2. Be a good brother.
 3. Take out the trash when it is full.
 4. Be supportive towards others.
 5. Clean my room when it's dirty.
 6. Watch my little brother when my parents are gone.
 7. Vacuum all the carpets in my house when they are dirty.
 8. Cook for myself or my little brother when I have too.
 9. Participate in family activities.
 10. Show up to holidays that my family celebrates.
 11. Support my families position on subjects when they arise.
 12. Help my parents when they need it.
 13. Water the plants in the backyard.
 14. Get the mail.
 15. Be emotional support in times of distress.
 16. Participate in customs.
 17. Continue Traditions the family believes important.
 18. Contribute culturally to the family.
 19. Do all my schoolwork.
- Be myself.

VAVO'S

BY BRANDON BETTENCOURT

There once was a boy who, like any other kid growing up, loved nothing more in the world than to go to grandma's house. He loved every single thing about it from the building of forts with resources such as bar stools and blankets, to the ceremonial preparation of bed time that consisted of taking a bath and the crafting of makeshift beds on the floor. Like any other child he saw his grandmother as the most loving and gentle woman. What made her especially unique to him was that he would call her Vavo, meaning grandma in Portuguese, and he knew no one else who did this. Memories stuffed the boy's head of playing war with his cousins, coming to acquaintance with new kittens that appeared every few months or so, and going into the big pond, which was on his grandma's property, on kayaks while his uncle created waves in the jet ski. The property was the most magical place in the world, and by far happier than Disneyland, for it had everything an adolescent needed growing up. It had a junkyard for troublesome activities such as arson, the big pond with kayaks and catchable fish, and on top of that the dairy that his parents and grandparents owned was a minute away by walking. By the pond were Portuguese style buildings, an island with a bridge on each side, and a gazebo where family parties were held. It was a fantasy of perfection and unlimited possibilities of passing time, but above all, the one thing that made it all worthwhile, was that it was an intimate experience.

The place and all its glory belonged to no one else but the boy and his family. This was his home for the weekends and especially the summers when he had to go with his mother to the dairy for her work every day of the week. The boy fantasized with his brothers and cousins that Vavo's would stand the test of time and no matter what would always be theirs. One can only imagine how heartbreaking it must have been for this now older and more aware child, when he was told that the place would be rented out.

The process began slowly as his Vavo began to rent out the property for weddings and various other get-togethers, which were attended by complete strangers. The boy, his brothers, and his cousins felt their hold on the fantasy land slowly slip. The change, while not severe at first, started to directly affect the children. Soon enough they were restricted from going to their Vavo's for what they loved about it and that was running around the property doing whatever crazy idea first popped into their minds. To make it worse the events were mostly on the weekends when the boy desired most to go. Time progressed further and the boy as the boy grew into his early teenage years. While at his Vavo's with his brothers he was asked who they were by attendees, in a tone meant to imply they didn't belong there. The boy was furious and found great pleasure in telling these people that they were the grandsons of the person who made their event possible, and in their own minds the sole owners of all the greatness that was radiated into the minds of those there to capture it. It was satisfying, but was not enough, for the boy still had to hear as various people proclaimed how beautiful their experiences were as if the place were something only they had experienced. The intimacy was dwindling and the boy soon felt cheated by the place itself.

Further time goes on as the boy begins turning into a young man at the age of 17. He still goes to his grandmother's place for family birthdays, graduations, etc. thinking that as long as he had these get-togethers, then the joy would remain. His cousins and family had always been accepting, but something had changed. The individuals whom he cherished the most began to become judgmental and closed minded with age. This family had, to the boy's disgust, kept to traditional values and viewpoints of folks who live out in the country living the "hard" life. The boy seemed too "city" by the way he dressed, cut his hair, and acted. This broke the boy's heart. He had loved sharing his grandmother's with these people, but now he dreaded the next time he would see them. The boy was not taken seriously for he didn't work for he was more of a studious type. Everything that he knew about his Vavo's was floating away and it was the last thing that he had held from his childhood. There is still yet hope for events will be coming to an end within a few years, but alas, at what cost for the years taken cannot be given back and the ringing of the division bell has begun, marking it too late to go back even when the place opens its arms once again. It is time for the boy to grow up and become an adult, an adult who has only memories of golden and unharmed times.



PHOTO BY PARMEN DHILLON

PLACE BY PARMEN DHILLON

Have you ever considered your purpose in the social system around you, the closest being your family? My role in my family is something that interests me because I have never looked at being in a family as having before. I can't understand the concept that being in a family which is considered something sacred in some cultures a just be considered a role. However the more I think about it I can see how it is a role and how you fulfill certain parameters prescribed to your position in a family.

My role is that of a son to my mother and father. Also it is a big brother to my little brother. These roles come entailed with certain duties and responsibilities. To my parents I have to be a good son according with their standards. I have to fulfill the duties that they require of me and do them to the standard that they would like. My role as a big brother requires me to watch out for my little brother and make sure he isn't doing anything unsafe. Also it is to teach him about things in life that I feel to be right or wrong in my perspective.

Roles are interesting in that the environment is responsible for cultivating what will be defining each specific role per a person. Someone born in an environment with privilege can have less dutiful roles and more social roles within his family, while someone born in a poverty setting will have more duties he or she might have to fulfill.

These are defining abilities of roles in life.

MY PLACE

BY LAUREN MARTINEZ

When one thinks of their place, it conjures up many thoughts. Locations, class, ranking, etc. If you had asked me a year ago what I think of, only one place would have been prominent: home. The warm, textured dirt under my bare feet, so familiar and welcome, dogs barking as I dance beneath the stars, flour and cookie dough under my hands as the scent of spice cookies fills the air, the redolence of new plant growth after the rains and the roar of the creek rushing past the house. This is my home. When I am here, I am at one with nature and I feel like I could do or be anything. Home is the place where family ties and inimitable memories are made.

Now, I have a second place in mind: CSU Stan. As I walk through this campus, I seem to make new friends daily. This is what home should be: welcoming, open. I am happy to see this campus and school as my place.

Here is where there are things- emotions, events – which cannot always be explained to others though, more often than not, you don't find the need to explain them at all.

The experiences you have here are irreplaceable. For me, I wouldn't trade one day of it for anything, no matter what it was for. However, these moments are not permanent outside of our memories, so I believe it is in everyone's best interest, if not duty, to embrace their place to the greatest of their ability regardless of the significance of the memory. Where you came from is always going to be part of you. I, personally, would never try to argue this statement. Here I know my place: student, food service employee. It feels more like a family than a school sometimes.



I am happy to call this place home.

“Home is not where you are born; it is where all your attempts to escape cease.” –Naguib Mahfouz

“You know that place between sleep and awake: that place where you can still remember dreaming? That’s where I will always love you. That’s where I’ll be waiting.” –J.M. Barrie

HOME

BY CLAUDIA GUEVARA

My home is a light blue house with white windows and a porch filled with potted plants. In the yard, stands a tall tree that provides shade on hot summer days. In my home, live two wonderful, caring parents, a kind and gentle brother, a trusting sister, and two loyal dogs. My home is breakfast in the mornings and dinner together every night. It is the laughter, joy, sadness, grief, and love my family and I share. It is the savory aroma of food on Thanksgiving, and the joyous songs on Christmas. It is a place where I feel loved, appreciated, and accepted.

This is my home.



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA GUEVARA

15 PIECES OF ADVICE FOR MY 15-YEAR-OLD SISTER

BY JAYCIE WILDERMUTH

1. Believe it or not your mom usually knows what she's talking about.
2. When you need life advice, go to someone with life experience. Don't ask your friends because they have the same limited perspective you do.
3. There are times that it is better to say no and feel alone than to say yes just to fit in and regret it later.
4. No matter how long it takes, wait for a guy who looks at you like you're the world, sees you for the amazing girl you are, and treats you like a princess. Anything less will be a waste of your time and will hurt your precious heart.
5. Kisses aren't meant to be given away! Wait for someone who will treasure them.
6. The most important relationship to have is your relationship with God. "In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:6).
7. The world is too full of critics, be positive and an encourager! Words are free so why hold back compliments and words that bring life?
8. Makeup is meant to enhance the beauty you already have. Don't wear it until you know that you are gorgeous and perfect exactly the way you are, beautiful one.
9. Clothes are meant to fit you, not for you to fit them! If a pair of jeans don't fit, don't fret... the next pair will! Embrace your beautiful and unique body.
10. Journal! Your thoughts and lessons written down will be the most precious gift to your future self and an amazing way to be encouraged with how far you've come.
11. Find something you love and be excellent at it even when it's hard. Never give up.
12. Do your very best in school! But remember, at the end of the day it is just a grade and in no way defines your value or your intelligence.
13. Have one best friend that knows your heart and soul and who can encourage you on in every season of life. They are rare but when you find her, hold on to that friendship forever.
14. Be a friend to everyone! Smile, be kind, engage other people and be a good listener. Bring out the best in others.
15. ALWAYS reconcile after a fight. You can't change if the other person wants to hold a grudge, but you never should. Make sure your heart is always right and do what you can to make it right then let it go.

HOW TO MAINTAIN GOOD GRADES IN COLLEGE

BY GABY PALOS

1. **Attend Class!** It may seem like class sometimes isn't necessary, but trust me, it can help you. The teacher might give out extra information about the test or you might even miss out on hearing key terms that can appear on the test, and when test time rolls around, you won't be able to answer the question of the top of your head. Class is important, so don't skip out because it's boring! The one day I decided to skip class, my professor let us work on an extra credit assignment the whole time. I completely regret skipping out that day. I mean, who wouldn't LOVE extra credit? We all get excited when professors mention "extra credit".
2. **Study, Study, Study!** Studying actually will help you. Reviewing the material you've covered at least once a day until the test will help keep it in your long term memory. It will prepare you for any type of surprise quizzes or tests. Making study guides are fun and you can make them to the way you like, it doesn't have to please others, just you. Flash cards can also help review and can be a fun method of studying with a partner. I took an anatomy class once and we had to memorize the major parts of the skull. I made a little song and dance to remember the parts of the skull and I got the chance to teach the class my dance. It was embarrassing, but it really helped in remembering what was required.
3. **Plan Ahead.** If the teacher gives out a syllabus, make sure you record each major date. If there are tests scheduled on the syllabus, make sure you either add it into your planner or make a "due-date sheet" which has all the due dates of assignments from all your classes. Make sure you let yourself know a few weeks ahead that you have a major test or project due. It can help and you won't leave it till last minute. I had a friend once that never knew when things were due. We had a HUGE project due at the end of the semester. It literally was part of half our grade. Make it or break it right? So my friend had no idea it was due, even though we discussed in class (but I'm pretty sure he skipped class the day we discussed it) he had no idea. So when I messaged him asking if he could proofread mine he totally remembered. He had around 6 hours to write a 12-page research paper on modernization. Around six espresso shots and 3 coffees later, he pulled an all-nighter and finished the essay 5 minutes before class. Turns out, our professor extended the deadline to the next day.
4. **Manage your time.** This one is a biggie, and it's what I am still struggling to manage. Find a way to meet your priorities first. Don't put your homework to the side because you want to hang out with your boyfriend or friends. Find a way to equally balance everything while still managing to have time for yourself to either relax or relief stress. Prioritize your schoolwork. It's essential and important for your success.
5. **Before you buy, think!** I started school with a brand new Apple MacBook. Now I am midway through the year and I realize that I could have gotten by with a tablet or an inexpensive laptop. Although I don't regret my buy, I really could have saved a lot of money by waiting it out and seeing what I would need. And this goes for everything else you might need for school! Before you buy all those fun highlighters and pens, think of what you have at home that you can still use, and really take into consideration if you *need* it. I bought a lot of my items on Amazon, which saved me money too, and let me get cheap cute supplies. Also, buying a Jansport backpack on Amazon is much cheaper. Just don't go overboard either. Do you really need that mug? Use your money wisely.
6. **Have fun!** If you over stress yourself with so much work, you'll end up hating college! Give yourself a day to go out and have fun! Your school is having a hiking trip? Go. Your friends are going to San Francisco on Saturday? Go. Your mom invited you to the spa? Go! It is completely relaxing and it gives you a breather from school and homework and all icky thing related. And even if there isn't anything to do that interests you, go for a walk!

*"When I look at you, I can feel it. I look at you, and I'm home." -
Finding Nemo*

WAITING

BY ANA GONZALEZ

There was a little girl that looked up at the sky,
No one knew why the clouds cast shadows in her eyes
And they never asked why.

They thought maybe she's waiting for a friend,
Or God,
Or an angel,
Or her mother,
Or her father,
Or her brother,
Or her sister,
Or maybe she's just gone mad.
Maybe...
Maybe...
Maybe...

There was a little girl that looked up at the sky
And there was a little boy that looked at the little girl looking up at the sky.
He never asked why until...
One day his curiosity got the best of him and he asked,
"Why are you looking up at the sky?"
And she looked at him with blue sparkly eyes filled with hope and patience, and she said,
"I'm waiting for a miracle, I'm waiting for a better world, I'm waiting for life."
"For...for a shooting star, for a wish, for a light?" the little boy asked.
"No, I'm waiting for our future, I'm waiting for our salvation... I'm waiting for... for a
drop of... of water."
The little boy just looked at the little girl with wonder and awe,
And he smiled.

There was a little girl and a little boy that looked up at the sky.

THE CROSSING GUARD: MY GUARDIAN ANGEL

BY GENNA MASHINCHI

When I started high school, I was nervous. As a freshman, I was at the bottom of the totem pole, and no one knew my name or my reputation. For some people, this is an exciting fresh start, perhaps even a blessing. But for me, it was a dreadful process of introducing myself to new people and one again being labeled as the “perfect student.” The car rides to school were the hardest part for me, because I felt myself approaching the chaotic and stressful site of my school campus.

On the car ride to my very first day of school, I noticed an elderly crossing guard standing at the corner of a street that lead to a middle school. He didn’t see me sitting in the passenger seat, but the sight of him made me smile anyway. Seeing him provided me with a second of relief from my anxious nerves.

A few weeks passed and I was still apprehensive about going to school. One day, our car was stopped in front of the pedestrian walkway where the crossing guard was stationed. A student from the other side of the street wished to cross, so the elderly man walked out, red stop sign in hand, and allowed him to cross. The crossing guard stopped right in front of our car, made eye contact with me, and waved with a small smile on his face. I waved back, and instead of feeling stressed for the rest of the car ride, I felt happy.

About a month passed, and seeing the crossing guard every day became the highlight of my morning. He began to recognize my car, and we would exchange waves and smiles. I was still distraught about going to school at this point because each day was different, and I never knew what to expect. However, seeing the old man every day provided stability on my ride to school, which helped build my confidence when I was dropped off in front of my school campus. On one particular day, my car was stopped in front of the pedestrian walkway yet again. The car was in the right lane, next to the crossing guard. After waving at each other, he motioned for me to roll down my window. I did so, and he said, “Study hard to go to a good college. You don’t want to end up like an old crossing guard like me. Have a good day!” As the year went on, I was able to have a few more conversations with this crossing guard, and day by day his smile and wave made me calmer about going to school. Eventually, I was no longer nervous. I had developed a routine, and waving to the crossing guard every day was a part of it.

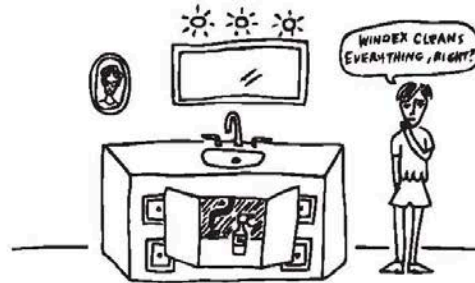
After four years, I finally took my last drive to my high school, and without knowing it, waved to the crossing guard for the last time. Since my school was on the other side of town, I no longer had a reason to drive that way. On my final ride to my high school, I thought about how much that crossing guard had meant to me. He had been there for every first day of school during my high school career, and any day I had a big test or project due. I often considered about how much of a coincidence it had been that he would never miss a day, and would look up at just the right time to wave at me. I never learned his name in those four years, but that didn’t matter to me. To many, and even to himself, he was just a crossing guard and served no real purpose in the world. But to me, he was my guardian angel.

20 LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MOVING OUT

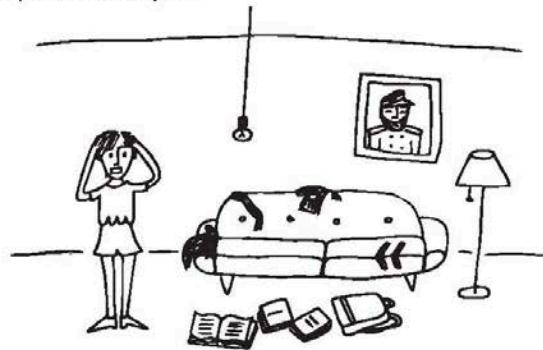
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES BY ESTHER MOONEYHAM



1. My parents are wonderful people.
There's nothing like a huge life change to make you realize how much your parents do for you.



2. Why is it so hard to keep a house clean?
Screw the environment, paper plates for all.



3. There is a huge risk factor when moving in with someone that they're going to be the messy one.
And speaking as the clean one in my relationship, this was not something I was properly warned about.



4. Work sucks.
The types of jobs you find at age 21 aren't dream jobs. Paying your dues is not a pleasant experience.



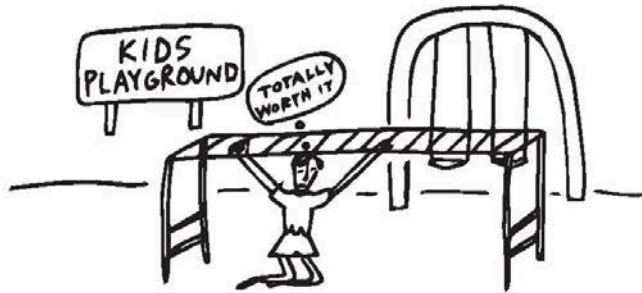
5. Food is so expensive!
Fast food. I can't afford shopping at an actual grocery store.



6. Toilet paper is even more expensive!!
This is a basic need!! Why!!!



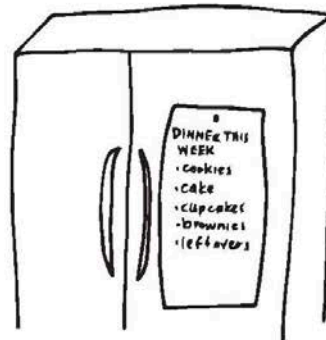
7. \$50 is going to make or break bankruptcy for me.



8. Gym memberships, Lol.
I'm not paying money to exercise. The world is my gym.



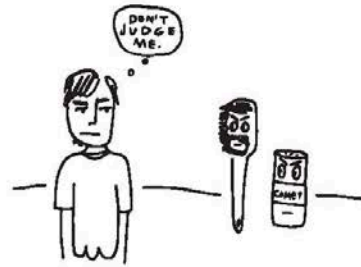
9. I can eat whatever I want!!!
Midnight cookie dough!!!



10. Turns out, being able to bake is not helpful when needing actual sustenance for dinner.



11. Why do I drive a car?
Between gas and repairs, I won't be able to eat this month.



12. My shower will never be clean.
It is what it is. That's the meaning of a Zen attitude, right?



13. How did I find time to exercise ever in my life?
Too much to do!! As long as I exercise my brain, I'm good, right?



14. Alone time is totally underrated.
I can sit here in complete silence in my underwear and no one will even know. Best day ever.



15. I turned 21 - now I can go to bars and spend actual money on alcohol and social experiences.
Lol, NOPE.



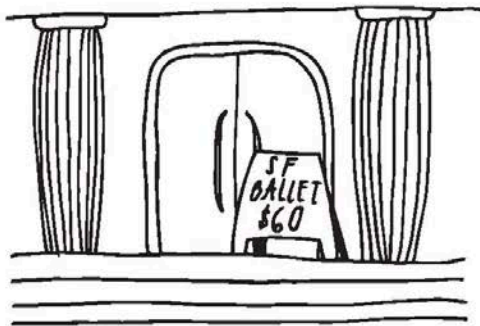
16. I CAN BINGE WATCH EVERYTHING!!!
Mawahahaha.



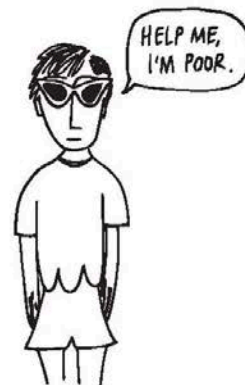
17. I BINGED WATCHED ALL WEEKEND AND
NOW MY EYES DON'T WORK



18. I'm late to everything!!!
With no one pressuring me to get out the door, time management was not a skill that I learned.



19. Cultural experiences are like, really expensive.
Must I pay so much for culture? Can't I just google it?



20. Independence is totally overrated.
I need someone to take care of me. I'm bad at being a human.

ANYTHING YOU CAN DO, WE CAN DO BETTER

BY GABY PALOS

“You can’t do it, you’re just a girl!” This has been said to me countless amounts of times, resulting in society labeling me as a weak girl. It’s not necessarily right labeling people because you could be completely wrong about them. Not only that, it can psychologically make us believe that we are what our labels say. Why would people call me weak? Throughout history, women have been deemed as weak creatures. They would be given jobs such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the sick and young. Unfortunately, these thoughts and opinions of women being weak have been burned into history.

My earliest memory from history classes dates back to the time of hunters and gatherers. Women were given the role of taking care of the children and gathering food such as berries and plants for medicine. They weren’t given hard strenuous jobs because the main thing they were used for was to reproduce. Not only that, they were seen as weak and inferior to men. That idea carried on for several decades later. According to the Women’s International Center website, “Throughout most of history women generally have had fewer legal rights and career opportunities than men. Wifehood and motherhood were regarded as women’s most significant professions.” When World War II came along, women had to take over the jobs of the men who left for war. This time period is where women really showed their true potential. They were even considered useful since their small nimble fingers could work with small, delicate objects. When it came to education, girls were not the priority. Boys were to be educated academically before girls. In other words, we were seen as incapable to be academically educated.

In my extended family, it’s customary for the girl of the family to drop out of high school and take care of household duties. My aunts and uncles that live in Mexico had the idea that because I am a girl, I would drop out of high school because I couldn’t handle it or I was just too dumb to finish school. They were surprised to find out that not only did I graduate high school, but that I got into college. Imagine their reaction when they found out I was accepted into the honors program at Stan State. I felt very happy knowing that I exceeded my family’s expectations. But just because I was a girl, it wasn’t right to say I was academically weak.

I’ve actually exceeded my own expectations! I would have never thought that I could make it into the honors program. I thought college would be much harder than what I am experiencing right now too. I may be starting out, but I have the strong feeling that I am going to enjoy school and pass my own expectations. My place is to academically succeed and find my way to being the best psychologist I can be, whether it be a child psychologist or industrial-organizational psychologist. Whatever the path may be, I am ready and I’ll tackle it with all my might. And if I just so happen to exceed my goals and expectations, then I’d say I’m pretty awesome.

To conclude, women have completely exceeded the expectations society has set on them. I have exceeded not only society’s, but my family’s expectations and I intend to keep exceeding their expectations. My future will hold several surprises for my family. I will finish school and achieve my doctorates in Psychology. I don’t know at what point I will start my family, but I know for sure that I will not drop out of college. I can handle the responsibility of a family and school because I am not weak. Not only that, I will start a program that helps troubled kids get involved in the community and help them find their natural born talents, whether it be musical or artistic talents. Many girls have strong goals for the future, and I am one of them. I do hope that as I grow up, the stereotype of weak women goes away because there is potential in women, but with all these outside factors, we are basically forced to conceal our true selves. But I happen to believe that anything you can do, we can do better.

THE SWEET WORK PLACE

BY GENNA MASHINCHI

"You're going to work for Jack Easton—bestselling author Jack Easton! You should at least be a little excited."

"I am. I'm just not crazy about his work like everyone else is. Besides, I'm only his secretary."

"Mia, that's still a very big deal."

"Mom, I only got the job because I'm not allowed to graduate early, you know that. And because my résumé says I won a contest and had a children's book published when I was twelve. My school practically begged him to hire me, and he's apparently so difficult to work with that he didn't need too much to be convinced."

"You're right, he didn't even ask for an interview. I hate to cut this conversation short but I have to run to work. Have a great first day!" her mom said with a hug.

Two hours later, Mia tucked her light brown hair behind her ear and strolled down the hall. The door to the author's office was propped open. Mia stepped under the door frame to see a natural-light enhanced room about the same size as her home's entire first floor. Her gaze followed the vertically-lined cherry wood floor to a large wooden desk against the wall about thirty feet in front of her. The right corner edge of the desk directed her sight eastward to a wall that was broken up at the halfway point to reveal another door.

"You must be Mia," a deep voice from behind her said.

She pivoted to greet a face she had seen on the back cover of books everywhere. A face belonging to a middle aged man with dark rimmed glasses and thinning black hair: Jack Easton.

"Wow, that really is you on the back of your books," she said with a slight smile.

He scoffed and reached out his hand to shake. After she accepted, he led her to the large wooden desk at the other end of the expansive room.

"I don't have much of an introduction to give, other than this is your office and mine is over there," he pointed to the door on the right side of the room, "I'm in there pretty much all day. I made a list of all the numbers to my publisher, manager, and editors." He pulled out a manila folder and laid it on top of a table calendar that took up almost half the desktop space. "The password to the computer is the name of my first book: nightfighters, and my schedule is all laid out on that calendar."

Mia sat down in the dark brown leather chair and ran her finger down the curved edge of the desk, getting a feel for her new surroundings. As she did, Jack scurried back into his office and reappeared with two enormous stacks of manila envelopes. He plopped them directly in front of Mia with a thud. She could barely see him over the tall stack as he began to speak again.

"These all need to be filed," he said, pointing to one stack and then to the next, "and these are meetings I have this week as well as appointments I need made and so on. I don't expect you to finish today because you get off at 3, but by the end of the week would be great. I'll, um, let you get to it," he said, stumbling over his words as disappeared back into his office.

Mia sighed before she picked up the first file and began.

Three o'clock rolled around. Mia sat at her desk, twiddling her thumbs and tapping her pencil against her desk. Jack emerged from his office for the first time since she had arrived. "So, how was your first-," he began to ask, before stopping and taking in what he saw: Mia's desk clear of

any of the files he had dropped off seven hours prior. “How did, how did you do all of that work in seven hours?”

A slight smirk grew on her face. “Easily. I’ve been bored for the past two and a half.”

“How is that possible? I gave you over twenty people to call and at least fifty documents to type up. The filing cabinet was a mess. Not to mention the phone ringing off the hook.”

“I’m very efficient with my time. And like my résumé said, very proficient with Word.”

He ran his fingers through his hair. “Did you at least give yourself a lunch?”

She nodded. “An hour. I thought that was fair.”

He nodded and shrugged. “Well, thank you for all of your hard work. You’re free to go.”

She grabbed her bag, shot him a smile, and strutted out the door.

The next few days were just as the first. When Mia walked into the office on Friday, she noticed a small cinnamon roll and a latte on her desk. Before her mind could process the gesture, Jack spoke up. His back was against the doorframe of his office and his arms were crossed.

“I don’t know what eighteen year olds like in the morning, but Google told me that I couldn’t go wrong with pastries. There’s a new café down the street that I thought we could try.”

She smiled. “This is so sweet. How did you know I was a cinnamon roll expert?”

“You are? Well, what’s your verdict?”

Mia took a bite of her cinnamon roll and expertly stated, “The amount of cinnamon packs a punch without being too overwhelming, but the frosting to pastry ratio is a little off. A-minus.”

“That’s not bad at all! So, what’s on the schedule for today?”

“You have a call with your publisher at 11, and dentist appointment at 4. Oh, and my progress report for school is due today if you have some free time to email that in as well.”

“Will do. Also, Sunday is my niece’s birthday. She’s ten. What should I get her?”

“I’ll order two outfits and send her an ecard to arrive Sunday to let her know you’re thinking about her. An ecard makes everyone smile.”

“Perfect!” he responded as he shot her a thumbs up and backed into his office.

At around 11, Mia answered the phone. “Jack Easton’s office.”

“Hey Mia, it’s me, Jack. Can you come in my office for a second?”

She agreed, restraining herself from rolling her eyes at the fact that he couldn’t walk thirty feet to ask her. She opened his office door, taking one step inside.

“Hey, thanks for coming in. I just got off the phone with my publisher. It’s not good news. I’m working on a new story but my concept is a little hazy. You’re résumé said that you’re an author and I thought you might have a suggestion,” he said, handing her a creased paper.

After reading it, she said, “I’m not sure how much help I can be, but it seems to me like you’re trying to write about the importance of communication. Maybe you could expand on how language came to be. How one day someone decided what the twenty-six letters of the alphabet would look like and sound like, and how all those letters can be strung together to create some of the most beautiful sentences in the English language that make readers feel things.”

“Wow. That’s exactly what I’m trying to say. Do you mind if I use that?”

“Go for it. I won’t even charge you a fee,” she said with a smirk.

Four hours later, Mia was getting ready to leave for the weekend. She busily straightened up her desk before she noticed Jack approaching her, his hands dug deep into his pants pockets.

“So, were you planning on telling me that your homecoming dance is next Friday? I saw it on your school website when I was turning in your report.”

She shook her head from left to right. “No, it’s not important.”

“What do you mean? Of course it is. Take the day off. Go have fun with your friends.”

“I’m not going, it’s not my thing. I’m hardly connected with the school anyway.”

“At least consider it. This is the only time in your life you get to enjoy these things.”

“Thanks, I’ll keep that in mind,” she said before she gathered her things and left.

The next week was filled with even more phone calls and filing, and a handful more orders of cinnamon rolls. It was their own ritual each morning: Jack left the pastry on Mia’s desk, waited for her to arrive outside his office door, watched her taste it, and heard her review it. So far, they tallied two B+’s, a C-, and a solid A. Somedays it was the only time they talked, like on Thursday. Jack did somehow manage to briefly peel Mia away from the phone to ask for her input on updated notes for his book. As she read it, her eyes switched from an excited beam to a fog of puzzlement.

“I don’t quite understand this scenario. The professor teaches something complex that the students enjoy, but his boss gets wind of it and he gets fired?”

“Yeah. He takes the basic course to a deep analytical state, which is interesting for the class but hard for students to understand. The dean tells him to tone it down, and he refuses to.”

“But if the kids are enjoying it and he offers outside tutoring, what’s the problem?”

Jack sneered. “Well, Mia, sometimes, if you don’t do something your boss tells you to do, you lose your job. That’s life.” His tone compared to a dad telling his five year old daughter not to touch the hot stove or else she’ll get burned. He leaned back in his chair and waved his hand in the air nonchalantly before adding, “But I don’t expect you to empathize with that.”

Mia was taken aback. “Excuse me?”

“Well this is what, your first job? You’re just a kid. You don’t understand.”

Her eyebrows narrowed over her darkened, piercing eyes. “You’re right. I don’t.” She turned on her heels and headed back to her desk.

As the clock struck 3 o’clock, Mia marched back into Jack’s office, a paper in hand.

“Is there anything else I can do for you today, Jack?” she asked in an irritated tone.

“Nope, I don’t think so.”

She slammed the paper down on his desk. “Then I’ll leave you with this.”

“What is it?”

“My resignation.”

“You’re resignation? But why? You’re the best secretary I’ve ever had!”

“Because there’s a lot I can’t help you with. You’re right, I’m just a kid,” she said before storming out of the room.

Jack stayed late in his office the following night, swamped with the day’s chaos from not having Mia to run things. He had tried to contact her all day, but not a single call was answered. He thought back to their conversations before beginning to type furiously on his computer.

He received a notification minutes later that his apologetic card had been opened. He checked his watch: 8:30 pm. The leather chair squeaked as he leaned back with a sigh.

She didn’t go to homecoming, he thought.

An hour later, Mia heard the doorbell ring. She hurried to check the peephole, and as she did, she exhaled loudly. Knowing she might regret it, she swung the door open a few inches.

"I'm not interested in what you have to say," she snapped.

"I get that, but at least give this cinnamon roll from 'Coffee Shakes' a grade," he said as he held up a small paper bag.

She scoffed, but after hearing her stomach growl, she sighed and decided to give in. She opened the door wider, just enough for him to squeeze his way in. He followed her to the back porch where they sat on the concrete steps. Mia opened the bag and took a bite of the pastry, stunned after she swallowed.

"Wow, A+. By far the best cinnamon roll I've ever had," she said.

"Phew, it's a good thing I didn't stop at 'Organic Coffee and Canteen' instead."

She snickered before he turned his body to face her and said, "I'm really sorry about what happened yesterday. I said something I didn't mean and I know I really upset you."

She shook her head, keeping her eyes on the ground in front of her. "No, it's fine. I was being way too sensitive. I think I took the job so seriously because I felt like maybe I could belong there. I sure never felt that in high school, which is why I'm not dancing in the middle of a gym right now. I never fit in there, so I rushed to get through all my credits, only to find out the school doesn't allow anyone to graduate early. That's why they set me up with you, and I'm very thankful that you said that you would take me as your assistant. I feel stuck in between being a kid and not wanting to be treated like one and being too inexperienced to be considered an adult, which is why what you said struck a nerve with me. I don't know my role in this world."

"Don't know your role? Well then please allow me to tell you. You're the best assistant I could ever imagine having, and the only person on earth that can put up with working with me. You're the fastest typist I've ever seen, and the only person I know who can respond with witty remarks faster than I can. You're one of the only people that understands literature the way I do, and you are easily the best judge of cinnamon rolls on this side of heaven."

She giggled before he continued, "And, you're...you're like the daughter I never had."

She turned to see his eyes beaming, the first time she had ever seen them with that amount of brightness. Her own eyes began to well up with emotion.

"Wow, I guess I do have a place in this world," she said.

"A huge place. And I think there is just one question left to ask: will you please come back to the office and be my secretary again?"

She smiled. "Only if you'll judge the cinnamon rolls with me."

"The master is going to teach me her ways?" he asked with a raised eyebrow.

She smiled. "Absolutely."

"I do not understand how anyone can live without some small place of enchantment to turn to." –Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

BLADE IN THE DARK
BY MASON DONABEDIAN

Two months ago, if someone had told Elias that he would end up in the employ of a band of assassins, he would have laughed them out of his presence. He was a squire, on the road to knighthood. There was nothing honorable about someone who could not face their enemy head on, who used stealth to rob men of their lives for coin. But then, two months ago his master had still been alive and well, surrounded by the knights of the Royal Guard. King Wunther had also been alive, Elias supposed. The old King's death had turned a great many heads to the land of Folgunthur, and the battle of succession had begun. Now Elias had somehow managed to end up halfway across the kingdom with eight assassins and a princess. It sounded like the start to a very poor jest. They were running up a mountain path, though the Darkblade (who still refused to tell Elias his name) hadn't told them where their order's Sanctuary was located.

Whenever he asked, the Darkblade would just murmur, "Close, not too far now," with an inscrutable look in his eye.

Nothing seemed to faze him, or any of the assassins for that matter. Two blizzards, a rockslide, the steep mountain they were climbing, it all seemed rather trivial to them. A minor inconvenience rather than life or death situations. Even when a party of a score of bandits attacked them, Elias and Rachel didn't even have time to draw their swords. The assassins dispatched each foe with precision and speed that didn't quite seem human. After what seemed like an eternity of running, which they never seemed to tire from, the unlikely party stopped at the entrance to a cave. Not one a man would have to crawl through, but large and spacious, with room enough for five men to walk in shoulder to shoulder. The Darkblade raised his hand in greeting, a smile on his face for the first time, though Elias could not see anyone he would greet.

"Hail Aldrin, how fares the watch?" He said, with what appeared to be actual emotion in his voice.

"Rather boring, no travellers this day." A man, Aldrin, Elias surmised, stepped away from the rock just in front of the entrance. Elias and Rachel gasped; the man seemed to have appeared from thin air, he hadn't even been behind the rock.

"Well Master Martyn, Princess Rachel, after you," The Darkblade gestured, and they walked through the entrance together. The cave only actually looked like a cave for about five feet. Then it somehow went from rock to carved, darkly stained wood. They were led down long corridors and into a large courtyard. The cavern opened up to reveal that there was no ceiling to it, the open air and beautiful skies shining up above. Many braziers were lit in a circumference around what appeared to be an arena of sorts. From one end to the other it was about forty feet, more than sizeable for practicing. The room itself, if you could call it a room, was also circular. There were doors at regular intervals on the walls, and it made Elias wonder just how large this Sanctuary was.

"Well, Elias, your time has come it seems," The Darkblade had a curious look in his eye. Out of nowhere two men shoved him into the circle, and the Darkblade drew his sword, a three-foot blade made of a metal as dark as night, with a shining silver handle.

"What is this? Why are you doing this?" Elias asked him, as calm as he could muster.

"This, my young friend, is your first trial." The Darkblade smiled, and swung his sword.