

Image:Owen Oliver



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Art &
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AS YEARS FALL

By: Omar Chavez

A time where it's sad to see the sunny times go

But a new start for us to grow

Although there is so much to look forward to

It's sad to see how much time left there is to view

As each year passes more and more things start to fade

All of these memories become hidden in shade

Next year it won't be the same to my eyes

They will shed tears as I start to cry

I will miss all my upper friends when they are gone

For all the fun memories we have had and done

They will go their separate ways soon

While I stay at Oxford with one last year to go through

This feeling is one of the toughest
I'm familiar with it as I have experienced it before
It tore me to pieces and made me feel like the weakest
I dread spring as that is when I feel the horror
When the sunny times come around
I'm supposed to be happy yet I'm feeling down
I struggle to believe that these times are almost over
As I start to age and feel like a leftover
Even though I still have friends my age
I can't help but think back to how much fun I had back then
It's not the same and it feels like I'm an animal being taunted in a cage
This is what I dread, as years continue to fall again and again

By: Elena Kahn



I HOLD YOUR HAND

By: Alaina Martin

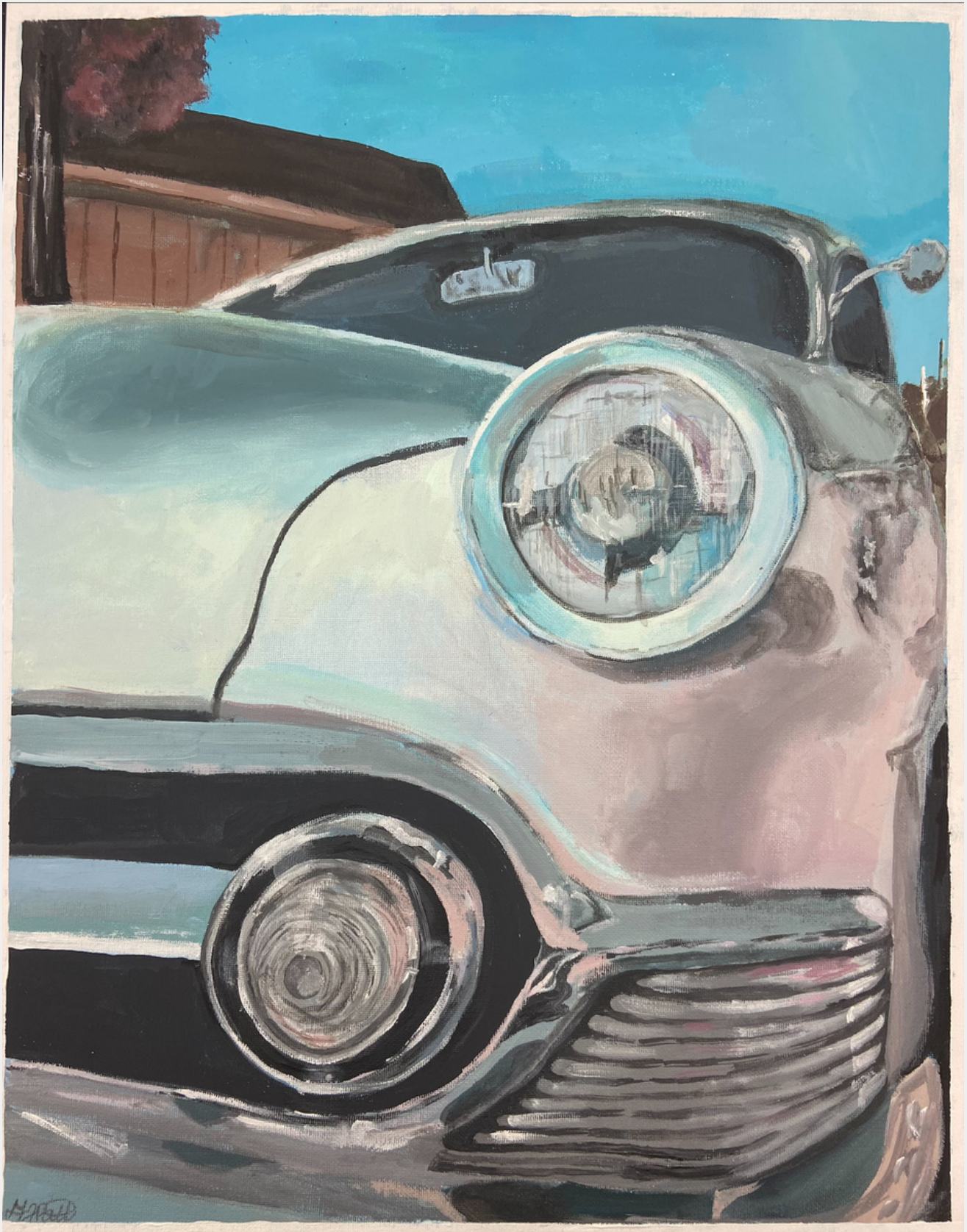
I hold your hand for comfort. Your hand is warm. The light wrinkles in your skin, developed from lovely experiences. Your hand is warm. I hold your hand for comfort, for reassurance, for your love. I hold your hand for comfort until I help you walk, until

I keep you balanced. I hold your hand to help you, in hopes of feeling your warmth. I hold your hand as you walk wearily, as you lose your balance and your thoughts. Your hand ages, wrinkles tell stories profound, like closing chapters, memories they surround. I hold your hand as you say I'm everything. As you say I'm special. As you say you love me. In my arms, your fragile form I hold, trying to comprehend what the future will unfold. I hold your hand as it turns another color. I grasp your hand, fading memories we share, beautiful experiences, darkening into thin air.

I feel your fingers get cold. Not the same as comfort. I feel your fingers getting stiff- lacking life- lacking comfort. I hold your hand as you sleep. I feel you tighten your grip one last time as you breathe your last breath. I watch you slip away, gracefully and peacefully. You lovely soul, I know you hold my hand in heaven, I feel you. I feel you when the sun beams. The warmth, the comfort.

I always think of you.

By: Grace Pañi



By: Elena Kahn



By: Kaie Kline



By: Sophia Towers





INTO THE WOODS

By: Michael Besancon

Around the house, the air was stale, dry, and cold. The day bore on like the ticking of a clock, endlessly ticking without end. I had just received word of a sighting in the woods behind my house; of movements and rustles in the night coming from creatures much larger than humans. From what I had heard, the neighbors believed that some sort of animal rolled down the steep slope towards the creek, ramming into trees and bringing branches down. I had never noticed anything until this was brought up, but I assumed it was a stray deer causing a commotion. I thought, “The snow around the ground probably froze over and it slipped down the hill”, and thought nothing else of it. It was around four o’clock, and there was word of a winter storm coming through. To prepare, I trekked through my yard, looking for sticks and pieces of wood that could be used as kindling. Once I had found enough to suffice for the next couple of days, I brought them back inside and put them near a fire I had already made to dry them off. I decided to head back outside to chop up some wood from the reserves I kept under my deck, just in case the storm lasted a while. I brought out my axe and started chopping at the wood, almost as effortlessly as falling asleep. I had around thirty pieces of wood ready for burning when I finished, and I brought them inside once I had taken a break. It was around five o’clock now, and the sun was just starting to set. I felt the air getting colder and decided it was time to start preparing food. I had vegetables that I had saved from my garden meant for these situations, so I walked out to my shed at the edge of my woods to retrieve some.

As soon as I walked into the shed, the wind started picking up and the doors shut on me. I did not bring a candle, and I was surrounded by pitch black darkness. I stumbled around looking for the door, with the only noise being the wind from outdoors and the ticking of my pocket watch. I bumped into my gardening tools and knew that I was close to the doors; but as I took a step, the wind picked up even faster. I could hear the surrounding trees tearing against each other, louder than the ticking of my pocket watch. The shed started to shake, and I scrambled as quickly as I could towards where I believed was the door. I tripped over something, too afraid to notice what, and bursted out the door, collapsing in the cold, wet snow. I looked up, just to see the trees calmly swaying back and forth in a uniform manner.

At this point, I proceeded back into my house and started making dinner with the food that I was able to recover from the shed. The sun was barely peeking over the horizon, and nightfall was approaching. I stoked the fire and refueled it with my now dry wood, and grabbed a kettle from the cabinets. I positioned the kettle above the fire and prepared a stew made from vegetables. I looked outside and saw that snow had just started falling, leaving a beautiful trail along the branches of the trees. The wind started to pick up again, but in the comfort of my home, I knew it could not get to me. My stew finished around six o'clock and I decided to eat it slowly and steadily to fulfill my hunger for longer. I pulled out a book from my bookshelf and started to read and eat simultaneously. Two hours passed before I was done reading, and my stew was nearly gone. I put my book back on the shelf, but as I was doing so, someone knocked on the door of my house. Being in the middle of a winter storm, I rushed to the door to see who was there, just to find a branch laying against my door. I thought nothing of it, and went back inside.

It was eight o'clock, and the storm was at its peak. I could feel the air seeping through the cracks of my house, and everything outside was covered in snow. I sat back down and stared at the wall, waiting for the storm to pass. My pocket watch and the noises of intense winds outside of my house were the only things sensible to me. The constant tick, tick, tick of my pocket watch filled the house, and I thought nothing of it. After about half an hour, I heard something from the corner of my ear. I heard someone scream, "Help!", and I rushed to grab my coat and mittens and ran outside. I heard a scream from my woods, and immediately ran to its entrance. I screamed, "Who's there?", but no one answered. I stared down the slope, looking for any traces of movement, but to no avail. I thought nothing of it, and started walking back inside. As I was about to reach the entrance of my house, I heard another scream from the woods and rushed to make it back in time. Through the darkness of night, I stumbled down the slope and tried searching for the victim, but I found no one. I started back up the hill, with the constant feeling of being watched. My watch continued to tick, tick, tick, as I heard movements from the trees behind me. I looked back and saw the branches starting to cave in on me, and I rushed up the hill as fast as I could. When I reached the top, I looked behind myself, and saw the trees in their ordinary fashion. This time, I thought of every possibility, "Maybe I am hallucinating, or maybe the trees are actually moving around, but there's no way for trees to cave in on me, I must be hallucinating." As I took my first step out of the woods, I heard a crunch of a tree branch. I looked behind myself, just to see darkness. I turned back around and felt my legs go out from under me. Thick, rugged limbs tore against my legs as I was dragged down the slope. I spread my arms out, hoping to catch a tree and haul myself away, but I found none. The velocity at which I was falling increased, and I felt a cold sharp pain above my right shin, like a large splinter.

I could hear the creek over the tick, tick, tick, of my watch, and felt the slope start to even out. I screamed, “Help!”, many times, but no one came to rescue me. The roots of the trees around me tore at my stomach and I grabbed onto one. I screamed as loud as I could, but no one came to help me. The pain in my legs increased as I lost grip of the root. I felt the cold water of the creek streak up my legs, and I slipped down the deep abyss of the dark creek, unable to hear the tick, tick, tick of my pocket watch.

By: Anna Dewees





By: Erick Rodriguez



By: Darrell Thomasl



By: Megan Smoker

My mom was looking especially distressed this morning; the bags around her eyes seeming darker, and her skeleton-like figure appearing thinner than usual. I had hoped moving into great-grandpa's house would act as a fresh start, but I still heard her pacing the halls throughout the night, and the muffled sounds of her whispering to herself, a tactic her therapist suggested. Right after dad's death, we spontaneously decided to move after we both agreed we needed to get out of Louisiana. I'm worried about her, but she claims she's fine, and only needs a bit more time to get over the passing of dad. The unexpectedness of his passing doesn't help her situation either. Additionally, I think she blames herself for the accident, since she was the one who caused him to run late and speed to work, which caused the car wreck.

"Morning," I called to my mom who was sitting silently on the couch drinking her coffee.

"Good morning sweetie," my mom replied without looking at me, in the same monotone voice she's had for the past couple of days. Today marked 2 weeks since dad's passing, and considering how difficult it was for my mom at the "one week anniversary," I had a feeling today wouldn't be any different.

I turned on the tv, attempting to distract my mom from her detrimental thoughts. I flipped through the channels, coming across the news when the flashy headline caught my eye, "Dead Body is Reported Missing from Hospital Morgue." As I further watched I was astounded when the information given lined up perfectly with dad's accident.

"Mom, do you see this?" I asked, concern filling my voice." My mom's eyes never left the tv as she replied with amusement in her voice saying, "Let's be real, I would've been notified if his body was stolen. Besides, his body has already been transported to a funeral home."

I turned off the tv, not being able to bear the thought of someone stealing a dead body. I wandered into the kitchen, and decided to make myself breakfast, this time as a distraction for myself. As I was preparing my bagel, I noticed a horrible stench. It reminded me of the time mice had become trapped in the walls and then died there. We had to call rodent control, and it took almost 2 weeks to completely get rid of the smell. Assuming it was the trash, I grabbed the bag from under the sink and disposed of it in the garbage can outside. It was a disgusting day out, and I was nearly drenched in the twenty seconds it took to take the trash out. As I entered back inside, I noticed my mom was gone from her usual position on the couch. I figured she had gone back upstairs to take a nap. Good. She needed to catch up on sleep. As I walked back into the kitchen, I noticed the bath was running. Huh, she must actually be taking a bath, except for the fact that she was standing in the kitchen making a smoothie.

“Mm, making a smoothie?” I asked.

“No, it’s for you,” she murmured.

“Oh,” was all I managed to reply. I didn’t really want a smoothie, but I was afraid denying it would make her upset. Ugh and that awful smell still reeked.

“Here you go,” my mom chirped, offering me the smoothie. I smiled, receiving it, again not wanting to hurt her feelings.

“Are you taking a bath?” I questioned her.

“Oh, yeah. You know how long it takes for the water to warm up in this house,” she replied. I didn’t though; I had never noticed the water taking an abnormal amount of time to warm up.

Sipping my smoothie, I wandered upstairs to my room, where I’ve recently spent a lot of my time catching up on school. As I got further down the hallway, I noticed the foul smell getting stronger. Following the scent, I peeked into my mom's room making my way into her bathroom.

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At this point I was nearly gagging from the intoxicating fumes. As I drew nearer to the bathtub, I saw an odd object sitting in the water. Upon further inspection, it was horrifying to realize the object was my dad's dead, rotting, defrosting body submerged in the bath. I was appalled, but even more shocked to discover the nightshade sitting on the sink. My mind suddenly flew to the smoothie I was holding in my hand, and the same smoothie my mom gave my dad right before he left for work.

Instantly, I dropped the smoothie, flying downstairs to try to get as far away from the monster I called my mother.

I started to feel woozy, my head spinning in a thousand different directions. I was experiencing double vision and forgot how to put one foot in front of the other.

"Where are you going?" My mom asked. She continued, "We haven't been able to have some nice family time recently. Come upstairs, I made tea," the sly smile on her face growing.

I struggled to reach the door, but I shoved my way through, only before tripping and being unable to function my now soaked limbs.

"Why are you running?" My mom asked calmly.

My mouth was incapable of moving, and the last thing I saw before everything went black was the cunning smirk of the woman I no longer recognized.

By: Omar Chavez





By: Peyion Eiferi



By: Erick Rodriguez



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