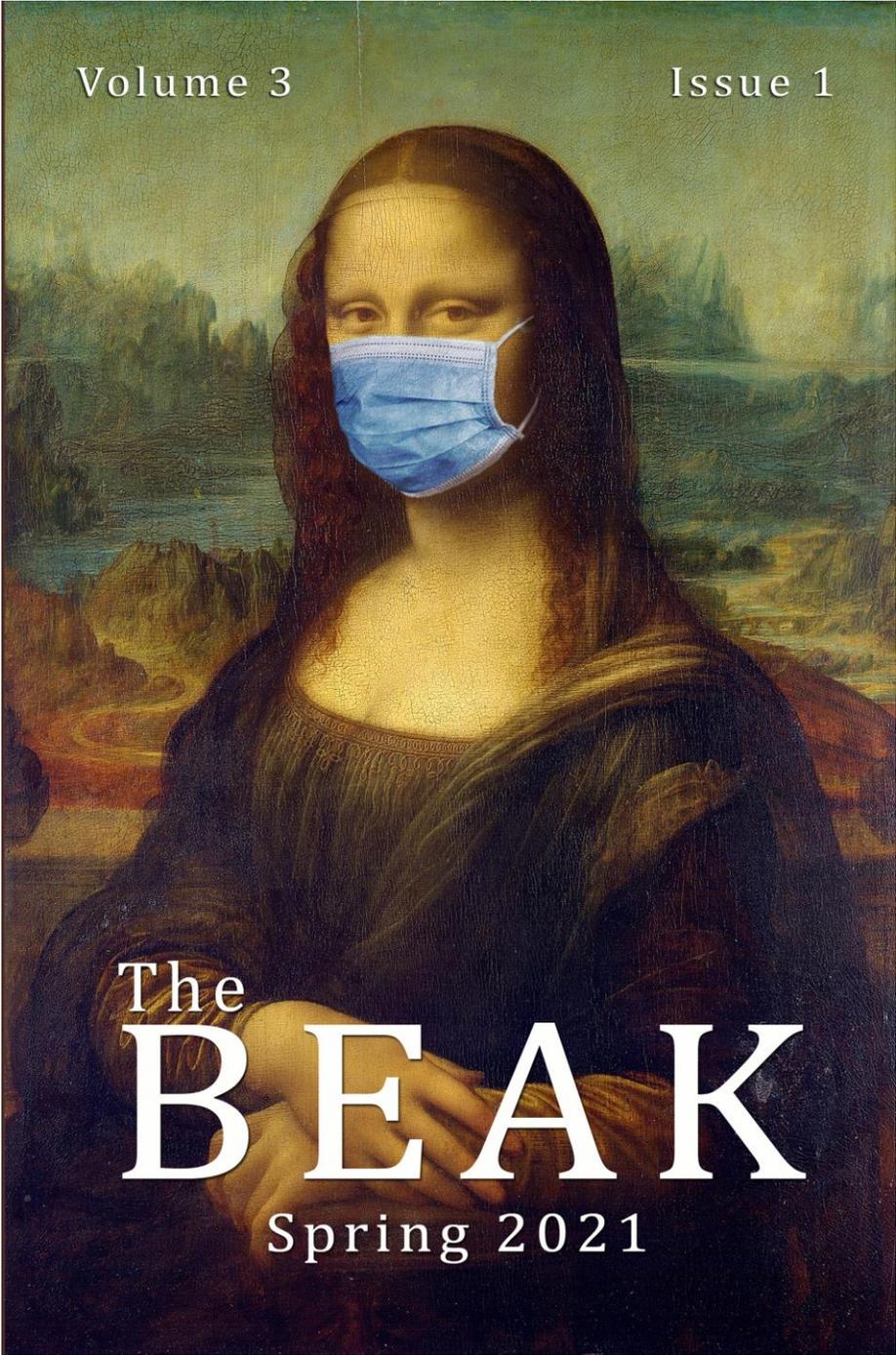


Volume 3

Issue 1

The image is a cover for a publication. It features a reproduction of the Mona Lisa painting. A blue surgical mask is superimposed over the woman's face, covering her mouth and nose. The background of the painting is visible behind her. The text is overlaid on the image.

The
BEAK

Spring 2021

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BEAK

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Welcome to the third issue of *The Beak*! *The Beak* is a literary magazine that showcases creative works produced by members of the Chadwick School community. If you are interested in having your work featured in future issues, please contact a member of the editorial staff for details.

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Kayla Purdome
Kylie Purdome
Hailey Beck
Bianca Mitchell
Madison Tilley
Katie Sallee

ADVISOR

Tyler Walker

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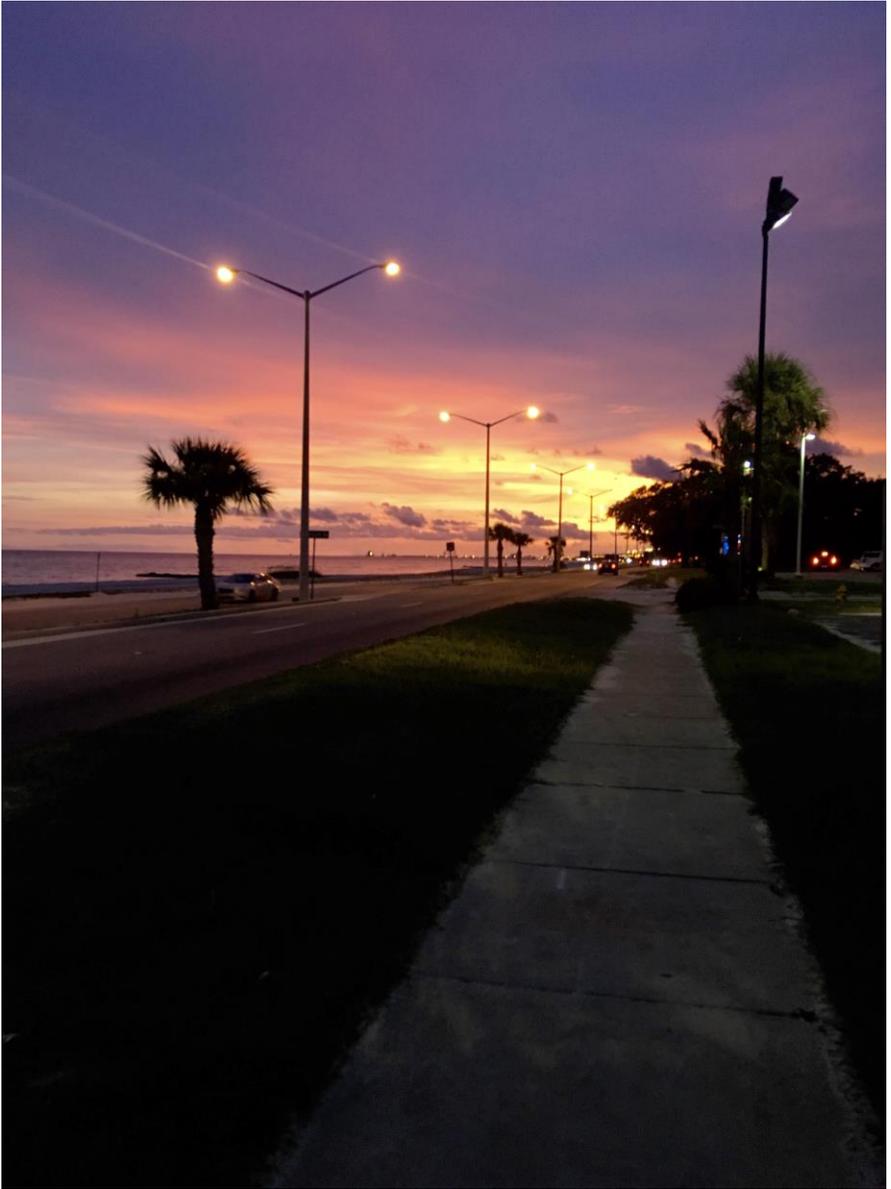
Our Page

Madison Tilley, Junior

If a star just vanishes, will everything be forgotten?
With you until the end, together we'll continue your story.
I say that it is so, but why is my heart still empty tonight?
The pretty words you left behind become lovely poetry:
"...with time, even the white petals wither."
I hope my voice reaches you wherever you happen to be.
You did well. Don't say sorry.



Hands
Madison Tilley, Junior



Sunset
Jaron VanHouden, Senior

Muscle

Hunter Stafford, Freshman

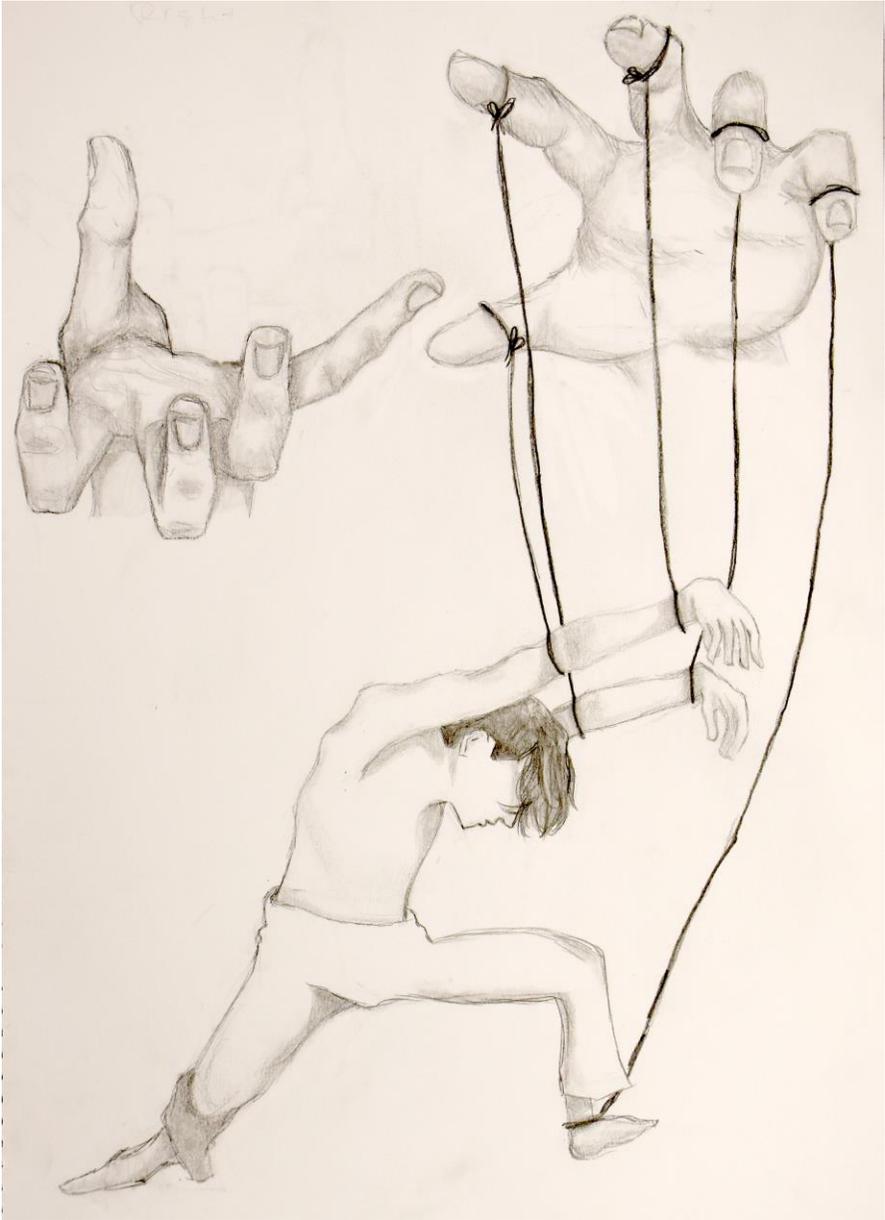
The roar of the big block
through shiny chrome exhaust,
the squeal of the Mickey Thompson drag radials
underneath the scream of eight cylinders,
the scent of a carb running just a little too lean,
the smooth metallic finish under
matte black stripes from bumper to bumper,
gauges winding in the dash,
and then, faster than a falling star,
you disappear in the night's wind.

Greedy

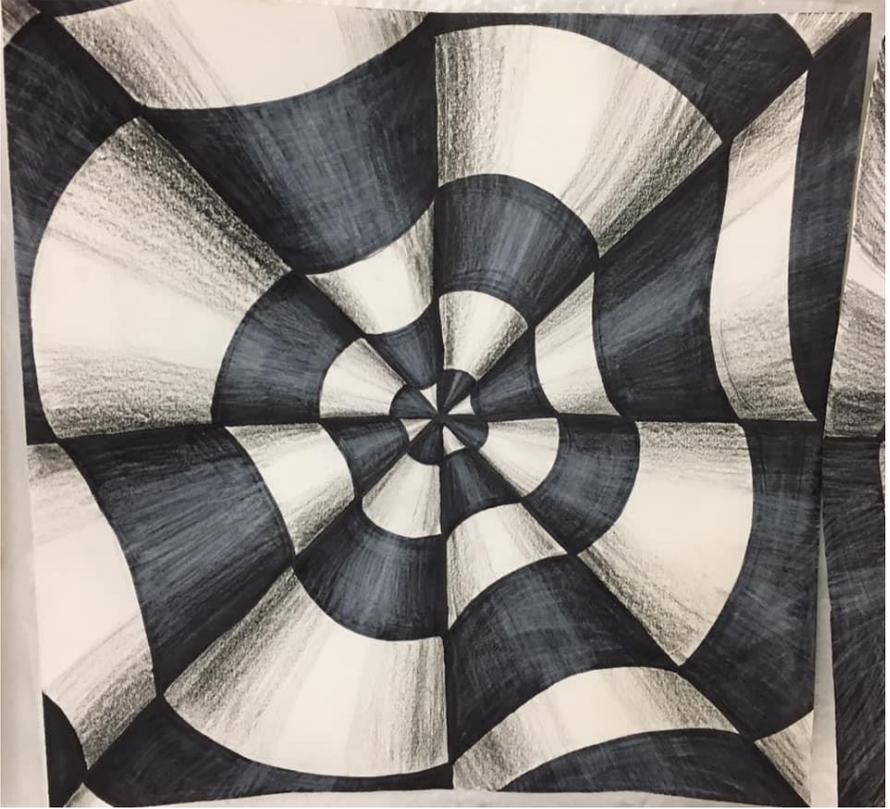
Madison Tilley, Junior

A tempting fruit below you on the ground:
one bite will only leave you wanting more.
It's something you cannot escape once found.
Don't turn away. It's what you came here for.

This desperate disease is part of you.
It wears and wears away your mortal soul
as you evolve into a creature who
just takes and takes to fill an empty hole.



Hands of the Puppeteer
Madison Tilley, Junior



Shaded Cones
Jolea Davis, Sixth Grade

Last Circus

Kylie Purdome, Senior

“Welcome to your greatest nightmare: visiting our circus fright fair! You will love the chilling sights there, watching as the acts perform. You will not regret attending, nor the mindless overspending while you watch the brilliant ending of the show that we perform. You will love the brilliant ending of the show that we perform,” says the man in uniform.

Thus begins the entertaining. First, the man with tiger training: how he saunters out, constraining an entire beastly crew! Then the tigers, they inspire as they jump through rings of fire, leaping high and ever higher till their skill and strength subdue. Then they turn away from jumping and attack their trainer, too, and his blood begins to spew.

Then the audience is screaming while the trainer’s blood keeps streaming, and the acrobats are beaming as they walk onto the floor. First, the ladder is ascended, then the trapeze is extended, and the acrobats are splendid as they stretch and glide and soar, but then one by one they falter, and they fall back to the floor and their blood begins to pour.

While the mangled corpses pile, viewers swallow gulps of bile and the tightrope walkers smile as they skip into the light. In an instant, they are scaling—first the ladder, then the railing-- and the audience is paling as they walk the rope upright, but they slip and fall and hang above and dangle in the light as their skin turns deathly white.

Next the elephants come storming, shaking benches while performing and they crowd at wooden platforms that are circular and red, but a mouse comes scuttling under, and their trumpets sound like thunder, and I cannot help but wonder, if more violence lies ahead. Then the creatures run and trample and my stomach knots with dread: several more have fallen dead.

Then, at last, the brilliant ending, that now has my pulse ascending: though the show seemed never-ending, now the act has come to be, and the costumed man arrives with both his hands filled up with knives and we are fearful for our lives, as he begins to juggle three, but he drops two blades and lifts the other, poisoning it with glee, and he throws it right at me!

Mirrorball

Bianca Mitchell, Junior

Take me out, away from the light.
If you can, stay within my sight.

Joyfully, I'll watch as you spin,
reflecting light off opal skin.

Blue satin sways above my feet.
Heart stretches thin, but I'm discreet.

I'll watch the light reflect your hues:
the mirrorball shines on my muse.



The Dance
Bianca Mitchell, Junior



Portrait
Lydia Walker, Senior

World's Best High School

Hailey Beck, Sophomore

First, mix in one large pot your dry ingredients, which include the lyrics to Dixie D'Amelio's song "Be Happy," seasons two through four of *Riverdale*, Simply Southern t-shirts, Leigh-Allyn Baker, and lastly, men who use AXE Body Spray as their sole means of hygiene.

Next, add your wet ingredients: Noah Centineo thinking a sheet mask hurts to take off in *To All the Boys: Always and Forever*, people who spell "you" as "yhu," people who hear "yanny" and not "laurel", and lastly, a piece of hair from someone with a peanut allergy.

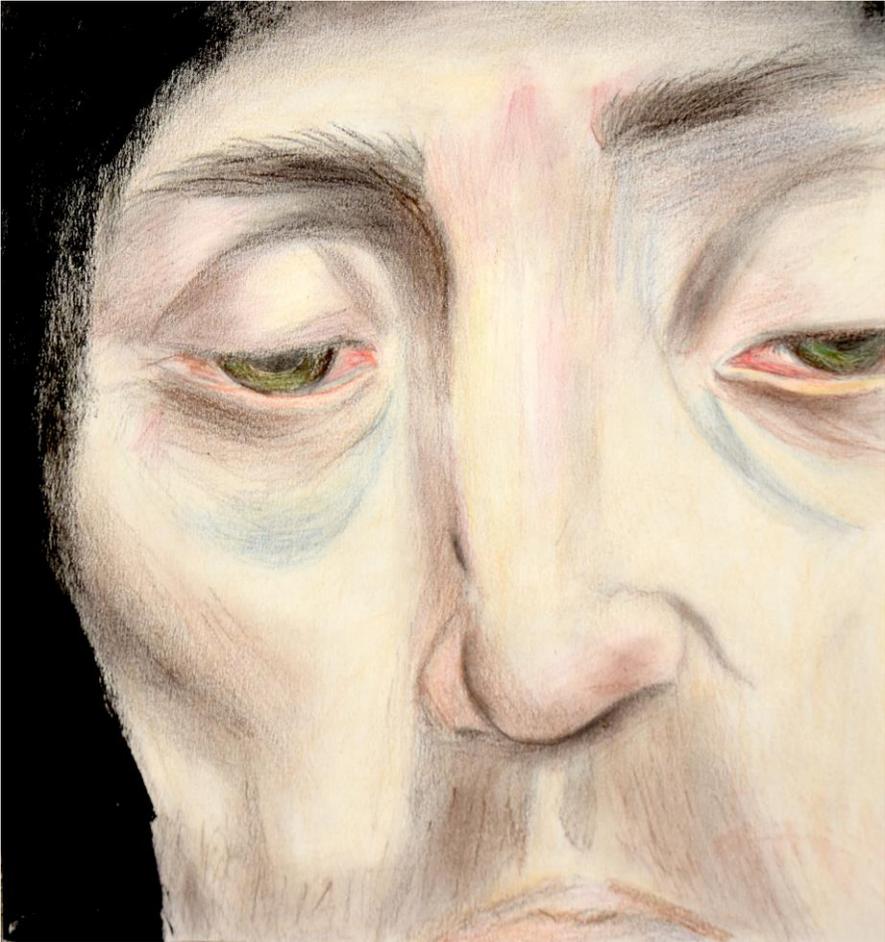
Boil for thirty minutes, garnish with lemon zest, and enjoy!

Macbeth's Head Louse

Paisley Gilbert, Sophomore

As I sit on my perch and ponder,
watching the drama unfold,
I wish to warn the victim,
but silence brings me closer to gold.

I know what it's like to be hunted--
I've dodged daggers of my own.
Though now my voice is silent,
I'll soon be on the head of the throne.



Old Man
Bianca Mitchell, Junior



In the Woods
Kirsten Maggard, Senior



Harris Market
Katie Sallee, Junior

Day One

Bianca Mitchell, Junior

A small, frail woman stood in front of the group. She was in her sixties. Her hands were dry and withered, and they shook above the podium. She spoke softly. She said her husband had died fifteen years ago. When he died, she had begun using. She had been an addict for a little over ten years.

She unraveled her story for a little over half an hour. She said that booze and opioids had become her best friends. Others in the room chuckled, but I could only keep still. I felt my neck begin to sweat. They were never my best friends. They were something I couldn't live without. I could live without my friends, even the best ones. I would miss them, sure, but eventually...eventually I would move on.

I still haven't moved on from this. No one here really has, if they're being honest with themselves. Because everyone is still sitting here. Everyone still has to be in these meetings. Everyone here still has to dodge social events that they know their friends will be drinking at. Everyone here still has to call their sponsor when they get a little too down and still have that bottle of pills inside their cabinet. We're here forever.

"Leon..."

"Yes, ma'm?"

"Would you like to share today?"

"Umm. No thank you. Maybe next time." I gave Miss Sarah a small smile and then quickly focused my attention back to the lining of the wooden floors. When I finally looked back up, her eyes were still frowning back at me.

I couldn't get up to speak because I knew that every word that fell off my tongue would be a bald-faced lie. As far as anybody here knew, I was four-weeks sober, but my dealer, who I had been meeting at Riverside Park every Friday, knew better.

Miss Sarah was a nice woman. Not only did she host our meetings, she sponsored half a dozen people herself. She reminded me of my mother in some ways. My mother always had her braids in, the apples of her cheeks grew big when she smiled, and her skirts always dragged the floor. She was kind, but tough on you when she knew she needed to be.

I knew Miss Sarah was disappointed, but I couldn't stand the idea of trying to explain to these people who were hurt and suffering that their greatest fear was my greatest thrill, that their worst nightmare was my only dream.

I've never been a good liar, and I definitely couldn't get up and tell them the truth. How could I get behind that podium and tell them that the only thing I thought about while they were pouring their hearts out, giving their speeches, and making promises to themselves was where my next high would come from, that it was all I could think of?

* * *

I wasn't allowed to drive. Kara, my kid sister, picked me up after.

"How was it?" she asked.

"Good."

She looked back at me in the mirror and one side of her smile turned up.

"Good."



Seventeen
Madison Tilley, Junior

The Final Test

Paris Gilbert, Senior

A tall man wearing a gray and black uniform is shouting.

“Let’s go! Move! Move!”

A siren sounds and the walls flash red. Shadows run along the walls. A man puts a sack over each subject’s head, pulls a drawstring tight, and directs them down the hall toward a line of men who move them out the exit and load them onto busses.

“Thirteen, where you at?” Seventeen whispers after being loaded onto the bus.

“Yeah, I’m here. Busted again. Don’t get separated. We’ll talk again at the new building.”

The buses move.

All subjects wear the same jumpsuits. They have no hair on their bodies. They are not allowed to speak to one another, though they break this rule and are punished. The subjects are tested once a month: behavioral tests, IQ, blood work, brain activity, and more. It is only these tests that give them a sense of the passing of time. They never know if it is day or night. They have not seen the sun in over six years. They do not know their own age, and as far as they know, they were born in a bunker. They know nothing of parents, nothing of family, but Thirteen and Seventeen are each other’s people.

The subjects are unloaded from the busses. They walk in a single file line, slowly, shuffling their feet along the ground with their hands on the shoulders of the subjects in front of them. As they approach the door, Four trips and falls. The line stops and makes a jumbled mess. A guard yells, and they can hear his voice growing nearer. There is a gunshot. It is silent.

“That was a warning shot. The very next subject to break out of line will be shot. The next subject to so much as whisper will be shot. If you scream, cry, or take off your blind, you will be shot.”

Inside the new bunker, there are ten rooms per section. Two subjects per room. In each room there are two beds, a toilet and sink, and one dresser for clothes. On top of the dresser, a pile of blankets and sheets.

“First day in a new bunker,” Seventeen says as she unpacks her bag into the dresser.

“Who are we running from? Why are they trying to find us? Why are we even running?” Thirteen asks while making a bed.

“I don’t know. But at least we are together.”

“We’ll be okay. I promise,” Thirteen says, smoothing out the blanket.

The tests begin after breakfast on the following morning. It is the first full day in Bunker 7. There is something different about the building. It’s hallways and rooms are big and open, and the ceilings are high. But the tests are the same. Thirteen and Seventeen complete phase one and head back to their room. They try to check in with the hallway guard, but the guards seem to have disappeared. Their room is locked so they return to the common area with the other subjects.

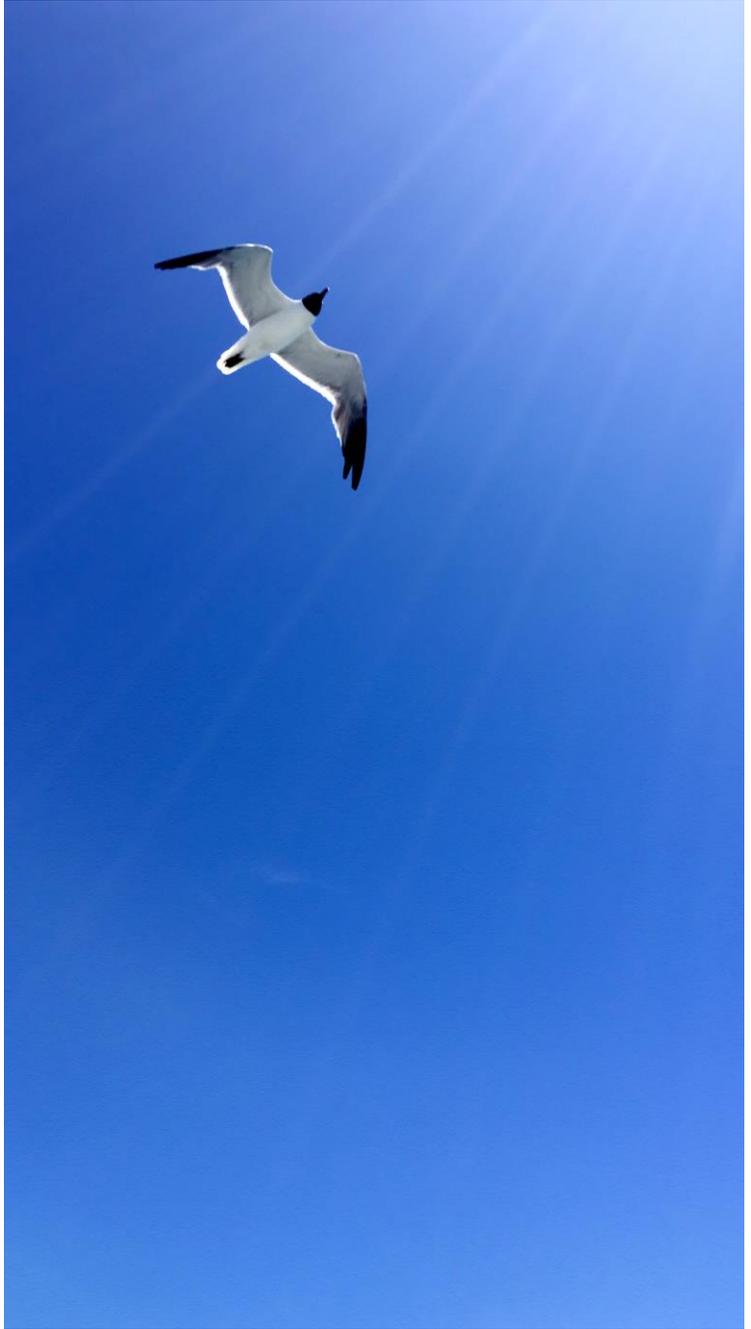
The loudspeaker cracks and an announcement begins: “Attention subjects. Phase Two will include a new test. It begins now.”

Suddenly doors open at the front of the bunker revealing a square of white sunlight, and then as their eyes adjust, green grass, blue sky, and yellow busses. The subjects walk cautiously toward the door. They shake nervously. The first subjects step outside. The rest follow. They are halfway across the open yard when they hear the first gunshot and a subject falls. Another gunshot and another. Seventeen looks back. The doors to the bunker are closed now. But across the yard, the doors at the back of the buses swing open.

The loudspeaker crackles, "Please find a bus. This is your final test." Thirteen grabs Seventeen's hand and they run. Subjects are falling to the left and right. They run as fast as they can. Thirteen releases Seventeen's hand and vaults into the back of the bus, then turns and says, "Take my hand!"

"I'm trying. It's too tall. I can't--" Three gunshots ring out and Seventeen's hand goes limp in Thirteen's grip. The bus jerks forward and Seventeen slips away. Thirteen tries to jump out, but there are so many hands pulling them back inside. A bullet strikes the side of the bus as it picks up speed, and another subject closes the door as Thirteen begs them to let go.

"No! No! Seventeen is okay! We have to go back! We can save them! It's not too late!" Thirteen presses against the back glass of the bus window as they drive away toward Bunker 8.



Sky
Jaron VanHouden, Senior

Why Can't I Love You?

Madison Tilley, Junior

Why can't I love you? She met the blue-eyes of the boy lying beside her. His mouth trembled and his damp eyes shook. His little-to-none eyebrows furrowed, relaxed, then furrowed again. She searched his face for something worth appreciating. He really was a beautiful boy. That's all her friends could ever say about him.

They'd say something along the lines of, "Wow, you really got lucky with that one."

If only I could see what they see, then maybe... Maybe I could... She was ashamed to think the way she did. It wasn't right. How could she blame him for the way she was feeling? It wasn't fair to him. She was the reason he was here.

It was the first time he had been inside her home, and the days leading up to his arrival, she did nothing but anticipate their meeting. But the 'him' that she created in her mind was not the same 'him' that lay before her. This one's eyes were too glossy and vacant, and he cried far too much.

No matter how much she tried to change her mind, she knew it wouldn't happen. She prayed one day she would wake up and feel that rush of love she had felt before, but it wouldn't be today.

"I'm so sorry, love," she whispered, while she stroked his light brown hair.

She got up and started for the door, her head hung low. She turned around and swallowed hard. She took one final look back at her baby, sighed, and closed the door.



John Prine
Madison Tilley, Junior



The Hate U Give
Madison Tilley, Junior

Staying True to Style: Toni Nichol's Life as a Published Author

Kylie Purdome, Senior

According to bestselling author T. Sue Versteeg, the most important part of being a writer is standing up for what you want to write. Every writer has a unique voice—a specific component of their writing that makes it stand out. For some it's cliffhangers. For others it's emotionally scarred antagonists. For T. Sue Versteeg—Toni Nichols to her friends and family—that something is sarcasm. In her book *Secrets of the Sapphires*, the main character, Nia Brooks, is known for her tongue-in-cheek humor. Even when she's transported back in time with little hope of returning home, her witty comebacks to the vampires, shifters, and her CIA partner never falter. Like Nia, Toni enjoys humor. In a personal interview, she said, "Voice is the only thing that I'm not negotiable on. You can change pretty much anything, but you will not take my snark or sarcasm out of my books."

Toni's writing stretches into several genres, including time travel romance, romantic comedy, and cozy mystery. She got into time travel romances after taking medieval studies in high school and falling in love with the time period. Romantic comedies attracted her for a different reason: the comedy. When asked about her familiarity with humor, Toni said, "If you could've met my mother and if you knew my father, sarcasm is a language that we speak freely in our home, so anything funny, I'm all about that." Toni was introduced to cozy mysteries through Gemma Halliday, who often incorporated elements of the genre in her own books. Toni enjoys their lighthearted nature and subtle romantic arcs.

Toni's writing is generally geared toward an older audience due to her inclusion of romance. "I do like my romance in my books," she said, "and while I'm not *Fifty Shades of Gray* or anything even remotely close to that, it's nice to have that [romance] in there too." Toni has tried writing for the "new adult," or college-age, audience, which is generally anyone between the ages of 18-25 (Keiffer), but she usually writes for a more adult crowd. Her cozy mysteries, for example, are more fit for the retired community, since the books are less focused on romance and more on figuring out a murder mystery. Toni even

admitted she wasn't a middle-grade type of writer.

There are things Toni likes and dislikes about writing. The thing she likes most is her ability to create something out of nothing. "I love that it's all coming from my experiences, my knowledge, and if I don't know it, I can research it. It's literally like making a baby, and the editing process is your labor," she said, laughing. "So it's a labor of love until the editing process." The editing process, in Toni's opinion, is one of the hardest parts of writing. "The first time you have an editor, it's like you're gutted because they're telling you, 'your baby's ugly' But you have to get past the personal part of it and know that it's not perfect." Another thing Toni dislikes about the writing process is marketing. She said it's difficult to market her own books because she has to draw attention to her talent. "I can do it for other people," Toni said, "but I can't do it for myself."

In high school, Toni did so well on writing assignments—such as essays—that other students groaned when the teacher graded on a curve. If she was assigned an eight-page paper, she would've written twenty pages, and her teacher would have graded her on only the first eight. Toni also enjoyed creative writing in school. It began as a love for quirky words and weird stuff and led to writing out the stories she heard from around the campfire. Toni loved writing so much that she decided to pursue a degree in it. She started with an Associate's degree at OTC and moved on to Missouri State as an English major. She eventually dropped out to care for her children, but not before she had taken several creative writing classes, which was the main reason she went in the first place.

Toni then set off on the arduous journey to get published. "This was the golden age of e-books," Toni told me. "When I first started writing, it was just the Big Six publishing houses, and you had to fit into this tiny little niche to even get noticed by an agent, let alone a publisher." She wrote around two hundred query letters and sent them to anyone and everyone she could find. "Normally with your query letter you're asking them if they're interested," Toni said. "They respond back with 'please send me your first three chapters,' so I did send the first three chapters out and got responses back from three or four of them." In the end, she chose the first publishing house to get back with her. She also said that the publishing process is a lot different than it used to be. Now, there are too many publishing houses and ways to research them

to send out query letters to every one you can find. Instead, you would find a publisher with the same writing style as you and focus your efforts on them.

Her first publishing house was so small that the covers were printed in a garage, and according to Toni, they weren't very appealing. "But it was a learning process, and I feel like it kept me moving in the right direction," she said. The publishing house filed for bankruptcy, and Toni moved on to a slightly larger publishing house called Wild Rose Press, which she left for a different reason. "I had an editor that I didn't mesh well with," Toni recalled. "We went back and forth a few times. [She] wanted the humor stripped out of *Secrets of the Sapphires*.... It was supposed to be dark and eerie and no, that's not who I am, and I wasn't willing to sacrifice that, so I did pull the plug on any future endeavors with Wild Rose Press." Her third publishing house was Gemma Halliday's, a boutique publishing house that only accepted authors with the same basic style as Gemma Halliday, such as humor and low-key romance. For Toni, it was a perfect fit.

Toni first met Gemma on a romance writers' site called Romance Divas. They were both administrators on the site, and they communicated through the online forum. Toni sent Gemma the first three chapters of her book to get feedback, and Gemma read it and helped her beef it up. While reading it, Gemma apparently noticed how similar their writing styles were. "[Gemma] had already hit the New York Times Best Sellers list, so her saying to me, 'What do you think about co-authoring?' ... I fell out of my chair, and when I finally woke up and was able to speak again... ahhh," Toni said excitedly. "So it's been stages, and that's been the pinnacle thus far." After they met, Gemma started her own publishing house and took on Toni as an author, even collaborating on a few books with her.

When Toni writes, she gathers inspiration from books she's read, people she knows, and life experiences she's had. She generally reads around two books a month, which she says helps from an author's perspective, since "nothing is ever truly organic." When authors write, she explains, "[They're] pulling from either something that [they've] read, something [they've] seen, or something [they've] experienced in [their] life, so reading helps fuel that. And it helps [them] stay with the current trends too." For example, Toni once based a character off of one of her old bank supervisors. "I helped the tellers all balance their

drawers at the end of the night," she said. "I made sure they had all their tickets turned in and that everything was done. Their computer systems had to work. They had to be able to do what they needed to do, and there was supposed to be an IT person on-call. But the supervisor of the IT department didn't pick up his phone, and we were there until almost 9:30 one night when we were supposed to leave at 7." Because of Toni's aggravation at him, the supervisor became a crossdressing gay man in her book *Killer Clue at the Ocean Blue*. Toni has also inserted several of her own experiences into her book plots. The foundation of *Secrets of the Sapphires*, for example, which introduces a Paranormal Division of the CIA to deal with paranormal entities such as vampires and shifters, was based on the fact that her Great Aunt was in the CIA. "When she passed away, they found a medallion in her belongings," Toni said. "She was a founding member of the CIA, hand-to-God. I have her photo album ... where she was entertaining dignitaries of other countries. Nobody knew why she was over there. She always said that she was traveling, that she was a secretary and ... worked for a department of the White House, but no one ever knew what she did until she passed away. And when I found out that she actually worked for the CIA, the paranormal division of the CIA was born." Since inspiration can come from anywhere, Toni advises either carrying a notebook or using talk-to-text to write down any spur-of-the-moment book ideas.

Toni hasn't written much in the last five years, but before that, she made it a goal to write for two hours a day, five days a week. While some write based on length, Toni prefers to write on a time schedule. In her mind, knowing you have to write 10,000 words in a day can feel daunting, but she knows she can devote two hours a day to having her laptop open. Her writing process also involves a lot of research, and she "can get stuck down rabbit holes so deep that it's hard to dig [herself] back out." She finds the information she needs by any means necessary, whether it be books, people she knows, or Google. "God forbid anybody ever confiscates my laptop and looks at my research history," Toni said, recalling the time she searched up medicines that could kill a person if they were taken in excess. "They're gonna think I'm some psychopath."

In Toni's opinion, there are two types of authors: plotters and "pantsers." "A plotter knows everything," she said. "They've probably got notecards and post-its and spreadsheets, and they know exactly

what's gonna happen in every chapter all the way through the end. I hate those people. Okay, I don't hate them—I envy those people. I wish I could be that type of a writer." Instead, Toni identifies as a pantser: a writer who comes up with the plot as they go. "Very often you'll end up with a sagging middle of your book, where you've got too much information, secondary characters that are going nowhere, and a lot of times you'll go, 'Why am I doing this?'" When that happens, Toni advises that you "step out of it, work on a different project, contemplate, take notes, and throw out ideas." She said it's also helpful to have a critique partner when you're struggling with organization. She enjoys her own critique partner because they can sit on the phone together for an hour and a half and go back and forth about each other's books, knowing just as much about the plotline as the author does.

Toni's critique partner is Nicole Leiren, USA bestselling author of cozy mysteries such as *Dark Rum Revenge* and *Heroes and Hurricanes*. In a short interview over email with Nicole, I found out that the two have known each other for several years. "From the first time we started emailing to the first time we got to meet in person, there was just this awesome connection that allowed us to talk for hours about anything and everything," Nicole said. "So we met and had lunch. We had a great time and couldn't believe how long we visited. It was like we'd known each other for years rather than a few months.... She's the kind of person who doesn't open up and share easily so I felt honored that we had a comfort level to be able to do that from the very start." The two became critique partners by collaborating on the *Danger Cove* series. Nicole said that learning how they complimented each other's styles just made it a natural fit. According to Nicole, every pair of critique partners has their own process. For her and Toni, that process begins with a discussion about what they loved about the other's work, and then moves on to what isn't working for them and why. "From there we strategize on how to improve," Nicole said. "There's also an understanding that, at the end of the day, the author has to tell the story how [they want], so they have final say on what stays or goes during the critique process." She said it's beneficial to have a critique partner because authors can sometimes be too close to their own story to know what doesn't work. "A carefully chosen critique partner," she said, "can be the eyes of our future readers and help us craft the very best possible story we have to tell."

After a manuscript is finished, Toni moves on to the editing process. In her eyes, every author—even Stephen King—needs an editor, regardless of their skill level or how many books they’ve published. The editing process includes several different steps, including line edits and content edits. Line edits are the line-by-line edits focused on details such as sentence structure, word choice, and pacing (Masterclass) whereas content edits are changes for the overall plotline of the book. Publishing houses generally have several editors on staff, and they simply assign one to an author, regardless of the author’s feelings about them. Although Toni has had editors she didn’t like, her current editor—Susan Thompson—has performed well so far. Toni co-authors several books with her publisher, Gemma Halliday. According to Toni, writing with Gemma is fun and exciting, and a lot of the pressure is gone because she doesn’t have to make it perfect. Gemma usually writes her a brief, two-to-three page outline of the whole book, and Toni then “[gets] to have fun and make the storyline and the characters.” In an email interview with Gemma Halliday, Gemma said that “two authors make writing a book twice as fast.” In addition to being efficient, it also provides company. “Writing is usually such a solitary profession,” Gemma said, “that it’s nice to interact with someone that closely on a project.”

Making an income is tough in the writing industry. According to Toni, it’s all about the blacklist, since readers are going to search for more books by a certain author if they enjoyed the first one. “It’s all about building as many [books] as you can get as long as they’re well-done. You don’t want to throw out crap because [readers are] eventually going to hit that crap book” and stop reading your work. It’s also about the publisher. With Wild Rose Press, Toni only made about \$50-\$200 a month. With Gemma, however, it was \$700-\$1,000 a month because Gemma had already established a sizable audience with her High Heels series, and that credibility was passed on to the authors she published. Although success by association can be beneficial, making an income is also about the funds and work you put into it. “You can’t just throw something up on Amazon and expect to make money. You have to have the person that’s doing the public relations work—the advertising and the marketing—constantly,” Toni said. “You have to spend money to make money in the publishing business.”

Writing isn’t Toni’s only profession. She was a banker most of her life, only retiring from the career about a year and a half ago when they

tried to put her in the front office of the loan department, despite that she was tired of working with the public. Instead, she decided to work with her husband and their house rehab company, which cleans commercial cleaning buildings and does maintenance for those outdoors. They used to have someone else that followed her husband around and kept tabs on him, but when she quit her job at the bank, they decided that she would take over for that. Toni's job involves balancing books, organizing payroll, getting receipts, and dealing with accountants. Her dream, however, is to one day become a full-time author.

Toni has been through several different publishing houses, written several books, and faced several challenges as an author, but through it all, she has managed to retain the one thing that makes her unique: her voice. During our interview, one piece of advice that stood out is this: "Don't ever write something just because someone tells you [it's] gonna sell, or, you know, 'this is what's hot right now.' Write what you feel." Like her character Nia Brooks, who survived her trip back in time and destroyed the vampires who were hunting her, Toni has faced the monsters of the writing world and achieved her own happy ending as a successful author.

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A Day in the Life of a Country Veterinarian

Jaron VanHouden, Senior

Dr. Eric Boeckmann puts his well-worn cowboy boots on one at a time and places a hat over his slightly shaggy locks of brown hair. He arrives at The Animal Clinic of Ava ready to help any animal that passes through the glass doors at the front of the clinic. His first appointment of the day seemed to be a standard, routine dental examination and cleaning for an elderly canine. As soon as the dog arrives, a veterinary technician weighs the dog and records his weight in the clinic's comprehensive database, which includes the owner's other pets, all of the appointments they have come in for, and any special notes regarding the dog's health or bad habits the veterinarian should be aware of.

Immediately, the technician notices the dog has lost fifteen pounds since it's the previous appointment just three months prior. The technician alerts Dr. Boeckmann of this change. Any drastic weight change such as this is alarming. Given the dog's age, Dr. Boeckmann was especially concerned. The immediate hope was that the dog had ingested some worm eggs from soil and was now harboring roundworms within its intestines, hindering it from gaining weight. Unfortunately, however, the dog was not this lucky.

Dr. Boeckmann began to perform a physical examination to see if he could uncover any exterior evidence that would lead to an explanation of the dog's rapid loss of weight. He noticed the dog seemed to be a bit "head shy" and chose to inspect his head more thoroughly. Quickly, he found a small abnormal mass on the side of the dog's mouth. There was a possibility that the mass was malignant and suppressed the dog's appetite. However, Dr. Boeckmann was still uncertain. He opened the dog's mouth and was left feeling astonished by his findings. Within the dog's mouth sat a tumor the size of a baseball that had likely been blocking the dog from consuming food. Still, there was some hope, but the probability of a diagnosis of cancer had increased significantly.

Dr. Boeckmann decides he needed to lance the mass on the outside of the dog's mouth. He grabs a number eleven blade scalpel and cuts into the mass. A thick black fluid slowly oozes out of the newly-made laceration. Dr. Boeckmann applied a slight amount of pressure to the bulge and the fluid began to gush out and all over the clean-white floor of the laboratory. Dr. Boeckmann now had the evidence he needed to make a conclusive diagnosis. The elderly dog did, indeed, have cancer. Given the dog's age as well as the size and location of the tumor, successful treatment would be difficult. Dr. Boeckmann's next step would be the hardest one: making a "quality of life" call to the dog's owners.

As briefly described to me by Dr. Boeckmann, a quality of life call consists of speaking with owners about the possibility of euthanasia. He discusses with them the quality of life their pet would have living in pain or uncomfortableness, versus a quiet, easy passing for them. He would also speak with them about the possible options of treatment and the cost. Dr. Boeckmann went into the office and made this dreaded phone call to the dog's owner. As he spoke with the owners, I was able to interact with the dog. This fifteen-year-old mongrel sat very still and loved affection. He was a true sweetheart and was undoubtedly loved by his owners. When Dr. Boeckmann returned from the office, I already knew their decision simply from his body language. The dog's owners had decided that it was most ethical to euthanize the dog and did not wish to be present during it. A technician then took the dog to a clean kennel filled with toys and a soft blanket, where he could pass away peacefully.

"It's never easy, but in cases like this, you know that it is the best route for the little guy," Dr. Boeckmann says to me as he removes his hat, pushes his hair back, and repositions the hat atop his head.

In the article, "What's Euthanasia Like For a Vet? It Only Gets More Difficult," published on Catster, a website dedicated to getting expert knowledge on behavior, health, and nutrition to the feline owner, Dr. Eric Barchas, a companion animal veterinarian from San Francisco, California says, "Performing a pet euthanasia is, in fact, not exactly the worst part of my job, but it certainly is the hardest and most emotionally challenging parts."

After the euthanasia occurs, Dr. Boeckmann has appointments and patients he must tend to for the remainder of the day. He continues

helping other animals who need it because he knows how much these pets mean to their owners and wants to do everything he can to ensure those pet's health. Even so, his main reasoning for treating every animal with the amount of care he does is that Dr. Boeckmann is simply doing what he loves. Dr. Boeckmann truly loves each animal he treats, and that is what has made him an excellent veterinarian.

Dr. Eric Boeckmann's love for animals began when he was a young boy. Growing up on a farm just outside of Jefferson City, Missouri, Dr. Boeckmann got to experience farm life up close. Dr. Boeckmann's family was contracted by Cargill Incorporated to raise and produce turkeys for meat. Because of this, Dr. Boeckmann and his siblings had many chores to do out in the large turkey barns. While chuckling, Dr. Boeckmann reminisced on his childhood.

"It's funny. I remember as a kid in the wintertime, I wouldn't layer up much. I would rush out to the turkey barns trying to stay warm, but once I was in the barn and working, I started to sweat real quick. Then, I'd have to hurry back to the house to keep the sweat from freezing to me."

In 2012, however, the Boeckmann's contract with Cargill expired and they began to shift the focus of their farm to cattle. Today, Boeckmann Family Farm LLC raises South Poll cattle and Mangalitsa hogs. The Boeckmann's sell their grass-fed and all natural beef to local individuals. Because of this, Dr. Boeckmann was able to obtain hands-on experience with livestock and interact with others in a business setting. These are both skills that are essential for a veterinarian to possess.

After high school, his time working on the family farm had come to an end. It was time for Dr. Boeckmann to start on his course to becoming a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. His first stop on this path was his undergraduate studies. Dr. Boeckmann attended the small university near his hometown, Westminster College until 2015, when he completed his studies and graduated. He was then accepted into the University of Missouri's College of Veterinary Medicine, which only accepts about 120 students per year. Dr. Boeckmann called Columbia his home for the next four years until he graduated and received his doctorate of veterinary medicine from the University of Missouri's College of Veterinary Medicine in 2019.

After this, Dr. Boeckmann traveled to Southwest Missouri where he began practicing veterinary medicine. Dr. Boeckmann practices mixed-animal veterinary medicine, meaning he treats both large livestock and companion animals. This keeps the environment he works in changing constantly and quickly. During my time shadowing Dr. Boeckmann, he had just finished up a quick check-up with a six-month-old puppy when the office manager informed him that he had a cattle emergency call. The owner had trailered a lame cow and a bull with an abnormal mass on its chest to the clinic.

“We keep stuff moving pretty quick in here. You never know what you are going to see,” Dr. Boeckmann said as we speedily walked through rows of empty kennels and made our way outside to the barn. Dr. Boeckmann greeted the owner of the cows and got a more in-depth idea of what exactly he wanted Dr. Boeckmann to do today. After this, Dr. Boeckmann, and a veterinary technician got the cow loaded into the squeeze chute. Dr. Boeckmann then did a thorough physical examination to pinpoint the exact area that was causing the laminitis. He found a small abscess near the cow’s hoof that could have been the cause. Dr. Boeckmann lanced and drained the abscess and then trimmed the cow’s hoof to take some of the weight off of the back of her hoof. Dr. Boeckmann also prescribed the owner a medicine to ease some of the pain the cow might be feeling and told him that she could still be limping for another week. After this, the veterinary technician pulled a long silver lever which released the chute and allowed the cow to go wait in a holding pen. Dr. Boeckmann intently watched her walk out and was frustrated when he saw her still limping slightly, even though there was substantial improvement from when she arrived.

After a bit of conversation between Dr. Boeckmann and the owner, they ran the bull into the chute. This hefty Black Angus bull had an abscess on its chest the size of a softball. However, Dr. Boeckmann did not lance this abscess; instead, he allowed Mr. Justin Schwarzlose, a veterinary medicine student at the University of Missouri, who was assigned to the clinic to shadow and achieve some hands-on learning from the veterinarians. Mr. Schwarzlose grabbed the scalpel from Dr. Boeckmann’s outstretched arm. He stabbed into the abscess once and sliced quickly, however no liquid drained. Dr. Boeckmann quickly showed him his preferred way of draining large abscesses. Mr.

Schwarzlose got back in position to lance the abscess. His hand trembled and the look of extreme concentration on his face intensified. Again, he stabbed the scalpel into the abscess and slid it down. This time, a yellow-brown ooze shot out of the abscess and pooled below the cow. Mr. Schwarzlose used his hand to work all of the liquid out of the abscess. Once the liquid was worked out of the abscess, he then grabbed a large syringe and filled it with iodine that the veterinary technician had prepared. He squirted the iodine into the abscess repeatedly until it seemed as though the abscess had been washed well and only iodine was coming out. The treatment had been completed, so the technician released the chute and loaded the cow and bull back into the trailer. After Dr. Boeckmann cleaned up a bit of the mess made in the barn, he went back inside the clinic and awaited his next patient.

Despite only having practiced for three years, Dr. Boeckmann has already created quite the name for himself in Southwest Missouri. Personally, my family thinks highly of Dr. Boeckmann and will take any of our animals to him when a need arises. Angel McKee, a member of the Ava community, wrote the following in an online review:

“Animal Clinic of Ava staff and vets are wonderful to work with. Have had to call them out a couple times to help pull calves and Dr. Boeckmann helped both times... Very responsive and quick to get there. Even helped when I had a cow down in the pasture in labor arrest to get her back up to the barn before pulling her calf.”

While I was at the clinic, I was able to observe how helpful and kind Dr. Boeckmann is to his coworkers and patients. Right after his euthanasia, another veterinarian at the clinic, Dr. Beth Kearns, was spaying a large Belgian malinois, who had recently had a litter of puppies. Dr. Boeckmann had walked by a couple of times and noticed that the dog was bleeding more than usual, so he popped into the operating room and helped Dr. Beth get some of the blood wiped away so it was easier for her to work. Throughout the day I also got to hear multiple veterinary technicians talk about Dr. Boeckmann, but one specific conversation stuck out to me. The technician said, “Boeckmann is nice. The other vets I have worked under never help. When their day is over, they just leave, but Boeckmann always stays and helps clean the operating and exam room.”

The last operation that I was able to observe while at the clinic was a C-section for an English bulldog. Due to their narrow hips, bulldogs have to give birth through C-sections, so this was a planned operation and the whole staff had been awaiting it. I was lucky enough to be in the operating room and observe the entire operation. Dr. Boeckmann was very careful with each of the five puppies that he removed from the uterine horns. He took them out one at a time, cut the umbilical cord, and swaddled them in a small towel. He then handed the puppies to a veterinary technician and allowed them to check that the puppies' airways were clear and they were not bleeding from cutting of the umbilical cord.

The day of a veterinarian is ever changing. During an interview for Drandyroark.com, Dr. Nichole Palumbo supports that statement saying,

“As veterinarians we are expected to be able to handle a variety of medical specialties in the course of a regular day. I can go from a puppy exam discussing early life nutrition, vaccinations, and care to an oncology appointment where I am discussing what types of chemotherapy might be best for lymphoma.”

Dr. Boeckmann's schedule is quite similar to Dr. Palumbo's. While Dr. Boeckmann's day may have started with sorrowful euthanasia, it ended with an amazing passage of life.

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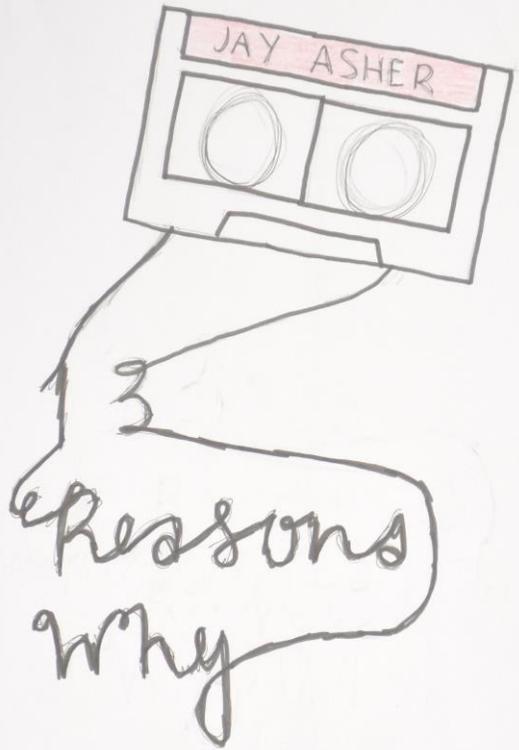
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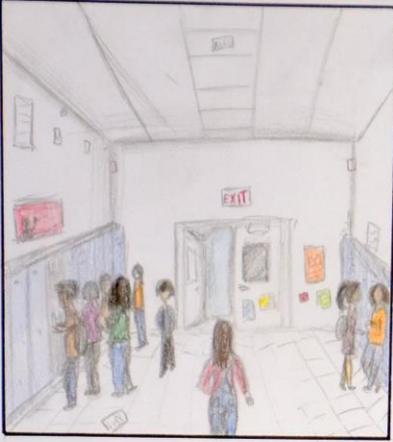
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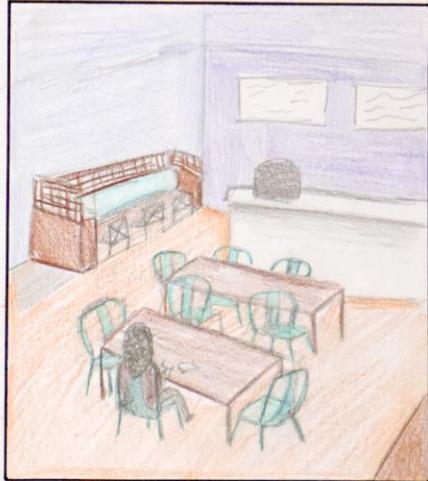


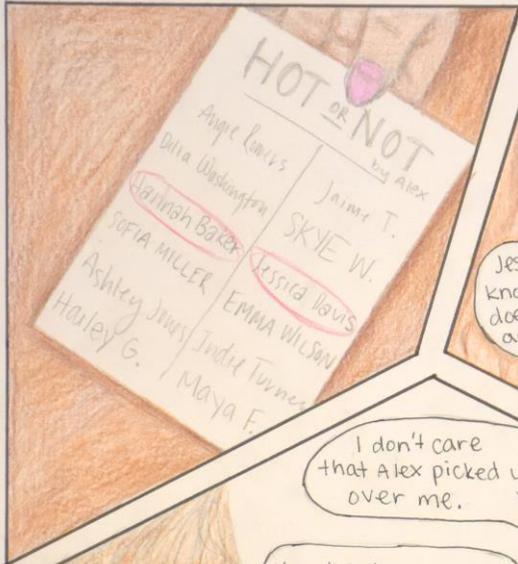
"Misconceptions at Monet's"

"Misconceptions at Monet's"
Madison Tilley, Junior
Based on story and dialogue by Jay Asher.



Later that Evening

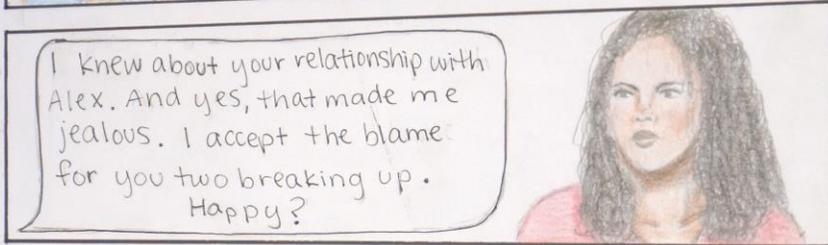
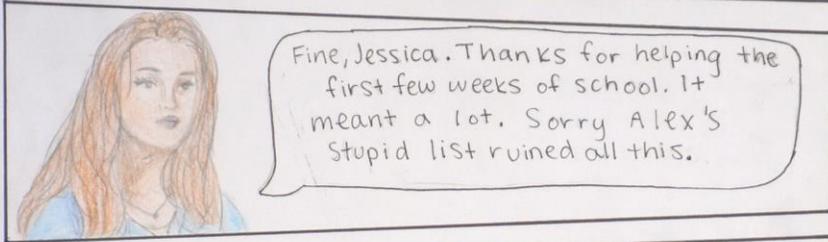




I don't care that Alex picked you over me.

He didn't choose me over you. He chose me to get back at you. He knew my name would hurt you the most.



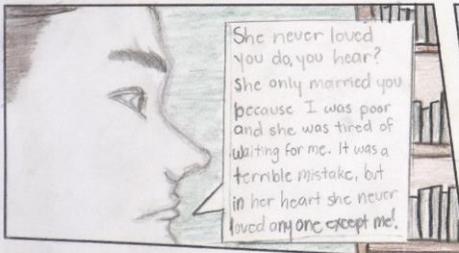
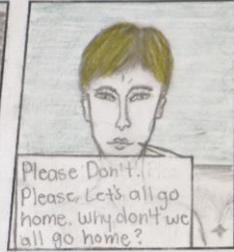


THE GREAT GATSBY

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

SIERRA JACKSON

"THE FIGHT"



"The Fight"

Sierra Jackson, Freshman

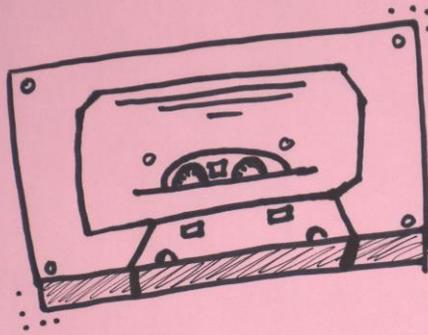
Based on story and dialogue by F. Scott Fitzgerald.



- 13 -

Reasons Why

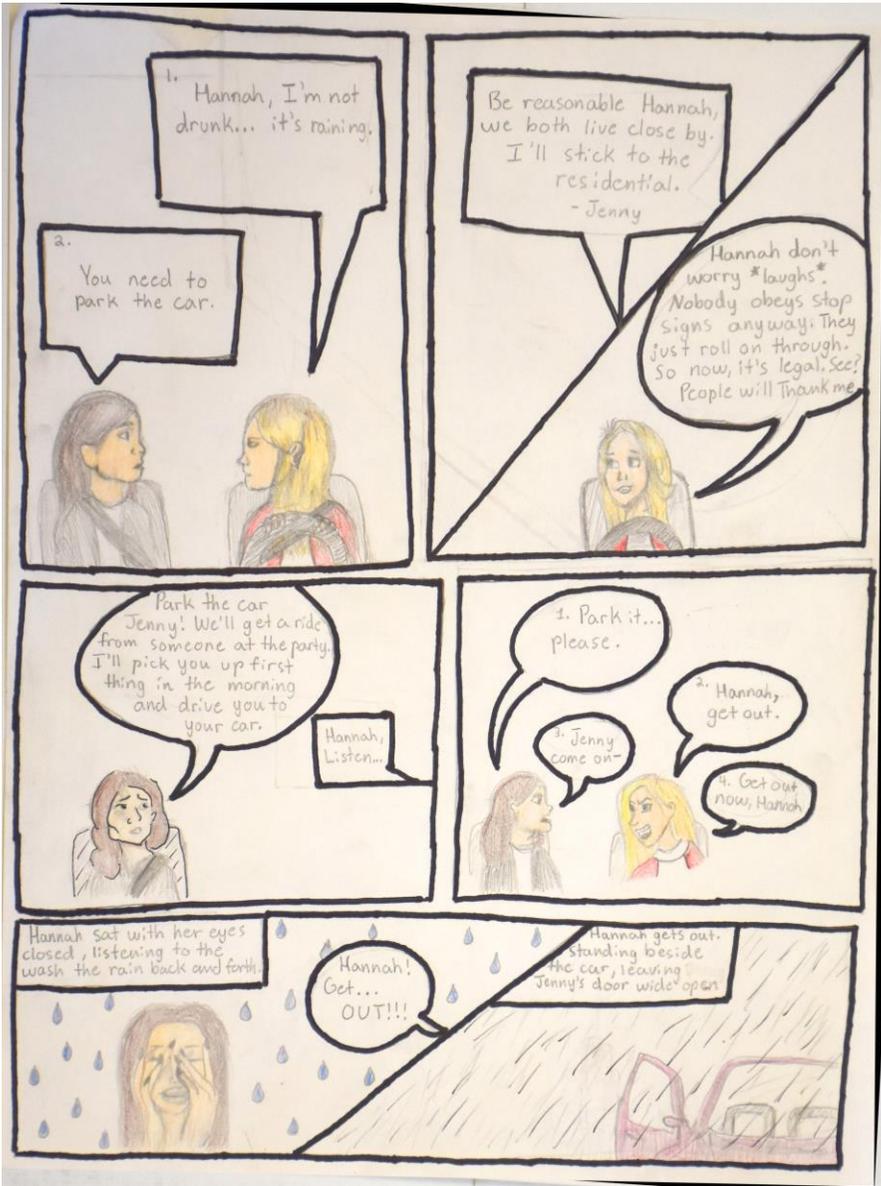
{ Story
Written
By
Jay Asher }



"Hit and Run"

comic by
~ Bianca Mitchell ~

"Hit and Run"
Bianca Mitchell, Junior
Based on story and dialogue by Jay Asher.





- Later That Night... -

