

Paper

&

Ink



"The scariest moment is always just before you start."
(Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*)

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Poetry

"Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality.

It's a way of understanding it."

(Lloyd Alexander)

Far more responsible than anybody
Jaw was clenched
Almost afraid to speak
As I'd silently begged him
People were out to get them
Again he stopped
And I remembered our first conversation
He'd more or less turned it aside
Joshua was killed in saving them
I should never have trusted Joshua
I'd stop him
Work with people who really care
What happens to all the little people

Unnamed – Kendal

I was the sand and you were the sea
And though you often left
You always came back to me

Six Word Poetry – Anonymous

Hello sunshine!
I've been cold lately.

Dragonfruit – Anonymous

Some days
My eyes cannot help but fall in love
With the way
Your teeth shine.

I wish I could explain why
My scalp tingles at the mere thought of you.

You are the lion, too wild for the circus.
The hummingbird – too lighthearted to ever be
Weighed down by my love.

And yet I can't help but throw myself at you,
piece by piece,
memory by memory
emotion by terrifying emotion
only hoping something sticks.

“It's suffocating me,” you beg.
And now it is I who understands

You are a dragonfruit,
too exotic to be mine.

3-10

03D-4N
Dragon Fruit*

Poison Fruit – Anonymous

Most days I want to peel your presence off of me.
Your laughter lingers in the depths of my dreams.

I wish I could make you see
how my personality poisons your future.

There is a fiery hell running rampant within me
I do not want you trapped in this inferno.

I am the expired hand grenade,
too unstable to be handled.
A plagued sinner,
too far gone to be saved by your love.

And yet I cannot leave you,
why won't you listen?

“I'm suffocating you,” I try to scream.
Now it is you who must realize,
I am a poisonous fruit,
too deadly to be yours.

Agender – By Terra Morgason

Life is full of choices, big and small
But the hardest one for me should be the easiest of all

I wish it wasn't hard for me anymore
But I don't want to open the girl's bathroom door

And I groan every time I try to buy something
Because finding stuff that isn't gendered is so tiring

Every birthday I wanna hurl
Because all the gifts are for a sweet girl

And when they say for girls and boys to separate
I've gotten to my side a little late

And none of the girly clothes fit
But I'm trying to get over it

And where's my romance?
Why do authors never give non-binary people a chance?

But when they ask me if I'm pink or blue
Neither one is a perfect hue

I'm sad that I'm not fragile or clean
And I'm sad that I'm not over aggressive and mean

I was supposed to be my dad's only daughter
But I feel this way hell or high water

I'm not blue or pink or in between
I'm just an odd looking pale mint green

Painful – Pen Name “A Not Mouse”

I thought of you today and cried
Because I don't want to love you
I want to wash my mind of your red hair
And cut every idea you've given me away

I don't want to obsess over what your lips feel like
Or how they'd say 'I love you'
I don't want to think about how those lips aren't mine
And how you obsess over someone else's hands

And no longer will I think of you while I lie awake
Until you have given me an inch, which will feel like a mile
And I don't want to give my soul to you when you don't want it
And I don't want to love you.

The feeling of being unwanted
Is one that no one should knowledgeable
It's scary to feel such a sadness
And haunts you wherever you go

Alone and upset and disgusted
The only emotions that follow
Will eat you up till you are nothing
And kill you with each hungry swallow

Even when people are with me
And they try to tell me they're here
With every sign of them leaving
I feel they are no longer near

They might tell me they'll love me forever
Or that it's just all in my head
But I can see the way things are changing
As I replay the days while in bed

I guess it may all just be nothing
But that doesn't get rid of the pain
Because no matter what people might tell me
I can't stop the thoughts in my brain

Whatever I do isn't good enough
Nothing I do is right
How can I be such a screw up
When they told me I would be so bright

But now here I am and I'm crying
Because life is not what I thought
I imagined it being like movies
But that isn't what I have been brought

There's fighting and crimes
There's murder and dying
There's bullying and sadness
And late nights up crying

So why wouldn't I feel so alone
Because no one shows love anymore
Leaving is all that I know now
As I see them walk right out the door

“Tweet, Tweet, Leet.”

For me – Pen Name “Cena Watermoose”

What made me happy was being with you,
What made you happy was being with me.
And you even told me as we went,
That you'd soon walk out and leave.

And then as we went,
You grew distant.
All that time we were together,
I really truly missed it.

And as we went,
I actually believed.
“Maybe you might stay,
Just for me.”

But soon I was right,
And soon you were wrong.
And stayed awhile, you played along.
You played the part God made you for.
You didn't walk right out the door.

Hoping the Ground Will Soon be White – Hanna Godin

The rain hits the roof on the gloomy November night
Hoping the rain won't turn to snow
The street light shines in my window so bright
I do want snow on Christmas though

Hoping the rain won't turn to snow
Wishing the ground would not be white
I do not want snow on Christmas though
I guess that would be alright

Wishing the ground would not be white
But I am getting sick of having grass to mow
I guess that would be alright
Maybe there is snow on the mountains in Stowe

But I am getting sick of having grass to mow
I am not seeing any snow in sight
Maybe there is snow in the mountains of Stowe
Hoping the ground will soon be white

I am not seeing any snow in sight
The street light shines in my window so bright

Hoping the ground will soon be white
The rain hits the roof on the gloomy November night

Unnamed – Meghan Draper

Pressure.
External.
When will you finish?
When, genie, can I make my wish?
It isn't your fault, take the blame.
Complain, oh complain, it remains the same.

Pressure.
Paternal.
Why don't you spend time with me?
Why don't you find my jokes funny?
I don't understand you.
I don't know how far is too.

Pressure.
Maternal.
Did you get it done?
Did you have fun?
I'll tell you what you want to hear.
But I've made my expectations clear.

Pressure.
Internal.
What can I do?
What have I done?
It's not enough.
I'm not good enough.

Her – Sam Dilner

His tears are streaming down his cold white cheeks
He is overwhelmed by deep solitude
She has not been the same these last few weeks
His love for her is forever renewed

Her angry words cut his heart like a knife
She does not love him the way he loves her
The only choice he sees is to end life
There is no going back to the way they were

He searches for a way to find release
Depression has destroyed his once sweet soul
This is the only way to find peace
He loses the ability to control

With each pulse pain drains from his depressed soul
She realized that she will never be whole

Fall – Meghan Draper

When I was younger, I fell for fall
I fell for the falling leaves
I fell for the fallen temperature
I fell for the fall in love feeling of the changing season

The crisp colorful leaves floated off the branches
Like small drops of paint
The wind and weather wrapped me into blankets
Cozy and content watching everything change

I fell for traditions
Carving pumpkins from bottom to top
Raking leaves just to jump in and mess them up
Boots and light jackets, stopping at the local bakery shop

I count the years in Halloween costumes
School begins and I'm a whole new me
As time goes on my pumpkin gets smaller, I rake to clean up
and my trips to the local bakery turn to trips to the coffee shop
Each fallen leaf like a part of my childhood, falling, dying, still beautiful
Living in memories, fall turned to autumn

I am the Blaze – Sam Dilner

I am alive.
I lick at the walls spreading quickly
Heat, oxygen, fuel, a chemical chain reaction
I am fire.

I am alive.
A halogen rips through the wall
My adversary dowses me with water
I am flame.

I am alive.
This will not stop me
My smoke and heat will defeat him
I am heat.

I am dying.
Water pours around me in sheets
I fade out like a light bulb.
I am cold.

Unnamed – Pen Name “A Not Mouse”

My name and your drink drip down my lips,
And you cling to every fiber of my being, or maybe it was my shirt
And you are begging for traction that I cannot give
Because I am dull, unable to shift
And I beg of you, please do not be sad
Because I must admit
That you are the best one night stand I've ever had

Black Out Poetry – Anonymous

Letters from years ago were evidence
Of promises and the love
Of a life-time

Unnamed – Kendal

He was snow
He was snow in the morning, crisp and pure
He was snow in the fall, new and exciting
He was snow in a storm, constant and everywhere
He was snow's first fall, different yet beautiful
He was snow in the summer, gone.

Painful – Pen Name “A Not Mouse”

I thought of you today and cried
Because I don't want to love you
I want to wash my mind of your red hair
And cut every idea you've given me away

I don't want to obsess over what your lips feel like,
or how they'd say 'I love you'
I don't want to think about how those lips aren't mine
And how you obsess over someone else's hands

And no longer will I think of you while I lie awake,
until you have given me an inch, which will feel like a mile
And I don't want to give my soul to you when you don't want it
And I don't want to love you

Don't Let Your Poems Be Ordinary – Jessica Settles

Don't let your poems be ordinary
Give them permission to be exciting or scary
Allow them to rock someone's world

Enable your words to stay straight or swirled
Make your words dance through the brain
Until they make the reader go insane
Always write your poem with some heart
And appreciate the poem because its art
Be sure to give it thought and emotion
Put in time and effort to show your devotion
Sure you can add all those literary aspects
Rhyme, meter, simile, you be the architect
Take pride in your work to give it some spunk
And don't pass judgment, for it isn't junk
So don't let your poems just be plain
Don't forget to own it, don't be like Mark Twain
Just know that you have a lot of great things to say
Then celebrate the poem and put it on display
For you have many reasons to be proud
Just remember to share it with a crowd.

Short Stories

&

Prose

*"There is no greater agony than
bearing an untold story inside you."*

(Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings)

He had a sister... but not one that he grew up with. He didn't know how they played or what they like to do. Little girls weren't in his vocabulary. And when his first baby girl was born, he had no clue what to do. Seeing that pink baby blanket being pushed into his arms made his head spin, made him more nervous than he'd ever been. What if he was too rough, what if he couldn't give her what she needed. But, oh how much he loved her. He played with her and teased, laughed and made that little girl smile. He soon realized little girls aren't as scary as he thought. But they aren't as rugged as little boys. So when she fell, she cried. There was no use trying to calm her because she was already screaming. No "shake it off" or "be a big girl" would work for her. He might've been a little mad at first, maybe a little annoyed, but he thought about it more. His baby girl was delicate, sweet and soft. He loved the precious little girl who got hurt too much and was a little too loud. He loved it when she'd fall asleep in his arms after she threw a tantrum. How peaceful she was now. When he found out another little girl would be joining his family, he smiled. "As long as she's as sweet as Bridgette, I'm okay with another girl," he told his wife. Two years later here he is. Playing dress up with this girls, teasing his wife as she takes a picture, he laughed and saw the big smile on his little brown, curly haired princess as she danced in the living room. He knew everything to know about little girls. They just need daddy.



It was Halloween night, and Billy and his friends decided to raid houses of candy, and also steal candy from little kids. They stole candy all through the night, when they arrived at the last house in town. The lights were shining through the window, but when they knocked on the door, nobody came. The door was unlocked so Billy pushed the door open. Him and his friends searched the entire first floor for people and candy, but unfortunately there was none. They found a door that read “basement” and a sliver of light was shining from under the door. Billy slowly opened the door and walked in. The door slammed shut behind him, separating him from his friends. Then a voice resonated in his mind “Yes, keep going, you're almost there”. Billy continued down the stairs. “closer, closer, CLOSER!” Billy reached the bottom step when a eerie red glow started. “Yes, you've made it, come, release me, and I will reward you beyond measure.” Billy walked toward the red glow, feeling weaker by the second. Billy thought *wait a minute, why would I follow the voice, it could be someone dangerous.* But soon he felt compelled to follow the voice. He was moving against his will. He walked toward the red light. There, around the corner, was a bubbling cauldron being stirred by a skeleton. The skeleton dropped something into the cauldron, and continued stirring. Then another skeleton came up to Billy from behind and grabbed him. He then lifted Billy up, and set him in the cauldron. Billy's skin started to burn. And then Billy was gone. Then a figure arose from the cauldron. “sir” said one of the skeletons. “Who else would I be, you fool? Now I, Lucifer, shall have my revenge on God. I will murder each and every human on his precious Earth!”

Unnamed – Kendal

The *butterfly wings* design of the dress moved as she ran. It gave the appearance of hundreds of butterflies taking flight. Her arms stretched out wide as she ran, and for a moment I wonder if she too will take off. I hurry behind her, making sure she stays firmly on the ground. She looks at me for only a moment to see if I'm there. She rolls her eyes at the distance between us, “dad! Hurry up, we'll be late!” In that moment, like so many before, she looks just like her mother. I shake the feeling and smile instead, “alright then, butterfly. Let's fly.”

32B-4^M
Butterfly Wings

Excerpt From Unnamed – Anonymous

It was dark the night he passed away. Every night is dark, but this one was darker somehow. A deep confusing dark where you can't seem to see the hands in front of your face. Now that I think about it, the day before she died was dark too. The clouds covered the sky, leaving out the light. The trees seemed sad as their

leaves got blown away in the wind. Then there was rain that poured down, leaving puddles, shallow and dark.

I always thought the rain was good. You could dance, sing, and kiss in the rain. These are all good things, right? I guess that's why I didn't notice the day before he died was dark, because it rained and rain was good, but now rain is sad, evil, dark, because it makes me think of him. Every drop is a memory of him. Bittersweet.

Paint Sample Writing: Bling Bling – Jessica Settles

“Everything must be pink!” Jenny screamed from her bedroom closet. It was the night before the first day of 1st grade and Jenny wanted to be the best dressed of all the kids in her class.

“Honey, I think that is a little too much pink,” Jenny's mom proclaimed as she stepped into the closet, examining her daughter's choice of attire. She wore a pink shirt with “Princess” scrawled glitter across the front, pink corduroy pants, a frilly pink tutu go around her waist and a pink and glittery tiara atop her head. Not to mention pink socks and pink Hello Kitty light up shoes.

“Jeesh!” Mom thought. “I guess I raised a girly girl.”

“I'm all ready for school, mommy... Oh wait, what will I wear for my bling bling?!” Jenny asked with a cute little grin on her face.

1-5

01B-6^N
Bling Bling

Long Stories And Essays

"There is nothing to writing.
All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed."
(Ernest Hemingway)

I had been training for this moment for months. Five months to be exact. Running day in and day out, 5 days a week with cross training. Running through the freezing cold weather as well as many days on the treacherous treadmill. As I stand at the starting line, I perform my usual routine of last minute tasks. I look down to see that my shoes are tied, double knotted to be exact but make sure they aren't so tight they hurt or not too loose that they'll slip and give me blisters. Adjust my armband and scroll to the perfect song. Fix my headband so all my little hairs are restrained. Through the crowd's murmur, and the blasting music, I can hear the announcer starting his calls and I see the gun being raised into the air.

"Runners, take your mark, get set, Go!" He yells into a muffled microphone. There are thousands of people around me and spectators everywhere. I spring forward, quickly remembering to pace myself. Don't get too excited now, Jess. Sometimes, I just get so anxious and excited to just run.

My coach's words echo in my head. "You can't win the race in the in the first mile" he says tauntingly at me with a wagging finger. I know he's right though, especially when this is mile 1 of 13. Don't forget that .1 at the very end, that's a doozy. I settle into my pace and let my body relax. I pass a few people here and there, sizing up my competition, in my head. Yeah, I think I'll beat her, let's pass her. Mmm...maybe not him, I'll let him go. Oh, I can definitely take this guy, I'll pick him off. I look around at the crowd for my boyfriend and friends. No sign of them yet. My phone then tells me I've reached Mile 1, 7:30 pace, Crap, that's too fast. Oh well, maybe I'll just try to hang on, I tell myself.

As I continue running, the next 5-6 miles I am able to maintain my pace. Each time I hit the pace I smile to myself. Yes, I got it. I can do anything. Around Mile 5, I see my running partner. I wave estatically when I see her and yell her name as loud as I can. At Mile 7, I see people all around me, handing me water and spraying a hose over all the runners. I even give a couple high fives to little kids. It's now mile 10 and I'm starting to really feel it now. 3 more miles, I tell myself. Just a 5k, just a 5k. You got this. Just when I need it most, I see my boyfriend and another friend. I jump up waving uncontrollably and I am instantly rejuvenated. Miles 11-13 drag on but I keep pushing. You're almost done and then you an sit on your butt the rest of the day and do nothing.

At Mile 12, I see some spectators holding up a poster with Vaseline on it. A girl near me reaches for some and eats it. "Uhh...that's Vaseline" I told her as she stopped to vomit. I ran away from her quickly, trying to avoid the same fate. Now it's mile 12.5, keep it going! And now here's a hill, right at the end? Are you serious? I look down at my shoes so it can't intimidate me. I'm up, I'm good. Strong finish. I see my partner ready to grab the bracelet and looking like she wants a hug. I spring into her smiling. "Hug me!" she says as I push past her and puke. "Not a good time, just go! You got this!" mid puke. I think to myself, "Yay, personal best!" as my friend walks over and says, "So when are you going to run the full marathon!?"

~ *Bag Stories – Pen Name “MAKINGCOFFEE”*

I accidentally killed a man with the STONE'S SHELL. I never expected it to be such a dangerous murder weapon. A weapon of true mass destruction. It appears in a pure ethereal white. Only used for the simplest things, but no, because of fate the small item became a tool used for murder. I was just playing around with my friend. We were both drunk, when my friend was searching for some money in his pocket to buy some crackers, but then he pulled out the STONE'S SHELL. Neither of us knew where it came from, but none of us felt anything off with it. So after buying the crackers, we went to watch the new sponge bob movie, wearing nothing but nostalgic Mardi Gras beads, was about time when my friend fell asleep. I did later too, but when I woke up he was still in the same position, still asleep. I spread my some Hot cocoa milk chocolate flavoring on the rest of the crackers, when I noticed something red coming out of from behind his ears. I tried shaking him awake, but he was still sound asleep. So I turned him around to see the STONE'S SHELL. It was impaled into his head. I screamed in such horror, than puked out my Hot Cocoa Milk

Chocolate Flavored Salty Crackers. I ran out of my house, away from the horror scene. But when I turned around one last time I saw it. The STONE'S SHELL! It was standing all by itself, in a bloody mess. I screamed again and ran from my house forever.

Prologue

The police came to my house to investigate the scene to find my friend's corpse. But there was no STONE'S SHELL. My friend had no family so I cremated him and kept him in many little urns. And I still feared for my life of the STONE'S SHELL.

PS Wait a minute, I did I say kill a man before in the intro sentence. OOPS.

~ *The Lie – Pen Name “John Turner”*

Running. I had to get away. I had to tell someone. But that laugh, that cackling laugh. So menical and devilish, taunting me, like a cat to yarn. If I told anyone, I would surely die. But it needed to be told, no matter the consequences. But as my running went on, down streets, and through narrow alleyways, I began to hear things. Feet clattering on pavement, and it sounded close too. Then, not ten feet in front of me, a fire escape ladder clanged to ground. It was like I was being led on by someone, but I ignored my senses, and trudged on. Sprinting. I had to get there. Had to beat him there. But the laugh came flooding back. Reverberating off of the alley walls. That was the laugh I had learned to fear. It belonged to the man who killed my father for knowing his secret. That man. That mimic. THAT THING! That evil that came with its presence. By I had to get away. I had to find someone. But as I climbed to the end of the fire escape, I looked back at my pursuer. His face, that hideous face. What a nightmare. He had no face, he had no eyes, no mouth, not even a nose. It was a blank slate. He was a monster out of a fairytale, but here he was. His black trench coat, black fedora, and his shirt were the only shapes I could make out to be of human origin. I latched my hands onto the window and pried it open. I squeezed myself through the window then slammed it shut behind me. The killer's face appeared at the window. But as I slowly backed up, facing the man, he waved. I continued to back up, with my face towards him. I then felt something grab me. I look back and I see the monster from the window. But I then look at the window and he is still there. As the cord drew around my throat, I knew. It was over. I wasn't going to be able to escape this one. The air began to get thin when the cord closed in and choked me. The last thing I saw before dying was the man in the window, his face slowly becoming mine, and then I couldn't see, as my eyes began to disappear.

~ *When War Ain't What it Was - Anonymous*

When War Ain't What it Was

I, Alfie Wolfe, stare up at the propaganda poster plastered to the brick wall outside my family's corner store. It just so happened to be that yesterday was my birthday, April 6th: I was born eighteen years ago, in 1899, it's 1917 now. It should have been a normal birthday, with a nice dinner and some exclamations of congratulation. It wasn't—actually, there were lots of parties, everywhere.

There weren't for my sake. I never thought my country would enter a war on my *birthday*.

It's not just any war either, people say that it's going to be the First World War. I think that sounds terrible, but people are *celebrating*. Maybe it isn't so terrible. Maybe God created it to let men fight, to let us use our masculinity and be the warriors we were always meant to be. Maybe...The propaganda poster *could* be right. It says: Be Our County's Savior. Fight for justice. Earn Your Honor. Be The Best. Join up. *I could*, I think to myself, *I could be so honorable*—

"Alfie?" A sweet voice cuts through my vain thoughts, "Momma wants you to come help clean the store. She says that you're goin' to catch War Fever and start having boyish dreams of honor and such." I stare at my tiny sister, Opal, she's barely fourteen, and has an even thicker Southern accent than me. She somehow molded, since the day she was born, into the rebellious-southern-belle type that is common of the Wolfe family women. My mother, grandmother, aunt—they're all very much like her. My

favorite thing about Opal is that, even when she's spitting mad, she has this little crooked smirk, like she finds everything you do and say to be beneath her, not like she's better...just more competent.

"Course," I mutter hoarsely, trying not to betray that that was exactly what I was doing. "I'll be right along." Her eyes widen and her smirk expands, "Now Alfie...that's just what you were doing ain't it? You were having boyish daydreams of honor and nobility. Don't even think about *trying* to join up, you're not even twenty-one. Besides," she shutters, "you haven't any idea of the horrors that unfold in war. Grandma Edna told me that all the people celebratin' it ain't got nothin' but air between their ears."

Surprising even myself, I raise my voice considerably, "Opal Jane Wolfe, *you're* the one who hasn't any idea! You're a woman—a kindhearted, petite one at that—and you don't understand what it feels like to have the opportunity to be *honored*. You don't know—"

"And *you* don't know what it's like to have a brother who wants to go offer himself up as cannon fodder and doesn't even know that that's what he's asking for! If you join up, or if you decide you're going to join up, you will be a *dead man walking*. Until the day you make it official and die in battle, you will be a dead man on two feet! You know what a dead man is? Worthless! A DEAD MAN IS WORTHLESS!" She pants, her cheeks red and her eyes wild, when she repeats, in a barely audible tone, "*worthless*." ***

I lay in my creaky bed now, pondering Opal's outburst earlier today. She could be right. But then, maybe she's not. I turn over, looking out the window of my tiny bedroom, she was right about one thing: I'm not old enough to join up. *Age is but a number*, is what my Dad says every year that he gets older. That could be my excuse, if I'm a good fighter, shooter, or something of the sort—why should I be limited by a petty number?

"*Oh, I'll join up*," I mumble to myself determinedly, "*God will it*." Aware that I won't be getting any sleep, I get up and fumble to my dresser, on it is a mirror. I blink the heavy weight of sleep from my eyes and stare into the mirror: my green eyes, black hair, and sun-tanned skin stare back at me. I don't see the face of a boy. I see an almost-man. Not exactly a *man*, but—Close enough. I think again of Opal's green eyes and raven hair—we look quite alike—glaring at me in fury. Fury caused by love, and start to rethink joining up...No. *No*. I will join up. If they figure out that I'm not 21, then I'll figure that God willed it not to be. I pace my room until the sun comes up, and when it does, I consider the infinite possibility the day holds. I heard once that the farther you go—the closer you think you are to infinity—the farther you are from it. Mustn't that mean that as soon as you think you've reached the end of all possibilities—there are more than is imaginable? If that is the case, then I most definitely can join up. I *can* and I *will*. *I will*, I decide as I collapse back onto my bed and drift into dreams of fighting and winning and honor.

The pale, early morning sun strains through the curtains, as if it too is tired. I want to sleep, I could, but I must gather information: where to join up, how, and what I must do. That means going to town. I fumble for my clothes: trousers, shirt, shoes, hat. Done. I run down the very short flight of stairs and run in to my kitchen, scrabbling on a piece of parchment:

Mom, Dad, and Opal,

I went to town to get the newspaper, milk, and flour. See y'all soon.

Love,

Alfie.

I perch it on the breakfast table and pull my shoes on, tying the black laces, and my heart pounds at the idea that I might not come home tonight. If the opportunity arises, then I leave, soon. Not because I'm not content with life, I'm just not content with the idea of sitting around while other men fight. "Goodbye," I murmur to my clueless, sleeping family. I feel sorrow and excitement hit me in one, confusing moment, and walk out the door. Trees line my dirt road, and I decide to take our horse, I can't leave my family without a car. Pa-thetic excuse of a wheezing car or not—they need it. I quickly walk to our homemade, two-stall horse-barn and choose the stronger of the two: Huckle. My sister named him after some character from one of the stories she cherishes so much; he's a big brute, strong and lean and chestnut colored.

"Hey, Huck—" I freeze as I see a shadow in one of the windows. Someone's up, and there's no time: I guess

I'm going bareback. I jump on Huckle and cling to him as I shout instructions and pat his back to get him going. Soon we're off our road, and I can't even see my own house. I know the way to town like its burned into my brain, so I close my eyes and let my memory take the reigns. Although there are no reigns, nor a saddle, which I am reminded of constantly as my legs hit the horse's muscled body painfully.

I live in one of the most isolated parts of Branchville, Alabama, so getting to town takes about 30 minutes. It feels like 30 years. As soon as my family's closed corner store and the shops that surround it come into view, I notice all the new propaganda posters. One reads: Join Up Now, then, in small print: Enlist at Piper's Supply, an enlistment center has been set up. Piper's Supply is essentially the heart of the town, almost everyone has a farm or owns some sort of livestock, so we need a supplier. I'm glad the enlistment center is there—I know exactly where to go. It's almost *too* easy. My head fills with the phrases on propaganda posters that I pass by, You will be honored...Stop the Germans...Put pride in your bloodline. I can almost feel my ego expanding as I read the words. My mother hates men with big egos.

She can't hate me, I think to myself, she loves me. That doesn't mean she can't hate what I do—

I pull Huckle to a jolting stop outside Piper's Supply, almost passing it by without noticing. My mother won't hate me joining up when I put pride in our bloodline like that poster said, so I jump off of Huckle and relish the sting as my feet hit the solid ground. Huckle trots obediently to the side of the building to wait for me, I smile a little at his faith—his sureness, for I wish I had such blind knowledge of the future. I turn then, and pray that whoever does my background check or whatever it is they do will believe me when I say I'm twenty-one. I walk into the usually calm, clean, orderly building and essentially see a million different versions of myself: dozens of overly proud half-men.

I made it. *I joined up.*

They think my name is Paul Jenkins and I'm twenty-five. Now I'm on a bus, going to God knows where. All they asked me was my name and age and if I had any outstanding talents that could be helpful

in war. I said 'I can ride a horse.' They just laughed and said, 'Lots of men can, Paul. Lots of men can.'

I feel bad about leaving Huckle there outside Piper's Supply, but I know he'll go home, and Opal will figure out where I went. Somehow, this whole honor thing is seeming less and less important, and farther and farther away. I'm sitting next to a man named George Walker, he's a kindly man, with honey colored hair tinted with gray—he told me he's thirty-five, but I'm assuming he made up his age as well as his name.

"Where're we going?" I turn to face him. He smiles and speaks in a scratching voice, "War. We're going to war."

"I know, but," I tap the window, "where?" "Good question, son. All I know is that I've got nothing to lose, so who cares? If I die—"

I sputter, "Wait, if you die?"

He laughs, "Yes, son. People die in war, 'specially this one."

"Well can you find someone who knows where we're going? If I'm going to die I want to know *where* I'm going to die."

He just sighs, "Alright. That man, right there," he points to a curly-haired, authoritative-looking man. "Ask him." I watch as George leans against the window. I tap the man's shoulder, he's sitting in front of us, so it isn't hard. He slowly turns to face me,

"What?" His eyes are cold and gray.

I gulp, "I just...I was wonderin'...where're we going?"

His eyes narrow, "We are going to war. We are going to battle. We are going where this bus takes us."

I finally realize that I'm not going to get a direct answer and decide to follow George's lead. Within seconds, I'm asleep.

I'm being dragged. That's the first thing I notice: I'm being pulled off the rickety bus, "Hey!" I protest.

"Well then GET MOVIN'!" A burly man yells. I swallow my pride and follow the line. I get the sense

that I slept a whole day and missed quite a lot and now it's tomorrow... Did that make sense?

Who cares? I remember Opal's words, *I'm a dead man walking*. Regardless, I am completely aware that I am surrounded by sand and there are big, *crevices* in the ground.

"Get in the trenches!" The same burly man yells. *That's what they are, trenches*. He walks past me, slapping me on the back, "Stop lagging behind *Fodder*," he spats the word. I half-jump, half-climb into the hole, and try to ignore the obvious atrocity of it. My nose is filled with the foulest smelling combination of rotting corpses—hands and feet and arms protrude from the dirt walls—stale food, vomit and human waste that there ever could be. I find George and stand beside him, he is visibly shaken, as am I, and we both flinch as the man I've nicknamed Burly—though I know his name is Edwardian—begins to speak.

"LISTEN UP! We charge tomorrow, so I hope you know what you're doing, you know how to shoot a gun?" The crowd roars 'yes,' and it's the first time so far that I haven't lied, as my father taught me how to shoot.

"You know how to run and shoot at the same time?" We all echo 'yes.' "Than we're all good here. Get some rest kids, and be prepared, I'd hate to see you only be useful as cannon fodder," he grins at his own joke. No one else does. We don't exactly find it funny. I find a mostly dry, cavern-like dent in the wall and settle down.

"Hey, Paul," George sits next to me, "here's our dinner." He hands me a chunk of bread and a small cube of...ham? Maybe? "It's dinner time? But that would mean..."

"That you literally slept for the better part of two days? It's true. You had shadows under your eyes that were so long they almost hit the floor, son. You actually look *better* than when you joined up, unlikely, huh?" He smiles crookedly.

I look at him, "My name ain't Paul." He just grins wider, "I know. My name ain't George."

"I just want someone to know who I am before I die, so, I'm Alfie, Alfie Wolfe."

"Scott Brink," he holds a hand out for me to shake.

I shake his hand, "So, Scott...do you think I'll really earn honor?"

"That why you joined up?" I nod, "Well, Alfie, if you live you'll be honorable and if you die you'll be honored. I don't think you're really earnin' anything, just joining up means some honor is a given."

I smile. It isn't a happy or sad or particularly meaningful smile, just a genuine curve of the lips.

"Well, if I'm going to die tomorrow, I want to die awake, so I'm going to go *back* to sleep."

He shakes his head, "You sure like to sleep—you're lucky, I'll probably stare at a mud wall all night." He gets up and walks away to his chosen area and I let myself drift off.

This time I'm up first, and I jump at the sound of Burly's yell, "GET UP AND ARMED, BOYS! We are charging NOW!" I'm up and I grab a gun, soon everyone has one. "Alright boys, GO!" Before I know what's happening, I'm running and shooting wildly, men are falling. There are loud blasts and screams. The moment slows: every grain of sand is visible, I see men's faces crumple as the life leaves their eyes, but I am not shot. *I am not shot*. I run back to the trench.

"A couple more times, boys! WE HAVE TO WIN!" Burly screeches. I comply. I'm out of the trench again, my feet feel like they're lead-sodden, but I push on. Once again I see men fall, but this time the shooters are more accurate, and hot blood splatters my cheek. It's not mine. *It's not mine, it's not mine, it's not mine*.

Then I see him: Scott—a.k.a George—lying on the ground, blood staining his shirtfront, his chest heaving. "SCOTT!" I scream. He looks, and his glassy eyes soften, but then I hear him gurgle as his eyes widen and he points. "What?!" I yell, and I see him mouth it again.

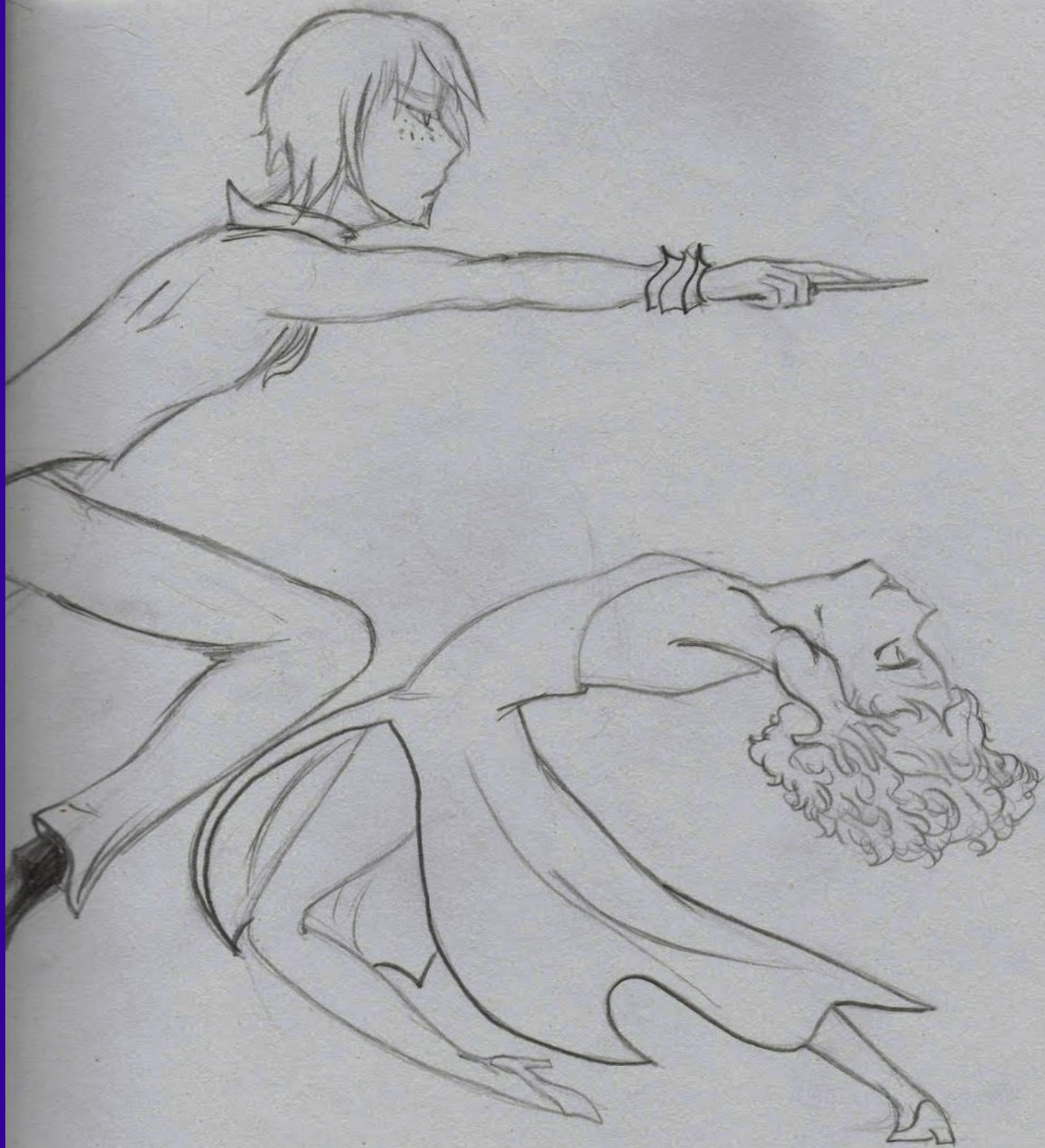
That's when I feel it: a ripping, burning hole in my chest. I am shot. *I am shot*. I am going to die. I am dying. As I slump to the ground, I realize what he said: *watch out*. I did not watch and now I am out. I let a tear slide down my cheek as I die, and I mutter, willing all the stupid boys in the world to heed my next words, "*War ain't what I thought it was*." And then my life slips away.

The posters lied.

Artwork

"I've heard it said that people come
into our lives for a reason,
bringing something we must learn.
And we are led to those
who help us most to grow
if we let them,
and we help them in return."
(Stephen Schwartz)





Hellooo

I Have YOUR little Kid

How much do you love YOUR BOY

HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO to save HIM

SEE THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK stand UP

You've got to PAY \$1000000

YOU have nine hours

MEET ME

470 Broome Street, New York - NY 10013

or he will be BURNED.

M

Maurice
Caffre





By
Megan
Coffec

Then

You smile at me and
I smile back, my blush
growing like a flower

You ask me to dance
and my whole world is on
fire with happiness.

You hold me in your arms
and time stands still.

Your laughter washes over
me and I soak in it.

I love you

Now

You frown at me and my
fear grows like a weed.

You ask me to dance and my
whole world is on fire with
anxiety

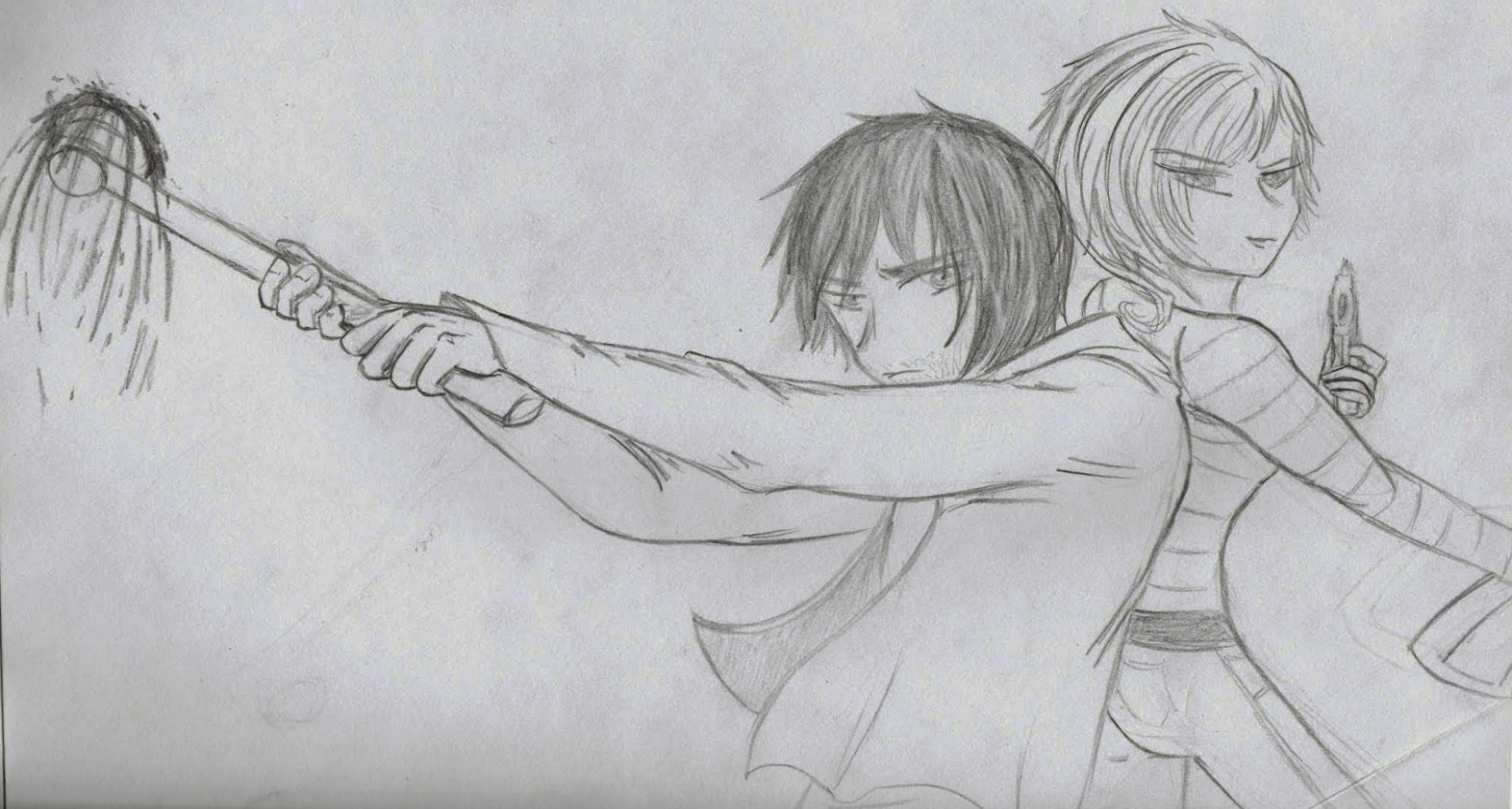
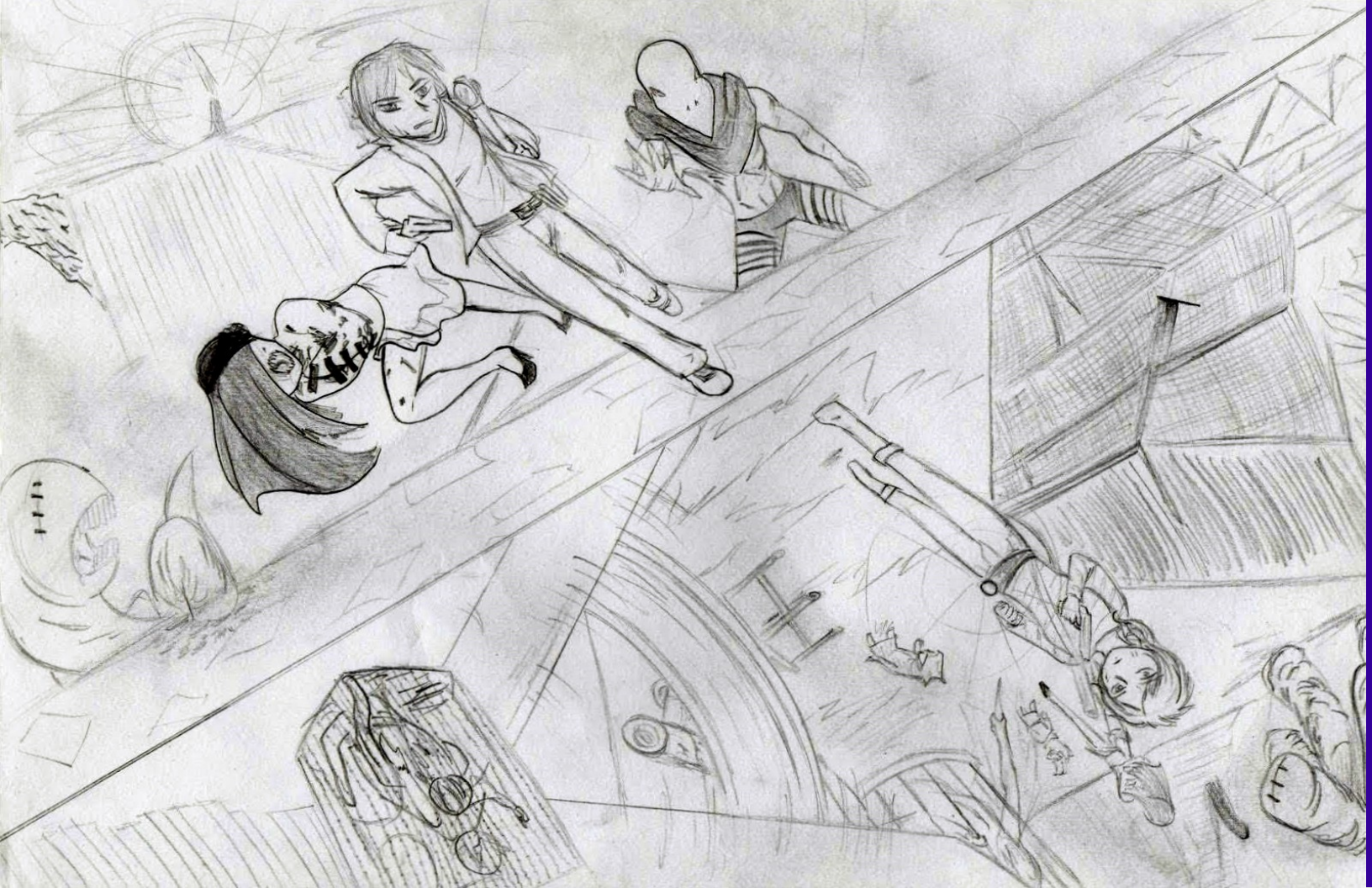
You hold me too tight and
the moment won't end.

Your laughter washes over
me and I drown in it.

I fear you







Selva



Teena



Mary



Ahri





"Whenever there is a meeting, a parting is sure to follow. However, that parting need not last forever... Whether a parting be forever or merely for a short time... That is up to you." (Happy Mask Salesman, Majora's Mask)