

Hands

Samantha Thompson

You are not friend,

Nor foe.

But it is amazing the civility between us that still exists.

A small smile,

A simple wave,

Or—if I am daring—a few meaningless words will cross my mouth into the tense air that

Separates us.

Long ago I prepared a speech

Of all the things I'd say

The questions,

Accusations,

Profanities I would curse without filter

I would tell you of my hatred,

The way you made me feel.

How hard trusting has become.

How hard it is to heal.

Now, none seem as important

As ducking my head in shame.

Lowering my eyes

Careful,

Not to meet your knowing ones,

For fear you will see through my smiling façade into the deepest corners of my mind

In which you still, unfortunately, reside.

Reminding me, every day

How strong your hands feel around my neck,

How cold your fingertips feel when they brush against my bare skin, and how helpless I felt

When my cries of fear were met with only echoing laughter.
Now, standing here with you, my heart races.
Panic and tears threaten to overwhelm me
Willpower fighting
My every instinct.
Run! My body tells me.
Run! My mind is shouting.
Still I stay.
I stay with your fingers lurking.
I stay while mine are trembling.
Even in this crowded hallway, I feel just as vulnerable as I did a time before
Do you know?
Do you know that you creep in my nightmares?
Even in my sleep your hands haunt my skin.
Your warm breath on my neck still makes me flinch in my realistic dreams.
Now, my speech is jumbled.
My accusations switched and meshed.
So many questions rack my brain; my mouth only forms one
Why?

Samantha Thompson is a poet and performer. Each time Samantha writes a poem, she writes it with a spoken word audience in mind. Samantha has performed her poetry for audiences at New Buffalo High School where she is a sophomore. Her publication in *A Common Thread* is her first experience submitting work to a wider audience.