

Spring 2017

## Running Past the Trees: Facing Childhood and Adolescence in Iowa's Cedar Valley

University of Northern Iowa. Two-Dimensional Concepts (Spring 2017).

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# ***Running Past The Trees***

***Facing Childhood and Adolescence***

***in Iowa's Cedar Valley***





# ***Running Past the Trees***

***Facing Childhood and Adolescence***

***in Iowa's Cedar Valley***

***A 2017 Facing Project***

This anthology is the result of a service-learning project supported by The Facing Project. Students enrolled in Two-Dimensional Concepts, a foundations art course at the University of Northern Iowa, and K-12 authors at the Waterloo Writing Project collaborated over the course of a semester through shared stories, conversations, and illustrations. The authors provided stories of their experiences and memories growing up in the Cedar Valley and were partnered with first year UNI art students who took inspiration from the authors' writings to create accompanying illustrations.

## ***Special thanks***

Alyssa Bruecken and Kevin Roberts, Waterloo Writing Project

Levi Portillo, Facing Project coach

J.R. Jamison and Kelsey Timmerman, creators of the Facing Project

Emily Shields, Iowa Campus Compact

University of Northern Iowa Art Department

Mentors, family, and friends of all those who follow creative pursuits.

A heartfelt thank you to the young authors and emerging artists who, by sharing pieces of themselves generously, creatively, and thoughtfully, have continued to inspire those around them.

2D Concepts Instructor, Angela Waseskuk

# Waterloo Writing Project

Alyssa Bruecken + Kevin Roberts

Authors listed in the order they appear in the book

Alex

Kalilia

Day

Rayvon

Dedra

Daniel

Au Revoir

Ashley

Shakira

Denaya

Joshua

Lariah

Kenyon

Daelon

Gissele

# 2D Concepts

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Abby H.

Olivia

Ethan

Kaitlyn

Denae

Hailey

Liv

Caitlin

Amber

Kumari

Haley

Chiska

Tanner

Maria

Sami

Ryan

Emma



Illustrated by: J.D. + Abby K.

Written by: Alex



I like going to my aunt's house but this day was not so good.

I was running past the trees on the gravel while racing my big brother and sister. All I could hear was my brother and sister telling me to hurry up. When we finally got there, my aunt was serving tacos. Some things I noticed when I was there was the happy feeling, laughing, there was a dog barking. When I took a look back at the dog I heard a chain snap. In a split second, pain jolted to my knee. I realized I was being bitten by a dog. Soon my uncle got the dog off me quick, and they put something on me to stop the bleeding, and that's all I remember.





Illustrated by: Abby H. + Olivia

Written by: Kalilia

I made a new friend, let's just call her "A". She's been with me for a while now. She's a bit of a homebody, and I guess I wouldn't want her as anything else. A service learning project I had worked on in fifth grade, which was called pizza bingo, was something we had decided on. The ELP kids had an easy job of serving people and helping out. I thought it was easy, and I underestimated my opponent, otherwise known as, life. I basically couldn't even do my job. I wasn't making eye contact, and I was shaking like a chihuahua. I thought of it as shyness I guess, but it was actually something like a bajillion times worse. I ate some cookies and stuff and played bingo. It was fun yet very scary. People can interpret this as anything they want and all that yadda yadda yadda. But if you really wanna know, it was actually about GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder). "A" is actually a personification of GAD. Basically around that time, around fifth grade, I had started to really show symptoms, and it really started manifesting I guess. And of course, it's gotten suuuper worse over the years but I'm good. I guess. And eye contact is a huge "no" for me dawg. (Who gets the reference?) And basically I worry about everything. I am anxious about everything. If there is something, or even nothing, I will worry about it. I run away from my problems and worry about non-existent ones. That just got like suuuper real. But yeah, it's basically about worrying about nothing and being like extra scared for no apparent reason.





Illustrated by: Ethan

# Waiting...

Written by: Day

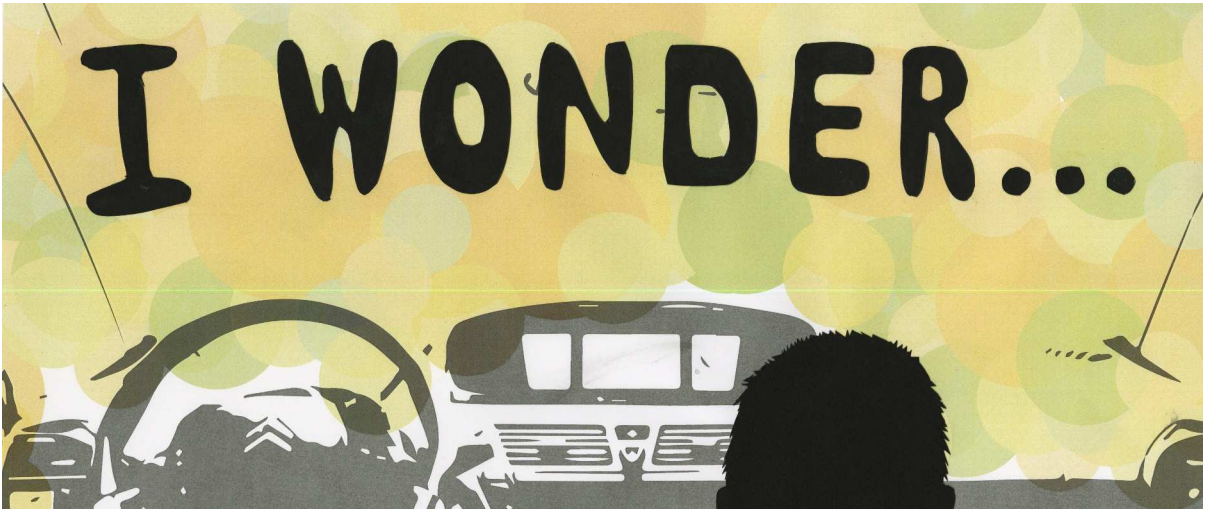
It's not that I don't wanna tell you how I feel, it's just that I can't...I'm at a loss of words the pain I'm in you can't describe it. I can tell you what's going on all day and all night but you still won't get it. I can explain to you in exact details all the things I've been through, but you'll never go through what I have to go through every single day. It's not a game anymore, being sad all the time is dead, drowning in your own thoughts isn't okay anymore. Telling people you're fine when you know you need help is not okay anymore. Being able to tell the people you love most what's wrong with you...and them actually getting it IS RARE ...so you can't get mad at me when I say "I'm fine" or "I don't wanna talk about it" because you'll never get it and it's impossible for you to understand it....I've been waiting 9 years for someone to get it, 9 years for everyone to apologize, 9 years to get revenge for him raping, 9 years for my dad to stop lying, 9 years to understand why everything played out the way it did, 9 years waiting on my family to be there for me, 9 years to actually be a kid again, 9 freaking years to depend on anybody else besides myself, 13 years to meet my siblings, and 14 years to figure out I'm here for a reason...But to be honest I'm losing grip of what I've already seen, I'm losing hope and I'm barely 14.





Illustrated by: Kaitlyn

Written by: Rayvon



I had a pretty dull childhood. But, there is this one memory I remember in great detail. I was four years old. Me and my dad had gone downtown, near Walmart, in his old truck. My dad had stopped at a loan office, leaving me in the back seat. Big mistake. This next part I remember vividly. I remember looking around my dad's truck, the tattered leather seats with patches in them, the pine tree air freshener hanging around his top view mirror, the distinct smell of it mixed with the lingering ash from all his cigarettes. I remember unbuckling my seatbelt, the satisfying click it made as it came undone, signaling that I had done it right. I then remember crawling over the small armrest in between the front seats and falling into the driver's seat, so I could reach for the steering wheel and pedals. Unfortunately, I had to settle for just the pedals. I then remember stepping on the gas, feeling the car lift itself up, thanks to the curb, and hearing something smashing apart. I get off the pedals to see that I ran into the loan office, and destroyed all the glass, with millions of fragments scattered everywhere. The last thing I remember is seeing this woman's and my dad's faces contorted in absolute shock and surprise, which I thought nothing of at the time, as I was too young to realize that I messed up.



Illustrated by: Denae

Written by: Dedra



When I was younger I went to live with my cousins in Mankato, MN. I went to school there for awhile. I went there because my cousin and her husband worked late at night, and they needed someone to watch their daughter. Also, my other cousin Kim also needed somebody to watch her son. So, I watched them over at their house. They lived in a trailer court. They worked at Long John Silver. It was my first time there so it was really scary. There were a lot more people there than in my hometown (Mason City, IA). I know all of the people in my hometown, and I only knew two people there. On your first day you wanna make yourself look good or like, pop. Growing up, I wore mismatched clothes. I had to look good, and not wear mismatched clothes. After a while, I got used to it. It was super fun. Their schools were very diverse. They had a lot of Muslim students. There was a black girl who wore a hijab. At the time, I didn't know that black girls wore those or that there were any black Muslims, so it was cool to see that. She didn't really like me like a friend, but I didn't care, I was just amazed by her culture. Growing up they didn't really talk about Mexicans, Muslims and other cultures, so I never knew about it. It was cool to learn about them.





Illustrated by: Hailey + Liv

Written by: Daniel



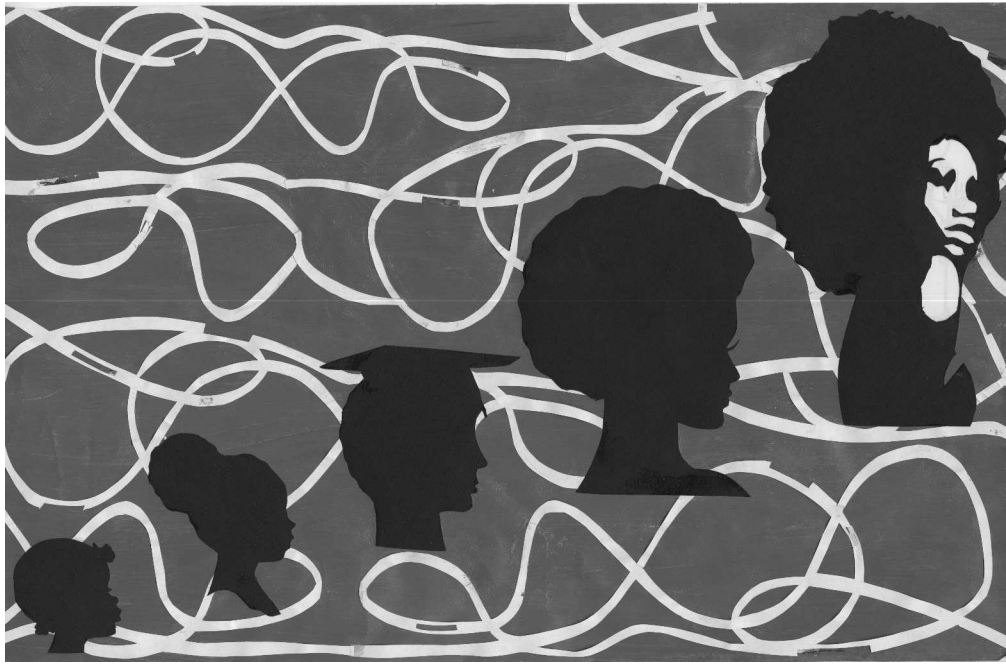
I walked down the rickety stairs as quietly as I could. These steps led to the basement where all you could hear was a thumping beat and a beautiful voice that goes perfectly with it. I peeked down the corner to try to see the face behind this beautiful voice, and then I saw a big roly chair - like a tall roly chair. At the age of 5, it was probably smaller than you think. But in my eyes, it was the coolest, biggest thing ever. It was the biggest beat making set up - it looked like a thing out of Star Trek. I went and sat in the chair and started messin' around clickin' buttons. Then I heard a deep voice from the back that said, "Why it sound different? Hold up. Play it back."

Then I saw one of the tallest men I've ever seen. He had two braids and a thick goatee. He looked down at me and said, "What are you doin' on the chair?" I was like "Nothing sir, just messin' around." He actually introduced me to The Beautiful Voice and showed me the incredible beats. I stayed in there for an hour, and then my mom came barging into the room. "Oh my gosh I'm worried sick! What are you doing?"

"Nothing, I was just messing around. I'm sorry. I'm coming back."

The tall man said, "Everything's okay. I was just showing him how to make music. He's pretty good at it. He could probably do this all by himself."

That's what started me off trying to do all this stuff. Making beats and lyrics.



Illustrated by: Hailey

# For You My Future Daughter

Written by: Au Revoir

For you, my future daughter. I shall shower you with love. I will teach you right and wrong. I will protect you from harm. You will learn and grow in a world that doesn't want you to succeed. You will learn to crawl in a world that wants nothing to do with you or what you stand for. You will take off your training wheels in a world that stacks everything against you. You will dress up for your school dances in a world that hates you because of the color you were born in. But for you, my future daughter, I'll carry the moon and I'll carry the sun, to make sure you're happy.

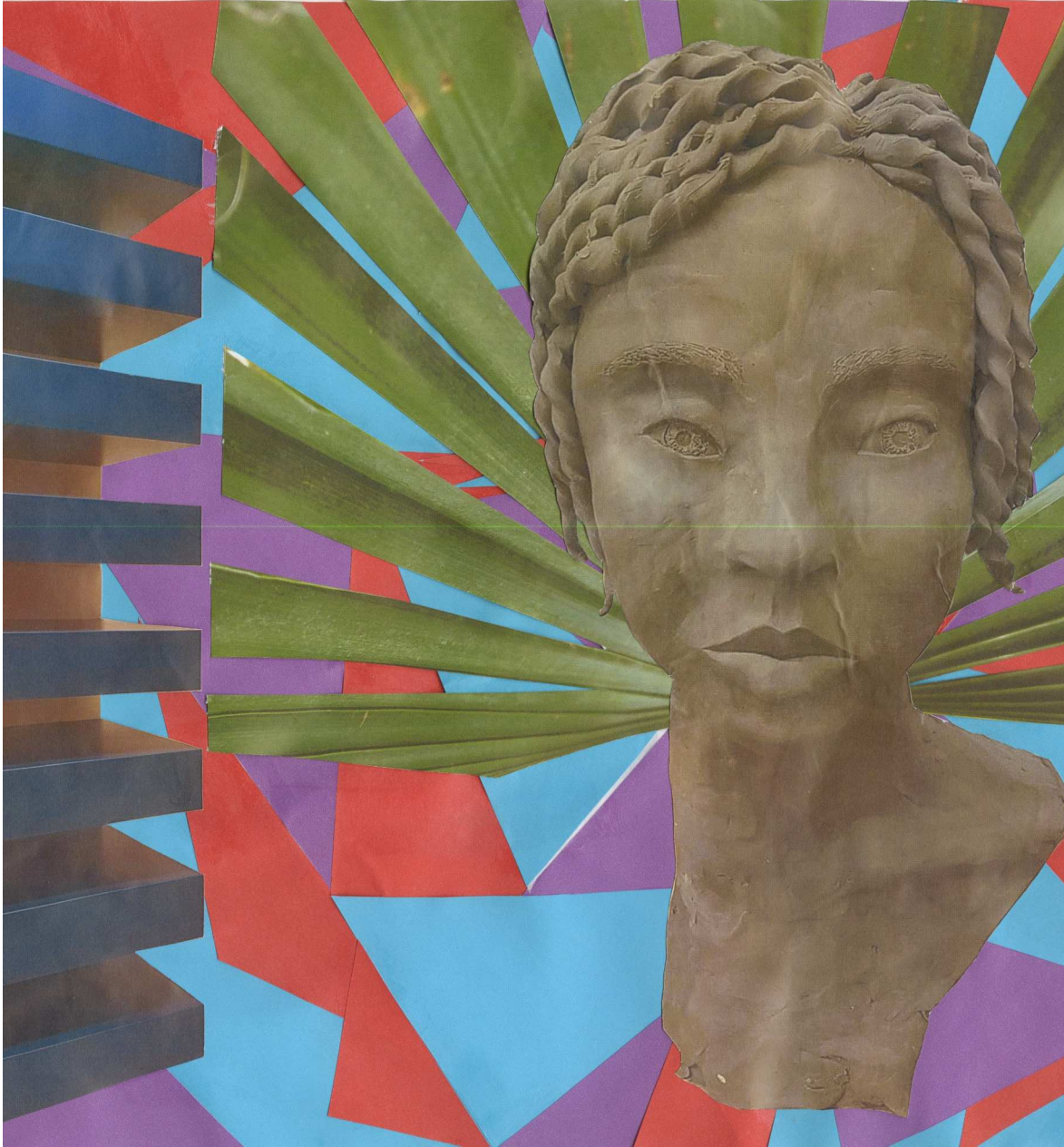
Blinking in the light of a fluorescent hospital room, you are born into my loving arms. You are born into discrimination, hate, racism, and point blank intentions of sabotage and thorns. You are born into curfews, because girls like you can't be outside when it's dark. Girls like you can't be out late till dawn, at parties with your friends. You can't be out that late, what if you need a ride? You can't walk home at night, what about the police. The people who will swear to protect you, but will kill you in the blink of an eye. You can't possibly be out there till 3, because if something happens, when something happens, you will be one of the only people there with a caramel target on your skin. You can't go to that side of town, where Tyrone hangs out with his friends, where they sling guns and smoke weed. Where they shoot bullets into the air and rep gang affiliations. Where stray bullets hit bystanders, babies who cannot see them coming. Where they jump each other, where they drink cough medicine out of styrofoam cups. You will not go where Shantay heard her man wanted to "get with you" and she's grabbing onto your long beautiful locks. Where the women are no longer focused on school work and are causing concussions. Where there is a lone track on the ground, where there is a braid hanging from the light fixture. You were born into violence.

You giggle as I open my arms to you, your chubby tiny toes wiggle in excitement, you can't wait to walk. But you don't know you're walking into stereotypes. Into the belief that you are loud and sassy and don't take no for an answer. That you love to eat chicken and watermelon. That grape kool-aid is god's gift to us. That you are bullheaded and arrogant, distant and ignorant. That weave is a necessity for you. That you will have kids in your teens, that you'll have 3 baby daddies and live off of child support and food stamps. That your father will leave us and your boyfriend will do the same to you. That you a savage monkey on the prowl for hot cheetos and carmax. That you own nothing but a smart mouth and a whole lot of sassy behavior. You are walking into stereotypes.

You teeter side to side, unsure if you'll make it down the street. You grip your handlebars and your small feet find their ways to the pedals. You are unsteadily riding into discrimination. Riding into the belief that you are less than a human because of your skin. Into the belief that someone is superior because of theirs. That you are nothing. That you shouldn't vote. That you can't do certain things, say certain things, achieve and accomplish certain things. The belief that you won't be able to be what you want. That you will live off the government instead. And you are riding into hate. They will hate you for the melanin that darkens your complexion. The way your beautiful brown and black curls bounce off your shoulders. The way you resemble power, beauty and grace. The way you were created beautiful. That you were created smart. People will try to justify the way they treat you. They will bring up christianity and they will bring up slavery and they will bring up the economy. They will tear your people down, because they are afraid of what they can accomplish. Afraid that one day you will grow into the strong beautiful woman I am predicting you will. That one day you will accomplish something they couldn't. Something they think you shouldn't. You're riding into discrimination and hate.

You fix your dress for the 15th time, your espionage of the cute boy across the gym is perfect. Your hair is pretty and curled and this is your night. You ask him to dance and he complies. You are dancing to the rhythm of self hate. The fact that boys your color are no longer interested in the darker girls. They call you a monkey, a roach. "You're too chocolate" they exclaim. They are only interested in the light skin girls. The redbones. The girls with the lighter complexion. They will do this because it is seen as perfect. They are doing this because it is the closest to white without actually being it. They don't want your african beauty. They don't want your ebony perfection. And not only the boys but the girls will too. They will call you burnt. They will poke fun about how you will never find a man. About how they will lose you in the dark. When they have been living in it all along. They will bleach their skin, try to scrub the black away. Because they hate their complexion. They hate it because everyone else does. Even people of their own race. Of their own struggle. You are dancing rhythm of self hate.

Your gown flows as you walk across the stage. I am cheering for you as you shake their hands. Your diploma hangs heavy in your hands. You are taking the next step in life. Stepping into pettiness. The pettiness that has settled itself in the belief of kanekalon hair. The white people will say "oh look straight hair, she wants to be one of us." and it will never be enough. Women will say "oh her weave is crusty. Oh does she not have enough hair? She just wants straight hair. She must be ashamed of her curls. Smh." But as soon as you take it down they will exclaim, "ew her hair so short. Crusty edges. Nappy hair ew. She got dandruff. Her hair so ratchet. She need to comb it. Why don't you ever straighten it?" And not only this, but the boys. You will get into a relationship with them and they will fall in love with the way your hair falls over your eyes. Then you will take off your brazilian weave and they will react the same. Yet you will have insecurities about the length of it. So you will crochet it or wear tracks, for the social validation you so desperately crave. You are stepping into pettiness.



You sigh as the butterflies dance around in your gut. Your dress is a pearl white and your bouquet of roses paints a beautiful contrast against it. You walk down the aisle, your head held high. You are committing. You are committing to a lifetime of worry. The worry that you are simply too emotional. If you're anything like your mother you'll be told this often. That people will take your heart on your sleeve as a weakness. That you will be constantly shut down because people will somehow always have the power to turn the faucet that leads to your eyes. You will constantly be "in your feelings" but at the end of the day it's not you. Surround yourself with people that won't constantly put you down. That won't constantly begin personal attacks on your sanity. You are committing to being played. Some guy out there's gonna be so dumb to screw you over and lose a goddess. You need to be ready for that sorry son of a gun and be ready for the point where he tries to crawl back to you. You are committing to a lifetime of worry.

But everything in life won't be negative. Everything might not just be about the struggle. You need to enjoy the beauty of life. Go out, live life. The world is your oyster. You are beautiful, you are kind, you are amazing. You are the future. You will write to your daughter and she will write to hers. You my future daughter will enjoy every aspect of what the world has to offer you. You my future daughter will be loved. I will love you for you. I will support you for you. I will care for you. I will protect you. I will make sure you are groomed to perfection. You will be graceful, you will be who you want to be. You will be mine. Mine to love and care for like I say I will. Mine to cuddle during the rain. To carpool with your friends. To cherish. To take to the dances and the parties. To give you ice cream and pep talks as a boy takes you for granted. To tie your small shoes. To swing back and forth in my arms. To feed mashed peaches and pears. To hold in the hospital and look into your chocolate eyes. To provide for and to love unconditionally. I will carry the world for you. Move mountains for you. Make sure you are happy. I will do everything in my power to make sure you know you are special. I will make sure you know how much of a queen you are, and that you never give up or settle for less. That you say what is on your mind. That you never let anyone push you around. That you compromise where you can and don't budge where you can't. I will raise you right. I will do anything for you. Anything so that you are happy.

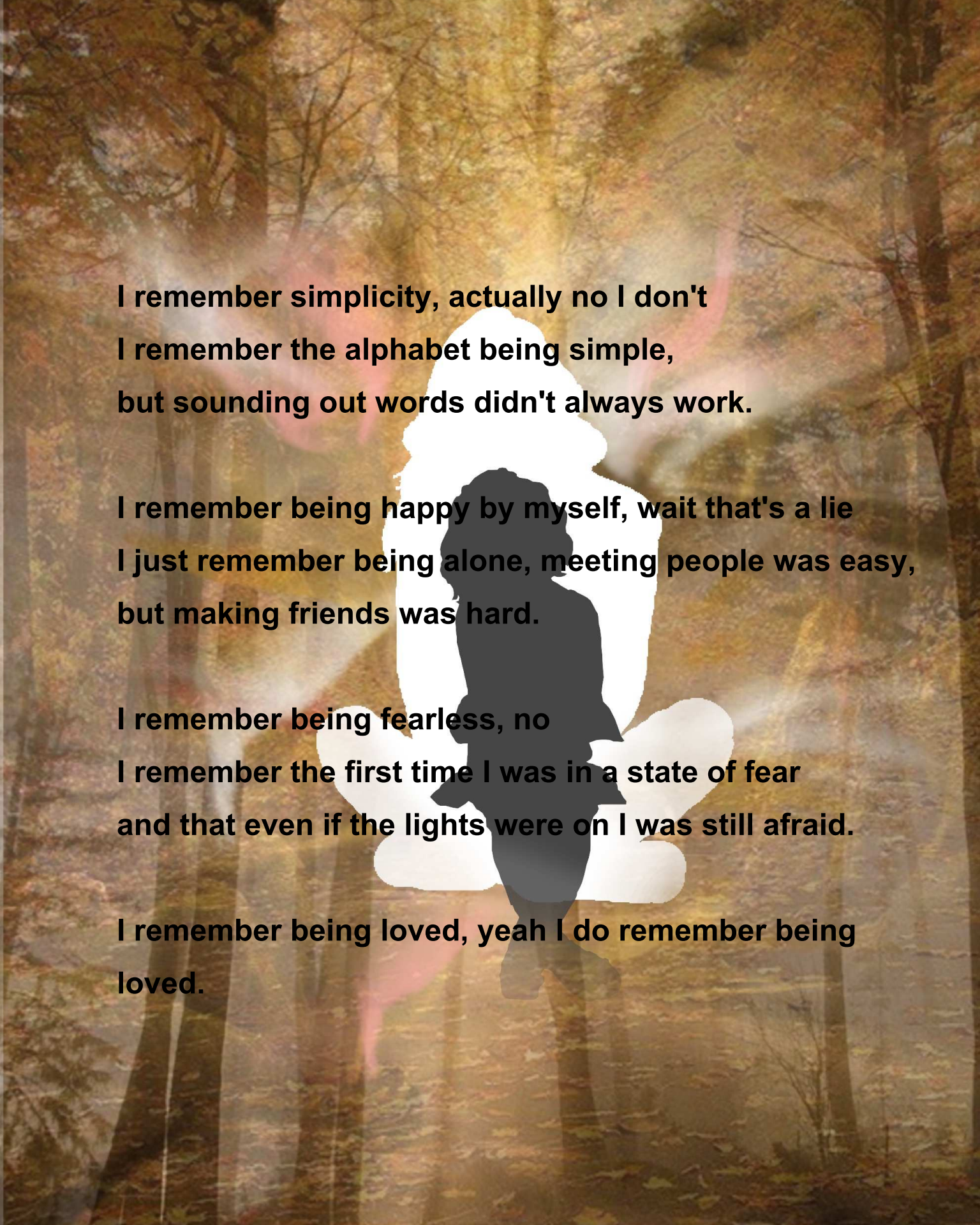
Anything.

For you, My Future daughter.



Illustrated by: Caitlin

Written by: Ashley



**I remember simplicity, actually no I don't  
I remember the alphabet being simple,  
but sounding out words didn't always work.**

**I remember being happy by myself, wait that's a lie  
I just remember being alone, meeting people was easy,  
but making friends was hard.**

**I remember being fearless, no  
I remember the first time I was in a state of fear  
and that even if the lights were on I was still afraid.**

**I remember being loved, yeah I do remember being  
loved.**





Illustrated by: Amber

Written by: Shakira



This is a story about when I was in kindergarten. Our class went into the art room and the art teacher, Mr. Black, had switched on this little tv and colors swirled around on the tv. When the class was over, I didn't want to leave so I hid under the table. My class teacher escorted my classmates out of the room. Mr. Black's ankles formed in front of me. Then, so did my class teacher's ankles. I decided to pretend to be a cat, so I growled at them. "What is she doing?" asked Mr.Black. "Well, she is pretending to be a dog and trying to hold in her tears," said my class teacher. I got really angry. "I'M...NOT...A...DOG!!!" I screeched and scratched the art teacher's ankle. Then I bit the other one. After that I remember being carried out of the room by my ankles and wrists. They took me to a higher level of the school and sat me in a desk next to a young boy. He had his head down. "What did you do." he asked lifting his head. "I bit the art teacher's ankle." His eyes went wide with fear. "Oh...ok..." and he put his head back down after that.



Illustrated by: Kumari

Written by: Denaya



One day, I went to my new school. I was so scared but I wasn't scared when I met my friend. Her name is Ariyana. Then, I met Lena, then I met Tamea and my teacher, Miss Onke. When it was recess I was not so scared after all. I made so many friends. So after school I told my mom it was soooooo fun, and she asked me what I ate for lunch. I had mozzarella sticks. They were soooooooooo cheesy. You should try it, everyone, because mozzarella sticks are good! I had so much fun with Aryiana because we were twinsys. It was soooooo cool, because we both had ponytails in our hair and we had the same colored eyes. We play with each other. I also have one more friend. Her name is Adreana and we do everything, like belly bumps, it was sooo fun. We would spread apart then run really fast towards each other and bump our bellies together. We would make funny noises because it kind of hurt to bump bellies. We ran from my friend Mehilo. He always chases us for fun. I WAS KIDDING.

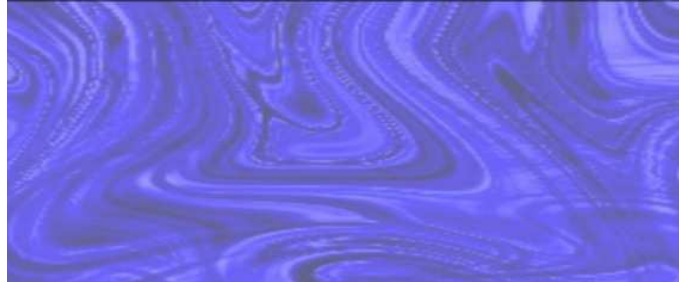
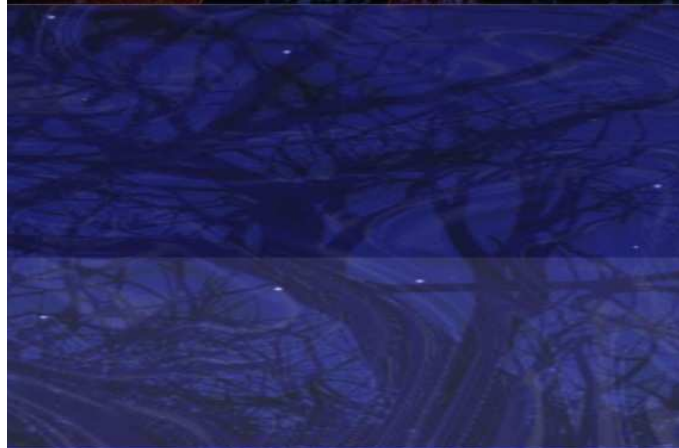


Illustrated by: Haley

Written by: Joshua

When I was a child I used to have very crazy and backwards dreams. Today I will share one of my dreams with you.....

One day I was sleeping in my basement, and I had a dream that I was on the street, and I was looking at this house that looked kinda weird because it had a driveway full of bricks and the grass was bright yellow but there was a tiny tree sitting in the grass, growing. So, me, being myself I went to touch the tree, and when I touched it the leaves started to break off and the tree started melting. Eventually everything around me was melting. Then I appeared in a white room... you know the jerel head from superman in the fortress of solitude that appeared in mid air? Instead it was my head saying "THIS IS A DREAM". Then I realized it was a dream and everything rewinded, and I woke up. Ever since I had this dream I have always wanted that tree. Ever since.





Illustrated by: Chiska

Written by: Lariah



I went to my school. I was shy. I asked people if I could be their friend, but they said no. Then I asked one more person, and her name was Jayla, and she said yes. And then I wasn't shy.

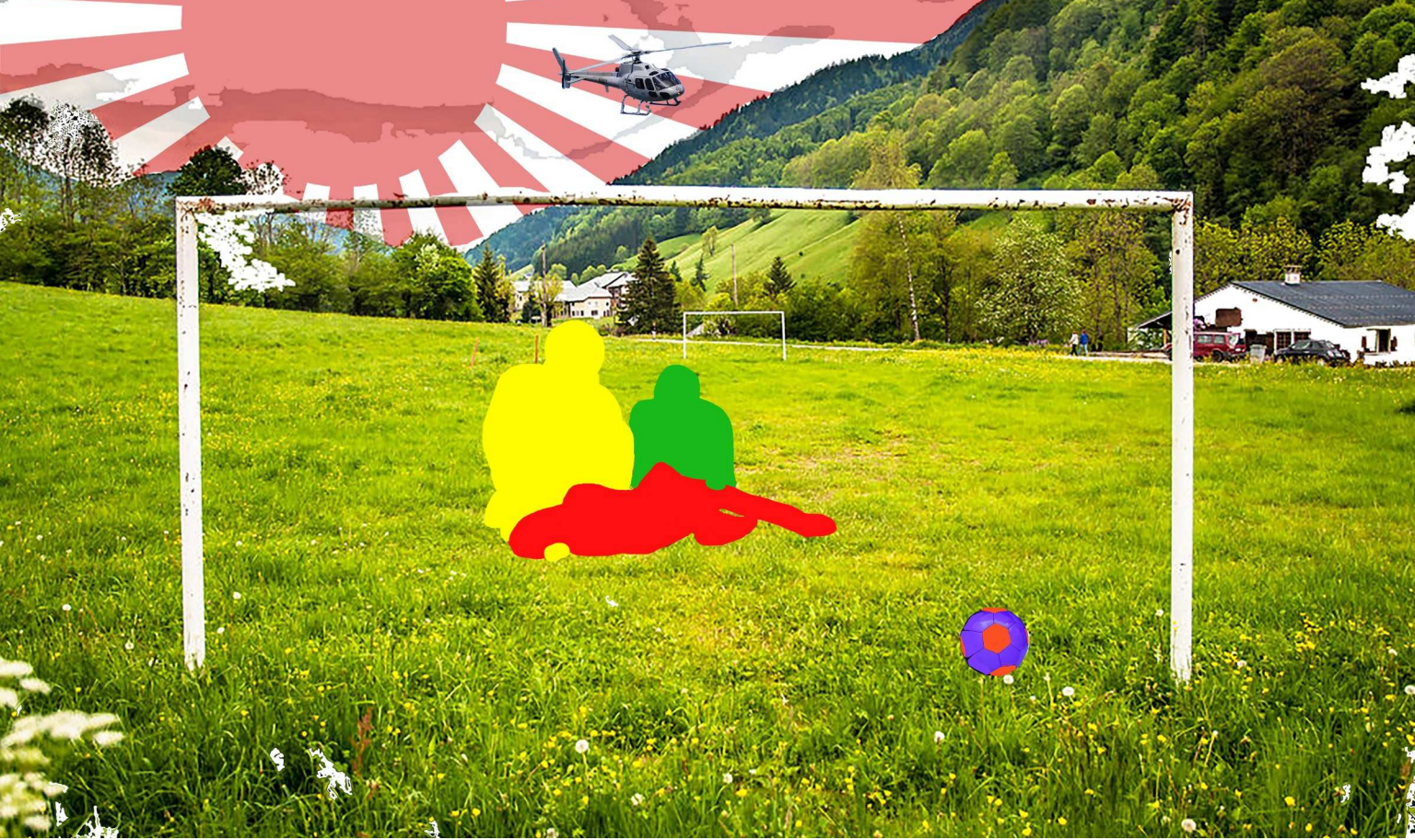




Illustrations by: Tanner + Maria

# A Terrible Day

Written by: Kenyon



I was in the desert and we lived in a brick house. It had only one house. It was just my house. Me and my big sister were the only two born, and I was five and she was ten. We were playing with a big blue ball that was spiky. They're not really sharp, it was rubbery. We were throwing it back and forth at first. She threw it and I kicked. Then she tossed it back one more time and I tried to kick it. I missed the ball, and slipped on my head, and busted my head open (see, that's what this bald spot is for. They said no more hair will grow there). My mom asked me what happened, and my big sister told her all that happened. My mom put a wet towel on the back of my head and she called the ambulance. I had to fly in a helicopter to Iowa City. I had asthma at that time, too, and I couldn't breathe, so they put a mask on me to breathe. There were three men on the helicopter, and my mom and my sister were riding with me. I got on one of those things that they lay you down on and ride with you, a stretcher.

At the hospital, they gave me a shot and took some blood. I was nervous about the needles in my head. I was scared because this was my first shot. Then they glued my head back together. They did not give me stitches. It felt like they were putting some goo on my head. It was kind of coated and sticky. Then I went home and went to sleep.

I woke up and it was the next morning. I went outside and I was trying to practice kicking the ball. My head kind of hurt the next day. I had a headache.



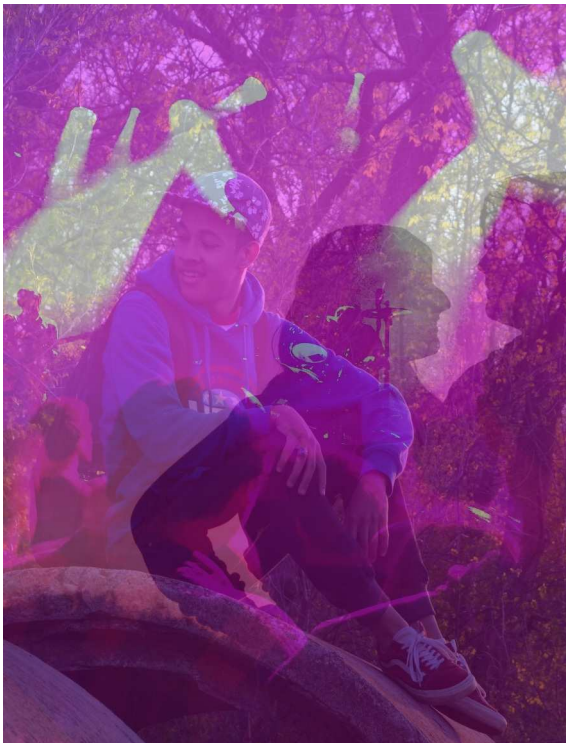
Illustrated by: Sami + Ryan

# Untitled

Written by: Daelon



Elementary school was all about trying to be something I wasn't. Trying to be the middle of the conversations. Being fast, trying my best not to cras. You weren't cool if you didn't have a girlfriend. Trying to be in as much drama as you could. But somewhere in your heart you know that what you're doing isn't right. When I got home the only place I could find myself was in my room. Listening to slow songs and trying to find myself at a young age. In the 5th grade, slowing down, avoiding as much drama as I can. Trying to stay with the same person. In 6th grade when you cut it all off so you can become a better person. Listening to music is your bestfriend. So in sixth grade I listened to music all of the time. Then you find that girl that you would never want to hurt. You love her just like how you would treat your mom. But just like that saying, what goes around comes around. So she ends up doing the same thing to you in the end, but you're fine with it because the love that you gained for her is too strong for you to hold a grudge. But then she comes back to you but then leaves, so you just get hurt in the end. So you just stop with her but another coe and took your heart but you stop before you start, and think about elementary, so you turn on music and never pursue her and stay the same and avoid people.

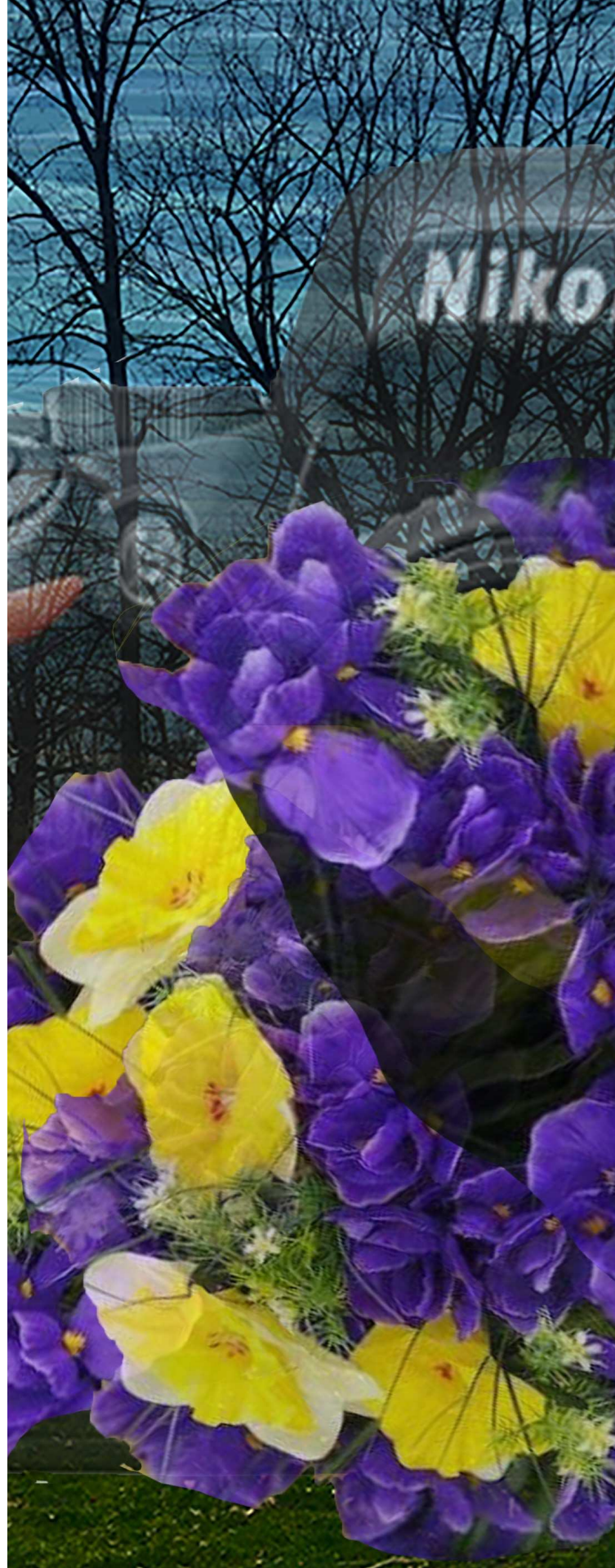




Illustrated by: Emma

Written by: Gissele

One day my dad took me to the park to take some pictures. At the park there were tons of flowers around. All the flowers were different colors. Whenever I remember this, for some reason, I always picture purple and yellow flower beds. So, we walked around and took tons of pictures. I remember myself - looking. I remember my hair was kind of flat, wavy. I was wearing a striped t-shirt - blue and black, and some jeans, and there was a playground next to the flowers. So my dad- he took pictures of me next to the slide.





**RUNNING PAST THE TREES**  
A FACING PROJECT





