

## **Descriptions: Prose**

### **1. Accepting Me**

*Accepting Me* is the story of a high school girl who shares her coming out story. From her earliest memory in childhood to the day she stood in front of her high school class and gave a speech letting the world know that she was different in her own way and hoping that it would be well received by her classmates. In the end she comes to the realization that being different is okay and even in high school you can find yourself amazed at the level of tolerance and acceptance that teenagers can come to. Her coming out story is a positive one and one that leaves the audience feeling the hope that she has in her heart for her future being who she is.

### **2. 32A**

There is nothing more embarrassing in the life of a “coming of age” young woman than going bra shopping. This event is even more tragic when you have to do it with your mother. Through this shopping experience we see the challenges of shopping with your mother for just the right fit, while laughing at the memories of being in this young woman’s shoes. And though the experience was forever life changing, as she takes this step toward becoming a woman, she realizes that there is no one else in the world she would have rather shared it with than her mother.

### **3. 57 Hours of Hell**

The greatest joy as a man is the day that your wife tells you that she is pregnant. A million and one things go through your head. But the most important thing, the thing that all parents pray for is a healthy baby. When a man is told by his wife that she is determined to have an at home birth, he agrees because he doesn’t know to ask questions. He trusts that what his wife wants is what is best for everyone involved. But when there are complications at home will there be enough time to save the baby? Or will husband and wife be left with the fact that their decision affected this outcome. Told from the perspective of the father sharing the longest fifty-seven hours of his life.

### **4. Clear Justice**

There was once a time in history when schools were considered a safe place to be. Unfortunately, through a series of situations some people fear walking into a school as much as they fear walking into a prison. For this high school teenage girl her future isn’t looking promising. As she reflects on her years in school and finally introduces us to her reality of high school life we slowly see her shift from storyteller to high school shooter. When she decides to take justice into her own hands to defend her favorite teacher and her friend we see the desperation that can

fall into the hands of a teenager and how sometimes the only way that some feel a situation can be handled is by giving their own form of Clear Justice.

### **5. Falling from The Top**

Told from the perspective of three different characters whose paths cross throughout the piece we follow the lives of these three people: the businessman, the homeless man and the son of the businessman. Told from these three views of the same world but from very different viewpoints we see how important it is to live life day by day as tomorrow may not be the same reality as the day before. Never discount the homeless man outside of your high-rise office, never overlook the importance of loving your child and never take for granted that the job that you have will be yours forever.

### **6. I Had a Dream I Was A Size 6**

In this high powered and energetic comedic portrayal of a woman who has never been a size 6 or a size 8 or a size 10 for that matter. While she accepts that she is not the model size she knows that her positive attitude and spirit make her special in her own way. In this comedic reliving of a dream that she had we see how the positive spirit of a not so small girl can remind us that it should never be about the size of the waist but of the size of the heart and the beauty within the person behind the smile. She is loving, energetic and hilarious in her own special way. We enjoy hearing of her dream and realize that all of us no matter the size have had that one special dream that left us feeling like anything is possible.

### **7. Knock Knock**

Abe sees himself as any other man his age. He has fond memories of childhood, and he absolutely loves his mother. When Abe was a young child, he found his dream job was to stand in front of a room of people and tell jokes. Through a series of events, he was able to make his dream of being a stand-up comedian come true but when his mother attends her first performance she does not see the humor. Abe is then faced with a career changing decision, do you follow your heart and do what you love, or do you give the utmost respect to the woman that gave her life for yours?

### **8. Living in The Olden Days**

Told from the perspective of an old man who is reflecting on his life and many years of commitment working as a janitor at a local high school. Celebrating his fifty third year at this school he remembers everything from the first day of his job to this day, the day of his retirement. He lets us know that though even the quietest of people in our lives, the people that we are so use to seeing that we don't even see anymore, are still important. They are still alive, and they are still very much active people. He recounts the memories of all of the children that were ignored by others but in their most emotional moments he created lasting relationships with them, relationships

that helped them to live another day. We must remember these people; they too can save the lives of children.

### **9. Makes Me A Woman**

For a woman there are few things that physically make us what who we are physically: one is breasts and the other is hair. When she finds out that she has Alopecia, a disease that will make her hair fall out, she must figure out how to stand in front of the mirror every day and see the beauty that is in her. She must accept her reality and learn how to move forward with all of the things that makes who she is, and makes her a woman in every day.

### **10. My Life: A TV Show**

In this serio-comic portrayal of a woman who finds herself in love with the people and relationships that she sees on tv. It begins as a fun-loving sharing of sorts of her experiences and her addictions to television. Soon we see that the saddest thing in the world is to only have people that love you on the other side of a screen. These relationships aren't real and the love that she has for them is not real, but in the midst of the story we come to realize sometimes the people that we depend on most are the those that we love only from a distance, and only in our minds.

### **11. Princess of Wine**

For the princess of the ball this story follows a teenage girl who reflects on her life as a princess. She lived the life of the homecoming queen and wanted nothing more than to be known by all, not caring if she was loved or hated. But when an alcohol addiction takes over her life, she must leave the palace of the life that she has always known to work to try to fix her life and get things back to the way she remembered them to be. Living every decision day-by-day trying to stay focused and most of all clean and sober.

### **12. Safety Net**

Tells the dramatic story of a father whose son comes home and asks him for a dog, so he can be like all the other kids. This request brings up memories from the father's past that reflect years of abuse at the hands of his father. The story is told as if the father's fear is the "dog" that comes into his room every night. When his son wants a dog, it insights a history in him that he cannot break free from, and one that makes him want to protect his son from the dog that he feared all his life.

### **13. Things My Father Taught Me**

A dramatic piece that follows a man as he boxes up the lives of his parents. When he gets the call that his parents have passed away in a tragic accident, he knows that it is his responsibility to pack up their house and tie up lose ends. He soon finds out

when going through the paperwork of his father that all of the things that his father had taught him as a child were things that he, himself, was not living up to. What do you do when all that you've known is questioned? How do you pack up the last box and say goodbye to all you have known?

#### **14. Rich Bitch**

Kalissa is a teenage girl that is: rich and beautiful and she knows it. She has a group of friends that treat her like a princess and Kyle who follows her around like a lost puppy. With a mix of humor and a dramatic twist Kalissa recounts her birthday party. Hundreds of people have arrived, and she is in the midst of an outfit change when she is attacked in her room. Kyle comes to her rescue and in the midst of him saving her, he loses his life. It is through this loss that she realizes how much she loved him and what, amid all of the material things she has, is really important. A coming-of-age story about a "Rich Bitch" realizing that money doesn't mean anything in comparison to true friendship and love.

#### **15. Guts, Glory, and Prom**

Jeffery is one of the sweetest kids you'd ever know. He is a good student, a great son, and an all-around nice guy. Jeffrey, however, is ready to take the next step, a girlfriend. All of his weird friends have girlfriends and as prom quickly approaches Jeffrey is concerned that he may not be going to the most important event of his high school career. So, he turns to get advice from the best person for teenage relationship advise...his mother. In the end he finds out that the advice from his mother may not be all too bad as he finds the courage to cross the street, knock on the door and ask the girl of his dreams to be his date to prom. This is a funny story of a great guy trying to get the Guts to enjoy the Glory of Prom.

#### **16. Thanks Mom: A Boy Named Jackie**

What is in a name? For a boy named Jackie, a lot. Being born into a family full of girls and parents that were hoping for five girls but got four girls and a boy named Jackie. When Jackie's father passes away he finds himself the man of the family surrounded by the strength of his sisters and his mother. Determined to keep his promise to his father he steps up in all of the little ways he knows how. In honor of their mother's strength as a single parent, the girls decide to perform a beautiful sibling dance for her mother at church. Jackie is not a dancer but commits to becoming one for this performance. We get to see the bond that they have with each other as a family, the humor of the dance and the love the children have for their mother. This piece is a funny and heartfelt story about the love and strength of family.

#### **17. Mei Guo Meng: The American Dream**

The story of a first-generation Asian American girl Miuki who wants to be who her parents want her to be while fighting to be who she feels like she is. She is fighting trying

to balance being a good student and daughter for her parents and being an American girl. Miuki wants to figure out how to do both. As her senior prom approaches, she asks her parents if she can attend knowing they would say no, they did. She is heartbroken that she can't do one of the most American things a teenager does. She tries to reason with her parents, telling them what a good student she is and that she has not let go of her roots, while explaining to them that they brought her to America for the American Dream that they are not letting her live. In the end her parents bring prom to her. She dances, has a date and realizes that it is difficult for parents of other countries to let their children grow into individuals in a place that is not home, but realize that compromise is universal.

### **18. Patience for Freedom**

One of the worst days of his life was the day that, as a teenager, he followed his friends to their house and had a video game night. It started out innocent enough but, on his way home he was arrested for a rape that he didn't commit. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. All of the evidence was circumstantial, but his story shows us that at times, that is all that is needed. He was found guilty and sent to prison branded a sex offender. After many years of incarceration his evidence is reexamined, and he is exonerated of all charges, but the emotional and psychological damage has been done. We listen to his story and sadly watch a man try to put his life back together after experiencing hell on earth.

### **19. My Best Friends Are Famous**

Tells the story of a teenage girl that finds herself addicted to the faces that she started out admiring in magazines as a young girl. She is now a teenager; all of the walls and ceilings in her room are covered with pictures of these famous "friends" that she believes she has a relationship with. She starts watching television for hours upon hours every day and when her parents find out she has not been going to school so that she can stay home and watch television they remove all of the televisions from the home. She attacks them, breaks down and they allow her to be arrested and committed into a rehab facility. Addiction is addiction.

### **20. Looking for Love: Addicted**

Tracy is the child of overbearing rich parents who never wanted a child. But when they did have her, she was going to be the perfect example of what a rich princess is supposed to be. Tracy never felt love from her parents, but she was always overwhelmed with the amount of things that her parents had her involved in. They finally sent her away to boarding school for rich kids, so she could "Be around people like her." Tracy eventually rebelled and dropped out of school. Her parents cut her off and in a short amount of time she found herself in an abusive relationship with a drug dealer and addicted to meth. This is a story of a girl who went from everything to nothing in a matter of months and as she reflects on her choices she doesn't know how or if she'll be able to get out.

## **21. Silent Hero**

A young woman recounts her most difficult moment in high school: her last speech in English class. The assignment was simple to write a paper and present it as a speech about someone who influenced your life the most. The decision was simple, her father who had died years before. A death that took her child mind to a silent place, she didn't speak for years. She had lost her best friend and she became the poster child of inclusive. When she entered high school, she didn't have many friends, didn't talk much and didn't stand out to anyone. But when she was given this assignment, she was forced to tell the story of what silenced her so many years ago and how she found out who her father really was and that the one person who wanted to help her the most, her mother, was her hero in a life changing way. Forgiveness is a powerful thing.

## **22. The Price: To Be Loved**

A teen boy talks us through how he found and fell in love with the love of his life. A love that turned addictive very quickly. His father warned him that he was bordering on being a stalker, but he informed his father that following her and making sure she was safe is love and nothing more. But when he finally gets the courage to announce his love for her in a big way at the homecoming pep rally in front of the entire school with a song, he knew his prayers were about to be answered. Elizabeth begins to cry and exits the room; she didn't feel the same way for him. He never returned back to school and ends the piece with his suicide note.

## **23. True Beauty**

A woman with addiction problems finds comfort in writing things down. She shares her best days and her worst days and in the midst of living her day-to-day she finds herself revealing her life through these words. Her journal becomes a continuous part of her ability to honestly tell her story. It becomes more than a listening ear because she doesn't have to worry about the words on the page judging her, hating her, or telling her all of her flaws. Her journal becomes more than just an outlet for her feelings, it becomes her best friend.

## **24. Coming from A Small Town**

High school can be difficult. For this teenager high school was her greatest dream that turned out to be her greatest torture. The story of a young girl who is living in a small town in Texas and sheltered by her mother who saw her as "different." But when her already sick father gets sicker, and her mother must send her from homeschooling to public school she experiences a terrible form of bullying. In a room full of strangers, she was her mother's greatest fear, an outcast. In the midst of her day there was one safe place, with her theatre teacher. In the climax she breaks away from another dreadful experience and makes it into the safe arms of her favorite teacher. After that day she never returned to school, but she did overcome the bullying and make it on her own. It

took a while, but she eventually learned that it was okay to be “different.” Okay to be gay.

## **25. Rules for Love**

Shelly has decided to write a book to assist women. It’s a self-help book of sorts on how to get over your evil ex-boyfriend. She is fun and full of life as she is sharing her book with us but sadly Shelly doesn’t know how to follow her own rules. When the love of her life hits her for the first time, she doesn’t follow her own rule of leaving the first time you’re hit. She stays and she watches herself turn into someone she never desired to be. A shell of a woman who cringes every time her boyfriend is in her presence. She finally gets the courage to leave and after a few months she begins to talk to him again. Believe him again and love him again. The piece ends with her reviewing the rules she’s created and the reality that she still loves him but will never forget the times that he hit her. The hardest thing about living is the inability to forget.

## **26. Humble Beginnings**

Set in the image of “*The Wolf of Wall Street*” dealing with a man who was born and raised in one of the poorest areas in Mexico. Through a series of unfortunate events his brother and him get to America and their lives change dramatically. Going from the deepest poverty-stricken fields of Mexico to working their way into a New York Penthouse and all in a hard day’s work. But when his brother points out to him that they are becoming the men that they hated in Mexico the brother chooses to walk away. The other decides that he is beyond his humble beginnings and will never go back to that life until his business fails, and he ends up, again poor. Now forced to see the reflection in the mirror he does the only thing he knows to do, goes to his little brother for help. The brother says “yes” under one condition, they have to play a game that they played as children, to remember who they are. A moving story about not allowing your current condition to overshadow the condition that made you the fighter you have become.

## **27. Keeping Connection**

An El Salvadorian woman speaks on the challenges of being raised in a country where women don’t have the rights that they do in America. After years of her mother telling her what a wonderful place America is for freedom her parents finally send her to America with one request, never forget where you came from. As she speaks of the connection, she aspires for her children to have with her homeland she shares the challenges of keeping the connection with so much distance. The greatest hurdle to overcome is getting her American husband to understand the importance of their children knowing about both sides of them, even if one isn’t as pretty as the other. The story is touching on different levels of the family dynamic and also the idea that the most important thing about family, is family.

## **28. Coming Out**

One's own sexuality can be one of the greatest challenges for a teenager to overcome. The idea that straight kids don't have to come out to their parents, but gay kids do. This is a coming out story. One full of comedy as one boy tries to figure out how to come out to his parents. He enlists the help of his gay and straight friends asking all of them to weigh in on just how he should do it. As much as the process is humorous it also brings sadness that this is the step that he must take in his life. As he is rehearsing his "coming out performance" he doesn't realize that his parents have walked into the room. Sometimes the unexpected is better than the rehearsed. He is accepted and loved and appreciates that his parents only wanted him to know that he was special for who he was, period.

## **29. In/ Out**

A sad but reflective story of a teenage boy who comes out to his parents thinking that he is just being honest with himself and finds out that the person that he is, is not one they can accept. They take him out of school and force him to be locked in his room reading pamphlets and papers on how they are going to "fix" him and save his soul from going to hell. He can't understand what he did that was so wrong. But it is when there is no hope that life doesn't seem worth living. In the final moments he decided to write his parents a note reminding them of the family they use to be. Then he goes for a walk and as he remarks on the freeing feeling of the wind on his neck a truck comes by, and he jumps. Finally finding his light and walking in his freedom.

## **30. Invisible Me**

The story of a boy who is by all accounts invisible in his life. He feels like his family doesn't see him, he has no friends really, and all he wants is to be heard by someone. When at the age of two he is diagnosed with a learning disability his parents treat it as an illness not to be dealt with, so they don't. As he gets older, and his parents have more children he realizes that he is truly on his own. Until he meets Star, another girl in his class that is just as quiet as he is. They become the best of friends; in essence she is all he has. Until one day in class when one of the kids is bullying him and calling him "retard" and the only thing he can do is the one thing he's never done, fight back. The fight ends badly with the other student in a coma and him removed from school and institutionalized. Through it all Star still comes to see him, but finally he can look in the mirror and see a real person looking back at him. No longer invisible, no longer alone.

## **31. Karma**

Parenting is a very difficult task. For this man is it even more difficult because he used to be a bully in high school and now in his own life, his son Noah is being

bullied in elementary school by a boy that reminds him of the man he used to be. When his son comes home with a letter from Noah's teacher informing him that his son has been bullied, he is furious but understands the situation. Noah is different and not like the other kids, but Noah is the love of his life. The most amazing child he has ever known, and he has to defend him. This situation is an emotional rollercoaster for him to figure out how to help his son. He decides to ask the teacher if he can go up to the school and talk to the classes about bullying and how to treat each other. Noah comes home from school that day and explains to his dad that the boy that was being mean to him was nice that day and that made him happy. In children sometimes we can teach them how to treat each other by remembering and accepting the things that we adults did at that age. Noah curls up next to his father and opens a good book to end his perfect day with.

### **32. Man Up**

Marty is a different kind of guy; he is a sensitive guy. All he wants is to find a girl that will love and appreciate his sensitive side that he always thought women wanted to see. Marty decides to create a men's group that meet and talks about men's stuff in a sensitive way. Cry if you need to no one will judge you here. Unfortunately, and sadly no one but his sister shows up. This was the one big idea that Marty had in his life and like everything else it fell flat. But a late knock at the door changes everything when a woman who is looking for a sensitive man decides that this meeting might be the place to find her husband, and she finds Marty. It is a funny and sweet story about the hearts of men and the souls of people in general. At times we do things to better ourselves not knowing that great things are just on the other side of the closed door.

### **33. Too Young to Know**

When a thirteen-year-old girl reflects on the events that led up to her unexpected pregnancy. When she is taken advantage of by the custodian at her school that made her feel special and that she believed she was going to marry she finds herself alone in a way she never thought possible. She tells no one about the pregnancy until the day that he takes her into the Porta potty on the football field and gives her a hand full of pills and locks her in the bathroom. Alone, scared and in a lot of pain she is forced to lose the baby. It is not until this moment that she realizes that he was a predator. Forcing her to finally realize that the man that she trusted had manipulated her young mind, locked her in the Porta potty and left her to die. Through years of counseling and a strong family she is able to move forward and share her story. To assist in helping young girls know that home is the deepest love there is, support and faith. Trust in the people that truly love you for who you are.

### **34. Bottoms Up**

Alcoholism is a difficult addiction or disease to overcome. Especially when you are dealing with a woman who knows she has a problem and has decided to do nothing

about it. As she recounts the moment in her life that should have gotten her sober, she realizes that no matter how much she drinks she can't drink away the reality that she is solely responsible for the death of her sister Beth. After Beth's death she is cut off by her family and never misses a beat with her drinking. It is an honest look into the world of an alcoholic that owns every bad decision she has made and knows that she doesn't have the strength or knowledge to get sober. She now has no one to live for so she dedicates her life to drinking to tease the pain. As she raises a glass on Beth's birthday which is also the anniversary of Beth's death, she must accept that as she nears her own death to liver cancer she is content with the fact that when she goes she will once again see her sister and she will again be loved.

### **35. Lost & Found**

Alena is an eighteen-year-old girl from Russia and she has seen her fair share of hardships. Being born and raised in one of the poorest areas in the country she recounts how her family made a way. They didn't have much but they had a plan that worked until her mother got ill. Living in poverty they could not afford a doctor, so she was forced to watch her mother die as she became the woman of the house. Shortly after the death of her mother her father also died leaving her and her siblings homeless and forced to enter into an orphanage. Within the time that she is at the orphanage all she wants is to be reunited with her family until she is adopted by an American family. But it is the custom of making a wish on your birthday that continues to give Alena hope. She holds onto a picture of her family and as she blows out her birthday candles, she closes her eyes...hoping her wish comes true.

**(\*Actress must speak some Russian within the piece.)**

### **36. I, Teach**

The most important job of a teacher is to connect and positively affect the lives of their students. And in some cases, to make the decision that could save their lives. As a woman shares her experience as a teacher on the day that the school shooting isn't on the television it is a present threat within her school. At first, she follows the rules set by the school then she makes a life changing decision, to keep her students safe and fight. She decides to send her children out of the room to save them. When all of the students make it to safety it is her turn to run but she is stopped by the gunman. He asks her is she is prepared to die and as her students are safe her job is done. He lowers the gun and walks in the other direction but before he disappears, he thanks her for being the one teacher that made school a little better. A story of fear and hope learning that the purpose of a teacher is to change the lives of children and sometimes it is the child that you didn't even know was listening that is change the most.

### **37. You Just Never Know**

A wonderful coming of age story that deals with humor at heart. Where a young man shares the life that he had being raised by his grandparents. Not realizing that they

weren't his parents. Not noticing that his "parents" were older than everyone else's parents because he was happy, had everything that he needed and all the love he wanted. But the older he got the older they got until his grandfather, the man that taught him everything that he knew dies. His grandfather always taught him not to cry and not to quit. As difficult as it was his grandmother pushed him to continue on in school. A short time later she sent him a box of her chocolate chip cookies that he shares with his roommates not realizing that this was her way of saying goodbye. This is a touching story of a boy that turns into the exact man his grandparents hoped he would be. He was strong, never quit, never cried and that is what made him special, they made him amazing.

### **38. I Sent Three Little Words**

The connection between twins is said to be one that is unexplainable and often never understood. The bond that they have allows them to share things with each other that others may not understand. When one twin sends a short text message to her mother while driving and loses control of the car killing her twin sister, she must figure out how to put her life back together. How does she accept the present to move forward toward the future? How does she wake up every morning and not regret that her life is still moving, and her sister's life is not? Married couples speak of losing their better half, when Ashlyn dies her sister feels that exact same way. But as she speaks at her sister's funeral at the request of her mother, she begins to understand what healing is and how she can continue with her life while never forgetting the affect her sister had not only on her but also on the world. A story that will make you think twice about the next text message you feel like you have to send, it is never worth the unknown circumstances.

### **39. Always in Bloom**

A woman shares her story of mourning hoping that maybe telling someone might free the pain in her heart. She will never forget the day she asked her husband why he felt the need to have so many guns in the house, "To protect my family" was his response and she accepted that. But years later when she receives a call from the police to come home, her life was forever changed. Arriving at the home she gets the information that her husband thought their son was an intruder and he shot him as he got a bowl of cereal out of the kitchen. She recounts that evening and the time since the shooting. She shares her heartbreaking story of living a wonderful life with the man that she loved who adored her and their son that brought her pure joy, to losing her son and walking away from her husband because she just can't forgive him for what he has done. As she moves forward, she finds herself asking all of the questions she should have asked before they started a family, "Why do you need so many guns?" She can't seem to forgive herself for a situation that she feels she could have prevented. Her pain is raw, and her story will affect every person who knows someone with a firearm and a family.

#### **40. Hair, Who Needs It?**

There are thousands of diseases in this world. Some have an outward appearance that makes others stop and stare, some do not. For this young man - when he began to lose his hair, all of it, he knew that something was wrong. After many tests and specialists, he is told that he has a disease called Alopecia, baldness. It doesn't hurt him, it won't kill him, but for the rest of his life he will not have any hair anywhere on his body. He struggles with the stares that he gets, the thoughts that people have that he has Cancer and is dying. He wants to just be a high school senior. He doesn't want to be bullied or stared at. He wants to be normal but because of his appearance he will never be that. Luckily his father has made it his life's mission to make him laugh and smile, to make him feel normal. With help from his father and his grandmother who is dying from Cancer he begins to see life in a way that lets him let go of his anger and live free of giving other people his power. Through the eyes of a teenager struggling to make sense of his present situation he realizes that hell, it's just hair, who needs it?

#### **41. The Wonderful Wizard**

On May 20<sup>th</sup> 2013, Moore, OK was rocked by one of the most destructive tornadoes in all of history but for seven-year-old Mikey and his big brother Kevin it was just another seventh birthday. As told through the eyes of a teenager Kevin shares the day that the tornado ripped through their town but more the affect it had on him and his little brother as it ripped through their lives. He remembers the day as if he were stuck living it every moment. From singing happy birthday and sharing cupcakes with Mikey's class to the roof of the elementary school being torn off and tossed into the eye of the storm. Both boys remember watching "The Wizard of Oz" as kids and thinking that tornadoes were so cool, that they had the power to take you to a magical place, but in the wake of the real thing the innocence of a child's imagination is lost, blown away with the rubble. It is a touching story of brotherly love and how a deadly tornado can truly put life into perspective, even for a child and his big brother.

#### **42. All for You**

In American history there have been many times of racial tension. In recent years there has been another rise of racism that makes us realize that we are not removed from it nor are we immune to it. In "All for You" we are engaged in the story of a Mexican- American teenage girl Lucia that reflects on her life in America and how she got here from Mexico. She tells the positive story of being an immigrant then becoming educated by the woman that her mother worked for and her and her brother taught their mother everything they learned. Until as a family they all are able to become American citizens together, as a family. It is not until her senior year in high school that she and her brother are accosted by a group of kids at their high school. They are called names and beaten for no other reason than they are from Mexico. It is at this moment that she realizes that no one is immune to the discourse

of racism. They are able to make it out of this moment, get home, and still reflect on their lives, wondering if this is home or if their home lies back in Mexico. Home is where the people you love are.

#### **43. The Life of Walter**

Jessi is a woman that is sharing her story of the life of her brother Kevin. Her parents knew when they were pregnant that he was going to be born with autism. The level of his disability was not known until he was actually welcomed into the world, and it was in that moment that Jessi's life changed. Kevin was so much to handle that she began to feel like she wasn't important to her parents anymore. She felt like her little brother was becoming the biggest problem of her life. She never hated her brother for being who he was, but she felt like her parents forgot about her as they were engrossed in assisting him. Kevin was substantially developmentally behind, but it was all in a toy fish Walter that brought him out of his cocoon and to life. His first word came after that, and he could not be separated from the fish that Jessi had given him. What she didn't know was by being the creator of his breakthrough her parents would assign her to be with him all the time taking her childhood away. It was on her fifteenth birthday that she got to have a day that was all hers until Kevin's fish gets broken and the party abruptly ends. On the way home that night, Jessi hated her brother, but it is what she does next that changes the course of her life. It is in our most angry times that we do things that we can never take back, never change, and never forget. It is in her reflection of her life that we see how we can love someone, and that love turns into something it was never meant to be. But it is in the moving forward that we see Jessi heal.

#### **44. An Experiment**

On April 20, 1999, two teenagers walked into Columbine High School and started shooting. Many years later we commemorate that event annually with prayers, moments of silence and laying down flowers, but then the next day it is back to life as usual. When a student is given an assignment in his political science class to observe the news and come back to class to discuss it. Unfortunately for this student the assignment became an obsession and then an experiment. How many guns could he buy? How many eyebrow raising t-shirts could he wear to school? How many times could he tell his parents that he was thinking about hurting people? How many guns could he bring to school and show off to his classmates before someone said something? On the final day of the experiment, he packs his backpack with the guns and ammo that he bought, walks into the school and shares his experiment with his class. Is he making a statement that speaks to gun control in America or did he just take his experiment too far? He never hurts anyone, never puts anyone in danger but what he did do was show how easy it was to live under the radar even if you are trying not to. This story shows us that we have to open our eyes, we have to see what's there and say something when we do.

#### 45. The Wall

A Mexican woman shares her experience of being an American born citizen to immigrant parents during the 2016 election. She works as a nurse in the labor wing of a hospital, and she compares all of the hate to that of bringing a baby into the world. The freedom that the baby has, they aren't tainted, or rude. They aren't mean or angry. They don't yet have anyone yelling at them the things or people that they are expected to hate in their lifetime. If only all of the adults running the world could be so clean. In her mid-twenties she shares her experience of voting for the first time with protestors outside yelling very hateful things to her. Out of curiosity she goes over and asks why. She is then yelled at but after she votes one of the protestors comes to her and offers to talk to her about everything. The two women engage in conversation that presents the possibility of understanding and change in the midst of disagreement. The Wall is used as a term to represent the things that we all have to overcome to achieve something as simple as day-to-day life. After the election day comes and goes and the headlines are reading as they are she finds herself concentrating on the children, the innocent ones that are surrounding her daily and she wonders if that nice woman ever thinks of her. We can all get over the wall that stands before us, whatever that wall may be. **There is no bashing of any politics or political figures in this piece, with the exception of the mention of the wall.\***

#### 46. Different at Birth

Chase is a special young man. His parents did a great job making sure that he understood what it was that made him different than all the other kids. Chase, at a very young age was diagnosed as having autism. He shares with us his story that his parents told him about how they found out and how they felt about his diagnosis. They even made sure that he could explain it to other people. His parents experienced many setbacks that were surrounded in the inability to find proper support for him. Chase wants us to know that he is different but he's still like any other young man. He wants to graduate from college. He wants to be a father but more than anything he wants for schools and people to support children with special needs and don't discount them or think of them as helpless. As he says in the piece, "With some support, I would be helpful." He has a great awareness that makes him sharing his story that much more special.

#### 47. Where I Stand

A young white woman, Stacy, in her early twenties shares her experience dating an African American man in college. She had never looked at him for the color of his skin but for him being a great person and amazingly smart. But when the murders of African American men become an active part of life her boyfriend James decides that he is going to lead a protest on campus. He asks her if she is going to attend, for a moment she didn't know the answer to the question, but she then agrees. The protest is well organized, attended by faculty, students, news outlets and security.

When James steps to the podium to give his speech, a shot rings out and James goes down. Stacy rushes to his side, he is alive and asks her for a favor, to present his speech to the crowd. As James is taken away in an ambulance Stacy cleans the blood off of his note cards, stands at the podium and gives the speech. It is an amazing moment that shows the intentions of a speech don't change because the person giving it does.

#### **48. Chasing Home**

Jack is a military man who committed his life to serving his country. Unfortunately, when he returns from his fourth tour in Iraq, he finds himself absolutely lost in the world that used to be normal to him but has now become completely foreign. He cannot connect to his wife, or his children and he cannot move forward as his mind will not let him. He is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the most serious way. Jack can't sleep because the nightmares are so vicious. He woke up covered in sweat and feeling like he was back there instead of at home safe. He tries to get assistance by attending therapy but what he begs for is something to take away the nightmares. Finally, he finds himself standing over his pregnant wife with a knife in one hand and his other hand around her neck. She talks him out of killing her and that night he walks out of his life, onto the streets to never return. This is the story of so many vets that return to the US with a great number of struggles that they need to work through but can't find the assistance they need in order to move forward with coming back to life as it used to be. Jack never finds his way back home the way he wants but he does find ways to connect with his family without putting them in danger. It is heartbreaking to know that someone who gave their life is now fighting to live in the place that he calls home.

#### **49. Falling**

Caroline is a typical college freshman. She knows it all and she is ready for it all. She sits in her freshman orientation listening to the Dean and a guest speaker talk about safety on campus as she's not listening, just as she didn't when her parents warned her of the dangers. In a blink of a night of frat party jumping Caroline finds herself drugged and in the trunk of a car, tied up with another girl. She then wakes up having been sold into the sex trafficking world. She recounts the two hundred fifty-three days that she spends sold. Her spirit is broken, she loses her will to live, her humanity but somehow, she is spared. In a twist of events the man that bought her allows her to leave, she runs to her freedom. Now she stands as a testament of the horrors that she experienced but the ability to fight and recover. It is a touching coming of age story that shows us that we are stronger than we believe or even know that we can be when confronted with the right situation. She hopes that sharing her story and informing others will save the next girls life. If only one.

## 50. Gentle Giant

High school is already said to be one of the most difficult times in the lives of children, but when you constantly feel like an outsider those feelings are magnified. This story is one of a young man that is larger than all the other kids. He gets made fun of by his brothers and their friends and clearly does not have a strong relationship with his mother since the father is out of the picture. He relies on his drawings of superheroes to push him through. He dreams of a superhero that will stand for everyone and end bullying. A simple kind of guy that he has named "Gentle Giant." It is not until he is in his English class and a girl does a speech about the importance of being our own superhero does, he finally believe that there is someone out there that understands him. He gets the courage to speak to her, which is the moment that his life changes. She turns out to be someone that supports him in his crusade and even has drawn a superhero of her own that becomes Gentle Giant's sidekick. This story is a coming-of-age experience for this young man in the difficulties of life. The sad reality that sometimes we are not what we look like and that deep within all of us is a superhero destined to be born. He makes you laugh with his wit and cry because when his heart breaks, our hearts break as well because we understand who this kid is. Because at some point in all of our lives we have been him.

## 51. S-P-E-L-L

All Gracy Stewart wants is to be seen and accepted for who she is by her parents. Unfortunately, she is the child that doesn't have the success of sports like her brother or blessed with perfect beauty like her sister. The stress that is put on her by her parents to be successful at something, to be more like her brother and sister becomes too much for one person to bare. She looks at herself in the mirror and sadly sees nothing. Because of this she begins to decline. She was fine with being good at things but not being great, but her parents were not accepting of that. She finally decides to quit all of her activities, her attempts at being great and starts to fall way below what even she is capable of. But in an instant her life changes when she watches a spelling bee and begins to connect with the seclusion of burying herself in a dictionary at the library and engaging in the art of spelling bees. She has finally found herself. As she stands on stage getting ready to spell her final word, she looks out to see her mom, dad, brother and sister sitting in the front row, signs raised "Go Gracy!" It is in this moment that she realizes and shares with her parents that all she ever wanted was to be accepted and loved for who she was, and not their expectations of who they thought she should be. This story is a testament for all children experiencing sibling rivalry to show them they can achieve but to also share with their parents that average can become extraordinary.

## 52. Beloved Gifts

Samaira is a simple woman from a very poor village in Bangladesh. Her story begins there, sharing the challenges of growing up in one of the most impoverished areas in the world and how her family was able to push through. Her village is then visited by the Prince who vows to assist them. Through this he sends a member of the royal family to interview and speak with the people of the village, and this is where Samaira meets Reyansh. They quickly fall in love but due to societal constraints he is not allowed to marry a woman so beneath him. They decide to leave it all behind and move to America to start their life, completely walking away from both of their families and all of his fortunes. As the years pass, they find themselves calling America home. Soon they get word that the royal family has found out where they are and is coming. When Reyansh is confronted by his father, he has a decision to make. For Samaira it is simple, we are together, married, living our lives let's keep going, but in an instant Reyansh decides he needs to honor his father and marry the woman they have chosen for him. He walks out of the house, never looks back, never contacts her, never returns and never knows of the daughter she was carrying. She was able to find the strength to pull herself up and move forward. Finding that she could absolutely stand on her own two feet and take care of her child. Her daughter is what kept her going. It was through the loss of her husband that she realized she had a power within her she didn't know she had. It allowed her to become independent and thrive working for a non-for profit that benefited poor areas like her village. Sometimes it takes a tragedy to truly challenge us to step up in a way we never thought we could.

## 53. Machismo: My Sort of Football Story

In this coming-of-age story we see a young man who is facing the most dreaded day of his life, his eighteenth birthday. It is on this day that every man in his family must spend the day playing football, the one thing that he hates. He is the youngest of four brothers and he is the only one that doesn't like football. He feels that this is a disappointment to his father and his father has said as much. He's not supportive of his accomplishments academically, his writing poetry, this child is everything that he didn't teach his boys to be. But on this day this young man decides to share with his mother that he's gay as she's always been his cheerleader. They share this moment, and the mother tells him she will always support him, but he wants the support of his father. As he stands in the mirror dressed in full football uniform topped off with a helmet, he begins to see his family arrive and realizes that he is lucky to have the family that he has. It's almost time for him to show his machismo to the family, play football with all the men as the women watch intently, cheering, laughing, and supporting. He finds an appreciation for this. Through his comical storytelling and emotionally passionate storytelling we see a cunning story of a young man who accepts the things he cannot change. As he prepares for his decent down the stairs into full family mode there is a knock at the door, his father. It is a turning point in his life: does his father accept him for who he is or encourage him to be who he wants him to be? \*\*\***This piece was conceived for ALL young men. You have the writer's permission to say lines in another language that is real for the actor and his family environment should he choose to. This does NOT mean adding text.**

## **54. No Fear**

An African American young man prepares for a ritual that he has with his grandfather. They spend the first Saturday of every month together and on this Saturday, they had planned to participate in a Black Lives Matter protest. Unfortunately, when his grandfather has a heart attack, he is stuck reflecting on what his life has been with this his Papa in it. As he sits with him in his emergency room, he realizes all of the things that he has learned from him. Seeing that all of the stories he shared were like pieces of his history that he didn't knowingly hold on to until this moment. When his grandfather begins to wake up, he points at his shoes that he was wearing then to the clock, showing him there is still time for him to make a difference. He tells him never live in fear, not to fear his death or anything else in his life. It is in that moment that a life lesson is taught; not living in fear has so many different facets that he must look at. Don't live in the fear that he believes people have for black men, don't fear his death, and don't fear making a difference. He then encourages him to go out and make his voice heard. The scene ends with the beginning of the second Saturday, getting ready to go visit his Papa so he can tell him about the week's events and so he can hear more of the stories that he now knows have changed and shaped his life.

## **55. I Accept**

I Accept deals with the difficult coming-of-age story of a young woman who's first memory of how she got where she is right now is the day her mother held her and told her that her father had left. Sitting in her therapist's office looking at all of the perfectly placed things she tries to find the moments of displacement she has lived through. Through the telling of her story, she reflects on the loss of her father from her life being the creation of a whole within her that she spent most of her teenage years trying to fill. She tried filling it with drinking, drugs and other men. There is a power that comes from her realization that through all of her soul searching and all of the bad decisions and drunken nights that her mother was always there ready and waiting to once again pick her up, hold her, and try her best to make sure that she had the resources to change her life. It is in her moment of acceptance that she realizes that she made some bad choices, but she owns them and has made the decision to make the first step toward getting her life in order. She has the power to stand in reflection of herself and say, "I Accept."

## **56. Cycle of Brutality**

\*The character references a Black Lives Matter protest but does not have to be African American.

Cici is a young woman who has the best relationship with her father. He is her everything. Her mother is very quiet and reserved but she never thought anything of it. It is not until she is a senior in high school that she comes in on her father abusing her mother and her mother doesn't stand up for herself, she doesn't have the power to. Cici steps in and takes her mother out of the situation never to see her father again. Years later, after her father has made many attempts to talk to her: showing up at the homeless shelter that they are staying at, coming to her high school and finally coming to the office

of the Black Lives Matter group where Cici is preparing for a protest. He begs for her forgiveness. She finally speaks with him. He just wants another chance. She tells him to join her in the protest and he jumps at the chance. It is during the protest that tear gas is thrown, and they get separated. Once Cici finds him he has been beaten by the police that have left him in the alley. She holds him and looks down at him for a moment. In the end she has visited him in the hospital and realizes that karma came back to get him for the things that he did to her mother. This could be the beginning of a new relationship with his daughter, she decides to try forgiveness.

### **57. Diagnosis**

Samantha is a young woman in her late teens or early twenties. She stands at the podium of a support group meeting for people with bipolar disorder. This is her first time at a meeting and her first time speaking. She tells her story of unexplained highs and lows and a rage that she couldn't understand. Finally, her senior year in high school her teacher recognized the signs and assisted to get her help. By this time, she had lost her relationship with her parents, friends and her best friend her sister Vanessa. She tells of the great relationship she had with her sister and what it has turned into. Two sisters living in the same house going to the same school who didn't even speak to one another or recognize the other's existence of that she was indeed her sister. In the end Samantha wraps up her first share with the group by saying that she is glad that she is there, excited to support them and their stories as they have done for her and with the hope that one day, she will come the meeting with her sister Vanessa in the audience supporting her. But until that moment she will work on making herself better. A beautiful story of a girl in trouble who didn't know how to get help because she didn't know what was wrong. A diagnosis that changed her life and saved it at the same time.

### **58. Halls of Life**

Natalie walks the halls of the local hospital meeting and talking to other patients who are sick there. However, Natalie isn't sick, but her twin sister Natasha is. Natalie shares the story of her and her sister growing up without their father for Natalie she accepted the reality and was about to move on, but Natasha took his absence very personal. She wanted to have a relationship with her father or at least understand why he had chosen to not love her and be a part of her life. This obsession turns into depression which then manifests itself into bulimia. She stopped living her life, stopped communicating with her family, Natalie and eventually herself. She started to exercise endless hours a day and Natalie followed a foul smell to the area hidden in Natasha's closet where she would purge herself. Natalie and her mother try to get her help but after Natasha has a random meeting with her father that didn't go well, she fell down a spiral that landed her in the ICU. As Natalie awaits to see if her sister will live or die, she continues to walk the halls. Listening to the stories of others as she tries to figure out her story is going to end. Wondering if the biggest piece of her is about to leave her life forever.

### **59. Bonnie to His Clyde**

Some wonders what it takes for a child to lose their innocence. For the young woman in this story, it started the day that her parents sat her down and told her that they were getting a divorce. She translated this into a situation where their divorce was not only her fault but that she wasn't a priority for them. She made it her mission to make their lives hell. Everything she cared about she let go of. Her classes, after school activities, nothing mattered anymore except making their lives hell. Then her best friend Brian who she has known all her life falls in love with her and she with him and finally someone loves her. His parents send him away and at fourteen she finds herself hustling her way from Texas to Arizona to find him. They end up living on the streets robbing people, in a Bonnie and Clyde kind of relationship. She then finds out she is pregnant. She wants the baby and without even a conversation Brian kisses her and walks out of her life forever. She makes the decision to immediately go home, finds the courage to ask her mother to allow her and her soon to be grandchild back into her home and with much joy her mother says yes. She does exactly what she said she would, she became the best mother possible. Her hope is that she can give Brian's mother some closure by telling her that he sends her anniversary cards every year. After speaking with her mother, she realizes that the worst thing for a parent's to suffer through is the not knowing. Now that she is a mother, she truly understands that.

#### **60. Life Shift**

This is a kind of coming out story. A young man shares his memories of what had led him to this day. Starting with a group of bullies that began his seventh-grade year to the end of his struggle his senior year in high school. The bullies would accost him in gym class forcing him to injure himself to ensure that he would never have to take another gym class while he is in high school. He took some incentive and started talking to the school counselor. He tells her just enough for her to give him the assistance that he needs but not so much that she feels it is necessary to call his parents. Eventually everything come crashing down when the boys follow him home from school. After being bullied: in school, online, via text messages and finally they have followed him home and because he wouldn't give them the power, they wanted they got out of their car and terrorized him at the door then he loses it and picks up a shovel and hits one of the boys in the face killing him. He comes in and locks the door and prepares what he always knew he was going towards, taking his own life. In his final life moments, he writes his suicide note and shares it with us.

#### **61. Security Blanket**

This is the story of an eighteen-year-old woman who is standing in front of the casket of her grandmother as well as her four-year-old daughter. Standing there she looks to her daughter and begins to share her story of her alcoholic and abusive mother that exited her life around the same age as her daughter. She shares her few memories of her mother that include her beating her, drinking and having screaming matches with her husband. It was a difficult life for a child, but her balance was found when she got to spend time with her grandmother. It is soon clear that her grandmother is the backbone of support that she desperately needs. After a series of events, she ends up living with her grandmother at the

age of four until she was fourteen. It was then that she got pregnant. She tried to hide it from her grandmother so as to not disappoint her but after a few months she asked her why she's sick all the time. Eventually her grandmother gets it out of her, and she tells her that together they can get through anything. She keeps the baby, goes back to school and raises her daughter at her grandmother's house. It is the death of her grandmother that brings the family back together. It is at the funeral that her mother finally comes back into her life, sitting on the front row and asking her if she can please meet her granddaughter. In the end she doesn't know what is going to become of her and her mother, but she does know that she is going to continue to be an amazing mother, to make her grandmother proud.

## **62. Last Dance**

In the wake of the biggest mass shooting in American history to date this story revolves around the Las Vegas shooting of 2017. A young man decides to celebrate his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday by surprising his parents with a trip to Vegas for the music festival. Little did they know that his surprise would quickly turn his world to a darker place than it has ever been. When they arrive, he introduces them to his fiancé Jesse, they were surprised but excited to see him so happy. The group arrive at the festival, and as they are joying the music Jesse suddenly falls into his hands, his hands now covered in blood. As he holds her, he also watches his father and mother go down. At the hospital his parents are in surgery and his fiancé has died. His parents recover and he tells them that she has died. This story shows us that we are never ready for loss, no matter in what kind of a tragedy. This story is not about the shooter, the situation or sensationalizing. This story is about love, loss and being able to reflect on how even in the midst of a tragedy love should always win.

## **63. Just Another Day...**

*Just Another Day* chronicles the day in the shoes of a Black woman. It is important for others to try to understand that there is a freedom that comes with not being a person of color. So as this black woman stands before the audience and explains the ins and outs of her day starting with the home that she wakes up to and her family life. Making sure to address all of the stereotypes that she does not fit but is aware of. Next, making her way down her street she says good morning to her elderly neighbor who reminds her that the world does not like her, something she expresses every morning. To walking through the halls of her school and the information, the whispers about the black race that she addresses from Kaepernick taking a knee, the rate of black men incarcerated, the connection to slavery- Civil Rights Movement- to the present power of the media, and finally a meeting her mother felt she needed to have asking the older black men to share with the younger black men who to be who they are in live in 2018. This is not a story about blaming or pointing fingers, it is a story that is seeking to teach in hopes that those listening will understand. That they will realize that there is comfort in the skin that they were born knowing that there are many who did not choose their color but must accept it and wear it, making it fit as comfortably as they possibly can. This is an educational story of sorts, just a simple walk in "a day in the life of." It just so happens that this character is

a black woman, and the day is hard as hell to get through. **\*Performer must be African American.**

#### 64. 13

Alex is a transgender (female to male) young person who is holding the most important letter of his life. The letter represents the possibility of his whole life changing. Growing up as a little girl he knew at a very young age that he was different. Not because he actually knew or could put it into words but because his family would tell him that he should be wearing girl clothes, doing girl things, liking what girls liked but that wasn't what he wanted to do or who he wanted to be. After many years of abuse at home and bullying at school he decided that it was time for him to be who he actually believed was the reflection staring back at him in the mirror- Alex. He wanted to transition from being a girl to a boy, but he knew in order to do that he had to go through a gatekeeper. These are the doctors that decide if a person is psychologically fit to make this life change. The process of denial or approval is timely, and twelve times Alex has been told, "No." But today as he holds this letter, he feels like this might be the one, lucky number "13." This story is a tale that is prevalent in the world right now as members of the LGBTQA community fight for their right to life as who they are without the prejudice of others negatively affecting them. It takes an immense amount of strength to be yourself, but not everyone must fight to do so like Alex. The story ends with Alex opening the letter and his reaction is up to the performer.

#### 65. Looking Back at Me

Kelly is much like other seniors in high school. She sings in the choir, loves her friends and is especially close to her twin brother Kevin. With them being born only seconds apart from each other she recounts the joy of having a twin and agrees that twins have a connection that is nothing like another other relationship. They can finish each other's sentences, feel the other's pain and live life really feeling that they are sharing it all with someone else. As Kelly looks into the mirror at her reflection, she tries to see how she could have not known what was about to take place. Just another normal day: Kevin took forever getting in the car to go to school, sang 80's songs all the way to school, made smart comments as we said goodbye to each other. A normal day...until it wasn't. When the shooting happened, Kelly ran like everyone else did. She hid in my car waiting for her brother to come and he never did. It wasn't until she began to walk back into the school that someone tells her that her brother was the shooter. How could she have not known? He wasn't just her brother, but he was her twin. She continues to ask these questions now, and possibly for the rest of her life.

#### 66. Band Aids on Bullet Holes

A teenager with ADHD recounts the moment of his life that he realized that something was wrong. Knowing that you don't have the ability to sit in a classroom like your other classmates and focus on the tasks at hand because your mind is on a ton of other things. In the mind of a child staring out of the window and losing your time in the beautiful wings of a butterfly seems amazing but when you are brought back to life you don't know what you've missed. As a child it was dismissed as an "active imagination" but the older they got the harder focusing became. After being diagnosed all they wanted was to be like the other kids, to have the normal social cues but they didn't. Their parents wouldn't allow them to be medicated so their mind lived in a constant burning fire until in their senior year they get tired of fighting and decide that medication is the only way they will be able to experience calm and normalcy. They come up with a plan, after researching the causes of ADHD they realize that a lot of the causes are the fault of decisions the parents have made drinking and smoking. Thinking this was the answer they go to the doctor's office and when the results are read, they find out that the parents had been involved in a very violent relationship which they now blame themselves for his disability. In a completely broken moment, the child realizes that the best cause of action should have been just asking for what he wanted. Instead, he will live the rest of his life with the effects of the pain he caused his parents. A powerful story that goes into the head of a person with ADHD trying to figure out how to get what they want when they, as a child, have no control. **\*\*\*Performance may be done by a male or female. All edits for this purpose are acceptable by the writer and publisher.**

### **67. Speak, We Will Listen**

This is a story that was created in the midst of the #metoo movement. The idea that there is an undetermined amount of people who have been sexually assaulted in their lives by people in power positions but have never been able to speak up. In this story a young woman recounts her desire to be an actress. Her and her mother move to New York at sixteen and she begins auditioning and sometimes auditioning alone. It is at one of these audition that she is sexually assaulted by the director and as time passes it is not the last but rather becomes the norm. She shares her shame and the silence that she decided to live in for many years until the movement began. Then she finally found the courage to post "#metoo" on her social media. And while it created a storm of emotions for her parents, for her it was about accepting that it had happened and standing up to the fact that she would never allow it to happen again. It takes a strong person to live through something and come out on the other side stronger and willing to share their story to help others.

### **68. Citizen**

It is common for our elders to remind us of the saying, "If you could walk a mile in my shoes." That saying is true for this seventeen-year-old Latino young man. He talks of being an American citizen and the racism he has experienced. From people whispering about him in English assuming that he can only speak Spanish to the day that him and two of his friends are accosted by two white men at the convenience

store because...they are brown. Sadly, these stories of racism are very present in our society and it, honestly has always been a part of our history. But for this young man he questions if he should have these memories as a part of his childhood? Shouldn't he be able to live his life without clarifying for people that he is an American citizen and that his doesn't speak Spanish because he was born and raised here, and no one ever taught him. There is nothing wrong with that. And though his grandmother back in Mexico desperately wanted him to learn to speak Spanish she loved him for what he did do, he made her smile, he loved her and that's what mattered. This story helps us to understand how an innocent victim feels and digests things he has no control over, when all he wants is to be who he is. Unapologetically.

**\*\*\*Performed needs to be Latino but could be any gender, the writer gives permission to adjust as needed.**

### **69. Be Your Own Village**

Like any solid tribe, close nit communities believe that "it takes a village to raise a child." Two African American siblings Ralph and Jay grew up only eleven months apart in a solid village (neighborhood). But at a very young age older brother Ralph knew that something was very different about his little brother Jay. He wouldn't take baths with him anymore and would pull at his private parts and say that he wanted to take them off. Things that a child should have no knowledge of. In the years to come Ralph begins to realize that Jay doesn't feel like he is a little boy but rather a little girl. So, like any good big brother he supports him in wanted to change. He plays as look out so that Jay can play dress up the way he wants to, in his mother's closet. Jay is now Jasmine and hiding who she is because she knows her parents would not support her. Her village will not welcome her in with open arms, but her big brother Ralph already has. As the story continues Ralph shares the evolution of Jasmine and how he supports her every step of the way all the way to her reveal. Standing at the top of the stairs, Jasmine dressed in a beautiful summer dress, is ready to show her village who she is. She takes Ralph's hand and makes her way downstairs. It is in the next five minutes that she was yelled at by her father, the house cleared of all of the neighbors and Jasmine is told she can either be a boy and get "fixed" of this phase in her life, or she has to leave. That night Jasmine decided to leave...and Ralph packs his bag and leaves with her. This story is one of love and acceptance with the realization that we all have a village of love and support, we just have to find them.

**\*\*\*Performer needs to be African American but could be any gender, the writer gives permission to adjust as needed.**

### **70. The Skin I'm In**

*The Skin I'm In* deals with the story of a teenage Mexican American boy whose skin is pale which allows him to pass for white rather than his Mexican American heritage. His parents have always told him that he was lucky to have the skin he is in rather than to have the dark caramel skin that his father has. For a long time, he never understood that by not having dark skin he lived under an umbrella of white

privilege that his father had never experienced. It is not until one morning his father is not where he should be, making his breakfast, that he finds out that he has been detained by the police who are looking for, "Mexicans that look like him." It is in this moment that this young teenage boy realizes the privilege that he lives in every day that his father can never experience. There is something to be said about the fear that lives on the shoulders of every person of color living in America today. The story shows us that sometimes the privilege that is given is not always the privilege that is wanted. This young boy wants to be proud of his Mexican American heritage and at the same time he realizes that it could also put him in danger. It is a tight rope that is very scary and difficult to walk as a teenage boy. When his father finally returns, he hugs him and wishes one simple wish for him, that one day he could wake up in the morning and give his father the skin he is in so that his father can experience living free for one day. But the sad reality, is that he will never be able to wear that coat of safety armor. **\*Performer must be of Mexican decent.**

### **71. My Badge of Honor**

Ellie is a wonderful daughter. Born and raised by two military parents who spent their entire careers climbing the ladder of success and the one thing that Ellie knows and understands is the idea of being a military brat. She jokes about it but realizes that it is a difficult situation to be raised in. She was taught, or quickly learned not to create relationships with people and not to get attached because at any point in time she could be moving. In her lifetime she lived in over thirteen different countries with her mother and her father and never stayed in the same place more than a few years. In the reflection of her life she realizes that she is too young to be alone for the rest of her life. She embarks on a scary mission of discovering the person she can still create herself to be. The only relationships that she really forged were that between her mother and her father. So, when the time came that they both passed away she realized that her life had become a series of organized daily events mirroring that of someone in the military, even though she wasn't. She has no friends, she has no family, and she is struggling right now to figure out how she can begin to live a normal life since she had never experienced living one. This is a coming-of-age story about a young woman who realizes that being a military brat, while a badge of honor, can also be a lifelong challenge.

### **73. Intelligent**

This is the story of a high school teenager who has battled and overcome the stresses of being smart enough. She is a product of a broken home with not much support from her mother she puts a lot of her focus into her education so she can use it as a means to get out. However, this concept becomes her obsession and eventually she begins to make bad choices for the sake of the grade. She stops eating and taking care of her body until her body begins to shut down. The one thing she never forgot was her first-grade teacher that taught her the word "intelligence." She held on to that all through her years in school and it was this teacher, Miss Keller that randomly sees her at the library, holds her, talks to her, and gets her the help that she needs. This is a story about a young person who uses drugs and deprives themselves of a healthy life because they have no coping skills with

how to deal with life and the things that are coming at them. In this day and age teen suicide is at an all-time high and this story hits on one of the more ignored topics: anxiety and the idea of educational perfection. \*This can be performed by a male or female student. It is permissible to change pronouns as needed.

#### **74. *Just Like Everyone Else***

Karen is the twenty- seven years old sister of Max who is twenty- nine. Though Max is the big brother technically, Karen has always been the big sister. Shortly after Max was born, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. He now lives his life in a wheelchair but for Karen he's just her brother. She wants all the best things for her brother like any sibling would but after his diagnoses their parents needed help and she found it in posting things online looking for assistance from people who are living with what they are living with. This is when they found out that people can be cruel no matter the situation. But as a family they came together to make sure that anything that Max was capable of doing he was able to do. At age twenty-nine Max went for a job interview at the theatre and got it. Ripping tickets allowed him to be social and work which is what he had always wanted. But it is at this job that he experienced being surrounded by people, most nice and supportive but some rude and discriminatory towards him. It was a difficult thing for Karen to see, people treating her brother this way. She confronts them about their behavior, but Max tells her that it's okay. People are going to be who they are, and that isn't always going to be what we want them to be. A story of sibling love and also an ode of support to all people with disabilities who have been treated wrongly because of reasons out of their control. There are people out there that realize that we are all just, people.

#### **75. *Countless Tomorrows***

Artists often talk about the struggles that they have when they first start out. Living in big cities, making ends meet, paying the expensive rent, but when your everyday obstacles are swimming around in your head how do you move forward from yesterday to live in today? A story of a young woman and her unwavering relationship with her mother who wanted to be an actress. The young woman shared this bond with her mother because her mother could never be an actress. Her mother suffered from schizophrenia and the voices in her head were living freely within her mind. Her mother would tell her the most amazing stories, and not just tell them but act them out as if she were on the biggest stage. Watching her mother was inspiring and soon, they were performing stories together. Why have a bedtime story when you can act out full scene with you mother every night? It was one of the most beautiful life connections. After being medicated she found her balance, but it was when she decided she was cured that her life took a turn in all the wrong directions. Her struggle with her mental illness soon come to a tragic end and much like the stories she told her daughter was left to figure out life alone. She is now an actress living in New York City, struggling like artists do but realizing that this life is better than the life she once lived. Through it all she continues to move forward battling with the things that are now swimming around in her head hoping one day to make it.

## **76. Gaining Wings**

This heartwarming story is one of historical relevance and recognition. As Marvon, an African American man in his 90's begins to speak we immediately fall in love with his presence and how he sees the world. Growing up in a time when the life of the African American was one of many hardships and yet still grounded in love he always wanted one thing; to be a part of the Tuskegee Airmen. The scene opens with him diving deep into the new challenges of this new thing his great grandson has introduced him to, the internet. As he fumbles with the phone, he is encouraged to search any topic and he'll be able to find information. All of this information at the touch of a screen. He searches "Tuskegee Airmen" and up pops on the screen a picture of him, his friends, his brothers. This then takes us on a trip into the past and present experiences of this African American war hero. A beautiful reminder that there are still heroes among us and something as simple as a search on the phone can take us away to a different time and a different place where little boys dreamed of flying in big planes and keeping us all safe. One never knows where the next memory is going to come from but what we must do is embrace them because passing them on to our children is how our history will continue to live well beyond our lifetimes.

## **77. Good People**

What would it feel like to feel like you are constantly telling people that you and your family and people who look like you are good people? Unfortunately, Mexican Americans experience this more often than we would like to believe as shares the woman in this story. She recognizes and admits that she is an immigrant but also tells of her life in Mexico and why it was necessary to escape. She has been in America for most of her life but still feels that she has to defend her presence here. On her birthday she goes to the grocery store and comes face to face with a young white man who she smiles at, but he stares at her with nothing but hate. He then verbally attacks her with offensive comments that are stereotypes of what people believe to be true about immigrants but was not true for her. As she listened to his rant and waited for him to finish, she politely smiled at him and went on about her business not realizing that moments later he would come back into the grocery store in El Paso, TX and start shooting people. Was it her simple smile that kept him from killing her? She will never forget this day or the events that led up to the shooting, nor will she ever forget the life she now lives as a survivor. A different kind of survival story and a reality check that every tragic thing that we see happening to other people can happen to us even if you are a representation of good people.

## **78. Advocating for Silence**

Natasha is a seemingly simple African American woman. She is up early at her job preparing for a rally that is supposed to happen later that day with her group *Live Through Me*, a group of survivors. These men and women are survivors of being bystanders/ witnesses to the murder/ death of their loved ones. For Natasha she was just feet away from her fiancé when he was shot and killed by a police officer. This is not a story focused on injustice as much as it is a story about accepting those injustices and finding your footing to move forward. It is a story that reminds us that experiencing something like that can affect you for the rest of your life. Natasha suffers from PTSD from her experience and has to find her way back to living her life instead of figuring out ways to end her life. After a long road to recovery and with the support of her family she finally gets both feet back on the ground and she begins to forward. She begins her organization *Live Through Me* so that her and the other survivors can have a place to come together, feel supported, and be held up by others that have walked the horrific mile in their shoes. She now lives to advocate for those who have died and stand hand in hand with those who feel like the best part of them is gone. Finding a reason to live can sometimes make life not worth living, but if you seek it and truly work on finding your road to recovery you can break through all of the noise and once again find your silence that you have been searching for. **\*Performer must be African American.**

#### **79. Afro Puffs**

A young African American woman shares a story that has been a hot topic in the news recently, natural hair in the workplace. She talks of her memories being a little girl and getting her hair combed by her mother on Sunday night, no chemicals just natural, that's all you need. But as a child she didn't understand why the other little black girls had straight hair like the pretty white girls. Because in her young eyes white was beautiful, black was not and she didn't have anything that she could find in them that was also in her. Instead of looking inwards or to her mother as an example of beauty she continued to look outside. As she grew into herself, she gained an understanding of black hair and the pride that her mother was trying to instill in her. As she sits in an interview where she is the only black person, she is excited for this moment. She is prepared, she interviews well, she nailed it. To find out weeks later that while everyone believed she was the best interviewee they didn't think her Afro puff was the kind of representation they wanted for their company. This is a coming-of-age story where one little girl becomes a woman and still must accept racism is still alive and well, it just presents itself in very different ways. **\*Performer must be African American.**

#### **80. Won't You Be My Neighbor?**

*Won't You Be My Neighbor* is a collection of short stories that all take place in a residential neighborhood where there is a man suffering from mental illness. This multiple-perspective selection shows the voices and experiences of those who encounter Sam a man diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic. The voices echo those across America who lack a basic understanding of the mental illness crisis we have

today. In the end, Sam struggles to save his mind and loses his life in the process. Inevitably revealing our lack of community in 2020, neighborhoods are not made up by neighbors, moreover just a group of houses where people would rather not get involved, because it may require more than they are willing to give.

\*\*\*Only available in the collection: Just Telling Stories III

### **81. Missing Pieces**

No matter what your job is, people sometimes lose themselves in their work. In this selection, we see a Pastor who has put his/her church family as a priority for so long they struggle with finding the balance between the two worlds. After his/her father has a massive stroke, this pastor becomes the one in the waiting room in need of prayers and counsel. Will he/she be able to accept the loss of their father as he is choosing to have his tracheotomy removed since he has lost his ability to speak and advocate for his own needs, his father does not want to live on a ventilator. After his father passes, she/he is finally able to find a new peace in the difficult process of death.

\*\*\*Only available in the collection: Just Telling Stories III

### **82. What Do I Tell My Students Now...**

After the nation is turned upside down in the wake of the horrific murder of George Floyd a white woman struggles to find herself at the corner of racism and white privilege. She has been overweight all her life so she brings some understanding to the table but quickly learns during this time of protest and pain that one must do more than just walk in the shoes to understand what it is to be black in America. While at the same time calling for everyone to be a part of the solution if we ever hope to truly find justice.

\*\*\*Only available in the collection: Just Telling Stories III

### **83. Dangerous Intersection**

In the midst of a global pandemic, one woman experiences a specific event on a specific day that changes her forever. As Jennifer, a white woman in the suburbs recounts the events that happened beginning in March of 2020. She talks about the pandemic and how that affected her and her family and eventually it became overwhelming and she decided to disconnect. When she reconnected the video of Ahmaud Arbery had just surfaced. She was amazed at the video, the conversations and the reality that the world was in. On a normal day she is driving to get ice cream with her daughter when she sees a little African American boy riding his bike towards a dangerous intersection. She immediately pulls over her car to make sure that the little boy gets across the street. In an instant the little boy sees her and leaves his bike in the street and runs home crying. Jennifer finds out through his big brother that he too saw the video and is scared of her. This is a story that flips the script. There is a lesson to be taught here and Jennifer now knows what it feels like for someone to fear her for no fault of her own. In her mind she is a mother doing

what mother's do, keep children safe, but this African American doesn't know that, all he knows is what he sees which is a white woman walking towards him in 2020. It allows them to gain a small piece of what it feels like for someone to be afraid of you for the color of your skin. Some stories are best told by the most innocent of people, through the genuine life experience of children.

#### 84. Angel Moment

Addiction can take many different forms. Too often we dismiss addicts as the crazy people we see on television not realizing that an addict could be our next-door neighbor, our best friend and in some instances, our parents. For this woman she remembers her childhood by the arguments that her parents had. Hiding in a closet or behind a couch she eventually realized that her mother was the aggressor. She decided at a young age she didn't want to be anything like her parents but when she was old enough, she left home, got in with the wrong guy and began the cycle all over again. How do drugs overtake your life? What makes someone who grew up in a terribly difficult situation do the exact same things and become the exact person she never wanted to be? It is when her addiction finds her on the ledge of an apartment building holding her daughters' hand that in a drug induced hallucination that she actually finds clarity. This is a story that reminds us that where we come from is not something to try and outrun, but rather a set of circumstances that we must embrace and overcome in order to be stronger adults than our situation set us up for.

#### 85. Taking a Stand

Erron is just a typical African American man. He's a father, a husband and cares deeply for his mother who is battling cancer. But when the pandemic hits him and his wife, who are both doctors/dancers, have to make some very difficult decisions. It is because of these decisions that Monica, his wife, contracts Covid 19 and dies. This leaves Erron in a very difficult situation. But being the man that he is, he makes the best decision for him and his family, taking into account that sometimes the most difficult decision is the one that makes the most sense. He quits being a doctor and begins working at the grocery store. Still working, still caring for his mother and daughters but putting himself less in harm's way. Then there comes a day that is like any other until a man enters not wearing a mask. It is Erron's reaction to this that reminds him and shows his others that taking a stand is not always the most comfortable thing to do but in desperate times it may be seen as necessary. He will forever be the hero that Monica thought he was, never thinking of himself as such but living his life as if the decisions he makes directly affect other people and not just his family but everyone around him. **\*Performer must be African American.**

#### 86. Love by the River

There is no greater life experience than that of being loved. For Injambay, a slave in Mississippi, his love experience is one that he only shared with one other person, Cormah. Cormah was a fellow slave who was also from Nigeria. The love that these two men shared with each other was one that they had to hide from not only the other slaves but especially the Master of the plantation. Injambay put his focus on keeping the relationship a secret while falling deeper and deeper in love with him. All they wanted was to be able to be normal. A couple that didn't have to hide their love for one another. But it was a scary line to walk being slaves and also being in a relationship. Years pass, they have been able to find their footing in hiding their affection. Seeing each other in passing. Spending time late at night in their quarters. Smiling and laughing quietly, hugging and kissing but hidden, it was their normal and one they were willing to accept if it kept them safe. They promised each other they would die loving each other, and they did. They made one mistake, falling asleep in each other's arms one night and waking up to a gun in their faces. The end of their love story is not unlike the end of the lives of hundreds of thousands of slaves. One of torture and pain, one where hearts are more broken than bones, and one where the spirit of a loving wonderful person dies in their blood drifting by on the Mississippi river. **\*Performer must be African American.**

### 87. Accessory

Being yourself is not always as easy as it seems. For some teenagers the most difficult years are high school. Students find themselves coming into who they are and getting comfortable with the person they want to be. For this teenager his life has revolved around writing stories of who he wished he were and how he wished people saw him. With his father as his hero, he knows what he wants to be, a hero. But when his personal writings are posted all over social media, he decides to own his truth. He has been outed as gay and he is going to be exactly who he is. What he doesn't expect is for the most popular girl in school to now see him as interesting enough to be a part of her group, and so the rollercoaster ride begins. He is finally accepted by all, admired by many and some are even jealous of him. All the things he wanted, by coming out he now has. Eventually, his dad asks him what has happened to all of his stories? This forces him to reflect. Who is he really? And if this person he thinks he isn't a representation of his father, is this who he really wants to be? He then asks the popular girl why she chose him, and she is honest. Because she needed a gay accessory. This shakes him. It also makes him realize that he is more than that. Does he go back to being the person that he used to be and walk away from the popularity, or does he continue to pretend for the sake of everyone looking up to him? This is a story that affects many teenagers because being honest about who they are is sometimes a struggle they are not ready for.

### 88. *You Can Let Go Now*

Rachel is a wonderful spirit who finally feels like she has it all and everything is perfect. She is living her dream of being a nurse, married to the love of her life, and expecting their first child. It is often in times of life being perfect that the dominoes begin to unexpectedly fall. Much like everyone experiencing 2020, the beginning of the pandemic turned Rachel's world upside down. It created a strain on the relationship with her

husband who was constantly worried about her safety. He had his own challenges balancing working from home as an elementary teacher and a heart condition that makes him high risk for the virus. All of these elements have also made Rachel look at life in a different way- where fear could overtake her but she tries to fight against it. Trying her best to take advantage of what she has and living in fear of the things that she could possibly lose is overwhelming. When in the midst of the pandemic she finds out that she is pregnant, her excitement is mixed with fear of the unknown not only of the pandemic but also of trying to keep her child and husband safe. A beautiful story of how even when everything is going right, and things begin to go wrong there's still joy that can be found and also realizing that with every death comes new life. Rachel is a strong woman who takes on the world to give life to her family.

### **89. Six String Guitar**

Xavier is a prodigy of sorts. He is a part of a family that for four generations has been members of a mariachi band. His great grandfather began the love for the music when he decided to craft his own six string bass guitar. When Xavier was born, he was instantly attracted to watching his great grandfather work in his woodshop and at the age of two he made him a mini two string guitar that forever changed his life and became his best friend. But music is more than a passion, it is a core piece of this family. Xavier's mother was a superwoman who stayed home and cared for the four children while his father led the mariachi band. As soon as Xavier graduated from high school he auditioned and was added as a member of the band, it was his life's dream. But it was in this decision that he learned things about his father that forever changed him. It was if he was learning things about his hero that he didn't want to know but could not ignore. Eventually the guilt of the situation weighed his spirits down and he quit the band. Putting his guitar away, becoming a normal person doing normal things and disconnecting from his father completely. Until the morning of his father's funeral when his mother comes to his home with his guitar and asks him to play a song for his father at the funeral. What Xavier didn't know was that the guilt he held on to for not telling his mother about his father's bad choices were things she already knew and had accepted decades ago. It is a beautiful story of what some families will go through to stay together and the strength and bond between a mother and her son. \*Performer will speak Spanish throughout and should be able to sing in Spanish.

### **90. Home of Good People**

Chelsea, now a senior in college reflects on her senior year of high school and how very different it looked from all of her other classmates. After being terrorized by her father for years her mother finally decides that she can't take it any longer and wants to leave. She gives Chelsea a choice to come with her and have nothing or stay, but for Chelsea the decision was easy. So, on the planned day they pack what they can in her mother's car and walk away from the only life they have known for nearly two decades and walk into homelessness. Living out of their car created a very different reality but with her mom she still felt safe. It was in this moment that

the good work of other people came to light. Cleaning themselves up in the local hotel bathroom daily they encountered Melissa the front desk clerk who supported them daily and fed them breakfast and Chelsea's teacher Mrs. Cartwright who knew something was different with her favorite students. She required Chelsea to write in her journal daily and promised to write her back. It was in these communications that Chelsea told her their situation and Mrs. Cartwright shared with her that there are other homeless students at the school, ensuring that she didn't feel like she was alone. Through the story Chelsea gains her balance from her supportive mother and teacher and before her senior year is done something amazing happens to her and her mom as well as the other homeless students in the school that remind us all that in the midst of a terrible situation there are always good people who are willing to do for strangers what they would do for their family. A difficult story of teen homelessness that is actively happening in all of our schools across America.  
\*Character gender does not matter and can be changed to fit any performer.

### **91. My Day**

Angelica is a teenager that is about to embark on the most difficult conversation she has ever had with her family, the coming out conversation. She has known for as long as she can remember that she didn't like boys, but her Catholic upbringing also taught her that she was supposed to. Conflicted with who she was and who she was supposed to be she decided to keep her sexuality a secret only talking about it to her small group of LBGTQIA+ friends that she had at school. But after sharing how she had decided to come out with her friends, she also decided that now was the time. She was months away from graduating and she didn't want to start her life in the military, which is also a part of her life that she has to share, without being honest. Her fear was not in telling her three older brothers or even her father, just in telling her mother who always expressed to her that being a wife to her husband and a mother to her children were two jobs she had to accomplish. In this moment she had to tell her mother that neither one of those that she wanted to do. After sharing with her brothers and father who were very accepting, she found the strength to tell her mother. Her fear was that her mother would disown her as some of her friends had said their parents said they would do if they, "ever had a gay kid." But she took a deep breath, sat with her mom and told her deciding that being who she was meant to be was the best way to celebrate the woman that her parents had raised. A coming-of-age story that reminds us how very hard it is for teenager to find themselves, then when they do the challenge of sharing that discovery with the world.

### **92. If You're Perfect**

The life of being a teenager is already challenging but when at a young age you lose your brother to Leukemia it truly shifts your world. For this teenager losing her brother was the domino that fell and changed her life. A story that deals with the concept of perfectionism and how her parents shifted their thought pattern when her little brother died to her being everything that she can be and more. Sitting in

her health class as her teacher talks about mental health and everyone is ignoring her, she begins to flip through the health book realizing that the changes she has been going through were breaking her mental health. Her parents seemed to be judging her on everything from her clothes being the best to her looks, grades, not allowing her to play sports because they didn't want her to get hurt. So many things in her life changed when her brother died, and she felt herself breaking under this pressure that until this day she couldn't quite put into words. Now her weight loss, inability to sleep, wanting to disappear, working to smile in public while privately hating herself all made sense. Like in any situation she had to find the words to ask for help. With the assistance of her teacher, she is directed to the school counselor who brings her parents in and as a family they begin to address her mental health, saving her life. This is a story of a mental health struggle that she didn't know she had until someone randomly presented her situation in a health book. Sometimes we need help and don't know it, don't ask for it and don't know how to climb out of the dark whole alone. But the lesson is always a simple one, there is always someone ready to help you, just find the courage to ask. **\*Story may be adjusted to fit any gender performer. Authors permission is given.**

### 93. Light of a Fairytale

Sometimes we don't realize how powerful the words of our parents are until we are adults and able to reflect on our childhoods. Unfortunately, for many adults they also in that same realization come to the conclusion that their parent(s) words affected them in a negative way. This fairytale begins like some we know, a balcony, a castle and some sort of princess figure. What is fake soon turns real when this teenage girl realizes that is the reality, she created in her head to avoid what was real, that her father had left when she was five and that her mother hates her and blames her for everything that has gone wrong in her life. In her reflection she talks about the night her father left, making sure she was old enough to remember him and for her to know how beautiful and perfect she was. But it is in the hateful words of her mother that over the course of her childhood transformed her into a teenager that drank, did drugs, and spent as much time at other people's houses as possible. The negative words of people we love matter, they have a lot of weight and sometimes when they are coming from a parent, they scare us for many years to come. A coming-of-age story about how negative words can affect us as much as physical abuse can. Both come with lasting consequences. But this young woman was forced to grow up fast and when it was time to say goodbye to her mother, she found that her father kept his promise, showing up on her eighteenth birthday hoping they can pick up where they left off. It may be difficult to understand the power what we say has, but in the eyes of a child their parents are the first people they trust, and words of hate can linger a lifetime.

### 94. Chemistry Experiment

This biracial woman always hated chemistry, the work, and not understanding how it was ever going to connect to her real life. She always hated the way people looked at her, wondered about her, wanted to date her because of the way that she looked. Intrigued by her curly hair, her skin color, and her beautiful eyes... but none of this was truly an interest in *her*. But it is when her mother falls ill that she realizes the connection between chemistry experiments, human experiments, and Life showing up at her doorstep. When faced with one of the most difficult decisions in her life she turns to the person that she trusts the most to assist her, her mother. Unfortunately, her mother is at the core of the situation that she is dealing with. The most difficult thing about living life is the acceptance of death. For this young woman she is faced with the looming illness that her mother struggles with on a daily basis, comparing the presence of death to that of a chemistry experiment. Her mother deciding that she wants to live out her life not being a part of anyone's trial, she just wants to live and die.

#### **94. Native Eagle**

It is in this story that we find the most unexpected lesson from the mouth of a Native American teenage girl named Behitha. For this family their education started many centuries ago and had been passed down to them generation to generation. She shares with us the experiences that she had living on a reservation with her family until the day that her father who was one of the tribe leaders passes away. As the eldest it became her responsibility to take over his positions when the time was right. Her mother decided to send her outside of the reservation to get additional education from the public school a few miles away. Starting out with kids making fun of the names that they think Native Americans have Behitha's struggle to fit in was clouded by her focus on why she's there. Behitha soon found herself educating not only her classmates but her teacher as well. Often asking permission to teach aspects of her Native American culture too everyone in the room period it became quite a staple with everyone. On the day she got permission from the tribe to bring her class onto the reservation so that they can see that the way in which the tribe lives is no different than the way the students live in their neighborhoods and their cities. The way that their areas are governed is also no different but the moral compass maybe coming from a slightly different reality. What we learned from this story is that it is possible to educate people who know nothing about your background and gain a respect from them that no one ever thought possible. It shows us a reality that maybe the answer to inclusivity lies in the children. In the end we get to see the joy of Behitha coming into the woman she always knew she eventually would be. Our destinies may be prewritten for us but sometimes the chapters, move a little too fast. A beautiful story of education and coming of age from a girl who followed in the footsteps of her father the Eagle.

#### **95. *Nonconforming***

Being different in any community is difficult and has its challenges. But standing out as different in the African American community, some would say is even more of a struggle. Historically there is a certain expectations of masculinity that comes with being a black man. If you are a man, you will act a certain way and possess a certain job. Much like in other cultures in America blue is for boys and pink represents girls. People don't recognize that they believe that boys should play with trucks and cars and girls should play with dolls. These two norms tell children that anything that lives outside of what is normal, is considered not normal. In the following story a young African American man shares his experience as being non-conforming. For him, the things he wanted to do were not extreme, quite simple in his mind actually. But he also realized that it doesn't matter, different is not normal, and not normal is unacceptable. He finally got to an age that he didn't want to hide those things from his father and his three older brothers anymore. His first experience of sharing ended very violently but he had to believe that who he was would be something that they would accept if they loved him. It was one of his friends from school that suggested that he follow a specific teacher on social media, and that is how he found his voice. When he watched a video and the teacher explained to his pre-kindergarten class the reason that he paints his nails and how all of that leads to acceptance, changed his perspective. He had to be honest with his family about who he was but what he realized was that first he needed to be honest with himself.

#### **96. *All Questions Answered***

There is something very special about the inquisitive child. Sometimes, that energy grows up to be too much for parents and for family members as well as friends and teachers. At some point someone may tell that child to stop asking questions, or to stop talking, to just be quiet. The younger a child hears this come from an adult or one of their peers the more likely it is that the child will go from constantly asking questions to silently turning inward to themselves. In this story we meet Nathan, who talks about how he is the question asker in his family until his parents tell him to stop asking so many questions. His twin sister Natalie always supported his questions and allowed him to shine as she stayed in the background. But when she saw *The Nutcracker* ballet onstage, she came into her own as a dancer and her brother loved watching his sister. But as he became an introvert because of the attention that he wasn't getting he didn't realize that at some point his sister was doing the same. Something tragic inside of Natalie had changed and Nathan will never forgive himself for not seeing it. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in our own lives that we don't realize that people who have been the closest to us have changed, have become silent, or have disappeared from our lives altogether. It is when Nathan and his parents sit in the car waiting for Natalie to join them on a family trip that they all begin to look at each other and realize how long it's been since they've actually seen Natalie. A heartbreaking story that comes back to the reality that when adults speak children will listen. Be careful what you say to a child because they don't have the ability to decipher it as anything other than exactly what you've said. Be quiet. You talk too much. Look on the internet. Listen instead of speaking... sadly one day this child's voice may be silenced forever.

#### **97. *366 Days Ago...***

Addiction is a difficult reality for any and every adult to maneuver. It is especially difficult when the person who is addicted is only 16 years old. Blake stands before us one year after the worst decision of his young life. He was just doing what kids his age do, at a birthday party, his Sweet 16, a house full of friends, no parents, no supervision, everyone's telling the same lies. His parents had given him all the tools that he needed to just say no to drugs. What is missed at times is how heavy peer pressure can be. No matter how hard Blake tried eventually he gave in, eventually he put his hand in the cookie jar and his life changed forever. People who have never been addicted often think that addiction takes time, commitment, years of abuse, and this is just not true. The story that is shared with us is one that is very sobering and a reminder that our parents are doing their best to keep us as safe as possible. But the reality is that as we grow into ourselves, we spend a lot of time away from the adults in the room. A story about how one decision, on one night, to do one bad thing can change you from being just another teenager into being an addict. Just as easily as we go from zero to cruise control, is as quickly as our lives can change at the drop of a hat. Listening to our children, really listening to the struggles that they have on a daily basis is what will make us a stronger society, stronger parents, stronger educators, and build up communication. And as they say in those anonymous meetings the first step is recognizing that you have a problem, but the saddest step is their reality that they will have this problem with them for the rest of their lives.

### ***98. If You See Him***

It has been said that the worst possible situation for any parent is for their child to be murdered or go missing. The following story deals with a woman who made one of the most difficult decisions of her life for the sake of her seven-year-old son Javier. When she found out that her son was developmentally delayed, she asked her doctor what is the best care for her son? His response was that the best care wasn't available in Mexico. Once she found out that her son could receive better care in America the decision was made. It was difficult for her to travel with a seven-year-old boy, but she made it to America. Upon entering the country, she was stopped by Border Patrol and her and her son were separated. No matter how much information she gave the officers the only thing they saw was that she as a woman with a child making illegal entry into America. The story goes on to share of what life has been like for her for the past year doing nothing but looking for her son and trying to figure out how her best intentions went so incredibly wrong. This is a story of love, the deepest kind of love told from the perspective of a mother who wanted nothing more than to see her son again, alive. She shares with the audience the last picture that she has of her son hoping that possibly someone will recognize him and be able to point her in the right direction towards reunification.

**\*Character must be of Latinx descent and may speak Spanish throughout as the performer deems necessary.**

### ***99. I Prefer Nick***

Nick, by all accounts is just another teenager. Unfortunately, Nick lives in a small town, a very small town where people who are different are seen as different, and often unacceptable. Nick is a girl who dresses like a Tomboy. People have decided that a girl shouldn't look like her nor should they dress like her. It is because there is a lack of understanding and acceptance that Nick finds herself constantly trying to explain to other people the decisions that she has made to dress the way that she believes she should dress. Her teachers and classmates don't support her, and she often feels isolated while at the same time feeling empowered. She is living in her truth and living in her comfort and that should be enough for everyone. Sharing the story of telling her mother that she was a lesbian and asking her for permission to start her senior year as the woman that she had always known herself to be a challenge but one of her happiest moments. With her mother's support she knew she could do anything. Dresses and skirts made her uncomfortable, made her want to crawl out of her skin. Once she realized that her mother loved her regardless of who she was Nick had the courage and support that she needed to do exactly what she had always wanted to do, be honest about who she was. Originally her name was Nikki but on the first day of her senior year of high school she decided she would prefer to be called Nick. Nick the Tomboy with short hair, baggy jeans, and a button up shirt. This is a story that is not unlike so many other stories about teenagers having the comfort to live in their truth. It is because of the people around them that they feel like their truth is a lie. But Nick is strong, determined, and will never allow herself to be anything other than Nick.

#### 100. *My Abuela's Tamales*

Within any classroom there may be students from different neighborhoods, states, countries, but everyone definitely has a different background that needs to be respected and celebrated. This is Citlali's story a Mexican American teenager who decides her senior year is going to be focused not on the negative experiences that she has at her school with racism but rather giving that energy to the most positive thing that she has in her life which is her family. She seeks joy and finds that in her abuela, her grandmother. This is an encouraging story that addresses the stress that a Mexican American student can have within the classroom. It also shows that instead of focusing on the negativity it is possible to turn it around and focus on who she now knows to be the most important person in her life. Sometimes it takes us watching someone that we love to get older and weaker and more fragile to realize that not only is there tomorrow not guaranteed but ours is not either. As she takes advantage of this private time, she has with her grandmother she is invited to meet with her in the kitchen before the sun rises. Citlali's mother told her that the best times of her life were spent with her mother learning how to cook tamales. There is absolutely nothing better than bonding with someone in your family from a different generation who has had different experiences over a hot stove and ingredients that they don't have to measure because cooking this one specific thing is second nature to them. A beautiful homage to respecting your elders, learning, and loving every moment that you get to spend with them.

**\*\*\*Performer should be of Mexican heritage but may be any gender.**

#### 101. *They Just Don't Get It*

In this story is 16-year-old African American high school student talks about the joy of having an older brother who was in the military. This young man can't wait until he graduates so that he can join as well. The disappointing reality is that both of these young men are joining the military because the area in which they live in, as black faces, has not been a safe place for them. He recounts his brother's situation as well as his own of verbal abuse and physical trauma executed on them by their peers. His brother tried to keep him safe by giving him rules to follow but he just wants to be a teenager, just like everyone else doing the things kids his age do. But when he joins the track team and trusts the wrong girl, he finds himself embarrassed and standing completely vulnerable in the middle of an intimidating circle of bullies. They laugh, they call him names, they hate him, and he doesn't know why. But what he won't do is allow them to break him. He stands strong, never cries, and will not beg them for anything, even his life. It is clear that no matter when in history we are, black bodies are misunderstood and mistreated for no reason other than the color of their skin. It may be difficult but it's a fact that sometimes they just don't get it. **\*Performer must be African American.**

## 102. Reporting for Service

When teenage Jack reflects on himself at seven years old it is a pure joy. He had a wonderful childhood with two parents that loved each other as well as him very deeply. But his father comes from a long line of people who committed themselves to the military and his father would decide to follow in those footsteps. The night of Jack 7th birthday his father tells him that the next day he is going to be leaving to begin his career in the military. Jack is ecstatic! He understands the legacy and his family, completely supports his father, and cannot wait for his father to return with souvenirs, pictures, and stories. What Jack didn't know or have an ability to understand is the amount of time and commitment that his father was going to give to the military. But Jack had a job his father gave him to do, make sure that his mother knew how special she was, how loved she was and to give her hugs every day so that she wouldn't cry. It isn't until Jack becomes a teenager that he is told that his father has been in war. Eventually he confronts his father about this fact and realizes that sometimes parents lie to keep their children emotionally safe. What Jack nor his mother could have prepared for is his father coming home with PTSD. Like so many other military vets the illness overcame him, and he found himself unable to separate his military experience from his present life. This is a story that has happened, is happening, and will continue to happen to our military vets. The hope is that anyone who loves this country enough to dedicate themselves to it, when they return home that they are able to get any assistance that they believe they need in order to continue being wonderful fathers and mothers and sons and daughters to their families.

## 103. *The Reasons I Came*

As Aysun speaks to us we begin to feel a connection of joy and understanding for someone who may not be a native of the United States but has definitely made America their home. Often, she is questioned as to what it was about her native land or her experience there that made her move? She finds that sometimes she knows people want

to ask but in America it is seen as rude to do so but it is not in her country. It is through this story that we gain a better understanding of the reasons she came to America and also a better realistic look at the things people leave behind. She tells us about her upbringing in Ankara, Turkey. With a mother, a father, and a little brother, her parents worked, and the children went to school. It sounds all very normal which is something that people tend to forget, that what's happening in America is often happening in other countries we just see it differently. She talks about watching 9/11 unfold on television and being able to disconnect from it but as Americans we couldn't. For her family it was when terrorism struck a little too close to home that her father decided they needed to leave for a place that would keep them safe. When they got to America, they thrived but definitely had moments of feeling like they didn't belong and weren't accepted as often immigrants do. But the core of this story is about how wonderful her life was before a violence situation forced her to leave. Her hope in sharing her experience is to teach us that when someone chooses to leave their home the most difficult thing, they leave behind is a large part of themselves, their family.

### 102. *In Silence*

The things we take for granted are often things that we never realize until that thing it's shown to someone who's never experienced it, and we get to see their reaction. For Sita, a young woman from Mumbai India she experienced so many things through the pictures and magazines. She began to wonder if it was all real, if in faraway places women had the rights and the abilities to do things that were not available to her and the women where she was growing up. Nonetheless she loved her family and appreciated everything that her parents had done for her but the more she read and the more she learned the more she thought that she could leave India and learn amazing things to bring back and make the country stronger for its women. Unfortunately, her father did not agree with this. In some places what the father says is the expectation of what will be. But Sita gathered her strength and courage to go against her father and attend college in London. Years later when she finished her degree and had read in her mind as many books as she could get her hands on, she stood on stage the day of graduation wanting nothing more than to see her family in the audience. And just as she walked across the stage like the most perfect of pictures, she sees the silhouette of someone who she believes is her mother. This is a beautiful story emphasizing the recognition that everyone is coming from a different place and those places have different moral standards and we should learn as much as we can from as many people who are different than us. In this we should also recognize that the power of individuality is very very strong. Because sometimes you'll find that you were biggest love, our biggest support in life is with you but only in silence.

### 103. **Someone Else's Shoes**

Following the conclusion of a very solid final round at a speech competition, a judge reflects on her experience. She talks about how she used to compete many years ago and now she spends her time on the weekends judging for her old coach because that's how much she loves the activity. Throughout the story we begin to realize that she is struggling to fill out her ballot, trying to figure out who should be ranked what. Her

struggle is wrapped up in the idea that the stories aren't what they used to be, they're not being told in a passionate way and things seem very unauthentic. The idea that there was a level of work that students were willing to do in order to be successful when she competed but now it seems like students forgot that the goal of an interpretation is to be able to maneuver yourself into someone else's shoes and tell an honest story, no matter how uncomfortable it may be. By the end of her realization, we see that one of the performances she just watched was an exact replica from beginning to end and everything in between of the performance that she did on the final stage her junior year. How can this be the way in which we tell authentic stories if the stories that we are telling we have stolen from someone else? A realization piece that addresses the idea that sometimes the things that we loved and dedicated our lives to as children evolve into something that we don't recognize when we become adults.

**\*Performer may be of any gender and has permission to change pronouns as needed within text.**

#### **104. Forever Normal**

Golibe is a young man who was born and spent the first years of his life in Nigeria. At the age of four his family relocated to the United States and that is where the challenges of his life began. As he shares his experience as an immigrants/ migrant, he realizes that in order to be accepted and feel normal in a different country than his own he must change who he is. This is a very difficult challenge for him. He loves his Nigerian heritage, and he wants to continue to allow it to be something that fuels him on a daily basis, however throughout his childhood different experiences made him feel like who he was not enough. From his first-grade class questioning the traditional clothing he decided to wear on show and tell day, to his freshman year of high school when his English teacher told him that if he wants friends that he probably should make his name something easier that everyone will be able to pronounce. The United States is often proudly presented as a melting pot where all cultures are welcome because all cultures exist here. Unfortunately, for immigrants/ migrants in the United States the feeling of isolation and standing out for all the wrong reasons is a very true reality. As he continues to tell the story we see that something as simple as acceptance may or may not be a part of the original American dream, but it is definitely present and something that immigrants/ migrants may want as a part of their everyday life. He begins to realize that in order to feel normal he may have to actively experience cultural abandonment. He may have to let go of one culture so that he can be accepted into another. But is that how it should be? Is that really what the American dream is? A true love story of one's heritage in hopes that we will gain a better understanding of the concept that we are all different but we are all special.

**\*Performer should be of African heritage.**

#### **105. Making Ends Meet**

If there is one thing that the pandemic of 2020 really showed us it is how underappreciated, underrepresented and how underpaid educators are in this country. This story addresses the challenge that many if not all educators have experienced in their careers, the idea that in the grand scheme of the amount of money that they are being paid

versus the number of hours that they put in unfortunately, they are not far from living under the poverty line. Sadly, in some states and some school districts teachers are being paid under the poverty level. Education is often seen as a job of passion. A job where the superheroes are in front of children making a difference daily because it is their dream. This educator is no different. She knew from a very young age that she wanted to be a math teacher. It had been her complete focus her entire life and she lived that dream. But it wasn't until after the tragic loss of her father, her graduation, and her landing her first job, that she really began to understand the financial challenges of teaching. As she sat looking over the amount that was deposited her account from her first month teaching versus the amount of bills she had to pay she realized that her dream job would not allow her to live without getting a secondary income. It was heartbreaking to realize that dedicating over 40 hours in the classroom was not enough. Her passion and love for her students was not enough. Her determination and energy to live life was not enough for her to actually live and enjoy life. She finds herself in the spiral of working multiple jobs to make ends meet, and finally wonders if moving in with her mom would make her happy, content, allow her to be a happy teacher. Unfortunately, this is the story of survival and realizing that sometimes the biggest dreamers must make difficult decisions because they are in a profession that doesn't recognize just how great and important they are.

### **106. Change for Change**

Poverty and our unhoused in America is one of our greatest disappointments, as one of the richest countries in the world. Often, we speak of people experiencing these realities as if this is a new or limited reality. We don't take into account the very real possibility that generational poverty is their circumstance. In this story, that is set on the streets of every city in America every day we meet a young woman in her early twenties speaking about her life as someone who has only known living on the street going back three generations. She talks about the assumptions that people have about people like her and the life that she is living. While she shares her childhood, day to day life, joys and struggles with us we are left with the feeling that all people are different. We all have our origin story that will never be identical to anyone else, and we all can learn from hearing someone else's. She leaves us with the reminder that "normal" is only "normal" to other people like us and other people who have lived the way we have lived. A person experiencing generational poverty doesn't miss having what they have never had or living a life they have never lived. In essence you can't miss what you've never had access to. A simple story of treating every man, woman, and child as if they are someone special. Accepting that we can all be different and still matter, whether our home is on a street or on a street corner, we absolutely matter.

### **107. A Lesson in Smiles**

Aashvi is a normal looking teenage girl from India now living in the United States. She is smart, has a good relationship with her parents and little brothers but she is tired of all of the moving that she has experienced in her school years. Her parents work for the government, and they have moved a lot in her lifetime. But Aashvi realizes that she is not

her mother. Making new friends is difficult for her and she spends most of her time feeling smart, but isolated. She isn't outgoing and she doesn't have the personality of the other women in her family, but this year she is determined to have a happy and positive experience at her new school. She has decided to take a deep breath and jump off the ledge by...making eye contact and smiling at everyone on the school bus stop. This may seem like a small step but for her, it is monumental. Who knows, this first step could turn into a conversation and then into a friendship. Friendship is something that Aashvi has not had a lot of in her life. Her parents moved too many times and too fast for Aashvi to ever build those relationships. Today is going to be different. We will be able to see the true introvert blossom. This is a coming-of-age story that shares with us the very real experiences of teenagers every day, they feel awkward, like they stand out for all the wrong reasons and sometimes all they want it to disappear. For Aashvi it may only take one day on the bus, one person sitting down and her finding the nerve to actually speak to them that changes the course of her year and potentially her life. Our hope is that within this story we see the simplicity of a smile, a conversation, and hopefully a lifelong friendship. **\*Heritage of performer may be changed to fit any performer with publisher permission.**

#### 108. *Silent Screams (in Just Telling Stories Collection V)*

Rachel comes from a long line of honored military vets spanning four generations. Her and her husband Seth proudly served their country and were born and raised in a coastal Texas town where big trucks and American flags filled the streets. Once they finished the military they decided to move to Washington DC and continue defending the country by working as a part of the Capital police force. They were so proud to be back on American soil and still be able to wear a uniform and defend the country that they love the most. But when they woke up on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, they never imagined that their lives would change so much in the midst of one eight-hour shift. This is a story from the perspective of a woman who went to work on that day expecting the monotony of every other day but came home forever changed. Recognizing that she did tours in Afghanistan, but it took an insurrection on American soil to put the weight of PTSD on her shoulders for life. From the perspective of someone who was there, someone who on a different day would have supported and believed in the rhetoric of the crowd that day, but she was there, just trying to do her job. She didn't get to turn the channel, and she was barely able to walk away. A reminder that a "survivor" of a catastrophic event still holds the memory of, the pain of, the guilt of and the sheer horror of that experience with them for the rest of their lives. Living in their heads as "Silent Screams" that they can't silence and no one else can hear. A different kind of survivor's story because Rachel was one of them, until she wasn't.

#### 109. *Distress (also published as DI)*

In December of 2019 the entire world was turned on its axis with the introduction of COVID-19. What once was something of a myth turned into one of the biggest global pandemics that anyone in this generation has ever lived through. Joy, an emergency room doctor shares her experience during the pandemic as a mother and a wife. It is in her story that we realize that everyone during the pandemic struggled

but that our medical care professionals saw it from a different reality, a stronger lens and experienced it in a more difficult way. A new concept of being a frontline worker, a warrior, and someone that no one on the outside wanted to be. What happens when her personal life, the things she holds closest to her make their way into the ER? Will she be able to continue to be Joy the doctor when the other parts of her are in complete chaos? It is through her eyes that we get a better understanding of how our medical professionals have the strength to walk in their respective places of work every day and put their lives in danger to save strangers.

### **110. *The Choice (also published as DI)***

Sullivan is a man who lives and breathes the blues. It is the one thing in life that gives him air. When the scene opens Sullivan is preparing for his day, cleaning off his suit and putting his hat on as the first subway trains arrive. He begins to sing the blues to the passerby's hoping for a bit of change. Why is someone so talented stuck singing the blues in the subways of New York? Sullivan shares with us the day that he met his wife while he sang in the music studio, she walked into the room and stole his heart but when she tells him she is pregnant around the same time that he gets the biggest offered the biggest contract of his life he has a choice to make. Does he quit singing the blues to be a father and husband or does he walk away from his family to live out his dreams? He decides to walk out on his wife and daughter who he was not present to ever see born. It doesn't take long for him to realize that without family he is nothing, by this time his wife is gone, and his baby girl is gone with her. Sitting on the subway he has nothing left but to sing the blues, to tell his story hoping that one day he will see them again. Sadly, Sullivan never finds them, but at his subway stop there is a girl, a girl that he feels he knows, is it his daughter? He may never know, but something about her gives him calm and makes him sing another note to live another day.

### **111. *180***

Lisa is a high school English teacher. She is the kind of teacher that every parent wants for their child. She takes her job very seriously and makes it a point to have meaningful relationships with each of the students that walk into her classroom. But in recent years there has been an overwhelming number of books being banned for educational use and that has affected Lisa's ability to do her job. She looks at banned books as a way to remove the existence of students from living on pages because she recognizes that those pages may be the only place that those students see themselves. As an avid reader she shares with her students her passion for reading and literacy that was passed down to her from her mother. In her life experiences we see her not only as an educator but also as a daughter, and sister. The hope is that we will gain a better understanding of the challenges that people outside of the educational system put on top of those who have to work within it. The pandemic of 2020 and following years left so many students more isolated than they had ever been. For some it made an already dark world completely blackout. At the end of every day the only thing Lisa wants is for the 180 students that

she teaches every day is for them to feel like they exist, they are important, they are heard, and above all else they absolutely deserve to live. A story about the fight that so many educators have fought and are having right now because it is difficult to understand why educators cannot just do for one, they must do for all.

### 112. *Listening to Notes*

Religion is very important to millions of people all over the world. Sometimes people encounter challenges within their religion when it comes to outside forces that ask them to potentially believe in something that they may not support. As is this story where a Black mother raising her son in the South as he begins to experience signs of schizophrenia. It reminds her of her aunt who suffered from hearing voices many years earlier. She attempts to follow what she had been taught in the church; she immediately went to her parents for guidance who told her that with the right amount of prayer they would be able to save him from anything. Unfortunately, as her son began to become more and more disconnected, even asking her at one point if she would take him to the doctor. But when presented with this option she is told by her parents that there is nothing the doctor can do that the church can't do. This is a heartbreaking story of a reality that happens far too often of the internal fight that people experience between religion and believing that an outside force such as a doctor can assist with things like mental illnesses. In this specific story Bobby, her son, leaves her notes to remind her how much he loves her and how he doesn't want her to worry about him. But as we know the job of a parent is to worry from the day that they are born until the day they die. A heartbreaking story where a mother has to lose her son, to on the other side realize that there may have been something that she could have done for him before he died.

### 113. *Cheer Life (also published as DI)*

Rebecca is much like any other teenager girl. She is beautiful, full of energy and she wants to be a cheerleader when she grows up. Having been on cheer for most of her life making the varsity team was a dream come true, but it is what she must do to maintain that dream that starts to break Rebecca's spirit. The girls must weigh in every week and must maintain a certain weight to cheer. If they are overweight the things, they are willing to do to their bodies to lose the weight within the twenty-four hours given by their coach is unspeakable. When Rebecca finds herself starved, high on meth and running in the middle of the night the only thing she wants is her mother. She calls for her, cries for her and by the time her mother finds her in the middle of the street Rebecca's dreams of cheering are over along with her life. It is not until the near end that we realize that it is the spirit of Rebecca that is telling us this tragic story. In the end she visits her own funeral, and she always comes to see her mother who was the strongest woman that she knew and now she has to find the strength to move forward without her little girl.

### 114. **Timeout**

Drew is not the typical teenager. As he prepares for his high school graduation, he is forced to remember that the person who supported him the most will not be in attendance that day, his mother. She encouraged him to get as much education as he possibly could so that every door he wanted to be able to open would be a door that is available for him. But unfortunately, no one investigated the teenager who grew up constantly being punished in timeout. Sometimes it was what he said that got him in trouble and other times it was his actions, nevertheless he was always in some type of trouble. When he shares the stories of his childhood, we begin to understand that being in timeout for him was an opportunity for him to get all of the attention that he didn't get at home. Trying his best to not listen to his mother and father fought constantly his mother created a safe haven that she too called timeout, it required him to hide in a closet with his Walkman on playing loud music in hopes that she could shield him from what was on the other side of the door. It is not until his fifth-grade year when he is assigned the task of speaking to his future self that he is able to put words on paper to make sure that when he reads it many years later, he will remember how much his mother loved him and how treacherous his childhood was. A different coming of age story that reminds us how difficult it is to be a child that turns into a teenager who has known more hidden trauma than unconditional love.

### **115. Safe and Sound**

A harrowing story of a teenage boy who finds himself one minute walking to the bus stop, listening to music, and practicing his basketball moves and in the next he is passed out in the back of a van. This is the beginning of what will be over two years of his life taken away from him and his family. He shares how difficult it was to be away from them, the difficulties of being taken and what it did to focus on getting out and getting home rather than his present situation. This story addresses stories of trafficked children and brings to light a difficult situation that plagues America and other countries all over the world. It is his determination that turns him into a fighter that puts himself on the frontline to not only free himself but also other boys that are in captivity with him. He finally makes it home and finds himself debating between walking back into a home that he is not sure if he knows how to live in or to do what got him his freedom and run. This emotional story reminds us how quickly our lives can change and what it takes to be in a tragic situation and still hold out hope to return home. Home, a place where he feels safe, where he can pick up his life where he dropped off and where his parents welcome him with open and caring arms.

### **116. Swing**

Some of the most important moments that we have in our lives are actually moments that we share with other people. In this story we follow a woman who is about to start the next chapter of her life as a mother and wants to share it with her best friend who sadly she has not spoken to in over 20 years. She starts by telling us how they met, how they became best friends, how their friendship blossomed and

ended, and gets us to the present place she is in her life. It is difficult at times to accept the wrong that we have done to other people but at some point, we realize, or at least some of us realize that apologizing and moving forward is much better than living the rest of your life without that person. A story that started when two little girls five-year-old girls after a day of rain in Chicago unexpectedly meet sitting next to each other at the neighborhood park on the swings. A sweet story about friendship and how important it is to all of us who have ever experienced it. We all hope for the happiest of endings...will she get hers?

### **117. First Job**

Everyone remembers their sweet 16 birthday, for this teenager it is absolutely unforgettable. Her mother celebrated her special day by giving her the keys to her very own car. It wasn't brand new but it was brand new to her and she was very thankful for it. But unfortunately, her mother followed it up with the most ridiculous ask of any teenager which was that she must get a job in order to maintain the keys to her car. The audacity! The nerve! What kind of mother is this? In this funny coming of age story this teenager learns the importance of work and how difficult it is to find your first job with no skills. She also realizes that her mother on this specific day was teaching her a very valuable lesson. Sometimes we don't realize that we are being prepared for the next chapter of our lives until we actually start living it.

### **118. Simple Conversation**

It is not a secret that right now in America and around the world our children are spending more and more time on their phones, tables and on computers. Unfortunately, this phenomena is also showing to have an effect on their ability to verbally communicate away from text messages. This is a story of a teenager who isn't the typical. They have a respect for technology but they recognize that the more time we spend on our devices the more disconnected we become from being able to do simple tasks like have a conversation. They take us on a ride of what it's like in the classroom when their classmates struggle to do assignments that require them to put their phones down and how funny they think that it. The turmoil within his family because their parents are concerned that their younger sibling might be addicted. They remind us of all of the things that they see on a day to day basis that should be reminders of how far we've gotten away from what was normal and what is now a rarity. A here and now kind of journey where the performer asks the audience a simple question, are we able to have a simple conversation anymore, or has technology secretly come in and stolen that ability from us? And if it's been stolen, will we ever realize that it is a skill that we need to get back.

### **119. Eye of Perfection (also published as DI)**

Jullian is not the typical teenager. He is a straight A student, a part of as many activities as he possibly can be, he is a leader within his school, and he has a positive future ahead of him. Like all teenagers he also has his challenges, secrets, and things that he hides from his friends but especially from his family every day. The older he gets the more he begins to accept who he is as a person and during all of the things that make him look “great on paper” as his father tells him, the one thing about him that’s not there is that he is gay. In his mind it’s part of him, something else that makes him stand out, but he has not been able to express this in his life. The time comes that he decides to come out to his parents and his life immediately changes. His parents make a public spectacle of his situation telling anyone one who will listen of this tragedy that they are experiencing. Unfortunately, small town USA is not forgiving, accepting, tolerant, or open-minded to people who aren’t like them. Within a year Jullian went from “perfect” to standing on the edge of life and death. He is bullied at school, beaten severely and with no support from his parents he has no one. After he is released from the hospital, he comes home to find his parents having movie night as if nothing has happened. His mind breaks and he does the only thing his mind will allow him to do, take a knife and kill them. In the end he sits, with his parents, eating popcorn and finally feeling alive again. Resting the remainder of his life in a nice room with four white walls, again perfect and finally free.

#### **120. If Only I Had Known (also published as DI)**

On the morning of September 6, 2015, Stacy gets up and proceeds like any other morning. But unfortunately, as her day progresses, she finds out that there has been a shooting at her son’s middle school. As she watches the television frantic and frozen, she realizes that she must get to her son’s school as soon as possible. Upon arrival she stands behind the barricades with all the rest of the parents holding pictures of their children in hand, waiting to hear a word from the authorities. As time passes the all-clear signal is given and children begin to exit the school. Stacy watches as parents around her are reunited with her children. She asked one of the students if they know her son and the mother replies “He’s shooter.” Surrounded by a mob of angry parents without the ability to defend herself Stacy is brutally attacked. The one thing that she holds onto is the only thing that she has, a school picture of her son Andrew. She finally realizes what it was that took her son to do what he did, but by this time it is too late, for both. This performance is a mature and very real look into the horror associated with being a parent amid a crisis and the realization that humanity is not always present and not always on our side.

#### **121. And the Universe Spoke (also published as DI)**

Nalia is a young Latinx woman who dotes on her new baby boy Marco. But we soon find out that her story of pregnancy is very different. She speaks about how large and close her family is living on the border in south Texas on the border. She has four older brothers who have made it very clear that they we’ll keep her safe just as her parents have. She spent most of her life being a tomboy and playing with them, having the most fun ever until she came into her own as a young woman. Her parents didn't have the money to send her to college but when she found out she had gotten a scholarship she

decided she would work multiple jobs to save up money so that she could go away for school. It was at the end of one of her shifts from work that her life changed forever forcing her to keep the secret of her pregnancy from her parents and her brothers. If we are lucky the best relationships that we have begin within the four walls of the home that we are raised in. But with that also comes the fear of potentially disgracing them or disappointing them sometimes with life changing situations that were stolen from us. Nalia navigates such a theft. Something very important and very special was stolen from her that she can never get back but through this story we understand that with love and support there are many things that can be overcome. It is at a family intervention that she decides that being honest with her family and gaining their support is what she needs to be the best mother she can be and truly cope with the situation that changed her life forever. **\*Performer needs to be Latinx and does speak Spanish within the performance.**

### **122. *Betterment***

One of the most important goals a parent has for their child is that they are better, smarter, more successful and all of those wonderful things than they were. This is a story about the relationship between a daughter and how much she loved and respected her mother and father for everything that they were willing to sacrifice so that she would have all the opportunities that they knew she deserved. Starting with her memories of being carried on her mother's back from Mexico to America and the process of becoming citizens she made it a point to make sure that her mother knew how much she loved and respected her. As she grew up in America, she experienced racism within the educational system as well as her mother making sure that she knows that unlike her she will never be anyone's maid. Angelica became everything that her mother wanted her to be, an independent woman who found her love for life when she decided to write the stories of her people because she felt like there weren't enough people representing them in Hollywood. A very simple and loving look at how far people are willing to go to ensure that their children have opportunities, the ability to make their own choices, and the ability to live free and bring to life all of the things that make their culture amazing.

### **123. *Out for a Swim***

Liz is a teenage girl recounting one of the best relationships she ever had in her life, that is between her and woman's best friend, her dog Rex. She tells us about how their relationship started, that originally, she didn't want a dog and she definitely didn't want him. But eventually over time they became the best of friends. But it was when she decided to learn how to swim that Rex became her biggest supporter. He sat at the pool watching her during her lessons and began to go with her to the beach. It was on a faithful day at the beach that Liz's life was changed forever. Doing what teenagers do Liz was having a wonderful time playing catch on the beach with her dog when the group decides to get in the water. Rex faithfully sits on the beach watching until someone throws his ball into the water and in he comes. At first Liz is amazed that her dog knew how to swim because she never taught him. He swims and gets his ball, brings it to Liz, and just like the game they had played so many times before she throws the ball and off

he goes. After a few moments of talking with her friends she realizes that Rex has not returned. She searches for him frantically in the water and on the beach and he is nowhere to be found. When she finally sees him farther away from the beach than anyone else, in deeper water than she had ever swam, she goes out to get him. This is a story about a girl and her dog and what each of them were willing to do to save the life of the other. A joyful story that deals with the reality of life and the idea that sometimes something as simple as a trip to the beach can turn tragic in an instant. But it also tells us that even in the midst of tragedy there will always be sunrise over the water, always be a picture-perfect ending to represent a new beginning.

#### **124. Fishing with Friends**

Family activities are always things that tend to bring us closer to the ones that we already love. In this story we hear of a little brother talk about his experiences fishing with his father and his older brother as if they were the greatest memories that he ever had in his life. Starting from the age of three all the way through his teenage years he reminisces about the lessons that he learned while he was on his great grandfather's boat sitting next to his brother and father on the lake fishing. It is in these moments, these private sacred moments that so many family stories are shared and bonds are crafted. It is on one of these trips that his older brother Jason tells him that after high school he's decided to join the military. And while he is scared for his brother, he is also very proud and supportive, because that is the type of family they are. He cries as Jason leaves for boot camp and counts down the days until his big brother comes home. Unfortunately, when Jason returns, he is different, changed, affected by the experience of going through training that could potentially send him to a war zone where he may have to defend his country by taking someone's life. Many attribute PTSD only to soldiers who have experienced war, but for some the training to get to that war is traumatizing enough. The family comes together as best they can to support Jason through the next chapter of his life. But one thing is clear, when he takes his big brother back out on the boat to experience the calm of the water, the beauty of the sunrise, and all of the joys that they had shared their entire life, he knows that his big brother is going to be okay.

#### **125. Make 'em Laugh**

Kristen is like a lot of teenagers; she doesn't necessarily know what she wants to do with the rest of her life but she does know that she at least has a purpose. In her mind her purpose is to make people laugh. This is what brings her joy, watching the joy of others. While she's in high school she starts working at a hospital in the unit that deals with sick children. What started out as a community service assignment in her theater class turned into her career, she works as a comic of sorts she- is a clown. She puts on her full costume and her red nose and she performs for sick children in the hospital. What started out as something fun for her to do turned into quite an enterprise when other hospitals around the country and eventually the world wanted to copy exactly what she was doing to bring joy to the sick children in their hospitals. But for Kristen the real love came in a child with leukemia named Shane. Kristen had been connected to Shane the first time he beat his cancer and was there for him when it came back a second time. It is this

relationship, this bond that made her feel like she had a little brother in him and he had a big sister in her. It was this relationship that took her from being just someone who performed for children into someone who children depended on. As Shane prepares for one of the most challenging procedures of his young life, the only person he wants next to him is Kristen. His ask is simple, that before he goes into surgery, he truly just wants her to make him laugh. Kristen is able to support him and his parents realizing that the best way to make Shane laugh is for him to pass that laughter on to others. This is a story about the joy that one person gets by making others happy. The only thing that some people want to do in life is to make em laugh.

#### **126. Floating on Katrina (Also published as DI)**

In preparation for the arrival of Hurricane Katrina a teacher shows his dedication to his students by doing whatever is necessary to save them. Even if this takes him to a place that is unfamiliar to him, never turning his back on his students is the most important thing. As he fights for his life and the life of one of his students we see inside the true essence of his man and his ability to never leave a student behind.

#### **127. For Isabella (Also published as DI)**

Josefina is a Mexican woman in her late twenties who is stuck in the grief of losing her sister V. The scene opens with her preparing for the typical Sunday dinner, but this Sunday is different. Her niece Isabella is visiting, and she is making her favorite traditional Mexican dishes. One in particular connects Isabella to her late mother. Josefina tells the story of what it was like to grow up with a little sister that was only twelve months behind her. Their relationship almost felt like they were twins. But when V became a teenager, their lives went in different directions. She began to change, and unfortunately as some relationships would have it theirs began to fall apart. But it is when V returns home and shares with the family that she is pregnant that she begins to get her life back on track. Unfortunately, shortly after the birth of her daughter Isabella, V goes missing, never to be seen alive again. This is a story that deals heavily with the concept of femicide in Mexico. Josefina will not rest until she finds her sister, but is she truly ready for the consequences of what that reality will look like in the moment and moving forward? The loving story of the endless time that a sister is willing to commit in order to make sure that her sister in some way shape or form returns home. A heartbreaking situation that makes you wonder how important is the presence of women in the world today? Or are they being ignored when they disappear from existence?

**\*Character must be Latinx and does speak Spanish throughout.**

#### **128. Pulse (also published as DI)**

Shelby is a young woman who has come to terms with the fact that she is a proud and out lesbian. It is in the midst of a random encounter that she ends up finding the love of her life Jessi. Unfortunately, Jessi does not have the same relationship with her family as Shelby does. Jessi's family is deeply religious, and they decide that they will tell

everyone that they are just best friends so that they won't have to deal with the push back. But through many events or homophobic comments Shelby can't pretend like it doesn't bother her and she gives Jessi an ultimatum either she tells her family about their relationship or they will have to break up. It is on this night that these two women go on the journey of their lives. After a tumultuous response from Jessi's family, they jump in their car and drive hundreds of miles to Florida to watch the sunrise on the beach and realize how special they are to one another. They follow that with a night of dancing and celebrating Shelby's birthday at a random club called Pulse. As they enjoy their first slow dance wrapped up in the freedom that they have just found the bullets begin to fly. Shelby does everything she can to keep Jessi safe but in the end a bullet finds its way in between them. This is a story of love, recovery and tolerance that reminds us that when you find that person that truly makes you feel like you have everything you need in the world wrapped up in them, that nothing and no one will be able to stop your love. A dedication to those who lost their lives, lost loved ones, or lived through the pulse nightclub tragedy in Florida. It is through love that we hope to move forward to a better day.

### **129. *Soli (also published as DI)***

Some would agree that the love that a mother has for her children is something that is universal no matter where on this earth that woman resides. This statement could not be truer for Evalynn Okolie a Mid-Nigerian woman in her mid-sixties. She is a single mother after she loses her husband to diabetes. She has two sons that she loves with everything that she has and like a mother bear her goal is to keep them safe. In Nigeria the belief is that if you have white skin, you are worth more than gold. When Evalynn's son Soli was born and came out with no pigmentation his father shunned him, wanted to sell him, didn't want any of the neighbors to know he existed and tried to get rid of him, but she saw him as a gift from God and would have none of it. She went out of her way to keep him hidden for worries that someone would kidnap him and sell him. Home schooled him, for years not allowing him to go outside at all, lied to him about why saying that his white skin would burn in the sun. But like all maturing children Soli gets curious, he ventures outside to find that she was wrong, his skin didn't burn and slowly Evalynn began to allow him to go outside with his big brother, do normal things, she let her guard down. But when Soli goes missing Evalynn's heart is broken. She searches for him and spends the rest of her life blaming herself. How do you fix the pain that a mother feels when she feels that she has failed at her one job... to be the protector. **\*The actress in this performance must be of African descent.**

### **130. *Mittens***

Cat is not your typical teenager; she is a million times better. What makes her so special is that she has a little brother Jake, and he is different from other boys his age. Super smart, was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) at the age of 8, and has a need to wear mittens 24/7 due to his extreme fear of germs, cleanliness, and illness. Cat believes it to be her job if not her mission in life to keep her brother safe from people who don't understand him and will not take the time or give him an opportunity to show

them how amazing he is. But her senior year in high school becomes more of a challenge. The feeling of not being able to have a day or a moment where she can be the most important person in her own life becomes her struggle. It is the day of her first dance and the only thing she wants is to focus on what she needs to do to get prepared for this date. Unfortunately, on this particular day Jake has a meltdown which has landed him underneath the desk in her room. After hours of trying to get him to leave she escorts him out of her room, closes the door, and locks it. Heartbroken, she can't get over how bad she feels for kicking Jake out of her room but is determined to get dressed for the dance. In an interesting turn of events, on the other side of the closed-door Jake shares with her exactly how he feels about his big sister, who she has always loved him for who he is. This is not a coming-of-age story as much as it is the story of a young woman who has already blossomed into a beautiful human being. There is nothing better than learning one of life's most precious lessons from someone who doesn't even realize that they have become your teacher. Patience, that is what we should all walk away with after one day in the life of Jake.

### 131. *Tortillas and Love*

As Alejandra sits in the doorway of her dimly lit home in Mexico she focuses on two things, the conversation that her older family members are having in the tortilla that she is eating with great care and consideration. She is listening to them contemplate what will be the next step of her life, being the person designated to make the trip to America. For her this was a gift. It was something that she feared but recognized that if her family believed in her enough to make her the chosen 1 then with pride, she would accept the challenge. As she prepared for her trip she shares how she grew up in Mexico and the relationship, the very close relationship she has with her family. What we soon realize is that when people come to America seeking citizenship or asylum, that mini are not coming with negative intentions but rather with the hopes of a better life. Alejandra and her family want nothing more than to be able to come to America and work and live and thrive. This is a coming of age story that allows a young woman to step into the shoes that would not normally be hers so that she can make life better for herself and all of the people that she loves who are depending on her period it is definitely a heavyweight for her to carry but in her backpack she finds the space to hold all of it including her love and her desperation for a better life as she heads towards America.

### 132. *Quinceañera* (also published as *DI*)

Nina is a fifteen-year-old Hispanic girl who is nine days away from her *quinceañera*. She talks to her friend about how excited she is about the event and her first dance with her father. But everything is gest turned upside down when she gets word that her father has been arrested by ICE agents and is in the process of being deported. She rushes home to her mother and siblings. This situation makes no sense, he is a good man who has only done good things since his arrival into America. Was he there illegally? Yes, but he had made himself and his family positive members of society and his reason for bringing them there was a noble one, to get his two eldest children the health care they needed to fight a difficult disease. Nina experiences an emotional roller coaster as her mother

attempts to comfort her and they all try to understand how they will be able to move forward, but Nina announces her *quinceañera* is off if he cannot be there for their first dance. This is a truly beautiful coming of age story about the strong connection a young girl has with her father. **\*Character will speak Spanish throughout the performance.**

### 133. *The Hanging Tree* (also published as *DI*)

Ester is an older African American woman who is sitting by a tall tree. She looks at the tree reflecting on life. She touches the tree as if the life of someone she loved was growing within its roots, and this is true. She begins to tell her story of the reason that this tree is so important. It is the last “Hanging Tree” in the Texas city of Mansfield. It is the tree that many years ago her son Toby was hung from one of the branches. In a time in American history when African American people were fighting for their freedom to live as any free men and women, many people of all ages took to the streets to march in protest. Against Ester’s better judgment Toby participates in a march and ends up hanging from a tree that is now standing in the middle of the downtown square, on display as a symbol of the past for many in the city. But for Ester it is a place where she can connect with her son who was taken from her long before his time. Ester’s reality of the situation is a sobering vision of a mother’s grief and how it is possible to experience the great loss of your life and still move forward.

### 134. *Rest Well, Sweet Lily*

One of the biggest responsibilities that some of us are granted in life is that of being responsible for your younger siblings. Sometimes that responsibility comes in the way of changing diapers and sometimes it comes in the way of doing everything in your power to save their life. This is a story that deals with a woman who has a little sister Lily that is a firecracker to say the least. And for her thesis project her sophomore year of college she decides she is going to do what she has always loved to do, focus on those who are experiencing being unhoused and less financially fruitful. She does this by going to a small country that she has never been to before and living amongst the locals. Lily has dreams of becoming a social worker that specifically works in educating unhoused people in an effort for them to gain the education that a lot of people take for granted. It is after she misses a check in with her family that her sister begins to worry. It doesn't take long for the family to realize that Lily, the dreamer, the most passionate person in their family, is not only missing but missing in another country. They do everything in their power to bring her back home but quickly realize that there is not much they can do when they are outside of a justice system that they recognize like that of America. Unfortunately, Lily never returns home and her dreams die with her passion. Her sister then makes it her mission to ensure that any other dreamer or citizen of this country has the ability to travel to another country and feel some level of security. In the end, many years have passed since Lily was taken but her memory will always live in the creation of Lily’s Law.

### 135. *Lyrics for Friendship*

Some would say there is no greater friendship than that of your best friend or your mother. But in this story the best friend is words on paper that evolve to lyrics in a song. As the storyteller says there is something very special and the strength that lives within music. In its origins it is taught that music is simply poetry that is then brought to life with sound, a beat or rhythm that brings it all together. We are taken through the journey of a teenage girl whose best friend is in the midst of a difficult time, a breakup. But for this particular young girl she knows that her form of therapy with her friend is that of music. So, they decide that rather than going to school they're going to go to the park and they're going to sit and listen to music and talk to each other or not. Figuring out what it is that your best friend needs in order to move forward is a challenge but sometimes with the assistance of music it makes things a little bit better, makes the heartbreak a little bit easier, and also allows them something that they have access to they could potentially make their day better. It's a quite simple concept that a lot of people have forgotten that one of the first forms of writing was poetry and we decided to evolve it into music but in its origins, it was words on paper. This is a story that focuses on not the importance of friendship but rather the importance of realizing that sometimes what we need is silence no speaking but rather to put a focus on the ability to make a connection through music to heal.

### 136. *Divorced From the Beat*

Divorce can be difficult for anyone. It can be difficult for the parents trying to maneuver the changes to their lives and it can also be difficult for their children who are trying to understand exactly how they got to where they are. In this particular story an only child tries to maneuver the logistics of her parents divorcing. Trying to understand what is it that got them to this position. The parents know it is possible to love each other and to love their child but also accept that the love in the marriage is gone. She finds love and escape in music. It is what she has wanted to engulf her life in since she was a very young child and when the divorce is announced she spends all of her time at school and when she does come home her and her parents are two ships passing in the night. For her, she hopes that she can hurt them enough to make them realize the decisions they are making is wrong for everyone. What she eventually realizes is that she does have two of the best parents in the business. On the day that her father moves out she decides the best way to inflict pain is to not say goodbye. When she wakes up the next morning and finds an envelope has been slid under her door, having gained clarity she is heartbroken and sits with her mother. She opens the envelope which is a gift for the three of them to share and she now understands how they can be apart but still a family. Sometimes, there will be things that happen in our young or old lives that don't in the moment make sense. The more we live the more we are able to accept that we only have so much control over certain events. However, what we can control is the love we have, who we give that love to, and the way in which we continue to celebrate our relationships.

### 137. *Rest Well, Sweet Lily*

Told from the perspective of the older sister when she realizes that her senior year of high school will also be the year that her parents decide to have another baby. They so poetically named her Lily. Lily was smarter than anyone they had ever experienced and she had a heart of gold. She believed in the innocence of others and wanted to dedicate her life to those less fortunate, unhoused, and financially struggling by becoming a social worker. She wanted to work to offer education services to everyone because she believed if everyone had what she had everyone's future possibilities would be endless. She truly wanted everyone to win. Her sister and her parents always feared that this kind of a big heart would be in some way taken advantage of or taken for granted, but Lily, would have none of it. Lily truly believed in people. For a college thesis paper Lily decided to go to another country and live amongst the people for the sake of dedicating her time to a community that she had no connection with. It is on this trip that her big sister realizes one day no one has heard from her. The family goes into quick action trying their best to do everything they can do in America to help find her in another country. And while her sister is a lawyer, she realizes that the disparity between American laws and what can be done versus other countries is massive. After Lily is found no longer with them her sister decides the best way to honor Lily is by doing something that could positively affect the world that she lived in forever. As a lawyer she went through all of the necessary steps and did whatever it took to pass Lily's Law which creates a direct pipeline between America and other countries to collaborate in the midst of a crime. What the sister realizes is that the dedication and love her sister had for her beliefs is exactly what she had to have in order to make this law come true, finally allowing Lily to rest.

### 138. *Cooking For My Culture*

Javier is an ideal son. He loves his family and respects the fact that his parents came to America from Mexico in hopes of making a better life for him. Javier always recognized a big part of who he was, was created before he was born, and that part is with his family in Mexico. After doing a family tree he realized that other than his parents and himself his entire family on both sides resided in Mexico and he truly wanted to have a better understanding of not only where he came from but of the generations that came before him. His closest connection to his ancestors was his grandmother, here's abuela. She would come to visit for months at a time and the one way they connected most was in him watching her cook in the kitchen. She taught him about seasonings, she taught him about measurements, and she taught him the best way to know if it tastes good is to taste. After she passes away a box sent to him from Mexico arrives and on small to big pieces of paper are hundreds of thousands of recipes handwritten from his abuela. He can hear her voice in his head, he can see memories of her cooking in the kitchen. His mission is clear, recreate her most difficult and intricate recipe. Once dinner is served, he allows his parents to have the first taste and following their response he tastes as well. There is something quite beautiful in being able to continue someone's legacy through food and while Javier once believed his culture lived in a country or lived within the hearts of people he now realizes that his culture also lives in the food they eat and the love by which it is prepared.

### 139. *The Princess and Her King*

Princesa is a Mexican girl living her best teenage life. She is the baby, the only girl and no one loves her more than her daddy. She lives her life to make her parents proud in all the ways she can and one thing that would break her father's heart is if she didn't find a Mexican man to date. In a crazy turn of events she waits until her senior year to try and date someone and it just so happens, the date goes well. She lies to him about where she lives because he can't come to her house. He shows up to a neighbor's house early nearly messing up her lie and Princesa is mortified, maybe lying isn't a good thing. But the date was fun, it was the best time she had ever had and so it begins. Princesa starts dating someone that will break her father's heart because he's not Mexican. But eventually, Princesa decides it is time. Her and her boyfriend who is White decide to tell their parents about the other. Peter's mother thinks a lot like Princesa's father but on this day... love wins. The teenagers decide that prom is the best time to bring the two families together and Princesa is excited for the coming together of their parents and brothers to see them off. This is a fun story that reminds us that people are people and the best stories are when love, no matter what it looks like, wins!

### 140. *Perspectives*

When we lose someone we love to suicide nothing makes sense. We beat ourselves up reliving every moment to see if we missed something or if there were any signs we just didn't read. In this collection of *perspectives* we hear from a small group of people who had nothing but love for a teenage girl simply named "K" who decided that suicide was the only way she could find her freedom. In an attempt to talk it out we hear the perspectives of people who loved her, supported her and in the midst of their grieving process can still smile when speaking of her because that is how impactful her presence was. From the voice of the: Mom, Best Friend, Brother, Theatre Teacher and finally hearing from K we learn what made this wonderful girl so special and try to make the pieces fit make sense soon realizing that it will never make sense. But in the end they all come to a level of closure not for the relationship they had with her but for this brief moment. \*This piece may be edited to be performed by any gender. Also note that these are five different perspectives written in short stories from each kind of form.

### 141. *Snapshots*

Shopping for an anniversary gift can be hard for anyone. But on this day a young woman decides she wants to attempt to gift her parents with the one thing they have expressed missing, their wedding cake. In a fun- loving story she talks about the importance of this cake and how determined she is to assist her parents in reliving their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary the way they did their first. Through the telling of the story and the presence of her mom and dad we see not only how special this moment is for all of the but how much they all love each other. After a full night of failed bakes, taste testing with dad and lots of batter being licked off of the big wooden spoon she thinks she's done it. In the end, when her mom tastes the cake, it is as wonderful as her memory served it up. However, in the midst of her cake success she shares that truly the most important thing that came out of their

marriage was... their wonderful daughter. A reminder that every moment we are presently living in will soon be replaced with the next creating beautiful unforgettable snapshots for us to hold close forever.

#### 142. *Grandmas Apples, Rain, Rainbows*

Seeing the world through a different set of eyes can be one of the most beautiful connective tissues that we can experience. For this teenage girl at tissue is in the hands of her grandmother. She's a simple woman who opened her granddaughter's eyes to be able to see the things we take for granted and make them flow like a true work of art. As she reflects on the time she spent with her grandmother reading, growing apples and appreciating the rain we see love manifested in a completely new way. A beautiful tale of how generations may make us different but love is love no matter the age difference and the love that is cultivated between these two people is a heartwarming testament to how special it can be to spend time with someone just enjoying their presence. A coming-of-age story that shows us how a girl and her grandmother grew from six years old through her high school years and the love never wavered. It also reminds us the things the importance of holding on to the things we are taught, you just never know when you'll look into the sky and see the coming of rain and smile because like in this story it takes you back to baked apples and reminds you that soon you will see one of the greatest gifts that no one ever gets to touch... the rainbow always left behind from its friend Rain.

\*This story may be performed by any gender, publisher permission is given.

#### 143. *Ring the Bell*

When taking the time out to focus on memories what tends to come to our minds first are the things that have had a negative emotional or physical effect on our lives. For this young woman she shares a lot of the memories that she had with her mother and father. But after the death of her mother her focus leans on the shoulders of her father. They spent time doing everything together believing that they would always have each other until her father gets a diagnosis that will not only forever change him, but it will also affect their relationship for the rest of their lives. As she becomes his caregiver and he works hard to recover we see two very beautiful souls come together to put forth the best fight possible. In the end like any Cancer survivor will tell you the best day, the best experience, the best moment of their Cancer voyage is the day they are able to ring the bell. Ringing the bell signifies that they are announcing they're Cancer free. Within this story we see the beginning, middle, and end of one of the most difficult fights ever. Appreciate every moment you have with the people you love, because tomorrow they may get their life changing diagnosis, and that diagnosis will change the relationship you have with them and will most definitely change their lives. Be prepared, to walk hand in hand with them as they fight to ring their bell.