

Paint

By Averie Basch

Once on a piece of white paper from the printer
A little girl created flowers
using finger paint
Because that was what she loved
And that's how she saw the world,
Full of flowers and bees and butterflies and color.
Her mother put it in a frame in the hall
and told her to paint some more,
And she did because she loved to paint,
And she had no brother or sister to play with,
So it was just her and her paints.
When she was five she went to school,
And she played princesses with her friends at recess.
When she got home she would sprint to the kitchen
For a fresh-baked cookie that her mother always had ready.
Each night, her daddy would tickle her belly,
Her mother kissed her cheek,
And with their loving goodnights
She would have sweet dreams.

Once on a piece of parchment paper from her art kit
A teenage girl shaped a portrait
Using pencils and charcoal
Because that was what she loved,
And that's how she saw the world,
Full of people in grey and tan, with no emotion or color.
She kept it in her notebook along with her mother's final note,
Saying, "I can't do this anymore,"
And so she sketched her mother's face because it helped,
But she had no brother or sister to talk with,
So it was just her and her pencils.
When she was sixteen she was struggling in school,
And she was called 'Slut' by her friends at lunch.
When she got home she would walk past the kitchen
Because she was too fat and needed to stop eating.
Each night her daddy would tickle her thighs,
Treating her like her mother,

So with her father's body against hers,
She would have troubled dreams.

Once on a cheap canvas from Amazon
A young woman shaded shadows
Using oil paint
Because that was what she loved,
And that was how she saw the world,
Full of shadows and darkness.
She kept it in the corner of her tiny apartment,
And told herself to paint some more,
And she did because that was the only thing to keep her going,
To ease her guilt for aborting her brothers or sisters,
So it was just her and her paints.
When she was nineteen she couldn't afford college.
She didn't have any friends, and that was okay because she preferred being alone.
When she got home to her apartment she would walk past the kitchen
And grab a knife to ease her pain.
She tried to run from her daddy
But no distance would suffice.
She still felt his body against hers,
and she would still have nightmares.

One night on her pink and red wrists
she cut red lines
Using a silver blade and her blood.
Because that was what she did now,
And that was how she saw the world,
Full of pain and harm and misery.
She kept herself in the corner of her bathroom
And let herself paint some more,
And she did that while reading her mother's note,
And she felt sad for never having brothers or sisters,
because now it was just her and her pain.
When she was nineteen-and-a-half she got a bottle of pills
And without any friends, all alone,
She walked past her kitchen,
And lay on her bed.
She'd never have to hide from her daddy
Because this distance would suffice.
With a loving goodnight, she put herself to sleep,

And that ended her nightmare forever.