

# EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING TO SAY

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Second Place—Essay Competition

## Immediate Family

With her small hands on her wide hips, and a big frown on her face, my mom stares at me. She stares at me with those eyes that say *What in the hell are you doing?* and I stare right back with wide eyes saying *I wish I knew*. At this point I've set the old hair clippers that I found down on the bathroom counter, and I fully turn to my mom to see her reaction.

"You know your head's too big for a low cut, right?" She immediately laughs at me after this, to which I roll my eyes. Almost on cue, my sister walks out of her room, takes one look at me, and then joins my mom in her cackling. I stand still in front of the bathroom mirror, wondering how I became a laughing-stock in all but two seconds.

"Girl who you tryna be? A black Britney Spears?" my sister butts in, doubled over with tears threatening to spill. My mother slaps her on the back with approval of her joke, and continues to giggle. I can't do anything but sit there and take it. Take all the jokes and cracks, and curse them flat out in my head.

*"The crowd has gotten larger  
and my self-confidence has hit  
an all-time low."*

## Best Friends

"Okay! I'm feelin' this. You cute, girl!" They snap their fingers and roll their necks, spin me around, and make me feel pretty. Our phones are pulled out now and we take pictures for what feels like hours, take breaks to make sure my short curls are still poppin'. We ride around town in an old school Camaro with the top down so everybody can see my new style.

"I just think it's good for you, y'know? Hair holds baggage and bad memories. This is like a fresh start." I nod towards my oldest friend as he says this. We sit in the Walmart parking lot at 11 p.m. and watch the stars while he goes on about the connection hair has to our emotions and whatnot. I can't seem to stop running my fingers through my buzzcut as I mindlessly listen to his rant.

"You look damn good. Don't let anybody tell you different, boo." He gives me one last hug before he jogs back to the car, and I walk into my house. I think about how great the day went, how much confidence I gained in the span of a few hours. I look at myself in the mirror again, and smile.

## Classmates

"Now she know she wrong for doing that to her head." Comments like these are said behind my back countless times throughout the school day. I grip the straps to my backpack as I try to distract myself from the stares and whispers. Teachers stop in their tracks and just stare at me, not speaking a word. Even the principal becomes speechless, shock etched on her face.

"So, what made you do it?" I look around the small space my counselor considered an office. I try to find

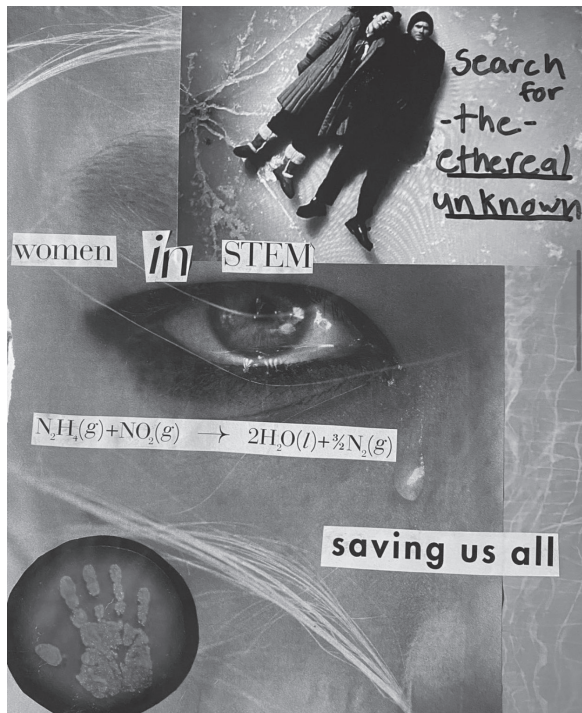
some lie that sounded good enough to be real, anything that would get me out of this uncomfortable situation. She continues to cut the thick awkwardness in the air with more annoying questions and I keep lying. I make it through the pointless meet-

ing and get back to perfecting my art of ignoring the rude comments.

## Crushes

"I mean you cute and all, but I can't be with no girl whose cut lower than mine!" He puts on a show for his audience, the group of football players around the lunch table. They snicker and playfully pick at my hair while I horribly fake a laugh. He keeps making jokes about my hair, and I continue to laugh, praying that the tears don't fall.

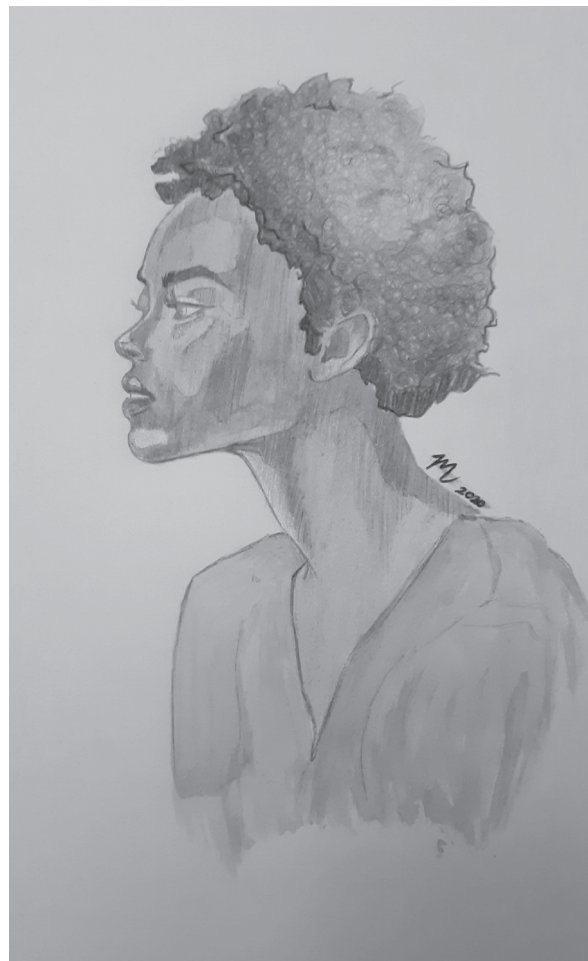
"At least you can be my bro now." He just won't shut up. The crowd has gotten larger and my self-confidence has hit an all-time low. At this point I walk away, far too done to keep listening to this diss. My feet carry me to the nearest empty space, and all I do is cry. I cry



## *Eyes of Ambition*

Gracie Rowland

Other media



## *Gold*

Merideth Johnson

Graphite, colored pencil, watercolor

as loud as I can because that way, I can't hear what they have to say anymore.

### **Grandparents**

My grandmother didn't talk to me for three weeks after seeing my haircut. Visits are always short and to the point. She is visibly upset with me, and I would rather not be in an unwanted home. My grandfather just stares at me. He stares then looks to my mother with questioning eyes.

"The Bible says a woman's hair is her glory. Why on earth would you take all your glory away?" my grandmother finally questions me, her eyes boring into me from her rocking chair on the patio. I remain quiet, my mind wandering around nothing. I don't want to be

here in this tense setting. Whatever I choose to say will only upset her more.

### **Myself**

It feels so strange to be finished with washing and styling my hair in under an hour. I stand alone in my steamy bathroom after a much-needed crying session and wash. The words I've received these past few days still sit heavy on my skin no matter how much I scrub. A sigh escaped from my mouth as my eyes find their way to that same mirror one more time. I finally take a good, long look at myself.

"I think I look pretty nice." △