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phone conversation

Dima Chiavello

“hello?”

“hi.”

“oh hey...um..... how- how are you doing?”

“i’m okay.”

“just okay? you're not more than okay or less than okay?”

“no, i’m just okay. are you?”

“i’m just okay too.”

“that’s good, i’m glad.”

“so you’re glad i’m not doing better than okay?”

“no- no that’s not what i-”

“you’re glad we’re on the same level, yeah?”

“no i was just happy you weren’t feeling less than okay, it’s better to do okay then to be doing badly.”

“..i guess so. there was a time when i was doing less then okay.”

“oh, when was that?”

“not too long ago.”

“oh...i’m sorry about that, is there anything i can do?”

“well didn’t you hear?”

“hear what?”

“that i’m doing okay now.”

“oh-... gue-....sens-”

“you’re cutting out.”

“can you hear me now?”

“i can.”

“i said ‘oh i guess that makes sense’.”

“yeah it does, doesn’t it.”

“yeah.”

“were you ever not okay?”

“for a time.”

“what time?”

“just some time, around that time...you know.”

“yeah... that's when i wasn’t either.”

“then it's good.”

“what’s good?”

“that we’re okay.”

“i have a question.”

“i’m listening.”

“do you think we will be okay forever?”

“probably not.”

“huh.”

“what did i say something wrong?”

“no, you said what you said, just like you do.”

“just like i do.”

“well i, uh- i have to go.”

“sure i get it.”

“yeah sorry i’ve got...a thing, but hey-”

“what?”

“i’m uh...i’m glad you’re doing okay.”

“glad that i’m just okay? not wondering why i’m not worse or better than okay?”

“no, just okay is fine.”

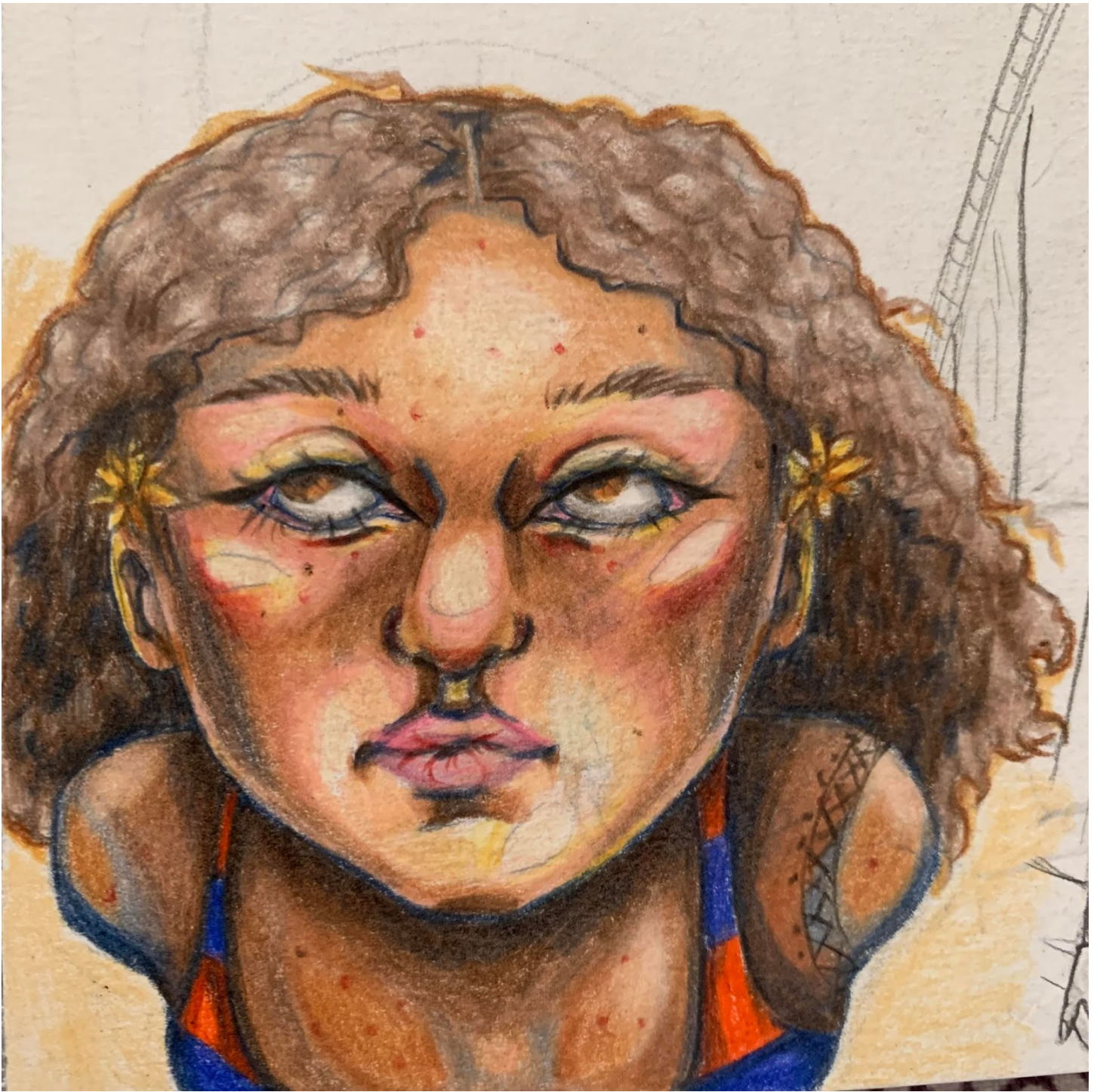
“yeah.”

“i’ll see you around?”

“yeah, i’d like that.”

“okay, goodbye....”

Yellow Flowers
Liya Johnson



Stretched Thin

Linnea Leijon

I became your bridge,
When you left me crossed.
Just to reach your own end,
I was left lost.

I stretched myself thin
To meet every standard you set.
But no matter what I did,
None of them were met.

Making my mistakes
Your own excuses,
You won every fight
And I still have the bruises.

You made sure I was hurt
By walking all over me.
Never very confident,
Or the girl you wanted me to be.

When I was your bridge
I nearly fell apart,
Doing anything and everything
Just for you to break my heart.

I was brainwashed to believe
You were worth stretching myself thin.
But did you really need to break me
just so you could win?



Common Yellowthroat

Dhruv Cohen





Daydreaming
Liya Johnson

The Crow

Sonja Talwani

It had rained the night before, thus the city smelled as fresh as cities can. It had been one of the first nice days of the year, one that wasn't actively storming or freezing or windy, allowing my sliding glass door to be completely opened, something my cat enjoyed.

Pebbles was an old cat, not at all active since my family moved him to our apartment. We had watched each other grow up and often I assumed he was more protective of me than anyone, though not particularly threatening. Every time I vacuumed the floor or turned on the bath, Pebbles would make an effort to scare off the active danger he saw and I would appreciate his intent. He was tubby and tried to be graceful when he wasn't preoccupied with his breakfast, lunch, *and* dinner.

He made a mess every time he ate and treated meals like a race despite having no competitors, thus encouraging me to feed him on the balcony where I left his breakfast unattended one faithful day.

I could have sworn I left the line of sight of the balcony for just two minutes. I got a snack from the kitchen—thinly sliced apples, before spotting something just past the sliding glass door.

For a moment I thought it was Pebble. He was a dark gray, it wasn't unreasonable to think whatever was eating his food was him. Upon stepping outside and being extremely close to it, I realized this wasn't Pebble on the porch. This was a crow.

The crow bellowed an ugly, raspy clamor and before I could think of a logical next move, I shooed it away and continued to do so as it side-stepped down the balcony railing, teasing me with every hop in the opposite direction I was desperately swinging my arms. Eventually, it flew away—first to a lamp post where I could have sworn it was staring at me. Mocking me with a look in its eye as if it wanted to say, “Come and get me, I know you can't!” Finally, it vanished from my sight after diving into a group of trees.

I thought that was the end of it, that I had scared off the nasty crow once and for all. That was until the following day. It was a slightly colder morning and my balcony door was cracked open, though Pebble was eating— or demolishing— his breakfast inside the room. I was relaxing on my bed when out of the corner of my eye, the little, black bird stepped inside my bedroom.

It would have been impossible to prove, but I could have sworn it was the same crow as the previous day. I could tell by the smug look in its eye and the fact he knew where to find me. Any other crow would be afraid to step foot indoors, but not this crow.

Immediately, I jumped to my feet and began charging at the crow who flew away to the railing of the balcony like the day before. And again, without a hint of remorse, it hopped farther down the railing as I continued to swing my arms and shout obscenities. If anyone would have witnessed this scene, I'm sure I would have looked crazy—and maybe I was—but I was tired of this entitled bird's badgering.

After a moment that was *probably* more intense in my head than in reality, I shut my doors and windows and began to live in fear that it would return to terrorize me and my cat once more.

It wasn't until a week later when I was retelling the story to a friend who informed me of a detail that would have been nice to know before I decided to cross one.

“Crows remember faces.”



Great Egret
Dhruv Cohen



Trapped

Noah Pershing



His Will

Dima Chiavello

Dear God,
Was it your will
That I was blessed with a family
Who asked for my commitment
To something, I did not believe in?

Dear God,
Was it your will
That I would be absolved of the sins
Of my memories
That I cherished freely?

Dear God,
Was it your will
That I was to stand at the altar
And make my father proud
And ignore the tears of my mother?

Dear God,
Was it your will
That I gave up my Thursdays
To learn the ways of a belief
I had no choice in?

Dear God,
Was it your will
That I give my life's blood to you
In the name of the trinity
Of the father, son, and holy spirit?

Was it your will,
That the little girl inside
Washed away her culture
With holy water.

Was it your will,
That another little girl
Stood upon the altar
With only the will
Of her family.

Was it your will,
Or the will of the church
Increasing their numbers
Inflating how many they've "saved".

Was it your will,
Or was it the will of the people
Who took your words
And used them against us.

Was it your will,
Or was it the will of a family
Who believed it was only you
That could fix the broken pieces of their
daughter.

Was it you?
Or was it something else entirely all along

An Interview with Dima Chiavello.

What inspired your piece *His Will*?

I grew up with a double belonging, meaning I grew up with two religious influences. On my mother's side, I have a Muslim influence, and on my dad's, Catholic. Recently, my dad decided to enroll me into Catechism, to move towards baptizing me, and converting me to Catholicism. My life shifted from having been to church 1-2 times in my life to going twice a week, working towards a goal I didn't set for myself. I felt trapped, as if I betrayed my mother's side, and like I didn't have a say in how faith would be a part of my life. Experiencing conversion without having a choice has been difficult for me to process, struggling to figure out where I identify religiously. It's been one year since my baptism, and on the anniversary of it, I happened to view another one. Viewing a baptism that wasn't my own, brought up the feelings expressed in the piece, with a central theme of a personal struggle of faith and a lack of choice being present.

Selenophile

Anonymous

