

# Voices

ISSUE #2: FAMILY

## APPRECIATE

A poem appreciating the roles that a mother has in a family.

## THORNS AND SCARS - REMEMBERING THE PAST

A story about the struggles that families have to endure to be called a family.



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# Appreciate

Kaleigh Solis Wilson

Everyday she takes me to school,  
She cares so she makes the rules.  
Her love is as immense as an Atlanta  
drive.

Origami represents her mind.

Her house smells every Sunday,  
The aroma is welcoming after a long  
week.

Her face scowls at late notices,  
But she still goes get her keys.

Fresh clothes every Friday.  
A buffet every Saturday morning.

How does she do it?  
All I can do is appreciate it.





# THORNS AND SCARS

REMEMBERING THE PAST

Diana Espinoza

*My father was always a suspicious man. He spent hours locked up in his office with dozens upon dozens of magazines spread across the floor. He would examine them, whisper gibberish, and write down scribbles in his leather notebook. He would look up, glance at the clock, and count how many times it'd tick before looking down at his magazine and jot something down. My mother would call him for dinner and he would scream, "Okay!" But never showed up. Until midnight, I would see his face again and ask what he was doing.*

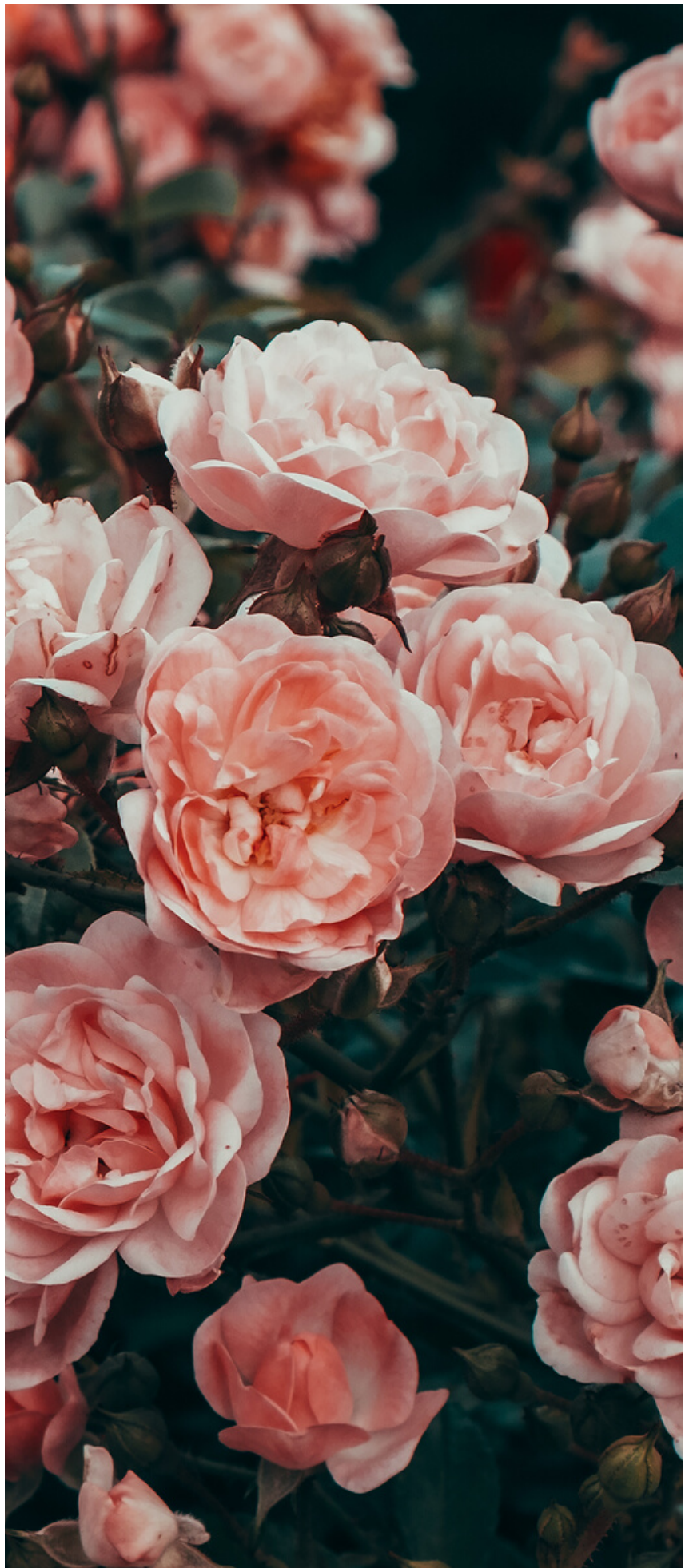
*"Nothing, sweetheart. Don't worry about it." He lifted his glasses with his index finger and pushed his ruffled hair back before locking himself into his room.*

*Years ago, we went to visit grandmother. We hadn't seen her in over a year and we were excited. Grandmother lived in rural Idaho, on a small farm where there were more cows than human beings. Her kitchen always smelled like sugar cookies and was decorated with chicken figurines. She would wear floral dresses and her iconic apron that had embroidered flowers. Grandmother was the kindest person I knew and would always listen sympathetically when something had happened. We visited her occasionally since my father didn't have much connection with her. He didn't hate her, he just acted as if she didn't exist. Grandmother would ask him about something and he would only nod, even if he disagreed on the matter. He would glance at a magazine and jot down whatever he thought was interesting.*

Father had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. He would stay in the office, night after night, trying to find dates and calculations that didn't exist. He fantasized over the idea that he worked for the government and that he was helping them to find secret codes in magazines. He said that the FBI told him that the Russians were trying to attack the United States and that it was his job to find where. He would spend nights trying to find codes and make equations with guessed numbers. Everybody thought he was crazy.

Mother had tried to be understanding. She said that father has a missing nail in his brain that makes him say weird stuff. She says not to trust everything he says. That it might be a lie.

The car hit a pothole. We shifted in our seats, it was scorching hot, the AC barely making it through the heat. We were squished together and felt bored because of the long ride. My older sister, Marla, gave us the idea for a rhyming game and we were hooked on the idea. After a while, we sang tunes in the back of my mother's van and played guessing games with each other. Father would look out the window, as if something interesting was about to happen, his eyes only glued to the valleys and hills that passed by. My sister would make a joke and laugh, but my father's eyes were glued to the car window.



We arrived at midnight. Grandma came to greet us, hugging until the air left our lungs.

“ Oh, it’s so wonderful to be here!” said Mother, after a long hug with Grandma.

“ It’s wonderful that y’all came! I made some muffins and biscuits, come inside and let’s eat.” Grandma took us inside where we sat on her peach-colored sofa.

Grandma’s house had a beautiful chimney, decorated with cuisine books and glass figurines. I talked to Grandma about our school talent show and how I had won with the most creative talent.

“ What did you do?” Grandma asked. Everybody started laughing and Grandma looked confused.

“ I juggled eggs while Old McDonald played.” I stammered and then everybody started laughing even louder.

“ You had a talent show?” Father asked. I had told Father about the talent show but somehow he had forgotten about it.

“ I told you, Father,” I said and the laughing died down. Father looked at Mother but she avoided his stare. “ You told me you were busy.”

“ When did I say that?” Father denied and I looked at him for a long time. “ I have always come to your events.”

“ Father. . . you always say that?! You have never come to any of my events, not a single one.” I screamed, my chest heaving as Father stared down at me.

“ I-I think you are tired, Ansley,” Father said.

“ No, Father. I’m not.” I said and I got out of the living room as the tears began to fall.

Grandma had big black hickory in her backyard. Its limbs almost touched the ground, the sun forming strange shadows that looked like an octopus. I got up from the tree, my t-shirt getting caught in the branches and my hair covering my view. I hassled to get on the tree, my legs dangling on the branches, tears falling down my cheeks.

“ If only I had a normal family,” I whispered or screamed, I don’t remember. I hugged one of the branches my cheek resting on the trunk.

When I was a kid, I remember waiting for my father to come home from work and I would be at the front door holding my teddy bear tightly. When I arrived from college and nobody greeted me. When Christmas arrived, only I would be with the presents.

What is family? I asked myself throughout those years, wondering what it was like to have somebody to trust. Somebody to hold, somebody to love, somebody’s shoulder to cry into.

I don’t know the meaning; I don’t know if I will.

But family isn’t always roses, there is sometimes a thorn that digs deep and leaves the scar.

What I learned on that tree what my father was different, but that unites us, that’s what makes us special. That makes us a family.



MAHALIA MCKINNEY

# NOW

Where has the time gone  
Doesn't matter  
We are here now  
We can fix this now  
What happened in the  
past doesn't matter  
What happens in the  
future is in the future

We are here now  
Forced here together  
but doesn't have to be  
that way  
Here together can go  
two ways  
Ignore each other  
Or try to start anew  
It all depends on you



# FAMILY MATTERS

EMALEE MCLENDON

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“Family Matters.” At least, that’s what everyone has always said growing up, including myself. My family has always been there for me. Ever since I was a toddler, waddling around. I remember my mom taking pictures of me, cheering me on for not even walking a step. “Again, again,” she would say. I was a toddler though, I didn’t know exactly what she was saying. It was just random stuff that I thought was funny as a 2-year-old.

Now that I am 30, and looking back, I miss those days. I was always surrounded by my family, and they were either saying at a new family reunion that I grew or that I was the “prettiest thing,” they have ever seen. I never had room to breathe.

When I was a teenager it got even worse, I felt smothered by my mom. She always wanted to walk with me everywhere I went. I continuously have to make excuses so she would quit bothering me. One of my main, “Don’t talk to me mom,” speeches were, “Oh I have school work. Sorry, mom.” Of course, she would always leave me alone, but now that I look back I wish she didn’t.

I wish my family still smothered me like they used to. I wish my grandma still took pictures of me opening gifts on Christmas. I wish my dad and grandpa still took me fishing on the lake. I wish my cousins still came to visit every weekend.

It’s just not the same anymore. We are all grown up and have our own lives. My grandparents have passed away, and my mom is arriving at her elderly stages in life, and everything is moving so fast. Now I am the one having to start my own family and take on the parent role. I have to watch my toddler take his or her first steps. I have to make sure my husband takes my child on boat rides. Lastly, I have to especially make sure that my mom is there to take pictures of my children, so one day my child will be saying, “mom, I sure do miss my childhood.”

Family is everything, and every chance you get to spend with your mom, dad, brother, and sister is valuable. Remember to take in every moment, so one day you will be able to look back and cherish it all.



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# MAHALIA MCKINNEY

# AGAIN

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Far apart but still so close  
now with new memories made  
And new bonds forged  
With a new type of love  
Connecting us together as if we were never apart  
With new things discovered  
And feelings rekindled  
Eager to see your face again  
Impatient to steal a hug again  
So many things to do again  
But it's worth it  
As long as I do it with you



Family is the smell of coffee  
with the sunrise,  
Scrapes on little ones' knees,  
Early vacations with tired  
eyes,  
Making teepees underneath  
the trees.

GABBIE SMALLWOOD

# FAMILY

Family is a mother who plays  
both roles,  
And a brother who provides,  
A teenage girl who sets goals,  
And a holy father who  
guides.

Family on the surface is  
beautiful and true,  
To some people it is merely a  
dream.

But that perfect world must  
have outgrew,  
The family next door are  
never what they seem.

Family is finding open  
windows at midnight,  
Picking cuticles and showers  
that are too hot.

Empty medicine bottles and  
ambulance rides,  
Those teenagers wishing  
they could be anything  
they're not.

Family is coming home and  
hoping today you'll be good  
enough,  
Realizing why Brother isn't  
home anymore.  
Being told crying doesn't make  
you tough,  
Knowing you can't take back  
what you said to Mother before.

Family isn't always blood  
however,  
Best friends and people who  
understand you.  
Sometimes water really is  
thicker,  
They love and stick with you no  
matter what you do.

Family can mean many things,  
Blood, water, summer, or rain.  
Even when there isn't coffee in  
the mornings,  
Love and compassion can  
always be found in the pain.



Ariel Henry

The VRHS Art Club collaborated to create art pieces related to family. The different pieces show what family means to each artist.



Alyssa Reid

Almost before we knew it, we had left the ground.



Savannah Flowers





Cloud Sellers

"FAMILY IS LIKE  
BRANCHES ON A  
TREE, WE GROW IN  
DIFFERENT  
DIRECTIONS YET  
OUR ROOTS REMAIN  
AS ONE."



Shiloh Nikole



Karissa Boyer

# Writer's Guild

September 2021

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