



Art for Life: A Place for Healing after Suicide

Julia Andersen MA, LCPAT. Art Therapist

Survivors: Jill Coutts, Sara Tagget and Krystle Washington

Community Art Studio based on **Open Studio Concept**

ART FOR LIFE

Art for Life Studio

- Artists- No prior art experience necessary!
- Art process- invites creativity
- Community studio- group members are supportive to each other, creating a safe, accessible place to express intense emotions after suicide.

Open Studio

- Open studio format – *Witness the process of art-making, not the product.*
- Art therapist leaders make art along side the survivors.
- Survivors can develop an artistic identity without judgment.

Found Objects/Altered Book

- Re-Purposing, recycling and re-working found objects *facilitates meaning and transformation.*
- Old, discarded books are given new life, observed in a new way
- Creative process inspires the artist with a commitment to self and life.



Grassroots

- A safe place in the community.
- Resources are available: SOS group, Crisis Intervention, 24hour Lifeline.
- Healing is possible...

1. Choose Art Materials



2. Express feelings in response to suicide.



3. Create. Do not judge yourself or your artwork.





Jill Coutts, mother of Jay and survivor of suicide

ART FOR LIFE

OUTRAGE

So tired of this burden NO

Sinking Deeper into the Void

It's been only weeks since my husband was diagnosed with depression. Our doctor, a complete examination, a psychiatrist, a family counselor, a support group, and a medication from Lilly have helped him get back on his feet.

PAIN RELIEF

My boy A Love Story

Memories

pain

MAGIC and the BRAIN

JAY

BEST-EVER PIE

Sacrificial Lamb

These women have made it impossible for me to live

Jay bird

do not disturb

miss YOU

such beautiful gifts. SO much love in your LIFE

Are you happy?

Magic and the Brain

Fall

Please Visit Again

Suck in here or die! why did you go?

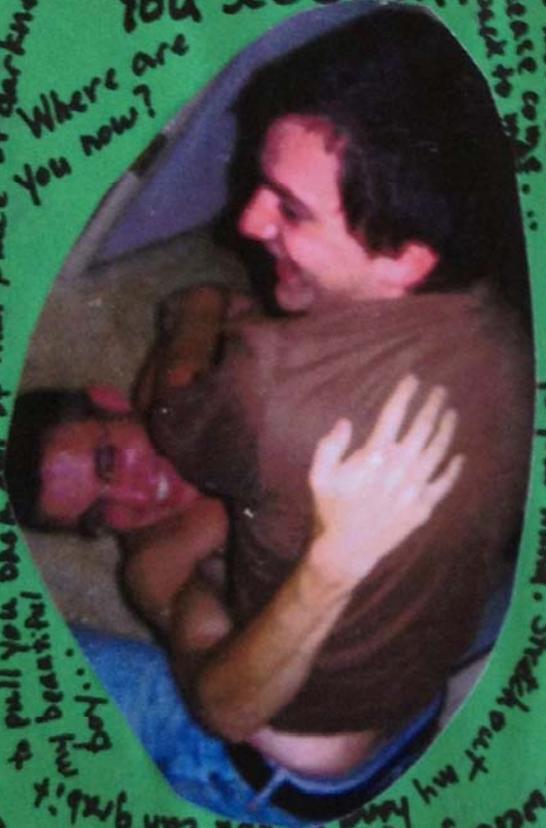
TOO GOOD FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!





Where did you go? I looked up and you were gone. I have so much to tell you. I have so much I want to ask you. You were so full of life. We were going to build a green horse. I want to hug you, kiss your cheek. make you laugh. I do understand but I want to have one more chance to change your mind. Shred out my hand - you can grab it to pull you back out of that place of darkness. Where are you now? *my beautiful boy...*

When did you see Black?



We are all dead stars
Can you believe it? We live in outer space
Just look up in the sky, you can hear me laughing...
Are you in a tree?



THE PASSENGER

Like a shadow, his fear was attached to him for the rest of his life, making him feel alien, not of this world...

I stand on the platform of the trolley car and am completely insecure about my footing in this world, in this city, in my family. Nor could I indicate even casually what demands I might rightfully make in any direction. In no way can I...
on this platform...
ley carry me...
the way...

FEAR

One Christmastime in
Great Depression



Contemplation

I wondered back then: How come she's not astonished at herself, how come she keeps her mouth shut and says nothing along those lines?



Nails, wire, two-by-fours whip by
in winds that soon reach 200 miles an hour.

LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

When did your
HEART
STOP?

it his arm around her waist and pulled
on. While she snuggled a quiet

for a moment couldn't you like to come

the money," she re-

his arm and hurrying

handsome boy?" she

for an answer. They

her girls, who had

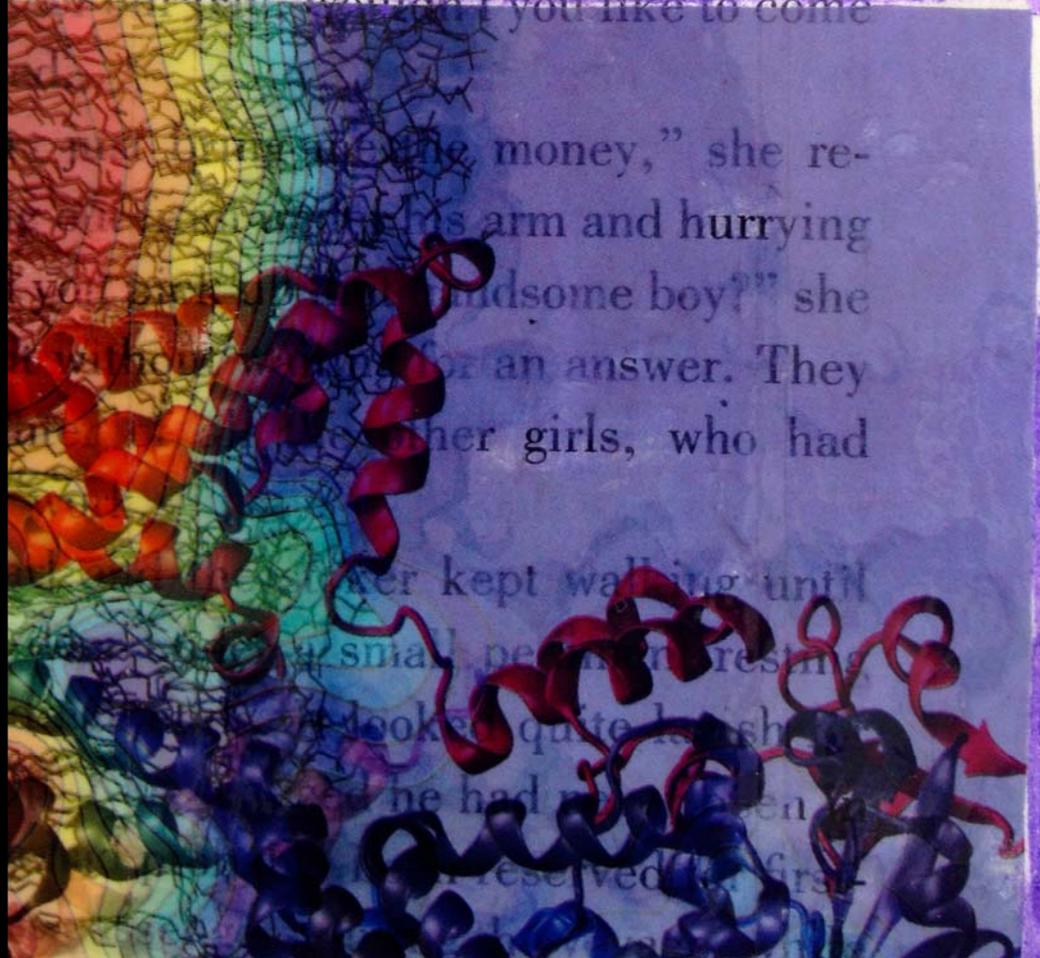
kept walking until

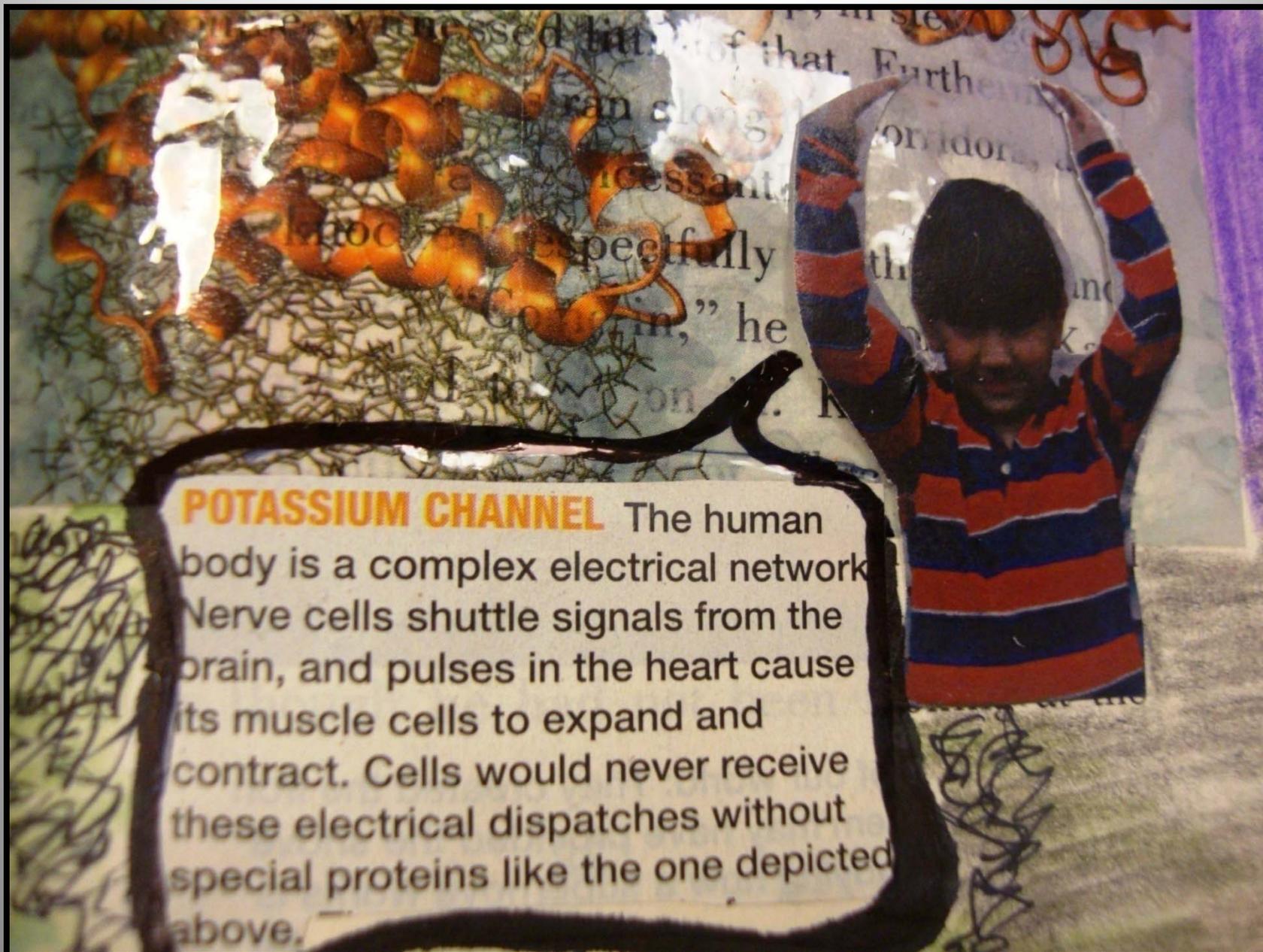
small pebbles resting

looked quite luscious

he had not been

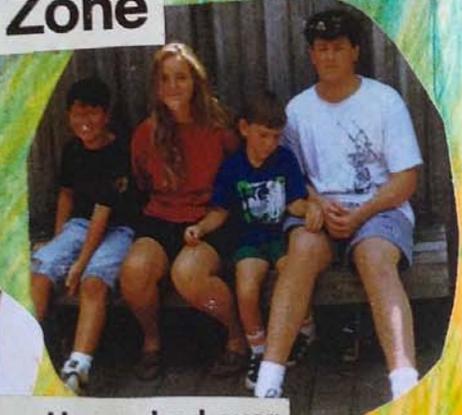
reserved. First







Threat Zone



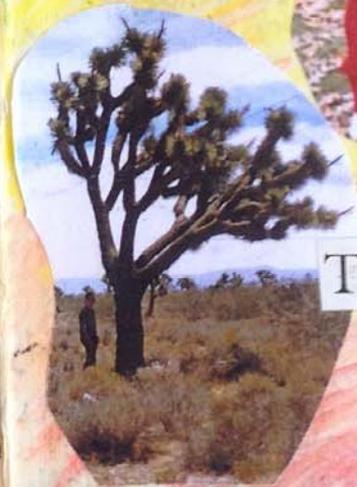
He peeked over the top, eye to eye with the boiling lava. This was beyond science. This was personal.

5/20/02. almost 10/1/02

The Volcano

THE EARLY STORIES

"everyone deserves to be safe."



THE PAST *is never past*

CHAPTER TWO



under the bed, wrenching up the loose floorboard, and grabbed the pillowcase full of his books and birthday presents. He wriggled out, seized Hedwig's empty cage, and dashed back downstairs to his trunk, just as the snake burst out of the dining room. His trouser leg in bloody tatters.

"COME BACK IN HERE OR I'LL BEAT YOU BACK AND PUT YOU IN THE NIGHT!"
But a reckless madman, over Harry's shoulder, kicked his trunk open, pulled out his wand, and pointed it at Uncle Vernon.

"She deserved it!" he said, breathing very fast. "She deserved what she got. You keep away from me."

He grabbed behind him for the latch on the door.
"I'm gone," Harry said. "I've had enough."
And he ran out into the dark, quiet street, hearing his heavy trunk rattling behind him under his arm.

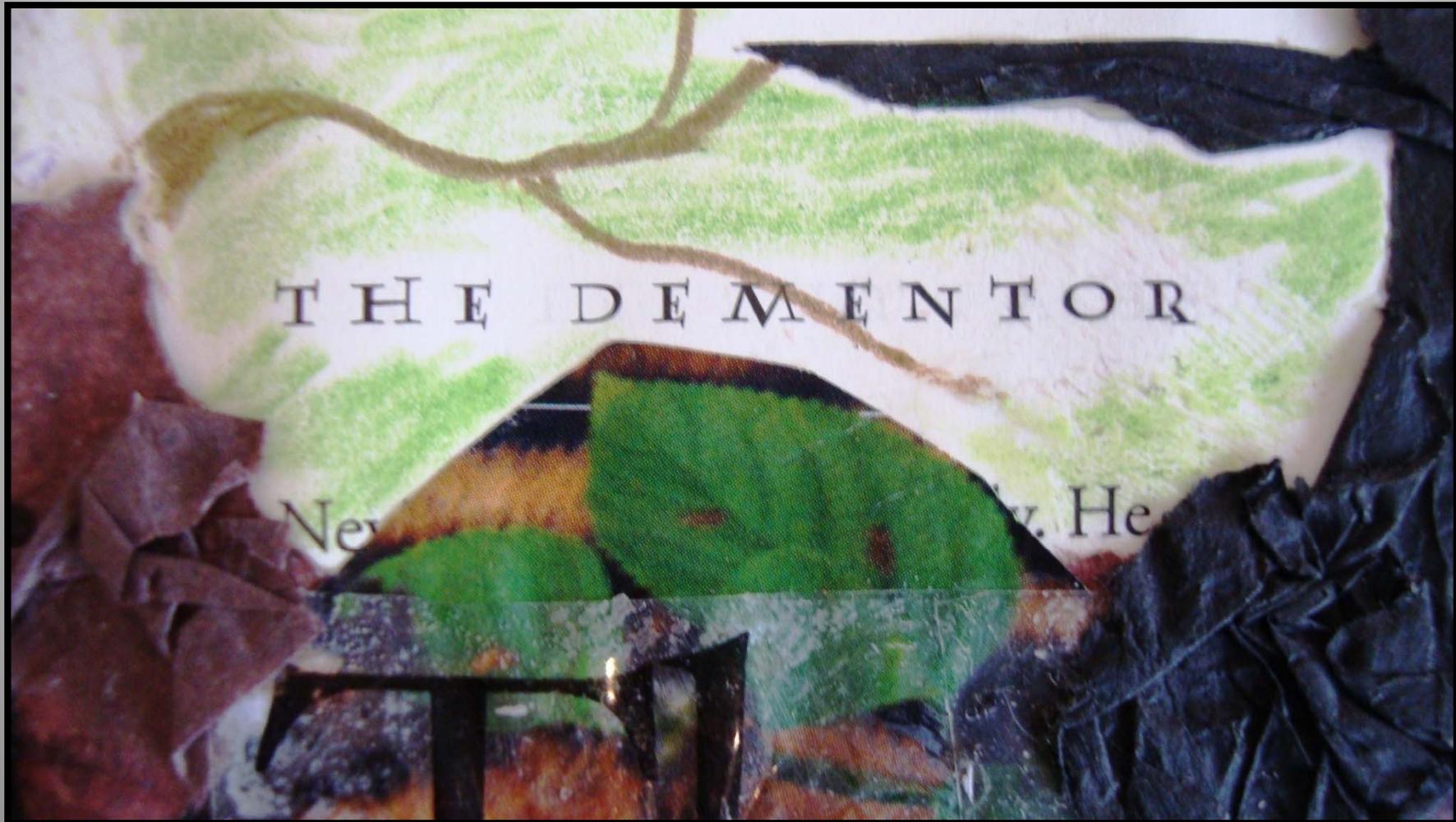


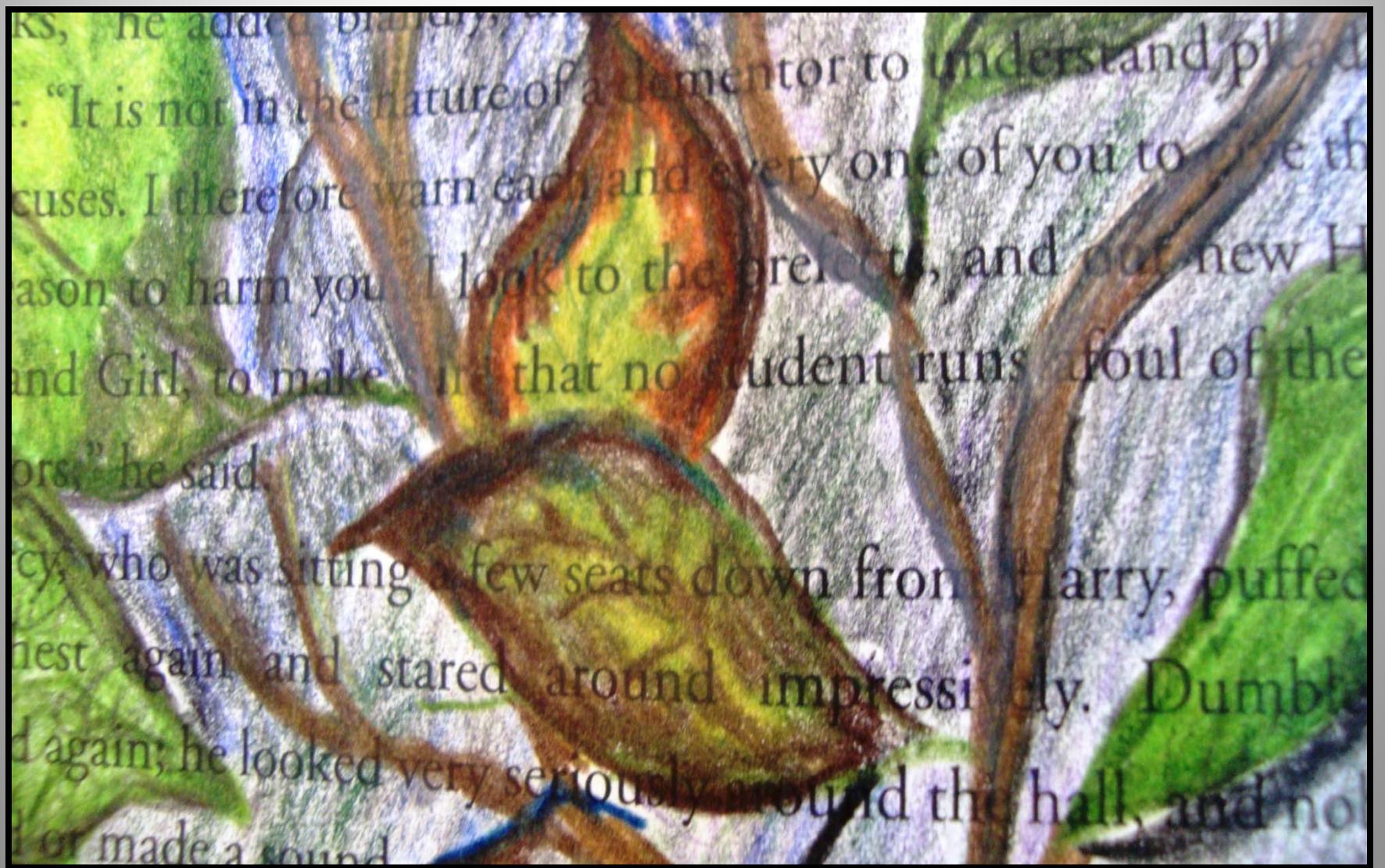
Harry low of dragging him, listening But after te overtook him: been in a wors gle world, with he had just de certainly expc the Restriction Ministry of M where he sat. Harry shive What was goin

THE DEMENTOR

Ne

He





KS, he added blandly, "It is not in the nature of a dementor to understand pleas-
t. "It is not in the nature of a dementor to understand pleas-
cuses. I therefore warn each and every one of you to give th-
ason to harm you. I look to the prefects, and our new H-
and Girl, to make sure that no student runs afoul of the
ors," he said.
cy, who was sitting a few seats down from Harry, puffed
nest again and stared around impressively. Dumble-
d again; he looked very seriously around the hall, and not
for made a sound

The Stoker

telling him to undress her, she actually undressed him and put him in her bed as if wanting to let no one else have him from now on and to caress him and take care of him until the end of the world. "Karl, oh my Karl!" she cried as if clutching her possession of him by looking at him, while he saw nothing whatsoever and felt uncomfortable in the mass of warm bedclothes, which she seemed to have piled up specifically for him. Then she lay down next to him and wanted to learn some secrets from him, but he could not tell her

other of the child, any more than is in receiving my still nurture; in-etter for his own on that is already hat girl. In the as wanting further s, at the kitchen it. She would be ly came to get a ey some instrus; sitting awkwardly could be writing a Karl's face. Some- h her hand, then . Sometimes she h to the kitchen, assing by, would ek of the slightly dash around the recall whenever after Karl came nor, clutching its e. Sometimes she ven want, and she nds. But one day, onishment at the into her tiny room, he door. She then s, and even while

And now," exclaimed the scold, "I want you to tell me straight out whether or not you are my uncle's son, and receiving a kiss on the cheek that I have met you, but believe that my parents only

And now," exclaimed the scold, "I want you to tell me straight out whether or not you are my uncle's son, and receiving a kiss on the cheek that I have met you, but believe that my parents only



Riding a Storm

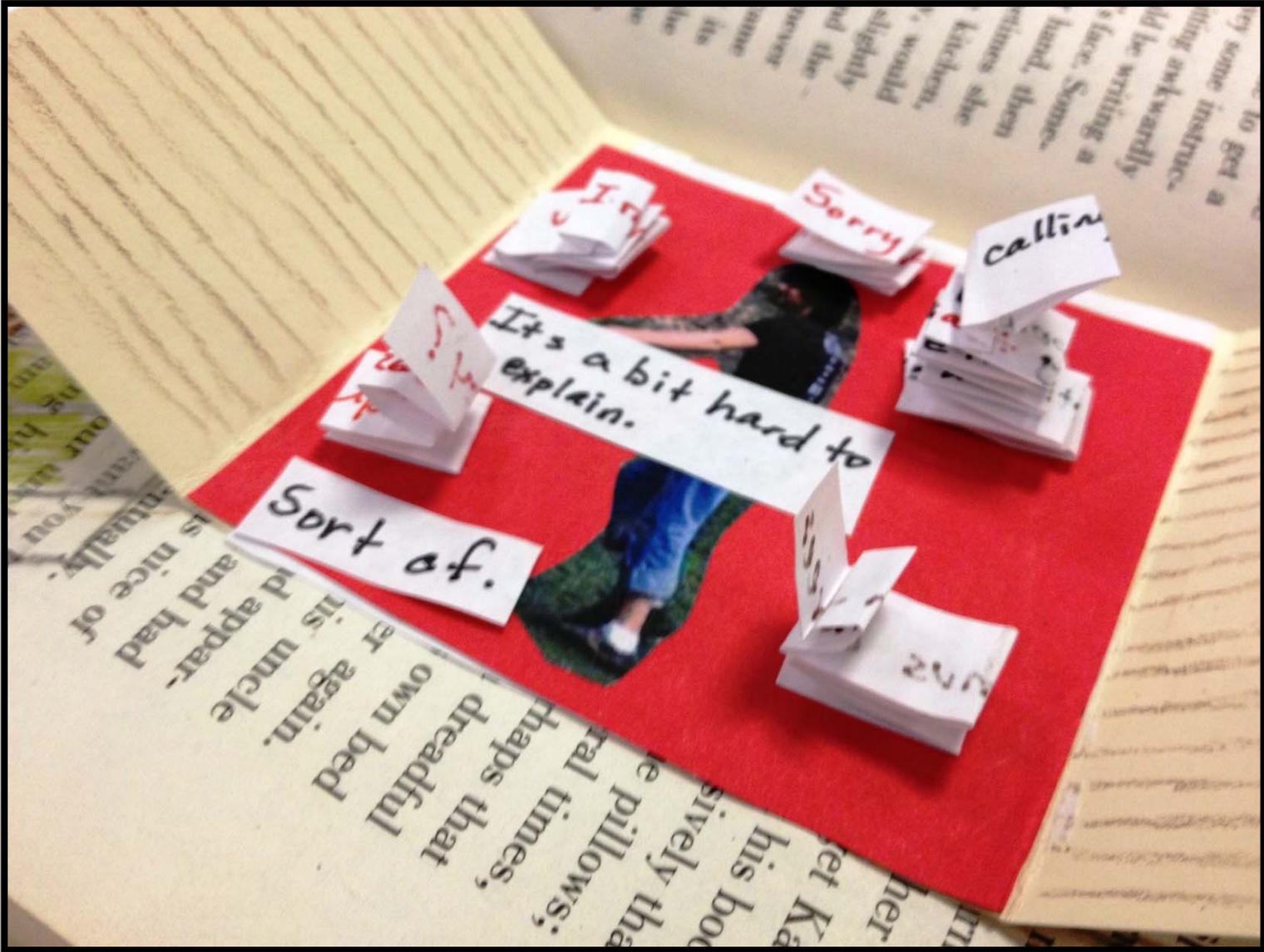
It's Time!

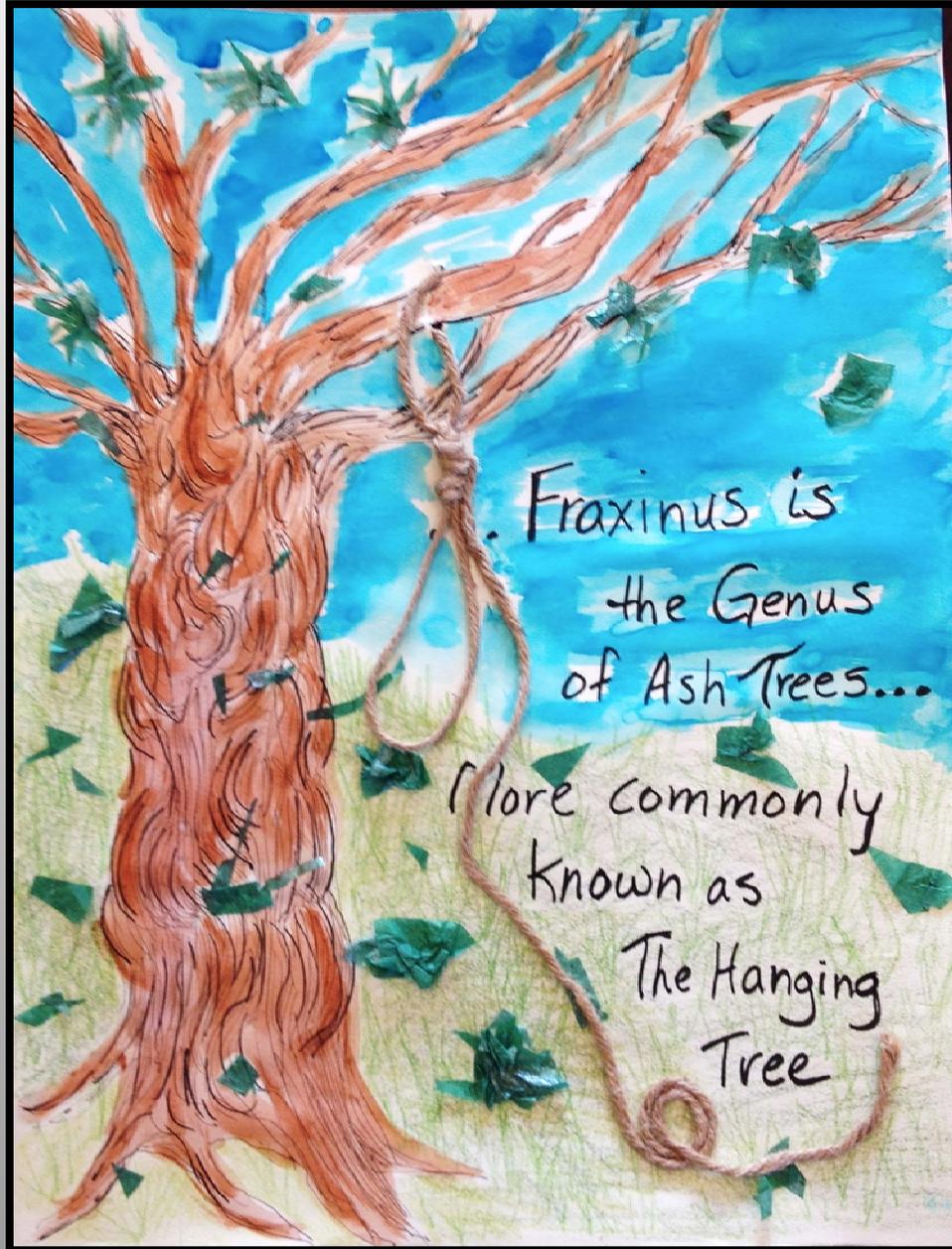
2010 Flight Forecast

The Stoker

telling him to address her; she actually unaddressed him and put him in her bed as if wanting to let no one else have him from now on and to curse him and take care of him until the end of the world. "Karl, oh my Karl!" she cried as if thinking her possessive of him by looking at him, while he saw nothing at all save a girl uncomfortable in the times of a storm of afflictions which she seemed to have stirred up for him. Then she lay down next to him and he learned some secrets from him, but he could not tell her

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Fraxinus is
the Genus
of Ash Trees...

More commonly
known as
The Hanging
Tree



Sara Tagget, mother of Kara and survivor of suicide

ART FOR LIFE





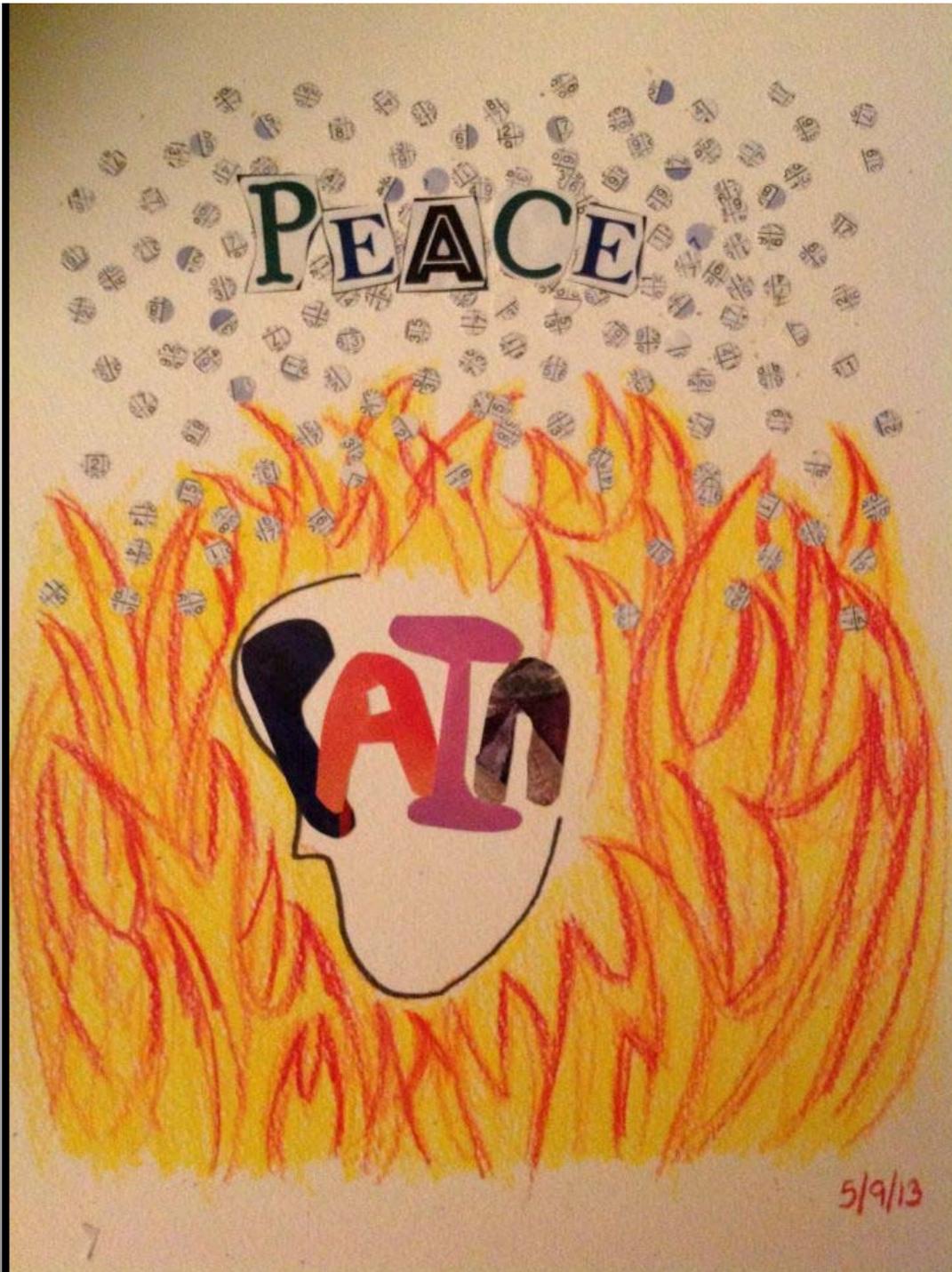
Send Silence Packing

- *Send Silence Packing* is an art installation created by Active Minds, of 1,100 backpacks to represent # of suicides on college campuses in the US per year.
- Artists can create personal messages on the backpacks as a canvas in response to suicide.
- Alison's goal is to reduce the number of backpacks each year the exhibit goes on tour.

www.activeminds.org







5/9/13

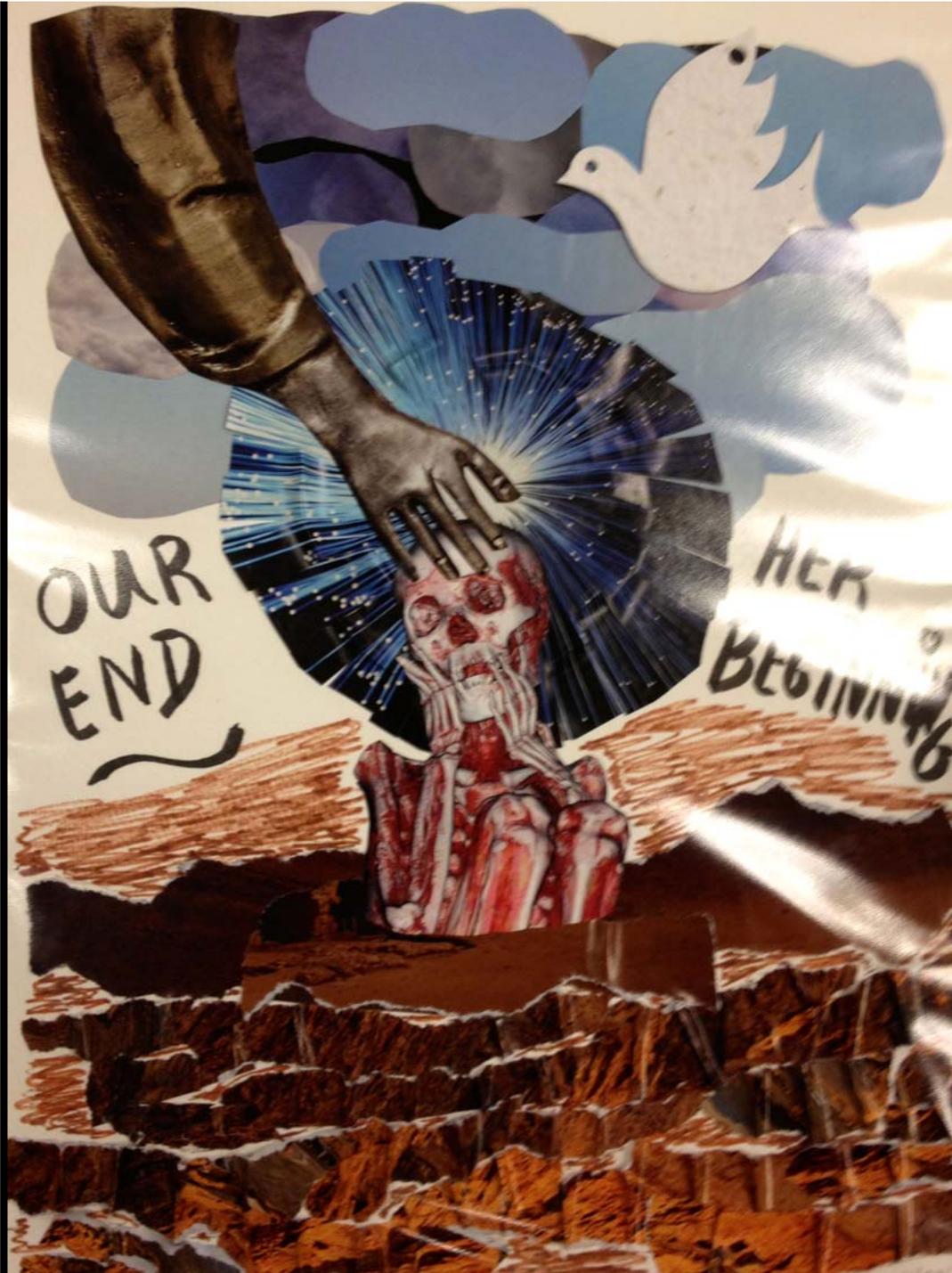
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BEHIND

THE

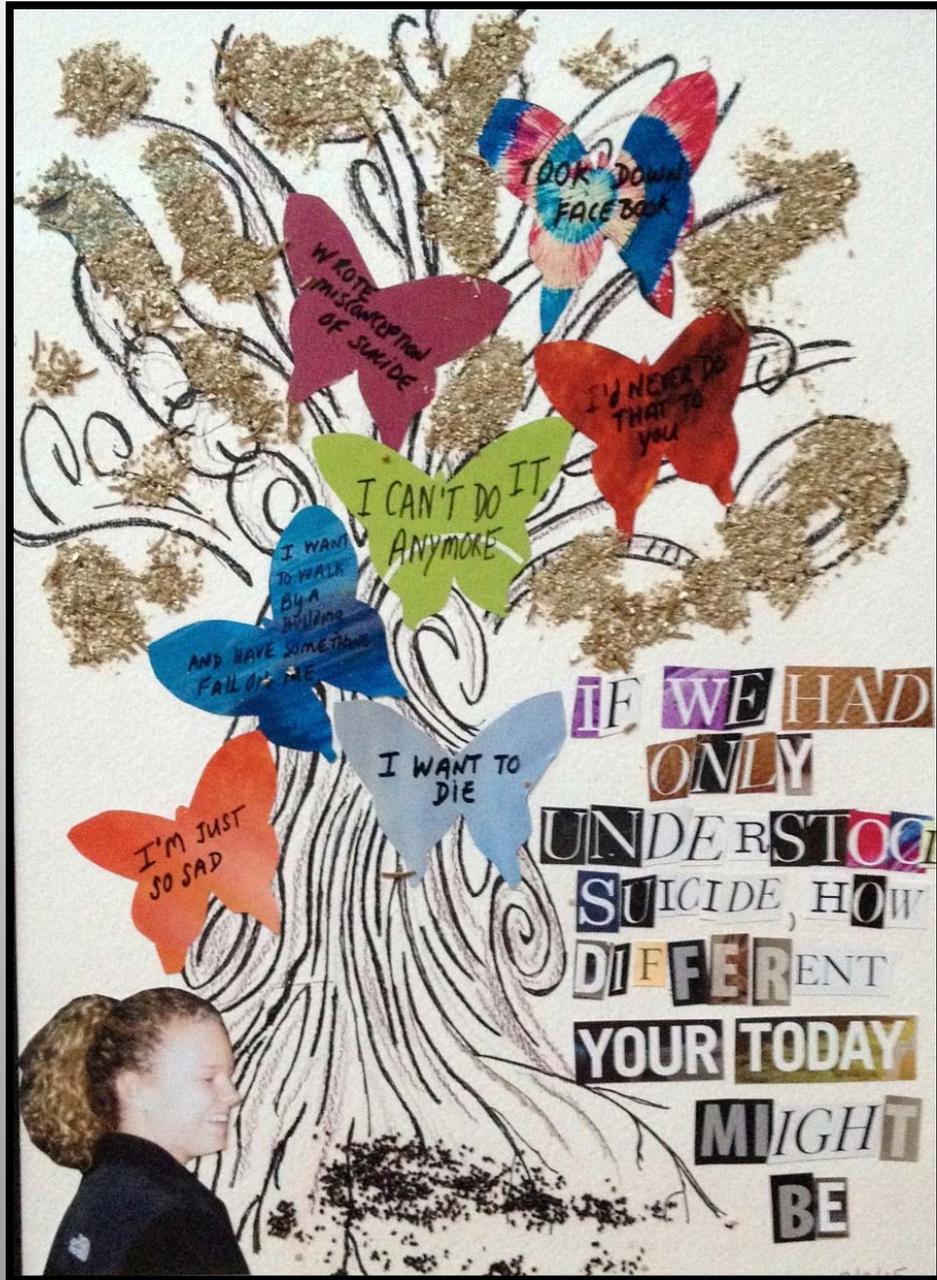


DESPAIR
HOPELESS
SADNESS
PAIN
TEARS
SHAME
ANGER
LONELINESS
NUMBNESS
CONFUSION









Krystle Washington, survivor of attempts

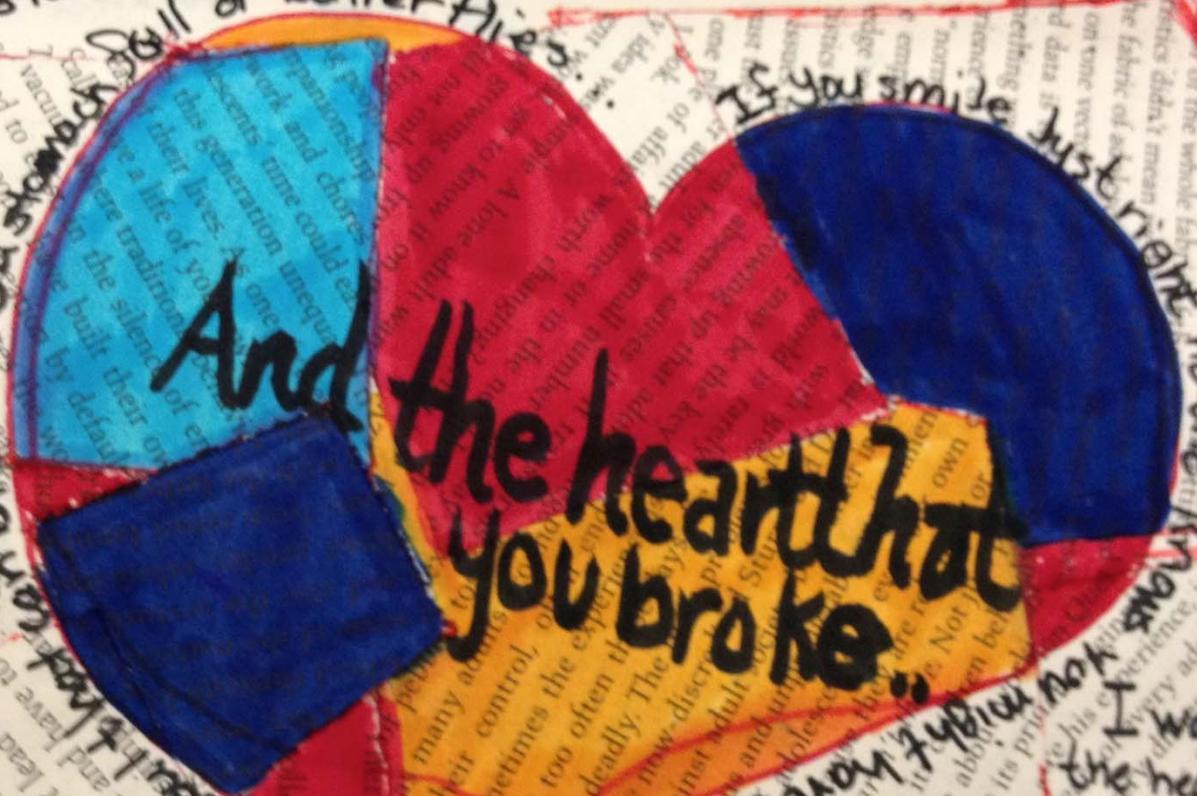
ART FOR LIFE



say I wouldn't understand.

Ball of butter flies.

If you smile just right

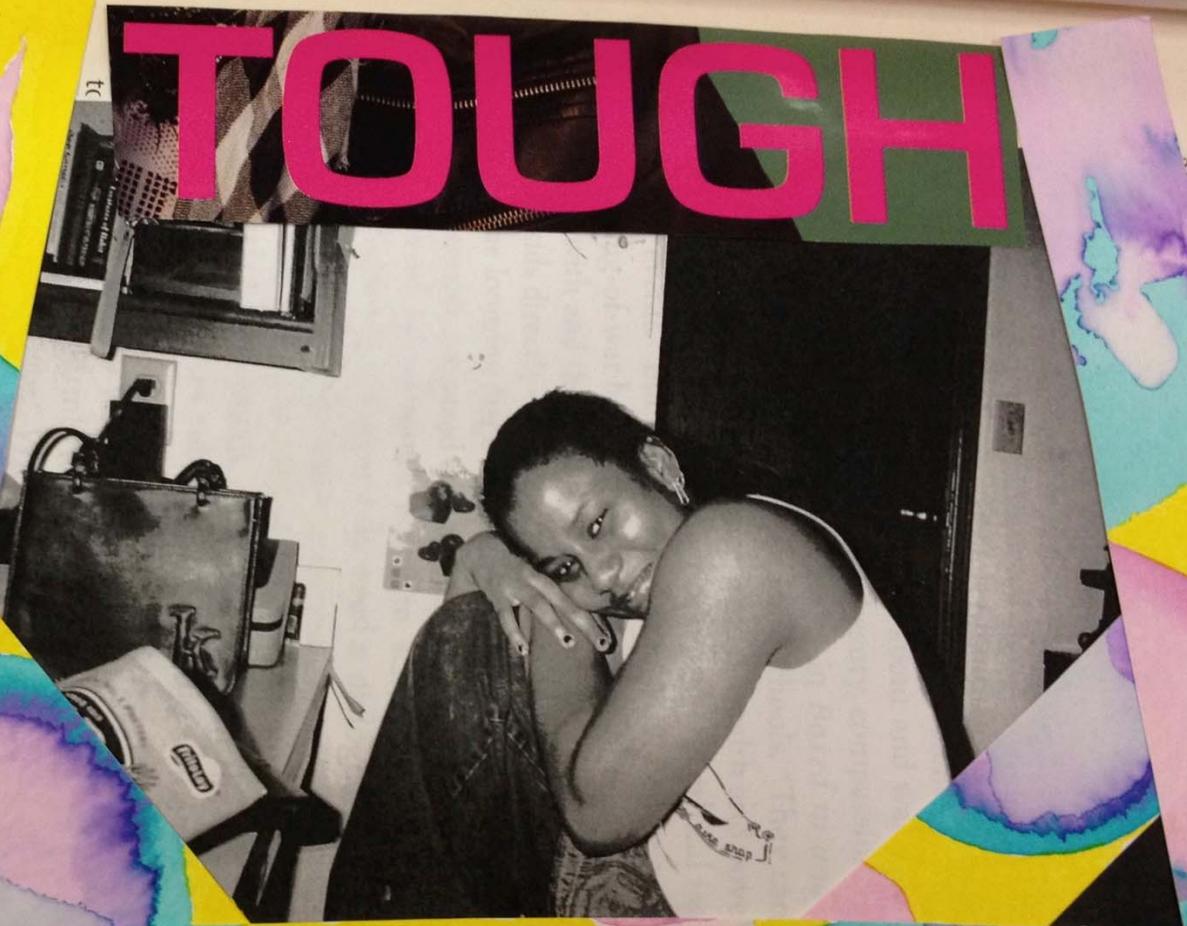


And the heart that you broke.

I was yours and the heart that you broke was devoted and pure and it was just anybody's business

and I said I'm fine, yeah I did my best. But you can't tell me you didn't know the truth

TOUGH



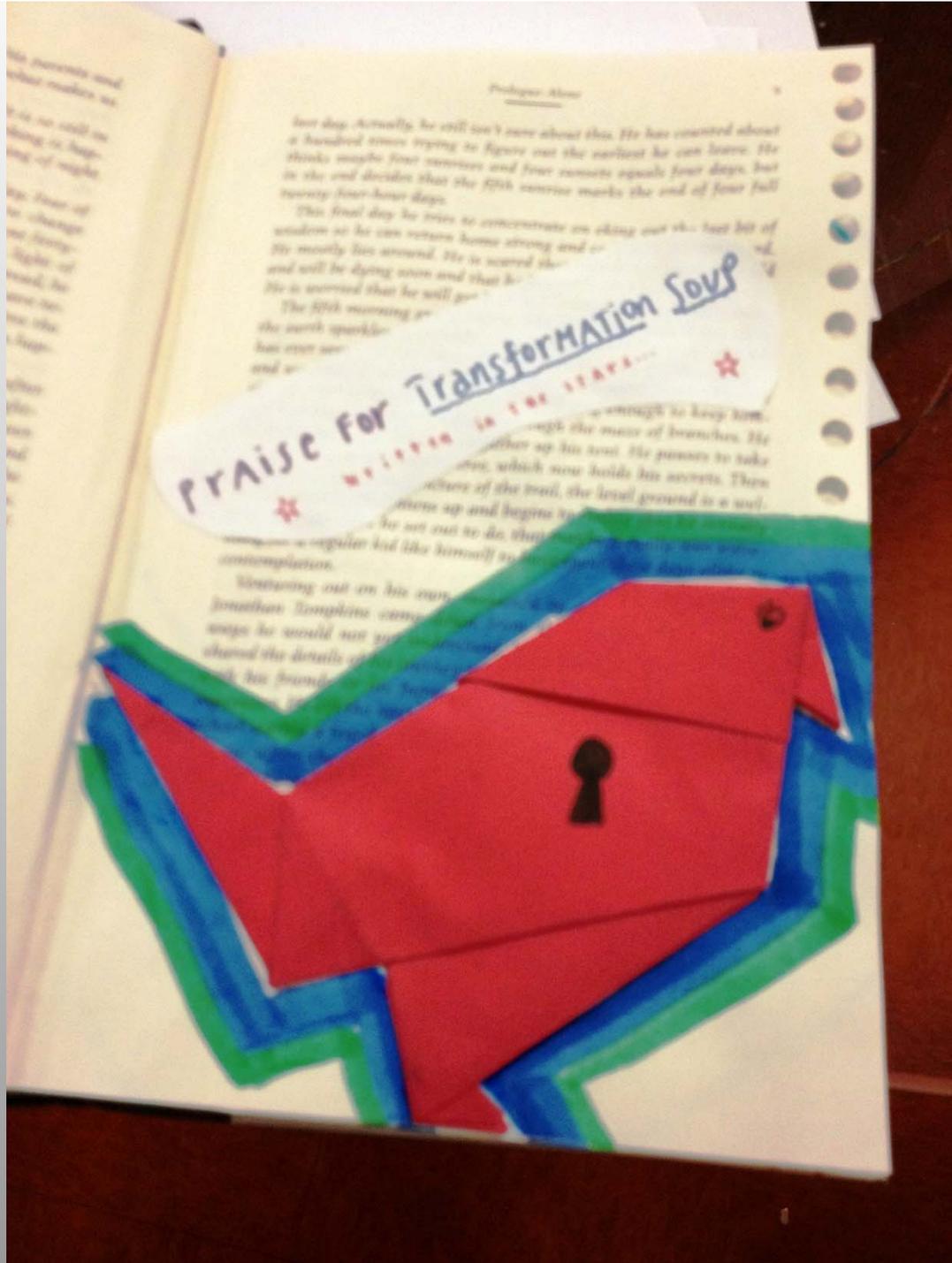
Strength does not
come from physical
capacities. It comes from
an indomitable will.
Gandhi

are A or B students."
By the time she
practically apople
locker comm
exactly beca

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was selling in the
obvious—"Many
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last day. Actually, he still isn't sure about this. He has counted about a hundred times trying to figure out the earliest he can leave. He thinks maybe four evenings and four mornings equals four days, but in the end decides that the fifth morning marks the end of four full twenty-four-hour days.

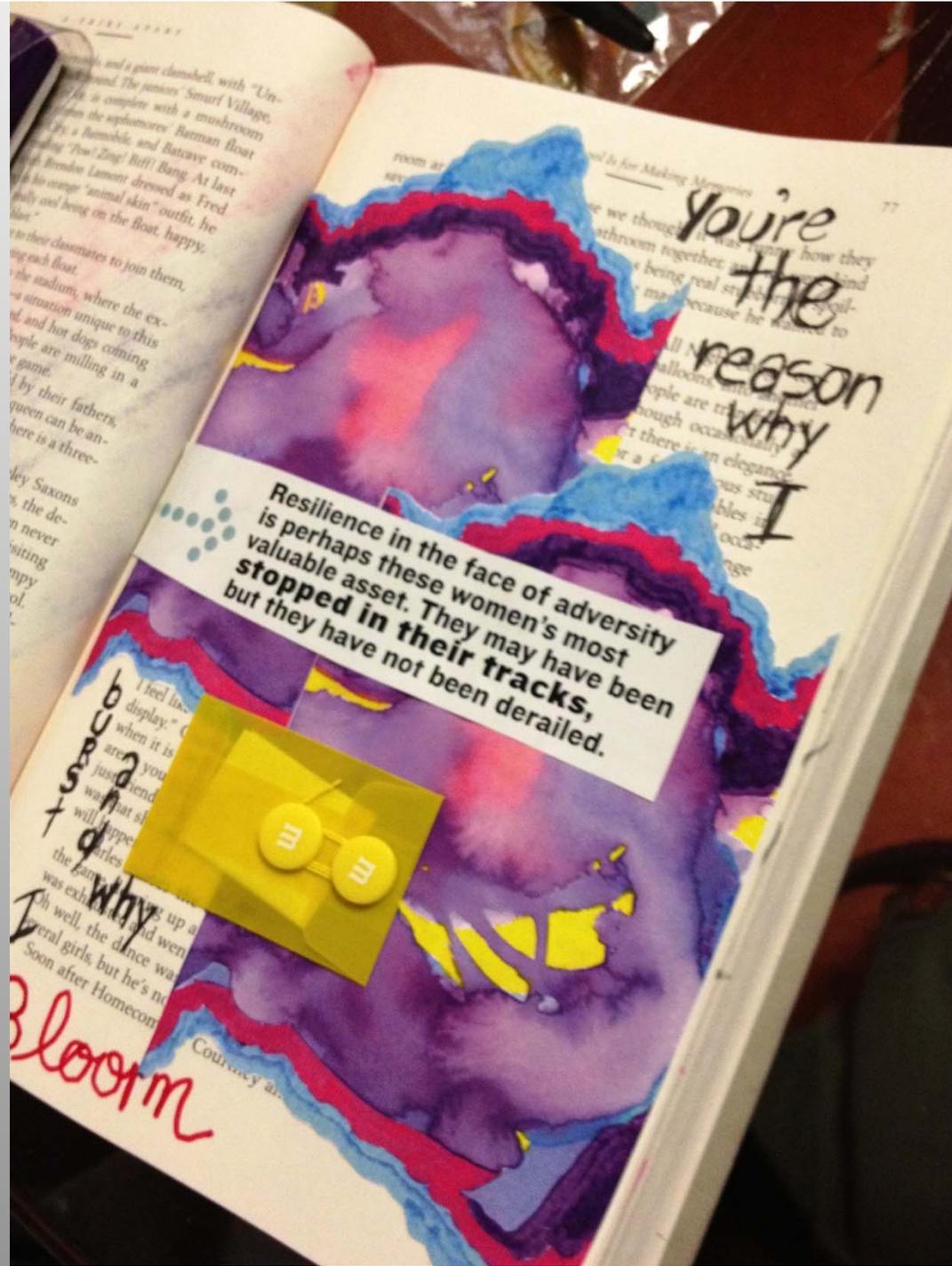
The first day he tries to concentrate on sking out the best bit of wisdom so he can return home strong and confident. He is scared and will be dying soon and that he is worried that he will go.

The fifth morning as the north sparkles has even seen and...

PRAISE FOR Transformation Soup
WILSON IN THE LEAF...

...enough to keep him. He gathers up his tent. He passes to take care, which now holds his secrets. Then, before the trail, the level ground is a wall. He sets out to do, that...

...regular kid like himself to... contemplation. Staring out on his sun... Jonathan Tompkins came... says he would not... showed the details of... with his friends...



Resilience in the face of adversity is perhaps these women's most valuable asset. They may have been **stopped in their tracks**, but they have not been derailed.

You're the reason why I

I feel like
display." C
when it is
area you
just friend
was that sl
will happen
shiries
the game
was excited
Oh well, the dance was
Several girls, but he's not
Soon after Homecom

Bloom

Courtesy at

and a giant clamshell, with "Un-
ground. The junior 'Smart Village'
It is complete with a mushroom
the sophomores' Batman float
By a Bumble and Batwave float
aking 'Zoo Zing! Bill! Bang! At last
ugh Brendo Lamoni dressed as Fred
to his orange "animal skin" outfit, he
fully and being on the float, happy.
to their classmates to join them,
ing each float.
the stadium, where the ex-
a situation unique to this
nd, and hot dogs coming
people are milling in a
e game.
d by their fathers,
queen can be an-
here is a three-
ley Saxons
s, the de-
n never
sitting
mpy
ol.

room at
and is for Making Memories
77
we thought it was funny how they
athroom together and
s being real students
most because he wanted to
All N
balloons, and
people are tr
ough occasionally
t there is an elegance
ous stu
bles in
occu-
nge









PLEASE

STAY

alive

DID YOU GO?







Crazy Priorities

the insane cost
of abandoning
troubled minds.

Art for Life at Grassroots

THE COASTER PROJECT:

***UNBELIEVABLE THINGS PEOPLE SAY AFTER A
SUICIDE OR SUICIDE ATTEMPT***



Coaster Project

Death makes people uncomfortable. How often have we heard the words, “I don’t know what to say.” After the suicide death of my youngest son, I know that many people didn’t know how to react. In an effort to help me cope with my devastating loss, many friends and colleagues tried to find words of comfort, or words to make sense of something that could not be explained.

Some words said to me were unnecessary, some were hurtful, and some were just silly. I had suffered the loss of my sweet son, whom I loved more than I can describe. It was such a profound loss, and how could words affect me? Early on I decided not to let the words of others hurt me. I didn’t want to become bitter. Most did not even know what they said. But the fact that I can remember them at all means that they were still inside me, and I did not want to carry those words around with me.

The most helpful thing in my healing journey was to make art. I found that through art I could take some of the pain and loss that I felt and put it on a page. Slowly, I began to heal. So why not take all of the words that were stuck in my head and put them onto coasters? Sitting with my friends who share a similar loss, we found ourselves laughing and sharing our latest creation. The process was so amazing. And we all found ourselves using the most perfect words to describe how we felt. One word comes to mind, spoken by my dear friend Sara, who lost her daughter Kara. Although it is now almost a cliché, but no one says, “Really?” quite like Sara. I think that simple word sums up “The Coaster Project.”

Jill, mother of Jay

SHE WAS

SELFISH



You Don't have Any
Reason to feel this
way...



Look How much you've
got to Be Grateful
For!

Are you
trying to go to





You know, God only lends
us our children ...



- 32 years?
- 20 years?
- 15 years?
- 10 years?
- 5 years?

Art for Life

The Coaster

Unbelievable things peo

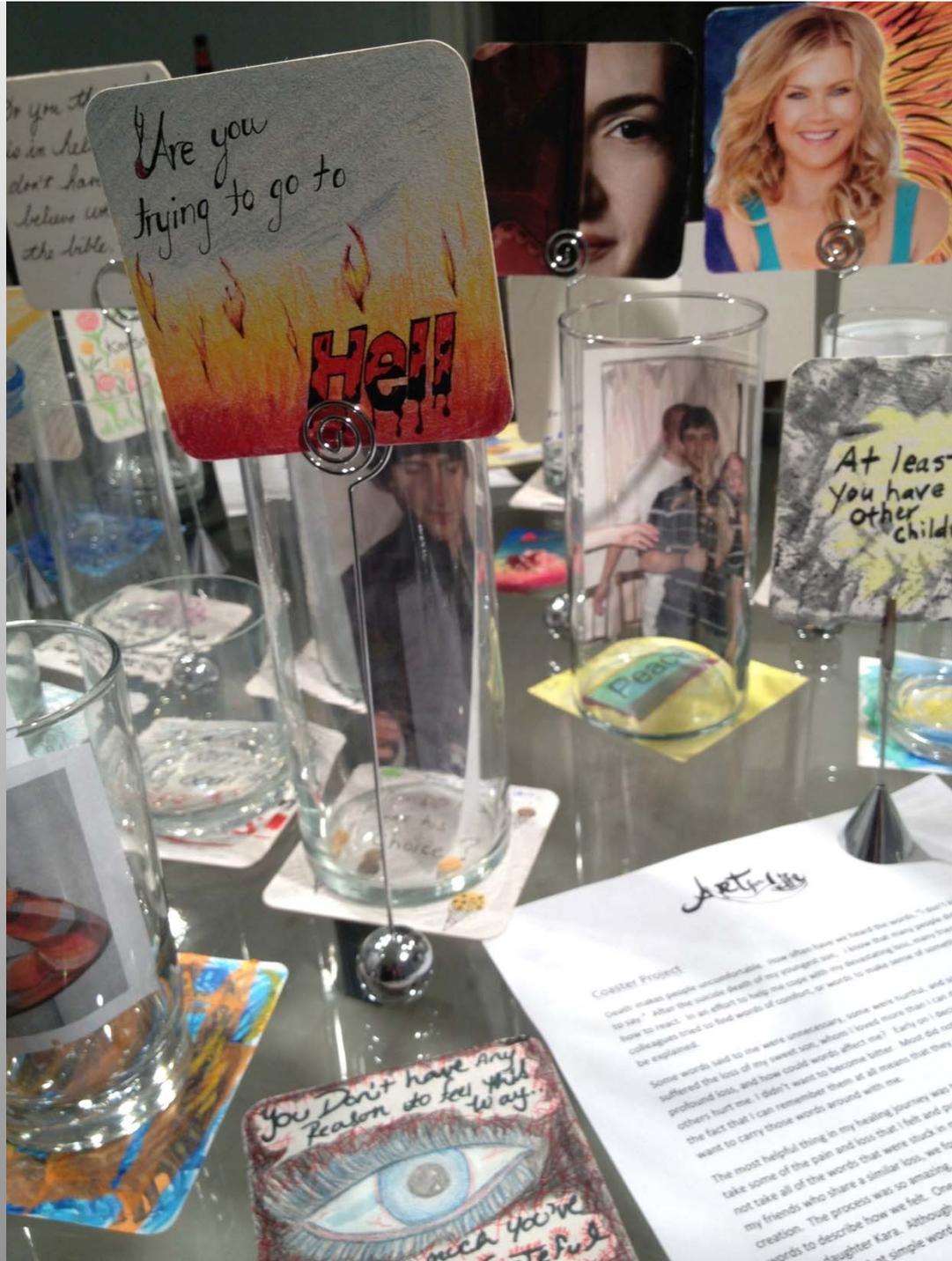
Drawings, paintings, wo
on coasters to express
directly to survivors, s
after a loved
a

asters illustra
a card table w

of the p

Please p

Art fo
wa



Do you th
is an hel
don't han
believe in
the bible.

Are you
trying to go to
Hell

At least
you have
other
children

You don't have any
reason to feel this
way.
much you've
teful

Art Therapy

Coaster Project

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*“Rather than focusing on the relationship with the art therapist, the **open studio process** seeks to promote the relationship each one of us has with the artist within, or between the self and the soul...the community studio is a place of all possibility.”*

(Allen, 1995)