

There was a sort of blissfulness that I felt in my childhood. A feeling of ultimate security and warmth. I was grateful enough to have a childhood where the people in my life made me feel so loved. However, there is selfishness that comes with being a child. I realized just recently that I don't know the people that raised me. I have only thought of them as existing for as long as I have, but they had lived so long without me. With this realization, I now feel that I have lost time with the people I love most. My art reflects this feeling. It is reconciliation for lost time. In the two rooms, I have created I wanted to describe the essence of two people; Waniso and Jodi. The artwork is a tribute to them.

In these rooms, I have recreated both love and immaturity. There is innocence and horror. Joy and fright. All driven by the womanhood that I have observed in childhood and in coming into my own. The rooms reflect what is unsaid, but too obvious to be ignored. Those things that frighten me and others, but I find the bravery within myself to express it in the intricate detailing of plates, bathtubs, mermaids, beds, ... body parts and monsters. It's horrific but truthful and beautiful. So often in my art process, I try to describe myself and my personal emotions. These pieces are unique because I had to consider others before myself, and through the art-making process I felt a sense of maturity.

The product of this process is the healing of my past. Expressing the emotions through multidimensional objects. In exposing the vulnerability of others and myself touches a part of all of our humanity. I hope that the viewer might be moved by these pieces. To see that although it is terrifying, there is a beauty that exists in its horror.

Sekai B.

Albuquerque, NM

**Writers Note:**

*As a child I don't think I was capable of listening. When you are young you believe that the world was created just for you. That the people in your life were made to listen and love. That everyone wants to watch you and hear what you have to say. I was grateful enough to have a childhood where those people who loved me truly made me feel that way. I felt constantly held and believed in. I was surrounded by a warmth and love that convinced me of my importance. But as a child I only saw the importance of myself. I am always trying to define what marked my transition from girl to woman. The distinction is hard for me to describe but so much of being a woman to me has been learning how to pay attention. Of course I am still learning but I believe now that is childish to only want to hear the sound of your own voice. I feel sometimes that I don't know the people I love most. I feel like I've lost time with them. Not absorbing enough of their knowledge. And now as I am becoming older, I am trying to reconcile with that lost time. The people that have raised me are such beautiful individuals. I did not consider how many lives they have lived before knowing me. Instead I thought of them as only existing for as long as I have. Now I am beginning to conceptualize the time they spent before me. And with it I find myself growing. To care about others is in some ways the essence of maturing.*

*These following pages are passages about women who have shaped who I am. They are about the things I learned about the people I love when I realized I should listen.*

## **Jodi**

### *Her Home*

It is easiest for me to describe her through her home. Her house sits quietly on plum street. The floors of sodden creaky wood, slope downwards as you walk across the house. I have always wondered why the unevenness of her home doesn't bother her as much as most things do. I could tell you about every detail in that house because it's the first one I remember. There is something that feels so alive about it. When I was a child I used to talk to the paintings thinking they could hear me. I felt like the whole house was moving and listening. I still believe it does. Being alone in that house makes me feel afraid. There is a feeling it gives me of being overly watched. The house is not meant for you to exist alone in it. It sings with us. Laughs with us. Rattles when we dance. Echoes when we argue. Holds us when we cry. When you're alone in it you are afraid of your own voice. The silence doesn't sit well but neither do you, talking and moving alone. That house gave me something as a child that I'll never shake off. I swear there's something alive in there. It is simultaneously beautiful and terrifying. And in its deepest sense, every time you enter the house, you feel like you belong.

### *Sunday Dinners*

You wouldn't bring someone you didn't love to a Sunday dinner. That's something my sister and I say. It's one of our universal truths. Sunday dinners are for people you feel are deserving. That house will test you and spit you out like a bad seed. Regardless if you're sweet or sour, that house will reveal something about yourself you didn't even know you had. That's another thing we would say because her home was on plum street. If the plum street house could tell us things, we wonder what it would say about everyone that comes to a Sunday dinner. What do you think of me? That's the first thing I would ask if the plum house had a voice.

I would arrive at 7pm every week for dinner. She wasn't upset by tardiness but hurt by it, as if my timeliness dictated her importances. Although the house was spacious, everyone who came to a Sunday dinner mostly just remained in the kitchen. I think we all felt safe there. The tradition of a Sunday dinner has existed for much longer than I, but the people in attendance have generally stayed the same. I often find myself wondering what the dinners must have been like when everyone was younger. I think back then, it was a time for excitement and freedom. A time where dreams could be conceived of and believed in. Now I believe it is a time of nurturing because my god mother does such a beautiful job of mothering whoever enters the house.

### *The Nights and the Mornings*

I think we were raised in this house even though we didn't live in it. It's a strange feeling to have. I feel as though my childhood exists in her home despite the fact that only a small portion of my life was spent in it. It is the recurrence and permanence of the house that makes me think it is my home. My memories of the house are some of my most prominent in terms of being held and loved. I picture the house in the night and early mornings. In the night I think of the baths she used to run for us. We would sit in it with full bellies, feeling satisfied and cared for. After our bath she would wrap us in towels and give us kisses all over our faces. They were the type of kisses that you could feel on your skin for days. You couldn't wipe them off but you wouldn't even if you could. We would then be tucked into bed and a book or two would be read to us. She had a whole shelf of children's books. The best ones I've ever had read to me. Now if I think about it there is something sad about a house with so many children's books and no children. That was only one of the things in the house that was meant for children. Perhaps the house was constantly waiting for a child to walk through the door that was always open. Maybe that's why I always felt important in the house. She would sing us a lullaby and would stroke our hair as we fell asleep. She had told us once that in school people would tell her how awful her voice was. I didn't understand this because to me it sounded like being blanketed from the world. It felt like home. In the mornings we would sit in her kitchen and eat pancakes with raspberry jam. I would tell everyone about a dream I had. Her and the house would lean in to listen.

### *The Fear*

She told me that she had lost her mother when she was young. Too young. She said her death felt unresolved and sudden. In the house there is an altar of her that sits on a table with fragile legs. As children we used to be afraid of accidentally knocking it down. Sometimes we almost would. The table would shake, and we'd think it was going to fall over but it never did. It was much sturdier than we thought. A few years after learning about the death of her mother I learnt that she wasn't able to have children. I never asked why but I've been told that her mother took a medication while she was pregnant with her that made her infertile. Someone told me her uterus is twisted up, making it impossible for her to carry a child. With the death of her mother and the inability to conceive a child I can't help but think that my god mother has been haunted by motherhood. The same thing that haunts her house. She once told someone that she said the greatest gift in her life was receiving us as god children. After telling them this she paused for a long time and muttered "but they always leave". Those words have gotten stuck in me for a long time. It's the same feeling I get when I'm leaving the house. It's like something is trying to pull me back in begging me to stay. My god mother searched for motherhood when she could not find it within herself. Her innate need to nurture has plagued her. She is afraid the people she cares for will leave for one day. There is an unspoken desperation that her and the house share. They're terrified of being left alone.

## **Waniso**

### *Just a Short Reminder of how We've Grown*

Just the other night, while watching our favorite show mom came in the room and we got lost in conversation as we often do. She told us how thankful she's been feeling to be able to share this time with us. We're all moving along now to different chapters of our lives. We're taking big steps and we're walking them alone. So she just came in to tell us how much she loves and appreciates these moments. We all recognize that these might be the last days in which we live all together. Instead of feeling sad over time that flew so quickly we have all chosen to just to celebrate who we have become and support each other in who we are becoming. We have all grown so much. We built a home. We are all so different now from when we first started building it. I think mom just wanted to come into our room and recognize that. We love you so deeply. We're so glad you exist.

*The Things You Never Say*

There are some words that are just stuck in you. I don't know how many. I don't know when they were put there. I don't know if you've written them down somewhere in a place that's only yours. I'm not even sure how aware you are about the things you'll never say. I wish sometimes that I could shake out all your thoughts. I'd do anything for your honesty. You always hold things back and I always claim it as your weakness. Too often do I mistake courage for bluntness and simultaneously hurt you. But sometimes when your thoughts come rushing out all at once I am terrified. It's like you remembered all your stuck thoughts and they exist all at once. As if you didn't write them down somewhere to let them go, but instead kept them with you all for one moment. You told me once that when you feel like that it's almost like dying. I can't say I fully know what you mean, but I am fascinated by your belief that vulnerability is the closest you've ever felt to death.



*One Bed In a Hot Summer*

When it is harder to sleep sometimes we'd seek affirmations from each other or just share a thought that came to mind

We asked ourselves questions out loud

What is a woman?

Why do people believe in hell?

Do you remember when we lived in what we called the yellow mustard house?

Remember the first time we wrote a song?

What was it called?

How did it go again ?

Ah yes something like that

Did she have green eyes or blue?

How do you think I'll look when I am older?

Would you ever?

Have you ever?

Will you ever?

Your answers were more candid and mine were kinder which meant we both were more like each other.

We were curled up sharing half the bed. I tell you that in the mornings I put my arm around you after having a bad dream. It seems like a childish thing to say but what I really mean to tell you is how much I appreciate our ability to hold each other simultaneously.

We agree on seemingly everything at night which makes it easier to speak without direction

We are constantly proving ourselves

It's a game we've play since we were young

But these conversations don't need to be decent and clean

But sometimes I wish I could convince you of something

I don't think I ever have because you've always learned things before me

You place a hand on my head and tell me you're going to bless me

Make the nightmares go always

Maybe we are silly in thinking you've got some type of magic

And me thinking you can fix all my problems with it

But there's no one around to tell us we're foolish

And we wouldn't care even if there was

Oh I wish I wish I say before we go to bed

What do you wish? You would ask

We've got everything we want right here

RIGHT NOW

Everything but two beds

### *What Are the Things We Have Forgotten*

Most of what we remember from our childhoods are recollections from other people. There is so much that is lost through those recollections. And although it would be impossible for us to know everything, I am afraid we have forgotten too much. We have forgotten how our past moments have shaped us, even the one we can't remember them. I am writing this because I remember how the room felt when mom told you about what happened to you when you were a baby. I remember how it changed you. And now it has me thinking about all the other moments we haven't been told happened and about the ones we lost. But somehow they are still in us, determining who we are. Mom told you that her brother and father died the same year you were born. She said that the people in your life tried to shield you from that trauma, but that it was impossible. All the pain was put on you just as much as all the nurturing was. Mom says she wouldn't have made it without you. I can't forget how she said it. We always think that an infant needs their mother more than a mother needs the child, but it didn't work that way with you. You have always assumed the role of having to care for everyone. I'd always wondered if you missed the time you had where you could be selfish and free, but now I understand that you never had it.



## Annotated Bibliography

Buckley, Dylan. "What Is the Psychology of Fear?" *BetterHelp.com*, 15 Nov. 2019, [www.betterhelp.com/advice/psychologists/what-is-the-psychology-of-fear/](http://www.betterhelp.com/advice/psychologists/what-is-the-psychology-of-fear/). Accessed 29 Apr. 2020.

This article breaks down the psychoanalysis of fear. It discusses the difference between our bio chemical reactions to fear and our emotional reactions to it.

*“Well, it's something that essentially occurs when we encounter something that we can't understand, control, or that we think will harm us.*

*When fear becomes a habit, we often forget why we began to fear something in the first place. Where does your fear come from? What was the first situation that led to the cycle of fear in your life? Understanding the root of our fear gives us further insight into our reasoning and helps us identify some of the ways that we can begin to face and disarm these fear responses.*

*The natural ones are the ones that we are born with. If you end up going toe-to-toe with a massive lion that could potentially injure you, that's a natural fear. Then, there are the conditioned fears, which are formed when something negative happens in the past and we become fearful of it happening again. Why does this happen? Well, it's an irrational response to something because our brain kind of deludes us into thinking that similar circumstances will lead to the same outcome.”*

This work is important because it is able to clearly and concisely summarize fear. Being able to read this article deepened my understanding of my own personal struggles with fear.

In my writing I will be referencing the emotional aspect of fear as talked about in the article. I will be able to properly analyze the fears that the people I am writing about face.

Freud, Sigmund. "Part Three: General Theory of the Neuroses XXV. Fear and Anxiety." *Bartleby.com*, [www.bartleby.com/283/25.html](http://www.bartleby.com/283/25.html). Accessed 29 Apr. 2020.

This article was a chapter from a book by Sigmund Freud. In the chapter Freud is able to summarize our human relationship to fear and he is able to distinguish the fear

from other emotions that are similar it. He essentially differentiates fear, fright, and anxiety.

*“At other times superior knowledge promulgates fear, because it recognizes the danger earlier. The savage, for instance, will recoil before a footprint in the woods, meaningless to the uninstructed, which reveals to him the proximity of an animal of prey; the experienced sailor will notice a little cloud, which tells him of a coming hurricane, with terror, while to the passenger it seems insignificant.*

*Of course, we are convinced that the tendency to repetition of the first condition of fear has been so deeply ingrained in the organism through countless generations, that not a single individual can escape the emotion of fear; not even the mythical Macduff who was “cut out of his mother’s womb,” and therefore did not experience birth itself. We do not know the prototype of the condition of fear in the case of other mammals, and so we do not know the complex of emotions that in them is the equivalent of our fear.”*

This work is important because it is engaging. Freud is capable of making science beautifully poetic. His ideas are creative, and he is able to make a psychoanalysis unique.

I used Freud’s work as the basis of my summary of research in the art proposal. His words in the article describe the essence of the essential question.

Joyce, Carolyn. "Fear of Abandonment." *Psychalive.org*, PsychAlive, [www.psychalive.org/fear-of-abandonment/](http://www.psychalive.org/fear-of-abandonment/). Accessed 29 May 2020.

This article talks about the fear of loneliness and how it is developed. It explains how fear of abandonments starts at a very young age and is determined by how you were raised. In some cases, fear of loneliness is so severe that it develops into a phobia of being left alone in any situation.

*A person’s early attachment history acts as an internal working model for how he or she expects relationships to work. As a result, people may carry their childhood insecurities and expectations for how others will behave into their adult relationships. Children who experience an ambivalent attachment pattern may grow to have a preoccupied attachment pattern as adults, in which they continue to feel insecure in their relationships. They “often feel desperate and assume the role of the “pursuer”*

*in a relationship,” wrote Joyce Catlett, co-author of Compassionate Child Rearing. “They rely heavily on their partner to validate their self-worth. Because they grew up insecure based on the inconsistent availability of their caregivers, they are “rejection-sensitive.” They anticipate rejection or abandonment and look for signs that their partner is losing interest.”*

The article talks about coping with fear of loneliness but also how to handle someone with the fear. It was important for me to read this article to better understand the people in my life that struggle with this fear. It was also important to learn about the causes of the fear.

In my writing I will be using this information as a guide to write a narrative about my godmother who struggles with this fear. With the understanding of where this fear originated from I will be able to more accurately write about it. I also have a lot more empathy and compassion for her now after reading the article.