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Section Introduction: In Retrospect

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In Retrospect

We all spend time looking back on our past with some degree of criticism. Life is full of choices, sometimes ones that we're not even aware of making, so when making those consequential decisions there's always that feeling of the unknown looming over us. There is no way for us to know how our lives are going to go or how to prepare for what's waiting for us down the road. "In Retrospect" is an ode to that unknown, exploring how we look upon our past with the knowledge we have in the present of how those events have changed us.

In R. Grayson Ittig's piece, "A Wood for the Unwanted," Ittig reflects on the events that took place in his home life, how they shaped and changed the way he was perceived by others, and even how he perceived himself. Ittig discusses the hardships of having a father who, similar to him, "is one thing to the outside world and quite another within his own house." We follow Ittig through his journey with self identity, religion, and a determination to not become his father. With the help of Henry David Thoreau and other writers, the story follows a unique pattern that helps the reader grow a deep connection with Ittig's narrative.

Kennedee Robinson pulls at heart strings in her piece "Checkmate," telling a beautiful story of her and her father's final game of chess together. Robinson uses chess as a vessel to discuss the complexities of relationships, growth, and life. As the story navigates the final game of chess, we learn more about the author and her father, their interests, their values, and their love for one another. Beautifully written and incredibly vivid, this piece is deeply emotional and moving.

Robinson reflects on her past while keeping herself present. Recalling her father's words, she writes: "'You play for the present,' he would say. You plan your movements all the while aware that it is impossible to foretell the outcome two moves in the future."

There are certain memories that tend to stick to us and reside in our consciousness indefinitely. Trauma has the ability to define a person for better or for worse, and Brian T. Shaw creatively conveys this in a piece composed solely of four-word sentences. In "How Does One Cope," he recounts a childhood memory surviving a home invasion that left one person deceased. Fear, pain, and survival are all central themes in Shaw's powerful essay.

Amital Shapiro's personal essay "When It Happened" explores the mental and emotional toll that trauma from a sexual assault has on a woman and her family through her own personal experience. Shapiro's piece is a powerful letter to the public addressing the reality that girls must understand from a young age, as Shapiro states, "While we hear the statistic '1-in-5 women' all the time, digesting the harsh reality was its own pill to swallow."

This section highlights the complexities of the unknown—how the events that take place in our present have an effect on our future, sometimes unbeknownst to us. Our authors look back on moments from the past that have shaped them into the people they are today. These stories contend with identity, growth, and remembrance. As you read, you may think of the journey that led you to where you stand today.

— John Adams, Calvin Flaherty,
and Grace Underwood