

## Mr. Rogers Was Wrong

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Gregory Manni

labyrinthine corridors of cookie cutters  
houses like records with repeats and stutters

I'm not sure when, but probably around the time the neighborhood kids stopped coming outside to play, I realized I don't like the manicured lawns or the silent echo of concrete streets. To me, it's an in-between. Not social enough, as everyone closes their front doors, back doors, blinds, and garage doors, and not natural enough, with tall white fences that tower over neatly sheared trees.

*Heaven forbid* I see your child playing in the yard beyond that alabaster barricade. *Heaven forbid* I get a glimpse of my own childhood, when the plastic sandbox was still as open as the seashore, and the patio brick anthills were giant like mountains. *Heaven forbid* he get a glimpse of *me*.

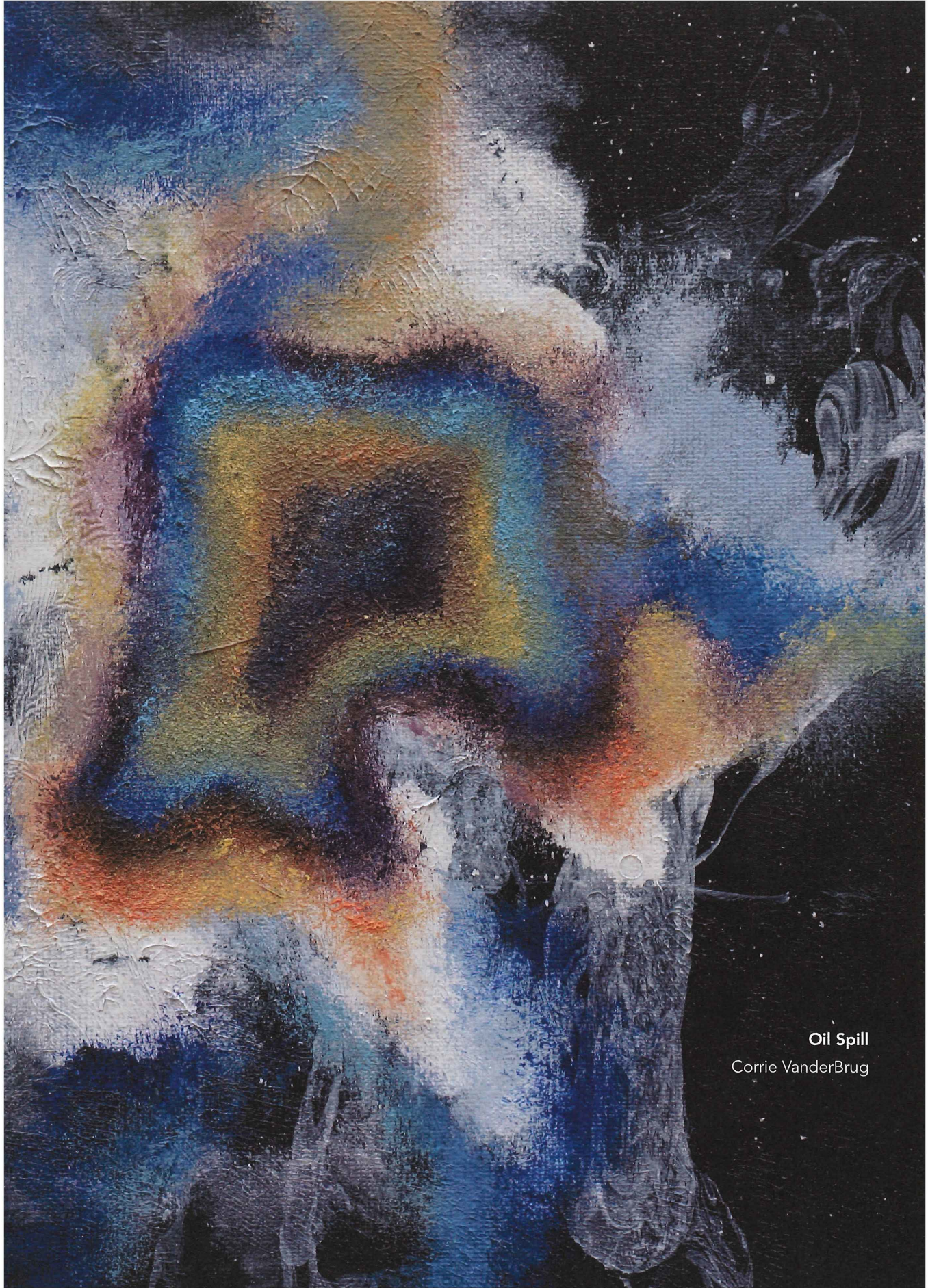
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"When those kids stop walking on the black path, we can plant grass seed over it, post a sign, and call it a park. There will be birds and bees and *no one will know*. Yeah, the housing development down the street is going up fine. We're telling people it's the perfect haven after a long drive from work, where you can sit, and watch the sun fall, and you don't have to say a word to anyone. You don't have to wave to them. You don't have to look at them."

The trees that found their way without a blueprint, the ones that grew on their own, stick out of fresh asphalt like innocent splinters; you can drive by and "Observe what nature might have looked like!"

In the next room, there is an exhibit on picnic blankets, where humans would sit and laugh and eat together.





**Oil Spill**

Corrie VanderBrug