

LEGACY

READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

XVII

2018





LEGACY
2018 | XVII

READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
10 SOUTH SECOND STREET
READING, PA 19603
WWW.RACC.EDU

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The staff members of *Legacy* are excited to present this year's edition of our journal.

We would like to thank everyone whose work lives in these pages. We greatly appreciate the contributions of RACC's student body that allows *Legacy* to exist and, as happens every year, we cannot express how difficult it was to select these few pieces out of all the truly deserving submissions we received this year. We are continually impressed by the level of creativity RACC students have, and we are honored to represent the cultural diversity of our college.

To Dr. Anna Weitz, our president, thank you for everything you have done for the college. Your influence in growing our school and your tireless support of *Legacy* are felt in more ways than you know, and we will be forever grateful.

Thanks to Dr. Susan Looney, as both our provost and our incoming president, for her support, and to the faculty and administration for creating an aura of learning that enriches our community—and our journal.

Lastly, we would like to thank our faculty advisor, Dr. Bahar Diken, for supporting us along the journey to creating *Legacy*, to DJ Plante and Nicholas Bellman for their dedication to making this year's journal a success, and to our alumni members Kha Nguyen and Austin Graczyk for their guidance.

*Cover Image: "Tropical Beauty" by Christopher Barrera
Cover Design by Nicholas Bellman*

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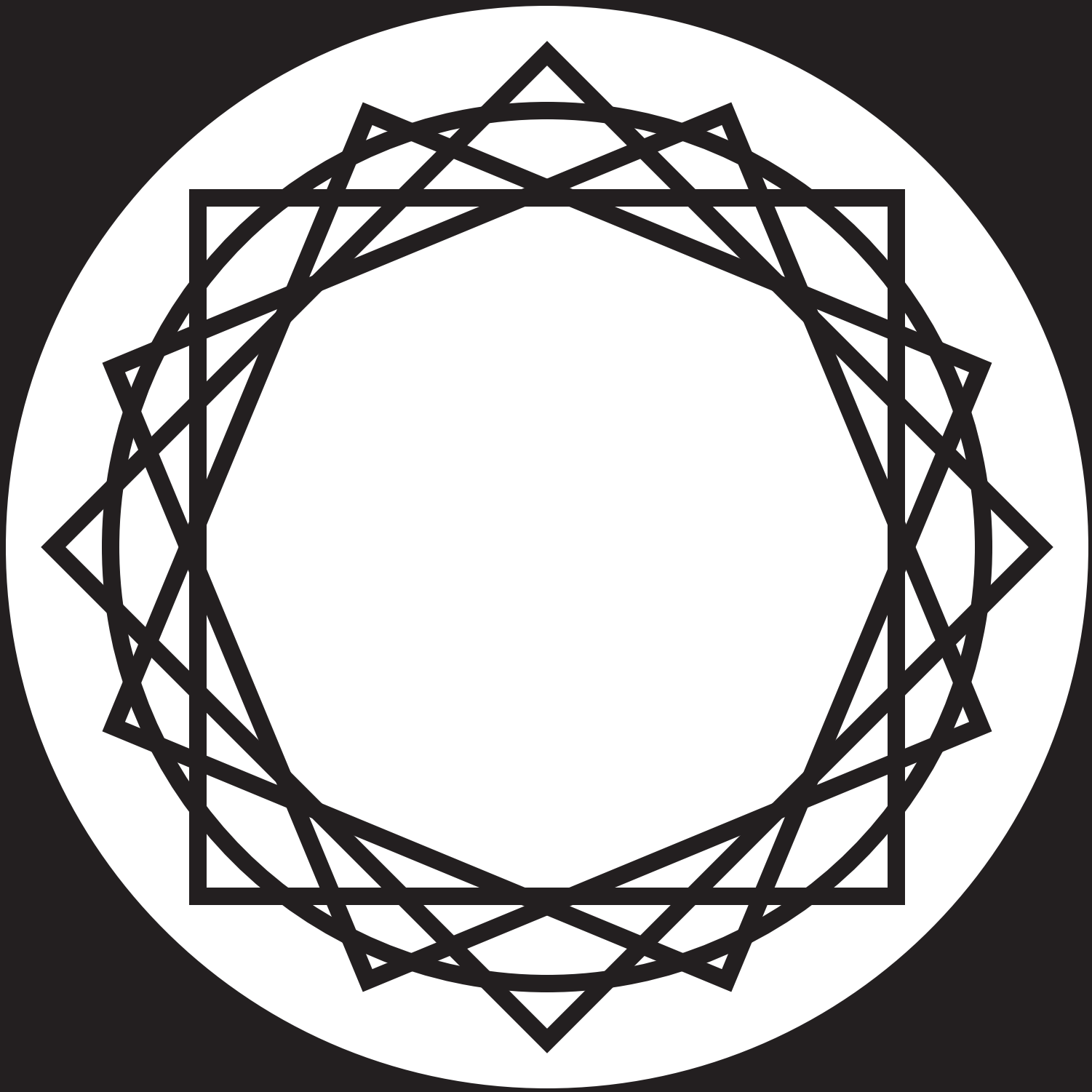
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TO THE READER

It has been said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Perhaps this is true on some level, but it is certainly not an absolute. Beauty, you see, is in the beholder. Each of us brings with us our own aesthetics in our appreciation of any piece of art. The words we read, too, are colored by the ways in which we interact with a poem or story. Can we ever really know beyond all that lies in our hearts what is meant by a single image or poem?

Wherever we go, there we are. And all that we bring with us colors and gives life to all that we see and hear. It is you, the reader, who imbues nuance to the words you read. It is you who adds meaning and depth to the works that you allow your eyes to rest upon. You not only add beauty, but you are, indeed the beauty that you see. To paraphrase the Buddha, all that you see is all that you are.

—And you are beautiful!

It is only through the reader and viewer that life is given to any crafting of words, or color, lines, and space. If our budget allowed, we would have included a box of colored pencils for you to make these pages your own, merging our voices and visions together, and so coming full circle.

-DJ PLANTE



SAFE HAVEN

*Hannah Elizabeth High
Ink*

THE DELINQUENT WRITER PART II: THE STARVING LIFE ARTIST

Nicholas Galiano

Tumultuous Youth, you write like a serial killer waiting to get caught. You are smug. In your paranoid day-mares, you dream that someone is reading your paper and calling you on your bullshit. So, you write; you write and you think; and when you think, you philosophize; and when you write, you scribe; and you still don't know if or when you're using semi-colons right.

Impetuous Fool, you don't want to do your assignment. You can't do your assignment, because you don't want to do your assignment. You want to strangle your assignment; you want to wrap your knobs around its throat and squeeze until the blood-shots in its eyes bulge, fit to burst, and you see pink and pink and red and red and blood pooling in its eyes, until you hear it snap. You want your assignment dead. You want it dead and you want to kill it. You don't want to do your writing assignment; you want to write. *Tumultuous youth*, you are a fool.

Starving Life Artist, you are a damned fool. You are damned; you are damned to excellence. You will never write simply as you must, for you must write more, and you will pain and you will hate, but you will endure, and you will turn in your goddamned homework – sometimes. *Life Artist*, why do you starve?

Writer, you are a writer. You will write, *Writer*. You will live, and you will write; and you will write life, and you *will* write, right? You have a writer's

hands. You are starving, *Life Writer*. You starve because you are alive.

Impetuous Youth, I see you. *Proud Fool*, I watch you. How you grind your jaw as they read your writing and try to think of “ways it can improve.” How you clench your fist as your girlfriend's younger brother gives you advice on – anything. You are angry and you are young. But it is not your anger that is your strength; it is your passion. It is not your youth that is your resilience; it is the depth of your roots. But, as the hill erodes from beneath the place where your seed falls, you must dig deeper. You must reach deeper. Time is not the termination of your vitality; it is the infinity of your power.

Ancient Soul, you are human now. *Human sapling*, you are vain and you are petty. Your depth is stunted by your fear of learning; you want to invent knowledge, not just to relearn the wisdoms of your past selves. You want to be greater than the bear and greater than the crow; you want to be greater than the mighty willow, but you are too busy trying not to be human. You don't want to “improve”: you want to transcend.

Human Clone, you must break the earth before you can become a tree.

Tumultuous Youth, you must shatter the sky before you can touch the stars.

DINER VIBES
*Ali Young
Photography*



SLICED LEMONS AND A CUP OF WATER

Christopher Smith-Thompson

Excuse me, yeah, waitress with the pretty smile
Could I have a second of your time and talk to you for a little while?
See, I don't normally do this
When approaching women, I'm a little clueless
But I promised I'd get through this, even if I sound a little stupid
See, you might not remember but last week we met—sorta
I'm the guy that decided to develop that terrible stutter
When all you did was ask for my order
And all I sputtered was sliced lemons and a cup of water
Yeah. I'm that guy.
I swear, I'm not normally that shy
But when it came to you—
For once in my life I had become completely petrified.
But that day you must have taken a lunch break or somethin'
Because later you sat by my table and we began to talk and
For ten minutes our talkin' turned into laughter in between light discussion
And you left me with an impression that really got me to wonderin'
Cause I don't believe in love at first sight—I'm a realist
It's impossible for someone to fall for someone else in an instance
But ten minutes is not an instance, is it?
For me, it was all I would need from start to finish
To comprehend everything I was feeling
For you, was no spoof, but the truth coming to fruition
In those ten minutes our souls sung symphonies
With songs that predated the history
Of our existence

Ancient prophets probably looked in the skies
Watched the stars multiply, divide, then realign
In order to prophecy the destined meeting between you and me
Look, I'm just saying, understand why this is no coincidence
My passion for you was not man made
But simply god given in deliverance
And my god makes no mistakes
For years, I sat patiently in wait
For someone to make me feel the same way
You make me feel right now, today
See, you have no idea how many times I'd replay
This conversation in my mind, unsure of what you would say
But maybe some time I could take you out on a date?
Nice dinner at a restaurant or a movie back at my place
Or we could slow dance by moonlit romance decorated from space
While you're whisked away to a state of joy that'll never decay
Look, I'm not sure what it would take, but I just want to try
I just need ten more minutes shared between you and me
So we could maybe have ten more minutes after some other night
Until those ten minutes expand and mirrors the span of our lifetime
And with all of that said, you smiled while looking me in the eyes
And asked 'Hey, can I take your order?' And then I realize
You couldn't have heard a single word that I've said
Because once again, I've had this whole conversation all in my head
But rather than truly confessing all this emotion that I've bred
I'll just ask for sliced lemons and a cup of water instead



CAVITIES ADVOCATE
Hannah Elizabeth High
Acrylic

SURREALISM: THE STIRRINGS WITHIN THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND

Anisa Jackson

Under the pretense of civilization and progress, we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition, or fancy; forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices. It was, apparently, by pure chance that a part of our mental world which we pretended not to be concerned with any longer—and, in my opinion by far the most important part—has been brought back to light . . . The imagination is perhaps on the point of reasserting itself, of reclaiming its rights.

—ANDRE BRETON, *MANIFESTO OF SURREALISM*

Surrealism is one of the Avant-Garde art movements that demanded attention for its revolt against a society that had chosen to reject the intellect of the imagination and suppress its desires, burying them into its collective subconscious in the name of reason. Surrealist artists protested the rigid and uninspiring lifestyle which they believed was brought about by reason and societal limitations sequestering imagination and desire, and creating barriers between life and art (“Tapping the Unconscious”).

Surrealist artist Dorothea Tanning expresses her voice of protest through her artwork by encouraging acceptance and curiosity towards the female form and the recesses of the human mind, and challenging the conventional reasoning of the twentieth century. What Tanning and the Surrealists who preceded her convey in their work is the fact that Surrealism is not concerned with

earthly delights that appeal to the flesh or the senses but rather the euphoria and inspiration that stem from abstract concepts such as love and passion—feelings that an individual may find himself/herself wading through whilst loving and being loved—concepts that have long since evaded the realm of rational thought. And these abstract concepts, surrealists believe, stoke the flame of desire within the unconscious mind to be able to achieve their goal of tapping into the realities, intellect, and inspiration that are harbored within the subconscious mind.

Between her longing for losing herself in works of literature by Lewis Carroll and Hans Christian Anderson, and her passionate love affair with art, Tanning became acutely aware, at an early age, of the fact that her ideas and desires were far too large for her home in Galesburg, Illinois. After taking a few night classes at the Chicago Art

Institute and independently honing her artistic craft by visiting numerous museums and galleries, Tanning moved to New York in the spring of 1935, four years prior to the onset of WWII. While supporting herself as a commercial artist, Tanning encountered the 1936 *Fantastic Art: Dada and Surrealism* at the Museum of Modern Art, which kindled her lifelong interest in and relationship with Surrealism (“Dorothea Tanning”). However, it wasn’t until 1942 that Tanning created one of her most renowned paintings.

In the winter of 1942 Surrealist artist Max Ernst arrived at Tanning’s New York studio in hopes of convincing her to display some of her artwork in his wife’s exhibit of the works of female artists entitled *Thirty-One Women*. The Dorothea Tanning Foundation has preserved Tanning’s own words documenting both her fateful first encounter with Ernst and one of the sources of inspiration for her painting, *Birthday*:

At first there was only that one picture, a self-portrait. It was a modest canvas by present-day standards. But it filled my New York studio, the apartment’s back room, as if it had always been there. For one thing, it was the room; I had been struck, one day, by the fascinating array of doors—hall, kitchen, bathroom, studio crowded together, soliciting, my attention with their antic planes, light, shadows, imminent openings and shuttings. From there it was an easy leap to a dream of countless doors. Perhaps in a way it was a talisman for the things that were happening, an iteration of quiet event, line densities wrought in a crystal paperweight of time where nothing was expected to appear expect the finished canvas and, later, a few snowflakes, for the season was Christmas, 1942, and Max was my Christmas present. (*Birthday*)

Upon spotting Tanning’s intricate oil painting of a bare breasted woman standing before a labyrinth of doors with a lemur-like creature poised at her feet, Ernst inquired about what she had entitled the artwork, and when Tanning expressed that she had yet to come up with a title, Ernst replied, “Then you can call it Birthday” (*Birthday*). A fitting title because the painting commemorates Tanning’s thirtieth birthday. Shortly after their initial meeting, Ernst separated from his wife and married Tanning.

LIGHTBRINGER

Nicholas Galiano

Digital



"The painting is a self-portrait of Tanning, and a depiction of her dreams and unconscious self."

The painting *Birthday* is an oil on canvas that was made in Tanning's New York studio in 1942. Now the painting resides in the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Modern and Contemporary Art gallery. The painting is 40 ¼ x 25 ½ inches and slightly above the observer's direct line of focus but not high enough that one would have to crane his/her neck to gaze at the artwork. The immediate impression that the observer gains from gazing at *Birthday* is that both the central figure and the background embody emotional experiences that have roots within the unconscious mind. The central figure is a woman who is bare breasted and bare footed, which is often considered symbolic of freedom and the woman being in tune with herself physically and emotionally. The painting is a self-portrait of Tanning, and a depiction of her dreams and unconscious self, through which she displays the dreams and desires of the Surrealist movement's vision of tapping into the stirrings of the unconscious mind.

The woman depicted in the painting has an air of boldness and unconventionality that drapes an aura about her figure that is just as revealing and audacious as her bare breasts which are devoid of any shame or vanity, but instead exist within contentment—contentment with one's body and gender. Trailing behind the woman's brilliantly colored and embellished jacket is a cape that possesses both the color and shape of seaweed. But upon closer inspection, it can be discerned that the seaweed is an intricate mass of intertwined female

nude forms. The nudity that is present within the painting alludes to the themes of feminism and self-liberation that Tanning imbued into many of her artworks. The absurdity of the mass of writhing nude female forms as a cape and the strange black and white lemur-like creature that is poised at the feet of the woman are representative of the line between reality and fantasy marking the threshold that lies before the unconscious mind.

The labyrinth of open doors and shadows revealed behind the door that the young woman has opened, are representative of the complexity and haunting nature of the recesses of the human mind. This seems to be a representation that leaves the observer overwhelmed with intrigue and the fallout of being intimately disturbed. The shadows that the doors cast upon the wood flooring effortlessly plays with the contrasted lightness and darkness that exists within the tones of coloration within the painting. The individual planks of the wood flooring, the intricacies of the woman's outfit, and the detailing on the doors add texture to the painting. Taken together, these elements allow the painting to flow with the writhing forms on the cape and into the labyrinth that the doors and shadows create. Michael R. Taylor, an expert in modern art, describes Tanning's painting as "an announcement, a self-portrait hailing the arrival of an artist who emerged into the public eye with a fully formulated vision and an exquisitely flawless technique"(216).

Surrealism burst forth from the literary and artistic formation of Paris Dada in the early 1920's. In 1924 the poet and critic Andre Breton created an identity for Surrealism through his *Manifesto of Surrealism*, which assumes that access to the unconscious mind would allow poetry and painting to carve out liberation from artistic and sexual oppression. The Surrealists craved an "absolute" revolution that would completely overthrow the institutions that perpetuated the social reality and moral values that they regarded as stifling and an immediate danger to all that resides within the unconscious mind (Barber 427).

Breton became obsessed with the idea of unlocking the unconscious mind and he approached it through a means much like Sigmund Freud's use of hypnotism to unlock the patient's repressed memories. Embracing automatism, the performance of an action without any conscious thought or intention, Breton and his fellow Surrealists began the practice of allowing their unconscious desires to become manifested onto paper through writing, painting, and sketching: "Automatic writing - or automatism in general - was never intended as an end in itself; its only real purpose, Breton insists, was to elude all those forces - logic, morality, taste - which stand watch over the unconscious prevent its violent, destructive eruption into the normal, rational, bourgeois world" (Ray 402).

Breton realized that liberating the unconscious mind from society's rationality was critical to the survival of the Surrealist movement. Breton regarded automatism as a radical approach to art and the way to undo the repression that had placed consciousness and unconsciousness "in a state of mutual antagonism." Breton believed that this state prevented them from "experiencing release into a higher plane of surreality, transforming both thought and lived experience" (Barber 434). For the Surrealist movement to liberate the consciousness and unconsciousness, Breton insisted, it had to first liberate the society in which it existed. Using avant-garde texts and images, Surrealists attempted to incite a revolution that would cause the destruction of capitalism, rationality, and the bourgeois morality that stifled sexual liberation.

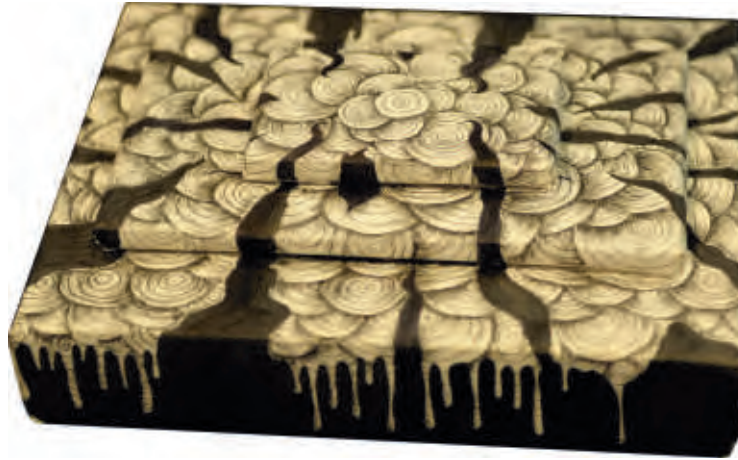
Shortly before the Russian Revolution that led to Joseph Stalin's rise to power, Breton became aware of the fact that the Surrealist movement was on the brink of losing its momentum and influence. This was partly due to the movement's lack of a political presence in a world that was constantly being divided by politics: "An aesthetic made to depend upon the conscious utilization of the forces of the unconscious was doomed to defeat unless some reliable method could be found for making entry into the unconscious feasible" (Bays 50). An abstract concept such as the unconscious paled in

"This evolution allowed the Surrealists to continue to show the world that something appealing could be manifested outside of its society's present conditions."

TARGETS ACQUIRED

Kylee Naugle

3D



comparison to the very real and tangible reality of politics and the tensions and wars those politics incited. In order to remain relevant and to regain the momentum, which was needed to liberate society's unconscious from the shackles of an oppressing authority, Breton made the bold decision to align the Surrealist movement with communism, specifically the brand of communism that was first detailed by Karl Marx and then revived by Leon Trotsky.

Unfortunately, between the Surrealists' refusal to commit themselves to the "restraints" of creativity, and the public's lack of preparation for Stalin's reach for power, Trotsky fell through the ranks of communism and the Surrealists were left with a brand of communism that did not advocate for liberation (Short 7-19). This left Surrealist art to remain known as "art brut," *outsider art*, both literally and figuratively (Conley 129). Surrealists were then challenged to regroup and return to the roots of their movement.

Still determined to liberate the unconscious mind from the grips of modernity's rationality, the

Surrealists adopted the tactic of scandalizing the public. This tactic evolved from the Dada movement's shock strategies. This evolution allowed the Surrealists to continue to show the world that something appealing could be manifested outside of its society's present conditions (Matthews 92). The Surrealists were unperturbed by the criticism they faced in their belief that desire was "the motivating force of all human activity," and they continued to utilize poetry, love, and liberty as means of enlightenment for society (94). Beginning as a "literary phenomenon in the 1920's," the Surrealist movement became known as one of the most important movements during the interwar period that impacted intellectualism on a global stage (Peyre 34).

The political and social atmosphere during the birth and evolution of an aesthetic theory is often dismissed, and when that happens much of that aesthetic theory's significance is lost as well. In his book *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, art historian Peter Burger highlights the importance of considering

and understanding the history that accompanies aesthetic theories: “History is inherent in esthetic theory. Its categories are radically historical (Adorno, qtd. in Burger 15). Surrealist theory, like any other aesthetic theory, reflects the historical period from which it originates—and it was not only impacted by society, but in turn attempted to create change in society through shocking and disturbing means. Due to the atrocities committed during WWI, Surrealists felt compelled to show humanity its shortcomings and the unlimited possibilities that resided in its unconscious mind held hostage by an oppressive society.

Martin Heidegger’s essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art” details the theory that the surrealist artists imbue their work with truth that is meant to illuminate a world which exists beyond this earthly realm, within the unconscious mind and thus transcends rationality and physical delight. “The artist,” says Heidegger, “is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other” (qtd. in Stulberg 257).

The Surrealist movement was often regarded as ineffectual because of both its late direct commentary on politics, and its alignment with Trotsky’s failed climb to power within the ranks of communism. But the Surrealist movement’s greatest impact was on intellectualism during the interwar period and its vehement condemnation of war—and a society that allowed for war to take root. Tanning’s painting, *Birthday*, is the epitome of the Surrealist movement’s attempt to unlock the unconscious mind and draw from the desires and inspiration that it contained. Tanning manages to illustrate the abstract concepts that the Surrealists were intrigued by—in a manner that seems to knock on the door of the unconscious mind, trying to coax the unspoken and unknown into a reality that can be discerned by the observer.

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LOOKING WEST AT SUNSET

DJ Plante

The trees
Naked and still
Skeletal-like.

Strike a chilling parallel
Against the backdrop
Of a setting sun
In a cold gray sky.

I stand at my window
No marvelous brightness
To warm skin.

Did you see me?
Was it me?
Or just a golden glare
Upon the glass?

THE REAPER

Alexis Harris

Digital



Alexis Harris
2017

THREE VIGNETTES

Austin Graczyk

ONE: SECLUDED

The night air is so thick that you can't draw a deep enough breath. The wood railing under your palms feels like it might give way any second, but it doesn't. There's usually another yellow porch light, like yours, somewhere out through the swamp. It's either out now or it's blocked by the night-blackened trees.

Or covered in a swarm even thicker than yours is.

You put a cigarette in between your teeth, but the match won't strike in the wet air. Around the house to your left is the continuous sound of electric snaps and pops from the bug zapper. None of its blue glow reaches the front yard.

A louder sizzle-pop from what was probably a moth dying.

You step off the porch onto damp gravel, pasty and hot even through the soles of your sandals. The dirt and grass is cooler, and the blades leave wet streaks on your feet. You shush away the cloud of gnats around the bug zapper and bring your face close in, just enough to get the tip of the cigarette through the thin wire grating. The hairs on your neck stand on end until you can pull away—an orange light between your fingers and the taste of vanilla smoke blown back into the air.

As quickly as you've scattered them, the gnats line back up to die.

TWO: PUBLIC

The whole world tastes like salt. It's in the air, in the sand, spraying off the ocean in front of you. French fry oil vapors cling to your hair and your shirt, and if the sun were out, you'd go bare-chested to feel it on your skin.

The carousel is at the far end of the boardwalk, somewhere indistinctly behind you, but you can hear it singing the same music as in every carnival and amusement park ever built.

You turn your back on the ocean just as the first drop of rain lands on your nose.

It only takes a minute for the squall to take full effect, and people at the top of the Ferris wheel scream and flap their arms, looking like the only seagulls who didn't know well enough not to show up that day.

Water runs down your head and into your mouth, and it tastes mostly clean.

The worst of the rain lets up, but the clouds stay. The screaming on the Ferris wheel stops. The roller coaster gears begin cranking back up.

There's salt in your mouth again, but for the next few seconds, you won't have to smell it. You breathe deep, and you know—you *know*—that somewhere, there's grass. Grass wholly untainted and full of water.

THREE: MIRAGE

Fluorescent lights are hallucinogenic, like the midnight sun. In your head, you know you're standing in an abandoned soda aisle, but your mind is in the void. One single wheel squeaks on the employee's cart halfway across the store as he goes to refill something.

No one else would be caught dead here at this time of night. No one else would be clutching a fist full of dimes, trying to decide between two different brands of knockoff two-liters.

Your mind wanders.

It goes to the far end of the aisle, past the yogurt, to a boy and girl wrapped into each other. You look at his torso: long, and tan, and covered with purple bruises in the shape of lips. Three long scratch marks sideways across his back, and blood under her nails.

They don't look at you—don't look at anyone else, even when the force of them together shatters glass doors and cooks eggs inside the shells.

Your mind gives them up and moves on as best as it can.

A new mother, a new child. Fussing now, but not for long. She would grab her hair and pull it out by the roots if her arms weren't dead tired.

Mangos; she has to remember to buy mangos while they're half off. Or was it avocados? Maybe she'll just buy two of each.

You return to your head and blink at the bottles in front of you. If you were in the desert and you had to pick one, which would it be?

The sun hurts your eyes when you raise your head, but there's no heat. A soft wasteland.

Two bottles buried in the sand. A coyote trotting over, sniffing them, deciding not to spend the energy.

"Lemon-lime or citrus?" you ask it in your head.

It sits down and scratches its ear like a dog.

The same squeaking wheel, the stock boy getting closer. You wonder what goes through his mind on a shift like this. The stock boy comes into view with a hospital gurney, sand piled high on it. He stops every few feet and throws some of it down onto the ground. He picks one handful back up, moves it to the left a few inches.

The hum from the lights breaks the façade, and you're alone again in the discount soda aisle. Probably for the best; the coyote would've eaten the baby.

The tan boy breaks away from kissing his girlfriend and shouts to you, "You're thinking of dingoes!"

"Right," you murmur to the bottles. You open your fist and count the dimes. Just enough for one knockoff two-liter.

The mother and child come back into view. Her face looks gaunter, more bones shining through under thin skin. "Caffeine isn't good at this time of night," she says without looking away from the baby.

"Lemon-lime, then?"

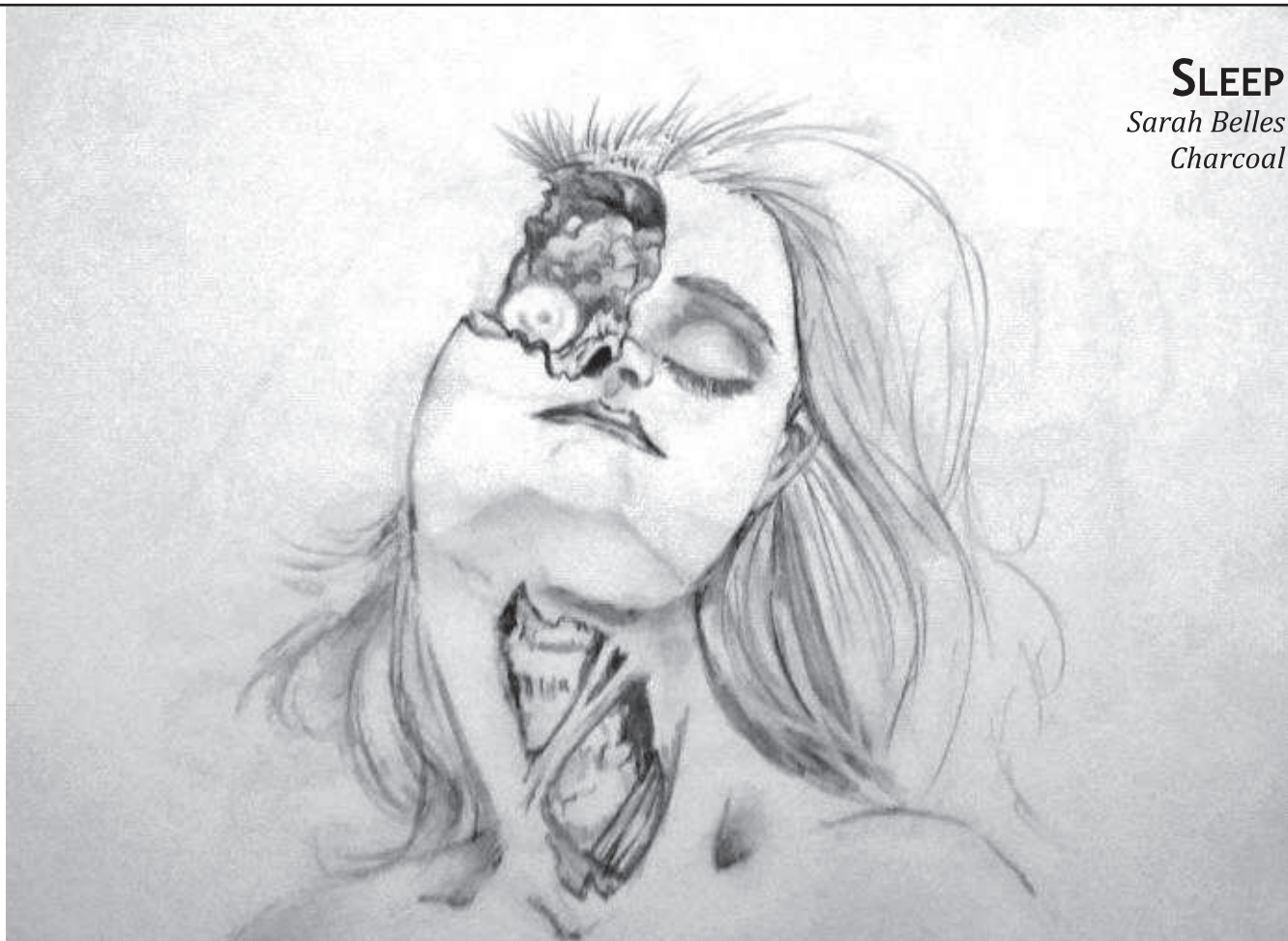
The baby looks into your eyes, and the mother lets out one tear before she moves on.

"Right," you say again. You pick up the clear bottle with two fingers and carry it away from the aisle, catching glimpses of desert at the edges of your vision.

SLEEP

Sarah Belles

Charcoal



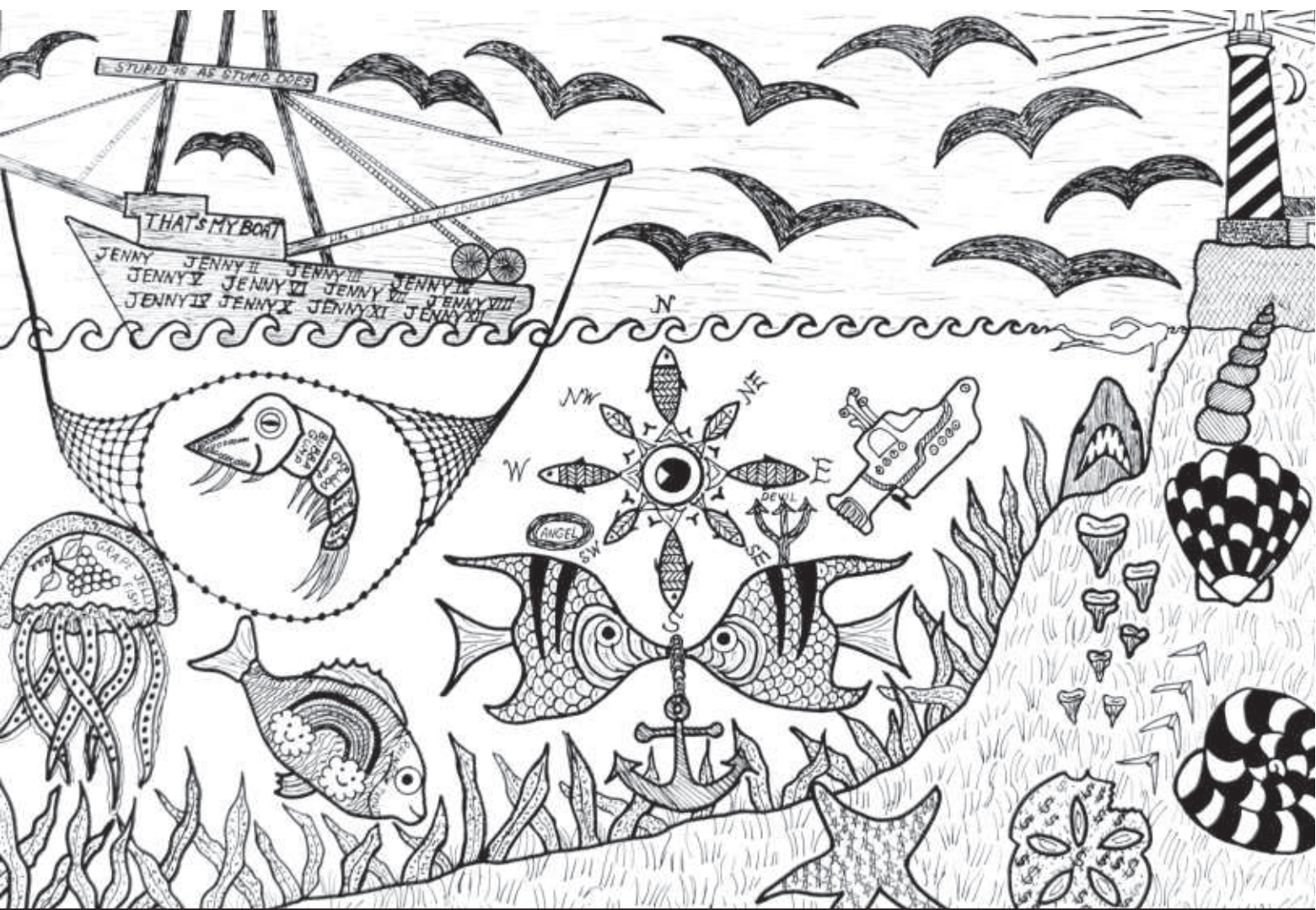
THE ELECTRIC CHAIR

Joshua Sparks

O Harbinger of Death, thou
Art a vain Destroyer, Comdemning
Those already dead to their long-awaited
Graves. We wait until this Insanity is
Over, and you claim us like an
Angel in loving embrace, taking
Us away to the Judgment



NEED A LIGHT?
Ali Young
Photography



STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES

Larry Griffis

Ink



THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

Joshua Templin

This song always reminds me
of something I can't remember,

Like a fog that's heavier
when it's lifted.

It is the cloud of unknowing
passing overneath
like a river
flowing out of the cenote
of silence.

Songcraft is mooncraft:

A lunar typography
for the blind and earthbound.

A language of brick,
cured from clay,
placed into the tower of Babel.

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

Sarah Belles

The old church on the hill has been standing there for years, well before the town built around it was really even a town. While bodies below have spun about in a haze of life, it has sat, and slept, and waited, and watched there—with eyes of clear glass looking outward and inwards at the muddle of humanity. It has been made host to strange parades: funerals, christenings, and sometimes marriages right after. It has seen linear womanhood play out, mothers bearing daughters who in turn bore their own daughters in an ever-going-matryoshka. It has witnessed men behave as fireworks, jetting off from their origins to sputter and explode into a fiery mass or fizzle into nothing. What remains of them is the wood, the stone, and the mortar—their legacy, not in legitimate children but in the homes they had built. The church is a part of that legacy too, and was alive itself at one time when hymnals were sung in its echoing gut, bells rung in its towering eardrums.

It's cold tonight, but the church bears it well. It waves to me through my open window—me or the building I live in. We're both at the bottom of the hill. It's a straight shot from here to there, one very narrow little street leading up. Electricity follows paths like that. Least resistance paves a way for power. Turning my lamp light off, the street light hitting the church bulletin stays on. There's no quotation or advertisement for spaghetti dinners, just broken text you can't make sense out of. That's fine: the dinners never taste very good to begin with.

The hill where it was placed held no special meaning. The grass long ago was neither green nor thick. The animals dwelling in the nearby woodland didn't show divine serenity. Deer never came to eat out of the hands of the congregation. The church was put there because it was public land at one point, a free place to worship. And the fact that everybody owned it meant that nobody did—sort of like god. When first built, the church was painted white, like the people who had since come and gone through its doors. It was, and still is rectangular, overly simple with one tower, one bell, and a sectional basement. It's been called Trinity Church, Sacred Dove, Unity, Burning Cross, and lastly First Zion.

It turns out that land wasn't like god at all: it could be bought.

Bedrooms everywhere are becoming like mine at this hour: quiet and undisturbed. The dimming of bulbs signals heads being laid to pillows—blue collar workers throwing themselves into sleep, hoping that the clock will give them a few extra minutes. Ten thirty is daring for most when they have to be up at five. I just won't sleep tonight; that's all.

Once the land grew an owner, the church changed hands too many times to count as tithing baskets couldn't pay for it like pastors believed. All things through faith, save for rent. It was updated only once. 1955 outfitted it with proper insulation and some bare bones wiring, while outside the wood was remade with an aluminum shell that

glared its previous white color in the sun. The siding came with a promise to never rot, staving off the church's expiration date so it could keep being exchanged—an ambition left untested when the church eventually outlived its purpose. In the wake of a modern age, its congregation dispersed to altars more in tune to new ways of being, places that accepted everyone, places without memories to haunt the patrons while they sang bygone unaltered hymns. Some of those places even have gift shops in the back, which solves certain problems but creates others.

There's a passage that I can't fully quote, "*Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's . . .*" I give unto myself because I'm all I have. I am a pair of legs in jeans, a torso in a hooded shirt, and a pair of hands in gloves because it's colder outside than I thought. There are clouds over head, can't see them, but there's no moon out, nor stars, clouds seem logical. Streetlamps are the only thing keeping the pavement visible—not good. Leaving through the porch door, I take a trip around back, between my neighbors and my neighbors' neighbors. Those are

gaps that neither side really claims. I'm still going up, but in a different way. When people want to see what's going on, they rush to their front windows. The main streets are where traffic is heaviest. They catch more that way. Hopefully they won't catch much of me.

I can see my breath, even in the dusk. Though if I couldn't see it, I could probably feel it if I tried. I can catch the vapor in one hand and throw it into the wind. I'm aware that there's a certain lack of pretense in wandering around the backwoods of the church. It's pretty clear I'm looking for something by digging through piles of leaves. It's my fault for not finding a better way to hide a gas can, but I didn't want to leave anything obviously marked.

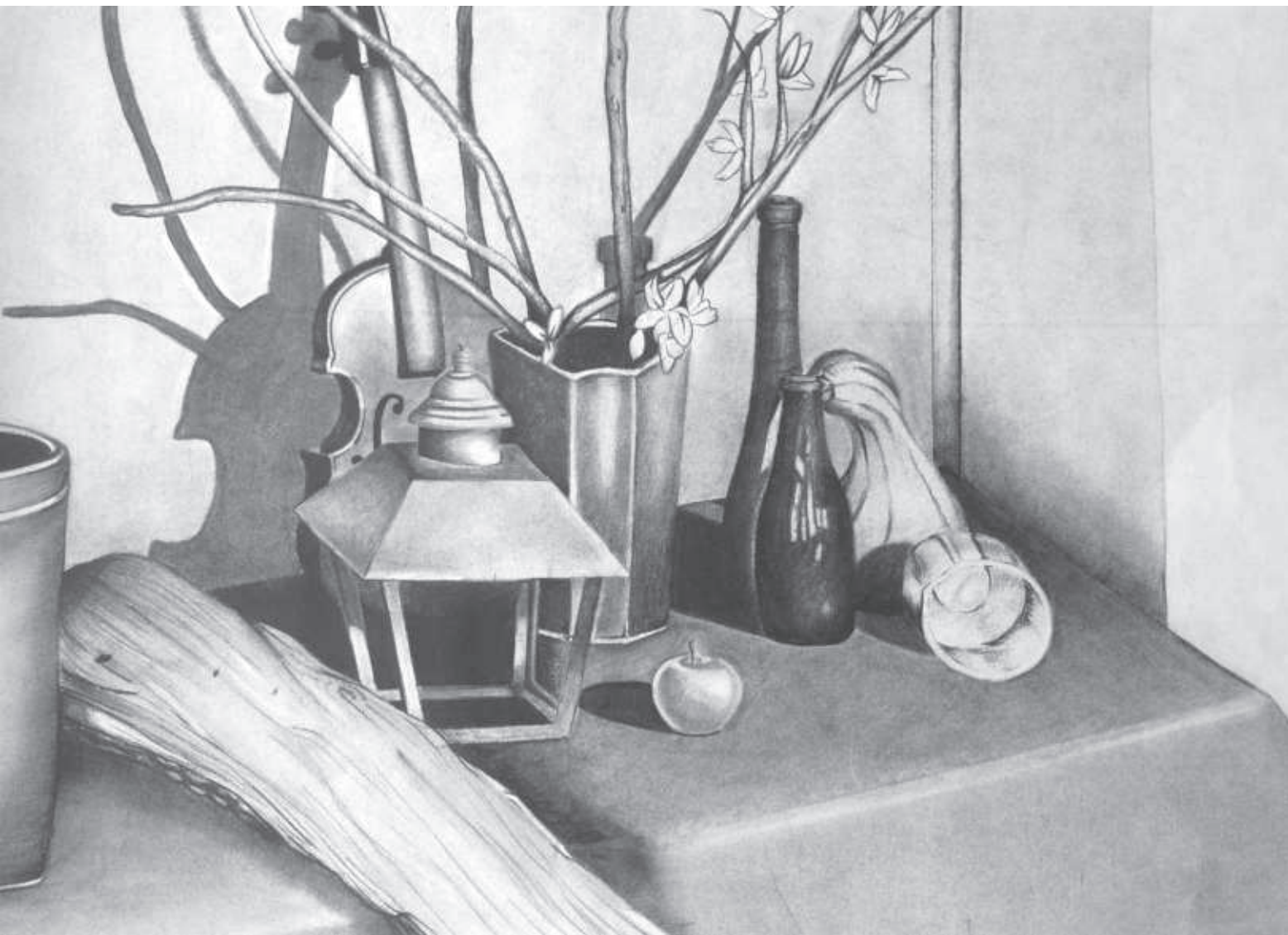
It's empty now, that old church on the hill, abandoned, bankrupt, dreaming of itself. White turned to grey, either by obscurity or neglect, it barely holds a silhouette against the backdrop of the town. It should have been pulled down long ago, demolished out of mercy. No one bothers with it because no one owns it anymore, and there're too



WWJOHNDO
Catherine J. Mahony
Digital

STILL LIFE

Jesus Sandoval
Charcoal



many hoops to jump through to order a demolition. The town is happy to lock the doors and let it fall in on itself, like a rotten piece of fruit. That's not right. What sense is a body without use or a machine without a purpose? Even if something isn't human, can not this lack of action be considered cruel?

This, I think, more or less justifies what I do. It's not a building which I clamber up to in the night, nor a human eye that I break to gain entry. By the way, gloves were a good idea. This place is a thing, maybe living, maybe dead, but deserving of respect and attention regardless. Mold and decay are at home here, but not me. Gasoline was made to burn clean, and that is the ultimate cleansing. Stinging smells invade everything once the anointment has begun. I breathe on, covering what I can, the pews, the pulpit, the hollow organ. Nothing is built to last. All is meant to return to the earth and to keep it from the earth is un-natural. The town doesn't care to understand that it has a way of latching onto you, preventing movement or growth. They don't seem to get that you can't have what you are not willing to let go of...or so I've been taught.

On exit, with a struck book of matches, one toss is all that is needed to start ignition. I can't stay to watch. I know better. Feet hurry me along while buildings and the people therein have yet to notice. I travel faster than senses are able to sniff out danger. I get to my yard before I notice myself beyond my roof a glowing indication of something

glorious. Up in my bedroom, I sit as before, in front of the window, staring in awe at the hilltop.

A candle burns bright tonight, as neighbors awake to the smoke and the smell and the fear. A candle burns brightly. Fire engines respond. Blaring sirens rush to put out what I've made. In the morning an investigation will go on, the gas can I left inside will be found, and they'll need an answer. But the truth is: those damn kids vandalize anything, and simple towns have simple reasoning. Blue collars are poor at being any other shade. I'm blue myself. Even if things go badly, and I am found out, I can take it easy knowing that what's left will have to be torn down, freed from the burden to exist.

"This place is a thing, maybe living, maybe dead, but deserving of respect and attention regardless."

THE TIRED SONNET

Austin Graczyk

Shall I compare...oh, screw it. Let me sleep.

I'm messing up my every waking move.

The urge to shut my eyes is pretty steep

Consid'ring all the shit I need to do.

The pull behind my eyes that tries to shake

My wakefulness won't set me free for long.

The grinding in my head is like an ache

Insinuating all but sleep is wrong.

I burnt out long ago, but this is worse

My brain in handcuffs of its own design

My mind no longer spits up prose or verse

Like fighting haze to write a single line.

The only thing that keeps my senses keen

Is swapping out my blood for more caffeine.

MALIGNANT

Alexis Harris

Pencil





SPRAWL

Nicholas Galiano

Digital

GRANDMA'S BLANKETS

Ruth Hernandez

As natural as ever, Grandma would sit in her plastic white chair on her creaky red porch every summer afternoon. As we ran around the not-so-green front lawn, playing and fighting, she would yell for us to be careful. Cars would speed by, one every half hour—or was it every hour? No one kept track of time then. The breeze would caress our tomato-colored faces and no one would want to go home. But Grandma would wave at us, as she extended her arm to send out a kiss, and shout, “Que Dios los acompañe” – may God be with you.

Bayview Avenue was a small passage in the largely populated and expensive state of Connecticut. Number 54 was her home—and her cave. As I entered the small-scaled closet that had now become her room, the smell of healing ointment would swiftly sweep the air like the smell of fresh bread following the baker throughout his days. Her cave was so small that it only fit one twin size bed leaving just enough space for a compact bookshelf and a cramped table that was now the storage nook for her blankets. She lived packed like size 8 feet in size 3 shoes, but there was no denying she loved it. It was her space.

Her gaze would shift towards the narrow window as she recounted the days before her hair had turned as white as snow. She sold miscellaneous merchandise downtown for years. She would leave home well before sunrise and return during the late hours of the night, always praying that she could bring home at least a loaf of bread for her eight children to share.

The ailment had already begun eating her from the inside out. She was deteriorating rapidly like fish under the hot summer sun. No one knew why. Questions were roaming silently through the rooms, yet no one was willing to ask her. One thing was certain, however—Grandma’s blankets were always neatly stacked like layers of cake that were perfectly aligned, one on top of another. She would wrap her arms around me—as a warm blanket soothes the shivers on a cold winter night—and I would wish she would always be with us—always be there, in her home.

The years will pass by and the blankets will wear out and deteriorate. I know, however, that they will never lose their warmth because that which you call a blanket, I call *home*.

SLITHER

Tyler Sheperak

The light plays coy onto the backdrop of her smooth skin
His fingers trace the surface like the serpents her veins mimic
She wants to cry out
But doesn't
Wants to fight
But can't
She cries out in fear
Only with her eyes
Drifting
In and out
In
And out
He's relentless

1920s FLAPPERS: THE FRESH FACES OF FEMINISM

Kayleigh Rutkowski

My idea of feminism is self-determination, and it's very open-ended: every woman has the right to become herself, and do whatever she needs to do.

—ANI DIFRANCO

The 1920s was a time of profound changes. After World War I there was an enormous push for social change, which created what is now known as the Progressive Era. Many of the changes that occurred were those made to the rights of women. Women gained rights that they had not previously possessed, such as the right to vote. These tremendous strides toward gender equality largely became possible due to a large push in the feminist movement, which had gained momentum before the start of the war, but only truly took off following the end of World War I. Feminism—as defined by *Merriam-Webster*, “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes”—created a new idea of freedom which led women to inquire how their appearance, social conduct, and sexual identities would impact an ideological change in society or, as Angela Latham states, a change in society’s expectations of women (7). Leading the pack toward women’s rights were the modern flapper girls who broke boundaries and defied traditional gender expectations. The flapper girl was a self-liberated woman who redefined women’s sexuality, status, and overall social behavior. Through the contributions flapper girls made to the feminist movement, women can enjoy the liberties we have today, while having a

solid foundation to continue the fight for equal rights.

One of the most prominent ways the flapper took control of her freedom was through changes in women’s fashion. As historical commentator Kelly Boyer Sagert explains, fashion trends were a prominent feature of the 1920s due to a seemingly thriving economy after the stock market exploded (2). This would open doors for new fashion icons such as Coco Chanel, a French orphan who, according to American historian Joshua Zeits, built a fashion empire and single handedly redefined the feminine form and silhouette (9). The young modern woman of the 1920s stepped away from the Victorian era dress, ditching the long skirts, corsets, and layers of clothing in favor of shorter dresses that showed off their shins. They wore makeup and bobbed their hair. The iconic flapper style moved away from showcasing the female silhouette to creating a body shape like that of a little boy. In comparison to the 1910s Gibson Girl, the feminine ideal created by Charles Dana Gibson, who would cinch in her waist and boost her chest, the 1920s flapper wore dresses that were looser, giving her a boxy appearance and bound her chest for the desired boy-like ideal (Sagert 2).

Fashion was just one of the many ideas fueling cultural change. As society became less conservative, so did women's sexuality. With a newly booming economy and changes in machinery, Americans had more money to spend on luxuries and more free time to enjoy outside of work creating a leisure culture, which was meant for men and women to enjoy together, ushering a new openness about sex and romance. Women began dating casually and would take pleasure in popular forms of recreation such as amusement parks and "talkies," which were a new form of movies that featured sound, contrasting prior silent films (Zeits 31). With a new candidness towards dating prior to marriage came a generation of women who were more sexually active compared to previous generations. Early 20th century surveys revealed "only 14% of women born before 1900 engaged in premarital sex by the age of 25, while 36-39% of women who came of age in the 1910s-1920s had lost their virginity before marriage" (Ziets 21). The notion of premarital sex partially came about due to Margaret Sanger, of the women's rights movement, who pushed for the use of birth control during the eugenics movement, which had to do with the survival of humanity and selective breeding (Sagert 4).

This early loss of virginity and premarital sex would lead to what older generations of Americans referred to as "promiscuous women" and "It Girls"—or rather sexually attractive girls (Sagert 3). Among these so-called promiscuous women was Zelda Sayre, who would be known as Zelda Fitzgerald after marrying writer F. Scott Fitzgerald. As a young woman, Zelda became the embodiment of new modern society, highlighting the independent life style of the flapper. Described as "sensuous and impulsive," Zelda was often found dancing at jazz halls and speakeasies, "accustomed to the limelight and even courted center stage with

antics such as pinning mistletoe to the back of her skirt as if to challenge men to an inappropriate kiss" (qtd. in Sagert 24). Flappers understood that women had just as much sexual desire as men and that sexuality is not exclusive to one gender or group. With this understanding, being promiscuous became a form of taking control of one's own body and life choices, fearlessly, without shame or approval from others.

"Not only were flapper girls physically liberating themselves through sex and style," Sagert emphasizes, "they were also liberating themselves socially through means of education and employment" (54). During the 1920s, nearly every female college graduate planned to get a job, and some stopped giving up their careers when they married and would eventually make up 23.6% of the workforce (Sagert 54-55). Much like changes to women's fashion, the educational and financial changes in the lives of women also coincided with the economic boom. Between 1921-1924, following WWI, America's gross national product skyrocketed, wages rose steadily, and the US, which entered the war as a debtor nation, "emerged as Europe's largest creditor" (Zeits 53).

With a growing workforce, cities became more appealing to women since they provided more employment opportunities. It was reported that women who lived in cities were more likely to work outside the home leading them to have more income and independence (Sagert 3). A 1920s survey found that due to the appeal of financial and social independence, "the farmer's daughter [was] more likely to leave the farm and go to the city than [the] farmer's son" to live in an environment wherein she would have more freedom. Young women were literally fleeing rural areas in the pursuit of more freedom and better economic opportunities (Zeits 30).

"During the 1920s, nearly every female college graduate planned to get a job, and some stopped giving up their careers when they married."



UPSIDE DOWN ILLUSTRATION

*Wilhen Suriel
Photography*

The opportunities of the city would only continue to bring more change for women with the creation of organizations to help secure their freedoms. American historian Stanley J. Lemons notes that with more women in the work force than ever before, organizations such as the Children's Bureau, The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's clubs, and women's unions were formed (5). Eventually, a Women's Bureau was created within the US Department of Labor to protect women's earnings. However, "it was not until 1963 that congress passed the Equal Pay Act" (Sagert 55).

The rise in female workforce participation would end up boosting the voices of women in politics. From the women's rights movement came the formation of the Women's Political Union and the National American Woman Suffrage, changing politics with the creation of the 19th Amendment, which was adopted on August 18, 1920, granting women the right to vote. This crucial Amendment created a debate on whether women should enter into the male-dominated political world—or rather how they should exercise their citizenship. The words of a New Jersey League Women Voters member below represent the arguments made by the major women leaders during the Progressive Era:

Perhaps we have failed to recognize fully that when we were enfranchised . . . our own status and therefore our own obligations were definitely changed. No longer outside the government . . . we were now inside and therefore obligated to assume the responsibility and to perform the full duties of citizenship through the regularly established governmental channels. (181-82)

However, despite the leadership provided by women who wanted to have an impact on the

political system, the 19th Amendment would not bring forth full citizenship, which is why women continued fighting for independence and equality throughout the 1920s (Lemons 63-64).

The flapper phenomenon was very controversial and heavily ridiculed as young women conducted themselves in manners resembling the attitudes and behaviors of men: they were drinking, smoking, and being sexually active. These fun-loving and free-thinking women were opinionated and voiced their opinions openly, which was not something a proper lady was supposed to do. In a 1925 interview, conducted by Bruce Bliven, editor of *New Republic*, about flappers and particularly why the younger generation was conducting themselves in this manner, nineteen-year-old Flapper Jane said: "In a way it's just honesty. Women have come down off the pedestal lately. They are tired of this mysterious feminine-charm stuff. Maybe it goes with independence, earning your own living and voting and all that." Flappers certainly did what society did not expect from them. Even so, Bliven concluded that they had "a good deal more smoke than fire in their general conduct," and wrote that their conduct, rather than evidence of loosening morals, is instead proof that "women today are shaking of the shreds and patches of their age-old servitude." Bliven took this as a victory for feminism, rejoicing in the fact that "women have highly resolved that they are just as good as men, and intend to be treated so" (qtd. in Zeits 7-8).

This is not to say that feminism fully triumphed during this period: equality was still a myth and there remained a great deal of discrimination. In fact, a few years later the Great Depression would bring renewed prejudice against working women with the notion that they were 'stealing jobs' from men. Eventually, the flapper lifestyle ended when the economy crashed in 1929. Although "the Great

Depression curtailed the night life, the freedoms women tasted in that era weren't easily given up," writes Miss Cellania in "The Rise of the Flapper": "They may have gone back to marriage and long hours of toil for little pay, but hemlines stayed above the ankle, and the corset never went back to everyday status." And the ideas and social changes flappers brought to society live on today—or as Cellania writes, ". . . we've been driving cars since then."

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NO LOVE FOR FISH GIRL

Stephanie R. Holloway-Peidl
Oil





CAN I BUM A FEELING?

The central idea of my portfolio deals with the complexity of female identity. I am largely inspired by bedrooms as a reflection of self. Bedrooms act as a time capsule of identity that lives and grows as we do. And the privacy that our bedrooms gives us to curate ourselves and carry out the rituals of girlhood is an intricate labyrinth to witness, which is why I intend to capture it in my artwork.

The work in my portfolio explores the relationship between space and identity. My use of ornate detail allows the spaces to feel authentic as well as make the women who inhabit them appear engaging. Although my style of art is precise, I enjoy creating the rooms to be less than perfect. For example, in my piece titled "Shakespearean Flaw," lost objects under the bed tell a story and create a more genuine picture. By utilizing color and pattern, I aim to create spaces that convey my intended design.

-ANNADORE FERN

HOW MANY SEX WORKERS DO YOU THINK KANYE HAS KILLED?





NO CRYING IN BASEBALL



SHAKESPEAREAN FLAW

TELL ME LESS ABOUT YOURSELF



INTENTIONAL HAPPINESS

Angela Siciliano

The rattling sound of the chains bound to my ankles echoed throughout the empty corridor as the prison guard escorted me to my strange new dwelling place. The dim yellow lights cast ominous shadows on the cement walls as we passed rows upon rows of holding cells. The cold air wafting from the ceiling vents was an odd mix of sweat and sterility. I was in uncharted territory. The further we walked, the more I felt as though a piece of me was dying. The part of me that knew laughter and love felt snuffed out by an anguish I couldn't comprehend. I couldn't fathom having to spend the next three years of my life behind bars.

In the beginning of my sentence, despair consumed me. Every vice I relied on for pleasure was unavailable to me. Ironically, my addiction to drugs had given me that pleasure and it was the very thing that took it away. Even though I had traded one prison for another, I still craved the false sense of relief that drugs offered. Unaccustomed to feeling pain or grief, I felt as if my emotions would swallow me whole. My tears soaked the unfamiliar bedding on which I slept as thoughts of my family flashed through my mind. I didn't want to think of them or the pain I had caused, but denial was no longer an option. I had exchanged my happiness and the love of those closest to me for superficial comfort. But happiness isn't the absence of discomfort or pain. And I would soon discover this.

I spent a significant amount of time in regret before I understood that I didn't have to wait for my circumstance to change to feel relief. One early

spring morning, while walking to the prison yard, inmates chatted excitedly around me as I wallowed in the temporary relief from my confinement. The sound of their voices blurred together as I mindlessly counted the cracks in the pavement. I would've missed it, had I not been looking down—a single white daisy blooming out of the concrete sidewalk. The small delicate flower appeared content and unaffected by the distance between it and the lush green grass on the other side of the road. It didn't require a different circumstance to flourish. In that moment, when I compared the daisy's existence to my own, I recognized my foolishness. I was waiting for the day of my release with such anticipation that I made it impossible for me to enjoy my life right where I was. Looking up at the clear blue sky for the first time since arriving, I thought, "If this simple beauty can thrive in such a complex environment, then why can't I?"

In the days that followed, I practiced staying in the moment. I hadn't realized how miserable my obsession with freedom was making me. Like so many others, I had perceived my unhappiness as the result of an unwanted circumstance, unaware that such perception may in fact create unnecessary suffering. I did not have control over my situation—but I realized that I had control over how I responded to it. And in the midst of the pain, I gradually discovered my ability to create joy.

Each time I began to feel despair cloud my mind, I reminded myself of the small white daisy and then searched for a reason to smile instead. It

was because of this effort I was witness to a sixty-year old woman, my cell-mate, forty years into her life sentence, finally learning how to read. The larger-than-life smile on her face brought me delight when she read letters from her estranged daughter. I was even lucky enough to have the opportunity to listen to a few women willing to share their stories and their shame. What I felt in those rare moments was not indifference, but admiration for their courage. These quiet little moments became like a balm to my broken soul and I soon became glad to be a part of such comradery.

I couldn't put a name to the new sense of warmth I felt, but I wanted more. Being mindful of the everyday joys happening around me inspired me to act. I wanted to help others the way they inadvertently helped me. I applied to tutor inmates in the education department. I also aided counselors in the drug-addiction program. Most

were days I craved the numbness my addiction had provided. This was the true test in my pursuit of happiness. I felt an overwhelming responsibility to respond well to those difficult days. So, rather than searching for some method of escape, I just kept going. I smiled when I felt like crying. I helped when I felt like hiding. I hurled myself deeper into those things that gave me purpose. It wasn't always easy. But if I were to make decisions that were easy rather than decisions that were right, joy wouldn't have been the result.

I still experience moments of sorrow or disappointment. I do. But now, when I suffer any kind of hardship, I don't search for an escape. It can be hard, in those moments, to find a reason to smile. But now I know that perception is the doorway that opens the path to joy, while participation is the key to reinforcing it. I've witnessed beauty in a landscape of concrete and metal. I've felt kindness and bravery right there

"I've witnessed beauty in a landscape of concrete and metal."

days were rewarding. I felt satisfaction at the inmates' progress and my own. The more I helped them achieve their goals, the more I gained a sense of well-being.

Even though I had reached a place of contentment, I had to put forth effort to maintain it. Just because grief no longer consumed me, it didn't mean sorrow didn't occasionally arise. I still missed my loved ones. I still dreamt of my freedom. There

inside of my cell. I've made difficult, yet moral, choices that had a direct impact on creating an environment of joy. The more I work towards making positive changes, the more my well-being solidifies. Life doesn't always feel pleasant, but now I know the choice to be happy is mine.

TRAIN CHASER

Ali Young

Photography



AN IDOL SMALL

Joshua Sparks

Who does not know
What life has written,
What death has shown?

Who has no revelation
For are we not all prophets,
Portending meaning,
Inquisitors of the future,
Sages of the past?

Who does not make
His own divine,
And serve it eagerly?

That sacred delusion
Made perfect in solitary hours,
And for all the silence
All can hear the music within.

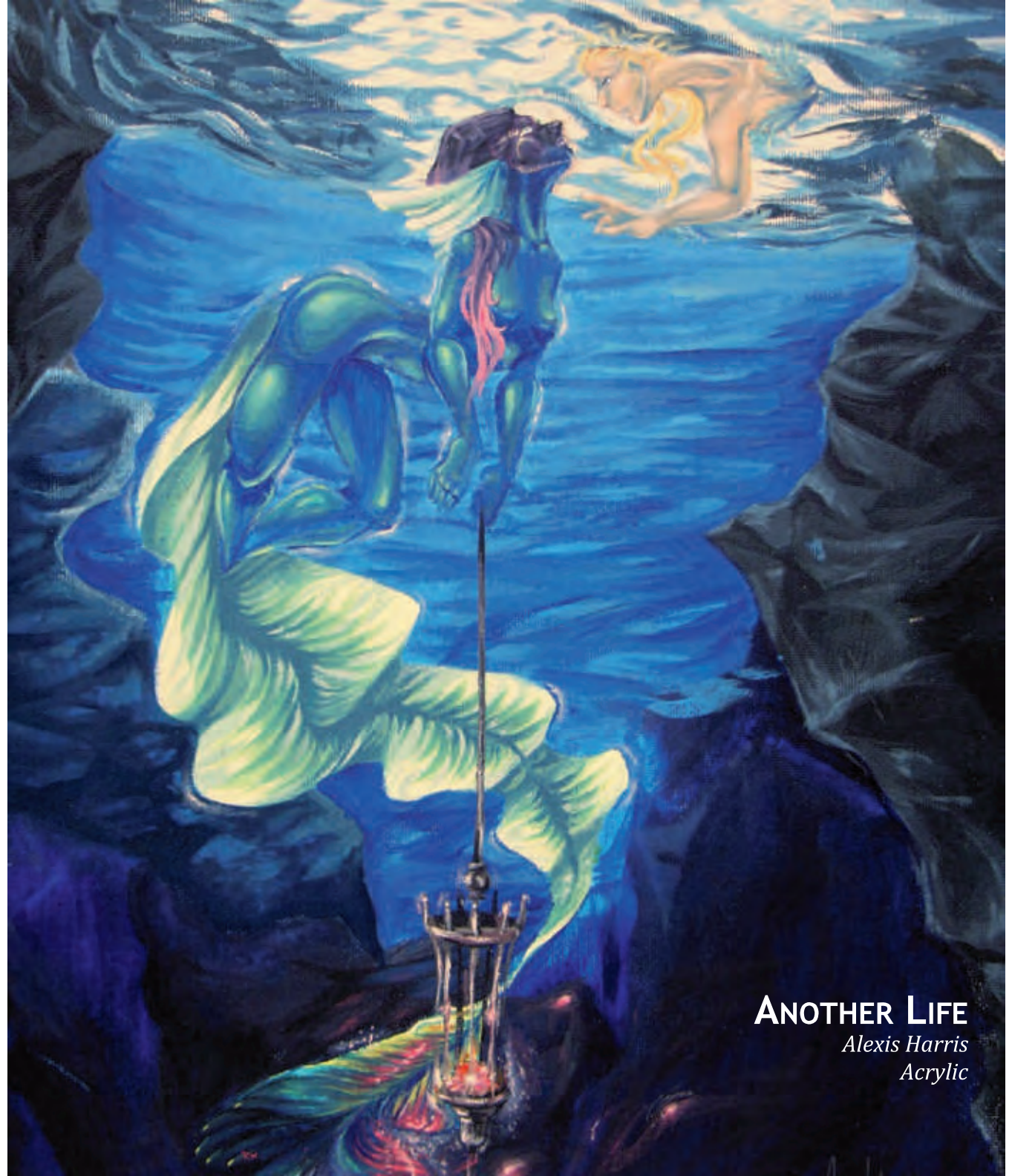
That sound of mania,
The sound that gods
Make in their boredom,
To drive mortals over the brink.

To walk the knife's edge
Between inspiration
And insanity
Eyes forever open
An eternal sentinel
To the brightest night
Mankind has ever faced.

The insipid gaze
Into the eternal
Saying, in zeal
Without reverence,

"I know thee.
Death shall not slay,
Nor the grave entomb,
For I, I shall live forever."

For the people,
At once
Knowing the name
Of their god,
Fall quickly to their knees.



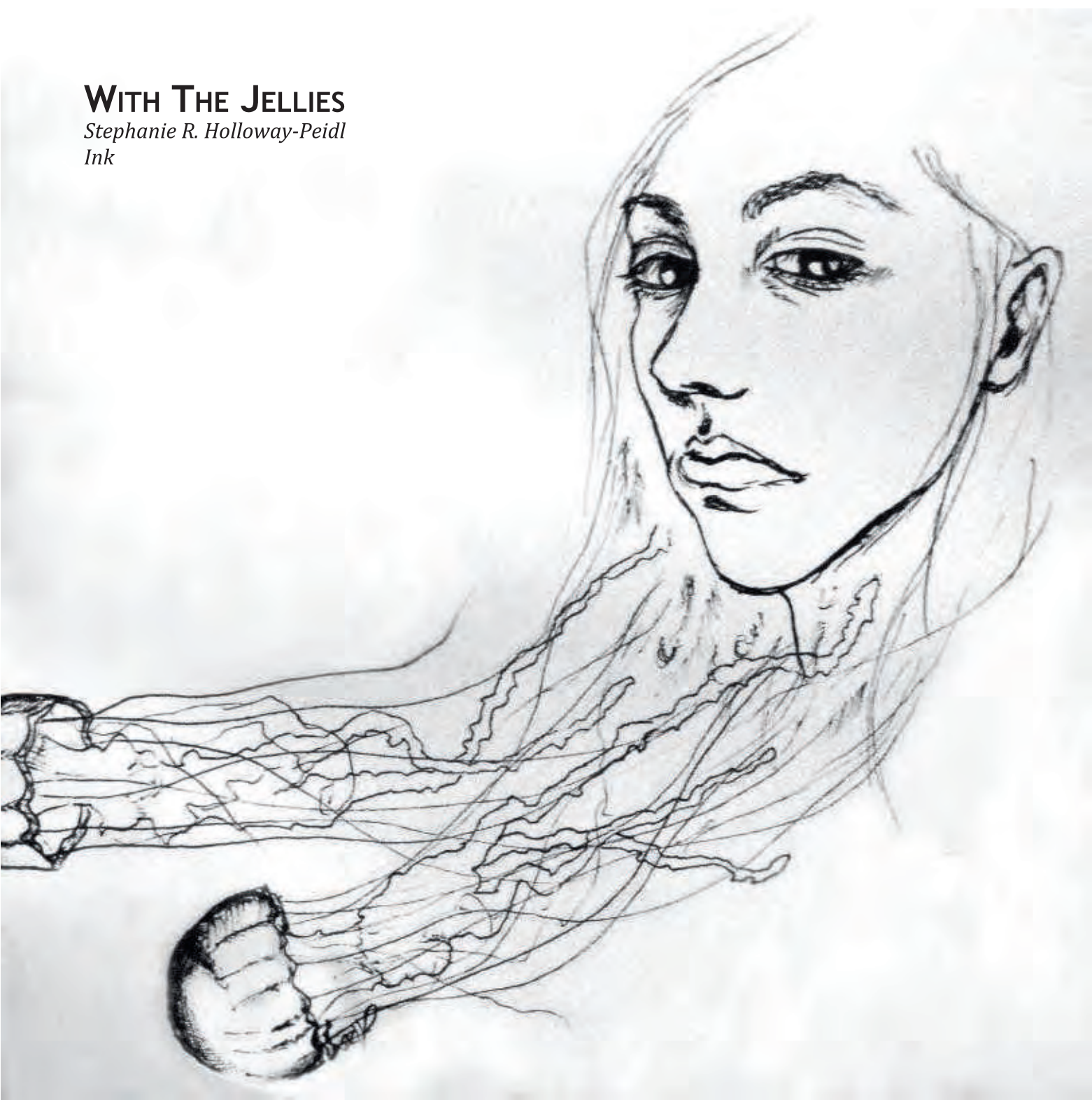
ANOTHER LIFE

Alexis Harris
Acrylic

WITH THE JELLIES

Stephanie R. Holloway-Peidl

Ink



FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN

Patrick Corcoran

*A little fire is quickly trodden out,
Which, being suffer'd, rivers cannot quench.*

—William Shakespeare

King Henry the Sixth, Act IV, Scene VIII

For a twenty-five-cent fee, his parents had a fake birth certificate notarized and three days later, Vance Palmer traded daylight for a future.

Like many boys, he was prohibited from wearing gloves and as a result, his skin remained red, his fingernails coated in dirt which never quite washed off. Injury was always feared over death as there were infinite ways of getting maimed. After eight months of scraping slate and coal, he was unable to grip an aluminum canteen. Along with his dexterity, Vance's hearing and vision had suffered greatly. The loud machinery of the breaker room shattered his eardrums and his once handsome brown eyes became puss-filled sockets that failed to see beyond several feet. No longer could he hear the cries of children that had fallen into chutes and were crushed to death nor could he see their young bodies retrieved from the gears of the machinery. Lack of sunlight led his complexion to resemble colorless porridge. Coal dust had embedded itself so deeply within his lungs that he regularly spat clots of blood-filled mucus.

However ghastly his appearance, the twelve-year-old émigré was a good worker, bubbling over with the untrained animal spirits of youth. By winter, he was promoted to trapper, a job which

required very little labor but with it came deadening monotony and the mental stagnation that inevitably followed in its trail. His duty was to open and shut the door allowing men and cars to pass through whilst providing ventilation to the mine. Twelve long hours would be spent each day in absolute darkness save for the flicker of an oil lamp. Loneliness had followed Vance Palmer far underground.

He rose before dawn. The crisp morning hours meant sucking in as much fresh air as his swollen lungs could hold. Shortly after five-thirty he was back inside the dank hole, overalls already soaked in dust and face smeared in black. The mine stank of mule shit and dirt. No one spoke a word to him on the way down save for the foreman who'd greet him every morning. There was a small wooden chair placed in the recesses of a dimly lit vein named "Primrose." Three days earlier, fourteen-year-old Frank Higginbotham's legs were severed at the knee after a passing coal car ran him over. Pools of blood had not yet drained and bits of flesh were still lodged into the steel rails that snaked through a labyrinth of mine entries. The remainder of his day would now be spent alone, in the bowels of the earth. Down here, Vance's sole

companionship existed of the sounds of dripping water, scampering rats, and the occasional muted noise of an explosion.

The day's first cart came shuffling in. He watched as two older boys pushed an empty wagon into the shadows until they were promptly swallowed up by the dark. They were laborers. Two years of experience accompanied by a lengthy state exam guaranteed this low-leveled-existence which very few escaped. But the backbreaking work was oddly tantalizing. It involved the ability to locate the hole, skill in boring it, and care in preparing and determining the size of the shot. It also paid considerably better than Vance's current wage of seventy-five cents, all of which he was saving to purchase powder, squibs, drills, shovels, sledges, a toolbox and oil necessary to blast coal.

Sometime between noon and one p.m. he grew unusually sluggish. He was too tired to whistle. Too tired to eat the cold polenta packed away in his lunchbox. Too tired to do anything but sit and anticipate the next cart's inevitable emergence from behind those large wooden doors. Vance's milky eyes now stared listlessly into the bottomless tunnel that'd become his home. Beyond vast darkness was a world of crippling routine and danger. He wondered just how far they had dug into the earth and if they'd ever stop digging.

Although the oil lamp provided very little light it was enough to make out a shadow that had formed on a wall nearest to him. It was odd looking, decidedly un-human, and its size would shift as the light rose and fell. Initially, he likened it to a mule that'd somehow gotten lost and was now roaming the pitch-black corridors. Lennon, Primrose's mule skinner, could very well have incorrectly harnessed the animal resulting in its liberation. Perhaps it sensed some sort of danger, visible or non, and took flight. He abandoned this idea altogether for mules were good union members and only at the end of

their eight-hour shift would they cease working. Foolish he'd felt for even considering this a possibility yet another minute elapsed and the shadow remained. It could be a dead rat, he thought. Only, his ability to discern objects from one another had regressed to rudimentary nature. At home, he often struggled to complete the simplest of tasks due to his poor eyesight. Blinking proved futile and a dirty handkerchief only worsened his vision. Elixirs and innumerable homemade remedies were ineffective. It was cold water, sourced from a spring atop the mountain that relieved him of pain but he had none with him.

The small flame continued to dance within its glassy enclosure, at times engaged in a violent jig with the shadow. He sensed it was closer now and could feel its presence weigh thick on his chest. Before long, the orange glow that reflected onto the wet wall began to fade. This was odd considering he'd fill the lamp with oil the night prior. Bitter darkness shrouded him entirely. He found it difficult to breathe as a series of sharp pangs shot through his head and chest with acute pressure. Slowly, his frail body began to sink into the wooden chair until he could no longer stand or raise himself up.

From the depths of the mine, a voice cried out.
"Fire! Fire!"

Though his eyes were incredibly swollen, Vance could make out the bodies of several weary miners now rushing toward him. They moved with urgency. Behind them, large flames spread along the support timbers and smoke curled up from beneath their waists.

"Didn't cha hear us calling! Didn't cha get our signal!"

The signal had been a canary let loose in the mine to warn of poisonous, flammable gas. It collapsed onto the ground not far from the entryway and its small frame had become engorged



MODERN MARY

Hannah Elizabeth High

Acrylic

in the light of the oil lamp resembling a figure after all. But it was far too late and a loud thud echoed throughout the shaft. A major support beam had collapsed. Growing clouds of smoke filled Primose within seconds and walls of flames and ferocious heat cut off every exit route. By midday, one hundred and seventy miners, Vance included, were entombed four hundred feet below ground. Smoke would suffocate many while roaring flames swallowed others whole. The deadly invisible gas miners called “the black damp” would also claim lives.

Death touched practically every home in the region. Locust, Pennsylvania saw its residents thrown into destitution and despair. Just two weeks shy of Christmas, the Palmers found themselves robbed of food, heat, and their son, a twelve-year-old émigré who spent his days sitting in the frigid silence, knowing nothing better.

*"Smoke would suffocate
many while roaring
flames swallowed
others whole."*



SLEEPING FOX

Sophia Vojtasek

Ink

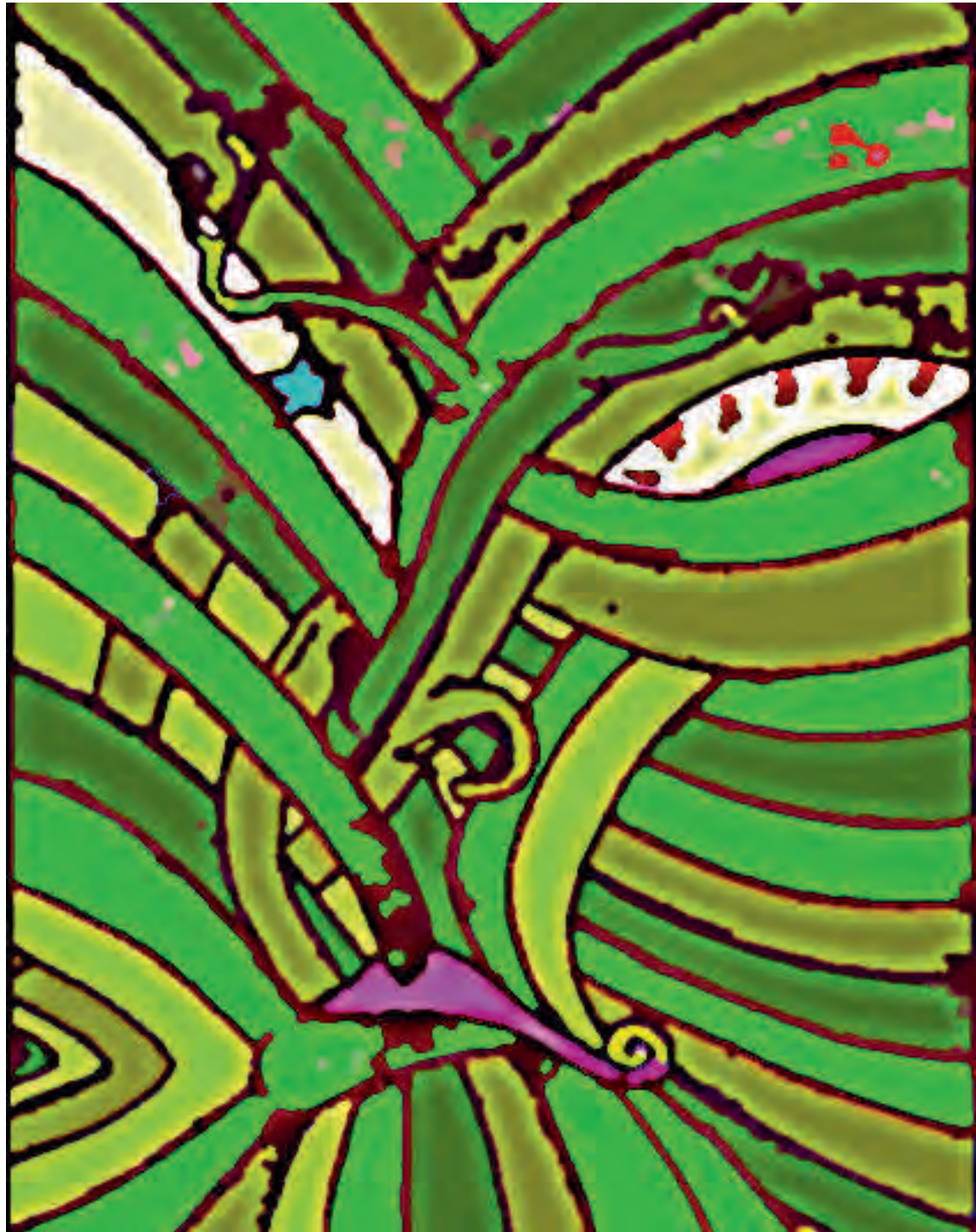
THE DEED

Catherine J. Mahony

Dear Fairfax Cryobank
stop sending me 20% off coupons for sperm.
Honestly,
you know it's inconceivable
to think that you really need my uterus to keep your lights on
To keep your rights on.
Dear, the donor
who is not my owner
don't tell me it's okay to send a woman a coupon
that never expires... fired is what I was from every job I tried to get... What
I cannot fret
over the liars
who told me who my father was? Cous, I know you love me,
so don't shove me,
or tower above me,
No!
we don't have room
for you to sleep on the couch.
U see that's y I slouch,
cause I've slept in rusty Buick seats, whiskey sour, make it neat, Washington square,
roots in my hair,
Strawberry fields, dirty needles...
The Dakota was where we met... Yes, where a legend was shot
and his blood runneth over
into the cracks of the street... Beats... Nick... Prick... My finger... Lingerin on and on
till prince charm-ing

rode up on a trusty steed... Need... You... What did I stutter... no you're not my brother,
just because a piece of paper threw us together,
just because we were raised by the same mother.
My mother was a warrior,
uh oh... better lawyer up... is that vodka in ur cup?
What's up now
you want my daughter... Borders separate the deviant from the lenient...
The weak from the mad,
hatter... Alice fell hard
and now her wrists are scarred
with lines that trace her creviced face... Me, can you?
Erase me... Can you... Disgrace me?
How about you just make peace...
pieces...
defend...
Pre-tend
Never land...
Stand...
Good day
In deed...

GREEN LADY
Nicholas Galiano
Ink/Digital



AUTHOR

Tyler Sheperak

The television drones on in the background to the point of deafening silence. This room is maddening. Father grunts from behind me. My shoulders flinch slightly. He doesn't like it when I move. Staring ahead, my vision blurs in and out of focus. I count the grains on the television screen as it continues to scream at me, but I don't hear it. One black, three gray, two black, one white, one gray, two white, three black, one gray, one white, one black, one black, one black, one black, one black . . .

It's morning. I rise to my feet, fully aware of my body. How long was I counting the grains? One black, three gray, two black, one white? Doesn't matter. The room is a mess. It looks ordinary enough, but to me, a mess. I walk towards the television, taking what feels like a lifetime. With my last step, I lift my right foot and penetrate the screen. Glee washes over me as warmth and red wash over my leg. I remove my foot from the black box, and pick up the television, ripping the cord from the wall. It isn't heavy. I look at the mirror along the wall and the television follows, shattering the mirror. Cracks form throughout the wall. I turn and move towards the kitchen.

I reach in the drawer and draw the shears Mother keeps there. I notice the moisture on my leg, right below my dress, as I remove the shears. It angers me. The dress angers me. So does the house. And Mother. But not Father. Mustn't anger Father. Must love Father. Always love Father. I slit my dress with the shears. Much better. The tear pleases me. Now, it matches me. Matches my skin, my person, the very fabric of my being. I turn back

to the living room. A high-pitched noise gradually grows louder with each move I make.

Past the empty couch, the television stand sits empty. I return to my place in front of the couch, kneeling, sitting back on my feet, hands on my knees. I close my eyes again. The sound of the television comes into focus in front of me. Father grunts from behind me again and rises to his feet. He brushes a hand on my shoulder as he passes me to turn off the television. He turns to the stairs and climbs up. The steps grow fainter and fainter. When I can hear them no longer, I open my eyes to the deafening silence. The sun has set.



TIRED OF WAITING
Sarah Belles
Colored Pencil

THAT DOG

Stephanie R. Holloway-Peidl

Ink



THE PRESERVATION SONNET

Austin Graczyk

If I could sketch my thoughts, I'd keep them near

In black and white, past loves in frozen form

Immobile, fragile beauty minus fear

Pressed flowers both in weather cold and warm.

I have no earth to bear the blossoms' seeds

Or spread the perfect versions I behold

Forever desperate, as the seasons feed

On beauty, slowly turning young to old.

The way I see them struggles to survive

Without a concrete captive cased in time

I'd sacrifice this form to keep alive

Eternal, my loves' beauty in their prime.

As faces fold and age dismantles verve,

I weep for what my hands could not preserve.

KRISHNA SPEAKS

DJ Plante

I am the spin of the atom, this earth, and every galaxy.
Beyond even that, I am the torque of the spin.
I am the center.

I am the fiber and fabric of all that is.
the warp and the weft of time and space.
the Great Void and its Event Horizon.

I am the abiding emptiness within all space.
I am Empty Space,
the vacuous energy, emerging from the center.
Indeed, I am the center.

I am both the empirical and theoretical mass,
the innermost,
The ever-churning energy that cannot be extinguished.

I am equally the wave and the particle.
Both its momentum and location.
I am complementary duality abiding in unity.

I am the beginning, the middle and the end;
The Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer;

I am the reflection of a light unseen,
and the echo of the unheard,
Residing in the single syllable Om, and
the meter of the Psalms.

Thus am I.

OMEN

Alexis Harris
Acrylic



FREE LOVE

Shannon Wiedinmyer

Pencil



THE DWEBB

Christopher Smith-Thompson

“Wolves eat sheep and sheep get eaten by wolves. Which one are you?”

These words—which come from my dad’s drunken rants—have stuck with me since I was young. A question that I have wondered for as long as I can remember. I think I have always been the wolf just like my dad and as the predator. I can sense when prey or other predators are near. But I can’t remember ever feeling this badly for being one before.

I could see it. The terror twinkling in his welling eyes as he tried to hold back the tears. I saw it the same way every other day for the past few months it seems. Derrick Wilson, or as we called him, Dweeb, was being messed with again.

“Aww, is the little wimp about to cry!” George Jameson called out towards him.

The other kids at the playground would just surround the two and watch from a fair distance. Some laughed at the scene unfolding, making jokes along with George. Others sort of just stood by and spectated in silence. They must have felt too bad for Derrick to say anything or too afraid to be George’s next target. Maybe both.

I wasn’t afraid of George though. I and George were actually friends. At least, I guess you could call us friends. We sometimes ate lunch together—talked to the same people and rooted for the same football team. We even shared the same sense of humor. Two wolves sharing their hunting grounds together. Yeah, I guess we could be called friends.

“Hey, Mikey,” George called out towards me.

“Check this out! The dweeb’s about to go cry baby on us!” He’d launch his arm out towards Derrick’s chest, pushing him hard enough to make him lose balance and nearly fall. “Can you believe that? The punk ain’t got no backbone! No backbone at all. C’mon! Say somethin’ back! Stop being such a wimp, man!” He’d push Derrick again while chuckling. “Ha-ha. Can you believe it, Mikey? I mean really.”

I had been staring at the two this whole time but I didn’t need to look around to know that there were eyes on me. Other kids just staring. Waiting for my response. My reaction. Ready for me to join in. But I didn’t. I just stood there and kept watching.

This was obviously not the first time this had happened. George always found some kid to pick on at least once a day. I usually joined in on the fun and games. While we had plenty of attention to share between everyone at our school, it seemed as if Derrick always got it the worst. He was practically the biggest of the sheep in the flock.

After winter break, everyone was coming back to school showing off their new clothes and games. Derrick had bought himself the newest pair of Jordan’s that had come out that year. He was so psyched about it. It must have cost him a fortune. While he didn’t seem like the kind of kid to care about an expensive pair of shoes, one could only assume he was trying to make a good impression on his classmates.

Well, it sure as hell worked. Everyone was in his face trying to make him sit with them at lunch tables. He got invited to some birthday parties.

DO LIKE A FLOWER DOES

Timothy Batdorf
Photography



Derrick went from being a nobody to a somebody in record breaking time. Those shoes gave Derrick the spotlight he could never attain by himself and all eyes were on him. No one seemed to notice him more than George did though.

“You’re one of the cool kids now, right man? C’mon. Be cool and let me borrow those sneakers for a little while. Just for the rest of the day. I’ll give them back. Promise!”

Derrick, the poor sap, was too afraid to lose what little bit of ‘cool’ reputation he had gathered and didn’t want to get on George’s bad side, so he ended up letting the sneakers go. George wore them around for a day and ‘somehow’ forgot to give them back to Derrick before the school day was up. Once those Jordan’s entered George’s house, they never left.

Derrick asked George a few times when he was going to get his sneakers back. By the second or third time of asking and getting blown off, Derrick would get the hint that he wasn’t going to be getting those shoes back any time soon.

It seemed like as the shoes left, so did Derrick’s brief phase of popularity. He returned to his original place as the nobody no one knew or cared about, unless I or George was teasing him. I remember thinking how funny the situation was at the time. How dumb did the dweeb have to be to actually give his shoes up like that? Thinking back on it now, I can’t help but feel a twinge of guilt over it all. I quickly snap out of that hazy memory and return to the sharp details of the moment unfolding before me.

“Ya’ know what, Mikey?” George called out at me while cracking his knuckles against his palms. “We should teach the dweeb a lesson. Really. Show’em how to stand up for himself. Show’em how to fight back! You’d like that, wouldn’t you, dweeb? You’d like for us to toughen you up, huh?”

Maybe that was why I and George were friends.

He reminded me a lot of my dad. He talked a lot like him. His methods of teaching were even similar. My and my big brother's good days consisted of finding three meals a day and not getting full off my old man's knuckle sandwiches. Those good days didn't come around as often when my brother left for the military. He just wanted a way out, he told me. Maybe he didn't think about how I'd be forced to

just stared, lost for words. Or maybe I wasn't—because for some reason, my lips kept moving.

"I said, leave the kid alone, George! These jokes are getting old and I think everybody is tired of them."

George's face shifted from a shocking awe to an angry glare.

"Either way, I don't blame him. I would have done the same if I were in his shoes."

handle dad all by myself. Maybe he did. Either way, I don't blame him. I would have done the same if I were in his shoes.

George's hand reached, grabbing Derrick by the collar of his now tear and snot-stained shirt. I could see that same fear in Derrick's eyes magnify instantly the moment he was grabbed up. It gave me a truly weird feeling in my stomach as if I had drunk sour milk. It made me feel sick—and mad.

"Enough, George. Cut it out. The dweeb got the point."

Why I even bothered to say anything at this point was beyond me. The words left my mouth before I could even think them through. I wasn't even sure what it was I said until I saw George's head spin around like an owl's and looked back at me.

"What'd you say, man?" he questioned. His face looked confused like I had just busted out and started speaking Latin or something. I froze up and

"Seriously, Mikey? You're going suddenly try and pull this on me? For real? What if I don't let the squirt go, huh? What then?"

He had a point. We had been using and abusing Derrick for so long now that he practically had become our unofficial punching bag. Why was he suddenly more than that now? I guess I never thought of him as anything more than that 'punching bag' before. I usually was in the middle of the action by now, shoving Derrick's body back and forth between me and George like a ragdoll. I remember reading somewhere that there's a weird calmness in the center of tornados. The eye of the storm they call it. While everything is getting wrecked apart on the outside, things are smooth sailing within. Maybe I took a step out of the center long enough to see the kind of damage that was being done everywhere else.

George had already turned his body fully to face me by this time. He still kept a good grip on

RAINBOW SURGE

Hannah Elizabeth High
Digital



"I sort of stared at him for a moment, shrugged my shoulders, and turned my back on the kid."

Derrick's collar and sort of swung him around like a little rag doll. My own hands curled into fists at my sides as I stared George down again. The students shifted their attention and suddenly we were the main attraction. The only thing crazier than watching a wolf maul a sheep is watching two wolves go toe to toe.

"Is there an issue here!?"

The loud and booming voice of Mr. Thomas seemed to bring a different form of clarity to the situation at hand. His words cut through the crowd of kids as cleanly as his body did in order to make his way towards the center of the student made arena. By the time he got there, George had already let go of Derrick and was attempting to squirm his way out of getting in trouble. The teacher didn't buy any of it and began escorting George to the Principal's office, a place both I and George were too familiar with. For some reason, Mr. Thomas didn't take me with him—but gave me a weird look and walked away.

Most of the kids surrounding us dispersed, seeing there was no longer a show to be seen. I managed to exhale a breath that I had apparently been holding on to for god knows how long. I had an opportunity to relax and take a breather. Relieved that I somehow dodged getting in trouble this time around. Relieved that I didn't have to bump heads with my buddy either. If it hadn't been for the sniffing I heard behind me, I would have forgotten all about Derrick. I turned to him and gave him a look.

"Hey, dwe- Derrick. You alright, man?" I questioned.

"Y-Yeah. Yeah, I'm alright. I'm okay. I'm okay." He said, trying to straighten up his clothes.

I wasn't really sure what to say afterwards. I and the dweeb rarely ever talked. I didn't really know him all that well. I reached to give him a pat on the shoulder. Something my big brother used to

do whenever I was down and felt bad. It usually came after a stern talking to by my pops or one of those 'life lessons' that needed to be learned through the teachings of a few knuckle sandwiches. Derrick flinched and stumbled backwards.

"P-please! Please, just leave me alone! Okay?"

I could still see it. The fear. The terror. Twinkling right in his eyes more than ever. What was sadder? The sheep crapping himself in front of the wolf or the wolf thinking he could actually befriend a sheep? Some things just can't change. I sort of stared at him for a moment, shrugged my shoulders, and turned my back on the kid, walking off.

"Yeah. Whatever, dweeb."

SCENES FROM A FAMILY ROAD TRIP

Patrick Brandolini

Sis,
Scoot over
Skip the next song,
So-and-so said something so wrong
Dislocated, expatriate love lost
Wait, where's my hat?

Well hey kids, did you see that?
Turn your head and push the seat back,
No, stop fighting for a minute
Many, many men have fought to win it
There it goes, God, get your grace
and shine just a little bit on my face
Do it all together, like we're growing up
Let yourself learn a little-
are you throwing up?

I don't like it
That's too bad
No, don't say that
Do something, Dad

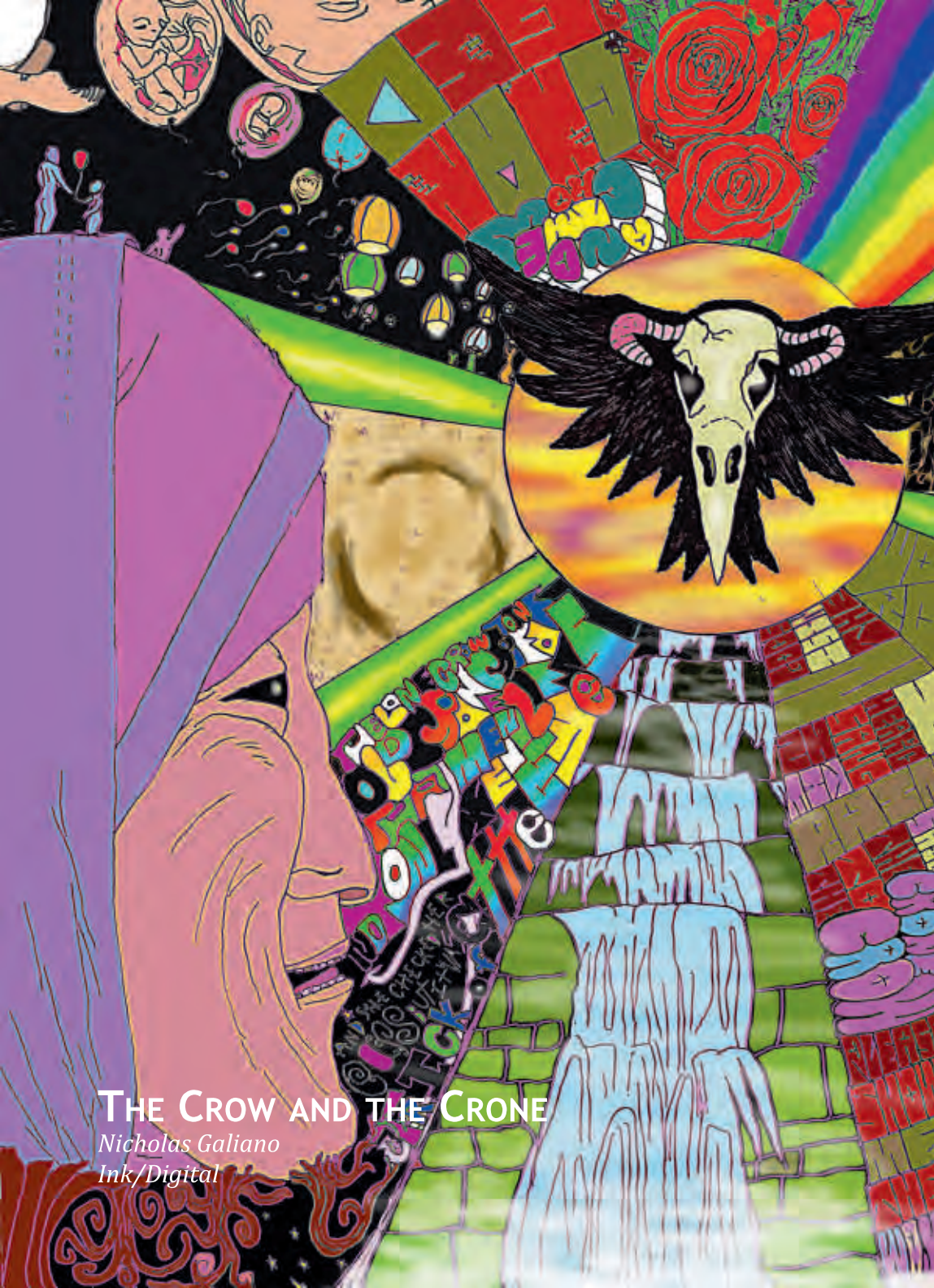
Are we here, and have we won yet?
Something tells me we're not having fun yet
Long looks shared across an ocean,
stumble right back to locomotion
Well whatever it all was for,
We'll learn a little less when we do it more
Big, bright, blue and optimistic
Buried in the back of an apparition,
Momma's moment, oh so fleeting, do it all together just to stop the bleeding,
smile damn it, smile please
Locked in love and on your knees
Kiss this moment on the ass,
Just to say we loved it when we look back

PORCELAIN

Kylee Naugle

Pastel





THE CROW AND THE CRONE

Nicholas Galiano
Ink/Digital

WARM MILK

Lou Madsen

“**W**hat’s your goal for today?” Mr. Brian asks as he looks at me over his clipboard. I repeat what every other kid before me has said: “To have a positive day.” He nods and writes it down. “One to ten?” he asks. I look out the window. Two of the stray cats have made their way up to the balcony. The orange cat is lying down in a small concave area of snow, while the gray cat is sitting up with his eyes closed, feeling the sun on his fur. I turn away from the window. “I’m feeling like a three today.” His pen scribbles across his pad, “Okay, go on up.”

At his discretion, my sock-clad feet make their way across the cold tile floor. I only step in one questionable puddle on my way. I approach the metal counter where our food is served, and I wait behind Josh. Today, Josh has wrapped one of his spare t-shirts around his head and is claiming he’s now Jewish, and that is his yamicca. I’m no professor in religious studies; however, I believe that someone who is claiming to be Jewish would subsequently not be shouting “Heil Hitler!” and giving the Nazi salute. But what do I know?

Breakfast today is cereal, as it always is. The vast array of choices presented to us are bran flakes and Lucky Charms. Josh is unhappy with the options. He picks up a bowl of Lucky Charms, waits until it has been filled with milk, then throws it over the counter. To his dismay, the bowl misses the staff member, Amanda, and splats squarely onto the ground. He begins to scream obscenities at Amanda, but I don’t bother to comprehend his words. I just want my bran flakes and the seat

closest to the window, where the cats are still lounging blissfully unaware of the ongoing commotion. Mr. Brian comes over to Josh and threatens to grab the restraints. Josh spits in his face and runs out of the dining room. As he runs, he jumps and pulls a security camera from the ceiling. A mess of wires and drywall fall from above, and the camera is now hanging by a single cord. It sways back and forth with ease as Mr. Brian runs after Josh. I step forward and grab my bowl of bran flakes sans milk.

I am in a mental hospital. It is my second time here. All of us are not here for the same reason. Josh, whom you’ve just met, is here for anger-management issues. Trish, the girl responsible for the suspicious puddle I stepped in, is here for schizophrenia. I am here for PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), depression, and “suicidal tendencies” as they gracefully label it. Most kids stay a week, maybe less. This time, I’ve been here for three weeks, going on four. I know each of the kids and staff by name, I know exactly what time to be awake and when we need to be ready for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and I have even come up with names for each of the stray cats that come and go just beyond the thick glass windows. The one thing I don’t know is how to get and stay out of here.

I am sixteen and I do not want to live to see seventeen. What’s the point? One day, we all will die. For me, it might as well be today. You can come at me with excuses such as “Think about how you’ll impact your family if you do this!” or “You have so

"How cliché to say that the orange cat reminds you of Garfield, Ms. Krista."

much ahead of you." To the rational thinking person, these are exemplary points. However, the sixteen-year-old me couldn't care less. I do love my family, but they will move on and find a way to deal. So much ahead of me? I have no want to see my future. I've already lived through enough. Besides, no matter how many good things happen, it's only a matter of time before the next catastrophe occurs. How long until the next man comes and attacks me? How long until my body is taken again? How long until I want to die again?

I pretend to eat my bran flakes, when in reality I'm just watching the two cats outside. I long to be free like them. I want to touch the snow that they are now both sleeping on. I crush the bran flakes into a fine powder between my index finger and thumb. I wonder if the cats ever take notice to me or any of the other kids inside the building. Hopefully not. They don't need to be burdened with our negativity. Do cats suffer from mental illness? If they do, are they even aware that they're different from the others in their pack? Or do they simply live their life to the best of their ability?

Ms. Krista sits down next to me. She takes my bowl of bran flakes and shakes it. I look over at her. "Are you hungry, Emily?" She asks me. I look to the bowl of cereal. A few flakes remain, but mostly all that is there is an assortment of different sized particles of bran powder. I shake my head. I turn away from her and look back out to the two cats. I can feel her looking over my shoulder. "I like the orange cat more. He reminds me of Garfield." I

pretend to ignore her. How cliché to say that the orange cat reminds you of Garfield, Ms. Krista. Next will you say that you can just imagine him eating a tray of lasagna? Now I want lasagna. Dammit Ms. Krista, just leave me alone. I pick up my bowl of bran "flakes" and make my way to the trash can. I throw it away and begin to walk back to my room. I pass by Josh, who has managed to work himself into the restraints and is now being talked down by Mr. Brian.

I enter my room where my roommate Arianna is nowhere to be seen. I sit down on the counter beside my bed. I begin to stare out the window again, wondering if the cats have noticed I have left the dining room. I wonder if they're looking for me now, as I sit here? A ridiculous thought, but it passes the time. I pick up a piece of white chalk that is resting by my feet. In each of the rooms, there are two sections of the wall that are covered in chalkboard paint. We're supposed to write things that are "therapeutic" in nature. I drew a lot of flowers on mine and one of my favorite sayings, "It is what it is."

Suddenly, I hear something banging softly. I turn away from the window. It almost sounds like it could be coming from down the hall. I stand up and walk to the doorway. I peer out, but don't see anything obvious. No staff are running towards a room; no kid is screaming. Maybe I'm just hearing things. If I were to go crazier, this would be the place to do it. Stepping back from the doorway, I notice that the noise has gotten slightly louder. It's



CYBER CHICK
Hannah Elizabeth High
Digital

SUNKEN

*Katie Brucato
Photography*



annoying and constant. I think I hear something else. *Is it a voice?* A sense of unease crosses my mind.

“Arianna?” No reply. I call out again, “Arianna?” Cautiously, I walk over to her side of the room. She’s not there. Something feels very wrong. I haven’t seen her at breakfast. I’m about to leave the room and see if she’s somewhere else, when I notice a light shining out through under our bathroom door. The door is always closed, but the light is never left on. It’s motion-activated. I walk up closer and see that it’s shaking slightly. Then I look up and see that over the door, a knot of white fabric is wedged, leaving the door ajar just slightly. The door is shaking. I push the door open and the fabric comes unlodged from the doorway and I hear a loud thump.

I fall to the ground as I put together what has happened. Arianna is on the floor, shaking. Her eyes are wide and she’s gasping for air. The fabric is her bed sheet and it’s tied around her neck. For a split second I’m frozen. I’m terrified. I bend down and grab her shoulders. I’m screaming her name. I hear the footsteps of the staff running towards our room. I’m trying to undo the knot around her neck, but my hands can’t keep steady. I don’t know what to do. I’m crying. I don’t know if she can hear me. Her eyes are closed now. Staff run into the room and Ms. Krista pulls me away. I don’t even fight her, because I know that there’s nothing I can do to help Arianna. She holds me into her chest and wraps both arms around me. The rest of the day is a blur. I don’t leave my room for lunch or dinner, and I can’t see anything clearly. Maybe it’s because my eyes are filled with tears; maybe it’s because I just can’t focus. I really don’t know.

Night comes and I haven’t heard anything about Arianna’s condition. I don’t know what time it is. They don’t place clocks in the rooms. I refuse to go to bed, because I’m afraid if I sleep then I’ll

relive the events of that morning. I sit on the counter near my bed and try to focus on the world outside the window. The outside lights illuminate the snowy balcony just enough that I can make out shapes. I think one of the cats has come back. It looks like it’s the grey one. He’s facing towards me, I think. I can’t tell if his eyes are open, but I’m imagining that they are. It’s comforting.

Ms. Ginger, the nighttime nurse, comes into my room. She’s holding a cup of something. I try to not look at her, because I know that I’ll start crying again. She sits down next to me on the counter. She hands me the cup. I take it and am surprised by its warmth. I lift it up and smell it; it smells like cinnamon, honey, and milk. I feel my eyes begin to tear up again. She places a soft hand against my left cheek and raises my head to look at her. I can feel hot tears roll down my face.

“What you saw today, most of these staff have never seen,” she says. Her voice is soft and smooth, but demands my attention. I take a sip of the drink. It’s the best thing I’ve ever tasted, and it makes me cry even more. I feel guilty for enjoying this, while I don’t know where Arianna is. It’s like Ms. Ginger knows what I’m thinking, as she then tells me: “Arianna is fine. She’ll be back from the hospital in the morning. She’s fine. If you hadn’t been there, she wouldn’t be. But you were there, so she is.” I let out a breath that I wasn’t aware I had been holding in. My shoulders begin to shake and I start to sob. Ms. Ginger takes the cup from me and sets it aside. She pulls me in close. “Why did it have to be me that saved her?” I asked through labored breaths. “Because,” Ms. Ginger said, “You needed saving, too.”

I looked out the window and saw the cat more clearly than I had before. His eyes were open, and he was looking right at me. It was as if he was affirming what Ms. Ginger had said. I did need saving. Maybe, by saving Arianna, I saved myself,

too. I never want my Mom to find me like I found Arianna. I never want her to wonder why I did it, like I was wondering about Arianna right now. She isn't even my acquaintance. I've only known her for three days. What would I do to my Mom if I did this?

The cat is still looking at me. Ms. Ginger is still speaking. I pick up the cup again and take another sip. I don't want to die. I don't want to leave my body to be found. I do have things ahead of me, things to look forward to. I now realize that there are things I want to do. I want to get out of here. I want to pet the cat on the other side of the window. I want to tell him that I'm okay—I'm going to be okay.

Today, I'm seventeen and will be turning eighteen in two months. I've graduated from high school early and am now enrolled in college. I'm looking forward to my senior prom this June with my best friends. I'm moving away to begin college

up in Hazleton, Pennsylvania this summer. I'm planning on getting tattooed on my arms to cover up old scars. I have so many exciting things coming up and I can't imagine taking all of that away from myself now.

Ms. Ginger was right. When I saved Arianna, I really did save myself, too. My time in the hospital made me realize something. Not only is life a gift, but it's an opportunity. It's an opportunity to help others. To save others. To inspire others. Yes, I've been hurt. I don't know if my hurting is over, but I now know that I control the effect that pain has on me. I can succumb to it again and leave more scars or even a body to be found, or I can fight. I can push past my hurt for myself and for others.

"I don't know if my hurting is over, but I now know that I control the effect that pain has on me."

SILENCE

Joshua Sparks

Silence.
The maddening symphony of a mind in doubt.
The language of the faithless soul,
The utterance of vile defiance.
The cost of a thousand prayers unheard,
Unerring in their pleas.

The chill of the grave,
Enshrouding its victims,
Coffins taken to earth.
The consecration of the ears,
The answer of the dead,

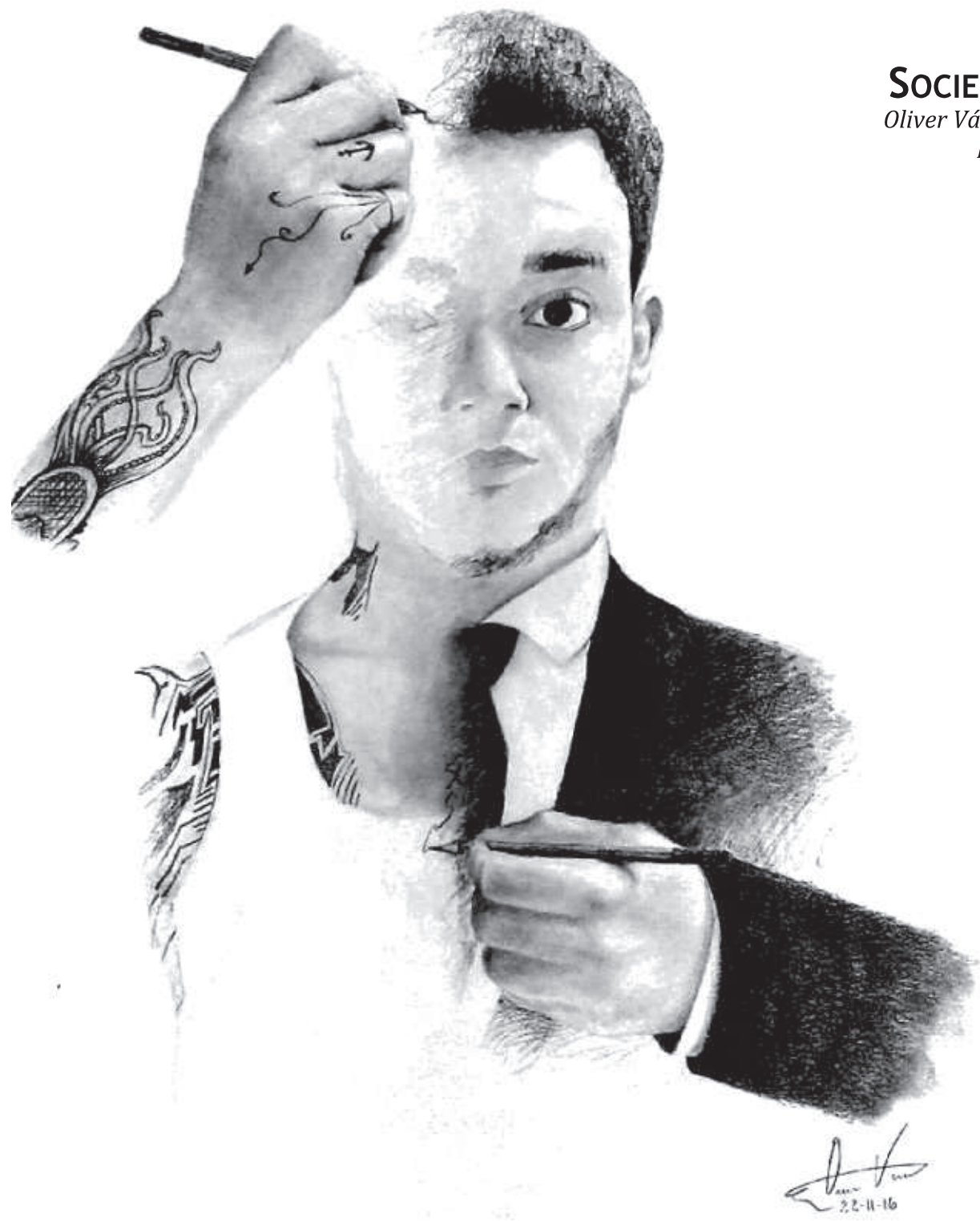
The lifeblood of the deaf, the mute,
The cloak of killers in the night.
The ambivalence of the great,
The voice of the poor in court,
However ill their grievances.

The shout of victory
As the saint enters Heaven's gate.
The call of the unknown,
The birth of enigma.
The breath of those not born.

The joy of the reaper
At the harvest of souls.
The sound of the angelic harps
The whittling of time down
To the last grain of sand.

Of all the folly, mystery, madness, and woe,
No power is more final than Silence.

SOCIEDAD
Oliver Vásquez
Pencil



Oliver Vásquez
22-11-16



ILLUSTRATION

*Wilhen Suriel
Photography*

AMID THE COMPLEXITIES OF EXISTENCE

Anisa Jackson

The body relaxed, and instantly grew stiff. The struggle was over. The insignificant little creature now knew death. As I looked at the dead moth, this minute wayside triumph of so great a force over so mean an antagonist filled me with wonder. Just as life had been strange a few minutes before, so death was now as strange. The moth having righted himself now lay most decently and uncomplainingly composed. O yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am.

—VIRGINIA WOOLF, “THE DEATH OF THE MOTH”

In “The Death of the Moth,” Virginia Woolf uses her observations of a dying moth to analyze the complexities of existence. While the moth is symbolic of the true nature of life, it also awakens the intricate relationship between life and death, which is both haunting and inspiring. This very strangeness between life and death kept Woolf ensnared between reality and the dark—morphing the reality that her mind created. Woolf’s genius and her struggles with her mental health contributed to her work, establishing her as a staple of the literary world. While Woolf’s mind allowed her to become a literary genius, it was also her undoing, which she alludes to and foreshadows through her characters in many of her works.

Fascinated by the mind and the happenings of everyday life, Woolf spends much of her observation of the moth by drawing parallels between the contemplative life and the pathetic nature of the unexamined life, reasoning that it is through understanding the everyday happenings

that an individual can understand himself/herself better. Woolf describes the moth as “little or nothing but life”:

Yet, because he was so small, and so simple a form of the energy that was rolling in at the open window and driving its way through so many narrow and intricate corridors in my own brain and in those of other human beings, there was something marvelous as well as pathetic about him. It was as if someone had taken a tiny bead of pure life and decking it as lightly as possible with down and feathers, had set it dancing and zig-zagging to show us the true nature of life. Thus displayed one could not get over the strangeness of it. (248)

To Woolf it is disheartening that the moth’s mere existence prevents it from appreciating the enormity of life, particularly in the face of death: “He flew vigorously to one corner of his

compartment, and, after waiting there a second, flew across to the other. What remained for him but to fly to a third corner and then to a fourth? That was all he could do, in spite of the size of the downs, the width of the sky, the far-off smoke of houses, and the romantic voice, now and then, of a steamer out at sea" (248).

While inspecting the moth, Woolf begins to wonder about what the life wrapped up inside the moth would have been capable of if it had been placed within the form of something other than the moth: "One is apt to forget all about life, seeing it humped and bossed and garnished and cumbered so that it has to move with the greatest circumspection and dignity. Again, the thought of all that life might have been had he been born in any other shape caused one to view his simple activities with a kind of pity" (248-49). And this speculation of "what if" can be applied to the curiosity of what an individual's mind could potentially be if he/she was free of his/her mental illness or the constraints of his/her mind. The individual in question would be a completely different person who would not think the same or perceive his/her surroundings in the same manner, either. Hisham Matar, a writer for *The New Yorker*, notes in his essay "The Unsaid: The Silence of Virginia Woolf" that Woolf's struggles with mental illness allowed her to pick up on the fact that people tend to fail to accurately convey the complexities of their minds, and this inability to express oneself accurately is a parallel of reality in contrast to the reality that one's mind creates. "There was a relationship between Woolf's mental illness and her writing," writes Matar: "Bouts of mental crises hit her between novels. The edges of sanity revealed what seemed to her to be the true workings of the mind. With each book she became more obsessed with language and how when we speak we often fall short of or else exceed what we

intended to express."

Woolf notes that there is an air of strangeness that encompasses both life and death that is unsettling. However, death releases the individual from being ensnared between life and death, but in doing so the individual steps into the unknown—an unknown that is far more powerful and final than any other presence in existence: "Just as life had been strange a few minutes before, so death was now as strange. The moth having righted himself now lay most decently and uncomplainingly composed. O yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am" (249). While it is often perceived as more unsettling than life, death offers up a release from the mind and the conflicted relationship between an individual's external and internal realities—something that Woolf fully understood.

In "Woolf's Darkness: Embracing the Inexplicable," essayist Rebecca Solnit examines a sentence of hers about darkness and how it sheds some light on the complexities within the relationship between life and death: "The future is dark, which is the best thing it can be, I think" (qtd. in Solnit). Realistically and symbolically, darkness maintained a steady presence within Woolf's life, and Solnit interprets Woolf's words as embracing both the darkness and the uncertainty of the future, and Woolf's own perception of her reality:

It's an extraordinary declaration, asserting that the unknown need not be turned into the known through false divination, or the projection of grim political or ideological narratives; it's a celebration of darkness, willing – as that 'I think' indicates – to be uncertain even about its own assertion.

Woolf's understanding of the fact that the unsettling nature of death and darkness doesn't need to paralyze our minds with fear is a state of understanding many people struggle to obtain and

ATLAS SMILED

Sarah Belles

Ink



come to terms with. And Solnit seems to agree with Woolf that darkness is not necessarily bleak: “And yet the night in which distinctions and definitions cannot be readily made is the same night in which love is made, in which things merge, change, become enchanted, aroused, impregnated, possessed, released, renewed.”

Although life and death are two distinctly different presences within the world, they are entirely dependent upon one another to exist—and to help us find and create meaning within our existence, which Woolf understands and conveys in her works. While the moth’s death is pitiful, it does give new life to Woolf’s musings and her appreciation for the complex relationship between life and death, and her internal and external realities. Woolf’s works and her life are exemplary examples of the arduous experience of being caught in an incessant fluctuation of chaos within one’s mind and one’s external environment, and the fact that coexisting with and facing such turmoil does not mean that one must slip into a meager existence or an existence that is devoid of satisfaction. It is through gazing out the window, through the soul, and creating room for speculation that one can stay afloat amidst adversity.

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"The unsettling nature of death and darkness doesn't need to paralyze our minds with fear."

CHERRY STREET

Annadore Fern

Mom says I am god. Do you remember the first time?

You tell me to open up as wide as I can.

I wonder what your nose and mouth look like.

Tell me how beautiful my teeth are again.

Mom says I am the whole world. You know, she grew me inside of her.

I have god in my stomach too. Wanna see?

Can I close my mouth now?

Mom told me about men like you.

If I'm god, why did you just put poison in my mouth?

But yes, I'm a big girl. See, I'm not crying.

Mom says but forgets.

Mom says and disappears.

BRIDGE

Joshua Templin

We are standing on the bridge —
not a metaphorical place
that connects both sides,
but literally the only path
over the river that divides
our slum from their suburb.

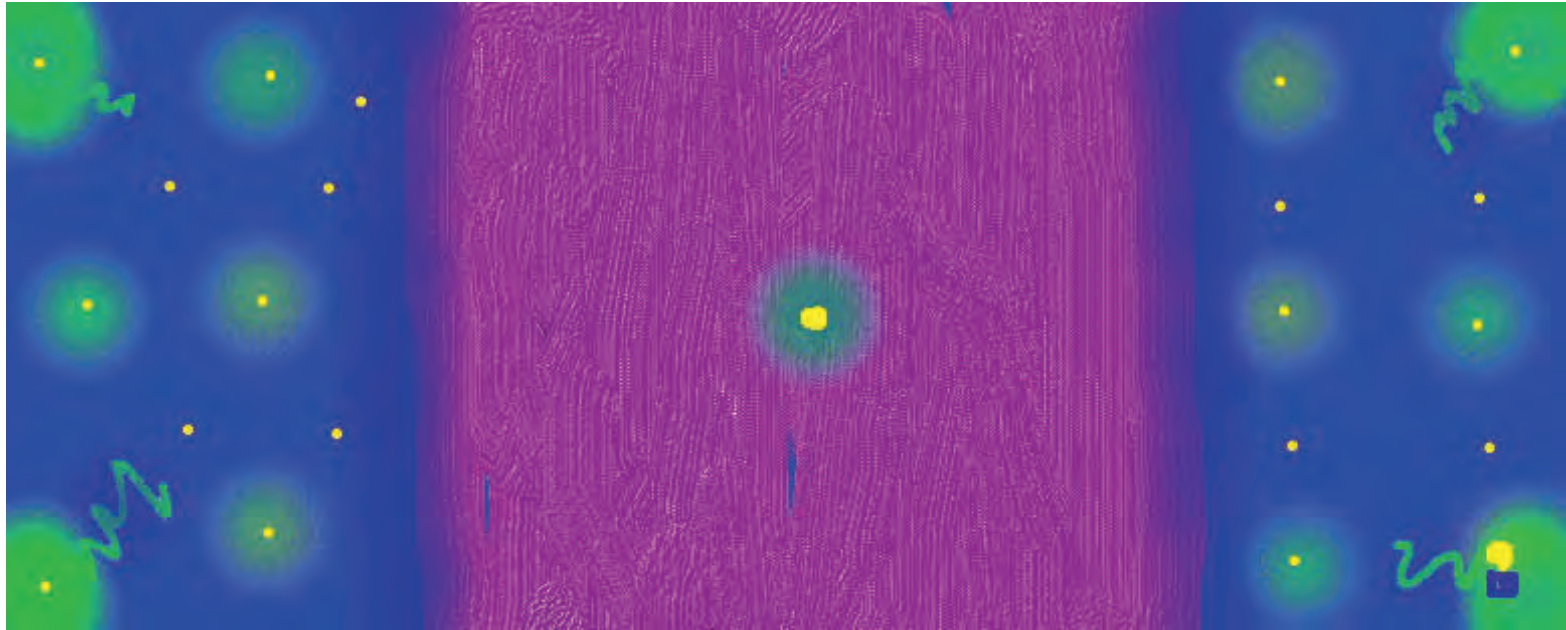
Liminality is peering over the side
into that wash of brown
and deciding not to jump
because it smells like trash.

We are standing on the bridge
that crumbled enough to need
some real repairs:
forty-two million dollars
of rehabilitation —
the kind you won't find
west of the river.

Liminality is crossing
from here to there:
an old life on this side
and a new one over there.

We are standing on the bridge,
not really watching the cars go by
or the bikes fly past,
but watching water move
from a spring to the ocean.

CLUSTER
Catherine J. Mahony
Digital





SEE ME

DJ Plante

We pass each other on sidewalks, on the bus, and in the hallways on our way to class. Sometimes, we share a ritual of exchanged nods or smiles as our paths cross. Yet, I wonder if we ever actually see each other—ever look beyond the limits and restrictions of the labels that we assign to one another and see the person behind those tags.

It was in my youth that I first began to feel unseen and often unheard. As a child, I did not receive many of the benefits that my heterosexual brothers received from our father. I don't blame my father or my brothers for this. And although it was more than simply a lack of interest that barred me from establishing a close bond with my father, I know now that he did the best he could. Yet I felt as if I had somehow become the rainbow-colored elephant in the room: *Yes, it's there, but we can't talk about it.* My dad could not see past the gayness of his son to recognize the child in need of his time and love. Sadly, this experience taught me that I was somehow unlovable as I was.

My experiences in school only reinforced the idea that I could not be loved. In addition to receiving a public education, I learned all about public shaming. When I graduated from high school, it was as if I had graduated from *not being likeable* to a new and enhanced status—one of *being hate-able*. I learned that if I wanted to survive, I had to become someone other than who I was. I learned to wear a mask so that people would never again see the real me.

Now, looking back, it doesn't seem that odd to me that I had to mask myself. No one saw me

anyway. My peers were unable to see beyond the fact that I was gay. They could not look beyond the label "faggot" to see the human being beneath the branding. They could not, or simply refused to, acknowledge my humanness and my need for acceptance. This invalidation slowly robbed me of my dignity.

Living like a ghost, never really being seen, was lonely. Deep down, I knew that I wanted to connect to others, but I no longer knew how. I wanted to be loved and appreciated just like everyone else. I remember reading in the bible as a child, "God is Love." If that is true, I thought to myself, then it is among His people that I will find the love and acceptance that I so desired. And so, I began attending a Fundamental Baptist Church.

There, they spoke of unconditional love, but they seemed to never quite be able to manifest that love in their own lives. As long as I wore my mask and conformed to their values, I was welcome. As long as I never became the authentic human being that I was, in fact created to be, they would accept me—though not the real me. I know it seems like a cruel joke, but I was in on it too. I was complicit. And I kept going back.

It wasn't just for the sake of companionship that I kept going. I had a sincere love for God, in spite of what I was hearing from the pulpit. I figured as long as I didn't act on my instincts and never honored my inner compass, maybe, just maybe, I could be worthy of God's love. But my love for the Divine was being tested as I began to confront my own hypocrisy and the irony of the

"Being gay does not define me. I don't even think it adequately describes me."

situation I had put myself in.

I recall one sermon in the early eighties, when the pastor spoke of the AIDS crisis as God's wrathful and righteous justice upon homosexuals because they were, to God, an abomination. I followed along in my bible as he spoke, wondering just what an abomination was. It wasn't until I looked it up later that I found that it meant "worthy of contempt, disgust and hatred."

My world was shattered. How could the God of unconditional love, the very God who is defined as love, hate me? This realization hit me like a wrecking ball. Suddenly, I knew that not only was I repugnant to my family, who couldn't see the child yearning to be loved, and to my peers who couldn't see the human being needing acceptance, but that I was so disgusting and abhorrent that not even the God whom I adored could love me. I felt abandoned and alone. Deep inside me, something broke. I turned my back on this wrathful, hateful god, and began forging my own long and winding spiritual path. I often walked in circles, but finally managed to get out of that dark landscape.

My experience has given me a greater appreciation for the people that now inhabit my life. I have found a faith community to be a part of, a sanctuary of love, safety, and comfort. I have never felt unwelcome there, nor have I felt the need to be anything other than who I am—who, in fact, I was created to be.

I am still learning to trust and take risks with

others. It takes a lot of courage for anyone to reach out to strangers—to build bridges of friendship, with no promise of mutual exchange or investment of heart. I am, however, discovering that the more I reach out to others, the more others reach back to me. The people I have chosen to surround myself with are helping me to cultivate the inner strength and resolve needed to do something as audacious as to take a chance and trust others.

Now, as I reach out to you, I am not only holding myself accountable for bridging our gaps, I am also taking the responsibility of reclaiming those human connections that were denied me in my youth.

I am gay, but I don't want you to see me as *just* gay. That's right. I want you to see my humanity, not *just* my sexuality. As the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard says, "Once you label me, you negate me." Being gay does not define me. I don't even think it adequately describes me. When I finally leave this earth, I want to be remembered, I hope, for my kindness, my sense of humor, and perhaps what little wisdom I possess. I want to be known for the very same things that you do: our shared humanity.

I am a fellow human being—just like you: multidimensional. See me, and see the same humanity that I see in you. See me, and see the same Divinity that I see reflected in you. See me, and perhaps see yourself reflected back to you. You and I are too much alike not to see ourselves in

each other. We are connected. When we deny ourselves the connections so vital to this web of life, we diminish not only ourselves, but, indeed, the entire web of being.

IN THE EYE

Katie Brucato
Photography



OUR EYES

*Kylee Naugle
Pastel*



AN ODE TO FOG

Andres Rodriguez

The clouds have come down from the sky
All around, On the earth they now lie
God's great kingdom graces your breath
Odd to see heaven before your death

The mist takes the world out of focus
Mistakes will go unnoticed
The fog covers the land
God, I take thy hand

The blanket coats nature
The Holy Ghost made of vapor
Sweet dew off the grass
Swiftly, you pass

It's so rare for the fog to form
Into a bare calm storm
No rain, just humid air
No pain in human error

There is no redemption in the mist
There's no exemption to the wish
Of a place beyond death
Or the face of those who bless

Heaven visited the Earth
And souls gifted at birth
the fog is God's kingdom
And I am a cog in God's wisdom



GOODBYE SWEETIE

Alexis Harris
Watercolor

NOURISHMENT

Jennifer Dunn

It is a beautiful Saturday morning in Los Angeles, California. On level 12 of this immaculate building, you can look out of Dr. Nina's window to the entire city. I think to myself, "How on earth did a small town nineteen-year-old from rural Pennsylvania end up here?" I feel myself jolt out of my own thoughts when I hear Dr. Nina say, "How would you describe your illness?" I look down at my feet and then to the rest of the diverse group of women and men and say, "infection"—a contagious infection that affects men and women in all age groups in different ways. I hear the sighs and see the looks of discomfort on the faces of the group. I feel nothing but a pang of sadness when I watch Nicholas, a sixty-five-year old man with Anorexia, show signs of torment when he slowly nods his head in agreement.

We all have received the template for today's session and a pen with Dr. Nina's signature on it. We go through the questions and answer them honestly. Each of us only has five minutes in order for all of us to be able to speak. After our session is up, we all walk slowly out the door and awkwardly meet in the elevator. No one says a word. I go out the nearest exit and walk to the alley behind the building. I feel myself involuntarily laugh as I look and see my sweet seventy-three-year old Auntie waiting in her car for me with the Wall Street Journal covering her entire face. She has coffee and a blueberry muffin waiting for me. We drive through Hollywood and when we finally reach my apartment on Harold Way, we hug goodbye and promise to call each other next week.

I grew up in a small town where everyone knew everyone. My family was dysfunctional and my emotions were heightened since I was a little girl. I grew up with the thought that compassion and empathy could lead to more negative outcomes than positive ones. I romanticized the beauty of bones and thinness. My family and friends would constantly obsess over how to look a certain way that society portrayed as perfect. I grew up relatively healthy but deep down the uncertainty with acceptance of my body was always coming to the surface. I tried various diets that included Veganism, Paleo, Vegetarianism, you name it. I had just turned nineteen years old when I moved home from Miami, Florida after my first service year in the AmeriCorps already and were planning my next journey to California for my second year in the program. I fell in love that summer and the very thought of leaving Pennsylvania was dreadful. However, I had already made a commitment, rented a room, and put a down payment on my car in California.

When I arrived after the long six-hour flight, I felt as if my entire world had shattered. Nothing was what I had imagined: the warm sun and the beautiful vast Pacific Ocean but no one to enjoy it with. I was all alone and my only closest relative lived three hours away from me. I felt utterly out of control with my life. I began working five days a week at an elementary school and rented a room with three other women. I worked hard all day and even picked up two jobs on the weekend to afford my rent. I was completely isolated from social

interactions and I slowly but abruptly found myself fall into a deep depression. I then began to lose my appetite. I cut out breakfast. A few weeks later, I stopped eating lunch. A few months later, I stopped eating overall. I began to absorb myself in the process of starvation and I secretly enjoyed the fast results and distraction from my current life.

When Christmas came around, I flew back home and saw my sister for the first time in months. She did nothing but hugged me and began to cry. She whispered, “I am scared for you.” I had lost almost fifty pounds in a matter of four months. I was nothing but skin and bones, and I only then realized my heartbeat was irregular and my breathing had become hollow. I was suddenly receiving feelings of attention and concern from my family, friends, and boyfriend, which interestingly made me angry—and almost motivated me to keep the attention going. I couldn’t understand why now everyone cared. When I was younger, no one took notice to my depression and anxiety. Since I now physically appeared ill, I was the topic of conversation. Unfortunately, this deranged motivation led me to years of suffering with a severe eating disorder.

Three years later, after constantly moving around, visiting therapists and doctors, and participating in group therapies, I finally came home. I was too frail and sick at the time, and I was afraid of what would happen if I continued the isolation. At the age of twenty-two I signed my lease in Schwenksville, Pennsylvania. I gained back some of the weight I had lost but quickly fell back into the same cycle I was pursuing in California. I was living in a small one-bedroom apartment with a little more stability in my life but the voice in my head—and this infection always found its way back.

I started a new job at a daycare working as an infant teacher and caregiver—and fell in love instantly with every single baby in that room. I had

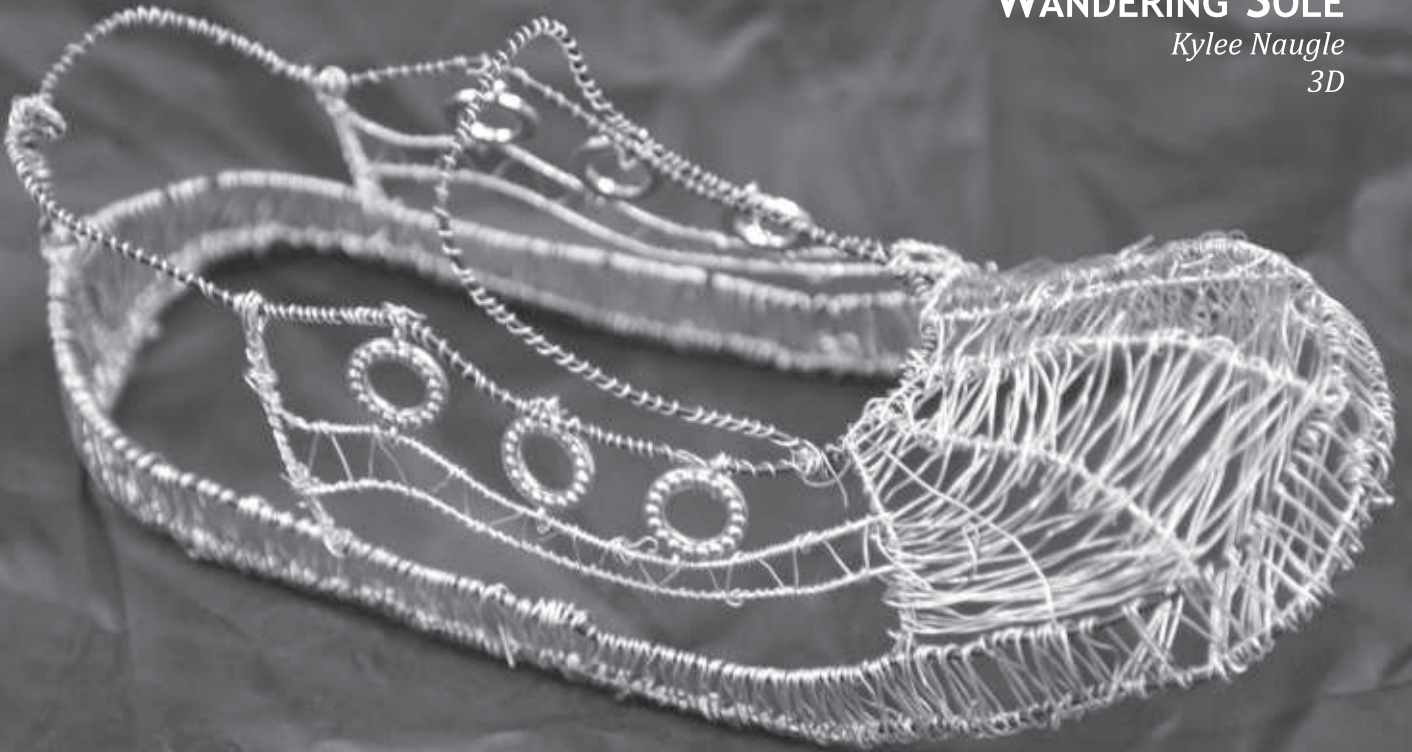
an overwhelming urge to care and love for them as if they were my own. I was not their mother but I knew during the forty-hours-a-week-working there I essentially became their second mother. I was still suffering deeply and secretly from my eating disorder. Every day was still a struggle forcing myself to eat something. Although I was beginning to feel in control and my emotions were on track again, I was still consumed with the almost petrifying thought of gaining weight—as if it was my worst nightmare and secret life I was hiding from everyone I knew and loved.

I have just arrived at work and I am conflicted with emotions of guilt and self-pity. I have not eaten in two days. I am so hungry, but I just can’t bring myself to eat a single thing. I have no reasoning or understanding why it is so difficult and frightening. One of my baby girls in my primary care group has just arrived. She is only eight months old and has grown an intense attachment to me since I began to take care of her since she was only six weeks old. Every morning she reaches for me. I laugh with her mother and go over her schedule from the night before. I know her as if she were my own child. Her sweet, hard-working mother hands me her and I hold her close to my chest. I kiss her and tell her that I love her, and I realize again why I need to fight harder today. I need to eat to give myself strength and energy to love and care for these babies to my full ability.

I sit in the blue rocking chair closest to the window and her bottle isn’t warm enough yet. She quickly begins to cry. I know how to rock and hold her to calm her down but this time she is simply too hungry. Her mother was running late for work and did not get a chance to breastfeed her in the morning. She screams and tears start running down her small cheeks. She is only thirteen pounds and resembles a small doll. She is so beautiful, and the best tempered little child I have ever met. My

"I kiss her and tell her that I love her, and I realize again why I need to fight harder today."

WANDERING SOLE
Kylee Naugle
3D



coworker gives me her bottle and I hold her close to my chest with her head resting in my arms. As soon as she begins to drink, there is silence. I hear her breathing slow down and her bambi eyes, almost resembling a butterfly, close. She takes her small hand and pulls at my sweatshirt, and looks up at me and lies there completely at ease.

After she has finished her bottle, I begin to cry. Ironic, isn't it? I have a moment of clarity, a moment of pure understanding. I realize how important it is to be nourished, to be fed, to grow. I feel so intensely shocked by the understanding that I have essentially become an infant again. I no longer know mentally and physically how to nourish my body—as if I needed someone to show me the way, just as I showed her. *If she refused to drink her bottle, would I be concerned? If I noticed a rapid weight loss, would I do nothing to stop it?* Then, I feel an extreme force of anger and worry about all babies, both boys and girls, and how one day they might grow up just like me. I hear the logical voice in my head tell me that even in our mother's womb our means to survive is through nourishment. I then realize how vital it is to take care of my own body to be able to tell others to do the same. I hold this little girl so close to me and even though she does not understand I tell her I love her, and how healthy and beautiful she is.

After work that night, I sat at my dinner table and ate a home cooked meal for the first time in years and I didn't think twice about it. I discovered the taste of wine. I discovered that warm fresh bread felt way better in my body than endless amounts of water—and that going out to eat with my family and friends was far more satisfying than counting my ribcage and tracing the length of my spine in the shower. I do not think I will ever be fully recovered, but every day I am growing stronger, healthier. I am confident and no longer

terrified of losing control of my body. I am becoming nourished.

LET THERE BE SONGS TO FILL THE AIR

*Timothy Batdorf
Photography*



THRESHOLD

Thomas B. Gomez

The door opens
To sleep and reap
To confide and collide
with persistent passions
of a soil recycled

Thinking grand tactics
of simple man`s stances
of fire and foil, of oil and gold
For the traffic of sorts
consistent with the nature of things
To decide, when my highs became lows
persistent, when my lows became my highs

An acrylic painting of a man with a beard and blue eyes, looking thoughtfully to the right. He is wearing a grey t-shirt and has his hand resting on his chin. The background is a soft, abstract landscape with warm, golden light. The painting style is expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a rich color palette.

LOST IN THOUGHT
Stephanie R. Holloway-Peidl
Acrylic

CUDDLE CAPITALISM

Rebecca Drayer

“Becca, pretty, pretty, pretty, please, let me sleep with you!” My four-year-old sister whines into my ear. “I don’t like the dark. Please!”

This is probably the hundredth time she’s asked to sleep next to me and I’m starting to get annoyed and frustrated. I flip down my copy of *Junie B. Jones*. My third-grade teacher has assigned at least three chapters due the next day. I groan, turn off my reading light, and turn towards her.

When I was a kid, my sister and I used to share a room. Our beds were identical in every way, same sheets, same frame, same mattress. The only difference was that hers was by the window and mine was by the wall. Her side of the room was always darker and colder. The window was drafty and in contrast my side had a reading light hanging over my bed. She didn’t need one. My sister couldn’t read yet.

“No!” I said frustrated, shoving her off me, “Your bed is like right there. I don’t want to!” And of course, she started to cry. I turned her away, thinking of the lost leg room and how stuffy it would get with her clinging on to me. It was a childish mindset we were both guilty of, thinking of only what made us comfortable, not thinking about anyone else. I remember being frustrated, knowing that she would cry and whine until she got her way. I stared moodily out into our room, pouting, eyes finally resting on our two piggy banks on a dresser in the corner.

If she was going to get her way, then why shouldn’t I get something out of it too?

“Okay, Lia.” I started slowly, “You can sleep with me.”

“Really!” Her eyes lit up.

“But—but you only have the basic package right now. You see...” I portioned out a sliver of my bed, barely enough for her to lie down. “The Basic Package is only this much room and it doesn’t even include a blanket.”

I bunched up my sheets around myself, leaving the divided section bare. “If you want more room, you need to upgrade. That’s going to be a dollar. So... do you want to upgrade?”

She nodded her head enthusiastically grabbing her piggy bank, chubby toddler hands shaking bills and coins out of the slot.

“Hey Lia, do you want to hear about the Silver Package?” I grinned in satisfaction as I moved over only an inch.

It was a bit mean but also funny in its childish logic. I remember begging her to not tell on me, after the deal was struck. It was only until later that I considered explaining to my parents why my piggy bank was suddenly fuller and my sister’s was empty.

Interestingly, I did not get in trouble when she inevitably told them. My parents laughed. Wiping the tears from their eyes, they simply told me to put the money back. They were surprised and maybe even a little delighted that someone so young could monetize something as innocent as letting someone sleep with her. And looking back it is funny. I thought I was being smart.

Eventually, when I got to high school, I got a job at a Dunkin' Donuts. By then I was in tenth grade. Seven years had passed since I last thought about swindling my sister out of birthday and chore money. I couldn't help but to think back to that moment when I was taught what sort of things we should charge for by my boss. Cups of water, whipped cream on drinks, empty cups. I think she would even charge customers for napkins if she could get away with it. But when you think about it, the idea of charging each other for goods and services is incredibly common in our current society. In fact, that's how we *function* as a society. Capitalism. Supply and demand. The dog-eat-dog world of the free market. So then, how do we know what's considered okay to charge for and what's off limits? I've had so many people complain to me or roll their eyes, when asked to pay 25 cents for a cup of water, and honestly, I don't blame them. Not when most major restaurants give out water for free.

It's everywhere. When I try to search for the answer to my question of how I came up with that devious scheme of mine, charging my sister for sleeping space, I realize now that the idea was surrounding me the whole time. It was there when my parents took me to the car wash. It was there when I ate six chicken nuggets rather than four in my Happy Meals. It was present at school book

fairs, where only the kids who fundraised enough money were allowed to attend special parties. And I think as a child I recognized that to get better things you needed to pay up. You couldn't get the special rainbow car wax, the kind that sprayed so prettily against your window for free. You needed to cough up the dough.

I asked my manager once why we needed to charge extra for cups of water. If what the customers said was true, plenty of other Dunkin' Donuts gave out water for free. Would it really make that much of a difference if we did the same? She simply smiled at me with a sort of knowing look and said,

"Cups aren't free for me."

I didn't ask her again, but I'm certain that my third-grade self would have thought that reasoning was fair. What I did all those years ago should have been considered the wrong thing to do but I believe I got off easily due to cleverness. My parents and many others—and I would argue that it's cruel to charge people for things that should be given freely, but we in practice don't theorize about such things. Take my manager for example. I thought to myself after the talk with her, "Shouldn't water be given to the thirsty? And consequently, shouldn't things like shelter be given to the homeless?" The answer is, well, complicated, but deep down I think most people would agree that, yes, we should do those

"Our money is only going to get more and more milked as companies wring out every possible cent, while the majority just accepts it."

things. I'll admit to you now, when my manager isn't looking, I still slip a free cup of water here and a complementary whip cream there.

We can recognize when it's unfair when a child charges for something as basic a need as a place to sleep, but when a corporation, company, or land developer charges us superfluous amounts of money for the privilege of shelter, we don't bat an eye. We allow these groups to charge us for any little thing and just accept that that's the way things are. And those unfortunate enough to not be able to pay are looked down upon. The same customers who complain to me about being charged for water, still come to my Dunkin' Donuts almost every day. They've accepted that that's just the way things are, even if it is begrudgingly.

I don't think that there's an elegant solution to all of this, but I do think that analyzing why I did what I did has let me look at what economic climate our youth are heading into. Our money is only going to get more and more milked as companies wring out every possible cent, while the majority just accepts it.

To this day, my parents will still bring up that night I charged my sister to sleep in my bed—to prove that I was a mean sister once upon a time. But could you really blame me for coming up with that idea? It's so ingrained in our society that even a third grader thought it was a justifiable thing to do.

IN THOUGHT

*Ali Young
Photography*



GOD AND EVE

Nicholas Galiano

Ink/Digital



EMPTY GRACES

DJ Plante

I scream
blue harmonies,
My voice lost
to a chorus of platitudes.

The dead
demand audience,
We give only
monuments.

From Columbine to Sandy Hook,
scrawled in chalk upon each wall,
Where children bleed needlessly
we offer thoughts and prayers.

From Orlando to the Vegas Strip,
embossed upon a plaque,
More lives taken pointlessly, and
still more thoughts and prayers.

Among the dead in Parkland hear
Another plea,
Another voice,
Another fallen child.

and are we still
to grant them
Empty Graces

of yet more
thoughts and prayers?

TO FIND A HOME

Autumn Schucker

Every person's touch leaves behind a mark—a color that temporarily resides at the point of contact between two people. Some people share the same color, yet the color is still remarkably their own. It is beautiful to see the remains of a gentle caress, the line of a loving brush, the colored palm from the tightly-clasped intertwining of hands.

But not all touches are always so beautiful.

Walking down the streets of Burlingame, California, a girl, no older than twenty, moved swiftly. A hood covered her head, a trace of black hair peeking out. She appeared to have a splash of color on her face, only noticeable when she briefly looked up to watch where she was going. Not that it helped, as tears blurred her vision.

Arriving at a white two-story house, she turned down the cobble path and up to the double-doors, which she knocked heavily upon. Opening the door was a middle-aged man with a head full of tiny curls and a face full of laugh lines. The kind smile dropped from the man's face as he took in the state of the girl on his doorstep.

"Lena? What happened, sweetie?" Robert asked her with such care that it made her sob a little harder. He was everything that her mother was not. "Rose!" He called for his daughter; she would know how to help Lena. Robert reached towards Lena, grabbing her gently by the wrist and bringing her into the house. Removing his hand, his yellow handprint stood out immensely upon Lena's skin.

Rose hurried into the foyer, having heard the urgency in her father's voice. Standing next to her father was her girlfriend, who kept her head down. When Rose didn't meet Lena's eyes, she knew something was wrong. Placing two fingers beneath her chin, Rose lifted Lena's head. Resting on her cheek and around her neck were large green handprints, the color of Lena's mother. Rose let out a large gasp, releasing Lena's head. Where her touch had been, there now lay two lines of a gentle lilac that contrasted against the harsh shade of green just a few inches up.

"She's never hit you like this before. What happened?" Before Lena could answer, Robert stepped into the conversation, only to excuse himself from the harshly delicate moment.

"I'll go make you some hot chocolate, Lena." Robert said. As soon as he had left, Lena sobbed out loud and made her way into Rose's arms, just wanting to be held for a little bit.

"She lost it. She said she'd finally had enough of me—and didn't want to throw her life

away to "raise some fucking gay." Rose's heart shattered for Lena, shattered like it did every time Lena showed up with a green mark left by her own mother that was not fueled by love.

Later that night, lying together in Rose's backyard, they let the sounds and colors of the night surround them as they shared a blanket and the air between them. Lena was quiet, looking at the stars and wishing she were them.

"What are you thinking about?" Rose whispered.

“Every day, I think about how great it would be to leave. To just get in my car and drive. To get away from my mother—from this life.” She suddenly turned her head towards Rose. “I think it’s time I make it actually happen.” Today had made Lena realize that it was time for her to leave Burlingame.

“Where will you go?” Although Rose was upset that Lena wanted to leave, she knew she was the only thing keeping Lena there. Sometimes one person just wasn’t enough.

“Wherever the road takes me. Maybe I’ll try and find some place that reminds me of you,” Lena admitted.

“Why would you want it to remind you of me? I’m part of this town, too; thinking of me would mean thinking of Burlingame.”

“Because you’re the ray of sunshine in this dump. You put a smile on my face every day. You make me want to believe in crazy things like magic

and true love. But I can’t stay here anymore, not where you’re the only thing that makes me happy. I want to fall in love with the world again, with myself, and with being alive. But I can’t stay in the very town that took all that love away from me.”

“So, do it,” Rose shrugged. “Leave this town behind you. Pave a new path for yourself.

Fall in love with the sound of the rain falling against your window, with the earthy smell and the rainbow it leaves behind. Fall in love with the way the first beams of morning light shine through your window as the birds sing happy little melodies. You experience those things while feeling trapped; experience them while you feel free.”

The next morning, the couple stood on Rose’s front porch, wrapped in a tight embrace. Pulling back, Lena caressed Rose’s cheek gently with the knuckles of her middle and pointer fingers, leaving two streaks of teal in their wake. In turn, Rose’s hand ghosted down from Lena’s shoulder to her



CROW

Alexis Harris
Digital

wrist, barely touching yet still leaving behind a rather long stripe of her brilliant lilac color.

Nothing could ever be as permanent to Lena's life and skin as Rose's color had become. She wanted Rose's touch, her color, to cover every inch of her, for everybody to see the traces of her intimate touches, her playful jabs, all left on Lena and nobody else—but they were about to travel two separate paths that might never again become one.

Twenty-four hours later and Lena was ready to leave Burlingame behind her, ready to watch it shrink in her rearview mirror.

"What do you mean you're leaving?" Martha screamed across the front yard.

"I mean exactly that: I'm leaving. For good," Lena told her mother while placing another suitcase in the trunk of her car.

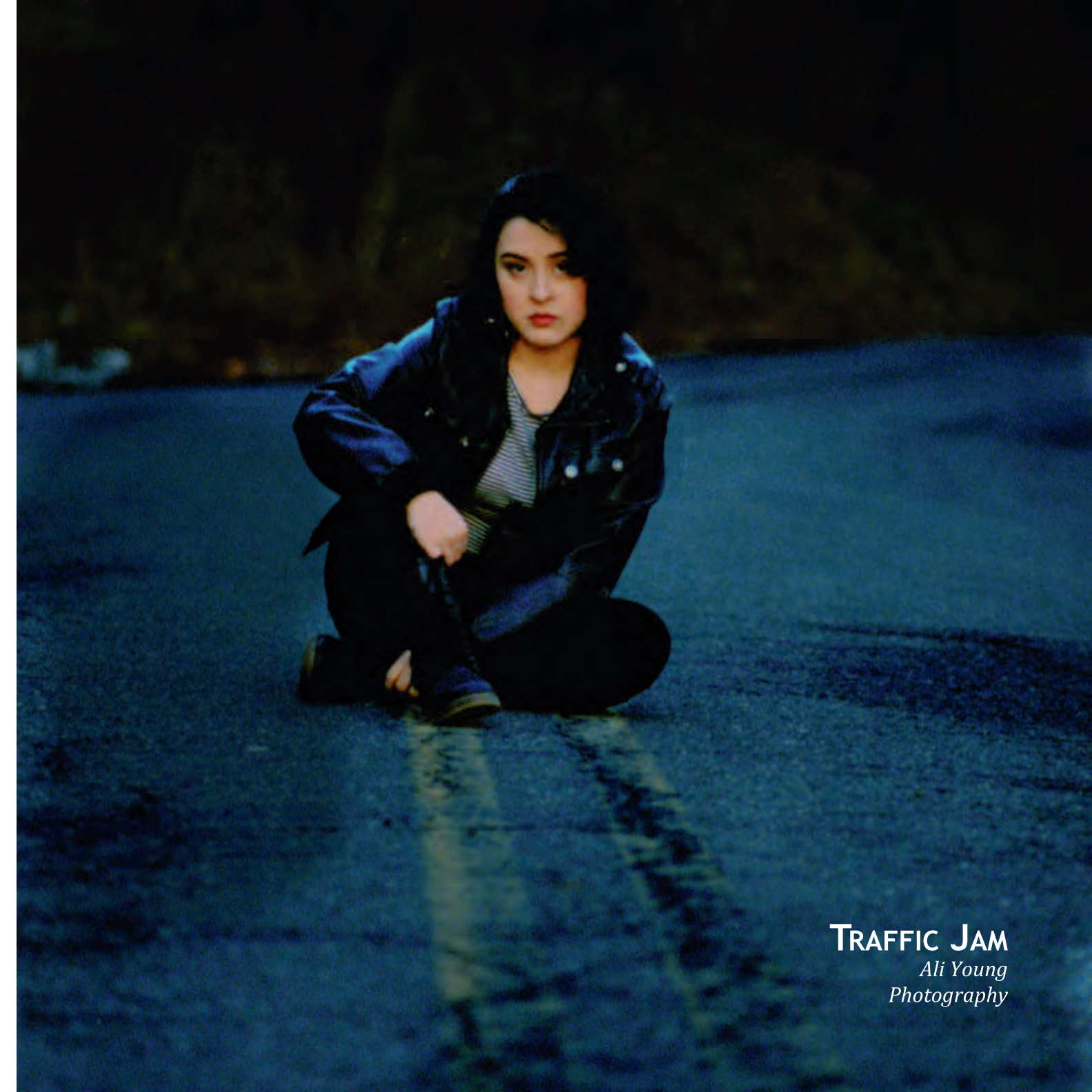
"You have nowhere to go. You'll end up on the corner, you ungrateful little bitch. I've given up

everything for you. I've fed you and taken care of you out of the kindness of my own damn heart. Yet here you are, a fucking ungrateful homosexual trying to play the victim and leaving. You get your ass back in- "

Lena said nothing. She got into her car, slammed the door, and flipped a coin. "Tails. Guess I'm heading east."

Lena spent the next four years traveling from state to state. Sometimes she would stop and build a temporary life in a state she found particularly nice. She covered herself in tattoos and the colors of other people's touches, falling in love with the world and all it had to offer. Lena had never before met such a number of people, such a variety of people. Each day she would go home looking like a rainbow, gentle handprints of multiple colors on her arms, her own teal handprint on the back of her neck and in the crook of her elbow—touches fueled by love and affection.

"Each day she would go home looking like a rainbow, gentle handprints of multiple colors on her arms."



TRAFFIC JAM
Ali Young
Photography

EDITORIAL POLICY

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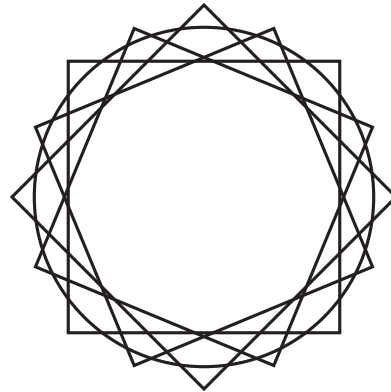
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