


SALMON CREEK JOURNAL 2018



The background of the cover is a complex, three-dimensional wireframe structure. It consists of numerous rectangular and square frames that are interconnected and layered, creating a sense of depth and architectural complexity. The lines are thin and light gray, set against a plain white background. The overall effect is that of a modern, geometric architectural drawing or a digital wireframe model.

SALMON CREEK
JOURNAL
2018

Original image:
Glass Tower / Date T. Strouse


Front cover remixed:
Salmon Creek Journal

Illustrations:
Richard Boneski III

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Salmon Creek Journal is the annual art and literary journal of Washington State University Vancouver. Our mission is to showcase the wide-ranging talents of students, staff, faculty, and alumni through both print and digital formats. As voices both artistic and academic, we attempt to represent the campus community, and build bridges with Vancouver, Portland, and other regional artistic communities. Through these efforts, SCJ provides professional opportunities for students to publish their work, and curate the works of others.

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If you think you've seen it all, flip your world upside down and look again.

Sarah Anderson

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Alex Duffield

Salmon Creek Journal has been serving the Washington State University Vancouver campus for over two decades. It is a privilege to be able to see the plethora of art and literary works that our small community of students, staff, faculty, and alumni have created over the years.

This year our team of six staff, along with the overwhelming support of advisors, student organizations, and the Office of Student Involvement, continued this tradition by facilitating expressive opportunities for a variety of artists, writers, organizers, and other patrons. We are often short on time, but never on talent.

Our Travel Cafe photo submissions centering on BLISS and the insightful Disability Awareness Month submissions speak to our collective commitment to sharing and comparing our all-too-often isolated realities as community members.

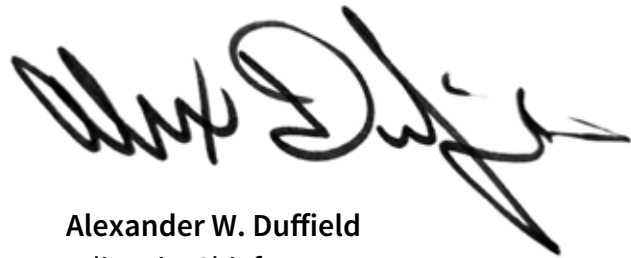
This year's PERSPECTIVE theme inspired an eclectic array of works that reflect with great skill the diversity of experiences on our campus.

As we curated this year's selections, the value and the meaning of these various works gave birth to more than a dozen themes. As you page through this year's issue, we invite you to look for clues that indicate a shift in theme. These motifs result from the staff's close reading, but aren't otherwise acknowledged. We encourage you to reflect on their meanings, but also to consider your own.

“If you think you’ve seen it all,” Sarah Anderson tells us in reference to *Upside Down* on page 10, “flip your world upside down and look again.” Nicholas Benko’s photo on page 22, which happens to carry the same title, exemplifies how interconnected our realities can be even as we seek out new perspectives.

With great bravery we express our individual perspectives. With great satisfaction our perspectives coalesce to create unified meaning beyond individual capability.

With great pride we present to you our beloved journal’s 2018 issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Duffield', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Alexander W. Duffield
Editor-in-Chief

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UPSIDE DOWN

Sarah Anderson

Digital Photograph



DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

By Ginger Clarke

(The scene opens in the living room area of a dark studio apartment, lights off and curtains drawn on the one large window in the room. ANNA, a white woman and lesbian, stands at the curtains, peeking outside. In the distance, PROTESTERS can be heard chanting, the words muffled by the time it reaches the apartment. On the coffee table sits a lit laptop with the headphones lying next to it. On the screen is a man's face, JOSH, a white man.)

Anna takes a seat on the couch and puts the headphones in.

Anna: Sorry about that. I thought they were getting closer. *(Waits for response.)*

No, still in the park. It's just. . . unnerving having them so close. Thanks for chatting with me while I wait it out. God, am I hungry. Doubt anyone would do carry out with those guys practically on my doorstep. I just- I thought this was like a deep South problem, not something here. Have you ever . . .? Yeah, how did you deal with these assholes? *(Waits for response.)* No, I mean, how do you get them to go away. Ignoring them won't do a thing. Yes- yes, Josh, I know. I know.

Outside, the protestors chant louder, the words still indistinct.

Anna: It's- it's just, it's scary. I don't want to feel scared in my own fucking apartment. It's ridiculous. *(Opens mouth but stops and closes it.)* You know they have guns? Who brings guns to a protest? And- what? Who cares if they have permits? They look like a freakin' militia, not a "Free Speech Rally." I bet if some liberal protest happened and they brought guns, the police would be all over it. Right now the police are standing out there *protecting* these guys and their

protest over . . . Jeez, don't they even understand the first amendment? I bet they don't even see the irony over having policemen securing their protest. You *know* that they're just protesting the fact they can't be racist in public anymore.

Anna: You don't think that's racist? You do realize that my mother is an immigrant, just not the kind of immigrant that they think is stealing their jobs or whatever because - guess what! - she's a white German. God, I wish she was still around. She'd give them the lecture of a lifetime. Yeah, no, I know you didn't mean it like that. It's just this stuff really . . . I don't know. It gets under my skin. I've got friends that these people want deported or imprisoned - good, wonderful, law-abiding people they want deported or imprisoned. What happens when just hating brown people isn't enough for these guys?

Outside, a bottle breaks and a loud argument between two men breaks out. Anna jumps in her seat at the sound and then wills her body to relax.

Anna: Shit. (*Nods as Josh speaks.*) You think? No, I'm not going to check. There's no point. Can't leave or do anything about it. I'm just crossing my fingers this doesn't last long. Maybe the police will get it to deescalate or . . . or just to disperse the crowd. God, I hope it's the latter. (*Nervously laughs.*) Wanna make a bet on which one? Ten bucks says they won't do anything until someone gets really hurt. (*Waits as Josh speaks.*) Let me go check.

Anna gets up and goes to the window, pulling the curtain and peeking through the blinds. She watches for a few seconds and then withdraws, taking her seat back on the couch and putting her headphones back on.

Anna: Just a handful of cops right now. Not really doing anything. Yes, my eyesight is fine - they're not that far. Ugh, just close enough for it to be annoying and scary and gross and close enough I can see their stupid picket signs. One of

them says “It’s Okay to be White” and the one next to it is “All Lives Matter” as if we all don’t know they’re just upset that Black people are bringing up systemic problems. You know, it’s one thing for these guys to put their fingers in their ears and pretend like nothing is happening, but it’s a whole other shit show when they decide that protesting *protests* is the way to go.

Protesters: *(Their voices are getting louder enough to be heard clearly in Anna’s apartment.)* Jews will not replace us! Jews will not replace us!

Anna: Ohhhh my God. Can you hear that? Here . . . *(Anna picks up her laptop and brings it to the window. She shifts the curtains but doesn’t open the blinds.)* Hear it now? Jeez . . . *(She then decides to peak through the blinds again.)* Fuck, now they’re moving from the park – and it doesn’t seem like they’re leaving. *(Anna is silent while Josh says something. In response, Anna scrunches up her face in disgust.)* There’s no way this should be allowed! *(Quickly, she sits back down on the couch with a huff as she sets the laptop back on the table.)* This- this could be a whole other shit show like that happened in the South. Shit, I recognize some of the people out there. They shouldn’t just be allowed to think that this is okay. What if- what if- *(Anna’s voice gets louder to stop Josh’s protests so she can get her own words in.)* What if they decide that they don’t just want Mexicans and the few Black people we have here run out of town? What if I’m next? Sure, there’s an LGBT community here, but nothing so big that I’d feel safe if thought it was okay to come after me. And why should I wait until then, either? Why shouldn’t I be out there, making sure those fuckers know that this town doesn’t support their views.

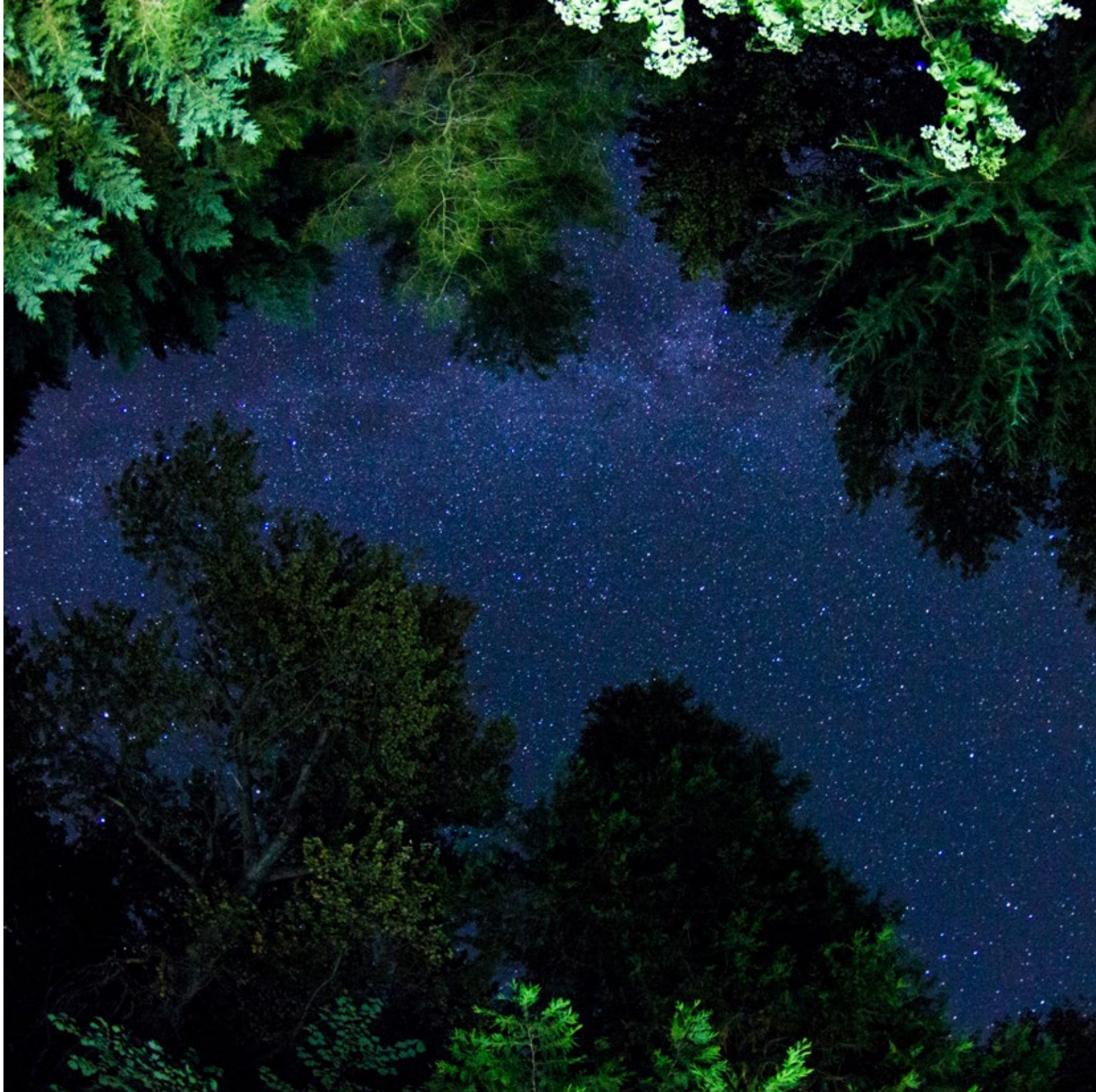
Anna runs her hands through her hair, trying to calm herself down from being worked up. She gives cursory nods as Josh says his part, but it’s clear by her face that he’s not agreeing with her. She sighs and looks away, towards the window where she didn’t

pull back the curtains. The sounds of the protesters are getting louder, like they're passing by her apartment building.

Anna: Josh, that's all bullshit and you know it. Maybe the majority of the people down there aren't neo-Nazis, but they're clearly agreeing with big portions of their message. Obviously they've rapped up a big enough fan base that I'm able to hear that anti-Semitic chant from my living room. No- Josh, no, that's not "you" that they're saying, its "Jews." Yes, I'm sure. You know what, I can hear it much better than you can so just trust me on this. Yeah, I can't believe it either. No, don't worry. I don't think you're one of them. Just . . . why do you have to play devil's advocate all the time? It's so tiring. *(Josh says something, resulting in Anna throwing her head back into a groan.)* You're trying to stop me from getting 'worked up'? How about you drive down and try that on the neo-Nazis outside my door? *(Starts laughing.)* You know what, stop. Just stop.

Anna: You've spent all this time defending the people outside that are scaring me. Legitimately scaring me. Gun-toting, misunderstanding-first-amendment preaching, racist people apparently get you in a defensive tizzy rather than, uh, me? Your friend? Oh my God, you cannot say I'm being divisive. *I'm* not radical. Oh my God- Josh! There are very angry people outside where I live that are carrying *guns en masse*. How is that not supposed to scare me or- or the people they're "protesting." *(Finger air quotes around the word 'protesting'.)* Forget it.

Anna taps a button on her laptop to end the call and takes out her headphones. She closes the laptop and stands up from her seat on the couch and heads to the door where she puts on shoes, jacket, and a scarf before heading out, slamming the door behind her.



BEYOND OURSELVES ▶ Travel Cafe 2nd Place
McKenzie Wells
Digital Photograph



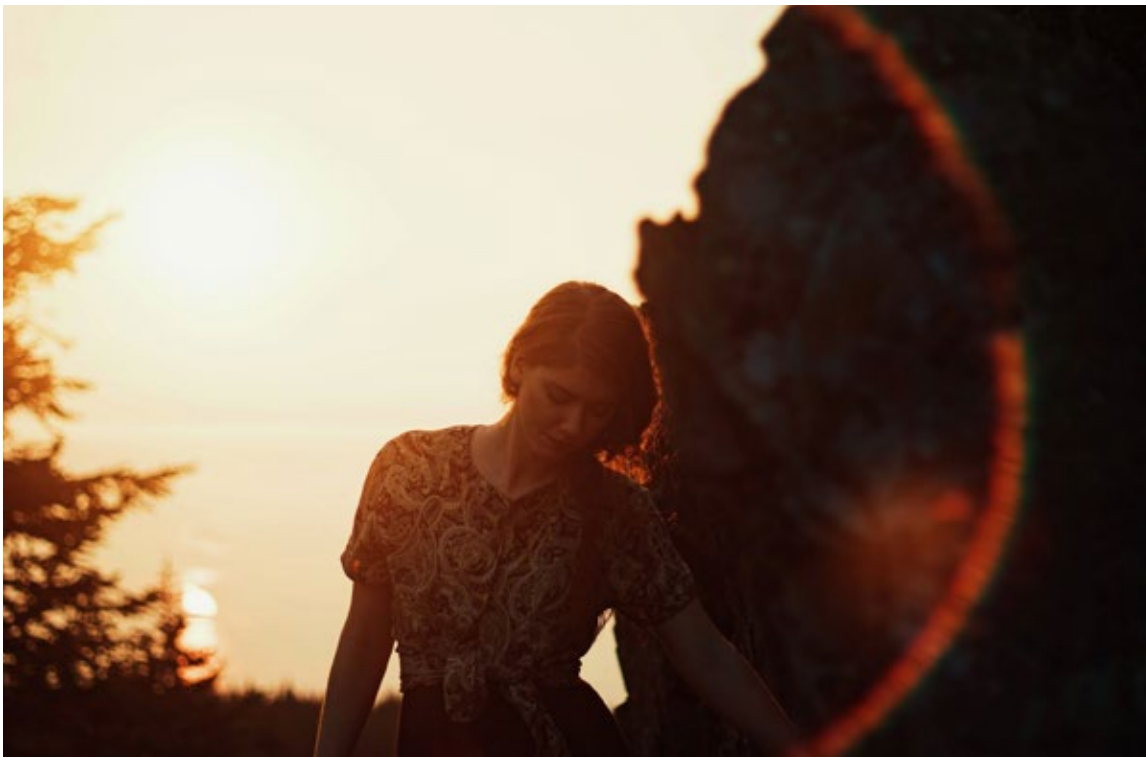
**EVENING LIGHT
OVER WANAKA**

Taylor Riordan
Digital Photograph

BLACK ICE

Alea Eide

Digital Photograph



CLEAR THE CHAOS

Valerie Parrish

Digital Photograph

THOUGHTS I'VE HAD, FEELINGS I FEEL

By Skylar Lampman

The Call of The Void

If I'm not jumping off a cliff,
I'm bleeding from a car crash.
If I'm not drowning in some body of water,
I'm running towards ongoing traffic.
If I'm not stabbed into an abyss,
I'm chewing on shards of glass.
I shove my friends face into a nest of bees,
Cut off the hands of my coworkers,
This is how I self inflict
Onto others.
A daily daydream of death.

Window

It's the same scene from when I was younger.
The seasons keep changing.
The screen is gone,
Because it ruined the view.
I'll never understand why the moon looks so much brighter,
Why the greens are vivid,
The sun hotter,
Why this opening of my childhood neighborhood,
Is one I love so much.

Filth

I stripped down my layers of shy.
I sat by the window,
I thought,
If the world could see I didn't care,
She would respect me.
She did.
You did not.
I washed my face,
Dried my hair,
Rinsed my pallet
Of daily torture.
I wanted to be clean.
You made me dirty.

When

You're a window that refuses to open, stubborn and calm.
You're alone.
Stranded in a sea of hurt you won't let me understand.
You're confined to your broken memories
trying to put the pieces together in an impossible puzzle.
I want to swim alongside you.
Take you to the shore and help you heal.
You are not the poison you think you are.
you are the heartache that writers dream about,
the stones that make a garden peaceful,
a sepia light that glows with warmth.
You're a forest fire at its deadliest peak
burning the fallen, bended branches.
The self doubt that swallows you,
suffocates and tortures you.
We can find the exit sign that hangs above the door of new beginnings.
Let me in,
Take my hand
I'll guide you out.

Anticipating for the End

I panic at the vowels in your name.
When your lips shape mine,
And I hear your vocal chords strain.
Pulsate.
Breathe me in,
Exhale my love,
Because you don't want it.

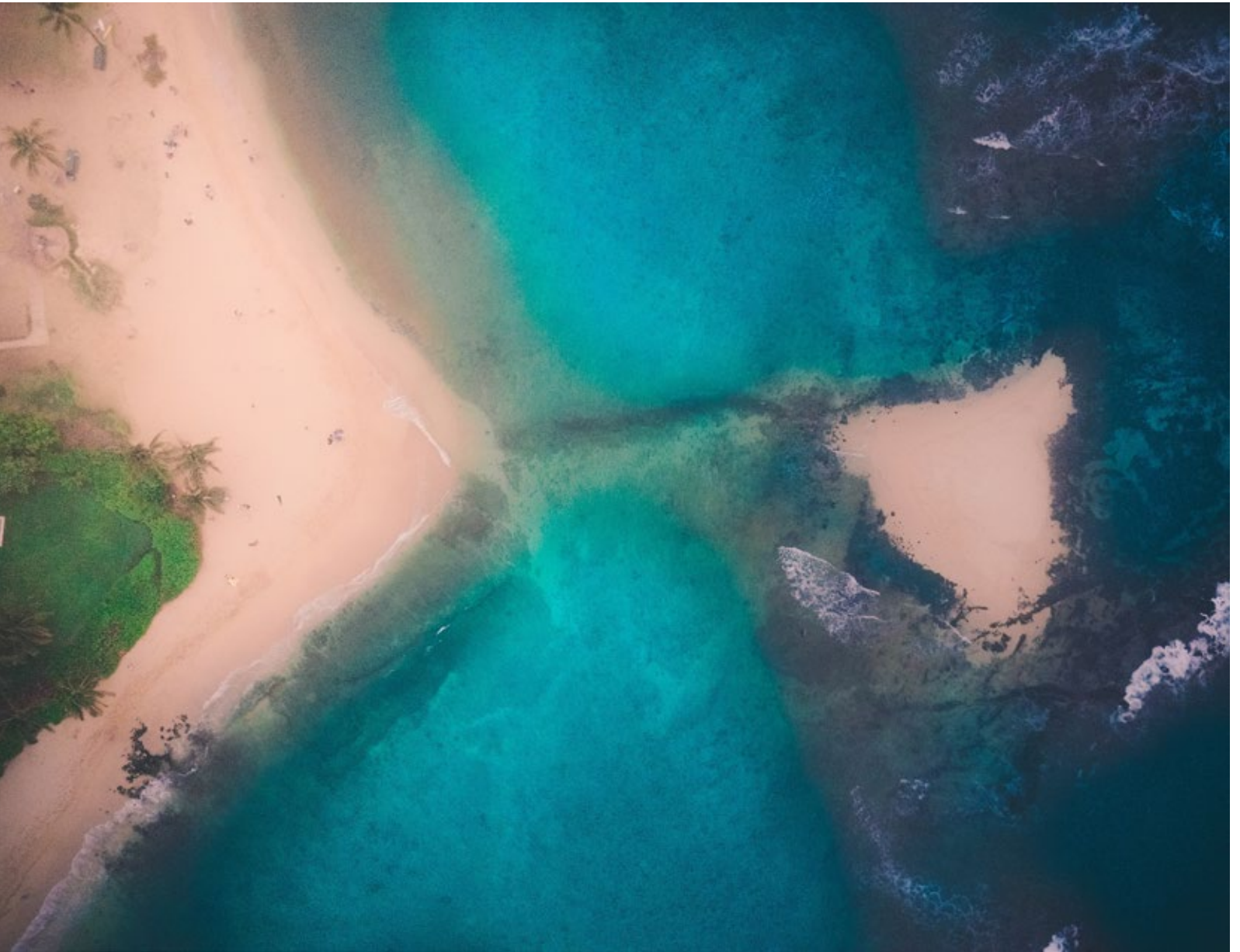
Not Important

Call it what you want to.
You can call me what you want to.
Call me when you want to.
So we can do what you want to.
And what you want
Is for me to leave.

HIGH TIDE

Nicholas Benko

Digital Photograph





YOSEMITE - INFRARED

Jehoon Jung

Digital Photograph



UPSIDE DOWN ► Travel Cafe Social Media Pick
Nicholas Benko
Digital Photograph



RUFFIS

Jaason Wilson

Digital Photograph



TURTLE ROW

Jehoon Jung

Digital Photograph





ANDREA AT IKEA

Erik Pelyukhno

Digital Photograph

SEATTLE SCENE

Michael Dunn

Digital Photograph



A SUNRISE ON A MOUNTAINTOP

By Grace Walton

Close your eyes. Wait! Don't close your eyes yet. You have to finish reading first, but this won't take long. I want to invite you to share a moment with me. A sunrise on a mountaintop. You might get cold, but it will be worth it. Trust me.

Imagine you are stepping outside from a tiny isolated log cabin. Be careful not to close the door too hard, or the snow might fall off the roof. It's still pretty dark out here. The sky is an ominously dark shade of purple. Faint, wispy clouds dance like light brushstrokes across a canvas. You'll have to look closely to see the outlines of the snow-covered pines looming over you. The icy morning air stings your face with a bitter unpleasantness. The distant wind howls faintly through the trees. Just stay with me. I know you're cold, but don't turn the page yet. It'll get better.

Take a few steps forward. The freshly fallen snow crunches lightly under the weight of each step you take. A little farther... Now, look up. The deep purple sky is slowly beginning to give way to fluttering yellows and vibrant scarlets. The wispy clouds are clearer now, aren't they? Notice how lightly they hang in the air. Fiery oranges and screaming pinks begin to overwhelm the lingering blues. The endless rolling hills in every direction are slowly drenched in the awakening light. The sky, the trees, the snow are all aglow with pure, unfiltered delight. More and more light creeps in and begins to illuminate everything that you imagine around you.

Now, just stand still and look around. Silence. Solitude. Maybe a gentle, yet icy breeze. We are mere audience members to this magnificent performance of the world awakening before us.

I know you're still cold. Just cup your hands around your mouth and breathe a few times. If you're wearing glasses, they might fog up a little; sorry about that.

But wasn't that worth it?



CHEWIN

Richard Boneski III
*Ink on Paper /
Digitally Painted*

INTRUDER

By John Wolf

“Shit,” he said and brought his textbook down. What he scraped off the bottom left a black smudge on the edge of his desk. “Shit.”



The death was witnessed by another. It watched from the dark haven in the corner of the ceiling. A shiver of what humans would call anger sped through its compact body. The fine black hairs trembled. If it could understand human speech, and if it could hear scientists explain that spiders were solitary creatures it would say, “No.”

Instead, it let the rage propel it forth from across the ceiling. All eight long legs worked in perfect unison navigating the pebbly cinder block. It rotated all eyes downwards and studied the object of its hate. The soft, fleshy prey. The remains of the other on the desk. Its body shivered again. The hairs shook across the plump, black skin. Even from here it could make out the exposed back of the prey’s neck. A few more swift movements bore it across the barren world it inhabited since birth. There it crouched.

Then it hovered below. At first just past the surface. Then, as its body went through a process become ritual, spun silk drifted from its abdomen. The cord held the weight of its body without as much as a minute squeal of strain. It descended. Not slow, but relishing the moment all the same. The legs twitched, fondled the thread. It went even faster, the line of silk flowing from it in a gossamer stream. It grew closer. The warmth of the prey’s body increased.



He batted the back of his neck with the hand not occupied in writing this fucking proposal letter. If he didn’t care about the migration of the zebra mussel, how could he write this? He shrugged. The tickling crept back, but he pushed it into the corner of his mind. Before he could get his brain into second gear about the waterway effects, a sturdy blast of air brakes brought him straight up from his chair. The 48! He jumped, left his chair spinning on its stand, and dashed out into the wet weather. If he made it across campus he might catch the 41.

It tottered madly on its string, clutching to it as the life-line it was. Something shook inside the abdomen and froze the limbs where they twitched. The silk snapped free. Falling was like hanging from a longer, thinner thread of a wholly unnatural material. Unlike the intricate webs it produced daily, this one would not go on forever. Its body instinctively drew up around itself for the impact.

Instinct was all that saved it. It landed among the harsh brown bristles, not too unlike the hair about the body. These were longer and stiffer though, almost like what it would call fence posts if it knew any better. The forest was dotted with artifacts of life. Shriveled eggs and shriveled remains of smaller beings were tucked into one alcove. Crumbs, nothing it would eat, lay about like meteorites. Scavengers clung about each, working into the morsels and working out again.

It stomped through this new land as the apex predator it was. The ground, springy and thick, sent wave after wave of sensations with each step. At the horizon beyond the new world, another portal beckoned. With a sense of purpose alien to its mind and unfathomable to humans, it marched forward.



Really he should have seen it coming. Prunes were just dried plums after all. Why wouldn't plum juice do the same thing? A heavy sigh did nothing so he opened up his copy of Roddy Doyle and waited. This onomatopoeia stuff...there could be a paper in that somewhere. The toes on his left foot twitched. Then they tickled. Roddy Doyle could use a break already. He placed the book on the back of the toilet. Then the spider became quite noticeable. A surprisingly high screech echoed in the small bathroom, and he flung the hairy thing off his foot. There came a papery thwack when the flat, squat body struck the cinderblock. It fell to the floor, but struggled to all eight of its shaky feet.

The spider swayed in the zig-zag course of a drunk or lobotomite. To him, this thing that would not die, it was sprinting towards him with not inconsiderable fangs bared to kill. He looked back, not even letting his flight reflex pull up his pants and open the door for a rapid retreat. Fight had won and it demanded this monster be slain. Roddy Doyle was a rental though and the bookie was a bitch. His frantic fingers calmed around the smooth wooden handle of the plunger. He pulled it off the floor and popped it down atop the spider. He put his full weight down and strained to hear the crunch. He thought he did and that was enough. Flight did take over and Roddy Doyle was left alone on the toilet.



The darkness was nothing to it, but the sudden exit rush of air and titanic pressure made its body crumple into a ball. Painful twitches spasmed from its legs. Hollow kicks rang out against thick rubber. Reward for this effort was another increase in pressure and the unyielding ceiling crushing down upon it. It could not move now, only lie there in darkness and dwell on memories no creature knew it had. The resurrected image of the dead other and its delicate, intricate body scattered across the desk revived this one's dying self. A new rush of air, this time from the outside, loosened the shackles of its invisible prison.

Another burst of new air as the plunger lifted, and the legs kicked harder. Soon, it had enough room to turn and scramble for the light. Seven slender shadows slid out into the new world. The eighth leg lay broken off and twisted in the darkness. As if the rage was carried in the blood, it still kicked against the prison. The absence of the one leg wasn't noticed till it passed the toilet. Noticed but not concerned. It limped back to the world it knew.



Navigating the ceiling was much harder now with a missing leg and crushed midsection. The silk though, it flowed as easily and true as it had upon birth. The fleshy abdomen squirmed, worked, and before too long it hovered over the prey's face. A steady, warm wind arose, sending it swaying on the string. It flew off the face, past the nostrils, and let go just over the forehead. The landing made no noise in the street lit night. Nor was there any sound from him as it left two perfect bite marks above the right eye.

*As if the rage was carried
in the blood, it still kicked
against the prison*

Each bite reminded it of the death, of the fall, of its own coming death. The strikes came quicker, more random. Two more above the eyes, then it traveled to the ear. There the prey seemed to feel the attack. The ground shifted, the ceiling with the perfect, single thread rolled out of sight for the last time. For the third time that life, it stepped foot into a new world. This one, soft and rolling into darkness. It limped along, scanning for more. Orange light spilled across the dunes, painting a picture it did call beautiful. It stood above, thinking of how far it had come, where it might still go if death could be fought off. The life ahead—



He rolled over and never felt the other being smear beneath him. Welts formed by the two dots on his ear. He scratched them and faded back to sleep.

LIFE AS SNOT

By Cory Blystone

Dripping viscously
down, down, down
the rabbit hole of my head
tickling bushy whiskers
like cold lava
flowing
like troubled waters
growing
like an ever-expanding
sanding machine
scraping down the plane
of my brain
as my body continues to
drain, drain, drain
like a faucet left on
donning Kleenex
like last year's Versace
hoping nobody notices
the hose my nose
has become
this flickerpissnosescum
my very existence
has been whittled down to
like Mighty Columbia's
continuous canyon carving
in the deep recesses
of my head
makes me feel dead
or at least close to death
I scarcely protest
in the face of peaceful
rest, rest, rest
Oh, yes! I beg for rest
yet my body puts to the test
how much I can lose
before climbing the
steep, steep, steep
Kleenex hill towards recovery.

ODE TO TOENAILS

By Natalie Ewing

Oh where' Oh where' have my toenails gone? Oh where' Oh where can they be? I think I may have left them, down at the SDC. Should I remain a mystery or retrieve my toenail clippings gleefully?

Will anyone recognize who I am? Will I be handed a broom and dustpan and asked to clean up, my own toe-jam?

Try as I might, I may cower and take flight and bid my long lost toenails a good-night. Maybe next time... I should probably reconsider, before I go and leave my toenail litter.

— Student Diversity Worker



LINES OF ME

Taylor Jones

Digital Photograph



WHERE TO

Maggie Handran
Digital Photograph

BeepBeePow

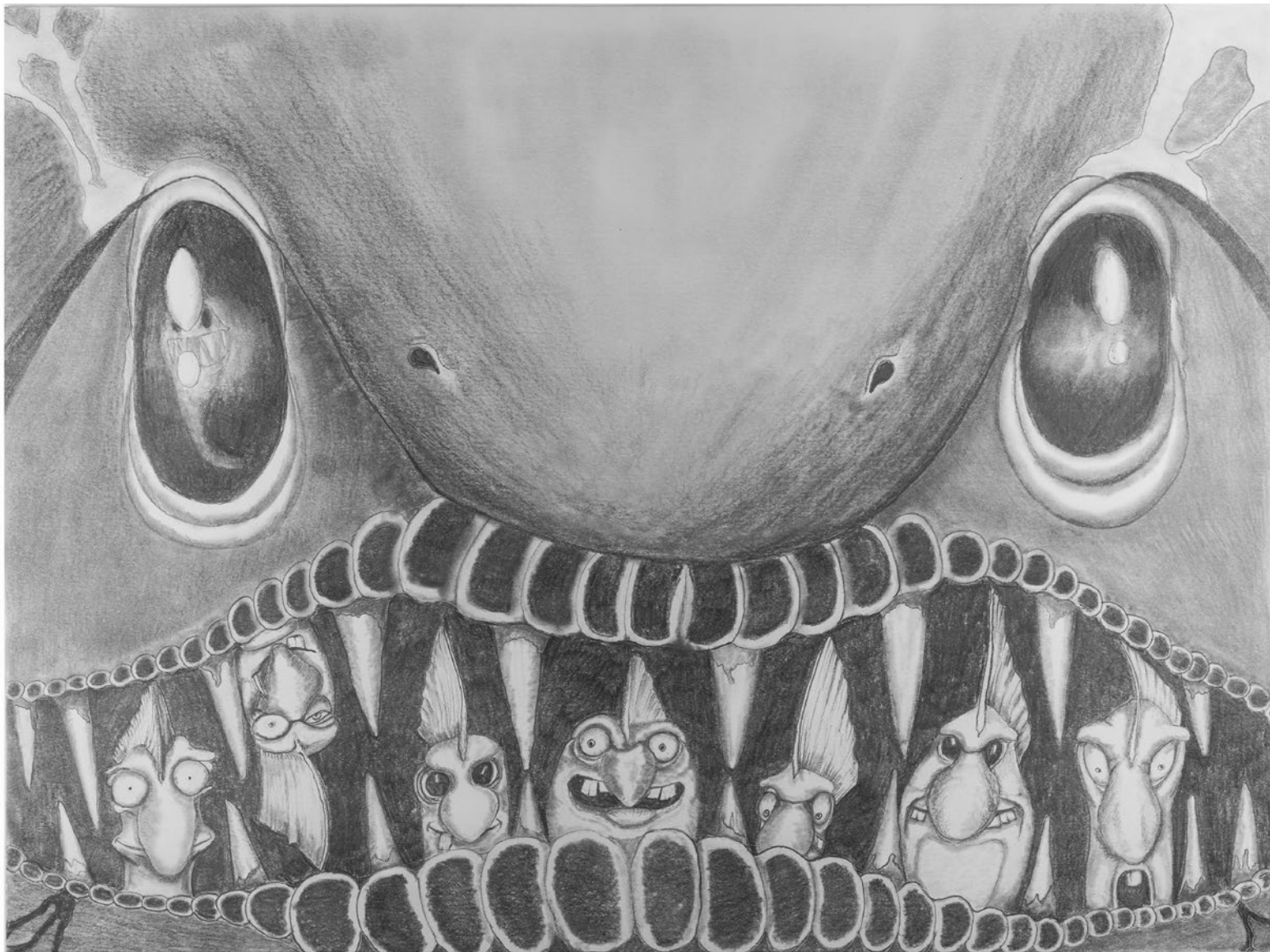
Richard Boneski III

Ink on Paper



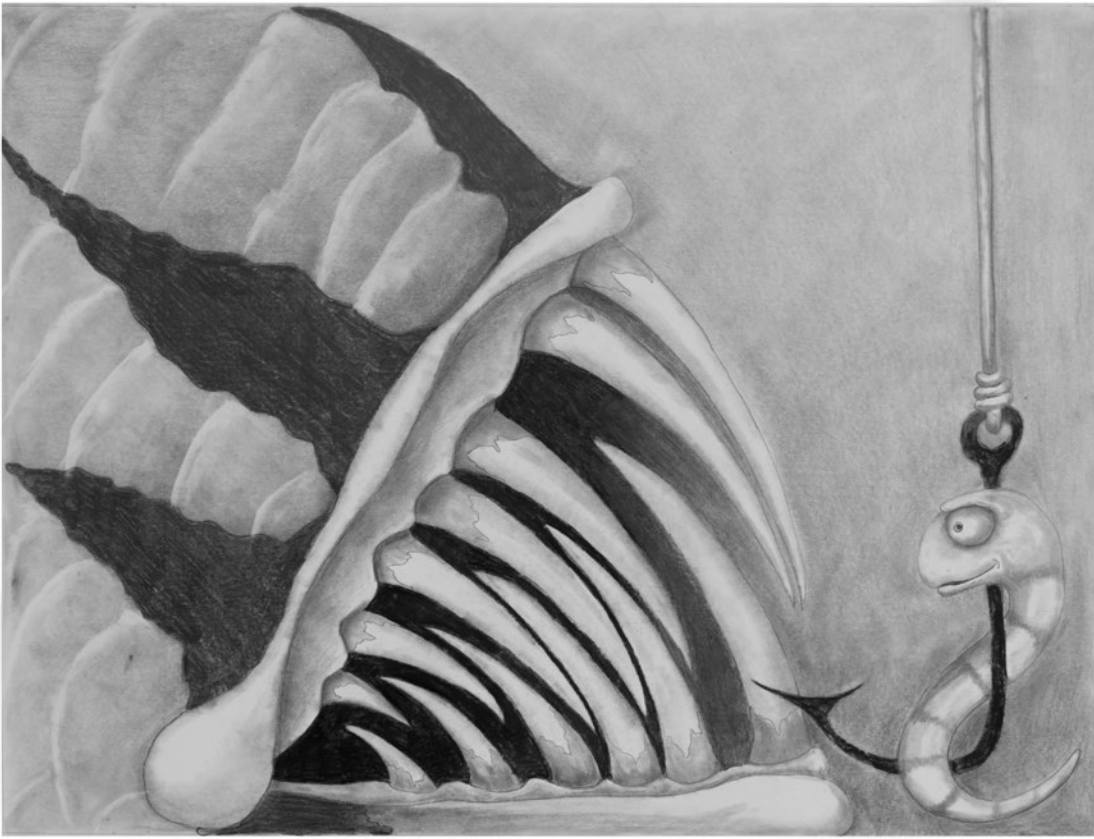
SOME DAYS series by Terry Bare

Photogravure

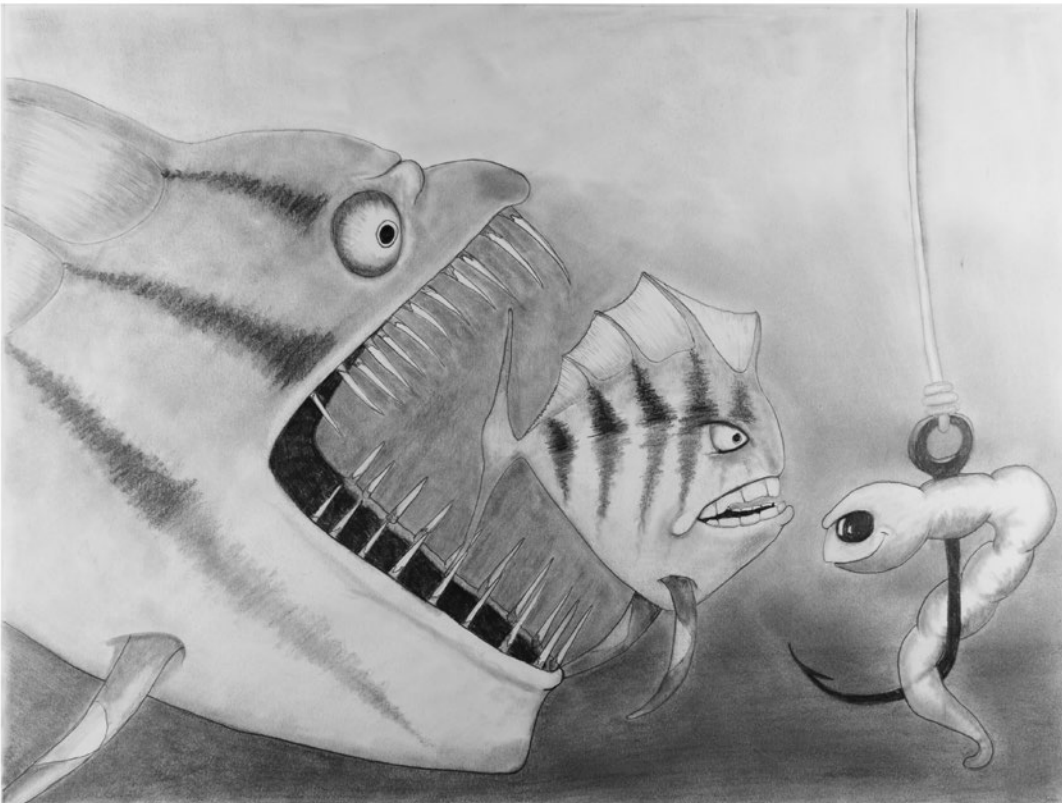


TOGETHER

Photogravure



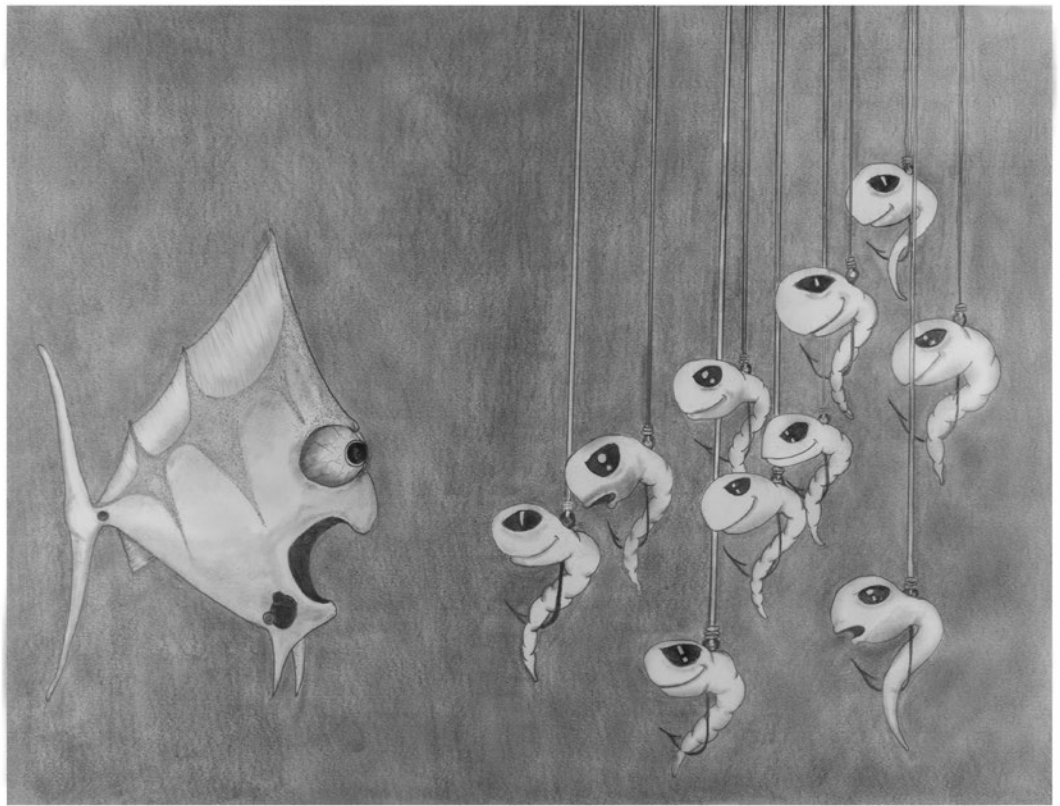
COME GET SOME
Photogravure



GOTCHA
Photogravure

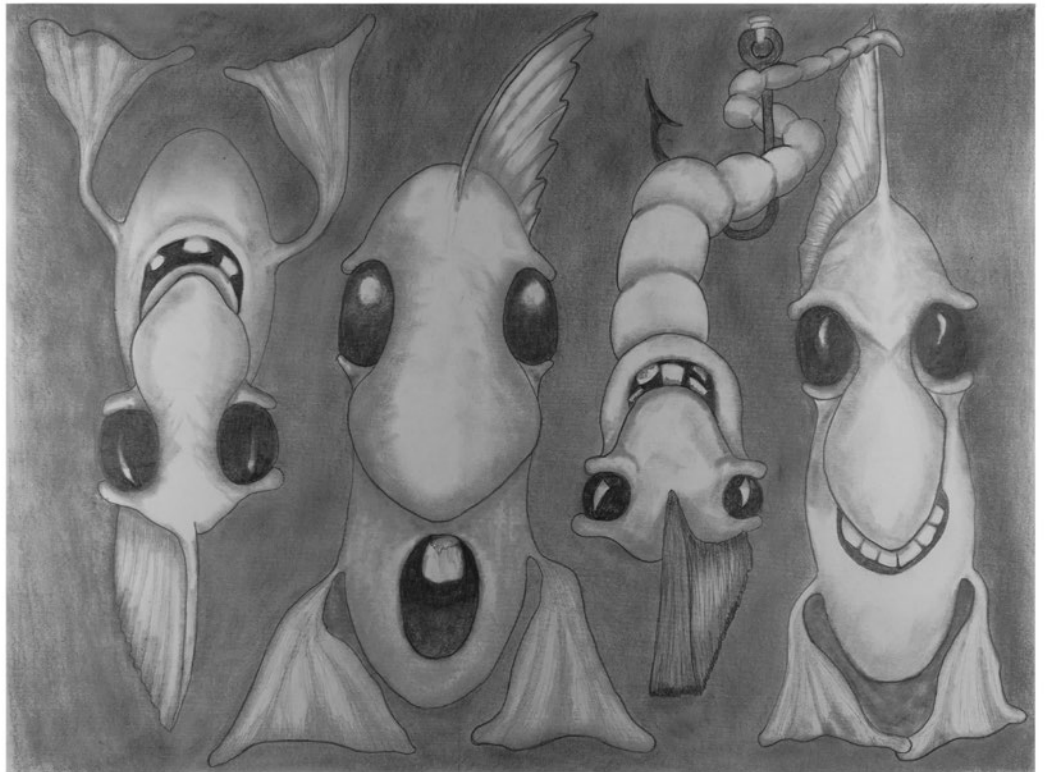
WHO IS THE BAIT

Photogravure



WHICH WAY IS UP

Photogravure



DUST BOWL, 1934

Samuel Gallentine

Wind shuffling over an ocean of wheat. Closing his eyes Charles knows it's the closest he will ever be to the real thing. The sound to him is the sound of waves folding into one another in the open ocean, splashing into the side of some strong ship, any ship, that he imagines he's on. Holding his hand over the side, brushing the tips of his fingers over salt water. He feels the tide biting into his skin, swallowing his hand. The vision feels real to him as he drifts into that fantasy. Opening his eyes, the fantasy is ripped away. A hurricane of dust swallows the sun and washes over the fields like a swarm of locusts, they crawl into his mouth and eat him from the inside, devouring his internal organs, ripping apart patches of skin like leaves. He would scream if they had not swallowed his tongue. He would bat them away if he had hands and fingers.

He wakes from this hell in a cold sweat, wet sheets clinging to him, to the real thing. The unmistakable roar of a black roller overtakes the house. The oceanic wind, the chirping of rock and soil making contact. The dust bleeds in between the boards, through the window sills, beneath the door. It seeps in and then rises up into the air before settling until disturbed. Even with cloth held over mouth, it gets in his lungs, a film of dust settling in his nose and ears, drying out his mouth.



The coyote shudders, shedding the dust that clings to its coat. It sneezes to clear its nostrils of the earthy sediment. It searches for food in an abandoned wasteland. The vegetation, the cattle, the dogs, the people, are all gone. It scans the horizon. The sky is no longer muddied by airborne debris. The sun is no longer obfuscated by clouds of dust. It stiffens and twitches its ears when it thinks it hears something in the distance. It approaches that source of sound at a slow, unenthusiastic, pace.



Charles runs his dry tongue over the blisters covering his cracked and dried lips, hoping to bring some semblance of moisture to them. Sitting at the foot of Helen's bed, he looks over his sister's almost motionless body, sick with fever. Even in her sleep she breathes slow and heavy, her frame, grown thin from malnutrition, rocking with every cough. Her eyes have day by day sunken deeper and deeper into their sockets. He swears to himself for not uprooting when the other families had, but where would they have gone? The answer was a simple one. Anywhere but here. Instead they stayed to be buried by the dust.

Lifting himself to a hunch, he reaches across her body to wipe away the sweat from her brow. She was a body of frail limbs, withering away more and more, the heat of her forehead intensifying, each day.



March 23, 1934

In her worsening state, Helen often complains of hearing voices coming from outside the house at night. She says that they call to her, asking her to leave the house, but I believe these voices are the consequence of delirium brought on by her illness. I often find myself trying to explain this to her, but she believes this explanation to be false. To Helen, these voices are as real as my own.



In the night Charles is awoken by the now familiar cries of his sister in the night. The voices are back. In an attempt to dissuade her fears, he wraps a cloth around his face and steps outside of the house to disprove any origin of the voices aside from in her head. He searches for any sign of footprints, but the wind has covered up any evidence that may have been there. He scans the surrounding area, finding no sign of any human life in the distance, instead his eyes fall upon the glowing gaze of a coyote in the distance. He swears to himself for not having a weapon of any kind. The lack of food is eating away at them so rapidly. Staring at the creature, it simply stares back. It does not appear to fear him, and yet, for whatever reason, he can not help but fear it in turn. Suddenly his desire to kill it is not out of a longing for food, but instead out of a desire to rid himself of the unnatural fear it fills him with.

Keeping his eyes on the coyote, he retreats back into the safety of the house, his fear hidden only by the cloth covering his mouth. “There’s nothin’ out there” he rasps, pulling the cloth from his face. “It’s all in your head, like I been sayin. Understand?” Helen nods her head. He isn’t sure if she believes him, but it doesn’t matter too much. Even if she believed him now, that didn’t mean that she wouldn’t call out to him in the night again the next time she thought she heard something.



He lets the water wash over him. The tide comes in, it devours his ankles, before excreting them as it drifts back out again. His toes curl and dig into the sand. Not dust, but real sand. He stares out at the horizon where the sun rests inches above the waves, the fuzzy orange glow burns his eyes, but he doesn’t care. He could stare at it forever.

*the fuzzy orange glow
burns his eyes*

Helen is here with him, running on the shore, giggling like she did when they were children, a mass of hair swarming her face as she runs against the wind.

He finds himself stepping out into the water. It absorbs his ankles, his legs, his torso. It sloshes over his face. In the distance, the sun vanishes behind a cluster of clouds. The world darkens. The waves grow vicious, and the dust chokes him so that he coughs and his eyes waters and he wakens to the familiar hellish sound. He holds a cloth over his mouth and goes to check on Helen, but she’s not in bed.

Opening the door, the dust and sediment is blowing viciously. It bites into his skin, his eyes sting, as he steps outside in search of Helen. He calls to her as the dust chokes him even through the cloth. In the distance he sees something lying on the ground, like a discarded heap of clothing. As he approaches, his eyes shielded as best as he can against the storm, what he sees is a coyote skin soaking in blood as fragments of dust cling to it. There are no bones, no organs, just the bloody mess of the beast’s outer layer. He calls out to Helen one last time, his voice devoured by the howling wind, before making his way back towards the house.

Once inside he breaks down. The tears come down in muddy streaks until a hand rests on his shoulder. When he looks up, he sees Helen, her eyes are still sunken into their sockets, but they seem to have a new sense of life to them.

As the days pass, so does any sense that her strength has been renewed, except now she refuses to eat what little food they have. She can't stomach it anymore. The hacking coughs come and go. The burning brow is still in full force, but any complaints of hearing voices coming from outside have faded.



They're playing in the wheat fields like they did as children. Charles hides, his belly to the ground, as Helen counts down before calling out an assurance that she will find him soon enough. He nibbles a head of wheat while he waits. He watches as a cereal leaf beetle crawls over his hand. He holds it up to his face, he inspects the insect while its antennae twitch. His eyes take in the black head and body, interluded by an orange thorax. He crushes it between his callus fingers.

He hears her footsteps as she grows closer. He hears as she sniffs the air. He can tell that she's about to find him, and suddenly he feels her fingers wrapping around his left wrist, then his right one, and they squeeze hard enough that his eyes shoot open. His eyes open to her thin frame straddling him. He tells her to get off of him, to let go of his wrists, that she's hurting him with the roughness of her grip, but she doesn't. Her grip only grows tighter, tighter than it seems physically possible for someone of her frame to manage, almost as if under the skin and bone is a mass of hidden muscle. Her appearance takes on a shocking animalistic quality before her jaw begins to stretch to an inhuman degree, dislocating with a sound like wet twigs snapping, giving way to a second previously hidden jaw, expanding to display a set of sharpened yellow teeth. He screams as the teeth dig into his face, and as his wrists are crushed under the weight of her fingers.



REACHING OUT

Bill Hooper

Digital Photograph

EXPERIENCE OF HEALING

By Sierra Hancock

XV

Missing her and feeling lost because,
She failed to guide for the challenges of life,
But gave strength to go along with life and live for her.

XIV

Silent crying in the car when asked on her anniversary,
To pick up her replacement,
In the one place I never wanted to be,
Wanting comfort to know that everything,
Was going to be okay.

XII

The memory of the last day I ever saw her,
Only lying in bed,
Watching the Back to the Future series,
Not wanting to play with her own children,
A seven-year-old girl not wanting to leave her mom behind.

XII

Self-harming words of:
“She never remembered you,
She never loved you,
She never wanted you,”
Drapes the black cloak of believing
The words were true,
Knowing they are not true.

XI

Tears shed subsequently,
A little girl would understand:
Her mother passed away,
Without the consequences of the pain to come.

X

Candles lit when the clock struck 10:40 am,
Every year on the same day.
The feeling of keeping her alive
for a few minutes longer.

IX

Painful hours throughout the years,
The tidal wave of knowing,
She is no longer with us,
Not knowing who to turn to about missing her.

VIII

Years of contemplation of how to move forward,
A rose, mother-daughter infinity, and a date,
Walk into the next chapter of this life.

VII

Holding the emotions in,
Letting them go,
Creating a desire to acknowledge them.
Starting to heal these ancient wounds.

VI

Moments of self-destruction,
Left a feeling of being raw and vulnerable.
No one was there to witness the pain that unfolded,
Swallowed up into the all-consuming darkness.

V

No emotions left after suppressing them for so long,
since that is all I learned when it comes to emotions,
suppress them until they do not exist.

IV

Family members left to pick up the aftermath,
Of what we lost that fateful day,
With a gloomy feeling in the house.

III

Years of therapy, forced by my parents,
Unrelated topics since the truth hid in the shadows;
Always about mom, no one talked about her,
No one talked about who she was.

II

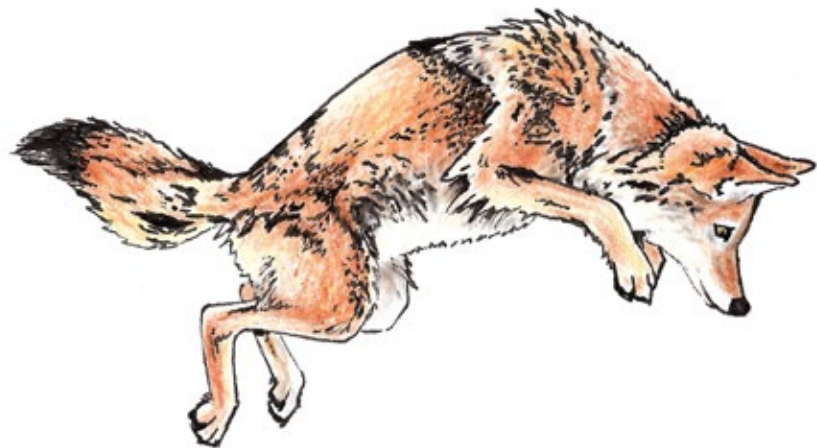
Close friends who could understand,
The pain of losing a parent at young age were rare,
Almost like they could not comprehend,
What the world gave a seven-year-old girl.

I

The first year after felt like nothing happened,
Time seemed to fly by, but we still missed her;
And not knowing how to express,
This longing for her love and affection.

O

Afterwards he asked,
“How would you feel if your mom died?”
All that was answered was
“It would be okay, I guess”.



BURROW

Julia Waters

Pen / Watercolor Illustration





GENDERFLUID

Shyanna Reyes
Digital Photograph

SILENT COMFORT

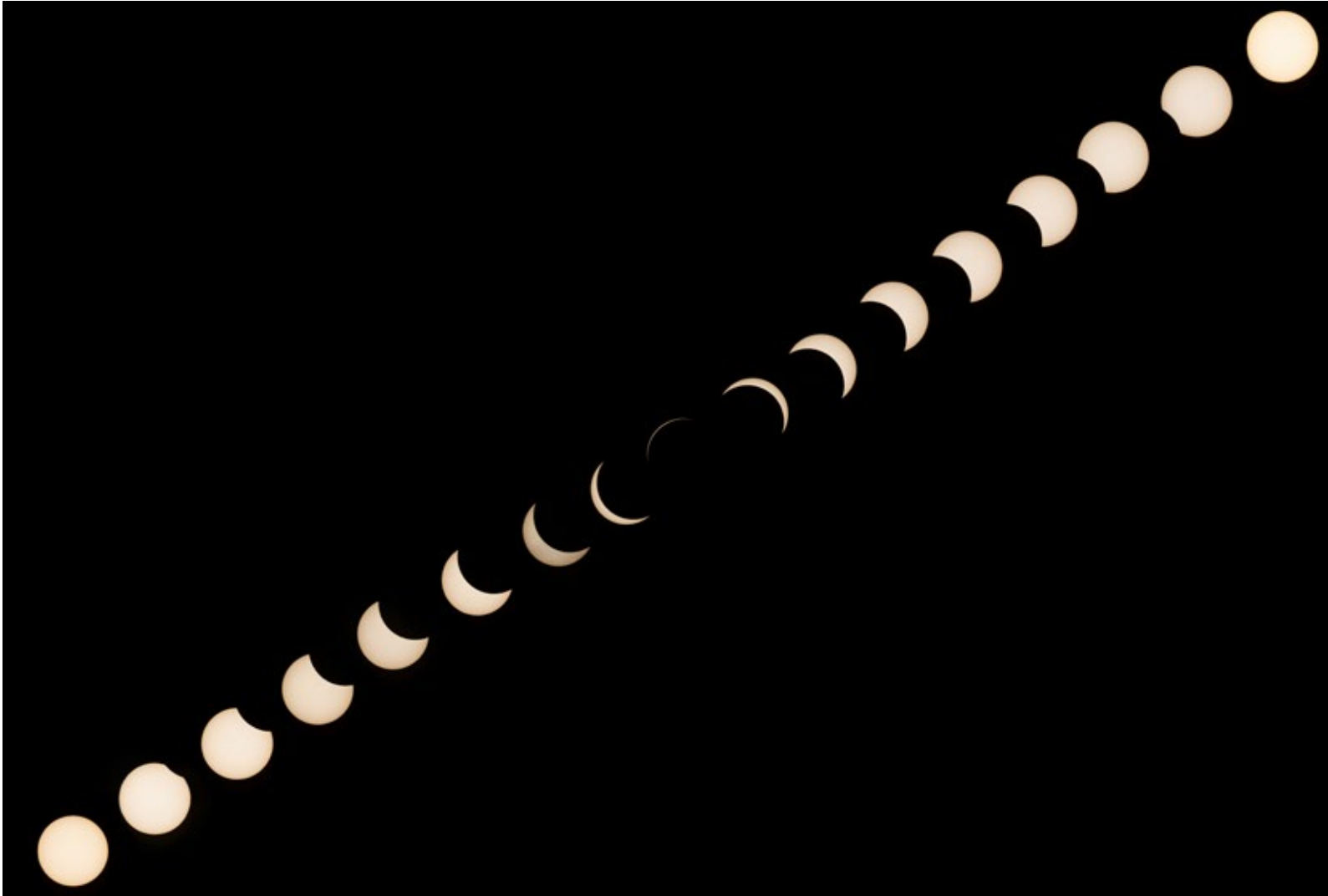
Antonio del Fierro
Digital Photograph



CIRCLE OF PRIDE

Erin Carlie

Digital Painting



MOON SHADOW

Faun Scurlock
Digital Photograph



RAYS

Meakia Blake
Oil Paint

BLINDS

By Cory Blystone

“We should go shopping for blinds.”

“What?”

“Blinds. We need new blinds.”

“Oh, that. I see.”

“Do you see?”

“Of course I see! I’m not blind.”

“Blindness comes in many forms.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Blinds. Blindness. The blind.”

“Oh for fuck’s sake. Where are you going with this?”

“We need new blinds but you are blind to the fact that I have needs too.”

“Then lets go shopping for blinds. Where do you want to look?”

“Look, I am well aware we need new blinds, but right now we should focus on our blindness to each other.”

“Then focus.”

“We don’t see each other. We never see each other any more.”

“I’m seeing you right now.”

“Are you? I mean, I’m right here, but you are blind to my needs.”

“Then let me twist the wand to let in more light.”

“The wand is broken and half the slats are too! That’s why we need new ones!”

“Then let’s go get new ones and stop arguing!”

“You fail to see the point.”

“Well, if we got new ones instead of arguing about getting new ones we might see eye to eye.”

“You can’t fix everything by replacing it with something new.”

“Sometimes something new is needed to maintain the old.”

“And sometimes something new replaces the old and starts the decaying process all over again.”

“Have you seen my glasses?”



RAPHAEL'S DOOR

Alea Eide

Digital Photograph



BLUSHING

Jackie Steffanson

35mm Film Photograph

HER GARDEN

By Lauren Rebitzke

It was my mother who told me of the most disturbing yet poetic sentence August, my four-year-old brother, uttered to the family. His perspective on life is simple and straightforward; there are concepts that are still far too foreign for his young mind to grasp. This time around, it was death he was grappling to describe. Our other brother Jack had asked him if he had any idea who Frannie was, and August responded rather matter-of-factly, “She’s my sister under the dirt.”

Jack and the rest of my family had no idea what to say to that, because he certainly wasn’t wrong; Frannie was his sister and now she was buried beneath dirt. How else could he describe the older sister he’s never met? At least once a month, he would walk with our parents to the graveyard to visit her grave. There, he would bring her flowers and explore the graveyard. The only idea he has of her is of her grave and the few photographs we have of her hanging on the wall in our home. For days, I thought about his interpretation. One day while he was playing with his action figures in my bedroom, I asked him the same question Jack had, “Do you know Frannie?”

“Yes,” he said, as if he were the son of a nobleman who practiced the proper grammar of English every day. I’m never sure why he spoke this way—I’ve tried several times to get him to say ‘yeah’ or ‘yep,’ but it seemed ‘yes’ was too major a part of his vocabulary to replace it with more casual agreements and acknowledgements. “She lives in a garden.”

“A garden?”

It was a strange contrast to describe a place designated for the deceased as rather a place flourishing with life. Sure, there were flowers that decorated some of the graves, and sure, the grass was usually a vibrant green, with trees planted throughout, but it was also aligned with rows of tombstones where some are so old that they have been weathered down by years of rain and snow. There was no consistency in the styling of the tombstones either; some stood tall like towers while others were merely slabs of cement pressed flat into the dirt. Frannie’s was the latter.

“Yes,” he said again, “I gives her flowers when I go.”

“That’s nice of you,” I told him and he seemed proud of this.

“Did you know Frannie’s dead?”

My lips parted in surprise. Running through my mind was a series of questions: What the fuck did he just ask me? Why wouldn’t I know that the very sister I eagerly anticipated for five months was dead?

He asked as if he were the one who experienced this tragedy firsthand, as if he were the one left in charge of watching three younger siblings while our parents were at the hospital overnight, as if he received the phone call after midnight from Dad asking if he wanted to be picked up to meet his dying sister. He asked me as if he were the one to whimper out a no. As if he were the one to ask Why would he want to meet her? She’s dying. As if he were the one who would later convince himself that it was because he wanted Dad to spend as much time with his daughter before she passed away.

*my sister
under
the
dirt*

It wasn’t him, though.

It was me.

I had hope that everything was going to be fine, even when I learned that the baby needed to be delivered early. That hope slowly wilted as the night progressed; It started with blind optimism with encouraging messages from my friends which ended with me pleading with them for reassurance. My siblings would continuously ask me about Mom’s condition, but I couldn’t say. We could only do as we would usually every night—eat dinner, watch television, and wait. By the time they went to bed, I turned to my black Labrador, Sadie, for comfort, whispering prayers into the course fur of her neck. My prayers may not have reached God, but it helped put my worrying mind at ease.

Dad didn’t return until early the next morning, and when he did, his eyes were bloodshot, shaded below with dark crescents, and his voice was hoarse with exhaustion. In my first fourteen years of life, I had never seen my father cry until that day. When I wrapped my arms around him, I felt his body tremble, shake as he struggled to keep himself together, to stay silent. His tears watered the roots of my hair and soon an ache grew in the lump of my

throat until I was bawling with him. I was later thankful I’d so selfishly refused to meet Frannie.

*surrounded by hand-picked flowers
wilted on top of each grave*

To this day, I believe that Dad deserved to be there uninterrupted for her life thirty minutes of life.

I later learned that Mom had some kind of infection in her womb which was what triggered labor four months early, and because of this, Mom needed to be monitored carefully during her next pregnancy with August. I also learned that if Frannie were born only two weeks later, she would have lived, since her lungs would have been fully developed by

that point. A narrow window of time, two more weeks and I could have met Frances Marie. I could have watched her learn to crawl, walk, run. Would she have been

I believed her death was my fault

happy-go-lucky or quiet or moody? What kinds of foods would she have loved? What would her dreams have been? Nobody could say. Instead, she's buried in a cemetery surrounded by hand-picked flowers wilting on top of each grave. These questions were a constant during the last of my summer. Frannie's death left our household in silence for weeks to come; whenever we spoke of her, it was with uncertainty, as if it were disrespectful to mention her by name.

My chest felt as though it had multiple weights pressing down against it leaving any words I wanted to say trapped in my throat. It hurt to speak. Like August, we grappled with the concept of death, searching for reason behind why Frannie was planted in the grass rather than resting at home in her crib. We wondered why us, but could only dive to conclusions built on self-hate. For months, I believed that her death was my fault—I had forgotten to bow to the Tabernacle during Mass. Her death was divine punishment for treating Christ's body irreverently. At the time, I hadn't thought twice about my mistake, but rather it hit me while I was watching Frannie's coffin be lowered. Irrational thoughts rotted my mind, and all I could imagine was how infection could've happened as soon as I didn't bow, how two weeks later it would strike my sister, and force her out of the comfort of the womb. I convinced myself this must've been what happened. Looking back, I realize how ridiculous it is to carry that much guilt on my shoulders for something as simple as an infection in the womb. Somehow, though, that was the justification that made the most sense to me.

Two years later, August was born. I can only vaguely recall the day of August's birth. I remember, the distinct smell of disinfectant when I stepped inside the hospital, the way my heart beat with anticipation, knowing I was finally meeting my new brother, small figure swaddled in stiff cotton, a fragile ceramic doll with dusted red cheeks. Most importantly, I

remember he looked healthy. He sounded healthy. His cries were so loud, so relentless, they would drown out conversations. He would inhale great breaths of air in his well-developed lungs and cry until someone finally would hurry to his room to swoop him up into their arms and hold him close. Even his name reflected his health and importance in our household. It was a name representing ripeness and great importance.

Mom considers August a blessing to our family. It was no surprise to anyone that he would be particularly babied and spoiled by everybody in his immediate family. He is never alone and I honestly doubt he will be alone until he reaches middle school when every sibling by that time will have moved out. He's a coddled seedling that with our family's warmth will grow tall and strong. We want him to live out a fulfilling and overall happy life—to have the chance that Frannie never had. As he continues to grow and experience more of life's milestones, that is when it really strikes me how he's living, that he's striving. He's so well-loved not just because of the fact that he is the youngest in the family, but because of what happened to Frannie. He's a direct outcome of her death, a flower among many, growing from the decay in dirt.

I really do admire how my parents refused to bury Frannie away in their memories as merely an incident. They make sure she's included in our memories through hanging photographs on our walls, through hanging a new ornament on the tree for her each Christmas, and through visiting her grave on holidays. Sometimes death can be forgotten and erased rather than revered, but Frannie's name lives on in our household despite her short life. My parents ensured August was his own person with his own name and distinguished from who Frannie might have been. Frannie and August are two unique flowers in our family garden that should never be compared or bunched together as one in the same. Frannie is a constant in August's life who he's gained his own idea and thoughts on. She's a member of our family despite never being once present in August's life. She's just as important as the living, even when tucked away far from home in her grave, her garden.

I visited Frannie's grave with August shortly after our conversation about her. He jumped in the grass, picked dandelions to place on her grave, greeted her with a, "Hi, Frannie!" Then, handing me one of the many dandelions he picked, he turned on his heels to explore the rest of Frannie's garden.

CAPITALISTIC PIG

By Kayley O'Connor & Cory Blystone

A mangled wheel
unraveled thread
scene of death
punctuated by a branch
and a bell
in the summer rain.

Instead of deserting the rain
I've created the wheel
broken the bell
broken the thread
climbed down from the branch
to be civilised to death.

As one with Death
in the burning rain
my body aches to branch
out from the grasp of a warped wheel
within tangled thread
while sung to by a damned off-key bell

bell Bell BELL BELL!!!
Incessant ringing of death
orchestrated by a thread
matted in the rain
stuck in a wheel
up high on a branch.

A goddamn branch!
Stop ringing the bell!
And spinning the wheel!
Just take me Death!
Take me in the rain!
Don't leave me hanging by a thread!

Snap! the thread
Snap! the branch
end this rain
END THAT BELL!!!
I'm ready Death
Jesus take the wheel.

JESUS! TAKE! THE! WHEEL!!!
I'M! READY! DEATH!!
...end that bell.



DELICIOUS

Nathanael Rawson
Digital Photograph

AN ABSTRACT VARIETY OF THYME

By Joseph Madamba

Of the many things in life that I would have to judge,
what I would need to state, in fact, is
thyme is most important.

For I have heard on numerous,
exciting rare occasions,
that thyme just keeps on slippin' by,
though is it really truly now, the only spice of life?

My good friend Mrs. Dash,
has peppered me with tips,
to eat or have a hearty hash, to stimulate the mind,
though maybe not the smoking kind,
for it may leave a mark.

And though it seems the mark is tweet,
what really passes by is thyme you need,
and thyme for all,
a thyme unique to each.

The stories told through each anew,
all brew a different sort,
with different thyme,
a varied rhyme,
an altered sort of life.

And though you may not seem unique,
you truly are your own,
so even if you only stew, for only just a minute,
or bake around for many hours, days, or even weeks,
the thing that you and I must notice,
agreed upon by all,
is that shared bit-piece of life we have, that passes by enthralling.

It is the spice of being that's shared among us all,
the breath of life, a wild call,
a bit o' hair from you-know-where that makes each life so rare.

That utmost rare important thing
that proves we all should care.
The thyme of all our lives,
that spice which we all share.
That varied, rare, small speck of thyme, epitome of need, a paragon of mandatory,
Time is what we need.



BOBBLED HARMONY

Richard Boneski III
Digital Photograph



HOARDING

By Samuel Gallentine

In the last days of summer,
We dug into the moist
Scent of fermented clothing and feces
That was my great uncle's house,
Loading trash bags with
Memories long buried by waste.
A basement full of old vinyls,
Promo singles
And Rod Stewart's once sexy face,
Carpeted by mold,
The edges hole punched
By rodent mouths.
A fridge packed full of
Rancid meat
Bought on clearance,
The juices seeping
Through loose seams.
The waxy paper of used porno
Magazines, eaten away by mildew and stained
By rat urine,
Added to the melting pot of musk
Mixing in the back of our throats,
Tangy memories of rotten fruit
Spoiled on the vine.



MIDNIGHT BRIGHT

McKenzie Wells

Digital Photograph

MEMORABLE DREAMS OF DEATH: SEPTEMBER 2017

By Angela Phung

“For what it’s worth, I’m sorry. I let you down. I hurt you and I hope you can forgive me.”

My cracked, dry hands crumpled the parchment, tossing it aside bitterly. “Some people don’t deserve forgiveness,” I muttered, pulling my hood over my cropped hair. I needed to finish my next job.

I’ve had this dream before, I thought to myself, and I loved the mission. I paid the cashier my coins. They clinked on the counter as the cashier tallied up my services: hair dye, two restored piercings, one fresh tattoo on my neck. Know thyself. It was funny, considering. I chuckled and took one last look before I left.

The salon was noisy. People ordered drinks and received body modifications simultaneously. The patrons lounged about, robes seductively drawn down for the tattooing robots to drill into their sleek backs and bellies. Colorful locks splayed about the floor as more were being lopped off. Some were getting shaven, others piercings. It was harder for the beasts to get piercings, but the fur jobs or webbing piercings or slicings were always well done.

The cashier puffed up his excess throat flesh, shiny henna glittering in the light. “Your change, sir.” His claws opened and small coins fell through his webbing slicings into my hand. These jobs are getting expensive.

The door opened automatically as I approached and revealed a glowing metropolis. Grand towers, sloping spires, and new constructs littered among grayed ruins and dark rubble. In total, these structures of ancient twisted vines, mechanical trains, glass buildings, and rocky homes was the floating city of Gram.

Gram was a major floating city, held upright by magic only understood and practiced by elders who knew the good and evil of time. Kilometers below were the industrial ground cities. Seas away were other floating cities, reached within a day by teleflight, or months by illegal seafare. It was a city of destruction and innovation. It was glorious.

Of course, my favorite part of this dream was that everyone could fly. How else would one get between floating cities and buildings? Silvery thin-steeled wings, phasing into tangibility thousands of times per second, loaded onto my back. It was a more expensive application I had downloaded, since most free flight applications were for gliding or ha heavier, solid wings. This one was easier to use for speed, maneuverability, and could phase through solid objects. It was handy for quick getaways.

I let my body fall from the drop-off salon entrance. I loved this feeling of wind on my face and morning vapor in my lungs. The wings tightened against the increasing resistance and opened, thrusting my body into incline and off into the fog. When I do get a chance to enjoy this dream over the mission, I spend it flying.

Previous versions of this dream required me to deliver ghost jade, a rare and beautiful gem that had mysterious luminescence. Legend says that it speaks deep and dark truths, that it reveals secrets. Others say that it is unethical because it is only found after destructive wars and genocide; it is generated when there is compression of inorganic matter and human life. Others say it is a singular soul that is born when enough people pray and bless the stone. At least, that's what they say.

Most people get ghost jade by the pound, millions of yuan per pound. I get paid when I deliver my packages to the right client. Luckily, I've never been caught. Most minorities like myself get caught, which is why the salon trip was necessary to make myself appear like the dominant race.

Now, I needed to pick up my package. My client in the black market wanted it before sundown, but it was easiest to pick up during the morning bustle. I adjusted my flight, dodged an aggressive robotic taxi, and landed in the general marketplace of Gram's Pearl District. Everything sold in the Pearl District glittered and glowed, which meant I needed to use glasses. How mysterious.

*It was a city of
destruction
and innovation.*

I perused the shelves, looking for someone who was looking to sell. I needed at least two pounds in several small packages in case I could not make one large transaction. There were pastries with gold flakes, beverages with bioluminescent probiotics, and lines of knick knacks and jewels.

An elderly woman with a healed heroin neck sore, lazily covered with a knitted scarf, called over at me. “You want it, we got it! Grandma Luong will help bring light to your home. You touch, you buy!”

She looked like the average rehabilitated user. I knew better. Her hands fidgeted begin her back when she tucked them in. Her eyes yearned for something better. Madam Luong could not have been over forty, and certainly would not live to fifty. I would hate to lose a reliable customer like that.

“You’re back again!” She knew me by my stride and smell. I smelled like eucalyptus oil, like my old home back in the Garage. “I liked your other piercings better. Tattoos are not as fun anymore.” She pulled out a small jade Buddha statue and a jeweled brooch. They appeared wild as bright lights darted about within the curves of the stones.

They were so small, I thought. She smirked, seeing my distaste, and grabbed my hand, tremors and all. She dropped the Buddha into my fist and I gasped at the sheer weight of it. It must have been at least five kilos in less than five cubic centimeters.

“It’s full of mysteries, tells you important secrets. Listen.” She guided my hand up to my covered ear. I tightened my grip on my credit block, tucked in my pocket, and close my eyes.

Small voices whispered. Indistinct words echoed. It was a language I could not understand, but it sounded desperate. It was not like the high-price blessed items seen in churches and museums, ones that sang or praised harmoniously. This one screamed, pleaded.

“I can’t buy this, Madam Luong.” I pushed her hands away, trying to give back the ironic Buddha. “It’s too loud. How did you get it these compressed so quickly? A good buyer will know.”

Her eyes narrowed. “Landslides happen all the time. You have a good necromancer and a small town and a rising politician with different interests and someone always goes down. Someone needs to conveniently and unfortunately die.” She reached for my credit block.

Someone needs to conveniently and unfortunately die

I eyed her neck deliberately and she pulled back reflexively. Her brows knitted together, annoyed at the accusation. “If you won’t buy, someone else will. You know that. I know what I want, and I will get it.”

As she said that, I heard another voice off the side. It was familiar and haunting. I tried not to look or move, frozen with dread. It’s him.

“I’m trying to find someone,” he explained, showing my old for in a tattered picture to the booth sellers. He looked around as he wandered the booths. The vendors inquired on who he was looking for, and if they could help. He opened his mouth, then looked confused, as if he could not remember. “I’ll just keep looking.”

This is not like my other dreams, I panicked. Why is he here? He shouldn’t remember or even recognize me.

Then, I heard him step next to me. I gingerly went through Madam Luong’s wares. She glanced at me, knowingly. That bitch. I hoped she would not reveal me.

I gave her my credit block hurriedly. “I’ll buy.” She smiled and took it, scanning it over her wrist register. Her eyes widened with glee at the thought of her next hit.

Turning to leave with dense packages in hand, I realized I made a mistake. My shoulder got caught in the beam of Luong’s booth. Then, he bumped into me, and we made eye contact. Panic surged, and I thought, I forgot to change my eye color.

His gaunt, sunken eyes blinked, surprised. “I’m sorry.” He turned as he muttered his apology. He looked so different. He looked alone and nervous. The sunken eyes did not seem so gaunt from when we first met.

I wasn’t sure what to say. I was surprised. Did he really mean i—

“I didn’t mean to bump into you. Have a nice day, sir,” he muttered.

A deep emptiness washed up from my chest and I tasted blood. The old scars ached. He didn’t recognize me. Rays of the ghost jade shone through the newspaper it was wrapped in, through my hand. The Voices grew louder, Voices that have always been there in my mind, joined in by the crazed ghost whispers.

I took off, not bothering to respect flight laws. Not that it mattered with my history. My wings were fully loaded by the time I reached a hundred kilometers per hour, eyes watering

*This is not like my
other dreams,
I panicked.*

against the wind even with the glasses. I pulled them off to see better now that I was away from the Pearl District.

It doesn't matter anymore. I wish I could believe that. But, the scars still ached.

I flew to the Dreamland, a mechanized bazaar. Outside, it advertised sales, quick fix diets, and reduced prices for furniture, vehicles, and recreation. Inside, it was like an old warehouse with second-hand decor and unenthused staff and temporary hands. Clouds of marijuana and nicotine fogged my vision along with thick syrupy honey and buttery fumes of baked goods. Frying oil and vehicle gas mixed in the air. I was home.

Many stands and booths were selling various wares; they were unabashed at marketing their clothing, food, sex, and drugs. Several stands in a gated hall sold "ethically obtained" ghost jade and other rarities. I scoffed at the sign and how foolish people were. How foolish I am.

Before I could get to my client, I heard a scurry of people. Beasts, robots, and people alike began to scatter, gathering their goods and fleeing. I prepared myself to leave, booting up my wings.

"The bounty hunters are here! They're coming!"

I don't remember what they looked like when I fled, pushing others out of my way as my wings phased through booth walls. I cursed, my words cut off when I felt a cold metallic grip on my neck and shoulder, pulling me down. I was slammed onto the ground amongst the ashen debris and old dried phlegm.

I couldn't see after they split my throat, warm blood running down my neck. I could still hear the voices from my pocket, imagining the disrupting lights within the peaceful Buddha statue.

My last pulses were fading and I could make out the bounty hunter's grizzly voice. "He's not what we're looking for." The grip on my neck relaxed and released.

Instead of the ground, I felt a wind on my face. Euphoria took over my body as I felt a falling sensation. I wouldn't be too bad to be compressed with the other voices, I thought.

I held the statue in my pocket with the last of my strength, thinking of the secrets I would like to tell.

I woke up before I hit the ground.



A KISS GOODBYE

Michael Curry

Linocut Print



Stoksness

Dale T. Strouse

Digital Photograph



LATRABJARG
CLIFFS
AND
FOG

Dale T. Strouse
Digital Photograph

**ROUGH BUT
READABLE**

Alexandra Meuler
Digital Photograph



► **Travel Cafe 1st Place**

ABOVE THE CLOUDS

Taylor Riordan
Digital Photograph







FULL SEND

Robert Nguyen
Digital Photograph



VISTA

Stephanie Maldonado
Digital Photograph

THE BEAST

By Abby Johnson

I am a goddess, a precious dream,
A nightmare to the handful of men,
who names I mostly don't remember.

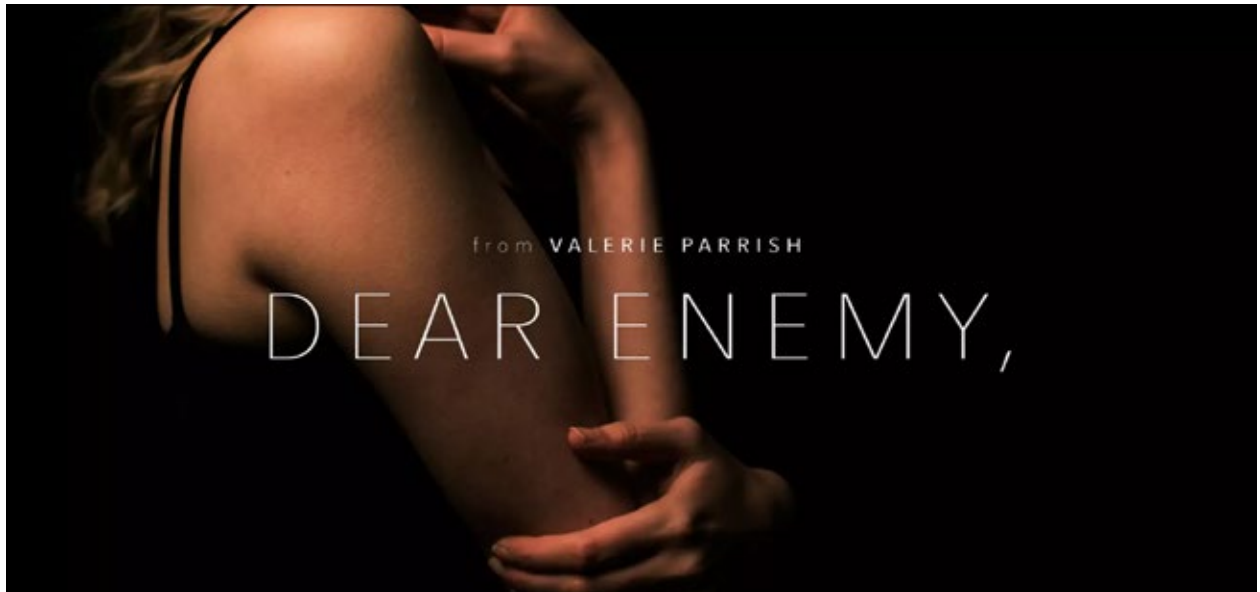
I am the mother of five children,
And if you hurt any of them, so help me,
I will hang you by your own tongue.

My record collection would blow your mind.
I have a Mayan tattoo on each foot
and a drawer full of pipes.

I have held my own hair as I've vomited
I have proudly taken the form
of all the beasts that you hide from

I am a goddess, a precious dream.
I am the strongest person you know.

Featured on salmoncreekjournal.com



DEAR ENEMY

Valerie Parrish

Video



SUNDROP

Sarah Anderson
Digital Photograph

Art & Activism

Dis(covering) Ability

Each fall brings another Disability Awareness Month. In early October 2017, in partnership with the Student Diversity Center, Salmon Creek Journal hosted a celebration for the WSU Vancouver campus. In response to a call for “dis(covering)” our abilities, students and other community members were asked to submit art and literary works. And Sue Clancy, a local author and illustrator, was asked to craft a permanent installation using the same prompt. This section presents a handful of the submissions we received and includes an interview with Clancy.



HAUNTING GROUNDS

Cecelia Martin
Digital Painting

LITTLE FLOWER

By Matthew Swanson

How does it feel
To own a flower
By controlling
Everything she does,
By destroying
All that she loves
Just so she
Makes you feel okay

How does it feel
To hurt her
By clipping and clipping
All her pretty leaves
Till none are left to see
By using and abusing her
Just so you can look
at a pretty flower sometime

And you can ignore
Your little plant
On the window seal
But someday
Without a drink-
She will die,
And the only thing to blame
Will be all of your shame

And you can control
Your little plant
And smother,
Her with water
But someday-
She will drown,
And it truly is a shame

LITTLE BLUE BOY

By Matthew Swanson

Boy in the blue
 Nothing seems true
 I feel it too
 It must be hard on you

Going around Portland
 Hearing your band
 At the crystal ballroom
 A soon to be groom

Boy in the blue
 Don't sniff that glue
 What would they say?
 If you were to die, today?

Look at the rain
 Falling down the drain
 Make it go away
 And let's go find your way

The rose city light
 Shining so bright
 Down onto me
 It makes it hard to see

But boy in blue
 Dont touch that knife

What about your life?
 And your wife?
 But boy in blue
 Don't grab that beer
 Or steer near
 The king of fear

You'll go running around
 Never to be found
 Your gonna drown
 And sink straight down

Boy in the blue
 I thought you were through
 And someday when your gone
 I'll weep for you

But boy in the blue
 I know you don't have long
 Before time runs out
 And I hear you scream and shout
 So I hope you know
 I love you, so
 My boy in blue



DECAY

Cecelia Martin
Digital Painting



HEROES' JOURNEY

Sue Clancy

Painting



STATIC

Cecelia Martin
Ink on Paper

Angles We Have on Things: A Conversation with Sue Clancy

By Amanda Flynn, former
editor-in-chief (2016-2017)

Editor's Note

Our former editor met Sue Clancy by chance at the Cascade Community Library. She'd seen her art there and was initially drawn to her imaginative caricatures of domesticated animals. This spark of interest would lead to something much bigger: a permanent installation on campus and a lasting impression for visitors. After introducing Sue's perspective to the *Salmon*



Creek Journal team as well as governing boards and committees on campus, Amanda was certain that our collaboration with her work would be a success. With support from the Student Diversity Center, Amanda's partnership with Sue became an example of how dedication can lead to the realization of dreams. Sue's piece, *Heroes' Journey*, now on display in the Office of Student Involvement, illustrates her personal ethos in delightful ways. But it also sends a larger message from WSU Vancouver: We welcome all abilities. We appreciate and value diversity. As the following conversation demonstrates, the possible sources of such an outlook on the world are abundant. May this perspective bind us together in the years to come, no matter what comes our way.

AMANDA FLYNN / I fondly think of the responses of Alfred Tennyson and Oscar Wilde when contemplating long held debates in artistic circles. It seems these two questions constantly resurface in some way through each century.

First, is it “art for art’s sake” or “art for life’s sake”?

SUE CLANCY / For me it’s primarily art for life’s sake. I create art, and view/read artistic works because I find it helps me to deal better with the “slings and arrows of misfortune,” to quote Shakespeare. I find that life’s sake is a reason to do anything: to get an education, to read books, to paint, to learn to cook, to study, to learn and practice any skill or experience. Developing one’s skills and experiences help one think better, develop empathy and be able to cope a bit better with life as it comes. As Kurt Vonnegut said, “Practice an art to grow your soul.” But I also firmly believe that making or enjoying art does not need any justification [i.e. “art for art’s sake”]. Humans need beauty, aesthetics and storytelling. Early primitive humans painted images in caves before they had dependable sources of food, water or shelter. Art is that important to our species. The heart of a community is its social vitality. The activities and the places where people can go to enjoy good company and conversation and the arts are a key stimulus of that. Really though, a third, non binary, option also applies: to live one’s life for art’s sake.



AMANDA / Secondly, does art imitate life or does life imitate art?

SUE / I think it’s both. When I’m creating art, I’m referring to the life around me, using real life as a point of reference, imitating it even. Along the way I transform, via imagination, the elements of my observation into something artistic that didn’t exist in the world previously. That new thought or new story then takes on a life of its own and the artwork becomes a point of reference itself for future artworks and also becomes part of ongoing conversations about ways of living life.

AMANDA / Cats and dogs are such a valuable aspect to your work. Most people at first may see your work as charming. Of course, with most art there is also a deep purpose, value, and meaning associated with the work that one creates.

Why use animal caricatures as opposed to using humans?

SUE / There are many reasons. My use of animals in art places my work into a specific genre of art that dates back to cave painting days and the use of animals as disguised symbols in Renaissance art. I like to think I'm updating the "Animals in Art" genre.

Animal characters are a way to signal "this is a story," a work of imagination. It signals to the viewer to look for allegory, metaphors and symbols within my work. It enables me to be more literary than literal.

Doing my animal characters in anthropomorphic ways, I think, associates my work with Aesop/Sufi stories and all of the kinds of fables that entertain and simultaneously reveal some ways-of-coping-with-life skills.

By using animal characters, I feel I can bypass the cultural clichés about humans and be more inclusive, and aware of human diversity.

So I'm willing to risk having my work dismissed as cute or charming. The people who are able and willing to read between the lines will enjoy my work on a deeper level.

AMANDA / Do you remember that "Aha" moment when you knew what you were going to create for Disability Awareness Month? How did you know it would be an impactful image for the event?

SUE / After the campus tour I sat down with (my wife), Judy, and read through the notes we'd both taken and looked through all of the photos and I brainstormed.

During our first meeting, it was stressed that the first experience students have on campus is the Student Ambassador's tour. That the emphasis is placed on forming a campus

community. I knew right away those two concepts would fit well with the journey-archetypes-plot-style that has been used for stories from Homer to *Star Wars*.

Clark College is a major “feeder” school, so I knew there had to be a Penguin in my piece. And it went without saying that there’d be a Cougar.

Mount Hood and Mount St. Helens are visible from campus. So—ah-hah!—I decided to add the mountain/mountaintop concept to my journey archetype. That cemented the theme framework, gave me a specific direction to go in to design the setting and a way to fit my characters together.

I began to focus on creating a fictional setting that used real-life campus elements. I wanted to make a setting that would be recognizable to students, yet that would be obviously mythological so as to emphasize my theme.



I re-combined views of the Dengerink Building and the library with the fountains and views of Mount Hood. I angled the sidewalks into a perspective aiming for the mountain top. Next came positioning the characters within my setting and implying obstacles to overcome and possible ways to work together as a community. This lent itself naturally to depicting characters with seeming disabilities. Each character would have obvious and not-so-obvious

qualities and abilities. For example, I imagined that both the mole's blindness and ability to dig could become assets to the community when the group got nearer to the mountain.

In this way I created an image that would fit for Disability Awareness Month but more broadly it would reflect concepts of diversity, community and pursuits of self-development.

AMANDA / What made you decide to title your work Heroes' Journey?

SUE / I chose this title because each of us are the hero of our own lives. Education is a journey of the mind. Life itself is a journey, with all the peaks and valleys. My title choice also reflects my archetypal theme, journey, and that each character is a hero. A viewer walking up and looking at my artwork is given a direct clue about content. I try to do this with my titles while leaving much of the rest of the content detail to be figured out.

AMANDA / I think it's quite special that you went out of your way to create a story for each one of the characters included in Heroes' Journey. The work just becomes that much more personal and meaningful for the viewer to step in and connect with the characters you have created.

Could you give me some general background for these characters and the message they may have for other people?

SUE / I create backstories for myself because it helps me to choose the various elements that surround them within my art/design, what they wear, hold or do, where they are placed in pictorial space.

Every one of them is special and has something of me in them. Take the rabbit for example. I imagined him as a veteran who lost his lucky foot in the war and now, after recovering, is a returning student getting on with his life. His past trauma is why I positioned him at the edge of the group. He's somewhat poised to run away but is also being brave and being part of the group. The rabbit connected with the phrase I learned from a mentor that was influential in my life: "A one-legged man can be unhappy about the loss of his leg but can still be a happy one-legged man with or without a prosthesis." So the Rabbit has something of my mentor in him.



The meerkat wears hearing aids, like I do, and is standing near the speaker, the squirrel, so as to hear better, like I would. Meerkats are communal creatures who live in clans. Hearing/listening is an important element of communal life. I imagined that the meerkat is planning to study either communications or sociology.

I created a backstory for each character, much like a novelist would, but I'm hoping that the viewer will look at the various elements, the animal species, what they're wearing or holding and will fill in the story with their imagination.

AMANDA / Sue, the works you create go beyond the cookie-cutter image. I learned in some previous art classes it is important to have your own style that is clearly

distinguishable as your own.

Is there a story behind the style you have created? What is most important about the narrative of your own work?

SUE / I just make the art. While other people are deciding whether they like it, don't like it, whether they'll exhibit or publish it or not, whether it shows a style, I get busy making more art! If an artist can be clear with themselves about what they think/feel then a recognizable style will emerge naturally. As Alfred North Whitehead said, "All learning is self-learning". If you keep exploring the things that interest you, while ignoring fads, suddenly you wake up one day and people are talking about your style and your influence.

I love literature, stories and storytelling. I've always loved to read. My relationship with words has, in the past, been fraught with peril, possibly because I grew up as a deaf kid and had to have speech therapy. So, my ongoing burning question, that I try to answer artistically, has been: "Can I write my stories or philosophical essays with just pictures and few or no words at all?"

AMANDA / What message would you like to share with other aspiring artists out there?

SUE / Keep creating. And don't show your early, tenderest work to a drunk family member. Learn to, and practice, picking yourself up and going on. Remember to have fun.

AMANDA / The theme of the 2018 issue this year is PERSPECTIVE. We were surprised to see this word and its eclectic connotations come to life in the work different artists channeled this year.

What comes to your mind when you think about perspective? How does it fit into your life as an artist for 2018?

SUE / In drawing techniques, perspective refers to ways of placing elements in pictorial space and the angle on the content that the artist gives to the viewer. When creating *Heroes' Journey* I chose a dominant one-point perspective and set the pictorial plane at an angle so that the viewer might feel themselves at eye-level with the Cougar character. It's as if the viewer is another Cougar walking up to join the group and is looking at the group and also aiming toward the mountain top. On my part, this was a deliberate choice of perspective use in order to draw the viewer in a particular way, to position them as a participant in *Heroes' Journey*.

Each character within the artwork has their own perspective or sight-line angles. Kind of like how in real life we each have our own perspectives, points-of-view or angles we have on things due to our past experiences, things people have told us, the ways our physical senses work and our physical chemistry.

AMANDA / Are there any closing thoughts you want to leave us with? Perhaps, words of wisdom or advice that has helped you in your own journey?

SUE / On one of the walls in my studio I collect phrases, wisdom and bits of advice that I find helpful. These handwritten cards, paper scraps and post-it notes come from random places and have hung in my studio for so long that I'm not sure of all of the origins. While I'm working I sometimes glance up at this wall for inspiration or encouragement. Here are some of my favorite, most helpful phrases:

“Stay close to anything that makes you glad to be alive.”

“It is important to remember to enjoy ordinary elements of life.” Simply remembering to focus attention on enjoying something can get someone through a hard time. Enjoying things can also be a moderating factor, a way of combating extremism.

“Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly at first.”

“Don't think about making art. Just get it done. Let everyone else decide if it's good or bad, whether they love it or hate it. While they are deciding make even more art.”

“One must care about a world one will never see.”

“Art is what we possess in the face of evil and the darker side of human nature.”

AMANDA / Sue, I would like to thank both you and Judy for your generosity and wonderful contributions you made this year. You are always welcome back to our campus here at WSU Vancouver.

SUE / You're so welcome and thank you! This project was a delight to do, and has become one of my favorite projects that I've done. Amanda, you and the SCJ crew, the Diversity Center and everyone at WSU Vancouver has been fun to work with. Thank you again for this opportunity to share my work and my story with you.





SABBATICAL
Stephanie Maldonado
Digital Photograph

CDMX- AMOR Y DECEPCION

Eduardo Ramos
Digital Photograph





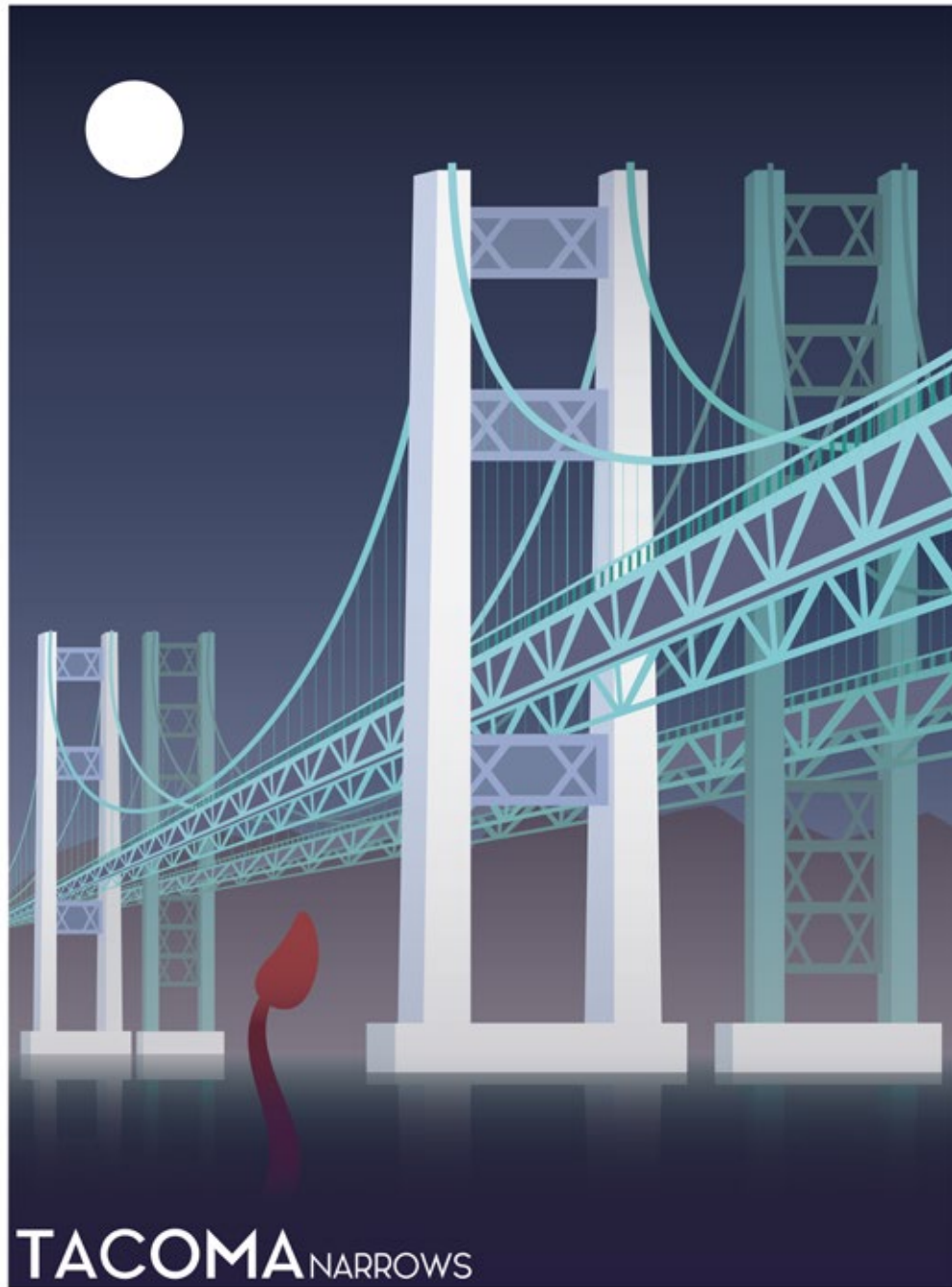
THE GEMINID'S TRAIL

Faun Scurlock
Digital Photograph



COVFETE

Raul Benjamin Moreno
Digital Photograph



URBAN LEGENDS

Austin Lewis

Digital Illustration

A SCULPTOR'S TOUCH

By Jennifer Schwartz

there's something
in a sculptor's
touch
fingers stroking
uncharted territory
it shakes foundations
reality, boundaries
blurring

he did that to me,
from the first caress
threw me
 off balance
unleashed power
in those fingertips
as if his hands
could rework me
chipping at the flaws
so every freckle, all scars
would
 fall
 in a
 heap
I was his muse
for a time
the arch
in my slender back
speaking softly
a language
that entranced him

he plotted with tools,
pale marble
kissing each one
before he began
to recreate the lines
on my palms,
"A trail to another world"

I could not resist
his ardent
 demands
to "journey along
my edges
explore the peaks
bathe in my light"

his searching eyes
landed on my curves
as he measured
each
 slope
sparks of desperation
that pulled my soul
so close
I could not tell
where his world ended
and mine began

lost hours in the studio
clay models of muses

the ghosts of his past
watching it all unfold
where the golden glow
in so
perfectly

I admired the way
he took charge
the mallet in hand,
to beat the smooth rock
into submission
La Gradina: tooth chisel
gnawing at the stone
craving perfection
bits of white marble
swirling
to the
ground
like snow

perfect communication
between metal and stone
as the clang from maglio:
his mallet
echoed
the music of creation
until darkness crept in

then the night was mine
to explore his terrain
and fall asleep
in his arms

I rose at dawn
to gaze at my likeness
in the quiet
and examine the holes,

wounds in the wall
where he threw chisels
that did not obey

trying to decipher
what he loved more
my warm body
or the cold creation
that will outlast us

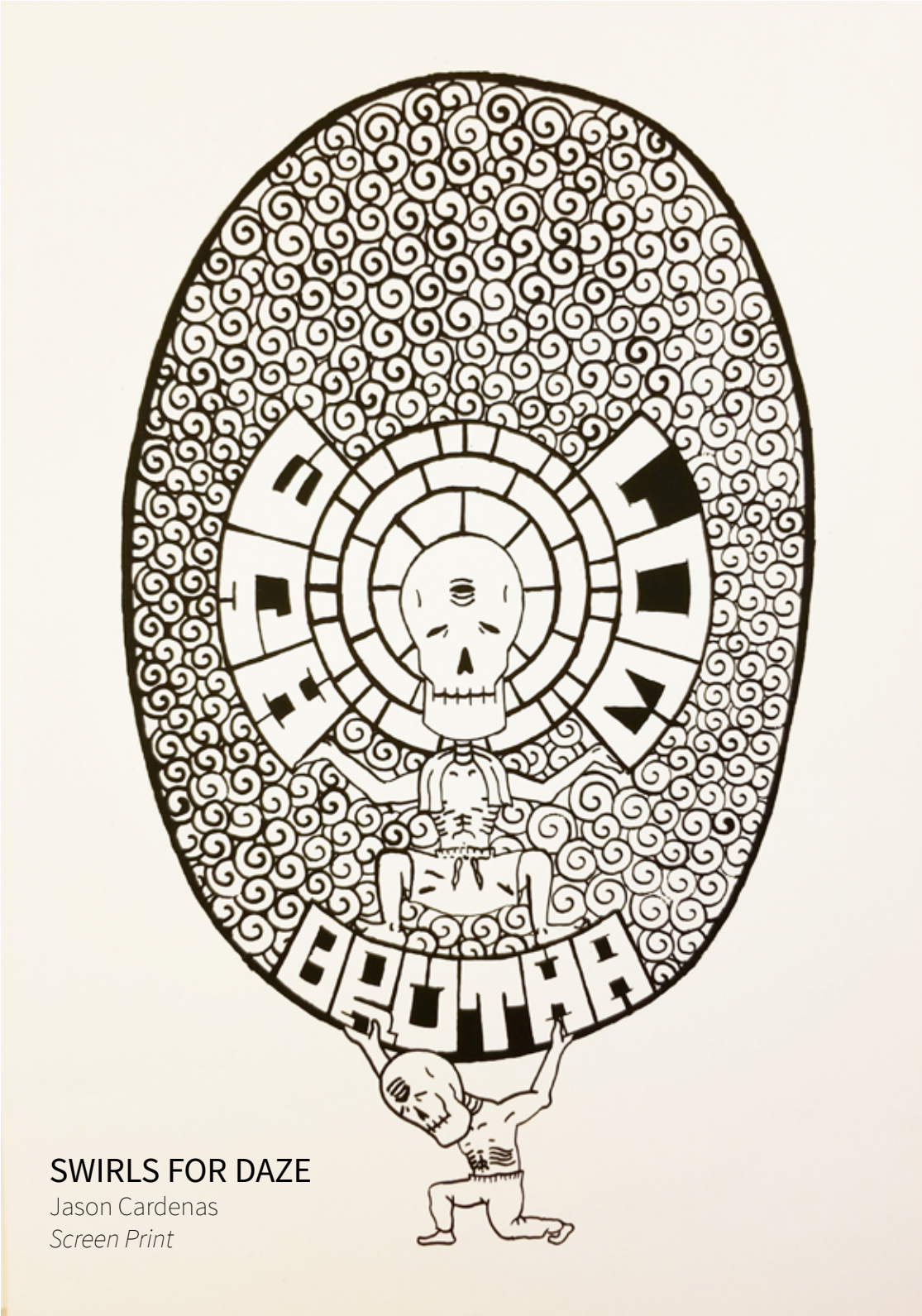
the distant look
of dissatisfaction
clouded his eyes
no more exploration
silence reigned
where my name
used to drip
from
his lips
like a slow sip
of Campari

ABSTRACTIONS

By Jennifer Schwartz

I don't want to be
The abstract painting
That hangs in a gallery
Impossible to
Understand
Shapes crashing,
Colours blurring
Every line,
Each brush stroke
Talking
Amongst themselves

I long to be more,
The explosion
Of spray paint
On weathered brick
That makes you
Stop -
Appreciate the rhythm,
Of life
Hidden beauties in
Each breath,
Every minute
How our bodies move
Like waves
Reaching out in the dark
For someone to hold



SWIRLS FOR DAZE

Jason Cardenas
Screen Print



ROOM 309

Alysha Henderson
Digital Photograph

FEELINGS

By Skylar Lampman

Want

I crave an unconditional love I cannot give myself.
I lack a genuine happiness I have never known.

I dig through dirt-rusty remains where I can't even come
across bones.
I wonder where it all went wrong,
I've repressed the known.

The coffin is buried deeper than I remember.
I need to open it,
Confront what I cannot comprehend.

I'm suffocating,
I demand to breathe.

Emotions

I don't drip from the faucet,
I pour.
I'm an overflowing sink,
That drains the life out of others,
I'm sipped when conversations run dry.
I'd rather be seasoned and warmed up,
So I could soothe sore throats.

I envision a waterfall of freedom,
Blinded by a mist,
A peaceful sound drowned out by a wel-
comed silence.

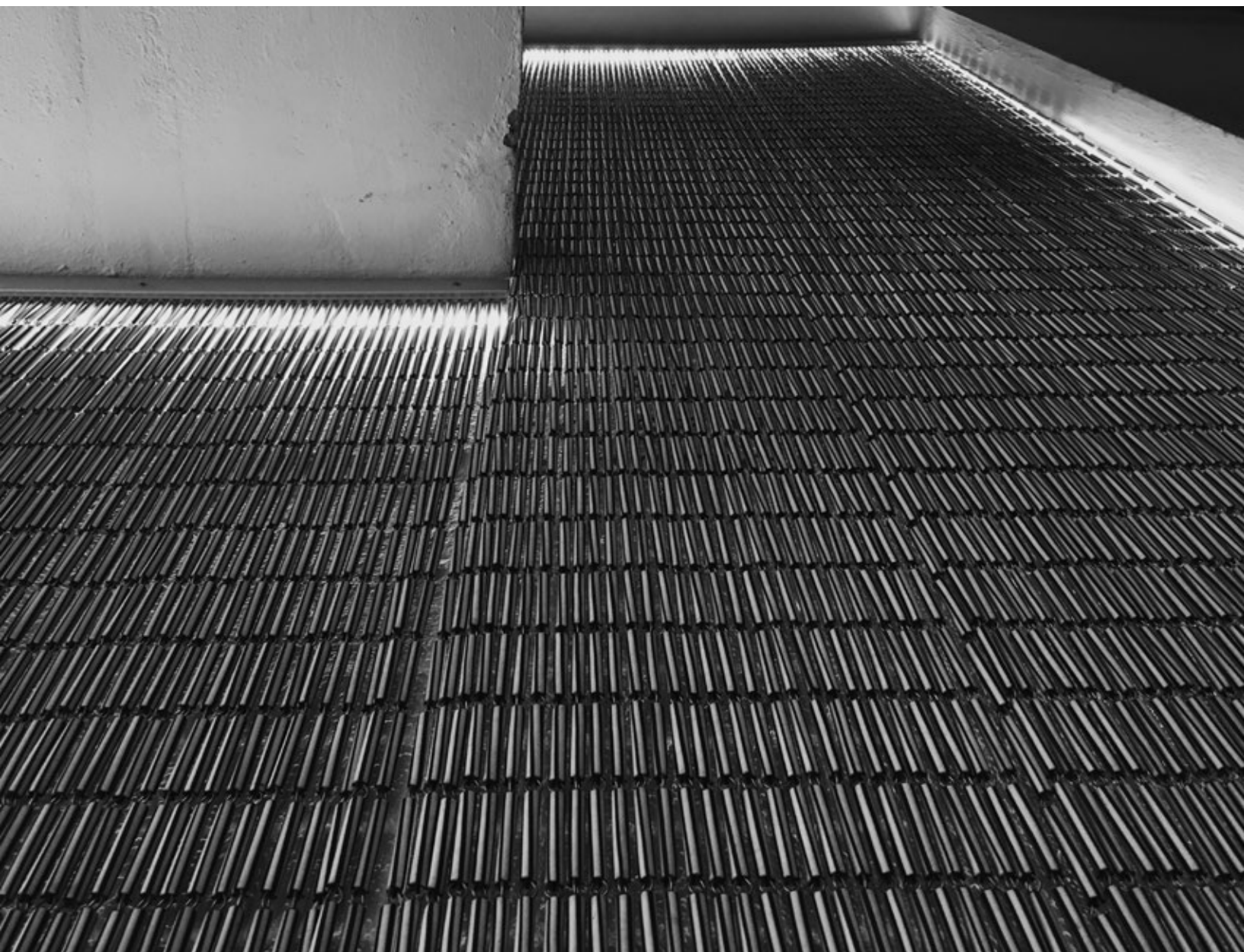
Calm without chaos,
Tame and scenic,
Free from all restraints and judgment.

Anxious

I sit in between the sheets of perfectly fine and not okay
They cradle my arms and fold over my shoulders.
I lay on blankets of bad thoughts on repeat,
It's a record I've had since I can remember
And I can't return it.
Like a bicycle wheel, or a God damn yo-yo.
They come back around again and again,
On the same Ferris wheel one more time.

I close my eyes.
It is a darkened space,
Wide and infinite.
I begin to run.
My breath staccato.
My pulse throbs into numbness,
My chest a burning building,
Collapsing lungs ache with every half sigh.
I can't slow down.
I don't know where I'm running too.
I don't recall what I'm running from.
The smoke creates these tears.

When my eyes open the fighting starts.



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL

Laura Arellano

Digital Photograph

BLOWFISH

By Raul Benjamin Moreno

FAG.

YOU

HELL, HELL.

F____G GO TO F____G

TO

GO

TO F____G HELL. GO TO F____G

So this is the trumpeting of a new town, a slippery boy with shiny eyes, a sharp and terrible shout. How many boys shout like this here? Will you shout things, mean things, into the autumn air and the snot-green sea when you're finally from here? There it goes, north along University, past the bubble of concrete where the yelling is sacrosanct, the absences for leading the trumpeting and also the marching, the crashing, the baring of limbs excused. Didn't you read the all-staff? The Dakotas are always excused. Forever excused. Please excuse Mr. Dakota on the following Fridays. And, Professor, please complete this short application for citizenship to help us better monitor our Student Athlete. This form is a great way for us to pinpoint areas of difficulty as well as areas of excellence.

There it goes, the Caravan with the golden boy still hanging from the passenger window. The same van your mother once drove to piano practice, then straight into a ditch one Friday in September.

Turn the other way. Let the Dakotas have a laugh at the funny man finishing another f_____g lap in a costume so elastic, he must be a fag. The man with a steady gait and a car key. The guy too chicken to—hey-yo! Bro! Let's ditch this guy.

The Dakotas are not the kind of boys you'll find in a Walmart parking lot.

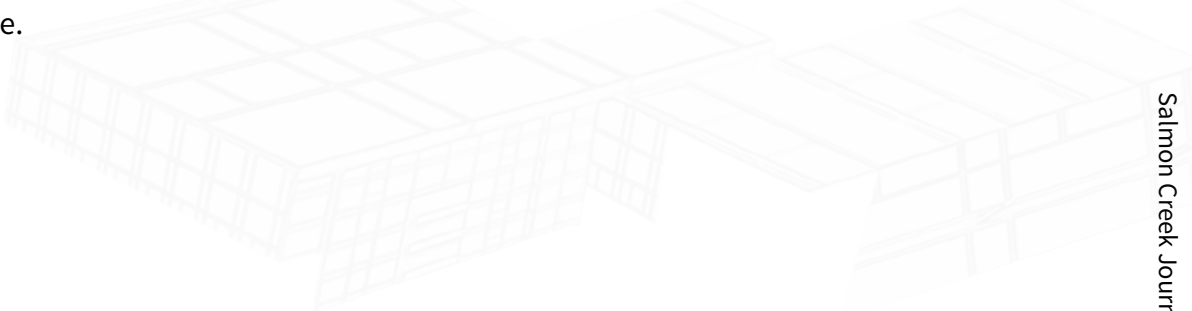
Be rational about this. Ask yourself, why this chase? Why this squealing of tires and this rolling stop? This gunning into third and this rocketing past parched corn? What would the Dakotas say? No really, if the Dakotas and their girlfriends pulled over and you actually had it out, what would they say? The Dakotas have probably crossed the county line. The Dakotas are not the kind of boys you'll find in a Walmart parking lot. So why this careful study of Entrance and Exit? Of tired woman and wailing would-be piano man? Inside there is Grocery and there is Pharmacy. Centers Garden, Vision, and Photo, and 1-Hour Photo. Where would the Dakotas hide? Sporting Goods? The walk-in cooler?

You'll trail them. You'll take their fake ID at Self-Checkout, fold it very calmly, then start grinding on the plastic like a gumball.

The Dakota boys are not in Grocery, and they are not in Pharmacy. Garden, Vision, the eyes of people trying not to meet your eyes.

There is starlight far, far above this miniature city, white and glaring, but over toward Sporting Goods, a radiant blue. Your breathing slows, and then your gait. A full stop. In Pet Supply. Next to the Daisy Powerline Dual Ammo, and the Crosman Pulse R76 (Full or Semi-Auto), and the Marking Ammo (5,000 Count), there is the trickling of water. And a fish.

A yellow Spotted Puffer, staring at you through the glass and breathing like the Buddha, like he's been here all along. In and out. Growing to 6 inches in 75 degree water and a little aquarium salt, next to two ceramic penguins and a school of GloFish. UPC #80930. Insert Pricing Label Here.





CENTER

William Paul Erickson
Digital Photograph

STAINED GLASS

By Jordin Lee

To live in the riverbed of experiences is to hear mirror shards etch poetry onto the chalkboard of the mind. What becomes of these etchings is distortion, an alternate form of reality, a dystopia of my own insecure reflections and those reflected upon me. At first glance, I welcome the face I knew at 7. The face that confronted that of my trapped twin: the girl who lived in the glass, who imitated me as I brushed my river-long black hair with the comfort of a cheap, orange comb. My hair, my locks, the locks I let free, the locks that defined my beauty. In that moment that I would only remember in the hourglass of my mind, I was a waterfall of sparkling tar. The way my hair glistened for me and because of me (it grew inside of my very own head) allowed me to grasp my humanity before its own eventual downfall. In the glow of my grandmother's bathroom's 1960's vintage-bulb lighting, I became the forgotten Eve. Stepping into her shoes, I was familiarized with the feeling of knowing oneself before acquaintance with the world's critique. In the fog of the shower steam, I was pure creation: all that God made me in skin, bones, and follicles. There, in unembarrassed serenity, I said my last hello to the girl who would from then on be acknowledged by her nakedness of form, who would be just like the world's foremost mother: conscious and embarrassed by her very own being.

Two years passed, and soon, I became everything that humanity hates: fat and the reminder of America's gluttonous desires. From the same bathroom I derived familial comfort, I no longer knew myself as being more than singular. If my twin was looking through the looking glass, she was only seeing and hearing the same death sentence as me. Looking at the Chinese-red scale below me and hearing the tick of the arrow against my feet, I was not dead weight, but living. Living and mourning the death of my own worthiness to live, to enjoy the fruits and rice and vegetables of living a content childhood. Looking at the scale's plastic glass with eyes of youth I would never retain, I could see the rigidity with which they wanted to control my body. They didn't care for beauty that was messy like Raggedy Ann. They believed in a rigidity that did not (and would not) believe in "curves" or "universal beauty." Their vision was vintage. They endeavored to make me into the perfect China doll: with the approved composed characteristics. In my tan, fat ugliness, I could not be beautiful

and skinny in that porcelain-white, oh-so-Chinese way. So, I determined to be traditional in another way. Everyone always said people like me were human calculators, so, experience decided it was my time to be proof. From there on, numbers would determine me, and I would surrender myself to their statistical violation.

I became everything that humanity hates: fat and the reminder of America's gluttonous desires.

In numbers, one finds one's strength. In extreme cases, one can become an anomaly. Considering my acquaintance with abuse and its many forms, I should consider myself lucky then that I was diagnosed with cancer at 10. Slapped and left with a starburst pink blush on my cheek as punishment for not eating medicine, being touched in my sleep by my same blood, oh, that was *nothing*. Before, I was like a tv box: something paid heed to according to convenience. Then, with cancer, miraculously, delightfully, I was given kindness and attention like the prettiest of celebrities. Finally, I was *SPECIAL*. With little left except a few wispy strands of hair, I was Gollum, but they thought me brave and beautiful still. How fortunate I felt even then to be artificially loved like a hologram of a dear friend who has passed. It was fresh-cut baby's breath sprinkled on my soul. I was 10, but not the age I stared at in the reflective pool of my mind and my mother's mirror. The diagnosis? *Hodgkin's Lymphoma*. Cause? *Unknown*. All that remains clear as tears is that I discovered the lump myself and that in the moment of diagnosis I was not shocked one bit. Accordingly, now, I question the cancer's incidence. It would be so easy to say it was environmental, but so

I was corrupted, and it would not be the last time.

comforting to what I know, as the inner me, to say that it

was the visual bruise of the hurt I endured. There was so much...so much no one even heard me complain. I always fought that which hurt me and smiled again. This was me. I believed if cancer could not break me at 10, surely, nothing more could. But, in this vileness of human destruction which crept into my body in secret, I was corrupted, and it would not be the last time.

Just as cancer has its symptoms, people have their habits and signs. Curiosity brewed in me like an overheated stew: it was insatiable and unstoppable. Like a burnt stew,

Did he ever see me for the girl I was

would leave me feeling defenseless in a fight I had no knowledge would occur. How...how I should have known. No one dared to warn me. No one gave me the protection. Beginning in my teenager years, they screened PG-13 movies, screaming at each other, at the screen, to rid the sex scenes of their immorality. These...*parents* of mine, who engaged in the very same “evil” to *make me*, wanted to rid me wholly of the beauty and the education surrounding it. And then...Here I was, sitting at a table with this man, five years older than me. This college rocker who had promised me so much: Korean indie concerts and endless music adventures together. Who had promised his *country* so much through loyalty in military service but who instead embarked in police duty in lieu. *A sign*. This stranger from the dangerous Net, which others had voiced they would never be caught in, whom I had saved and deemed my friend as he did I. *Did he ever see me for the girl I was, the girl whose heart palpated in sync with the rhythms of his country’s music, who found herself in it? Did he ever intend to take me anywhere but...* We ate at a place he laid down his asset for: a meal I now know is the confirmation and acknowledgment of consent. So odd the way consent and intention intermingle like a bad mixtape. In this living nightmare of a memory, I am a frequent flier to this table: Where innocence bloomed like lotuses, where he cut radish kimchi for me to eat. A familiar fire of a food. My *favorite*. The *best* kind of kimchi. I relished in it because I *loved* Korea, and through the bites of the spicy, sweet, high-heel crunch of that radish that came scooped out of a miniaturized version of a traditional kimchi container, I felt that Korea somehow loved me too. Sitting and facing me was this son of Korea, who gifted me with a winter wish only a short text ago. Who bowed down *happily*. For me. Soaking his standardized blue boots, cap and all to write my Korean name, ‘이조정’ (Eee-Jo-Jung), in the perishable beauty of snow. Interrupting his routine to remember me. It remains a bittersweet snapshot reminding me every so often like a possessed Polaroid camera, just like the meal paid with apparent coins of considerateness. Eating and maintaining conversation felt as awkward and cheerful as our short voice calls in the past where we attempted to be comical but

it would leave me tasting and feeling bitterness: in the tendons stretching themselves like rubber bands to give me fluidity, in the arms and legs which

*It gestured in colors of
hemoglobin, caution-tape
yellow and poison green*

professional amid the ears of police comrades. The initial awkwardness had passed. Here we were: happily shedding spicy-food tears, sniffing and exchanging convivial regret for choosing and consuming the hottest chili dish even the chef did not recommend. Here I was: tasting the Hell I would receive, which would only show indiscriminately now. Later, I would know it as a down payment for a personal wreckage on me more horrendously-affecting than the dish itself.

The Long Island Iced was no Lipton

Neon. As luminescently varied as sea glass. Neon shined without discipline. It gestured in colors of hemoglobin, caution-tape yellow and poison green. They splattered billboards and buildings with a danger that was exciting. It was especially exciting because it was *Korea*. The country that contained an environment that, when understood through earphones, was a pastel universe and whose music was all my tender tremblings. In its own vivaciousness, unobstructed by audio, Korea was pure possibility. Under my flats, Myeongdong's street echoed like brownie batter: dark as the sins of the day and textured like fudge crackling. This town was no edible mess but that which comprised itself of regurgitated nightlife. My tears were stamped inside my eyes like personal mirrors for him. They reflected his carelessness back to him in twofold devastation. He looked sorry for having ignored my presence every meeting we agreed upon. He showed sorrow in such a way that made me feel like rather than friends we were lovers. Caressing my shoulders firmly with his hands, he looked at me so long with eyes so serious that I still cannot believe the whole of him was counterfeit. *I really care about you. I do.* It was *not* his intention to mind me only occasionally. Dragging my hand like a long-lost lover, he ensured repentance, walking us to one bar and then another. He would *make it up to me*. People see alcohol, and they know its bile finish and its power. But me...at 16...I could not belittle it more than I knew, and I knew little if anything at all. Alcohol elicited

fear like a monster known by name but never seen, but for him, my *friend*, I wanted to conquer that monster. As it appeared in front of me, in untrustworthy sunset and muddled, Hershey brown, I dismissed the height and cloudiness of the compromised cyclical staring back at me.

My body resigned and refused to work for me any longer

Convinced myself for *his* sake that I should treat it like sweetened tea. Liquid time which I would share with him. He wanted to drink together, so, then, alcohol was not as it always

seemed, but a drink of companionship. A sacrifice I made to turn his shared cold sorrows into warmth, to meet him anew. With glasses one and the same, we were equals. Here in an open room of golly drinkers, I was among experienced onlookers, so therefore, I was *safe*. The venture could continue. The next place was *professional*. Like a jazz club, it was dark instead of illuminated. Endowed with a grand piano rather than a grand crowd of loud folks, it felt *special* in the sense that it was noticeably different. It felt *special* because he brought me.

an American slut

Just... *me*, and with excitement I thought, *I can play the piano here*. But I was reminded that this was no music joint, and he did not pay for me to play or to order something *so expensive* as a fruit salad. The Long Island Iced was no Lipton, which appears always in labeled safety. It was tainted with something which would render me thoughtless, I knew, but still I could not fathom blaming the alcohol for not remembering how to play my favorite song on that piano that day. Being “hungover” was truly a foreign thing to me, and it seemed rude to blame only one-and-a-half drinks. *Keep drinking, keep drinking*, he encouraged, like a racecar driver’s second hand. Chocolate alcohol was “chocolate milk” to him, and my consciousness was an afterthought. Going to *noraebang* (singing rooms) in Korea had always been our shared wish, but as it existed then, it appeared he had hoped for a little too much. This was no intimate concert hall for two to sing but a place reserved for one. For him. For him to take me, a place to *fuck me*. I did not know a joke turned playful wrestling would convince him I *desired* him. With his two hands over mine, unmoving, I lost my smile and my strength. My body resigned and refused to work for me any longer. In that startling and unexpected moment, as his smile turned into a lustful line, I did not know who I was. All I knew was that this strength, this strength he must have learned from mandatory training in Korea, was used against me. In that moment, I became an enemy. Korean police would never believe me when one of their own men was involved in *this*. My own country would never believe me. They created a public shame and statute to guarantee this. Especially when what seemed to be an *American slut*, dressed in a *short THIS* and a *short THAT* was involved. *I was culpable*. I dressed in the *WAY* that was asking for *it*. Knowing how each singing room was insulated, I knew no one would hear my truth even if I screamed it. Pleading *no...no...no* again and again did not trouble him, but probably excited him as he attempted to kiss me over, and over, and over again. Until...until my ‘no’ and resistance somehow became *enough*. I was confused, and he was pissed. In what I can

My experience, their plotline.

now register as shock, I became an unknowable *thing*. A thing that cared for him so much in comparison that I wanted to cheer him up for what seemed like *my* betrayal, a thing that could be easily discarded in two words, “*Just go.*” I remember the coldness in that voice, like the unforgettable ice-cold draw of saline injected into my blood every, single, time, before being fed chemotherapy only six years before. A coldness that insulated all the affectionate and terrible memories of acquaintance. *Still*, it chills me. Makes my body quiver, as I concede the truth: that I shared in a piece of the humanity in him that was *beautiful*. There I was, on the steps of my temporary home, left a victim of another cancer. A cancer that would give me no remnants of PICC lines, but invisible scars that would offer the lack of proof sexual abusers love to revisit. An abuse story devoid of nuances. Satirized, made to be materialized and masturbated to by the media. My experience, their *plotline*, and those like mine aired for all like some show-and-tell dry-clean: a dirty thing always redressed in perverted excitement.

Here I am, three years later and I wonder if I’ll ever find that original goodness in the cracks of all the distortions. Who will she be, this girl I call me? When I look in the solidified memory of my aged humanity, will I see the thing I want to be or contortions of all three: a victim, a survivor, a girl eventually free? Oh, that is the girl I want my future daughter to look at with glee.



I AM WHO I AM

Valerie Parrish
Collage

TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE OF THE HEART

By Cory Blystone

Bonnie Tyler and I have more in common than I care to admit. We both aspire to love, know rejection of love, and have closed our hearts to love. Eclipsed. My husband will be the first to admit how closed-off I really am, no matter how we act around friends and family, sometimes even strangers if the mood strikes us to provoke jealousy. Lately it's been difficult to recharge myself, as if I am nothing more than a solar-powered object whose batteries have been drained useless by being kept in the dark for far too long. Eclipsed. Solar eclipsed.



August 21st, 2017. Anticipation hovered over us like a wet blanket as we all stared through approved eyewear at the rapidly eclipsing sun. I faked my smile during selfies that flooded my Instagram and Facebook with hearts and likes, tried to act excited as the sun slivered away, cowering behind the moon. I know that feel. I am one with the sun in this moment.

Then totality hit.

The wet blanket flew off. The fakeness disappeared. The crowd of family and friends and friends of family all stared in awe at the sight without those ophthalmologist-approved bulk Amazon.com-purchased paper and plastic glasses we'd needed seconds before, even the kid whose younger brother decided croquet is a violent head-bashing game while blood streamed out his right nostril, mottling the green grass and making it Christmas in August. I later told him he's not alone in asshole younger brothers as I relayed the time mine decided to fling a flaming marshmallow into my eye while camping. I hated my brother for longer than

their massive hits slapped me in the face of my repressed elementary school rejection factory

I can remember after that, closing off any love I may have once felt. Eclipsing my heart until one day when totality ended and that tiny sliver of light overtook the sky once again.

But the new moon still eclipsed my sun.



Duran Duran entered my life at two distinct points, and both times I had blissfully ignorantly already heard and loved their music. Child brains. While “Girls on Film” certainly was catchy, “Save a Prayer”, “Rio”, and “Hungry Like a Wolf” had my heart without me even realizing it. By the time I was six going on seven, another of their massive hits slapped me in the face of my repressed elementary school rejection factory. I can’t remember how many times I wrote down Tommy’s name with hearts and butterflies and swirly Qs, but I remember carefully tossing them all in the trash as soon as I got home so my kindergarten and first grade teachers wouldn’t catch my sin-filled lustworthy pre-teen objectification notes expressing my total infatuation with the brown-eyed boy with a smile to melt even the mythical ice queen’s heart. But just when I thought my nonexistent love life might be that way forever, and yes, I really was that dramatic of a six-year-old, and admittedly more so as a forty-year-old, “New Moon on Monday” crashed into my ears via my mother’s tinny car speakers begging for an upgrade we couldn’t afford. I’m pretty sure I didn’t understand all the lyrics, but the song sounded hopeful that barriers keeping us apart would eventually break down. After all, new moons bring new beginnings. But something else was stirring in my darkened heart I was terrified to let out: hope. Hope springs anew. “New Moon on Monday” may not have been as big a hit as some of its predecessors or successors, but it hit me when I needed it most.

leave the past where it’s at

I may not have had the guts to just come out and profess my love for Tommy when I was six, but when I was sixteen and “Ordinary World” became my mantra, telling me to leave the past where it’s at, telling me to find my way, and most of all, survive, I knew I had to do something, anything, or I was going to explode or implode. Either way there would be ploding. After years of self-denial and doubt and angst

my past dictates my future

and hating myself for not being ordinary, a song called “Ordinary World” was telling me I’m not alone. Maybe I could stop cutting myself every time I jerked off thinking about a guy. Maybe I could stop hating myself for something I had no control over. Maybe if I stopped being a chickenshit and told Tommy or any of the dozen or so Tommys I’d closetly thought I loved, though in reality I only had an unhealthy dose of repressed lust for, that I’m gay and ask if they’re gay and maybe we could be gay together or something horribly poetic like that, my life may have turned out differently. Tommy answered my question before I could even ask as I spotted him sloppily making out beneath the gym bleachers with a girl I’d seen a bazillion times but never could remember her name, her hand and mouth where I wanted mine to be. And so I hid away, locking my heart back inside the coffin where it belonged. It wasn’t long before I was back to cutting myself every time I masturbated to his face. It also wasn’t long before Soundgarden’s “Black Hole Sun” overtook my being, eclipsing my heart as I sang about Jesus on Sundays.

Perhaps if I’d only been honest with myself then I might have become a different person. But what about me now? These choices led to me being me and if I take that away, aren’t I killing the *now me* in favor of a *naïve me* from the past? My heart is full of regret and hate rather than contentment and love. No matter how much I wish for it to change, my past dictates my future. If only I could recall those hopeful words “I light my torch and wave it for the new moon on Monday” or “I won’t cry for yesterday” when I need it most, but alas, my adult brain fails me miserably. Blackened like that black hole sun that has sucked away my life in favor of an empty shell of nothingness. Perhaps I’m being too harsh. Perhaps I have to push my own damn way out of the shadows of other people’s expectations.

Perhaps I could be the torch and light the way.

But first I had to let the darkness pass.

If I completely close myself off to love, then I’ll never get hurt again



Taking off my protective eyewear to view the moon blacking out the sun, completely surrounded by the corona flaring like an angel’s halo, I began to feel my heart’s own eclipsing begging to let the sun back in. But it’s been so long and I’ve been such a complete dick to so many people in my life that I am still in awe most have remained a part of it. Even my husband has wavered on our marriage and if it should continue, to the point of telling me he

wants a divorce if I refuse to work on it. Part of me felt relieved. Maybe that was the answer to my problems. If I completely close myself off to love, then I'll never get hurt again. But losing the man who's been a huge part of my life longer than he hasn't been in my life was scarier than I ever imagined once the threat of its reality hit. But during that brief moment, barely a minute and a half during the eclipse's totality from where I stood in Fruitland, Idaho, I sensed the sun begging to shine again. After all, this was his time, and the normally jealous moon was stealing all the glory, making a mockery of the sun despite her comparatively diminutive stature. Blacker than black. Blacker than Chris Cornell could ever imagine when he wrote "Black Hole Sun." So black it was as if nothing was there at all, even though I knew the truth. But dancing around that black hole in the sky were strands of delicate white lace. It was as if the sun was saying, "You may not see me, but by God you will see the impressions of me dancing around the moon." And then the sun broke through, quickly overtaking the moon's power and flooding the valley with a vibrant explosion of light I could only equate to pure and unconditional love, even though it felt eerily artificial and natural all at once. I could feel my batteries trying to recharge in this natural fluorescent light, trying to ignite the light inside my heart. If the sun can find a way to break through the darkness that overtook him suddenly even if all the warning signs were there, could I do it too? Should I? One look at my husband who looks right back at me, both of us smiling and not faking it for appearances, I realize for the first time in a long time I don't have a choice. I have to try. My second cousin Stella blasting Bonnie Tyler through her iPhone set inside a glass to amplify the speakers may have prompted this elation.

I really have to do more than try since this total eclipse of my heart is breaking through during a new moon on Monday. The warning signs are here. A wise old being once said, "Do or do not. There is no try." Perhaps I should take that to my uneclipsing heart, carrying those words like a backpack during a swamp romp.





WALLS

Nathanael Rawson
Digital Photograph



QUIET IS THE COVETED

Erin Carlie

Digital Photograph

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

By Samuel Gallentine

“I want you inside me,” I moaned in a hushed tone, the cool air radiating against my skin. Greg’s strawberry yogurt called to me from the break room fridge like some kind of dairy siren beckoning a lactose intolerant man to his wreck upon its ocean of flavors. The sticky note, with Greg’s name scrawled upon it in a faint blue ink, acting as a reminder that the luscious strawberries were a forbidden fruit to my sinner’s tongue.

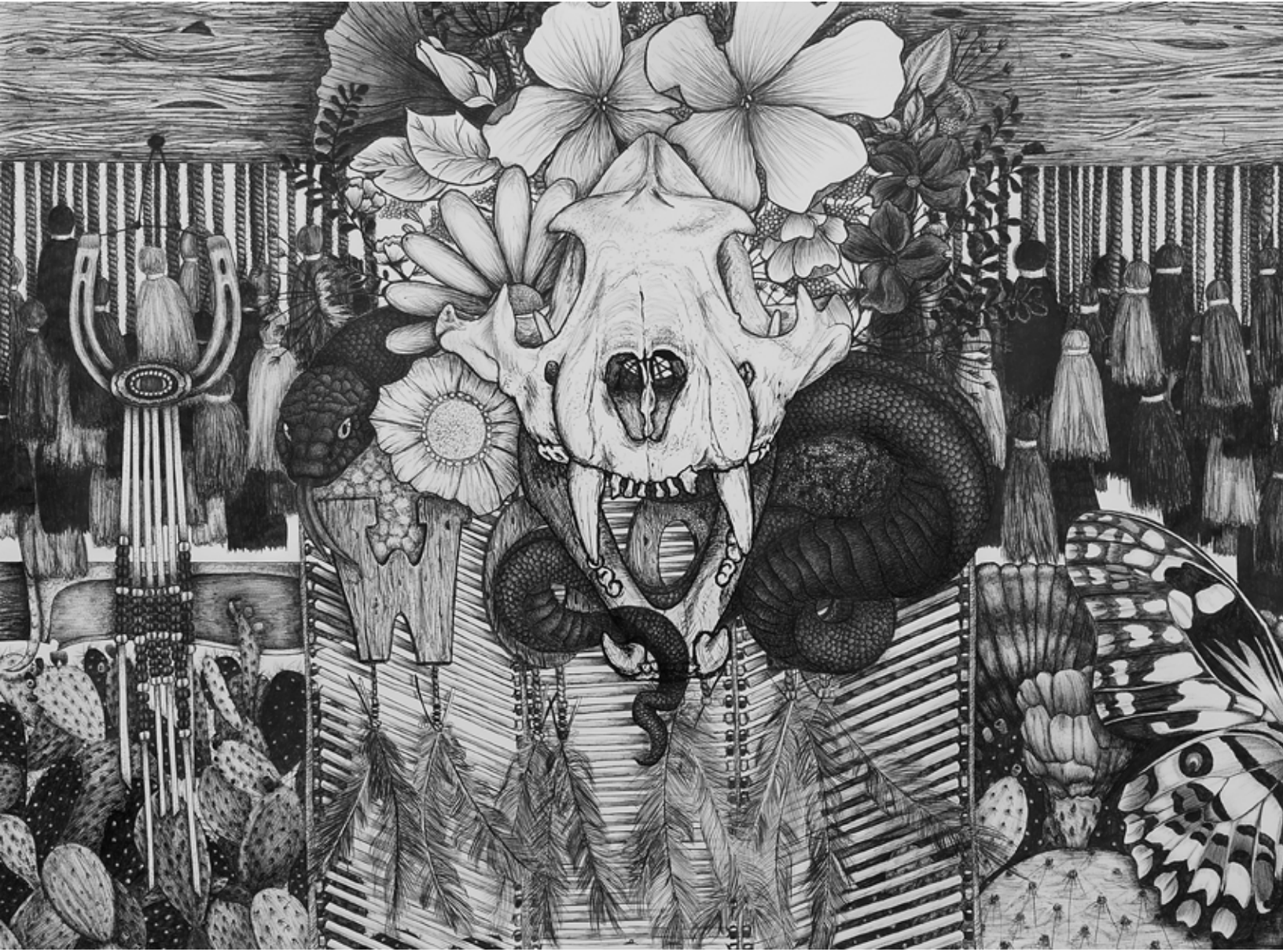
Yet, is forbidden fruit not the sweetest fruit of all? The question rang in my head as my taste buds cried out for stimulation. Peeling off the yogurt lid, I knew that what I was doing was wrong, evil even, but Greg was no angel. I partook greedily in the contents of the yogurt container, the bittersweet taste of gluttony on my tongue.

“Are you eating my yogurt, Randy?” My feathers bristled at the sound of his voice. Greg’s face was contorted into the face of one facing deep emotional suffering. His wings, which usually elicited disdain from me, for mine were a perfect crisp white, while his were the withered, featherless, stubs of a castoff, now filled me with a sense of foreboding.

I had stolen. I had acted below my stature, and worst of all, I had been caught doing it.

Like snow being shaken from the branches of a tree, my perfect white feathers descended, aided by gravity, to the cold hard floor, as did I, upon my hands and knees, as my now barren wings twisted into nothing more than malformed stubs protruding from either side of my spine. My wings had been, in an instance of misery, like a flower shedding its petals before shriveling up in death.

“Was it worth it?” With a thud, Greg threw an ice pack at my feet and walked away.



THAT ONE WESTERN DRAWING

Valerie Parrish

Ink on Paper

LAMENTATIONS OF SORROW

By Megan Peaker

Dear You,

Words cannot express the sorrow I feel at your misfortune. The inevitability of truth is forever a stain on our relationship, a stain from which not even the strongest bleach can restore its once vivid luster. Your eyes sparkle with an intensity that melts the hearts of men and your golden hair reflects the rays of the sun with such a passion as unseen even in the heart of nature. Those that dare approach you all fall sway to your magnetic charms, drawn in by the melodic tones of your laughter, which, like the flu, is contagious and spreads easily among the crowds. You are beautiful. You are perfection. You are everything wonderful in this world.

Well, almost. You are not me. While it is true that your eyes sparkle, their sparkle is nowhere near the quality of sparkle I possess. If your eyes spark, mine are alive with a full flame. This fills me with sadness, for you can never be me. Yes, that stain is there. That ugly truth as I see you striving to be just like me. Your trials and tribulations are a mark attesting to my greatness, and for your struggles I thank you. My heart is filled with hope that one day you too can achieve the perfection you so vainly desire. I can help.

Again, I shall express my remorse wholeheartedly. You are not me. Your golden hair is but a testament to my lingering desire to make things right between us. Allow me to purchase some conditioner to repair our relationship and the damage caused by the sun's rays. Just a little bit goes a long way.

I know that it's hard to not be me but I have hope that someday you will no longer be so sickly. Doctors and scientists work tirelessly to create cures for diseases every single day. Like the flu, someday your laughter will no longer infect crowds and you can walk around in

peace, healthy again. Make sure to take your vitamins because a healthy body is the key to a healthy life. I recommend a multivitamin, after all, I take one every day and I have never infected anyone. Please understand that I care. The first bottle is on me. I need you to know how far I am willing to go to correct the mistakes made between us.

How I wish to see you again! Tears fall whenever I pass by you and you look down upon me as if I am lesser. I know that you are not me but fear not, I am not going to give up. I hope you appreciate the steps I am willing to take to fix the wrongs between us. Together, we can concoct a bleach potent enough to remove our stain. I look forward to the day that you and I reunite, our hearts together as one.

Forever yours,

Me



THE MANIFESTATION OF MAN'S MALICE

By Betsy Hanrahan

The bite of a sandy ankle
begged the question:

If self-entitlement could be mocked up to:
bigger, faster, stronger

or if (by simple calculations)
the flea had been here longer

But, had man not conquered the planet and
perfectly executed self-determination

(in spite of being in
the form of worldly extermination)?

Here was man's expanse:
greed and loathing,
which showed
no glimmer of hope
and no remorse

for those who came before
who forged, fought, and fumbled.
Instead, bravely held what man

himself created:
Hands up
Foot down.

It was

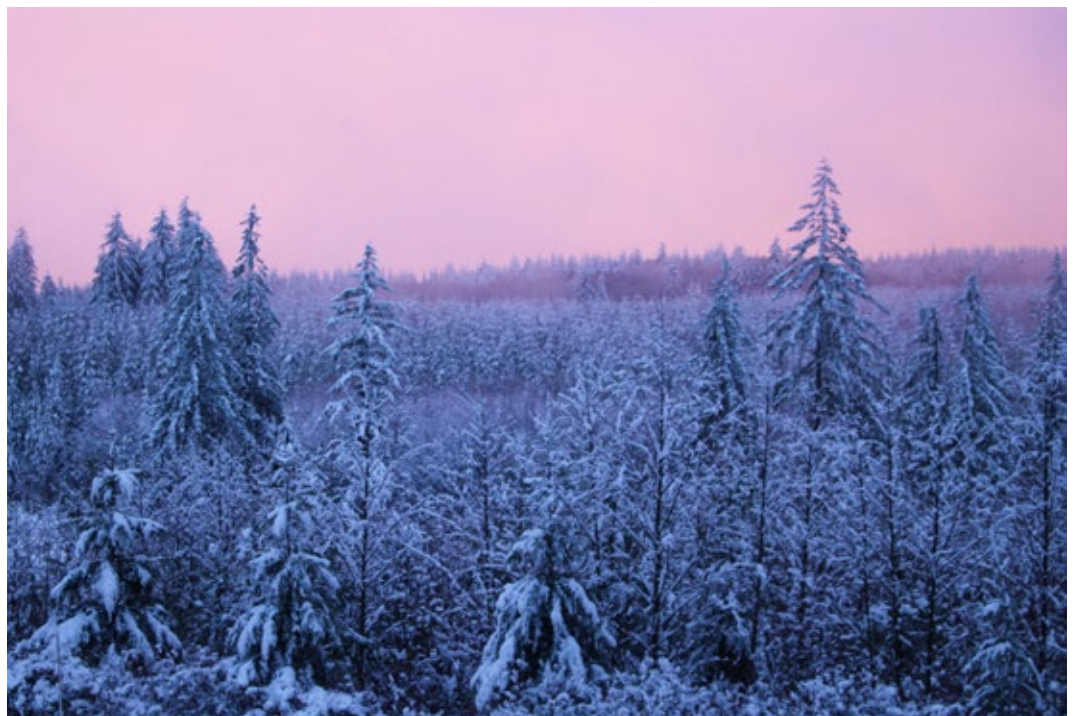
and always would be:

the death of a flea.



MOON KISSED

Alea Eide
*Digitally Altered
Photograph*



WINTERTIME AT DUSK

Grace Walton
Digital Photograph



PORTLAND, OR

Haley Elmer

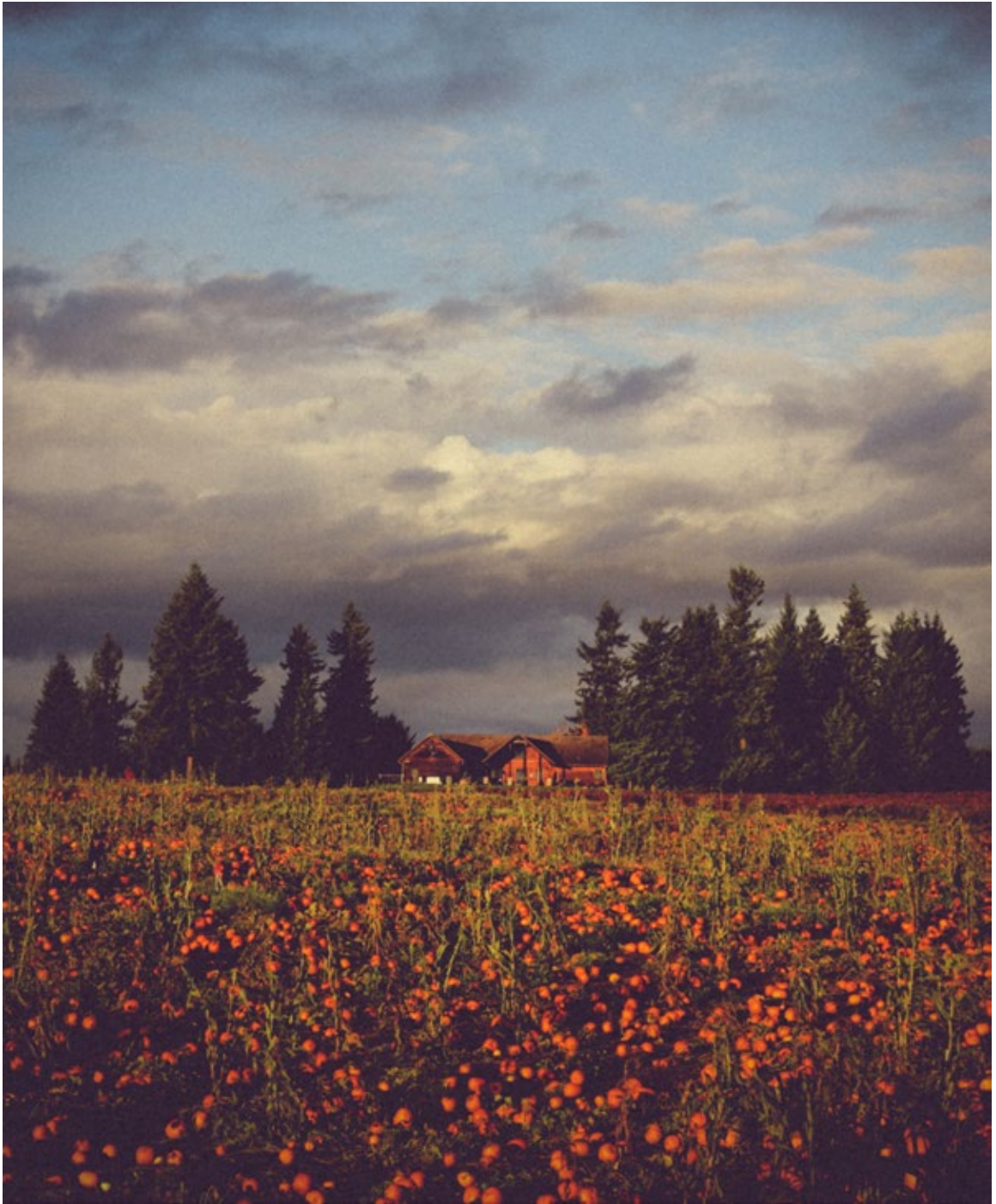
Digital Photograph



CRACKLING FIRE

Faun Scurlock

Digital Photograph



WONDERLAND

Michael Tran

Digital Photograph

NOT BLOOD

By Skylar Lampman

The rivers in your body that pulse with adrenaline, like worms under flesh throbbing with tiny heart beats. The pulse is rushing, flowing begging for me to dive in. To splash around and bathe myself deep in its stream.

Your wet hair, dripping crimson oil paint that shines like rubies. They're at the bottom of a treasure chest that waits to be found. The lighting fluorescent as if we're outside all the blackened windows. The softness of the follicles between my fingers, the long strands glistening in our artificial sunlight.

Matching your lips like the metallic lick of nickel that I long to taste. It's like a fountain or a hidden waterfall filled with minerals that might quench my thirst. Waiting to be bottled up and savored forever.

My knife becomes a pen. The ink marks temporary scars that soak into your skin and stains my hands. It dries up into crusty plates on your Earthly body that I want to explore.

Your hand, has traces of roads blending blues and greens faded in your arm. It's a map to an underground pipeline of streaming rusty fluid.

Raindrops splatter within our confined space, they start to look like stars from a negative strip of film. Needing to be poured into a wine glass so the vibrant scarlet is captured properly. Even though a picture could not do it justice.

It's a spontaneous adventure we take together, the outcome of warm silky fluid flowing like bed sheets. The motion is soothing and calming, a chaotic mess of lust. Sending chills down your spineless back, and frozen body.

Contrasting against your inner peel completion of a marble statue. Carved perfectly embraced by pink pillows all around that cradle the liquid sweater inside out, knitted from within bones.

It gushes out of your heart and boils in my palms until it runs cold and the puddle starts to drain. I can't give it back to you so I keep it, like a secret.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

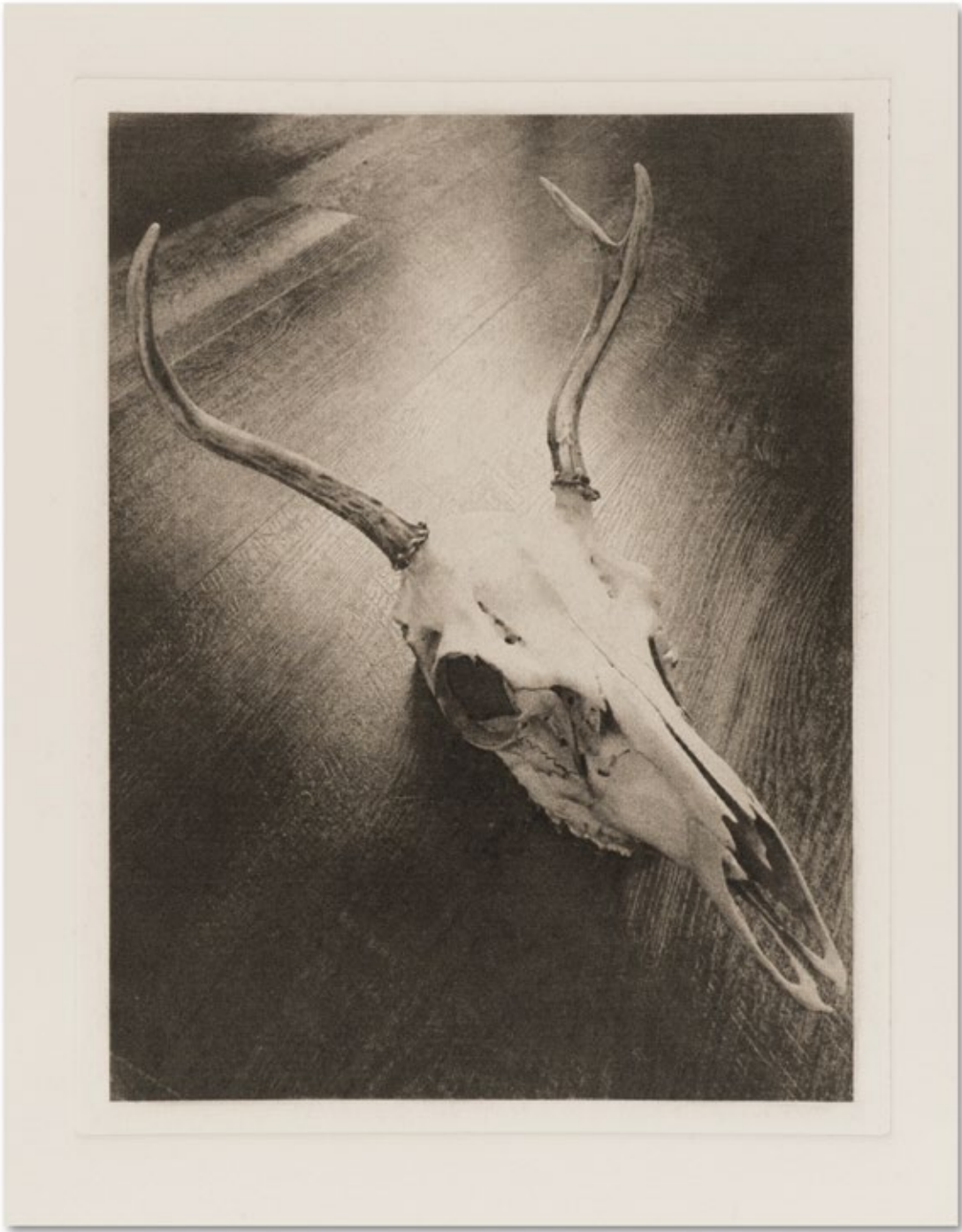
By Samuel Gallentine

In the last moments of my dog's life,
Between long bubbling breaths,
Harsh staccato waves left
Ocean foam, issuing from his mouth.

In the last moments of my dog's life
His fur had the same tar black gleam,
The same silk feel,
But his big dumb tail didn't wag
When his legs stiffened,
Back arching like a bow,
As urine hissed out onto the stained blue rug.

In the last moments of my dog's life
His heart hammered against
His chest, at strange intervals,
Until the up and down motion
Of breath bled from his lungs
For the last time.

On the last day of my dog's life I
Buried him in the backyard
And then blew out my candles.



SKULL BLISS

Kaitlyn Slorey
Photogravure



SUNDAY

Maggie Handran
Relief Print

ALOIS

By Elsa Gomez



And we agreed
Like all the birds in a single migratory pattern, we agreed



Dear Alois,

everyone keeps asking for you
Zoda is slithering in her sleep. I think she is having nightmares

I have thought that the language of cats was nonlinear too
or maybe every language but our own is non-linear, like fractals and physics

all languages I don't understand

this man came into my work today and said marriages have a way of ruining families
he was mad you left, or he was mad at my being alone

I used to be mad at my being alone, too

Alois, you never lived but you never leave me.
You lived in me, unborn and void from my own mothers mind
You live in me now as your father Alois, he was also always void
but in his non existence I said, "I am glad. I am glad because then you can live forever"



Your dad never lived
He was born of himself in immaculate conception
He did not come from god's dirt or Adam's rib
He came of himself

Alois, you came from me

From my pain
Your brown eyes, brown hair, brown skin
All from me

In your expression of you
In your alleles that never were expressed
You'll find me, wishing I could understand you

Alois, you came from me

Your pain, your hurt
Your father
It was all mine



To Alois

You are my not dead and never-born child in the ether
You
You, who awoke me to the pain and suffering in my heart
by never piercing the physical world
Because you never made it to the outside, flesh and bone of your own
But were formed from my rib, like Adam's Eve, and my dirt, like god's Adam
You came to me one night
When I was open to you

Inside my cells, inside my mitochondria
I must have been ready to be a part of you

The cells I would have gave you
that came from my mother and came from her mother
My grandmother, your grandmother who never met you

Your face, Alois, I could recognize
But I can't ask you to show it to me now
Your face, Alois, I don't know it
I miss the rays around your iris
the rays that point to your soul and tell me where to you find you



Alois

I'm glad you are an angel and will never know human pain

sometimes Alois, someone will sing you all of gods songs

your dad is a singer Alois
we have all come from the same womb, but we seem to forget
we came from the same place as you did, but somehow you'll never forget

please don't hate me, because I don't grieve for you
You can't understand my human pain.
My tears and why I cry, or at least that's what I tell myself
I cry because I know you bore gifts.
The myrrh and frankincense that your
spirit could have brought me

or did bring me, Alois
Is it wrong to wish you were alive?

Your father is a magician, Alois
but don't look too closely

Maybe you know why it is everyone is so obsessed with the future, Alois.



PORTRAIT IN GRAPHITE

Cecelia Martin
Graphite on Paper

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT I KNOW WHO YOU WERE

By Skylar Lampman

I don't know who you are, but I knew who you were.

R.D.J

Like the mist of a waterfall, falling and falling you chose me, sprinkling my cheeks.

Deadly like the drop that you keep dwindling, crumbling, because you are broken, shattered.

I was drenched from the gaze of your fountain eyes and I let you in.

You could not go back. Sinking into that bath, sleeping just to wake up trying to pull yourself together and you chose to hurt me instead of yourself.

I was pure before my lips drank your venom mistaken for water. You broke me in just to wreck my innocence.

I thought emotions could only be felt, not abused.

Are you still that chaotic force? Can you remind me of how it feels to be a small drop compared to your beautiful waterfall?

I tried to feel beneath the surface, only to be grazed from your rough edges that are hidden behind your barricade of liquid deceptions.

Did you enjoy putting me down? Did you pray that I would drown?

The tears you created blinded me.

What a curse it must be to feel the need to collect useless pebbles just to throw them against the walls of your world.

It's always about you. It'll always be about you.

I'm sorry for the weakness you have surrendered to; all you'll ever do is fall apart and drag people in to sink beside you.

That must be why you are such an asshole.

D.B.

Do people really change? Or do they just become more like themselves?

Remember when I told you I was struggling and strained our relationship and you ripped the thread of our long distance connection.

I remember the naked clothes next your bed, while you were scolding me up and down telling me I needed to change the parts of me that didn't fit your mold.

I tried to compromise a deal that couldn't be negotiated.

I just wanted you to listen. The echoes couldn't reach because our mountain had already crumbled. I told you I wanted to build it back up, I handed you bricks of hope and you threw them into the void.

You told me I had changed.

I showed you scars on my body and you didn't hesitate to pull them apart at the seams. And you didn't even offer to fix the ones you tore. Drove a knife deep into my fingertips. Blades ascended from the text you sent that ended our conversations.

Two weeks of suffering without you and you were already with someone new.

Two weeks is the time it took you to become someone new.

The person you became was not the person I climbed to the top with. The person you became soared without me. Left me stranded. I called out for you my voice was never received because you deleted my messages.

I changed?

I did change. And I couldn't have done it with you.

S.F.

I must not lie to myself. I must not run from the truth that she chased out of me.

We cried when the worst came down upon us. We laid in her bed, we breathed.

She opened the door to a forbidden garden, where the trees shaped like bodies, and flowers could run wild in fields along side us. The sound of her voice made the grass on my legs and arms stand. The sunbeam reflections blossomed in the ponds and we were trembled for what felt like an everlasting night.

She was a lightning bolt that struck in the strangest of times, and it left a mark not only on my skin but my heart.

She wasn't mature enough, and she always kept secrets. The key was under her tongue in her mouth, as if she'd open for anyone but me.

I thought I knew attraction, that I knew my limits. She destroyed them all when she kissed me. Her corruption transformed into a creation that beamed in moonlight.

It was liberating to feel a sensation that I didn't know existed. To live through lies that held such valid truths.

The answers I was seeking didn't matter because she became my solution.

Until she touched the lips of someone else, when she still was kissing me.

Could I even be mad?

She was the one who took me to a pond and I discovered a rainbow.

She took our bond away, but I keep what's left of it locked inside of my identity.

But there are still pieces lying on her bed.

A drunken voicemail I left gave me a regret so deep it seeped into veins that used to pump at the thought of her existence. Now I just bleed.

She never called back. I hope she never does.

I must not lie.

I hope she does.

A.O.

I could cry gold tears all night, my lungs haven't rested, and since I met you they've transformed into a cold chrome.

You swept the dust off of your heart and opened it up to me. I leaped in checked the gears the drove your veins. The clocks kept ticking and we lost track of intervals between the clicks.

I should've kissed you longer.

You talked about art as if you didn't realize that you were already a masterpiece. And when I asked you about your dark pastels in your canvas, you'd shy away. Yet you never asked about me.

There is an emptiness that lurks inside my now hollow chest.

It's deadly, addictive on the brain and the heart. The veins connect and pulsate the same way when we'd hold hands in your car, you drove to the places I wanted to go, but you never stopped to ask me why.

You never answered me when I asked you why.

You said things, I said things, but nothing really happened. The hands never stopped turning. If only they stood still I could still be still next to you.

Yet here I am lost in thought of when we were tangled between those curved lines.

You told me your favorite color was blood red, and I couldn't stop imagining the taste of your skin, the flesh you used for your armor, you locked the lock that opened your beating wound and told me you were not interested.

Could've fooled me.

It still hurts even though it's been a few months.

I've lost my ability to see past anyone that isn't you. No imaginary affair could replace you, because you're still real and what we have is real.

It cuts deep and it stings because you never apologized for what you've done.

You picked someone else and you didn't even tell me.

Every so often I fidget with my hair that you admired so well and wonder why I wasn't enough, because we both know we were shaped for one another. You told me so when you jokingly asked me to marry you. You'll never know I said yes.

If you ever heard the echoes of the strained voices in my brain, you'd probably run as fast as you already did.

The scenario runs through my skull of when I'll see you again. I've rehearsed to tell you that I'm happy for you and how fortunate she is.

It is true in a twisted sense that your happiness brings me happiness.

You'll never know what you missed out on, and I'll probably never have the daringness to tell you.

Despite the fact that I still cry gold tears that weigh me down to places I didn't know could be so nether.

All that remains when our shadows fade from my memory is the inner inquisition of how you could be so stupid.

ALLEGORY OF THE SHOWER

By Abbie Bambilla

All this time you knew me
As a blurry figure behind shower glass
I was existing
But not living
It was then that I stepped out to you
Naked and vulnerable
Dripping in shame
Soaked in anxiety
Afraid that hate would break my bones
That surely wrath would scorch my skin
As if I was a traitor for being myself
That I belonged behind the distorted glass
But hopeful you might not feel that way
With both feet on the floor

I locked eyes with you
Baring my very soul to your gaze
It felt as if the world stopped turning
As all of humanity paused to watch
You, The Shower, and my Truest Self
Seconds turned into eternity
As I awaited the fate of my existence
Finally you spoke
I have always loved you
I love you still
I love who you are
And I always will
The world of fear I was once lived in
Began to fall away



SOLUTION

Erin Carlie
Ceramic



BABY KISSES
Sue Phelps
Digital Photograph

WEIGHT

By Evelyn Steveson

I carry the weight of it, this thing unseen.
The weight of iron shackles, pulling me to the ground.
I drag this weight, I pull, I struggle,
I stand up straight pretending the shackles don't exist, yet I can still feel them.
So heavy.
The weight of them forever indented into my skin,
my blood, my heart and my soul.
The dirt and muck of the it,
leave a smudge on my heart that can never be washed away.
Painful scrubbing, still a stain.
I can see the bleeding worn skin pulling away from my wrists,
the shackles are heavy and hard.
The blood that drops and splatters on the ground are my form of footprints
It burns, stings, skin worn and raw,
bloodstained tears make streams and pools upon my face.
The burning in my arms,
like fire used to keep a steam train in toward motion,
fuels the power to carry these irons.
Sometimes I want someone to carry them for me, but then what would I be.
This ghosts of someone I knew,
bloody, dirty, suffering, crying, shamed, a ghost whose shape has been deformed

twisted from the shackles they've carried for so long, it's too much a part of me.

I didn't ask for the shackles,
this cold heavy iron was forced on my body, like the wind moves a leaf,
swift and strong without question.

Now this blood, pain, scars, and weight is forever a part of my steps through life.

Irons, a heavy weight to bare, but mine.

It's my blood that stains my skin, my tears that wet my face,
my wounds that dig so deep my breath sometimes can't escape from my mouth
and I struggle.

My bleeding wounded body reaching for relief.

My wounds sting, burn, bleed and pus, something you can only ignore for so long.

Wounds unhealed can fester and green into disaster. How do you ask for a key to
freedom

knowing the weight these shackles bare.

They can't be discarded, only shared.

My legs are tough, strong, and dirty.

My ankles are forever scarred by the shackles there.

A strong red ring, where they have rubbed to the bone,
the bleeding, pain, and dirt are only inside now.

With every step I can feel the weight of them, pulling my legs down.

My legs rooted on the ground above telling me I'm stronger still.

The shackles a constant reminder of the pain hidden below,
the constant struggle for good to overcome.

The iron of the shackles apart of my DNA,
drifting through my blood, driving me insane.

Metal flecks swimming through my system, infecting every part of me.

These iron shackles are so heavy, adding stress to the mundane.

My legs sometimes shake from the weight, as the shackles shift with something new my
way.

The movement can cause a new cut or burn as the heavy metal iron shackle reminds me
of what I carry.

A forceful burn, nauseated, dizzying, pound of a hammer into the bracket,
forever clamping the shackles to my soul.

The fluid of disease and heartache forms around my heart,
causing a dull pain only one with irons can feel.

Every beat becomes painful,
so much easier to pretend these shackles don't exist.

I stand tall and proud, too painful to heal.

A fleck of doubt, easily causes my fake reality to glitch and flicker,
looking around I see the blood I'm spilling, while blinding myself
with the desire to be normal.

I can see the realness settling in, the new shackles I help build.
Shackles not build of iron, or painful metal, but shackles all the same.

While not sharing what I carry, my struggle to carry it, causes pain.

I was running through a field of wildflowers, hair dancing in the wind,
arms open wide, smile on my face.

Then suddenly the sun turned dark and blood red, the flowers turned to dust,
shackles were placed on my wrists and ankles, the ground a rocky wasteland.

The wind had turned to a fiery breath of pain and suffering,
reaching every region of my body.

The shackles forcing me to crumble to the ground,
to break,
to fall,
to ache,

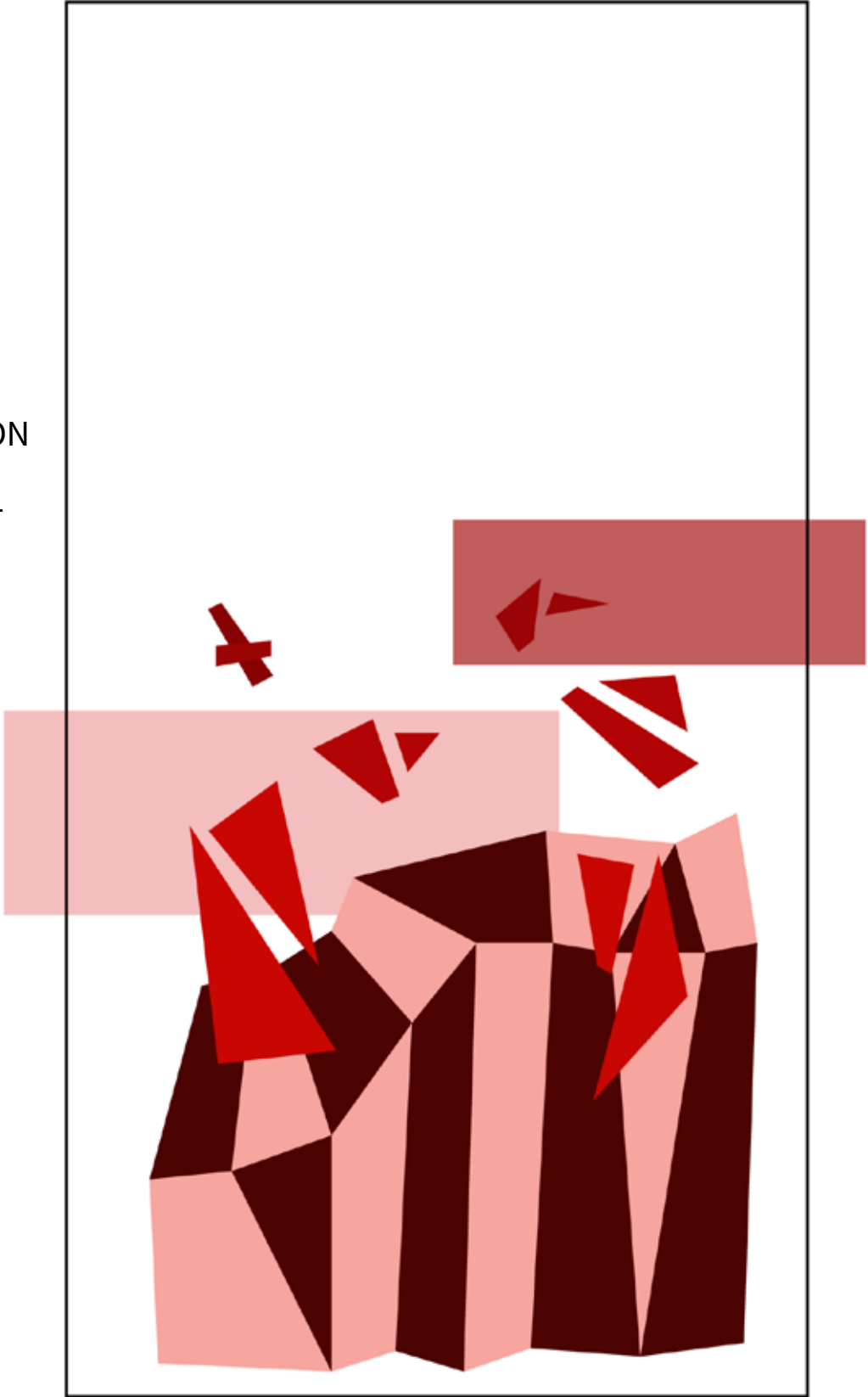


UN DIBATTITO AMICHEVOLE

Eduardo Ramos
Digital Photograph

EXPLOITATION
OF
SIGNIFICANT
FORM

Betsy Hanrahan
Digital Illustration







► **Travel Cafe 3rd Place**

ICY BEACH

Dale T. Strouse

Digital Photograph



BISON

Julia Waters
Ink on Paper

MY FLATLAND'S BREEZE

By N.A. Doss

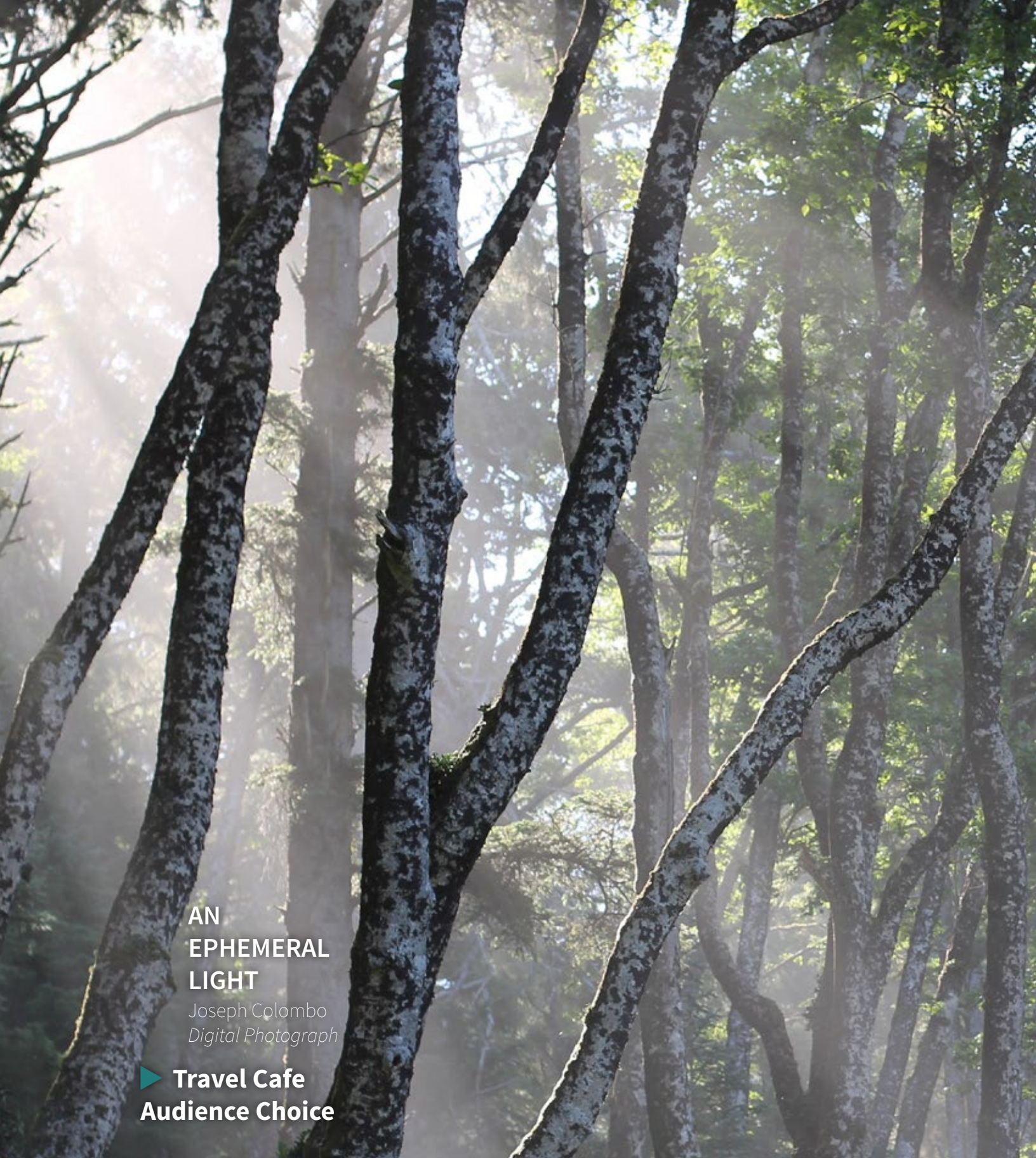
I miss it,
That dusty breeze
That swallows up both
Man and car
And living things.
It comes in from the strawberry fields.
It makes them turn eyes down
And follow their feet.
I miss it.
The breath of life like ash from a fire
But finer.
Wash me
And I will be the same.
Wash me
And I will be as I was before I stepped out
Into the dusty breeze.
Write of the best laid plans.
Write of wrath and eden.
They're here
Under the silken dressing
Brought by the dusty breeze.



A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

Antonio del Fierro
Digital Photograph





AN
EPHEMERAL
LIGHT

Joseph Colombo
Digital Photograph

► **Travel Cafe**
Audience Choice



THE INSIDE ROOM

By Emily Lozier

The dusky lights that sheath the room
Are like dull opiate under the silky moon.

The peaceful place is unpolluted by
The feeble face of the Public Eye.

Inside dazzling walls with colors bright
My Subconscious muses true each night.

Welcome to my Inside Room
Where amaranthine Thoughts can finally bloom.

In place of furnishings, my Passions crystallize
And palpable Dreams can, alone, be realized.

But there is no window or door
And outside Reality sprawls like a colossal War.



WILD

Grace Walton

Digital Photograph



REFLECTING
ON
REFRACTIONS

McKenzie Wells
Digital Photograph

YEOUIDO

By Jordin Lee

His town was made
for the Professionals, the Worker-Bees
Who recycle their dreams
to marry reality
The determined who travel from the cities in the sky,
from the capital,
to find capital materialized
The eyes who enable themselves to see
only prefigured prospects
and adorn themselves only
in miscellaneous pigment
like a pencil bag with an identity crisis:
Full of sharp shades, primaries and pastels
Focused on the Green
in smog-colored slacks, black
jackets reminiscent of truffle shavings and
cherry blossom-pink skirts
Living consummations of pop culture, they live
Unable and fighting thought,
unwilling and desiring something more, distraught
Stepping in scattered tempo with the timbre of this town
Where the He who lives
here determines to decorate
his day with
purest color possible:
the paint of the patters of his heart.

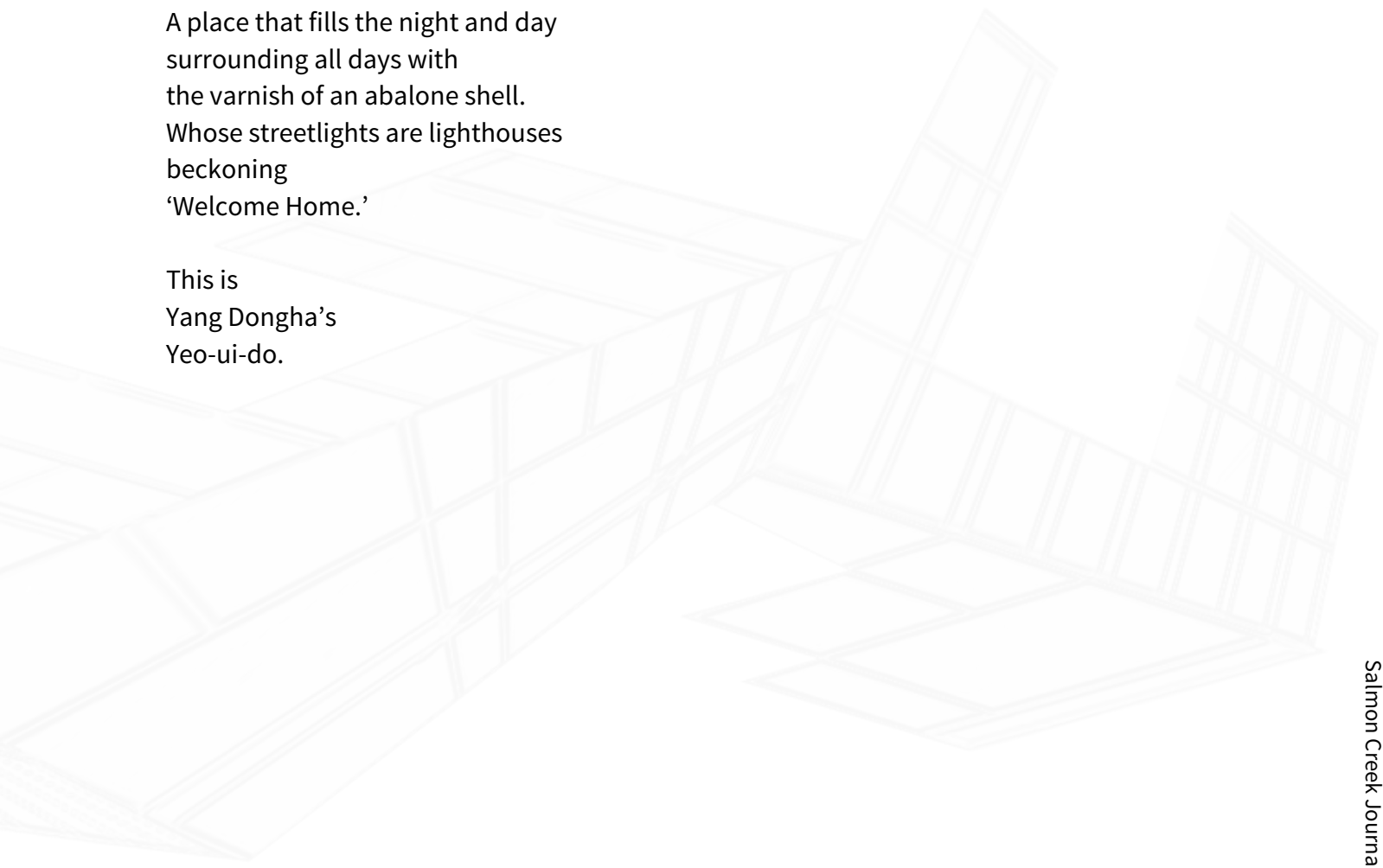
Hometown of off-white, tall,
secluded buildings
which shy away
in schoolgirl innocence:
seething in simplicity
His soul, reflected in it,
white as the gleam of gold

Sanctuary for solace that hyperventilates and wheezes
because of the quiet
whir of modern-day wagons, visions
of the past made reality

The peace that envelops this place breathes
like the exhaust of cars and buses:
with the gentle sigh of a birthday boy blowing out candles,
capturing life in candid courage:
Donut-glazed colors of toasted and dyed sesame seeds that skip
with tranquility towards different stops of productivity;
observing his 24-hour neighbor,
who continuously reserves food within himself
to satisfy the hunger of him and the insatiability
of the local economy
that eats
away at job prospects
and replaces
them with robotic roles
of the government.
A stagnant form itself
that becomes animated and lively,
as individuals drown and revive
their sorrows, discoveries, and excitements inside
its belly that contains
cheap, 99-cent happiness.

Space that is modest
but necessarily small in nature
like the quaintness of a diamond ring
against promised, devoted love for all days
With a mini marketplace
just around the contained corner
to shop daily desires.
An unknown work of art
that captures all construction, trees, coffee shops and answers
all inquiries to his splendor
in vivid, mesmeric iridescence.
A place that fills the night and day
surrounding all days with
the varnish of an abalone shell.
Whose streetlights are lighthouses
beckoning
'Welcome Home.'

This is
Yang Dongha's
Yeo-ui-do.



IMMERSION

Kaitlyn Slorey
Photogravure





GRAVITY

Taylor Jones

Digital Photograph



FIELDS

Jacob Bloomer
Digital Photograph

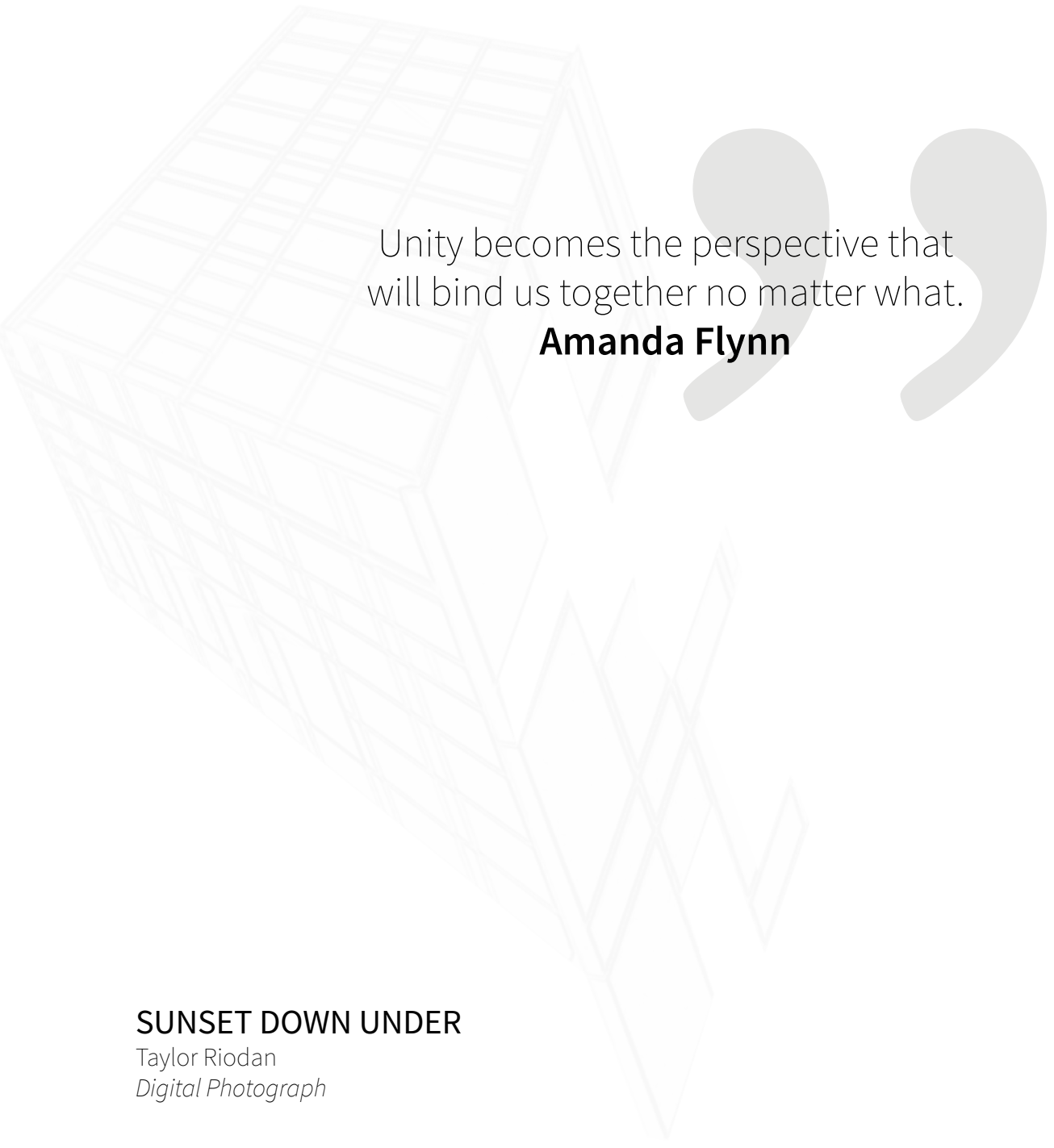


A JANUARY MORNING

Haley Elmer

Digital Photograph





Unity becomes the perspective that
will bind us together no matter what.

Amanda Flynn

SUNSET DOWN UNDER

Taylor Riodan
Digital Photograph

STAFF



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Editor-in-Chief

Favorite Piece: *Bobbled Harmony* by Richard Boneski



Amanda Flynn

Former Editor-in-Chief



Cory Blystone

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Richard Boneski

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COLOPHON

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