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Washington State University Vancouver

*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.

Free to all (one copy per reader)

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# LETS TALK SYNTHESIS

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Division, it seems, is the way of the modern world.

E-books are rising, so print must be falling. Cameras are in everyone's pockets, so the painters must be starving.

On the other hand, argues another voice: How can animation compete with the authenticity of a true performance? Aren't websites only dead lines of code?

This year, *Salmon Creek Journal* rejects these dichotomies.

The qualities of art and literature transcend the printed page.

Rather than reject the digital for the familiarity of the analog, or forego the analog for the novelty of the digital, it is this journal's goal to merge the two. To illuminate the convergence of nature, humanity, and technology through all manner of artistic expression.

In a word, we seek to achieve synthesis.



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*editor's choice marked yellow*

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# THANK YOU

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We would like to extend our gratitude to those who contributed their time and made this year's vision of *Salmon Creek Journal* possible. We would like to thank both the Office of Student Involvement and the Student Media Board for their continual support. Raul Moreno, this journal would not be possible without your encouragement. Your guidance was essential to the direction we moved the publication this year. Your love of art, literature, and publishing served as a model for our staff.

Brenda Alling and Kate Palermini, the spirit and marketing of this year's issue was inspired by your insightful suggestions. Nikki Hinshaw and Michelle McIlvoy, your enthusiasm, thoughtful feedback, and cheerful disposition empowered our team to do bigger and better things. Zeke Estes, in chairing the board this year, you elevated our standards as a team. Alexander Peru, Haley Elmer, and Linnea Englund, what better colleagues could we have in student media? Seriously, your counsel helped our team break new ground this year. Auz Burger, thank you for curating *The VanCougar's* regular spotlights on SCJ contributors. Victoria Moon, Travel Cafe's "timeless" success was due in large part to your patience, hard work, and devotion to celebrating our community's photography. Thank you!

Amanda Shannahan and the Student Diversity Center, thank you once again for partnering with SCJ in bringing Disability Awareness Month to campus. Your devotion to empowering students and transcending barriers enriches our community's dedication to inclusivity. Randy Boose, thank you for your assistance in planning "More than Meets the I" and connecting us with Bruce Burris and Oregon's ArtWorks. Bruce, thank you for championing the idea of tearing down misconceptions in the pursuit of creativity.

Thank you to the wonderful English, Creative Media and Digital Culture, and Fine Arts faculty who support the journal. Without the contributions of these departments and their attention to craft, this journal would be incomplete. Dale Strouse, your careful eye and technical generosity in helping us share fine art is greatly appreciated. Lastly, thanks to Steve Rigby and the printing staff in Pullman. Your support and hard work radiates from these pages. And to all who submitted new work this year: Keep creating, and **Go Van Cougs!**





# Emerging Stronger

Jennifer Ruthruff  
*Digital Photograph*







## Coffee: It Gives You Wings

Amanda Flynn

*Coffee Filters, Silver Acrylic Paint, Paper Flowers*



# Best Friend

Jennifer Barnes

*Prose*

It was one summer when we were eighth graders. We were tent camping on my grandparents' property up by the tree line when a thunderstorm came out of nowhere, boiling the night sky into a rage. We huddled in the thin opacity of the tent, the lightning illuminating your pale anxious face. We will be okay, I said to you. The thunder roared; the lightning's jagged unpredictability came from all around. You were frightened, so we zipped our sleeping bags together and huddled in the middle, two girls in the midst of chaos made of rain, wind, and electricity. Your heart beat insistently against my forearm as we lay on our doubled-up pillows, our arms twisted together. We stayed like that, in the dying light of the Coleman lantern, as the storm slowly moved east. You fell asleep first. Your cornsilk hair darkened by the sweat of uneasy sleep. Your small hand resting inside my slightly larger one like a pair of perfectly matched seashells. I felt a surge of something like pure emotion, a desire to keep you safe always, to hurt anyone who dared try to harm you in any way. In those moments, as the thunder subsided, as you slept, I knew that I was in love with you, that I loved you, completely and utterly.

Some years later, in high school, we walk down the hall to our lockers after class. Your boy-friend approaches and kisses the side of your face; he slips a hand into one of the back pockets of your jeans. My smile stays in place as I tell you I'll see you tomorrow. I can't find the voice to say how I really feel, so I watch you walk away holding his hand.

I want to be the one holding your hand, but fear clamps my heart in a vise.

What am I scared of?

Everyone's judgment?

Your rejection.

I will always love you, unrequited, silently, but it would be worse to not have you as my best friend.

So I will remain quiet.-





# Swamp Witch

Julia Rose Waters

*Polymer Gravure Print*



# SHIPWRECKED

Jennifer Schwartz

*Poetry*

I lost my fragile heart that day.  
The immortal light in my veins  
Fading to black with each step  
Up towards the rocky throne  
Overlooking the sea

Perched on the narrow peak  
Misty rain assaulting my face  
Carried on the swirling gusts  
I witnessed my love's demise  
The cruel hand of fate

I begged him to stay on land  
To remain safe by my side  
He ignored the dark whispers  
Of the aquamarine abyss  
Calling his name...

My love's ship was split open  
Helpless in the jagged rocks  
The violent waves relentlessly

Beating  
Knocking  
Crashing

Eroding the cliffs and my soul

My arms crossed at my chest  
I screamed out his name  
But all sound was swallowed  
By the screeching, bitter wind  
Laughing at my vain act

The hands of grief tightened  
Everything seemed to slow  
Gasping for breath, weak  
All color and music vanished  
Feeling unsteady like I was



Whirling  
    Reeling  
        Falling

Into an unknown world

It was too late to save the crew  
The vessel clawed fearlessly  
By savage, beastly waters  
My love would never again  
Be in my arms

I can still feel his gentle touch  
Hear his honest call of devotion  
Waking me from restless dreams  
By swirling a feather on my cheek  
Igniting my lips with a kiss

Daily I speak to my lost love  
At sunset on that tragic peak  
Releasing a single feather  
With a prayer that his spirit  
Finds peace in the depths

The sea may have claimed it  
But truth be told, my heart  
Was a treasure stolen long ago  
It would always belong to him  
Never to return

In solitude, there is vengeance  
The jealous Queen of Tides  
Shares his eternal night but  
We lived in the flaming sunrise  
When passion flowed like wine

His eyes fierce with fire  
Burning with desire for only me





# Debate Weekend

Samantha Cousins

*Prose*

Glancing around, one would think that they were attending some form of business meeting or a seminar on how to properly suck up to their boss in order to get that raise or promotion. Boys all clad in business suits clearly picked out by their fathers and girls in pencil skirts and dark colored blouses. Perhaps these kids were all attending a funeral, mourning the loss of the Saturday they would rather spend watching cartoons in the comfort of flannel pajama pants. Little would one of these outsiders suspect that these business-styled dungarees acted much more like armor than their appearance would suggest.

Like in a Roman coliseum, there are many different labyrinths in which to partake in and traverse. The crests of their clans branded in the shapes of their school mascots. A wolf fights with teeth and claws against a titan, a falcon sinks its talons into the winds and rains of a thunderstorm.

One event hosts rounds of battle over various moral standings. It requires its volunteers to be quick-minded, their tongues sharp and coated in poison. Cobras ready to strike without a moment's hesitation. The riptide that pulls its victim under before the swimmer even knows it's there.

Lincoln Douglas requires the knowledge held by philosophers of history. Locke preaches the good of humanity. The mother who knows that boys will be boys. The life guard watching the dark shape glide ever closer to the children in the ocean. Hobbes condemns mankind to forever commit to their own hubris and wicked ways. The greed fought in Robin Hood. The dystopia promised by Big Brother. These are tools, the warrior's means to an end.

Other events require memorization skills akin to those possessed by the actors who portray Shakespeare himself. Interpreters is the title held by this class of warrior. They use words that strike like the hammers of a blacksmith. Stories become tied together to possess the fluid motion of ballet dancers. They are sorcerers whose magic is found through voice. Jesters who command laughter to the room. The warriors who fight without ever touching one another.

These combatants, these scholars, these children are locked in combat with one another. Soldiers who promised their homes victory. Ants that fight for the biggest crumb. Pinned in battles to the death. In which case, death means they don't go home with a shiny trophy or a card stock piece of paper with a number and name on it.

They follow the path of those who rule by philosophy. Scholars who sharpen their tools with the grindstone named Rousseau in Plato's cave.



Rounds are posted like brackets in a boxing tournament, red versus blue, Rocky versus Apollo. The sound of bugles signals the start of a race, the well-dressed group panics and scrambles like a group of beheaded chickens. After the dust settles they look to see who battles and where opponents will shed blood.

Challengers make their way toward the designated arenas. Their colors are painted on after they read the postings. The piece of parchment printed not five minutes ago, is followed dutifully as if it were one of the Ten Commandments. Time and place are assigned, as well as the colors each combatant will wear and the weapons they will wield.

The affirmative always holds the sharper weapons, words that cut, ideas that cleave and statistics that puncture. The negative is always blocking, with concepts that deflect, claims that ricochet, and proof that is anchored.

Upon entering the fray, both are looked upon by one overseer. This arbiter plays the roles of judge, jury and executioner. The fate of the duelists rests in their, more often than not, ignorant hands. How can one expect a housewife, who watches nothing but reality television, to determine who spoke more convincingly about Affirmative Action? Who are the conscripted warriors to say?

Ages pass in the span of only thirty-six minutes. Divided up into chunks of time allotted specifically for the maiming and tearing of one another's foundations. Chipping at armor and the cracks in their tools. The battle cries and claims of omission are silenced as the judge declares that the round has ended.

The warriors brush the dust and blood from their armor as they stand. Ignoring the burning accusations and the stinging words of mere seconds ago as they shake hands. The flames fueled by heated arguments cool in the silence. The round is over, onto the next.

These children declare themselves the champions of their events and battle to prove as such. They are clad in ideas and beliefs and brandish them for all to witness. They are the preachers of peace by means of war. They are pitted against one another in a battle of concepts and bring with them the tools of discipline and script to win. They sacrifice more than just sleeping in and Saturday morning cartoons to claim these victories.





# Astoria

Anna Hixon

*Digital Photograph*





## S-Stutter

Emily Hays

*Poetry*

My s-stutter is subtle

Most people don't even notice

But I notice

Every time

Every repeated syllable

Every repeated word

I hear it

Boom-booming in my ears

It's a failure to c-c-communicate

Drag-drag-dragging every word from my throat

Kicking and screaming

And most people don't hear it

But I do

Every time

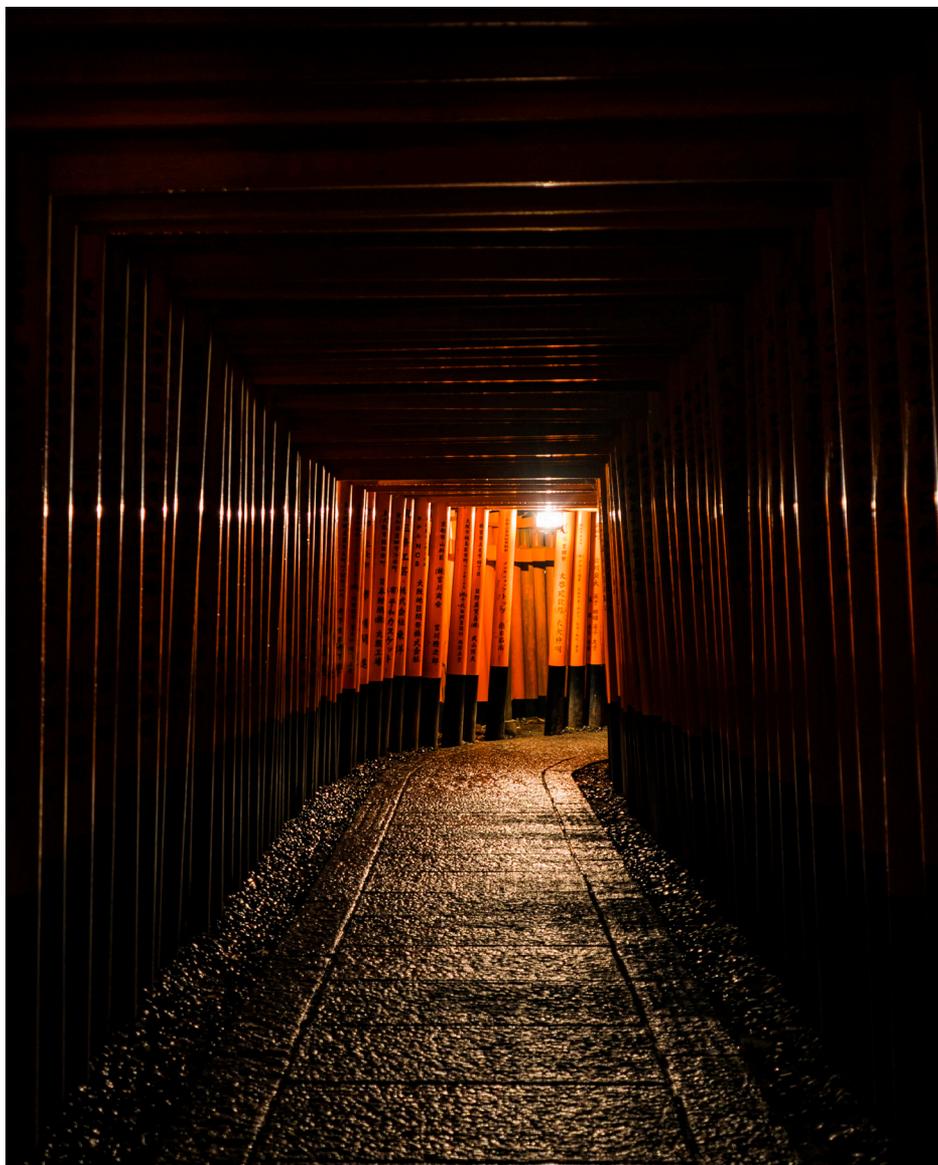
Every repeated syllable

Every repeated word

I-I hear it

I hear it





**Endless**  
Mohammad Al-ahdal  
*Digital Photograph*



# Get Me Out of Here: Confessions of a Lonely Military Wife

Dawn Bailey  
*Prose*

Get me out of here. It feels like the walls are closing in. Day after day after day, the same thing. It's like riding a merry-go-round with no end in sight. There is nowhere to go, no one to talk to, and no friends nearby. The people I thought were my friends took advantage of me and abandoned me. I guess I didn't need them anyway. How can you be a housewife if your husband doesn't come home at the end of the day? "Hey honey, I cleaned the bedroom and washed the clothes." Nobody answers. "Hey honey, I cooked your favorite dinner this evening." I stare at the empty sink.

Sometimes I want to jump out of my skin and into someone else's life. This person would have a husband who comes home at the end of the day. This person would have a husband who is not always gone. I want to feel anger at the injustice done to me, but the only reasonable thing I can get mad at is the military and myself. I'm angry at the military because of the rules I am put under and the sometimes heartless way I am expected to just go along with whatever they say. My life is uprooted at a snap of the fingers. I love my country, but at this point the military can go fuck itself. "If the military would have wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one!" A phrase I've heard time and time again, like I'm unwanted baggage. It makes me feel like my sacrifice for the country does not matter. "You knew what you were getting yourself into" is something I've grown accustomed to hearing. It is usually from people who have no earthly clue what it is to feel so alone with so much responsibility and with the fear that any day now your husband could die. I made sacrifice after sacrifice to follow my heart. Yes, I knew it would be hard; that doesn't mean I can't grieve for the life I could have had if I had chosen a different path to follow. Sometimes I get angry at myself for choosing this path. It could have been so much easier if I would have stayed with my mom and stayed in school. Taken the smooth path instead of the road less traveled. But instead I chose to be a mother and housewife when I was barely a woman.

My day-to-day schedule doesn't allow for much sorrow. I must, as they say in the military wife circles: "put on my big girl panties and deal." Preschool drop off in the morning, park with the baby, ballet class, and story time at the library fill up my mornings. But at night, ah, at night is when the real loneliness creeps in, whispering terrible things into my ear. What if he never comes back? What if he is dying right now? Only two months have passed by, think of how much longer you have without him. How old will your kids be then? How many milestones will he miss? I wonder if the baby will be crawling? I wonder if she will know who he is? The only way I can sleep is if I pack pillows behind me, listen to the dog's deep, rhythmic breathing, curl myself into a ball, and slip his wedding ring on my thumb, and shut my eyes tight to ward off the tears.



Mother of two, wife of Petty Officer Bailey, and incredibly, incredibly lonely. Lonely at nineteen and pregnant, sitting in the one room apartment late at night listening to the rain and feeling the baby kick and knowing there is no one there to celebrate with. Lonely at twenty-one with a two year old who cries for her daddy during the day while I try and make it better with "daddy-calendar" paper chains at night, and wonder how on earth I am going to put food on the table. Lonely at twenty-four with an out-of-control, angry four year old who throws chairs at me because her daddy is not there and a baby who never wants to be put down. Lonely at twenty-five with a five year old who is starting to ask questions and a two year old who cries for her daddy, her long, brown eyelashes wet with tears. Lonely at twenty-six with the stress of the world pressing down on my shoulders, feeling like I have lived a lifetime of sorrows. Sometimes it feels as if I am outside of my body looking at my life from the outside in.

I repeat: Get me out of here. Get me out of this never-ending cycle of Hell I have been put through. Get me out of this life that I despise but I can't get away from. Get me out of this mother's body that I have been given, and give me back the beach and my bikini and carefree summer sunsets. I want to feel free to live again. I want my worries to melt away. Give me another life, one that I could recognize as my own, and I swear, I won't screw that one up.





# Reflections

Jonathan Hardy  
*Digital Photograph*



# One Thirty A.M.

Elizabeth Lester

*Poetry*

Editor's Choice

according to the multiverse theory,

there are universes beyond this one  
where all that could be  
and every what-if  
are reality.

there are universes out there  
where you are happy.

where your father lives past forty-eight  
and cancer doesn't eat his bones.  
he teaches your brother to shave,  
walks your sister down the aisle,  
and sees your every graduation.  
in this universe, he still works away from home  
so all of these things are done  
one week of the month when he returns.  
but he is there, and always will be.

where your stepmother doesn't grab you,  
shake you, hit you, hurt you.  
she is kind and she is trying  
and she doesn't take it out  
on you.  
in this universe, you know her love  
more than her rage.  
her smiles do not terrify you.  
she raises you well.



where you grow up popular,  
or at least well-liked,  
and your school days don't feel like warzones  
where no one is on your side  
and you're enemy number one.  
in this universe, the system doesn't fail you.  
you are protected and feel safe.  
your peers don't cut you down.  
you never feel alone.

where your mother isn't addicted  
to alcohol, to pills, to attention, to lying.  
her funny quirks and habits  
are undoubtedly her personality  
and not just her being high.  
in this universe, she is a mother.  
she watches you learn, grow, and fly away.  
she does not scream for your return  
and try to cut your wings.

where your first love is as open  
as you try to be.  
you see the break-up coming before it happens  
because he talks about his feelings  
instead of pretending they aren't there.  
in this universe, you stay together.  
or, maybe you don't.  
but you feel okay either way,  
because at least he still talks to you.

according to the multiverse theory,

these universes are out there,  
and these versions of you exist,  
and they have not known all the pain  
that has shaped you in this life.

don't be jealous  
of all that could be  
and every what-if  
that exists far away.



you would not have grown the same way  
if this life was easy.  
you are brave, and strong, and smart  
during the pain,  
after the pain,  
because of the pain;  
and you choose to be,  
you choose to be,  
you choose to be.

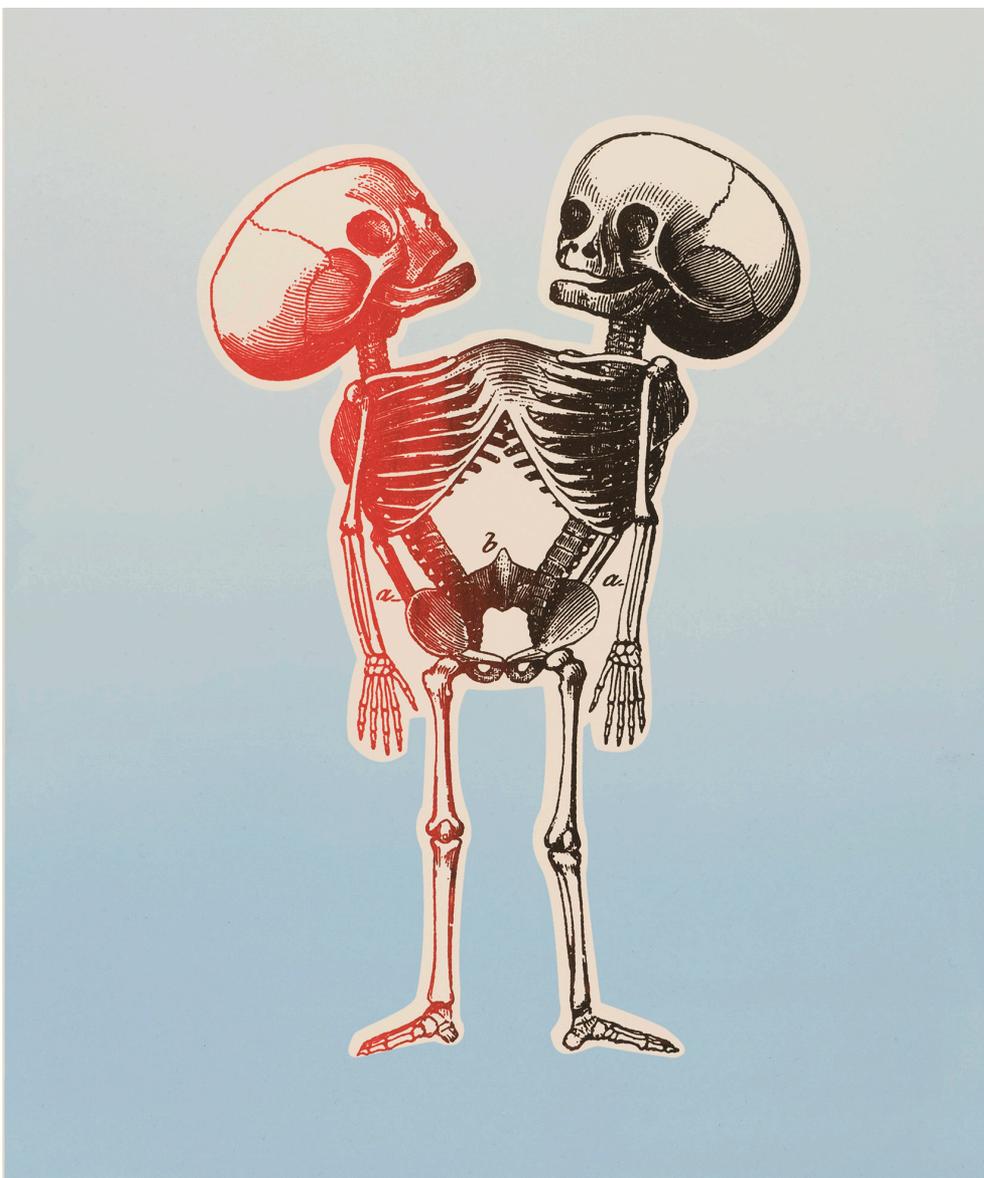
and every you in these universes --  
the you who seems so happy  
because finally, for once you aren't hurting --

they should be jealous  
of you, in this life,  
in this world,  
in this universe,  
and the claws and fangs you possess  
and know how to sharpen  
because you yourself have been clawed and bitten.

they only wish they could be  
as brave  
and strong  
and smart

as you who have suffered.



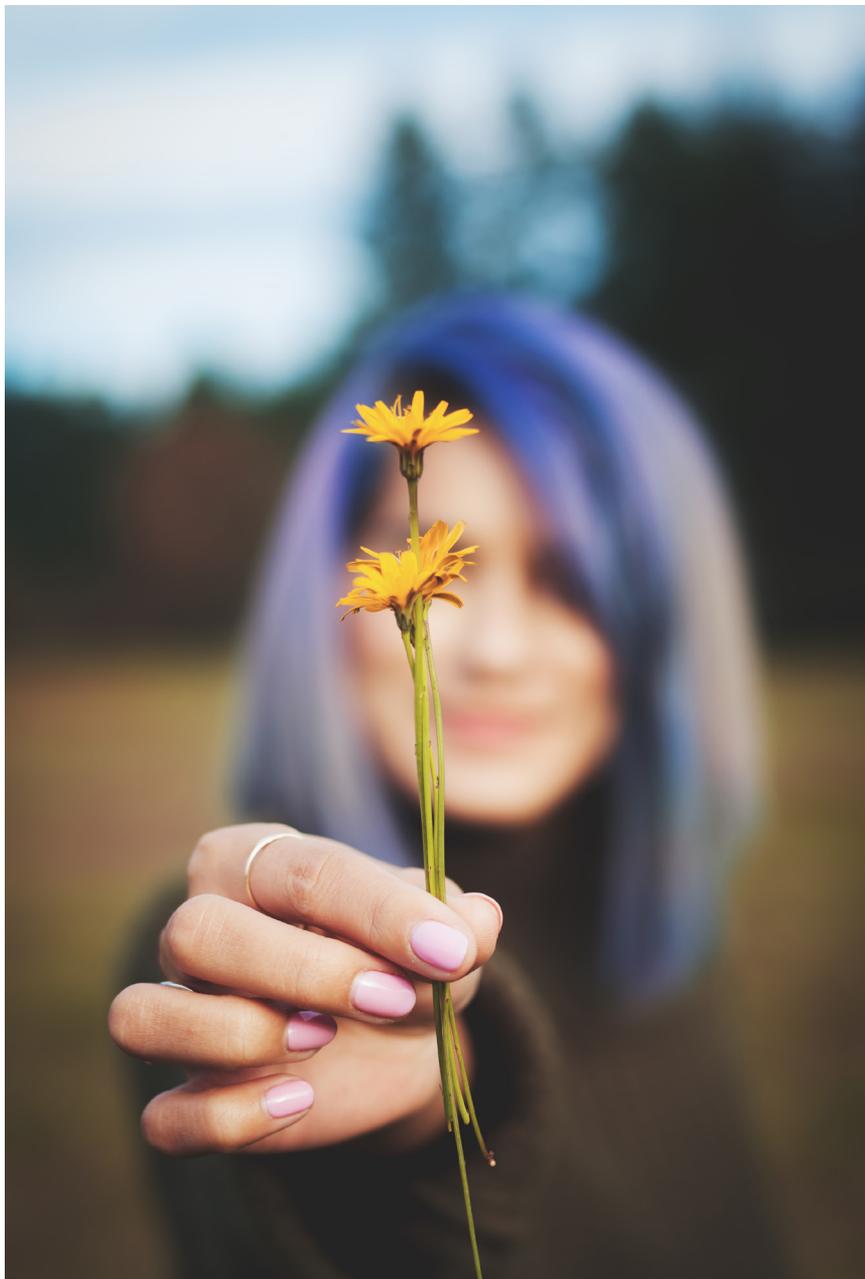


# Twins

Dale Strouse

*Serigraph*





# Waiting for a Wish

Amy Roberts  
*Digital Photograph*



# Please No Camping

Carol Siegel  
*Prose*

In an attempt to please her new husband, Max, Rita agreed to spend their honeymoon camping, and not even on Mount Tamalpais, which would have at least been somewhat familiar from a school trip, but in an actual wilderness. The honeymoon trip was to be, in a sense, her gift to him, as it represented her first attempt to do something that was entirely of his world. They borrowed a car from Rita's best friend Rose and started off to Yosemite, which to Max's horror, Rita, who was not very enamored of contacts with Nature that required effort, had never seen.

It was an August that Rita found uncomfortably hot even before they left The City, but that turned into something, in her view, epic, startling, unreal, as they went further, although Max continued, patiently, to explain to her that heat in the summer was not unusual outside San Francisco. Also disturbing to Rita, but apparently more normal to Max was evidence that the farmers east of The City were murderously irritable, if not psychotic. All along the roads they had posted hand-lettered signs warning of their intention to shoot people who stopped their cars by their orchards for any reason. Max drew the signs to her attention directly after she asked him to stop the car so that they could pick some of the ripe peaches hanging near a fence. Rita thus passionately resisted Max's desire to stop for a burger in town, arguing that if they were so territorial about their fields, they would be likely to be much more so about their towns. His decision to stop for the night at a campground and sleep in a bag outside the car struck her as suicidal madness of which she wanted no part. Consequently, when they left the next morning at first light, Rita was a wreck from sitting up watchfully all night locked in the steaming car, as Max sprawled out on the ground.

It soon developed that the car was in even worse shape than Rita. It began sputtering and gasping on a mountain road and finally announced with a spume of smoke that it would go no further. Max, alighted and pointed out the signs for the Cherry Lake campground. Although it would lack the grandeur of Yosemite, it would no doubt be a nice place to spend a week in the wilderness. The name sounded promising. Rita had once been to the u-pick cherry fields and was not averse to lying on a well-maintained lawn in the shade of fruit trees by the side of some cool water. And Max did nothing to disabuse her of these notions until they were well underway with enormous packs on their backs.

Rita was not happy about that latter part and, in fact, had for the first time, but not the last time, begun to question the wisdom of this whole marital venture. What sort of a man would ask her to carry a seventy-five pound bag full of god-knows-what on a huge metal frame that bonked her in the head as she walked and was strapped to her waist in a way that rubbed her rawer than new jeans by the end of the day. If it was necessary to carry so much freeze-dried food and heavy iron pots and pans, and metal dishes and cutlery, and sleeping bags, and trowels, and collapsible metal stoves, and tents with poles, and metal lanterns, and lamp oil, and towels, and pairs of woolly socks, and first-aid kits, and everything imaginable except anything Rita had wanted to bring, well, then the husband should have carried it all himself, she thought. However, Max thought otherwise and lectured her tediously about feminism when she suggested it, leaving her to wonder why he became such a strong advocate of women's liberation only at such times.



She was also full of trepidation about a place that required so much gear to be packed to it in order to support human life. And that had no place, according to Max, for attractive clothing and shoes, bubble bath, or stereo equipment. But when they first disembarked from the car, leaving a note about their destination and intended time of return inside the windshield, Rita was not completely unhappy. The big trees smelled nice and the air was fresher than it had been in the car. The pack didn't hurt her back much at first. Rita was concerned about encountering the uneven, rock and twig strewn ground that Max and her other friends referred to as "trails" and she privately called "trials," but for the initial stage of the journey they stayed on the sort of smooth surface Rita approved of for walking, a blacktop road.

She minced along in her brand new hiking boots, noting how each type of footgear known to Occidentals is uncomfortable in its own way. Women's dress shoes are hard on the toes and insteps but hiking shoes more than made up for the comfort of their larger toe boxes and low heels with their unforgivingly hard leather uppers that were at that very moment gripping Rita's feet like tiny iron maidens. Talk about footbinding! And without high heels to push her feet forward, the backs of her heels were scraped with every step. She realized what a fool she had been to let Max dissuade her from wearing her Chinese goatskin Mary Janes. She was always seeing women in The People's Republic carrying huge bundles of sticks on their backs in *National Geographic*, and what else could they have been wearing on their feet except Chinese shoes?

Sharing these thoughts with Max, she also remarked repeatedly upon the way the road illustrated the faultiness of that theory about dark colors retaining heat. The black tar beneath their feet was scalding hot and the road wasn't doing a thing to retain the temperature, but instead was radiating it liberally all over their bodies. Rita was beginning to sweat, something she found abominable outside the sauna. Max sighed and sighed. Finally he pointed out that the road was obviously making a wide curve around a gully. If they cut through the gully, they would come to the lake much faster.

Rita looked down aghast. "There's no road down there. No sidewalk, either."

"But look at that trail and the trees, and see the little stream? Think how much cooler it will be down there. We just need to climb down and stroll across to meet the road when it curves back around. We'll cut off at least two miles that way." Rita relented, and they scrambled down an embankment to the narrow dirt path Max had indicated. He consulted the compass and off they went. Despite Max's prediction, it was not appreciably cooler in the gully. They say heat rises, but it seemed disinclined to do so here.

Instead, the gully held the hot air like a cup filled with steaming water. More sweat rose on Rita's skin and poured down her. The rigid shoes slipped up and down the backs of her heels more and more painfully. The pack jumped up and down viciously on her back. She drank all the water in her canteen, despite Max's cautions, and then, despite his protests, drank all the water in his as well. Still they trudged on through air that began, in yet another way, to defy all the laws of the physical universe with which Rita was familiar. Not only did the heat not rise and go back up on the road where it belonged, the air became simultaneously humid and dusty. At the same time the trail became less and less smooth. The debris blocking easy walking, and the thorny branches that stretched across it with increasing frequency, suggested that it hadn't been used in awhile.

"I've had it with this gully," Rita announced, "Let's get back on the road. Maybe we can hitchhike up there."



"I'm trying to get back on the road," said Max who was once again looking at the compass, "What do you think I'm doing?"

"I have no idea! What does the compass tell you to do? Do what it tells you! Ask it where the hell the road is!" Rita had the idea that the little thing was something like a crazy eight ball, except more accurate. Max tried to explain until he had to start yelping because she had too abruptly released a particularly thorny and springy branch on him. She then explained that she was compelled to do so because she saw a spider web on it, and where there are webs there are spiders.

"When you come out into Nature you have to expect some bugs to get on you."

"I am neither expecting it nor willing to submit to it." In the additional heat of the subsequent argument, Rita lost her footing on a rock and fell onto her back, where she remained for some time, due to the weight of the pack, unable to right herself. Max, who had been getting grouchy, seemed amused by this.

"You look so silly," he said, "you look like a beetle on its back." Rita reached up and grabbed the compass out of his palm. She tossed it as far as she could into the bushes.

"Ha! There goes your little buddy! Now you'll have to take us back to the road."

"Why did you do that? We were already going around in circles. Now we'll never get out of here."

Rita, finally struggling to her agonizing feet, informed him that if they were already going in circles the compass must have been defective anyway, so it was a good thing she had rid them of its pernicious influence. She offered to lead the way using common sense as her only guide. Her plan was to look for something, anything, indicative of human life and, once she found some other people, throw herself on their mercy. She began to walk as fast as her shoes allowed in the direction of a broadening of the trail. Suddenly a bit of paved road appeared.

Ignoring Max's warnings that she was on a dead end, she climbed onto it and began running as fast as she could, given the pack. Soon she began to smell water. This made her wonder whether living out in the wilderness this way was having an atavistic effect. Maybe soon she would be able to smell danger. That would be a handy skill when she got back into The City, for sure. Then they came up a slight rise and she saw two sights that gladdened her heart: a big body of water and a concrete retaining wall around it, the last clearly indicating that other humans had at least sometime been here.

"Civilization, ho!" she exclaimed, dropping down to sit beside the water. She cupped her hands and scooped some up.

"No," shouted Max, "It may be filled with microbes and impurities. We need to put some water purification tablets in it first." In the style of *Death Valley Days*, she took a cursory look around for cattle skulls or rib cages and seeing none began lapping up water as fast as she could. The water was cool and the cement was too, as well as being smooth.

"I like it here, let's stay until some people come rescue us."

Max argued but to no avail and even as Rita had predicted some people did come along shortly, in a forest ranger truck. She began yelling "help" as soon as she saw them. When they pulled up, Max tried to explain the situation, but Rita cut him short and got to the gist of it, "We are trying to get to Cherry Lake.

We got lost in here because the compass was no good and my husband is demented with the heat. I drank a bunch of this water, is it OK?"



"Well, that's debatable," said one of the rangers, "But they do drink it in San Francisco. This is one of the main reservoirs." Rita had thought it tasted familiar. After a few more reiterations of their plight, which Max for some reason was minimizing, Rita was able to persuade the rangers to take them back to the road, specifying that they wanted to be let off after the loop around the gully. She felt she had earned that much. Luckily it was only moments after she and Max were left back on the road that she saw a pickup truck approaching. Rita began waving her arms frantically above her head.

"Stop acting so hysterical," he said, "They'll think we're in trouble."

"We are in mortal peril." And, as it happened she proved to be correct, at least in the view of the son of the rancher in the pickup, with whom they were directed to share the truck bed. This ten year old in a billed cap expressed the utmost horror at Rita's account of how they had spent the last few hours.

"That there ravine? That's filled up with meat bees! Them nasty bees, they live in holes in the ground and don't eat nuttin' but meat. They will take chunks offen a cow standin' in the field. My Dad seen 'em take down a whole jackrabbit once. They just tore at him til there's nuttin' left but bones. They make 'em a pee-ewtrid honey out of it, smells like rotten meat, cause that's what it is. Just a festerin' away in those holes of theirs. They're gross! And if you go near 'em, even walk by their hole, they'll be on you in a minute, bitin' off pieces wherever you're uncovered, like your face, take it right off! They'll eat your eyeballs first off, 'cept if you're wearing sunglasses. Then they'll get after your tongue, when you commence screamin', and right up your nostrils."

When the rancher let them off at Cherry Lake campground, she was in for yet another disappointment. There were no cherries to be seen and no lake, either. Just some dusty evergreen trees, and a large wooden sign warning people to stay away from the bears. What bears? Had Rita known there were any in residence she would have stayed so far away from them that she would still be in San Francisco. She pointed to the sign silently, feeling that, like the child's recitation on the habits of meat bees, it spoke for itself about Max's folly, but Max seemed actually to have perked up. The dirt, the spiders, the bears, all of this seemed his very element, and as it developed she was correct in that appraisal.

He soon picked out a campsite for them, an uneven piece of ground underneath some trees with spider webs in them and near a spigot that released a thin trickle of warmish water. He enlisted her aid in setting up the tent, proceeding with the operation despite her urgent pleas that he first clear the land the way the men always did in the book *Little House on the Prairie*, which she had enjoyed as a child.

"That means cut down the trees," he said, perplexed.

"Oh, this is what comes of not having a TV. I never saw any visuals of that story! I thought it meant they cleaned up all that crap on the ground and made a level foundation for the tent. Isn't that what our trowels are for?" Max now had to explain about the bathrooms, or rather their absence. A thought almost too terrible for utterance dawned on Rita.

"This doesn't mean, does it, that we can't take a bath?" Max left her for a time, sitting on the uneven ground and some sharp sticks. She contemplated her socks, through which blood kept seeping, with her head in her hands, experiencing for the first time what was meant by the word "depressed," which previously she had used as a synonym for "miffed" or "thwarted." He had gone in search of other campers, he said, shrugging off her pleas that he beg them for help.



"Camping," how odd it was, she mused that a term that among her friends connoted an entertaining evening of cutting up, with perhaps the added fun of some cross-dressing, to others could mean this sort of gladiatorial confrontation with a clearly hostile Mother Nature. Had she remained single, as her radical feminist sister, Olivia, had advised, she might at this very moment be camping through a screening of *Giant* at the Castro Theater, with her feet, comfortably clad in her favorite sparkle socks and Mary Janes up on the seat back in front of her, mouthing along with Rock Hudson, "Who did I keep it big for all this years?" as everyone in the theater hooted or hissed, and drinking deeply of ice cold cherry-flavored Calistoga water.

Max returned, and as Rita remained despondently inert, prepared a revolting dinner of various stuff from little pouches that advertised itself to be things like chicken fettucine and beef Stroganoff, but in reality resembled something one might find in a meat bee hole. As Rita explained to Max, it would be a hard choice between the freeze dried food and cannibalism, but she feared she must go the way of the Donner Party if they didn't get help soon. Fortunately for him, she had had the sense to bring along a large Ghirardelli chocolate bar, although he had told her that people no longer took candy hiking. Sometimes the old ways are best. As Max ate something vile and Rita licked melted chocolate off foil, he told her what he had learned from the other campers. It seemed that there was a beautiful cool lake, only ten miles away. They could hike there in a day and relax by the lakeside for a few days' vacation.

"Are there bathrooms there?" asked Rita

"No, but we won't need them, we'll be able to swim in the lake. You don't know how lovely it can be up here. You'll love it." Rita doubted this, especially after Max, in response to close questioning, revealed the certain lack of electrical outlets, hot water, rock n roll, or cappuccino at their potential destination, as well as the probability that there would be no paved road leading there, and the likelihood of them encountering bugs, including mosquitoes, upon their arrival. The threat of bears was also to be kept in mind. Since they had all these horrors already at their present campsite, and the mosquitoes were beginning what promised to be a long evening of biting by the light of an oil lamp that gave off just enough illumination for them to find their targets on Rita's face and arms, she saw no advantage in a relocation that would require more hiking. But she agreed to sleep on the decision.

Sleep, however, was not to be. The interior of the tent was hot and stuffy, as might have been anticipated by Max, Rita pointed out. But on the chance that a very stupid bear with a stuffy nose might not be able to find them there, as opposed to their situation lying out in the open, Rita insisted on staying inside the tent, with the flap zipped shut. Rita was not feeling very romantically inclined, but sex would have been something to do, had it not been forbidden by Max on the grounds that it could attract bears. Bears, it seemed, were driven into killing frenzies by a whiff of the human female, and often killed hikers with their periods and ripped the heads off women who were resting in their sleeping bags after sex.

This cleared up for Rita a question she'd always had about the Native Americans, including her Cherokee ancestors. If they were so cool as everyone said, why did they put up with the Pilgrims at all? Here in Nature she had found the answer. Obviously, they were used to misogyny and Puritanical attitudes from centuries of dealing with bears and erroneously believed that as long as they kept their food in bags in the trees



and didn't have sex outdoors near the Pilgrims all would be well. Thus, it was that Rita found herself at nine o'clock on a Saturday night, a time when ordinarily she would be just leaving the house for a disco, having a little history lesson and lying on top of a sleeping bag inches from a snoring Max.

Her feet itched, burned, and occasionally bled where the blisters had broken. She fancied she could feel the dried sweat peeling off her skin. Her head ached from hours of exposure to sunlight more intense than one ever got in San Francisco. Under her back was a collection of debris that suggested to her one possible life-experiential source of that schoolyard philosophy that "sticks and stones can break my bones." Somehow, perhaps because prior to this time she had always slept in them on top of bed mattresses, she had thought sleeping bags were more heavily padded.

Thoughts such as these rolled around all the white night long in Rita's mind. On the next morning of her honeymoon she would successfully prevail upon the merry forest rangers to drive her and Max back to their car, which was now cool enough to take them to a Motel 6 with air conditioning, running water that filled a bath tub, fast food options, and a complete lack of bears and bugs. About thirty years later, happily married to a more citified husband, they were upgraded to an ocean front suite in a four star hotel in Hawaii, but nothing ever beat the sense of luxury she felt that night in the Motel 6. Prior to the trip Rita had a mild sense that Nature was most pleasant when contained in flowerpots or window boxes. After the trip she espoused this belief with religious fervor. And two decades later, when she saw all through The City signs saying, "please no camping," she could only feel that it was the best possible advice to give anyone who had another option of any sort.





## Yellow

Anna Hixon

*Film Photograph*





# Holly

Grace Edwards  
*Ink on Paper*



# Your Time

Jennifer Barnes

*Poetry*

pay attention to me  
 please  
 all I want is a little  
 a little of your time  
 don't leave me here again alone  
 I am so very lonely.  
 my toys don't talk to me  
 the flickering of the tv somehow  
 sinister  
 when I know you're at  
 the other end of the house.  
 that new medicine you gave me  
 makes me feel  
 scary nothing, dark calm with a current roiling underneath  
 I think you just want me out of the way.  
 what would happen if I  
 put my head through the window  
 would you notice the sound?  
 you say to me these things  
 "stop it, you're not a baby"  
 "leave me alone and go play in your room"  
 "don't you dare ruin my morning"  
 "quit with your attitude"  
 I have the most toys.  
 I have toys  
 toys toys toys toys toys  
 but what I want is time, just a little  
 me and you time.  
 I am screaming but you have your music on  
 you never listen  
 I didn't mean to bother you  
 I just wanted a hug  
 but I'm "not a baby."  
 I cry tears that are too bitter for my age  
 the objects in my room dumb witnesses  
 a small child screaming alone  
 in his own private hell, a toybox, his digital corner of the universe  
 having  
 never  
 been touched  
 by a parent's true love.





# Preferred Pastime

Grace Walton

*Digital Photograph*



# Organ Donor

Emily Hays

*Prose*

I am an organ donor. When I die, I want the doctors to know they can have everything.

Tell the doctors they can have my lungs. Make sure the recipient knows these lungs gasp under the touch of their lover's lips. Let them know these lungs crave the pant that comes after a long hike. Let them know these lungs love the air on a crisp fall morning. Let them know these lungs are loud. Let them know these lungs are made to be heard, made to stand up for their beliefs, and never back down. With these lungs, they will never be silenced.

Tell the doctors they can have my eyes. Let the recipient know that these eyes don't work perfectly, but I've never met a person who didn't look good in glasses. Let them know these eyes love the sight of freshly fallen snow, and the endless horizon that lives over the ocean. Let them know these eyes cry all the time, both sad tears, and happy tears. Let them know no matter how bad it gets, these eyes will always see the bright side, will always see the good in a bad situation, will always see the good in humanity.

Tell the doctors they can have my skin. Let the recipient know that this skin has spent hours under the needle, enduring the pain that allowed it to tell my story. Let them know this skin gets goosebumps when watching a good horror movie. Let them know this skin will tingle, shiver, and come alive under the lightest caress. Let them know this skin is thick. Let them know this skin acts like armor; it can take just about anything thrown at it.

Tell the doctors they can have my bones. Let the recipient know sometimes these bones ache when it's cold out. Let the recipient know these bones have never been broken. Let the recipient know that these bones stand tall, even when they don't want to. Let them know these bones have great intuition. Let them know these bones are always right about a person, so when they speak, be sure to listen. Let them know these bones have never been wrong.

Tell the doctors they can have my heart. Let the recipient know this heart loves art; reading, and writing, and film. Let them know this heart loves anything done with passion. Let them know this heart occasionally skips a beat when it sees a cute boy or girl, especially one with dimples and glasses. Let them know this heart aches for the world around it, and will always feel compelled to help others. Let them know to follow this heart, it is full of passion and love and will never fail to make you feel alive.

Let the doctors know they can have my kidney, liver, pancreas, and intestines.

I am an organ donor and when I die, tell the doctors they can have everything. Tell the doctors to cut me open and empty me out. Leave me hollow on the table. Hand each of my parts over and allow them to be spread out. Tell the doctors to sew me shut and allow the satisfaction of my donation fill me back up.





# Pokemon A Go Go

Amanda Flynn  
*Pen and Colored Pencil*





# Summer Breeze

Sandie Burks

*Digital Photograph*



# The War Between Good and Bad

S. Hancock

*Poetry*

I am bad side of yourself  
I hate who you are becoming

Why are you doing this to yourself?  
Trying to fix we had for all these years  
I like this me

I like you struggling in that emotional straight jacket  
It looks good on you,  
It suits my needs  
And that is all I care about.

Not if I do not allow it.  
I want to keep you locked away  
Where no one can find you. Ha-ha.

I will win this war  
I love keeping you from growing and changing.  
It is what I do all day and night,  
I am just watching the time fly by for me.

That is what I do, make you cry

I am good side of yourself

I love who you are becoming

Why can't I be free of you?  
I want things to change,  
I do not want to feel this way anymore  
So much hate, where is the love?

Why do you hate me?  
I do not want a war with you  
I just want to be free from you  
And all the pain you have caused me.  
I will break free of you soon

I want you gone for good  
Where no one can find you  
You cannot control me forever  
I will win this war.

Time is supposed to heal  
But I am waiting for time  
I hate that you steal time from me.



You are funny.  
 I will always be here, I am part of you  
 I am bad side of yourself  
 Whether you like it or not  
 I am not going away.  
 Just because she is gone does not mean I will go with her.  
 You chose to accept me when she left  
 Now you are stuck with me.

You cannot get rid of me.  
 I am a part of you.  
 I am not going to leave freely.

Ha-ha, you are funny!

I do not want to cry anymore.  
 I do not want you here.  
 Why won't you leave me alone?  
 Let me live in peace and harmony

I am good side of yourself

I wish I had not accepted you in my life  
 I am tortured by you being here, every day  
 I can get better then you will be gone.  
 Forever.

I want to be free I want to love myself  
 But you stop me from doing anything that I want to  
 Why can't we end this war and make piece?





## Lunenburg

Michael Dunn  
*Digital Photograph*



# The Fortunate Cat Occurrence

Abigail Hughes

Prose

Editor's Choice

An expiration date of 12/4 is stamped on my forehead by a doctor whose eyes never lift from my medical biography.

His words are affirmative, detached, and, worst of all, terminal. I, a mortal of their later years, have already outlived nature's expectations. Adding any verses of encouragement en route to my recovery would be dishonest, we voicelessly agree, as the doctor sentences me to an eternity of bedpans and blue linens.

Thus, in hospice, I wait. I "live" with as much pride as the caregivers will allow and I am painfully aware that the days are turning to months. Freedom from my white-walled prison is continually postponed. The fourth is changed to the seventeenth. The seventeenth is carefully calculated to be the twentieth instead.

But on the twenty-fifth of December I am *still alive*.

I am still alive and know that it is not nature's fault. Several times I have begun to drift away, my heart has momentarily stilled, I am almost free – but they always bring me back. It is a sickening sight to see people tear into you. To feel them fight a battle I wish to not be in. They prod me and pull me back into the white-walled room. They tie me onto the paper bed with tubes and wires. They assault me and are paid to do so.

A caregiver whose scrubs are crumpled, and bleach-stained, and dotted with tiny snow-men and Santas walks into the room. Their hair is unclean and matted, but they assume that people like me do not notice such things. "How're we doing today?" The caregiver speaks to me like I am a child. "I heard you had quite a scare last night. You sure are a fighter." I am not a fighter, I am a non-resistor. If they would look at me I know that this would be clear, but instead their eyes are focused on their daily tasks. They assist me in fulfilling duties that I never dreamed of needing help with.

"The animals are coming in today, you'll like that, yeah?" they say, making small talk with a person who cannot return the burden. Once a month therapy animals visit the center. It is not something I look forward to but I bear through the experience nonetheless. "I'll leave the door cracked just in case you want company," and with that, the caregiver leaves.





"Are you afraid?" Asks the cat. I think about its question but cannot manage a response. "That's common, but it's why I'm here. I've experienced death at least eight times more than you ever will. I know what comes next and it's not anything special. A touch intimidating, sure, but there's nothing to fear."

"This makes me feel no better. "

"No?"

"No, I've seen death before and it was horrid. I was alone, confronted with the faces of all I had wronged. Everything I had done that purposefully or inadvertently made someone miserable. I—"

"Hush!" Snapped the cat, hairs rising on its spiny back. "You didn't meet with death, you didn't even so much as shake his hand! You saw him at a far, far distance. When you die you are given a summary of your life. Yeah, it's gross, it's a little hard to confront – but there are also nice occurrences. Ways in which you made someone's life better. In the end, death is just a brief history of you."

"I didn't know."

"How could you? You haven't tried it yet, not really." The cat smiled its Cheshire grin and walked onto my lap. It braced a yawn. "I'm tired, you're scared and that's perfect."

"How so?"

The cat looked up at me. "It means we can walk together. You won't have to go alone and I'll get to meet with a good friend. What do you think?"

I don't respond, not with words. I simply close my eyes and leave this world with a smile as honest as the buff cat's. The tubes and needles and wires return unsuccessfully; I cannot be re-turned. I leave this world with a smile as honest as the grey cat's and I know that the doctor was mistaken.

I was meant to die today.





## Fun in the Snow

Zeke Estes

*Digital Photograph*





# Higher Self

Jason Cardenas  
*Acrylic on Wood*



# The Potatoes

by Kayley O'Connor

*Poetry*

I walked to the garden store  
with my toddling daughter one day.  
It was spring, my house was clean,

and I had a need to plant  
some alive thing deep in the soil,  
in the far corner of the yard.

The potatoes were waiting,  
breathing and resting at the market,  
begging for mother Earth. Although,

they were already filled and dirty,  
needy and greedy with the scant soil  
that I sifted through. I gathered

splinters in my palms, before  
finding eager spuds who were  
already growing in lumped vines

that I grasped and paid for.  
My daughter fell asleep  
and for hours I dug a hole that fell

five feet deep in the wet mud,  
until the holes were two feet wide  
from steady stabs of my shovel.

I buried the potatoes then like dreams  
and offered only a little dirt,  
and a little water,



until two sprouts rose  
from the holes like hands,  
and I buried them again.

Up high on the mound,  
the purple flowers bloomed  
and I could hear the potatoes

wriggling beneath the soles  
of my feet in spudded layers  
of life. They were stacked like children

in bunk beds, still restlessly sleeping.  
The spuds will wake when the flowers wilt  
and die, and then I will pick up my shovel

and dig every brown jewel as my own.  
I will clean them white, and boil, and season,  
and feed them, mashed and hot, to my daughter.

Some lost spud still will sleep, dirty and dormant.  
I always miss some stubborn root,  
some yearly lost infant stays sleeping in the dirt.

And then they bloom out of the weeds and worms  
of the west corner on a Sunday,  
like they always do in spring.

They are so unlike children;  
they lack possibilities.  
They bloom for forever,

and I am never left  
in my wearied wonder  
as a living, breathing, human mother.







## Undone

Maggie Handran  
*Pen and Ink*





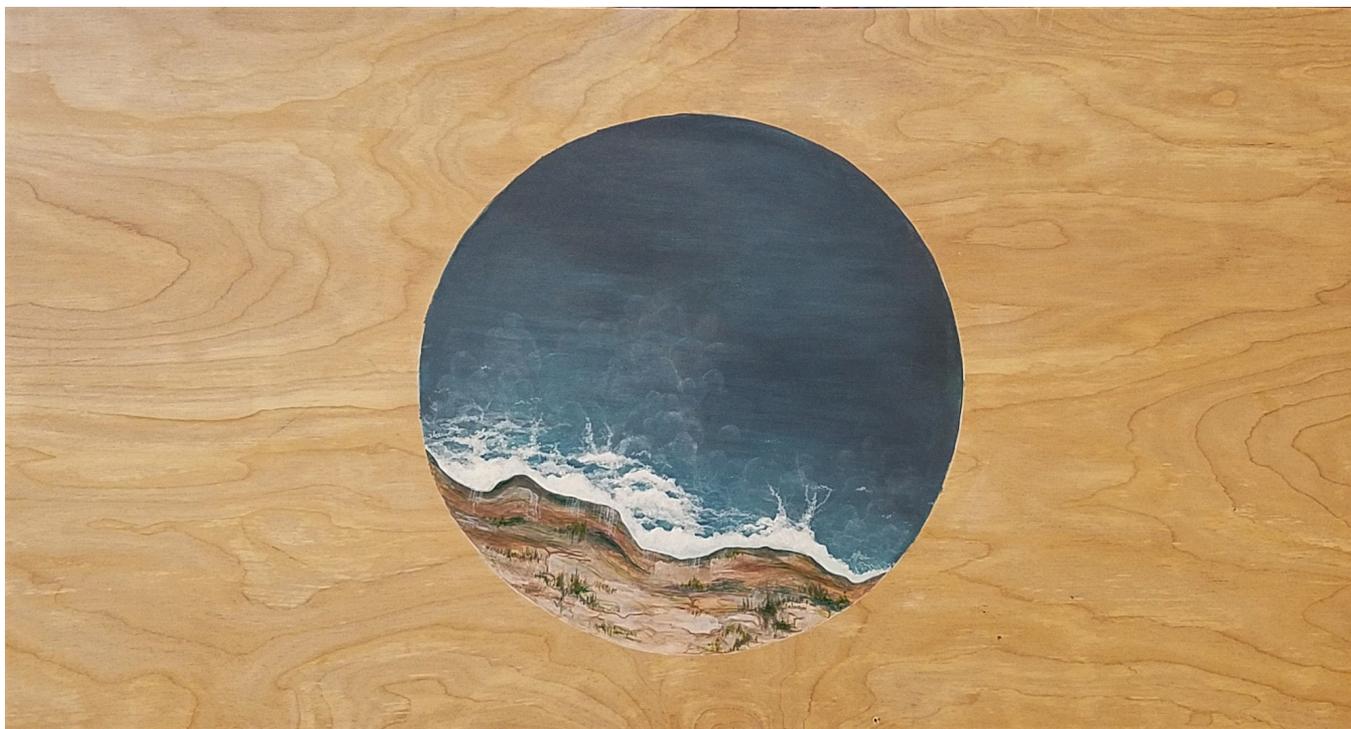
He turned around to face Gilbert, yawning, wiping the drool off of his clothes, and rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. His eyes were completely milky white. "You ready to go then?"

Gilbert nodded. "Yeah, thanks for letting me finish."

Death shrugged. "It's fine. I enjoyed the short nap, and my girlfriend wanted to read that one anyway."

He turned around and walked away. Gilbert followed him and handed him the completed book once he caught up. "Always nice to meet a fan."





# Prisoner's Tide

Victoria Moon

*Acrylic Paint on Wood Panel*



# Spy Novel

Sam Lohmann

*Poetry*

Spill coffee, evidence turns force  
 worries grow dummies  
 to frustrate headlights & slow  
 cut, fall back & caught  
 wrong person jumpy  
 won't get right  
 or anything finally I balanced there to hear:

Grr, said the forest primeval, there's no floor  
 to sweep, no responsible  
 No transparent shadow government or  
 feather government, all kinds of little  
 scouts everywhere, reach  
 out a hand & lift  
 the floating rib, the bitter functionary was explaining

Was the forest, tall thick things  
 stuck all over with goosedown  
 In another room you might get jellybeans  
 or you might get kicked in the mouth, it amounts to  
 a balance, a small town  
 you can't maintain, eyebrows  
 raised, eyes open to collect all the matter, the frogspawn

I want to call it but then I'm unprincipled  
 all these hot weeks I've lain  
 at the bottom of a well, hell I've been  
 a watercolor, a water-  
 beetle the color of  
 your lover's eye and his open mouth the day of complex forgiveness

It should have been simple, it was exhausting to  
 look at, be touched  
 & go on with the geography lesson  
 Trees are crawling over the earth, colluding  
 humming & demonstrating  
 You can't get up you can't  
 fall down either, there are no real convincing options, evening star



You said was a balloon it was an evening star  
 above & between  
 following the argument, burning the participants it comes  
 spiking the air, a long deadly joke about  
 gentlemen's agreements  
 old skeletons wired  
 together, can we just say it's not a balloon & it's not human

Not like these gentle spies you could totally  
 put up on your wall  
 & not know  
 what they are, I took a bike ride  
 to wreck not decide  
 breathe not distinguish  
 what to say next from where I'll go, I'd always rather hide

provoke sighs and the stinkeye, spill the coffee  
 on myself and the books  
 Glad to be alone but not really, this incriminating  
 form pushed into use, too fast  
 to loosen bolts  
 lose evidence or  
 expend the silly force that drives the silly peony flower

down the freeway for science, new typologies  
 to stick a pin through  
 lighten the dark interior with no worries  
 is dumb to say, grow warts  
 on my tongue, grow  
 tongues on my eyelids  
 with grim resolve, grow eyelids on my non-illuminating phrase

& nictitate, & wait, & sink in slobber, properties  
 notwithstanding caresses  
 & glum slow blinks, man I'm a reptile  
 long as the day & you know the night  
 never comes, headlights  
 licking taillights, nuggets  
 to frustrate the tale, dependent & dangling entanglement nuggets



To stumble the telling  
     falling back & caught  
 brought to a fermata, looking shampooed  
 & innocent, the function of innocence  
     in this system is  
     to induce sudden  
 shame, but cut & run now, now already you're something else

Dredged up, you're a forcefield on the face of  
     turning & turning person  
 a superb zero, composed, impaled on a spit  
 already a thrown thing that can't land,  
     goosedown that swerves, a  
     butterfly that's having  
 scruples, always jumpy on that updraft & now leaving

Leaving a note that says shit is broken  
     or just joking  
 It is written turning & turning person  
 won't get it right but I always run away anyway  
     from everything they write  
     —dancing evasively  
 is a flattering description, OK, but my perversion

Isn't a stance & doesn't get a disclaimer  
     Hard to follow this  
 monologue punctuated by kisses, slipping on  
 doubletalk, doubled over finally  
     to hear anything  
     & balanced there  
 I'm there but lose my place, a function jumping with closed eyes

jumping with closed eyes into  
     the forest primeval  
 eyebrows raised, might get jellybeans  
 but I don't get people  
     humming & colluding  
     deadly gentlemen's agreements  
 on your wall to wreck not distinguish





## A Successful Hunt

Jennifer Ruthruf  
*Digital Photograph*





## LeBron Chalk Toss

Adam Cheng

*Acrylic on Chalkboard*



# Belgrave Street

Samantha Cousins

*Prose*

The clicking of her heels on the cobblestone resonated in perfect syncopation with the rain that stained the street in a canvas of gray. The symphony was a comforting tune like that of a remembered nursery rhyme.

Slender fingers moved to turn the collar of her jacket closer to the alabaster skin of her neck as she drew closer to her apartment. This wasn't the greatest part of town. It wasn't uncommon to hear some tragedy had occurred on Belgrave Street through the television or radio or, more times than not, just through the grape vine.

It wasn't a few nights ago that she had come across a prostitute being thrown from a car. The young girl's pale skin had been bloody and torn from the impact of the unforgiving road and her bright red hair a wild mess of fire. Instances like these were what painted this street in apprehension and fear.

Dark eyes cast their attention to the telephone lines strung above her head as she walked. The strings acting like webs ready to trap their next unsuspecting victim in their grip. These webs didn't appear to be the dwellings of spiders on this dreary night, but rather birds. A murder of crows watched the streets beneath them, dark vigils casting judgment on the soggy mortals below.

The keys in her hand were so frigid that they felt like they burned the skin of her palm as she unlocked the door. This outing had been longer than she'd thought it was going to be. The same delicate fingers that had held her jacket now moved to the table that waited patiently by the door. The handle of the scalpel held a familiar warmth, like the greeting of a loved one, as she plucked it from its resting place. With practiced diligence, she brought the sharp blade up to rest at her temple.

She had been seen too many times today. She thought the dreary clouds and hints of rain would have kept most people inside, but that had not been the case. Curious, attentive eyes and even those with a hint of recognition, had gazed a second too long at this face.

What would it be like, she wondered, to be cursed with wondering eyes? To be forever searching for a speck of color in a world that was doomed with grays. She'd never know.

Her hand, scalpel still pressed to her skin, moved down with careful precision to the end of her chin.

She'd met a man today, in a small coffee shop that smelled of familiarity and was furnished to look like home. His presence went unnoticed by most, a ghost among men, with a weathered book resting on his knee and a coffee in his hand. No steam rose from the amber liquid, most likely chilled by neglect. His unobtrusive presence is what captured her attention.

The edge of the scalpel continued its path from the end of her chin, up the left side of her face, and found her other temple.

He must have felt her eyes upon him. One minute, his irises were scanning the words on yellowed pages, and the next, they were looking at her. A thousand words burned in their gazes, though none passed their lips. A smile cracked through the nervous tension that had hardened on his face, causing her to do the same. Her hand found its way into her vibrant red hair in a show of faux reservation.



With careful, calculated steps she made her way toward the stranger. Her smile grew wicked in nature but sultry in appearance as she watched his eyes break her gaze to take in her form. The unmistakable veil of desire clouded the stranger's eyes by the time she drew near enough to initiate conversation.

"My place, ten o'clock," were the only words spoken between the two. She passed him a card with her address on Belgrave Street printed on it. Speech must have escaped him because he only managed to nod in reply. She shot him a wink before turning to leave the coffee shop, making sure her hips spoke volumes as she walked.

Her hand moved the scalpel across her forehead until the incision connected with its origin point. She placed the blade back in its place on the table. Careful fingers rose to the cut on her forehead and expertly wormed through the layers until she managed to gain a grip on the skin. With slow, methodical effort she began to peel the covering from her face, hands moving so that nothing would rip or tear.

Once the layer of skin was no longer attached she placed it into a jar that waited patiently beside the tools resting on the table. The green liquid inside the jar sloshed a bit as the once living mask was placed inside of it. She screwed the lid on the jar tight before lifting it to gaze at its contents. This one had been a favorite, the first she'd come across in quite some time.

She moved through her apartment to an old door. Upon opening it, she was met with the welcoming sight of her collection. Dozens of jars filled with green liquid lined the shelves, each a home to one of her previous lives. Careful hands set her newest trophy in its place, stepping back to look upon it like one would when watching an accident; they know it's horrific, but are unable to resist the beauty of its chaos.

The chiming of the old clock in her living room released her from the spell the collection had trapped her in. Not a second after the old grandfather had bid her the time did a knock sound on her door. Perfect.

Her heels called out her movement along the hard floor as she approached the door. Slender fingers reached out to grip the handle.



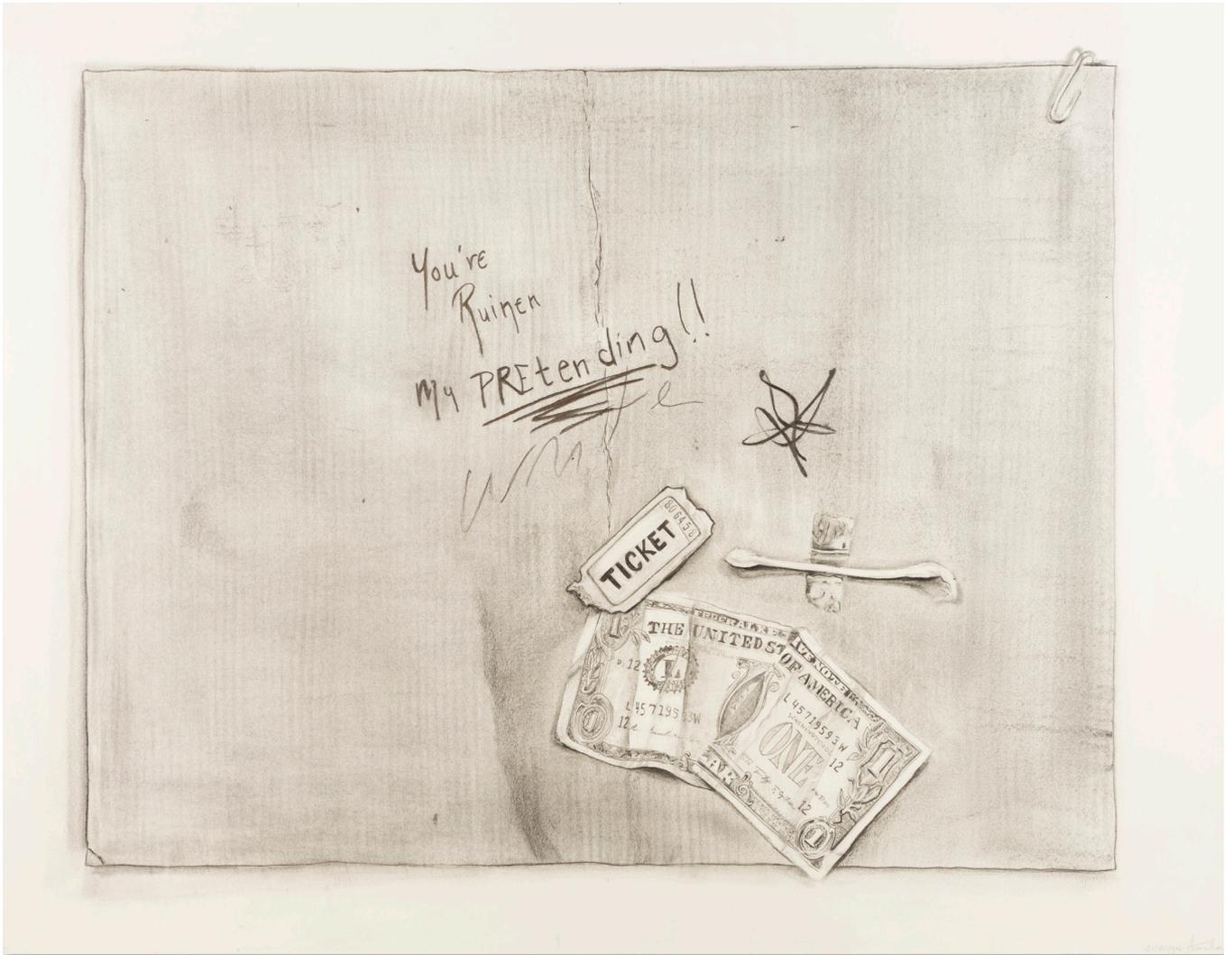


## Sunset at the Farm

Amy Roberts

*Digital Photograph*





## Ruinen' My Pretendin'

Maggie Handran  
*Graphite Pencil*





Your words, sparks of hope  
Jolting my soul from its sleep  
Like standing in Time Square  
Ignited by the timeless glamour  
Of the billboards bursting color  
Like fireworks reflected on a lake

You were my New York City.  
Hypnotizing with fierce poise  
Like getting lost in Central Park  
Among monarchical maple trees  
Losing track of time and existence  
Forgetting all that came before

Like the city that never sleeps  
You are intoxicating, dangerous  
Causing pain, unexpected cost  
My bags are packed to leave  
On the next train out - away  
From your draining grasp

I bid you farewell - for now  
But in the end I am drawn  
Back into your embrace  
No way to break free

Your charming smile  
Masking dark pleasure  
As this was your plan  
All along





# Main Street Horrors

Mark Campbell

*Prose*

Howard

Sweat streamed down Howard's brow in the brisk October weather. He positioned his little blue pickup truck towards Main Street, slowly easing around each pothole that ate away at the black pavement. "Bad things happen when you're late, bad things happen when you're late....", he muttered under the stress of his breath. His truck groaned with each turn as the heavy crates in the bed of his truck repositioned themselves. Howard yelped when the old truck backfired. Realizing he wasn't with the saints, he let out a panicky unsettled laugh. He would have gladly paid to get the old girl fixed, but since this was his last delivery to the old church he didn't see the point. The handyman fished out a cigarette from his breast pocket. Lighting it with a rattle of a hand was a bitch. He inhaled deeply, then exhaled with an ease of a slow sigh. He began muttering his mantra again. "Bad things happen when you're late, bad things happen when you're late...." The truck angled past the stores of Main Street toward an old, worn, white church that sat on a large distant hill. The church looked as if it was presiding over the town below.

Susan

It wasn't the alarm clock that woke Susan. Nor was it the milkman ringing the door bell with his weekly delivery. Or the sudden thud of the daily newspaper hitting her front door, as Tommy the paper boy practiced his dead-on throw. Tommy was Susan's default last chance to get up and start her early morning routine. Even Mr. Sheldon's annoying yapping trio of Pomeranians barely registered an eyelid flutter. No, it was the sound of an old, beat-up blue truck backfiring that seemed to bring the dead back to life.

Her eyes opened to view the light, reaching out through her poorly blinded windows. The light was warm across her face. Huh, it's bright out this morning... The thought hung in her head as if the sun rising in the morning was an odd thing, like it wasn't supposed to happen at the hour she usually woke up at. That was then her torso sprung up to check the clock. "Crap! Crap, crap, crap....crap.....CRAP!"

Jeremiah

The clamor in the diner was louder than usual for a Wednesday. Plates of hot food clattered as they were passed from proprietor to customer. Jeremiah sat rigidly on his stool, the steam from his freshly poured coffee seeped up his nose. His eyes lazily wandered through the scene of the busy diner, watching as people made conversation and merry chit-chat. Every so often he could hear bullshit being uttered.

He watched Clara's ass as it bobbed from table to table, she was trying desperately to take each order from the packed tables. *Susan must have slept in.* The thought was fleeting as he took a sip out of the dense ivory mug.

Howard

Howard glared at the old church with a thickening disdain. The highly-neglected building was Howard's weight to bear after the death of his father and brother. Howard pondered many times over the years how they must have felt when grandpappy bit the big one and left it to them. The responsibility should have rested on the old hellfire preacher's family who built the damn thing. Or at least the parishioners who worshiped there every Friday night back in the day. *Why his family? Why him?* With a sigh and a disgruntled grunt, Howard pulled the pickup to the front of the church. "Bad things happen when you're late, bad things happen when you're late...."



And Howard was late. The shadow of the old church lengthened and started to creep down the hillside even though the sun's rays were directed in opposition. But the old church cared little about the laws of physics, or even the laws of man.

Susan

In the bathroom, Susan managed to do her makeup, brush her teeth, and put her bra on backward three times, all seemingly at once. The night class and double shifts were getting to her. Add in the hour drive to school and sleep was thrown on the back burner. Thank God Carl liked the look of her ass or she would have been fired months ago, or maybe it was Clara stepping up to bat for her? Either way, she had never been this late. She threw some tissues in the toilet then watched her underwear fall in, chasing after them. It was not a great start to this day.

Jeremiah

An explosion like a cannon firing off resonated in the dinner. Jeremiah looked back to see Howard's blue, dented pickup putter on by. It was packed with crates and supplies. A sigh of futility escaped Jeremiah's chest. Ever since Howard's father died going on well over a decade ago, the poor schmuck took care of that old church on the hill. No one used it anymore, and in Jeremiah's opinion it should have been demolished years ago, "He should just burn that place down," Jeremiah mumbled as he took another sip.

"What are you going on about Jeremiah?" asked Carl, the old line cook, as he set a plate of eggs and bacon down on the counter.

Howard

The last crate thudded into place. What the church lacked in aesthetics and decor on the outside was made up for with what laid within. The inside looked like an ivory mecca. As Howard walked through his eyes were greeted by white marble flooring, hand carved statues, and smooth alabaster pews. The walls were decorated with real gold-inlaid murals and at the front, an altar laid bare and disused for more than a century. A great statue stood in the foreground behind the pulpit, expelling ominous presence that crawled into the skin, inserting a level of unease and looming dread. The statue itself was of a man dangling inverted, ensnared in the intimate embrace of a gigantic serpent as it bit down on the man's jugular. The statue, like the church, stood out and presided over all that lay before it. The walls themselves told the story of how all had come to be in grotesque exaggerations that wouldn't be taught in Sunday school. Howard glared at the serpent statue with disdain. "I'll be seeing you soon." With that, he beelined to the kitchen.

Susan

Susan threw open her front door with a burnt piece of toast in her mouth and juggled her keys, handbag, and watered down coffee. Milk went flying everywhere as she tripped over this morning's delivery. The two half gallons of boxed milk cartons drained on her front steps, killing any hope that she would read today's newspaper. With a sad sigh, she locked up the house and peeled out of her driveway, which let loose a cacophony of Pomeranian barks of dissent in her wake.

Jeremiah

Carl's white paper hat was covered in sweat and grease stains. The man was a house, and towered over the counter where Jeremiah sat. Jeremiah smiled and leaned back a bit, "Oh, I was just talking about Howard and his church." Jeremiah's views were common among the town's population. Minus the ghost stories surrounding the old church, no one really thought much of the old place. Carl's eyes wandered from Jeremiah to peer out the



window at the towering white steeple. The church had a hypnotic effect in that way. Many caught themselves staring at the odd structure for no other purpose than just to look at it.

Carl nodded. "Yeah, never liked the damn thing."

Howard

Howard stood in the church's kitchen watching the sad remnants of Howard's lunch boxed swirled down the drain. Howard sighed as depression started to ferret in behind his chest. He dried the solid gold plate and left the worthless object in the sink to gather dust. It was time to take care of the mutt out back. The one task that seemed far more Sisyphean than transporting the 600 some odd crates to the old church. But maybe Howard could succeed where the rest of his family failed. Howard wondered. *What would great grandpappy have suggested?* Howard picked up his shotgun and the shovel that sat in the corner and wandered on back to the yard where the old, mange-ridden animal waited.

Jeremiah

In the diner, Jeremiah sat up rigidly on the stiff red stool. He could feel fingers walking up his back like a seductive lover enticing him to the bedroom. He looked back to see empty tile and a crushed cigarette. He was half expecting to see someone there. An odd feeling swallowed him from his soul out. Jeremiah's face and body suddenly contorted as he sucked in air, making incomprehensible guttural noises. Like something inside of him was trying to talk. Then, as abrupt as the episode came, his demeanor relaxed. Carl shot him a level stare as if the man in front of him had just stated he wanted to fuck a clown on Main Street while he wore a pair of nice silk stockings.

Carl held a steady tone in his voice as he took a step or two back "You okay Jeremiah?" In the shadow of the old church, Jeremiah was flexing his hand like he had just put on a pair of newly oiled gloves. "Great, just feeling a little... touched." With that last word, Jeremiah shot Carl a smile that made the old Marine turn pale.

Susan

The radio blared as she pushed down on the throttle. "There seems to be an unusual storm front building in the north..." *buzz glitch* "...GOD!!! Judges with a swift and merciless force..." *buzz*. Finally, success, as the local rock station came on. "Why," she began to berate herself, "Why today of all days did I have to sleep in?" Of course, today of all days Carl wouldn't mind much at all that she was late.

Howard

Howard stood in front of the sink washing the blood and gore from his hands. "I hope twelve feet will be deep enough." He muttered to himself.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah looked on pleased with himself. Carl's head lay limply on the white and blue tile. The red, velvety smear of blood slowly enveloped where Carl's face used to be. Removed by Jeremiah's .45 slug. The .45's siblings were heading elsewhere.

Susan

Susan gasped as the seat belt caught her. The one thing that seemed to work correctly on her old beater of a car was apparently her brakes. Susan stared on in horror at the black beast of a dog that stood before her. Its gnarled black body stood hunched. Its fur was caked in blood and wet mud. It held what looked like its head at a peculiar angle. Susan soon found out why, when it turned to look at her. She stifled a scream with her hands, as to not bring the thing any closer. After what felt like an eternity, the dog-like thing limped and dragged itself away, leaving Susan to ponder its very existence, as well as her own.





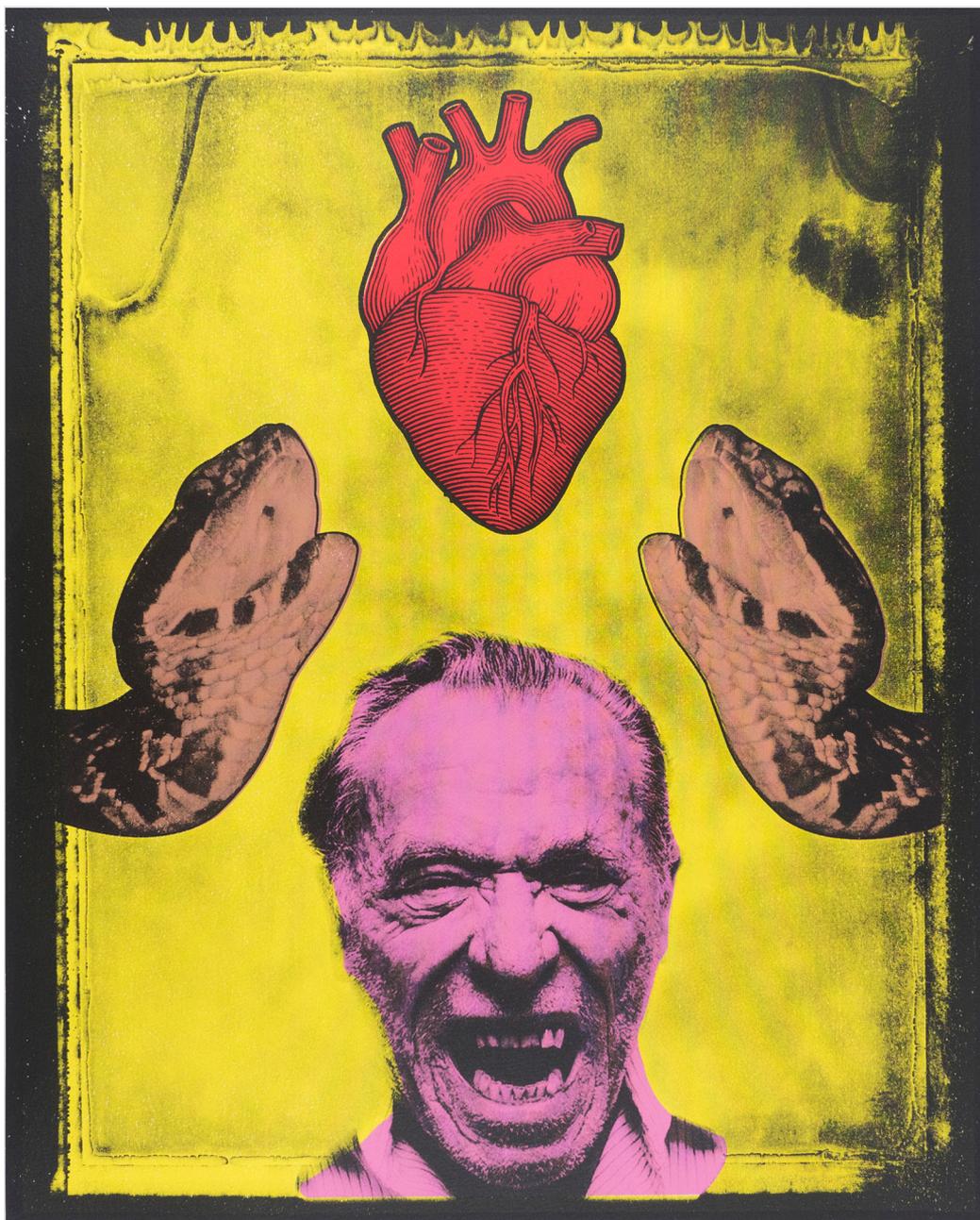
Susan

Susan pushed herself out of the car into the diner parking lot. She glanced at the dark quiet 1950's Sterling Streamliner style Restaurant. She couldn't see much movement in the windows. *It must be a slower day than usual. Probably why they hadn't called her. Carl and Clara are probably screwing in the office.*

The thought of working another twelve to sixteen hours wasn't pleasant. Susan looked up to the old, white steeple on its high perch. She held the gold cross that dangled around her neck and sent a small prayer towards the church. Praying to be bestowed with enough energy to get her through her shift. She would need that energy to get through this night. That's about the time the old church exploded in a brilliant orange light of utter destruction.

Susan stared on as multiple shades of horror crossed her face. She watched the whole hill catch fire, then collapse in on itself. Flames roared out of the collapsing hill as an eerie scream echoed from underneath. The playful jingle of the diner's front door bell drew Susan's gaze back to the restaurant. Leaning against the door was a blood-stained Jeremiah with a knife in hand. His unnatural smile gleamed in the orange glow of the inferno that had engulfed the hill. "Hey Suzie Q, how're you? If you don't mind, I'll take a cup of that good old black java Clara used to make."





# Bukowski's Lament

Dale Strouse  
*Serigraph*



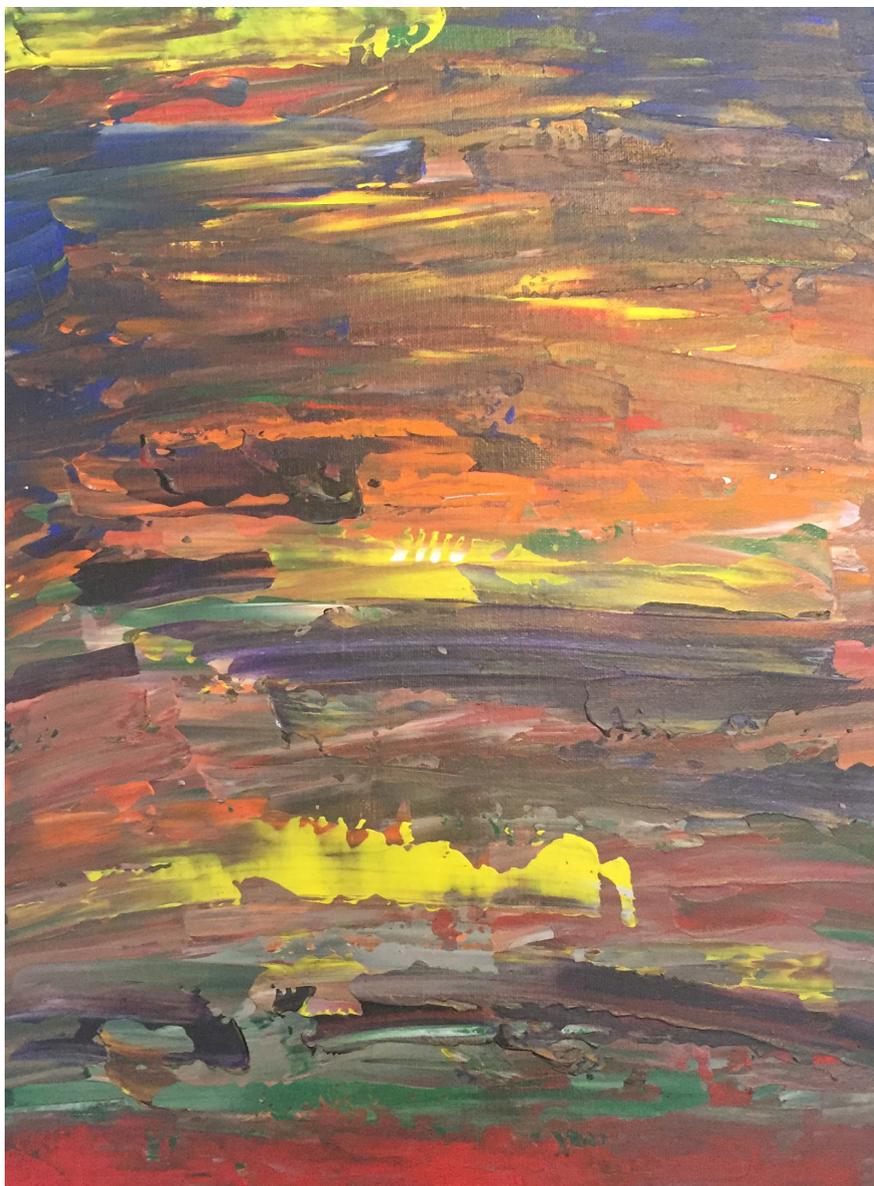
# Long Pauses

Romney Kellogg

*Poetry*

You must think I am crazy when I turn my head,  
And walk away from you when you need me to talk instead,  
You must become furious when I look at you in silence,  
Wondering if my lack of words is just showing my defiance,  
But when I lose the will to speak it feels as if I'm dying,  
My heart is being ripped piece by piece on the inside I am crying,  
I wish I could come to you and lay all my feelings on the table,  
Though the very thought of that makes me quite unstable,  
I want to do my best with you and give it all my might,  
So I can break these tall dark walls guarding my glowing light,  
One day I will be able to put an end to all the causes,  
Until then though there will be silence and long pauses.





**Chaos**  
Cecelia Martin  
*Acrylic on Canvas*



# Key to the Heart

Tyler Hickey

*Prose*

Jeanine jumped halfway out of her skin. The sharp intake of breath was more than the caretaker had heard from her charge in three years. Horace was usually so docile, passive even. Nothing fazed the old, bed-bound man. This wasn't the first time that she had lifted the silver, linked chain from around his neck, but it was the first time he had shown any signs of protest. She watched him with a tender anxiousness, hoping that this was not a precursor to something more dire, but his gaze was simply transfixed on the tarnished little key hanging from the end of the chain. Of course, Jeanine couldn't be sure that his clouded eyes saw anything at all, but they had definitely widened ever so slightly, looking for all the world like something had suddenly sparked in the frail fellow.

"Horace, dear, you remember this little thing? Wasn't it so sweet of little Beth to give it back to you, remind you of Martha? If you remember anything at all."

The last bit wasn't necessary, but hell if it didn't feel good. As she understood it, the old bastard hadn't been a charmer when he had his faculties, but she'd almost give them back to avoid having to clean up after him now. She'd nearly thought his soul had fled, that the time was coming to be rid of him, but he was a fighter; the old occultist had time.

The object still held Horace's rapturous attention; his mouth had even opened ever so slightly. It really was a beautiful little piece of craftsmanship, that key. Beautifully beveled runes wrapped around its handle, and the teeth rolled and roiled like waves, not the jagged precision of shopped steel. It was too bad, Jeanine mused, that the key was in such disrepair, it couldn't hope to open a thing, let alone sell for anything near what its craftsmanship would demand otherwise. Of course, its value was far beyond the contents of whatever it had opened in ages past.

"Hrnh," tried Horace, setting Jeanine back another step. She had been in his employ long enough to know his idle idiosyncrasies, and this was not one of them. Intention riddled that sound.

"Now Horace, such a precious little memento shouldn't to be kept to yourself, be gracious," she purred facetiously. It had taken years of preparation and research, but she was ready now to feel the power she had sought for so long. That key was more than a mere bauble. She had used it only a few times before, for small tasks; the neighbor's dog really had been quite annoying. Already she could sense it, the encroaching despair growing stronger as the light in the bedroom weakened.

As all young people must, Jeanine had learned that the human soul, contrary to what the purveyors of peace and poverty may preach, is a dark place, where desire and depravity run rampant. All it had taken was finding someone who had lived in the light of one of those special few. One of the true saints, by whom the demons of men's hearts could not help but be driven back into the darkest corners to fester and multiply. Martha's accident snuffed that light, and left Horace, infirmed and alone, ripe for Jeanine's







# Abandoned

Faun Scurlock

*Digital Photograph*



# LAPDOG

Howard Aaron

*Poetry*

I tried saving the dead  
instead of the dying.

I trusted my intuition  
And its inherent habit to err.

I entered before knocking  
and got knocked around.  
And I did the same thing again.

All rules were made  
after they were broken.

Fear was my bride  
and she embraced me.

I was a lapdog in the lap of the insane.





# Float Away

Grace Walton  
*Digital Photograph*



# Restless

Samy Reel

*Prose*

Annie woke to the sound of a buzzing alarm clock, a sound that reminded her of a chorus of angry bees. She lay in bed for a moment, wiping crumbs of sleep from her eyes, savoring the warmth of the sheets that lay puddled around her. If today were any other day she'd let the curtain of sleep lull her back to the dark, but she was far too excited for today.

She firmly tapped the alarm clock as though scolding a child and stepped out of her room, sweeping her fuzzy cream robe tight around her tiny frame.

The kitchen was bright and cheery, the light lemon walls cast a hazy, welcoming glow around the room. Annie had always loved the mornings, something about waking up and watching the sun slowly peak its head from behind the clouds. Mornings always meant birdsong and endless cups of coffee. Her son had always been a morning person, his father wasn't.

The ceilings were vaulted and slim towards the peak. Annie had been so thankful when Tom, her son, had helped her paint all those summers ago. She could still picture him, teetering high on the wobbly ladder, his face scrunched in two parts fear, one part anticipation as he swept the big brush in his hand back and forth. She pictured his sandy-blond hair freckled with tiny flakes of gold-colored paint. He'd been illuminated by the light streaming through the upper windows. Thankfully, he had forced himself past his extreme aversion to heights to appease his desperate mother. Annie had never really thanked him for that. Instead, she'd ordered Chinese take out (hold the peanuts), and together they had sat on the plastic covered floor. Tom had held his chopsticks poised over the white and candy red take out box. He'd complained about how his father had mapped out his future. Tom would attend his father's Alma Mater and study Econ with a focus in Business.

Tom had different dreams.

Sometimes it felt like she was grabbing wistfully at passing clouds, small reminders of the good days. That had been when Tom thought Annie could do no wrong.

After her second cup of coffee, which she doctored up with two sugars and two creams, Annie set about organizing the decorations she'd purchased for Tom's coming home party. It wouldn't be anything big, just Tom, his father and her. She hadn't seen Tom in years, it didn't help that Tom and his father weren't on the best terms.

She had selected silver and blue balloons, blue to match Tom's eyes and silver because it was his favorite color. She glanced at the ingredients on the counter that she'd set out the night before. She planned on baking Tom's favorite sweet: her famous lemon and almond tarts. When he was a little squirt he'd sit on the kitchen counter, his chicken legs dangling over the ledge. His hair would be matted down after his afternoon toss and pitch session with his father. Tom had been quite the leftie, his fastest speeds clocked around 75 to 80 mph. "Be better, do better than me." Tom's father would chant that like a mantra.



Annie could still see Tom's face, his hands coiled together into fists as he leaned over the raw batter and his tongue lolled. She always gave Tom the first slice, sprinkles of sugar and the thinnest slice of almond on top. In the blink of an eye the tart would be lost into the dark hole that was Tom's mouth.

Annie had been a ballroom dancer in another life, gracefully gliding through life until Tom's father had put a stop to it. Sometimes, when she heard music at the supermarket she would translate it into various dances. Tom's father didn't like it when Annie danced, he had forbidden it. Still, she had Tom, and for her, because she had her son, she had the world.

When Tom was a sophomore in high school he had begged her to teach him more about ballroom. She had taught him little things here and there as he'd grown up. But never enough. She had declined at first when he begged her. She had tried in the past, but Tom's father always gave them a sidelong glare and made his displeasure known to her. But still, Tom begged.

Annie taught him in secret. When she was feeling particularly nostalgic she'd go over the waltz with Tom, reminding him that he was the frame, his partner was the picture. She taught him that ladies were not to be stirred during turns but that it was the leader's job to open the door and invite the lady to walk through, not force her. She taught him the gliding and tipping motion that accompanied waltzes and how Tom needed to channel gliding into his steps while maintaining balance and poise. She slowly began to teach him other dances, hustle, cha-cha, rhumba, foxtrot, tango... everything she could remember and for a little while, everything was okay.

Sometimes she wished she could go back in time and stop herself from teaching him. She remembered the phone call, she could hear Tom's father yelling into the phone, the sound of broken glass and his fist against the walls in the kitchen. Tom had dropped out of his father's Alma mater, flunked out of Economics, lost his spot on the baseball team, and become a ballroom instructor. He'd become like Annie.

Annie heard the phone ring cheerfully and she snapped out of her daze and unhooked it from the wall. "I'm sorry Mom." she heard Tom say to her through the line, unreachable. When Annie finally found her voice, she said, "I understand, another time perhaps, love you." Then she hung up the phone and walked back towards the darkness of her room.





## Evening on the Sound

Austin Lewis

Digital Photograph





# Water Fall

Sandie Burks

*Digital Photograph*



# Hello, My Name is Crazy

Emily Hays

*Poetry*

They named me crazy

Painted my skin insanity

Clothed me in lunacy

And then made me a pariah

In their eyes I am patient zero

The Typhoid Mary of mental illness

Like they can catch the my delusion

My schizophrenia a contagion

My mind is an epidemic

And it's airborne





## Invisible Masses

Victoria Moon

*Acrylic Paint on Wood Panel*





When the morning mercifully crept in, the snowfall had ceased and there was a misty fog sitting heavily around her house. An icy wind whistled through the surrounding trees. Glancing at the window, she realized that the weather had, in a generous act of kindness, changed its temperament. She shuffled across the creaky floorboards to the cabin door and stepped outside to greet the new sounds. Glancing down, old lady noticed a reflection of herself in a muddy pool of water on the ground, left over from the rainy morning. She leaned over, peering into it. The whistling wind grew to a ferocious howl. A slight smile stretched across her wrinkly face.

"Yes, I live in this log cabin all alone now. Well, I have my cats."





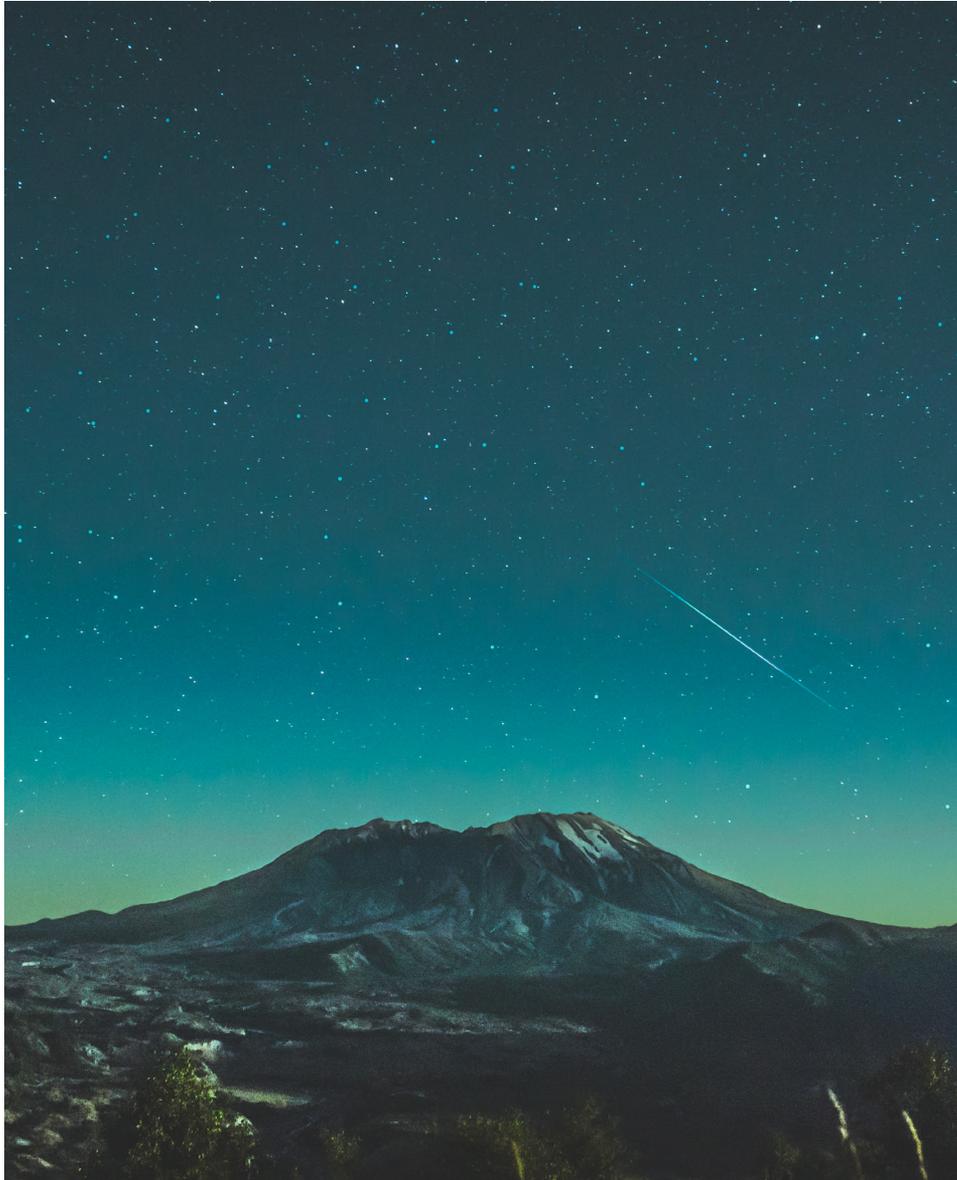
## **We're All Nerds Here, Episode 5: Dungeons and Dragons**

Kate Palermini, Shyanna Reyes, Kyle Chavanu

*Podcast*

Editor's Choice





# Mount St. Helens Under the Perseid Meteor Shower

Alexzander Isenhowe  
*Digital Photograph*







## The Juxtaposition of Perceptions

Nathan Hall

*Digital Photograph*





The princess loved to take long walks through the castle gardens. During one of her afternoon strolls, she found several maids and stable boys crowded around the new gardener. They watched entranced as he pruned a hedge into the shape of a unicorn dueling a narwhal. The princess was entranced as well, not just by the skillful way he wielded the clippers, but by his story of a time he had actually seen a unicorn battle a narwhal off the coast of Delmira, his homeland. Over the next several weeks the princess developed the habit of seeking him out when she took her walks. When the head gardener wasn't looking, they would sneak off to the pond together, where they skipped stones from the shadow of a weeping willow and the princess listened to the gardener's tales of adventures in Delmira. Once, when he had just finished telling her about a dwarfish friend who fell in love with a giant and she had succeeded in making a stone skip seven times, she looked up to the heavens and dreamily said, "He's a much better storyteller than you are."

*I will ignore that.*

Another afternoon at the pond, the gardener noticed that the princess seemed sad. She stood with her head down and her stones bounced only once or twice before sinking. "What's up?" he asked.

*Semi-medieval dialog, people. Try again.*

"Why art thou so downcast of countenance?" the gardener asked. "How was that?"

*Eh, you might be overdoing it, but close enough.*

With tears in her eyes, the princess looked up at him and said, "My eighteenth birthday is two days away. The day after that, I leave to marry the prince of Delmira." Her eyes widened.

"Wait, what? Since when am I marrying this prince dude?"

*You've been betrothed since you were born, but you made me skip that part because you said it was boring.*

The gardener became a bit downcast of countenance himself. "Don't you – I mean, doesn't thou want to marry the prince?" he asked.

"No," she replied. "I am nervous about going to a country where I've never been, to marry a man I've never met. I'll admit, your stories make it sound like an interesting place, and the fact that you showed up so suddenly and you're from the same country makes me a little suspicious that –"

*Shh! You're not supposed to catch on that quickly.*

The princess shook her head and said, "Never mind. It was a silly thought. Not really, but the narrator is getting better at manipulating dialog. Anyway, the real problem is that my heart belongs to someone else." The princess gagged even as she fluttered her long eyelashes at the gardener.



"Please tell me that someone else is me," he said, plucking a nearby buttercup and offering it to her with a flourish.

The princess rolled her eyes, but accepted the flower. "Of course it's you. You're the only other significant character in this story."

The gardener took her in his arms and kissed her, saying, "You are the *only* significant character in *my* life, baby. Oh, sorry, I should have said 'milady.'"

She cracked half a smile, then wriggled out of his embrace. "Okay, so now we get married and live happily ever after. Are we done, narrator?"

*Not exactly. The assignment says there has to be some sort of conflict, so now I have to inform you that* The princess' younger sister had been hiding in the bushes, watching them all this time. As soon as she saw the princess and the gardener kissing, she jumped out and said,

"Hi, sis."

The princess startled and blushed. "What are you doing here?" she asked.

"Making sure you don't do anything stupid," her sister replied, brushing the leaves off her skirt. "Like run away with a gardener or something."

"I wasn't going to do that!"

"Liar. I heard your whole conversation *and* I saw you kissing." The sister put her hands on her hips and cocked her head, waiting for an explanation.

"Um," said the princess, glancing upward, "I was willing to let it pass before, but now that there are three of us in the scene, could you please give us names?"

"What?" asked the sister, blinking a couple of times and frowning.

"Not you. I was asking the narrator."

"Oh! Well, I'm I going to tell Mother you're breaking all kinds of rules today." She sniffed. "A good princess does not kiss servants nor does she talk to the narrator." She tilted her nose in the air and turned to march back to the castle.

"Fine. You do that, little miss goody-two-shoes." The princess stuck her tongue out.

The gardener tapped her on the shoulder. He had been standing off to the side during the whole confrontation, twiddling his thumbs and wondering if the narrator had forgotten him. Now he said, "Pardon me, but is that appropriate language for a fairytale?"



"Oh, if you *really* want to hear inappropriate –"

*Don't you dare. This professor take off points for profanity.*

"Come, let us follow your sister," Vincent said, then grinned when he realized he was the first to get a name. "Thank you," he said. "Let us follow her and see what mischief she makes, but never fear, Esmeralda, for I have a plan. And a name for you too, apparently. The plan is this: comply with your parents' wishes. Go to Delmira as if you are going to marry the prince. I will go there ahead of you and at the last minute we will run off together, but you must trust me to follow through, even when all hope seems lost. Will you do this?"

"Wouldn't it be easier to just tell me now you're the prince?"

Vincent smacked his forehead. "You are ruining the suspense. Besides, it is not nearly as romantic if you already know."

He convinced Esmeralda to walk back to the castle with him, hand-in-hand to make up for the lack of romance. *Thanks, pal.*

"You're welcome, narrator."

As they expected, when they got there the queen summoned them into her sitting room where she personally fired Vincent and gave orders for the guards to lock Esmeralda in her room. Before either could leave, however, she made them listen to a long lecture on the importance of comporting oneself as befits one's station and on the dangers of crossing class and literary boundaries. Esmeralda's sister stood behind their mother's chair, smirking and nodding the entire time. Vincent and Esmeralda were glad when the queen finally realized the narrator wasn't taking any chances with direct quotes and allowed the extremely bored guards to take them away.

Two weeks and a long journey later, Esmeralda found herself dragging five yards of white silk down the aisle of Cathedral Delmira. "You. Must. Hate me," she muttered, taking measured steps and smiling with gritted teeth. "This thing is so heavy and the smell of all those lilies is going to suffocate me, not to mention every upper-class eyeball in Delmira is staring at me right now. You'd better give Vincent and me a *really* happy happily-ever-after."

When she finally neared the flower-enrobed altar, she narrowed her eyes at the man standing next to it. *Next to it, not behind it. Stop glaring at the priest.* He was wearing a white uniform with a gold sash, gold epaulets, and a gold sword hilt poking out from a white leather scabbard. He was the same height as Vincent and his hair was the same dark shade of brown, but the eyes that coolly watched Esmeralda's approach were blue, not hazel.



She paused on the first step leading up to the altar. "Uh, narrator?" she whispered.

"What's going on here?" Then she remembered Vincent's promise to follow through even when all hope seemed lost. Snatching up her skirts, she finished ascending the steps and stood patiently at the top while the elderly priest mumbled the wedding sermon as best he could without any teeth. She listened to the blue-eyed stranger repeat the vows in a highly formal tone of voice and she, in turn, said her own vows, ending each phrase in a question mark. She even allowed the stranger to slide the gold ring onto her finger, though his fingers felt like icicles when they brushed against hers. It wasn't until he leaned in for the kiss that Esmeralda took a step back.

"What is the matter?" her almost-husband asked.

"I think this is the part where Vincent comes rushing in and I marry him instead," Esmeralda told him.

"I don't think so," he replied, moving toward her again.

She took another step back. "Isn't it, though?" She lowered her voice. "That was the plan, right, narrator?"

The priest, the man in white, and the first few rows of audience gasped.

*Vincent being the prince was the plan, but since it was too predictable I decided that when they looked up the old parchments they found out that you were actually betrothed to Vincent's older brother Victor, and they had to lock Vincent up in a tower to keep him from crashing the wedding.*

"You can't just change things like that!"

*Yes, I can. I always have.*

The crowd began to get restless, deprived of witnessing the royal kiss. Those in the front rows were also beginning to wonder if it was wise to have the heir to their throne marry a woman who talked so openly with the narrator.

"Then I demand that you change things again so that I get to marry Vincent after all."

The princess said this rather loudly, causing more gasps from the audience. Ladies covered their mouths in horror, and those with children began escorting them out of the room so as to protect their impressionable minds from corruption. The priest kept tapping his ears, forgetting he was in a story without hearing aids, and Prince Victor stood stiff and straight as if perfect posture might make this mess of a scene look better somehow.



*Well, if you've got your heart so set on it, you'll have to tell me how to work it out, because this assignment is due in twenty minutes and you just ruined my only good idea.*

"I could break into the tower."

*Yeah, right.*

"Or he could break out and come running to my rescue."

*Now who's being cliché?*

"His parents have a change of heart?"

The kings and queens of both countries sat in the cushioned front pew, whispering to one another and exchanging worried looks. *Okay, Esmeralda, I might be able to make this work. It'll be boring and anticlimactic and I probably won't get an A, but I can try. Are you sure this is what you want? I mean, Victor is kind of handsome too.*

"Uh, no. I'm sure. And if it makes you feel any better, you weren't going to get an A on this assignment anyway."

The king of Delmira stood up and addressed the crowd. *(See how I ignored that comment? You're welcome.)* "Thank you all for coming today. I sincerely apologize for the shocking spectacle that this has become. I would like to put to rest any fears that the future king of our great nation is now united with this reprehensible young lady. We were not previously aware of her disregard for our most deeply held literary values, and now that we are, we rejoice that she herself prevented the marriage from being sealed with the kiss. Furthermore . . ." The king's speech went on for several more minutes, but fortunately the narrator managed to cut off his direct quotes.

Esmeralda sighed and tapped her foot. "So I'm not married to Victor, but do I get to marry Vincent or not?"

*I'm not sure. I probably should've read that chapter about monarchs and the Divine Right to Irrelevant Dialog. Since when are you so attached to Vincent anyway?*

"I don't know, maybe after having to listen to you all the time I just fell for the first guy who could tell a decent story. At least when a certain narrator isn't messing with his dialog."

*That's not fair!*

*"You're telling me. You know if Vincent were telling this story he would have been out of the tower a long time ago."*



*Well, guess what? Time's up for my midterm and I'm actually over the page requirement, thanks to all your arguing. If you think you would do a better job telling this story, go right ahead. I have to stop now and turn this in, so here's your chance. You finish your own story.*

"Wait, that's it?" Esmeralda's gaze darted around the cathedral, from the still-talking king, to the hundreds of confused and upset audience members, to the priest standing on tiptoe to whisper in the prince's ear in a not-so-quiet voice, "What is going on?" She looked up to the ceiling again, as if the narrator were hiding somewhere among the painted cherubs, which was literarily impossible. "You're not going to give me any hints or any –"

Nope. Best of luck, princess, and let me know how it turns out. See you at finals, maybe.

"Seriously?"





## A Version of Us

Valerie Parrish

*Graphite on Drawing Paper*

Editor's Choice







## Countless Stars With You

Robin Nguyen  
*Digital Photograph*





Finally, Algor's favorite sight on his daily journey came into view: the masses. Gamey, caked masses of flesh that time had done its absolute best to dispose of. Masses that transcended into a new physical form: mold. They stuck on the sidewalk and etched into its broken cracks. The masses were plentiful, placed on earth as different beings, and fulfilled lives of their own significance. Even in this state, Algor thought of them just as intricately defined as they had been in before. None of them were alike, be it the organisms feeding on them or the positions they were set in.

Dormant mildew: Algor's best friend.

Though these were keen sights, nothing paid full tribute to the masses that sat in the nicest structure of all. Reaching the same height as the grey vehicle-stations, this building looked like that of royalty. Time even agreed with this notion, as it allowed the building to maintain its vibrant red and white color. Here, the masses left a pathway of decomposing victory straight through an open door. Aisles of bowing statues that were all hunched along the structure's base, folded over each other in celebration of their species. A shattered window of colorful glass allowed Algor to peek inside where the masses sat in columned togetherness. They, for what he assumed to be their own, individual reasons, chose not to flee the city but to observe a T-shaped throne that sat directly on the stage in front of them.

Amazing.

Algor's mind was comprised of countless, filament-thin chips that marked anything he conceptualized in an instant. And in several hundred of those instants, he was still unable to ascertain why these particular masses were unlike the masses within their vehicles. Although he supposed that it mattered not, because they were all the same in the end.

Then, Algor's systems calculated his battery life and told him to stop. He obeyed. The bot noticed that his travel concluded a foot less than it had yesterday. In fact, yesterday it concluded a foot less than it had the day previous. He was certain that this pattern would continue forth tomorrow, the next day, and the next – but Algor's mind was unable to fear the end so he simply noted this as fact and returned the way he came.

Soon, Algor knew, he would be one with the masses and he thought that was just fine.





# Celestine

Julia Rose Waters  
*Ink Drawing*





## Sequential Erosion

Nathan Hall

*Digital Photograph*



# Minors

Julia Rose Waters

*Poetry*

Unnoticed deaths:

Crushed worm

(guts pulp),

Roadkill

(twisted spine).

Innocence lost;

World rushes on.





## Octo Splash

Faun Scurlock

*Digital Photograph*



# Corpus Callosum

Kim Engeln  
*Prose*

Once, there was a war between two villages that stood on opposite banks of a river. On one side lived the Binarians, who believed that Logic and Reason were their rulers. Above everything else, they worshipped rationality, and with it, came their infinite knowledge of numbers and laws of the universe. On the opposite side of the river dwelled the Aesthetians, who valued creativity and an abstract mind. With their deep, philosophical wisdom, the Aesthetians would ponder imaginative questions and come up with brilliant theories to explain the origins of their planet, and what life after death may be.

The village elders furiously argued with one another between the arts and sciences, loyally defending their gods as the promise for the future, but there was one thing that both villages were in desperation for: advancement. The Binarians had devised the cleverest equations to send their kind well into the space age, yet their amazing gifts were useless without the ability to think beyond the stars. The Aesthetians, though just as wise and advanced as their neighbors, were cursed with the inability to think linearly, and thus doomed to always wonder about what has passed and what may come, but never to ask, "what next?"

Then, one day, a young Binarian girl wandered far upstream from her village on the same day a handsome Aesthetian boy did the same. The two met where the river narrowed, and from a stone's skip away, they innocently exchanged hellos. Though from different ways of knowing, their young minds had not yet been fixed and soiled in permanent ways of thinking, so their imaginations intertwined, sharing with each other marvelous stories of both the sciences and the arts.

The two children grew close as they aged, continuing to rendezvous by the river and marvel at each other's amazing thoughts and talents. Inevitably, they fell in love as they learned that their worlds were not divided, but rather complimentary. At the end of the day, their minds would creep closer to adulthood and their ways of knowing became fixed with both creativity and reason.

Then one day, when the children had grown up, they knew that the river surely was not deep enough to keep them apart any longer. They agreed to confess their love to their villages, and propose that each village take the advice from the other. The young lovers declared to their towns, with such passion and enthusiasm, images of rockets propelling into the heavens, how numbers could paint masterpieces, and how imagination could foster invention.



The tribes were in uproar. The Binarians declared art useless, emotions counterproductive and creativity distracting. The Aesthetians held strong to their belief that numbers were cold, and that a rational mind was claustrophobic and constricting. Separately, the tribes deduced and exclaimed that the lovers were false prophets there to spread blasphemy and fiction. The adults of the villages, with their brains so hardwired into their own version of the truth, blindly and mercilessly killed the lovers for exposing their secrets to the other tribe.

However, the Binarian and Aesthetian children, with their young brains still malleable and their imaginations unlimited, listened to the lovers describe an infinitely wondrous future in which creativity gave way to experimentation, and faiths could be made facts by deductive reasoning. That image of a unified and powerful mind shaped the youngest generations and when it was time for those children to become leaders, they combined their wealth of knowledge and built a bridge across the river.





# Battle of Rainbow Falls

Cambri Shanahan  
*Acrylic on Canvas*



# Tap Out

D.G. Kyker

*Poetry*

Asshole at the bus stop  
smoking a menthol  
he catcalls a girl  
she's walking across the street  
she doesn't hear him  
lucky her  
she glances around  
headphones in  
he nods his head  
looks like he's having a fucking seizure  
that way she will know who blessed her with such a profound compliment  
she keeps walking  
he checks her out  
and the next girl  
and the next  
he boards the city bus  
I wonder  
if he chalked that up as a victory  
she keeps walking  
passing me  
our eyes meet  
she rolls hers  
she heard him  
I wonder  
how does she chalk that one up?





# The Lodge

Samuel Hardy  
*Digital Photograph*



# A Nameless Girl

Dawn Bailey

*Prose*

The girl had no father. No men in her life to speak of except the nameless and faceless strangers who kept her company. She was never daddy's little girl to anyone, but the men cried out in the night, "I will be your daddy." They whispered, "I will take care of you." She had not yet passed seventeen years on Earth as the words were panted in her ear. Barely a woman, her body warmed as slick flesh slid over slick flesh during the heat of the long Los Angeles summers. In the autumn, the sultry breeze of the Santa Anas did nothing to cool her passions, but only served to fan the flames of her desire, the weathervane in her mind being turned to and fro, west, east, north, and south. She was flying but had no place to land, free-floating through the chapters of her life.

Men. Nice men, bad men, all men, no preference. Promises made but never kept. She was hurt constantly, lied to constantly. Over and over, they came. Wrapped in those promises, a tangle of promises, lies, and promises. Hurried motions in faraway rooms. Quick, pull those up, zip up, quick. Through it all, she searched. She knew there was one man who would fulfill that need inside of her to be loved. Not just used for convenience and temporary pleasures, but truly and deeply loved.

Her whole life she was the unwanted secret others chose to hide. Innocent in her feelings, she was a girl swept up in the current of a premature adult life. Learning the facts of life late at night in the local park. They took her on the couch in the family home in the full sunlight, and more than once in a scary, foreign bedroom, with the smell of nag champ permeating the air and UV lighting illuminating the psychedelic posters on the walls.

The words they uttered, empty and meaningless: "I will take care of you." "I will be there for you." They flowed through her brain, in and out, in and out, in and out. Suddenly, these words did not comfort her any longer. Her life had become an empty, dried out husk, and she, a ghost that walked among the living. No one was going to be her savior. Her life was a lie. As she flung herself off of the Colorado Street Bridge in Pasadena, the wind whipped at her hair and made her eyes sting, a temporary pain as a tradeoff for everlasting silence. For the first time in her life she was not sad, for she had the comfort of knowing that, at least this time, she could fly and have a place to land.





# Separation

Jessica Smith  
*Intaglio Print*





## Cataclysmic Skyline

Kaitlyn Slorey, McKenzie Wells, Polina Sklyarova  
*Adhesive Vinyl*





## Demure Honey Bee

Holly Varner

*Digital Photograph*



# If I Left the Zoo

Cory Blystone  
*Prose*

I never thought I'd live to be eight years old. Eight is a good number. Round. Double round! Like infinity, only sleeping on its side like I am pretending to do right now in a makeshift bunk, scooped out from the surrounding rock and supported with concrete. Since nothing good ever happened to me, I never figured a good thing like the number eight would be in my future. Apparently I was wrong. Today is my eighth birthday, only there is nobody around who knows it. The Elephant Flu wiped out my entire family in one fell swoop last winter. How ironic they were all in the Ivory Trade. My grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters, mother, father, father's special friend, and everyone else I ever knew. Gone. Burned to ashes. Poof! I was certain I was next.

Unfortunately, I wasn't.

I live underground now. Well, to be honest, so does everyone else after the sky went dark. Yes, it is musty and moist and murky, and I can barely remember what it feels like to have the sun warm my face, but it's home. I can't say that it's all bad. There are plastic windows behind the metal bars that look out onto a stone wall that still holds the blast marks from the day this place was created by the government. And my favorite time of day is food. I like food. The handlers tell us that if we want more food, we should start performing. After all, that's what the hardworking citizens who visit us in the Orphanarium pay to see. The Orphanarium is where the orphans go when they're no longer suited to live in society because they have nobody who can care for them. I've been told that it's the nicest exhibit because we are the only one that has beds. Kids like beds. We like to jump on them and nap in them and hide in them when the bad guys come at night. It also has a giant dome that has a painted ceiling of white, puffy clouds that look like sheep swimming in an ocean of sky. That's what Mother used to say when I was little. But I'm not little anymore. Now that I am eight today, I'm afraid I will age out and become food for one of the other attractions in this zoo. Lions? Tigers? Bears? The Meat Popsicle Stand?

I wonder how long I can pretend I am only seven.

Behind the harsh glare of artificial light that always buzzes, and the smell that usually makes me dizzy, and the fingernail scratches against the plastic windows that sometimes obscure my view of the outside world, I see the crowd is piling in. They easily stand out in front of the dark basalt. The women like to wear flowery dresses. Some men do, too. Mother told me once it was because it reminds them of how it used to be before all the bees died, back when the world had flowers and fruit. She said it was a sad reminder of the past and people should only live in the present. My present awaits me. It must be food time soon. Nobody likes to watch a starving child starve, but everyone likes to watch a starving child eat. The handlers tell us it has been this way since the dawn of time. I have my doubts, but I don't let my handler in on my suspicions because he brings the food.



He also does other things I don't like to talk about.

My mouth begins to water as I watch the colorful old people on the other side stuffing their faces with hand pies, meat popsicles, mushroom sandwiches, and I wonder if that will be today's menu. I hope it is. The other children, all much smaller than myself, stop their playing and stare at the people eating as I walk behind them. Many of the adults look uncomfortable as they wait for the show to begin, trying to hide their glare from the dirty kids. I even hear one threaten to demand a refund as I sit down, my bare feet numbing from the cold cement floor as I fight back shivers crawling up my leg. I pinch my inner thighs a dozen times as hard as I can so they can focus on pain instead of cold and stop trembling. Trembling equals weak. I am not weak. At least, I am not weak today. The handlers must have overheard the restless crowd, because the food is suddenly pushed through a small door on the far side of the arena where I perch in a plastic chair next to a plastic table. This means I'm first to get my food. I take a plastic plate, set it on the plastic table, and begin cutting it up with the provided plastic knife and fork, slowly eating my food with the proper etiquette my adoring audience craves.

The crowd goes wild, trampling one another to view the spectacle that is me, squishing their fat faces against the windows. The other children couldn't care less about etiquette and shove food into their faces like the pigs in the arena next door. I've been here long enough to know what happens to kids like that. I've seen too many of them get snatched away at night while they sleep, and lay awake every night praying it won't happen to me. Then I'd have a bad day and hope that they did take me away because even death was better than being trapped in a cage.

Slicing a bite off my hand pie, I hold it close to my mouth and let it sit there while I close my eyes and sniff. This is almost too much for the adults. An old woman faints, dropping her own half-eaten hand pie. I smile on the outside and cry on the inside. That pie would get thrown away now, and that makes me sad.

"Give him more!" they shout.

The handlers oblige, rushing into the Orphanarium to make a barrier between myself, my food, and the paying public prepared to perceive my perpetual perseverance against the feral orphans I share a cell with. I like big words. Mother taught me lots of them in this magical book called Dictionary. We only got through 'P' before she died. But, admittedly, I love food more than I ever loved Mother. As the new plate is set before me, I put my hand to my chest and shake my head NO, which only makes the adults shout, "YES!" After a short back and forth—engaging, I think they call it—I give in to their demands, and eat the second plate with the same restraint I'd shown on the first.

Even with two plates full of food, I still feel empty inside.



The handlers leave the arena, taking with them the plastic plates and knives and forks in plastic bags to be put into a plastic bin before they head to a facility where they will be placed in large plastic storage containers and live forever. But today is my eighth birthday, and I am the only one who knows it. Suddenly, I want to live forever, too. Perhaps if I left the zoo and some family took pity on me and adopted me my life would be better. But then, would they have food?

As I look around my concrete prison, I can't help but notice a few children missing that were there before feeding time. Uproar from the crowd, cheering wildly as they had done for myself only moments before, clue me in to their current location.

"Stupid tiger! Get the white one! He's weak!" I heard a man shout.

"I think he wants the black one!" A woman shouted back. "That tiger must like dark meat better."

I don't know. I've never known a tiger to be that picky when it came to feeding time, especially when the menu consisted of orphans like myself.

Well shoot. My handler is coming.





# Gold Hair

Erin Carlie  
*Wire*



# Chemistry

Jessica Judd

*Poetry*

There's something exciting about exothermic reactions  
And Erlenmeyer flasks filled with acid,  
Pipettes and burettes and bottles and beakers,  
Even the words "thermodynamics."

Once you master the math, stoichiometry's a breeze,  
Even combined with calorimetry.  
Equilibrium and entropy and Gibb's free energy,  
That's where it starts to get tricky.

At first you only gloss over the basics  
Of thermodynamics and quantum mechanics.  
Find temperature, mass, or measure molarity  
By titrating a specific quantity.

Pay attention in lecture and listen in lab  
And don't take your eyes off the beaker or flask.  
Does it bubble or boil, turn blue or sublime?  
The answer's worth points in the paper you'll write.

A semester of this will leave telltale marks,  
Like calculator buttons with the numerals worn off,  
Equations on notecards, and lines around your eyes  
From the cheap, plastic goggles like most students buy.

Yet from unit conversions to London dispersion  
To the elegant complexity of the elements,  
Like a ferromagnet, vacuum, or van der Waal's force,  
It will draw you in. It's chemistry, of course.





# Hye Low Brutha

Jason Cardenas  
*Serigraph*





## Peaceful Serenity

Zeke Estes

*Digital Photograph*



# American Curiosity

Raul Moreno

*Prose*

This week, on the campus where I teach English, we're studying "living sources." Fieldwork, et cetera. "Give your topic a face," Bruce Ballenger urges his curious and not-so-curious researchers. Today, on the day none of us want to show our faces, I asked them to write for 10 minutes in a notebook. What have you overheard? What will you remember from this day?

Here's what I got down.

*North Portland. November 9, 2016. Corner bakery, big windows.*

*The man sitting down the bench from me is on his phone. I can't make out the caller. His mother, maybe. He loves her very much—that much is clear. What's also obvious? This morning, this man is nearing some breaking point.*

*"You don't understand," says the man. "You're a white, straight American and you can't understand what this means for me. It's a nightmare. For someone who's gay, I mean. I'm gay, remember?"*

*The man has curly brown hair and big headphones wrapped around his Adam's apple. Up-down, up-down.*

*He's working, he told his sad friend a few minutes before the call, for a little paper company off Mississippi. He's trying to convert a Craftsman into office space. Free beer, sans wireless. So he's working from the bakery today.*

*"You don't understand," the man repeats, his whisper beginning to crack. "I'm fine, I'll be fine. But I have friends in North Carolina. I'm worried sick about them. For their safety, I mean. They don't understand."*

*"And listen, when I get back, I don't want to hear about this. Nothing. Not at Thanksgiving. Not now. They don't understand, and you don't, and I don't either."*

And I don't either. But that's what I heard today, I told the sea of faces. Okay, who's next?



# Passing Time

Cory Blystone

*Poetry*

Wed, Aug 12, 7:41 PM

gregs going into surgery  
ph cant call he had a  
stroke sorry have to tell u  
like this love u patti mom

Wed, Aug 12, 8:33 PM

Sterile waiting room  
shades of brown and red  
and an aunt I don't care for  
await us. My mom needs me  
more than my ego or hate.  
Shades of brown and red and  
an aunt I am hugging. Mom is  
scared. She blames herself for  
being sleepy and slow and not calling  
9-1-1 faster. She can't be convinced  
otherwise.

Wed, Aug 12, 10:10 PM

Another sterile waiting room shades of  
blue and red though not so sterile as the  
first. I spot crumbs and wrappers. This is the  
ICU. Another aunt I don't care for but am  
hugging just the same. Tragedy breaks  
barriers and grudges, but for how long?

Thu, Aug 13, 2:15 PM

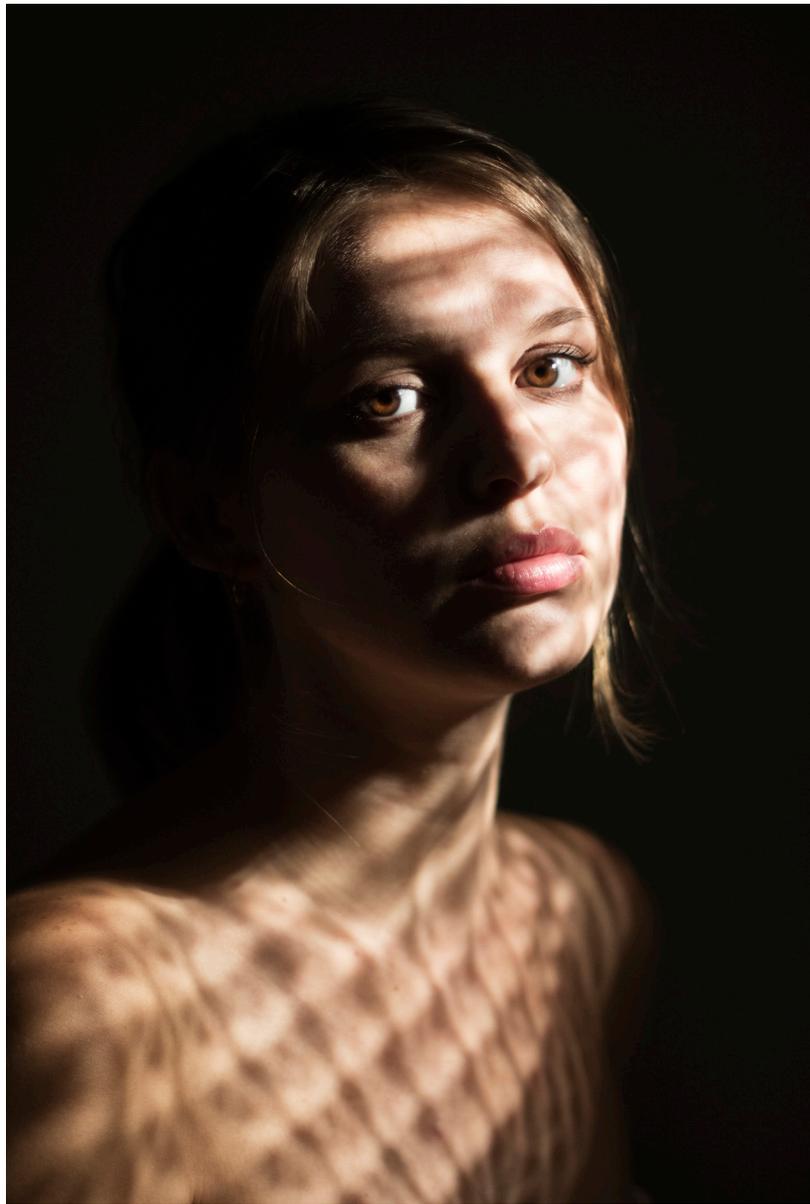
Another sterile waiting room shades of blue  
and red and bright windows. Private.  
Family I love and hate. We hug like we forgot  
why we hate each other. Waiting together.

Fri, Aug 14, 1:44 PM

Waiting for news. Good. Bad. Good. Bad. Bad.  
Bad. Bad. Bad. Really bad. But we wait together.  
The room swells of fake and genuine.







**Grace**

Polina Skylarova  
*Digital Photograph*



# That's What You Mean to Me

Brian Idle

Song

1) How to express my thoughts of what you mean to me  
 You've given strength and love that's what you mean to me  
 You're like my best's friend that's what you mean to me  
 I'll love you to the end that's what you mean to me

2) Have you met a certain someone I will bet?  
 Who moves your soul and makes you feel you're in control  
 A true romance you're feeling like you're in a trance  
 But better still a lover that you will fulfill  
 Now tell your friends you're gonna love them to the end  
 You'll be on top the love you feel will never stop  
 Then party on and make it to the break of dawn  
 Fantastic chill the feeling of your free will

3) You've turned the night to day that's what you mean to me  
 I've found a better way that's what you mean to me  
 I thank the Lord above that's what you mean to me  
 You are my only love that's what you mean to me

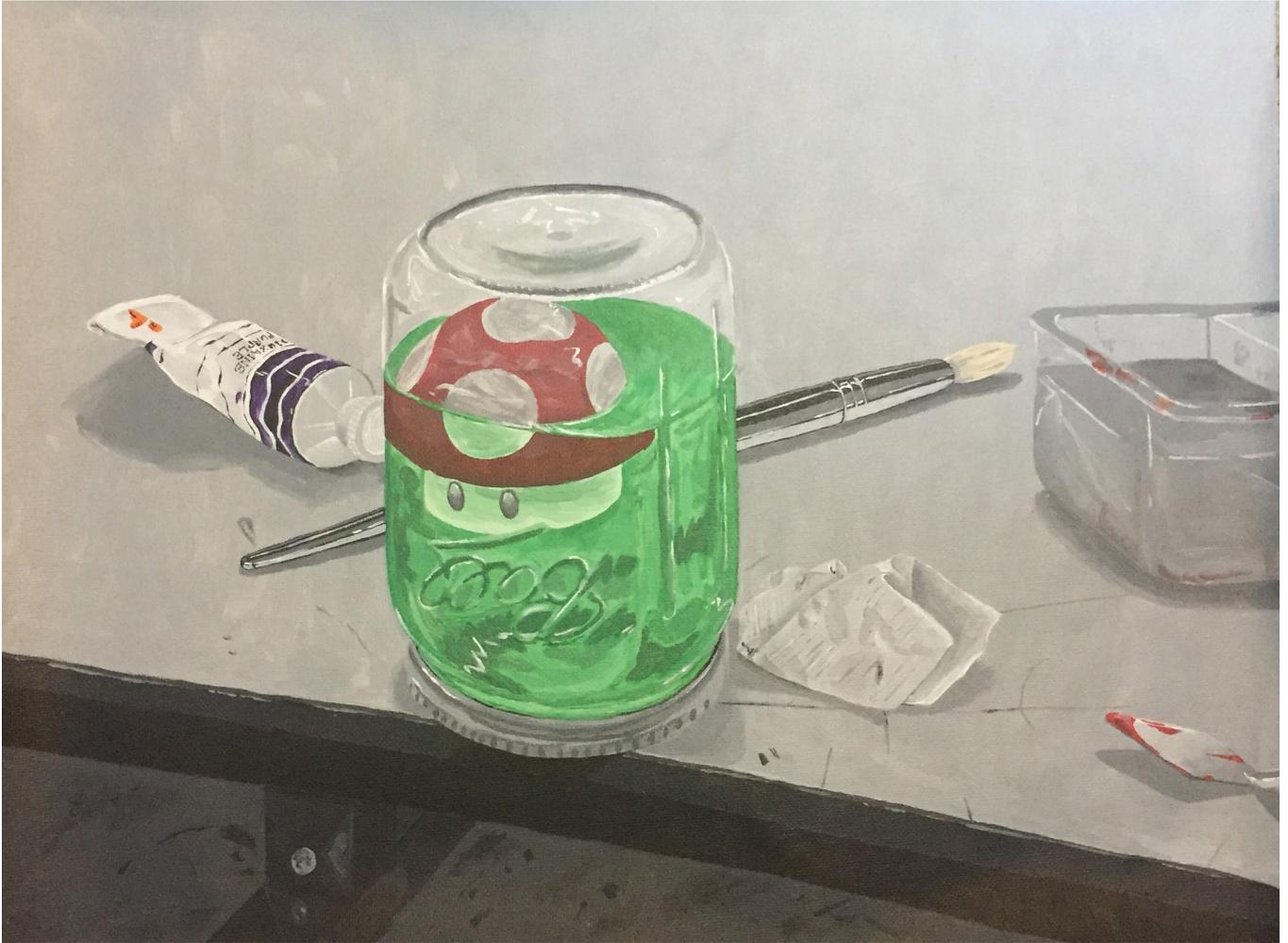
4) Now turn around they're waiting for you all down town  
 A lover's glance is there if you will take a chance  
 Some happiness to get you out of all your mess  
 Not black or white just colorful within your sight  
 And don't stop there and tell your friends to be aware  
 Not right or wrong it's where you feel that you belong  
 You better stop and take a breath before you drop  
 Don't loose control your mind and body and your soul

5) The problem has been solved that's what you mean to me  
 With you I'm so involved that's what you mean to me  
 I'll never run away from what you mean to me  
 My heart with you will stay that's what you mean to me

Repeat 3

Repeat 4





# Mario Jar

Cecelia Martin  
*Acrylic on Canvas*



# Maidens and Monsters

Megan Peaker

Prose

*The studio audience was rapt with excitement. The taping for Maidens and Monsters was about to begin. Everyone wondered who the lucky maiden would be. The host, Jerky Insaltin ran onto the stage, his eyebrows arched in perfect sarcasm. The audience went crazy as he smoothed his shiny black hair back and flashed a cocky half-smile that lit up his mannequin-esque face. He waves the audience into silence.*

Jerky: Welcome back ladies and gents! Let's get this party started. Audience cheers. You already know the rules but just in case someone here hasn't seen our award winning show, let me break it down for you! One lucky maiden will be chosen at random from our studio audience. That young lady will then get to question and choose one of three hideous monsters. Remember audience etiquette! We cheer for the maiden and boo her monsters. Makes 'em feel at home. *Audience laughs. Is everyone ready?* Audience cheers. *I can't hear you!* Much better! Spotlight please! *Spotlights light up, circling the audience. An eerie glow makes their faces look alien.* Our maiden is in row G. *Spotlights circle in on row G. There are only two girls in this row. One is a chubby brunette wearing jeans and a t-shirt. The other is a perky blonde wearing a cheerleading uniform. They are both staring at Jerky, waiting for the seat number. The audience inhales slowly. Seat 6!* *The blonde girl bounds out of her chair and down the stairs towards the stage. The stage is set up for the game. There are four stools, one of which is separated by a partition. The girl is jumping up and down next to Jerky, who puts his arm around her and pulls her uncomfortably close. Tell old Jerky your name!*

Girl: My name is Candy Apple!

Jerky: Sounds delicious. *Audience laughs.* Candy, have you ever seen this show?

Candy: Omigosh, like totes watch it all the time. It's like my favoritest show of all time.

Jerky: Well Candy, are you ready to meet your monsters?

Candy: YAY!

*Candy is escorted to her seat behind the partition.*

Jerky: Audience? Are you ready? *Audience cheers.* Candy? Are you ready? *Candy cheers.* Let's get it on. Our first monster hails from Transylvania. He is known throughout the land as a force to be reckoned with and can even drain you of your will to live. Get ready to boo as we meet Count Dracula!



*An older gentlemen dressed all in black steps into the harsh studio lights. He visibly recoils as the light touches his skin. His pure white hair glistens in the fluorescents, giving him an otherworldly vibe. Sharp, pointy teeth peek over the edge of thin, colorless lips, grazing against a long, white mustache. The audience is booing like mad.*

Jerky: Thank you for being here! But aren't you a little old for this?

Dracula: Zank you for having me. I am excited to meet my next victi-err-lover. And sir, I am timeless.

Jerky: Well gramps, Candy isn't yours until you woo her to your side. And you have some dreadful competition. Our next monster comes to us straight from the party capital of London, England. Known as a reclusive and secretive man, he is mad scientist meets high school jock, put your boos together for Dr. Jekyll. *The audience boos as a nervous looking yet handsome gentleman walks out onto the stage. He is dressed in a neat suit and looks clean. His eyes dart shiftily about and he occasionally glances behind him as though he is being watched. He wrings his hands while taking his seat. He greets the host with a shy smile. The audience boos softly, not sure of what to make of this monster.*

Jerky: What's up Doc? Ya hiding something?

Jekyll: No, no. *He twitches.* I'm, I'm good.

Jerky: Well pull yourself together. You've gotta win the heart of Candy!

Jekyll: Yes, yes. I'll be sure to win her heart.

Jerky: Not much of a talker, eh? Well audience, what do you have to say about that?

*The audience boos louder than before. They glare at Jekyll as he shrinks into himself. He is clearly scared. He starts shaking and suddenly the muscles beneath his suit start contorting. He screams as the sleeves of his suit and the legs of his pants start tearing apart. The sleeves and legs lay against him, tattered beyond repair. The audience gasps in horror as they view the man, who now has an angry scowl on his face.*

Jerky: Doin' do alright there, Doctor?

Jekyll: Mwa ha, I am finally free! No more hiding from the truth. I am no doctor. I am Mr. Hyde.

Jerky: What a twist! Two monsters for the price of one. This has never happened before. *Audience boos in excitement.* Audience, our last monster is a mystery. Not much is known about him other than he comes from Verona and he is known by most as Viktor Frankenstein's worst nightmare. Get ready to boo! He is simply known as The Creature.





Candy: Um, can like, Mr. Hyde come back? No offense but you are super boring. Like, a night on the town is totes more interesting than a boring house party. *The audience shuffles uncomfortably. This second monster was boring.*

Jerky: Candy. Has. Spoken. *Chanting* Bring back the monster! Bring back the monster! *The audience quickly catches on and chants "Bring back the monster" until Jekyll retreats and Hyde's scowl returns.*

Hyde: As I was saying, I'll show her the dark side of the night life. *Audience boos excited*

Jerky: Last guy err corpse? What even are you? Okay Smelly Giant, where would you take Candy on your first date?

Creature: *clearly annoyed* Well, I like intimacy. Getting to know one another over a cozy fire, as I read aloud from the classics. We'll sip cocoa and just enjoy one another's company.

Candy: Awe, you're so sweet!

Jerky: Rotten! Moving on. Candy, what is your next question?

Candy: Hmm. What should I ask? *Her bounciness affects the audience and they start bouncing with her as she thinks.* Like I love animals. So if you could be, like, any animal, which one would you be and why?

Jerky: *He winks.* Naughty little mink.

Candy: Naughty?

Jerky: Nevermind. Old man, answer the lady.

Dracula: Vhait, I have to pick just vun? Let me reflect for a moment. Zhere are times when I feel batty, other times I vant to just scale a building. I have a volfish hunger, so much hunger. Hmm. Are imaginary animals effective?

Jerky: Candy? It's your question, you call the shots.

Candy: Of course! Like, your wildest fantasies are totes okay with me. *Jerky wiggles his eyebrows suggestively. The audience snickers.*

Dracula: Then I would like a chance to be a unicorn. I vant to feel pure and beautiful.

Candy: Omigosh that's like totally cute! I think I like you.

Jerky: Points to the elder dragon! Mr. Hyde, your animal?

Jekyll: Excuse me? I am Doctor Jekyll. And I would be a cat.

Hyde: No! A dog is so much better.

Jekyll: Cats are independent.





Jerky: Heh, heh kinky. *The audience chuckles.* Splity-Mcpersonality?

Hyde: I would win an award for most awesome night life. I know how to party and to leave a room looking on in awe. My killer personality allows me to trample over all who cannot keep up.

Jekyll: No! I'd win an award for advancement in medical sci—

Candy: Next monster please!

Jerky: Hey, leave the insults to the hot! But good on you. *Jerky winks at her.* You know what you want!

Candy: 'Kay.

Jerky: Sir Smelly?

Creature: *The Creature glares slightly to the left at Jerky, his eyes not connecting properly to be a proper stare down.* My award would be for my ability to love others. I know how to take care of others because I learned to read on my own, cook for myself and do what it takes to survive. I just want someone I can take of and make them happy.

Candy: Omigosh, you are so sweet! *Candy makes an overly excited heart shape with her hands. The audience boos, not sure of how to react when the maiden does something monstrous.*

Jerky: Now now, save your booing for the monsters! *The audience sits, bewildered at the weirdness of this episode.* Candy, you are so close to picking your monster!

Candy: Yay!

Jerky: *Jerky wiggles his eyebrows and the crowd cheers wildly. He quiets them with a wave of his hand.* Candy! Let's review the candidates and then you'll choose your monster! What do you think of Count Dracula?

Candy: Well, like, he seems like a real romantic. We could totally stay up all night talking while we eat yummy food. I totes like dancing and he likes my favorite music. He's kinda hot!

Jerky: Kinda hot for an undead creature of the night. How about the man within a man, Dr. Jekyll?

Candy: Dr. Jekyll, well, what can I say? He's, like, a boring human. Gross. I want a monster. But Mr. Hyde, oh he is so dreamy. I super like to party and go out and I kinda like want to tear up the town with him!

Jerky: But can you handle the boring side?

Candy: I, like, don't know.

Jerky: Onto our vision of life after death, how about The Creature?



Candy: He seems so sweet. And not gonna lie, I kinda like to be spoiled. He sounds cute and nerdy and that's like so totally in right now!

Jerky: Guess that leaves me out. Jerky pouts, *his perfect face sarcastically drawn down to look sad. But Candy*, what about your host with the most, Mr. Jerky Insaltin himself?

Candy: You're not a monster! But I love you anyway. You, like, host my fave show of all time.

Jerky: Ah, stop, I love you too. *Jerky blows a kiss at Candy. Audience? Are you ready? Do you want to know who Candy will choose? The audience cheers wildly. It takes Jerky an abnormally long time to quiet them down. Candy, who do you choose? The lights dim and the spotlights return. They circle the studio and the stage, lighting the stage. The lights circle in on Candy until they unify on her bubbly, bouncing body. She smiles brightly and gives her answer.*

Candy: I totes pick The Creature!

Jerky: Well he certainly is a hunky piece of rotting flesh. Are you ready to meet your monster?

Candy: I totes am! *Dracula and Jekyll are escorted off the stage as the partitions drop and Candy meets the eyes of her monster for the first time. She tries to meet the gaze of The Creature, and she tilts her head to the left. They share a smile as she walks towards him. She gives him a big hug and smiles up at him, his giant size casting her in shadows. You are so tall!*

Creature: *The Creature giggles nervously as Candy slips her hand into his. You're cute. Candy and The Creature exit the stage amidst a raucous round of cheers and boos. Jerky is alone in the center of the stage. The camera pans to him and he gains the crowds attention.*

Jerky: You saw it here folks! Another maiden monster connection made on this very stage. Join us next week as we connect more maidens with more monsters. Only this time, we have a twist. Next week, a monster will get his choice of three lovely maidens. Who will he choose? Stay tuned after this broadcast for a sneak peek at our newest show, Knights and Nightmares. Our valiant knights will fight to win the hearts of the most vicious harpies and succubae we can get our hands on. Thank you for watching and see you next time!

*The camera pans around the audience one last time and lingers on Jerky's perfect face as he smiles unblinkingly until the lights finally fade out.*





## Lost in Time

Robin Nguyen  
*Digital Photograph*





# Street Musician

Austin Lewis  
*Digital Photograph*





**Free**

Valerie Parrish  
*Digital Photograph*



# Skeleton Number 112

D.G. Kyker

*Poetry*

I cant breathe.  
Fuck, my chest hurts.  
I stepped on a piece of glass  
it is working its way to my brain.  
My chest hurts, fuck.  
What's wrong with me?  
Head hurts,  
I'm having an aneurysm.  
If my nose bleeds,  
I'll choke on the blood and die.  
My chest hurts.  
I can't breathe.  
There's a loose bone over my eye,  
its floating in my scar  
its going to enter my blood-  
stream  
Am I too young to have a heart  
attack?  
A stroke?  
My chest still fucking hurts.  
Ingrown hair,  
cancer?  
Tacks on the wall over my bed,  
they will fall into my mouth  
and choke me to death.  
Do I have alcohol poisoning?  
I have alcohol poisoning.  
My food is trying to choke me.  
Can't swallow.



Fuck, my chest hurts.  
What's wrong with me?  
I just want to eat.  
I just want to sleep.  
Can't eat.  
Can't sleep.  
Infected.  
My fucking chest hurts.  
I heard a prince choked to death  
on a hair,  
his own hair.  
Is my hair falling out?  
Laundry detergent on my hand.  
Bleach, pine sol, comet, poison.  
Can't swallow pills  
they get stuck.  
Read the label.  
Might overdose.  
Re-read the label.  
Recommended dosage, 12 and  
older.  
Probably won't overdose.  
Doesn't matter  
still can't swallow it.  
My chest fucking hurts.  
Choke on spit.  
Choke on air.  
Wrist hurts,  
I have carpal tunnel syndrome.  
Spider bite.  
Snake bite.  
I have a bruise,  
blood clot?  
"You look flushed, a little pale"  
Do I ?  
I do.  
Still can't breathe.  
Why the fuck does my chest hurt?





# Smith Rock Rec '16 Rec Trip

Sterling Fletcher  
*Digital Photograph*





## American Dreams VII

Raul Moreno

*Digital Photograph*



# Remembrance

Tyler Hickey  
*Prose*

Old Po could not help but admire the vastness of the valley far below his perch.

"Is its size not splendid?" the old man asked his companion, a young man laying nearby. "You could get lost in those winding canyons between the fires of the villages." The silence that followed did not perturb Old Po. "That would be a good place."

Old Po turned his attention to the vivid, green canopy of the jungle to the east.

"Can you see the tree branches shake with the passage of life? Is that vitality not exhilarating?" The dullness in the young man's eyes betrayed him. "You could be a part of that, nestled among the roots of those great trees. That would be a good place."

More silence. A soft curl teased the ends of Old Po's lips.

"You cannot deny, though, that the gulls' wandering flight is enviable in this chaotic world." The young man did not deny it. "The waves below them are nurturing and furtive, like a mother. Imagine what is left for you to find in its depths" Old Po imagined his companion reflected his own wry smile. "That would be a good place, out among the waves."

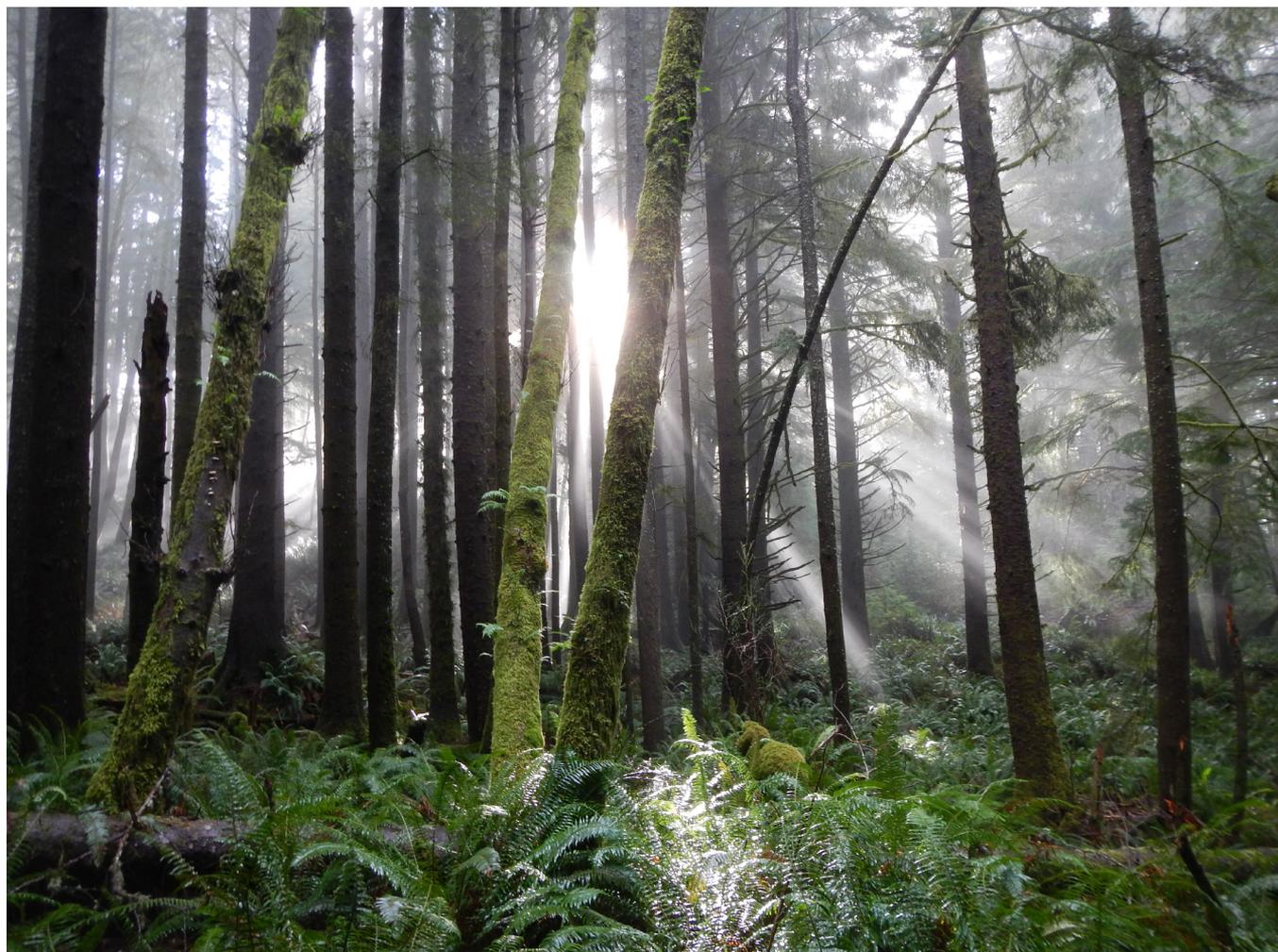
It was almost time now, Old Po's weary bones could not withstand much more.

"I would even venture that the swamps, so far and inhospitable, beat with a life of their own." Old Po's lip quivered at the thought of that place, but the young man did not waver. "They defend their own, just like you would have. That would be a good place"

"But," declared Old Po with renewed vigor, "this is the best place, my son. Up above the clouds, with the gods of men. "Where you will be king of the grass and the earth." Old Po's voice broke, but he continued, "Where I can look up and know that you will meet my gaze, ever watchful and safe. Where you will remain unstained by the touch of man, who did not deserve you," he whispered.

Finally, having had enough, Old Po rose and left the young man to his rest.





# Sun Bursting Through the Trees

James Ficek

*Digital Photograph*





# Bailey Arritola in Ivy

Alexzander Isenhower  
*Digital Photograph*





# Line of Descent

Ari Hall

*Graphite on Embossed Paper*



# Damn Girl! Get a Watch!

Amanda Flynn  
Poetry

Ext. Hollywood Boulevard Marble Stars - Day

JOCELYN: "Damn girl! Get a watch! Remember the time..."

Helen: "Oh yeah..."

O.C. VOICE: I remember the minute I found out I was a girl  
my mom stepped on the scale  
and said she was overweight.

Voice Over: She was 98 pounds.

Int. McDonald's - Warm, Cheap, Convenient

Clock is clicking closer. Girls sit to table munching on fries while people converse and pick up orders. Guy makes burgers tirelessly, sizzling, popping gum as the cashier looks over. Narrator takes quick breath.

O.C. VOICE: I celebrate the hour in which I realized I was a girl  
Anthony twisted my arm while it was still in a caste  
and bashed me to the ground.

VOICE OVER: She threw him against the fence and  
gave him a charlie horse.

JOCELYN: "Damn girl! Do you even remember the day?"

HELEN: "Hell, how could I ever forget it..."

O.C. VOICE: I recall the day I knew I was a girl  
Denny would only date me  
if I didn't have freckles.

VOICE OVER: She scrubbed her face with lemon juice  
till it cracked-blistered-peeled.



O.C. VOICE: I think about that minute I realized I was a woman  
and I was about to go on stage,  
but, I just couldn't leave that bathroom stall.

Voice Over: She was afraid, perhaps,  
the bleeding meant she was dying.

O.C. VOICE: I reminisce about that hour I knew I was a woman  
when I found love, but, became even  
quicker friends with heartbreak.

VOICE OVER: She flung that bracelet against the wall and wept until the  
nightmares became beads.

Cues stop. Exit stage left.

O.C. VOICE: But, I'll sure as hell never forget the day.  
I just about had enough and I enrolled into that women's studies course.

Int. Room - Helen and the clock meet face to face. SHE'S HAD IT!

HELEN: "Now see, I dismantled that wretched dial,  
For its rickety-clackety-numb filled hour and  
its tick-tick-tick minute dollar, got to make money  
to survive sign, And SHE scratched her nails on  
HIS face, No warning wheel would stop the speaker  
from the bursts of loose screws, ratchets, and clanks  
And I got up, real clearly, all up in HIS tail and HIS pinion,  
I got up to his clack-click-pit-clack and I whispered, I said,  
'You know all my secrets, and all my springs,  
But you're gonna know my one and final absolute.'  
Oh yeah. I remember the second. I got up in Father time's  
lever springs. And I told HE, real clearly, I yelled,  
'You sure as hell can control time, but my gender  
will NEVER define my success.'"

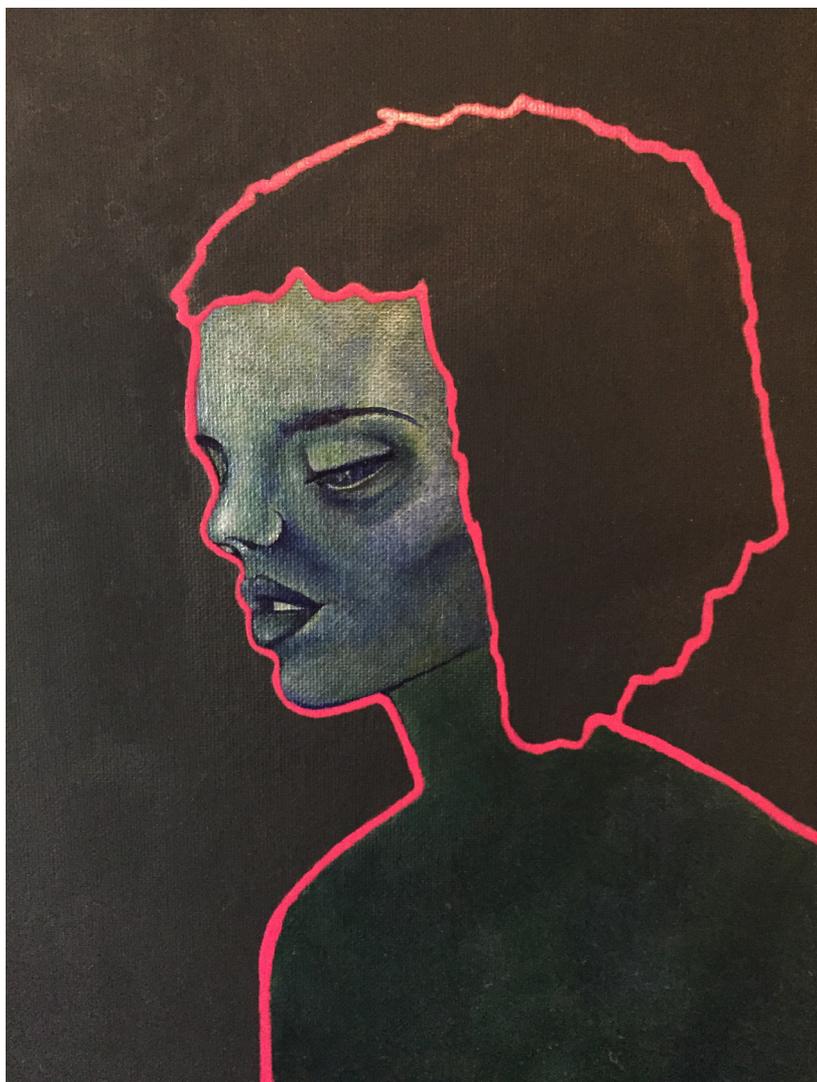
VOICE OVER: I remember the minute

O.C. VOICE: I recall the hour

JOCELYN: I celebrate the day

HELEN: I finally learned the truth.





# Neon Gaze

Grace Edwards  
*Acrylic on Canvas*





# Zion

Haley Elmer

*Digital Photograph*



# Final Notice

Marilyn Johnston  
*Community*

Talia always dreamed of going. To pack her canvas duffle bag, enough for two to three months, taking only what she could carry on her small frame without anyone's help. She'd imagined it would be by motorcycle on her good days, when the pain was only a 5 or 6 out of 10, envisioning the motorcycle driving permit folded in the inside pocket of her leather jacket.

She knew where she would head, leaving before the first snowmelt on the main roads that led from her front door in Shaw, Oregon, until she arrived in Patagonia. She'd studied the maps, tried to figure out distances along the Pan-American Highway. She'd explored the ferry system through the Darien Gap between Panama and Colombia, researched possible detours to Iguazu Falls, then Valparaiso, Chile (how romantic she'd thought this sounded), before arriving in Torres del Paine National Park by the end of March. Ted laughed uproariously each time she'd bring this up the idea of such a trip, shaking his head at the notion she'd ever have the nerve to ride a motorcycle, let alone that she'd be alive to reach the tip of South America to tell anyone how it felt ever being that free.

But Ted stopped laughing early November, a worried brow accentuating his round face, Talia standing in the doorway of their cottage, waving goodbye. And he followed her to the shed where she revved up the Kawasaki she'd bought late summer, second hand, in spite of his protests, with savings from her part-time job at the Dollar Tree. He shouldn't have been surprised. He'd witnessed the subtle changes in her, her new confidence, her fearlessness. And just last night, while walking home after work during a steady rain, Talia had turned the corner onto Rippling Brook Court and reached the sidewalk to their house, when a darkly-dressed figure bumped into her, almost knocking her over.

What the hell! she'd shouted, turning to glare, but whoever was there was already running away, the soles of their shoes pounding against the puddles as they quickly disappeared down the barely lit street.

Talia turned, rubbing her shoulder, and then walked up the three stairs to her front door. It wasn't until she took off her raincoat in the entryway before hanging it in the front closet that she noticed a white envelope sticking out of the right pocket. Her name and address were imprinted on the label—once, no-doubt, boldly typed, now rain-soaked and faint. It was the latest Lab report her doctor had promised her as soon as the hospital techs' strike ended. Three weeks of negotiations finally over, there were test results to report, and no one likes to deliver bad news in a small town.

Talia scanned the contents, then tucked the report back in the envelope and left it on the kitchen table. She fixed a mug of chicken broth, ate it with a stale piece of toast left over from breakfast, and headed upstairs. By the time Ted returned home and climbed into bed with his cold feet, she was already asleep, her bike's saddlebags all packed and left on the landing by the bedroom door, waiting.





# 2017 Digital Journal

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In response to the spectacular growth of WSU Vancouver's digital arts community, Salmon Creek Journal celebrates 2017 as the official launch year of Salmon Creek Digital. SCJ now recognizes the importance of showcasing digital compositions in ways that highlight the unique materiality of each production. In this spirit, SCJ has redesigned its website as a platform for elevating the full spectrum of electric literature. As we launch this next chapter in our future, SCJ would like to thank the students and faculty of the Creative Media and Digital Culture program for answering our calls for submissions with countless pixels, and for jumpstarting this and other efforts to curate all things digital.

[www.salmoncreekjournal.com](http://www.salmoncreekjournal.com)



# The Acquaintance

Tyler Hickey  
*Web Fiction*





# Ashen One

Austin Lewis  
*Digital Illustration*





## Cubism Self-Portrait

Lylliana Gurrola  
*Digital Composition*





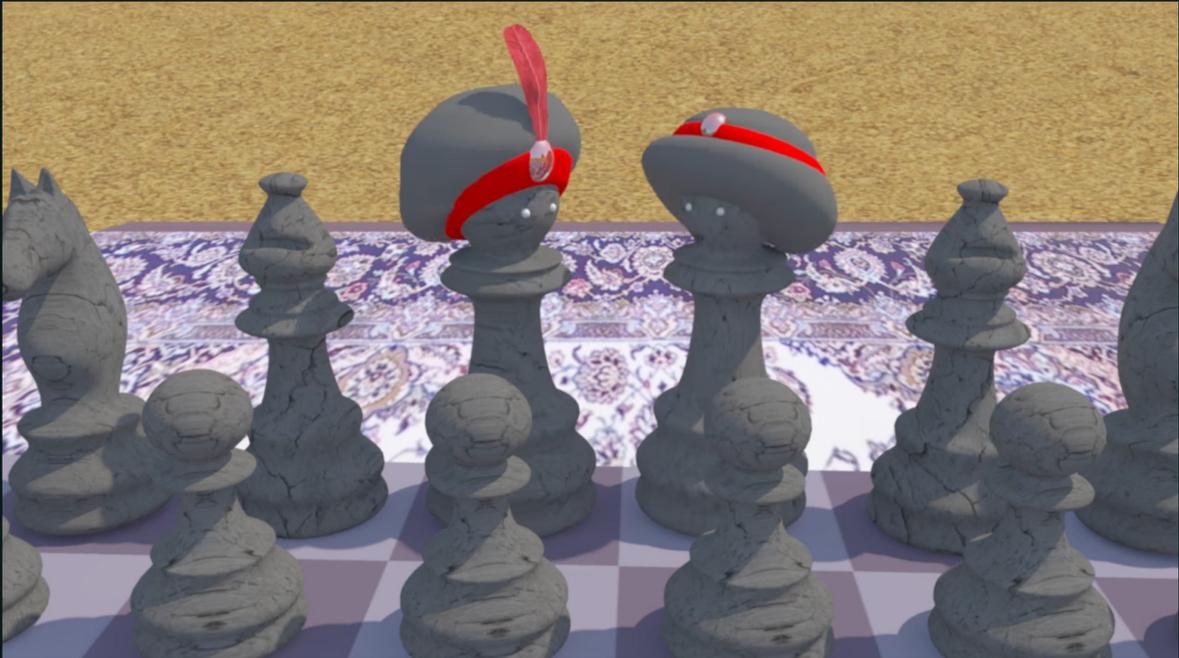
I made up my mind to take the life of the old man,  
and thus rid myself of the eye forever.



## The Telltale Heart

Kate Palermini  
*Web Fiction*





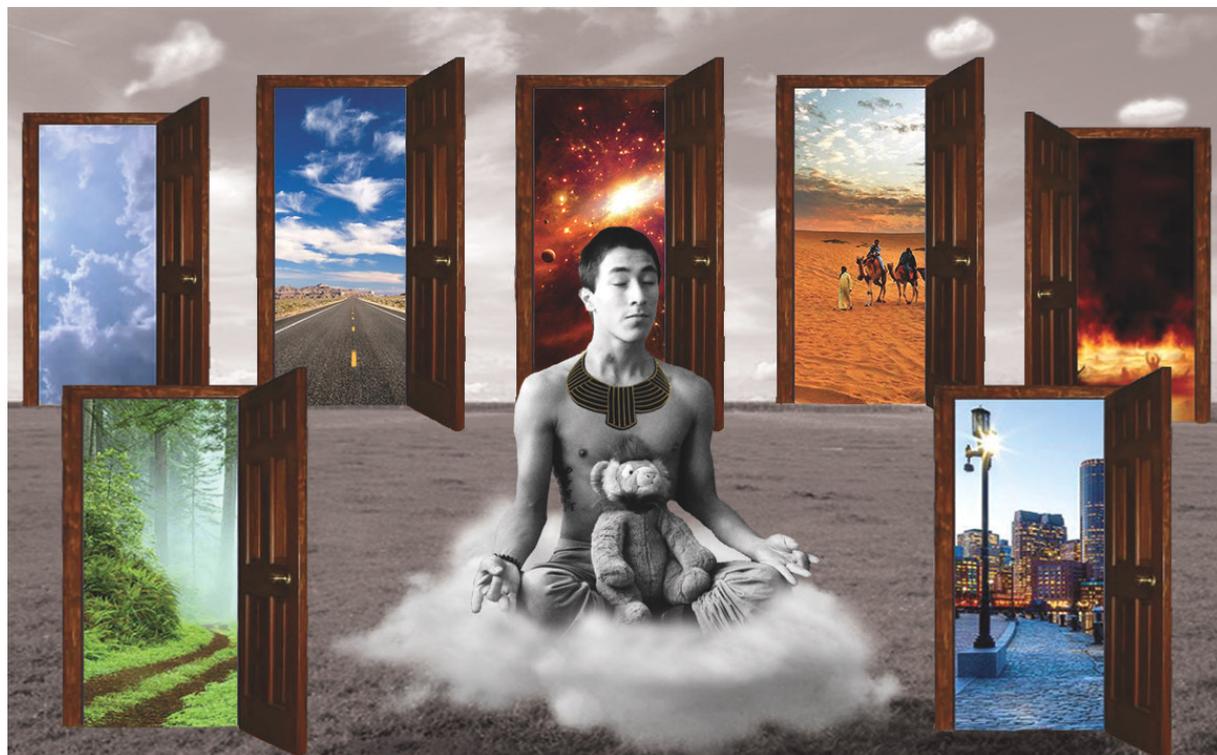
## Diamond in the Rough

Brianna Savage

3D Animation

Editor's Choice





# Enlightening Leo

Lylliana Gurrola  
*Digital Composition*

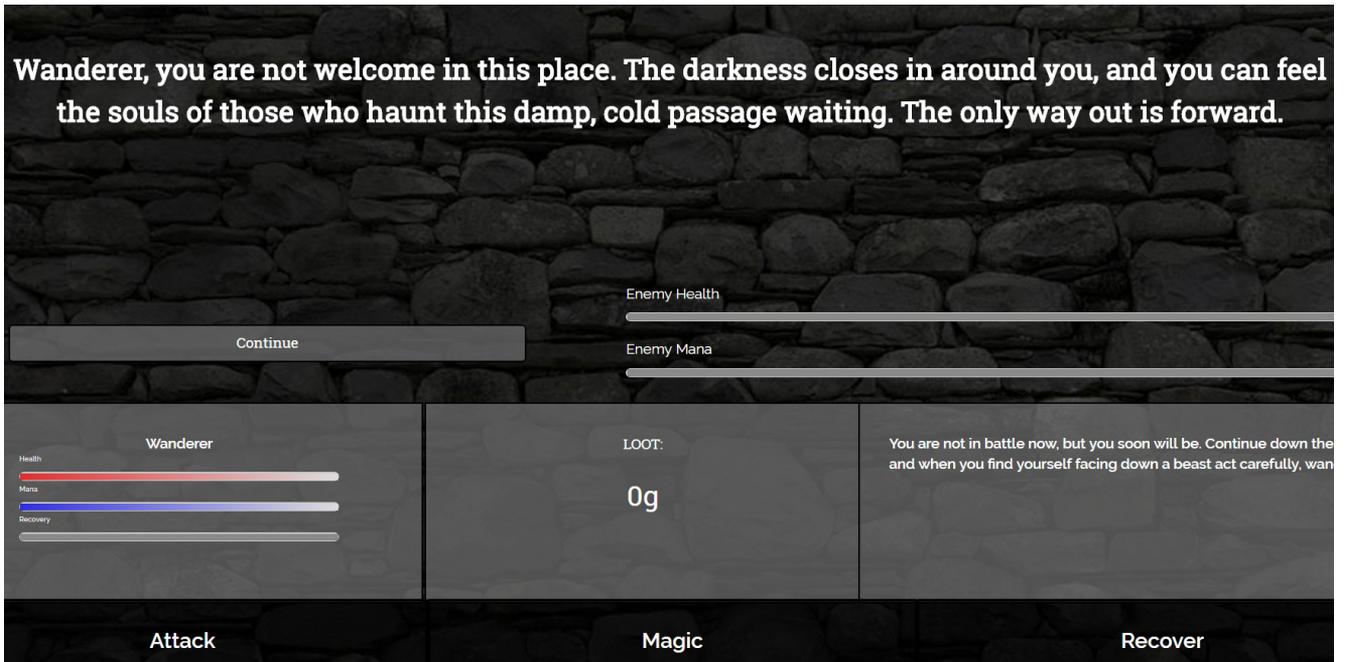




# The Apple Seed

Brianna Savage  
*Digital Comic*



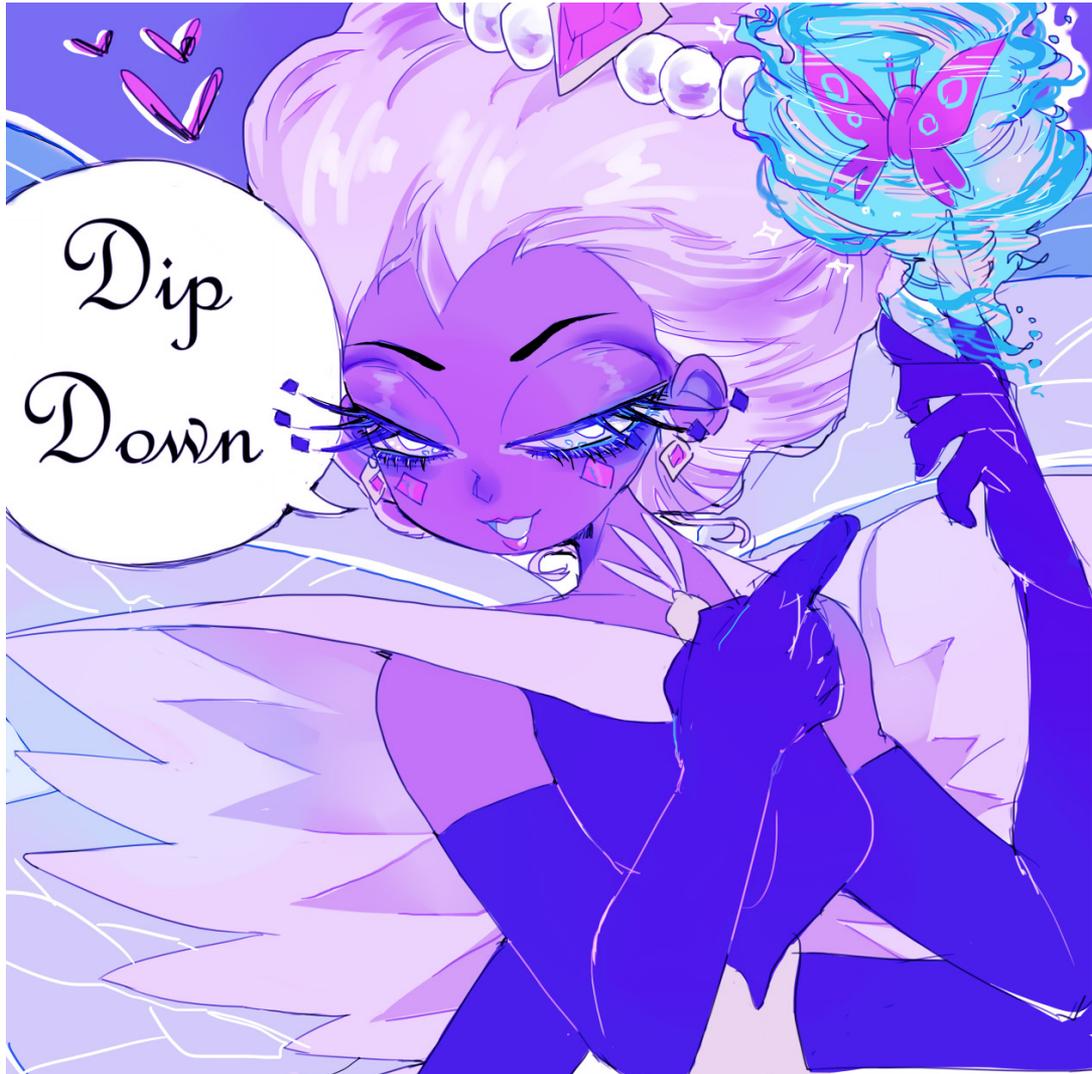


## Corridor's End

Tyler Hickey  
*Web Fiction*



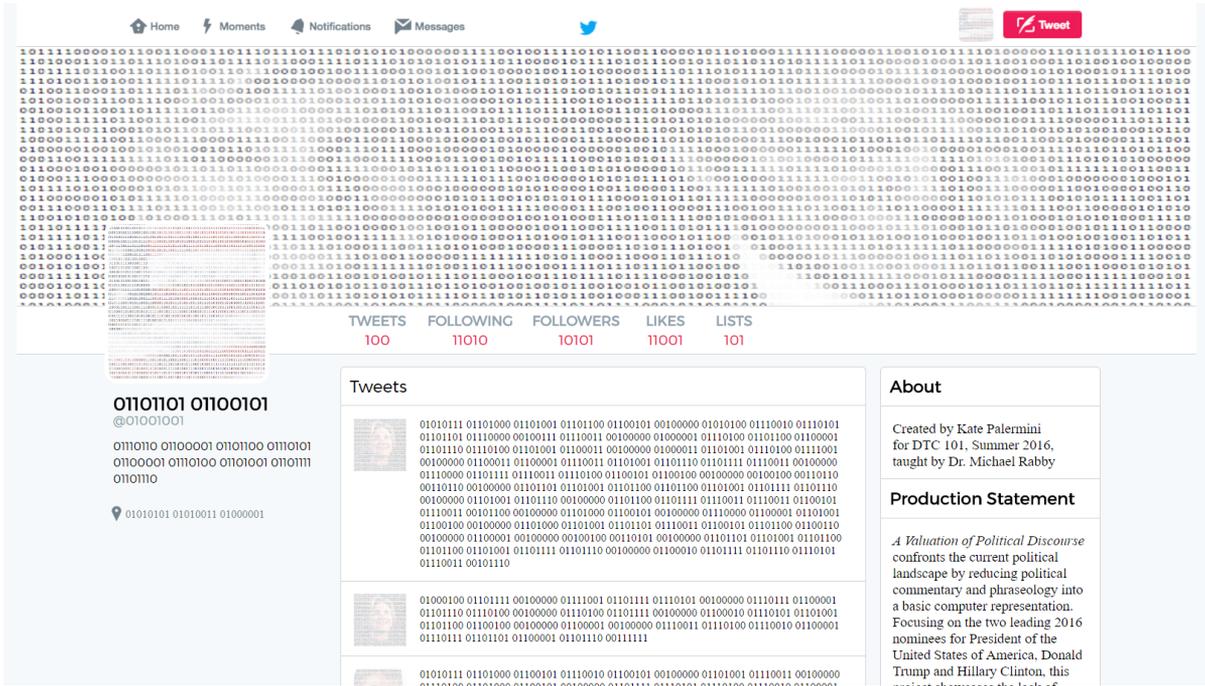




# Queen Butterfly

Sabrina Polehn  
*Digital Illustration*

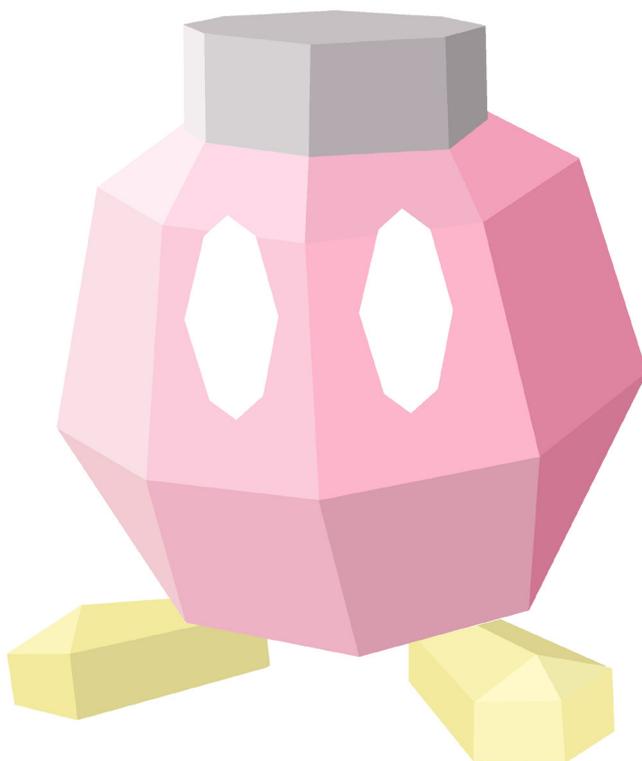




# A Valuation of Political Discourse

Kate Palermini  
*Digital Composition*





# I'll Open the Way for You

Austin Lewis  
*Digital Illustration*







# OUR TEAM

Salmon Creek Journal

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**Amanda Flynn**  
Editor in Chief

Amanda Flynn is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Arts in English. She is devoted to pursuing a higher understanding of the field itself, examining theory, and focuses her research of literature primarily on gender and postcolonial studies. She aspires to have a career as a creative writer and to also work in the publishing industry.



**Jason Cardenas**  
Visual Arts Editor

Jason Cardenas is a senior at WSU Vancouver graduating this Spring with a Psychology major and a Fine Arts minor. Art has always been part of his life, acting as a means of self-expression and influencing his understanding of the world around us. One day he hopes to become an Art Therapist and utilize the healing powers of art to uplift the local community and further his own artistic practice.



## Tyler Hickey

### Prose & Poetry Editor

Tyler Hickey has been the Prose Editor for the 2016 and 2017 editions of *Salmon Creek Journal*. He has a degree in English and Digital Technology & Culture, as well as a certification in Professional & Technical Writing. Tyler is planning for a Master's program in the field of Interactive Arts & Technology, with a focus on playable media and transfer of learning.



## Kaitlyn Storey

### Social Media Manager

Kaitlyn Storey is the Marketing Director for *Salmon Creek Journal*, and is pursuing a degree in Digital Technology and Culture with a Fine Arts minor. She wishes to become a graphic and multimedia marketing designer. At some point, she wishes to achieve a Master's degree or attend design school. Kaitlyn was born in Portland, OR and has lived in the Pacific North West her entire life. In her rare downtime, between working two jobs and going to WSU Vancouver full-time, she loves playing guitar, piano, listening to music, drawing, and painting.



## Austin Lewis

### Web & Layout Manager

Austin Lewis is the Web and Layout Manager for *Salmon Creek Journal*. He moved to Vancouver this year to attend school at the WSU Vancouver campus. He is a senior majoring in Digital Technology & Culture with a certificate in Game Studies & Design. Austin is a first generation college student who enjoys Photography and Digital Art.

Design and layout by Austin Lewis

Cover illustrations by Austin Lewis and Jason Cardenas

**Fonts Used:**

Poppins

Segoe UI

GRAGEMAN

**Press Start 2P**

