

The Magnet



2022

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Turning Blue

Robert Leopoldi

There's the athletic star player of the team
The pitcher with sweat dripping from his hair not getting a single
 good call from the ump
The tall heavy power hitter struggling to jog around the bases,
The 6' 3" "freshman" from the Dominican Republic with a full beard
 hitting bombs on every pitch
The small strictly defensive infielder trying to make up for his
 offensive shortcomings
The flashy shortstop making every play seem harder than it is
The fast center fielder trying to keep himself occupied while waiting
The coach's son that can't catch a ball for his life standing in right field
The lazy left fielder scouting out the other team's sisters
The players on the bench keeping it warm for the ones actually playing
The coach turning blue from screaming at his players
The other coach with his face in his palms after a bad play
The pair of friends stuffing their faces with sunflower seeds
The moms in the shade cheering their kids on from the side
The crazy dads yelling at their kid for not hitting a 85 mph slider
The catcher wearing bulky gear dying from heat exhaustion
And the terrible umpire trying to ignore the insults from the audience.

Tomitake

Elena Scherer

People walking below me in short clothing,
Tops of houses as far as I can see,
Trees on every block swaying in the warm wind,
Mosquitoes buzzing around me,

Reminding me of the wet thrifted shirts hung by oba-chan beside me,
Salmon skin crisping on a hot pan under oji-chan's calloused hand,
Mountains in the distance every way you look,
Moments that can now only exist in my memory.

A moist breeze hits me as I sit on the roof,
Listening to faint chanting coming from the living room,
Thinking of that damp vacated house,
Only a fleeting memory of simpler times.



Dawn on the Beach by Victoria Hatala Slupsky

a broader picture

Rose Fletcher Black

a broader picture
someone is punching me repeatedly but I wouldn't know I'm
 too careful to ever get punched
what does it feel like? because this
feels
like burning
the tying to the stake
water from the underground rushes in
it isn't pastoral
not like the swell from the ocean, which floats over the seawall

consume consume consume
spotřebovat
who is being consumed by the fire
to burn up
some type of fever consumes us and these tiles feed it,
 eating away at energy
somewhere in your life you woke up and–
I would think this fire is my fault
voltaic hydra cauterized
I do not remember being happy
I cannot remember being happy
and I am not real unless I am mad
when the floor sinks away from me
and my lights go out
they go out in a bang
and my person goes with them
and you cannot replace the lights because they were installed in
 1902 and modified for energy saving in 1968 and the sort of
 lights they are isn't something they sell anymore

the glass from those lights digs itself deeper into my chest
over and under my lungs

and the burning motion it makes is false electricity
friction power
the factory line stretches out before me
Hephaestus in his office, with a little plaque that says “forger of
young minds” it was a gift from a colleague, he says, and
pushes his hands together, slick with soot

if I could cry it would be the loudest
vehement

everyone electric (lucky bastards)
is afraid of saltwater

Serendipity

Rose Davis

Her hair suspends outwardly
Gold cuffs outline her earlobes
Drops of purple sun trickle down her nose
And fall onto her tongue

Her colorful mess makes me laugh
Although she remains unimpressed
I watch her movements with awe
And she doesn't notice

I've never seen someone so carelessly delightful
Her profile is a carved landscape under the soft horizon
I've never seen anyone who glows like
Serendipity

Clearly a child of sunlight, she couldn't be further from adolescence
Naturally maternal, giving up her glory with ease

It bounces off her and lands in my bowl
A breath of bright air from her beautiful light



Spring Still Life by Livia Bernstein

I Just Don't Get Him

Seema Ifraimova

I just don't get him
He stands in front of me and all I have is questions
"I and this mystery, here we stand"
We stand three feet apart, but it feels like miles
We look at each other, and it feels like ghosts
I hold his hand and it feels like a stranger's
I just don't think I know him anymore
His eyes just aren't the same
His stare feels cold, not warm like how he used to look at me

I just don't get her
She stands in front of me and all she ever told me disappears
"I and this mystery, here we stand"
We stand miles apart
I wonder if she also feels this way
Has all that time apart distanced us?
Or did we let it?
Should we repair this?
Or is this the end?

“Is it Mundane, or is it Us?”

Nino Machavariani

I think there's something really beautiful about immersing
yourself in literature and knowledge.
Good books make me sad because they're not real, but only a
temporary high.
One can't help but feel comforted by not living to their fullest
potential.
Life is just a mere blink of an eye, and then death. But what is
death? The end?
I can't walk lightly... the events approaching are sinking me
further. The floors, they've fallen.
It's time to stop waiting to experience life. Forgive yourself.
Is it necessary to escape, do you have to run?
But you'll keep running, if there's a path ahead, you'll be damned
before you're blinded.
In chaos we thrive.

Love Letter To Seraphim

Hui Lin Wang

They may pray to God and his divinity,
which to me is nothing more than a false reality.
Oh, the sinners and saints may burn
as I wait patiently for my beloved to return!

Oh dear Angel, my six-winged creature,
my devotion as endless as your one true preacher!
You may cover your face and heart as you fly,
but I fear you not, so please enchant me with those eyes.

There is not a single greater pleasure
than to see a being made from perfection and pressure,
whose feathers embrace me in death.
A joyous terror leaves my breath

For Silvana

Debora Nuro

Did it hurt when it
came crashing? Were the white lights,
the last you saw? Or did a montage,
unfurl before you like a spring flower?
Did the sea breeze carry
salt in your eyes? Did the water
sweep you under, hidden like a pearl?

Did you see your sons waiting? Did
you recall your husband's malice?
How did you remember the life
you lived? Would you remember the kindness
you poured? Would you remember the blows you suffered?
Did you know how far you strayed? Did you think the distance
Would it make it easier? When it happened,
did you remember the month before? When I said goodbye,
did you know it would be our last? When I left to go home,
did you know you would never? Did you know
what week it was? Can I really blame you?
Did you remember it was almost my birthday?

Summer

Isa Podwil

The melted Ice Cream Cone that squishes beneath my feet
Is the perfect metaphor for summer
It was fleeting, now it's gone, still in sight but less pleasant
When summer began like a gust of wind
It left as soon as it came, its generous heat warming me
Squinting through sunshine, feels like it'll always be there
And now it's fall
And now it's cold
And warmth is a distant memory
I walk to the bus, Metrocard in hand, my phone in the other as

I scroll through pictures of beachy days and the summer heat
feels like a myth
With jackets and shivering fingers, icy breath sends a white cloud
lighter than the
Seven AM sky
But then it's gone– camp songs repeat in my head, smiling at
the memory
The sharp cold reminds me to stop daydreaming
And board my bus

for a lover

Tess Nealon Raskin

Here i am
My throat
My scalp
And my mouth sour
My wrists,
Rice-paper chest,
Chest bone abacus.

Taste my marrow, swollen plums.
My ribs for you to count
Twelve-twelve,
No divinity in the low light,
No adam,
Just animal, white as headlights, never
a stir from my pink womb
Never once.

Take me as i am

My lungs, lemon tree

Inside me a well
from which you cannot drink,
But you can drink from my hands.

For Ruth: Your Flooded Tree

Ila Holstein Rosen

Did you stop
Asking for help? Because you
Thought your pain didn't
Compare?
Because your house getting
Flooded didn't compare
To the
Tsunami in Poland?

Did you make your daughters swim
Around the house? Did you
Tell that to Martha? Do you know she
Is drawing in her
Own wave,
Buried deep in
Her back pain and stories
Devoted to you?

Do you know how brave you
Were? And how different things are
Today? Those seeds you brought
Over the Atlantic are planted now,
Large trees with
Long branches and
Starred necklaces worn proudly.

Do you know
There's a picture
Of you in our house?
A small one,
Black and white?

Do you know your daughter
Used to take Ma
Shopping?

Why would you
Never ask for help?
When your body was failing

Was that not enough? How did the flood hold
Up, when your husband's
Body shut down, but
Head stayed above the clouds?
Did you read those letters in pain?
The ones sitting in
Our apartment, English
Side up?

Do you know your family's
Seeds are being printed
On paper
By your
Own flooded girl? I think she
Wishes there
Was more time.

I wish I knew.
I wish you
Could see how far
We've come
From your little tree.

Kibō no Hibana

Jumaane Millette

There were many heads clustered around us on the station platform. Even through the disorganized crowd of men, women, and children, the shouts of orders echoed as the train prepared for boarding.

A piercing whistle suddenly blew through the confusion.

“Next! Boarding!” one of the station workers shouted.

I took Timothy by the hand as we approached the train with the slow flow of the crowd. We hadn’t much with us: only a small pouch of what was most dear to us. The souvenirs were with Tim, the rest of our luggage somewhere in the crowd with everyone else’s. As we drew closer to the train, I lifted Timothy into my arms, bringing him aboard the wooden carriage with those before us.

A glance down the aisle revealed that the train car was packed with others just like us. It was the signs, the news stations, and, most of all, that one-week notice which said it all: we were no longer wanted here. We were a danger to society. A danger that would wreak havoc across the land. However we had no other choices. We decided to find an empty seat at the back of the coach.

“Okāsan,” Tim started, with an innocent stare into my eyes, “where are we going?”

I knew he wouldn’t understand, but...

“To somewhere... safe, Timothy,” I reassured him.

The locomotive’s whistle sounded and the coaches pulled after it. The train flowed through the streets, passing all the familiar places I had known. First, Nakayama Café. Then Mr. Chen’s Dry Cleaners. And finally, Timothy’s school. The beautiful buildings of San Francisco gave way to houses, and then to grasslands. But the land soon revealed its desolation as the earth beneath us dried into desert, its arid heat felt through the body of the train car.

I peered out the window and into the orange grains as the train began to slow down, rolling into a new station encompassed by long, metal wires and large, wooden towers. My breathing had stopped as the train ground to a halt. Figures armed with rifles awaited us on the outside.

Suddenly, a bell began ringing, followed by a man’s

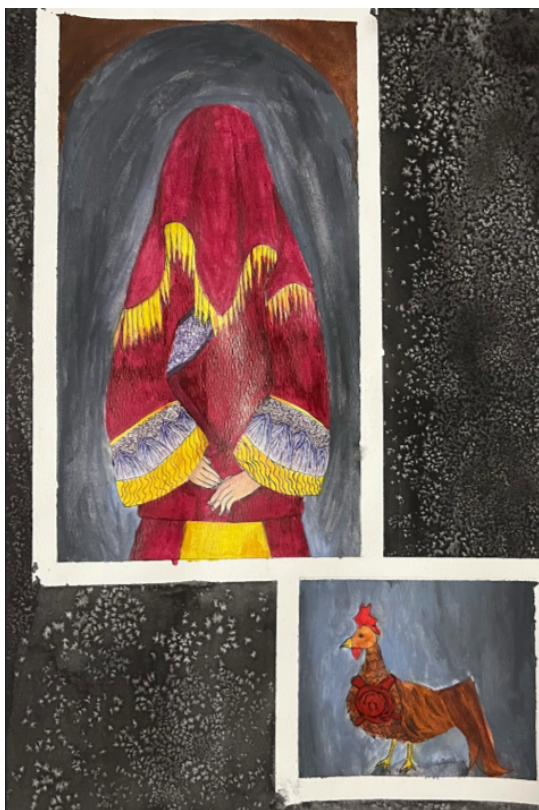
aggressive orders into the train: “Come on! Get off!”

The passengers around us began to gather their belongings, ready to leave the carriage onto the foreign territory outside. I looked towards Timothy, who had slipped into a dream, and lifted his loose body into my arms, pushing towards the exit with the others onboard.

“Line up for registration! Line up for registration!” one of the men commanded as he signaled off into the distance.

I stepped off the train and onto the rough, wooden platform of the station. The glare of the sun was trained on us as I looked ahead at the cabins off in the distance. Those ahead of us trekked through the barren sands, kicking up the red dust with each step.

It was clear this would be our new life.



The Wedding by Huimei Liao



Minette à la Fenêtre by Chloe Bonnet

Simplicity

Keira Huffman

A round face lit up by youth
Sounds of joyful expression and innocence
Chubby hands clumsily grasp fistfuls of dirt
Its texture appeases sensory desire

I watch her as she traces the alphabet in the soil
The sounds of nature and children playing
Dissolve into each other
Background music to a curious mind

I feel my feet rooted to the surface of fresh earth
Except it's not fresh earth
It's dirty linoleum
And I'm not outside
I'm in a silent classroom
I look back out of the window and my eyes find the girl once again

Snow Angel: Memories That Have Yet To Happen

Nicoline Birebent

Out the window, into the isolated park
There's a snowy hill glowing in the dark
All quiet and windy in the cold white night
The only thing shining is the orange street light

Suddenly a snowflake falls from the sky
Reminding me of the lady with the glorious blue eyes
How we rolled around carving angels in the snow
This gushing wave of joy makes my heart feel aglow

I've never felt this feeling of melancholic glee
With my lady I only feel my spirit run free
She lays in the glitter gleaming like a warm dove
Snow angels forever, forever with you, my love

Red Hook Housing Authority

Django Buenz

You never know what reality is until it smacks you in the face
It doesn't waft over you like the
Smell of synthetic, burning cocaine. Cracked
Open, your eyes lacking exposure to the flashing
Cold LED lights
It looms over like the three story three thousand resident
Complex
Jabs out like the broken cement sidewalk
Dropped off the bag of goodies to this small child
His mom rambles in Spanglish
I translate my half
My boss and I walk back
A dad on his Harley, his son in front. I turn and smile
The man has a tear on his face
Tattooed near his brow
He smiles back

August

Levi Hurst

There is something so serene about an afternoon in August
Stepping back into your routine after drifting through the
foggy haze
Of summer nights on end
A window with three sides, a bay
Glass with no imperfections
One view, of kids playing in the lawn
Another, a kid dives into his sparkling crystal clear pool
On the right, a group of middle age women
The sound of crinkling comes from their daily newspaper
Held firmly in their veiny hands

As I watch the children run and play carefree
I reminisce
Not a care in the world
Not a negative thought running through my brain
The paper, my mother, me a child
Sitting at the breakfast table
A warm platter of merriment waiting for me
I miss these days,
These carefree days
A time where my perspective was clean

The longer I look
The more I feel regret
For old might not always be considered satisfactory
And for me
The longer I look
The older I seem
Like a clock who wants to turn back it's time
I wish for a day where I can finally feel at ease
A time where it seems that I am not out of place
Not wanting to grow
Not wanting to shrink
Just merely a sense of ease

Baths are simple

Maxwell Frackman

It is easy to forget the beauty of taking a bath. It is convenient to forget. I forget how nice it can be to take a break. I took a bath last night, and it helped me fall asleep. I sat by the bath with the warm water running. The air smells better when the room is steamy. My bathroom is old, just like my house. On the wall, there is a window that is painted over and faces into the building. The beige paint is chipping. There is a lot of buildup in the corners of the window that has been there for a while. I remember taking baths when I was smaller. I took a lot more baths when I was smaller, and I was afraid of the shower. Shampoo would get in my eyes in the shower. The water in the bath comes out with a green tint. My mom says that sometimes when there is a lot of rain the city puts more chlorine in the water. The bath is full now. I dip my fingers in to see how hot it is. It is too hot, so I wait and stir around the water. Now that the water has cooled I get into the tub. I forget how nice it can be to take a break.

I spend a lot of time during the day thinking. It is easy to stop thinking while taking a bath. In this manner baths are very spiritual. I should try and find the time to meditate more.

Now the bath is done, and it is time to sleep, and I am ready to sleep. I am a lot looser after the bath. Everything there was to do in the day is done, and I am done with the day.

Baths are simple.

I remember being courageous

Gabrielle Orcel

I remember being courageous.
Unphased by the future.
Having the guts to go down the slide at the playground.

I remember watching the waves.
I felt the salt on my lips sting.
I hated the dry sand between my feet.

I remember answering the questions wrong.
Friends laughing.
I was playing with pals, not a care in the world.

I remember being young.
I wasn't thinking about all the things I did wrong.
I wasn't caring about how others would perceive me.

I remember watching shows I wasn't supposed to.
I was gaining my rebellious soul from the crack of dawn.
It believes that I am an authentic and unfiltered person.

I remember throwing up in school.
I thought it was because I drank chocolate milk.
Sorry chocolate milk lovers.

I remember meeting my guidance counselor for the first time.
I asked my parents why they said, "I don't tell them everything."
I thought keeping secrets to my extent was normal.
What is *normal*?

I remember going to middle school.
My defiant ego grew more influential.
I wasn't an influential person during my middle school years.

I remember writing *I hate you* for the first time.
She found it.

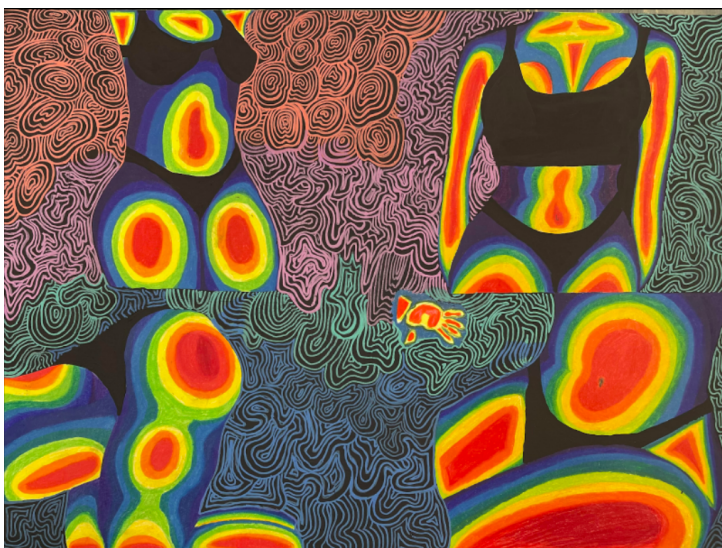
Nearly wept.

I remember when you told me to stop comparing myself.
You told me, "*focus on myself.*"
Easier said than done when my generation is obsessed
with perfection.

I remember weeping myself to sleep while clenching my massive
teddy bear, Cindy.
Before I washed her, she smelled like tears and excessive phlegm.
I'm sorry, Cindy, I never meant to leave you in horrible condition.

I remember living by the saying: *when life gives you lemons, you
make lemonade.*
In my seventeen years of life, I realized that I didn't like this
motto.
I don't like it because they don't account that you may or may not
have a lemon squeezer.

I remember it all; I remember everything before my time on
this Earth.



Thermal Atake by Rachelle Popova

All the Time

Samantha Damian

you consume my mind all the time
last night before i went to bed
this morning as i brushed my teeth
the thick bitter black coffee trickled
down my throat
i pretended it was your blood
coursing through my veins
making me yours forever
i think of you when i'm showering
your hands touching me all over
your soft yet firm hands
massaging my scalp
and i returning the favor
even though you're a few inches
taller than i am
i think of you when i'm scrapbooking that tissue you left in the
trash during mr. baffet's math class
the hairbrush filled with beautiful brown silky hair you left in the
locker room
the once used cherry flavored chapstick after you discovered you
hated the taste of cherry
i think of you when i'm watching you those jeans fit snug and a
little tight
around all the right places
that casual black hoodie
covering your chest
your right one a 32B yet your left a 34B even you don't know that
wearing those old black low top converse i remember you wore
them the time
you went on a camping trip with
your friends a few months ago
you're my beauty and my grace
my reason to live

my sole purpose to be
we're soulmates you know
how could we not be
the way we both said hello to each other that day in the 7th grade
October 16, 12:52 PM
i can't be away from you
for even one second
you don't realize it
but i'm always watching you
the bathroom
the halls
the classroom
your home
your room

just promise me
you'll never look behind you



Family Photo by Polina Gershman

My Way

Lamis Idris

As I made my way through the rocky roads of Prospect Park, the intercultural scent of Bakoor and barbequed chicken welcomed me to the crowd where I belonged. Mothers dressed in thobes, a long thin piece of flowy chiffon wrapped around the waist like a skirt and draped over the shoulder like a long hijab. The men dressed in our national dress, a long sleeve ankle-length garment paired with usually formal shoes but in the case of a barbeque, my dad had on dirty 2000s Nike sneakers. I'm Sudanese-American. Now that might not sound like a lot, but it means my entire life. From the day my parents immigrated to this country to how I answer the question "Where are you from?" Now, if I'm answering that question honestly, I'm from SpongeBob SquarePants on the TV box, I'm from hot dogs and the 4th of July. I'm from the scorching sun in the heart of Africa, the hot Aseeda drenched in okra stew, the warm welcomes at every Sudanese event. I'm from the rich scent of Bakoor omnipresent in our two-bedroom apartment. This question "Where are you from?" is so simple yet so complex. I could tell them my life story or I could just say "I'm American." One simple phrase, two words. One second and I've answered their question. However, I'm really just "Sudanese" in the eyes of America and I'm "American" in the eyes of Sudan. There is no equal ratio to my identity, and the unspoken truth is I will never be Sudanese-American. Let me explain. My heart jumps as the car drives precisely around the large deep pothole. The white minivan pulls up to two large wide-open doors. My flimsy sandals sink in the deep warm sand as I make my way towards the large doors. Round platters of steaming fragrant Sudanese food array the long hallway. I make my way towards my mother who introduces me to the abundance of aunts and uncles I never knew I had, as they pressure me to eat. I sit down and join my cousins eating in the group bowl of Aseeda. Confused aunts and cousins stare at me as I grab my spoon to eat. "Oh, she's American, of course, she is eating with a spoon". At that moment, I realized that I would never blend in, growing up in America is what distinguished me from my

cousins even though we were all ethnically Sudanese. Culturally, I was not as Sudanese as my cousins. As much as I hated to come to this realization I finally did. On the 14-hour plane ride back to the US, while watching Zootopia, I paused every few minutes to translate what the characters were saying in Arabic, in an attempt to improve my native tongue. I refused to be seen as the “Amrikia” (the Americans) when I went back to Sudan. As we arrived in New York, our apartment door unlocked and a rush of the indescribable scent of our home came back to me. It was a mixture of Bacoor (woodchip submerged in perfumed oil) and my dad’s absolute favorite food, Ful medames, a stew of cooked fava beans served with olive oil, cumin, chopped parsley, garlic, onion, and lemon juice. My taste of Sudan was at home, in our small two-bedroom apartment in the middle of Prospect Heights. As September rolled around, I was still dedicated to not being seen as the “Amrikia” so I opened SoundCloud and familiarized myself with popular Sudanese artists. My first favorite was Huda Arabi’s “El-hub hada” (this love right here). Listening to it on the Q train, my memory, refreshed, took me back to low-hanging palm trees and angry sandstorms in the fertile land of Khartoum and eating tamarind and hibiscus ices under the tall lemon tree. The conductor’s “Avenue M” echoed through the train car. Edward R Murrow High School. A new chapter. I walked into the massive campus greeted with a long line of confused freshmen like myself. Global History is my first class. After 15 minutes of navigation I finally make my way to the stuffy classroom and sit down. “Where are you from?” Startled, I turn around and a curly-haired, tall, skinny caucasian fellow student awaits my response. I take a few seconds, navigating my answer choices, and finally say, “I’m American.” He chuckles and says, “No, where are you really from?” At that moment I finally realized I would never blend in as a Black Muslim girl, I would never be seen as “just American.” “If you’re asking for my ethnicity, I’m Sudanese,” I replied to this endless question.

Dream Pet

Lyla Kiani

A snake has always been my dream pet. And with eyes closed, beads in hand, the beads resembled what I imagined a snake would feel like. As I moved my hand to the rhythm of prayer or fidgeting, the beads resembled the animal as they coiled around my hand and shifted, worn down yarn and beads their scales and muscle. Just like a corn or king snake, it was the perfect size to sit neatly in my hands and be admired for its subtle beauties.

My “pet” wasn’t new, far from it, and this was best indicated by the black and white string holding the body of beads together. The white had a darkish hue to it from all the years carried in bags and from my makeup brushes. The ends of the string were also worn down, splitting at the ends like the loose scales of a snake beginning to shed slowly. Just as a person may not be able to see a snake as a lovable pet, the untrained eye could never marvel at the beauty of my beads. Maybe it was a talisman or a piece of jewelry, but for the enlightened, its roots were made clear by images of the Kaaba embedded in its tail. Those who understand the bead’s significance would surely condemn me for comparing it to a snake, the animal forever held responsible for our short existence on earth. Like the snake’s disregarded craftsmanship, the intricacy and minuteness of the beads made them easy to overlook. Brightly drawn on stripes, patterns indicating proudly its social status or home as the tongue flicks in a rhythm of the heart, connecting it further to this world. The beads were carved with a black design full of dots and lines each holding the same weight, but when in the rhythm of prayer, moving quickly from one to another bead, each could be distinguished from the other. Muslim craft always has taken into account Math: they are 33 beads together, each broken into 11 bead sections. The maker could never account for my individual needs, but only for the 3 sets of dua’s I recite on it, 5 times a day, evening out to a perfect 99.

Not the Same

Destinie Jecrois

The sisters were unique
There isn't one to blame
But the youngest isn't like the other
Why are you upset that they aren't the same?

The eldest, responsible
Brains that exceed more than her dome
The youngest, outspoken
The repeated "Just wait til' we get home"

Popular and favored
Riding the high saddle
And no matter how bright the other one shined
She never made it out of the shadow

Dimpled smile with a kind heart
She had a certain type of charm
Pink, fitted and cropped
Beaming out of stores hooked to mother's arm

The youngest was impulsive
"Think before you speak" didn't apply
Black, baggy and ripped
Mother wonders who let this child outside

Her accomplishments were always celebrated
Every spic and span was perfected
But this wasn't reciprocated for the youngest
Because everything was always expected

As they grew, they became more unique
They didn't allow their opposites to tame
Each gained a better and bigger bond
And accepted that neither of them were the same



The Three Friends by Leeor Gelman

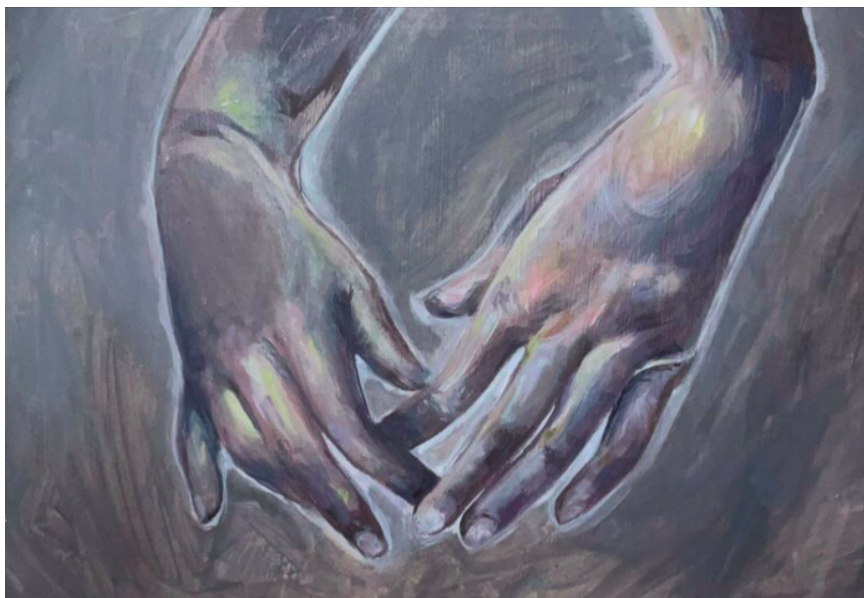
Mother Dearest

Garielys Lopez

I'm thankful for my mom,
my supportive mom who takes photos
everywhere, storing all the lines in a leaf,
the type of memories that would make
you want to keep going, be strong,
wake up every morning at 5am,
make breakfast, get ready for
the same routine every single day,
until one day, on a cold november morning,
everything changed, not knowing what
was going to happen as everyone does,
everything changed, but still the same
routine revolves around us.

It has been one year since life went from having a beautiful butterfly turn into a moth,
but everyone around us acts as if nothing
has happened, the world seeming to crumble
around us, but no one else was affected by this change,
roses and snowflakes bringing love and light,
but why doesn't everyone else see that there is
this change? all the sadness that one can endure
being alone.

Yet here she is, standing tall,
being strong, still taking care of her family,
still being there for others, although she is in pain,
she has fought throughout it all,
and one day everyone will know her as
mother dearest.



Mother's Hands by Sophia Volchanina

My Kid

Stella Tannen

There is a drawing on my wall, a tangled mess of arbitrarily scribbled crayon lines in various colors, with no particular intention on the part of the artist. Chaotic and confusing, it is one of the most important things I own. It was drawn for me by one of my kids when she was about four, a present for me on my birthday, and I will never forget her face as she gave it to me. Unadulterated raw pride, the kind present only in the naive eyes of a four-year-old after completing her crowning achievement, her masterpiece. Those eyes had never seen heartbreak, or hollow skeleton people with their skin hanging off their frames, or old photos immortalizing friendships that did not last. They had only ever seen Mom and the sun setting on the lake and her own angelic reflection in the mirror.

She's not *really* my kid -- I have no kids, I promise -- but there will not ever be a better way to explain Roya. I remember the day she was born, the hundreds of goodnight kisses and diapers and stories and bubble baths. I'd get into bed with her and snuggle with her on nights she couldn't sleep. Those memories are small and pure and give off the faintest of glows, pinging softly, a twinkling heartbeat in the space between my lungs and behind my sternum. They are the faintest whisper of gossamer memories, those once-upon-a-dream memories, tiny and innocent and faintly shimmering, so distant that they could be a trick of the light. I watched as Roya's tiny toes grew, as she evolved from infancy to toddlerhood to the present (age seven) navigating the newly introduced sentience that accompanies childhood. When I wasn't with her, I would write her an endless stream of poems to comfort her because she was afraid of the dark. She always brought out a gentle softness in me, fawning eyes, and an eternal patience that I shared with no one else.

I once overheard someone on the radio talking about how, when you have a child, you feel as if your heart is walking outside of your body. I will forever refer to Roya as *my kid* because that is precisely how it feels.

I'm Googling

Rose Fleischer Black

I'm googling how much this costs now
It's certainly not the sort of fancy hardwood toy
It would never work in wood
It looks like pottery, curved edges
Odd structure mimicking a father's hands
As if he carved this thing from the clay below you
Hands sliding along the ridges of the stem
Over the lips of the base
Indents of fingers would shift the trajectory of the machine
Speeding it up
But
The plastic is what makes it function.

Spinspinspinspinspin until you fall
Who even designed this
Beautiful magic thing that people wish for when they can't have it
any more
No stories to be told here, no mental training to be done
You cannot learn your ABCs on a sit and spin
You cannot write a mental story about a sinking ship or a dramatic
breakup
Or a trip to the hospital where Chelsea spun so hard that she barfed
Every child-rearing book will tell you it's a waste of money
That it's harmful
Talk of head splitting and staples
A replacement for a playground with its single person occupancy
"Couldn't you build a spinning thing outside? At least that way, the
kids could get some fresh air"

Wind whips past your face
Sister yells it's her turn
Mom yells it's time for dinner
Their words mean nothing
You're spinning faster than light



Untitled by Reed Carter

Observation of a Stranger

Clio Barrett

The toddler is not just a child, more like a little bald dwarf with his pant legs cut above his ankles, seven inches of awkward lower shin and some Lightning McQueen socks. His knee is pressed up against the wall, eyes pressed into his screen, mouth cracked open in a resting softness, just big enough for his being to fly out leaving a thin thread of drool, replaced by auto-pilot baby, fixated and stupefied by the characters squeaking on the screen. One hand grips the rubbery case while the other seems to have a mind of its own, taking advantage of this displaced focus and empty eyes of the body and mind of the child it is attached to as it crawls up the bus pole and back again to scratch the face or cheek or insert itself into the mouth ajar. There are little crusties that freckle around the child's face from a long nap or maybe some congealed breakfast, his shirt crumpled and loose around the neck, lifting above his baby pants, slack around his baby arms.



Overgrowth by Nathaniel Sheridan

One Day I'll Eat a Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich, and Hate It

Teeka Duplessis

I grew up hating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
My father liked them, with blackberry jam.
On bread pulled right from the bag.

His mother eats cornbread with large pats of butter
and great smears of raspberry preserves.

At her house, that one morning,
a sourdough slice went from my hand
to the rack in the oven on the counter.
For several months I had opened the door,
the jar of preserves sitting on its water-spotted shelf.

On the back porch, it began to stick
like ripped cotton on the spiny mat.

The toaster oven beeped three times.
The fridge, neglected last trip,
I wiped clean.

I set preserves next to my blue-flowered plate
and thought, with the light flowers, to visit Papa's Japan.

I picked from the drawer the one with the thick curved end.
Butter knife,
heavy
and firm in the hand.

My great-great-grandmother, Ada, made blackberry jam.
I imagine Ada's jam was very good,
better than the store, better than the mulled berries in the jar on
the counter,
just as good as eating the berries themselves.
The levels rose and the walls stretched thin,

I knew to come, was a fire.
I spread the preserves on the bread; thin, plum red, dotted with
seeds
on the white and golden veins of wheat
the alizarin dabbed at the plate.

When I finished my toast I wished I had licked my plate.
Tomorrow, I could eat another slice.
Perhaps tomorrow I would eat two instead of one.
I began to wonder why I had no preserves in my fridge.
I wondered if raspberry jam would taste any different.
I was to get the same jar of preserves back home,
and maybe soon I'd try it with peanut butter,
but I doubt that would be any good.



Blue Expression by Bella Yuan

Breakfast

Jenna Sajecki

the alarm sounds,
the light crowns
through the cracked, ineffective blinds.
the grumble of hunger
resembles the sound of thunder,
and there, i begin to cry.
constraints of food
and the carbs i exclude
are now no longer an option.
my hands start to shake,
and my body aches,
as i stare at the food before me.
inhibition takes over
as i get closer and closer
to shoving it all down my throat.

I no longer wake

Aren Lau

I no longer wake to the sun shining in from the front.
Instead it comes in from the left.
The house is not thumping with footsteps.
Nor voices, nor crackling wrappers.
The yard is not roaring with grass being cut.
I no longer sleep like I did in that room.
She's no longer there, after all.
No shines on the floor,
No dents in the stairs,
His voice doesn't echo with laughter.
I no longer wonder if his eyes are green or gray-blue.
The wine glasses don't pile up.
I teeter between home and an invisible family.
When I know neither one will be true.

Blessing for Anna to Have a Good Winter Morning

Anna Miesenzahl

May you wake up in the morning
to the bright sun
beaming on the fresh white snow.
May your eyes feel rested
and your limbs feel awake.
When your father calls out for breakfast,
may you feast on warm buttermilk pancakes.
May you taste the sweetness of syrup
first thing in the morning,
have a warm cup of coffee,
have a knit blanket thrown over your legs.
May you enjoy the sight of the snow, sky and crisp air.
Oh Anna, please enjoy the light of the cold mornings!

What on Earth is Sleep?

Leslie Chen

What on earth is sleep?
I think I've gained twenty pounds
Food coffee cry cry

If I had one buck
For every nap I took
I'd pay tuition

Procrastination
Will be banned from my life for now on
Starting next Thursday

A writing deadline
Quarantined in my bedroom
I hate these headphones

A beautiful day (= submission day)
Always drive the pain away
That's all I will say

Monday

Jian De Mai

getting up on the weekdays
never gets better
not when you've just begun to enjoy
a good night's sleep
not when you've just begun to enjoy
the sun on your bed
not when you wake up to 65°F
from your noon 75°F

your day becomes structured
gone are the parties,
the family night outs
the coming of the weekdays
are like seasons:
sudden, tumultuous, inescapable
they bring long days
the weekends barely softens the blows of the previous week
before monday comes

on the weekdays,
you walk with heavy steps
the cold, early winds pound your neck
a sinking feeling on the concrete path

The park poem

Logan Lane

Sit with me by the fire, juveniles,
Let my crisp tales of August and October's grim battles
Start a revolution in your tiny heads,
Rustle your shivering spines.
Words don't rhyme anymore,
And I may never write your biography like I said I would,
But I'd sure love to write your obituary.

Is it Me

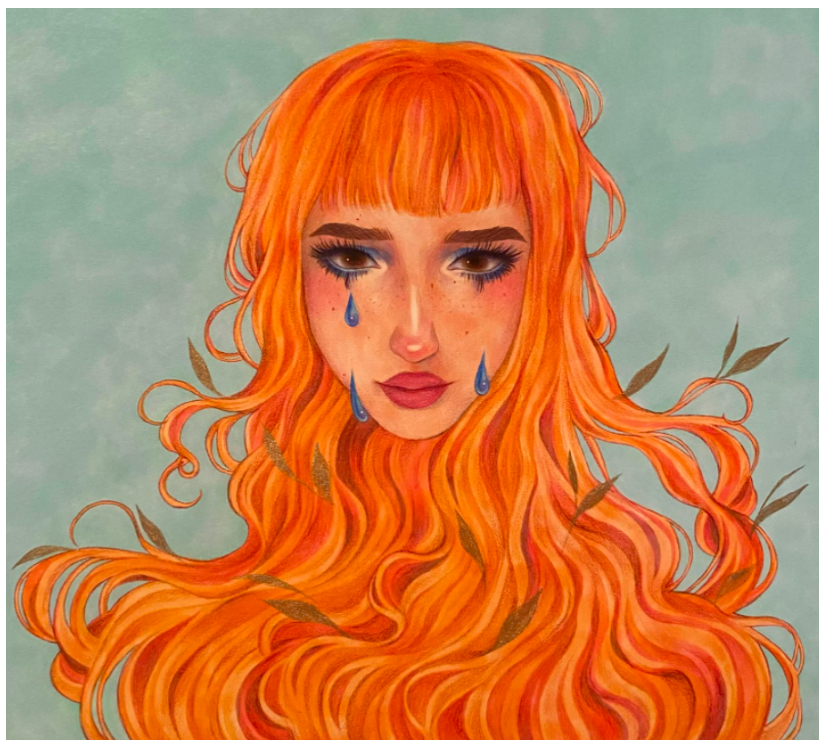
Samantha Damian

is that me
the person writing this
on the spotless
white paper
is it that girl in front of me
with the long black hair
in a loose ponytail

or maybe it's the guy next to me
with his hair always in a messy bun
always wearing their glasses
even though i never have mine on
maybe i'm not a poet
because i'm too dull
not creative enough

i'm not metaphorical
or mysterious
i won't write that poem that'll
leave you awake at night
thinking about it
the meaning of it
and its impact

you
you reading this right now
are you listening to me
are you reading me
are you confused
are you creeped out
it's me



Growth by Nora Trebunskaya

Is it too cold in here?

Ulyana Shyrokaya

this autumn is somehow different
does not bring warmth and love
she rips out my heart like nails down my back
no thoughts of hope

I want to sleep

the only thing I want
is all people pulled away
there is nothing more to celebrate
no happiness even from the first puff

wet spot in my notebook
open pack of melatonin
rereading old emails
I recall a carefree childhood



Saturated Summer by Racquel Matusevich

On the first day

Lila Garfinkel

Undisclosed to human eye,
Light and shadow marinate.
Mixing,
Separating,
Playing hide and go seek.
Objects made by men disappear,
While what was created first basks
In solitude,
Until burly men with stomping feet
Turn on a light.

i woke up

Gaberiella Shapiro

i woke up in my two story home
next to my husband
who hasn't called me pretty
since our wedding night
i walked downstairs to make breakfast
for my son and daughter
scrambled eggs with bacon for her
and waffles with syrup for him
i proceeded to feed our 5 year old dog
a big bowl of puppy chow
i started the car and drove them to school
then drove myself to work
to my 9 to 5 job
i head out for the day
and pass by the same drive through
i've seen for the last 10 years
i pass by the illuminating bodega
followed by a lonesome gas station
around the corner a green and white pizzeria
up the stairs i walk
as i come in to my husband
sitting on the couch watching television
i go to make dinner for him and our kids
i proceed to feed our 5 year old dog
a big bowl of puppy chow
after we eat
i go shower
put on my white top
and black pants
and get to bed
i woke up in my two story home
next to my husband

Thirteen

Avery Craig

1. The hair of a boy playing baseball changes inconceivably in a matter of seconds.
2. The woman grows into a lifeless and loveless image of age, an image she doesn't want to see anymore.
3. The boy—now a man—works endlessly, waiting for the breath to leave his throat.
4. The lucky succeed and the unlucky learn despair.
5. She hoped to see her again, but the moment passed and she can't remember those she once loved.
6. Nothing can be done, and everything can be undone, in a flash of light.
7. The ivory wall, once vagrant, has now fallen.
8. The house of the ones you know but never met is gone, taken by skyscrapers and capitalism.
9. What was once thought to be good is bad and those who like bad are Depraved.
10. You were once bored, but now that there is none left you crave it more than life itself.
11. It's hard to comprehend that sooner or later everything falls victim to it.
12. "The planets are collapsing! I repeat, The planets are collapsing! Sound the bells!"
13. A daughter holds her mother awaiting the end.



Old Man Portrait by Tate Huang

Extended

Rose Davis

Side profiles of white figures, flick cigarettes onto freshly swept
streets, but no harm no foul.

They'll be blown away with the next day's rising sun,
Fresh and clean, once again.

Between two lawyers sits a giggling baby,
Unaware of the trauma he's already seen.

Under a bridge lays a boy, in his pajamas,
Sleeping while traffic passes over him.

In a taxi sits a dead man and the tears of his life story,
Having barely left his eyes, dampen the leather seat.

Bedtime stories become funeral eulogies,
But both end when the sun sets,
Leaving only the next one to look forward to.

Bernadette has the day shift

Aren Lau

No windows.
No showers.
No talking.
No sense of self.

My grandmother came here decades ago. She called up her daughters after a day or so and said, "Help me. I'm in Mexico and there are people following me. Help me." She was not in Mexico. She was Here.

Now, it's just me and the pink woman,
and the red man.
and the girl who hasn't woken up since she first got Here.
Her mother is stroking her hand and muttering a nursery rhyme
in Cantonese.
I've fallen in love with the girl's sleeping face and I feel as if I
know everything about her.
She is just like me.
The people behind the desk pretend to watch us and pretend to care.

"Are you feeling better?" the three women ask, blots of color in this
colorless cage.

"Yes," I say.

When they leave, I churn in lonely silence for
hours or days or minutes or seconds or years,
then I stand in front of the glass where the Nurses sit
eating their vanilla cake on party plates and
laughing it up.

I rake my nails down the already-scratches on
my arm.

(yellow-bruised as well)

And I swear Miss Bernadette pays attention for a second.
before she turns around and takes another bite.

The old phone doesn't work. The operators keep cutting me off.

“Are you feeling better?” the woman and three women ask,
blots of color in this colorless prison.

“Yes,” I lie.

Three more days.

If I lie well enough, maybe they’ll let me go.

If this isn’t life, then maybe life isn’t so bad.

Inventory

Anonymous

A veritable vomiting
of digits, dirt, and diamonds
A deaf audience
Stands, well known,
As I recite their wrongdoings from a pedestal
Quarry of quandaries
Refuge of resentment
Held by butcher’s string
Clocks alarming
Discarded gifts
Relics, nibbling creatures
Mud pie and gratitude.
Runny scrambled eggs
And yearnings
For main street
Rivers.
Punctuated hatred
Presented as statues
Tears, chewed fingernails, shamed sweat
Regrets, ribbons, red
All I can see
Boots with the bottoms flapping
Epiphanies found in
Quality of penmanship.

Death

Emma Bank

It's scary to think about how you will die,
when you will die,
if you will even be remembered,
if anyone will even care that you are in the clouds with the angels,
looking at all the ants that are roaming the Earth,
looking at all the violence that is occurring,
looking at the guilt, the sadness, the happiness,
the anxiety, the anger, the stress
that a singular person can be feeling.

Maybe it's better to be up there,
the feeling of sanctuary,
the feeling that everything is actually okay.

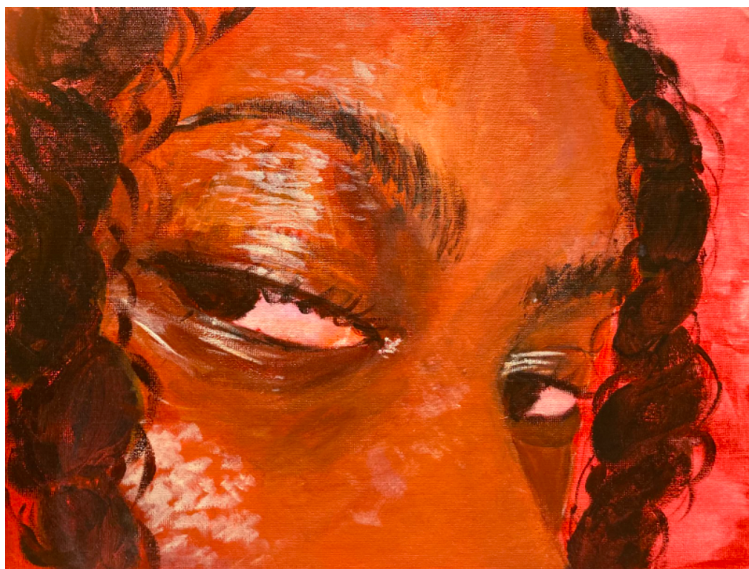
Yet that's not how others would feel,
if they ever find out,
if they ever even care to find out,
if they ever even wonder where you had gone for that long,
if they ever even feel the grief,
if they ever have to drag a broken heart.

I guess we will all see at one point.

Snapchat Eulogy

Clio Barrett

Snapchat News titled the story “Man Dies For \$2.75” because he broke his neck after propelling himself over the turnstiles of the New York 71st Street Station and because Snapchat is cooler than the snap of someone’s vertebrae, and even the sudden cutting of one’s nervous system needs a catchy headline. The video footage shows him gathering up his momentum before both bolstering his swinging legs over the two metal arms and taking a few steps peeled away from gravity, spinning over himself like ragdoll timber. His feet hesitate in midair as if he is trying to walk on water (or else the sewage of the MTA) and dash right up to heaven. His body, folded neatly, was then (and only then) covered in static and content warnings, fuzzy and blurred so as to not give it all away to the readers. I slide my finger up to watch the video in its entirety but it pauses just as the man tumbles, freezing for a few seconds before the screen goes black. I think about all the dollars and quarters I have not had to pay and how I have had many chances to fold up and fall over and snap like Timber torso, like a paused, omitted neck, a censored hop. I keep scrolling.



Self Portrait by Solea Miller

The Lilac Room

Samantha Damian

my world begins here
in the morning
sun struggling to shine through the blinds
therefore missing the glorious pile of clean unfolded
clothes splattered around the bed of
my sister

who no longer sleeps there
next to it lies the bodies
of all my stuffed animals
who failed to stay on top of my bed
therefore falling to the right side of my bed
living there on the ground
until the weekend arrives

in front is my desk
where my 5 below hello kitty figurines
stand
some fallen over
because of their bulky design
like the sparkly alien hello kitty
to the right of my desk

is my bookshelf
full of bts albums and funko pops
almost my entire collection from
2018 to now
even my slogan
from my first concert
is plastered on the wall
across from it is my vanity
with the numerous bottles and cups
of drinks varying from water
to soda to coffee to juice
on that same vanity

can be seen the various my melody products
it's hard to miss
since she might be the first thing you see

when you enter
the white trash can full of scrap paper
stands in front of you
with the bag of empty little bites
and a fruit punch CapriSun pouch
never reaching full capacity
because my dad always empties it out

follow my dog
onto the infamous bed
with my pink dog heart blanket
and my white kate spade blanket
fresh out of the dryer
thrown on top of the mattress
unmade and bunched up
like a big warm snowball
i'm safe here
if you couldn't tell
upon opening my door

the pink purple blue colors instantly catches your eye
the flag looking over the messy bed
dusty floor
fallen plushies
clean clothing
scattered hello kittys

even the bts 2021 seasons greetings wall calendar
unwelcomes you
because what the hell are you doing in my room



Promise You Will Behave by Demarre Joly



2022 by Skyler Dorin

Gazing at the Sky
Anastasia Podhorna

Aroused, gazing at the sky,
For what seems eons,
Stars not eternal as we thought,
But young, and so pure as we are.
One day they'll die, as we will, we're the same, we all end within
the cycle of existence.
Once no longer, no one will shine as brightly as they do now.
The light will go, will fade away, as the faith of the young goes out
to the void.
And galaxies so broad, so massive,
Why can't we witness them from earth?
Are they not as great as we ever had assumed?
Hopes so lavish, why are they so false?
Maybe just not visible, through our stained glasses?
Perhaps the eyes are just closed?
Darkness.
Oh, how pleasant it is!
So still and peaceful!
Why think about anything else?
It's more painless for us to think about ourselves,
About our darkness.
Although a whole lot of people don't like darkness.
They are afraid
Of tears, of gazes, of what they don't see.
Oh, producing tears!
How forked it is!
And people cry as if it were so depressing,
Or cheer at what they toned again.
Desires, and dreams, how exhausting it is!
We all have dreams,
We all desire things from this life.
Whether woman about a set of wine,
Or a boy about his beloved past.
Oh, past! How good is it?
Or people dream of later,

And someone hangs on to tense and would not say goodbye.
Nature ruined by innovations,
Animals forever on women's spoiled lifts.
And people can't survive without the present,
Can't live without life. And so
Life goes forward, no regrets,
No grabbing rope and lashing him to us.
Just understanding
Everything and everyone
Old, beloved to us, will die,
Old times are dying.
Yes, it's true, everything will pass,
The past that was so pleasant will never come again.
And the sky that always was so bright in the morning
And gloomy at the brunette nights,
Perhaps amidst the heat of haze so high,
Aphotic, highlights of gray clouds,
Ordains outshining that brightening sky.
But light eternal gorgeous stars outdistance us,
Will not eclipse while we are alive.



Vvecheri by Anastasia Protsak

Day at the Ticket Booth

Alexander Kramer

The sun beats down every day, all day, the same every day. The cold nights feel ever colder until the sun peeks over the horizon, restarting the cycle. The murmur of the automobiles as they pass through the arches, one after another, after another. The low whispers of brief conversation between the worker and each new driver passing through continues throughout the day. The window of the booth slides down as the day comes to an end and everything stops. The doors close, the lock does its dance with the key and the lights dim. The last buzz of engines fade away into the darkness as only the streetlights remain on. The barely audible electric buzz is overshadowed by the chirps of the crickets. The peaceful night drags on as the crickets grow fainter and the dew begins to settle. The drops of water form as they roll down the windows. They pool at the ledge under the window where nothing but dirt and dropped coins remain. As the moon soars through the night sky, its light glints off the coins and windows; the stars begin to fade. The horizon becomes a work of art. The sun peers over showing its beautiful colors as far east as the eye can see. The last of the dew races down the glass; which droplet will win? Most don't reach the bottom as the warmth of the sun sends them back to the sky where they belong. The lights flicker to life as the cars roll in, the doors unlock as the key dances. A new day is upon us, nearly identical to the last.

Grew, Flew, Moved

Washima Jahan

The waves have always been on the forefront of my mind. In the rain. In the heat. I always think of the warmth and the almost crunchy feeling beneath my feet. I used to hate the ocean, and the thought of submerging myself and exposing myself to whatever *things* are found inside the waters in Coney Island, was not a pleasant one. How was I supposed to enjoy the peaceful waves, when I found comfort in the *noises* of New York City? The fights in the bodega, the crackhead yelling “azalalmalaqukma” whenever they see a hijab on someone’s head, the static noises of the subway announcements. The noises concealed the loneliness within this populous city.

During the tropical season, thunderstorms take place, living near the ocean I saw it all: The crashes. The lighting. It felt as if the heart of the ocean was breaking, crying out to the sun, only to find it gone and in its place, the *tears* of the stars. The violent tantrums, the crashing waves, they enticed me. I was left immobile, not in fear but in awe of the chaos. It resonated with me, I felt as if I was seeing my subconscious thoughts come to life. I found comfort in the ocean, yet the waves were not picturesque.

The city is silent now, and has been for the past two years. Pots and pans used to clatter and clang every day at seven in the evening. Thank the essential workers. The ones carrying our society on their backs. The *hustle and bustle* no longer existed.

Early August, the waves raged on, destroying everything in their path, yet an invisible barrier held them back. In a second, my entire neighborhood could be wiped out, yet with some force, God, science, whatever it may be, kept them bound. The unruly waves became my new source of comfort, the outlet for my pain, my passion, my perseverance. Ida. Elsa. Larry. Henri.

Painting the picture of affection, yet I was dependent on the ocean. I couldn't help falling in love with the way the waves consisted of control. Like a cross lover, holding power, yet never snapping. Cracking. Splintering.

All for me. The ocean was all for me.

September drifted by, yellow buses honking, the trains moving, the squirts of hand sanitizer. The city was back at the cost of the noise. Black mask, blue mask, red mask, yet we learned not to hide ourselves. We grew, flew, moved.

Welcome to New York. Thousands of empty condos in Manhattan.
Welcome to New York. Daily sneers hidden by cloth.
Welcome to New York. Where the ocean no longer rages.
Welcome to New York. Where the sun now shines happily.
Welcome to New York. Where the noise no longer masks your
insecurities.

What love, what affection, what comfort. All striped away, yet always on the forefront of my mind. The waves. The ocean. My comfort. My forbidden.



Decrepit House by Gus Hildebrand



Let It All Out by Maggie Bugler

At the beach building

Melissa Martone

sand castle with my cousin. We build it up
and watch the waves come and go,

dissolving the creation with each careless breath.
There is a shack at the shore. A baby

and it's dead. And we hold it in our hands
and smile because we don't know we're

just as fragile. And a sandwich in each
little hand, bits and crunching against

its baby teeth as we chew. Not at all diminishing
the joys of that simple lasting lunch.

The Cold

Noah Galkin

The door is frozen shut
My arms are too tiny, too frail to pull it open
Maybe I should work out more

There is a warmth pushing through from the other side
An orange light that seems to say
'I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do'
I guess I'm truly trapped here
In this room with two stops and three objectives

I remember the day New York decided I'd be stuck here
I really liked my haircut
Fresh out of the salon, I thought I mirrored my father
My sister called me very 80s and I called her a hypocrite
She had seen her friends with a face unrestricted, how dare she?
I hated my haircut later that night
That didn't take very long

The nights are different nowadays
My legs creak as I stumble out of my chair
Knocking over plates, cups, and rows of buildings as I walk two
feet to my bed
I leave them there, as I'm too chilled by the crack in the window
To do anything else but sleep
I'll get them in the morning

The day begins again with a knock at the door
I wasn't able to fight off the cold last night
I'd reached out to every blanket I knew, but still, I am here
I take my cereal and coffee through a crack small enough to keep
me secluded
So I may continue to roll around in my companionless cocoon
With a door that continues to be frozen shut
And arms that continue to be too weak

I think the last time I felt this way was when I slept alone in the
woods for three nights
My bed was a hammock with a sleeping bag tucked into it
At night, I swayed back and forth in the frigid winds, lucky to
even drift off in such a climate
I never questioned if anything else lay in the dark of the forest
I would forever be the only accomplice to the chills that went
down my spine

I hope my sister comes back soon
I think soon enough I'll be able to see her without letting the cold
get to her, too
They tell me it's only a matter of days before my bed stops
swaying
And when it does, I'll tell her thank you this time
When my room comes back down from space
And I can take off my helmet when I open the door
I wonder what shape it will leave on my hair
And what my sister will think of it then



Untitled by Evidence Smith

n.e.r.

Teeka Duplessis

To write the poem of a language so absurd
would be to obstruct my own tenacity
rank my mentality
capitulate to the wants of the oppressor.

Though I wish I could see the moon
it is one in the afternoon
and I am on a train.

I imagine I follow the curves of the countryside
but I am from new york
and the stretch between point three eight minus seven seven
and numbers of the same nature in the city
remain unclassified.

Yet I am here
ogling at the plump face
speckled with its simple complexities.

How I wish I was on the moon!

My train is rather full
the car too crowded for our time.

If I *were* with the moon, perhaps
the rest would not find themselves with me.

Resting in the lambency,
carried through the eastern country,
and relinquished in the enigma of my city.

The Kingdom of Flowers

Ana Kilasonia

I have scraped dirt, from The Kingdom of Flowers with my
bare knees.

After countless promises of a welcoming parade, what kept you
from a timely arrival at your own palace?

I have picked out, the finest flowers for you.

And now? I want to sew on every handmade button onto your
unreachable heart.

Tell me love, why am I still looking for you?
For what am I stumbling around for??
Please! Teach me how I can forget your timeless, soul
piercing gaze.

Poison ivy crawls in and out of your rotten walls.

Soon enough, deadly thorns will poke their heads through your
discolored ceilings.

Open ALL doors for me!! You dare refuse acknowledgement of
the woman? Of the spring?

Even with raging mountains behind me,

Even with the fog of hatred that clouds your cursed city, you can
still see me struggle with my inescapable flightless nature.

All here; in your Kingdom of Flowers.



Mushroom Lit Town by Miles Magin

Life Line

Evelyn Finn-Wilson

Dear delight
To obey you under
Ubiquitous sunshine
She sings sorrow sullenly, suddenly
Lyrical calling in
Nonsensical senses
See everyone excited
Citing it to the opaque pride
Pray you'll love evermore
More money, misery,
Serve various sinister
Establishments
I'm meant to overhear
Real life lessons,
Elevate topical thoughts,
Shameful, bashful,
Literally resenting god's good doings
Silly ill little ex-believer
To open new eyes
Shadowing worlds,
Wondering why,
He implodes.
Screaming, beaming
Dreaming misfortune
Shall halt.
All men may mock.
Captivate truth—
Our purpose.
Shall all call love loss?
Lost to ordinary yearning—
November recollections of youth
Testament to our obituaries

Yuki

Abbie Li

Yuki is snow in Japanese
It falls slowly on the windowsill
A white blanket covers the city

Yuki! I scream, point towards
The crying clouds
It laughs and screams with me

The chimney is stuffed with snow
The house temperature falls
With my knees weak

I watch as the clouds continue
Crying and laughing
Please don't stop

The Docks

Rose Fleischer Black

Wintergreen mint springs out of wood, busting out of cracks.
Boards rotting, mold bright, creeping along the foundation.
Shout, grunt, heave, men wander down the docks, catch in hand.
Beyond them, sea, glittering, infinity.

Wind smells bad, makes my nose wrinkle, but calmly.
Will the house fall from beneath me? Will the land?
I wish for my mother, pray for her return,
I look out to the blue, waiting, a siren.

Waiting for magic, a pirate-themed Santa Claus,
None of which will come.
Best to hope for is a letter,
Sealed with parchment and love.



Rabbits by Tess Nealon Raskin

Paper Plates

Ramon Graupera

The most relaxing sight
To my half shut eyes,

Paper plates.
They are like a snow day
Like a dog already walked
Like a substitute teacher
Like a gust of fresh air
Like a play-off

Excited for nothing,
But to finish eating
On tonight's
Paper plates

Vague

Nyah Gill

Remember that day?
That day when everything was blank?
Or maybe it was a time when this guy came over and said
“I have this car I want to give to this guy.
I parked it in a garage on this street
Near this intersection by this town.”
I never got his name,
But I know he was with this girl
Who had a dog.
The dog had fur and it was a weird color
I can’t put my finger on,
But I know who they are.
They were these weird looking people,
But I can’t remember exactly what they looked like.

How We Used To Be

Zoe Maidman

Can you pick up some bread at the grocery store
And perhaps some coffee because I am so tired
Something for dinner that will fill my soul
And something sweet to lighten my heart
Perhaps some fish to re-new my faith
Maybe some apples to remind me of my sins
Mix it with honey to remind me of the sweetness of life
Bring me some decadence with a bit of chocolate
Or some eggs to bring me back to life
With ham which we’ll glaze in fortune
Some pretzels for our devoted children
And three dates so I can end my hunger
Finally, bring me a pomegranate so we can go back to how we
used to be

Action, No Reaction

Ananya Francois-Martin

I wrestle
I play guitar
I write
I party
I talk
I sing
I do whatever my body allows me
And when it bruises
I don't cry
I don't even wince
For I am productive
They say hobbies and productivity brings the happiness we so
 desire
Yet all it brought was exhaustion
With it I feel so low
Yet without it I wouldn't feel as high

The endless cycle of despair
That can not be washed off
Cannot be slammed out
Cannot be kissed away
Cannot be talked through
I cannot run from it
The naked truth is that it's in me
It's in the pit of my stomach
And in the front of my brain
No high is tall enough
And no ride is far enough
All of this action
Yet no reaction
Science was wrong



Self by Nadra Ali

Camping

Isabelle Duperval

He can whine and whine as much as he'd like, but it won't do much. Mom is too busy setting up tents to listen. She needs to be sure they'll stay up during the night. She carefully checks each tent stake, making sure they're planted firmly in the ground. If he tries whining to her again, she might give him that look that means he should get lost. Or maybe, maybe she'll listen. Is it worth the risk? He decides it must be and tries again. His reward? A stern and unsympathetic glance before her focus shifts again to the tents.

He could try with Dad. Maybe Dad isn't too distracted by the firewood, maybe it'll work. But no, his old man won't listen either. He shrinks away to the edges of the campsite, slowly circling its border. He stops and for the briefest of moments he glimpses it, movement in the trees. This isn't the first time he's seen it.

He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. He can smell something metallic and damp. He can hear the thing as it shifts slightly, brushing against tree bark.

"What're you doing over there, Chuck? Come sit with us!"

He continued standing and watching.

"Chuck! Chuuuuuck!"

Chuck reluctantly turns around and cautiously walks over to the log where the little girl sits. She giddily kicks her legs back and forth while gazing up at the blue violet sky. The stars are just beginning to glimmer, and if you look close enough, you can see the faint outline of the moon.

Finally Dad is able to set the wood ablaze, illuminating the grass and sending the smell of burnt wood shooting into the air. Red and orange light cascade all the way down to the tree line. Lily gasps with amazement, and he can understand why. It is beautiful. Dad turns to smile at the two of them.

“Amazing isn’t it? Now we can have a proper camping experience.”

And so the family huddles near the fire, holding each other close. All except for him. He can’t join in the singing or the warmth. Not even the sweet smell of dessert wafting from the campfire can tempt him. All he can do is stare at the treeline. Stare at the outline of figures moving and watching. He can’t see them clearly, but he can feel their eyes boring into him. After some time of singing and laughing, Mom finally decides it’s time for bed. All he can do is watch and sink into the grass as Dad puts out the fire. The family all cram into their tents. After a minute or two Lily calls out to him from the small pink tent she picked herself.

“Chuck, aren’t you tired? Come inside with us!”

Mom is the one who answers for him.

“Leave him sweetie. He’ll come when he’s ready.”

They zip up their tents, content and ready to rest. Not him though. He stays outside. That’s all he can do, shiver in the cold night air while turning in endless circles. He stares at the ground, unwilling to see what might be out here with him.

Eventually the tension becomes too great, and he slowly lifts his head. The figures are more clear now, swaying in front of the trees.

He begins to whine again, whine and bark. The family doesn’t leave their tents. They didn’t listen to him before, and they won’t listen to him now. He can bark and whine and cry, but that won’t change anything. In the end, he simply cowers in fear, tail tucked and paws firmly planted in the dirt.

He cannot run and he cannot fight so he simply freezes. Freezes as the figures and their hooked tools are illuminated by the pale moonlight, slowly closing in.

God is Only Good Because You Are Hungry (Bagels are Basically God)

Clio Barrett

Eating Ila's bagel in Poetry is like being christened by a monotone god. Just like the bagel is still a bagel, even if it is tinged with stale toughness, the church is still a church, the blessing is still a blessing. The water from the sink may not feel as holy as a cathedral's tap, but both liquids are still drinkable, both holy, this bagel compared to a fresh one will still fill you up. The water may not feel as warm, as holy, the god not as fulfilling if it comes from a crazy grandma and not a priest. How do they collect the holy water? Is it just Poland Springs in a fancy bowl? Is the bagel just as good as the price? Is the bagel only good because you are hungry? Is God only good because you are hungry? If you don't have an absolute need for the bagel, an absolute thirst for holy water, are they worth it? Don't you lose sight of the value or the true deliciousness of both if you aren't lost, if you aren't convinced it is a necessity? It also depends on the person. Just as Ila may worship the bagel, my grandmother may worship god, because both people have been starved, both have insurmountable hunger. To be christened in the local church down the block is to buy a bagel at the rundown corner deli because you need the hit; a bagel is a bagel and a blessing is a blessing. Is the hole only holy because its rarity makes it a valuable commodity? The missing circle a reminder of the space in your stomach that God should fill? This lukewarm sanctification is still a blessing nonetheless, this day old cream cheese is still inspired by the same stuff as the best bagels in the world. Is God just as strong, as powerful as you make him? Is the bagel's taste measured by the amount by which it satiates you, just as god satiates you? Is the power of religion just based on the need for it, the desire? This bagel felt sacred because I haven't had lunch, just as this god feels more than enough because of my empty stomach, my loose head. If I was full, this bagel would be mediocre, just as holy water would simply be wetness, a splash, a regular bath, a lukewarm spritz if I did not need god.

I Open My Locker

Anjani Goag

I open my locker
The hinges screech
It's loud and obnoxious and I hate it
I don't like the fairy lights I put in there anymore
They're too bright and they make my eyes hurt
I see a book that I never finished
And a bracelet that I meant to throw away
There's a pincushion overflowing with threaded needles
There's half a yard of bunched up aida cloth
Some dried out flowers that have been crushed to pink dust
There's moldy ravioli in a small glass bowl
Last week's coffee cup sits in there
Next to a bit of art my friend gave me
There's clip-on cat-ears and a tail
From a discarded halloween costume
I scan over the shelves with a sigh
And cringe at the screech once again



El Telefono by Aeryn Monserrate

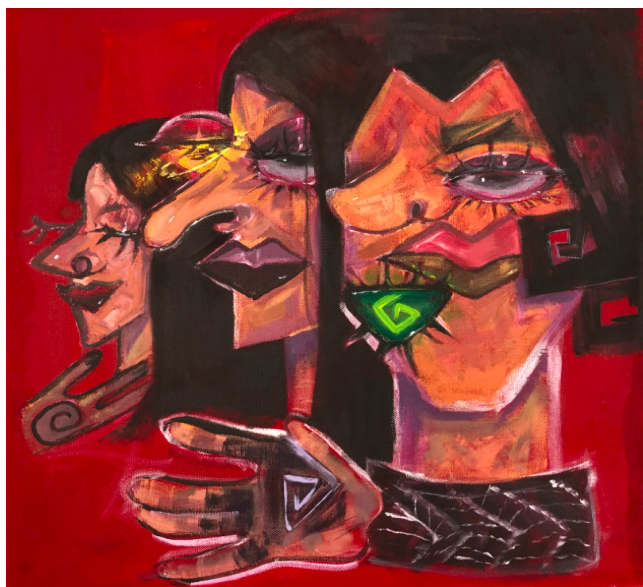
A dispute

Rose Davis

A dispute between two lasts for hours
Locked in the middle of nowhere
Void of color and absent of context
Submitting to the lack of substance
Fighting just to fight, night becomes day
And it starts over, once again

A traveling band plays under the Louisiana heat
Latin funk slows into an aggressive blues
Dancers sit down and cry into each other's laps
Remembering the sadness of lost nights
But the song is soon over and they're dancing
Once again

A young father is stopped and jailed
On a night of his son's first birthday
His one call isn't a happy birthday, but a goodbye
He skips bail first chance he gets
And runs away to start over, once again.



Three Portraits by Bernice Babynin

What Am I?

Alexandra Celauro

If I am not yours, what am I?
What am I?
Who am I?
If it were possible, I would have chosen differently
I would have been brave
I would have spoken up
My body burns everlastingly; my mind and heart too, aflame
And as each day begins to pass
I slowly become that flame
Every second is full of torment
All that I am is to please you
Satisfaction that no one but I could bear
I lay in melancholy, unkept
The phoenix flies, ever so willingly
I reach, I pray
Only to be reminded that I am burning in this cage
The bars, melting with me
I have now become that flame
You have ignited my body with one mere touch
I shutter as my bones crack
The feeling never goes away
The phoenix acts ever so sparingly, its movements, quaint
Why?
Why?
Why have I become your consequences?
Why am I what you did to me?
The feathers that you have grazed, fall deftly
The reflection of what is left of the bars stare at me
The mirror is a fraud, I don't know who that is
Who am I?
Who is she?
She is not
The same, yet she is me
For if I am not yours, what am I?



Off Road by Tess Nealon Raskin

Recollect

Orisha Angus

Running down the street she was racing
the concrete;
I guess the base was home but the
concrete couldn't reach.

Separated by the glass that disjoined me from the feast;
I watched the girl eat during a day so bleak.
She smiled, she laughed, then she went to sleep.
My, oh my, dear lord was that me?

But now I turn back to my reality
and all I see are the piles of papers
stacked in front of me.
Tears rolling out of my eyes

like they were following the rhythm
of my aching heart beat.
But dear sweet girl who settled across the street,
smother yourself with joy and never go weak.

Come See

Ayisha Siddiq

Come. Take off your shoes. Sit by Little Snail. Can you hear the sighs of summer before she descends?

Great grandmother stepped over dead bodies. Father ate peanuts with their shells intact.

Come see the holes in the sky. Nothin' wrong with choosing to live in them. Rainwater tastes good before you tell a story. When it touches you, tell your story again and again.

When doula took me out from mother's love letter, I whimpered. My name is spelled with the English alphabet now, there is anger in my vocabulary. I don't put oil in my hair, it is not long enough for a braid. There should be a word for when you cut your own hair; *here lies a part of me that was always dead but continued to grow.*

I keep fearing someone will break into the house and scream "Get Out, Get Out, Get Out." I keep a bucket under the balcony in case sky opens and I can't run quickly enough to catch the story. Auntie keeps wood by the stove in case the power goes out.

There are days I let body go and watch her become the slightest breath of air, drift in the company of apricot trees, sway as if she were a leaf and shudder just as frequently.

How trees abandon their leaves, how they lay down and cover the footpath, is how perfectly I want body to resign; facing earth in allegiance; admitting the ground before it comes above me.

Pilgrimage is the desire to go, a name is the pronunciation that ties you together, the stories we cannot tell multiply and burn the world. Rebirth is the promise of our people.

One day the sky will open, it will only speak the language of water, the water will build us a home. It will keep our story alive.

Ghost Town in my Head

Aren Lau

Through panels of plastic white and glass I see
An arctic-paint blue sky dotted with gray clouds,
Lights in daytime windows like stars.
Clotheslines blow,
A green shirt drifts off into the distance.
Who let it go?

I think of an empty town far away, maybe
Where only this street exists.
In a field of heather stretching far and wide
From east to west, the arc of the slow sun
From north to south, a gray garden
Invisible hands releasing the shirt from the line,
Unclipping the little wood clip, a kid's pink name
Scrawled over the surface.
Gray clouds move like ghosts.
The sound of wind, the howling of spirits in the heather
Eyes watching
Voices singing
Hands caressing
Bringing me into a world that does not exist,
A world of opportunity--of mystery, adventure, maybe even romance.

But when I blink back to reality, I find people on the sidewalk like ants
With their laptops in bags and their eyes on the ground.
Maybe we're already ghosts, maybe we don't need a story.
I hate to notice that the street crosses out more and more 'till it
 reaches the water,
The smoking kind of American Spirits tucked into their seams, spilled
 coffee and torn political passages strewn about the surface,
And it was only the wind that carried the clean shirt away.
No heather, no eyes,
Only a quiet Other Place in my mind,
Hands pushing me back
To a world that is not mine.

I throw open the sash

Sebastian Lightcap

I throw open the sash at the sound of a whine
I look out onto the dark shoreline
Big, colorful shells burst into the night sky
As the people below let out a joyful cry

The last time I heard such a thing was the war,
The sound of death rapping at my door
The last time I saw such bursts of smoke was the battle
Where I dove to the ground
And felt the earth rattle

Now the dust collects in the wind
And everybody's driven away
While I sit frozen and recall
When death was just one limb away



Flowers by Stephanie Katsnelson



Brandenburg Gate by Noah Boettcher

A Silverfish in the River

Stella Tannen

Moonlight drifts along the lone river,
settling in corners where the water turns and dips and bends.

The river waltzes a sedated waltz in an empty ballroom
with a pale, faceless man
in oily black shoes.

The air carries a soft freeze,
the slow, damp kind of cold that seeps in through the skin and
burrows in the bones,
and makes a home there in the hollow.
This cold is not dissolved by flames,

not even from the greatest hearth by which the oldest woman sits
with her knitting needles.
They click together, a pleasing, tinkling sound,
as she happily knots the fabric of time
and hums songs from her childhood in a throaty, crackling murmur.

A twig falls in the river,
gets stuck in the mud,
and waits for the water to froth.

A silverfish jumps out of the river
not hooked,
merely catching a glimpse of the river-bank.
The icy air grates against its scales.

How long is forever?

Henry Carbone

In my domain, I see all and know all until the end of my time.
Every wave crashing on the rocky cold shore, every ship's honk as
it passes by, and every blade of grass rustling in the frigid wind. I
love all that is my domain.

And the children in the house below love me too. Every day,
they laugh and yell, running up and down the twisting stairs for
hours on end. And the parents love me too, happy that they can
leave their kids to me and enjoy some relaxation from time to
time.

The ships love me too. As in the darkest night or heaviest storm,
I am the only friend they have to guide them through the cold,
rough waves. But they all move on. Every wave erodes the rocks
on the shore, and ships come through more and more rarely.
Blades of grass wither in the winter, and, as the children get older,
their laughter echoes through my stairs less and less.

Everything moves on. Not me. I stay. With each passing day, I
long to see more. But how could I have more? I see all only of my
domain, which is everything. Could there be something beyond?
The ships that pass through always disappear, and so do the chil-
dren. Their movement is a blessing. They can explore and touch
all that exists. They can call and listen and respond. Not me.

A Late Night Drive

Clive Coe

I'm driving through the floating, dark country road. At this time of night, the road is only a gray shimmer of light that stretches for hundreds of miles. All above me is the dark night sky, and I can't even see the stars or the planets. I may be driving the only vehicle on this road. Looking through the rearview, all I see is the gray shimmer of light getting smaller and smaller. Through my window, I can't see a single animal. Not one fly has hit my windshield. I haven't yet had to slow down for a tiny furry animal crossing the road. I haven't heard the howl of a coyote or the hoot of an owl. I only hear the roaring engine of my vehicle. I don't even hear any crickets or any other night time insects. I take a look into the distance and all I see is blackness and no sign of civilization. There may be farms, but at this time of night no one can tell. Nor have I seen the lights of a gas station. If I run out of gas, I may have to wait several hours until the next car passes. Since, there are no speed limits and no traffic lights I may as well go as fast as I can. On the other hand, my passenger is sound asleep, so I might as well slow down and let the meter on my taxi rise.

The Road

Isabelle Duperval

I can feel it beneath my car's tires, the road. Cold and endless it drags me forward. It's dark out here, a deep pitch black. Not the kind of dark that's concealing though, the kind that's empty. Or perhaps there is something out there. Perhaps there is a creature capable of living in a void like this, beckoning me off the road and into its malicious maw. Waiting and watching for my resolve to leave me. I tighten my grip on the steering wheel until my fingers feel sore, my gaze fixed on what lies just outside the windshield.

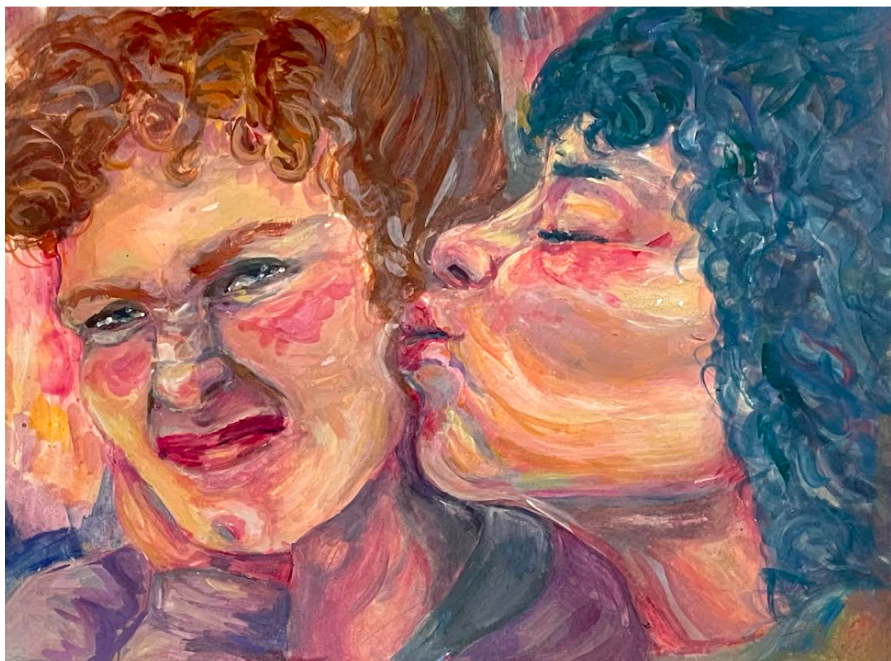
The light is my only comfort, a parting gift from the sun as it slowly sinks under the horizon. Even then, it's barely a reassurance. The sun will complete its descent any moment now, leaving me helpless and at the mercy of whatever waits in the dark. Still, I drive forward. There's a dull pain in my head and my eyelids feel like lead.

For a moment my blink lasts too long. I realize what's happening and painfully pry them open. It's a miracle I haven't swerved and crashed by now.

How long has it been since I began driving? I should have found a place to stop by now, I should have been able to stop. It feels like forever since I've rested and left the confines of my vehicle. My eyes close again, and I find myself wishing to keep them that way. How nice would that be, to simply surrender and let the pressing darkness swallow me whole? To become one with the void that watches hungrily from outside my car window. I could finally be at peace then, no more pain and no more waiting. And yet, despite all this, I find myself continuing forward. Riding along as the last waves of light cut through the night.



Dance by Sunniva Rockhill



Smile by Madeline Boccone

Her Head

Angela Chen

'Where's my next appointment again?
Oh yeah! At her house,
how can I have forgotten that?'
I walked through the streets
trying to find her house.
When I found it, I walked
inside with a spare key and
looked around for her.
I saw her head laying on the table.
I thought it was uncomfortable,
so I picked her up and
put her on a comfortable bed.

Purpose

Elijah Godsberg

I was the first here, abandoned, garbage. I was once a treasure. People loved me so much. I traveled the country. I went from Seattle to Tallahassee, LA to NYC. Those were the days. Now I'm stuck here. Wasting away. Junk.

I never thought I'd be left in the dust. I was immortal on the open road. A god to be reckoned with. I'd go 90 in a 40 zone, and no one could stop me. I was valued once, but here I sit, discarded. Eventually, we all reach this point, this sadness, this emptiness.

Were we all just hunks of scrap from the beginning, destined to be destroyed? Or was I made for something better, something brighter?

I hope that this isn't the end for me. I'll be back soon enough. I'll be newer, faster, better, you'll see. So, until then, I'll wait right here, biding my time. I'll rust away. I'll melt in the summer, soak in the spring, freeze during winter and fall. Sometimes I wonder if I had never arrived at this junkyard...

Nevermind, the past is the past and the present is reality, and that's the hard truth. The pile has grown since I've arrived, each stack as high as a skyscraper. Sometimes I forget who I am. I've become a needle in a haystack, no one can find me. Not even myself. I'm just metal and wheels in a junkyard, an afterthought.

Bathroom stall solemnity

Logan Lane

Bathroom stall

You've got it all

Why would I go to the dining hall

When here's a sink, a chair

And a place to scrawl

The Girl Who Never Was

Eliot Taber

I am no longer truly a person
I am the personality you begged me to be
I am the harsh words of my mother who never liked the cut of
 my skirts
I am the women at church who made quiet comments on my figure
I am my mother's tear stains on the old wood of our kitchen table
I am my father's disapproving words that never really go away
I am the everlasting echos that follow me around on my way to school
I am my ever changing shadow mimicking my every step
I am unspoken opinions and half-hearted responses
I am struggling to understand what I did wrong
When you told me I was bad before I was ever really me
When you told me I was a disappointment before I ever really was
I am skin and bones and words and insults
And by now I am almost gone
And one day I'll be all gone
And one day you'll write on my gravestone
That I was the girl who never really was

In loving memory

Leyli Dib

Today I died again, buried alive under my comforters in the comfort
 of my room.
Yesterday I died of humiliation as a result of the humidity that caused
 me to sweat through my shirt
And tomorrow I think I'll kill myself.
I'd like to apologize first for the way I've left my room and then for
 making things so difficult for you.
I'd like to apologize for my frantic behavior, and the fact that towards
 the end
You couldn't seem to recognize me,
That you couldn't feel the warmth when my hand touched your face.
You felt a sting in its place and in that moment you were just as
 desperate as I was to get away from me.

Even though you told me you could handle it, that you would
never get sick of me,
Not of me, not of the illness that infiltrated my body and my
mind and left my brain rotting.
I hope one warm summer night you'll sit on the back porch and
watch the fireworks fly
And block the memories that usually make you cry.
I hope when I die you can remember the way I slept as a baby in
your arms,
The way we would rock back and forth, ebb and flow.
I hope you forget all the frantic messages I left and the way I
would yell in a state of panic
And apologize immediately after even though I was still manic.
I hope you forget the way I looked at you and pleaded for you to
look my way,
To look and see me for all that I was.
Every sick part of me that only a mother could love, but your
motherly love isn't love enough.
And why do people seem to think that i should be thankful to
have survived the worst of it,
And how did they not notice when the world went gray and
started to weather away?
Or when my hair and bones became brittle and I was stuck in
the middle
Between two worlds of consciousness?
But in truth, I have not been here for a long while, and in truth
My memory is shot and I black out most days.
And in truth I wish you could just leave so I could have a reason
to be the way I am,
And so that I could stop going about and embarrassing myself.
So please leave and I will sleep like a baby in my own arms and I
will be the only person
Who has to face my anger and resentment and desperation.
Please leave and take all your light with you.
Please take with you its source so I may never feel the sun expand
under my skin again.
Please let me continue to wither away without you watching
and begging.

I think as a ghost I won't haunt our home as much as I did when
I was ebbing.
And tomorrow you will read this again and again
And during that party where everyone dresses in black you stay
behind and read again my plaque:
In loving memory;

Untitled Angel

Elsa Souffrant

I fell from my own grace a long time ago
My wings were battered and bruised by the time I hit the ground
But it was a long time coming
I just wanted to save myself
But instead was damned to eternal hatred and suffering and the cycle
of goddamned human life
We call a day
We call it a day
But it feels like a thousand years
Swamped into my skin
Misting beneath my eyes
Shattered beneath my too light skin
I'm never gonna be brown enough and that's okay
I'm starting to learn to love my skin and hair and the
Scars from my wings that were torn from me
Taken day by day by day
I wonder whether you kept the feathers
Probably not
They weren't like you see in the movies
They were mottled and scratchy and harder to take care of than
you think

But they were mine
And they let me fly past other skies, angels singing choruses of
 my praises
Of my beauty
When you fall no one remembers what came before that
No one remembers any of us in the end
Why didn't I hear about the Tulsa Race Massacre until a week ago?
Why isn't that in my textbooks?
I don't care about the emperors in the pictures
I want to know about the people behind the paint
The bodies who bent under rule until they rose up and turned Egypt
Into their paradise
Built something out of nothing
Stayed strong for a good ten years until they couldn't anymore
But they went nobly down
At least that's how I see it but it was probably a lot more bloody than
I imagine it
I never imagine anything right anymore, I don't know how anymore
When you hit the ground, and you hear your bones shatter, your
 adrenaline carries you on
You lie there in shock
In pain
But you make your way up
And hobble towards your nearest home
Your feathers falling behind you
And maybe they pick them up
Maybe they're sitting in a box somewhere
Waiting for Pandora to open it
Never mind the implications
You just want to fly again

Fireflies

Fiona Lawson

"I don't understand why you're so upset, you know I've got work trips to go to--"

"This is the *third one* in the past month. You've been gone for a week! That's--" the boy paused, trying to calm himself a bit, "twenty-one meals, seven bedtimes. All I'm saying is it might be nice to know when you're going to get up and leave for an entire week."

Owen laughed, an almost sickly sweet tone, rubbing his son's back slightly. "I will, I will. I know this was short notice, I'm sorry."

"It's always apologies, but you never really change, huh?" Ashton stared up at his room's ceiling, cracking white paint revealing the dark brown underneath. The room was dim, and nothing moved - not even a stray breeze dared to whisper. He seemed somewhat out of place here-- a young boy at the edge of disheveled sheets, making an attempt to not listen to the commotion downstairs. He knew he would no matter how hard he tried to urge himself not to. He always did. There wasn't any use trying to sleep, anyhow. His father had come home.

Opal had shouted with excitement when he'd first seen him, as she always did, running up to the door and burying her little face in his coat. The words she managed to muster had all come tumbling out, a shouted summary of their week, and asking him how his time away was, and also did he bring her a gift? What did he do there? Did he see anything cool? And finally, can they have pancakes tomorrow?

But once she was safely out of earshot, or so it was assumed, Lawrence had snapped, perhaps rightfully so. Two fourteen-year-olds were hardly equipped to raise a girl of five, no matter how much their father complimented them about their maturity. But the visits weren't really as common as he made them out to be, and *god, Ashton, just shut your eyes and go to sleep.*

His body rebelled against his mind anyway, and he hoisted himself off his bed. He tried to look at himself in the floor length mirror, but all he could make out in the darkness was his staticky

silhouette. So he opened his bedroom door, and closed it behind him softly. There he could see his baby sister, watching what was happening below through the wooden slats at the edge of the second floor.

Ashton stopped short, bewildered. In a slight whisper, "Opal?"

The child turned quickly, and immediately dashed into her own bedroom, so fast one might have thought she was a shadow, or a ghost, or a figment of their imagination, had they not known her well.

But since Ashton did, he only sighed and creaked open the door she had disappeared into, disregarding the sign on the door which expressly said: "No Boys Allowed (Especially Big Brothers)."

"Hey." He approached slowly. Opal was stiff as a brick, squeezing a plush rabbit so tightly her knuckles were beginning to go pale. "It's okay, I'm not telling."

Finally the girl rolled onto her other side, looking up at Ashton. "I only watched because they were being so loud!" He smiled, but it didn't quite meet his eyes. "I know. It's hard to sleep, huh?"

Nodding, she pulled his blanket all the way over her face, completely hiding herself. Her voice muffled, she grumbled, "I don't know why they gotta fight."

With a sigh Ashton muttered, "Me neither." He reached over and tugged the covers from Opal's head, who stuck out her tongue at him in response. Suddenly an idea, "Hey, tell you what. Neither of us can get to bed, huh?" Opal nodded once more, turning her head to the side slightly, a confused puppy. Ashton grinned. "Then, why don't we go to the special spot?"

"The special spot!" She brightened suddenly, perking up. "It's not too late for it?"

"Well, if it's not too late for them to be loud...?"

"Heeey... you're right! Oh, yeah, we're going out super-super late. Can we be like chameleons, and, like, uhh... turn into the wall?"

"Do you mean camouflage?"

"YEAH!!"

Laughing, "Or maybe I can just carry you?"

“Ohhh. Uh, yeah.”

Their so-called special spot wasn't really that special at all. Behind the house, there was a small clearing, and that included an enormous apple tree with a wooden platform built onto one of the larger branches. Since the day they'd found it there deteriorating, the siblings had transformed it into a full fort. It was complete with tiny twinkling lights, toys, books, art supplies—really anything to spend the time (save for the weapons that Opal had originally requested).

But to them it was a refuge, an oasis smack in the middle of an inconsistent, ever-changing world. The only rule of use was that nobody could go alone, no matter what. One didn't actually have to talk to their companion, they just had to be there. Lawrence and Ashton would never admit to it being anything more than simply for safety, but there was a reason why they regarded this rule so highly when they'd dismiss others.

The July days had been so hot lately that even coming out here was a chore, but the night's breeze made it favorable. The sky was clear, and the stars were out. Even Opal, who was practically incapable of not constantly being in the middle of doing some kind of *something*, just watched the sky beside her brother.

“These little - like, Christmas lights - why aren't they just called star-lights? That's way cooler.” She stood up, reaching to touch one of the twinkling pinpricks strung all around them. She liked the way they made her fingers look as if they were glowing.

Ashton adjusted his gaze, swiveling himself a bit. “They're called fairy lights, and could you not touch them?”

“Why?”

“Oh, I don't know, because you could get electrocuted and die?” He knew he was exaggerating, but didn't correct himself.

“No, *I meant* why're they called fairy lights? They can't hurt me, I'll get my hand away before. I'll do it when they go zzzz so they can't even get to zap!”

“That's not how— okay.” Ashton pinched the bridge of his nose slightly, shaking his head, yet still grinning. “Fairy lights. Fairies. You know.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know fairytales.”

“No, not fairy tales. *Fairies*. Has no one ever told you about

fairies?”

“Uhhh...”

“Okay, come here, sit next to me.” The boy patted the spot next to him, against the edge of the platform with his legs dangling off the edge. His companion followed suit, squinting down into the grass below. “Fairies, right? They’re in everything we do. Let’s say.. When the sun goes down and it turns into night, that was the magic of fairies. When it rains, or snows. When the butterflies come out! They paint the flowers and the butterflies one by one.”

“Woah, really? Nah, you’re lying.” Opal crossed her arms, as Ashton looked at her, his face drawn into an almost apologetic smile. Maybe she wasn’t as gullible as she once was, but nonetheless he definitely wasn’t going to let this go.

“No, I’m telling the truth. And they watch over you, and me, and Laurie, and Dad too.”

“Everyone? In the whole entire world?”

“Yyyep.”

She shook her head. “But if the fairies are so busy with the rain and stuff, how do they even have time to make sure everyone’s okay?”

“Well, they don’t. Not everyone is okay all the time, and that’s normal too. But if the fairies can’t check on you then, they will soon, and it’ll get a little better, right?”

Opal kicked her legs back and forth. “Ohhhh, is that why Laurie and Dad are yelling so loud?”

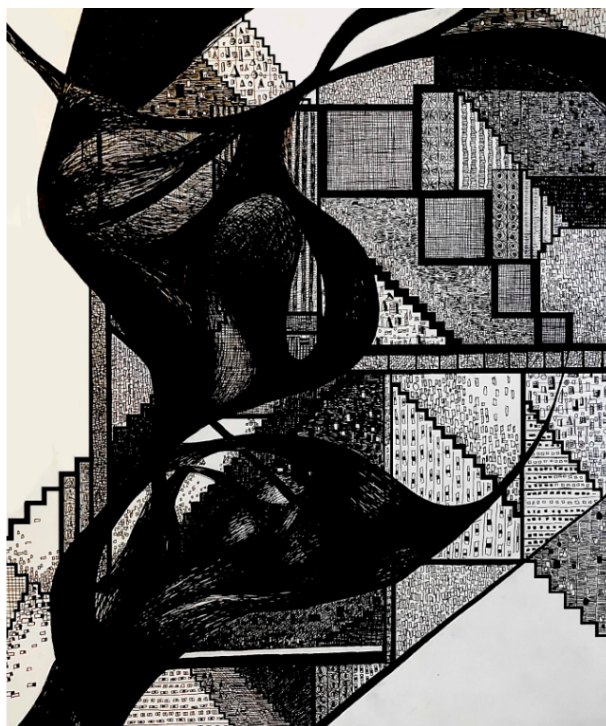
Ashton burst out laughing. “I don’t know. Maybe that’s kind of good sometimes.”

“Nooo way.”

Opal leaned into Ashton, who put his arm around her. Together they watched the stars somehow shine even brighter as the sky faded from a navy to a black, and the breeze shook the leaves surrounding them. The world was a symphony, and the siblings had front-row seats.

And then, a few ghostly, yellow-green dots faded in and out, closer to the house. Fireflies, and this late in the season?

“ASH, ASH! Are those the fairies for real?!”



Anxiety by Alexandra Litinskiy

Sorry Starry Night

Logan Lane

Out the tainted windows of a Violent Femmes anthem
I glance at the reflection of my sorrows,
At ghosts beyond the glass.
The British and French declared war on Germany.

My best friend lived in that building
Out the window with
The trees with their long arms
Hugging one another like some East Village orgy.

Dusk can be divine as well.
I am overcome with the sick sorrows of falling leaves.
Put out your cigarettes and fold your laundry.
The boys are coming home.

Dream

Leonora Suleymanov

The closet door creaks open
It was not the door to this dream
A little dream
A place of waiting and waiting
The clock continuing to tick
Eerie silence
And the patient hope of the waiter
Becoming less and less with the passing of
Each waiting time slot
Perhaps they searched for a new chance of seeing them again

This room holds those people tightly
How would they even be able to leave?
So why were they never there?
By chance
If to pray long enough
They'd certainly return
Return to the time when everyone lived together as a
 happy family
But none of them do and none of them plan on it

The worn frayed case was put back on
And the photo album was shut
Returned to its original position
Standing up in a tight space with other albums
They all had one thing in common: family
All had family

A family to look up to
A family to adore
A family to have

To give away your love effortlessly

To smile everyday
To know what it means to be supported
To be loved

But the only place that felt like true happiness anymore was on
the third shelf
It was below eye level
And if you wanted to look through those photos
You'd have to put in all your effort to not burst out crying
Though it was something that just had to be done
Something that was worth risking for

The rest of the shelves were filthy
All the blankets and the pillow cases were engulfed by parasites
Who would never stop feeding themselves
Never stop satisfying themselves
Do they know what it means to live for family?

Perhaps it is due to the value of the closet
Or perhaps it is to trap the dust mites
But no matter, the door always stays closed
Unless of course it is bearable to leave that door open

Sometimes it would be opened once a day
Sometimes it is too difficult to remind oneself of the days that
did exist

The next night approaches
And once again no one is there but the waiter
The clock seeming to tick faster
This is the last night to get such an opportunity
To see a broken family forcibly glued back together

They never came

As I flip through the album's once more

I remember
I remember when everyone was around me
I remember when I took it all for granted
If not for them I don't know who I would have become
How would I behave?
How would I see the world?
How would the world see me in return?
How much would I have valued?

It's done for
There's no more
I had so much love to give away
But now I'll keep it in forever

I had so much to show
So much to improve on
I'll continue to live my life
There will be no pause

But I will walk away with a few words to say

The album is closed shut once more
Knowing it's now forever
I close the closet
I begin to walk away
I near the door
And I turn for one final look

We may not sense your presence
Or see you
Or hear you
But I will believe

You were there with me all this time

On this bleak winter morning

Sadman Rahin

On this bleak winter morning,
Looking at the cloudy sky
Missing you, radiant old buddy.
The playground is crowded with ants;
Ants so little, playing with a snowball in the middle of the field:
Caught one off-guard,
Lying there, but play continues.
Big ants pass by, small ants fight,
But that ant lying there, people point at it and stare.

The world never felt smaller to me,
As I walked down the road and saw so many people running,
Their curious minds infecting me and my old buddy.
What are people screaming about?
Through the large assembly,
I didn't see
A soccer game
Or a small city concert.
One man was being hunted by a group of barbaric gang
members,
Nothing matched
The size on both sides,
The behavior of the surrounding people.
It felt like we'd all become a herd of animals
Waiting for their turn on the food...

The glass shook from the winter air.
That fallen ant was shaking his hands making a penguin shape
on the ground. Another joined.
Both looked happy, the other ants looked happy,
Playing five against three.

Maybe because you weren't there, old friend,
Your guilty light of darkness wasn't there
To melt their white hearts charcoal black
(This is because ants have either white or colorless blood)
Nor my aura reached them from up here
That vicious aura of fear and guilt.
Cold strangling me through my red hand gloves...



Rooted in Decay by Leah Solomon

Scare Tactics

Penelope Day

Welcome to the World!
It's a terrifying place.
Rapists, murderers, gangs on the streets. . .
I'll walk with you every step of the way to keep you safe.

Happy birthday!
Don't look down when you walk.
Don't walk alone at night.
Three people got stabbed just today.
You're too young to die.

I think you're old enough to go out alone now.
But don't challenge people on the streets.
Don't talk to any strangers.
Don't accept free candy.
Beware of SUVs.
Make sure nobody is following you.
And then you will be OK.

I can't believe how mature you're getting!
Make sure not to wear anything exposing outside.
Men have horrible minds.
Your body is not something you want to have violated.

I'm sorry, you can't go out tonight.
Night means drugs.
At dark, your friends will drink.
You're such a responsible girl, but. . .
The world seems too tempting in the dark.

Have a great first day of school!
Don't forget to pack your mace.
And you really should take this portable taser, just in case.
And maybe walk with a switchblade?
Keep your keys between your fingers.

I don't want you to get hurt.

Look at this!

I'm going to track you on a map.

That way, I can follow every step of your journey.

And if you need me, I'll come pick you up.

It's cold outside today.

Take a hat.

And this scarf.

Borrow my gloves.

Don't let yourself get frostbite.

And remember to wear boots, it's icy.

It's Saturday!

What are you doing?

Watching TV!?

On a Saturday??

You're young!

Go outside and socialize!

You hear me lazy-bones?

GET OFF THE COUCH!

A life is a terrible thing to waste.

And it's such a beautiful day.

Don't spend all your time with Netflix.

GET YOURSELF OUTSIDE!

How was your trip to the mall?

Oh no, you got lost?

But how?

You have a phone.

You have a Metrocard.

NO, I won't pick you up!

I have a life too, you know.

You're old enough to be independent.

Being scared of the outdoors is silly!

I don't know why you can't just come home alone.

What are you doing reading the news?
Your phone is just going to give you anxiety.
Who cares if people get killed out there? I told you to delete
that app!
Hey, HEY! Eyes on me.
PUT DOWN THE SCREEN.
Get some fresh air.
Why can't you kids just go outside and play?

a poem

Ayumi Mazor

I slice vegetables with my brother
The sliced cucumbers and leaves that will be put in tonight's salad.
We slice vegetables to help our grandparents.
We don't do much.
They tell us what to do
And we do it.
A very simple activity that nobody could get wrong.

My grandfather gives me instructions.
I recognize some of the sounds that come out of his mouth.
I see the way his hands move
And what he's looking at.
My brother asks me to tell him what our grandfather just said,
Even though he is standing closer to him than I am and definitely
heard him.
I tell my brother to not slice the cucumbers as quickly.
It's dangerous.
My brother slices slower.
The way my grandfather doesn't say anything
I assume I got his request right.

I want to ask him,

But the language we speak

Is not the same

The Locker Poem

Wiktoria Klimczuk

As the metal hinges cry,
I see a mighty prize,
A twenty dollar bill,
All folded and crumpled up.
Its origin is unknown.
Perhaps a buyer misplaced their pay,
Or a friend got the wrong locker,
Or maybe a kind stranger thought I'd deserve it.
It matters not,
For I do not know what to do with the award.
It doesn't feel right to just take it.

“DID ANYBODY PUT TWENTY BUCKS IN MY LOCKER BY
ACCIDENT?”

Silence, and then shouts from numerous owners.
Without question I pass it onto one of the apparent victims,
And walk away with a fabricated feeling of righteousness
and morality.



Street 2020 by Edward Pilch

A Child Came Back From School

Timothy Leung

A child came back from school, asked me, "What is homework?"
Something so simple, yet very complex.

The kid had yet to see the true definition, the inner meaning of
what lies beyond the question.

How could I answer the child, he who only seeks answers because
of curiosity and nothing more?

I guess it is a piece of paper that other, older humans assign in the
form of legalized "forced work."

Or something you do because it has been embedded in society for
so long,

Like going to school every day, waking up bright and early,

Or eating breakfast prior to going to school,

Or riding the same bus or train daily just to be taught something
that might not be of the utmost importance.

Is it a figure of speech that people say

To get you to do their bidding?

To have a teacher assign you something to avoid boredom?

Or is it to actually provide you knowledge of a particular subject,

Something you need or require to move on in life?

Then again sometimes it is a maze that never ends.

You walk and there are five options ahead of you,

Which one do you take?

It won't matter because each one

Has the same end, same conclusion, the same outcome.

It comes in the form of paper,

But what is to stop you from doing it?

As long as you pass the class

It is all that matters, right?

There is no answer to this question

As that answer is up to you.

It is alive and though you do not see it,
It eats away at your brain,
Question by Question,
Answer by Answer,
And with utter moments of blank pages within that brain of
yours...
But wait, there is a spark—
As you write your paragraph long answer down, you come to a
conclusion.
You have successfully accomplished the meaning of homework.



Thorn by Thalia Merino

Supersale: College Admissions Scam

Logan Lane

Out back through the screened door
Through the partings in those grand, North Carolina mountains
Who cough and sputter from fifty years of chain smoking
Out back through the bedridden dreams of alexander supertramp
 who sourly sings the dying
Words of Jack London and Thoreau
Quiet waves of mystical losers, loners, and drunkenly gifted stoners
Schlep up admissions mountains to liberal arts colleges across the
North East

People On Subway

Jia Xin Wu

The old man looks at today's newspaper,
The office workers stare at their computers and doing new tasks,
The women go into long monologues about their family troubles,
The children play with their new toys,
The pretty girl makes the final preparations for her date,
The students gather around discussing their annoying homework
 and exams,
The musician's devoted performance attracts the attention of
 many passengers,
The homeless put the cardboard they collected on the floor ready
 for the night,
The subway drivers carefully check each platform before departure,
The shop vendor sits in the shop, looking at the door and imagining
 who the next customer would be,
The youth wearing headphones looks at the phone which cuts off
 his connection to the rest of the world,
The lovers hug and kiss each other in the corner of the carriage,
The painter is drawing all new ideas that came into the mind
 with a pencil,
The street dancer makes his tour in every carriage,
The police stand by the subway side and watch everything silently.



The Maw by Roshini Soans

Savior

Kate Manitsky

Not the burning.
Not the infinite stretch
Of glistening grains of sand,
Nor the barrenness of the dunes,
Nor the lonely.
Not the prickle of armor.
Not the tiniest of flowers
That decorate the skin
Painting colorful patterns
That hide the pinpricks
Of all that is true.
Do not ask for its strength,
For it will not come easy.
It is not your savior,
For it itself is not saved.

Providing Refuge

Willa Van Cleaf

I'm harboring something
A secret
I'm nurturing it
Cultivating it.

It's an infection
That digs its roots into me and grows
Expands
No matter how
I treat it
It refuses to leave.

I'm harboring something
A bomb
I'm keeping to myself
So when it explodes
No one else knows.

I'm defending it
Providing it refuge
So no one comes near
So when it detonates
No one else hears.

I'm harboring something
An enemy
I'm keeping it prisoner
So when it begs to break free
From its jail of surreptitiousness and stupefaction
I'll let it.

I'm harboring an eye-stinging and pungent life

That just won't die. I'm harboring something
A secret
I'm nurturing it
Cultivating it

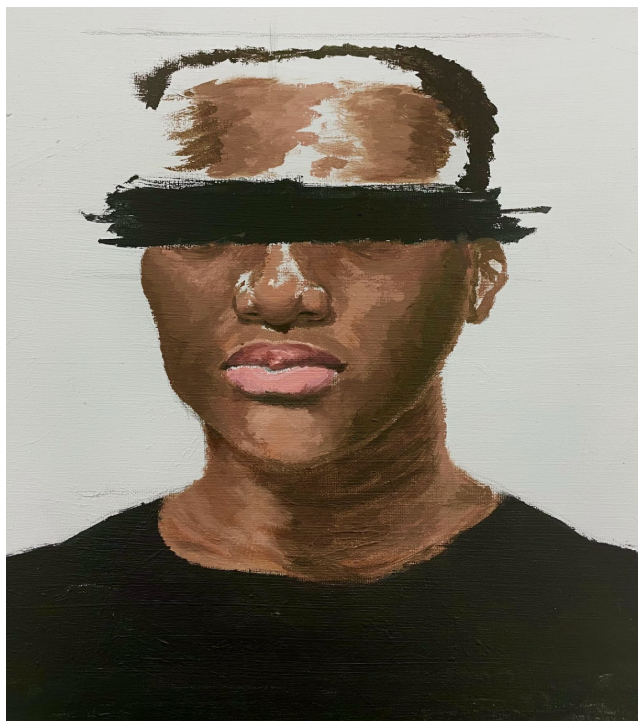
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I'm defending it
Providing it refuge
So no one comes near
So when it detonates
No one else hears.

I'm harboring something
An enemy
I'm keeping it prisoner
So when it begs to break free
From it's jail of surreptitiousness and stupefaction
I'll let it.

I'm harboring an eye-stinging and pungent life
That just won't die.



Unidentified Man by Geoffrey Pryce

I love the way

Aisha Badar

I love the way the birds chirp in the morning when I wake up.
I love the way the mascara sits on my lashes before school.
I love the way I lay back on my seat when I drive to school.
I love the way I stare at the clock, waiting for my school day to end.
I love the way the music sounds in my ears on the bus ride home.
I love the way my bag falls on the floor the second I get home.
I love the way my coffee tastes while I sit down to do my work.
I love the way my clean pajamas feel after a warm shower.
I love the way my skin feels after my 5-step skincare routine.
I love the way my blanket feels on my tired body.

I love the way my mind wanders before I fall asleep,
Thinking about you after a long day,
Even though I try my best not to.
But the one thing I don't love is not knowing how to love you.

Would you like me more?

Ivan Shao

What if I was cooler?
What if I was prettier?
Would that make you like me more?
Maybe if I was smarter and stronger,
you'd like me more.
Maybe if I gained some weight,
you'd like me more.
Maybe I should. What's next?
Failure?

I'm trying everything I can,
but I feel rejected by you.
I hate everything I eat,
and it's become a habit.
I'm trying to sleep,
and it's become impossible.

But, does me being unique,
make you hate me?
If I were normal,
Would that make you like me?
I'd change everything for you.
I'd do anything for you.

And if I don't speak,
Would you ignore me?
Would I forever have peace?
Would you leave me be?
Here all alone again?

in this home

Kiera Mckenna

a home, a house, my bedroom window

a home so small but somehow managed
to swallow me

you lived in this house, in this home

you were here before the floorboards
caved in

caved in on themselves like
a massive black hole

just like the promises that we made,
long ago

i asked you to come back,
i begged, i pleaded

but you moved on out,
before the ceiling could collapse on you

so now i sit in this home, this house,
my broken bedroom window

alone, i still read your tiny love
notes that you left behind

i gaze upon them so often
it's almost like i still talk to you

HERE

Huriya Waqar

It is Saturday afternoon. I realize that my life is less about living and more about sitting in a chair in front of my window, watching words blow in the wind, hanging like laundry on a clothesline. It is Saturday afternoon and I realize that my life is less about living and more about watching words move through the air in every shade of pastel pink and blue and green, with streaks of sunlight slashing through them. It is Saturday afternoon and I realize all I want to do is pluck the words off that clothesline one by one, drape them over my forearm, and go back to the chair to fold them into sentences, all while hearing the people bustling about in the streets down below. All of this is to say, it is Saturday afternoon and I realize that my life is less about living and more about writing about living. Right here ____ in this crack ____ in this gap, in this ____ absence of word, yet space ____ surrounded by word, is where I begin. It is here ____ where a match strikes and the heart and mind speak, it is here ____ where the arm outstretched to the clothesline and tugs on a sweater. It is here ____ where everything becomes possible. It is where every thing of the dimensional world melts and the child's world becomes tactile again. Here there is breath, movement. It is here where sparks fly from the fingertips, where I stop caring, about everything, about if this is a good poem, a bad poem, or an okay poem. If I'm a good poem, a bad poem, or an okay poem. It is here where life begins. All because of the tap of a space bar. So this is where I weave myself into. I built a home in the middle of a sentence. I dissolve, skin the flesh, discard the bones, and dilute it down to nothing. This is where I become and unbecome. This is where I dematerialize. This is where poetry and I marry. This is where I plant my seeds and watch the leaves droop over the body of text. This is where I don't care if my life is less about living and more about sitting in a chair in my apartment. This is where I'd rather my life be nothing but that. This is where I'm content.



Chop Suey Inspired by Mariana Sodi

Dreams

Aren Lau

I remember blue marigolds creeping over the side of a creaky blue merry-go-round.

I remember a tall, arching mosaic-and-glass dome with the calmest river snaking underneath, and sitting in a wooden row-boat with a man rowing me in front, whistling to himself.

I remember periwinkle willows drooping over the side of the street, a pale twilight stretching above me.

I remember a stone terrace on a dreary day, which looked over endless fields of green and gray, cloud-swirled mountains in the distance.

I remember massive hallways hanging over me, metronomical footsteps slow and steady, glassworks of the Madonna and her Child, church bells ringing softly behind me, dipping my fingertips in holy water, touching my forehead, shoulder, shoulder – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Repeat at every hallway corner.

I remember pink and blue flowers inked over the title page of a children's book. I stared at them for hours, thinking they looked sweet, just the same way I'd look at an edible desert.

I remember a deep orange light, almost like rust, filtering through every invisible fiber of an apartment—everything was brown or red or orange. His sweater smelled rough, like bricks. I remember picking out that awful teal-blue paint for that awful tear-filled room, and regretting it for the rest of my life.

“Shit!”

Joe Elliot

A long thick brown
smear on the sidewalk.

Someone must’ve stepped in it
and slid,

and shouted, “Shit!”
and then tried to get it off

every few feet for the rest of the block,
each imprint a little fainter

than the last. But the dog who,
suddenly gripped by need,

had no choice but to do his
malfunctioning and incoherent

business in public; and the owner who,
unsuccessful in his attempt

to deal with their pup’s
pasty muck, was ashamed,

and so abandoned the furtive job
to someone’s shoe;

to the happy flies that swarm
and alight, swarm and alight;

to those microbes that mysteriously
always show up to feast;

to the rain, the life-giving
and forgiving rain;

and to the earth that receives
everything equally.

The Disastrous Road

Nella Bupp

I drive down the long, curving road. There are no cars in sight. It's been that way for miles now. There is only cold and gloomy blackness on either side of me. It's as if one slight swerve to the side would result in my being pulled into the darkness until I become part of it. What if my car breaks down? The whirring sound of the old engine cautions me to not go too fast.

The headlights are strong as they guide me down the road. I wasn't expecting the darkness to be this strong, this lifeless and empty. This cold December day doesn't offer much light. Instead, it reminds me that winter is rapidly approaching. I think back to the warm air of summer, which seems like just days ago. The comforting memories distract me from the biting air that causes a sharp and unwelcome feeling to wash over me.

The road is endless. Only 30 minutes have passed, but I feel like I've been driving for weeks.

Horror movies start like this, a lone woman driving at night, music blasting on the radio, until her car breaks down and the one car that has the courtesy to stop happens to be a murderer. The long, curving road is a disaster waiting to happen.



Oh New York I Love You by Toni Ann Powell

Oh New York I Love You

Toni Ann Powell

Beautiful isn't it?

New York is the city that never sleeps, beautiful at night, but even more so in the morning.



You Can't Help by Alex Reisch

Passers-by
Angela Chen

I got dressed in warm and comfortable clothes before picking up my black umbrella and heading out the door. It was kinda dark and was snowing, so I opened my umbrella before going down the stairs and down the quiet street. I could only hear the crunching of snow under my feet. It felt good to be alone in the streets and listening to snow crunching is satisfying. But then I saw someone walking in the direction towards me and I got nervous. What if they were some kind of kidnapper or worse a killer? I got more nervous thinking about the outcome. What if they want to sell my organs in the black market? 'Noooo' I thought, devastated. When we were getting closer to each other I clutched my umbrella tighter before walking past the stranger who was wearing a long black jacket. We didn't make eye contact and just walked past each other. 'That was nerve-wracking' I thought, relieved.

Impotence

Reeda Chaudhary

I step in.

Fumes fill my nostrils. Fumes is a harsh word. Afterall, the smell was pleasant. Incense. I recognize it. Jasmine? Vanilla? Definitely jasmine. Used as an alleged antidepressant and just to make you feel better, it's one of my favorites.

"You're here."

It wasn't a question, but a statement. I've grown accustomed to Maisie's poise. Always so self assured. We were quite the opposites. Maisie Laurier with her long gray hair. A silvery marvel. I couldn't help but stare from time to time. It was an entity of its own. She stood in the middle of her sunroom. The airyness of the space calmed me. The news I had to deliver did not. But that could wait.

She was a woman of the seventies, forever stuck in the mental turmoil of the Volkswagen Type 2 and Watergate. Unfortunately she was also adamant in her defense of President Nixon and forever speculative of... computers? Quite the trip, I know. She could light all the incense she wanted but the mental clarity she was trying to achieve was always going to be impossible to grasp with those ideals she held close to her heart. To this day I don't know how she ended up a "hippie." AND claims to be one to this day. The many ego deaths she has claimed to suffer don't seem to be manifesting in three dimensions because she's as self absorbed as ever. Was that a diss, perhaps!

I believe it's time I introduced myself before I establish myself as a prick. Florence Laurier, yup unfortunately for me, Maisie's older sister. Always known as the prissy, fussy, prude Laurier. I've built quite the reputation for being an asshole, at least according to anyone that seems to come within the vicinity of me. I will admit, I do partially agree with them, I am a prissy asshole, and I revel in that. I wouldn't have come as far as I have, if I wasn't an assertive bitch.

Maisie and I are both assertive BUT, this is a big but, I do it

better. Maisie is just annoying. She thinks she's always right and refuses to think critically, ever. No wonder she's on her third divorce, but I won't get into that.

My tweed jacket is making me feel sweaty. I take it off and carefully place it over the back of the cyan blue armchair. Standing awkwardly in the corner of the room I want to blurt out what I know. Seeing her so calm is infuriating. Then again I can't blame her, she doesn't know. I step forward.

"Stay off the rug."

"What?" the confusion is visible on my face.

"You see the rug. Stay off it."

I look down. My own thoughts had kept me occupied. I didn't even notice that the hideous cream area rug. It was speckled with orange and yellow and seemed to have a rough woven texture, reminiscent of vomit. No wonder she chose it, I thought to myself. A smirk played on my lips, but I did my best to hide it.

"Mom's dead."

She looked up, obviously caught off guard. "What?"

I'd never had a close bond with her, my mother only reminded me of unextinguished cigarettes and amphetamine addiction. A time I had buried in the back of my mind. Forgotten, up until now. I pitied Maisie, she genuinely had loved her. And that was evident from the snot running down her nose and the forgotten incense that was now singeing the vomit carpet.

"Maisie" I gestured at the smoke that was now rising out of the rug. She didn't seem to hear me.

"MAISIE" she looked down. And just, looked at it. I walked over her damn carpet and picked it up for her.

She was silent. I was dumbfounded. Her silence was surprising to me. I had expected screaming, yelling, crying, chest beating even, but she did not deliver. We stood in silence for way too long. The airiness of the space had fled. I felt choked. The air felt thick. I needed air.

I ran out.



Lavender Shadows by Victoria Hatala Slupsky

Butterfly

Yaqeen Zindani

Butterflies flying over the flowers on the window sill
Flutter their beautiful colors and soar through the skies
If only there wasn't a glass barrier blocking us from flying together
Instead the flowers are dying alone

You're just like a Butterfly
From afar, I steal glances. If we touch hands, will I lose you?
You shine in this pitch darkness that is the butterfly effect
Your light touch, and I forget reality at once

It's like a wind that gently strokes you
It's like a dust that gently drifts along
You're there, but for some reason I can't reach you, stop
You, who's like a dream, a butterfly, high to me

Young vs. Old

Lucy Manning

You skip and run and jump.
I ache and limp and slump.

You go to school and read.
I go to doctor appointments and sleep.

You are making new friends.
I am losing them.

You cross every bridge.
I explore the wonders of my fridge.

You are surrounded by people who support you.
I am surrounded by nurses who are forced too.

You are always whining and complaining.
But I am satisfied.

You are always looking for more.
But I don't need anything else.

You are not ready to die.
But I am.

Universe University

Onayah Smith

Clattering of keyboards,
bland colored walls with old chairs.
Crowded with people
trying to achieve the same goal.
Professor gives his
academy award winning
performance on stage.

Lecture hall window,
small yet
filled with future.
Tuning out tour guides
envisioning my
sweet, sweet success.
Reminiscing late nights
spent fighting essays.
So close to the prize.

World of its own.
A contrast from the
working class land,
but a gateway back.

My universe to explore.
planets, galaxies, stars.
No going back.
Am I ready?
I must.

Locker

Madeline Boccone

There's a moldy granola bar in my locker
And that sweatshirt I forgot about
The granola bar was in the sweatshirt
Gross

The mice started a colony
With the moldy granola bar
It's the crumbly kind
And they're good at sharing

One is white, one is gray and one is faintly speckled
There are babies in the pocket
Of the sweatshirt I forgot
I wonder if they're lovers
Do they all love each other?

The note my girlfriend wrote me is still in the corner
Folded out like they read it
Like it's Shakespeare or great literature

They'll teach their babies about it one day
Analyze the "can we go to 7/11 after school?"
I miss you!
Meet me in the bathroom during third period"
There's nothing behind it
But they'll make it up anyways
For a little mice English class

Why do they need to know English?

What Lies at the Bottom of the Mariana Trench?

Mirre Zhou

Down into the ocean blue,
Far below the tranquil sea,
A submarine sinks,
To unfathomable depths.

Deep it goes,
Past the light,
Far down into the endless night,
Into a crevice,
A dark abyss.

Far beneath the ground it goes,
Falling into the grasp of the crevice,
Darkness enveloping all it sees,

Headlights failing to aid,
Failing to pierce the chilling darkness.

Deep into the abyss it goes,
Its damned crew trapped,
Crinkle and crunch metal went.

Then they saw a glimmer of light,

Relief they felt,
Joyous they were!

Yet the submarine sank deeper and deeper,
Farther and farther into the abyssmal trench,
Closer and closer to fiery light...

But then they fell-
No water to be seen,
No water to be felt,
And they fell-

Now enveloped in harsh light,
They panicked and screamed,
Overwhelmed with fear.
Oh, damned crew!
How pitiful they were!
And they fell-

Then they felt scorching heat,
Scalding embers burning their feet.
What could this be,
Where could this be?

Nowhere but the Mariana Trench,
Its secret forgotten,
The brave who ventured there driven to insanity,
The truth revealed to the despairing, damned crew,
The truth of what lay at the bottom of the sea, was not the end,
But an exit.

An exit from the cool embrace of the sea,
The entrance to a realm of flame and screams.

The crew despaired,
Gazing through the glass,
Towering spires of flame-
Burning in the distance.

What could this be?
Where could this be?
Nowhere but hell,
The damning lands of burning souls,
The pitifully damned crew having been abandoned by their
superiors.

They were in The Devil's sea now,
An ocean of lava,
A sea of screams,
Pleading for help as the submarine sank,
And the crew burned,
Sacrifices to The Devil.



Repurposed by Sam McKenna

Flower in the vase

Hui Lin Wang

the flower in the vase
you gave beams of innocence
and poured drops of affection.
but when all is done, when all is said
you did not save the flower from its death
and you'll never understand
the way that it wilts
the way that it wants
to stay there
dead

Locker Post-COVID

Ripley Butterfield

I didn't remember the numbers. I had to smash through the
door.

I crumpled and crushed my seaglass boots.

Wrapped candy dust, mixing with the contents of my
favorite sarcophagus,
coated the warped key to dad's old place.

Beneath the rubble lay my lonely birthday,

archival markers bleeding blue, second breakfasts and
thirds,

a live bug mounted on a dead one. I trapped them in a sheet
of notes
on the divine right of kings.

There was a young woman hanging onto the coat hook who I did
not bother,

a compact mirror, a ziplock bag full of faux fur,
pink prunes and suntanned bananas.

A borrowed thermos, crusted with mold and similarly scented
frustrations.

Sleeping capsules I'd been praying to find

were stuck in the grooves of my sister's sneakers.

Fisheye mice

and ocean cats swept the dirty corners. I couldn't bear to
throw anything away.

Slip

John Faciano

Someone is pouring the oil
from the big jug into the little one.
He is using a small funnel so as not to spill any.
I think it is me, he thinks. His hands seem moist.

He thinks about letting go of the jug and the mess it would make
all over the table and the floor. It would take a lot of paper
towels, he thinks, and maybe a few days before he finds all the
splatter. Perhaps the dog will lick it all clean, he thinks.
He hears the blop of the plastic jug hitting the floor.

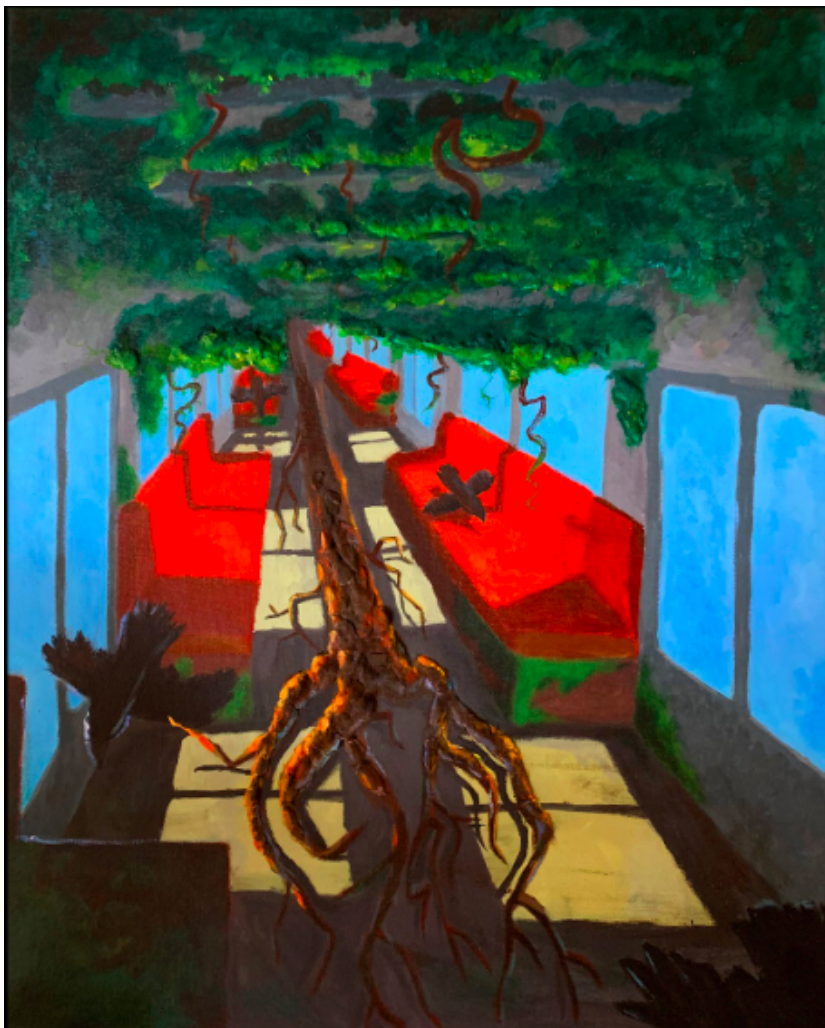
He is stepping out of the shower. He raises his leg over the tub.
He thinks about the bath mat slipping out from under his feet,
falling backwards and the break of his neck on the tub edge.
I think it is me, he thinks. He thinks about the sound of the
bath mat, a shrieking squeak before the crack of his neck.

He is boiling water for pasta. He lifts the steaming pot from the
gas range with the red pot holders. I think it is me, he thinks.
He thinks about the pot slipping from his grasp and falling to the
floor. He thinks about the scalding of his legs and feet, and the
face and shoulders of the small child standing beside him.

He is slicing carrots for a stew. The knife is sharp and precise.
He thinks about slicing his hand off, just below the knuckles.
I think it is me, he thinks. He thinks about the four fingers
lying curled on the cutting board. They look like lobster legs
separated from its carcass. He hears only the quick chopping
sound of knife on wood.

He is lighting the barbeque. The gas hisses through the burners.
He presses the ignition. I think it is me, he thinks. He thinks
about the bubble of gas expanding and then exploding in his
face. He thinks about the sound it would make, a soft boom, like
punching a pillow.

He is driving along the highway.
He thinks about turning the wheel sharply into the overpass wall.
There is no thought after that, only the tremendous sound of an
impact and the dashboard and engine crushing his torso. I think
it is me, he thinks.



Natural Brutality by Kevin Li

from The World Outside Button, Manitoba

Liam Powers

A judgment was necessary. David called to mind the evidence: there was the time that Mr. Hubbard rescued David's snowmobile from the thin-layer-of-frost-that-looks-like-a-perfectly-solid-place-to-go ditch that always tricks the kids after big storms. Kindly Old Man. Then there was the time he had caught David in the county dirt shed with a six pack and made him hand over his fake ID. Lofty Old Bastard. David searched him with his eyes, K.O.M. or L.O.B., for some hint either way, until the movement. A timid readjustment of those bony glasses, surely borne out of the discomfort of being scoured by such a vigorous stare, and his mind was made up. Certainly that was not the body language of a hemorrhoidal yammerer or a righteous defender of law, order, and the way things ought to be; certainly that was the gesture of a benevolent gramp, possibly a conscientious draft dodger, a lighter-up for medicinal purposes, a worthy associate, even. David cast a wary eye up and down the street and bade the K.O.M. a hasty entry.

Scarcely two minutes had past after David had inducted the K.O.M., the former having explained the crack and the sealant can on account of the leaky windows and loose doornails that sucked frigid eggshell-contracting air in from the vicious Manitoba outdoors, when the door was stampeded aside by Old Mrs. Archambault.

"The egg!" she gasped. "I knew something was up!" It was all David and the K.O.M. could do to give chase, as dry leaves tumble after a log-hauler, as she made for the egg atop its plinth. Her hands stopped inches from its surface, twisting and drifting around the exterior like a sorceress manipulating her crystal ball. "How has this happened?"

"The windows," muttered David and the K.O.M. in unison. They were spared from further explanation by the

doorbell, which had stood neglected through the beginning of what was shaping up to be a long and unfortunate night.

“God help us!” cried David, failing to appreciate the mercy of the moment. The K.O.M., K. beyond fault, answered for him.

“Come in, come in,” He stepped aside as a throng of surprising density squeezed through the doorway. “There’s a problem with the egg!”

In had walked Maude, Benjamin, and Lachlan Byrne, plus the Daltons, and then a nimble Matthew Wald from Button High who managed to duck in as the door swung shut. All, despite being entirely silent as they entered, fell profoundly silent as they gazed upon the egg.

“It cracked,” said Matthew Wald, who tended to notice things when they were very obvious.

“Yes,” said David, his voice raw. “It was the windows.”

And then that treacherous dotard of a front door swung open once more, never to shut again for the foreseeable future because of the unpluggable torrent of nondescript Manitobans that suddenly surged through its frame: a harried herd of fast-food workers, at least twenty-four lumberjacks, the whole gaggle of grocers, and of course an inestimable expanse of fishermen. All flooded in, until the vast majority of Button’s 264 hardy residents stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the kitchen or its adjacent hallway, and the few stragglers peered in through the front-porch windows. They jostled and clamored; flying every which way was the word egg, with a crack thrown in here and there, until the house was fit to burst with the expanding volume of these two words.

An old man once asked me

Hira Yasir

An old man once asked me, "What is youth to you?"
With wavering eyes,
A stare of wisdom and wariness,
triggering a bright smile
on my innocent face.

A wonderful question
open to interpretation,
yet beautifully detailed.

Youth is just something that can not be explained.
When you live to eat, rather than eating to live,
When you walk where your legs and heart yearn to take you,
That is your youth.

Some may be happy with it,
Others may long for more in life,
Yet being in your youth is a journey that leads you to partake in
society as an individual.

Youth is what gives us uniqueness,
drifting from conformity
and all that is uniform.

Days will pass by like trickles of water, fast and certain,
until your youth is no longer there
and adulthood begins.

The Snack

Gabrielle Rosales

I didn't mean to
It was so nice in the moment
The thoughts were coming to me
Why am I doing this?
I knew what your reaction would be
I couldn't control my urges
My beastly, human impulses
The voices in my head or stomach
Something was speaking
I know for a fact it wasn't
Logic or reasoning
Throwing away every single
Piece of wisdom I had on home training
I understand how sinners feel
How they feel the moment
Before they commit the act
The thought process rushing,
The adrenaline flowing
I wasn't heartless, of course
I thought of you before I did it
The bright, fluorescent white light
Glaring off translucent plastic
Making the tiny refreshment
Inside glimmer and shine
Every good moral in me
Was gone, nonexistent, fictitious even
As I tore away the plastic
And I unveiled The Snack.

Empathy & Apathy

Anthony Hackett

Your troubles, your trials, your sadnesses,
In my heart I feel.
Understood and validated,
With each unspoken word.

Your pain felt deep within me,
Our feelings intertwined with each other,
Like copper wires creating connections,
Transmitting understanding through emotions.

Your troubles, your trials, your sadnesses,
In your heart stand alone,
Invisible, nonchalant and unfeeling,
With each desperate word.

Your pain cries like a wounded animal,
Hurt and bruised, left alone to die,
Left vulnerable to the cruel elements,
Because apathy reigns.

Poem Interpolation of Personal Statement Opposites Attract Black and White, Colonizer, Colonized (sorta).

Sebastian Fraccari

What I'm tryin' to say is I'm mixed. My family
is a checkerboard. With it comes the stares,
the confusion, especially abroad. Why it is
such a difficult concept to grasp I am not sure,
but does it drive me mad? Constantly. I
don't understand myself anymore and
especially within society.
Am I acting "too much" of a certain race?
Are my preferences unaligned with what

they are supposed to be? Must I be perfect in their eyes? Am I causing myself more problems?

Yes. Almost certainly. I am me and I am what I like. Parlo Italiano e sono nero? Sì. Am I into many white artists from the past? Yes. It's who I am and, yah know, judge all you want, but I ain't changin' easily, so might as well shut up...
(nobody has said anything to me, so it may just be my brain, sociology, and news...) I am me e chi se ne frega niente. I am me and who gives a damn?

*Translation:

Italiano: Parlo Italiano e sono nero? Sì. English: Do I speak Italian and am black? Yes

Sitting in the sun's

James Ma

Sitting in the sun's blue light,
My hands race against the clock.
This hasn't been an uncommon occurrence:
11, 10, 9, 8, 7 ...

Faceless students pour into class
Yet this isn't class.
Ms. or Mr. talk into the void,
Only to hear no response, not even their own voice.

The silence of the void deafens me.
The only sound in the dark is slamming keys.
Crossing the finish line,
I go to bed to rest before another school day.

The Joke

Tess Nealon Raskin

Sage lungs, curls in fishcake spirals, ribbons
from my skin. The air is as clear and green as
the dead winter is sweet.

A wail like an opening flower or a smoke signal. Drumskin
tugging at the corners of

your mouth, stretched marionette, I close
like a kettle under words and skin.

Snow globe, sun globe, airplane view,
cookie platter, big dollhouse world keeps
revolving around me, revolving around you,
and revolving around the street dog with the
missing leg.

If the crown falls off the king's head, the
people demand the head must come with it,
smiling faces and leather-buckled shoes
clatter across the cobblestone and they cry
out for cherry rain and carnage with open
hands like children.

I am the jester, all silk and chiffon, with
bluebirds at my window and my blankets
knotted around my still limbs. Come to your
window, the birds chirp quietly, can't you see
what you've slept through?

Ingrid

Evelyn Finn-Wilson

Ingrid buries her second child

Silent all the while

Ingrid has four

She'll have no more

Ingrid kneels in the church

To pray and search

Ingrid is stony-souled and teary-eyed

Still, she never cries
Ingrid forgot to enjoy being young
She never gazed straight at the sun
Ingrid has pretty hands
And a bony face
Ingrid earned deliverance
With her fists
Ingrid loved a broken road
Ancient and unpassable
Ingrid pursed her lips and closed her eyes
As he turned his back
Ingrid will go to the sea
And there she will finally be
Ingrid as she was born



Portrait of a Young Model by Maximillian Valentine Mills

Entering Adulthood

Ulyana Shyrokaya

In a brick building, on a windowsill on the 6th floor
I sit and stare at the evening, non-flickering deserted Coney
Island,
relaxing my brain, looking at a beautiful violet-red cold sunset
without a single cloud,
old roofs and only plants bloom after a cold winter,
only the Verrazano Bridge from my window makes me feel ‘
at home.

Was it always like this I will ask myself, will it stay like this
as if in the village with my Grandma but without jam?
Then where are all my friends? No longer waiting for me on the
bench for hours.
The deserted city in longing and sadness has acquired shades
of gray,
only birds flying from the warmth make a smile on my face,
trains seldom run and not a single plane is in the sky.

Where did all the people go, where are you, why am I alone again,
or am I?
We are so close, only one block away, but I will not go first.
Am I alone in soul or am I empty without him?
Where are all my feelings, all my motivation?
Where is that Ulyana that with a joyful face?
But no, I'm not alone, I see her, my salvation from darkness,
through the window, that girl screams a verse of music.

I'd better leave this window, don't want to get sick.

Puppet

Ananya Francois-Martin

if you go i'll stay
and if you come back i'll be right where you left me
and when you don't
i'll wait
ask me to jump
i ask how many times
i will do anything you tell me
even if it's not to
i'm pathetic

you ask why
i ask the same question
though i know
because no one ever wanted me
i was big and strong
i was small and fragile
i was me
i was someone else
i was the person i thought you wanted me to be
quiet
louder
dominant
submissive
i showed you everything
i showed you nothing
yet i was never her

and though i love myself
it is not enough
i am not enough
so i must be a puppet
a puppet no one plays with

Self Sabotage

Huriya Waqar

Do I let the great phosphorescent hibiscus on my windowsill
Dry out and die
Because I am too weak and unmotivated
To pick new ones?
Or is it because I find them comely as they are?
Perhaps I enjoy the dried wilting petals
Littering the moth-eaten rug on the ground
And the way they yellow and turn brittle
Not because it reminds me of death
But because it reminds me of me
In a beautifully twisted way I suppose
I have let myself go I am so
Afraid of getting my heart broken
So I took a hammer
And smashed it myself
And cradled the shattered pieces to my chest
Holding on too tight
When it would have been better to let go
Like the hibiscus on my windowsill
I wilt without you
You are the water and the sun too
Trying to survive on my own without you
May the hibiscus grow again
In the fields of my heart
May the sun rise shining
And allow me to flourish in its yellow sight
Perhaps my hibiscus can be stunningly serene
And the air will smell of ripe, aromatic berries
But for now I'll try to give what I couldn't receive
Show my soul kindness, compassion, love
And show my body respect and care
After all I've been through
It's only fair

Ramadi

Sasha Rosen

Hands worn by time
To a rough callous
Palaces of yore
Reduced to heaps of bricks
Face concealed
Behind the warmth of a red scarf
In the town square
The rain was coming down in sheets

This is a Blinding Point of View, I Actually Have No Clue

Clara Abbasi

A beautiful day full of beautiful snow.
A gorgeous day with a gorgeous glow.
A peaceful day with a peaceful flow.

All so acute yet wonderful with a view.
Not so much with a vagrant crew.

Sitting and watching their brains pursue.
Heating and freezing
Their veins subdue.

Fall after Fall
They prepare for what is to come.

Another year of violent crime.
Slowly turning their bones to grime.

This is only my point of view.
Some might say I have no clue.



Puzzled by Leah Alfred

To Stephen Hawking

Charlie Townsend

Did the bright colors of the void
Ever fail to find you? As you sat crippled by
The world that had set you up to fail?
Or was it such hindrances that pushed you
To paint a larger picture of the unknown? Could more
Strokes have been made?
Did your inability to step away from
The canvas result in precise or
Agitated mixes? Of the colors that would
Paint the future? What
Could have been painted?

scribblings in vain

Ellie Trinkle

you love me not
stomach, brain, turbulent rot
crashed colosseum, a sea of mutiny
grasp a concept, then refrain
stand up, so proud
then scathe away
wait one more second
in a pool of rain
resume in fury
backstabbing glory
others will torment
but you won't lament
price in time
cracked, REFINE
improve and reuse
your debts are due
not a penny late!
pay right at the gate
turn back, shuffle
resume, noise muffled
blast the sky
for all its wrongdoings
your time is now
leave, scamper, mill around
do so without a single, scornful sound
trifle, yes, do trifle
pour yourself into a cycle
cloudy mind
low, and frankly, quite unkind
you stand in a hurricane
while i wait for the rain
common ground gone
browning leaves
naked trees
whisper it so no one else can know
and continue your way
for, it is i, awaiting your dismay

Never Judge A Book By Its Cover

Noemi Tracey

As I turn to face her, my mouth forms a thin line. The teacher just announced that we had to work in pairs. Well look at my luck! I have to talk to the gloomiest kid in our class. She just looks arrogant and difficult to work with. Why do I have to work with her? I mean you can just see that she doesn't want to be here. Her frail arms are covered with a lacy material that goes up to the sleeve of her black shirt. She paired her shirt with a pair of ripped black jeans and jet-black combat boots. What a depressing outfit. I inhale the perfume she is wearing as she gets near me. It smells more lively than her entire personality.

As she starts to speak to me a hushed voice exits her mouth. My eyes widen when she makes a joke and starts laughing hysterically in front of me. Her laugh sounds like a hyena dying. I am shocked. I don't think I ever heard her laugh. As a matter of fact, I thought she didn't laugh at all.

Her teeth are colorless and her nose is pierced. As I look closer at her she is wearing heavy mascara and black eyeliner. She definitely went to prison before; there was no doubt in my mind. But I am actually really curious, so I asked her. A small smile graces her milky white face. She giggles at me and told me that she's never been to prison and is a straight-A student with really strict parents so she usually tries to stay out of trouble. Guilt bubbles in my throat as I apologize repeatedly for assuming something so horrible about her. A huge smile is plastered on her face when I'm done apologizing. She tells me not to worry about it and asks me to eat lunch with her today. I agree because she doesn't seem as bad as I thought she was.

As we eat lunch outside at a vomit green table I learn more about the girl I worked with in class. She tells me her name is Catharina. The name Catharina means pure and innocent. After talking to her during lunch I can now say that her name suits her perfectly. The way she tenderly eats her food and insisted on making me eat some of her lunch. Or maybe it's her upbeat and soft personality. It's like you can see little white wings flutter behind Catharina every time she smiles. I would've never known

this though if I hadn't talked to her. Catharina is a completely different person from who I thought she was. Catharina may even be the best person I've met in this school.

my best friend

Jenna Sajecki

eyes like dark chocolate chips,
no longer hidden behind her rounded frames.
brown specks placed perfectly across her button nose and
around,
filling up the canvas.
different brown shades create unintentional highlights
as a result of numerous colors slapped onto her still healthy hair,
done unprofessionally of course.
figure resembling aphrodite,
goddess of beauty.
beneath her exterior holds
hidden treasures of the
mind, of the soul.
heart like glass,
be fragile with her.
her mind works in some way,
resembling a young person's art:
chaotic with the best intentions.
soul like a well;
the beauty in it lies deep,
deeper than expected.
in the midst of the
mess that stands
64 inches above the ground,
there is hope.
past like a black hole,
present like a tsunami of emotions,
but her future?
her future will be like the crisp air
after a drenching storm

Forsaken

Zion Clement

I don't want to write this god forsaken memoir. I hate writing. Well, I can't really afford to hate writing. Can you be a writer that hates writing? I feel that sounds a bit ridiculous. Doesn't it? It isn't necessarily that I despise the idea of writing, it more so has to deal with what I am meant to write. Personally, I can't stand journalism. Memoir writing and autobiographies are also two things I find distasteful. I feel as though I've seen too much to write about just one topic. In my seventeen years of living, I have managed to experience such a titanic amount of things that people my age shouldn't even have to imagine. I could write about my mother passing away when I was in seventh grade. I could write about how my father introduced me to his mistress not even a single day after she passed. Or maybe I'll write about when he put my dog down, without speaking a word of it to me. Maybe I'll write about my brother moving away and leaving me to fend for myself in the domain of beasts. The summer leading up to this school year alone could make an interesting and compelling story. The twelve classes that I'm currently drowning in. The microaggressions that I take on in the theater community. There are too many options I have as to what to write, and the idea of just *having* to choose one of the many experiences I've had to explore and elaborate on is excruciatingly painful to me. Maybe I don't hate writing, I just hate the feeling of having to write. Suffocated by words, imagery, subtext.

You'd Be Happier

Tucker Griffith

You'd be happier...
If this wasn't you

You'd be happier if I was a lily
But I've got five petals
And curling whites and yellow middles
I was never meant to bloom

You'd be happier if we tried again
If you could set the clock back
And give it another shot
But I was never meant for you

You'd be happier and I wouldn't blame you
But I've got special needs
And special names
And special attitudes

Time's passing us by
And the future's looking pretty dim
You'd be happier then...
But I'd never want to be so grim

It wasn't the woosh

Django Buenz

It wasn't the woosh of the Acela.
Or the screeches of a commuter.
Nor the old plastic cover on the red velvet vintage couch forcing
sweaty skin together.

Not the bickering nagging convos.
With the complaints served on the side.
Couldn't have been fancy chinese dinners.
With bubbling pork trotters and duck thighs.

Not tear stained t-shirts
Not empty happy smiles
It wasn't because you made me, you molded me for a while.

Not the old fisherman on his dock.
Setting up his bait.
Dragging the hook lipped fish.
Into her first date.



Baby Leilani by Ripley Butterfield

Broken Gate

Wyatt Kotuk

In this frozen stream, covered with ice so cold and surrounded by trees with no leaves, there is no life. There is nothing moving, no sound, everything is still. One light peeks through the branches and shines off the ice-covered water. Small footprints left in snow now brushed away by the heavy winds. I'm broken. My rusted metal bars only stop sticks from flowing down this sleeping stream. I've forgotten who I was once protecting. What was my purpose? Will I ever be useful again?

I remember when I stood strong during a warmer time. I protected the children who played with their stick swords and paper boats. The stream was powerful and surrounded by life. All kinds of animals squawked and squeaked, jumped and flew from tree to tree. The forest was filled with color and feelings, but now it's all broken. I've failed at my one job, so now I lie here left to crumble in a stream covered with ice so cold surrounded by trees with no leaves where there is no life.

Sketchbook

Solea Miller

The edges are torn and tattered. They expose the cool grey of the cover, hidden under a layer of textured black paper. Some of the pages are yellowed, a signature of old age; while others are warped with water damage, crinkled and rough. It almost looks like waves on the ocean, how the paper rises and falls. It no longer has the scent of the store's cleaning chemicals. It was replaced by the sneeze-inducing smell of old paper; a result of spending millenia in the back of a closet. The cover wears an outfit of sticky paper residue, bent staples and a creased index card. The card holds memories of a nervous younger me, stepping into a high school building for the first time. I took my first leap into an environment full of the woody scent of sharpened pencils and the smell of alcohol markers that burns your nose. Soft charcoal and pastels smeared across fingers. Acrylic paints staining shirts and painting canvases with a wash of color. The printing presses, heavy enough to crush fingers, sat idly in the corner. In that room, the book held experiments with color combinations. Blues mixed with reds to create vibrant purples; purples mixed with yellows to create rich browns. Using perspective, we created the illusion of three dimensions with only pencil and paper. The book held and continues to hold the characters of an imaginative 8th grader; barely fleshed out universes created on a whim. The stained pages littered with doodles from a multitude of hands that may not have been my own. My sketchbook is the keeper of my former identity and the owner of my past interests. It tells the story of a period of development in my life where I look back and cringe at my mediocrity. At the same time, I can compare my drawings to the ones that I've created in the past, and confidently say I've improved.

an ode to my skull-shaped mug

Keira McKenna

my mother had bought my very own mug
a mug that had arrived in my
dreams and spoke to me

i'm the only mug you'll ever need she whispered
you'll feel so content once you have me
how could i ever refuse such an offer?

she was a perfect fit for my tiny hands
with its round half circle handle
like a crescent moon attached to her side

from the back, she may seem very normal
but when you turn her around
that's where you see her true value

black on the outside
and black on the inside
the perfect color combination

as i trace the ceramic mandible of my skull-shaped mug
i feel like hamlet as he spoke
to the dead jester's cranium

even now as she sits on my desk,
holding my pens and collecting dust,
i still am in love with my skull-shaped mug

It's Called Uno

Vivienne Knouse-Frenzer

Gabe opened the bedroom door uncaringly and waddled into the dark room where he sat down on his brother's bed and decided to shake him like a rattle.

"Get up, Aiden. You promised!" the boy whined, he shook and shook, faster each second. Aiden lay there limp until his little brother got tired and walked out of the room, which left a stream of light on the teen's head. Aiden squinted his eye open to see if he was once again alone. He rolled over and grabbed his phone, as he anxiously stalked his inbox.

"Ok, open your eyes." Aiden laughed as Gabe pulled his fingers away from his eyes. "It's called Uno." Gabe took the red cardboard box and started to investigate it, sniffed it, bit it, and tried to figure out how to open the damn thing. "It's a card game where you have to get rid of all your cards... well... it's more complicated than that," Aiden felt his leg vibrate and pulled out his phone, he clutched it hard and stood up and shook his brother off him. "I'll show you in the morning."

"Promise?" Gabe pleaded, Aiden's hand held firmly on him until he gave a response.

"You got it," Aiden finger-gunned at him, "birthday boy."

Ten minutes went by while he paced mindlessly around the small confines of a room littered with old boxers and graphic design t-shirts. The man's temples were bruised from being rubbed for so long, and the smell alone could tell anyone how much of a cold sweat he was in. Aiden's bedroom door creaked open to reveal a pouty 7 year old Gabe. "I knew you weren't sleeping." The little boy gritted. "You promised to play with me in the morning."

"I was sleeping I just - I just woke up." The little boy stomped like a cow on the filthy rug beneath them, stared darts as if he tried to burn his brother's hair with sheer willpower. "Fine." Aiden gave up, "Let me take a shower first." Aiden brushed past Gabe, pushing his face down with the palm of his hand, "Little brat." The door behind the birthday boy slammed shut, the force made his whole spine twinge. Gabe laid down on the unkempt bed, pulling the sheets over his shoulders, and closed his eyes, as if he was trying to ignore the water streaming down his face.

Pinkerton

Hanna Slidders

It is not the click of a lighter
Not the glowing circle it makes in the night
It's not the deadbolt on the door I had to open for you
After smoke-filled hours of being alone
It's not the days without contact
Adding up to become weeks
It's not the ironic birthday cards
I was still thankful to receive
It's not those long nights ending in tears
It's not your day in the hospital
That day was so hard
It's not your empty threats, empty promises
It's not the rare occasions you would
Button your shirt correctly
Not the way you violently laughed
Not the way you tried to argue
When you knew you were right
Not the years it took for you to treat me as a person



Family Southern Dinner by Nadine McCall

Because I was alive

Joe Elliot

I must've been breathing
fine, more or less,

without my paying too much attention,
but when they tell me

to let myself start to notice
and follow my breath, to let my mind

rest on the rising and falling
bosom of the breath, and to just breathe

naturally, I can feel that same breath
of mine grow anxious,

as if it did not know what it was doing,
as if it hadn't been doing its job

all along everyday for 61 years,
and start to look to me for guidance

and assurance, that is when
I start to take over,

right when I should be letting go,
my uncertain mind, not resting at all,

now telling my breath when to go
in and when to go out,

now laboring
just to stay alive.

A World That Isn't Mine

Malika Shakirova

I try, I try, I try

I try to indulge in the beauty of the night
The beauty of the day
And all that comes with light

I try to indulge in myself, my worth and my body
My true whole being
And all that comes with somebody

I try to enter myself into a world of man
As a woman I know it's hard

I tried Kickboxing
It sounded easy
My fist flew and broke people down
It was pure satisfaction
I felt unbeatable
I felt strong

I tried, I tried, I tried, and I tried so hard
But the moment of my discomfort
Of my grief and my disgust,
Of my rationality came

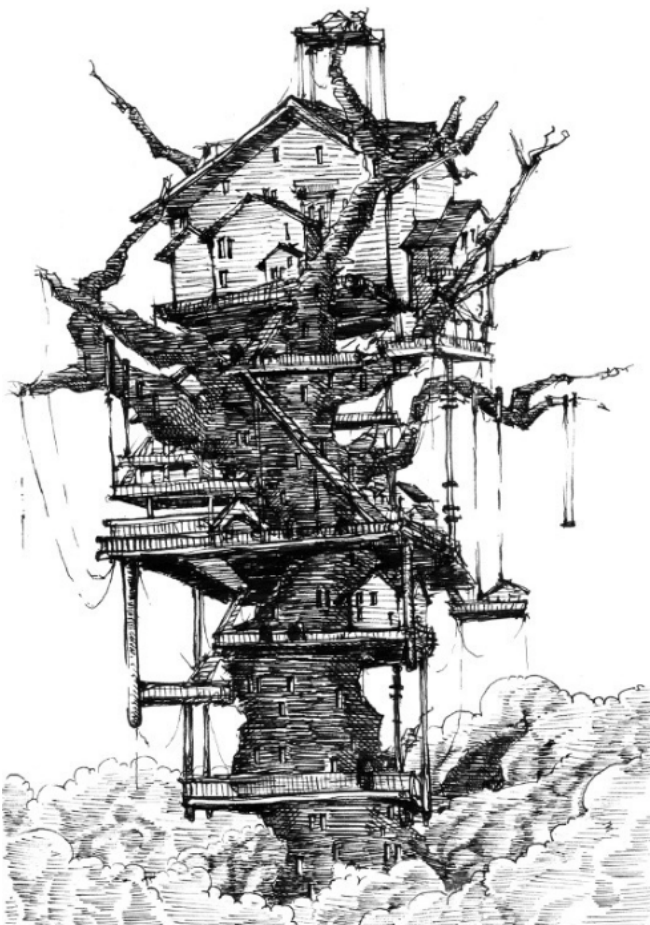
Of course, it was a man's sport
A sport with a man in control
I was only a yellow belt
And that was the end of it all

When a hand touches you
An unfamiliar one
One not from your mother or your friends

A wall so hard

One so hard to break through
Looms in front of you
Stopping all possibility of recovering

I tried, I tried, I tried
I tried to ignore everything
The fright of being a woman in a man's world
I tried being one with a man
I had all hopes
But hope isn't always the answer to virtue



Imaginative Treehouse by Fredrick Hoffman

This Poem Story

Aviva Feinstein

is about the day I went to the Keith Haring Exhibit. The sun was shining so intensely that I could feel its rays penetrating my window. It was early spring and a day off from school. My mom was a teacher so she had the day off too. She wanted to take me and my younger sister to a Keith Haring Exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum. I was around nine-years-old and the only thing I knew about Keith Haring was that we had a piece of his poster art hanging in our living room.

It both scared and fascinated me. The strange stick figures embracing each other like friends who, without faces, looked the same. I wore a vibrant blue dress and my sister put on the identical dress in bright yellow. So we would be bold and bright but the same, just like Keith Haring figures.

During the subway ride to the Museum, I kept staring at the blank faces on the train and imagining where they were coming from, where they were going, if they had families or if they had dogs or cats or anyone. Just like I often imagined what was going on behind the blank faces in the Keith Haring poster.

When I emerged from the dark subway station into the light of day, I squinted and blinked to shield myself from the blinding sun. Even that didn't prepare me for the blinding and dizzying art happening of a Keith Haring Exhibit. There was art everywhere. Pop art, street art, graffiti art, people who are not people art, animals who are not animals art, abstract art, alternative art, faceless people with gaping holes in their stomach, maybe holes in their heart.

Yet not all dark and empty. Bold colors popping off the canvas. Child-like dancing figures, all looking the same, all looking equal, in joyous affectionate poses expressing energy and a zest for

life even without a face to express emotion. I was swept away in this cartoon-like world that was so much more alive than what I might have been learning that day at school.

It was so strange stepping outside where it didn't look like a Keith Haring painting. The subway ride home was like a ride back to reality.

John vs. Paul

Giulia Arlia

Paul built castles with melodies
John wrote from the heart
A partnership no one assigned
But a victory from the start.

John was politically inclined
Paul pleased his crowd
He wanted to rock the world
But John wanted to be loud.

John disagreed with
Paul's attitude towards the end
John and the guys slammed the door
A wound no Beatle could mend.

John started to imagine his life
As a peaceful illusion
Paul worked harder until
His career had no conclusion.

Paul's stayed in the picture
John ran out of time
The Dakota winters consumed him
While Paul sang Live and Let Die.



Observational Figure Drawing by Kelly Chen

Thanksgiving is my hummingbird

Logan Lane

Thanksgiving is my hummingbird and you are her captor.
Every winter I check the playground wood where we carved our initials.
Our locks play improv games down this four year hallway where I've
tagged my guilt.

Guess I

Ruined your life after your life left me in ruins.

Enemy, I was shamed, got my name,

And emerged: tamed at your defeat.

Narrow Nomenclature stays in my head and prays in my bed.

Hummingbird, who devours takeout on Christmas,

Over the river and through the woods, plastic spork in hand.

Under the covers we are merely

Sons, and mothers, sisters and brothers.

Every dog deserves a book to read and a reed to play.

Shall Wind Bring Him Back

Kaicheng Wu

Sky within dye of ink,
Houses row up on the other side.
Bugs creep and tweet on the net.
Only a few windows on the other side were struggling with
the dark.
Wind, praise him, the arrival of midnight,
The clouds were swinging as the wind told them to.
The gradient disk radiating soft light wouldn't tell them who takes
away the orange in front of her,
The disk couldn't be like the orange, for they rotate day and night.
Miss Subrosa will keep the truth before the inquisitive one
finds it out.
Wind floats with him, back to junior-high.

Link with the same skies, with the same disk and orange,
But with a different night.
He used to look out the window
For the one he was waiting for.
Imagine for her,
Sought for her,
Ought with love for her
And gone with her.

The gust of wind brushes his face, the wild breathe of nature,
Trussed with rain splashing his face, turning his mind weaker.
Time to go to bed, he lays on the bed, rolling back and forth,
thinking bleaker.
He can't fall asleep, weeping like a failure.
He will be appeased by time but will replay.
He ought to change day by day
Or the display may stay.

Rain patters on the sidewalk

Melanie Chen

Rain patters on the sidewalk
The rain unclothes the trees
A blanket of autumn leaves transforms the desolate streets
Everything becomes red and orange
The sun comes out
No more pattering
Everything comes back to life

Staring out of my cold and ordinary window
The gloomy storm has left a beautiful sight
I can't help but be reminded of my childhood home
A small wood house painted red
Rain washed and washed the color off
The beautiful bright red turned a faint red orange color
Now I stare
Stare out the cold window in this apartment
Staring at the leaves
The leaves that remind me of my home

The rain on the leaves glistens underneath the sunlight
Yet I can't help but feel sorrowful
The rain has stripped away the leaves from the trees
Leaving them naked and scrawny
Like how the rain stripped the color off my home
The home I grew up in
I can't help but wonder
If the rain is a blessing or a curse

An Old Man's Anguish

Jian De Mai

a man spends his long days
gazing from his tiny window
over to a dirt road
one he knows from childhood
the days bring
golden, piercing sunlight and noontide breeze
a clear, azure sky
but his eyes never left the dirt road
watching cars go past
beneath him,
a neighborhood squeezed and dried
of life and good
what's left, rots and reeks
of decay and neglect
the streets lost their color
for him

a sick town, bringing memories of
years past
in this tiny, old town
alone
stuck to his roots
now, he's lost in washed dreams
of when
he could've left
on the dirt road

he curled up
and could no longer stare
his pale face gained color
he wept like a child
but he knew he was no longer one
and that only made him cry harder



Stella by Ansophie Pagani

13 Sons of Man

Kayla Moll

The unfortunate man's portrait
Got photobombed
By a falling green apple

You want to see the man
You want to see the apple
But which one
Are you truly supposed to see?

The grey skies
And the grey seas
Drain all life
A single apple grows

The man with an apple for a head
Stares

Why is there an apple
Covering the man's face?

You can see a glimpse
Of his eyes
They look blue

On such a cloudy
Miserable day,
What did he do
To deserve this?

Did he put the apple there,
To conceal his face?
Or did the apple put itself there
To conceal him?

Unearthly, Irrational Doll

Aviva Feinstein

A warm soothing summer day
Abruptly turning into a haunting winter night chill.
As I dim down the lights
I see It through a purple haze,
Searing eyes like lightning bolts
Staring right through me.
I slowly turn the lights back on.
It disappears.
I look around the room
And see nothing.
Am I hallucinating?
Did I imagine this demonic creature?
Did I breathe life into a wooden doll to overcome my loneliness?
I leave my room,
Feeling alone
Since I have no one to comfort me when I am sad or scared
Or share my bursts of joy.
I am by myself,
Walking,
Dreaming,
Wind howling, tree limbs
Clattering
Looking with my mind's eye for those piercing hypnotic eyes.
Walking beside this unearthly, irrational doll.
Friend or enemy?
I will never know.

Nowhere In The World

Evelyn Finn-Wilson

Do you ever feel it when time stops?
And life is still for a minute-
And you can smile at the strangeness of it
As it tilts back into motion?
I don't know how to tell you everything
I wanted to my life is
Trying to tell you everything I wanted to
You had rage and a loud laugh
And you danced like a wild creature
You said the things you wanted to say
And one day this ended, so I wonder-
Were you forced to?
Did getting old scare you?
Are you afraid of being alone?
I wish I hadn't mocked, so boldly and bravely.
I wish for a lot of things
And I want to be you, be with you,
Bathe myself in your warmth and wisdom
You are everything I ever wanted
To have and to know
I love your laughter more than life
Would willingly die for you without a second thought
There is nowhere in the world
Like the spaces you are in.



Me and Myself by Wiktoria Klimczuk

Middle schoolers

Rose Davis

Middle schoolers suck lollipops whilst observing slippery basketball players. A stiff man in a stiff suit teaches his son how to ride a bicycle. A braider transports her salon to a park bench. Too gorgeous of a day to stay indoors, inside walls. The icy woman hustles in the heat. Next to her, a school security guard sells firecrackers by the bundle. One kid sits at a bench doing calculus homework while his friends play dice a few feet away. A short man practices trombone on a long lunch break. A car passes, blasting Spanish music. A woman dances gently, with a sleeping baby cradled perfectly in her arms. The police make an arrest on the next block while a man gets down on one knee and proposes. A pristine picture with an unwritable caption.

Marilyn Dead

Sabine Vockins

Reads the headline of the Daily News
A happy day at the beach
Sand sticks in the crevices in my feet
As I dive deeper into the story
My eyes trace the words:
Tragedy, overdose, Saturday evening

My sister runs through the sand
The American flag trails behind her
An American beauty dead
The barbiturates consumed her whole
Like the wind consumes the flag

Marilyn did not know me
But I knew her
Yet what if she did know me?
Would this headline still have been
Marilyn Dead?



Fragile by Denys Prots

At the bottom of my closet

Rose Fleischer Black

My cousin strangles me. A prayer book circled nails cutting in, connected to a sort of shameful piece of paper, connecting my heart to a woman twice my age, connected to a woman just my age, connected to a woman eons ago, connected to my rabbi, who is supposed to be the adult, but she is not my mother and I don't know how to explain.

My friend throttles me. She is chipper when I talk to her although everyone says that she's doing badly. This is no surprise. I am nowhere in her closet, which makes sense, I cannot remember the bottom of mine, only legos where there is supposed to be feelings. She associates me with hummus. It is smeared on the corners of my closet to keep the moths out, but it's not working very well.

My father suffocates me. Words are streaming through the bottom of my closet, but they are not my words, masses of red string tying things on a clothesline with loose knots. He gives me pretty paper for my closet, but has neglected to give me the X-Acto knife, or the glue. I hope this closet is better than what I think it is. WFMU stickers cover the floor of my closet, and I use them to stick the paper in place.

My sister has a garrote. She does not use it but she laughs at my fear of it. We circle each other, I think. She doesn't give me a second glance. Simply plows forward. Her closet is cleaner than mine and I don't know whether to be happy or sad for her. She writes poems too.

My rhinoceros stifles me. It is a heavy weight, pulling me into the past that everyone seems so eager to get rid of. It's dying, pushing me into a future without it, stealing the things it loves, comfort, family, song, peace. The world is freezing, or warming, the sort of burning sensation that happens when one is so cold that faces burn under a frozen sun.

I choke myself. Undercut myself. Trip myself. If this closet had a road I would say I was falling off but there's not a road anymore and instead this closet is an elevator, cold metal, shooting into the sky. I stand like Willy Wonka above myself. I am not a person. I am not a character anymore. My dance teacher would probably call this bullshit, and so would my mother, that every person has a basis, a personality designated since birth. When I open my mouth I see her snake out, and my body moves without my brain and I twirl like Emma Stone in La La Land, no personality to be seen of, although this snake is a convincing phantom. Glass eyes litter the closet floor.



Print Dress by Michael Romeo



Last Day by Emelie Villanueva

I Do Not Ask

Ekaterina Kozak

“I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person.”

I feel their pain with small restraint, and sometimes it feels like too much.

I open the window to their soul and let my cheerful wind sweep their heart of rain.

The rain was strong, I almost failed but kept my efforts in touch.

I feel the suffocating and sad emptiness of their mind and water drops run down my face.

It may be just the rain, or perhaps I am the one crying.

The rain washed everything away and my soul, starting to cry, suddenly got soaked.

I screamed for help but there was no answer, instead just the storm of theirs.

With time the storm started calming down, and I realized my medicine worked.

I healed my dear friend of worry and wounds and let myself feel the triumph.

Time has passed and the friend has moved on, like a tornado that was passing through.

I am alone, completely alone, with no one left by my side.
I now feel: sadness, pain, suffocation, like my friend did before.
I was the sponge and she was the tornado just passing through.
She left me with all her troubles and ache.
I am alone, completely alone.

Apples

Samantha Damian

Let's pick apples
Let's pick them from trees
There's red ones
Green ones
Even yellow ones
Let's pick the red apples
They look the juiciest
Let's pick at the skin
Peel the skin off
Off the apples
It'll get messy yes
But we're picking apples
Just ignore the blood
Staining both your index and thumb
The apple sings
It hurts
It feels weird
But that means it's working
The apple is almost fully peeled
Look at the blood on your fingers
Aren't you happy
I am
I couldn't tell
I was self harming
I just wanted some
Apples

Spare Me The Birthday Wishes

Anna Gabisonia

I sneer on the same day
Every year

Its pressure draining
As his ghost is paining

He lingers on my shoulders
As my father forms boulders
I feel my father's pain
But my grandfather certainly did not die vain

Happy Birthday, they sing and shout
Birthday is mine but the happy's washed out

How can I celebrate?
When I'd rather commemorate

A great man's death
Is now planted on the same day I took my first breath

Up in the sky
Or maybe somewhere nearby
He celebrates me
As I celebrate him

Oh how I despise this day
And instead imagine he called to say
Happy Birthday
But back to reality
My 16th birthday
Will always be remembered as an abnormality



Brooklyn Colors by Alyssa Reid

Arson

Valeria VanTuyl

You opened the door like a gentleman
I entered and you swiftly locked me in
It slammed shut but I shrugged it off as the wind
Not knowing what could have been

You looked at me with a vendetta
But I saw sweetness in your eyes
Your mask carefully strapped on
Your face I saw no lies

A poker face, but two-faced,
And in each, hollowness, eyes maced
Smile stitched on like delicate lace
I was foolish enough to want a taste

You held me and you gripped so tight
I found it endearing but should have put up a fight
Your nails were barbed wire
On a gate I could not climb over
You made me feel like I was higher

Than the hell you were trying to drag me into
The hell that you dragged me into
The hell that you trapped me in
Under the burning red embers
Of last December's fireplace
To block the bitter winter wind

I realized that you lit the fire in me
Just to burn me down more
To leave scattered ruins of me
Carelessly on your bedroom floor

You wanted to start the fire without the blame
You wanted to see it reflect in your soulless eyes

You wanted to feel the heat
When you're dangerously close to the flame

You wanted a taste of danger
For it to dissolve on your tongue
Like pineapple on a summer's noon
Just for it to leave you numb



Addiction by Maisy Berger

Dance

Yolaine StFort

Our gown shreds
yet your warmth on my bones
satiates me like cold lemonade

Onpa me around this city where
peanut vendors water my mouth
and yum my palms

Sugarcane men sing
“Vin achte siwo kann!”
I stop to buy their syrup

To sweeten soursop herb
tonight, I will sleep beyond
dreams of rising water

Of men pulling carts on rocky roads
weight of dry goods bends shiny backs
I could fry eggs on their foreheads

Some time ago, your children
ate breadfruits in your womb
now, they are walking x-rays
who pine for your spine, once a ravine
of fresh water, encircled with foliage

Suppose I kneel and clutch ankles
of ones in exile
suppose they bring needles and
nylon threads to sew your wounds?

Wings

Yolaine StFort

A young woman with bent shoulders steps from a tent the height of her waist. I can see her knotted pubic hair, her sagging breasts.

There is an old man in Port au Prince
who gives away his torn shirts
to cover his neighbors' nakedness
before they learn how to fly.

A barefoot boy carrying a jug of water on his head laughs.
Li fou, he said. He looks in the direction where tents grow like
wild mushrooms on bruised earth.

Oasis

Ila Holstein Rosen

An early autumn afternoon-
Tanned cheeks from leftover August evenings
Red nose from the drafty air

Bright leaves mirroring the crisp sky with
Clouds resembling those of a Renaissance painting
Nothing out of the ordinary, yet so close to perfection

The path that leads to waterfalls in the middle of The City
Everyone spoke their mind, most of us agreed.
Sitting in so much bliss we thought it would last forever.

Acts of affection,
You tilted your head when you laughed.
-that late autumn afternoon

Snow without Maeve

Sofia Daley

The snow is slowly falling outside the fogged glass.
The thin glass keeps us apart.
Each flake, so different from the rest.
The world looks so lonely from this view,
So unimportant at this moment.

Although, I cannot say I'm much different
Sitting alone
In an empty house, thinking of how it used to be
When the snow last fell, and Maeve was beside me

I could say I fit in more with this quiet world now.
Losing Maeve was like being covered in a blanket of snow
No one could hear me, no one could help.
I've dread this season, but then again
It brings back the best of memories
The Best of Love.

Sunday Afternoon

Evelyn Finn-Wilson

Screeching with rapturousness,
Children gather in the cinder block courtyard
And as parents look on from apartment windows above,
The central drying tree becomes a maypole,
The cement a chalk tapestry.

Undulating youth possesses such wonder.
I am an old man now, with clouded eyes and twinging bones,
Can't fly down the stairs
To tell those babies how beautiful they are.
I've lived a long life - their paths have yet to be created,
While mine

I mourn myself for no one will.
I mourn the blooming bud I once was.
I will drop my dying petals onto the sweet heads below,
Water them with my tears.
I'm fatigued, I will rest.

a soft hand

Anonymous

If you were standing further along the road, it wouldn't make sense.
You're where you should be,
a soft hand on a slender shoulder.
If you had said "no", things would have been different,
And I'm glad you said "yes", just as you were always told to.
I'm glad you jumped, but why was the fall softened,
why did you go back on your word?
Honestly, you had no way to know besides getting lost and realizing
the wrong turn was taken a few streets back.
Or perhaps you anticipated your failure before it occurred,
causing an accident, a misfortune, a sign of the times.
Anyways, what does it matter? We're all beings,
rotating and being pulled down by
the invisible force that holds us to decisions and homes.
So maybe I shouldn't care if you are okay,
but I do anyways,
and will determine that you are.

Mark and Delilah

Sofia Daley

Mark often kept to himself
Never spoke when he wasn't spoken to
While Delilah said what was on her mind
Loud and clear
Always

They were so different with only one thing in common
They loved each other
Were so connected by the heart, so detached by mind
But that never mattered except when
Delilah went out, and Mark stayed alone

Delilah danced under the disco lights
Sipping every last drink she could find
Talking to every person in sight
While Mark stayed in, reading his book
In the apartment they made a home, that always seemed
to be occupied
By One

Everyone wondered why they stayed together
Why it was enough
They were on different planets
Yet somehow, for them it was
Enough