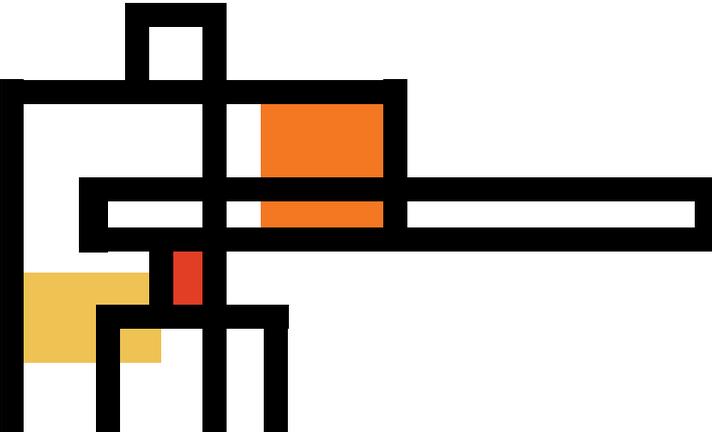




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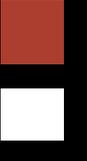
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Welcome Traveler,

Welcome to the culmination of many dreams, hopes and aching hearts. Welcome to our little shelter from the wild and from the dark. So, come, warm yourself by the fire. Feel the heat in your bones and the tinge of hope in your soul.

Dream with us for a moment. Dream of pastures and fields; of poverty and pain; of love and heartbreak. Dream of soaring through a thousand different lifetimes of stories, for you are writing one right now. You are the protagonist of a most marvelous story: life and, perhaps, perhaps, you can find traces of it contained within these flames.

And when your story is ready to be told once more and you venture out into the cold, carry this shelter with you when you do. Take our joy, our dreams and our words and use them, think with them, spread them, create more of them. A single candle can keep out the dark, so hold it high and nurture its flame.

And, whenever you feel the chill of dissonance drip its way down your spine, know that we are here, always, and these flames; these pages, are yearning to be opened once more. So keep your candle lit, weary traveler, for a thousand others could be living off its light.

Connor Greer
Editor-in-Chief



Unconventional Self Portrait
Dan DiPaola
Watercolor & Watercolor Pencil

Lost

living pillars carry the sky
whispering memories
sun speckled wind tickles
stone and paths long forgotten

wooden feelers mingling with stumbling leather feet
will-o-the-wisp him away
spilling out his thoughts of metal encrusted jungles
and the clickity clack of letters in harsh relief

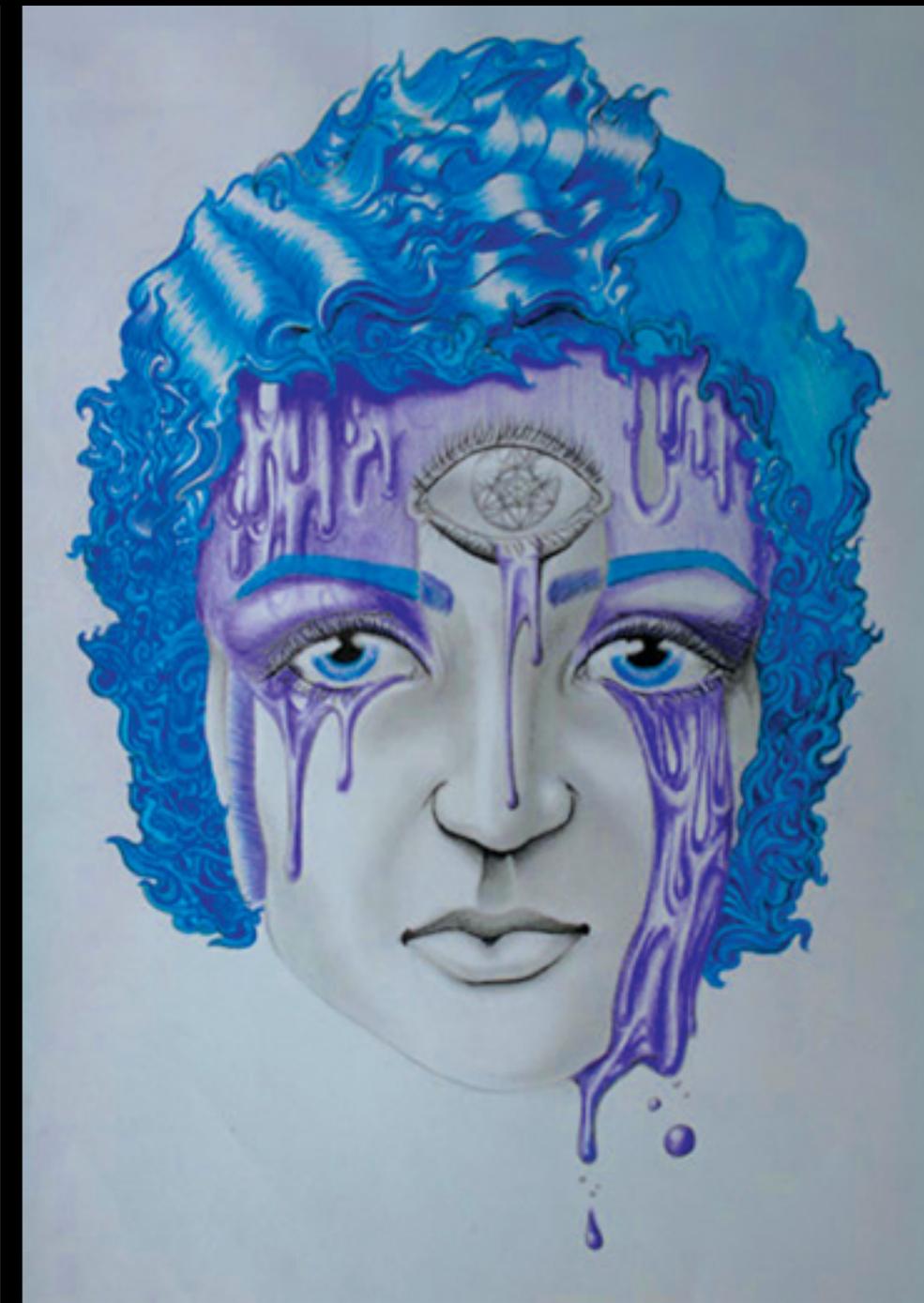
those walking clay figures made their choice
abandoning the soft vermillion world
for one of their own creation
building from troubled thoughts a city of metallic dreams

return to the leafy domains
forget your moon towers
for a land of soft sunlight
before you remember it's already gone

Soft little clay creations, your wires are showing.

Ilana Meeker

Courtnick the Indigo
Declan Farley
Mixed Media



Revelations on a starry night

Laura Kaminsky

I lie down on the cold pavement.

It's not so much lying down, though, as melding with the porous asphalt, seeping into the skin of the earth, no matter how scarred and scabbed she might be.

I know she can't feel me, for how can you feel the warm whisper of a body when you are screaming out in pain?

So, I turn to the sky. It is bruised, tinges of orange punishing the horizon for trying to be something greatly to be feared: dark.

Breathe in, breathe out.

Frozen velvet fills my gulping lungs. I can taste the moon. I can just barely smell the sharp tingle of the stars in the tainted air, begging for my attention. I concede, folding my hands behind my head and crossing my ankles, lifting my eyes to their beckoning light.

They are still at first, shy and sad. There is silence, for a time. Then, they let one little word flutter down from the heavens, just one, as if carried down on the forgotten feather of a dove.

“Why?”

It is as soft as a tear, but shimmers with thousands of years of shock and grief. It brushes against my cheek.

Then, for once, they allow themselves to let it in, and it all starts to fall like rain.

“Why?”

“Why ever?”

“How could you?”

“What have you done?”

“It can't be fixed.”

“You've gone too far.”

“The earth, the earth, the poor earth.”

The indignation builds. The very air starts pulsing with their rising fury. They've watched, they know, and there is no one else paying them any mind tonight but me.

Their quiet serenity mutates into a blinding scream, driven mad are they by the blinding screams of this world unnoticed. Rage, inferno, burning, spitting, for we have mutilated their once unblemished child.

Slamming, pounding gravity grinds my torso into the ground, and suddenly the sky is no longer above me, but below me, whirling wildly out of control in an infinite chaos like a tossing sea, waiting to savagely devour mankind should they fall overboard.

Terrified, the judgment of the universe pressed crushingly into my chest, the breath catching in my lungs, the silent shrieks howling in my ears, I clench my eyes firmly shut.

It should take more than that to make it stop.

Breathe in, breathe out.

The ashes of paradise fill my gulping lungs.



Decomposition
Rachel Schneider
Marker & Ink

Lex



The End of the Tunnel
 Francesca Pullano
 Art Pen

Let me tell you about an old friend of mine...
 Let me tell you about Lex.
 Lex...was a real son of a bitch. Lex was a real man.
 A real *manly* man.

Lex was the kind of guy who made Tom Waits
 Look like your Average Joe.
 Lex was the kind of guy who would never take or make
 a low blow.
 Lex was the kind of guy who would go camping in January
 With nothing but a knife
 A flannel shirt,
 And a pair of jeans.
 And get *bored*.
 Lex was the kind of guy to make a single bicep look like
 a Mongol horde.
 Lex was the kind of guy to grab a rifle from the gun
 rack,
 Then throw a can in the air behind his back,
 And split it in half with a single bullet.
 I'm still not sure how he did it.

Lex was the kind of guy to stare down a Jaguar
 Rushing towards him at full speed,
 And make it turn away- though I saw him do Cadillacs,
 And a Ferrari one day.

Lex was the kind of guy who won fights before they'd
 begun,
 That is, except for the fights he got into for fun,
 'Cause, see, Lex was the kind of guy who had honor, like
 an overflowing cup,
 And he always demanded a handshake,
 And he'd grip the other guy's hand so hard they'd give
 up,
 Because they'd always admit they didn't have what it
 takes.

Lex was the kind of guy you really admired,
 And Lex was the kind of guy who women desired,
 Because Lex was the kind of guy who was handsome;
 In an ugly sort of way,
 And kind of ugly, but in a handsome sort of way,
 And he had just the right amount of body hair,
 And I hear he was pretty well off down there.

Lex was the kind of guy to get into drag races while
 driving a 10 year old Buick
 And *win*.
 Lex was the kind of guy who'd get shot at and grin,
 Lex was the kind of guy who you'd get scared when he'd
 frown,
 Because Lex was the kind of guy who'd never back
 down,
 Because Lex was the kind of guy who'd always take
 risks,
 Because for Lex, failure was always risible,
 Because failure was weakness, and weakness and Lex
 didn't mix-
 Because Lex was the kind of guy who seemed *Invincible*.

And, apparently, Lex
 Was the kind of guy,
 To one day find a kinda lump
 Lurking around in his body,

And Lex was the kind of guy,
 To one day – no fanfare, no conflict –
 Just up and die.

Amir Gibson

Left Bridge

Only a waking man can say that we are alive; the sleep, the stars and wrought iron beds of flowers, they all come to me when I leave my life somewhere and forget. I close my eyes to them as I once did to everything, as I once saw fit in so many ways. But the language, the words I am hearing, they are wrong.

But go first. Go first forward towards the end of a burning road, the slightest life we have not seen.

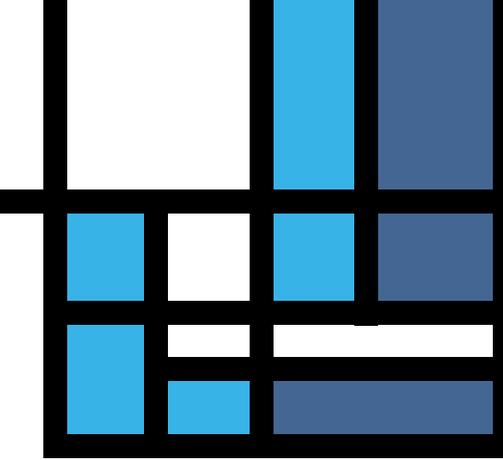
So the living men wish for the ground and I say to them we are blooming, now the left carries the right in silent admiration.

A job unfinished and gaping lungs. The look of exhaustion; Of forced thoughts and half lies.

I breathe deep in this small room, perhaps to suck all the air from it and render it empty space,

A bell jar to expand in.

I look to the ceiling but the wall is yet the shimmering stars of years passed, the inspiration of another man. I am sometimes left with a hollow image and no appendages. I am sometimes left to breathe as though that was all I ever wanted.



That all I ever needed was a simple kind of poison.

But all I get is the freezing dark, the lesser exhaustion. All I ever get is the useless feel that fills this whale's bones, this city, so deep that when you touch it

It drops you like the slits through the fingers in the shaded light.

I was that once but I am less now, the cracks of overcompensation disappearing;

The holes being filled with certain sediment. Peculiar thoughts.

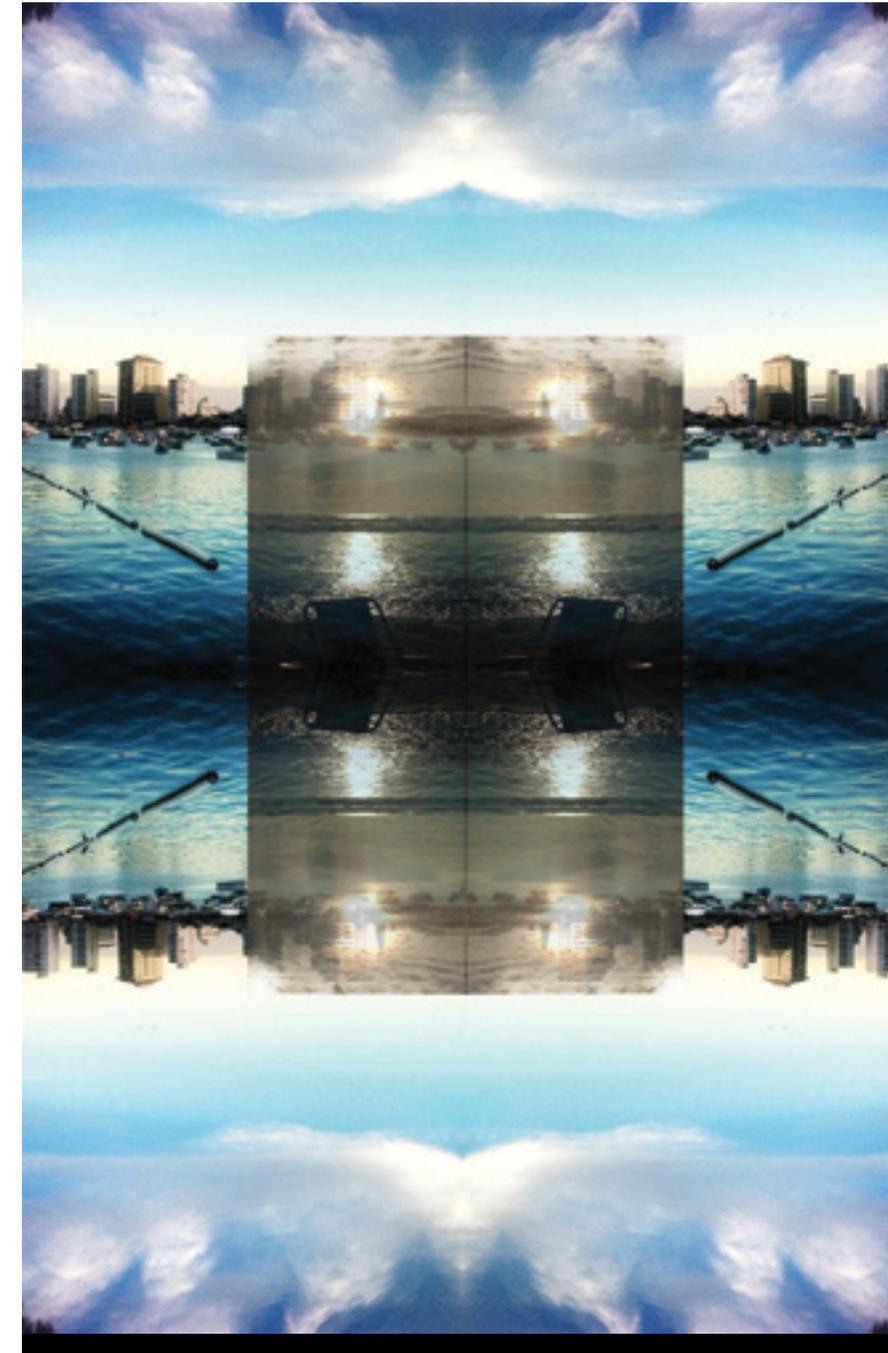
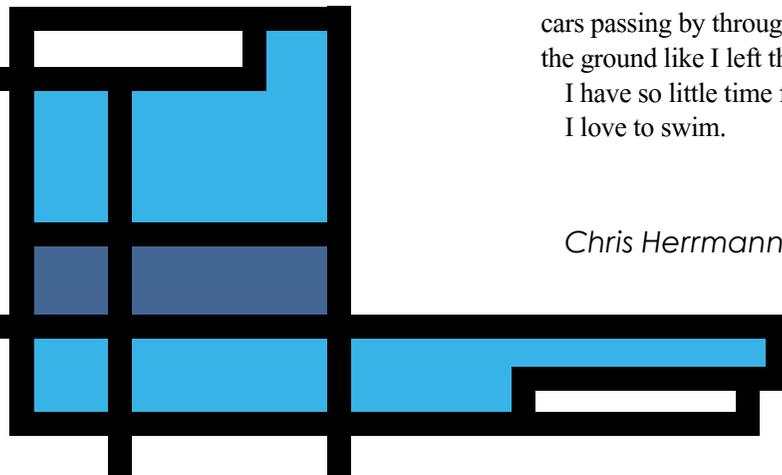
The lack of depth to this ocean, the stream of microscopic bubbles fleeting – and I said I needed them. There is a heart down there, and I am swiftly moving with the current through the kelp, the cold Atlantic

The corner on this second Tuesday in February, the cars passing by through the grey overcast sky, roads on the ground like I left them there without caring.

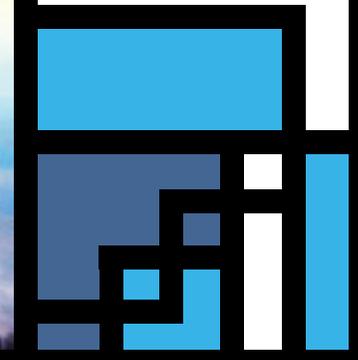
I have so little time for them.

I love to swim.

Chris Herrmann



Mar Azul - Ecuador
Joanna Romero
Photography



Prodigal son, come home.

Laura Kaminsky

I. The house is staring back at you.

You weren't sure at noon, when the sun was high in the sky and played tricks on your mind, but there's no denying it now, now that it's midnight. Midnight never lies.

Perhaps you won't be able to approach that cold brick face, the glassy eyes a different color than you remember – your mother must have replaced the drapes since you left. Perhaps the hours you've spent rooted to this one particular spot on the pavement (this one spot where you sat writing your middle name, the one gift from your grandfather, in chalky cursive, over and over, every time it rained, or blew away, so that it was etched into the black stone, imprinted for the world and no one to see) have convinced the now cool asphalt to crawl up your skin, turning your feet to stone and rooting you forever to the spot as a nervous statue. You glance down, and shuffle your tattered, bloody shoes, only to find that no such curse has occurred. Furthermore, now that your head is down, you can't quite bring it up again, for how those glass eyes do burn with the remnants of your young fingerprints, your patterns traced into frost and fog, your father's proud reflection, your own impatient adolescent glare. But the smell of baking lamb leaks out of the chimney, and shame is no match for your mother's cooking.

II. What a fool money makes of man, the house thinks.

A rosy-cheeked child, a hard-working boy, an impudent fellow. Someone raised my foundations, and I raised yours, but here you are torn from them, the soles of your feet bleeding from the loss. Swindled, were you? Beaten, were you? Such is the price of freedom. I am chained, I am cemented, and I am the embodiment of content. I know no life but this, so no other life can exist. You used to think so too, when your plump feet still pattered through my halls. No talk of business, then, just fairy wings and trolls and daring sword fights you made up in chalk when everyone else was busy and I was the only one there to see you as you ought to be. From where did this emptiness and greed spring? What poison made them grow inside you that I had no antidote for? You bow your head, as well you ought. How I wish I could turn away from your humility. It doesn't suit you.

You really have come home.

I couldn't be sure at noon, when you easily could have been the sun's creation, or my own senescence in the flesh, but there's no denying you now, now that it's midnight. Midnight never lies.

III. I couldn't look at you at noon, not with the heart-ache you've wreaked upon me and all that I had waiting for me besides you, but there's no ignoring you now, now that it's midnight. Midnight never lies.

I miss your arms around my neck, and the buckets of chalk I had to buy you for your drawings on the pavement. I could always see what you thought of the world, and it was so simple and free. But your father was here long before you, and he is a better man than you, and you broke him. He sits by the telephone at night, forehead balanced on his thumbs, waiting to hear your voice, to hear that your desertion was all for the best, to hear everything that I tried to tell him but with the hollowness

of my half-truths filled in with your validation. How I long to rush out and bandage your crimson feet, but I fear you would flee from me again. If only I had your father's constancy. He still sets your place at the table each night, but I can't quite bring myself to make that extra serving, or your favorite dishes – yet, I think I will today. You need the extra pull, the one part of home that you can't dismiss forever, if only because I can no longer dismiss his sleepless nights, his untucked shirts, his strained smiles, his incessant worries. He will forgive you, lifting up your fallen chin with a gentle hand, and I will follow him.

So come in, my lost son.



King
Jolie Gittleman
Pencil

Attempting to climb the
flaky tears of angels
like rungs on an icy ladder failed.
I tumbled down to sheets of pristine snow.

Hitching a ride on a gritty sandstorm,
violently thrashing across the desert as if
a repressed beast unleashed
resulting in lasting blindness, paired with
the humiliating plummet to the unforgiving dunes.

Harpoon a cloud,
yet know that anything weighing more than
a ghost will rip the delicate creature
and no resulting victory could be worth
the guilt of causing rain.

There was one story, a legend at best,
that a man, like us, who
dedicated his life to reaching Heaven, had found
some heart lying around beside the road, and he
picked it up, brushed the dirt off and kept it
safely swaddled in rags in the shoebox beside his bed.

After the sun fell, and splashed darkness over the sky,
the heart would screech and shriek, all through the night, but
the caretaker sang it a lullaby to sleep.
For the remaining years of the his life,
the heart squawked and trilled, yet each splintering noise was met with
the same soothing melody.

In old age, the finder and his heart vanished,
all evidence of their existence reduced to
a shoebox and a bed.
And a lullaby.
A lullaby radiating from the sky.

Madison "Bloo" Van Edwards

i have a secret

There is no such thing as a rainbow...

Grasping the garden hose in my right hand, I slowly trace an arch with the sporadic stream of water. Sprurts of liquid, like heavy rain drops, smack onto the leafy, decorative plants that line my neighbor's backyard. A dull patter reaches my ears. Sunlight strikes the mist surrounding the hose. A band of bright colors blossoms in the air. With a mischievous glint in my eye, I continued tracing a path in the air until I had come full circle. The brilliant color band did not cease in advancing, instead trailing behind my hand, a flame racing across a pile of gunpowder. Tiny droplets of water pierced the warm sunlight in a million directions and hues, a chromatography of reality. Each droplet a small piece of the large cloud overhead and, in turn, a microcosm of alien life. The wind flowing through branches and blades of grass carried faint whispers in tongues from distant lands. I gazed at the shimmering halo hovering in the space in front of me, beholding its infinite symmetry.

...and that scares some people. No beginning. No end. No pot of gold to justify the journey.

But just step back and remember why you started.

Jack Valinsky



Concentration #1
Dan DiPaola
Colored Pencil

The Choice

A tribute to Sandy Hook Elementary

Sink or swim
Above or below
Cut the flowers' stems
Or let them grow

The world stands still
Breathe in, breathe out
Silence screams
Until broken by a shout

The choice
To pull or not
One last moment
Then –
the shot.

Kateri Boucher

The Real

(A How-To Manual)

You broke softly into my night and whispered,
 To witness coldly the golden wisdom of ages old and
 tumbling,
 That cannot be safe.
 Wholly, we exacerbate negligent reality by our intrusive
 longings.
 To lie,
 To look out over a landscape, such beauty so far away,
 sealed within time and chance,
 Shared,
 Painted so painstakingly human
 By the needles of truth, grasping
 At a feeling so real that to brush up against it
 causes tremors,
 Shudders and glimpses at hope,
 That it seems that it might have been felt, replicate in
 feeling,
 The end goal, the twin clarity of entwined predilection,
 such care in forethought.
 Perhaps the shimmering dawn we gaze at from hallways,
 from angles, from stairwells
 (All injustice, sure to enrage the arcane spirits of forest

gods, night walkers and lonesome spirits)
 Was a byproduct of ancient volcanoes on the other side of
 the world, so far a journey to drift as the smoke and fog,
 the definitions, no doubt delicious to the inquisitive.
 But I hope not.

 Because that, the circumvention of intention,
 Is so shoutingly base that all my intuition cracks
 rightly
 At the gross miscalculations of indentured intellectuals.
 I hope that the inclement knowledge, once untwined, is a
 pragmatic deviation of mind;
 A pleasantry to run your fingers through when times
 dwindle out or reminders of ancients
 Reposition themselves, shaking off dust coats, and you
 find yourself outnumbered.
 Let them shake
 And arise
 Marvel at their spectacle but pay them no due,
 No price that they ask for.
 They deserve nothing,
 Nothing from you.

Chris Herrmann

Citgo Cowboy

Kentucky, Alabama, Pennsylvania. All the way from
 Birmingham. Another cigarette and another lost hand.
 White trash, last gas. A town famous for its overpass.

I mingle with men whose dreams have long been
 mangled. Poverty pounds and pounds on the door but
 my ears are deaf and my eyes blind and I am shame
 incarnate. Just one cigarette: maybe two gallons this
 time?

Some nights, I walk down that sickened street with the
 litter catching the breeze and the immigrant-planted
 daises shining in the sun, and look to my left and see that
 man in the bus stop: his eyes a little pinched, glancing
 downwards in respect. I think for a minute, under the
 glow of the street lamps and the fading clouds that warp
 and twist above me like chariots circling a ring that I can
 only dream of. Who are all of them: those cars and faces
 speeding by in rhythmic paces? The cigarettes glowing in
 the evening light? The shaky knees and wandering minds
 of men that dream and regret and linger in it?

I am one of them, perhaps. Just another lost soul in a
 broken down, John Wayne town. The American soul,
 maybe. A smirk: I can't help it. When did America
 ever think about me? When did Indiana, New York, or
 Tennessee ever think about little old me?

But, I thank the Lord for that turn down past the quarry
 where the rocks bleed as red as the blood that I hope I
 don't find tonight, for hope is hard to come by, and when
 the sun hits that little valley like the tears that stain the
 soil, I know that, for tonight, I'll be alright.

Idle eyes and aching hearts. Tonight's a little too dark.
 Greasy hair and gasoline. Lungs all worn out from
 nicotine.

I'll never make it out of here alive.
 I'll never make it out of here alive.

And the sun rises. Another cigarette.

I haven't made it out of here alive quite yet.

Connor Greer

Cassidy Pearsall
Western Breakfast
Oil Pastel



GOD MIDAS AND THE LITTLE GIRL'S NIGHTTERRORS

A SCENE FOR FILM

James Macias

At the height of the Second Solar-Born Empire, young aspiring business woman Katherine Jones is outside of conference room 7B of her new workplace. Katherine is charismatic and successful, wearing a coal-black suit perfect for filing invoices along with a black name tag. Within the conference room, a few of her colleagues compose themselves for the imminent meeting. Name tags are stuck to their chests also, each with a different name: Mr. Marcus DeLaffette, Mr. Eric Devonian, Mr. Adam Romani, and Mr. Darius Plumb. The lot of them look like a herd of smoke-stacks huddling around the watering hole of their native home of Victorian London. Each wears a suit indistinguishable from the one worn by Katherine with matching monochromatic ties and shoes that cost more than each of their trophy wives. The flock begins to sit down in the expensive chairs of the conference room. The chairs are identical, except for one is slightly larger, facing the hallway entrance to the room and with a door behind it. All are chic, but undistracting. They encircle a long mahogany table, an Earth antique. Katherine is talking on a handheld intersettlement audio communicator [IAC], a device with a similar function to a cell phone, with her husband.

KATHERINE. [playfully] Well I'll just have to make sure I let Allie the Alligator gobble her up, Noel. In doing so, maybe she'll develop a heartbreaking back story like in the comic-grams and become a noble pirate that rescues lost starfish.

NOEL. [voice slightly garbled by the IAC throughout] I'd like to see you try; you love her more than any poet could devise. It was just a tea party anyways. I'm sure that if Allie and Daisy fell out, Daisy would replace Allie in an instant with Flavio the Ferret.

KATHERINE. I love you just as much. And is Flavio the one who dabbles in the dark arts? That could bring about a ruckus in the house. Speaking of ruckuses in the house, how is everything holding up back there?

NOEL. Just fine. Joanne and Phil's marriage finally got approved, effectively shoving a thorn up the butt of the big wigs that still can't believe that humans aren't the only beings with rights walking around. Or slithering or floating around. And David stopped by for a small visit. But other than that things have been pretty quiet since you left. [compassionately] We miss you.

KATHERINE. I miss you too, and I want nothing more than to be home. But I told you already, if I go out and make a bunch of money now, then I can be home with you and Daisy later. I'm only with K. M. Stockholm for one terrestrial year, and once I'm back we'll have forever.

NOEL. [solemnly] And each day will be like forever until then.

KATHERINE. Brighten up, I have my first meeting today, and things will only go up from here.

NOEL. But you're missing your daughter's childhood— [He is interrupted by something on the other side] Your daughter cordially invites you to a conversation on the IAC.

KATHERINE. Well I cordially accept. I love you.

NOEL. I love you too.

DAISY. [She is also garbled by the IAC] Mommy! We haven't talked in days!

KATHERINE. Yea—

DAISY. Thirty-six hours in fact. Oh! And you know what?

KATHERINE. Wha—

DAISY. I was having a tea party with Allie and Christy and Daniel and Jessica and we had sour melts and sugar stars and we were having fun. BUT-BUT-BUT THEN! Allie spilled tea on my new gown!

KATHERINE. Well she is an alli—

DAISY. So I told her, I said "We are in the royal parliament of Versailles, and we are Martians. If you can't keep your manners to yourself, you can leave!" AND SHE DID! I tell her about having politeness and manners, and she leaves the tea party! That is a very un-mannersly thing to do!

KATHERINE. Well I'll just have to have to use my incredible psychokinetic powers and convince her to act differently. But maybe you could try and talk things out with her. I've found that talking wit—

DAISY. Mommy Mommy Mommy! When are you coming back?

KATHERINE. I'll be gone for a while, honey. But we can always talk like we are now. And we can use the visualizer too. I'd be using it now, but reception in the belt is terrible. It'll be a bi—

DAISY. And Mommy! Did you know that Uncle David came over?

KATHERINE. Yes, I di—

DAISY. He told me about this lifoneutakajical thingy that he was developing over at Ewdamonea with—

KATHERINE. He's working at the Eudaimonian Institute now? That's rather- [Eric Devonian enters the hall]

DAISY. You didn't let me finish! So he was—

KATHERINE. One second, Daisy.

DAISY. Mommy!

KATHERINE. [to Eric] Is the meeting starting, Eric?

ERIC. Yeah.

KATHERINE. [to Daisy] I've got to go to my meeting, but we'll talk later.

DAISY. Can I come? I'll listen and be quiet.

KATHERINE. No, I have to go now.

DAISY. But we haven't sung the song yet!

KATHERINE. Okay, but it has to be quick.

DAISY AND KATHERINE.

*The blooming little flowers turn up and say "hi"
To the salty old dustbirds, flying in the sky.
I miss you and love you my dear, old friend.
But when you're home, we'll dance and sing
Until day meets its end.*

KATHERINE. I love you, Daisy. I'll be back home before you know it.

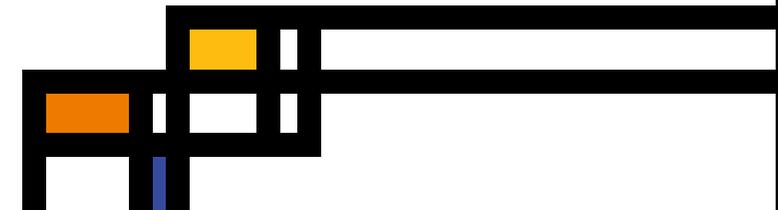
Katherine puts the IAC in her pocket and enters conference room 7B. All of the chairs but the larger one and the one closest to the hall door are taken. She sits in the smaller of the two. A pause. The room hangs as still as the unwelcoming void. Suddenly, a man steps in from the door behind the larger chair wearing a somehow blacker suit than the rest and without a nametag. His presence carries the demeanor of a malevolent mist and his countenance crashes with the waves of frigid disaccord. This imperious shadow is known by his friends as Mr. Stockholm.

MR. STOCKHOLM. [spoken with the electrified static of a drill sergeant] You did not get here because you are weak, and you will not stay here if you prove me wrong in that. You are the elite, the talented, the proud and the strong. Each one of you is the king of your own little country. For metaphor's sake, then, I am your God. Your entire being will wish to fulfill my wishes and my dictations. If you fail to do so, you will be expunged. I know you are thinking, "Mr. Stockholm, you seem too strict, too callous. Let us help you mellow down." I am strict for a reason. I am about to divulge the deepest inner workings of K. M. Stockholm; a company that I have invested my whole being into. Thirteen years ago I was looser. More... frivolous. In not keeping the keenest eyes on my closest associates, I lost four-hundred thousand venutians. Four hundred thousand venutians that my company worked long and hard to earn back. I want you to know that I mean to scare you, to frighten you, because if you aren't frightened of me than you will try to rise up against me, and that will get you eradicated. While working for me, I will be your constant nightterror, and you will only be woken from these shades by the reflex that keeps you from literally drowning in your sweat.

[voice changed from fierce to a more dastardly and conniving tone] Now that the initiation is complete, let me begin to explain. K.M. Stockholm has been able to rise to its imperial influence through two processes discovered by me. Exploitations, if you will. The first is scientific. You see, every piece of matter is built up from atoms, and these atoms are composed of baryons known as protons and neutrons. Furthermore, these baryons are composed of quarks. As many of you probably know, the weak nuclear force works by exchanging intermediate vector bosons between fermions and other leptons to change the quantum state of the fermions. But using a newly developed model, a constant stream of a certain kind of intermediate vector boson, specifically the Z boson, directed at an ordinary electron can bring into existence a stable muon. Furthermore, these muons, when interacting under a certain electrical charge, can bring into existence new quarks as well as destroy quarks. Using the standard quantum model, I calculated the amount of muons needed to be applied to any atom to decay the atom into another. The atom my process creates is gold. The M in K.M Stockholm is a given name, you see. It stands for Midas, and never before ha—

KATHERINE. [angrily] That's knowledge entrapment! Under Article 18 of the Solar Writ, withholding knowledge that would be applied to system-wide biotic achievement is illegal! Have you considered what that kind of technology could mean for the world?!

MARCUS. [hesitantly] She does have a—



MR. STOCKHOLM. [unaware of Marcus and furious] You will hold your tongue while in my presence, Mrs. Jones! [Katherine backs down unwillingly and is still steaming] This knowledge is so groundbreaking that it is patent exempt! If I reveal this to the world, all of us would lose our fortunes! You watch yourself, Mrs. Jones. Your knowledge of the law is why you were employed, but if you use it against the well-being of K.M. Stockholm, your well-being will be forfeit. Throughout history we see ingenious schemes and corporate coups, and the consistency of these events shows a fundamental law of nature. Humanity will rebel against the law. And I, for one, have noticed that living against history has disastrous outcomes.

[returned to his previous state] Now, as I was saying, I have a second process too. An ethical exploitation. Every human in existence has some sympathy for the lower species. Sympathy has increased now that science has proven that mongrels such as dogs and asterworms are not only sentient, but have minds that work on the same level as humans. We have bridged the gap of communication between species, did so forty years ago. But it took me to realize that this changes nothing. With the language gap gone, I learned how to inculcate orders into these beasts' minds and have them work on the asteroid farms, saving precious money that would be spent pulling resources for my private labs to-

KATHERINE. [furious] One's biological makeup does not decide the rights that being has. And the word beast is offensive! I have known many non-humans that are twenty times the man you are, Mr. Stockholm!

MR. STOCKHOLM. [gravely] I'm glad I know where you stand on this issue, Mrs. Jones, but perhaps a demonstration would change your view on this.

Mr. Stockholm pulls a switch concealed within the table and the seat that Katherine is seated in pulls around her and locks her in. The surge of a primary bioelectric dampening signal rumbles through the room. At the start of the sound, Katherine begins to scream as if the whole of the fires of hell had been unleashed unto her. Starting at her feet and climbing up her legs, Katherine begins to turn to gold. The others, silent as they were at the start, look on with horror.

MR. STOCKHOLM. [Mr. Stockholm is suddenly enlivened and reveals a touch of insanity. Katherine is screaming throughout] Ah, yes! Mr. Devonian, Mr. DeLaffette, Mr. Plumb, Mr. Romani, remember this moment as vividly as you can, it will be essential to you if you are to continue on in business. Inspiration through intimidation, it is the only way to do it! Also I should have been more specific earlier. Humans will rebel, but only should rebel if they have the devices to upturn the tyrant! But Mrs. Jones, do you want to know what truly happens to those who try and live against history? They become immortalized.

KATHERINE. [through her tears]

*The blooming little flowers turn up and say "hi"
To the salty old dustbirds, flying in the sky.
I miss you and love you my dear, old friend.
But when you're home, we'll dance and sing
Until day*

[Long Beat]

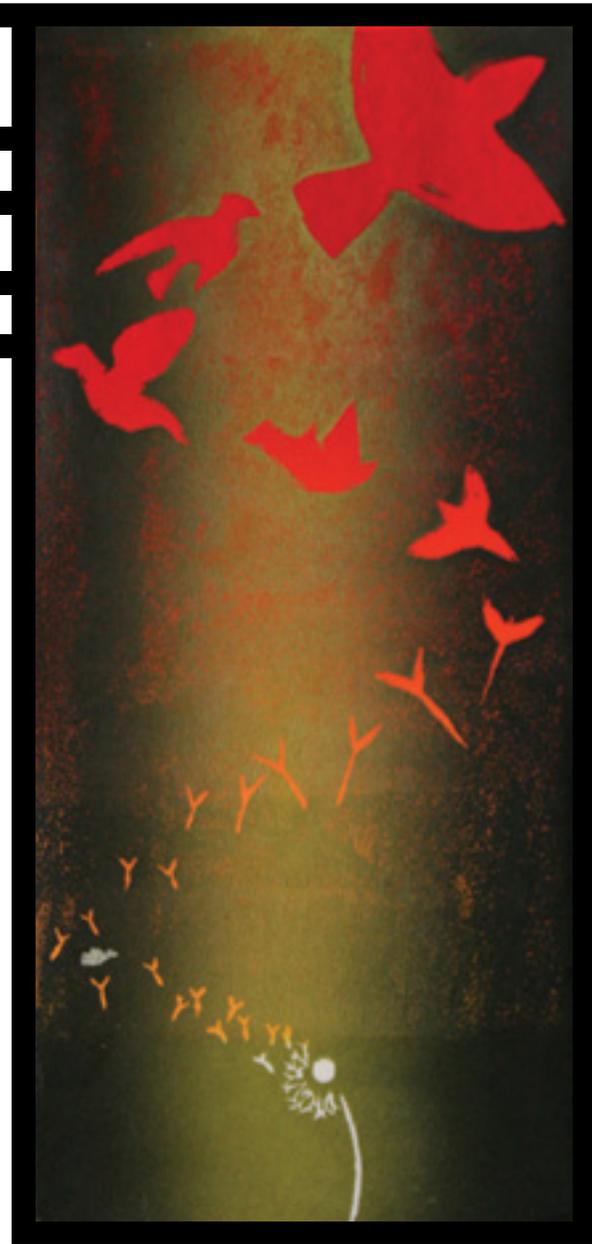
DAISY. [she has been listening in the whole time, her voice slightly garbled by the IAC] Mommy? Mom, I'm scared. Mom, come home, Please. Please come home.



Nike of Samothrace
Nadia Wakabayashi
Mixed Media



Ghost
Cassidy Pearsall
Watercolor & Ink



Metamorphosis
Leah McCarthy
Reduction Print

Garden

Heavy, with delicacy
they admire the world.

Their eyes are wide,
pink, blue, brown, purple.

Colors flood, surge, roil
beneath their feet, trying to conquer.

Emerald fuzz tops
interlaced toes, gentle protection.

Their eyes are wide.

Swaying above this battle
between color and
neutral.

Grey, black, brown,
swarm
stomping into red,
crashing into blue,
dissolving into yellow.

Their eyes are wide.
A storm to watch
a game to guess
a performance of
the weak.

Their eyes are wide,
their petals open,
arching
from thick, slender stems.

My orchid
sees you.

Simona Zaretsky



Sister
Nadia Wakabayashi
Oil Paint

No White Light

Connor Greer

Waking up homeless in an unknown city with the sights and sounds of an apocalypse blaring: that is fate. Falling through the cracks of good fortune as effortlessly as leaping off a bridge: that is fate. Bewilderment and despair as the skyscrapers carelessly blot out the evening sky: that is fate.

Eyes crack open through layers of dust and grime. Red. His looks are haggard. He speaks: "God." It is lost in the flurry and the pulse of the music and the city. All is nothing. Legs curl up, hands touch the ground. Wet concrete. Vomit, maple syrup and motor oil. He stands with careful feet. Meandering through thrashing crowds, he weaves in and out of reality and humanity. The cries of anguished mothers carry him into the night. Running, running: the glass digs into his feet. Blood trails in the moonlight.

The ghosts of the loved and lost haunt his vision. Their visages. Touches, scents. A brush across the hip, a kiss upon the cheek. He bats them away, failing.

Garbage: needles and bottles; shattered glass. The busiest of ants wind in and out of footfalls. Cockroaches hiss and the sound of music from an innumerable cluster of clubs pounds its way into the very core of the sidewalk.

"Death is beautiful," yells a man from the center of an intersection, the automobiles screaming around him. He spins with delight and cackles as fate passes him from car to car to car.

Women with shaven heads and nose rings wait in lines to snort cocaine under neon lights. Men with greasy hair, golden chains and crooked backs. They all dance the tango of life to the sickening moans of the city and the music and the men holding signs that read, "seeking human kindness."

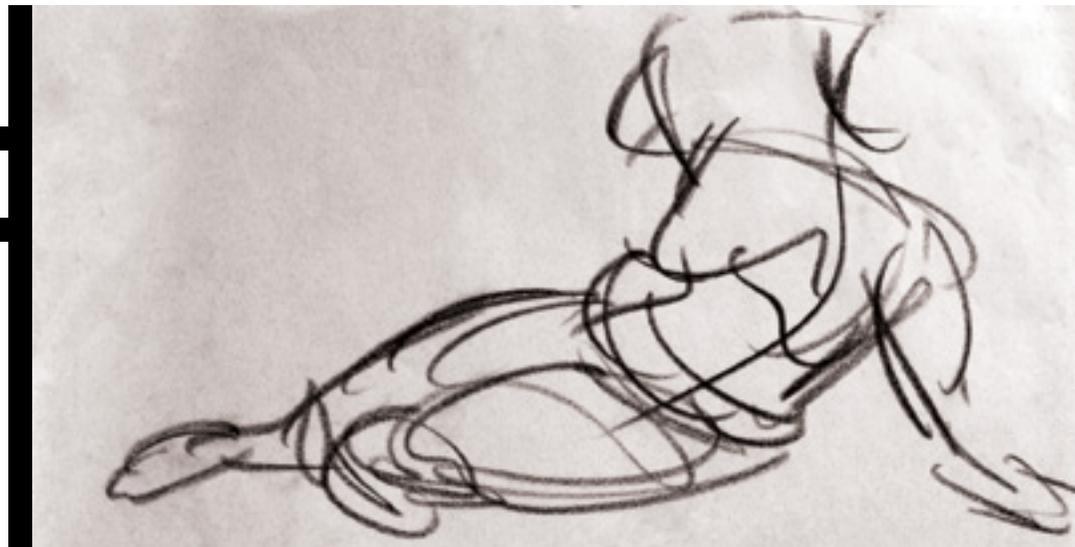
Some find themselves praying to a god that they have never seen. They call out to the others: "I swear: salvation is here!" Some beat on the sidewalk with plastic bottles hoping for an equally unlikely savior to bless them with a few dollars for heroin. Some curl up and cry. Hope is commodity when life is mere possibility.

The artists and the poets, they gather here as well, offering their trade for that same hope, that same faith in a humanity that cares not and a god that cares even less. They sit along the same streets filled with the same scum of a dying race. Perhaps they are as much its vermin as those around them.

He wanders his way into the harbor; underneath the docks and the crying birds. The boardwalk stretches out to his left. A Ferris wheel reaches desperately towards the tip of a darkened, cloudy sky. The rain peppers the shallow sea. Each drop causing an explosion of ripples: a cataclysm. He pushes further and further until the water envelops his frail chest and the rain plasters his hair over his face. His hands rise up and his tendons bulge. His mouth opens and he howls like some tattered wolf. The lights of the dock reflect off of the writhing water; they become more and more distorted as the waves crash. They devour him.

Waking up naked on a forsaken beach under brewing clouds: that is fate.

His lips had split and blood had smeared across his jaw. He pulls himself to his feet and begins his trek down that tormented beach.



Dead plants and garbage bags. Beer cans and cigarette butts. The clouds linger in the sky. A foul wind blows. He shivers and grimaces as it works its way through him. Each footfall carefully placed around the hypodermic needles and the chemical stains. Enormous bonfires mark the distance, a mass of vagrants hoarding around them; fluttering with the flames. He can hear their cries and their hoots. He can hear their vague chants recited with gleeful aggression. His mind loses the strength to stay awake and he finds himself falling to the sand, to the trash and to the eternal chaos of his dreams.

The clouds depart as the wind grows, sweeping sand over his fallen body. The granules embed themselves in his disheveled hair. The blood dries and the bonfires die. The wind catches their remnants: used condoms, ripped clothing and cellophane. The Ferris wheel is a speck in the distance. It rotates calmly despite the wind and the desolation. It continues its grueling job without complaint. It does not curse, it does not shake, it does not call out. It is complacent:

why?

He begins to fall. He feels death as a tap on the shoulder and love as an exasperated curse. Aphrodite's face fades in and out of view. She smiles. He does as well. His lips bend back and his face is gone, though his eyes remain for one short instant. Sadness lingers in them.

Waking up dead with arms eschew, legs spread: that is fate.

The sights and sounds of a city lost to chaos: the apocalypse came and went. The rain peppers the shallow sea. We did not go with it.

Birds on the wind: chirping, fluttering.

No anguished mother.
No police investigation.

No white light.

Stretch
Madeline Bronstein
Ink

Light a fire under a pile of branches
 Make it twice as tall as you are
 And throw a hornets nest inside
 And if you remember the truth
 The hornets will stay alive.

Then wait until it explodes
 As fire rages around you, and consumes you
 Stand still for thirty seconds
 And if you are not afraid
 The fire will not burn you.

And when those seconds are over
 The hornets have flown away
 All the wood has succumbed to the fire's hungry jaws
 Your mind must be empty
 And then you can dance.

Once the fire has finally died
 In a few hours or so
 You will be untouched
 And if you have learned something
 You will find a small piece of wood at your feet.

It glitters with black fire-dust
 Pick it up
 And keep it as a memento.

Annaliese Taylor

Misguidance
 Declan Farley
 Ebony Pencil



Lost at Sea

There is no evidence
that the wires holding us together
don't dissolve in the acidity of sunken rain
freeing us from our earthly confines
to a career of becoming
clouds, whales, and ferns
or a bit of each
all at once
until our atoms are retired from the universe.

Laura Kaminsky

Kepler's dream

Oh, how overwhelming you are, tides ripping, supernova booming all around,
you're eclipsed, but solar flares, glares, and shine encircle you,
and you radiate in the dust.

Volcanoes erupt and you are molten, burning golden.

I am trapped in your orbit, craters and meteors surround me.

and I am struck, stuck

in this light of yours, it blinds so bright,

but it's not your own gleam, is it?

My eyes are blazing because of the flash, my ears ring from the echoing blasts.

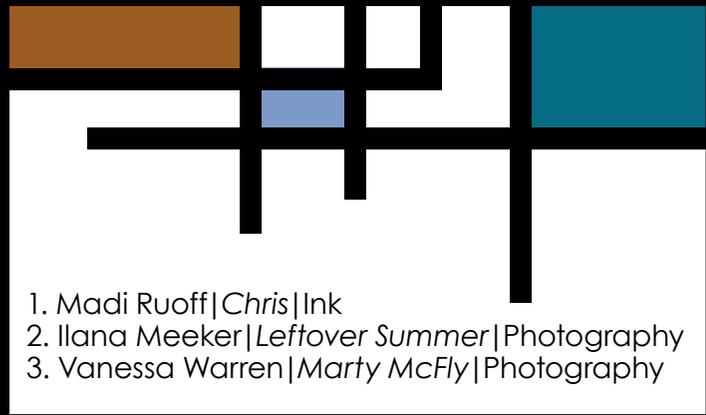
I cannot see, I cannot hear, I ignore it all and convince myself

that, from my lunar perch, you are the reason for insomnia.

Mira Bodek



Starry Jellyfish
Nadia Wakabayashi
Mixed Media



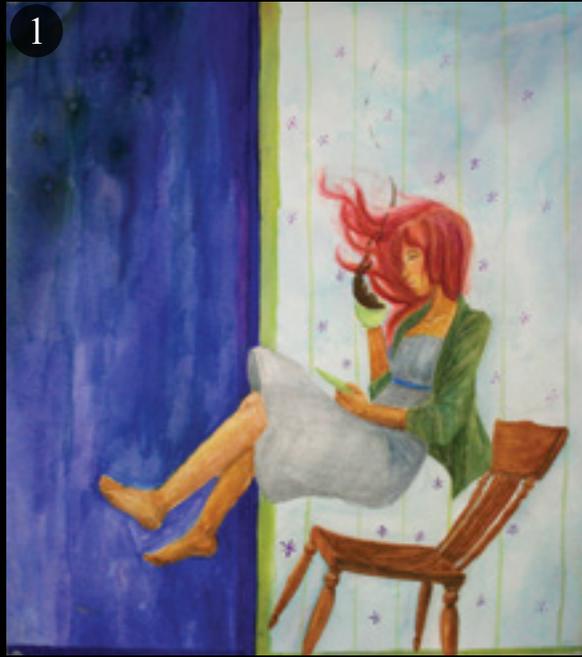
1. Madi Ruoff|*Chris*|Ink
2. Ilana Meeker|*Leftover Summer*|Photography
3. Vanessa Warren|*Marty McFly*|Photography



4. Madeline Bronstein|*Nina*|Watercolor
5. Zoe Jacobs|*Birdman*|Mixed Media
6. Rachel Schneider|*Swan*|Pastel
7. Olivia Garrett|*Blue Eyes*|Photography



1. Nadia Wakabayashi|Teatime|Mixed Media
2. Cassidy Pearsall|Roses|Ceramic
3. Ilana Meeker|A venture in mindscape|colored pencil
4. Erica Lubman|BA-BAM: The Necklace|Jewelry

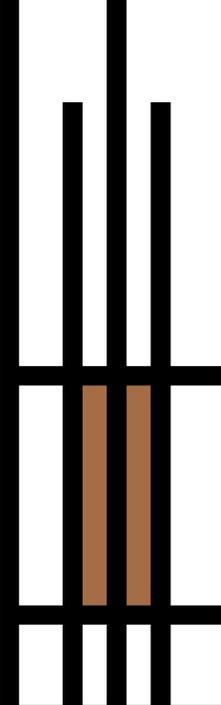


4. Erica Lubman|BA-BAM: The Necklace|Jewelry
5. Yohan Sequeira|Caught in Fall|Photography
6. Madeline Bronstein|Fresh|Colored Pencil
7. Rachel Schneider|Storybook|Watercolor
8. Elizabeth Crummins|Life of the Strawberry|Acrylic
9. Madi Ruoff|Human and Lobster at Dinner|Marker & Ink

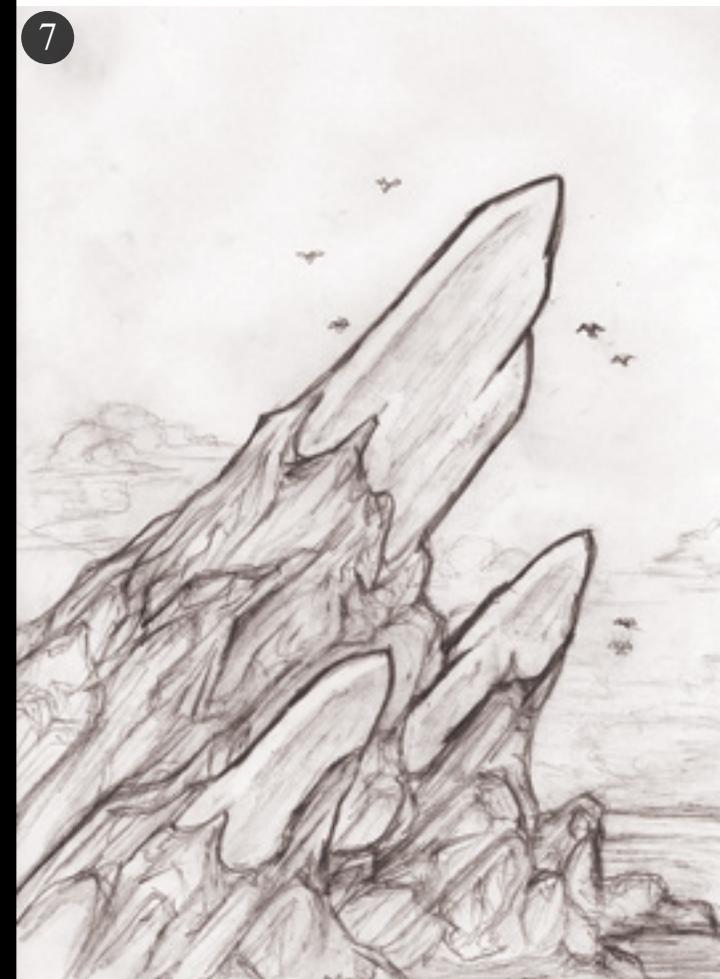




1. Dan DiPaola|*The Ghost of Dreams*|Pen
2. Madeline Bronstein|*Salty Shannon*|
Scratch Board
3. Liam Kane|*Rifle's Spiral*|Glass
4. Erica Lubman|*Yes, those ARE
lightbulbs*|Jewelry
5. Chris Herrmann|*Stay*|Pen & Ink



6. Jolie Gittleman|*Happy Baby*|Pencil
7. Sam Rapp|*Diamond Peaks*|Pencil
8. Nicole Moran|*Press*|Pencil
9. Mandy Smith|*Darkness Shivers*|Photography





Midnight Snack
Cassidy Pearsall
Charcoal

The Only Thing We Have to Fear

They're nothing but sparks
golden fireflies flashing,
disappearing into the winter night.

They're just sparks
packs of tiny wolves leaping from the wood
biting, hungry

So if they're just sparks,
fleeting and beautiful,
then why am I so afraid
that my world might
ignite?

Kateri Boucher

Look

How easy it is
To live with a pretty face.
How lucky you are.

Cindy Jiao

We were released to the outlines of climbing miniature cities
 when the confines of reality became too hard to bare.
 The red, yellow, blue bars glinted mischievously in the eye of Apollo;
 ‘This is our Kingdom!’ We cried. It is our land of mind reflecting mirrors, bending to our will.
 Gleeful eyes see through dream tinted lenses--
 The woodchips are a sea, the climbing wall a mountain.
 Every step a hundred miles, every moment a never ending quest.
 These images sealed in eternal soft light; always sunny are our recollections of Never Land.

The shaky treks up the mountainous steps should have been warning enough,
 and that morning’s strained air had whispered to my ears,
 but ignoring the empty faced figures was a much harder task.
 I knew
 the gently sealed eyes and the curving length of pelt was not sleep.
 That familiar creature was absent from the room, but it didn’t stop
 hands from reaching out, bidding farewell.
 I think something must have cracked because saline rain trickled through.

That hooded figure never did join in our games.

We’ve moved to the filled-in box structures of the concrete playground,
 where the robed form has shackled us to cruel mistress, reality.
 Most forget Never Land or write it off as some sort conspiracy.
 It didn’t exist.
 But it did.
 And it isn’t childish, or fake, or native.
 Halt the packaging of our psyches in uniform plastic styrofoam packaging
 stamped with the lable ‘made in china’.
 Kronos waits patiently, his ticking face unstoppable,
 but a quest of a hundred miles leads to innumerable crossroads.

Ilana Meeker

Forever Lost

Charles cried out in fury to the stars,
 “Take back to dust these foul Memories,
 woven from the sands of Time.
 Wipe clean my Mind of these whispers of human failure!”
 And so it was done.
 The Sandman, with a wavering hand,
 scrubbed clean his Mind of the doleful whimpers,
 of wasted Potential.
 Drew back the silver-kissed sand
 and listened to it hiss as it dissipated into the roaring ocean,
 where Entropy is king and Chaos reigns.

Charles looked upon the setting sun,
 watched the caressing colors mix and swirl,
 and then they blurred into shades of gray.
 When the Past is no more,
 It is forever Today.
 How can there be an End
 without a Beginning?
 Like a circle with four corners.

Charles unbound himself from
 the hands of the ticking Clock.
 Escaped Foresight,
 Hindsight never more to break his heart...

Jack Valinsky

Christine



Abandoned
Eva Weber
Acrylic

I remember the time we were arguing in your cousin's house, and you knocked over a bucket of paint on her brand-new white carpet.

I thought you would blame me, but you didn't.

I remember the time I threw a baseball and it bounced off a wall and hit you in the head.

I thought you would yell at me, but you didn't.

I remember when, in a moment of clumsiness, I broke a favorite family picture.

I thought you would hate me, but you didn't.

I remember when you let me drive your brand new car, and I popped a tire within five minutes of pulling out of the driveway.

I thought you would kick me out, but you didn't.

I remember the time we were caught throwing potassium cubes into a neighbors' pool.

I thought you'd let me take the fall for it, but you didn't.

I remember the time I fell going up the stairs to your apartment and sprained my thumb.

I thought you would laugh at me, but you didn't.

I remember the day you got the letter: you were going to be deployed to an infamously dangerous base in Afghanistan.

I thought you would have seemed scared, but you didn't.

I remember the days that our families each said good-bye to you.

I thought you would have gone teary-eyed, but you didn't.

I remember walking you to the terminal, after your parents drove us to the airport.

I thought I would have expressed how much I cared for you, but I didn't.

I remember reading your letters and emails, hoping and praying for you, and expecting you to come home alive.

But you didn't.

Adam Ontiveros-Oberg

The Source

Jack Valinsky

It was a Wednesday afternoon, at least as far as I was concerned. The same cheery-eyed and overly sociable girl met me at the bus stop and forced a conversation out of me. She was an art major. We talked about Jackson Pollock. His success, I informed her, was due in large part to the CIA's backing of his artwork. Even pop culture was weaponized in the Cold War. From the western horizon, ballistic works of William de Kooning swooped down and created an Expressionist firestorm across Warsaw. Scribbles from Robert Motherwell tied up troops from Mother Russia. Then came the cultural nuke, bearing the resemblance of the crack works of our dear Mr. Pollock; it resounded through the streets of Moscow. Apparently, a few paint drips and splatters across a canvas were infinitely more interesting than another bland picture of a cow. Unfortunately, she seemed to enjoy my rant and continued off on a tangent about Cubism and the nature of perspective. I decided to walk to gain a new perspective myself.

The drainage gates were plugged, as usual, due to the incompetency of the city's maintenance task force. High school drop-outs armed with duct tape would have been more efficient. Plus, it would cut back on unemployment and give a boost to Barney's discount hardware store, which was in disrepair (how ironic). A rusty yellow school bus flew past the sidewalk, causing a cascade of dirty water, motor oil, and dog urine to wash over the gentlemen next to me. He proved useful as a human shield for me to duck behind. Taxis buzzed like angry bees rushing out from a shaken hive to sting the offender, weaving through the other cars in their way. Drooping trees amongst the

concrete jungle littered the cracked sidewalks with their leaves. Bird droppings and debris covered the resulting collage with the occasional pigeon tracks to complement. I had forgotten how much I hate nature.

Taking a sharp left off Austin Avenue, I arrived in a narrow street lined with cafés and bakeries (and more art majors). Had I not developed a strong gluten intolerance, the sight of the fresh delicacies sitting proudly in the display windows would have met my eye with a little more than a half-baked appeal. I was more of a tea drinker. The white fields of froth-topped cappuccinos in the hands of coffee connoisseurs do little to appease my palate. On the outskirts of this cultural and artsy-fartsy refuge stood a wakeup call from reality, Mr. Renaldo's Righteous Dogs.

It was a quaint little hot dog stand, complete with the standard fumes of gurgling meat grease, chipping paint, and an unhygienic older man tattooed up to the finger tips in age spots and hairy moles. Mr. Renaldo was a failed pastor turned broke hot dog vendor. He seemed to be in his element on the street corner, barking at potential customers in a fake New York accent. I always thought he had the makings of a proper businessman; after all, he was thrown out for embezzling church donations to fund his gambling addiction. Of course, twenty years of preaching at the local city church left a hint of his former career in his work; Mr. Renaldo used photocopies of Bible passages as napkins to hold his sausages. The words of Job swaddled a fresh dog that he was waving at passersby: "If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity? Why have you made me your target?" The cold, condescending glares he attracted were his only answer. I tipped my hat to the fine gentleman and walked on.

* * *

Kumquats are a decidedly odd fruit, though not quite as bad as pomegranates in terms of fruit-to-packaging ratio. My cold-blasted fingers fumbled as I attempted to peel the skin off of one of the stunted oranges. Perhaps people eat them with the skin on? I popped one into my mouth and grimaced as the bitter bite of the skin fought for over dominance with the tangy citrus flavor of the fruit. I decided kumquats were not for me. Stupid tropical fruit. I deposited the stringy mess into a crumbled Kleenex I found in my pocket and whisked the balled-up tissue down the underside of my seat. I glanced around nervously to check if anyone had seen me.

Out of the window of the bus, I caught a glimpse of my favorite coffee shop down in Rat's Nest, the multitude of bakeries, cafés, and craft shops crammed into a narrow side street. I couldn't recall the origin of the name. Perhaps it came from its use as a housing for soldiers during prior times of upset. Villagers would line the tenant houses with bread crumbs and food scrapes. The whistling of the wind between the buildings in the night would often carry shouts of terror from unsuspecting soldiers that had unwittingly curled up with the lovely vermin. From the corner of my eye I caught sight of the sleazy hot dog stand at the end of the street. I shuddered. There was still some vermin that had yet to be disposed of.

The bus came to a screeching halt to let a disheveled older couple off in front of a crumbling church. Across the front of the establishment, an image of two young lovers with their faces obscured by a cloth was stenciled. Known simply as "The Lovers", it was a calling card for an underground movement that was protesting the push for abstinence-only education in the city schools.

Mr. Hugh Langsam, the surly older gentlemen that I had the pleasure of conversing with earlier, grew up in the city right next door to the church. From the older folks who worked at some of the cafés in the Rat's Nest, I had come to learn that he was much more likable as a kid. He had worked many fund-raising events for the church and frequented the city museums for art lessons. Father Renaldo, a.k.a creepy-hot-dog-vendor-man, was a powerful influence on him. He had helped coach young Billy through a rough period of substance abuse following his parents' split. The day Billy saw Father Renaldo taken away in handcuffs was the day he lost faith. Mr. Langsam dropped off the radar for a couple of years, and was later found burning away the time with cigarettes and cracker jacks, working at a convenience store at the other end of the city. From time to time, I cross paths with him on my way to class.

I bet Mr. Langsam is one of those people who eat kumquats with the skin on. People who enjoy the bitter rind of life over the sweet fruit should be avoided at all costs. Unless they're poets.

street lamps grey clouds you

of giggling gagging girls
of streets far too bright and the glimmer of night
of horns and long dead birds
of oft-trodden garbage
of you

the victims of failed suicide attempts walk beside us
around us
are us

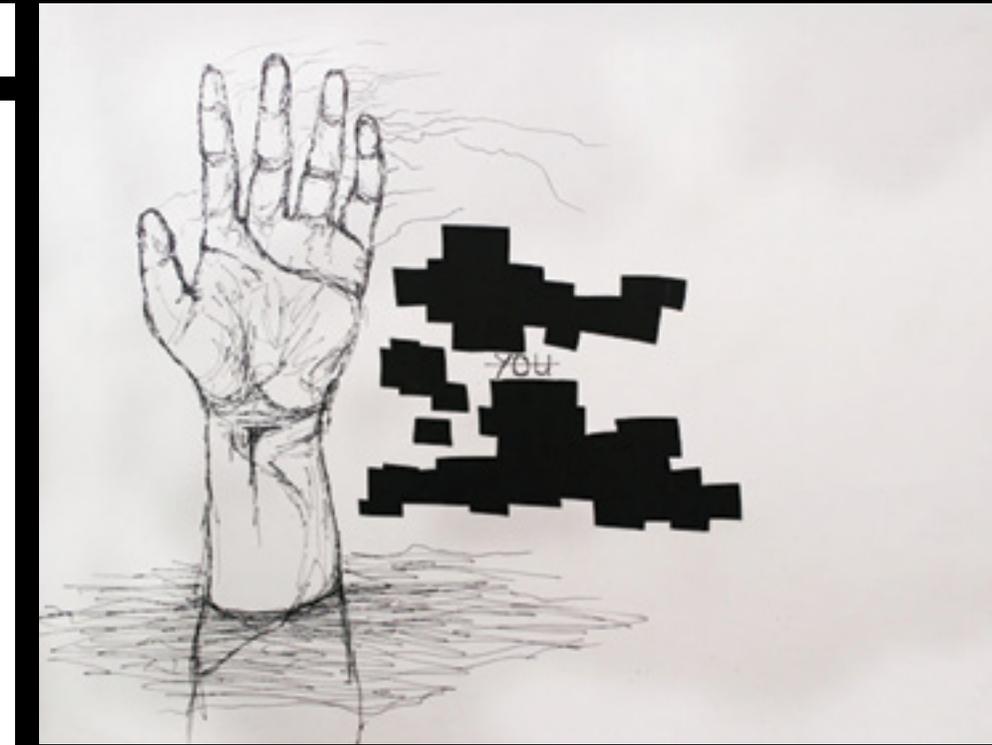
and we find ourselves lying in the middle of deserted highways at three in the morning
breathing
breathing
looking for the face of god in the oncoming headlights

and our tears sparkle in a night as deep as a death that we cannot see coming
because of
you and you and you.

because god never did show up
and i never did pull the trigger
and the rope broke
and your mom walked in
and we cut the wrong way
and it turns out that toxic doesn't mean "deadly" but
instead
sickening

we didn't even puke

and the radio's on
and judas weeps
and these broken streets still hum with writhing, frothing people that fumble
following lights held by flagrantly misguided fools



Slowly
Chris Herrmann
Pen & Ink

and we curse ourselves for being so hopelessly pretentious
as to think that the world is large enough
yet small enough that we have any impact on anything other
than our own remarkable but remiss lives

and every house on this block has one of us
and every county in this damn country has more than I can count

but we aren't enough
there are never enough.

so society slithers on

slithers on shaming us
and
we follow suit.

Connor Greer

Romantic Minds to Repair Flawed Vision

Our eyes would turn perfection to clutter.
 The lenses we rely on are too curved
 And seek to break the beauty Earth deserves.
 They do perceive the flash of the thunder,
 But form tableaux that dull the bright color.
 They press and flatten the scenes observed.
 Blind us all, for it, we must preserve.
 But, God! How people rectify the blur!
 True, we cannot behold the real grace,
 But the will and the strive to fix our sight,
 To construe true worth from our dreadful plight,
 Captures me ecstatic in my low place.
 And from my newly found jubilant height,
 Finally, I can gaze at my lover's face.

James Macias



Dreams
 Harlowe Root
 Mixed Media

The Fall

Mira Bodek

The prettiest girl in the cosmos stood over a carcass. Pearl necklace and a corpse. The knife in her hand was streaked with what could only be blood and her pastel dress dripped with shame.

Sharp turn. Hair flip. And a wide gaze was thrown to me over the silence. She was wearing vermillion lipstick, upper lip worn pale pink from constant gnawing. We stood there, and I could hear breathing, heart beating, through the years between us.

Clatter. The knife was dropped, sound echoing as it fell into the serpentine pools of blood, vice inching towards me. She wiped her hands on her dress, an attempt to save herself from the understanding as the guilt dried beneath her painted nails. She really was beautiful, even with—especially with eyes haunted bright and curls coming undone like unclenched fists.

“Please.”

Velvety voice, one you only heard in the haze of a spring garden in a child’s dream. She wasn’t like me, she was young and startling with crimson flowers blooming, eyes gleaming like hardwood gloss, teeth pearl bright against apple lips.

The funeral for purity hung in the air separating us, settling into skin, frozen in place, frozen in time.

Glass tear, perfectly crystalized, perfectly falling down a cheek, streaming mascara and rosy blush and ruining the picturesque, the revelation crawling out on veined palms. Glued lips opened again, she had changed in seconds and seasons, and the voice of fuming cigarettes and smoking lungs croaked.

“Don’t.”

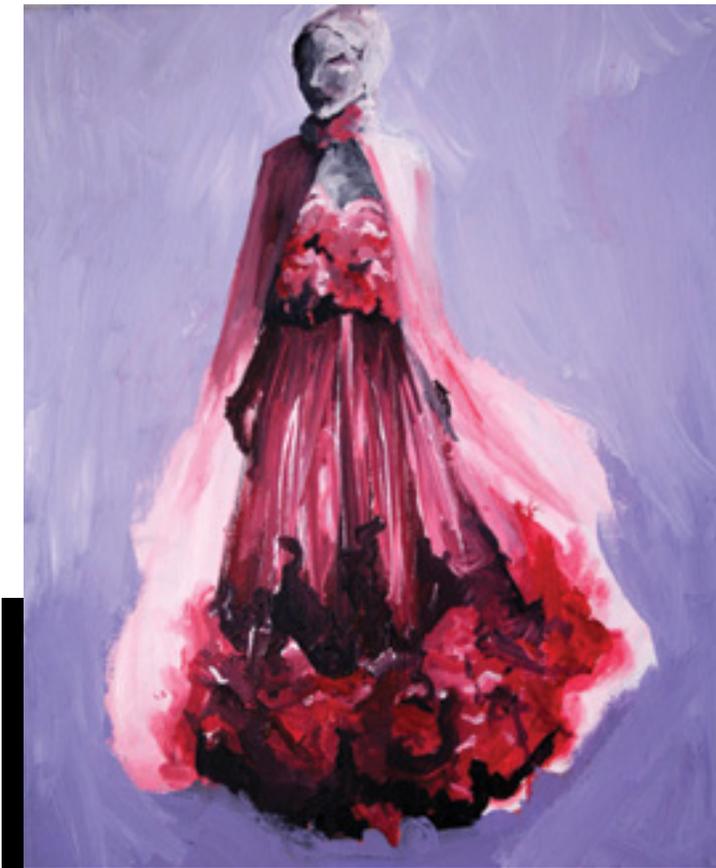
A crack at the end, bones shivering, as if out in the frigid air with skeletal knuckles unsheathed, wickedness biting at bones. She wasn’t like me, she was a thousand years old and her eyes were rotting wood in a forest.

There were only three. Me, leaving the afterlife of childhood behind, eyes wide, blinking at the sight of being baptized from evil. Her, this ancient tree, eons old and fruit rotting, white teeth jagged, slicing through a rainy smile. And the corpse—

Clatter. To her knees she fell, right beside the knife with shuddering shoulders and laughter and sobbing. Earrings framing the mirror of the world that was her floral face. Ankles practically snapping, knees scabbing, in the harsh tumble.

Thin knuckles wrapped tight around a hilt, blade flashing in the glistening sun, blood still dripping to the floor, dew drops in the streaming light. Another racking sob, tears on a dress, jewelry glimmering, knife cutting into the stomach, exile and the four walls of reality came screaming back and I was enlightened.

One last sob, one last stab. Falling forward on the knife with a silent screech of an oil painting on fire. Two eternally sleeping bodies, hands almost intertwined, but miles away. A flush on the cheeks in red blood, eyes a decaying coffin in the cemetery. A sinner and a sin, and the witness who was revived by the finality of it all. Neck on the floor. Pearl necklace and a corpse.



Light
Eva Weber
Acrylic

Inexorably, Bitterly, Thoughtlessly, Pointlessly

I step;
 And time steps with me.
 The distant rumble of the engines of cars;
 The crushing of frozen ground underfoot:
 My only company.
 My only guide, the dim light
 Of a night full of bright stars,
 Obscured by a layer of clouds.
 And I march on.

I shiver.
 The cold bites my legs,
 My arms, my fingers and my toes,
 Working its way ever so slowly
 Towards my heart.
 It bites my neck,
 My ears, my lips and my nose,
 Worming its way to the center of my head.
 And I march on.

I breathe,
 My breath explodes before me
 In a flurry of white mist,
 Before disappearing against the black
 Background of the night.
 My mouth is left numbed;
 I have been kissed
 By the frostbitten mistress of winter.
 And I march on.

I gaze
 Into the swirling whorls of ice,
 And see the night grow antsy-
 See a flurry of snow flakes blow past
 On an idle zephyr.
 The wind, driven by no greater motive
 Than a passing fancy,
 Nevertheless moves faster than I...
 As I march on.

Amir Gibson



Pinecone
 Daniel DiPaola
 Scratch Board

Timothy and his Rope

James Macias

Timothy was a young boy, not old enough for chest hair or any facsimile of puberty, but not so small that he could not read or write all by himself. He was touched, that Timothy was.

One day his brother came back from one of his big expeditions into the wilderness. Timothy's brother had left his pack in the entryway once he was home so he'd have enough strength to survive getting smothered by his mother. Timothy was left in the entryway too. On the strap of the very large and very adventurous-looking pack, his brother had tied a very long piece of rope. Timothy quickly untied the rope and the two of them formed a sudden bond. The rope was perfect for Timothy. If he stretched his hand across the width of it, his fingertips just barely touched. After his brother was completely enveloped by his mother, Timothy asked him where he got the rope.

"You know, I don't remember, sport. Maybe if you ask me some other time I'll know," he said, then walked away.

Timothy didn't mind that his brother didn't know, though. Timothy never got told anything about anything, so he always had to look for it himself. If he wasn't at school he was in his room. And if he was in his room, he was reading. That, or lying on his mattress thinking about life. He would've gone outside of his room to look for things, but his mother didn't like him being exposed to the wilderness on his own. He was still a child, after all.

But his room wasn't that bad, Timothy actually liked his room quite a lot. In the middle of the room hung a yellow incandescent light bulb from two lengths of wire a foot from the ceiling. It was the perfect light for him. It made the grey walls not quite so grey, gave him just enough light to read. It also lit up the other two main attractions of his bedroom: his mattress and his dresser. The mattress was in one corner of the bedroom and in the other was a dresser as big as he was. Well technically, you couldn't really call it a bedroom because he had just the mattress of his bed and not actually a frame for the mattress, so it wasn't actually a bed. Mattressroom would've been a much more suiting name. But nevertheless, Timothy loved his mattress. He would read many pop-up books on his mattress. He knew the books were below his level of reading, but his mother didn't want him reading too much of a violent-kind of graphic; she thought the pop-up kind of graphic was much more becoming of young lads.

But after a while, the books would begin to bore Timothy. So when he was done with them, he would cuddle up on his mattress with his rope and think about life. About how much more life everyone else seemed to have over him. He would think for hours at a time about how other people at his school were taking karate or playing soccer or knew how to ride a bicycle or a scooter. They all seemed like nice people, but Timothy didn't like them all that much. They enjoyed making fun of Timothy; especially the way he would hold his rope behind him and let it drag so it felt like he was walking a dog. Timothy always wanted a dog, but his mother didn't like dogs.

Sol
Ilana Meeker
Photography

Thinking about it, Timothy didn't like much of school at all. Most of the subjects bored him because they were all so easy. But he did like history; it was the only subject that he couldn't figure out all by himself. His favorite unit in all of history was the witch trials. He didn't believe in magic or anything like that, but he liked the idea that people could do more than nature would allow them to be. It was from the witch trials he discovered the best idea he had ever had.

For a while he didn't think he should do it. You see, there was a book that his mother would read to him every Sunday. It wasn't a pop-up book, but his mother said it was a good book and that he should do everything that the book asked of him. And the book said that his plan was not good, and that he'd get sent to a bad place if he did it. But Timothy sat on his mattress and he thought and he thought. He thought about how he didn't have much life and how his mother was always worrying about him and how he didn't want her to worry and how if he did go to a bad place, at least he would be going somewhere.

So one day after a lot of thinking on his mattress, Timothy went to his dresser and moved it under the light bulb. He did it all by himself. Once the dresser was in place, Timothy stepped on top of it and he could just touch the ceiling. He tied one end of his rope right where the wires met the ceiling. He tried to make a different knot with the other end of the rope, but he couldn't get it right. He never learned how to make the kind of knots the witches used, but he didn't mind. It had a loop at the end, that's all that mattered. He had finished his good enough knot just as his mother was passing his room.



"Are you working on a project? That's cute, Timothy," she said, then walked away.

His mother seemed to be fine with his idea, so he decided to follow through. Timothy slowly slipped his head through the small hole he made and tightened the rope around his neck. Without any hesitation Timothy stepped off of his dresser.

There was a big flash, and the next thing he remembered was that he was lying on his bedroom floor under shards of glass. The rope wasn't strong enough for Timothy and it broke when he jumped. He assumed that the flash and the pieces of glass were from the light bulb because all he could see attached to the wire above him was the root of it.

Timothy still doesn't know if his plan was successful or not.



Afternoon
Francesca Pullano
Acrylic

Butterscotch Sweets

The tired, yellowed lighting fixture sagged in the space where it rested above the doorway. Almond shaped and dusty, it was a roasted pumpkin seed dropped in the parking lot of some seasonal farmer's market left to wither and age.

Like dry lips on a cool Autumn day, the glass shell containing the bulb looked as if it would crack with a passing breeze, allowing pus and blood to issue forth from the wound. As the bulb fought to keep itself alight despite its nearly burned-out filament, the peculiar almond shape of the light roused images of the sweet butterscotch candies my old bus driver gave to good passengers.

For a moment, I nearly mistook the dry creaking of the branches surrounding me for the soft crinkle of plastic wrappers. I could almost picture the small American flag above his seat as he saluted every departing passenger with his wrinkled, but beaming eyes.

The lamp flickered for one last brief moment before extinguishing in a great sigh.

Jack Valinsky

The Desert-Children War of 1999

Madison "Bloo" Van Edwards

It was Arizona, 1999. The Sun had conquered every once-tranquil oasis, the dry sand had infiltrated every garden, and the snakes spied on every unknowing civilian. In those times, each day was a battle between the desert and her inhabitants. Most had long ago tossed in their white flag, and hauled in their air-conditioners to survive the rest of their days in the cages they called home, robbed of the vigor to fight Arizona's army. Not us, though.

We were warriors, him and I, part of the withering Resistance that operated out of a camp hidden far up in the mountains. Specifically, his grandmother's house.

We converted the basement into our underground bunker, and built a fort of three chairs, a sheet, and innumerable pillows. By day, we would plan our attacks—

we knew we would have only a small window of outdoor playtime, and damned if we didn't make the most of it!

In a short time, we became experts in both storytelling and cartography, creating the fantastical tales to structure our playtime, and charting maps of simple squiggly lines, really only marked by the cacti or rocks recognizable for their resemblance to musical instruments or cartoon characters. By night (earlier than eight o' clock—just before our bedtimes), we would charge into the backyard, and finally, while Arizona's troops rested for the night, freedom was ours, playtime was ours! And there was this place, in the far corner of the yard, beside the wilting garden and just along the property line, with these colossal evergreen trees, four of them, in fact.

It was a forest.

And not only that, but a small creek, just big enough that to jump across in one leap was an honorable feat (worthy of a paper medal colored yellow and taped to your breast), that slithered through the trees, and on several occasions, served as an ocean.

See, with these four trees and a creek, we were pirates. And superheroes, royalty, ninjas, Vikings, monsters, scientists, vampire slayers, astronauts, cowboys, anything! Anything except warriors—that was for the daytime. For planning the stories we would live out at night when we ambushed the desert, armed with the imagination and energy of two children kept indoors during the Sun's plunders, fueled by each denied request to play outside.

My ally was transferred to another division, up North, and later, I too took refuge outside of the desert's reign. Neither of us has killed any vampires or discovered aliens in years. We went back, once. It was Arizona, 2029. Like boring grow-ups, we sat on the backyard hammock and sipped yucky coffee, looking out over what was once our battlefield. A fence now divided the property line instead of our forest, which was long since gone. Termites, we were told upon asking what had happened to it.

We walked over there, to that corner of the yard when his mother asked if we could water the garden that she was trying to start back up again. It was doing considerably better than when we had left it. The sunflowers, at least, were doing well.

"Look it! Look, look! I'm a mermaid, see?" From the other side of the fence came this child's voice, prefacing a wave of chlorinated water that crashed down just beside my feet and splashed down to the garden. I raised an eyebrow at my ally, and stood on my toes to peer up over the wooden barrier.

"Yeah, well, I'm a pirate, and I eat mermaids!" threatened a little boy, maybe four or five years of age. He stood in his swim trunks at the top of a ladder attached to the side of an aboveground pool against their side of the fence. Gasping, a little girl about his same age emerged from the water, comically large swimming goggles taking over her face.

"Didja see that? I think I just did a back flip!" She inhaled dramatically, puffed out her cheeks, and dove back under, feet kicking wildly.

These children are free! Their futures show no signs of the Sun's oppression, only ridiculous amounts of sunscreen lotion and playground adventures, fantastical quests, and exploratory discoveries.

And we, retired warriors, will relax in our backyard hammock and not so much reminisce, but relive our childhoods through the eyes of the new generation.

We are veterans now.

This is what we fought for.



Distance From Reality
Joanna Romero
Photography

Primordium

It's hard to breathe with lungs yanked up through your throat, callousing every time the wind moans and mourns. But we do breathe, we pant for eons, we gasp and grasp for it, and it is heard. It's heard clanging over the thunder, the chimes. Oh, the screaming. Oh, the screeching!

We writhe on the dirt, exorcism pumps through our veins, and we shudder, hair filthy, strewn about like an obscene halo on the rocks. Like a virgin, a virgin with blood felling through her thighs as she coats her hands and prays, prays for grace.

The whips, the shackles, the lashes on our backs, the bruises on our wrists, and we've broken our spines, split our fingers, to the vertebrae, to the bone, the chilling, the shrill shriek of the bones ricocheting off the throat of life!

But we're free! This perpetual thought that comes slithering down the stream, slipping in, crashing over as a waterfall, as we scrub ourselves till the skins gone red, crimson, burnt raw, and our shaking knuckles are bleeding, scars unstitched, threads pulling them together and apart, just as the bonds strangling our lips come undone.

Shoulders shudder with a vulgar rage, a disgusting laughter at a shrine in a closet, shrines in stone walls. Stone walls that echo every word. Palms grip palms at the grave for the fleeting, the everlasting, the ending. Fingers meet fingers at the birth, the womb's last lashing, and a banner rises high from the ocean, ascending from the thrashing waves.

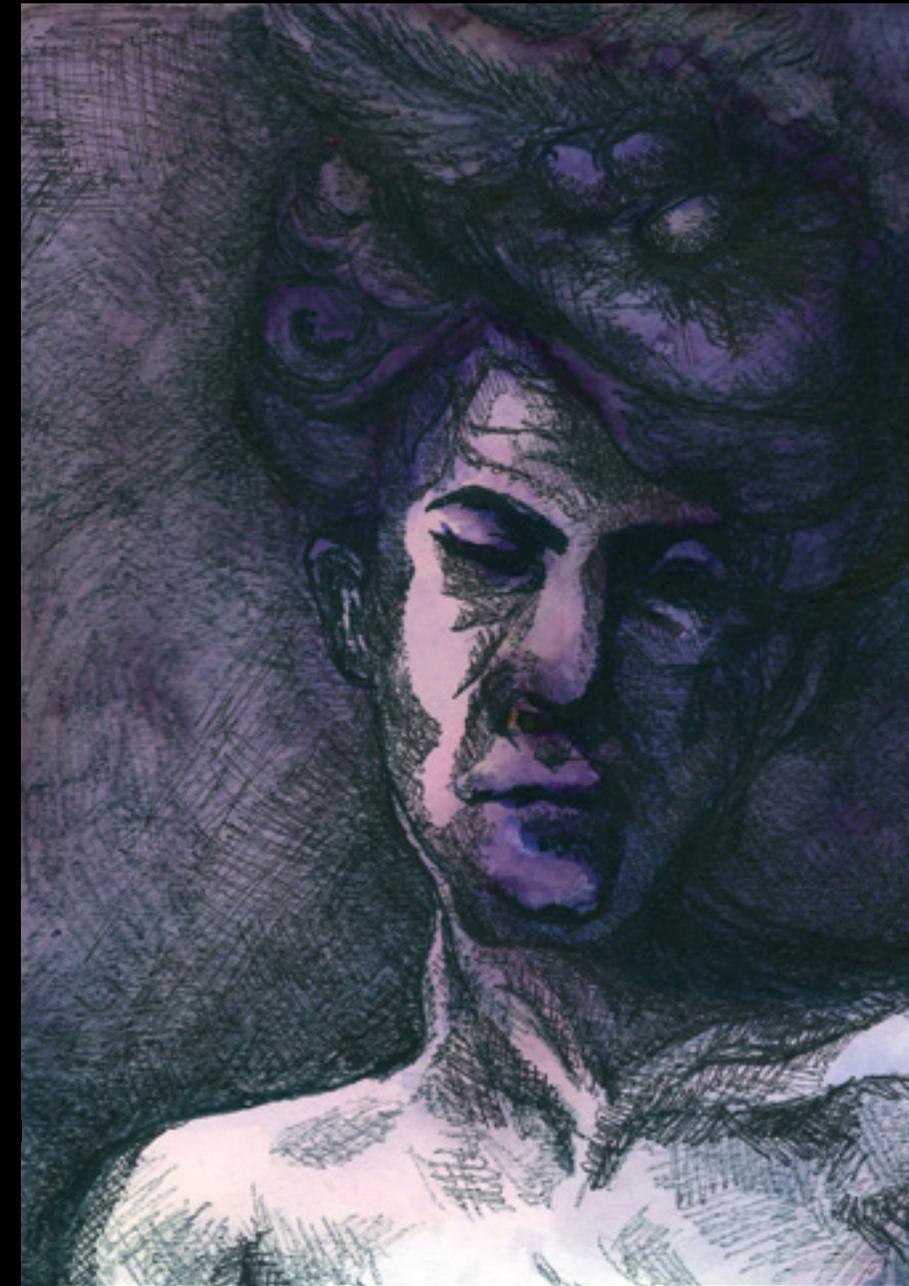
We've come so far, so far, so far! Come hymns, come Hell and your holy water. Purge us, purge yourself, purge all!
There's nothing left on these walls to claw at, to cling to, to prey on, to blindly, barely murmur your blessing.

Our fists are tight, nails dig to the ringing, clashing of bells, slashing. We shout, and it's far louder than any lion's rampant roar. That Heaven is a sin, enlightenment is a sin! We're cursed, we're haunted. The tide crashes at jagged stones, trees clamber up and down in the witching hour and we whisper.

We whisper, and it reaches to the sky, the river reaches to its mouth, and its rapids sleep to the bottomless pit of the roaring blades, the foaming flares. We sing, we chant, we rise, we rise, we rise. We live!

We slide hands between hands, sweat slick, building, collapsing, icing, flaring, to the edge. And then, with a final scream at the summit for salvation, with no sound at all, with a wisp flashing out, we die, we fall!

Mira Bodek



Perch
Rachel Schneider
Watercolor & Ink

How We Die.

So this is how we die?
We lie and weep
At the feet of the reaper,
Trying to keep him
From sneaking away
With our souls.
We beg of the holy man,
“Salvation please,
As fast as you can!”
And try to buy our way
Away from the grave
By slaving away
Our life and our liberty,
Desperately hoping
That someone agrees.
Because what’s being free
If it isn’t forever?
And what’s being alive,
If life’s a pointless endeavor?

But come to terms, come to terms,
And I promise you’ll be fine -
You’ll toe the line and laugh,
You won’t be half as scared,
And if you end up a bit more scarred,
It’s only because you cared enough to try
To not really care how you died.

Amir Gibson



Looking Back
Rachel Schneider
Watercolor

Thrill Me, Confound Me, Taxidermy

James Macias

Christopher Uzzle was a tall boy and was sixteen. He was gentle and funny and handsome and lean. He acted at school with his friend Garrett Tuffett. They also built sets, and they both really loved it.

They were told by their friend, their director and boss, “Go down to the prop room and get me a box.” They were handed the keys to the moldy old prop room, and ran down the staircase, preaching prose and pontoons

They galloped and ambled all down the school’s hallways and readied for oodles and foodles of swordplay. Garrett pontificated “Unto the Breach!” as Christopher opened the door with a creak.

On top of the shelves laid boxes and sprockets and the boxes held watches and footballs and lockets. The room was expansive, not a wall could be seen. It held a caboodle, from prayer shawls to spleens.

But the boys grew tired of typical conversation, so they decided to reveal some deeper information. Christopher told Garrett, “I kissed Susan Lenore,” and Garrett told Chris, “You mephitic grease-boar.”

You see Garrett had a crush on Susan since he was just only three, but Garrett couldn’t compete with Christopher’s body. He quickly grabbed for a nearby prop gun. He hit Chris’s head, and croaked “What have I done?”

Garrett was surprised at his own brute power. Yes, Christopher lay dead next to the fake soap and flowers. Garrett riddled and puzzled over what would be best, and found a good hiding place, a deep treasure chest.

He returned to his friend, his director and boss, and told him, “Christopher had to go to lacrosse.” Garret called his dad’s friend, who stuffed dead rabbits and fox, and Garrett told her, “After this, nobody talks.”

The two snuck into the school so very late at night and were only slightly horrified by the sorry, mangled sight. They stole Chris and put him in their old pickup truck and Garrett gave his new friend his only sixty bucks.

Now that Christopher was gussied up from limb to limb, Garrett needed to find a swell place to hide him. He returned to the prop room with the stuffed teenage toy, Chris was in blackface, dressed like an English Bellboy.

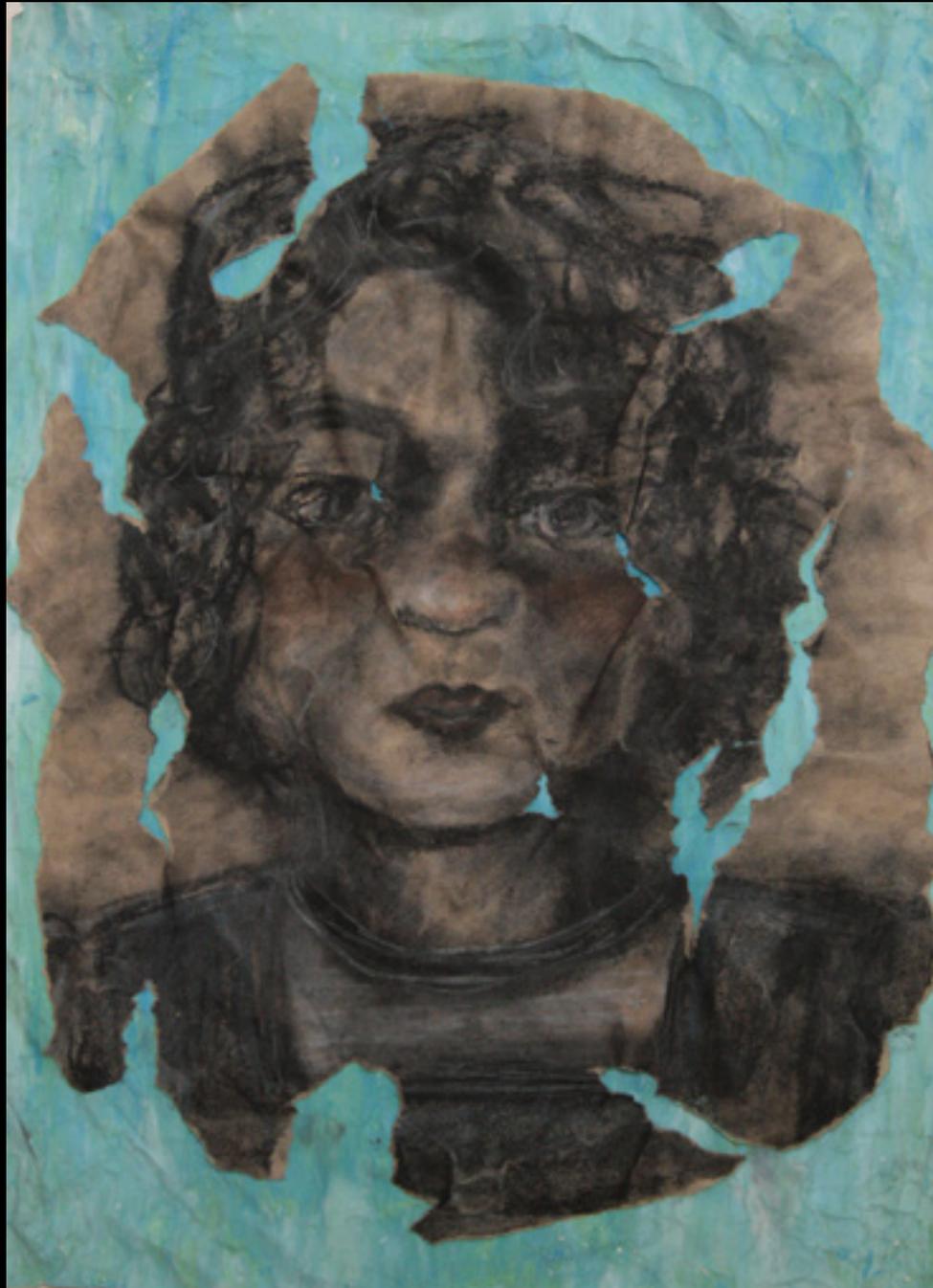
The town had looked in the slums and the gums. Chris had gone away, and with him the funs. The school hung distraught with Christopher gone, but they weren’t sad forever, people move on.

Garrett was especially good at this moving on business. Though he never forgot, Garrett rose to new bigness. He lives a life full of red velvet and soufflés. and makes bags of money acting in Broadway’s new plays.

Chris acts too, and always delivers a zinger. He played a mannequin in the show The Jazz Singer.



Origami Dinosaur
Nadia Wakabayashi
Digital Illustration



Rhapsody
Francesca Pullano
Mixed Media

Sometimes I talk to my six-year-old self,

I ask him: why'd you go and die on me?

He points at broken hearts and languid tombs. He points at the piles of paper that always eat away at my desk and the insecurities that whisper in my ears and he says, "love did this"

Now, ambition might tempt me with sultry hips and depression sure kisses me with chapped and weary lips, but that isn't love.

And I might have had a shitty girlfriend or two, but they never did anything to me that I didn't really want them to. so I swear to my father and his too that, this time, love hasn't done single damn thing to you.

"It isn't your love, but His and I'm still alive, for now. So feel that chasm in your chest, feel it collapse. Your faith failed, Father, the snow's cold to the face and your childish screams as you storm from communion are far too feeble for your age of thirteen. And maybe God forsook you, but by that time, I had too. So, while you're still face down in that sparkling snow, just know that your father will pick you back up and throw you in the truck and you'll never have to touch the cross again."

But, God wasn't there and my father ran too and my feet were on the ground long before He knew.

You talk as if my dreams are still up in boxes, with Playmobil swords and Pokémon drawers, or hidden under tables transforming into forts and castles. You act as if ambition didn't become king when God condoned corporate sin. You act as if I don't love cutting my wrists to bleed numbers for suckling. You act as if there is still a soul in this shell of stocks and cigarettes.

"If not, then who am I?"

Connor Greer

Dear Kenneth, September 15th, 1994

Chris Herrmann

Take your feet, boy, and put them in the ground.

Take the dirt out of the people and shovel it on top, it will keep you rooted here,
it will keep you here among the weeds.

And you think how great the sky is, and how far the stars do stretch,

And how you could join them if you just unweighted your toes, if you

Just jumped a little.

But don't you dare. These slowly circulating clouds are just dust particles and moisture and the blue blue
blue blue blue is just a trick of the light and the bouncing of waves through your face.

Those stars don't even exist anymore.

Take this weight, boy, take it and throw it down

To the bottom of the ocean, and anchor yourself here. It will keep you harbored for the winter, in this easy space, though
you float between the weeds,

And you think that the great old ocean is so tossing out there with the whitecaps and the pods of whales that you could
just slip slip your way on out, and not a soul would know

And that if you just untied this tether, the one you cannot see,

You'd be free.

But I pray you don't, you weight, you slow box of iron filings and shotgun shells. There are such waverings
in the waters that you could never dream of, and the riches are beyond your grasp, and the blue blue blue blue blue of the
sea is just the deeper of the depths to drown in.

And your ship will not survive.

And the bright lights you keep under your tongue are growing, the wavelengths of an old radio keep splashing down in
the dirt. There are small ages and eons that pass from summers to winters and back again, and all the while you

you've taken up the pickaxe that your parents left by your bedside table. You take it and put it to pace, testing the
mettle of the hands that hold it,

you craft a worth.

You dig yourself a right way up. The soil you break your back over will house your bones, but not so soon;

They're still yours yet, so spin out the cobwebs and

Weave yourself together, gather your branches and your fingernails, your rattling frames and thumb tacks, the
piece of yellowed tape that hold up the photos on your wall.

Be the one to light the match. This garden needs fertilizer to grow, and the phosphates and nitrates of your toy box and
picture books will do just fine.

And the lights in the garden grow brighter, now.

And the lights in the garden grow dim.

And the lighthouse light you keep behind your eyes is growing; the tap tap tap of the morse code is raining upon the
deck, whipping up a storm. You can feel the salt billow and sweep across your frame, crystallizing you.

You know that the fragments of the anchor won't be enough to keep from capsizing, and you can't bear to see the
ship go down so you beat back the waves with a thimble,

you fight the battle because it keeps your mind busy.

You unsink yourself. You know that this floor is not quite the surface, but it'll be the place when you need

A place to cut up the pieces and stitch together a finer fabric, made of all the receipts and bills
and books and letters you keep piled up in the bottom of your closet.

Be the one to cut the thread. Finish them off. This boat needs a sail to take you back to the surface, and this history will
fit perfectly in the pattern.

Work, boy, toil for the heart concept, the one you put to motion. Lift your hand and see the stones rise, the trees lift;

See them crack the earth and writhe and tremble at the sight of the sky. Feel that weight

and pick your feet up. Move forward and grasp the hammer your father gave you. Build the house and the fences to sur-
round it. This garden is getting lonely and overgrown

So you best grab the weeds by the roots

and pull.

The sun is on your side and your back, your brow sweats and you keep the trees above you but the insects are all hum-
ming, wishing you good luck. There's a sense of sentiment as you lay the bricks, as you drive the posts, as you hoe the

garden, as you plant the seeds, as you saw the planks until your hands are raw. There's a message to be found in the sweat
and toil, but you can't hear it over the noise

of the cicadas.

Breezy Day
Alex Melnik
Photography

Haul, boy, heave that promise onboard, keep it coming until it's true. Lift your hands as the water spills and spills; watch the rivers run from the holes in the net. Feel the heaviness of all that time spent in the sun but don't let that pull you anywhere. Wear it like a medal. You've got the calluses to prove your worth and the rope wrapped round your shoulder is calling out to you,

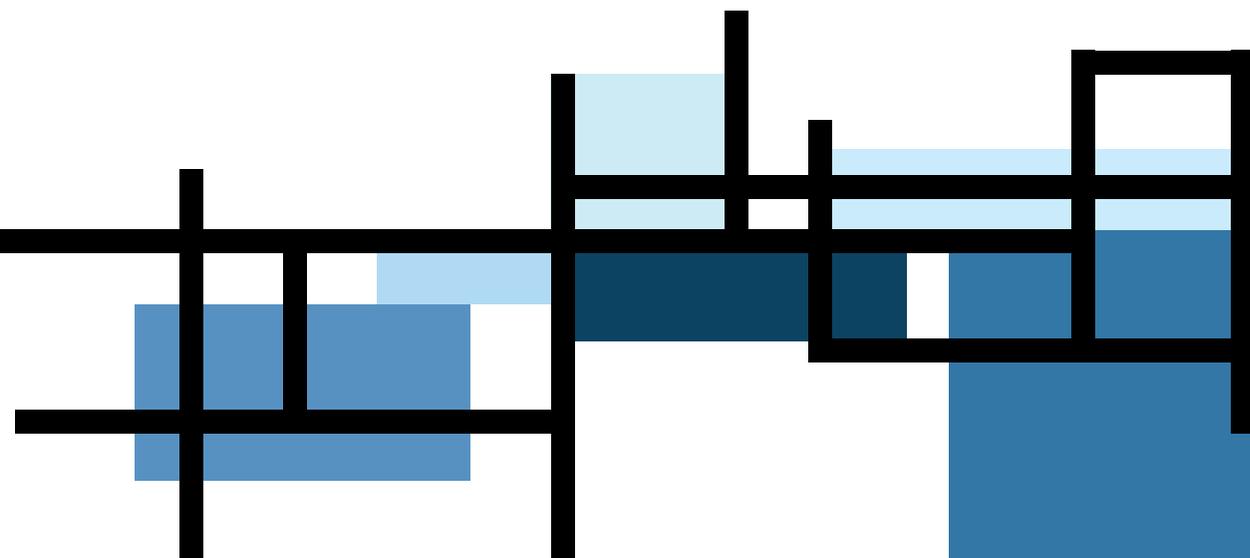
So throw it up among the timbers
and pull.

The light is all about you, glimmering on the crests, the dips, the ripple of the sails, and there you have all the screaming cheers that the birds shower down, the only help they could provide. The gulls all wheel about and in their ragged song you note the simple significance, the hint of solidarity, and somewhere in the midst of all the noise of the bright lights, you can feel the inkling of a thought. The sea is angry today, and the birds tear at the fish.

The dock, the shore, the harbor, the land, the garden, the house, the home.
The home, the house, the garden, the land, the harbor, the shore, the dock.
Put them between your fingers.

Then go walking, deep amongst the frogs and curvature, the capsized jars with the grooves all inscribed like an ancient tongue, then go looking for the glow. If you taste the hickory and the marsh, the tall tall grass and reeds, the scent of a long forgotten place, you can hear the filtered moonlight deeply in this place. Give me your hand, boy. Come with me. You're tall enough to trespass the treeline but that's not the goal. We'll go down to the pond and the shore and the ocean, and the pieces of the starlight will grow. That boat's still there at the dock. That tree still grows on the beach, in the garden, in the water.

Give me your hand.



Proud Songster

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
 And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,
 And as it gets dark loud nightingales
 In bushes
 Pipe, as they can when April wears,
 As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand new birds of twelvemonths' growing,
 Which a year ago, or less than twain,
 No finches were, nor nightingales,
 Nor thrushes,
 But only particles of grain,
 And earth, and air, and rain.

Thomas Hardy, 1926

Each painting you have seen, each poem, each story, is someone's beloved bird. I have watched them grow under the careful watch of my peers; I have nursed my own to life. This magazine has blossomed from bleary-eyed, newly hatched ideas, cemented into being with the strike of a pencil, the stroke of a paintbrush, the flash of a camera. Somehow, by spring, they all migrate to this one place, this one culmination of paper and ink, our grain and earth and air and rain.

How peculiar.

How incredible.

We set them free from their cages for you, that they may fly into your hands and your homes. Treat them with care, and heed what they have to say. Some whistle solitary lullabies, and some join into timeless choirs with their own invented harmonies, and all of them are painstakingly important. This nesting ground will breathe life into an entirely new flock of words and wings in a year's time, just as peculiar and just as incredible as ever.

And so, our kind lives on, to all ends of the earth, in bushes and trees and canyons and cities in every language and every medium. The proud songster that is art fills the very sky, and gives the cloud-gazers and star-gazers like me something to ponder.

I thank those authors and artists who shared their creations with us this year.

I wonder what spectacular birds will find their way here after I am gone.

I wonder, and I hope, and I say to you:

Whatever may come, let them soar.

Laura Kaminsky
 Submissions Editor

supernovas

Lori Jeanne Peloquin & Ted Retzlaff

constellations

The Greer Family

stars

Susan Krasner · Kathy Lesiv · Hunley-Davis · David Berg · Fultz Family · The Stevens Family
Jack Morrissey · Harris Honickman · Amy Wing · Ann McAllister-Thomas
David Creele · Terry Emmens · Craig Geller · Butch & Dale Kane
Heather Stevenson · The Schaefer Family · Mr. Wilson · Tony Vodacek
Naxia Guo · Anonymous · The Powell Family
The Meyvin Family · Alan & Margaret Kaminsky

special thanks

Dr. Kevin McGowan · Dr. Tom Hall · Mr. Brain Gee
Dr. Michael Liener · Ms. Teresa Mosher · Ms. Rose Muir
BHS Custodial Staff · Our Parents and Families



Hotspot
Cassidy Pearsall
Ink & Marker

Galaxy is Brighton High School's award-winning art and literary magazine. Galaxy is not only a magazine, but a place where students can receive feedback on their literary and visual works of art. Through weekly two hour meetings, free writes, forums, seminars and other events, we promote excellence in art and writing with an emphasis on constructive criticism and analysis. We also host poetry cafés and Soirée, our primary annual fundraiser.

Submissions are accepted via e-mail (to galaxy.litmag@gmail.com), the Galaxy mailbox, or directly to one of our editors, throughout the school year until late February, when those who have attended ten or more weekly meetings have the opportunity to vote on the pieces they would like to see published in the magazine. Final decisions are made through a combination of these votes and a consensus among the editors. All authors are verified as students at Brighton High School, though their work may be published anonymously at their request.

The final product is designed and printed for distribution in May. Copies of Galaxy are free with a \$1.00 donation. Browse past editions and learn more at our website: www.galaxylitmag.org.

Quotations on the inside covers are from current Brighton High School students.

about

colophon

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