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The word "galaxy" is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are set against a background of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of green, yellow, orange, and red. The shapes are irregular polygons that create a layered, abstract effect behind the text. The overall design is modern and artistic.

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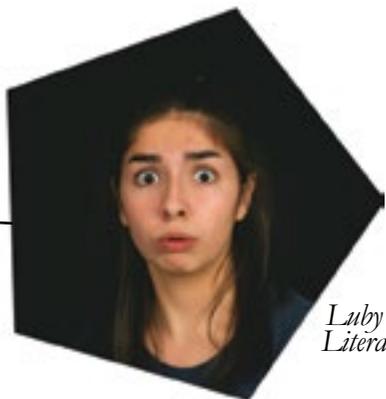
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*Mrs. Burger
Advisor*

Opening Comments

First, on the behalf of the dreamers transcribed upon these pages, I would like to take a moment to thank you.

Take a moment to thank yourself, for you have given yourself a great gift.

By opening this magazine, you have taken the first steps away from the Wild West of the Internet Age and into a sanctuary of reveries. For the past sixty years, a compilation, much like the one you hold in your hands, has been formed from a supernova of teenage musings. From its first publication in 1954 to this edition, *Galaxy* has seen so much change- it has been witness to war, liberation, unrest, and discovery. It has guided multiple generations through the sea that is high school- baby boomers, flower children, latch-key kids, generation x, y, and zers, and children of the world wide web.

And now, in a time of disconnect where many of us travel from one screen to the next and are constantly bombarded with information from half a world away, *Galaxy* remains. Throughout the year, it grants retreat from a restless era, giving Galaxians two hours to contemplate works of art, pieces of their peer's souls, away from distraction, as it has done for sixty years.

Any time you pick up a copy of this magazine, be it from the 60s, 1986, or this year, let yourself be transported away, at least for a few minutes- from Facebook notifications, from the latest episode of that TV show, from Instagram- into the ponderings of young souls. Immerse yourself in their words; let them take you to places you've never been, introduce you to individuals you've never met, and expose you to feelings you've never felt. Take these experiences, treasure them, and let them inspire you.

And perhaps with in this catalyst of contemplation, you will uncover a story of your own.

Ilana Meeker

Cataract
Cassidy Pearsall
Pencil



Destination

We walk through this house at night. It is old and well known, worn by the tread of thousands of travelers. There are traps, holes in the wood that will snare our ankles and leave us stranded until the vastness of the space weathers us to brittle bone. There is enough light to see the spots, enough time to dodge, but the farther we go, the more there are, until the floor is a hole, and the wood, islands we must hop to.

Our journey becomes a dance, skirting the edges of rot, bumping the decay and leaving chunks of foot behind. Soon we will be walking on our knees.

Some people are born tall and agile. They can survive brushes and bumps and still walk on. Some can leap and twist and remain intact, striding ahead on healthy limbs. We can only watch as we drag our bodies across the ancient floor. At least our arms are strong.

The lucky few reach the top of the house and open the window that lets in the light. They breathe in air unpermeated by dust and mold. The rest of us lay prone, slowly absorbed into the planks, becoming shadows, the moisture we leak weakening the boards, drop by drop, until we too are another trial to avoid.

We have joined the company of failed dreamers.

Tess Austin



Athena's Dream
Ilana Meeker
Colored Pencil

Of time we cannot be certain

Do as the monks,
and make something beautiful.
Use colored sand, for its grains light as wind.
And when you're all finished,
wait a moment
or more,
and take your cruel hand-
Nothing lasts forever.

Does it trouble you,
as it does me,
that with our hands we give ourselves power?
The point of your adage is lost in real life
even when you *are* the killer.

When you make your next picture,
lay the grains on a beach-
the very edge of the ocean, where sand's packed and damp.
The tide will come in,
wash footsteps away-
how right in so many ways you are,
that nothing lasts forever.
But what you must yet realize:
if we could control our destruction, everything would last forever.

Natalie Karlsson



The Garden of Hera
Cassidy Pearsall
Acrylic & Embroidery

Muscled Like A God

He was tall and well-dressed,
flat of face and shoulders broad,
and his arms, chest, legs and back
were muscled like a god's.

He stood by the side of the road,
feet firmly planted on an emerald lawn,
and leaned forward to look up and down the street,
then leaned back, and swore in Afrikaans.

And he stepped down off the grass,
and sat down on the curb,
and thought back hours ago,
'To a sign that read 'do not disturb'.

If that room in that hotel had been heaven,
then the outside world was surely hell.
But he somehow felt that room was damnation,
and he was destined for Hades no matter where his feet fell.

So he sighed and hunched over,
glanced fruitlessly left and right once more,
giving up hope on hitching a ride,
thoughts still attached to that sign on the door.

Brain, mind, emotion, thought,
all stuck, not coming loose,
and he was trapped somewhere between
euphoria and putting his neck in a noose.

Trapped between harsh freedom, and
the agonizing comfort of being a slave.
Between what was expected of a true Man,
and the sniveling pansy he felt like today.

So sit on a curb and rack your brains,
think 'til your problems get solved.
Think on your sins and don't get up,
think 'til you're completely absolved.

It took him weeks, years, lifetimes,
across the galaxy and back -
a tangle with infinity, and upon return
his mind had cracked.

Or the cracks more pronounced
that were there to begin with.
Or the cracks that were formed in that room
by the man who spoke perfect English.

He reminisced with fond loathing:
tongue forming words with perfect diction;
dropped R's and sophistication
causing so much internal friction.

The first time he recalled the exact events,
the memory wracked his body,
spasming with unknown emotion
just to think of the hotel lobby.

The only thing he could focus on
without entirely breaking down
was the sign on the door with the wonderful words
and subsequent midnight walk about town.

Which culminated in this:
lost, on the roadside,
which wasn't so bad for someone
who was still trying to hide.

But now, alone with his thoughts too long,
how could he hide from himself?
He'd kept the cracks away for a lifetime,
and it took just one man to knock his brain from the shelf.

So as a distraction he stood,
started walking once more.
So maybe he'd think a bit less
if he just thought on the chore.

And so unfocused, and so inattentive
he let the only car for miles pass him by.
But not without a few cracked ribs or stolen heartbeats.
Not before sending his soul to the sky.

Amir Gibson

Summer Day
Candice O'Connor
Photography



Dog Eat Dog

Muffled screams and raging flames surround him.
The air is polluted with debris and ash.
Architectures fall and are replaced with scratched out memories.
Give us a reason.

Shrapnel flying left and right, ripping apart anything it can.
The smell of death and fear floods his senses.
Give us a sign.

Blood drips from his raped, damaged body as he falls to the ground.
Give us a chance.

This all starts from an authorized order and he can only ask...

Why?

A voice screams out: because we can, because we must, and because we follow orders.

We are dogs.

Asher Pantaleo

Lighter

bonfire blazing
but i'm still here
(maybe there's something left to find)
and maybe there's mind at
the dwindling end of this
cigarette

and yet, i light another

do you ever think
about the apocalypse?
if things got a little closer
to the sun?

(death by incineration
ignition
inflammation)

the end of the world would feel weightless

and so, another cigarette

smoking like a chimney
the fire continues to burn
(i am the coals

but i want to be the smoke)

(cigarette)

no mind
no madness
just another soul
(another coal)

waiting for a solar flare

Mira Bodek

Let Me Tell You Something,

boy. Some day, you're going to wake up at 12:33 pm on a Sunday, suffocating under the aftermath of the night before. You're gonna open your groggy little eyes and shout through the overwhelming humidity, "How could I have let this happen?" And no one will answer you but the kiss of the hot sandy breeze, and the whisper of cicadas. And you will prevail.

And boy, one afternoon, you'll find yourself kicking up wet leaves with your tired little arms folded, muttering something along the lines of, "How could I let them do this to me?" But your only companion will be the freshly, grayed skies, caressing you with their tears. And you may cry too, but you will prevail.

Yes, one evening, you're going to stomp your stubborn little feet deep into the icy, wet mush, attempting to feel something colder and emptier than your own mental state. And you will sigh, "How could I let myself come to this?" And you will stare into an abyss of iridescent cream and periwinkle with no response. Silence.

Boy, someday, maybe this year, maybe not for another five, you will be hit by it all. The silence. The emptiness. The loneliness. With no one to blame but yourself, because, someday boy, you will screw up, even if unintentional. You will let it happen, you will let them hurt you, and you will let yourself come to this. But then, someday, you may grow tired of it. You may feel the adolescence hunching your shoulders forward start to release a little. You may let yourself change.

And boy, someday, you're going to spend the first evening above 56 degrees in months sitting in your best friend's backyard. And you'll take your angst-y little hands out of last year's pockets and touch the newness in the air, and you'll cry, "How could I ever have been so lost!" And your laughter and chatter will bounce off of the lawn chairs and seep into the warm grass and carry you on through the night. And you won't need to take the blame anymore. And you will prevail.

Erica Lubman

Babel

I.
They were made. Cells, old but preserved for eons until science could keep up with imagination. They were formed with drugs, surrounded by tested conditions and given a mechanical nudge whenever their growth veered off track. They were the children born of thousands of scientists, each offering their expertise to the most advanced project of the decade. Each held their breath as every new test result came in, positive, and each felt hope bloom in their chests.

II.
They were born. Babies birthed from willing women, quickly ushered out once they had completed their purpose. Six perfect babies. They were named; Michelangelo, Newton, Da Vinci, Hawking, Marie Curie, Beethoven. They held the hopes and dreams of thousands on their newborn backs. They were the geniuses of a generation that could grow their own.

III.
They grew. As children must, they explored and learned, taught by the best minds available. They exceeded expectations, grasping concepts beyond their age and forming theories that stunned their creators. The surrogate parents were proud. Their experiment had been a success. They had made the masters of art, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Beethoven, without the egos. The greatest minds, without the distractions. Any sign of personality that could not be guided was smothered, punished harshly. These children were special, but they were still children and couldn't be allowed to rebel and learn bad habits.

IV.
They rebelled. Beethoven disliked classical, he preferred Grunge. Marie Curie experimented with food instead of chemicals. The scientists stood firm. It was within their nature, their very being, to return to their origins. It was only a matter of time before the children would comply and deliver new works of masterpiece in the medium for which their predecessors were most known.

V.
They complied. It was easier and they realized they enjoyed that at which they excelled. They lost themselves in their art, music, thoughts, equations. Papers they wrote, pieces they carved, were auctioned off to the highest bidder after months of study by the scientists in charge. They learned to love what they did and became obsessed. The scientists were not worried. They were geniuses after all.

VI.
The scientists worried. The children's genius was frightening. Hawking theorized about time until he could not stand to look at a clock. Newton proved the theory of gravity. Da Vinci created a flying machine without a motor. The scientists worried. The experiment was getting out of hand. They had not reached the expected limit of past genius, but had flown past it, propelled on the wings of modern knowledge and youthful enthusiasm. The scientists no longer felt like they were in charge.

VII.
The scientists take charge. It was the only way. They changed the children's brains, fiddled until insight lasted only an instant before dimming and dying. The children could think, could see the connections that made them genius, but couldn't express it before it disappeared. They changed their names to; Mark, Tom, Sue, Henry, Bill, Matthew. The scientists were sad, but resigned. The children entered the real world and the scientists watched them go, disappointed. The experiment had failed.

Humans are not perfect, not even ones born in labs. The scientists knew it was their duty to uphold this sacred truth.

Tess Austin

Serenade To A Dark Night

Oh she, the moon
How bold, how bright
Glowing strong
Yet in another's light

How must it feel, lady moon
To catch what isn't yours?
What emotions hide
Beneath your dusty, rocky floors?

Do you ever feel jealousy
For the gifts you don't possess
Do you, like me, seek solace
In stealing others' specialness?

How must you suffer, lady moon
To see our Earth, day by day?
To move around us
And yet, to always stay?

Do you ever tire of staring
At lands of green and seas of blue
And can you feel the eyes
Of millions looking back at you?

Do planets share secrets, lady moon?
What do you know that we do not?
What hides beneath those other surfaces
That our scientists know not?

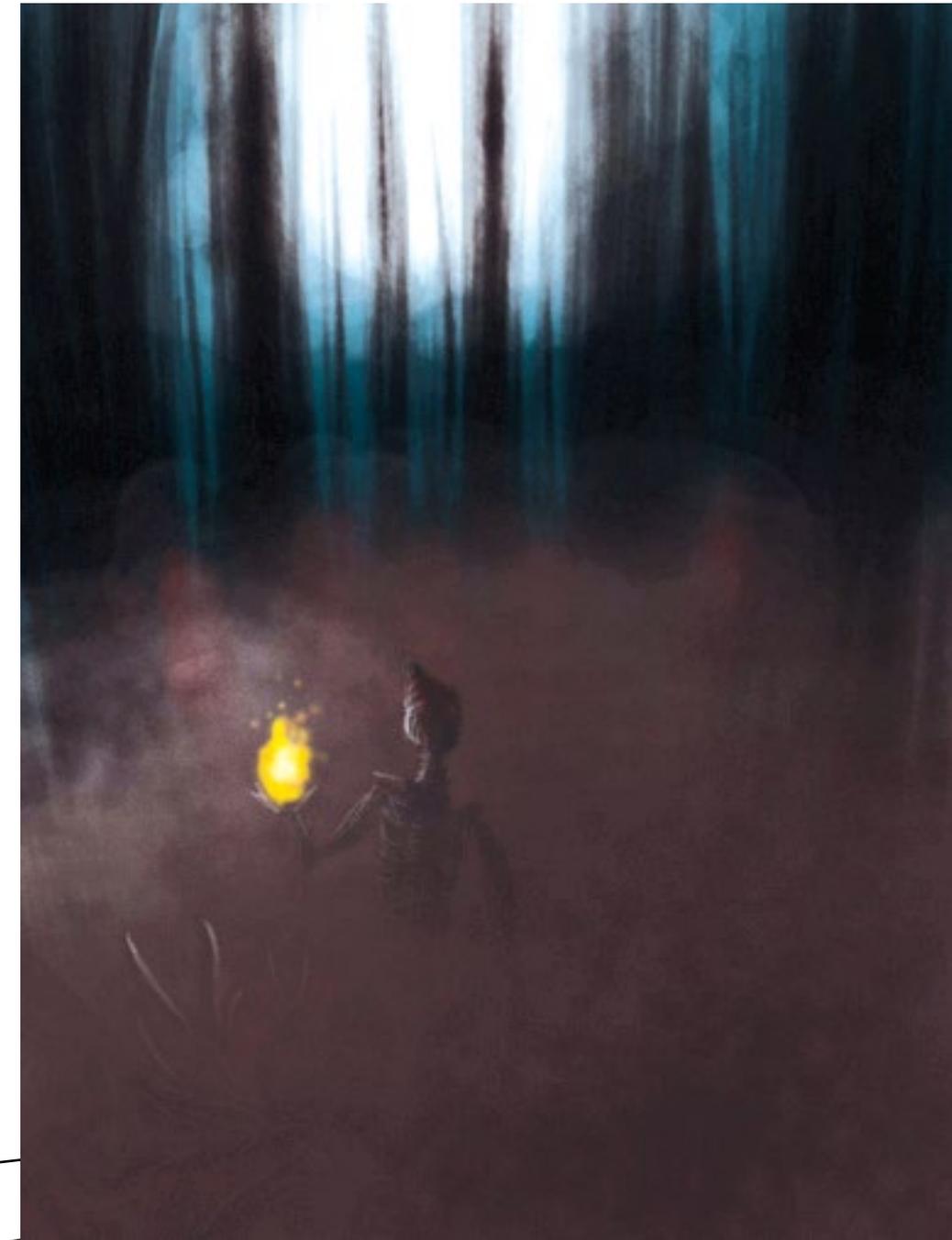
Can you converse with all the stars?
Old, and those whose lives have just begun?
Do they sing songs of other lives far away
Of another Earth, and another sun?

Do planets tell stories, lady moon?
Stories of humans who have landed there?
Do they laugh at us, who think we know so much
And yet, our knowledge is so bare?

Maybe they tease you for being a moon
For being so grey and small
Do they know you stole someone's shine
Or do they really know you at all?

Oh she, the moon
Ruler of the barren night
Standing alone

Annaliese Taylor



Skeleton Forest
Ben McLauchlin
Digital Illustration

The Moonlight Sarabande

The sun that blots out stars at day
hangs jealous of its neighbors' lights.
It burns to lead the world astray
from glowing souls who waltz the nights.

Introspection

The day-break sleepers all rest their heads
on ponds and pools of mortal wine.
They dream of men whose dreams are dead;
dreams soaked in blood in hope they'd shine.

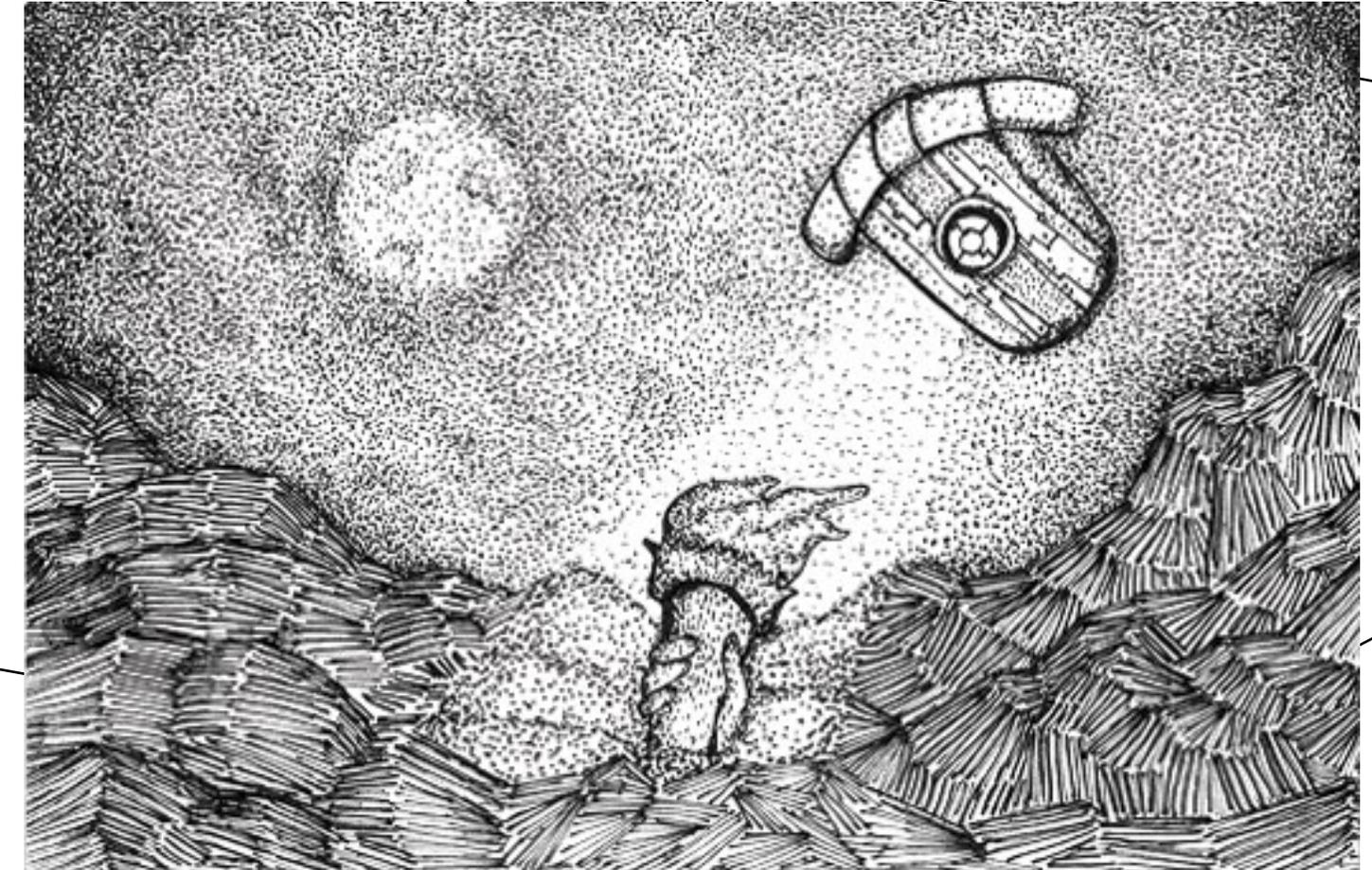
Crossfire Caught in Ingushetia

We saw and heard the terror men
and cleansed their scourge with tears.
And when we fought the terror men
we helped them spread their fear.

James Macias

But Always and Option

The water can rise for frozen hearts
Whose demon deeds hide safe in hoods.
The tides can rip the ice apart
And kill the evil, but drown the good.



The Return
Mira Bodek
Ink

La Jolla

Here is where the seaweed—
thick vines of bruised green, matted, smarting—
is knotted, overhand style
like a Boy Scout would do
tight and neat
on the gaping shore.

And here is where the worn leather night
melts into a pool of fool's gold
which in turn dissolves
shard by shard
into trimmed blue paper sheets
stapled together
quilt-like.

And where the very tall man
with the briefcase—
you can just make out
panes of calloused skin around the eyes—
stands hand in hand
with that bitter swinging wind.

Yearning
briefly
for the sculpted sighing
melodies of siren songs
from the old transistor radio
that used to sit
on the bedside table
for the clang-clang-clang
of pots and pans on the
chipped kitchen tile.

But it was all
static anyways.

He's met the silence before
knows the angle
at which she lunges
knows the gnaw
of her teeth
sharp-sharp-sharp.
knows her eyes too
clean deep violet
hints of pearl opal
and their rising warmth
like a paint-flecked
radiator.

Knows the
tangled folds
of her swaddling
gown
and the creases in
her filmy
skin like Braille.
Remembers how
to climb
underneath them
through the pores
how to bury himself
in spindly bones.

Tugs on his tie
and lets it fall
on a breeze.
He plays violin
for the orchestra
of a happy purgatory
and she is
the conductor.

Sara Krolewski

The Rape of Europa
Cassidy Pearsall
Acrylic, Gouache, String



To take the intangible and rewrite its composition thus creating its tangible representation might provide a way out. There are things we can't put into words. Like those watered down remnants of memories; half baked nostalgia.

That strange comfort that wafted in the air when we read together, side by side, alone, together. The faint figures of two individuals laughing on the sidewalk. Ice cream stains, sand in my flip flops, your goddamn, whole-hearted laugh.

They linger like flies after the first barbecue of summer, eventually eliminated with pesticides. They linger like the warm, encompassing aroma of the last bonfire in my hair, eventually washed away with shampoo.

They linger, but there is no product or home remedy to expel these dusty half thoughts from the universe. They only exist amongst the chaos of my cloudy mental state now, underneath the tangible things.

Thoughts, reminders, ideas, memories that I can throw out or pick up whenever I want to. The tangible things, post-it notes, pages torn out of a journal, a dying daisy chain. I can throw those out. That is my choice. I am in control.

But it is the deep-rooted, impossible to access, gut feeling of dread when I'm reminded of that strange comfort and the faint figures that I can never seem to pinpoint until sometimes all at once, it hits me..

That doesn't exist anymore. And you cannot eliminate something that already doesn't exist. You cannot even attempt destroy matter that isn't even real.

So I am stuck. Stuck in this maze filled with familiar scents, recycled inside jokes, and re-runs of happier episodes that only play in the depths of my brain.

But to take these little shards and shreds and paste them together with mod-podge or glitter glue and finally have something to show for whatever I've been feeling...

It would provide a way out.

Here. I made you this. See it. Touch it. Smell it.

Remember.

Remember?

Erica Lubman

Miracles

Each drop falls
slowly
to the ground;
smells like rusting iron
crumbling,
tumbling from shoulders,
easing my burden
leaving my muscles tense and tight
my mind hazy and hesitant
my heart unsure and unconvinced;
but the memories of sharp hurt and brilliant sparkling emotions
coalesce
into a beautiful explosion
that leaves my chest heaving
and my eyes burning
and my feet numb from walking so far
over so much debris
as rain
falls
sweetly,
dusting my eyelashes
coloring my cheeks
slipping off my fingertips
and I smile
to be sad.

Simona Zaretsky

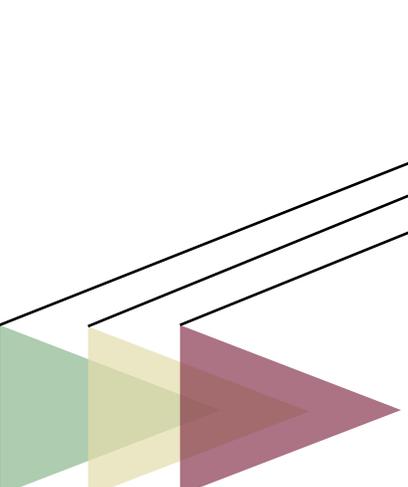


Opaque Beauty
Eli Schwartz
Photography

i grew up in hotel
rooms //
a history of my
moment's-notice
childhood

I remember leaving behind what I could live without,
just small enough to fit under his barricade and run
to the Jeep like I was running for my life —
his arm twice the girth of my neck.
I remember the white of my mother's knuckles
on the wheel, crying like it was the first time.
Crying like there was some surprise.
I remember the three-night wanders,
hearing the word safe whispered hurriedly into a payphone
and an hour-long drive to get to 4th grade.
They pointed at my hair laying flat and slick
but
it was \$5.00 to refill the shampoo.
You know that feeling, disorientation
waking up tucked in sheets too rigid and cold
a room too lidded by heavy shades
to be your own.
I collected side-table drawer Bibles and squares of soap
and
I just wanted to be left alone.
I remember the bruises on my mother's arm
as she clutched the receiver too tight.
I remember the police standing tall at my door,
go upstairs boney go upstairs.
I remember the last drive, streetlights stretched high through thick tears.
Neutral-toned carpet and a one-use toothbrush to end it all.
The nighttime 'tel noises still fill my tired mind
the childhood soundtrack of radiators,
ghetto sex and hallway thumps.
And somewhere between the house my parents bought to raise me well
and the motel that let my little sister in for free,
I've pieced together the shadow of the place I came from
the backseat of a Jeep —
the shallow, altered tone of a broken home.

Anonymous



Later

She ran her long, thin fingers through her pure brown hair. Later, I would come to think of those fingers as elegant instruments, whose power to create knew no bounds. These sweet tools brought to life willowy ballerinas, toes poised, with arms held gracefully above their heads; they illustrated princesses, whose gowns seemed to swallow their legs and leave only a peep of their feet beneath billowing maroon dresses. These hands became nearly divine in my mind; there was no crocodile they could not draw, no pile of fruit that they could not paint, no stuffed animal that they could not animate.

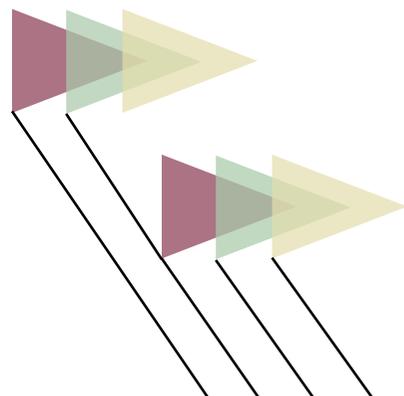
Later, though, I would speculate that those mystical implements were not very magical. They were merely pale, narrow hands that I would never hold again. I would never place them on my forehead again as we walked through a shiny green park, so much sparkling sunlight sending me to my mother's side to grab those eternally cold fingers and palms. These hands were the extension of a fading memory, the last tendrils of a dream slipping away into darkness as I woke up to reality.

Later, I pretended it was of no importance to me: her caresses, her paper dolls, her hugs, her silly voices and jokes about salmon and halibut, her smile. I decided it did not matter because it hurt far too much to close my eyes and try to remember her voice and the color of her skin and the pressure of her hand in mine. It was easier to make a face of disdain and shrug, telling my family I don't know, I don't remember.

Now I know. I know that I will never know my mother first hand, nor will I ever be entirely accepting of that fact. I know that I can become acquainted with her through the memories of my family and those strangers who come up to me and tell me they knew my mother, they tell me she was wonderful, and that they are so sorry. It has been ten years since she died and still, we receive condolences. I cannot help but feel a twinge of envy for these strangers; my mother was no stranger to them.

So I will see her life through the games, encounters, and dinners that my cousins, my aunts and uncles, my sister, and my father remember.

And now I know that I can remember too, not a lot but that makes each memory sweeter. It hurts a little at first, but it makes me sicker to realize that if I don't, these remembrances will dissolve, nothing but fodder for dreams.



I recall that she ran her long, thin fingers through her pure brown hair. Short strands daintily danced to the floor, littering the edges of the furry mint green bathroom carpet and covering the peach floor tiles around her. I looked up from the carnage of chemo; she was so much taller than five foot five. Her blues eyes shone from the mirror as she gazed at herself, her fingers gently moving a large clump of hair tenuously clinging to her scalp. She did not seem perfect or wonderful or divine then. As a cautious and severely shy seven year old I recognized fear and uncertainty; they sat heavy on her shoulders and lined her face.

I ran downstairs, leaping over the occasional red and yellow toy and prone Barbie, and stopped in front of a tall, slim closet. I probably struggled to open the cupboard, sticking my tongue out in concentration, as I still do when I focus on a problem wholeheartedly. I greedily reached in and grabbed the treasure. I darted back up the stairs to my mother standing in the bathroom. I bent down and began to sweep up the hair into the small green dustpan I had retrieved. She looked down. Maybe she felt divine for a minute, a second. I think so.

You're a good girl, she said. I don't know how she said it, I can't remember if her voice was high or low, I'm unsure if she was smiling or fighting tears, but I know she said it. I remember.

Anonymous

Permanent Markers Fade

The clock ticked slowly
It was high summer
Pencils and binders trapped underneath
Beach towels, sandy t-shirts, and
Neon sunglasses in the sweaty sauna of a closet

We trained.

6 am runs from backyards to woods
Blistered feet soaked in dewy grass
Neck and neck in unspoken competition
Up and down deserted roller-coaster roads
Through green, breathing tunnels

We trespassed.

From glaring neighborhoods to your backyard
Sat on the creaky trampoline, cell on speakerphone
Until your crinkled, sleepy smile shone through the window
Our trio's mission, interrupted by your mom's hospitality,
Reconvened as we ran, strawberry jam still smeared on our chins

We triumphed.

The United Interstate Ultimate Frisbee League of Awesomeness
Our teams assembled in the slow-cooker soccer field
Feet fried if kept in one place, like the melting, orange goal cones
But we never stopped moving, fighting, or smiling
Our victories challenged the stupidity of time

We trembled.

Standing in the chilly rain by the U-Haul truck
My new life packed in a box
You wrote your names around the frisbee in
Permanent marker. So I'd never forget.
Your bodies shrunk in raindrops on the rearview mirror

We tried.

Luby Kiriakidi



Queen Anne
Kerry Lubman
Photography

4AM Musings

Sometimes, in the murky purple space I wade through before I truly fall asleep, I picture a different world. This alternate existence of mine, it's so much unlike everything we believe in, here, on our green-tinted-cotton chasing rock floating through the cosmos. So different, that it is almost entirely the same. Except for one key aspect. See, I dream of a world where children are encouraged to draw on the walls and play with their food and stay in the bathtub for hours, just day dreaming. Young, aspiring innovators are told by their parents that pursuing their craft is the foremost method to make them proud. Because that's what they were told when they were kids. Because that was the foundation of their ancestors. I dream of a world in which photography students, theater majors, sculptors, architects, magicians, designers, mimes, painters, writers, singers, creators of all kinds are praised for being the pioneers on the road to national advancement. A world in which a country's worth isn't defined by capital investment and gross domestic product and by how much they are beating their competitors in a race to financial domination, but by its art.

We live in fear of our neighbors because they may be plotting our destruction. We strive for envy from the people we care about because success is measured by the relative misery of others. We kill, we torture, we bully, we exclude, and we pray for our own salvation. And I succumb to my own fatigue and try to stay there for as long as possible because I've finally found a place where I feel like I am useful. I am important. I have wasted entire days repeatedly writing arbitrary words on the soles of my shoes, and dousing miniature cities in liquid rainbows, and achieving a sense of purpose because of it. People on the streets join in and whistle tunes of fresh flowers and burning fire places and by the end of it, we're being photographed for international newspapers and congratulated on our intellectual excellence. This is the definition of prosperity. Creative collaboration. This is all possible in my dreams. This is my salvation.

And when I awake, I am encompassed by an overwhelming sense of guilt because those dreams won't lead me to financial success. Those dreams won't get me in history books and win me a nobel prize and change the world and put the grand ol' United States ahead of dog'gon China. My aspirations are nothing out there in "the real world". And the further I delve into my slumber induced society, the further I want to be from my dauntingly bleak-looking future chasing my every move as we speak.

I don't want to live in fear of my neighbors. I don't want to measure my success through the self-dissatisfaction of my friends. And I don't want to feel at home in a far off world that only exists in my near-subconscious mental state. I want to go back and change history so that we will prosper through our passions, not our credit scores.

You may not know, but, there is a suspiciously wide black hole sprouting up through the depths of society itself and it feeds off the "hush-hush" attitude of the greedy. I fear it will swallow us whole if we continue to drag our feet along with the herd and hold keys between our fingers ready to fight our own kind. I'm not ready to fight, and I'm not ready to run, but I'm certainly not going to let the aching tremors in my legs keep me from moving.

But what can I do? Commit fact and equation after equation and fact to memory until I fall asleep, drifting back into my unconscious utopia. And I am happy here, amongst the whistling city folk, banding together to advance our beautiful world into artistically effervescent opulence. I am happy with my half theories and ideals floating amongst a colorfully clouded in-between. So, please, don't tell me when it's time to wake up. I am well aware. But I am afraid.

I hear them calling for me. I can't keep my eyes open.

Erica Lubman

Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles

Two days ago, I was in Dallas, Texas for a fencing competition. The thing about being a fencer traveling all over the continental U.S. -- it can be pretty monotonous. The day-long events are contained within vast, cement venues. It's a vacuum of rows of metallic fencing strips, clone armies of chairs, and a high ceiling that seems to maliciously creep down. The windowless, timeless environment is simulated in convention centers all over the country. Every month one of these unremarkable venues is filled up with the fencing community. Every single person. (Fencing isn't all that big in the U.S.) Sometimes I suspect that, besides me, none of them really ever leave and the building grows legs and stomps over to the next location.

I guess I was looking for a change of scenery. As a frequent traveler, I was not getting a scrapbook-worthy amount of eye candy, unless the vibrant reds, blues, and purples of a screaming Russian coach's bald head counts for something. So when my friend, Jocie, said she was craving waffles, I knew something good was coming. We had just finished a day of fencing victories and losses with our teammates. Well, teammate. My dad also fenced. I'm not ashamed; veteran fencing can be kinda fun. Sure, it's slower, but actually, it's a lot more adrenaline-inducing. While my events are competitive, theirs are life and death since it is very likely that one of them could have a heart attack and drop dead, the way they wheeze and stop for muscle cramps. It just goes to show that fencing is a life-long sport. It'll never leave you. Take that, gymnastics. How old are your veterans, 19?

Anyways, while my dad was packing his sweaty equipment, Jocie and I acted on our waffles craving. We googled "waffles in Dallas TX" and found a miracle. Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles. Raving reviews told us that although it kept getting burned down, people couldn't get

enough of Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles. One lady said that when her date took her there and confessed his love for those Chicken and Waffles, that's when she knew that he was "The One." Another lady, it might have been the same one, said that when she was pregnant, all she wanted was Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles.

We wanted to confirm that this wonderland existed (it could've burned down again) so we called up Big Mama. First, just to make sure, we asked if they served waffles this late.

"Honey, we serve waffles from the tah-ime we open to the tah-ime we close."

Wow! That southern drawl. It's real! Giddy with excitement, we asked how close it was to the Dallas Convention Center, and to our disbelief, it was five minutes away! I told my dad the good news. He shrugged, too tired to object to this spontaneous detour from the haven of our hotel. Now, the mind works in mysterious ways when hungry. Jocie and I neglected to look at the comments that noted the sketchiness of the location. We were going anywhere our cravings would take us, and, as we drove past a gradient of increasing sketchiness, we realized our stomachs could take us all the way to hell for some quality food.

We stopped when we saw a building painted watery white with a dim red sign reading "Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles." Gosh, I hoped that pregnant lady was right about the food. We walked in to a small white room with a thick, plexiglass window above a counter, a TV playing celebrity news, and some chairs scattered along the wall. It smelled strongly of cigarettes. The Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles logo hung on the menu, beyond the plexiglass. It was of a big, cartoon, motherly, African American lady tossing fried chicken and waffles masterfully in a skillet.

At the register stood Small Mama with an amused look on her face. She looked just like Big Mama accept thinner and with more sass. I recognized her voice as the one from the phone call when she said, "Hi. How y'all doin'." (I don't think she really wanted to know how we were.) Jocie and I didn't give up hope while my submissive father sat down on one of the chairs with a heavy sigh and waited for us to order. The hanging menu listed different amounts of chicken we could order, leaving Jocie and I squinting up for an option that included waffles.

"Excuse me, is there an option with both chicken and waffles?" Jocie finally asked.

"Honey, everythang comes with chicken and waffles," said Small Mama, chin deep in her neck with sass. Jocie and I looked at each other with embarrassing realization. We recollected our nerve and ordered three three-piece baskets and a basket of wings. With waffles. After we paid, Small Mama pointed to the waiting chairs and said it would take ten minutes. It took longer.

More customers started coming in. A lot more. Now, I don't want to say that there was any racial tension in the room, there wasn't. I was just not used to being a minority. Yet, I think we were accepted because they knew Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles was so good, it was understandable that we came for some. I don't know why I thought of this, because, like I said before, there was no tension.

So as we were waiting, glancing around the room, avoiding eye contact, I spotted the TV. I got to catch up on some current events. Did you know Taylor Swift was caught hanging out with Harry Styles? They might be dating again.

Luby Kiriakidi

Again, no tension whatsoever.

The room's aroma of cigarettes became replaced with a thick, warm scent of waffle batter. I could taste it in my nose. Soon, I smelled the fried chicken. I melted in my chair with happiness.

Still waiting.

Finally, after losing track of time, Small Mama presented four paper bags to us at the counter. I asked for ketchup, like the sign on the plexiglass instructed me to, but Small Mama said they were already in the bag, her facial expression insisting that I was born with this fact. I knew I would never forget Small Mama. Instead of telling her so, I briskly walked out of the restaurant, eyes staring at the sanctuary of the car. My dad said it would take twenty minutes to get back to the hotel. We were so hungry we ripped chunks of waffles from the bag and indulged. Big Mama's Chicken and Waffles hadn't seemed like a quality place. The waffle maker looked like a standard one at a free continental breakfast in any lodging. Yet, when I bit into that waffle, I knew it was something special. The rich, buttery fluff was brought to life by a secret seasoning unveiled by the taste buds during the third chew. My dad didn't believe that I was genuinely wailing in delight. When he grabbed my remaining piece of waffle and tried it himself... he didn't think it was a big deal. However, by the third chew, it dawned on him that he was eating a part of heaven.

We refrained from eating the rest of the meal before getting to the hotel. How, I'll never know. As we drove, I looked up at the Texan moon. For a second, I thought I saw Big Mama, with her hearty smile and her hearty food, in that perfect circle. But the Mama on the Moon was just my hungry imagination. I breathed in the waffle waft and smiled.

The Masculine Ideal

I.
I asked, shall we dance?
And you, smiling, declined
You asked,
"wanna smoke?"
And I, nervous, replied.
I reached for your hand
And you grabbed on to mine
I spun you around
And you punched me in the gut

You said "I don't dance,
Now give the hell up."

You say you hate romance
In the most romantic way;
And I don't understand love;
And that I'm not here to stay.

You say I'm the cutest boy you've ever met.
I say you're the cutest boy I've never slept with.

And you kiss me with passion,
Then you say "I'm not gay."

Well, me neither. Get over it.

II.
No, they're not in love
They insist upon it.
They resist the claim.
They say it's not the same.
And yet if you ask one's opinion of the other
They'll say,
"I love him to death."

No, they're not inseparable,
Lifelong partners in crime:
They part ways all the time.
Nor do they find each other's company pleasurable.
And yet, quote;
"I don't know what I'd do without him."

"No, I don't know what I'd do without him."

And yet,
And yet,
And yet.

III.
I still miss the taste of cigarettes on your tongue.

Amir Gibson

January

I stepped into the car and he found the song to make him feel alright.

"You don't mind if I smoke, do you?"

I didn't. The small interior accepted the smoke instantly. It seeped into the ratty cushions to join yesterday's, and warmth spread down to my feet, uncaringly wrapped in thin socks. In the slow explosion of the first exhale I stole a moment to inhale the dewy secondhand. The stench expanded, filling every space in my body with one graceful breath, glowing inside me.

"I love the smell."

When he spoke it was low and excited. A kid's eagerness contained in the throat of a grown man. He told me that he loves it too. It was the reason his receipt read \$7.69 and his scale read less than it should. Other people like the way it makes them feel to hold the little rod between two cool fingers, flicking ash angrily. No. He was a slave to the stench.

Driving with one hand on the wheel and cigarette arm out the window, he quietly tried to be one of those angry cool cats. He's always trying to be cool.

There was a vacancy in his eyes as they stared ahead. Some kind of wildfire had been extinguished along the line to that car ride. It occurred to me that he was a man looking for childhood and freedom in the empty acts of teenage rebellion that had turned stale in the space of a few years. I watched his lips. I never got to see them touch the end of that white expansion but I imagined it initiated a familiar melancholy emptiness.

Walking away, I felt the stench on me, around me. I ached not to leave my three-minute home but I was always trying to be cool.

Anonymous

Dial the Boats

Show me the pulse of your thoughts, hammerhead boy.
The child in me has colored your cheeks with a red crayon, played hopscotch on your nerves.
Kids can be cruel.
You're not so innocent yourself. The shark in you has left us both tensed and treading water yet dreading safety.
What will the rescue boats say? Will we even call for one?
You won't ask me not to.
If you did, I wouldn't hear you through the water. Air bubbles might flee from your jagged teeth but your garbled speech could not stop me.
It started with some puddles...
 a tart smack now and then, usually deserved.
The hungry water rose up to our ankles...
 a closed hand is not for lovers.
Our throats...
I can't breathe.

We are totally swallowed, lurching out farther and farther from the shore with each crashing wave.

We find ourselves suspended here too often.
Submerged in the ocean water, an icy refresher after the fiery fight.
The salty water sometimes stings my face (if your hand left a scrape).
The current sometimes eases your ego out of you, drains you dry.

Now, we are in the Stillness, the Aftermath. Any salt water contributed silently from my own eyes blends into the liquid surroundings.
We don't even breathe. We, are breathless.
Some reality leaks into my lungs, and
a tremendous wave crashes into the living room,
angrily throws me against the wall as we resume. *The boats, the boats...* just three dialed digits away.
Time sighs at us and begins ticking again.

Madison Van Edwards



Backdrop
Francesca Pullano
Acrylic

Retrograde

This is the constant fear that you are here.

This is that time you made a fool of yourself.

You fell to your knees, sobbing afterwards.

There is that patch of ice with falling snow and your own damn blood.

A siren broke the sound barrier.

Shards of glass and dark red poison.

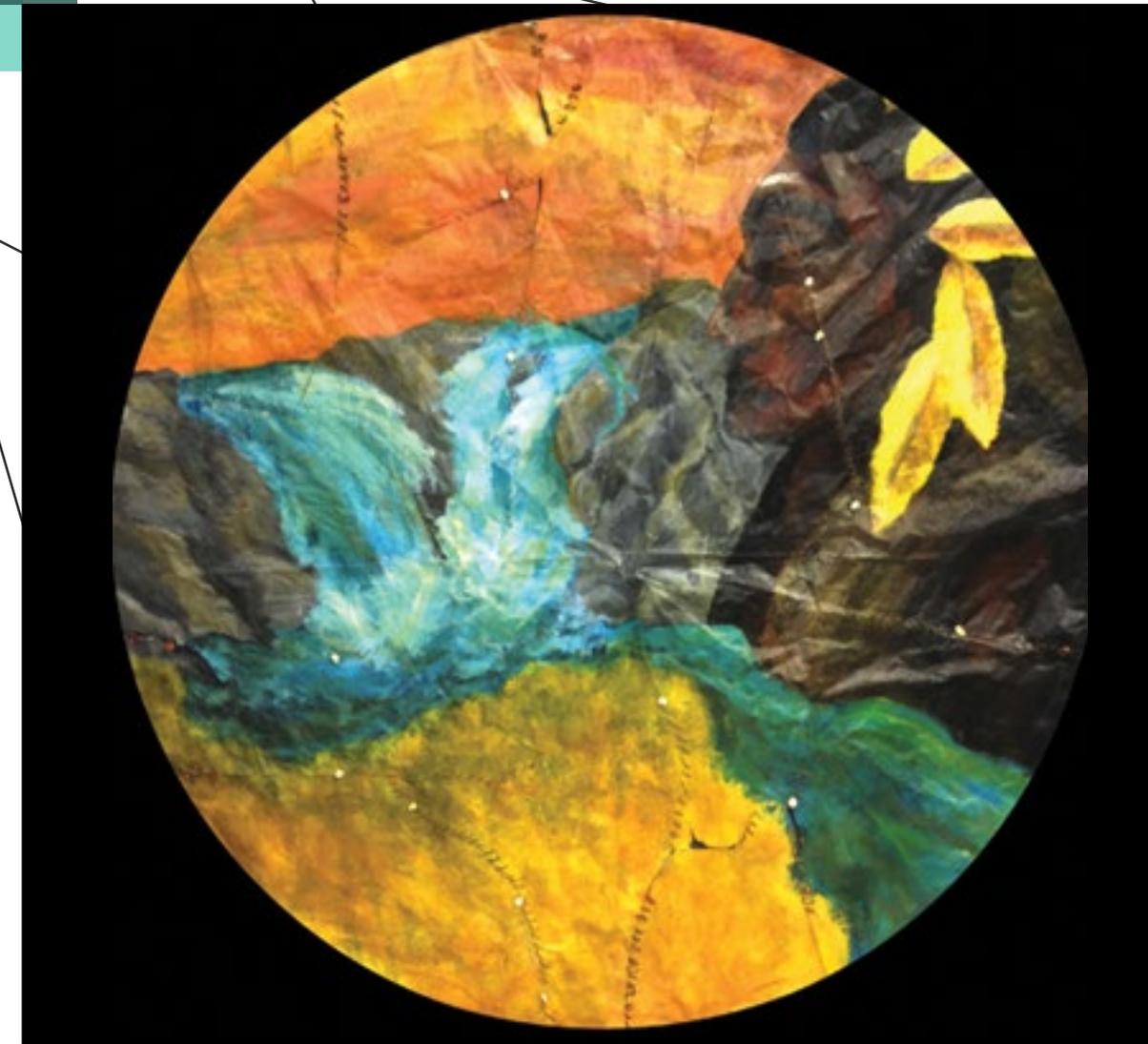
A nameless face pleads for one more day.

Retrograde

Kerry Lubman

Adderall powered heart h-h-hammers.
Breakfast was a pill and a cup of coffee so,
No thanks, I'm not hungry.
Feeling like an irritable engine,
A high-strung, neurotic, little bitch,
Waiting to glitch at the drop of a pin.
Why can't you just smile, shut up, and take your Ritalin?

Maude Hall-Skillern



Convergence
Francesca Pullano
Acrylic

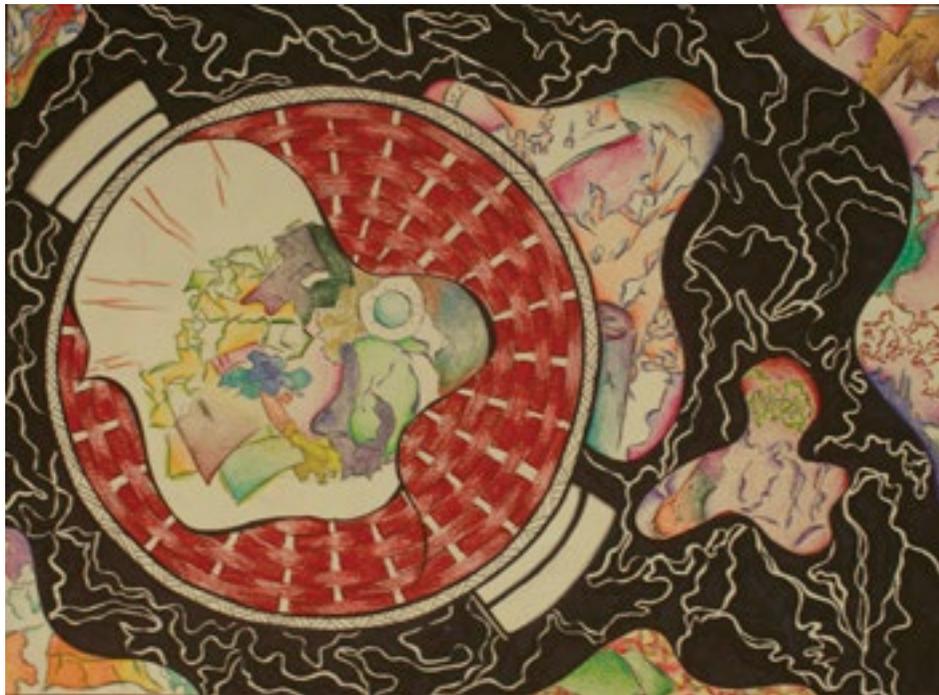
Brushfast
Mira Bodek
Oil Pastel



Dead & Alive
Femi Thompson
Photography



Trash
Shreya Razak
Colored Pencil

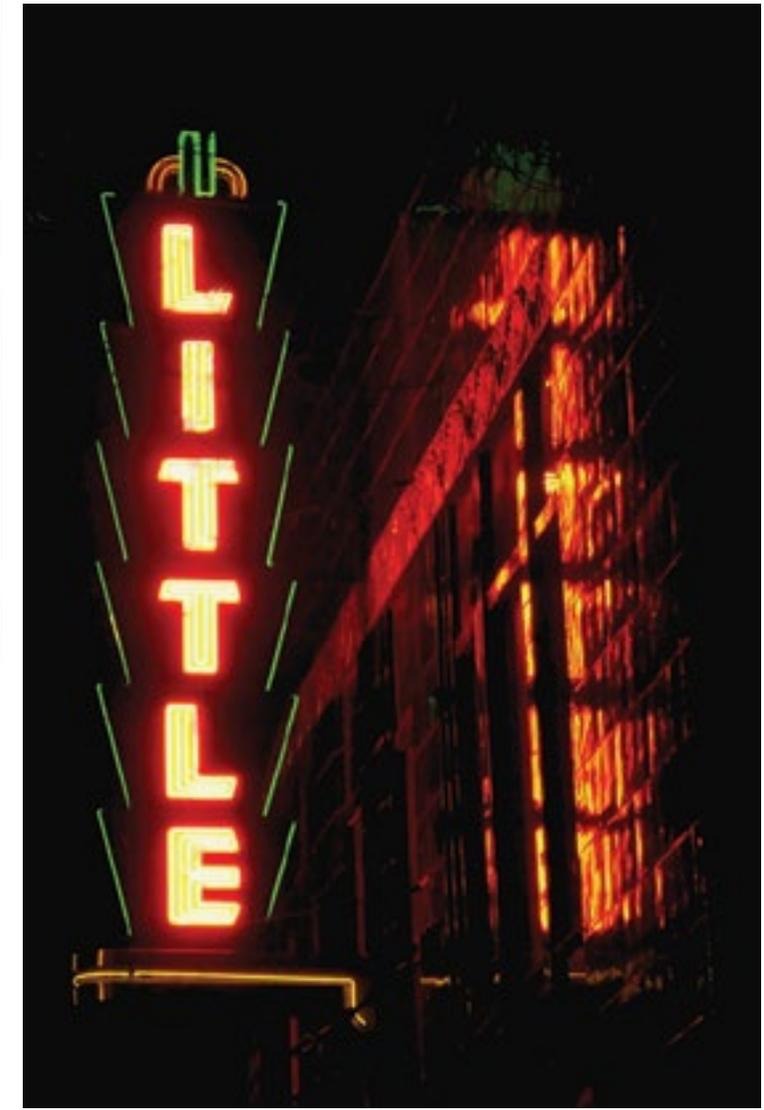


Staircase
Molly Spero
Cut Paper



Conure
Qingqing Yang
Digital Illustration

Marquee Lights
Rachel Herrmann
Photography



Frog
Mary Flanagan
Ink



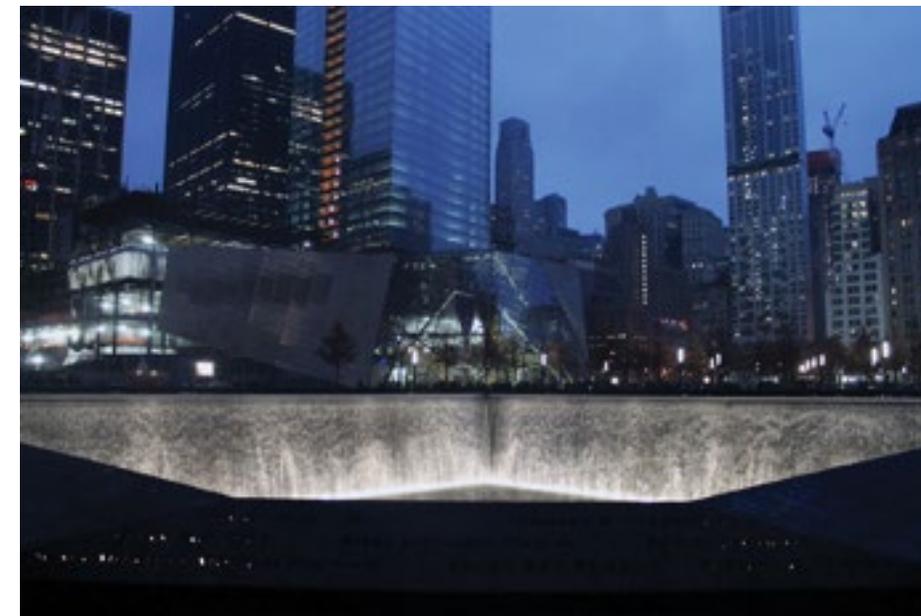
DJ's Affairs
Denis Kassabov
Ink



Lazer Lights
Scott Lazeroff
Photography



Maritime
Eliza Duberstein
Photography



Ground Zero
Laura Castelein
Photography



Snow White
Cassidy Pearsall
Ink



Line Bird
Mary Flanagan
Water color & Acrylic

Hazel

in your name, I am an ocean
rolling and charging for miles on end
miles to gaze till a sleeping sky
blue to the core in wistfulness

at your honor, I bristle green
baring brittle prickles; (so insecure)
a gentle wind to bow me down
a rain to wash the clotting dirt

in your eyes, I'm scared
the ocean doesn't know
which way the current flows
the tall-rooted tree can't
tell which way the wind blows

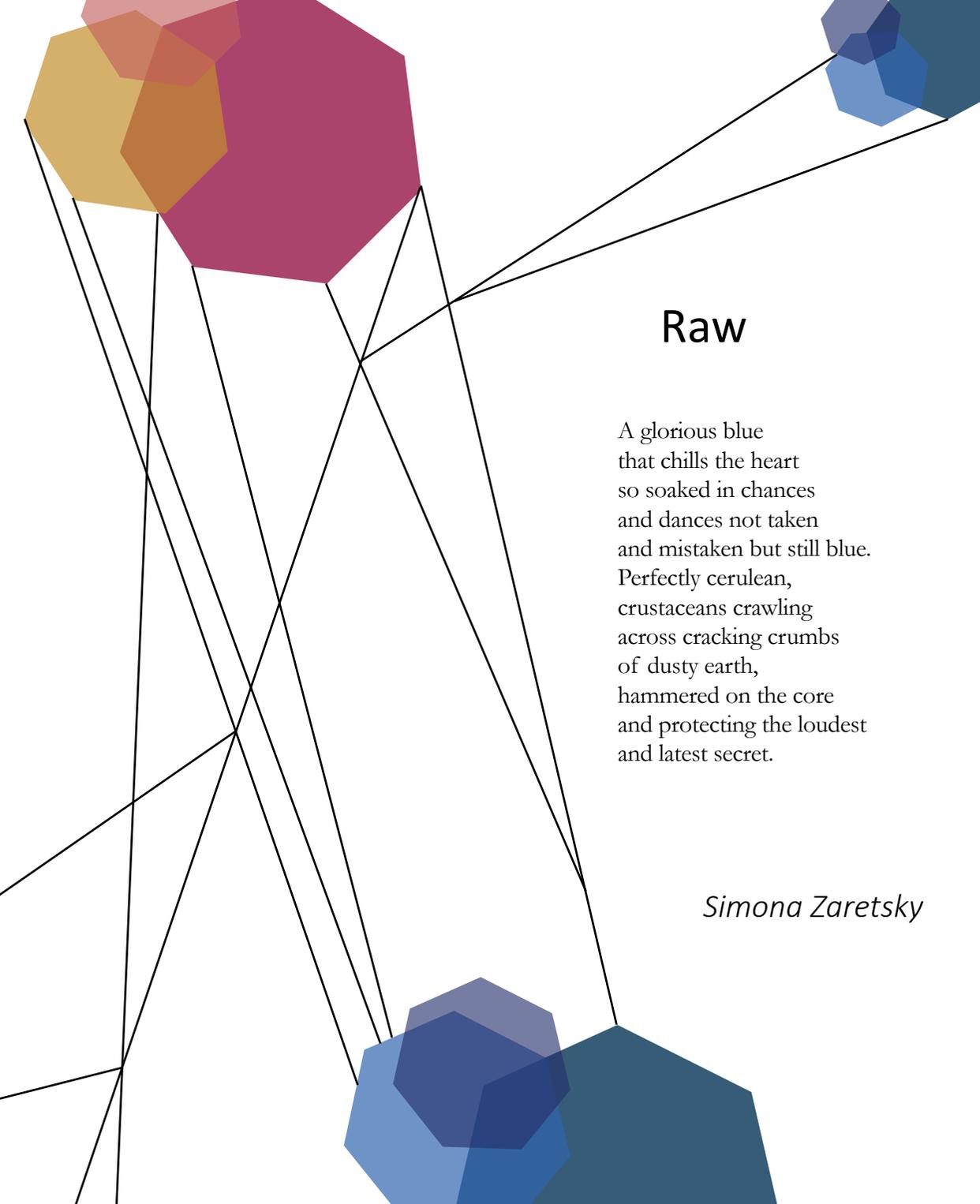
So the roots lets go
and the current lets afloat

Una Stroszeck

Raw

A glorious blue
that chills the heart
so soaked in chances
and dances not taken
and mistaken but still blue.
Perfectly cerulean,
crustaceans crawling
across cracking crumbs
of dusty earth,
hammered on the core
and protecting the loudest
and latest secret.

Simona Zaretsky



Que sera, sera.

a granule of sand has lodged itself
underneath his eyelid
he presses a thumb to his eyebrow
grasps at the half-moon of skin below
tugging it upwards sharply
a tear
forms and skates down his cheek
an inebriated trail no heavier on his face
than the petting hand of a
shuddering briny breeze.

the tide swabs the shore rinsing
out to a distant void
the horizon is bloodshot and
rimmed with sore faded bruise
swollen with the weight of the falling sun
seeping viscous rays like melted taffy
fringed in foam.

he is a marble centurian
stone toes spread towards the ebbing current
sand plugging nail crevices
hands shoved deep into his jean pockets he
is still on an
invisible precipice.

the surf grips the coast
wrings its neck
tramples its body
day after day
then stages a careful retreat
seething in its isolation
inevitably it will appear
clung to the doorstep
spitting sour fury
saliva on the welcome mat
a plastic threat at times
a demolition crusade at others
the coast is left with bitten nails
and shivering gloom.

his back is tall he bears witness
in a coiled-ivy jury box
and records each altercation

Sara Krolewski



Jellyfish
Mira Bodek
Ink

The Broken Court

Ilana Meeker



Sculpture 1
Cece Tassonne
Sculpture

Under the shattered glass sky, light came only from the dying sparks of unfulfilled dreams. One such dream drifted before him, pulsating softly. The man reached a curious long fingered hand out to the fluorescent ball only to have it sizzle and fade away with a sound between a muffled gasp and a sob. The wispy husk drifted groundwards, to join the thin hazy carpet blanketing the uncharted soil. The tall man strode onwards, a fluid shadow through a sea of jagged edges.

Alongside him, the horizon of the stagnant blue landscape reached past eternity, but directly before the man, the scene revealed itself only as he walked; the land curving beneath him as if he treaded on a much smaller globe than the one he ventured from.

As in a dream, things did not seem to exist until they were noticed. The realm appeared to be empty of vegetation, he observed. As soon as the thought condensed in his neatly alphabetized psyche, his icy blue eyed gaze detected a scraggily tree to his left in the mist. Half the plant still inconceivably grew, greying leaves reaching out to where a sun might have been, while the other side stood dead and blackened, as if Zeus himself had taken offense to the tree's very existence.

The man's unfeeling stare swept his surroundings. He knew not where he was, but he could guess, being not unfamiliar to in-between and half-formed worlds. So on his polished shoes strode, not once faltering. He did not doubt that he would eventually arrive at his intended destination. Every so often, his long figure would pass another distorted tree or what appeared to be a being in the expanse. He did not call out to them, in part because he did not think they would respond but additionally because disturbing the quiet that reigned here did not seem to be a wise endeavor.

Slowly, as he reached to brush a dying fantasy from his hair, a fortress grew before him, rising into his field of vision like a castle in a pop-up book. It was an ugly thing, its misshapen grey bricks seemingly and incomprehensibly mortared by crushed glass. A decaying stone path led to warped double doors, planks held in place by plates of twisting iron. Along the path stood (or slumped being a more accurate term, the man decided) ruined statues far removed from the classically amputated sculptures of ancient earthly civilizations. The two closest to the building each retained at least a single arm. These limbs pointed upward, directing observer's gazes to the firmaments above. Up the towers stretched, stones fading further to the blue of the surroundings the higher they were until the turrets seemed to dissolve, as if the bricks had lost the will to hold solid form.

Gazing up at these parapets, the man nearly stumbled over a large stone as it began to speak. The stone had once been the face of a statue. Elsewise the artist had curiously decided to carve a disfigured visage upon a crumbling stone. The lower half of his right jaw and cheek had fallen away, forming a surrounding brethren of pebbles. The features of the stone man formed a mask of madness- the eyes just too wide and the iris' drawn away from one another. His smirk pulled apart, crumbling further as he spoke in the voice of falling gravel and a perverted wind.

Welcome! Or perhaps illcome, who can say? Time will tell, if he is feeling generous today. No matter, come; be your state fair or fall short. Howevercome to the Broken Court!

An uncomfortable number of moments passed as nothing occurred. The stone stared up at the man, a grin frozen on his stony face as he blinked slowly; his concrete visage more animated than the one of flesh before him. Eventually, the air was swept clean with the sound that would emit from the duel between old trees.

Pausing for only a moment, the shadow man trod forwards past the verbose carving and through the threshold. The world the doors opened to appeared to be more populated by shadows than it should have been. Seemingly unphased by the superfluous darkness, the man continued deeper into the room in silence.

Since his immediate surroundings seemed unwilling to yet reveal themselves, he again gazed upward to where the few waves of light that had caressed his form since he had entered seemed to venture from. The chandelier above his head shone brightly, though the shadows in this world clearly did not obey the rule of light. It was intricately chaotic, built up of various metallic objects, pieces of mirror, pendants, and keys, hanging and tangled together forming a spherical net. The man came to stand in the solidary spot naturally affected by the glow, directly underneath the chandelier. Only then did he begin to see that he was not alone in the vast room. He was enclosed in a circle of thrones.

The shadows appeared to draw back, whispering, from the form immediately on his right. The miserable creature now visible to the man sat upon a throne that was much too big for it and wore a crown of slithering dragons, muttering into their wearer's ears. After a few moments the man realized they were repeating a single word in countless languages, only a few of which he recognized.

Kamili, keusurlu, netobulas, cacat, difettoso, ajizai, imperfect...

The form, which appeared to be a woman, listened with an emotionless mask, though tears intermittently trickled from her glassy eyes down a gaunt face, tracing her skull. When he looked closer, he realized her eyes were mirrored orbs, reflecting the inky landscape. She was a skeleton sitting with perfect posture in a shapeless lace gown. Her color seemed to have been leached from her by the vibrant serpents upon her brow clad in vermilion and scarlet. The woman did not see him, or if she did, she chose not to acknowledge him. The man's eyes narrowed for a brief moment; her face looked so familiar...

The shadows receded further, revealing another figure; the apparent opposite of the one before. He was large and grotesque, slumped in a throne of glass bottles; his head small and sporting a disproportionately large red nose. Foul smelling smoke curled off of his fingertips, his hands fused to his transparent throne. He too, like the skeleton woman, gazed directly over the newcomer's head.

The darkness continued to bare its inhabitants. There was a blue and black spotted downy creature, no larger than a child, who sat curled in a haphazard throne of sticks and wooden planks. Further along sat a willowy cerulean woman, wearing a painted fox mask in a chair that seemed to be made of broken stars. He saw a man chained to his throne, his fingers clicking out a message on the arm of his chair while his clock faced eyes counted the seconds.

He passed them, one by one, the mutable, the distorted, and the deformed. Not one met his diagnostic stare, but he could feel many pairs of eyes, or what passed for eyes, upon his back. When the man reached the place from which he had started, he turned, facing the inside of the circle and waited. The darkness beyond the thrones jostled with his peripherals, suggesting many and more figures inhabiting its shadowed land. But the man had seen enough.

"Well?" He inquired, his firm tone shattering the silence. The word echoed in the seemingly wall-less room, jingling a few of the objects hanging from the chandelier. A few of the more lively forms turned to look at the man, but most did not shift their gaze. The man took a few steps into the circle, taking his hands out of his pockets.

"Why did you bring me here?"

Robert North

His name emanated from a crumbling man to his left. Half of his face had been shattered and he was missing a large piece from the center of his chest. North strode towards him, and the crumbling figure carefully turned his head down to face him. "Why am I here?"

We did not bring you here, Robert. I could ask you the same question.

Someone was laughing behind him. North spun about, approaching the masked woman. Her laugh was the sad cackle belonging to a much older woman than her smooth blue skin suggested.

You brought yourself here, Mr. North. So tell us, who broke you?

North blinked and smirked, his head tilted back as he crossed his arms. "I am not a broken man." He looked down at himself, "Am I discolored? Cracked?" He paced over to another figure and showed it his hands. "Transparent? Talloned?" Leaning in, he inquired, "My eyes, tell me, are they still blue?" An eyeless man with tree bark skin was shaking his wooden head sadly. Another form spoke.

Was it your father?

It was the softly feathered creature, the soft, childlike voice nearly inaudible. North paced to the little throne, but another form joined the calls.

Was it a friend?

A woman?

A job?

A brother?

The Man?

North had lost track of the speakers, turning from one voice to the next, his impassive face flickering with doubt. He ended up again before the crumbling man, who leaned forward pieces of himself tumbling from his back- sailors abandoning a sinking ship.

Tell me Robert, was it yourself?

North stepped back a few paces, further into the glow of the chandelier. The light seemed to recede from him as he approached its warmth, dimming slightly, glinting off his eyes that now held the slightest trace of fear. For a moment, he appeared almost his age, a much younger, less wary man. His mask quickly reaffixed itself. He scoffed, coldly. "I would have to be very foolish to do such a thing. I am not a foolish man." The response came to him in tones of pale green, words fluttering in his mind.

I believe you are, sir. Only a fool would believe he could build a palace of icy stone around his broken, very human mind, and call himself a stronger man.

The darkness had begun to creep forwards, reclaiming its shattered children. North moved back towards the door, his pace slightly hastened but his face emotionless still. The doors lay

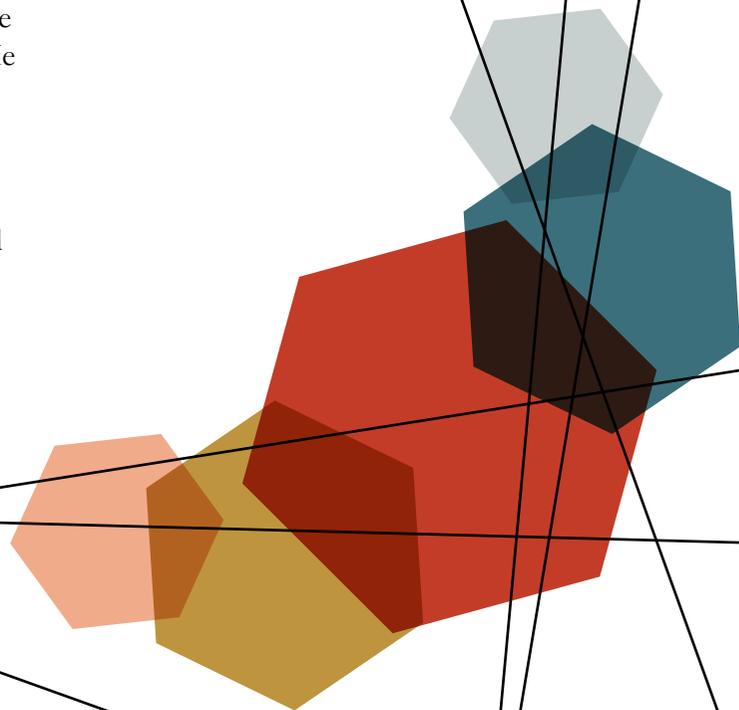
before him, the gaps between the planks emitting the soft blue of the world beyond. His careful fingers reached out for a handle but found the air empty of any such device.

The chandelier chimed softly, its delicate vibrations shaking his mental fortress. It would take more than a circle of wretched creatures to break down the walls he had so scrupulously built, brick after brick, mortared with the fragments of dreams and despair. The light lingered upon a spot he was sure he had observed before. Occupying the space was another throne- tall, straight-backed, and made of glittering ice crystals. North shut the doors to his own icy orbs, his head flinching away from the sight.

Retreating into his thoughts, he began to search for a way out, but unwanted, forgotten images reached out to dance behind his eyes; a woman, blond hair hiding her face, collapsed upon a tiled floor; men, splattered in mud and gore running through a sea of shattered sound; his own hands, trembling as lifted the pale violet contents of a flask to another glass that shattered in his fingers; a red tear corrupting the fluid, stretching out through the violet like a serpent. North stumbled and inconceivably caught himself upon the frozen throne which, moments before, had been across the room. He drew his hand back quickly, the cold burning his fingers.

You brought yourself here, Robert, and only you can lead yourself out.

The tall shadow crumbled, scrambling at the bricks that had encased him for so long.



Psychosis
Mary Flanagan
Acrylic

The Hyperborean Bed

And now again I've found myself
 ensconced by comfort's fragile, breaking skin.
I'd fight to fix my dying health
 had I not known of freedom's dreadful grin.
For once, now past, I braved my torment's towered flares
 towards plains where sun-soaked flowers held pure reign.
 I left in fiery heat my soul's now-shattered snares
 and sipped, once free, the air's resplendent tang.
But "once" holds fragrance so quickly lost.
 And now, though standing independently,
I found that "free" is set in frost
 by Lonely's sick and bitter cavalry.

And so I lie, alone and cold,
and wait for time to take the old.

James Macias



Triptych
Azaria Castillo
Photography

Star-Strangled Banner

Mira Bodek

There's a body bleeding out in the backseat.
We took the backstreet, gun dropped in a ditch.
The corpse was supposed to go along.
But there are already bloodstains and fingerprints,
no clean getaway, no victory songs,
only opportunity drawn by birth.

And there is no salvation in flickering motel signs.
Only in static blaring on the radio,
and a ticking away time,
and a single pair of headlights on the highway lines.
But not for long.

There is no hope in your bare hands on the wheel
or in a desperate prayer of anywhere.

Anywhere is rotting in the backseat.
Anywhere is a bullet hole in the head
and skeleton skin
and blue eyes dead.

Anywhere is not an electric chair
or a border in the desert.
Anywhere is no dwindling tank of gasoline
or the stinging headline of a magazine.

There is no such thing as anywhere,
Not for us.
We sealed our fates in a gun shot.

Wreathed in flashing crimson and cobalt,
a crown of hopeless thoughts,
that mantra of states is your shrine.
But that shotgun under my seat is mine.

From the horizon the sun has bled
what's one more bullet hole in the head?



That Heat
Francesca Pullano
Acrylic

Ten Cents

Lem says, "got a name, stranger?"
And the stranger shoots back, quick and brusque, "John."
So Lem sits down and leans against the tree next to John, and waits around like he wants John to ask for a name back, but after a bit he stays quiet, so Lem says, "hey John, got a chew a' tobacco?"
And John shoots back, "Maybe. What's it worth to ya?"
So Lem says, "I ain't got a penny in this world to give 'way, or even no belongins' save the clothes on my back."
And John shoots back, "tough tits, then." But he's eying the blue of Lem's shirt kinda sideways.
So Lem tugs at his collar and says, "shucks, I'm just bein' friendly."
And John shoots back "we ain't friends. We's strangers." And shifts around a bit, and turns his head away from Lem, and pulls out a chew of tobacco and clamps it in his teeth and starts chewing.
Lem just looks at him, incredulous, and rolls his eyes, and says offhand, "I ain't never met a person so unpleasant." And John just shoots back a grunt, and he lays a protective hand on the sack of belongings lying next to him, and pulls it out of the sunlight and into the cool shade by his side. So Lem says "Say John, how 'bout a bottle? Y'got a bottle in there? Surely y'ain't gonna leave a man to die of thirst?"
And John shoots back, "what's it worth to ya?"
So Lem says "I told ya, I ain't -"
And John shoots out real flat, interrupting, "y'gotta drink, doncha?" like he's barely even asking a question. Then before Lem can say anything, he shoots out "ten cents."
So Lem says, "ten cents for what?"
And John shoots back "swig a' rum," and spits a gob of tobacco into the dust by Lem's feet.
So Lem says "John, yer the meanest 'ol bastard -"
And John shoots out "that a uniform yer wearin'?"
So Lem stands up, and says, uneasily, like maybe he's scared of the question, "might be."
And John shoots out "you gonna pay me that ten cents for a swig a' rum?"
So Lem says "aw, dammit, I dunno. I'm mighty thirsty 'n all, but..."

And John shoots out "Well, dammit to you too! I'm sure I need that money just's bad's you do, and if y'ain't gonna pay me nothin' maybe you should leave." By now John's gotten riled up, and he's not slouching back any more, he's sitting up straight, like maybe he's gonna stand and pick a fight with Lem, who's meanwhile feeling uneasier than ever, so he steps back a half-step like maybe he's looking to run away. Then, John shoots to his feet and he gets up real close to Lem and shoots out "or do y'want me to keep asking questions 'bout that ol' blue uniform yer wearin'?"

So Lem just backs away and clenches his fingers around the rusty bayonet he's had hidden behind his back, just in case, ever since he started talking to John. The cool breeze that kicks up can't make him stop sweating.

And John just keeps shooting' out words as fast as he can "cause folk like me don't take kindly to blue uniforms, so you just move along 'fore I start getting' suspicious a' your loyalties."

So Lem says, stammering, "t'aint like that John, I'm in the same boat's you I swear it, I ain't cheerin' on any a' this, I'm as desperate as you are."

And John shoots out, "You ever seen your house burn down? You in that boat?" real angry, and he lurches forward, all taken up in the rage and the grief of the moment. Lem, he gets scared, and he tries to back away, but all of a sudden he's got another tree behind him, and so he brings out his bayonet, and before he knows what he's doing he's got blood on his hand, and soaking into his sleeve, and his weapon's stuck in John's belly. John, he shoots out a grunt, real slow like this time, and his body sorta slumps down, and Lem lets go of the end of the bayonet and he watches John crumple and gasp and gurgle and try to talk. Tears well up in Lem's eyes, and he's struggling to talk as well, but just like John's starting to choke on the blood now, Lem's choking on his tears, and his hand tremble as he reaches down into his pocket, and he pulls out a couple of nickels. Lem, he pulls John over into the shade by the side of the road and lays him out comfortable-like, and trembling, he walks over to John's old sack and reaches in and pulls out a bottle of rum, and he stares bitterly at it before taking a swig, coins still clenched in his fist. He carries the bottle over to John, who's barely breathing now, and he stands over him, and takes another swig, and he mutters through the tears the longest and prettiest prayer he knows, and he puts a coin in each of John's eyes, and he curses the loudest curse he can manage. And he stands there for a long time over John's body as the sun sets, just staring, before he grabs the sack and starts walking north, his back to the sun, as John's body gets cold in the twilight.

Amir Gibson

Veracity

I am a mystery.
Who knows me but Time himself?
Hidden behind swaths of the bouts of divine knowledge
I bathe myself in,
I am a specter;
A king with a shadow cloak
through which you see only the glint of tiger eyes.

I am a wanderer.
Who knows me but the Night?
I am no passing breeze
but a fiery gust.
Once here, soon gone;
A catastrophe to linger upon.

I am an honest man
whose cloak hides nothing at all.
My stories spun from a web of memories alone
where not a single hyperbole lurks.
Truth is my currency,
my mask made of crystal and smoke.

I am who I say I am.
But the mind and words are mutable,
and a soul is built on dreams.

Ilana Meeker



Purple Mountain
Cassidy Pearsall
Acrylic & Watercolor

Memory

These memories do not belong to me.
This person I'm being - she's very dumb.
If I'd been living her life sooner,
I would have done a much better job.

When she was a child she cut
Her own thumb off
With an apple slicer.
I wouldn't have. I'm much wiser.

When she was a girl
She spent six afternoons
Copying down the titles of a thousand books
She had never read,
And proceeded not to read each
And every one of them.
Who does that?
I wouldn't.

I don't know where my real memories
Have gone. They floated
Away, pale cold bodies
Face down in a river,
Each story too late to be told.
Hers marched in,
A cast of actors half-convinced
Of their own parts and
Entirely convinced of their own
Brilliance.

When she was a young lady
She fell in love with a fisherman,
But he was old and bearded
And smelled of brine.
She remembers him fondly.
I am appalled.

When she was almost grown
She bought herself fourteen pairs
Of shoes.
Five red,
Four yellow,
Three green,
Two blue,
And one white.

I have them all -
Are they mine?
If the memories are hers still,
Whose shoes are they?

The white ones were almost
Beautiful
Glossy magazines with bright-smiled
Young people living slices of
Imagined lives.
They had five skinny straps
And a slender heel
And they fit on my feet
Like they were made for her.

My feet?
Her feet?

She ran through the rain in them.
Stupid, stupid, stupid.
They are blotchy, mottled milk coffee brown,
And ruined.

She never used to bite her nails,
But I do.



Bedroom 1
Cassidy Pearsall
Ink

Grayland



Self Portrait
Ilana Meeker
Charcoal & Chalk Pastels

The old man wasn't sure what he had expected death to be like, but it wasn't this. He was a well-read man, intelligent, and had died old enough to have contemplated the end. He wasn't religious so he hadn't counted on flames or golden gates: in fact he'd expected nothing. He'd always thought that death would be nothingness, like sleep without dreams. Certainly not this.

The old man was standing on a plane, gray and fuzzy. He had a sense of a landscape, like something glimpsed out of the corner of one's eye, yet whenever he tried to focus on something, it went hazy as if he were viewing it without his glasses at dusk. He turned round and round, but he couldn't make out a single feature. It was all gray.

The old man turned around again and found himself facing a man. The man was the same gray color as the surroundings, very bland in a nondescript way. He gazed at the old man and the old man gazed back at him.

"Are you Death?" the old man asked, disinterestedly. He felt curiosity, but it came from afar, as if through a veil.

The gray man blinked slowly at him, like a lizard.
"I am."

If the old man had cared, he would have noticed that the man spoke with a high society British accent. But he didn't care. It didn't seem important. Nothing really seemed important. The two men stood facing each other for a while. The old man wasn't sure if he'd been thinking about anything or if he had been in the space between thoughts.

"Am I supposed to be doing anything?" he asked vaguely, because it didn't seem to matter if he was.

"If you want." The gray man replied and the old man nodded. Had he cared to notice, he would have said that the gray man now sounded slightly Australian.

He started walking, in no direction because there were no directions in the gray place. Nothing stood out, there were no landmarks. He followed the horizon in front of him, except he couldn't even be sure that it was a horizon. It kept escaping him whenever he thought he had a good look at it. He didn't tire and time did not seem to pass. Everything was the same.

Sometimes he thought, a sentence here and there, an image. He saw his daughter; dark hair, walnut brown eyes and laugh lines. Slowly those colors faded from his mind until all he thought was gray. And then he didn't think at all. He just walked.

Suddenly, yet in a gradual way, an old woman was standing in front of him. She was crouched down and staring at the gray under her feet, squinting. She looked up and he got the impression of walnut brown eyes.

She looked at him for a moment, then...

"Are you Death?"

The man looked back at her.

"I am."

If she had been interested she would have commented on his Southern accent, but she wasn't. Nothing seemed interesting anymore.

Tess Austin

Submerged

It didn't take time.
It took a matter of opening your damn mouth and producing sound.
They would have heard you.
But now. Now is when it takes time.
Now at the peak of night when those suburban sounds turn off
and a layer of extra weight slowly creeps down your spine and you breathe.
Breathe. No don't put your hands around your neck, breathe, for god's sake.
You don't need more bruises.

I didn't want to start again but for you, I will.
And this time stop mumbling that all hope is gone.
Hope. What is that hackneyed idiocy you spit towards me.
You've lost your voice in this cliché you grasp onto.

There is a god damn light at the end of this tunnel
and if your hands reach back into the throat of blood coated iron,
there is no need for such a light.

Keep your mind averted from all around you.
Remember, I already had to restart more than promised.

Tying yourself to a tree again?
Get down from there.
Your neighbors will see.

Kerry Lubman



Canyon Stroll
Ben McLaughlin
Digital Illustration

En Faire un Fromage

Looked in the refrigerator
yesterday.
Nothing but two blocks of
cheap American cheese,
mossy boulders
on a frozen plain.
And a jar of olives
with their eyes all bleeding
purple-reddish bruise,
like shrunken heads in
a glass display case,
lips parted in a final
gasping
death rattle.

Walked past the house
we used to live in
yesterday.
Thought of your half-eaten
dinner, and your wine
glass, cracked at the
stem, and the claw foot
bathtub we eventually
ripped out.

The one where you
gave yourself
a last communion,
poured Champagne into all
your wounds, left
sliced camembert
and dried lilies
on the bathmat.
It was almost 60
years old,
that bathtub.
Still too young
to be stripped of
its parts
and tossed into
a junkyard somewhere
in Queens.
Went to the corner bodega
yesterday.
That sweet old cashier
whose line
we would always stand in
retired two months ago.
The cheese section there
is as miserable as ever,
just like you
always said.

A lot of soft
whitish brownish
stuff wrapped in
withered cellophane,
the edges all puckered
with deep craggy
wrinkles,
like the kind you get
after you've been in
water for a while,
after all the droplets
have slashed down
through cold coiled flesh
and dried up on
the surface of all
that sizzling muscle.
The edges should be sharp,
you always said,
so if somebody were
to run their fingers
along them
they might almost
feel the teasing
bite of blunt
bare teeth
like the ridges
on a butter knife.

I never
really understood
that,
but I always nodded.

Yes, yes, I heard you,
yes, yes, I agree.

Bought the most
expensive cheese
they had,
\$6.99.
And a bouquet
of sweet peas,
\$10.99.
The new cashier
smiled when she
saw them
on the conveyor belt,
asked who
they were for.
She couldn't have known
but it made me sick.

Sara Krolewski

Emergency Exits

Waste away

like the waning wisps of smoke trailing from the joint trapped by your teeth,
exhaust from a beaten up and rusting truck.

Exit here.

Race your peers to the finish line; by the end of this sprint you'll be running on fumes.

Live a little! the kids shriek.

Flip heads for hazard, tails for sorrow.

These teenagers they warned us about want you to call it.

Exit here.

Heads: Kick up dirt and rebel.

Tails: This was never a race--no one wins in a getaway shortcut.

We're just escaping--

to the dead. end.

Exit here.

I know where you are tonight, flipping coins and burning rubber/blunts/lungs,
lounging in the scummy patchwork home of those lost children in a haze of smoke, faintly moaning the mantra:

wreck more and be reckless.

Hacking out your lungs, coughing

wre--ck more and...be...re--ckle--ss...

Trembling in the night, fumbling with your phone for more,
maniacally chanting

wreckmoreandberecklesswreckmoreandberecklesswreckmoreandbe—

Out of control never felt so glamorous!

120 miles an hour on slashed tires becomes sluggishly slow.

Amp up the velocity, why don't you?

At breakneck speeds like these,

easing off will only give you whiplash.

Accelerate, cross the finish line!

Exit here.

I'll be miles behind, kneeling on the track, fingertips tracing your skid marks.



Streak
Carolyn Raca
Photography

Madison Van Edwards

The Hand Shaped Gap

It was a kid who found it. He was working part time at the cemetery, digging graves, when he realized that there wasn't nearly enough dirt in the pile for the hole he had made. A large part of him didn't care, but he was curious above all things, so he started looking about for what could have happened to his missing dirt. It was by pure luck that he discovered that if he threw clumps into the air, about a third of them disappeared as if they had never been. Intrigued, he experimented until he could tell the general location of the eater of dirt.

For a small town, it was surprising how quickly the news got out. Soon, videos of disappearing objects took over primetime TV and everyone from science fiction writers to theoretical physicists had something to purpose about its origin. It became popularly known as "the Gap". The Gap would accept anything, made of any substance, but only things about as big as a grown man's hand. The public was fixated.

Then, of course, the government got involved. People were honestly surprised that it had taken them as long as it did, but science funding had just been cut, and they had to placate irate scientists first. The cemetery was shut down and the town evacuated to create the best environment for experimentation (though, for a couple thousand dollars you could sneak in through the back and throw something in). The Gap absorbed bombs and chemicals, living mice and dead ones. The scientists pumped water in for three days and received not a trickle of overflow.

The logical next step was to figure out how create another. The best minds in the country gathered to figure out the components of the Gap, only to be thwarted. The anomaly seemed to create data which contradicted itself. One scientist commented in disbelief that it was as if God had read a modern day physics textbook and decided to play a practical joke. The government raised taxes to fund additional research, but the money may as well have just been thrown through the Gap.

The biggest mystery was that people could walk through where the Gap was and be unaffected. Only small objects were accepted without prejudice. The Security Council was beside itself with frustration at such a potential for a weapon to be so outside the grasp of human comprehension. Other countries got involved. Since the site was in Vermont, the Canadian government claimed colonial rights over the town that had called itself American for hundreds of years. The allies of the United States poured in their renewed support for everything the President purposed, and the enemies of America formed an alliance to keep the United States from becoming even more powerful than it already was. War was on the horizon as all countries scrambled to be prepare for a weapon-like gap.

It took a couple of years before the tension died down, but eventually it did. Scientists were no closer to understanding The Gap and many wanted to move on to less frustrating venues. The government decided to cut its loses.

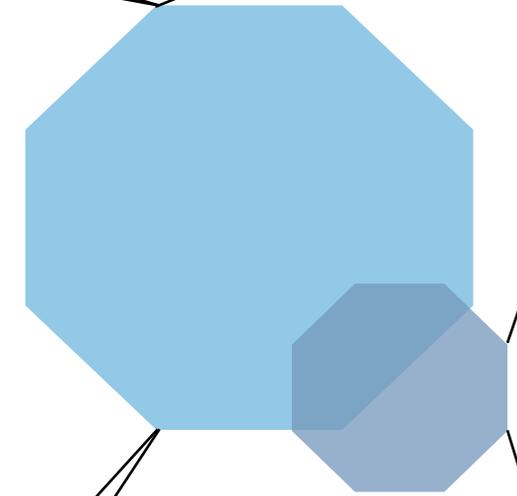
The Gap became a tourist attraction. The gravestones were removed and the deceased cemented over to create a platform to view the Gap from. It became a state park and people flocked from all over the world to throw items into the Gap. It became the most dramatic gesture you could make when a relationship ended.

It was a kid who did it. It wasn't that the scientists hadn't considered it; they just concluded it was too dangerous. It had even been attempted before, but the guards usually stepped in. The guard on duty that day was thinking about his girlfriend waiting at home for him when his shift ended in 10 minutes. The boy was part of a middle school field trip and he had told the guard he was throwing in a Pokémon card. Instead, on a dare from his giggling friends, he approached the Gap and, without ceremony, stuck his right arm straight into it.

It took the ambulance 5.8 minutes to arrive on the scene. It took the boy 20.7 minutes to stop screaming.

There is a man out there who has weary eyes and only one hand. Those who meet him suppose him to be a veteran, though he seems young. His lack of hand would almost go unnoticed since the rest of his arm is intact, except that he tends to keep his stump levitated from all surfaces and avoids letting anything touch it. People don't comment; they have been raised to be socially conscious of other's differences. In this case, that means ignoring them. Those who are close to him joke sometimes. They say he has magic fingers. When he is tired or distracted and his arm touches down, small objects tend to go missing.

Tess Austin



Lines

Lines create life
From the softness of a feather
To the sharpness of a knife

But small, flaky lead
From the gentle birth, by pencil
That are guided by hand
Into something beautiful.

Pencil on paper.
Life on earth.
A straight line.
A still face.
Then came a sharp curve
And everything changed.

Draw with joy.
Draw with sorrow.
Sketch a line today.
Blend another tomorrow.

Lines go on
and on
and on
and on
and on
and on
and on
When it suddenly comes...
To an end.

Pencil lifts off paper.
Time stops.
Silence.
Breathe.

Lines create life.
From the tranquility of a feather,
To the hostility of a knife.

Candice O'Connor



Tree by the Sea
Mira Bodek
Watercolor & Ink

Forgotten

Hear that?
It's the sound
Of thousands of clothes on the line.
Each one belongs to a different person.
They have been washed
In blood
And the one that is stained the reddest in the end
Has been worn by the person
Who is the most brave.

Who's blood is it
And who is the washer?

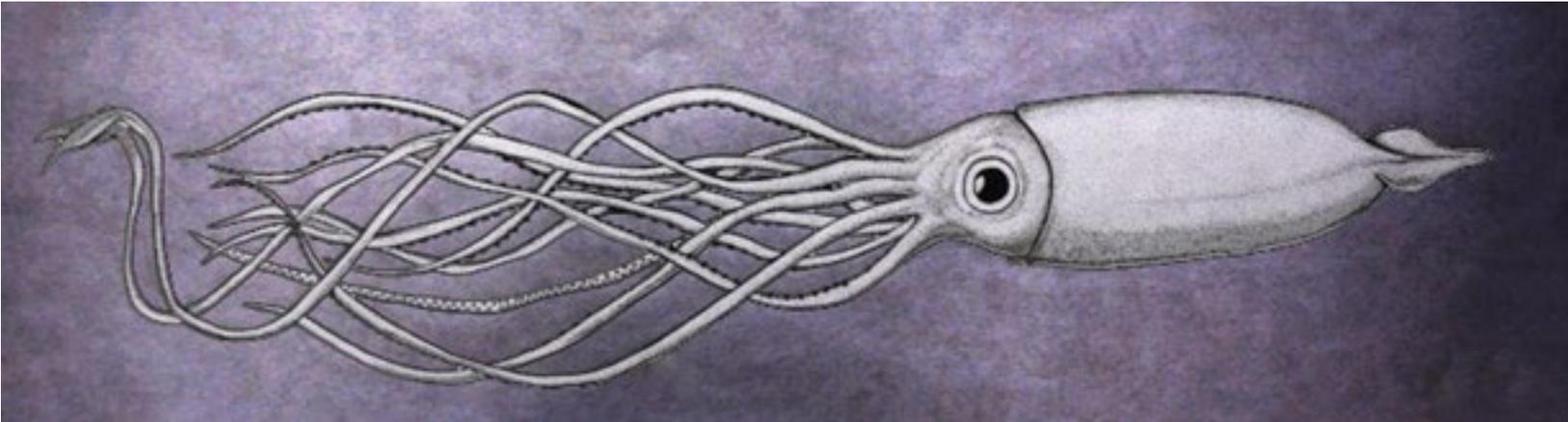
Hear that?
It's the sound
Of forlorn music boxes.
They sing different tunes
And yet they sound the same.
Tattered porcelain dolls sit next to them
Slowly turning their heads.
People think they're scary
But they're just sad.

Who did they belong to
And who put them there?

See that?
That's the old house
Over the hill.
They say no one lives there
I live there.
They say the rafters are bones
They say the floor is dust
And will pull you down if you walk there.
I've not been pulled down yet
But I've lived there for a long time.

Who put me there?
And how can I get out?

Annaliese Taylor



Squid
Shreya Razak
Ink & Digital Illustration

The Swan and the Jackdaw

Madison Van Edwards

Truth cannot be found on one's lips, but rather, behind the light glinting off a shard of the Universe in their eyes. Truth, that she-spirit of the night, who strolls with secrets leaking out her pockets, is the sweetest heartbreak you'll ever know, a darling beast with a mouthful of fangs behind a soft, sealed smile. If you ever have to study her up close, you'll see that written on the thin silver sashes she wears draped over her body are white spiraling cursive words, all the truths Time has ever witnessed, histories of entire lost civilizations, what you wore that day in the park. And you will weep if she ever hates you or loves you enough to remove a slip of honesty and tie it around your tender wrist.

*Truth cannot be found on one's lips, but rather,
behind the light glinting off a shard of the Universe in their eyes...*

These words, scrawled in a white ink of a higher grade purity than the base of an angel's wings, tattoo a narrow strip of a shimmering gray fabric too royal to be trampled over by the stress-soaked, rain-worn boots of agitated New Yorkers. After glancing to both sides and over the shoulder, you lift the end of this cloth with the kind of care an apprenticing artisan uses in painting lips on a porcelain doll's face. The seemingly silky material is indeed smooth, but surprisingly icy amidst the hot fog of the city; while it does not hurt you, it feels something like holding the flat side of knife, knowing, with tense, numb fingers that you could so easily be sliced should something as innocent as a quick noise startle you.

Civilians scurry by with their eyes squinted and their heads ducked, grabbing refuge under umbrellas, speed, and a sense of urgency. Like a gargoyle, you are unmoving and arched over the ribbon you found on the sidewalk. In your fingertips, you sense a gentle tug from the other end of the silk, the end you cannot see, and when you look for it, your eyes fall in fear to a puddle a few feet away that has consumed your unique treasure. You hurry towards it, collecting more ribbon as you go, and when you kneel on the dirty city ground at the edge of this puddle and pull, the slack in the sliver straightens, but it does not move.

You lean over the pool of swirling metallic oils and fresh rain water, searching for the source that clutches the other end of the silk, and gazing with a fond curiosity from this urban elixir is a human face. And it is not your own. She is no reflection, this alluring spirit who is, in appearance, your inverse. The puddle is only big enough to display from her naked shoulders and up, yet you can see from the hue of her skin, the type of her hair, her features, you are opposites. And while her expression is blank, her eyes, nets that capture not only fish, but entire fishermen, eyes too aged for her unwrinkled skin, soothe you. Her gaze is an innocent invitation. She raises her hand into the frame, showing that caught between her fingers is the end of your silk ribbon.

Thoughtlessly, your hand plunges into the shallow dent, but rather than your wrist bending at the impact with gruff, crumbling asphalt, you become shoulder-deep in pleasantly chill water. She backs away with a twinge of fear expressed in the innocent incline of her eyebrows, and this makes your stomach tighten and sink. You have frightened her. Slower now, with a deliberately composed gentle smile and two round eyes, you reach, not quite sure what you most want your fingertips to touch because while that silk certainly calls to you, she herself is soft, exquisite.

She is not running from you, but she will not stay. With footsteps like breezes, she drifts farther from you with an increasingly panicked stare traveling directly into your eyes. As she is swallowed into a distance you had not known existed until this moment, you gaze hopelessly at her, dressed in a gown of carelessly-placed gray silks, like the one trailing in her hand, the one that connects you two. The ribbon is tightening, threatening to slip from your hand and in a moment of realization that she is fleeing, you silently slip down, cold water closing over your head. There is no light from the steaming city you used to occupy seconds before, only black.

There are no gray scarves in sight; no white text with secrets to the stars; no truth.

You must find her.

Closing Comments

I cannot say that Galaxy has been a part of me through all of high school. Nor can I say that Brighton High School has been a part of me from the start. Coming in as a newbie my Sophomore year was like trying to jump on a moving train while riding a horse. Kudos to the cowboys in all those Western flicks that pulled it off, but I almost missed the train.

I discovered Galaxy as you may have discovered this magazine: passing a table on a sunny day of Springfest. It was close to the end of my first year. I had two bucks in my jeans pocket. Like most hypocritical Rochestarians, I was blindly staggering about in the magical rarity called sunshine. Sunshine that, after being M.I.A. for all of winter and most of spring, was not welcomed by my squinting eyes. I was lost in the blurry crowd. By luck, I felt my way over to a stand that sold sunglasses. That's how my first buck was spent. Putting on the dark blue shades, the sharp greens and blues became clear. Many others were wearing the same glasses, and I saw that on the side it said BRIGHTON. There were very few glasses that made me feel so relieved. BRIGHTON was a good fit.

Then I saw Connor Greer, a Galaxy editor at the time, shouting something with a motivational speaker/held-back poet vibe, like he knew something but was only telling people half of the story. I walked over to the stand. Dozens of magazines with an enticing tree were layered across the table. I started flipping through the pages. The moving air cooled my forehead and the freshly-printed book scent seeped into my nose. I was too scared to look back up to Connor, until he said, "It's free, with a one dollar donation." That's how my second buck went. I walked on, my curiosity fired up, ready to soak in the pages.

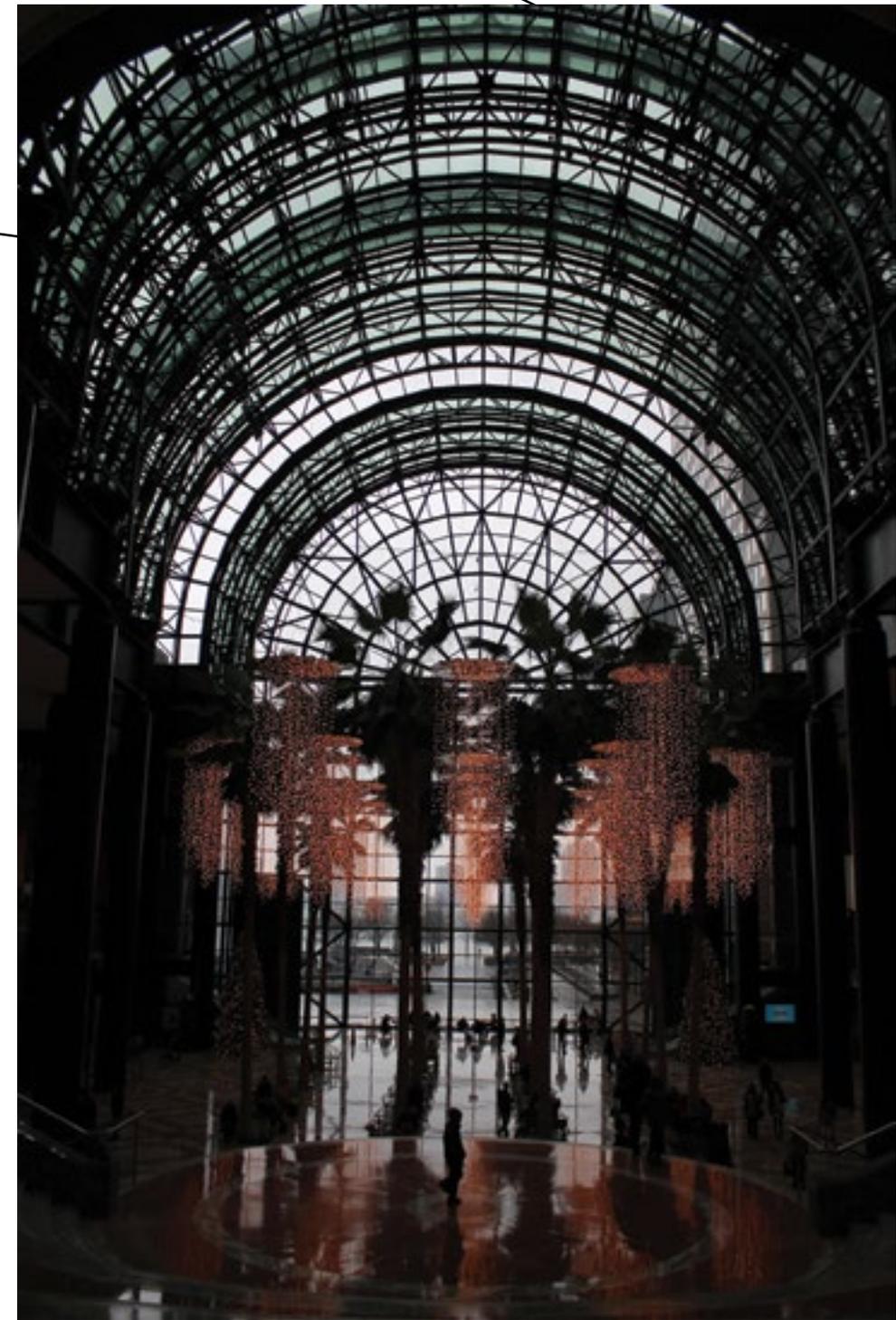
I lay down next to the live music. My elbows sunk into the grass as I continued looking through the magazine. *These are student works! These are people I see every day.* I got distracted by the band. I sat up, legs crossed, and listened. The singer's aura drew me in. Now I was blown away by the performers. *Holy crap! THOSE are students too. That girl's in my homeroom.* I do not know if it was the sunshine, or music, or that magazine, but something brought a warmth in my chest that froze this moment in my memory as some sort of turning point. I lay back, hands behind my head. The sky was bluer with Brighton specs.

Oh and that girl? She turned out to be an editor with me two years later. All those students I marvelled at, they became my friends. I tried to imitate their wonderful writing, with varying degrees of success. I found my voice to be less contemplative and powerful, but I was nevertheless thrilled with finding a voice. Each week, the meetings were my cure for Sunday blues. Although the sun rays and music may have helped that day, it was Galaxy that had convinced me that I was, and still am, in the right place.

This magazine in your hands is a treasure, my snow globe of that glorious Springfest afternoon, and a conductor gently calling to the people still standing at the train station:

"All aboard?"

Luby Kiriakidi



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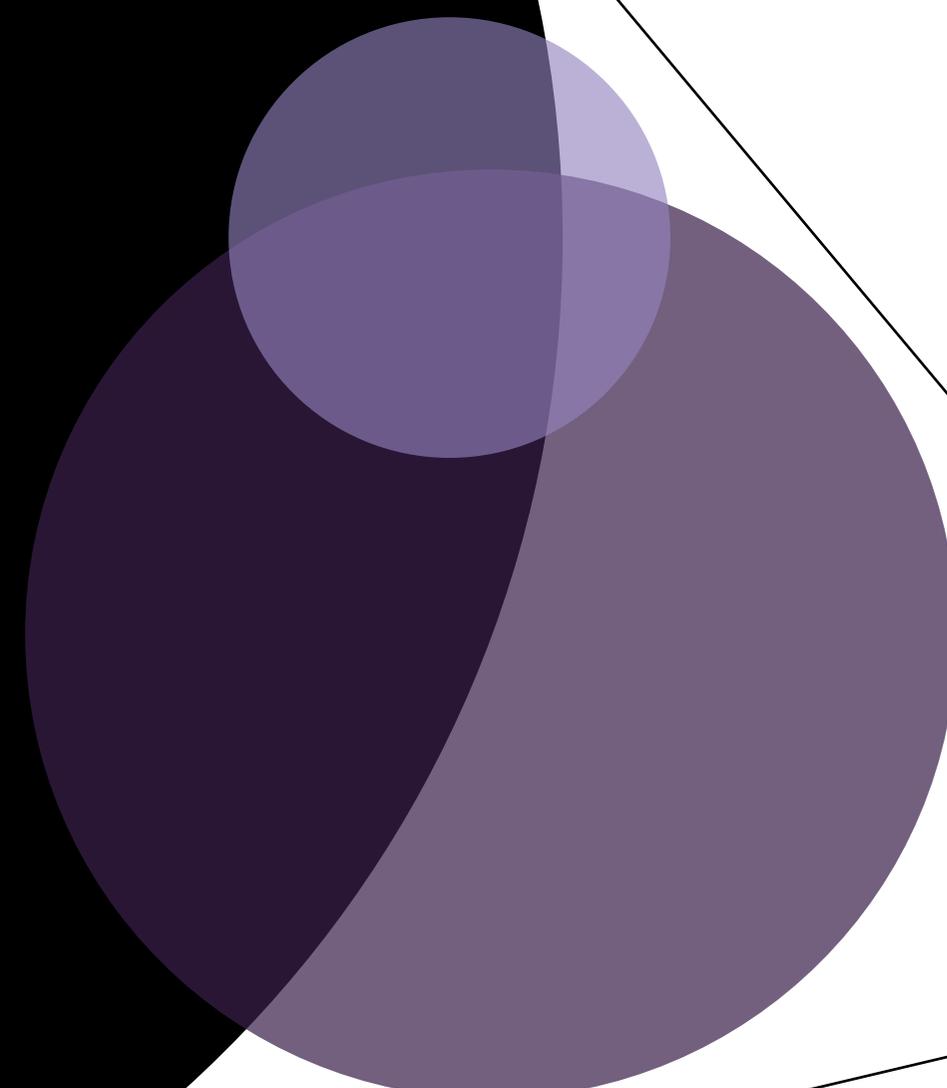
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About

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.

Submissions are accepted via e-mail (to galaxy.litmag@gmail.com), the Galaxy mailbox or directly to one of our editors, through 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.

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