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OPENING COMMENTS

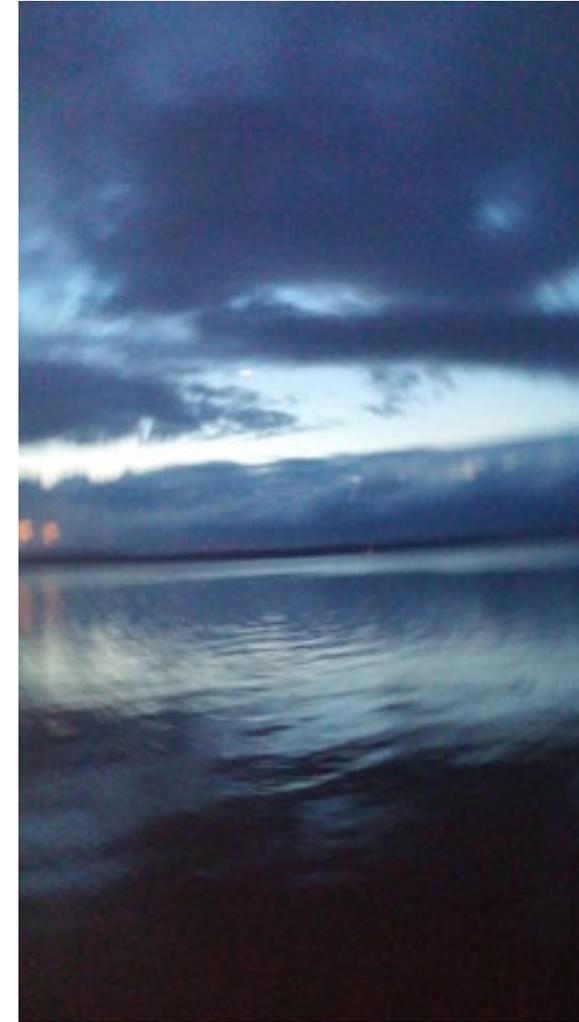
There's a field just a few blocks away dotted with yellow flowers and the smell of sunshine after a week of rain.

You find a new path home as the sunset fills the sky with peach and amber.

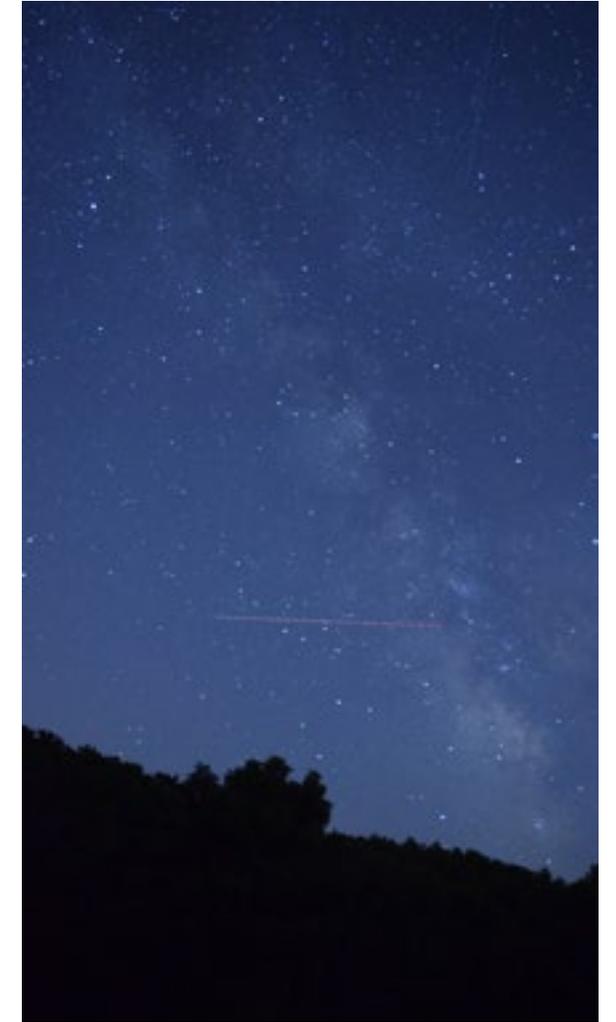
The laundromat across town flickers in the dark. When you realize that you need it, you know where to find it.

Personal but not intrusive, a simple discovery to fuel a warm glow within you. There's this connection to small glimpses of your world and the faces passing by each day; it can be found seeping through these pages. Each piece in here is more than inky words and glanceable pictures. There's someone behind each and every one and behind that person are experiences, feelings, stories, moments, views, life.

There's no right or wrong in this. There's no fear to push through—just pages to flip through. Let the life of every work in here drip into your hands and begin.



Swiveltown
Rebecca Ritterman
Photography



Night light
Kerry Lubman
Photography

ALLERGY

Four hours after you fall asleep
after opening your eyes to the sound of a
ceiling fan
and the smudgy black of a bedroom at 5am

Plum juice dreams running down the back
of your neck
mixing with the sweat of memories

Remember how he looked through your
opaque walls
that you tore down
and how he felt nothing
but the blood running under his skin
because he knew you found meaning in his
name
while he found desire in the five letters of
hers
as your own five letters fell from his lips
to be left on the ground he walks on

The beckoning buzz of telephone wires
takes you
through the window to your roof
where the sky is your skin
sprouting twilit blossoms

SEASON

Kerry Lubman

And where his three letters were planted
as seeds to stay ungrown
to savor what could have been
what stays underneath to possibly be dug up
when isolation overcomes rationality

Now blooming from the cracks in your
palms
that once felt the cracks of his
flourishing and withering in one glance

Inflated lungs
with itchy eyes shut
under layers of syrupy moonlight

The wind is naive
taking seeds of uprooted remnants
but you're starting to breathe again



The Aftermath
Olga Shvetsova
Photography



Statue
Evie Brooks
Charcoal

OMNIPRESENT

DETERGENT

Shivani Singh

I'm with my father at the moment
meandering around Buffalo's historic
district
studying the Victorian houses.
He takes pleasure in pointing to the
asymmetrical facades
and polygonal towers.
I hope he's feeling indulgent today
so we can stop for a crêpe suzette
at the ramshackle oak floored café on
Queen Street.

Can I come over later?
I'm disinterested in another day in my
room
reading old birthday cards.
I said my grandmother's chicken
tasted like laundry detergent
my father was agitated by the words
and I preferred to not be lectured over
brunch.
Let's just go home
I really didn't mean it in a negative
way
I quite like detergent.

Later around seven thirty
when the snow is falling in delicate
flakes
like the colored dandruff that falls
from my scalp
I'll walk the uneven path to your pale
blue and grey house
I'll step in a puddle of grimy charcoal
and
the water will infiltrate my shoddy
loafers.

Will you give me money for the bus home?
I haven't any
I spent it all on a paper mache box for your
birthday.
I spent the entirety of a Sunday morning
looking for it at the public market
I'm feeling ashamed that it lacks sentiment
as you always buy me those lovely maple
candies,
the ones we used to buy at the store filled
with futile items.
Maybe I ought to go out and buy you
a Toile du Jouy porcelain teapot tomorrow
since your cream of asparagus doesn't taste
like laundry detergent.

SUN-DROPS SCARE THE DARKNESS AWAY

No secret carries itself with greater meaning than when it's told in a dark, quiet room. This is especially so when the room is under water and its subjects are suffocating to the tune of tapping feet and wind chills. We are not nocturnal like our fellow bats, nor are we capable of telling truth where lies make more sense. After only minutes, darkness fades into shadows that seem to hover over. I can't say I felt safe at that particular moment. If anything, it was only regret creeping up my throat out towards the hollow woods.

He didn't seem to mind it too much, then again, he didn't have a clue. I was particularly to blame for that. Every time I felt the wisp of his fingers against mine, it was accompanied by a tremor of guilt I could not keep down. At this point, one would probably turn the lights on and release themselves. Who would want to put themselves through the misery of holding back? Obviously, that would be me.

The gentle tapping had begun to pick up speed as darkness began to fade and fresh beams of light cascaded through the cracks allowed from the window. They took up corners and holes that were once dark with deception. One beam landed on his face, warming his ignorant flesh. Different smells were whirling around, most apparent was the fresh scent of pinewoods. It was coupled with sweet sweat mounting upon my forehead.

The light had taken up all three walls, but the one I leaned against. He was illuminated in it, glowing with the truth that lay under my tongue. Unfortunately, I was choking on water three feet over my head. Looking closer, the water seemed to be tinted red as if by blood. Although, that very well could have just been my eyes deceiving me.

My fingertips caught the light as I attempted to shrink away, but the corners will filled. The ceiling was covered, the floor was practically transparent under the sun's golden glow. It crept up over the side of my body. I thought I was going to drown for sure when the unexpected happened.

The water's edges began to shrink and soften. Its redness was fading into crystal so as to appear normal. The ability to form sounds began to play along my vocal cords, and I was able to make the eye contact that was not so possible in darkness. The words slipped out with ease. I wasn't choking. The rush of warm air overtook me with force as I flourished in sunbeams red and gold.

Rebecca Ritterman



Confetti
Kerry Lubman
Photography

GIRLS

They're free

and drift, seemingly aimless

through forests under starlit skies,

catching moonbeams in the nets of their hair.

They breathe in the world surrounding them,

the moss,

the rotted leaves on the forest floor,

the musk of wolves,

the very spirit of these woods

as if they had become a part of it,

so surrounded by the creeping vines and fireflies

as to embed themselves.

Starlight speckles them,

their freckles perfect reflections

of the constellations they exhale.

When they go, it's silent,

their spirits whisked away with the dawn,

evaporating like dew drops on the grass.

WHO

LOVE

THE

NIGHT

Rachel McLaughlin

THE DEER

The deer is the essence of beauty as it sprints across the road. So much power in a few steps, so elegant, so perfectly timed. The deer looks as though it could outrun the world -- it's so relaxed yet energetic, its hooves are pounding the ground, but barely touching it all the same. It has enough power to shift the world beneath it.

The fly is trying to stay at one height but it keeps dipping below and shooting up. This is its second day and it's trying too hard. The effort is difficult to watch, you wish it would pause for just a second, just so you can let out the breath stuck in your throat for the past few minutes. It's trying so hard to push through the air, and it can only get so far on its pathetic wings.

AND THE FLY

Maybe the deer has avoided its fate, the rushing car that was soon to speed by. Maybe the deer will live to run again, live to show us just how good it can be. But here the fly stands, almost taunting you in your attempt to catch it. It says "I don't care what you do. I can outrun you 'til the sky is red tomorrow morning, but if you get me now I'll feel just the same."

The fluid motion was not enough for the deer. There is a faint buzz as you approach the body and you know all too well why. The fly knew. The fly knew this would happen and that is why it tries so hard that you can't bear to look one second longer. It cares so much while you endeavor not to.

The ground will carry your skid marks forever. The deer tries to rest wondering what it could have done. Soon, the fly will rest too.

Natalie Karlsson



Ducky
Evie Brooks
Acrylic

THE *Elizabeth Cumbo* GUEST

I tumble down seething, sacred layers of snow.
Pins and needles attack my unassuming face.

I am no stranger to the winter,
though every fall I am an intruder.
Every winter raw reminders show.

Let the wind hit you, rushing an improvised race.
I am submissive. Learn to accept the stings,
be a grateful guest. Do not stay too long.
Call little attention, keep your head low.
Like reverse quicksand, swollen ice has rejected my feet from their place.

Ginger orange light finds purpose on my numb hands. I am close,
Though reflecting snow has been deceitful before.

I am no stranger to the winter.

AN APOLOGY TO SYLVIA

Sarah Schwarz

Sylvia
I want to apologize.
I emptied your water bottle,
Unscrewed the cap and tilted the lip.
We kicked off our sandals.
We resisted the urge to dip our toes in.
We jumped in.
We had a waterfall.
A reservoir.
We brought our watercolors to life.
We were cool.
I do not understand how something so fluid, so versatile, so giving, so
alive,
Can be saved and stored, so still, so quiet, so confined.
Imprisoned in plastic,
Sentenced to wait for a moment of thirst.
It is not just a drink.
See what it could do.



Get Sh!t Done
Catherine Hauser
Acrylic

Alice Weber

SLIPPING

a smoker's smile used to keep me going
before that it was skinny arms and warm skin
and before that I didn't care about any of it

I used to hope I'd see him again
I had the words on my tongue
and all I had to do was wait for the right time

now I just hope I don't lose my direction
I can actually feel myself slipping
I sink farther and farther down into my hood

the books stare down from the shelves
my candles flicker and I try not to touch the hot wax
every sound is too loud, too harsh for me right now

last night my conscience spoke to me
they said, "I can't believe I'm a woman!"
I did not reply; I wasn't ready

none of my boxes are filled with small treasures anymore
all I remember is the warmth of my bed
and the cold concrete where I sit

THE FROZEN FOREST

The Frozen Forest

Listen only to the sound of my voice. Let your mind relax.

Let your thoughts drift.

Let the bad memories fade. Let peace be upon you.

Surrender yourself to your dreams.

Let them wash over you like the gentle, smooth waves of the bluest ocean.

Let them envelop you.

Comfort you.

Imagine somewhere calm.

Imagine somewhere safe.

Imagine yourself in a frozen forest.

You're standing in a clearing.

Trees around you so tall, they touch the sky.

Pure white snowflakes fall all around. You can feel them melt on your skin.

You are not cold.

It cannot overcome the warmth of your beating heart. Can you hear it? You only have to listen.

You hear it slowing? You're slowing it.

You are in control.

Calm. At peace.

Jacob Ritterman

Patterned Owl
Saily Deshpande
Ink





she was an ellipsis,
always left in thought
she never began anything
and her ending was always sought

she trailed along sleepily
daydreaming all the while
the kind of girl who, instead of your eyes,
looked at the broken ceiling tiles

she asked too many questions
and was never loud enough
her hands were smooth and soft
and no part of her was the slightest bit
rough

she whispered into vacant rooms
and hung fairy lights on her walls
she always lost her phone
and could never answer calls

her hair was broken glass
and her eyes could swallow you whole
she sang softly, and often,
and her heart danced with her soul

she wanted to travel the world
but wouldn't part from her door
her life was frozen in suspension
but she'd always want to see more

she was an ellipsis,
her attention could never be caught
her only purpose was to help
but her lonely body was left to rot

Addy Farrell

Self Portrait III
Evie Brooks
Acrylic





Perception
Evie Brooks
Photography

THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR

INSPIRED BY A PHOTO TAKEN BY EVIE BROOKS

To the girl in the mirror, I ask, "Who are you?"
She stares back, blank as a slate.

Her long, blond locks blanket her face, And I am frozen in place,
My eyes locked into hers. "That's me," she, or I say.
She takes her finger and shakily draws In the dirt,
But I cannot read it.

I place my hand on the mirror. She stares back.
The glass is cool and crisp,
Like water from the Mariana Trench.

"I'm coming," she says. "That's me," she says. And she turns away.

Eleanor Lenoe

RAINDROPS ON MY GLASSES

Turning my head towards the window, I got a glimpse at the goblet shaped clouds spilling their residue over the vast expanse of land far below. (can't help but wonder what those little puffs of water vapor are thinking).

With no other choice, I took myself out into the near frozen weather, silently cursing to myself without a word over forgetting my umbrella. This Tuesday afternoon was like one of those days where, despite being in a pleasant mood, the weather cuts in, all pretentious like, in order to put you into a state of gloomy wonder. Gloomy due to the lack of sun and wonder because your mind can't help but drift off when everything is under shadows. Only seconds after exposing myself to the 'disease', its particles wind up spotting my glasses in a way that my vision was still in tact, only tainted and slightly blurred out of focus. (lot's of things seem out of focus lately). My thoughts decided to travel over to a parallel universe at that moment. This was one where instead of water dropping from the sky, liquid fire descended and burned. It shed skin the same way a razor would shed hair but with an added fizzle for affect. In this otherly world, we are not humans but snamuhs who have adapted to flames and must avoid water at all costs since it melts

our flesh whenever they greet each other.

This little moment of imagination only lasts seconds due to the rude interruption of a passing vehicle colliding with a puddle the size of a miniature pond. I stand hair and clothes soaked internally enjoying the rushing feeling of being struck by surprise but externally squealing in the most girlish of ways. It wasn't even a minute later when I got drenched a second time, and this one with slightly dirtted water. This peaceful walk that began as a thoughtful experience was now filled with an urgent need to get home and warm up.

The very first thing I did upon entering the house was to take off my glasses. They were studded with several little raindrops, each one with a different story to tell. No matter how small a body of water is, each one has the ability to reflect its surroundings. (I wonder whatever story they're telling right now)

The second thing I did was wipe the droplets from their surface. Stories don't last forever after all.

Rebecca Ritterman



Soggy
Kerry Lubman
Photography

Her vacant gaze pierces the perfect ballet bun on the girl in front of her,
not a single hair dare stands out of place

The alcohol swimming through her veins remains hidden,
but begs to be released in her tears

You see,
her shoulders are leveled,
eyes glimmering like fool's gold, chin at an elegant raise,
her core impenetrable, knees and legs gripped, feet blistered and pointed

Her entire being lacks humanity, her soul is foreign to a smile You see,
there is no humanity in one single joint, for her body is living its life on pointe

She has grown armor,
a shield that dare not let her weight gain,
and a thick skin to mask and suppress any and all pain

Once Miss' sharp voice halts its cruelty
and her feet are lowered along with her chin, she thanks Miss
and grows one more layer of skin

HUMILITY

Matt Lipschitz

RUBY SANDS

Annaliese Taylor

I have drowned my fears in a carnelian sea
They float away on jasper waves
And sink to the bottom, to ruby sands
Getting nibbled on by opal fish
And turquoise seaweed grows on them
Until they are lost
In the diamonds of my memory

There is something there-
A twitch of fabric
A whisper of a voice
A ghost of haunting song
Unbidden, I reach out to grasp it
But they are gone now, just a bad dream
Forgotten in the diamonds of my memory

Wherever I go, I am followed
Spirits of the past haunt my light footsteps
But I just whistle
And tip a wink
And they disappear-
I don't know them anymore
They belong in the quartz of my thoughts

I have buried my sorrows in the obsidian ground
Layer after layer of malachite earth gets piled on top
On which amethyst grass grows
Earthworms made of tiger's-eye encircle them
And tunnel through them
Until they are lost
In the quartz of my thoughts

I walk through blackened halls
Floors coated in dust
Walls buried in dirt
Ceilings dripping with slime
Corners laced with cobwebs
Being the only one who can see it
Now swallowed up by the diamonds of my memory
And there you stand
Hands in your pockets
Hair swept over your forehead
Wearing your smug grin
Your glow that sets you apart
But you, too, are lost to me now
In the quartz of my thoughts

Its so easy to forget your trials
At least, you think it is
You slide them out one ear
But you never truly let them go;
They come slithering in the other just as fast again
You truly have to let them go-
Bury them, drown them in happiness
So that you are sure they'll never come back again-
And tear up even your memories of losing those thoughts
And stomp on the pieces
Until you are sure there is nothing left
Nothing at all



Inkstars
Catherine Wu
Digital

UNLEARN

The elegant intrigue of a voice you've only just heard and how its pearlescent tones flow through amber honey.

Firefly eyes, lighting up like the stars that have speckled her cheeks and nose.

They all say *delicate* as if it was meant to offend but it doesn't hold intent.

Red waxy words flowing through her velvet lips, a pocket knife of solid gold. She cuts away at your seaweed flattery, clearing the water for a better kind of talk.

She'd never think of calling out unless you grab her wrist. The briny air of a darkened room as you cough up more remarks.

Pasty palms on satin skin, you're kicking down locked doors.

She's turns to go before you try for more but you don't feel the panic of this atmosphere.

They'd use the term *missed opportunity* and you didn't care to know her name.

Don't expect a thank you note laced with an apology

WHAT

THEY

DON'T

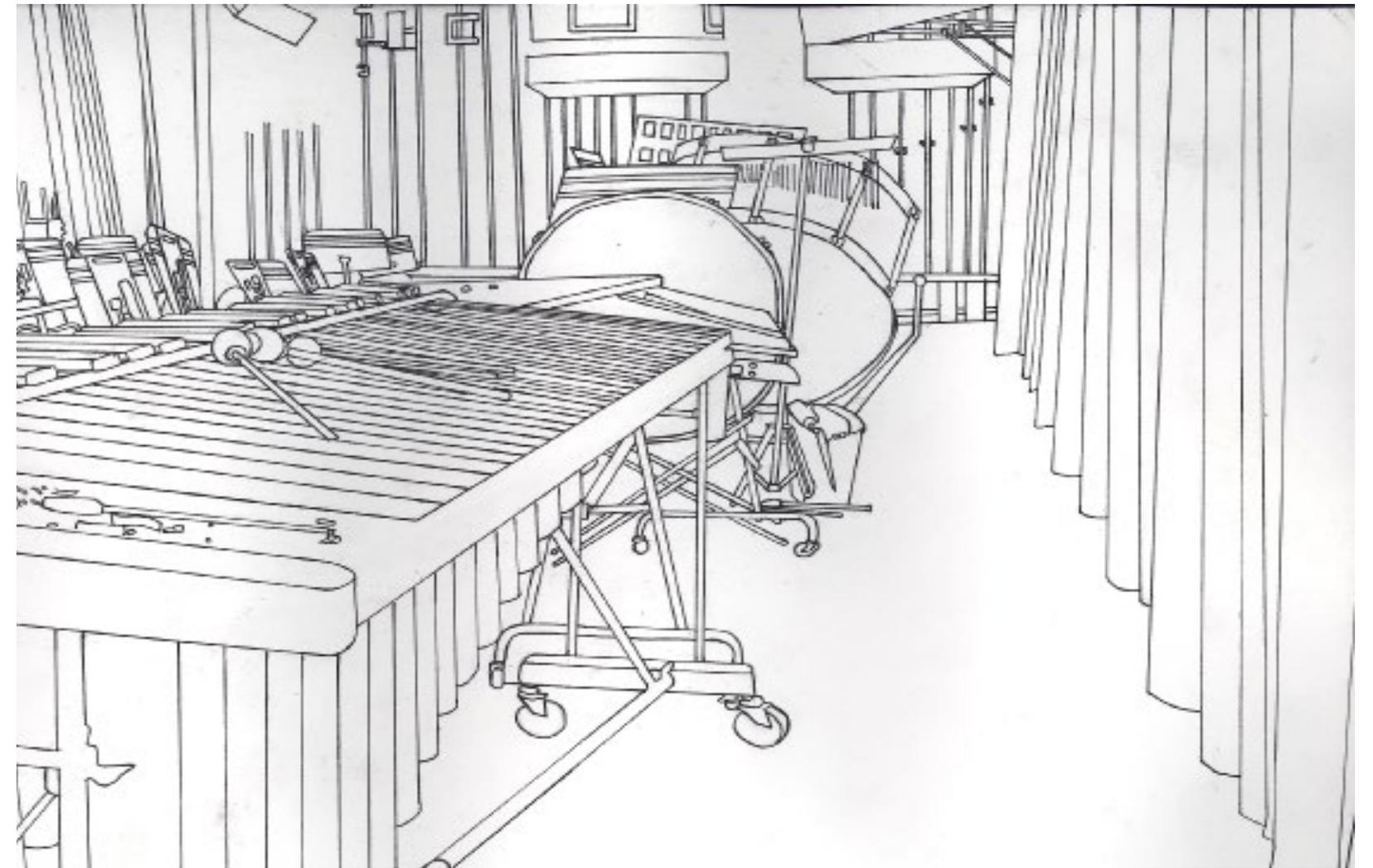
TEACH

Kerry Lubman

SAFELIGHT BOY

Oona McCormack

Half-submerged into the deep blue sea
He finds himself swimming
Carelessly surrendering himself to the ether
He wears purples
He wears blues
He wears pinks
He is the sea mew
And like the pores of sea sponge
He takes from the water, just like the water takes him
As the swells of foam rise and fall
Beneath the morning sun-tide



Silent Noise
Tanya Herrmann
Ink

PERSPECTIVE

Every street has a story
One outsiders can never know
Even if told by one that lives there

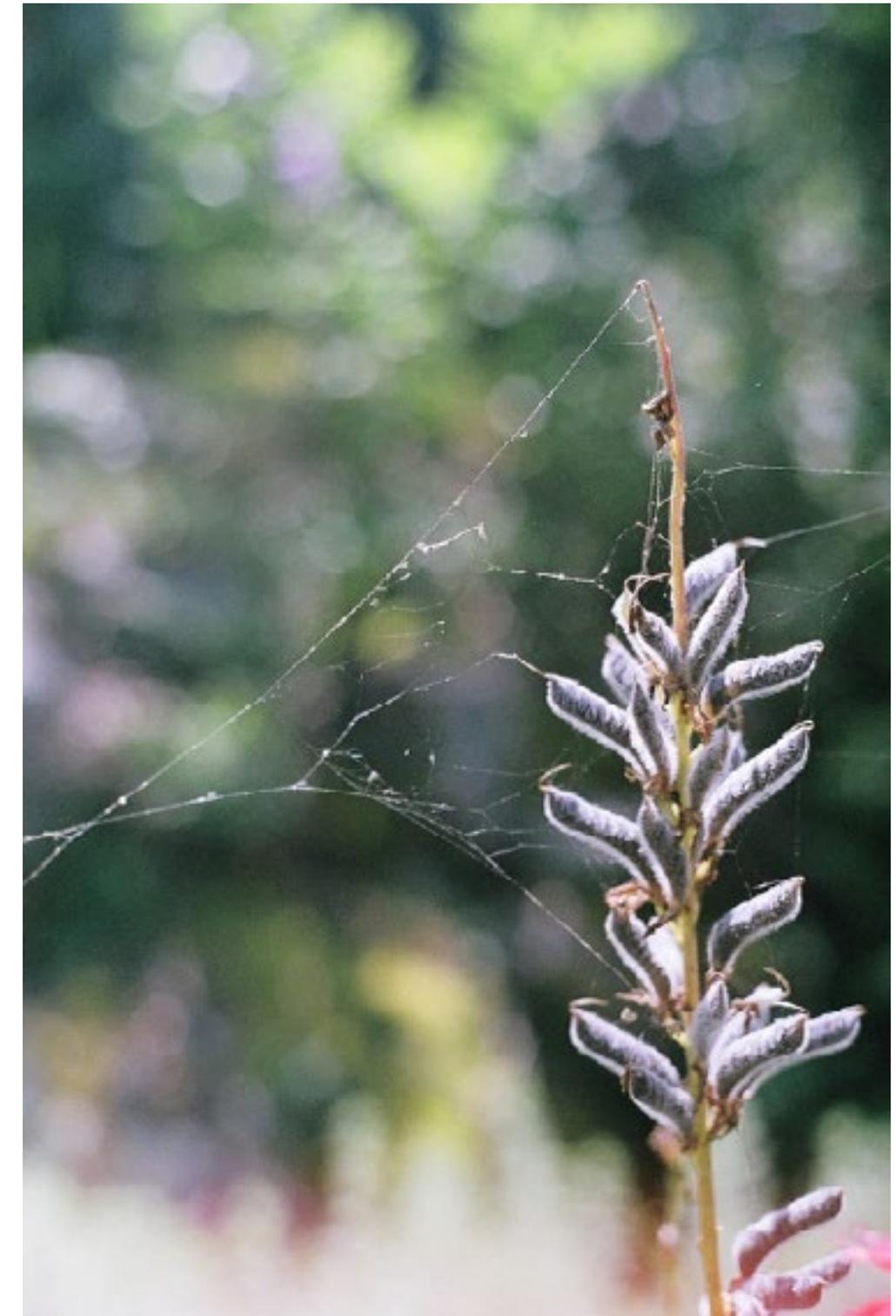
Every street has a story
One must walk more than a day in someone else's shoes
Much longer is necessary to experience the web of hidden secrets, stories, and spaces

Every street has a story
Each home, store and post office held together by invisible threads
The holes in the wall whisper of destruction

Every street has a story
Brick red, gray, yellow, brown, black, white
Drab colors, drab town?

Every street has a story
Who is there? Why?
All we can do is imagine.

Carolyn Daly



Lace
Evie Brooks
Photography

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
And in another's light

Annaliese Taylor

BLACKBERRY

JAM

Remember sprawling under ferns, I spoke
in sticky, stringy stanzas, before I went and
walked with terns, dipped fingers in cold
strata.

A deer can sleep so soundly in the wind
and in the rain, a deer with dripping sinews
in the frozen wood is slain.

Teeth like pearly everlasting gleam
against the gloom, bones like cracking
cataracts weep deep inside a tomb. Lashes
clung together like your sugar-coated
spit, blood clots oh so poorly in a snake-
infested slit.

And how you oh so longed to cut back
through your lids with knives, how you
often pined to pass with rosy tinted skies.
Hair is soft and eyes are red and wrists,
like ice, will fracture, but bats as black
as squid ink soup will assist you in your
stature.

You wrapped fingers round your collar
bones and pulled until they snapped, as
birds so cold and lonely at a lakeside sat
and laughed.

All the while I was lost amongst the
dogwoods and the laurel, gray cats slinked
across the field, set paws on tufts of sorrel.

Lydia Boettrich



Dentistree
Kerry Lubman
Photography

WATER

Fizzing, dismembering effects of warm water and Tuesday's air popped popcorn. The water drags what's left of the kernel into its grasp. Popcorn was her favorite past time pleasure; last month orange juice and thawed cranberries, how adorable is she? She was so stupidly happy when you came over for rigatoni last night, even if a third were mistakingly cooked al dente. She can be so careless. You don't want to embarrass her.

Praise her cooking the next day, and she will giggle nervously into her hand. Subtly prod about how the pasta was cooked, and she will laugh an airy, light chirp, as if she were holding the longest kept secret. With widened eyes, keeping her cherry lips pouted, she will ask if you want to come over for raspberry pies and cream. Her voice is delicate, a few octaves higher than yours. Any trivial ponder over the pasta dissolves. You love how she always thinks of you. You love how cute she can be.

Elizabeth Cumbo

Rainforest
Melissa Illig
Watercolor



SUN

A HAIKU TRIO

Una Stroszeck

A haze permeates
the lining of the cloud on
which I was standing

It illuminates;
a silver outline mimics
embers in your eye

the gaze infiltrates
heady like the sun's warped blaze
parched for tender phrase

A SCOOP

AT A TIME

Eating ice cream without
any ulterior motives is unnatural

Rebecca Ritterman



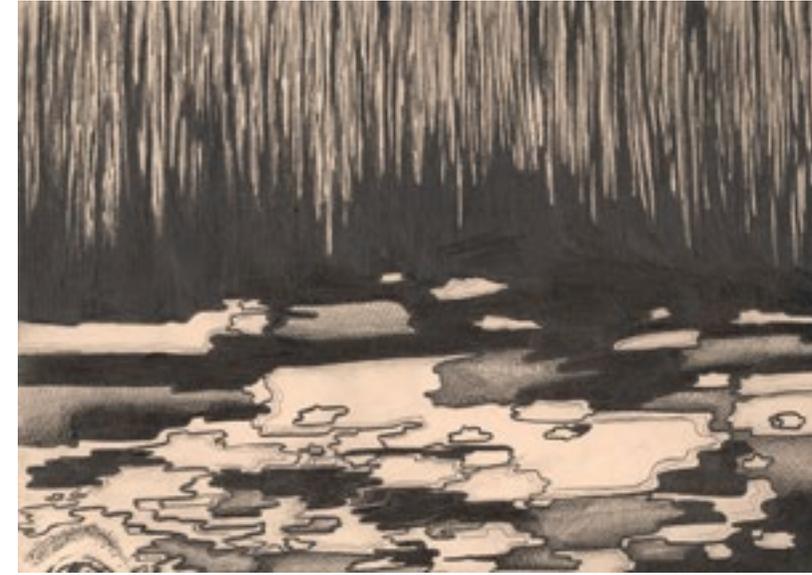
Hexatestibiopanicelite
Qing Qing
Graphite



Consolation
Rebecca Ritterman
Digital



Untitled
Clara Dwyer
Acrylic



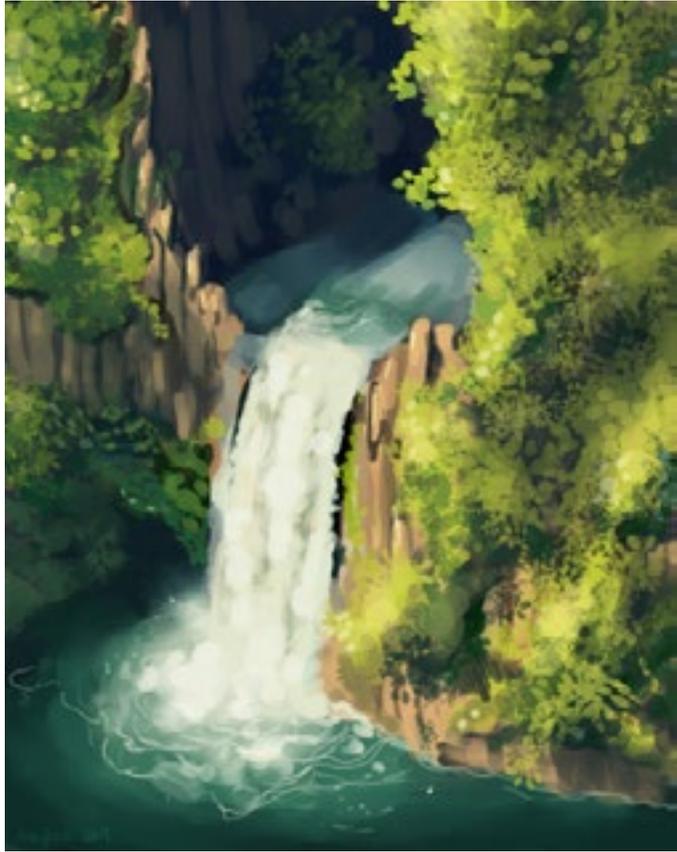
Clouds
Elizabeth Cumbo
Graphite



The Lone Sailboat
Jose Fernandez
Photography



Untitled
Natalie Tse
Ink



Falls
Catherine Wu
Digital



Untitled
Saily Deshpande
Ink & Watercolor



Deep Sea Teeth
Lydia Boettrich
Digital



These Filthy Skies
Catherine Wu
Digital



Goldsworthy
Ben Borus & Chris Jaeckel
Photography

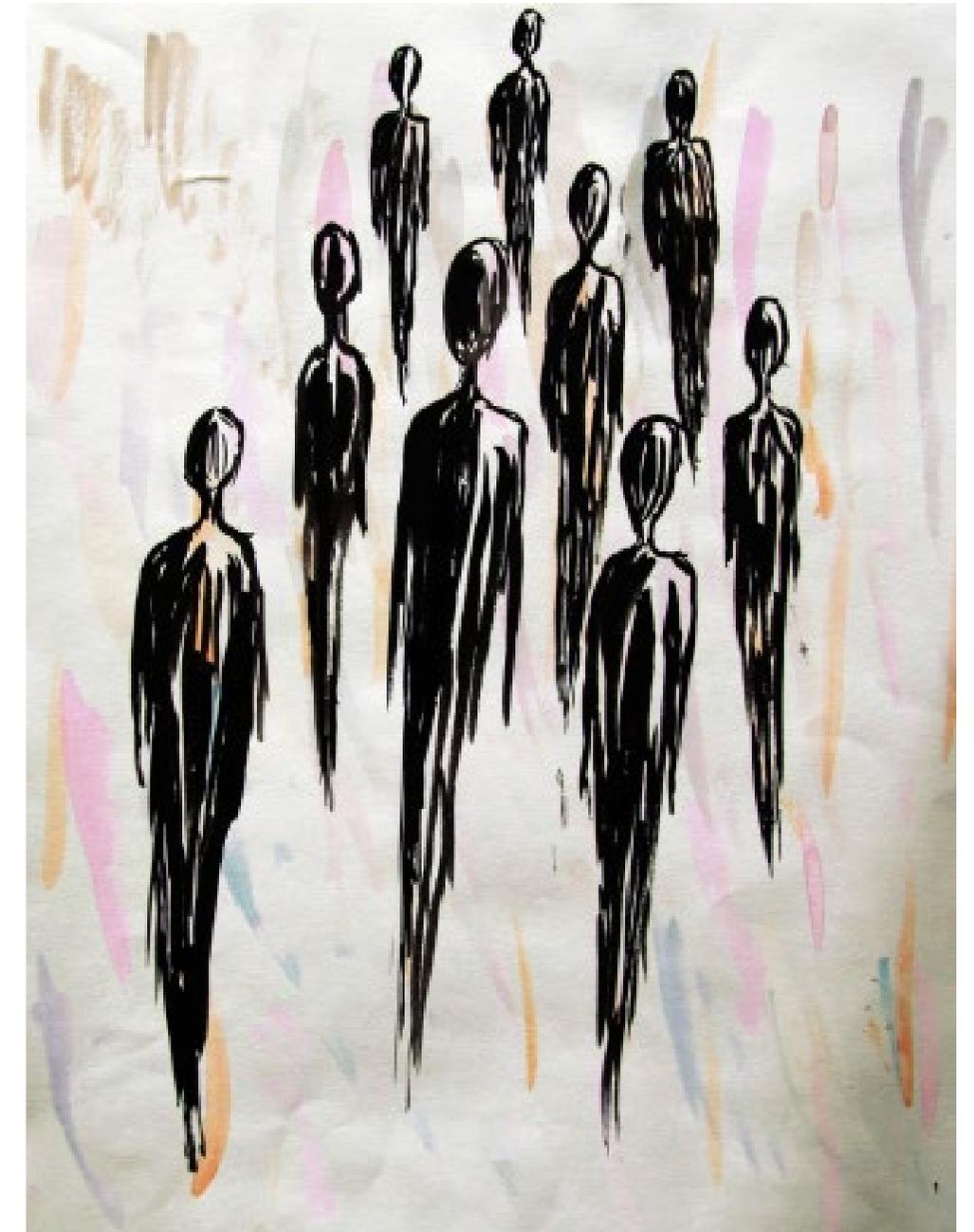


Alien Takes A Ride
Alice Weber
Acrylic

WEIGHTING

Kerry Lubman

- Time your arrival so you get there before me
- Don't plan to tell me about how the lavender is growing well this year
- Sit in the corner booth next to the window and under the neon sign
- Order two coffees and nothing else
- Sip your coffee, think about the rain outside, think about how you just missed it
- Why am I not there yet
- Trace the ride to my house over and over in your head
- Think about the steam from the coffee and how it's not fogging up my glasses because
- Why am I not there yet
- I told you I would be there ten minutes before you arrived
- Leave the two mugs, one still full and the other only half
- The rain is lighter but you still put your hood up as you walk back to your car
- Think about driving to my house before putting the key in the ignition
- While you're driving home, think about the coffee
- As you unlock your front door, decide to call me
- You leave a message about lavender



The Ghostly 1
Grace Hiltunen
Acrylic

DISPAR TION

She was holy, alone.

Clean, exposed skin flashed in the light. Crooked teeth and nimble fingers tracing designs in the soft sand. Bruises speckled her knees like constellations shining under her skin, and wild hair surrounded her, flickering in the turbulent air. There was no trace of bone under her smooth skin. Her limbs vibrated slightly as her hands pushed under the ground, sinking into the grains. Her eyes weren't shielded against the rising storm, and the sharp particles in the air left grazes on her arms and legs.

Her movements were erratic and curious, sweeping around her and connecting the lines and arcs she had created. These were her own, her possessions, in the empty landscape. Sometimes, she would cease and simply shove her limbs into the sand, and flex her fingers underground. They grasped for some invisible treasure, a thought that kept slipping out of her sparking mind.

I know my task, she thought. I was put here for a reason, and when I am finished, I may go. And oh, what I'll know when I'm finished! I will truly be better! Doubt flashed briefly, a rumble of thunder in the distance, but it was too quick, too small. It was far away. She would deal with it later.

So she continued.
He was holy, alone.

Dried blood caked on his frail body. Fingernail scratches were carved deep into his skin, and scars lined his legs, wrists, torso. Sunken, watery eyes were cast down towards his thin hands, half-submerged in the shifting sand. His limbs vibrated slightly as his back arched, trying to pull his hands out of the ground. The knobs on his back were spikes, a self-defense mechanism many desert animals have obtained. The desert changed everything, of course. He knew that.

The same designs were present, yet not around him, but on him. Swirls and lines and dots made up his frame, his skin a composition. The air filled with dust and filled his lungs with the same spirals, and he sunk deeper down. He couldn't tell the difference between the pins and needles in his fingers and the scratching of sand against skin.

Why was I put here? He lamented silently, the wind tearing the thoughts from his head. *I was not told how long it would take for me to finish. I was never told my purpose.* He tried to take a breath, but his ribs cracked as thunder reverberated through the scenery. *Is this truly worth it?*

No, he thought, a shift in the ground beneath him causing him to sink a full inch. This was the largest increment so far, and he trembled. *I must finish. I must know my reward. I must be better.* The low, dark sky was briefly illuminated by lightning.

Struggling, he ripped his hands out of the ground, rivulets of sand running down his arms and connecting his fingers to the ground with shimmering strings. He tried to lift them to the sky, trying to feel cool wind on his injured skin, but he found them only returning to his scarred body, blood beading on his skin and collecting beneath his fingernails.

So he continued.
It was holy, alone.

There was so much sound, so much that the other senses were muted, a secondary reaction to the deafening roar of the tempest. Its thick skin was impervious to the jagged sand whipping in the air, and its squinted eyes were streaming with tears. Long limbs struggled under the sand, trembling, swimming forward in its lifeless sea. Ears were tight against its skull, weathered and torn. Bony spines raised as it tensed, ceasing to paddle as lightning ripped the sky in lines and arcs and patterns.

The surface of the ground constantly shifted, sand being blown into the sky and lifted back down. It moved with a senseless, almost mechanical rhythm, eerily in time with the howling wind. It was one with the vast desert, it knew this storm. All it knew was the churning of sand, the feeling of wind ripping air out of its lungs and replacing it with grime.

How long have I been here? It formed a thought in its mind. There wasn't much room in it other than its drive. *I want to stop. But I can't. If I stop, I will drown. I can't remember it being any other way. I am strong, but I am not strong enough to get through this. I am going to die in this storm, and I will have nothing.*

Unease and pain forced a moan out of it, under the dull scream of the weather. It moved powerfully, desperately, as the sand underneath was lifted around it, forcing its way into its eyes, mouth, and ears. Choking, it swam harder. *Maybe I am nearly finished. I am getting stronger, but I need to finish.* This is all it ever knew. *I must be better.*

So it continued.

You were holy, alone.

There was nothing. The sky burned black, and your body lay completely surrounded by the ever bountiful sand. You could barely feel anything. Did you even have eyes, fingers, skin? You attempted to move, and there was slight response in your muscles. Your back twisted slightly, and the horns running down your body creaked in response. They vibrated ever so slightly, causing sand to trickle down your body and fill in the spaces it hadn't reached before. The taste of the dry earth was everything, and the scratch of it in your lungs was a welcome sensation.

There was no wind, no thunder, no lightning. You were shrouded in silence, thick and viscous. It oozed into your head, making your long-dead thoughts stir in response. *I am safe, you drawl. There is nothing that can hurt me. I made it.*

The darkness around you is complete, and undiscovered colors dance at the corner of your vision. *I am strong. I am capable.* These words sluggishly run through your head. *I did this.* You had no memory of how, or why, but you know. You know there was something that you had to do, and you did it. The dancing lights started to engulf your vision, in dancing movements.

Beautiful, you remark. It's like artwork, these patterns and shapes. Nostalgia shot through you, the first true feeling you have felt in a long time. These are familiar, terrifying yet comforting. You allow these visions to swallow you, and you sink into the strange rhythm of them, knowing only one thing.

You are better now.

Robin Eassa

Fruit Pastel
Alejandra Dominguez Perez
Pastel



RUSSELL'S TEAPOT

Some will tear their steeping tea bag
And stir so the contents disperse to the bottom
And see the (wavering) grounds line into a cross
And desperately cling to their good fortune.

Some know better, using loose leaves from our soil
And let them drift as they sink to the bottom
And become smug decoding the (wavering) grounds
And desperately cling to their good fortune.

Elizabeth Cumbo

ANATOMIA

Addy Farrell

everyone walks around with holes in their eyes
blinded and bumbling, invisible and wise
our sight was taken from us
now no light can escape our grasp

everyone walks around without any skin
our casing tediously peeling away to reveal the part underneath
but all you can see is
our organs straining to survive the sorrowful raging heart

everyone walks around with slits in their teeth
chewed lips and drooping cheeks
we reveal our bones to everyone we see
isn't that strange?

everyone walks around without any legs to walk with
just talking about nonsense
it's exhausting
isn't it?

everyone walks around with cackling bones
sometimes we get tired of the moans and
we break them to grow anew
but the better one is never the same
is it?

Clockwork Hands
Rhys Kane
Ink & Colored Pencil



FELL ASLEEP ON SATURN'S RINGS

My hands pulled reluctantly away from my sides like magnets,
and clenched the space between my brows and cheekbones as if they were polar opposites.
The force of my hands kept me warm, but the voices told me to let my fingers curl back.
Little specks in the endless night greeted me with smiles, and I smiled back,

and I closed my eyes again to pretend my friends weren't there,
and let the muscles fall into the shape of my curved and honest face.
After realizing where my fingers had curled to, the blackness started wrapping the edges of my fingertips,

and with the pace of the moon's revolution, it crept up my bones and filled my joints.
I could feel the orbit of my soul pounding in my chest, but yet it had no where to go,
and my thoughts separated into their own unidentified solar systems with cores not of iron nor nickel,
but a liquid mixture between fear and loneliness.

I felt like there was no where to run or turn,
and I was correct,
for the darkness of this space clung to me like lint,

and wherever I moved,
it stayed

and even the smiling faces could not pull the redness from my cheeks,
unless of course they pinched it, which time to time they did just to make me act as the little doll,
as if I were plastic, perfect
or perfectly fine

I could not see myself anymore, for I had become my surroundings,
become what was meant to describe, not define
and what I hear within the dark made me become

me

and with all of the strength of the moon, and the heat of the sun,
I wish I could say it wasn't my fault,
but I am the only one letting my skin turn to nothing but the endless dark
and it is all my fault.

So Venus will sing me a song,
and an asteroid could help me belong,
but I am the only one to tuck myself in when my head leans against the mighty rock,
floating around what I wished I hadn't lost.

Harrison Atwater



Infinitesimal
Robin Eassa
Digital



TRANSLUCENT ORANGE &

pressing out from the inside
a head of glass
cracking, cracking

they say
that
they

say that

they say that it's all in my
head
which is exactly what it is
but when I say:
"I'm hearing too much
I'm seeing too much"
yet my eyes are mesh
and my ears are cork and

I'm needing something to happen
when the sky is melancholic
and there's wind in my lungs

as the cold core of morning air
nestles in my pores
and my tongue is dripping copper
but I have it now

I have a map
painted over in black
so no one else will ever see it
but at least I know I have a reason.

MUTED BLUE

Kerry Lubman



Untitled
Jonah Simpson
Ceramic

THE FANTASY

Una Stroszeck

She's only starting to bud outwards towards everyone else; young, eyes typically down-cast in personality, but open and fresh with opportunity. Ready, springy - like a shiny new toy, patent leather and shining in every angle of light sumptuously. She peruses the halls like the delicate turns of the feather-thin pages of an archaic book.

She is, masterful.

She has already achieved the highest level of the art. She's surpassed it; grown herself into it and eaten it whole; not for herself, but for the projection. At this epoch of existence, her projection is perfection of disguise – an entry ticket into the key manipulation of those criminally awesome manipulators of her fellow students. Hyper-aware, of herself and others, she wears it long and thick like a woolen cloak, a naked soul preening beneath. She is no toy.

Stuck with school, she sighs in discontent at the loneliness of a palpably capable mind, turning a corner. Dreams engrossing tales of red-tinted intensity, of a fevered connection. Of someone blatant enough to make her unsteady on her feet by now. Alas, where is the occasion for such awesomeness? Of a privately shared, introspective duel? Without use, her own begot language of the sirens loses its luster.

This woman-in-waiting, she is fifteen, and alight. Her eyes are singing and her hair is bright. Her body cowers, yet it calls with the distant, queenly ring of cathedral bells when her shoulders are set properly. In wanting a full display of power, she wears the finest silks under a velveteen, purple robe that floats along the square tiles. She glides, head high, brazen-eyed.

Realistically, a crucial, calming counterpart is lacking. There is an ocean to be filled here. Her thoughts are not yet heady, steady, and constant. She fidgets, she cries. There is torment on her ravaged lands. Spinning into class and slumping down, she finds a heaviness upon her. She's tired today, flying low, scanning the score of the earth only for essential occupancies, a bird absorbing the minimal amount of potentially perceived space; a queen re-tracking her kingdom for basic upkeep. How far her throne, how high the bird's sky...



Untitled
Natalie Tse
Acrylic

SYMPHONY- DROP

Viscous music is my saving grace
A stormy cliff-edge to grate down upon
is a heaven my mind can't replace
with pliant, empty contribution

Then, devouring rushing air and beat
in the bright simplicity wrought from
the freedom-feeling of falling feet
is the art of attending to automatic drum

A little step away from crashing through
A note, one spasm, one bunny-hop
into the convectionous ocean blue
which sanctifies; makes the grating stop

Una Stroszeck

VILANELLE OF THE GREY WOLF

A splotch of grey fur stands on top of the
frost-ridden hill

Snarling bitterly against the cold, seething
eyes widening at my sight The snow-topped
peaks are silenced by winter cold and all lays
still

The cry of the wilderness is sharper than any
scream which man could instill While eyes
fixate upon my gaze, playful howls echo
throughout the lonely night A splotch of grey
fur stands on top of the frost-ridden hill

And growling at this sight of such unantici-
pated thrill

Streams of grey fur orchestrate prideful

into a silver of albino moonlight The snow-
topped peaks are silenced by winter cold and
all lays still

The feral beast yet untamed, and yet delicate
as god's will

Howling children illuminate the starry
night, barking either joyful love or in spite A
splotch of grey fur stands on top of the frost-
ridden hill

In tire they rest, curled gently into snug
droplets of grey lay on the now quiet hill

Delicate creatures nest in blankets of snow
inhaling the crystalline flakes which fall
throughout the night The snow-topped peaks

are silenced by winter cold and all lays still

The ginger light rises from the west, as
the children wake to mourn in sorrow, yet
delight As the night draws its cessation, and
the children now ravenous begin the morn-
ing hunt A splotch of grey fur stands on top
of the frost-ridden hill

The snow-topped peaks are silenced by win-
ter cold and all lays still

Ishai Nardia

ENCUMBERED IN SHADOWS

Some say there exists a cynical dwelling:
An uncharted constraint of fractured memories
and secrets with fictions one should not be telling.

Rory Kuczek

A place elevated above angels' skies
Yet buried beneath evils' tombs,
Where grins fade as hurt aligns.

Blind to the eye,
But keen to the mind,
It only must be perceived
Because their sadness cannot be combined.

A corridor of somber walls and blistered ceilings,
Pour a fine powder concealed in the corners of the floor,
And to the sense's sinking appealing,
It left an abhorrent feeling, one cannot endure anymore.

Endless it seemed,
For confinement of the purest forms,
Confuses the distorted soul as it
screamed.

At the end,
A miniscule room filled with decaying flowers,
And a stained vibrancy burnished the crepuscular ascend.

Three beautiful, disheveled heads were pressed together,
Their long hair dripping in the faint air
and hands covering their faces that tethered
Compromised of their own sins and tears in despair.

Dreams eradicate and incarcerate,
While motions subside,
And all that remains of their fate,
Is the trance that happiness can decide.

Dance With a Ghost
Harrison Atwater
Acrylic



HEALING

Veronica Ward

I believe it to be true that an affliction is more easily obtained than cured. Whether it is the slicing of a finger in an instant and the week after with a tender hand, or a kiss followed by days of coughing and a runny nose; however, I feel nothing could've prepared me for those long hours succeeding the removal of the cyst by my spine.

My blood ran hot and cold all at once, rushing through my veins and mixing to form ferocious, swirling clouds. Just above hot red cheeks, my forehead was clammy and beaded in cold sweat. I felt as if my body should break apart at any second, but at the same time I knew it would not. I could feel every bit of muscle, fat, sinew, and bone straining, pulling taught, and holding together with steely resolve. Just the effort of staying upright in a wheelchair made my arms and legs quake, but the moment I let my eyelids close, vertigo took hold. In the two and a half minutes it took for the doctors to get the anti-nausea pill, I was violently ill. Sour, stinking acid burned as it traveled the course of my esophagus in the wrong direction, revealing itself to be same neon color as the ooze which is emitted from a blistering burn. After the pill it was five more minutes till I was sick again. The acrid substance rushed through the same already raw passage and left my breathing ragged and laced with an awful stench.

This seemed a very bleak situation, but it was one I craved once the prescription medicines wore off. Soon a deep throbbing began all across my lower back, quickly consolidating itself to a point at the base of my spine. Then the pain intensified until I was reminded of the truth of my condition.

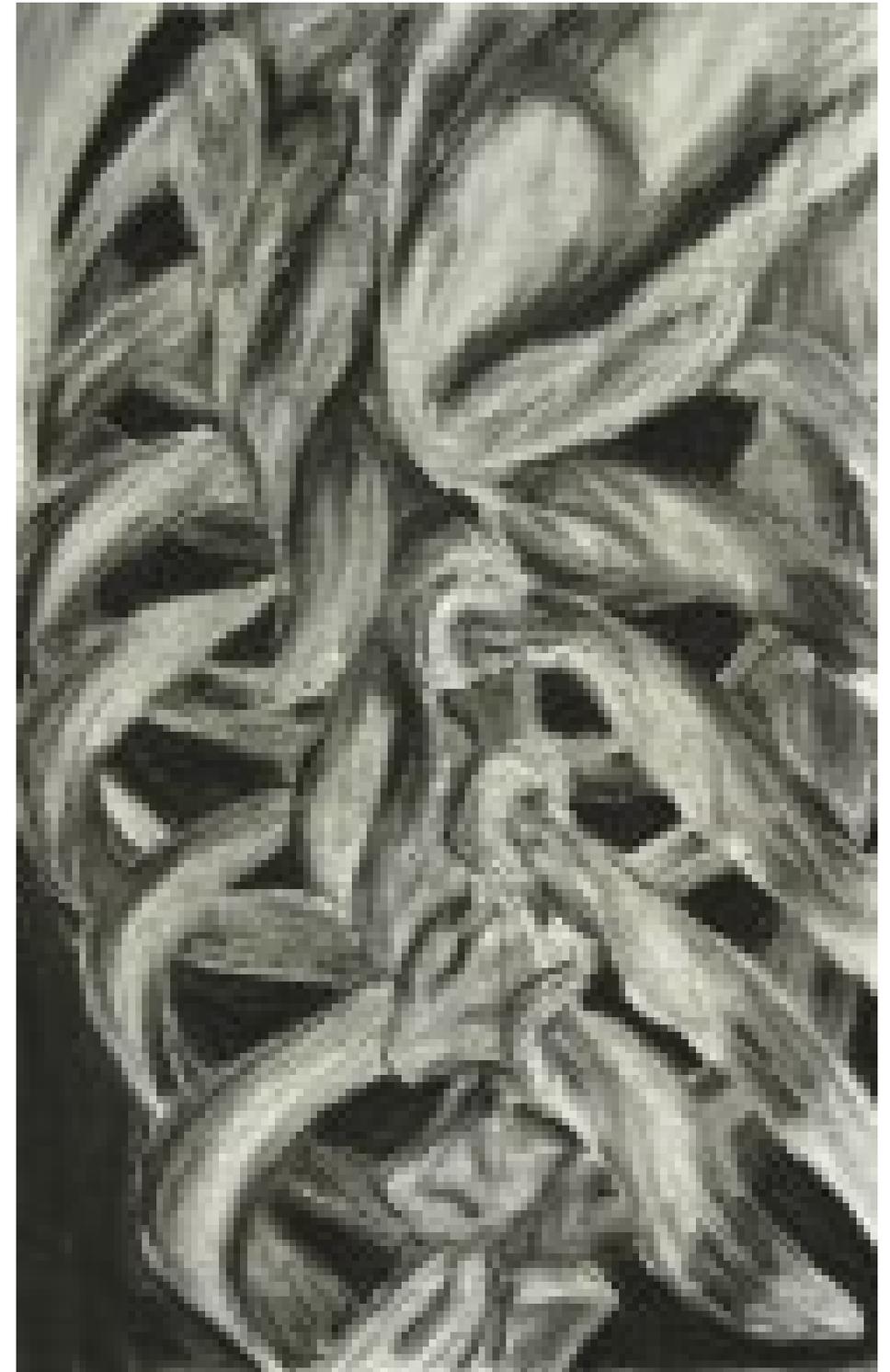
I recalled, with rising revulsion, how the doctors had described the procedure. First they had sliced off the growth and removed those foreign particles lodged far under the skin. Then they had scraped around the edges, layer by layer, digging deeper into the soft red flesh until they reached a part—two inches down—where nothing seemed to be wrong. But that was not all, oh no, not even close. The gash, you see, could not run the risk of being re-contaminated, so it had to heal slowly, from the bottom up. The bloody hole was cauterized slightly, revealing it to be precisely two inches deep and three inches long. Then into that hole went a yard of thin white gauze, soaking up blood and prying apart the two sides of the gash. The flesh pulled, threatening to rend further and elongate the deep, crimson slice.

At first, this had all been a bad dream, lurking in the shadows. Reality struck with the force of a stout throwing knife to the back.

Nothing I did would ease the pain. When I walked, I felt my skin stretch with every stride. When I sat I felt the skin pull up and down, but squeeze at the sides, and I could feel the gauze itching and forming a ball of wet, foreign cloth in a raw pink area which should not exist. When lying down, I felt neither of the former effects, but the fact that there was a large wound in my lower back became excruciatingly obvious when I lay on my stomach, feeling the throbbing, stabbing, ache face down with no distractions.

The worst part, however, was when the gauze had to be changed. If I was lucky, the bloodstained cloth would grow moist and malleable in the shower, and slowly tug out with only the occasional resistance. On most days, I was not so lucky. The cloth, porous due to its numerous small holes, would be caked with blood and stuck fast to my tender, healing skin. The cloth would slowly peel away, ripping off skin with it and grinding against the edge of the cut, scraping along in slow, agonizing bursts. Then, the freshly scraped down skin would begin to bead with droplets of blood, which would be soaked up by the fresh gauze brought to re-pack and re-stretch the sore, stinging, itching, aching gash.

Cage
Evie Brooks
Charcoal



A hush fell upon the eager crowd
like a fist choking out the last few whispers
from each craned neck.
Breaths of air escaped open mouths
as one arm raised
in time with the other.
Fingers unfurled slowly from clenched fists
branching, tense, from hands
held at each side of the dark suit.
A deep vibration
too low to hear,
but present enough to feel,
shook the bones of every witness.
Shoulders tensed,
head lowered,
the man slowly
silently
arose from the platform
as color faded around him.
Onlookers became ghosts,
barely there,
unseen through dark locks
veiling his eyes.
There he stayed.
Still.
Mute.
Waiting.

Maya Prabhakar



Starfish Concentration
Saily Deshpande
Ink



Antique
Julia Bourdeau
Pastel

HERE THERE EVERYWHERE

Shivani Singh

You were supposed to be my friend,
but you said my driving made you feel unsafe

We went to the nice restaurant
It was good until you started talking about Sir Winston Churchill,
and his great intellect

I used to never watch Bollywood movies.
because I thought they were embarrassing
I used to plug my ears when
my parents played Indian music

It's too bad I didn't work hard enough in middle school
I don't want to be fiscally responsible

I can't believe you groaned when I said I liked
The Catcher in the Rye

I love New England but it makes me invariably morose
No, my father is not pastor Singh

My grandparents' house is real swell,
but my grandmother always wipes my clean clothes
with a dirty towel

My sister says grandiose English palaces make her sad,
but I still like them
You used to be my best friend, but now you're
way too cynical

The only trees in my yard are
useless birch trees
I never could climb them

Elmo is my dog
last year he tore a ligament,
but he's doing just fine.

CLARITY OF GRAVITY

She's not a crater in moon or the wind pulling leaves off trees.

She's not the tea bag, now cold, resting on your kitchen table.

She's not remnants of ink that didn't wash out of your skin or the soap bubbles left in a ring around the sink drain.

She's not amber sky or pearlescent clouds of morning.

She's not the fraying threads on your sweater.

She's not the alarm at 5:55 that you only start to hear at 6:00, pulling away webby layers of sleep.

She's not anyone you know. You're not anyone she knows.

I've been walking laps around the patch of bluebells in the field.

Once spring is here, I plan to stop. A muddy imprint will remain but summer will bring fresh grass.

I will lay by the bluebell patch until fall which will bring heavy skies. She won't know about the bluebells because they are mine. They are not for her to have.

She's not the cold water heating up as you wait to wash your hands.

She's not the chipped paint of a room you'll never see again.

She's not the peach evening sun or the stars that start to glow around it.

She's not the uneven sidewalk that your shoes know from memory.

She's not the smudges on your bathroom mirror that have become part of your morning and night reflection.

She's not anyone you know. You're not anyone she knows.

I can't remember the last time there were bluebells.

I think they started blooming last year. They died out as other flowers took their ground. I laid in these new flowers every day until I got sick.

They told me the new flowers were poisonous, the kind to be avoided. I don't care about those flowers anymore. I care about the bluebells.

But the grassless splotch around them sometimes makes it hard to focus.

She's not the bluebells in the field.

She's not the heavy autumn skies.

She's not the muddy ring you've tread into the ground.

She's not.

Kerry Lubman

Inception
Katie Cox
Colored Pencil



THE BLEEDING

TREE

Annaliese Taylor

I walk up to the bleeding tree. Twisted trunk,
and peeling bark Tired of reaching for the
sun
It gave up long ago.
I bring a book, which I was planning to read,
Read under the bowed branches that conceal
me.

People tell me not to go near it. They fear it,
They tell me its shade causes depression
Its bark seeps fumes
It's alone in a clearing, but for a raspberry
bush nearby.
Everyone eats from the raspberry bush.

I duck under the slowly swinging leaves,
Pull aside a swath of foliage
Light green, light green, red, brown Yes,
bright red berries, shimmering And beautiful.
And poisonous to ingest.
That's why they call it the bleeding tree.

Not much sun reaches the ground (though
just enough to read by) And moss replaces
grass.
Cushy moss, though slightly wet. I settle

between two gigantic roots And pick up my
book

But as soon as I lean back
And my head touches the trunk I cannot
open it.

It's so peaceful here.
Why has no one ever ventured shade under
the canopy? Could it be they are scared of
this harmless tree?
Or, it exudes such sadness, such grief, no
one dares come near. Yes, that must be it.
I can hear the tree's sadness, feel it like the
water traveling up the roots.

What could have made it so sad?
Perhaps, it was the knowing that in the winter,
it would die, cold and alone? And in the
spring, awake alone again?
Perhaps, knowing its berries dole out death,
It is jealous of the raspberry bush nearby? I
do not know

But I for one
No longer fear the bleeding tree.



Still Life
Sydney Hunt
Charcoal

REASONING

Rebecca Ritterman

It's because I skip to the end of the book
while I am only on page 26

It's because at night when I should be sleep-
ing, I lie awake thinking up scenarios for
weeks to come

It's because when I'm the seeker, I peek
through itty bitty spaces between my fingers
and because I can't simply just go up and
talk to a person without writing a script for
myself beforehand.

This is why surprises terrify me into the
cornered safety of my closet spaces
and why I wear baggy sweaters to cover
finger tips and hands and wrists
and why my eyes dart into the sun instead of
yours. The rays sting less than your gaze.

All the while I'm suffocating
All the while I'm dreaming of new cliffs to
fall over
All the while I'm skimming sky when I
should be walking ground

You take a shadow and break it open like an
egg.
You pierce skin with claws and watch red
blood ooze out of yellow yolk
Because it's how you cope.
Because that's how you choose to make
decisions
and because I never had another mind to stop
any of it

Charcoal Salinity
Madeline Hastings
Charcoal



GARBAGE TRUCKS ARE BEAUTIFUL

Halima Abukar

Garbage trucks are beautiful. The car you just bought is beautiful. The music you listen to is beautiful. The construct of beauty is so strange. I find it so beautiful that people call things ugly. What is ugly, really? I used to think that people married the ugliest looking people and I always sat and wondered if they could see what I saw. This is NOT going to be cliché ridden. It's not going to end with me wondering if it's what is on the inside. It's simply a wonderment of perception. How come I came to think that the garbage truck driving on that Sunday morning was beautiful?

I figured it out, that same morning. It's because garbage is garbage and life is

short and I only saw that garbage truck on that one Sunday morning on that one day. I will never experience the feeling of seeing that garbage truck driving by on that one Sunday morning ever again. That's why it's beautiful. The strata of being ethereal and flawless; it's this concept that bored people made to make life less boring, and it affects what people look for in life, or don't look for at all. Now I find things that people hate pretty. People being annoying to me, being angry, being sad. Nor is this a romanticization of illness, just an appreciation of wave-like features that living seems to have. It's an understanding that people are so different and that world peace will probably never happen. World peace will probably never happen, ever.

I think that this confirmation of beauty people seek lurks everywhere, and it ends with the idea that girls and boys would find themselves attractive and cute even after

they are rejected by their crushes, that old people feel beautiful in their age, that teenagers feel beautiful in their zits and pimples. I do this. I diminish the need for traditionalistic beauty. I don't need it. I have an afro and dark skin. I wear my hijab the way I want to. I dress what I feel like. I keep this confidence of myself intact with the understanding and strong opinion that I do not care what people find beautiful. I've used small words and big words and I've read books that were so bad I wanted to pull a Fahrenheit 451 and burn it. It's all so beautiful and these experiences I have of seeing things that I love being completely invalidated by someone who has this pyramid of beautiful being the apex and ugly being the very bottom is so ridiculous to me.

People subconsciously see this pyramid, this thought that a person's face must be symmetrical to be attractive, and music has to be three minutes long and should have small, dumb raps in the middle. I get

nagged by my parents daily that I should get a phone. I'm not putting myself outside the bubble of this social reality, I'm just noticing it. How can something be ugly to you? Do you not see what I see? I've realized most things should probably be kept to myself, now. Like the time three weeks ago when I lingered too much on the topic of cannibalism, and how my mom used to braid my hair so ridiculously so that when I put on my hijab that my braids would pop out in the third grade. How I wore my favorite pants on Tuesday, the 70s boot cut ones, with the dazzles on the hip. I wore the same pair of black converse since, like, the fifth grade and my mom and dad conspired together to throw them out three weeks ago.

I watched the garbage truck go by two weeks later, the Sunday morning two weeks after that dreadful day my favorite shoes went bye-bye, and I wondered why I thought those gross, black-now-green

converse so beautiful, why I did and kept them so close to my heart. It was because I remembered all the years I walked in them on the years since the fifth grade, stepping in the mud and letting my socks get dirty through that horrid hole on the side of the shoe, how I ran and the laces used to undo themselves, how my friend always told me that I should paint them, and instead of using paint I used black sharpie and they turned green, how I came to think of them as beautiful and wonderful all those years, and how marvelously I changed the day I watched Roman Holiday with my grandpa, who used to be a police officer in Somalia, and how he so greatly loved watching Gregory Peck on the television, while I was in my black-now-green converse. I realized this beauty, this small essence that seems to shape my life into a wonderful thing, and how other people see life, which is as a stain, and how they dab, while I rub.

IN THE BEGINNING

Rory Kuczek

And I hope you are happy in the end.

I believe the clouds will splatter the sky
while through the crackled snow,
the pale blue shines.

I know it is when the flowers bloom and
grow
in the flowerbed,
the river runs deep,
and the petals flourish a rose,
envying blankets of white
that light can never touch;

And I hope you are happy in the end.

I hope the sun shines bright,
and the heavens open wide;
I hope the heat burns your eyes
and starts a fire inside.
The blaze of the beautiful planet will open
your heart,
igniting the dreams that I
once had.
I believe the earth will tumble under our feet;
I know you will be there,
trying to put it back together,
piece by piece.

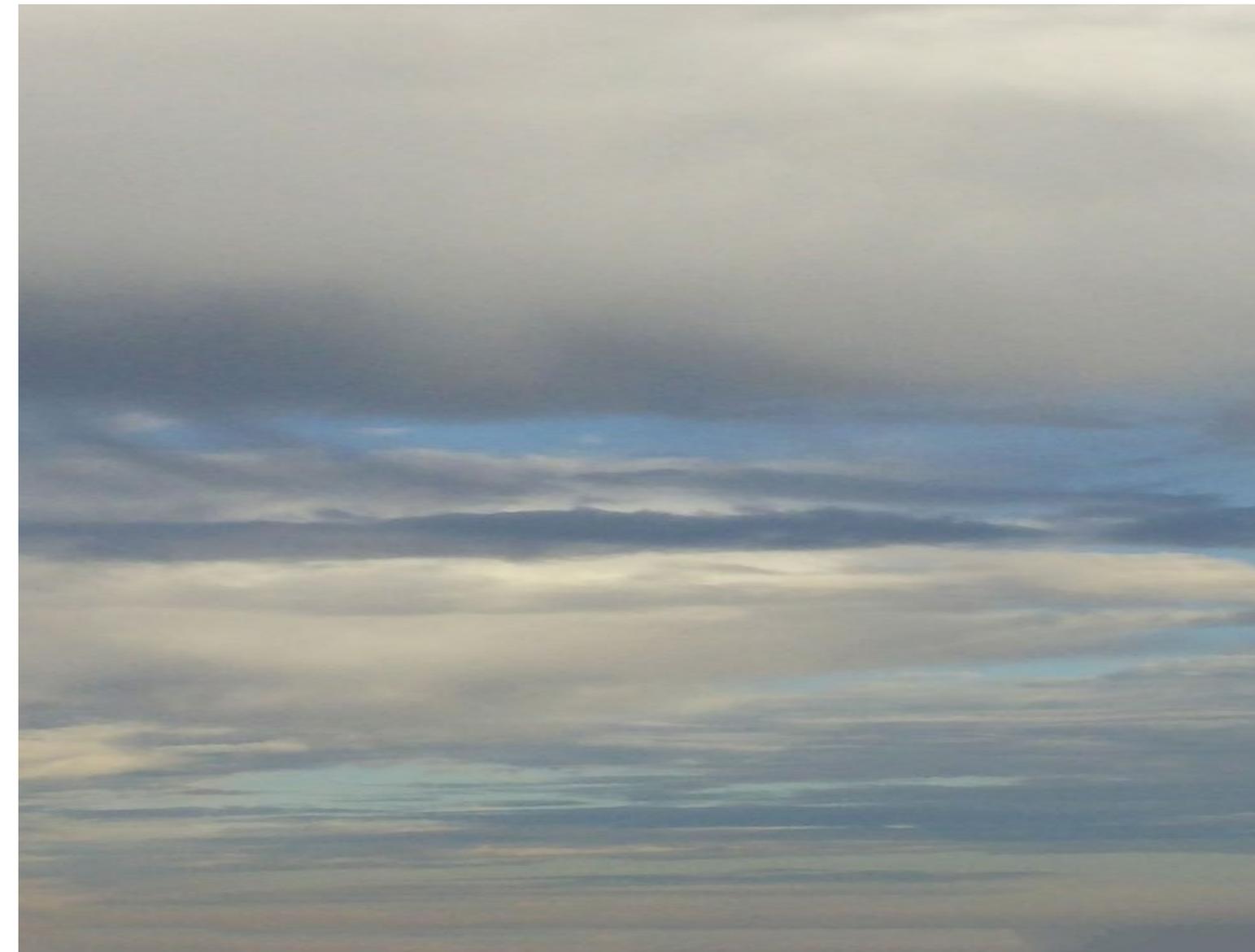
And I hope you are happy in the end.

I hope you find me black and blue,
and see my smile that shows through:
look into my eyes and see what had lied
behind.
Just look down at the tidal waves,
where I now lay.

Invite the doves to sing for grace,
tell my love and do not hesitate,
and talk to the world;
from the tip of the mountain,
to the ocean floor.

Because for now,
as they close up the box and pull the strings,
and lower me down,
while the priest starts to sing,
Nothing will ever be the same for you again.

And I just hope you are happy in the end.



Flotation
Rebecca Ritterman
Photography

RATIONALLY MOURNING

and the holes in the
top fabric of my soles
angled heel up
against my French chair –
Sitting with time
and its omnipresent ways;
sitting in its vacancy
pondering a reason to live,
something
worth dying for.

There's a hole in my shoe
against the fabric of my
continuity.

Una Stroszeck

Face Fiction
Grace Hiltunen
Ceramic



DIVINITY

Frail hands clutched a Styrofoam coffee cup, gripping it like an anchor in a storm. The bitter liquid had gone cold, but white knuckles still clenched as if trying to find comfort in its phantom warmth. Those thin, pale hands led to even more frail wrists, bangled with bruises. The purple-blue blotches were stark against her pale skin, swelling the thin joints. Other bands of color—blue, purple, pink, yellow—could be seen adorning her legs, arms, and neck, where she had attempted to conceal them with clothing. A single unavoidable, angry blue smudge adorned her face, sprawling from brow to nose to cheek, marring her delicate features, knocking her nose askew with the intensity of its color. The blue of her bruises complemented the deep blue of the gauzy dress she wore, the drape of it enhancing the regality she exuded. Glazed-over eyes gazed un-blinkingly into her cup. Her head snapped upwards, eyes wide, as the clatter of another shop closing down for the night startled her; the only store left in the rest stop was the fast food place where she had purchased her untouched coffee. She glanced down to where her son lay asleep on the bench, small plush lamb clutched in his tiny arms, face peaceful in sleep as it never was in waking. The clamor hadn't woken him. Her solemn face relaxed while looking at him, thin lips spread into a small adoring smile and blue eyes warmed. The boy snuffled in his sleep, and she quickly laid her hand on his golden hair, smoothing and shushing, unsure whether the noises indicated another nightmare. Eyes darted around her, searching for threats was second nature, and her shoulders and chest raised as if making herself a larger presence would make her appear the able guardian she was. Once reassured of her son's safety, her eyes and hands slowly returned to her cup. A deep, shuddering breath wracked her body as heavily as sobs would, expanding the ribs clearly visible through her top. The blonde waves of her hair fell down her back as she allowed her head to fall backwards, eyes closed and neck arching; and the setting sun through the window behind her illuminated her, surrounding her in warm honey, and turning the yellow of her hair into a golden halo.

Rachel McLaughlin

Macabre
Sydney Hunt
Graphite



CHORES

stay up all morning
stroll through the dew
eat little red berries
from branches of yew
lie on the pavement
admire the flowers
nap in tall grass
go home and break glass

Lydia Boettrich



Crane Dance
Catherine Wu
Digital

GOODNIGHT, GOODBYE,

Alice Weber

Leaving the warmth of my bedroom to meet Sarah at night could be considered an act of weakness. She didn't beg me to come, but rejecting her would have seemed harsher than I would have meant it. I allow myself a few minutes to choose a nice outfit and apply some eye shadow before telling my mother where I'm off to and locking the door behind me.

Tall pine trees pass by hauntingly on either side and cars cautiously roll past me again and again. The houses of my neighborhood all watch me and I try not to watch them back. Patches of shadow I need to pass through quicken my heart rate, and all I can think of is how Sarah constantly tells me how safe our town really is. I turn onto the main road, keeping my head straight forward, one hand on my phone.

Soon, I am upon a crosswalk with a red light. Across the street, I see Sarah awkwardly leaning against a tree in front of gas station, unaware she is being watched. It is amazing how obnoxious she can be just by standing.

"Hey, girl," I turn to see nobody. Oh, it's the person in the car waiting for the light. Oh. Their small black car waits patiently, humming with anticipation. "Lookin' good..." I tell myself not to look at the stranger and pretend I don't hear. It isn't long until the light changes and the car drives off.

Once across the street, Sarah watches me until I reach her. Dead grass crunches under my feet. She's wearing that plain hoodie again.

"Hey."

"Hey. I was just catcalled," I tell her.

"Oh," she says, expressionless. "What did they say?" I can't even remember anymore. I can't even believe they said that. And I should have known that's exactly how Sarah would respond. Who cares what they said?

"I didn't really hear. Wanna go in?" I gesture towards the gas station and she takes my hand. I know she has her wallet with her, even for an evening stroll.

The lights in this place are giving everything a dull glow. Dust gathers in the cracks of the linoleum tiles. Stacks of soda are at every turn. I go straight to the snack aisle while Sarah, hands in pockets, makes an unimpressed face at the refrigerator full of drinks.

Some red-faced boy we know is loitering around the checkout counter, half-heartedly looking at the candy bar selection. His black hair hangs at his shoulders, only adding to his gawky appearance. 'What long, long legs,' I think as I watch him pretend to be making a decision. 'Imagine I was a boy with such long legs, standing over everyone, loitering in gas stations.'

"Hey, what are you getting?" Sarah asks me, drawing my attention back to her. I grab some \$1 snacks, since they don't have what I really want.

She convinced me that a good place to sit would be right on the bleachers of our school's football field.

"What a weird place to sit," I comment tiredly. We shouldn't sit here. It's not safe, comfortable, or even fun. "Why can't you just come to my house?"

"I'm not allowed."

"But you can walk around town all night?"

"I guess. Break open the food, huh?" she says and looks out onto the dark oblivion that is our view. The sidelines are vaguely visible, and the tops of the trees can be seen against the cloudy sky. Everything is quiet. Sarah is looking out, but I don't think she sees what I see. She told me a while ago that every summer she takes walks at night. That doesn't seem like something she would want to do, but here we are.

"Come on, let's eat those snacks."

"Do you see those guys?" I should have said "hear" them. They are hooting and hollering like chickens, but are merely charcoal blobs against the football field. For a minute, I thought they were just playing a game. Now they are all kneeling down at the circle in the middle, suddenly hushed. A moment later, they all run in opposite directions as a bright light shoots up quickly into the sky, accompanied with a loud, wailing cry.

"Oh, my gosh," I say, holding my hand to my chest. I stand up, wide-eyed, as I watch them light another one. "I have to go home." I grab the plastic bag with my food and clamber down the huge steps of the noisy bleachers.

"Wait, wait!" Sarah follows behind. She grabs my hand and says, "It's just fireworks. It'll be like a show, we can watch and eat and-"

"I have to go, it's getting late. My mom... I have to go." I kiss her goodbye before she'll want to walk me home. "Bye, Sarah." I don't mind leaving her here.



Birds
Ffion Collinsworth
Chalk Pastel

CLOSING COMMENTS

If there is one thing I regret not doing in high school, it's submitting more pieces to *Galaxy*. During my four years in *Galaxy*, including two years as an editor, I only submitted one piece, which was a throwaway story I didn't really put a lot of effort into. I suppose the reason I didn't submit much was because writing a poem or story that you are proud of and willing to share is difficult because you are exposing a part of yourself.

For me, most of what I write ends up getting abandoned halfway through either because I can't think of how to finish it, or I've stared at it so long that I don't like it anymore. That is why I admire everyone who has submitted a piece to *Galaxy*.

Writing requires a deep emotional transparency and honesty, and only the most thoughtful people can translate that honesty into a cohesive piece. You have to be brutally honest with yourself in order for the audience to believe what you say. It isn't easy. And these writers were willing to give up their work that they poured their soul into so that we could all experience it and hopefully gain something.

So I hope as you read through these wonderful pieces of writing, you can feel the presence of the person who was behind them, and thought about how much they have gone through to give you this piece. Thank you for reading, and thank you to everyone who submitted their work. You are an inspiration.

Calvin Staropoli

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