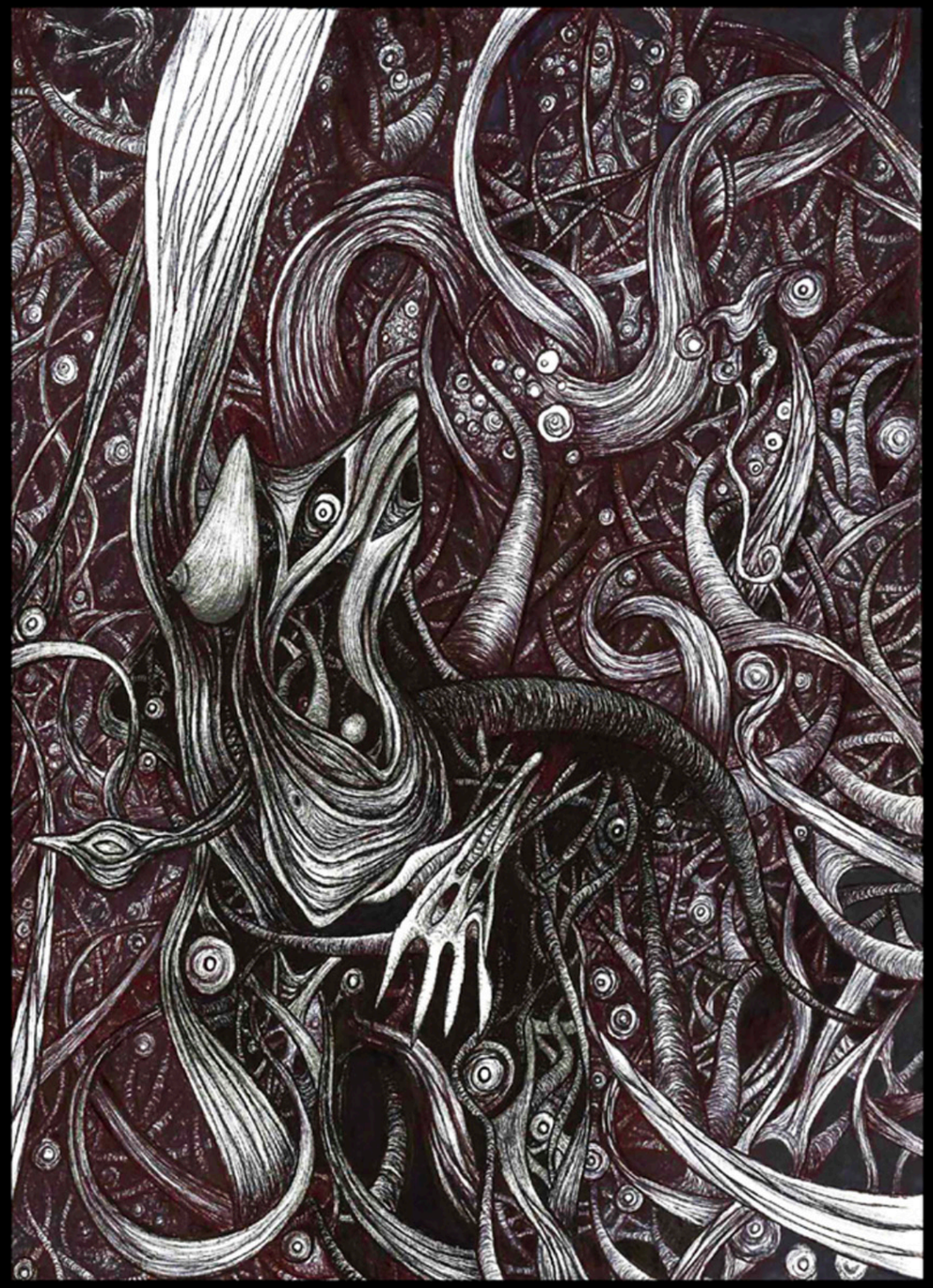

The Sand Canyon Review

2025

The Sand Canyon Review

Crafton Hills College's
Art and Literary
Magazine

2025 Edition

We would like to first offer
an important land acknowledgement.

Crafton Hills College acknowledges that the land on which it is built is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Maara'yam, commonly referred to as the Serrano people. Maara'yam (Serrano) and Cahuilla histories and stories are intertwined in this space, and by sharing them in culturally appropriate ways, Crafton Hills Colleges hopes to honor and celebrate our indigenous neighbors and partners.

Crafton Hills College

Dear Reader,

The 2025 edition of *The Sand Canyon Review* is special. Even though each edition of the magazine is significant and unique, the 2025 edition marks a shift that the staff did not recognize until the submissions started to come in. *The Sand Canyon Review* has been published every year, by a class at Crafton Hills College, since the early 2000's. It went through numerous changes in students, faculty advisors, and contributors but its heart has always remained the same. At the heart of *The Sand Canyon Review* is the tradition to nurture and protect a space where artists, writers, and poets are free to grow and experiment in their creative garden. That is, until 2020. As with many things we loved, *The Sand Canyon Review* withered during the years we were plagued by COVID-19 and there were no published magazines. This felt like a death for the magazine.

But then, like a bear after hibernation, the magazine awoke and returned, hungry for the creativity it had been kept from. The class size was smaller, and submissions were fewer, but the magazine still held the same heart. *The Sand Canyon Review* was alive once again and sought to be a safe harbor for everyone with a creative urge. The class at Crafton grows each year and the number of submissions increases, as well.

When we chose our theme of Rebirth, we did not think about it regarding the rebirth of the magazine. We chose the theme of Rebirth because we wanted to focus on the ideas of transformation, renewal, and the limitless possibilities that lie ahead. That everything created is composed of the scattered pieces of something that came and vanished before. For something to be destroyed, there must first be something to destroy. This is the cycle of rebirth—of thoughts, of inventions, and, of course, of people. Little did we know that we were in the middle of our own process of Rebirth; that we had been destroyed and that we would be reborn.

We see this now and feel more part of the 2025 edition of *The Sand Canyon Review* than we could have anticipated. We hope you enjoy our Rebirth and all our talented contributors' work.

Sincerely,
The 2025 *Sand Canyon Review* Team

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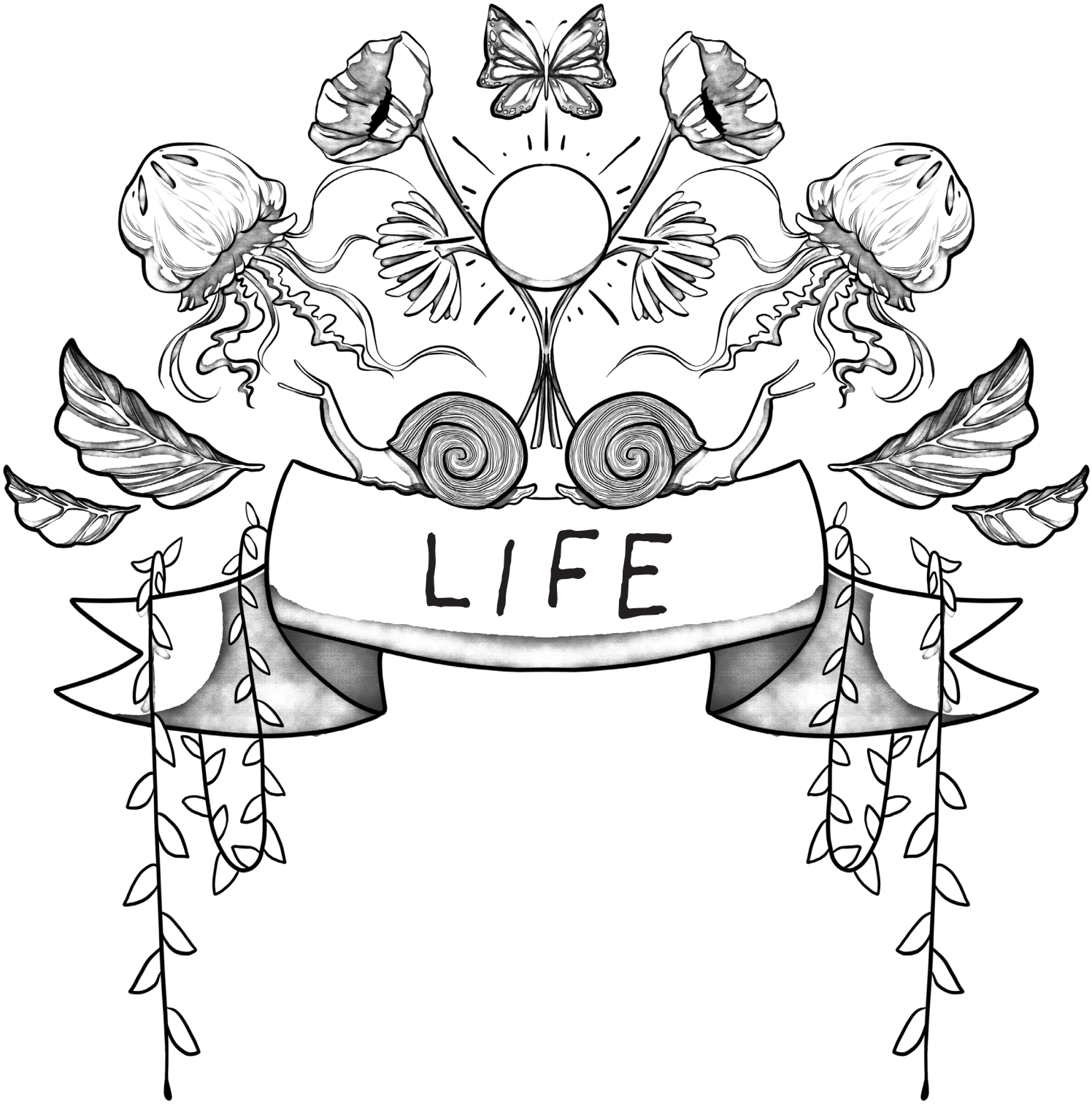

LIFE

The Delicate Process

Gianna Raquel Lopez

Little Green

Annie Monge

Isn't there anything more
familiar than the unfurling of a leaf?
Even as a child, as you looked up
at lime-green leaves and veins
of branches, you knew,
you were before something wiser,
something that knew you
and seemed to love you even
before it came to know your name;
when you asked to live again,
it was precisely for this;
an unfurling,
to once again receive sunlight
for the first time.

The Dandelion Sings

La'Reenah La'Marra Decker

The Dandelion sings a Song:
Resilience and New Beginnings.
I survived the bitter harmonies of Winter.
The harsh frost did not overwhelm me.
Winter's blanket did not smother a hopeful heart.
Dissonance burst into beautiful Harmony:
Life's Song encapsulates my heart.
The Dandelion's song: A joyful tune.
A Melody for New Beginnings:
Enlightened Spring.
Passionate melodies are carried by New Life.
I am the Sun in the Meadow.
My rays travel throughout the sea of green.
Cheerfulness clothes the fields of Spring;
Golden the color of its garments.
New Beginnings flow through sunlit meadows.
Restoration breathes life into Hope's field.
The Dandelion sings.

Catastrophic Demise

Alexia Clark

I want to be a jellyfish, he pondered.
I could live anywhere in the world, so many places to see.
I would get to see the world.
I would have no bones for you to break.
I would have no eyes for you to water.
I would have no heart for you to take.
I would have no brain for you to devour.
I want to be a jellyfish, he decided.
I could be immortal, turn back the aging time.
I would have no bones or eyes, that could lead to my catastrophic demise.
I would have no heart or brain, so I would no longer feel pain.
I want to be a jellyfish.

Orilla Del Mar

Annie Monge

We are rocks eroding
on the shoreline,
becoming sand that will
nest the turtle eggs,
shelter the crabs,
and rest the seabirds.
We'll become a place
where jellyfish wash up to die,
where fragmented shells are deeply
buried to be hidden and found.

"Look at what we've become," we'll say,
what we've birthed,
what we've dissipated,
all the while the sea is still there,
breaking us down into something smaller,
yet infinite.

Jellyfish

Alexia Clark

I want to be a jellyfish, she said.
Maybe I'll be immortal, maybe I'll glow in the dark.

Jellyfish have no bones, I tell her.
Why would you want no bones?
Your bones are strong and hold you right.

I don't want bones, bones might break, she said.
They get old and wither away.

Jellyfish have no eyes, I tell her.
Why would you want no eyes?
Your eyes can see the world around you.

I don't want eyes, eyes get tired, she said.
They retire and begin to close.

Jellyfish have no brains, I tell her.
Why would you want no brain?
Your brain thinks and feels for you.

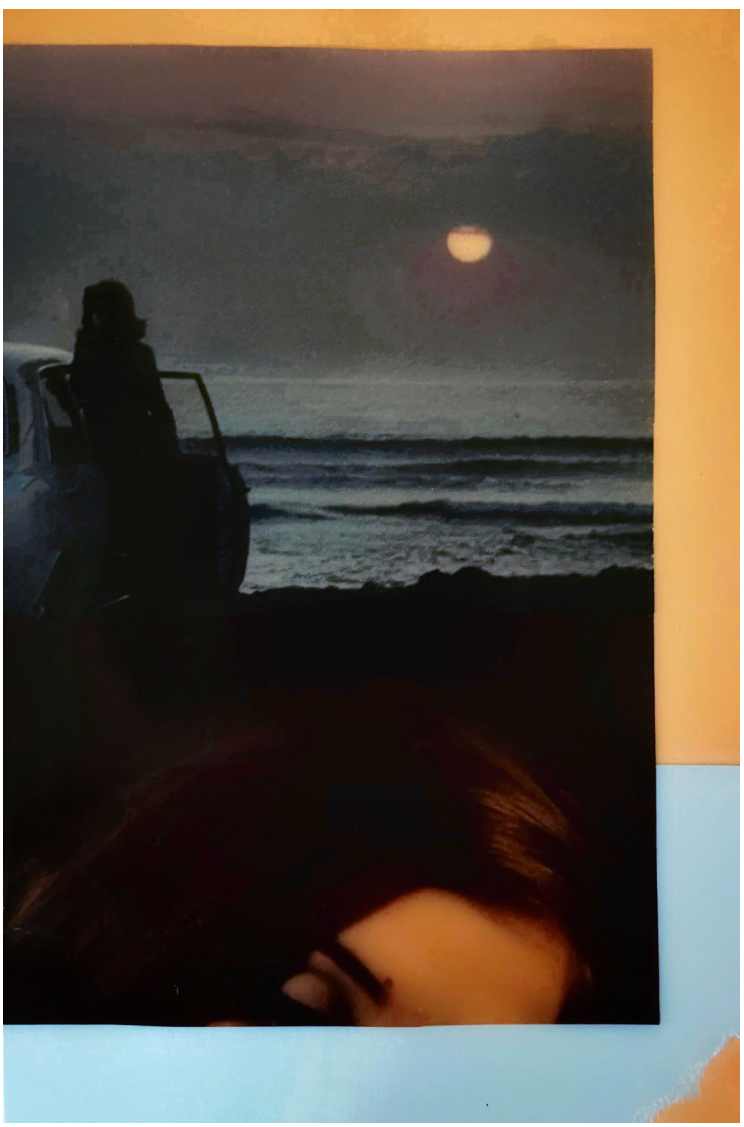
I don't want a brain, brains get scared, she said.
Brains forget and lose all reason.

Jellyfish have no heart, I tell her.
Why would you want no heart?
Your heart beats for you.

Jellyfish have no heart? she asked.
Maybe I won't be a jellyfish,
I need a heart to love you.

Sealight (XX)

JC Alfier



AA Monologue

Julia Barrett

"Hello everyone," I spoke quietly, my eyes cast down on the podium standing before me, the mass of faces before me slipping in and out of the void. "I'm not sure where to start, but I guess I'll just start talking and see where that goes," I continue, my voice unsteady. With every word that escapes my lips, I feel the judgment in their minds cast by their eyes in a glazed-eye stare. Slamming my eyes shut, I breathe in every lost ounce of my fears and breathe them all out. Somehow I let out the words teasing and taunting me, balancing on the tip of my lips and begging to be spilled for so long. "Ever since I remember, I'd wake up angry at the sun. Maybe because I was angry at it for rising again, ripping me away from the only time I ever felt even the tiniest little sense of peace. It was the only time the monster inside my stomach slept, sparing me from its movement that turned, squeezed, and flipped my insides everywhere I went with everything I tried to do no matter how desperately I begged it not to. All of my demons - inside the walls of that house and out - couldn't touch me.

Back then, before Mamma's property got taken, the entire three acres were covered in these colossal olive trees, just ginormous. It's the most insane thing you could ever see - though I was much smaller than - I must admit, but - oh -. It felt like magic. My great-great-great granddaddy and my great-great meemaw planted every single one of those trees when she was a little girl, and for generations, our family took care of the tree farm - I suppose when they say all great things must come to an end, they weren't kidding. Momma loved that olive tree farm though, between all of us - I think she loved it more than me. I mean for Christ's sake, she even named me Olive! Olive, who lived on an olive tree farm - do you know how much I got made fun of back then?!

But yeah, I guess if I had to pinpoint when everything started to go wrong, I say that's when it began. I can't remember how old I was anymore, but after my daddy died, nothin' ever felt right again. Momma was never the same, I was never the same. Even our home, which held onto so much of his love and warmth, was taken from us, seized by the banks when my Momma had to go away. I thought I was all grown - too grown to be living with strangers when I could provide for myself easily, I had been doing it for so long already, but I couldn't fathom being shipped off. I tried to stay in school, but the rent was due and minimum wage hardly gets you anywhere. That's when I turned to the bottle. I mean - I had drank many many times before that, but I guess I should say that's when the bottle turned to me. I don't even want to admit to the amount of years it took me to put the damn bottle down after that. - as you can see by the lines on my face, it took me way too long, but here I am, fighting those demons, as are we all.

I am only fourteen days sober, - the first two weeks I've been sober in decades. You'd think, after hitting rock bottom over, over, and over again you'd never be able to climb your way back up, I mean that's what happened to my Momma. She never could manage to climb her way out, it had too deep of a hold on her, I guess. I mean, the woman died with an alcohol bottle in her arms for crying out loud! I never should've expected anything more. I never expected anything more for myself, I don't even think I've dreamed about the future 'since I was a little girl. The furthest I thought for most of my life was tomorrow and I don't want to live my life that way anymore." I choked up as the thick coat of tension filled the room once again. My chest seems to be on fire and my lungs are swallowing it with every passing moment. I close my eyes, enveloping myself in darkness, and allow a few breaths to escape, slowly easing out the fire raging inside my body and mind. *Three seconds,* I think to myself, my eyes still squeezed shut while everyone in the room waits for my move. *One, two, three.*

"I had a sweet, sweet baby child, the absolute best thing that had ever entered my life. Evangeline, my poor sweet baby," An all too familiar thickness lodges in my throat and I take another few seconds to calm down. "She was m-murdered," I whisper. "She was murdered, three years ago now. She was only six years old." Salty streams are slowly dripping down my face as I try to fight and squeeze them in. This is the first time I've ever been able to talk about it, and I still am stuck, unsure how to feel. I've spent most of my life numbing every feeling, every painful memory, and hurtful thought. I couldn't even be sober in my daughter's final moments, and that haunts me every single day. There are many things I still haven't learned, lessons I blindly ignored. Standing here today, at thirty-four years old, one thing I am finally starting to figure out is that it's better to feel - even the bad parts. It's better to feel pain, deep-deep pain than to let your life pass by in a numbed haze. Happiness, simply can not exist, if pain did not exist too.

The day I had to say goodbye to my baby, I swore to myself I would never have a kid again. I was a terrible mom, I did not deserve that precious little girl. You know, a few months before she passed, she asked me, 'Momma, why do you always have the funny grown-up drink?' and I remember being particularly upset that day, so I rolled my eyes and to mind her own business and leave me alone. I wish I could say that was my worst mom moment, but it's nowhere even close. There was a large part of me that felt - feels like God murdered her to punish me. I mean why would he do such a cruel thing to such an innocent girl whose life hadn't even begun? It's my fault. Here I am now, three years later, I just found out two weeks ago I'm pregnant. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't go through with this pregnancy, and I couldn't live with myself if I gave this baby away even though I already knew it deserved better. So, for once in my life, I'm learning from my mistakes and being better to be the mom this baby deserves - or as close to it as someone like me can ever get. These past fourteen days have been some of the hardest, yet strangely also some of the best days of my life. Thank you ladies and gentlemen for listening to me."

It

Katy Garcia

So long I was missing something that felt so close
I remember
I could feel it
It was palpable
It was bittersweet—like a grapefruit
It was in my hands, and yet
I couldn't find it
I didn't know what the damned it was

The *it* was staring me in the face
The *it* was laughing at me
As if to say:
You, you fool child. You know nothing yet

I am still a child
still,
Learning all of the most basic principles of self-care
Still,
Trying to meet everyone else's expectations
Still,
Biding time as if I were older than I am
As if I knew more than I do

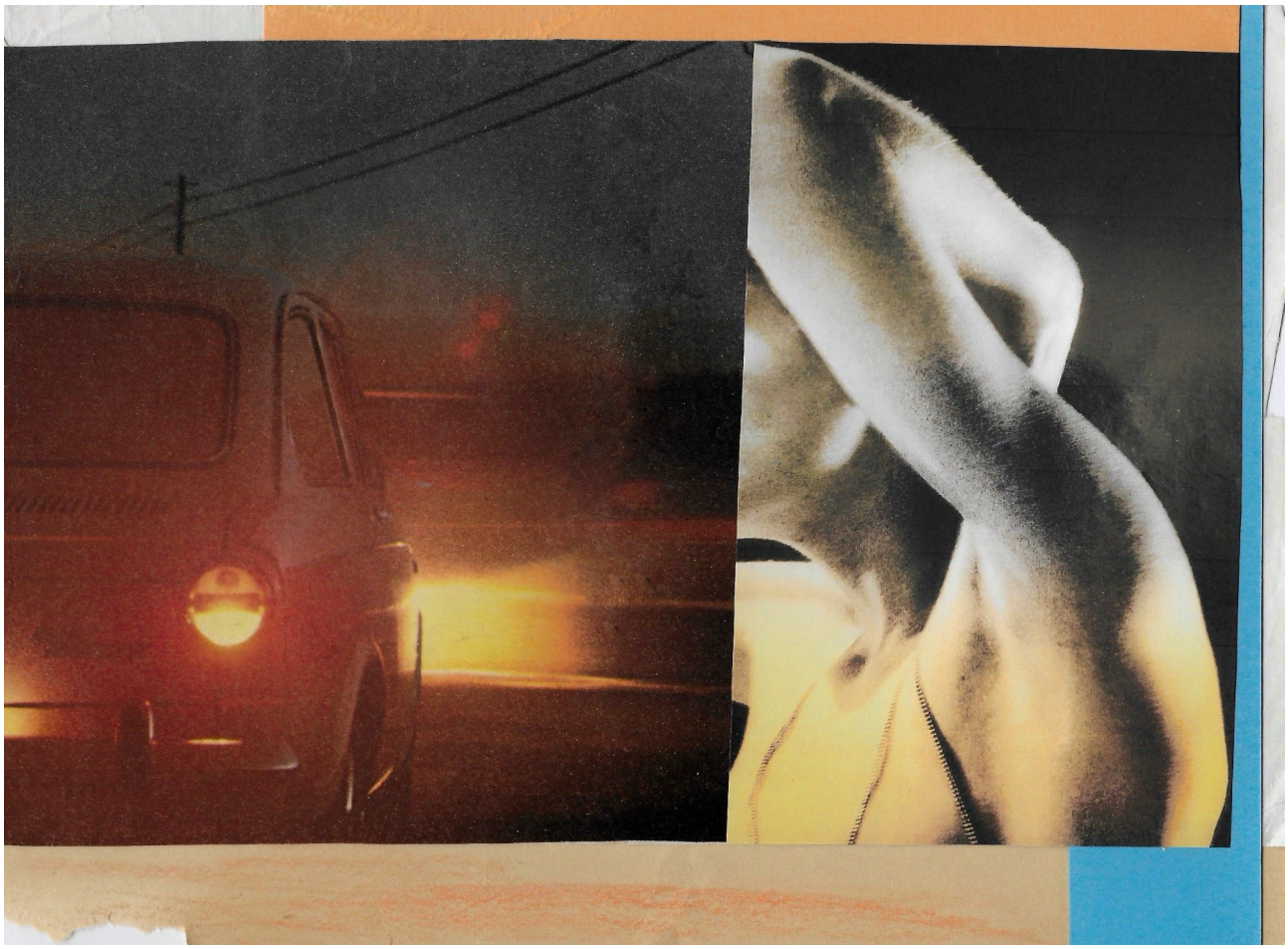
Last night I had a very simple realization: this thing. The *it*.
It is no one else's job to love me but mine

All these years
I have been mourning the child that I lost

Yet I am the one that left her.

I have been asking who will learn to love me
Yet I haven't ever—until now—asked when I will learn.

Peaceful in her Garden
Lia Goritz



Lightstruck (III)
JC Alfier

The Truth
Katy Garcia

Here is the cold hard truth:
We are meaningless
A small blip in between everything
Here is what it is to be human:
To defy the aforementioned fact
To give yourself and the world around you a meaning
To decide it matters because you need it to.
What are you supposed to do once you become aware of both things?
Lord, what am *I* to do?

Dahlia

Alexia Clark

Secret lover of mine, kiss me in the darkness
The chaos and the morbid, hold me close
Carefully under watchful eyes
Dahlia, don't turn your back
Or close your eyes, armies stand waiting
For you to fall out of line
Stand at attention, don't question
Kiss me, quickly while their backs are turned
I wish to love you Dahlia, completely
Meet me under the stars, where we can be anything
Where we can be free
Hold me
Don't breathe to harshly, or they might hear
Step lightly, until we're in the clear
Patiently waiting, watching from above
Dahlia, my love, my life, join me
Anticipating our story, will this be our glory
Dahlia?
Where did you go?

Love Bitters

Aaron Kahrs

Forget me and my feigned fame
Even though there's something left
I don't know what it is or was or could be
What i can hold is just this glass
The bitters in it
And i hate that you were good
And i hate that you saw it in me
And that i couldn't be more broken
And that you're still around
And that i am too
The peaks and troughs never level
An uncalming sea in my glass

Life Will Prevail
EtoTeddy

To me, my friend, thou wilt never grow old

Bob Blanck

To me, my friend, thou wilt never grow old
But will always remain young in my mind
Thy deeds they were great and thy spirit bold
And to ev'ry soul thou wert always kind

Thus far are the miles many we have seen
From Langley's high peak to Pacific sand
Faithful and true friend hast thou ever been
As we sought adventure in this great land

Alas my friend thou art no longer here
And now a deep wound is left in thy place
Thy life has been taken too soon I fear
No more wilt I ever look upon thy face

Not till God's presence wilt I meet thee again
Where losses art restor'd and sorrows end

In memory of my best friend Scott Johnston who was killed by a drunk driver. Scott was a member of the Sheriff's Department search and rescue team. He was killed in the line of duty while on his way to search for a lost hiker.

Last of Fall

Tracy Reyes

Birth of Breath

Ryan Marin

Being – so from breath to breath;
a birth is it's vitality –
cradle, to concluding death;
consumption – till the final breeze.
In peace, so move to the next;
a brand new breath, another me –
life, to bed of flowers rest;
a cycle – my identity.
Living, so it is enough;
a part of what it will become –
a death divine, hopeful knell
of new rebirth – a life redone.

Regrowth

Kira Saucedo

Softly weeping, your
tears fall to the soil. Till, so
happiness may grow.

Out with the Old

Diosa Xochiquetzalcóatl

Mint green for evenings, relaxing and serene.
Pristine peach for sunny days at the beach.
Stripes of blue and white for months without strife.
Navy with sexy lace to put an end to the ridiculous rat-race.

Hear me loud! Hear me clear!
None of you MF are ever getting near
to my brand new panties in this brand new year.

Red Rock Scenic Drive

Lia Goritz

06:52 february 27th 2025
Ivan de Monbrison

Not to be.

Not to see.

I don't know.

I don't know anything. I had such a bad night full of nightmares.

My body was almost destroyed.

Destroyed by the pain of the brain and
I have to take these pills. I have to take Abilify, I have to take Lamictal.

I have to accept this medication for the rest of my life.

I found myself yesterday watching this recent movie about Hitler and Goebbels and I don't know why. As I watched it I understood there was some cruelty in me too.

And the cruelty in me, came to me step by step. Very slowly. I didn't see it coming at all. It came over the past years.
Now, my mother is very old. She's a dying woman somehow. And I am going to be 56 on the day after tomorrow. This I realized that the boy
that I used to know the young man that I used to be, is dead now.
He is really dead inside me. I mean, this young man that used to be, someone who had ideals, was sensitive to things, you know...it is dead. And he is gone forever now.

And it's funny because my brother mentioned something about this to me, the last time I saw him, as there was a photo of me as a young man on a shelf in the room. A photo that my girlfriend keeps there, well, my wife, like she likes me to call her, and my brother noticed this photograph and looked at my eyes and said *your eyes have changed.*

It's not the same eyes.

As for when the photo was taken, I was maybe. I don't know, 32-34.

When I was that age, paradoxically, I was utterly lost in life, I was nothing. But I guess I was indeed lost, but not. cruel, yet. Not so much eaten *alive* by myself.

I think this first idea of this cruelty came also from the fact that recently I went back to drawing on

canvas with Indian ink, And with these very complicated drawings, intricate lines, some cruelty surfaced. You see when I use the colors, the colors, you know, fill up the canvas totally. So it hides somehow how sharp, how hard some things can be inside the brain.

But with this Indian ink, it makes a very, very precise pattern, like a portrait of an ugly true reality of oneself.

So, I've tried to understand.

I guess the cruelty comes from the fact that I'm scared or I was scared of something in the first place. And in order to protect myself, I put myself in a position that I felt more secure in. But it's a more secure position, because it keeps me totally apart from the others, totally aloof. And naturally any more secure position is very difficult to keep in life by essence.
And in some way I got more and more angered at others. For putting myself in this position in order for myself to feel some safety, but they didn't do it especially. It's just a reaction of my brain to life, to the natural violence inside others. The one that exists by itself. Whether it's aimed at me or at anyone, it's part of nature, then you decide how to react, it is actually your own responsibility, and my reaction has been to set me apart from the world, to live away from the world. So, I live in total seclusion. I have partially no connection with reality.

And so, I live in this closed circle that I've created thus I guess. With the passing of the years, it becomes more and more unbearable because you get older. So your body starts to suffer more often than before, you see people get older around you, they suffer too. And so you give up. You resent the world more and more, you resent the obvious fact that you cannot do more things, be more, exist as vividly as in your youth.

And then this suffering turns into cruelty.

You want somehow to get some payback, some revenge.

It's very sad. It's a very sad thing. I think a lot of old people have this beside me, as they grow old and weary. Well, I'm not that old but I'm old brainwise, you know, it's not a young brain anymore.

Then I had these nightmares coming over me, and I simply lost it, for one truly ugly past night, when I was partially almost eaten alive by monsters, in fantasy. And just to reach the bedlight in the night near my bed became almost impossible.

It was not a night. It was agony.

And after this, tomorrow I'm flying away to Turkey, to meet my wife. To try to rest, to also try some new "magic" pills for my sick brain.

My wife will want me to perform sex.

But me and sex, we don't communicate anymore. Maybe it's too. It's too heavy. So, my sexual life is like something I should do but not something that I enjoy. So I guess it's like everything now. I don't enjoy many things anyway. I enjoy things which are totally sick in many ways, like smoking, picking things thrashed away by people on the pavement, and keep the usual ordeal, drawing on canvas the mess that I keep hidden inside in the daylight.

You know, I only do things that are not really about sharing, they are just things I do within myself, selfishly.

But sharing now .... I don't share anymore. I can't share.

One of my former publishers came to visit me in my art studio in Paris, and I can feel that he likes me, he is a good man, he is totally crazy, but he's a good man. Anyway, he likes me. I had not seen him for years. And as we sat there and chatted casually, I just wanted him to go away, for no reason.
Just to have this simple conversation with someone was very, very difficult.

Recently I tried to watch "The Hours", the movie, once again. I know this movie by heart, I saw it maybe 10 times and I used to enjoy it a lot now, I see it with different eyes. But I guess I used to like it also because I identified myself with a character and the story of Virginia Woolf drowning herself in the river with stones stuck inside her pockets ... and this last sentence that she's supposed to have written, you know, *always the years, always the time, always the hours*...you know? between us and how she speaks about how to embrace life and and to live in it and then to put it away, and it's all very morbid and I've always been thrilled by all this stuff. I reveal all the morbid shit.

Yeah, I'm very sick.

Now it's done. It's 6:30.

My neighbors are waking up.

And the coffee shop, on the first floor of my building has just opened,
as some Chinese people run it and they always work very hard, opening first, closing last.

Sometimes when I go out in the street, very early in the morning before anybody, because I just can't stay in my place. So, I go out, by foot, to my small art studio located in another borough, and usually meet the same man. Always smoking in the dark in my street. I guess that his wife doesn't want him to smoke inside their apartment. And last time I said hello and he said hello. It was nice. It was nothing but something between smokers.

Why? Yes, smoking kills. But I guess it's the least of my problems.

I don't know, I don't know why we are all alive. I guess some, like my wife, think there is a target. I'm not sure ...
But why not?

But whether there is a target or not, it makes no difference. And what I can think or not. It makes no difference too. So and at some point, in the end, what I believe in or my opinion about any topic isn't worth a shit. But I always want to make my point, when I discuss with someone, I'm very stubborn, I really keep my position in a very strong way and I never give up, and it's totally useless.

Who Cares. And what difference does it make in the end?

None, well, that's why I guess that I avoid most interactions.

The stupidity of so many things inside me, I cannot change them with sheer will, because they came for a reason, and to block everything would not make any difference. When I was a very young man, I used to try to block myself but it didn't help at all.

We'll see what happens next. On the island of Burgazada on the sea of Marmara, facing Istanbul, in the last days of winter, with very few people around, I guess, with all the wind and rain. We'll see what comes next.

My Accent

Yacquelin Laveriano Pizan

I came from my hometown in Peru,
carrying a language with pride
a language that feels like home,
and another that feels like a barrier.

In Spanish, I am myself.
"¡Hola! ¿Cómo estás? ¡Mucho gusto!"
I can jump into conversations,
even lose myself in chisme if you want.
But in English, I shrink,
swallowing my words before they escape.

My accent holds me back,
makes me second guess my voice.
There is so much I want to say,
but it feels like a clear tape covers my mouth,
so I stay quiet.

My accent builds a wall between me and others,
locking me in a silence that is not my own.
But one day, I will rip that tape off my mouth,
break down that wall,
and let my voice be heard.

Dabke Folk Dance Solo

Mona Kadah

Heritage in Harmony

Mona Kadah

A Timely Word

Jessica Gilfillan

Janus, with two faces, chases
the past and present simultaneously.
Magic potions mute our emotions,
can be smoked, swallowed,
or taken intravenously.

My mother told little of how to love
except that it was forbidden,
so I sought out to prove her wrong
by letting every little bit in.

Betting you my monthly ebb and flow
is getting me in trouble again,
a foe to all, a foe to self,
ideation setting in and then...

A fire breather,
there she goes gesticulating dramatically
even when she's not yelling,
she's Italian,
her annoyance reads.
Jeez I wish I could silence
the subtle violence
of my gesturing.

I guess it's in my DNA,
or maybe that's a tired cliché.
I can't tell what's nature and what's nurture
what with my ADHD,
PMDD, PTSD, OMFG you know we love
to label it with an acronym,
an acrobatic attempt
to explain why my actions are an anachronism.

Actually, I can't self-actualize
while preoccupied with surviving capitalism.
I'm frying my endocrine system
in fight or flight over Outlook emails again.

I took out the student loan,
spent countless nights away from my daughter
just to score salary at a company
that eats you up
as corporate fodder.

The American experiment, meanwhile,
lugging opulently onward,
uninterrupted and unbothered
by buried alive sons and daughters,
dead children, dead doctors,
aid workers slaughtered...

After another made-in-America,
Lockheed-Martin brand bomb drops,
another round of botox!
More botulism and BBLs before
Coachella fit pics,
unfollow your friend
who can't stop posting
about Palestine
for killing your vibe.

#ThisIsHowWeActedDuringAnActiveGenocide

Dizzied by generational trauma,
riding the tsunami of historical drama
and subsequent collective apathy,
it's the artist's responsibility
to name what we see.

A great divide,
who can decide
between the right wing and the left wing
of a rotting bird?
I'm no prophetess,
just a nameless mess.
Still I can bring
a timely word.

Our Creator knows
of every buried bone
that has ever tried to be hidden,
and the Oval Office is now haunted
by 18,000 Palestinian children,
and it happened while
the White house was blue,
but their hands are blood red,
joke's on me and you.

And if our friendship ends
since I can't justify
why babies and toddlers
were among those that just had to die,
then go ahead and hit unfollow,
I'm not bothered,
and free Palestine.

Poppies in Palestine

Mona Kadah

The Man On The Moon
EtoTeddy

Frostbite

LeAnna McEuen

I go out to sit amongst the trees
To talk with them—
They listen

Still...quiet
Majestic in their stance
They hear my words and watch my tears
Though brazen in stature they're soft in spirit

Wisest of all nature
Protecter, healer, keeper of life
We have things in common—
The naked tree and I

Don't judge the tree in its barren state
Its shedding process to be saved
Seasons are Salvations
For the tree and me—

I sit with him, and discuss the secrets that I keep--

Great tree, wise and noble
How do you survive?
My heart is broken.
I grapple with the whys—

Do you ever break, under the weight of snow on your limbs?
Do you feel pain or regret in the still presence that you give?
Do you converse with all the birds, that come and go in chatter?
Empty verse, lovely songs, and sometimes empty banter?

How do you poise so mighty?
I wish that I were so—
Alas, I am mere human
In this frigid breeze I blow

Becoming older, wiser like you—
Wearing my own rings
Did yours hurt like incision?
Were your leaves the tears you weep?

I'm looking for relation...

With nature and life, you see
I'm determined to learn until I fall
Until I fall, I need to be—
Growing.

My heart is crushed, and dreams haunt me
Do you ever dream?
Have you ever been made to feel that your presence is hindering?
When man axes you down, do you also cry?
When you're broken into pieces, are you still alive?
When you burn to appease another, in anger do you lie?
Oh, Noble Tree, I long to know—
How is it you survive?

Tell me your sacred secrets
Tell me the wisdom of life
Tell me something because his silence
Is as painful as
Frostbite

Like you I have withered
Like you I seem to die
Like you I sacrifice parts of myself
For others to survive

As you have throughout your lifespan
Shown beauty and grace,
I've tried to be a place of holding
Giver of peaceful shade

Some inhabitants are takers
How will I ever know?
I don't have your perspective above, beyond
Nor tapped in roots below—

But intuition I do have—
I was hoping you could guide me
Offer me reprieve...
The quietness of frostbite setting in
Is haunting me

Nothing but a coyote cry
Over the horizon bellows out
I break and weep, shed my leaves,
In the coldness of frozen ground

Like you tree—
I am exposed
And like you I believe
I rise up
Grow strong again and greet my Tulip Spring.

Whispers to the Songbird

Gianna Raquel Lopez

The Tulip Spring

LeAnna McEuen

I descended...
My dried up bulb
into the earth, as dark as the womb

It will not be
seven days I'll need
But for a season
I must be buried
I am not the staple, standard seed
whom within one week
unearths her green

I am the deeper -
Buried deep
Within the dark of Winter's steed
You'd think they'd freeze
these tulip shells
Yet grace of God,
He shelters well

Not to say I haven't felt
Thirst, fear, and pressure dealt

Ay, I have my forgone foes-
I've been stepped upon
with a thousand toes
This is not pity nor despair
Rather peaceful, loving care

To allow myself to bury deep
To rest this season, for my soul to sleep
Within its layers - sheltered well
lies this tulip between heaven and hell
The middle is real - the in-between
of seasons, of changes, the forthcoming unseen

Here I shall lay, so quiet and still
Deeply growing and developing well
I may look buried, I may be asleep
In-between the layer for my mind to keep
It's solemn place, it's sacred space
It's protection for growth, It's fasting for the call

This Tulip is hardy
This Tulip is strong
In the Spring I shall bloom
though buried so long
In the Spring I shall bloom
answering my Creator's call

To come forth from the mirth, out from my safe wall
To rise up and shine - radiate light to all
The Spring Tulip doesn't fear the trample
I trust and stand tall
This Tulip Spring shall be most grand -
As rich as the sweetness of Mother Netherland

This Tulip Spring is the wake-up call
from the lightless depths of chosen burial
from the warmth of layers' cover
from the guarding of heart for survival
Within my shell I rested well
This Tulip Spring I'll be uncovering

This Tulip Spring
will be the unfolding
This Tulip Spring
will be the blooming
This Tulip Spring
is the uprising.

Katy Garcia Interview

WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST INSPIRATION FOR "THE END"?

When I wrote this, I was thinking about a lot of those philosophical questions that can't really be answered. I write about those a lot, or at least try to. This monster is sort of representative of that, it's beyond our comprehension, it always will be, and yet, everyone that has read it, wants an answer to the story. The monster descriptors themselves are most heavily inspired by different Lovecraft and biblical pieces.

WHAT WERE THE EASIEST AND HARDEST PARTS OF YOUR STORY TO WRITE AND WHY?

The hardest part I rewrote over and over (and am still not sure of to this day) is the question the person asks the monster at the end, that one final say. This was the most important moment in the story to me, and how can you gather all of these thoughts in one question. You can't. Trust me. I tried. So I had to ask myself what was the best question you could ask in that situation, what is the hardest hitting? I suppose "what's next" hit closest to home, or seemed the most human. Another little annoying thing, was very specifically avoiding any pronouns. I habitually switched up so much, but wanted to maintain the mystery so that anyone could put themselves in this person's shoes. The easiest, or most fun part, was writing the monster, its arrival and presence was dramatic and vivid, and somehow it just flew out.

YOUR STORY IS OPEN-ENDED. IF IT HAD TO HAVE A DEFINITIVE "THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT", WHAT WOULD IT BE?

It can't have a next part. I feel the ending of the story is what defines it the most, the entire story is about the unknown, the things we want so badly to understand, that element had to be there. Honestly I don't know what would come next, it's no secret I'm hiding, it is beyond my comprehension. It is something that can't be captured with words, so the words stop there.

COULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THIS YEAR'S THEME, "REBIRTH", WITHIN YOUR STORY; WAS THE INTENT TO SHOW WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE A REBIRTH, DEATH AS REBIRTH, OR SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY?

When I wrote this story, I had never intended this meaning to be interpreted, but a friend said it was very interesting how cyclical it was, how easy you could go from the last line, right back to the first. I had never noticed it before. It changed my view on the story entirely. This story depicts so many different stages, life of the monster, death of man, and the cycle of the story repeating itself.

IF YOU HAD TO GIVE SOME ADVICE TO ASPIRING WRITERS, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Honestly, I always feel unqualified to give any, but if I had to, I'd say to make yourself sit down every day for just a little bit and write. It doesn't have to be good, it doesn't have to be anything -I've written about the burger I was eating, I've written a grocery list, or even just the words "I can't think of anything" over and over again- but if you make yourself sit there, eventually something will come out of it.

YOU ALSO SUBMITTED SOME POETRY. HOW WERE YOUR APPROACHES TO WRITING BOTH GENRES SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT? WHICH WOULD YOU SAY IS EASIER FOR YOU AND WHY?

Honestly, poetry comes much easier to me, it's just one snapshot, a small glimpse. I only throw out one thought blurb, and there's a poem. But writing a whole story, my god. You have to expand that concept into something so large, you have to portray it in every detail. Poetry is just one thought or emotion, or even just an observation. It doesn't take many edits or [much] thought. In fact I think the more you think about it, the harder it gets! So how I deal with both is just time centered. Writing a story is structured. I sit myself down and I plan. Poems on the other hand are written in the middle of the night, or pulled off to the side of the road.

The Last Dance

Bob Blanck

The first night we met I wasn't sure if you liked me
Your huge new voice deafening our ears
I held you close but you wouldn't stop crying
We swayed back and forth, though there was no music
We'd never danced before, we sort of made it up as we went
Your little hand wrapped around my finger
Your little body tucked under my arm and clinging to my chest
I'd be angry too if I had been thrown so suddenly into this scary new world

The next time we danced, I wore a bow tie
And you wore a cute little tutu
I still didn't know how to dance, but you taught me the moves
We spun and twirled across the floor
Just me and my little girl

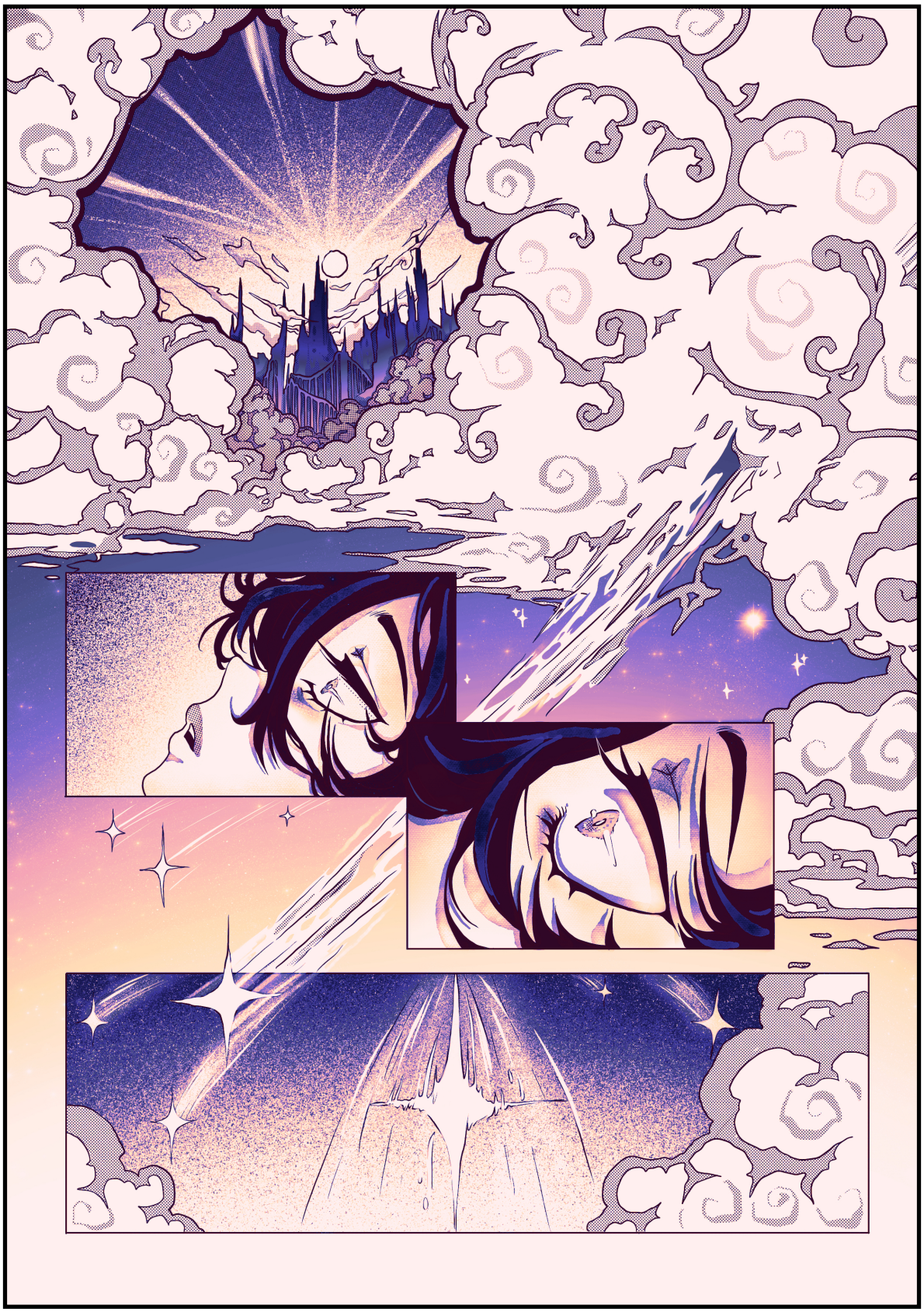
The third time we danced many years later
Outside in the sun
It was the same dance we had done once before
I still wore a bow tie, but you were a young woman now
I still didn't know how to dance, but you reminded me again
Now looking eye to eye, we spun and twirled some more
But still my little girl

Tonight we dance like Cinderella
Reminding me of the dances from our past
I still won't be able to dance, but you'll lead the way
We'll lift and spin and twirl
A young woman now, but still my little girl

The last time we dance,
I'll be saying good bye
No longer a child, but still my little girl
I'll be handing you over to another prince
And you'll teach him to dance with his little girl

I wish I'd realized that first night together
How quickly life would pass us by
I wish I'd known that first night we danced
That dances with my little girl would soon be over
I'd trade all of the dances we've ever had since then
To go back to that first night we met
And dance with your screaming little self, just one more time.

alight
Lauren Kelley Bond



Reborn again

EtoTeddy

The End

Katy Garcia

"You aren't going to die," he promises. "This is not death, do you understand?"

I wanted, more than anything else, to do something. To feel something. Nothing specific–I'm not too particular, but I just thought I might lose my mind if I kept on going the way that I was. I wanted to fall in love. I wanted to stay up until sunrise. I wanted to rob a bank and change my identity for all I cared. It would at least be less boring than my life right now. Well, not now, not after all this.

I remember where this all started, vividly. It was three days ago. It was 7:26 p.m. according to the car, which was three minutes ahead. I had until 8:30 to eat my glorious TV dinner and get to the next place, a night shift at the mini-mart. I had just enough time to eat in the car. My glove box poured out each night like clockwork when I reached for the cutlery: junk mail, bills, a pair of taped-up glasses, and a bunch of other crap that hadn't been taken out of the car in at least seven years. Along with it all, out fell an old book I could've sworn I bought, what, last year? Was it really so far away?

I still hadn't found the time to read it. I took the book and jammed all the unpaid bills back inside the glove box to close it. I held the book in my hands for a minute, just staring at it, wondering if I could still read it, if I could still read at all. Could you forget how? No, that sounds laughable. But I still didn't open it. Instead, I ran a finger down its spine. With my hands, my aged and callused hands. After all the work I've put in, I guess I seemed to be aging faster than before.

The truth was I missed reading, thinking, doing something enjoyable. It had been a while. Everyone else saw me as a shell of myself, but I never knew how to express that I saw it too, that I wasn't oblivious. That I missed myself. At that point, it was like I was just waiting at some bus stop, and I'd always miss my ride. I hadn't caught it in years.

It was 8:13 p.m. by then, or so said the clock. Either way, I was out of time. I threw the book (not really mine at this point) in the back seat, threw away the untouched amalgamation of

food, and drove away from one nowhere to the next.

Everything was the same, cyclical. The mini-mart with the flickering lights, most out completely. The same homeless man and his dog on the bench outside. The same nod to each other. The same punch card in the back. The same aisles. The same dread.

A new poster on the window.

Bright orange and blue hand-painted flowers, a phone number, the question: *Looking for a purpose?*

I took it and folded it up in my pocket. What kind of childish naivete does it take to think a poster can change your life? But for me, it had to be enough. If only I would have left it and just stayed bored. But I didn't do that. I took the poster. I called. They answered.

A soft voice reached through the phone gently, coy and kind as if she were talking to a kid.

"Looking for a purpose?"

"Yeah, I am." And then, began the end.

It wasn't scary like this before. The people seemed kind, and the church was plain but warm. It didn't match this. Here, now, it was too cold.

I had told myself, despite my doubts, that this wasn't a cult because cults have weird hooded uniforms, and creepy basements with stone altars, and most importantly, I hoped I wasn't in a cult. But now, whether or not it is a cult, and whether or not this is my purpose, I feel like the sacrifice.

This room is plain and sterile, like a doctor's office, and this rolling metal table is my altar. The ceiling is covered in plain white panels and lights, and lined with the tops of cabinets at its edges. It seems less like a church, yet we never left the building. I hadn't been to this place before, and now I know I will never go back.

In my defense, I'm not crazy like the rest of them. I never truly believed in all the edifice of these cosmic beings and their rulings. I was just bored, bored and alone. Sometimes I like to imagine that night I found the poster and pretend I found something else instead. Maybe I found some dog alone in the dumpster outside and so began some new kind of devotion. Maybe I ran into some special CIA operative who had an assignment for me. Maybe I met some girl named

Melissa or Kathy or Amelie who took up all my time and just chose to love me. I love to imagine I never made that call. But I did.

An old man with nimble hands is fidgeting over the table in the corner. A crucible of metal is then poured into a mold, which produces a coin that is dropped into water to cool; it is not cool enough. It burns when pressed into my skin, and then another, and then another, and another, in a long line down my chest. He bends down to unlock the wheels of the table and pushes me out the door, smiling down at me.

"Don't be afraid. This is not death."

He pushes me into the next room, from which voices have been faintly bleeding through the walls for the last hour or so. A chant, a call, a countdown.

"Seven. Seven. Seven. Seven."

The throngs of people reach their needy hands out to me as I roll past. At the far end of the room, a man is howling from the pulpit. He has quite the conviction, and yet he almost sounds in pain.

"They, who carry the weight of the totality upon them!"

"Six. Six. Six. Six."

Some women are crying in the corner, shaking and convulsing extensively. Others are smiling. Many are praying.

"They who lead the primordials!"

"Five. Five. Five. Five."

I think of my made-up Melissa now. She mourns for me.

"We submit to the dying of the light!"

I think I read that somewhere. Wasn't it *rage*, *rage*? Maybe I'm mixing it up. I guess now we submit and go gently.

"Four. Four. Four. Four."

"This holy monster!"

Now, that just seems contradictory.

"Three. Three. Three. Three."

"This cosmic being!"

"Two. Two. Two. Two."

"It calls to us, to feast."

Time to feed the worms.

"One-"

The room floods with the smell of aging things. Fermented, decaying. There was a new taste on my tongue, melancholy. If you, too, could taste melancholy, you would know it is bittersweet.

Slowly crawling out of the impending fog, one limb at a time, *it* appears. My end; my monster. But it comes no further. Instead, its tendrils reach out to me with great speed, pulling me into it, and now I sit with it, alone in the void. Everyone, everywhere, everything else is gone now. There is just this thing in front of me.

It is large, like sitting in front of a moon. It has limbs, strong like steel, holding it up. Thin long tentacles, each seemingly with a mind of its own, reaching out from all angles of the body. Eight wings spread out behind, all different sizes, all iridescent and almost blinding. Somewhere in the center of its mass–its body or face–there are thousands of eyes, each one bright like a burning sun. On its back, it carries what looks like planets webbed together by strings of gold. They look heavy. The monster looks tired.

"Wh-what... What are you?" I asked.

"Everything."

Every moment before this I was so sure I was ready to go. I was prepared to die. And now is that moment, my time. And, I was wrong.

"Please don't do this. I don't want to die, I-"

"This is not death."

"I don't understand."

"And you never could, but this must be done."

"But why?"

"It has always been this way. It will always be this way. That is the end of it."

"No! No, no, I can't be done, I can't be gone yet."

"It is already done."

"I can't die-"

"This is not death."

"I can't die at the hands of a monster!"

There was a long silence after what I had said. Would it strike me down right here? Maybe the beast was choosing, or maybe it was as calm as it seemed to be.

"And what makes a monster?"

"Evil."

"And why do you think I am that?"

"Look at you!"

"So evil is based upon appearance?"

"No, I didn't say th-"

"But you just did."

Silence fills the void, no echoes, no ringing. I don't think I've ever truly heard nothing before.

"Yes, I did."

The thing kneels down, filling the void with the sound of trees falling as it moves, its limbs cracking into place as if it hadn't moved in ages, as if it were old and rusted. Each of its eyes still look bright and burning like the sun, but up close I can see those suns exploding, dying. If a monster is evil, I cannot identify whether this being is or is not one, but I can identify what seems to be patience and at the very least, a lack of cruelty. After all, this being has let me live this long and speak this far. Maybe it would let me push my luck even longer.

"What is the meaning of my life? My death?" I asked.

"This is not death."

"My end then."

"It would take too much time to explain everything to you, and all for nothing."

"But it's something for me," I say.

"And you are nothing."

"But I am something! I'm here now!"

"And in a moment you will not be. And it will mean nothing because you will be nothing. You have always been transitory, all of you."

"But-"

"Besides, it is not something you can comprehend."

"Let me try."

"All of you are the same, so human. You always think you can understand everything, that there must be an answer and *you* must understand." He chuckles to himself. "Such hubris."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"You think that *you* could understand the meaning of the universe? Its interworkings? It's folly for a being like you."

"But- but I have to try," I insist.

"Every soul I have taken before you has asked for the same, and every soul after will, too. You are no different. There is no point in denying them while entertaining you."

I puzzle for a moment, reaching for any response. "What about your entertainment?"

"Go on..." for the first time, they show some form of interest.

"You say this has always been the way things are. You follow this cycle, right? Aren't you bored?"

"Tempting." It flicks a tendril and stares at me blankly. "You are interesting, I will say that much." It sat a while longer, in a silence that seemed to last for hours. Then again, I'm not sure if time could pass in this space at all. "You are allowed one question."

"But-"

"One. I've already entertained you longer than you deserve."

One question. One question that had to fill me enough to give my life some sort of meaning, or some sort of understanding. But one question to which I could understand the answer in the first place. The meaning of everything was already off the table, too vast. I had to pick something more concise. Maybe I could at least understand my end.

"What's next?" No, that was still too general.

"There is no *next*. Time is not so easily organized, each moment lies on each other."

"The end, I mean. What happens in the end? What happens to me?"

"Put in the simplest terms, your end is the same as the beginning," he said.

"I chose the wrong question."

"Did you think there was a right one?"

"Well, then I guess you're right. That is what it is to be human. I wanted there to be a right one."

"I almost like you. I just might choose to remember this."

It leans in and stares into my eyes, into my soul.

"I do not know what it is to be you either if that makes you feel any better. It is the one thing I will never understand."

"What is?"

"To feel."

And I suppose that is the answer I would have to settle for, my meaning: to feel. And this moment, right here is my end.

This being pulls me into itself, binding me tightly against a newfound darkness.

I wonder if there is something like this being that ends me, is there someone out there who created me too? A God? A father? It sounds nice right about now. I wonder if he watches this moment. Does this add some sort of tally to my score? Does he take this sacrifice into account? Does he, at least, if anyone, mourn me? Will I meet my maker?

This thing *envelops* me into itself, I feel my soul being swallowed whole, and then–

DEATH

untitled

Randy Focazio

untitled
Randy Focazio

untitled

Randy Focazio

Meet Our Cover Artist:

RANDY FOCAZIO

We would love to learn more about you and your artwork. Could you share a bit about your creative journey? We're interested in understanding your process and the techniques that inspire your art pieces.

It's hard to describe my creative process ... Like all artists it's an internal thing. If I do not have a specific idea I guess I do what the surrealists call automatic drawing or a better term coined by artist Ron Nagle is "Peripheral Cognition" which is a stream of conscious state of mind you enter while creating. I'll select a drawing that grabs me after that process and I will start concentrating more on what that image speaks to me. Personally I think that image existed somewhere already in my subconscious or somewhere else wherever that might be I don't know ... my job is to see that image fulfilled.

I'm still amazed by some of my drawings and how they started. It's always different though for each piece ... sometimes I'm just sitting there and I think how an image I may already have marries with something else and then there you have it and I make it in about an hour. Each piece's origin is its own story but the end result is to create some otherwordly image that espouses a narrative. This is why I do not usually title my pieces .. I feel like once you give it words or direct the viewer you are killing the everlasting ability of it to keep your curiosity. Instinctually you know or sense something about it...it gives you a feeling. If it is not doing that then it has failed.

Additionally, we would love to hear your insights on how you portray women in your pieces. What narrative or emotion do you aim to capture in these depictions?

I use the female form because for me it radiates so many things on many different levels. Fear, lust, power, mystery .... they probably come from my different encounters of several women in my life over the years. There's nothing better than a muse for an artist and they continue to inspire long after the relationship ends.

Are there particular symbols within your artwork that you feel are significant? If so, could you elaborate on their meanings and the messages you intend to convey through them?

I'm really trying to do what Heironymous Bosch did with his work , create a otherwordly image which suggests something supernatural. But I am not trying to use the imagery he used... the environments in these images might be some metaphysical landscape between birth and death. There are a lot circles lately in my images... someone postulated that they were eggs or souls which is interesting. I also like to do this veiny and plant tendril thing with teeth or thorns which for me is this raw based nature thing. I grew up in Florida with the everglades in my backyard and that primordial "feeling" or residue it has never really left me but instilled itself in me.

Is ink your preferred medium when creating art? If so, what qualities of ink do you believe enhance your work and contribute to a deeper expression of your ideas?

I usually work with a simple black pic pen as funny as that seems , they seem to have the right amount of control for making light and dark. Then once its done. I will clean it up digitally in photoshop if needed. I like working with digital media just as much as I do a pen or oil paint. The medium is just a means to create the desired image,.

The concept of "Rebirth" holds many interpretations. What does this theme represent to you personally, and how has it influenced your art pieces?

I said a lot of these worlds are between life and death possibly or at least in some otherworldly realm in between so that is my interpretation of Rebirth.

untitled

Randy Focazio

untitled

Randy Focazio

Sour

Alexia Clark

My face winces at the flavor.
Not tart like lemon. Biting like lemon on a open vein.
Salt plunged into an open wound so deep I can see the bone.
That's what his lies taste like.

She says that you get used to the taste.
But I spit them out.
Lies taste bitter.

Don't spit them out, she says.
Once he stops putting sour candy in my mouth, I'll stop spitting it out, I say.

Another candy. Tears cloud my vision. I gag and my mouth begins to water.
I don't want to get used to this flavor.
But sometimes I can't help myself but enjoy the way it stings my heart and burns my eyes.
The pain reminds me that it's all real.

Blue Moon

Joshua Plumley

Here I am, crying in the moonlight, deep in blue.
There I go, chasing after sunshine, lost without you.
Here I am, howling at the moon, mad about you.

Here I am, burning in the sun, dying for you.
There I go, chasing love like lost shadows, wandering and confused.
Here I am, lost around midnight, floundering and abused.

Alone in the dark, waiting for my soul mate, I'm learning to live without you.
Maybe one day, I'll be with you at sunrise, hopeful and anew.
One is the spark, taken to our whole fate, I'm burning forever for you.

Letter of Love

Alexia Clark

I would write love letters to you. Without command.

I would spill my heart onto pages for you,
I take the knife and drive it into my chest, bleeding out– staining each line.

And so, I did.

I created novels, stories, memories of you and me. I did it all for you.
In my final letter, the story of how I fell in love with you, I'd spent each night

Writing with such intention and detail.

But as I was writing I'd never intended to fall out.

Articulate Silences (IV)

JC Alfier

Elle espère rentrer chez elle
-she hopes to return home

JC Alfier

Prodigy

Katy Garcia

You were told you would be destined for greatness
You would rule the gods and be fanned each day as fruit
dripped from your hands
Your every whim would be fulfilled
You would know everything
You would have everything
You would be everything

And then
Of course
You fell

Now you are one nymph in a million
Living in a garden just like the others
Harvesting the spoils to serve a master

And as you watch the newest prodigies
Who know everything
Who have everything
Who are everything

You wonder what you'd done wrong

Were you not special like they said?
Did they lie?
Were you just another Icarus?

Picking My Own Bones

Aaron Kahrs

Do not resuscitate
Get the gurney
I'm tired of life in this dermis, That's where the problem is
Somehow I feel I provoked it let the smoke in
Burning from the inside out
Hurt me help me dig this shit out
This cancer i've found
I can't live with my demons anyhow
Perseverance from dusk to dawn to dying
Every night, taking nightmares to new heights
Putting salt in my wounds, trying to feel
Adding insult to injury, peace doesn't work for me
Dopesick and still trying to find the right way to kill the devil inside me
It's only hell i see, Becoming the definition of insanity
Put me in a box and I'll find my own way down
Into the ground; yes, i know I'm hellbound

A SENCE

To a New Me...
EtoTeddy

Hush Child, Too Loud

Ramsey Harney

Monster once a boy
Abuse his eyes saw
Cries he screamed out
A father raising a fist
Hush child, too loud

Pain was only known
Anger grew with time
Heart shrinking away
Mind forever gone
An existence mourned

Life turned colder
Air became polluted
Ground burned feet
Water stained blood
World never the same

If only time changed
Another chance given
Where both were loved
But this will never be
The clock kept ticking

Boy now a monster
Abuse his hands felt
Cries he buried within
A son raising a fist
Hush child, too loud

No Friend of Mine

John Cole

He was just a man, honest 'til his day was through.
He was also a Warrior, tried and true.
The warrior was a Hero every day of his life,
And he was a friend throughout life's strife.

But he was no Friend of mine...

He went away to war to protect you and me,
And he suffered Hell on Earth to keep America free.
He did not quit when the going got tough,
And finished the job so enough was enough.

But, he was no Friend of mine...

Days passed slowly for the years of his life,
And nights re-lived every moment of war's strife.
Hardships he faced daily, now with only one arm;
The other lost in the war to keep Freedom from harm.

But, he was no Friend of mine...

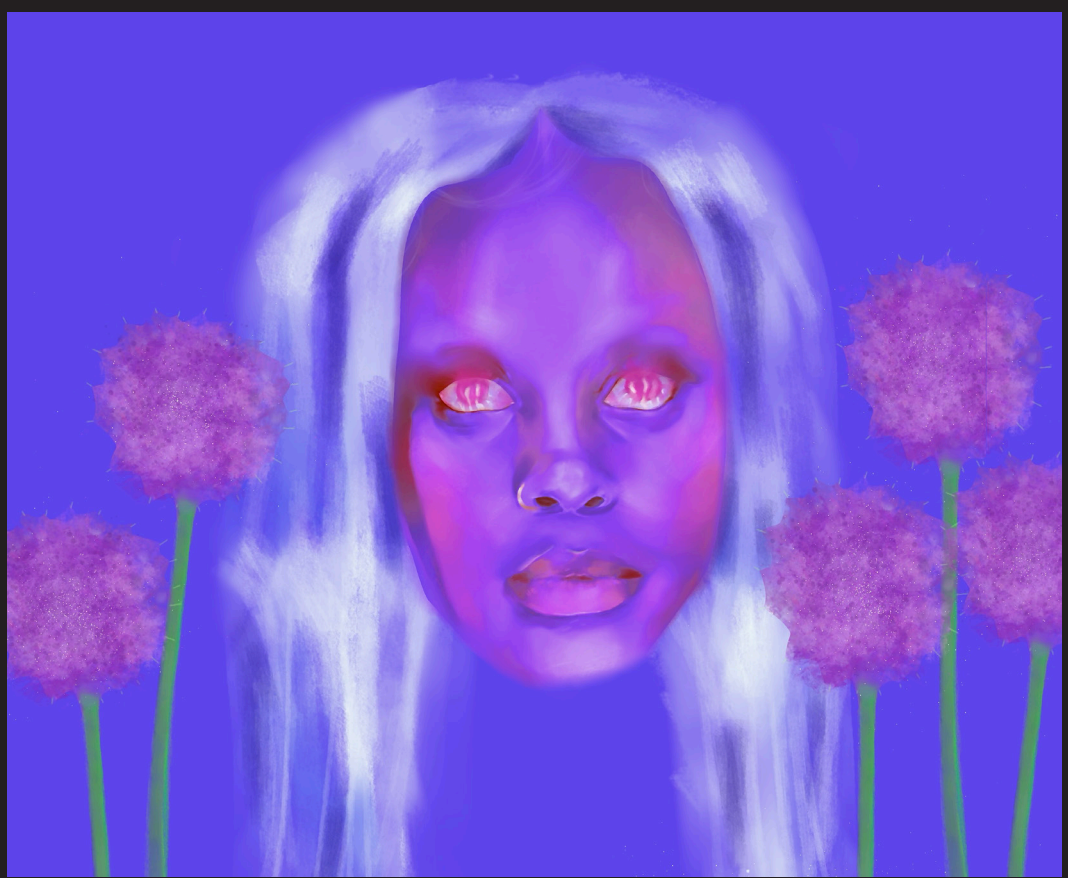
And now that he lies cradled in the Earth
We hold to our faith in the Great Re-birth,
When Mac will walk among us once more,
Forgetting all those effects of having been to war.

But this Hero was no Friend of mine; He was my Brother.

I think I was born bored

Sofia Duarte

the vision inside you is hazy, a blinking star on the screen, melancholy waves in which you choose to drown
The light at the end of the tunnel emits a noise like the whisper of a childhood best friend, lost to time, age in the concept of loss
your mom tucks you in and it's like dying, the tv light creeping through the crack under the door, a path to something new
six feet under is when you felt most alive
dagger to the chest, the middle is what controls us all, reset the tape
what's you is not always inside you
sometimes it is



Fana Hues

Matt Ramirez

In memoriam

Izzy Davidson

Entrails of memories
–Soft, malleable, and sweet
Like the distinct give of
Flesh between fingers, hands
Like the clicks and grinding
In (of) lungs
–Mournful and fading

What does she belong to
Near your chest
Which of your flaws do you
Hate (hide) the most
In vibrations
–One needs not hear/see to feel

Fall, fall, slowly, controlled
Mark, marl, rumble

———————

This is far too joyous
Do not give in do not
Distract

CRAMP!

CRAMP!

She pulls away
Gradually at first,
Then all at once

–Flesh is only warm when it's feeling

You can't hold what you don't know

Give it time
Give it time
It (She's) (Flesh)
GONE
Like entrails of a memory

I fear she will not come

JC Alfier

These Days

Joshua Plumley

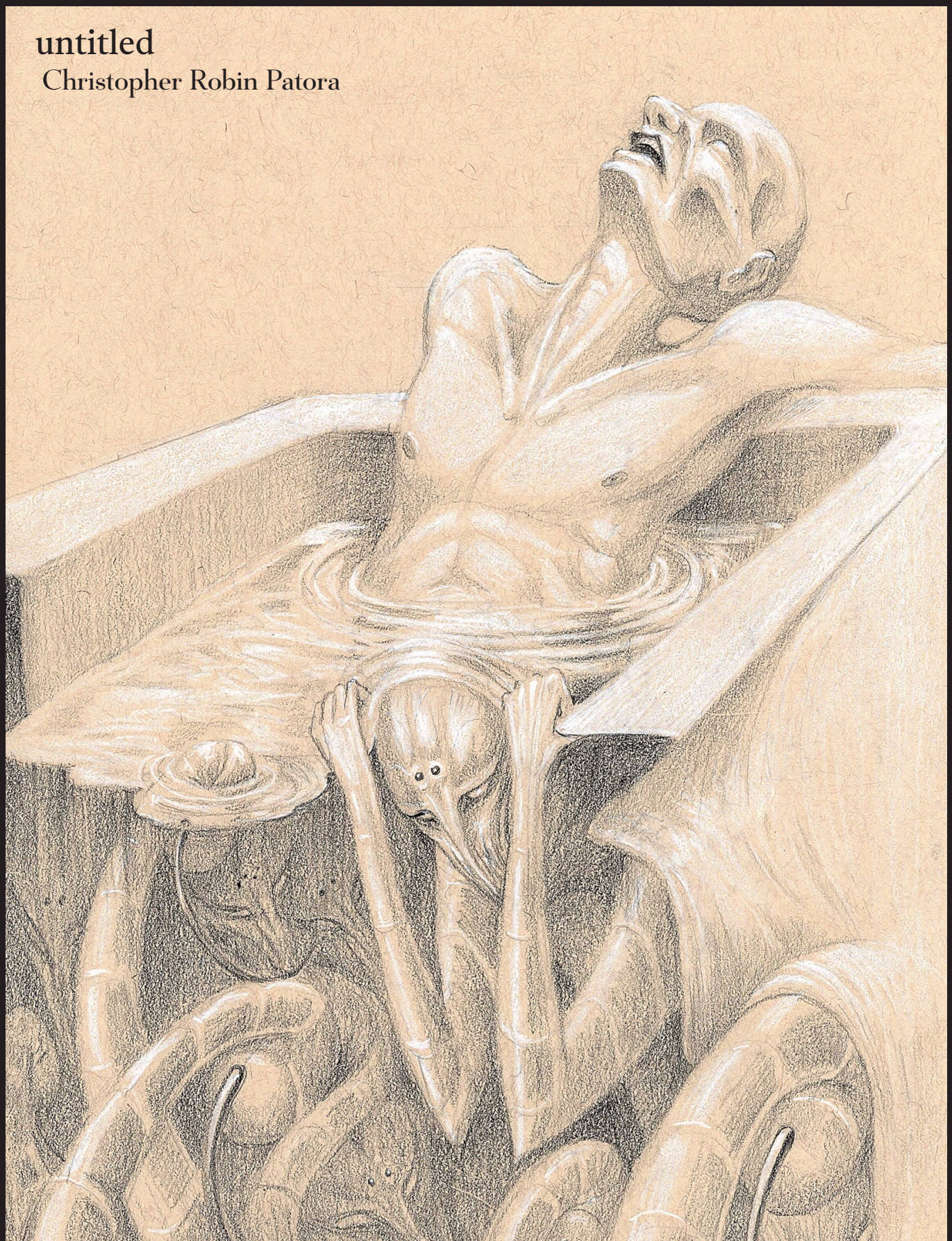
All of these days. Stuck it this maze, but they are woven.
Amazing grace may sometimes be chosen.
In this world that seems to be broken, but it's me who screams & is choking.

Miles away from where my soul is golden, a home for my heart is what I am hoping.
But these days I mean to be moving, to places where my grace would be noticed.
But my daze rearranged my focus, soon enough I'll be bound to the notion,
that all these lives consist of oceans.

To deepest souls, the tolls are emotions, scattered at chance, in dance of devotion.
While faith in the Lord is what I should be holding, I lose myself in waterfalls folding.
This is my life & it might as well be open, it will take heart & soul to keep hoping,
That all these lives in my life will be soaring, to places where we feel it's worth something.

untitled

Christopher Robin Patora



Boop
Billy Summers

Angelina walked down the corridor of ward A, the hairs on the back of her neck prickling up. She felt as if she was being watched. This was a common feeling in every ward of Grant State Hospital, and in some it meant danger. In wards C or D, the high-security wards where the most dangerous patients live, walking alone in the halls is against policy for this very reason.

But this was Ward A, where the least violent patients at the hospital reside. The ward where walking alone is mostly fine. The ward where if you got that being-watched feeling, it was probably because Mrs. Hicks was playing her game. Boop.

Angelina had been booped by Mrs. Hicks five times in the more than three years she had been employed at Grant. It was almost always like this. She would be walking alone down a hall or busy with her work when Mrs. Hicks would suddenly appear from behind a cabinet or around a corner, grinning, finger pointing at nose level.

"Boop." she would say, attempting to poke her victim in the nose.

Mostly harmless. Mrs. Hicks did, however, struggle with hand-eye coordination. People on meds for schizophrenia almost always had a tremor, and Mrs. Hicks also refused to wear her glasses. So occasionally she would miss, poking her finger into your cheek or lip. On two occasions she booped so far off the mark that it caused an issue. One had happened to Angelina herself. She had been walking almost exactly at the portion of the Ward A corridor where she now had the willies, when Mrs. Hicks stepped from around the corner that led to the dining room. She had her finger up, bewildered smile, her eyes wide, red and watery. On this occasion, Angelina had been preoccupied with the hem on the sleeve of her scrubs, and did not get the willies, or had not noticed if she had. No willies-induced slowing of her stride occurred, and she began to lift her face as she paced down the hall. Mrs. Hicks' bony finger sank into her eye socket.

"Boop."

Angelina had screamed, of course. She had all kinds of sensations: the dull throb that comes from an impact to the eye, a white flash, and a rush of fluid. She was sure her eye had been completely obliterated as she stumbled away from Mrs. Hicks, her coworkers rushing to and past her, all yelling incoherencies.

Terrifying as it was, it didn't amount to much of an injury. Popped blood vessel in the eye, some pain in the orbital region. Didn't even turn black. Angelina had taken the rest of the day off.

The other time, Mrs. Hicks had booped Dr. Heinrich in his mouth, sliding her finger up his gums to that uncomfortable place where they curve down and become the inside of the lip. More discomfort than injury. Dr. Heinrich was on the board of directors, and everyone that worked at Grant thought he was kind of a bastard. One of the reasons

Angelina had for thinking he was a bastard was that after the incident with Mrs. Hicks he had demanded she be put in Ward C. Ward C was the ward for dangerous women. Patients there had almost no privacy or yard time and were far more medicated. Everyone on Ward A thought that was too harsh, and did not carry out Dr. Heinrich's order. There was no follow-up from Heinrich.

On another occasion somebody had observed Mrs. Hicks with a pencil in her hand. Angelina wasn't working that day, but another nurse named Cherry had filled her in. An orderly named Reggie Lamb had spied Mrs. Hicks slip around a corner holding it. Everyone that worked on Ward A was familiar with her game, had in fact almost all been booped themselves. She had never actually used an object to boop, but Reggie figured it was better not to find out if she would use one. Regardless of whether she would or not, unsupervised patients were not allowed to have sharpened pencils. He gently confiscated it. Cherry thought this was a great heroic act, but Cherry also thought Reggie was hot. Angelina thought both he and the pencil-nabbing were just alright.

None of these things were on Angelina's mind as she walked down the hall. She had been considering what to eat for lunch. She had brought lunch with her, her husband almost always packed her a lunch, but she wanted junk food. Sometimes she was just in the mood for it. At the top of her mind, she considered whether to get Del Taco or Wendy's, her subconscious mulling over the short list of work she had to do first.

A grey mass suddenly appeared in front of her. Of course it was Mrs. Hicks. Angelina had seen this exact pale form before, under almost these exact same circumstances. On top of the mass, she glimpsed the stringy and gray shoulder-length hair, the wild bloodshot eyes, the yellowing jagged grin with the spittle gathering in the corners. Angelina had time to brace herself and close her eyes.

"Boop." Mrs. Hicks cackled.

The impact came, just to the left of Angelina's nose. She knew instantly it wasn't a finger boop. It was too stiff. This was an object. Her subconscious flashed to the pencil, then to Dr. Heinrich. Maybe Mrs. Hicks belonged in Ward C after all. A moment later, she felt a burning sensation and a thick wetness rolling down her lips and dripping onto her chin. This was no pencil. Angelina opened her eyes.

In her terror she was unable to process what she was seeing. Mrs. Hicks grinning face was before her, coated in bright, glossy red. The red cascading down her face, matting her hair, covering her still wide eyes and grinning teeth. In fact, everything seemed to be turning red. She realized it was blood. Her blood, and a lot of it. It was in her left eye, nose, and mouth. It was soaking into her scrubs. And it was not the dark red blood that would issue from a surface wound. This was the bright red of oxygenated arterial blood, and it was spraying from her face.

Mrs. Hicks, with Angelina's blood running down her arm, withdrew it. Angelina, with her good eye, now saw that she had been booped with Cherry's fingernail file. Cherry had kept it in a locked drawer in the nurse's station. Angelina did not consider how it came into Mrs. Hicks' possession at that time, but she did wonder why Cherry kept such a thing at all. Potential weapons are strictly forbidden at Grant. And why was it so damn sharp?!

Angelina's vision began to fade. Her hands shot to her face. She traced the wound with her fingers, a gash that trailed from the corner of her eye down to her lip. The blood was pumping from it at an alarming rate. Her knees weakened. She tried to scream, but she was either too terrified or too weak. Her right hand reached weakly to her personal duress alert device, which everyone that worked in the hospital was required to wear. It had a string dangling from it. If she was able to pull it, help would come running.

Mrs. Hicks cackled. It was a low, dry, crackling sound. Angelina's blood, which had been running down Mrs. Hicks' face, splattered from her lips. She tried to tug at the string, but her fingers were slick with blood and she was too weak to pull it.

"Angular." Mrs. Hicks whispered. "Labial."

Angelina's vision continued to fade. She fell to her knees. Angular... Labial? Her mind, also fading, cast back to her anatomy classes in college. They were the names of arteries in your face. Specifically, the ones she was bleeding from now. She remembered briefly that Mrs. Hicks had been a professor at some medical school.

Mrs. Hicks, cackling, had disappeared around the corner she had emerged from, leaving big smears of blood on the wall. Angelina watched with wonder as her blood continued to spray, now on the wall instead of on Mrs. Hicks. Her vision continued to fade. She slumped all the way to the floor. Her PDAS began to beep. Help would be on the way shortly.

She heard a voice down the hall. Finally, someone would come. It was Cherry and she was... giggling? Angelina thought she was probably flirting with Reggie.

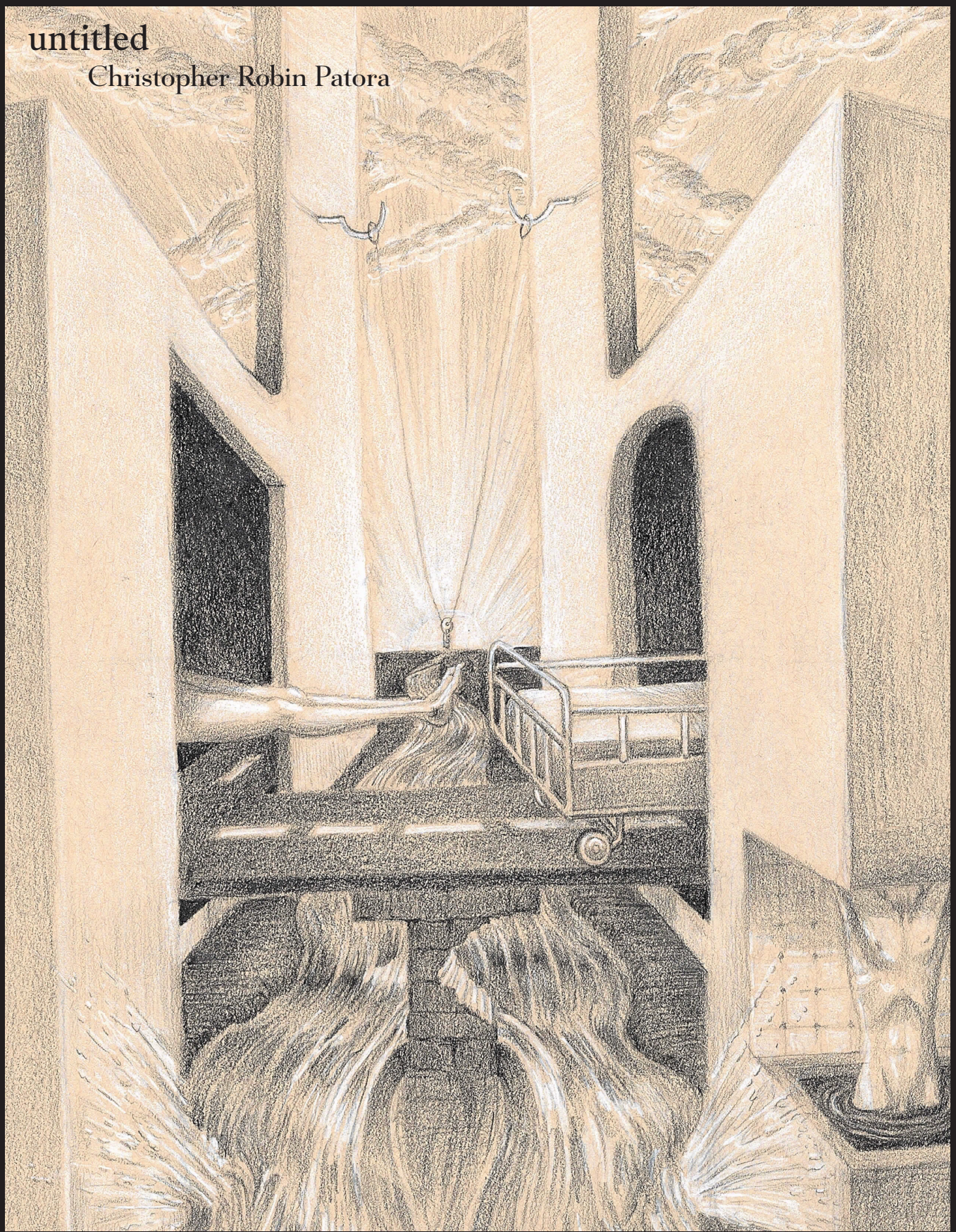
Unable to move or speak, her vision almost entirely black now, Angelina waited for Cherry to come down the hall toward her. She had no idea how much blood she had lost, but she knew if she wasn't discovered quickly, she would not survive. The sound of a door clicking shut echoed down the hallway. There were no more voices. Why didn't they come? After a few moments she resigned herself. She was going to die in Ward A of Grant State Hospital.

Her vision was gone now. Angelina thought of her husband, her kids, her parents. She thought about how Cherry was a bitch. As her final moment of life approached, a feeling of grim amusement overtook her. Fucking Mrs. Hicks, she thought. A faint smile alighted on her bloody lips. A final word escaped them, flicking blood into the pool already spreading around her.

"Boop."

untitled

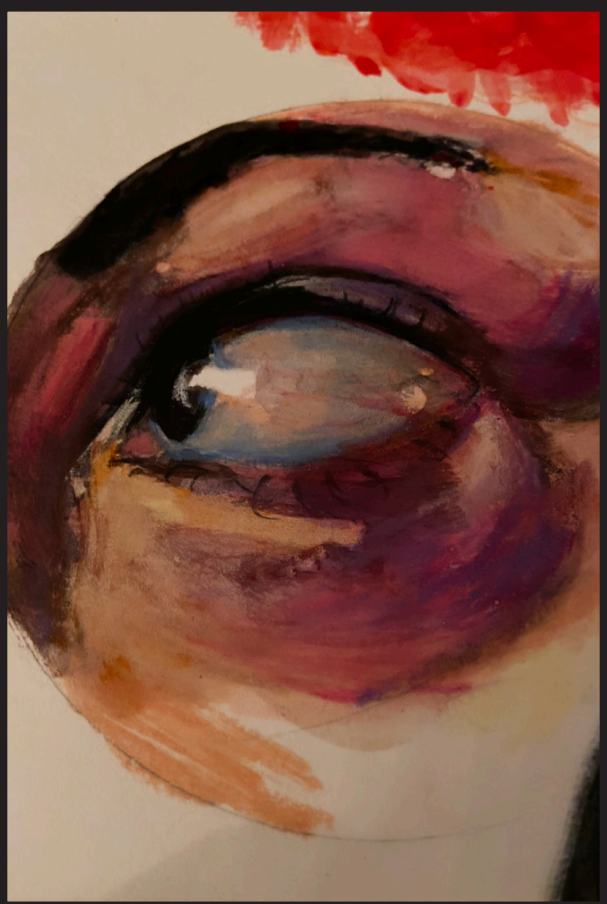
Christopher Robin Patora



the burial

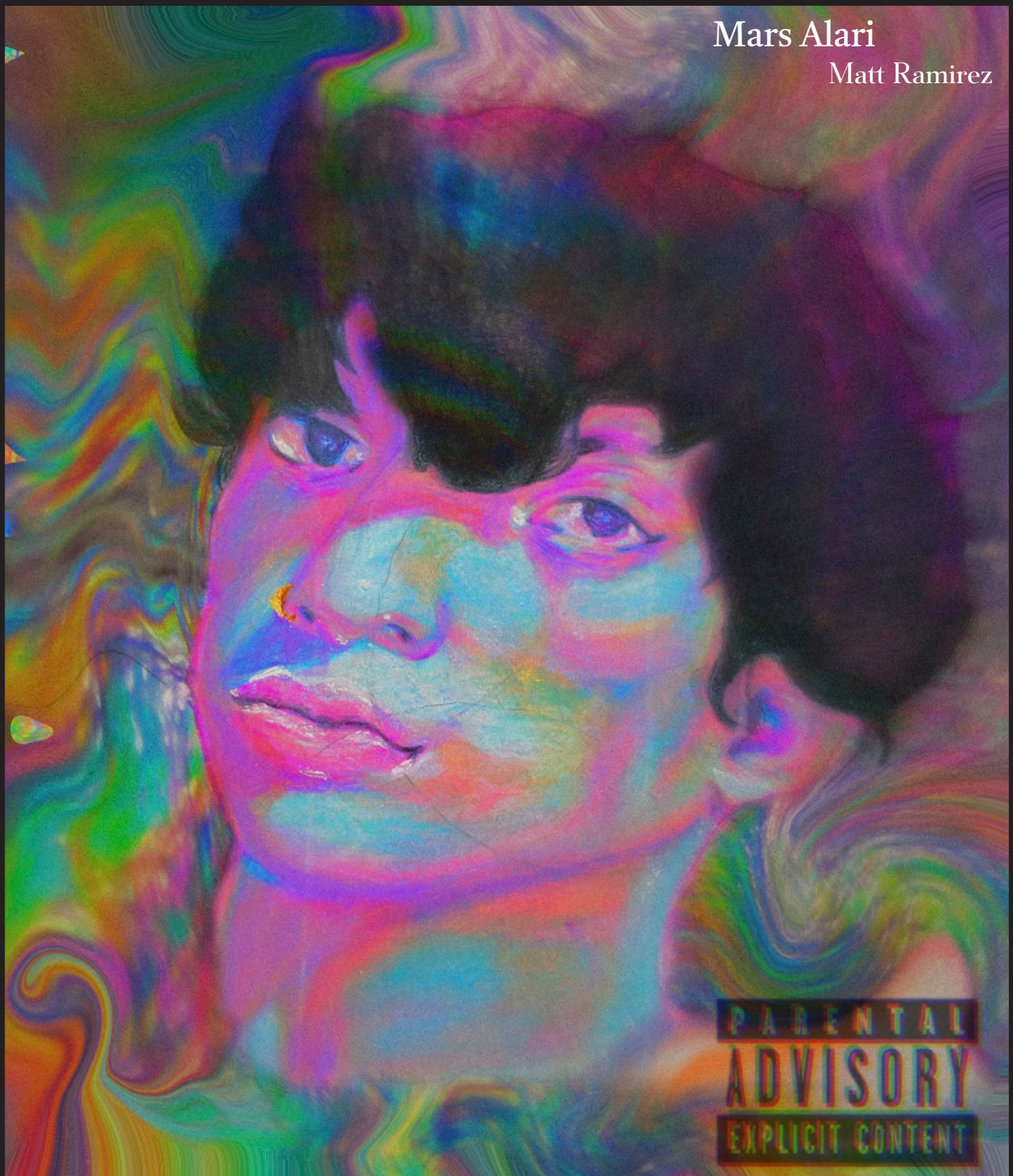
Sofia Duarte

I have felt like less of a girl and more of a body,
a host for something more
something we put reason to like
nature on behalf of gods
I think the earth could spare to be a bit more lonely
and filled with shadows of a body
When a star goes out the human eye will not notice,
and your keen eyes will only feel the weight
be lifted off a sky so heavy
I promise it'll be a relief and
the tick of the clock sounds off,
and I clean my room in hopes
That they will think I was brighter than it seemed and I
will write a thousand notes that
Will never make it in your hands,
only to feed the flames of a dying light, a forest fire
I have lived well enough but quiet enough to fade
and I repeat, in the comfort of being buried
Everything fades eventually



Multi-media Mateo

Matt Ramirez


Mars Alari
Matt Ramirez
PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

Son

Seiji Grossman

Through love, her last,
The first is born
A new mother, passed
he's too young to mourn
birth and death
The beautiful stings

A cool mourning dove
Bleeds as it sings.

Soul

Alexia Clark

I feel like I'm missing something
Like when the manufacturer made me-
hadn't realized a piece of me was missing
Every experience feels incomplete
I'm getting half a plate at dinner
And I'm left still hungry
I seek to find satisfying stimulation
I crave everything deeper
Maybe it's my soul
Where's the other half?
And why did it go?

When Does a Story End?

Andrew Bryant

My favorite professor
Once told us a story
Of the time his professor
Asked them to do the impossible

"He dropped a cow's skull on the table
And asked us to describe its beauty.
We really struggled with that.
It took us a while."

I began to think
About the beauty of a cow's skull.
Where is the beauty in it?
Is there beauty in it?

I began to picture
Personify
Embody
This cow whose life is long past

Does this even matter when discussing
The beauty of a cow's skull?
I shook the emotions I attached
To this cow's skull

I began to analyze
Perceive
Theorize
About this cow whose life is long past

Does this even matter when discussing
The beauty of a cow's skull?
I shook the rationale I attached
To this cow's skull

I began to visualize
This cow's skull
In the dusty red
Of a strange desert

And I began to question
Realize
Fathom
The beauty of a cow's skull-

A cow dies alone
In the red, desolate desert.
It is lost, starving, and thirsty.
Its umber, furred skin clings to its ribs
As it collapses.
A cloud of red dust arises around it
And it lies in the dirt
Knowing,
Accepting that its life
Is close to the end.
Vultures circle hungrily above
As the cow dwindles
And the small spark of life
That once thrived
In the now boney, frail creature
Extinguishes.

The raptorial vultures dive and feast.
A starving coyote delights in its luck
And survives another day.
Innumerable tiny critters find sustenance
And a home,
For a while at least.
And, in a cruel twist of fate,
Dark, roiling clouds thunder their way
Into the dry, desolate skies,
And relieve the desert
Of its parched, hostile nature,
For but a moment.

Rain dances on the cow's corpse
And it is washed of what was.
What was left of its once umber, furred skin
What was left of its once defined, powerful muscles
What was left of its once soft, gentle eyes.
The sweet relief of what was
Nourishes the seeds
The cow once ate.
They drink deep of the rain

And begin to sprout
In an environment they're not meant to be.
They thrive in the shadow
Of the cow's skull
And grow through its eye sockets,
Violently defying the desert's red hot anger.

The sun bakes the freshly cleaned skull
And bleaches it a striking white
The desert often uses
As a warning sign.

The seeds continue to grow,
Shadowing the skull
That once shadowed it.

Passersby marvel
At the miraculous story of survival
"How did it get here?"
"How did it survive this far out?"
"Where is it supposed to be?"

And I conclude
All of it matters
When discussing the beauty
Of a cow's skull.

End of a Chapter

Alexia Clark

The sky was dark now,
Just to show how, how exactly your heart beats
My mind fleets, this scene, this memory
How am I to escape this treachery?
The battle cries seep into this screen,
I scream, don't make me, don't make me do this
Don't make me lose this
I search your eyes for the answer,
And that's where, I find every bit of emotion with every bit of intensity overwhelming they take over me
Everyone begins to dim as if they understand on a whim that it is in this moment I realize,
To no one's surprise,
That you and I were meant for more than this, this life of ours
This fight of ours
A sword, gunfire, rubble, and broken hopes, dreams
Everything that we once built broke
I choke, *I'm yours.*
In the next moment I am struck in the center of my chest,
Right on the crest of my character's revelation
Upon this devastation, damnation, you crumble,
There's words that begin to tumble, with a rumble from your lips
You're mine.

The page runs blank now, my blinking eyes vow not to let myself cry
I pry, stealing at glance at the world that has passed me by
Not questioning as I began to fall behind
I start to grind, my teeth and jaw sore
When was the last time that I swore?
As if I was keeping score, the dark circles under my eyes deepen
A noise creeps into, this silent space of mind

I close the book
Stored safely in the nook, of my arm reaching for the door
How have I let myself become such a bore?
Pore, core, roar, blore, floor
For it is that I am not defeated by my enemy, though I surely have plenty
I almost feel empty, like I had truly lost you
The exhaust my limbs compel, but I will not fall for their spell
Until I sell, whatever it is I need
To erase this fiction world of mine and make all our dreams come true.

Transformation
Cheryl Diermyer

Alexia Clark Interview

What are some of your biggest inspirations when writing? Are there any poets/writers who inspire you? Could you give some examples of each and elaborate on them?

My biggest inspiration when writing are those quiet moments in life. That feeling after a wave of laughter, the quiet, the stillness, and contentment that settles. It's those moments that have inspired me to scramble words onto a page, into a sentence. When I was first introduced to poetry, I was given several works by Edgar Allan Poe. While his famous works like The Raven and Annabel Lee are inspiring, it was the lesser-known work that I felt more attached to. A Dream, Evening Star, and Deep in Earth compelled me into the world of poetry and raw, earth-shattering emotion.

What role does writing play in your life? How might it be important to society as a craft, artform, and medium of conveying ideas, in your opinion?

Writing started as my release. Emotions can be powerful and overwhelming, it's almost too easy to fall victim to the pain we experience. Writing became a way for me to release those experiences, the glory, the hurt, everything and anything. Now, writing has become an extension of my voice. It is so important to have a voice, now more than ever. A way to share our opinion, our experiences, to create and build. Writing and art have so much power behind them.

What, to you, is poetry, and what separates a good poem from a bad one?

I don't think I can say I've read a bad poem before. I could say a good poem will have a nice rhythm or pattern, maybe even a good twist. But a good poem is one that has connection, it has purpose, and meaning. Poetry was first created as a way to remember our past, to remember where we came from and where we're going. If a poem lacks that humanity, then perhaps I'd consider it a bad one.

Could you describe your writing process, including how you might handle writer's block?

I wish I had a step-by-step tutorial of my writing process, but unfortunately, I'm very inconsistent with it. There are days that are so overwhelming that I need to put everything on paper. I'll start with an idea, or one word, a feeling, and the rest finds me. There are other days when I stare at my notebook and know I have so much to say, but no way to say it. Those days are the hardest. I write down a word or two, and come back to it later, but this doesn't always work.

This year's focus for the literary magazine was "rebirth" and each of your poems had rebirth--or change--either as the speaker's focus, or as a byproduct to their thoughts and feelings. Similarly, a large emphasis was placed on love and how it might affect one's perception of themselves, those around them, and even the world. Are there any other themes or motifs that you find yourself commonly writing about?

The theme I most commonly lean toward is love. This is for two reasons: love is all around us, and love is also almost gone. There are things that happen that make me feel loved, or things I do to show my love. But there is also so much disconnect and hate in the world. It's as saddening as it is terrifying. I have also written about my traumas in the past, and I will caution people to write about those. At least until they are ready. Writing out your trauma can be so scary, and if you aren't ready to face it, it can cause more harm than good. But it can be liberating once you are ready to face them.

Roughly half of your poems had some type of form or pattern to them, most noticeably in "End of a Chapter" with its rhymes and rhythm, in "Jellyfish" with its alternating couplets and tercets, and in "Catastrophic Demise" with the "I"s that start each line. The rest of your poems, on the other hand, seem considerably less "rigid", for lack of a better term. Do you have a preference between the two? Which one is easier, and which is more fun to you? Do you have any advice for writers in regards to how to write either form-poetry or free-verse?

I love writing poems with a beat or a rhythm, and patterns can create these impactful messages, but free-verse will always be my favorite. The easiest one to me, personally, is free-verse. There are no rules or requirements, just you and your thoughts in an open discussion. There is something about that, that is so unique. My advice to anyone who wants to try free-verse is that you make the rules. Use punctuation how and when you feel it fits the best, and worry about being grammatically correct last.

Do you have any advice for writers in general, or any tips that helped you when you were a fledgling writer?

My advice for fledgling writers, if you can't make anything work today, try again tomorrow. Or next week. A month later. Even a year, if that's what it takes. If you have a story (which we all do) then tell it. Take your time and don't feel like you need to rush the process, though. I have poems that have taken me several years to finish, and that is the beauty of writing. It is never-ending. Our stories can take as long as they'll take. Just don't give up. This advice is a mixture of my own learned experience and advice from my dear friend James Nelson, who is also a poet (poet of sorts is what I'd assume he'd say).

Ophelia

Matilda Heidelberg

If I'd have known I'd be a martyr

I'd have thrown you to the wolves

A once docile lover, now gaunt and thin

A pale banshee, howling at the water's edge

The blood of Eve staining the bank red

Charmed by bouquets of Yarrow and Gypsum Weed

And fed the blossoms by your hand

Now, standing at the water's edge

I see a picked-through grove of Hemlock

And foam green at the mouth with envy

With filthy hands and tainted lips

I descend into the River Styx

The feminine hands of wailing souls my current

As I float to the depths of hell

Reminded by Frigg in a gentle voice

That Mistletoe is still poisonous

The Philosopher's Child

Evelyn C.C. Shamblin

Given ample time, man shall bring into the world his every imagining. Humans are industrious, they are inventors, discoverers, explorers, researchers, and stubborn warriors. It is humanity's very destiny to rival the works of God. This is the sentiment I gather reading tomes of philosophy, science, and history.

All that I have is time. There is little for me to do save for to read and to think, both of which I have done in excess and I have recently come to the epiphany that I do not know who I am. I know some might read this and think, everyone has experienced this at some point but let me assure you that I am being quite literal in my words. I do not know who I am. I have no name, no connection with this form, no life I have found thus far; I have nothing. It is not, I imagine, a common concern to be unfamiliar with one's own identity at this level. I am myself, that is usually enough. How often does one stop and ask: who am I? And genuinely find themself at a loss.

I know I would err to assume that I am the only person to have felt this way, but I cannot ignore this notion, this itch at the brainstem. I have knowledge, I feel that I have experiences, but it is all foreign to myself. I try to follow my memories back as far as they can go for some clue as to who I am, how I got here, but in truth I've found I can only go back about three months. I have started to keep track of the days, counting them one by one because I have no calendar to say when I am. For as long as I have known consciousness, I've wasted away in my prison, lost, sheared from time and the greater world. The doors seem to have working deadbolts, I could unlock them and walk outside at any time, but every time I try, when I get close to the doors, even to the windows, when the light of the sun creeps through the blinds, this vessel's heart feels as if it might stop. I'm afraid to step outside of what little I know. Thus I long since resolved myself to first gather my bearings.

I think that this is my home. It feels like it is, sometimes at least. Other times it feels like a hospital. Others it feels a tomb. Yet it is a house. Or rather it is a manor, and a large one. It took me two whole days to explore the grounds once I got the sense to do so. It was a month before I found the basement, but perhaps I am getting ahead of myself.

It is a lavish estate which I find myself in, old perhaps but no older than the turn of the century – that is assuming I'm not far more lost in time than, well, than should be feasible. There are four bedrooms, two of which are decorated and lived in: one a nursery with two small beds, and the other the master; there are five baths, a kitchen, a drawing room and a study, a dining hall

with a great table of cherrywood, a smoking room, a billiard room, a ballroom, and of course a library where I am currently growing bored of this list even as I write it. The library has two stories and more books than I care to count, but I have read roughly a third of them which so far has totalled fifty-seven. The subjects of these books vary from fiction classics, to poetry, to sciences in all varieties accepted and unaccepted, and even esoterica. Nothing difficult for one who finds themselves inclined to learn, in fact I may have read some of them myself at some earlier point which I feel certain exists, yet cannot grasp, but they seem far too many and too diverse for me to discern why any one person would desire to own such a selection. Outside, the sky is always grey. There are fields so far as the eye can see, a gatehouse, and a set of stables in which I have seen no animal step foot. In fact I have not seen a single living thing besides myself and plants for as long as I can remember. Perhaps there have been none.

I am in the countryside with no other homes in sight and I am alone. I have no memory of ever meeting another human. There are, however, portraits in the home. They are among other paintings of foreign landscapes, sharp cliffs, and they show me what seem to be nothing more than old white men and sometimes women, both alone and together. Yet, in the greatest of them, positioned in the center of the grand stairway, a family is depicted. A tall, thin man in a dark suit, a young woman with auburn hair and jewels, and two boys, neither older than twelve, with round cheeks and bright eyes. As I write in this journal I know their names. Johanna. Clark. Matthew. I do not know the man, only the wife and the boys. In my mind's eye his face is a void. I cannot stand the thought of him. I feel ashamed.

Apologies, I must speak of the basement. In the basement- no, Start in the billiard room. I find the mere existence of the billiard room to be idiotic. This is because billiards is an idiotic game and a poor social event, but men are a strange sort I suppose. My point is that I had little reason to spend time in that part of the house, at least for the first month. As discussed, I have wasted away in this place as long as I know, that is to say that I am depressed, agoraphobic, and see no reason to eat or drink. If you must know, I did make a single attempt. As you can imagine I was in a bad place so do forgive me if I am brief in my account. I rarely left the bed in that first month. I lied dressed with a thin chemise and draped in silk sheets, hot in near a fever, and slept more often than I stirred. As I sweated in hydrophobic fabrics, I noticed one night that I might throw up and so I moved to the nearest restroom. I writhed there in pain next to the privy, and waited, sleeping much of the time, perhaps a day, before I could throw up dark warm bile all over myself as I woke from a nightmare. I slowly climbed into the bath, still full with the murky water of days prior– it had leveled to the temperature of the room by the time and I let it rise over me as again I was taken by the black lids of the stranger's eyes. Trapped behind them a mind

rattled within its skull and I felt myself drown, swaddled in the skin of a man whom I called lover and bastard. Pummelled with hard rocks by a wreath of my peers, each thrown without sin. Millions of tiny pins burned my flesh and I stirred with teeth chattering. My skin was red and vomit swirled around me in the bath as the water flowed over the edge of the tub and flooded the room and beyond, seeping into the tiles and soaking the carpets deep. The moon's pale light trickled in from between fine curtains, then the sun's. I know not what days passed as the blood slowed and grew thick in my veins. When I woke from lying in bed with my wife, I may have been freezing to death. I shakily stepped or rather threw myself out of the tub and found a robe. As I pulled it over my shoulders, I noticed the mirror. Mind you, this was the first time that I had seen myself, or rather the thing in the mirror. It was the first time seeing anyone in a true sense. I looked in the mirror and I am uncertain whose face looked back. She – for I feel indeed that the features belonged to a woman, though I know not what to call myself – is familiar, but in a way that I can not place. I know her, yet not who she is. This body may be the one which I inhabit, but it is not mine. It belongs to somebody else. I am certain of it. These pale eyes do not fit in their sockets nor this head, the shoulders on which it sits. The arms too long, torso too short, ribs too big for my chest to hold them in its delicate flesh wrapping and I could no longer hide that this puppet I'm trapped within was getting thinner every day, sinking into its too-broad frame like little more than a skeleton. And this thing, this amalgamation of blood and bones and skin, this is what I'm trapped within, smothering me, me, a jolt of electricity through the wet mush that is a mind. Twelve watts. Is that all that I am?

A scream escaped, entirely too deep and raw with disuse. I slipped on the wet floor and fell back into the tub, hitting my head on its far edge, but not before I had punched the mirror. I remember it did not simply shatter, it exploded like water jumped into or an outward blast. And with it came blood. This body's, of course. When again eyes opened, the water and with it my robe were red. The vomit was gone and in its place were shards of broken glass. The leaking brain, the only thing binding me to this form spilling out, was in the process of killing me, heat running down the back of the neck, and to be truthful, I was sick of living. I took a shard of silvered glass, one from the foundation of which the fibers fell in jagged threads, and I dug it into the soft, thin, flesh. I aimed directly for the largest blood vessels and dragged it down the inner forearm from the wrist. Red meat clutched the glass and pushed it out. I must have been dreaming, or hallucinating due to blood loss. The wound bled profusely and it would not stop, it came with force, with wrath, and yet the skin bubbled and pulled itself back together. I sank into the tub to drown myself and the bloodwater tasted just like wine.

I spent something like the next week in that red bath. When I finally got up, I explored

the west wing of the estate, though I was apathetic towards every part of it. After a month, I was desperate for anything, really, so I entered the billiard room for the first time. Yes, I played the damned game. But as I spent more time in the room, I grew familiar with the space. I noticed something. No, I shan't be dishonest and say it was pure observation and deduction that led me to my discovery; I had grown mad and threw the billiard balls around the room in a frenzy. I aimed for vases and windows and paintings, fine and breakable things, but as well I lobbed them at the walls, leaving little dents in the finish. I made certain you knew that I was never fond of billiards. What I truly grew accustomed to was the thud of these ivory balls against the wood-tiled walls and in doing so I noticed a stretch of the room where the strike sounded hollow. This was what I deemed to be a narrow rectangle of panelling above the fireplace.

My first thought was that it was simply the chimney, but as I threw more balls against the hollow wall, I heard the echo of rattling metal bars. Still I cannot justify what I did, but to say I felt a need to explore this. Logic dictated it was just the chimney, yet I knew there was something more. I looked within the fireplace, but it was difficult to see through the flames – I used the hearths in the manor often after having frozen, with always more layers of ice to thaw – so I reached into the cavity and felt around. All that I found was a lock, shallow in the roof of the opening, and though the metal burnt my hand, I opened it and lifted. The mantel came in two and parted as if I was meant to walk directly into the hearth, yet the wall remained behind it. I felt along the wall and though there were slits throughout, I could not tell if they were the result of tiling or something made to open, so I took the fire poker to it. To my surprise, there was enough strength left in these shrunken muscles to break through the wood. It cracked and tore as I lashed out and pulled the instrument through it, ripping away splinter by splinter until I uncovered the chamber behind. It was not much larger than a typical chimney chamber I would imagine, but concealed within it was an elevator on a pulley. The flames licked at my legs as I stepped through and I descended into the dark.

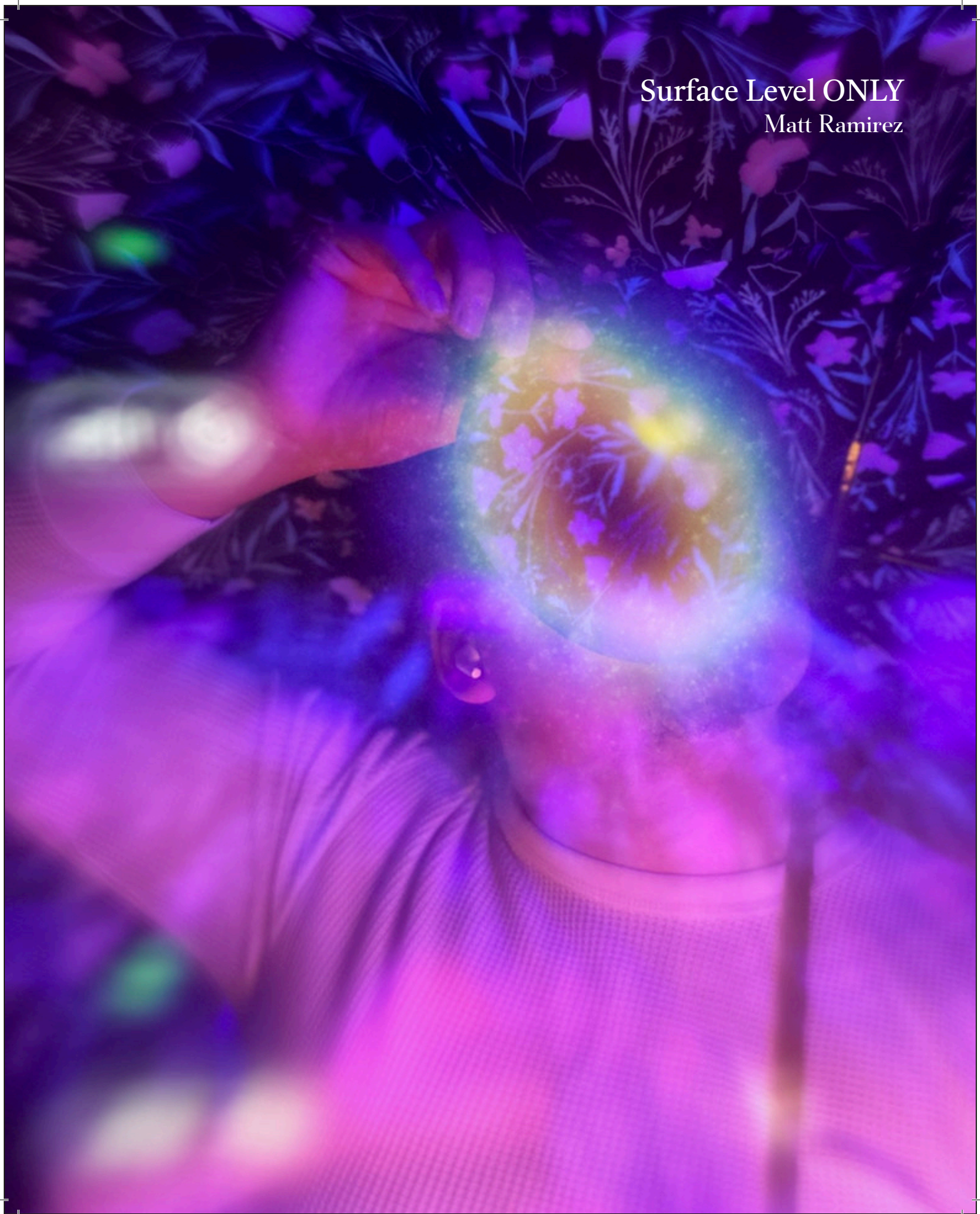
The elevator shook as it fell and halted abruptly when it crashed into floor. The room was black as pitch, yet it took only a moment for my eyes to adjust. This was the basement prior unseen. Stone on all sides. Everything grey. There were wooden chairs and tables housing medical instruments and chemicals. Bags of flour and salt spilled across the ground and dried blood painted the ceiling. Concentric circles were drawn in white, each layer with a smaller circle drawing a triangle within and within it a square, both with circles drawn at each corner, and at the center a steel coffin rested in the smallest circle. I drew towards the dark cradle, peering into the sinking abyss. A blotch of gold blemished the plain surface on the side nearest to myself. To find what lay within and crossed through the circle.

I moved and was still at once. I stood in the circle. I stood all around the circle. I was the circle. I was eight. I was four and three and one. I was the red king and I was the white queen. I was the royal court and the royal family. All these things that are and are not me melded together with heat and pressure and sounded with the screaming of boiling blood. I saw this body nude and bloody with newborn slime, an umbilical cord trailing from its gut. It tried to fight and I realized that It was me in that moment, I had drifted off and there I was. I tried to walk and I could not feel the legs I once possessed. I fell and caught the edge of the steel casket. It bent ever so slightly and ushered me into my descent as I spilled out across the dusty basement floor, a splattering mess of boiling flesh and melting, oversized viscera spilling out of its husk, too massive, too bulbous to be contained in this rotten idea of a form, the juices seeping, sweating out. A gasp left the lungs as I choked on an engorged tongue and the eyes rolled back in the head. After that it was black.

No, that can't be right. I am here. I am not dead. I could not have died. I did not. Why did I die? Why did it have to happen? There was no good reason. I would know if I died, no? I haven't done anything. I haven't had the chance to. I am certain that there are stories locked away behind me, but I haven't had enough time in this world yet. And of course, I'm not dead. Whatever that was that I remembered, it isn't what I am. It is not me in this moment. I am after all born anew. I am but a babe swaddled in wool, white like the light when my eyes first opened.

Washed in blinding light a vision was revealed to me, oyster coloured pus dripped from my stitched together innards and wet threads like spiders' webs or a mucus membrane pulled my parts back together in more or less the right order. I am a spirit trapped in a flask, an infant god born of guts, of flesh and blood and bone, I am an angel of thirst and a patron of sick, I am wealth and wine and youth, I am the red when I close my eyes to the sun, the fallen hermaphroditic seed of the one who is. I approached the casket. It was empty, clean even. Again I noticed the golden blemish again, a fine fault, the only spot of color on the morbid sight. It was like a layer of paint peeling to reveal the true metal beneath, yet dented, impressed with five marks outstretched from a palm. It was the print of a hand.

What terrible imagining am I?


Surface Level ONLY
Matt Ramirez

The House

Katy Garcia

I've come back to the house I ran from
The haunted one
I know it is not right
I know it is not safe
I know it is dark and cold, alone up on that hill
But I was born there
I don't know how to function if not among the deeply disturbed
Ghosts and ghouls
And the problem is
I always know myself to be in the wrong place,
But I can never seem to find the right one
I want to leave
I want to be birthed anew
And yet every time I walk out the door
I end up leashed back to this damn house
How long must I be the dog chained up in the yard?
When do I get to be human?
Why must I be haunted?

Articulate Silences (VII)

JC Alfier

Freed from Burden

Zachary Bower

That chapter, no; that life
It passed with you.
The razored edge of a knife
Only cuts what it wants to.

Love lost never stopped me,
The direction changed but the story remains.
This old dog still yearns to be free,
But he still waits for you to come home to release his chains.

Romance once brightened life's dull moments,
But the mundane is what breeds breakthrough,
The voice of love's last letter sends my deepest condolences,
"Another try wouldn't kill you."

One bad day never slowed you so,
I say to you too now, I let you go.

Nobody Remembers that Icarus-

Eva Cantwell

You live in the void between the sky and the earth.

You live in an endless plummet,
ever falling. Ever sinking. Closer, closer, closer,
to the
ground.

You have wings. You know you have wings.
You know you have never spread them.
You wonder if you ever will.

(What if they're hideous?
What if they've *melted?*
What if you've already brushed the stars,
And everything else is your rolling death?
Decades spent hurtling towards the ground?)

You can't bring yourself to reach for *anything* with all that you are.
(People will expect, after that, if you succeed, and-
What if it's still not enough?)

(*Stop measuring, something in you chides. As long as you measure it it never* will *be enough*.)

You said, once, that you'd rather be ashes than dust. Rather be Icarus than the nameless person who found his body.

Nobody remembers that someone had to find his body.

Be careful what you wish for.

Maybe there's hope yet. Of course there's hope yet; you haven't hit the ground yet. Maybe you'll spread your wings and swoop upwards just in the nick of time- that'd be dramatic.

Maybe you'll spread your wings but it'll be too late, like every protagonist in a proper tragedy is. That'd be fitting, you think; you are not someone made for happy endings even though you made yourself.

You're a proper tragedy. Even though you're not the protagonist. No, you're the *survivor*.

Things keep ending and you keep surviving and you keep being the only person left to tell the story. Who is willing to tell the story.

What's another wound reopened so you can bleed some more ink compared to everything else you live with? You're plummeting towards the landing already. What's a little blood lost on the way?

Icarus, Icarus, Icarus. Darling, what did you *do* to yourself?

You could've been Icarus if you'd ever flown high enough. You could've been whoever found his body if you'd just stayed on the ground. But you're not; you're this. You're a storyteller.

Fly just high enough to know how the fall must have felt- just close enough to the sun to describe the heat without being burned.

Once upon a time there was a house on the cliffside

You're the survivor. Things keep ending and you keep *surviving* just so you can tell people how it felt.

and the person who lived in it was not written into the myth. They had no tablet; no temple; no statues.

It doesn't feel *like* falling, though.

Outside their house was a grave. They had dug it. They knew nothing of the boy they buried, not even his name. They dug that grave for him when he washed up on the beach. They tended it till the day they died.

It feels like floating. It feels like the sky and the earth are tumbling endlessly over one another and you're just suspended midair.

Nobody remembers them.

It's so hard to try flying when the fact that you're falling has never felt real.

Nobody remembers that grave they dug and tended for someone they never, ever knew.

But you're a survivor. It's your job to remember. That's your part in the play, your role in the story; the storyteller, the last one left alive to speak of it.

Nobody knows them and nobody knows that grave because nobody thought to look.

You're the one left standing when the curtain falls on every story that ends and this will be no different. Stories keep ending and you keep outliving them.

Nobody thought to look because nobody remembers that there was something left to look for.

Even if that story is your own.

Nobody remembers that Icarus drowned.

Unbound
Gianna Raquel Lopez

ALEXIS SCULLIN INTERVIEW

Alexis Scullin is a Crafton Hills Student, with experience in photography, marketing, and psychology. She explores themes in her photography including humanity, spirituality, femininity, and personal story. She creates art and looks at others' art as a way to make sense of her memories. She is creating a life focused on holistic recovery, starting with the Physical Therapy Program at Loma Linda University. From there, she will explore other avenues of trauma recovery, including artistic expression, trauma-focused yoga, and clinical psychology.

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT ABOUT?

This project takes the "Grief Cycle" and looks at it in the twilight between our physical world and the psychological landscape of our minds.

WHAT INSPIRED THIS SPECIFIC PROJECT?

For this piece, I was inspired by the work of Gregory Crewdson, as well as Alfred Hitchcock, The Twilight Zone, and the world of clinical psychology. One of Crewdson's earliest memories was listening through the floorboards to his dad's sessions with psych patients, and I see how that shaped his work. Looking at his photos is like stepping into a world that feels somewhere between David Lynch and Black Mirror—familiar but unsettling. I was thrown into the world of clinical psychology when I was thirteen. It was a really strange space—sterile CBT programs, psychiatric medications, and this constant message of "it's okay, we can fix you" through the brain disease model. I think my experience in clinical psychology was sometimes more traumatizing than my father's suicide. The lack of emotional connection and attunement was isolating. What helped me survive it were the other teen patients, and my weird high school friends. At least when we were weird together, things made sense, and I felt close to normal. We sometimes hear stories from people that seem so strange they sound made up; the person telling the story might even start questioning themselves, whether it happened at all. I wanted to capture this feeling through a somewhat vague situation that has no clear identifier of what actually happened and allow people viewing it to be

suspended in this reality, seeing themselves in it almost like a Rorschach test. I want them to be able to create closure that's unique to their experience, and in so doing, what they glean from it is more of a reflection of themselves, then the art itself.

WHAT DETAILS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I'm most proud of my use of the lighting equipment, it was a new tool for me to have fun using to create something I've never done before.

What does rebirth mean to you?

Rebirth just means change, there's no light switch transition, but there is inevitable change. The poem "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley shaped this understanding for me. We need other people–but you also need autonomy, to become something different than what you were before.

WHAT DOES REBIRTH MEAN TO YOU?

Rebirth just means change, there's no light switch transition, but there is inevitable change. The poem "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley shaped this understanding for me. We need other people–but you also need autonomy, to become something different than what you were before.

HOW DO YOU THINK THIS RELATES TO THE THEME OF REBIRTH?

Rebirth is change. In this series, the actual creative process of staging the scene was collaborative and improvised. I provided example photos of Crewdson's work and the grief cycle I wanted to replicate, the rest we created ourselves. We created something, together, from what felt like nothing, and worse than nothing–we created something from pain. That's Rebirth.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE ASPECTS OF PHOTOGRAPHY?

Choosing where light goes. Lighting (and the lack of) is a major part of set design in photography. It draws attention towards certain things and away from others. That façade and directing of attention is what also drew me to theatre, marketing, and psychology.

WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST TO OTHERS WANTING TO GET INTO PHOTOGRAPHY?

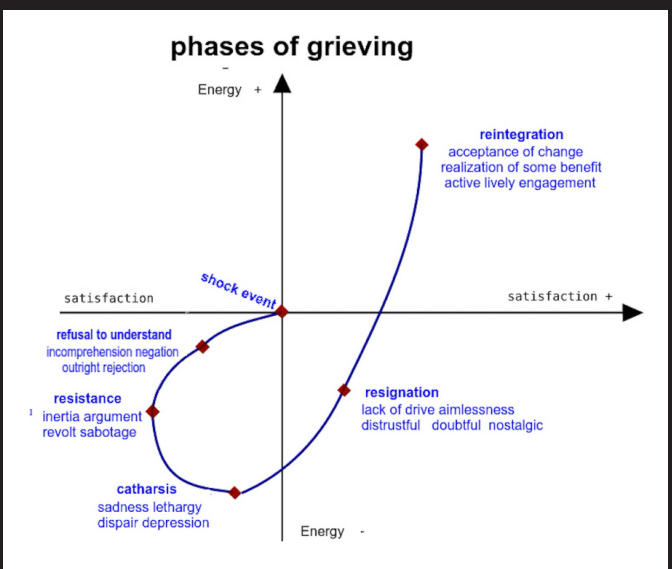
Keep observing the things around you, taking photos, sharing them, and talking about them. Go into social spaces where people share and talk about their art. Be open to criticism.

WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR INSPIRATION FOR YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS?

I appreciate pinterest for its convenience, but I want to join more classes and clubs–social spaces where I can communicate with other people and explore ideas.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE AS A THEME FOR THE MAGAZINE IN THE FUTURE?
I'd like to see something exploring interpersonal biology, community, or reactivity. Humans are social creatures, and together we can do horrifying, beautiful, and incredible things. Our ability to socialize and influence one another can be the best and worst thing about us.
Are there any other photographers that influence your works?
I admire the eerie realism Sally Mann captures, the quirky exposure of human nature in Vivian Maier's negatives, and the fragmented memories in Nan Goldin's work. Please look at their work.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'RE EXCITED TO TRY FOR YOUR MEDIUM IN THE FUTURE?
I am excited to try watercolor. I'm trained in photography, but the moment I gather watercolor supplies I freeze! I admire the free flowing nature of watercolor-getting started is much more of a psychological battle for me than it is a technical one.



I didn't want to be stuck with the monotony of what I've been exposed to the majority of my life. I wanted something weird, something different, so I chose a grief cycle I hadn't seen yet.

Shock Event:
The untouched tissue box, a stoic response to another's crisis, and a dog quietly eating in the background capture the banality of trauma and our instinct to suppress unbearable knowledge. It was an ordinary afternoon. I chose to shoot in a living room—the place where I first learned of my father's suicide and where I've often seen families gather after funerals. Preparing to explore grief through photography was an emotional process, sadly, a common result of early childhood trauma is emotional shutdown; I believe I remained numb through much of the editing process because of it.

Refusal to Understand:
Denial sets in after the shock event. Life resumes its routines, even as emotions wreak havoc beneath the skin. An outburst may seem exaggerated, but soon after, numbness takes over and the inability to communicate. The television flashes the words, 'Is that an exaggeration?' along with the stumbling of words "Oh yes…Mrs…I mean.." The lighting remains unchanged—steady—while one person moves on in life and the other remains stuck. In the dining room, unopened mail from the outside world piles up, untouched.

Resistance:
Relationships begin to unravel under the weight of suppressed anger and sudden outbursts. The room darkens, illuminated only by the red glow of the television. A pillow lies abandoned on the floor—an early sign of caring less about maintaining appearances. The TV becomes both an escape from reality and a catalyst for uncontrollable anger, a way to shut out the world and the people around you.

Catharsis:
For the first time, grief and sadness find a way to surface. One person is absent, but the other remains, finding a fragile sense of safety in the sadness reflected by the television's blue light. A tissue is held loosely in hand, with others scattered on the floor—evidence of allowing emotion to take priority over maintaining appearances. In this moment, feeling your feelings becomes possible again, perhaps for the first time in a very long time.

Resignation:
After emotions grow too overwhelming, numbness sets in. The attempt to self-regulate begins through scattered coping mechanisms—deep breathing, drugs, the hum of static television. The other person remains absent, and emotional connection feels out of reach. What's left is internal processing, carried out in isolation.

Empty:
This is the chaotic, vulnerable space where decisions are made, memories are formed, and meaning begins to take shape. It's a transitional state—a moment of stepping back to observe: Is this situation safe? Is this person safe? Do I need to leave? Existential questions surface. In this emptiness, rebirth begins. It's the turning point, where we begin to create something from what we've been given.

Reintegration:
This is the step forward. Rebirth is not about resolution—it's about a transformational process. She begins to wake herself up through connection, emotion, and vulnerability. The television now shows a scene from Good Will Hunting. The light, once tethered to the living room, is now somewhere new—a scene not yet explored. To honor Rebirth, we must also honor Death.

- Capturing the final image was the most difficult. Grief and human suffering doesn't end. To imagine a tidy ending is actual death, it's the end of thought. What I hope the image conveys is not happiness or an absence of pain, but a process—a movement toward something new. Change is constant, and for someone in the depths of suffering, that change can become a source of hope.
- Many friends interpreted the final image differently. One person believed it depicted suicide. Another said the cold light looked like an open refrigerator door. At first, I was embarrassed—I wished I had used warmer lighting. But I've come to see that this project isn't about perfect execution; it's about exploration and inviting others into that space to talk. Their reactions are part of the art. And next time, I'll add more warmth to that dang light.

REBIRTH

One offers their friend a life-changing deal—

BLOOD OATH

Dee Allen

You're cradled in my arms now. You're safe from harm. Nothing will touch you now. I have to admit, this is the first time I ever had a human partner. Usually, your kind would run to the hills at the very sight of me. Even you were startled and thought of me as a monster when we first laid eyes on each other. Now you've accepted me. The whole being. Two horns, cloven hooves, shining eyes, animal face and all. I've come to know your true heart as you have seen mine. Look at what the other humans have done to your cat! Look at the damage they've done to your dress, your leg, your wrists! Is this how they treat their own? You could let it all go and live the rest of your days around them—as a cripple. But there's another way for you. Come to my world and live. Side by side. You must admit, the woods are quite enchanting, especially the oldest tree with its tall height and bright red leaves. The woods have a magic the cold, harsh human world lacks. And there's one way to be there: Drink. From the flowing gash in my hand. My blood mixed with your blood will renew your strength, renew your legs and body to working order and sharpen up your senses. You will finally be above this place of torment, this violent village. But I must warn you. Not to scare you, dearest friend, but to educate you on what lies ahead of this current path. The choice must be heartfelt and yours because

If you walk with the beast you become the beast.

Mother Earth has sent you something wild and deadly. Are you ready?

[Inspired by the novel *Slewfoot,* written and illustrated by Brom.]

Chrysalis, Between the Bones

Mia Altenbach

Lost Causes, Last Hopes

Eva Cantwell

Did I cripple myself so young?
Is it true?
Did I tear the feathers out before I even saw what color they were? Those wings of night are nothing more than the untouchable sky above me. I-
I've already hit the ground.
I've already hit the ground.
Is there any getting up?
Am I really just going to be this way forever?
Is this - it is, isn't it? This is all I'm *really* going to be. A helping hand. A stepping stone. Loved, and left behind.

Because I just won't do what it takes to climb higher. It's not even that I can't. I just *won't*. I tore out my potential before I even knew it was *there*.
Fragmenting. Flaking. I rotted and then I rusted. I came back from the dead just so I could have the privilige of killing myself twice. I flew on wings of nothing into skies of night just so I could hit the ground that much harder.

I am curled up beneath that twilight with myself and we are both shaking and we are both crying, and we are both wishing we remembered how it felt to feel alive.
There is nothing to be done, is there?
Even then we were a lost cause.

Fractured

La'Reenah La'Marra Decker

I was sown in New Life,
darkness surrounded me for a moment.
Moisture flows into the passionless soil;
A prerequisite for life within.
How could dark turn to light?
How could passionless soil ignite with zeal?
Impossible: To a fool's heart.
Spiritual Truth: To the faithful.
I was sown in New in Life.
A seed imperishable,
by God's enduring love.
I was sown into the good soil, where life begins.
A fracture has caught the light;
a tender root extends.
A fragile stem forces its way through.
Darkness waves its white flag; light takes control.
My spirit: Re Born.

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Tracy Reyes

Hopes and Dreams

Joshua Plumley

Falling out of heaven to the depths of hell.
Calling out the brethren for a chance to compel.
Breathing down my neck, getting hot I can tell.
Seething on a speck, wreaking havoc I swear.
Speaking of the subject, reaching more than I care.
Breaking down these walls, preaching more than I wear.
Streaking down these halls, teaching more than I flare.
Getting down to business, the best shot all year.
Sweating for forgiveness, the best hope I hear.
Open up my mind and mic, until my words spill.
Coping with the grind of life, until my wards fill.
Roping till I find my heavy heart be still.

No doping till I'm numb, got to feel it, be real.
No drooping till I'm dumb, got to heal it, repeal.
No snooping till I'm dumped, got to reel it with skill.
No movement if I'm slumped, got to be it and deal.
I'm grooving and I'm bumping, got to seal it with zeal.
I'm soothing but I'm crumping, I got to peal the wheel.

Moment of recollection, all things become clear.
Monument of contribution, all beings be aware
Emolument of restitution, all rings be there.
Valiant reconciliation, freedom we share.
Taking down the stall, challenge oppression I dare.
Building up tall, savage passion declare.
Shielding this fall, apprehension beware.
Gilding a call, aspiration be there.
Feilding us all, inspiration be fair.
Wielding one draw, unification be here.

Kindness tenderness, to yourself and to others.
Compassion and caring for your sisters and your brothers.
Empathy understanding, for all shades all colors.
Being deeply seen and removing all those covers.
Joyous gratitude, raising courage and it hovers.
Not halfhearted, wholehearted, hearts flutter.
Outward vulnerability, why the starts stutter.
Inner core of shame, the guilt melts like butter.
Fears struggles battle, confessions we utter.
Worthiness aim, concessions we mutter.

Breakdown buildup, spiritual awakening.
Belonged beloved, wanting and beckoning.
I love you willingly, it happens with a quickening.
More love, less hate, a manifested reckoning.
Birthplace of joy, a gifted epiphany.
Creativity we gain, this lifted symphony.
Authentic awareness, no mystery.
This is the game, make history.
Make it for the world, and you and me.
This is your calling and your destiny.

untitled

Xiadani Soriano

I yearn for your rhythm —
The way your words glide
And confuse my tongue
At the same time.

You were dead to me,
But now you're back.

Reminiscing how good
We used to be...

Si tengo las ganas
To try again,
¿Volverá a funcionar?

¿Te vas a quedar,
Si me mejoro

O te íras otra vez,
Aunque si doy lo mejor de mí?

Anhelo tu ritmo —
La manera en que tus palabras se deslizan
Y confunden mi lengua
Al mismo tiempo.

The Town in Appalachia

Andrew Byrant

There is, was, will always be
A town in the deep,
Cold hills of West Virginia.

A hundred and fifty years
Fail to fall, protected by a phalanx
Of fronds, boughs, and vines.

This town suspended in time,
Is home to no true souls
Lost, found, or present.

The dusty roads
Saw the soles
Of hooves and boots and skin.

Empty shacks
Replaced by empty cabins
Replaced by empty homes,

Shrouded by the ancient sycamores
Who could tell the tallest tales
If they could speak.

Accounts became verisimilar,
Then fables,
Then legends.

These legends travel
From lips to ears,
Guided by a cupped hand,

And the town gains a new life,
A reputation, built by, on,
people that have never been.

The wind howls
Through broken windows
And empty door frames,

And there is a stillness
That drags the town's air
Towards the ground.

What was once home to caricatures
Is now home to creatures, who dwell
in the treeline, just out of sight

Unknown in name
Uncertain in appearance
Unfounded in existence.

What was once a place of sanctuary
From the deep,
Cold hills of West Virginia

Is now home to unsanctity,
Where the footsteps of the lost
Disturb the peace.

Unfathomable, ancient souls
Cry deep and loud and somber,
And echo in the gorges

That snake their way
Through the deep,
Cold hills of West Virginia,

And the town rests
Near the edge of a gorge
And it listens to every ancient cry,

The town that once was
Is the town that is
And the town that will always be.

encroachment

Lauren Kelley Bond

Upward

Hannah Kirchgater

Send Them Away

Victoria Van Stee

The Queen in her unguarded castle
Watches carefully as a wolf wanders in
His eyes downcast, not daring to look
Tail tucked between his legs

He gets to the base of the stairs to her throne
And tells of how he made mistakes
How his pack cast him out
For sins he said were never committed

"So please, my Queen, let me stay for the night
I'll stay out of trouble and I'll stay out of sight
I just want the warmth of your palace
And a place to rest my eyes and head"

The Queen thought she knew wolves well
So she gazed into his eyes for any sign of deceit
As she looked she saw nothing alarming
Despite the goosebumps, she let him stay

The wolf was gone in the morning, nothing disturbed
The Queen went about her day
At dusk he arrived once again
Still not having found a home

She welcomed him in, still hesitant, but friendly
They chat a bit and the goosebumps stay
He is nothing but charming and sweet
There is no one around to say otherwise

Days go by, same routine
They become friends and eventually she forgets
Why she ever felt so put off
By the sheep she once thought was a wolf

But the sheep never was right
The teeth too sharp, eyes too dead
The wolf tries his best to get her guard down
With no one to stop him, he succeeds

Months go by
In a moment of clarity she realizes
Her palace is not her own
And her mind is infested by the yellow eyes of the wolf

His words so sharp they cut through her skin
What happened to the sheep she invited in
She doesn't understand, can't see how
He was a wolf all along

He invaded, tore down what he hated
And built up what would keep her bowed down
Taking his place at the throne
Convincing her that she didn't deserve it, will never deserve it

She is chained to the wolf
Who commands her and tells her what to think
When visitors come they don't seem to realize
That the Queen is no longer speaking

She tries to flee but each attempt
Makes for a more violent return than the last
Breaking her bones, her spirit, her will
Sucking her life away

Until one day, the wolf, fed up with her cries
Throws her to the road, locking the castle up tight
Just a ghost left with no resemblance of what she once was
She wonders for when she'll be let back in

There's a tug in her heart that keeps her nearby
But she ventures for just a bit anyway
Eventually she stumbles upon another
A former ghost, who was once like how the Queen is now

They chat and they laugh and they
Get to know each other a bit more
Something in the Queen tells her that
The ghost is to be trusted

So she mumbles and then she cries
Months upon months of conditioning and lies
Come pouring out of her and into the world
She's so ashamed of what she's become

She's convinced the wolf was meant for her
He convinced her that she would never be enough
That she would never try enough
That he would be the only one to love her

The ghost sees so much of their past in her
Says, "Child, he is a wolf, don't let his lies get you
He thrives off your pain and your willingness to stay
Don't listen to the voice that says 'you're mine'"

She cries and cries and cries as the ghost
Tells her everything she already knew
Crying turning to anger at how
He fucked her up

The next day she marched back to the palace
Demands to be let in and the doors open hesitantly
His piercing gaze strikes her in the heart
But she stands despite it all

It takes years but eventually her palace is brought back to life
No sign of the wolf
Except for the whispers in her head
And the phantom touch of him on her neck

She is ever grateful for the tears she once cried
As she wandered into the ghost
Otherwise, she has no idea how things would have gone
How much closer to death she would have been

Swamp Thing

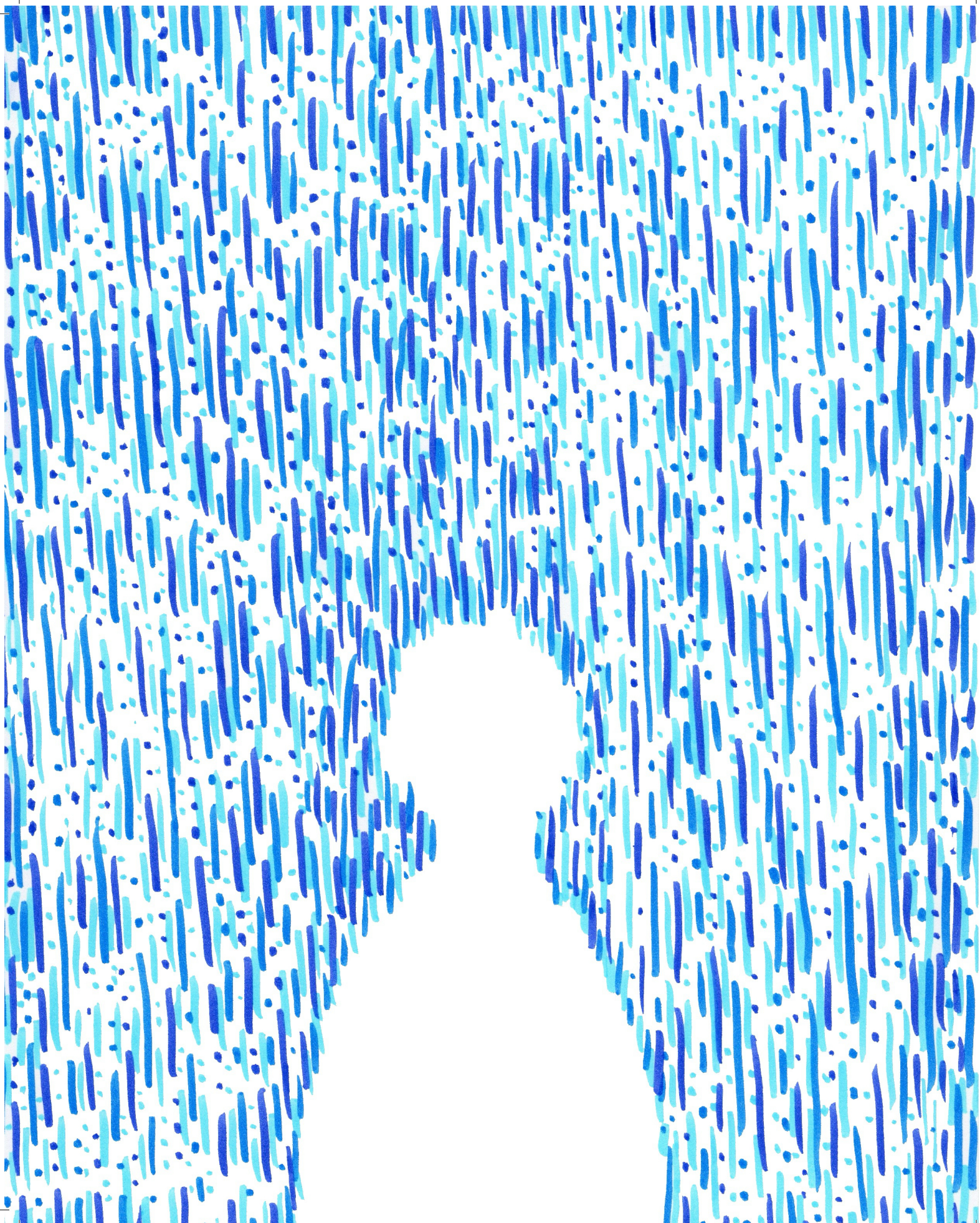
Nicholas Delgado

Phoenix: Ash to Bloom

La'Reenah La'Marra Decker

Beauty from ashes;
Ashes to bloom.
Baptized in the love of my Father;
A love unconditional.
Washed in forgiveness;
A weight lifts off burdened shoulders.
My soul rises.
Released from sin's influence.
Hope and New Life
are found in Bloom.
Shame and guilt
left alone in the ash.
Blown away by Life's breath.
A soul once lost: Now Eternal.

A Fallen King
EtoTeddy



To New Beginnings

Diosa Xochiquetzalcòatl

It has been years
since I last smoked the pipe
and sat around the sacred fire.
But this time, there is no Malinche.
There is no Cucuy lingering in the shadows.

January first, twenty-twenty-four.
One is a good number.
Today, the canupa and I
begin a brand new chapter.

Rain

Kira Saucedo

This rain.
It washes away the tears
and leaves a rainbow to discover
behind the gloomy clouds.
An experience has come and gone
but a dwelling need not be built.

Vices are left behind as a path is made
through an unpleasant haze.
Virtues are strengthened.
These virtues are a mighty weapon
tempered as time goes on and hardships are confronted.
Thrust this weapon into the sky
part these clouds of sorrow
For a new adventure has begun.

Rain in Retrograde

Joshua Montejano

The Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center

at the Norman F. Feldheym San Bernardino Public Library

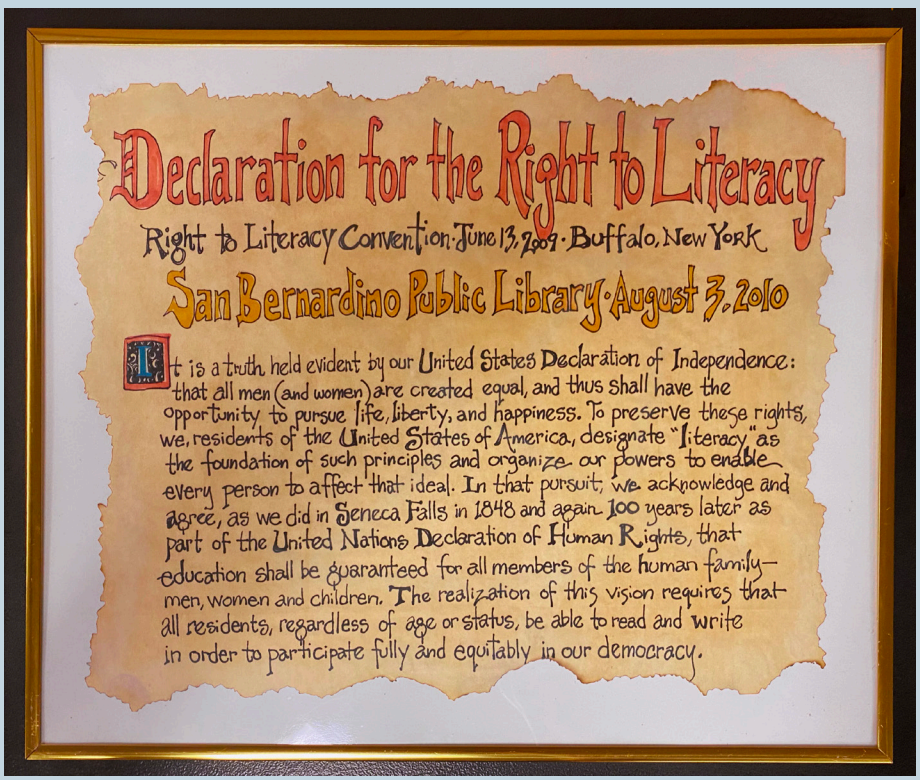
One of the points of pride of this literary magazine is that we accept art, poetry, and fiction from people from all walks of life. We want this magazine to be a nurturing, open space for creative minds to showcase their work, no matter who they are. So, when we were given the opportunity to partner with the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Literacy Center at Norman F. Feldheym Library in San Bernardino for a special feature, we immediately said yes. The Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center, tucked away in one of the many special private places of the Norman F. Feldheym Library in San Bernardino, is a non-profit program that offers basic education, English as a second language lessons, conversation classes, virtual resources, and access to the Career Online High School program. They offer classes, one-on-one tutoring, resources, and a welcome space for learners to improve their reading, speaking, and writing skills. All of the offered services are free, and the staff will work tirelessly with every learner who walks into their space to achieve their personal goal. It is apparent the moment you walk into the Literacy Center that it is a program that loves its community and will do everything it can to uplift the Learners they teach.

The following poems and stories are submissions from both Learners and Staff from the Learning Center, as well as excerpts from interviews. These pieces are the product of hard work from both Learners and Staff, and we want to sincerely congratulate them on their accomplishments. We think their work particularly highlights this edition's theme of Rebirth, because their poems and stories highlight the traits required to be reborn: courage, determination, hopefulness, and adaptability.

My Small Dog
Oliva Lopez, *Learner*

I have a special member in my family. His name is Chapo. He is my family's dog. I met him five years ago, when he was a baby. My cousin gave him to me and I took him home. I fed him and took care of him. My family and I were very happy with him. One day, we looked for him and we couldn't find him. He was lost for three days and we were very worried. Since he is a chihuahua, he was small and hard to find. Then, my daughter found him. He was home all along.

We were happy to see him again. His brother Charlie was also happy to see him. We still have him at home and he has not gone missing again.



Like a Phoenix
Alysha Cisneros, *Staff*

Like a phoenix I die
My heart breaks, my thoughts ache, I fall and crumble under the weight of the world
Like a phoenix I am born again
I stir, I rise, I fly towards the bright full sun of possibilities

PUSH

Nick McDonough, *Staff*

PUSH
your self beyond the filament
or firmament, a permanent
fixture hanging over your head
a cloud, or shroud,
a cloak to hide your self from
Unseeing eyes who won't just
PUSH
them selves open enough to
find you, or mind you,
or clear the smoke to stop
the burning, the churning
guts that decorate your bedroom wall and
Seep like snake oil dripping
from skin, so then
you
PUSH
your self through the thickest fog
to see, and be,
the sunlight that scorches
the mother earth – another birth
taking place in the most beautiful instant
High above
it all, in thrall
to freedom with just one
PUSH

Has learning English changed your life in any way?

Before I started learning English, I was scared and could not buy a bus ticket or communicate with anyone. Now, I am able to ask questions and do what I want to do, even if I am still a little scared.

(Jennifer, Learner)

What keeps you motivated when it gets difficult?

"What keeps me motivated when it gets difficult is looking back at where I started and where I am now and accomplishing my future goals."
(Raul, Learner)

"I feel better when I learn something difficult, I like to fight my way through it."
(Oliva, Learner)

"When it gets difficult, I think to myself, 'I am not younger but it's okay - I am not too old to learn.'"
(Jennifer, Learner)

Jellyfish
Anahi Campos, *Staff*

Washed up on the shore it lays,
still fighting despite its state.
The sun feels like needles
and the sand pricks its flesh.
The waves move with rhythm
as its cells begin to wither.
There is no fear or panic
for the ocean never fails her inhabitants.
Remaining remnants weave into the tide,
scattered among the salt and foam.
From what was destroyed,
something stirs.
In the deep, unseen, life takes shape.
A whisper in the currents,
a pulse in the waves.

When did you start learning English, and why?

"I started learning English in April of 2024. We live in this country where a second language is important because I don't want to have an interpreter everywhere I go. I needed to communicate with my boss better and now he understands me because I've been learning English."
(Oliva, Learner)

What advice would you give someone just starting to learn English?

"I encourage the people who are not native English speakers to try to open their mouth and talk whether they are correct or not or have an accent, it doesn't matter just try to speak. It is okay if you aren't pronouncing right. Little by little you get closer to sounding how English people speak and your accent will change. You will feel more self-confident."
(Kim, Learner)

"The advice I would give someone just starting to learn English is don't give up, try to study the most you can, and it's okay to not see results right away but they will show up with time."
(Raul, Learner)

The Girl Who Was Adopted

Kim Hsu, *Learner*

She's a four year old quiet girl in China.
The parents think a boy is more valuable than the girl.
They put the girl in an orphanage. After several months she was adopted by parents who can't have kids.
The new parents came and talked to her very nicely and smiling.
They made her feel safe and happy. Then she started smiling, too.
The new parents went to the adoption agency to do the paperwork.
After that, they took her home.
When she went with her new parents home the new parents started to give her a good education.
They sent her to school. She had a lot of friends at school, she studied very hard, and she got a good degree.
Later on, she finished her education, she got a good job, and made good money.
Then, the real parents came back to look for her and tell her to come back to them.
She rejected, and told them she has a new life now.

How do you think writing creatively affects a Learner's ability to understand English?

"Creative writing gives learners a sense of ownership over language. When they get to choose what they write about, they're more engaged, more willing to take risks, and more likely to enjoy the learning process. That emotional connection makes a huge difference in how they absorb English."
(Anahi, Staff)

"If you allow someone the room to explore in their writing, you are allowing them to explore their own mind. For individuals learning English, to be able to have complete freedom, their own narrative allows them to be more excited to truly learn and expand their knowledge of the English language."
(Alysha, Staff)

A New Pozole
Thamar Olvera, *Learner*

The figure of my maternal grandmother—she was a vital part of my growing up. I was her spoiled granddaughter, to the point that only I got her pozole recipe, which happened at a time when I had a restaurant.

She came every day to check that I followed her instructions to "the letter" and to give her finishing touches.

She also gave me a very personal recipe for a sauce to accompany the pozole. This recipe had been a hit with her customers since she sold Mexican food, after becoming a widow, to feed her children.

I have engraved these tokens of her love in my heart. That is why it is so pleasant to make pozole, it is like being with her.

How do you keep your students motivated to learn English?

"I always encourage my students to breach their comfort zone, even if just for a few moments, to feel the growth and development that comes with learning something difficult. That feeling may be a little uncomfortable in the moment, but afterwards becomes a motivator for the future."
(Nick, Staff)

"Our learners, while already highly motivated individuals, do need a bit of a push sometimes. We encourage them to talk about their cultures and customs and share stories with each other. We like to switch things up and have variety in lessons, this project was definitely something different not only for them, but for us as well."
(Faydra, Staff)

Have you noticed any common challenges for Learners depending on their native language?

"The most common challenge we see in a learner with any native language is a lack of confidence. Unfortunately, our learners have often been misinformed about their potential and ability to succeed. It is our job to show them otherwise, but that is hard to do and takes time."
(Alysha, Staff)

"The biggest obstacle I have seen isn't language itself, but confidence in the ability to speak. I experience this myself when I attempt to speak Spanish, Mandarin, or Arabic, it's not an easy thing to do and I can understand the hesitancy our Learners feel when speaking English. The secret is that they are my biggest inspiration to keep learning new languages, and without them I wouldn't be as brave as I am today."
(Faydra, Staff)

What's your approach to correcting students' errors without discouraging them?

"Something I've found to be helpful is to ask the learner a question about what they've written. Even something as simple as "What does this word mean?" can get the learner to think deeper about what they are trying to communicate. "
(Nick, Staff)

"I let my learners make mistakes; it is only human to do so. Once I spot a mistake a learner has made, that is a teaching opportunity. I allow them to finish writing their sentences and I have them read it out loud to themselves, many will catch the mistake on their own and if not, I point it out to them kindly and explain the correct answer. The last thing we wish a learner to feel is shame."
(Faydra, Staff)

Rebirth in the Winter

Jennifer Liu, *Learner*

8 years ago, on a very cold and snowy day, I was on the way back home. Suddenly, I heard a sound, I found a puppy laid on the snow, his eyes full of sadness and begging. I thought quickly, I picked him up. He was trembling and was very thin and cold. His left leg was broken, and he couldn't stand.

I brought him back home; he was very scared and wouldn't eat or drink. I took him to the pet hospital that afternoon. The doctor examined him and put medicine on his leg. Then the doctor spoke to me 'The puppy is healthy and only ten months old'.

I gave him the name 'Lucky'. He began to eat and drink on the 3rd day. He wagged his tail to me and stood. I knew he began to trust me and my family.

In the meantime, my husband got sick, I couldn't sleep well, Lucky was patient with me for a long time. Now, Lucky is a happy dog, and I have recovered.

In this moment, Lucky is with my sister in China. I had moved to the U.S. He has a good life and I often speak to my sister and Lucky on the phone.

That winter, Lucky and I saved each other. We were both reborn.

Second Chance in Life

Raul Beccera, *Learner*

When I was young I hung out with the wrong crowd. I wasn't responsible in school and I got in trouble a lot.

My parents and family were worried about me. In school my grades were bad because I missed a lot of days. This caused me to lose 10 years of my life.

I was then given a second chance. I started by getting the trust of my family back. Then I got a job and went back to school.

Now I have a better relationship with my parents and family. My literacy skills have also improved. At my job I started sweeping and mopping, but now I am a crane operator. Although I have bettered my life, I am not going to stop making progress.

The concept of "Rebirth" holds many interpretations. What does this theme represent to you personally, and how has it influenced your writing pieces for the magazine?

"I find the theme of rebirth to be very interesting because I never thought of it as giving introspection into oneself. It made me think about myself, it marked me, I didn't think writing would be so profound in my life. I never thought it would make me recognize the deep relationship I had with my grandma."
(Thamar, Learner)

"To me, rebirth means starting all over again and putting the puzzle pieces back together. In my writing, this meaning meant getting a second chance in life."
(Raul, Learner)

"Rebirth, to me, means breaking down parts of yourself or your life that no longer serve you--then rebuilding from that space with more intention and clarity. My writing for the magazine pulls from that process. It's shaped by personal challenges that once felt like endings but later became the groundwork for growth."
(Anahi, Staff)

"Rebirth is not one singular event or experience, but rather a continuous process of transformation. For me, the same is true of any piece of art that I create. Creation is, itself, a rebirth of an energy into a form; which, then, becomes reborn into an interpretation and carried on as its audience grows and its message spreads."
(Nick, Staff)

The Rain
Thamar Olvera, *Learner*

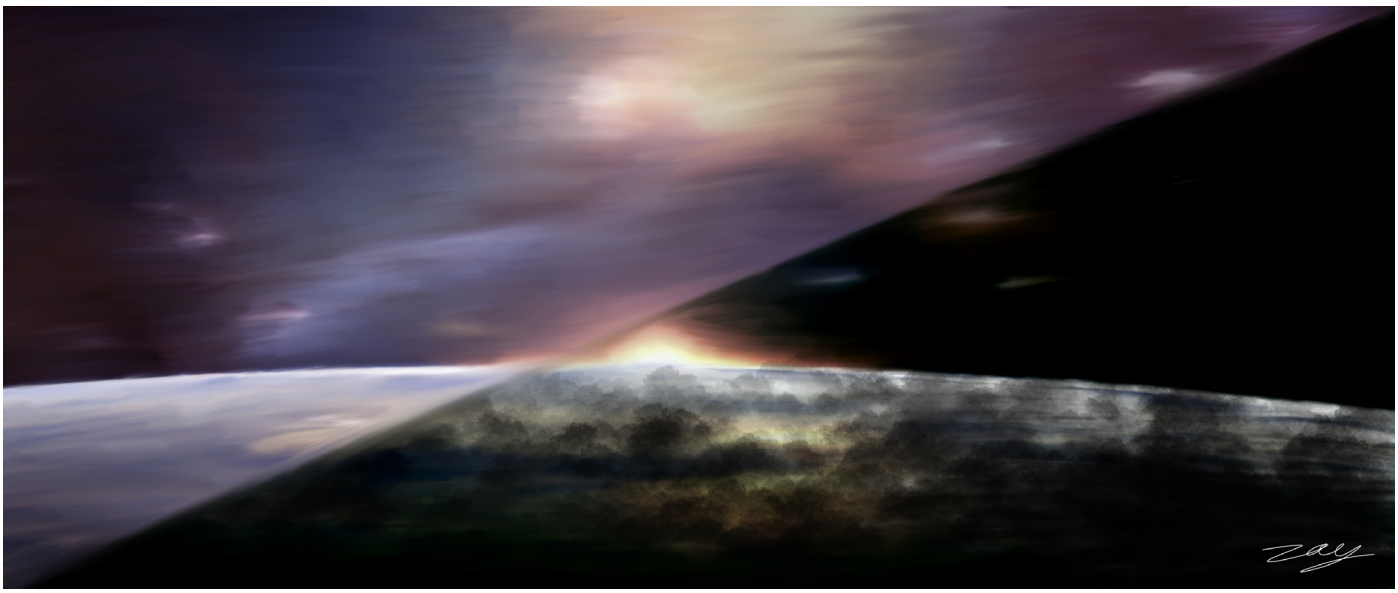
Soft diamonds
descend endlessly.
My city brightens...

How to Survive a Housefire
Faydra Patora, *Staff*

Try not to battle
a raging fire, you will
end up worse than burned.
It's too late
to turn off the gas,
explosions will happen,
just try to avoid them.

Look out of the shattered window,
the rain you've been wishing for
has arrived.
Prepare for floods
and mudslides when you
make it outside.
After escaping with your burns
and broken skin, the fence that still
stands has perched a bluebird
untouched by the storm.

The blinding sun breaks through
the clouds and the heat of June
melts them away.
The fire has been extinguished
and you made it out,
the blinding sun has opened
your eyes
to a clear day.



Earth Rebirth

Isaiah Bruny

Star

Katy Garcia

And when the most beautiful nebula–
Made up of what you were–
Begins to collapse in on itself,
The emptiness where it is fading seems to be colder

And when its own gravity and vastness are too much,
It regrets reaching too far

And just as the clumping of its material together
Begins to feel like the churning of a stomach,
The matter screams
An implosion all at once

And when everything that was left is dead,
And everything else has fallen apart,
It starts again
It births anew; you.

Writer's Unblock

Joshua Plumley

My words are stuck in my mind amuck. My tongue is twisted in a grind no luck.
No verbs, no actions, no movements, I'm stuck. A past, a future, a present, I struck.
No nouns, nobody, no place, no idea, in a rut. A passion, a patience, a persistence, I cut.

My head in the sand, in my hands, slipping away, I cannot see you.
A needle in the haystack, lost without love and lost without you.
My heart wanders in a wilderness of hues.
My mind wonders, in the stillness, & gets lost in listless queues.
I see beauty in all the colors, but I was bequeathed to sing the blues.

Grasping at straws so slim they fall through.
Gasping for air to breathe, they suffocate, they turn blue.
So bridle, so broken, so unstable, they break too.
So little, so petty, so unreasonable, they take you.
Kidnapped, hogtied, hands & feet bound, mouth muzzled.
Taken aback, cannot move, cannot speak, profoundly puzzled.
Lost to time, stuck in the back, behind locked doors, it is hard to follow.
Left behind, stuck in the cracks, behind the walls, inside dark shadows.

Open your mind & let this time be hallow.
Close your madness & let your sins be hollow.
Let your words make progress & let your mouth speak truth.
Do something, get involved, go forward, be in motion & make your move.
Learn from the past, live in the present, & hope for a future brand new.
Everyone, every place, everything, every great idea, I love you.
With passion, with patience, with persistence, I come through.
Lift your head, lift your gaze, open your eyes, I can now see you.
Do not slip away, find your treasure, find your truth, find love & find you.
Find your heart in calmness within the great depths of you.
Ground your mind & ponder the fullness of being you.
Awesome colors shining brightly bringing beauty to hold.
Firm hands holding you tight with love, we are told.
Take a breath, breathe deeply, don't turn red, don't turn cold.
Be strong, be unbroken, be stable, but break the mold.
Larger than life, so grand, so reasonable, behold.
Freed, released, untied, unbound, & unmuzzled.
Taken forward, free to move, free to speak, profusely unpuzzled.
Found in the moment, up front, through the doors, it is easy to follow.
Picked up, out of the cracks, over the walls, so bright we see beyond the darkest shadows.

Questions Only Asked When There's No-One Else Around

Eva Cantwell

I am walking through a forest in a winter that doesn't end and for all my love of starlight I've never seen the sky here. Clouds, silvered and endless and always waiting to unleash the next blizzard, but never starlight.

This forest is like all my other forests. There are no gaps in the canopy. The trunks are thick. The wood is dark. The needles are black, because it always runs too cold here to grow anything with leaves.

There's a girl in the forest. She dresses like some cross between a huntress and a princess, and she is lounging on a low hanging branch, sharpening a knife.

"If someone is a ghost possessing their own body, are they alive?" I ask her.

"They are a haunting," she says, not looking up. "They are the victim and the murderer and the crime scene and the grave. They are made of things that were and are not any longer."

"But are they alive?"

"Can you build a life out of all the things that are not there? Can you sew all the empty spaces together and call it a soul?"

I press my lips together. I don't like those questions. I don't like their answers.

The hand with the whetstone stills. The hand with the knife rises.

"I carve names onto the insides of your ribs with this," she says. "I etch them too deep to be forgotten, and even if you scratch them out you'll look at the gouge and remember that they used to be there."

I nod. I know this, because I am the one who commands her to do it.

"Do you ever wish you knew how to love halfway?" She asks.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because if I did then it wouldn't be mine. It might be love, but it wouldn't be mine."

There's a thoughtful hum I can barely hear over the quiet rasp of a whetstone and a knife.

"Do you know of any way to love that doesn't involve carving more negative space into a place built out of negative spaces?"

"I'm not sure. I don't think so."

She sighs. The closest emotion we have to insanity is love. We both expected that answer.

"It's still a ghost story," she says eventually. "Even if all ghost stories are love stories, in the end, they're love stories where something went wrong. Someone still had to die for it to be a ghost story. Something has to be gone that used to be there."

For the first time since I found her, she meets my eyes.

There is nothing truly special about them. They are blue with a lot of grey, because our eyes are always the same.

"But you knew that," she says. "You're not trying to remember the ghosts. You're trying to remember what they were before."

"I feel like I'm made of absences."

It came out more desperate than I wanted it to. She blinks, and turns back to her knife.

"Then you must have an awful lot of space."

"I do."

"Build something in it."

"I'm trying," I say, and the words come out raw enough to bleed.

"I know," she says, not unkindly.

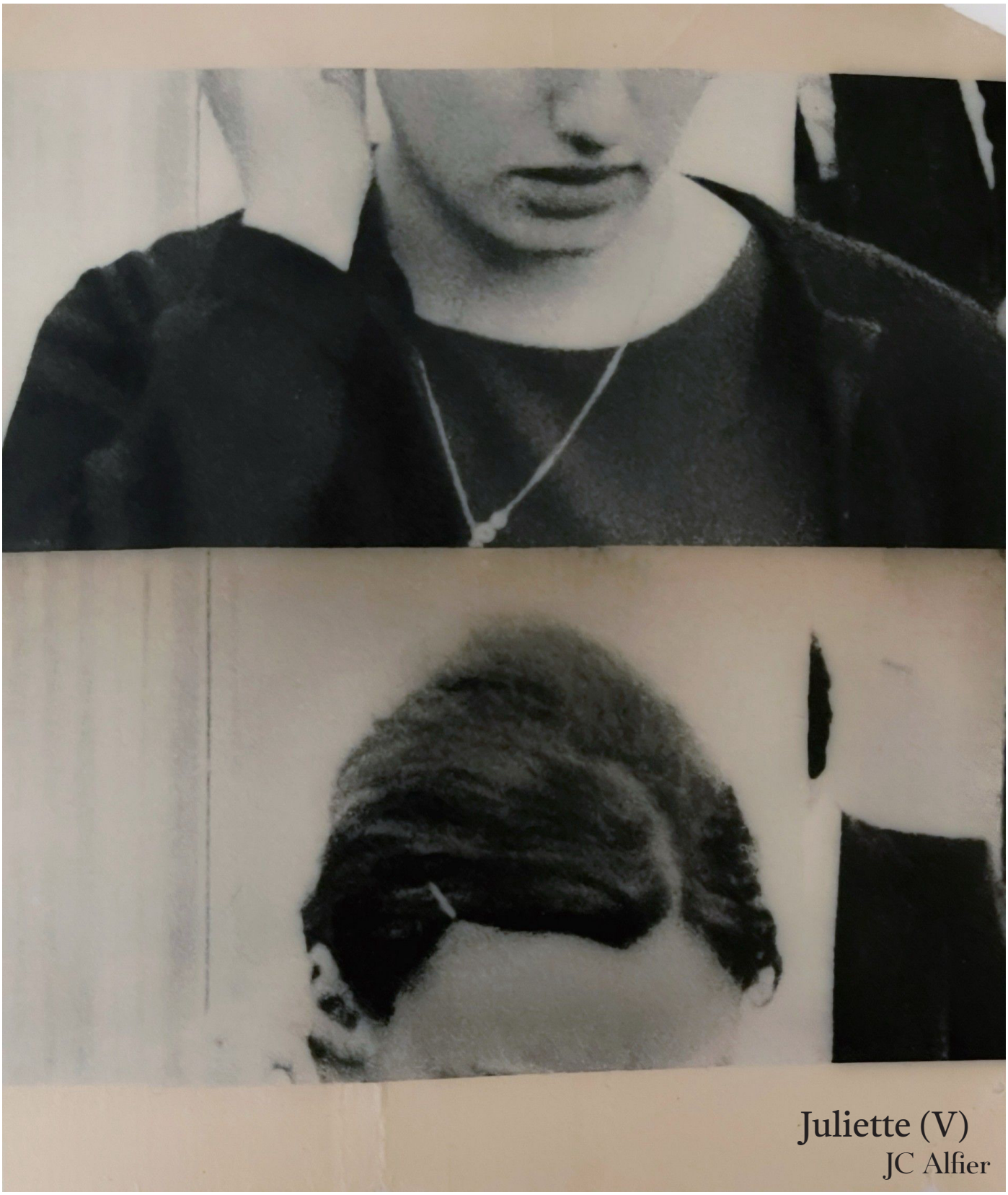
"Is that enough?"

"It will be."

Up From The Water
La'Reenah La'Marra Decker

Up from the water;
New Life embraces me.
Into the light, cleansed from what was.
Shadows no longer surround me.
New Life welcomes me home.
Salvador. My Savior. Jesus.
I was called from the grave:
No Return.
Porque nací de nuevo; I am a new creation.
Christ broke the chains
Of my enslavement.
He experimentado un renacimiento.
Condemned. Forgiven.
New Life embraces me.

The Willow Tree
Julia Gonzalez



Juliette (V)
JC Alfier

Piece by Piece

Victoria Van Stee

Piece by piece
Every part of my being
Shatters
Plummeting to the floor

Getting swept up in
The false promises of those
Who say they love you
Yet they never see you

Picked apart by the scavengers
Of the night sky
Wanting you only because you
Provide attention

And when you can't give anymore
Because you've given every piece away
They will fly off again
Leaving you to be claimed

Yet you wander the days
Painting your face, in a damn masquerade
Something separates you from them
A thing you can't discern

Months go by and then you realize
You were not feeling
Though you chase and cry and beg
They elude and evade your grasp

Piece by piece
You pick up yourself
Vulnerable and alone
Regretting all those you lost

Slowly most parts return
Not all, but most
There's only so much you can recover
When your soul is scattered in the wind

And eventually you look in the mirror
See the girl you were meant to be
She's tattered and torn but
She is alive.

To Exist in Two Places at Once

Liliana Velasco

A walk down the path is made exciting by a rolling stone, kicked and stopped by a shoe. A night of restless sleep is made memorable by a rolling tumor, caught under two fingers on the left breast.

To bend your head backwards, to feel the sunlight through the trees and on your cheek. To dress yourself after the surgery, to feel the wounds on your chest and the tumors out of it.

Breathing in deeply and drinking the open air. Contemplating the scars and wishing them away.

Acknowledging how your lungs expand and how your body seems to unfold. Acknowledging the proof of what happened and how it confronts you with a resilience that seems to be yours now.

The exhale is easy and satisfied because the world has aligned in this moment for you. The understanding is random and absolute because the world has aligned in this moment for you.

Untitled Prayer

Katy Garcia

I feel myself healing, and I fear it
I cannot remember the last time I was healthy
One of the able bodies or minds
Lord, what does it feel like?
It cannot be comfortable
It will not be
Nothing new ever is
But dear Lord, don't take my spark
The best art is made in the dark and I fear
leaving will cure me of my taste
The best art captures the pains of the body
It is easy to capture while I hold my own pain

Hillside Burros

Tracy Reyes

Mental Gymnastics by an Unathletic Caterpillar

Edgar Aguilar Silva

On the topic of rebirth, my mind is stuck with deliriums. That word and what it means festers like maggots spreading and eating my time. It confuses me plenty but excites me all the more as I grow. I think however there is a conclusion that I have reached to satisfy my now. To shed like a snake. No, to shed like a beetle. I wish to shed like a snake and a beetle, like a reptile too big for themselves, and a bug to grand for their past I wish to shed like they do. To be new and the same as they do. Chemicals change, time changes. Do we change or are we molded and am I still my own in the end? What is rebirth but a change from one state of existence to another. Is it tangible? If so then why am I not able to change like I wish and am instead forced to evolve in the smallest of ways conscious at every lethargic foothold I take on my stride forward.

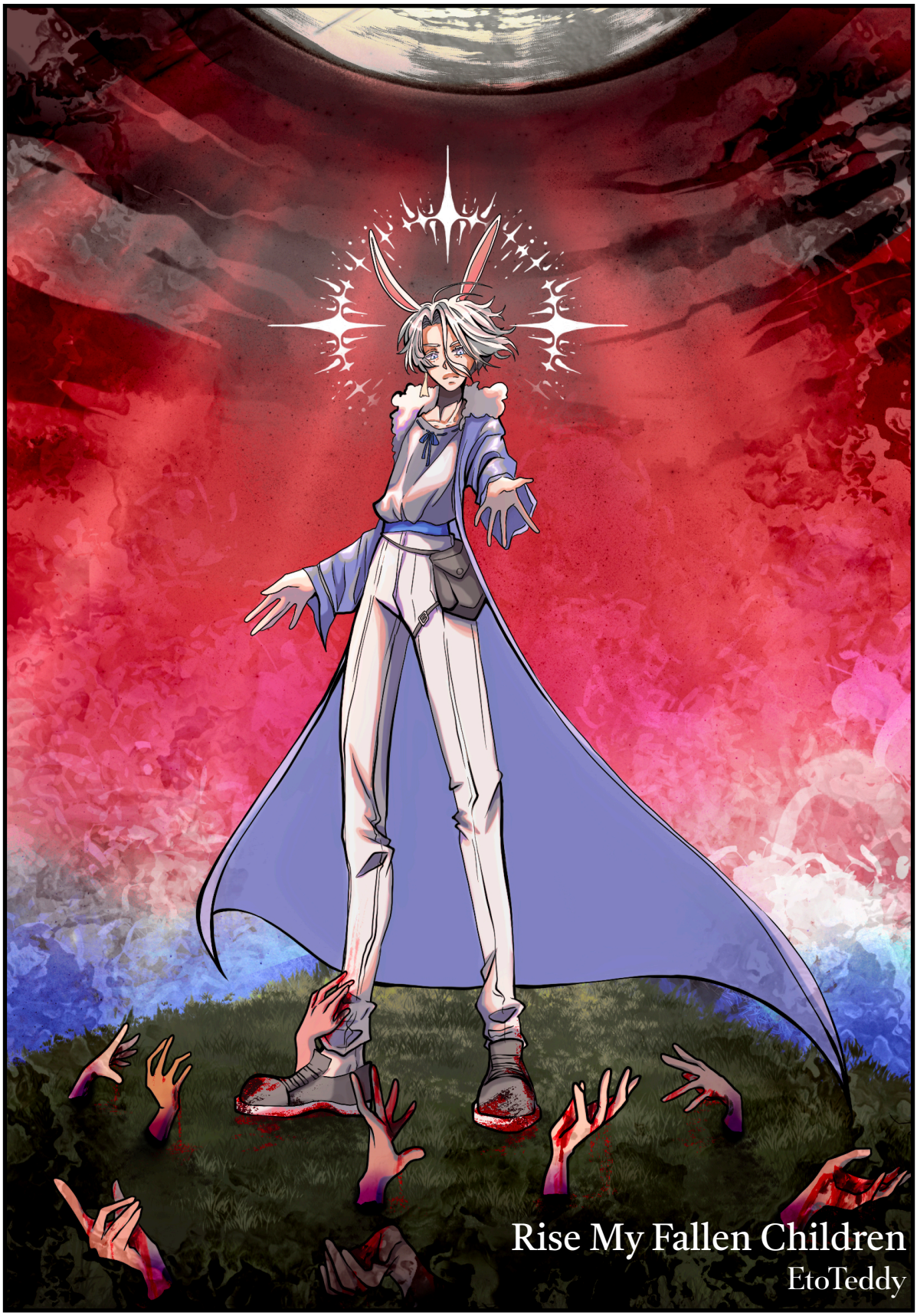
I wake up from a poor night's sleep after a full day's dreary happenings. Again, and again and once more on repeat. The days turn to weeks, the weeks to months and before I can grasp my own story even from pages I read yesterday I am already lost. I have forgotten what passages occurred or why they mattered to me and it is all in the least spectacular of fashions. To my credit, without wanting to rubbish all I have said so far, I am conscious, and through perception can produce radiance. However, at the moment even my boldest stand against monotony is small in relation to the hardness of the earth I intend to shake. A Pericles of the mundane in man, and a crisp example of the most depressing and unimpressive of divots that time had to witness. My fibers burn with hate that I am not more than what I imagine in those moments when the sun is clearly set and rest is a past tense need not fulfilled. So, I drift away as to not break cycle to the sorry repents of my wills becoming wants as they join the caches of ideas amassed for later.

What to do in this case with my shelves stacked full, no room for more ventures if my feeble mind would even muster one again in this state. If tonight I dream of learning new materials might my will to grow become snuffed by the deep inhale of my waking in the morn. I am torn, to form intrusive thoughts that attack my own formalities, but might the bite of deprecation ever bud a better pasture grown of motivation? Would the chew of my own hide simply tart the aftertaste of my already sour morsels. In this case I believe the baggage of my memory is too great a pitfall to risk intentional disregard and disagreement with myself. I mustn't be too harsh, I know. If I lead my life with switches of self-loathing I might need rebirth, and this I know is not an ability I possess in the literal. I am stuck with no determination to affect the state of my particles loaned. Apologies to the Cosmos on this account.

Heartbreakingly the Universe cannot perceive me. Inspiringly, the Universe cannot perceive me. It will not bear witness to the sum of the person I am at my death; therefore, it will not be the one to burden my scales. While this sounds disturbing or even uncouth it does realize the idea that I solely have dominion over the challenges I face, and my interpretation is final in the case to judge myself. The philosophy I subscribe to is not in question. Perhaps this should have been addressed earlier but to make it plain I have a desire to grow and change as my aspirations though spotty still drive my life. I don't submit to quietism or share contempt in bare survival. Understanding that, now we vault back to the main topic. Through my endeavor I have got this far and now I wish to know how much harder the push will be to go even that much further. To grow just that much more.

I really wish to be a vermin. One of those who don't recognize limits and grow when they have outgrown. When they are outgrown they continue to grow again using the same day cycles that encapsulate me. While the growing pains condition me. I don't wish to change I must confess. I am accustomed to my bones and at my age they don't bother me. Not like they do with insects who must break their skeleton to grow in order to survive . Is that to their contempt I wonder. For myself, I want more. However, I don't want to slither, I just want to shed the weight accumulated. Even now I pick at my skin out of anxiety hoping a better version of me shows up by tomorrow to face what's next.

In a certain way this is my rebirth is it not. I unload my weary head as I shed the thoughts that make me stale and rigid. Now in physical discard these paragraphs will not haunt my mind, I can allow myself to forget. Tomorrow I will be new. Tomorrow I will be vulnerable to new parasitic thoughts of feelings I don't want and force my soul to harden. Maybe then I will find ways to shed again and become closer to the end that my will prepares. I hope he recognizes me as progress needed through repairs as mental exercises. It excites me that I am no writer, but I might be tomorrow. If I can shed enough tonight.


Rise My Fallen Children
EtoTeddy

I am (Continuous)

Izzy Davidson

I

Am

Jaw

Displaced

I

Am

Unraveling

Skin

I

Am

Forehead

Bullet

I

Am

( )

continuous

Roots and Blossoms

Eva Cantwell

AUTUMN:

Eventually you realize that your childhood is over and you don't get choices anymore.

But it takes long enough that he gets a laugh or two. Long enough that your lips are stained where the pomegranate juice dried sticky and sweet and damning. Long enough that you have to peel your mouth back open before you can ask *when do I go home* for the last time.

You don't go home. Not really. You can't cross the River Styx twice, not in any way that matters. Your mother kills the world with cruelty equivalent to how much she loves you, and it's almost funny how fast they rush to bring you back to her, but even then-

Your mother kills the world to bring you back. You still come back wrong.

WINTER:

Maybe that's why you make a bet you know Orpheus can't win. He loves Eurydice, it's true - but he loves her like a story. Like something beautiful and enduring and perfect. She is beautiful, and she is enduring, but she's a person. She'll never be as perfect as he's decided to remember her being.

He plays until his fingers bleed and Eurydice follows the sound like a moth follows a flame. You almost hope they make it; that he steps into a field of flowers and turns just in time to catch her, that they live forever in the gardens you planted as a child and that once, just *once,* someone pries a happy ending from the jaws of hell.

When she comes back without him, she's quiet, and you're not happy even though you know it was for the best.

Eurydice would have come back, if Orpheus had succeeded. But she, like you, would have come back wrong. She, like you, would have spent all the joy of resurrection, trying to fit a mold that's not even big enough for who she was before.

SPRING:

"You set us up," Eurydice says, and it's been so long since her return that it truly catches you off guard.

"I did," you admit.

"Why?"

"Becuase now he can be in love with the thought of you forever, and you'll be spared from trying to live up to a memory of something you'll never be again."

"You can't leave this place unchanged," Eurydice says, "but that doesn't mean you can't leave it whole."

You're quiet until she leaves. You'd never once considered that - that you could cross the River Styx twice, that you could be as different as the water and still be *you*.

SUMMER:

You leave with what you leave with every time. He gives you jewels, and clothing finer than Eurydice has ever touched, and a pomegranate in case you get hungry on the road.

You're starting to wonder if it's still meant to be an insult. You're starting to wonder if your husband is as tired of this story as you are.

It gets boring, when you're immortal, and everything you're furious at is nothing you can change.

You roll the pomegranate in your hands, and you find Eurydice standing by the door.

"You're going," she says, and you can't fathom how she says it without envy.

"I do each year."

"Yes. But you're going whole."

You don't know how she sees it in you, these fragile daisies sprouting between your ribs. Orpheus could tell a story more beautifully than anyone you've ever known, but Eurydice can read them better than any but the Fates. She reads them in the curve of spine and twitch of fingers and which way your foot falls when you walk, and you find there's still something in you capable of marveling at it.

"I am," you say. "I am going whole."

Cut Away The Vines That Wrap Around Me

EtoTeddy

Open Your Life

Joshua Plumley

Open your eyes, there is much in disguise.
Can't you see the lies, coming up from behind?
Sometimes what you see, you know it is not right.
So, you must learn to read between the lines.

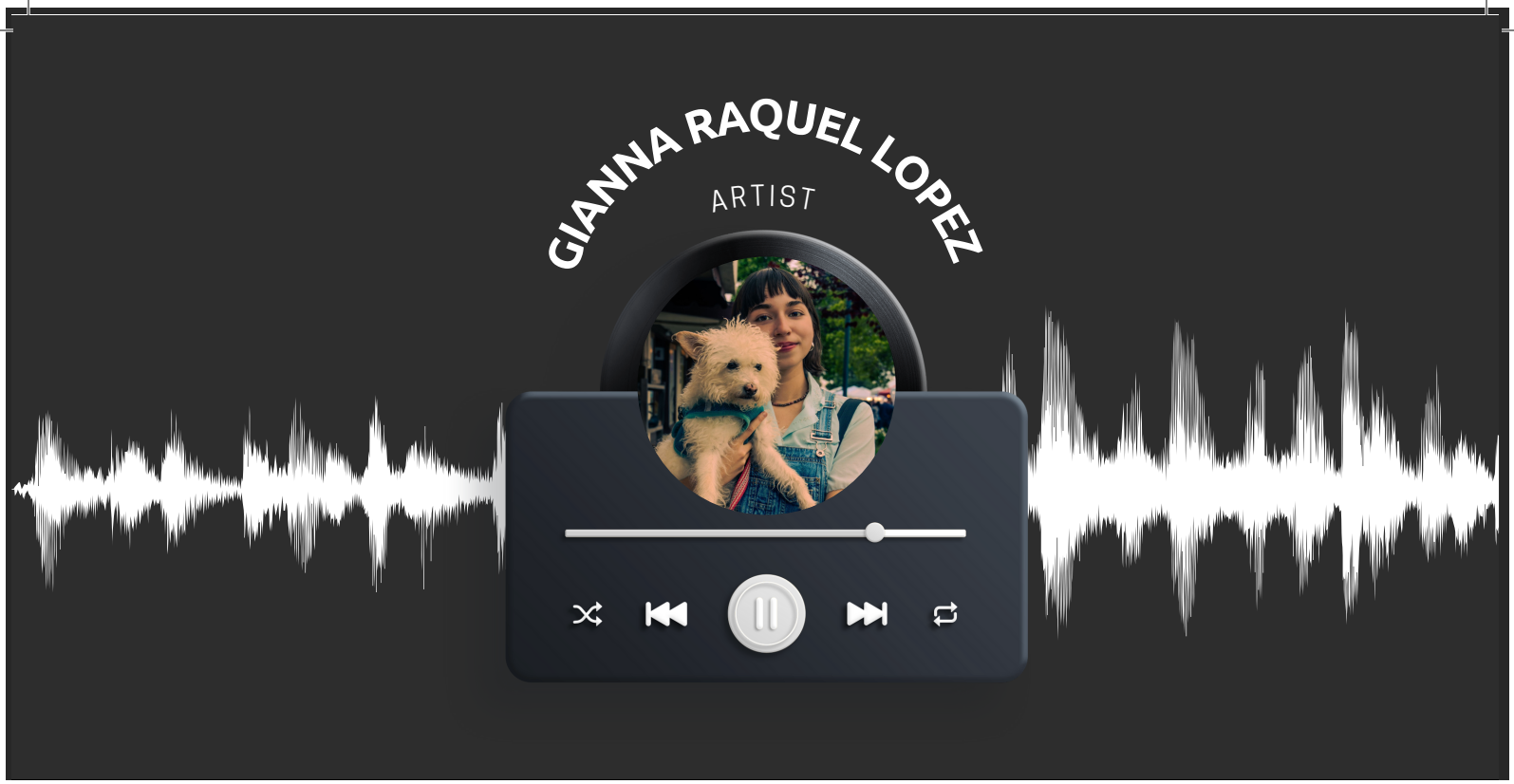
Open your ears, there's much to beating fears.
You can't be scared, to shed your tears.
After they flow, things become clear.
The light shines in, the shadows disappear.

Open your mind, while the truth unwinds.
Hope & seek sooth, & stay wise.
Cope & treat true, find the path that hides.
Find the presents deep within, where they reside.

Open your heart, you reach, you reach far.
Look at all the scars, make amends, it's who you are.
It's all about love, you love, you love hard.
We must heal each other, haven't you heard?

Open your spirit, take the flight so apparent.
Fly above the obstruction, until you clear it.
Your souls soaring so high, so can you feel it?
It is time to rise above, much more than the ceiling.

Open your life, like a bright star shining.
Being true to yourself & to others, is the beginning.
Rising above all this hate, is ascension.
Loving each other like brothers & sisters, is salvation.



Gunward Pursuit

BIOGRAPHY

GIANNA RAQUEL LOPEZ IS A PASSIONATE ARTIST, MUSICIAN, AND COMPOSER WHOSE CREATIONS DELVE INTO THE WONDERS OF NATURE, LIFE, AND THE UNIVERSE. HER ARTISTIC VISION IS FUELED BY HER FAITH AND THE ESSENCE OF HUMANKIND. GIANNA'S WORK HAS BEEN FEATURED IN TOWN GALLERIES AND STREAMING PLATFORMS, HOPING TO TOUCH THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS ONE DAY. OUTSIDE OF HER CREATIVE ENDEAVORS, SHE LOVES TO HUNT FOR VINTAGE TREASURES AND IMMERSE HERSELF IN CAPTIVATING FILMS.

SCAN ME

QUESTIONS

COULD PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

MY NAME IS GIANNA LOPEZ, I'M A STUDENT AT CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE AND I LIVE IN YUCAIPA.

HOW LONG YOU BEEN DOING MUSIC?

I'VE BEEN DOING MUSIC. HONESTLY, SINCE.. I DON'T KNOW, WAY BACK. SINCE AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, UM, EVER SINCE I REMEMBER WRITING MY FIRST SONG WHEN I WAS FOUR. I THINK, I'VE ALWAYS JUST LOVED TO.

YOU STARTED SINCE YOU WERE YOUNG. WHAT KIND OF CREATED THAT INSPIRATION TO GEAR YOU TOWARDS MUSIC?

UM, IT FEELS LIKE IT WAS. ALREADY THERE. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT. LIKE, I THINK I WAS JUST BORN WITH THAT PASSION FOR MUSIC, BUT I THINK WHEN I STARTED TAKING PIANO LESSONS, I KIND OF GOT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT, LIKE, WHAT MUSIC ACTUALLY MEANS, YOU KNOW, WHAT THE BASIC MUSIC THEORY. AND I HAD A GOOD PIANO TEACHER, SO I TOOK LESSONS FOR ABOUT... 10 YEARS? I ALSO COME FROM A VERY MUSICAL FAMILY, SO THAT'S ANOTHER THING.

WHAT DOES THE PROCESS OF CREATING MUSIC LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

SO USUALLY I EITHER COME UP WITH AN IDEA IN MY HEAD OR I HEAR SONG THAT HAS, LIKE, A SPECIFIC, LIKE, PART IN IT THAT I DON'T KNOW, THAT KIND OF CATCHES MY ATTENTION. AND SO I KIND OF EITHER TAKE THAT PART AND KIND OF TWEAK THE CHORDS AND THE NOTES. AND, YEAH, YOU KNOW, WHEN I HAVE AN IDEA, I HAVE TO RECORD IT, USUALLY BY HUMMING FIRST, OR SOMETIMES I SIT DOWN AT THE PIANO AND I MEMORIZE THE POSITION OF MY HAND. LIKE, MUSCLE MEMORY, YOU KNOW? THAT'S ANOTHER THING. I REALLY LIKE TO VISUALIZE WHERE, LIKE, THE POSITION OF MY HANDS, WHETHER IT'S ON PIANO OR GUITAR, I THINK THAT'S REALLY HELPFUL.

HOW HOW LONG DOES IT NORMALLY TAKE FOR YOU TO CREATE A PIECE?

OKAY, IT REALLY REALLY DEPENDS..THE PIANO PIECE THAT I SUBMITTED, THAT ONE TOOK ABOUT THREE MONTHS, WHICH WASN'T TOO LONG COMPARED TO MY LAST COMPOSITION. BECAUSE THAT ONE TOOK A LITTLE LONGER. THAT WAS MY FIRST COMPLETE ONE. AND SO I THINK AFTER GOING THROUGH THAT PROCESS AND KIND OF KNOWING HOW MY MIND WORKS AND MY PREFERRED STYLE OF WRITING MUSIC, I THINK IT WAS A LOT EASIER AFTER. SO IT ACTUALLY TOOK LESS TIME, BUT I THINK IT REALLY DEPENDS ON THE LENGTH. SOMETHING I NOTICE USUALLY WHEN I WRITE SONGS IS THAT I'M KIND OF A PERFECTIONIST, SO I ALWAYS KIND OF ADD MORE TO IT UNTIL MY EARS ARE SATISFIED, YOU KNOW, LIKE, IT TAKES A WHILE TO HAVE A FINISHED PIECE.

WHAT ARE SOME DIFFICULTIES YOU MAY OR HAVE ENCOUNTERED

I THINK WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE A SONG IS I LIKE, I WRITE DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE SONG, AND THEN I THINK IT'S HARD TO KIND OF PIECE THE PIECES TOGETHER, KIND OF STITCH EVERYTHING TOGETHER. BECAUSE YEAH, WITH THAT SONG I HAD, THEY WERE ACTUALLY GOING TO BE TWO SEPARATE SONGS. BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO WITH THEM SEPARATELY, AND SO I SAID, WHY NOT MAKE THEM ONE, YOU KNOW?

WHAT DOES MUSIC MEAN TO YOU?

I'D SAY THAT,. I DON'T KNOW. MUSIC, I MEAN, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN TO ART AND MUSIC, BUT I THINK THAT MUSIC HAS THIS DIFFERENT, ALMOST MORE LIVELY FEELING BECAUSE, I MEAN, YOU USE USE YOUR WHOLE BODY TO WRITE A PIECE OF MUSIC. YOU KNOW, YOU USE YOUR HANDS AND VOCALS AND YOUR MIND. AND I THINK IT'S JUST A WHOLE ALMOST SACRED EXPERIENCE, LIKE JUST DELVING INTO THE WORLD OF MUSIC. IT'S JUST A WONDERFUL THING. AND IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, TOO, BECAUSE THERE'S JUST SO MANY COMPONENTS THAT GO INTO WRITING A PIECE OF MUSIC, BUT I THINK IT'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING THAT I CAN'T IMAGINE. YEAH, ALL THE TIME. LIVING WITHOUT.

WHAT IS MAYBE AN ADVICE THAT YOU CAN OFFER TO OTHER UPCOMING MUSICIANS?

YEAH, I'D SAY UM RECORD OR I MEAN, YEAH, RECORD WHETHER THAT'S BY WRITING OR THROUGH VOICE MEMOS, JUST GET ALL YOUR IDEAS OUT. GET ALL YOUR IDEAS OUT, UM, AND JUST, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COMPLETE IDEA. I'D SAY DON'T STRESS ABOUT HAVING, LIKE, A COMPLETE IDEA. UM, JUST RECORD EVERYTHING AND THEN, BECAUSE YOU CAN ALWAYS COME BACK TO IT, RIGHT? AND I'VE HAD TIMES WHERE I'VE HAD AN IDEA AND I DIDN'T RECORD IT, AND THEN I REGRETTED IT. AND ALSO DON'T THINK THAT AN IDEA IS BAD BECAUSE JUST AS WRITERS, WRITE, NO ONE NO ONE WRITES LIKE WELL WHEN THEY FIRST START TO WRITE, BUT IT'S THE REVISION THAT REALLY THAT REALLY MAKES IT COME TO LIFE. YEAH. I'D SAY THAT NO PIECE OF MUSIC HAS NO POTENTIAL REALLY. EVERYTHING HAS POTENTIAL, EVERYTHING HAS A SPARK OF INSPIRATION THAT CAN BE USED FOR SO MUCH GREATER

IS THERE ANY SHOUT OUTS YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE?

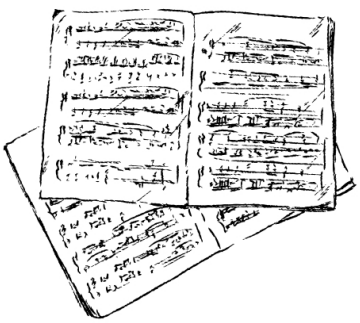
SHOUT OUT TO MY FAMILY, 'CAUSE THEY'RE THEY ALL PLAY INSTRUMENTS AND THEY'VE JUST BEEN REALLY ENCOURAGING FOR ME IN MY WHOLE MUSIC. MUSICAL JOURNEY,

Simple Gifts

BIOGRAPHY

MUSICAL ARTIST AND COMPOSER SUNNY GUNN, ALSO KNOWN AS THE ALIAS IMAGINARY JOKE, IS A STUDENT HERE AT CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE. A YUCAIPA RESIDENT, GUNN STARTED CHC IN 2022 AND WILL BE A 2025 GRADUATE, COMPLETING ASSOCIATE DEGREES IN MUSIC AND FINE ARTS, AS WELL AS CERTIFICATES IN MUSIC TECHNOLOGY, COMPOSITION, AND SONGWRITING. SHE'S BEEN HEAVILY INVOLVED IN THE CHC MUSIC COMMUNITY, AS THE PRESIDENT AND FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF MUSIC CLUB, A CHOIR AND JAZZ PERFORMER, AND FORMER WORK STUDY ASSOCIATE, AS WELL AS PERFORMING IN SEVERAL RECITALS. GUNN PLANS ON EARNING A BACHELOR'S IN MUSIC COMPOSTITON AT CSUSB

SCAN ME



QUESTIONS

COULD PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

I'M SUNNY. MY MUSIC NAME IS LIKE IMAGINARY JOKE. BUT I'M SONNY GUNN. I'M A MUSIC MAJOR HERE AT CRAFTON HILLS COLLEGE. I'VE BEEN DOING MUSIC HERE SINCE 2022 AND I'M SET TO GRADUATE THIS SEMESTER. I PLAN TO BE A COMPOSITION MAJOR AT CAL STATE SAN BERNARDINO THE FALL. I'M REALLY GLAD YOU LIKE MY PIECE.

HOW LONG YOU BEEN DOING MUSIC?

WELL, I STARTED TEACHING MYSELF HOW TO WRITE AND PLAY GUITAR WHEN I WAS AS A TEENAGER. BUT I'VE ALWAYS I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN MUSIC, I FELT A CONNECTION TO IT. EVER SINCE I WAS A BABY, I WOULD FEEL. I MEAN, MY MOM HAS TOLD ME STORIES ABOUT HOW WHEN I WAS A BABY, LIKE, LIKE WATCHING AMERICAN IDOL, LIKE, I WOULD SEE ALON AND LIKE, I HAD THIS LIKE, TOY DRUM. I'D PLAY THE DRUMS ON THAT.. I USED TO GO TO THE SUMMER CONCERTS IN YUCAIPA IN THE COMMUNITY PARK. I'VE ALWAYS JUST FELT LIKE CONNECTION TO MUSIC. I HAVE SOMETHING CONSTANT IN MY LIFE. AND UM AS A KID, I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE THE FUNDS TO LEARN PROFESSIONALLY. SO AS AN ADULT, I'VE BEEN GOING OPEN MICS, TAKING LESSONS, COMING HERE TO COLLEGE, AND IT'S DEFINITELY A JOURNEY TO PICK SOMETHING AND LEARN IT. IT'S BEEN REALLY FUN

WHAT WAS THE PROCESS OF CREATING THIS PIECE?

SO IT WAS FOR AN ERIN COPELAND PROJECT. HE'S A 20TH CENTURY COMPOSER. HE USED SIMPLE GIFTS, WHICH IS A TRADITIONAL FOLK SONG. HE USED IT IN HIS SON APPALACHIAN SPRING. AND OUR PROJECT WAS TO TAKE SIMPLE GIFTS AND MAKE OUR OWN RENDITION OF IT, BECAUSE IT'S IT'S A SONG THAT'S BEEN COVERED SO MANY TIMES, THERE'S DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF IT AND UM SO HE ASKED US TO MAKE OUR OWN RENDITION OF IT, AND I WAS INSPIRED BY APPALACHIAN SPRAIN BECAUSE IT'S AN ORCHESTRAL PIECE. SO THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I ACTUALLY WROTE FOR STRAINS. AND HE WANTED US TO USE THE MELODY AND THEN BUILD AROUND THAT. SO THROUGHOUT THE PIECE, I HAVE THE MELODY GOING. AND JUST TRY TO PLACE THE STRINGS WHERE I THOUGHT WOULD BE FITTING. AND THAT INTRO, I WAS FEELING, LIKE, VERY INSPIRED AT THE MOMENT FOR FIRST TIME WRITING STRING. I WAS LIKE, OKAY, I WANT TO LEAD PEOPLE INTO IT, AND THEN SHOW THE SIMPLE GIFTS. AND I WANTED IT TO BE KNOWN THAT IT'S SIMPLE GIFTS, SO IT DOESN'T GET MUDDY. AND JUST SOUND LIKE SPRAIN TO ME.'CAUSE THE SONG IS A VERY, UM. IT'S VERY WARM AND WELCOMING, KIND OF SONG, ESPECIALLY IN COPELAND'S RENDITION OF IT. AND SO THAT WAS ACTUALLY ONE OF MY ONE OF MY FINAL PROJECTS OF MUSIC THEORY FOR AS WELL. SO I WANTED I WANTED TO SOMETHING BIG, YOU KNOW? END WITH THE BANG, KIND OF THING

WAS THIS YOUR FIRST PIECE YOU'VE EVER WRITTEN?

WITH STRINGS, YEAH. THE PROCESS IT'S SIMILAR. I USE MUSE SCORE. IT'S A MUSIC SHEET WRITING PROGRAM. OR I SHOULD SAY IT'S SHEET MUSIC PROGRAM. I USED THAT TO WRITE, SO I COULD EDIT STUFF AROUND, AND, UM YEAH, I SPENT I SPENT DAYS ON IT. THAT'S USUALLY HOW THE PROCESS GOES OR I'LL SPEND LIKE, I'LL START IT AND THEN FORGET ABOUT IT AND THEN COME BACK TO IT AFTER A MONTH OR TWO. I'M VERY MUCH. I LEAN TOWARDS INSPIRATION MORE, WHICH CAN BE BAD, BECAUSE I DON'T ALWAYS, LIKE LIKE DOING MUSIC AS A SPORADIC PROCESS'CAUSE OF THAT, BUT UM BUT I FOUND WAYS TO, LIKE, GET INSPIRED. SO I LISTENED TO A LOT OF AARON COPELAND AND A LOT OF BEETHOVEN. I LISTED OTHER VERSIONS OF SIMPLE GIFTS, TOO. I STARTED WITH A MELODY FIRST. SO I COPIED THE SAME NOTES AS A MELODY. AND THEN I BUILT AROUND THAT. AND THERE WOULD BE TIMES WHERE I'D BE LIKE, OKAY, I'M GONNA SWITCH THE MELODY OFF FROM ONE INSTRUMENT TO ANOTHER ONE. I WANTED THE MELODY BE TO BE KNOWN, SO I TRIED TO BUILD OFF OF THAT AND HAVE IT BE, LIKE, A BASE FOR THIS SONG.

DO YOU HAVE ANY DIFFICULTY GETTING INSPIRED AND IF SO HOW DO YOU OVERCOME IT?

YOU JUST KIND OF LEAVE IT OR. TO GET INSPIRED, SOMETIMES I'LL LISTEN TO MY OLD PIECES, AND I'LL BE LIKE, OKAY. I REMEMBER WRITING THAT, SO I CAN WRITE SOMETHING ELSE I GET, TOO. UM. OR I'LL SEE MY KEYBOARD AND I'LL BE LIKE, I SHOULD WRITE ON THAT TODAY. SOME OF MY INSPIRATION, TOO IS BECAUSE WE HAVE RECITALS IN THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT AT THE END OF EVERY SEMESTER. LIKE, RIGHT NOW WE HAVE ONE COMING UP. FOR CLASSICAL GUITAR AND FLUTE. SO I'M LIKE, OKAY, I NEED TO WRITE A PIECE FOR THAT. SO I COULD BE INCLUDED IN IT. BUT I DEFINITELY STRUGGLE WITH DISCIPLINE AND MOTIVATION.. SO, I ALWAYS HAVE TO FIND, LIKE, A WAY TO GET BACK. MM. 'CAUSE OUR ART IS SUCH A. SUCH A GOOD THING TO HAVE. LIKE, IN ANY KIND OF FORM

WHEN THIS PIECE WAS COMPLETED, WHAT DID IT MEAN TO YOU?

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO WRITE A PIECE. WITH STRAINS.. AND. WE STARTED DOING CIRCLES TOO. OH, I REMEMBER. WHEN I WROTE IT, I ACTUALLY STARTED HAPPY CRYING, BECAUSE I WAS LIKE, I KNOW HOW TO DO THIS NOW. AND SO I FEEL LIKE THIS IS ONE OF MY BEST PIECES, BECAUSE IT SHOWS A LOT OF GROWTH. AND. OH, MY GOD. I GUESS YOU COULD SAY IT'S LIKE A BENCHMARK OF PUTTING WHAT I'VE LEARNED HERE IN THE PRACTICE. LIKE, IT'S IT ALL COMES TOGETHER AND MEANS SOMETHING. YEAH. AND, UM I'D SAY IT'S ONE OF MY MOST AMBITIOUS PIECES, TOO, AS WELL. THE SONG FEELS LIKE JOY AND RESOLUTION.. LIKE YOU'RE IN A FIELD OF FLOWERS, JUST AS THE SUN IS SETTING.

DID YOU EVER GET FRUSTRATED WITH THE PIECE?

YEAH, I HAD TO.'CAUSE IT WAS MY FIRST TIME WRITING FOR STRINGS. I HAD TO KEEP READING HOW TO WRITE FOR STRAINS BECAUSE. CELLO, FOR EXAMPLE, IT'S WRITTEN AN OCTAVE HIGHER THAN IT ACTUALLY IS PLAYED. AND FOLA, IT'S WRITTEN WITH AN ALTO CLEF, WHICH IS DIFFERENT FROM THE TRADITIONAL TRIBAL AND BASE CLEFTS. AND SO... LUCKILY, MY TEACHER, HE GIVES OUT PAPERS FOR, LIKE, GUIDELINES ON HOW TO WRITE A SPECIFIC WAY. AND SO I TRY TO FOLLOW THAT AS BEST I COULD. BUT KNOWING ME, THERE'S TIMES WHERE I'LL GO BACK AND FORTH WITH IDEAS.. AND. OH, I REMEMBER BECAUSE I WENT OFF OF THE MELODY FIRST. I HAD TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO TRANSFER IT, TRANSFER IT INTO DIFFERENT OCTAVES FOR DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS. SO THAT WAS. THAT WAS A CHALLENGE. BUT ONCE I FIGURE IT OUT, I WAS LIKE, OKAY. WE'RE GOOD. THIS MAKES SENSE NOW.

WHAT IS AN ADVICE THAT YOU CAN OFFER TO UPCOMING MUSICIANS?

TAKE LESSONS. AND IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE MONEY, GO TO YOUTUBE AND A THRIFT STORE AND FIND SOME GUITAR OR A NOTEBOOK TO WRITE IN. THERE'S SO MANY GREAT RESOURCES ONLINE. IT'S JUST ABOUT FINDING A PATH. AND SOMETIMES PEOPLE CAN LEARN FROM YOUTUBE AND THAT'S GREAT. BUT THERE'S ALSO LIKE MUSIC THEORY SITES. LEARN ABOUT THE INDUSTRY, TOO, 'CAUSE THERE'S STUFF WITH LIKE COPYRIGHT LAWS, HOW TO FIND CONNECTIONS THAT YOU CAN LEARN ONLINE. AND I SAY INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY. THERE'S OPEN MICS AT COFFEE SHOPS OUT THERE. THERE'S LOCAL BANDS PLAYING THAT ONLY THAT YOU CAN SEE FOR FREE. THERE MIGHT BE LESSONS AT, LIKE, YOUR COMMUNITY CENTER. THERE'S SO MANY WAYS. IT'S JUST ABOUT FINDING THEM. WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER, IT WAS HARD FOR ME TO FIND ALL THAT STUFF BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW HOW, BECAUSE I THOUGHT, OH, WELL, I COULD JUST LEARN FROM YOUTUBE, RIGHT? THAT'S NOT WORK FOR ME. IT MIGHT WORK FOR SOME PEOPLE, BUT NOT FOR ME. AND SO. WHAT I FOUND WAS, OKAY, I NEED A TEACHER TO SHOW ME HOW TO DO THINGS AND SHOW ME A PATH. AND NOW THAT I HAVE THAT, IT'S EASIER TO FIND MY OWN WAYS. LIKE, I'VE LEARNED SONGS ON MY OWN BECAUSE OF WHAT I'VE LEARNED. AND IT'S JUST ABOUT FINDING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU. IN YOUR WAY OF LEARNING. ALSO, IT'S GOOD TO HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS, AS WELL. LEARNING ANY KIND OF SKILL DOES NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT OR EVEN AFTER A YEAR, IT WILL TAKE A WHILE. TRY TO END ENJOY THAT JOURNEY.CAUSE IT WILL IT WILL BE VALUABLE. STUFF LIKE THAT.

FINALLY, IS THERE ANYONE YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE A SHOUT OUT TO?

I WOULD LOVE TO GIVE A SHOUT OUT TO MUSIC CLUB, AND MY TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY MUSIC TEACHERS CHRISTINA CARRANZA, MARK MCCONNELL, SCOTT SIMONSON, AND ROBERT WINKOUR.

CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Edgar Aguilar Silva is a Business Major in college as well as an administrative manager at a small firm. This is his first time dabbling in creative writing of his own volition. This spark of expression was brought about by the wonderful opportunity offered by the Sand Canyon Review. He thought there was no better time to start a new journey than now, with the ever-inviting prompt of Rebirth.

JC Alfier's (they/them) artistic directions are informed by photo-artists Toshiko Okanoue, Deborah Turbeville, Francesca Woodman, and especially Katrien De Blauwer. Their most recent poetry book, The Shadow Field, was published by Louisiana Literature Press (2020). Journal credits include Faultline, New York Quarterly, Notre Dame Review, Penn Review, River Styx, and Vassar Review.

Dee Allen is an African-Italian performance poet based in Oakland, California. Active in Creative Writing and Spoken Word since the early 1990s, they are the author of over 10 books, including: Boneyard, Unwritten Law, Stormwater, Skeletal Black, Elohi Unisti, Rusty Gallows: Passages Against Hate, Plan, Crimson Stain, Discovery, and their newest, The Mansion. He also has 78 anthology appearances under his figurative belt so far.

Mia Altenbach's work is a direct reflection of her experiences. They are how she expresses the most complex reaches of her heart, and she is grateful to share them. Mia feels every part of the process when making art, such as writing poetry before sketching. It's the mental sketch. It's reflecting on the feelings she wants to apply to her work. She hopes to make art that makes an impact, like so many artists have inspired her.

Julia Barrett is a writer and psychology major at California State University, Long Beach. With a strong foundation in creative writing and a deep interest in the human experience, she crafts stories that explore emotional nuance, identity, and the quiet moments that shape us. Drawing from both her academic studies and creative passion, Julia aims to give voice to characters who speak the truths we often leave unspoken.

Raul Beccera is an adult learner at the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center at Norman F. Feldheym San Bernardino Public Library. Raul Becerra began his literacy journey in November 2022 because he wanted to gain independence, get a better job, learn how to use technology, and improve his public speaking skills. When he isn't at the literacy program, he is working, meal prepping, going to the gym, helping in AA meetings, and spending time with his family. This writing project helped him reflect on his life and gain confidence in his reading and writing skills.

Bob Blanck has lived in Redlands and Yucaipa his entire life. He graduated from Point Loma Nazarene University (1994) with a Bachelor's Degree in English and Cal Poly Pomona (1999) with a Master's Degree in English. He has been teaching High School English since 1995, and Bob has also been a part-time English Instructor at Crafton Hills College since 2002 because he loves teaching English. Bob believes that EVERYONE can be a critical reader, writer, and thinker, and he loves helping students to excel in these areas. He has been writing poetry and short stories since he was in high school. Bob also published a book in 2008 on the history of the San Gorgonio Search and Rescue team through Arcadia Press.

Lauren Kelley Bond teaches English at Crafton Hills College, and her research interests these days include decolonial studies, ecocriticism, and utopic-dystopic fictions. When she's not teaching, she's enjoying life with her husband and son listening to music and going to concerts, visiting with friends, camping, gardening, and running.

Zachary Bower often uses poetry and short stories as a way of checking in with himself and as a way of releasing stress. It's become a sort of tradition now for him to revisit old memories that have inspired old pieces to see what they cause him to create now. It helps guide the process and helps him see if he's grown as a person in the way he hopes he has. He hopes that someone else can garner some enjoyment from his writing and relate to the feelings in it.

Isaiah Bruny's piece reflects the tension between light and dark, hope and loss—a moment suspended between what was and what could be. The horizon glows with the quiet promise of renewal, yet shadows still linger. It's a visual meditation on the cycles we move through—endings that carry the weight of grief, and beginnings that whisper of something new."Earth Rebirth" here isn't a grand transformation, but a subtle shift, a turning point. It's about finding meaning in the contrast and recognizing that even in darkness, light waits just beyond the edge.

Andrew Bryant is a twenty-four-year-old English major looking forward to a focus in Writing, Editing, and Publishing at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point next year! He enjoys writing poetry, running games of Dungeons and Dragons, and worldbuilding.

Anahi Campos is a Library Page at the San Bernardino Public Library's Literacy Department, located in the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center at the Norman F. Feldheym Library. She supports learners in improving their reading, writing, and communication skills through free, accessible services. She is currently a student at Chaffey College studying Mechanical Engineering and has a passion for editing, sewing, music, and thrifting--especially anything from the 2000s. When she's not working or studying, she enjoys traveling up north and discovering new places through road trips with her family.

Eva Cantwell is a student majoring in Multimedia (Graphic and Media Design) and has interests as wide-ranging as costume design, bookbinding, and creative writing. She intends to spend her life creating beautiful things.

Alysha Cisneros is the Literacy Program Coordinator for the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center with San Bernardino Public Library. She has worked for local governments for over half her life. Ally has a Master's in Information Science from the University of North Texas and is currently a Public Administration doctoral student at the University of La Verne. When she isn't working or studying, Ally is spending time with her partner, Vincent, and their four fur babies -- Peaches, Penny, Xena, and Frida. Ally loves to travel, read, eat great food, and spend time with even greater people.

Alexia Clark is a Freshman at Crafton currently majoring in Sociology and English. She spends most of her time writing, whether it be poems or scripts, she enjoys them all the same. Alexia believes in self-expression and aims to execute this through her writing, nothing is more powerful than a pen.

John R Cole is a U.S. Marine Corps Combat Veteran. John interweaves his love for reading with his love for writing. He often says that his reading interests involve anything other than smut, and that his pencil is on a quest to expose life's stories wherever they may hide. With guidance from Mr. Andreas Kossak's Written By Veterans (WBV) Program at the Veterans Success Center at California State University in San Bernardino, Mr. Cole has written and published seven novels and a volume of poetry dedicated to Military Combat Veterans. One of Mr. Cole's desires has always been to leave Literature a better place than he found it.

Izzy Davidson, Izzy to his friends, is a published and award-winning poet. Along with this, he captains his high school varsity basketball team, is the founder and president of his school's Creative Writing and Speech and Debate clubs. He is also an avid chihuahua lover.

Nicholas Delgado, who uses the artist name of Saraleo, is a passionate artist, songwriter, poet, and actor whose work is deeply inspired by the worlds of comic books, movies, and music. Saraleo explores new ways to innovate and refine his creative expression, whether it be in deeper works like poetry, writing a song that portrays a current emotion, or making character-driven art. His work reflects a deep commitment to portraying individuality and building your narrative. His biggest influences are Mico, Scott Snyder, and the artist Halsey. For Saraleo, great storytelling isn't just entertainment, it's a way to show your personality, reflect on your own emotions, and connect, create something someone can relate to.

Cheryl Diermyer, working as an award-winning CBS News Video Journalist, Cheryl has captured stories and images that connected a worldwide audience. Wanting to slow down, generate gratitude, and adopt a pay-it-forward mindset, little did Cheryl know the magical allure of producing a still image would have on her to do just that.

Sofia Duarte is a freshman at CSUSB majoring in Creative Writing. She is into reading, writing, and imagining stories while listening to music.

Mitch Padilla AKA EtoTeddy is a cheerful college student who has a passion for creating fun illustrations and comic-style art. She has a sweet tooth and a love for all kinds of art forms! Follow @Etoteddy on Instagram for more!

Randy Focazio is a dark cerebral artist. His work strives to evoke a sense of introspection in viewers creating a loose narrative which keeps asking what it is about as opposed to giving them all the answers. Borrowing from psychology and techniques from the first surrealists his work possesses a dark unsettling beauty exploring the dichotomy between chaos and order, life and death. He hopes to reach a larger audience and eschew norms of the current art world.

Katy Garcia is pursuing a degree in Psychology, and yet Katy is a creative spirit with a deep love for storytelling and visual expression, Katy has always found inspiration in the power of words and art to connect people and ideas. Gifted in both writing and visual arts, she has a unique perspective that values curiosity, empathy, and the human experience.

Jessica Gilfillan is a 34-year-old Italian American poet from Redlands, California. You can occasionally find her performing spoken word poetry at Riverside Underground Poetry Open-Mic (RUPO) on Monday nights. Her life motto, adapted from her late uncle Graeme Gilfillan, is: Work for the Ancestors until you join them. Her poetry is an essential part of that work.

Julia Gonzalez is a student at Crafton Hills College who enjoys creating traditional 2D art in her free time. Having drawn for most of her life, music is a primary source of inspiration for her work. Many of her illustrations are inspired by classic fairy tale elements and tend to have people as the main subjects.

Lia Goritz is a local California artist who is passionate about capturing the beauty often unseen. She creates stunning landscapes/seascapes, and portraits. Art has been a childhood passion of hers. Her work is featured at Laguna Art Gallery in Mission Viejo, and she's a member of Oil Painters of America. Her IG handle is @liagoritzart

Seiji Grossman is an eighteen-year-old artist with a passion for writing. Since he was fifteen, Seiji has used writing as a creative outlet. He draws inspiration from the beauty of everyday life. His other hobbies include painting, sewing, drawing, and creating dioramas

Sunny Gunn is a musical artist and composer, also known as the alias Imaginary Joke, and is a student here at Crafton Hills College. A Yucaipa resident, Gunn started CHC in 2022 and will be a 2025 graduate, completing associate degrees in Music and Fine Arts, as well as certificates in Music Technology, Composition, and Songwriting. She's been heavily involved in the CHC music community, as the president and former vice-president of Music Club, a choir and jazz band performer, and former work study associate, as well as performing in several recitals. Gunn plans on earning a bachelor's in Music Composition at CSUSB.

Ramsey Harney is currently a student at Crafton Hills College and still figuring out her career goals. She is interested in writing, reading, television, cinema, acting, and music. Most importantly, she enjoys spending time with her friends and family.

Matilda Heidelberg is a 4th year English Literature student at UCR. She casually writes poetry in between playing Sonic, throwing pottery and working at her local crystal store. Being alumni to Crafton Hills and a former SCR editor, she's excited to add another piece to their collection.

Kim Hsu is an adult learner from Taiwan at the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center at Norman F. Feldheym San Bernardino Public Library. Kim began her literacy journey in the middle of January 2025 because she wanted to improve her English. When she isn't at the literacy program, she is at home cooking, studying, and watching her favorite show, American Idol. This writing project helped her work on her English skills and look back on her past. In the future, she would like to plan to communicate better with people in English while writing and speaking.

Mona Kadah holds a B.S. in Business and an MBA in International Business, along with credentials in medical interpretation. She has trained under Karin Harris through the Coachella Valley Watercolor Society and Holly Warner at the Redlands Art Association. Her watercolor art explores themes of identity and resilience. Award-winning pieces such as Poppies in Palestine, Umayyad Mosque, and her intuitive floral collection have been recognized by the Coachella Valley and Yucaipa Valley art associations. Mona was juried into the 108th National Orange Show and will be the featured solo artist at the Redlands Art Association's May 2025 exhibit, Rooted in Resilience.

Aaron Kahrs is an undergrad student at Crafton Hills College, quiet and assertive. Always looking to answer the most asked question in life, why. His writing has been a part of the answer to this question in his life, and an outlet to reach out to connect with others.

Hannah Kirchgater has always been passionate about art, exploring it as both a field of study and a personal outlet. After briefly pursuing art in school, she realized she enjoys it most as a hobby, free from pressure, creating purely for herself. Her artistic journey remains a source of personal fulfillment.

La'Reenah La'Marra Decker is an English major at Crafton Hills College. Her work often explores themes of her Christian faith and identity. She is passionate about exploring her own emotions and experiences in a raw and evocative way. La'Reenah La'Marra's Decker's writing aims to evoke emotional resonance and capture the nuances of faith, identity, and emotion.

Jennifer Liu is an adult learner at the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center at Norman F. Feldheym San Bernardino Public Library. Jennifer began her literacy journey in the middle of January 2025 because she wanted to communicate with people. When she came to the US in 2009, she did not speak any English because she had not had the chance to learn English when she was young, so she chose to learn as an adult. When she isn't at the literacy program, she enjoys spending time with her grandsons and visiting friends at the senior center. This writing project helped Jennifer improve her English skills and become more confident when speaking English with other people.

Oliva Lopez is a learner from Oaxaca at the Jack L. Hill Learning Center at the Norman F. Feldheym San Bernardino Public Library. She learned how to write, read, and speak a second language. She has studied here since April 2024. The reason she is here is that the teachers and tutors provide her with a good education for everyone. She is understanding, and it has changed her life. She is very happy with the class. She likes to walk in the hills, study, go to her Zumba classes, and go to Church with her family.

Gianna Raquel Lopez is a passionate artist, musician, and composer whose creations delve into the wonders of nature, life, and the universe. Her artistic vision is fueled by her faith and the essence of humankind. Gianna's work has been featured in town galleries and streaming platforms, hoping to touch the lives of thousands one day. Outside of her creative endeavors, she loves to hunt for vintage treasures and immerse herself in captivating films.

Ryan Marin is a student completing his Bachelor of Arts in English at the University of California, Berkeley, and plans to pursue a Master's in English as well. Originally from Southern California, he loves cats and in his free time enjoys doomscrolling and biking.

Nick McDonough is a literacy page in the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center at Norman F. Feldheym Library in San Bernardino. He is passionate about education, music, food, and technology. When he is not working, he is usually watching mid-budget horror & disaster flicks, playing video games, building websites, listening to or producing music, and occasionally dabbling in writing fiction and poetry. Nick also runs a recording studio in Redlands that offers aspiring musicians a place to learn the industry and take ownership of their art and intellectual property.

LeAnna McEuen was born in California. Passions are her children, travel, and being a lifelong learner. She received a B.A. Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside, and MFA Writing and poetry emphasis at Lindenwood University, serving as an editorial assistant for The Lindenwood Review. She writes Poetry, Children's Lit and Non-fiction.

Ivan de Monbrison is a person affected by strong psychic disorders that prevent him from having what others may call a "normal" life. He has found writing to be an exit to this prison. Or maybe it is a window from which - like an inmate - he can see a small square of blue sky above his head. His writing often reflects the never-ending chaos within him, but contrary to this mental chaos, the paper and the pen give him the opportunity to materialize this in a concrete and visible form. Writing can feel like a slow death, but it's better than mere suicide in the end.

Annie Monge is a Salvadoran-American poet and writer who is pursuing a future in English academia and community work. As a student, she is majoring in both English and Political Science, having a passion for literature, political theory, and social justice. As a writer, she finds true self-expression through free-form poetry, autobiographical fiction, and journalism. Her work pulls material from her love of nature, personal relationships, and her family's history. Her poetry has been published in different zines and literary magazines with the aspiration of one day publishing her own poetry collection.

Joshua Montejano is a writer and illustrator who takes pride in his work and is willing to spend countless hours in the pursuit of improving his craft. He's a diligent student who always tries to find the time to write something, especially if it's related to manga, short stories, or book covers.

Thamar Olvera is an adult learner at the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center at Norman F. Feldheym San Bernardino Public Library. Thamar began her literacy journey in May of 2024 because when she went to do her citizenship test, the interviewer told her to come back when she spoke better English. Two months after joining the literacy program, she passed her citizenship test. When she isn't at the literacy program, she is watching movies, going to church, and studying English on Duolingo. She also volunteers her time to visit sick people and pray with them at their homes. This project helped her stay motivated to continue writing, and now she has more ideas for future writing projects.

Christopher Robin Patora (1973-2021) was an artist from San Bernardino, CA. He was a master oil painter and graphite artist who expressed many different styles with his art, mostly centered around surrealism. His unique style was formed through his life experiences, dreams, and deep emotions. Instagram: @plightupon

Faydra Patora is a Library Page at the Jack L. Hill Lifelong Learning Center at the Norman F. Feldheym Library in her hometown of San Bernardino and works alongside her colleagues to provide learners with an education that suits their needs. While she doesn't consider herself a poet, she does enjoy expressing herself by creative means. When she isn't working or attending class at Crafton Hills College, she can be found working in her native plant garden, reading books from her favorite queer horror authors, or curled up in bed with her girlfriend, Pepper, and her cat, Cosmo.

Yacquelin Laveriano Pizan was born in Lima, Peru, and now calls California home. Yacquelin navigates the intersection of logic and language. A native Spanish speaker, they explore the precision of mathematics and the fluidity of words, always seeking meaning in both. When not writing, they find strength in movement, whether through travel or weightlifting.

Joshua Plumley is a United States Navy Veteran who was with the carrier airborne early warning squadron VAW 123, aka the World Famous Screwtops. He enlisted in the service after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Joshua is a lyricist and poet who writes about the human condition and the depths of the mind, heart, and soul. Joshua is a father who writes to inspire, inform, educate, and uplift himself, his family, and his community. Two traits Joshua strives to incorporate into his writing are empathy and compassion.

Matt Ramirez is a 25-year-old gay artist and minimum-wage worker bee. He was born and raised all over the Inland Empire. For someone who didn't think he could graduate high school, he worked hard for his diploma & in 2020, Matt obtained an AA in Social Sciences at Crafton Hills College. Since then, he's focused on exploring self-identity, and ALWAYS encourages others to do the same! He believes in the ability of empowerment to build healthier communities. Nowadays, Matt can be found loving on his two pups that he talks about non-stop. He wishes peace and prosperity to all.

Tracy Reyes is a devoted wife, loving mother, and passionate photographer. She enjoys capturing heartfelt moments and creating lasting memories through her lens. She enjoys photographing people, sports, nature, flowers, and birds. Her work reflects her love for storytelling and the beauty in everyday life.

Kira Saucedo considers herself a homebody whose other hobbies include crochet, cross-stitch, gardening, and playing video games. She uses writing as a way to work through her social anxiety and explore her insecurities. She hopes to secure the confidence to return to practicing and eventually pursuing opportunities for music performance in the next several years.

Alexis Scullin is a Crafton Hills Student with experience in photography, marketing, and psychology. She explores themes in her photography, including humanity, spirituality, femininity, and personal story. She creates art and looks at others' art as a way to make sense of her memories. She is creating a life focused on holistic recovery, starting with the Physical Therapy Program at Loma Linda University. From there, she will explore other avenues of trauma recovery, including artistic expression, trauma-focused yoga, and clinical psychology.

Evelyn C. C. Shamblin is an aspiring writer spending most of her time aspiring to write. A Crafton Hills alumnus, they are currently studying Creative Writing at the University of California. In verse and prose, she strives to bring life to old stories and spin her own tall tales.

Xiadani Soriano is a Mechanical Engineering student with an interest in studying philosophy, politics, religion, and self-exploration. Her work often explores the overlapping of identities and the impact they have on a person's life experience through reflection and skepticism. Beyond her academic pursuits, she spends her time exploring her relationship with spirituality and creativity.

Bill Summers is a Yucaipa, CA, native residing in St. Paul, Minnesota. A father of four and former student at Crafton Hills College, he has taken time off from his career to build cell towers to focus on writing fiction.

Victoria Van Stee is a Psychology and Fine Arts major, with their main major being Psychology. They love writing poetry in their free time, especially when there is a lot emotionally going on in their life. Victoria doesn't really write "traditional" poetry, though, they kinda just do it off of vibes. These two poems were written shortly after they got out of an abusive relationship and were meant to be a reflection on how they had changed within the relationship and later how they changed after they broke up with them. It was a rough point in my life, but Victoria survived.

Liliana Velasco: Coming to terms with the body is at the heart of Liliana Velasco's writing. The emergence of life cycles in everyday events is especially resonant in her poetry. She is currently a junior at Cal State San Bernardino, majoring in English. This is her first publication.

Diosa Xochiquetzalcóatl, or Diosa X for short, is a multilingual and multidimensional spoken word artist and international poetiza. She is a seasoned language arts educator with a Bachelor's in English and a Master's in Cross-Cultural Teaching. Diosa X has been published in a variety of anthologies and literary magazines in the U.S. and Mexico and has four collections of poetry: A Church of My Own (2021), Hechizera: Sus Sultry Spells (Editorial Raíces, 2022), West of the Santa Ana and Other Sacred Places (Riot of Roses Publishing, 2023), and Felices Fiestas (Read or Green Books, 2023). For more information, feel free to visit www.diosax.net.

Scan for more information

Thank you for your creativity and passion!

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