

**WALL**  
**Literary Journal**  
**2018**



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WALL is a student-produced literary journal of Saddleback College.  
All entries were submitted by students of Saddleback College.  
Submissions to WALL are reviewed, selected, and edited  
by the students on the journal staff.

We accept entries that embrace all viewpoints and walks of life.  
However, the opinions and ideas  
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To submit your work for the 2019 edition of WALL,  
please see the guidelines for submission  
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The deadline is January 25, 2019.

# WALL

is a community space for creative displays.

It is a fresh canvas,

a blank surface

begging for decoration,

a vast white page

awaiting our words and images.....



## MISSION STATEMENT

WALL Literary Journal is dedicated to providing an open space for creative experimentation. We encourage the unfettered expression of ideas, images, and emotions in literary and artistic works that explore and illuminate the human experience. Aimed at a multicultural, cross-generational audience, the works represented in the pages of WALL encompass a diversity of voices and visions. This is art in the raw and in the round. We want our readers to laugh and cry, smile and sigh as they immerse themselves in the pleasures and power of art and literature.

# WALL 2018

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A delicate bouquet of pastel flowers. A sturdy pair of brown oxford-style shoes. In the hands of a visionary artist such as Olga Perelman, these rather ordinary items take on a richer, metaphysical significance, especially when combined with each other and placed in front of fluffy psychedelic clouds—as they are on the cover of this year’s WALL. The flowers and shoes embody abstract qualities that are polar opposites: fragile versus strong, soft versus hard, made by Nature versus manufactured by technology. This imaginative juxtaposition of elements captures the competing tensions of modern life as we struggle to achieve balance in our daily lives in the midst of social, political, economic, environmental, and psychological upheavals. The image of the oxford shoes also represents the treacherous footsteps taken by those who undertake the Hero’s Journey, a theme that runs throughout this year’s WALL, as eloquently described in the Editor’s Note by Noah East on page vii.

It may not qualify as a heroic epic, but each year, the staff members of WALL embark on their own journey to select the most distinctive pieces of literature and art from our talented students at Saddleback College. We’re fortunate to be able to continue this journey every year through the ongoing support of students, faculty, administrators, staff, and members of the community. The WALL staff and I would like to thank South Orange County Community College District Chancellor Kathleen F. Burke, Ed.D., and the district’s Board of Trustees: Timothy Jemal, Marcia Milchiker, T.J. Prendergast III, James R. Wright, David B. Lang, Barbara J. Jay, Terri Whitt, and Evelyn Hoang. We also are grateful for the support of Dr. James Buysse, Interim President of Saddleback College, and Dr. Kevin O’Connor, Dean of the Liberal Arts Division.

Special thanks goes to professors Suki Fisher, Bill Stevenson, Brett Myhren, Jennifer Hedgecock, Bruce Gilman, and Shellie Ochi of the English Department; Marina Aminy, Dean of Online Education & Learning Resources; Khaver Akhter, Giziel Leftwich, and Megan Carr of the Liberal Arts Division; Professors Karen Taylor, Christopher Clafin, and Rudy Gardea of the Graphics Department; Professor Larry Radden of the Speech Department; Professor Ariel Alexander of the Music Department; Barbara Holmes; David Anderson, Joyce Speakman, and Matt Brodet of the Division of Fine Arts and Media Technology; and Professors Timothy Posada and MaryAnne Shults of the Journalism Department. Other supporters include Kristen Bush and Donna Pribyl of the Graphic Services Department; Deborah Armstrong of the Library Services Department; Ali Dorri, an instructional assistant for the Lariat; Bruce Parker of PJ Printers; and the Science Scholarship Foundation.

The concept of journey might be a well-worn metaphor, but it’s given vibrant new life through the literary and artistic adventures we invite you to explore on the pages that follow. May the journey be a stimulating and enlightening one.

Gina Victoria Shaffer  
Faculty Advisor, WALL 2018

# EDITOR'S NOTE

WALL has established a longstanding tradition of publishing a diverse set of voices and artists within the student body of Saddleback College. When I was offered the position of editor-in-chief, I knew that this spirit of diversity and inclusion would become our guiding light as we crafted this year's edition. Thankfully, I had an amazing staff to assist Professor Shaffer and me in executing this vision. Furthermore, the students submitted a plethora of amazing pieces of artwork and literature, each with themes and perspectives unique to that student's experience. From our submissions we were able to find a wide variety of emotions portrayed, from sorrow to happiness, from new beginnings to requiems and everything in between—even a couple pieces of comedic relief.

After we had chosen the pieces we wanted in WALL, the staff expressed interest in an overarching theme for the journal. Alongside this, Professor Shaffer suggested that the issue follow a thematic arc of its own. After I spent a week bedridden with the flu, a solution dawned on me that would achieve both of these goals: linking the stories and art from WALL into a macrocosm of The Hero's Journey.

The Hero's Journey is a concept developed by Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), a professor of literature at Sarah Lawrence College. Campbell examined narratives and myths from a variety of cultures all over the globe and found remarkable similarities. Across all of the cultures he studied, he found a very familiar story: a hero who enters the unknown to overcome extraordinary circumstances was almost everywhere he turned. He theorized that each of these cultures must have been inspired by some singular, prime "monomyth." The elements of the Hero's Journey are generally split into three main sections: departure, trials, and return.

The departure stage begins at home. Suddenly, the status quo is interrupted by a call to action, which the hero might initially refuse. When he does decide to make his journey, he ventures across the threshold and into the unknown, where he will face his trials. At the other side of this threshold, the hero begins to learn about the new world he has entered. Here he is faced with a series of challenges or trials, often forging his identity.

After successfully completing his quest, the hero begins his return home. He may feel a desire to stay in the world which was once unfamiliar to him, as the lessons he learned may have drastically shifted his perspective. But eventually, each hero returns to his home.

One might rightfully object to Campbell's male-centric perspective of heroism, but this is precisely why I chose to focus on the Hero's Journey during this extraordinary year in our nation's history. With the Me Too Movement and the incredible turnout for the Women's March, there could not be a better time to release Campbell's concept of the Hero's Journey from the shackles of gender. Our move to make the hero's journey a gender-inclusive one was not decided beforehand; rather, it was guided and inspired by the pieces of literature and artwork from our talented students.

Noah East  
Editor-in-Chief, WALL 2018

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**DESIGN** by Sejal Banker, Atra Givarkes, and Ashton Riemer  
using *Sign of the Times*, a 10-layer reduction print created by Olga Perelman

# Eye on the Horizon

Khang Nguyen



Scratchboard

# Here I Stand

Keaton Larson

We think we are grand, do we not?  
So did those bygone species, I'm sure.  
The colossal and the modest alike,  
for which time inevitably granted an end.  
I stand here in the sand, small  
against big worlds  
of immortality and infinite indifference.  
I listen to the sea, the earth, and the stars.  
And what I hear most while I stand  
is not the persistence of the ocean,  
nor the whipping of the wind,  
but the language the universe speaks,  
the white noise it plays.  
I hear the constant humming it sings,  
the ever-present reminder of its unsettling disregard.  
Perhaps we should thank those archaic creatures,  
for we would not be here if they did not die;  
And one must wonder if our purpose  
is the same as the extinct.  
If that is so,  
it brings a smile to my face.  
For I am a human with a purpose.

# Waiting

Christine Ziff



Photograph

# Born An Enemy

Jean-Michel Ochsenein

Fall of 1956 was inexorably surrendering to winter, making life for some innocent souls of Metz a heavier burden to bear. More than ten years had passed since General Patton delivered France's northeastern city from the German Army, resulting in massive casualties for both camps. The war had left visible scars along with harsh injustices that had taken unexpected form.

Lise was asleep. A strand of golden and curly hair that had escaped from her nightcap leaned astray on her young and pale face. The coldness of the night leaked into the dormitory, creeping onto her bed, easily seeping through the thin blanket until it finally woke up her frail body. As a vain attempt to warm up, the child started to shiver.

It seemed to her that she could hear the other orphans' teeth chattering in the dormitory. *Unless... Maybe it's the rats scampering in the attic?* she thought, half-asleep. *Yes, it must be them, sneaking outside the orphanage to go forage for food. Free... to leave...*

For the rats, St. Joseph's Orphanage was a refuge. For the girls, it was a different story. Lise rolled over in her bed. She slowly opened her eyes, whose color seemed to have been borrowed from the sky and stared into the darkness. Going back to sleep was going to be difficult. She could not wait for the sun to rise, which would not be the only thing to warm her heart. Today was a special day. The Americans from the Chambley-Bussières Air Base had promised to visit them. Besides the biscuits and candies they always brought, they would give something the sisters seemed to be incapable of: love. Today, Jonas would be here. He would spend hours with Lise telling her fascinating stories about his life in California, or how he enrolled in the U.S. Air Force in his twenties to help liberate France. At these thoughts, she felt a warm wave of comfort embrace her as she eventually sank into a deep sleep, a smile on her face and a tear of joy rolling down her cheek.

A few hours that seemed like minutes had passed when a voice rang out and suddenly interrupted the tranquility of the dormitory.

"Wakey-wakey, young girls!"

Lise's heart startled. Her eyes, wide open, saw a black silhouette complete with white horns standing on the threshold. The *creature* appeared to be one with the early morning darkness, the peculiar shape of its head stood out as if glowing. Lise calmed down and quickly emerged from slumber. Sister Josephine was not known for her patience. Tall, with a stony face and dark circles under her eyes, she was one of the "Sisters Cornettes," as the orphans would call them because of the distinct horn-shaped headgear that formed their religious habit—a characteristic of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent De Paul. Lise had never seen her smile. It seemed that she was wearing her severity like a mask she could not remove. For outsiders, the sisters would show nothing but kindness, embodying values of

dedication and sacrifice. Yet they ruled the orphanage with an iron hand.

Lise was sitting on her bed, looking for her clothes, when she heard a familiar voice whispering:

“Hey! How did you sleep?”

She looked over to the bed next to hers and saw Paulette, her dingy face half covered by scraggly black hair, who then let out a lively yawn.

Lise shrugged her shoulders in response and tilted her head slightly to the right at the same time. “What about you?”

“Same,” Paulette said, making her bed carefully. “I think a noise woke me up.”

“Maybe it was Mother Superior snoring,” said Lise with a half-smile.

They both giggled discreetly.

“Silence! Get dressed!” said Sister Josephine, raising her voice.

Led by Sister Josephine, the girls left the dormitory and passed a nearby bed with untouched underwear at its end, placed there nightly before the orphans went to bed.

“Where is Jeanne?” whispered Lise, who noticed that her bed had not been slept in.

Paulette’s face suddenly became grave. She pointed her finger discreetly upward, a gesture that Lise understood immediately.

“In the attic?” she asked horrified, raising her voice inadvertently.

“Shhh!!”

“Did she...”

“Yes, she wet her bed the night before... She tried to hide it, but Sister Josephine discovered it yesterday.”

From that moment, they remained silent. Talking about Jeanne, who had been locked in the attic all night long as a punishment, stirred up painful memories. Lise was only twelve years old, but growing up in St. Joseph’s seemed to have lasted an eternity. Even worse, a terrible and shameful secret she tried to keep from the Americans at all costs weighed heavily on her shoulders. A secret her typical appearance could not hide. A secret which Lise was blamed for continuously, especially by Mother Superior.

Under the harsh gaze of the sisters, the girls endured the Mass, their stomachs growling for food they would only receive after their morning prayer. At breakfast, the latte that tasted burnt seemed almost enjoyable after the revolting spoonful of castor oil. The entire morning Lise could not help but think that the noise she heard the night before might have been Jeanne, crying alone in the attic, swarming with rats.

Then a beautiful and melancholic melody resounded in the orphanage, which pulled her from her thoughts. Sister Céline had placed a record on the gramophone, a gift from the Americans during their last visit. The French singer Marie-José was singing *Au jour le jour* with her characteristic vibrato:

*“Joining my hands, I will rise up to the heavens, where good Lord’s angels wait for the poor humans... Day by day, I live my life in chains, without joy, without pain, without hope because without love... Day by day, I live without trying to understand... Because I have nothing, I have nothing to wait, living my life... Day by day.”*

Finally, they arrived! The girls welcomed the Americans, screaming with glee, and the atmosphere quickly warmed up. Lise hurriedly finished setting the table for lunch when she heard a man’s voice behind her saying with an American ac-

cent, "Bonjour, Princesse."

With a large smile on his face, the man, with slicked-back chestnut hair and wearing a brown bomber jacket, put half a crate filled with food on one of the tables of the refectory.

"Jonas!" Lise exclaimed before jumping into his arms, smelling his comforting scent of leather and cologne.

"I have something for you," he said, reaching for his interior pocket. He pulled out a dented postcard that he handed to her.

She took the picture carefully and discovered beautiful scenery. A charming city on the right side, the Pacific Coast Highway lined with street lights running in the middle, and people walking on the shoreline on the left, with the ocean reflecting the sun.

"Is it California?" she asked with wonder. "That you told me about?"

"Yes it is! And the city you see here is Torrance, my town."

"Oh wow! That's beautiful."

"Lise... I have something very important to ask you."

She looked at him with a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

"Would you like..."

"Here he is!" interrupted Mother Superior, welcoming Jonas warmly with a broad grin. "One of our heroes! God bless you for your kindness and generosity." She took his large hands in hers and slightly squeezed them. "We owe you an everlasting debt of gratitude." As usual, she never missed the opportunity to praise the Americans' bravery during the war. "I don't need to remind you that, without you, we would be speaking German for the next millennium!" At these words, she glanced at Lise, who felt as if someone had put an ice cube against her spine.

Lise avoided her look and seemed suddenly very interested in the details of the picture.

"I noticed that you two have become quite close," said Mother Superior to Jonas, lowering her voice and leading him away from Lise. "If I may say so, you might not want to spoil *her*..."

She then came closer and whispered something in his ear.

Lise's heart sunk. *Please please please don't tell him...* From the corner of her eye, she observed Jonas as his face turned to an expression that looked like shock. *No!* she thought in despair. *He knows...*

When their eyes met, Lise dropped the picture and left the room hastily. Everything became blurry, as tears of shame were forming a filter of sadness before her eyes. She stood against the wall in the corridor, a hand against her racing heart. Then she heard them.

"Really?"

"I'm afraid so, yes... It's a terrible story! Her mother fell for a *Boche* during the war and got knocked up. She tried to hide him at the end of the war, and they were both killed by the Resistance. Even at the end, she kept betraying her country by protecting the enemy. Naturally, that's how Lise ended up here. Nobody wants to adopt the daughter of a *Boche*, I'm sure *you* understand..."

"And Jonas killed so many *Boches!*" said Erwin, one of the Americans, proudly holding Jonas by the shoulders as he used the contemptuous term for German soldiers. Erwin particularly enjoyed telling stories about how he and his brothers-in-arms fought hordes of enraged Nazis in the most heroic manner. "I'm pretty

sure he killed more *Boches* by himself than all of us!” he added, making a gesture with his hand to designate his compatriots present in the room.

One of the sisters approached Erwin and Mother Superior, reminding them that their words might not be appropriate for the youngest souls in the room.

“We all need to remember our history!” replied Mother Superior with a callous tone. “And never ever forget the horrors and the *errors* of the war! Even if we have to endure the presence of a constant reminder if you see what I mean...”

Lise, still a hand on her heart, could swear it was bleeding from her pain! Her vision became blurry as she ran to the dormitory, her eyes flooded with tears. While she was climbing the stairs, the lyrics of the song looped in her mind: *without hope because without love.*

“I’m so sorry, Lise,” said a broken voice downstairs.

Lise froze. She slowly turned around and saw Jonas, his eyes red.

He climbed the stairs and embraced her.

“So... You’re not mad?” she asked with a faint voice.

“Lise...Why would I be?”

“Because of what I am.”

Jonas seemed to contain his emotions. After a few seconds, he declared, “You are the result of love. You are living proof that love is stronger than war. Stronger than anything. You certainly should not be ashamed of that.”

Lise closed her eyes and for the very first time in her life, she did not feel anymore that she was born an enemy. As years of shame and guilt were slowly releasing their hold on her, tears of relief rolled down her cheeks.

“No child should endure what you went through,” he said, with a quiver in his voice. “And you shouldn’t endure it anymore... I’m going back to California soon, and I was thinking that, if you agree, I could take you with me...” He gazed tenderly into Lise’s blue eyes and finally asked, “Would you like to become my daughter?”

As an answer, she squeezed him as hard as she could, overwhelmed by joy and love she never thought she could feel. Jonas indeed helped liberate France, but his greatest feat of arms was liberating Lise from the very same country that never treated her as one of their own.



# Destinations Unknown

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Judy Tiano



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Photograph

# Recollections of a 21st Century Brown Girl

Alyssa Oliver

Growing up, I had a babysitter named Betty. She was a black woman in her late fifties, and she was a hard-ass. With one look in her eyes, I knew I was in trouble, and I would fall back in line, 'cause she was the epitome of "looks can kill." But the intensity of her wrath mirrored her soul. She had a voice like rough honey, and when I would make her laugh, the sound would fill the house like music. As much as she terrified me, she also felt like home. If I was sad, I knew I could run to her arms, and that she'd sing to me with her throaty voice and tell me I was going to be okay.

One Sunday, when my mom got scheduled for work, she dressed me nicer than usual and told me that I was going to a place with Betty that was called "church." I didn't know what a church was, but after setting foot in one, the only thing I could say with certainty was that black people loved church. I had never seen so many black people in my life. I was amazed to look around me and discover that I was the only non-black person in the entire congregation. However, I was never uncomfortable about this. In fact, I felt like I was at home, since nobody seemed aware of my imposter status.

Old grandmothers, strangers to me, would embrace me and declare how cute I was. "Miss Betty has the most beautiful granddaughter," they told me. Incredulously, four-year-old me told them I wasn't black. The women all laughed at me. "Child," one of them said, "If you ain't black, what are you?" The rest of the women nodded in agreement.

I thought they were the kindest, warmest people I had ever met, and I didn't know how to tell them I wasn't one of them. Instead, I simply smiled, said my thank you's, and asked to be dismissed so that I could play with the children again. And play I did. While the congregation would sway back and forth with joyful cries about a man named Jesus and angels and Heaven and God, me and the other kids would crawl under the pews, bask in the joy around us, and laugh and tell each other stories. I told the group of kids about my awkward encounter with the old ladies and how they thought I was black.

All the kids looked at me like I was an idiot. I, too, stared back at them until one of them finally through threw his hands up in the air and exclaimed, "Well, aren't you? You *look* black!"

"Yeah," another chimed in. "You've got light skin, but you're definitely black."

"Is your daddy black?" a girl asked.

"No," I said. "My dad is Mexican. But I've never met him."

"Mexican?!" Everybody looked at me in shock.

"Well, what about your momma?"

"My mommy's half-Brazilian and half-white."

"That makes no sense. You gotta be mistaken."

“No, I’m not. I swear, I’m half-Mexican, a quarter white, and a quarter Brazilian.”

“Well, I don’t hear Af-ri-can anywhere in there, and I *know* a black person when I see one.”

I didn’t want to continue the argument over my supposed blackness, so I let it go. I wasn’t really interested in fighting with my new community, which had embraced me so freely, so, for the remainder of the day, I just went along with everybody else and accepted that I was a black person. When my grandma got home that afternoon, I told her of my experience at Betty’s church. She laughed and laughed, and said that it was the funniest thing she had heard all week.

After that, on the occasions that I did go to church with Betty, I pretended to be black. I could only explain my ethnicity so many times, and, honestly, it was fun to be part of a different culture, if only for a little while. A nice man would stand in front of everyone, and he’d shout with happiness about that man named Jesus and angels and Heaven and God. I’d never heard of anyone named Jesus before, but that nice man was telling me about how Jesus died for me so I could have eternal life. I thought it was pretty crazy that someone who I’d never met had died for me, but I supposed he really had to love me if he would give up his life for mine. So I joined the congregation, singing and clapping, swaying back and forth with joyful cries about Jesus and angels and Heaven and God.

It wasn’t until I entered the fourth grade that I realized my grandma was black. I honestly don’t even realize how I came to this conclusion, but I looked at her, and it occurred to me that she was a woman of color. I was shocked. How did I not realize? Even as a small child, I would remark how beautiful I thought her cocoa skin was. I felt silly for taking so long to connect the dots.

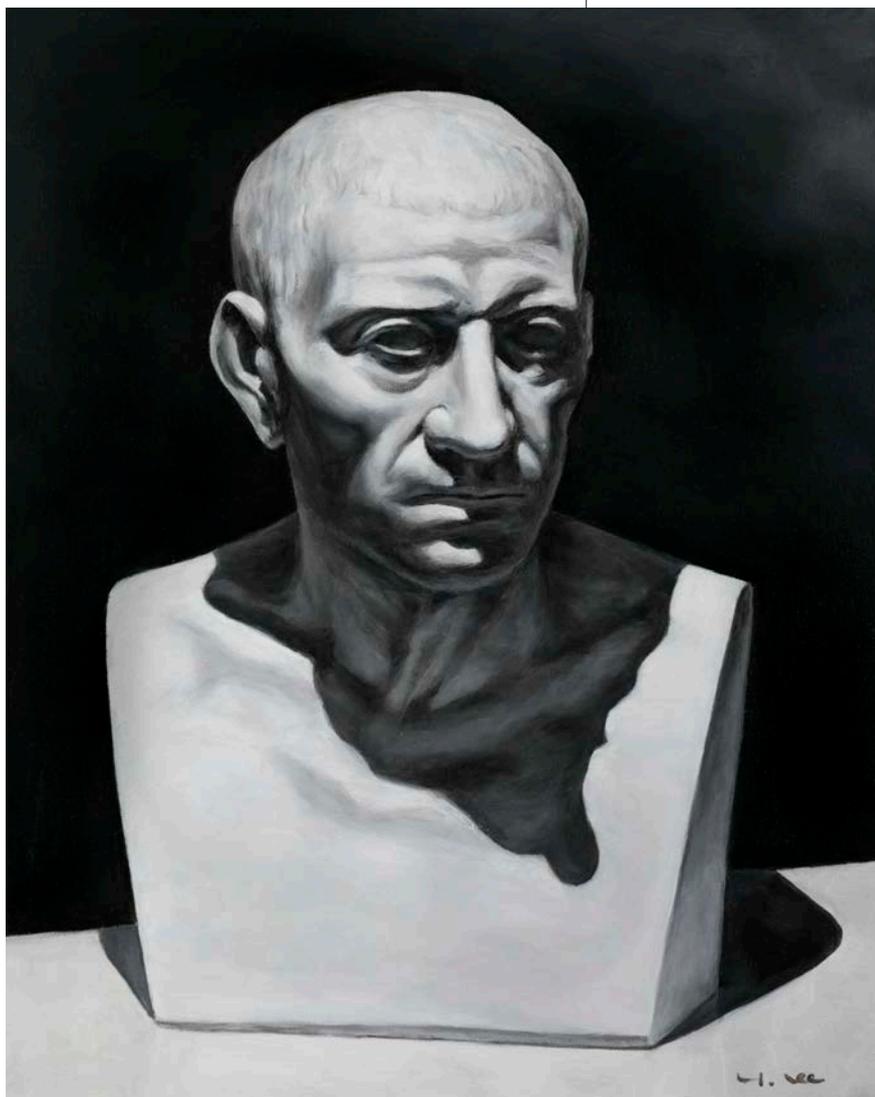
After all this time, I realized that the people at Betty’s church were right. I thought of the day I told my grandma about my experiences at the black church, and I couldn’t understand why she didn’t tell me right then and there that she was of West African and Portuguese descent. I even confronted her about it. “Honey,” she responded in her sing-song, Portuguese-accented English, “sometimes we have to come to our own realizations. If I simply show you everything, how are you going to grow and form your own conclusions about the world?”



# Julius Caesar

---

Yoon Lee



---

Oil on canvas

# The First Philosopher

Noah East

What great comforts do I miss of the cave?  
They are too numerous for one to count.  
This illusion of heaven—expansive  
Horizon—serene skies make one feel

small.

That earthen, holy ceiling; our heavens  
And everything beneath it. Was ours and  
Ours alone—rulers of our own domain.  
In the cave, one could not help but feel

tall.

Outside, that yellow sun has faded:  
A blue curtain lifts, to reveal darkness  
Millions of stars, with billions of planets;  
At least half a trillion caves between them

all.

In simplicity we found our comfort,  
But with reckless folly, how they ignored:  
That life was more than a mere projection  
Settled on that earthen and unholy

wall.

# Only Then

Maria Mull

Sometimes the world around us encompasses feelings of loneliness, feelings of angst and suffering. The skies don't seem to shine as much as they scorn. The tides don't seem to flow as much as they thrash. A secret is told aloud and an embrace is felt at arm's length. The reaching hand grasps for nothing and the forced smile pretends that's what it was looking for. Only then the nights combine into a never-ending dream and the feeling of wakefulness becomes the nightmare. Only then, the closed-off heart and watchful mind hide the dream from reality. But the reality is already here; the reality is aware of your actions. And your actions should not fear. Your actions should embody your desires. Only then is the fear lost. Where love is present, strength is not compromised. Love, in the simplest form of familiar beauty and uninterrupted harmony, creates a world where selfless devotion and assuring inspiration never cease to conquer. Only then, looking up, you see birds flying with purpose, and looking down, waves crashing with courage. Only then is the truth told. The truth that the birds are unaware of the sky's distress and the waves unaware of the pain they create on the shore. Finally, you see, the birds and the waves live in peace. One day we will all strive to be so free. Only then.



# Happy Place

Sophia Walker

FICTION

Waves crash, silently rumbling against the sand at a mesmerizingly arrhythmic rate. The chatter of seagulls is soft as the breeze pushes it around the icy blue sky and cotton candy clouds. We lie face down on a washed-out apricot colored towel, the thick fibers making tiny pink craters on our bellies. We joke and chuckle at each other while our heads rest on our folded arms. My ears reminisce on every word he lovingly whispers, hoping they linger like the taste of chocolate. Summer rays of sun dance on our salty skin and flicker in his hazel eyes that I tend to get lost in. When the sunlight illuminates his face, his eyes turn into a lush forest, and his messy, honey-colored hair turns bleach blonde. A cool breeze brushes the peach fuzz on my arms and tickles my eyelashes. The ocean is a thousand pieces of shattered glass, glistening with every soothing *boom* and *swish* of the waves, calling for us to come play. We race to the ocean like frolicking horses, sending sand flying behind us with every stride. The frigid sea envelops our warm bodies as we dive into the underwater world. Below us are emerald grassy plains flickering in the current, snagging our feet as we wade. Water droplets crawl down his cheeks and back to their home, making his face glisten. Shivering, we lethargically saunter back to land and plop down on our pleasantly warm towel. The waves light on fire as the sun comes to kiss the horizon. The amber ocean engulfs all our light, leaving behind the sun's lovely heat. In these moments, my heart floats above the moon.



## Dawn

Anessa Rodriguez

I look at you and for a moment, I am drowning,  
seawater filling my lungs, sunlight turning the water into a shimmering gloom

—it would be a  
beautiful way to die,  
in your eyes—

You do not see this: that I am kneeling before you,  
my palms raised, arms lax; scars roll over my hands like seafoam,  
washing over the backs of my hands, my fingers.  
My heart line is fractured, my lifeline severed.  
*This is all I have*, I am saying,  
seawater crests over the back of my throat, fills my mouth with saltwater and fish.  
They glow in my mouth like stars, whisper messages lost at sea

—*do not lose him*,  
they say, voices like cracked sea glass, *do not lose him*—

A part of the ocean is tucked under your collarbone,  
water boiling and the sky a streak of charcoal.  
*This is all I have*, you are saying, eyes somewhere on the horizon.  
The sun hasn't risen and the sky is a ribbon of pulsing navy,  
but I place my hand on your heart,  
beneath roiling waves.  
*Okay*, I say, sea glass biting the inside of my cheek,  
copper on my tongue. *Okay*.

Light begins to prod at the dark line of the horizon when our eyes finally meet,  
shaky, wavering in the half-gloom.  
You place your hand over mine.

*Oceans freeze if they never see the sun*, you say,  
tentatively tracing the scars on my fingers.  
Something cracks in my chest, warmth pools at the base of my throat.  
Yes, I say, but I mean *What have you done to me?*

Red and orange trickle across the sky, bleed  
and bloom into a burst of ochre,  
we meet like the first light of dawn.



# Emotional Freedom Technique

Fiona Lamb

The yelling ceased and the car engine subsequently hummed away. The floating red and white lights hugged the lines of the winding road leading to the coast, like rays depicted in a long-exposure photograph, snake-like in the bending twilight horizon. Everything had just occurred in slow motion, with the lights following suit. Bailee had just spent the night in the redwoods with the type of guy who wears boating shoes and pants exposing the ankles. Newly twenty-two, with an entirely new ownership of her sexual allure, she lay dejected on the pungent forest floor in a musty clearing where all of the mist became trapped after drifting northeast from Bodega Bay.

“Gabby Bernstein would definitely not have approved of this rock-bottom level lack of self-love,” Bailee thought to herself. She had listened to all of the bestselling New Age audiobooks, hoping to stifle her emotional wounds.

The moisture of the cool, coastal air lowered onto her shaking body. Her denim jacket lacked any sort of insulation, and this was the kind of dank briskness that crept up in one’s bones, not keen on making another home for itself anytime soon. She held up her phone to a lit home screen portraying a still from the film *The Fault in Our Stars*, with the two lead stars embracing one another with a warmth that made a mockery of Bailee as a woman seeking any form of affection from the opposite sex.

There were no notifications from anyone important, with the exception of a marketing email from REVOLVE, sent at 11:17 p.m. She opened her Lyft app to see if there were any active drivers in Guerneville. Nothing. She proceeded to call her estranged friend Marisa, who lived in nearby Santa Rosa.

“Hello?” The cacophony of white noise emanating from a TV in the background was competing with Marisa’s voice. Bailee struggled to get her words out coherently, with alcohol-induced sobs punctuating each syllable in her sentence.

“Ma-ha-risa, I-uh was left in Armstrong-ahhhh.”

“Oh, no...you’re drunk...”

There was hesitation on Bailee’s end. She was so upset that she forgot she was in a befuddled stupor.

“This is just what I thought would happen. I told you he was a narcissist from the first time I saw him.”

Bailee didn’t acknowledge the contentious tone in Marisa’s voice. She felt as if she were stranded in the middle of the Pacific Ocean on a miniscule dinghy, waving a sign titled “SOS,” which no one could see for miles.

“Yea-hah...he left me here,” she responded, her voice quivering with shame. She broke into a series of voiceless whimpers. She couldn’t seem to communicate that she needed a ride, though she assumed at this point that would have been intimated to Marisa, who moonlighted as a psychic and life coach to supplement

her income from her monthly alimony.

“Okay, well, I don’t know what to tell you. You need to find someone to take you home. You’re certainly in no state to drive.”

“Why-hy won’t you come—”

“What are you implying?” Marisa’s verbal pace accelerated. “Okay, well, I don’t know what to tell you. You need to find someone to take you home. You’re certainly in no state to drive.”

“...What?...I just need you to help—HE.. Pierce left me here-ahhh. I hate him... and after he told me he loved me tonight—” She couldn’t finish her lamentation and proceeded to keep sobbing into the receiver of the phone, tears and droplets of drool covering it as a result of her hysteria.

“I keep telling you who to date, and you won’t listen to me!! No one I care about ever takes my advice. I see you jumping into bed with these strange men when you don’t even know them. You should wait at least six months before sleeping with someone!! And now you’ve relapsed!! What are you going to tell your sponsor this time?! Call an Uber.”

Before Bailee could respond, she heard a vacant silence, terminating with three beeps, indicative of a cold hangup. Bailee was dumbfounded, not only at the abrupt annihilation of the conversation, but that Marisa’s older Generation Y revealed itself when she demanded her little ingénue to “call” an Uber. Overwhelming anger replaced gloom at this point.

Her escapee had grown up in Marin County and graduated from the distinguished Redwood High School, where his strengths lay in lacrosse and tennis, which he owed to his worship of the fictional character Hal Incandenza from *Infinite Jest*. He was at least six foot two and carried himself assuredly. He was dubbed by Marisa as a “pedantic charlatan.” All of this initially struck Bailee in the beginning as red flags, but her reservations about Pierce’s arrogance and incessant “mansplaining” dissipated over time once she became accustomed to twenty-dollar cocktails at eateries like The Slanted Door in the Ferry Building.

Upon graduating from a prestigious university, he swiftly became employed as an account manager in a sleek tech startup titled Condom Coup, located in the Mission District in San Francisco, which specialized in on-demand contraceptive deliveries at all hours of the day. He had no qualms about exploiting the perks of his job, which implicitly promoted the hedonistic notion of in-office indiscretions and other forms of unwarranted sexual deviancy.

This was how he met Bailee, a tall, classic beauty with bright green eyes, soft, freckled features, and auburn hair. She was initially working the deliveries division as a Rubber Runner to make ends meet for a month or two before taking an administrative position within the Sales Department. Contrary to the swirling office gossip, Pierce didn’t do any favors for her in her career advancement at Condom-Coup. He was only out for his own professional gain.

Bailee, in contrast, was from South Santa Rosa. This was a town in Sonoma County known as the blue collar area, where hookers and their pimps circumvented the local police in the nearby Target parking lot on a Wednesday afternoon. She went to school with the children of Laotian refugees and had no idea what lacrosse even was. Her family’s neighborhood consisted of a trailer park which sat with a view of the 101 Freeway. This lackluster upbringing made Pierce an exotic reverie to her, with his arsenal of words such as “vichyssoise” and “bespoke.”

After six months of ghosting combined with highs of sleazy, intermittent rendezvous, these two ill-matched lovers came to this juncture, emblematic of the travails of unrequited love in the 21st century. Bailee, passed out on a bed of lichen, was awakened by her phone ringing.

The glowing light rudely shone in her face as she read the name “Pierce” across her screen. She answered, “Hello?”

“Hi.”

“Where did you go?! Why did you just leave me stranded here? It’s pitch black and I can’t see my fucking hand in front of my face!”

“You did this to yourself. Do me a favor and recount the past four hours, especially the entire hour you were screaming in my face in the car. You were wild. You left me no choice but to leave you there.”

“You told me you loved me tonight...I remember that.”

“Perhaps I do, but if we can’t have any semblance of normalcy in our relationship, I don’t think we can go on at this point in time. You clearly become unhinged to the point of no return when you drink. I’m upset, and I no longer feel like talk—”

“YOU’RE A FUCKING ASSHOLE!! YOU ASSHOLE! You had the balls to get into my pants and leave me in the fucking WOODS?! What is WRONG with you??!!”

Just as before, Bailee heard nothing on the other end. She had been yelling to no one, with the neighboring trees as her audience. Her head was pounding and, consequently, her eyes felt as if they were oscillating in their sockets from such emotional intensity. The pulsating continued down to her arms and hand—she could even feel pain in her toenails from all of the alcohol she had consumed.

The emerging sun outlined the canopy of the trees and warmly illuminated the crown of her head like a haloed Madonna in an early Renaissance painting. She took deep, long breaths, which mimicked the flow of the wind through the tree trunks. Her breaths continued until she felt a sense of the nature washing over her. She allowed all of the drama and heartache to empty out of her. Not only was her mind emptied of vacuous thoughts, but her chest felt less heavy.

Her heart was empty but freed simultaneously. She had never really experienced this letting go before. Wind rustled the leaves and spores from ferns became airborne as a result of this, one aggressively landing in Bailee’s eye, which took her out of this tiny moment of solace. The landscape felt Mesozoic and remote, as did the emotional aftermath that resulted from quarreling with her reptilian paramour. It was over.

When she was finally able to reach lucidity, she was able to walk, hoping she would reach a view of the main highway soon. The battery on her phone was at eleven percent, increasing the weight of pressure on her chest, resulting in shallow breathing. She traversed the clearing and pushed herself up the sloping trails, heading in the direction of human noises. “Fuck,” she whispered to herself once she reached a higher plateau.

Bailee peered over the edge with a vantage point of early morning hikers conversing while drinking coffee out of thermos mugs, sitting beside each other on picnic tables. She decided to walk by the onlookers, amassing stares as she emerged from the greenery resembling an apparition, with smeared makeup, pale, lifeless cheeks, and earth-pigmented smudges all over her dress. She finally made it to the highway, which led her into the riverside town of Guerneville. Realizing that she could no longer live as a passive bystander in her own life, she decided to get

sober again and change jobs immediately.

Back at CondomCoup headquarters, it was apparent to Bailee that Pierce had moved on over the weekend. Word traveled fast within the office that he had become involved with his thirty-six-year-old married office manager, with Bailee being the last one to find out in painful succession. The next day, Bailee forwarded fifteen resumes to competing startups in the city and re-enrolled in community college. She had learned her lesson in not letting herself fall into reckless abandon with the same bad habits ever again.



# City Corner

Henry Thornburg



Illustration in scratchboard

# City Corner

Leilani Harrison

My cigarette flickered as I inhaled the city landscape. I sat perched in a small flat four stories up. It was a clear night with streams of pedestrians searching for something to do. I watched lovers make their way from restaurant to restaurant as others walked in groups, transfixed by the passing cars. They continued beneath the lights, looking for an answer, innocent as to what lay behind the next corner. I thought that most of my life had been the same.

There were people from all walks of life down on the street, many of them attempting to bypass the homeless. Skid Row was only a block away. The dirty humans would leap in front of cars, begging to be seen. Everyone looked away. And so it continued until my pack of cigarettes ran out. I decided to go downstairs.

On my way through the hall, I followed signs for the exit. I broke outside and the wind was warm. Everything that seemed small now seemed big. I felt more like myself, rather than an anthropologist in the window. I wondered if anyone had noticed who I was.

My nicotine levels were dropping and I split for the closest liquor store. The letters "Los Angeles" flashed in green and white from a sign, reflecting upon the dark, hard pavement. No one noticed it. I continued back to the apartment with two packs of American Spirit. I had forgotten which side exit I had come out of. Even if I had remembered the exit, I still couldn't remember the number on my friend's apartment door. I was lost. I felt scared and lit a cigarette. I breathed easy and decided to go for a stroll. There I was, walking down the street with everyone else. The same as everyone else, searching for something to do. Life.



# The Night Market in Korea

Maria C. Hackett

The speckled, five-foot-long snake, clamped below its head, hung wiggling and curling its tail under the glaring white bulb. A black November sky shielded the vendors in their booths as each one hawked their wares of pottery, scarves, jewelry, knick-knacks, and souvenirs. Pungent cooking smells permeated the cool air as smoke and steam lifted above their worn griddles. The weekly night market was underway as Korean vendors, scrambling to make a living, tried to convince tourists to buy their goods.

“Come try the snake’s milk,” yelled a toothy, old salesman, dressed in worn-out looking clothes, who spoke surprisingly good English. “Only one American dollar if you drink it. Come on; it’s healthy for your bones.”

The college students and I, a staffer and supervisor, had been granted shore leave that night until midnight. Six of us jumped from our ship onto a waiting boat for a brief ride through heavy surf to the dock in Pusan in South Korea. Even though the law required it, none of us wore life jackets. We quickly headed to town to take in the sights while adding to our “voyage of discovery,” the theme promoted by the ship’s administrators on our round-the-world trip.

“Come on, Jerry, you’re brave,” taunted one of the students as we circled around the snake charmer and his victim. “You can do it. Show us what you’re made of.”

“Oh, I’m not as brave as Tom,” Jerry shot back. “He’s always telling us he’d do anything once. Besides, he’s a milk drinker. I’m not.”

Lots of nervous laughter ensued. Would Tom do it?

“Hey, fellas, there’s nothing to it,” droned the vendor. With practiced hands he stroked the big undulating snake up and down, up and down. “I tell you none of its poison goes in the milk. It’s just as good as cow’s milk and cheaper, too.”

The old man set several small plastic cups on his grimy counter and then proceeded to massage the snake again, squeezing in just the right places as he expertly streamed its milk into the containers. The action looked pretty harmless to me, but there was absolutely no way I was going to taste that milk! My skin crawled with goose bumps as I stepped back a few paces. What if the snake shook itself free and clamped onto an onlooker?

“OK, I’ll do it,” said Tom, always willing to take a dare. “You pay, Jerry.”

All eyes were glued on Tom as he took a deep breath, pinched his nose with one hand, took the little cup from the vendor with his other, tilted his head back, and, like a flash, downed the snake milk! The crowd cheered in disbelief. I just knew he’d upchuck right away. He didn’t. But in spite of his heroics, Tom felt a little sick to his stomach the rest of the evening, probably from post-traumatic stress, I thought. The crowd took turns slapping him on the back for his bravery, but I noted no one else tried the snake milk. After the creature had been milked,

the vendor unhooked the snake, threw it in a box on the ground, and retrieved another one to tease another willing tourist. He never did tell us what kind of snakes he had. I wondered about the legality of what he was doing.

No other activity that evening compared to the snake milk drama. Our group returned to the ship and for days afterwards news of Tom's daring snake drink made the rounds. He bragged repeatedly that "it was no big deal."

Well, in my eyes, it was a big deal. That was the night 30 years ago I watched a crazy 20-year-old college kid take on a dare, not knowing if he'd live or die. Thank heavens he lived to tell about it.



# Fantasy of Dragonfly

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Celia Wu



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Watercolor

# Tibetan Prayer

Sharon Yu



Oil on canvas

## Moccasin Feet

Laura Ciucci

I call on my ancestors, oh great ones,  
Come to me on moccasin feet.  
The beat of the ancient Earth drums  
Thump, thump the sound of sacred drums  
Thump, thump the wind from the East carries  
Mother's voice from the dew of the morning dawn, she whispered,  
"All will be well."  
In a trance, I play the crystal bowls.  
To the South I call for my spirit guides,  
Be here now.

Mother, I had a vision of you riding the Great Wolf on the Milky Way.  
The sounds of the crystal bowls vibrating peace into my grieving soul.  
My eyes closed as I called on my ancestors,  
"Show me a vision of red streaks bringing me from whence I came."  
My soul aches to be one with the Sacred Earth.

*We are here, dear one.  
We called from the West on moccasin feet.  
It is not your time to join the blackness, your life is full.  
Listen to the beat of the drums,  
The vibration from the crystal bowl,  
It will lead you to life's greatest rainwaters.*

Thump, thump the sound of the sacred drums beat to the North,  
As Mother's voice whispered,  
"Be strong, my daughter, there will be harsh winters in your life,  
But you are not alone.  
We, your Great Ancestors, walk beside you.  
Follow the white owl to the East,  
Allow the yellow sun to warm your weary soul.  
You are my daughter,  
I gave you the gift of the drum and my moccasin feet."



# No Harm Done

Austen Landaas

Piercing green engulfed the lens. Raul rotated, camera pressed to his face, immortalizing each detail to the beat of his finger. Only the twigs snapping underfoot competed to fill the silence as he pressed into the woods. The sanctuary held within, the isolation—it was his drug. It was also his livelihood, but he never liked to think of it like that. There was a certain thrill in escaping to a remote utopia far away from the milling bodies packing the streets, the blaring car alarms, and the constant, paralyzing chatter.

The chatter was the worst.

Here he didn't have to answer to anything but the coaxing whisper of the leaves or the chorus twittering out of rhythm from the treetops, free to come and go with a mere flap of their wings. He envied that about birds. They didn't freeze up when startled; they simply took off. He wished whenever someone approached him, he could just flap his arms and flee instead of turning to stone. Freezing was all he knew.

Not here though. Here, he didn't have to cough up words for people's entertainment or make decisions on a whim or buckle beneath pressure. It was just him, his camera, and sweet seclusion. The cold, choking hands of civilization couldn't reach him here. He was content to never speak to anyone again, to withdraw entirely, closing himself off until the world seemed small enough for him to control.

That wasn't so terrible, was it? Who was he bothering?

Raul thudded into deeper, denser wood, his finger clicking away to capture one shot after the next. He angled it toward the canopies, admiring how their massive, gnarled hands concealed him in an emerald dome. He turned the camera left and clicked. Green. He spun it right, clicking. Green. He lowered it to a bundle of bushes barring his path, clicking. White. A white, doughy tree branch with five wilted digits.

The camera fell from his grip and crashed to the dirt. Whatever he was staring at had pulled him out of the moment. It was no branch, he knew, deep down, as the golden band around one of the digits sparkled that ungodly metropolitan glint. The ugly sight squeezed the immersion from him like the very chokehold he'd been running from, defiling his perfect kingdom.

He swallowed, his feet charting his first steps after much resistance. He squeezed his eyes shut as he reached for his camera and didn't reopen them until his back was turned to the anomaly. He'd only seen where it started, not where it ended. He might as well have not seen anything, really. He didn't need to report something he never saw, he reasoned. He didn't have to fish out the phone in his bag that made his hands seize. He wouldn't have to sit suffocating in a police car. He wouldn't have to suffer those officers in ugly blue poking at him with their

endless questions, grilling him with their dirty looks until words oozed out of him in jumbled fragments.

No, no, there was no point in telling anyone. Dead was dead. The damage was done. Who was he harming by minding his own business?

He put as much distance between himself and the anomaly as possible before setting back to work. The camera, however, just wouldn't steady in his grip. He anxiously paced the forest floor in the hopes of walking it off. He couldn't hear the forest anymore over a voice shouting inside him. He didn't understand. Where had the silence gone?

He eventually circled back to the site of the anomaly, fighting with himself each step of the way. Maybe it was gone. Maybe it was all green again and everything would be as it was. He came to the spot and plucked the glasses off his face, wiping them with the hem of his shirt. When he put them back in their place, he froze.

There it was still—pale and obtrusive.

Raul tore his body away from the obnoxious sight as quickly as he'd set eyes on it, mumbling silent pleas. His chest fluttered, his knees tremored. He wasn't sure where he was anymore. He was in his kingdom, but not *really*. He'd been hurled viciously back into the real world where pressures, decisions, and the mere thought of human contact lurched from every direction to smother him.

He battled it with every thought he could muster, any shred of reasoning he could bite into. Okay, yes, he saw what he saw, but so what? Nature would consume it, surely, and return it to the dirt as though it had never existed. He needed only to forget, somehow.

However, that voice—his own voice, he feared—shoved him right back to the spot minutes after he left it again. It peeked at him through the shrubs, taunting him. He tossed his camera bag off of his shoulder and pressed his palms to his eyes to keep hot tears from gushing forth. The screaming had leapt from his mind and into his throat, yet he couldn't bring himself to act. He couldn't tell anyone. He didn't want those ugly blue uniforms gutting through his utopia, upsetting the greens, and claiming his kingdom as their own in a tight yellow noose.

This was his turf, not theirs. Where else would he go? Where else could he escape to? And if he did tell them, what if they didn't believe him? What if they locked him up for nothing? How would he survive in prison, staring at grey walls for the rest of his life surrounded by more bodies? Living, moving, talking bodies?

He shivered just imagining it. No, grey would never do. People wouldn't do either. Behind bars, he would be perpetually frozen.

He started to turn away, but stopped, his earsplitting conscience diluting the precious silence he feared might never return. He didn't mourn it with tears this time. He knew better. What good was this utopia if he could never again relish it? Green was the color of silence, but that color would fade over time and turn ashen just like the body unless he stifled the pounding in his skull.

He came to and trudged out of the woods on feet that moored beneath his weight—a slow, procrastinated walk of shame. As he approached his car slumped on the side of the road, the sun poured over him as though spotlighting him after a long, rigorous manhunt. He set his bag down on the car hood and dug out his cell-phone. With his quivering thumb, he dialed the three cursed numbers and pressed the contraption to his ear. A woman's stern voice quaked from it.

"911, what's your emergency?"

He let out a breath he didn't realize he'd been holding, yet the words refused to leave his stubborn lips. He spun to the treeline behind him as if to bid his most cherished days a final, wordless farewell. At least now he would have peace of mind.

"Hello?" the operator yelped into his ear, frightening him.

"Yes, I..." His voice cracked and he rubbed his throat, trying to squeeze the words out. "I'm sorry, I... my voice is a little dry."

"Sir, you're going to have to speak up."

He wanted to cry again but strained to keep it from his voice. "I'd like to report a possible dead body."

Ten minutes later, it was exactly as he'd envisioned. Squad cars and ambulances drowning the calming lull of the forest. The chatter of officers sending birds scattering. Blue uniforms spilling into his dominion of green like an army of foreign invaders. Yellow tape barring his entrance.

"Peace of mind," he kept muttering to himself. It only took ten or so minutes for the ugly heap of flesh that had brought on this nightmare to emerge from the trees on a stretcher, covered in a thin sheet. He watched it disappear into an ambulance, a pang hitting him somewhere beneath his chest.

One of the invaders in blue approached him, an older, grizzled fellow. Raul pushed himself off the car in a desperate bid to straighten his posture. There was a scowl hardening on the man's face, and Raul felt a scourge of goosebumps crawl over his body.

The officer halted in front of him. "We're gonna take you back to the station so we can fill in the timeline a little better."

Raul nodded quickly, like a reflex. His back was so straight now that the muscles ached.

The officer glanced toward the ambulance, then back at Raul, a silver brow hiking up to his hairline. "You really didn't think to check for a pulse or anything?"

The question floored Raul. When no words came to him, he slowly shook his head.

The older man glared. "Son, you do realize his heart stopped just moments after we got to him, right?"

Raul stared, unblinking.

The officer nodded morosely. "He suffered heavy contusions and concussions, but he was still hanging on, unconscious. Might have made it, too. Damn shame."

As the officer walked away, the pang in Raul's chest expanded into a supernova. He fell back against his car, reeling. He couldn't hear himself think over his conscience, screaming louder than before. He dragged his nails over his ears and slumped to the ground beside his bag. He couldn't run. He couldn't escape. He glanced up, looking at the kingdom he was forbidden from withdrawing into. He only had one other alternative.

He snatched the camera from his bag, switched it on, and began cycling through his nature photos. Photos of pure green, peace, comfort—shortly before it had all been mercilessly ripped away from him. At least he could bury his guilt in this eternal state preserved at his fingertips.

Then his clicking finger went still, the blurring roll of green stopped by a shot of pale flesh. *The* shot, immortalized, burning into his brain the longer he gazed. He

couldn't will himself to hit the delete button, even as the timestamp in the corner promised consequences. It wouldn't have silenced the voice anyhow. Instead, he just froze.



“ . . . ”

Brooke Campbell

“Good morning”

An echo through the room  
that bounced off the walls  
and vibrated through my person.

I remember.

“It’s because of people like you”

A luminous language on the page  
that reflected the brightest light  
and ignited my soul.

I remember.

“He is lucky to have you”

A casted dark shadow  
that collapsed the surrounding oxygen  
and weighed on my heart.

I remember.

# No Roses Here

Ali Marcotte

Water  
Drought  
No rose petals found

Deserted  
Earth  
Rootless ground

Pain  
Thoughts  
Cloud the mind

Soiled  
Buried  
Truths to hide

Torn  
Shredded  
Pieces of love

Empty  
Vacant  
Heart of dove

Lies  
Ripped  
The wings away

Flight  
Denied  
Soul is swayed



Weathered and Torn Photograph by Ali Marcotte

# Fenced In

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Braydon Tsuyuki



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Photograph

# Broken Sunset

Sobia Ali

I stood silently, trying not to look into the eyes of the little boy who had become a victim to Tyler. I could feel his pain as his soft voice tried to escape his throat but barely made a sound. It wasn't worth the effort anyway. It was around 7 p.m. and the offices had closed, so no one was around to hear his cries. Tyler and Rob laughed as they dragged the boy into the parking garage on Fifth Street. At this point he was on his knees scrambling to get on his feet. His glasses were snatched off his face and crushed under Rob's boot. The three of us surrounded him as Tyler and Rob kicked and screamed, "Your sister is a slut." Their motive was unclear, but I wasn't going to question it.

I was once in the place of that boy. I didn't deserve what they did to me, but I should have known better than to steal from the scariest looking kid in school. Tyler was about 5'11" with the build of a wrestler in a nineteen-year-old body. He had a rose tattooed on the left side of his chest with the words "live and let live" carved underneath. I first noticed it in gym class; it seemed quite odd for a guy like Tyler. I always wondered what was going through his mind when he decided to get inked, but I wouldn't dare ask. He usually faced the wall while changing his shirt, almost as if he was ashamed of what his tattoo read. He didn't smile often, but when he did, it was crooked and you could tell he didn't care much about oral hygiene. But you would be a lot better off never seeing that smile because it meant you were about to be his next victim.

I remember that smile all too well—that's the smile he gave me the first day our paths crossed. I was the new kid in school and I was much too familiar with what that felt like. In the past year I changed schools three times and lived with four different foster families. My mom was locked up behind bars when I was nine, right before my tenth birthday. The three of us, mom, dad and I, were supposed to have a small picnic by the beach and watch the sunset there. I guess you could say it was a tradition; we had been going there for my birthday as far back as I can remember. But that year Momma got caught up in a big mess.

I don't think she knew what she was getting herself into when she agreed to keep a lookout. I want to believe she didn't know that the men she was helping had guns. Momma worked at a bar. It didn't pay well, but she made enough in tips. The men she made a deal with were regular customers. I would have never known all these details, but I got to attend the court hearings. While Momma kept an eye out for cops, the men ran into the gas station, pulled out their guns, and stole a bunch of cash. They got into their van, threw her a stack, and disappeared. She thought that was the last time she would see those men, but the whole scene was caught on camera. The police arrived shortly afterwards, and my mom was in the middle of it all. Long story short—don't trade your freedom for a couple of extra bucks. She would have made eight hundred dollars that night, but, of course she didn't get to keep the money, and I didn't get to keep my mom. After that, it was just my dad and me.

My dad was a pretty cool guy. I learned a lot from him growing up—like how to ride a bike, how to throw a football, and tricks like juggling. He was smart, too. Anytime I needed help with homework, he was there. I wish my dad had tried harder in school because he would have made it further in life. Instead, he dropped out after tenth grade. My grandpa had a stroke, so my dad left school and got a job to help pay the bills. He never went back to school after that. He was a hard worker though. He was a painter—not the kind that painted scenic views but the kind that painted walls in peoples’ homes. I don’t know if he enjoyed it, but it helped pay the rent, so he did it anyway. That’s actually how he met my mom. Her old landlord hired him to paint her apartment before she moved in. The woman living there before had a toddler who drew pictures all over the walls. My mom ended up moving in before he was done and the rest is history. They were the best parents. I’d only heard them fight a few times and it was always over money. Maybe that’s why my mom risked it all that night of the robbery. Sometimes I really wish I could have my old life back.

After my mom was put behind bars, my dad lost his motivation to work. He had fewer and fewer new customers and wasn’t doing a great job with the ones he had. I don’t blame him. He really missed her. I missed her, too. My dad started spending more nights at the bar where my mom used to work. I don’t know what he had in mind. I think he just wanted some answers, but he never got any. What he did get, though, was a bad drinking habit. Soon he started spending all his time at the bar and I hardly got to see him. No one was around to help me with my homework anymore. I used to enjoy doing it because it meant I could spend time with my dad, but now I hated it. I started getting into trouble with the teachers at school and with the people in the neighborhood. I started stealing candy from the convenience store and spent a lot of my day on the streets. It wasn’t a good place for a young kid. One day, the cops caught me stuffing my pockets with a few snacks. Who knew it would be such a big deal. They took me to the station and decided my dad wasn’t fit to care for me anymore. That’s how I ended up in foster care.

The foster families were really nice to me, but I didn’t deserve them. I was too caught up in my rowdy lifestyle to care about what was happening to me anymore. I would run away from home and take things from them that I wanted. That’s why I moved around so much—no one wanted me.

I’m fourteen now and in my freshman year of high school. I have my dad’s build, tall and skinny, but my mom’s delicate features. It doesn’t really help that I haven’t grown any facial hair yet. I thank my height for saving me from the bullies so far, but I was bound to get into trouble with my careless attitude. When I stole the money from Tyler’s pocket, I thought I would buy myself a nice lunch. I had no idea what was coming for me. Before I could even make a run for it, he grabbed me by my backpack and threw me onto the ground. He punched me straight in the nose. Although bloody, it wasn’t broken. Everyone at Fletcher High knew not to mess with Tyler. The dollars were ripped from my weak grip and then he gave me that crooked smile and said, “You got nerve, kid.” I had never been the victim before, but there is a first for everything. I realized that day that I messed with the wrong kid. I wasn’t going to last long at this school if I kept this up. I was tired of moving around and I just wanted to go home.

I thought Tyler would be out to get me after that incident, but he wasn’t. I think he was kind of impressed, actually. No one had ever challenged him before. I was terrified of him though, so when he told me to carry his books while he walked to class, I did. I also did his homework from time to time. It was clear he just wanted

to be done with school; he had been going for quite awhile. Maybe he was just happy I didn't get him suspended. I didn't care what the reason for his "mercy" was; I just wanted to be done with school, too. I didn't hate being his sidekick, but I hated how he treated the kids. There must have been something really wrong in his mind because if he didn't like you he would make sure you knew it and issue a scar to remember it.

I don't know what it was about his latest victim, this little boy who angered Tyler so much. Maybe it was because his sister didn't want to go to prom with Tyler. I was getting tired of all this nonsense. The boy wasn't much younger than I was, but he was a lot smaller in size. If they kept this beating going, he might not be in one piece by the end of it. I looked at Tyler. I knew I had to do something. I took a deep breath and with all my force I struck Tyler in the face with my elbow. Rob looked at me and then at Tyler as he tried to grasp what had happened. I grabbed the boy by his arm and helped him onto his feet. He was a fast runner.

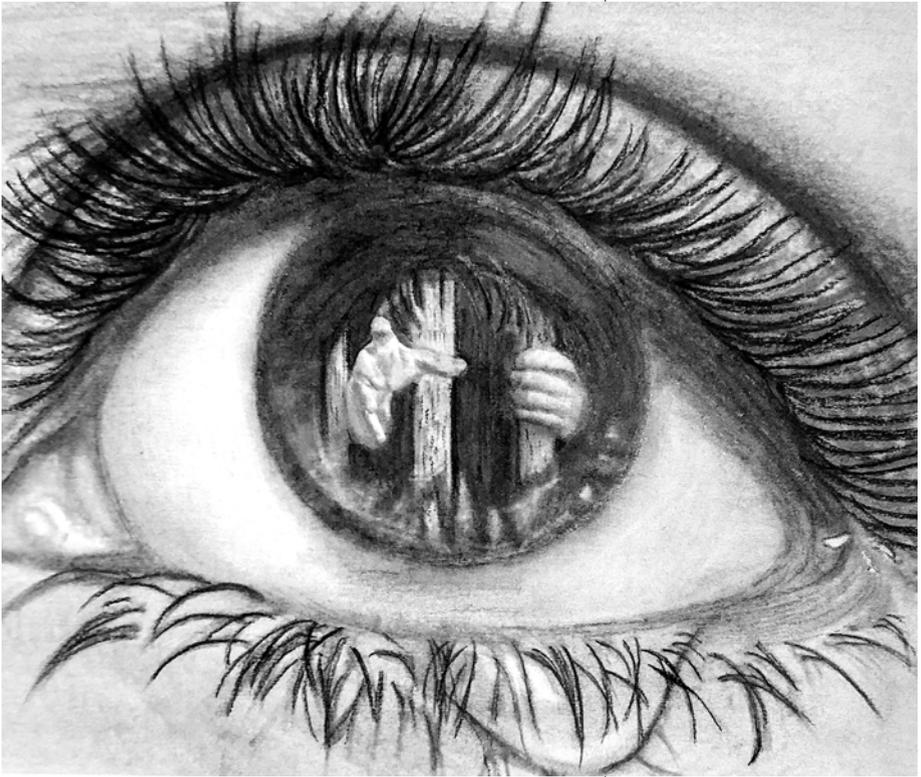
I don't know what that boy is up to these days, but I'm glad he made it out that night. I haven't seen Tyler since then either, which I'm very thankful for, or I wouldn't be standing here today. Maybe changing schools so often isn't such a bad thing. It gives me a chance to start fresh. This time, however, I'm going to do it right. No more messing around. I want to graduate like my dad never got to. Once I'm done with high school, my mom will be out of prison and I want to be ready for that. I want to support my family and bring my dad back home. I want to spend my eighteenth birthday watching the sunset at the beach with my mom and dad like I used to.



# Cages

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Ashton Riemer



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Illustration in charcoal

# Cages

Angela Dawson

Perhaps it won't suppress  
This utter feeling of unrest  
Like a demon rattling a cage  
This unsettling self-rage  
Out of the black, but into the glass  
A constant state of worn out places  
Of bitter madness—I cannot surpass

I've grown weary of such solitary  
A confinement that I strap to myself  
Around my hips, neck, mouth  
For my cage grows tighter  
When I feed the monster inside it

# Empty

Anisa Panahi

Pain.  
That's what it was,  
That feeling she felt.  
It burned through her, a dull ache that lingered  
Long after it should have been gone.

She couldn't take it  
So she reached into her chest,  
Far and deep,  
And she ripped out the pain.  
And the phantom blood that dripped down her skin  
Felt like freedom.

But the longer it was gone,  
The longer her heart did not beat,  
The harder it became to feel  
Anything.

The pain was gone,  
But so was everything else.  
And when she looked for something,  
Anything,  
To feel,  
She found nothing.

# The Seasons of His Eyes

Meaghan Jones

A crisp breeze fell through  
and whistling air left me shivering.  
It's winter, but  
his eyes, as green as spring grass.  
I miss the spring.

The flowers bloom,  
The rains dismiss  
and his eyes have dismissed me, too.  
Spring will ramp itself up soon,  
and I cannot wait for summer.

The pavement stings.  
A scorching sun,  
and his eyes have left burns  
on my skin.  
It's summer now and things  
are looking bright, except  
I can't help but  
miss the snowfall.

It came and went,  
green grass turned leaves falling.  
And his eyes have fallen, too.  
Things are dying now, but  
they are still beautiful.

# Painted Faces II

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Diane Fahrion



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Watercolor

## Second Sketches

August Larsen

For an artist, Jacques' lover, Elisabet, spoke little about color and a lot about time. She often commented, "When you are happy, you bide your time in days; alone, in years; and when you are afraid for your life, in minutes." He spent 29 years before he met Elisabet, 247 days with her, and twelve-and-a-half minutes with his wife.

Jacques Thomas was only his legal name. As for his birth name, it could be found on a road sign dedicated to his father, a police officer, beside a certain highway in Caddo County, Oklahoma. Jacques' family was one of patronymics: he had been christened with his father's name, which was also his grandfather's name, and his great-grandfather's name, and so on—all the way back to Adam and the dust.

His father died of a heart attack the previous February. Jacques hadn't spoken to him in eight years since he left to study art in New York. When Jacques heard about his father's death from his mother, he was no longer living in New York. He had moved to Seattle, where he sold fake Thomas Kinkadee landscapes in Pioneer Square.

Later that day, his wife appeared in the doorway of his studio.

"You're acting different," Valentina said, standing in the doorway, her hair a dark and tangled garden gathered atop her head.

*Different* was Valentina's codeword for *tell me or else*.

"I was just thinking about Pettier," he lied, referring to his old "friend" from Tisch, who now was a lithographer of some repute. "He is opening a new gallery across town. Somehow he found out I live here—sent two tickets for us. *Tickets*. Can you believe that?"

"Oh God," Valentina sighed. "Who cares? Sounds like a fun time. We should go."

"I can't live here anymore. What if he discovers me shucking Kinkadee paintings?"

Valentina looked at him with a disbelieving look, and then told him they were not fleeing in shame. She suggested he distract himself by working on something grand: their retirement plan. Recently, Valentina had developed ambitions for Jacques to take on a far more daring forgery than Kinkadee—a Vermeer self-portrait. In her mind, pulling off a Vermeer forgery would not only ensure comfort for the rest of their lives, but also make her husband more than a shuckster of counterfeit hotel art. He would become a handsome rebel who hoodwinked the art world.

Unable to argue with her, Jacques got to work on some preliminary sketches. But when he began painting—in latex gloves, of course—he found that the face of Vermeer began shifting into that of his father.

He redid sketches and even discarded the custom canvas he had replicated exactly after Vermeer's seventeenth-century version, in order to reattempt the whole portrait altogether. Nothing helped. His father seemed to emerge relentlessly out of any rendition, unchanged since Jacques left him, like Dorian Gray.

Valentina cried all night when he told her that the faux Vermeer had been ruined beyond repair.

"How did we come to this?" she asked repeatedly in the following weeks, passing through his studio as he worked, often for no other purpose but to make that comment.

The tone of her voice implied: how did *I* come to this?

Valentina insisted on going to Pettier's gallery. She read aloud reviews of it during their Uber ride: "Although he is too young to have a definitive masterwork, Jack Pettier's new gallery of lithographs is nothing short of outstanding."

"Why don't they just call lithographs fancy stamping?" Jacques asked.

"I think it's nice," she said.

Pettier's gallery opening was the glitzy, laudatory event Jacques feared it would be. He watched as Valentina and Pettier strolled away together, arms linked, so he could show her lithographs.

He met Elisabet shortly after.

Elisabet had long white hair and bright gray eyes. She was a well-regarded painter in her sixties from Santa Barbara, in California. Her "talent"—which Pettier derided as a gimmick—was that she was a tetrachromat, meaning that she had four color cones in her eyes instead of the usual three. She saw 100 times the colors of anyone else: she described Los Angeles' cement landscape as not an endless maze of beige but a dancing kaleidoscope of color.

"The moon is actually blue, not white," she told him. "Your eyes cannot differentiate how pale it is."

"A blue moon," he joked lamely.

She rolled her eyes, but she smiled.

Jacques did not remember how he fell in love with Elisabet, only that he found himself in her hotel room later that night, sitting on the rim of a bathtub with the faucet pouring hot water over his feet, while he poured out to her everything about his father. Elisabet sat attentively on the lidded toilet, her gray eyes musing.

"I couldn't paint in art school," he was saying. "I hated everybody in New York. They didn't understand Oklahoma. They didn't *want* to. They wanted artists from around the world, but not from Oklahoma. So I changed my name."

"Perhaps your father was your muse," Elisabet hypothesized. "You couldn't paint after you left him. That's why he appeared in your Vermeer."

"I spent my whole childhood trying to get away from him, his predictable life," Jacques said. "Most of all, I hated his comfort with the inevitable. I wanted to fight death, not wait for it."

"Art is forged in the fire of opposition," Elisabet said, "in the smithy of a rebel's heart. Now that he's dead, you need to find something else to fight."

Afterwards, the two of them made a plan, their bodies interlinked on the floor. Elisabet needed a set of hands to create pieces for her next gallery. While her eyes were as perceptive as ever, her hands did not guide the brush with the same finesse as they used to, due to her age. She would pay him for his time and discretion, and he could escape to Santa Barbara for awhile and rescue his soul.

When he returned to the apartment, Valentina needed no explanation.

"You always find yourself in other people," she said. "Especially in women. I could have told you that. You have never had a truly *original* thought in your life."

Jacques felt angry and frozen, all at once. She left their apartment in a hurry.

That evening, he received a strangely contrite text from her—

*Sorry about your father.*

The year went on, 247 days passed. Jacques discovered that autumn in California comes and goes without much distinguishment from summer. November, however, the last month he was in Santa Barbara, grew impossibly long due to his growing impatience with his arrangement.

Jacques found that Elisabet mused on nothing of importance. Despite her undeniably gifted eyes, her mind was not universal or daring or ambitious. She almost never spoke of *anything* new at all, simply reiterating the same set of childhood stories about her daughter. One day in the middle of the month, he wondered what the effective difference was between death and her unchanging, endlessly recursive mind.

*Nothing ever evolves within her, Jacques concluded. There is no future she can promise.*

After that, he could not contain the sprawling growth of his dissatisfaction which, like the roots of weeds, found its way into the tiniest of crevices and split them wide open. He grew hateful at having to tolerate her idiotic ramblings, at having to acknowledge her ancient voice, the faltering of which gave an impression of her whining or needling at him as she called out to him across the studio. He despised having to answer her and often did not.

Eventually, she stopped attempting to converse. She would only sit on her painting stool and regard him for long periods with her cool, sad eyes.

He sensed that she knew what was coming.

On the first of December, he left in the dark hours of the morning on the northbound road. Elisabet called and called the following day, as he passed over Oregon's border into Washington. Finally, the phone, sitting in the lap of the passenger seat, ceased to stir altogether. She moved on, as Valentina did, as everything does.

In Seattle, things had changed. Valentina had drained the money from their account, changed the locks on their apartment. Worse yet, he learned that Pettier was living there with her.

That evening, Jacques knocked on the apartment door. Everything after that went quickly and terribly. He and Pettier had at it, weight on weight, Jacques soon losing, succumbing under the larger man, trapped between his collarbone and armpit. His nose was hot and wet and probably broken.

He briefly spotted his wife, red-eyed, yelling inaudible words, her dark, thorny hair freely falling from its band.

"Stop it," she shouted at Pettier. "Let him go, let him go!"

She never looked so wild and beautiful.

Valentina ensured that Pettier did, in fact, let Jacques go, but he could not allow him to stay. Instead, he drove Jacques for nearly three hours outside Seattle. Everything was silent and nearly black inside the car.

"You should thank Valentina for this," Pettier growled, his white blonde hair turning into a flamelike halo under passing streetlamps.

“Thank you,” Jacques said, although she was not in the car.

They stopped. Pettier gave him a thousand dollars and opened the car door. He told him he was on a northeastern corner of Puget Sound. Jacques thanked him and got out.

The next morning, he went on a walk along the shore where he had slept. He remembered hearing once that pearl-bearing oysters could be found there, although he had no idea if that was true.

Sleep had eroded his rage. He thought to call Valentina again, persuade her to attempt another try, a final chance, a second sketch...were they not good at that?

But everything was done. He realized that, and with that realization all the anger that last evening convened its mass like a dissipated thunderhead. Valentina felt as immaterial as any dream or memory from his life in Oklahoma, as forgotten as the love he had for Elisabet in the summer.

He wandered at the water’s edge, looking for pearls both figurative and real: a maiden offering a sword, the ghost of his father (or his eyes, as Shakespeare promised, in the pearls!), promise of love, a magic horse.



# Diamonds in the Rough

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Jim Langford



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Photograph

# Ghost in Mid July

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Whitney Micaela



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Photograph

# A Feeling I Can't Describe

Maggie Belfield

empty laughter fills the room  
a cloud still looms  
broken glass sits ignored on the floor  
close the door  
sitting alone in a bed that is still warm  
waiting for the storm  
to lay and watch you walk away  
to wish you would stay

a feeling I can't describe visits me in moments  
but now I fear it's here to stay  
it's in the back of my throat  
that itching urge to purge  
yearning to clear the feeling out  
but all I can think about is your pout  
soft eyes that plead  
hands that lead  
and the honey that drips from your lips  
I peel back my skin to let you in  
and you rush over me like water

# The Cartoon

Raymie Bucknam



Illustration in scratchboard

# The Cartoon

Cy Hill

It would be a lark to sit before a cartoonist at the Pike Place Market. A joke. Last night two of her oil paintings were hung at an art exhibition, side by side with her husband's oils, and wouldn't a cartoon of her be the perfect ironic token?

She saw only the back of the man who called himself "Sketch-O," his booth surrounded with drawings of happy faces, people depicted better than they were—better than the standard sideshow fare. Some germ of happiness had been located in each subject and exploded into flower.

She wordlessly sat upon the stool, the perch that customers took.

Sketch-O's booth was at the main entrance to Seattle's Pike Place Market, before the fish bazaar and to the left of the produce and jewelry. The city's Market Committee awarded him this prime spot because his cartoons not only gave people joy, but also drew them into the Market.

On this drizzly spring morning he drank sugared coffee from his thermos and smoked one of his long, thin brown cigars. He was 41, 5'6", and built like a rain barrel. His face was a broad, weathered stone from a creek bed, with a thick shortly clipped white beard that matched the thatch on top.

He recognized her immediately, a small delicate bird nested before him, posing demurely atop the wooden stool. Even after fourteen years, she still wore her black hair short. She still had that lovely fine-boned face and those large, deep-as-an-ocean brown eyes. She was three years his junior, a couple of inches shorter, and still elfinly thin.

"Good morning," he said.

Did she recognize that voice? "You are Sketch-O?"

He pointed at the sign that read "Sketch-O." He was already intently working on the cartoon.

"Can you talk while you work?"

"Of course." He briefly made eye contact, miffed. She should at least remember that. He never cared who watched him work.

The manner, the height, the eyes—it could be him. But Sketch-O appeared so much older than the Jacob Bailey she knew, a popular untenured art teacher at a California State college, popular more for his own artwork than his classroom manner. Students wanted to learn to create as he created. There was a time when she did, too.

"I am here for an art exhibition," she said. "At The Huijari."

"I've never been in there."

"It's on—"

"I know where it is." Stuffed-shirt, cliched cerebral art. He was contemptuous of the place.

Several tourists gathered behind him, curiosity mounting as they watched the

accumulated black strokes on white paper that she could not see. He did not care. She did. If this was Jacob, what might he be drawing? What had she let herself in for?

"A couple of my pieces are hanging there," she said.

That got him. A kick in the stomach. So her art had gone that way. "What medium?"

"Oils."

That was her husband's forte. "Congratulations."

"Thank you," she said sincerely. Then, she added, "My husband is there now. At the exhibition."

"Is he an artist, too?" As soon as he said that, he wished he could retract it. Her husband, who would now be in his mid-fifties, had been chairman of the Art Department, probably still was. Jacob judged his professional superior's work derivative, blasé, and boring.

With that comment, its tone, she knew. This gnarled piece of granite before her was indeed the former art teacher. She crossed her hands and then her legs, uncrossed her legs, and then her hands. She caught herself. She knew how to pose and she was not being a good subject.

"Our work is being displayed side by side," she said proudly.

He thought, "Isn't that sweet?" but said, "Give him my congratulations."

She suddenly wondered what she would do with this cartoon. Could she—would she—ever show it to her husband? He would gloat. Young excitable Jacob Bailey, reduced to drawing cartoons in a street fair setting, revealed as a sideshow buffoon. Unstable. Volatile. Wasted talent, gone to seed. A Nowhere Man.

A dozen onlookers watched and buzzed behind Sketch-O, observing his handiwork, and then looking at her. Was he drawing her nude, as he remembered her, from his bedroom? She studied the onlookers' faces for a reflection of what she could not see on the other side of the easel.

How many women receive two proposals of marriage within the same day?

Jacob had accepted a job at an Oregon community college. There was a path to tenure there. There would never be one where he was, not with Warren as his chairman. Would she marry Jacob? Would she share her life with him?

She refused him at a bar, overlooking the Pacific.

"Will you get tenure at that community college, Jacob? Or will you upset everyone at that school as you have Warren, here?" That was how she refused him. "Warren is established in his career. I need that stability. I want a man who is established in his career."

His face altered, assumed those first fissures that would deepen and spread. He thought she loved him. Maybe she did. More to himself than to her, he said, "What happens now?"

Fourteen years later, here they were, face to face with his sketchpad in between.

He never made it to his job in Oregon. He did not appear for his final month of teaching at the California college. He drank at the bar where she turned down his marriage proposal until they threw him out with him throwing punches. Marijuana, cocaine, LSD. It was 1968. He lived in the woods of Big Sur, sketched with Bob Crumb in San Francisco, shared an inner tube off Carmel with Jimi Hendrix, and was his guest at the Monterey Music Festival. A girl he ran into named Sunshine

convinced him to hitchhike cross-country with her to a music festival in Woodstock, New York. A few years later he was at the Altamont Festival. A Hell's Angel killed a man in front of him. That was when he came north, to Seattle, and began to draw cartoons. They made people happy. Sometimes it almost made him happy.

As she posed, poised on the edge of the stool and the decision that altered both their lives, a nine-year-old boy rushed to her.

"What are you doing, Mommy?" he asked.

She placed her hand upon his head. "I am posing for this gentleman," she said, hoping Sketch-O was a gentleman and not exposing her to ridicule with his cartoon.

"What's your name, son?" he asked.

"Warren."

"Junior," Jacob said.

He completed his work with the signature "Sketch-O" at the bottom right corner and applied a stamp on the bottom left that stated this cartoon had been created at the Pike Place Market on this date. Then, he carefully separated the work from the sketchpad.

There was a short smattering of applause behind him to which artist and model were oblivious.

She apprehensively took the cartoon in her hands, turned it over and saw—who she had been, fourteen years ago. In his classroom. Her face was in the act of turning from him, looking towards the door—model and artist knew who she was turning towards, about to leave his life—it was not a simple cartoon. It was unmistakably something very special, very personal.

She momentarily wondered what life with Jacob would have been like had she not gone out that door. But she had made her choice. Because of it, two of her paintings hung on a wall several miles away.

Jacob named the price. She gave him double. It was an even exchange.



## How Do I Look?

Alyssa Shishkov

I saw a little girl at the corner of two roads  
That crossed in a place hard to find.  
But I found myself there and what do you know:  
This girl had eyes just like mine.

Or maybe I'd wished that my eyes were like hers  
For their spark I had had long ago  
When I was her age and my hair still had curls  
And my shoes tapped like hers down the road.

So badly I wanted to ask if she knew  
Who I was and where I was going.  
If my eyes are different sizes and my ears slightly askew  
And if she could tell when my lameness is showing.

I'd've asked what part of my face it is  
That tells my friends it's me.  
How lucky was I to have the chance at a glimpse  
At what it is other people see.

Of course, greed would not have consumed our meet  
There was so much I'd wished she'd have known.  
Like to not bother dreaming of Ben down the street  
Or of ever looking fully grown.

I'd've warned her of all of the songs that are sad  
And that even adults can be wrong.  
I'd've told her that silver spoons start to taste bad  
When left in your mouth for too long.

Though these things I wanted to say, I was late  
So knowing myself I'll say such:  
She'd've critiqued my hair and my music taste  
And probably told me to grow up.



# What Hell Smells Like

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Sejal Banker



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Illustration in scratchboard

# What Hell Smells Like

Sophia Noble

*Floor Two is unusually dark. I suddenly understand that it is night time. It is never night time when I'm here. It is so stark black on the floor that it's almost eerie, as if Floor Two is whispering to me to turn around and walk away; this screams to me that I might be in danger. Every single call light above each patient's room is illuminated, and I scan my surroundings to look for assistance with the multiple pending call lights. The nurses station is empty and not a soul occupies the LVN carts, and I gain the awareness of being alone.*

*Almost instantly, I am not alone anymore. I can hear a group of familiar voices snickering and conversing in the distance. Believing the laughter is coming from one of the patient's rooms with an awaiting call light, I follow the noise. As I move closer and closer, rummaging for sight in the darkness, an object rolls out of the noisy room, followed by a trail of red liquid I immediately assume is blood. The object comes into focus and I see that it is a beating heart. Without thinking, I pick it up and enter the room. I refuse to acknowledge that the fluttering organ is erupting the blood from its anxious veins all over my body. Miss Teddy and the others who occupy the voices are standing around a man's corpse with his chest cavity ripped open and obliterated. This doesn't seem to bother me in the slightest.*

*The giggling from the people standing in a circle around the thrashed corpse ceases. "We'll blame it on her," Miss Teddy says pointing at me, the heart still spurting its blood in every direction.*

*I turn my head and look into the mirror that resides in my vision. I see myself holding a detached heart. There are blood stains on my candy red and white uniform, and its blood is dripping down my face. In the mirror's frame, not a soul beside me is visible. Within the frame, I am the only one that exists in this crime scene. Now, I realize, Miss Teddy has framed me for her perfect crime, just like the mirror has.*

My distaste for Miss Teddy was at its peak before the day even began. I was contemplating the dream I had just hours ago of her framing me for murder while I obsessed over my uncooperative hair. The employee bathroom was the only bathroom in the entire hellish place that had a full-length mirror. It was a cheap, generic mirror that was barely being held together by a piece of yellowing tape. I was disgusted by its drabness. In a way, I saw the nursing student version of myself as this pathetic mirror held together by rusting tape. Like the mirror, I was trapped in a generic costume, stripped of value by endless numbers of people who only sought aesthetic pleasure from me, and was only barely being held together by a very thin piece of my own psychiatric form of a jaundiced, useless bandage.

I exited the bathroom.

"Rachel, will you help me clean up Mr. Mooney?" Carrie stopped me before I

could make my way to the nurses station. The frustration in her fatigued, sleepless eyes did not leave me much room to reject her request: "It's his third bowel movement this morning, and I guess he urinated through his diaper." Mr. Mooney was the man who had C. Diff—the fecal disease that made the entire hospital smell like hell.

I contemplated turning around, running out of the hospital and catching the first bus to anywhere it decided to take me. "Of course, Carrie." I never had the heart to say no to Carrie.

Due to having C. Diff, he had to be isolated from every other patient in the hospital, and, upon entering his room, every staff member had to be gowned, masked, and gloved. You could almost taste the irrevocable shame that lingered in the smell of that blocked-off hospital room. "Mr. Mooney, we're going to clean you now," Carrie warned him as she pulled down his sweatpants, which were dripping with brown acid.

My tape was getting thinner.

Like proper nurses, we turned Mooney on his side. His front side was facing towards me as Carrie disinfected his behind. "Will you pull him closer to you?" she asked me through her masked face, eyebrows burrowing in disgust. The emotional trauma endured from that stench was becoming harder to hide with each passing second.

Seconds after I did this, Mr. Mooney let out a beastlike sound as warm liquid seeped into the front of my navy blue scrubs and down into my socks. This completely paralyzed me for a nanosecond. "No! No! NO!" I hastily stripped off my gown and mask before I bolted out of the room.

Miss Teddy, the director of nursing, caught up to me before I could reach the bathroom. "What's going on, Rachel?"

I couldn't stand still much longer. I was filled with so much dread that I thought I might hemorrhage in that moment. "Mr. Mooney peed on me!" This rudimentary shriek was all I could manage to give as an explanation. As I nervously faced her, sweat started to break through my pores and demolish any visible sign of dignity that I had left.

"Is this seriously what you are freaking out about?" She pinched the bridge of her nose and shook her head. Her buried irritation with me was brought to the surface as she contemplated my situation. "Do you think that this sort of thing doesn't happen all the time?"

There was a long pause. "I...I need to clean off. Please, I can't handle it anymore." I begged her to set me free.

Instead, she pulled me aside, out of hearing distance from the nurses station. Her hand sternly grasped my shoulder. "Don't you think for a second that this industry isn't going to chew you up and spit you out," she said, aggressively extending her index finger to my face. "Because, believe you me, it will."

The tape rusted entirely and tore in half. Teddy left me standing there in a puddle of infected piss.

I ran to my safe place, the quaint bathroom with the full-length mirror. Washing off the tainted piss on my body, I analyzed the events that had transpired moments ago. The incompetence that Teddy saw in me leaked through the cracks of my counterfeited, inflated ego and thrashed it into shreds. Looking into my reflection in that loathsome mirror was the only place I felt safe in that entire orifice.

# What Hell Smells Like

Alexander Pagan

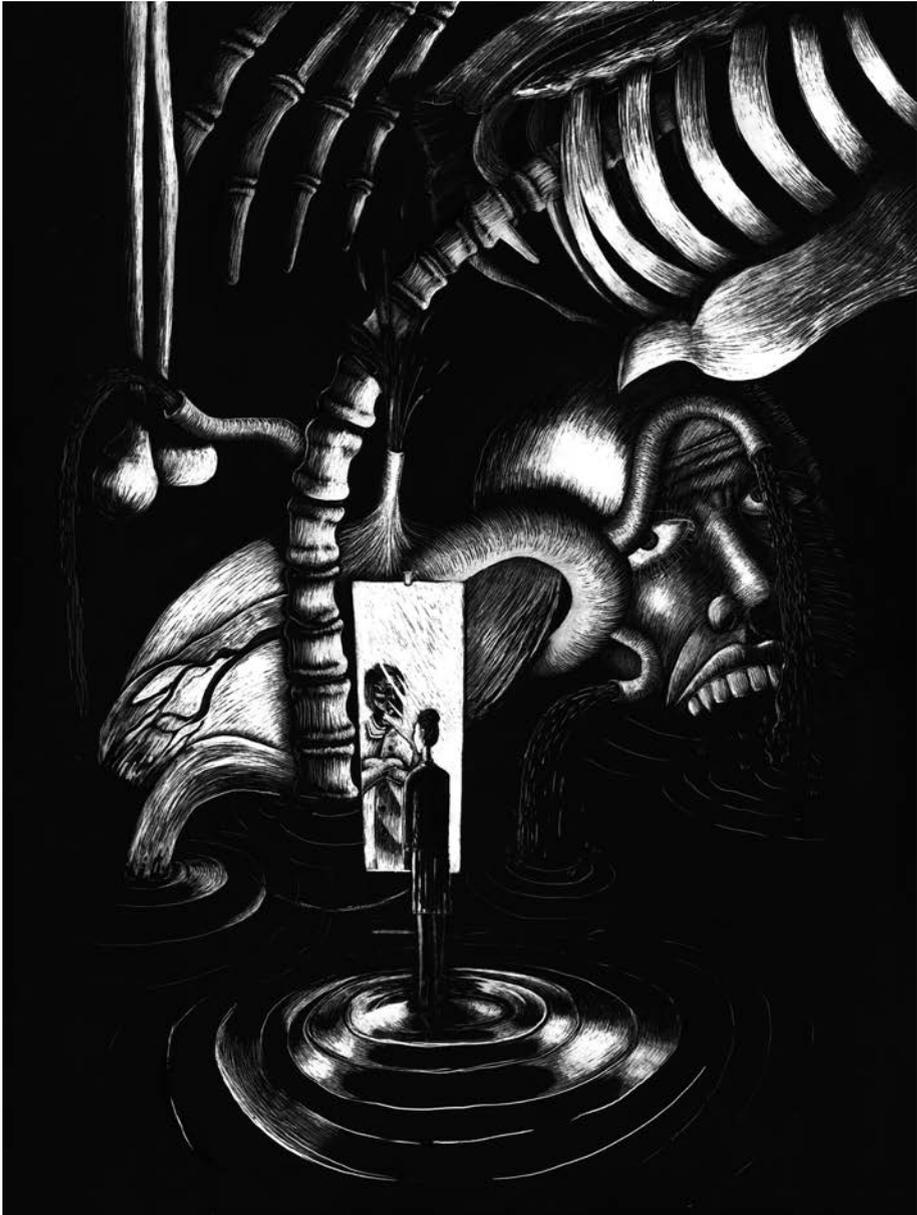


Illustration in scratchboard

I imagined Teddy standing in my place, looking into that mirror herself, contemplating her life and her choices like I was. She was an unmarried mother of two with a mere associates degree, no real accomplishments in her sixty plus years of life. Visualizing the intricacies of her life, I only saw misery. No real love, no companionship, only able to rely on her career for her entire sense of identity. I saw into her life, stuck taking care of a daughter she never intended on having, bottling up her bitterness over this injustice through her many years of despair.

I had to finish off the day with a barrier between myself and the rest of my surroundings. I had to develop a membrane with the function of protecting my cell body from outside toxins. Being a natural cynic, any other attitude was not an option. Letting in negativity would only obliterate any chances of preserving the jaundicing bandage keeping my mind together, keeping my cell body alive. When Teddy approached me as I exited the bathroom after cleaning the infected urine off my body, I chased that feeling mercilessly.

“Did you accomplish cleaning yourself off, Miss Gilbert?” She raised her left eyebrow at me and it furrowed with displeasure. She tapped her pen on the back of her clipboard as if counting off the seconds it took me to answer her. This filled me with an emotion I could not pretend was positivity.

I decided she was not going to win today. I let my strong sense of fortitude take the reins of my response. “Yes, Miss Teddy.” I smiled brightly, skirting around my contempt of her. In my habitual, decorous manner, I patiently awaited her further instruction.

Teddy eyeballed my entire anatomy before speaking again, as if my physique was the deciding factor of what my next task would be. “Go to lunch,” she turned to walk away, bitterness beating through the rhythm of her every step. “With a body like that you’re going to need about two thousand more calories to last the rest of the day.”

While picking at the salad I brought for lunch—a meal that Miss Teddy would most certainly disapprove of—I considered the reasons behind her incessant need to ridicule me. I fiddled with the idea that people with an overestimated sense of power always needed to make the small seem smaller and the weak seem weaker. In a short moment of clarity, I envisioned myself as the man in my dream who was ripped apart and destroyed by Teddy. I thought it quite possible that, metaphorically, this is what she really wanted to do to me. I dismissed this for a short while, in hopes of being able to actually enjoy my thirty minutes for lunch and freely leaving Teddy to being the black hole that she was. In deep thought, I sat there debating over whether I was going to sleep that night.

I came to a conclusion. I would not be Teddy.



# Mind Over Body

Lillie Mae

My mind was in mania; its compulsive fixation on diet, exercise, and “health” left me exhausted. It was not magazines showcasing skinny models or society constantly romanticizing anorexia nervosa that had brought me to these doors. Rather, it was a fear of lack of control, combined with body dysmorphia. If I could control my caloric intake, my exercise, and my body, then, perhaps, I could control every aspect of my life. Or so I thought. It was not until a couple of months ago, after reaching a weight of 100 pounds at 5 feet 5 inches that I realized I was slowly draining my life. My once-supple body had become concave, my bones were visible despite being relaxed, and my period had not come for more than six months. I was terrified, not by the realization that I might die, but because I did not see the point of dying at such a young age. However, that fear was not enough to overcome my addiction.

The more weight I lost, the more in control I felt; the more in control I felt, the less I ate; and the less I ate, the more I exercised. If I did not know the calorie count of a meal I had eaten, I threw it up. I used laxatives and diet pills. I used anything that promised me a “quick fix” to get rid of the fat that was still suffocating my judgement. I continued to destroy my body—to the point that I had developed (or aggravated) a heart condition. It was not until I realized that true control meant allowing myself room to fail that I sought help. My struggle with anorexia nervosa with bulimic tendencies muddied many years of my life but has also taught me what true health is. Health is not a singularity; health is a combination of mind and body—with mind being of first and foremost importance.

My mental health was a catastrophe. I was in constant fear of seemingly ordinary activities such as social gatherings and speaking on the phone. My avoidance of other people stemmed from an intense belief that I was unpresentable; therefore, I restricted myself from pursuing my hobbies and furthering my education. It was as if my mind was at war: dreams and desires versus my notorious avoidance and anxiety. Many years of my life were spent wallowing in distress about what might happen next. Eventually, it became too excruciating to bear.

Seeking mental health was not an easy journey but one that ultimately introduced a me I had not known before. Being able to express my concerns, my insecurities, and experiences without the fear of being judged allowed me to blossom into the confident and enlightened young adult I am today. It took many tries to find the right therapist—going through more than four to arrive at the right match. It was hard to repeatedly open myself up, only to repeat the process; however, in the end it was worth it. If I had given up, or continued to neglect myself, I would not have had the strength to power through anorexia. Without foolish thoughts to cloud my logic, I began looking at my body

Bones and bruises were presented to me in the mirror. It was not a pretty sight,

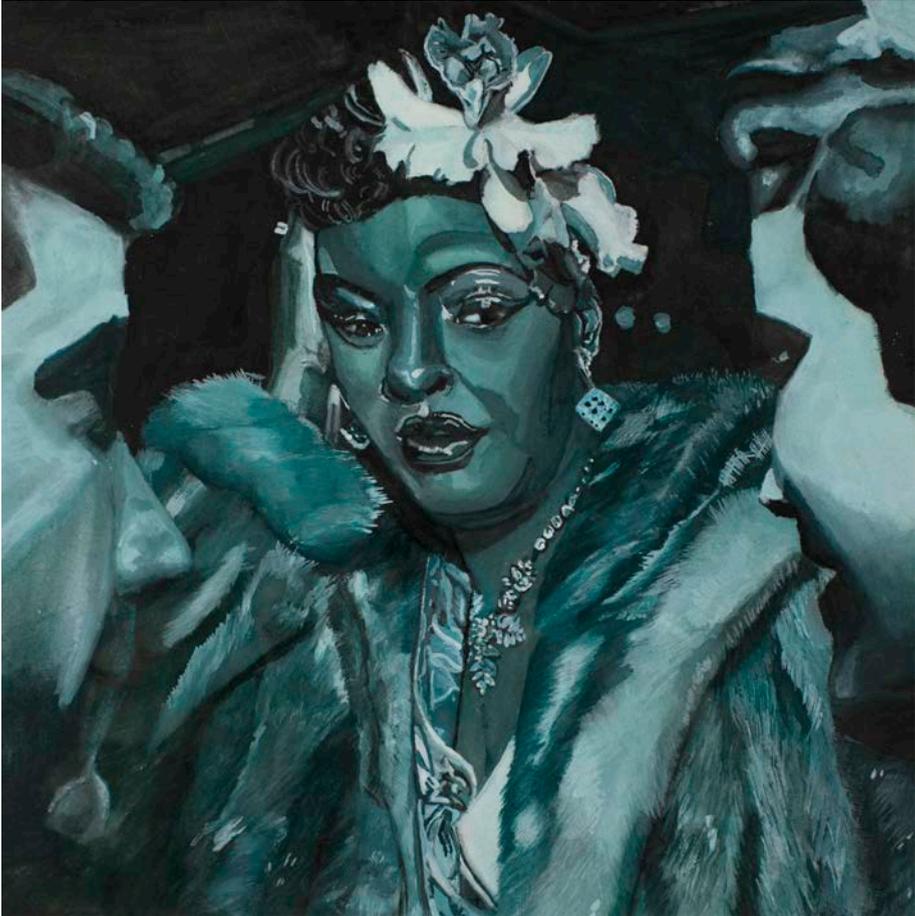
nor did I feel as if it was a beacon of good health. Complications of anorexia nervosa include amenorrhea—the absence of menstruation which could lead to infertility—and osteoporosis. Rather than continue to risk developing another life-long illness, I began to choose foods based on their nutritional properties and health benefits. With more nutrients such as vitamins A and D, omega-3 fatty acids, iron, and zinc, my once-lethargic body began to replenish itself. Standing up too quickly no longer meant I was going to faint and my newfound energy allowed me to broaden my interests. I began researching many topics, including history, physics, and mathematics. I even dabbled in drawing and painting. The more I learned, the more I longed to go back to school. Since I was making magnificent progress with both my psychological and physiological health, I decided that enough was enough and began taking classes at college.

Now I am at a point in my life that I am proud of. I still struggle daily with invasive thoughts but have learned to cope both physically and mentally. My physique is strong and resilient, able to endure walking, running, and performing its basic biological functions. And though it was hard, in the words of Flora Whittemore, Idaho's longest living citizen, "the doors we open and close each day decide the lives we live." If I had not pushed myself, I would not have furthered my education; I would not have chosen to follow a righteous path towards healthiness. It is imperative to cater to body but first and foremost to mind. With a balance between the two, my health has flourished, and I am no longer battling myself.



# Full Size Output

A Portrait of Billie Holiday    Emily Denk



Watercolor

# Bits and Pieces

N.M. Hume



Watercolor and acrylic

# Listen

Naveen Sheik

Can you hear it?  
The voices of the lost  
The voices of the scared  
The voices of the damned  
Those who are unable to continue  
They come to you and you set them right  
Yet they always fall apart  
What can you do?  
How can you help?  
No glue or tape will ever fix them  
No words can ever save their soul  
You try and stop them but fail every time  
They walk alone unwilling to listen  
Down a path of destruction  
*Cheating*  
*Lying*  
*Deceiving*  
Words bouncing off of them  
Crying for you to speak  
But you've run (out of words?)  
Watching in agony  
As the cycle repeats itself  
Until Silence  
Can you hear it?

# Waiting to Die

Michael Rosenkrantz

On the first day of the barrage at the northernmost front, Antoinette Bell was caught dreaming. She was dreaming of a ball, of the handsome man she had once danced with and whose name she could not remember, of her parents, and of the life that once existed outside of the dilapidated confinement of a triage tent thousands of miles away from home. That life was over now. When Antoinette finally opened her eyes, with the sound of a concerto that seemed to play only for her, one that was moving into the recesses of her mind, she saw the burned remains of a man being rushed in through the opening of the triage tent. Of the four months that Antoinette had been stationed on the front, *this* was new. While often terrified, she had never actually had to *treat* anyone—medically speaking. She was a triage nurse, barely, and only had to walk the trench at night once the fighting had subsided and the wounds had festered enough for her to clean.

Now? Now she was a nurse, and the two men whose faces she would remember forever threw what seemed to be the remaining vestige of their comrade on the steel table in front of her: a mess of blood, burnt flesh and a wheeze from a shape she was almost sure was no longer a man. They waited for the briefest seconds before taking off their helmets, bowing, and leaving. This ritual always struck Antoinette as odd. She had never seen it up close, but when she did, it never seemed natural. How could they leave their own? It was only then she heard the distant war, the one that changed so much, and she seemed to come to some level of understanding, if any. It was only the second cough of the man beneath her that brought her attention back. He was dying, that much was sure, and there was little that she could do to save him. She was only a nurse, after all.

Abetha nodded to Antoinette. They proceeded. Given Antoinette's inexperience and youth—she was only seventeen—Abetha's time in the war took seniority. Once she had entered the tent, there was little to do but follow her. They grabbed instruments—knives, sedation, and cotton—and began to administer whatever aid was possible. Abetha wasted little time in cutting away at the tough fabric of his uniform. Up close, the man could move only his hands, which now shook as his full torso was revealed. Antoinette dropped her scissors and moved away. Abetha moved closer and began operating.

"You have a responsibility," Abetha said as she washed her hands.

Antoinette had never seriously had a conversation with her, but now everything seemed different. The battle at the front had brought in more men. More men with less supplies to treat them. More men and fewer prepared nurses.

"Am I to take care of him?"

"We have no one else."

It seemed that settled it.

On the night that the nameless man almost died, Antoinette heard him whis-

per. She was replacing his bandages, which were barely working considering their limited supplies on the front, and was taken aback by his voice, which had emanated so softly she almost didn't hear it. She leaned in again, and made out the word—*Book*.

With so little strength, the man nodded toward the crumpled heap lying next to his cot. Antoinette ambled over and began rifling through his bloodied clothes, though she half-expected the man to be delusional. It took only seconds to discover he wasn't. It was a small journal, one that Antoinette could barely fathom to hold given its many red stains. When she turned back to him, he was fast asleep, his stomach moving up and down and his body shaking with every breath. Antoinette quietly sat down next to the candle, opened the journal, and began reading.

Antoinette sat by the flickering candle as the sleeping man rested. She could hear his rasp and the shortness of breath caused by the inflammation of his wounds. One of the aides had removed the shell casings while Antoinette had taken his clothes to be burned. She held in her hands everything this man valued, the last piece of property he would have if his wounds somehow subsided. Something told Antoinette that the soldier didn't have much longer.

On the second day, they shared their first conversation. He was hardly better, his voice not higher than the whisper from before, but he caught Antoinette unaware. Again, she leaned in.

*Book.*

Antoinette nodded and showed him it was safe. His head was covered in a wrapping, but he seemed to nod.

*Words.*

She was unsure then, but his one free hand seemed to long for some type of instrument. Antoinette shook her head, mouthing to him that he was weak, to rest, to sleep. It was only hours earlier that Abetha had come by and checked him. She was morose knowing that there was little to do except wait for him to die. Antoinette had also heard the news and was always checking that he wasn't awake to hear it. Did he understand how grave his condition was? Was that why he was asking for something to write with? She felt guilty, even as she stared directly into his eyes. There were other patients, other duties to fulfill, other men. But he was captivating, and soon enough as the day wore on, placed his hand on hers. She would come by and check on him. With such events going on, she enjoyed those few minutes of respite, of being with him, and knowing that he was comfortable in her presence. So close to death it seemed, but just as alive all the same.

Then he asked her.

*Die.* Those were the words he'd mouthed to her. Antoinette was not expecting it, any more than she expected the man portrayed in the journal she flipped through. He was young, that much she knew, and he'd been to school. How? Those were not questions she could answer. She worried now only about the word he kept repeating, until he exhausted himself and the blood seeped through his bandages, which she had to replace. She was at a loss for words, until she came so close to him that he used his mangled hand to touch her waist.

She jumped. Abetha was down the line handling other patients and had stopped caring for him. As Antoinette leaned closer, she heard the word again. She backed away and sat down next to him. When looking over his entire body—including blinking eyes that seemed to never stop—she hardly realized the pain he

must have been suffering through. Yes, they had given him as many drugs as were available, but even that failed to dull the internal damage, or at least it seemed that way. Antoinette was unsure how to respond and merely moved his hands back into place. She knew, of course, what he was asking for: the drug. The one famous across the battlefield. It could end everything with a simple prick. She stood and wiped her hands across her smock, and when she turned, he was asleep. She left quietly, hoping Abetha's watchful eyes wouldn't soon catch her absence.

Antoinette pushed past her guilt and began reading, soon becoming lost in the flow and rhythm of the life passing by in front of her. It took hours for her to finally wake up, to finally realize she had reached the end of the book and the end of his life. It was those last words that resonated most, she felt, outside of the small cottage he had grown up in, the wife he had left behind, the people of his town who seemed so proud of his journey to the front. She tried not to think of the last page, those solemn words that seemed to explain everything and nothing at once. A scene of terror, he'd written, one so extreme that he had committed a mortal sin: he'd dropped his weapon. Antoinette could barely make out such words at this point, the writing having been smeared with an equal mix of blood and what she only assumed were tears, a shakiness all too evident in his once perfect cursive. It was all that she needed to read. She closed the journal.

Early that morning, Antoinette mustered up the courage to leave the triage tent and walk the elongated trench that had defined so many of her days. The battle had subsided earlier in the night and it seemed a reprieve was at hand. So often, Antoinette was stuck in the tent, but now she could breathe, even if it was only dirt and blood. Of course, she was never startled by the sight of the men, especially as she stepped lower into the trench. They seemed to extend as far as the eye could see, a sea of misery, pain, and regret. As she walked past each soldier, many of who barely acknowledged her existence, one soldier continued to stare at her. Antoinette was used to such a gaze, but for some reason this felt different. The man was short and stocky, and removed his helmet when he approached her. She meant to ask his name, but he was already motioning toward the tent.

"How is he?"

"He's doing all right, I suppose." Antoinette wasn't sure what, if anything, she was supposed to say. The man shuffled his feet a bit, almost as if he was dying to say something of importance.

"He's a good man, you know."

Antoinette thought back to the book, to the day he kept describing until he was fatally hit.

"It seems that way." Antoinette was hoping to reassure him, but he interrupted suddenly.

"It's okay to run. That's what they tell us, miss. It's not a bad thing. Not with what they've got over there."

He paused for a second, almost as if there was more to say, but he bowed his head again and returned to his place in the trench. Antoinette never forgot those words, nor the decision that it brought her to as a result.

That night, Antoinette injected the man whose name she finally knew but would not say and wondered if it was the last moment of intimacy she would ever have. He did not grip the sides of his cot—his hands were too weak and scarred. His broken legs did not struggle. Antoinette felt that his mind must have been

somewhere else, a combination of the drug she had never used before, the pain coursing throughout his body, and the realization that the end was now inevitable.

When the sun rose, they would list his death—with no name—and his body would be mercifully driven past the trench, beyond the détente that had mercifully been struck by both sides. There had been enough death, it seemed. Even after the man's body was taken, Antoinette continued. She rolled the wheelbarrow up and down the trench. She braved the bullets and the blood and the bandages. She burned the clothes, washed the floors, covered the patients who expired, helped build a new tent, and helped burn the old ones. She wrote letters to mothers and fathers, helped fix the trucks that were constantly breaking down, and awoke every morning with a desire to find a way forward, even if the conflict never ended. When the year passed, and the war had subsided—when the men cried, when they cradled champagne, when Antoinette was told that her brother on the Western Front had been injured but lived—she took a moment from the raucous celebration and sat where the old triage tent had once stood. The air was cold, the morning long, and the trenches half-sunk into the Earth like some crooked smile that Antoinette would have read in a novel.

She took out the journal, felt its spine, felt the cover that reminded her of home, and felt the secrets that she would never reveal about the man whose name seemed distant to her now.

She wept.



# REQUIEM FOR CHILDREN

Matthew Talebi

Do not kill babies and kids, they are innocent , fearful .  
 Do not kill children , they are all tearful .  
 Leave them alone , play their games , hide and seek and potsie.  
 May be “johneey and the pony “ or skating .  
 Don't know greed , hatred or war .  
 Have moms and dads who love them ,  
 as you do yours , don't hurt them  
 Have no right to bum them , they are the essence , running stream of life ,  
 future of humanity .  
 Don't bomb to irradiate them , don't terrify them .  
 Brilliant stars of planet , they are , in valleys and high mountains .  
 not the ones on the epaulettes .  
 Blind to skin color never know evil , don't shoot them .  
 Not even tasted the wonders and pleasures of adolescence.  
 Leave them alone with their smile and happiness to live .  
 do not ..... *kill them* .

# I Know I Ask A Lot

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Case McQuillan



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Acrylic on canvas

# Sengoku, Reoccurring?

Hef

It's 97 degrees outside, but my windows are tinted and the air conditioning is blasting, so I'm quite comfortable. I turn right against the red. As I'm driving up the street, I see that the car next to me is a real piece of crap: an emerald-green Honda with the paint peeling off the roof, the trunk, and the hood. It's got one black-primed fender and the entire driver's side is dented and scratched. The rear window is held in place with duct tape, the steel wheels minus hubcaps are mottled with rust, the rear bumper is smashed and cracked. Beads of sweat run down the dark-skinned driver's forehead and under the filth that's covering his face. He's wearing a dirty white undershirt with the collar stretched out. Accordion music is blasting out of the car's scratchy speakers like a carnival from Hell, and the singer wails and whines about God-knows-what.

I arrive at work. The Boss creeps stealthily around the corner. His vitriol catches me off guard, his verbal venom stinging my ears and necrotizing my self-confidence to the point where he can suck out my soul through a straw. Today he's acting like a particularly arrogant prick, telling me I should "work hard" like *he* does, so that I can "make something of myself" as if that kind of cause-and-effect relationship actually exists. He has no idea what hard work really is. He's never cleaned out a sewer in Bangladesh, or mined for diamonds in Sierra Leone, salvaged the toxic trash of Smokey Mountain, or broken his back picking strawberries in a hot, dusty field in Irvine. It's a mere coincidence that he was born a Caucasian male in one the most prosperous milieus in the history of mankind under a social order where White Men rule with impunity and seemingly reap a disproportionate amount of the world's treasures, regardless of the amount of genuine effort they put in. I marvel why he doesn't recognize that his "success," as he calls it, is almost exclusively the result of his good luck.

Later, a couple of middle-aged guys dressed in business suits walk into the store. They're laying pretend bets on which sports team will prevail in this weekend's "big game." They bicker about which players are truly worth their salaries and try to justify why the quarterback deserves \$23.8 million a year for throwing a ball around, even though they both know that the outcome of the match will be forgotten before the next weekend even arrives. I notice the ambient music coming out of the speaker grilles in the ceiling, and it reminds me that today's Pop Stars fly on private planes and live in mansions, but Mozart spent the final years of his life begging for loans from friends. When fortunes can be made because we follow the fashion trends started by whores or choose to spend our time in darkened amphitheaters indulging our reveries, sequestered from the events of the rest of the world, I ponder how we assign value in our society these days.

At home, after work, I turn on the TV. The reporter is talking about the torrential rains in Texas. It's not the kind of rain that makes Gene Kelly want to dance

through puddles though. It's the type of downpour that creation myths are written about. Homes have been destroyed, many people have died, and some folks will never recover from the resulting emotional and financial devastation, yet the First Lady has the nerve to wear five-inch designer stilettos on her trip to tour the Houston Flood Zone. Dear God, I wonder how high most people's standard of living would rise if we collected all the wealth on the planet and distributed it equally among the earth's inhabitants.

As college students we study philosophy, math, economics, the sciences, and the works of The Great Scholars of Harvard, the Sorbonne, and the Lyceum, yet no one seems to know how to promote equality in our own communities. Ironically most of history's wars have been fought because the "truths" of the world's various religions provide conflicting answers to the question of why we are here and how we should behave. With the sum of all the intelligence collected, over time, available to us at the touch of a screen, I can't imagine why we've yet to figure out how to take care of each other.

While one's sense of morality is relative to the time, place, and culture in which he or she lives, civility is absolute. You cannot accuse a cannibal of being unethical for eating the flesh of his fallen enemies given that he is merely following the moral standards of his culture, but there is no excuse for indifference to issues of public concern—other than selfishness. As we prepare for our futures, struggle with our present, and ask ourselves "What *is* my place in the world?", we must recognize that we are all citizens of the same global society. We must also accept our responsibility to respect differing points of view, maintain balance in our ecosystems, and work together to make positive economic changes that enhance the common good. Behave otherwise, and we become a population of savages.



# Femininity

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Nikki Arya



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Photograph

# Synthesis

Kendall Halliburton

the soft milk  
sits in your glass  
lukewarm, paste drudges  
down the sides  
this, and all that is determined  
has already come

I cannot hear our  
argle-bargle  
as I levitate  
among the benthos  
in your cerulean mind  
the bleak absolutes; soaked  
and etched  
against my tips

but in the white I bathe, chalked down to the bone  
until I cannot tell the difference—  
one mask for our own,  
a calloused facade.

# Fight Like a Girl

Amy Kaplan



Photograph

# Thanks to You

Priscilla Hwang

Your teeth grip onto my soul  
With no intent of letting go  
You hold my heart in your hands  
And violently squeeze with apathetic eyes

You release your hold and dispose of me  
Like all of the others

It's okay, I'm fine.  
Don't I look like I'm fine?

Look closer to see  
The damage you left in your wake  
A body so tattered  
Emotions pulling my body apart  
Each limb torn by  
Anger  
Despair  
Self-Pity  
Longing

Time allows me to piece myself together  
Again.  
Who is looking back at me in the smudged mirror?  
She is stronger, illuminated with resilience,  
Undaunted and unrestrained.  
Confidence radiates,  
No evidence of heartbreak.

Just like wounds form a callus  
I am tougher thanks to you.

# How Harvey Weinstein Ruined the Bolshoi Ballet

Harriet G. Himmelstein

Here I am, making myself comfortable in my fifth-row center seat at the Aliso Viejo movie theatre while Katerina, the charming host, is explaining on screen first in French, then English, and finally Russian, our view of the lobby at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, Russia. We are attending a live broadcast of the ballet *Le Corsair* in the refurbished venue of Russia's premier government-sponsored ballet company. The audience mills around the lobby, and then enters the lush auditorium with its plush red velvet seats, glowing chandeliers, and sconces.

Katerina interviews one of the two choreographers in Russia who updated the classical ballet made popular during the 1850s by Marius Petipa. Translating rapidly first in French, then in English, she explains how they expanded the male roles beyond merely supporting arms from which the ballerinas balanced. We are taken backstage to watch the cast warm up—stretching and leaping on the enormous practice floor.

A synopsis of the first act appears in six languages. I quickly read that we will be in a village on the Mediterranean, probably Morocco, where a Pasha is expected to purchase slaves for his harem. The audience applauds as the conductor makes his way to the podium. He taps his baton and the overture begins. The curtain opens to a colorful, bustling scene of merchants, women selling wares, a white-veiled girl tending flowers on her balcony, and a very old, hunched over slave dealer hobbling around, getting everything ready for his honored customer.

The Pasha, looking well-fed and prosperous with his neatly trimmed hair, enters pompously. I look at him and I think “Harvey Weinstein.” His eyes roam over the girls for sale and catch sight of a white-veiled young woman on a balcony, tending her garden, declaring he must have her. The dealer mimes, “No, that is my ward and she is not for sale.” The Pasha's guards rough him up until he finally agrees to sell Medora, not knowing she has already met and fallen in love with a shipwrecked pirate, Conrad. But I cannot get Weinstein out of my mind. I shake my head and try to erase him, but he stays with me throughout the whole first act. At intermission I hobble down the steps to refresh myself and think, “I must not let that insatiable brute rain on my parade.”

Since I was a small girl I loved dance in any form—ballet, tap, contemporary, hip hop, Latin, jitterbug, waltz. I did them all and still do, in my mind. I was in New York to see the start of the Balanchine era, Philadelphia to watch Alvin Ailey dance, and the beginning of the Philadelphia Dance Company, Philadanco. When I came to Orange County in the late 1990s top companies danced at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts—the Kirov, the Danish, the Eifman, the Mariinsky. My like-minded friends and I lined up with beautiful, young would-be ballerinas, their long blonde or black hair flowing to their waist or tied up in a dancer's knot, to buy rush tickets. We marveled at how lucky we were to be given this opportunity. Now my friends

have dwindled to one or two and we no longer drive to Costa Mesa at night, so the Sunday matinee *Live at the Bolshoi* is our speed.

Today they are glorifying the buying and selling of women unable to escape their fate in a long-ago, fairy-tale time, and yet it is still happening, maybe not as publicly, but still happening. I throw cold water on my face and climb back to my seat. I must not think of Weinstein.

In Act Two, unbeknownst to the Pasha, the corsairs have come ashore and their leader, Conrad, and Medora, the woman in the white veil, plan to escape to his ship with the slave girls for his pirates. “No, no,” mimes Medora, “if you want me, your men must free the slaves.” Blinded by love, he agrees. His crew does not. They revolt. The Pasha’s men capture them along with Medora, Conrad, and all the slaves.

Seeing the Pasha in his beautiful robin’s egg blue silk kurta, Weinstein has been replaced in my mind by Hugh Hefner and his silk pajamas and Playboy Bunnies... *Stop! I want to concentrate on the choreography, not the criminality.*

Act Three has five scenes, each more exciting than the one before. We see a charming flower garden dance with eighty-two ballerinas on stage. We witness a wedding between the Pasha and the white-veiled girl he assumes is Medora but is really her friend, Gulnare, who truly loves him and changes places with Medora. Somehow, Bill Cosby fills my mind. I shake my head and blink my eyes to get rid of him.

With the Pasha and his men busy, the pirates escape to their vessel with Medora and the rest of the women. But there is a terrible storm at sea, and, thanks to animation, photography, and our imaginations, we see the ship break in two. Rolling waves seem to overflow the stage right up to the footlights. But all is not lost as Conrad appears, carrying Medora. We know they will live happily ever after somewhere without dirty old men to bother them.

The next presentation by the Bolshoi will be a contemporary ballet, *The Taming of the Shrew*. *The Taming of the Shrew?* The Russians really need to get up to date with women’s rights because I can’t get them out of my mind.



# Contemporary Pro-Fem Pillows

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Danielle Peterson





Ceramic with beads and string

# Superwoman

Ellen Rose



Oil on canvas

# Her First Wave

Wesley Davis

Turquoise water glistening beneath a yellow sun,

Who knew she could struggle with something so fun.

Stroke after stroke she paddles out to sea, trying her best to remain calm and at ease.

Finally, beyond the waves she waits for a set. Basking in the sun with no regrets.

Her will is strong, but her skills are weak. As she catches the wave, we hear a loud shriek.

Offshore winds blowing against her face, the joy was there but lacked much grace.

Back out she goes again and again

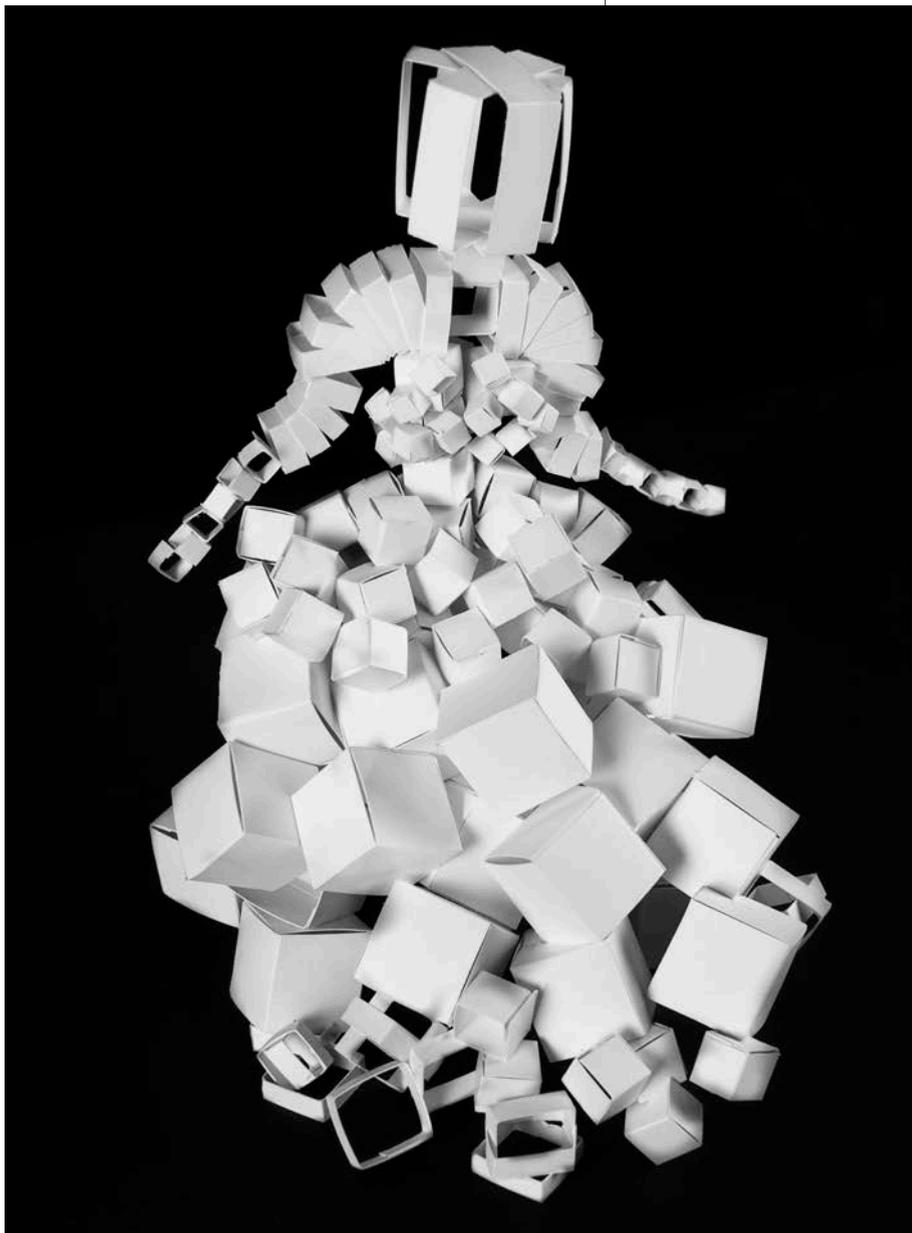
beckoned only by the sun and the surf.

You will now find my mom on the emerald green sea

Much preferred to the hard-brown earth.

# Resistance

Sara Safa



Paper

# Me Too

Giulianna Lazio



Paper

# Human Being

Frances Klocke Fullwood

I know a man,  
He had a dream  
Of a race . . .  
    called Human Being.

I know a man,  
He had a dream . . .  
A vision of the future,  
Not for one, two, or three  
But for all who live and breathe and see.

I know a man,  
He had a dream  
Of a race . . .  
    called Human Being.

Undefined by ancient labels,  
Chains cannot bind these minds  
Nor shackle them to the past,  
We the now –  
We the future –  
We – Human Being.

Neither black nor white  
Nor any other color  
That can be defined,  
Walking free and tall . . .  
    Human Being.

With eyes sometimes blue and sometimes brown,  
(What is the color of truth?)  
Looking up to a clear sky,  
Uncluttered by hate . . .  
This race called Human Being.

I know a man,  
He had a dream,  
A dream of you – me – we . . .  
    Human Being.



## Free, Caged Bird, Free

Tony Lockridge

Sad news was brought; you may have heard  
about this caged poet, some would say a poetic bird.  
Singing atop that window sill,  
calm, free, always still.

Saddened was I when news awoke me,  
eyes burning from the way her poems caught me.  
You're free, Caged Bird, you're free,  
86 years young, you died so gently.

Poems move through you like water and air,  
my favorite line "Mmmm...God how I love your hair"\*  
Time has passed, forever we stay  
released from that cage, free bird, fly away.

Stay in our hearts, a wind stir of peace.  
Loved by all, her poetry we knew  
We will all miss you, Dr. Maya Angelou!

\*Line taken from "In and Out of Time" by Maya Angelou

# Memories of Yesterday

Annie Rodriguez

The smells of yesterday, tomorrow, and today  
blending, mixing, fading  
I miss her

I know.

Restless hands aching and anxious  
the fabric etched with dissipation  
I have to help her

I know.

Brown eyes full of hope  
the cinnamon oak that shielded me  
loved me  
taught me  
I have to help her

I know.

*Todo está bien, mija*  
*Todo está bien.*  
I'll be here  
The words lost in the aroma  
of worry

But as I sit here  
carrying her reflection  
smile  
faith  
compassion  
and the warm scents,  
trapped in the walls

I miss her

I know.

# Old Man Without the Sea

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Giovanna Putrino



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Ink on bristol

# Winded by the Sea

Blake Burris

My palms are burnt and broken  
As soon as panga hits the plume.  
I search far, wide and open,  
waiting for the algae's bloom.

Hard to distinguish colors  
When you're blinded by the truth.  
I search far, wide and open,  
and only seem to find a few.

Maybe's meant for sinners,  
Not for winners, yes it's true.  
So, when you search far, wide and open,  
be sure to offer no excuse.

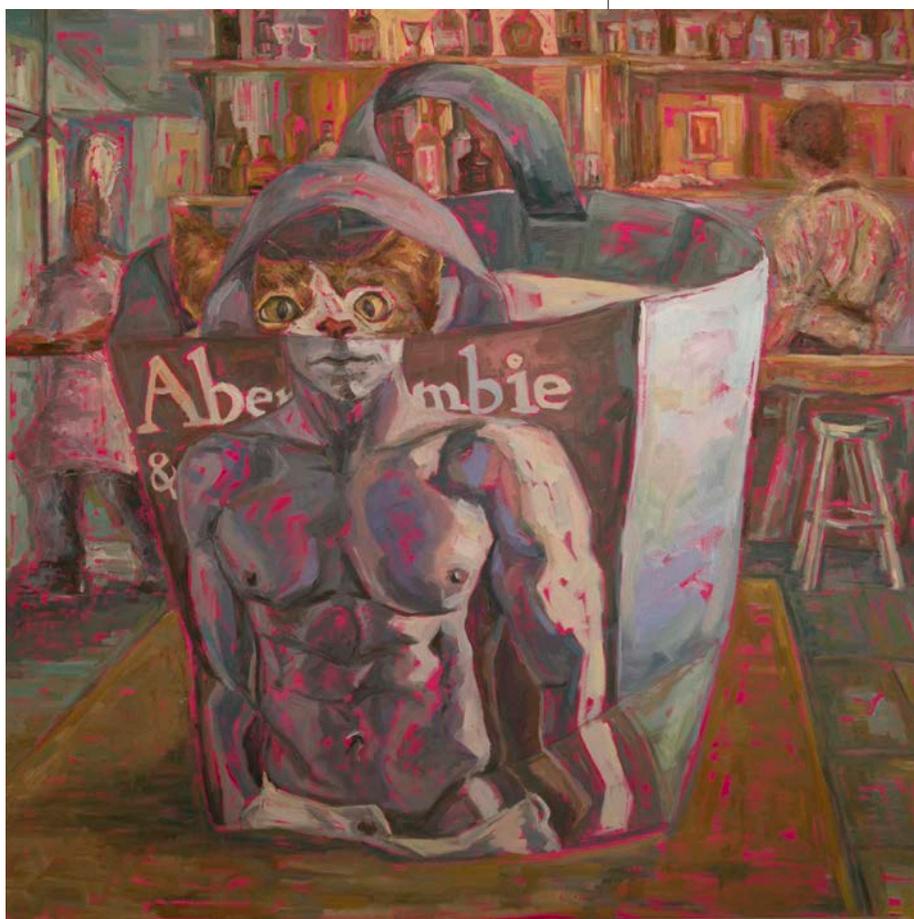
The reel spins fast and heavy  
To rhythm of a clicking spool.  
I searched far, wide and open,  
patience kept me calm and cool.

While the action hits the sinking line  
all I seem to think is you.  
You searched far, wide and open,  
only to leave the sea too soon.

Ay yi, bye, bye captain  
I wish I woke up with you.  
Searching far, wide and open,  
just to tell a story from your view.

# I Can See You

Bo Schang



Oil on canvas

# My Almost-Perfect Match

Stacy R. Harrison

We met thirteen years ago. It was an unexpected meeting in Culver City as I had originally gone there to meet someone else. It was inauspicious as well. He was shy and reticent, not confident and extroverted.

I wasn't at all sure that we had a connection, but since he had salt-and-pepper facial hair and I was attracted to his handsome exterior, I decided to give his interior a chance, and our relationship began.

I was struck by our easy compatibility once we became better acquainted. We settled into a quiet, steady relationship built on companionship and mutual interests. In all the time I've known him, we've never actually fought and have had only the mildest of disagreements.

There is much to like about my match. Perhaps as much for what he doesn't do as for what he does do. He's never tried to make me jealous by flirting with other women. His affection for me has been constant, and I love the warmth I get from feeling his body next to mine. I can see the love light in his eyes as he looks at me.

He's not particularly handy around the house, and a plumber has to be called on occasion. However, he is delightfully neat, and I have never had to retrieve a sock wedged between sofa cushions or remove discarded underwear from the bedroom floor. He's never left the toilet seat up—not once.

Since my interest in football is limited to watching the Steelers play in the Super Bowl, I appreciate that he doesn't spend endless weekend afternoons viewing grown men inflict injuries upon each other on the gridiron.

While he hates traveling and I've had to do that alone, he's always excited to see me when I come home and greets me enthusiastically.

I have been quite happy with him over the years. There are a few minor faults that I have noticed, but no one is truly perfect.

For example, he is a picky eater. While he does enjoy salmon and ham, when presented with a fine dinner starring lamb or beef, he sometimes bypasses the succulent protein and instead focuses on the fattening gravy. This is not manly!

Because he likes to nap in the afternoon and doesn't sleep soundly through the night, he will start stirring around 6 a.m. (while I am still in deep slumber), wanting his breakfast immediately. He insists on opening the shutters and jars me awake with the noise. Small things, but annoying nonetheless.

Recently, he has developed a new habit which perplexes me. In order to get my attention, he plants himself between me and the TV. And I do mean plants. He positions himself directly in front of the TV, blocking my view, staring at me with his glimmering golden eyes, twitching his luxurious tail. This is totally unacceptable, causing me to admonish sternly, "Dior, get down from there, right now!"

Darn cat!

# Cheeto Puffs

Donna Ghassemi

This has to be her lowest moment.

Sitting on the couch, face drenched with tears, shoving Cheeto Puff after Cheeto Puff into her mouth and watching yet another episode of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*.

Kris Jenner is on the screen, complaining once again about Scott Disick and his ridiculous antics. On the other side of the screen, Nora sits there feeling yet another sob rip through her chest, as she thinks to herself, “*Always and forever ... my ass!*”

She told herself she would never be one of *those* girls, the ones that turn into a mess as soon as their significant other dumps them. Why would they waste their tears on a *man*? Men aren’t worth tears—they’re barely worth your time. Yeah, once in awhile you find a decent one that makes you feel all flowery, like some sort of bathroom aerosol, but in the end, all that romantic nonsense is just there to cover up the fact that he’s kind of shit.

Just like the bathroom aerosol.

So yes, Nora would internally make fun of girls who completely lost themselves after a breakup, but now here she is, face covered in neon orange crusts and chest full of broken pieces of her heart, trying to fill the void he left in her with bad reality TV. God, she hates herself.

She doesn’t even know how long she’s been watching this stupid show. It’s probably been years since she’s even gotten off the couch. The blanket she’s wrapped herself in has gone from a pristine white to a muddled orange-gray. There used to be a box of tissues next to her, but now all that remains is a mountain of snot-covered, crumbled tissues and three candy bar wrappers.

He was supposed to be The One. Y’know, the bullshit *Cosmopolitan* “Take this quiz to find out if your boyfriend is The One!” crap. (Though she will not admit it to any living creature, she took multiple *Cosmo* quizzes about her ex-boyfriend and they all had promising results. But that’s what she gets for feeding into the corporate scum that is *Cosmopolitan*.)

But it seems like he isn’t The One. Their last conversation has been swimming around in her head forever, and it won’t seem to go away. She’s literally going insane and she can’t take this. It’s stupid, stupid, stupid—she bangs her head on the armrest of the couch. Ow.

Nora sighs and holds her crusty, not-white blanket closer. *This too shall pass.*

Kim Kardashian is walking into some fancy photoshoot when Nora hears a bang come from upstairs. She turns her head towards the general direction of the sound but pays no mind to it. The window in her brother’s room is open—it’s probably just the window shutting the door again. She briefly considers going upstairs and closing the window, but the idea of getting up and *walking* seems horrible.

She's already going to have to do that when she finishes bag number 23 of Cheeto Puffs. She sighs again and zones back into her dumb show.

Must be nice to be able to afford all of the things these Kardashians do. She could probably look somewhat attractive if she had the money to buy nice clothes and eat well. Then she could also get a personal trainer and look hot and go by her dumb ex-boyfriend's work in some nice clothes with clear skin and shiny hair. Then he'd really know what he's missing out on. Yeah, she could be hot. Maybe. If she had money.

Whatever. She doesn't need him. She doesn't need his soft, brown eyes or his strong arms. Psh, no. All she needs is her Cheeto Puffs. They can be the calm, soothing voice that whispers sweet nothings into her ear when she is stressed out about all the million things she procrastinated on doing.

She hears another crash from upstairs, the dog must have knocked something over.

Yeah, that's all she needs, her faux cheese puff snacks.

Kourtney and Scott are being disgusting on screen, all cuddled up and happy. Nora grimaces. This was supposed to help, not make her feel worse. She doesn't need cuddling and she doesn't need another person supporting her emotionally as she makes her way through life's daily challenges. She can do that all by herself; she did it for years before he came into her life. Yeah! Screw him. She's a young woman on the brink of taking over the world. She's a superstar, she's a rock star, she's.... out of Cheeto Puffs. And also crying. Again.

Who is she kidding? She's a wreck without him. He was her rock and her everything. She basically treated him like he was a star and she a planetary body. It's not that she is nothing without him; it is more that she had become so accustomed to having him be in every aspect of her life that she doesn't know how to fill that wide, gaping hole.

The walls creak as someone walks upstairs. It's probably coming from the neighbor's house next door. They share a wall, so Nora always hears them walking or opening their closet door.

But yeah ... Wide, gaping hole. Just like the wide gaping hole on her face that won't stop demanding food. Being a stress eater is all fun and games until you're knee deep in food wrappers and feel like you need to vomit for three days straight. Attractive, no? How dare he get rid of her when she so obviously exudes sex appeal.

She doesn't even know if there's enough air in her lungs for her to sigh again, so she opts for a shaken-up, half-choked exhale and calls it a day. Her eyes have not stopped tearing up for longer than a few hours. She wasn't even able to sleep through the night without getting up in the middle of it and wishing it was all a dream. That's all she wants—for it to be a dream.

Footsteps again, but this time they don't seem so far off. She looks up expecting the dog or her brother or literally any other person living in this house, but instead, there's some skinny guy standing in what looks like a makeshift ninja outfit with a dumb ski mask on holding a—

"Holy shit, you have a gun," Nora says.

The guy looks at her like she's an idiot but then stands up straighter. "Put your hands up!"

Nora's hands go up reluctantly. "Is this some sort of joke or—"

The guy turns the pistol head up and fires out a shot. There's a large bang before some plaster falls down, a big piece hitting the guy in the head. He grimaces and then adjusts his gun.

"Do as I say or I'll freaking shoot you!"

Nora's eyes widen and her hands shoot up.

"Good! Put the freaking money in the bag!"

"M-money!?" Nora snuffles and wipes snot off her face for the thirty-seventh time that day.

"Keep your hands up! D-Don't move, God dammit!"

"O-oh kay! I'm sorry!"

"Put the money in the bag!"

"This isn't a bank! You don't rob someone's house like that!"

He hesitates. "Then... show me where the money is!"

"I-I... That's also not..."

"God dammit, I don't know—could you stop crying? It's distracting me!"

"I *can't* just stop crying when I'm being freaking robbed," she says, voice high and whiney. Her arms are starting to ache and she'd rather just have the guy shoot her at this point so it can all be over.

"Can't you just shoot me and leave? It would make my day a whole lot better."

The guy looks at her like she's crazy, "That's kind of morbid. Is there something wrong?"

She gives him a look.

"I mean besides the whole robbery"

"Well... I mean, my boyfriend just broke up with me."

The man puts his gun away and comes and sits down next to her on the couch, eyeing the pile of trash beside her. "What happened?"

"With my boyfriend or..."

The guy nods.

Nora takes a deep breath and wipes her eyes. This guy may be trying to rob her and/or kill her, but at this point, she'll talk to anyone who will listen.

"Well, you see, it all started last week when he replied to one of my text's with 'k'..."



# The Arrowhead

Martha Phillips

My grandparents have always played an important role in my life. I cherish every memory spent with them at their home in the Hill Country of Texas, where I visited them every summer. From the age of seven until I was twelve, we swam, fished, and traveled; they taught me how to have fun. More importantly, they taught me how to be responsible. Although I drifted apart from them by taking an unfortunate path in life, they never abandoned or forsook me. Granny and Gramp's love was steadfast and supportive even in the darkest days of my journey. They were always here to welcome and embrace me from the time I arrived here in the United States from Korea.

My father met my mother while he was in the U.S. Army, stationed in South Korea at the 38th Parallel, known as the DMZ (demilitarized zone). It was a peace-keeping station formed by the United States during the Korean War. In 1965, my parents were married and after I was born, we left Korea and came to America—the land of opportunity.

Starting at the age of seven, I would take the red-eye flight on Delta Airlines from Cincinnati to Dallas. My grandpa picked me up at the airport and we drove the three hours down to Canyon Lake. On this scenic drive, I discovered the magnificent beauty of Texas. The rolling hills, lush terrain, rivers, and small towns captured my attention as I had never seen anything like this panoramic setting. The suburbs of Cincinnati, where the houses stood side by side and there were always crowds of people milling about downtown, did not compare to this open, expansive countryside. About an hour into our trip, Grandpa turned to me and asked, "Are you hungry, kid?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Well, I know a special place that has the best hamburgers and milkshakes in all of Texas. It's called Whataburger. Let's say we stop and have a bite there?"

"OK. I'd like that."

He was right. Whataburger did have the best hamburger I'd ever tasted and I finished all of my chocolate milkshake.

When we arrived at the canary yellow house my grandpa built, I noticed a lake across the hills with sandy white beaches and tourists basking in the sun. There were boats and skiers on the glassy water. For someone like me growing up in an urban area, this was like an oasis. I thought to myself, "I never want to leave here."

Granny taught me how to cook, clean, and sew during the summer. Every morning we did chores following a hearty breakfast of crisp bacon, eggs—sunny side up—and toast with orange marmalade. Sometimes the toast was a bit burnt and charred, but Grandpa insisted that charcoal was good at cleaning out your lungs. He would put green onions in his ears so that they would stick out like antennas to make me laugh and Grandma would always say, "Philip, you're so silly!"

# The Arrowhead

Atra Givarkes



Illustration in scratchboard

After we finished breakfast, Gramps would go out onto the porch where he smoked his pipe before heading off to the lake to go fishing. Granny and I would sweep and dust the house before he returned. She always commented on what a good little worker I was and it made me beam with pride.

One day, as I was cleaning the dark brown wooden hutch with glass doors, I dropped my grandpa's authentic black obsidian Native American arrowhead. I was terribly afraid of what would happen to me as I had been warned to be extra careful with the knick-knacks. I yelled for Granny and she immediately came darting into the room.

"What happened?" she asked.

I blurted out tearfully, "I dropped Grandpa's arrowhead and broke it."

She tried to calm me down by letting me know that "accidents do happen and everything would be just fine." She assured me that it was not a big deal and we would fix it. But I just knew Grandpa would be upset.

Gramps came home from the lake with a bunch of catfish and I waited for him to clean it out back at the sink. When he came in, Granny told him that I needed to talk to him.

"Gramps, please don't be mad at me," I said between sobs. "I dropped your arrowhead. I didn't mean to do it."

"Don't cry, my precious. It's okay."

He did not get mad at me, but in a gentle voice began telling me the story of the sacred arrowhead. It was a treasured memento in his life, a symbol of the journey he embarked on after a troubled time in his early years. I came to learn that my grandpa had joined Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) some fifty years earlier after he went to the Salvation Army in Alaska to recover from his drinking problem. He began a new life following that experience and the arrowhead was given to him by his sponsor. I, too, am a member of a 12-step program and know the importance and value of learning a new way to live after a chaotic life, one of despair and shame. Just as he did, I understood the meaning of taking direction and finding serenity.

I was simply overwhelmed by the unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace I experienced that day talking with my beloved grandfather. Today, I have a granddaughter of my own, Avinelle, who is three years old. It is my hope that I may impart the loving guidance to Avi that I had growing up during those remarkable summers spent at Canyon Lake with Granny and Gramps.

The broken arrowhead was returned to the hutch that day in the summer of 1972, with both pieces lying side by side. It was never fixed, but I now realize that beauty, indeed, often comes from brokenness.

# Infinite

Elsa Micklin

With a final flourish, eternity combusted  
Into the dazzling light show so often fantasized.  
The Universe screamed in a pained silence,  
Not a molecule daring to breathe within the  
Suspended interstellar tranquility.

*This* was the infamous end to it all.  
It's only fitting for something born with a bang  
To greet death with one as well.  
Atoms ripped apart with deafening nothingness,  
Planets lay resolutely still in their orbits, waiting.

Stars went cold, so civilizations froze and passed.  
No one could say where these ripples had begun, only that they had.  
It swept entire star systems, burning, tearing, splitting,  
Hand in hand with that silence. With no civilizations left,  
The gods calmly packed up and abandoned burning galaxies.

These were only stories. It was only when the sky  
Began to bleed, red rolling in with afternoon rain,  
That we knew it was our turn. Not a soul made a sound,  
While we sat together as one species, waiting.  
We knew that we had lived long enough.

Fathers held daughters, animals lay in their packs,  
Old friends shared a last cup of tea  
As hell rained outside their four walls.  
It was a good life, they said.  
No shame in its passing.

For we shall meet again, when atoms reappear and  
The stars weld together. When rivers begin to flow, and  
Monkeys walk foreign planets' shores once more.  
We shall meet again, under the shade of a reimagined tree,  
Peacefully unaware to all but our current life.

So do not despair.  
Our time here will always be infinite.



# WALL 2018 STAFF BIOS

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## **NOAH EAST** Editor-in-Chief

After travelling to Europe and Russia with the Riverside City College Chamber Singers, Noah returned home with a deep sense of dissatisfaction in his plans to major in music education. While the experiences he had abroad were life-changing, he wanted to engage with the world in a meaningful way, without sacrificing his happiness. He credits the thoughtful and supportive professors at Saddleback College for encouraging him to pursue writing. Noah attained his Associate in Arts for Transfer degree in English in May 2018. He is looking forward to continuing his studies in English Composition at California State University, Fullerton in Fall 2018.



## **GINA VICTORIA SHAFFER** Faculty Advisor

Gina teaches composition and creative writing as a professor of English at Saddleback College. She previously served on the faculty of UCLA Writing Programs. Before becoming an educator, she worked as a newspaper reporter, magazine editor, and theater critic. A published playwright whose works have been staged throughout Southern California and in New York, she earned her Ph.D. in English at UC Irvine. She is perpetually inspired by the creativity and innovation of the students who staff WALL and of those who contribute their words and images to it.



## **CY HILL** Fiction Editor

Cy has had numerous professional and artistic incarnations, including AT&T splicer, accountant, coach of youth soccer and softball, play director, and naval officer. He and his wife enjoy living near their three children and three granddaughters.



## **SOPHIA NOBLE** Fiction Editor

Sophia is a passionate English student who has written hundreds of short stories, some of which have been published in Teen Ink, an online literary magazine. She enjoys reading classic literature and horror in her free time, her main inspirations being Jane Austen, Stephen King, and Gillian Flynn. She plans to be a novelist in the near future.

**SEJAL BANKER** Graphic Designer/Layout Editor

A passionate artist who was a designer in India for several years, Sejal holds a Certificate in Graphic Design from Saddleback. Winner of the Graphic Art Education Research Foundation (GAERF) 2017 award in the student Design Competition, she is currently busy creating beautiful artwork in addition to freelancing for graphic design. She is a perfectionist and immensely passionate about all her projects. Follow her portfolio and creative pursuits at [sejalbdesign.com](http://sejalbdesign.com) and be sure to check out her instagram page at [esbeepaint!](https://www.instagram.com/esbeepaint/)



**ASHTON RIEMER** Graphic Designer / Layout Editor

Ashton is a free-spirited creative who holds a Bachelor's degree in Communications and a Certificate in Graphic Design. She is currently on a road to discovery of who she is as a professional artist. Next to her love of art is her deep passion for travel and adventure. The ultimate dream is to be able to wander the world with her tablet, blogging and creating beautiful things. Follow along on her journey at [NativeHummingbird.com](http://NativeHummingbird.com)!



**ATRA GIVARKES** Graphic Designer/Layout Editor

Atra is a graphic designer and illustrator who completed the Associate Degree program in Graphic Design at Saddleback College in May 2018. Prior to that, she worked as graphic designer for the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum for a year. She also received her B.A. in Visual Arts from the University of California, San Diego. She is a painter as well as a designer and uses her typographic compositions in her paintings. She is pursuing her dream to become a book illustrator. Contact her at [Atra.givarkes@gmail.com](mailto:Atra.givarkes@gmail.com).



**ALI MARCOTTE** Photography Editor

A photographic artist, Ali has a stern eye for detail and idiosyncratic imagination, which is used to produce what she calls "subliminal imagery." As a former detective, she encourages the viewer to examine the details in her craft, in hopes to awaken the subconscious connection. Her main purpose in artistry is to search and seize opportunities in order to "freeze" moments for the "eyewitness" through her interpretive lens. She also dabbles in poetry while on "surveillance." You can capture her at [artisticlighimagery@gmail.com](mailto:artisticlighimagery@gmail.com).





**FIONA LAMB** Personal Narrative Editor/  
Art Editor/Copy Editor

Fiona received a degree in Art History from Cal State Fullerton. Upon graduating, she revisited her passion for fictional creative writing as a cathartic practice of chronicling her personal experiences. She has taken multiple courses in graphic design, photography, architecture, and literature as well as visited many countries in Europe and South America. Beginning in September of 2018, she will commence her graduate studies in art business at Sotheby's Institute of Art in Los Angeles.



**MARTHA PHILLIPS** Personal Narrative Editor / Copy Editor

Martha is attending Saddleback pursuing a Certificate in Human Services and an Associate Degree in Journalism. Her spirit animal is a dragon with a passion for imagination, which she uses in her writing, especially poetry. "The Arrowhead" is a personal narrative written to honor her grandfather, who passed away 30 years ago.



**TONY LOCKRIDGE** Poetry Editor

An artist and poet for 40 years, Tony loves portraits, portraits, cartoons, paintings, graphic arts, magazine designs, poetry, sculptures, and all things in the arts. Born in Nashville, Tony lived in Tennessee and Florida before moving to Orange County. Formerly a paralegal in Laguna Hills, he is currently taking courses at Irvine Valley College and Saddleback College. He plans to transfer to Cal State Fullerton in Fall 2020 with degrees in art and journalism. This year marks his first time taking literature and creative writing classes. Working with the warm staff of WALL has been a pleasure for him.

**FRANCES KLOCKE FULLWOOD** Poetry Editor/Art Editor

As a poet, songwriter, and artist who considers herself a life-time student, Frances states, "The world is a classroom and there is always something new to learn every day." She writes poems and songs about life's conditions in today's tumultuous world and the hope we "human beings" need to carry on. Currently taking English and graphic design classes at Saddleback College, she looks forward to writing and illustrating a children's book based on her poem "Morning in the Garden."



**MICHAEL ROSENKRANTZ** Literary Associate

Michael graduated from Saddleback College with Associate in Arts degrees in English and History. He is fascinated by aspects of service, duty, immigration, justice, and above all, drama. His dream is to write professionally while attending UCLA to rigidly pursue his intellectual and creative passions.



# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Sobia Ali** moved to California recently to be closer to her grandfather. The last time she took an English course was in high school and she didn't enjoy it much, but she's giving it another go. She thinks she will like writing stories more than she did essays.

**Nikki Arya** has studied photography at Saddleback College for the past two years and will continue to pursue her passions at Parsons School of Design in New York. She hopes to one day work in the fashion industry and use her love of portrait photography to bring light to a more diverse group of people. More of her work can be found at [Nikkisarya.com](http://Nikkisarya.com).

**Maggie Belfield** is a freshman at Saddleback College, pursuing a communications major. She began writing poetry in the form of very simple songs when she was in elementary school and slowly started putting them to music. Over the years, she returned to writing just poetry, focusing on her personal life and experiences.

**Raymie Bucknam** is finishing her second year at Saddleback with a major in graphic design. She has been drawing since she was a kid. Using pen and marker are her favorite mediums. She hopes to one day become a professional designer and illustrator as well as publish a children's book. Website: [Roosterillustrations000.myportfolio.com](http://Roosterillustrations000.myportfolio.com) Instagram: @rooster\_illustrations

**Blake Burris** is a history major and an aspiring musician. You can find his latest project on Spotify, iTunes and Amazon under "Raw Blake."

**Brooke Campbell** is currently studying English/Creative Writing at California State University, Long Beach. Before this, she was a student at Saddleback College where she attained an Associate in Arts for Transfer in English Literature degree and held the editor-in-chief position for the 2017 edition of WALL; this is where her poem "Extremes" is also published. Today, Brooke enjoys tutoring English Composition at Saddleback College because she constantly encounters new and exciting voices from a broad range of students.

**Laura Ciucci**, a re-entry student returning after a twenty-two-year absence due to a work-related injury, graduated in 1996 with an Associate in Arts degree from The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising. She majored in product development. Though she has taken English 3 and English 107 at Saddleback College, she has limited literary experience.

**Wesley Davis** presented his poem "Her First Wave" in Professor Suki Fisher's Intro to Creative Writing Class before, it was selected for WALL 2018.

**Angela Dawson** is transferring to Chapman University in Fall 2018 to pursue a degree in creative writing. She was a writer and editor for her high school newspaper, THE PAPER, during her senior year. Angela is now working on a collection of poems and short stories.

**Emily Denk** has been taking a couple of art, photography, and film classes per semester. She has always loved art, even when she was little. Saddleback has really helped her gain essential skills to take her love of art and make a career out of it. Instagram: @miss.emilykay

**Diane Fahrion** completed a career in teaching learning-disabled students in elementary schools before she began taking art classes at Saddleback College. She has enjoyed many exciting and challenging art projects as well as experienced an environment rich in conversations with multi-age and multicultural students. She wanted to learn how to draw and paint as well as tell stories from her past in visual form.

**Donna Ghassemi** is an English major with dreams of one day being a published writer. She has been crafting up short stories since the dawn of time (or at least, the dawn of her own time) and enjoys writing prose as well as poetry. She hopes to one day join the likes of the Greats, but she has settled for being good enough to have her book be sold in grocery stores.

**Marcia C. Hackett** was trained as a home economist educator at Cornell University and taught school briefly. As an “empty-nester,” she returned to school, obtaining an ESL Certificate from UCI and subsequently taught English as a Second Language for 17 years at Santa Ana College, a job she loved. She has traveled twice around the world with 400 to 600 college students on the Semester-at-Sea program through the University of Pittsburgh and wrote the “Night Market” story describing an adventure in Korea with those students.

**Kendall Halliburton** is a freelance photographer, amateur filmmaker, and aspiring writer who has long used art as a means to channel her crazy imagination into reality. A communications/media studies and hopeful English double major, she is headed to a four-year institution in Fall 2018. To see more of Kendall’s work, visit her website: [Kendallehalliburton.com](http://Kendallehalliburton.com)

**Stacy R. Harrison** is retired and presently enrolled in the Emeritus Institute’s Introduction to Creative Writing class. Previously she spent more than four decades teaching elementary schoolchildren. This is dedicated to her live-in partner, who inspired this vignette and to Susan Hecht for her stimulating instruction.

**Leilani Harrison** is an English major who found her love of storytelling thanks to her parents. She will be transferring to the University of California, Santa Cruz and looks forward to continuing her writing.

**Hef**, a mononym for Kenneth Hefner, is an extremely mediocre ceramist, painter, writer, musician, dancer, photographer, and brewer, looking for his 5 seconds of fame. In other words, he’s a true 21st Century Renaissance Boy.

**Harriet G. Himmelstein** is a graduate of Temple University with a BS in Secondary Education. A resourceful child of the Depression who saw the need for women to save time, money and their sense of humor by doing their own home repairs and maintenance, she spoke extensively as “The Handiwoman” and appeared on ABC radio and television morning shows in the 1980s. Harriet now writes a monthly advocacy column on women, children and families; and studies life drawing, sculpting, politics, silver jewelry making, Tai Chi and writing creatively.

**N.M. Hume** is a concept artist for game and film, with an intention to focus in character, creature, and prop design. His artwork has been published in the Overwatch Charity zine “Not Getting Any Younger” and featured in the 2018 Saddleback College Student Art Show. The artist feels a knack for graphic shape is often highlighted by structure in artwork and thus focuses on finding the pleasing geometry in things otherwise ignored. Website: [Pocketnik.tumblr.com](http://Pocketnik.tumblr.com)

**Priscilla Hwang** graduated from Mission Viejo High School and is now majoring in communications with hopes to transfer to a UC or Cal State.

**Meaghan Jones** has been writing poetry since as far back as she can remember even being able to write. At 21 years of age, Meaghan is currently in her third and final year of community college at Saddleback and IVC. Majoring in English with a focus in creative writing and poetry, she plans to transfer to University of Alaska at Anchorage in August 2018 to complete her bachelor's degree. Ultimately, Meaghan's goal is simply to be able to write what she feels called to write about every day; she hopes to continue publishing both poetry and other creative works and to be able to see her work inspire others. Blog: [Meaghanjones3262.wixsite.com/website](http://Meaghanjones3262.wixsite.com/website)

**Amy Kaplan** is an experienced photojournalist who enjoys sports photography and writing. She has returned to Saddleback to pursue creative writing. She is obsessed with all things royal and could survive on avocados alone. You can reach her on Twitter and Instagram: @photoamy33.

**Austen Landaas** habitually writes creatively in his free time, usually short stories. For the moment, it is primarily a hobby, one he didn't particularly invest in until high school when he decided he needed an outlet for his ideas. He has since committed to English as his major and hopes to transfer to Cal State Fullerton in the Fall to further his craft.

**Jim Langford** is currently focusing on landscapes, views that move him, lighting that excites, and moments that inspire him. The work Jim creates has been shown in galleries, featured in magazines, graced the pages of calendars, and resides private collections throughout the country. Follow along on Jim's journey at [Jimlangfordphotography.com](http://Jimlangfordphotography.com)

**August Larsen** is a 24-year-old short story writer, Boston transplant, and recent graduate of UC Berkeley. “Second Sketches,” her story in this issue of WALL, marks her fiction debut. Despite her name, she was born in February. She can be reached at [august.larsen.writes@gmail.com](mailto:august.larsen.writes@gmail.com).

**Keaton Larson** attends Saddleback College as an English major and plans on transferring to a university to pursue his undergraduate studies in 2019. “Here I Stand” is Keaton's first publication, and he hopes to continue writing relevant and thoughtful work in the future. When Keaton is not writing, he spends countless hours trying to ascertain the meaning of life, and so far, he has come up with diddly-squat. Email: [Keatonlarson2@gmail.com](mailto:Keatonlarson2@gmail.com)

**Giulianna Lazio** has been attending Saddleback College for three years now and has just recently changed her major to fine art, as she had been encouraged to do by her family throughout her school years. “Me Too” is her first publication, but she is taking her free time to create more pieces and work on promoting herself to other local publications. Giulianna has travelled around the country and loves to take inspiration from her experiences and passions. <https://giuliannalazio.tumblr.com/>

**Yoon Lee** is a retired architect who is taking art classes as a returning student at Saddleback College, Yoon loves to draw and paint with all kinds of mediums. His other passions are playing golf and traveling around the world.

**Lillie Mae** is a twenty-two-year-old female whose goal is to receive a Ph.D. in physics. Her interests include anime, video games, and reading books.

**Case McQuillan** is a multimedia artist who started scribbling one day and hasn't stopped since. “It Was All a Dream,” a piece made of graphite, acrylic, and spray paint on canvas, was presented in the pages of WALL 2016. “I Know I Ask a Lot” represents the second of his works featured in WALL. You can view his digital art, paintings, screenprinting, and mixed media creations at [Stupiddoodles.com](http://Stupiddoodles.com)

**Whitney Micaela** is a photographer based in Los Angeles / Orange County who specializes in film photography, portraiture, still life, and practicing in cinematography. Currently attending Saddleback College with photography as her major, she hopes to transfer to an art school within the next year.

**Elsa Micklin** has dabbled in writing throughout her life. From short stories to poetry, it has followed her around since elementary school. Although she doesn't seek to write professionally, it has served as a cathartic outlet when dealing with life's problems. Inspired by her sophomore English teacher, she will always seek to keep creative writing in her life to keep rediscovering how she perceives the world.

**Maria Mull** returned to school at a late age to obtain her Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a specific focus on creative writing. She was born and raised in Southern California, where she now raises her son, Jackson, who proves to be a daily inspiration to her writing. She is most passionate about writing screenplays, but also enjoys writing prose poetry and short stories for children. She can be contacted about her writing at [missy.mull@yahoo.com](mailto:missy.mull@yahoo.com).

**Khang Nguyen** enjoys skateboarding, photography, memes, and going to shows from literally every genre. Instagram: [@oalliedamus](https://www.instagram.com/oalliedamus)

**Jean-Michel Ochsenein** is an international honors student and an English major. Due to his passion for writing, he wishes to become a novelist and make California his new home one day. He has already been published in WALL 2017, which in turn has greatly encouraged him to pursue his passion and a promise to deliver on another piece of writing. Jean-Michel, being vegan, ensures no animals were harmed in the making of this short story.

**Alyssa Oliver** is an economics and English double major at Saddleback who hopes to pursue graduate studies in English. She enjoys witty humor, appreciates foreign films, and is always on the lookout for a funky and intriguing magnet to add to her collection. In the fall, you'll find her roaming the halls of UC Berkeley as a political economy and English double major.

**Alexander Pagan** is a student artist exhibiting his passion in gallery shows, restaurants, and businesses in Orange County, Alex is currently studying for his graphic design certification. He works as graphic design intern for Parker School Uniforms. Highly influenced by history, the natural positives and negatives of time are what inspire him to influence the future through art. Website: Coldfloating.wordpress.com

**Anisa Panahi** is a first-year Saddleback student who is pursuing a degree in creative writing and a career as a novelist. She spends her free time reading, painting, doing things with her family, and, of course, writing.

**Olga Perelman** is a 21-year-old graphic designer, illustrator, and printmaker from Orange County, California. After receiving her AA in Fine Art from Saddleback College in Fall 2016, she continued exploring various art forms and techniques, which led her to launch her own brand and online shop, Inner Peach Design, in May 2017. Olga enjoys vintage fashion and has a deep love for musicals and iced coffee (sometimes simultaneously); you can follow her creative journey via her website: Innerpeach.com and @innerpeach on Instagram.

**Danielle Peterson** has been involved in art since a young age, eventually focusing on ceramics as her passion, along with typography and illustration. She pursued a career in the fine arts while at Saddleback College and earned a BFA in Graphic Design at Cal State Fullerton. Danielle intends on using her work as a medium to start a conversation or inform the audience about social and political issues, mostly affecting women. She has illustrated yearbook covers, designed tattoos for friends, and hand-lettered chalkboard signs for restaurants around San Juan Capistrano. Her instagram is @daniptsrn\_art and for any inquiries, her email daniptsrn@gmail.com

**Giovanna Putrino** is a self-taught artist who didn't have a real art class until her first semester at Saddleback. She has been an artist her whole life to help her through all of her vast adventures – most of which are hard to believe. You can find more of her artwork on her up-and-coming Instagram: @shortstacks.art.

**Anessa Rodriguez** is a recently escaped, ahem, graduated high school student and now an English major at Saddleback College. She has been a voracious reader her entire life and, consequently, has developed a love for words that some may call unhealthy. You can often find her in the LRC, frantically submitting homework at the very last minute or on Instagram: @\_anessarose\_

**Annie Rodriguez** is a senior at Saddleback College majoring in creative writing and deaf studies. She has been published in WALL before and various other literary magazines—mainly submitting short stories and personal essays. Annie really enjoys true crime podcasts, Disneyland, and cooking shows; she is still figuring out a way to merge all three in her writing.

**Ellen Rose**, a graduate of UCLA and the Otis Parsons Art Institute in Los Angeles, describes herself as the oldest student in Saddleback College's Fine Arts program. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions throughout Southern California, including the Festival of the Arts in Laguna Beach, the Irvine Fine Arts Center, and the Bayside Gallery in Newport Beach. Her painting "Good Habits" received a 2nd Place Award in the Pacific Western Division of the Community College Humanities Association competition. "The Embrace" was featured in the 2015 edition of WALL. "Superwoman," the third of her paintings to be featured in WALL, was awarded Best in Show in the 2017 Saddleback College Student Art Exhibit juried competition. Website: [Ellenroseart.com](http://Ellenroseart.com).

**Sara Safa** was initially unable to choose a path to continue her education. But she finally found the right major (industrial/product design) and has never been more sure of anything else in her life than this decision! Her goal is to transfer to a private institute to become a unique product designer and use art towards creating and inventing to make the world a better place. She is excited to see one of her first works as an artist being published. Email: [ssafa4@ivc.edu](mailto:ssafa4@ivc.edu)

**Bo Schang** graduated from CSU Long Beach with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree. Her talents have taken her from oil to acrylic, from watercolor to printmaking, earning recognition from all of her teachers. As she continues to explore heavy texture acrylic painting, her work has been featured in local exhibits, including the display of a watercolor painting at The Great Park art gallery in Irvine and a print titled "Bunny" in a group printmaking show at The Grand Salon gallery in Los Angeles. One of Bo's paintings was awarded Best Watercolor in a juried student art exhibit at Saddleback College. For years, she has collected realistic dolls and miniature furniture that she uses as subject matter for many of her works. Email: [boyoungartist@gmail.com](mailto:boyoungartist@gmail.com)

**Naveen Sheik** is a UCLA political science major working towards a PhD. When you're feeling down, that's the best time to write.

**Alyssa Shishkov** is currently in her second semester at Saddleback College. While she is majoring in psychology, she's always had a love for literature and has been writing poetry recreationally for the past few years.

**Matthew Talebi** is a retired ophthalmologist who discovered the pleasures of creative writing three years ago when he enrolled in a creative writing class through Saddleback College's Emeritus Institute. His work is inspired by the literary direction of Susan Hecht. "Requiem for Children" is his first publication.

**Henry Thornburg** has been studying graphic design. He recently enrolled in a graphic illustration class under the direction of Professor Rudy Gardea during which he produced the scratchboard illustration that captures the urban ambience in the personal narrative "City Corner."

**Judy Tiano**, a former sales and marketing manager, is passionate about photography. She has been learning photography at Saddleback College for two years and she is intrigued by the creative and technical challenge that photography offers. She has been fortunate to travel the world and enjoys seeing the world through her camera lens. Website: [Judytphotos.com](http://Judytphotos.com)

**Braydon Tsuyuki** completed his undergraduate degree at Colorado State University where he obtained his BS in Marketing, and he is currently working towards his Juris Doctorate at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. His goals include opening his own law firm and continuing to grow and learn as a passionate photographer and student of the arts. He recently placed 3rd in the annual Saddleback College Student Photography Exhibition. When he is not taking pictures or studying for law school, he can be found fishing in the dark, playing the blues, and smoking barbeque. Braydon's latest work can be seen and purchased directly from the artist @i\_catch\_light on instagram.

**Sophia Walker** loves being able to describe and create imagery in her writing. Her short story "Happy Place" represents her descriptive style of creative writing.

**Celia Wu** is an artist with a passion for painting with oil and watercolor. Celia has a vision to show viewers a different world by allowing them to see through her eyes for a brief moment as her distinctive and particular vantage point reflects her view of the whole. More of her work can be found at her Facebook page under Celia Wu.

**Sharon Yu** is a retired Senior Director of VLSI ASIC Development in the computing storage industry. She began learning oil painting at Saddleback College two years ago with Professor Vito-Leonardo Scarola and later with Timothy Smith. During these last two years, she has been exploring a second career in artistic expression, developing oil painting techniques and her own style. Her first exposure to art was as a teenager, when she dabbled in photography and Chinese calligraphy as hobbies and her works were selected by Fudan University's Amateur Art exhibit. Website: shy-painter.webstarts.com; Instagram: @shy\_painter

**Christine Ziff** is an award-winning portrait photographer with a passion for creating emotive images of children, family, high school seniors' personal branding, and contemporary-magazine-inspired portraits that celebrate inner strength, grace, and beauty. Christine creates captivating images one frame at a time! Her documentary style preserves precious moments and milestones that loved ones can cherish for years to come. Website: Christineziffphotography.smugmug.com

