



AQUARIAN



AQUARIAN

Literary and Visual Arts Review
53rd edition

2023

LETTERS FROM THE

The 53rd Aquarian Magazine encompasses the theme of reflection. As we are still rebuilding from COVID, we wanted to take this time to reflect on who we are as an organization. This year, Summer and I discovered older copies of the Aquarian magazine. This led us to create a historical collection of our magazines in-person at the library and on our website, at www.ju.edu/aquarian. Our growing and amazing team helped us design and choose a logo to represent our magazine. We also chose new additions and changes to make in the magazine, including a new category of audio and video works, based on our discoveries within the old magazines and visiting the Associated Collegiate Press conference.

Reflecting on our history has helped us create an even stronger magazine. But this would not have been possible without the astounding team that helped every step of the way. I am so proud to lead such an awe-inspiring group of creative, intelligent, and dedicated individuals. They have achieved so much, not only the copy of the magazine you are holding, but also expanding the team, encouraging more students to submit, and collaborating with others to host events.

I hope as you flip through the magazine, you take time to reflect on each piece and how it speaks to you. All forms of art are a reflection of humanity and each work carries a bit of the artist in it. From the artist to the audience, art is not a static thing, as each piece is meant to be interacted with and reflected upon. How we view the world, from art to nature to others, is a reflection of who we are at heart.

Welcome to the 2023 Aquarian Magazine.

Abby Neff

Editor-in-Chief

EDITORS



The Aquarian is my favorite part of campus life. I learned about it on a tour I took of campus when I was still considering where to go and it sealed the deal. I'm thankful to have gotten the opportunity to work with so many different artists on the staff and be able to contribute directly as Assistant Editor this year. As an English major it's so fun to be able to take my skills out of the classroom and into a creative field. I started writing as an escape during the quarantine and I never considered at the time that I would get published. I really love every year being able to contribute both my own writing and help get others involved and interested in submitting their own. Abby and I found the old editions life-changing as we had only seen editions from a couple years ago. Being able to look at the old editions and see just far the magazine had come was incredible. But more than that being able to see that even in 1989 people were working just as hard as we are now to make a magazine that shows off student work. I'm so excited to show everyone just how amazing this year's magazine is. The theme of reflection was both fun yet heartwrenching to work with as personally I had a very hard past couple years which is reflected in my poetry in this magazine. But all the grief in the world could not compare to how incredible it is to work with my favorite people in the world to make a magazine I will never forget.

Summer Lewis

Assistant Editor

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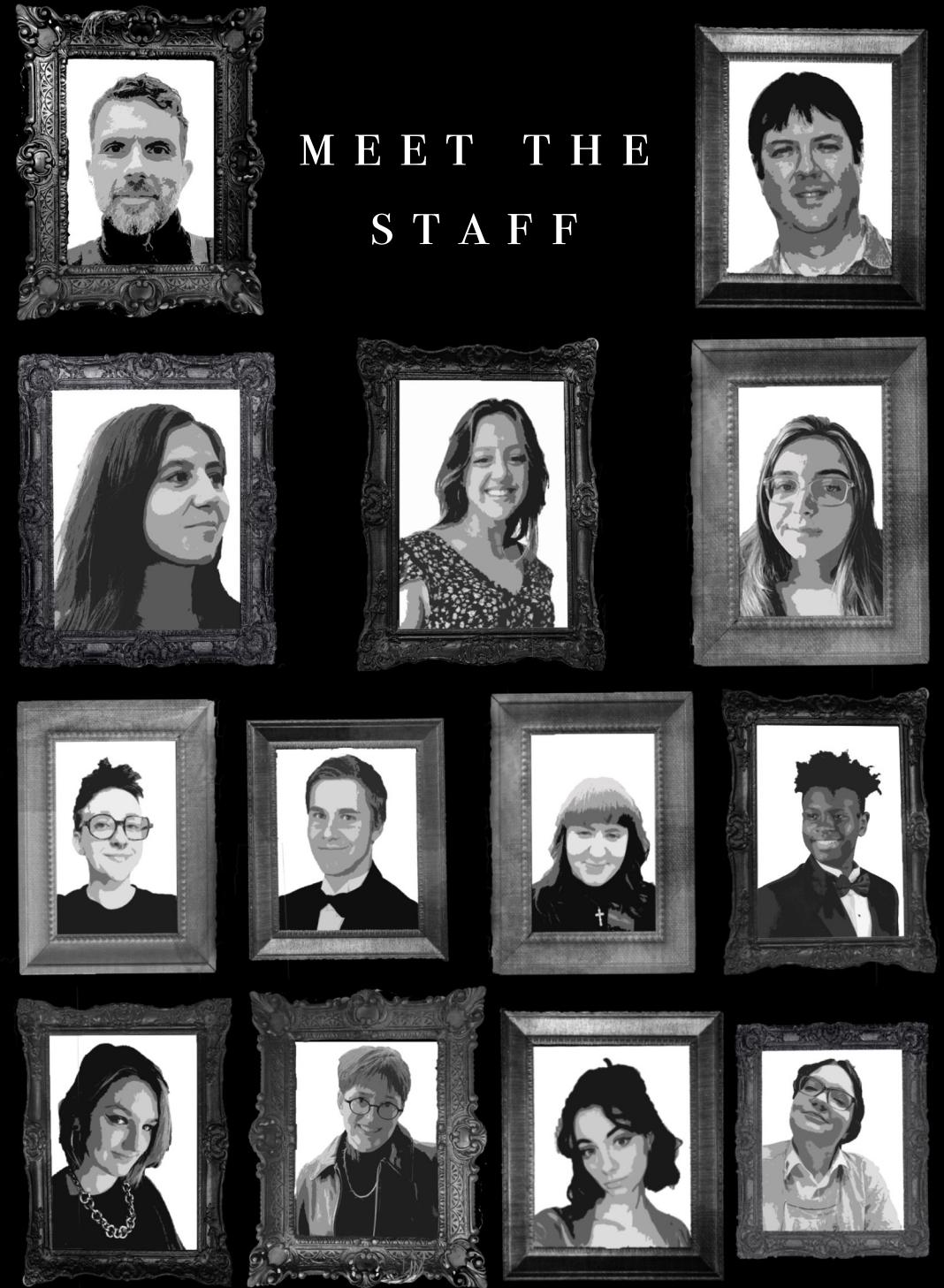
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CONTENT WARNING: SOME PIECES MAY INCLUDE EXPLICIT THEMES OF CORE, SUICIDE, DEATH, AND ABUSE.



(FROM LEFT)
 ADVISORS: NICHOLAS MCNALLY, ROBERT DEW
 STAFF: VIOLET KING (LEAD DESIGNER), ABBY NEFF (EDITOR-IN-CHIEF),
 SUMMER LEWIS (ASSISTANT EDITOR), OLIVER MCCINN, KAROL PALENIK,
 MADISON GOREMAN, ISAIAH JACKSON, SASHA HEYLOCK, EMI KIMBROUGH,
 OLIVIA MONTALBANO, REAGAN CHESTER

A YEAR IN REVERSE:
HOW DO I TELL HER
SHE'S DEAD

March:

3 missed calls from dad
A house colder than it's been in months
We can finally take the rugs back out.
Tripping hazards they are no longer.
As the woman who owns them walks the halls no
longer.
Can I trade the decor for her back?
I'd take a lifetime of empty walls
For her to see me and remember my name
Or just say she loves me
One more time.

February:

We got the poems prepped for the magazine.
I offer to read her mine and she waves me off
The porch plants wave back at her
Greeting her arrival to the sun.
She promises she'll be here when the books are
ready
"What? You don't believe I can make it?"

January:

I come back to school from break.
It'll be nice to go back to classes.
8 weeks at home messes with a sleep schedule.
I've stayed up crying more nights than I've slept
Terrified of waking up to her gone.

December:

We went out on an adventure at least.
Though the shopping center needs to charge their scooters better.
Between Happy Birthdays and searching for her iPad for twenty
minutes, I'm exhausted.
It'll be nice to get back to work
Though so much can go wrong with me gone.

November:

Can't wait to go back home.
I text my friend about my brain melting out of my ears after doing a
philosophy paper.
The same friend gets a text two days later.
Stage 4. She didn't tell me until after my tests.
I guess she thinks my grades are more important than her life to me.

October:

I think I'm actually good at this whole college thing.
I did a presentation on Doctor Who.
This is more fun than high school.
My friend spends 2 hours doing my hair for a costume party.
A screen-accurate Padme Amidala from the second movie.

I sent her a photo of my hair.
She'd give me a hard time about it but it should impress the
hairdresser in her.
She doesn't respond and I spend 2 hours deep conditioning it after the
party.

September:

I'm bad at this college thing.
I come down to celebrate my sister's birthday and ended up stress-
eating a blizzard.
She tells me I'll do fine.
I, of course, believe her.

August:

I love buying school supplies
I get matching binders and notebooks and eat sushi with my mom
before we pack up my stuff.
It's not as stressful as my mom's acting.

July:

I need to rewatch so many shows before I leave for college
I get through at least 10 seasons of shows before really thinking it over
But I know I won't have a lotta time in college

June:

18 years old
High schools over soon
No more plays or AP tests
But I'm excited

I tell her about my plans for college
She replies:
"You'll do great, baby, 4 years of more school though. I don't know if
I'll last that long"
I promise to do it in 3 if she promises to be there
"I promise." she says.
I believe her. She's my grandma. She'd never lie to me.

CHI VA PIANO
VA SANO E VA
LONTANO
ABBY NEFF



S T O R M S

When I was younger I used to believe I could control the weather.
Somehow every time I felt upset, it would start to rain.

An earth shaking rumble of thunder.
A clash of lightning.

A thick curtain of water standing between me and the outside world that
could be seen through my window.

The rain representing me.

When you have no more energy and all you can do is fall.

Fall like the rain from the sky.

Heavy.
No mercy.



CORAL SUNDAE
KAIT GRIFFIN

F A K E L A T I N A



yo soy una.....¿come se dice? a fake latina

i speak spanish in its most basic syntax.

so don't get too excited when i say

“¡que pasa contigo!”

because i know your enthusiasm will turn into rapid speaking in a tongue

i should be familiar with.

so i'll just stare at you like a deer in headlights,

while a part of me dies when you ask

“aren't you puerto rican?”.

i take a deep breath,

hold back tears

and nod my head yes.

and if looks could kill,

i'd be turned to stone.

'cause your disappointment is like

second-hand smoke.

your eyes burn me like cigarette butts

as you blow your marlboro special select into my face.

porque este cabrón es nada especial.

i get lost in the smoke

as my identity gets dissolved with it

talk about some brain fog.

but you see,

i've become far too acquainted with imposter syndrome.

matter of fact,

she's the devil AND the angel,

with her fingers crossed.

the snake that told eve not to eat the apple,

though they said it would be sweet.

and has now has morphed themself into my middle finger

since it always tells me to go fuck myself.

or am i just describing my anxiety?

i tend to get them mixed up every now and then.

considering they're both twins who stand at the end of the hallway

asking me to come play with them.

but i'm tired of playing

i just want to live.

they drag me anyways

because no to them means i'll just end up caving to my white friends.

so why not have a little fun in the process?

i joke about how i'm the whitest latina you'll ever meet.

because i burn far too easily,

i hate malta,

and i have failed to execute arroz y gandules every time i've tried to make it.

but call me a gringa again.

know there's not a tinge of white blood in me.

i have blood hailing from caguas and arecibo,

there ain't nothing diluted in me.

and though i was born in the land of queens in the state that houses my biggest dreams,

their blood is coursing through my veins.

i'm sorry for trauma dumping

i'm sorry for not transla-

wait, why am i apologizing?

see, THIS is what being an imposter does to you.

i am the snake and the apple personified.

these bitches ain't got nothin' on me.

i shouldn't even be justifying my identity.

pero yo soy aqui,

standing on this stage.

IF THERE WAS AN ANSWER

THEY'D FIND IT THERE

SHAYLYNN FERGUSON



in front you,
the people i dedicated my entire life to conforming to.

21 years have gone by while i stood on the side
watching my family dance bachata
sing along to reggaeton,
and eat the food that binds our culture together.

all while feeling i was undeserving of bearing that olympic medal pride.
and what did i do?

i bleached the tips of my hair.
hair that once cascaded down to my thighs,
to fit in with the latin girls,
since that's what they were all doing.

i allowed the cafeteria workers to correct me when i asked for extra
garbanzo beans in my salad,
"gare-bahn-zoh beans? those are chickpeas."

i was too much of a 'spic' to hang with the white kids
but never 'spic' enough to hang with my people.

and i wonder why...

now i've chopped off all my hair,
feeling liberated as ever.
i purposefully roll the 'r' in garbanzo

to make YOU do the extra work

abuelo, lo siento para no decir bendiciones y dios te bendiga a ti.

the only time i ever said it,
was at a soft whisper through tears.
now synonymous with the closing of your casket.

i finally understand why you always said that instead of goodbye.

and i'll forever live with that regret
because you'll never get to hear it.
entiendo eso completamente.
ya follow me?

y no puedo dejar que tu sueño americano muera en vano.

i'm tired of letting the the snake force feed me the apple.
i'm tired of letting these twins play mind games.

i'm taking it all back.
and that's my dying proclamation.

yo soy puertorriqueña.
yo soy boricua.
y yo soy una puta madre gorda.

and i ain't gotta define that for nobody.



CALM AT SEA
ADDISON
BEASLEY



BEACH PUPS
EMI KIMBROUGH

CALM
AGIJA ELERTE



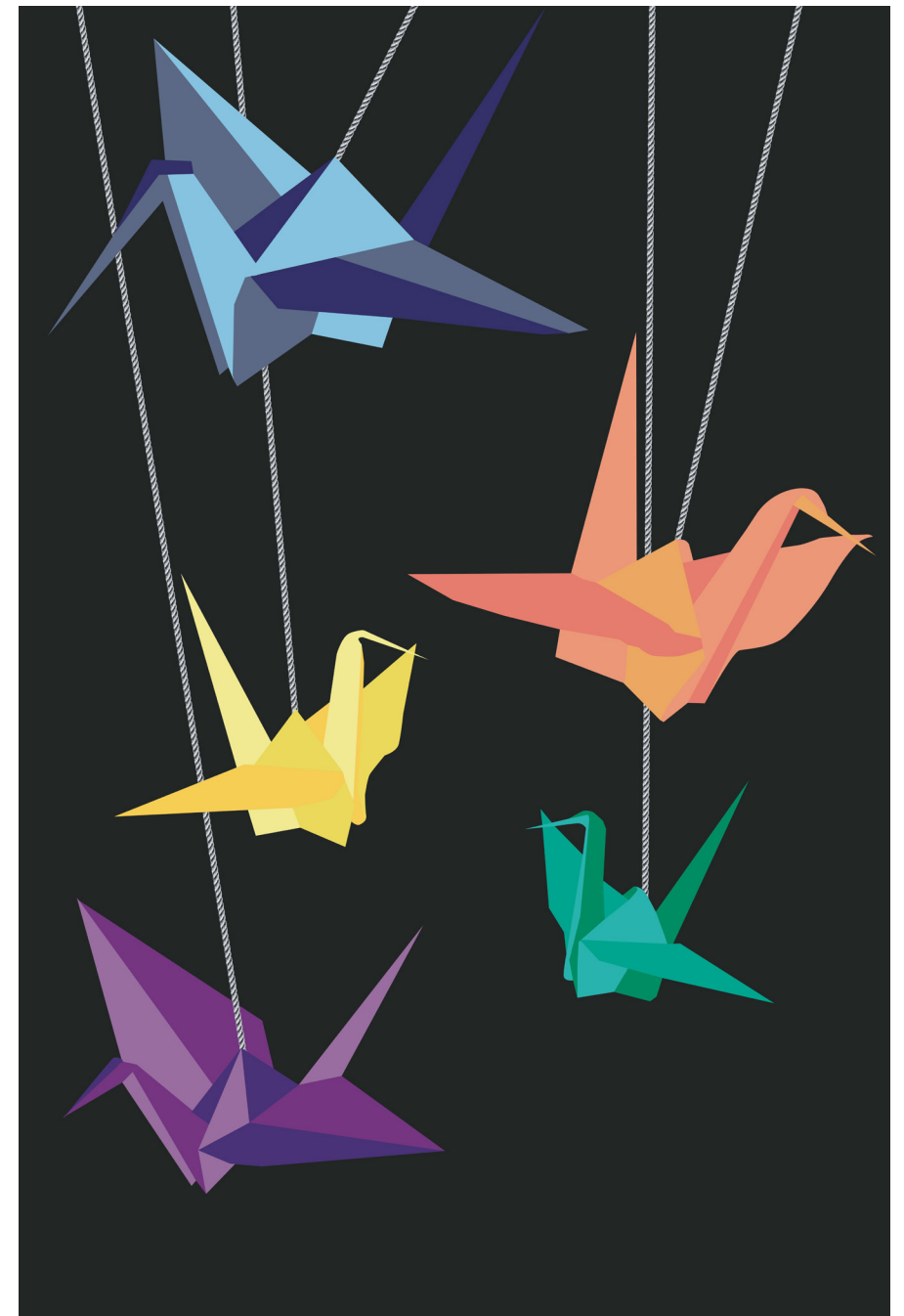
WHEN THE SWEET
AND BELOVED DIE

And when the sweet and beloved die,
I take - I took - one day to cry.
And then the next reappears my smile
Wild, dishonorable, and vile.

The mourners look on and suppose,
This callous girl, no pain she shows
She knows no depth. Yet my grief grows -
Tears to shed behind eyes closed.

Your mother's sick, her father's no more.
What in hell are you here for?
Here's a beer, now go drink more.
Drown your sorrows for all I care!
But don't you dare
Go on living as before.

Lose your mind and punch a wall!
You can't?
If you can move on undisturbed,
Did they even change your life at all?

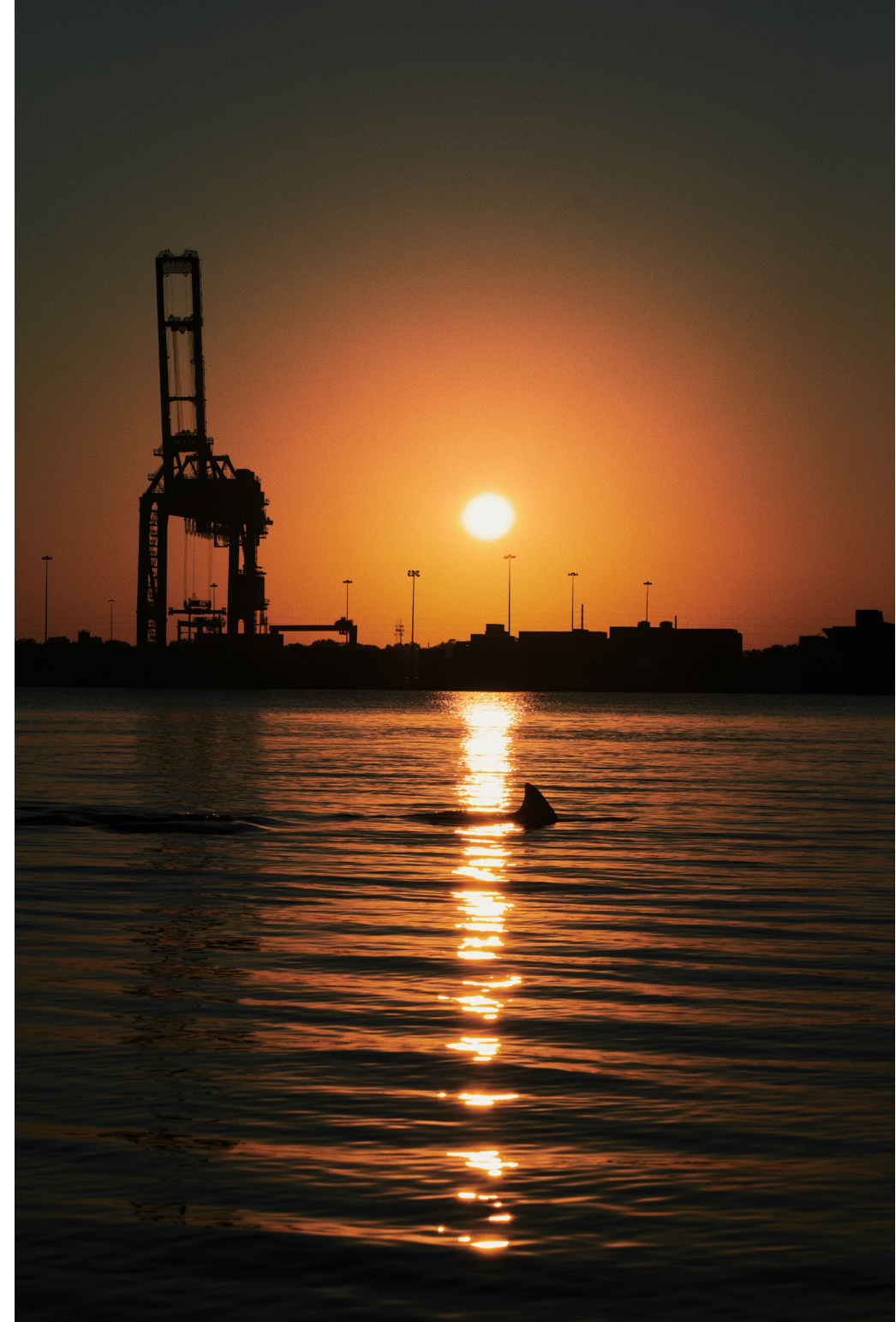


I, 000 PAPER CRANES
SHAYLYNN FERGUSON



TOO LITTLE, TOO MUCH

Out comes truth
The unbeatable face
To you, a bothersome disgrace
Too much emotion
Too little logic
Running against half tide and yet still in motion
Choose with my heart and step with my mind
When something attacks my soul I crumple a little, feeling despised
Bothersome, too little, too much
Harsh words from sweet lips
Heart hurt
Soul crush
Soul smack
Heart crack
Rush away, escape today
I can't and so begins the chant
Rattling through my head
On destruction, some words bent
Close my doors, can't let them hit me
Escape the public, escape the light
How it affected me, never let them see
I am fine. I am good
Too little, too much?
No, I do not care how you think I look





IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME
OLIVER MCGINN



ODE TO MISERY

If the breaking o'er the ridge
Or the cracking of the dawn
Drives you like a coal-
Burning locomotive to despair

Then find no shame seeking
Misery's solace

Oh Misery, sweet Misery
What reprieve from eternity
And Bringer of Bliss
(Who should still love some company)

Blanket my cold soul with embrace
Cover these sore eyes with wool-touch
Pull me down from those heavens
Whom mortal gaze can hardly try

Sing me that piece
Which sets me in peace:

This is alright

All is alright

This is the world: Misery

*See this but one thing
All along, this one thing
This is your shell, your oyster shell*

And with Joy (who as certainly as was, shall come again)
Rejuvenation, feeling Nature's multitudinous feelings
Euphoria, seeing illumination in full

But when eyes still burn the setting sun's light
Ever do you stray an errant sheep
(Did you ever once look back?)

Alone, abandoned they come to your arms
Misery, sweet Misery

And do I hark that she who errs just as easily
Should receive Man's consolation
As they assume for themselves
Her loss as great as theirs?

Wherefore do they lay their ills upon you?

Is not the world just?
That as surely as the mountains
Are thrust towards the heavens
They crumble back into the sea?
And with every flake of winter's snow
Lay songs of homeward summer?

Wherefore do they lay their ills upon you?

Would they fault moon's face
Which keeps their restless hearts company?
Resting (once again) by your side
Until the broken spirit (once again) has resolve?

And so the Other banishes the old Mistress's face
But let no man say his life he lived alone



COVID TEST APPREHENSION

OLIVER MCGINN



M O M E N T O F R E F L E C T I O N

A D D I S O N B E A S L E Y

W A I T I N G F O R L A Z A R U S

I've cried three times
Since you died.
Once when I was told.

The second when I went to your bedroom door.
I couldn't bring myself to open it
To see the tomb
that doesn't fit in a cemetery.
A room full and empty and collecting dust.
I never want to see you walk out and never come back
And yet.
I get my stubbornness from you.

The third time is eternal.
Every moment you're gone.
Every flash of a memory of
Friday nights with Chinese Takeout
Every time I open a door
that you're not waiting behind.

D I S H E A R T E N M E N T O F
F A L L I N F L O R I D A

The sun burns: my sweater clings to my skin, hot,
Black coffee, Black box-dye hair, and grieve the Black skies.
Is there something about wishing what is was not?

No crisp air to bring the deep calming sense of Rot
No smoke flowing and flaming wood that cracks and sighs
The sun burns: my sweater clings to my skin, hot.

I miss that feeling of cold, it's like I forgot
The folk music, the season where everything dies
Is there something about wishing what is was not?

I miss Hades, his enthrall, Persephone: caught,
The bite of hearty chill where the sun scant rises
The sun burns: my sweater clings to my skin, hot.

Miss the time when I have a foot in my grave plot,
Miss when the dirt knows, the time when nature seems wise,
Is there something about wishing what is was not?

I want to depart from Mother nature's hot spot,
Find my home where she matches how my cold soul cries,
The sun burns: my sweater clings to my skin, hot.
Is there something about wishing what is was not?



S U N R I S E A T S N O O K I ' S
M I C H A E L P I C A R O N I

THE OYSTERS NO. 5

ALLISON DEPTULA



HONEY

I make apple cinnamon oatmeal like she did.
The soupiest oatmeal known to man
And I hate it
But I don't really
It slides down my throat like bad news on a bad day.
Acceptance.
I sit amongst the sea of medical bills and insurance premiums
and a half-finished shopping list
We need eggs, tea bags, and butter.
I add something sweet to the notepad
We need good news on a good day.
The oatmeal goes cold.
It does that a lot these days.
Gets stuck in my throat like goodbyes and
I miss you
Unavoidable phrases that haunt me like broken promises
Or an empty room.
Grief is a comforting roommate
She is not noisy or domineering
She just waits
But I don't know how to let her in.
Because I don't know how I will ever let her leave.

I E S S E E , W E B E

stands erect a lonely lighthouse within a dark abyss
whose socket flames illuminate naught
but so to keep itself and stay the darkness at bay

*We are nothing to the Gods
grinding their machines
in that dark submerged room
childlike whispers muffled ringing
and far away but heat so near
and we ourselves who them can't see
as they us having yet to see
so hark that we should send
our fathers to disturb
their cosmic work
and bring their gaze upon us*

his cold, disinterested eyes saying
have it as you will you could have waited
but here I am again and here we die again

And I, are you man, or woman?
I was man stout in my cold
but now that I flow I am woman
but see this night-breaking crack

UNTITLED
SOPHI AVILA



shall soon cease again and I
I will be man again
But did you not perhaps-
I consider all now and then
that you were not until you could see
Alas no I did not know I was man
until now seeing you

and should you see,
(for to be is to be Good,
for naught is for naught)

Hear whoever so that quakes before the Great Reef
and take solace in the One passing flame that births
where once was void both heat and disorder
whose own diffusion hath given life in your jaw
even yet while the embers are fading
like the hand that reached within the darkness
to grasp your being and upon your heart
given itself take no distress that you are One
in many but remember how great wings of hubris
once flew you high away from that hand and light
so even as they melt, your arms reach into the cavity

before endless grasping spray the spire cannot but slowly sink
its flickering light, once bright, being overtaken by He, the sea
who thus reclaims his ancient space, but does so in vain:



MEETING UNDER THE BRIDGE AT SUNSET
ADDISON BEASLEY

(cont.)
Time Oh Time
how can it be
every moment
an eternity
yet it passes by
so hurriedly?
here we are
yet again
but perhaps this
Time Oh Time
You'll see



stands erect a lonely lighthouse within a dark abyss

SUNLIT WAVES
ANDREW BLANCHETTE

THE FOREST



I left. I couldn't stand it anymore. My smaller sister had finally caught the plague. It was only a matter of time, truly; she was prone to the most illness. I cannot stand to see her die. My father, damn him, had done no good to me, nor her. His beatings only grew harder and longer with every passing day I remained alive. The failure of a hideous child and his unsightly sister. My mother, just as wretched, cursed our names and slept drunk with any man she could get her hands on. Damn her. Damn them both. My sister may as well be dead already; the masked god has been sighted near the city just last night. I knew his next target was going to be her. The wide-eyed girl, the sucker of a child, my kind sister living through hell with her coward of a brother. I will not wait to see her fall to the hands of the zombie creator. Maybe he will give her a quick death. Maybe the masked god will slit her throat and let her die. Maybe the masked god too will understand she never deserved this.

I ran from the house. I heard my parents' screaming arguments for the last time. I would have killed them myself had I believed the god wouldn't stab them in their sleep for creating such dreadful and useless children. Weak, cheating, lying bastards. Just like their parents in every way. Despite my attempts to rid this world of my sorry existence, I still lived for 15 years. I can't even kill myself correctly. A horrible, sad, weak child.

I slid out the bedroom window and into the cold night's air. Maybe I should have burned the house behind me for the warmth of fire. I was

never given the opportunity; Before me was the masked god, stepping ever so lightly down the road. Had his mask not been so pale, I may have never seen him in the pitch of night. I knew he would slip himself through the walls of my sister's bedroom. I knew he would murder her in the night. I knew, if he saw me, I would be no better off than my dying sister. I planned to run into the city to gather supplies for my trip to the town over, but these plans had been swept away the moment I saw the god. I would have to slip into the back woods to avoid him. I would have to find my way to the road from there. I remember my mother telling me to never go into the forest when I was younger. She told of creatures far beyond understanding of man. They could smell emotion, thoughts, even intention. Seeing the god's robes leaking black smoke as he took heavy steps towards my house, however, dashed all thoughts of safety from my mind.

PARISIAN TRAFFIC JAM
ADDISON BEASLEY



Determined. Deliberate. Powerful. I wish I were him.

My steps towards the forest were hasty. Every step I took was that of an elephant. The god's gaze, however, was unfaltering.

Strong. Silent. Confident. Every step he took had my heart skip a beat.

Escaping with no elegance, I pushed myself through the underbrush of the forest. I had no regrets. Even if I died here, at least I was away from that god-forsaken household.

No more than thirty feet into the forest, I heard a sound. I froze in my tracks. The path behind me was riddled with my desperation: broken twigs and fallen underbrush. Because of this path, I thought the sound to be someone following me. In truth, I did not expect the wet crunching sound to be in the very direction I headed.

Slurping. Cracking. Drizzling. The sound was of a feasting animal.

I waited in place for the sound to cease. It felt like eternity, but the sound eventually stopped. I glanced back to see if I was being followed. Instead, I found my path to be closed behind me. It appeared as if I had never stepped foot in these woods before. This cannot be true. Perhaps I lost my sense of direction? No. Pivoting my head in every which way did not reveal the path I created.

A sound. A soft, breathy whisper on the wind. A snapping of trees. A movement in the corner of my eyes. Was it an animal? It had to be. Still





NIGHT LIGHTS IN THE FOREST
REAGAN CHESTER

frozen, I focused my gaze to the movement. Only trees filled my sight. Perhaps I should have gone back. Maybe it was better to live in that horrible house than to live another moment among these trees.

No, it was only paranoia. I can make a better life for myself elsewhere.

Another snap. A crack. The tree was moving. Not a simple sway in the breeze, no. The tree had moved closer to me. I did not know what to do. I had to be crazy. It had to be my imagination, right?

A crack. A twist. A figure in the distance. Growing closer now. It was not human. It was not monster. It was not illusion. Nor the masked god, though I might wish it were. My mother was right. I was a fool.

Weak. Stupid. Useless.

Now here I will die.

Weak. Stupid. Pointless.

What have I done to deserve this? Was I destined to be a failure in this story? In this world? The loser. The laughingstock.

Weak. Tired. Ignorant.

The forest moved closer to me. The trees boxing me in and leaving no way out.

Tall. Pointed. Deadly.

Yet here I stay.

Small. Insignificant. Food.

Chewing on my skin. Chewing on my mind. Chewing on my very soul.

Drained. Dying. Unmotivated.

I, a product of my failure. Just like all else in my life. Just like my sister, my father, my mother,

Pointless. Selfish. Dead.



THE GRAVE'S EPITAPH ASKS

Who will I be?

When I have soaked the page

When my blood has bled dry

And I have nothing left to say

Who am I?

I am made up of the cosmos.

But when I have traversed all my stars am I still wanted?

Will you listen after I have said my piece?

When I have laid myself bare

For all to inspect

What will my worth be noted?

The price of a soul that has

Been made empty from overuse.

When my poems have brought

Me no profits.

My writing undesired.

My love discarded and my thoughts dissected

Like pigs?

What would you pay for the remains?

The empty carcass that lies in pieces

Spread across my pages

Soaked in the ink that pumped

Through my veins

Am I worth the time to even count the pennies?



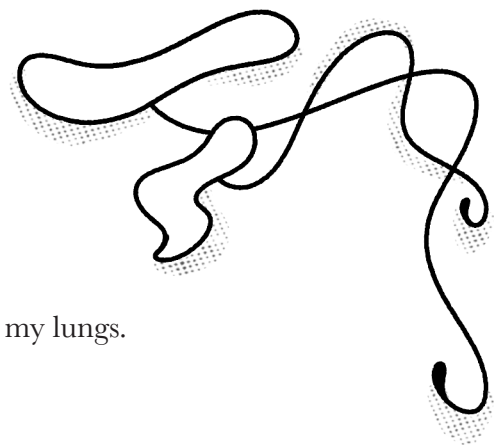
LOOKING FOR OUR NEXT READ

VIOLET KING



THE GROWING SHADOW

The Shadow grows on the wall
Like a drop of blood spreading on a rug.
Like mopping with dirty water.
Fuck.
My heart leaps to my throat. This isn't real, is it?
This crying, bleeding Shadow,
Threatening death and sorrow.
Pain and fear.
Grief and change.
The Shadow grew over weeks, gracefully ignored by all who pass it,
Only noticeable when it began taking shape out of its two-dimensional
prison.
Its philosophized and controversial existence.
Now that it begins to shape, I can't ignore it.
Others pass without care.
My personal hell beast, gracefully ignored by all.
It bubbles over and spills from the wall, grabbing my throat.
It digs its claws of darkness into my skin.
Tightening my throat like a vice,
Locking me from making a sound,
Though I desperately need to.
Not a tear escapes my eyes,
Not a sound from my throat.
I feel everything,



The shame, the pain,
The Fear.
It grows like a flame,
Burrowing into my throat, taking breath from my lungs.
Yet I don't make a sound.
I don't cry.
My eyes dry like empty wells.
My throat remains as still as death.
Gracefully ignored by all who pass it, the Shadow removes its claws.
The pain remains.
I cannot scream, I cannot run, I cannot cry,
The seeping pain crawls uncomfortably down the front of my spine.
The Shadow forms a mirror,
Where my reflection looks back at me. My expression is empty and pale.
My body isn't cared for.
For a moment I don't recognize it as myself.
I open my mouth to ask for its help
And it reveals a chasm down my throat,
Empty and endless.
The image in the mirror remains a shell.
My seeping nightmare continues
And yet the reflection is true, I can't feel the pain in my chest.
My heart went missing.
Lost in the chasm.
The only thing I feel is
A drip in my stomach, like the corner of a roof after rain.
The Shadow remains uncertain,
Though the Shadow always remains.

In a sickly voice, it speaks.
“I will help you grow.”
A disgustingly familiar voice.
“Every experience will help you learn,”
Speaking my own voice and cutting through my soul.
“Loss is life. Loss is growth.”
Are these thoughts my own?
Is this voice from within?
The Shadow places a blade in one hand,
The handle rattles against the shell
And jar in the other, ready to be filled.
I feel a Fear in my heart.
The Shadow’s illusion of choice.
I feel a Fear in my heart.

THE CONSUMPTION
OF TIME
OLIVER MCGINN



And yet,
I can still feel.



IF THERE WAS AN ANSWER, THEY
WOULD FIND IT THERE
MOON STENSON

LOOKING TO THE
ANTHOLOGIZED PORTRAITS

they who look into eyes and see not
eyes, who have expression but are static,
frozen-consumed as bound and they are
bound to the story, not to the history,
for there is no history of facts, but a story
and what mammal are they who do not eat
or sleep, divorced from experience and held
by men who lack memory but of the binding
of the pages? And is this but our greatest mark
in this celestial game of crashing rocks
which absent Gods must call Billiards?
no, they are great because they are
unattainable to the living, no longer
human, and to that is the aspiration of the condemned
and we the watchers of the ceaseless flowing
of the river aware it makes no mind to us
and it is our folly to remark “Nature sleeps”
(‘tis the justification of desire) and we reason
she is unaware of *true motivation* possessed by
yours truly (you)



THE GIRL THAT BECAME WOMAN

“Have you looked in a mirror lately?” said the boy.

“What is the problem?”

“I said, have you looked into the mirror lately?” ... “I hate when you dress like that, speak like that, walk like that. I need you to attract attention.”
said the boy who thought so little of himself.

Boy. The character in the girl’s life that was trying so hard to have his way. Trying to form and change her, as if she were a doll. That she was, an embodiment of grace, but not his. She was never his. In her mind she knew she didn’t belong. This was not her calling. She was crashing into a wall.

The wall of self deception. She was not a girl, she was a woman, trying to carry the happiness of the boy. She wanted nothing more than to have him out of her life.

But she must protect her image.

She must keep up this facade.

Hold on just a little more.

Now you might think this story is strange. You’d be right if you think the previous statement is true. The truth is that at one point, that girl was one of you.

The one holding on for the sake of not hurting anyone. Letting herself go in order to please others. Putting herself last, stomping on herself. But that, no more. You are worth it all. You are worth the love you give and are worthy of receiving it back. You are worthy of much more.

Once you push that boy into the past, send that wall crashing down...

You, girl, will become a woman.



PORTRAIT OF
TURTLE
EMI KIMBROUGH

CHERRY HYDRANGEA TEA

KAIT GRIFFIN



PERIPHERAL VISION

Time is passing,

The dreaded feeling is lasting,
Longer than I thought.

It's been so long,
Since I've fought.

This sensation in my chest.

I can't seem,
To put it to rest.

I seem to be catching your eye.

I don't know why,
I ignore it all.

You look,
I look away.

I don't want to say,
I want you to stay.

I see you watching,
From the corner of my eye.
Why?

You thought I wasn't looking,
But that smile was stellar.

"What do I tell her?"

How long have I been waiting?

Tell me something.
I've been waiting.

You look,
I look.

Then look away.

- "you took advantage of my
peripheral vision."



CURTAINS CLOSED

SHAYLYNN FERGUSON

THE STORYTELLER SPEAKS

When you think of me
What will I be to you?
The best the worst
will you even remember my name...
My eye color?
Will I be a footnote in your story?
I helped you write it.

Will you cast me as your villain
When I did nothing but build you
You cannot call me a savage when I made you the protagonist
of my stories
How dare you not even
remember
my name
when I am gone
Will you ruin me?

I'd rather you forget me
Not even be a Thought in your brain
Will you destroy
what I worked so hard to build
Ruin my stories
because yours are mine as well

I made you
Sculpted you like the master I am
Into the monster you are.

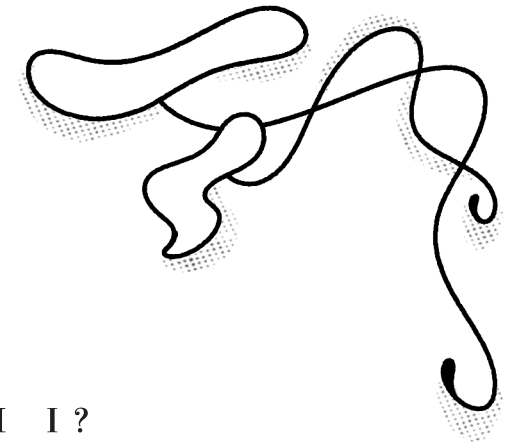
Monster.
Meet Frankenstein

B & W
AGIJE
ELERTE





HOUSE ON THE NILE
JESSICA BOBKOV



WHERE AM I?

Am I in the bushes?
Or am I fleeing the canopy?

Am I in the wind?
Am I pushing the sails and passing through windows?

Am I the stagnant puddle on the road, soaking into their socks?
Or am I the waves knocking them down?

Can't I just be the mist that cools skin?
Will you let me be their dreams?
Those forgotten in wakefulness?

Or can I be nowhere at all?

IF BEAUTY ONE SHOULD VALUE

If Beauty one should value:
That champion of the qualities
Whose stark effect on man
Bears both Good and Perfection
Into his interpretive mind,
Whose display-case quality,
Unattainable and divine,
Convinces him of God,
For there he sees it,
And possesses beholder
To grope and stumble
Vainly towards its source –
Then sigh and keep away
Lest frustrated hands it smother



I AM A PROUD AMERICAN

I am a proud American

Born and raised in the land of the free
A country for which there are no comparisons
Life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness we decree

I am a prou- American

A country made on the bones of natives and backs of slaves
Perfect for all without melanin
Amendment 13 applies except if you “misbehave”

I am a pro-- American

A country run by corporations in meatsuits
Rainbow washed companies donate to politicians
Money for anti-queer laws allowing abuse

I am a pr--- American

A country that reversed Roe v. Wade
Where the government values womb over brain
Which will cause the biggest health crisis in decades

I am a p---- American

A country where I can buy a gun before a drink
Elementary students texting I love you from hiding
Full lives and amazing kids gone in a blink

I am American

I recognize the privilege my citizenship gives me
But other countries see and hate our arrogance
Are we really the land of the free?

CINQUE TERRE

MICHAEL PICARONI





TO LIVE AND DIE BY THE
(GRASS) BLADE

I. a memory:

*the watch the turrets keep
against obscuring trees,
moss-covered walls stand stout
yet tourists mill about -
a dull and crack-ed mass
through dim-lit halls we pass:
a face which called this home
now stares through eyes of stone*

II. a history:

Upon a plain a burgh was found
That grew till it in gold did drown,
Which plank and stone excess adorned,
And into royal coffers poured

But want so great and deep imbed
Both he who has and not does wed:
A roving horde the burgh did steal
And king away from hoard did peal

To mountains far he made retreat
Where Nature faire doth thrive discreet,

With core untouched except by traps
Emplaced by hunters, feather-cap'd

Beauty from there above does leach,
As earth toward Heaven strives to reach,
To settle white on mountain tops,
And into mountain valley drops

To take from stream felt king endorsed,
As bear and deer do when both thirst,
And took that he above them placed
While bears his bounds with mouth embraced

A steep and jagged cliff was claimed
To house new keep, to rebuild name,
That any foe to climb assayed
Would easy be away allayed

Lay village 'neath in cliffside shade
That many ages there had stayed,
Which saw the rise of ancient fort
Where there now settles foreign court

The simple folk were there impressed
In servitude, by Might's behest;
For those whom Nature's whim had learned,
Misfortune's coup was small concern
(cont.)

The trees were felled, the land was broke,
Under the toil of peasant yoke,
And through their toil, the keep did rise
And for the king, they wealth apprized

Yet every field king made to pin
Had twenty others still as kin:
Rugged, untamed, remained the land
Against which Man straddles the strand

The keep, now grown with many layer
That top to reach had rope and stair,
Through iron gate became reprieve
For king who seldom room would leave

Monarch again with worth retained
Was every night by nightmares pained:
Accosted by his loss of fame,
His loss of life, his loss of blame

And so upon the land renewed
Assault with vigor to subdue
Those thoughts which him led to despair,
That he with burgh his fate would share

If he could Nature tame at last,
Wrest full control of mountains vast,
So every leaf be marked his own,

PHRAGMIPEDIUM CAPE SUNSET

EMI KIMBROUGH



Then eye could not but his print know

From chamber high, down through the halls,
Between the doors, and past the walls,
Drifted that air which work persuades
In calloused hands among grass blades

Tales of his worth were writ and spread
By monks enticed by gold or dread.
His face in mountain stones was bored,
Until one day, appeared the horde

In force they came, in Autumns wake,
To take the keep, or it to break;
The gates were closed, the storerooms stocked,
And in his room, the king but rocked

To bring it down like falling leaves,
Or take his name, become but thieves?
How cruel, he thought, that life be frail,
That want for want has no avail

But while flesh dies but certainly
Through works I stay eternity.
So let me die, but let them not
Destroy that which I wrought!

In highest chamber king did stay,



 SERENITY
WEDNESDAY PENNINGTON

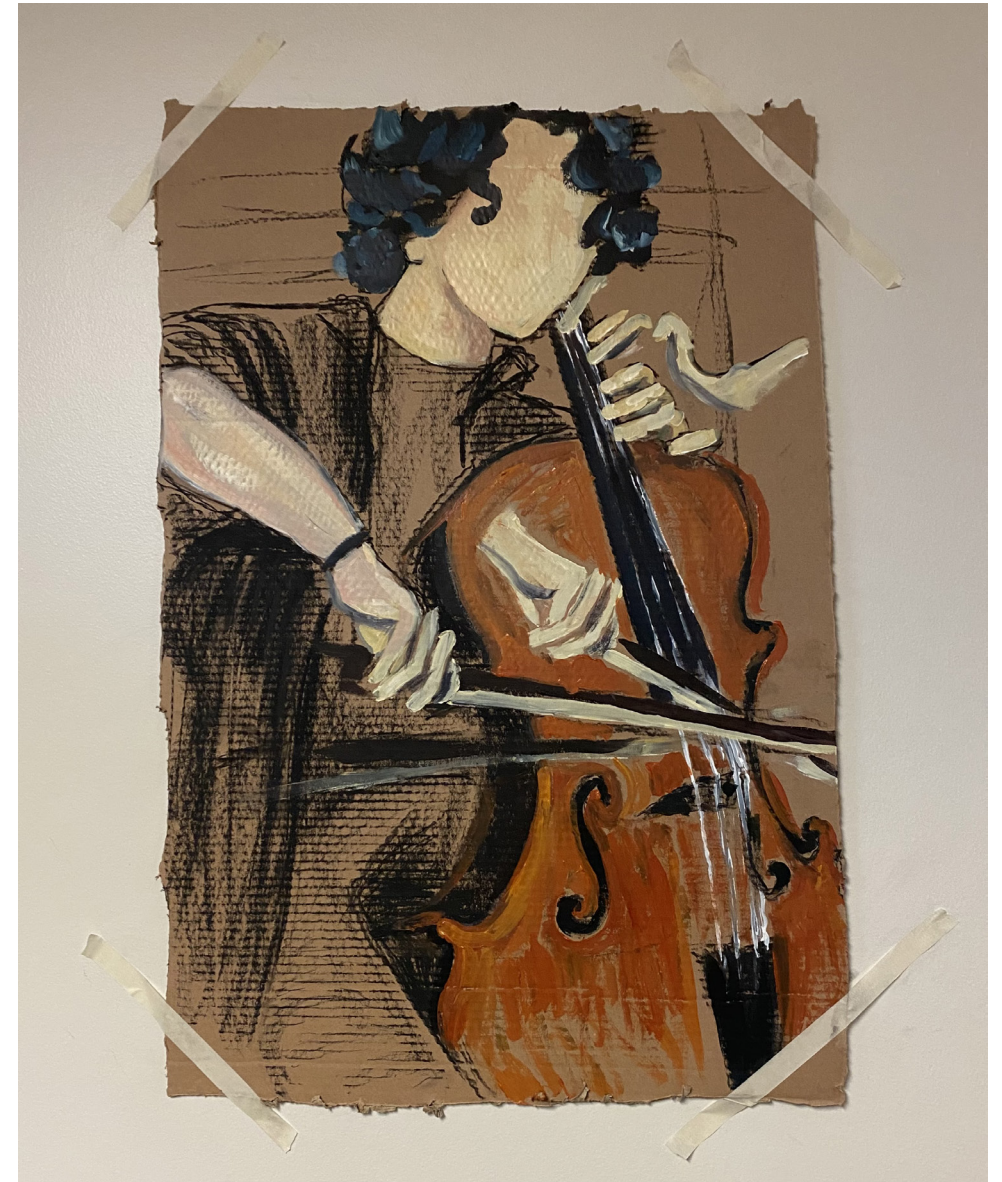
His will towards weakness ne'er did stray
And while his spright held on but grim,
The days of Autumn 'gan to dim

For many months then Darkness sat
Upon the landscape, pressing black,
Until the snow shone sterile grey,
And of the horde but bones remained

Then with a crack the sun arose,
And springtime bugles broke the foes,
Who washed away in torrent streams
To distant seas where no man dreams

And so it was, the battle won
By winter cold, and springtime sun,
And peasants merrily did cheer
That Nature's course the foes did clear

Up many steps, the guards did climb
To chamber late where king was bind;
With joyful news entering the door,
But finding there a cold man's corpse



JULIE - O
OLIVER MCGINN

DESSERT IS SERVED

SHAYLYNN FERGUSON



ONE WAY WAR

If I hand you a dagger
That you have no control over,
And I see you as its beholder,
I will feel attacked.

If I hand you a dagger,
You are my compass, I your north.
Friend or foe, you're enemy now
Who, though unwilling, bears a sword.

If I hand you a dagger,
Destined for the hand from which it came,
And that hand chooses to succumb to it,
Please know - no, you never were to blame.

And if I give you this dagger,
Away! AWAY! I'll stumble and stagger,
Till limping back, by own self battered,
You have every right to war.
And yet you'd rather
Return - to who we were before.

N O V E M B E R

Comfort and love cannot be used to describe a relationship at the same time. One can be either comfortable with a person, or be in love. Being comfortable can simply be infatuation, but love goes beyond that. Being in love has the dangers, the moments that make you want to run and hide. If there is anything that love has taught us as individuals, it's that it cannot be trusted.

Love is not only going on romantic dates. It's not remembering their favorite meal or surprising them with flowers at their place of work. It's not heartfelt text messages, and it's most certainly not the happily ever after daydream you picked up on one day.

It's shutting the door after he leaves, knowing deep down your heart wants him. It's staring at the one photo of you two, wondering why you couldn't spot the lies and deception soon enough. It's seeing his face for the first time while walking on the sidewalk, unsure of how to react. You hadn't prepared yourself to see him, but knew it was bound to happen eventually. Yet, there he was. The color of his shirt is the color of your eyes, but you'd never admit it to anyone because then you're just looking for reasons to believe he might want you still... or perhaps you need a reason to hold on to what never was.

The problem lies in the present. Had you known it would have ended the way it did, would you have stayed to begin with? Had you known he was

a liar like the lover before, would you have filled his head with a version of yourself you know doesn't exist?

You of all people know that he fell for a version of you that does not exist. So innocent and thoughtful... but what if the version of you he brought out is the version you have been fated to be all along? Let's not forget that none of it was real. How could he have looked at you, knowing deep down his heart longed for someone else's touch?

One minute you're telling your best friend you forgive him, and the next you're lying on the floor screaming how much you hate him. The problem remains in the past. From November - when the floor became the safest place on Earth.

II GATTO
ABBY NEFF

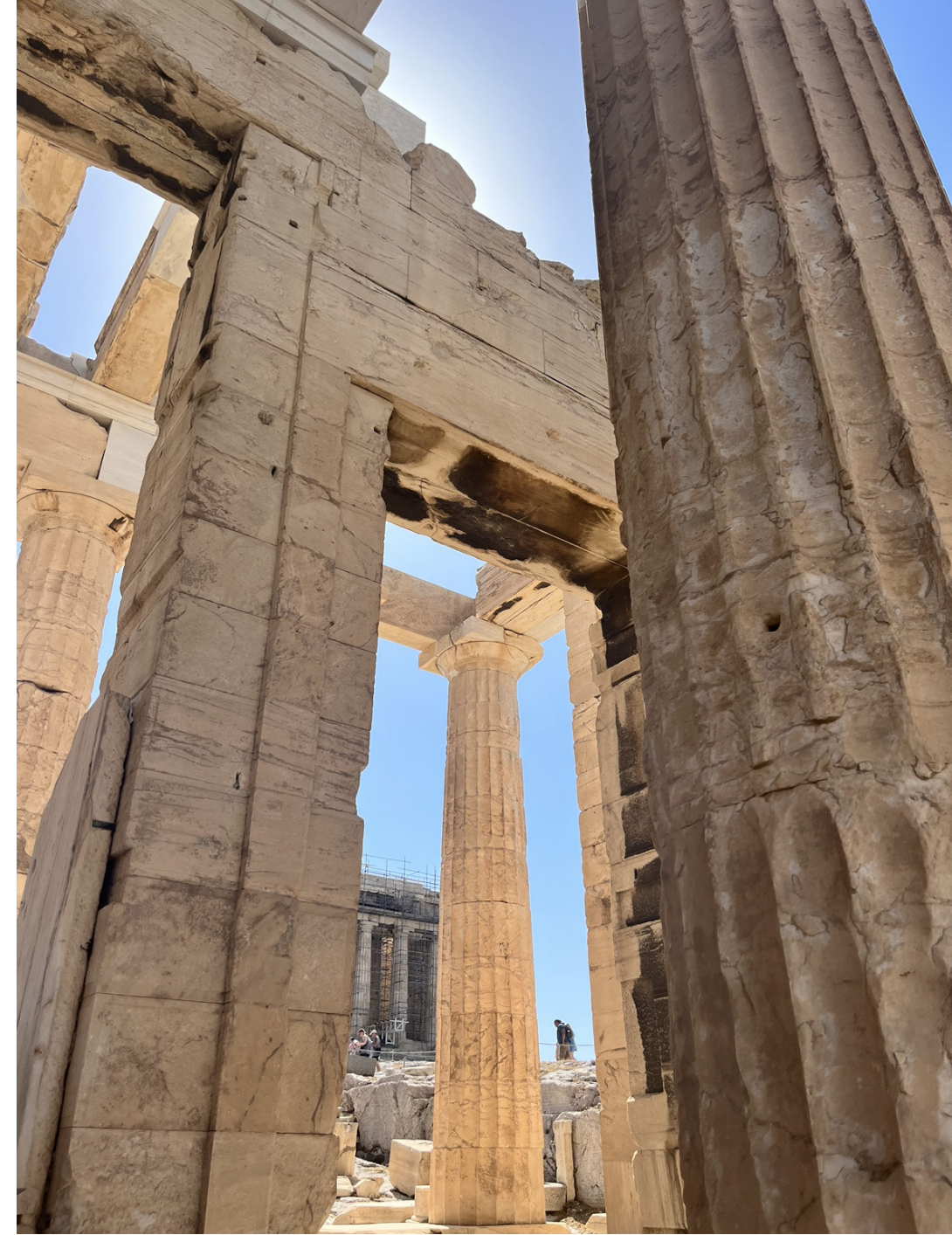


LOVE ME LIKE MYTHOLOGY

Can Cupid shoot me?
Can he end my pain,
Or my life,
With the point of an arrow?
Strike my heart clean through
So that I forget everything,
But you?

Can we be god-destined?
Manipulated to be in love,
So that my responsibilities
Fall to the wayside.
Let my kingdom fall,
As I fall for you,
Like Dido for Aeneas.
Let me fold myself over for you,
Or fold myself over your sword.

Would you charm
The God of the Underworld
With a song of our love
To retrieve me
To see me
Only to look back
Too soon



SEEING BETWEEN THE CRACKS
MICHAEL PICARONI

Too eager
Only to watch me fade
Into the depth
As Orpheus watched Eurydice?

Could you love me as much
As Apollo loved Hyacinthus
That even the Wind is jealous
And when the gusts blow
And the dust
And the death
Settles
Grief blooms
With a beauty
Only beaten by our love?

Could you give me the love
Of Achilles and Patroclus
That burns so bright
That the Gods intervene
That I would sacrifice my humanity
To be with you once more
That I would break society
To break those that hurt you
So when we meet our end
We are together forever
As ashes in the urn and
As souls in the Underworld?

Could you love me
So deeply,
It's an Ancient Tragedy?
That the only way
To explain it
Is through mythology?

ACHILLES GRIEF
ABBY NEFF





9220-BOUDOIR SERIES
JESSICA BOBKOV

ODE TO GALATEA

I know why I cannot find myself beautiful.
Art and literature
Building things out of hands and soul
Painting secrets and dreams on canvas.
How can I not find it beautiful?
The effort and thought that went into
Making..
Anything I have the honor to see.

I know I was not made with careful thought,
My body not forged out of starlight
Millennia of consideration
Waiting for the perfect moment.
My body was not etched out of clay by the gods
No one breathed life into me and wept.
I was thrown from the ship to drown
And I lived by mistake.
I am here by cause and effect
And no one rejoices a coincidence.



B E T R A Y A L

Dearly Betrayed,


I see the pain in your eyes
Your rage, I feel it seething
I know that I'm not worthy
Of the air that I am breathing

I never meant for this to happen
I truly wish we never met
For then I could have hurt you
Without a shred of regret

I was taught that you were evil
Savages of Subhuman level
I was sent to save the world
From the spawn of the devil

But when I grew close to your heart
Heard your story, learned your name
I realized that Wall or no Wall
All people are the same

Your life conflicted with
Everything I had been taught



The truth had left me broken
Bewildered, distraught

Why couldn't you be evil?
Why couldn't you be the demon that I perceived you?
Why were you just a person who needed healing?
Why couldn't you have just lied so I'd believe you?

I was so desperate to be a hero
To be loved, to be whole
And to have the whole world,
I only had to give my soul

Now I'm forced to see the truth
My sin is undeniable
I've given up on trying
To justify the unjustifiable

Now I'm in too deep
There is no going back
Blood up to my knees
My soul stained red and black

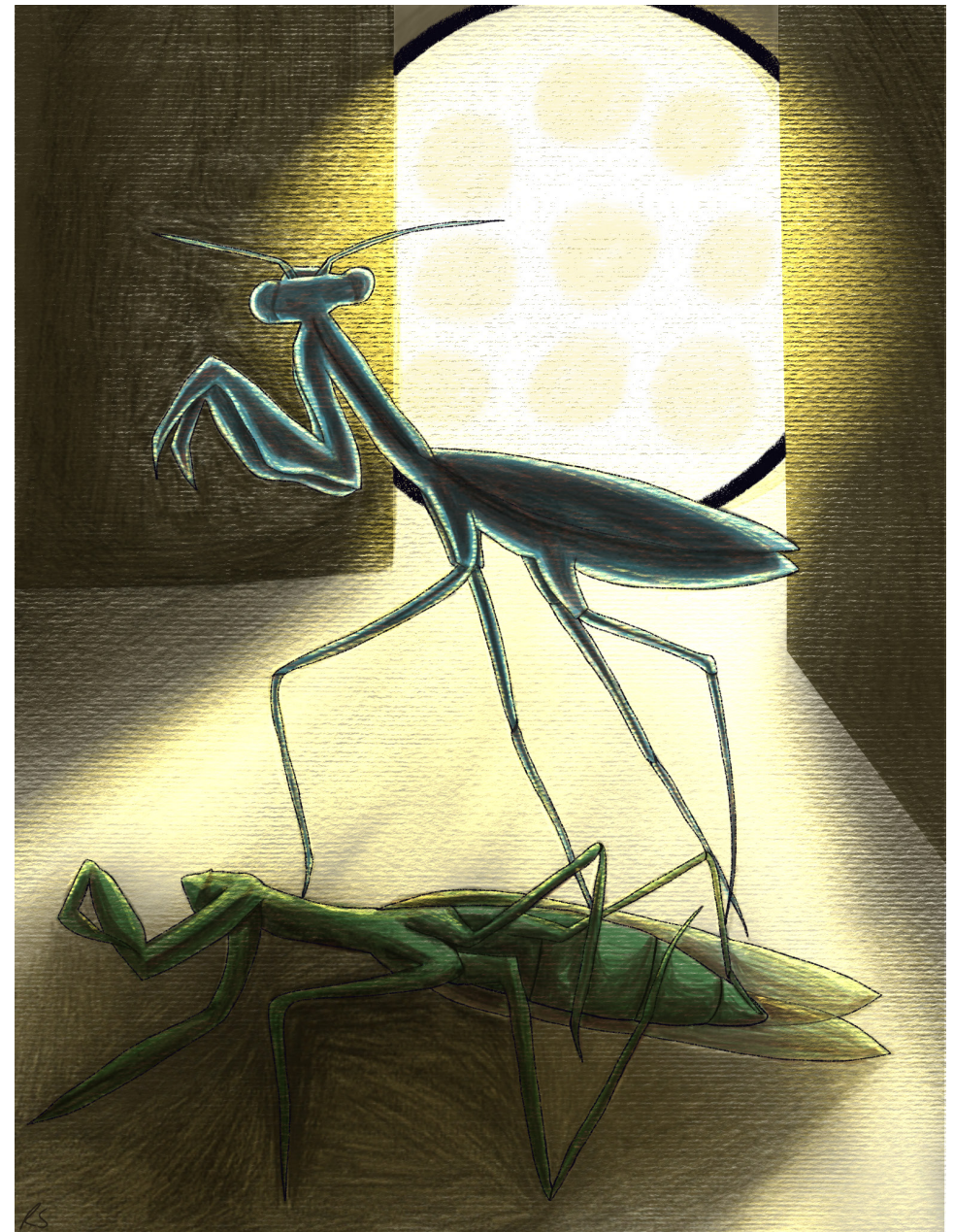
My mission will be completed
With teary eye, and shaky voice
I will carry on knowing
This was all my choice

And so I stain my Hands in blood
I dive straight into hell
I now become the villain
One day you may as well

Don't be a slave to your dreams
When you do, the chains grow stronger
And one day you'll look up and find
That you've become
The Monster



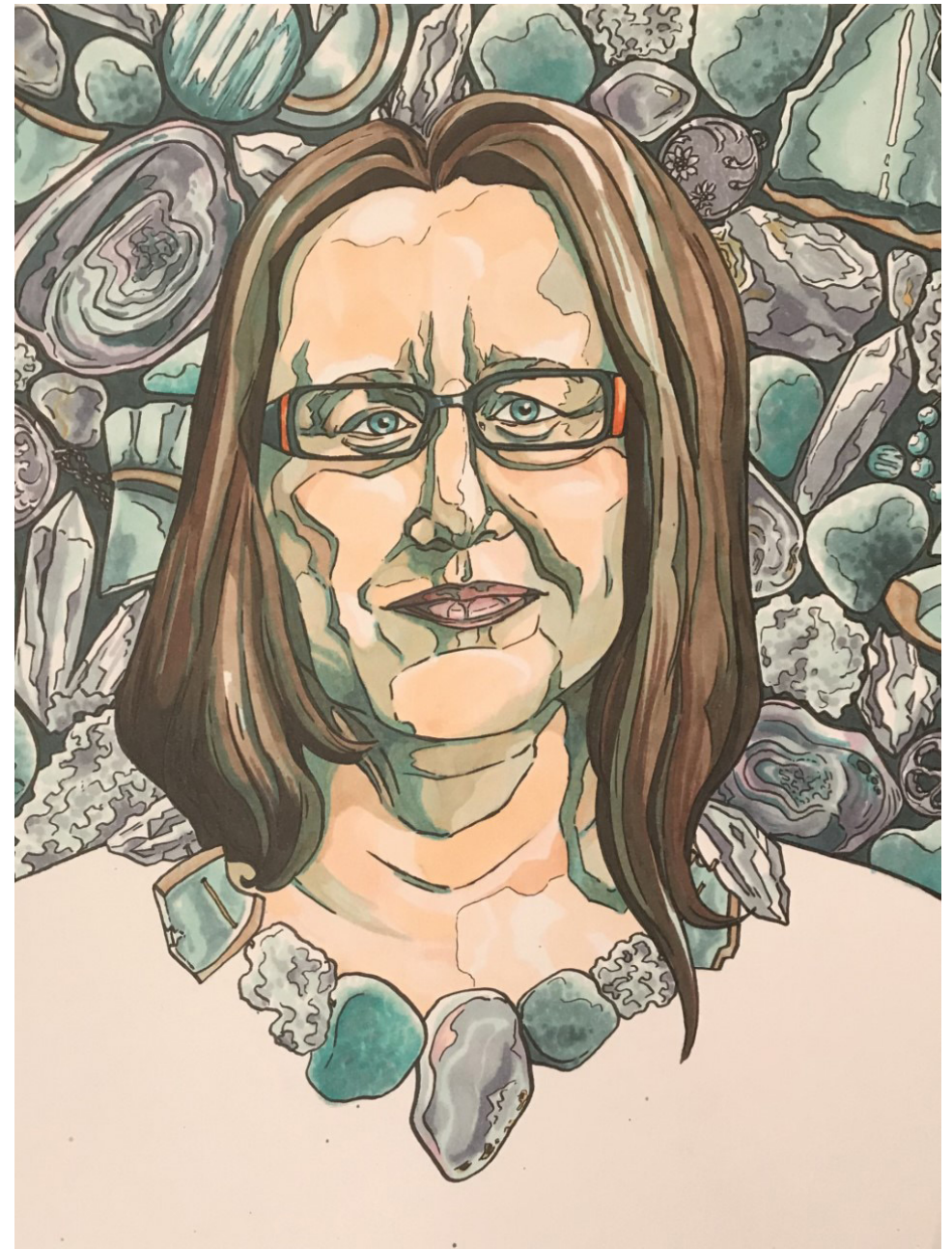
RED
JESS BOBKOV



BETRAYAL
MOON STENSON



LOTUS TRIPTYCH
EMI KIMBROUGH



PORTRAIT OF ELIZABETH BEAR
EMI KIMBROUGH

THE BLUSHING BRIDE

the bride was a beautiful woman
fair caramel skin
clear eyes of hazel
a small but sweet mouth
and Red blushing cheeks.
it was a happy day.

Her Husband to be was a man who put mountains to shame.
Large, Dangerous, Cunning.
It was a day of duty.

On the morning of the wedding.
Women cheered and Men drank.
The mother of bride, a jealously unsatisfied woman,

came to her daughter's room. To Pluck,
Pick, and Pamper her duckling into a swan was her goal.
But she was surprised to see it was already done.

the bride was indeed plucked, picked, and pampered, ready for a show.
as her hair was cut to the brain.
her skin was scarred and stretched,
her eyes gone, and mouth broken.

and her gown, though not white, was made of rope, a highchair was her
wedding train, and a hook her veil.

yet her cheeks were still that beautiful blushing of Red.



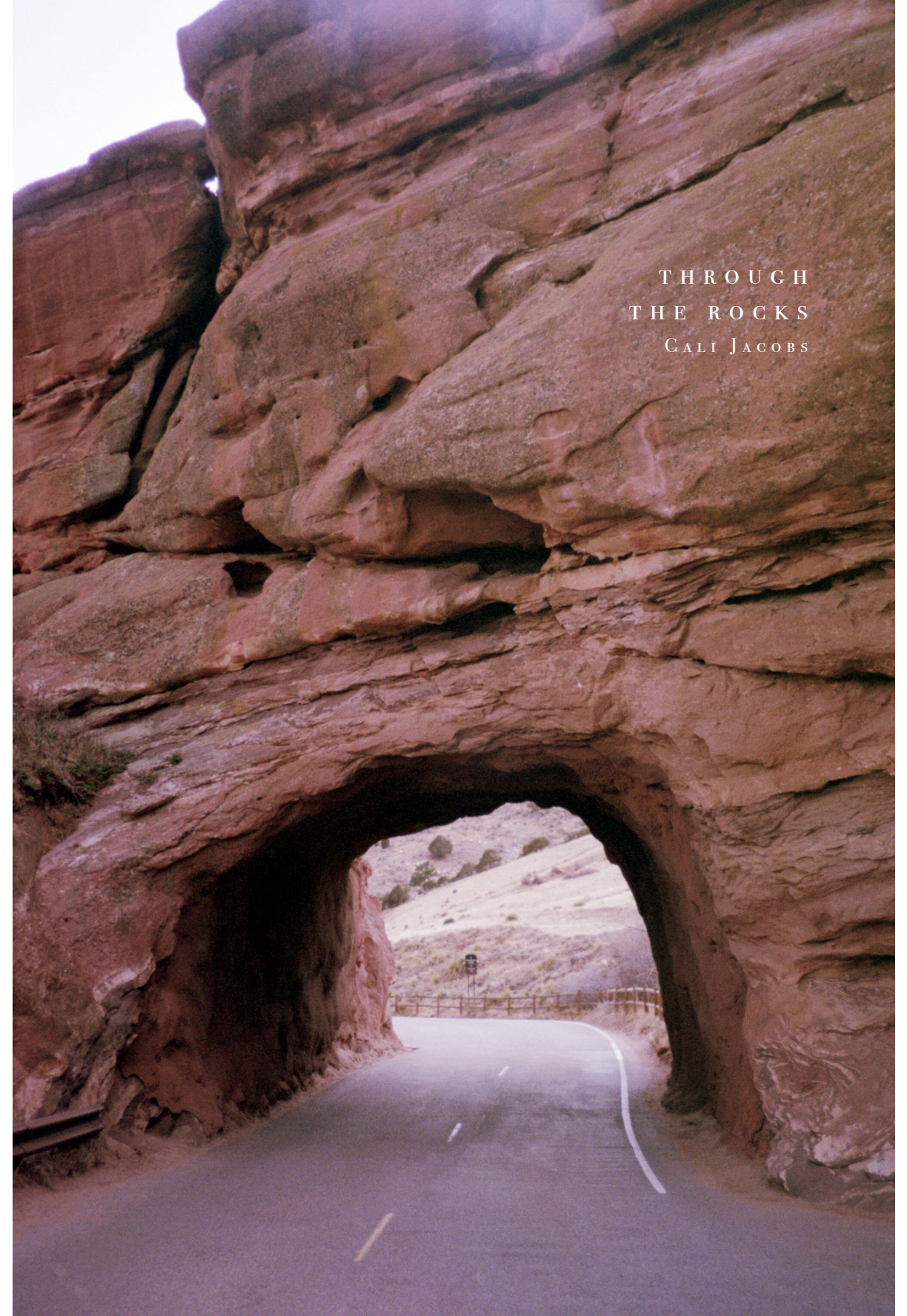
A S I T W E R E



Standing at the edge of the curb with an ache in his side, Theo thought of his apartment. His home, with his books and blankets, was just a few blocks away. He could practically smell the mildewed coats and dusty carpet from where he stood, waiting to cross the street. Ill at ease, he swayed back and forth from the force of the cars passing him. Oh, how he yearned for the comforts of home as the pain in his side grew with a fury. Alas, he persisted in his journey to, well... he wasn't quite sure yet. All he knew was a piece of him, that little piece stuck in his side, was urging him forward. So, as a break formed in the street in front of him, he stumbled off the stoop and walked to the other side.

It was a simple task, walking a few yards in the middle of a busy street at the center of a bustling city in the middle of the night, but he couldn't help it but to feel an anxiety about the whole thing. His shoes fit alright, having been his favorite of the lot, and his glasses were free of smudges but, aside from the bit of him writhing around inside, something was amiss. He felt the loose bits of asphalt crunch under his best pair of shoes step after step, until each step became more and more uneven and the rocks became pebbles, the pebbles became gravel, and the gravel became sand. The lights from the cars and buildings slowly dimmed as the world mutated from metal mayhem to a sea of golden sands.

He looked up from his feet to the blinding sun before him. How could this be? He thought. Ripples creased the air in front of him, slicing through the tops of the dunes. Sunlight glinted off each speck of sand, each time



THROUGH
THE ROCKS
CALI JACOBS



CHLOE, PLEASE PICK A SEAT
KAIT GRIFFIN

making Theo's wince deepen. Of course, the tall man stuck out of the unending landscape like the last standing light post from the forgotten city, not moving in any direction. He only stood, baffled.

At long last, his eyes adjusted and he began to move. A step forward; a step to the side. He could not choose a way to go. It's hard for a man of his disposition to make tough choices in a new land which was thrust upon him in such a way. He searched for a landmark, something to give him direction, when his squinted gaze fell upon a rather... small man. This was an understatement, indeed. Theo himself could scarcely see him with the glare on his specs and the sand in the air, so he mistook the man for a rock, or a stick, or maybe it was a broken piece of machinery. No matter, he thought. It gave him direction and he followed it onward.

The little man was but a short walk away, and only over one incline, but the trek had left Theo a right mess. The heat of the desert contributed slightly to his state, but it was the traitorous pit in his side that called the sweat to his brow and the limp to his legs. At the sight of his weariness, the man of small stature asked, "Good lord, man! What has happened to you?" Theo, still having not realized that what he had been after was not an inanimate object, but a tiny person just as alive as he, stared down at the man in awe. "Well... I erm... I'm not quite sure," Theo began, "I was following this here piece of me," He poked his right side, "and, well... it's taken me to you, I suppose." The little man lifted a little hand over his head. "Say no more." He said, "I know what this is. Do you feel a small thing inside your side ache and stab and try to claw and worm itself out of you?" "...Yes," said Theo "Well then, come here." Theo knelt down as close to the little man as he could, with his right side nearest. The

man put his ear up to the side of Theo that was troubling him. “Ah, it’s a simple fix, I’m sure. But it was not I that it was leading you to. I am but one step in your journey. A guide.”

This troubled Theo. He had been out of the house for at least two hours, which is far more than he would’ve liked on any other day. “Well, will you at least tell me where I am meant to go next?” The man smiled and leapt a great bound onto Theo’s shoulder. “I’ll show you.” He said, still grinning. He was quite chuffed to have a new expedition after such a long time of solitude. Theo took this as a prod forward and, with the pain a bit more noticeable in his side, they went on.

He was quite old for his size, at the edge of 400 years as Theo soon surmised as they spoke, but still as sharp as a tack (and as tall). The man told him his name, York, and many other great stories of all that he has done. He spoke of adventure and mischief and treachery. Grand tales of love and hate, seemingly too big for such a little person, rang out over the hills and struck something in Theo’s side. He felt the pain grow as his jealousy did, and took it as a sign to push away the feeling. All they did was walk and talk; Theo did most of the walking while York did most of the talking, as one might suspect for one with longer legs and the other with longer stories.

Theo avoided exhaustion for quite a while; possibly because he had forgotten all about his predicament as he was enraptured by little York’s tales. He had been so preoccupied that he paid no mind to where they were going, or even how long they had been going. Finally, York tapped a tiny finger on Theo’s shoulder and said, “This is our stop.” “Here?” said





Theo, “But there’s nothing! It looks the same as everywhere else we’ve been, how could this be where I’m supposed to—“

“Shush, you fool!” York yelled as he jumped off of his post and onto the sand, “Of course this isn’t the end—it’s only the beginning.”

As York said those last words, his little feet began to disappear into the sand. Then, slowly, the ground crawled its way further and further past his knees, arms, and head until he had vanished completely. Theo started to dig where York had been. Frantically, he clawed out handful after handful ‘til he too started to sink. “No! Stop!” He cried. He did not go as calmly as his little friend. He went down screaming and scratching and reaching for a life raft that wasn’t there until he was consumed.

Theo had lost his glasses in the chaos, so he wasn’t sure if it was just his poor vision or if there truly was a penny in front of him. With the choking sand gone at once, so was his fear. He had composed himself and so the world had done the same.

The street was not as busy as it was when Theo had left. He was back where he started — staring at his feet in the middle of the road. He put the penny he had spotted in his right pocket, and finished crossing the street. It was dark out, but the city seemed even brighter now than the land he had come from, so he did the same as he had done for the past few hours and walked until he found a spot that suited him. That spot ended up being a bench in a park across from a little bakery that smelled rather nice. The bit of him, on his lower right side, was still asking for attention, but the screams became whispers as he sat and thought.

That was quite a small man, he laughed to himself. He still wasn't quite sure what the point of all this was about. Theo was a silly, tall man so he sat for a while longer, looking into the bakery window. For such a small man, York lived a life as vast as the desert. As for the tall man, sitting in the dark smelling pastries, he only had a life the size of his five hundred square-foot apartment. He realized this now, seeing all sorts of people milling out of the bakery before him, all with lives and stories, and he bet none of them had any bit of themselves asking for a way out, for something to change. At the thought of this, the penny in his hip pocket began to move. It began with a shiver, then shimmied its way outside the fabric and onto his knee. It scabbled and flipped and dug itself into his leg. Theo swiped at it with the back of his hand, not yet grasping the curiosity of the situation. It dodged his attacks, then slammed itself into his palm.

Theo, still without his glasses, squinted at the face on the penny. "Why, isn't that funny! Old Yorkie, is that you?" He said to the object. Stranger things had happened that day, so when the penny responded, Theo listened, unflinchingly. The picture of York simply said, "Your journey's still not over, chap. It's only just beginning."

ENOCHLOPHOBIA
ADDISON BEASLEY



PAPHIOPEDILUM HELENAE

EMI KIMBROUGH





D R I F T W O O D
M I C H A E L P I C A R O N I

H O P E G R O W S O N T R E E S

It's 4 am.
The birds aren't even awake
And yet I am.
Traipsing through the dewy grass
Over the hill
Through the hunched swaying moss
Lazily holding on to the tired arms of
The grandmother oak tree
To the swing.
The swing has grown sad from rain
Now sagging in the middle of the bench.
The metal creaks with each rock:
Back and forth.
Back and forth.
Back and forth.
I find myself staring at the orange tree.
It hasn't borne fruit since I was a child
And yet every year it tries.
Each budding green never quite getting to yellow before some deer
Come to call.
The kind of faith I wish I had in myself.
That I could try again after failing.
But I don't.
I just keep rocking.

HEROINE

she is a knight errant
who goes wandering into the heart
of the Bower, to face again
that mortal foe – the hy-dra

it takes a prick
to slay this beast
a black and tarnished thing –

every fell hit and every crusade
multiplying the heads, her fixation,
a losing holy war when you are
both holy land and residing heathen

Helpen, Wehren, Heilen –

she buys her fate like indulgences,
the black medicine she administers
guarantees her overindulgence

and so she is felled by the beast
seeming like a classic Beowulf ending
until Wiglaf raises her from the dead
- not three days later
she is lost in Faerie Land:

some principles are injected
straight into the heart
“Let whoever can win glory before death”

these are her knightly principles
this is her tragic fate:
like Beowulf, she keeps on fighting
for a Beowulf ending



SAPPHO'S
ELEGANCE
ABBY NEFF

THALIA AND MELPOMENE:
THE REVERSIBLE MASKS



Shutting down is easier than shutting up.
I am skilled at biting my tongue off
Turn to lead
Watch it sink down
Dissolve in stomach acid of my indifference
I am made whole in the silence
To exist beyond perception
More quiet than a moth
With my masquerade mask
Even I cannot tell where I end
And the marionette strings begin
Pull the thread
Watch the words
Tumble out my bloody mouth
But it won't hurt
Porcelain feels nothing
Gild the cracks
I am made whole without the flesh



HAUNTING ME

Car.
Dimly lit

In the backseat,
I don't know how we fit.

So well.

I've never felt such comfort,
In a pair of arms.

While we lay here,
In a car.

Your hand touching my face.
My cheek against your chest.

I hear your heartbeat.

You move some strands of hair,
From my face.

My heart loses its pace.

Your eyes are so soft.
Talking to me in such a tender voice.

I'd stay here forever,
If I had a choice.

You ask me what I wanted to say.
Silence.

But you knew.
You asked me if I meant it too.

To that, I nod.
With a smile, that wasn't fraud.

But you knew.
You say, "because I love you too."

And then I feel your kiss.

You've never kissed me like this.

It was so kind.
But something came to dominate.

Something so intense.

I thought I might disintegrate.

Under your touch.

I love you so much.

The feelings start to pass.
The dimness lightens at last.

But now the tears start to fall.

I crashed into a wall.

Or is it you?

It's you.
Bringing me in after the fall.

A hug so kind.
I never thought I'd find.

Someone like you.

- "this is where my hell began."

NOT SO ALONE
CALI JACOBS



MY BROTHER IN STEM

You all forget us.
We see it.
We see it in your flying cars and rovers to Mars.
We see it in your pipelines and how you disregard life signs.
How can you innovate and yet forget who it's for?
You push us to assimilate.
To embrace your change.
To reshape our lives.
You
Persuade us to forgive your mistakes as you try to upgrade and escape.
You leave us
Abandoned on a wasteland you created for profit.
You forget us
As we no longer are a part of your future to build and sell.
You deem us unremarkable.
Unmarketable.
Our dreams and talents wasted as we are not builders of machines.
Nor laborers for your dreams.
You leave us nothing.
But we are writers and poets and teachers and believers and we have
created more from less.
So you forget us.
You will remember soon.



BUTTERCUPS AND LARKSPUR

EM I KIMBROUGH



SOMNIPHOBIA

I fear I have forgotten how to sleep.
How to fall into bed and let myself go
Go down into blissful unconsciousness
Without trepidation.

Instead, I have turned my bed into
Something different.
Something wrong.
I stay awake like a child, hiding Little Women under my pillow

And my mother no longer comes to catch me
Like she did when I was 12.
Now I fight sleep off as if it hurts.

But sleep doesn't hurt.
Waking up does.
Sleep convinces me everything is good
And the waking world reminds me it's not.

A SILHOUETTE OF
CHRONIC ILLNESS

A mother, a silhouette in the summer sun,
Tears slip, pain slides, looking out the kitchen window,
A daughter just wanting to do something fun.

“I can’t do this anymore, I’m done”
She means life, she means the pain
A mother, a silhouette in the summer sun

She believes she’s the extra causing her to be done
She encourages her to fight, to live, to be a mother,
A daughter just wanting to do something fun.


A mind in death’s grip, a body with pain’s thrum,
This life isn’t life, it’s just trying to survive
A mother, a silhouette in the summer sun

She has to convince her, or reality will be undone,
Life and death responsibility in the hands of a child
A daughter just wanting to do something fun

“I can’t do this anymore, I’m done”
A memory forever imprinted, ingrained
A mother, a silhouette in the summer sun
A daughter just wanting to do something fun



BROKEN AND DREDGED UP
TRISTAN BANKS



AMOR IN ROMA
ABBY NEFF

FIRST HEARTBREAK

heartbreak is like open heart surgery.
except,
there's no operating table,
no anesthesiologist to knock you out so you don't feel any pain,
no doctors with the proper tools to make sure the procedure goes well.

no.

heartbreak, is lying on your cold dorm room floor.
in the exact same spot where he last held you tightly and called you
beautiful,
with an open mortal-kombat-fatality-like wound.
and you're bleeding mercilessly.
while you feel your heartstrings break.

one,
by one,
by one.
like an out of tune violin

it's waking up in a hot pool of sweat at 5:30am
thinking it was all some sort of nightmare,
but you violently shake once more because you know it wasn't.

and you can't go back to sleep because your mind is wrapped about what
used to be,
when those were the exact same thoughts that used to put your mind at
ease.

but here i am,
crying snot-filled tears like Viola Davis
since i am in complete doubt of this parable that i've been faced with.

except i won't get any oscar nominations for these tears.
mine will come from me finally dragging myself out of bed.
like i'm not living off some synthetic heartbeat,
given to me by this pen,
that's helped curate some travesties Shakespeare would be jealous of.

because at least this kept me from flatlining.

and i may be an actor,
but i'm not acting here.

the curtain doesn't fall at night,
it's simply intermission.
and each new waking day is only another act in the show.

i don't wish this pain on any heart.

no one is invincible to this pain.
from the most fragile,

to the most bullet-proof.

because heartbreak is like open heart surgery.

when you become the doctor,
your pen becomes the anesthesiologist,
and your floor becomes the operating table,
for when your body finally decides to give out.



DOMESTIC DISPUTE

ADDISON BEASLEY

QUIET
MACK McCORMICK



MEMORY IS A RECEIPT

We passed along some track a field of Bison
bulk about like rotting bales of hairy
hay, not one moment spent for gaping mouths,
saying “the trains don’t wait for the dead”

And as my hands listed the charcoal
coals, those ancient bits for furnace
fire, your eyes began to trace the lines
that marked our tracks and fate

From night we chased the setting
sun, with fervor iron wrought
and wrath, some dying Father’s parting gift,
and zeal to drive the western path

And parted from your station
stop, passing some field of rotten Bison
bulk, I look for you among their number,
thinking “the trains don’t wait for the dead”

TELL ME FATHER

the colors of your youth
how the valley once bloomed
under the purple mountain shadows
how the pebbles once shimmered
under the blue spring water
how the falling winter snows
could blanket the landscape white
how the smoking night fire
melted your bones with red relief

And I will see
your snaking veins
the dripping drip
the sterile sheets
the blinking blip

And I will say:
Yes,
I can see



A COLLECTION OF THOUGHTS
DURING THESE GROWING PAINS

Entering your 20s

There's this odd period in life—it can be found between the ages of eighteen to twenty. It is when you're too young to have experienced the world, but too old to not be trying. It's this inevitable epiphany of having to recognize that time is real. However, when you're in college and you're entering your 20s, this reckoning looks a bit different. As those around you enter the workforce, become parents, and build families—you're studying for a degree you won't be getting if you don't pass chem 210. Entering your 20s is coming to terms with the decisions you've made and the path you've taken. Furthermore, it's also understanding that in this marathon called life—we're all running different races.

Ithaca

It's happened again. The overwhelming, almost suffocating, sensation of being exactly where I'm supposed to be has taken over my being. Prior to this moment, I've only experienced this feeling once in my life. It occurred on August 10th, 2020. After several long years of stating, "I'm going to Jacksonville University"—I had arrived. The place I planned to call home for the next four years, sung to me like Ithaca sung to Odysseus. It called for me, cheered for me, and acted as a beacon of hope and solace as I journeyed through my schooling career. However, as I begin to wrap up my junior year and begin to plan my life after JU, the melody of Ithaca has lowered to a murmur. It was not until this past fall that Ithaca roared

LOST IN A DESERT
AGIJA ELERTE



with the pride of a lion once more. I crossed state lines and wandered to the city of Boston, touring graduate schools and listening to the hymns of an ever so familiar song—knowing that my Ithaca is now calling me home.

Anomaly

I've been here before. The late nights and early mornings. The strenuous coursework and mountain of books that need to be read; I have seen this all before. The difference, this time around, is that I am not the one in need of saving. I am not drowning in my ambitions and goals to pass classes and be successful in my endeavors. I am not suffocating under the pressure of trying to maintain perfection. No, I am not struggling to stay afloat like those around me. Those days are years behind me, leaving me with nothing but the road of opportunity. It is on this road that I choose to help those around me. Using my past experiences to serve as walking stones in this sea of burnt-out students.

Therapy

Inhale. Exhale. Repeat. Four white walls, a single oak desk, and a cold leather couch. The memories of movies and their portrayal of the office of counseling services, leads me to believe they were exaggerating. There is no chaise lounge, sporadic paintings, or quirky art. No, there is simply an eerie feeling of being cornered and cold. Inhale. Exhale. Repeat. The process of breathing becomes difficult. My body begins to tremble and the world around me starts to spin. The hammering of my heartbeat, the clamminess of my palms, and the sweat alongst my brow reminds me of why I'm here. The elderly lady, her gentle smile, and suffocatingly happy aura antagonizes me. It pries open my lips to tell her the three words that



have been burning holes in my throat, “I need help,” --suddenly the four walls fade to yellow.

Letting Go

I miss you. I miss telling you about my day and hearing about yours. I miss creating new memories with you and laughing at old ones. I miss the person you were when I needed you the most. I miss the banter, the tears, and the moments that felt like forever. However, these periods of longing for what was and what could have been, have been spreading apart. Time is making this heart of mine mend. It is soothing the pain, stitching the cuts, and repairing what was previously broken. Time will continue to progress. I will continue to change, and this heart of mine will begin to understand that letting you go is what’s for the best and allowing others to occupy the space you left is okay.

Procrastination

At 2:00pm, I said I would start my homework then. It’s currently 2:07pm. I can’t start my homework at an odd time, I’ll wait till 2:10pm. Minutes that feel like seconds go by. Suddenly, it’s 2:36pm, I missed my starting time once again. I suppose I should wait for 3:00pm; when 3:00pm comes, then I will head to the library to work. A phone scroll here. A mindless Tic-Tok there. Before I know it, the wall clock states it’s 3:09pm. I tell myself; I will give myself grace, but I, who knows me better than anyone, knows that’s a false statement. Time and I will continue to dance this devilish tango, until the due date says “tomorrow.”



GREEK SAILOR

MICHAEL PICARONI

MISSION STATEMENT

Since 1970, The Aquarian has supported artists and authors to express themselves and share their creativity by producing a platform that encourages artistic expression through publication. The Aquarian Literary and Visual Arts Magazine has been a cornerstone of Jacksonville University's art community, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in creative works. We pride ourselves on being a part of JU's rich history. We would not be here without decades of dedicated students coming together to build the magazine and brave artists and writers willing to submit their work. We welcome poetry, prose, two-dimensional, three-dimensional, photography, and audio/video artistic pieces from the students of Jacksonville University. We continue to nurture and celebrate our University's creative community for years to come.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Aquarian is a student-run publication published annually at Jacksonville University, which includes literary and art submissions by current students. We welcome poetry, prose, two-dimensional, three-dimensional, photography, and audio/video works to be submitted during our Fall semester each year. We advertise by posting flyers, social media posts, word-of-mouth, and classroom visits during our submission period in the Fall semester before publication in the following Spring. Students may submit up to ten different pieces through our Submittable account attached to our website, www.ju.edu/aquarian. All submitted work must be original. If their work is accepted, students will receive an acceptance notice by email during the Spring semester before publication. All submitted works are evaluated by a voting process through Submittable by our entire team.

The Aquarian is a student-run publication, and there are opportunities to join our team at the beginning of each Fall semester. We advertise open spots by word-of-mouth, class visits, and our Spring semester club fair on campus. Our entire staff is involved in the voting process and the creation of each publication by participating in weekly meetings.

COLOPHON

The Aquarian works to encourage artistic expression at Jacksonville University by producing a platform through which students can express themselves. We achieved this goal by designing the 2023 publication, volume 53, which you hold in your hands. Together, our staff selected the theme of reflection for this volume as a representation of the introspection that comes with the college experience and the trials and tribulations that come with being a modern student in a post-pandemic world.

We received 181 total submissions in our Fall 2022 semester, and this publication holds our most highly voted for submissions which contains thirty-four poems, thirty-one 2D, zero 3D, five prose, thirty-four photography pieces, and one audio/video piece.

We printed 250 copies on 7x9 on 80# uncoated text. The typefaces used are Didot, Bodoni Smallcaps, Bodoni Oldstyle, and Baskerville. The magazines were printed by Raintree Graphics in Jacksonville, FL. The cover was designed by Violet King and was printed on #100 uncoated with perfect binding.

The Aquarian would like to thank Jacksonville University for supporting our mission and the Dolphin Media Board for providing funding for our endeavors. More specifically, we would like to thank the School of Humanities and School of Art and Design, and especially our Advisors for their continual support and encouragement. We would like to thank the Associated Collegiate Press conference for providing feedback on our 2022 magazine, as well as the Center for Gender+Sexuality for collaborating with us to host a Pride Poetry Slam. Finally, we want to extend a special thanks to the students who submitted pieces, contributing towards our mission to showcase the extraordinary work of our school.



A Q U A R I A N

Jacksonville University's Literature and Visual
Arts Review

2023

