

A horizontal band of marbled paper with a grey and white pattern, featuring wavy lines and small dark spots.

SCRIBENDI

Vol. 36

about us

SCRI•BÉN•DI / skribéndee /
participle (nom., pl., masc., gerundive/future passive part. of scribo, scribere
3rd conj.—“to write”) LATIN.
Those which must be written.

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Scribendi is an annual nonprofit literature and fine art magazine produced and published at the University of New Mexico Honors College by students, for students. *Scribendi* staff members work tirelessly throughout the year to produce the work of art you are holding in your hands, doing everything from soliciting submissions to selecting works, from copyediting to typesetting, from designing to producing the magazine. *Scribendi* uses a blind-jury process to select creative works from nearly nine hundred Western Regional Honors Council (WRHC) and National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) schools. *Scribendi* publishes creative nonfiction, foreign language, open media—a category limited only by the imagination—photography, poetry, short fiction, and visual art. The WRHC gives annual awards and \$250 prizes to WRHC students. *Scribendi* welcomes visiting staff members from WRHC schools through the National Student Exchange. The staff takes pride in providing a forum for fellow undergraduate honors students to publish their creative works.



FOREWORD

Flannery Cowan, Sierra Martinez, Spenser Willden

Digital Editor | Managing Editor | Communications Editor

As the editors of an arts and literature publication, we find ourselves immersed in art—soaking up the creativity and passion of the artist with each word read, each second watched, and each image observed. This is something we recognize as a gift. We know that in the moments of our deepest uncertainty and absence of joy, we can turn to art to renew our anticipation of tomorrow. While art may lack a definition that encapsulates its essence, whether we are its creators or casual appreciators, art grants us the opportunity to understand, explore, and reflect upon our deepest emotions. Each year, the staff enters the *Scribendi* process hoping to provide the space, both physical and otherwise, to bridge the gap between artist and audience. Last year we were tasked with the seemingly impossible job of keeping such a process alive while working entirely remotely. This year we reacquainted ourselves with the little joys and luxuries that only in-person experiences can offer: little chocolates left on our desks, long hours spent laughing in the office, even small talk and pleasantries before class. The time we spent together, working and bonding, nourished the development of this magazine as well as a series of long-lasting friendships.

The entire process would not have been possible without the inspiring works from our contributors, the tenacity of our staff, and the unwavering support of our faculty advisor, Amaris Ketcham. In the same way that our magazine has adapted, so too have our contributors, who have kept their passion and creativity alive amidst times of great adversity. It is because of their continued willingness to share their works that we are able to make this publication a reality, and we owe each of them the greatest of thanks. To our staff, whose explorative nature drives us to find interest beyond the surface and to expand our worldview and tastes, the joy you have brought to this process is evident on each page. We commend and appreciate you for your wit, expressiveness, and attention to detail. And finally, to Amaris. Thank you for encouraging and empowering us to lead confidently, have faith in ourselves, and appreciate the little things along the way. Thanks to you, no matter where we go, we will always remember to prance, enjoy the sun, and never forget that the truth is out there.

To the friends and family of the staff and contributors, thank you for your ongoing love and support; you are the foundation from which art blossoms.

To our readers, we hope you find art within these pages that illuminates the grandness of the little shared moments in your life that keep the anticipation of tomorrow alive. Explore and enjoy.

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WRHC AWARD WINNER

NEGATIVE ENTROPY

Kyra Jee
Chapman University

The moon's reflection falls through glass window onto glass table — rolls
right into the empty bowl of peaches.
Don't you want to eat it? Scoop it up and crack it apart? Is there a pit
seeded deep inside the moon? We take the moon in our hands and
bite it.

October 2020 caps both ends with full moons. The 1st and the 31st.
Maybe the 1st thought it would be overshadowed. I think it
overcompensated.
A clementine sits where the moon ought to be.
A rotted clementine, wretched-toned and looming. I understand now,
not for the first time but in immediate resurgence,
why ancients called celestial bodies divine. Unearthly.
The air's gone thick and purple. All else is
blank. No clouds. No stars. Atrocity abnormal scared them away. Pollutants dye.
Someday, we'll be the ancients.

As night goes on,
the clementine moon becomes familiar. Yes, *there's* the rabbit
carved into lunar crust. Yes, *there's* the halo-corona, clementine colored and
sanded to a perfect sphere.
The mind will adapt to anything,
so long as it reminds of home.
So this moon is darker than normal — how curious!
We grow intimate with our warning signs.

WASATCH WOOD

AFTER DYLAN THOMAS'S *UNDER MILK WOOD*

Preston Waddoups

Utah State University

To start at the start,
it's summer, a moonlit suburb, starless.
Potholed roads show shiny stones
all lit by light of midnight's lamps,
and breathe their heat of black coals left
from midday's sun-soaked bonfire.
But breathing weak, the heat is swept
on down the street, on past my place
of childhood sleep: the house on Raymond Road.

A willow wakes me with the whispering sounds
of its hush-hush meeting with the wind that wound
from up the towering mountains, down
to me from Wasatch Wood.

I join the wind on a walk to find,
parked in a gutter that green weeds line,
an old Chevrolet with windows saying
"God Bless the USA."
Other remains of the celebration
of the bloodstained birth of God's chosen nation
(another triumphant window proclaims)
decay near fruit trees on Village Way:
cups and plates all soaked by sprinklers,
star-spangled garbage in the moon's white rays.



I walk on further, past the trash.
Water lies still in a white bird bath
where an aspen leaf lies, a lazy raft
while the waning wind does a weary dance
with a sun-bleached flag made see-through and gold
by the naked light of the front porch bulbs
that give all their watts to this worn-out waltz,
and leaving dark the deep green lawn
leaves even darker the deep red beyond,
in roses by the sidewalk.

And red and green are back there too,
above the porch where ivy grew in green,
and reached around the bricks that seem
a burgundy in the moonlight.
I walked here once when I was young
to see a boy I knew from church;
we hid in the prickly rosebush there,
to see if we tricked the cars out there
with our nickel-eyed cardboard cat.

But the cars have all left. Too late. Too late?
I take a left along the straight
smooth vinyl fence, the moon glowing mark
of Davis land and the last farm left.
Mr. and Mrs. Davis sleep
sound in their sprawling empty nest
that sits amid a barren field
where big black lumps of Angus lie,
as if they fell from the big black sky,
and look about as dead.
The glowing fence now faintly hums;
it's on, unlike the night
I tried to shock myself
in the childish machismo, smiling and dumb,
of a nine-year-old hero on Halloween.

Chuckling, old man Davis knew
exactly what young boys would do
to prove that they were men.

And up ahead, beyond the field,
the streetlights start again
lighting brightly Country Way with
all its ugly stucco homes.
They stuck where orchards used to grow.
It used to be just orchards here,
those orchards and the church
where hunched old men and neighbors spoke
of God, His ways, His easy yoke
and how, in His power so infinite and good,
He created our beautiful Wasatch Wood
that stands above the fields, the land
of cows and Christians
of cars and flags,
of trash and roses and the willow that sags
of red brick and ivy,
of the white church and streetlights
of all my (mostly) innocent nights,
of salad days and all the ways
my time was lost in a summer haze
below my Wasatch Wood,

those timeless trees that watch the ivy
creeping further every year,
those trees that watch me walking now
to say goodbye to the potholed streets
all littered with sweetly rotting dreams
of eighteen careless years.

visual art

EHEHEHE, WISDOM

Allison Peschek
University of Montana



relief linocut in ink on paper, 11" x 9"

EL DETENIDO

Raven Otero-Symphony

The University of New Mexico

Rojo: del amor, de nuestros corazones
Azul: por mis ojos, te doy mil bendiciones
y blanco: eres el lirio de mi existencia
blanco: quiero probar su inocencia
En las estrellas Él nos conoce a todos por nombre
En las franjas hay rebelión entre nuestros hombres

Oye, mi patriota,
¿Dónde estaba mi consentimiento
para nuestra revolución?

Oye, el leal,
¡Escucha que mis dolorosos
son la declaración!

Rojo: de sangre, el vino de la Tierra
Azul: lágrimas, la alianza de esta guerra
y blanco: eres la paloma volando por miasma
blanco: ¿cuánto tiempo hasta serás un fantasma?
En las estrellas hay monstruos con cárceles, con poder
En las franjas hay amor siendo enseñando esconder

THE DETAINEE

Red: of love, of our hearts
Blue: through my eyes, I give you a thousand blessings
and white: you are the lily of my existence
white: I want to prove your innocence
In the stars He knows us all by name
In the stripes there is rebellion among our men

Oh, my patriot,
Where was my consent
for our revolution?

Oh, loyal one,
Hear that my sorrows
are the declaration!

Red: of blood, the wine of the Earth
Blue: tears, the alliance of this war
and white: you are the dove flying through fumes
white: how long will you be a ghost?
In the stars there are monsters with prisons, with power
In the stripes there is love being taught to hide

*English translation by
Raven Otero-Symphony*

Photography

SWARM

J Landolina
The University of New Mexico



35mm black and white film

poetry

INTERVIEW FROM ACROSS GARDEN STREET

Kai Broach
Western Washington University

Garrulous sunflower quartet:
could you sing to me
for a moment?

Which of you is the lover?
The leaver?
The liar?
The leader?

Which the hopeless romantic
who eloped with the sun,
claiming its inexhaustible softness
as theirs alone

(like most love,
an incomprehensible act of greed
and widely unpopular)?

Which the perennial bachelor,
flitting from

leaf to leaf
germ to seed
stem to stalk
dust to clay
breath to breath
velvet ray to velvet ray?

Which dreams
they are an emperor penguin
who only knows the sun
as a rare
and unimportant
gray disk?

Which watches its companions
caress, carouse, create:
 not paternal
 not filial
 not curious
 not envious
 not loving
 not loathing
 not competing
 not conspiring
 not seeing
 not blind
the way the tides watch the moon?



poetry

BOISE WEARS OCTOBER

Fiona Martinez

Western Washington University

The water below the red bridge from where we leapt
this summer, squinting and gasping,
is nearly brown with stones
and the bodies of baby trout reflecting.
The water so shallow and icy
only fly-fishers will wade it.

The leaves are all saturated or ghostly by now.

The ducks rest with heads tucked into down,
sleeping in the center of the channel.
Musty pale blue berries, insignificant and crumbly,
grow on river bushes, nudge under fences.
The last crickets trip over my boots,
their clicking washed out by wind's eager arrival.

On Warm Springs,
I pass the yard sale where dead Boise royalty
drape their tarnished jewelry,
spread stories, and meet neighbors they
know from walk-bys, leashed dogs, and children's names.

Down the street,
a dinky stand of free cake and quarter hot dogs
is like a homecoming.
Neighbors pay cash for their cartons of two percent milk,
trying to remember the names
of one-hit wonder bands,
the known tunes echoing out over fluorescents.

In the botanical garden,
I know where the wild strawberries grow.
Tiny bursts of red eaten with some leafy stem,
south of where the koi have reigned for eighteen years,
kings of the leaf boats and Cheerios.

The city sanded down the sidewalk where I used to jump
on my scooter
over two-inch rips from the roots
of a tree with a blue moon face.

Neighbors pass in disjointed groups.
I don't know all their names, but
they tell me they've seen me grow.

There is comfort in that,
how they stop to say hello, even if
they think they'll see me again tomorrow
and call me by my sister's name.

poetry

UINTA PLATEAU

Preston Waddoups

Utah State University

Empty mountain altar:
white sunbeams cut through gyring clouds
to you, the highest, utmost, barest
piece of stony ground

where nothing grows.
The scraggly rising pines stop right
below the final rim, afraid
of climbing to the crest,

and afraid for good reason!
For what deserves to burn in those beams,
and what could God ever need from Life,
that scraggly, sap-filled thing?

short fiction

THE PRECIPICE

Donny now sits atop a steep precipice in such a way that both of his legs dangle off the edge. A brief compendium concerning Donny's character and a summary of the day at hand is necessary in order to fully comprehend his current state of mind. The compendium: Donny is neither smart nor dumb. He is not ugly nor is he handsome by any means. He is not weak, yet he is not strong or athletic. Donny's father is a plumber, his mother a maid, and both work more than their fair share of hours. As a result, Donny does not see them much, and when he does, they are rather despondent, both to each other and to him. Donny lives as an only child in a medium-sized house,

Peyton Mower

Brigham Young University

where he sleeps on a twin bed in a small room. The walls of his room are barren.

Now, it is important to note, that although the reader may take the information above and write Donny off as a completely unremarkable and

ordinary human being, there are several aspects of his personality that make him unique. These distinctions could be classified as the three things that Donny loves.

First of all, Donny loves art. He loves everything about art. He loves the concept of it—that it encompasses such a broad spectrum of *things*. What can be art? Well, that's up to the observer to decide. This freedom is what appeals to Donny—art has always been something that *he*

controls. *He* gets to classify what *he* thinks is art, and what *he* thinks isn't art, and what *he* thinks is good art, and what *he* thinks is bad art. It is through this kaleidoscope of creative expression that Donny sees the world. Every beautiful sunset is a photograph from the gods, dedicated to the concluding day. Every towering skyscraper is a sculpture signifying the intensity of mankind's industry. When Donny draws, paints, or sketches, it is a moment in which he can symbolically trap those scenes and objects that he considers truly beautiful, the things that he considers art.

Underneath his twin-sized bed in his small room with the barren walls sit piles of these drawings, paintings, and sketches. After entering Donny's room, a casual observer might say that it is, perhaps, the most boring room they have ever seen. However, if one were to take a moment to ruffle through the thousands of scenes, people, and places that lie underneath his bed, their boredom would be replaced by wonder.

Second of all, Donny loves his dog. Now readers may ask themselves, "How does this make Donny unique? Every human being with a functional heart loves their dog." But Donny loves his dog with his *whole* heart.

Ten years ago, when Donny was six, as he walked past the dump on his way home from school, he heard the pitiful, piercing squeal of a small soul in anguish. Such sounds—those of a despairing life—elicit an anxious discomfort in even the numbest of human beings. This discomfort can only be quelled through the cessation of the sound itself. And so, Donny hopped the fence that surrounded the

dump and rummaged through the garbage until he found the source of the squealing. Inside of a dirty trash bag, there was a small, helpless puppy. As Donny lifted the tiny creature from its plastic residence, its screeching ceased, and it began to lick his hand in frantic gratitude. This was the first sign of affection Donny could remember feeling in his life. After receiving permission from his indifferent parents to keep the dog, Donny named him Plastic, in honor of the bag from which he hailed. From that moment forward, Donny and Plastic were the best of friends. Many of the papers underneath Donny's bed depict Plastic, because Donny thinks Plastic is one of the most wonderful works of art that ever entered his life.

It is quite conceivable that the bond between these two souls subsequently became so strong as a consequence of their likeness. Physically, Donny may not have been in such dire straits as Plastic was that day. However, a disconsolate spirit is just as terminal as a physical malady, and the resulting toll paid by Donny due to the wrathful indifference of those surrounding him had been hollowing out his soul as surely as that bag was slowly suffocating Plastic. Accordingly, Plastic's salvation was reciprocated the moment he licked Donny's hand.

Third and final among the things Donny loves is what he considers to be the best piece of art on the face of Mother Earth: Susie Shelton. In order to explain the relationship between Donny and Susie, a short anecdote must be recounted.

When Donny was eight, two years after he became acquainted with Plastic, a family moved in three houses

Every human
being with a
functional heart
loves their dog.

down from where they lived. One day, as Donny and Plastic were exploring the woods behind their house, as they often did in the summer, Donny was shocked (and rather dismayed) to find a *girl* playing in *their* woods. However, as Donny was (and is) a rather nonconfrontational boy, he began to turn around and walk the other way. Better to ignore this minor infraction of intrusion than to interact with a *girl*. Although Donny had made up his mind, Plastic did not share this predilection toward avoidance, and upon realizing that there was something new to smell in these woods, he set off in the direction of the girl. The reader can imagine Donny's astonishment when he heard the sound of his beloved companion galloping toward the one part of the woods he did not want to go. He wheeled around and yelled, "Plastic!"

The girl heard the yell and looked up. Donny became even further astonished (so astonished, in fact, that his jaw hung open as if he were in a cartoon) when the girl, upon realizing that a dog was running at full speed in her direction, smiled and opened her arms in preparation for the embrace of the exuberant animal. Plastic leapt into her arms and they both fell to the ground. The dog began sniffing and licking excitedly, as dogs often do with novel things. Donny, unsure of what to do, hurriedly approached the two and looked down at them. The girl was giggling—a sound that made Donny even more uncomfortable.

After a fit of laughter, the girl turned and looked directly up at Donny. He almost fell over.

Occasionally, in each of our subjective realms of perception, we stumble across something that is so

indescribably beautiful as to rob us of our ability to function normally and render us utterly incapacitated.

Feasibly, anyone else that would have seen Susie Shelton in that instance, would have just seen a young red-headed girl with freckles generously distributed across her face. They would have only seen a charming smile and green eyes, but Donny saw art. Donny saw what he could only describe as an anomaly. Something so incongruously beautiful in comparison to the rest of the world that his fingers itched for a pencil or a pen. Anything that he could use to create an image of this moment before it dissipated like a dream.

Donny did not know how much time had passed before he realized she was speaking. He snapped from his reverie but continued to stare. The girl—realizing that Donny had not heard her—repeated herself. "Is this your dog?"

Donny glanced at Plastic and then directed his gaze back to the girl. His mouth opened but he said nothing. The girl was unfazed by his silence and continued asking questions.

"What's his name?"

"Plastic." The verbal component of Donny's mind was running on autopilot. He was unable to stop staring.

The girl looked down and giggled at the name Plastic. Then she looked back up at Donny with her shockingly green eyes. He shuddered.

"What's your name?" She was smiling the widest and tallest smile Donny had ever seen.

"Donny."

"Donny and Plastic." Her smile got even bigger, "I'm Susan, but I like Susie 'cause it's more funner than Susan."

He snapped from
his reverie but
continued to stare.

"Why're you in our woods?" Donny's voice sounded accusatory, though it was shaking. After processing as much of his current situation as he could, he was irritated that this girl had entered his sanctuary and disturbed his peace with her abnormality.

The girl giggled yet again, and Donny blushed. "They aren't your woods, silly; you can't own woods."

"Yes, they are. No one else comes here." This was true. All the other kids in the neighborhood were afraid of the woods, and, by association, quite afraid of Donny and his dog.

"I'm here," she said. This was also true. "Guess that means they're my woods, too. We can share."

Donny could not argue with such infallible logic. When he failed to respond, Susie asked a question. "Do you want to see something cool?"

Before he could reply, Susie was walking, and Plastic followed with a wagging tail. Donny sighed deeply and started walking with them.

Susie walked deep into the woods, deeper than Donny had thought the woods could go. Eventually they came upon a tall and steep ledge that overlooked a valley. One could call it a precipice.

Susie walked straight to the edge and sat down in such a way that her legs dangled. Then she turned around—still smiling—and patted the seat next to her. Donny groaned inwardly. He apprehensively advanced until he was about five feet away from the edge, and then he sat in the dirt. Susie shrugged and looked out at the valley.

"It's like we're on top of the world." Her eyes scanned the horizon admiringly.

Donny thought that was a true statement, but he also thought that it would be pretty easy to fall from the top of the world: a chance he was not willing to take.

They sat pensively while they looked out over the valley. After a while, Susie turned to look at Donny again and smiled. "Do you want to be my friend?"

This question struck Donny dumb, so he just nodded. Susie pumped her fist in the air triumphantly. They were friends.

And then she started talking. She talked about her parents, how she was an only child. She didn't see her parents very much. She talked about the place she had moved from. About her new house. Her father's new job. How much she loved nature. About everything. And Donny just listened. Really and truly listened. He listened with the intensity of a boy who never had anyone to listen to.

After that, the days passed in a similar fashion. Every day, after school, the three of them would roam around the woods while Susie talked and Donny listened. Occasionally she asked him a question, and he provided a short answer. In this way, Susie came to know Donny better than anyone else, despite the rather small amount of information he provided. Toward the close of each day, they ventured deep into the woods, back to the precipice. Susie sat and dangled her legs, and Donny sat five feet away. Then, Susie talked until the sun went down. When it became dark, they walked back together—Susie talking all the while—to their respective homes.

These days at the precipice expanded the scope of Donny's life. He went from loving only two things—art and Plastic—to loving three things: art, Plastic, and Susie.

Now that the compendium concerning Donny is concluded, it would be wise to return to the present day.

There are days in every human being's life that could be classified as malicious by design. As if the day itself were crafted by the very Architect of Unhappiness. All twenty-four hours progress in such a way that there seems to be a blueprint laid out which outlines all the different ways to destroy the contentment of a given individual. Some attribute this phenomenon to a god, some to a devil. Perhaps it may be coincidental. But these days of dejection unequivocally occur, however infrequent they may be, and those who have lived through them will testify to their

bitterness. The day that we will now examine happens to be one of those days.

Donny woke up early, as was his habit. He would wake up at five o'clock in the morning—sometimes even earlier—and use the time before school to draw, paint, and sketch. Excluding his time with Susie at the precipice, this was his favorite part of each day.

After waking, Donny proceeded to toss his sheets onto Plastic—who was sleeping beside him, as the animal always did—in order to wake the dog in the exact same fashion he did every morning. He then walked to his drawer, extracted his art supplies and turned back toward his bed.

Plastic had not stirred.

Donny dropped his supplies and approached his pet. Upon moving the sheets from Plastic's face, he saw that the dog's eyes were still closed. Donny tried to reassure himself that this could be a normal product of Plastic getting older. The dog had been having a rather difficult time throughout the past year. He was ten years old, after all. Donny shook his friend.

Plastic's body was cold.

The state of grief that comes directly after a loss is indescribable. This grief is amplified when the loss is one of importance. The amplification is tenfold when the loss is one of utmost importance. Any attempt to relate one's emotion in such a time is futile. The world simply transforms into a whirlwind of chaos and misery from which one cannot escape until the grieving process is complete.

So, Donny cried.

It should be mentioned that Donny never cried. He could not remember the last time he cried. He didn't see the point of it. He could always express his emotion in a more apt and productive way through his art. This time, however, art did not seem sufficient. So, Donny wept like a boy who had just lost his best friend. Because he had.

He cried until he had no tears left. When he couldn't cry anymore, he embraced his numbness. He would need it for what he had to do next.

Donny picked up the lifeless body of the creature whom he had cared for dearly for ten years. He opened the door to his backyard. It was raining.

He carried his dog to his favorite part of the woods. There were often rabbits there, and Plastic loved to chase them to-and-fro as Donny listened to Susie. Donny then laid Plastic's body down with an ineffable tenderness onto the wet earth. Then he started to cry again. He waited for the numbness to come back as his tears fell unnoticed with the rain.

When it returned, Donny walked back home and went into his garage. Both his parents and their cars were gone, as they had been every day for the past ten years. He grabbed a shovel and returned to Plastic. He started to dig and didn't stop until the hole was big enough. He was scared to stop moving, scared that the lack of motion would open holes through which the numbness could escape. When the hole was dug, Donny lifted Plastic's body and, with an affection that could only be displayed by a boy to his dog, placed it tenderly in the grave. Donny began filling the hole as to avoid stillness and the emotions that would accompany it. When it was done, he found a large stone and placed it where a headstone would be.

The actions of a lamenting human being are often bemusing. Grief affects each individual differently. In many cases, as a futile attempt to return to normalcy, the grieving soul may go through the motions. After all, "the motions" are what constitute normalcy are they not? And so, in order to continue the constant movement that was allowing him to maintain the numbness he felt, Donny retrieved his backpack and walked to school, as he did every morning. It was still raining.

He had missed his first class, so he walked to his second. As he entered the classroom and approached his seat,

Susie shot him a concerned smile. The previous year they had signed up for all the same classes. They had been friends for eight years, after all. Today, as he walked in—wet, dirty, and numb—he failed to notice she was there. He sat down behind her.

"Are you okay?" She turned and whispered. Donny nodded. Susie did not look convinced. "You don't look okay."

"Ms. Shelton? I'm sure you two are having a very important conversation, but please leave it until after our lesson." Susie turned back toward the middle-aged man who was their teacher and apologized. Through the rest of the lecture, she occasionally glanced worriedly back at Donny. Again, Donny did not notice.

At the conclusion of the class, they walked out into the hallway to Donny's locker so he could get his lunch. He did not have a lunch that day; as we have seen, he did not have time to prepare it. But these were "the motions." Donny started to open his locker because it was something he did every day, and he had to keep moving. It didn't take long for him to open it and find an almost completely empty locker. Only his sketch book sat on the top shelf. But there was no lunch. And he was not moving. He did not know what to do next. This was not part of "the motions."

"Why weren't you in first period? And why are you covered in mud? What happened, Donny?" Susie gazed intently at him, but he could not make eye contact.

Before Donny could answer (or refuse to answer), he heard Jack. Whether it be a product of insecurity or malevolence, there has always been, and will always be,

individuals who possess some latent, sadistic desire to belittle others. Jack was among the members of this group.

And Donny was among his favorite victims, in part due to the fact that he never fought back, and in equal part due to the fact that Susie fought for him. Jack thought that was funny. A *girl* standing up for someone who was supposed to be a *man*. This made Donny an easy target. And Jack loved easy targets.

"Hey, look. Van Gogh and Fire Crotch." This elicited a snicker from Jack's two cronies, who flanked him on both sides.

"Shut the hell up, Jack, or I'll break your damn nose." While Susie defended him, Donny stared

at the place where his lunch should have been.

"Aw, that's cute, standing up for your little boyfriend. Hey Van Gogh, why don't you chop your ear off and give it to sweet little Susan here?" Jack tugged on one of Donny's ears. Donny barely noticed. What he did notice was that he was not moving. And that his emotions were slowly eating away at the numbness that he was trying so hard to maintain.

"Really clever, Jack." Susie's hands were balled into fists. "You don't think this pathetic little freak is in love with you?" Jack continued, unfazed. He reached forward and snatched Donny's sketchbook out of his locker. "I bet this thing is full of pictures of you."

Now, ordinarily, this is the point where Donny would have intervened, and attempted to take his sketchbook back, because Jack was correct. This sketchbook had many depictions of Susie, because, as was previously mentioned, Donny thought she was the best piece of art on the face of Mother Earth. Of course, it also had sketches of Plastic,

"Hey, look.
Van Gogh
and
Fire Crotch."

sunsets, and a hundred other things, but this meant little to Jack. The thought of Susie knowing that he frequently drew pictures of her would usually have mortified Donny, but he was currently trying, with all of his strength, to remain numb. And so, Donny stood and stared at the place where his lunch would have been if he had not had to bury his best friend that morning.

Jack turned the pages and ripped out the many depictions of Susie, throwing them on the ground at her feet, with the efficiency of a bully trying to make a point.

As Donny finally realized what was happening, the threads that held up his façade of numbness snapped, and emotion began to overcome him. He turned and looked at Susie, who was staring at all the expertly drawn sketches of her falling to the ground. He could not quite discern what the emotion displayed on her face was. Pity? Shame? Confusion? Amazement? Whatever it was, he could no longer stand his ground, because tears were forcing their way out of his eyes.

Donny began to run.

He could vaguely hear Jack and his cronies laughing, Susie calling after him, and the bell ringing, but he tried to concentrate on running. As he exited the school and entered the rain, he began to run faster until he was sprinting in the direction of his home.

When he arrived, he ran down the stairs toward his room. All he wanted was to lie on his bed and sob. Sob until he was numb again. However, as his shoe hit the floor of his basement, he realized there was an ankle-high layer of water covering the floor.

Donny paused at the bottom of the stairs. He knew what this meant, but his mind lacked the ability to process it. The reader may recall that Donny kept every single one of his paintings, drawings, and sketches underneath his bed.

The gutter on Donny's roof had needed replacement for several years. However, as a consequence of his father's busy work schedule, it remained in disrepair until this fateful day, when the rusty screws holding the part of the gutter directly over Donny's window well had snapped. Accordingly, Donny's room, along with the entirety of his basement, had flooded.

Donny walked to his bedroom and fell to his knees next to his bed. As the water soaked his pants, he willed himself to look underneath.

Everything was ruined.

He pulled the top paper off one of the stacks. It was a watercolor he had painted of Plastic, years ago. Wetness had demented the portrait in such a way that Plastic was just a blob of brown and gray.

The burden of life is one that we all carry. Sometimes it's heavier than others. And sometimes it gets so heavy that we just want to drop it.

So, Donny stood up. He walked up the stairs and out his back door. Then he walked deep into the woods until he arrived at the precipice. But this time he did not stop five feet short of the edge. We arrive in the present moment.

Donny, legs dangling, is out of tears yet again. But this time, the numbness is not returning—just visceral emotion.

It is difficult to think of the future when one cannot come to terms with the recent past. Donny sits and thinks of the

recent past and about how easy it is to fall from the top of the world.

Donny does not know how long he has been sitting on the top of the precipice when he hears footsteps on the ground behind him. He knows who it is.

Oftentimes, one is instructed—by context—to remain silent, no matter how much they may want to say.

Susie sits down five feet away from him.

And he starts talking.

And she just listens. Really and truly listens.

LIFE GIVER

Amy Griffin

Brigham Young University

For Her part, Woman gracefully dresses Her breasts
Perfumes, and undresses.
Perhaps he'll prefer more exposure.
With hormones and ores, She adorns Her best parts

Perfumes, and undresses.
Intricate symphonies disrupted by synthesized instruments.
With hormones and ores, She adorns Her best parts
Flattens Her hair and plumps it back up.

Intricate symphonies disrupted by synthesized instruments
She smooths over lotions, emotions, and covers Her skin with a pigment of health
Flattens Her hair and plumps it back up.
She shaves, nicking Herself on skin not meant to see blades.

She smooths over lotions, emotions, and covers Her skin with a pigment of health
She bears with a smile the heat and the pain, only growing with age, the ache.
She shaves, nicking Herself on skin not meant to see blades.
Conceives.

She bears with a smile the heat and the pain, only growing with age, the ache.
She holds and warms for months, carrying softly One who will bear the same weight,
Conceives.
Pushing Her through war and carnage and fragments of bones.

She holds and warms for months, carrying softly One who will bear the same weight,
Sewing Herself back up, painfully pulling for one extra stitch.
Pushing Her through war and carnage and fragments of bones.
Straightens Her spine and begins the dance once more.

Sewing Herself back up, painfully pulling for one extra stitch.
And as She returns to dress Her breasts, noticing misshapes and pockets and pores,
Straightens Her spine and begins the dance once more.
She bleeds, cries, and nurses.

And as She returns to dress Her breasts, noticing misshapes and pockets and pores,
Life giver,
She bleeds, cries, and nurses.
Her own gravedigger.

Life giver,
(For his part, Man arrives late. PillPack in hand with two clearly cracked open.)
Her own gravedigger.
(It's all that he needs. It's all he ever will.)

(For his part, Man arrives late. PillPack in hand with two clearly cracked open.)
Perhaps he'll prefer more exposure.
(It's all that he needs. It's all he ever will.)
For Her part, Woman gracefully dresses Her breasts.

creative nonfiction

AN APRIL SWIM

I push through the water like a frog, nearing three screaming girls fighting to win balance over a pool floatie. The hairs on my arms have calmed from the shock of chilled water and my body is yearning for more. More numbing pain, the welcome kind. My feet are heavy from my sandals and their soaked straps rub at my ankles, tugging taut around my big toes. I glide as smoothly as I can out to where I have to strain my neck just barely to keep my hair from getting wet. Each time I feel a soft toss of lake water along the nape of my neck I raise myself further.

My lips hover inches above, so close to inhaling algae bits, startlingly cold and living water. The smell of suntan lotion has faded into the clear, honest scent of the lake. Clearer than the water itself, where each reflection comes

Fiona Martinez

Western Washington University

back speckled and distorted. My shaking breath stills, and the buzz of barbeques, pebble tossing, and chattering on beach towels, falls away into the lull of water lapping at my skin. My head stays keen, aloft, as my eyes wander to the hills. Oh, the hills!

I am struck by a thought: This is the most beautiful lake I have ever swum in. And I repeat it, as though to get in touch with the statement. The words "most beautiful" starting to quiver out of my lips. I glance about to see if anyone has heard, perhaps the screaming girls will believe me to be delusional. But I am alone. My friend is drifting off under shades, legs drip-drying on a bathroom towel many feet away. I am alone. Alone with the lake. In the cold that should feel colder.

9.75" x 14.5" screenprint with gold leaf accents on stonehenge paper



visual art

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD WINNER

MODERN MADONNA

Rachael Buffett
The University of New Mexico

IMPERSONAL LOVE

Alisha Foster

University of Washington

I think the lonely are attuned to more love than most.
Eyes in the dark, finding every faint glow.
Millions of stars when our closest star is gone.

I order a pupusa for \$6. For free,
I sit in the corner, turn invisible,
and watch the trio of staff give birth
to takeout orders.

Warm light from within their kitchen.
Murmurs of the HVAC and soft sizzles. Occasional Spanish, slight oily fragrance.

My senses are wide, I drink it in like soup. How loved those recipients are, blessed
with the swift and tender care of six hands they'll never see?

I carry my box home in the rain,
high on my thank you to each cook,
holding that hot heartbeat
swaddled safe and sound
in two kinds of plastic.
I fold it up like a prayer and eat, feel it fill me.
Beans, chicken, spinach, corn, oil,
and the six hands that fed me seem
to cup my cheek and
smooth my hair and
rub my tired back.

Tenderness in your throat.
The edible end of a stranger's workday.
You learn to appreciate love like that
when the sun is gone.

archival pigment print



photography

UPSIDE DOWN

Zubayr Mohammad
University of California, Davis



photography

NATURE IS HEALING

Brieanne McGrath
Everett Community College



archival pigment print

short fiction

TO PLANT A GARDEN

I sat in the garden for hours that day, brushing my fingertips across the soft, green leaves of the strawberry patch. I must have been a sight, sitting against the peeling wooden fence, pressed slacks sinking into the dry dirt of the garden, tie draped like an ill-chosen decoration over the cherry tomatoes' crowded cages. The rain had stopped coming years ago, sometime after I first left home. I wonder if mother had sat in this garden without me and remembered the days when we rolled in mud and ate fresh fruit like it was the best food we had tasted in our lives. Did she sit out here on her hands and knees, digging fingers into soft soil, crying silent tears as I do now? Oh, the cruelty of fate as I kneel now in

Caylee Caldwell

Western Washington University

her place, and before I can think, I am tearing up the carrots before they've even grown, ripping up the potato leaves, tearing down the tomato cages, and shredding the strawberry flower buds. I scream into the dead confetti greens, dirt across my cheeks like war

paint, and I sob.

Mother had started the garden way back when the rains still came in springtime. We would sit together on the deck and drink warm lemonade and sing loud songs that neither of us knew very well. On our hands and knees out there by the fence, she had said that the yard was too brown as she wiped wet mud onto my chubby child cheeks.

Mother had planted the strawberries in early spring, the skies blue and weeping as we gathered dirt beneath our nails. She held those plants close to her chest, leaves folded gently against her overalls like they were clinging to her the way I clung to her legs, and I know she loved us both so dearly.

Mother tended the garden in much the same way she tended to me as I grew and changed and wilted and grew again. We lived because she loved, and we grew because she gave and that's life, isn't it? We take and we take and we take, digging roots into the hearts of those who know nothing but giving and giving and giving.

It is a long time before I leave the garden and it is longer still until I return. The garden never leaves me, though. No matter how hard I try to throw myself into work after the funeral, bury myself in the burns of hot coffee on my tongue, every day, all day... the roots take hold.

It is in a fit of despair and aching longing that I return home long past the sun's setting glow. Father answers the door in old sweats and a bathrobe, and I know, despite the sleepiness he rubs from his eyes, that he was not sleeping. We say nothing, wrapping trembling limbs around each other and holding the silence there between us, remembering what it's like to breathe.

When we pull apart, I press one of the seed packets that I brought through the house's threshold into his hand, and he holds it the same way he used to hold her hand.

It's a funny thing, trying to plant a garden in the dim beams of a mostly hidden moon, but I bathe in the aching that hangs like midnight mist there. On hands

and knees, we push past dull pain and dry dirt, and we plant each seed carefully, precisely.

We regrow the garden and more still, we regrow ourselves. Not forgetting, never forgetting, but filling some of the hungry gaps with flower petals and the soft blossoms of pumpkins.

We regrow the
garden and more
still, we regrow
ourselves.

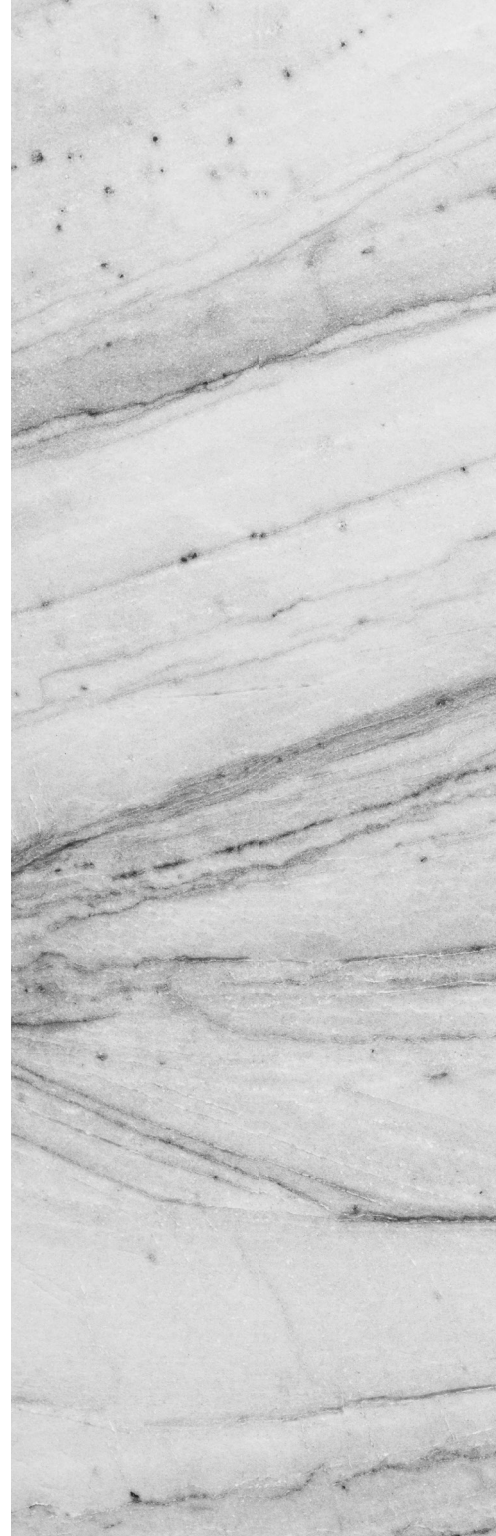
photography

SERENITY AT SUNRISE

Isabella Hutzler
Northern Arizona University



archival pigment print



photography

YEARNING FIELD OF YELLOW

Isabella Hutzler
Northern Arizona University



archival pigment print

poetry

FIERCE

Taylor Curry

University of Montana

I'm gay but some days I want a girlfriend
In the same way that I want a one-story home in the Midwest
In the same way that I want to only wear jeans and T-shirts.

I want the comfort of casualness, of nonuniqueness
That a girl holding hands with a boy achieves
While a boy holding hands with another boy rebels
Offending some and empowering others.

If straightness is a brick house in the Midwest
Then gayness is a neon townhouse in San Francisco
And we rarely get there
And we share forbidden kisses among brick backgrounds in Montana.

Having a girlfriend would make me comfortable
But having a boyfriend makes me *fierce*
In the gay way
Because homosexuality is a lifestyle to which I don't always want to commit.

It's a product of grandparents asking which one is my girlfriend
Of preparing to come out when my straight sisters can bring any boy home
Of looking away in locker rooms
Of imagining myself as the girl in teen romance movies
Of wanting to be attractive but in both a gay way and a straight way.

It's always hard to be gay
When straight girls expect you to be sassy
When straight men don't want to get turned
Meanwhile the gays in the club dance through blinding ecstasy
To ride a quiet subway home hoping their eyeshadow doesn't catch the wrong fist.

But boys are hot
So really I don't want a girlfriend
I want having a boyfriend to feel comfortable
Like jeans in the Midwest.

archival pigment print



photography

FOR LILLIAN

Natalie Johnson
The University of New Mexico



12" x 18" acrylic and marker on canvas



visual art

IDENTITY

Dylan Francisco DeCastro
California State University, Northridge

FOUR MORE TIMES, AND THEN . . .

One.

The first time I saw my little brother dead was on a Sunday. He still looked like a person then. We were in his room and if I didn't look too long, I could convince myself he was asleep. Trapped in a nightmare that coated him in a freezing sweat. I screamed for him. I thought maybe if I was loud enough, if I cried hard enough, Death might take pity on me and set him free. I had hope then.

A fabricated future flashed before my eyes too quickly to grasp. Christmas dinners, inside jokes, nieces, nephews, and so many more hugs. I cradled him close and willed my warmth to thaw his heart so that it might beat again. So that we might make it to the other side.

Monét Taylor

The University of New Mexico

Two.

I sat for far too long on the broken couch in the living room. Too many strangers in badges swarmed around my house. I picked the cuticle on my thumb until it was crimson and raw. A woman came downstairs. She didn't look at me. None of them looked at me. I closed my eyes. Heard the garage door. Heard the careful, controlled delivery. Heard my mother scream. I held her while she cried. Her tears made it real.

They carried him downstairs on a gurney. He was hidden at first in a bag but they unzipped it just enough for us to see his face. That was the second time I saw him. Thankfully not the last. Tubes, tape, and bandages obscured most of his

face. There was the smallest amount of blood on the plastic that cocooned him. He looked like he would've been in pain.

The future I'd dreamt up became fuzzy and hard to remember.

Dead.

Three.

My brother hadn't had a haircut in a while. Not a professional one at least. My uncle is a barber, the only one we could have trusted. A final haircut is a big deal, after all. If it's terrible, it won't grow back. The funeral home allowed us to come in a couple days before the service. He was lying on a table, swollen and stiff.

My father cradled him and cried; he shook so much that my brother's arm fell from his stomach. I thought he was alive, just for a second.

It was a long while before I was able to look at him. Even longer before I worked up the courage to touch him. His lips were pale and sealed together. Whatever adhesive they'd used on his eyes had overflowed. He looked like he'd been crying. He was so cold that I had to pull my sleeve over my fingers to hold his hand. That coldness clung to the fabric long after I left.

I no longer pined for a future; I didn't yet have the strength to appreciate the past. I was floating.

Four.

His funeral took place on a Thursday. We arrived an hour before the service. My brother no longer looked like a person. "Peaceful" is how people kept describing him to me. But I think he just looked gone. Hollow. I didn't look at him for long. There was nothing left to look at. I kissed his forehead. My lips were bitter for a long time after.

By this time, I'd found one of his old empty notebooks and began writing letters to him every day. Sometimes, if it was quiet enough, I could hear him respond in my heart. I

could hear him laugh. I could feel him still. I realized that when he left, he took a part of me with him, but he also left a part of himself behind. We belonged to each other still. So as my parents and I closed his casket, I took one final glance and felt a sort of peace.

And then....

I dreamt of him last night. We were like before, talking about something so simple I can't even remember. He told a bad joke and cracked up before it was finished. I told him how unfunny he was, which only made him laugh harder.

Despite my best efforts, I laughed too. It felt a little bit like every conversation we'd ever had. So natural and real that I forgot he'd be gone when I woke up. I forgot to hug him, kiss him, and tell him goodbye. But it didn't feel like I needed to. It didn't feel like the last time he'd meet me there.

He was so cold
that I had to pull
my sleeve over my
fingers to hold his
hand.



open media

WRHC AWARD WINNER

LOST CONNECTIONS

Michael Caspi

*California State
University,
Northridge*

“Lost Connections” reveals the damage of disease and discord in the home through the lens of a mundane chore: chopping and carrying firewood. The son of a broken family is the only one tending to the hearth, both literally and figuratively. He bears the emotional weight of his family’s struggles as he lugs crumbling boxes of wood. As we watch the protagonist keep the fire alive, the viewer is reminded that oftentimes the most worthwhile relationships are the ones that involve the most care.

Visually, “Lost Connections” is a sea of browns and grays, displaying a cold, depressing wintertime so palpable the viewer might want to grab a weighted blanket. Amidst the difficulty, though, there are still golden reflections of sun on the dying trees and a pink halo on the horizon, mirroring the hope the son has for his family to stay together. In contrast with the bleak outside, the family’s home feels warm despite their infighting, the fireplace glowing pink and orange, the intricately framed photos telling a story of a close and loving family. Overall, the visuals of the film give it a low-budget, indie sensibility that heightens the viewer’s experience of empathy and relatability.

“Lost Connections” will implore you to stoke your own hearth, asking yourself which of your relationships have been fading into gray—how can you warm that nurturing part of you again?

*Commentary by Scribendi staff.
View this piece at scribendi.unm.edu*

short fiction

WRHC AWARD WINNER

MY APOLOGIES

Dear Dr. Kepler,

I am sorry, but I think it might be best, before our first appointment, to explain the neon sign. Your website says that you “strive to establish fluid and honest communication with your clients,” and I have found that answering certain questions ahead of time often saves everyone a great deal of fuss. I got this email address from your secretary. I hope this isn’t too out of the ordinary.

The sign is two feet wide by one foot tall, like you might see in a shop window, except it hovers unsuspended six inches above my head. Its neon tubes trace the word *SORRY* in a cursive script, with

Kai Broach

Western Washington University

the ‘s’ shaped like a little robin or a chickadee. It lights up when I am sorry.

It is waterproof, fireproof, sledgehammer and car tire-proof, and on one particularly stubborn day it broke my fiancé Brett’s brand

new twenty-volt angle grinder. His sturdy arms swung the buzzing tool down above my head with a solemn “here goes nothing,” his lips pulled in and twisted like a balloon animal, that particular frustration normally reserved for rude clients or the slow waiter at our favorite Thai place. I heard his yelp and an infernal clanging squeal and the blade shattered, blasting steel shrapnel all over his garage

and into the safety shield I made him put up. The sign, unscathed, flared immediately into blinding red.

However, as long as you keep it away from whirring saw blades, the sign is almost completely safe. I suggest you don’t stare directly at it—it can get rather bright—but beyond that, it isn’t as much of a nuisance as you might expect. No matter what, it remains in the exact same place above my head, cool to the touch. It has effectively raised my height to 6’4”, but I still don’t have too much trouble with ceilings, and I’m still several inches shorter than Brett. I can’t go to movies or operas anymore, but, as Brett reminds me, that just gives me more time to focus on my own music. It has somewhat limited my choice of hats.

When it’s turned off, most people in public do not seem to notice it. Perhaps they are too polite. When someone does comment, it fuzzily flickers on as I make excuses.

The sign hangs above me when I shower, rests above my pillow while I sleep, and glows cherry red when I have sex. It has hung there for about six months.

I asked my doctor about it once during a routine checkup. Powered by my embarrassment, it outshone the lights of the examination room, the white walls and countertops slowly flushing like a silk shirt soaking through with blood. The middle-aged man, who reminded me of a used armchair—balding, stern, but distantly friendly—frowned and left, returning with a pair of sunglasses. He measured the sign, poked it with a tongue depressor, listened to its gentle hum. Finally, he shrugged. “That’s okay,” he said. “Don’t worry about it and it’ll go away.”

I think he was right. I think if I avoid apologies long enough, it’ll go away. I’m really trying my best. Sometimes

I meditate. Still, I have yet to go very long without it switching on for something. I forget to respond to a text, I leave dishes in the sink, I realize I haven’t touched my violin in weeks, I think about literally any part of high school, or the time I forgot to pick up my cousin from swim practice, I say something that makes Brett turn his furrowed brow on me, and the room sputters into red again. Oh, I have important things to be sorry about, too. Don’t worry, we will talk about those. But most often, it’s the little things that light me up. Brett says the sign flicks on and off when I’m sleeping, too; I’ve always been prone to stress dreams. Thankfully, he purchased a nice silk sleeping mask and set of silicone earplugs, so at least my apologies for keeping him up at night no

longer compound the problem.

At first I found them maddening, my scarlet letters, but now that I’ve gotten used to their droning glow, I find it almost soothing. Plus, I appreciate not always needing to say my apologies out loud. As soon as the light catches their eyes, most people assure me that I have nothing to feel bad about. Maybe it’s more a mark of Cain than a scarlet letter.

Still, Brett insists that it’s a nuisance and can’t be healthy for me, being around all that light and electricity all the time. And what if it were to somehow rupture or fail? We looked it up and neon tubes have mercury vapor in them!

We have given up on removing the sign by physical means, which is why I am now seeking your help with my mental health. Should our appointments prove unsuccessful, we will be taking a two-week sabbatical in August to intentionally relax my regrets away. Brett has

Maybe it’s more a
mark of Cain than a
scarlet letter.

already rented a cabin in Cannon Beach, which was very sweet of him and I'm sure will be lovely. But I know that he shouldn't be taking that much time off work right now, so I anticipate the sign will be at least faintly glowing for most of the trip if it's still there when we leave. Brett works too hard, and he's been supporting us both since Director Maxwell asked me to leave the orchestra. My tiniest errors, once imperceptible to everyone but me—one muted harmonic here, a slightly slurred staccato there—were distracting the audience with flashes of red.

I am worried that Brett will leave me soon. He has always been very patient with my failures, but everyone has a breaking point.

I don't know what exactly summoned the sign. Just like my first period, I woke up late one Sunday morning and there it was. All I remember are the heavy red waves of light crushing my hungover brain like a blanket of bricks. The night before was a typical night out. I did indulge somewhat heavily, but I remember most of it, having worn out the tape track in my memory replaying it. Everything I did and said was completely usual, completely understandable, and Brett and his friends insist that I did nothing embarrassing in the parts of the night that are hazier to me. Brett even got some sticky notes and helped me assemble a moment-by-moment account. We have adopted the view that it was a "straw that broke the camel's back" situation, that perhaps I was just a little bit sorry one too many times, rather than much too sorry all at once.

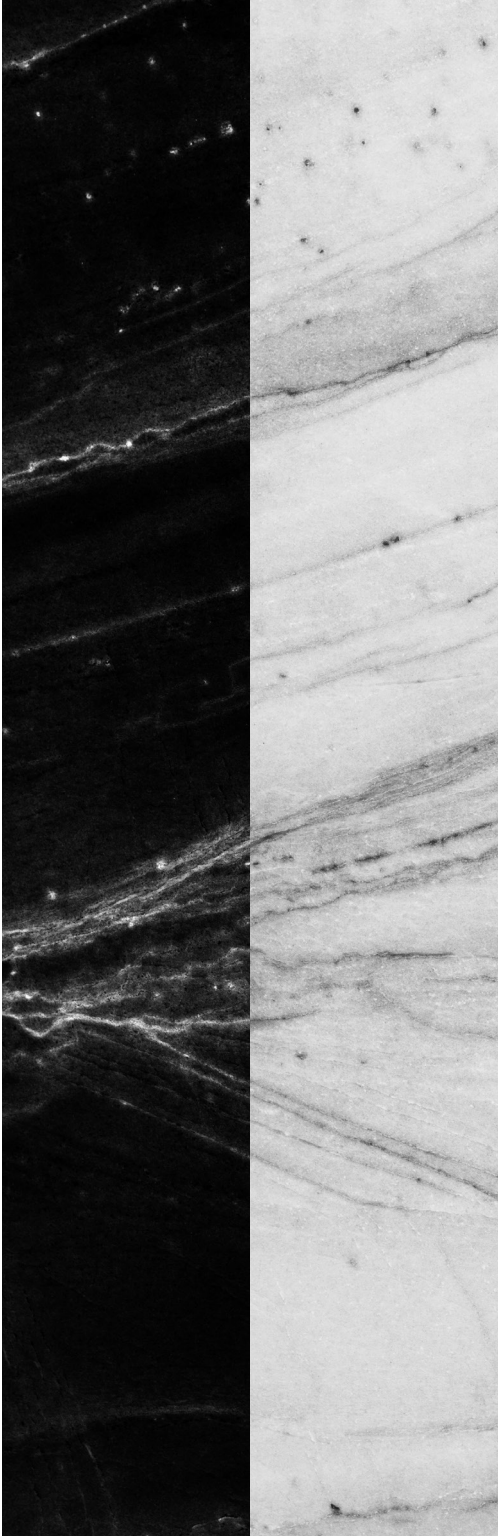
There was one time I was much too sorry all at once, back in April. You see, Brett's boss' wife's brother is an epileptic—sorry, a person with epilepsy—and Brett and I were at a fancy dinner party for his office. They rented the country club gala room with the arched white ceiling and the view of the gorge, and they were piping Brahms No. 3 in (slightly sharp) F through the speakers. I used to

play this venue all the time, and I didn't know what to do with my hands now that they weren't holding the firm arc of a bow or the buzz of strings. I was absolutely ablaze, and of course I had to explain it to everybody, getting brighter and brighter with each excuse.

Like always, Brett offered me a way out before we left. He said it would probably be stuffy and awkward and he didn't want to drag me along if it would make me uncomfortable. Now that I was there, I was just sure that had been his way of asking me not to come and make this kind of scene. So I was sorry for that, too, and I was sorry to everyone there for being so distracting and blocking out the view in the floor-to-ceiling windows with reflected red, and I just wanted to get out but I moved too quickly and knocked a young lady's champagne into her beautiful teal dress, and suddenly it was all too much and the sign started flashing very fast, pulsing with my hyperventilating breaths, and I saw the brother keel over convulsing by the door, and I didn't know what was going on or where to look so I found Brett's face and his lips were doing that circus trick again. Maybe it's bad to admit because there was someone seizing on the floor, but putting that look on his face again was the worst part of it all. Unbearable.

I'm told I collapsed in a flash that blinded everyone in that room for several minutes, long enough for the brother to severely concuss himself. When I woke up in the hospital Brett had to hold me for hours, eyes closed tight, whispering his forgiveness over and over until I believed him just enough that the room stopped pulsing crimson and the nurses could come in and examine me.

Anyway, sorry for my rambling. I look forward to our appointment.



poetry

CHURCH DRESS

Bethany Saint-Smith

California State University,
Stanislaus

Sis, I took the petals of my dress and matched it
to the celebrations of blood, so tired of the work
oh, we wept
remember how the linen would coil up your blood
smelling like pasture pains, the pastor explained
where we've come from
oh, church
the blessed be of a God, but don't forget, mental health
wait
no, *you* wait
we cannot savor that mental health, we merely need a God
oh, if we had a God, he wouldn't let us need mental health
isn't that right
mm-hmm
mm-hmm
oh, we in unison, songs together
am I right?
heels go *click, click, click*
but the petals of my dress look tired, same dress every Sunday
'magine that
a place where the dress doesn't matter
just a nook of prayer that the thoughts I tolerate fit this dress
I could use a brand-new dress.

TWO KNITTED HALVES

Joshua Martelon

University of Montana

CO—Cast On, K—Knit, P—Purl, KFB—Knit Front Back, K(pen-ult)—Knit until penultimate, P(ante-pen-ult)—Purl until antepenultimate, P2T—Purl Two Together, BO—Bind Off

In the hollow silence of this dark closet,
two lapis knitting needles, size U.S. 10,
and a skein of velveteen yarn
animate with anxious vibration
and begin their clicking tedium

1. CO 3

2. Purl row

whispers of distant voices
drift on cold sunshine

3. K1, KFB, K1,

4. Purl row

through a keyhole looming far above.
Their words: unpredictable

5. K1, KFB, KFB, K1,

6. Purl row

Looping threats
Tangle in ordered chaos

7. K1, KFB, K(pen-ult), KFB, K1

8. Purl row

9. Repeat {7-8} 7 times {22 stitches}

with every row they trade the burden
of the secrets held within each stitch

10. Knit row

11. Purl row

12. K11,

the heavy oaken door creaks upon its
hinges—oiled abdominals step
through to hold a piece of me hostage
(last 11 slipped onto substitute)

13. Purl row

14. Knit row

the yarn continues to flow
and so must I—straight on.

15. P1, P2T, P(ante-pen-ult), P2T, P1

16. Knit row

17. Repeat {15-16} 3 times {5 stitches}

with one eye peripheral,
I shrink, wasting away
divided apart.

18. BO 5

caesura—two halves of a pair reunite,
where distraction dwells
and take up that which
sits in idle fantasy.

19. Repeat {12-18}

a morose heart lays limp
in a shadowy corner
tendrils laden edges reach for
the light sneaking beneath
the closet door
the pair begin their dance, again.

20. Repeat in full {1-19}

Two lie adjacent,
surrounded by darkness
flaccid and trembling

21. Stitch and stuff

timid arms embrace each other
fill the other with white cotton fluff
and seed of lavender

Innocence and Exploration.

22. Weave tail into seam

The union of a heart now more whole
consumes the last velveteen strand
reaching for the handle of a
door, too distant to know
the world beyond
the two lapis needles
animate and begin their cursed duty
clicking together
one more and one more until
one day it will be enough to
press the hinges off this old door frame
and flood out onto the rainbow byway.

18"x24" relief linocut in ink on paper



visual art

BABA'S SEA

Allison Peschek
University of Montana

poetry

BLACK VEIL

Zoey Kartchner

Arizona State University

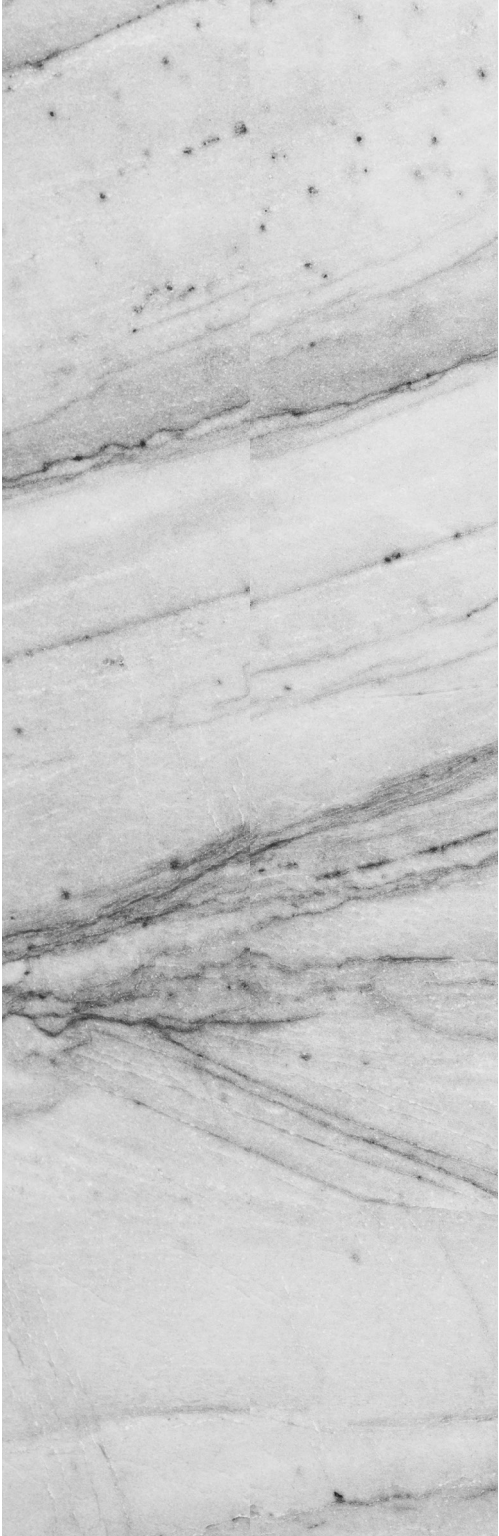
She drags a dead man across the Americas.
That's all he is,
a corpse in her arms.
He can talk,
but he can't move,
so it's up to her to get around.

Black cats yowl under the streetlights
as he tells her stories about the stars.
She's pretty sure there's no such thing
as The Great Corn Kernel,
but he's seen death
so he must know.

Death is not an evil thing,
he tells her as they cross into New York.
The canals cover the scent she finds solace in.
He does not understand why people
are so afraid.
But she knows why,
and it's the same reason she carries a razorblade
in her pocket.

His tux is no longer fine-pressed lines
and elegance.
Worms eat through the pockets
while she rests.
Her veil, though torn,
is enough to cast blindness.
In her dreams, she tastes dirt.

He asks her to die with him in Colorado.
Deep in the mountains,
there are no streetlights.
She asks him to tell her about the stars.



creative nonfiction

HOMESICK

When I think of home, I think of people.
I think of my father: dark hair and dark
eyes and gnashing teeth like a wolf. All
bark and all bite, too.

But during the times he was gentle,
I would climb up into his lap and he
would tell me stories about before he was a wolf—when
he would run barefoot through the grass and the marsh by
his home on the island. He chased game birds and rabbits
and the sun, and when he was tired, he slept in big tree
branches under Spanish moss until the sun came back
and he did it all over again. He told me about the salt air
and the island people. His people. And they lived in pink
houses with yellow doors to match the sand. And they
lived in green houses with blue windows to match the sea.

Benjamin Tabáček
The University of New Mexico

There are oysters that grow along the
reefs in the shallow salt marshes just
below the green water, and if you swim
to them, you'll find pearls rolling back
and forth over the black sand. You could
fill your pockets with them, he'd say, and

then tell me about island winters when the rains came and
froze the streams. He would leave his white house with a
blue door to match the sky, and the sun would be hidden
still, tucked behind the ocean and the trees.

Before my father was a wolf he was a boy, but never
mind his gnashing teeth because what is a home if it isn't
what we're made of?

I was born in Georgia. I say it and my mouth feels
empty. Like something is missing. A taste, maybe.

Something strong, something punchy. Something to make me remember.

I made my way back there in the middle of July and the heat was exhausting. I knew it would be. While I was there and fumbling around trying to recollect my memories, I went to the house, the old one we used to live in, and it wasn't seafoam green anymore. Did you see? The door was black and they painted the house blue. It looked like a bruise, a tender wound. My brother told me that they did that long ago and to not tell dad because it was sure to break his heart. His poor, wolfy heart.

We left my hometown a week later and drove south down to Savannah. But we left at night, got lost on the way, and crossed the border into South Carolina by accident in the dark. I had never been to South Carolina but it's where my dad's stories came from. It's where his island home on the coast was. So, when we drove in the pitch-black across state lines and then turned back around at the first bridge, I nearly cried.

The feeling of being at home happened in an instant. I had July and ocean all over me and could almost melt into the wild grass, become a gull, and dive into the sea. I felt like my father—all island, and sun, and Spanish moss. I had never seen anything as beautiful as St. Simons in summer and I wondered if it looked like his home. Oak trees told stories of wars when you drove past them, hundreds of years had gone by since I'd been there.

Welcome back.

I felt the island in
me, Georgia in me,
the sea and the coast
and the pink houses.

In my brother's truck, sunburnt and smiling, I felt a stillness. A calm. Willow branches and curtains of moss hung down above the pavement and you could brush your fingers through them as you drove by, blankets of green to break up the blue sky. I could have stayed right there forever: curled up with my knees pressed against the seat back, my cheek pressed against the window, salt caked into my hair. I felt the island in me, Georgia in me, the sea and the coast and the pink houses.

It was more than that, though, more than where I was or what I saw. It was every place I had been to, every creek I had passed by and each night I slept with my window open. Cicadas and summer heat and sunscreen, the spray-on kind.

Why are you crying?

Why aren't you?

Have you not felt it this entire time? This shifting tide, balmy wind, hurricane season in late Georgia summer. You look just like him, you know? Same curls but lighter hair. Less like a wolf and more like a boy.

The feeling of being at home happened in an instant. It happened all at once. And if I let myself feel it, I mean really feel it, I could go back to it again and again. But I left it there in the ocean. I stood on the sun-scorched sand as it burned my feet and I let my home sink into the sea. Something to come back for. Something to come back to.

It all hurts. The growing, the finding and the losing, the letting go. But what hurts more, the sunburn or the leaving?

short fiction

TWELVE THIRTY

The monotonous thrum of the engine is like a spell capable of lulling you into the deepest sleep. The only thing keeping you up is a steady stream of the Mamas & the Papas, perfect for midnight driving. The long stretch of highway produces little light, a problem exacerbated by the downpour of rain. The droplets ricochet off the four glass panels surrounding you, creating a cocoon of subtle music composed by nature herself. You indulge in a slow blink. The relief of closed eyes is palpable to you. Maybe pulling over to nap for a few hours wouldn't be a bad idea. Maybe finding a motel. Maybe quitting this goddamn life on the road for good.

Brooklynn Kreps

Portland State University

Just as you think it won't be too bad to stick it out for a few more hours, a blur of neon passes by. You make a U-turn on the desolate highway to drive the few yards back to a twenty-four-hour diner. In the modest parking lot, there are only two other cars. You climb out of your car, the muscles of your legs and around your tailbone groan from the release of stagnation. As you take a moment to situate yourself on solid, unmoving land, you notice the two cars again. They're both the same make, model, and color. A Mazda Protégé, in a bland tan color. It looks like someone copied the car and pasted it into the lot right beside it. Hands in your pockets, you sidle over for a closer inspection to

see they even have the same scratch on the back end, right above the left taillight.

“Huh,” you say, your breath puffing out a cloud into the frigid air. Yet somehow the rain escapes you. A look around and you see that there’s a perfect circle with you as the center, undisturbed by the torrential rain. You take a meager step to the right. The circle follows you as though you have an umbrella.

Puzzled, not wanting the safety from the rain to abruptly end, you go into the diner. It’s distinctly sixties-themed with cushy blue, red, and white booths lining the wall with windows too dark to see out of. You realize the song drifting from the speakers, as though it were coming from your own head, is the Mamas & the Papas. They are telling you to dream a little dream of the stars above you, of the birds in the sycamore trees.

There’s a guy at the table next to the door, clutching a coffee in his hands. “Hey,” you say to him with a short laugh, “I was just listening to this.”

He stares at you. Not unkindly, not kindly, but blank. You frown at him, moving on to take a seat at the bar. You probably just need a strong cup of coffee, and, hell, one for the road. Then you’ll be in tiptop shape, right? There’s some kind of pie in a glass case a few chairs down that doesn’t look too bad, either.

The waitress appears from the kitchen, wearing a simple red apron that lays flat over her white T-shirt dress underneath. She smiles at you in a way that warms all the chill from the rain out of your body. You take off your jacket.

“Hello, darlin’. Do you want to try the special?” she says, notepad at the ready.

You smile too. You can’t help it. “Uh, what’s the special?”

“It’s real good; it’s our maple bacon burger. They put syrup in the bun like at McDonald’s.”

“Like a burger had a baby with a pancake. I’ll take it,” you agree. You’d probably agree with anything she said.

She laughs, soft as a cloud from a dream. She pours you a coffee before you can ask and puts two creams in it, just how you like. “Of course, hun, comin’ right up. You just passing through?”

You blink at her, confused.

“Yeah, I never stay anywhere for very long.”

“Why not?” She says, actually looking crestfallen at the idea of being a nomad.

“It’s always been like that.” You wave your hand in polite dismissal. “Don’t you have to put my order in?”

“No, honey, they know. And I think it’s ready,” she says, already maneuvering back through the door to the kitchen. In her absence, you sip the coffee. You look around, but there’s no one else here. Weren’t you just hearing the hush of conversations behind you? Had you missed the jingle of the door as it opened, the rumble of the cars pulling away?

You look around the diner for the first time, like Eve when she first put on clothes and gained consciousness. When you were a child, your parents forced you into dance lessons. That was confusing and terrifying, even to your eight-year-old self. In the second class, you did one of the spins wrong and fell, breaking your arm. After getting the cast put on at the hospital, your mom took you to a diner

She smiles at you in a way that warms all the chill from the rain out of your body.



by the hospital that looked just like this one. She agreed you were never going back and bought a large chocolate milkshake to share.

You shiver as though someone had just opened the door and let the chill in. It is not similar, or reminiscent. It is exactly the same. Old, cushy booths that are red with blue trimming. The vivid red and yellow ketchup and mustard bottles standing guard at every table. The black and white checkered floor, so shiny you might be able to spy your own reflection in it. The faded bubblegum pink walls. The Formica countertop in front of you, clean and smooth as a pebble by the beach.

And the food smells just as good, you note as she comes back with it. You take a deep breath of the aroma. The meat contrasting with the syrupy sweetness of the bun, the bacon cutting in at the last moment with a salty undertone. You take a sip of the coffee and it coats your tongue, warming you on the way down. The steam, as it rises to your face, causes you to close your eyes. When you open them, your mother will be sitting in front of you, the sun shining, a bustle of people around enjoying their food. You open your eyes. It is not your mother in front of you.

“Here you go, sugar,” she singsongs, setting it down in front of you with a flourish.

You say your thanks, soon overwhelmed by the smell of bacon and syrup wafting up to you. It looks like the best burger you’ll ever have. You take a bite and find you were right; this is the best burger you have ever had.

The waitress watches you eat, waiting until you have put it down for a break to speak again. “If I could ask you somethin’, don’t you ever get tired of constantly moving around, Morgan?”

“How do you know my name?” you ask. You should be afraid of this impossible place, of this kind woman who knows your name when you’ve never told her. But instead, the oddness is insulating, like a blanket.

She smiles sheepishly, tucking a lock of hair behind her right ear. “I know everything about you. I want to help you.”

“What is this place?” Another sip of coffee, another bite of your food.

“This—” she looks around, as if trying to gather the words, “this is sort of a halfway point for you. Between Here and There.”

“Here? There?”

“Yes, that’s right. Once you were Here, and I will help you get to There, if you’ll let me. I can only help you get There if you want me to. There you can rest; you can stop running.”

You finish your burger, wiping your mouth with the napkin you don’t remember seeing before you needed it. “What happens if I say no?”

“I’ll stop being able to help you. Eventually, I would have to leave you.” Her brow is creased with apologies.

The slow blink. The crescendo of the tires screeching as they veered off the right path. The disturbed leaves falling on your face the second before the end. The crimson paint staining the leather interior of the car. The scream sounding much too close to your own. These are the only things that flash through your mind as she stares at you, her proposition dangling in the air.

“Are you an angel?” That is the only thing you can think to say.

She giggles, clear as the chime of a bell. “You’re mighty kind, dear. What do you say?”

You finish your coffee. “Yes.”

poetry

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD WINNER

CENTRALIA

Caroline Tuss

University of Montana

To build a ghost town,
Strike in the mines
Miles down the way of the concrete sidewalks.
And when you toss the Molotov cocktail,
Leave.
Run up the flaming veins,
Breathe the carbon monoxide
That hasn't killed anyone yet.
There's still time, at least centuries to burn.
Until then, just remember,
A ghost town isn't made in a day.

34"x48" oil and gold leafing on wood panel



visual art

WRHC AWARD WINNER

CONQUEST OF TEOTIHUACÁN

Pablo Cruz-Ayala
University of Utah

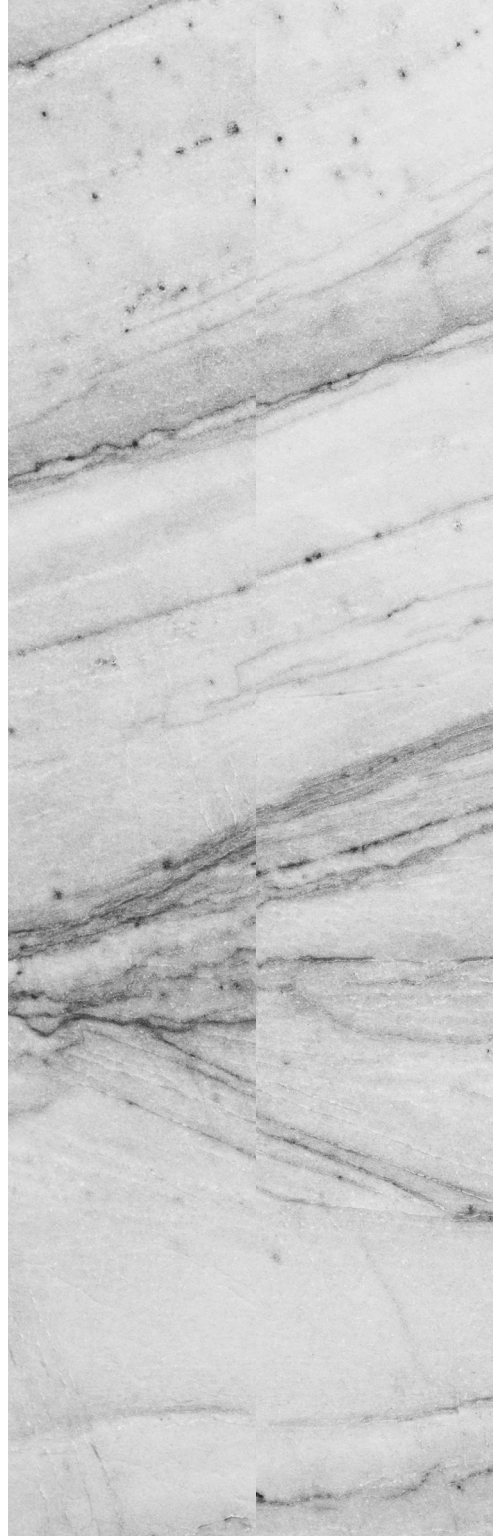
poetry

INFINITY

Kristen Chastain

University of California, Irvine

If you are an artist, I am not a canvas.
Dressed plain and wrapped in color, like that
beautiful persistent detail dancing 'round
the chipped rim of a vase, curving in, out
through that great space between hands and mind.
If you are time, I am continuously waiting
to come and claim the footprints, irreversible
steps to the same destination in different directions.
In your strangest loops there is a kind of home
I feel warmth from, even in distant cities.
There is a hand grasping for a trailing leg and
a beautiful, cyclical vice versa of I love you's.
If you are a proposition, I cannot prove you wrong.
Charcoal always strikes a starkness against the
empty page, but then there is its highlight, in wait
for the foreground to become its opposite,
a perspective eagerly watching the present unfold.



archival pigment print



photography

LIKE PULLING VEINS THROUGH MY FINGERTIPS

Nora Vanesky
The University of New Mexico

Photography

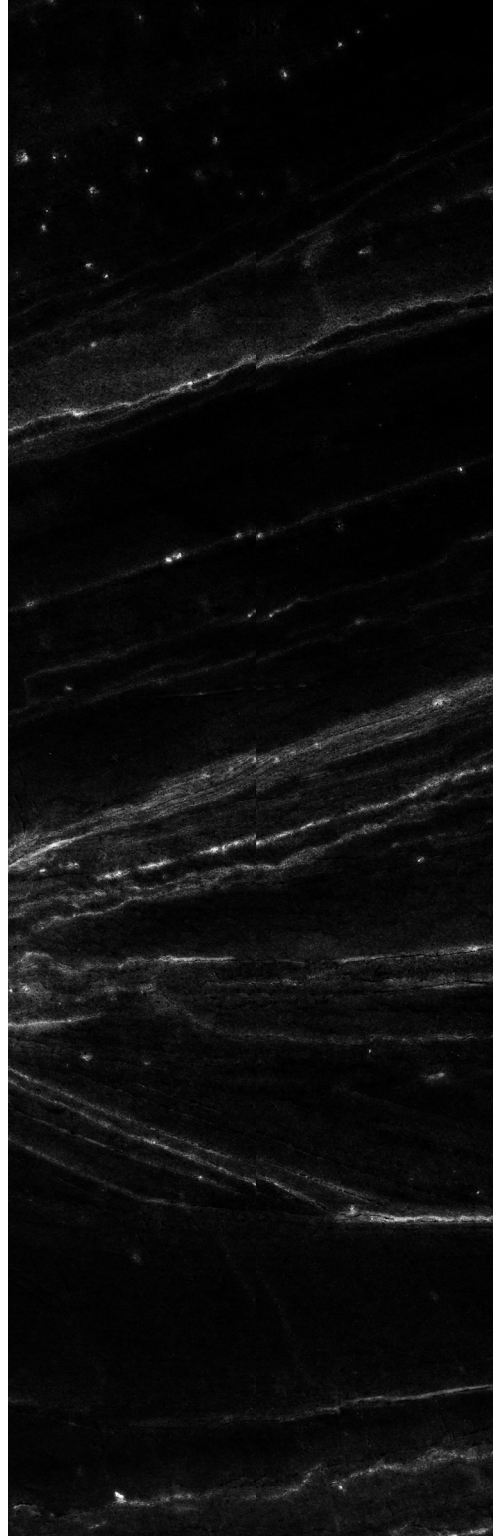
WRHC AWARD WINNER

GRIPPY SOCK VACATION

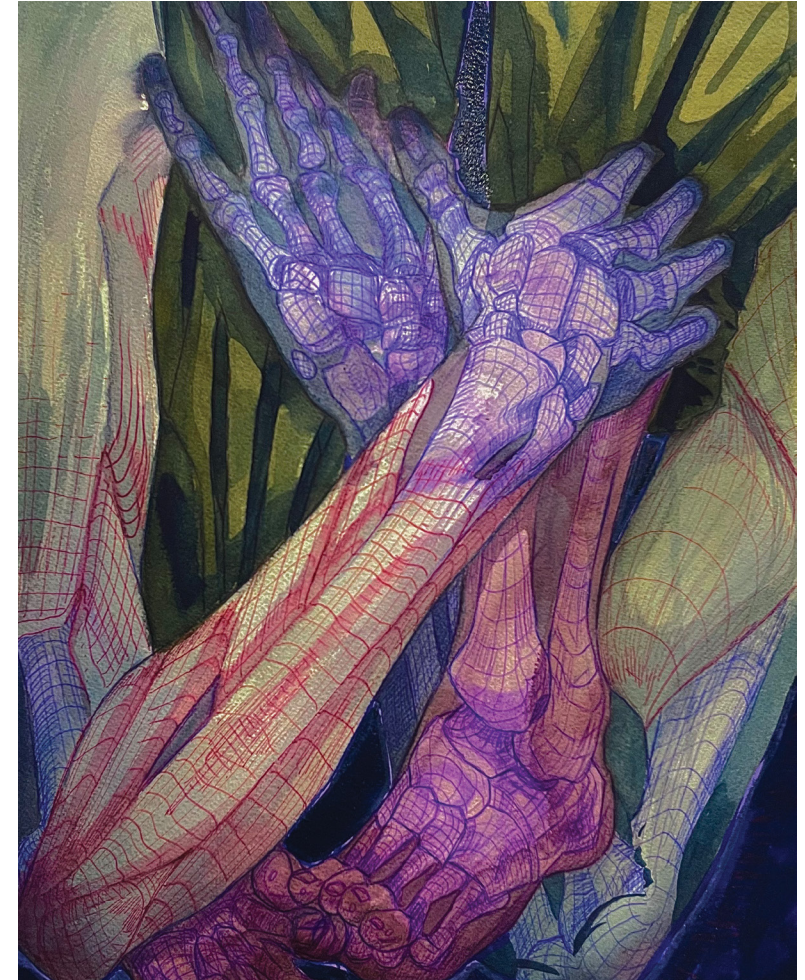
Monét Taylor
The University of New Mexico



archival pigment print



16"x18" mixed media on cold press watercolor paper



visual art

STAFF CHOICE AWARD WINNER

BONES AWAY FROM HOME

Pablo Cruz-Ayala
University of Utah

creative nonfiction

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 7:38 AM

Teddy bears and trinkets litter the floor. There was going to be a Christmas toy drive. Desks dragged to shield the entrance of a blue door with a broken lock. My prom dress hangs silently in my bedroom closet, unworn. The lights are off. Muffled screaming from outside.

Samantha Veres

Southern Oregon University

Hysterical giggles from behind. Then a terrible quiet. My sister's necklace hangs heavily against my collarbone. Maybe they'll find me with the metal promise strung from my neck, staring through the glass window across the room. It's a nice day out. Bright air. Every sound is deafening. I never thought it could happen here. Fear. Dull lights of cellphone screens caress my eyelids. A phantom

hug from frantic mothers. I might never feel her arms around me again. The empty glittering eyes of stuffed animals stare back at me from the stiff carpet. *The door won't lock.* Legs—cramped; pins and needles. Still, I don't move. Everyone is crying. Huddled together, arm to arm.

Slaughter. Should I have tried to run? Hide? Watching out the window. Dying grass covers the hill. I should get away from the window, but I can't move. Fire alarm and flashing. *"This is a lockdown."* The gentle rise and fall of my math teacher's extended abdomen. A girl with a casted leg in the back. Is it selfish that I want to run? Numbness seeping in. Always thinking I would be brave. What a lie.

Quiet.

The tip of a gun in the window.

Adrenaline spiking. Followed by the uniform of an officer. Hands raised. Bags abandoned. Gripping my phone and my keys. Bitter air scrapes down my lungs. My arm won't stop burning. Flashing lights. Cameras giving condolences. Everyone is laughing. Despair and hysteria warring inside of me. Rumors spread through smiling mouths. *"She was shot in the back of the head while trying to run away."* Condolences. *"Where is my little brother?"* Confusion. *"Have you seen my friend?"* Loaded onto yellow buses. *"I saw them this morning, but now I can't find them."* Arms of three parents remain empty. *"Are you okay?"* Silence. *Am I?* I don't want anyone to touch me. Water rushing in from every side. *"How do you feel?"* We walk home from there. Slinking upstairs.

In the bathroom, I fall apart.

digital art



visual art

ALONE, TOGETHER

Nadia Jokiman
Mt. San Antonio College



visual art

A QUIET MEMORY IN SUMMER

Nadia Jokiman
Mt. San Antonio College



digital art

GLORY

Zoey Kartchner

Arizona State University

Feathers and sparkling rhinestones,
this is Cirque du Soleil.
Who is she if not spinning through
hoops of fire?

The devastation, the mistress,
she grasps his arm with bespectacled fingers.
The rings are so heavy,
they leave indentations in her skin.

She's a gymnast,
a bird that flies above the lights.
He has her call him *mi esposo*.
He doesn't know the difference
when she says
mis esposos.

Arms outstretched,
the feathers take root:
needles worming into her skin,
but she welcomes the parasites.
This is how she learns to
soar.



No experience with a tightrope,
her toes struggle to find purchase.
The cheering
spurs her on.
Lights dimming
everywhere else,
only her eyes glow.

The fall is where the bird first flaps its wings.
Where it realizes it never really knew a thing at all.

archival pigment print



photography

GOLDEN DELIGHT

Katrina Dutt
The University of New Mexico



photography

LAST LIGHT

Meghan Kontic
Bellarmino University



archival pigment print

poetry

TO EAT A NECTARINE

Brandon Ligon
Arizona State University

Let teeth fall asleep at the threshold
of juicy paradise.
Wake up,

but only enough to crunch down
and descend into
reverie.

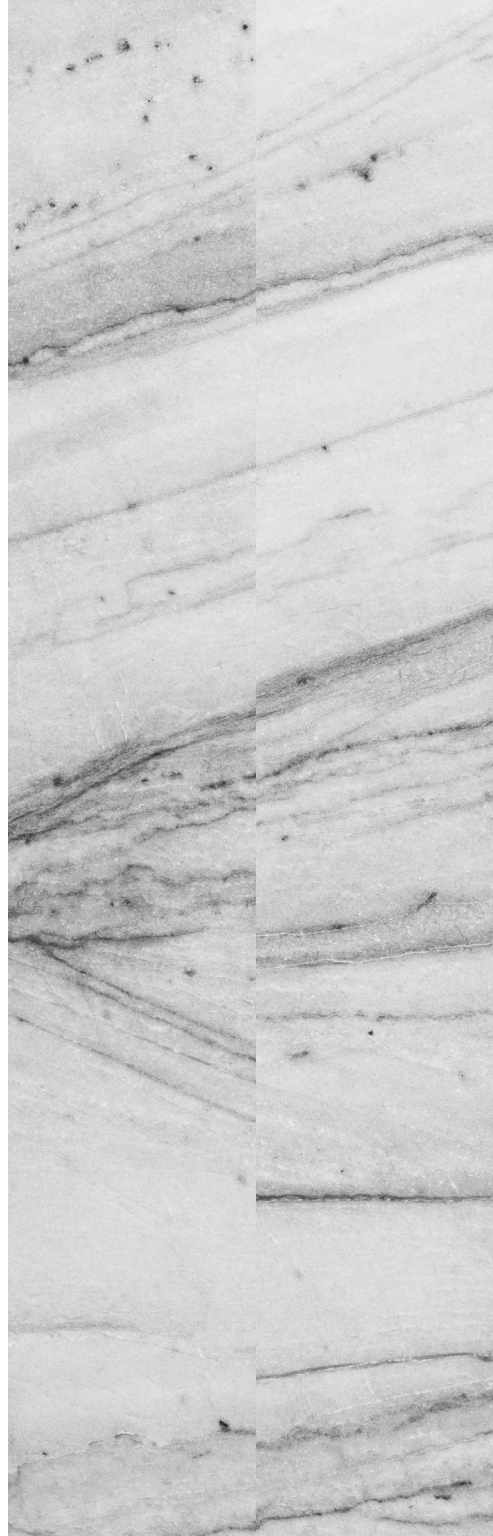
Marigold sunset, shimmering fauna, scarlet sand,
thus opens the dreamscape
of honey, sugar,
and bliss.

Watery world, marshy swamp,
wade in rust-colored tides,
and sink, and sink
deeper.

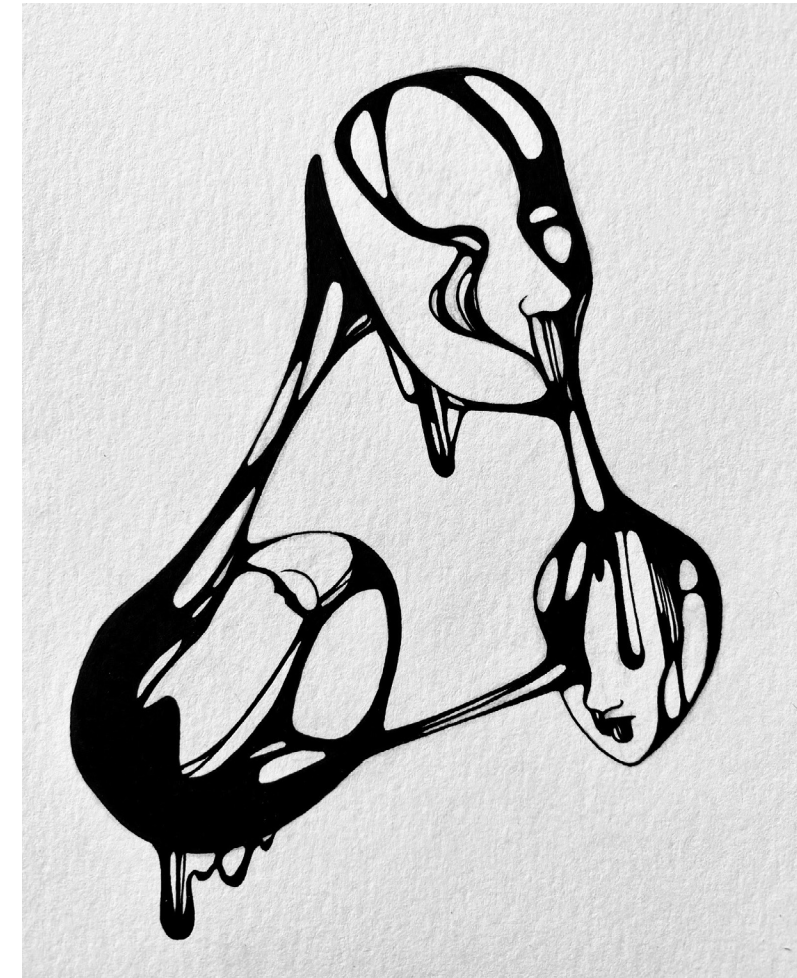
The waves recede, vibrancy pales,
what remains lives inside
the belly,

until
there is

nothing
left.



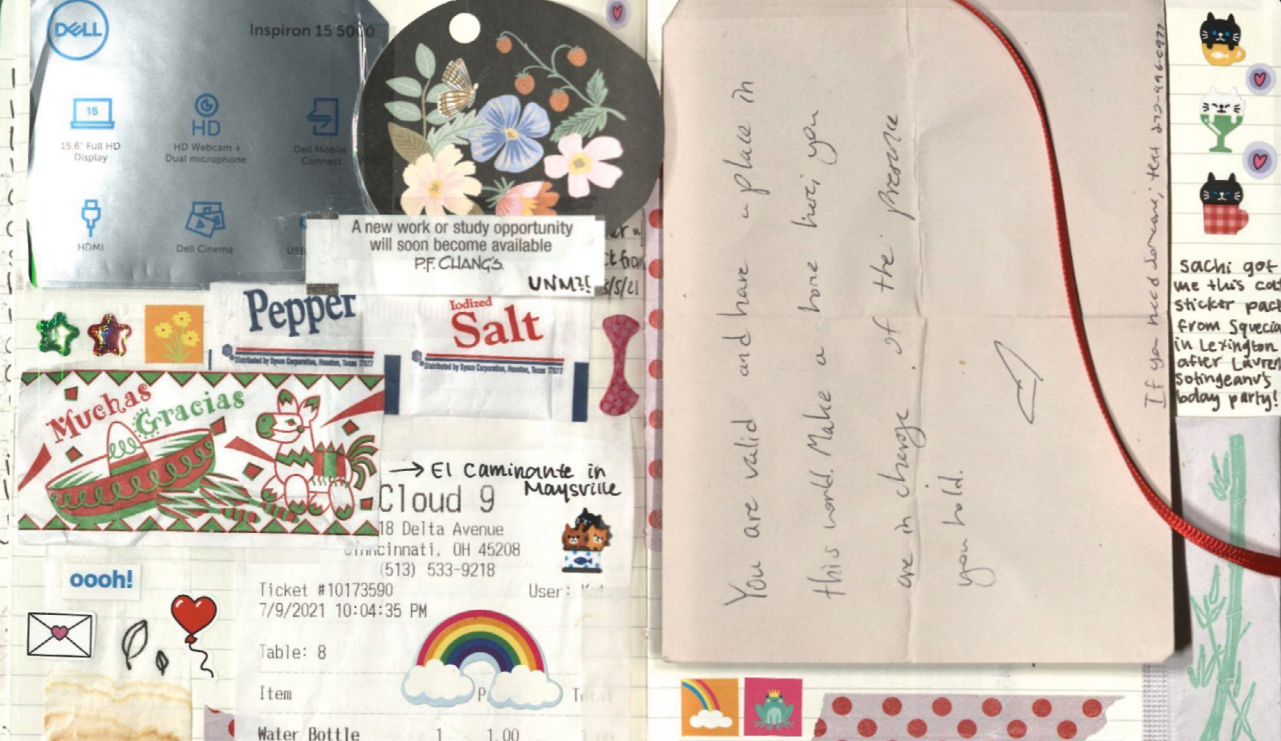
4.5"x6" pen and ink



visual art

SENSES

Dylan Francisco DeCastro
California State University, Northridge



open media

LIFE SCRAPS

Raychel Kool

*The University of
New Mexico*

"Life Scraps" is a collage of scraps of paper and foil that acts as a visual journal, documenting memories through tickets, wrappers, and stickers instead of words. Each piece of the collage represents a moment which holds a significance the viewer cannot fully understand, but their meaning is intimated by little descriptions as well as each element's placement within the overall scheme. This collection of memories prompts the viewer to consider how something becomes art. What might have become a discarded wrapper or sticky note is rendered as artwork within this wistful and sentimental form of personal documentation.

*Commentary by Scribendi staff.
View this piece at scribendi.unm.edu*

short fiction

THE PINK PANTHER

I've heard that life is a series of befores and afters. There are the major events, but those only take a couple of seconds from our precious lifespans. Indeed, it does not take long for a car accident, a job offer, or a piano to fall from the penthouse window onto the neighborhood's favorite ice cream truck. So, if the 180° life events only account for minuscule moments, most of a life is made up of the Before and the After. The Before is the innocent puppy completely unaware of the exact depths and heights its life is capable of wielding. The After is when either a new type of pain or a new type of happiness settles into one's bloodstream. My Before was my first eighteen years. I currently find myself in the

Grace Tobin

Arizona State University

After. As far as distinctive differences, only one is currently coming to mind: in the Before, people used to tell me I was always smiling. "You've got a grin glued on that freckled face, Olivia." In the After, no one has ever said that to me. Not once.

Eighteen Years into the Before, Day Zero of the After:

All I remember thinking was, "Why did she have to tell us right when the dessert came out?" Here Mom was, telling me and my siblings that for the past two years, Dad had had a girlfriend in New Jersey, and all I could stare at was the dessert. It was s'mores bread pudding with ice cream on the side, and I could see it melting. I didn't

want the waiter to come back and think we were some weird family that ordered dessert just to not eat it. More than that, I needed to eat it soon before it was too late and I wasn't able to see it anymore. There was a blurry curtain of tears closing shop on my eyes. I started shoveling spoonfuls into my mouth as Mom gave every piece of information she had managed to wring out of Dad's email and text message history like an old, damp rag. The detailed mosaic of a torrid affair was becoming clear in our minds.

"I found the text messages and emails a couple of weeks ago." I told my siblings that something was seriously wrong this time, that it wasn't just a regular fight. But they didn't believe me from the vantage points of their college dorms.

"She's half his age." Okay, so Dad is in the *worst case scenario* section of the mid-life crisis brochure. The knowledge fell like strong hands onto my brother's shoulders: the mistress was only just older than him.

"It was a complete double life. Every week when he leaves us to go to New Jersey for work, he's living his life with her." Okay, Mom, you can stop talking. I ate more s'mores bread pudding. "He would even leave earlier than he needed to so that he could spend more time with her." Please, Mom, that's enough. "They aren't together anymore, but that's only because she broke up with him. She started dating someone else and he got jealous. He would've left us if she hadn't left him first." Mom. Please.

It wouldn't be until later when I would find out the rest of the story—it would come in spurts while I was getting

ready for prom or telling Mom about a date I went on. I would find out all about how Dad told his young girlfriend

that he wanted to stay with her in New Jersey and never come back to our shrub-lined home. I would find out about the times Dad texted his girlfriend what he thought their kids would look like if they were to ever have any: black haired and blue eyed and sporty and beautiful, so very beautiful. I ate more bread pudding as I heard her say, "We're going to try to make it work," through a distance of murky oceans. She was clutching to her heart the bracelet with a Pink Panther pendant Dad gave her. I could tell from where I was

sitting that both she and the pendant were on the verge of shattering.

My sister pulled me aside after dinner to tell me that we'd be getting our noses pierced instead of going to school tomorrow—something Dad had told her she could never do. I declined the offer of desperate and unoriginal rebellion, determined to go to school as if nothing in my life had changed. I had my leftover bread pudding in a to-go box and I couldn't wait to eat it for lunch tomorrow.

Nine Years into the Before:

I hated Mom. It had been an hour since they told me to go to bed, but I remained unnoticed on the cold seat of the top stair. Why would they notice me? Mom was too busy telling Dad his eyes were too big and too sweet for the blonde mom at my sister's soccer games. How dare she? Didn't she know how hard he worked for us? Didn't she know how much he missed us? She just couldn't understand. All he did was get

There was a blurry
curtain of tears
closing shop on my
eyes.

on a plane to go to work every Monday and come back to us on Thursday while she got to be with us all the time. We wouldn't have even had a house if it wasn't for him, and she was just going to yell at him and accuse him of this? I couldn't go to bed with that happening right downstairs, so I went to the kitchen. He shouldn't have let her talk to him like that.

Four Days into the After:

Dad flew home last night drunker than I had ever seen him. The flight attendant had become his best friend when he ordered gin after gin. I assumed he was scared of the contents of our brick house. Mom had said he was going to talk to all of us about what happened. The next morning, I was sitting on the old brown couch watching TV when he blocked my view of the screen by sitting on the coffee table. He didn't really say much, only asked if I had any questions.

With nothing else on my mind other than the question that had slept restlessly on my pillow every night since I found out, I said, "Do you still love us?"

"Of course," he said. "Of course, Olivia." That was the first of two times that Dad and I talked about it. I should've been angrier at him like my sister was. She seethed. She burned. She scorned. I felt none of this. I should have yelled at him for doing that to Mom after everything she had done for him—practically raising us by herself while he went out of town every week. I should have given him the silent treatment and not forgiven him so easily. It shouldn't have been that easy for him. But it was. It was that easy because more than ire, more than sadness, more than disgust, there was a fear. There was an insecurity. There was a determination.

He almost left. "He would've left us if she hadn't left him first," Mom had said. At the core of everything I felt there

was a voice in my head telling me that I didn't do a good enough job. I didn't do a good enough job at getting him to love me. It didn't matter that the whole rest of my being told me that I was unreasonable and on the cusp of laughably insecure. I couldn't shake the voice. If he wanted to leave us, it would have been because we weren't giving him what he wanted. I mean, I know he wanted us to be more into sports. I know he wished I didn't talk as much as I did when there was a serene silence. I could do better. I had a second chance.

And there was no way he was sticking around if all I did was get mad at him and make his life even worse. He had set the price too high and I couldn't afford the anger.

Two Weeks into the After:

"Mom told me you thought this would affect me more than anyone else."

My brother, Douglas, looked up from his bowl of Cap'n Crunch at the kitchen table. "Only because you are the only one that still lives at home. Laney and I at least have our dorms to go back to. Also, Olivia, she wasn't supposed to tell you that."

"But why don't you seem upset?" I had been eyeing Douglas since the night Mom told us. He seemed irate at dinner, but I found out later it was only because he thought it was unfair of Mom to tell us in public, and he didn't want me to cry in front of a bunch of strangers. I was hoping his lack of passion could be tethered to mine and we could find

I didn't do a good
enough job at
getting him
to love me.

camaraderie in our shared apathy. I had been gaining the nerve to ask my question for a couple of days now.

"Because Mom did it too." His eyes were cold and unfeeling as he relayed what was "old news" to his little sister. The same eyes were filled to the brim with regret as he registered the look on my face. Whatever he saw there, he wanted to make it go away. "I'm sorry. Shit. I shouldn't have told you that." He wasn't looking at me anymore. "I just thought it would be unfair if you thought Dad was the only one in the wrong."

"What are you talking about? When did this happen?" Please, Douglas, could you paint me a new picture? I was learning I would have to burn all of my old copies.

"I was a sophomore in high school, Laney was in seventh grade, and you were only a fifth-grader. Laney and I decided you were too young to know, but I found an old burner phone in Mom's closet when it went off one day. I think the guy lived in Colorado or something. It doesn't really matter."

The weight of his words on my already teetering hold of the world released my body from any tethering. Every item in my surroundings and every thought in my head moved an eighth of an inch and evolved into a darker shade.

I wasn't mad at Douglas and Laney for not telling me. They were forced into their After at such a young age. At least I got through my formative years before realizing our house rested on a fault line. No wonder they were so much more fucked up than I was.

"Does Dad know?"

"I don't know. Mom said she told him."

"What do you think is going to happen, Douglas?"

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing. She doesn't have the guts to leave him."

Two Years into the After:

"My ex texted me today. She just wanted to tell me about a movie she thought I'd like. It looks pretty good, honestly. We should watch it."

I put my burger down. Suddenly, my stomach was full and I couldn't think about eating anymore. Martin was still looking at me. I chewed thoughtfully and swallowed what was left in my mouth.

"I know last week I told you to tell me every single time she texted you, but I've been thinking about it and it's really not necessary. I don't need to know every single time. I would just rather it not be like, every week."

"What do you mean not every week? I text all of my friends like once a week and she and I are friends, so why would I text her any less?"

"Oh." I tried to respond with an even voice and clear head. "I didn't know you felt that way about your friendships. When I was talking to my sister about it, she said it shouldn't be that frequent. I don't know. Honestly, it just makes me kind of uncomfortable."

"Jesus, Olivia, we can't keep having the same conversation. I can't do this every month. If you can't trust me, I can't handle that." While I tried to process the amount of times he said "can't," tears started forming right above his lower lash line. I didn't realize I had crossed a line until it was five feet behind me.

"Hey, hey, hey, Martin, I do trust you." My voice became as soft as his wavy brown hair. "Look at me. I promise I trust you. It's just with everything that happened with my parents...I just...I know you would never cheat on me. I know that; I know that. I promise."

I could hear the lie in my voice. I honestly didn't think he would cheat on me. The lie was that I was insecure because of my parents. When I said that, it felt like I was willing trust issues onto myself because I expected them to bubble up naturally. In reality, when I was friends with Martin, I sat with him while he cried over his ex, taking a year to get over her. I sat there and listened while he told me about their perfect relationship in which they never fought, but tragically had to break up because of long distance. I didn't know why

he expected me to just erase all of those memories when we started dating. I didn't know why he expected me to be immediately chill and cool and unconcerned with them being friends now, no questions asked. But maybe it was all just about my parents. Maybe it was because Mom had told me ten more times than necessary that the only reason she married Dad was because she "never thought he would ever do something like that to her." Maybe it had nothing to do with Martin, the sweet man I was making cry right next to me. My first love. The man who just last week made me hot dogs in his new oven and showed me the entire livestream excitedly. He couldn't believe he was able to watch his food cook and he wanted to show me. Just me, and no one else. I knew he loved me. I knew he and his ex were just friends. I knew he would never cheat on me because he knew me. And he knew that if he ever did that, I might truly never recover. I knew he didn't want to be responsible for that.

So I said, "We don't have to talk about this again, Martin. I promise. It won't be an issue anymore. I won't make it an issue. Maybe, when she's in town next, I can meet her. That way we can all be friends." Every word out of my mouth tasted vile and reproaching.

"I don't know if she would be comfortable with that," was all that he said in response. I picked up my burger again.

Two-and-a-Half Years into the After:

"Honestly, Olivia, if all he wants is to go to Australia for a couple of months, that's perfect. That's fine. Hey, I'll leave too. Then he'll find out just how hard it is to run a household while your supposed-to-be-partner just jets off to God knows where." Mom was a couple of steps ahead of me on our hike and miles deep into an emotional spiral after going through Dad's phone again that morning.

"Mom, just because he texted his coworker that a couple of months in Australia sounds really nice doesn't mean

anything. I mean, who doesn't think a couple of months in Australia sounds nice? Also, I thought we discussed you not checking his phone anymore. It's never going to make you feel better. You're always going to find stuff you don't like on there."

"Olivia, you don't understand what I am going through. I pray to God every single night that you never have to understand. I mean, picture Martin cheating on you and then you'll get a small glimpse of what the past three years have been like for me. No, really, try to picture it. You walk in on Martin with another girl who's younger than you and prettier than you. She's probably better in bed than you are by a mile. Are you picturing it? Now add twenty-five years of marriage and three kids and try to tell me not to check his phone again," Mom said as she tried to navigate the steepest part of the hike.

I knew this conversation well. I could time the exact moment when Mom would start crying. It was almost my cue for the grand finale: me telling her to go to therapy because the only advice I had was for her to talk about this to someone who wasn't me. I knew I would never understand and I didn't want to have to try anymore.

When we got back to our house, I went right to Dad's office. I didn't even bother closing the door behind me before saying, "Mom still checks your phone all of the time. You need to try harder than this. She's hurting so much." I left, and that was the second and final time I ever talked to Dad about what he did to Mom.

Three Years into the After:

"I hated the way you asked me to be your girlfriend. You just said, 'Olivia, is it okay if I told people you were my girlfriend?' It was so lame. I was too embarrassed to tell anyone how you asked." What I didn't go on and remind him about was the completely encompassing joy I felt in

that moment. I didn't remind him that he wanted me at that moment so long ago, so maybe he would want me again.

Maybe I should have reminded him. Martin was in the second hour of breaking up with me and we were playing a fun game of "This is How I Really Felt in That Moment When You Thought I was Happy During Our Two-Year Relationship."

"Also," I added for good measure, "it was a total red flag that you refused to put anything about me on your Instagram."

"You want to talk about red flags?" I knew I did not want to talk about red flags. Martin continued, "You told me it would be fine if your husband didn't cheat on you for the first ten years of marriage, but then cheated after that—like, at least he made it ten years. Then you would forgive him."

"What does that have to do with anything? I just think marriages are a lot more complex than people think."

"It's a red flag."

"So that's why you're breaking up with me?"

"Olivia, we're just incompatible." I still don't know what that word means.

I could feel it. This moment—it was one of those moments. With every word he said as he cut all ties attaching himself to me, he was creating another Before and another After in my life. But that was for a different story.

At Some Undisclosed Time in the Before:

"For show-and-tell, I wanted to bring this Pink Panther toy from my mommy's stuff. My mommy and daddy met in high school where they grew up in Wisconsin. My daddy

wanted me to tell my classmates that he knew he was going to marry my mommy as soon as he saw her. Daddy used

to shoot spitballs into my mommy's hair during their math class. Their first date was on Valentine's Day their junior year. She was the homecoming queen and he was the quarterback, point guard, and catcher. They used to hide this exact Pink Panther in each other's lockers when the other person wasn't looking. My daddy used to write my mommy love letters all of the time and she still has them in the same box she keeps the Pink Panther. They got married after college and then they had my brother, my sister, and me. My

mommy told me to tell my classmates during show-and-tell that they are soulmates. When I grow up, I want to have a marriage just like theirs."

The kids in my class "awwed" and "ewwed" while the teacher chuckled silently at the Before girl talking about her Before parents living in the Before Fairytale.

I didn't remind him
that he wanted me
at that moment so
long ago, so maybe
he would want me
again.

creative nonfiction

WRHC AWARD WINNER

AUX ARCS

*"Said the river: imagine everything you
can imagine, then keep on going."*
—Mary Oliver

The mountains of the Ozarks are upside down. Their tops are flat and fertile, covered in roads and cropland and gas stations of varying repute. These places are quaint but mostly uninteresting. The real action happens in the hollows in between. In the morning, before the sun reaches its apex and burns in a new day, fog fills the valleys and the little farms and hamlets become quiet islands of reality in the sky. Below them and among them is a sea of mist and forest, theoretically on Earth but in a de facto different dimension which has somehow settled

Thomas Cuezze

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to the bottom of the great river of time, stubbornly refusing to be carried by the current. It is no surprise to me that the Acheron, the river which in antiquity Greeks believed to be the portal to the Underworld, was not a myth but rather a real stream in a part of Greece which

happens to look very much like the Ozarks. The difference is that here there aren't many souls, only water.

I had driven down from the city for the weekend to explore this pocket universe, and my plan for the day was to explore a certain creek, which probably has a name well known to the five people living near it, but which is not marked on any map, app, or atlas. The creek starts out as tame trickles of runoff on the pastures high in the hills, but

as it drops and gorges itself on the springs and seeps and streams of the hollow, the bluegrass gives way to trees and cliffs and the water acquires a glint of mystery, becoming more than just a wet blue line on the map. If the hollow is some strange and ancient creature, the creek is its icy, empty heart cavity.

The road from the trailhead down into the valley had long ago washed out, so I left the car behind and descended on foot into the morning fog. The two-track road ended at a grassy canebrake on the banks of the brook. This clearing was my last anchor to the world, the shore of the Acheron, and had only one trace of humanity: a toppled, overgrown wood sign reading "Madison County Wildlife Management Area," denoting the border of an area which clearly had not been managed in many years. It was easier to walk in the water than deal with the brambles on the shore, so I plodded into the creek with a splash and began the descent downstream.

Along the side of the creek were many overhanging bluffs, smooth curves of limestone arching upward over the stream. The rock reflected the *hshh-hshh-hshh* of the rushing water and the *hwash-hwash-hwash* of my footsteps into a kind of blended murmur with a friendly, conversational tone. The melody was very welcome. There are many stories of men and women who lose their minds and bodies to the wilderness, and so it is always important to stay on good terms with the surroundings. If you fancy yourself a conqueror trying to thrash the landscape into submission, an unpredictable turn of events will throw you out on your

ass, and your misfortune will probably be written about in a dramatized bestseller on the pulp shelf at a truck stop.

If the hollow is
some strange and
ancient creature,
the creek is its icy,
empty heart cavity.

The day slowly slid past me, and after eating a handful of peanuts which passed for lunch, I decided to trace one of the many small rivulets which pours into the creek. It cascaded over a series of rock steps before twisting around a big oak and out of sight. The steps were slick with moss, but I made it up with some trouble, and at the top was a convenient place to take a rest. Below spread the floor of the valley. Looking over the treetops, far from the comforting sounds of the creek below, it finally dawned on me how lonely this place was.

I was struck by a strange conviction that if I were to climb the bluffs, leave the hollow, and start walking, I would find rolling hills of oak and hickory forever and ever and ever, and not another person to be seen.

The sun set quickly over the tops of the mountains, and I knew time was of the essence, but I was oddly determined to find the source of this trickle of water. Every time I convinced myself to twist my shoulders and turn around, my will failed me, so I trudged upward through the brush. This little tributary leapt over many cliffs on its sprint to the mainstem, forcing me to scale a couple of nasty pitches and a particularly slimy hickory on my way to the top. Between plunges, it rested in little sapphire pools and carved channels through any boulder with the audacity to stand in its way. Once, it pulled a trick, leading me to a spot where it popped out of muddy gravel which appeared to be the source. Further inspection revealed a dry overflow channel above, and when I followed it a hundred feet or so

I caught my stream in the middle of a vanishing act, sinking into the gravel as if to hide from me. After tense Soviet-style negotiations with a couple more bushes, I finally reached the top of the staircase of stone to find nothing.

Well, not quite nothing—a blank wall of rock where the water appeared from a spring. There was no great passion to the act, none of the screaming and pain and joy and sheer exhaustion which usually characterize birth, just nothing and then something.

I knew that behind that unmarked wall of alabaster was a cave. Below all the Ozarks is a watery subterranean underworld of caverns and aquifers. It is a strange place, one where trees are replaced by stalactites and fish have translucent skin, their bloody guts visible underneath. The caves steal water from streams and roots and spit it back out in unexpected places like an uncaring anti-Prometheus. Occasionally, this chilly foundation bumps up against the surface.

Drive through the Ozarks on a winter morning and you'll see little plumes of steam in the cow pastures—breaths of the catacombs.

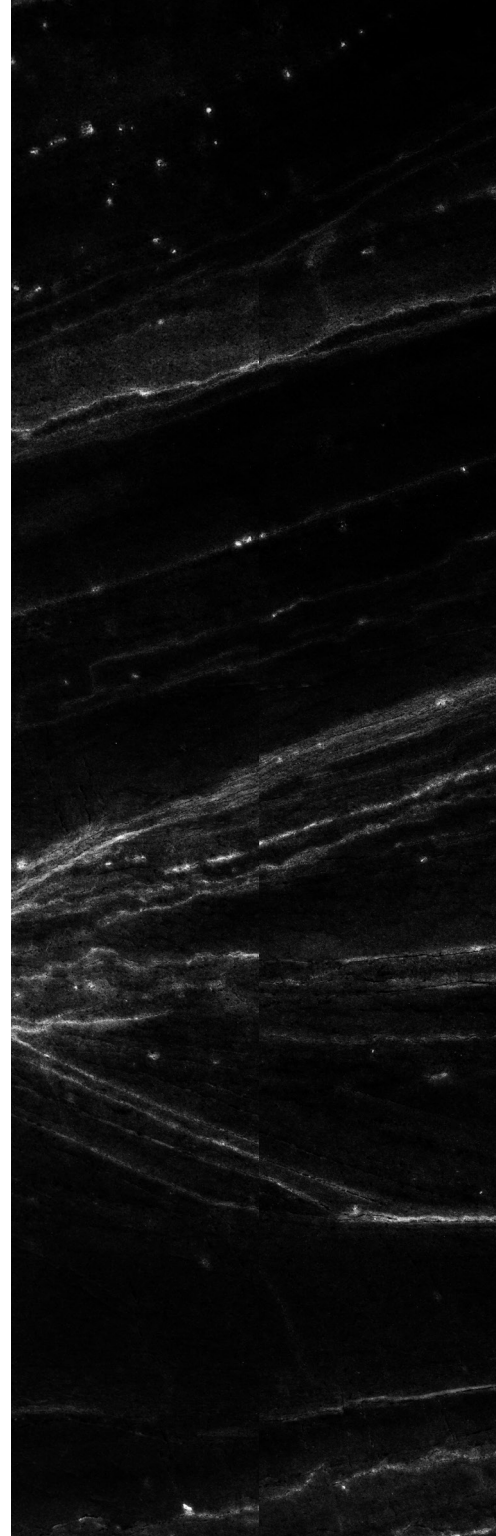
Entrancing as the spring was, it wasn't my primary goal on this hike. That lay further downstream. So I took one last glimpse at the water and the dried-up flowers around it and bushwhacked back to the creek, coming out with nothing but a few red scratches. The creek was flowing faster than ever. Above me, the hardwoods and pines leaned over the hollow, enclosing it like a tunnel. I picked up the pace and walked with the current. My feet grew numb from the cold water, and their motion began to seem inevitable and entirely separate from my body, a rhythmic series of

swishes in the waves, preordained since the beginning of the universe. I became so enamored by the motions that my surroundings faded into hazy pastels of the subconscious, and I almost failed to notice a distressing change. The bubbly whisper of the water had stopped. The bluffs were still there, standing sentinel over the creek and the crawdads, but some unseeable change in angle or composition had stripped the soundscape of its congenial character. I had not traveled long in distance, but this newly chilly gorge was as far from the welcoming wonderland of my afternoon as is possible on Earth. Perhaps farther.

I began to worry this labyrinth might be inescapable, but before too long, I found the mouth of a smaller stream, a golden string to lead me to my final destination. Marching up the sandy little creek, I heard it before I saw it: a violent pounding of fluid against ground, drowning out all natural noises of the forest like a drum beat. As the noise reached a crescendo, I emerged from the understory onto the sandy rim of the clear plunge pool. Above me was the waterfall.

The Ozarks are littered with falls. The country is so hilly that a river flowing any respectable distance will inevitably have to jump a cliff or two on its way to the Gulf. This waterfall, though, was different. It had spirit. It danced across the pool as the winds buffeted it, twisting and turning as if following an incomprehensible ancient ritual. The cave lurking behind offered at once shelter and mystery. But the most notable trait, the one which made this waterfall so eccentric, was the top. This stream was apparently too proud or arrogant to merely pour over its stone spigot. At

Below all
the Ozarks is a
watery subterranean
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the top of the bluff it vanished into the rock, gushing out of a hole several feet below. Needless to say, I was intrigued. After a brief stop to admire the grotto, I hastily scrambled up to the top of the cliff. Standing up and seeing the stream in all its reality froze me in my tracks. The stream dropped over several small ledges before splitting into two channels which spiraled down into the rock, with only the faintest hint of light shining through.

Peering into the great vortex, I raced to spot some familiar pattern in it, desperately trying to connect with memories of spinning tops or theme-park rides. I had never wanted to humanize something so badly in my life. As hard as I tried, the spark was not there; I jump-started nothing. The animalistic metaphors I had slapped onto every atom of the hollow suddenly seemed quaint and ignorant, an obvious fiction of the imagination. I rediscovered that feeling often whispered about by visitors to the wilderness, an ecstatic sense that the world is far deeper and stranger than you could ever imagine. It is the closest thing I have ever felt to the divine. But "God" is far too small and human a word. Prehistoric peoples would paint their gods on the walls of caves, the sooty primordial home of humanity. Some caves have many layers of different gods, as generation after generation tried to force rationality on the world. If gods are cave art, this thing I had discovered was the cave.

Eventually I had to leave. The sun was setting. I had no supplies to spend the night, and practical concerns began to press in. The moment faded. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. The hike back crossed typical Ozark terrain, nothing I hadn't seen before. Eventually I drove back to my hotel and went to bed, preparing to wake up and return home to the plains of Kansas City. When asked what the hike was like, I described it as "pretty." I woke up and went about one day, then another, then another. Life progressed. Eventually, I planned more trips to the Ozarks and returned to the waterfall. I've poked at it from every cardinal direction, dragging along

eager friends and less than eager acquaintances, but I've never found anything out of the ordinary. No matter how I look, all I see is water.

ПАМЯТЬ МОЕГО ДЕТСТВА

Daniil Tourashev

U.S. Air Force Academy

По Русской земле ты течешь
Величественней всех других.
Итиль—“река рек”—раньше называли тебя,
Но «светлой» финны тебя прозвали,
А в переводе—Волга.

От Твери до Астрахани простираешься ты
И впадаешь в Каспийское море.
Мое детство заполнила ты
Своими неземными красотами.

Ещё ребёнком ходил к тебе,
Купался в твоих водах,
И с той поры вопросом задаюсь я:
Почему не понял я тогда,
Что вряд ли теперь увижу тебя.

A MEMORY OF MY CHILDHOOD

You're flowing on Russian land
More majestic than all the others
“Itil”—the river of rivers—you were called in the past
But the Finns started calling you “light”
And in translation—Volga

*English translation by
Daniil Tourashev*

From Tver to Astrakhan your waters stretch
And into the Caspian Sea you fall
My childhood—you filled
With your unearthly beauty

Back when I was a child, I would come to you
I would swim in your waters
And since then, I ask myself the question
Why didn't I understand then?
That I'm unlikely to see you again

poetry

SECRETS

Mairéad Ryan

University of California, Davis

You asked if I had a secret

Well, I did, and I do.

The truth is I stole a shirt
from you.
From off your floor,
when I was packing,
when I could feel you
slipping away.

*I wanted something to
hold,*

a little piece of you.
You had two letters from
me, a half a dozen poems.

*I wanted something to
hold.*

Not something you got for
me, something from you.
It smelled like you.
I kept it hidden in a ball in
my room.
The week after I left you
I held it every night,

*it gave me hope, it gave me
comfort.*

After you broke my heart
for the first time, I stopped
smelling it, I kept it
hidden, in a ball in the
corner.

I wanted to burn it, but I
couldn't bring myself to

*let it go, to let the last
threads of you go.*

The Sunday you called me
after brunch to tell me you
loved me, I went to the
corner of my room.
I took out the shirt—it still
smelled like you.

*It gave me hope, it gave me
comfort.*

I packed it in my suitcase
to California in a ball with
a sliver of hope.
I held it every night that
week until you broke my
heart for a second time.
But that time it didn't
come as a shock,

*I saw it waiting
precariously to be
shattered in your wake.*

When I hung up the phone
and gathered myself up off
the floor, the first thing I
did was go to my suitcase,
pick up your shirt,
still in a ball, in the corner.

I carried it with just an
index finger and my
thumb.

Unsteady on my feet, I
didn't want any piece of
you to rub off on me.

With a friend by my side, I
tossed it into the dumpster.

*The last physical threads
of you were gone,
out of sight,
not out of mind.*

I couldn't stop to think
about what I wanted to do.
I didn't have the time.
I did what I had to do to be
kind to myself.

You and the shirt were
never really mine

to have or to hold.

*It gave me more
comfort and hope to see
you both go.*

**I kept this secret, and if
I'm being honest with
myself, I know you'll
never read this, but if I'm
getting everything off my
chest, I can't keep any
secrets.**

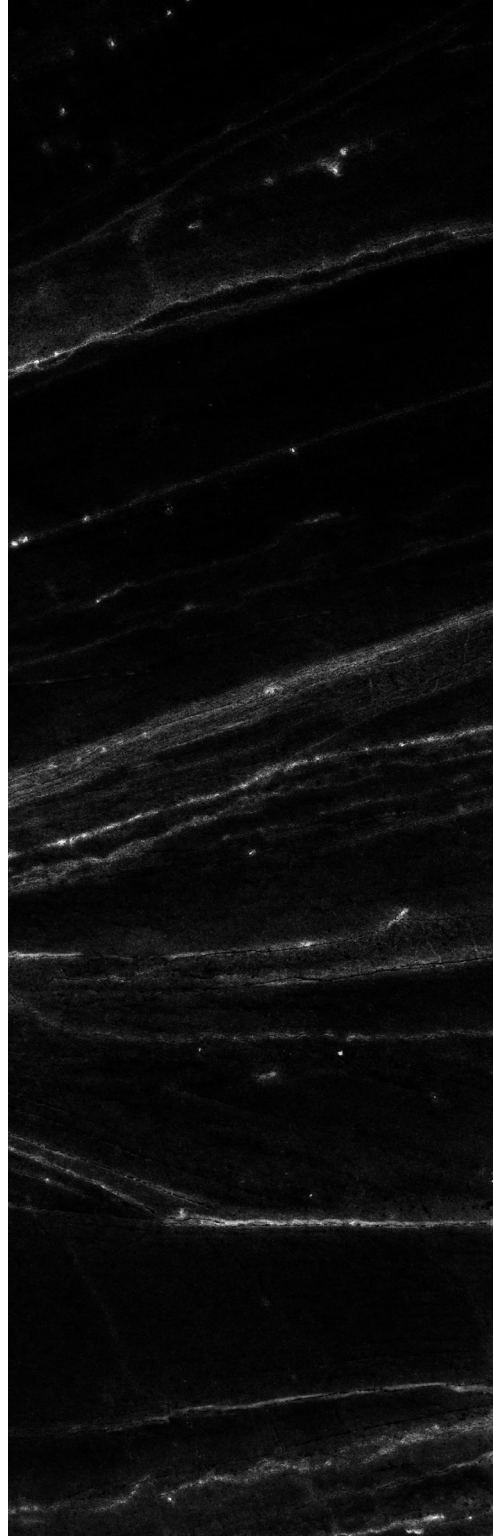
STAFF CHOICE AWARD WINNER

DRIP-DRY WAR CRIMES

Arwen Grace Baxter

University of Montana

I heard the machine gun fire on the back lawn
A pristine Swiss pasture smack-dab in no man's land
I heard the *chht chht chht* as they rose from the ground
To water the blood money roses
We crossed our hearts, prayed for the mercy of our heavenly mother, and
sipped straight from
The nozzle, created a seal with our parched lips
Golf balls whipping this way and that like a hailstorm
Hail everywhere and no water
Just tons of uranium buried in the mountain
Uranium welling up into a spring flood
They held their clubs at right angles and sized up the damage
They had the yucca, Joshua tree, and barrel cactus in their sights
They were snipers on the seventh hole
Ready to take the whole world in one swing
And we
We were the rust-colored coyote children born of the brown patches
Suckled on the bright white linens drip-drying on the laundry lines
Drip-dry war crimes
We saw them sweating into their own wounds
Feasting on their own salt
We were crisp, sand-papered, and solitary
Moving only at night, ripping at sod with our fingernails
We crawled on all fours under the fence to sit in the man-made rain



They had the white mountain and the Mojave in their sights
We came to remind them we were delicate: cactus, coyote, and me
They laughed and said we were lucky
Gnashing bright white teeth hard as the July sun
The desert gets cold at night
And the watering holes attract carnivores

open media

FADE INTO PHOTOGRAPH

Brandon Ligon
Arizona State University

"Fade into Photograph" is an evocative and stirring composition for string orchestra in two movements: "A Near Forgotten Disturbing Memory" and "Disquieted." The piece begins slowly, comprised primarily of lonely sentimental melodies but later becomes fuller, building up steam with a spirited rhythm until everything seems to crash into the exhilarating climax. The piece explores the decline of memory from dementia with a haunting and discordant melody. The quality of the recording is close and intimate which, in conjunction with the tension and uneasiness of the piece, creates a sense of frantic urgency that parallels the fleeting realization that cognitive awareness is quickly slipping away.

"Fade into Photograph" is dedicated to Brandon Ligon's grandmother and great-grandmother.

Commentary by Scribendi staff.
Listen to this piece at scribendi.unm.edu

The image displays two pages of a musical score for a string orchestra. The top page shows measures 6 and 7, and the bottom page shows measures 8 and 9. The score includes five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. Additionally, there is a woodblock part indicated by the instruction 'col legno tratto' and 'col legno battuto'. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and 4/4 time. Measure 6 begins with a *mf* dynamic. Measure 7 includes a 'dim. to silence' instruction. Measure 8 starts with a *p* dynamic, followed by a *f* dynamic in measure 9. The score also features various performance markings such as 'release harm.', '(harm. slide again)', and 'approximate'.

visual art

MURDER OF CROWS

Summer Sekula
University of Nevada



17" x 12" ballpoint pen

poetry

THE RATHER UNFORTUNATE TIMING OF A DELTA AIRBUS IN THE MIDST OF A FINAL DRINK SERVICE

Amy Griffin
Brigham Young University

As we make our
final descent
into clouds
and
blindness,
I understand
we have radar.
But what if we strike God
meeting his people for the
Rapture?
Will galley Chardonnay and Biscoff
suffice as
communion
after running down James
and John?
What is the protocol
for mowing over Peter?
Have we a backup plan
for opening the
gates of heaven?

AFTERWORD

Amaris Ketcham

Faculty Advisor

Several years ago, science fiction author Philip K. Dick concluded that time is not real, that though the world appears to be changing, we are really stuck in 50 A.D. eternally reliving the period of the Book of Acts. As I write, we are 750 days into a pandemic. Another variant is on the loose. Almost daily we hear people question whether others are “authentic human beings” and are reminded to accept that there are plural realities—but obviously ours is “more real” than others. It can feel like we are living in a Philip K. Dick novel, perplexing and visceral. And yet student work continues to surprise us with the clearest eye and steadiest hand. In this edition of *Scribendi*, photographers create universes in puddles, while poets invite rapture among the scraggly pines near the tree line. There’s such beauty in the long stroke of a quetzal’s feather, the smooth curves of limestone and marble, a walk through the old family neighborhood. These works find their awe in the moon, the garden, nostalgia, and rebirth. We received 395 submissions this year. Of these, we are publishing forty-one students from twenty-two schools across the country, many of them asking “What are we? What is it which surrounds us, that we call the ‘not-me,’ or the empirical or phenomenal world?”

Back in the office and back in the classroom this year, the *Scribendi* staff devoted itself to presenting this body of work in the best magazine possible. *Scribendi*’s staff is from all majors, from Russian to women’s studies, philosophy to theatre, environmental science to business, and of course, English to graphic design. Many have never worked on a magazine before but signed up for this class hoping for an intensive, meaningful collegiate experience. Hundreds of hours of InDesign errors and copyediting questions later, they understand the “intensive” part of the year, but the “meaningful” part comes from work we publish, and that part is never fully understood until we connect with contributors at the opening reception. The work they have done is with the utmost care and consideration for the needs of each individual piece—and the real, authentic person behind that work. The connection that happens once the magazine is out in the world makes the year’s work feel real and meaningful.

I could not have asked for a better editorial team to transition back to the in-person classroom. Digital editor Flannery Cowan, managing editor Sierra Martinez, and communications editor Spenser Willden brought enthusiasm to even the most challenging tasks. Rarely have weekly management meetings been filled with such joy and laughter—even while setting agendas, assigning tasks, and discussing edits. This magazine would not have been possible without their casual brilliance, wit, and design savvy. Together we hope that this edition of *Scribendi* leads you out of feeling stuck reliving the same cycle and into the wonderful mystery of authentic human experiences.

CONTRIBUTORS

Arwen Grace Baxter—*University of Montana*

Arwen Grace Baxter is a writer, poet, musician, educator, and citizen ecologist. A senior at the University of Montana, she hopes to work in the environmental humanities, coordinating educational, academic, and creative partnership between the humanities and sciences. She is also a singer-songwriter. Arwen loves teaching, sagebrush, and wool sweaters.

Drip-Dry War Crimes 88

Kai Broach—*Western Washington University*

Kai Broach is in his final year of studying creative writing, energy science, and computer science and working in sustainability at Western Washington University. He believes in fiction as radical imagination and poetry as radical joy.

Interview from across Garden Street; My Apologies 09, 42

Rachael Buffett—*The University of New Mexico*

Rachael Buffett is studying for her bachelor of fine arts in studio art as a member of the Honors College at The University of New Mexico.

Modern Madonna 25

Caylee Caldwell—*Western Washington University*

Caylee Caldwell is a second-year honors student at Western Washington University majoring in creative writing and minoring in journalism. Caylee likes writing, photography, climbing, and nerding out over *Dungeons and Dragons*.

To Plant a Garden 30

Michael Caspi—*California State University, Northridge*

Michael Caspi is a film production major studying at California State University, Northridge. Influenced by directors such as Tarkovsky, he is drawn to the emotional and spiritual depth that cinema has to offer. His goal is to become a film writer and director.

Lost Connections 40

Kristen Chastain—*University of California, Irvine*

Kristen Chastain is a senior undergraduate in UC Irvine’s Campuswide Honors Collegium pursuing a degree in English and education sciences. She is an editor for *Neon Anteater Renaissance*, her school’s Honors Creative Works Journal, and hosts a local radio program to combine her love of creativity with her desire to build community through the arts.

Infinity 58

Pablo Cruz-Ayala—*University of Utah*

Pablo Cruz-Ayala was born in Guadalajara, Mexico and raised in Utah from the age of five. His family has always believed in shooting for the stars no matter the circumstances. He is now in his third year at the University of Utah and has been honored to work and learn from some of the most brilliantly-minded and gold-hearted teachers there. He’s worked hard to amplify the voices and stories of people who’ve felt loss and trauma like himself through building and being part of artist and non-artist communities on and off-campus. He truly wants to carry his family’s sentiment through his artwork as well as the communities that he has the privilege of interacting and learning with wherever he is involved.

Conquest of Teotihuacán; Bones away from Home 57, 61

Thomas Cuezze—*Montana State University*

Thomas Cuezze is a freshman studying ecology at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. He originally hails from Kansas City, Missouri. In the words of Montana writer Norman Maclean, he is “haunted by waters.”

Aux Arcs 80

Taylor Curry—*University of Montana*

Taylor Curry studies at the University of Montana Davidson with majors in French and political science, alongside a minor in music. He studied abroad in Lyon, France during which he gathered inspiration for his writings. As he hopes to stir contemplation, he encourages readers to reach out on Instagram: *@taylor...curry*.

Fierce 34

Dylan Francisco DeCastro—*California State University, Northridge*

Dylan Francisco DeCastro is currently a third-year at California State University, Northridge studying as an art major. Her focus is geared toward illustration and she enjoys using traditional methods of drawing in order to create her pieces. Inspired to create art for those around her and herself, she plans to pursue tattoo artistry for her career in the near future.

Identity; Senses 37, 71

Katrina Dutt—*The University of New Mexico*

Katrina Dutt is a curious adventurer who loves to photograph the beauty around her. She takes inspiration from her home on the West Coast and her travels. She finds the hidden and not-so-obvious aspects of life to showcase the uniqueness and beauty that is everywhere.

Golden Delight 68

Alisha Foster—*University of Washington*

Alisha Foster is a sophomore majoring in environmental studies. They are interested in the social and political underpinnings of the climate crisis as well as most other things. They have way too many poems sitting in their notes app.

Impersonal Love 26

Amy Griffin—*Brigham Young University*

Amy Griffin is a senior in the broadcast journalism program at Brigham Young University. She enjoys reading essays, playing with her dog, and sending texts in short bursts rather than long paragraphs.

Life Giver; The Rather Unfortunate Timing of a Delta Airbus in the Midst of a Final Drink Service 22, 93

Isabella Hutzler—*Northern Arizona University*

Isabella Hutzler is a hardworking, dedicated, and artistic student who tries her best to be successful in all aspects of life. She is an anthropology and photography double major with the hopes of one day working for a well-known magazine as a photojournalist after college.

Serenity at Sunrise; Yearning Field of Yellow 32, 33

Kyra Jee—*Chapman University*

In every writerly environment, Kyra Jee hopes to support joy, vulnerability, and the em dash. She is currently an editor at *Calliope Art & Literary Magazine* and an undergraduate student at Chapman University. Her work has been published in *Calliope Art & Literary Magazine*, *VOYA Magazine*, *Sapere Aude*, and *The Wildcat Review*.

negative entropy 01

Natalie Johnson—*The University of New Mexico*

Natalie Johnson is a sophomore at The University of New Mexico. She is studying film, theatre, and Italian. She would really like to go to Maine (for the puffins, of course).

For Lillian 36

Nadia Jokiman—*Mt. San Antonio College*

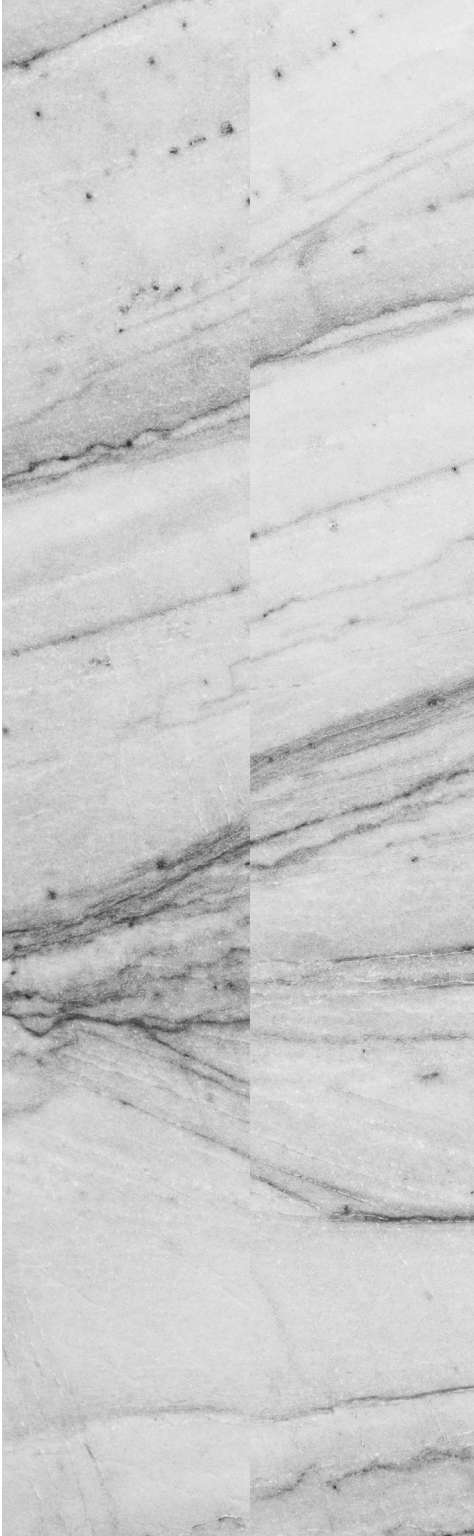
Nadia Jokiman has been passionate about making art ever since she was little. Her goal is to become an illustrator and animator in the future. Besides drawing, she also likes to listen to music, study Japanese, and has recently learned how to ride a skateboard.

Alone, Together; A Quiet Memory in Summer 64, 65

Zoey Kartchner—*Arizona State University*

Zoey Kartchner is a student at Arizona State and a future author. She enjoys reading, writing, and playing basketball in her free time. Her greatest achievement is that she binged fifteen seasons of a television show in under a month.

Black Veil; Glory 49, 66



Meghan Kontic—*Bellarmine University*

Meghan Kontic is a second-year student studying biology. She is a photographer and artist who loves to visit national parks, zoos, and almost anywhere with an abundance of plants or animals. Her favorite animals are red pandas and secretary birds.

Last Light 69

Raychel Kool—*The University of New Mexico*

Raychel Kool is currently a student at The University of New Mexico, but they were born and raised in California, Kentucky. Their interests include conservation, rural culture and development, and LGBTQ+ activism.

Life Scraps 72

Brooklynn Kreps—*Portland State University*

Brooklynn Kreps is studying English at Portland State University to obtain her bachelor’s degree before attending law school. She has been writing short fiction since the sixth grade.

Twelve Thirty 53

J Landolina—*The University of New Mexico*

J Landolina is currently studying fine arts at The University of New Mexico. In their free time, they enjoy collecting teacups and rehabilitating vintage cameras.

Swarm 08

Brandon Ligon—*Arizona State University*

Brandon Ligon is studying music composition and creative writing at Arizona State University, where he also attends Barrett, the Honors College. His favorite artistic endeavors include writing from unusual perspectives and experimenting with strange sounds and textures.

To Eat A Nectarine; Fade into Photograph 70, 90

Joshua Martelon—*University of Montana*

Josh Martelon is a Colorado boy that has found a home and family while studying psychology and creative writing at the University of Montana. He loves his pet rats, classical music, and one day hopes to seek his master’s in counseling.

Two Knitted Halves 46

Fiona Martinez—*Western Washington University*

Fiona Martinez is a second-year student studying creative writing and minoring in Spanish. She is from Boise, Idaho and draws inspiration from the contrast between her hometown and her college town, Bellingham. Fiona enjoys writing poetry and nonfiction.

Boise Wears October; An April Swim 11, 24

Brienne McGrath—*Everett Community College*

Brienne McGrath is a thirty-six-year-old mother of four who went back to school after dropping out in 2003. Photography, art, writing, and learning are passions of hers and she enjoys sharing these passions with others.

Nature is Healing 29

Zubayr Mohammad—*University of California, Davis*

Zubayr Mohammad is a third year UC Davis student pursuing a materials science and engineering major and a computer science minor. He loves renewable energy, baseball (Go Giants!), photography, comparative religion, poetry, and good food. He also goes by the moniker “Bear from the Zoo.”

Upside Down 28

Peyton Mower—*Brigham Young University*

Peyton Mower is currently pursuing his undergraduate in neuroscience at BYU. He loves reading and writing and hopes to continue to use creative storytelling as a way to express himself.

The Precipice 14

Raven Otero-Symphony—*The University of New Mexico*

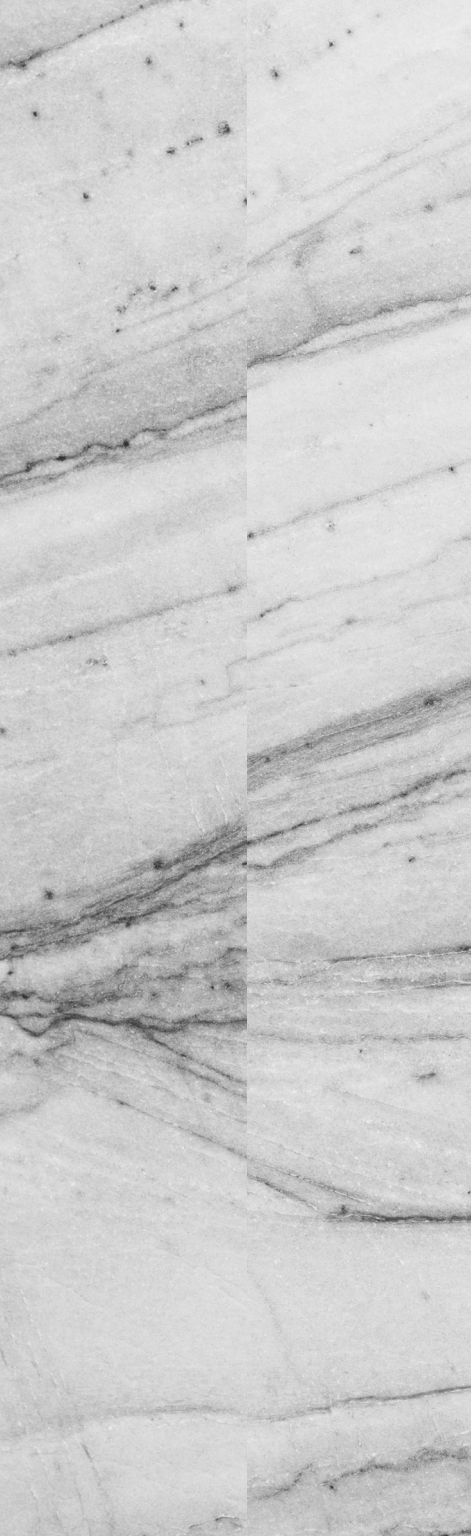
Raven Delfina Otero-Symphony is a Hispanic, first-generation student finishing studies in statistics, Spanish, interdisciplinary honors, and biomedical research (MARC) at The University of New Mexico. She believes the preservation of one’s cultural identity and the development of a more just society largely depend on balancing the arts and sciences.

El Detenido 06

Allison Peschek—*University of Montana*

Allison Peschek is a sophomore at the University of Montana. Originally from Renton, Washington, Allison has always found inspiration through how she perceives the world around her. Through appreciation and interest, she hopes to one day blend her fields of study: wildlife biology and art.

ehehehe, wisdom; Baba’s Sea 05, 48



Mairéad Ryan—*University of California, Davis*

Mairéad Ryan is a fourth-year animal science major pursuing a career in veterinary medicine. Her late grandmother instilled a love of poetry in her and she first began writing her own poetry after taking Native American poetry her freshman year at UC Davis.

Secrets 86

Bethany Saint-Smith—*California State University, Stanislaus*

Bethany Saint-Smith is a third-year social sciences major at California State University, Stanislaus. She has previously self-published two poetry chapbooks, *Black Pearls* and *Going Brave*, and has spent several years working as a musician. Bethany is fervently devoted to serving underrepresented communities to attain cross-cultural mobility.

Church Dress 45

Summer Sekula—*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Summer Sekula is a freshman at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She loves drawing birds and natural landscapes. More of her work can be found in *Kalopsia Literary Journal* and *Celebrating Art National Summer 2020 Anthology*.

Murder of Crows 92

Benjamin Tabáček—*The University of New Mexico*

Benjamin Tabáček is a poet, artist, and writer from Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is currently attending The University of New Mexico and pursuing a degree in English studies and will graduate in 2022. He is the author of a published essay, two unpublished poetry collections, and a novel which he plans to publish upon graduating.

Homesick 51

Monét Taylor—*The University of New Mexico*

Monét Taylor is currently enrolled at The University of New Mexico. She is studying performing arts and French and hopes to one day inspire others through various forms of art.

Four More Times, and Then...; Grippy Sock Vacation 38, 60

Grace Tobin—*Arizona State University*

Grace Tobin is currently an undergraduate at Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University, majoring in creative writing with a fiction concentration and minoring in French. Her poetry has been published in the literary magazine *Lux Creative Review*, her fiction has been published in the literary magazine *Canyon Voices*, and her interviews have been published in the literary magazine *Superstition Review*.

The Pink Panther 74

Daniil Tourashev—*United States Air Force Academy*

A Florida native, Daniil Tourashev is a double major in international relations and military and strategic studies with a Russian minor. At the academy, he is in charge of Russian tutoring and the Russian club. In his free time, Daniil likes to read the news and learn about the world.

Память Моего Детства 84

Caroline Tuss—*University of Montana*

Caroline Tuss is a creative writing BFA student at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana. Her creative focus is playwriting, but she also enjoys writing poetry and narrative essays. Her favorite bird is the magpie.

Centralia 56

Nora Vanesky—*The University of New Mexico*

Nora is an interdisciplinary artist in the last year of their BFA at The University of New Mexico. Their work surrounds themes of gender, violence, and the physical manifestations of emotion.

Like Pulling Veins through My Fingertips 59

Samantha Veres—*Southern Oregon University*

Samantha Veres is an avid writer with an erratic personality and an obsessive pull toward anything strange. With a passion for storytelling, she spends most of her time writing poetry, short stories, and fantasy.

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Preston Waddoups—*Utah State University*

Preston is a student of philosophy and English literature at Utah State University. That is all.

Wasatch Wood; Uinta Plateau 02, 13



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Front Row: Nell Johnson, Emma Ziegler, Ashley Apodaca, Abigail Campbell, Flannery Cowan, Victoria Trujillo

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