



Scribe

2023



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The Thrill of the Hunt

The Pilots

Part I

I have a hunger that rolls through my bones, insatiable by natural means it seems. I gorge myself on lamb, beef, I've even moved on to more unconventional meats. However my stomach is a bottomless pit.

I make the trudge to my friend's home. He and his son are out on a hunting trip this week, killing for sport it seems. I find it rather odd how they choose to quench their bloodlust, as if to their core they are just as primitive as their game. They will be gone for four days.

I knock on the door and am greeted with warm confusion.

"Mr. O'Ryan, how goes it? I don't think my husband is home right now. He and Junior are out on a little excursion." She says, voice brimming with goodwill.

"Oh no, I am aware. I'm actually here for you,"

"Oh," she starts, taken aback, "Is that so?"

I flash her a reassuring smile and ask, "May I come in?"

"Well, I suppose, it'd be a shame for you to catch a cold out there." She steps aside letting me in, and offers to take my coat.

"Thank you ma'am, you have a lovely home. Very spacious. It really is a shame that your husband and child have left you here all alone."

"Oh, it's quite alright. Boys will be boys," She says laughing nervously, with a tint of innocence. I hold back my grin, as not to reveal myself too early. I walk to the table with slow calculated steps.

"May I sit down ma'am? My body is a bit tired from chopping firewood."

"I- I uh sure you can, you're a guest here." She responds, although I sit down before she can answer. "You must be hungry. How about I make us some food and drink?"

"Mmmm, I'd like that." My grin stretches wide. I fear my facade has begun to slip.

As she begins to cook, I find myself chuckling internally. My execution thus far has been perfect. I take note of her smooth skin, glistening from the winter sun reflected off pale white snow. She moves with the grace of a deer, maneuvering her limbs with ease. The steam from the water rises and dances through her hair, which is tied back tightly. She strides delicately across the kitchen tiles to get frozen sausages from the ice box, and throws them onto the skillet. I sit watching, excitement tingling up through my spine. My anticipation only grows as the sausages delectably thaw.

Once the sausage is finished, we begin to feast. I note how she takes small bites and eats very cleanly. I quickly devour the meal. I know it will not satiate my carnal hunger. I sit watching her eat in silence, noting the dis-

comfort present in her eyes.

“It really is a shame. Your husband leaving you here all alone in the cold.”

“Hahaha, I guess it is a bit lonely here. But it's fine.”

“I do find it strange that he's going hunting during such a cold time. I don't reckon he'll find much game out there. It makes you wonder...” I trail off, allowing for her to fill in the dots of my implication.

“Oh, well he and junior are just bonding I suppose.”

“So you don't find it strange?” I let out a sly grin and slowly move my chair closer to hers. Her innocence and glowing skin gives the appearance of an angel.

“I guess it could be seen as a bit strange, but who am I to question? Boys will be boys,” she says, and I can hear the doubt start to line her voice.

“Ma'am, I'd like to be frank with you. I believe your husband is practicing infidelity.”

“No, no he wouldn't. He would never do that to me. We love each other,” she says, and her lip begins to quiver.

“I wouldn't be so sure. You've noticed, haven't you? He seems distant lately.” I lean in towards her face. “Your husband is disloyal to you, his words betray his actions.”

“Oh my god,” she sobs. “I don't believe it. It can't be true.”

“I'm sorry, but it is.”

I put my hand on hers in a reassuring way. She looks up at me.

“I'm sorry, I'm a complete mess,” she managed. “You're so good to me. Even though he's your friend, thanks for telling me. I just can't understand. He seems so happy, we're happy together. How could he...”

She turns her watery eyes on me and starts to blubber more.

“Why did he do this to me? I thought I was good to him, I thought, I... was he just using me this whole time? I'm not an *object for his pleasure, I'm not!*”

In the midst of her incoherent rambles, I pull her into a soft embrace and rub her back to calm her down. Now begins the fun part.

“It's ok ma'am, I am here for you. I'm sorry but may I use the bathroom quickly?” She nods and points to a door down the hallway. I wash my face and slick back my hair as my innocent unexpecting game sits in the kitchen unaware of what comes next. I revel in the hunt and see my primal aching hunger reflected through the mirror.

** Read Part II on the final pages of this magazine**

Explanation: On the Origin of Art Gallery

art gal·ler·y

noun

The liminal zone between the heavens of space-time and the inner wolf of spiritual degradation.

There is debate where the “Art Gallery” project first began. The earliest known art gallery in history (17th century) contained renaissance portraits of aristocratic members of society. Before this, art galleries were hallways lined with paintings. With time, they grew to be identical to art museums today. Perhaps they are one and the same. The desire to sever higher knowledge due to the irrepressible growth of the unknown led to the Library of Alexandria being burned to the ground in 48 BC. Art Gallery was scraped from the ashes. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* portrays the search for the fruit of immortality. When Gilgamesh was deceived by the snake, he lost this fruit which contained art gallery; revered as a lost paradise. The confines were broken. Art Gallery had graced the mortal world.

“Art Gallery” means to abandon the materialistic fog around one’s physical shell. The only way one may attain this one true heaven is to tear down the barriers, to crush them, and wipe the floor with the remnants. There is only the strength within. In the wake of “Art Gallery,” the physical world will cease with a golden blaze of light. The soul will be left on Earth to bare witness. The soul will be left in awe. This is not a theory or threat. This is a promise.

We’ll see each other again,

Clarence.

Poetry

To Fly...

Griffin White

Sweet release
From this decrepit part I play:
The fool.
The walls of my birdcage
Fall away around me.
I am released from what was once sad and cruel.

I can soar and drift
Among the very clouds
And fly through the very sun.
And I can finally see
And understand the world below,
Watching all the busy-folk on the run.

But in roll the clouds
Of such a violent storm
That threatens to forever clip my wing.
Rain cries down and pours and pours
From the sky that grows black
And the clouds with their rage: lighting they fling.

Frantically like falling,
I race back down through the air.
Unwilling pain and despair fills my bones.
And back to the cage I find myself,
To sit forever until I don't.
Taking blow and blow from the flurry of stones...

Untitled

By Colin Lowry

War is like a horror film.

War is dark and red like a blood moon.

An armed conflict is always going on.

Blood pools around me.

Everyone is in battle.

It sounds like whistles flying by.

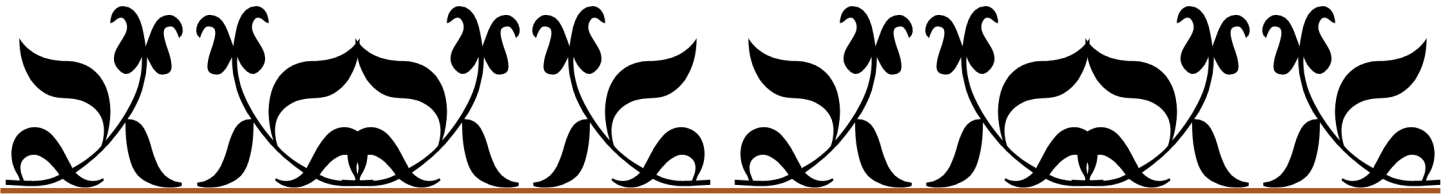
It feels like the end of the world.

The continuous scent of blood lurks,

Then it all ends. I'm missing everyone.

I've survived the war, last one standing.





[Not Ever]

By Anonymous

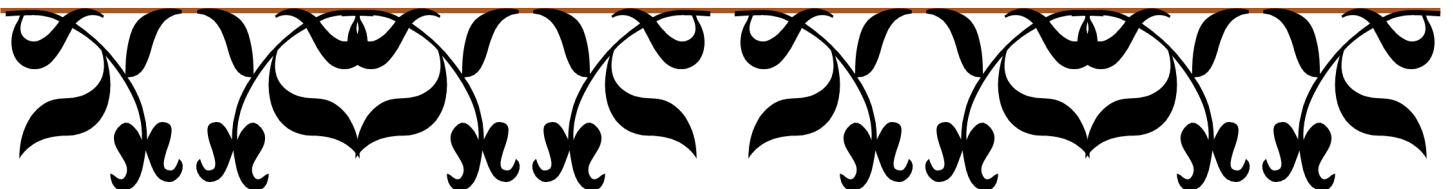
I looked down and thought,
“How I wish I could love you.”
But I fear it's impossible.

For you were a mistake...
An accident.

I can't carry through with the pain you give me.
I want it to go away,
Far, far away.

There's a way,
Though it's frowned upon.
I see the light at the end of the tunnel.

You were there
And now you're gone.



Untitled

By Anonymous

I wish your finger was stuck in a door,
Raw chicken, tangled fishing line.
The fish baits you.
A bin full of left shoes, you trip on your own foot, shoes get untied.
I hope you pour milk before your cereal, snap your pencil,
Have bad Wi-Fi at home,
Untied shoes,
A stain on your favorite shirt, you spill your milk.
I hope your leg cramps at night, and in the morning in bed;
You get a paper cut and every haircut gets worse.
I hope your key gets stuck in a door, a bee sting in your side,
People forget your name, your birthday, your age;
You forget how to walk, talk, and eat.
I hope you never grow up. I hope you put toothpicks under your toenail and stub your toe;
You sit inside a room full of mirrors, of one sided glass, on display.



Image from archdaily

Arrow of Spring

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Loss Is like...

Loss is like the color black.

Loss is like defeat.

Loss is a big smack.

Loss makes people flee.

Loss is a slap in the face.

Loss hurts people.

Loss changes a place.

Loss reminds me of a steeple.

Loss makes me love more.

Loss hurts everyone.

By Anna

Webb

Art Gallery

By Griffin White

The art gallery had an unreadable air about it. Due to the public nature of the event, the variety of guests was wide, stretching from the casual art viewer to self declared connoisseurs donned in velvet suits. The music, which emitted from the speakers set up along the corners of the estate, was drowned out by the incessant blaring of the crowd. I paid no attention to this however, as I, in my curiosity, wished to see my own works which were displayed among the apparent best in the region.

I had worked my blood, sweat, tears, and paint into a display of abstract glory, one which was derived from the deepest recesses of my soul. Despite the dismay from some, this was my life's work. When I finished a work and wiped the fluids from my brow, a wave of tremendous satisfaction washed over me. However I never thought that I would go as far as getting my work shown to such a large crowd. It filled me with a certain sense of hope. Once I reached my works, I marvelled at how far I had come.

"Ah, this one right here," spoke a man with a twinkle in his eye. "I must say, this one right here."

The slow rhythmic nodding from the man persisted as he kept repeating the same phrase again and again, emphasising different words each time, as if practising for a public reading. His features were polished, and his eyes were a piercing ice blue. His garments, in contrast, were dark.

"Do you like it?" I asked after a while of watching the older man repeat the same actions and words. "I painted it straight from the heart. It's called—"

"Ahhh yes," interrupted the man, filling me with a sense of sudden disdain. "This one. This one right here."

He walked away, while muttering the phrase he seemed to be fixed to. A strange fellow, however at least he liked my painting. I gazed upon it with a swell of pride in my chest. I was sure that my art would speak to people.

Suddenly, a group of about ten, clothed in a casual garb, walked up to my exhibit on my side. They stared for a while, heads cocked like lost puppies, before smiling and turning to whisper to each other.

"Did you paint this?" One of them asked beaming. "I like this one a lot. Did you paint it?"

"Yes I did. I'm glad you appreciate my—"

"Do you have any more?" Another chimed, interrupting me for the second time this night. "You should make more!"

"Well I'm working on some in my studio at the moment, perhaps I can show you when they're..." I trailed off as they walked away. The strange nature of the crowd filled me with unease; the interrupting and walking away, but at least they liked my art. The sound of talking seemed to have died down, and I felt a terrible hunger within my stomach, so I de-

cided to grab some of the hors d'oeuvres. As I walked, I felt as if the air had grown still, and thousands of beady eyes were watching me, burning holes into my head. However, once I turned, everyone was minding their own business. Sweat began to condensate at my forehead as the unease turned to near-nausea. Once I reached the food, I noticed three men in suits approaching me wearing sunglasses. Their hair was greasy and stringy, yet they looked to be about my age.

“Greetings sir, we’ve heard much about your exhibit,” said he with a smile. His teeth seemed too white, as they gleamed like a beast's fangs. Behind him, the other two nodded along with his words in silent agreement. “May you show us the way? We wish to visit it.”

With their words, I no longer felt proud, rather a distant feeling of dread was my reaction. However I decided it was superstition. So I swallowed the lump in my throat, nodded, and began to lead them to my works. Heads turned whilst we walked, and I thought perhaps they were renowned figures in the art community.

“Here we are. These are my paintings. Do you like them?” I asked once we reached our destination. I turned to them once again, however their appearance had changed. They resembled hags, their grins toothless, apart from one, which hung lone in the middle one’s gaping mouth. Their sunglasses were gone, and between them was one bloodshot eye. Where the rest of the eyes should’ve been were pits, which emitted utter despair. Their stringy hair began to fall out in chunks and their skin was grey.

“How wonderful,” they sneered and chuckled in unison, voices ghastly and rotten.

They each raised a finger to point at me with their horrific bony digits. Thread suddenly began to wrap tightly around my arms and legs, cutting off circulation and making me cry out in terror mixed with pain. They hoisted me up into the air like a puppet, and suddenly the room went dark.

When the light came back, I was in a new room; a small studio, similar to my own. In three of the corners were the hags, as they leered at me with their eye holes. The damp air of the room made me gag, and the repulsive peeling paint on the walls did not help. I looked down and saw my hands were going purple from the loss of circulation. I could no longer feel them, instead I just felt a searing pain which burned red hot against my skin where the threads were fastened. With a crash, one of the walls fell down flat, revealing what seemed to be an auditorium filled to the brim with blank grins. Upon further inspection, I realized they were all carbon copies of the group from before who had complimented my art. Once the wall had fallen completely, they began to holler and laugh.

The threads tied to my body began to move me around to their own device, as in this bind I had no control over anything. I was trapped, and when tears streamed down my face the roar of the crowd grew louder, resembling the sound of a predator of large size. The hand that the threads lifted was suddenly thrust into my chest, causing me to almost pass out from the pain. Blood spurted into the air like a fountain, and leaked down my body and onto the floor. When my hand receded, in it was a beating heart. My heart. These wicked beasts had forced me to tear my own heart from my body.

“Well go on and paint,” said a familiar voice. It was the man from before, the first one I spoke to that evening. His eyes were wide and wild; whites showing and pupils small. They sent a shocking chill through my veins as they were emptied out into the gash across my chest. After he said this, the crowd began to chant the word; *paint!*

“W-with what,” I managed as my sense of my surroundings began to fade. This was met by more laughter, as if the answer were so clear.

“Utter fool, you paint with your heart don’t you? Well then, paint! Splay your verse in blood upon the floor for us! We’re dying to see it!”

The threads dragged me down until my chest was on the floor, and they began to swing me around as the blood poured like running water; a river of utter visceral suffering flowing from my body. The floor was rough and jagged, and only served to make the wound more fatal. Yet this plight, this hell, was met by nothing more than laughter. Laughter from all directions washed over me like a tidal wave. When I was lifted again, I managed to see what had been painted: A scene of utter horror; a bird with its wings being cut off. I screamed, half in pain and half in disgust. How could they use me to paint such a mockery? A sham work of art that is horrific drivel of the simple-minded.

“Behold! Masters of fate and common folk alike, behold! Our artist dances for us, does he not?” shouts the man. He is met by applause.

“Doth thou wish for more?”

Affirmation is given through savage clapping, and once again, my chest is dragged against the floor. As my vision faded, the man shouted once again.

“Come now brethren! Harken my words! Homunculi of fate, I have brought thee meat for thy hungering souls. Feast homunculi! Feast!”

A thunder of a thousand feet stamping approached the stage where I was strung up bleeding. Once the noise reached me, I felt arms grip me and try to pull me down as the threads began to hoist me into the air. They clawed and tore at my body, yet I could not scream, for my vocal chords had been rendered raw. I felt my bones snap, and erupt in pain, until everything went black. They continued to pilot around my carcass long after, however, until I was rendered unrecognisable; broken beyond repair.

Spring

Soft rain trickles to the ground

Pittering and pattering on the roof

Right down into the wet soil

Into the roots of the flowers

New blossoms sprout up

Greeting this wonderful season



“The sculptor never told the marble it would hurt”

By Angelina Alves

Is it selfish to wish I had been told how much creation would hurt?

It is my purpose:

I am marble, to be molded, to my creator’s vision.

And oh, at first, how I ached to be carved into being;

To finally become the perfect statues I saw around me,

And expose the veining in my marble,

And feel my dust coat the hands of my sculptor.

The first chip away was agony.

I was being cracked apart,

Torn into what I was meant to be.

And I blasphemed more than I could have ever imagined:

I wished my creator would turn me into something else.

In my dreams, I saw what I would become.

A magnificent, breathtaking creature in flight.

Unbound by the thoughts of others.

My sculptor chose to make me a human woman.

But no, that can’t be right.

I do not feel like such a sculpture.

Where are my wings?

I became sacrilege.

And oh,

Why was the otherness more bearable than not being myself?

The sculptor never told the marble it would hurt.

When taking up the chisel not meant for my hands,

I carved myself away a bit by bleeding a bit.

I carved away my chest, ribs expanding with each new breath.

It was agony.

The pain, nearly unbearable;

The blood soaking my skin.

It was dizzying, to bleed for the first time.

What a relief: to breathe and hurt and bleed for the first time,

And not feel the ache under my skin of wrongness.

They call me a martyr,

But they have never Been.

The sculptor never told the marble it wouldn’t hurt,

But the marble knew the agony of creating themselves.

It was worth more than the sculptor will ever understand.



Lovers' Flight of Fancy

Upon the frosted grassy field,
Whimsical, winter waltzes
Transpire between
Hearts which lie intertwined
Within the chests of their bearers.

Windows to the soul
Meet—tinted pinkish rose—
As such souls tether themselves
With fate's woolen thread
Threads which craft a lovely blanket.

Neath the warm comfort of quilt,
They ignore the world
Snowfall skies of deep gray,
Bitter cold wind which whips and bites,
And trees which grow greenless and leafless.

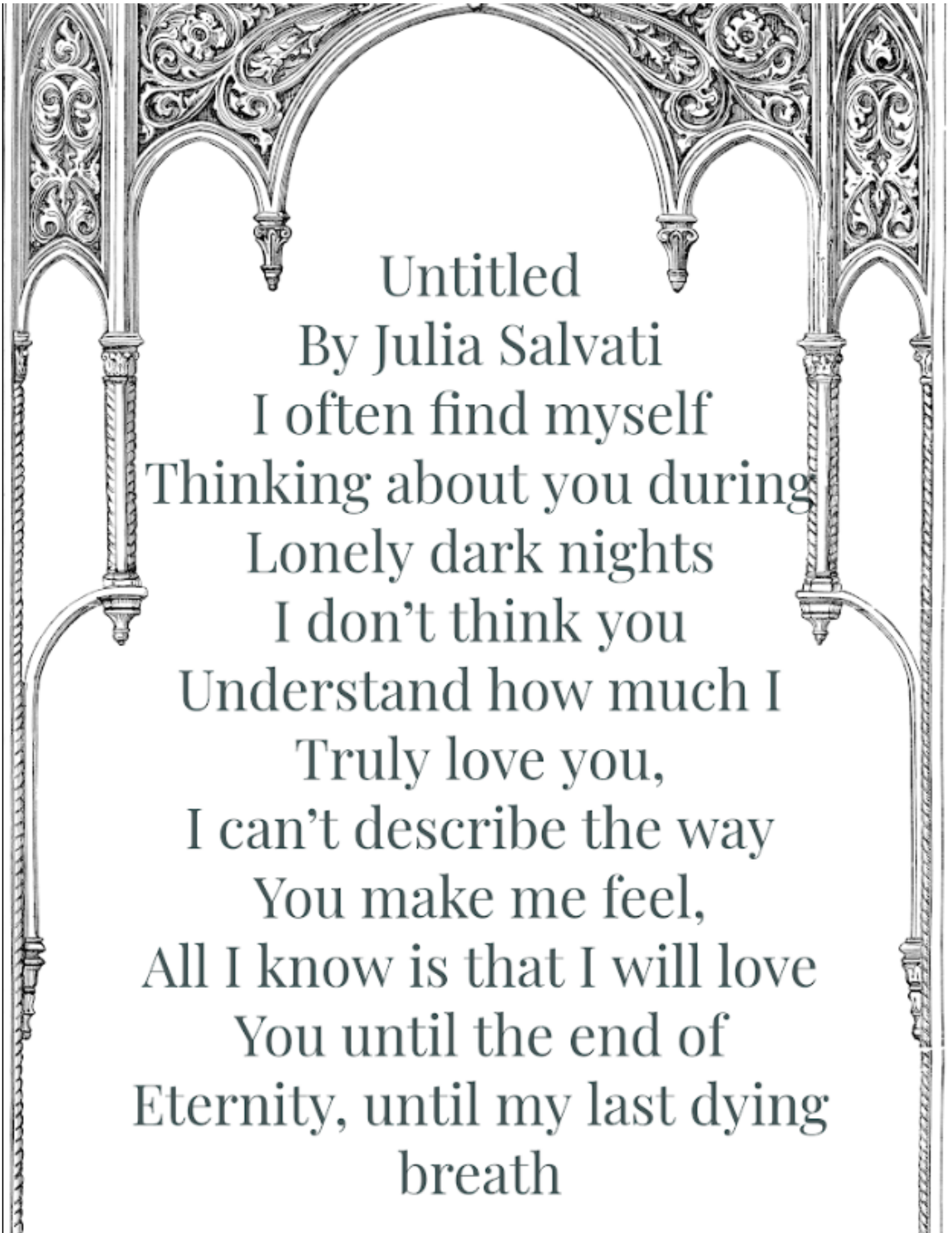
Lovers' flight of fancy
Chases away frostbitten nights;
Lighting an infernal paradise
With the sweet rhythmic
Pulses of dancing hearts.

Moments of pain, of wrath,
Of pride and bitter resentment come
—as they always have and will—
Impaling their beating chests
Always together as one.

That shilling of pain
For the ferryman feels steep,
Yet when the moment is nigh,
Such a cost sits unnoticed,
As ink under a nightly veil.

No cost too great exists
Under the very stars in infinite space
When it is true it'll bloom
And paint spring across
The winter world of Earth.





Untitled
By Julia Salvati
I often find myself
Thinking about you during
Lonely dark nights
I don't think you
Understand how much I
Truly love you,
I can't describe the way
You make me feel,
All I know is that I will love
You until the end of
Eternity, until my last dying
breath



Untitled by Jack A.

Spring is blooming.
Emotions are flowing.
Sun is shining,
Then clouds are crying.
Birds are flying.
Flowers are smiling
And people are dying.



Untitled by W.A. Allen

The sun shone on the growing flowers.
The wind wisped past my ear.
The dog ran through the beautiful park
As the children played in the heat of the
sun.

The water splashed through the stream.
Kids played baseball at the park.
The beautiful sound of the bat
Echoed for miles.
People ran down the road.

Art Gallery, Sealed with a Kiss

By Ben Rasmussen

“So you really think I should do this?”

I waited for a moment with bated breath, a faint fluttering in my chest. I was nervous, hesitant. Expectant. I surveyed the group in front of me: my council, sat elegantly in a semicircle, silently debating the gravity of the act I was about to commit. There was Sir Boulder, solid as could be, with a tough exterior that hid a passionate and unbreakable spirit. Penny, with an unmatched luster and gleam, could talk just about anyone into anything and could always strike a deal. And then there was Howard, loyal as ever and the catalyst to my crusade.

The council continued their discussions, looking straight ahead with the most serious of looks, their eyes not betraying anything. I spared a glance around the room. It was one of the stranger places for a meeting to take place, and more than a little unpleasant. We were sat in a small utility room in the art gallery, just down the street from the library where I had procured my cookbooks and religious texts (not returned). Distantly, the hubbub of visitors could be heard as they passed through the halls, though the thick concrete walls surrounding our sanctuary dampened the noise greatly so that it could barely be heard above the clinking and thumping of the boiler that was right next to my head. Pipes ran all through the ceiling, and a small leak which had sprung in one sent droplets of water intermittently plotting onto the top of my head. I was miserable, but the council did not seem to mind so I stayed put. I had chosen the location, of course.

I was growing impatient. In fact, I was absolutely furious. I slammed my fist down onto the floor, scraping the bottom of it on the rough, speckled concrete and causing a dark bruise to spread across the skin.

“Ow! I want an answer, council! We have decided on a plan; now I must know if I am to go through with it.”

“...”

“Aha! I always trust your judgment, Sir Boulder! If you think I should do it, it might just happen!”

“...”

“Penny! You have such a way of talking me into things. I’m just about swayed!”

Howard, however, thumped his tail on the ground. Clearly, he was disapproving of the plan. But how could he disapprove? Boulder and Penny both agreed, couldn’t he see? Had he even considered how I felt about this plan? Did I want to do it? The things that were at stake! I wanted to do it! Though it may destroy my body and mind and flesh, but never my spirit, I resolved to convince Howard that this was the only course of action.

While I was busy coming to this conclusion, Howard kept his round, dark eyes on me, almost as if waiting. Waiting for a challenge. In a fraction of a second, I locked my eyes with his, the pure, unbridled rage in my gaze palpable and my dominance absolute. He stared back, unperturbed. Electricity seemed to crackle around us as our presence filled the entire room. We were now engaged in a climactic duel, good versus evil, for the fate of the entire universe rested on this one decision.

We stood at this standstill, each assessing the other, wearing them down before going for the kill. As I was beginning to think that I had underestimated my adversary, I saw an opening. Howard opened his mouth, yawning, and left his tongue lolling out of his traitorous maw. I knew he was close to breaking. Slowly, I reached toward my bag that was sitting beside me. Howard noticed this and began to pant. No treats this time, pal.

My hand darted into the bag. I knew right where to aim, and in an instant it had found its mark. I chuckled smugly: this was it. Whipping my quarry out of the bag, I held it up triumphantly in the air. A book, titled *Everything to Know About: Dogs*, sat in the palm of my hand.

“Do you see, Howard?” I boomed. I looked down upon him, miles above in my throne of utter authority. Howard was my subject, and I, the monarch who would deliver unto him my divine decree.

“DO YOU SEE!? THIS BOOK! **THIS ONE!! THIS ONE RIGHT
HERE!!!! GODDAMNIT HOWARD!!!!!!**”

Then Howard began to whimper. It was at that moment that I realized the error of my ways. Tenderly, I cupped my face in his, bringing our heads close together.

“I’m doing this all for you, Howard. You know that. I have to do this, to reshape the world in your image.”

He looked me deep in the eyes, then licked me on the face. It was in that one single action that I knew he understood. The plan, everything, sealed with a kiss. It was time to do what I had to do. I reached back into my bag and collected my things. The book, which I was already holding, a condiment cup filled with my own blood, and a palette of oil paints. With that, I stepped through the door, into the halls of the art gallery.

ANGELINA

Untitled

FLAHERTY

Your eyes are like freshly melted chocolate.

Your shortened hair, smooth and hued
like the obsidian crystal.

Your burnt sienna complexion mixed
with your polished smile.

I despise how you always tower over me
when we meet.

I find it amusing how you act like you
don't need glasses when you do.

I admire how you constantly make me
laugh in tough situations.

I find it entertaining to observe you being
rough with friends,
yet you treat me so delicately.

Everytime I hear your voice it brings me
comfort.

I feel at ease whenever you are near,
and whenever we are apart I feel pessimistic.

I adore seeing you happy and would
devote my life to make that happen.

I will forever cherish how accepting you
are,
just like I will forever cherish you.

Untitled

By Taryn Lebreck

I wish you a canker sore, hindering the movement of your tongue.
I hope you sit on a bee. Get poison ivy.
I hope the gift card you had in your wallet expires before you can use it.
I wish that your pillow is warm on both sides.
I hope your straw breaks so that you can't sip your drink.
I hope your card gets declined.
I hope you get put on JV2.
I hope your laces break on your shoes during a long hike.
I hope you go bald at the age of 20.
I hope your hole-punch goes off the edge of the page.
May you become homeless, even if you've come down with a life threatening disease.
I wish you would go to jail for life for something you never did.
I wish every memory of us would cement in your brain.



Photo by Jan Prokes

A Rain of Flaming Books

By Anonymous

We are a species
Ruled by the crimson flame
Of destruction,
Desiring to set the world ablaze
In a display of scarlet passion.
We want desire over knowledge;
Desire to light fire
And pillage the world of the void
Within our minds that is the unknown.
We may never know that little thing,
So we burn and burn and burn
Until there is nothing left to not get,
Nothing except a rain of flaming books,
Which fall from the night sky like
A meteor shower you would wish
Eternal love from.



Summer Sadness

By Alexandra McManus

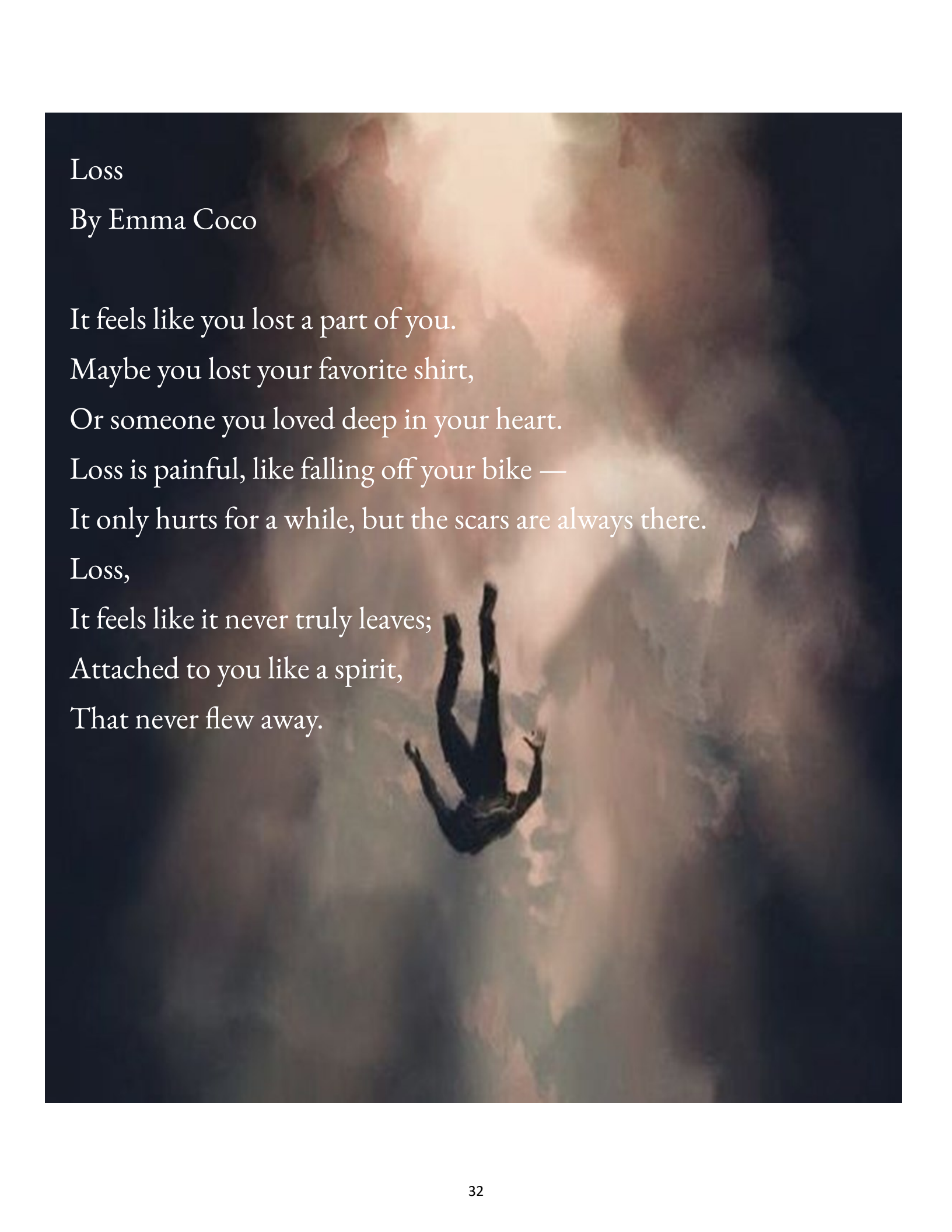
The sand is in my sneakers,
Stuck in the crevices of my
shoe.

I've dumped them out
continuously,
But what am I supposed to
do?

I have a sunburn on my scalp
And my skin is becoming
scaly.

My shoulders are burnt to
the crisp.

I thought sunscreen was
supposed to save me?
I'm sure I've been using the
right SPFs,
So why can't I be sunkissed
like the rest?

A person is falling through a cloudy sky, seen from above. The person is in a dark, almost black silhouette, with their arms and legs outstretched. The sky is filled with soft, ethereal clouds in shades of light blue, white, and pale yellow, suggesting a bright but slightly hazy day. The overall mood is one of vulnerability and loss.

Loss

By Emma Coco

It feels like you lost a part of you.

Maybe you lost your favorite shirt,

Or someone you loved deep in your heart.

Loss is painful, like falling off your bike —

It only hurts for a while, but the scars are always there.

Loss,

It feels like it never truly leaves;

Attached to you like a spirit,

That never flew away.



Love Me So

By Sadie Clifford

I love you.

Your eyes so bright,
The sun has nothing on you.

Your words so warm,
The brutal summer heat cannot compare.

Your hands so soft,
No blanket of mine is the same.

I love you.

The way you talk for hours,
The glint in your eye, sparkling when you're excited.

The way you smile at me out of the blue,
Something I'll forever cherish about you.

The way you lift my spirits with ease,
A gentle gesture that dries my tears so intimately.

I love you.

From your messy hair to your toes,
Your harsh words to your sorry's.



Untitled

by Liam Prendergast

The rain pours down,
The flowers come around.
The wind gains speed,
For food it shall need.
The sun glows bright,
With an orange hue,
For water it needs too.
As the stream drains away,
The flowers are here to stay.

Grief, Not Guilt

By Emily O'Shea

I hope your milk expires while pouring it into your favorite cereal.

I hope you stain your new white shirt. Your toothbrush falls into the toilet.

I hope you get a 50% on a test you studied for all night.

I hope you get a stalker who it takes years and years to get rid of.

I hope a bird poops on your head, right before a business meeting.

I hope a shark bites your leg.

I hope you forget your lunch at home before a big day.

I hope the delivery guy never shows up.

I hope your family disappears and never comes back.

I hope your favorite dinner plate breaks.

I hope a robber breaks into your house. Your bagel burns right before leaving.

I hope somebody takes your children away from you.

I hope your favorite teacher quits.

I hope all your pets die.



Photo by Pixabay

Today at the Art Gallery

By Ben Rasmussen

Today at the art gallery, five people were shut off in the middle of the show floor. In only moments, their matter was strewn across the pieces that lined the walls as their emptied shells hit the floor. Panic ensued among the remaining patrons, and they fled the building in search of something more pleasant to view.

First they closed the building. It was decided that the traces of human were too unsightly for the eye, so the public was barred from entering. They sent in a janitor, with keys, to lock all the doors and hide what was inside. Still they did not remove the bodies.

Then they shut off the power. The interior was plunged into darkness, the shadows creeping up the wall, highlighting the congealed red that resembled a fungus as it sat untouched on the works of aspiring artists. The artists were complaining that their paintings were still inside. Still they did not remove the bodies.

They at last sent in a team to remove the art. The pieces were gently lifted from the walls, with great care taken not to damage the frame. The team had shuffled awkwardly past the bloody objects on the ground, trying not to look at them. With the paintings out of the building, it was deliberated on whether they should clean them. The answer was obvious. These things were no longer human. They were not to be looked upon. They sanitized the paintings. Still they did not remove the bodies.

The art was reclaimed by the artists and moved to more fitting locations. Some were taken back to the studio to be a reminder of success for perseverance. Others were put on sale, to be bought by wealthy collectors and turned into income. The rest were readily accepted by other art galleries, where visitors would turn and say, "This one, this one right here!", not realizing that there used to be a person there. The art gallery was empty. Still they did not remove the bodies.

Today at the art gallery, they tore the building to the ground. Nobody wanted to claim the bodies. They were too repulsed by the thought of them. Instead, they left them in the building as it was demolished. Down on the show floor, under piles of rubble, the rotting, fleshy waste remained. Over the corpse of the building they would erect something new, and nobody would remember that humans had been there at all.

Untitled

By Simon Bissell

I wish you cold shower water,
Disease and Starvation,
A Firing squad. A death in your family, preferably your mother.
I hope your family abandons you without warning,
I hope your air conditioning is broken in the summer,
No heat in the winter,
A never ending power outage.
I wish your house a rat infestation.
I wish thousands of bugs in your eye,
Bankruptcy.
I wish you death.
Stub your toe on every corner.
I hope the leash breaks and your dog runs away.
I hope an earthquake sends you into the earth's core.
I wish you stained clothes.
I hope you lose your TV remote, and never find it again.
I hope every restaurant messes up your order.

Photo by Cottonbro Studio



That Singular Distinct Feeling

By Molly Murphy

My heart sank as she twirled across the floor, her dress sparkling and playing off of the years of sunsets and sunrises. She was a beautiful mix of colors, but all I could see were the gray hues of her pale skin and silky black hair. I could feel the colors of the heat pressing against my skin like a soft yet violent blanket. I could feel the colors, the stinging cold of the water when I stroked my fingers through it. The breath that sprouted from my lungs was now visible. I could feel every inch of her gorgeous palette. I just wish I could see a little more of her each day. Even if it's in hues of white and black.



Photo by Jackson David



Untitled

By Anonymous

I hope your favorite food is out at the store,

Burn your mouth on coffee,

Fall off a cliff.

I wish you would step in mud in your new white shoes.

I hope the water is cold when you take a shower.

I hope you lose everything

and no one comes to your funeral.

Stain on your white shirt,

Experience loneliness,

Put a load of colored clothes in with the white clothes.

I hope you spill a boiling pot of water on yourself and your skin turns crispy.

I hope your AC breaks on a super hot day.



Untitled

By Lucas Bistany

I wish you forever-itchy skin with the touch of grass,
Constant hiccups, headaches, and knots in your shoelaces.
I want your ego forever destroyed,
Rejection from every love interest.
I wish you depression and hate,
Every look in the mirror destroys you.
I wish that you slowly deteriorate,
Your toothbrush goes dry and your shower head turns moldy,
You begin to suffocate in your own filth,
Nobody wants to be around you.
I hope you are not only not wanted but you are hated.
Because you should be.

Untitled

By Jack Harding

...I wish you a bad hair day every day.

A flat tire, a traffic jam, broken nails. A cold shower.

I wish you a rolled ankle every time you step. Bee stings.

A clogged toilet. Grief, not guilt.

Holes in your socks, pimples all over.

Cavities in your teeth; a paper cut every time you turn
a page.

I wish your life would get miserable, each day significantly
worse than the other.

I wish your confidence would shatter.

All your sports teams lose their star player; I wish your
friends would leave you.

That car of yours never runs.

A rain shower every morning, nothing but drinks gone
bad,

When you're thirsty.

I wish you a bad haircut, a broken toe.

A creepy neighbor to watch over you.

A closet filled with shirts that are too small.

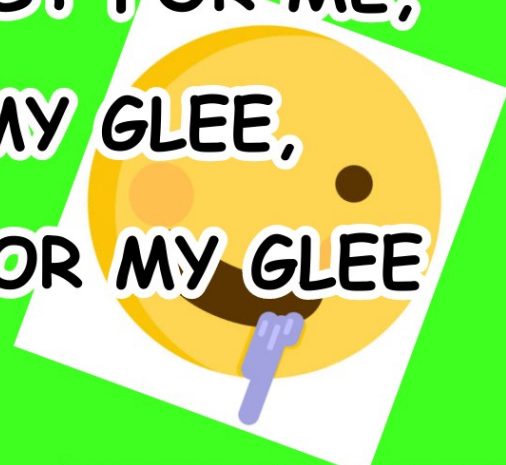
Headaches, spoiled milk, no wifi.

I wish you a scratch on your car, tests failed, a detention
with the worst teacher.

Car with no gas, yard without cut grass.

I wish you a lifetime of pain.

An E.R. visit for your whole family.



**WHOPPERS AND SODAS,
CHOCOLATE AND MARSHMALLOWS,
PRINGLES AND RUFFLES,
CHICKEN AND CRAB RANGOONS,
A DELICIOUS MENU JUST FOR ME,
ALL A BENEFIT FOR MY GLEE,
PLEASE GET ME THIS FOR MY GLEE**

- Cyrus P.





19 Sweat rivers

I hope all your silver turns your
neck green.

I wish no girl ever interacts with
you ever again.

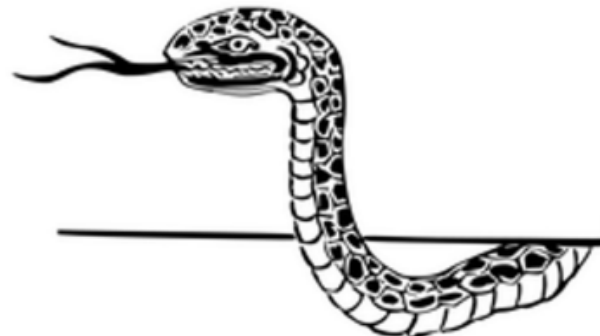
I hope you lose all your hair at the
age of 18.

I hope the back of your throat is
itchy and you can't itch it.

Paper cuts, trip over a stump, and
scrap your knees up;

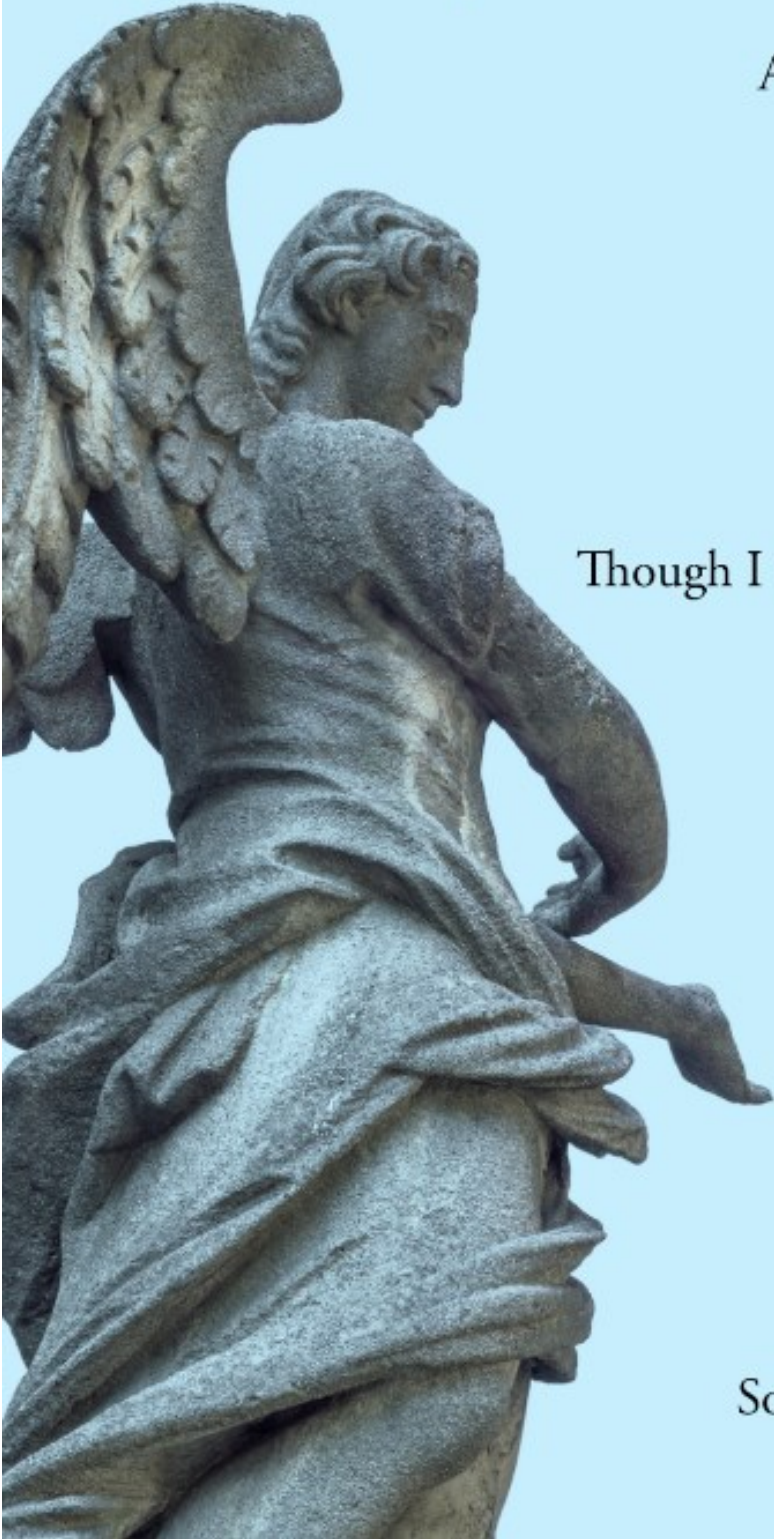
I hope you have a nightmare every
night and wake up crying.

Fall in a sinkhole and die.



Untitled

By Anonymous

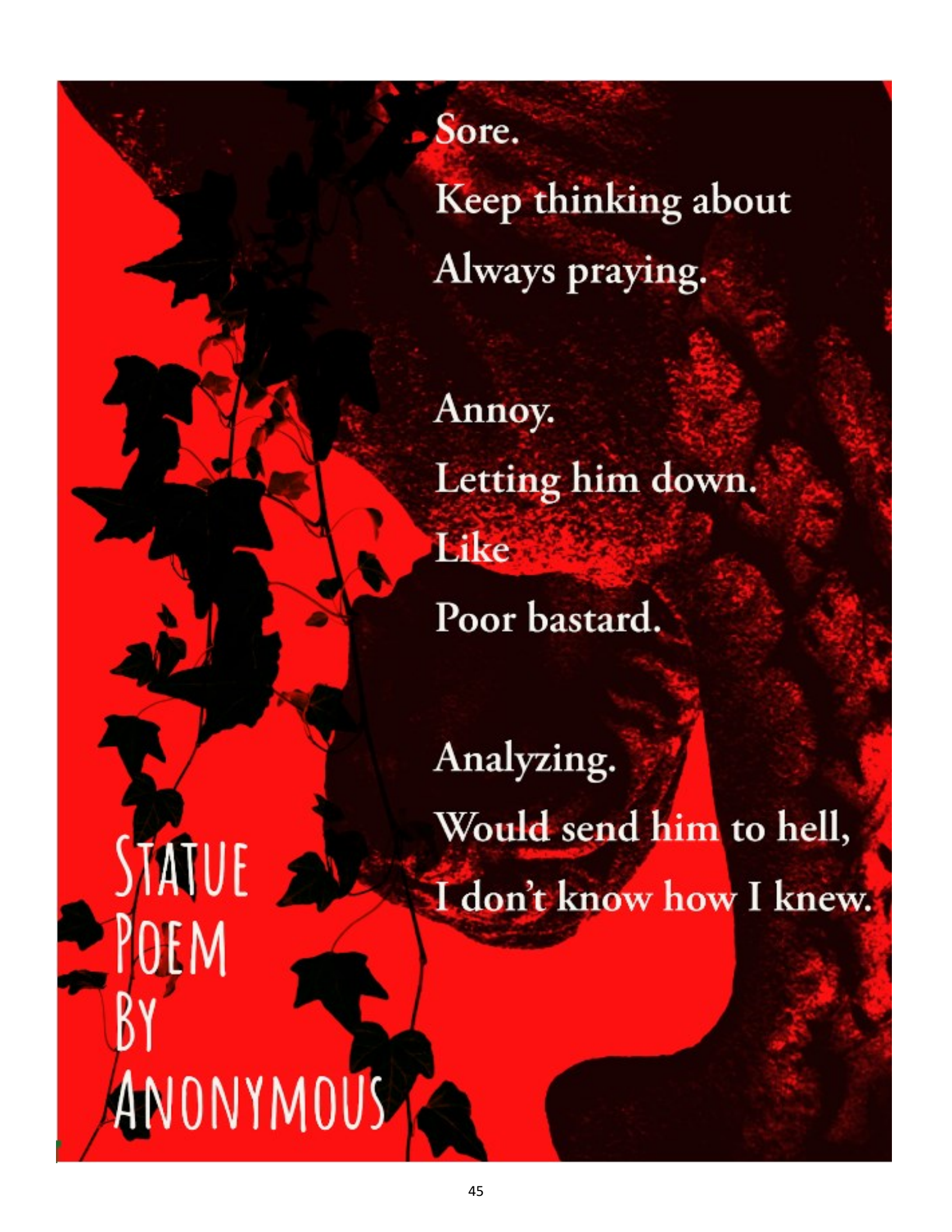


Praying, I can't,
I'm an atheist.
The disciples annoy me,
All they did was let Jesus down.
Jesus, that lunatic,
Cutting himself with stones.
Poor Bastard.

He was nice, I liked him,
Though I could never see eye to eye with
him.

I betrayed, certainly,
Hell would too.
Hell and all
He was right

I was in bed, I couldn't pray.
I got started, I sat up in bed.
Lousy.
Somebody knocked on my door.



Sore.
Keep thinking about
Always praying.

Annoy.
Letting him down.
Like
Poor bastard.

Analyzing.
Would send him to hell,
I don't know how I knew.

STATUE
POEM
BY
ANONYMOUS

Season's greetings,

By Anonymous.

Season's greetings,

As you are all aware, this year has been a good year for the Hagensen family. Our oldest son Kevin's trial went far better than expected. He got off on a technicality after being charged with assault and battery for that little incident involving the piercing pagoda last month and he still got to keep his job there! Most thankfully, there is no bad blood between our middle son, Dave, and Kevin for the Piercing Pagoda incident. There has been some recent discussion of a zombie apocalypse as the undead have recently risen. I suspect this will simply pass over.

The Hagensen family.

Season's greetings,

A lot has changed since last Christmas, as it now appears that the zombies have in fact taken over. Recently, there was some sadness in the family. As you may have heard, grandpa Jim is a zombie, but to this family, zombie or not, you're still family, so we've decided to keep him in the shed and feed him fish heads. There has also been some good news in the family: Piercing Pagoda has finally realized Kevin's talents and now he's in charge of zombie security! Things look bad now but they will not escalate.

The Hagensen family.

Season's greetings,

Things have escalated. Grandpa Jim has now escaped from the shed and is running rampant through the house. We're all cautiously optimistic about the upcoming year and the current zombie rampage and oh dear god he's coming after me.

The Hagensen family.



Scribe Magazine

HOLIDAYS

Contest



Art Gallery - Griffin White

By Ben Rasmussen

The cold of the air was evident by the frost that crusted the edges of my windshield as I approached the art gallery. Crossing the parking lot, wind whipped the side of my head as my shadow was strewn across the dark pavement by a nearby street lamp. A row of dark clouds towered above the early evening sky, a sign of the storm that was inevitably going to hit the next day.

Reaching the entrance of the gallery, I quickly made my way into the warm refuge of the interior. I looked around my surroundings, taking in the sparse nature of the building. Off-white walls with a light gray trim running along the bottom. Unemotional, uncontroversial, the perfect place for my works to be appreciated of their own merit.

I crossed the room to where my exhibition was already set up. It wasn't hard to find; I was one of the only people who had bothered to show anything on a night like this. I gazed silently at the paintings I had selected for the occasion. They were just a few of the many pieces I had poured countless hours into over the last four years of my life. It had been a long journey, but I was finally given the chance to show the world what I was worth when the gallery had reached out to me for this exhibition.

As I was thinking about how fortunate I was to be given this opportunity, I turned around and looked at the room once again. It was then that I realized that there was no one in the room besides myself and Tom, the janitor who had helped me to set up my display the previous night. I thought that the visitors could perhaps be in another room where some other artist was displaying their works.

Turning back to my paintings, my eyes were drawn to one in particular. A scene of a family gathered around a hearth.

"Of course," I spoke quietly to myself. "Why would anyone bother coming to an art gallery on Christmas Eve?" It was going to be the first white Christmas in years, and yet I was spending it alone, in this colorless room.

My thinking was interrupted when I became aware of footsteps approaching from the entrance. I turned back once again, somewhat startled, as a man entered the room. He looked around for a moment at the blank walls before turning to me with a warm smile and walking over. He was an older man, with a kind but weathered face that had clearly seen much more than I. He wore a dark wool coat and a gray cap, which he took off as he reached my display.

"Good evening!" he greeted, jovially. "Are these your paintings?"

I nodded, smiling slightly at his unexpected cheerfulness.

"My goodness," he murmured, looking at each of them in turn. His attention was then brought upon one-piece. "Ah... this one right here," he exclaimed, gazing intently at it. "I must say, this one right here.... What was your reason for this piece?"

The question caught me off guard. It was the same one I had been looking at before. It was much more subtle than my other works, lacking the fantastical subject matter and explosive colors that were staples of my style. While I was very pleased with the quality of the painting, it was a wonder to me why he was so focused on it.

"W-well," I responded slowly, "it represents my experience with the holidays, I suppose."

I looked closely at the painting again, taking in all the details I had placed into it. A toddler stands in the corner, crying, food still crusted on his chin. A man sits on the couch watching something unrecognizable on the television, facing away from the viewer. A woman sits on a chair near the toddler, the hints of gray evident in her hair as she stares at the floor. The hearth in the background casts each of their shadows in streaks of back across the floor. The entire scene is painted in washed out color, giving it the appearance of both warmth and coldness at the same time.

"And would this be your family?" the man prompted, clearly wanting me to continue. He was looking at me now.

"Well, no, I wouldn't say that. This isn't really what my family is like, but it captures the discomfort I feel when I used to visit them."

The man got a distant look in his eyes. "I remember the holidays that I spent with my family. I wouldn't trade those memories for anything. Did you say you used to visit them? How long has it been?"

I was taken aback by his wistful tone. "Four years. About as long as I've been painting, actually. They weren't very supportive of me following my passion."

"I've had my fair share of disagreements with family," he chuckled. "We didn't always get along, and I didn't always want to visit, but it made it all worth it knowing that they were happy I was there."

He paused, before putting his hat back on. "You've got a lot of potential," he said, looking back at the painting. "That one really moved me."

"Thank you," I replied. "I feel like it needs more color, though."

"No. No, I don't think it does." He began to walk back to the entrance. "Remember to do what makes you happy, stranger."

As I heard the door swing shut behind him, I once again became aware of the fact that there were no other visitors around. What was I even doing here, by myself, on Christmas Eve?

*The sun rises once again
Days feel long
Pain is experienced
Some from wounds
Some from loss
Ears pound
With the echoes of war
Death,
Sorrow,
Sides fighting
Till the other falls
Feet stomping
Guns firing
Weapons thrown
All for an end
Dusk draws in
War still lingers
The dark now covering the horrific
sight*

DAY IN AND OUT

BY TAYLOR HAMILTON



A POEM ABOUT MY FAVORITE GAME
Genshin Impact
BY AINSLEE HURLEY

It started with a letter,
Never thought of something better.
Continuing with a thrash,
Paimon came with a crash,
Swearing great news,
With no time for a snooze.

Falling from the clouds, the sky
breaks not a sound
Greeted by grace,
A great vision appears,
Bearing wonder,
And bearing truth.
The secrets uncovered,
No chest left undiscovered,
Come achievements galore
bringing great lore.

Friendships made,
Friendships kept.
Calling for support and calling for
help.
All weapons raised through enemy
gaze,
Battles have been won
Through battles done together.

The loot collected,
Through groups selected.
Bearing mora by the thousand.
Resin replenished as groups bid
goodnight,
All for the fun,
And all for the laughs.

MORA - CURRENCY
VISION - POWER GIVEN BY GODS
RESIN - ENERGY

I'VE MET A BUNCH OF REALLY GOOD FRIENDS THROUGH THIS GAME AND ALWAYS HAVE SOMEONE TO TEAM WITH AND HANG OUT WITH WHILE FIGHTING BOSS ENEMIES. I'VE SPENT WAY TOO MUCH TIME LEVELING MY CHARACTERS UP AND COLLECTING ALL SORTS OF COOL MATERIALS HAHA.

WILTED DRIED FLOWERS

BY MOLLY MURPHY

Wilted Dried Flowers

Play pretend by the rose's end

Along the road where the river bends

A quarry filled with children's poems

An empty field with empty homes

No songs to sing, no games to play

A rose's thorn, a prick a day

Where rivers spilled, where sundowns were shown

An empty soul with hollow bones

wandered

lost

empty

alone

A casket filled with water



asket filled with water
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asket filled with water

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Boredom

I sit in a room
That's filled with gloom.
I stare at the wall
For I shall stall.
The clock ticks,
My pen clicks.
I want to go home,
Or even just roam,
But the clock doesn't change.
Why does time have to be strange?
I feel stuck.
Why do I have no luck?
For this class doesn't end.
I should just not attend.
I don't like to wait,
Why do I suffer this fate?
Still, I wait for the clock to chime
So then, I can stop this rhyme.

THE IRRITATING NOTES

**I HAVE RIPPED
THE NOTES
THAT WERE IN MY BINDER.
YOU WERE PROBABLY
GOING TO CHECK
IF I HAD THEM FOR THE
NEXT BINDER CHECK.
FORGIVE ME,
THEY WERE
FRUSTRATING,
SO MESSY,
AND HAD SO MUCH MATH
ON THEM.**



Three Poems
by Mmamoon
Kandji

Spring-ku

With slow Winter's end drive,
The warm spring begins
anew,
Leaving dreams behind.

Goodbye winter

Bye Winter,
And welcome back
spring.
We love you.



A warm greeting

Spring greets us warmly,

A smile in the sky

Goodbye winter.

The snow melts as we cry

Though our tears are not of sorrow

Because your snow will be back

tomorrow

No matter how long we are away

We know that winter will soon

overcome the day.





REBIRTH OF THE EARTH

BY KLOE SNOW

WHEN EARTH DIES
FROM THE WINTER COLD,
THE BOLD BURSTING
COLORS WITH LIVELY
REBIRTH UNFOLDS THE
DEAD WITHERED FLOWERS.
REBIRTH INTO MARVELOUS
MAY FLOWERS, DYING, DRY
GRASS BECOMES A
BREATHTAKING GREEN.
THE CLOUDY SKY
REBIRTHS TO A
CLEAR OCEAN BLUE,
COLD KILLING WIND NOW
A CALM HEALING BREEZE.
WITHERED DEAD TREES
REBIRTHED TO BEAUTIFUL BLOSSOMED
LEAVES SWAYING TO THE
WIND'S HYPNOTIZING MUSIC THROUGH
THE AIR, BUT AFTER
SPRING LEAVES, THE TRILL
OF COLORFUL LEAVES,
TREES, FLOWERS, GRASS,
ALWAYS MUST PASS.
BUT NEVER FOREVER
BECAUSE THE EARTH
WILL ALWAYS REBIRTH.

Two Poems by Robert Chernick

Do you know Noah,
Last name Noah,
Do you Noah Noah
Noah,
No,
Do you noah person
who,
Noah where this
Noah Noah is
This Noah Noah fella

Why was 0 scared,
It was a little round,
Why was 1 scared,
Because 1st is the worst,
Why was 2 scared,
It was always a number 2,
Why was 3 scared,
They thought it was going to
kiss them,
Why was 4 scared,
It had 3 lines,
Why was 5 scared,
It was obese,
Why was 6 scared,
6 didn't have a six-pack,
Why was seven scared,
Eight wasn't eaten,
Why was 8 scared,
It was too round,
Why was 9 scared,
6 divorced it,
Why was 10 scared,
It had a brother.

1

2

3

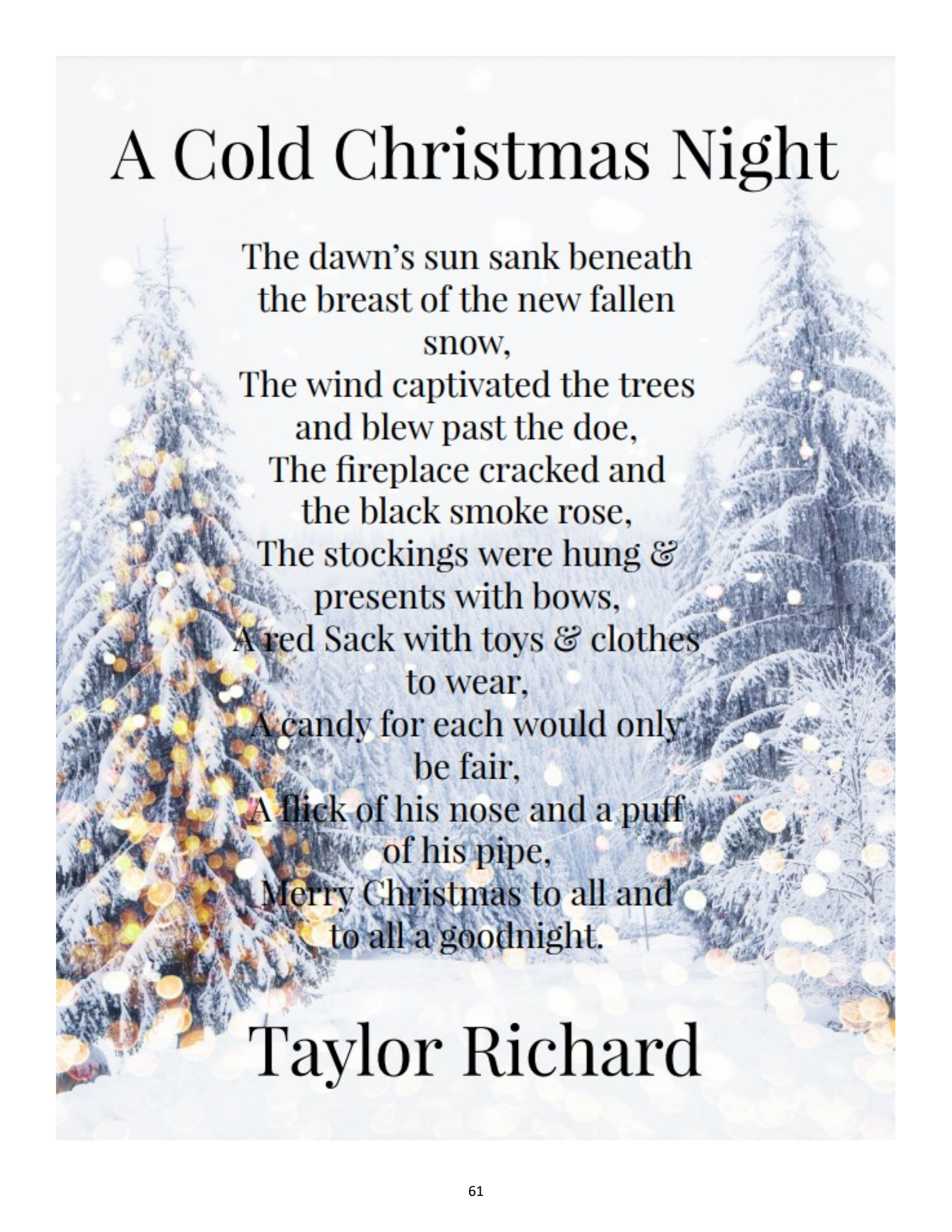
Ocean's Lullaby

By Leena Haddadi

The ocean glistened in the night,
Ribbons of blue and white and black,
Its pearl white borders kissed the shore sweetly
And still it was dangerous,
Deep blue waves hissed and crashed against tar-black rocks
Its strong hands pulled the sand towards it,
Stealing from the land mercilessly
But in the white specks of moonlight that touched the line between the sky and
the sea,
Everything seemed peaceful
Like a lullaby rocking the earth to sleep,
“Shhhh, shhhh, shhhh”



A Cold Christmas Night

The background of the page is a soft-focus winter scene. It features several evergreen trees covered in a thick layer of snow. Interspersed among the trees are numerous warm, glowing bokeh lights in shades of yellow and orange, creating a cozy and festive atmosphere. The overall color palette is dominated by whites, blues, and greys from the snow and sky, contrasted with the warm tones of the lights.

The dawn's sun sank beneath
the breast of the new fallen
snow,
The wind captivated the trees
and blew past the doe,
The fireplace cracked and
the black smoke rose,
The stockings were hung &
presents with bows,
A red Sack with toys & clothes
to wear,
A candy for each would only
be fair,
A flick of his nose and a puff
of his pipe,
Merry Christmas to all and
to all a goodnight.

Taylor Richard

Prose



'ILL WILL'

By River Wynne



“IT was dirt cheap at Goodwill. Maybe when you’re done with it I can flip it for something.” Pops placed a box next to the knives we were using to carve a pumpkin. The box was in rough condition, its latches barely attached. Large splinters stuck out around the edges. Pops unclicked the latches and unveiled the contents.

It was an Oni mask. Legends speak of the fearsome Japanese demons, incarnations of evil. The mask was as red as a maraschino cherry. Giant ivory horns protruded from the temples. The horns’ resemblance to real ivory was uncanny. The massive three inch long fangs that protruded from the upper lip were more akin to bone than any other material. The mask’s face twisted up into a ginormous scowl. Its nose scrunched up and its teeth bared, the eye holes slanted.

Pop’s face twisted into a grin. “Come on. You’ve gotta try it on.”

“If you insist,” I said, donning the mask.

It was perfect. The size, the fit, everything. The wood felt smooth on my skin, none of the splintery wood of the box was present on the mask. It would make the perfect centerpiece for my costume.

For years Pops and I had worked on our little passion project, the perfect Halloween costume—the likeness of an Oni. One of folklore’s scariest demons. Murderous cannibalistic trolls. Finally we had assembled the costume. The mask was the pièce de résistance.

I could see the excitement on Pop’s face, his eyes twinkling. “So, how does it feel?”

“Perfect. It fits so well, what are the odds?” I grunted as I gave Pops a menacing stare. It felt good to be an Oni.

The mask felt tight around my head, almost like a tension headache. My legs stiffened up as well, as though I was walking through molasses. “Wow, you’re really getting into the role,” Pops said.

“How so?”

“The way you’re stalking me.”

I noticed I was moving, walking toward Pops. My headache was gradually getting worse, growing into a searing pain. That must have been why I hadn’t noticed I was walking toward him. My mask felt itchy. God I must be delusional. A mask can’t be itchy. It had to be my face. I tried to raise my hand to scratch it, but my hand wouldn’t move.

Why wouldn’t it move? I could only get it to shake.

The pain released. No, not just the pain, all sensation went with it. Yet my body was moving, beyond my control. Slowly at first but then it got quicker. I was helpless, watching from the passenger’s seat as someone, no, *something* took control.

“Come on, the act is going a bit too far.” Pops said as I took hold of the pumpkin carving knife.

“Seriously, this is going too far.” His eyes widened in fear as it hit him—the man he was in the room with was no longer a man, but a demon.

I See Red

By John Emerson

The rage escapes me. Maybe I want it to, but I know for certain I don't want it to leave me here. Not around all these people going about their normal lives. I even recognize that little boy over there. How terrible. I think he said his name was Phillip. I played volleyball in the resort's pool with him last night. The adults were going all out, spiking it and everything, yet fearless Phillip came waltzing over and asked if he could join. Despite his inability to actually hit it over the net or even stand in the pool, he had the best time out of all of us. He was trying his hardest, and that's all that mattered to him. Now he's here in the amusement park holding an ice cream that looks like it weighs as much as him. I feel so badly. How could I be so stupid as to let my emotions take over?

It's such a gorgeous park too, full of every character from every little kids' movie. The food and toys aren't even overpriced. The walkways are all stone, made to look as though you're in a medieval town. Other than the stone, everything is filled with colors dancing all over the place. Oranges wind up the pillars of the café, blues jump out of the tiled walls, and green grass pokes out of everything. It's such a calm place. With enough colors to excite the kids, a small enough amount of concrete so that the wifi still works, and filled with enough happy parents that this could be a ballet recital; it's the perfect place. How could I get mad here?

I was sitting with my legs crossed while devouring one of my favorite foods: a croissant. Surrounded by joyous people, a pretty landscape, and some scrumptious food, I felt at peace. Yet something had been bubbling inside of me, a monster perhaps. It writhed and shrieked, longing for control. Where did it come from? I don't know.

The world glitches.

Everyone in the park is gone. Only I remain, ready to explode. Every part of me wants to fly every which way, trying to break free from the world that molds it. My beast—no, I—want my revenge. The people are gone, so why not let the monster out?

The beast cackles. The red ribbons tickle my skin. My clothes flake off. The laughing ceases and I replace it with a yell. The flames are me; they're my emotions; my sadness, my anger, and my joy. Fire dances over tables, eats at buildings, and skips across the pavement. Everything melts, everything feels, and everything burns. Today I'll make sure it never stops burning.

Fire.

It flows off of me, gushes from my soul, and runs rampant all around me. It grows with every breath. Scents die as they're replaced by the toxic odor of smoke. Trying to burn the clouds away, it reaches for the sky. The only sound is the crackle of the storm as blue walls, green grass, and everything else erupts into overwhelming red.

A building collapses, a victim to the flames. Tears form and evaporate in the heat as I recall my past two years. Every school rejected me, too scared of fire. All I wanted was for them to teach me to control it yet they called me "too much of a liability." But my friends got in, and through their school's teachings,

learned to despise me. My own family saw me as a failure, a burden, and something to pity. I don't need pity, I just need a little help keeping myself in check. I join the fire in its dance.

The road bends and folds, a victim to the flames. Anger controls me, it consumes me. I remember how my ex-partner cheated on me with someone who was a little less "hot headed." I wasn't even a rash person until my powers kicked in. I was never an angry kid. I meditated and I read, but they didn't care. No one ever saw me for me. The world demanded me to represent the flames that control my life. All they see is destruction, so all they'll get today is destruction. I run with the blaze.

Ashes upon ashes pile up around me, all victims to my flames. I'm happy to have finally let it out. My whole life has been years of bottling up emotions and hoping they never escape me. Every day has been finding a way to healthily let my emotions out, but nothing is as satisfying as this. Finally I can show off, finally I can be me, and finally there are no consequences.

I collapse to my knees.

It's gone, all gone.

I feel numb, a victim to the flames.



Photo by Moein Moradi

The Fish

By Griffin White

Lifelessly with unblinking eyes, the fish lies caked in the beach sand as the sun rises above the ocean waves. The scaly carcass seems to be a foot long, and likely has been here for some time now. One can only imagine how it ended up *here*; baking in the morning light that shines down on its dull grey form.

I try to ignore the fish and watch the sunrise, like I have every morning. Day in and day out. Without fail. Like I would let such a small insignificant thing plague my thoughts for now. Some gull will eventually fly down and steal it away, bones and all. So why care about such a small insignificant thing? Instead I watch the sunrise from the rock on the beach that I sit on every day. Despite the cold callous nature of stone, I find it comforting to have a place to sit every day. Its rough exterior welcomes me with open arms as I observe one of nature's beautiful occurrences. The rock is surrounded by smaller stones that can fit perfectly into my hand for me to skip them across the water.

The orange light of the sun shines long across the water, reaching the sand and shining a bright hue of greyed out yellow. The fish is also there under the light, however it seems as though no light was caught onto its scales, rather all it did was highlight the pink fleshy scars that are its gills. Under the ocean breeze that ripples through the air, it almost seems to move with breath. As if. I turn my head away from the eyesore. I will not let it ruin my sunrise.

I continue to watch the sunrise, and can hear the morning song birds. Their voices, like a chorus, reach the very clouds that drift in the sky. I feel as though a heavenly chorus is beckoning me to listen further. Suddenly I hear the screech of gulls cut through like a violin overwhelming the rest of the string quartet. My head jerks towards the source and I see the gulls circling overhead above the fish. The fish...

I pick up a stone and hurl it at the gulls. They disperse, leaving me alone. But the fish is still here. The fish is still here...

For one last time I attempt to watch the natural phenomenon without interruption. However, the occasion is spoiled by the fish. The colors of the sun look watered down, as if the dullness had spread from the corpse and drained the world of all brightness leaving pure disdainful blight. On the left, stormy clouds rolled rapidly, rocking the sky with thunder.

I turn my gaze upon the fish in scorn. It has done this. It sits there mouth agape as it torments me. Torments me so it does. This fish is dead and its lingering stench of ugliness plagues my very soul. This fish shall receive what it deserves for ruining my sunrise. I pick up another rock and start towards the fish. It shall torment me no longer. The fish shall not torment me no longer. It sits with the same lifeless eyes and unblinkingly stares through my soul. I hate the fish. I hate the fish. It is dead and I am alive, yet it lingers here to ruin everything. Once I reach the fish, stone in hand, I raise my hand into the air as a windup, and throw the stone down at the fish.

As the stone hits, the fish splits down the middle, its fishy guts and fishy blood spraying onto the sand in a hideous display of fleshy red. I can hear the bones crush and snap as the fish is eviscerated before my very eyes. The scales collapse in on themselves and the stone is lodged in between the head and tail. A job well done. I have vanquished this ghost that haunts me. Yet the eyes continue to observe me silently with the dead blank light reflected in them. The eyes! I cannot escape the eyes!

I leave the beach yet these eyes follow me as if the fish is looking down on me from the very heavens themselves. Will my torment never end? Why must I suffer at the hand of such a pitiable creature. Once I reach the safe confines of my home, I sulk through the door, and the eyes seem to turn their gaze away from me. Could this perhaps be peace? Slowly, worn from the senseless terror of the dead gaze, I walk towards my kitchen. Perhaps I can sustain myself with breakfast, as I have not yet eaten today, and had spent quite some time at the beach. Once I reach the kitchen, I stop dead in my tracks as rage infuses with my blood and my vision goes red. My tormentor sits upon the kitchen counter, guts spilled across, sullyng the integrity of my home. The fish is back, and the stone is still lodged inside.



Untitled By Anonymous

The birds chirped, and the wind sang, the plum trees creaked, and the children played. Maria was one of many people living in the modern city of Jerusalem within the 10th century. She was the wife of the local town's chief and warrior Abu Bakar. Together they maintained a settlement housing 106 inhabitants, and a large olive garden of 255 olive trees. They truly were divine in every aspect of ruling. At the time she was hitting the carpet outside on the porch. But all of a sudden there was a large rumbling noise, a noise that was fairly close to that of a people's march.... The birds flew away, and the ground burned, the woman screeched, and the children cried, the men ran only to die by the crusader's sword.... Maria was now bearing witness to the first crusade. She ran into the house and hid in the house's storage compartment. She remained in the compartment for 12 hours, which was the necessary time for the cries and the groans to die. She slowly crept out of her hiding place to find bodies scattered everywhere: everything was dead. The children were dead, the animals were dead, Abu Bakar, her husband, was dead. This massacre was that of a person's worst nightmares multiplied by ten. All Maria could do was cradle her husband's body, moan, scream, and ask for a subsequent death from the gods, as she had nothing left to live for.

Crows

By Cole Jacobsen

It's one thing to have your bike stolen while it's chained up outside, it's another thing to have it stolen while you're riding it, and it's another, another thing to have it stolen by a murder of crows while you're riding it.

I should clarify that the crows did not push me off and take the bike, instead, they began disassembling it while I was riding, causing me to fall. Once I was on the ground they took the frame and other larger parts.

I wasn't really sure what to make of it, how on earth did they coordinate that? I knew crows were smart but damn, that was a whole bike. And what was I supposed to do next? Report it to the police? Maybe animal control?

Confused by the criminal crows, I began the long walk home when I saw them again. It was kind of hard to miss the sight, a large black cloud holding bits of metal. They were flying deeper into the park. I figured that I may as well follow them, to try and get my bike parts back.

It was a little hard to keep an eye on them from beneath the trees, but they had to fly pretty low and slow on account of my stolen bike's weight. Eventually, they all went swooping down into a nearby cave. I didn't know crows lived in caves, but I'm not a bird-ologist so who knows.

There was a weird light coming from the cave in harsh spurts, as well as the sound of metal hitting the ground. I assumed it was from the crows dropping my bike parts. One step at a time, I gathered my courage to poke my head into the cave.

Once I was there, I became even more impressed by the little birds.

In the middle of the cave was a giant hunk of metal in the vague shape of a bird, with jointed wings and everything. It was made from all kinds of things like trash barrels, car bumpers, and of course, bike parts. All around the construct were crows screwing bolts, carrying screws, I even saw a few working together to hold a welding torch.

Turns out it's another, another, another thing to have your bike stolen by a murder of crows so they can build a giant crow robot.

The Funky Glass of Lemonade

By John Emerson

The tires meet the gravel with a grumble as I enter the parking lot of the cafe. It's little and cute: quite frankly I'm surprised by the seating space to parking space ratio. It looks as though no more than twenty people could comfortably sit in the cafe yet thirty could park. Maybe there's some fun underground part of the cafe where they auction off stolen art. Maybe, because that would be fun.

I step out of my car, a bit nervous. My head tries to sink down to hide myself, but I catch it and then reposition my shoulders to try and convey a sense of self-confidence. Awkwardly making eye contact with everyone as I look for my date, I walk toward the cafe. I see a couple laughing while taking turns sipping out of a funky glass of lemonade. The cup has many small bumps, like a golf-ball, causing the sun to reflect in ways I had never seen before.

"Charming, right?" a voice says from behind me. I twist around a bit too fast, causing my lanky arms to fling out. A man meets me at eye level with a smile on his face. His hair waves hello at me in the wind. Wearing khaki pants, a flannel, and a Star Wars shirt, this man is drop dead gorgeous. I'm too stunned for words: I hope I don't say anything stupid.

"The cafe, do you like it?" I realize I hadn't quite answered the first time. I nod and wave my hands around as if to gesture to the place's entire essence. I want to point out the funky glass but he's already wheeling me inside excited to show me more. It smells like a bookstore mixed with cinnamon. He picks the perfect place and all I can do is gesture at it with my string arms.

In the most attractive of manners, he orders a Pumpkin Spice Latte. He doesn't flinch nor flounder his words when he asks for no whipped cream. Yet, I flounder every word as I try to ask for the lemonade with the funky glass. When the employee doesn't understand I give up and apologize. I end up getting what he's having. How embarrassing.

"Do you like it?" I'm asked mid-sip. I look up at him, looking like a goof, with my lips still on the normal glass. I nod my head excitedly. While I may prefer a funky glass with some refreshing lemonade, this drink is still pretty good. Now that we've gotten drinks, he'll probably initiate some sort of conversation. Lucky for me, I prepared for this in the mirror this morning.

"So what do you do for a living?" I nearly spit out my drink. I was not prepared for this question. An artist living off of their parents' money should've expected such a question, yet somehow I did not. Words slip and slide off my tongue as I try to find the right way to explain how I'm financially stable and would gladly raise a family with such an amazing man. Apparently I hate myself more than usual today because when my hurricane of words is over it ends with "I love you".

Now it was his turn to stare at me. This is "How I Met Your Mother" all over again, except this guy was going to leave forever and I was going to become Marshall, but from the beginning of "Forgetting Sarah Marshall". Oh boy, this is bad because now I'm telling him these things. For some reason my body thinks all the movie references in the world will save me. It only digs a deeper grave. He walks away without saying a word. I fall into my grave.

Like in the end of "The Lion King", it rains on the ride home.

Soaking from the five second walk into my house, I slump onto the floor. After a minute of trying to self-coach myself out of this slump, I finally have the willpower to take off my shoes, hang up my coat, and get myself some

lemonade from the fridge. Setting up my art station, glass in hand, I grab all the colors from today. Lots of brown and gray for the cafe, and a variety of bright colors for the glass of lemonade. It will be an adventure figuring out how to replicate the sun reflecting off of the glass.

I play the next movie on my list, "The Big Short", and begin to paint. I always paint the background first. I let myself go. Paint brushes dance like trees in the wind. They reach up to the sky and draw streaks in the clouds. After the storm, calming colors rest on the paper and set in. Next is the cafe. My pencil walks on the sky as it forms shapes within shapes to create more shapes. Then I paint over those lines, fill them in, and admire my work. It's a simple painting lacking a main focus, so I add it! I start by making an elongated golf ball. When it's time to fill it in with my paint I use all the bright colors. Every last bit of paint goes into the funky glass of lemonade.

It's gorgeous. Maybe someone will actually pay me good money for it, but I don't want to sell it. I feel too much of a connection to it. Plus, no one would truly understand its meaning. No one ever understands what I mean, in art and in life. It shows the world through my lens: no humans, no questions, no extra parking, just the funky glass of lemonade.



Our Hero

By Ben Rasmussen

the minds that emerged

Our Hero awakes in a room. Cold, white walls draw all warmth from the surrounding air. This room is featureless. The walls are smooth and bare, the floors lack any blemish. The only imperfection is a single door that sits at the far end of the room. It is a heavy door, its iron surface speckled with rust. The door has not been opened in a very long time. Our Hero approaches the door, and as it lacks a handle, Our Hero pushes against the door with one hand. It groans hauntingly as it slowly opens. Our Hero passes through the threshold, across which is another room. This room is vast, with sharp corners that give it a cubical shape. The walls are made out of an indistinct brown metal. In the center of the room sits a clockwork god. It stares down uncaringly at Our Hero with motionless eyes. The ghastly automaton makes no noise as it silently judges Our Hero. Thousands of years of neglect render the machine in ruin, its sole organ within it overcome with rot and decay. The two ghosts stare at each other for what seems like an eternity, both carrying ancient stories but possessing not the words to tell them. The machine will never speak nor feel toward another soul, regardless. Eventually, Our Hero begins to walk past it. The machine does not move. Our Hero continues toward the far side of the room.

...
There is a computer that sits on a desk. The room is dark, the curtains are drawn shut, the door is closed. This is your computer, your room. A gateway into the boundless possibilities of the human spirit, the fractal depths of love, vision, and ingenuity. The computer is on, emitting a dim white light from the screen. An empty canvas, a digital escape. The computer will remain on, it will not mind. The chair is empty. The door is closed, the curtains are drawn shut. The room is dark.

the flame in the fishbowl

Our Hero approaches another door. This door is made out of a white glass, so thick and murky that it is impossible to tell what lies on the other side. Our Hero opens that door, and beyond it is an endless field. Wind sways the short green grass gently under a pleasant blue sky. The land is spotted with hills intermittently, but apart from that lacks any other characteristics. The wind picks up, carrying with it a friendly voice. "You stand here on this field, visitor," it says, "Yet you have no purpose, no reason to reside in this place." The wind whips around, circling Our Hero, seemingly scrutinizing its subject with invisible but keen eyes, though it has nothing to learn. "I have seen you before, felt you before, but never have you been in this place." Its words ebb and flow, echoing softly. Our Hero begins to walk, but the wind follows. It grows in intensity. "You title yourself a hero, yet you have no sword. A hero, yet you have no enemy. You are looking for something, but you do not know what, and so you are here." Our Hero hates the voice. The voice is ignorant, vulgar, spiteful. The wind roars violently, pushing Our Hero into an unseen fissure in the earth. Our Hero falls down and down, before hitting the ground with a crash. One arm breaks, the bone shattering. Our Hero stands. On a nearby rock rests a sword. Our Hero picks up the sword in the one arm that can hold it before walking deeper into the fissure.

...
The computer was once a place of comfort for you. A flash of color, of simple pleasures, of passing time that would never come back, an endless cycle. Disgusting. At the computer, nothing ever happened. So you abandoned the computer. You started caring for a garden. You grew life from the earth, caring for it each day with rigid devotion. A cycle of simple, pleasant flowers. It made you sick. So many choices. Too many choices. The computer has notes, photos, memories. The computer has possibilities. The computer never had anything at all. It used to be an escape. Now it's a wilted flower. The computer is on. The flowers are wilted. The passion is dead.

i, the fool

At the end of the fissure is a door surrounded by the solid rock wall. This door is made of deep black onyx, with intricate circular patterns carved into its face. The door swings open when approached, not needing to be touched, and reveals a grotesque scene on the other side. It is another room, each surface soft and moist and each corner rounded. The entire thing is constructed out of flesh, and it squishes unpleasantly as Our Hero enters. When Our Hero reaches the center, the walls begin to bubble. A figure of black liquid seeps from the pulsating flesh. Its body flows, lacking form, until at last it takes the shape of a limbless man. It gazes indifferently upon Our Hero. "What are you?" it queries. "Where did you come from? Why are you here? When will you leave?" As it spews question after question, it again changes form. A tide of limbs, faces, hair, bones. It never settles on one for long. Its tone changes. "I envy your sword. You are a hero, I believe. Can you lift your sword?" Our Hero lifts the sword, still holding it with the unbroken arm. "No, no, with your other hand!" it gasps. "A real hero does it with the other hand!" Our Hero switches the sword over to the other arm and attempts to lift it, but in its ruined state it does not respond. This enrages the black liquid. "I do not see you lift your sword," it booms. "I do not see you reach out your hand to others. I do not see you laugh. I do not see you smile." It lifts its chin, turning its dark, accusing eyes downward. They are full of scorn. "You are no hero." The black liquid begins to writhe, spitting vitriolic insults incessantly. "Weakling, fraud, idiot, wretch, fool," it screams. With each word, Our Hero is pulled deeper and deeper into the flesh, until nothing remains.

...

Then you were surrounded by people. People who did things, who derived pleasure from life, wringing it by its neck like a dishrag. And then there was you; worn, gray. Nothing ever happened. You saw how they laughed at you. You knew what they felt about you. Pathetic. Helpless. Stupid. Even if they didn't say it or think it. You knew. So you didn't tell them, and they never knew, and they never laughed, and they never cared, and they never did anything at all. You left them behind, and you saw them every day, and you never saw them again. But all feelings fade, right? Even the feelings that don't feel like anything.

ouroboros

Our Hero awakes in a room. Hard, gray walls drain all life that may have once splashed the world with color. At the far end of the room is a desk. At the desk sits a boy, staring idly at a hole in the wall. Every so often he lifts a hand to the hole, before looking at his palm with dazed apathy and placing it back down. Our Hero approaches the boy. He turns his head lazily to look at Our Hero. "Who might you be?" the boy asks. Our Hero looks back at the boy. The boy notices the sword in Our Hero's hand. Recognition flashes in his eyes, though his face is otherwise unexpressive. "So it was not all for nothing," the boy remarks. "I hope you have found what you were looking for. Now that you are here, this is the final step in your journey." Though the boy is seated, he seems almost as if he is gazing down upon Our Hero from far away. Cold eyes with no passion. The spark had died long ago. "So, what are you waiting for?" Our Hero stiffens. This boy was just like the rest. It would always be the same. In a final act of defiance, Our Hero plunges the sword into the sternum of the boy. The boy looks down at the sword, then back to the wielder. And to the dismay of Our Hero, he smiles. The boy then crumples to the floor, dead. Our Hero waits for the ground to open to be swallowed whole for the final time. But nothing happens.

...

*There's one thing left for you to do.
Find your spark.
Blow it out.
And wipe the floor with it.
You wish this is what you wanted.*



Raging Sarcasm

By Connor Hart

Raging Sarcasm is a fascinating spell to learn. Only people who are often aggravated have been able to use it, interestingly enough. It doesn't take too much power to use, but the effects are (potentially) devastating.

When cast, the user forces the target to only function in a raving, sarcastic manner. While it doesn't seem like much on paper, it is incredibly useful. *All* actions are made sarcastic, meaning that they aren't a lot of help. In fact, they will actively tease allies and then refuse to attack, heal, or whatever they need to do. This essentially renders them useless, putting the battle in favor of the caster.

Apparently, the spell was first conceived by a wizard who was having a bad day. He attempted to cast a control spell and failed. He then cursed, said "Whatever," and shot off the spell anyway. It hit the target, and the target took on the same sarcasm as the wizard. The wizard planned to name the spell as their own (such as "Murday's Blunder"), but decided not to out of embarrassment.

The spell has since been used to save many, as it is actually able to control any being (other than deities). People have attempted to manipulate the spell to inflict different emotions, but none have had enough conviction (as far as we know). Even though we haven't had success in recreation, it has encouraged spellcasters everywhere to experiment with casting. Recently, a Dragonborn was able to alter his breath weapon with Thaumaturgy, making the flames almost blinding. A halfling was actually able to share their natural luck with an ally. Raging Sarcasm, while initially a blunder, started an entire magical renaissance of sorts.

The Stolen Bicycle

By Anonymous

I opened my eyes and my head was throbbing. I looked to my right rather than left. That's when I saw him, that evil little toenail John Emerson riding away on my brand new bike. I tried to get up, my head pounded in protest. I lay back down, my head resting on the hard cold pavement. That little foot-licker John Emerson had stolen my bike. I tried to concentrate on the events that happened prior, trying to remember the details. That's when it became clear. I was riding my brand new shiny red bike when John Emerson jumped out of the bushes.

"He he he," he laughed, "nice bike you have, mind if I steal it?"

"Yes, I would very much mind," I replied.

That's when he took off his shoe and wacked me straight on the forehead.

"Mine," he said, grabbing my bike and riding away.

The whole world faded to black around me. Oh my god, he hit me with his shoe and stole my bike. I am going to hunt him down and steal it back. I got up, my head feeling better with the prospect. I couldn't do it alone, though, I needed help. I dusted myself off and went to find the mother of dragons. I knew she would help me on my quest against injustice.



kill two birds with one stone

I heard the gurgle, heard the sound of impact. I staggered back, leaning on the wall to keep myself upright. I brought my hands to my stomach, feeling the sticky, red substance relieve itself of me.

“You... you stabbed me,” I whispered, repeating the words like a mantra. I could feel myself losing. Losing more than just my blood.

I looked to her, looked to her hands stained red. In her left was a letter opener.

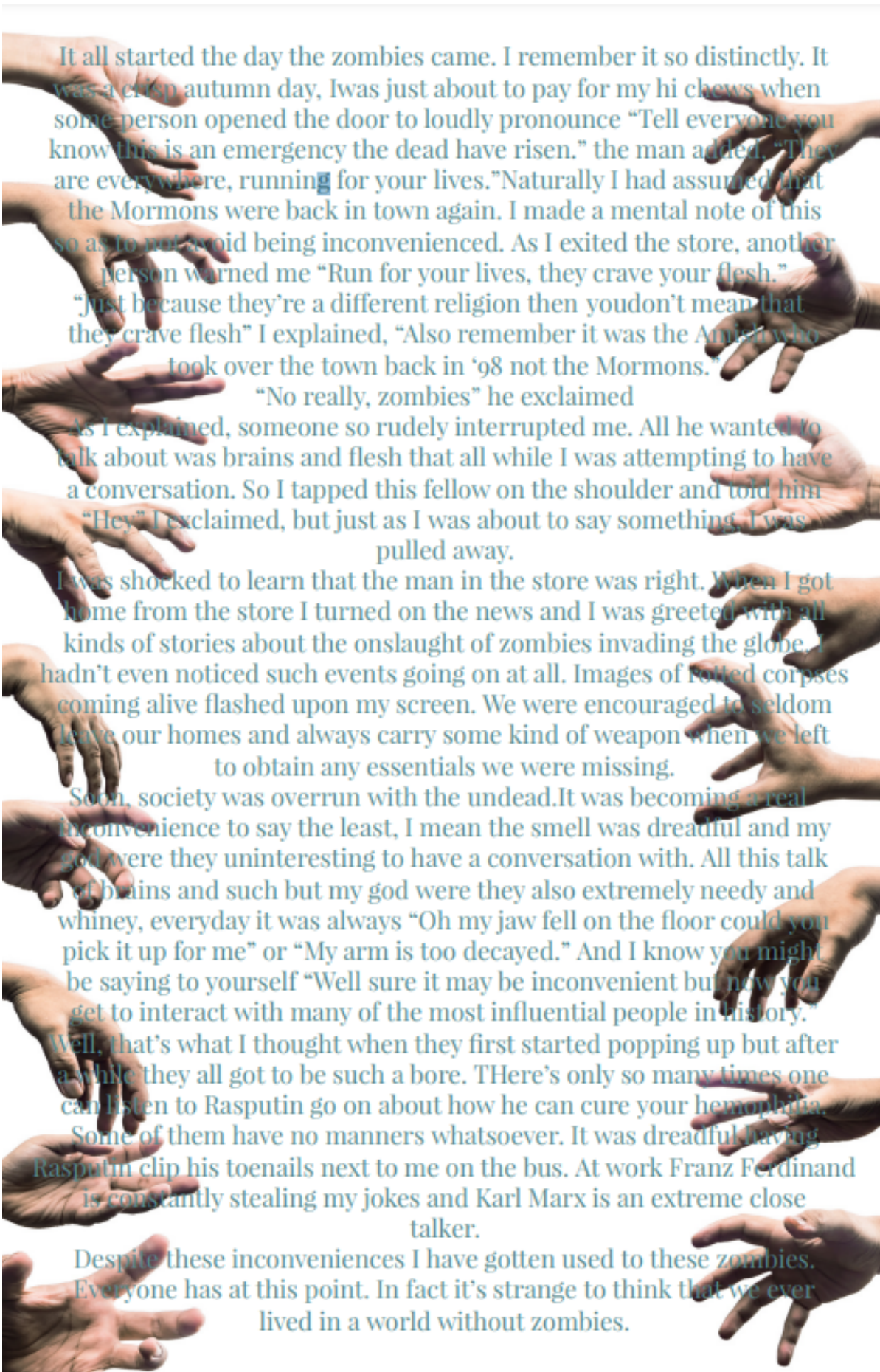


“You stabbed me with a letter opener,” I whispered once again, like if I said it enough, it could be reversed and I wouldn’t have to bleed to death in front of both my lover and enemy.

“Kill two birds with one stone,” I said faintly. She just watched, her gaze mixed with grief and greed. The same color, but different shades.

I knelt to the ground, my vision growing foggy, my hearing and heartbeat growing distant. My hands fell in front of me, keeping me from falling forward. She walked towards me, looking blurry. Like I was watching her through a foggy window on a rainy day.

“You can sleep now,” she said, lifting her hands to my face and closing my eyes, leaving me with only black. “It’s all over now.”



It all started the day the zombies came. I remember it so distinctly. It was a crisp autumn day, I was just about to pay for my hi chews when some person opened the door to loudly pronounce "Tell everyone you know this is an emergency the dead have risen." the man added, "They are everywhere, running for your lives." Naturally I had assumed that the Mormons were back in town again. I made a mental note of this so as to not avoid being inconvenienced. As I exited the store, another person warned me "Run for your lives, they crave your flesh." "Just because they're a different religion then you don't mean that they crave flesh" I explained, "Also remember it was the Amish who took over the town back in '98 not the Mormons."

"No really, zombies" he exclaimed

As I explained, someone so rudely interrupted me. All he wanted to talk about was brains and flesh that all while I was attempting to have a conversation. So I tapped this fellow on the shoulder and told him "Hey" I exclaimed, but just as I was about to say something, I was pulled away.

I was shocked to learn that the man in the store was right. When I got home from the store I turned on the news and I was greeted with all kinds of stories about the onslaught of zombies invading the globe. I hadn't even noticed such events going on at all. Images of rotted corpses coming alive flashed upon my screen. We were encouraged to seldom leave our homes and always carry some kind of weapon when we left to obtain any essentials we were missing.

Soon, society was overrun with the undead. It was becoming a real inconvenience to say the least, I mean the smell was dreadful and my god were they uninteresting to have a conversation with. All this talk of brains and such but my god were they also extremely needy and whiney, everyday it was always "Oh my jaw fell on the floor could you pick it up for me" or "My arm is too decayed." And I know you might be saying to yourself "Well sure it may be inconvenient but now you get to interact with many of the most influential people in history."

Well, that's what I thought when they first started popping up but after a while they all got to be such a bore. There's only so many times one can listen to Rasputin go on about how he can cure your hemophilia.

Some of them have no manners whatsoever. It was dreadful having Rasputin clip his toenails next to me on the bus. At work Franz Ferdinand is constantly stealing my jokes and Karl Marx is an extreme close talker.

Despite these inconveniences I have gotten used to these zombies. Everyone has at this point. In fact it's strange to think that we ever lived in a world without zombies.

Student Stress

I walked into my math class at exactly 10:42 am on November 30th, 2022. I sat down and immediately realized what was about to happen. My test was already placed face down on my desk with the grade on the other side. My legs shook up and down as I moved my hand across the back of my test. This would determine my chances of getting an honor roll for quarter one. This will prove if all my studying pays off, but most importantly will prove how I think about myself as a student in the future.

▣The people next to me start turning their tests to the front, the emotions in the class are going up and down. The person to my left is jumping up and down as they show me their 96%, while the person on my right has tears running down their cheeks. My stomach drops more than I thought a stomach ever could. It feels like my throat is closing as I begin to turn my paper over. I close my eyes and complete the turn. I open my eyes and my heart breaks. ▣63%! I scream at myself in my head. “How could you let this happen?” “How are you such a terrible student!” “Your parents are going to kill you!”. My heart races at the thought of my grade dropping. My eyes begin to brim with tears. I ask my teacher to let me leave the room so that I can collect myself. She reluctantly agrees and I rush into the hallway to avoid my classmates asking me what’s wrong. I slide down the wall and begin to break down. It feels like all my hopes and dreams are crumbling from underneath me. I think about how I still have four classes after this and have to deal with the anxiety all day. I head back into class, and act like nothing happened.

▣Through the next 4 classes I stay silent, internally worrying about my parents’ reactions. When someone asks me if I’m alright I just nod and smile. Finally, after what feels like a decade the final bell rings for the day. For the first time ever, I’m not excited to go home, I don’t want to face my parents when I tell them about my grade. I know deep down that they won’t be mad but I don’t want to let them down. I get on my bus and prepare myself for what is about to happen.

▣After 5 minutes I arrive at my front door, when I walk in my Mom is sitting on the couch and asks me how my school day was. Just as fast as she asked me I started crying. I am a mess, I talk about how disappointed I am and how I don’t understand why my work isn’t paying off. I cry and cry for over 30 minutes and finally start to calm down. I realize that a grade doesn’t define me as a student and that I am more than a letter. I understand what I could have done better and know what to do for next time.

▣In the end, I realized that I have learned from my mistakes and know what to do if it ever happens again. I plan to speak with my teacher and ask if there is anything else I can do to get my grade up. Even if she says no, I will understand and work as hard as I can to get a better grade for my next test.

Jillian Giusto

Ain't It a Long Way Down?

By Ben Rasmussen

It was quiet around the hole. Nearby were the sounds of a world in full bloom. A slight breeze brushed the tops of the trees, rustling their leaves. The low hum of cicadas emanated from the small bodies clung to the bark. Below, bees buzzed from flower to flower. The world was as alive as it ever was in this small strip of countryside, but these sounds only just reached the hole. The world was captivated by the hole; it was as if everything near was holding its breath, waiting for something to happen.

Waves of heat trailed from the ground. The world was cloaked in a blanket of warmth, pulsating like a beating heart. To the east, the woodlands provided some shade from the relentless heat. To the west, the fields consumed the landscape, a sea of pale, waist high grass. Beyond the fields was a small town, inhabited by no more than one hundred people. It was a town of small homes, metal roofs, plastic chairs, and cheap beer. The hole existed, liminal, between these two spaces. It was flanked to the north and south by copses of trees, forming an indent into the trees as though it had carved out its territory from the forest.

In the late hours of the morning, just before noon, figures appeared in the distance. Like droplets running down glass, they worked their way toward the hole, dragging chairs and coolers of drinks behind them. The sun beat down continuously as they walked. After around half an hour, the first of them had reached the hole. There were perhaps thirty among them, all middle aged men and women. Most had come from the town, but some had come through the trees to the south from another nearby community, hours away by foot. They set their chairs down in a circular group around the hole, before sitting down with a collective sigh and wiping the sweat from their brows with their sun-bleached tops. Then, they each grabbed a drink and stared into the hole.

After a few minutes of silence, a man in a stained white tank top whistled, impressed. "Ain't it a long way down?" he marveled. Around the hole, the onlookers muttered their agreement.

Another man, in a black t-shirt, was the next to speak up. "Yup...wouldn't wanna' fall down there," he said, after taking a sip of his drink. Again, agreement rose from the crowd.

No one else spoke for some time. They simply gazed into the hole. The hole had an unmistakable presence within the landscape, as if the land had just disappeared into the depths. There was a distinct lack of shrubs or weeds just around the hole, and it was bordered for a few feet only by well kept grass. The hole itself, about eight feet across, was overlapped slightly by this grass, with patches of dirt made sturdy by roots being the only thing to break up its perfectly circular shape. The walls of the hole were made up of soil which led into rock as it went down, though these surfaces had an unnatural smoothness to them. Below that all light was consumed by an impermeable darkness; it was impossible to tell how deep the hole was.

"Y'know, somebody oughta chuck a rock down there to see how deep it is," a woman declared with a knowing nod of her head, her disheveled hair clinging to her face in the unabating heat. There was a creak of plastic chairs as the statement was met by a chorus of *yups and yessirs erupted from the group which had not spoken in nearly an hour. One thickly bearded man called out, "I'll drink to that!" before taking a sip of his warm beer.*

Nobody moved.

Another man chuckled; it was the one with the stained top. "Sure would stink to get stuck in that hole...." he mumbled. His gaze was locked on the inky blackness beneath, transfixed. Once again, there was silence.

The sun lazily glided across the sky. Noon had long since come and gone, and by now the sun was dropping to the west, the mid-afternoon light bouncing off the items that had been brought to the hole. The coolers, now ignored, had been left open, the melted ice pooling in a warm sludge along the bottom with unopened drinks bobbing idly within. Despite the heat of the day, the hole had an inexplicable cold to it; not the kind that could be felt, but understood. It was an entirely unnatural structure, and yet it blended perfectly with its environment. Unlike the land in which it resided, the hole could not be developed. It was the absence of an idea.

As the sun sank lower and lower, the group around the hole began to stir.

One of the older men slapped his hands on his knees, leaning the weight of his body forward with a sigh. "Welp, I better get goin'. The missus'll want me home for supper."

"I'll be gettin' on too. Gotta check in on the little ones," said a woman in a floral sundress. As she spoke, her gaze continued to rest unwaveringly on the hole.

Nobody moved.

The last light of the sun rested over the town, sparkling on the metal roofs of homes that were painted black against the horizon. Vibrant streaks of orange, red, and purple shot across the sky. In the undergrowth of the woodlands, crickets sang softly.

After hours of silence, the man in the black shirt spoke. "Do you think they laugh at us?" He looked down into the hole.

Then the sun was gone, covering the world in darkness. Gradually, the moon rose up over the trees and glossed the leaves a dull silver, and far above the sky was speckled with stars. The group around the hole spoke no more, only staring straight down into the depths. The night had taken away the day's warmth, replacing it with an eerie stillness. The soft light of the moon gave the hole a new appearance: the shadows had crept further up the walls, beckoning.

Just after midnight, as the moon crested the sky, the onlookers stood up. One by one, they threw themselves into the hole.

It was quiet around the hole once again.

My Lost Fisherman

By Molly Thornton

I smell the salty air as I stand on the pier, waiting for my fisherman to come home. The waves are a deep cyan. Water crashes on the posts of the pier, the seafoam bubbling to the surface. I have always liked the ocean— it has always been kind to me, bringing back my fisherman with a bountiful catch that he would sell to support us. The waves have always been there, for no one can drain the sea well. It is eternally good. There’s always been something comforting about the waves, something that beckons me in; they seem to call my name.

Two boys walk towards me. They both look similar, with dark brown hair and green eyes, but one is clearly taller. They are dressed strangely; almost everyone who comes to this pier now is. They had strange shirts that didn't have sleeves and their pants didn't even reach their ankles. It seems inappropriate to be dressed that way. I am wearing a white dress, and although it may be my wedding dress it seems more appropriate than what the boys wear. They don't bother me.

“Have you heard the stories about this pier?” the taller boy questions.

“No,” says the younger one.

“Well, they say it's haunted by ghosts.”

“That's not true! Ghosts don't exist,” the younger boy shouts.

“Yes they do!” says the older boy, jumping a little, “You must know the story they all tell. ‘Her fiance was a fisherman. She would wait for him to come home on this pier. One day she realized he wasn't coming back and she jumped.’ They say she still waits for him.”

That poor girl, I think to myself. My fisherman will come home soon. It shan't be much longer.

“I think we should get out of here,” The younger boy said fearfully, “It's too dark”

“Fine. You chicken!” counters his brother.

“I am not a chicken... it’s just that it's late and Mom is probably looking for us”

They turned to leave. As they walked away, I realized that I didn't want them to go. I was so lonely. My heart was aching for companionship. Maybe the boys could stop and talk for a while; maybe that would mend my aching heart. I ran towards them and jumped between them.

“Did you feel that? I just got cold all of a sudden” said the older boy, his face going pale.

“Stop trying to scare me,” the younger boy said, scowling.

Aren't they odd? They'd just walked on. What just happened? Perhaps it was too dark for those boys to see me.

I looked up at the sprinkling of stars in the night sky. Those stars are what connect me and my fisherman. He always tells me that we are looking at the same sky. No matter how far away he is, the sky will always be the same. Those stars guide him back to me. I watch the boys as they walk away from me, their figures disappearing until they are one with the darkness.

Abandoned, I began to think. It wasn't my imagination, was it? I had never been one for imagining. I was never that creative. How could they do that, why could they just walk through me? Why couldn't they see me? Why wasn't he back yet? He had never been this late. What if he never came back, then what would I do? I never dreamed of a life without him. I couldn't even picture it. No, I *wouldn't* picture it. I am alive, I am right here. I tried to call out to the boys, but water came out where the words should've been. It was like I was drowning, but that wasn't possible. I was on land. Why? He is coming home, just like he always does. No matter what, he wouldn't leave me. He wouldn't die... but how long had it been since he left? Only a couple of days, a couple of months? Years? God I have been waiting for so long

He said he would be back, but he's not! What is wrong with me? Why can't I remember how long it has been since I last saw him? Why am I forgetting his face? Why couldn't those boys see me? Why, Why, Why?!

And then I knew.

I was the girl in those stories. He was never, ever coming home. I was going to be alone forever. Waiting for my lost fisherman. For my fisherman, lost at sea.



Art Gallery, Again

“-No, baby please, don’t!” I hear from behind me. I turn my head to see a large man pleading after a much younger woman. His checkered, red and yellow sweater is nearly bursting at the seams, sheltered by a khaki colored windbreaker and brown slack pants. A thick, brown mustache is the centerpiece of his bloated face, topped off with a weak combover.

“Oh man,” he exclaims as the door slams shut. He catches me peeking at him, and marches over, “I’m hopeless.”

I take a long sip of my drink, before biting, “how’s that, pal?”

“I ain’t got no luck with the girls,” he frowns.

“Well, maybe you ought to go after some that are more your age. She looked to be not a day older than 25,” I respond, giggling at the end. Yellow crust surrounds his eyes, and wrinkles inhabit most of his face.

“I’m only 31,” he moans.

I spit my drink out in my glass, “oh, sh-, man, I-uh, I’m sorry.” Buddy doesn’t look a day over 50.

“Is it that bad?” he whines. What a loser.

“No, it’s ok, man,” I lie.

“Really?” he says, shocked. His large mouth gapes open like a whale gulping plankton.

“Yeah, you’re good,” I respond, turning around, back to the TV. Not that I’m interested in what’s going on, I just can’t be bothered.

“Say fella, let me buy you a drink!” he says with excitement.

What a dilemma. Part of me wants to take what I can get out of this idiot, but another part wants to get away from him. I take a deep breath, looking around the bar to analyze the environment.

Harrison’s has been my go-to spot for a couple years now. It’s a funny little place, owned and named for by a retired “football star” who sat on the bench of a Division-III school and never saw a snap.

The establishment is housed in an old, drafty building. Wet, too. The door to the parking lot is centered on the western wall, leading in to a bar that wraps around to the two adjacent sides. There are tables strewn about, but the dust that’s accumulated on them says enough about the food. The inside has very few windows, instead, the walls are covered with sports paraphernalia. The dark wooden panels are barely visible, concealed by college pennants and signed jerseys. It reeks of cheap beer and piss.

Despite this, Harrison has a charm to him, and he’ll always have my business. Maybe it’s that his bar is the only one in Muldraugh, maybe it’s that I can get three or four drinks for ten bucks. Maybe both. He’s old, 75, probably. His days as a linebacker are far in the rearview mirror; he’s 5’10, 120 pounds. His slim, worn face and long, greasy, gray hair give an uneasy impression, but he has a heart of gold. Always willing to call a taxi for you, let you put some drinks on a tab if you forget your wallet, hell, my buddy had his roof redone by him. A real stand up guy.

“Sure,” I finally respond.

“Great!” he says, overenthusiastically. Piece of shit. “Hey, Mister!” he yells to Harrison, loud enough to get the other four or five patrons to look over, “can you get this fella another drink, on me!”

He grips his belt tightly and sticks his belly out, gleaming with pride. As Harrison fills my mug, the man sits down, and I can almost hear the stool screaming for help.

“So, what’s your name?” I mumble.

“Clarence, and you?”

“Murray.”

"Well, Murray, it sure is nice to meet you!" he sticks his grossly miscolored hand out to me. I strongly shake his hand, hoping he pops and I can get home.

"Say, mister, what do you do? Like, for work?"

"I'm a lumberman," I respond.

"Oh, man, that is so cool!" he says. What the hell is wrong with this manchild?

"Do you guys *really* yell 'timber' when you cut down a tree?" he asks.

"Sure," I shrug.

An awkward silence descends us. I glance away from his face back down to my drink. Maybe he'll leave me alone. I look back up, and he's still looking at me, grinning. Blow me.

"How 'bout you?" I ask.

"Oh, me?" he asks, "I'm a critic, an art critic."

"That must pay well."

"Oh, it will, soon, trust me," he gloats, "I gotta website, clarencearnold.com, and it's taking off soon, I can feel it!"

Sure, and I'm gonna win the lottery tonight.

"Is that why you're here tonight, Clarence, cooling off after a hard days work?" I sneer, although the job seems to have gone right over his head.

"Yeah, it's hard work," he sighs, "I was down at that new art gallery in Oakmont today, whew, that was tough."

What the hell?

"Sounds like it," I tease.

My attention is caught by something behind Clarence. The lightbulb above the ATM machine in the corner is misbehaving. I stare at it, watching it dim and brighten without rhythm. It's ever so slightly miscolored, perhaps a shade more yellow than the rest of the lights.

"-It's not a pastel that he's used previously, but I think it really opens up a new avenue for him," he drolls on. I continue to nod, but for whatever reason, the light in the corner possesses my full attention.

"Are you just nodding to get me to keep talking, mister?" he asks, with a spite I did not see him being capable of.

"No, no, not at all. Yes, Gerard and his pastels, continue, please," I save myself, "hold, on, before you get going again, how 'bout another drink?"

"Oh, totally!" he just seems happy to have someone to talk with. To.

"Hey, Harrison!" I wave him over, "two more for us please."

"Absolutely. The same?" he asks.

I nod, then, before I can stop myself, "hey, you notice that light in the corner?"

He leans on the bar to get a closer look, squinting. "Huh, yeah. That's funny, ain't it?"

"Yeah." I respond, then watch as he walks away, unphased.

"Anyway, as I was saying, *Lions Dancing, I mean, wow! Phenomenal stuff. You really ought to see it, mister,*" he demands. *Well maybe I don't want to see it. Maybe I want to be left alone.*

"Yeah, I might be able to find the time."

"Oh, you gotta!" he says, then just fucking stares at me, waiting for an answer.

"Yeah, man, maybe."

"Ok, ok, just think about it."

Screw this guy.

Again, I look at the light. Fade in. Fade out. Fade in. Fade out. There's a buzzing. Like a fly. It crescendos as the light brightens, then crawls away when it dissipates. I look in the window just below it. I can see my truck

through the window when the light is dim, then watch as it is concealed by the reflection of the brightened light. There it goes. There it is again. My escape.

"-she's insistent too, like fully convinced of it. I tell her, it's a Barceló, lady. She won't back down-"

I interrupt, "where exactly is this story going, exactly?"

"This clown thought it was a Escevuella!" he laughs. What an idiot.

The buzzing grows louder. The loudest it has been tonight. I survey the bar, and I seem to be the only one who notices.

At this point, I'm ignoring Clarence. "Hey, Harrison. You wanna do something about that light?" I point over to it.

"Murray, look, not right now. I can fix it up after close tonight, maybe tomorrow morning at worst. It'll be good for tomorrow night, don't worry,"

I can feel sweat beading down my forehead. My drink has grown warm. Hunger pangs in my stomach, and as much as I respect Harrison, the food he makes is foul. I need to get out of here.

This entire time, Clarence and I have had our drinks very close. Mine is closer to the edge. His is closer to Harrison's side of the bar. They're close, but not close enough to confuse them. I thought. I watch as this mongrel grabs my drink and raises it to his fat lips.

"Whoa, whoa there! That's my goddamn drink!" I yell.

"Oh, sorry Murray. Oh, gee, yeah, this is yours, and this one, this one right here, this is mine," he explains.

"Goddamn idiot, man. Not that hard," I jeer. The buzzing grows louder. I can hear it in my head and heart and soul. It's so loud. I look back over at the light. Now it's playing with me. Bright as the sun, dark as the void. The buzzing, like someone using a propane torch on my head. I can feel the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

"Hey, hey, it's ok, calm down," he slyfully speaks. I'm calm.

"Calm down? You stupid bitch."

"Mister, I'm sorry, I didn't even drink out of it," he cowers, like a dog in a thunderstorm.

"You're a fucking loser, Clarence."

"We-wha-, well that seems uncalled for, Murraray," he flabs. His face has begun to turn red. Not a difficult man to break.

"Uncalled for? *Uncalled for? How about, you leave me the hell alone?*"

"F-, I-uh, what? Murray, what happened? I'm sorry about the drink, ok?" he fumbles.

"No! Not ok! You keep on pestering me, for what? You think anyone gives a shit about your stupid paintings and your stupid website?" I yell, standing up. I've attracted the attention of the other patrons.

"You goddamn loser! I only listened so you'd get me more drinks, you idiot, how did you think I'd care about Garcélo or Bescuevla?"

"Murray, I'm sorry, I, I didn't think it was bad."

I notice the light in the corner is bright. Brighter than ever. Brighter than the goddamn sun.

"Murray, what is it? What, I mean, how? How can I help you? You seem troubled, man."

"You f-, I," I groan, incomprehensible, before gathering my words, "I'm done. You win, fucker."

"Murray, what the hell are you talking about?" he follows.

I storm out of the bar, ousted from my own sanctuary. The last thing I see before swinging open the door is the light in the corner. It's... off. Off for good. Like me. I'm off for good. Off for good, Again.

The Thrill of the Hunt

Part II

After four days, my son and I had made our return to our sweet home under the veil of night. My wife was waiting. Unknowing and all-believing to the lie I had fed her. Well, more than a half-truth. My boy and I went on a hunting trip. That much is true, however she was left unaware of my ulterior motive. Her innocent mind couldn't wrap around the stupidity of going hunting in the dead of winter...

Once I return to my home, I send my son up to his room to bed, and notice my kitchen light is on. A tune is being hummed from that direction. Expecting my wife, I am surprised to see the neighbor, Mr. O'Ryan, cooking a meal in my own kitchen.

"Hey you," he says grinning at me with almost a sly expression. His eyes lack the usual yearning and instead seem to be brimming with a childlike excitement, as if he were a young boy about to show his father a fresh kill. Not much unlike my own son, and even myself as a boy...

"What are you doing here? Why are you in my home?"

"Your wife is having me for dinner. Take a seat, she'll be ready soon," he says with a wink. Confused, I sit down. Is my wife sleeping around? The bitch, she has the audacity to do this. Well, I guess I'll bite.

I watch as he slowly cooks the meat. The room is cloaked in a certain level of darkness, lit only by the dim bulbs in the kitchen. I thought I told her to change those. The house looks a tad bit dusty, and there seems to be a subtle odor coming from somewhere. An odor that for some reason makes me reminisce about the trip. I look up at Mr. O'Ryan's face and see his toothy smile. His teeth are slightly stained, yet they have a gleam to them. They are almost fanglike and make me feel increasingly uncomfortable.

The way he moves is uncanny, switching from sharp and precise to puppet-like and chaotic. It's as if I'm watching an alien or some sort of creature foreign to this world try and mimic human movement.

"All done," he says, bringing over a plate of meat garnished with a leafy garnish. He places it right in front of me and pours me a glass of wine.

"What is it?" I ask. "What is this meat?"

He stares for a moment, until he once again flashes his teeth wide and says, "Sausage."

He grabs his plate and sits down. The shadows casted by the kitchen light paint his face sinister, and the odor seems to grow only stronger.

"Shouldn't we wait for my wife? On that matter, where is her...?"

"You know," he cuts me off. The nerve on this guy. "I do find it strange that you went on a hunting trip in the dead of winter. The grounds are frozen and the birds have flown south."

I stare at him. How could he know? Does he really know? Is this bastard trying to insert himself into my marriage?

“We do it every year.”

“One could only assume that you had... ulterior motives,” he continues, jabbing his fork into the meat and twirling it around slowly; almost sensually. This guy makes me sick. “You can start eating, your wife wouldn’t have wanted you to wait.”

I look down at the meal, and feel a nagging urge to refuse, but at the same time I am rather hungry, so I pick up my fork and take a bite. The meat is tender; cooked to perfection. It has a delicate quality to it. The marinated spices give the flavor a certain kick to it, although it is lacking. I layer the top with salt and take another bite. There is a certain forbidden feeling that fills my being as I eat. I look up and see Mr. O’Ryan gleefully grinning at his successful work.

“I sure do hope you like it,” he snickers.

I do like it quite a lot. The aftertaste is among the best in any food I’ve eaten. The smooth texture was unique and delectable, serving only to make the meat more enticing. I certainly was not expecting something like this, especially since I don’t love red meat. This belonged at a restaurant from a top chef. But this is just the next-door neighbor’s food. It fills me with a combination of satisfaction and envy. My wife never made something like this. Her sausages were never this good. But the other one’s cooking... well she definitely knew how to cook.

“It’s very good. I never took you as the cooking type.” I reply, giving my compliments to the chef. However, I begin to remember how he interrupted me early and how I still want answers. “But you never answered my question. Where is my wife’s plate? She’s spent a lot of time getting ready.”

“Me and your wife both know about your adultery. Your actions made your wife cry,” He leans forward, almost beastlike. “Thankfully I was around to help her.”

“You don’t know anything. Nothing about anything!” I said sternly.

“Your wife cried and cried and cried. She was a rather lovely woman.”

I stand up with rage, causing the table to shift backwards. “I am not going to sit here and let you destroy my family.”

“You did that yourself,” he retorts, hand resting over his mouth as if he’s giggling.

“Where is my wife?” I shout, which causes him to grin. “What? Why are you smiling, you bastard? You think this is funny?”

“You want to know where your wife is?” he asks in a mischievous tone.

“Tell me where my goddamn wife is!”

“Do you finally appreciate her now that you’ve gotten a good taste?”

