

lumière

Issue #10, 2025



lumière

ISSUE 10

ISSUE #10 EDITORS-in-CHIEF

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MISSION STATEMENT

lumière is here to be the flashlight of your literary and artistic shenanigans. If you've got some wonder, tantalize our eyes and oil up our brain gears; help us showcase your super-duper, unique expression, passion, awesomeness, and authenticity. Our goal is to produce an inclusive and diverse platform that illuminates the creative work of MassBay's students, faculty, staff, and members of the larger community.



Words from the Editors

I am not sure what day it was exactly—maybe the first Wednesday-morning-check-in, or when I volunteered to be submissions manager, or seeing the first submission arrive but, at some point, lumière became as much a part of me as I am a part of lumière. My world became refreshing my browser hoping for submissions, pestering Matt Walsh when passwords did not work (they never worked), finding hidden pictures Dani left for me on Marq, the frustration of “reiteration,” the constant feeling of wonder and excitement that I was creating something so tangible and lucid and alive. My world became creation and exhaustion and pride and caffeine, caffeine, caffeine.

lumière is a labor of love and community celebration. The process of creating lumière has forever changed me. I have gained a new appreciation for the voices that often go unheard; it's the artists, poets, writers, photographers, that breathe life and meaning into their creations. I have witnessed pride and love unique to the individuals behind the words and images on these pages that I had not before. I am so proud of our magazine and to have had a hand in sharing these voices with all of you.

– Brooke Richey

lumière snuck into my life and found itself a home in both my head and my heart. What started as a small side task—a weekly 20 minute meeting with a few of my peers and messing around in a brightly colored spreadsheet quickly snowballed into reviewing and re-reviewing submissions, minimal sleep supplemented by coffee and Redbull (sugar free!), and a new found respect for graphic designers. The hours spent in room 242D are laughable when held against the hours upon hours spent in a voice call creating spreads, deciphering forwarded emails, and the agonizing struggle of choosing 10pt font over 12. My sleep schedule has had irreversible damage done to it, but I feel very grateful to have messed it up in such good company. I've struggled to put in to words just how much this magazine and the community it has created means to me. This journey has been riddled with learning curves, trial and error, and so much love. I am beyond proud of the staff and the submitters that made up this edition of lumière!

– Dani Joseph

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MAGAZINE CONTENT

This magazine features a variety of genres and styles, with content including serious matters that may not be considered casual reading by all, but which we feel are important, and for which we are proud to provide a home.

lumière has a similar approach to submissions as *Touchstone Magazine*: "abusive pieces written from an obviously celebratory perspective will be rejected" and *Fatal Flaw*, which says that you should avoid submitting work that contains "sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, anything that even remotely resembles white supremacy, ableism, ageism...." However, we'd like to acknowledge that there's a big difference between writing that endorses violence and hate and writing that explores the impact these can have on someone.

We prioritize publishing work with impact, demonstrating technical proficiency and attention to detail and craft, in any genre. We highly value authenticity and originality, and therefore we do not accept fan content or AI-assisted work. We look for work that shows us new things about the world, or lets us see familiar things in a new light.



Fashion & Design / Cole Ackerman
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Aerial Photography / Julio Aguilar
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Speculative Evolutions / Isabella Laird
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Letter to the Editor

When I was charged with writing this op-ed I was excited. Now on the cusp of publication I'm worried. I'm not having writer's block, I'm having a block against my convictions. I'm holding back my true feelings. Why? Fear. Why really? It's still fear, but more nuanced.

Right now we are a fear based society, and for good reason. I don't want to be sent to an El Salvadorean supermax for my opinion. I don't want my civil liberties to be infringed upon for writing this piece. Will I have that problem after this is published? Probably not. I'm a citizen, caucasian, cis, a combat veteran. Like Donny, C's get degrees. Yet, if I take away a couple of those C's, I'm now one of those "bad guys" in a foreign jail, sans due process. No, I don't want to be sent to our bastardized version of the gulag.

Truthfully, this is just a bit outside my wheelhouse. I have never written an opinion piece before, at least not seriously. I have never wanted to. Which is and isn't surprising, as I have an annoying tendency to give anyone an unfettered, scathing rebuke of their poor thoughts. It's why I gravitate toward fiction. I can hide in the characters and sway with an artistic nuance. I can show you bits of every feeling, every emotion, every thought that has coursed through my being. My mistakes. My triumphs. A jack of all trades and a master of none. It's not me, it's fiction. It comes with a nice and tight disclaimer: All names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

This is not that, no matter how much I wish it were so.

Right now, I still have some privilege left, and a voice, while many of you do not. In the coming years, as my daughter learns about this period of history, and the freedoms she lost, I can tell her that I stood for her and that I stood for humanity. I can point directly to this register of concern.

*First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out
—because I was not a socialist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out
—because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out
—because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for me
—and there was no one left to speak for me.*

—Martin Niemöller

The shadow no longer looms, but has been cast into each and every American neighborhood, and it penetrates deep into the soul of our republic. No bubble is thick enough anymore. No community is exempt, no matter how manicured the lawn or expensive your home. At the end of this, we do not

want to be the modern day "good German." As we surpass one hundred days of this administration, threats of constitutional breach continue, and no delusion will save us from the masked men and women *just doing their jobs*. We will find no respite from the steady dismantling of our constitution, our free speech, our due process. Just as we've had no respite from the lies and the gaslighting. The agenda was posted and then implemented. If it has yet to be done, it will. No one will save us but ourselves. We are not actively wading towards a constitutional crisis—we are already deep in the throes of one.

If you think like me, then these grim tidings are nothing new. And if you don't, you might have already checked out, but please bear with me for a few sentences longer: I promise not to lecture, but I plead for your attention. I refuse to let the darkness obfuscate the only American exceptionalism I subscribe to. One I believe is still worth fighting for and one worth dying for. That tangible something which made us great in the first place. You.

"There is a cult of ignorance in the United States, and there has always been. The strain of anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that 'my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.'"

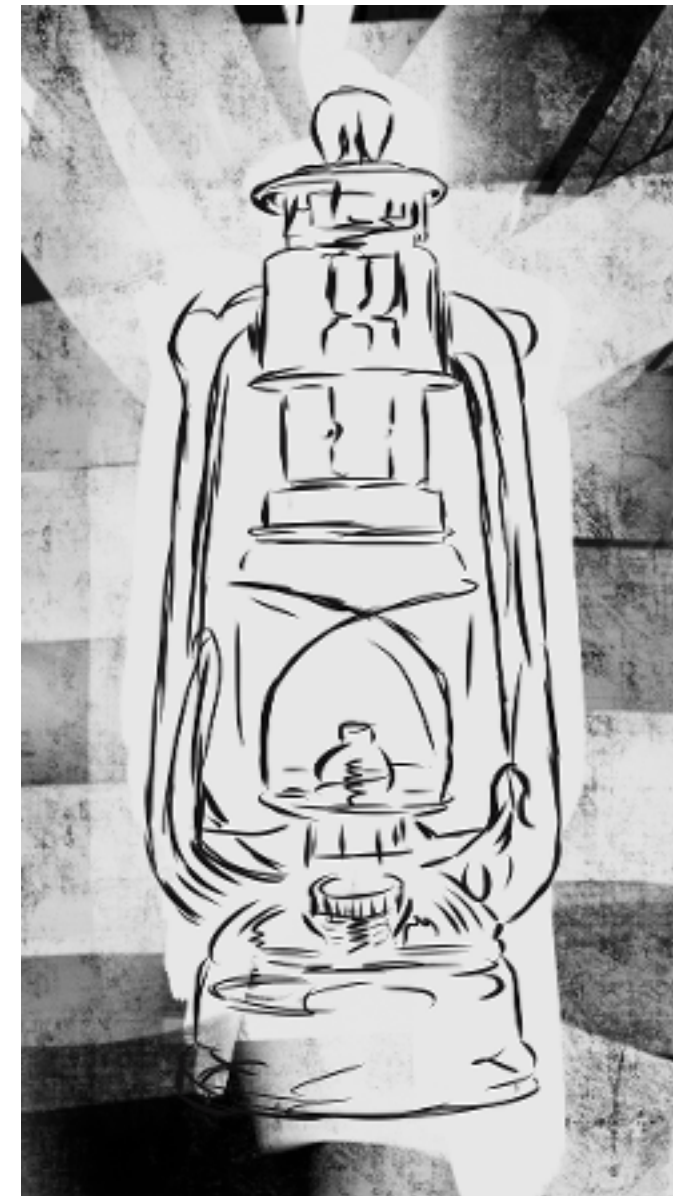
—Isaac Asimov

Why should you listen to me? I am thirty four years young, and lately I have been failing more than I have succeeded. I've farted around this community college campus three times over the course of fifteen incongruent years. I hold no college degree. I am not an intellectual nor a scholar. I am unemployed. I am disabled. I am less qualified than the many who have already spoken out, including Rumeysa Ozturk, who was wrongfully incarcerated for forty five days for her opinion. But I have seen war and I have seen death. I was a small cog in the grand scheme of our military industrial complex. And an even smaller cog as a firefighter and paramedic during the pandemic.

I suffer from experience. In those fifteen years, I have seen the cruelties of man in their quest to dominate with their opinion. Those opinions directly led to my most pervasive affliction, post traumatic stress disorder, which I acquired just doing my job as a Combat medic, outside the sleepy town of Gelan in Southern Ghazni, Afghanistan in 2012. One of the hallmarks of the disorder is avoidance, and coupled with the other symptoms, my transcript might appear as somewhat of an aberration in contrast to how I conduct myself in person, and how I speak. That is, if you can get me to do it.

I was disheartened to come to realize that one in four Americans think that due to my affliction, that I am violent or a dangerous person. And nearly one in four of Americans think it's not treatable. There are

many medical misconceptions floating around not based in reality, despite peer reviewed and scientific backed best practices, from the assault on vaccines and women's healthcare to misconceptions about mental health and resilience. We have made great strides with the VA, but it's still not enough, and dismantling the progress made will directly lead to more soldier suicides. We have yet to tamponade the bleed, and our intervention is about to fail. You're losing us at a rate you can't afford. How do you inspire the next generation of warfighters without our endorsement? The ones who just fought and bled and died for over twenty years of arbitrary war. How do you inspire anyone towards civil service when you abuse and neglect your most passionate and staunch defenders. I had to be treated by a non-profit, as my calls and referrals to mental health at an underfunded and understaffed Veterans Affairs went unanswered. I fear that will happen again, and the strain will continue to fall on the families and loved ones. There is nothing natural about fighting war. To live in a perpetually traumatic state. That goes both for soldiers and civilians alike.



The assertion that cutting seventy thousand jobs at Veterans Affairs to streamline efficiency is so insanely laughable I can't fully comprehend it. What possibly does the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Doug Collins, a reservist Chaplain, know of the perils of war. I can't even possibly fathom what he stands to gain by selling out the lives of soldiers of consequence. Truly a man of god.

Trauma constantly reminds myself of my faults and shortcomings as a human, that of which are as immense as the gravity which keeps me grounded. I've been curt, I've been rash, I've been a bad friend. I've perpetuated stereotypes. I have said and done wrong things. I have been a bully and I have been bullied. I have made mistakes in my past. I am many things, just as you are. We are not the sum of our traumas, our mistakes or political ideations, our brokerage accounts, or our parentage. We are human. I can wholeheartedly assure you that our blood and matter are all the same. It's not too late to change. Though I can no longer serve my country as I once saw fit, I will continue to write and advocate for the immense progress we have made. Progress that is not invalidated by declaring inane national emergencies and executive orders.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that organization that did save my life. The Home Base program, a partnership between the Boston Red Sox and Mass General Hospital, nestled just behind the USS Constitution in the Charlestown Naval Yard. They were there for me when I no longer saw any light.

"And I'd ask you about war, you'd probably throw Shakespeare at me, right, 'once more unto the breach dear friends.' But you've never been near one. You've never held your best friend's head in your lap, watch him gasp his last breath looking to you for help."

—Good Will Hunting

The attack on universities, teachers, and their diverse student body for having an opinion counter to the current government is a direct attack on free speech. It was protected speech during Vietnam and the War in Iraq and it continues to be so. To have the opinion that maiming and murdering children is a war crime is not a controversial opinion. It is protected by the first amendment. It does not mean you support Hamas. It means you live in reality, and that the cruelties of human existence have yet to break your spirit. You realize that the rules of war exist, that the Geneva Convention exists, and that they were created for a reason, one that you cannot outright ignore for convenience: *to safeguard humanity as we contradict our most important commandment.*

As someone who has been directly attacked by insurgents masquerading as civilians, the kind who hide behind women and children, and behind mosques and cemeteries and holy sites—I get it, but I'm sorry. You'll have to do your job, or schill a different lie. Do more reconnaissance and complete the objective with more danger. Do more research and question your convictions and truly deeply wonder how you got there

in the first place. It's counterinsurgency 101. It's a sweeping failure that cost us time, money, and directly led to American deaths in Afghanistan. It cost us the objective, and one of the many reasons that a religious oligarchy still retains power through systematic oppression. We have twenty years of precedence set in Afghanistan, and over seventy years in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It does not work. Math, science, and history are all on your side. It's just as reprehensible for civilians to be killed in Palestine as it is for them to be killed in Ukraine, just as it was in Vietnam, and every named and unnamed conflict. The rules are set in stone. And for the naysayers saying the deaths of children and civilians is just a cruel reality of war, I would gladly sit with any one of you and describe the images that plague my mind.

In the same right, the cruelties perpetuated by the Israeli Government do not excuse anti-semitic rhetoric and cruelty to a historically repressed people. Religious freedom is a fundamental right, and when you persecute one, you persecute all. Supporting the Jewish right to live is not a controversial opinion, and my support for human lives does not make me complicit in another government's atrocities. The separation between religion and state is a fundamental imperative.

"I didn't ask for this role, but I'll play it. Now go do your best. Be bold, and mighty forces will come to your aid. Goethe said that. It's not too late for you to become a person of substance."

— Almost Famous

Right now, more than ever, wading through the endless propaganda is essential for the long term safety of this nation. Education and critical thinking are essential. That means fair compensation for our educators, so as to be healthy and happy to inspire cognitive growth is essential. Not stretched into the singularity. Look to the countries that prioritize education and look to their success. In the state which created public education, we know we can do so much better.

The world is too fluid for solidified opinion. Question everything, but be open to anything. I can't possibly know everything. I have been wrong, and I continue to be wrong. Stop defining what constitutes an American family based on a spurious fear of

diversity and difference.

The truth is, I absolutely abhor not knowing. I am paralyzed by my knowledge of Dunning Kruger. Though I can bullshit with the best, I feel seen and exposed. Everyone should feel this way. You should feel inadequate by not knowing, it should self-immolate within your subconscious and scream for growth. Errare humanum est. To err is to be human.

We have been divided into political factions. We've been deliberately labeled against our will into a caste hierarchy, where we are all laborers and peasants, fighting for an iota of what our parents had. Middle managing our cubicle phone, in our small cubicle apartments, for an unfulfilling cubicle life. It's a war of attrition against our collective psyche. The news cycle runs too hot and too fast. Constant lies have sullied known truths. We are in a state of perpetual burnout, slaves to capitalism and comfort. The promise of individual wealth and status should not have replaced life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

We must remember what made us strong, why we could endure such sacrifice for a better future. Why we fought war. Why our forefathers were willing to die to uphold our American ideology. Somehow, some are still celebrating the unscrupulous conman, the bullies and the liars and the cheats. The opposite of what this nation was founded upon. The ones who could care less if you lived or died. It's something I just fail to understand, because at the end of the day, it's not the politicians or the billionaires strapping up for war. They might show off at gun ranges and for their cosplaying constituents, but they'll never have to watch a child gasp their last breath. They'll never have to stretch their souls and question their existence. That has and always will be bestowed upon **We the people**.

"History is filled with the sound of silken slippers going downstairs and wooden shoes coming up."

— Voltaire

As we tread deeper into this bastardized version of freedom, I plead with you to remember that our collective voice is more powerful than tyranny. It always has been.

—Peter Kistner / Jr. Sergeant
United States Army, Retired



I Am Made from the Raspberry that Ripens in the Fall
by Georgia Oakley

#1

I am made from the raspberry that ripens in fall
I am made from the strand of hair a bird weaves into its nest
I am made from the freckles of my mother
I am not a lone being, grown solely from my own thoughts and actions
How could I ever be?
When I am made from everyone and everything around me

#2

It is an ugly thing
That those we love age at a greater rate than we do
It would be a gift for my senses to dull
as hers do
so I don't have to see the way she declines before me
Hear her cries for my aid in something she used to do without a second thought
I wonder if the trees feel this way about humans?
Our relationship is likely more akin to that of a human and a gnat
human lives take up a mere speck of time compared to that of a tree
I am not offended
I understand
But I wish it were different
But I am just a gnat
A gnat forced to acknowledge the aging of their dog

#3

I met a man in the woods today
He handed me a sparrow
Soft as an angel in my hand
I observed its foot,
Silvered with the mark of the man
In the morning light shifting through the leaves
My friend and I watched and learned
We held these creatures smaller than our palms
So impossibly delicate,
Like children glee alit in our eyes
As we gazed upon the subjects of our adoration



by Maria Jockusch



by Violet Rizzo

my love is the color of tangerines
 not blue, not yellow, not even green
 i'll peel myself to share fruit,
 my love for you is never moot
 for you deserve to consume the best
 let me take care of all the rest!
 please commend me along the way
 please ingest me before decay
 fruit is best when they are sweet
 you make my love so complete
 to nurture, to feed, to embrace the sun,
 to enjoy and live life, full of puns.
 to share my life and enjoy sweet fruit
 to proclaim my love absolute!

the fruits of love
 by Kuan Lee

If she was a Poem

by Dani Joseph

If she was a poem
 she would be the one you read
 when the sky starts to spit and the windows rattle,
 the rhythmic noise a backing track to her beauty

She is the poem scribbled on a post-it
 a reminder that the world didn't end when you were 10
 that you should shake the nozzle a few times before removing it
 that dried lavender is prettier than the living thing

She's the poem reinforced with tape and mounting putty
 tight when the knuckles callus over, the hair thins out, the jaw inflates,
 each word written a finger, a leg, her mouth, her teeth
 pressed flushed to my skin, the blood of my nose, the sweat of her neck
 the string of saliva, the tears and the grime and grit of our love
 smeared across the paper for only us to see



by Maria Jockusch



Anguish

"Through life we live and experience many hardships and sometimes we are silenced by others or ourselves to keep going. There is no time or place to accept your feelings because it might show that you're "weak." So I want to show with this art work that people suffer and feel pain and that is completely normal and the act of silencing it is just cowardice."

— *Celine Callisto*

Ah, The American Dream

by *Gabriela Moreno*

There's a ticking clock in the back of my head.
Palestinian children dancing on a tiny screen,
a joy carved from the absence of bombs,
from the silence where their parents used to be.
My rent is due on the first.

There's a ticking clock in the back of my head.
The State now owns my body.
There's a ticking bomb in the back of my head.
Bombs carve craters where homes used to be.

There's a ticking clock in the back of my mind.
Your credit score dropped.
The food is poisoned.
Whales are attacking.
UFOs are real.

Tick.
Tock.
Banned.
Deported.
Stay and fight.

There's a ticking clock.
I'll be thirty next month.
What are my dreams made of?
How much do they cost?
The pursuit of dreams in the time of revolution—
a privilege, a myth, a distant mirage.

The clock. The clock.
It won't stop

100 executive orders.
The oceans are rising.
The world is burning.
The world is drowning.
The world is ending.
The clock keeps ticking.

There's a ticking clock.
They found water on the moon.
Flint still doesn't have clean water.

There's a ticking clock.
The missiles launched overnight.
My package is out for delivery.

There's a ticking clock.
Minimum wage won't cover rent.
A billionaire just bought another yacht.

There's a ticking clock.
The ocean swallowed a city.
The Met Gala theme is "apocalypse chic."

There's a ticking clock.
The polls open at 7 AM.
They've already decided the winner.

There's a ticking clock.
Bodies pile up at the border.
Stock prices hit an all-time high.

There's a ticking clock.
Health insurance won't cover anesthesia.
Drag bans.
Stock trades.

The world is unraveling.
Clock in.
Pay your bills.
Look busy.

The clock.
The clock.
The clock.



Sometimes the Sky Splits

by JayJay Conrad

Sometimes the sky splits open
at daybreak with birds erupting
like coal-blue thunder from threadbare trees,
a rorschach blotting black on pink on cream.

Inhale; a ventricle opening flush with new red blood;
color leaking into the pales, hard black borders fade.

The world brought to light
held in softgreen mountainhands
(i am Wordsworth witnessing sleepy-eyed london;
i am Rumi witnessing god)
gentle as midwives. Dew clung
close on spiders' motherstring intricacies:
(a web a welcome a warming each)
The universe reflected into itself
The universe strung together and quivering
(viviparous birth,
Concentric circles).

Hung like a halfseen star in wombwet dawn-dark
glimmers afterbirth we cannot wash our hands of.
I am born daily, too.

Dudley Pond
by Rebecca Stimpson



Fashion and Design

Cole Ackerman, founder of "Aksfab"



Mobile Mind

I've used this garment to display the control phones have over us and how detrimental it can be to our relationships and mental health.

I threaded wires throughout the piece to show how tangled and attached we have become with our phones, sacrificing passions, connections, and decision making for cheap, short term entertainment.

One of the wires latches directly from a phone to a caged heart, symbolizing how phones have locked themselves into our bodies and society, depleting us of our own blood and energy.

If you take anything away from this, it should be that your life and the connections within it are far more important than anything our phones feed us.



上个圣诞节
我看到家
用了
很多花
纸来包
礼物。

在上个圣诞节我看到家
用了 很多花纸来包礼物。
礼物以后我想用花纸做一
衣服。在那个时候天气非常
冷还没有做过一件羽绒外
套。所以我用碎花纸替羽
绒去填充。我也用一些毛
皮让他更温暖。完了这件
羽绒外套和裤子有一

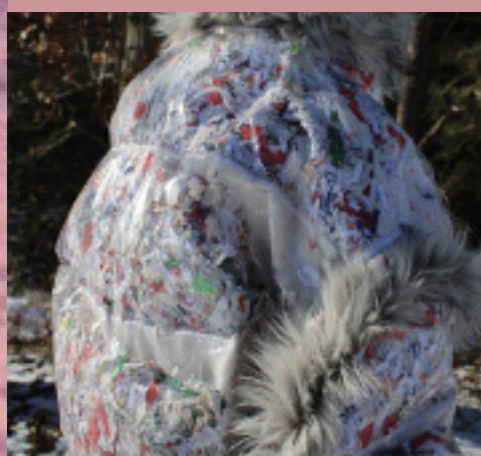
Last Christmas as I was watching
my family unwrap presents I asked
myself ... what are we gonna
do with all this wrapping paper?
Unfortunately it was all trash in
I thought to myself... how could
I repurpose all this wrapping paper.
My brain EDINKED! What if I shredded
the wrapping paper and used it to fill the inside of a puffer jacket!??

I had never attempted a puffer jacket before, so it was tricky and
mentally taxing. After MANY broken needles, unexpected setbacks, and
a broken sewing machine, I finished the jacket. Then I realized,
that a top like this needs a friendly pair of pants to
go with it.

My original design featured a hood, but as the pieces came
together I decided to leave the jacket without one to accentuate
the fur collar.

To elevate the piece above and beyond, I decided to
incorporate some faux fur into the garment because
I'd never worked with it before and thought it would add
some extra flare.

The BIGGEST learning from this project
is that if you maintain an open mind as to what
you can and cannot do, there's a million
ways of converting "waste" into
something with value and personal
connection.



Last Present

Let's imagine you're a tree. One day some people come along, chopping you and all of your friends down. Next, they turn you into paper and you sit in a store until someone takes you home to wrap their Xmas presents. The next morning, kids come down and tear into your skin, throwing you over their shoulders as if you were nothing. Watching my brothers deplete you of life on Xmas morning made me want to give you a new life. When the idea clicked, I gathered you and all of your friends that I could find, and delicately stuffed you into this creation. I promise to take care of you. I will bring you around the world with me, introduce you to people who will appreciate your beauty, and use you as an example of how to create sustainably.

Leopard Print Qi Pao

Medium: Leopard print cotton, army camo canvas

For those who aren't familiar, a Qi Pao is a traditional Chinese dress that is said to have been created in the Qing dynasty period and popularized during the 1920s in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Also known as a Cheongsam, the qi pao evolved over time. They're often worn to weddings, family photos, and special events. Lots of different qi paos exist for different areas + functions. mainly Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Beijing.



旗袍

qipao

- 1x front
- 1x back
- 2x panels
- 1x button front
- 1x collar



旗袍和长衫是一样的有名的中国衣服之一。在香港有些女士穿旗袍，特别在重要的机会。旗袍是独特的。每条旗袍是量身定制。



When I lived in Hong Kong, I often saw beautiful women wearing these vibrantly colored Qi Paos and felt as though creating one myself would pay tribute to the city and their unique clothing.



Qi Pao

This Qi Pao is a tribute to my grandma (Ah Por) and everything she has taught me. Ah Por is Malay Chinese and helped me learn to love my Asian heritage. I admire how she puts her head down and works around the clock, rarely complaining and staying humble about her achievements. I've implemented this hard working mindset into my own life, allowing me to work towards my goals in a long-term and consistent fashion. I created this form-fitting traditional Chinese dress that I often saw worn in Hong Kong with a striking leopard print fabric. It's presented on grass paper that I made that contrasts well with the fabric.





Selvedge Lamp

This lamp is a combination of leftover materials from previous projects, memories, and eras of my life. The base of any structure is vital as it serves as the foundation for the rest of creation. Therefore, I decided to use a ceramic vase to encase the lamp while providing stability. Upon the first lampshade hangs some trinkets. These unique additions contain personal memories and relationships. The second lampshade utilizes wires used in my "Mobile Mind" project, threading in and out of the fabric. The final lampshade is decorated with my mom's jewelry, wine corks, and flowers. When creating this last section I fused elements of nature and my closest companions, emphasizing the themes of love and evolution.



Leaf Legs

Fall. An impressively colorful layer of red, yellow, and brown leaves across my lawn. I layered leaves between a woven fabric and plastic vinyl, creating a protective barrier that would allow the leaves to be seen but also contained within the garment. I finished off the piece with some funky-shaped pockets and an adjustable waistband.



Aksfab's Origin

Interview by Brooke Richey & Dani Joseph

Cole Ackerman, the creative mind of Aksfab, lived in Hong Kong for 8 years before moving to Massachusetts a few years ago. The jarring differences in self-expression at his school in Hong Kong vs the US are a part of what inspired his craft and led him down the path of art and creativity.

In Hong Kong his school had uniforms—except for certain allotted non-uniform days. Ackerman told us that on those days the students would all put a lot of evident care and self-expression into their clothing. Everyone was unique and had a personal style that made them all the more lucid. He emphasized how he and his peers all felt that the ability to have that self-expression was important and its importance was felt in its fleetingness. He spoke of planning outfits the night before non-uniform days and putting creative effort into his self-expression. When he moved back to the US his high school no longer had uniforms, and he was disheartened to see that even though the students were allotted the freedom of self-expression through clothing every day, he was surrounded by a sea of gray lounge wear that dampened the uniqueness of the individuals. This lack of human expression inspired him to do more with his own clothes and eventually led to the piece that made him realize he could use his art to inspire others.



Some of Ackerman's earliest pieces

A pair of pants now looked like a blank canvas for Cole to add new life to. When he wore those pants to school the next day he was met with intrigue from his peers, and many asked him to make them a pair as well. This was how Cole's brand "Aksfab" was born and from there it has grown into an outlet of passion and creativity that represents who Cole is and inspires others to be who they are.



Two of his first commissioned pieces after he started wearing his designs to school

Ackerman's work is unique and unconventional; he uses unexpected materials and gives them a new purpose. The pieces he sells in his shop allow others to feel the striking humanness of individuality. Not all of his work is functional or wearable but it is always undeniably personal and almost feels like it lives and breathes.





Shifting by Zoe Anderson

It Is What It Is

by Dylan Burkett

As I stare at the glow of the coffee shop drive-thru sign above a static-filled speaker, contemplating my order. Overcome with the fiftieth bout of negative emotion from work-echoed screaming and flying papers. Giving into temptation I proceed to calmly open my car door, step out, and place my hands parallel grasping the perimeter of a glass and plastic sign depicting some nutrient-devoid, mass-produced, sugary pastry. I slam my head as hard as I can into it, shattering the glass into my, now, bloody temples.

I am startled into reality by the voice of some teenage girl, “Welcome. How can I help you, today?” I’m sitting in my car, not having actually gotten out. Just another intrusive thought that had overcome my data addled brain, I complete my transaction and drive away. I realized that there were more emotions there than I had previously thought. I think to myself “Stressed, tired, and lonely.”

It is what it is.

Repeating those acknowledgements of my feelings. Mindfulness has always been an ally. I sit repeating the feelings in my head until they lose their meaning and therefore their power over me. Mindfulness has kept me functioning when everyone else around me has slipped through the cracks and melted down. When a child is taken away from his mother, screaming and crying. “Fear, pain, sadness.” When he returns to her as a man, finding a drug-induced dementia-ridden husk of a woman who could not remember his name. “Anger, regret, loss.” When someone at work was not fast enough to do chest compressions to save someone else’s life. “Regret, Guilt, Anguish”.

It is what it is.

From the Greek stoics to the Buddhists of Tibet. “It is what it is” seems to be the philosophical oversimplification of the process that human minds have considered a necessary ability for containing overwhelming human emotion for thousands of years. Mindfulness. Mindfulness is an emotional glue that has held the jagged components of my feelings together one after another, allowing my human mind to process the impossible. To persevere through suffering and overcome. Mindfulness is an emotion-processing technique we must use at every chance, to not let our emotions consume us. So, I raise to you through dears, tears, and fears. To scream at the top of your lungs:

“It is what it is.”



Peruvian in Portugal
(inspired by Victor Delfino)
by Allyson Rodriguez

Circo della Luna by Nick Giancioppo

It pains me to admit that I cannot shed myself of the Circo della Luna. These days the memories are to me as dim stars in the night sky are to the naked eye. Look directly at them and they vanish, only to taunt and tease you in your periphery when you look away.

It had been the summer just following my graduation. I had attended a semi-prestigious university at which I studied the many societies and cultures of the world, and proudly attained a masters degree in Sociology. People had always been my greatest interest, particularly people from far away who didn't speak or look or live like me. I would ogle over travel magazines, knowing my family could never afford such trips, yet studying the images anyway and immersing my imagination in wordy descriptions of Indonesian clothing, the traditional music of Angola, or the dancers of Bolivia. I learned how to say 'hello' and 'thank you' and 'nice to meet you' in half a hundred languages by the time I reached my teenage years, and it came as no surprise to anyone when I excelled in my field. I always considered myself lucky, having found my calling at such a young age, and eagerly bounded from high school to college to what would become my career.

Yet, I now find myself more dissatisfied than ever before. I have achieved my dream of traveling the world. I have lived on nearly every continent and spent time in nearly every country. I have conversed with all sorts of people in their native tongues and partook in their ways of life. I have laughed and cried with people who were born thousands of miles from my own home and whom I will likely never meet again. I have tasted the world and all its splendors many times over and drank every flavor it has to offer. I truly am blessed for my experiences and am not blind to such facts.

Despite this, or perhaps precisely because of this, that insatiable itch that first planted itself onto my unconscious mind many years ago is now a feverish tremor that seems to guide my every step. It's a euphoric sort of ailing, though. One that brings back joyous memories of when I was young and the whole world was still so alien and fertile. Some days it takes hold of me so intensely that I forget to eat or sleep while I search through my old notes or tear through local libraries in search of information that does not seem to exist. When fatigue turns to exhaustion and my stomach begins to groan, however, it is the warm sensation of desire and purpose I feel bubbling within me. The world is so large and so beautiful, but when your career takes you to every hidden nook and cranny upon its surface, it can feel so small. Or maybe the circus is solely to blame for that. There is no way to know how my life would look today had I not stumbled upon that late summer festival.

It had occurred during my ventures down the western coast of Italy, a hotspot for Americans like

myself looking to dip their toes in travel, but not quite ready to stray 'off the beaten path' per se. For a 20-something year old man with a love for culture and an affection for wine, it was a dream made corporeal. I saved up my money for this 'expedition' through Europe all throughout my university days, and was well prepared. I went solo for this leg of my trip, planning to meet with some of my graduate friends once I completed my tour down the Mediterranean and doubled back up to Germany. It was important to me that I learn to do this sort of thing on my own. If I ever truly wished to immerse myself in foreign lands, I'd first need to let go of familiarity and embrace uncertainty. Besides, this part of Italy was largely built on tourism, so I knew the locals would be accommodating should I need some assistance.

I felt the historical weight of Rome, enjoyed the beauty and cuisine of Naples, and had just spent a somber, thought provoking afternoon in Pompeii when I decided to venture inland a ways to where the hills rolled lazily and farms littered the fields like a light-green quilt of patchwork. I had just settled my belongings in a quaint, little three-bedroom inn with pink stucco walls and a red shingled roof when hunger pangs got the best of me. I settled on a small diner where the food was fresh, and was in the midst of walking out when I eyed a flyer by the main entrance.

"Circo della Luna!" it read. Circus of the Moon.

I studied it curiously, admiring the detail with which it was made. Sketches of acrobatic feats and musical instruments lined the outer rim while the middle was an assortment of peculiarly drawn animals and equally peculiar men performing tricks. Between each image were specks of stars arranged in made-up constellations. Just behind the large text at the top was a rendering of the moon adorning a jester's belled cap. Struggling to translate some of the words in my head, I came to understand that this was a traveling show that had been all across the world, if it could be believed, and now it would be performing for just one night in this rural part of the countryside.

I thought that peculiar. Surely they would draw in a much larger crowd should they travel only a little ways to the west where the cities lined the sea. Even more confounding was the statement at the bottom of the page, 'free admission'. These reservations waned, however, and I realized how fortunate I was to accidentally happen upon something like this. Sure, this may not be the 'authentic Italian experience' I was on this trip for, but I had been looking for my next activity, after all. I had not planned to stay in this town for more than one night, but figured I could postpone my travels by a single day.

I left the diner and meandered my way back to the inn, enjoying the cooling air as the sun hung just above the horizon. Upon the way, I noticed that the flyers were strewn about the sidewalks at every turn, on walls

and signs and bulletin boards. How I had missed them earlier stumped me, though it seemed I was not alone in this befuddlement. Parents hunched forward reading the finer text inquisitively while their children tugged at their shirts pleadingly, and young couples smiled and gestured to the signs. The town seemed to be abuzz as more locals ventured out from their homes at the beckoning of neighbors, and crowds began to form about the signs.

"Circo della Luna?" I heard them saying.

"A circus?"

"Here?"

"How exciting!"

"How strange..."

By the time I reached the inn, the crowds had thinned and the sidewalks had all but emptied again. Only excited children remained, jumping up and down and shouting with their friends about "la Luna". I walked through the front entrance and smiled at the old lady who sat quietly at the front desk, tapping away at her bulky desktop computer.

"So there's going to be a circus? How exciting!" I managed in broken Italian.

"Circus?" she responded looking up at me unsurely. Dark bags hung beneath her eyes and her glasses gleamed in the screen's reflection.

"Yes, the circus. The one on the flyers."

"What flyers?"

"The flyers outside, they're all over the place!" I responded, trying to mask the confusion on my face with a grin.

She was less stoic, scrunching her brow and pushing herself back. She stood up, and with a hunched, awkward sort of gait stepped out from behind her desk and made for the door I had just entered.

"I haven't seen any flyers" she mumbled, sounding part intrigued and part annoyed. I made no effort to respond as she pushed open the front door and made her way down the front steps. When the door swung itself shut behind her, I turned and headed for my room. I fell asleep quickly once in bed, lulled to sleep by curious wonderment of the next night's festivities.

I woke early the next morning to a knock at the door and the smell of breakfast. The old lady entered without waiting for my response and placed a tray upon the night stand with some sort of omelet and a cup of yogurt beside it.

"It's true, the circus" she said with a toothy grin that was more gums than teeth.

"Y-yes" I responded groggily. "There were many signs."

"Oh, very many signs," she said. "All over the place. Who would've thought, a circus, right here, in this town? How wonderful!"

She turned and walked out the door, closing it gently behind her.

I rose and ate, then got myself ready. The finer details of that day elude me, naturally. Such mundane details disappear beneath the bright festival lights.

That night, droves of people shuffled down the street to the edge of town, where an enormous big-top tent had been erected some time before sunrise. Where the sidewalk and street lights came to an end, a thin dirt path wound along a hillside to the main entrance. The opening glowed so brightly that the way was well illuminated, and the gaps at the very top of the tent spewed forth rays of light that battled against the red-orange hues of the evening sky before fading. Red and white stripes spiraled down the tent's exterior, dotted with green stars of varying shapes and sizes. Pink bulbs circled the perimeter and painted its drapery with a warm light.

I stood at the back of the long line, looking over the heads of the locals at the entrance, trying to see what lay inside. By the time I was close enough to make out the rows of bleachers stuffed with excited families, and the well lit ring at the center of the tent, the sky had grown dark and the night cool. A very tall man stood just inside the entrance greeting the few stragglers ahead of me, welcoming them in and pointing them to what seats remained. He wore a velvet suit with black trimmings, and long black pants that tapered to a flowing point at the cuffs. His brown dress shoes were immaculately shined, and the white bowtie about his neck was like ivory. A tall black top hat sat rigidly on his head, with a red ribbon tied about it. At the front of the ribbon was a large medallion made to resemble the moon. His face was long and its features pointed, but he had a jovial grin lined with wrinkles.

"Salve," I said as I finally approached him.

"Greetings! My final guest, it seems!" he responded in English as he leaned forward on his cane.

In my shock I neglected to speak, responding only with a grin and a surprised chuckle.

"Oh, come now! You speak Italian well, but I have an ear for this sort of thing! You must if you should travel the world!"

He placed a gloved hand upon my shoulder and pointed the cane to an empty spot at the back of the bleachers. From my quick cursory glances, it seemed to me that it was the only empty spot in the whole arena.

"The best seat in the house, if you ask me!" he grinned. "Quickly now, the show is soon to begin!"

And with that, he bowed out the front entrance and veered off to one side, disappearing. I shuffled my way through the clamoring crowd of excited spectators, up the stairs to the eighth row, and tiptoed along to my seat. Only upon sitting down did I truly take stock of the tent's interior. It was grandiose, and even larger than it had appeared from outside. Two large wooden columns sat opposite one another, reaching to the top of the tent. High upon them were platforms, a taut cable wire spanning the gap. Rings hung from the wire that shone a brilliant gold. Bright lights were fixed upon the upper reaches of the columns, cascading down light that pooled at the center of the ring and bleached the bare dirt white. Neon stars lined the inside trim where the drapery of the walls met the roof and

hummed quietly.

Then the lights cut, and a drum roll began to play from speakers hidden away beneath the bleachers. I heard adults gasp and children squeal with anticipation. Just as suddenly, the flood lights atop the pillars came back to life, and all that could be seen in the sea of darkness were four distinct men wearing masks, standing atop podiums at the center of the arena. They faced away from each other, staring out at the audience and waving.

The first man had an enormously large upper torso. He was neither fat nor muscular, perfectly average in physique, instead appearing as if he had the chest of a giant but the legs of a normal man. He wore a mask made to resemble a clown, and wore a shiny outfit of wild colors and designs to match.

The next man, who faced me, was no larger than a child, three feet tall, perhaps, though nearly as wide around. He looked like a sphere of purple and green motley with small hands and feet sprouting out from its surface. His mask was the simplest of them all. It looked like a dinner plate, but bore three equally-sized dark circles upon it. Two where the eyes would be, and the final was meant to be a mouth, so it looked as if the man were perpetually surprised.

The third man was grotesquely tall and lanky. I assumed he must have been wearing stilts as he towered over the other men, likely eight to nine feet in height. His arms, however, were long enough to reach his knees, and they moved about as fluidly and precisely as any other person's arms would, as did his hands. He wore a dark blue body suit that covered him from his neck to his feet, speckled with white stars. Atop his head was a white cube, each side bearing a crudely painted eye, uneven and squiggly as if drawn by the sloppy hand of a child. One eye was blue, then the next was orange, then purple, then green.

Upon the final podium roosted the man in the velvet coat who had welcomed me in at the entrance, though now he wore a white mask, detailed with craters like the moon's.

The drum roll continued for a time while they waved, until all the lights came back on and the crowd became visible again. All watched on, slack jawed and wide eyed, leering at these unusual performers. Some children were on their feet and staring with wonder, while others hid behind their parents' backs and dared only to peep over their shoulders. The music suddenly burst out in a brass cacophony, and the performers leapt from their podiums.

Lights flashed and costumes gleamed, and the three men of wildly disproportionate frames performed acts of acrobatics and feats of strength one might describe as inhuman. The man in velvet commentated with a frantic energy that captivated the onlookers, speaking of the "Lunar Men" and their prowess. At one point, the small man rolled across the tightrope wire as effortlessly as a wheel rolls downhill. The clown hung from the brass rings and performed a routine that would put

Olympic gymnasts to shame. The tall man contorted his body at extreme angles, bending this way and that way, crawling up and down the columns like a spider.

"Look at him go! Stronger than an ape!"

"More insect than human!"

"What a sight, wouldn't you say?"

"All in a day's work for a Lunar Man!"

The audience whooped and cheered and clapped whenever the performers pulled off a new unbelievable stunt. Even the children who had hidden away had scrambled onto their parents' shoulders, laughing and pointing.

One of the Lunar-Men, the one dressed in a clown suit, picked up the smallest member, scurried to the far side of the arena, and tossed him to the tallest. The other Lunar Man jumped to catch him, and returned it with a pass of their own. This game continued for a long while, tossing the small man as they ran in circles, climbed the pillars, and continued in acts of acrobatics all the while. The small man hooted and hollered, causing the townsfolk to crack out in laughter.

I cannot say how long this continued, but eventually all four men reconvened upon the podiums, and the man in velvet with the moon-shaped mask spoke once more.

"You have seen the wonderful Lunar Men in action, ladies and gentlemen, but now, we present to you another wonder of the Moon. Up amongst the stars, things grow a little different than here on Earth. Bring out the Lunar Beasts!"

With that, the tent wall between a set of bleachers began to rustle and unfurl, revealing an entrance that had not been there before. The tent flaps caught upon something as it shuffled its way through, and then it came into view. It was long and serpentine, sporting a snake's head to match, but the similarities ended there. Instead of scales it was coated in golden feathers that puffed up and laid flat with the rhythm of the music. Along its long body were countless legs that ended in hooves and stepped with a synchronicity that made the beast seem as if it were floating through the air. Scurrying between its legs in a game of chase were the 'mice', though they were a dull orange and ran bipedal on chicken's feet. Behind the 'snake' came a pack of yapping 'dogs', whose hides were coated in dark green scales like a fish, and they licked at each other with the tongues of frogs. A large 'ostrich' bounded close behind, hopping along on a single leg as thick as a tree trunk, with a giraffe's neck and the head of a house cat. They marched along in an otherworldly precession; A display of the most profound, unearthly wonders.

I believe this is when I began to feel that itch. I was enthralled and puzzled, undoubtedly, by the Lunar Men and their absurd shenanigans, but these creatures could not be faked, and were wholly unnatural. There came the 'elk' with antlers of wood and leaf, the 'fish' that flew with four pairs of wings, the man-sized 'armadillo' that unrolled itself to reveal an enormous snail whose gelatinous body strobed different colors. They entered,

looped around the Lunar Men dancing upon their podiums, and exited the same way they had come, all in a steady, uniform succession.

The whole crowd, myself included, sat in a collective silence, mouths agape. No one stirred when a thousand see-through 'crabs' flooded out from the entrance and scuttled up and down the performers' legs, or when the 'hippo' covered head to toe in long locks of shaggy brown hair snorted and brayed, or even when the enormous mass of tentacles and horns dragged itself along the arena's edge. A hundred other 'Lunar Beasts' flowed before us, the man in velvet naming each one in some strange tongue I could not place. He spoke of the habitats they came from, describing impossible, alien ecosystems of glass trees and acid geysers and oceans that oozed.

"These are the creatures of the moon, ladies and gentlemen! Creatures from afar! Where strange men live and savage beasts prowl! Oho, do not fret! They are all well fed and thoroughly trained!"

When the last beast crawled back through the flap in the tent and only the Lunar Men remained, the music faded to silence, and the man in velvet spoke in a softer, calmer tone than before. He apologized, informing us that the show had come to its conclusion, and hoped that we had enjoyed the Circo della Luna. Then he stepped down from his podium, wished us all a pleasant night, and began to usher the audience out row-by-row. The stupefied crowd followed his instructions, though clumsily, making their way out the main entrance and continuing down the dirt path back to their homes. I'm not sure if it was the creatures, or the Lunar Men, or the simple abruptness with which the show had ended, but no one stopped to talk to the man in velvet or converse with their peers. It's as if it all were too much for their minds to digest all at once, and while their brains turned and toiled to make sense of it, they could do little more than follow the man's instructions.

As I was the last one in, I, too, was the last to leave. Just as I was about to make my equally obedient exit, the kiss of the cold air upon my face woke me from my stupor, and I swung around to the man. He had since removed his mask, and his sharp features seemed to soften as I met his eyes. I began to stammer, trying to find the words that jumbled about upon my rigid tongue.

"What... whe- where..."

"I told you," he said, leaning his torso out of the tent and raising a finger to the night sky. "The moon!"

I followed his finger and gazed upon the full moon, its silver glow reflecting off the tops of clouds and outlining the roofs of the village. I stared, lost.

"But- But how? That doesn't-" I stammered, eyes still affixed on the sky.

"Oh, don't take it so literally!" he guffawed, laying his hand upon my shoulder for the second time that night. "Not just the moon. The stars, too, and the thousands of worlds just like yours!" He waved his cane

across the horizon and the stars seemed to twinkle and dance as it passed them by. "You have to simplify things a bit, or else people will have a hard time believing it."

He patted my back, leaned back into the tent, and drew the flaps shut. My mind slipped back into that haze, and I stumbled down the path and back to the town's edge, spotting no one and accompanied by only silence as I walked the streets to the inn. I cannot remember much beyond that. I know I must have slept, and must have packed my things the next morning and caught a ride back to the coast. In truth, the rest of my trip is marked by a pervasive fog, and I have little recollection of the time I spent with friends and future colleagues as we bar-hopped through Germany and dined in France. The fugue wore off eventually once I was home and enough time had passed to begin convincing myself it was not real. I spoke of it to no one, chalking it up to a dream born of some nasty fever. Yes, that was all it was. It is wonderful and terrifying what the mind can do to deceive itself.

—

Those efforts were in vain, it would seem. A handful of years ago, decades since that night, I found myself in the same region of Italy where my world had turned upside down and those long suppressed memories took shape again. It was real, truly. I know this now, for I could not fight the urge to return to that little village tucked away in the rolling fields. It is far larger than it had been, more a city than a village, and its borders extend far beyond the field where the tent had been. It took a long time, and lots of humiliation, but eventually I met with a man who claimed to remember the Circo della Luna. He had been a boy when it happened, and as such his memory was even shoddier than my own, but he talked of the golden serpent with a hundred legs, and the 'fifteen foot-tall man' as he described him. I was careful not to lead him on with my questions to ensure the authenticity of his answers, and I was left speechless when he finished his recounting. He had lived on the edge of town, and claimed that just before he had fallen asleep the night of the circus, he awoke to strange lights flashing through his window. Suddenly released from his own foggy disposition, he ran to his window. He says he got there just in time to see the tent lift off the ground, and take to the sky as if lifted by a mighty gust. His house was silent, however, and the tall grass beyond his window was still.

Now, when the night falls and the sky is clear, I look to the moon and feel an itch within. An itch to learn more about those strange men and their homes. An itch to live amongst them, and gaze upon their forests of glass and viscous seas. To learn what they eat, and hear how they laugh. To behold their art and experience their cultures. To understand them.

And if I cannot do all that, then perhaps it would be enough just to see, once more, *the Circo della Luna*.



Italian Street in Summer
by Martina Gianotti

It's in Her Sway

Alyssa of DawnStudios

*The beauty
that is found in
the sway of the
body.*



*The purity
within lines
that dance can
bring.*





by Violet Rizzo

The only time he felt peace
was when his pockets were empty.
Smoke made the air dull –
that's the way he likes it.
Some feared nothingness
but he invited it –
paper that tapes together false men,
love a dull lighter
that ignites a stale cigarette,
that keeps you warm.
Integrity is placed on red
and even numbers,
a spinning perception
with faulty combinations
of how you perceive others to perceive you,
a prodigious risk never to be satisfied.
Gold has lost its luster
as the diamonds their sparkle.
All the houses money
on one hand...
but he folded and left that place
to somewhere where you can't lose or win
nothing to spin
forever for eternity.
What cannot be seen in that hour
is more than a lifetime of wooden nickels –
paradise.

The Gambler That Never Won

by Patrick Langdon



"I sketched this on a scrap of paper while sitting in an antique bookstore waiting for my shift to end. I randomly gave it to my boyfriend that same evening and it now lives crinkled in his jacket pocket. A cozy reminder of our first months together."

– Brooke Richey

The Girl in Flames by Annabelle Foster

I was nine when I first met him. He was cold and standoffish. The dirt trapped under his talons, soon to be my flesh.

He came to me with a sword-like tongue, bitter and sharp and wanting more.

I call him the dragon.
So it seems as storybook as possible.

He only ever came to me in my sleep, or so he thought.

His claws crawled over me with no intention of returning the heartbeat I had to disguise under my skin.

Breathe *in*
Breathe *out*

The bones of my thighs shift into cutting boards so the meat of my childhood can be cut up and swallowed whole.

When I look down at my legs now I am left to wonder which scars were drawn from my hand or from his.

I keep my emotions sheathed so as to not reopen old wounds.

Today the dragon's scales can still be found folded in my bed sheets.

As they shimmer, I see the reflection of a girl who just wanted a dad.



Speculative Evolutions

by Isabella Laird



Desert Hedgehog

(1) *Herbiporis*: As plant life began to recover, all large to medium sized herbivores had gone extinct, leaving an abundant amount of food for smaller animals. Some Desert Hedgehogs began to shift towards being entirely herbivorous, and increased in size. Their feet became more adapted for walking, and they grew longer snouts to better rip up plants. Their cycles shifted to be diurnal instead, as being nocturnal no longer proved effective for their lifestyle.

(3) *Calailis*: With larger herbivores booming in population size, competition was anew. There simply weren't enough plants for each herbivore, so some herbivores switched back to their old roots. As they had a common omnivorous ancestor, much of their digestive system was still capable of processing meat. These evolutions grew longer limbs to help them with running, and their quills shrunk, taking on a different purpose. Quills became associated with stronger males (partially true: males would need to hunt for more to keep up quill production) which drove sexual selection.

(2) *Dendrohedges*: The more basal hedgehog groups; keep a body plan similar to that of their ancestor. As bamboo forests begin to sprout up around the world, few animals exploit the open niche. The bamboo is not easy to process, and difficult to navigate for larger creatures. This groups fingers become better at grabbing to allow them to climb onto the bamboo stalks, and their tails increase in size for balance. This group also retains their nocturnal lifestyle.

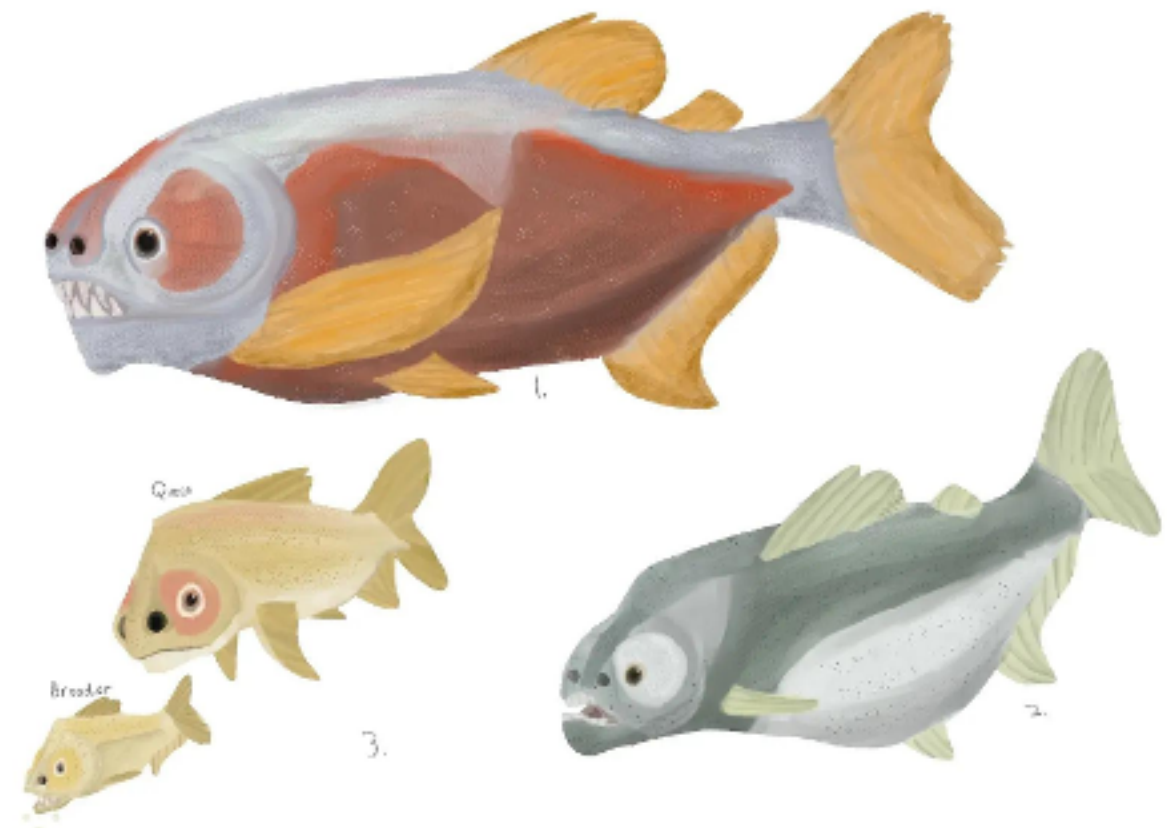
(4.) *Terrapores*: One of the key reasons that hedgehogs survived the initial extinction event is their ability to burrow underground. Some hedgehogs never leave this niche even after conditions improve above ground. This group develops long claws to help them burrow underground, and long snouts to eat both plant matter and small organisms. They remain nocturnal, and their eyes decrease in size. Their sense of smell becomes their main sense.

Red-Bellied Piranha

(1) *Gigapirae*- With nothing to stop them, Piranhas began to grow larger and more aggressive. They also kept their schooling behavior, and would hunt in packs of 6-12 individuals. These large piranhas managed to prevent crocodiles from spreading into the southern parts of Neo-Gondwana, as they dominated the aquatic waterways. These piranhas can vary in size, with some being as small as their ancestors and others reaching up to 150 pounds.

(2) *Denipirae*- As meat became more competitive, these groups moved into more still bodies of water, and began to eat the sea grass and other plants that grew there. With no terrestrial organisms competing with them for these plants, they also managed to grow quite large, reaching up to 200 pounds. As they got larger though, they lost their schooling behavior, as individuals began to compete over space, and their size proved to be effective enough as a predator deterrent.

(3) *Eusocipirae*- The third group ended up evolving an unexpected adaptation, eusociality. As the genetic diversity went down, it became more advantageous for schooling piranha to protect related individuals. As time went on, this led to a eusocial lifestyle, where there was a queen piranha who was the primary producer of eggs. Other castes evolved, such as the Brooder caste, which uses mouthbrooding to protect the queens eggs. Though any female is capable of producing, these fish are able to smell distinct markers on eggs to identify if they are the queens or not. Those who are not made by the queen will be eaten.





Dwarf Crocodiles

(1) *Savapredes*: When plant life initially took a hit, Dwarf Crocodiles had to rely on meat. Yet, most of their usual aquatic prey had been killed in the asteroid impact. Some Dwarf Crocodiles were forced to become more terrestrial due to this. Overtime, they began to stand up to better see across the savanna, and their gait shifted to a bipedal one. They're capable of running quite fast with this new bipedal gait.

(2) *Pastoriscrocidia*: As plant life did recover though, some crocodiles chose to focus on the much easier food source. Their teeth became flat, and bellies larger to better process plants. Their pupils also changed, as they began to be hunted by the various predators that were evolving. This group also was noted as exhibiting more social behaviors, as herd behavior started to become their main protection against predators.

(3) *Arenleuis*: The desert is a large part of Africa, and a population of Dwarf Crocodiles ended up wandering there. The abundant hedgehog population in this region proved good prey, but the scorching heat was difficult for the crocodiles to adapt to. They began to rely on burrowing more, and their colors changed to match the desert sand. They are shorter to the ground and have a more streamlined body, with less scales on their back. Unlike *Savapredes*, this group are ambush predators.



"The Bush Frog"

Ancestor: Vietnamese Mossy Frogs

Size: 10-15 pounds, 2-3 feet tall

Habitat: Ecotone

Diet: Carnivorous, it will eat insects, small mammals, or anything else it can fit into its mouth. It will grapple animals with its tongue and use their mouth and teeth to crush them.

Adaptations: Bush Frogs have grown to be much larger and live on the ground, becoming a dominant predator of Ecotone and Rainforest biomes. Bush Frogs will lie still for long periods, and when not moving, they blend into their environment as looking like bushes. This is accomplished both by the leafy like texture on them, and the sail of their back (which also helps the frog not to dry up as fast by warding off heat). The only time of prolonged activity for Bush Frogs is during mating season, where males and females will travel to rivers and streams to mate. Young will be deposited in these water sources, and after it ends, the adults will return to their solitary, slow lifestyle.

"The Sandy Nightjar"

Ancestor: Common Paraque

Size: 2-5 ounces, 8-10 inches in length

Habitat: Beaches

Diet: Sandy Nightjars will use their long beaks to scavenge for Beach Crickets and Horned Ghost Crabs, often being able to swallow multiple at once when it unhinges its mouth.

Adaptations: Common Paraques have overtime adapted to living on beach environments, which was likely caused by a group of them following the Beach Crickets out of the rainforest. They have evolved a longer neck and beak for plucking out creatures from the sand, and their legs have gotten longer as well to support their wading/walking lifestyle. Their tail feathers have expanded for sexual display, and their wings have gotten bigger to allow for more flight. Despite all these changes, they are still considered Nightjars due to still having many of the Nightjar traits. As they are primarily insectivorous (with sometimes eating crustaceans), they are crepuscular and arguably nocturnal, with some blurring between the two. Either way, Sandy Nightjars are most active when insects are most active. Although they spend a great deal of time foraging on the beach, when the tides come in, they will wade out to search for small animals blown out by the tides. One of the key features they adapt to avoid predation is moving together in groups of waders, and puffing up their feathers to look larger when encountering anything.



by Allison Cameron



Clementines for Edna
by JayJay Conrad

There are so many sounds on this gray day, calling
The low-velvet growl rising
In my dog's throat to awareness:
Car doors slam, groceries
Are brought in small trips, the people
Move like watercolor smudges;
Chickens, to the left and out of character, tap
Their beaks and ruffle, exclaim
At cloud and ground with equal
Enormity; through the wall another
Life sounds out its cadence over
Television drones; what all is said? And
How? Delivery van backs up, breaks
Chirruping like windup birds.

I stand
In the kitchen, barefoot and leaning, plunge
My nails into sticky fruit; peel an orange; a slice
for me and one for
the wet-eyed velvet hound at my feet licking
Droopy lips & trusting
My benevolence.
Is this how Gods feel? Humbled
By the duty of care?

For five years I've yielded
To candid chaos patterns, wept mightily
into the fur of a beast whose language
I do not speak, but whose being is
Inextricable from mine.
"Who does that?" The paws twitch
As I dab blood from january-chapped
Dogflesh, &
Somewhere In this red barreled
chest bays
A wolf with bared fangs, jowls
Dipped proud into carcass meat,
remnants
Of jugular gnashed and consumed
As a matter of course, & this beast, this
Hard-and-soft beast, rolls
Towards me in the night, will refuse
to sleep without her body turned
Into the space between
My knees, hand on her haunches.

What a strange
& necessary dependence, this:
In a world where bombs are dropped
On children, I peel an orange
For my dog.

Another Number by Yume Shapiro



Another Number is a piece based
off the 5th verse from the poem
Sweet Daddy by Patricia Smith

"But hey, here's to just another number.
To a man who wrote poems on the back
of cocktail napkins and brought them home
to his daughter who'd written her rhymes
under blankets.
Here's to a strain on the caseload.
Here's to the fat bullet
that left its warm chamber
to find you.
Here's to the miracles
that spilled from your head
and melted into the air
like jazz."



Aerial Photography *by Julio Aguilar*

Perfect Day

This was my first flight near the Longfellow Bridge in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I always travel with a drone—just in case a good photo opportunity presents itself. I waited patiently for a Duck Boat to enter the frame before snapping this image. It was unusually quiet along the Charles River that day, minus a little wind. Every time I look at this image I can remember how perfect this day was.

Aerial Serenity (next page)

As a full-time drone pilot, I frequently travel with at least one drone. On this occasion, I was flying over the Wells Reserve in Ogunquit, Maine when I panned down and saw the turquoise water crashing over a rock formation. The photo represents the organized chaos, beauty, and serenity of the ocean. Many believe that the southern states and Caribbean are the only areas to see crisp, clear, and blue waters, but as I explore the coastal areas of Massachusetts and Maine, nothing could be further from the truth. I hope that this image allows viewers to disconnect from the "hustle and bustle" of everyday life and enable them to hear the sounds of the crashing waves within the image.





Crane Sunrise

This image was taken over the estuary of Crane Beach in Ipswich, Massachusetts. This was a serene moment where the sun rose over the horizon and began warming the marsh. It should remind viewers that the earth does not belong to us, we are just stewards of it.



Dedication

I often fly the Charles River, especially late winter and early spring. Right around sunrise you can see the dedication and commitment by rowers and rowing teams as they train on the Charles. This particular rower was the only one present on the Charles on this morning. I flew and watched as this rower circled the Charles, at least, 3 or 4 times in the span of an hour without resting. I was inspired by the dedication that this rower had in perfecting their form.



by Violet Rizzo

Summer Without Goodbye

by Hermione Marcelus

1. Summer Without Goodbye

No schoolbags this year.
No uniforms waiting at the tailor.
Just silence.
And one plane ticket,
folded like a secret.

The house buzzed, but not with joy.
I packed my childhood
into a suitcase
and left summer behind
without a goodbye.

2. Foreign Skies, Familiar Silence

New York air tasted like cold concrete.
My father hugged me with stiff arms.
My brother stayed.
I flew again.

Massachusetts for a moment.
Then Florida.

The guest room was warm,
but I stayed cold.
The words around me
moved too fast.
My tongue couldn't keep up.
I didn't know how to be
in a language that didn't know me.

He Cometh
by Leo Fitzwilliam

Did it hurt
When you fell from the edge
Of Paradise, to grace us
With your presence?
Does the crushing weight
Of this mortal coil
Bear too greatly upon
Your perfect
Posture,
Your regal bearing?
Do these four walls
Limit your true power,
Just as the mighty Labyrinth
Protected humanity from the Minotaur?

Shall I fetcheth thee a silver platter
To catch your genius as it spills forth
From your cherub lips,
So that it may be partaken of
By the meek
And humble plebeians
Of this digital realm?

O, to be
The lowly fly
Mounted high upon
Your glass ceiling,
Beholding
The masterful craftsmanship
Taking place from your perch.
The crane of your neck
Only wishes it could fly this free,
As gracefully as your dexterous digits
Glide across the mechanical keys.

I'm overreacting?
No, this is what you wanted, see? A battle
Of wits, a
Debate, if you will,
As you gloat from high atop your
Ivory Tower,
Armed to the teeth so that you may
Masticate
And expectorate
Every warrior who dares
Cross swords with you.

Or, perhaps, you wanted
A quick draw,
A one-off victory.
Here's the thing about that:
When you shoot from the hip,
You're liable to hit
Things you didn't even know were there.
Because the fact that you can't see
Past the tip of your own nose,
Justifies
How you shouldn't be packing so much heat.

And over what,
A spelling mistake?
Let me spell it out for you:
Nobody cares,
Least of all me.
I am merely the mirror
For you,
O Lord.



by Rose Ciprano

A black and white cat is sitting on a white shag rug. The cat has a white face with black markings on its ears and around its eyes. It has green eyes and is looking towards the camera. The background is a soft, textured white rug.

The Cat vs the Shower

by Davy

She is so stupid
Every day I watch her get trapped in there
Good thing she has me
I will get her out
I always get her out
I did not realize I had powers until the first time I rescued her
I cry my song and the water stops
Sometimes it takes longer than others
Sometimes she looks at me and smiles
No need to put on a brave face for me
She is so stupid
One day I will find a way to get rid of it
But for now I guess I will just follow her around so I'm there if she needs saving again
What would she do without me?
She is so stupid

Sunlit Pearl
Vivian Chaghlasian

The Colmery Logbook

by Nick Giancioppo

A quaint little thing from afar, the distasteful malignance of Colmery Island becomes plain by the time one moors their row boat upon its dingy pier. Like a knife thrust through the heart of the Atlantic, sharp and slanting to one side, the shoreline is beset by red algae that bobs up and down with the tide.

Split-edged stony outcroppings populate the sparse brown-green grass in place of trees, gleaming wet in the sun, sharp and shiny as honed steel. Slickened by sea mist and seasonal showers, the moss-coated staircase carved haphazardly into the vertical crag that looms over the dock seems almost desperate to kill the man who steps too carelessly upon its rugged visage.

The state of the lighthouse itself and the living quarters attached to its side are, unfortunately, befitting Colmery Island. Upon the highest peak of the promontory, more like a shed with an enormously bloated chimney, it sits lamely. Once it was white, evidently, but now large patches of paint have peeled away exposing dark green membranes of mold hugging dark brown wood. There is one small window at the far left, dark and opaque, and the door is made of a copper-toned metal which moans loudly in its frame when confronted with every ocean breeze. Within it is a single, claustrophobic room choked with food rations, a table with an old lantern and no chairs, cupboards, a yellowing bed nearly half the size of the room, and a deep coating of dust. On the far-right wall is a doorway, bereft of a door, which leads into the tower.

The tower, too, is white on its outer walls, but the paint has not faded from the masonry like it has the wood. The base of the tower is thicker than the living quarters, though it quickly narrows as it rises. It must be only twenty-five to thirty feet high yet becomes uncomfortably tight at its uppermost reaches. A black metal cage lined with round panes of glass crowns the very top, within which the light itself is roosted. Inside the lighthouse, a hefty column of brick stands erect at the center, around which slithers the rusty spiral staircase, coiling up around the tower's spine until it meets the small, grate-like metal platform just beneath the light.

It was up on this platform, while repairing a broken pane of glass, upon the base of the light, that I stumbled upon the logbook. A small thing, it was easily filled front to back with the unsteady, at times, nearly illegible scribbles of its previous possessor. Curiously, pages were torn out seemingly at random and some words were crossed out so violently the ink bled through to the next page. The words that remained and the things I read this past night have come to haunt me, and so I shall chronicle it here before I make haste to leave this island come sunrise. Neither this notebook, nor any other artifact from this place, shall

be accompanying me home, so I will spend these last remaining hours of dark to transcribe, to my best accuracy, the writings of the unnamed lightkeeper. I do not believe I will be finding any sleep this night.

April 21st, 1839

Let this entry mark the first day of my work here upon Colmery Island. I, the new lightkeeper, shall maintain the structural integrity and functionality of the Colmery Lighthouse and log my work within the pages of this notebook to assure I receive fair compensation for my labors.

It is here upon this jagged-rocked protrusion, somehow deemed worthy of the title of 'island', where I shall alone preside over the next twenty-eight days and nights. The tower is unshapely, but at least seems wholly sturdy and trustworthy. The living quarters leave much to be desired. I cannot help but sneeze with every step as the dust beneath my foot takes to the air, and the house groans and creaks without abatement. I tried to sleep this afternoon in preparation for my first night's duties and my new nocturnal lifestyle, but it seems nigh impossible to find rest in such a foul place. Were it not for those depending on me ashore, I would never debase myself to an employment such as this. These trying times, however, have called for continuous debasement and self-subjugation. My first night of upkeep went smoothly enough. The rusty crank which turns the light fought hard at first but eventually gave way, and one of the many oil canisters began to leak, but it is no matter. The novellas I brought along were pleasant company as I waited to refill the light's oil reserves or turn the crank again, and as I finish this log, my eyes grow heavy with fatigue. I hope to find sleep more easily than yesterday.

April 22nd, 1839

Sleep came, though fitfully. I woke often to the strange noises of the house and its rotting, rattling walls. Being midday, light snuck its way through the small holes in the ceiling, wriggling slowly across my body and face as the sun turned in the sky. It was the dust, though, which truly plagued me. Teary-eyed and wheezing, I woke in fits of sneezes that made my lungs and nose raw. It was shortly before sunset when I cursed the stiff bed I slept upon and begrudgingly rose. The first thing I did was eat, then make use of the final hour of sun to attend the outhouse, before I set to work preparing the light. While outside, it occurred to me that I had not seen a seabird upon the island or soaring in the cloudy sky since I had arrived. This struck me as peculiar, but I do not have much experience with these matters, so I figure it must be ordinary.

The next thing I did was search the cupboards for a broom for the dust. I found a small dustpan and brush

instead and set to work. My nose and throat blazed with agitation by the time I had finished, but the sun was down, and in the flickering light of the lantern, I could see the floorboards for the first time. From that point forward things progressed much the same as the previous night. I lit the Light, turned the crank, and replenished the oil as frequently as needed, finding solace from unrest in the pages of a book. I see the orange hints of sunrise on the horizon. I shall be retiring to bed.

April 23rd, 1839

Sleep came more steadily at first. As it grew later in the day, however, the house began to creak and moan much louder and more frequently than before. In my half-asleep mind, I assumed some shift in the weather had simply given rise to stronger than usual winds and tried to ignore it. The noises began to creep into the world of my dreams, though, and I envisioned angry gales flattening my hovel and carrying me out to sea. While falling beneath the waves and gazing up helplessly as the lighthouse sprang to life, I woke with a start to a particularly loud roar and leapt to my feet, heart racing. Dead silence and stark darkness greeted me, and for the most fleeting of moments, there was a presence about me. Unplaceable, unrecognizable in any way. My balance went sideways. I fell back onto the feather mattress, then began fearfully fumbling about the table which I had pulled beside my bed the previous night. Eventually, my shaking hands caught purchase of the lantern and set to lighting it. By the time the oily wick caught fire, and the room became corporeal in the wavering flame, my heart had mostly settled, and that sensation had ceased. I ventured to the door to see what sort of weather had borne such a cacophony and woken me so unceremoniously.

When I stepped outside, bare feet gingerly kissing cold stone, I once again felt a strange rise in my chest. The night was cool, and utterly calm. Suddenly I felt dizzy and sat on the step just before the door, resting the lantern at my side. I looked up to see if I could discern any clouds, but instead was met with a bare sky speckled with stars. I envisioned a dark ocean filled with lighthouses peering down at me. I rose to my feet, grabbed the lantern, and headed inside to begin my shift.

April 24th, 1839

I believe it was a mistake to take this job. I do not have what it takes, it seems, to live this sort of hermit lifestyle. My mind is playing tricks on itself, and I have no better explanation than isolation. It has not been long, but this island has a way of making each day feel a century. I long for the mainland with its trees and comradeship.

Perhaps I could have blamed exhaustion for these happenings, but last night was the deepest sleep I have had in ages. I did not stir once, nor did I dream. It was bliss compared to the previous nights, but what I awoke

to was a sort of nightmare, blanketed in the reddish hues of the setting sun.

The house is drowning in dust, again. I am not sure how this could have happened over the course of a single night, but it has. That is an oddity in its own right and a point of great frustration, but it is the footprints that worry me most. Footprints, my footprints, exactly shaped and sized as my feet, mark a trail in the dust across the floor and into the tower. There they vanish, as the brick floor of the tower nurtures not a speck of dust. It seems that I have begun to sleepwalk, and thoughtlessly meandered my way to the tower. I have never been afflicted with bouts of sleepwalk before, but I have heard tales, and this sounds undeniably similar. What I cannot shake from my anxious thought, though, is that the trail goes only one way.

How could I leave a trail one way, yet wake in my bed? My soles were caked in dust so I know it must have been me, and no one else is staying on this island. I suppose with great care it is possible to tiptoe through the prints I had already left behind, but the awkward, shambling gait of my trail tells me I had not been particularly steady on my feet. How then?

I hugged closely to the wall and crept across the room to the tower entrance. When I walked through, I scrutinized every step of the staircase to see if I could further puzzle out my journey, but to no avail. Nothing seemed any different than it had previously, even at the top of the stairs where I figured I must have gone. A frightening thought, that I had ascended and descended this shoddy staircase while asleep.

I write this now from the top of the tower. I have seen to my duties this night, and now as the sun rises, I feel a strange sense of comfort here, away from the dust and the trail and the creaking wood. I have set out an old shirt upon the ground to sleep on, so I am not directly atop cold metal, though it does little in the way of comfort. I know I will have to return to the living quarters again soon, but for now, I think I shall sleep better by the Light.

April 25th, 1839

Wrong. Things are wrong. So very wrong.

April 26th, 1839

I awoke yesterday atop the lighthouse as was expected. There was no trail or sign of my having traveled in my sleep. Despite the sunlight flooding the top of the tower through the glass, I again slept without interruption. It was only after my awakening that things had become disconcerting. Wrong.

I could not descend the spiral staircase. I could walk down, step-by-step, counting each step as I went, but never would I descend. With every step counted, it was always the same number of steps to return to the top. Eight steps. That was the number of REAL steps I could take. The point where the platform with the Light disappeared behind the brick pillar. Every step

that followed was a fool's errand. As soon as I turned and ventured back up, I was on the seventh, then sixth, then fifth step until in a moment I was back upon the platform staring face to face with the Light. Panic took over, understandably, and for nearly three hours, judging by the sun, I sprinted down the staircase, circling around and around until I got dizzy and began tripping and stumbling, never ceasing. My feet and shins bled from the impacts, and my hands became blistered from wildly grabbing at the railing. Each brick upon the pillar became familiar to me. It seemed, in my delirium, that they laughed at me as I marked them one by one, desperately hoping to see a brick I had not yet met. The sun was setting, and what little illumination I had from just behind the pillar dwindled rapidly. Only once all was black and I could no longer see the steps beneath my feet or mark the bricks did a hopeless apathy consume me. At that moment I sank down and sat upon the eighth stair, but no sooner did the Light hum to life.

I jumped back to my bloodied feet and balanced myself between railing and pillar. I stood frozen, back to the Light, staring down the way I had so desperately and fruitlessly fled. A dark, blackish water sloshed and lapped at my toes. The blurry mirage of the staircase below disappeared beneath the water and spiraled away into the abyss. I was too confounded and tired to truly appreciate the insanity of it all by this point. Instead, I let out a shaky breath and ascended the staircase backwards upon equally shaky legs. By the time I reached the summit, the Light had begun to spin, though the crank sat undisturbed. I finally dared to look away from the staircase and felt a shiver race its way down my body when I gazed beyond the windows. An endless crimson ocean spanned in all directions beneath an empty, black sky. The creaking and moaning and groaning of the house that had, at one point, laid below the tower raged out from the void-like sky. Only that, and the sound of gentle sanguine waves stirring just beyond the lighthouse walls.

I am not ashamed to admit I began to cry. How could one not cry at a sight like this? Oh, for this truly must be Hell.

I shrunk down to the floor, eyeing the slight shimmer of the darkened waves through the array of small openings in it, and closed my eyes. I cried long, and then I fell asleep.

It is the next day, I think. There is no way to be certain. I still cannot leave. The Light is still on and spinning.

I am still in Hell, or wherever this is, but now I have company it seems. Off in the distance, I see a spinning light. It is very far and very dim, but it is there.

I have stared long and hard and I am sure it is there. It is another lighthouse.



Perth, Australia by Obum Ogunedo

April ??, 1839

I slept long again, yet I still wake to a nightmare. I dreamed, though, last night. I was beneath the waves again, but this time they were red. As I thrashed my arms and legs I seemed to sink faster. I did not have the courage to look, but I could sense there was something in the water with me. There are more lighthouses. Some are nearer than the first, some are further. They spin and spin and spin and expose more and more of the rippling crimson surface. It is only us out here.

??????

Last night I dreamt again. Of home, of the people I loved. Suddenly, that presence was in it. The one I could not bear to face. I still could not. When I awoke, it was all gone from me, though. I could not picture

home, or my loved ones. Like many dreams, it fled from me quickly and no matter how hard I tried to recall, it was gone. But it took with it everything. I no longer know their names or faces. It is laughable, I do not know my own name any longer! Oh, how I wish I wrote my name in this journal! The only name I know now is Colmery! Oh, how pitiful! Yet how liberating it is to forget! Now I no longer mourn! Now I no longer want! I no longer cry! Pitiful! How laughably Pitiful!

??????????

The lighthouses have stopped spinning. They all face the same direction. All the Lights, they are watching the same spot. The darkness consumes their beams greedily. What do they see? Oh, God in Heaven what do they see?

I feel that presence again, but I am awake. Or am I? There is no way to be certain. But it is there, where they all peer. It is hidden in the darkness.

?

The Light is gone. They are all gone. The waves thrash heavily against the lighthouse. I cannot see them, but I hear them. The water beneath my feet in the stairwell is raging, too, and droplets fly through the grating beneath my feet, and it seems to have risen above the eighth step. I am making this final entry only as a goodbye. To whom? To you? To me? I do not know. I will place this logbook upon the Light and pray it is not swept away when I shatter the window with the wet, useless lantern I have beside me.

– The Colmery Lightkeeper

"There's an old truism in art that says all artwork is self-portraiture. I don't resist that interpretation, sometimes it's explicit, like the collage I made during a bout of selective mutism, related to my being autistic..."

Portrait of the Autist

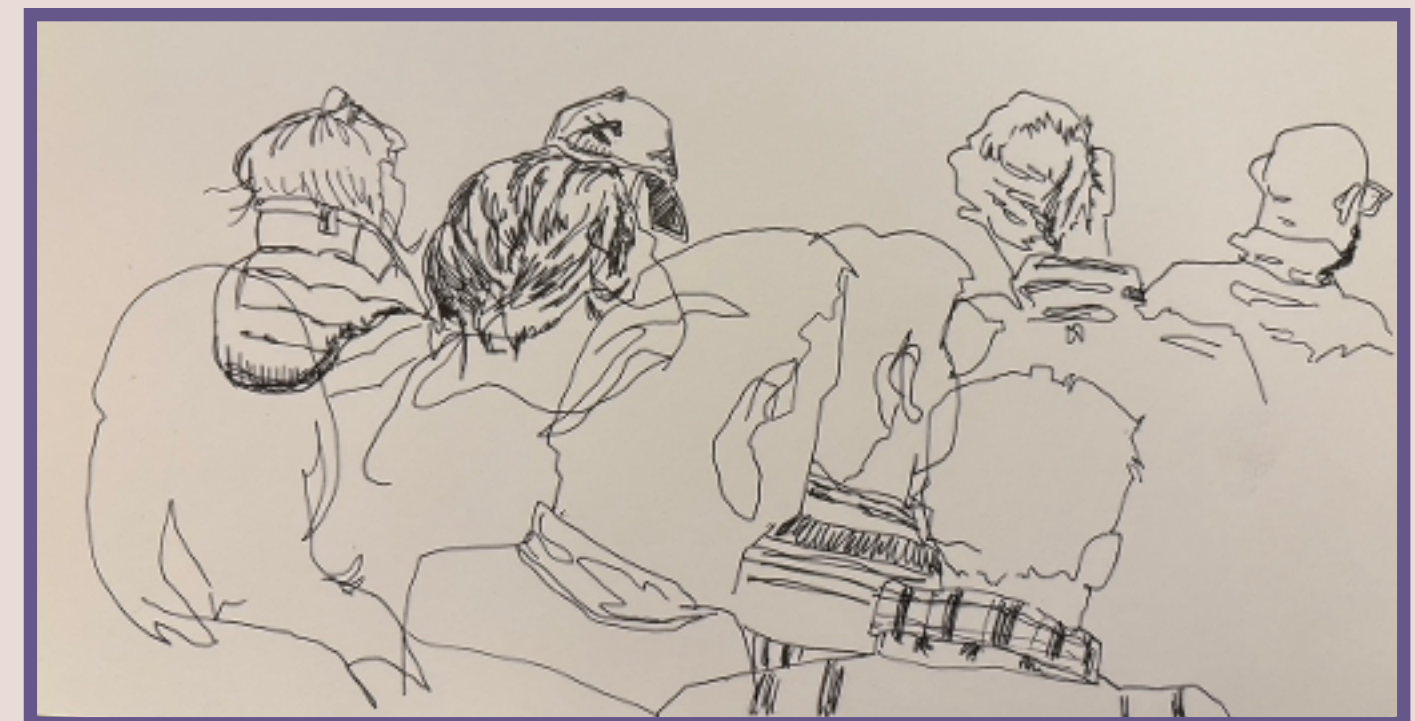


Keep it Shrimple

"...sometimes it's less overt. But certainly, I can see definite elements of questing after self-understanding in these delicate-bodied shrimp, and in the faculty colleagues I drew from the dim corner of the auditorium where I peered out, observing."

- Sarah Courchesne

The Faculty Are Quiet



Troubled Young Lady by Sonia St. Cyr

I search for it, but I can't
It's my nest, I have to nurture it.

There's a fuzzy blob, on the ceiling
It's black and blue mold
Let me reach out and touch it
I want to hug them
Black and blue people
The mold forms a face
It watches me, it's always there
So it must be a protector
But I can't make sense of the walls
The scotoma fades
My mold guardian
Don't leave me alone here

I want to feel termites crawl
Then each take a piece
Eat at my wooden, stiff flesh
I worry if I run out
Will it be enough
To satisfy my needs?
They eat at me, crawl, lay their eggs
I want to feel the flies and gnats
Swarming my limp body
I want to feel the fruit flies
Who already took my fruit
Taking advantage of my acceptance.
I want to feel leeches suck out my soul
And create a drought of my energy.

I want to hear mayflies sing songs of spring
To bring on new life
Maybe I'll live forever
In my mind's decay
Desolate, undead spring
My spring, lying away
I carry on the eggs
I want to kill them along with me.

I want to hear the crickets chirping
As you ignore me
So I stay silent
Whenever I speak
I want kudzu vines
Wrapping around my ankles
I want to feel poison oak
My skin getting scaly
My palms always sweat
I want you to stare
The stress is my fault
Just like always, you know?

I want to dress like a ladybug
And drench my blankets
With blackish blood
I want to wake up thrashing
Scratches sheathing my body

Every morning when I wake up
My throat is full of spiderwebs
And butterflies crawl
Cocooned in my eyes
They escape and fly about
To anywhere else
I lie very still
But silverfish scare
Flee, and scatter, from my gaze
They climb up and down
A mass, together
Like rushing water
Like a rusty kitchen sink
Crawling across, on
And through my body
They search for a place to hide
They will find nothing.
So some hide in the walls
And some hide in my flesh.

Bed bugs will bite my skin
It's soft, white like milk
And wrapped in silkworm bands
And marked of red spots
Bruises, deep red lines
I want those marks of status
The bed bugs left their mark, as well.

I want to be pitied, all my own
Send me off to therapy
To ignore what you produced?
Why this behavior?
Does it even matter?
When you send me somewhere else
I'll gulp down roaches
I already know the taste
Shoved inside my mouth
I want cockroaches to squirm
Feelers and thin legs
I want them to break out my stomach
Feeling my deepest organs
And they'll join the others
Like a city throng
I don't want to be left behind.

Legs shake, ringworms swim in my blood
They move to expand my veins
Tapeworms drink my blood
It feels like something
Hookworms hook me on the feeling
A feeling like bliss
Quick flashes of pain
I deserve to feel only pain.

I want to feel centipedes crawl
In and then out my nostrils
They've multiplied inside me
Then run off quickly to the nest

Sleep paralysis makes me feel not alone
I want the maggots to laugh
When I arrive late
I don't care what dreams I have
I want to sleep forever.

My feelings are stronger than all
So why can't I cry?
My smile the cutest
So bring me anywhere else
I stay on the internet
Talking with moths

That are not real butterflies
I have a mask, too
I'll light you with joy
I know they lie
But in the night
I want to be led away
However, you'd know

My own mind is a mantis
If I try to leave
I'll be binded by its claws
There's nothing to do now

I have butterflies in my eyes,
They bloom beautifully
And tint the world
That's why I want to die young
What else can I do?
You don't answer,
there is no answer
You cheer me up, such an idiot
Only one thing cheers me up
It's feeling mousetraps on my fingers!
I want to scatter
And stay inside my own hole
To fake happiness

I'll escape the cats,
I tug on my wrists
I want to feel things again
I want carrion beetles
To pull out all my innards
As I shout aloud
A gifted child
I'll prove how gifted I am
As I bring you all to Hell with me
But before that, I want to feel
All this world can offer
I want this unmistakable feeling
Again and again
I love feeling butterflies
in my stomach

Invited Chaos by Hannah Moylan



UNDEATH IN PARADISE by Aurelia Rodriguez-Cooley

CHARACTERS

VINCENT: 400 year old melodramatic vampire who wants to die

MEL: Vincent's human wife who has rocky relationship with him

GREG: 19-year-old surfer kid with a metal detector

LENORA: A mysterious loving mistress

AT RISE

[VINCENT and MEL enter stage left, VINCENT wearing a blindfold being led by MEL onto a beach in the dead of night.

VINCENT is dressed in a large black cloak and has a slicked back widow's peak. MEL is wearing a sundress.

MEL undoes VINCENT's blindfold.]

VINCENT

My love, I told you I wished to end this miserable existence of mine, where have you taken me? It matters not what you have planned, my decision is final.

MEL

Darling, I thought if you planned to perish anyway, that you may as well have the last thing you see be the gorgeous sunrise on the beach. I don't like seeing you starved like this...

[VINCENT begins to tear up]

VINCENT

Oh... my sweet Melinda, that is almost sweet enough to will me to live again, but alas, I am intent on my demise.

MEL

There is still a while until the sunrise, I bet I could convince you by then. [A bottle with a parchment scroll bobs up to the shoreline]

VINCENT

Ah, what is this here? Is this common on the beach?

[VINCENT reaches down into the water to grab the bottle and pulls his hand back with a hiss when it touches water.

HE reaches back down carefully and grabs the bottle without touching the water]

MEL

Not particularly, I haven't seen one before.

VINCENT

Ah, but you have only lived for thirty or forty years, how could you possibly say what is common?

[MEL subtly rolls her eyes as VINCENT uncorks the bottle and removes the scroll]

VINCENT

It appears to be a map of some kind. But it also would seem someone has graffitied this obtrusive red X here

MEL

Oh honey, that isn't graffiti, it's a marking. That X could mark treasure! The map looks old, too. Probably from some old-timey pirates or something.

[VINCENT squints at the map, then widens HIS eyes]

VINCENT

In this corner, there is something horribly sinister.

[MEL looks over VINCENT's shoulder]

MEL

It just looks like a signature to me.

VINCENT

Not just any signature... this is the signature of my former master, that most horrid, foul man. If you are correct and this is treasure, then I will take his accursed treasure as my final act in this cruel, dark, lonely world.

MEL

(muttering to herself) lonely, huh?

[VINCENT gallops off and MEL paces pensively. Both exit stage right]

[VINCENT and MEL enter stage left, VINCENT now dressed in a gambeson]

MEL

So... what do you think is gonna be there?

VINCENT

Surely a relic most ancient and valuable. Or maybe something that could launch mankind into a new era of archaeological discovery.

MEL

What if someone else has already found it?

VINCENT

Why, that would never happen. I am the greatest explorer there ever was! Nobody could match me.

MEL

Do you even know where we're going? I'm pretty sure we're going in the wrong direction.

VINCENT

You treat me as though I don't know right from left. I know precisely what I'm doing, I assure you. On this, the day of my death....

MEL

Then show me.

VINCENT

Hm?

MEL

Show me on this map where you think we are right now.

[VINCENT grumbles and pulls the map out of his pocket and confidently points]

VINCENT

There.

MEL

No.

VINCENT

Oh sorry, I meant there.

MEL

Still no.

VINCENT

Well you tell me where we are, then.

[MEL points to a spot on the map. VINCENT looks around to survey the surroundings, checking to see if they match up]

VINCENT

Aha! I see now, we're here!

[VINCENT points to the same spot MEL pointed to. MEL sighs exasperatedly]

MEL

Yep, that's where we are.

VINCENT

Then that must mean... we have to go this way!

[VINCENT begins to skip towards stage right]

MEL

Other way.

[VINCENT turns around and continues skipping. Both exit stage left]

[VINCENT and MEL enter stage right, VINCENT now dressed as Indiana Jones. They walk in normally but then VINCENT flinches and looks behind HIM]

VINCENT

Did you hear that? Who's there?

MEL

Hear what? I didn't hear anything.

VINCENT

Are we being followed? Does someone dare to come after this treasure that I seek? Or maybe they're out to kill me? No one gets to kill me but myself!

[MEL spots someone in the distance ahead of them and hurriedly grabs VINCENT by the wrist]

MEL

Oh look, it must have come from that person! Let's head over there!

VINCENT

But I could've sworn I heard it coming from behi- aah!

[VINCENT is pulled along by MEL running towards GREG, who is holding a metal detector and sweeping the beach with it]

MEL

Good evening, what brings you out here this time of night?

GREG

(speaking like a surfer dude) Uhm, what's it look like? I'm looking for stuff.

VINCENT

Stuff like... treasure?

GREG

I mean, sure maybe.

VINCENT

What do you mean maybe, speak with confidence boy!

GREG

I dunno man I just find whatever I find alright? Now go away you're harshing my vibe.

MEL

I'm sorry about him, he isn't as up to date with this newer technology.

GREG

Newer like... a metal detector?

MEL

Like a metal detector.

GREG

Well hey listen babe, how about you drop your dad off at home or whatever and then you come back here and we can hang out a bit more?

[MEL looks extremely unamused, VINCENT is fuming with anger, eyes glowing red. HE gets up in GREG's face, baring HIS fangs]

VINCENT

How DARE you speak to my wife that way! I am an extremely powerful man who could tear you limb from limb and hang you out to dry, what makes you think you have the right to speak such offenses as you have tonight. I will cast you into the nine hells and tear you back to reality so many times that you will WISH you were dead, you hear me boy?

[GREG screams, drops his metal detector, and runs away. VINCENT immediately looks happy when seeing the fear he inspires in others]

MEL

That was a little over the top, don't you think? I mean, he's just a kid.

VINCENT

I care not how young he is, he ought to know not to

speak to MY wife like that. Now, dear, grab that magical staff, it may aid us in our search. Let us carry on towards my death.

[MEL rolls eyes and picks up metal detector. Both exit stage left]

[VINCENT and MEL enter stage right, VINCENT now wearing a tricorner hat, pirate-y attire, and wielding a saber, MEL trudging along behind, weeping with the metal detector]

VINCENT

(singsong-y, happy) Now we away to find the hoard of the man who was my lord, my wife and I search low and high before I am to finally die!

MEL

Honey.

VINCENT

Journey most noble, wandering global, my wealth soon to become mobile.

MEL

(agitated) Honey....

VINCENT

(grandiose and singsong-y) The evil lord of peril and ruin soon to be reborn anew in-

MEL

(yelling, angrily) VINCENT VON SCHLEPCLAW!

[VINCENT yelps]

MEL

Can you PLEASE stop singing about you dying? How do you think that feels to me? This is the problem, you NEVER think about how your words affect others. Or maybe you do and you just don't care! Do you know how much SHIT I've had to put up with from you over the past fifteen years!? No! Because you don't listen! Maybe you should just fucking die!

[MEL throws the metal detector at VINCENT. SHE misses, and when it hits the ground it begins to beep. MEL and VINCENT stop arguing and look towards the sound]

VINCENT

What is that beeping?

MEL

That means it found something. Let's go see what it is.

[MEL and VINCENT begin digging at the spot, and eventually unearth a wooden treasure chest]

VINCENT

Haha! My reward, finally.

[VINCENT opens the chest. Inside is a pile of various golden trinkets and atop them a single corked vial of a red liquid]

VINCENT

Look at all this gold!

MEL

I don't really care about all that, what's this?

[MEL picks up the vial and removes the cork to waft and smell]

MEL

It's not familiar to me.

VINCENT

Let me give it a try.

[VINCENT wafts and sniffs and HIS eyes go wide as he begins to smile]

VINCENT

This... it has only been told in legend throughout vampire kind. I didn't know it really existed. It is a magical serum made from stonefish venom and cactus flowers. It is the cure to vampirism.

MEL

What?

VINCENT

My love... I can now live amongst you and your people as a human. I can see the sun and live to remember it, I can age and die at peace, and I can leave behind this curse. All I need is that vial right there.

[MEL looks at the vial in her hand for a moment, and then dumps it into the sand]

VINCENT

(shouting) WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!? YOU TREACHEROUS WOMAN, YOU HAVE DOOMED ME TO-

[VINCENT lunges towards MEL. As he does so, the sun creeps over the horizon and HE incinerates and becomes ash in an instant. LENORA peeks her head out from over a rock nearby and then runs over towards MEL]

LENORA

Oh, my darling, you did it!

MEL

Yes, I did. I'm finally free of that tyrant. If it is truly what you wish, we can take his wealth and live out our lives together.

LENORA

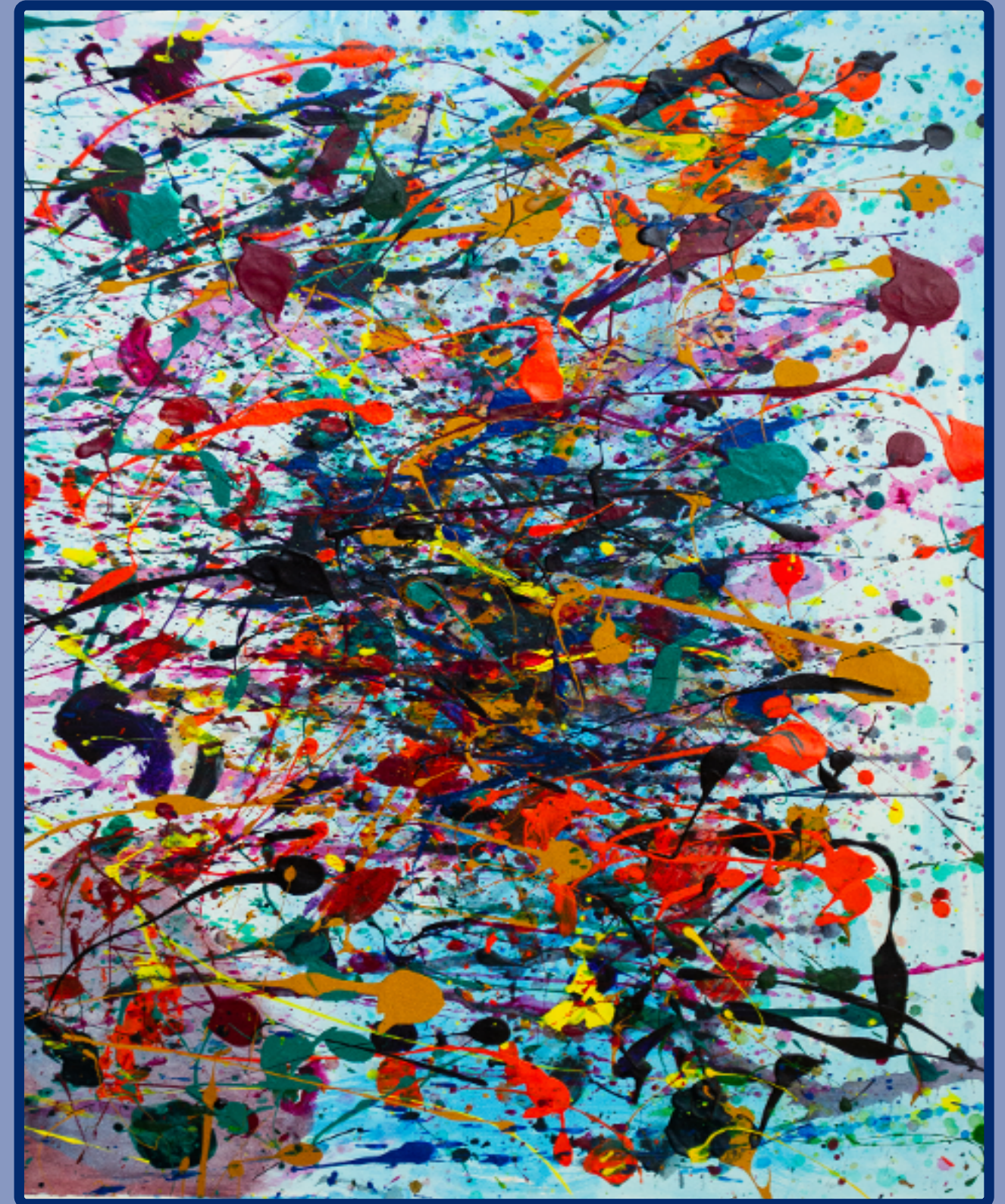
That sounds lovely, dear. I just have to ask. Why did you have to kill him in such a cruel way? Couldn't you have just staked him during the day while he slept?

[MEL shrugs]

MEL

Cheaper than a cremation.

END



by Theodore Michelle

Against All Odds: A Mother's Fight for Choice

by Keyla Santiago-Rivera

Why does it have to be so challenging being a woman today? I was certain about my decision not to have any more children. As a single mother of two beautiful, silly, and intelligent kids, I am everything that they have, and they are everything to me. For six years, I pleaded with multiple doctors to allow me to be sterilized. Instead, I was practically forced to endure a series of birth control methods to avoid pregnancy. Why? Why was it acceptable for me to ingest hormones my body did not want or need? Why did I have to endure wild mood swings and uncontrollable, irregular bleedings? None of this felt natural. None of it seemed aligned with how my body was meant to function. The resistance I faced taught me a valuable lesson: I needed to advocate for myself, persistently and fiercely. After all, no one else should have the authority to decide how my future should be.

I tried it all! The daily pills, the arm implant, the daily pills again, the vaginal ring, the IUD (Intra-Uterine Device), and the pills AGAIN! None of it worked for me. These methods left me feeling far from normal, triggered feelings of negativity, irritation, and isolation in me. I picked fights with my partner, my family, and even myself. I would rather isolate myself than be surrounded by my family and friends. Hormones were not just altering my cycle—they were altering my peace. Bleeding daily for months at a time felt biologically wrong, yet I could barely get my concerns taken seriously. Over and over, I encountered deflection instead of resolution. “Why not tie my tubes?” I asked relentlessly. Each time, I was brushed off. My circumstances were dismissed; even though I was raising two children without their father I could not entertain the idea of having any more kids with this imaginary future perfect partner, it is just unrealistic at this point.

Eventually, I hesitated to visit doctors at all. The cycle of dismissal felt endless: “You are too young,” one said. “What if you meet someone new and want more children?” another questioned. I was just continuously getting excuses for them to not perform my most desired request. “What if you regret it after?” They all pressed. One doctor even suggested I see a psychologist to confirm I was not being coerced into my decision. Their unwillingness to listen made me feel invisible, as if my voice carried no weight in matters of my own body. Speaking with a health professional at this point felt as if we both were speaking different languages, and I was not being understood.

Things changed the day I met a gynecologist who actually listened. It felt like some light was shining to me in this dark and cloudy world. During an appointment to remove my IUD, I explained my struggles once again to this new face. To my surprise, he did not hesitate: “I have no problem performing a tubal ligation,” he assured me, though I would need to go back on daily pills until the surgery would get

scheduled to avoid any sudden surprises in the meantime. It was a glimpse of hope—light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. I would just need to wait patiently for the day I would go to sleep for a few hours and say bye to crazy side effects from pharmaceuticals that do not belong in my body and not be concerned about becoming pregnant ever again.

I remember when this special day of mine finally arrived. Waiting, laying on this icy table in a room so blindingly bright it felt as though the sun itself was inside. Fear and excitement coiled inside me. I could not stop looking at my surroundings, at the many strange and intimidating faces around me. They were just nurses, technicians, and doctors getting everything ready for what was about to happen. My dream was just about to become real! I recall being so nervous, hoping that no complications would result from this surgery. I was shaking on that ice-cold steel table, so vulnerable and exposed, with only a paper-thin sheet barely covering my nude body underneath.

As I was recognizing this peculiar smell of a sharp, metallic and clearing smell of antiseptic, rubbing alcohol, and bleach that oftentimes hospitals have, I was getting asked all these questions that I cannot even recall anymore. I knew somehow that these questions were to get me distracted, to calm me down until the anesthesia would start making its effects on me. Before I even noticed, I was getting woken up, in a different room by this familiar voice who then I noticed that was my doctor telling me that everything went normally, and I would be able to come back home in the following hour or so.

Yet life, unpredictable as ever, had one more twist in store. Months after the surgery, during a family visit in Puerto Rico, I began to feel unwell—foods I loved tasted strange, nausea gnawed at me, and exhaustion clung to every waking moment. I was just trying to enjoy the hot weather and the love from all my family. I would rather stay home with my grandmother than going out to enjoy my time there. I was experiencing an exhaustion that I did not recognize but felt somehow familiar. I guess I was just minimizing what was happening to me. I didn't want to think about what was going on with me that was making me feel so strange. I wanted to enjoy my time with my family because I would never know when I would be able to travel again to visit them.

Then came the pain: a sharp, stabbing sensation in my abdomen one night left me frozen in fear. It was so excruciating I was not able to even think straight to try to make sense of what was happening. Everyone at the house was already sound asleep. “Should I wake my mom up to go to the emergency room? Or should I just ignore it and hope it goes away soon, and see my doctor when I come back to the States?” This very strange and agonizing pain left me very confused and scared, but about an hour later it subsided, and I was able to fall asleep still questioning what I just

experienced. Since I was already planning to see my doctor after the trip because even months after the surgery, I was still having some light abnormal bleeding that was concerning me, I decided to wait until this appointment to ask about this pain incident too during the visit.

A couple of days passed, and I was back in the States and with my suitcases still unpacked, I returned to the doctor's office. My concerns seemed a little insignificant once again, but I'm no expert, so I just accepted whatever he recommended and followed his instructions. He ordered blood tests to make sure my hormone levels were within the normal ranges and to check there were no other signs of any type of infection. The next morning, back at work, I got a call from my doctor's office. “We have the results from your labs, you are pregnant! The doctor wants you to get an ultrasound as soon as possible!” I was so confused, and I felt that my life was about to crumble down with this shattering news. Luckily, I had my coworker and friend, Stephanie, nearby. She helped me stay grounded and focused after this call. She didn't let me spin out of control with the news, by giving me one of those long and very tight hugs. An embrace that made time stop for a minute and helped me take a couple of deep breaths. She eased the way I reacted to the news of me being pregnant once again.

I left work and went straight to the office to get this important ultrasound done. Again, there I was at a table feeling vulnerable but also outraged. “How could this have happened if I got my tubes tied already?” was my repetitive thought while they were doing the ultrasound. There was a silence in this room so eerie and so loud at the same time. Just the sounds of a keyboard as the technician kept on typing and a bunch of clicking from the pictures being taken. As she was finishing up, she told me to get dressed again while she would go to discuss her findings with the doctor in the meantime. When she comes back, she has my doctor on the phone ready to speak to me: “You will need to go straight to the emergency room. You are pregnant, and the fetus is developing in your fallopian tube. It is not a viable pregnancy, and the tube can rupture at any moment causing you to bleed out. So, you need surgery right away to get that fallopian tube removed.”

I was trying to process this information. I felt so disoriented thinking, “What am I going to do now?” This was unforeseen news. I was supposed to return to my job right after this ultrasound and I was clueless on what to do about the care of my kids after school is done for the day.

My mom was traveling back from Puerto Rico on that same day, but she hadn't arrived just yet. My two kids were in school, and they would get out in a few hours, but “Who is going to get them if I am going to be stuck in surgery? I just don't have anybody else

other than my mom!” I then took a risk, instead of driving myself to the emergency room; I drove to Boston to pick up my mother who was arriving soon from her flight. The plan at first was for her to take the train back home because I could not take the morning off from work to go get her from the airport. I thought that it would be okay to arrive at the hospital a couple of hours later instead of going right after the ultrasound. I really needed her to be home already so she could help me out with my kids before trying to go to the hospital.

Back home, we finally made it to the hospital. My mother only stayed with me for a couple of hours before it was time for her to go get my kids from school. I spent the rest of the day alone in that busy emergency room, watching people come and go while I was waiting for the operating room to free up for me. I spent hours playing silly app games on my phone just to kill time and keep myself distracted from my belly rumbling because I only had a cup of coffee first thing in the morning, and because I didn't want to overanalyze the events that led me back to that hard, cold and silver table, exposed one more time by the end of that day. At least this time should be definitive, I kept pondering.

Due to the ectopic pregnancy, the doctor removed not just the damaged fallopian tube, but I was able to decide to get the second tube removed as well. I was asked this before I was brought to the operating room, and I accepted it in a heartbeat. How could I refuse that option when it seems like even a tubal ligation is not a definitive option? I had chosen otherwise I could be still at risk of another ectopic pregnancy that could threaten my life once again, and it may have a different unfortunate outcome then. I could not leave that to faith, and hope for the best.

It has been over two years now; I reflect on this journey with a mix of exhaustion and triumph. I do not regret deciding to not have kids anymore. I just want to continue being the best mother I could be to my very real kids that I already have, and not to the imaginary future kids that the doctors kept on insisting I might have or want. I endured physical and emotional agony, battled dismissal and doubt, and came through with an unwavering sense of purpose. Today my kids might not have a mother if I hadn't kept insisting. My scars, now adorned with butterfly tattoos, symbolize transformation and liberation. I am free to devote myself to the two incredible children I already have. I am free to live without fear, free to love fiercely and fully. I hope one day all women can have their choices respected without having to justify or fight for them. Our bodies are our own, and our decisions should be honored. My scars tell a story of pain, perseverance, and ultimately, a reclaimed sense of control over my own life.

Where I'm From
by Chelsea Dow

I am from handkerchiefs, from coal dust and Old Smuggler Scotch.
I am from the single-wides on the southern flats, lousy with roaches and rigs.
I am from the olive branch, gleaming green with new beginnings.
I am from meth mouth and birthing hips.

I am from Kimberly, and I am from Virginia.
I am from addiction and abandonment.
I am from the destitute and I am from the blessed,
from painkillers and martyrs.

I am from pain and I am from prayer.
I am from unimaginable horror,
an impossible decision with no right answer.
I am from heaven, sent to my mother.
I am from God's sick sense of humor, sent to my other.

I am from Kimberly's womb and Virginia's home.
I am from "all life is sacred," and "women should choose."
I am from the High Church of Alcoholics Anonymous.
I am from third world America.

I am from the scratches on the handle of my dad's revolver.
I am from the tattoos on my brother's arms.
I am from three bookshelves to the left of the armoire.
I am from the tears of my mothers.

**Golden Shovel –
In Kyoto**

by David Earl

After Basho
Kyoto, that venerable, dying city I am in
is nothing like Kyoto
for I can't escape the stink of cherry blossoms, nor can I
stand its diluted crowds, nor can I hear
the temple bells, baffled by concrete, even in the
cypress trees, the call of the cuckoo
imitated in crosswalk chimes and
train station ambiance. But still, I long
for Kyoto, hunchbacked and blind, for
how can you bear your years and still hold me, Kyoto?

Dear Sister,

I was depressed before I even knew what depression was. I would have days where I would feel so low I would wish for something outlandish to happen. An asteroid hitting earth, the sun exploding, a monster Tsunami taking out our landlocked little village, that's how I would explain it to my friends.

"I don't want to do anything, y'know? I just want something to happen *to me* instead."

The group of twelve year olds would nod like they understood, and some of them did.

Some days I would leave my last class with nothing but worthlessness flowing through my veins. pale skin, with dark eye bags, trudging to the parking lot so I can find my mom.

One day she wasn't there.

I forgot I said I'd walk home.

Continuing the zombie-like walk I had adorned myself with, I made my way to the small white house in the cul-de-sac by the ball field. I had no headphones, no one to walk with, I was alone. All I could do was marinate in this feeling until I could go home and distract myself.

When I made my way through the oak door into our front hall, I heard my sister shout something at me. The words didn't process so i made some grunt in acknowledgment. I didn't look at her as I shut the door but I could feel her eyes on me.

"You alright?"

"Just having a bad day, it's whatever."

"Oh. Wait there," she pointed at the dining table. Once I walked towards it, she started rushing around the kitchen. My sister had started entering that moody tweenage phase girls go through, that one where she believed she was cooler than everyone else, so something like this surprised me. She seemed childishly excited by something. A moment goes by before her small hand peaks out from the kitchen and fumbles for the lights. She successfully managed to turn them off before she walked in the room.

Paper plate in hand, and a smile on her face that was being lit up by...something. She had prepared a song that went in the tune of happy birthday:

"I'm sorry you're having a bad day.

I hope this makes you feel better.

I'm sorry you're having a bad day!

I hope this makes you feel better!"

She places the plate down and I see a slice of American cheese folded so that it makes four. In the center of them sat a crudely placed blue birthday candle. The wax had started to melt off it.

"Quick, blow out the candle!"

So I did.

"Do you feel better now?"

I feel the weight of the tears welling up in my eyes as I stare at the creation made of nothing but adoration. No matter how much we bicker or fight, she's still here. Even if I can't find it in me to care for myself, I know that there will always be someone to pick me up when I've fallen. To bandage my cuts and bruises and kiss them better, even if she's the cause of most of them. I will never not be loved, not as long as my sister's on this earth.

"Yeah. I do."

by Anonymous



Daysia

"My daughter, Daysia, has a deep love for turtles, plants, and trees. Whenever she is feeling a down, the need to hug a tree revives her in so many ways. Our many walks in nature have brought her peace and calm. When she went off to college to pursue a degree in Environmental Engineering, I was inspired to draw this piece. It was my way of telling her that her name is Written in the Trees."

— Yolanda McClean



by Andrew Willis

Today I Prayed

by JayJay Conrad

Today I

(watched, rapt, the luna moth
pull free, with its soft
tuft-edge wingtips,
a single silk stand
spiderspun between dewy lilac leaves;
sat in an offtrail
brambled bowed under
the midday heaviness of
august-ripe raspberries
and
pressed my juicedark fingertips
through my lips
again and
again;
conversed with a sand plover
skittering and stamping its
skinny feet
in the pre-midnight surf:
a hymn among the sweetgrass dunes
carried on
the tailend of dusk;

aligned the swirls and
soil-caked ridges of my
palm with the bark
of wisteria wearing green-tinged
apricity like an

oil baron's ring
to feel her heartbeat in the
tenthousand ants who have marched
across her skyward twisting;

ducked away
from a flown-to-close honeybee,
tucking
my fear to my chest like a poker hand,
watching the unrealized thought
roll down her beady body and
am glad
for not swatting;

touched my toes to
winding roots of an
overturned oak,
the lichen-leavings underside
callused souls an echo,
or bell,
or tether
to our tiny eternity)

Prayed.



Safe Space

"The dichotomy of lived spaces is fascinating. Growing and changing through daily ritual practice of bathroom activities over many years has carved within me something that cannot be expressed in words. This piece is an expression of suppression, acceptance, and intimacy with my physical and mental spaces."

– Nathan Desmarais

Matador

by Diego Rocha

Esteban woke up to the mourning echoes of the Ave Maria. It was six in the morning, still dark and cold. Seven ladies, all veiled and dressed in black, surrounded his bed with the mission of commending the bullfighter's soul to God. Just in case! They were crying, holding each other's hands as if to make a fortress of love and protection on Esteban. Since the passing of both his parents at the age of four, he was raised by the seven women in the small village of Alcobendas, about 25 kilometers North of Madrid. They were all his tias, very attentive mid-aged, voluptuous women who earned their living by serving as maids and nannies to the traditional families of the Capital. They all made sure Esteban had absolutely everything.

As a teenager, his tendencies were very clear. He used to watch his uncle, Paco, teach aspiring young men every afternoon at the Paco Torres School of Tauromachy. Paco would teach them not only the moves and routines a true bullfighter makes to seduce and elicit death, but also the connection made with the crowds that gathered every Sunday after church at the Arena. One afternoon, at the age of fourteen, Esteban's destiny was traced by Paco: he would be trained to be the biggest Matador of the Iberian Peninsula. It took him years and years of learning every single move and their meaning, every technique, breath and concentration exercise. It was true that the spectacle of the Bullfight all seemed like a beautiful dance between the man and his ferocious counterpart. However, any fault from the man's part could dictate the end of a glorious career!

Soon he went on to being the most iconic torero in Madrid. No bull had ever survived his final dagger; no woman could resist his exquisite charm. No other man in Spain could match Esteban's excellence in the art of being a Matador.

The First Act: Suerte de Varas

Sundays in Madrid were rich in colors and flavors of Spain. Everyone was out in ferias enjoying the weather and delicious, mouth-watering tapas. People walked around, hoping that time would fly so that they could make an entrance into the iconic Plaza de Toros. Meanwhile, for Esteban, the early afternoon was a moment of deepest concentration and reconnection with God. This was his opportunity to make sure to thank Him for the lives of all around him, beg for the health of all his tias, and to ask for protection upon himself—once again. After lunch in the comfortable comedores of the Plaza, Esteban would take a long, relaxing bath and wait for his assistant, the mozo de espadas, to come in to help him dress into the fitted, imposing golden and yellow hand-embroidered suit. Only men were allowed into

the chambers, for no torero was to be amused by any woman. In fact, they were not even allowed into the Plaza before the Grand spectacle. Paco was always around. After all, he was Esteban's maestro. They would have lunch in a quiet ambience, whilst Esteban heard Paco's timeless tales of all his feats as a bullfighter. After a two-hour siesta, it was time to get dressed. Paco went outside to call one of the assistants who would help Esteban prepare himself. After instructing the young man, of about 20, he went into his own room to change and do his own spiritual preparation for the event.

The Second Act: Suerte de Banderillas

The wind was blowing through the white silky curtains, while Esteban contemplated the birds and the trees, perhaps for the last time. As a matador, he never knew whether that would be his last contact with nature. He never knew if that afternoon marked his ultimate appearance before his public. It was all a matter of fate. It was all a matter of luck! The assistant walked into the room slowly, careful enough not to make a sound. When Esteban felt his presence (he could always feel it), he turned around. Looking at him peacefully, he smiled. "I am here to dress you, Señor", said the young man. He was tall and handsome, with eyes as deep and mysterious as the Strait of Gibraltar. His skin was aged a bit, from all the years spent in the sugar cane plantations prior to coming to the capital to make a life for himself. His smile was big and his energy, exuberant. That joie de vivre and exuberance kept Esteban alive! He had been in the business for over twenty years. He was 42 now, wanting to retire after a successful 12-year career. "Señor," he said once again: "I am here to help you get dressed." Esteban replied: "I am glad to see you again, Domingo". They knew each other. In fact, they knew each other well. Domingo had been coming in for the past six months. His job was to dress Esteban's body for the bullfight, but he extended his services to undressing his soul. They were friends. But only on Sundays, while everyone was enjoying their afternoon in the Madrilenian festivals.

Only on Sundays would Esteban allow himself to be touched by Domingo. Only on Sundays would Domingo privilege from Esteban's affection. As he was dressing his superior, without looking at him, Domingo tried: "Nervous today?" "No, not this time. For some reason, I am never nervous when you are here." As he buttoned the bullfighter's white linen shirt, he provoked: "What will you do when they find out and kick me out of here?" Esteban grabbed his wrist. "What do you mean? What are you trying to tell me?" "Well, sooner or later someone will find out. People are already beginning to talk." Esteban reacted:

“You will never confirm it. People will never know, as long as you keep it to yourself.” “This has to stop! I cannot go on with this. I cannot come in here, get you dressed, see you out there risking your life, and for six days a week, just wait. I can’t wait for six days to be loved on the seventh. Either you love me every day, or don’t love me at all. Stop the toreo, or I won’t...”. Esteban pushed him away. “It must be like this, and you know it! I cannot risk my image over this, as much as I have fond feelings for you. Why can’t you accept things as they are?” “Because I have waited for too long. I have been sacrificed like a bull every single week; every time I walk by you in the streets of Madrid, and you pretend not to know me. I am stabbed to death every time I hear from gossipers around town that you were seen walking hand in hand around Plaza de España with a woman. I am not a bull to be sacrificed by you.” “Y que cojones do you want me to do?” Esteban asked furiously. “Love me today. Love me forever”. Esteban did not reply. And so, in silence, Domingo walked away, but before making an exit, uttered his final words: “Sometimes I wish the bull would defeat the matador. Just once. Just this time!”

The Third Act: Suerte de Matar

When the gates opened, the crowd cheered in excitement. The sun was shining, even at 5 in the afternoon. Soon enough, Esteban appeared before his loyal subjects. Everyone applauded warmly. He made all the official greetings to the mayor and the officers present at the event. To his left, he saw his tias, all holding a white handkerchief. Although concerned and skeptical, they were joyful. Esteban looked regal. He was handsome, strong and glorious. Uncle Paco soon started the beginning of the procession by galloping his way through the Plaza alongside 4 other horseback riders. It was all a preamble to the Grand Act. After the three trumpets that marked the beginning of the battle, a small iron gate was opened. All gasped in silence. Even the air molecules had stopped. They all waited for two long minutes before the creature made its debut. It was heavy. Imponente. Strong! Esteban looked at it, straight into its eyes, and he knew at that moment that it would be a hard one. The bull stepped fearlessly into the arena, raising a cloud of dust as if being birthed from the viscera of the Earth. It stared at the crowd as if to say, “You will all regret this moment!” The matador had no way out. For the first time he was scared. Scared of losing Domingo on Sundays. Scared of watching his prestige among his family, friends and admirers being scattered through the winds. He looked at the bull and knew that this was his last time.

And yet, he could not turn back. And so, without hesitation, he allowed the dance to begin. At every move he made, the crowd screamed a triumphant ¡Olé! In perfect harmony, creature and man were infused by dust, sweat and fury into one single thing:

beauty! As time went on, the animal started losing its senses due to all the precise estocadas on its back. Blood dripped and stained the sand below its hooves. The beast looked at the public, this time begging for compassion. It stared at the matador, screaming for a last chance. Esteban acknowledged the breathless crowd. Amongst the 1200 souls, he saw Domingo. He was there, holding onto someone else’s hands. His eyes were as fearful as the Dead Sea. And then, it all made sense to him: “You either love me every day or don’t love me at all”. His eyes met his crowd once again, and then Domingo. “Why can’t you accept things as they are?”, he thought, looking now deep into the eyes of the bull. “Love me today. Love me forever!” His decision had been made. He got into a final position and made the ultimate call to the bull. This was the moment the bullfighter sentenced the animal to death. The rule of the game dictates that, on the final move, the bullfighter must provoke the bull with his cape, while holding a hidden sword, the ayudado. As the bull makes a run towards the cape, the fighter stabs the animal deeply into its neck, piercing its heart. The bullfighter then moves away to save his own flesh. This time, however, it was different: Esteban looked at Domingo for the last time, whispered “¡Te quiero!” and called the beast. It came forward, with the force of a hurricane, ready to destroy anything that dared to cross its path. The matador was ready. Consciously, instead of making a move to the left after the stab, Esteban made a move to the right, inviting the horn to violently rip through his majestic suit of lights. It was an irreparable damage to his heart!

Nothing else was heard, apart from the useless ambulance sirens entering the arena. Esteban laid on the ground, lifeless. The bull, shocked by its enemy’s unexpected move, walked quietly out of the arena, into the iron gate and through the narrow corridor. It was accepting of its inevitable fate. Seven men ran after it. A single shot was heard. Some said that they both obtained triumph through immortality. Others claimed that they had reached stardom through death. And all of Spain knew, from that day on, that Sundays without Esteban would never be the same!



by Allyson Rodriguez

Icarus

by *Lilith Hansen*

I wish to follow Icarus
step up into the sky just once
and reach my hand to Apollo.
To love and die is better
than to be forgotten.
If I could touch the sky just once
I would smile the whole way down
to the dark waters below.

Fifteen Minutes
by *Hannah Moylan*

Cape Cod Constellations

by *Chelsea Dow*

She turned to face me, her chocolate brown eyes already brimming with tears. There was nothing left to be said. Even if I hadn't heard everything the doctor said, my mother's face had spoken volumes.

Wintry ocean air nipped at the apples of my cheeks as I nestled further into my mother's warm embrace. Warm for winter, two oversized sweatshirts offered all the protection needed from the frigid Atlantic air. Intertwined on a white vinyl beach lounger, we sat on the porch of our Hyannis hotel room, desperately clinging on to one another. A wondrous and exquisite expanse of constellations loomed overhead, shining beams of soft starlight onto the sandy beach below.

Blinking away my tears, I stared at the infinite universe of night sky above us, searching with all my might for the constellation that might take me to heaven.

Perhaps if I could memorize every star in every solar system in every galaxy, I could untangle the cosmos and decrypt the map that would lead me to the everlasting firmament.

Feeling her shuddering breath beneath me, I adjusted to face her. Copper eyes churned with emotion: bloodstained, empty, distant. The tears that she had fought so valiantly to contain poured down her rouged cheeks, streaking her foundation. Arms tightened around my stomach, and my heart skipped a beat. Flushing red, heat radiated from my freckled cheeks. Fear's ice-cold fingers gripped my throat, threatening to choke the life out of me. The words clawing at the back of my throat, begging to be spoken, could not escape. Lying in deafening silence, I turned back to the sky. I wondered where she will go.

My heart, a caged animal threatening escape, thrashing and gnawing within my ribs. With measured anger I turned back to the sky, loathing every star, every solar system, every galaxy between me and my father.

He would know what to say. He always knew what to do. I was twelve.

Disgusted with the heavens, my gaze turned to the white caps of surf as it roared and crashed at the water's edge. Two rock jetties made of jagged obsidian-colored stone flanked each side of the beach, cutting us private slice of ocean. Each wave lapped further up the dry sand, nearer and nearer still to the stone retaining wall. I begged the tide to be merciful. I pleaded with the sea to swell up onto the beach, surge over the wall, wash onto this godforsaken porch, and swallow me.

Fury coursed through my veins like a drug, eroding my nerve endings until my body was but a shell, numb and lifeless. My limp corpse dared not

move, mother snored gently beneath me. Inevitabilities danced like sugarplums in my head.

Treatment. Suffering. Death. Wake. Funeral. Burial. Grief.

When my eyes finally refocused, I realized they were glued to the night sky. Where would the stars take her? Would I be able to find her there? Should I leave with her? I should leave with her.

Struggling not to wake her, I twisted my shoulders to catch a glimpse of my mother's face in an attempt to memorize every detail. The way her eyebrows furrowed ever so slightly, pulling her face into a perpetual puss. How the crest of her top lip formed a perfect cupid's bow beneath her Grecian nose. How the hollows of her cheeks I had seen her face wherever I looked for as long as I could remember. Would I only see it in the mirror now?

Her eyelids parted as she startled awake. A grin grew across her lips, and she realized I was still there, holding her. Shifting me to one side of the beach lounger, she moved toward the bathroom.

Alone, my thoughts drifted once again to the heavens. Streets paved with gold, endless banquets and feasts, rivers of wine and honey, a painless and permanent existence, and my dad. Why did I have to stay behind?

A new moon loomed overhead, ominous and foreboding. Changes were ensuing without either of our consent, and like the ever-rising tide, they were crude and unstoppable.

I had done this before.

Like a dime store retelling of a not-so-long forgotten fairytale, history was repeating itself. These feelings had raged within me once before. Anger, futility, disgust.

The last time my body sailed the raging sea that is existential grief, my mother had been at the helm.

My eyes flung to the sky with rage. How dare the stars take her. How dare they leave me here alone. How dare they take so much from me and cause me so much pain, leaving nothing behind but moonbeams.

A shadow forms on the wooden porch floor and my mother reappears. She had been gone longer than I realized. Her hair now pulled back and the makeup wiped clean from her face, she invited me back into the hotel room.

Leaning against the cheap plastic banister, I took one last glance upwards.

In that moment I accepted that even if she did not survive, she would always be okay. The stars would look after her, and she would have what we both longed for most in this world.

My dad.

Late August, 5:23pm, Tending a Wound
by Adrien Jewell

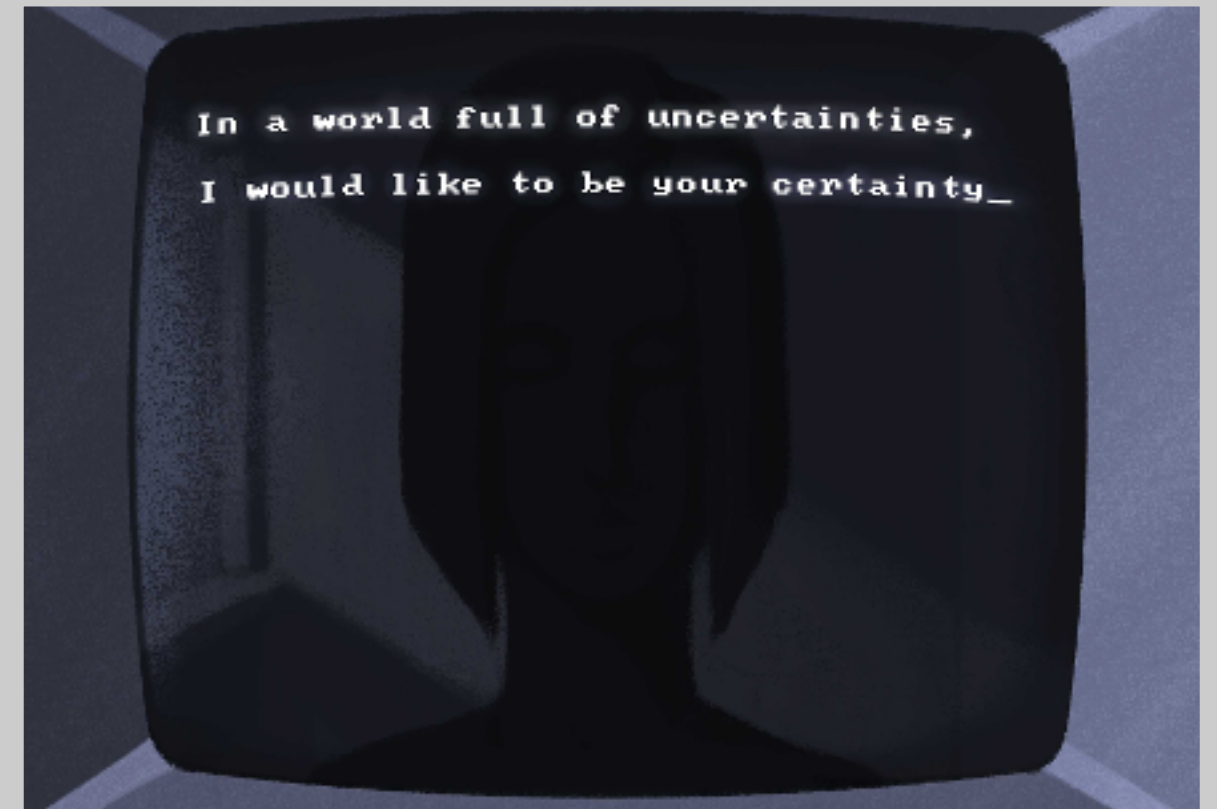
There's glass in my palm
when I open it.

Not painful before,
don't even know how it managed to get there,
but now it starts to sting since I've noticed it;
Tiny shards,
barely there,
almost like the glitter
from old birthday cards i received
with the princesses on it.

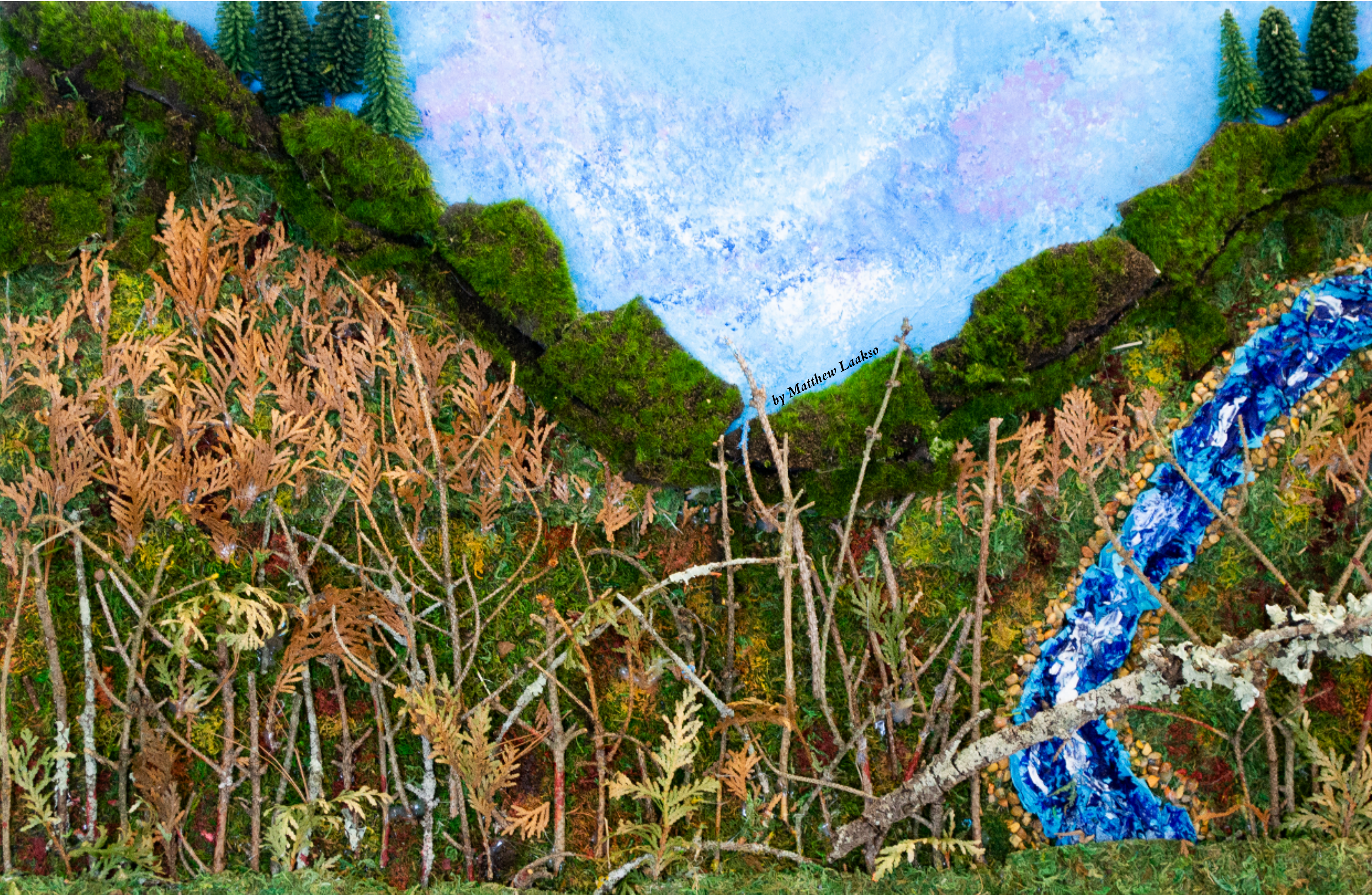
I grab my best pair of tweezers
for the job,
the metal ones
that can successfully grasp the thinnest of splinters.
I adjust my hand
under the light,
so I don't miss any shards,
small as they are.

The pieces crunch
softly from the pressure,
reminding me of
boots in snow,
the kind that packs well,
good for making snowmen,
leaving a clear print in the ground
as i trudge forward
cold and miserable
to my friends house
while the tips of my hair freeze

because my parents forced me out of the house
and i curl my lip in distaste
thinking of birthday cards,
and winter days
watching wine-colored beads form
where i'd tugged the pieces
from out of my hand.



Uncertainty by *David Earl*



by Matthew Laakso



A painting of “Susan Thompson, Cape Split, Maine” by Paul Strand

"The medium is acrylic. Painting slows and deepens the act of seeing. I love to paint, but time is such that I mostly do so in summer painting vegetables from our planting boxes or even the grocery store. I also paint from photographs as a way of paying closer attention to the image to which I'm responding. The point isn't to replicate the photo or the thing I'm painting, but to look more closely, and see where the colors and lines go. The apron is luminous."

—Jeanie Tietjen

Editors' Column



lumière issue 1 staff: Joshua Klein, Chewy Medoff, Branden Lacroix, JayJay Conrad, Paulo Shimmelpfennig, Sabrina Putnam, Joe Young, Diego Rocha, Matt Walsh (faculty sponsor), Christian Hardy & Olga Sydorenko

When we built the English major at MassBay, we thought we had until spring 2017 before the first candidates would be eligible to graduate. But I got a message from Diego Rocha in August saying he'd be done with the major by December except for this *one required course*, Advanced Writing. What was that all about? And could he do an independent study? I agreed to work with Diego, we signed him up, and within a day I heard from Joshua Klein: What was this independent study that had popped up the schedule, and, soon enough, could he get in on it? At the time, Josh was pitching a project to the Kerouac estate, writing a massive pov vr stage play, and planning several intellectual and actual revolutions. It seemed like a good fit.

I'd planned to produce the first issue of a new college lit mag with a full class in the spring to publish in May. Could we do it by early December? Well, *mostly* hell yeah! Our timeline reduced our chances to iterate, and we went to print with tasks still undone, bleedlines unheeded. I remember Josh turning to me the day before print and saying, "I really don't think we should put page numbers in the table of contents, because I can't guarantee anything at this point." But you two promised me a magazine, and you delivered. We can call it *lumière*, Diego said under Josh's chalkboard agenda, to shine the light on all the beauty in this community. Yes, Diego. Yes we can. And we have.

But we didn't do it alone. People found out what we were up to, saw us arguing excitedly about chalkboard diagrams, about *words*, and they wanted in on it, too. Christian Hardy became our poet/legal/engineer renaissance man. Sabrina Putnam rolled saving throws for submissions against a premature dismissal. Branden Lacroix held up poems by the window so we could see them refracted freshly. And have you ever met a person like JayJay? I sure haven't. I swear it was her Mountain Dew-induced snorts that called Chewy, Sabrina, Paulo, and everyone else into our staff meetings (3 snorts and it's an official meeting!). But it was her singular vision and drive that drew them to our *staff*...and kept doing so after Diego and Josh launched into projects on new terrain. For issue 2, and issue 3, and issue 4. Wow. What a ride.

Stephen Gaskin, the hippie veteran who founded America's longest-running intentional community, said during Sunday night mass that "Attention is energy. Whatever you put your attention into grows and prospers." I joke with Dani Joseph and Brooke Richey, our issue 10 editors-in-chief, about the elf magic that happens overnight in the spreads and the margins of the magazine, but the truth is that elf magic is real: it is comprised of time, attention, and *love*. I hope you feel all the love and joy (sprinkled with mild profanity) that went into this magazine, that continues to go into this magazine.

We'd like to take some time and make some space, in these pages and in our lives, to recognize the writers and artists who find a way to slow down, to slow us down, so that we can see. Part of *lumière's* renewed 10-year mission is to shine its light in more impactful ways, taking a closer look at artists themselves and a closer look under the hood, at *craft*.

Help us evolve. Help us help art and artists thrive. Reach out at litmag@massbay.edu if you're interested in collaborating or learning more.

—Matt Walsh

Professor of English & *lumière* faculty advisor
Onion River Review, '94-'97

PS: As we approached our 10th issue I reached out to our former editors to ask what their work on *lumière* has meant to them.

LENA SEBUGWAWO issue #9

I had been thinking about creating a magazine for our non-profit Suubi Community Development Organisation for quite some time, but I wasn't sure where to start and felt hesitant about taking the first step. When I came across a course that involved working on *lumière* I knew this could be the perfect opportunity to learn the process of magazine creation and gain the skills needed to bring my idea to life.

Working on *lumière* was a major undertaking that involved brainstorming, discussions, designing, and organizing. Every team member had the chance to contribute their unique skills, ideas, and perspectives, making the 2024 edition a true representation of our college community. What I appreciated most was the variety of tasks—each member had a specific role, from updating the website and designing the magazine layout to promoting submissions, organizing events, and selecting the pieces to be published.

I won't lie—the process required a lot of time and dedication from so many passionate individuals.

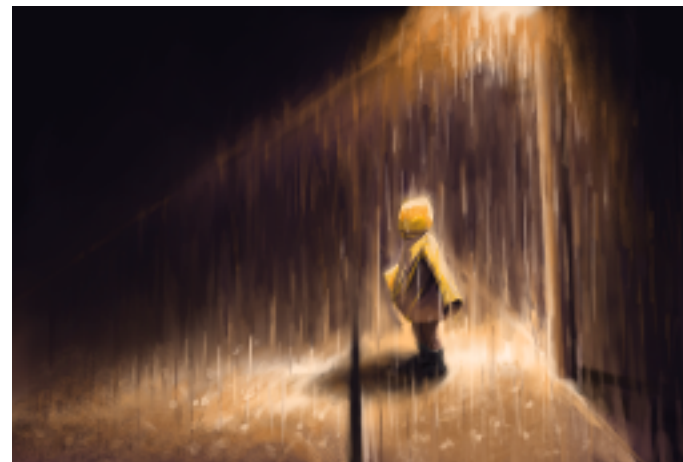
One moment that stood out to me was when a woman from the community who wasn't a MassBay student submitted her photographs. Her father accompanied her to the launch party, and seeing their pride and excitement was truly inspiring. That moment made me realize that a magazine isn't just for the readers—it's for the contributors as well. It gives people a voice, a sense of recognition, and the motivation to share their creativity with the world.

By the end of the course, I had not only gained the skills to create a magazine but also the motivation to finally start one for Suubi. Our magazine focuses on encouraging students and young women in their faith. I invited older students at our school to contribute, and now, a group of children in rural Mubende, Uganda, has a magazine filled with their own pictures and their own words. I hope this will not only strengthen their faith but also inspire them to develop their reading and writing skills, empowering them to share their stories with confidence.

DAVID EARL issue #5-7

When Matthew Walsh (whom I still call “Professor”) asked me to write about how my time at lumière affected my path beyond MassBay, the answer was at once simple and impossible. It's affected everything, because everything started with lumière and the creative writing courses Professor Walsh offered. But when I do look back, the point A to point B nature of “where they are now” seems to not tell much at all. If you must know, I've ended up in the Masters in Fine Arts graduate program for creative writing at UMass Boston. On the way, I was briefly Editor-in-Chief of its undergraduate literary magazine *The Watermark* and I've interned at Arrowsmith Press; currently, I'm taking a course on publishing, with the hopes of getting into the business, whatever becomes of it in the future.

These are all the beads, neatly clacking together on a string, whose origin point I can reasonably call “the



Issue 5: *Downpour* by David Earl

time I spent at MassBay.” Fine for a cover letter, perhaps. But thinking back, what strikes me most about lumière was what a clear view it gave down the road trodden by those who are driven, passionate, and deranged enough to curate, edit, typeset, print, promote, and propagate fiction. It let us sweat in the labor of nurturing writers, giving them a voice beyond their voice by giving mere written words the bones, flesh, and blood of a corporeal book, bound in glue, thread, or saddle-stitched and rolling off a press.

Let it be clear that lumière, like all literary journals, is a sausage whose processing should remain unspoken of in polite company. But that gristly churning and cranking is what I now find reassuring, for it said we, the editors, had done the work right, that we cared about the writing and the people who submitted it to our mercy. And the editor's work is as artful as it is crude; we are caretakers and butchers who raise, brand, and slaughter our writings and writers. Do not think of the rejected writing: the smarmy political tirades drifting like gristle in lukewarm cynicism; the cloying piety and enthusiastic enjambments of incompetent poetry; and the reams of derivative drivel whose serifs seem purposed for scraping skulls clean of grey matter. When we smite down such poor writing, smugly mouthing “no” to a manuscript, do not think of how we sear shut the lips of people, snipping their disembodied vocals cords. As the launch date approaches, do not think of typesets, fonts, serifs, the clutter of running heads, paper weight, contact lists, launch parties; all hamstrings wont to shear at the very breath of the inopportune. Least of all, do not think about that clangoring demon-mascot of an Editor's symbolic capital: the “matter of taste.” Taste—biased, irrational, sentimental taste—is the temperamental engine that powers any literary forcemeat, the tendon that brings down the swing of a culling axe. The only thing more king is simply the will to care about such a publication, a belief that it matters. And we the editors do think it matters; all this haranguing we slog through just to look for those voices that piece us, that take us around an unseen bend, move us so much that we feel awe at the very fact that it is our lowly little selves that are handling the priceless.

That is what I carry most from lumière—from lumière! Not AGNI or Ploughshares or Salamander, no, at a little literary magazine serving a community college off Route 9 in Wellesley. And magazines like these matter deeply; it's both a miracle and no miracle at all that lumière continues to this day. It gives voice to those that we feel deserve to be heard for those that might not have the opportunity elsewhere; gives the MassBay community something of value, to say that we have a publication, corporeal, flesh and blood, of our own. And it's the editing team and the venerable Professor Walsh that ensure that the most deserving voices are heard, because it matters. It's that spirit that I

carry that with all the grace I can muster towards an ever-uncertain future. And it all starts here! Right on this page!

FAISAL MURAD issue #5-7

It's been over four years since I left lumière behind, but the experience has stayed with me ever since. In many ways, my love for writing and my belief in building writing communities were born in lumière's meeting room with its long wooden table and a ceaselessly whirring humidifier that was a valuable member of our team. Now, when I teach writing at the University of Massachusetts, tutor students in the writing center, read submissions for magazines, or write my own stories, I constantly draw on that love. In fact, one specific, very comic, image is etched in my brain. It was our campaign poster for Issue 5 of lumière: An artist Uncle Sam, wearing a beret, holding a pencil, soliciting submissions from writers. “I want your stories,” he seems to be saying on that poster. Now, I seem to have embodied that image.

What I cherish most from my time at lumière is the love for stories that I found there. When I transferred to UMass Boston, the first thing I did — alongside a dear friend — was build a creative writing club. The idea was borrowed from the first creative writing club I was a part of, run by lumière's Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Matt Walsh. I am happy to report that our club at UMass is running strong. Pen in hand, finger pointing, I am still approaching people to ask for stories. That feels good, like a steady, sure step towards a society connected through stories.

I also teach creative writing at UMass Boston. Though there I don't have to directly seek out stories, my outreach radar is still alert. Every semester, I read many student pieces and try to guide my students to give their stories the shape they had envisioned. Occasionally, a story grabs a hold of me, and when it does, I make sure the students know which of our own creative journals at UMass Boston could be the right home for it.

I will leave you with this final thought: correctness, grammar, and other sentence-level concerns are all useful in their own way; and when I work at the writing center, teach academic writing, or polish my own stories, I do love shackling those run-on sentences, merging fragments, fixing misspellings and the like. But, if there is one thing I learned from my time at lumière, it was this: stories are so much more than the sentence-level concerns. They are emotions, histories, struggles, tears, laughs, love — the good things that connect us all. If you want to chase something, chase that connection.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have fiction to write and typos to pretend I never made.

DIEGO ROCHA issue #1 editor

Many years have passed since our first issue of lumière, but the memories are still incredibly fresh! I remember the love we shared as a cohort, and the creative burst we all felt as we worked together to bring the first issue to life. From receiving submissions, to reading and sharing our thoughts with them... Not to mention the difficulties for getting a printed version; technology was still an issue—pew, we've come so far! The result was a first issue filled with voices and visions so excited and eager to be heard and seen!

Ten years ago, I wrote *Matador*, a story about a bullfighter desperate for love and understanding. Ten years later, this story became the foundation for a thesis film I wrote and directed at the prestigious FSU Film School, in Tallahassee-FL. *Suerte de Matar*, the film, has had a wonderful festival circuit ride, receiving accolades all over the world. After obtaining my master's in film production at Florida State University, I became visiting professor of Acting and Voice in the FSU School of Theatre.

Matt Walsh has always been my mentor, since my very early days as his first English Major student, along with Joshua Klein. We were the dream team! Matt's generosity towards my ideas is something that I always cherish, because they have carried me from the classroom at MassBay all the way to where I am now. Between then and now, I've grown so much as a human being and an artist. And although the journey has landed me in such a special place, I never forget where it all started. Honestly, the first materialized manifestation of my Art was the first issue of Lumière! I truly hope you enjoy this celebratory issue. It feels good coming home once again!

JAYJAY CONRAD issue #1-4

I joined lumière on a whim. Or, rather, I was volun-told. Walking through the library of the Wellesley MassBay campus—where I am generally profoundly uncomfortable, in the presence of blase wealth presenting itself as not having wealth, where the stark differences between the quality of the Framingham buildings, classes, and campuses is even more apparent, at least at the time I, a Framingham-ite who grew up in generational poverty affecting middle-class, attended—someone from my English class grabbed my arm. I asked where we were going only to be told brusquely it didn't matter as long as I got there.

Much to my surprise, where I was going very much did matter. Where I was going changed the course of my life.

I'm pretty sure I'd never been in charge of anything substantial. Nothing meaningful, at least. My own agency, it felt, had been severely limited. Between my

own neurodivergence and the corrective “therapies” I was subjected to in the ‘90s—before the whole world waving offensive puzzle-piece banners and shouting autism acceptance claimed that it’s changed (it hasn’t) to a more compassionate version of telling children their fundamental modalities of existence are morally objectionable at worst, non-functional and ergo primed for eradication at best—life felt like a series of events inflicted upon me. I’d learned to tolerate, to endure, to accept I didn’t know best. I’d learned to taper my excitement; the way I moved and spoke, the way I expressed joy, were all based on how they may contribute to a neuromajority’s arbitrary discomfort.

And I wrote poetry.

I centered my life around poetry. Poetry became a rosetta stone, the way I understood the world. The way I understood the intensity of my emotions, the private, world-consuming meaningfulness of experience, the details of the world dancing psychedelic fractals pressing down on my chest in a pregnant state of potential energy.

At each moment of my life, a book of poetry was there, a sword and a shield. Blake, Naruda, Tennyson, Baudelaire, Plath, Kavanaugh, Rumi, Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Herrick, Crane, Plath, Hughes, Moore, Poe, Oliver, Hardy, Rimbaud. These are the iron girders that build the soapbox on which I stand, who understood me in my sublime joy in overlooked moments; these are the lens through which my experience fits into the world. In a world where my wrongness had seemed so loud I cannot hear myself think, the poets and their sprawling, technical forms, their unabashed expertise, their unapologetic passion gently led me into my ability to lead, know, and more importantly excerpt agency over not just my own experience but the world as a whole. As form gives verse meaningful structure; as vining plants cannot fruit without a trellis to support the enormity of their potential blooms, their knowing wanderments; through sonnet and sestina I made sense of my place in the world. Without their container, I could not be this iteration. Without lumière, I would not have become.

Until lumière, the intensity of my interest was one of those things I’d learned to tone down, to not express. lumière is where I learned I had authority on the topic; that decades of in-depth self-directed education, that vertiginous heights of passion I’d scaled, fallen down from, and decided were worth re-scaling—better, more skillfully. I learned I knew the way. And I could, maybe, show others.

I like to think it is in the lumière meetings, at the head of the table sweating over deadlines, page metrics, cohesive design elements, outreach, that I took the training wheels of my until-then jerry-rigged

expertise and saw, for the first time with perfect clarity—with all the kaleidoscopic detail—the depth, breadths, and sheer staggering height of my ability. I can remember the bile rising in my throat, bloomed from the pit of my stomach and twisted like a rustcaked crankstart at being looked to as an authority; I can taste, just as easily, the words of protest at the suggestion I become editor-in-chief. I can still smell gold mylar balloons, last-minute cakes, an auditorium-eatery reverberating tittering voices, too many empty chairs, fear, joy, cohesion: we did this, we made this. This endures, in part because of my hand. But mostly because poetry endures, because we are human and being human means poetry is vital to our well-being.

The bitter, barked laugh at the suggestion of editor-in-chief alone is still clear as day to me. Ten years after the bile rose, at the head of a classroom I painted purple myself, I’m teaching a lesson in my Form Poetry class on syntax as style. Students who move their bodies and express their joys in ways I recognize listen to me talk about the thing that means most to me: poetry as art, poetry as academics, poetry as experience, poetry as a measure of being human. Four years teaching two classes borne of roiling passion, righteous anger, fought for, carved out, wept over, and I’m learning to speak slowly, clearly; I no longer speed up my lecture when I feel the hook of “nobody cares” pull me lie a guthooked fish, I’m learning to no longer twist on the line.

lumière is the single point where the threads of my life were gathered into a braid, where it exploded outward with all the structure of sonnet and sestina, the refrains of triolet, rondeau, ballad.



lumière issue 1 staff: Branden Lacroix, JayJay Connad, Diego Rocha, Joshua Klein, Matt Walsh, Christian Hardy, Sabrina Putnam, & Paulo Shimmelpfennig

Poetry is an action. Poetry is a promise. Poetry is your lineage, your connection to humanity. Write poems. Write badly. Practice. Continue the tedious, sometimes uncouth, back-breaking and worthwhile work, and we will be looking back on another ten years before we blink.

Still Lit,
—JayJay

LUMIERE

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can submit work to lumière?

Anyone, and that includes you! It's our practice to ensure that at least 70% of the work in the magazine has been created by students, but we also find it important to publish work from faculty, staff, members of the community, and anyone else who hears our call.

What types of work are accepted?

You can submit your poetry, short fiction, prose, short plays, lyrics, artwork, photographs, and other creative work.

How can I submit my work?

Go to lumiere.litmag.com and click “Submit Your Work!” at the top of the page, or email us at litmag@massbay.edu.

How are submissions reviewed?

First, our submissions manager removes all identifying information from the submission. The editorial team looks for work that is original in subject and style, showing the world something new, or letting us see something familiar in a new light. We highly value attention to craft, no matter what the medium.

Does the magazine staff edit submissions?

We reserve the right to crop and enhance art submissions, to copyedit, and to make minor changes to maintain consistency across the magazine, but we highly value the integrity of the work we receive and will not make substantive changes. We promise not to change your ending.

When is the deadline for submissions?

We accept submissions all year round and publish annually at the end of the spring semester. The deadline for each issue will be announced every spring. Submissions received after the deadline will be reserved for the following issue.

Is AI work accepted?

Per our submission guidelines, all submissions must be the creation of the applicant; as such, this does not include AI-created works.

Is fan art accepted?

Our goal is to accept works that are unique and unfamiliar to the audience. While fan art is considered a type of art, it is not exclusive to the artist and is therefore not accepted. Also, without the appropriate licenses and permissions, fan art may be considered an infringement of the copyholder’s right to publish that work.

Can I publish my work anonymously?

Yes! When filling out the website submission form you can choose to have your piece published anonymously or with a pseudonym.

Who creates the magazine?

The magazine is primarily developed by the hard-working students of EN202: Advanced Writing; however, any student at MassBay is welcome and encouraged to join the lumière staff. If interested, please contact English Professor Matt Walsh at mwalsh@massbay.edu.

How can I view the magazine?

Printed copies are available on the Wellesley Hills and Framingham campuses in the library and Academic Achievement Center. You can also find this issue and all previous editions online at lumiere.litmag.com

Legal Stuff

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