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# MANASTASH

JOURNAL OF WRITING AND ART

VOLUME 27 | SPRING 2017

MANASTASH 2017

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# MANASTASH

Journal of Writing and Art

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear *Manastash* readers,

In the 27th edition of the *Manastash* literary magazine, we want to showcase the diverse minds of our CWU campus as well as create a path of new growth for the years to come. We wish to cultivate and inspire the current and future artists of our Central community and push them as humans and as artists. We hope to continue in future issues to break boundaries and reach new heights. We are grateful, as always, to our dear readers, for your continued support in this creative endeavor.

Thank you for reading and supporting *Manastash*!

Sincerely,  
Olivia Abt, Rashay Reading, and Amanda Giligan  
Managing Editors

# DEDICATION

This issue of *Manastash* is dedicated to Dr. Terry Martin and Dr. Steven Olson for their contribution to the creative arts.



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Cover Photograph by Kyle Bagley

*Manastash* is published with the support of  
Central Washington University's Department of English.

Printed in the U.S.A. by Abbott's Printing Inc., [abbottsprinting.com](http://abbottsprinting.com)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## POETRY

- 1 **Abt, Olivia**  
*Doo-ah Ditty Into A Carrot Microphone*
- 2 **Benson, Natalie**  
*Cardboard Lilies*  
*Walking tree*
- 4 **Bisogno, Maria-Elizabeth**  
*Bugs in My Room*
- 5 **Bloom, Leslie**  
*Reflections of Pain*
- Buckner, Kali**
- 6 **A Stuffed Tiger Named Y to Rain**  
*I Wonder What Silence Sounds Like*
- 8 **Carpenter, Patrick**  
*Rosaries (Churches Started Being Weird)*
- 9 **Courter, Megan**  
*ball*
- Days, Jason**
- 10 **A Pot of Emeralds - After Jamaal May -**  
*Ochophobia - The Fear of Vehicles*
- 12 **Delgado, Jesus Ayala**  
*Who Am I*
- 14 **Denner, Richard**  
*Calendar of the Moon*
- 15 **Dennon, Anne**  
*Quelque Chose*
- 16 **Epperson, Megan**  
*In The Garden*  
*So Heavy*
- 18 **Farnsworth, Max**  
*Last Night You Came Home From Work and Told Me*  
*That My Clothes Looked Metrosexual*
- 19 **Gilmore, Vaughan**  
*This Good Old Tailor*
- 20 **Gould, Shaylynn**  
*Appaloosa*
- 21 **Helmick, Brittany**  
*Inauguration Day*  
*Threads That Speak: The Chilean Arpilleristas as*  
*Parachutes of Wind-Dispersed Dandelions*  
*When in the Valley Where You're on Track if You're*  
*off Track*
- 24 **Hernandez, Selena**  
*With Unconditional, Undying Love*
- 25 **Kelley, Joseph**  
*Shitty Traditions*
- 26 **Lee, Forrest**  
*Swipe*
- 27 **Lewis, Oliver**  
*The Vitalist Manifesto,*  
*Torn Pocket*
- 29 **Miles, Sarah**  
*Take A Girl*  
*Threads that Speak; The History of the Chilean Arpille-*  
*ras As My Privilege is a Silent*  
*"h" at the End of My Name*  
*When You Stop Wearing A Bra Everyday*
- 32 **Mitchell, Tim**  
*Reset*
- 33 **Nambo, Ruby**  
*The Love, Pain and Independence*
- 35 **Osorio, Gabriela**  
*The Real Me*  
*Because*  
*I Believe*
- 37 **Riendeau, Michael**  
*Poetry About Poetry*
- 38 **Roach, John**  
*Thus Always to Tyrants*
- 39 **Robinson, Samantha**  
*Castle in a Pig Pen*  
*Will a Tree Grow in My Lungs*
- 41 **Santana, Rene**  
*Even Death*  
*Bro*

43 **Simons, Connor**  
*The Moon of Falling Leaves*

44 **Slone, Savannah**  
*Because You Asked About Love*  
*Hollow Lungs*

46 **Sorrels, Launie**  
*Whisper of Wind*

47 **Sorrels, Melynda**  
*Time In a Bottle*

48 **Stanley, Amber**  
*Heart Breaker,*  
*Suicidal Schizophrenic Tendencies*

50 **Talley, Drea**  
*Looking at a Boy*

51 **Taloff, Nic**  
*Playing With Spectrum*

52 **Vaughn, Bryce**  
*Central*

53 **Virdin, Spencer**  
*Light and Dark*  
*“untitled”*

55 **Weyrick, Samantha**  
*Spectrum*  
*Write to be Writers*

57 **Witzel, Jennifer**  
*No Way Home*

## PROSE

58 **Benson, Natalie**  
*Distracted*

61 **Connelly, Erin**  
*Alone with Animals*

64 **Courter, Megan**  
*Friends Don't let Friends Sneeze Once*

66 **Gilligan, Amanda**  
*Birthday Surprise*  
*Setting the Bar*

75 **Greso, Emily**  
*Lady Winter*

76 **Hsia, Trevor**  
*Scatter*

82 **Kelly, Joseph**  
*Everything Rattles*

## VISUAL ART

85 **Featured Artist: Krista Zimmerman**

92 **Craig, Kayla**  
*Arachne (Self-Portrait)*

93 **Crane, Lesley**  
*No Contact*

94 **Garcia, Ashley**  
*The Other Side*

95 **Harley, Austin**  
*Make Amerikkka Suck Again*

96 **Laird, Brendan**  
*Space Tiger*

97 **Nelson, Hailey**  
*Silence*  
*Dreams*

99 **Nemrow, Anjerie**  
*Muscle Man*

100 **Otterbach, Elizabeth**  
*Psychedelic Muse*  
*Self Portrait*  
*Structure*

103 **Ruiz, Dalia**  
*Egg head*

104 **Robinson, Lana**  
*Metallica Album*

105 **Sullivan, Carlos**  
*The Imposter*

106 **Wicorek, Sarah**  
*Adam and Eve*

107 **Weier, Ryan**  
*Golden Circle, Iceland*

108 **CONTRIBUTERS' BIOS**

An aerial photograph of a fairground at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. The sky is filled with scattered, light-colored clouds. In the foreground, there are several large, long buildings with metal roofs, likely exhibition halls or arenas. A smaller, white building with a red roof is visible on the left. The ground is a mix of paved areas and grass. The word "POLE" is overlaid in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image. The background shows a hazy landscape with rolling hills and a town in the distance.

POLE

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Salt Lake City, Utah, taken from a high angle. The city is densely packed with buildings, streets, and parking lots. In the foreground, there are several large, yellow-leaved trees. The background shows a valley with more buildings and distant mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. Overlaid on the image is the word 'TRY' in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. To the left of the text is a large, stylized white graphic that resembles a flame or a leaf, with a central vertical stem and several pointed, flame-like shapes extending outwards.

# TRY





# DOO-AH DITTY INTO A CARROT MICROPHONE

*for Nama by Olivia Abt*

The music truck was an ice cream truck, no nap for me.

Twinkle lights instead of light bulbs, getting lost on a road I know  
always leading back to tombstones and comfort.

Cold. People actually write like this. And it's beautiful.

Screw birds. Not hummingbirds.  
There is an exception to every rule.

The smell of pasta water after golfing,  
Don't forget to sing the tortellini song!

What is the difference between  
a shoelace from a thumbtack?

Jarred screaming.  
Your death destroyed the girl in me,  
but is teaching me to become a woman.

Change a tire on a car,  
because ladies do it all.

I let you walk away, because I take after my grandfather  
Say "I love you" when I feel it, because I would rather take after you.

The day her mom got murdered, I thought of you  
Faucet drips and gargling the soundtrack to freshly yellowed curtains opening, you  
Left.

New York City in winter, make snow angels  
My father almost left but didn't.

You took our house and lost your home.  
Warm summer due on intertwined fingers, we lost fireflies in the stars like we lost our breath to each other.

# CARDBOARD LILIES

*by Natalie Benson*

My cousins are macaroni people.  
Cheaply glued to pieces of paper  
with Crayola drawn smiles.  
They hug strangers with their dry pasta-arms,  
tolerating slow-motion attendees  
who try to understand.

My uncle is cracked granite.  
Scuffed and chipped in some places,  
from where tar dragged him  
twenty feet with black teeth.  
His scraped stone hands shake flesh hands,  
and his silver hair and porcelain smile  
shine under the fluorescent lights.

I am thousands of crumpled eggshell napkins.  
Sinking into a cushioned chair,  
tearing pieces off of my imprinted edges,  
and hating the sound of my mother's laughter.

I stare at the chestnut box blanketed in diaper-smelling lilies,  
hoping it to be a cardboard cutout.  
Maybe, if I blow hard enough, it will fall over.

# WALKING TREE

*by Natalie Benson*

She cries about the gashes she puts into her own skin.

She falls asleep to monks praying, and Lincoln getting shot.

Vanilla touched kisses.

She lives in houses built from Legos.

An abdomen covered in bark.

Ankle scar. Wrist scar. Abdomen scar.

*You're a slut, you're a slut, like me, like me.*

Holiday aprons strangle her neck.

These hands are a gift, so use them.

Purple and green are the colors of a broken TV screen.

God left her in a rock quarry

and a motorcycle king begs her to stay.

# BUGS IN MY ROOM

*by Maria-Elizabeth Bisogno*

Bugs in my room,  
In places too high for me to reach to squish them  
Bugs in my room in general,  
Because you always squish them for me  
Even if I can reach  
I called you once to ask if you could come over and kill a spider  
You came running

Jack Daniels and Coke  
A lot of Jack  
A little Coke  
Too strong for me to even smell

That part in American Pie by Don McLean  
When he sings “I know that you’re in love with him  
‘Cause I saw you dancing in the gym”  
I don’t know why  
But I knew I was in love with you  
When I heard you singing that part  
After we had been in the car hour what seemed like hours  
I was motion sick and dizzy  
I had just wanted to get out of the car  
My eyes were closed, my face against the window  
You sang that part and I felt better

Bugs in my stomach,  
In places too deep for me to reach to squish them  
Their long, spindly legs sinking into my abdominal tissue.  
Crawling into my intestines,  
Swarming over my heart until it’s a black, moving mass  
At the sight of your smile  
And the words “I love you” falling over me  
The bugs blossom into butterflies

# REFLECTION OF PAIN

*by Leslie Bloom*

Cancer – Ripped

from my body

cut the diseased flesh

Mutilated – unrecognizable

Tears hide the shame

of the purple and blue scars

my body's failings shine

like light from the glowing moon.

My soul – ravaged

In the dark of the night's stars

No longer do they shine

Only a reflection floats across the sky

Tears flow slowly down my cheeks

my mind lost in emotion

My innards – stripped

Away with callous care they toss

the flesh like trash onto the street

The shame – devoured

my heart and my eyes can no

longer gaze upon my naked body

The mirror – shattered

a million pieces lay upon the floor

that beast – disease

filled light

# A STUFFED TIGER NAMED Y TO RAIN

*by Kali Buckner*

Based on “Paper Tiger to Wind” by Jamaal May

We attack bright afternoons

With

Laughter and stone branches

That held twelve

Elephant ears

Longing now

I’m blind. Passing lollypops,

Blueberry

Pancakes and

Pinecone battle crys screamed

On wet stone, thin air and freeze-dried shadow

To cook and clean

Other’s shadows

Biting back

Too weak words. We dance on

The occasional cyclone

Counting down the clock

Giggleing clicks

# I WONDER WHAT SILENCE SOUNDS LIKE

*by Kali Buckner*

Get on  
We ride  
The beating wings between my thighs reminds ears what life is

Poetry is easy  
52 minutes STOP  
68 minutes STOP  
Now count the lines

Poetry is easy  
STOP

Each line, never ending  
Screeching  
Poor circle poor circle  
Never long enough

Each line, never colored  
Howling  
Poor flower poor flower  
Never pain enough

Each line, never right  
Crying  
Poor coal poor coal  
Never clear enough

Get on  
We hide  
The beating wings between my ear reminding my dreams what life is

Poetry is easy  
STOP



# “ROSARIES (CHURCHES STARTED BEING WEIRD)”

*by Patrick Michael Carpenter*

There it was. Coiled like a rubber snake:  
Jarring but impotent, mouth agape  
Drawer ajar, form molded faith  
Loosely bound, wound,  
Comfortably round in  
A self-explanatory knot:  
My 4th grade rosary.  
Now, when you're in fourth grade you have  
A lot of weird goals – I wanted to be a painter,  
A lawyer, a doctor, a teacher,  
And a priest. Yes, the gayboy wanted to be a priest,  
Cause I was a know-it-all and priests had all the  
answers.  
They could raise the dead and heal the sick and talk  
to capital G, God, and I needed answers.

But then churches started being weird.

One day, all of a sudden, an edifice was torn to the  
ground.  
They talked of milk and honey, and served blood  
and flesh.  
Churches got weird for me when I learned  
That Crusaders didn't civilize the savages.  
When I learned a five in the basket was worth  
more than a hand to a neighbor.  
When I learned that godly sounded a lot like gaudy,  
And when I learned that “good” men did bad things.  
They talked crackers and wine, and preached blood-  
shed and salvation.  
Churches got weird for me when I learned that there  
weren't savages.  
Maybe that's why I thought my 4th grade rosary was  
weird.

Why it scarred me there, in that drawer.  
Because it glowed in the dark,  
Because men pray behind stained glass,  
Half light for half truths  
Because all the light is too much to carry.  
Because I never saw someone pray in the dark,  
Because I nightly prayed a decade in the dark to be  
decent.

Church started being weird when homily hurt my  
heart,  
When amen meant no boys.  
I held that rosary in my palm and two millennia of  
dogma had it wound round and proud  
The first time I fucked a boy I thought of my fourth  
grade rosary –  
How it looked like stars and how his cum made a  
constellation of sin across virgin skin.

How many hail marys does it take to get to the  
center of an inferiority complex?  
He wore it around his neck and the room thrust in  
soft relief against the dark.  
When Conquistadores say “Hecho un cristo/made a  
christ” I think of him.  
In the pale light I turned Sodom to Calvary.  
Churches got weird when I knew all the prayers, all  
the spells,  
And they didn't cure me.  
Churches got weird for me when it was reflex, not  
reflection that brought me there.  
And I say let us pray!:  
Our Father who aren't in heaven, hollow be thy  
name, but fulsome be your blame.  
Hail Mary, fuck the gays, the whores especially,  
wicked are girls who fuck women, and cursed be the  
girls who are dudes.  
Amen

I put the rosary in my pocket and continued to clean.  
Churches got weird when I went to make mama  
happy, when priests were men in drag,  
Churches got weird when I got happy

# BALL

*by Megan Courter*

a spiked ball in my chest, sitting  
just inside my ribcage, behind my lungs  
prodding, poking, stabbing-  
how are you  
are you okay  
do you love me still  
what would you think of my life now-  
bloody questions leak into my inner space  
dripping, dripping...

I see you post  
a star in our sky  
brief, flaring  
I love you, *I love you*  
this connection fades like comet trails, like blood smeared  
and I cannot connect.

my mental wifi's fried.  
this ball pokes holes in all my love,  
and drains it down my spine.

# A POT OF EMERALDS -AFTER JAMAAL MAY -

*by Jason Days*

Think cashmere, swathed  
around a wrist, wool scarf

wrapping a svelte neck.  
Think down pillows. But

say feather and think quill,  
on a pen or porcupine

fountain or hedgehog.  
Say rodent or rode

or leave me alone. There are days  
I enjoy being hatched

from shells. Cracked  
into morning scrambles

and omelets, too many  
yokes and sunny side ups.

When I was a recycled  
bottle, my wrinkled plastic

held by fingers of persons,  
I embedded into cup holders

of autos and strollers.  
Ask what I've been. Seattle

is an expanding skyline littered  
with construction cranes,

a boy scattering remains  
of a building from his hair.

I say Seattle;  
you think rain.

I say rain; you think bow;  
I say rainbow

arched reflection;  
think a pot of emeralds. My pants pockets

hold hands. Wallet between denim,  
denim worn at the knees.

Not everyone finds their bottom,  
say the junkies.

Homeless spare a dollar,  
pleads a voice of vapors,

a broken-down apartment,  
this empty parcel,

this black-hole dark pit  
say tent city is empty, no,

there is space here for trash-  
just not persons, breathing like you.

# OCHOPHOBIA- THE FEAR OF VEHICLES

*by Jason Days*

In between broken pieces  
of plastic a split oil cover  
seeps what some believe  
to be the fossilized remains  
of an extinct species of reptile.

A man with ghostly white  
features, sobbing wife in the  
front seat, tells me he doesn't  
give a shit about the insurance  
card I wave in front of his face.

His blue Chevy pick-up truck's  
front bumper is curled up  
like the face of an infant  
enjoying its first taste of lemon.

I sign away the ambulance waiver  
with my left hand because my right  
hand looks like someone smashed  
it against the front of a pick-up at  
sixty miles per hour.

Witnesses say I was thrown through  
the air, spinning like a helicopter blade  
ten feet above the ground for nearly  
one hundred feet, while my motorcycle  
broke into a thousand pieces.

I have to take their word for it.

Grinding a cigarette into the gravel  
between broken pieces of black and  
yellow plastic resembling a grist of  
fallen bees I stare into the sweetest  
sunset, my eyes watering cheek bones.

# WHO AM I.

*by Jesus Ayala Delgado*

What am I, but a lost soul  
An identity misinformed, carved by rhetorical minds  
Ones that claimed me to be nothing, but a thug  
I use to be okay with umbrella terms, labels that I now despise  
Derived from those that depict my lineage to be inferior, of other bloods  
What right did they have to classify me, renounce the labels placed upon we!

Who am I?  
Mexican-American, can I be  
Cannot be for capitalistic values they cherish, spit on their culture and heritage  
Pleading acceptance in the eyes of the whites, their minds become white  
Assimilation is not my path  
This is not I!

Who am I?  
Before been conformed by lies  
Done so by making me believe I lack the intellect  
To get a degree  
Not just me but the legions of me  
Many have fallen to deception, reside in a cage and wither away  
For elites seek profits, dropouts fill their pockets  
There wouldn't be so many if we were placed on a path that connected us to our indigenous past  
Criminal I am not  
I am no convict!

Who am I?  
Before went with the flow, walked in the shadows of those before I  
My reflection was the perception of political elites, neglected the white men's education  
For they whisper in the art of deception  
Fatal words that persuade the young, to believe they are thugs  
I am no thug!

Who am I?  
They call me Illegal, alien and dreamer  
Say this isn't my home, but my roots are to these lands  
Theirs are not, they are more alien than I  
Brainwashed me to believe their "history" as my own  
Consequently, I hated the brown on my face, I hated my own race  
Illegal degrades, aliens are from space, a dreamer, I do dream  
But there is more to who I am!

What their words have concealed the world has revealed, they fear my disobedient mind  
They fear the indigenous mind  
We are smart, environments are hostile, to make us believe to be naïve  
Not naïve, problematic maybe for the system doesn't listen to minorities!

Discovering my history opened my eyes  
Now on a path of those before I, the first Chicano, of recorded time  
Initiated in the sixties, the creation of El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan  
A movement to liberate those with indigenous blood, those with an identity lost.

Chicanismo is a political statement, respect and pride in one's ethnics and culture

But men relearn to be men for patriarchy created, arrogant men  
See women as prequels not equals, women are not inferior  
Women play vital roles, beautiful minds who don't get enough rewards  
Proof is on the walls, portrayed through their art.

But with the passing of time, new become old, new minds take control and ideas evolve  
Chican@ is out, Chicanx is next  
Fighting to protect those imprisoned by corporate greed  
Greed that creates hostility for those it exploits  
Spineless political elites, blame immigrants for economic altercations  
Lies that slice deep in the minds of sheep, blasphemy to me  
Side with community needs, I choose the indigenous we.

So who am I?  
I am the product of struggle and despair  
Produced by corrupted systems that still loom  
And all that is felt is hate, vibrating from starving hearts  
While society continues to produce oppression  
Ripping families apart, incarcerating those who haven't committed a crime  
But these systems need to go, only way to improve the nation we call home  
For the revolution is not on hold, liberation is the main goal!

I use to be confused of my own pigmentation, but where once it was smeared  
It has become clear, hate is oppression!  
Eradicate it with love!  
Educate the heart, it is the weapon against oppression  
So who am I? I am unique, don't go by the terms that strip my identity, I am, a Chicanx!

# CALENDAR OF THE MOON

*by Richard Denner*

Moon of soft dreams  
Moon of sweetness and smoke  
Moon of wax and tar  
Moon of scaffolds  
Moon of the charnel grounds

Well-hung moon  
Full-bosomed moon  
Moon of a face I sometimes hate  
Moon, Moon of a face I adore  
Moon that turns to flame  
Moon that turns in pain  
Moon that goes as far as I go

Bandaged moon bruised and bloodied  
Tangled-tooth moon with a mouth of cotton  
Babylonian moon hiding in a cloud rack  
Old man moon sitting in a chair

Moon covered with lost socks  
Moon with astronauts in her mustache  
Moon cruising in her black Mercury convertible  
Moon dancing in a diaphanous gown  
Moon peeping in at me through my window

Cryptic moon  
Perfumed moon  
Drunken moon

Moon of the raven who sat on the flagpole  
when a bolt of lightning struck  
Moon of the Humpies jumping in the stream while  
I'm doing the venison jerk to the stove rag band

Moon on a hill in a tree in the heart  
Moon in a place I've made  
Moon just beyond my hand  
Moon, will you be free after work?  
But, no, you have to work a double shift

# QUELQUE CHOSE

*by Anne Dennon*

The smell of bitter  
almond oil in a little brown jug

The quick hello

The listening again  
to an audible thing unheeded  
momentarily deaf

Catching something impossible  
momentarily deft

The hat on the hat rack

The sorrowful country song

The fine grey haired lady

The long goodbye

The clever insinuation

Heliotrope

The slight incline!

You the creator discussing  
with you the editor.



# IN THE GARDEN

*by Megan Epperson*

Marigold and rosemary:  
a circle of happy, bright peace  
Framing an arc of animals dancing on hind legs  
'round the may pole.  
Rottweilers, giraffes,  
The lions, tigers, and rabbits—  
Then more.  
If only the fish could dance along too.  
Fragrant herbs, like lemon balm,  
Sweet marjoram, and the mint family,  
Permeate the air  
With perfumed perfection—  
Nature's best.  
Every flower in bloom  
From rose to lilac to heather and violas.  
All but one.  
The one bloom—a daffodil:  
The snake in the fields of yellow,  
Colored so dark a purple  
It was the burnt blood on and otherwise beautiful day.  
Blooming but once a year,  
This ashy ember opened slowly.  
Tonight is the night, you see  
On all hallows eve it blooms  
Reveals Eden's dark secret  
All this beauty of dooms.  
Limbs pretzeled, cartilage crumbling  
Body's long since layered  
Into a puzzle of horrified faces  
Turned to bleached bone,  
Feeding their decay to the ponderosa pine,  
Oak, grass, flowers, and birch.  
The grasses are Flora, riding the carcass  
Of the supposedly mighty conqueror  
Of her lover—Tierra

# SO HEAVY

by Megan Epperson

I'm an MS monster  
Wait, no. I have MS  
MS is a monster,  
Or am I?  
I mean, it is in my brain,  
Right?

*Oh girl, this boat is sinking*

107 miles--1 hour 49 minutes  
to walk backwards, sideways, etc  
Dr. Minute 2--done doing circus tricks  
Dr. Minute 3--I have relapsing, remitting Multiple  
Sclerosis  
Dr. Minute 5--attempted forced feeding  
Of non-cure cures  
Minute 34--locked in a public bathroom  
For a sea-soaked call titled Daddy

*Oh girl, this boat is sinking  
There's no sea left for me*

Everything is complicated  
Under all this weight  
My mind is left a house  
With mylene sheathed wires  
Stripped by anti-body cloaked soldiers  
Leaving me vulnerable  
To crossed cables  
Shorted limbs  
Catastrophic life shorts...

*Oh girl, this boat is sinking  
There's no sea left for me  
And how the sky gets heavy*

No skittle cures for me  
No blues for anxiety or reds for MS  
Don't get me started on multi-colors of  
Depression coated-sugar candies

*Oh girl, this boat is sinking  
There's no sea left for me  
And how the sky gets heavy  
When you are underneath it*

I am a junkie  
Not for pre-approved jelly beans  
Or smoked dreams  
But for a boat-load of sadness

The world shoots me up every day  
With I'm the blueberry girl,

With other person's tears  
With the orange-tanned man is coming  
And the reaper is a thief to fear  
Without remedy

*Oh girl this boat is sinking  
There's no sea left for me  
And how the sky gets heavy  
When you are underneath it*

*Oh, I want to sail away from here*

# LAST NIGHT YOU CAME HOME FROM WORK AND TOLD ME THAT MY CLOTHES LOOKED METROSEXUAL

*by Max Farnsworth*

And I knew what you meant to say was gay because if you knew what metro sexual meant you wouldn't have apologized for saying it.

The next day you told me you were just giving me shit and I could tell by the look on your face you were looking for me to explain why I smiled when you said what you said but I don't have to tell you.

You already know.

But you still expect me to explain because you don't know that I know you forced your daughter to explain in explicit detail the exact nature of our relationship.

And since I know you know your daughter isn't a virgin anymore thanks to yours truly I shouldn't have to explain that I was smiling because I was still hard from being inside your daughter 10 minutes before you got home from work and called me gay.

# THE GOOD OLD TAILOR

*by Vaughan Gilmore*

The good old tailor, tall yet pear-ish  
Stricken, by coughin' fits, yet fingers of pine  
Sturdy, they ford to and fro  
Through this, endless flow

Renown and diligent.  
Ladies and gents, the young or the old  
All must know, the good old tailor, who only works alone

Binding and fitting bodies with garish  
A fresh set of skin framing the one laying within  
The sweetest old tailor good and carin' services.  
Requisite but a piece, a penny to share

For the memento, morish a remembrance,  
Of the seams he guided and glided across, this river of stitch,  
So that your body and soul, may cease to hunch. But stand tall  
In reverent, and beauty, out lined in finery, and elegance.

Coughin' and old, this tailor, good and old  
Fastens a, suit church worthy.  
He bastes a gown, of royalty.  
Sore cough August

This Good Old Tailor.  
Services, only his work. The work.  
That ceases to perish  
Ceases to perish

# APPALOOSA

*by Shaylynn Gould*

Brought out of a wind-blown field in Wenatchee,  
Muscle and tendon stretch and flex  
Under a short coat of red-brown, flecked  
With the silver of winter's first frost.

Her hooves pound out the beat of life  
As she races to greet me with a  
Soft nudge of her whiskery nose.

She inhales the scent of my dogs,  
Second-hand-smoke house, laundry detergent,  
And I take in her dirt and grass aroma.  
Soon we'll smell like each other again.

She is the asylum to my insanity,  
The only therapy for my loss of self.  
Her loving calls are my lifeline in the ocean.

Whispering syllables she can't comprehend,  
I comb my fingers through her sun-streaked mane,  
Touch the thin rope binding her to me,  
And thank the good Lord that she is mine.

# INAUGURATION DAY

by *Brittany Helmick*

A favorite interjection  
slips down my throat  
as I watch my daughters  
catch snowflakes on their tongues.  
Each one burnt,  
each one begging  
*wrong*  
A word to make  
even the birds silent,

I sit here staring  
into the little faces  
I have made  
and I wonder when others will  
notice how their worlds,  
hang on my walls. And there,  
they have skin and soil and  
sorrow – drawn in love.

Today, I will keep my eyes  
down. Not down like when  
I took my sister's candle  
and shaved the wax into nothing  
at seven. But down in my  
book, like I am seventeen  
in my Holocaust literature class.  
“Genocide is always collective  
because it drives its impetus  
from group identification.”

Tomorrow, I'll keep them on  
small sturdy fingers  
as freckles line  
soft round noses,  
point at the sky and  
twirl and twirl and twirl.

# THREADS THAT SPEAK: THE CHILEAN ARPILLERISTAS AS PARACHUTES OF WIND-DISPERSED DANDELIONS

by *Brittany Helmick*

*For Violeta Morales*

Where did you go? When you left  
you took your water and your breath  
and your stem and your gray-fluff  
of ideas of what you should be.  
If I could rip the cool cotton  
from my eyes, I would find you.  
I would see that you still have your  
temper and your lust and your root  
in the palm of my hand.  
I went to seed like  
the parachute of a wind-dispersed dandelion—

A white page to tell the world  
what is happening in this country—

*Una pagina blanco para contarle al mundo  
lo que esta ocurriendo en este país.*

I drift uphill in daylight with  
building-lined streets,  
searching and searching and searching  
over blurred faces and black figures.  
I use a needle to sew your face  
one after another  
onto a list, as if any  
of you belong there  
on a sticky note, next to argan oil.

# WHEN IN THE VALLEY WHERE YOU'RE ON TRACK IF YOU'RE OFF TRACK

*by Brittany Helmick*

The trains have always been arbitrary.  
They come and go only to return forlorn  
and frustrated like all the twenty-somethings.

Autumnal bodies adorned in red in rust  
rattle and run down North First Ave. like  
the sound of the Sun rising every day.

Before gangs and guns  
and racism grew  
they chugged along cheerful

eager to grind on a ground or  
snook and reel Rainbows in a river of  
Steelheads with hands. Hands that

forgot their mamas live here too. Mouths  
stack and stack, apricots and apples to  
remind the Rez that even here

the white man passes through. Even here  
suits and skins- of every generation  
smell a little more like hops, a little less like heroin.



# WITH UNCONDITIONAL, UNDYING LOVE

by *Selena Hernandez*

the weight of the moon  
pressing down on  
my chest,  
i struggle to release  
the oxygen  
from my lungs;  
the voice from  
my throat  
the words from  
my mouth,  
I choke

communication is never  
easy to do,  
never as easy as  
the absolution  
i give to you

please...

listen to me...

you  
really hurt  
me...

to you,  
i am miss  
mis  
under  
-stand  
ing,  
mis  
read  
ing,  
mis  
inter  
-pret  
ing

if you could just  
stop yelling,  
maybe i could  
lose that title  
because i am trying;  
what an endeavor it is  
to get close  
to you,  
but when i do

your face whispers transcendency  
as we share familiar warmth  
and intimacy,  
our kiss  
coalesce  
false optimism of us

we are both aware

a new beginning will never come,  
yet we love like it's in  
the print of our thumbs

it is cliché  
to believe  
fate controls us,  
it does not  
pero tu eres  
mi vida  
quiero secuestrar  
tu amor-

no!!! (x3)

gaze into the gorge  
of my heart;  
the bottomless ventricle  
you once inhabited  
is now full of red guilt,  
my muscle's  
endless effort proves wasted

i deceived myself to believe  
that you could replace  
my blood,  
my oxygen,  
my nutrients and i am tired  
and you  
do not love me anymore  
this is not  
your fault

instead

the unwillingness to forgive,  
the hostility  
and torture ensue,  
there is not much else I can  
do  
be  
-sides  
love  
you

-sah

# SHITTY TRADITIONS

*by Joseph Kelley*

I remember the disdain for elementary school  
and going to bed early.

I remember seeing Spider-Man for my first  
superhero movie.

I remember Godzilla and King Kong etching off  
my pages and fighting one another for real.

I remember being told that Spider-Man and all  
that other crap didn't exist.

Reality shwattered my world with its  
spine-chilling embrace.

I remember the first word I cussed with.

I remember the fire that burnt  
the damn carpet.

I remember the over the phone breakup.

I remember the first joint I puffed.

I remember the first drink I chugged at  
a party.

I remember the bloody knuckles and  
black eye from the first fight.

The plane ticket prevented the second round  
from ever happening.

I remember the smell of wet pavement  
celebrating my return.

I remember being taller than everyone else.

I remember when superheroes belonged  
to the imaginative people.

I remember the Starbucks break up.

Not sure if I'm totally over that one.

# SWIPE

*by Forrest Lee*

Tap twice, swipe right. Tap twice, swipe left. Swipe right into my late night adventure alone in my room, illuminated by unfamiliar faces.

Like anxiety stricken people flipping through the magazine waiting to hear if its cancer, an unsuccessful surgery, or a baby boy or girl. I wait for the beep.

I swipe right into the cold wires clanging against the masts of the catamarans. Remember the noise. A metronome. No, a timer. Counting down my favorite memory of you.

Swipe right. Lying on the boat, look at the stars then back at you.

Swipe left. Lying on my bed, looking up at the plain ceiling then back at the blinding rectangle spewing out selfies.

Swipe right. Ill meet one at star bucks. Why couldn't we meet on a sailboat?

Swipe left. I'll meet one with blonde hair. Why couldn't she be a brunette?

Swipe right. Ill match with a dime piece, a comedian, a diplomat of all things cool

Why aren't any of them her?

Swipe right. I swipe through the lonely and horny, the hive of bees looking to find or forget love.

Swipe through a stampede of miss-matched souls seeking what they saw in the movies, what their friends have, what they may have felt before, what they saw in a website diseased with pop-ups.

Swipe right. Swipe left. Swipe to avoid or match a pic and a bio, a true or false preview of what could be a spectacular disaster.

# THE VITALIST MANIFESTO

*by Oliver Lewis*

If you are comfortable, stop reading  
If you are happy, set this down  
If you take pride in your followers,  
like liking and being liked on your profiles,  
thrill at the sight of a new Netflix original,  
and bask like a sunflower in the bluish digital glow...  
please stop reading. This is not written for you.

This is one for Goya, Quixote, Zorba, Cyrano,  
Jasmine, Ignatius, Jezebel, Caroline, Tirzah,  
Jacob, Alice, Peter, Samuel and the rest.  
I can see them now.  
I can see you now.

There, where the trimmings of the scorched earth  
touches the ever-smoldering sky  
here, in this cyan haze,  
your sleeves unbuttoned, rapiers poised,  
eyes zesty as orange peel.

There, where the basalt cracks up at an ancient joke,  
where the air of sweet metal cries out for lightning,  
a white skirt is swirling above a bruised knee  
dark eyes dance with the Malabar sun.

We splurge into the uncommon wave  
tickle her spine as she crashes  
numb over the sand.  
we, the ghost they chased with incense  
we, the windswept dust after the inquisition  
we, the bell's last toll on the sinking Titanic  
we, the gravestones howling with new frenzy  
we, the drunken alley rats  
we, the tornado's hand  
we, the last first cry of an unspoken song.

Hear and understand:

*We come bearing a sword and a rose*  
We are the wick  
the living in the frost stained rosebush  
In this dark, silent winter  
we are the flowing sap  
beneath the bark of cypress trees.

# TORN POCKET

*by Oliver Lewis*

1) My dog, Lad.

An eagle swooped him up as tornado  
churned the dusty sky. He left, old and sore  
before I said farewell

2) A pair of sunglasses,  
not aviators

in the dark of Athenian nightlife  
where cannabis, ouzo and tobacco  
fumes thumped and boiled all bodies  
into one

3) My innocence

hung on a chain  
along with a baptismal cross, when it snapped  
in the frigid Arctic sea, and tinkled down  
to where the crabs grumble weather

4) My breath

under a willow tree, where the canal  
bends beneath the bridge. Her breath was jasmine,  
hyacinth, my hand cloyed with her hair.

5) My way

among tenement rooms and screech  
owl feathers, where the hallways mumbled with ghosts  
I alone could hear.

6) Her letters

to the tongues of fire that licked  
love out of them, and beneath a starless windlust sky  
on the plains of the Klickitat, reduced them to ash.  
A bowl of blood and honey spilled.

7) My God.

the whispering one, the Zephyr  
for high stakes in a game of dodge-ball and cartwheels

8) My sister

a month before she was born. It rained.

9) My mind

in a fever dream as the rain  
cried stoplights into blood and springtime oozing  
on the wrinkled asphalt.  
My head... I hear her voice. I cry across the sea:

*Mama! Mama!*

# TAKE A GIRL

*by Sarah Miles*

Take a girl

who has spent the last eighteen years being  
interrupted.

Whose pockets are full of secret  
fists and gum wrappers.

Let her grow

A back bone *all of a sudden*.

Let her run from you and  
everything.

Let her find the gray water tower  
with the paint that peels and  
the kiss underneath that sings  
your corners like a split cigarette,  
lit too close.

Watch her press

Her face and body and raw,  
bloodred hope against the bus window  
As if she might pass through.

Let her find the breeze

that blows once on Sunday and  
let the door fling open and  
let her empty body be thrust  
among the land full of Self.

# THREADS THAT SPEAK; THE HISTORY OF THE CHILEAN ARPILLERAS AS MY PRIVILEGE IS A SILENT “H” AT THE END OF MY NAME

*by Sarah Miles*

Here they are, writhing.  
Family calls out – they cannot answer.  
Eyes full of cotton,  
throats clogged by excrement.  
Shame, shame, shame.  
You have your soul, a centaur,  
with the champagne-ruined  
girlhood of her fancy and  
all I can fucking whine about is a  
dumb pinched nerve in my back.  
One nerve. One pinch, one jolt.  
One volt of electricity straight to  
the genitals. My privilege, implicit,  
clangs in the same ugly, sea-sick  
way their shackles do when the  
innocents shake with sobs.  
You have your many extravagances,  
kept in jars, a growing collection  
that might mean nothing at all  
if poured out, inspected. You have  
your history, and I have a silent “h.”  
What does my pale, unburdened,  
never burned, never maimed,  
never taken flesh- What does  
this sad sag of skin and vessel  
know of the lime ovens of Lonquén?  
When he fucks me from behind,  
what do I know of control taken  
or ever given. You have your  
delectable, black and white  
understanding of the world and  
your leather leaf and  
your heather blossom. And I  
am fourteen and there are balloons  
for every birthday wish and I am  
the apple in every eye and every  
eye is on me. The balloons do not  
wish for education, medicine,  
food, water, work. But one says  
My Name and I touch my finger  
to it and weep - not for the missing “h,”  
but for the missing.

# WHEN YOU STOP WEARING A BRA AND EVERY DAY AND EVERY DAY AND EVERY DAY

*by Sarah Miles*

When you stop wearing a bra and every day  
and every day and every day

You notice the wind more and your own body that you didn't know had anything left new to discover. But he thought he discovered rather than stumbled and he assumed and he assumed and he assumed and he assumed that the smiling sweet talkative pair of nipples that told him what page the reading was on actually wanted to tell him but was too adorably shy to about a secret map and hand written invitation to her clitoris. Your nipples are friendlier than your mind, but still all four of you believed that you could be friends which is why you giggle dutifully at his jokes that aren't funny as if you are taking a note from a director who knows what he wants. Not the kind of friends that lick each others' bodies but just people not eyefucking over a cup of coffee. Your soul is dry in search of a word in search of a million words whispered between confidants. But he doesn't want your words your poems and he is not your friend and he is not your friend and he is not your friend and he is not.



# RESET

*by Tim Mitchell*

Drink a cup of decaffeinated earl grey  
Stir it first, then with the spoon – \*clink\*  
Remember “I’m A Little Teacup”?

Hum it at your kitchen counter while you have an empty sink  
Take a deep breath, and don’t mark its due date on your calendar  
Sing, because you know kindergarten cadences by heart  
And while you should be analyzing tomorrow’s deadlines

Smile, because those deadlines are someone else’s  
But those songs? They’ve always known you  
and where you’ve come from  
and where you’re going  
and where you’ll be at the end of it all.

They knew you’d be here from the very beginning  
Those sappy, sticky licks and melodies that flex, grow and burst like bubble gum

And just like I’m sure your parents have done, or have restrained from doing, or will continue to do unashamedly until you return their goddamned phone calls:

These songs sustain their love for you: sniffing, they dampen tenuto-marked tears while gazing at photobook portraits of you, wondering where the time went:

At Graduation (It’ll happen)  
At Christmas  
At the Wedding  
At the first Job

At All the many times when:

you dumped a stunningly Good Deed to date your Ego  
you drank with Symptom then lost your wallet to Disease  
you said let’s Play but monday morning said not by your Rules  
your boss said no Second chances and the anxiety hit Twice as hard  
your mom called to say Help arrived, but not to the door It needed to  
you lost hope because there wasn’t an imported bottle of It in the kitchen  
you shut the lights off wanting to see Nothing, yet saw Everything all at once

And while we’re both here, I’d like to suggest an alternate ending of the song we can use to teach our children to value art as a way of cherishing optimism:

*Words are your metaphorical handle,  
and Music is life’s graciously flowing spout*

# THE LOVE, PAIN AND THE INDEPENDENCE

*by Ruby Nambo*

The girl struck her soft lips to his ear  
He began to feel the zing of her words  
Her bright smile shined his eyes  
He touched her soft pale face  
Together, they both started to kiss each other  
Beyond the wild gust of wind  
Full of passion towards the moon  
Her mind was full of passion emotions  
While his was full of happiness and joy

The man's soul begins to burn of anger  
The woman soul explodes everywhere  
She begins to cry in tears in blood  
He takes her aggressive tears and turns into roses  
Waves of voices of evil comes from her  
Instead of good, she burns the roses from him  
"I want nothing to do with you!" she states  
His dreams with his lover were crushed like stone

She marched thru the warmest streets  
Alone in white with yellow light  
She kept turning back to the door  
Starting a new chapter of her life  
But she knew she had a purpose  
The fulfillment of beauty in her eyes  
Her smile lead her the direction of love  
While her hands lead her the pathway of hope

# THE REAL ME

*by Gabriela Osorio*

Look at me and tell me what you see  
A daughter, a sister, a student  
But how about a role model? A leader? A warrior?  
Aztec blood runs through the rivers of my soul  
Makes me wonder what you'd see  
If you saw me walk the streets alone  
The color of my skin, my hair, my eyes  
Make me a victim of statistics  
Don't you know they lie?  
I'll tell you what you'd see through the lenses of society  
A criminal, a wetback, a dropout  
A chola, a rapist, a drug dealer  
A nopal en la frente, no English, no manners  
Because to you, that's all that really matters  
You study the charts, the lines, the graphs  
Thinking you can explain what happened in my past  
I'm not a number you can multiply, add, subtract, and then divide  
But I will tell you who I am  
I am a flag united with the heart of an eagle and the brightness of the stars  
I am from the land of mariachi and tequila  
A land from hear not far  
I am from "echale ganas" and "make us proud"  
A family both big and loud  
I am not here to take your spot  
From this nation I now call home  
Even though you remind me I wasn't born here, I was brought  
The color of my skin, my hair, my eyes  
Take another look at me  
Now tell me what you see

# BECAUSE

*by Gabriela Osorio*

Te quiero he says the roses are blooming  
I come from loud families, fiestas,  
I believe that shadows have a right  
and music  
To be human. Shadows didn't choose to  
I come from many cities, two countries,  
be shadows. Shadows have a heart.  
two languages, two cultures  
My God says we all are loved no matter  
Hello my name is the thousand stories I possess in my locked-up soul and my  
what you believe, how you love  
favorite food is the fresh fish on  
how you speak, how you paint your  
top of the warm white blanket. The  
world, how you live your life, how  
salty drips on the plate. The smushy  
Two things I want to tell my future  
meat that melts in your mouth.  
child is never stop dreaming the dreams  
This time next year I will be  
you dream. Echale ganas no matter who  
almost at my goal. My goal that  
wants to stop you because you  
has taken me years to reach. I will  
are the child  
feel accomplished.  
My favorite color is purple because  
My lover says to me te amo and  
I could never

# I BELIEVE

*by Gabriela Osorio*

I believe in the mothers and fathers and tios and primos that crossed the desert for a better life.

I believe in the sacrifices of children not born here; having to speak two languages, live two lives.

I believe that education will take you beyond your dreams.

I believe in the women that raised your children and mines and ours then theirs.

I believe in the work before day break to make ends meet.

I believe in the tacos, tamales, pozole, enchiladas, tequila and music that nourish the soil of this nation.

I believe in the brown of my skin and your skin and her skin and his skin and our skin.

I believe in the black of the night that covers the body, mil souls, and the pure.

I believe in working the land and the hands that feed the good the bad and the ugly of this country.

I believe in the power of words and palabras and hope y esperanza.

I believe in the seeds our ancestors planted before the border crossed us and de-potted our feet.

I believe in the resilience, la fuerza, the courage, the patience, and the love of the known and unknown.

I believe that a nine-digit number will never stop the progress of shadows in American land.

I believe in the future she has, he has, you have, we have, I have.

I believe. That's all that matters. That's all that counts.

# POETRY ABOUT POETRY

*by Michael Riendeau*

In the beginning  
I was a spaceman  
from an unknown land  
  until  
I landed  
in a hand.

Four toes and four feet  
Three neat eyes  
and two chompin' teeth  
  with  
a sniffing nose  
and twin elbows.

As  
I began  
to grow I  
  learned  
what there was  
to know.

With no destination  
and quite bored,  
I acquiesced to my chores  
  and  
the cat never blinked  
at me near the sink.

Then I'd think in new  
directions that upon  
introspections, in ink  
  with  
inflections, can I encapsulate  
my thoughts and reflections?

So I set myself  
apart and hoped  
for some expression to indart  
  and  
maybe just maybe  
contrive a brilliant art.

I wrote  
a few stanzas  
while I enjoyed a banana  
  and  
fuddled with the lines  
a number of times.  
As the cat  
purred, I altered my words  
in doing so heard,  
  that  
to be sure, one  
or two of them rhymed!

# “THUS ALWAYS TO TYRANTS”

*by John Roach*

Mankind's worst invention  
thus created,

The bombs, bullets, and  
revolutions

Crossing borders, and digging  
trenches

Political squabbling with  
executions

by starting with sticks and stones,

fighting, scratching, completely  
divided

our history written with  
blood stained pages,

entire empires rising,  
peaking, and falling

we bleed and break and  
cry for peace

and we look to leaders for brighter  
days

the pages we write are  
with swords, not ink

we continue to dream of a  
better tomorrow

# CASTLE IN A PIG PEN

by *Samantha Robinson*

She experiments with  
alcoholic drinks in  
the kitchen.

If callers  
are jerks  
she drowns her words  
in alcohol.

Three new drinks  
in one week.

To escape the yelling  
she surrounds herself  
with novelties.  
Each figure a witness  
to her pains.

To vent, she imagines  
the callers as ants.  
Their ignorant organs  
stains beneath her feet.

Her specialty? Blue and green jerseys. Screaming at  
TVs.  
Once, when I was fifteen years old, I sat near a lamp.  
She paced in front of the screen, yelling profanities at  
incomplete passes. No breath passed her lips without  
a  
traveling companion. My mind knew it should watch  
the game  
but she was far more entertaining.

After she was bitten by a snake,

doped up on painkillers,

she asked me who

the looker in the corner was.  
Those who refused to eat can

dy corn  
were scolded that candy corn  
*doesn't grow on trees.*  
Each time she'd vacuum  
she'd mutter  
*this is a castle*  
*in a pig pen.*

In a photograph she's a campfire.  
In a photograph she's a library, a checked out book.  
In a photograph she's a bruised mouth.

In a photograph she's a comb untangling knots.  
In a photograph she's a flickering light.

I said: remember to  
take care of yourself.

She said: remember to  
live for yourself.

Flashing lights paint the night

Jack O'Lanterns sneer at goblins and ghouls

Candy trades hands like a shady drug deal

as she smiles at children who come to her door.



# WILL A TREE GROW IN MY LUNGS?

*by Samantha Robinson*

You offer me your vapor cigarette and swear by its healing powers. Your smile is a snake of smoke that dances into oblivion. I wonder what happens to all the smoke snakes after they've exited their purpose. Do they enjoy the ride or do they weep as their tales fade away? As you blow smoke rings like a pro you continue your pitch, as if I am a customer looking at cars. You speak of miracles bestowed upon you: No more backache from lifting heavy boxes to towering shelves. No more pulling hair at the fact that screw-up Larry got the raise over you. No more praying for an escape from a wall that divides the country. We keep our voices low so as to hide from her disapproving ears. You tell me it helps with anxiety. That it's not nearly as bad as people make out and your huge selling point: it grows from the earth. If I take a puff, am I consuming part of mother earth? Will a tree grow in my lungs and my insides bloom with flowers? Or will the smoke choke me from the inside? Curl its wisps around my larynx to silence a voice that never held meaning? With a final puff you pass it to me and with shaking fingers I take a hit. And with that hit mother earth proclaims me healed.

# EVEN DEATH

*by Rene Santana*

O, What wondrous  
love this is  
For us to walk in truth  
in trust  
in belief  
in hope  
No other reason for  
us to truly live  
our lives but to  
Serve  
To protect  
To honor  
To afflict  
those who walk beside us  
As well as  
attempt to demonstrate  
this wondrous love  
to those who walk  
in darkness  
Scared to reach out  
their hand  
Afraid to believe, or  
unwilling to see truth  
O, What Great  
Authority we serve  
under  
We are not alone,  
together, or separated  
Our hope binds us  
Closer than anything  
this would could understand  
Any reason for us  
to fear, is our own  
foolishness  
For we, in our King  
have conquered  
All,  
even death.

# BRO

*by Rene Santana*

*For my Bro, Solomon,*

Killswitch Engage  
Our go to band  
everything sick licks related  
We were guitar masters  
and everyone at  
school know it to be true  
But you  
Also You built rockets  
You mad scientist  
Getting your license  
to shoot those missiles  
Sounded WAY cooler than  
Prom  
to you  
And I  
Well I skipped homework  
Just so I could sweep  
pick like the real  
guitar pros  
The only A, B, and Cs I knew  
were those on  
the staff  
Keeping a hold on the rewind button  
I'd like to apology  
for taking our Lord's  
name in vain  
In front of your forgiving Parents  
Overall, it was  
a pretty cool birthday party  
Button held  
I always loved  
imagining the non  
existent landscapes and  
fictional characters  
then pretending to  
be, only to  
fight one another  
Close to our genesis  
That was our start  
Our interest saw one another  
Friendship was inevitable  
So just like how

you remember rocket  
schematics  
I know you'll  
remember our bond  
I still remember our  
guitar duo and I  
hope to shred with you  
once and forevermore  
Solomon

# THE MOON OF FALLING LEAVES

by *Conner Simons*

i.

My driveway hugs tall trees thick shade  
water brown needles red  
a soon-dead campfire

the sky bleeds the sun like a leech  
the palm of a latex glove  
shadow clusters fans

there is a crinkled sign on my juniper bush  
HELP HELP HELP  
frayed corner edges

the car doesn't start  
without a tired kick HELP HELP HELP  
the front door scarred wood grain  
will not unlock for me

a cat stares at me perched watchful  
cherry-wood fence that cold steel-pit  
can't spit up the ash

my feet halt  
a shuffle a spasm a muted  
attempt parched leaves crowd the  
drive-way like bugs on a moss-covered log

ii

stop here  
seven wood crosses  
splintered  
splinters  
a crop of rocks in a four-foot pile  
someone keeps this wire fence  
someone fills this bag for trash  
a tongueless voice laps up arroyo dirt  
spit fire blood bathe the evening  
in meaty showers make horses  
set them to run  
trample  
tear down the tired nets  
on each side  
of this sunset beaten highway

iii

her breath is a November flower  
heavy each petal pealed  
skinned  
eaten  
raw juice welled in thick veins  
inhale exhale inhale exhale

closed eyes taste  
like a secret open  
sun that crawls between  
dust-filled webs

some days wrapped in a green blanket  
a blue blanket of the thin sky  
shrouds  
birdsong  
the queen of all towers  
wears my dirty red sweats

three folds hide me  
a stray dog  
I stalk naked streets  
drink mud-water off the ground

stay here on this bed  
please silence your white legs  
your fluttered blue eyes  
sink down down a stone on  
layers of pillows please  
taste this kiss in your ear

a door opens and closes  
dust motes and spider eggs  
two feet and hands  
a naked girl and my ragged heart

# BECAUSE YOU ASKED ABOUT LOVE, I'LL TELL YOU

*by Savannah Slone*

Love should be  
heard: an unannounced  
gasp—the flicking  
of a lighter  
the cracking  
of knuckles  
a deep inhalation  
as a breeze  
envelops your  
body.  
should be  
felt: the full body  
cringe when the untimely,  
wandering deer inhales  
a concluding breath—like chilled,  
aching breaths  
during a frosty  
jog like the  
first  
thrust of your  
first.  
should be  
unanticipated—  
should make you  
reconsider  
every thought  
every theory  
leading up to  
the moment your  
fingertips graze that  
sacred page.  
should be  
a blind trudge  
through thick  
soil in search  
of yourself—  
your voice.  
should be  
finding home  
in sketchy alleys  
with flickering,  
shot at, shattered glass  
streetlamps and quaint  
cafes where the era  
of the smoking section  
lingers upon the wallpaper's  
yellow tinted rosebuds  
and rundown hotel rooms  
and their sheets that tell stories.  
A love should be  
should be  
should be

# HOLLOW LUNGS, EYES, KAZOOS, AND FINGERNAILS

*by Savannah Slone*

We bury disassembled  
rag dolls, pouring the nectar of humanity  
over top the neglected  
handcuffs.  
Our mystical wild  
eyes flutter  
among the discarded  
crayons. We see the dark-eyed,  
deafening earth  
swallow the cheap feathers—  
drawn down in the black glass,  
among hazy  
footprints of blood.  
These faceless footprints  
render our shattered  
tongues outnumbered.  
Our crooked mouths duct  
taped. Our jaws gripped  
by the vibrating  
fingernails of our nemesis.  
We see the delicate peach pits  
in the urns of your overall  
pockets. We hear your  
shadow. The watercolor  
humming of the bees  
and their kazoos make us swallow  
the florescent Morse code rot  
of our minds' inner workings. Inky cigarette  
ashes shiver  
beneath the graffiti  
rot while conceptualized universes  
dance in the machine shadows.  
You discard empty  
prayers of empty generosity.  
They shimmer from your gold,  
hollow lungs.

# WHISPER OF WIND

*by Launie Sorrels*

Whisper of Wind After Jamaal May

It could of course be a whisper. A softness  
slightly touching the skin, leaving a message  
barely heard, or understood, as it wisps

from the lips and tickles the ear.  
But now the storms create a noise  
throughout, a push that touches every tree,

every person, every mountain. An aroma of flowers  
follow its bidding. Smoke carried, so creatures  
can flee. If only, I could be, as I stare out this window,

sheltered, afraid. The softest touch on a woman's lips  
or a strength to topple trees, to move oceans or dissolve mountains,  
to carry memories or help those flee.

But none of this,  
would be equal to the soft silence that brings  
the roaring charge of atoms throughout the

forest, the city, or the ocean. The whistle as I enter doorways,  
the crack of limbs breaking, the muting of all other resonances  
that exist, except my powerful charge. I create sound,

I create touch, I create smells. A strength that is greater than  
anything else, I wield the power to create and  
destroy as I wish. I am all. I am nothing.

# TIME IN A BOTTLE

*by Melynda Sorrels*

At five years old, I would accompany my grandparents to the stables  
on the Air Force base where they kept their horses. One mare,  
one stallion. One of which lifted me off the ground. Biting  
a pink barrette that my mother had put in my hair  
I didn't care for either of them after that.  
I enjoyed the barn, the earthy smell  
of hay. The little bits that would  
stick to my clothes.  
Bales stacked a  
thousand feet  
high.  
I'd climb.  
All the way up  
Lay on top. Gaze out  
the door. A tall gray windowless  
building shadowed the far side of the stables.  
Ominous in its vagueness. Undefined edges against  
a gray morning sky. Twenty years later, at work at the tall  
gray windowless building, I knew all of the secrets stored within.  
I look out across the way at the dusty stables. Remember the little girl.  
A thousand feet high. Concerned about hay bales, barrettes, and little else.



# HEART BREAKER

*by Amber Stanley*

“Watch out bro. She’s a heart breaker.”

It cannot be  
that he was moving too fast,  
gave me a key

He said, “move in with me”

“I want a baby”

“I want you with me”

No

Not when our time together

Amounts to three.

Months might I add

Not years.

Or “millenniums” like he liked to say.

No

“She’s a heart breaker.”

Because it cannot be

that he was crazy

No

That he once squeezed my face so hard

he made my cheeks bleed

because he wanted me to open my mouth.

No

It can’t be that he drank to get through his day,

cracked one open as soon as he could stand,

then he’d come home drunk as a skunk

From 7/11 on his way home from work,

get kicked off the bus,

pass out,

piss the bed,

and then wake me up crying –shouting- that

he was a Man.

No.

“Watch out bro,

She’s a heart breaker.”

# SUICIDAL SCHIZOPHRENIC TENDENCIES

*by Amber Stanley*

The first time sets the precedent.

Imagine the need to soar, but living with boulders on your shoulders.

He says, "I must fly with these three angels."

Her brother hears them. He sees them too.

He says, "Reach out and touch their words, their light lifts you, raises you, their gaze understands you. Can't you hear them too?"

She is a block away when she gets the call.

He climbs the tree, a massive listless creature,

born out of cement on a skinny back road in a dingy town.

The tree did nothing to save him.

It only pushes him off the precarious limb that his angels saw fit to beckon him to.

From three stories up, his body rushes to kiss the earth.

His heels take every bit of that force. He shatters.

A block away, her phone screams at her for an answer.

She lifts the receiver and hears them, the angels.

Run, run, run, he needs you.

Roger, her brother, this makes-her-laugh-until-she-cries brother, earns the diagnosis, "schizophrenic with suicidal tendencies."

He spends months in the hospital healing his bones.

A mess of months more are spent rooted in a wheelchair.

This is the first time.

She presses her ear against the grain of the bathroom door.

She begs the thin wooden barrier for entry.

This small low-income apartment houses her mother, herself, and him.

Her mother stands guard at the front and a kind neighbor stands in defense on the back patio just in case this brother-of-hers tries to escape.

They all know there is a struggle going on inside of him.

Some undeniable battle between his sanity and his clarity.

From this poorly lit hallway, she sways with panic.

She can sense that something is not right.

Her brother mumbles his love and apologizes through the door.

Her ear strains against the threshold and she knows this time is different.

No angels are here to warn her and no feeling of need comes, just dread.

She feels her brother slip away.

She envisions his red breath slide through six-inch vertical slits on each arm, his new wounds cut through the ladder-work of scars.

His serenity pours into the lukewarm waters that wait for him in the bathtub.

When the ambulance finally arrives, her brother is right where he wants to be, near death.

This is not the last time.

# LOOKING AT A BOY

*by Drea Talley*

First  
To be carried  
To be born  
And marked in his difference

Myself, pale and blue eyed  
My daughter, pale and blue eyed

My son, bronze and glorious  
His eyes dark with secrets  
A birch, a willow,  
an aspen  
Reaching above me  
So slender as he brushes the sky

He smells of rain  
Of sweat  
And stinks of teenage boy  
He ran all the way home

My arms could circle him twice

Muscle and sinew  
Joy and vitality  
Cartoon quotes and cliches  
Rearranged as needed

His truth is too strange to speak  
His words are always someone else's

His hands long to create  
And destroy  
And create  
And my house is filled with art  
And sculptures  
And LEGOs

He kisses  
My cheek, the dog, a baby's head  
He sings  
But only when no one else does

Coming home  
His spice warmth fills the space  
He looks best in russet  
He is earth and fire

# PLAYING WITH SPECTRUM

*by Nic Taloff*

Red:

Where a little girl on the playground  
is grimaced at by parents  
for driving a monster truck through mud  
instead of applying makeup under the giant willow.

Orange:

For the boy spinning the baton  
in a class full of testosterone and teenage cat-calling  
stating vulgar language  
is more acceptable than passion.

Yellow:

Hope in the iris behind the black eye  
on the boy who cooks his mother dinner each night with a play stove  
for the two jobs and missing child support  
she carries on her shoulders.

Green:

The grass stains on her knees and jersey  
after running the football eighty yards down the field  
where all eleven opposing players  
struggled to rip her down.

Blue:

Highlights of hair for a nameless pronoun  
rests on the shoulder of the man or woman on each side of the aisle  
because their hearts are more understandable  
than the parts born between their legs.

Violet:

A name provided by the mother  
who just lost her son, but gained a daughter  
that felt more comfortable in a dress and gaining glamour  
instead of a tux and losing swag.

Black and White:

Seen in the eyes of those who cannot understand.

# CENTRAL INSPIRED BY AMERICA BY ALLEN GINSBERG

*by Bryce Vaughn*

Central I've given you all to be something  
Central 20,000 dollars, 77 cents June 15, 2018  
I can't stay this stagnant  
Central when will I feel stable?  
Don't be a kid, you're not an adult  
Don't bother the professor, it's quiet hours  
Walking in six degrees will get you a degree  
Central when will you hand it over?  
The snow covers chalked outlines  
Why is the library filled with sullen eyes?  
Are we worthy of it all?  
Central start pushing, I don't know what I'm doing  
Central the leaves are hitting the roof  
And it's another damn snowflake

I'm addressing you  
Are we running our lives based on 88.1 The Burg?  
I'm obsessed by 88.1 The Burg  
I listen every day  
I slip into the SURC and it cuts my ears  
I am central  
We are central

Central I feel neither offended nor defensive  
Central I'll sell you my soul for 40k a year  
I will feel the seasons centered in Barto  
Central free our marginalized  
Central save the falling tress  
Central rivalries can't die  
Central, I am central  
Central when I was seventeen I stayed in Sue Lombard for journalism camp and I had no earthly clue that I would bury my vices inside you and you would birth me out with a degree, a 20,000 dollar target on me, and grease burns from the paycheck I handed right back  
Central its the Feds,  
Central its the state,  
Central its the future,  
Hah, it's all on us  
Central is this correct?  
I better get to work  
Central I'm putting my cut up hands on the wheel

# LIGHT AND DARK

*by Spencer Virdin*

why do people talk about light and dark  
as if it pertains to them,  
their relationships,  
their existence.

light and dark are just two perspectives  
among a spectrum of  
infinity.

why do people talk about light and dark  
but they reject black and white  
they expect a silver lining, a grey middle man

and yet they ignore the planes of existence  
that are more relevant  
relationships are more ultraviolet  
than light and dark  
a human's existence is more than the  
existence of color and the  
absence of it.

existence is more than light and dark

# “UNTITLED”

*by Spencer Virdin*

i felt safe in the fire of your mind  
but now  
i'd rather suffer awake than  
be tortured in my dream filled  
slumber

i try to breathe and  
i try to find something worth fighting for  
but everything reminds me of  
the days in which we coexisted

i'm afraid to sleep in my own bed  
to drive my own car  
to sit in my favorite siren café

locked  
in a tunnel of fear  
a tunnel of moments that burst with  
nostalgia and reminder

i felt comfort  
i gave into the hope of the future once  
but not im lost and stuck  
between the plane of existence  
and of chaos

# SPECTRUM

*by Samantha Weyrick*

I never thought much of white  
Only that it was just a color  
When I thought of white  
I saw seas of snow during winter  
I saw cheery clouds on a sunny day  
But as I grew older  
I saw a dark side of white  
The history of what being White  
Meant by hurting others  
That history is now repeating  
White became an ugly color  
Snow became slush  
Clouds became storms  
A flurry of colors are thrown  
In a tumultuous tornado  
With a White eye at its center  
I flush with shame  
At the sight of my own skin  
But hold!  
I look again at my skin  
Each pigment while similar  
Is home to rivers of red  
My tears contain shades of blue  
My bruises are a mix of yellow, purple, and black  
I found a way to counter White  
I am not one color  
I am an entire rainbow  
And I'll stand against  
The idea of White  
Because everyone-  
White, Black, Red, Yellow, Brown,  
Are a beautiful cornucopia  
Of communities  
Of individuals  
We are all equals of humanity.



# WRITE TO BE WRITERS

*by Samantha Weyrick*

Ethos, Logos, Pathos,  
The sacred trinity  
The writer's creed  
Literature's unity  
Be it fiction or nonfiction  
A novel or poetry  
The rhetoric is our stage  
But we the writers  
Are its actors

Lend me your ears!

Followers of Ethos  
Experts with credibility  
We own up  
To our field of mastery  
Express and present  
Our appeal to authority  
In every soul  
A born writer can be forged  
Talent ready to share

Open your mind!

Students of Logos  
Facts are your responsibility  
Seek the truth  
Knowledge is key  
Misinformation and lies  
Can lead to fatality  
We are the investigators  
Searching for answers and  
Never stop questioning

Listen to your heart!

Apostles of Pathos  
Embrace empathy  
For logic and reason  
Can't be complete without sympathy  
For the audience to listen  
Requires passionate delivery  
Humans are not machines  
Nor are they sheep  
Individuals with personalities

Write to be Righters!

The right to free speech  
Is our philosophy  
But never forget  
Our rights of democracy  
And address others  
With integrity and diplomacy  
For we are writers  
Storytellers whose voices  
Will stand up to be heard!

# NO WAY HOME

*by Jennifer Witzel*

Though I seem to float up Third Street  
as if looking through someone else's eyes,  
I will not remain unconscious,  
for I am not alone.

As if looking through someone else's eyes  
Pedestrians pretend they just don't see.  
But they too are not alone,  
look into his eyes, this lonely homeless man.

Still pedestrians pretend they just don't see.  
They want to run, run and not look back.  
But look into his eyes, this lonely homeless man,  
His worn and tattered clothes, they paint a painful truth.

He wants to run, run and not look back.  
But the shadow whispers that there's no way out.  
His worn and tattered clothes, they paint a painful truth  
Just look into his eyes, this lonely homeless man

The shadow whispers that there's no way out  
But I will not run or pretend that I don't see  
I look into his eyes, this lonely homeless man  
And reach my hand to his to I give him what I can

Though I seem to float up Third Street  
I will look into his eyes, this lonely homeless man  
But the shadow whispers that there's no way out  
there's no way home for a homeless man.



**MPR**



LOSE



# DISTRACTED

by *Natalie Benson*

When I was six years old, I almost got my best friend killed. No one would say it was my fault, but it always felt that way. To me, Cassidy, my best friend, had fiery red hair in a messy pony tail, freckles splattered across her face, and two giant front teeth. And spunk, she had lots of spunk. On a day in September, we met at her house like we did every day to ride our bikes to school. Cassidy lived at the top of a very steep hill. I remember one day when it rained, we sent paper boats down that hill in the street gutters and watched them sail all the way down. However, on this day, we didn't have rain or boats, we had backpacks and bikes, and Cassidy wanted to race her bicycle to the bottom of this tar-plastered summit that lay before us. No one would say it was my fault. But when she began to rev her engine, peddling with her pink plastic sandals, I didn't stop her. When I could hear the high "zuumm" of her tires as she neared the bottom, I didn't tell her to slow down. When I saw that navy blue car coming towards Cassidy and slam on the brakes before making contact with her white shorts and tacky pink sandal, I only watched. To this day, their faces are etched in my mind. They shared the same face: both wondering how they only came within inches of disaster but never made the hit.

\*\*\*

Sixteen year old girls in cheerleading uniforms are invincible. At least they think they are. Having a summer birthday, and taking drivers ED courses late in the year made me the last of my friends to obtain her driver's license. Three days after getting my license, I broke the law by taking my fellow Cheerleader, Kaela, out for a "test drive" before the first basketball game of our junior year. Hair tied into tight pony tails, secured with orange and black ribbons, and A-line skirts too short for 37 degree weather, Kaela and I departed on our journey to McDonalds with me in the driver's seat. Two blocks in, Kaela plugged in her Mp3 player and put on "Bossy ft. Too \$hort" by Kelis, cranking up the bass. Wearing those uniforms and driving around like adults, made us feel alive with fire in our veins and pretty damn bossy. That didn't change either after I accidentally ran through the stop sign at 1st avenue and heard the screech of several cars' brakes, in order to avoid two separate collisions. In fact, Kaela and I squealed with surprise and belly-laughed the rest of the way to McDonalds.

\*\*\*

At seventeen I didn't understand how fast temperatures rise inside of automobiles. One hot summer afternoon, I convinced my two little sisters that I was craving a green pepper pie from Time Out Pizza. In reality, I craved the cute delivery boy on shift. Before, during and after parking, I imagined what to say and how to act when he saw me from the back paying at the counter. I fantasized him casually strutting towards me and asking about my day with a confident smirk. Nearly delusional from the 90 degree heat, I told my fourteen-year-old sister Eryca, she was welcome to join me inside. I told ten-year-old Amber to remain behind in the car. I didn't want to look like a babysitter. Eryca told me to leave the car running with the AC on for Amber. "O.K., O.K. yeah I will." I replied. But I forgot. I took my keys out of the ignition. Ten flirting-minutes later, Eryca and I came back to the car with Amber passed out in the back seat sweaty and pale. Paralyzed with panic, I watched Eryca frantically shake Amber back into consciousness.

"Why didn't you let her come inside with us? You didn't leave the AC on for her!" Eryca sat in the back with Amber while she scolded me. I promised myself on the drive home I would never let Amber get hurt again.

\*\*\*

A police officer yelled at me when I was nineteen. Nearing Spokane, after a weekend in my home town, I was in the middle of winning a fake argument with myself when he pulled me over. Surrounded on the freeway by towering pine trees, I remember I felt powerful, passionately engaging in my own fabrication. That is, until I passed a citizen vehicle and two cop cars parked on the shoulder, while going 75 miles per hour in the right lane. The second cop's car lights turned on so fast, it cut me off mid-speech. At first, I felt bewildered as to why he pulled me over, but the officer, his face flushed with rage, soon reminded me of which traffic law I violated. After yelling at me—"I know you saw me!" and "you didn't even try to slow down!" and using other stern language, he shoved the ticket at me and told me I needed to go to traffic school. I called my mother, hysterically crying as the wounded victim. She said to be forgiving. She said the officer possibly had a friend die because of somebody else doing what I had done. I said he was a prick.

\*\*\*

I caused my first car accident when I was twenty-one years old. Apparently spring sunshine, country love songs on the radio, and the thoughts of what to wear to work, caused my mind to muddle behind the wheel. I failed to yield. I didn't pause for even a moment before turning left at the green light and hitting that old, green Toyota

on the left side, crunching the fender flare right into the tire. Two young women staggered out of the Toyota—one from the back seat, clutching her left arm screaming and letting the tears stream down her pain twisted face. The other from the driver's seat, wearing grease-stained sweatpants, attempting to calm her wailing friend. I couldn't stop shaking as I spoke to the officer on the scene.

He was kind. "Nobody means to do these things." He assured me, "That is why we call them accidents."

I tried apologizing to the girls. The driver did her best to be polite and accept the apology, but the injured back seat passenger remained quiet—silently crying, sitting on the curb, cradling her arm. She only looked at the driving cars passing us by. I wished she would look back at me.

\*\*\*

*Deseret News, Morgan Jacobsen,*

*On October 3, 2015, a woman died and her husband was in critical condition Saturday after the two were struck by a small passenger car while riding bicycles.*

*Just after 3 p.m., the Orem (Utah) couple was headed south on 800 East and were stopped at a red light. When their light turned green, they started crossing University Parkway when a Honda Civic traveling east ran a red light and collided with them, according to Orem police.*

*Stacey Bown, 51, died from her injuries Saturday evening, and her husband, Kevin Bown, 55, was in critical condition according to Orem Police Lt. Craig Martinez.*

*"This man, for whatever reason, did not stop at all," Martinez said. "Witnesses say they didn't see any brake lights at all when he struck (the couple)."*

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The man who ran a red light and hit my Aunt and Uncle seven months ago was only twenty-six.

I asked my Grandma why. Why he didn't stop? Why he didn't just follow the law—slow down and come to a complete stop at a red light? Was he drunk? High? Or texting? Police said he wasn't. Was he listening to music? To a song so relatable and soul catching, he felt he had to look down to turn the dial, so he could fill the whole car with its sound? Maybe he zoned off for a few moments because he didn't want to think about all burdens waiting for him at home? I don't know. I don't know why he ran that red light, why he didn't see her. I guess he was just distracted like the rest of us. Twenty-six and distracted by a daydream about life outside of his vehicle and off the road where my Aunt was riding her bicycle, her favorite thing. Riding her bicycle, around the town in which she grew up, raised her children and guided her nieces and nephews. Riding her bicycle, with her husband who still keeps that old picture of her up in the garage by the light switch and wonders everyday why the accident didn't take him too; riding her bicycle, across the street by the Sierra-West jewelry store only a block and a half away from her home. Grandma told me witnesses said she was smiling up until the moment she was hit. That twenty-six year old man didn't have a chance to see how beautiful her smile was.

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April 20, 2016, twenty-four years old, I got pulled over for speeding on the freeway in Kittitas County. "Do you realize how fast you were going ma'am?" the officer asked. I didn't. "88 miles per hour," he informed me. At first, I attempted to defend myself: I don't have cruise control, I had just come up a hill and didn't a chance to slow down, or I didn't know I was going that fast. He didn't buy it and I didn't either. I didn't have a justifiable reason for reaching such a speed. I was on my way home from work, had a lot of chores and homework awaiting me, and spaced off for a moment, allowing my foot to gradually press the gas a little more without realizing. I promised the officer I never purposely cruise at that speed. "It may not seem like it right now, but I'm being the good guy" he told me. "Do you know how many horrible things happen on the road because of reckless driving?" I did.

Driving home, the reduced speeding ticket folded next to me on the passenger seat, I didn't feel twenty-four. I felt six years old again and guilty. I wanted the officer to be angry with me, to scream at me, to smack me upside

the head. Me—the young woman who should know by now not to let fluff fill her mind when she should be focusing on the road in front of her; hands at ten and two on the wheel. The young woman whose fleeting mind is such a danger to the loved ones driving next to her. I thought of my Aunt and I thought of the young man of twenty-six, whom now I understood, and asked him, “What have we done?”



# ALONE WITH ANIMALS

by *Erin Connelly*

I had only been on the island for a week, not long enough to sleep soundly. As a result, I was alert the moment I heard the knocking at my door. My Quebecois boss, Clara\*, was speaking rapidly in heavily accented English outside, and in my fresh consciousness I was confident that she was telling me I had overslept. As reality set in, I noted it was 6:30am, I had not overslept, and that Clara would never knock on my door. Something was wrong.

As a graduate student, it's easy to justify a potentially valuable experience that also saves money. My research with wild howler monkeys in the region had ended and I had a few weeks to spare before heading home, which is how I found myself living and eating on Clara's private Caribbean island in exchange for my services caring for her 12 monkeys, a kinkajou, and two toucans. A reformed pet owner, she had recently become the founder, president, and director of the country's newest and only primate sanctuary. She didn't have nearly enough space, but she had an enormous heart, and big dreams for the site's expansion and improvement. Despite having no formal education or training in animal care, she had the necessary land and permits, and was fundraising to build on it. But she needed help from animal people, and I was thrilled to be that help, especially in a setting as scenic as Clara's private mangrove island in the Caribbean.

I opened the door to yet another brilliant day in the tropics, squinted, and as my eyes adjusted to the light I saw Clara, distraught. She told me that Cristóbal, the local kinkajou (neotropical, nocturnal, raccoon-like, mammal) had attacked Henri, the tamarin, (neotropical, small, squirrel-like monkey) late that night. Henri's leg was mangled and bleeding, and he was swaddled in a scarf in Clara's breast like a tiny, demonic baby. Henri should not have been outside at night in the first place – the two should never share space, but due to our negligence in letting him sleep outside, the worst had happened. Clara would go to the vet in a large city four and a half hours away by bus, but only two and a half by cab (a fact that does not reflect well on the safety of Central American cabs). She would be gone for at least the day, and I would feed the monkeys. What could I say? One, I was confident I could care for the animals without burning the place down, and two, I could not pass on the opportunity to play music other than the french pop station to which she subscribes (whose English motto, “for maximum joy, just listen”, I've heard so many times I now find it deeply profound). Her boat taxi arrived and before motoring off she told me that if she had any news, she would call a neighbor on a nearby island and they would paddle over and let me know (we didn't have an internet connection or a phone). With that, she wished me *au revoir* and good luck.

The first order of business: back to sleep. I woke again at a more reasonable hour and had a lovely morning drinking an entire french press of greasy coffee, playing music, snacking on Lucky Charms, and enjoying that feeling of being unwatched, particularly that of being unwatched by your boss. I made lunch for the monkeys, fed them, let the squirrel monkeys run around outside their enclosures - all quite uneventful but fascinating in the way that monkeys are when allowed to be themselves. Next was the toucans. I was at a bit of a loss for what the toucans eat because I hadn't been watching Clara as closely when she tended to them. But I had been mopping up their shit all week so I had one clue: their food was orange and green. I found and sliced some orange and green fruits in the fridge, filled a bowl with water, and approached the enclosure. It's a habit to constantly count the animals, and I'm pretty good at counting to two, but when I got closer...only one. One toucan. One. Toucan. It was like a tragic children's math problem. If there were two toucans when Clara left and only one at lunch time, how many toucans did Erin lose? My second thought was that I needed to hide the book on animal rights theory I was reading, which, being mostly about the immorality of captivity for all species, wouldn't necessarily help my case. Many questions now: how did one bird get out and lock the door but not the other? Was the door really locked when I opened it or only partly locked? Was there a hole? If so why did only one get out? Did this happen while I was sleeping? I would have seen if the escape happened later because I was here...wouldn't I? How far could a toucan get? Our island was certainly within flying distance of others, but from those islands? Surely he couldn't fly to the mainland? My only hope was that he couldn't find food nearby and would come back. I set out a big plate of papaya, no doubt torture for the remaining toucan, who now had somehow missed an escape opportunity and was staring at a plate of out-of-reach papaya. The only thing left to do was look for the escapee, and what a birding tour it was! I saw night herons, egrets, cormorants, terns, and two species of kingfishers, but nothing so out of the ordinary as a keel billed toucan that I was sure was going to cost me my job.

I eventually gave up and made some tea. Clara would fire me. Fired from volunteering! Over a toucan! Not even a monkey! I would have to add to my resume: great with monkeys, don't ask about birds. There was

nothing to do except watch the papaya plate and tend to the other animals. I spent the rest of the afternoon scanning the neighboring island for my renegade toucan, rehearsing what I would tell Clara, and preparing dinner for the monkeys.

Later in the afternoon I began to serve them. First, the tamarins, what little angels. When you put the plate down they gather around it politely and nibble and squeak and they never fight over the grapes. Next, the capuchins. When you give them food you must feed Layla the first and best foods, due to her status as alpha. It is also vital to make sure little Petey gets enough to eat, because if you don't watch carefully, the others will steal his food and he won't get any, a situation that has led to starvation in monkeys and apes even in the most reputable zoos. Last, the squirrel monkeys. They're tricky, not because they fight over food, but because Gigi is a known escape artist. Although she spends the bulk of her day running free through the mangroves on the island, she never loses an opportunity to break out, even if the cost is missing dinner, served exclusively inside. My tactic for getting in without an escape is simply to open and close the door swiftly, without waiting around to try and get them to back off. This time, I made it into the enclosure, plates laden with fruit, nuts, and water, and counted one, two, three, four monkeys, no escapees, they would all have dinner! I set the plates down and turned back to the door. The ingenious tactic the squirrels employ to prevent caretakers from leaving without any of them leaving with us, is to cling to our backs and shoulders as we try and exit. I did my best to shake them off and open the door. But I didn't open it because I couldn't. It was locked from the outside. In my haste to get in I must have shut the door too hard and the lock fell and...well there I was. Utterly alone in a twelve by six by ten foot cage, unless you count the four hungry monkeys.

There are worse species than the squirrel monkey to be surrounded by in close confinement, but there are also better. This species has a delightful habit of urinating on their hands and feet, using the scent to mark their path when they travel, and they use these same hands and feet to eagerly explore the latest most interesting thing in the vicinity: me. My eyes, ears, nose, mouth, any and all cuts, scrapes, bruises, and blemishes were fair game. My shirt was sweaty, so they were happy to chew on that rather than my skin, but husky Julius was intent on licking my armpit hair, which had grown out quite impressively in my time on the island. Gigi took it upon herself to give my teeth and gums a thorough examination, Mickey took a more direct route and urinated right on me, all while little Kenji was content to sit and eat the apple I had so carefully chopped into monkey sized pieces. Good boy. In a scenario like the one I was in, the most important thing, as inane as it sounds, is to remain calm. Animals feed off our energy, and they know and react to perceived anxiety, usually with their own anxiety, which can lead to aggressive behaviors. The monkeys approach new playthings with a bold curiosity, and if the monkeys in your care do not, I urge you to reconsider their psychological and physical wellbeing. For the plaything (me), there's nothing to do but take it, unless you want a firm but not serious bite on the elbow, a very clear and effective communication tool that means they don't approve of your action. I could take it, but I also desperately wanted out. Of course the horrible irony that the incarcerator had become the incarcerated was on my mind as I abused my fingers and hands trying to shimmy the lock outside. Like good primate, I used all the tools at my disposal: only some broken bamboo and a bobby pin. We try not to give the monkeys tools, for this exact reason. And if it were easy to open the locked enclosure, the monkeys would have done it by now. At first I was optimistic I could get it, that I would free myself and there would be no need to tell Clara at all. It soon became clear that that would not be the case. After a while I sat on the wood floor, damp with urine and grime, and took deep breaths. Some thoughts I had at this time included things like: this is definitely someone's greatest phobia, a small enclosure with constant touching by tiny hands, which means it's gotta be someone else's greatest fetish. Later: How long can I go without food and water? Would I eat a live monkey if my life depended on it? Would they try and eat me before I even have to make that choice? Was Clara going to call a neighbor to come check on me or not? Darkness began to fall and I could hear the Saturday night reveling tourists pass by on party boats. Was it worth yelling? Surely if Clara had to spend the night in the city she would have someone come tell me? My heart was beating a little faster and the monkeys were getting tired of my presence, evidenced by their increasingly less gentle bites and gropes. I began to mentally settle into the reality that I may be sleeping here, in this enclosure. In these moments, the linguistic difference between enclosure, the term animal care professionals insist on, and cage, seemed more arbitrary than ever. More time passed. I couldn't tell how much but dusk was making everything gray, and the breeze was getting cooler. The next time Gigi and Mickey bit me, they drew blood. I tried to be uninteresting to them, and they started to settle down for the night.

Finally, a motor pattered, closer than the others. Clara had returned! All embarrassment faded as I thought about showering and sleeping in my bed, I was rescued!

Clara let me out, eyes wide, but, incredibly, laughing. "You were close to sleeping with them!" Yes, I was. She revealed that she had done the same thing once and had never since forgotten to fix the latch that prevents it from locking itself before going in. She promised we would change the orientation of the lock the next day.

Relieved beyond belief, I babbled about the toucan, insisting that I had no idea what happened or how he escaped. She looked at me and at the enclosure and said “one toucan left” (a wonderful and certainly unintentional double entendre). Her response: “I did not like them from early. They are so loud and they eat so much.” I breathed. She was not angry about my incompetence, and it didn’t sound like she was going to fire me. In total I’d been caged for just over two hours, but her day had been worse. After speeding to the city, little Henri died in the vet’s office. We poured wine and she cried for him. A service, in the morning, we agreed. We would light a candle, say some words. We laughed some more about my close call. She insisted she would have obligated her only employee, Mariana come by had she needed to spend the night in the city. I’m sure it’s true. Darkness pressed in from the surrounding ocean and the stars winked in and out as we googled enrichment ideas for the other monkeys. She carried a lot of guilt about not providing sanctuary for Henri, instead letting him live in fear and ultimately to be attacked and killed by a strange animal. I realized then that she couldn’t be upset with me. I was a volunteer, brand new on the island, in a situation a more legitimate sanctuary or zoo would never have put me in. Her position in the animal care community was tenuous, and a deadly accident like today’s with Henri could ruin everything. Negligence with an inexperienced volunteer could be equally catastrophic for her organization trying so hard to get on its feet. The monkeys on the island were there because they were taken from the wild as babies and sold into the illegal pet trade. Raised by humans and confiscated by the government, the monkeys don’t have the skills to be successful in the wild. And since they can’t live anywhere else in the country, they have no home to go back to, Clara’s insane dream had to work. I stayed for a few more weeks and helped her as much as I could. She kept me on because it’s irresponsible to be alone and because I helped her research solutions. She’ll improve and grow her organization, but she can’t afford to make mistakes. We got up the next day and the monkeys still needed to eat and there was plenty to clean, and who would do it except the gringos on the edge of the archipelago on the edge of the country who couldn’t walk away.

After the squirrel monkeys so thoroughly asserted their dominance over me that day, I was permanently positioned at the bottom of their hierarchy. The consequence being that they did not consider me an authority on anything. They freely stole teabags out of my cup, took my hair ties for their own, and committed other acts of general mischief in my presence. These animals are not pets, and it was clear they needed a space they don’t have to share with people. I am grateful that they’ll soon have it due to impending construction on a nearby island, as a direct result of Francine’s tireless fundraising efforts. A few days before my scheduled departure from the island, I was scrubbing the squirrel monkey’s floor when I felt eyes on me. It was Gigi, hanging by one foot from the outside of the caging and purring. She watched me clean until I was finished, and when I let her back in she inspected each corner and crack that I had cleaned and then jumped onto my arm, opened my hand and handed me a tiny snail shell. Before my heart had a chance to melt, she bit me hard on the elbow and snatched a pen out of my pocket. I never got the pen back, but I still have the shell.

*\*Names of humans and animals have been changed.*

# FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS SNEEZE ONCE.

*by Megan Courter*

Every time, I think she's screaming until the second one comes, but no, Lizzie just sneezes like a flock of demons are escaping her.

We've joked that if she ever sneezes just the once, then something is terribly wrong and she's probably possessed by some sort of malevolent spirit.

Which is why, on the Monday before finals week, my roommate is tied to a chair in a circle made partly of salt and partly of Instant Ramen flavor powder.

I found a likely-looking exorcism on YouTube (I'm no connoisseur but the Latin sounded particularly ominous) and am fumbling with my phone and the aux cord when the demon fakes a sneeze again.

"Look, I probably just have a cold! Could you untie me already? We both have Barker's final tomorrow and I need the sleep!"

I turn my head slowly to look over my shoulder at the familiar face. It is now wearing an expression of innocence that said face has not been able to convincingly pull off since I discovered Lizzie's search history in freshman year.

My expression tightens, just a little.

The demon shuts up.

I finally get the aux cord in and press play, but instead of ominous latin there is only ominous quiet, broken only by sobbing through the north wall.

(Alanna has a final with Camber tomorrow, poor kid.)

"Was... that... supposed to do something?" the demon asks tentatively. I shoot it a look that could re-freeze the ice caps and turn back to glare at my phone. The mute symbol mocks me as I wait for the goddamn advertisement to end. When it does, I turn the volume back up.

The first syllable knocks the air out of the demon's chest with a wheeze. It leans away from the speakers as though increasing the physical space will make any difference. An inhuman noise that is usually Lizzie's response to cute animals and small flowers claws its way out of my friend's throat.

"MORTAL! Turn that off, I beg you!" It wails.

I shrug. "What'll it get me?"

"Gold! Riches! Charisma! Anything!"

"Anything?"

"Anything!"

"Can you wipe out my student loan debt?"

It pauses. I can almost see the gears whirling in its head as it tries to come up with something that will satisfy me.

"I- I- I can't but I can kill the man who made you sign the papers, I can curse the professor who fucked up your GPA, I can, I can--"

"So you can't," I say.

"Nuh-nuh-nuh-no but I can get you vengeance, I can get you justice--"

"Not interested," I say, and set the video to double-speed.

About ten minutes of shouting, false promises, attempts to bargain, and sobbing curses later, Lizzie sits tied to a chair in a circle of salt and Ramen seasoning.

"What the hell! What the fuck! I can't believe you could tell! What the shit." Lizzie pauses to boggle at me. "How the hell could you tell?"

I shrug.

"You only sneezed once. Why did you even summon a demon anyway? It's not like Barker would have let you miss the final for demon possession..."

"I thought it would help me memorize the textbook." Lizzie has the wherewithal to look frustrated. I shake my head tiredly.

"That level of demon? They're next to useless. They can put a mildly irritating curse on someone, but cursing Barker to itch through the final wouldn't make him grade our tests any more mercifully." Lizzie boggles at me again.

"How do you know that?"

I sigh. "I summoned one last year to see if I could get rid of my student loan debt that way. Apparently, some high-level demon is in charge of it and none of the lesser things are strong enough to challenge it."

“...Joy,” says Lizzie. We stare at each other for a long moment.

“Pfft,” I snort. Lizzie cracks right after, and we both split into gales of hysterical laughter.

“Only us,” Lizzie gasps. “Only finals week.”

“I used ramen seasoning, holy shit,” I wheeze.

“I’m tied to a CHAIR!”

“You and your damn sneezing!”

We both failed the final the next day, but we did eventually graduate.

# BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

*by Amanda Gilligan*

Bryan got out of his truck, a smile spread wide across his face. His head spun as the world around him tilted. He chuckled as he missed the side step, sliding to the ground. He grabbed hold of the side mirror to prevent himself from face-planting the gravel driveway.

Claudia slammed the driver door shut and rushed to his side. "Wow, Bro, think you celebrated a little too much."

"It was my birthday, wasn't it?" Bryan chuckled again as Claudia took his arm and his towering stature slumped against her slender shoulders. Claudia tried to toss her dirty blonde hair out of her face, but it hit Bryan instead and he snickered once more. "Twenty-three is going to be a good year."

"We'll see how good you feel tomorrow." Claudia half dragged Bryan to the old Victorian estate. Their parents were collectors of anything related to the time period and their house doubled as a museum. Tours were offered every day, describing the history of every relic that consumed every corner of the house. After eighteen years, the constant shuffle of people seemed stranger when there was none.

Claudia could hardly see in the half moonlight. The house stood dark in the 3 a.m. chill. Claudia reached into her back pocket and pulled out her phone. "Damn, it's dead. Can I use your phone for a flashlight?"

"No." Bryan slumped his head forward and his long curly brown hair covered half her face, making seeing even more difficult.

"A little help carrying yourself would be nice."

"I'm not nice." He wrapped his arms around her. Claudia made it to the porch steps blindly. She stubbed her toe on the first step and fell forward, Bryan falling on top of her. He laughed as Claudia struggled to squirm out from underneath him.

"Bryan, you're gonna wake them up. Get offa me."

Bryan rolled onto his back over the porch steps still laughing. His chocolate brown eyes stared up at the night sky. The big dipper was easy to pick out, but as he lay looking up his laughter died down. The night sky swallowed him. The stars looking like twinkling snow.

~

Five-year-old Bryan lay in the backyard of his birth parents' trailer. The snow landed softly on his face as he created a snow angel. Bryan's brown curls glued to his wet forehead. Bryan let the snow seep into his Goodwill snow jacket. "Bryan!" His mother screamed from behind the broken screen door. Bryan sat up prepared to return to the trailer when he heard his mother scream again. "No! Stop, Luke!"

His father's drunken slurs and mother's screams drove Bryan to hide. Bryan sat trembling at the sound, beside the trash bin.

"That a thing's cursed. 'Member Tommy?"

"Let me go!"

"Tommy dead because of that thing."

"It was an accident, not Bryan's fault."

"He knew would happen. It's a devil and I a gonna kill it."

"NO!"

Bryan heard a loud *thud* come from inside the trailer and his mother fell silent. He pulled his knees closer, growing even smaller behind the trash bin. He heard his father's voice booming from the trailer as he tore it apart in search of him. Bryan lowered his head, praying his father wouldn't find him. From the trailer, he heard a gunshot and a body drop. He sat behind the garbage bin for some time, afraid his father might still find him.

When Bryan finally got up and opened the screen door, both his parents were lying in pools of blood on the floor. The shotgun lay at his mother's side. The trailer was a wreck, the coffee table thrown in the corner, the hamper of laundry sprawled out on the couch, the dented cabinets in the kitchen all open, and his drawings, which had been on the coffee table, now spread across the floor. Bryan saw the crayon drawing of the car crash with Tommy lying by his father and at Bryan's own feet was the drawing of home with both his mother and his father on the ground in a red pool. He picked the drawing up and heard sirens in the distance.

~

Claudia staggered to her feet and examined Bryan's wondering eyes. Crossing her arms to protect against the chilly night air, she kicked his foot.

He rolled his head to the side to look up at her glowering figure. "What?"

“You’re not that drunk, Bryan.”

“You don’t know that.”

“No, but I know you. Even if I wasn’t drinking you wouldn’t be so wasted that you couldn’t watch out for your baby sister.”

“Not so much a baby anymore.” Bryan sighed, the porch steps cutting into his back. “All right.” Bryan reached out his hand.

Claudia threw all her weight back and pulled Bryan up. Once Bryan stood on two feet, he wrapped his left arm around her shoulder again, but for the most part he could stand on his own.

The siblings climbed the porch steps and Claudia turned to look up at Bryan. “That wasn’t so bad, was it?”

Bryan pulled Claudia closer to him, “It’s more fun to have my little sister caring for me.” With Bryan still hanging on her, Claudia checked the key ring to the truck for the spare key. “Did you forget to take the spare key again?”

“No. I just don’t remember where I put it, Bry.”

Bryan stood up and turned the doorknob. “They left it unlocked. I guess you did forget.”

“Oh whatever, Bry.”

Silence filled the room and darkness seeped into the corners as the half moonlight crept in along with Bryan and Claudia. Bryan reached for the light switch, flicking it up and down a few times without change. “I guess the power went out.” The blackwood stairwell with newel posts greeted them at the door. Bryan stepped into the room, leaning against the railing for support as he called up. “Hello.”

“Sshhh,” Claudia grabbed his arm, “They’re already in bed.” Turning to his right, Bryan entered the living room.

In the darkness he tripped. “Shit.” Claudia let go of his hand just in time so she wouldn’t fall with him. As Bryan looked up he saw what had caused him to trip. The old Persian rug was bunched up. He skimmed the room, noticing pillows thrown across the floor, which belonged to the opulent ruby red couch, one of the oldest pieces of furniture their family owned.

Broken glass and picture frames were scattered in front of the fireplace. The tapestry hung by one corner. Bryan noticed the Victorian bracket clock was removed from the mantel. Back on his two feet Bryan went to the fireplace and removed the poker from its stand. Walking back to Claudia’s side he whispered, “Someone’s been in the house.”

Taking her hand, Bryan led Claudia through the living room to the dining room. The china case doors were opened and shards of fine china littered the olive rug. Many china sets were missing along with the English brass candlesticks on the dining room table. Gripping the poker in his hand, he stared at the carpet, noticing a dark stain. Moving forward, Bryan also saw stain marks on the chair legs and scraped down the sides of the kitchen doorframe. The siblings entered the kitchen, the moonlight streamed through the windows, and Bryan let the poker fall from his grasp.

“Mom!” Claudia rushed to their mother’s side, her hands reaching out: shaking, scared to touch her. Bryan stared at the blood pooling from his mother’s head staining her blonde hair red beside one of the candlesticks. Claudia gently grazed her cheek, tears streaming down her face.

“Don’t touch her,” Bryan yelled, stumbling forward and grabbing Claudia’s wrist to pull her way. Bryan fell to the ground, cradling his sister in his arms.

“She’s so cold, Bryan,” Claudia sobbed, burying her face into his chest.

Bryan slowly pulled her away, looking into her green eyes and said, “Calm down. We need to call 911.”

Claudia nodded, getting up to fumble for the phone in the darkness as Bryan stood and removed the tablecloth from the dining room table and laid it over their mother’s lifeless body. Claudia screamed. Bryan reached behind him for the poker. He held onto the island as he walked to where Claudia had crumpled, her knees giving way as she lay pressed against the wooden cabinets, her eyes wide with terror. Bryan looked down below him and saw their father’s body on the other side of the kitchen, a butcher knife protruding from his stomach with multiple stab wounds.

Bryan couldn’t hold it in anymore; he turned to the sink on the island and threw up. Reaching her left hand behind her, Claudia searched for the phone on the counter. Finding it, she pulled it toward her and knocked the wireless phone from its stand into her lap. Bryan watched her hands fumble over the buttons and then shakily place the phone to her ear.

“911 what is your emergency,” Bryan could hear through the phone.

Claudia stumbled over her words, “M-my p-parents have b-been m-m-murdered. P-please come. P-please.” Bryan felt his legs give way, unable to support him and he slid down the counter leaning against the cabinets a few feet away from Claudia, who continued to give information to the person on the phone.

Bryan jumped as he felt his pocket vibrate. He pulled out his phone and saw a message on his screen from his friend Matt. The message read: Are you home ok? Bryan ignored the message, noticing below it, a missed call. The caller ID read—Home. Bryan pressed the play button and placed his phone to his ear. “Hey, honey its Mom. We’re going to bed. You two be safe tonight. We love you. You left the spare key on the counter, so we’ll leave the door unlocked for when you get home. Tell your sister to drive safe. Happy birthday, my sweet boy.”

“Happy birthday, Bry,” his father called from the background. “We will see you in the morning. Good-night.”

Bryan pulled his phone away from his ear and turned to Claudia, who was watching him, unable to look at the still body of their father, who lay between them. Both his parents were dead in front of him and Claudia had come close to sharing the same fate.

~

Last Tuesday morning dragged out, since his parents had placed him on receptionist duty. The sunlight streamed through the study, Bryan sat at the front desk, working on a sketch. Bryan’s focus was on the call and he let his hand move on its own as he talked on the phone, discussing an available visiting time for a client.

The lady continued to babble in his ear as he held the phone between his cheek and shoulder. Bryan flipped through the calendar, still sketching with his other hand. Once they’d decided, Bryan marked in the calendar the available date for the tour visit. “I have you booked, thank you for your time. Have a great day.”

Bryan dropped the wireless phone on the desk, rubbing his temples. Looking down at his sketchbook he began to shiver. The shades of grey were filled with stains of red as the broad strokes spread across the floor and cabinet drawers around the figure sketches in the drawing.

Bryan tore the sketch out of his book, crumpled it up, and threw it into the bin at the end of the desk.

“Whatcha doin?” Claudia surprised Bryan, jumping on the back of his chair. Startled, Bryan dropped his sketchbook on the floor. He reached down to grab it while Claudia pulled the old sketch out of the bin.

Bryan saw her hand pull away with the drawing and snatched it from her as she started opening it. “Don’t look at it.”

Claudia backed up as Bryan grew defensive. He tore the drawing into pieces and threw them back into the bin.

“That bad huh?”

“Sorry, forget about it. Hey, I wanted to ask you if you’ll come with me to celebrate my birthday this Friday with the guys.”

“Aww thanks, bro. Are you buying?”

“I will buy you all the non-alcoholic drinks you want.”

“So you just need me to DD.”

“No.” Bryan got up and started tickling Claudia.

Claudia couldn’t stop giggling or pull herself away from Bryan. When he finally stopped he said, “I want to spend my birthday with my sister too.”

“I guess.”

~

Bryan snapped out of his thoughts, seeing the body of his father lying in front of him and felt vomit rising in his throat again. Claudia wrapped her arms around herself and Bryan looked away. Sliding on the slick floor he got to his feet and stumbled shakily to the desk in the study using the flashlight on his cell to guide him.

At the desk, he kicked the bin over, grabbing the tape off the desk and kneeled down to scavenge for the torn pieces of paper from Tuesday. Slowly the pieces were put back together and Bryan taped them. Once complete, the image showed the rough sketch of his parents lying in the kitchen and the stains on the drawers were the splatters of blood, which now covered the walls and floor.

Trembling, Bryan struggled to understand. His hands stained the edges of the sketch with the blood of his parents. The blood seemed to consume him and take away all that he held close to him. Everything. Looking close at the drawing, Bryan noticed in the corner was a third figure. Claudia. He hadn’t heard her in the kitchen and immediately returned, clutching the pieced-together sketch in his fist.

Claudia sat with her knees pulled to her chest with arms folded on top and her head buried in her arms. The same position Bryan hid in when his birth parents killed each other, the same position as the dark figure in his picture.

Bryan sunk to the floor beside her, scooping her up in his arms, pulling her closer to him. She sat like a child in his lap and he wrapped his arm around her once more. He held her in the silent darkness, the poker beside him and the sketch clutched in his right hand till the sirens arrived.

The bright flashlights entered the room and Bryan could see the bloodstained floor that surrounded them.



Claudia's legs were covered with their parents' blood. She trembled in his lap and Bryan felt tears sting as he tried to prevent them from falling.

An officer bent down and placed his hand on Claudia's shoulder. Bryan dropped the sketch, grabbing the poker to defend Claudia. "Stay away from my sister!" Another officer came up from around the other side of the island and grabbed hold of Bryan's arm mid-swing. "Calm down, son. Everything is going to be okay. We're taking her to get looked at." The first officer pulled Claudia away from Bryan.

"No, no, let me go! I don't want to go!" she cried as she weakly fought against the officer.

"Claudia!" Bryan struggled to free his arm from the officer trying to restrain him, but he felt a shock wave shoot up his side and felt his body go limp. The officer pulled his hands behind his back and handcuffed him. "I didn't do anything."

"This is for your own protection, son. And for ours."

"I want to see Claudia. Where is Claudia?"

"She's outside, son. I'll take you to her."

"She's all I have left."

"Just remain calm, son." The officer saw the sketch and reached over Bryan to pick it up.

Bryan struggled again, seeing the officer look at the drawing. "I didn't do this. This isn't my fault. I didn't do this..." Bryan's voice trailed off as he continued to repeat, "I didn't do this" in a hushed tone to himself.

The officer helped Bryan to his feet, still observing the sketch and looking at the bodies before him in the kitchen. He slowly led him outside by the arm. More officers were putting up caution tape, blocking the house off from outsiders. Bryan could see Claudia sitting in the back of an ambulance truck with a blanket wrapped around her.

The officer uncuffed Bryan at the ambulance and he flung his arms around Claudia, who sat in shock unable to cry anymore. Bryan rubbed Claudia's arms as he watched the officer with his sketch speak to another, watching over them.

"Keep an eye on him. He may know something."

The other officer mumbled too softly for Bryan to hear. Claudia wrapped her arms around Bryan, leaning her head on his chest. The officer with the sketch shook his head.

The first officer nodded and the officer with Bryan's sketch went to a police car and called in on the radio.

~

Bryan sat coloring by himself in the foster center. The other children didn't talk to him much and Bryan didn't bother to talk to them.

The same woman with long blonde hair that had visited him several days in the last two weeks sat beside him, picking at her cuticles. She occasionally looked up, watching him color, but, unlike before, she remained uninterested. She never questioned him or tried to get him started in a conversation.

Irritated, Bryan held up the picture in front of her, wanting her to talk to him. The woman continued to pick at her nail till Bryan spoke up. "Look."

The woman looked at the drawing and smiled at him. "That's a beautiful picture."

Bryan nodded, placing the picture beside him and starting on a new page in the coloring book.

The woman started twisting a strand of hair, aimlessly looking around the room. Bryan noticed she had stopped looking at him.

"Why aren't you talking?"

The woman's head turned back towards Bryan when he spoke. "I thought you didn't like me talking."

Bryan shrugged, returning to his coloring. "I don't mind."

"You don't seem to mind a lot. You don't mind being by yourself, talking or not talking. What do you not like, Bryan?"

"I don't like questions."

"Why is that?"

"Because I'm asked things I don't know."

"Does it make you upset that you don't know?"

"It makes people scared and I get scared."

"About your parents?"

Bryan felt his shoulders tremble and saw the purple crayon shake in his hand.

The caregiver came over and directed the woman away. "I told you. I don't think Bryan is ready for a home. He says he drew his parents dying before it happened. He knew it was going to happen."

"No one can predict the future and the fear that you show him isn't helping his situation, which is why he needs a new home. With people who aren't terrified of him and willing to love an innocent boy, who has witnessed his parents' murder." The blonde haired woman came to his side once more and said, "Bryan, do you

want to come live with me?”

Bryan thought about the offer, but shook his head.

“Bryan, sometimes bad things happen and we blame ourselves for it and try to think of what we could have done better. That doesn’t mean you caused it to happen.” “I could have done better. I could’ve not shown them the picture. If I didn’t show Uncle Tommy and Daddy my picture of his crash, if I didn’t tell him not to drive fast, maybe I would be home.”

“Sometimes we sense when bad things are going to happen, but we can’t predict them and we can’t change them, even if we want to. You didn’t know Uncle Tommy was going to die because no one can know the future, but we can do everything in our power to love those we care about while we can.”

“I don’t have anyone I care about anymore.”

“That doesn’t mean you can’t grow to care for someone again. I want you to come live with me and my husband, Nathan.” The woman pointed to a man standing in the corner holding a toddler. Bryan had met the man before, but he didn’t recognize the child in his arms. “That is our little girl— she’s three.” The woman ushered her husband over and reached for Claudia. “Sweetie, can you say hi?”

“Hi.” Claudia’s voice was high pitched, but sweet.

“Hi.” Bryan paused, thinking about the blonde woman’s offer. “Why me?”

“Because I want to prove to you that you’re meant to be loved, not feared. You are so brave and strong. You have nothing to fear. You have seen some terrible things that no child should have to see. You don’t belong here.”

“I don’t want anyone else to get hurt because of me.”

“You’re not going to hurt us, Bryan. I think you can help us.”

“How?”

“Our baby Claudia needs a big brother to protect her. Can you do that?”

“Protect Claudia?”

His mother smiled. “Yes, my sweet boy.”

~

Claudia adjusted her position in Bryan’s arms, sitting in the ambulance. Bryan buried his head into her neck. “Don’t worry, Claudia. I won’t let anything happen to you. I promise, I’ll protect you.”

# SETTING THE BAR

by Amanda Gilligan

New Rochelle, NY, commonly known as Home Town, carried its normal clamor of city noise through the window of the colonial house, while Peter sat glued to his desk, finishing a paper for his second term in college. He could hear his father in his study, ranting on the telephone. His younger brother, Quinn, knocked on his father's door only to be waved away. He slammed the door, which received a stern "Quinn!" from his father. As Quinn passed Peter's door, Peter glanced up from his paper and gave Quinn a smile, reassuring him that the hard-hearted Vice President of Field Operations and Logistics Support of Sikorsky Corporation wasn't worth his time. Peter watched Quinn shrug the rejection off like any other as he went to help their mother in the kitchen.

The cell-phone on top of Peter's stack of books vibrated. Peter read, "Cover me—Ten minutes—Back door."

Peter tossed his cell back on his books, running his fingers through his light brown hair, leaning back arching his long torso over the chair to stretch as he tried to refocus on his studies. Another damn cigarette. Adam, his older dropout of a brother, was pushing his luck. Fifteen months might make Adam older, but it didn't make him any smarter. He had been smoking for the last three months behind their parents' back, practically begging them to kick him out. He would disappear in the evening two or three times a week to hang with his crew and return smelling like a whole pack.

Covering Adam's tracks was Peter's role, but Adam's lack of restraint and conviction around their parents had become too relaxed. Tonight, Peter didn't have time for it. With a midterm exam and a paper to work on, Peter got up and shut his door, preparing to hear the shouts from his mother in the kitchen and the stomping feet from his father as he descended the stairs from his study to discover Adam's wretched reeking stench of cigarette smoke.

\* \* \* \*

Adam hobbled to the back door of his house. His dirty blonde hair was greasy. Sweat covered his forehead and stained the back of his shirt underneath his leather jacket. Crumpling on the stone porch steps, he slipped his duffle bag off his shoulder and pulled out the clean unwrinkled Walmart blue vest. Adam crushed it into a ball, threw it on the ground, stomping on it with his good leg, before shoving it back into his duffle. Adam dug through his jacket pocket, ignoring the sharp pain from his left ribs, ache in his right calf, and throbbing in his head. He could still feel the blood from his nose, which had crusted over, and as he pulled out his packet of cigarettes, he observed his split knuckles. Adam sighed, taking out his last cigarette.

Lighting the cigarette, Adam leaned back, releasing the tension that had formed as his muscles clenched from the fight. The cash weighed nicely in his left pocket. He had earned tonight's victory, but his celebration was cut short as Quinn pushed open the back door, carrying a bag of trash.

\* \* \* \*

Quinn halted in the doorway, one foot on the porch, the black trash bag holding the screen door. Quinn stared at the cloud of smoke, rising from the end of the cigarette in Adam's mouth. "What the hell."

"Shut the fuck up." Adam rushed before anyone inside could hear him. He tugged at Quinn's faded jeans as he pulled himself up. He then yanked Quinn by his collar onto the porch, the screen door slamming. Still holding onto the trash, Quinn froze as his older brother clung to him for support. "You didn't see anything." Adam's breath carried like smoke through his ear and planted its deadly disease.

Quinn rolled his eyes. "No promises." He coughed and tossed the trash onto the pile, lining the side of the house, which formed a wall from the base of the porch stairs to the kitchen window. Quinn looked out on the bare 500 square feet of tough dirt, avoiding Adam's eyes and the smoke in his face.

Adam stumbled backward, reaching out to grab onto Quinn. His movement was slow and wobbly, which allowed Quinn to easily deflect Adam's arms, but before Adam fell off the steps, Quinn took Adam's wrist. Quinn leaned down to pick the duffle off the porch and placed it over his shoulder. Adam slumped forward, Quinn wrapped his arm around Adam's side to get a better grip on his sagging body, slipping his fingers into Adam's pocket to nick a couple of \$20s. Adam looked up at Quinn supporting him and a smile spread to his amber green eyes. "You're a good brother."

Quinn grinned back. "Anything for my big, bro." Sticking his head inside, he checked to see if the kitchen was empty before hoisting Adam into the house. Adam stopped Quinn for a moment, took one last puff of smoke, before turning and throwing his cigarette onto the pile of trash, smoke still emanating from its tip.

\* \* \* \*

Peter tapped his finger on the keypad to his laptop, trying to focus. His hazel eyes glowed, reflecting the computer light. He heard his mother climb the stairs, and argue with his father about not paying attention to their upcoming flight plans to Chicago, which now showed problems. Peter's five-page paper grew more strenuous than he had anticipated due to the fragile relationship battle next door. His IT class on Cybercrime was a joke to him and the paper was on his particular favorite, identity theft.

Peter's phone vibrated again, and he was about to throw it against the wall in the direction of his father's study to tell his whole family to shut up, when he caught the name on the phone: Jack. Peter clicked on the text, which read, "Sent the pic."

Peter opened his browser and went to his email, and sure enough, Jack's email lay in his inbox. Peter opened his bottom desk drawer and substituted his regular printing paper for a coated cover paper, then printed the picture no bigger than 1 1/2 inch margins. Peter, with perfect precision, cut the glossy coated picture out; he went to his closet and pulled out a locked ammo container, which his father had given him from his father's military days. Unlocking the box, Peter placed the picture on top of the old ID cards he had collected from several people, now over the age of 21, and roll of cash he kept stashed inside. Peter locked the container, pushed the box of his video games in front, and pulled his hangers equally across the hook.

He returned to his desk. Peter leaned back in his chair, replying, "Received—Design will be finished soon—I will let you know." Placing his phone down, he drummed on his keypad, thinking about what to say next on fake ID's.

\* \* \* \*

Lifting his feet up the stairs was a struggle for Adam. His vision became blurry as his eyes refused to focus. Adam looked up at Quinn the Angel, seventeen with the inherited broad shoulders from their father, but long curly hair from their mother. His blonde hair was a beacon shining above his grey hoodie with designer frayed edges and faded blue jeans, sent to help him to his bedroom. As they climbed the stairs, his parents' voices sounded like a vibrating hum in his spinning head. For a second, as Quinn dragged him up the last of the steps, Adam saw the closed door to Peter's room. Adam's palms began to sweat as he tightened them into fists. His body constricted under Quinn's hold. Golden boy too perfect to help a brother out. Adam wanted to kick Peter's door, but two things prevented him. One, he didn't have the strength to kick the door and remain standing, and two, Quinn's 2 1/2 inches taller stature stood in the way. Quinn led Adam to his room and let him sink into his bed. Quinn shrugged off the duffel and let it sink to the floor with a light thunk.

"Thanks. You can go tell that worthless ass next door to go fuck himself."

Quinn stared at Adam sprawled out on his bed. He grinned, his left hand tucked into his hoodie pocket. "Sounds great. I'll get right on that," he said unenthusiastically.

Shortly after Quinn left, Adam was able to pull himself up off his bed. Shrugging off his jacket and tugging at his shirt, he shoved his sweaty smoky clothes and the vest from his duffel into his hamper in the closet, spraying Febreze to mask the smell of cigarette, then changed into something clean. Adam looked down at his chest and could see a drastic change in color on his left side. He hobbled to his mirror and examined his left eye and the side of his face where he had taken a blow to the head, which was starting to turn yellow.

\* \* \* \*

Quinn left Adam limp on the bed and shut the door behind him. Quinn then took out the cash and counted, eighty bucks. Not a bad steal. Tucking the money into his back pocket, Quinn walked over to Peter's door, knocked once, and walked in.

"Hey, I'm finishing my paper. What's up?" Peter said, not bothering to look at Quinn. He didn't appear frustrated about the distraction, but Quinn played it safe.

"Can I ask ya for a favor?"

"Sure, what is it?" Peter said, without hesitation leaning back and folding his arms over his long abdomen. Closing the door and leaning against it, Quinn rubbed his hands like they were sweaty on his faded jeans. Looking down at his feet, he noticed the torn ends.

"I was wondering if you could maybe make it to my football game this Friday?"

"Sure, whatever." He said, disinterested, continuing to type.

"You're the best." Quinn hugged Peter from behind his chair. "By the way, ya might want to convince Adam of that."

"You helped his sorry ass sneak into the house, didn't you?" Peter swirled his computer chair around to face him.

Quinn stepped back, holding up his hands innocently. "Is it really sneaking in if you just walk through the back door? Where is the challenge in that? Their bickering is the only thing that matters to them." Their father's study had calmed down when Quinn came in, but their voices could still be heard muffled through the wall, the

most devastating part to the vicious cycle in their disputes, where when their mother would cry silently, taking the brunt of their father's wrath. "Go tell him yourself he has a problem, because no one else in this family is gonna."

"Isn't that the truth, but it's not worth it." Peter returned his attention to the computer screen.

Quinn moved closer, leaning in on Peter's right. "Ya sure about that? It was clearly worth his time ranting about you."

Peter glared at Quinn. "He blames me for not helping with his problem."

Quinn stretched his arms back on Peter's computer chair, moving away from Peter's face and predator eyes. "He blames everyone for a lot of shit. But hey, you didn't hear it from me."

"I've had it with his self absorbed ego and trash mouth. Thinks he can cover his tracks, but relying on others to do it for him." Peter slammed his laptop shut. Quinn stepped back as Peter stood and kicked his chair over before leaving his room.

"Have fun." Quinn drew out his words, his voice growing softer until Peter had disappeared. Quinn quickly turned towards the closet. He scrolled through Peter's clothes, pushing them to the left till he saw the ammo container in the back behind the box of video games. Quinn pulled out the ammo container, inputting Peter's birthday into the lock, and sure enough, it opened. They're both suckers. Quinn took another \$80 and returned the container, stashing the money with the rest in his hoodie, before closing the closet. Quinn reached for his phone in his back pocket and texted, "Got the cash." Quinn waited until his phone buzzed. S: "Pick up 8 PM same place."

\* \* \* \*

Peter swung Adam's door open without knocking. Adam stood looking in his mirror when Peter slammed the door behind him. "Have a good night with your crew?"

"No thanks to you, asshole." Adam replied, turning to face him.

Peter saw the bruise for the first time, noticing how Adam could barely stand, supporting himself with the dresser. "What the hell happened to you?" Peter stared, puzzled, concern replacing his anger. He could see bloodstains underneath his brother's nostrils.

"None of your fuck'in business."

\* \* \* \*

Adam took a step forward and face planted into the floor. A horrific pain shot up from his calf. This wasn't a charley horse. He had heard something snap and he passed out.

Adam was jolted awake, leaning against the dresser. He clenched his teeth, holding back the pain. Adam could feel his foot pulsing and every breath he took brought another wave of pain from his chest. Adam wasn't sure if he was going to faint again or throw up till Peter, without warning pushed on his ankle.

"Mother Fucker," Adam let out under his breath, holding back the yell, slamming his fist against the side of the dresser. Adam turned to his left and vomited.

"Ya sprained your ankle, idiot." Peter held him, so he didn't land in his own throw up, and waited for Adam to settle down.

Adam had a hard time catching his breath as he said, "Did... ya realize... that... before... or... after... ya jabbed... your finger... in my damn leg... you asshole." When his breathing finally evened out, he chuckled. "Guess the cigarettes disagreed with me."

"Just give it up. What happen'?"

"Fuck off," Adam pushed him away, catching himself from falling over and leaning against the dresser. He sighed, trying to hold in the pain, coming from his foot and punching him in the gut. Peter's hand moved toward his bare chest. "If you fuck'in touch me— Shit." Peter pressed on the side of his ribcage. "Damn, Adam, do ya have a broken rib too—Answer me!"

Adam lunged towards his right, in an attempt to get away from Peter, but his hand, which still hovered over Adam's chest, dug into his ribcage once again. Adam slumped back against the dresser, trying to get away from the pain.

He rolled his head from side to side, along the dresser saying, "I'm not saying nothing, prick." He cringed as another wave of pain shot up his leg.

"Adam, what the hell is that?" Peter pointed to the bedroom door and Adam rolled his head in its direction to see a steady stream of smoke, rising from under the door.

\* \* \* \*

Quinn stepped out of Peter's bedroom and stood motionless as he smelled and stared at the rising smoke, hoping what he saw was just a figment of his imagination, but the smoke wasn't going away.

"Fire!" Still unable to move, he waited till his parents appeared. Peter came out of Adam's room as well.

Their father ran down stairs, shouting up at them, “Front door now!” Their mother dropped the papers she held in her hands and led Quinn downstairs as Peter returned to Adam’s room. Quinn turned to look behind him, his mother’s hand slipping away from his as she ran down the stairs, as Peter fled in the opposite direction. Quinn stumbled, sliding down the stairs, bumping his chin against one of the steps. Quinn felt his mother’s hand grab onto his wrist and drag him back to his feet.

Downstairs, the fire could be seen spreading from the kitchen. When Quinn made it outside, still dazed, the flames were recognizably coming from the trash pile. His parents ran across the street to call 911 as Quinn stared at the flames, blazing up from the backyard.

Peter came out the front door carrying Adam, and as they made their way to the road, Quinn reached for Adam’s shirt and pulled him off Peter’s back. Adam collapsed in the road.

“Hey!” Peter reached to pull Quinn away from him.

“It’s his fault,” Quinn shouted, fighting against Peter. “It was his damn cigarette. Everything’s destroyed because of him.” As Quinn struggled to get past Peter, he was pinned down to the ground, and the money in his hoodie fell out.

Adam saw it first. Placing his hand in his pocket, he could feel the cash stack was smaller than before. “Is that my money?”

“What money?” Peter searched around him, still restraining Quinn.

“Adam’s fight money. Oh come on. Why else would he be beaten to a pulp?”

“You sneaky bastard.”

“Don’t get too cocky, it’s only half yours.”

Peter, pushing Quinn hard against the pavement, yelled, “Where did ya get the rest?”

“Where do ya think? Your lock combo is as bad as your fake ID’s.”

Peter punched Quinn across his face and left him lying in the road. Peter picked up the money, splitting it evenly, throwing Adam’s half on the ground in front of him.

“I’m just gonna try one cigarette. That’s what you told me three months ago. Was that the first lie?”

“What if it was? When can you say your deception started?” Adam glared with all

“Fire Department is on their way.” Their father’s voice rumbled like an earthquake across the conscious strength he had left.

“Fire Department is on their way.” Their father’s voice rumbled like an earthquake across the street as their parents came to meet them.

“Adam! What happened?” Their mother rushed to his side, her eyes still red streaked from crying.

“When did you get home?” their father demanded, glaring down at Adam.

“I... Uh.”

Quinn pulled himself up off the pavement and said, “Must’ve rushed down the stairs like I did and slipped.”

Their mother touched the side of Adam’s ankle. “Ow! I think I sprained it.”

“You sprained it that badly, falling down the stairs?” their mother questioned.

“I missed a step and when I tried to plant my foot I must have rolled it. I-I also hit the railing really hard when my ankle twisted the wrong way. I think I bruised my ribs. It really hurts to breath.”

“Oh my! Adam, your whole side is black and blue.” Their mother examined the bruise without touching it.

“No way that fuck’in came from the railing. What the hell have you been doing, Adam?” their father bel-lowed.

“Matt, don’t swear at him!” their mother yelled.

“Well am I really fuck’in meant to believe that Adam got a broken rib from a side rail. What the hell hap-pened?”

“I told ya dad, I fell down the damn stairs.” Adam bit his tongue, trying to hold his father’s gaze.

“Peter, how did your brother wind up beaten to a pulp?” Their father fumed, crossing his arms, making himself seem larger than he was as he waited for a reply.

\* \* \* \*

Peter glared into Adam’s staring eyes, which turned away from their father and onto him. Crossing his own arms, reaching the same height as his father, Peter began his speech.

“Like Adam and Quinn said, he slipped down the stairs.”

# LADY WINTER

by *Emily Greso*

At her onset, Winter seemed innocuous. She was an extrovert. Her entrance was bold and immediate, without flirtatious transition. Autumn was instantly overshadowed; the thermostat did not dwindle slowly but hit freezing overnight, and subzero in merely a number of days. Winter invited community indoors with hearth fire, outdoors with quiet reminders of childhood ecstasy. The greatly anticipated snowfall was incessant for 60 hours; I counted each one. The consistency varied, with small, keen flakes piercing the fabric of our flannels, and fat, happy flakes drifting to kiss our faces.

In the beginning, it felt as if the town had undergone a profound personality shift. With the blanket of snow pushing a foot deep, no lines visible on the roadways, we had to trust in one another that we would each uphold a degree of sensibility and concern. Tracks forged by big trucks with sturdy tires became the new road stripes. The early risers carved out makeshift sidewalks in the layers of ice and snow for us, salting their footprints as they walked backwards across Ellensburg. We danced through banks of snow in our long johns, scarves waving; joyous pennants of warmth. For the first time in my few months here, the people looked up at me as I walked past. Perhaps, being cold, we had enough common ground to smile at each other.

Winter grew tired of entertaining us, I think. Her temperament, once soft and welcoming, became sharp in early January. The snow stopped visiting regularly, and now only drifted through to keep us docile and to quiet our protests. Mostly, we had ice. Ice is cold, ice is unforgiving to those who fall. *Give us snow*, we cried silently, *give us snow or give us Spring*. We didn't say this aloud. It was too cold to speak, too cold to open our mouths lest we risk freezing our tongues and lungs. The scarves we danced with became bonds of our silence as we wrapped our faces in thick wool. As the people stopped speaking to me, so too did they stop looking as I passed. Eventually, the town became home to the puppets that Winter made in her own image: icy, hard, monochrome. Here I was, trying to remain gentle and engaged, in a loose pack of people afraid to be acknowledged.

With the snow no longer falling, the cloud covering vanished and again could I see the night skies. How I had missed the constellations and the moon. Winter's skies are possibly the most beautiful; her sunrises cast pastel tints onto the white world, and the sparkling ground reflects her bedroom eyes and celestial bodies. Walking everywhere as I do, it is often difficult not to look to the sky. Winter presents an ultimatum to the stargazers: do we walk across the ice with our eyes to our feet, so as not to trip? Or do we stand still and turn our faces to the moon?

People stopped opening up; people kept their jackets toggled in class. In the spirit of keeping warm, my body developed a light layer of peach fuzz. I stopped shaving my legs. Every insulator afforded a small comfort from the elements, but nobody held anybody. What the penguins of the south get right, we neglect to heed: closeness brings warmth. Instead, individual bundles of blood and fat and fleece and goose down tried to hoard heat. The loneliness of the entire process was miserable. Sometimes the icicles hanging from my building seemed sharp enough, heavy enough, to impale me should I walk beneath one as it dropped.

Mid-January— I look at my naked body in the bathroom mirror before work. The indoor draft brings bumps to my skin and hardens my nipples; my jewelry is cold to touch even being so close to my center. Winter has her way with me, chapping and ravaging my skin. The fat on my thighs often seems pointless; it is too cold to feel my fingertips against my legs as I walk across campus before dawn. Do I eat more? Do I risk the icicles that will form inside my nose if I unwind my scarf for a smoke? Do I buckle down and hibernate? Winter is no longer an extroverted party guest; Winter is an authoritarian dominatrix. I surrender under her sharp lashes, and I wait for the sun.

# SCATTER

*by Trevor Hsia*

"I remember that there used to be a lake here," Frederica spoke softly, her legs dangling over the precipice, "I'd come down here on the weekends with my parents. We had a boat, you see, and we'd take it out onto the water for the day."

Alphonse sat down next to her, staring out at the expansive crater that stretched near to the horizon, "There isn't anything here anymore."

Frederica nodded. Indeed. There wasn't anything here anymore. A soft beep emanated from her watch. A quick glance at the display told her that the purifier was done.

"Water's ready," she looked to Alphonse, who silently confirmed.

Back at their camp, Frederica carefully pulled the pitcher out of their portable water purifier, and began preparing their ration packs.

"How many filters do we have left?" Alphonse asked with some concern as he pulled out the purifier's filter, now black with sludge.

"Four," she answered as the packs began to heat up, "How goes work on the engine?"

"Going slowly," Alphonse sighed, sitting down, "We'll be cutting this close."

"Not too close, I hope," she handed him one of the packs, "The only thing worse than dying with no hope is dying with salvation just out of reach."

That earned her a bitter laugh from Alphonse as he gingerly took the pack.

Enough filters for a week. The rations would be useless without water. And the shuttle needed at least 6 more days of work before it could get airborne again.

"This place is so sad," Frederica broke the silence as she checked her pack to see if it was ready, "Remember when it was so full of life?"

"No," he shrugged, "Never was here when it was."

That was right. Frederica had spent centuries in cold sleep, awoken to help with this survey mission. Alphonse, on the other hand...

"Ah," she nodded, "Right, you're one of the new generation. Sterile halls and polished bulkheads are your home."

"And I much prefer it to this wasteland," Alphonse opened his pack, drooling slightly at the smell, "Oh, this is good stuff."

"You know, food used to be cooked and prepared by hand," Frederica sighed as her partner dug into his ration pack, "It wasn't always like this."

"I know, but I can't miss what I've never had," he pointed out before going back to his meal.

Frederica sighed and took a bite. This was a poor approximation of good old barbeque pork and baked potatoes. Her pack said "BBQ Pork and Potato" on the front, but you wouldn't know it from the appearance. It looked like a solid slab of white with some dark strips mixed into it. Very processed, very fake. But it was all she had. Looking over at Alphonse's meal, she noted that he had chosen some sort of fried rice dish for his second



meal today. She remembered that pack, it was decent enough. Hers, on the other hand... she took another spoonful and choked it down. It wasn't a banquet, and it wasn't fine dining, but it was food. It was all the sustenance humanity had ever known ever since they took to the skies in massive Arkships bound for Mars and the other celestial bodies, leaving mother Earth behind a dull, rusted, wind-torn shell of its former self.

For centuries upon centuries, they had searched for a new home. Yet Mars turned out not to be the saving grace that so many had once hoped for. The great Arkships had loomed over the dusty world like vultures, and yet the feast never came.

"Inhospitable," came the reports.

"Only capable of supporting a minimal population," was the conclusion.

And like children being told to share, rather than work together to solve their collective problem, the Arkships of humanity turned on each other.

What little weaponry they had brought with them was quickly utilized, shedding what little blood mankind had left among themselves.

And yet, the dirt of Mars could turn no redder.

In the end, the determined Arkships of China flew victorious over the Martian soil, and the rest of humanity flew away into the black, tearing into each other over water deposits and resources.

The Arkships of the United States had little want for resources, as most of their population was in cold sleep. As such, they had felt little need to risk it all to clash with the other, desperate remnants of nations. And yet, they still needed a home where they could wake their cargo.

And so, after the radiation storms had long since dissipated and the lands shifted so that they no longer resembled the world it once was, the Arkships of the United States returned to their cradle. To make it their home once more.

Somehow.

Someway.

The cold, firm silver hull of their large, contoured oblong shuttle beneath her feet, Frederica stared out into the horizon, the sun tinting the sky red as it dipped below the jagged mountains in the far distance. All around them were the crumbling ruins of a once expansive residential community. Now, only bent frameworks of houses remained, and a gigantic dried lake dominated the middle. This place had once been near sea level. Frederica remembered. She had been here, long ago, before Cold Sleep. Now, she was here, far in the future, and the once lowland community had been pushed upwards onto a plateau by geological upheaval.

An upheaval, much like her own life.

She remembered those final days, as the government went around taking all the valuable people, all the promising ones. She had long been estranged from her family, so when she had been offered a coveted seat on the infamous Arkships, she had taken it.

Only when she had stared out of the viewport at the ruined world, as thunderstorms ravaged half the globe in patchwork and distant flashes of nuclear explosions desolated the Middle East, did she dare to wonder what had happened to her family.

She still didn't want to think about it.

"Motherfu-! We may have a problem," Alphonse's cut off curse drew Frederica back into the present. She

hopped off the top and slid down the side, running around back.

“What is the probl-Oooh fuck,” she finished his swear as she saw the absolutely ruined Thermal Redistributor in the engine compartment.

“When did this happen?!” she all but shouted in shock and momentary anger.

“I don’t know,” Alphonse apologized, chagrined, “I just tried to run a basic thrust test, and the system refused to cooperate. I tried seeing what system could be stopping it, and lo and behold, fried Distributor!”

Frederica hissed in exasperation, lost at what to do or what to say. Without the Distributor, the shuttle had no way of channeling heat away from the main thrusters. And in that state, they would slag themselves before reaching the stratosphere.

There was simply no way to fix it. All the components had melted. They had no replacements. Without a working communication array, they couldn’t send for help, and by the time search parties were sent out, they would be long dead. If only their water purification unit hadn’t been destroyed in the crash, then they could have held out. Now, their only hope was that another survey shuttle would happen to pass by their location.

And as Alphonse and Frederica shared a devastated look, hope seemed very far away.

Frederica stared at the smooth, white, featureless ceiling of their shuttle from her small bunk back in the habitation section of the ship. It was a utilitarian thing; wedged into the wall just before the sanitation stations and cargo hold. A few feet to her right, Alphonse also lay, reading a small, worn book with fading red covers by the dim blue glow of the shuttle’s ambient emergency lights.

Frederica turned to stare at Alphonse’s book for one reason; it was real. Only a handful of real books existed on the fleet; keepsakes taken by nostalgic individuals as they fled the crumbling United States into the stars. Even before the beginning of the end, books had almost completely fallen out of print, only a few remaining as novelty or specialty items. Frederica had one, a well-treated paperback with a plasticized cover. A special edition reprint of an old Star Trek book. If only the future had been as wondrous and fanciful as the authors of old had envisioned. There was no peace, no happiness, and no security. Only war and the frantic drive to persist.

“What are you reading?” she asked out of curiosity, leaning out over her bunk to get a closer look.

“Hm? Oh... it doesn’t have a name,” Alphonse explained, tilting the book to show her its blank cover and pages filled with handwriting.

“It’s a journal?” she ventured. He shook his head.

“No, it’s a story. My father said that it was written by his great grandfather while he lived on the Arkship,” Alphonse supplied helpfully.

“Your great grandfather lived on Earth?” Frederica was surprised. So recent? They must have skipped some generations in cryosleep.

“Yes,” he nodded, “He writes about his hometown in a place called ‘California’. I must admit, I’m having a hard time envisioning the place.”

“All the open spaces?” she guessed, thinking back to when she had visited San Francisco. All those towering buildings of glass and steel.

“No,” he looked back to the book, “The water. Imagine, having so much water that you could waste it in a public art display.”

A fountain. He was talking about a fountain. Frederica smirked a bit, remembering the time. Funny, because California had been going through a drought at the time.

The whole country had been going through a drought.

A sound like rustling came from the roof. Then heavier. And soon it sounded like a million tiny pebbles were hitting their small craft. Frederica looked up, mouth wide. It had been so long since she'd heard that sound.

Rain.

"Hm," Alphonse looked at a small display near his bunk, "Wow, that toxicity is high. Wouldn't want to be out in that downpour, it'd eat through your skin."

Ah, but of course. Frederica grimaced. Just another reminder of how things would never be the same again. Poisonous acid rain.

The morning of the next day was cold. Merciless wind whipped by the shuttle's thin hull. Frederica and Alphonse found themselves warming their hands by a portable heater, waiting for the maelstrom to pass until they could head out again. Even if they couldn't escape, they could still continue surveying the area. That way, their likely deaths would have purpose.

A singular ping from the shuttle's console broke the silence, and Frederica rushed to it. A slow smile grew as she saw the reading get closer.

"Alphonse!" she exclaimed in excitement, "It's a ship!"

He gave her a disbelieving look that slowly morphed into joy before the two of them scrambled for the emergency flares and ran out into the blistering gale.

"Hey! Hey!" Alphonse jumped up and down with a blazing flare in each hand as Frederica flashed an SOS at the approaching craft with a handheld electric torch. It was hard to see it in the haze and whipping wind, but the shape of a shuttle and its droning engines could clearly be heard over the roaring of the wind.

It got closer and closer, enough to make out the outline. And the smile slowly drifted off of Frederica's face.

The shuttle was not oblong and silver like their own, but had harder angles, and had a pale white paint job. Long sweeping wings allowed it lift as outboard engines propelled the craft towards them with damning speed. Beneath the nose, panels slid aside to reveal a nose cannon.

"Hell, it's the Japanese!" Frederica swore, tossing down her torch and running back for the shuttle. The Japanese Arkships. The only other survivor fleet looking to claim Humanity's ancient cradle.

A new sound joined the engines and wind. The staccato snapping of a plasma cannon. Bright white globes of energized gas slammed into the ground around them, popping with flashes of heat and light, scorching the ground they touched. As Frederica ran back, she heard Alphonse's agonized scream behind her. She didn't spare a glance as she threw herself into the shuttle.

Nearly tearing the door off the weapons locker, she yanked out the Strike Anti-Vehicle Rifle and stomped outside with it, priming the weapon. The hum of capacitors began to compete with the wind's symphony as she raised it, sighting down the holographic scope at the Japanese shuttle as it banked, going for another pass.

Lasers snapped on, connecting the rifle and shuttle's left outboard engine for a split second, ionizing the air between. Then the capacitors released its stored energy, and energy arced from the gun to the shuttle like a lightning bolt.

The engine all but exploded, gutted and spewing smoke. Wobbling, the craft turned away and fled, dropping slowly as it flew away. It wouldn't go far.

Frederica scoffed, ejecting the rifle's spent energy cartridge and racking the bolt for the underslung machine gun. They had something she needed.

As she prepared to head to the downed ship, she paused by Alphonse, and knelt down next to him. He whimpered as he clutched the burnt stump of his shoulder, the rest of his arm twisted and twitching mere feet away. Seeping out from the charred wound around his fingers, Alphonse's blood turned the ground into a parody of the Martian soil.

"Hold on, I'll get the Distributor," she whispered, "You're going to be alright. We're going to be fine."

But she knew in her gut that he wasn't going to make it. There was too much blood on the ground already. So she choked down her tears and told that comforting lie.

"It's... It's too big out here..." he gasped, eyes shut tightly as he curled up into a ball, "Please... I wanna go home..."

He was just a kid. She had been treating him like an adult, but really...

"I know, Alphonse," she stood, staring at the distant light of the downed ship, "We're all going home."

The haze eventually disgorge the downed shuttlecraft as Frederica approached, Strike Rifle raised and gun ready to shoot. The shuttle door was open, and a limping Japanese man wearing a simple white and red uniform was trying to leave the ruined ship, a somewhat battered grey laser pistol clutched in his right hand. Upon seeing Frederica, he shouted something in Japanese and raised the gun.

"Drop your weapon!" she shouted angrily, brandishing her gun, "Drop it!"

She was no soldier. She was a scientist. She didn't want this man's blood on her hands, and she thought that the same held true for this man. He was just a pilot. It was one thing to rain death from above, another to send it flying from your hand.

For a moment, she saw him hesitate, the gun lower a bit. Hopes high, she stepped forward.

Then the fear in his eyes reignited, the pistol snapped back up, and he fired.

Her gut burned. Frederica cried out in shock, in alarm, in surprise. She gave the enemy a look of betrayed regret, and then pulled her own trigger.

She fell to her knees, gasping as pain tore through her, raking her spine and making her skin ache in sympathy. Pressing hand to the wound, she felt a charred hole. The feeling sickened her. The damage... she didn't know what had been hit. She didn't want to look. Not like she could fix it either. She had to find the Thermal Redistributor on this shuttle, remove it, take it back to her own shuttle. If she could repair it, she could get back to the fleet. They had the medical facilities to heal anything short of death. If only she could make it that far...

Stumbling to the hatch, she poked the tip of her gun inside, looking around frantically. Only one chair. Nobody else to worry about.

Tossing the now pointless gun away, she grabbed the maintenance kit from its cubby with shaking hands. Throwing it open as she moved around to the back, she fumbled for the plasma cutter. With trembling fingers, she cut a rather jagged hole in the maintenance panel. Prying the metal away, she laughed giddily at seeing the intact Thermal Redistributor. With minimal modifications, it could serve her own craft just fine. She just needed to get it out and carry it back to her ship. Then she could return, treat her injury, deliver her data, and it would all be over.

Frederica stared in confusion at her hands as she tried to unscrew the component. Why was it so hard to turn the screwdriver? She knew that she was stronger than this! But as she tried to push harder, her hands only barely listened, and then she fumbled the screwdriver. It clattered away into the recesses of the ship's interior, a

death knell for her as the Thermal Redistributor sat there, now with no way to be removed.

She tried to open the kit, intent on finding some sort of substitute, but the coordination necessary just wasn't there, and her knees buckled.

She couldn't understand, until she sat there, hands pale and twitching as she tried to move them. So this was it, huh? She couldn't even endure one hit from a laser pistol? Humans were such fragile creatures, honestly.

With a bitter, weak laugh, she fell onto her back, unable to muster up any strength to move. She had been born on this planet, and so it seemed she would die on it. How... fitting.

Would anyone find her? Their data? Had she only woken from Cold Sleep just to die here? The only people who she had spoken to at length before coming here was Alphonse, and he was dead. Was nobody around who remembered her?

Was her family on one of the Arkships as they plowed their way through the heavens?

Staring at the sky, Frederica saw the haze clear, and smiled slightly at the distant thin, silver outlines of her country's Arkships, silhouetted against the early pale yellow light of morning. She felt like she could reach out and touch them.

She supposed getting to leave Earth in the first place was cheating death. But this time, there really wasn't any way out.

Who would reclaim Mother Earth? She supposed not living to find out was her only regret.

Frederica's light faded before she could see her Arkships intersect another group of slivers against the sky, silver needles mingling with white cubes, bright and dim flashes accompanying the conflict as humanity spiraled deeper and deeper into oblivion.

# EVERYTHING RATTLES

by Joseph Kelly

Everything in the house rattles. The dishes by the sink clink and clatter while the old ceiling fan in the living room swings left and right before settling into its usual circular pattern. I clench my spoon and wait for the rattling to stop. Dad hastily moves in and out his bedroom, packing the last of his clothes and other supplies for the trip back home. His checkered Arabic scarf around his neck chases after him with its tail in the wind. We both dress casually with similar torn jeans and dark long sleeve buttoned shirts, but his mind is clearly elsewhere. His eyes are full of focus, full of intensity.

My eyes glaze over Dad's reports covering the rebel attacks here in Aleppo. Just a few weeks ago, Dad was allowed to follow a group of rebels that were riding through different villages and cities within Aleppo until the group was ambushed and killed by President Bashar Assad's army. While Dad reported on the rebels, I spoke with the citizens and recorded their stories of survival and constantly living in fear of Bashar Assad's army. Everyone I talked to asked why my father and I, two well-off American journalists, were still here in a war-torn country. *We're reporters. It's our job.* That's all I could say to them, but I'm tired of trying to use that phrase as a buffer to hide the fact that I really just want to go home. I knew this job would be dangerous, but I couldn't let my dad come here alone. Those sunny L.A. beaches look really good right about now.

-Michael, you finish packing?

-Yeah.

-Got your passport?

-Right here.

-Alright, I got us a ride that'll take us to Turkey's border, but it's still a risky venture.

-Cuz' everything else has been a cake walk.

-Damn straight. I'm gonna finish packing and we'll get going.

Heading back into his room, my gaze turns to the half-eaten bowl of honey nut cheerios. On my way to the sink with the bowl, I hear a loud boom in the distance. I stop in my tracks. A large cloud of dust and smoke can be seen through the barred window in the distance. The three most important airports in Aleppo are closed because of rebel attacks. Just try to think of the sunny beaches. The soft, but course sand that gets entangled within your gelled hair before you dive into the cool—a collection of crackling sounds go off near the smoking area. My body jolts instantly and I almost drop the bowl. Think of the damn cool ocean that forces your body to shiver upon impact. Dad rushes back into the living room and we make eye contact. We say nothing and he goes back into his room, faster now. I just want to go home.

With a deep exhale, I continue towards the sink. Before the milk is poured, a low-pitched noise from the balcony stops me. With the bowl in hand, I check the balcony to find a skinny and scruffy orange cat perched on the rusty metallic railing. I look behind me to see Dad still packing. I return my gaze to the cat, still perched on the railing. Its eyes glare at me. Slowly kneeling, I place the bowl on the floor, pushing it a few inches from me. I back away from the bowl and sit on the rug covered floor. I click my tongue and point to the bowl. I'm not sure how to go about this, but I don't want the cat to end up falling off the rail. Dad walks back into the room with more clothes and his focus is suddenly interrupted once he sees me on the floor, making noises.

-What are you doing?

I nod towards the cat.

-How the hell did it get up there?

-No idea. I heard him meowing or something on the balcony and I didn't want to leave him out there.

-Well, don't get too attached. We're leaving in a few minutes.

The cat makes his way to the bowl with his tail perked up high in the air and sniffs its contents. After a moment of suspense, the cat dips its little tongue into the milk. A few quick licks and the cat is face deep in Cheerio milk. I don't know what to call him. Maybe I should call him Cheerios for the hell of it. I shuffle towards the cat slowly and he immediately looks up once I'm close. I carefully extend my hand. His soft wet nose taps the palm of my hand and he taps my hand again with a soft paw.

-Cheerios it is.

The building rattles again and Cheerio's head veers up. A loud screeching noise passes over our building and an earth-shattering boom shakes the whole building. I snatch up Cheerio as Dad rushes back into the room and leads us out of the building. Down winding stairs and stone walls, we exit the building to find people running in different directions. Down the street, an apartment block has been hit. People rush over to carry out the injured. Tenants of the building stumble out dazed and confused, covered in dust while two girls dash out of

the building trying to make sense of what happened. Nearby, a wall is coated in graffiti that reads: “Zero hour has come, God, Syria, Freedom.”

-Shit, it's coming back Michael, run!

Dad jerks my scarf in his direction as we sprint down the street. A deep, searing penetration rakes through my skin. Gaping scratch marks bleed through my shirt as Cheerios frantically breaks free of my grasp and runs amongst a crowd of frightened people.

-Dad, Cheerios!

-What the hell are you talking about? Just run!

I lose sight of Cheerios' orange colored fur as people run in our direction while armed soldiers run past us and open fire on the jet. I know it's of no use, but I pray in the back of my mind that they manage to shoot something vital and bring it down. Gun fire is broken up with a loud explosion that sends me and Dad flying. I slam into something that forces the air right out of my lungs. A thick cloud of dust burns my eyes while my lungs try to find air. I can barely make out the cars flattened by rubble through the thick smoke. Through all the dazed screaming and panic, a low-pitched meow catches my attention. Under the car I slammed into, I see Cheerios curled up underneath baring his teeth at me.

-Come on you little bastard, just trust me.

A high-pitched scream blares in my ears and I'm jerked off the ground.

-My God Michael, are you alright?

I don't know what to say for a moment as I look Dad over, the same as he's doing me. Nothing seems serious, just some scrapes and bruises.

-Dad, I need to get Cheerios from underneath the car.

-Cheerios, the cat?

-Yeah, he's under the car and I need to get him!

-Michael, the cat—

The ground shakes beneath our feet again and we hear the dreadful screeching noise

-It's coming back!

Ignoring any pain, I run in the opposite direction, but the jet is too fast and another bomb is dropped on an apartment across from the other building it hit. The force of the explosion rams us against parked cars as debris falls onto the street. I look up towards a dark sky, but quickly realize that it's a huge chunk of debris coming at me. Something soft touches my hand and it's Cheerios hiding underneath the car. Without hesitation, I clutch him and use my body to shield him. The weight of another body collapses on top of me before I hear an ear numbing thud. Small shards of glass rain on my face and everything goes silent. A buzzing noise fills my ears as I look up to see the debris on top of the car and that the extra body was Dad. We step away from the debris and I don't see Cheerios anywhere.

-What the hell? Where'd he go?

-Who?

Before I can answer, Dad slumps against one of the crumbled cars and a spot near his waist progressively turns dark red. Feeling around the spot, Dad pulls out a shard of glass and collapses to his knees. Nerves in my body want to freeze, but I quickly hoist him up and help him towards a dirty pickup truck. People run up and down the street, screaming with their hands over their heads. Shards of glass rattle against the cars and the screeching noise brings my ears back to life. A large piece of rubble a few feet from us would make for some kind of cover and I try to rush us over to it with legs that are too tired to run. The jet zooms over our heads with its screeching fading into the distance and yet there's no explosion. Once the smoke clears up, we see five men carrying a bloody mattress out of the apartment down the street towards the truck. Another mattress is carried out of the building with a survivor while more women and children run out with a few supplies and the clothes on their backs.

A few men help me lift Dad into the crowded truck and I hop in next to him. With all my strength, I press Dad's scarf against his bleeding wound. While the truck leaves, a young girl runs past us carrying a bloody and orange-coated cat. My stomach churns, but I remain focused on Dad's wound. The truck eventually arrives at a building that almost looks like a YMCA recreation center. The truck backs up near the entrance with doctors and nurses immediately rushing out the door of the building and carrying people inside. Dad is placed on a stretcher and rushed to an open emergency room. While I wait, I'm bandaged along with other survivors. For some reason, I keep thinking about Cheerios. I check over my body to see any scratches, I got from Cheerios, but I find none. The doctor that examined me didn't find any scratches from Cheerios either. A nurse covered in bloody robes informs me that I can see my father, but that he's still resting.

The room is brightly lit and surprisingly white. I sit in a chair next to Dad's bed and I grip his scarred hand.

My eyes feel drift. The sound of crashing waves and soaring seagulls lulls me into a sleep. My head bursts out of the cold and refreshing salt water. I make my way onto the beach and rush towards my flip flops hopping on burning sand. Upon the widespread sandy beach, I hear a distant low pitched meow.



WIS





QUALITY  
PART

# A DRIVE TO LEARN

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AN INTERVIEW WITH KRISTA ZIMMERMAN

*by Olivia Abt*



*“I have always been someone  
who wanted to communicate visually”*

“STORMWIND”



***A drive to learn***, is what brings most students to a college campus. However, what each student is driven to learn varies from student to student. For Krista Zimmerman it was a drive to learn more about the structure and function of what she observes and to put that into her artwork, through meaningful visual designs and narratives. This is something we at *Manastash* believe Krista has successfully achieved during her time here at Central Washington University.

“I have always been someone who wanted to communicate visually,” Krista stated when asked what drove her to become an artist, “I think that some people are born with a predisposition to want to communicate their impressions of the world through visual means.” Similar to other artists as children, Krista, as a child, picked up a pencil and never put it down. She was always motivated by a desire to understand light, form, expression and other principles and elements of art.

It is this drive that lead Krista to Central’s Washington University’s Art Department where she says her eyes were opened to the use of new materials, mediums and processes which she claims she would not have found on her own. Through her education here she has been able to hone her natural artistic abilities and develop new skills that have widened the range of possibilities for her future work and improve the quality of her present work.

“My goal is to consistently craft compelling designs and visual narratives that connect with viewers both on a technical level and on an emotional one.” As one can see by the examples of her work, Krista is able to communicate strong emotions as well as evoke the imagination through her talent and unique style.

Digging deeper into Krista’s artistic process she stated: “One thing I really enjoy about the work I do is that it helps me to see and understand the subject more deeply. Whether I am doing a study from a photograph or illustrating an abstract feeling or concept, the process of working causes me to think in new and unexplored ways about the subject. I analyze the forms, curves, and angles from which it is composed, or visualize the many different ways it could potentially be explored or expressed. I see art as not only a process of creation, but also of discovery, and that is something I deeply enjoy.”

Now that she is graduating, Krista hopes to work as an artist in the entertainment industry, “using concept creation and visual problem-solving to help develop the stories and worlds that touch us all on a daily basis.” With Krista’s talent and drive, it is more than likely that she will not just achieve her goals but surpass them.



“BARN OWL STUDY”



“HEDGEHOG CONCEPT SERIES”







**"STRIVING"**

*“I see art as not only a process of creation, but also of discovery, and that is something I deeply enjoy.”*

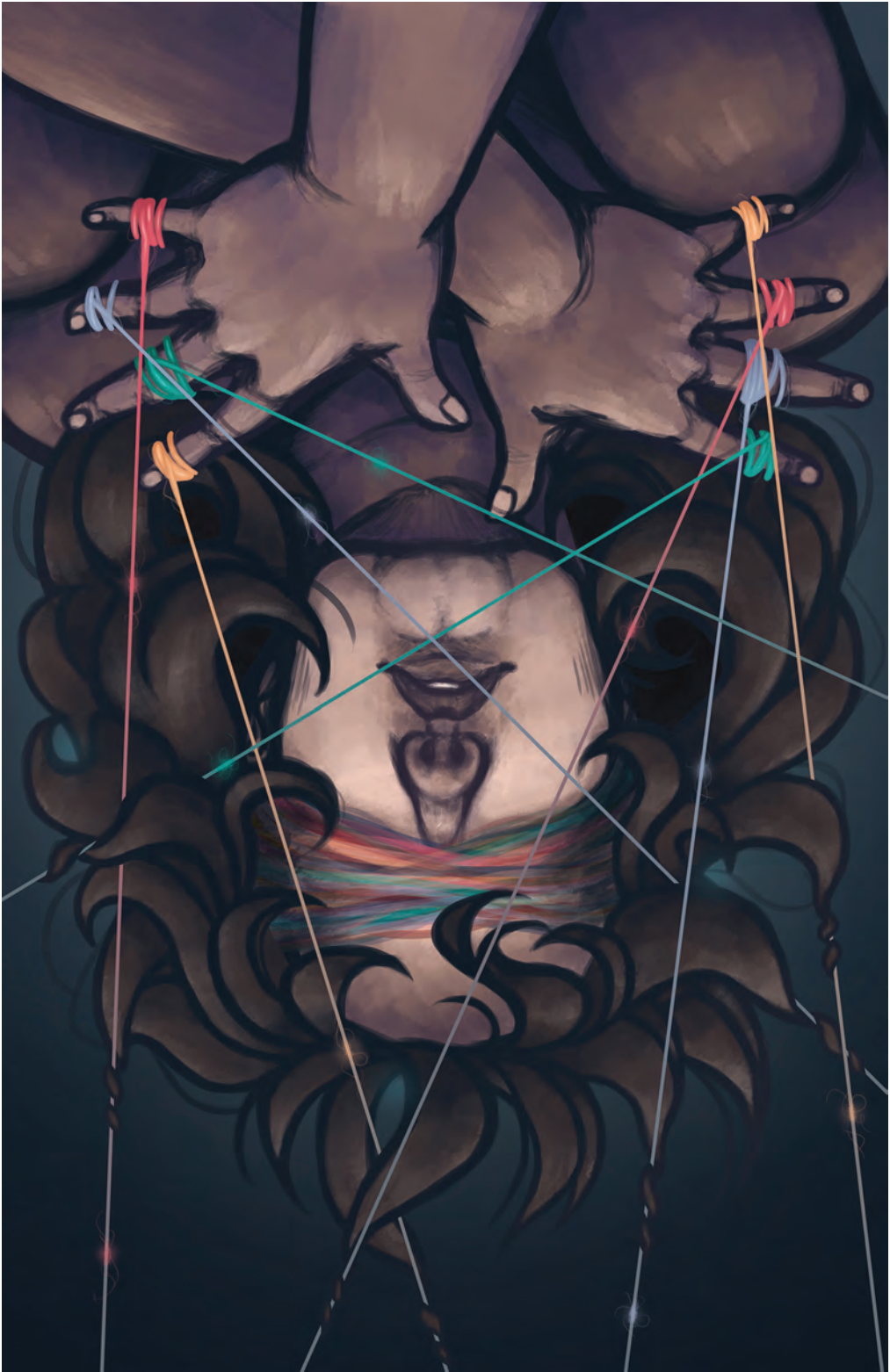
*- Krista Zimmerman*



**"DEPENDANCE"**







**ARACHNE (SELF-PORTRAIT)**

*by Kayla Craig*



**NO CONTACT**

*by Lesley Crane*



**THE OTHER SIDE**  
*by Ashley Garcia*



**MAKE AMERIKKKA SUCK AGAIN**

*by Austin Harley*



**SPACE TIGER**  
*by Brendan Laird*



**SILENCE**

*by Hailey Nelson*



## **DREAMS**

*by Hailey Nelson*





## MUSCLE MAN

*by Anjerie Nemrow*



**PSYCHEDELIC MUSE**

*by Elizabeth Otterbach*



**SELF PORTRAIT**

*by Elizabeth Otterbach*



**STRUCTURE**

*by Elizabeth Otterbach*



**EGG HEAD**

*by Dalia Ruiz*



**METALLICA ALBUM**

*by Lana Robinson*



**THE IMPOSTOR**  
*by Carlos Sullivan*



**ADAM AND EVE**

*by Sarah Wicorek*





**GOLDEN CIRCLE, ICELAND**

*by Ryan Weier*



# ARTIST

## **OLIVIA ABT**

Olivia is currently a junior at Central Washington University majoring in Professional and Creative Writing. After graduating Olivia wishes to work in publishing and become an editor herself.

## **NATALIE D. BENSON**

Natalie is a student at Central Washington University. She is majoring in professional and creative writing and will be graduating with a Bachelors degree in 2018.

## **MARIA BISOGNIO**

Maria enjoys writing about the sappy, nice things in her life. In her free time, she likes to listen to three of her favorite spoken word pieces on repeat.

## **LESLIE BLOOM**

Leslie is a wife and mother. She is finishing college and homeschooling her five-year-old twins. She enjoys reading, writing, traveling, and spending time with her family. She loves writing poetry.

## **KALI BUCKNER**

Kali is an accounting student who aims for a future writing to inspire others as she was inspired by her favorite authors.

## **PATRICK CARPENTER**

Patrick is a queer scholar of Spanish poetry from Sequim, Washington. His work walks the line between engaging and taboo, discussing topics from queer masculinity to religion to language.

## **ERIN CONNELLY**

Erin is a master's student at CWU, currently working on her thesis in howler monkey seed dispersal.

## **MEGAN COURTER**

Megan inherited words, and is still trying to figure out how to put them together. She figures she'll get it someday.

## **KAYLA CRAIG**

Originally from California and now western Washington, Kayla is a junior currently going for my BA in Studio Art with a minor in Spanish. Her interests include illustration, fiber arts, and wood design.

## **LESLEY CRANE**

Lesley Crane is a first year graduate student in Fine Arts Department at CWU. Her work, No Contact, is about the way that media and social media affect personal and community perceptions about police violence.

## **JASON A. DAYS**

Jason is a Professional and Creative Writing major at Central Washington University. He enjoys playing the guitar, reading books, and spending time with his wife and daughter.

## **JESUS AYALA DELGADO**

There are many unique traits that create my identity. Such as, Jesus is an Economics major, poet, backpacker, activist, artist. He is a Chicax.

## **RICHARD DENNER**

Richard is an innovative Central Washington University student who is passionate about literature.

## **ANNE DENNON:**

Anne is a graduate student of English Literature currently working on a thesis exploring the figure of the femme fatale in film noir.

## **MEGAN EPPERSON**

Megan Epperson snap sizzle pop, poetry too powerful to stop/ write that, give that a slap, keep shockin' / lockin' load of words, yea, ya heard/ sex, death, wicked below

## **MAX FARNSWORTH**

is a poet and undergraduate English student at CWU. He dabbles in poetry, prose, and flash-fiction.

## **ASHLEY GARCIA**

Ashley is a Mexican-American CWU student on her way to becoming an immigration attorney to help keep wonderful families together and safe.

## **AMANDA GILLIGAN**

Amanda Gilligan is a senior Professional and Creative Writing major and History minor. Her love is for prose particularly fantasy, science fiction, and historical fiction.

## **VAUGHN GILMORE**

Vaughn is an innovative Central Washington University student who is passionate about literature.

## **SHAYLYNN GOULD**

Shaylynn is a senior majoring in choral music education. She is also working towards a creative writing minor. Her other interests include riding horses, swimming, reading, and studying music history.

## **EMILY GRESO**

Emily is a third-year Political Science student. Greso aims to push the envelope with every creative and academic endeavor. She looks forward to starting her career oriented around legislature and social justice.

## **AUSTIN HARLEY**

Austin is a graphic design student at Central Washington University's BFA program of graphic design. He enjoys illustrating with pointillism and forcing his friends to listen to his music.

## **BRITTANY HELMICK**

Brittany is a student at Central Washington University. When she isn't studying, she tries to go outside where it's neat. This is her first published work.

# BIOS

## **SELENA HERNANDEZ**

Selena is a Central Washington University student passionate about literature and art.

## **TREVOR HSIA**

Trevor is an aspiring author attending Central Washington University. About to graduate with a major in Professional and Creative Writing, he is cautiously excited about his future career in writing.

## **JOSEPH KELLEY**

Joseph is a born and raised Washingtonian who enjoys spending most of his time at the movies whenever he's not gaming or working towards that Professional and Creative English degree.

## **FORREST LEE**

A few years back Forrest went through a tough breakup and joined tinder to try and move on. Results varied. His poem is inspired by his experiences dating through an app.

## **OLIVER LEWIS**

Oliver is a thirsty student of the written word. Dostoevsky's line: "Beauty will save the world," sums up his ideology. He studies English (among other marvelous things) at Central Washington University.

## **BRENDAN LAIRD**

Brendan is a creative graphic designer currently enrolled in Central Washington University's BFA program of graphic design. Brendan enjoys dabbling in drone photography and bathing in Nutella.

## **SARAH MILES**

Sarah is a senior at CWU, although she is unsure when she will be graduating, or with what major, or if at all.

## **TIM MITCHELL**

Tim is a Senior in the Writing Specialization major. He has contributed to and written for KCWU-FM, PULSE Magazine, The Observer, and Central News Watch.

## **RUBY NAMBO**

Ruby grew up in Sultan, Washington, along Highway 2. She started passionately writing at the age of eight. Currently, she writes and performs her work along with balancing school.

## **HAILEY NELSON**

Hailey has enjoyed art and writing as a hobby for most of her life. She has recently transferred to Central and is pursuing a degree in Professional and Creative Writing.

## **ANJERIE NEMROW**

Anjerie is Central Washington University student majoring in Graphic Design.

## **GABRIELA A. OSORIO**

Born in Jalisco, Mexico. She's the proud daughter of hardworking immigrants and the eldest sister of two supporting siblings. Her passion is education and helping the Latino community.

## **ELIZABETH OTTERBACH**

Elizabeth grew up in Yakima, Washington and made it my passion to become an illustrator. She loves creating characters that could never imagine in reality.

## **MICHAEL RIENDAUE**

Michael is a Central Washington University student passionate about literature and art.

## **JOHN SEBASTIAN ROACH**

John is a Junior in the Professional and Creative Writing major with a minor in Advertising. His hometown is Kennewick, WA. He's been writing poetry since fifteen.

## **LANA ROBINSON**

Lana is a graphic design student enrolled in Central Washington University's BFA program of graphic design. She enjoys illustrating and making bad jokes.

## **SAMANTHA ROBINSON**

Samantha is a senior at CWU working towards getting her bachelor's in film and video studies with a specialization in screen-writing and a minor in creative writing.

## **DALIA RUIZ**

Dalia was, but no longer is skeptical about calling herself an artist. She studies Studio Art and Russian Language at CWU.

## **RENE SANTANA**

Rene is a Senior at Central Washington University studying English and Music. He writes writing music reviews, short stories, and poems.

## **CONNOR L SIMONS**

Connor is a 23 year old poet and future educator. He was born in Portland and has lived in the Pacific Northwest his entire life.

## **SAVANNAH SLONE**

Savannah is in CWU's On-line Professional and Creative Writing B.A. program. She lives in Skykomish, WA and is deeply passionate about creative writing. These poems are her first publications.

## **MELYNDA SORRELS**

Melynda is a writer, student, reckless blogger, dreamer and aficionado of all things funny or caffeinated.

## **LAUNIE SORRELS**

Launie writes in a world where others often do not go. His imagination is a beacon that draws the unknown for him to discover.

**AMBER STANLEY**

Amber is a Central Washington University student passionate about literature and art.

**CARLOS LEE SULLIVAN**

Carlos is most interested in telling stories. This may be tied to the excellent storytellers he grew up around in Boise, Idaho. He's no speaker, so he paints.

**DREA TALLEY**

Drea is a Central Washington University student passionate about literature and art.

**NICK TALOFF**

Nick is a Central Washington University student passionate about literature and art.

**BRYCE VAUGHN**

Bryce is a senior at Central Washington University majoring in English Education. He is a slam poet who appears at poetry slams and open mic nights around campus whenever he possibly can.

**SPENCER VIRDIN**

Spencer is a second year student at CWU declared under the English Language Arts Teaching Major.

**RYAN WEIER**

Ryan is a graphic design student in Central Washington University's BFA program. He enjoys travelling, photography, and being a Ron Weasley impersonator on weekends.

**SAMANTHA WEYRICK**

Samantha is an English Education major to become a teacher in secondary education, but her other goal is to become a writer. Writing is a part of my soul and she hope to share her work.

**SARAH WICOREK**

Sarah Wicorek is majoring in Creative Writing and Art. Her art is inspired by many different subjects and she works with many mediums including oil, ink, wood, and even mascara.

**JENNIFER WITZEL**

Jennifer is a Professional and Creative Writing student at Central Washington University. She lives in Ohio and strives to one day become a published novelist.

**KRISTA ZIMMERMAN**

Krista is an artist who can most often be found drawing, painting, studying, and greedily hoarding art materials.



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