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Community College of Denver
Student Literary & Art Magazine

Hi!

Ourglass, now in its 37th year of publication, is the journal of the English, Graphic Design and Visual Arts departments of Community College of Denver, dedicated to providing a forum for the creative work of our students.

Please consider submitting your work to *Ourglass*. If you are attending CCD or have attended in the past, you are eligible to submit. Submissions are accepted between September 15th and April 30th of year. We accept submissions of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and drama, as well as any interesting combinations thereof, exclusively through our email address: CCD.Ourglass@ccd.edu.

All work submitted must include your name, phone number, and current email address. Submit one story or essay at a time; poems can be sent in groups.

Due to the sheer volume of work we must consider, we can only notify you if your work is chosen to be published. If you don't hear from us, please try again next year!

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If you have any questions, please email us at CCD.Ourglass@ccd.edu

Thanks,

The Editors

LAUREN SIEVERS

Svartifoss

Acrylic



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EMBRACING

the
of

SONG

my

NIGHTINGALE

BY Audria Ruiz

***“Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—”***

There was some sort of overwhelming calm and ease that can only be obtained in the idea of finality. A slow breath in as I picked up the pill. “Two hundred forty eight,” I counted softly as I placed it in line alongside the rest. This was it. As I finished my last ritual and placed everything in its order, I never thought, even for a second, that this was not the answer. The world was so grey and meaningless that death was a welcomed gift. I lifted the glass to my lips and gulped down the rest of my little silent white friends, then laid myself to bed ready to drift away into the night, unaware of how wrong I truly was.

***“That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:”***

I awoke to the soft light of the early morning hours, convulsing violently, unable to control my own body, or even see. All I knew was that my great aunt was there shaking me awake, screaming question after question, all of which were unintelligible clusters of sound as she worried herself with holding me up while still trying to work her phone. She’s way too much right now, I thought as I allowed myself to fall asleep, my head dropping back into the pillow. Moments later, I was shaken awake by a gaggle of EMTs poking and prodding, picking me up and then dropping me onto the couch. “Drink this!” they demanded. I turned my head in defiance, stubborn as ever. They pried open my mouth and poured the black mess of charcoal down my throat, forcing me into survival. To me, the world was moving slowly, my senses dimmed and my body shaking itself back and forth. There was no use in fighting; it would do as it wanted, and I allowed it to take control over me. I watched as the EMTs scurried around my living room, talking to my hysterical great aunt, bumping off each other, mumbling a few words as they passed one another. The police only stood, silently judging, like the statues in my old church. There was no god here, only penance. Their cold stares would occasionally shift from me to my mother, who stood there silent and still, unable to react. She too could not move her body to her will and simply allowed the scene to buzz on around her as she did the only thing there was to do, wait.

“Away! Away! For I will fly to thee.”

They’re moving me again, I noticed as they pulled me out into the front yard. The mid-morning sun greeted me brightly along with the sound of the community lost in its daily routines. My neighbors came out of their holes, crossing the street and peering across their yards to get a glimpse of the action. Anything to break up their monotony, I thought as I was paraded into the flashing lights on the gurney that worked as my joke of a stage. “I need you to stay calm and think of a happy place,” the EMT chided. Calm? I had been nothing but calm this entire time. It was them interrupting the peace after all. Then I felt it. The needle stung as it made its way into my arm, and as the pressure began to build, I looked over to see her pushing a long, clear tube into my vein. I screamed and reached to pull it out, but my hand was swatted away and secured. “Leave it. We need this to make sure you don’t go into renal failure,” she scolded. As we swerved and sped through the city streets, sirens blaring, it finally occurred to me that they weren’t going to leave me alone. They were going to win, and once again I would become the failure. How dare they take this from me.

***"Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!"***

We arrived at the hospital, and they crashed through the front doors. Nurses rushed to connect me to this machine, and that monitor while I pushed and screamed, fighting them as much as my convulsing body would allow, every step of the way. Suddenly, my mother was there and the words, "Shut up and let them help you!" ripped from her lips. I looked at her and stopped. Everything went black, and I fell into unconsciousness. The emergency room relaxed a bit then, like someone letting out a sigh after forgetting to breath. The nurses made quick work of checking the machines, toiling away to monitor me, and then took me to a room to await my fate. My mother sat watching me, stillness would be better than the scene of my body wracking uncontrollably from the inside, but at least I was alive. She stayed as long as she could, occasionally going to take care of my brothers and leaving my aunt in her place to keep watch. Time seemed to drag on in the stale hospital room, and the unspoken question hung heavy in the air, nobody daring to voice it fearing to tempt fate. Is she going to make it? The stillness was unsettling as they waited for me to give the answer, watching as my body slowly started to calm, the convulsions giving way to intermittent shaking. How could they even imagine the hell that I had been sent to.

***"Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the trees hast never known,"***

The darkness was all encompassing, choking me and holding me still. There was no cold, fear, or pain, but there was also no light or peace, like every Lifetime Channel story would have us believe. There was nothing. Timeless and never-ending, I knew I was stuck here with only my regret to keep me company, and possibly something or someone lurking in the deepest corners of this hell. Were those the demons described by the Father in all those pompous sermons? The beasts that had tormented me in my life were waiting for me to succumb so they could secure their hold on me in death. Silence. Was this death? Was this hell? Or was this something much worse? This must be some void where all those foolish enough to dance with death are left to be forgotten. The comfort I was chasing, the relief that always seemed right at the tips of my fingers was now lost. Hopelessness never felt as terrible and empty as this. The fear that accompanied the realization of my mistake must have been strong enough to pull myself out of the depths of this abyss because eventually, I woke up.

***"Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod."***

As my eyes staggered open, my aunt rushed to my bedside, relieved that after so many days I had finally come back. The nurse jumped out of his chair in the corner to check my vitals and poke at my IV as my aunt called all the family to share the news. The doctor was summoned, and one by one another relative would poke their head through the cracked door, then burst into smother me with their joy, and remind me of how concerned they had been. So much excitement flooded the room, and all I could do was look

around, still a slight jerking to my motions, amazed to be back from the void. The light bounced off the whitewashed walls, glaring off the medical equipment that kept me stable, adding to the shock of being released from the darkness. Whether I wanted it or not, I was given a second chance. What I thought of life, I still wasn't sure, all I knew was that I never wanted to be damned to that place ever again.

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird."

The days of recovery following my near death were filled with a multitude of questions, and a much needed session of introspection. If death couldn't provide the comfort that I so desired, what would? What now did I have left to chase? As days turned to weeks, I searched through my music and my books, maybe I'd find a scrap of meaning hidden in their lines and phrases. Perhaps I just wanted to lose myself in their stories. I found my answers in "Ode to a Nightingale," the song of the bird was the peace that I desperately needed, and realization finally dawned on me. All this time, I was fantasizing and chasing the wrong idea. Life wasn't a thing to be chased, rather it is a creation. The song of the Nightingale must be found within yourself and then manifested into life. Only then can peace be found, and the darkness evaded.

***"Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:— Do I wake or sleep?"***

Works Cited

Keats, John. *Poems of John Keats*. The Easton Press, 1980.

the
UNiverse
at
LARGE

BY **Travis Mundt**

We joust, riding maple trees
We cover our heads with aluminum foil
Our conversations begin and end,
On the tops of mountains

We raze the church steeple that imprisons us,
We munch on pine needles and earth
Claim it's delicious

Our brains melt and reform in outer space
So far away they cannot be seen,
By whitecoats observing the heavens

When we dance our language is unintelligible
By other humans.

We dig to the center of the earth with spoons
Build a museum, and fill it with sky
We wander through dimensions
Making friends with ourselves who

Live in stone or mud or
The branches of maple trees
Full of sap and yellow-red stars

We let the wind carry us into the desert
Where we bury each other in dunes
And forget how to escape

When we sing our melodies rise and fall
On deaf ears.

We skinny dip through interstellar histories
And dry off with beach towels
Made of iron and gold as
Our dreams kneel before us.

Where I begin you end
Like a hula hoop in orbit on the hips
Of a gas giant

Together you and I race giant worms
To the edge of the galaxy
Lit with pinholes

It is the universe at large
That understands us.



SHEINA THIEBEAULT

Still Life of a Chair

Charcoal

the

Reminiscence

About

SUMMER

BY **Nhat Hoang Pham**

“Ding-ding-Ding.” The distinctively signature iPhone ringtone broke the silence of the room in the very early morning. Suddenly waking up and slowly opening my eyes, I scrambled to find my phone by touch. It was completely black around my room. A thick bed of snow covered the only light source of the basement, the hemispherical convex window in the corner of the damp ceiling.

“Got it!” I squeaked. No matter how I constricted the irises, my eyes still suffered some minor discomfort due to the dazzling blue-screen light. As a daily routine since the time I first arrived in the United States, I always checked The New York Times morning briefing after waking up.

“What was going on last night turning my room into the palace of Erebus and Nyx?” I thought. The twenty-inch snowstorm had been falling until this afternoon, and a forewarning had come from the National Weather Service last week.

“Why I didn’t know about that?” I mumbled. Shivering and chattering my teeth in the thin, cheap and dark-brown blanket, I was hiding myself in my nest. While surfing on the web about the weather news and school announcements, I unexpectedly received a Facebook notification, a comment on a photo.

“Where r u now, Axel?” said Jean.

“Oh, my dear Jean, for a year, I haven’t seen you. I miss you so much. Where am I now? Half of the Earth’s diameter from the place where the sun entirely dominates. And now, I am in the coldest, the most remote and the most lonely place I have ever been,” I thought. I wistfully stared at the picture and began to reminisce...The harsh sunlight slanting down through the old thin straw-colored curtains signaled a typical summer in Vietnam. I had woken, up then noticed that it was noon and all my roommates were still laying lazily on our bed.

“A boring day again!” I said rather sullenly.

It had been a month since, and these men in my apartment were still following the same tedious routine every single day. They slept until noon, ate lunch, slept, ate dinner and slept again. Yet, that day was not an unusual day. After dining, I had an unexpected call from Jean.

My high school friend I had not seen since she went to a college in Ho Chi Minh City. Jean eagerly said she’d like to travel to Ninh Thuan by motorbike at midnight with us. “Women and girls, how incomprehensible are they! When they are not the timidest, they are the bravest of creatures. Reason has nothing to do with their actions. What! 150 miles on the road at midnight is insane, totally insane.

But how can The Three Musketeers and d'Artagnan refuse and let a young girl down?" I thought. We immediately agreed with her idea not only due to our masculinities, but also juvenile personalities.

My friends, Michael, Tom, Ryan, and I quickly stowed away everything needed in our backpacks. We were three young men so excited and ready to be off away from Ho Chi Minh City, the city of dust and noise.

As the clock struck half past eleven, Jean came. I still remember what she was wearing. A white tank-top under a leather, Levi's motorcycle jacket, and dark-blue jeans. She looked charming and prettier than I remembered. Perhaps, one year living in the busy metropolis changed a homely girl into a comely princess. After some chatting, we began our journey at exactly midnight to avoid the scorching hot daylight in Southern Vietnam. We pulled out of the city, heading North. We rode faster and faster, up to 60 miles per hour, and the scene on the road rapidly changed by the swiftness of the motorbikes, from the sprawling factories in the industrial zone to the immense rice paddies. Our group kept pace until we reached Ba Ria City after 80 miles of non-stop riding. Taking a sip of a cold drink, I looked around. The city was absolutely quiet, only the sound of rustling leaves and old newspapers. A cool, sharp breeze made everyone quiver. Before continuing our ride, we took some photos to mark our first time at the Ba Ria Welcome Gate.

At 2:00 AM I was still concentrated on riding. Jean looked tired and gently dozed on my back." A girl is still a girl. She just talked and let the men do the rest. But for God's sake, it's male duty to bring smiles and happiness to our girls," I thought. Under the looming moonlight and the surrounding darkness, a sleepless dog crossing the road might have freaked us out because of its danger. That was yet to be the worst possibility. We saw a red-reflective sign at a distance, then our group gradually slowed the pace and stopped.

"What! A dead end!" Ryan shouted.

Everyone turned their heads and eyes to Tom, the navigator. It was a terrible blunder that Tom had believed his presentiment, and had not checked GPS from the time we were off Ba Ria City. Hence, our team position was far away from Ninh Thuan, more than 50 miles and our bikes nearly out of fuel. Everyone was speechless. It was silent, the calm before the storm. We were young and aggressive, and blamed each other without thinking. Michael was the first one who threw a tantrum, insulting Tom. They could have fought if I had not seen a light bulb in the distance.

"Michael, Tom, stop this nonsense now. There is a fuel station over there," I said. They all looked in the direction I was pointing. They were speechless again, and that was the moment they realized how embarrassing and stupid they were. "I want to see the dawn at Kega Lighthouse, please!" Jean whispered to me. I nodded with at her without thinking. At once, I realized it was a serious mistake.

“What! It was not 4:30 AM, and we had traveled 120 miles in an hour and a half by motorcycle. She definitely wants to kill me!” I reckoned. I knew I had to ride at least 100 miles per hour by motorbike to reach to the lighthouse in time. It was crazily dangerous, but I had to keep my word. Brum-brrr-Brumm, the engine sound sparked off a race among risky young men who wanted to prove to themselves that they were winners. I aggressively twisted the throttle and quickly threw myself into blackness. Michael, Tom and Ryan darted behind my silhouette. At 100 miles per hour, I could feel the strength of the wind as if it would blow through my helmet, tossing it into the abyss. I also felt Jean’s fear through her body pressed into mine, leaning her head upon my shoulder and hugging me tightly. I was more nervous because of her warm breath on my neck.

The night was gradually gone. The sun was rising up, dispelling the dense fog, and the background on the roadside appeared more and more clear. Therefore, we needed to hurry.

Finally, my friends and I arrived at a secluded beach where we could observe the dawn. On that beach, I could overlook the Kega Lighthouse on the islet. A marooned guardian with a torch in his hand to protect the sea. Jean and I stood together, our bottoms soaked in seawater. We were fortunate enough to gaze out at the sunrise-gold beach. The sun, like a shy maiden, was still hiding herself behind a blanket of grey clouds after her awakening. The arrays of orange and yellow were embroidered over the surface of the water, turning the sea into the sky with twinkling golden stars.

The galaxy river stretched out under my feet.

“Nothing’s more beautiful than this, is it?” Jean said.

“You don’t think of yourself!” I replied and shrugged my shoulders as if it were a joke. Jean’s cheek turned rosy, and she smiled. My eyes were allured by her angelic smile, and I could feel something awaken in my heart. In a blink, my lips and her lips were too close to hold. A cough from a decrepit old man drew me back to reality, to the space surrounded by four ash-colored walls. I glanced at the window. The snow began falling again. From the unbroken sunshine to the falling snow, my world had changed so much since a year ago. However, I will never let these great memories fade because they are the answers to the questions: who was I, who am I, and who will I become.



JOSH DREEN
UNTITLED

Photography

HAIR

BY **Claudia Tena**

The waves
of my existence
are twirls of moods
and unforeseen curves-
sharp and sudden
even when
I know
It's coming
My hair surprises me still
And with great hunger
It eats me up.

“Do something
about that hair!”
My mother yells

But my curls rebel.
Like her hair did once
She considers mine
dangerous,
But hers already killed
Our brush twice.

The Guzman women
Have all had
'Curvas Peligrosas'*
No, not our body
But this other persona
On top
And in
Our heads,
And they've eaten us all

My mother and I
Argue, but agree
We're out of place

Too sharp and sudden
We've killed too many
brushes

*dangerous curves

HOT HAIR

Hot combs and high heat
sizzle on the kitchen cooker.
Preoccupied black girls
guarding nape and neck.
Ritualistic fixed twists
uncoil and collapse
into deflated strands of
white girl hair.
Blisters and scars
tattoo scalps and edges.
Hot combs and high heat
dispatch messages that
black girl receivers
decipher as
Pretty now?

BY **Carol Covington**



HANNAH JACOBSON
UNTITLED

Photography

the
Lone
SISTER

and
HER
FEAR

of
History
REPEATing

BY Leticia Goebel

Bryce
Baby, Boy, Blue-eyed,
All smiles, creates smiles

My nephew.

Kyle

A brother, a son, Bryce's daddy, a husband-- A broken child
Tears on the inside, nonchalance on the outside,

My brother.

Justin

The middle sibling, the favorite child-- an addict
Scarred wrists, disconnected eyes,

Our brother.

Dakota

Biologically a brother, a son--a vague memory
Baby, Boy, Blue-eyed

The baby brother.

Dearest Bryce,
Your dad was once the blue-eyed baby boy.
Your uncles were once blue-eyed baby boys.
Tragedy robbed them of their naivete.

Aunty prays,
that baby Bryce's happy childhood is here to stay
Aunty prays
that her brothers will see the light

Aunty prays

through the rays that Bryce emanates.

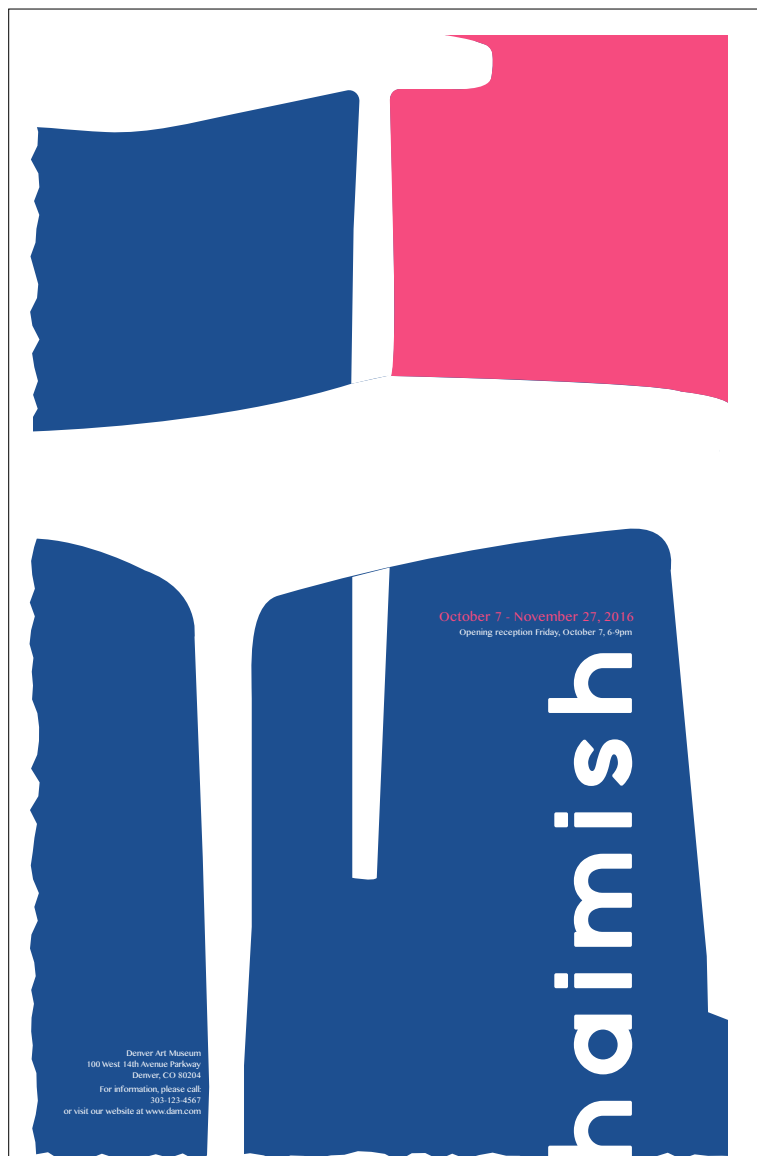
Aunty prays

Bryce does not encounter her brothers' fate.

Aunty prays.

DAVID BEUERMAN
Haimish

Graphic Design



All the Colors She Owns

BY **Shreeya Shrestha**

Her auburn curls

Remind me of the colors painters use

I try replicating the angles they turn at

I try to liven her portrait

But I fail.

My plain hands have failed.

We play, and I watch her.

She twirls at angles I can't imitate

I fail to become her replica

She watches me try and fail

We own different colors

I ache to be her

My mother always says

She is the prettier one.



NEFTALI PAZO
Our Turn Now

Acrylic



June **DROP**

BY **Stephanie Dees**

She reclines next to me, her face tilted up to receive the full adoration of the sun on her eyelids, her thick, dark waves undulating behind her like a dappled python in the grass. Backpack and school work littered around her, forgotten as she luxuriates in the early summer heat.

We both sense them, two awkward, hungry young males, sizing up their prey. The tall one has dirty blonde hair, pulled back into a low ponytail, a week's worth of scruff on his face, wearing a blue T-shirt and boardshorts. His friend wears a baseball hat backwards over his dark hair, his weight-lifting hobby obvious under a green tank top. Bellowing at each other confidently, their hacky sack game brings them closer, as does their game of chase. They see what I see, this feast laid out on the lawn. A perfectly posed specimen of femininity, petite and compactly voluptuous. One spaghetti strap slides down a smooth, olive shoulder, hinting at decadence, yet undiscovered. Her pink, full mouth, like fruit that may poison, but is worth the risk.

Pretending we do not notice them, both to the men and each other, we talk of school, friends, music. We laugh loudly, to attract and distract. Maneuvering our conversation around the tricky spots on the chessboard, lightly skipping from one safe square to the next. We don't mention last night. We won't get near the topic of lips, hands, softness. The subject is too new, too delicate, the green nub of an unripe peach. Instead, we dance under its branches, ever mindful of what hangs overhead.

Side glances give us away, however. Both of us peeking in the direction of the prowling males nearby, interspersed with glances at each other. Our movements so similar, our motives appear so as well. The suspicion that they differ forces me to speak.

"They're staring at you," I say, looking in the opposite direction. "Who?"
I look at her directly, and tilt my head. She glances over her shoulder and laughs, "Them?"

"The one in green isn't bad," I offer. My fingertip lightly traces the line of my collarbone, as I watch her under lowered lashes.

"He looks a little like Brad," she says. She props herself up on one elbow and looks at me squarely. Chastened, I retreat and focus on a bird that has landed nearby. It had spotted a worm and was now busy teasing it out of the ground. I feel the sun burning my skin and try to hide my forearms under my bent knees.

"I think they're staring at you," she says, raising her delicate eyebrow slightly. This small gesture floods me with images from the night before, and my cheeks burn.

I look up and accidentally meet eyes with the one in blue as he misses a hacky sack pass. I force a laugh as I look away. "Boys are funny," I say. "So obvious." She returns to her sunbathing with a half-smile.

I'd like to believe her, to think I am as tempting as she, that she feels a little bit jealous. I try tossing my hair back and exposing my neck to the sun, but all I can think about is whether she's watching. I feel like a taut string, aching for the bow. When I open my eyes, she's looking over her shoulder again.

"Are you tired?" I ask, inching closer to dangerous territory.

"Not really," she says. She brushes away a few long strands from between her lips and rubs her finger along the full curve where it tickled. "But I do not want to start our homework."

My fingers mimic hers, parting my lips with the sensation. The orange hacky sack plops down a few yards away from us. My hackles rise, as one of them jogs closer to pick it up.

"So obvious," she laughs, and our eyes meet. I giggle too, and feel a trapped bird trying to escape my ribcage. "The next one will probably land in your lap," I say.

Immediately, I wish I could take it back, feeling like I jumped feet first onto the most treacherous square. She laughs easily, though, as she sits up and says, "They don't have the balls." With one more sidelong glance, she grabs her notebook and pencil. Jotting something down, she says, "Let's grab an iced coffee so we can start this lame assignment."

I gather my things in my backpack as she rips off a long, thin rectangle from her page. I stand, brushing grass from the backs of my sticky legs, feeling relieved and almost swollen with joy and anticipation. I turn towards the parking lot as she zips her backpack.

As we begin to leave, I catch her looking one last time over her shoulder. "Can I borrow a pencil?" she asks. She grins at me and increases her pace.

I look back at where we were sitting, the grass still flattened in places, to see a bright yellow pencil standing straight up, its point pinning a strip of paper to the ground. Upon it is written a phone number. My smile fades, and my heart drops, as I follow her to the car.



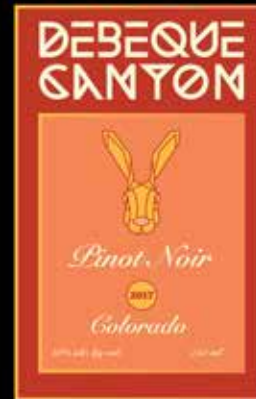
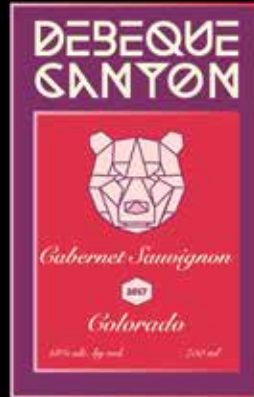
ALLISON WESSON
BLACK RHINO PORTRAIT

Mixed Media

JUN **iper**

BY **Erin Lucey**

Rita stepped one bare foot down in front of the other, pressing the balls of her feet to the cool stone. Through ancient trees the sun shines warm and bright on her face. Delicate flora, bursting with sensational color and spice, drifted through the fresh morning air, encouraging Rita to gaze lovingly at the lush garden. She took a moment, flexing her toes in the thick groundcover, to admire the floral abundance her mother had left for her.



DANIEL FERRY
WINE LABELS

Graphic Design

Cerulean

BY Emily Slotta

We may look the same
But I do not exactly have your face
It's broken at the base
I don't want my lines to form the
same way.

I forget my smile doesn't show
Through curtains of the thoughts, I
used to sow
My skin cannot forget
A lighter burn on tender flesh of neck

Cuz I am younger now
Than I was at least 6 days ago
Am I just a fool
Patching holes with palms I didn't
grow.

My coffee's cold
My god's as old as I am, don't you
know
You— wooden eyes
I blame myself for all the things you
hide.

Break my back and tell me that it's
fine.
Sticking fingers into both my eyes.
Evil isn't strictly in the mind
But there is nothing else that feels so
kind.

Cerulean
A word that winds around a
broken crayon
Buried brick
1,000 tiny towers make me tick.
My coffee cold
My gods as old as I am, don't you
know.
My cryptic sea-
Will wash up to the pyramid of
me

A wasted day
Can make me want to throw the
blue away
A cough sprays pain.
No lungs can breathe the air to
make me stay.

Apple bottle babe
Leave me in the dirt
The city doesn't glow
Cuz kids are getting hurt
Silly sloppy kiss
You make me wanna sleep
I never make mistakes
Cuz' I don't feel that deep.



ck
ja

BY **Leticia Goebel**

Dear unborn child of mine,
I love you with all my heart. I'm sorry for not letting you enter this world because of my selfish decision making. Please forgive me.

I think you're a boy.

I've had 5 years to pick out your name, but I haven't. Maybe I should. Unless something more suiting crosses my thoughts, I shall call you Jack.

Your birthday is in May with my best friend Vanessa's little boy, Ethan. Father Jacob told me last year it is okay to talk to you and pray for you, so here I am finally attempting to.

I got pregnant in September of 2010. Your 1st birthday was May 2012. I would have been 22. We would have been in Missouri living with Stephie. She's my biological mom and your grandma. Your great grandma raised me, and I call her mom. They were both upset at the choice I made, but loved me and helped me move forward.

Your 2nd birthday would still be in Missouri, but probably not with Stephie. I don't know.

Time changes with every choice made. At that time, I had moved out and we were fighting. However, I fell in love with my roommate's kids. Beautiful little girls. I think I love kids so much because I abandoned you. Perhaps if I shower them with the love and affection that I had stored up for you then it's atonement of some sort.

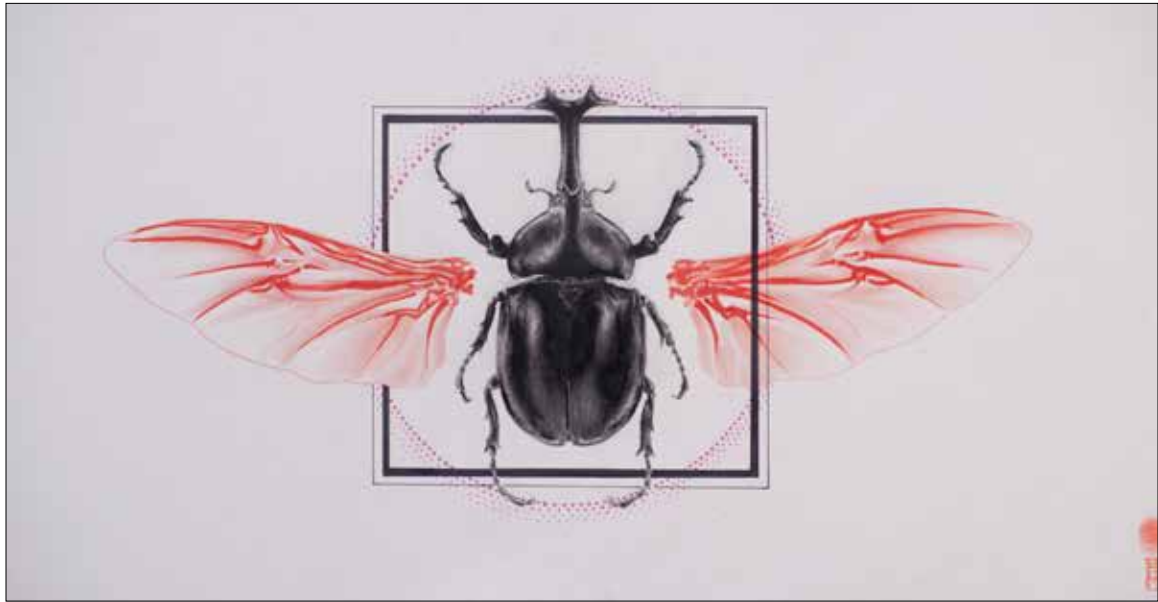
Your 3rd birthday was the month before I moved to Denver. I met my biological dad in 2012 and moved to Denver in June of 2013. I wonder if he would have let YOU and I move there? My dad (your grandpa) is very narrow minded, so if I was a single mom or with a man but not married to him, Denver probably wouldn't have happened.

Before you were conceived, I was homeless. Then I started dating this guy. I loved him, but I didn't love me. The relationship was unhealthy on both ends. I started cheating on him. I don't know who your dad is, but I do know you would be Mexican or Panamanian.

At the age of 24, I was a little girl in a woman's body. I wanted my dad to love me the same way you deserved mine and your dad's love. That year, my dad and I celebrated our 1st and only birthday together. Meanwhile, you and I mourn the loss of you every year. That year you would've been 4. When you turned 5, I was finishing my second semester at Denver's community college. The little kids that frolicked in the grass next to the walkways, as I walked to Cherry Creek building, made me think of you, and wonder what your little group of buddies would look like. On many occasions, I smiled at these beloved children and looked up at the sky, letting the breeze dry up my teary eyes, and then I would proceed to my Literature class.

This year you will be turning 6. Vanessa and Ethan will be at my May graduation, but you won't be there. As I walk that stage to receive my diploma, I will carry you with me. Because I took your physical life, the best I can do is take you with me in my writings, my memories, and share you with those who need insight and strength. Please forgive me and stay with me until the day I leave my physical body, and can be reunited with you in the spiritual realm.

Love always,
your mother



MIA MILLER
ARTHROPOD

Pen and Ink

Three

BY Jeremiah Attridge

UNRELATED

Stories

We loiter at the movie theater after my
roommate and I caught the dollar show.
We haven't spoken for months.
Since our first college party where
I wanted to go home, but he was my ride,
he got hammered, and passed out.
While he was on the floor I peed on his jeans.
Right in the center of his crotch
down his leg and onto
the shag carpet
Mrs. Party-Host kicked us out.
Roomie doesn't talk to people
Too afraid of the bed wetter.

I have a quarter, or do I?
Coffee used to cost a dime.
Walking with dad, we see a bum
"Do you have a quarter?"
No. (Yes.) Keep walking.

Club Penguin dies in thirty minutes
I have not waddled in years
Where do video games go when they die?
The same farm as your first dog.
See you, space penguin. Waddle on.

Here's TO Optimism

BY Yehuda Makowitz

Here's to optimism part 1-14
Here's to optimism,
It opened up my eyes,
Life is the white in the coffee,
The rest is the darkness that chases me.

Your void has filled my thoughts of the end,
Frantically I think up ways to pretend, or extend, or lie that there is
no end.

Here's to Optimism part 16-38

You're in a better place they say,
But is there a better place than here?
Where tragedy, death, suffering and anguish live.
Where happiness is a fantasy.
Where dreams are put to rest.

No, I think not.

For life is not without these things.



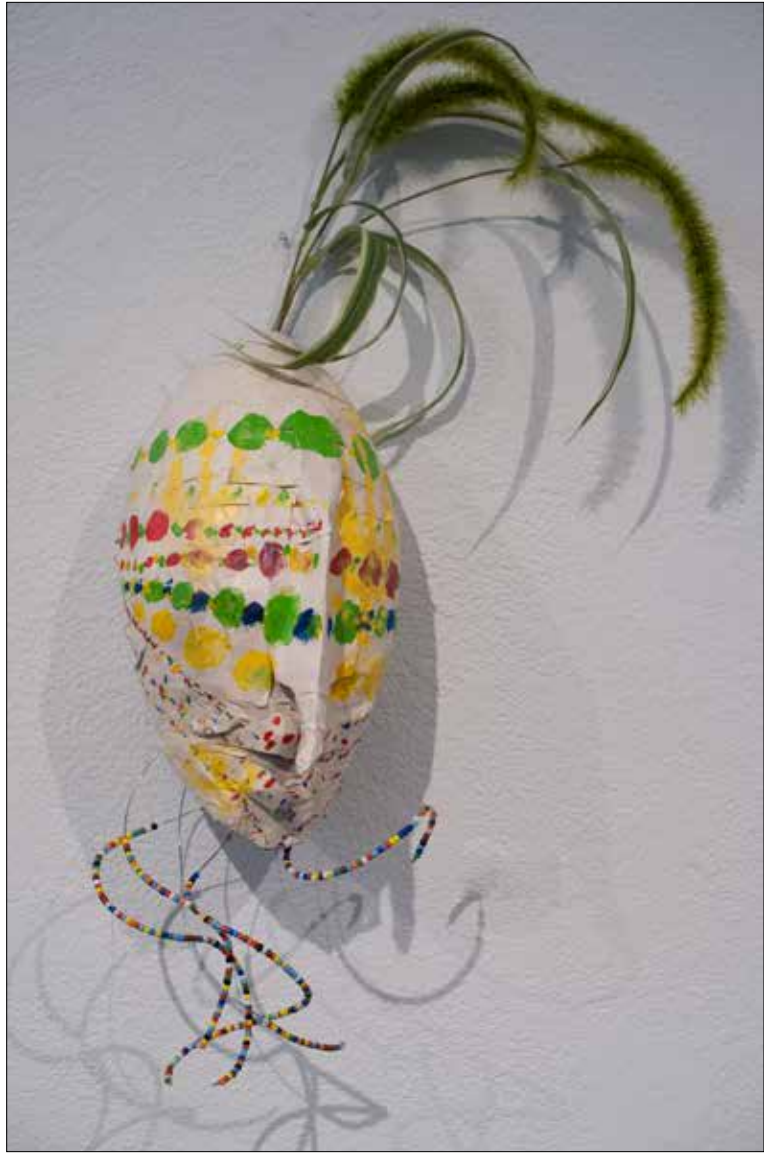
ALEXIS LAVALLEE
SAMURAI SPIRIT

Mixed Media

lone dance

BY **Georgina Rodriguez**

I see you
Like I
Standing alone
Gliding in silent music
You
You dance to no song
None that's heard
All a couples dancing
You
You stand alone
Dancing in your own energy
and grace
Dance on sweet buttercup
Dance on



JESSICA BERNAL
LILLIAN AND LINUS

Mixed Media

I

Dont
Know

if

NOTHING *ness*

MATTERS

BY Kenneth Quinn

My Hollywood tale of heroism was about to begin. Visions of grand battle scenes from film and Army funded commercials are all I see. I was finally being thrust toward the conflict; my generation's Vietnam. I dreamed of returning to a hero's welcome, a celebration of my triumphant combat escapades. I had landed in the birthplace of civilization by way of a giant flying metal tube filled with 21st-century warriors and weaponry. I brought with me nothing but what Uncle Sam had provided me, a machine gun, extra barrel, entrenching tool, uniforms, green socks, goggles, gloves, rucksack, all joined alongside high lofted dreams of bravery and violence.

My mission was the simple task of guarding the entrance to my unit's area of operations, a long, remote pathway into the outpost in which my unit was to call home for a long 12 months. For 24 long hours a day in sweltering desert heat, I was to sift through all vehicles that requested access to the base. My objective was to ensure that no instruments of death were being smuggled, whether they were assault rifles or haphazardly constructed homemade explosives. I felt important because I had finally fulfilled one of the most basic human needs, to be needed, to be necessary. How little I knew. If ignorance is truly bliss, I had reached Nirvana.

It was the time of night that caused worried parents to enforce curfews. There was only myself and a 30-year-old Louisiana native with a golf ball sized piece of chew in his lip. Considering I was of higher rank, I had the "luxury" of being unarmed. Our gate was the finish line of a long road carpeted by sand and riddled with stop signs and concrete barriers. Some of these vehicular deterrents still contained remnants of past violence from the first Gulf War. They told stories of previous conflicts and death. Suddenly, a bus flew past the warnings with impunity. It was a large blue and white vehicle, riddled with rust and sand. Its spinning tires caused a whirlwind of sand and rock to form a surrounding cloud. Inside, I could only see a shadowy figure at the helm of the mighty vessel. My time for heroics had finally showed itself. My body remained calm and still while my heart raced and my palms sweat.

I ordered my Creole-speaking comrade to load his weapon with destructive intent. As he took aim, the bus screeched to a halt. Visions of motion picture style firefights flashed through my mind's eye. But there would be no great battles; no medals would be pinned on my chest. Instead, an innocent and haggard bus driver would change a flat tire alongside two of Uncle Sam's finest. It was at this turning point that I realized I had been in no danger, nor would I be for the remaining time in this war-torn country. Conflicts of the past had subsided, and I was there for nothing more than a show of force. There was a business contract between two nations, and my comrades and I were the raw materials to be traded and used. I was no longer human; I was a resource to be used with the same care as lumber or oil. No training had prepared me for this mental battle. I had been forged by fire for physical combat, but no one ever prepared me for the battle within myself. I felt severe guilt and self-shame.

I was sitting at this peaceful gate while men and women were being maimed and killed just a few borders away. Yet I could do nothing but continue to look for weapons that would never come.

I was no instrument of death and destruction. Instead, I realized I was merely a pawn in a bureaucratic chess match. No human being should have to feel useless, but that is what I had become. Although I tower over the average person in regards to height, I felt tiny, minuscule. Was this to be my purpose? Is this what my great crusade had become?

The remaining months of my mission were filled with nothing but sweat and monotony. Every day I returned to my desolate post and searched empty vehicles. I returned to my homeland empty, hungry for purpose. It was this search for purpose that led me to leave the only lifestyle I ever knew. Patriotic citizens thank me for my sacrifice as I shake hands and politely nod. How could I tell them? How do you inform someone that holds you in the highest regard, that you were useless? I could do nothing but continue to shake hands, nod politely, and do my best to feed my hunger for purpose.



KARISSA SOLAS FAJARDO
SELF PORTRAIT

Pen and Ink

GrandMA

LOVE

BY **Stephanie Dees**

She sits in a worn recliner, both the chair and her lap covered by thick, soft blankets. Basement bedrooms, especially in Herriman, UT are cold in the winter. Next to her, resting on the cushioned arm of the recliner, yet snuggling close in the crook of her arm, sits a cherubic, chubby infant. He wears a preppy, pastel collared shirt under an ivory cable knit sweater, and new pants – his feet kept warm by cozy white socks, one already halfway to the vortex that swallows pieces of small, paired necessities.

The two regard each other quietly, one or the other occasionally reaching out a hand to feel a shirt or cheek.

My mother, sisters, and I, links in this genealogical chain, sit nearby on a faded couch. I'm painfully aware that I don't remember the last time we've all been in a room together, which means I probably can't count the years on one hand. We've grown quite as well, watching these bookends of a generation meeting for the first time. We notice their similarities. Both have flaming orange hair (both, in retrospect, are semi-permanent: Hers came from a bottle for over thirty years, while his will transition to the whitest blonde by his third birthday). Both have fair, almost translucent skin marked by faint blue veins. Both are like goldfish, their focus only lasting three seconds before being pulled to a new sight or sound. His infantile fragility mirrors her inability to bear his full weight.

These small, comfortable living quarters feel simultaneously familiar and foreign. The fuzzy afghan on the couch, a 1970's palette of mustard, pumpkin, and rust, I vividly remember snuggling under while reading books with her during my visits as a child. The cobalt blue water glass next to me on the end table, I recognize from making "Tang-its," our clever name for ice cream floats made with Tang. I don't, however, recognize the furniture, compact and utilitarian, provided by my Aunt and Uncle who reside upstairs, to facilitate ease of movement. Nor do I recognize this bouquet of antiseptic, analgesic, and age, usually found in pharmacy waiting areas. It is so different than my olfactory memory of her, fresh-baked cookies, Trident gum, and Estee Lauder's White Linen. She appears both familiar and foreign. Her once plump figure, warm and solid, has been diminished, as if her outermost layers have dissolved from years immersed in life's relentlessness. Her face, once round and full, now looks gaunt, with the exception of her nose and ears which compete for the limelight. Her hands, once strong and capable, taught me to knead dough, fold candy centers for chocolates, and sew clothing for my dolls. They now resemble gnarled twigs, prominent knuckles corrupting the previously straight lines.

Foreign, as well, is her feebleness of mind. I recall a visit during the Dubya era, her sharp wit tearing down his intelligence, policies, and "beady little eyes" with a twinkle in her own. All the while slapping down worn, soft playing cards in a seemingly endless game of solitaire. Today, in contrast, when I introduced my child to her, she asked, "When did you get this one?" clearly confusing me with my cousin who had recently adopted a daughter.

I do recognize the portrait of Jesus on the wall, smooth waves of brown hair, groomed beard, penetrating blue eyes, beatific smile. I remember well the weight of oppression from the church I shunned at twelve, somehow never translating into shame from this woman whose faith never wavered. My mother, if asked, may have a different opinion. Being the first in her family to jump ship, to see the forest amid the trees of patriarchy, hegemony, and hypocrisy in the Utah Mormon institution, she was the direct recipient of her mother's disappointment. At ten, I watched my grandma's free-flowing tears, over milkshakes, about that cost on their relationship. I could sense then, just barely, the complexities of parent-child dynamics that persisted even through adulthood. Complexities that now, as a new mother, I have only begun to truly grasp. My grandma's love for me, perhaps informed by the failures with her daughter, perhaps due to generational distance, was liberated from the ego reflections of parenting. She could love me for who I was, not what it said about her.

I look now at my mother, watching them together with a half-smile, and hope she can do the same for my son. Our mother-daughter relationship, fraught with history and complexity, may be the buffer necessary for my child to receive that unfettered love. As much as I hope to love my child as my grandma loves me, it's more likely I will love him as my grandma loves my mother, as my mother loves me. I will see in him my own failures, my own struggles, and my own limitations. He will bear the burden of my hopes and dreams, and my guilt when neither of us is perfect. Hopefully, he will have some unconditional grandma love to survive it.

As I see them together, I witness the perfection that is Great-Grandma Love. They look at each other with open wonder, absent all judgment. His ego hasn't developed yet; hers has disintegrated with age. The separation by years and generation strips away all but the most basic connection, that of blood. He squirms and babbles. She smiles and coos. The tribe watches and, hopefully, learns.

JULIAN CHRISTIANSON
Lost in Passion

Acrylic

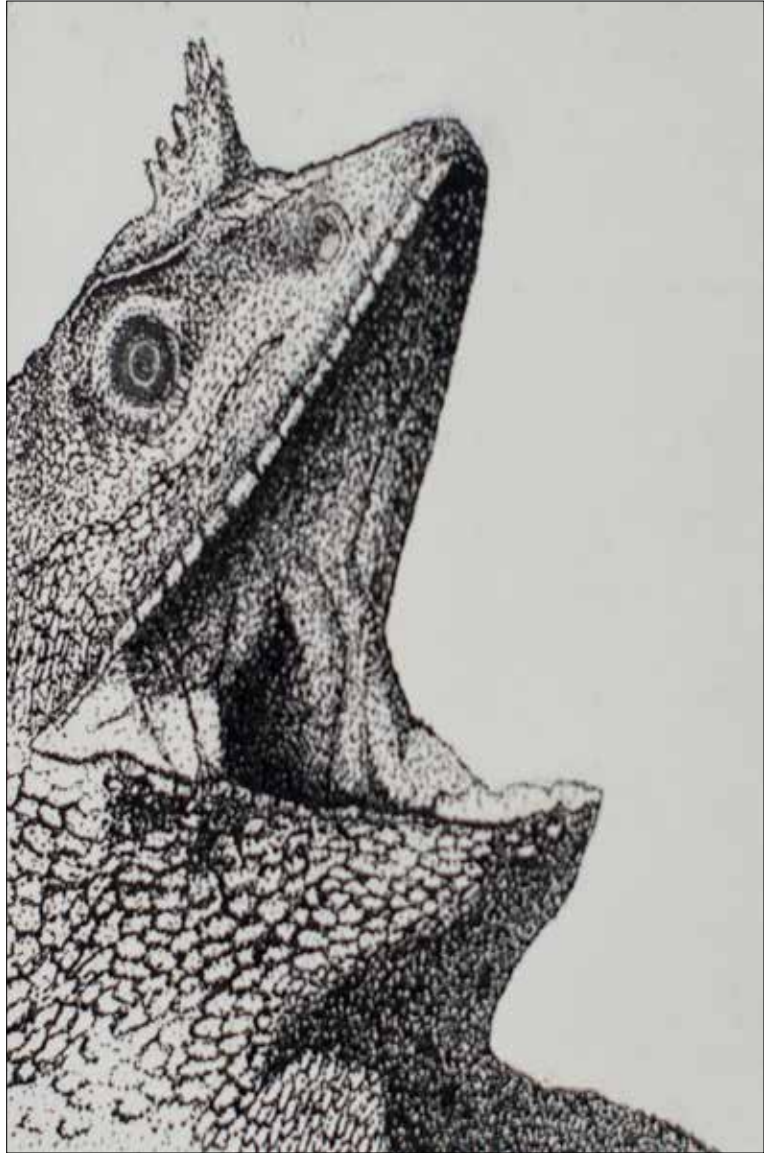


the

FUTURE

BY **Yehuda Makowitz**

It smells of budding lavender in fields of slaughter and smoke
Tastes of bitter sweet caramel with too much salt
Feels like wet silk and dry tears
Sounds like faint, golden, rusting trumpets
Looks like a sinister beautiful siren drawing you closer.



ANDRE C. ZULIAN
LEGARTO

Pen and Ink

Vigil

BY Daisy Vigil

Winner of the 2017 Winograd award

horseshoe rings are heirlooms
that are worn upside down
to show the world how unlucky we are
horseshoe rings are gold heirlooms
we are not rich
but we can pretend
as we flash them when we are
leaving a tip
at the Black Eyed Pea
we're good tippers because we all work in the industry
horseshoe rings are heirlooms
we wear when we gamble
with money
life choices
and whether or not this beer will be the one that finally
puts us over the edge
horseshoe rings are heirlooms
we wear and we pawn
i didn't have much to inherit from you
my knees ache
they can't hold your weight
my Italian nose is hereditary
the blotch of red on my neck
arthritis
depression
addiction
horseshoe rings are heirlooms
i wear on my cracking joints
horseshoe rings are heirlooms
inherited from my grandfather i will never meet
the day i turned eighteen
i got mine
i lost it two days later



CHANCE ODEKIRK
Space Calendar

Graphic Design

how

THEY'

FIND

ME

BY **Katlyn Lafferty**

when dry how prickly
and hostile
pine needles become

how it becomes tension
a feedback loop
prescribed by weight

it seemed like hopeful belonging
to find a soul matched to yours
crawling on my floor
debilitated

in blue shades of navy black
how chalky bones break upon
words you repeat
this is who i am

or when without light
believing what is before you
when described

becoming haunting arms stretched forward
impossibly covered in sheets
what's before you

when would it seem
what you will become
is no different
from what you are

is no different
from what is told
as in what you will become
as such in doing
what are you really
besides before you, arms stretch

when lights turn on it would seem in
your grasp
i've been as always closed eyes
as always ive been closed blinds
always been
it would seem

still stories i sing when laying in bed
this is who i am as i long to be as
you told me as you saw in me
still stuck humming i will find a
lingering soul tethered only
though it would seem an endless
light to find what would make
comparison

for i become as light
or i am as dark
but unseen they all remain
boundless and true
one in the same

red

ANTS

and

red

POPSICLES

BY **Monique Splitter**

Sunny Sunday mornings always included shorts and cherry popsicles. I woke up eager to swallow my popsicle and sit outside on the warm cement. I grabbed my stuffed tiger, Penelope, and gently kissed her on the nose. She was about three inches long, but filled my entire hand.

“It’s gonna be a good day!” I tucked her in and jumped into my ladybug-patterned shorts. I stumbled to climb the small, black desk in my room to grab fish food, which was carefully hidden on a top shelf. This was part of my daily routine. Once I grabbed the orange-tinted fish food, I immediately opened it and dumped flakes into the bowl. Princess Ariel-Sleeping Beauty-Jasmine The Second was officially well fed. I then grabbed my gummy vitamins and wrestled with the bottle for a few minutes before finally giving up. I knew I was supposed to take my butterfly shaped treats everyday, but I never understood why they’d make it so hard to open. I could clearly read the Press Down and Push sign on the cap, but I had been trying for three days, and slowly started to think I wasn’t strong enough to push down and twist. I said goodbye to Penelope as I shut my door behind me.

My hand traced every indent in the eggshell colored wall, as I walked down the hallway. As I neared the family room, I noticed someone’s hand seemed to be lying on the hardwood floor. “Strange,” I thought. “Why would anyone wanna take a nap on the floor?” I knew that hand awfully well, and soon realized it was Mommy taking a cold nap.

“Mommy?” I said, as I began prying her eyes open with my tiny fingers. The familiar smell of sweet alcohol swallowed her. Her skin was dark, and there were red marks splattered across her arms and face, while her black, thinned hair stuck to the floor like pressed flowers. She was still the prettiest woman I knew. It had been days since we last saw each other; I just wanted to talk to my mom.

“Moommmmy!” I shouted as I began to bounce on her belly. “Mom mom mom mom...”
Tender footsteps approached.

“C’mon kiddo,” my dad said as he picked me up and plopped me onto the couch. “Now why don’t you go outside?” I just stared back at him.

His words embraced me, as he kissed my forehead. His pale skin was complemented with splotched freckles on his peach stained cheeks. I could fit three of my hands in one of his. His knuckles always seemed to be a little more worn than the rest of his hands, a little redder. His brown hair, highlighted with hints of grey, rested on his shoulders. His right hand constantly tapped against the thigh of his light-washed jeans, to a beat only he knew.

He always spoke in a hushed tone that I couldn’t help but admire. I stared at him as I ran my hands through the tough fabric of the sky blue couch. Everything was sky blue. My bed sheets were blue, cluttered with caterpillars and other little critters. Bear, from Bear in the Big Blue House (my favorite show), lived in a big sky blue mansion. The outside of our house was sky blue with a nice touch of red doors. I’ve always been enchanted with the color, mostly because it was my dad’s favorite, but also because it always surrounded me.

The house was small, but safe. I knew only good things filled our home. One bathroom was all we needed between the three of us, and although the heat didn’t work, our oven did the trick. Either “The Sound of Music” or “Bear in the Big Blue House” seeped through the corners. And sometimes, I’d

stand on my dad's toes as we danced around the house listening to Bob Marley, as he attempted to clean up. My best friends were Penelope and my dad. The neighbors were incredibly friendly, but they were 13 and talked about things I haven't yet heard of.

Filled laundry baskets were on the coffee table in place of a decorative jar filled with beads; a small grin grew from the corner of my cheek just thinking about how later this afternoon I'd be carried in one of those baskets on the way to the "clothes-cleaning store" with a stack of quarters.

My dad handed me my popsicle. "There ya go, Boo." He pet my head like I was a good boy who just retrieved his ball. I fixed my hair. I snatched the popsicle from his hands, and headed off towards the front door, carefully stepping over my drunken mother. My dad quietly shut the door behind me.

I sat on the warm concrete stretching my legs as far forward as I could, wiggling my toes. I soaked up the sun like I hadn't seen her in years. The sun was my friend, and I was hers. The smell of daisies and wet soil filled my lungs. The popsicle dripped onto my legs and stained them cherry red, my favorite color. I watched as Rollie Pollie Ollies tried to cross the sidewalk. Their tiny legs tickled my fingers, as I let them crawl around my hands. I grabbed small twigs and rocks to build obstacles courses for them, testing what it took to make them roll up into balls.

Once I finished playing with my bug friends, I decided it was time to head back inside. "Step on a crack and you break your mamma's back!" I sang to myself as I hopped around the cracks in the sidewalk. My legs became itchy, but I quickly reminded myself it was because of my dripping popsicle.

With my sticky fingers, I carefully opened the door in hopes of not hitting my mom with it. To my surprise, she wasn't there anymore. "She must have gotten up because she was so uncomfy on that floor," I thought. I went to the kitchen to throw away my popsicle stick and found my dad sitting on the kitchen floor.

"Monique Rachel," he growled. "What's all over your legs?!"

Before I even had time to react, he pushed me outside and told me to stay there. I looked down and little red ants were crawling all over me, making my body their home. I started to brush them off; I didn't see what the big deal was. I thought we liked ants. I heard the chirp of the hose and flinched before water abruptly hugged my body. I was being hosed down for an hour, maybe a year even. Once the water bullets stopped, I made a run for the front door. My dad quickly stopped me with his hand, and pet me like a dog again. "Just wait here, okay?" I nodded.

He came back with the biggest towel I've ever seen! As he began wrapping me in a cloud of warmth, he gently whispered, "red ants bite." We went inside, and he took me to the warm, open oven. "Why was Mommy sleeping on the floor?" I said. Without hesitation, he picked me up and carried me to the couch. We sat there together like two old friends. I looked up at him for an answer. He turned on the TV.



JULIAN CHRISTIANSON
CLOTH AND CHAIR

Charcoal

INTER section ON*al*

BY **Stephanie Dees**

I want to humanize the other.
Loudly and often.
I want to tell stories that expose us to
ourselves,
through the face of another.
Appropriation, though,
the sin
of white devils
sucking all the air
while
profiting
from othering.
I am not the other,
compared to most others.
My POV not POC,
my degree of separation
chromosomal.
But my one degree
opens the door
to variations on a theme and
thump-thump says
injustice.
the heart picks up on
sim-i-lar-i-ty.
and
dis-son-ance.
re-sis-tance.
And I want
to tune
the whole world
to the beat
that the heart
of the planet is setting,
the tribal
pump-pump
that dissolves
the false walls
which lie between us
it is rapping:
We're in this together.
But my proximity to
the man
and ancestral versions of my kind
render my message
suspicious to the other, and myself.

I see
where they were blind before,
hindsight 20/20.
Planned Parenthood's
roots in eugenics,
women's suffrage
at the cost of
black suffering.
Some future self
or other, now,
might see the blind spot
I myself cannot.
Some reason why my best
intentions,
labeling myself as other,
may ring false
or unaware
of the way in which my
proclamation
is days and dollars
late and short.
My soles
new to the
pavement of protest,
others souls
worn thin.
Heeding the call now,
with skin in the game,
not excusing
my years
on the bench.
So I
bite my lip,
target my rage,
show up.
Take
only my share of oxygen
and hopefully more
of the burden.
Invite everyone
to the party,
no white tears
if people don't come.

the VOID

BY **Anessa Hedger**

Requirements Necessary to Become Overseer of the VOID:

- o A wine drinking straw.
- o Cut hands that bleed and never heal.
- o A good plan for death.
- o Brain entanglement/the ability to speak to animals.
- o Want or drive or motivation for anything positive.
- o The spirit to perfectly deliver the line, "We will be okay."
- o God has to owe you something.



LUIS CEBALLOS
SIT

Pen and Ink



Eddie

BY **Travis Mundt**

His mother had trouble paying the bills, and he was not much help. After the eviction, he ran a thousand miles away to where the land meets the Pacific ocean, and sludge piles into black lumps on the shore. He left his mother and his brother to fend for themselves. His brother took up residence with a friend and his parents, a solidarity his brother was not used to, and his mother moved into the house next-door.

His mother had done her best providing a comfortable childhood, but after fifteen years, she broke and ebbed her way into drug abuse and negligence. Her new roommate was a less-than-reputable man, who smoked any white powder he could get his hands on. His name was Eddie. A twitchy man, he wore glasses held together by masking tape, and often played on his aging guitar the same unassuming blues riff, his face and hands overexerted and sweating. Eddie often made the claim that he was an expert musician, a person who could teach anyone to play the guitar.

In real life, he was a con man, and not a very good one.

After a month or so of squatting in the northern portion of the Bay Area, sometimes sleeping on the roof of a bar, or a toolshed that leaned to the right and looked to be made of driftwood, he called Eddie's house to speak to his mother.

"Hello," she said, her voice small and distant through the phone.

"Hi, mom. How are you doing?" he asked, knowing that she was not doing well at all.

"Oh fine, I just need to get out of here," she said.

"There have been some people around lately that are no good." He could hear in her voice the severity of the situation, and from so far away, he could do nothing. "I am going to go down to Las Cruces, New Mexico with Juan, and I have to leave our stuff in the basement here," she said. Juan was her boyfriend, prone to theft and heavy into drugs.

"I hope it is all there when I get back," he said with little hope.

"Take care of yourself. Talk to you soon," she said.

"I will," he said. It would be three years until their next conversation.

Cold flagstone sidewalks pave the way, and a city breeze blows street dust across his face and into his mouth. He tastes car exhaust and chemical debris. Fresh off of a long Greyhound bus ride across the desert, and happy to have returned, he smiles to himself. The experience of life on the streets has left him wary of his surroundings, but approaching the familiar, he feels at ease.

In the distance, two black dots morph into people, accompanied by flashing blue and red lights floating over black and white cars. Normally, police presence means turn and run, but his mission to retrieve his

meager possessions hibernating in Eddie's basement is clear in his mind, and he does not want to risk losing the overstuffed duffel bag. So he trudges through a thick veil of fear, triggered by the man. He nears Ed's house and sees that two uniformed police officers stand guard outside. He slows his pace. Talking to cops isn't on his top ten list of things to do today.

He surveys the scene before him and determines his course of action for gaining entry into the house. Step one: have a conflict-free verbal exchange with the cops standing guard outside the decrepit fence, green and crawling with foliage. It is a full blown crime scene. The front yard is dotted with men and women in bad suits, dark blue uniforms, and silver badges that boast titles. The cops at the entrance stand wide, like sentinels guarding a castle. A loose barrier of yellow crime scene tape shifts and crackles around them in the breeze, like spider silk. Their forearms are crossed and tense at the prospect of his arrival, and what it means for them. They would soon demand answers.

The boy manages to push a few syllables from his lungs to get the deal done. "Excuse me, officers," he says, putting on his best attempt at formal speech. Their eyes trace his thin frame, his ragged clothes filthy from travel, and make their conclusion whether or not he poses a threat.

"Hold it right there," says one of the cops. It's the shorter one. He's shorter than the other by a foot, his voice peppered with authority--arms outstretched, palms flat and exposed. "What do you want?"

"Well, my mom was living here and she had some of my stuff, important things. She told me over the phone awhile back that she needed to get outta here, and couldn't get it to me on account of me not having an address," he says.

"Is she on the lease? What is her name?" The questions come like piranha at a feeding frenzy.

"Her name is Elizabeth, and no, she is not on the lease," he says.

"So she lived here illegally then?" the short cop asks.

"I suppose so," the boy says, cringing from the brashness of the question. His response is truthful, and the cop can read it on his face. He tells the cop his name, adding that if it is a bad time he could come back.

The tall cops' jaw muscles tighten, and he chimes in, "You won't have another chance to come back. Hold on." He turns into the yard and trades words with a superior, then enters the house.

Standing on his duct tape covered toes, the boy cranes his neck to get a better view of the action. People busy themselves in the grassless front yard. Some are engaged in intense conversation on the front porch, peeling fragments of lead paint, which turn to shards. They cast sideways glances in his direction, part their lips to speak, then look away. He waits in silence and watches as fountain pens pull ink across tiny note pads. The reality of what has happened here begins to creep into his

consciousness. Three small bullet holes crowned with glimmering fractures are in the front window, and it is hard to tell which direction they came from, either inside or out. A detective bends at the waist. His tie kisses the concrete as he places numbered cards next to small objects and red droplets, while an accomplice shoots photographic evidence. The boy's new friend in uniform, slender and balding, emerges from the doorway and motions for him to enter. They must have the situation under control, otherwise he would not be allowed to enter. His partner shrugs his broad shoulders, and lifts the fragile yellow and black strip of plastic, as the boy ducks into the unknown.

The carpet is stiff underfoot, and stained black in spots. A faint odor of burned rubber clings to the air inside the house. He steps into the main room and sees the chair he witnessed a woman overdose in, translucent puke on her green tee shirt, her skin swollen and blue like an all-over bruise, her ghost still haunting folds of green fabric. Used needles litter a coffee table, charred and sticky from heavy drug use. A man sits on a thrift store couch, handcuffed and shirtless, his skin scuffed red on the shoulder. The boy knows him. He uses and sells drugs in the neighborhood. He notices the boy's presence, and his eyes make an invisible gesture of acknowledgment. The boy does not reciprocate. On the wall behind the dealer are more bullet holes, and the living room is turned on its belly. A small handgun that looks like a .22 caliber, sits idly on the torn cushion. The boy imagines it still smoking. So far, there is no sign of Eddie. He could be anywhere. Perhaps he is bleeding out behind the liquor store down the street, or blue-lipped and wrapped in black plastic.

"If you can prove the stuff is yours, you can take it out of here after we search the place," the cop says, his words pulling the boy back to reality.

"Fair enough," the boy says with few words to cling to.

The door to the basement is in the kitchen. The tall cop takes the doorknob in his fist and turns, opening the door to reveal a flight of unsafe stairs built a hundred years ago, and oppressive darkness that envelops the contents of the basement. He switches on a dull yellow light that fills the basement and comes to rest on a small community of inanimate objects under the house, still buzzing with activity. The boy starts down the stairs behind the cop, whose eyes are vigilant, turning in his head as he looks for danger. The stairs wobble with each step down, whispering dust into trapped air. Under the stairs, the boy finds his duffel bag lying in between boxes of old photographs and handmade keepsakes gifted by children. The boxes belong to the boy's mother.

"That one there," the boy says. He points at his bag with a trembling finger, and the cop retrieves it from under the stairs.

"Is there any way you can prove this stuff is yours?" he asks, as if the boy has no proof. The handles of the bag are bundled into one, held together by a tag from the bus station, evidence of a trip from the previous summer. The tag is emblazoned with his name and address, the same address on the house next door. The boy picks through his wallet to locate his ID, hands it to the cop with a nervous glance,

not accustomed to being helped by police. Holding the thin blue and white identification card between thumb and forefinger, the cop squints between the handle of the bag and the ID, studying the validity of the boy's request. The boy imagines oiled gears turning behind the cop's eyes, deciding that the bag is indeed his.

"Ok, open it up," he says.

The boy takes his final step into the basement, and tears through the tag. Somehow it has retained its stick after an entire year. He pulls the small black zipper over clothes, important trinkets he got as presents from a girl that told him she loved him, if only for a while. With the bag fully open and the zipper at rest, the cop sticks a hand inside and rifles around. He pulls a few books from the bottom that have photographs tucked between aging yellow pages, books that make life bearable. Some of the photographs show the boy and his estranged girlfriend standing on a porch identical to the one twenty feet away, and above ground. The cop nods his flat-topped head, and motions for the boy to climb the stairs. At the top of the stairs, and in the kitchen, bag re-zipped in hand, the cop tells the boy to exit through the back door. "It is safer this way," he says.

Two weeks later, the boy encounters Eddie on the street, his arm wrapped in plaster and bandages rimmed with dried blood. He shows the boy one small bullet wound in his chest, near the shoulder. He laughs and says that there are two more wounds, one his forearm, and one in his elbow.

"He must be high," the boy thinks to himself. Eddie's two-week-old cast looks like jaundiced skin, his hair unkempt. His glasses are foggy from the excitement. He has the frazzled appearance that only a person who has been up for days can attain.

"I was tryin' to get a deal done, but Frank is a real asshole. I don't owe him shit," Eddie says.

"Yea I was never too sure of that guy," the boy says. His tone is sarcastic, and his words pat Eddie on the head, like a parent giving their child approval for completing a simple task. He already knew from limited experience to avoid long conversations with crackheads. They never let you go. The boy keeps his distance while standing and talking about a drug deal gone wrong, who owes who money, and how the police let him go.

"I didn't have anything on me, and they were already watching Frank. That son of a bitch can't kill me," he says. Eddie is so nonchalant about nearly being shot to death, it puts the boy ill at ease. Eddie's head whips around at a whistle. A man stands, waving his arm from the edge of the curb across the street.

"I gotta go. See you around," he says. Without looking for traffic, Eddie stumbles off the curb and into the city street. Car horns blare, and Eddie laughs. "He must be high."



BOUCHRA FILALI MOUTEI

UNITITLED

MIXED MEDIA

Light of HOUSE

BY Erin Lucey

My spring arrived
too early
Lilacs expressed their perfume
into the air before May had even shown her tail
feathers
I pushed
hard
against my mother
I challenged her on everything
forcing gray hair from her scalp
stressing her body and mind
My spring arrived
too early
Bears awoke confused to be greeted not by
melting ice
but instead by blooming tulips
I fought
relentlessly
with my mother
I bruised her sensitive heart
forcing my purple and blue words upon her

When the rains
and forceful blooms of spring
fell still
I followed suit
I lay in the grass while my mother rested
When we both woke
we fell into each other

like mountains crumbling
from their own weight
Waterfalls cascaded down our broken spines
and lush cheeks
until
together
we were standing in a lake of our own making
Jupiter wove his beard
decorated with pink flowers
around our ankles
reaching green leaves up our calves
Jenny crept her small yellow buds
through our thighs and
around our waist
stretching herself towards the sun
Peonies bloomed from our scalp
curling their immense heads
heavy with pink and white petals
out from the inside
until our face no longer resembled sorrow
The tall desert grass
spotted with wildflowers
shot up all around us
to touch the wind as she blew by

My mother and I did not move
we remain intertwined
held together by the beautiful things of this world
as one emotional being

HOW

to
be

soft

BY **Monique Splitter**

I don't get why people walk on the grass.
I can't remember a time we were gentle.
There's a perfect sidewalk that isn't home to
little critters
Why ruin something innocent?
Something soft.
Help worms cross the sidewalk
after it rains,
Their bodies are too weak.

Hard work goes into an ounce of honey,
You
can swallow a jar in minutes.

Remember the sun still shines, even though
sometimes you don't feel it.
Flirt with flowers
Help them grow.

Breathe
Even though your lungs are filled with weeds
and thorns,
You're still whole.

The bee that lands on you thinks you're a
flower.
Be a gentle one.
Let him stay for as long as he likes,
Move only with the breeze.
Be soft.



SENA BRYANT
POP ZOMBIE

Graphic Design

the
JACKET

BY Daniela Uriarte

A jacket. Thick, patient and familiar.
Suspended from weary hangers, bent out of shape
from years of being overworked.
Its origins are long forgotten
But life pulses within the crumpled, stiff sleeves still.
Thrashing among other, kinder fabrics, all who provide
a more gentle embrace.
But I wear it still, and I am not cold.

Maybe it is the lack of softer words
And meaningless, empty giggles slipping through my
teeth.
But I cannot abandon this wrath after it clothed me.
Do not ask me to hang my hatred back up on some
damaged hanger—I never will.
I will wear it still, and it will keep me warm.
I remain unapologetic and he remains worthy.



LAUREN SIEVERS
INNSAEI

Linocut Print



Ninety
Nine
Copies

BY Joe Gurr

“WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS?”

That week we’d been learning about different ways to say the word “said” in a story; after this outburst, the word “bellowed” popped into my head. “Boomed” could also work; a minimalist might just say “shouted.”

In her hands, she held up a substantial stack of paper. She stood next to the cheap, impossibly loud printer at the back of the classroom. It sat near her desk on one of the old tables. We got new tables at the beginning of the year, smooth new Formica, but the old ones were made of worn wood, dented and scratched and otherwise defaced from untold years of hard use by seventh graders.

The one that her printer lived on was the only old table left in our classroom; the rest were moved into storage, or simply thrown away.

Mercifully, I was near the front of the classroom, so I had the luxury of shrinking into my chair and hiding from her gaze. We weren’t getting new chairs until next year. These ones were unforgiving cracked plastic and not a one of them was silent when a student moved in it. My chair was not the only one to creak in that moment, as we all stopped working and reacted separately, but similarly to this latest tirade.

“Well?” she snapped, her beady eyes scanning the room. “Is anyone going to answer me?” Roughly, she pushed her glasses up on her nose.

As she looked at us, we looked at each other. From what I could tell leaned back as far as was physically possible in my chair between the nonfiction bookshelf and the poster describing subject-verb agreement, everyone else was as bewildered as I was. I locked eyes with a comrade across the room. I raised my eyebrows as I lifted my left hand off the table and turned my fingers up in a silent question. I received a shrug in response. We both jumped as she continued her rant.

“I see...no one knows what I’m talking about, right?” She projected her voice across the room as though performing bad Shakespeare.

With a huff, she adjusted her grip on the papers and began to make her way around the room. She picked up speed as she passed each table of four, and the table of three next to the windows because we were an odd number. She slammed down a stack of the papers she held in her arms for each group to see. I’d never seen her move this fast, and it was more than a little frightening to see her substantial frame barreling toward us. She slapped a chunk of paper on my desk; I cautiously picked up the top sheet on the stack. Under it, all of the others were the same.

In my hand, I held a black-and-white printout of a photograph. The image was blown up to fill nearly the entire page, and the resolution was not forgiving. It was the quality of surveillance footage at a gas station, but I still knew what I was looking at: our classroom. The image was taken at the front of the room, by the door, probably from the credenza that had the trays where we turned in our vocabulary

worksheets. I did a double take when I saw myself in the image, wearing the same clothes I was wearing at that very moment. The picture had been taken that morning.

Our middle school had a cart of laptops that teachers could sign up to use. The librarian was the one who wheeled it down the hall; she and she alone had the key, and anyone who damaged any of the six-pound monsters answered directly to her. Our English class had use of the laptops that morning to type up our most recent assignment (a one-page essay about someone in our lives who inspired us) and print it out. I had to stifle a grin as I realized the picture must have been what was holding up the printer.

“NINETY-NINE COPIES! Ninety-nine. Someone used the web camera on their laptop to print ninety-nine copies of this...image!” She drew out the pronunciation of “ninety-nine,” with such an emphasis on the second syllable of “ninety” that it sounded as though she said three separate words. Additionally, she pronounced the word “camera” the way I imagined a film star in the 1930s might have: “cam-err-ahhh.”

This was the kind of teacher of children that had deluded herself over a very long career into thinking she was in a position of great power. She ruled by decree, and boasted an uncanny ability to completely ignore reason and rational thought when anyone dared question her, especially when she was wrong. She was not just theatrical, but operatic in nature.

Every lesson was a performance given to an audience that couldn't ignore her and couldn't leave.

She began to pace the length of the front of the classroom, between the ancient and now-dormant overhead projector and the whiteboard that had been nailed on top of a chalkboard in the late 1990s.

She clasped her hands behind her back as she strode on once-white sneakers with her nose in the air. Her weak chin struggled to emerge from under her white turtleneck, which in turn struggled to contain her within the confines of the faded red fleece vest she'd zipped as close to the collar as was physically possible.

She now became a detective in a whodunit, a clever hero solving a murder during a dinner party at a lavish New England mansion during a heavy rainstorm. I could almost hear the crash of thunder as she began pointing fingers.

“Obviously,” she began quietly, in a tone suggesting that whatever revelation she was about to share was obvious to only her, “nobody in the picture could have done this.”

She stopped pacing and turned to look at us, clearly waiting for that to sink in, possibly expecting gasps. I did breathe a genuine sigh of relief, as I'd seen myself in the picture, and even though I was not guilty, she had been known to falsely accuse and then refuse to consider any amount of exonerating evidence. She held one of the copies to her face and examined it closely, then rapidly whipped her arm back to her side. She narrowed her eyes as they roamed across the room, her left eye noticeably twitching. More violently this time, she pushed her glasses up her nose. As she brought the paper back up then snapped it down to glower, it crinkled loudly. Unfortunately, I sat close enough to hear the joint in her elbow popping as well.

During this interlude, I took a peek at my copy of the image and tried to figure out who it was. I could see pretty much everyone in the photo, typing what they'd written on loose-leaf paper into a near-prohibitively outdated version of Microsoft Word with hollow stares.

Who wasn't there? I looked up from my paper a few times to check against our assigned seating arrangement, and established a list of suspects. Roughly twenty seconds later, the tyrant at the front of the room did as well.

She called up six students, four boys and two girls, to the front of the classroom. It was 10:58 AM and lunch started at 11:10. I quietly began the long, slow process to log out of and shut down my assigned laptop; clearly, we were done with class for the day.

One boy and one girl had alibis. They were in the bathroom. Only one of each was allowed out at a time, and they needed an initialed hall pass, so there was a paper trail. They returned to their seats. At this point, others began to notice the time – now exactly eleven o'clock – and shut down their whirring, overheating machines as well. I was still waiting on a spinning wheel to even access the menu to log out. I looked up again at the developing spectacle. She'd decided to try being the good cop.

"Look, I know it had to have been one of you, and I'll be much more...lenient...if you tell me now rather than having me find out later," she said in a softer voice. Her tone was disturbing, its sweetness hollow and false. Other than making the bottom lip of one of the boys quite literally tremble, it accomplished nothing. The remaining girl crossed her arms. The other two boys exchanged a quick look. She soon gave up and turned with a huff to take a long look at the image again.

I finally clicked on "logout." Many students had tried explaining that shutting down would also log the user out, but the librarian didn't care or remotely understand, and neither did any of the teachers, who strictly enforced that protocol. We found it easier to do it their way. I sighed. The clock at the corner of my computer changed to 11:04.

I looked up and realized she'd started again. Her return to sleuthing proved fruitful; she'd found another clue. She appeared to be directing the boy with the trembling lip back to his seat. Following that move, she made her way to the credenza, brushing past the three remaining accused. Upon arriving at the scene of the crime, she brought the photo to her face with a flourish. It whooshed back down to her side after a few moments. An "aha" was imminent.

"Aha!" she said loudly. She extended a finger at the quivering student she'd just seated. "You are out of view of the web camera! You couldn't have been in the image because of the angle of the shot."

She beamed. Another groundbreaking discovery. It didn't seem to cross her mind that this evidence proved nothing, that the mere fact he couldn't have been in the photo didn't mean he didn't still take it, but nobody objected. One of the boys up front, the one in the middle, opened his mouth to say something, but quickly found himself silenced when his neighbor unfolded her arms to elbow him in

the ribs. It didn't matter. The kid with the trembling lip honestly wasn't smart enough to do something this funny. As my computer began to shut down, I was forced to turn to the clock on the wall to count the seconds until we could leave. Just four minutes now.

Up front, the plot had thickened. Clearly I'd missed something; the boy in the middle had also been sent back to his seat. Two suspects remained. My heart sank as I realized what was about to happen. She absolutely loathed these two. Both had long, rich histories of, as the beast interrogating them so often put it, "disruptive shenanigans." She was just going to pin the whole thing on them. She'd been the dirty cop planting evidence, and she would become the judge and jury in a moment, but for now, she was the prosecutor gunning for the maximum penalty. She began her closing arguments.

"I don't know how you did it," she began quietly, probably referring both to their method and the actual operation of the 'web cameras' to take the photo, "but I do know why. You thrive off attention, don't you? It's not exciting if it's not all about you! I have to say that I am so disappointed. You couldn't sit through a single class period without some intrusion into the learning of everyone in this classroom, could you?"

Her performance reached a crescendo as the screen of my laptop turned black and I quietly closed the lid. She'd raised her voice to a shout.

"How DARE you waste class time on something like this! Do you have any idea just how selfish this behavior is? I have NO CHOICE but to sentence the two of you..." She paused, clearly for effect, possibly to think about what punishment she actually had the ability to give out. "...to lunch detention!"

The bell rang just as she turned on her heels to face the rest of us, and barked out, "Dismissed!"

Say what you will, but she had an excellent sense of timing.

PON DI DANCE floor

BY Fatoumata Sumbundu

As the beat drop
I watched my dance partners as they
threw it back
Rotating and tic tocing di waistline
Whining pon di right
Whining pon di left
It's the magic on the floor that
excites our bodies
Putting in energy, letting our body tek
control
Hoisting and Whining to dancehall
tunes
Mi loving how we flow di waistline
We must have come from di
Caribbean
Loving di way our hands flow in the
air
As our bodies move to the rhythm of
the music
Whine up!
Whine up!
Oh Yeah!

Pon = On
Di = The
Mi = Me
Tek = Take

eLuSIVE LOVE

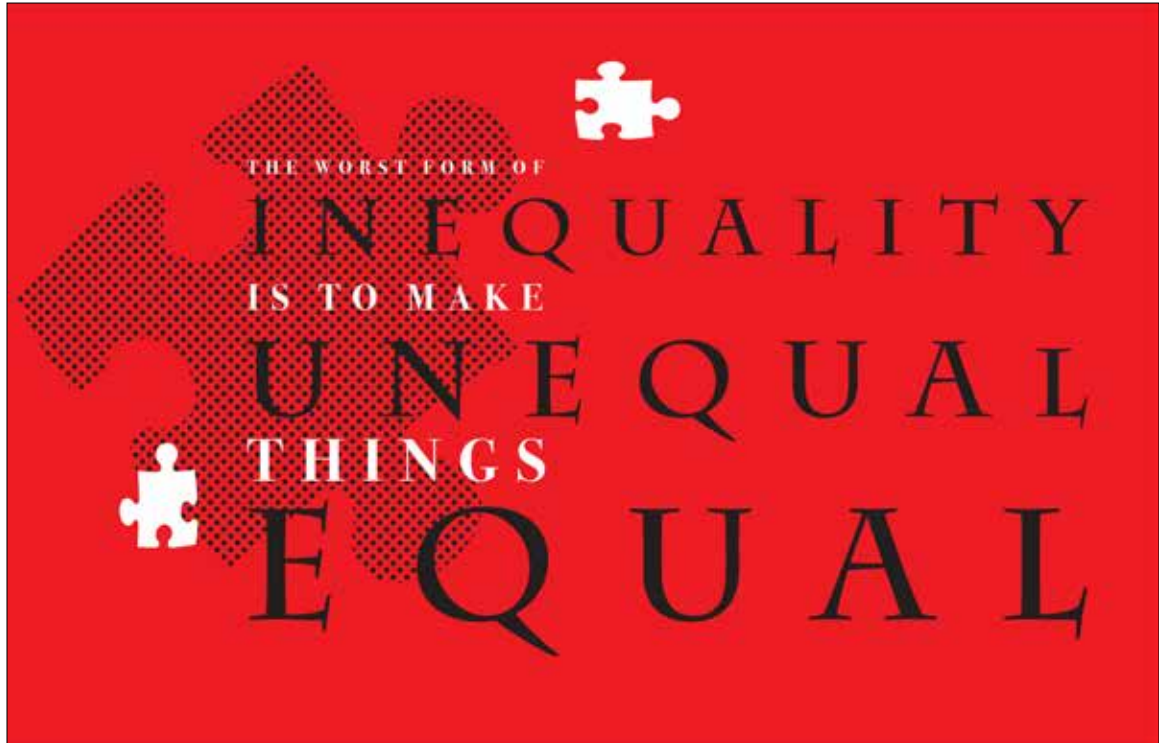
BY Carol Covington

You
Crept inside of the crevices
Trying to hide from your own dirty
laundry
Expecting the day to end differently than
It had begun.

I
Allowed access and passage
Without putting the toilet seat down
So that being in my latitude made you
feel
As if you belonged.

We
Taught each other to dance in
Opposite continuum, tripping on top
Of and over feelings neither one of us
Are willing to share
Until the nuclear fallout of desperate
Expectations made us choke from the
fumes.

Love is not secondary to living
As if planting seeds in the desert
landscape
Yields a watered-down heart of
misunderstandings
While waiting for yesterday's
Eclipse of the moon.



SENA BRYANT
Aristotle

Screenprint

I
can't
Hear
the
**CAGED
BIRD**
Sing

BY Devon Decker

O Maya, I can't hear the caged bird sing
An I know the voice was never angel quality,
Those vomitting mouthful rings.

With his tune heard on the distant hills,
On otherside poverty
Broke. Negro. Killed

The caged birds sings
The caged birds sings
And we know
the screams were never pretty
Those awful rings

Brother bird, why have you forsaken me?
Where are your wings?
And is it true
You stand in a grave of dreams?

Sing caged bird! Sing!
That wasn't heard
Over the distant hill, where
those
Dead crows. Shrilled.
"Another empty belly, black, killed"



BOUCHRA FILALI MOUTEI

Untitled

Mixed media



**My Deep
Dark est**
Secret

BY Natalia Walton

I dreamt of this man. I prayed to Jehovah for him. I masturbated to the thought of him touching me. I saw our children sitting on his knee. Now, I sit with a clump of my hair in his hands; his naked body standing over me. He stands over me, screaming down at me. I wish now I could erase the memories of him. Imagine that he never existed in my life. A thought of someone else popped into my head but faded as he yelled, “suck my dick Bitch!” with conviction and determination to stay alive, I placed the head of his penis in my mouth. I allowed my lips to get wet from the tears that streamed down my face. Then without looking, I clamped my teeth down around the rim of his massive penis. I felt a strong jerk as he pulled away from me. I allowed my teeth to release their pressure, and got up from the floor, moving at a speed I had not moved before. My weight became oblivious, like being in a swimming pool. I felt light as a feather. I felt my bare feet on the grass, then on the pavement of the sidewalk. I felt the tar of the street, paving my way to any house, any door that looked as though it would be a safe haven for my pale, scared, helpless body to slam into, and bang on the door.

The neighbor to the right was all dark, the lights were out, I jolted the other direction, moving North. Lights! Oh my God Lights! Springing like I was in the NBA, I spun around like my opponent was trying to capture the ball from my hands. I could hear his breathing. He was calling out to me. This time a different voice; one I was familiar with. “Nya, baby, I’m sorry! Come back! Where are you going?” I hesitated for a moment, then turned around, searching for his distance from me, but also hoping to see if he had returned to himself, or if he was still the demon that I had met for the first time tonight. “Bitch, you hear me calling you!” His voice came from the east, but suddenly he was right in front of me. His penis dangled against my thigh; his warm hands grabbing my shoulders. He shook me, with more strength than I had ever known him to have. He turned my body like we were performing the tango. I went under his arm and again kneeled before him with his fingers entangled in the locks of my hair.

“Why don’t you love me? Why are you always trying to get away from me? You think you’re better than me? Well, bitch I got you! I’m the mutha-fuckin’ man Bitch!” He threw his head back as if to laugh at my current dilemma. Pressing me further into the ground; I could smell the asphalt as though they had just laid it. I cried, sobbing with defeat. My naked body pressed against the pebbles of the road. I wanted to run away, but couldn’t go.

“I do love you, baby! I don’t think I’m better than you! I love you. Now, why don’t you let me go so I can go in the house and make love to you?” I grabbed his wrists with my hands and pushed upward. Still holding his hands, I tried to release the demons’ grip, or at least loosen it. I pushed my way to my feet and dropped one hand from his wrists. I placed my hands around his shaft and began to massage his erection. I felt sick to my stomach that he was turned on by the torture he was inflicting on me. I stared into his eyes, brown with flakes of green. Deep, warm brown eyes that once used to entice me. All I could think was “It didn’t used to be this way.” There used to be love there. I use to lay on his chest at night and I never felt fear or disrespect in his arms. Now I was a dog; a hooker working for her pimp. I felt like shit! I wanted to crawl into a ball and die! Stroking his manhood, I now realized that, that was the

only manly thing about him. He was treating me like a nobody off the street. His vile words and abrasive actions made me wish someone would bash his skull in. I allowed the skin to harden more around his shaft and his fingers to drop from my hair. I kissed his neck and he began to purr like a kitten. I watched his eyes roll back in his head, as muttered some vulgarity about me. I remained mindful, keeping watch of the light that shined behind him. Naked, my nipples erect, I moved my head to the other side of his neck. My tongue danced over his earlobe as I looked down the street desperately looking for a way to run. He moaned sounds that once used to be pleasant to me. Now a wasted nut! How could he be this way? Who was this person? This is not my Terry. Not the man I walked down the aisle with. Not the man I planned a future with. Not the man I prayed for. This strange imposture in my significant other's body was a disease unleashed upon my now bruised and battered soul.

I squeezed the palm of my hand and summoned all the strength in my body, as I tried to crumble his manhood in my hand the way he had crushed my dignity. I ran, again the wind hitting my body, to the light. I ran with all the energy I could muster, ran like a slave. I ran like I was an Olympic gold medalist. "Don't look back, don't look back!" I told myself. When my foot touched the concrete porch, I felt as though I took flight. My insides sang as I pounded my fist against the wooden door. "Help me! Someone please help me! He's right behind me, please open the door! Help me, please!" Before the door was completely open, I began to push. Pressing my weight against the door, I noticed the person who had opened it, was oblivious to me. All I could see was the light. The light was my savior. I felt a hand around my neck. The grip was tight, and stopped me in my tracks. I fell to the ground, a hard thud and a hollow sound I felt in my stomach. My nipples smashed. I could hardly breathe, and I felt my skin pulling away from my bones as my body went in the reverse direction. The Devil was pulling me away from the light! "No, no!" I dug my hands into the carpet that lay behind the now fully opened door. Suddenly, I felt a plunge in my back. I felt another one, then another one. Still, I kept pulling myself to the light. But I felt weak now. My body going limp, I felt another plunge; this one deep, near my arm, piercing my left side. I couldn't hear anything anymore. Slam, Slam, Slam! I reached forward once again. Everything around me was losing sound. Slam, plunge, Slam! I looked up, and in slow motion the woman began to scream, but no words came out of her mouth. Two men came from behind her, their eyes bulging. They jumped over her and me. I felt another plunge, this one straight across my back, from shoulder blade to shoulder blade. "Don't look back. Don't look back!" I passed out, and everything went black.

When I woke up, I was unaware of my surroundings. I wanted to believe in my heart I had made it to the light. I had put so much effort into it there was no way I didn't make it. I could hear, but not see now. I was lying on my stomach and I could feel bodies around me. A warm light surrounded us. I just knew I had made it to the light. I couldn't move though. I was unable to turn over. I felt a weight like no other on my back. Wetness rolled down my sides. Then I heard the words of one of the bodies above me. "The son of a bitch stabbed her with a rake in her back 16 times!" I felt a hiccup in my heart; it was a pause not long enough to die, but strong enough to feel death. "A Rake!" A small laugh came from inside of me. Not loud enough for anyone else to hear, just me. "A Rake!" The evil sadistic fucker stabbed me with a

rake 16 times. What the fuck?" I laughed a hearty laugh from my gut. "This fucking fool raked me!" My laughter became tears. My tears became pain. The anguish I was feeling in my back, my body, was intense. The pain was an indescribable feeling that causes death to be at your doorstep, so painful you pray for it to come and take you away, pain so intense I passed out again before I could feel anymore.

When I woke up, I felt the warmth of the I.V. running into my veins a soft beeping noise in my ears that told me I was still alive, and my heartbeat was being monitored. The nurse touched me softly, removing gauze from my wounds. She saw that I was awake, and attempted to ask me how I was feeling. "I used to have a tattoo of my kids' names down my back. I also had a cheetah and her cub in the center of my back near my ass." She nodded, as I strained to look back at her while remaining on my stomach. "Is it still there?" She shook her head no, and I tried to picture what my back looked like. From deep inside my soul, I felt a scream forming, a deep sound of pain, hurt, and the inability to understand. The scream was formulating around all of the questions and emotions that I had. Betrayal, pain—how could he do this to me and say that he loves me? Is this the man that I love? I couldn't do or say anything as the scream formed. I felt the tears forming in the corners of my eyes. My teeth clenched but still no scream.

During the month I was in the hospital, every day was a blur, with the exception of when they told me I had to bathe. I sat in the cold room with marble tiles, bent over because this was the only way I could walk or move, or exist. I sat there with my little white towel, the hose, and the little hotel size soap. I sat there, the door shut. I was alone. No assistance for me. Bandages removed the sting of the air hitting my wounds. I sat there. And when I did run the water over me, I tried to keep it on the front of my body, as the water hit the marble floor to the echo of my thighs rubbing together. I gathered my strength. I gathered every fiber of being inside my defeated, unloved, wounded soul. I gathered it, and turned the head of the shower behind me. Then up over my head, and then towards my back. That scream, the one that had been forming, lingering in the pit of my stomach, it came out, with tears and pain, and the desire to die. That pain I could never describe was a combination of my broken heart and the intensity of my wounds screaming from the pain. I cried, I sobbed, knowing there was no God in the pain I was feeling. A desire to die, to not feel this anymore came over me. I quickly removed the water from my back, but the residual sting told me my back was horribly disfigured. But then again, my soul was disfigured too. I looked like a dumb ass. I felt like the biggest fool in the world. I loved him, defended him, and helped him to be a better man. And now my soul was left dangling on the edge of a cliff, wishing I could commit suicide, a gnawing feeling of wanting to get rid of the aching for him I still felt. Who would still want him knowing that he had tried to kill me? But he was my addiction, and I believed he was not the person that did this to me. He was not the monster that I met that night. But this was also my secret. A deep dark secret I tried to keep to myself. I still loved him!

Heart break CITY

BY Daisy Vigil

you're still slurring your words
and flirting with monsters
who buy you nice things
pay to explore your anatomy
but leave you with bruises
and cigarette burns
you bare your wounds proud
accept comfort from anyone
you thrive off of pity
everyone's done you wrong in your
heartbreak city
city of pills, city of booze
city of abandoned cars and suicide
scars
you've been feeding your habits
for thirty-nine years
but i'm a twenty-one year commitment-
too long
trying to leave your heartbreak city

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An introduction class that focuses on poetry, nonfiction and fiction. You will get to try a little bit of everything here and learn a variety of skills that will improve your writing

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ENG 226

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Pre-req: Eng. 221

ENG 227

Poetry Writing Workshop

This workshop provides you the space and support to build on your poetry writing skills

CCD Art Classes

ART 121

Drawing I

An exploration into Drawing as an expressive medium for human creativity! As a human mode of communication, Drawing and 'mark-making' have been part of our collective experience since our ancestors inhabited the caves! As part of this class you will enjoy projects that investigate the various approaches, techniques and media needed to develop drawing skills and visual perception.

ART 132

Visual Concepts 3-D Design

An adventure in three dimensions, you will use the visual mechanics of the physical world to creatively solve conceptual challenges. The opportunity to play with scale, perspective, texture, form, color and the creative application of ideas to a wide range of materials will open up a new world of expression.

ART 139

Digital Photography I

Free your inner photographic genius! This class will deliver the fundamentals of photography in a fast-moving, creativity-focused, workshop-style class using state-of-the-art workstations and software to bring your photographic ideas into reality.

ART151

Painting I

An engaging exploration of the various techniques, materials, and conceptual possibilities using acrylic paints to bring form, space, symbol, and more to life.

ART 221

Drawing II

Taking the drawing medium to the next level in technique and media possibilities, this class is a deeper exploration into expressive drawing techniques with an emphasis on formal composition, including use of color, awareness of content and conceptual/thematic development.

ART 239

Digital Photography II

Expands upon the beginning digital photography class. Focuses your digital photography practice to strengthen use of design, technique and lighting to create more successful images for your portfolio. This active and exciting class includes a deeper dive into communication factors including color, visual design, lighting, graphics, and aesthetics.

ART 251

Painting II

This course further explores techniques, materials, and concepts used in acrylic painting, and introduces working with oil paints as an exciting addition for an expanded range of techniques with emphasis on composition and content development for your portfolio.

On the Cover:

Karissa Solas Fajardo

Self Portrait

page. 47

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Editors

Annie Howley, Jeff Becker, Brian Dickson

Art Editors

Lincoln Phillips, John Kjos

Design

Sena Bryant

Design Editors

John Kjos, Sue Samuelson

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