

Pegasus



Pittsford Sutherland
High School

2022

Foreword

I am growing up now. Growing up in the way that I write stories about parties and love, that I write about my family and the mountains and valleys of our lives together. I am not a little girl anymore. She who dreamed of castles and dragons and princesses has become a woman who dreams of success, strength, and life beyond Pittsford. I hope I did not lose the little girl and I do not think I did. I find her in my favorite novels (that have been the same for years), I see her in the flowers that grow in my yard, I recognize her innocence in the yellowed pages of my journals. I think that the little girl I was grew into who I am now because of my passion for this craft. I can love my princesses and dragons, yet express my anger and angst in words. I have grown with my writing. I have so many people to thank for that.

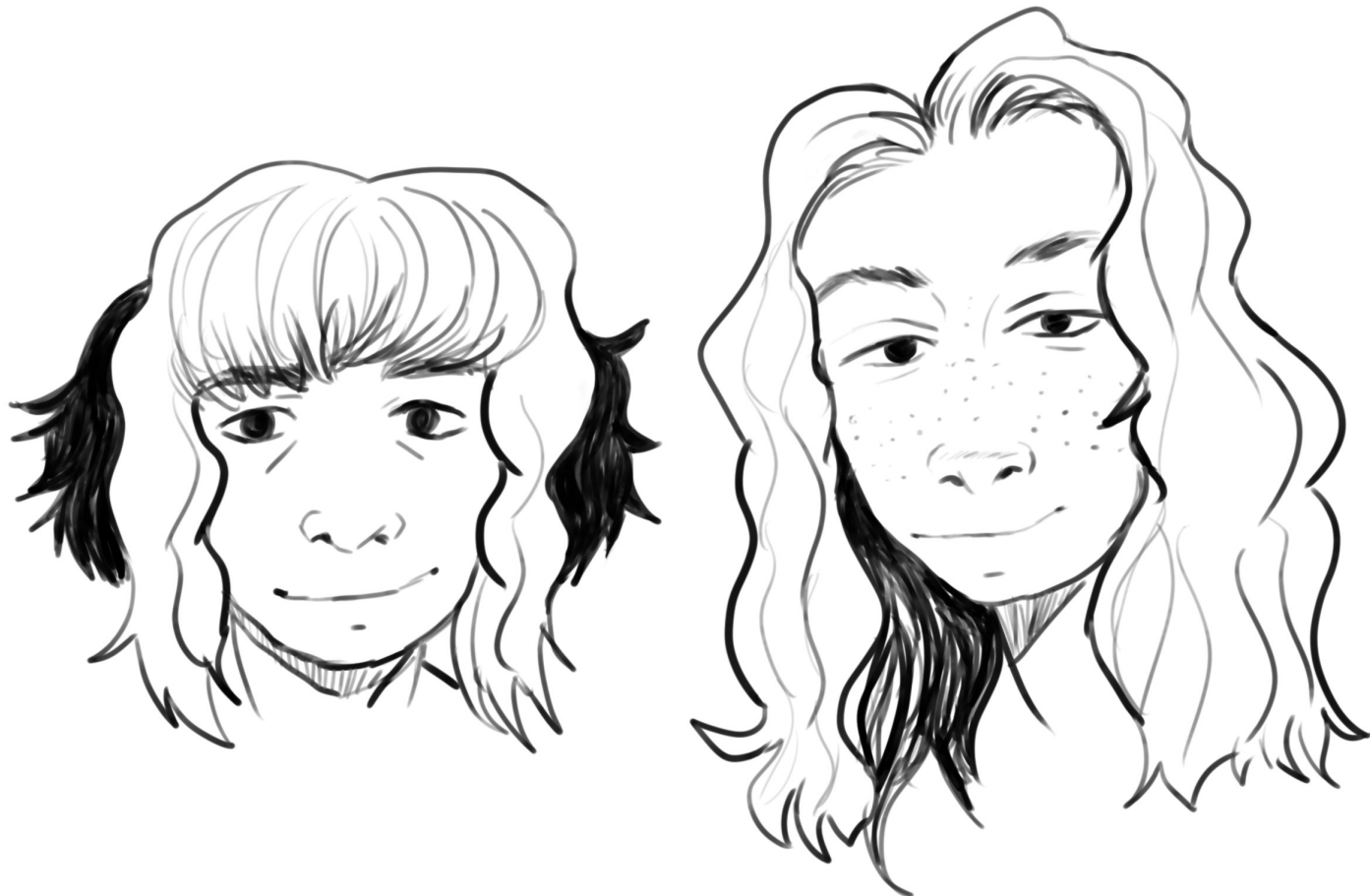
The teachers in the Sutherland English department are truly my inspirations, Mr. Regan and Mr. Shafer most of all for their dedication to this club, the students and editors who came before me created a legacy that I had every intention of respecting (and I hope I did), and my co-editors Genevieve Day and Roja Standing Soldier whom I have relied on more than they know. Of course, none of this would be possible without the dedication of our staff and anyone who ever attended a meeting. You guys made this magazine everything that it is!

Especially to my co-editors, the council, it was hard. We were tasked with reviving this magazine after two dreadful years of pandemic. I know the three of us wanted to change Pegasus for the better. We sure tried our best. Roja and Genevieve, you have put in so much hard work to make this magazine beautiful and I'm so grateful to have experienced this with the two of you. This experience has helped me in countless ways.

I hope you enjoy the art that we have captured.

Maggie Keating, editor.

Class of '22



Pegasus Staff

Maggie Keating - editor
Genevieve Day - layout editor
Roja Standing Soldier - layout editor

John (Frankie) Bellone
Arev Lima Boudakian
Shuwen Ding
Lydia H. McCamant
Ana Paku
Alexis Probst
Evan Peterson
Gwendolyn Sievers
Deven Spencer
Dirk Walker

Shuwen Ding
Lydia H.M.
Roja Standing Soldier
Dirk Walker
Maggie Keating
Deven Spencer
Genevieve Day
Evan Peterson

Faculty Advisors: Brian Regan and Brian Shafer

Author Contributors: Johnny Bellone, Lexie Bird, Marissa Chen, Nicole Christian, Genevieve Day, Jack DesRosiers, Saylor Early, Maggie Keating, Mollie Kurth, Arev Lima-Boudakian, Ana Paku, Evan Peterson, Gwen Sievers, Reid Smith, Deven Spencer, Danielle Spyra, Roja Standing Soldier.

Artist Contributors: Marissa Chen, James Cook, Genevieve Day, Nadine Gagliardo, Ashlyn Kreiss, Rose Majeed, Gwen Sievers, Maeve Smillie Dirk Walker.

Additional graphic art created by Genevieve Day and Roja Standing Soldier. Front cover art by Maeve Smillie. Back cover art by Rose Majeed.

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Wakínŷan Tunwánpi win is my Lakota name. It means 'Revealed by the lightning.'

Tuwéni Yuhá šni máni is my dad's Lakota name. It means 'He who walks alone'.



"Look, your cousins are coming." I wasn't expecting my cousins to come over today. It's night, too late for visitors. "There they are." My dad points to the sky. The porch goes bright, followed by a loud sound. We go outside. It smells like rain. We head to the basement. It smells like sage. My dad goes to his prayer desk, he picks up his prayer pipe and a lighter. We head outside. My dad says a prayer in Lakota. I try my best to follow along.

He lights up the spirit pipe. The tip is in the shape of an eagle head. He inhales and hands it to me. I inhale. Smoked sage fills my throat. I begin to cough. I look to my dad for help, but, he does nothing. We face NESW and begin to sing. Every time we finish the song we turn to the new direction and sing again. Four is a sacred number. At the end, my dad says one final prayer in Lakota. I say mine in English. "Tunkasila, thank you for all that you've done. Uh, thanks for my dad. Thanks for my mom." I look to my dad to know what to do next. "Hau," he says. "Hau."

"Okay, so it looks like there are a few Natives in here." The 2nd grade guest speaker was sitting



in the front, looking to those he thought were native. He did not look at me. I knew why. I sit at my tiny desk, looking around the room at the natives and non-natives. Me, somewhere in between. I feel out of place. The guest speaker hands out worksheets for the facts he's about to spew about South Dakota. I pick up a pencil with my pale hand and write, "Roja S.S."

"You shouldn't write your name like that." My dad laughs. Why is he laughing? I look at my name again "Roja S.S." He points to the "a" and "S.S." Roj ass. I laugh too. I only write my full name from then on.



"Is your dad Tim Standing Soldier?" my orchestra teacher asked me. "Yeah." I felt special. "I love your father's writings in the newspaper." My dad wrote 'Letters to the editor' for the local Rapid City Journal and Native Sun News. "Oh thanks, I'll let him know." From then on, she only really liked me because of my dad. Thank God, I sucked at the violin.

My dad wrote about the racial injustice and political issues in South Dakota. He was called "The Word Warrior" by his relatives and people who knew him well. His 'Letters to the Editor' were followed by quite a few people in the Black Hills. He concluded all his letters with T.L. Standing Soldier.

"When can I get a dog?" My mom and I are at the humane society, looking at dogs. "When you're an adult." When I would be responsible. I wanted a dog for as long as I can remember. Whenever I would go in public and see a dog, I would beg my parents to get one for me. I loved being around dogs, petting them, hugging them, feeling a connection with another life.

Hell. Hell is scary. I don't want to go to Hell. I cried in my pillow besides my mom. I ran out of the bedroom to find my dad watching tv.

"Dad, I don't want to go to Hell."

"There is no Hell. When you die you either go to the spirit world with all our relatives or the black box."

"What?"

"The black box is an entirely black room where you can see nothing except blackness and your relatives enjoying themselves. You are there for 4 years. Remember, Spirit time goes much slower than human time. The only way to get there is if you kill another or yourself."



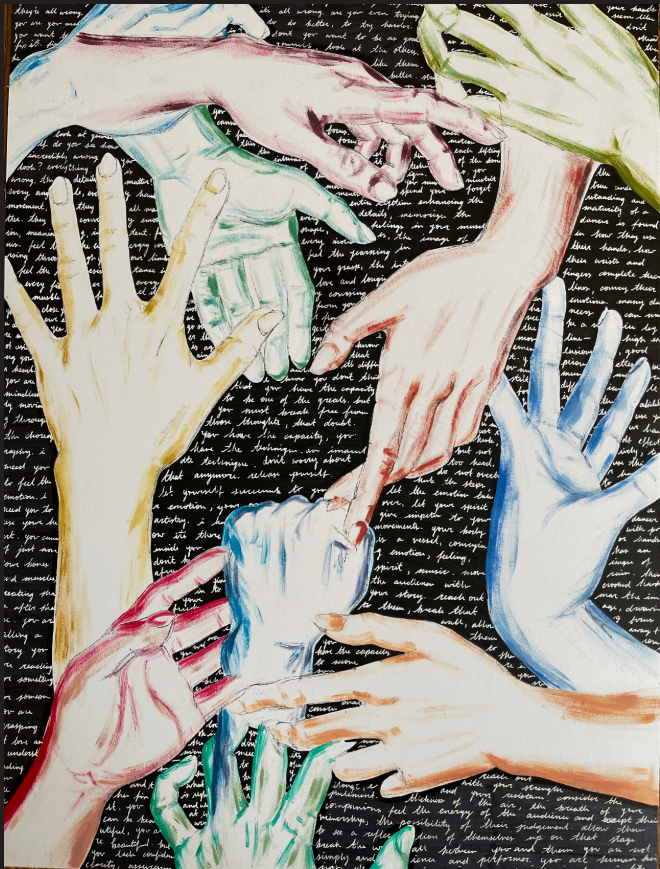
The seats felt like velvet. The car smelled like sage. We are cruisin' in my dad's Toyota to Mathó Pahá or Bear Butte. *Tháthánka* (Bison), can be seen for miles. Bump bump bump, we go over the rails that prevent the *tháthánka* from leaving. We stopped the car; my dad got his prayer ties from the back. Looking up, you could see a big mountain that looked like a bear. We walked down a steep hill to my dad's praying spot. It was a tree with black, red, white, and yellow ties on it. My mom and I would return here years later, alone. My dad lit up a piece of sage and put it in his prayer bowl that I always thought looked like a seashell. My dad said a prayer in Lakota. I said mine in English, "Tunkasila, thank you for all that you've done. Thank you for my family and thank you for my happiness. Hau."

"Hau."

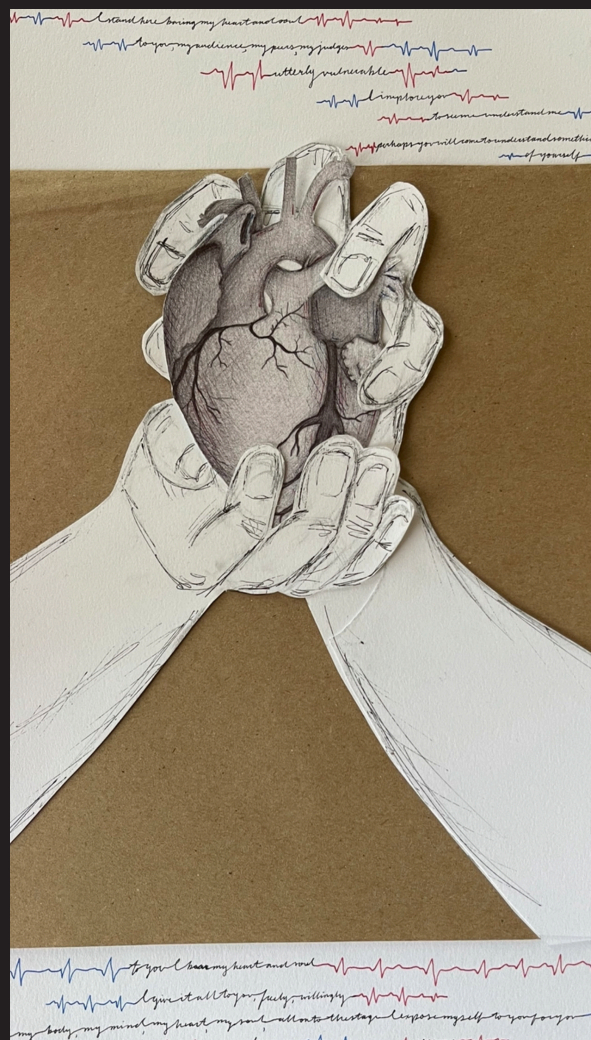


My dad's last words to me were "Enjoy yourself."

My mom told me that dad said to her "Get that girl a dog." A couple months after his passing, we got a dog. I named her Joy.



Artwork by Marissa Chen



The Fence

- *Danielle Spyra*

My house was a little brick cottage.

From the front, it was a gingerbread house. From the left side it was a dark, cold alleyway. From the right side it was a wall of a castle. And from the back it was a greenhouse. Three-quarters of it was surrounded by a splintery vertical board fence.

One day my two younger sisters and I came home from school to see Dad proudly standing by the fence with a smile hiding in his eyes. None of us noticed the surprise at first. The alterations were barely noticeable: two small silver hinges and a silver lock. They were drilled into the fence next to our patio. He called our names with a hint of frustration that we weren't more excited about the fence, "Danielle, Gabrielle, Marianne!" and always in that order. Then he pulled on the fence and a tall, person-sized rectangle of wood swung into our yard, revealing the Butchers' backyard.

Suddenly, the gate became the new craze. I thought the locks were a mystery – I couldn't understand how they worked. Our lock was on the fence and the Butchers' was on the gate itself and somehow when just one was locked, the gate wouldn't open.

The gate was our very own portal that connected our world to our neighbor Isabel's world. No longer would we use the front door when going to her house! When we were invited to their house for dinner, we swung open the gate and marched in, bearing platters of food. When I went to their house for a sleepover, I lugged my things through the opening. And when Maman carried me back home from the sleepover at midnight because I was afraid Isabel's TV would fall and crush my head, we squeezed back through the gate.

Occasionally, the Butchers didn't lock their side overnight, so in the morning Marianne, (who didn't yet understand the principles of privacy of a

home) walked into their backyard, then into their house, and proceeded to their freezer to take an "ice lolly", then simply wandered back home. We only found out about her little adventure when Maman asked her where she'd gotten her treat. We realized we had a thief among us! The Butchers didn't mind though. In fact, all the adults thought it was funny. I didn't know what to think.

One time Oscar (Isabel's other neighbor) was over at the Butchers. We were all chasing each other around outside when someone, out of fear of being tagged "it", locked the fence from our house's side and Oscar ran into it. The rectangle of wood snapped right off its hinges, and it plummeted, with Oscar on top of it, to the ground.

My dad exclaimed his signature, "Woah-ooh!"

I stood behind the commotion where no one could see me and glared at Oscar. How dare he come and ruin the gate that my dad made for my family and the Butchers? I expected everyone to share my momentary hatred for Oscar, but there wasn't any hatred at all. My dad leaned the broken piece of wood against the fence and Oscar's parents went to make sure his knees weren't bleeding too much and now our magic portal was gone and we just had a hole in our fence.

Within a few days it was fixed. That gate went through a lot. This wasn't the first time it was broken off its hinges and it wouldn't be the last.

However, I blamed Oscar for this whole ordeal. I didn't even think of the person who had locked it in a fleeting attempt to avoid being tagged "it." For all I knew, it could have been my fault – I could have been the one to lock the fence or to run into it. I was beginning to learn that things, broken or not, didn't matter more than people.



Minimum Wage — Gen Day

I always like to question what I'm worth

What purpose do I hold for someone small enough to fit into the universe's carry-on luggage

Sometimes I don't know the fixed amount but I'm happy to let that auction go on

Sometimes I don't feel worth nearly enough to be where and with whom I am

But I am worth a handful of coffee dates

And reading old leather books that are fingered and torn, abused like an old lover

Butterfly kisses with my cat that will always be returned passive aggressively

I'm worth falling in and out of love with

I'm worth staying in love with, even if it's only for a time

I'm worth twelve and a half-used lipstick containers and a pocket's worth of stargazing philosophy sessions in the dead of night

Despite my bias I am worth knowing and seeing in the messy fumbling's of life

And I am worth cringing at myself in the mirror because my arms didn't look that big in this outfit in the mirror 20 paces down the hall

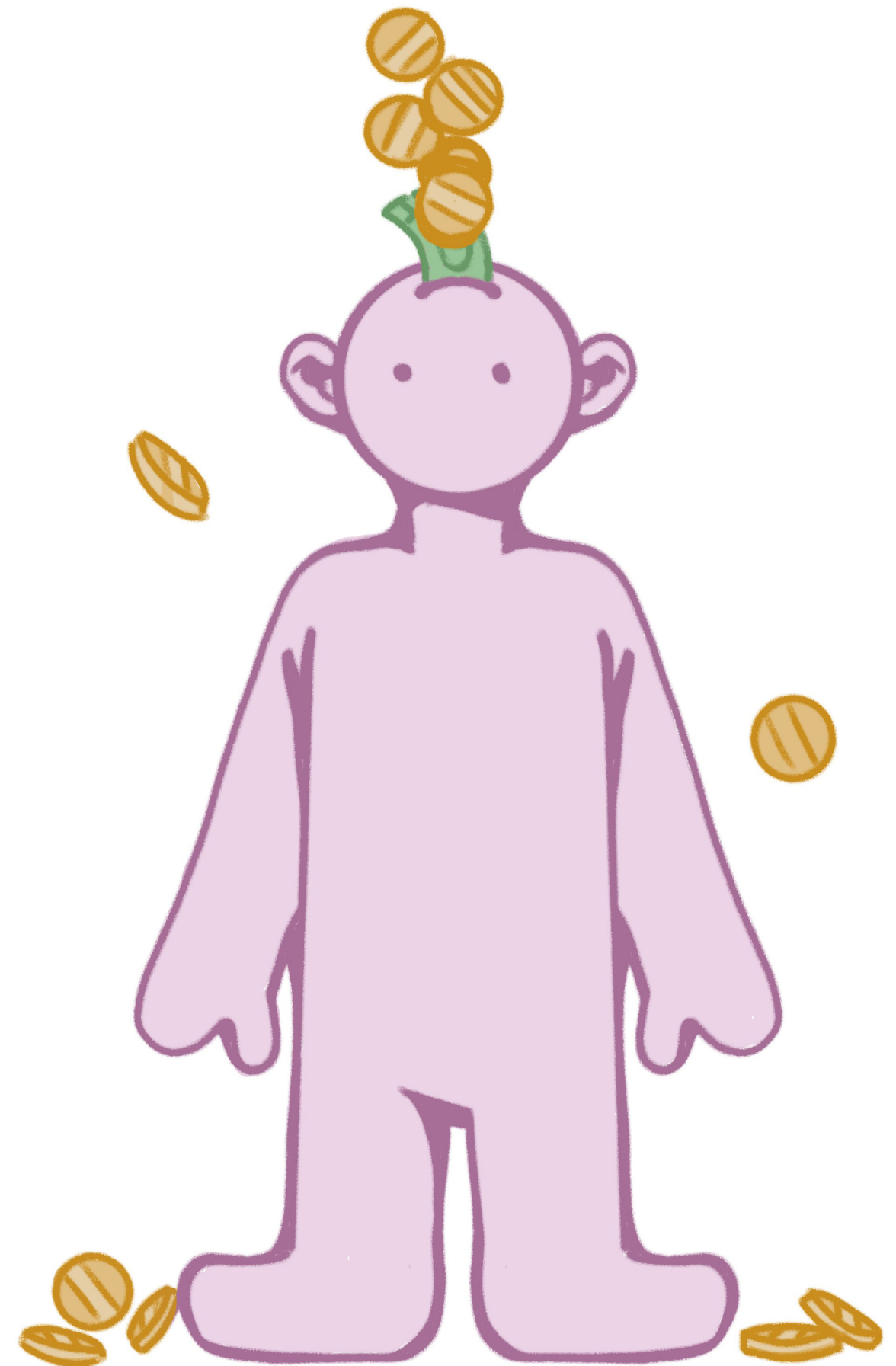
But I'll tally that experience like a prison guard

And whatever the total may be

Lottery or add cents

I hope I'm worth enough

I hope I'm worth enough to buy another day



It Was Just The Wind

— *Gwendolyn Sievers*

As I sat inside, the wind and leaves called out for me

I went out for a walk, the wind pushed me along

A song was whistled from behind

I wasn't scared,

It was just the wind, after all

The wind led me to a thick forest, far from home

The leaves rustled, a snap came from beyond the trees

I froze but the wind ushered me along

I wasn't scared,

It was just the wind, after all

There soon was a clearing, and the wind slowed, only a

whisper behind

I felt a sharp, cold pain on my neck as I fell,

Red staining another daisy

I wasn't scared,

It was just the wind, right?



Artwork by Rose Majeed

Me haces falta

— Ana Paku

I used to slip out of the house with all the best intentions,
I used to bruise the blacktop with flat heels,
In short: I was violent in life,
As far from death as one gets while stumbling towards it.

That night it was warm when I crept into the ditch,
The muddy backyard boundary softening and slipping
So I could lay swaddled a little closer to the crux of the universe.
When the voices came—
There's a car here,
We should go,
Stop trying to scare me.
The night was warm, the stars swelled fit to burst,
And words settled on my mouth and pressed in and still
I would not give, not yet.

Well, I tore her shape down from the wall,
Set the radio on the floor
Dancing to a song that somebody had waited hours for,
And I hadn't seen that coming, no,
I was just a witness to the murder— right place, right time.
Who was happier? Me or the patient listener on
One of the other thousand sides of the station
Or the girl on paper
Coming down from the wall to meet the earth
Flying for the first time...

I left that bench behind ages ago,
Got a nice big road so I couldn't fit the path anymore
Because I had loved in the way
You put it, so very simply:
I lack something when you are gone.

It is the most impossible thing, to be her.
Stupidity, and sex, and senescence, yes of course,
But the blinding sensation
That comes during motion and before writing
And after nothing and far in-between and and and, and—
Damn. You've lost it.
See? See how hard it is?

These days the words don't press in,
They plummet down—
My car's back here,
I think I'll go,
Yes, you scare me badly, you scare me.
Picture this— I used to hate poetry.
I used to know exactly how I'd want it to go.
Now I step back from the page and apologize to the masses:
I'm sorry. Let me think of the right thing to say.



An Embarrassment

—Jack DesRosiers

*(The foyer of an opulent summer home belonging to Maxim Agosti, a wealthy Venetian landowner. The foyer is populated with a smattering of contemporary literature. Though presented in the way that one would to braggadociously proclaim their literacy, some of the volumes are well-loved. There are numerous paintings hung, all bordered with elegant furnishings, some of them commissioned, others won at auction; Upstage, there is a large opening that serves as a closet. From the sturdy front door stage left, there is a trail of water leading to **Anton**, a twiggy young man methodically wringing out his clothing at center stage. He fiddles with his extremities as he wanders stage right towards a large bronze set of doors, leading to the dining hall. He cranes his neck, not focusing on any particular element of the room. He is soaking wet, having just escaped from a turbulent, rainy afternoon. Using his cane, he taps the mud from his shoes onto the large area rug underneath him before turning back anxiously to **Charles**, the doorman.)*

Anton:

Tugging at his collar, then wincing as water falls onto his britches. Sir, am I to understand this to be the Agosti estate?

Charles: *(Turns away from his post at the front door to address **Anton**, donning a warm smile.)* I believe Master Agosti would coin this as his “Spring Retreat”, but you will undoubtedly find him here, yes. *(Picking up on Anton’s nerves, he speaks plainly.)* You’ve found where you’re meant to be--is there anything I can do for you, lad? *(Clasping his hands together.)* Unfortunately, the master is not in the charitable mood today. You’d be better off searching the market for--

Anton:

(Shaking his head tiredly.) --No! *(Recoils and reconsiders his tone. Resumes where he left off as he rifles through his pockets.)*

No, erm, yes, I’m meant to be here. I believe the master had... *(Physically*

relaxes as he locates and produces a crumpled letter from his pocket.) Ah! Expected me. I was invited here, you see.

Charles:

(Squinting to make sense of the smeared ink on the page.) Evidently you were, yes! Terribly sorry for my assumptions master...

Anton:

(Looking away as though Charles is referring to another.) Anton. Anton is fine.

Charles:

Well, Master Anton, *(Checking his brass pocket watch in his coat pocket.)* It would seem you have been fashionably late to greet Master Agosti with your presence.

(Smiling warmly.) Rather becoming of a young master, eh?

(Cranes his neck back towards the front door, pausing to comically dig wax out of his ear as forceful knocking can be heard.) Do pardon me, lad, I believe we have another young master in our midst. I will say, his hands sound as they’re in a sour mood. *(Privately, to Anton.)* His carriage must have stung his thin arse on his ride through our humble cobble streets. **Charles** turns himself away from Anton and moves towards the front doors. As he lays a hand on the knob of the right door, the left door flies open. Charles quickly shifts to the right as **Danté** rushes on stage. **Danté** wears a scarlet red vest. Angrily, he beats the moisture out of his hat. He scans the foyer with an expression that dares the others to question him.

Danté:

(Quickly applying a warm smile, as one would concealer.)



My sincerest apologies for making the master wait, my driver did not have his priorities in check. *(Breaks into a brisk walk towards stage right, giving **Charles** a stiff handshake before pausing in front of **Anton**. He removes his hat and vest before presenting them to Anton.)*

If you'd be so kind as to store these somewhere *clean*, please. The last servant shoved my suit coat in between a pair of louse infested britches. Keep my things away from the common trash.

(Hangs his hat and vest on Anton's cane as he turns toward the dining hall doors stage right.)

Anton:

(Looks down baffled, then quickly composes himself.)

Sir, sir! *(Jerks his body to catch up to **Danté**.)*

You misunderstand, I'm no servant. I'm a guest of Master Agosti.

Danté:

(With a look of pity.) Oh yes, I suppose anyone that has the pleasure of serving the master *does* feel like family, don't they?

Charles:

(Walking in between them.) Master Danté, if you could do me the pleasure of escorting Master Anton to his seat. I do believe he has had yet to grace this estate. *(Calling down the foyer as **Danté** furiously pushes into the dining hall with **Anton** in tow.)* Ever thankful!

Danté:

(Over his shoulder to Anton.) Do you have a table seating?



Anton:

(Squinting, inspecting the letter still in his hand.) Table... three.

Danté:

(Scoffing.) Well, there must be some mistake! I am seated at table three. All of the veteran writers of Venice are seated there. It's a seat you earn.

Anton:

Well, I admit I *am* rather new to this scene. But I've earned all of my renown by my own accord, however little I may have. I have bled and sweat the same amount as *any* of these fine men.

(Waving his left hand around, motioning to the elegant hall before them.)

Danté:

I wonder, what have you done to catch the master's eye? What places you above the common street *filth* that I must trudge through? *(Stops abruptly to perch against the wall just by the entrance, evaluating **Anton**. He exaggerates twitching his nose.)* I've smelt that odor before. Sea water? No. No it's worse than that. *(He groans and laughs.)* Dead fish? Oh my, how does one like you find himself here, not strained into the gutter like brown-water. My goodness, look at you. A boy with a cane, attempting to play the prophet. *(Pointing his finger at Anton, looking around the dining hall as his voice raises and others pay attention.)*

Your preachings will fall on deaf ears--you are not wanted in this, this literary oasis. *(Anton opens his mouth to speak. Dramatically, **Danté** throws his hand in front of **Anton's** face and turns his head away.)* Silence, spectre! You will haunt us no longer!

*(**Danté** moves pompously to his seat and pours himself a glass of wine as the observers within the room begin to applaud him for his speech. **Danté** cools down and is able to revel in their appreciation. **Anton** begins to tear up. He throws his invitation to the floor and hobbles offstage through the dining hall entrance.)*



Boy, Suppressed

— Saylor Earley

Occasionally, the two children's wards would be allowed to play together under supervision. These were called Play Days. They happened twice a month and lasted about two hours each. This was often a stressful, but also an exciting event for the little ones, as the boys and the girls didn't get to see each-other very often. Whenever she could, Polly would do activities with the kids. The kids loved Polly. Her kind and gentle nature made her less intimidating than the doctors, nurses, and interns. On one of these play days, Polly invited me to play with the kids. I obliged, figuring it would beat listening to the Lisas arguing over anything and everything. There were 12 kids total. Five boys and seven girls between the ages of six and ten. Polly was particularly attached to an 8-year-old boy. I don't remember his name, but he reminded me of a weeping willow, so that's his secret little nickname for now. Polly said that he never acted out. Not on purpose, at least. He never tried to be difficult. Weeping Willow never really engaged with the other boys in his ward. Not much of a people-person. So, how did Polly manage to get through to him? It was a question to ponder over.

Polly was playing a board game with Weeping Willow and a girl named Saoirse, or was it Hua-Ling? I swear, it changes between the two every time I speak to her. Anyways, Polly was playing a board game with Weeping Willow and Saoirse/Hua-Ling. I didn't really know what to do, because I'm not nearly as good at playing with children as she is, so I hung out in a corner, away from everyone. Apparently, a little boy, about the same age as Weeping Willow, had the same idea. I tripped over him, startling both of us. His nose was buried in a book that was not written in English. The letters were all really squiggly and complex-looking. I decided to sit next to the boy. "What language is your book in?" I asked him.

"Sinhala." said the boy, his eyes fixed on the book.

"Do you like your ward members?"

"Mh. One."

"Which one?"

The boy pointed at Weeping Willow. I guess I can see this boy and Weeping Willow being friends. The boy I'm sitting next to, whom I nicknamed Robot, didn't

seem to enjoy his emotions. I don't blame the poor kid. Emotions can be cruel. Robot and Weeping Willow balanced each-other out, and quite nicely. Robot shut out his emotions, and empathizing proved to be difficult. He rarely spoke, even to Polly. I don't think it's because he disliked her, I think Robot just doesn't know how to become friends with her. Weeping Willow, however, was only emotions. He empathized until he couldn't physically or mentally function on his own, and Robot or a nurse would have to calm him down. Robot translated factual information for Weeping Willow, and Weeping Willow translated human social cues for Robot. It was almost funny how perfectly they worked in harmony, like they were actually one person who somehow ended up in two bodies.

"Did I do something wrong?" Robot asked me.

"No, why do you think that?"

"You're looking at me with a weird look on your face."

"Sorry, I spaced out."

"Oh, okay." and Robot returned to his book.

The next Play Day, I attended with Polly again. Weeping Willow walked Robot over in front of Polly and me. "My friend wants you to read to us." said Weeping Willow, showing Polly and me a copy of *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. Robot stared at the ground, as if he was ashamed that he had asked us for something.

"Susanna, do you want to read to them, or do you want me to?" Polly asked me.

"Can you read to them?"

"Okay!" she said with a smile on her face.

Polly sat down on a short, red bench. Weeping Willow steered Robot to the floor space in front of Polly, and cheerfully plopped down next to him. Robot looked both embarrassed and annoyed. I don't know if Weeping Willow is just an airhead, or if he had purposefully pushed Robot out of his comfort zone. I had never seen a child pull off something so clever. I'm starting to think that these two children know more than they're letting on. Polly was on page 5 of *The Crucible*. The other kids looked straight at Robot. Of course, he had chosen a book about the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, they muttered. Robot blushed and hid his face in his hands. He hated the attention. Weeping Willow stared at Polly, letting the

rhythm of the story flow around him. He definitely did not understand what the story was about. As time passed, Robot lifted his head from his hands and slowly, he began to ignore the other kids' judgmental stares and became engulfed in the story himself. Robot has a surprisingly mature taste in literature for someone who couldn't have been more than 8 years old. Even if his young age created barriers in his understanding, he never seemed to stop exploring new topics and trying to understand the world around him.

I began to wonder how Robot ended up here to begin with. I only ever saw him twice a month, when Polly and I would observe Play Day. I know Weeping Willow absolutely melts when faced with conflict, among other problems. Robot, on the other hand, rarely gave anyone a reaction, even when it seemed appropriate to do so. He rarely spoke without being spoken to first, and I don't think he trusts me just yet. He never even told me his name, so I seriously doubt he'd tell me anything about his life, much less his issues. He contrasted, almost humorously with the Lisas, who boasted about their issues, and with Allison and Janet, who simply didn't care who knew about theirs. It was sad to see him refuse to accept himself and move forward with his life.

On my fifth visit to the children's wards, Weeping Willow was crying profusely. "Peter, what's wrong?" asked Polly. RIGHT! Weeping Willow's name is Peter! Peter was too emotionally drained to answer, so Robot did, instead. "Amos said that none of our parents loved us and that's why we were all here. He's a jerk."

Polly embraced Peter in a tight hug. Robot slinked away to read a book in the solitude of his favorite Play Day corner. Since Peter was in dire need of Polly's support, I figured I should check on Robot for her. Robot stared blankly at his book, just mindlessly flipping through the pages. Sitting down next to him, I tried to figure out what to say to say to him.

"Hey, are you okay?" I asked him.

"Yeah."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Why wouldn't I be?" Robot asked me as he held a straight face while fighting back tears.



"Well, Amos said some upsetting things, and –"

"Well, Amos doesn't know anything. I'm fine, okay?" Robot snarled.

I took a step back and decided to leave Robot alone after that.

A little girl named Delilah asked me to play Jenga with her, so I did. I positioned myself at the table so I could still keep tabs on Robot, who was still mindlessly flipping through his book. Every time I looked over at him, his eyes shot up to mine and he gave me the angriest glare I had ever seen, as if to tell me to F-off. I don't know if Robot just has impeccable timing skills, or if he could just tell when I was looking at him.

Peter, while he was no longer crying hysterically, was still upset about Amos. He sat down beside Robot and placed his head on Robot's right shoulder. Robot went from being angry as hell at me and Amos to uncomfortable in a matter of seconds. Polly sat down next to me to watch the two boys. Robot's eyes darted back and forth between Polly and me, seemingly unsure of what to do. He lifted his left hand and started to gently pat Peter on the head. Peter was very receptive of the patting and gave Robot a quick hug around the neck. Peter tentatively showed Robot a small chapter book. Robot smiled, set down his own book, and started reading to Peter.

"Can I play with you?" Saoirse/Hua-Ling asked Delilah and I.

"I'm kind of playing with Susanna, but you can join us," Delilah responded.

"Oh, you two can play together." I said to the two of them.

Not to be rude to Delilah and Saoirse/Hua-Ling, but I was more interested in how much Robot tolerated from Peter. There was just something about him that allowed him to get away with more when it came to being annoying to Robot. I guess I should see this as a relief. At least Robot has a friend he can keep, and Peter has a friend he can rely on.

The sixth Play Day rolled around and everyone was in a much better mood. Amos didn't bother anyone and everyone was happy to see each-other. Peter, Robot, Delilah, and Saoirse/Hua-Ling were playing a board game together, and the four of them seemed happy to be together. Polly pointed out a slip of paper that had been carefully folded in half and had my name printed on it.

Upon opening it, I was greeted with the most illegible of scribbles I had ever seen in my life. How was I ever going to figure out what this says? After a few moments of looking over the note, I came to the conclusion that it said something along the lines of:

“Susanna,

Thank you for checking in on me last Play Day. I didn’t mean to snap at you I was just... upset. Can you forgive me? I can’t promise that I’d never yell at you again, but I’ll try my hardest to be nicer next time. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for visiting Play Day. Keep coming back, please? Peter really likes you. Saoirse, Hua-Ling and Delilah do, too. I enjoy you being here as well.

I should tell you my name, shouldn’t I? My name is Alexander.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Alexander”

I expected Alexander’s handwriting to resemble that of a typewriter, but that didn’t really matter, did it? He told me his name. That’s one of the most personal things he’s ever told me. I continued to attend Play Day until I was released. Polly said that Alexander was released about a week after me, and that he and his parents were ecstatic to be together again. So, Amos was wrong, at least in Alexander’s case. I never learned what happened to him. I imagined him graduating at the top of his class from both middle and high school. I imagined him studying abroad in the country of his dreams. For him, I imagined a life he enjoyed, free from the issues that sent him to Claymore in the first place, whatever they might have been. As for Peter, I placed him in a job he adored, with a family to call his own. He would be happy, healthy, and free of his emotional baggage. For Polly, I imagined her with the best husband anyone could ever ask for. Someone who would love her as much as we did at Claymore.

The others were a little harder for me to imagine futures for. Of course, I wished them all the best. I hoped Saoirse/Hua-Ling and Delilah were able to reclaim their lives. I hoped Allison and Janet were able to overcome their food demons. I hoped the Lisas didn’t get into too much trouble. And, even though I never liked him that much, I hoped Amos had a decent life, too.

There are some people and some places you just never forget. Claymore Hospital and the people I met there will stay with me forever.



Ritual

– Maggie Keating

At parties we drank red solo cups of each other’s blood,
because what else could we get drunk on?

The tearing and slashing of our flesh was not sufficient to
convince me that this was not enough.

I know girls who know girls who know girls who live and die
for the sacrifice of Saturday night.

I’ll bow down to your bloody rituals
and you will submit to mine.

We coexist in that third circle where we
grow horns and hold pitchforks,
scaly with glitter, hair full of snakes.
But I’ve seen too many falls from grace
for it to matter anymore

At the soiree we hug and kiss,
dance and bump and fall and smile.
I promise to be your best friend forever.
I will tell you all my dirtiest secrets.
I will never deny you my love, my Lilith.

The sun reflects red all over the temple.
We scrub it away in silence.

On Sunday, I will hope you remember what I said and
on Monday I do not remember what I said.
I do not love you.



Knight and Miller — Mollie Kurth

The scene opens in a tavern, cramped with low ceilings, lit by candles and the large fireplace in the wall adjacent to the bar. It's late in the evening, with most patrons having left for home or a room upstairs. The tables nearest to the fireplace have the pilgrims sitting at them, various drinks and empty bowls scattered between them. Conversation between the pilgrims is lively in the background and we see the Miller finish his mug of mead as he turns to talk to the Knight.

The Miller is wearing a wool tunic, his coat sitting on the back of his chair, and you see old stains of past food and drink on it. Most of the pilgrims' belongings are in their rooms, so he has no weapons on him. The Knight, however, sits poised in his seat, careful not to drink as much as the Miller, so there is only one mug and bowl placed neatly in front of him. He is also wearing his tunic, and no visible outer garments or weapons are near him. He turns to see who has faced him and looks disappointed as his eyes land on the Miller.

Miller (*obviously drunk*): Aye, nice evening isn't it?

Knight (*sighing*): What is it you want out of me?

Miller: Oh come on, do you only see me as some lecherous fool? (*He laughs a bit.*) I assure you, I am, I— (*stumbling over his words,*) when I'm rested I can hold my own, perhaps even against some Oxford scholar.

Knight (*thoroughly unamused*): Do you attempt now to jest with me? I think it best for you to go to your room and rest before you run afoul of someone.

(The Knight stares at the Miller for a few seconds, and the Miller looks around as he collects his thoughts.)

Knight: Go on, you seem to have something to tell me.

Miller (*faking a more refined tone*): I just have some comments, one storyteller to another. You see, your tale was... long winded... and— (*he looks frustrated as he struggles to find the right words, eventually switching back to his normal tone,*) your story was an absolute bore, to put it kindly. Ah, if I were telling it I would have added some real fun. That Emily girl was awfully dull, first off, maybe instead of wasting her time at that temple thing she could have snuck off for a night with that Pamalon fellow, (*the Knight looks as if he is about to correct the Miller, but is interrupted,*) and you ramble far too much, going on and on about statues and clothing that add nothing interesting.

(The Miller intends to continue on his rant but the Knight manages to cut in during a pause where the Miller is trying to form a sentence.)

Knight (*resigned*): Is this why you came over to me? I can appreciate when a story starts a discussion, but unprompted and rather unfounded criticism is not what I care for at the moment. It sounds like my tale was simply not best suited for your audience.

Miller: But you know I'm right, (*mocking the Knight,*) "not the proper audience" is just an excuse so you don't have to admit your story has issues.

Knight: If you want me to address some of your issues with it I suppose I'll entertain it. Now, in my defense I did try to keep the story brief, but some details are important, and I kept the ones I believed were necessary. As for Emily and the general dullness you described, I promise you it is genuinely a matter of differing taste. I like my characters to exercise restraint and a care for the others around them, it would have left a bad taste in my mouth to have such boorish characters as you've requested. It was just meant to be a story about what loving someone feels like and (*looking at the Miller in disappointment,*) how someone who holds himself properly should act.



Miller (*visibly annoyed*): I see. You clearly think too highly of yourself to take advice from some peasant, don't you?

Knight (*flatly*): That is not what I said, and I would advise you not to twist my words again if you want this conversation to go anywhere.

Miller (*half smiling*): Now hold on, you tell your characters from your own experiences-- (*He waits for the Knight to nod before continuing*). What exactly do you even know about loving someone? And that Emily, do you honestly believe a woman like that exists? You seem as unaware of the world we live in as a newborn donkey. You carry yourself so little like a man that if I didn't know any better I might suggest your son a bastard from your lord.

(The Knight is taken aback by this assumption, and it has evidently shaken him, so he takes a minute to respond. In this time the Miller gets a new mug of mead and continues to give him a look of expectation for his answer, thinking he has cornered the Knight in this discussion.)

Knight: You have made some very bold accusations towards me, and I would like to push both them and you aside but, (*pausing to think over his words*) I imagine I won't be left in peace until I satisfy your ego.

(The Miller settles into his chair, waiting for a grand explanation, but his expression becomes confused as he sees the Knight stand up from his chair and collect his bowl and mug to bring back to the barkeep.)

Knight (*annoyed and in a cold tone*): Unfortunately for you though, I have been through enough of the worst actions of man that your petty rivalry is a minuscule annoyance. Consider that I believe a woman like Emily could exist because I married one like her, and that arguably your inability to separate love from lust makes you the one less

knowledgeable on this subject. As for my son, all I ask is that you leave him out of whatever game you're trying to play, and that you mind what you say to other people, because you have gotten very lucky that my weapons are not with me right now. Your carelessness is a dangerous fault.

(With this, the Knight begins to walk off stage to his room in the tavern, and the Miller takes an angry swig of his mead. A few of the other pilgrims had begun to watch the scene but they returned to their conversation quickly after the Knight's last comment. The Miller turns towards the stairs.)

Miller (*yelling*): Oi! You people have the nerve to call me a churl but you act like those below you aren't even deserving of a conversation. I say, if you're really a man—

Shipman (*yelling to interrupt the Miller*): Shut yer mouth already!

(The Miller glares at the other pilgrims now but eventually resigns himself to his mead and takes the Knight's advice of going to his room before he makes things worse. With this, the scene ends.)





**Artwork by
Marissa Chen**

**Artwork by
Dirk Walker**



Artwork by James Cook



Acid Rain

- Jack DesRosiers

The employees working at the old boot factory wore gloves. Not Jacob, he worked bare-handed, had for years. The blisters gave him better grip for scaling cliffs. Jacob’s mind wandered while performing repetitive tasks, similar to the way one’s eyes wander when walking along a straight path. When the way forward is certain, one’s focus is allowed to shift and fixate on more intriguing things. When stitching soles together, Jacob thought of trees- not the hawthorns he’d scrambled up when he was younger, but the old spruces that had grown to become his dearest friends. He found comfort feeling the material of the boots in his hands, their coarse texture reminded him of tree bark, though the same could not have been said of the smell. The smell was what shook him from his daydream. The factory maintained an odor of sweat, burnt plastic, and smoke--stubbornly so. It was not long into his eighth pair of the day when the smell of blood intermingled itself with the coarse aroma. The needle of the hardy sewing machine Jacob was bent over had found a home in his hand as it had crept forward.

Two roars sounded almost simultaneously, filling the vacant space: one was the flat, metallic groan of the machines’ emergency stops being triggered. The second, however, was the distinctive bellow of “Baxter!” as wooden cane smacked against steel catwalk. The employees hadn’t the displeasure of hearing this deafening ringing for some time. A quick series of pangs followed as heavy footfalls made their way to the factory floor. Grunting like a bulldog came the foreman, who did in fact share a sort of resemblance with the breed. Spittle that had been flung from his mouth gathered on his large mustache like rain water on a dimpled tarp. Though it was not yet halfway through the work day, his armpits had already gathered sweat; the same could be said for the majority of the workers, though the foreman’s crimson shirt certainly exaggerated the perspiration. Jacob hurriedly wrapped his hand with a rag and looked up as the foreman stood hardly a foot from his face. Though he stood a modest head and a half taller than the foreman, Jacob could feel his stare burning a hole through the floor underneath his feet. His breath stung Jacob’s eyes.

As he spoke, the foreman’s cane struck the floor, enunciating his speech, “Jakey, Jakey, Jakey, what on god’s green earth have we gotten ourselves into? ‘S not even lunch!”

Jacob scratched the back of his head with his left hand, inadvertently lifting the cloth off of his right, “Well, sir, I had my head in the--”

“Head in the clouds!” The man became a bobble head as he mimicked Jacob and completed his thought. “Well, the next time you wanna lose your head up there, my boot just might lose itself up your ass”.

He leaned in closer to Jacob, almost catching his chins on his shoulder, “You alright, son?”

Jacob offered a curt nod, “It was just a graze, Eddie, honest.”

“Don’t look like no graze”, Eddie’s beady eyes narrowed on the drenched rag.

“This sorta thing happens all the time, I’ll be right as rain after my break--”

That just added more coal to the furnace. “Don’t give me that bull. If I let you loose, you’re gonna dye every boot you touch redder than a cardinal. Now get your ass to the doc, and take the rest of the day!” Eddie then craned his neck, meeting both concerned grimaces and nods of approval before turning back to Jacob. “Now, you know I care ‘bout you like you’re one of my own, but do me a favor and don’t be a fool- wouldn’t wanna give your boys any bright ideas.” With this, Eddie poked Jacob in the ribs with his cane. He then turned back to the factory floor, “S’alright fellas, we just have ourselves a quilter to be, that’s all! Should only take a few stitches to fix him up, hell, he’s done half the work himself.”

Jacob was met with jeers and stares as he stumbled off of the factory floor. The building might as well have been empty- his heavy footfalls were the sole noise filling the room. Jacob felt himself burning up as every set of eyes bore into him. This however, was in stark contrast to his now clammy and pale appearance. He struggled and strained to push past the heavy exit door. He could feel his feet losing their will, slipping on some slick on the floor. Some water, or coffee or--no, no that was his blood.

His boots picked up the tempo now, driving him down the hallway that expanded and became longer before his eyes. He was gasping by the time he escaped into the outdoors like a chick burst from an egg. He hardly noticed Jessie, the door nearly caught her in the side of the head when he pushed past. She didn’t seem to care, which was the usual heuristic she applied. He had to admit, he was envious of her inability to worry. She’d been working for nearly as long as he had (not counting the years he worked under the table). She worked as hard as he did, maybe harder. Neither of them would admit it verbally, but they were locked in competition.

Jessie only muttered “watch it,” as the door whooshed by her face. That was the thing about Jessie, she didn’t say much. Ever. She could go an entire day without speaking a word, just inching her face closer to her work station. It was a won-



der she didn’t have back problems, the way she’d perch. He stood a little straighter and hung his head.

“Taking a long break, Jake?” she said dryly.

He made a show of flashing his hand, to which she gave an amused smirk, “You could say that.” He leaned up on the wall next to her, the metal siding groaned in protest. He breathed deeply from the humid air. Just as soon as the relief came, he caught a whiff of her cigarette and scrunched up his nose.

“We have a no smoking policy, you know”

She gave him a side eye, “I’m outside, aren’t I?” She flicked an ash from the cigarette tip; Jake watched it peter out, changing color from proud orange to an ashamed gray, “Besides”, she continued, not like the rest of them don’t do the same thing, and lord knows Ed doesn’t give a rat.”

She eyed him more skeptically now, “Why?”

“What?”

“Why do you care, Baxter? We’re not pals like that.”

Jacob leaned in, “You still working overtime shifts?”

“As long as they’re offering it”

“Jesus”, he rubbed his chin, tracing his thumb back and forth over the stubble, “Hey, I’ll be away for... a while. You take care, call me if you need anything, yeah?”

“Go home, Jacob.”

He exhaled a breath he’d forgotten he was holding on to and pushed himself off the wall. He walked off, not in the direction of his home, not any direction in particular, just away.

Jess gave him a curt nod, and after Jacob had walked a ways away, crept back into the factory.

Walking his way through town, Jacob felt relieved. Old Forge was the sort of town that didn’t change much; not in a stubborn way, people just stayed true to themselves. It was unique. His back was aching- he’d been working for too long. He still hadn’t gotten around to planning his next steps. “Work for what’s next”, that’s what his old man used to tell him. He hadn’t thought about the next step since he graduated high school. He was thinking too much. Luckily, his freedom was only a few hours away.

Jacob’s mouth always got dry when he listened to The Grateful Dead. It amazed him that they could perform in concerts where a single song could last longer than his lunch break. Jerry Garcia’s warbling voice guided his truck along the winding mountain roads. The car would occasionally swerve too far to one direction or the other; Jacob was not used to steering with his left hand. His bandaged hand would jealously sneak into view and reclaim its place on the wheel until he batted it away.

It was a dewy sort of morning, the kind of day where you couldn’t help getting your shoes wet. Jacob kept his windows down to let in the thick breeze; this helped to cool him down as a film of sweat gathered on his brow- expectant adrenaline. The sun had yet to rise- it was early enough in autumn that the sun remained fat and lazy and couldn’t be yanked out of bed until seven or eight in the morning.

In his right hand, his damaged hand, he held a map. It was disgusting--it had waves of ripples from water damage, it was crinkled and torn, and there were stains that were truly of an ambiguous nature. He didn’t need it, he hadn’t needed it for years, but it brought him comfort and nostalgia- reminders of his years tracing his way across every trailhead, carving paddle-sized swathes into each river. This morning, like most mornings he had to himself, he held his hand above the map, closed his eyes, and let it fall. Wherever his thumb pointed to--that’s where he’d go. Today, Mohawk River’s ticket was drawn.

The further Jacob drove, the more the trees resembled Winnie the Pooh. The conifers all came dressed with their green sweaters, but their underbellies were exposed: their emaciated legs caught his eye. Ashamed, the trees hid them behind a thick cover of fog. He flicked his headlights from high to low and reduced his speed... slightly.

He could hardly see the river off his right shoulder anymore, but he knew it was there from the rapids passing him by, drowning out the sound of the truck’s engine. He took a swig of coffee from his thermos, criss-crossing his arms to grab it with his left, leaving his right hand on the wheel. Back where it belonged! The truck lurched and jostled. He knew where he was. The road had transitioned from pavement to gravel- creating a comforting popping resembling kettle corn.



Not long after did a familiar cabin push through the fog. It was a traditional style, with large loft windows near the top of the frame. Moss covered shingles covered its cap, though the moss too had turned gray. An old pickup, older than Jacob's, lay idle, parked facing out over the river. The stretch of road leading up to the house was riddled with potholes, forcing Jacob to ride the brake. He pulled over a few feet from the front of the house. He took a moment to take in the property. It hadn't changed much since he last visited, though part of him had hoped it wouldn't. He stepped out of the car and made his way to the back of the property. There, overlooking the Mohawk River, was an older man seated in a wooden chair. Jacob gave him a wide smile. The man offered his warmest side-eye.

Jacob stood in front of him, "Hello, Abel"

"Good afternoon Jacob. You're blocking my view"

Jacob threw up his eyebrows, "Busy today, are we?"

"Extremely", Abel craned his neck to the side to look past Jacob, "I'm watching the salmon climb."

"That so?" He looked over his shoulder to inspect the river. It was sparse. He stared for a moment longer, waiting to see just a handful of salmon swim up a shelf of rock, but there were none to be seen. He looked back to Abel, "Huh. Looks like the fish are having as much of an eventful day as you."

Abel was quiet. Either he grew too annoyed with Jacob, or didn't have a mind to care. He breathed deeply before looking back to Jacob.

He jerked his head, "What is it this time?"

Jacob smiled, of course, always business. He revealed a couple of plastic bags he'd been hiding behind his back, "Brought you groceries."

Abel's sea blue eyes squinted behind his spectacles, "I suppose that's fair." He gave a satisfactory huff.

"Trees're looking a little sparse. I saw 'em on my drive this morning."

"Sparse?! They're practically bare. It's a miracle they're still holding any needles at all." The clouds were cleared from his eyes now. He went on, "I swear they look worse by the year. It's no wonder they're going bare--it's the soil. You know those lilies I plant every year? They died not halfway through the season."

"I hadn't noticed. Seems as if it's always been this way, no?"

"You don't understand, Jacob! It's sick! Everything's sick and getting sicker and--"

After this outburst, Abel's chest began to quake with a fit of coughing. It was a dry, pitiful wheeze that caused him to fold over on himself. Quickly, Jacob was at his side patting his back.

Eventually Abel began to settle down, but Jacob stayed by his side.

Gesturing to the bags, he said softly, "Just set 'em down inside?"

"Don't belabor me with routine, Jacob."

Jacob sighed and made his way inside, relishing each creak the wooden steps made as they were reunited with his boots. He gingerly opened the old screen door. It groaned in protest.

Stepping inside, Jacob was met with a blast of warmth, a pleasant contrast to the outside. It was early enough in the day where a chill could last well after the sun was out. Jacob was able to see his breath not one hour ago. He stood in the doorway and paused to take everything in. Once again- more of the same. The cabin could've been a comfortable, perhaps even a pleasant place to live if there was a lick of activity; it felt more like a morgue than a home. A thin layer of dust that covered most of the interior: the mantle, the bookcases, hell, even the chairs. Jacob decided it was better to not linger and sorted the contents of the grocery bags into Abel's fridge.

Stepping back outside, Jacob could see that Abel hadn't stirred a bit; he'd stayed in his chair, eyes locked on the river. Jesus, could he sit still. Jacob crept up as quietly as he could, but Abel still noticed him; Not that he'd expected different- Abel was an odd duck in that way, the type to always have his head on a swivel. He spoke without looking at Jake, still facing the river.

"Eerie, isn't it? How lifeless it's become?"

"Hm?" Jake was busy scraping thick mud from the cuffs of his pants, using a twig to pry it off.



"The river, Jacob. It's silent." Now he looked over to Jacob and saw his words were falling on deaf ears. "Listen to the river, Jacob, don't you think it's quiet?"

Jacob furrowed his brow at the river, "I don't hear anything."

Abel produced a long sigh. "Should I have high expectations for the groceries?"

Now Jacob smiled, "I'd hope so, they should last you until my next visit."

"Isn't that a strange coincidence?"

He chuckled to himself. "Yes, I suppose it is... Next week, then?"

"You know where to find me."

Jacob squatted down and removed a burlap covering from the seat next to Abel's. There it was, the same paddle he'd been borrowing all these years. It was looking a little worse for wear; the wood had lost its polish and some parts were beginning to tint green.

"You taking good care of it while I'm gone? It looks like it hasn't moved an inch"

"Oh, that? That's your doing, lord knows I don't touch it."

"You should get your own canoe, then."

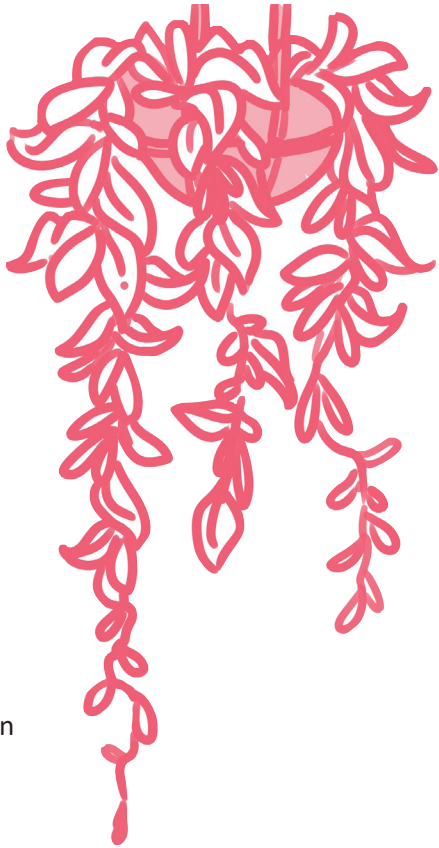
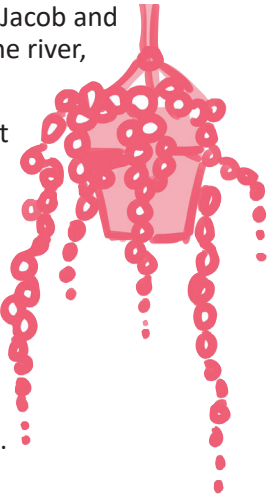
"And maybe you could stop mooching off of my paddle."

"I'm glad we understand each other." He snatched up the paddle, gave it a couple of spins, and jogged off to his truck.

Jacob breathed deeply, taking in the scent of pine. The water had a palpable scent too. It was one of the humid days; the air was thick and clung to everything it touched. Though he had barely begun to paddle, Jacob was already sweating. Each stroke felt like he was pushing through molasses. Canoeing was a meditative experience for Jacob. His paddle was an extension of his arm. The rhythm was calming: push down and back, graze your knuckles on the cool water, lift up and out, reach forward, pull back. This routine carried Jacob down the windy stretches of the Mohawk. Push, down, dip, up, reach. To either side of him was an expanse of moss-covered earth laden with knotted roots and shrubbery. There was a light sprinkling of rain that pattered down, tapping him on his shoulders and back. He weaved through errant rocks and obstacles with no effort. This was a leisurely canoe trip, and nothing could tell him otherwise.

Push, down, dip, up, reach. He was really beginning to sweat. Push, down, dip, up, reach. He wiped his forehead with the sleeve of his shirt, taking deep, gasping breaths. Push, down, dip, up, reach. Had the shrubs always been this bare? The grasses were much thinner too, and already turning a tint of rust. Push, down, dip--Jacob's hand brushed against something cold, colder than the river, more slimy than the algae blooms this time of year too. The dribbling of water was growing louder, the rapids weren't far off now. As he turned back for his next push, Jacob locked eyes with a lifeless fish. Its mouth was still open, frozen in a mask of horror. Not just one fish, a whole pod: salmon and trout, fish of all sorts floating still. Quickly, Jacob jolted and wrenched his paddle out of the water. He jumped up in his seat, causing his canoe to rock malevolently, just as he crested the top of the rapids. The river jerked to the right, throwing the canoe along with it. Jacob, unprepared, rolled right out of it and thumped right into the water.

The next thing he remembered was a burning sensation in his nose and throat. He lay gasping on a large boulder as the rapids surged past. He checked to either side of him: the canoe? Downstream most likely. His pack? Gone, definitely screwed. The paddle! Where was that damn paddle? That old, rotten, paddle that was full of mold, like every other thing in his life? And that was the damndest thing, as soon he asked, there it was to fall out of the air and smack him in the head.





Artwork by
Nadine Gagliardo



The Old Guitarist

— Marissa Chen

In this sad, blue world, my only company is the very man who keeps me captive. I am trapped behind him for eternity, as he sits and strums his guitar. I do not blame him though, for I know he is oblivious to my presence. And what's more, how can I hate a man so pathetic? Blind and fragile, each day I see the Old Man's spine grow more hunched, his ribs more prominent. He nearly never moves. He simply sits, leaned up against the corner, cradling his guitar as though he fears it will flee from his grasp.

This world in which we exist is cold and cruel. A tragic scene of desaturated blues—my eyes cannot bear to keep looking. At times I long to be blind like the Old Man, free from the terrible sight which lies before me.

I close my eyes.

I hear the gentle and shallow breath of the Old Guitarist. I hear him carefully adjust the tuning pegs ever so slightly. I hear the crack of his knuckles as he flexes his fingers; he is about to play once again.

Eyes shut, my brows furrow as the first notes hit me. D minor. The Old Guitarist plucks through the scale, playing with the order of the notes, creating a despairing melody. He begins to strum gracefully, slowly, purposefully. Each chord lingers in the air long enough to wash over me, to envelope me. I am at once immersed in the pain of the Old Guitarist; he shares his sadness through his fingertips, to the guitar, to the air which surrounds us.

Hauntingly beautiful, utterly heartbreaking.

He continues, abandoning the chords and returning to his melody, plucking note by note, imbuing each with a strong vibrato. I wonder, if his fingers hurt as much as his heart must, if they tire and ache from every sorrowful phrase. Perhaps they've grown calloused, and he no longer feels the strain of grinding the strings against the fingerboard time and time again. With neither sight nor strength, all that remains for the Old Guitarist is his music, the sound of his breath.

Perhaps that was his choice.

He stops. The despairing plucking is no more. The Old Man's breath, calm and steady as he played, regresses. Every inhale is shallow, shuddering, gasping for air. As though he can barely function without the music. I hear a strangled whimper, and the scraping of the guitar's body as the Old Man pulls it closer.

Wrenched from my trance, my eyes startle open. Leaving behind the world of color in my head, I return to the blue. The Old Guitarist's shoulders tremble, and his knuckles are desperately pale as he maintains his grip on his instrument. He weeps.

A tear slides down my cheek, and I make no move to wipe it.

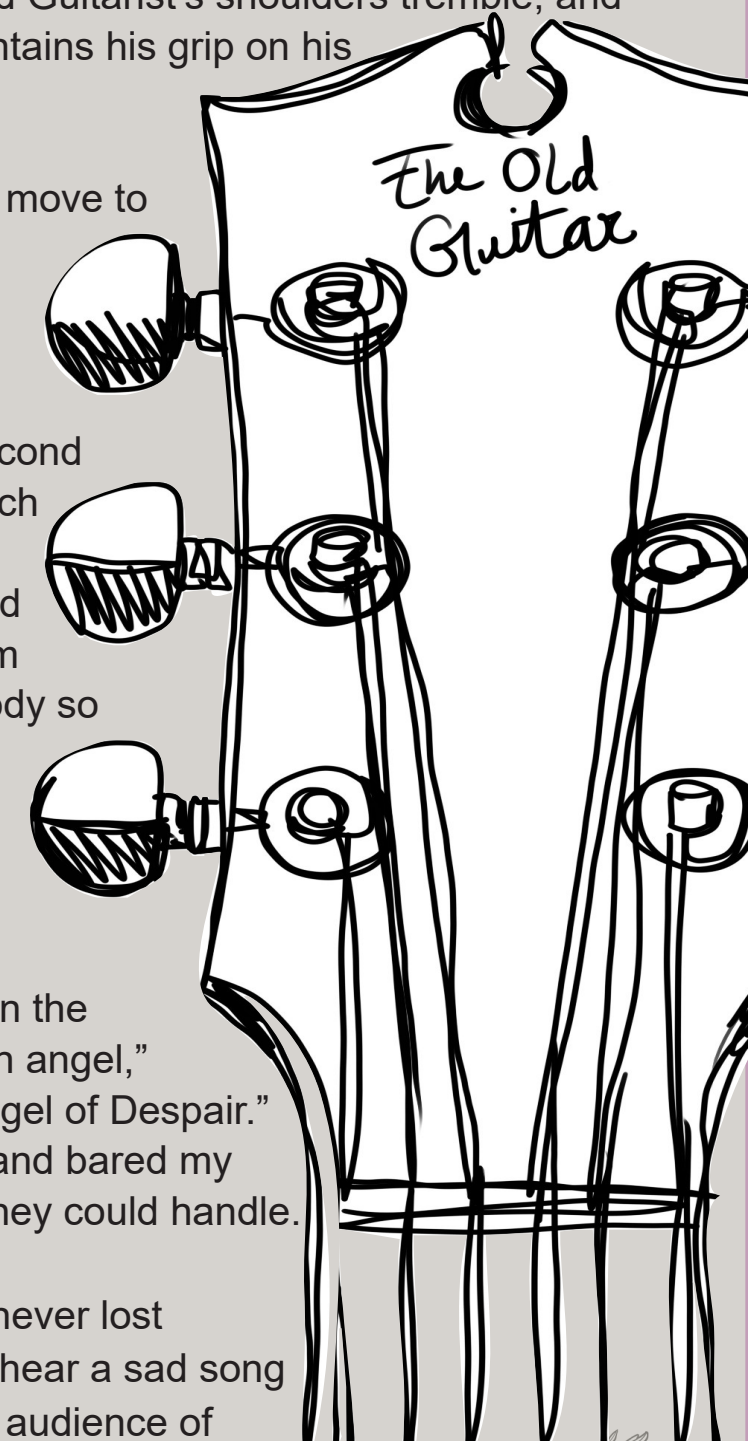
My dear Guitarist.

My prisoner, my protector, my companion.

We are strangers and yet we share every second together. In this desolate, blue existence which you will never see with your own eyes, your music is all that I have. Each note, tender and raw, each line of song which you wrench from your heart and release into the world. A melody so exquisite that it fills my mind with color and shields me from reality. And yet, each note is fraught with pain. The guitar in your weary hands is a vessel of beauty and torment.

I was once a musician too, long ago. I sang in the churches and opera houses. "The voice of an angel," they said. "But too sad." They called me, "Angel of Despair." I poured myself into my lyrics and melodies and bared my soul to the audience. And it was more than they could handle.

My music wasn't for them. Those who have never lost something they loved with all their being will hear a sad song and dislike what they cannot understand. An audience of



those most privileged in life, who've never had to crawl their way out from the pits of despair, who have never known what it is to feel truly alone—I could never reach them.

But you, you would understand. You who have lived in sorrow, alone all your life, saved from utter hopelessness by the music of your guitar—you feel it too. The woeful, desperate need for music. In your loneliness, you too created chords and melodies, filling the void of companionship with the plucking of a guitar. Clinging onto the sole thing through which you could even begin to express what was trapped inside.

I yearn to escape these boundaries, to overcome the wall between us. But not to flee, no. I've long ago lost the will to be free, to sing once again for those who will never relate.

No.

I only wish that I could share your company. To sit by you in your little corner and compose a new melody. That we may find solace in companionship, in feeling each other's sorrow, but no longer feeling so alone. I yearn to bring some color, some escape to you as you have done for me, all throughout this eternity. A beautiful creation of guitar and voice, of shared experience, of compassion.

Perhaps our world would no longer be so blue.



In the crease of the needle

— Genevieve Day

My first experience and lesson in death, grief, and what lurks after

we were raging on his bones under the pine

the porcelain in our mouths clacked to his metronome

twitching fingers kept the beat

wheezes of laughter harmonized the wracked breaths out in the parking lot

ribs were cracking with our jokes

in the cup rum made itself from the dirt in my heart and his tears in the last of us

the speakers told the story and thumped to his doped-up telltale heartbeat

his specter will pass out the party favors, love for the friends and warning for the witness

he sits in the corner and projects his story for a one-night drive in

tomorrow a dream will end while another will be born in a box

the stars hold a stopwatch over the night until then

I still remember the color of his nail lacquer

his mouth bubbled like champagne

“Mr. Jake”

— Jack DeRosiers

“Once you start working, you never stop.”

So much of existence is

sitting... waiting...

expectant and eager for the next moment of stimulation.

Children sticking forks in outlets.

I worry, I’m only ten minutes early.

They tell me, “Sit there on that black couch.

Fiddle with those buckets of Legos and twiddle your thumbs.”

The interview will be in fifteen minutes.

I wait for thirty. I’m very patient.

I am interrogated. The conversation consists of prospects

and Dungeons & Dragons.

I start Monday!

On the second day, the children lick the walls and tell me I am too old to be seventeen.

Some days I am a nameless observer,

an awkward scarecrow.

Other days I am “Mr. Jake”.

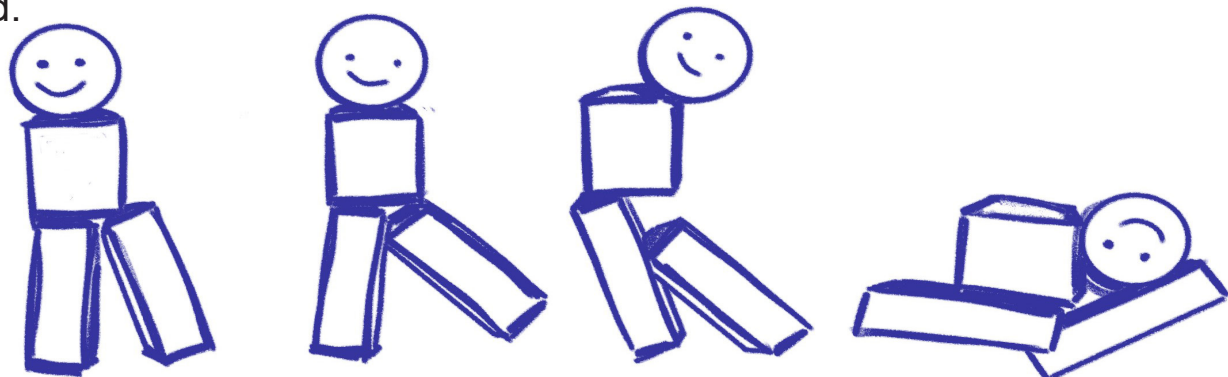
I am a child leading children.

Lunchtime becomes Lord of The Flies.

They cry, fight, turn me over and empty me out,

pour my energy out over the linoleum floor.

I am fulfilled.



Sadako

— Marissa Chen

You stand there with your arms outstretched, chest open, facing the sky. Your face shines, weathered by a lifetime of rain and sleet and wind. Here at the center of this clearing, you have stood tall, planted in the stone. Never faltering. Unyielding. You would have been an old woman by now, yet here you stand, still a girl, frozen in time. You bear the look of a child not much older than I, maybe ten, twelve. Your hair in pigtails, adorned with little ribbons tied in little bows. Your jumper, that reminds me of the hand-me-downs from my sister. And yet, you carry the weight of one who has lived far longer, experienced far more, than a small girl. As the rain and sleet and wind wore away your cheeks and the tip of your nose, so too has your naïveté, and innocence, dissipated from your being. Your smile, once bright and strong, is subtle. The crinkles by your eyes, the dimples on your cheeks, are gone with the passing of many seasons.

I grow tired, straining my neck to look up at you, to inspect you. I grow sadder too. But you must also be tired, so tired, having held up your arms for decades, reaching up to the corners of the sky, poised to take flight. But stuck here forever, bronze feet planted into the stone arch. Arms that were outstretched to fly, now simply a weight you must carry for eternity. Crucified in your stance against the world.

The wind moans, it grows louder, stronger. The bronze crane suspended beneath your feet swings, back and forth, back and forth. Crashing into the walls of the archway and releasing a dissonant ringing, pulsating in my eardrums. Growing tension with the wind’s moans, a cacophony of despair. The leaves whip into the air, swirling around us. The birds rise from their perches in the trees, fleeing the scene of noise and pain. I feel the wind pushing me from behind, whipping my hair around me, blowing my dress forward, so it billows away from my chest, tight to my spine and the backs of my legs. The wind, growing ever more powerful. Using every last inch, every remnant of its energy. Urging you to fly. Longing for you to be in the air, flying like the crane. Free at last from the bronze which plants you here, and from the rain and sleet which hurt you here. To fly away. Freed, from the bomb that put you here.

これはぼくらの叫びです
これは私たちの祈りです
世界に平和をきずくための

(Kore wa bokura no sakebi desu.

Kore wa watashitachi no inori desu.

Sekai ni heiwa o kizuku tame no).

“This is our cry, this is our prayer: for building peace in the world.”



Roadkill

— Nicole Christian

Recently I am making eye contact with the dead animals in the street,
And my curiosity makes me cringe.

The variety is amazing.

Mother Nature is no longer satisfied with beavers

Oh no, she is adding seagull, fox and hummingbird to her soup.

And yet I do not blame her because now I am buying popcorn.

My life is not dull.

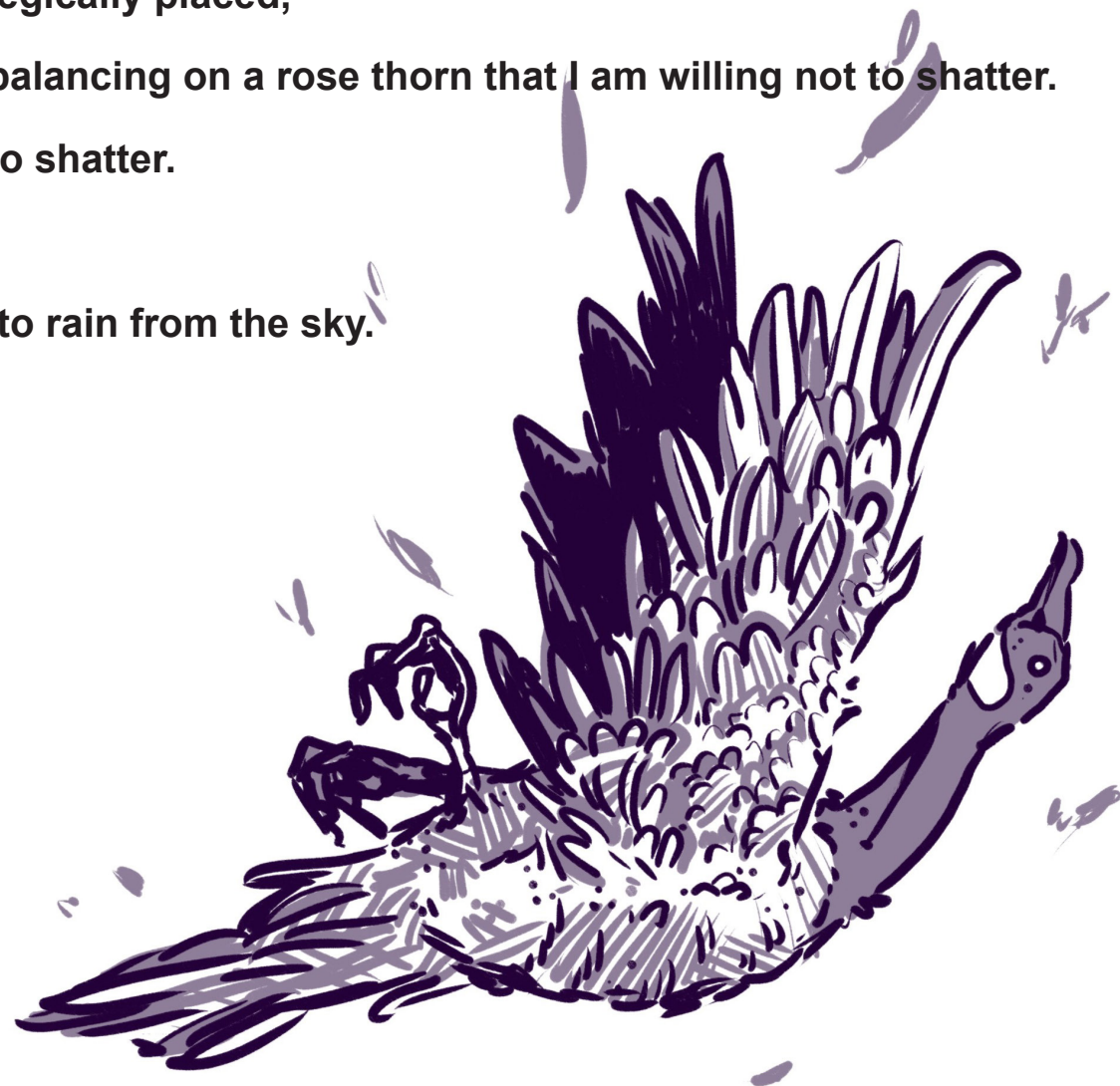
It is just strategically placed,

An eggshell balancing on a rose thorn that I am willing not to shatter.

But I want it to shatter.

So badly.

I want geese to rain from the sky.



**Artwork
by
Ashlyn
Kreiss**

The Crane

— Nicole Christian

The woman's weathered hands are indescribably precise, moving as if guided by the wind. They prune and arrange leaves while simultaneously picking rouge flowers and weeds. Her coarse graying hair is held atop her head in a neat bun. Two smooth, wooden sticks frame her face in symmetry. She kneels beside the oblong koi pond to rearrange surrounding rocks with an eye of scrutiny. White and black fish are set ablaze with patches of tangerine, drawing the eye in the limpid water. She dipped a finger delicately into the pool, evoking a fluid, rippling pattern. The lady witnesses this moment with the eyes of a child, with a sensation of curiosity and joy. Her eyes fall to a long shaft, elongated from the slight arc of the bronze roof. She watches as water cascades in droplets which empty onto a dais. She scrubs the rims of the shaft, persuading the sun to glisten off its reflective surface. In answer, the bending arcs and dips of the roof catch the sun at varying angles, illuminating the entire garden, and filling the woman with pleasure. Every aspect of the garden meets in harmony, like the weave of the soft threads of her yukata. As she stands, it glimmers a rich shade of purple in the afternoon sunlight. Small flowers embroider the bodice; their stems grow down the skirt in spiraling patterns. The elegance and simplicity of her yukata is not out of place amongst the tranquil body of life surrounding her. She surveys the landscape one more time before turning down a broad, stone-covered path. The air is crisp, yet the cherry trees lining the walkway hold the close promise of bloom.

The grandson's back aches from the stiff wooden chair he has been rooted to for hours, impotent to grow. Futile is his attempt to stretch the vertebrae out of their crushed state. Again, he is in this expensive room, both regal and stark. Voices echo in the imperial court room, government voices that double on themselves in search of quixotic solutions. There is discussion of Heian-Kyo and its increasing population, which gives way to the topic of Buddhism. The Fujiwara like to think it will impede upon their unebbing power, become a bend in their steady river of uniformity. They must not let it influence their rulings. The grandson does his duty. Thin gold veins snake through the dark wooden panels, evading prying eyes. He walks home. Cracked trees bare the way.

The crane is not like the fox. She transverses the pools of lotus with delicacy. When the marshes fill with rainwater she fishes for blue crabs. When the sun bakes the earth, she searches for leaves and acorns. She bends with the wind, changes with the seasons. And when the white descends, she prospers. The swell of her feathered belly gives way to a long black neck. Ruby burnishes the crown of her opulent head. She dances with life. She gives herself up to its rhythms. When the fox stalks in the wood, she gives herself up to him.

Her words flow like honey. Though she assesses him wordlessly. A pearl sits in the middle of the sky, an Inyo. Her beauty is reflected in every pool, river, and lake, deepening the quality of the water. It is no longer day. Its vibrant sounds have given way to the subtle interplay of nightfall. Silken river, soft tufts of emerald grass. Lavender permeates the sky filling the distance between the stars. Wisdom feels much like this night. It flows from her bright red lips because she knows that he needs it. She watches the grandson pore over his books with aridity. His flame drags on rusty and limpid on the desk. She wants to brighten it, to let the light cascade over his face and watch him tease the shadows with his playful fingers. She takes his hand and leads him out the oaken door and into the velveteen night. They stand wordlessly. Twilight exists silently before their eyes, free of movement and yet they feel her presence. He watches her play in the reeds, returning dewy and luminescent. She will unveil all her secrets to him now, secrets she reveals to few. The boy senses the unending grasp of night, the intangible aura that can only be described as Sabi. He sees his grandmother now beside him. Her pale face peppered with smile lines, her dark, imposing eyes. She is so graceful in her ruby red yukata; one would say she is like a crane.

* * *

The fox is not like the crane. He prowls through the wood with cunning, listens as it goes silent. He is cocky, a flash of chestnut under the soft spill of sunlight. Birds go quiet, squirrels pause their chattering. Even the leaves stop their rustling to admire his beauty, his easy gait. Under the cover of velvet night, the stars show off for him. They are flirtatious. He does not dance with life, life dances for him.

Grendel

— Lexie Bird

They are screeching at the top of their weak little lungs. Still, they're not screeching at me. They too ignore my company. How dare they? I kick at the tree and, one by one, the eggs in the nest above me fall. Twelve eggs, one after the other, cracking on the wood near my feet, coating the roots of the tree with a yellowish glaze. One more egg lies alone in its nest, indifferent to the force my foot brought upon its home. With my hand wrapped around it, the egg crushes under my mighty grip. Undignified beings do not deserve such pity.

Stick in hand, I beat through the bush, with each dynamic strike taking out a small realm of surrounding wilderness. As I trek through the forest, I see the remnants of old paths I have taken in the past. Piles of dry sticks lay broken on the ground with shriveled moss sprinkled sparsely on the forest floor. Stones and logs crack under my feet, and yet I still hear their voices. Those pesky voices. The sound of their gaiety reverberates off the walls, through their empty halls, and into the forest. Over the mountains the sound travels, echoing off the jagged rock. Elsewhere, their joyous cries hushed by the heavy snow or the waves crashing on the beach.

"Hail, Hrothgar" they cry! "Save us!"

Oh, how I desire his head on a stick. My trophy. My prize. This wretched war shall end with his demise. Will they then hold their tongues when their lord is finally dead? Then they will suffer from the unrest brought unto me many years ago by their miserable God. Their lands will be torn apart. Their galling voices no longer screaming with joy. Their pride shall be ripped apart and their souls buried below the surface of the sea, never to be heard again.

For now, I must fight.

It is getting dark. The storm begins to appear in my line of view as I come



out by the edge of the woods. The wind feels stiff, and the strong smell of mead circulates my nostrils. As I stare across the wilderness ahead, I get a sense that something is not the same. Again, the sky tells me nothing. I look to the ocean, my home, for an answer. And still, nothing.

"Oh, how stupid could I be? For I thought these idiotic creatures changed their ways just to challenge me and fail yet again."

What could they possibly do to avoid the inevitable outcome? For twelve years, they have continued to fight. They've stayed loyal to this war. Staying in one place, never venturing out to find me. Such cowardly creatures! Their downfall is inevitable. My heart impatiently churns in hopes of a victory.

My presence is made known by the sudden silence that hushes over the halls. The only thing I can hear is the sound of their stifled breaths escaping their little mouths. Their stillness is my power.

As I march around the castle, I begin to realize that something has changed. A new scent has risen. One of status and sea. Have I been away for so long that I have missed intruders crossing over the depths of my waters, entering the land of such wretched men? Who are these creatures who speak of stories of my past battles?

"My hands alone shall fight for me, struggle for life against the monster."
"Grendel's plan, I think, will be what it has been before, to invade this hall and gorge his belly with our bodies."

How dare such a lowlife belittle me so! I have slaughtered many a man with my bare hands and teeth, and this loathsome creature believes that he can do the same? Nonsense!

With my heart aflame, fists tightened, and stomach empty, I stormed Herot.



Someone once told me that each time we remember something, our memory is not of the event itself. Rather, we only remember the prior reimagining. Then, each time we revisit that memory, it becomes less of a lens for us, and more of a mirror. A sort of rebuilding. Like Theseus's ship, but why should we only replace the rotting planks? What if we replace the planks that squeak as we walk over them, or the planks stained by alcohol, or the planks with nicks in the wood, from when we threw ourselves to the floor and breathed bloody air into each other's mouths? Is it still Theseus's ship if we changed it simply because we *wanted* to?

I'm trying to picture a few days ago, when you told me you *couldn't do this anymore*. Funny, you said it in the corner of the café we always sat in when ordering breakfast. You used to say such pretty things in that booth, preaching in the morning while the light sucked shadows from your skin: *Poetry and music must be close for either to be really well done. We must imagine Sisyphus not happy but persistent. You could be so smart if you'd only speak a little more*. That would make me laugh, and then I couldn't say anything at all.

Your face smudges now. You were mad, at first, and then I thought you might be afraid, and then I saw a tiredness that melted you into your seat. I wished you would rage. I wished you would color brilliantly, your teeth flashing, your eyes burning bottomless. When you got angry, your vision narrowed like a bull's. I would wave my red-flag mouth and watch you become blind to everything but me, and that felt *good*.

I confess— I am no great craftsman. I cannot make these fragments more than they are. But let me take Theseus's ship up in my hand; let me brush my fingers over the wave-battered beams and feel those familiar dips before they are sanded down. Three nights: three pieces. That can be enough.

The first night is battered, splintered through. In every way I can picture it, it comes down to the same thing.

You wait outside the bar to catch me at the bottleneck. We are healthily drunk, and our words are meaningless, acrid, spewing into the dark. You reach for your hair and pull

as your inhibition gives like rotten wood.

At times like this I wonder: do you hate me?

When you press your shaking hands into my skin, whispering curses against my lips, I know the answer does not matter.

We bruise each other. We tug at fraying strings. We say: I will meet you at your worst. You leave your shirt at my apartment, and I use it to wipe my floors clean of the mud you track in.

The second night fractures in the middle.



As you sleep, you curl to the left side, shielding your chest with the pledge of a palm. I watch you rise, and fall, and rise, and rock. There: I want to pick out your thoughts from the quiet of your face. The curve of your cheek, the crease of your brow— I coax them into meaning.

Despite what I may surmise, you are not much more than your body. I know that well. I have seen a great deal of you, pushed up against my bathroom sink, with one eye always on the mirror.

Something in my form caves as I watch you sleep, dying flowers in a gale. In quiet moments, I cannot help being weak. I have opened myself and become raw where I should have been rough. My fingers twitch out, trying to leave a touch that is soft.

Starting, you roll over slightly, eyelids cracked open. You are not fully awake, but you gather impressions of the room. Of me, bending over you, one hand outstretched.

At times like this I wonder: do you see me?

When you shift back into place, disappearing into yourself again, my

hand drops. I feel shame. I have done something awful, or something awful has happened, and I have not been able to stop it.

I think you know what comes after. We gain momentum, and as we hurtle towards an inevitable, we spark and catch fire, burning out in a coffee shop sometime in the morning. The final bruises are exchanged, parting gifts for voyages to opposite ends of the world.

Let me give you my final piece. I have been selfish with this one, but no longer.

Do you remember the last night you cooked dinner in my house, three weeks out from the end? You spilled chicken broth over my counter; you let the water boil into the stove grate while trying to explain the mysteries of the universe to me. You said to *put some actual goddamn music on, none of that electronic crap*, and I told you how pretentious you were and did it anyways. It was that song about the girl named after the drink, and I knew it was right when I saw your eyes light up with prideful pleasure. I sat on my stool and watched you dance around my kitchen, absorbed in yourself.

For a second, I wished my house faced east, not west. I wanted you to turn around and face me. I did not want to wonder anymore; I wanted to stand up and place my hand under your sternum, where your ribs split. We needed to change in that moment. We needed to stop seeking out our faults. We needed to be good to each other.

You looked back, drops of broth falling from your spoon and crashing to the floor. You asked: *what are you thinking?*

I cannot see your face in my mind's eye. Too many times, that memory has been passed over. You watch me, I suppose, and it is not enough. I answer: *Nothing in particular*. We find our burden again, continuing up our mountain.

Imagine that one day, I learn to disregard the past. When I come looking for you, you are full, and you have not tasted bitter for ages.

I am sweet as well, and still foolish. We have hurt each other, yet I ask you to imagine us happy.

One question remains: do you listen to me?

Four Years

— Arev Lima-Boudakian

What difference does four years make?

None at all? Just a little?

High school is four years. So is college.

But four years can make a difference.

Four years is why she's perfect

And why I'm broken.

Four years is why she's a perfect porcelain plate

And why I'm a million shards barely attached

Bound to break at any moment.

Four years ago she was pretty and smart. Kind and sane.

Everything I'm not.

Four years after that, I'm where she was

I'm nowhere near where she was.

But maybe four years isn't so bad.

Four years is why I'm tan and she's as pale as snow.

Four years is why my hair is curly and hers is straighter than a line.

Four years is why my skin is bare and hers is covered in scars of battles she never fought.

But then again,

Four years is why she's the victim and I'm the villain.

Four years is why she's selfless and I'm selfish.

Four years is why she always says the right thing and everything I say is wrong.

Four years is why I'm stuck at home all day while she was able to leave.

Four years is why her dreams came true but mine got buried so deep that I can only hope to remember them.

Four years is why everyone likes her but there'd be no difference if I was at home sick for a month.

Four years is why she had someone but I'm still all alone.

That is the difference four years can make.

There are two men standing

At the top of Royal Gorge canyon near the middle of nowhere.

There are traces of one in the other. They could be brothers, or cousins, or

People who do not know each other but share the same hard set of jaw,

Different eyes, same lashes but one pair from a mother and the other from a father

Who might know them, but perhaps not.

There are two men, and one is reflecting

And the other is thinking.

The man on the left roots himself like a tree in a land

That holds little but dry scrub, and he's not starving

But looking to fill something.

Say there is a blue sky above him, holding up fat puffs of cloud.

Let's make this simple. Say there's a blue sky. And this blue sky funnels, twists, con-
torts to make its infinity less infinite, affixes itself to the square upon the man's eye.

It keeps traveling, clawing through rods and cones and licking the backs of organs

To come to a sacred place, the *most* private place,

And like a parasite it seeks oxygen from another's lungs.

Little Johnny watches for the ball to eject from the pitching machine;

It's a timed kind of violence, and this operates in much the same way.

The blue sky spins out of track and collides back into itself.

It's a fastball, or not, depending on who's throwing.

The man on the left projects *blue sky* to a blue sky. *Deep ridge* to deep ridge, *long bridge* to long bridge, and if that bridge broke, he'd let the bridge know: *you're breaking, My God, you're breaking!* He reflects, or he absorbs and spits out, depending on who's throwing.

There are two men, and the man on the right

Is thinking about pushing the other man into the canyon.

Here's the catch (or the slip): he doesn't want him to die.

He doesn't want him to *not* die, he doesn't think in those terms,

But something big ought to happen. Death is big, infinite as a blue sky.

The other guy is wearing flannel, and one of the seams has come loose

Like an outstretched hand that says *hold me, move me,*

And a thousand ants are coming out of the woodworks

To converge upon a Coke that's spilling

From the hands of a girl who's straddling the bridge and screaming

And the man on the left projects, *screaming child*.

And the man on the right holds his fists tight together and embraces himself,

He abstains from motion, except for his brain,

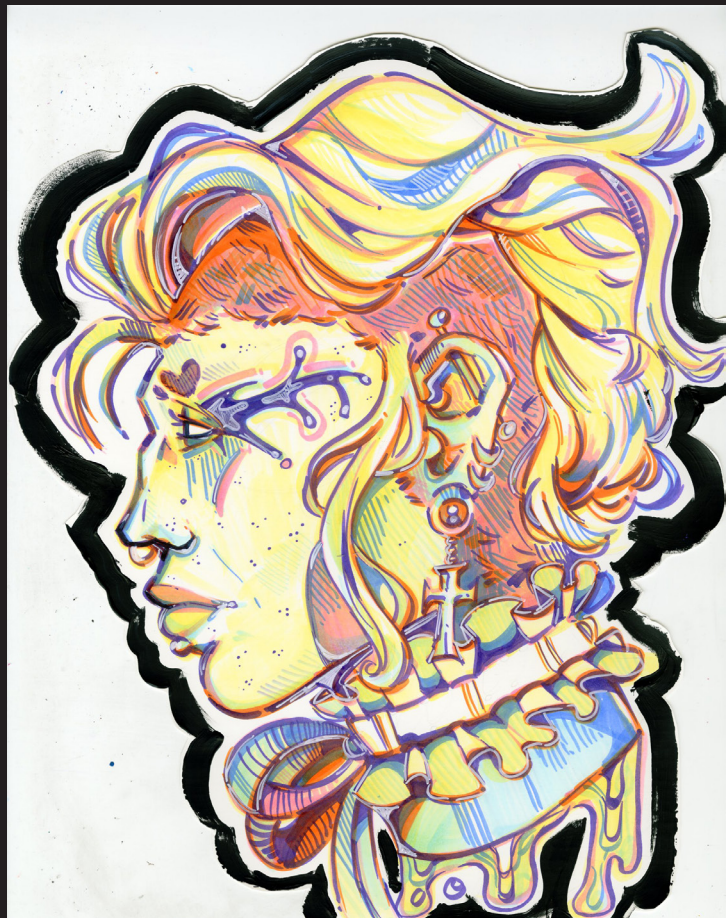
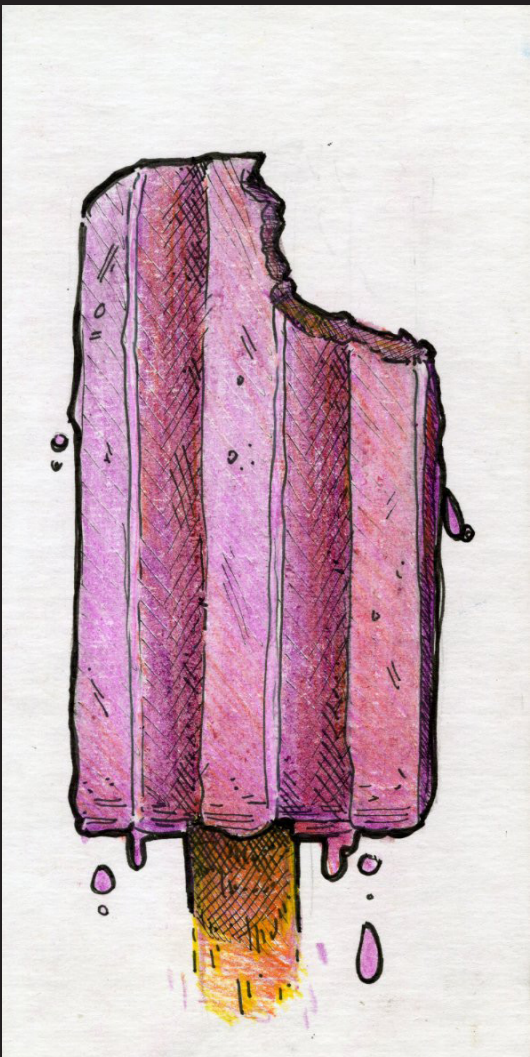
Which follows a fast track that nobody's loading.

There are two men standing at the top of the Royal Gorge,

And only one's got an idea of how the world operates

Behind rusted floodgates.

Artwork by Genevieve Day



Beekeeping

— *Danielle Spyra*

8th Century

"It's a shame we have to kill them every single time, don't you think?" Melissa asked, shooing an angry bee away from Andreas' arm. She wasn't really expecting an answer, but she wanted one.

Andreas rolled his eyes as he lifted the skep¹ from its place in the bee bole².

"I only ever warm up to them when their hives actually get heavy. But then it's goodbye," Melissa said. She knew Andreas thought bees were vicious creatures and nothing more. The bees began to swarm out of their hive and she followed Andreas on the path to the stream.

"Is the honey really worth killing for – where are you going?" Melissa stopped walking. Mostly because Andreas had rerouted, but she liked to think that it was because she was protesting the murders he was about to commit.

"The stream flooded a couple days ago and the bank is waterlogged. We have to commit these murders over here for a few weeks," he said as he disappeared into a field. The new path was overgrown. The only trace that it had once before been a trail was the division in the grass, but even then, it appeared more like a deer path. Barely visible from the main route, it went through a small meadow with young trees, past vibrant arrays of flowers, and into a dark forest. Melissa frowned as she looked on.

"You don't have to come, you know."

"I'm coming. I just think you should feel bad."

Melissa hurried to catch up with him.

"It's not even that long of a path," he said, "But I know how you feel about the woods. I'm okay with you going back home if you need."

"Oh, you can't stand doing this without me. Who else is there to drive away the bees if they attack you?"

"You know what's funny? When you're not here, they are the nicest little beings. I think you actually intimidate them."

"Impossible."

"Why? You're the one frightening them whenever you're here."

"No, I mean impossible that you think they're enjoyable. Why else would you willingly murder them?"

"Not all of them."

"Why else would you willingly murder all the bees that are in the skep at the exact moment you toss them to their death?"

"Because, Melissa, they give us the honey we need. And anyway, they always come back." They entered the gloomy forest and Andreas put the skep upside down on the ground, nestling it softly into some twigs and needles. He stretched his back and lifted the skep again.

"What do you mean they come back?" Melissa asked, squinting as sun rays fell upon her face through clusters of leaves.

"I don't know, they just do. I trap a King and then he goes out and fetches young bees from flowers." He looked at Melissa, who was giving him side-eye, and said, "What? I've seen it happen."³

"Well anyway, Philaretos doesn't kill his bees."⁴ He has workers move them to an empty skep instead."

The woods gave way to a bright clearing covered with wildflowers. For a moment, they admired the scenery. The restless bees began to crawl up Andreas' arms so he held the skep even farther away from him. Hearing the promising sound of water trickling nearby, Melissa stepped around him and saw the stream glimmering at the edge of the clearing.

As Andreas walked to the stream, Melissa distracted herself by sitting on a log and braiding some grass. A few moments later, she heard the unmistakable sound of the bee skep being dropped into the water. She sighed as she leaned back to snap a flower from its stem.

She twirled the bloom in her fingers while she looked at Andreas, knee-deep in the stream. He picked up the skep, now flooded with water, and drained it.

A honeybee fluttered near Melissa's flower for an instant before flying off into the forest and Melissa placed the blossom on the log beside her and went to Andreas.

She gazed at the empty skep and a feeling of sadness washed over her.

"Do you want some?" Andreas asked, reaching into the skep to gently break the comb.

Melissa didn't give any indication that she heard him. Really, she was craving the honey, but she didn't want to admit it.

Andreas gave her the piece anyway and broke one off for himself. Then he put the skep down and followed Melissa as she bit into the syrupy comb and walked into the meadow. Melissa adored the sweet ambrosia. As she strolled, she spat the wax onto the ground and bit into the honey once again. When she gently poked at a cluster of small, rich purple flowers that a couple of honeybees were pollinating, she stopped and scowled.

Melissa pointed to the empty skep. "Do you think those bees came here?"

"To this clearing? Yeah. All our bees probably come here."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, Melissa. Why are you –"

Melissa spat out the wax and threw the rest of the comb into the grass.

"Because these flowers have grayanotoxins."

Andreas stopped in his tracks as Melissa glared at him.

"The honey is toxic."⁵

telling the bees
19th century

To the left of the dirt road,
On the edge of some shrubs,
There were three skeps – woven grasses and cane—
Sheltered from the sun as I rode
My bike to deliver the news.

To the right of the dirt road,
Was a low-cropped field,
And ahead were frolicking highland cows
Basking in the sun as I slowed—
Beside the old, rusting plow.

I left the bike by the lane,
And hopped as close to the hives as nature’s gate would allow—
Thorns and thistles and flowers mused,
Starting to scratch me, blocking my way—
But I entered anyway.

I shuffled the shoots away with my feet,
And stepped again after taking a breath.
And found in the grass an ancient bench.
And as I sat down, I glimpsed at the bees.
I pondered, leaned in, and whispered to avenge—

The bees crawled out from the hives
And flew around me—
Eager for my words, they landed on my hands.
So I promised I’d tell them about the lives
And deaths⁶ I did not understand.

Endnotes:

1. A skep is a woven basket with a small opening used as a honey bee hive. To harvest from skeps, beekeepers would typically toss the hive into a body of water and drown the bees.
2. A bee bole is a sheltered area, like a cavity in a wall, or where the skeps would be kept.
3. In Ancient Greece, it was believed that bees didn’t breed. Instead, they fetched their young from flowers. Also, it was believed that the queen bee was a king.
4. Philaretos was a person who had around 250 hives on his Byzantine estates and did not kill his bees to harvest their honey.
5. The Ancient Greeks and Romans had learned that they could use flowers with toxins (specifically, grayanotoxins found in rhododendron plants) to create “mad honey” which, at worst, would lead to hallucinations when consumed. There have been moments in history in which different kingdoms or people left mad honey out for their enemies in order to defeat them more easily.
6. In the 19th century, there was a tradition of “telling the bees” when momentous life events (such as someone’s death, a marriage, or birth) had occurred. This was so that the bees could mourn, or celebrate, too. There are tales of entire bee colonies dying because they hadn’t been notified of a death.
7. “Red Sugar,” a poem by Jan Beatty.

honey – sticky
21st century

She told me she’d been stung before
And that she’d been wearing the
beekeeping suit.
She told me this in secrecy
And made me swear I wouldn’t tell my sisters.

You see, we just didn’t want them
To be afraid of collecting honey.
I told them anyway.
And
They didn’t collect any.

She told me as I stuck and unstuck my plaid pajama pants from itself on my knee
Where I had swiped away three bees with an oversized glove
Honey-sticky.
Where I hid three beestings.
I hated Honey-sticky.

Her dad had smoked them and taken the roof off their home.
Then he’d handed me a heavy frame covered in wax and sweet and bees.
The bees crawled over each other – as if they were flowing honey.
I carefully brushed them off
Hoping they’d catch the wind and fly
Away—
Away, away.
But I guess some stayed because I had felt a sharp sting on my knee.
I dropped the brush and doubled over to shoo the bees away.
I swiped my pajamas but the honey – sticky – stuck my glove to me.

And just like that
Two more attacked
And my red sugar⁷ said run.

Dragon Moon

— **Deven Spencer**

The moon was high in the sky as eight-year-old Davroar Da'ardendri'an sat gazing at the sky with his father Sulhadur. The two were sitting on the edge of a cliff, high in the mountains on the eastern edge of Sixpeaks, the land in which they lived. A sheltered vale in the north, Sixpeaks was home to the last vestige of the old world, before The Separation. Elves, dwarves, gnomes, and dragonborn like Davroar and his father, lived in peace, sheltered from the people beyond the mountains. The people who would misuse the magic that was commonplace in Sixpeaks, if they could get their hands on it. So it was told to the children.

"Davroar, look at the stars. What do you see?" Sulhadur asked. "Don't say anything just yet. Think on it. And don't just see them, see them. Feel them, feel their magic, their power."

Davroar gazed upwards, to the colorful tapestry of light splashed across the night sky. Millions of tiny, glowing points, each with its own place. As he watched, he let himself drift with the constellations, opened his being to the magic that suffused the world. He felt... something. He didn't know quite what it was.

"There's something. Something... else," the boy said. "It's there, but I can't— I can't grasp it."

"That, my son, is the magic. You've used it before, once or twice, but you haven't really let yourself feel what it connects you to," his father replied. "It's everywhere. The Tapestry, we call it. A web of magical threads laid down by the gods at the beginning of creation. When we use magic, we change the weave of the threads, manipulate it, to allow the magic to happen."

Davroar had heard this story before, though it was the first time he had actually felt something that the name "the Tapestry" could be applied to. He knew that there must be another reason for his father bringing him here, or at least this was only part of the reason.

His father was talking again. He was telling the creation story again—how the god Xulran had created the world and dragonkind (including dragonborn) to populate it, and how the other gods had come to this new world and brought their own peoples to it. And about the Great Wars, when first the gods fought primordial elemental beings, and the dragon gods Bahamut and Tiamat were born, and next when dragons fought the giants and the two races nearly wiped each other out. And then later, when dragons fought dragons and the lines were drawn between chromatic and metallic. But after this event, he kept going.

"After the Great Wars, the gods withdrew. Xulran had already been gone for quite some time, quietly offering wisdom and power to the worthy, but not interfering. Not after Bahamut and Tiamat were born. The other gods, though, they left their children as well, left them to chart their own destinies. And that, Davroar, is why we're here, watching the stars. For the stars have a power of their own. They are how the gods watch the world that they helped create, the world of their children. They are watching, from beyond the stars, and they can make them change, to tell us things. The stars can give us messages, omens, tell us the gods' will—but only if you know how to look. Sometimes it's easy, plain for all to see. And sometimes, it takes a trained eye to know what the gods are trying to tell us.

"And the moon, the moon is Xulran's. The greatest object in the night sky is for the one who created all this in the first place. Xulran uses the moon, to watch, to send signs. The moon is his eye, and his mouth. He can change it, when he wants us to see something, to do something. The greatest, and the rarest, of these signs, is when the moon rises full when it should not, larger than normal, and purple, like Xulran the Purple Dragon himself. It is a call to action for Xulran's chosen, and it sets into motion world-changing events. It is called the Dragon Moon."

The Dragon Moon. Davroar had heard the name before, but he couldn't quite place when. It was a vague memory, with a dreamlike quality to it. Somehow, he knew that it had something to do with his future.

His destiny.



Crumb

— Maeve Smillie

What told you to take your first breath? When you, a crumb of another, entered the world. I wonder...who made you cry out? What were you so afraid of when you were drawn in by your very own M87, which is only a crumb of the Virgo, being only a crumb of the Ursa Major?

We learn how to fear as we age, not when we are born.

Megalophobia, claustrophobia, nyctophobia. So why did you scream when you entered the light? When you emerged from that pressing red cave. Weren't you glad to get out?

You wonder just as I do. We try to scramble the particles in our brains with indie films that we don't really understand. I read you novels in tongues, and you like to wear black clothes. We shape a manifesto with our very existence. Yet we know nothing, and we cannot hear. Because we're only crumbs, and crumbs don't have ears...

The universe is growing with age as we crumble into even smaller crumbs in that same eternal timeline. And back in the M87, it's hard to escape the voices and vices of crumbkind, which wrap around the rattle in my chest. Squeezing like a basilisk. Eyes that drip with death.

Don't look at me!

Don't look at me!

Don't look at me!



This is normal they hiss at me; this is life. Trying to catch my gaze.

Crumbs don't truly live. Simply a piece of another, who lives to break off a piece of itself. Is it a mission of how small can we become? How small until the Rulers of The Cosmos don't even recognize us as crumbs anymore? And how small until the Basilisk can't meet our eyes with her poisonous stare. Small enough that she can't wrap tight enough to asphyxiate the soul.

And I know all the tear-stained throw pillows were for nothing.

All our calls in blackness and the rich discourses that got us nowhere. I plead with you, my knees sunken into the soil, why be different?

And you resist, but agree.

With hands of cobalt, they cover our eyes, and we are happy. We crumple the manifesto and light it on fire. A fire that burns the color of complete combustion.

It Still Goes On

— Evan Peterson

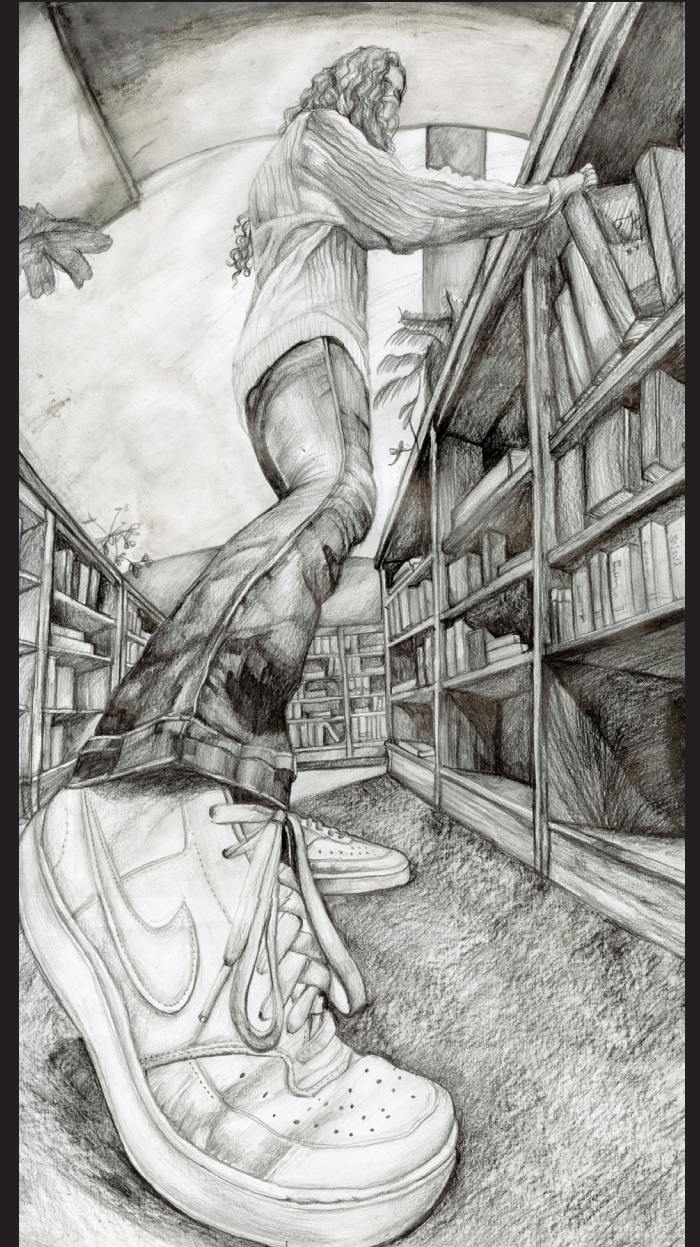
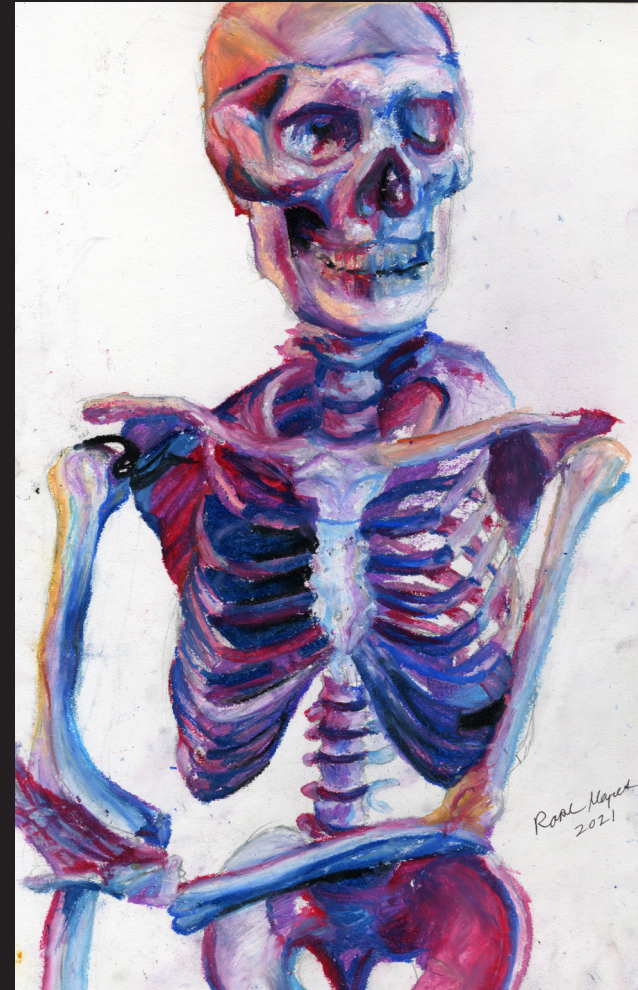
We watch as it crumbles around us, but our eyes are only witnesses
They have no power, no control, to change the path that chaos has chosen
Our brittle dreams are broken, scattered like poems that meant nothing to
us

We say we should have stopped, but our fingers just kept tearing

When times like these leave us in a state that can't really be explained
When truth be told, we don't know why we act this way
We plunge into the wisps of thoughts in hopes that something may be
gained
But we find nothing but ash and rubble, more doubt has joined the fray

As senseless fingers try to touch what we used to call home
And grasp at what we would have called the truth
Our cluttered minds make believe that in these dark waters of icy foam
We've found what we want to call brand new

And although this trance of new awakening is only an illusion
We won't accept that what we've lost is gone
So we carry on, we press on through hysteria and confusion
Because although the world seems to have stopped, in truth it still goes on



**Artwork by
Rose Majeed**

Blue Angel Hosta

—Reid Smith

My name doesn't look good in cursive. It is just too clumsy. Like a bug, it gets spit out fast and the taste leaves in an instant, but no one forgets it. Unlike my middle name, my short first name is of no moment. "Princess Reid." It sounds horrible. It is supposed to be a boy's name but I don't care. It is mine and I care. How do people think it sounds? My pencil drags across the paper in small dashes and a dot. That's all that it is, lead scratched into four letters.

My name sits bored as if it were a Blue Angel Hosta, waiting for a flower, never getting one. The leaves fall off when the frost hits the ground and everyone hides away inside where it is warm. Once the ground turns mushy but everyone is happy, the leaves grow back, they hear my name.

Clear as the sky and light as my Oma's eyes,
a puff carries a part of me away,
away, away. I like it up there where
nothing can hurt me and I can see
forever, forever, forever.

I like how it never has to end,
unlike my name.

One syllable.

It ends abruptly.

I was never good at
cursive anyway.



Falling

—Deven Spencer

My eyes burned. My throat felt like it was on fire. All around me, swirling vapors and noxious gases churned, blown about by some unknown, invisible force, for there was no wind. With each inhale, I felt myself growing weaker, my breaths coming more and more labored. Half-blind, I stumbled through the orange-tinted fog, not sure where I was going. Whoosh. Something behind me, a sound like the beating of huge wings. Quickening my pace, I stumbled on. In the back of my mind, I knew, rationally, that I should have suffocated long ago. I knew that I should be able to feel something beneath my feet, but there was nothing. Rationally, I knew these things. But I was beyond all reason now. There was only panic, desperation, trying to escape that mysterious entity, that thing, that hounded my every step. Escape was all that mattered, fear all I knew. And still, the unending chase continued. Then, long after I lost track of time, long after I should have dropped from exhaustion, my vision began to clear. I could breathe! The fumes were gone; I could no longer hear the monster behind me. At long last, I was free! I could get home, see my friends, my fam—

The wind was knocked out of me, my thoughts cut short as huge claws latched onto my shoulders and lifted me into the air. The monster! It gave a deafening roar as it rose ever higher, reentering the poisonous fog. I twisted and thrashed, trying to break free. I clawed at it, grabbed at it, anything to dislodge me from those claws—and I succeeded. It dropped me, and I was falling, falling.

Falling forevermore.





**Artwork by
Ashlyn Kreiss**



**Artwork by
Gwen Sievers**



Wanted

— *Evan Peterson*

Uninterpreted sounds, buzzing like moths around a lantern

Unidentified thoughts, swirling like snow on a windy day

Unknown feelings, emotions, turning left and right and taking a U-turn

Uncharacteristically quiet voices, whisperings of dismay

Confusion is strong in the foolish

Comprehension weak in the naïve

Courage is strong in the bold

Conception in strength guaranteed

But above the importance of wisdom or strength, there is one thought that triumphs all

The urge that gnaws inside you, that needs to be fulfilled

The need of having friends and family, the pleasure of kind correspondence

Of all your hopes, the one that entralls you the most is the wish to be wanted

Demons

- *Johnny Bellone*

I love them,
more than words can ever say.
They're a rose blooming,
a beautiful ballerina.
They have saved me
from the demons that project from my mind,
the way I am loathsome to myself.
I have built them a house in my mind,
with a box full of stuff they love.
I lay in bed,
unable to sleep at 3:33 am,
peering in the house that's my mind
they can never escape,
my demons whispering to me,
delusions, crazy ideas, depressing ideas.
I lay there,
My mind wanders between the ideas that I'm
on the top of the world, my thoughts run quicker
than I can keep up.
I shake, for the 3rd night in a row.
The demons,
that I only see,
are real
whisper secrets to me.
They whisper how they hate me,
how my favorite person hates me.



all

Hum Drivers

Lydia HM ♥

Rip Stamp Soldiers

Dirk Walker
↑↑
~

Maggie
Healing

Damen Spencer

Ⓡ

Evan Peterson

Denim
+ Day

~ ~ ~

Ⓢ



