

the WORKS



literary/arts magazine
clayton high school * issue 30 * 2018

a note from the editors:

Our minds are surrounded by a world constantly in flux and suffocated by thoughts which never cease to flow. We, as people, experience emotion, create logic, and defy reason. It is our duty to come together and allow ourselves to process the thoughts and ideas which encircle us, as well as those within, especially through the arts.

As the world changes, so do we. The idea of finding one's self is often overemphasized, while the real challenge should be creating one's self. This search for self can be limited by the labels in which society likes to place us.

However, the strife involved in this identity-seeking time can be alleviated by participation in the arts, and thus they become a paramount means of expression, especially to a young person going through a time in which their identity is still in development.

In the 30th edition of *The Works*, we have divided our literary magazine into two sections: "Reflection" and "Introspection".

We define "Reflection" as pieces which invoke emotional, artistic, and literary responses to the state of the outside world and the relationships which interconnect us across that world.

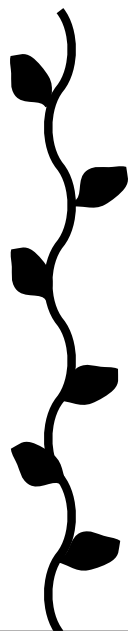
We define "Introspection" as pieces which involve deep thought and emotions regarding our innermost selves, such as the psyche, which are processed through the creation of literature and art.

We hope that you enjoy this collection of young artists' work and that you find yourself inspired to do your own pondering on the world around you and your inner being – crucial components of developing the self.

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REFLECTION



THE FATAL FLAW

by samantha zeid

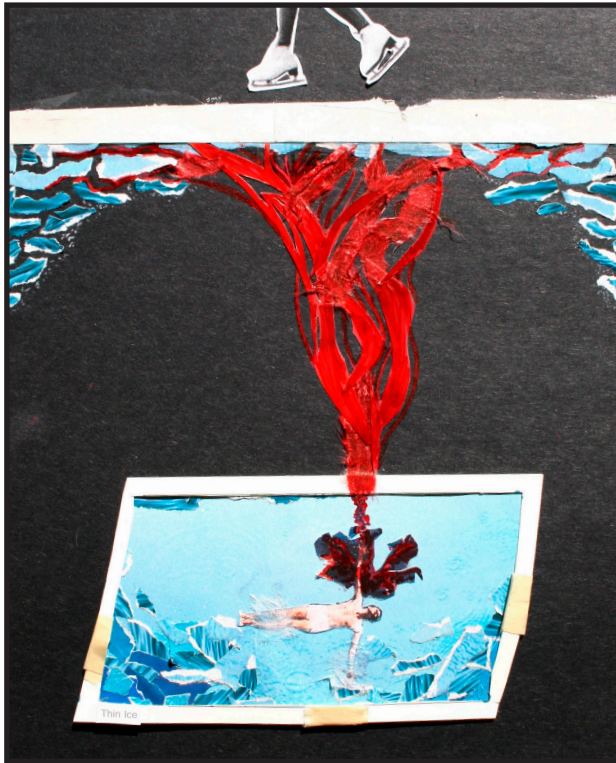
ask good questions, my dad says every day, walking out
the door
i usually spend the day in wonder about Shakespeare
and The Moor
instead, today i think about Florida's booming gun
shots, what to do and when
i see the half-masted flag and think: but when will this
begin again?
my teacher tells me yesterday she learned to shoot to
kill
the men on tv promise war and walls and make my
insides chill
america is the freedom land, bear arms as you please
wasn't hubris odysseus' fatal flaw, did it bring him to his
knees?
this country waves red, white, and blue yet fails to see
the light
the love for weapons will destroy, they're prized above
my life
in history class we talk about how the government
should protect
so i tell my teacher how thoughts and prayers leave this
box unchecked
'be the change you want to see' is written on the wall
so when those in power hide and cower, it is time for us
all
to rise up and demand action, common sense, i would
think
yet another one bites the dust, before i could blink

but this time i will not let it go, i will not succumb
to the adults who tell me that i am just too young
to understand this world right now, no, much to your
dismay

hell no, we will not go, i refuse to see another tragedy
fade away

today i am not preaching, asking, nor pleading
rather, i stand tall and call for an end to this bleeding
the frustration burns my lungs each time i take a breath
to know that america cares more for guns and wealth
than the protection of its children and their innocence
now or never we must rise in insistence and existence
yes, existence, for those who looked into the barrel can
no longer say
that for our inaction, "there will be hell to pay"

ART BY ANNA STURMOSKI



PERCEPTION

by elizabeth cordova

I believe that God has given each person one life, and one life only. It seems a shame, does it not? In a world so vast as the one we inhabit, one would think that a singular life is not enough to experience all that should be. So, as an innovative species, we have learned to compensate in our own ways. My favorite way is through photography.

PRECISION. I bring the Canon to my eye and divide the viewfinder into ninths. I angle the camera so that my subject, a piece of gnarled birchwood on the lake shore, sits on one of four intersections and adjust the f-stop so that the silhouette of the branch falls into striking focus. I hold my breath. Click.

PURPOSE. I capture each photograph in my head first. I squat and angle the camera. Two long legs hang over the side of a thin purple hammock. My friend has fallen asleep with a book on his chest, and, across the water, a mountain pokes through the foliage of the island. Picturesque, calm, vibrant. Click. With a character, a setting, and a feeling, I have my story. I do not take pictures merely to take pictures. I keep my goals in mind even as I allow my right hemisphere to take control.

PASSION. To me, a photo outing rarely feels forced, and if it does, I know I am forcing myself only because I will enjoy it once I begin; I always do. I love freezing time and immersing myself in one frame. My eyes absorb the colors, the shapes, the stillness, and for a moment, I'm zoned in. I'm calm – focused. Click.

PERSISTENCE. I take shot after shot at the water polo game. The natural light is lacking and splashes of water continue to block my view. It's a Friday, and I have been here thirty minutes already, but I again look back through the lens. I realize that when I keep going, I'll obtain the shots I need. On Monday, I plug my SD card into a desktop and open the file. Hundreds of pictures appear.

Going through one by one, I find my favorite: a player's flexed arm shines with dripping water as his fingers desperately grasp the slippery ball.

PERCEPTION. I take my camera to the streets of Chicago, New York, and Philly. I take my camera to the beaches of San Diego, the trails of the Adirondacks. I take my camera to the sidelines of races and games. I take my camera whenever I can and wherever I can because I never want miss an opportunity to fit the world inside a box. I capture traditions, scenes, and people around me, so other worlds may partake, see, and meet. When I take photos, I view the world in a way I haven't before; the world is revealed. I love to capture depth and hope that when someone else sees my photograph, their perception will change, if only for a moment. It's through these moments of shared perspective in which we experience snippets of others' lives. With this exchange, and as I continue to build up a collection of these experiences, my life is no longer just one, but a hundred – no longer just mine, but everyone's.

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PHOTO BY PAIGE HOLMES



THE FRENZY

by brenna mcauley

I told her everything was ok. I knew it wasn't, but the tighter I held her in my arms, the better the situation felt. It's ok. It's ok. I looked into her clear sparkly blue eyes. I braided her soft hair into two braids, combing my fingers through her long dark hair. I heard him shouting in the background, and I moved my hands from the back of her head to cover her small ears with my hands. The sharp screams echoed through the bright white walls in the hospital. This isn't anything new. I knew he was ok.

I took my daughter's hand and led her back to the lobby of the hospital. I picked her up, sitting her on my lap. My eyes filled with water. I looked up trying to contain my tears; I couldn't let her see me. The bright hospital lights burned back at me. Everything was blurry around me. The floors were scrubbed clean, the walls were bright white, and the lights were long rectangles on the ceiling. Everything was bright, light, and clean. There was a crisp smell of cleaner and plastic and nothing else.

I wheeled my husband out of the hospital room and walked into the lobby, looking down at my daughter who was wearing a little blue dress and playing with little kids. I heard her little giggle as she ran from another child trying to tag her. My husband's face was pink, his eyes were watery, and he was in a wheelchair. I looked at my child and smiled, "Hey sweetie, are you ready to go?" Her sweet bright eyes wandered from my face to her dad's. Her face crinkled with disgust. "Why is Dad in a rolly chair?" I smiled, took her

hand, and sat her on her dad's lap. I pushed them both to the car.

We arrived at our house. The clouds were racing inwards. Racing to cover the house. Turning darker and darker the closer we got to the door. I cracked the big dark wooden door open. And my daughter walked ahead. I pushed the door open wider for my husband. He wheeled the chair straight to his room without a word. He waited outside of the door for me to open it.

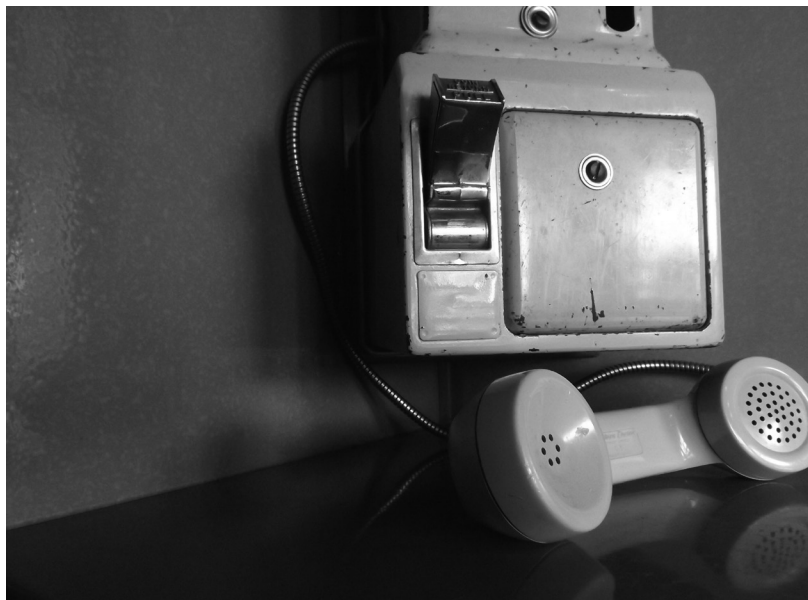
That night we were sleeping; the storm was whirling and crashing outside. The noise of the storm overcame any noise that tried to fight it. I stared at my husband's long eyelashes closed on the pillow next to me. Outside was windy. The curtain blew near the window, and the rain rushed in the tree leaves. I turned away from my husband and got out of bed to close the window. I looked outside and closed my eyes feeling the storm echo around me. Suddenly I felt two strong hands grasping my throat.

I swung my elbow backwards and hit him on the face. Once. Twice. Three times. He fell backwards. His eyes red with fury, he stood up and turned at the door. No, I thought. Stay in the room. Don't get our daughter. He almost growled with anger and aggression. He stomped in my direction. Stared straight in my eyes. For the first time, I didn't see my husband. I saw a monster. He turned towards the door. I stood motionless as he began to turn the knob. All the sudden a bolt of anger shocked me as I grabbed the lamp near our bed and

threw it as hard as I could at his head. He slammed against the door, and I raced to the phone. The thunder roared, and the lightning struck outside the window.

"911, my husband is hurt, please hurry." I ran to the door, pushed my husband aside, and ran straight to my little girl. She stood crying in the hallway. I looked back at my husband's bloody face and clenched every bone in my body trying not to cry. I scooped my daughter up and ran out the front door. I ran out in the rain. The rain poured on my daughter's sobbing face. Her bright eyes darkened by the storm. Our wet, dark hair clung to our faces. Rain falling, dripping, pouring all over. I put her in the back of the car, locked her seat belt, and got behind the wheel. I turned the car on and pulled out in front of the house. I paused looking at where we lived. And I would never look at it again.

PHOTO BY HANNAH WOOD



THE MAN OF PURPLE DRAWS AND WISHES HIS LIFE AWAY

by angelica vannucci

a. the man of purple draws and wishes his life away
just to pass the time.
and yesterday, - in the haze of anything unholy-
somewhere slicked back through wooden planks and the
green that never ended
and his laugh and my coughs and the fact that your lips
were
pale but never white-
yesterday, i saw you.

- 9 b. jim morrison has an alice in wonderland fetish
and i swear to god, I was trying with a 23 year old ant
man.
everything has lost its sense of wrong or right or yellow
{and the whole city is eating me alive with all the eyes
and sighs and hoots and every, pulsing breath we take as
a
uniform entity.}but in the best, wind-winged-breath possi-
-ble way.
- c. indubitably, unsure on how to continue. when the mist
takes
ahold of my voice and my mother's spackled-throat
lullaby
crackles from nine planets away. I, indubitably, will be
unsure on how to continue,
indefinitely. |
when time takes a dip in the knee and everything i knew
to be

blue runs under my feet with too much (and oh so slip
-pery) ease. I will collapse into
every star- every wisp of smoke, every unappreciative
sigh that escapes my tongue- no
longer white, i guess.

- d. the fact that you are still here. surprisingly.
how to keep grip
of all my letters, all my maps, all my 1- 2- 3- 4/?-
and your mumble-ish hesitant laugh in my pocket. i like
girls
who don't know when to laugh because i don't either.

- e. *i am beginning to believe that i am too much of everything once
more.*

*that one day, I'll sprout roots and nobody will even glance when
they see*

how much i am.

you still look at me though. even though I know it's just in
the reach

to something stricter, drier, softer than me; i feel no appre-
-hension.

for now, i tug at all the feathers on your wings and pray
for you,

dear helena, to stay.

he has dark dog-brown eyes and smokes like a sailor and
tells me he loves you- and i,

apathetic because i know he can't trace the stars on your
neck, nod solemnly and envy the
mantis shrimp.

"CITY THINKER," PHOTO BY EMMA EBELING



CLOSER

by ryan kerr

Staccato Percussion
Cuts through the air
A fleeting last heartbeat of
silence
Teeth flashing, panic uncon-
trolled
Followed by the only real
screams
You will ever hear

1,300 foot pounds of kinetic
energy
Pulverizing young hearts
Semi-automatically in 30 round
extended clips.
Muzzle flashing, recoil con-
trolled
Followed by the only real dead
You have ever seen

He is closer now –
Your fleeting text sent in hud-
dled darkness
Your heart racing at 3,200 feet
per second
Life flashing, breathing uncon-
trolled

ART BY MARICLARE GATTER



STARRY NIGHT

by ethan bernstein

Mary couldn't take her eyes off of the bottom of her cup. She couldn't explain why the little shot glass compelled her so much. She examined the glass bottom, inspecting the last drips of the remnants of the cheap booze that had recently occupied it. She looked at the gleam and sparkle of the alcohol; in the light of the house the remnants lit up like stars. Next thing she knew a large glass of water appeared next to her cup, as a swift hand carried the shot glass away.

"Mary...Mary!" a voice said, shattering the thoughts that had been occupying her.

"What, what?" Mary said as the booming buzz of the frat house and the clatter of voices returned to her.

"You spaced out there," the voice continued. "That's your 3rd drink in 1 hour. You need to slow down, I am beginning to worry."

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"I'm fine Jake," Mary said as she slowly tilted her head up from the table so that she could see Jake's face: his short dark reddish hair, the light stubble around his chin, his slightly oversized nose that supported a pair of large circular glasses, and his eyes. Mary always thought Jake's eyes were his best feature. She stared at them, his glasses working as magnifying glasses, enlarging his caring, green gold speckled hazel eyes.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Jake asked in a light tone.

Mary wanted to announce that she was not okay, that all she could think about was Jake, that she wanted to be around him, held by him, but before the words could come out she watched two arms cross around Jake's stomach.

"Hey there sexxyyy," a deep voice slurred into Jake's ear.

"Dang, Mark, how drunk are you?" Jake said turning around.

Mary watched as Jake stared into Mark's eyes. There, her best friend, the reason she had come to the party in the first place, was staring at someone else. She knew that as a friend she was supposed to feel happy for him, but staring at him happy with someone else just made her want to cry.

"I think we are going to find an empty room," Jake announced as Mark pulled on his arm. "We'll be back in 10 minutes."

Mark slowly tilted his head, "15 minutes," he said, smiling.

"All right, 15 minutes."

"Okay, have fun." Mary said as she watched Jake and Mark walk away, "I will just sit here alone, at this party where I don't know that many people," Mary whispered to herself, as she reached across the table and poured herself another shot of alcohol.

"Here's to another night alone," she said, lifting the cup into the air before ceremoniously engulfing it.

15 "Wow 4 drinks, how classy," a voice announced. Who is that? Mary thought the voice was familiar, but she couldn't place it. She had the feeling you get when you have a question that you can't quite articulate. Furthermore, how did they know this was her fourth drink—only Jake had been watching how much she had been drinking. "You know there are other ways to be happy," the voice continued.

Mary slowly looked around for the voice, trying to figure out who it was talking to her.

"I am over here." the voice said from behind her. Mary spun around and came face to face with...herself? "You know there was a cute guy checking you out earlier. He would def-in-it-ely make you happy," Mary 2 announced, adding a little whistle at the end.

"Oh my god, I am going crazy," Mary said with bulging eyes. "What are, how are, who are—"

"Oh I'm not real," Mary 2 interjected. "I am just your subconscious here to help you make better decisions, like that

cute guy from earlier. Here, get up!"

Following the command, Mary jumped up out of her chair.

"Come on let's go, let's go," Mary 2 cheered pushing Mary forward.

"I don't want to, I don't want to," Mary said as Mary 2 pushed her forward causing her to crash into the nearest guy. They crashed to the ground.

"I am so sorry," Mary stammered as she looked up to find who she had stumbled into. "I'm a little drunk, and I don't know what I am doing, and..." Mary looked up to find herself face to face with

"OMG it's Jason!" Mary 2 squealed. "You know he had the biggest crush on you freshman year in biology, plus you guys kissed that one time under the mistletoe at that Christmas party..."

"I know that," Mary said out of the corner of her mouth, before turning to Jason. "I am so sorry Jason, I guess I didn't see you and—" 16

"It's okay," Jason interrupted, before stepping up and extending his hand out to Mary.

"Thank you," Mary said as she pulled herself up with Jason's hand.

"You should ask him if he has been working out," Mary 2 interjected. "I mean look at how big his arms are."

"No that would be tacky, and no one says that anymore," Mary whispered at her subconscious.

"Fine, then say you like his shirt," Mary 2 said, rolling her eyes.

"I like your shirt."

"Thanks," Jason chuckled to himself. "Do you want to go somewhere alone?" Jason asked, adding a slight tilt to his eyebrows. "I would love to talk and catch up with you."

"YES, you should do that" Mary 2 squealed into the air.

"Yeah that would be fine." Mary said, ignoring her

unwanted friend.

“Cool.” Jason smiled as he lead her out of the frat house. She huddled near him as they walked back toward their dorm room on the clear starry night. The two friends

PHOTO BY MALLORY PALMER



walked outside staring up at the luminous night sky. Mary slowly reached her hand toward Jason, seeing how he would respond, slowly their fingers intertwined together.

"It's really clear," Mary 2 announced, causing Mary to jump a little.

"Are you okay?" Jason asked turning toward Mary and swinging his arm around her in a protective manor.

"Yeah, yeah," Mary responded. "My dorm is over here if you want to come up?" She motioned to the door of a large, brown, ivy covered brick building.

Jason opened the door and followed her into the dorm. They walked into the dorm and up the stairs, before turning into the second door on the right.

"Julie isn't in here," Mary 2 sung out as she ran into the middle of the room and spread her arms.

"My roommate's not here," Mary announced as Jason stepped forward and kissed her.

Before she knew what was happening Mary was on the bed with Jason. She slowly took off her shirt, and Jason quickly followed. Before long Mary and Jason were left in only their underwear laying down on the bed.

"Do you want to have sex?" Jason asked between the kissing.

"Yes, you do girl," Mary 2 responded.

"Uh...yes, uh condoms are in the drawer," Mary slurred; the thought was hard to get out. Mary quickly realized she may have been more drunk than she thought. She watched as Jason slowly opened the drawer, and found the pack. Jason then slowly went back toward the bed. Mary laid there kissing him, as they slowly began to move further, she found herself staring into Jason's eyes. She stared at his chestnut eyes and noticed specks of gold. Fear then began to fill her as she watched Jason's chestnut eyes morph into a pair of green, gold, speckled eyes, hazel eyes, Jake's eyes.

"Wait stop," Mary announced to Jason. "This is a mistake."

Jason didn't stop. Instead he kept going moving forward.

"What are you doing? Stop!" Mary 2 screamed. "She told you to stop! Stop! Stop! AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH."

Mary laid there speechless, looking up at the ceiling of her dorm room. She was paralyzed. Her subconscious wouldn't stop screaming. She was mute.

After Jason left, Mary found herself in bed staring at the ceiling. She hadn't moved since Jason left, in fact, she hadn't moved much when he was there. After she had told him to stop she couldn't get herself to move at all. The entire night became one big blur to her. She couldn't seem to discern what had happened; all she did was look up. Before long the emptiness engulfed her. For the first time that night she found herself alone. Mary 2 had disappeared shortly after Jason left; she screamed the entire time. Slowly Mary pulled herself out of bed, and trudged to the window. Looking outside she saw that the clouds had come out, covering all the stars. That bothered her. For some reason it bothered her a lot. If the stars wanted to come out and shine, why couldn't they? Why was it the job of the clouds to decide what they wanted? Don't the stars get a say? If the stars say they want to stay out, then the clouds should listen to them! At this thought she felt the tears begin to roll down her face.

OUR SONGS

by james glenn

Songs of us
Songs that moved us and used us
That flowed through us, and improved us
Songs that were gentle yet hardening, truthful yet heartening
Mythical yet marveling, flooded with light yet sparkling
Songs that were sung in battle, that would cause our enemies
hearts to rattle
Songs meant to soften the emotions of rascals
Songs of pain, bravery and mind wars
Songs meant to bring back your soul in case you lose yours
Acapella
We don't need sounds to tell a novella
Our words alone are solid
Add music and the system will be forever haunted
Our words alone started a revolution
Add music and coloreds will righteously abuse it
These songs of us

ART BY GRACE SNELLING

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MARTYRDOM

by mitali sharma

those moments –
when deism seems impossible
in the face of
tides of fury and forgetfulness.
when the immortal
seem to be buried alive.
my clenched fist tries to prevent
the sleeping butterfly from
dying and decaying in
runnels of blood.
salvation comes when
we remember the ancient
and read time
the way we revere fiction.
only then
philosophy seems real again.

ART BY EMMA WEBER



AN OPPOSITE VIEW

by lauren kanaan

Soldier

The fireworks go off and all I can think about are the
bombs

It was a long war
It changed me
There was blood everywhere. . . It was horrible

Over 200 men died that day.

It killed me inside

I can't forget the taste of blood running into my mouth

I sit around my living room with my family and think,
I don't deserve to be here.

I let so many people die, and I can still feel their weight on
my back.

I just want to end it all.

I can't face it anymore.

No one to help me.

There is no one who understands this pain.

I just want to die.

America

The fireworks in the sky are a sign of our gratitude

We celebrate you and America's victory

You saved 12 soldier's lives
You are a true hero

You set America free

25

You pulled them from the ashes, bringing them back from
the dead.

It's men and women like you who make America great.

So many families are in debt to you.

We will never forget what you have done for us

It is an honor to have you as a part of our forces.

Thank you for your bravery,
your sacrifice,

And thank you for your service.

IMAGE BY JACK HOLLOCHER



PATRICK

by alexis nichols

A shiny black box, alone, in the middle of the room. It rests there, in improper serenity, consuming all of the air from our lungs. It's open.

I can see the silhouette of his body lying there—stock-still. I inch closer. Julie and Jeremy are already standing in front of the box. We stare in silence. “Can you hear a heartbeat?” he says. She leans down toward his body and puts her ear on his chest. “Nothing” she says. I look at his face. He looks the same, only colder somehow. But the smile that usually danced along his lips was replaced with a flat line, an emotionless expression, that would never curl into a smile again. That is odd. He is always smiling. Was.

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Crack! The pins were knocked down—almost a strike but not quite. Next was my turn. The weight of the bowling ball was too much for one of my hands to bear, so I had to use two. I wanted to do well. I shakily pulled the ball up to my chin. He was there, cheering me on with his innocently mischievous smile. Aiming for the middle, I pulled back my arm, swung it forward and then released. A gutter ball. He laughed. And at first I was embarrassed, but then I laughed too. It was infectious. And then we all began to laugh amidst the jokes directed at my bowling skills. We laughed and laughed...

And again, silence. We departed from the room, leaving the shiny box behind us. We were then shuffled into the sanctuary only to see the shiny box appear in front of the altar. My mom guided me by the hand to the pew. I uncomfortably sat on her lap. As the last of the guests shuffled in, I looked around at them, seeing unfamiliar, nameless, faceless figures. Why were they here?

The program begins. It carries on hazily. Muffled words are spoken presumably about him and how he lived his life. They're just words now. They have no weight. But he does. Seeing him there in that box evokes strong responses in those watching. So young, but already gone. I hear sobs. Aunt Jackie, I think, and cousin Chris, too. They are crying. No, wailing. I am crying, too. My mom whispers, "It's okay, it's okay" as I try to force the tears back into my eyes, trying to make them stop, but they keep coming despite all of my efforts. I don't understand why I'm crying. I know he was here and now he is gone and that knowing that makes my chest tighten, but I never told myself to cry. It's a force I can't control, and the tears continue to descend. Unable to stop them, I allow them to fall down my cheeks onto my dress. So many have spilled that they form a pear-shaped watermark on my dress.

The water rushes in. I am drowning. I slipped underneath my floaty. Somehow I had reached the deep end, but I could not swim. I desperately tried to keep my head above the water, clawing at the liquid surface—but you weren't there. Chlorinated water seeped into my lungs as I continued to struggle to stay above the water so that I could breathe—but you weren't there. Monica was. She noticed me, struggling, trying to hang on, and jumped in and saved me. You weren't gone yet; however, you were distant. Just like you are now, only that time it was physical space between us. Perhaps that moment was preparing me for the loss of your presence. Perhaps that moment was permitting me to rely on someone else other than you. You could not... would not always be able to be there for me in my time of need. I realized that. But you left so suddenly and without a goodbye. But I guess this has to be goodbye.

Goodbye.

ART BY GWYNETH SCALLIONS



THE PUREST FORM OF EXCELLENCE

by darryl sams

Black,
The color that built this country with its bare hands,
The color that was brought over by force and not by choice,
The color that receives no respect for trying to live in a society
The color that still looks for true freedom,
This liberty, this beautiful and terrible thing, needful to man
The ideas of racism and discrimination,
Two huge impurities in American society,²

Excellence,
Earned, 30
not given,³
A trait which takes time to achieve and master,
The ability to continue even when

Black Excellence,
The success of the oppressed,
America plunging them into the lowest depths of dissipation,⁵
Blacks with no hesitation,
Continue to thrive with thoughts of temptation,
Of a life with firm foundation,

¹Robert Hayden: "Frederick Douglass" (Poem)

²Darryl Sams: "A Dream That Must Become Lucid (My own writing)

³Nike Advertisement Slogan (Ad)

⁴Nas: "NY State of Mind" (Song)

⁵Frederick Douglass: *The Narrative and the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (Book)

which was forced upon them,

as air,¹

1
2
3
4
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7

31

drained of energy,

Always believing to
Never sleep, ‘cause sleep is the cousin of death⁴

8
9
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19
20

Originated by Douglass,	21
Then torched	22
down	23
to	24
DuBois,	25
Washington,	26
MLK,	27
Evers,	28
Parks,	29
Jordan,	30
James,	31
Obama,	32
A list this still is going on,	33
A list that will never cease,	34
A list started by whites,	35
But fought to be finished by blacks,	36

32

Singing We Shall Overcome,	37
Dreaming of a dream so deeply rooted in the American Dream,	38
while	
Believing freedom will come at last,	39
For our eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.	40

PHOTO BY CHARLEY WALDROP



WISH

by hayley bridges

Wish

A kid clouded by depression
Confuses airplanes with shooting stars
Every flick of light in the night sky
Was a tick of hope

Wish

Never forgot a promise
Hoping the star grants it
“Good things come to those who wait”
But good things never come

Wish

It's meaningless to me
An adolescent who gave up
Stars aren't important
Life isn't important

Wish

Has been replaced with luck
A high school grad clouded by hope
Knowing airplanes aren't shooting stars
But still wishing upon them

Wish

PHOTO BY NICK STRAND



MAMIHLAPINATAPAI

by dawson gershuny

Subjunctive lovers walk this street,
Their yellow boots won't ever meet,
Puddles scattered, drops in flight.
A moment. Sight. And sighs.
A longing question in their eyes.

An arrow finds no target.
though, not for lack of trying...

Shared moments fall behind.
Their cobbles set in static streets.
Regret and wonder rise in wake.
Wet shoes. Bitter feet.
Furtive glances keeping track,
as yellow raincoats never stop.
They only fade to black.

PHOTO BY JOVAN MILLER



TALBOT

by paige holmes

Only Child
only child
Two years of my life

Little Sister
Little Sister
...Goodbye to MY mom

Double the Sister
Double the attention
gone

38

16 years later
Off to College

Double the Sister
still at Home

And now
5 becomes 4

And Two years more
Little Sister Little Sister
Not so Little Anymore
The Nest left
Empty, cold, silent

Free Wisdom for
Little Sister
Little Sister
Trial, Error, Struggle for
Me

3 is the most stable
How selfish I would be
Without you,
How I love you so
Sister, Sister

39

ART BY TEAGAN BAKER



LIFE

by amy tishler

Life

One

Flower

Is growing

Out of the cracks

Of the old, crumbling neighborhood sidewalk

Where no one walks—

Persistent,

Growing

Life.

PRINT BY SARAH FRANZEL



Sarah F.

PACIFIST'S HUNT

by mitali sharma

I.

instill a soul in a young empty jar and it must dream.
dress the soul in a witch's beige silk,
provide some bare limbs,
and it will tread
nude upon the fresh soil
and through the forests and fields
searching for the wild children of the grass.
what companions could fill this void,
it will fantasize.
amaranth for divinity,
saffron for culture,
sage for the multitudes.
don't think
the soul does not quiver.
but a starry sight soothes these quakes.
the earth shall not break
if a new wind arises. the children dance.
and her
longing is shielded by these stars.

II.

caged by glass is hell,
on earth.

III.

she wonders at these stars –
they cannot be solitary
nor
apparitions of the sky.
coded in rectangular machinery,
they are not.

rather, abiding to the classical fluidity –
their sovereignty oscillating in the song of the wind.
she looks at her breasts and understands
that her breath can aid that zephyr.
but one exhale
is one star in some immensity beyond.
perhaps she has to return credence to those ornaments
so we can resolve
to work together. so
photographs breathe.
so our veins lose the tangled wires.
so spirit survives and dogmas dissolve.

IV.

I did see a shooting star, once.

43

what if I poured its contents
into my jar?
a container of liquified rapture,
to embrace and pray to.
I'd set it on an altar
and feed it while whispering:
credence! credence!
waiting for you to emerge,
baptized by some mother
somewhere beyond.

the jar would shatter. during the night.
and I would be awakened by
levitating gems returning home.
bleeding, as I try to hold on to them.
learning, to let them go.
breaking
free.

I will remember this
when the machinery
starts its packing:

I search for you in constellations,
shattering and healing again
and again
and again.

they call it modern love;
it is not.
it is
fertile soil from your first steps,
before your arrogance was watered by false truths:
so ancient.

V.
I ride through faith on a yellow bike,
a jar of honey in the pocket of my long blue dress.

44

ART BY PAIGE HOLMES





introspection



series of the migrained mind

by kaylaun bonni

lurid lights beam bright
a lucidity burns bright
clashing colors kill

pools of blood
disperse and corrode
my poor brain

language can't describe
this bleeding brain, this much pain
please stoppit, puppet

There is a puppet
master. Who tinkers with strings
in my brain. Ouch.

The puppet master
tugs at strings hooked in my eyes.
taut. unrest. Mental

the strings pulled so tight
eyes remain slightly ajar
can't sleep can't dream. can't.

Evil-spirited
is the being that burrows
farther. Nausea

pain is my anthem
pain's tapping comes at my neck
pain's hands are constant
i crave for normal
a normal pain-free brain, please
that is all i crave

*the pain took me
out of body. And now
I float above*

*I pity that girl
who loses her sense of touch
and her sense of self*

*above, I see her
filling in a girl's body
she's all the more dead*

ART BY GRACE SNELLING



gigantic kidney beans

by angelstarr jones

Holding you is a tightrope. You are rotund but insubstantial. You are olive, and you are red. When you are red, I leave you. The first day, you sank into me. When I held you, you relentlessly recoiled into the concave warmth of my forearm and breast. This first moment was my first denial of you. I created an expansive area of unavailable space that would not be occupied by you. There was such an extensive space that your heart beats that duplicated mine verbatim were drowned by the muffling of my mouth breathing. The straying of your mother's heartbeat caused you much unrest. My detachment from you caused me to become content. I only held you twice, and even then, we did not make contact. The first day, I looked into your eye, narrowing into just one eye with such scrutiny and intensity, you never wanted to look into mine again. I never tried holding you again.

I used to hold your grandmother the way she held me. Her legs would dangle in depondancy. She was decrepit and infirm. The lenses of her eyes were clouded, the cataract in her eyes formed a nebulous clump that made it difficult for the family to tell who she was gazing at. Her character dwindles and drips onto you everyday. Sometimes you smell of her, her old age in a way as if she had been carrying you. Her scent rubs off on your butterfly skin as if she had ever met you. I smell her in the air too, or see her in the market, or she swings by in a dream. Her voice is succulent and as certain as I am that it is her, it is loud.

She asks, "Why don't you hold that baby? She used to get so red, red as kidney beans. Oh, just cry and cry for her mother. Why don't you hold her? Guess she's grown up a little about it now. She don't be cryin'," she mulls out loud. My face scrunches, my ears are hot, and my hairline is wet. My breathing labors and I can hear my pulse at the back

of my head. The strainer in my hand topples to the floor and the remaining water droplets from the kidney beans I had been soaking pierce my skin and disappear in a stream of steam. I am livid. I am hot. I can hear my own joints crack as I turn my entire being in the direction of her voice. "I don't hold her because she doesn't want me to, Mother," I say, curt and rigid. She follows up, "Of course she does, Irene! You should not be the way that you are, why are you the way that you are? Especially to the people that you love? Do you love your baby, Irene?" My air turns thin, the floor seems to quake, and the room starts to capitulate on its foundation just for me. The universe was using a soft-spoken agent to revile me, to entice feelings inside of me that I did not want to fool with. "Yes, I do," I say, dismissive and passive. "Say all the words, Irene! Say, 'Yes I love my baby! Unconditionally! I will even when she is bad! And rotten, and curses me! Say that you love her positively, down right, in full, out and out, explicitly, unlimitedly, unreserved, unrestricted, and absolutely!' Everybody needs somebody, Irene; that's why you came from someone. You would not have come from your mother if you did not need her. You know, convincing yourself that you do not love her will not protect you if you ever lose her. You have to love while they are here, and love relentlessly. You can never not be hurt in this life, but you can control who you hurt. You love her so much, you hate her, Irene. Love her for real now."

At that juncture, the pot and pans placed on the kitchen walls fell from their hooks. The plaster of the walls cracked and caked, and smithereens fell from the ceiling. The ground broke into its own section and started to meander the way an island does. I threw my hands behind me, then wrapped myself in them and fell to my knees to rejoice. I had been delivered from my vulnerability and I felt new! Right beside me lay two small kidney beans, cocked at an angle revealing the shape of a heart.

PHOTO BY CHARLIE MCDONOUGH



winter

by angelica vannucci

1. lion girl is melting off the wall;
2. brown eyes in the crowd are carving holes into
neck.
3. he's got a slingshot for a tongue and abso-
lutely nothing is Right.
4. how to paint all my blood orange;
how to dip fleshy hands in something silver;
5. she smiles like she's got the world, strapped
back, bonded to her skin.
i want to fix her.
6. mama has glass eyes and knows not to look at
the sky;
7. we both ignored the thunder and his laughs,
when he saw
when he heard,
when he knew that he was gone blue for good.
8. trying to hold on but all i can smell is the nail
polish remover;
spilled 3 hours ago on her carpet.
9. it is cold and my blanket keeps no warmth. i
shiver, and he pulls it over his beard
10. not even christ knows what it's like to choke on
femininity. //
- like adam bit the apple, he bites into pink suede
and white cotton and envelops me whole.
11. as i feel my lips turn blue,
i look into his eyes; he is slipping faster than I am,
"psychadelic" he says.
12. he takes the train and i clutch metallic heart,
something is incorrect but i lack the words to ex-
plain it and so, i remain tied to the tip of my
tongue.

cashmere sleeve,

“I would’ve made a great boy,” she looks down at delicate hands.

23. the older man thinks himself young and wrestles with the lanky boy who thinks himself strong

24. i sleep with her on his couch on an acid-snow-storm night

and i spend every second feeling her warmth, hoping she’ll stay.

25. i think i have a fever; i roll my head back to the ceiling

and cough. i can feel Them looking at me, but I can’t find the will

to look back at Them.

26. on the bus ride home, I count the number of people

who look like they’re in pain.

PHOTO BY CAMILLE CURTIS



april afternoon

by samantha zeid

azure blue abyss, hold me like You do
while warm canary yellow rays flood my veins
elucidate me and my riddled words
as they leak from my soul
let yesterday's glass ridges evanesce away

lavender suede peonies, wave at me from window sills
while Spring encircles my psyche
whisper dreams of rhythmic fugue
as my feet tingle with ecstatic placidity
let tomorrow's birds sing what they may

54

towering evergreen, must You poison me with last Winter's
injections?
while now I remember, still– I skipped the ending
alleviate your scarlet sap and stark accusations
as i choose to feel the great star's vibrations
let bridges burned stay beneath my gaze today

and alas Grandfather in the air, smile down at me if you can
while memories taunt and try to chain me down
say this isn't just one frivolous reverie
as i do not want to go back inside
let me stay where i cease to crave clouds

You follow me so close that i'll burst and burn with happiness
i'll shatter the glass into one million pieces
so There. now You have me. Reborn.
Unchained but in God's image, no longer battered by momen-
tary lapses in life—
unclaimed
vivid as a dream,
but maybe this time i'll stay

ART BY KAYLAUN BONNI



old blue van

by elizabeth cordova

Three rows deep
with worn out seats.
Blue grass plays
to a worn out beat.
Old in front
and young in back,
the CD flips
from track to track.

Licorice,
unfolded map;
A whole day passes
in wakeful nap.
Seatback games
or books on tape.
Siblings' conversations
shift in shape.

Banjo in my ears
and magnets in my lap.
A couple fits of tears
but mostly, we laugh.
Despite the bickering,
I miss these trips –
before you know it,
the “good times” slip.

ART BY EMMA WEBER

57



breathe

by madeline martin

My head spins, making me dizzy.
I feel like I'm on a continuous ferris wheel,
one minute on top of the world
the next, at the bottom of the earth.
The nerves shaking me up inside
creating emotions to bounce inside my stomach,
like a ball in a pinball machine.
so tense with nothing to focus on.
So hard to calm down
I don't know what to do.
Feeling the need to rush everything yet
needing time to slow to a stop.
Chains on my wrists weighing me down.
Alone with my thoughts
making things worse.
Trying to hold back the tears that could create a flood.
Anger fighting to break me open like an earthquake.
The rush taking over to destroy me inside like a tornado.
It's all so overwhelming;
just needing Trust to be by my side.
Helping me get calm,
getting rid of my stress.
It's just a dream that won't come true.
People asking me what's wrong,
telling me that it'll be okay.
The thing is
they don't know what's happening
I can't even start to explain in words
nor would it make sense.
It's all just chaos in my head.
I need to breathe.
Just breathe.

PHOTO BY ELLIOT BOBO



glazed donut

by elizabeth szabo

Why do we love light so much?
I think it is for the same reason
that we love it when people listen
to us, we love it when
the sun listens to the thrumming of
heat just under our skin when it
first wraps us in its embrace. It pauses
and waits, for you, and
not many people do that, wait for
you, anymore.
it gazes upon us in the way we wish
we were gazed upon,
we want in that second next to the
perpetual windowsill to solidify and
turn into perhaps a glazed donut, which
doesn't do anything at all but sit and shine
(for no one but itself), the delicate almost
spherical inertness taunts us, tempts us
from somewhere beneath what we
realize, all we realize is that the
sun is shining on the tops of the curves of
ourselves and we like it

except of course the
inevitable shifting away, the peeling away
of it that leaves us cold and is what time
means and causes, the windowsill is not
so perpetual anymore, it is all just
lies

PHOTO BY EMMA WEBER



addressed to a class poltergeist

by sofia ragouzis-roman

Are you a ghost?
Do you disguise yourself in human skin?

Do you parade yourself down the streets of town,
With a plan scripted deep within?

Do you reappear when a camera flashes,
And disappear in the dark?

Do you speak to mortals, tongue twisting with lies,
Just to hear them squawk with a start?

Do you possess their minds as well as their bodies?
Just to make them writhe about?

Do you look into their eyes and feed them lies,
Until they start to doubt?

Do you enjoy it?
How sweet does all this really taste?

Does it really fill you,
Or do you do it to save face?

ART BY RACHEL SCHNEIDER

63



bullet scars

by kalli brown

Bullets braise my cheek
When mirrors stare back at me,
The barrel of a reflection
Is much different than that of a pistol or rifle
The barrel of a reflection is filled
With words,
With glares,
Not lead,
Not the ambition to kill,
But the potential to.
This isn't a feeling I have for myself,
It is a feeling that was built for myself,
By everyone else.
I am taught to swallow my protest
In exchange for their approval.
I am forced to be surrounded
By glass,
That doesn't reflect the right reflection.
I am told to contain my steam,
Because smoky mirrors have bad aim,
Leaving the bullets to braise other cheeks.
But,
I'll still stare into mirrors when the steam evaporates
And mirrors will still stare back at me.

BY CHARLIE MCDONOUGH



jazzmaster

by eli baumstark

I pull my sweatshirt over my head, comb down the static, and stomp to the bathroom. I look in the mirror at my face: the sharp jawline, the small whiskers that sculpt it. I stare into the eyes of a stranger that looks just like me. A torn person struggling with who he is and what he wanted to be. I wash away the the person who looked like he was begging for help with a quick splash of water on my face, put in my wireless earbuds, and crank up my latest indie album.

In the kitchen, I open the fridge and grab a protein shake.

“Good morning,” my mom cheerily says, trying to break me from my trance.

“Good morning, Mom,” I grunt back, focused on my phone, scrolling through the explore page of Instagram until I finish my cereal. I put my phone in my pocket, put my bowl in the sink, and grab the keys to my car.

I take the long way to school so I can listen to one more song, my jeep practically driving itself. “Sedona” by Handmouth is playing, “Well hey there Sedona, let me cut you a deal I’m a little hungover, adamant to steal your soul. Woah woah.” I belt along with the lead singer, goosebumps rising all over my body letting. The highway transforms from a dreaded beaten path to a midwestern interstate cutting through golden wheat fields towards the beautiful orange sunset swallowing me whole. As the song fades out so does heaven, and I am back on track to school. The extra minutes it takes to get there are one of the best things I discover. I am alone and able to listen to my music without the stress of everything that surrounds me, baseball scouts, girls, and school.

I arrive at school early, and I walk from the student parking lot to the school, hastily yanking up the hood on my hoodie. This is my favorite type of rain. Even though it could cancel baseball, I wish it would rain forever, the clouds dim the lights, and the warm spring air mixing with rain is the best feeling in the world. I enter the side building, so I can finish listening to my song without being bothered. The hallway feels like a swamp as I push on to the cafeteria.

• • •

My leg bounces up and down as I wait for the final bell to ring so I can get out of the trap I feel stuck in. The heavenly sound that signals my parole until the next bell rings. I throw my backpack over my shoulder and make a beeline to the closest exit.

67

I unlock my Jeep with a click of the key, and the car chirps back in response. I open the driver's side door, slip in, and take a deep breath, enjoying the few minutes I have before baseball practice by myself.

I eventually yank my gear from the trunk and head to practice, trotting across the field from the dugout in response to coach's whistle, "Enough chit chat let's get this show on the road" he barks. The gentleman has the voice of a pitbull, and he is ruthless. "Batting practice for the infield, get your arms warmed up outfield and pitchers, now let's get goin'."

I jog over my bag to get my bat; it was time for dinger-fest. That's what me and my friends call batting practice because that's what it is for me. I, up first. I step up to the plate and get set. Coach floats the first one to me, and I know it's gone. Ding! I crush it "gone forever!" people shout. "Dinger fest!" my friends holler. A smile grows on my face, and I set up to crush another ball.

Wreak wreak wreak, the knobs chirp as I turn off the hot water and step out of the shower, throwing on some clothes, heading towards the basement to play the guitar, my nightly ritual. Guitar is something that flows through me. I am always thinking of playing a chord or a melody I get stuck on. I often day dream of playing my favorite song with my favorite band, jamming with them, dancing around with the guys, the lead singer and I together, the crowd cheering as I bang out the cleanest indie rock solo they've ever heard. I grab my Fender Jazzmaster. I had saved all my money for when I was 14. It seemed like forever ago.

The off white body is worn down in spots, and the maple neck has indents up and down it, giving each fret its own separate groove. The white pickguard is a little darker than it was when I first got it, but I think it looks better the way it is now; it has more soul. I plug it into the amp and turn it down real low because I know my parents are going to sleep soon. I play with the dials and make the clean natural sound of the guitar sound like a raspy, tired street cat.

I think for a minute, then put my fingers in place and strum a perfect D minor 7th. Switching between natural and flat minor chords sounds the best to me. After I play the D minor, I go to town, from D minor 7th to A minor, up to a B flat Minor 7th and higher to an E minor 7th, strumming a quick 8th note swing.

"Honey, I'm going to sleep," my mom shouts from the top of the basement stairs.

"Alright, goodnight," I shout back. I unplug and grab my acoustic so I can still jam and let my parents sleep. I sit on the old chair in the basement for about an hour playing mindlessly, going back and forth from chord to chord thinking about life, thinking about how great it

it would be if I could finally escape and get away.

I check my phone, no recent notifications; everyone seems to be asleep. It's almost midnight, and I'm the only person awake in the house when all of the sudden I get up and look in the old mirror we keep in the basement. I look at myself for a long time thinking "Am I the person that I want to be?" I set down my guitar and grab my Jazzmaster, pack it up and head upstairs. I grab my keys and go to my car, unlocking the driver's side door with my key so nobody hears the car then I gently place my guitar in the back and start the car.

I drive until I get out of the city and the only thing I see is the road and the hood of my car. I stop at the first exit to text my mom. "Sorry if I wake you up. I have already left. Please don't worry about me; this is what makes me happy and what I need right now. I will call you when I make it." I go inside the gas station to grab a snack. Then, I start driving again.

The sun starts to rise, reflecting off of the beautiful fields and prairies, the golden wheat and tall grass complemented by the wildflowers and the rising orange sun. All that is in front of me is the open road and the sun.

. . .

"I'm George, everyone, and I will be playing my new single 'Jazzmaster.' It's my last song tonight, so I hope you like it."

I take a deep breath, set my fingers, and take a strum. Then I start playing.

"Thank you, goodnight!" I shout into the crowd, almost in tears as I walk off stage. I whip my phone out of my pocket and put it up to my ear. "Mom, I made it," I sputter with tears and spit flying off my face. "I made it."

PHOTO BY JULIAN LAWLESS



breathe

by olivia whittle

Escape.

She tells me to leave this place-

To get out of here, to run to her.

I dash into her arms

Because she is mine

Chilling water, rippling yet clear

Koi fish bubbling below

Stones, smooth and stubborn

Clinging to both the rich soil beneath them

And the flowing water beside them

71 Green grass, breathing life into me

She belongs to me, but I belong to her.

She holds me while I laugh, through my tears,

In success and facing fears.

Now I am here in her presence and she knows

She knows why I am here and tells me

Breathe.

Inhale

sipping

expanding

filling

up

more

and

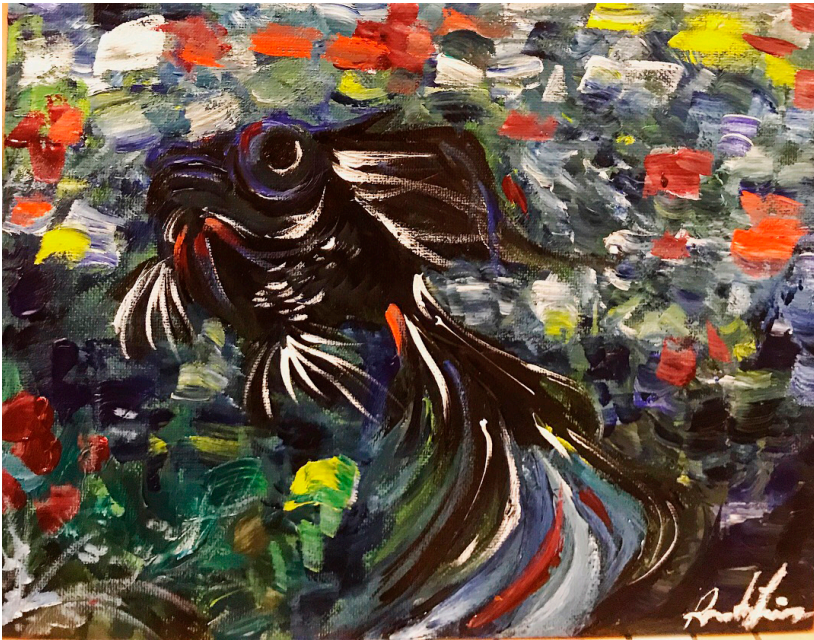
more

until

Exhale
releasing
freeing
contracting
yet
lengthening
all
the way
up

With each breath in, a new flower blooms
Each breath out, the flowers condense with strength
First a lily, pure and white
Then a daffodil sings to the sun
A peony unfolds, basking in the warmth
Marigolds, orchids, hydrangeas, tulips
Pulsing to her rhythm, my rhythm
Carnations, poppies, snapdragons, daisies
All breathing with us
I am now in a garden, spilling over with beauty
A metamorphosis
With the memory of blossoms, I dissipate
Into a cool mist
I am left on my white living room sofa
But she is still with me
Inhale
Exhale
I am at peace

ART BY RACHEL LIANG



becoming a room

by elizabeth szabo

locked up inside a
room, (duties
and doorknobs prevent
you from leaving, as
well as a distinct
listlessness) you wander
across the rug, processing
your toes turning from carpet to
hardwood,
and you pick up a coin from where
it was lying on the bed, you
must have, because when you
look down at your hand it lies
there, a pearl.
a dream world,
it is,
you are,
your brain oozes from
the pores in your forehead and spreads
like butter across the room,
lazy,
congealed in the air.
you become the room and find
this unsettling, and so, respecting
duties and doorknobs you reach
for the blinds and unblind yourself
with sunlight. suddenly, the
spell is dispelled.

PHOTO BY CHARLEY WALDROP



flashbacks

by catherine walsh

Beads of sweat

(er from that night

s) was it soft?

Or rough like the lovely ruffling of the dry leaves

Your chin a sharp V

your whispers trivial,

So why didn't we

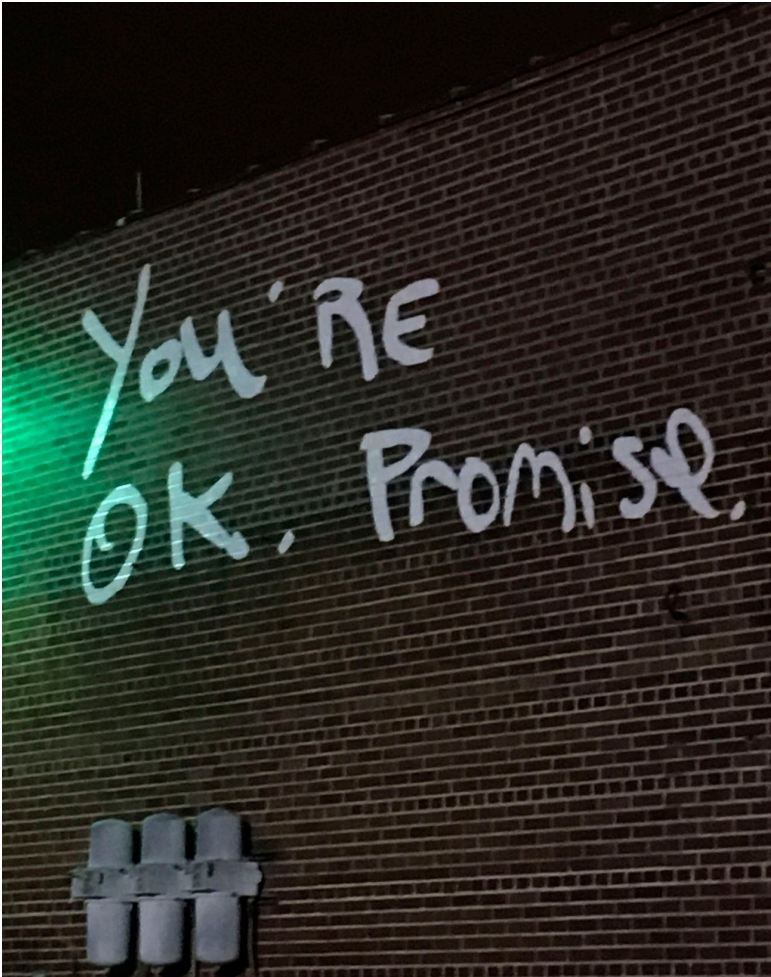
I think

maybe

we should
stop?

... 76

PHOTO BY MAGGIE BAUGH



trains that stop

by dawsen gershuny

Almost a moment takes the time 'tween
Breaths of yours and mine Our sweaty clothes
On tired bodies leaned against graying walls
Our fight was fought and no one won it.
Our quiet halls weigh empty tonnage.
Absence echoes sharp cries never come.
This silence triumphs bawls and bellows
Spring leave turn on falls, dropping dead.
Barren.

Wedding nights, wistful tears, wrinkled palms,
Alone Together throughout them all.

PHOTO BY MAGGIE BAUGH



smoky mountains

by elise friesen

I lay in the tent, listening to the sounds of the night. The crackling of the fire, smoke rising up high until it can no longer be seen. Every few seconds, a firefly would light up. I listened to the flowing of the river as it pushed against the stones.

The others sit around the fire, talking. The air constantly feels damp, which is normal considering we are in the smoky mountains.

Brown-eyed Sophie unzips the tent with great care and enters. She steps over the sleeping bags that are packed like sardines.

"You alright?" she asked, as she laid down next to me.

"I'm just thinking about stuff," the vagueness stuck in the air.

"Let's think together," she said as she grabbed my hand in hers.

She and I are the same in every way. We think exactly alike and have experienced the same things. We've known each other for two weeks, and we've talked every second of it. We talked late into the night—the conversation never faltering. She is my second sister.

"I have to go to the bathroom, now, or else I might have an accident" I say, already halfway out the tent.

She meets me in front of the fire, a few feet from the others. Sarah has her head on Red-Haired Will, Boy-of-pudge sits alone, and everyone is slowly falling asleep. Sophie and I try and navigate through the dark, both of us tripping over every pebble.

It took us an hour to make it to the restroom, but we did it. As we were making our way back to the tent we were

informing us that we were on the path.

We climbed back into the tent and jumped onto our sleeping bags. When the laughing finally died she turned to me,

“You are one of my favorite people,” she said.

I could tell she meant it based on her voice.

“You are too,” I replied, making sure to give her a hug.

Reality

I sit and wait, facing the empty side of the booth. The sounds of people talking with one another fill the diner. It’s been two months since I’ve seen her. She’s always busy with something. We have had this planned for weeks. We were going to go to the loop, specifically Blueberry Hill, so we could have a chance to talk.

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I sip my water, carefully watching for any sign of her. Finally I see her, a flash of yellow from her jacket.

I get out of my seat, and we hug without hesitation. Smiles on both of our faces from ear to ear. We barely get two words out before the waiter comes.

“What can I get for you two ladies this evening,” he waits with his pen already on paper.

“I’ll have a burger please, with a side of onion rings,” my usual order.

“I’ll have a grilled cheese,” Sophie says. We talk as though no time has passed, as if we had just seen each other days ago, when in reality it has been months. I’m someone who always is talking, but with her, I am content with listening.

She tells me about school, and the new friends she has made. She has finally realized that Rachel isn’t good for her. She tells me about her family, and how she loves her sister’s new girlfriend.

We slowly make our way out of the diner, and out onto

the sidewalk. A constant flow of cars drives past us, but we don't get distracted from each other.

We enter Rocket Fizz, and she sees the large amount of salt water taffy, and her face lights up like a kid's on Christmas morning.

"Ten dollars for as much as you can fit into this bag," the woman behind the register says, holding out the bag towards brown-eyed-babe.

Sophie takes it without hesitation, and heads straight towards the isle of taffy. By the end of it she has almost a pound of taffy for ten dollars.

As we enter United Provisions, I notice that Sophie is stepping over every tile line, putting a considerable amount of effort into avoiding them.

"How's that whole thing going," I ask, pointing to her feet.

"It's still the same. Sometimes I find myself unable to do certain things because I can't do it the way it's supposed to be done."

"I told my dad about how you feel like something bad will happen if you don't do things a certain way, and some of the other things you told me in the Smokies. He said that it sounds like textbook OCD..."

"Yeah...I kind of figured I wasn't normal," she gets quiet, looking off in the distance.

"I hate it when people use the word 'normal' as a compliment. I take it as an insult. If you aren't considered normal, that just means you are interesting. You are unique. Everyone is trying so hard to be 'normal' in school, but when they get older they try hard to be different. You just have a head start on them."

We move from one store to the next, and eventually the sun has set. The sounds of the night fill the air: people talking, cars rushing by, music from street performers. I know it is time for us to leave, but I don't want to go.

We embrace each other, and hug as old friends do. I can feel a lump in my throat, and my vision starting to blur as I turn to go to my car.

I take one last look behind me, and see Sophie looking at me. She looks at me with love, and appreciation. She and I both know the reality, we won't see each other for months. But this won't stop us.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH CORDOVA



insignificance

by bridget chan

Sitting on the bench
at the top
of the stairs,
My body
feels heavy,
Wanting to fall
through the floor
And sink down,
Down,
Down.
My pursed lips,
Sweaty arms,
An insouciant surface
trying to breathe,
Small puffs of air
at a time,
I tell myself,
But my lungs
never reach
their capacity,
My heart beats
like a bass drum,
So loud
everyone can hear it.
I can't breathe.
My fists
clenched tighter,
Trying to hold on,
Invisible crowds
block off my exit
And laugh
at my struggle
for air.
They jeer

at my despair,
Telling me that
this is what
I deserve,
What karma
has brought
to me.
I look at my arm,
Covered by a
black fur jacket,
The soft fabric is
glued to my body,
Unable to part
from the
safe haven
that I have
embraced,
Gently bandaging
my wounds,
Masking what society
Just cannot grasp.
Knowing what
laid underneath,
Slowly pushing
the sleeve up,
All I see is
a reminder of
my war,
And I want
to stop,
The useless flailing
for air,
The constant
Breathlessness.
With a sweaty hand,
I clutch my wounds,
The cold air condition

Licks at my skin
As I quickly pull the
cuff of my sleeve
To where it belongs.
Loud conversations
spread throughout the
air, instilling a
sicklike pounding
within my body,
I want to breathe
and sleep
and feel happy,
A feeling that is
no longer provided
for me.
I am not allowed.
I do not deserve
to smile
without strained
weight,
To laugh
without expectant stares
boring into
my back,
Their hands holding
my shoulders
in place,
So I sit,
I read,
I grasp
for fleeing air.
Chary glances
to my surroundings,
I look out at
the groups of people,
Able to express
who they really are,

Yet here I sit,
Wondering what
would suit
my everyday facade,
Releasing shaking smiles,
weighted laughs.
Perish.
Die,
I tell them all,
My mind swirling
with envy,
A disgusting
green snake
That twists itself
around my neck
Like a chafing rope.
My lungs are
bags of rocks,
My slowly dissolving
glass surface,
My blood that had dripped
from my arm,
My clenched teeth,
My sharp,
stabbing jealousy,
My fading will
to wake up
every morning,
My desperate fight
to move
every
limb,
My inner debate
on whether
to move forward
or stand still,
An insignificant war.

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