INSTRESS

Journal of the Arts

2018

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Instress has been published by the students of Misericordia since December 1966. The word *instress* was coined by Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bernadette Waterman Ward describes instress thus: "Instress is an action of the will—a moral action, for good or evil. Instress is assent, to use Newman's term, to an inscape. To call out an inscape is a pleasure, though not one necessarily leading to God; . . . But the ability to see and instress inscapes is the imaginative faculty that makes love possible." *Instress* at Misericordia is therefore an opportunity of the artistic and literary imagination to make possible something—call it *love* or even *grandeur*—like the following, from Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur":

> . . .
> And for all this, nature is never spent;
> There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
> And though the last lights off the black West went
> Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
> Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
> World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

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Poetry and Prose

Individual Letters
Rach Ahern 1

Nightmares
Daniella Amendola 3

A poem
Lauren Butera 7

i am the storm and that is okay
Kristin Kuntzman 9

The Redeemer
Scott Bargisen 13

Late in London
Kayla Binner 16

How I (the mirror) see you
Rach Ahern 17

Grapevine, Texas
Daniella Amendola 19

There's A First Time For Everything
Connor Swagler 21

Lights Out
Juliana Cofrancesco 22

Not the 18th
Scott Bargisen 23

September (If Autumn Leaves Could Speak)
Sierra-Lynn Krohnemann 24

Something I Think About
Connor Swagler 25

Tragic Beauty
Rach Ahern 27

Last Name
Kayli Boyes 30

Distance Lies in Words Unsaid
Lauren Schuster 31

Untitled
Nicole Grassi 33

From Auntie to Auntie
L. Joann Leigh 35

I Miss You, But I'm Still Here
Connor Swagler 37

Sunshine
Juliana Cofrancesco 38

The Height of Right Now
Annette Ritzko 39

Tell Me About Yourself
Jessica Vera 41

Pope Saint John Paul II
Matthew Nickel 43

A Mountain
Kimberly Kowalski 45

Fireflies
L. Joann Leigh 48

An Unoriginal Piece
Juliana Cofrancesco 49

What Makes You Different...
Tara Koskulitz 51

Untitled
Nicole Grassi 53

Praying
Kayli Boyes 54

The Theory of the Galaxy
Rebecca Steinberger 55

Pop
Kayli Boyes 57

to give
Kristin Kuntzman 59

Of Mountains and Falling
Kimberly Kowalski 61

Mama
Sierra Krohnemann 63

You.
Lauren Schuster 65

Beach
Rita Molino 67

A Finite Reminiscence
Kristen Capitano 68

Artwork and Photography

Beatrice
Annette Ritzko 2

Adam in Fog
Connor Swagler 6

Curiosity Killed the Cactus
Annette Ritzko 8

Plow
Connor Swagler 12

Which Path
Nicolette Bagoly 20

Lost in the Pines in Wharton, New Jersey
Rylie Fitzgerald 21

A Taste of History
Nicolette Bagoly 29

Grumpy Man
Connor Swagler 32

Waist Deep
Rylie Fitzgerald 34

Poppies Grow in Flanders Fields
Rylie Fitzgerald 36

Rosy in the Sunshine
Annette Ritzko 38

When in Rome
Nicolette Bagoly 40

Growth
Kristin Kuntzman 42

They Built Cathedrals
L. Joann Leigh 44

Kayacking on Bear Lake in Seward, Alaska
Rylie Fitzgerald 48

Daniella and her Pretzel
Annette Ritzko 52

The Heart of Life
Rach Ahern 56

Madame Pompe
Annette Ritzko 58

Luzerne Festival
Connor Swagler 60

Living as the Mountains Do
Rylie Fitzgerald 64

BEEuty
Rach Ahern 67

Individual Letters

Rach Ahern

Words aren't enough
They limit my expression
They fool you into thinking
That all this is my confession

They make you believe
That this is all I feel
But in truth it's incomparable
To what is actually real

My words are tied to a rhyme
And strung to individual letters
That form together as words
And piece some thoughts together

The thoughts I piece together
Are so minor and minimal
Because the thoughts inside my head
Are too deep to write or grapple

My thoughts are like deep oceans
But all I give you is a drop
A drop of water that seems tasteful
And you believe that it's enough

But no amount that I can write
No words that I can form
Can truly describe my feelings
Or the depth within my thoughts

You think you understand
And relate to what you read
But all that's an illusion
That you feel you must believe

Beatrice



Annette Ritzko

Nightmares

Daniella Amendola

> "Mother pulled from father's ribs, little baby in a crib, hands reaching up
> Before the blinding light is split through the prism of your organs into colors
> All that being and nothingness, on the same möbius strip
> Sleep and waking up" —Typhoon, "Empiricist"

Another empty room that seemed familiar, yet distorted. The wood paneled walls bled into the rusty carpet, and the sliding door of the closet was bent off its track, revealing a vacuous hole. All the furniture had disappeared, leaving indentations in the floor. She ran her toes over one, and the sole of her foot scratched a patch in the carpet where one sister or another had spilt glue before she had been born. If she blinked, she might see the ghostly imitations of her sisters' bunk beds. Perhaps the television set, still glowing hazily in the dark. Maybe even the square trunk that had sat beneath the window, which she knew held picture frames and twigs sharpened into stakes.

The hole in the closet screamed at her, and she scurried from the room.

In the hall, which was both narrow and yawning, she tipped sideways and fell into a wall. There were no lights here, and she felt that if she turned to look back then the darkness would catch her by her ankles and drag her away. So she fumbled and crawled slowly, her movements sluggish for reasons beyond her understanding, through the hall, up a hill, until the ground leveled out beneath her and she was back again in the distorted, mirror image of her living room.

"Mom?" she called. Her eyes were not quite level with the doorknob, so she had to tip her head back to look at it.

She opened her hands up to the door, but the knob was out of her reach.

"Lemme in," she said. She frowned deeply, and laid her palms flat against the door, smacking it indignantly. "In! In! Lemme in!"

The door swung open and she toppled into her knees, her fingers sinking into the floor. The room was less of a poor imitation, like her sisters' room, and more of a blurry photograph. Like maybe this was her mother's room, but she could not recall the details. Was the dresser directly to her left, or to her right? Was the floor wood, or was it carpet?



Was there one window, or two? There was a floor to ceiling mirror somewhere to her left, but when she looked into it, she could not see herself.

"Mom," she said, struggling to get to her feet. She grappled with the corner of her mother's bed, and wondered if it had always been this tall.

When she looked up, there were two floating orbs, like stationary suns caught between the ceiling and the floor. It took her only a few moments to realize they were eyes, and the bed beneath her hands disappeared so fast that she couldn't be sure if it had ever truly been there. The eyes above her came closer, and suddenly they were connected to a massive reptilian creature, red scales rippling in the phantom daylight.

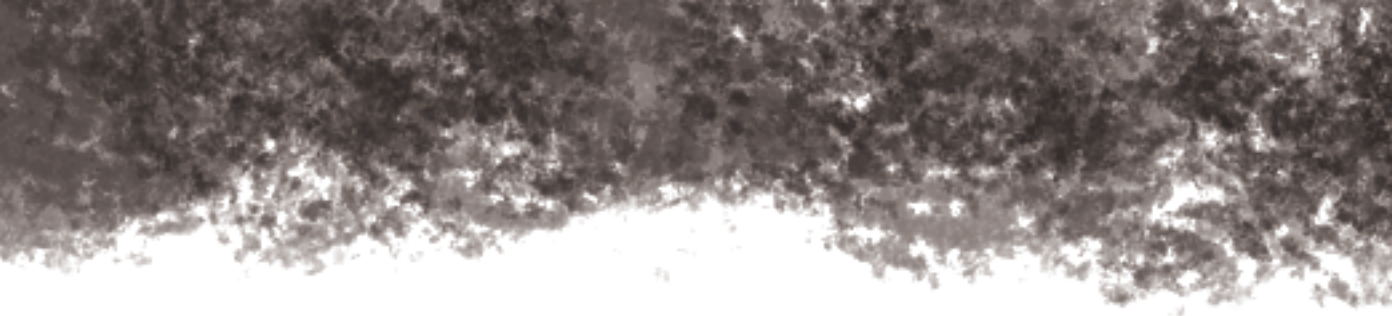
Its mouth yawned open, and its teeth glistened.

The little girl awakened with a small shout, light splashing into her eyes through the ribs of her crib. Her eyes watered, and when she blinked yellow orbs glowed behind her eyelids.

Sluggishly, she sat up. Her small bedroom was dim, and the morning light shivered against the folds of a bed that was her sister's once, before she had taken this room. It was dark enough that she could not see patches of her room, and shadows danced around her mischievously.

"Mom," she called. Her voice was hoarse. She could see out her door, into the hall, and though she did not know much, she knew her mother's room was at the other end of that hall. Couldn't her mother hear her? She should be able to. She always seemed to know when she was needed.

However, her mother did not come.



She drummed her little fingers against the white enameled bars that held her in place. Her crib was sparse, just a blanket and a little bear, and neither of those things made her feel any better.

"Mom!" she yelled a little louder. She threaded her fingers around the bars and began to shake at the bars. Maybe it'd fall over. Didn't it open somehow? If she shook it, it'd open, and she'd be free.

It was a nice thought.

"Mom!" she screamed. She beat at the walls of her crib, shaky and sniffling.

Nobody came.

***

Sometime later, maybe a decade and a half passing in a blur, the little girl drummed her fingers thoughtfully against a mug.

"Do you remember that?" she asked her mother.

Her mother glanced at her, and she laughed.

"No," she said. "You were fine though, weren't you?"

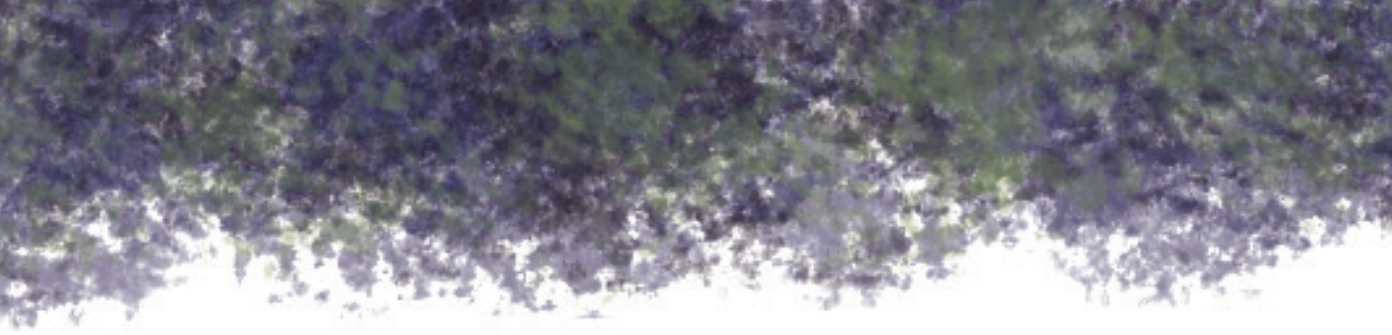
"I guess so, if you don't count the trauma."

"Yeah," her mother said, nodding. "You were fine."

Adam in Fog



Connor Swagler



A poem

Lauren Butera

In the mist of London,
I wander through the corridors and I hear a sound of a cry and wonder who is it?
I travel through the depths of the underworld
and wonder who is looking in the mirror of my soul?
As I continue my journey, I come across something scary, a monster version of myself.
I want to run in fear, but my heart says no. So, I continue going on my journey through the underworld and I find myself awed in fear.
Waiting a little bit longer, I see Hades inside of his palace.
Next, I see smokeless air then I become dismayed of Hades.
As time goes by, I grow stronger and face him.
Then, I wake up and see nothing but darkness.
In the mist of dawn, I see my city once again.

Curiosity Killed the Cactus



Annette Ritzko

i am the storm and that is okay

Kristin Kuntzman

Sometimes I feel like I drifted out to sea without cluing myself in.

Like, a year has passed and I didn't exactly drown, but I didn't swim either.

So, I am just stuck and I don't deserve to win.

My God? My family or friends?

Well, I think I hear them—but only muddled through my own thoughts of self-torment.

And just when I think that numb is as bad as it gets—an even greater storm appears. Except this time, it stays.

This storm swirls around me as a mirror. It shows the person that I have become—pointing out my every fear.

And the storm mirror? It's my mind. It shatters like my spirit and turns into a weapon used against me, by me.

It's like I know what is happening—but I don't. The shards are ready to finish what they arrived to do

and

I can't control it.

And even if I think I can—self doubt takes over like a panic attack that squeezes the life right out of me

As if I already wasn't creating more hurt, the people around me who don't understand throw some more shards into the storm, sometimes removing themselves completely in the process because they fear being cut themselves.

And that all together? That's a lot of pain.

Today I choose to sit in that pain rather than push it away as if it were ready to attack.

Sitting in this pain, it hurts. And it's lonely—but I decide to meet myself in it all. I met someone clothed in uncertainty and isolation.

fear

anger

anxiety

sadness

more sadness

guilt

more fear

more sadness

strength

.
.

Strength?

But, I barely got out of bed this morning.

But you got out of bed.

And I am definitely not as kind as I used to be, I'm just too sad.

But now you meet empathy like an old friend.

But,—

No. Stop.

This pain I keep speaking of?

It turned me into a fighter and not so much of the flighter I thought I used to be.

The storm doesn't want to leave though. It has me pleading with my higher power that His plans for me can be finished. Over. Done. No longer.

Please?

. . .

But I realize that this strength didn't just come from anywhere—

I am shown again and again that

I am love

I am light

I am enough

Today I sit in my pain, in this storm of a person that I am. And through it all, there is air in my lungs—shards swirling and all.

And those shards that are my being? They are waiting to do more damage; I swear they are. I never took a minute to listen to them because trust me, I know.

But really? They are hopeful that they can be put together in a mosaic that reflects new.

They scream to me that broken is a synonym for beauty and strength.

They tell me that there is air in my lungs today.

Today I sit in my pain, and I realized that my soul was on my side all along.

Plow



Connor Swagler

The Redeemer

Scott Bargisen

Cristao's blood ran over my nose right before Jimmy dumped water over me.

"Quit being so damn respectful; you're a Golden Glove champ for Christ's sake. She wants to go to the ground because she knows you'll break her f***ing jaw. Knock her out and get that paycheck."

My leg hurt a bit, but not enough to matter. Coach never fought, but he knew what to do to win. And he was right: Cristao's jiu-jitsu is better than expected but her clinch is trash. Just have to watch her guard that's all, just like any other Brazilian. It makes sense to stay standing but that bitch is going to keep trying to roll. I got a good shot behind her ear last round, but she held guard too well for me to do anything about it. If I'm going to knock her out, I'll have to wait for her to shoot-in: maybe a knee, maybe a straight. Hell, if I can get a teep like Anderson Silva that would put asses in seats next time, or at least make them pay attention.

The crowd was drunk but quiet; they never took too well to women's fights down here, more of a traditional mindset in the delta. "They're too young and pretty to be beatin' on each other like that. Poor ladies havin' to fight like this is a real shame. Who'd wanna marry them after gettin' their noses busted so much?" Stupid bumpkins. I don't know why I moved, NYC was so much better even though it was so expensive. The competition was better too, along with the pay. The bonus tonight is $1300, so it isn't that bad. Just have to win, that's all. That's another nice thing about the Bronx: Why can't these rednecks clean the mat a little between matches so there aren't any puddles left on the mat? So goddamn gross.

It didn't help that the cage itself was basically plasti-dipped chicken wire and PVC, so any time anybody touched the thing they'd get busted open. Disgusting. I'll be lucky if I don't get Hep-B from this redneck crap. This bitch was a piece of work too; we were told to follow Unified rules, but this caveman head-butted me last round only to get a warning. The ref better grow a set before she starts thinking this is Vale Tudo. I'm not risking my career over this amateur crap. Coach was talking, but he wasn't louder than Cristao's brick-face. This Brazilian was brolic as hell, makes sense why she's tested so often. Her back looked like a topographical map of Montana between her cross-tattoo and her Japanese rib-pieces; she surely had to juice to be that muscular as a Welterweight, especially at her height. Or she was a dude at one point. Either way, she was gross, just like this swamp-town hell-hole and the toothless inbreds in the crowd and the cheaply thrown together cage

and the coagulating blood seeping into the mat. I'm done with this fight.

The horn went and it was time. Coach grabbed the stool and smacked my ass, Jimmy put a quick glob of Vaseline on my cheeks, and Cristao never blinked. Not once through the whole break. Sick roider trying to be Iron Mike. What the hell is she? It. Whatever. The zebra's hand went down and, of course, she laid on the ground. Spiteful brat, stand up and get knocked out and make this easy on yourself. With a clap, she prayed at me in that deep growl: "Por favor," waving her hands together, "deite-se comigo, por favor."[1] Zebra waved her up, and she complied, stone-faced. Sick woman. Zebra's hand went down again; planting her right foot, she threw a few kicks at the leg she worked last round.

"Move your goddamn feet Eve! Bounce a bit! Circle, circle, circle."

Her feet are too heavy; I should push a bit. I can jab a couple times to set up a clinch, but she might try to grab my leg again. I can probably get a combo again, but she'll just take me down like last— her hands flew and I barely had her in half-guard. I started mouth-breathing realizing that my nose was sideways. That's when the tunnel-vision set in.

"Put your hands up! Put your hands up! Put your hands up! Clasp! Clasp! Clasp! Yeah that's it! Good!"

Her hands felt like they went through my ribs with each strike; all I could do was kick half-assed into her kidneys. It was working enough, she stopped throwing.

"Right leg, switch. Switch. Switch. Switch dammit. Switch. Good! Now get up! Get up!"

Oh, shut up, dickless. Her arm slipped and I got her in a loose rubber-guard. Her wrist went limp and she got up real quick. Her shoulder looked a bit postured now: must have tweaked it. I think Cristao's coach was screaming in Portuguese. That, or it was Coach Groves and I'm just messed up. Now she was treading less and moving more confidently.

"Throw! Throw! Switch feet! Keep those feet! God dammit, keep those feet! Watch the takedown, Eve."

She was pushing more now that she saw my face better. I can't take many more shots to

the face; every jab shot more blood down my throat, every kick made my knee buckle. She juices. No doubt she juices. Her head bobbed in and out of the blackness and my throat was getting sticky. She planted her feet in one of the puddles and swung; thank God she missed, that would have knocked me the—

"WATCH!"

The pop silenced the crowd. I unclasped my hands and crawled out from beneath her, backing into the cage. She grew redder and redder as she rolled around, curdling the pools of blood with her shrieks. Her coach and the cut-men jumped over the cage and sprinted to her, encircling her and restraining her to set her arm. Cristao's face was covered in tears, whether hers or her coach's. I could see everything again, just in time to watch her humerus be pushed back in and to have my face straightened out. The ref raised my hand quickly and tended to Aceline who was screaming for her dad, I think.

Anyway, the injury forced her to retire; last I heard, she was living in Sao Paulo and had triplets with her coach.

---

1. "Por favor"... "por favor": Please, lay down with me, please.

Late in London

Kayla Binner

A single bell tolling,
Above a crowded street.
A clamor of voices,
The sounding of feet.

My lover is waiting,
So I pick up the pace.
A mere crowd is nothing
To see your bright face.

Thick dust coats the road stones,
Bright flowers line a stand.
London is bustling,
It's cramped, but so grand.

I reach the small cafe,
I am so out of breath.
Then I'm filled with dismay,
You're gone—you have left.

How I (the mirror) see you

Rach Ahern

You only like me
When you like what you see
You only take care of me
When you can't see through me

You constantly use me
And question your reality
You love me, then hate me
Dreaming of alternate beauty

When you think you look scary
You get scared by me
You stare straight through me
Yet see yourself in me

But I am not you
What you see isn't true
I'm just a surface
I can't reflect you

I can't reflect your heart
Or the brilliance of your mind
I reflect the outside
But not what is inside

You see straight through me
But that's not who you are
I hate it when you look at me
And only see your scars

So next time you look to me
Come closer and really look
Look into your eyes
And the color around your pupils

See your eye colors come together
Think about everything you have seen
Everything you have been through
The person you have come to be

Stop using me to criticize
Start using me for good
Please give me a more meaningful life
Than vanity, if you would

Grapevine, Texas

Daniella Amendola

Terra firma doesn't sit right with me,
Along the horizon and stretches of concrete.
We breeze on past a man-made sea
Where gold glitters beyond the street.

Along the horizon and stretches of concrete
I search for hills and find none.
Where gold glitters beyond the street
There is a mirror of the setting sun.

I search for hills and find none
Like a Roman disgraced and displaced.
There is a mirror of the setting sun
In a storybook that I have misplaced.

Like a Roman disgraced and displaced,
I find a sword and a story to tell.
In a storybook that I have misplaced
Love is an accident that can't end well.

I find a sword and a story to tell,
Though the story is not mine.
Love is an accident that can't end well,
But we're all living with wrecks just fine.

Though the story is not mine,
I know the beginning and the end,
But we're all living with wrecks just fine,
In a bed of letters we forgot to send.

I know the beginning and the end
Where the valley meets the peak,
In a bed of letters we forgot to send,
Searching for the seven hills I seek.

Where the valley meets the peak,
We breeze on past a man-made sea,
Searching for the seven hills I seek;
Terra firma doesn't sit right with me.

Which Path



Nicolette Bagoly

There's A First Time For Everything

Connor Swagler

Her knuckles crack,
As they hit my teeth,
Now she's mad that she hit me.

I walk away crying,
As she calls me a baby,
Clutching what's left in my mouth.

While I'm curled up on the couch,
She attempts to comfort me,
And it works.

That was the first time.

Lost in the Pines in Wharton, New Jersey



Rylie Fitzgerald

Lights Out

Juliana Cofrancesco

I don't trust the walls anymore

Paranoia sets in as I sit in my bed

Lights out—yep yep yep—I'm asleep

Cozied in bed not overanalyzing every little thing

Every minute detail that gnaws away

At my consciousness. Until all that is left is

The unconscious. To convulse in silent agony

My voice is my own, only mine can I trust

Puppeteers relish in the idea of me

Tied up with strings

The wire tightening around my neck until

Too deep—too deep

I wear a necklace no woman would envy

But those who jeer as I cry out in pain

Shall never reach their climax

For I stand tall with eyes of steel

Cold, unflexing

Prepared to battle for my life

And for those who don't know,

I will win.

Not the 18th

Scott Bargisen

I cannot compare you to summer days,
For you are far too fickle, first of all.
What use is it to compliment this way,
My words will wilt before you force their fall.

Your hair, dun as my will to leave your side,
Matches the tone of conversations past.
To keep you calm (forgive me for my lies),
I feed you false: your feasting makes me fast.

Listening to you, incessant like a child,
Heart attacks and gerd are what I fear.
The mucous lies upon both types of bile
To match the air that rests between your ears.

To solve this snag, my silence stands aside;
Since speaking stalls severance: leave.

September (If Autumn Leaves Could Speak)

Sierra-Lynn Krohnemann

I was born during the beginning of death. Where leaves begin to glow with phosphorescent orange and reds, a telltale sign of life crumbling down into the earth or is it back into the earth? Born already half alive, people find beauty in the decay.

I am a simple tree. My leaves were supposed to astound you with greens of health, sucking up every drop of the falling sky, I was the epitome of beauty. But my life began in September, where my leaves changed from green to yellow and now, I am dying.

Passers stop and gawk, ignoring my call for help, my cry, a piercing sound of misshapen limbs, I am not beauty, I am dying.

They pick me off of the ground in hopes of tracing me into their notebooks in the same way that I have tattooed a past onto my body, in the same way that you have permanently captured a frozen heart, I am not beauty, I am dying.

They tease with autumn decorations of plastic leaves wrapped around their porch steps, yellow, red, and orange, why mock my fallen soul, show me how I am weak, I am not beauty, I am dying.

The cold increasingly devastates my health, I was meant for warm months, to balance the frozen tundra that I find in my body, but now I am leaking ice and the words I spit are ice, and the air I breathe is ice and you see nothing but ice, I am not beauty, I am dying.

Will you find death as beautiful in December?

Something I Think About

Connor Swagler

Your yellow sundress,
That one with the white polka-a-dots,
No makeup on,
Not that you couldn't bother,
But you didn't need it.
That day is now a frequent dream.

You were smart,
You didn't wear heels,
I heard you say,
It was gonna be a long day,
So you played it smart,
In your white flat shoes.

I remember making fun of you,
Because those socks looked silly,
"It only covers half of your foot"
But you said,
"That's all I need."

Then we kissed,
That kiss was sweet,
It's something I think about,
Often when I can't get any sleep,
After I've woken up,
From this unrealistically pleasing dream.

Then I think about our fight,
You were right,
And I was proud,
Now it's too late to turn around,
Say I'm sorry,
And start over.

So I stay here,
Scratching at the rough winter-skin,
You once kissed,
Because I'm still too proud,
And I'm too scared you wouldn't want me back.

So I lay in this dark room,
Waiting for the sunrise,
I hope will come soon.

Tragic Beauty

Rach Ahern

Facing the waters
As tidal waves crash
Most leave the city
It's lost and abashed

People have fled
Others have fought
The storm has ended
The lost are now sought

People returning
Some just to pack
Others to rebuild
Some turn their back

I'm returning to the city
To look through the ruins
See what's retrievable
In the scattered blueprints

I start to walk through
As memories flood
Some are more painful
Than i could dream up

I have to face the bad
As well as the good
Accept what has happened
Like people say i should

But I'm not ready for this
It's all too much
How can i move on
And pretend it's all dust

This city has built me
It made me who i am
How can i walk away
How can i abandon

But looking at the rubble
Seeing all the ash
Is killing me inside
Trapping me like quick sand

My mind is growing darker
As the tragedy seeps in
How could this have happened
How could evil win

How could a city be destroyed
Who would have the heart
The heart to let this happen
And force families in the dark

They say life is good
And everything has a purpose
But a purpose of a tragedy
To me is just heartless

The good memories that i had
Now are clouded by smoke
In a faraway land
Where there seems to be no hope

Hope to rebuild
Hope to stand tall
Hope to get through this
I feel weak and small

But I'm staying in the city
The cement will be mixed
I'm gathering supplies
And laying each brick

I Will create a New town
In this broken city
I Will make this place home again
And name it The Tragic Beauty

A Taste of History



Nicolette Bagoly

Last Name

Kayli Boyes

I've always hated my last name.
It belongs to a man I no longer see.
Belongs to a family where I am not the same,
And am no longer welcomed to be.
That name is sewn into so many of my clothes and shirts,
Alienating me from my true loving family.
I see that name and each time it hurts,
To think I will bear it for most of my eternity.
I cannot wait until the day I wed,
Or until I have enough money to change it myself.
And then the only memory of that name will be in my head,
While the clothes remain on some high shelf.
But there you lay, in an old hoodie with my last name sewn in red.
I can't help but love that name when it's on you instead.

Distance Lies in Words Unsaid

Lauren Schuster

I never knew
how much I wanted
You to make me yours

Not quite as truly as the moment
that you were no longer there.
And soon I realized
as I felt the way my heart was pulled
to you, to you, to *always* you,
a million miles away.

We're linked by phone lines,
fragile strings that tremble, snap—
the intricate web of silence and sighs
that we share into the early hours

You're far away, my heart aches;
You're standing here, I miss you even more.
And all because you'll never know what's yours
How deeply I belong
to you.

Grumpy Man



Connor Swagler

Untitled

Nicole Grassi

In the winter, I trudged through the snow,
Shielding my eyes from the stabbing glow,
Dragging myself uphill
And tumbling down until
I just suffered the snowdrifts below.

In the spring, I trudged through the puddles,
Toed my way around winter's rubble;
I stumbled right along,
Pretending to be strong
As against the downpour, I huddled.

In the summer, I was eaten alive
By bugs and mosquitoes that thrive
In the eternal heat
So I grabbed a seat
And wondered if I'd survive.

In the fall, I trudged against the chill,
Through the leaves, down a hill;
In such a strange place,
I did an about-face
And winter stared down from uphill.

Waist Deep



Rylie Fitzgerald

From Auntie to Auntie

L. Joann Leigh

Once again in memory of Joann Terlizzi, and for Sunny, my little love.

Being an aunt has brought joys aplenty;
My sunshine was born well before I turned twenty.
As I think of times with her that I've shared,
I wonder how we could've bonded, had you been spared.

As a girl I could never understand, try as I might
To understand why so early in life you gave up the fight.
Only when I experienced your mother as a bully
Did I understand the situation fully.

Kristy had four kids and Tommy had two,
But these children may grow old never hearing of you;
For Nona and Tom preferred to have more be said
About the three who lived, than you, who dropped dead.

Poppies Grow in Flanders Fields



Rylie Fitzgerald

I Miss You, But I'm Still Here

Connor Swagler

I miss the comfort of you next to me,
I miss my independence,
I miss the connection we had between us.

I wish you were still around,
I wish I saw you when the sun goes down,
I wish you didn't hate to see me,
I wish that I didn't hate to see you.

I don't hate anything,
I just dislike it,
I still can't stand the way you treat me.

As if I was someone who meant nothing,
As if I was someone who did the hurting,
As if I wasn't overthinking everything,

After all I can't stand anything,
Since you've left nothing is complete.

But I've found some pieces,
Hope is not lost yet,
At least not this evening.

Check in tomorrow,
To see if I'm still breathing.

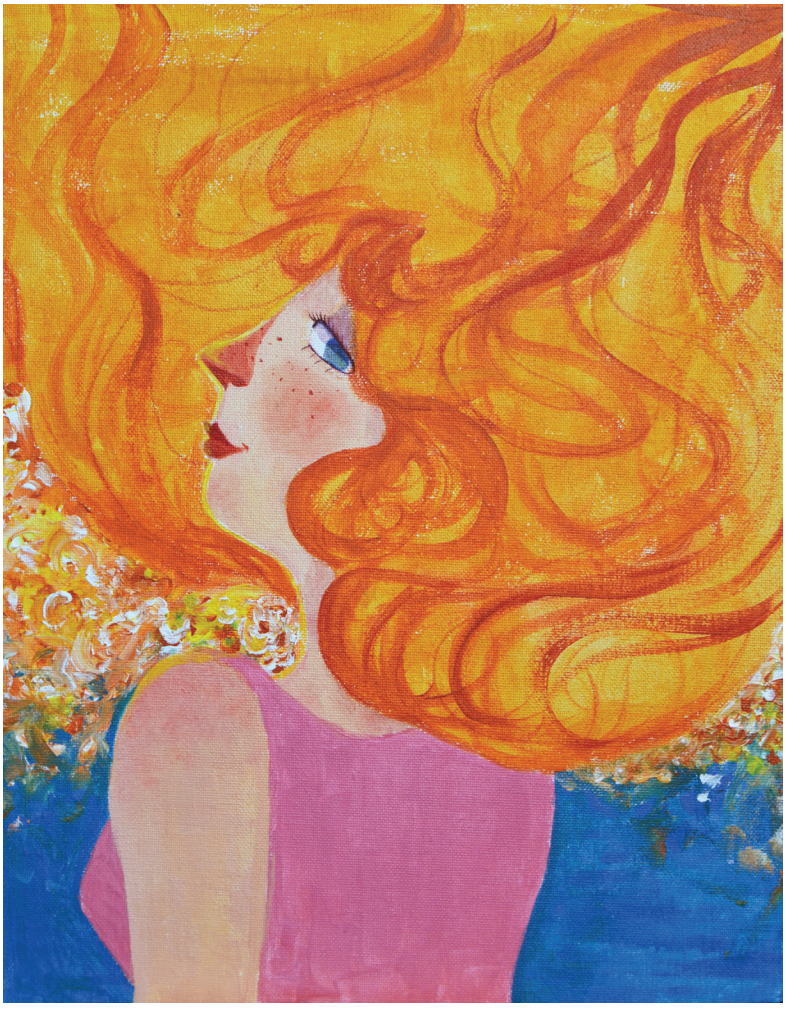
I'm sure I'll be here.

Sunshine

Juliana Cofrancesco

Like a beautiful cancer, your rays touch and transform me.
There is no cure.
You are unadulterated sunshine, and I am hopelessly in love with you.

Rosy in the Sunshine



Annette Ritzko

The Height of Right Now

Annette Ritzko

The lampposts that line
The long highways to and from cities
The height of right now
Of driving back
From Barnes and Nobles
From restaurants
From moments
That last
For only
So
Long.
Someday
There will be
Bigger and better
Lampposts that will be
The height of right then

2ND PHOTO

When in Rome



Nicolette Bagoly

Tell Me About Yourself

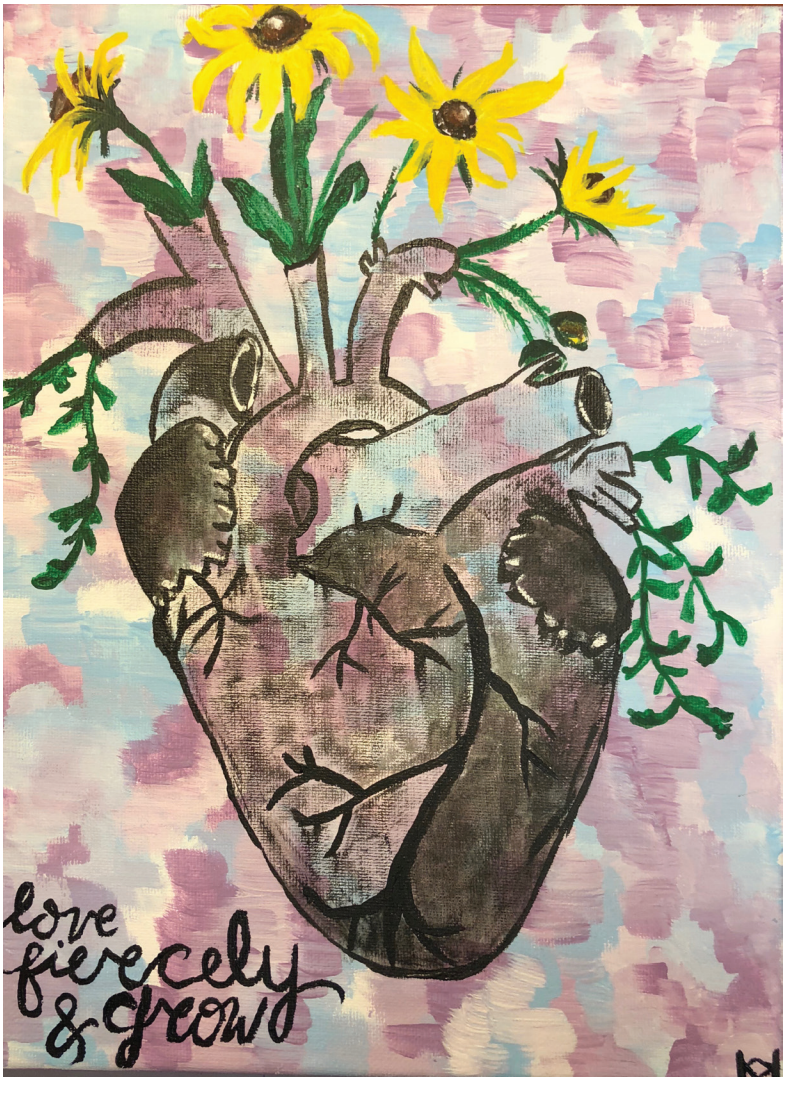
Jessica Vera

The most frequent questions I always stumble upon are, "So tell me about yourself. Who are you? What do you do? What makes you who you are today?" I stare blankly at the persons asking these questions trying to make sure I force the corners of my lips into the poster smile of friendliness. These questions seem all too impersonal masked behind false pretenses of interest. That, or maybe I am just being too cynical. But how does a person under my circumstances answer such questions without alluding to the cloud of doom that tends to follow throughout my life? That damn cloud I have been running away from since the dawn of time. Trying so desperately to escape into the sun, or at least feel the light kiss my skin even if it is just once, for only a second. How do I answer to them that what I have seen throughout my short lifetime would humble even the most pompously vain, or that the struggles I have single handedly faced would make a grown man weep in fetal position?

The strength I wake up with is not my own. It belongs to the child caressing my face lovingly with his cheek against mine whispering, "Good morning mommy," so heavenly into my ear. My daily routines are bleak, but they serve purposes. Getting an education will free me from my shackles of poverty. Earning some income will allow me to afford the medicine that will sooth the fever my young one suffers during these insufferable winters. Cooking warm meals will fill the hungry belly of the one I love. While others my age enjoy the freedom and youth of the night, I take comfort cuddled up under my quilts with a shared cup of hot cocoa and a movie all before nine o'clock. I am a victim of cruelty. I am a survivor of abuse. I am a mother of love. I am just a nonspecial trying to make a better name for herself and her son in this crooked world. But these responses do not fit the commercial answers that conform to these usual questions asked. So, when the question of, "So tell me about yourself," presents itself, I just answer with, "Hi everyone. My name is Jess and I'm an English major."

2ND ART

Growth



Kristin Kuntzman

Pope Saint John Paul II

Matthew Nickel

> On Saturday, 2 April 2005, at approximately 15:30 CEST, John Paul II spoke his final words in Polish, "*Pozwólcie mi odejść do domu Ojca*"—"Allow me to depart to the house of the Father."

I.

I try not to be afraid, but I'm afraid most days
it does not come that easy, nor does the modern
lyric solve the mystical paradox of the soul
yearning toward the door we are unable to open;

yet the lyric revisits, like a wheel, the departing
moment when an image and sentiment lift
from the page into metamorphosis: meaning
seasoned with romantic gestures of truth and beauty

but the value of meaning depends, a butterfly
does not always fly with grace, a soul sometimes
falls into darkness: the truth is rarely beautiful
for the fanatics, and beauty is hardly truthful

in the mouths of the modern world. What we
thought we knew is not even written on the stones
for the scribes died a long time ago and with them
knowledge that accumulates, the palimpsest.

II.

In the South of France in the ancient church
of Les Saintes-Maries, they have washed the stones
scrubbed candle-soot, saliva staining the floor
from frantic prayers of millions of pilgrims,

all now smells sterile, the most fertile magic in France
purged, eliminated with installed lights so bright
the darkest soul cannot hope to fear the unknown,
in this light even demons become tangible:

I am not ready to depart to the house of the Father
but I think of you John Paul, as my wife holds my hand
prays in aseptic light from the chapel, whispering
so low not even the dead can hear: be not afraid.



They Built Cathedrals



L. Joann Leigh

A Mountain

Kimberly Kowalski

> God when you choose to leave mountains unmovable, give me the strength to be able to sing, "It is well with my soul." —MercyMe, "Even If"

Right now I am supposed to be finishing a take-home final for my twentieth-century American literature class, but that can wait.

It can all wait.

More than a year ago, I ended a relationship that was toxic and what some would categorize as emotionally abusive. I finally gathered the strength to leave that relationship and take myself into consideration. I remember playing out in the snow that night with my roommates and feeling as though my body and soul and heart were being cleansed of any and all toxins. I felt free—liberated and light. No more feeling as though I was not good enough, no more being the victim of manipulation, just no more.

I had moved a huge mountain in my life and I felt inspired to conquer more. I wanted to tattoo mountains on my body as visible proof that I could handle any and all mountains that came my way. Since then, mountains have been a symbol for me: a symbol of my strength and resiliency, of my ability to push through and endure anything. A symbol of how much love I have to give to others, for my love for the people I care about is more than enough.

However, I have encountered a mountain much bigger than any I ever imagined—my mom. Now, when you read that line I bet you're thinking, "What the heck??"

First things first, my mom is the strongest woman I have ever known. Strength can come in a multitude of forms and my mother had an ever-enduring strength to live her life showing love to everyone. She was the woman who lost her father at sixteen, became pregnant at eighteen, married the father of her son, moved all over the country for him, bore him another son, and then had her heart utterly broken, for she was not enough for him. I want to tell her that she will always be enough; she was always enough.

Nevertheless, she overcame that mountain. She moved it. She was resilient.

Eventually, she met a man who accepted her love and gave her love in return—my father. He accepted her overflowing cup of love and together, they gave of themselves to one another.



To quote Edgar Allan Poe, they "loved with a love that was more than love." They had two more children, one of them being myself obviously.

My mother filled my life with freshly baked cookies, clean laundry, books, home-cooked meals, fuzzy socks, and love. Love filled my home and life. If anyone has taught me anything in this life, it is my parents and they taught me how to love. My mother taught me that love is not an emotion, but a practice, an action.

I wish I had learned more.

My mom became ill this past September and passed away.

My mother, the woman who loved me even before God, the woman who loved all as God desired, is gone. The woman who endlessly loved and gave love is gone.

She passed away after enduring a physical ailment that caught us all off-guard—ARDS, Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome. Recovery was not impossible or unheard of and we had hope, everyone had hope. A whole community of people came together to support her and our family through this illness. Banners, Facebook posts, tee-shirts, and money were just some of the ways that our family received the love she gave to others. Everyone wanted her to get better and to push through, for her strength was undeniable. Even as she lay unconscious, but very aware, I knew she would make it. I knew my mom could make it and I had hope.

My hope was crushed as I stood in front of my residence hall with the sun shining and the September morning chill surrounding me, and heard the news that she was gone. I cannot look at the third window in front of MacDowell Hall without seeing myself being embraced by my cousin and sister-in law.

However, despite this state of despair and helplessness, I still endured.

Like my mother, I will endure and have strength. I will love unconditionally and without question. I will not let her memory be a sad one, but one filled with the *agape*[1] she expressed everyday of her life. Her memory will be a hope for me that I will love like her and share in her memory with every step I take and breath I breathe.

This is my biggest mountain yet, and it will not budge.

This mountain is not meant to be moved, it is meant for me to climb and camp next to. I will never move this mountain; it will always be in my line of vision not as a goal, but as a reminder and a memory of her. Of her endless love that did not die, for it still lives in me and every single person she has ever given her love to.

This mountain is my mom, and I never want to leave this mountain behind.

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1. Agape is the type of love mentioned throughout Michael Himes' work *Doing the Truth in Love* and is described to be "experienced as a gift not only by the one loved but also by the lover... [and is where] true selflessness of the lover's abilities are transcended" (Himes 55).

Fireflies

L. Joann Leigh

Stucco clouds take shape in a twilight sky;
A full moon hides behind them,
and the fireflies have a chance to leap and dance
until the darkness closes in.
As the night envelops them,
the fireflies leave as swiftly as they came.
Houses up and down a quiet street
illuminate as their inhabitants move
from room to room until morning—
mimicking the fireflies long after they've gone.

Kayacking on Bear Lake in Seward, Alaska



Rylie Fitzgerald

An Unoriginal Piece

Juliana Cofrancesco

Love is overrated
A typical teenage line
For typical teenage poems
That always try to rhyme

There is no point in writing
Wallowing tears of what "Could have been"
We were never together in the first place
A childish fantasy

I've already broken the rhyme scheme
I can't do anything right
Perhaps that is why I have no date
Approaching Friday night

Mundane text that means nothing
Why try when I already know
Your charming looks conceal the truth
Your heart cannot bestow

—What?

Anything, yes anything
Nothing true nor genuine
I know the truth and all your lies
Taste like a bitter sin

Temptation is sweet
Fall into the trap
Shackle myself to the wall
As you lay there and nap

How carefree you are
Strutting through life, causing pain
Mind overthinking
I must regain

Confidence. Hold head up high
Erase my name from your “to do list”
For you shall never win
Clouded emotions I must dismiss

This topic of love so redundant
Your name on every page
Wasting ink, wasting paper
You are a waste in my day

So go distract some other girl
And let my mind go free
Consuming thoughts of you shall cease
My mind belongs to me

What Makes You Different…

Tara Koskulitz

Some people seem so transparent, predictable
But something about you perplexes me
The way to act is obvious, clear
But something about you challenges me

It's a scary thing to dream, to think
But something about you reassures me
To open myself up to change, to difference
But something about you encourages me

So many questions are difficult, unanswered
But something about you calms me
Love and life are confusing, messy
But something about you comforts me

I feel your curiosity, your kindness
And something about you welcomes me
I see your vision, your view of the world
And something about you has captured me

Daniella and her Pretzel



Annette Ritzko

Untitled

Nicole Grassi

To my early morning lover:
You're the reason I leave my bed,
Get myself to class—a wonder—
And never appear brain dead.

We meet in the dark of morning,
With a yawn and a stretch, "hello."
Your silver body shines, transforming
Sleep into wake, my early morning beau.

You stave off the headaches,
The eye-popping pounding,
The caffeine deficient mistakes
In my skull resounding.

Tea kettle, how could I get through
A morning without you?

Praying

Kayli Boyes

I had given up praying long ago,
But my knees still ache from long hours of prayer.
I had given up praying long ago,
But my hands still fold habitually from years of practice.
I had given up praying long ago,
But then you came into my life.
I had given up praying long ago,
But you have me falling to the ground in adoration.
I had given up praying long ago,
But my head bows in reverence to your beauty.
I had given up praying long ago,
But you have broken my stubborn habit.

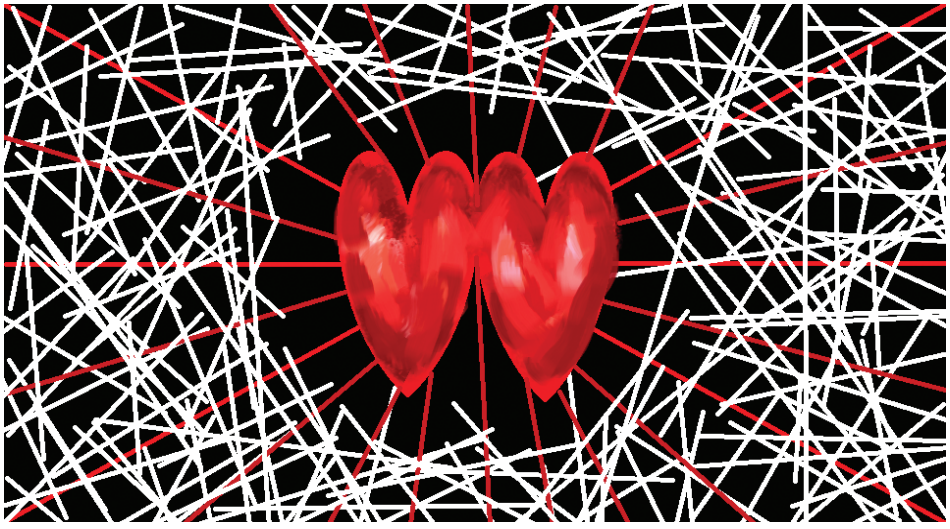
The Theory of the Galaxy

Rebecca Steinberger

for Luca

Shutting the sun's rays out,
we make the room eerily dark
and toss popcorn in our mouths
intentionally missing the target.
The trash compactor reference
gets me every time
and I have to explain my first time to you.
The original was the best
unsurpassed by flashy side effects
and the latest gimmicky technology
which will be out of date
before your not-so-evil-Empire of Lego sets.
Suddenly, I am transported
to a Galaxy far, far, away
to a time when twigs were our light sabers
and the Millennium Falcon cost less
than the Star Wars Lego set I bought you,
and I wore my hair in braided buns like Princess Leia.
You blink occasionally
but ask more questions than your 5-year-old brain
should be able to absorb.
And as we watch *The Force Awakens* for
the insert-number-here time,
I hug you close to me
smile, and recognize
that history *does* repeat itself,
and that you are the Chewbacca to my Han Solo,
the Finn to my Rey,
the star in my galaxy.

The Heart of Life



Rach Ahern

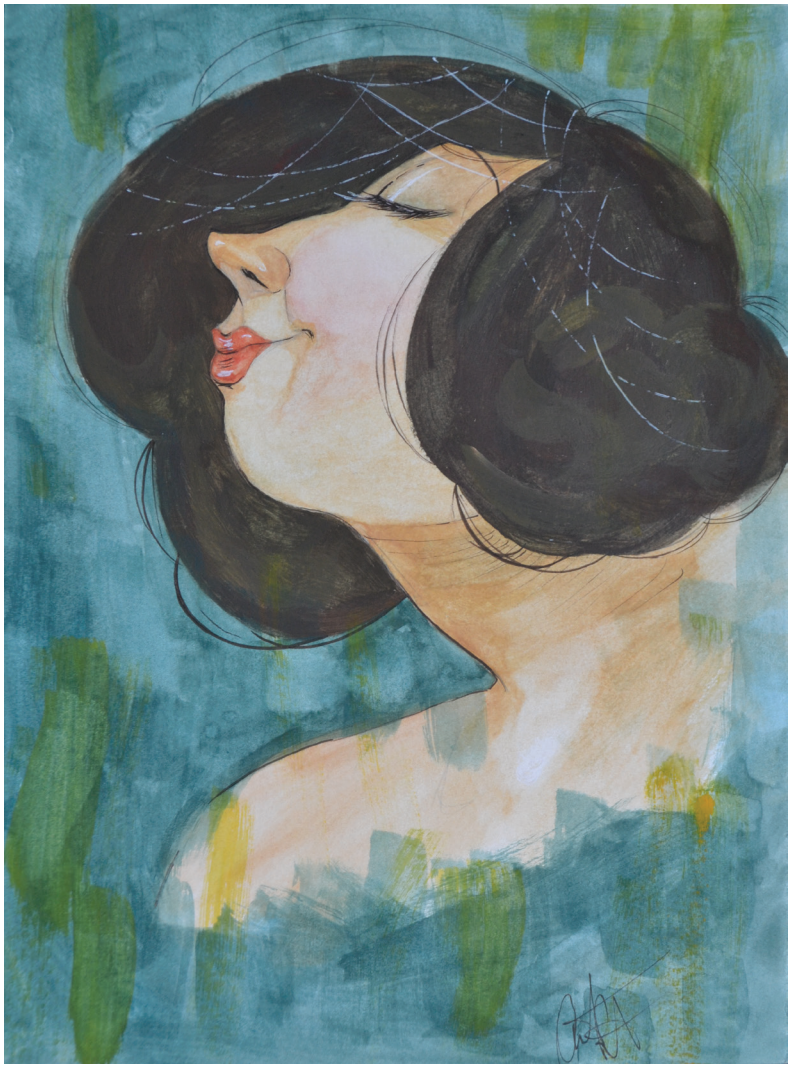
Pop

Kayli Boyes

He was there my very first day.
Back then I could nestle into the crook of his arm,
And fall asleep to his gentle sway.
I knew he would protect me from every harm.
He was there for each and every milestone.
Each moment captured in pictures lovingly taken,
By a man who has witnessed how much I have grown.
His eyes always full of father-like adoration,
I have him to thank for who I am today.
He alone is responsible for my fierce loyalty,
And how I get stuck in my own stubborn way.
He was the one who introduced me to our shared passion of poetry.
All I know is that no matter how my life will unfurl,
I will always be my Pop's little girl.

1ST ART

Madame Pompe



Annette Ritzko

to give

Kristin Kuntzman

when i became a daughter

i learned that givers get,

and by givers get i mean that my parents gave

me a whole lot.

i got a lot and now i want to give a lot.

i want to give back to the people who have given

so much to me

i want to give to souls I have never encountered

and you can wonder, what do you get?

to which i can reply, everything.

when you give

your heart fills knowing full well

that you have the ability to fill

another's soul.

you come to understand that your

human flesh has the power to change

what is broken in this world.

you are able to catch a glimpse

at why our Creator put us on this earth

when i became a daughter,

my parents gave me

everything.

Luzerne Festival



Connor Swagler

Of Mountains and Falling

Kimberly Kowalski

She has moved mountains before.
She has climbed and climbed and reached the top and climbed back down again.
She has struggled and has hurt herself along the way,
Some of her falls have left scars.
Scars that she doesn't show to just anyone.

This mountain
Is much steeper and every time she climbs it,
It seems as though it gets taller and bigger,
Like there is no end.
She pulls up her body and reaches for the sturdiest rock she can find,
Timidly shifting her feet before pulling her body up fully
Her foot reaching for the next level of rock,
Only to fall down on her back.
She looks up and sees more rock in her way
Blocking the sun and moon—
Her only sources of light on this journey.
All light seems to be lost
And hidden behind much taller mountains and clouds
That are haunting her vision.

Sometimes there is a soft place to rest,
After days and miles of the hard rock beneath her feet.
A place where she can take off her shoes
And sleep under the stars when they do peak out.
When she starts to regather her strength
And the clouds seem to fade away,
She ties her shoes—tight—
Pulls her hair back
And she begins again.

Sometimes it rains. Sometimes it snows.
She has gotten caught underneath the thunder and has been frightened,
But she made it.
She has been soaked to the bone
And has continued to climb.



Her footing is especially important during these storms,
And it's not safe to be climbing during them,
And though there are some things we cannot avoid,
We must know when we have pushed ourselves too far.
She can't stay in one place for too long.
She cannot remain in a state of stasis.

She cannot move this mountain,
Today or maybe ever.
It may be the mountain she could not climb,
But kept in her line of vision as something more—
Motivation or maybe a memory.
It is the place where she fell down
Tears streaming down her face, screaming at the sky.
Where she dug her nails into the earth
And clawed rivers into the mountain for the rain to travel down.
See those patches of green and bright pink?
That is where she planted the seeds of her pain and sorrow and struggle
So that something bright lay in its place.
The place where she will grow and learn about herself.

First, however,
She needs to camp beside this mountain. She needs to rest as she goes,
Taking it little by little until she reaches the top.
Until she can see why it took so long
Why it was so challenging
Why it must be climbed
And not moved.

Mama

Sierra Krohnemann

A completely corny poem, for a completely wonderful woman.

Blonde hair, blue eyes
I could have been adopted
But you made brown look like gold
And you taught me about the world

You gave me my best friend
Nicknamed Sugar, sweet in my world of bitter
You always feared dogs and I knew why
But you fell for her just the same

Together we created the definition of family
I know it was only the three of us, but I never minded
I loved when Sugar and I made you laugh
I lived for that crooked smile

I think about those moments
The ones of pure joy and simple recovery
When you would talk me out of the tree
When you would embrace me with your unconditional love

I try to hide my smile and I try not to rub it in
But it is the truth when I say that I am the luckiest
For you exceed all expectations
And you are my forever saving grace

I guess what I am trying to say is
I forgive you for the past
For fighting your demons
When I felt that I needed you most

I thank God every day
For showing me my gold
And giving me another chance
At showing you

Blonde hair, blue eyes
The characteristics of a man you once loved.
But you never cared
And you always called me beautiful

Living as the Mountains Do



Rylie Fitzgerald

You.

Lauren Schuster

And maybe you're my favorite songs

you're my favorite dances

you are the sparkle in the summer sky

when the smoke clouds the air from the fire.

You are the haze that settles over lazy August skies-

and you you you

are the music, the hum,

the constant whir whiz bang of the

coursing pulsing rushing world around me

And you

You and your kind eyes

You are charity and charm and eloquence and grace

and you are all that is soft and good

and warm in this world



And you are home.

You

Yes you my friend

You are the one who brings rain to this parched earth

Color to this blank canvas

Song to this still silence

Light and heart and soul to this cold unfeeling darkness

You are kindness; you are empathy and feeling

You are care and concern and you are, yes you are, what keeps this world turning.

What knocks me off balance and yet what always manages

to keep me steady, keep me grounded, to help me stay on my feet.

And you are the familiar.

And you are home.

Beach

Rita Molino

May 8, 2017

The smell of the ocean breeze
And the sand beneath my feet.

The dolphins jumping through the water
Makes a day at the beach complete.

BEEuty



Rach Ahern

A Finite Reminiscence

Kristen Capitano

Suitcases and mouths packed to the brim,
Each story a hand-selected souvenir.
How to synthesize five months of discovery
Into the span of one polite inquiry, where
Memories are called forth only to live as
Long as your conversationalist's attention span?
Colors were brighter and tastes were sharper—
Everything was new, yet nothing was unfamiliar;
Normal routine shuffled into a different order.
On my tongue danced a hundred words to try and
Explain the sensation of realizing exactly how
Small we are in a vast world, and the peace that
Comes with seeing that each and every individual
Connection is interwoven in a way that transcends
Every culture, every nationality, no matter how
Many miles away the airplane takes you from
Home. But ultimately the novelty fades
And the monotony pushes its way down
My throat and into my lungs, stilling my
Tongue, drowning the words that
Nobody wants to hear anymore.
The stories have turned to dust,
Blown, dispersed, irrelevant;
Every syllable a prisoner
Behind my teeth because
They cannot be liberated
In the wake of one more
Set of eyes glazed over.
The memories will
Always stay, but
Now they are just
For me, and I will
Let my words
Stop.

Instress
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